

Lesson 10: Variability in estimates

TB sections 4.1

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2025-10-29

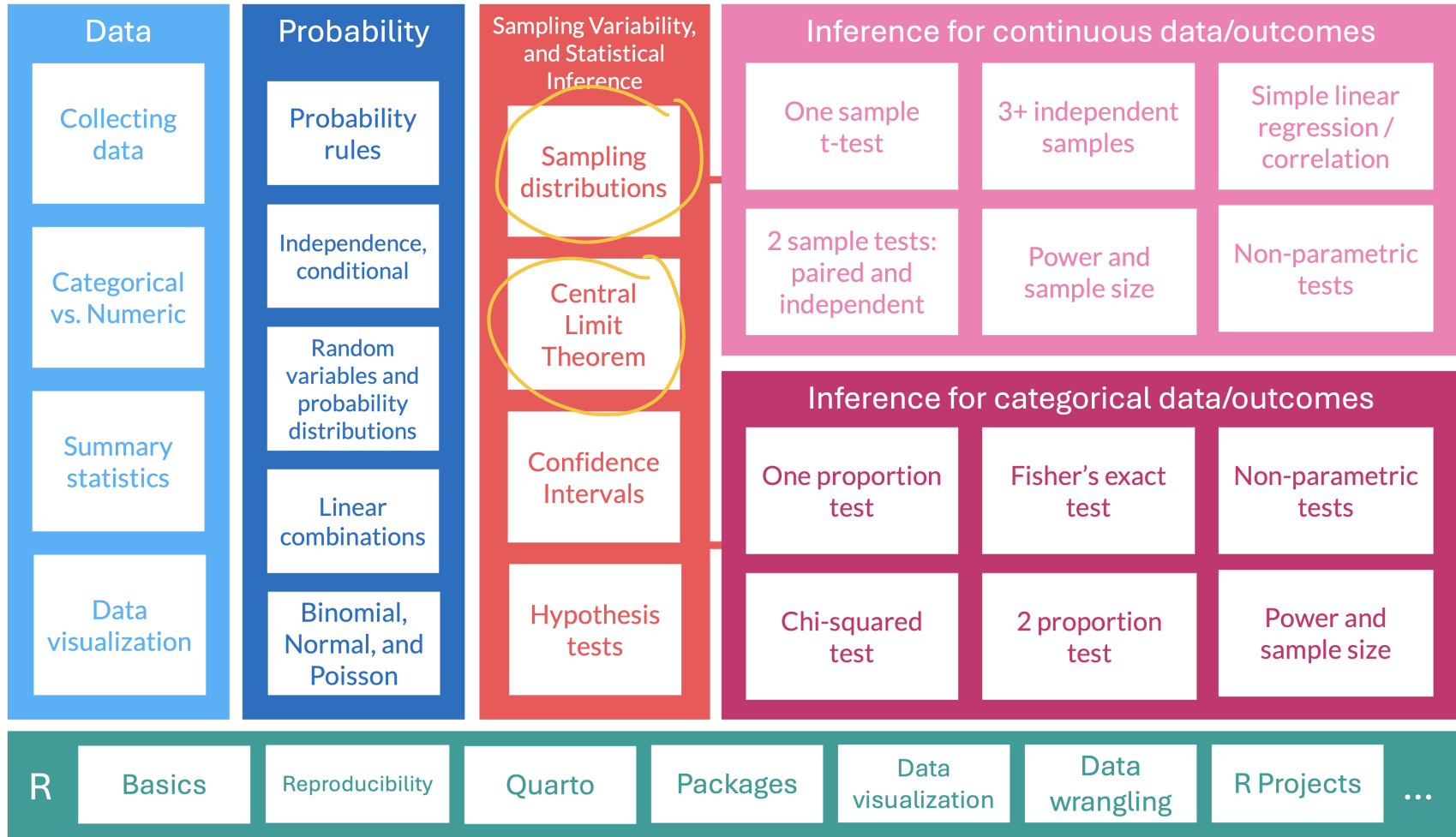


Artwork by @allison_horst

Learning Objectives

1. Illustrate how information from several samples are connected to the population and to the sampling distribution
2. Understand how the sampling distribution of the sample means relates to a sample and the population distribution
3. Apply the Central Limit Theorem to approximate the sampling distribution of the sample mean

Where are we?



From Lesson 1: Population vs. sample

(Target) Population

- Group of interest being studied
- Group from which the sample is selected
 - Studies often have *inclusion* and/or *exclusion* criteria
- Almost always too expensive or logistically impossible to collect data for every case in a population





Sample

- Group on which data are collected
- Often a **small subset** of the population
- Easier to collect data on
- If we do it right, we might be able to answer our question about the target population

- Goal is to get a **representative** sample of the population: the characteristics of the sample are similar to the characteristics of the population

Why sample statistics?

- When we want to estimate features of the population
 - We can use corresponding summary statistics calculated from our sample
 - Often called **point estimates** or **sample statistics** 
- Much easier to measure statistics from our sample (Lesson 1)
 - However, statistics from our sample are not exactly the same as the population measurements that we're aiming for
 - We call the population measurements **population parameters** 
- So we need to start by distinguishing between the population parameters and sample statistics

Population parameters vs. sample statistics

Population parameter

- Mean: μ ("mu")
- Standard deviation: σ ("sigma")
- Variance: σ^2

- Proportion: p, π ("pi")

- Correlation

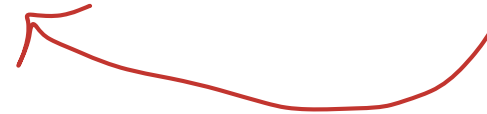
Sample statistic (point estimate)

- Sample mean: \bar{x}
- Sample standard deviation: s
- Sample variance: s^2

- Sample proportion: \hat{p} ("p-hat")

- Sample correlation coefficient: r

Can calc these



want to use them (sample stats) to make claims about these (pop parameters)

Poll Everywhere Question 1

13:25 Wed Oct 29

85%



Join by Web PollEv.com/nickywakim275



Suppose we randomly sample 1,000 adults from each state in the US. Would you expect the sample means of their heights to be the same, somewhat different, or very different?

