

From classics to punk: almost fifty years of Extreme Value Analysis

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Overview

1. Inference based on empirical quantiles
2. Likelihood based Peaks-over-Threshold methods: maximum likelihood and Bayesian inference *
3. From Peaks-over-Threshold to Block Maxima **
4. Empirical Bayes inference and a real data illustration **

* joint work with Clément Dombry and Simone Padoan

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Tail inference: preliminaries

Drees (1998): «In many statistical applications it is necessary to make inferences about the tail of a distribution, where little or no data is available. For example, if dike is projected in order to protect a costal line, then usually it will be higher than any flood recorded yet. Hence the estimation of the minimal height that ensures that the probability of being flooded in a particular year is less than a given small value requires an extrapolation of the underlying distribution beyond the observed data.»

Tail inference: preliminaries

We restrict ourselves to data which are realisations of independent and identically distributed (i.i.d.) random variables.

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In order to make inference on the tail beyond the data, we need assumptions:

- ▶ on the distribution F of the observed random variable near its end-point
- ▶ or, equivalently, on its inverse function

$$F^{-1}(1 - 1/t) := \inf\{x : 1 - F(x) \geq 1/t\},$$

corresponding to the $1 - 1/t$ -quantile of F , for large t .

A gentle start: the Pareto distribution

A random variable X follows the (standard) Pareto distribution if

$$\mathbb{P}(X > x) = x^{-1/\gamma}, \quad x > 1,$$

for some $\gamma > 0$.

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The **shape parameter** γ , whose reciprocal is called **tail index**, fully characterises the distribution and, in particular, its tail features.

A gentle start: the Pareto distribution

Let X_1, \dots, X_n be i.i.d. copies of X . Then, for $i = 1, \dots, n$

$$\log X_i \stackrel{d}{=} \gamma \log Y_i,$$

where Y_1, \dots, Y_n are i.i.d. copies of Y , satisfying

$$\mathbb{P}(Y > y) = y^{-1}, \quad y > 1.$$

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As a result, the sample mean satisfies

$$\mathbb{E} \left(\frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \log X_i \right) = \gamma \mathbb{E} \left(\frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \log Y_i \right) = \gamma.$$

A gentle start: the Pareto distribution

This is still true for log-spacings of the k -th largest order statistics among $X_{1,n} < \dots < X_{n-k,n} < X_{n-k+1,n} < \dots < X_{n,n}$, indeed

$$\log X_{n-k+1} - \log X_{n-k,n} \stackrel{d}{=} \gamma \log(Y_{n-k+i,n}/Y_{n-k,n}) \stackrel{d}{=} \gamma \log Y_{i,k}$$

for $i = 1, \dots, k$. As a result,

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{E} \left(\frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k (\log X_{n-k+i,n} - \log X_{n-k,n}) \right) &= \gamma \mathbb{E} \left(\frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k \log Y_{i,k} \right) \\ &= \gamma \mathbb{E} \left(\frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k \log Y_i \right) \\ &= \gamma. \end{aligned}$$

More generally: positive tail index

Assume that, for some $\gamma > 0$ and a positive function a , as $t \rightarrow \infty$

$$\frac{F^{-1}(1 - 1/tx) - F^{-1}(1 - 1/t)}{a(t)} \rightarrow \frac{x^\gamma - 1}{\gamma}.$$

Then, as $t \rightarrow \infty$

$$\log F^{-1}(1 - 1/tx) - \log F^{-1}(1 - 1/t) \approx \gamma \log x.$$

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This fact has important consequences for the estimation of γ , still determining the degree of heaviness of the tail of F .

More generally: positive tail index

Indeed, since for $i = 1, \dots, n$ we have

$$X_i \stackrel{d}{=} F^{-1}(1 - 1/Y_i),$$

then for a sequence $k \equiv k(n) \rightarrow \infty$, such that $k/n \rightarrow 0$ as $n \rightarrow \infty$,

$$\begin{aligned} & \frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k (\log X_{n-k+i,n} - \log X_{n-k,n}) \\ & \stackrel{d}{=} \frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k (\log F^{-1}(1 - 1/Y_{n-k+i,n}) - \log F^{-1}(1 - 1/Y_{n-k,n})) \\ & \stackrel{d}{=} \frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k \left(\log F^{-1} \left(1 - \frac{1}{Y_{n-k,n} \frac{Y_{n-k+i,n}}{Y_{n-k,n}}} \right) - \log F^{-1} \left(1 - \frac{1}{Y_{n-k,n}} \right) \right) \\ & \approx \gamma \frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k \log \frac{Y_{n-k+i,n}}{Y_{n-k,n}} \stackrel{d}{=} \gamma \frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k Y_i. \end{aligned}$$

The basic estimator: Hill estimator

This justifies the construction of the Hill estimator (Hill, 1975)

$$\hat{\gamma}_H = \frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k (\log X_{n-k+i,n} - \log X_{n-k,n}).$$

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The proportion of data k/n used for estimation is known as **effective sample fraction**.

