

11.2: Facts About the Chi-Square Distribution

The notation for the chi-square distribution is:

$$\chi \sim \chi_{df}^2 \quad (11.2.1)$$

where df = degrees of freedom which depends on how chi-square is being used. (If you want to practice calculating chi-square probabilities then use $df = n - 1$. The degrees of freedom for the three major uses are each calculated differently.)

For the χ^2 distribution, the population mean is $\mu = df$ and the population standard deviation is

$$\sigma = \sqrt{2(df)}. \quad (11.2.2)$$

The random variable is shown as χ^2 , but may be any upper case letter. The random variable for a chi-square distribution with k degrees of freedom is the sum of k independent, squared standard normal variables.

$$\chi^2 = (Z_1)^2 + \dots + (Z_k)^2 \quad (11.2.3)$$

- The curve is nonsymmetrical and skewed to the right.
- There is a different chi-square curve for each df .

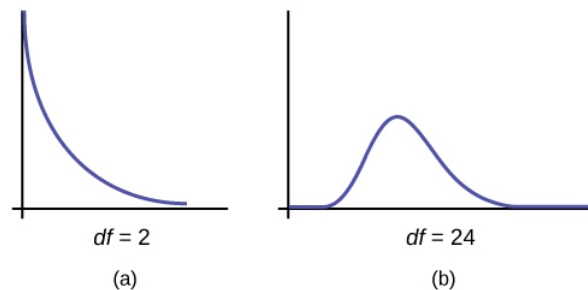


Figure 11.2.1

- The test statistic for any test is always greater than or equal to zero.
- When $df > 90$, the chi-square curve approximates the normal distribution. For $\chi \sim \chi_{1,000}^2$ the mean, $\mu = df = 1,000$ and the standard deviation, $\mu = \sqrt{2(1,000)}$. Therefore, $X \sim N(1,000, 44.7)$ approximately.
- The mean, μ , is located just to the right of the peak.

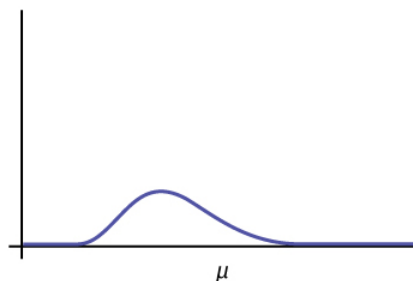


Figure 11.2.2

References

- Data from *Parade Magazine*.
- "HIV/AIDS Epidemiology Santa Clara County." Santa Clara County Public Health Department, May 2011.

Review

The chi-square distribution is a useful tool for assessment in a series of problem categories. These problem categories include primarily (i) whether a data set fits a particular distribution, (ii) whether the distributions of two populations are the same, (iii) whether two events might be independent, and (iv) whether there is a different variability than expected within a population.

An important parameter in a chi-square distribution is the degrees of freedom df in a given problem. The random variable in the chi-square distribution is the sum of squares of df standard normal variables, which must be independent. The key characteristics of the chi-square distribution also depend directly on the degrees of freedom.

The chi-square distribution curve is skewed to the right, and its shape depends on the degrees of freedom df . For $df > 90$, the curve approximates the normal distribution. Test statistics based on the chi-square distribution are always greater than or equal to zero. Such application tests are almost always right-tailed tests.

Formula Review

$$\chi^2 = (Z_1)^2 + (Z_2)^2 + \dots + (Z_{df})^2 \quad (11.2.4)$$

chi-square distribution random variable

$\mu_{\chi^2} = df$ chi-square distribution population mean

$\sigma_{\chi^2} = \sqrt{2(df)}$ Chi-Square distribution population standard deviation

? Exercise 11.2.1

If the number of degrees of freedom for a chi-square distribution is 25, what is the population mean and standard deviation?

Answer

mean = 25 and standard deviation = 7.0711

? Exercise 11.2.2

If $df > 90$, the distribution is _____. If $df = 15$, the distribution is _____.

? Exercise 11.2.3

When does the chi-square curve approximate a normal distribution?

Answer

when the number of degrees of freedom is greater than 90

? Exercise 11.2.4

Where is μ located on a chi-square curve?

? Exercise 11.2.5

Is it more likely the df is 90, 20, or two in the graph?

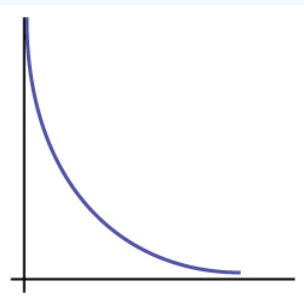


Figure 11.2.3.

Answer

$df = 2$

This page titled [11.2: Facts About the Chi-Square Distribution](#) 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.