

# SAMPLING AND DATA: DATA\*

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## Abstract

This module introduces the concepts of qualitative data, quantitative continuous data, and quantitative discrete data as used in statistics. Sample problems are included.

Data may come from a population or from a sample. Small letters like  $x$  or  $y$  generally are used to represent data values. Most data can be put into the following categories:

- Qualitative
- Quantitative

**Qualitative data** are the result of categorizing or describing attributes of a population. Hair color, blood type, ethnic group, the car a person drives, and the street a person lives on are examples of qualitative data. Qualitative data are generally described by words or letters. For instance, hair color might be black, dark brown, light brown, blonde, gray, or red. Blood type might be AB+, O-, or B+. Researchers often prefer to use quantitative data over qualitative data because it lends itself more easily to mathematical analysis. For example, it does not make sense to find an average hair color or blood type.

**Quantitative data** are always numbers. Quantitative data are the result of **counting** or **measuring** attributes of a population. Amount of money, pulse rate, weight, number of people living in your town, and the number of students who take statistics are examples of quantitative data. Quantitative data may be either **discrete** or **continuous**.

All data that are the result of counting are called **quantitative discrete data**. These data take on only certain numerical values. If you count the number of phone calls you receive for each day of the week, you might get 0, 1, 2, 3, etc.

All data that are the result of measuring are **quantitative continuous data** assuming that we can measure accurately. Measuring angles in radians might result in the numbers  $\frac{\pi}{6}$ ,  $\frac{\pi}{3}$ ,  $\frac{\pi}{2}$ ,  $\pi$ ,  $\frac{3\pi}{4}$ , etc. If you and your friends carry backpacks with books in them to school, the numbers of books in the backpacks are discrete data and the weights of the backpacks are continuous data.

### Example 1: Data Sample of Quantitative Discrete Data

The data are the number of books students carry in their backpacks. You sample five students. Two students carry 3 books, one student carries 4 books, one student carries 2 books, and one student carries 1 book. The numbers of books (3, 4, 2, and 1) are the quantitative discrete data.

### Example 2: Data Sample of Quantitative Continuous Data

The data are the weights of the backpacks with the books in it. You sample the same five students. The weights (in pounds) of their backpacks are 6.2, 7, 6.8, 9.1, 4.3. Notice that backpacks carrying

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three books can have different weights. Weights are quantitative continuous data because weights are measured.

**Example 3: Data Sample of Qualitative Data**

The data are the colors of backpacks. Again, you sample the same five students. One student has a red backpack, two students have black backpacks, one student has a green backpack, and one student has a gray backpack. The colors red, black, black, green, and gray are qualitative data.

NOTE: You may collect data as numbers and report it categorically. For example, the quiz scores for each student are recorded throughout the term. At the end of the term, the quiz scores are reported as A, B, C, D, or F.

**Example 4**

Work collaboratively to determine the correct data type (quantitative or qualitative). Indicate whether quantitative data are continuous or discrete. Hint: Data that are discrete often start with the words "the number of."

1. The number of pairs of shoes you own.
2. The type of car you drive.
3. Where you go on vacation.
4. The distance it is from your home to the nearest grocery store.
5. The number of classes you take per school year.
6. The tuition for your classes
7. The type of calculator you use.
8. Movie ratings.
9. Political party preferences.
10. Weight of sumo wrestlers.
11. Amount of money (in dollars) won playing poker.
12. Number of correct answers on a quiz.
13. Peoples' attitudes toward the government.
14. IQ scores. (This may cause some discussion.)

## Solutions to Exercises in this Module

### Solution to Example 4, Problem (p. 2)

Items 1, 5, 11, and 12 are quantitative discrete; items 4, 6, 10, and 14 are quantitative continuous; and items 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, and 13 are qualitative.

## Glossary

### Definition 1: Continuous Random Variable

A random variable (RV) whose outcomes are measured.

### Example

The height of trees in the forest is a continuous RV.

### Definition 2: Data

A set of observations (a set of possible outcomes). Most data can be put into two groups: **qualitative** (hair color, ethnic groups and other **attributes** of the population) and **quantitative** (distance traveled to college, number of children in a family, etc.). Quantitative data can be separated into two subgroups: **discrete** and **continuous**. Data is discrete if it is the result of counting (the number of students of a given ethnic group in a class, the number of books on a shelf, etc.). Data is continuous if it is the result of measuring (distance traveled, weight of luggage, etc.)

### Definition 3: Discrete Random Variable

A random variable (RV) whose outcomes are counted.

### Definition 4: Qualitative Data

See **Data**.

### Definition 5: Quantitative Data

See **Data**.