

Mean, Mode, and Bar Graphs

Do you think you could calculate the average from the data shown in the bar graph? After all, there are numbers involved.

Actually, we cannot. To see why, you need to think *what kind of original data* produced this graph. What was asked of the people in the study? What did they respond?

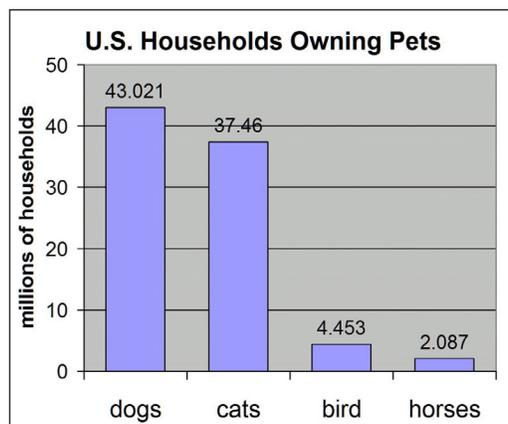
The people were asked something like, “What pets do you have?” The people would have answered, “cat,” or “dog,” and so on.

The original data set consists simply of the words “cat,” “dog,” “bird,” and “horse”—each one listed many times, because each mention of a “cat” would mean the answer of one particular household.

cat, cat, dog, dog, dog, dog, bird, dog, dog, bird, cat, dog, horse, dog, cat, dog,...

We cannot calculate anything from this kind of data set because it is not numerical data! However, we CAN find the most commonly occurring item, and that is called the **mode**.

In this case, the mode is *dog*. It made the highest bar on the graph.



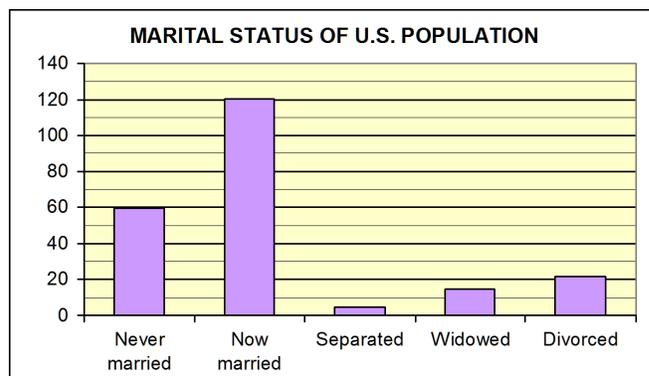
The mode is the most commonly occurring item in a data set.

- Sometimes a set of data has two or more modes. For example, the data set *green, green, blue, blue, black, brown, hazel* has two modes: both green and blue are equally common.
- If none of the items occurs twice or more, there is no mode. For example, this data: *green, blue, pink, red, black, brown, purple* has no mode.

1. Find the mode of the data set shown in the bar graph on the right.

2. a. Find the mode of this data:

water, pop, juice, pop, juice, water,
milk, water, pop, pop, juice, pop



b. If the above are the answers of 12 people to some question, what could have been the question?