Very different

0%

Not the same, but only somewhat different ✓

100%

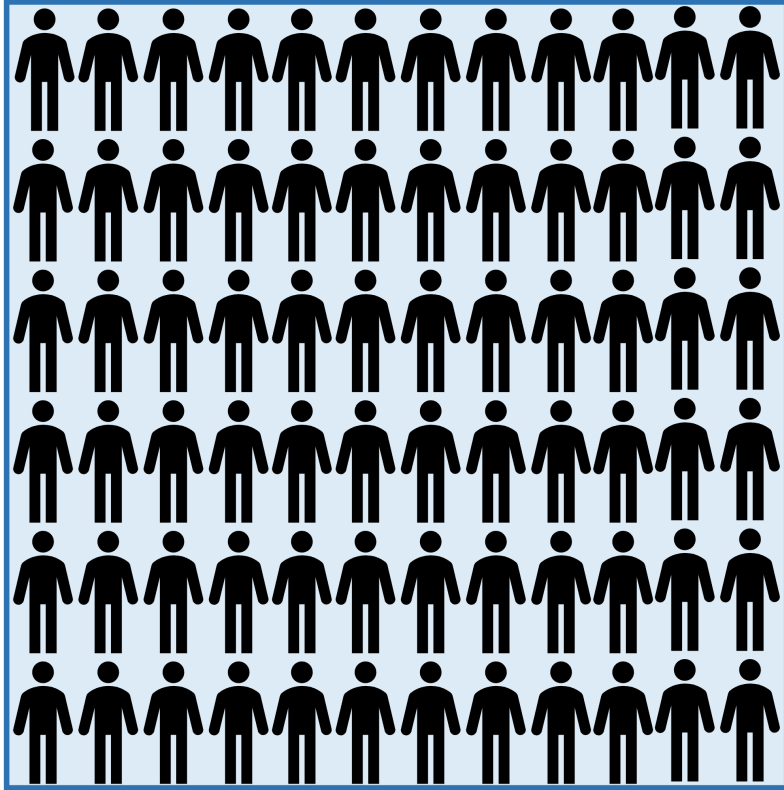
Exactly the same

0%

Learning Objectives

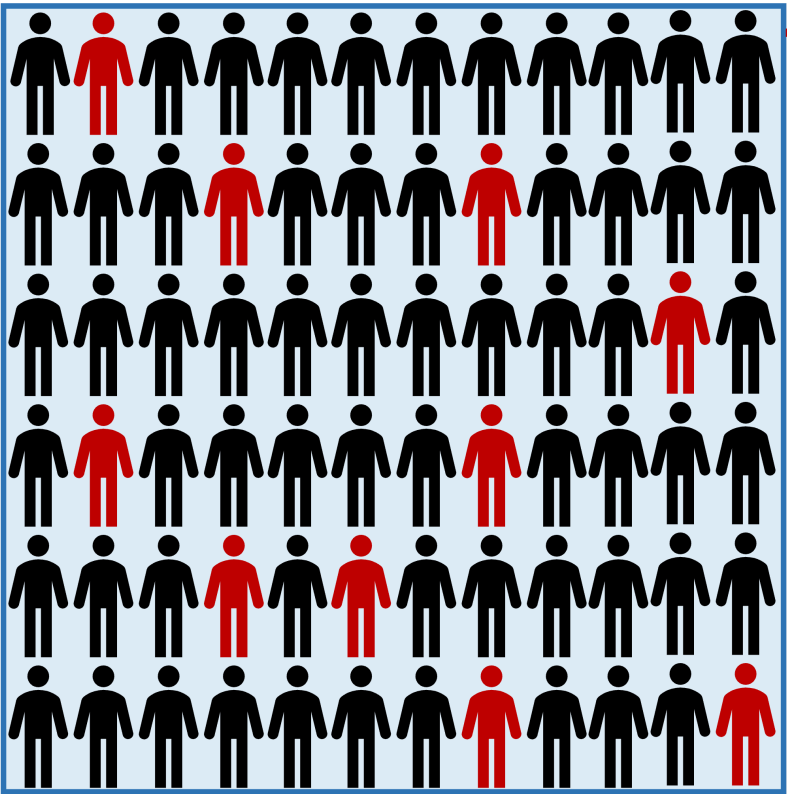
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Population



Example to facilitate our thinking:
Population height

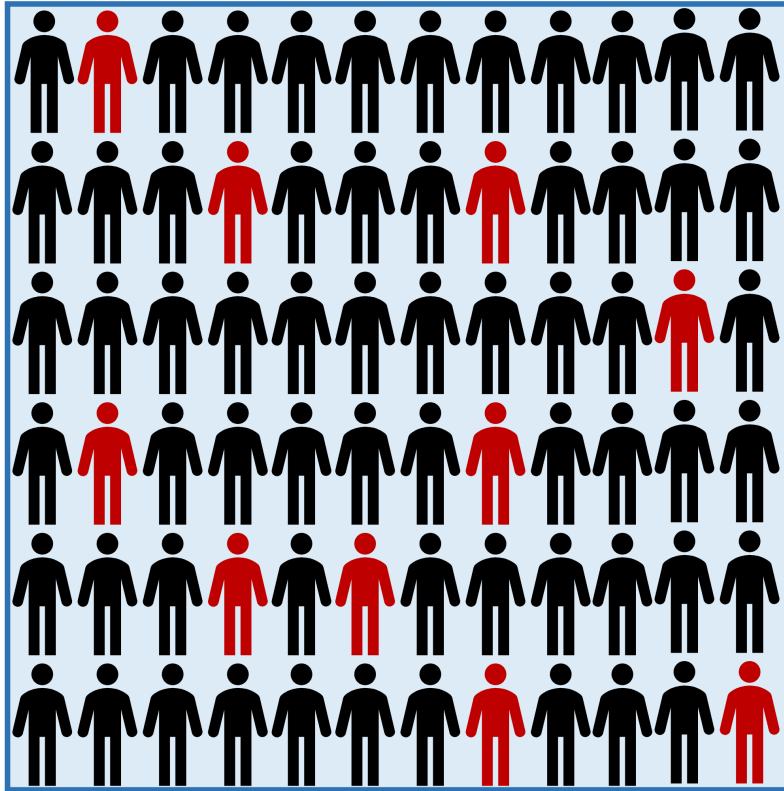
Take one sample



Sample of red people
Mean: \bar{x} , SD: s

→ sample mean \bar{x}
sample SD s

Take one sample



Sample of red people
Mean: \bar{x} , SD: s

Heights of 10 people:

67 inches

57 inches

70 inches

61 inches

69 inches

68 inches

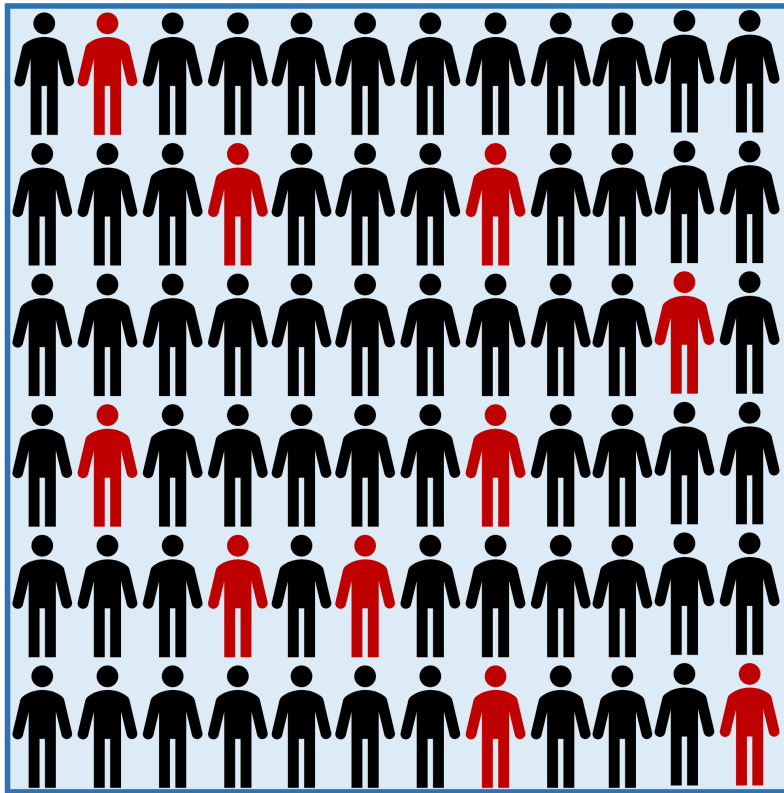
62 inches

75 inches

65 inches

59 inches

Take one sample



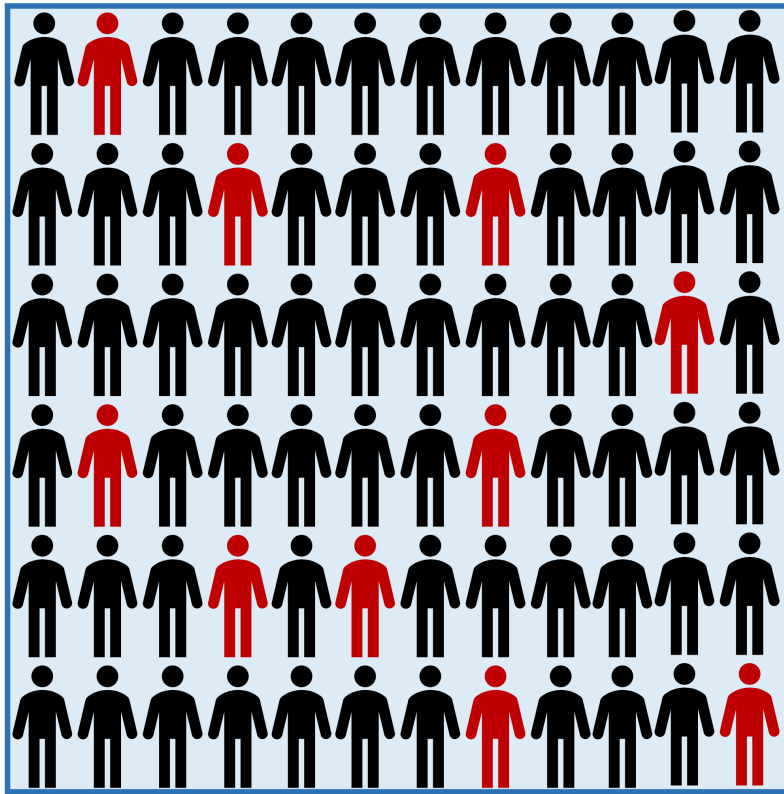
Sample of red people
Mean: \bar{x} , SD: s

$\bar{x} = 65.3$
 $s = 5.6$

From our red people sample, this is our **best estimate** of the population's average height and standard deviation

When we are researching, this is usually **the end of our data collection process!**

Take one sample



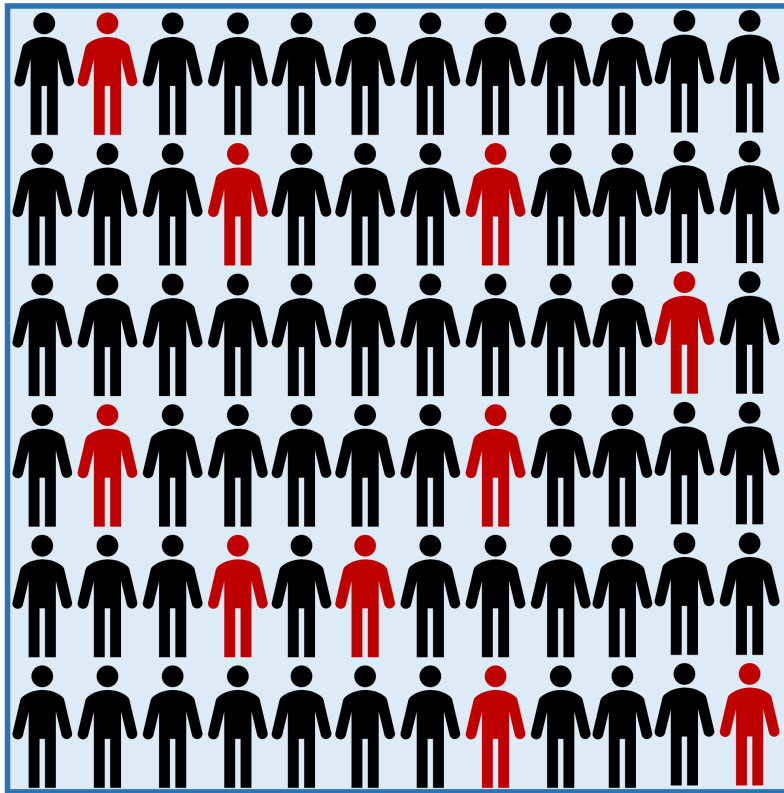
Sample of red people
Mean: \bar{x} , SD: s

$\bar{x} = 65.3$
 $s = 5.6$

Even though this is the best estimate based on our sample, it **may not truly capture the population.**

Can we measure **how well our sample captures the population?**

Take one sample



Sample of red people
Mean: \bar{x} , SD: s

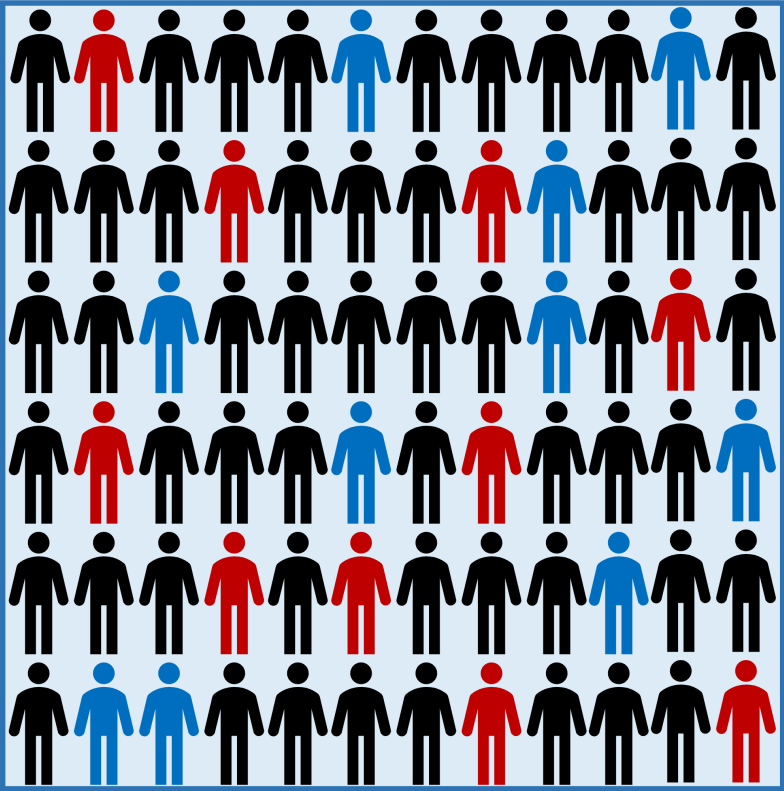
$\bar{x} = 65.3$
 $s = 5.6$

Even though this is the best estimate based on our sample, it may not truly capture the population.