When F is not a member of the Pareto family, the estimator is biased, i.e. $\mathbb{E}(\hat{\gamma}_H) - \gamma \neq 0$.

→ More refined estimators have been proposed for bias reduction, see, e.g., Gomes and Pestana (2007).

More generally: nonnegative tail index

Assume that for some $\gamma \in \mathbb{R}$ and a positive function a

$$\frac{F^{-1}(1 - 1/tx) - F^{-1}(1 - 1/t)}{a(t)} \rightarrow \frac{x^\gamma - 1}{\gamma}, \quad t \rightarrow \infty.$$

Then, as $t \rightarrow \infty$

$$\frac{F^{-1}(1 - 1/tx) - F^{-1}(1 - 1/t)}{F^{-1}(1 - 1/ty) - F^{-1}(1 - 1/t)} \approx \frac{x^\gamma - 1}{y^\gamma - 1}.$$

As a result of this and convergence $Y_{n-sk,n}/Y_{n-k,n} \xrightarrow{\mathbb{P}} s^{-1} \dots$

More generally: nonnegative tail index

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{X_{n-k,n} - X_{n-2k,n}}{X_{n-2k,n} - X_{n-4k,n}} &= \frac{X_{n-k,n} - X_{n-4k,n}}{X_{n-2k,n} - X_{n-4k,n}} - 1 \\ &= \frac{F^{-1}\left(1 - \frac{1}{Y_{n-4k,n} \frac{Y_{n-k,n}}{Y_{n-4k,n}}}\right) - F^{-1}\left(1 - \frac{1}{Y_{n-4k,n}}\right)}{F^{-1}\left(1 - \frac{1}{Y_{n-4k,n} \frac{Y_{n-2k,n}}{Y_{n-4k,n}}}\right) - F^{-1}\left(1 - \frac{1}{Y_{n-4k,n}}\right)} - 1 \\ &\approx \frac{\left(\frac{Y_{n-k,n}}{Y_{n-4k,n}}\right)^\gamma - 1}{\left(\frac{Y_{n-2k,n}}{Y_{n-4k,n}}\right)^\gamma - 1} - 1 \\ &\xrightarrow{\mathbb{P}} \frac{4^\gamma - 1}{2^\gamma - 1} - 1 = 2^\gamma.\end{aligned}$$

Another simple estimator: Pickands estimator

This justifies the construction of Pickands estimator (Pickands, 1975)

$$\hat{\gamma}_P = \frac{1}{\log 2} \log \left(\frac{X_{n-k,n} - X_{n-2k,n}}{X_{n-2k,n} - X_{n-4k,n}} \right)$$

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Again, the estimator is biased and more refined versions of it have been proposed for bias reduction, see, e.g., Drees (1996).

A general view: tail functionals

As discussed in Drees (1998), many estimators of γ are constructed via functionals, say T , of the *tail empirical process*

$$Q_n(s) = X_{n-\lfloor sk \rfloor, n}, \quad s \in (0, 1].$$

A general view: tail functionals

As discussed in Drees (1998), many estimators of γ are constructed via functionals, say T , of the *tail empirical process*

$$Q_n(s) = X_{n-\lfloor sk \rfloor, n}, \quad s \in (0, 1].$$

Intuitively: the tail empirical process describes the tail of empirical distribution function

$$\mathcal{F}_n(x) = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \mathbb{1}(X_i \leq x)$$

beyond its quantile of level $1 - k/n$.

