High-Throughput Sequencing Course

Statistical Inference: Part II

Biostatistics and Bioinformatics

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Duke University School of Medicine

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Two-sample Model: Inference

- The mRNA abundance level in the untreated population is μ_0
- The mRNA abundance level in the untreated population is μ_1
- Assumed model:
  - Untreated Population: $Y = \mu_0 + \epsilon$
  - Treated Population: $X = \mu_1 + \epsilon'$
- Statistical Hypotheses
  - $H_0 : \mu_0 = \mu_1$ (no treatment effect)
  - $H_0 : \mu_0 \neq \mu_1$ (treatment effect)

Two-sample Model: Estimation

- What is often of interested is estimate the unknown parameters or quantities
- Examples
  - Mean level for the untreated group μ_0
  - Mean level for the treated group μ_1
  - Fold-change $\rho = \frac{\mu_1}{\mu_0}$
  - Standardized difference $\Delta = |\mu_1 - \mu_0|/\sigma$
- Two types of estimates
  - Point estimate
  - Interval estimate

Confidence Intervals

- Example: The sample mean (the average of the observations) is a point estimate of the population (true) mean
- It is either equal to the true value of the parameter or is not
- As it is a single number it does not provide any direct measure of accuracy
- An interval estimate incorporates some measure of accuracy
- Thus it is generally more appropriate to present an interval estimate
- A common example of an interval estimate is the confidence interval

Estimation Example (One-Sample Model)

- Truth: The RNA abundance follows a normal distribution with mean $\mu = 0$ and standard deviation $\sigma = 1$
- Assumption: The RNA abundance follows a normal distribution with *unknown* mean μ and *unknown* standard deviation σ
- Goal: The population mean μ is to be estimated on the basis of sample of size $n = 7$
- Objectives:
  - Produce point estimate of μ
  - Produce a 95% confidence interval of μ

Estimation Example (Simulate data)

```r
mu <- 0
sigma <- 1
n <- 7
set.seed(12131)
x <- rnorm(n, mu, sigma)
x

## [1]  1.5227356 -2.7829224  0.3571897  0.5478351  1.2733071  0.5166791
## [7] -1.3890287
```

Point Estimator

- A point estimator of μ is the so called sample mean
- The sample mean $\bar{x}_n$ is obtained by simply averaging all the observations
- Note that an alternative is to used the sample median (rather than sample mean)
- The sample median is obtained by first sorting the observations (in say ascending order)
- The median is the middle observation (among the sorted observation)
- The median is more robust against outliers

Point Estimates

- The data

```
x
```

```
## [1]  1.5227356 -2.7829224  0.3571897  0.5478351  1.2733071  0.5166791
## [7] -1.3890287
```

- The sample mean

```
mean(x)
```

```
## [1] 0.006542226
```

- The data sorted in ascending order

```
sort(x)
```

```
## [1] -2.7829224 -1.3890287  0.3571897  0.5166791  0.5478351  1.2733071
## [7]  1.5227356
```

- Sample median

```
median(x)
```

```
## [1] 0.5166791
```

Confidence Interval Estimators

- To construct a confidence interval for μ we need to deal with the nuisance parameter σ
- We can estimate it using the sample standard deviation s_n (details omitted)
- A 95% confidence interval for μ is obtained as

$$[\bar{x}_n - \frac{s_n}{\sqrt{n}} t(0.975, n-1), \bar{x}_n + \frac{s_n}{\sqrt{n}} t(0.975, n-1)]$$

- $t(0.975, n-1)$ is the 0.975 quantile of a t distribution with $n-1=$6 degrees of freedom
- $\frac{s_n}{\sqrt{n}}$ is called the standard error
- $\frac{s_n}{\sqrt{n}} t(0.975, n-1)$ is called the margin of error
- The confidence interval is obtained as the point estimate plus or minus the margin of error

Simulate Experiment 1

- Calculate the sample mean

```
xbar <- mean(x)
xbar
## [1] 0.006542226
```

- Calculate standard deviation

```
s <- sd(x)
s
## [1] 1.544261
```

- Calculate standard error

```
se <- s/sqrt(n)
se
## [1] 0.5836759
```

- Calculate margin of error

```
me <- qt(0.975, df = n - 1) * se
me
## [1] 1.428204
```

- Calculate 95% CI

```
c(xbar - me, xbar + me)
## [1] -1.421661  1.434746
```

Covered or not covered

- The goal is to estimate μ
- If μ (the true but unknown parameter) is contained in the confidence interval, we say that it is covered
- Otherwise, it is not covered
- Note that when doing a simulation study, we can ascertain if μ is covered or not.
- Why?
- In real data analysis, we cannot ascertain if μ is covered by the confidence interval
- Why?
- We can only state that we are 95% *confident* that μ is covered by the interval estimate based on the data from our experiment
- More on "confidence" later

