

Prime number races

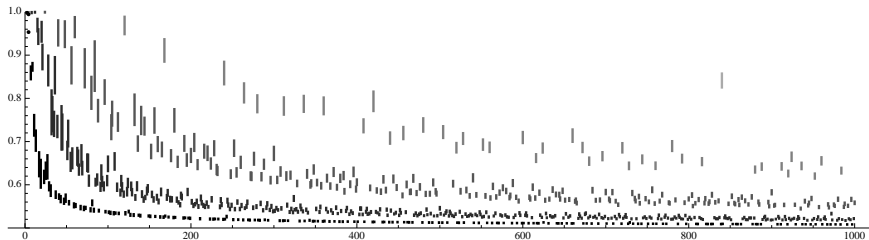
An asymptotic formula for the densities

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Please turn off your cell phones and beepy things.



Outline

- 1 Introduction
- 2 The densities $\delta_{q;a,b}$
- 3 Data and new phenomena
- 4 Dependence on the modulus q
- 5 Dependence on the residue classes a and b
- 6 Other highlights

Where all the fuss started

In 1853, Chebyshev wrote a letter to Fuss with the following statement:

There is a notable difference in the splitting of the prime numbers between the two forms $4n + 3$, $4n + 1$: the first form contains a lot more than the second.

Since then, “notable differences” have been observed among primes of various forms $qn + a$.

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Who has the advantage?

Races where such advantages are observed:

- Primes that are 2 (mod 3) over primes that are 1 (mod 3)
- Primes that are 3 (mod 4) over primes that are 1 (mod 4)
- Primes that are 2 or 3 (mod 5) over primes that are 1 or 4 (mod 5)
- Primes that are 3, 5, or 6 (mod 7) over primes that are 1, 2, or 4 (mod 7)
- Primes that are 3, 5, or 7 (mod 8) over primes that are 1 (mod 8); and 5, 7, or 11 (mod 12) over 1 (mod 12)

The general pattern

Primes that are nonsquares (mod q) over primes that are squares (mod q)

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Primes that are **nonsquares** \pmod{q} over primes that are **squares** \pmod{q}

Past results: computational

Notation

$$\pi(x; q, a) = \{\text{number of primes } p \leq x \text{ such that } p \equiv a \pmod{q}\}$$

Further computation (1950s and beyond) reveals that there are occasional periods of triumph for the **square residue classes** over **nonsquare residue classes**:

- $\pi(x; 4, 1) > \pi(x; 4, 3)$ for the first time at $x = 26,861$, but $\pi(x; 4, 3) = \pi(x; 4, 1)$ again at $x = 26,863$; then $\pi(x; 4, 1) > \pi(x; 4, 3)$ for the second time at $x = 616,481$
- $\pi(x; 8, 1) > \pi(x; 8, 5)$ for the first time at $x = 588,067,889$ —although $\pi(x; 8, 1)$ still lags behind $\pi(x; 8, 3)$ and $\pi(x; 8, 7)$
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And theoretical results as well:

- The prime number theorem for arithmetic progressions (1900 + $O(1)$): $\pi(x; q, a) \sim \pi(x; q, b)$
- Littlewood (1910s): each of $\pi(x; 4, 1)$ and $\pi(x; 4, 3)$ is ahead of the other for arbitrarily large x , and similarly for $\pi(x; 3, 1)$ and $\pi(x; 3, 2)$
- Turán and Knapowski (1960s): for many pairs a, b of residue classes, $\pi(x; q, a)$ is ahead of $\pi(x; q, b)$ for arbitrarily large x . However, assumptions on the locations of zeros of Dirichlet L -functions are necessary.
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Defining delta

The central question

How often is $\pi(x; q, a)$ ahead of $\pi(x; q, b)$?

Definition

Define $\delta_{q;a,b}$ to be the logarithmic density of the set of real numbers $x \geq 1$ satisfying $\pi(x; q, a) > \pi(x; q, b)$. More explicitly,

$$\delta_{q;a,b} = \lim_{T \rightarrow \infty} \left(\frac{1}{\log T} \int_{\substack{1 \leq x \leq T \\ \pi(x; q, a) > \pi(x; q, b)}} \frac{dx}{x} \right).$$

$\delta_{q;a,b}$ is the limiting “probability” that when a “random” real number x is chosen, there are more primes that are congruent to $a \pmod{q}$ up to x than there are congruent to $b \pmod{q}$.

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Two hypotheses

Rubinstein and Sarnak (1994) investigated these densities $\delta_{q;a,b}$ under the following two hypotheses:

- The **Generalized Riemann Hypothesis (GRH)**: all nontrivial zeros of Dirichlet L -functions have real part equal to $\frac{1}{2}$
 - A linear independence hypothesis (LI): the nonnegative imaginary parts of these nontrivial zeros are linearly independent over the rationals
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- Work of Ford and Konyagin (2002) shows that certain hypothetical violations of GRH do actually lead to pathological behavior in prime number races.
 - LI is somewhat analogous to a “nonsingularity” hypothesis: with precise information about any linear dependences that might exist, we could probably still work out the answer. . . .