A general view: tail functionals

If T is continuous, invariant to linear transformations and satisfies $T(Q_\gamma) = \gamma$, with $Q_\gamma(s) = (s^{-\gamma} - 1)/\gamma$, then

$$\begin{aligned}\hat{\gamma} &= T(Q_n) = T(F^{-1}(1 - 1/Y_{n-\lfloor \cdot k, n \rfloor})) \\ &= T\left(\frac{F^{-1}(1 - 1/Y_{n-\lfloor \cdot k, n \rfloor}) - F^{-1}(1 - 1/Y_{n-\lfloor k, n \rfloor})}{a(Y_{n-k, n})}\right) \\ &= T\left(\frac{F^{-1}\left(1 - \frac{1}{Y_{n-k, n} \frac{Y_{n-\lfloor \cdot k \rfloor, n}}{Y_{n-k, n}}}\right) - F^{-1}\left(1 - \frac{1}{Y_{n-k, n}}\right)}{a(Y_{n-k, n})}\right) \\ &\approx T(Q_\gamma) \\ &= \gamma.\end{aligned}$$

A general view: tail functionals

Pickands estimator fulfills these properties with

$$T_P(z) = \frac{1}{\log 2} \log \left(\frac{z(1/4) - z(1/2)}{z(1/2) - z(1)} \right).$$

A general view: tail functionals

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Another example: Probability Weighted Moment estimator $\hat{\gamma}_{PWM}$ (see Drees, 1998), obtained with

$$T_{PWM}(z) = \frac{\int_{[0,1]} z(s) w_1(s) ds}{\int_{[0,1]} z(s) w_2(s) ds}$$

for weight functions satisfying $\int_0^1 w_j(s) ds = 0$, $j = 1, 2$.

From empirical to model-based inference

Recall that if, as $t \rightarrow \infty$,

$$\frac{F^{-1}(1 - 1/tx) - F^{-1}(1 - 1/t)}{a(t)} \rightarrow Q_\gamma(x),$$

then

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{P} \left(\frac{X - F^{-1}(1 - 1/t)}{a(t)} > x \mid X > F^{-1}(1 - 1/t) \right) &\rightarrow (1 + \gamma x)^{-1/\gamma} \\ &=: 1 - H_\gamma(x) \end{aligned}$$

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I.e., **rescaled exceedances** of a large threshold $F^{-1}(1 - 1/t)$ approximately follow a **generalized Pareto (GP) distribution**.

From empirical to model-based inference

In practice, F is unknown and so is $F^{-1}(1 - 1/t)$, thus a typical inferential routine is:

1. Setting $t = n/k$, use the k -th largest order statistic $X_{n-k,n}$ as a threshold.
2. Compute exceedances

$$Z_i := X_{n-k+i,n} - X_{n-k,n}, \quad i = 1, \dots, k.$$

3. Fit a GP distribution to exceedances

$$\{H_\gamma(\cdot \sigma), \quad \gamma \in \mathbb{R}, \sigma > 0\}$$

including a **scale parameter** to account for the unknown $a(n/k)$.

Fitting a GP to data: maximum likelihood

Note that for any z such that $1 + \frac{\gamma}{\sigma}x > 0$

$$H(z/\sigma) = \int_0^z \left(1 + \frac{\gamma}{\sigma}x\right)^{-1/\gamma-1} \sigma^{-1} dx =: \int_0^z h_{\gamma,\sigma}(x) dx.$$

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Treating the Z_i 's as approximately:

- ▶ independent
- ▶ distributed according to a GP

the associated *likelihood function* at parameters $\theta = (\gamma, \sigma)$ is

$$\mathcal{L}(\theta) \equiv \mathcal{L}(Z_1, \dots, Z_k; \theta) = \prod_{i=1}^k h_{\gamma,\sigma}(Z_i).$$

Fitting a GP to data: maximum likelihood

To estimate θ and infer tail probabilities, large quantiles, etc. one can compute the maximum likelihood estimator (MLE)

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Caveat: a maximum over the full range of possible values for (γ, σ) does not exist. We focus on the region

$$\Theta := \{(\gamma, \sigma) : \gamma > -1/2, \sigma > 0\}$$

since the MLE behaves irregularly if $\gamma \leq -1/2$. Moreover...

Dombry, Padoan and R. (2023): U.r.c., with probability tending to 1, $\arg \max_{\theta \in \Theta} \mathcal{L}(\theta)$ consists of a single value.

