

# Regression Assumptions & Diagnostics

## Fundamental Techniques in Data Science with R



**Utrecht  
University**

Kyle M. Lang

Department of Methodology & Statistics  
Utrecht University

# Outline

---

Motivation

Assumptions of MLR

Regression Diagnostics

- Heteroscedasticity

- Correlated Errors

- Linearity

- Omitted Variables

- Normality



# Assumptions for Identification

---

Consider the following equation:

$$5 = x + y$$

What are the values of  $x$  and  $y$ ?



# Assumptions for Identification

---

Consider the following equation:

$$5 = x + y$$

What are the values of  $x$  and  $y$ ?

$$y = 5 - x$$



# Assumptions for Identification

---

Consider the following equation:

$$5 = x + y$$

What are the values of  $x$  and  $y$ ?

$$y = 5 - x$$

What if we assume that  $y = x$ ?



# Assumptions for Identification

---

Consider the following equation:

$$5 = x + y$$

What are the values of  $x$  and  $y$ ?

$$y = 5 - x$$

What if we assume that  $y = x$ ?

$$5 = x + y$$

$$0 = x - y$$



# Assumptions for Identification

---

Consider the following equation:

$$5 = x + y$$

What are the values of  $x$  and  $y$ ?

$$y = 5 - x$$

What if we assume that  $y = x$ ?

$$5 = x + y$$

$$0 = x - y$$

Now we have enough information:

$$5 = x + x = 2x \Rightarrow x = y = 2.5$$



# Assumptions for Logical Inference

---

Given {Assumptions, Estimates}  $\rightarrow$  Inference





# Assumptions vs. Estimates

---

Model = Assumptions + Estimates

$$M = \gamma_1 A + \gamma_2 E$$

$$1 = \gamma A + (1 - \gamma)E$$

- $\gamma = 1$ : Because I said so
- $\gamma = 0$ : Infinite model complexity
- $0 \ll \gamma \ll 1$ : Useful models



# Assumptions of MLR

---

The assumptions of the linear model can be stated as follows:

1. The model is linear in the parameters.

- This is OK:  $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \beta_2 Z + \beta_3 XZ + \beta_4 X^2 + \beta_5 X^3 + \varepsilon$
- This is not:  $Y = \beta_0 X^{\beta_1} + \varepsilon$

2. The predictor matrix is *full rank*.

- $N > P$
- No  $X_p$  can be a linear combination of other predictors.



# Assumptions of MLR

---

3. The predictors are strictly exogenous.
  - The predictors do not correlated with the errors.
  - $\text{Cov}(\hat{Y}, \varepsilon) = 0$
  - $E[\varepsilon_n] = 0$
4. The errors have constant, finite variance.
  - $\text{Var}(\varepsilon_n) = \sigma^2 < \infty$
5. The errors are uncorrelated.
  - $\text{Cov}(\varepsilon_i, \varepsilon_j) = 0, i \neq j$
6. The errors are normally distributed.
  - $\varepsilon \sim N(0, \sigma^2)$



# Assumptions of MLR

---

The assumption of *spherical errors* combines Assumptions 4 and 5.

$$\text{Var}(\varepsilon) = \begin{bmatrix} \sigma^2 & 0 & \cdots & 0 \\ 0 & \sigma^2 & \cdots & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & \ddots & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & \cdots & \sigma^2 \end{bmatrix} = \sigma^2 \mathbf{I}_N$$

We can combine Assumptions 3, 4, 5, and 6 by assuming independent and identically distributed normal errors:

- $\varepsilon \stackrel{iid}{\sim} \mathbf{N}(0, \sigma^2)$



# Consequences of Violating Assumptions

---

1. If the model is not linear in the parameters, then we're not even working with linear regression.
  - We need to move to entirely different modeling paradigm.



# Consequences of Violating Assumptions

---

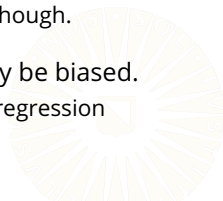
1. If the model is not linear in the parameters, then we're not even working with linear regression.
  - We need to move to entirely different modeling paradigm.
2. If the predictor matrix is not full rank, the model is not estimable.
  - The parameter estimates cannot be uniquely determined from the data.