Can we measure how well our sample captures the population?

BUILD A SAMPLING DISTRIBUTION

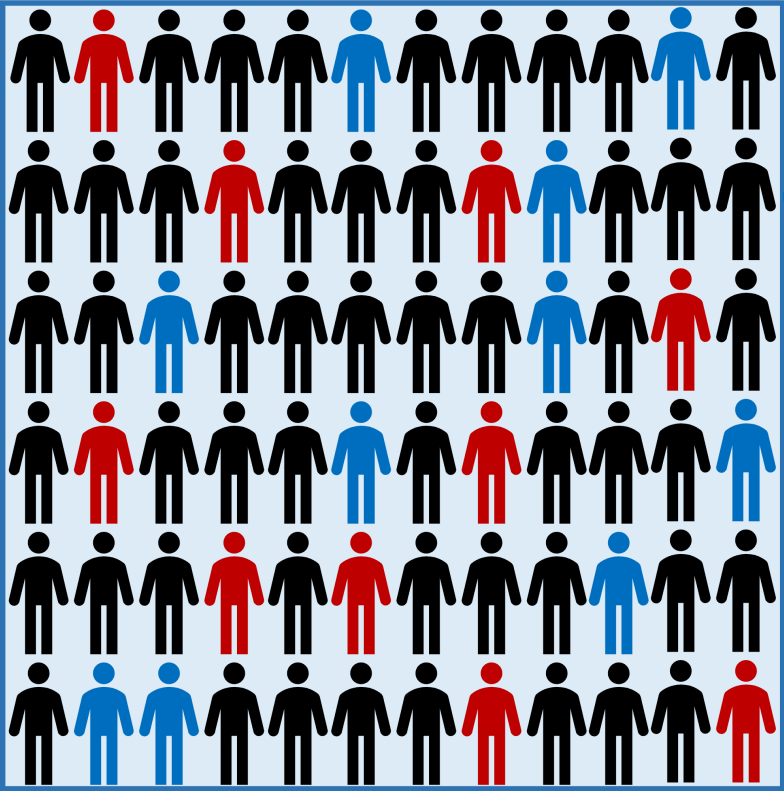
Take another sample



Sample of red people
Mean: \bar{x} , SD: s

$$\bar{x} = 65.3$$
$$s = 5.6$$

Take another sample

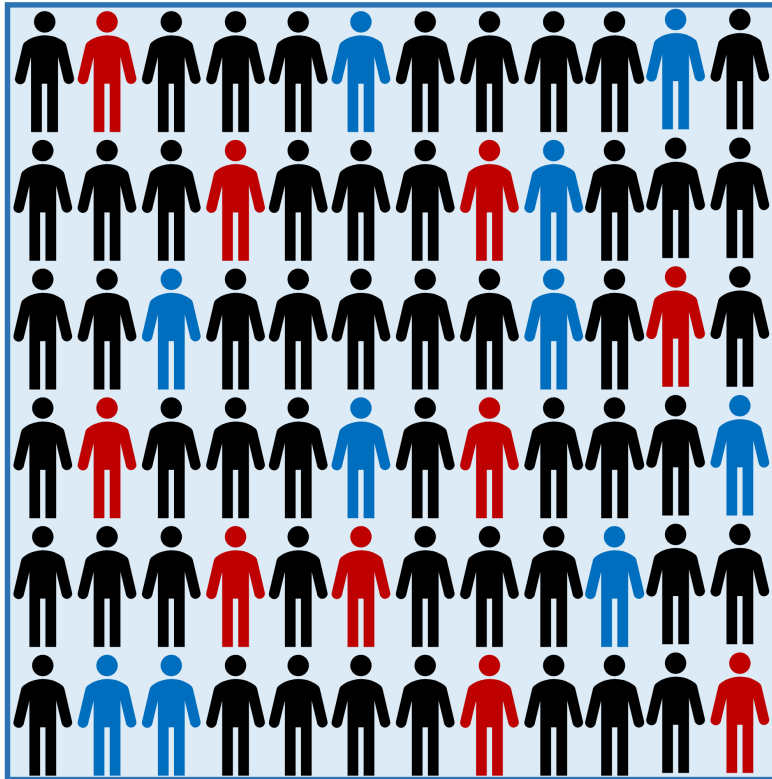


Sample of red people
Mean: \bar{x} , SD: s

$\bar{x} = 65.3$
 $s = 5.6$

Sample of blue people
Mean: \bar{x} , SD: s

Take another sample



Sample of red people
Mean: \bar{x} , SD: s

$\bar{x} = 65.3$
 $s = 5.6$

Sample of blue people
Mean: \bar{x} , SD: s

Heights of 10 people:

64 inches

67 inches

66 inches

61 inches

69 inches

68 inches

63 inches

71 inches

64 inches

68 inches

Poll Everywhere Question 2

13:31 Wed Oct 29

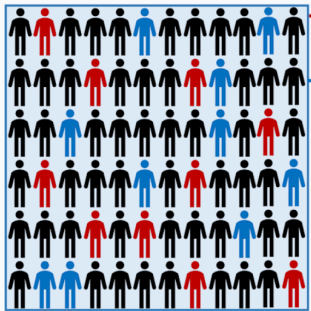
83%



Join by Web PollEv.com/nickywakim275



Calculate the mean for the blue sample. Is it the same as the red sample?