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Rubinstein and Sarnak's results

$\delta_{q;a,b}$: the “probability” that $\pi(x; q, a) > \pi(x; q, b)$

Under these two hypotheses GRH and LI, Rubinstein and Sarnak proved (1994):

- $\delta_{q;a,b}$ always exists and is strictly between 0 and 1
- $\delta_{q;a,b} + \delta_{q;b,a} = 1 \dots$ that is, $\delta(\text{“tie”}) = 0$
- “Chebyshev’s bias”: $\delta_{q;a,b} > \frac{1}{2}$ if and only if a is a nonsquare (mod q) and b is a square (mod q)
- if a and b are distinct squares (mod q) or distinct nonsquares (mod q), then $\delta_{q;a,b} = \delta_{q;b,a} = \frac{1}{2}$
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Comparisons of the densities $\delta_{q;a,b}$

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Feuerverger and M. (2000) generalized Rubinstein and Sarnak’s approach in several directions.

We calculated (assuming, as usual, GRH and LI) many examples of the densities $\delta_{q;a,b}$.

- The calculations required numerical evaluation of complicated integrals, which involved many explicitly computed zeros of Dirichlet L -functions.
- One significant discovery is that even with q fixed, the values of $\delta_{q;a,b}$ vary significantly as a and b vary over squares and nonsquares (mod q).

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Example: races modulo 24

$\delta_{q;a,b}$: the “probability” that $\pi(x; q, a) > \pi(x; q, b)$

Example: races modulo 24

a	$\delta_{24;a,1}$
5	0.999987
11	0.999983
23	0.999889
7	0.999833
19	0.999719
17	0.999125
13	0.998722

Note that 1 is the only square (mod 24). The density in any race between two non-squares, such as $\delta_{24;5,7}$, equals $\frac{1}{2}$.

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$\delta_{q;a,b}$: the “probability” that $\pi(x; q, a) > \pi(x; q, b)$

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a	$a^{-1} \pmod{43}$	$\delta_{43;a,1}$	a	$a^{-1} \pmod{43}$	$\delta_{43;a,1}$
32	39	0.5743	5	26	0.5672
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$\delta_{q;a,b}$: the “probability” that $\pi(x; q, a) > \pi(x; q, b)$

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- A more precise understanding of the sizes of $\delta_{q;a,b}$.
Recalling that $\delta_{q;a,b}$ tends to $\frac{1}{2}$ as q tends to infinity, for example, we would like an asymptotic formula for $\delta_{q;a,b} - \frac{1}{2}$.
- A way to decide which $\delta_{q;a,b}$ are likely to be larger than others as a and b vary (with q fixed), based on elementary criteria rather than laborious numerical calculation.

These goals are the subject of *Inequities in the Shanks-Rényi prime number race: an asymptotic formula for the densities*, which is joint work with Daniel Fiorilli (Montréal).

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Asymptotic formula, version I

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Theorem (Fiorilli and M., 2010+)

Assume GRH and LI. If a is a nonsquare (mod q) and b is a square (mod q), then

$$\delta_{q;a,b} = \frac{1}{2} + \frac{\rho(q)}{2\sqrt{\pi} (\phi(q) \log q)^{1/2}} + O\left(\frac{\rho(q) \log \log q}{\phi(q)^{1/2} (\log q)^{3/2}}\right).$$

In particular, $\delta_{q;a,b} = \frac{1}{2} + O_\varepsilon(q^{-1/2+\varepsilon})$ for any $\varepsilon > 0$.

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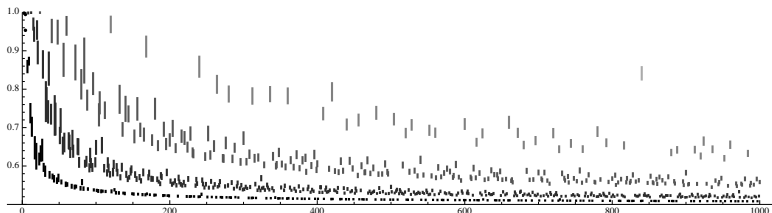
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Graph of the densities

We have a full asymptotic series for $\delta(q; a, b)$, allowing us to compute the densities rapidly for $\phi(q) > 80$, say (which is when the numerical integration technique becomes worse).