# Consequences of Violating Assumptions

---

1. If the model is not linear in the parameters, then we're not even working with linear regression.
  - We need to move to entirely different modeling paradigm.
2. If the predictor matrix is not full rank, the model is not estimable.
  - The parameter estimates cannot be uniquely determined from the data.
3. If the predictors are not exogenous, the estimated regression coefficients will be biased.
4. If the errors are not spherical, the standard errors will be biased.
  - The estimated regression coefficients will be unbiased, though.
5. If errors are non-normal, small-sample inferences may be biased.
  - The justification for some tests and procedures used in regression analysis may not hold.



# Regression Diagnostics

---

If some of the assumptions are (grossly) violated, the inferences we make using the model may be wrong.

- We need to check the tenability of our assumptions before leaning too heavily on the model estimates.

These checks are called *regression diagnostics*.

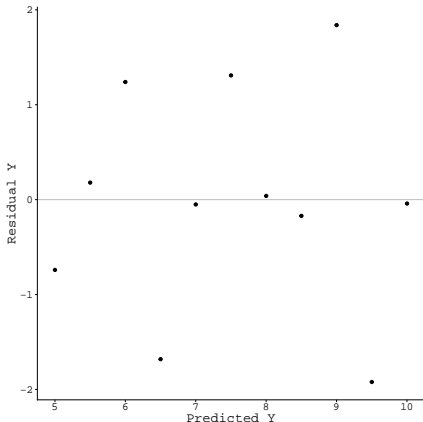
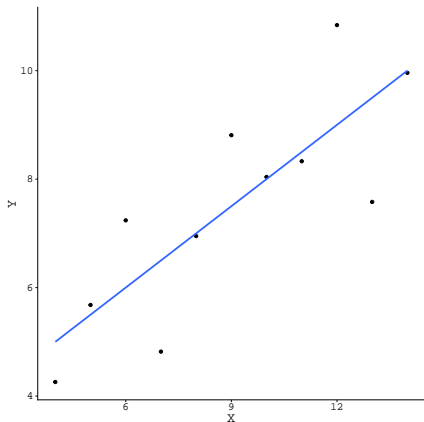
- Graphical visualizations
- Quantitative indices/measures
- Formal statistical tests





# Residual Plots

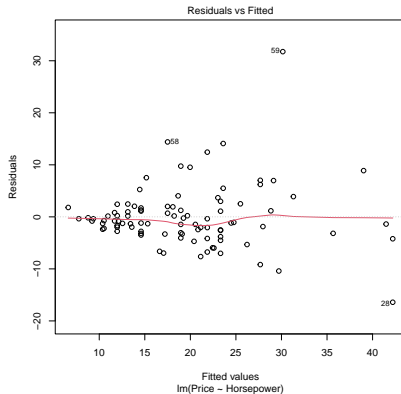
One of the most useful diagnostic graphics is the plot of residuals vs. predicted values.



# Residual Plots

We can easily generate a simple plot of residuals vs. fitted values by plotting the fitted `lm` object in R.

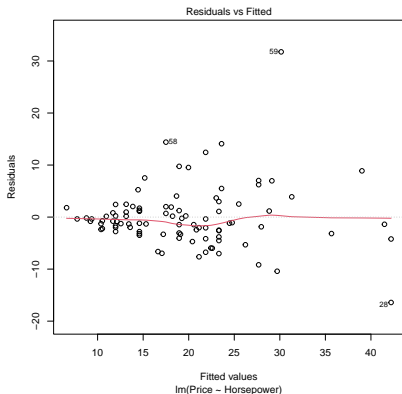
```
out1 <- lm(Price ~ Horsepower,  
           data = Cars93)  
  
plot(out1, 1)
```



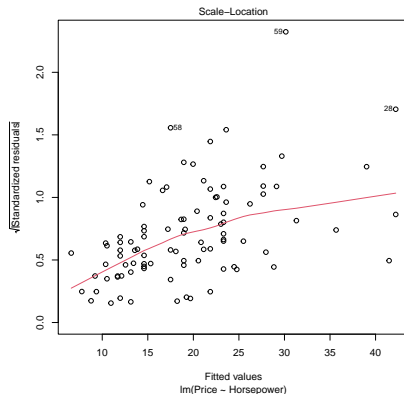
# Heteroscedasticity

Non-constant error variance (*heteroscedasticity*) violates Assumption 4.

```
plot(out1, 1)
```



```
plot(out1, 3)
```



# Consequences of Heteroscedasticity

---

Non-constant error variance will not bias the parameter estimates.