Sample of red people
Mean: \bar{x} , SD: s

Sample of blue people
Mean: \bar{x} , SD: s

Heights of 10 people:
64 inches
67 inches
66 inches
61 inches
69 inches
68 inches
63 inches
71 inches
64 inches
68 inches

65.3

Yes 0%

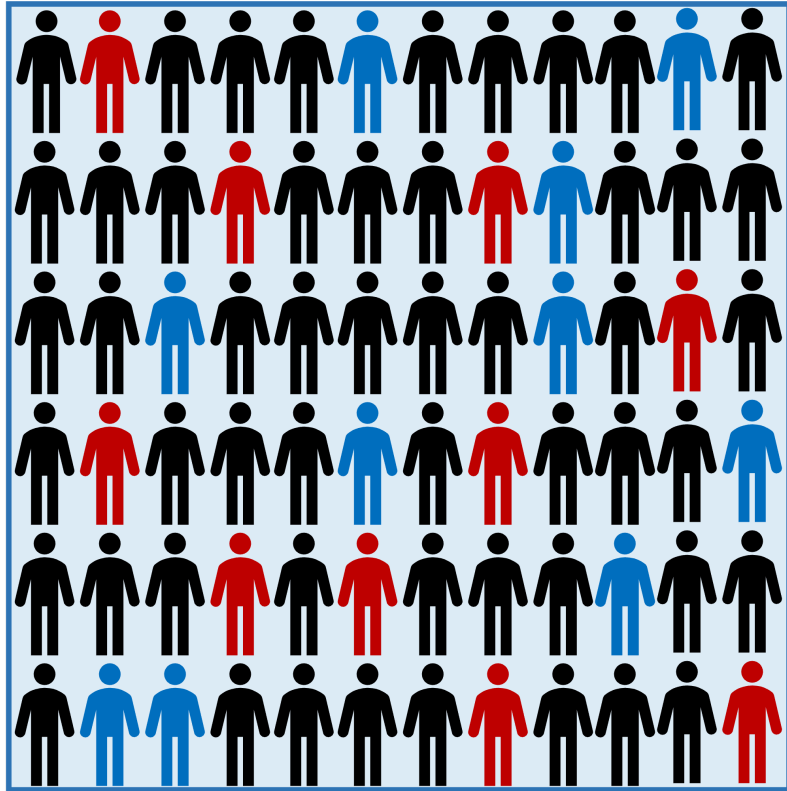
No 100%

2 tired 2 calculate 0%

Powered by Poll Everywhere

$\bar{x} = 66.1$ inches

Take another sample



Sample of red people
Mean: \bar{x} , SD: s

$$\bar{x} = 65.3$$
$$s = 5.6$$

Sample of blue people
Mean: \bar{x} , SD: s

$$\bar{x} = 66.1$$
$$s = 3.1$$

Are these two sample means the same?

NO

Take several samples



Sample of red people
Mean: \bar{x} , SD: s

Sample of blue people
Mean: \bar{x} , SD: s

Sample of orange people
Mean: \bar{x} , SD: s

Sample of green people
Mean: \bar{x} , SD: s

Difference between samples?



From our **red sample alone**, we don't know how well it captures the population.

If we had access to many samples, we'd get a better picture of the population AND how the red sample relates to the population.

Learning Objectives

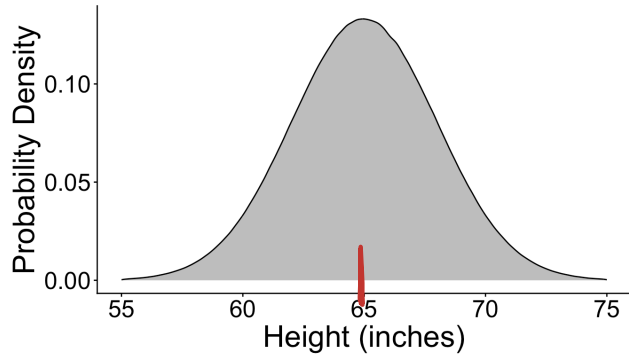
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More concrete example with height (1/3)

Variation in population (σ):



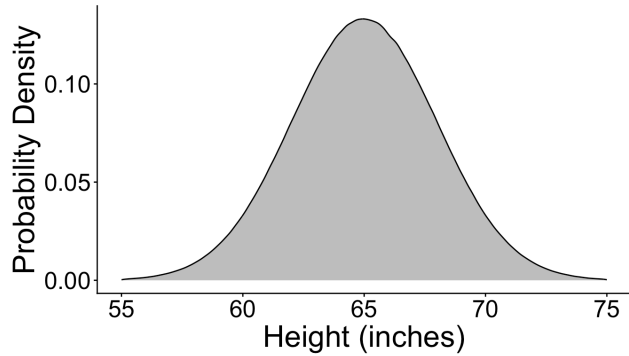
$$\underline{\mu = 65 \text{ inches}}$$

$$\underline{\sigma = 3 \text{ inches}}$$

$$\sigma^2 = 9 \text{ inches}$$

More concrete example with height (2/3)

Variation in population (σ):



$$\mu = 65 \text{ inches}$$

$$\sigma = 3 \text{ inches}$$

Variation within samples (s):

1 Sample 50 people
 $\bar{x} = 65.1, s = 2.8$

2 Sample 50 people
 $\bar{x} = 64.7, s = 3.1$

3 Sample 50 people
 $\bar{x} = 64.7, s = 2.5$

4 Sample 50 people
 $\bar{x} = 66.1, s = 3.4$

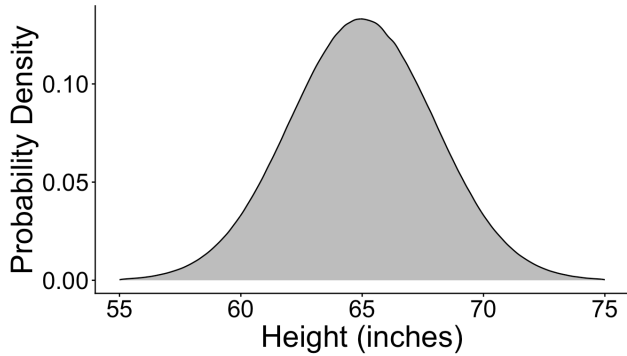
5 Sample 50 people
 $\bar{x} = 65.3, s = 2.9$

...

1000 Sample 50 people
 $\bar{x} = 64.9, s = 3.2$

More concrete example with height (3/3)

Variation in population (σ):



$\mu = 65$ inches

$\sigma = 3$ inches

Variation within samples (s):

1 Sample 50 people
 $\bar{x} = 65.1, s = 2.8$

2 Sample 50 people
 $\bar{x} = 64.7, s = 3.1$

3 Sample 50 people
 $\bar{x} = 64.7, s = 2.5$

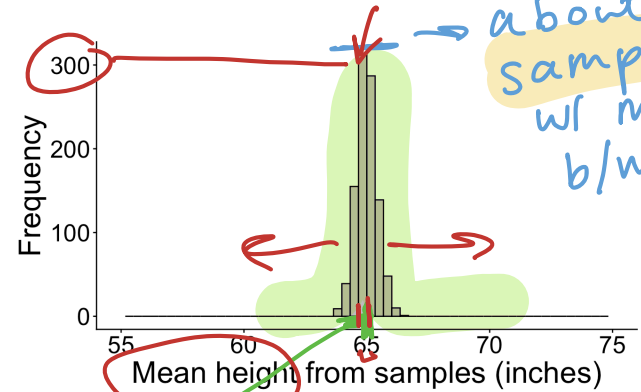
4 Sample 50 people
 $\bar{x} = 66.1, s = 3.4$

5 Sample 50 people
 $\bar{x} = 65.3, s = 2.9$

...

