

5.1: Introduction



Figure 5.1.1: The heights of these radish plants are continuous random variables. (credit: modification of work “Radish (*Raphanus sativus*): White rust caused by *Albugo candida*” by Scot Nelson/ Flickr, Public Domain)

Continuous random variables have many applications. Baseball batting averages, IQ scores, the length of time a long distance telephone call lasts, the amount of money a person carries, the length of time a computer chip lasts, rates of return from an investment, and SAT scores are just a few. The field of reliability depends on a variety of continuous random variables, as do all areas of risk analysis.

NOTE

The values of discrete and continuous random variables can be ambiguous. For example, if X is equal to the number of miles (to the nearest mile) you drive to work, then X is a discrete random variable. You count the miles. If X is the distance you drive to work, then you measure values of X and X is a continuous random variable. For a second example, if X is equal to the number of books in a backpack, then X is a discrete random variable. If X is the weight of a book, then X is a continuous random variable because weights are measured. How the random variable is defined is very important.

This page titled [5.1: Introduction](#) is shared under a [CC BY 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [OpenStax](#) via [source content](#) that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.