

Introduction to Probability

Lecture 4: More discrete distributions – Poisson, Geometric,
Negative Binomial, Hypergeometric

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Poisson discrete random variable

Geometric discrete random variable

Negative binomial discrete random variable

Hypergeometric discrete random variable



Preliminaries:

The natural exponent e

e is a mathematical constant AKA the Euler number. e is very important for exponential functions. Here are some important identities:

$$e \approx 2.71828$$

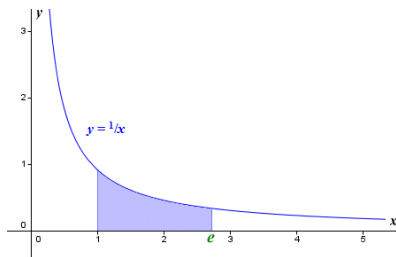
$$e = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n!}$$

$$e = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \left(1 + \frac{1}{n} \right)^n$$

$$e^{-\lambda} = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \left(1 - \frac{\lambda}{n} \right)^n$$

$$e^r = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \left(1 + \frac{r}{n} \right)^n$$

$$e^r = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{r^n}{n!}$$



Binomial RV example: large n , small p

We are trying to predict footfall in a store. We know, based on previous data, that on average 8 people enter the store per hour. What is the probability of k people entering the store in the next 1 hour?

1. Break an hour into **minutes**.

What if 2 people enter in the same minute?

- At each **minute**, independent Bernoulli trial with 1 for a person entering the store and 0 for nobody entering the store.
- X is a Binomial RV: # people entering in an hour, so $\mathbf{E}[X] = np = \lambda = 8$.
- $X \sim \text{Bin}(n = 60, p = \frac{\lambda}{n})$, so $\mathbf{P}[X=k] = \binom{n}{k} p^k (1-p)^{n-k} = \binom{60}{k} \left(\frac{8}{60}\right)^k \left(1 - \frac{8}{60}\right)^{n-k}$

2. Break an hour into **milliseconds**.

What if 2 people enter in the same millisecond?

- At each **millisecond**, independent Bernoulli trial: 1 for enter, 0 for not enter.
- X is a Binomial RV: # people entering in an hour, so $\mathbf{E}[X] = np = \lambda = 8$.
- $X \sim \text{Bin}(n = 3600000, p = \frac{\lambda}{n})$, so $\mathbf{P}[X=k] = \binom{n}{k} \left(\frac{\lambda}{n}\right)^k \left(1 - \frac{\lambda}{n}\right)^{n-k}$

3. Break an hour into **infinitely small units**.

- At each **unit**, independent Bernoulli trial: 1 for enter, 0 for not enter.
- X is a Binomial RV: # people entering in an hour, so $\mathbf{E}[X] = np = \lambda = 8$.
- $X \sim \text{Bin}(n, p = \frac{\lambda}{n})$, thus $\mathbf{P}[X=k] = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \binom{n}{k} \left(\frac{\lambda}{n}\right)^k \left(1 - \frac{\lambda}{n}\right)^{n-k}$



Computing Binomial in the limit

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{P}[X = k] &= \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \binom{n}{k} \left(\frac{\lambda}{n}\right)^k \left(1 - \frac{\lambda}{n}\right)^{n-k} \stackrel{\text{expand}}{=} \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{n!}{k!(n-k)!} \frac{\lambda^k \left(1 - \frac{\lambda}{n}\right)^n}{n^k} \\ &\stackrel{\text{rearrange}}{=} \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{n!}{n^k(n-k)!} \frac{\lambda^k \left(1 - \frac{\lambda}{n}\right)^n}{\left(1 - \frac{\lambda}{n}\right)^k} \stackrel{\text{def of } e}{=} \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{n!}{n^k(n-k)!} \frac{\lambda^k e^{-\lambda}}{\left(1 - \frac{\lambda}{n}\right)^k} \\ &\stackrel{\text{expand}}{=} \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{n(n-1)\cdots(n-k+1)}{n^k} \frac{\lambda^k e^{-\lambda}}{\left(1 - \frac{\lambda}{n}\right)^k} \end{aligned}$$

$$\text{as } n \rightarrow \infty \quad \frac{n(n-1)\cdots(n-k+1)}{n^k} \approx \frac{n^k}{n^k} = 1$$

$$\left(1 - \frac{\lambda}{n}\right)^k \approx 1^k = 1$$

$$\left(1 - \frac{\lambda}{n}\right)^n \approx e^{-\lambda} \text{ because } e^{-\lambda} = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \left(1 - \frac{\lambda}{n}\right)^n \text{ thus we have}$$

$$\mathbf{P}[X = k] = (1) \frac{\lambda^k e^{-\lambda}}{k!} = \frac{\lambda^k}{k!} e^{-\lambda}$$