1000 Sample 50 people
 $\bar{x} = 64.9, s = 3.2$

Variation between samples (SE):



$\mu_{\bar{X}} = 65.002$ inches

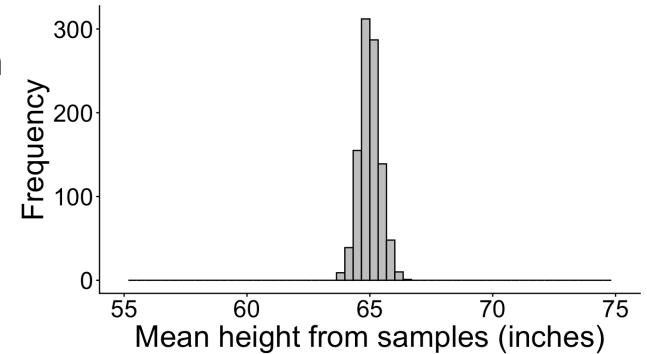
$SE = 0.421$ inches

Standard error (std dev of sampling distribution of sample means) → the mean of our sample means

Sampling Distribution of Sample Means

- The **sampling distribution** is the distribution of sample means calculated from repeated random samples of *the same size* from the same population
- It is useful to think of a particular sample statistic as being drawn from a **sampling distribution**
 - So the red sample with $\bar{x} = 65.1$ is just one sample mean in the sampling distribution

Variation between samples (SE):

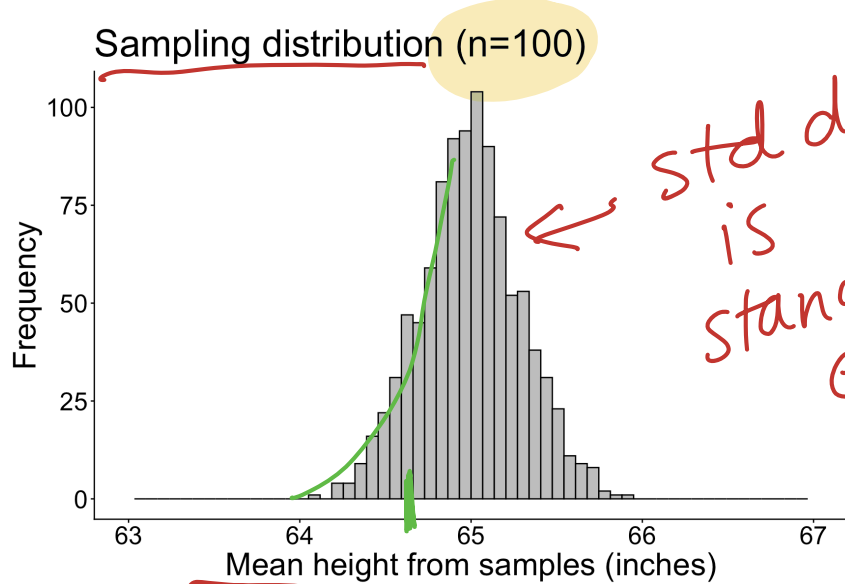
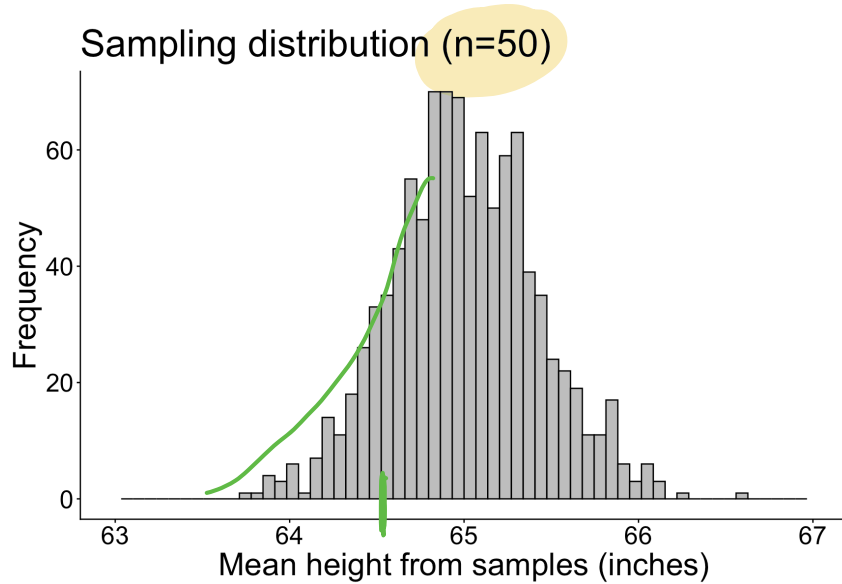


$$\mu_{\bar{X}} = 65.002 \text{ inches}$$

$$SE = 0.421 \text{ inches}$$

For following Poll Everywhere Question

How are the center, shape, and spread similar and/or different?



std dev
is
standard
error

each sample has
50 ppl

100 ppl

Poll Everywhere Question 3

13:44 Wed Oct 29

78%



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How are the center, shape, and spread similar and/or different?

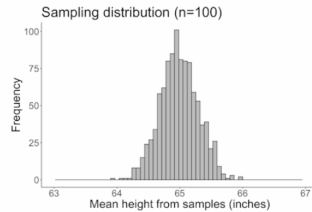
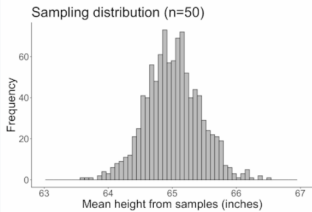
21

Center, shape, and spread are roughly the same

Shape and spread are roughly the same, but the centers are different

Center and shape are roughly the same, but spread for sampling distribution with $n=100$ is larger than that of $n=50$

Center and shape are roughly the same, but spread for sampling distribution with $n=50$ is larger than that of $n=100$



Okay, but in real life we only have one sample...?

- In a study, conclusions about a population parameter **must be drawn from the data collected from a single sample**
- The **sampling distribution** of \bar{X} is a **theoretical concept**
 - Obtaining repeated samples by conducting a study many times is not possible
- **Not feasible** to calculate the population mean μ by finding the mean of the **sampling distribution** for \bar{X}
- In the next lesson on **confidence intervals**, we'll see what kind of statements we can make about the population mean from a single sample

Learning Objectives

1. Illustrate how information from several samples are connected to the population and to the sampling distribution
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The Central Limit Theorem (CLT)

- If a sample consists of **at least 30 independent observations** in **EACH sample**, then the **sampling distribution** of the sample mean is **approximated by a normal model**
- Aka, for “large” sample sizes ($n \geq 30$), in each sample
 - The **sampling distribution** of the sample mean can be approximated by a **normal distribution**, with
 - Mean equal to the population mean value μ
 - Standard deviation $\frac{\sigma}{\sqrt{n}}$
 - This is actually referred to as **standard error**: a quick way to say “the standard deviation of the sampling distribution of the sample mean”
- This is **regardless of the original sample is from a different distribution**
 - For example, if we **count** the number of heads in 50 coin flips, and do this for many samples, then our **sampling distribution** will be **Normally distributed** around $n \cdot p = 50 \cdot 0.5 = 25$
by **Central Limit Thm**

$$N\left(\mu, \frac{\sigma}{\sqrt{n}}\right)$$

binomial!