Figure: All densities $\delta_{q;a,b}$ with $q \leq 1000$

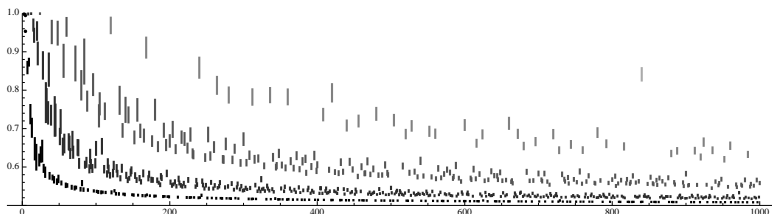


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Our approach

A central limit theorem for differences of prime counts

- For given q, a, b , the normalized **difference**

$$\Delta_{q;a,b}(x) = \left(\frac{\phi(q)}{2 \log q} \right)^{1/2} \frac{\pi(x;q,a) - \pi(x;q,b)}{x^{1/2} / \log x}$$

has a limiting distribution function

$$F_{q;a,b}(u) = \lim_{T \rightarrow \infty} \left(\frac{1}{\log T} \int_{\substack{1 < x < T \\ \Delta_{q;a,b}(x) < u}} \frac{dx}{x} \right).$$

- Rubinstein–Sarnak: As $q \rightarrow \infty$, these distribution functions converge to the standard normal distribution with variance 1.

A quantitative formula for the rate of convergence to the normal distribution allows us to asymptotically evaluate the density $\delta_{q;a,b}$ in terms of the variance $V(q; a, b)$ of $F_{q;a,b}$.

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A few ugly details

Proposition (Feuerverger–M., *a la* Rubinstein–Sarnak)

The density $\delta_{q;a,b}$, in terms of the **Fourier transform of $F_{q;a,b}$** :

$$\delta_{q;a,b} - \frac{1}{2} = \frac{1}{2\pi} \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \left\{ \frac{\sin(\rho(q)t)}{t} \times \prod_{\chi \pmod{q}} \prod_{\substack{\gamma > 0 \\ L(1/2+i\gamma, \chi)=0}} J_0\left(\frac{2|\chi(a) - \chi(b)|t}{\sqrt{1/4 + \gamma^2}}\right) dt \right\}$$

Truncate the right-hand side and rewrite as

$$\sim \frac{1}{2\pi} \int_{-\alpha}^{\alpha} \exp(-V(q; a, b)t^2/2) \exp(V_4 t^4 + V_6 t^6 + \dots) \frac{\sin(\rho(q)t)}{t} dt.$$

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Three terms depending on a and b

The variance, evaluated

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- γ_0 = Euler's constant: $\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \left(\sum_{n \leq x} \frac{1}{n} - \log x \right) \approx 0.577216$

There are three terms in this formula for the variance $V(q; a, b)$ that depend on a and b . Whenever any of the three is bigger than normal, the variance increases, causing the density

$$\delta_{q;a,b} = \frac{1}{2} + \frac{\rho(q)}{\sqrt{2\pi V(q; a, b)}} + O\left(\frac{1}{\phi(q) \log q}\right) \text{ to decrease.}$$

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There are **three terms** in this formula for the variance $V(q; a, b)$ that depend on a and b . Whenever any of the three is bigger than normal, the variance increases, causing the density

$$\delta_{q;a,b} = \frac{1}{2} + \frac{\rho(q)}{\sqrt{2\pi V(q; a, b)}} + O\left(\frac{1}{\phi(q) \log q}\right) \text{ to decrease.}$$

Three terms depending on a and b

The variance, evaluated

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- $\iota_q(n) = \begin{cases} 1, & \text{if } n \equiv 1 \pmod{q}, \\ 0, & \text{if } n \not\equiv 1 \pmod{q} \end{cases}$
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provides extra variance (reducing the corresponding density $\delta_{q;a,b}$) if a is congruent to b modulo suitable large divisors of q .

a	$\delta_{24;a,1}$	$24/(24, a-1)$	$R_{24}(a-1)$
5	0.999987	6	0
11	0.999983	12	0
23	0.999889	12	0
7	0.999833	4	$(\log 2)/2$
19	0.999719	4	$(\log 2)/2$
17	0.999125	3	$(\log 3)/2$
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Example: races modulo 43