Therefore, in our store footfall example: the probability of k people entering the store in the next 1 hour is:

$$\mathbf{P}[X=k] = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \binom{n}{k} \left(\frac{\lambda}{n}\right)^k \left(1 - \frac{\lambda}{n}\right)^{n-k} = \frac{\lambda^k}{k!} e^{-\lambda}$$



Poisson discrete random variable

A Poisson RV X approximates Binomial where n is large, p is small, and $\lambda = np$ is "moderate". Thus we no longer need to know n and p , we only need to provide **rate** λ . X is the number of successes over the duration of the experiment.

$$X \sim \text{Pois}(\lambda)$$

$$\text{Range: } \{0, 1, 2, \dots\}$$

$$\text{PMF: } \mathbf{P}[X = k] = \frac{\lambda^k}{k!} e^{-\lambda}$$

$$\text{Expectation: } \mathbf{E}[X] = \lambda$$

$$\text{Variance: } \mathbf{V}[X] = \lambda$$

Examples: # earthquakes in a given year, # goals scored during a 90 minute football game, # misprints per page in a book, # emails per day.

Key idea: Divide time into a **large number** of small increments. Assume that during each increment, there is some **small probability** of the event happening (independent of other increments).



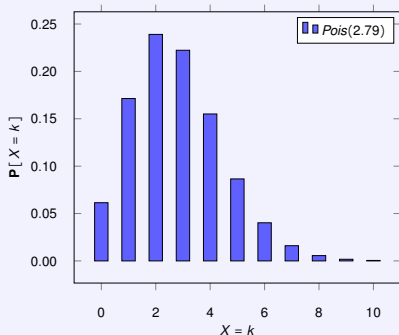
Earthquake example

Example

Suppose there are an average of 2.79 major earthquakes in the world each year. What is the probability of getting 3 major earthquakes next year?

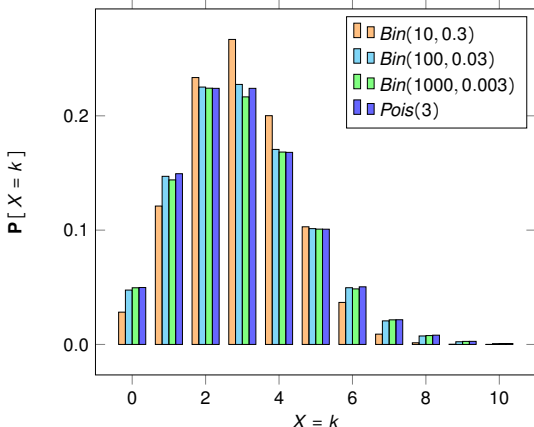
Answer

Define RVs: $\lambda = 2.79, k = 3, X \sim \text{Pois}(2.79)$



Poisson paradigm

- Poisson approximates Binomial when n is large, p is small, and $\lambda = np$ is "moderate".
- Different interpretations of "moderate". Commonly accepted ranges are:
 - $n > 20$ and $p < 0.05$
 - $n > 100$ and $p < 0.1$
- Poisson is Binomial in the limit: $\lambda = np$ where $n \rightarrow \infty, p \rightarrow 0$.



$$\text{PMF: } = k \in \{0, 1, 2, \dots, \infty\}; \mathbf{P}[X = k] = \frac{\lambda^k}{k!} e^{-\lambda}$$

$$\mathbf{E}[X] = \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} k \frac{\lambda^k}{k!} e^{-\lambda} = \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \frac{\lambda^k}{(k-1)!} e^{-\lambda} =$$

$$= \lambda \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \frac{\lambda^{k-1}}{(k-1)!} e^{-\lambda} \quad (\text{let } i = k - 1)$$

$$= \lambda e^{-\lambda} \sum_{i=0}^{\infty} \frac{\lambda^i}{i!} = \lambda e^{-\lambda} e^{\lambda} = \lambda$$