From parameter to quantile estimation

Recall that if, as $t \rightarrow \infty$,

$$\frac{F^{-1}(1 - 1/tx) - F^{-1}(1 - 1/t)}{a(t)} \rightarrow Q_\gamma(x),$$

then, for a small $p \equiv p(n)$ such that $np \rightarrow c \in (0, 1)$

$$\begin{aligned} F^{-1}(1 - p) &= F^{-1}\left(1 - \frac{1}{\frac{n}{k} \frac{k}{np}}\right) \\ &\approx F^{-1}\left(1 - \frac{1}{\frac{n}{k}}\right) + a\left(\frac{n}{k}\right) Q_\gamma\left(\frac{np}{k}\right) \end{aligned}$$

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An estimator of the extreme quantile $F^{-1}(1 - p)$ is thus

$$X_{n-k,n} + \hat{\sigma} Q_{\hat{\gamma}}\left(\frac{np}{k}\right)$$

From frequentist to Bayesian inference

The Bayesian approach tackles the problem from a different angle:

- ▶ The data are seen as having a joint probability density *conditionally* on a give value θ
 - at realisations $z_{1:k} := (z_1, \dots, z_k)$, it is *analytically* equal to $\mathcal{L}(z_{1:k}; \theta)$.
- ▶ In turn, θ is assigned a *prior distribution* Π , representing the researcher's belief on more plausible values of θ .
- ▶ Finally, inference is based on the *posterior distribution*, obtained via *Bayes rule*:

$$\Pi(B|Z_{1:k} = z_{1:k}) = \frac{\int_B \mathcal{L}(z_{1:k}; \theta) d\Pi(\theta)}{\int_{\Theta} \mathcal{L}(z_{1:k}; \theta) d\Pi(\theta)}.$$

From frequentist to Bayesian inference

► **Point estimation:** e.g., via posterior means

- $\hat{\gamma} = \int_{\Theta} \gamma d\Pi(\theta | Z_{1:k} = z_{1:k})$

- $\hat{\sigma} = \int_{\Theta} \sigma d\Pi(\theta | Z_{1:k} = z_{1:k})$

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- ▶ **In practice:** computations via MCMC

$$\hat{\gamma} = \sum_{i=1}^R \gamma_i w(\theta_i), \quad \hat{\sigma} = \sum_{i=1}^R \sigma_i w(\theta_i)$$

where $\theta_i = (\gamma_i, \sigma_i)$, $i = 1, \dots, R$, are approximately drawn from the posterior distribution and w is a weight function, e.g.

$$w(\theta) \equiv 1/R.$$

From frequentist to Bayesian inference

- ▶ **Beyond point estimation:** it is possible to derive regions C_n containing θ with posterior probability $1 - \alpha$, i.e.

$$\Pi(C_n | Z_{1:k} = z_{1:k}) = 1 - \alpha$$

where $1 - \alpha$ is the desired *credibility level*.

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- ▶ It is possible to derive also *credible intervals* for single parameters.

In practice: computations based on MCMC, e.g.

$$C_n = (\gamma_{\lfloor R\alpha/2 \rfloor, R}, \gamma_{\lfloor R(1-\alpha/2) \rfloor, R})$$

where $\gamma_{1,R} < \gamma_{2,R} < \dots < \gamma_{R,R}$ are ordered values of a sample (approximately) from the posterior distribution.

From frequentist to Bayesian inference

Since for a given p and realisation $X_{n-k,n} = x_{n-k,n}$ the map

$$\mathcal{T} : \theta = (\gamma, \sigma) \mapsto x_{n-k,n} + \sigma Q_{\gamma} \left(\frac{np}{k} \right)$$

is continuous, the posterior distribution of θ induces

$$\Psi(\cdot | Z_{1:k} = z_{1:k}) := \Pi(\mathcal{T}^{-1}(\cdot) | Z_{1:k} = z_{1:k}),$$

a posterior distribution for the extreme quantile.

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Summaries for point or interval estimation can be extracted from the posterior along the previous lines.

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Summaries for point or interval estimation can be extracted from the posterior along the previous lines.

From an approximate sample $(\theta_i)_{i=1}^R$ from $\Pi(\cdot | Z_{1:k} = z_{1:k})$ one can get a sample $(q_i = \mathcal{T}(\theta_i))_{i=1}^R$ from $\Psi(\cdot | Z_{1:k} = z_{1:k})$.

Bayesian inference: prediction

In this framework, a natural estimator for the c.d.f. of a future exceedance $X - F^{-1}\left(1 - \frac{1}{n/k}\right) | X > F^{-1}\left(1 - \frac{1}{n/k}\right)$ is

$$\hat{H}(z) := \int_{\Theta} H_{\theta}(z) d\Pi(\theta | Z_{1:k})$$

which defines the *posterior predictive distribution* function, with

$$H_{\theta}(\cdot) = H_{\gamma}(\cdot / \sigma).$$

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As a result, a natural estimator of the c.d.f. of a future peak $X | X > F^{-1}\left(1 - \frac{1}{n/k}\right)$ over $F^{-1}\left(1 - \frac{1}{n/k}\right)$ is given by

$$\hat{H}^*(\cdot) = \hat{H}(\cdot - X_{n-k,n})$$

Bayesian inference: prediction

- ▶ **More than point prediction:** e.g., it is possible to construct a *predictive interval* (x_l^*, x_u^*) for a future peak such that

$$\hat{H}^*(x_u^*) - \hat{H}^*(x_l^*) = 1 - \alpha$$

for any desired probability level $1 - \alpha$.