a	$a^{-1} \pmod{43}$	$\delta_{43;a,1}$	a	$a^{-1} \pmod{43}$	$\delta_{43;a,1}$
32	39	0.5743	5	26	0.5672
30	33	0.5742	7	37	0.5670
12	18	0.5729	2	22	0.5663
20	28	0.5728	3	29	0.5639
19	34	0.5700	42	42	0.5607
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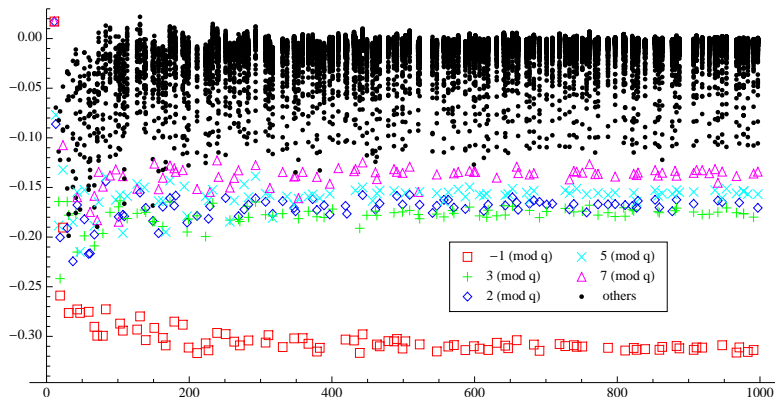
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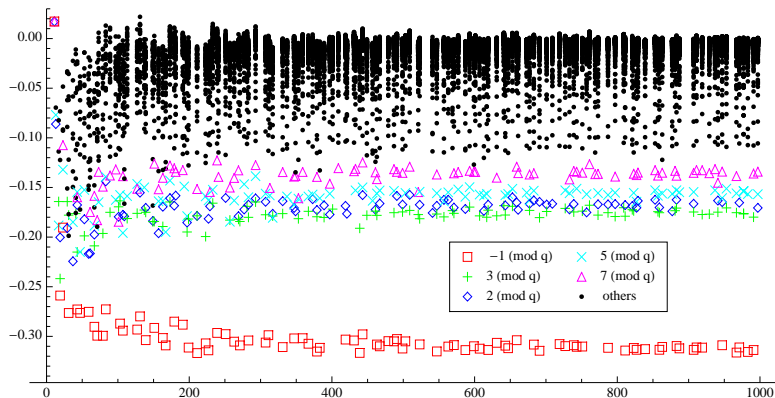
Graph of normalized densities

Figure: Densities $\delta_{q;a,1}$ for primes q , after a normalization to display them at the same scale



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Note: $\frac{\Lambda(3)}{3} > \frac{\Lambda(2)}{2} > \frac{\Lambda(5)}{5} > \frac{\Lambda(7)}{7} > \dots$

Top Ten List

Top 10 Most Unfair Races

Modulus q	Winner a	Loser b	Proportion $\delta_{q;a,b}$
24	5	1	99.9987%
24	11	1	99.9982%
12	11	1	99.9976%
24	23	1	99.9888%
24	7	1	99.9833%
24	19	1	99.9718%
8	3	1	99.9568%
12	5	1	99.9206%
24	17	1	99.9124%
3	2	1	99.9064%

There are 117 distinct densities greater than 9/10 (the last one is $\delta_{56;37,1} = 0.900863$).

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Races with more than two contestants

Definition

Define $\delta_{q;a_1,\dots,a_r}$ to be the logarithmic density of the set of real numbers $x \geq 1$ satisfying

$$\pi(x; q, a_1) > \pi(x; q, a_2) > \dots > \pi(x; q, a_r). \quad (\star)$$

Under GRH and LI, Rubinstein and Sarnak proved:

- $\delta_{q;a_1,\dots,a_r}$ always exists and is strictly between 0 and 1
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The prime number race among r distinct residue classes $A \pmod{q}$ is *inclusive* if, for any permutation (a_1, \dots, a_r) of A , the simultaneous inequalities (\star) hold for a set of positive logarithmic density.

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Weakening the linear independence assumption

Rubinstein and Sarnak: assuming GRH and LI, every prime number race is inclusive.

Theorem (M. and Ng, 2010+)

Assume GRH. Every prime number race (mod q) is inclusive if every nonprincipal Dirichlet L -function (mod q) has $\gg T/\log T$ zeros up to height T (as $T \rightarrow \infty$) that are not involved in any linear relations among the zeros.

- We only need $\sum \frac{1}{\gamma}$, summed over such zeros for a given L -function, to diverge.
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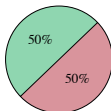
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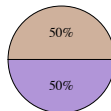
Asymmetries in three-way races

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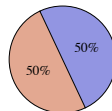
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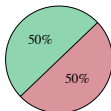
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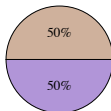
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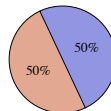
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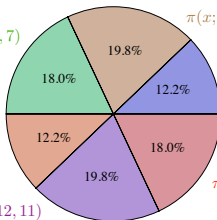


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The end

The survey article *Prime number races*, with Andrew Granville

www.math.ubc.ca/~gerg/index.shtml?abstract=PNR

My paper with Daniel (and pointers to other papers)

[www.math.ubc.ca/~gerg/
index.shtml?abstract=ISRPNRAFD](http://www.math.ubc.ca/~gerg/index.shtml?abstract=ISRPNRAFD)

These slides

www.math.ubc.ca/~gerg/index.shtml?slides