Recall

Joint distributions

Let X, Y be two random variables. The *joint cumulative distribution function* (joint CDF) of X, Y is

$$F(a,b) \coloneqq P\{X \le a, Y \le b\} \quad , \forall\, a, b \in \mathbb{R}.$$

Then the *marginal distributions* (marginal CDFs) are

$$F_X(a) = \lim_{b\to\infty} F(a,b) =: F(a,\infty) \quad , \forall\, a \in \mathbb{R},$$
$$F_Y(b) = \lim_{a\to\infty} F(a,b) =: F(\infty,b) \quad , \forall\, b \in \mathbb{R}.$$

All the joint probability questions about X, Y can be answered in terms of joint CDF. In particular, $P\{X > a, Y > b\} = 1 - F(a,\infty) - F(\infty,b) + F(a,b)$.

- If X, Y are discrete, then the *joint probability mass function* (joint PMF) is

  $$p(x,y) \coloneqq P\{X = x, Y = y\} \quad , \forall\, x, y \in \mathbb{R}.$$

  Moreover, we have the *marginal PMFs* of X, Y

  $$p_X(x) = \sum_y p(x,y) \quad \forall\, x \in \mathbb{R},$$
  $$p_Y(y) = \sum_x p(x,y) \quad \forall\, y \in \mathbb{R}.$$

  and the joint CDF becomes $F(a,b) = \sum_{\substack{x\le a\\ y\le b}} p(x,y)$ for all $a, b \in \mathbb{R}$.

- Two random variables X, Y are *joint continuous* if there exists a *joint probability density function* (joint PDF) $f\colon \mathbb{R}^2 \to [0,\infty)$ such that

  $$P\{(X,Y) \in C\} = \iint_C f(x,y)\,dxdy$$

  for all 'measurable' sets $C \subset \mathbb{R}^2$. Fortunately, the countable intersections or unions of rectangles are 'measurable'. In particular, the joint CDF becomes

  $$F(a,b) = \int_{-\infty}^{b}\int_{-\infty}^{a} f(x,y)\,dxdy \quad , \forall\, a, b \in \mathbb{R}.$$

  If f is continuous at (a,b), then $f(a,b) = \frac{\partial^2}{\partial a \partial b} F(a,b)$.

  Moreover, X, Y are continuous random variables with *marginal PDFs* obtained by

  $$f_X(x) = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f(x,y)\,dy \quad , \forall\, x \in \mathbb{R},$$
  $$f_Y(y) = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f(x,y)\,dx \quad , \forall\, y \in \mathbb{R}.$$

Independent random variables

Two random variables X and Y are *independent* if

$$P\{X \in A, Y \in B\} = P\{X \in A\}P\{Y \in B\}, \forall\, A, B \subset \mathbb{R}$$

$$\Updownarrow$$

$$F(a,b) = F_X(a)F_Y(b), \forall\, a, b \in \mathbb{R}$$

X,Y discrete $\Updownarrow$ $\qquad$ X,Y joint continuous $\Updownarrow$

$$p(x,y) = p_X(x)p_Y(y), \forall\, x, y \in \mathbb{R} \qquad f(x,y) = f_X(x)f_Y(y), \forall\, x, y \in \mathbb{R}.$$

Examples

Example 1. Let X, Y be random variables with joint PDF

$$f(x,y) = \begin{cases} ce^{-x}e^{-2y} & \text{if } x, y \in (0, +\infty) \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Find the value of c, $P\{X > 1, Y < 1\}$, $P\{X < Y\}$ and marginal PDFs f_X, f_Y. Are X and Y independent?

Solution. Since

$$1 = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty}\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f(x,y)dxdy = \int_0^{\infty}\int_0^{\infty} ce^{-x}e^{-2y}dxdy = c\left(-e^{-x}\Big|_0^{\infty}\right)\left(-\frac{1}{2}e^{-2y}\Big|_0^{\infty}\right) = \frac{c}{2},$$

we have $c = 2$.

Then

$$\begin{aligned} P\{X > 1, Y < 1\} = \int_{-\infty}^{1}\int_{1}^{\infty} f(x,y)dxdy = \int_0^1\int_1^{\infty} 2e^{-x}e^{-2y}dxdy &= 2e^{-1}(-\frac{1}{2}e^{-2} + \frac{1}{2}) \\ &= e^{-1} - e^{-3}, \end{aligned}$$

and

$$P\{X < Y\} = \int_0^{\infty}\int_0^{y} 2e^{-x}e^{-2y}dxdy = \int_0^{\infty} 2e^{-2y}(1 - e^{-y})dy = \frac{1}{3}.$$

By formula, if $x \le 0$, then $f_X(x) = 0$ and if $x > 0$, then

$$f_X(x) = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f(x,y)dy = \int_0^{\infty} 2e^{-x}e^{-2y}dy = e^{-x}.$$

Similarly, if $y \le 0$, then $f_Y(y) = 0$ and if $y > 0$, then

$$f_Y(y) = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f(x,y)dx = \int_0^{\infty} 2e^{-x}e^{-2y}dx = 2e^{-2y}.$$

Hence $f(x,y) = f_X(x)f_Y(y)$ for $x, y \in \mathbb{R}$, thus X and Y are independent. □

Remark. It is optional for us to make a safe check $\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f_X(x)dx = 1$ to avoid computational mistakes.

Example 2. Let X, Y be random variables with joint PDF

$$f(x,y) = \begin{cases} \frac{1}{x} & \text{if } 0 < y < x < 1 \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Find $E[X]$ and $E[Y]$. Are X and Y independent?

Solution. By formula, if $x \notin (0,1)$, then $f_X(x) = 0$ and if $x \in (0,1)$, then

$$f_X(x) = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f(x,y)dy = \int_0^x \frac{1}{x}dy = \frac{1}{x} \times x = 1.$$

Similarly, if $y \notin (0,1)$, then $f_Y(y) = 0$ and if $y \in (0,1)$, then

$$f_Y(y) = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f(x,y)dx = \int_y^1 \frac{1}{x}dx = \ln x\Big|_y^1 = -\ln y.$$

This implies $f(x,y) \neq f_X(x)f_Y(y)$. Hence X and Y are not independent.

Then

$$E[X] = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} x f_X(x)dx = \int_0^1 xdx = \frac{1}{2},$$

and

$$E[Y] = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} y f_Y(y)dy = \int_0^1 -y\ln y dy = \left(\frac{y^2}{2}\ln y\Big|_0^1\right) + \int_0^1 \frac{1}{y}\frac{y^2}{2}dy = 0 + \int_0^1 \frac{y}{2}dy = \frac{1}{4}$$

where 0 follows from $\lim_{y\to 0} y^2 \ln y = 0$. ("exponential" $\geq$ "polynomial" $\geq$ "logarithmic".) $\square$