Repeat the Experiment

```
set.seed(12301)
makeest <- function(b, n, mu, sigma, alpha) {
    x <- rnorm(n, mu, sigma)
    xbar <- mean(x)
    s <- sd(x)
    me <- qt(1 - alpha/2, df = n - 1) * s/sqrt(n)
    lcl <- xbar - me
    ucl <- xbar + me
    cover <- ifelse(mu >= lcl && mu <= ucl, TRUE, FALSE)
    data.frame(exp = b, n, mu, sigma, xbar, s, lcl, ucl, cover, len = ucl -
        lcl)
}
res <- foreach(b = 1:10, .combine = rbind) %do% {
    makeest(b, n, mu, sigma, 0.05)
}
```

Repeat the Experiment 10 times

exp	n	mu	sigma	xbar	s	lcl	ucl	cover	len
1	7	0	1	0.48	0.42	0.09	0.87	FALSE	0.78
2	7	0	1	0.34	0.88	-0.47	1.15	TRUE	1.63
3	7	0	1	-0.51	1.18	-1.60	0.58	TRUE	2.18
4	7	0	1	-0.87	0.67	-1.49	-0.25	FALSE	1.24
5	7	0	1	-0.09	0.95	-0.97	0.78	TRUE	1.76
6	7	0	1	0.30	1.62	-1.20	1.80	TRUE	3.00
7	7	0	1	-0.68	0.52	-1.15	-0.20	FALSE	0.96
8	7	0	1	0.06	1.30	-1.15	1.26	TRUE	2.41
9	7	0	1	0.28	1.02	-0.66	1.23	TRUE	1.89
10	7	0	1	-0.31	0.48	-0.76	0.14	TRUE	0.89

Confidence Interval: Common Misunderstanding

- A (not the) 95% CI for the mean based on the first experiment was $(0.09, 0.87)$
- A (not the) 95% CI for the mean based on the second experiment was $(-0.47, 1.15)$
- It is wrong to say that the probability that the first CI does not contain the true value $\mu = 0$ is 95%
- It is also wrong to say that the probability that the second CI contains the true value $\mu = 0$ is 95%
- We conduct one and only one experiment
- Based on the first experiment, we can say that we are 95% confident that it contains the true value
- Note that μ is *not* covered by the first experiment
- If we repeated the experiment a large number of times, 95% of the CIs would cover the true value
- We are 95% confident that the first experiment is among these (which it is not)

Recap: Assumptions

- We do not need to make distributional assumptions (e.g., normality) on the sample mean for the purpose of point estimation
- The sample mean, however, is not robust against outliers
- Why did 1984 UNC geography graduates have high average salary?
- We made distributional assumptions for using the confidence interval
- The margin of error was based on a t distribution

A more complicated example: Outline

- Suppose that you are measuring a quantity that is between 0 and θ
- How would you estimate θ?
- Would you take the sample average?
- How about the sample mean?
- If the measurements are uniformly distributed, it turns out that the maximum observation is an "optimal" estimator
- It is also intuitively speaking a "reasonable" estimator
- Why?

A more complicated example: Simulation

- Simulate data from a uniform distribution on $[0, 1]$

```
n <- 10
theta <- 1
set.seed(2313)
x <- runif(n, 0, theta)
x
```

```
##  [1] 0.34807917 0.12084940 0.11035999 0.03917718 0.79590237 0.72536724
##  [7] 0.80347454 0.95498314 0.62601926 0.19549397
```

- Sample mean

```
mean(x)
```

```
## [1] 0.4719706
```

- Sample median

```
median(x)
```

```
## [1] 0.4870492
```

- Maximum observation

```
max(x)
```

```
## [1] 0.9549831
```

A more complicated example: Recap

- An estimator is "valid" if it depends only on the data and no unknown quantities (including the parameter to be estimated)
- Why?
- Both the sample mean and median are *valid* estimators of θ
- There are, however, not good estimators
- In fact, in this case, the sample mean and median should be close to 0.5
- Why?
- The maximum observation is not only a valid estimator but also intuitively reasonable estimator
- This example has a rich history

Quick Note: Estimate versus Estimator

- We use the terms estimate and estimators interchangeably
- There is a subtle but important distinction
- Suppose that you decide to estimate the population mean using the sample mean (once you get the data)
- The sample mean is the estimator
- Its outcome is random before you collect the data
- Once you collect the data and plug them into the estimator you get an (not the) estimate