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for any desired probability level $1 - \alpha$.

- ▶ **In practice:** with realisations $Z_{1:k} = z_{1:k}$ and $X_{n-k,n} = x_{n-k,n}$
 1. for each approximate draw from the posterior distribution θ_i , sample independently a value z_i^* from H_{θ_i} ;
 2. compute $x_i^* = z_i + x_{n-k,n}$, $i = 1, \dots, R$;
 3. set $x_l^* = x_{\lfloor R\alpha/2 \rfloor, R}^*$ and $x_u^* = x_{\lfloor R(1-\alpha/2) \rfloor, R}^*$.

From peaks to block maxima

Let $M_m := \bigvee_{i=1}^m X_i$ (max over a block of size m).

From peaks to block maxima

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Recall that if, as $t \rightarrow \infty$,

$$\frac{F^{-1}(1 - 1/tx) - F^{-1}(1 - 1/t)}{a(t)} \rightarrow \frac{x^\gamma - 1}{\gamma},$$

then $\exists a_m > 0$, $\exists b_m \in \mathbb{R}$ such that normalised maximum's law converges to a *generalised extreme value (GEV) distribution*:

$$\mathbb{P} \left(\frac{M_m - b_m}{a_m} \leq x \right) \rightarrow \exp \left\{ -(1 + \gamma x)^{-1/\gamma} \right\} =: G_\gamma(x)$$

as $m \rightarrow \infty$, for all x such that $1 + \gamma x > 0$.

Block maxima approach

Common practice:

1. divide obs. X_1, X_2, \dots into blocks of size m ;
2. compute maxima on each block, obtaining a sample of size k
 $M_{m,1}, \dots, M_{m,k}$;
3. assume $F_{M_m}(x) \approx G_\gamma(a_m^{-1}(x - b_m))$;
4. fit a GEV model $G_\theta(x) = G_\gamma(\sigma x + \mu)$, where

$$\theta = (\gamma, \mu, \sigma)$$

includes (σ, μ) , to account for the unknown (a_m, b_m) .

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Inference can be based, e.g. on maximisation of the likelihood

$$\mathcal{L}(\theta) \equiv \mathcal{L}(M_{m,1}, \dots, M_{m,k}; \theta) = \prod_{i=1}^k g_\theta(M_{m,i})$$

with g_θ the density of G_θ , or on Bayesian procedures.

Return levels

The T -return level is intuitively defined as the value that occurs or is exceeded (on average) every T -periods.

Formally, it is the $1 - 1/T$ -quantile of the periodic maximum

$$F_{M_m}^{\leftarrow}(1 - 1/T) \approx b_m + a_m G_{\gamma}^{-1}(1 - 1/T) =: \mathcal{R}(a_m, b_m, \gamma).$$

Estimation:

- ▶ MLE: plug maximum likelihood estimates in the formula, i.e. compute $\mathcal{R}(\hat{\theta})$ with $\hat{\theta} = (\hat{\mu}, \hat{\sigma}, \hat{\gamma}) \in \arg \max \mathcal{L}(\theta)$.
- ▶ Bayes: obtain a posterior distribution of $\mathcal{R}(\theta)$ from that of θ .

Bayesian analysis of extremes: a subtle issue

Coles and Powell (1996): «Extreme value problems are characterized by a scarcity of data and the requirement of modelling where the data are most sparse. This presents a dilemma when considering a Bayesian approach to inference: the value of additional prior information is likely to be substantial, but the plausibility of formulating such prior knowledge for extremal behaviour is questionable.»

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In particular: difficult to specify genuine prior distributions which

- ▶ appropriately account for the block-size (threshold) dependent nature of location and scale parameters (scale parameter);
- ▶ put the basis for efficient posterior computations.

Empirical Bayes analysis of maxima

- ▶ Prior on γ : use standard densities π_{sh} on \mathbb{R} .
- ▶ Difficulties in specifying priors on (σ, μ) .

