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Mean

By Robert Niles

This is one of the more common statistics you will see. And it's easy to compute. All you have to do is **add** up all the values in a set of data and then **divide** that sum by the number of values in the dataset. Here's an example:

Let's say you are writing about the World Wide Widget Co. and the salaries of its nine employees.

The CEO makes $100,000 per year,
Two managers make $50,000 per year,
Four factory workers make $15,000 each, and
Two trainees make $9,000 per year.

So you **add** $100,000 + $50,000 + $50,000 + $15,000 + $15,000 + $15,000 + $15,000 + $9,000 + $9,000 (all the values in the set of data), which gives you $278,000. Then **divide** that total by 9 (the number of values in the set of data).

That gives you the **mean**, which is $30,889.

Not a bad average salary. But be careful when using this number. After all, only three of the nine workers at WWW Co. make that much money. And the other six workers don't even make half the average salary.

So what statistic should you use when you want to give some idea of what the average **worker** at WWW Co. is earning? It's time to learn about the **median**.

About Robert Niles

Robert Niles lives in Southern California, where he works as a journalist and website editor.

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