Binomial and Poisson Random Variables – Solutions

STAT-UB.0103 – Statistics for Business Control and Regression Models

Binomial random variables

1. A certain coin has a 25% of landing heads, and a 75% chance of landing tails.
   (a) If you flip the coin 4 times, what is the chance of getting exactly 2 heads?

   Solution: There are 6 outcomes whith exactly 2 heads:

   $$HHTT, HTHT, HTTH, THHT, THTH, TTHH.$$

   By independence, each of these outcomes has probability $(.25)^2(.75)^2$. Thus,

   $$\text{P(exactly 2 heads out of 4 flips)} = 6(.25)^2(.75)^2.$$

   (b) If you flip the coin 10 times, what is the chance of getting exactly 2 heads?

   Solution: Rather than list all outcomes, we will use a counting rule. There are $\binom{10}{2}$ ways of choosing the positions for the two heads; each of these outcomes has probability $(.25)^2(.75)^8$. Thus,

   $$\text{P(exactly 2 heads out of 10 flips)} = \binom{10}{2}(.25)^2(.75)^8.$$

2. Suppose that you are rolling a die eight times. Find the probability that the face with two spots comes up exactly twice.

   Solution: Let X be the number of times that we get the face with two spots. This is a binomial random variable with $n = 8$ and $p = \frac{1}{6}$. We compute

   $$\begin{aligned} P(X = 2) &= \binom{n}{2} p^2 (1-p)^{n-2} \\ &= \binom{8}{2}\left(\frac{1}{6}\right)^2\left(\frac{5}{6}\right)^6 \\ &\approx 0.26. \end{aligned}$$

3. The probability is 0.04 that a person reached on a "cold call" by a telemarketer will make a purchase. If the telemarketer calls 40 people, what is the probability that at least one sale with result?

Solution: Let X be the number of sales. This is a binomial random variable with $n = 40$ and $p = 0.04$. Thus,

$$\begin{aligned} P(X \geq 1) &= 1 - P(X < 1) \\ &= 1 - P(X = 0) \\ &= 1 - \binom{n}{0} p^0 (1-p)^{n-0} \\ &= 1 - (0.96)^{40} \\ &\approx .805 \end{aligned}$$

4. A new restaurant opening in Greenwich village has a 30% chance of survival during their first year. If 16 restaurants open this year, find the probability that

(a) exactly 3 restaurants survive.

Solution: Let X be the number that survive. This is a binomial random variable with $n = 16$ and $p = 0.3$. Therefore,

$$\begin{aligned} P(X = 3) &= \binom{16}{3}(0.3)^3(1-0.3)^(16-3) \\ &= .146 \end{aligned}$$

(b) fewer than 3 restaurants survive.

Solution:

$$\begin{aligned} P(X < 3) &= \binom{16}{0}(0.3)^0(0.7)^{16} + \binom{16}{1}(0.3)^1(0.7)^{15} + \binom{16}{2}(0.3)^2(0.7)^{14} \\ &= .099. \end{aligned}$$

(c) more than 3 restaurants survive.

Solution:

$$\begin{aligned} P(X > 3) &= 1 - P(X \leq 3) \\ &= 1 - (.099 + .146) \\ &= .754. \end{aligned}$$

Poisson random variables

5. The number of calls arriving at the Swampside Police Station follows a Poisson distribution with rate 4.6/hour. What is the probability that exactly six calls will come between 8:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m.?

Solution: Let X be the number of calls that arrive between 8:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. This is a Poisson random variable with mean

$$\lambda = E(X) = (4.6 \text{ calls/hour})(1 \text{ hour}) = 4.6 \text{ calls.}$$

Thus,

$$P(X = 6) = \frac{\lambda^6}{6!}e^{-\lambda} = \frac{(4.6)^6}{6!}e^{-4.6}.$$

6. In the station from Problem 5, find the probability that exactly 7 calls will come between 9:00 p.m. and 10:30 p.m.

Solution: Let X be the number of calls that arrive between 9:00 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. This is a Poisson random variable with mean

$$\lambda = E(X) = (4.6 \text{ calls/hour})(1.5 \text{ hours}) = 6.9 \text{ calls.}$$

Thus,

$$P(X = 7) = \frac{\lambda^7}{7!}e^{-\lambda} = \frac{(6.9)^7}{7!}e^{-6.9}.$$

7. Car accidents occur at a particular intersection in the city at a rate of about 2/year. Estimate the probability of no accidents occurring in a 6-month period.

Solution: Let X be the number of car accidents. This is Poisson random variable with mean

$$\lambda = E(X) = (2 \text{ accidents/year})(0.5 \text{ years}) = 1 \text{ accident.}$$

Thus,

$$P(X = 0) = \frac{\lambda^0}{0!}e^{-\lambda} = e^{-1} \approx .368.$$

8. In the intersection from Problem 7, estimate the probability of two or more accidents occurring in a year.

Solution: Let X be the number of car accidents. This is Poisson random variable with mean

$$\lambda = E(X) = (2 \text{ accidents/year})(1.0 \text{ years}) = 2 \text{ accident}.$$

Thus,

$$\begin{aligned} P(X \geq 2) &= 1 - P(X < 2) \\ &= 1 - \left[\frac{\lambda^0}{0!} e^{-\lambda} + \frac{\lambda^1}{1!} e^{-\lambda} \right] \\ &\approx .594. \end{aligned}$$

Empirical rule with Binomial and Poisson random variables

9. If X is a Poisson random variable with $\lambda = 225$, would it be unusual to get a value of X which is less than 190?

Solution: Set

$$\mu = E(X) = \lambda = 255,$$
$$\sigma = \text{sd}(X) = \sqrt{\lambda} = 15.$$

Define z to be the number of standard deviations above the mean that 190 is, i.e.

$$190 = \mu + \sigma z.$$

Then,

$$z = \frac{190 - \mu}{\sigma} = \frac{-35}{15} \approx -2.33.$$

A value of X which is below 190 is more than 2.33 standard deviations below the mean of X. The empirical rule tells us that observations more than 2 standard deviations away from the mean are unusual (they occur less than 95% of the time). Therefore, values of X below 190 are unusual.

10. The probability is 0.10 that a person reached on a "cold call" by a telemarketer will make a purchase. If the telemarketer calls 200 people, would it be unusual for them to get 30 purchases?

Solution: Let X be the number of purchases. This is a Binomial random variable with size $n = 200$ and success probability $p = 0.10$. Thus, the expectation and standard deviation of X are

$$\mu = np = (200)(.10) = 20$$
$$\sigma = \sqrt{np(1-p)} = \sqrt{(200)(.10)(.90)} = \sqrt{18} \approx 4.2$$

Since $np \geq 15$ and $np(1-p) \geq 15$, the distribution of X can be approximated by the empirical rule. Using the empirical rule approximation, 95% of the time, X will be in the range $\mu \pm 2\sigma$, or (11.6, 28.4), and 99.7% of the time, X will be in the range $\mu \pm 3\sigma$, or (7.4, 32.6). We would see $X \geq 30$ less than 5% of the time. It would be unusual to see X = 30, but not highly unusual.