Padoan and R. (2023) propose data-dependent priors

$$\hat{\pi}_{\text{sc}}(\sigma) = \pi_{\text{sc}}\left(\frac{\sigma}{\hat{a}_m}\right) \frac{1}{\hat{a}_m}, \quad \hat{\pi}_{\text{loc}}(\mu) = \pi_{\text{loc}}\left(\frac{\mu - \hat{b}_m}{\hat{a}_m}\right) \frac{1}{\hat{a}_m}.$$

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This yields the empirical Bayes posterior distribution

$$\Pi(B|M_{m,1:k}) = \frac{\int_B \mathcal{L}(\theta)\pi(\theta)d\theta}{\int_{\Theta} \mathcal{L}(\theta)\pi(\theta)d\theta}$$

with $\pi(\theta) = \pi_{\text{sh}}(\gamma)\hat{\pi}_{\text{loc}}(\mu)\hat{\pi}_{\text{sc}}(\sigma)$ on $\Theta = (-1, \infty) \times \mathbb{R} \times (0, \infty)$.

Prediction of future maximum levels

I.i.d. context: distribution of a future maximum over $m^* > m$ obs.

$$F_{M_{m^*}}(x) = \{F_{M_m}(x)\}^{m^*/m} \approx \{G_\gamma(a_m^{-1}(x - b_m))\}^{m^*/m}.$$

E.g., $m = 122$ and $m^*/m = 3$, i.e. M_{m^*} is annual maximum.

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By max-stability $\{G_\gamma(a_m^{-1}(x - b_m))\}^{m^*/m} = G_{\theta^*}(x)$, where

$$\theta^* = \left(\gamma, b_m + a_m \frac{(m^*/m)^\gamma - 1}{\gamma}, a_m (m/m^*)^\gamma \right).$$

Prediction

A natural way to define a **predictive distribution function** for such maximum is then

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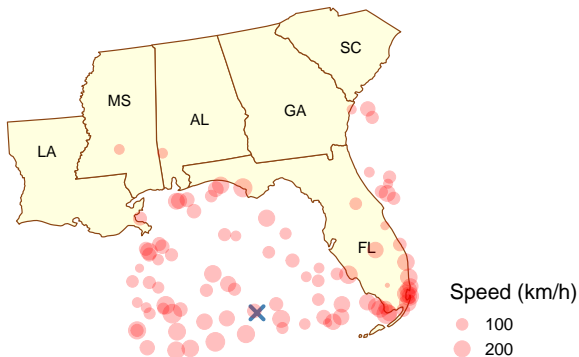
From it we can derive:

- ▶ Predictive intervals: $(\hat{G}_{m^*}^{-1}(\alpha/2), \hat{G}_{m^*}^{-1}(1 - \alpha/2))$.
- ▶ Predictive return level: $\hat{G}_{m^*}^{-1}(1 - 1/T)$, for $T > 1$.

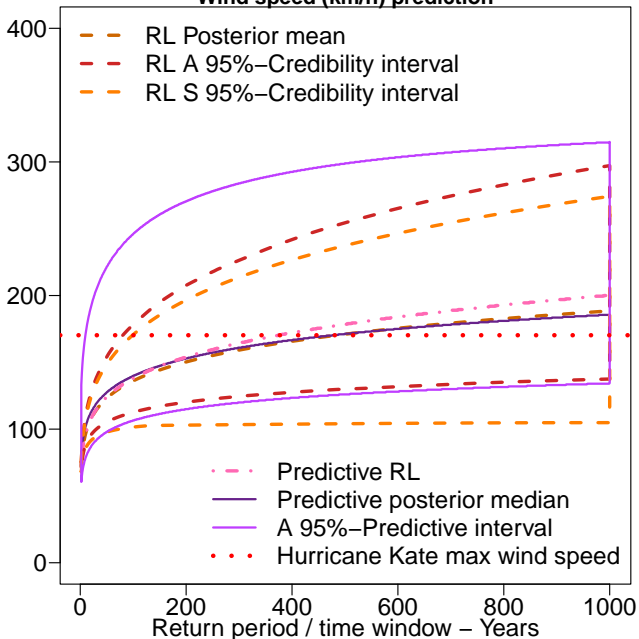
Predicting hurricanes in Southeastern US

We analyse a sequence of daily wind speed maxima from 1976 to 2021, selecting training block size $m = 122 \implies k = 120$ maxima.

Hurricanes in Southeast US
Largest Annual Wind Speed



Wind speed (km/h) prediction



Thank you!

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