

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Summarizing Distributions

Descriptive statistics often involves using a few numbers to summarize a distribution. One important aspect of a distribution is where its center is located. Measures of central tendency are discussed first. A second aspect of a distribution is how spread out it is. In other words, how much the numbers in the distribution vary from one another. The second section describes measures of variability. Distributions can differ in shape. Some distributions are symmetric whereas others have long tails in just one direction. The third section describes measures of the shape of distributions. The final two sections concern (1) how transformations affect measures summarizing distributions and (2) the variance sum law, an important relationship involving a measure of variability.

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