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbf{E}[X^2] &= \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} k^2 \frac{\lambda^k}{k!} e^{-\lambda} = \lambda \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} k \frac{\lambda^{k-1}}{(k-1)!} e^{-\lambda} \quad (\text{let } i = k - 1) \\ &= \lambda \sum_{i=0}^{\infty} (i+1) \frac{\lambda^i}{i!} e^{-\lambda} = \lambda \left(\underbrace{\sum_{i=0}^{\infty} i \frac{\lambda^i}{i!} e^{-\lambda}}_{\text{same as before}} + \underbrace{\sum_{i=0}^{\infty} \frac{\lambda^i}{i!} e^{-\lambda}}_{\text{sum of PMFs}=1} \right) = \\ &= \lambda(\lambda + 1) \quad \text{thus}\end{aligned}$$

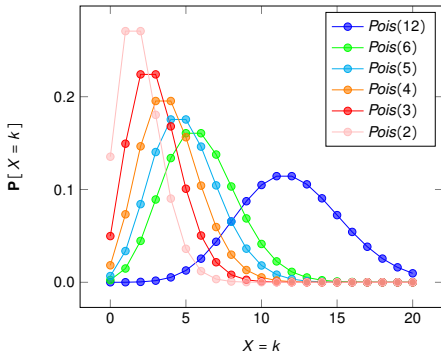
$$\mathbf{V}[X] = \mathbf{E}[X^2] - (\mathbf{E}[X])^2 = \lambda(\lambda + 1) - \lambda^2 = \lambda$$

$$\mathbf{E}[X^k] = \lambda \mathbf{E}[(X+1)^{k-1}] \quad \leftarrow \text{useful generalisation}$$



Bernoulli, Poisson, and random processes

- A Poisson process is a model for a series of discrete events where the **average time** between events is known, but the exact timing of events is random.
 - The arrival of an event is independent of the event before (waiting time between events is memoryless).
 - The average rate (events per time period) is constant.
 - Two events cannot occur at the same time: each sub-interval of a Poisson process is a Bernoulli trial that is either a success or a failure.
- Example: your website goes down on average twice per 60 days; calling a help centre; movements of stock price...



Outline

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Geometric discrete random variable

X is a geometric RV if X is a number of independent Bernoulli trials until the **first** success, and p is the probability of success on each Bernoulli trial.

$$X \sim \text{Geo}(p)$$

$$\text{Range: } \{1, 2, \dots\}$$

$$\text{PMF: } \mathbf{P}[X = n] = (1 - p)^{n-1} p$$

$$\text{Expectation: } \mathbf{E}[X] = \frac{1}{p}$$

$$\text{Variance: } \mathbf{V}[X] = \frac{1 - p}{p^2}$$

Examples: tossing a coin ($\mathbf{P}[\text{head}] = p$) until first heads appears, generating bits with $\mathbf{P}[\text{bit} = 1] = p$ until first 1 is generated.



PMF (E_i is the event that the i -th trial succeeds):

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbf{P}[X = n] &= \mathbf{P}[E_1^c E_2^c \dots E_{n-1}^c E_n] = \\ &= \mathbf{P}[E_1^c] \mathbf{P}[E_2^c] \dots \mathbf{P}[E_{n-1}^c] \mathbf{P}[E_n] = \\ &= (1 - p)^{n-1} p\end{aligned}$$

CDF ($\mathbf{P}[X > n]$ is the probability that at least the first n trials fail):

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbf{P}[X \leq n] &= 1 - \mathbf{P}[X > n] = \\ &= 1 - \mathbf{P}[E_1^c E_2^c \dots E_n^c] = \\ &= 1 - \mathbf{P}[E_1^c] \mathbf{P}[E_2^c] \dots \mathbf{P}[E_n^c] = \\ &= 1 - (1 - p)^n\end{aligned}$$



Die example

Example

You roll a fair 6-sided die until it comes up with #6. What is the probability that it will take 3 rolls?

Answer

Let X be a RV for # of rolls. Probability for any # on die is $\frac{1}{6}$.

Define RVs: $X \sim \text{Geo}(\frac{1}{6})$, want $\mathbf{P}[X = 3]$.

Solve:



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Negative binomial

Negative binomial discrete random variable

X is a negative binomial RV if X is the number of independent Bernoulli trials until r successes and p is the probability of success on each trial.

$$X \sim \text{NegBin}(r, p)$$

$$\text{Range: } \{r, r + 1, \dots\}$$

$$\text{PMF: } \mathbf{P}[X = n] = \binom{n-1}{r-1} (1-p)^{n-r} p^r$$

$$\text{Expectation: } \mathbf{E}[X] = \frac{r}{p}$$

$$\text{Variance: } \mathbf{V}[X] = \frac{r(1-p)}{p^2}$$

Examples: tossing a coin until r -th heads appears, generating bits until the first r 1's are generated.