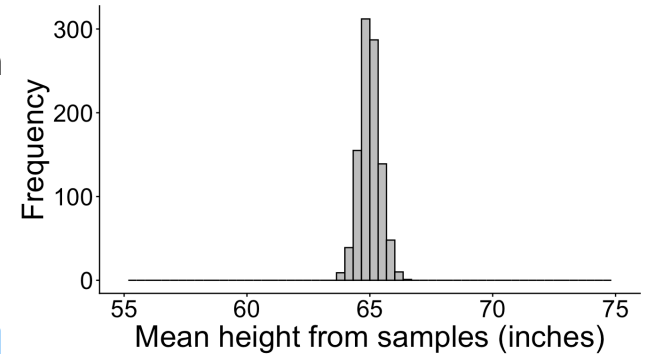
Other cases for normal approximation

- For small sample sizes (when $n < 30$), if the population is known to be normally distributed, then
 - The sampling distribution of the sample mean is a normal distribution, with
 - Mean equal to the population mean value μ , and
 - Standard deviation $\frac{\sigma}{\sqrt{n}}$ (aka standard error)
- Not technically the Central Limit Theorem, but sampling distribution approximated using same Normal distribution

Sampling Distribution of Sample Means (with the CLT)

- The **sampling distribution** is the distribution of sample means calculated from repeated random samples of *the same size* from the *same population*
- It is useful to think of a **particular sample statistic** as being drawn from a **sampling distribution**
 - So the red sample with $\bar{x} = 65.1$ is just one sample mean in the **sampling distribution**

Variation between samples (SE):



With CLT and \bar{X} as the RV for the **sampling distribution**

- **Theoretically** (using only population values):

$$\bar{X} \sim \text{Normal}(\mu_{\bar{X}} = \mu, \sigma_{\bar{X}} = SE = \frac{\sigma}{\sqrt{n}})$$

- **In real use** (using sample values for SE):

$$\bar{X} \sim \text{Normal}(\mu_{\bar{X}} = \mu, \sigma_{\bar{X}} = SE = \frac{s}{\sqrt{n}})$$

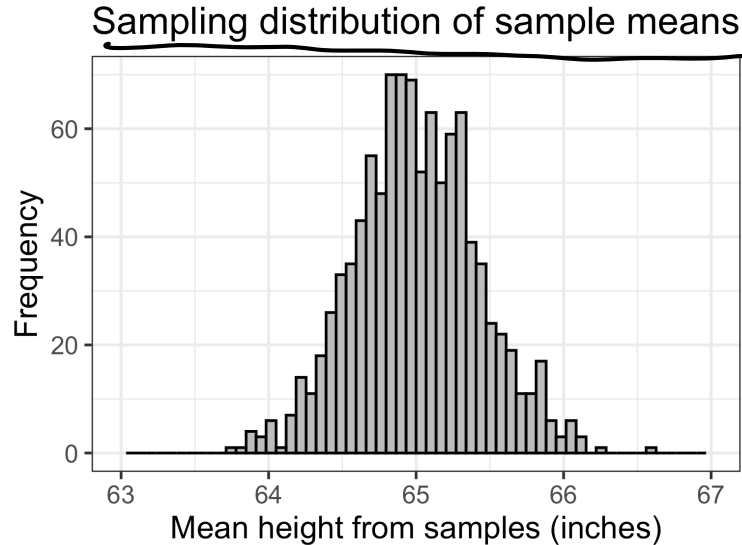
sample std dev
to approx
pop std dev

$$\mu_{\bar{X}} = 64.996 \text{ inches}$$

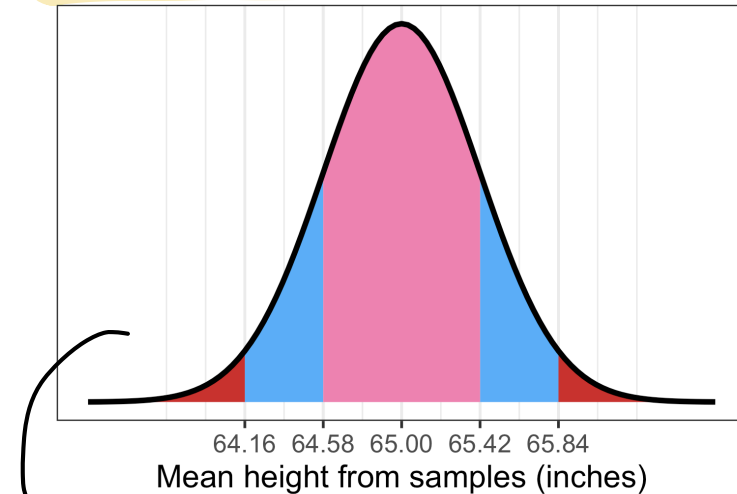
$$SE = 0.291 \text{ inches}$$

Let's apply the CLT to our sampling distribution when $n = 50$ (1/2)

CLT tells us that we can model the sampling distribution of mean heights using a normal distribution:



Approximate Normal distribution



$$\bar{X} \sim N\left(\mu, \frac{\sigma}{\sqrt{n}}\right)$$

Let's apply the CLT to our sampling distribution when $n = 50$ (2/2)

Mean and SD of population:

$$\mu = 65 \text{ inches}, \sigma = 3 \text{ inches}$$

From the CLT, we can figure out the **theoretical** mean and standard deviation of our sampling distribution:

$$\mu = 65 \text{ inches}$$

$$SE = \frac{\sigma}{\sqrt{n}} \text{ inches} = \frac{3}{\sqrt{50}} \text{ inches} = 0.424 \text{ inches}$$

I simulated the data, so I can calculate mean and SE of the sampling distribution:

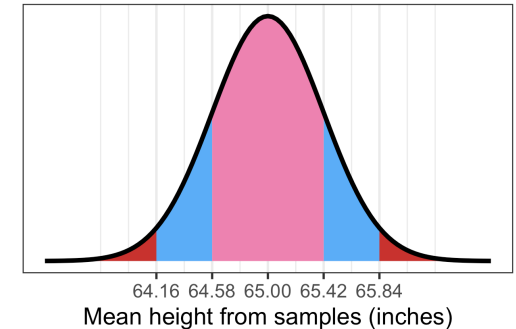
```
1 (sample_mean = mean(means50$means))
```

```
[1] 65.00198
```

```
1 (sample_se = sd(means50$means))
```

```
[1] 0.4212266
```

Approximate Normal distribution



red sample

$$\bar{x} = 65.1, \quad s = 2.8$$

mean of 50 ppl

$$SE = \frac{s}{\sqrt{n}} = \frac{2.8}{\sqrt{50}}$$

$$= 0.396$$

Applying the CLT (1/2)

Example 1

For a random sample of 100 people, what is the probability that their mean height is greater than 65 inches? We happen to know the population mean is 64 inches and population standard deviation is 4 inches.

