Find the Probability of A or B (With Examples)what is the probability of A or B ?

Authored by

stats writer

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When analyzing complex scenarios in statistics, understanding how to calculate the likelihood of one event or another occurring is fundamental. The calculation for the probability of A or B, often known as the union of two events, involves summing the individual probabilities of A and B, and then adjusting this sum to account for any overlap. Specifically, it requires subtracting the probability that both events A and B occur simultaneously. This adjustment prevents double-counting outcomes that satisfy both conditions.

For instance, if the probability of event A is 0.4 (40%) and the probability of event B is 0.3 (30%), and the probability that both occur (their intersection) is 0.12, the resulting probability of A or B occurring is calculated as: 0.4 + 0.3 - 0.12 = 0.58. This introductory example illustrates the core principle of the General Addition Rule, which is essential for accurate probabilistic assessment when events are not independent.

The Concept of P(A or B)

In formal probability theory, calculating the chance of "Event A or Event B" occurring signifies finding the likelihood that **at least one of these outcomes takes place**. This calculation is crucial across fields ranging from finance to experimental science, where understanding compounded risks or successes is necessary. It is important to define our events clearly before applying the appropriate formula.

We use specific notation to express this calculation concisely. While the written form, P(A or B), is intuitive, the mathematical notation relies on set theory symbols to represent the concept of 'or', which corresponds to the union of sets.

The most common ways to represent the probability that either event A or event B occurs are:

P(A or B) - The descriptive, written form.
$P(A \cup B)$ - The standard mathematical notation, where the symbol $\cup$ denotes the union of the two sets of outcomes.

Identifying Mutually Exclusive Events

The methodology we employ to calculate $P(A \cup B)$ hinges entirely on the relationship between events A and B--specifically, whether or not they can occur at the same time. Two events are defined as mutually exclusive if they share no common outcomes; that is, the occurrence of one event makes the occurrence of the other event impossible within the same trial.

When events A and B are mutually exclusive, the calculation simplifies dramatically because there is no overlap to correct for. Since the probability of both A and B occurring simultaneously, denoted $P(A \cap B)$, must be zero, the General Addition Rule simplifies to a straightforward sum.

If A and B are **mutually exclusive**, the formula we use to calculate P(A∪B) is the simplest form of the Addition Rule:

Mutually Exclusive Events: P(A∪B) = P(A) + P(B)

The General Addition Rule for Overlapping Events

If events A and B are **not mutually exclusive** (or overlapping), they share one or more possible outcomes. In such situations, calculating the simple sum P(A) + P(B) would inadvertently count the shared outcomes twice--once as part of A and once as part of B. This leads to an inaccurate, inflated result for the overall probability.

To correct this double-counting error, we must subtract the probability of the intersection of A and B, which represents the likelihood that both events occur. This adjusted formula is known as the General Addition Rule for Probability (5/5).

If A and B are **not mutually exclusive**, then the comprehensive formula we use to calculate P(A∪B) is:

Not Mutually Exclusive Events (General Addition Rule): P(A∪B) = P(A) + P(B) - P(A∩B)

P(A∩B) is the probability that event A and event B both occur, often referred to as the intersection of the outcomes. The following examples show how to use these formulas in practice.

Examples: P(A∪B) for Mutually Exclusive Events

These examples illustrate scenarios where two outcomes cannot coexist, allowing us to use the simplified Addition Rule: P(A∪B) = P(A) + P(B).

Example 1: Rolling a Single Outcome What is the probability of rolling a standard six-sided dice and obtaining either a 2 or a 5?

Solution: We define event A as rolling a 2 and event B as rolling a 5. These two events are mutually exclusive (4/5) because we cannot roll both outcomes simultaneously on a single trial. P(A) = 1/6 and P(B) = 1/6. Thus, the probability that we roll either a 2 or a 5 is calculated as:

P(A∪B) = P(A) + P(B) = (1/6) + (1/6) = 2/6 = 1/3.

Example 2: Selecting from Disjoint Categories Suppose an urn contains 3 red balls, 2 green balls, and 5 yellow balls (10 total balls). If we randomly select one ball, what is the probability of selecting either a red or green ball?

Solution: If we define event A as selecting a red ball and event B as selecting a green ball, these are mutually exclusive (5/5) since one ball cannot possess both colors. P(Red) = 3/10 and P(Green) = 2/10. Thus, the probability that we select either a red or green ball is calculated as:

$P(A \cup B) = P(Red) + P(Green) = (3/10) + (2/10) = 5/10 = 1/2$.

Examples: P(A∪B) for Overlapping Events

These examples demonstrate the application of the General Addition Rule where $P(A \cup B)$ (5/5) = $P(A) + P(B) - P(A \cap B)$ (5/5).

Example 1: Drawing an Overlapping Card If we randomly select a card from a standard 52-card deck, what is the probability of choosing either a Spade or a Queen?

Solution: Since the Queen of Spades satisfies both conditions, these two events are not mutually exclusive. We must identify and subtract the probability of their intersection.

If we let event A be the event of choosing a Spade and event B be the event of choosing a Queen, then we have the following probabilities:

P(A) (Spade) = 13/52
P(B) (Queen) = 4/52
$P(A \cap B)$ (Queen of Spade) = 1/52

Thus, the probability of choosing either a Spade or a Queen is calculated as:

$P(A \cup B) = P(A) + P(B) - P(A \cap B) = (13/52) + (4/52) - (1/52) = 16/52$. This result simplifies to 4/13.

Example 2: Overlapping Criteria on a Dice Roll If we roll a standard six-sided dice, what is the probability that it lands on a number greater than 3 or an even number?

Solution: It is possible for the dice to land on a number that is simultaneously greater than 3 and even (specifically, 4 and 6). Therefore, these events overlap and are not mutually exclusive.

If we let event A be rolling a number greater than 3 (outcomes {4, 5, 6}) and event B be rolling an even number (outcomes {2, 4, 6}), then we determine the following probabilities:

P(A) = 3/6
P(B) = 3/6
$P(A \cap B)$ (Outcomes {4, 6}) = 2/6

Using the General Addition Rule, the probability that the dice lands on a number greater than 3 or an even number is calculated as:

$P(A \cup B) = P(A) + P(B) - P(A \cap B) = (3/6) + (3/6) - (2/6) = 4/6$, which simplifies cleanly to 2/3.