Note: $\text{Geo}(p) = \text{NegBin}(1, p)$.



NegBin example

Example (not real life!)

A PhD student is expected to publish 2 papers to graduate. A conference accepts each paper randomly and independently with probability $p = 0.25$. On average, how many papers will the student need to submit to a conference in order to graduate?

_____ Answer _____



Adding NegBin example

Example

Let $X \sim \text{NegBin}(m, p)$ and $Y \sim \text{NegBin}(n, p)$ be two independent RVs. Define a new RV as $Z = X + Y$. Find PMF of Z .

Answer

- Need to show that $Z \sim \text{NegBin}(m + n, p)$.
- Consider the sequence of independent events tossing a coin with $\mathbf{P}[\text{heads}] = p$.
- Let X be a RV for # of coin tosses until m heads are observed. Thus $X \sim \text{NegBin}(m, p)$.
- Now, continue to toss a coin after m heads are observed, until n more heads are observed. Thus, for this part of the sequence, $Y \sim \text{NegBin}(n, p)$.
- Looking at it from the beginning we tossed independently the coin until we observed $m + n$ heads, thus $Z = X + Y$ and thus $Z \sim \text{NegBin}(m + n, p)$.
- Note: if X_1, X_2, \dots, X_m are m independent $\text{Geo}(p)$ RVs, then the RV $X = X_1 + X_2 + \dots + X_m$ has $\text{NegBin}(m, p)$ distribution.



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Hypergeometric

Hypergeometric discrete random variable

X is a hypergeometric RV that samples n objects, **without replacement**, with i successes (random draw for which the object drawn has a specified feature), from a finite population of size N that contains exactly m objects with that feature.

$$X \sim \text{Hyp}(N, n, m)$$

$$\text{Range: } \{0, 1, \dots, n\}$$

$$\text{PMF: } \mathbf{P}[X = i] = \frac{\binom{m}{i} \binom{N-m}{n-i}}{\binom{N}{n}}$$

$$\text{Expectation: } \mathbf{E}[X] = n \frac{m}{N}$$

$$\text{Variance: } \mathbf{V}[X] = n \frac{m}{N} \left(1 - \frac{m}{N}\right) \left(1 - \frac{n-1}{N-1}\right)$$

Example: an urn has N balls of which m are white and $N - m$ are black; we take a random sample **without replacement** of size n and measure X : # of white balls in the sample.



Example

A street has 40 houses of which 5 houses are inhabited by families with an income below the poverty line. In a survey, 7 houses are sampled at random from this street. What is the probability that: (a) none of the 5 families with income below poverty line are sampled? (b) 4 of them are sampled? (c) no more than 2 are sampled? (d) at least 3 are sampled?

Answer

Let X : # of families sampled which are below the poverty line.

$$X \sim \text{Hyp}(N = 40, n = 7, m = 5).$$

Summary of discrete RV

	$Ber(p)$	$Bin(n, p)$	$Pois(\lambda)$	$Geo(p)$	$NegBin(r, p)$	$Hyp(N, n, m)$
PMF	$\mathbf{P}[X=1]=p$	$\mathbf{P}[X=k]=\binom{n}{k}p^k(1-p)^{n-k}$	$\mathbf{P}[X=k]=\frac{\lambda^k}{k!}e^{-\lambda}$	$\mathbf{P}[X=n]=(1-p)^{n-1}p$	$\mathbf{P}[X=n]=\binom{n-1}{r-1}(1-p)^{n-r}p^r$	$\mathbf{P}[X=i]=\frac{\binom{m}{i}\binom{N-m}{n-i}}{\binom{N}{n}}$
$\mathbf{E}[X]$	p	np	λ	$\frac{1}{p}$	$\frac{r}{p}$	$n\frac{m}{N}$
$\mathbf{V}[X]$	$p(1-p)$	$np(1-p)$	λ	$\frac{1-p}{p^2}$	$\frac{r(1-p)}{p^2}$	$n\frac{m}{N}(1-\frac{m}{N})(1-\frac{n-1}{N-1})$
Descr.	1 experiment with prob p of success	n independent trials with prob p of success	# successes over experiment duration, $\lambda = np$ rate of success	# independent trials until first success	# independent trials until r successes	# successes of drawing item with a feature (without replacement) in a sample of size n from a population of size N with m items with the feature