$$\mu = 64$$

$$\sigma = 4$$

1. Make sure that the number of individuals in the sample is greater than 30: $100 > 30$, so we can use the CLT
2. Find the mean and standard error for our sampling distribution:

$$\rightarrow \mu_{\bar{X}} = 64 \text{ inches}$$

$$SE = \frac{\sigma}{\sqrt{n}} = \frac{4}{\sqrt{100}} = 0.4 \text{ inches}$$

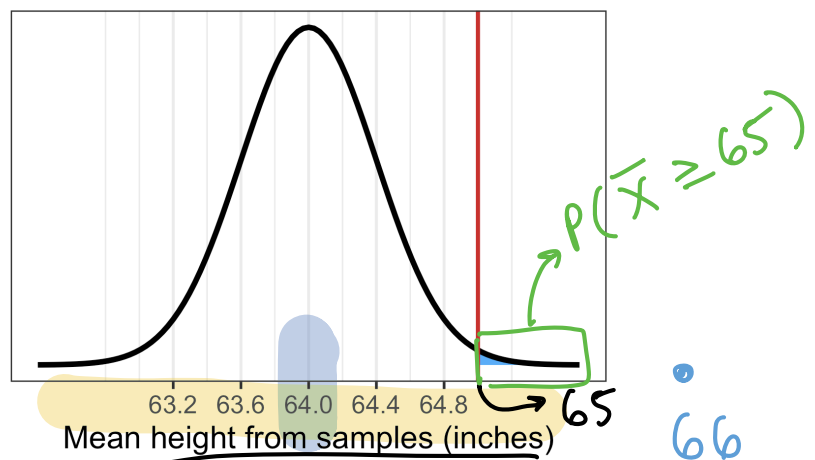
$$\rightarrow \bar{X} \sim \text{Normal}(64, 0.4)$$

Applying the CLT (2/2)

Example 1

For a random sample of 100 people, what is the probability that their mean height is greater than 65 inches? We happen to know the population mean is 64 inches and population standard deviation is 4 inches.

3. Calculate the probability from a Normal distribution: $P(\bar{X} \geq 65)$



```
1 pnorm(q = 65, mean = 64, sd = 0.4,  
2 lower.tail = F)
```

[1] 0.006209665

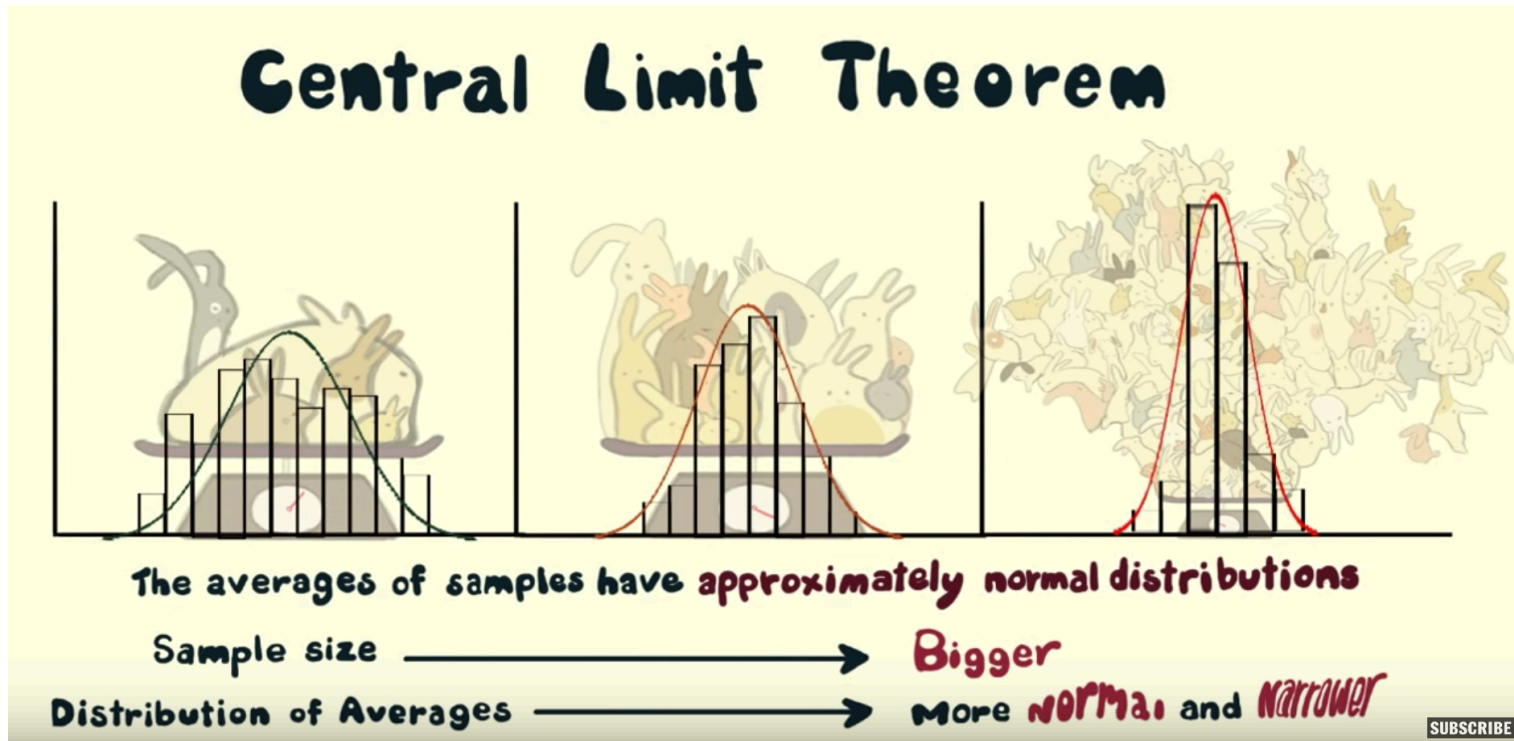
$\rightarrow P(X \geq q)$

The probability that a 100-person sample has a mean of 65 or greater is 0.006. Makes me question if our sample really came from the population...

Outskirts from other sample means > not good rep of population

Check out this video explanation of CLT

- Bunnies, Dragons and the 'Normal' World: Central Limit Theorem
 - Creature Cast from the New York Times
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jvoxEYmQHNM&feature=youtu.be>



Summary Review: Point Estimate and Variance Terminology

- Population mean: μ
- Population standard deviation: σ
- Sample mean: \bar{x}
- Sample standard deviation: s
- Sampling distribution: Distribution of sample means for repeated samples.
 - Use \bar{X} as the RV for this distribution
 - $\bar{X} \sim \text{Normal}\left(\mu_{\bar{X}} = \mu, \sigma_{\bar{X}} = SE = \frac{s}{\sqrt{n}}\right)$
- Standard error (SE): The standard deviation of the sampling distribution.

▪ Formula: $SE = \frac{s}{\sqrt{n}}$ or $SE = \frac{\sigma}{\sqrt{n}}$ if you know pop σ

↓
if only
sample