

2.1: This is what too many numbers looks like

Let's say you wanted to know how happy people are. So, you ask thousands of people on the street how happy they are. You let them pick any number they want from negative infinity to positive infinity. Then you record all the numbers. Now what?

Well, how about you look at the numbers and see if that helps you determine anything about how happy people are. What could the numbers look like. Perhaps something like this:

73	594	-22	-20	-547	162	-90	312	235	-511
-337	85	552	377	241	-382	241	-439	264	-292
-136	-262	432	835	73	-180	-93	218	597	419
-500	-120	588	-96	-412	502	1058	761	549	-320
14	-869	338	935	531	339	83	37	820	544
50	-397	203	-374	-186	518	530	1320	816	1293
580	-741	-102	-56	933	-228	-347	656	162	714
440	569	-431	557	-502	-331	-281	73	311	459
-143	-348	136	-624	55	-790	374	-988	-1102	-408
-666	671	660	452	1299	717	369	158	679	411
-593	-364	115	379	56	-440	505	-370	-102	-1020
610	-86	-181	-143	75	-188	502	606	443	74
181	-355	40	551	-362	414	-307	415	-930	-302
1416	-387	437	-126	-407	28	466	-25	-413	-286
106	257	459	703	3	1592	1042	-124	102	-578
550	-605	-41	167	-581	830	-17	200	98	472
242	-30	94	-619	-885	424	320	241	193	121
-373	-478	-398	1035	425	-199	-350	189	-394	346
-161	-355	108	-685	-668	-667	893	-623	19	879
-430	119	830	-236	-527	61	313	265	453	-565
-523	9	-413	-705	-527	237	-341	80	349	891
181	555	371	-623	-107	859	-673	855	4	117
-1225	317	279	266	24	-387	368	567	-717	717
-110	706	-40	-836	-882	48	307	1150	-917	-236
-669	-401	-274	-465	-178	104	517	635	86	186
-357	356	932	118	-51	62	-111	-154	-409	852
-91	-568	640	-48	-349	-481	511	-544	254	-641
654	-127	-563	-340	30	-293	-100	292	220	41
312	640	-628	335	-808	105	77	-674	108	-1177
-804	-318	608	954	-350	606	-394	-68	-226	161
-580	174	622	-433	-758	-49	949	496	802	-271

745	184	-41	281	-318	-323	634	-53	-307	446
245	368	163	-489	-124	-258	-463	357	-465	-321
628	1055	-11	-177	-28	139	-531	134	-400	-182
-298	153	-206	946	534	295	543	350	184	-311
1109	-174	1169	-175	88	804	-555	-269	-376	1199
-463	1078	-384	-804	2	-29	219	-467	375	503
1717	264	-177	-222	1125	-738	569	-335	581	364
-36	-523	847	-1189	-379	-704	-654	51	-136	303
609	-200	675	286	353	67	-993	-181	1198	-508
77	58	-53	-510	-343	657	1303	-300	804	-376
421	73	-165	-238	409	470	648	127	347	-296
659	280	1397	-715	979	-793	565	-102	510	333
-848	571	-297	630	286	-512	275	468	-314	-246
-212	603	-152	-474	428	-315	-38	-53	-324	-225
-46	-89	316	341	516	-655	613	249	334	94
-66	-688	101	-128	-422	424	326	-287	417	-605
357	-959	-149	387	-39	-104	-596	55	-25	-26
-533	-667	280	863	215	-182	397	333	-56	36
-118	-329	44	-1	354	-545	630	460	458	30

Now, what are you going to with that big pile of numbers? Look at it all day long? When you deal with data, it will deal so many numbers to you that you will be overwhelmed by them. That is why we need ways to describe the data in a more manageable fashion.

The complete description of the data is always the data itself. **Descriptive statistics** and other tools for describing data go one step further to summarize aspects of the data. Summaries are a way to compress the important bits of a thing down to a useful and manageable tidbit. It's like telling your friends why they should watch a movie: you don't replay the entire movie for them, instead you hit the highlights. Summarizing the data is just like a movie preview, only for data.

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