- The best fit line is still correct.
- Our measure of uncertainty around that best fit line is wrong.

Heteroscedasticity will bias standard errors (usually downward).

- Test statistics will be too large.
- CIs will be too narrow.
- We will have inflated Type I error rates.

To get valid inference, we need to address (severe) heteroscedasticity.



# Treating Heteroscedasticity

---

1. Transform your outcome using a concave function (e.g.,  $\ln(Y)$ ,  $\sqrt{Y}$ ).
  - These transformations will shrink extreme values more than small/moderate ones.
  - It's usually a good idea to first shift the variable's scale by setting the minimum value to 1.
2. Refit the model using *weighted least squares*.
  - Create inverse weights using functions of the residual variances or quantities highly correlated therewith.
3. Use a *Heteroscedasticity Consistent* (HC) estimate of the asymptotic covariance matrix.
  - Robust standard errors, Huber-White standard errors, Sandwich estimators
  - HC estimators correct the standard errors for non-constant error variance.

# Example

---

```
## The 'sandwich' package provides several HC estimators:  
library(sandwich)  
  
## the 'lmtest' package provides fancy testing tools for linear models:  
library(lmtest)  
  
## Use sandwich estimator to compute ACOV matrix:  
hcCov <- vcovHC(out1)  
  
## Test coefficients with robust SEs:  
robTest <- coeftest(out1, vcov = hcCov)  
  
## Test coefficients with default SEs:  
defTest <- summary(out1)$coefficients
```

# Example

```
## Compare robust and default approaches:
```

```
robTest
```

```
t test of coefficients:
```

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t )
(Intercept)	-1.398769	2.078200	-0.6731	0.5026
Horsepower	0.145371	0.017164	8.4696	4.051e-13 ***

```
---
```

```
Signif. codes:
```

```
0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1
```

```
defTest
```

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t )
(Intercept)	-1.3987691	1.8200164	-0.7685475	4.441519e-01
Horsepower	0.1453712	0.0118978	12.2183251	6.837464e-21

# Correlated Errors

---

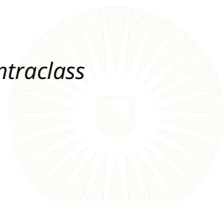
Errors can become correlated in two basic ways:

## 1. Serial dependence

- When modeling longitudinal data, the errors for a given observational unit are correlated over time.
- We can detect temporal dependence by examining the *autocorrelation* of the residuals.

## 2. Clustering

- Your data have some important, unmodeled, grouping structure.
  - Children nested within classrooms
  - Romantic couples
  - Departments within a company
- We can detect problematic levels of clustering with the *intraclass correlation coefficient* (ICC).
  - We need to know the clustering variable to apply the ICC.





# Treating Correlated Errors

---

Serially dependent errors in a longitudinal model usually indicate an inadequate model.

- Your model is ignoring some important aspect of the temporal variation that is being absorbed by the error terms.
- Hopefully, you can add the missing component to your model.

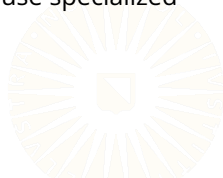


# Treating Correlated Errors

---

Clustering can be viewed as theoretically meaningful or as a nuisance factor that just needs to be controlled.

- If the clustering is meaningful, you should model the data using *multilevel modeling*.
  - Hierarchical linear regression
  - Mixed models
  - Random effects models
- If the clustering is an uninteresting nuisance, you can use specialized HC variance estimators that deal with clustering.



# Example

---

```
## Read in some data:
LeeBryk <- readRDS(here::here("data", "lee_bryk.rds"))

## Check the data:
str(LeeBryk, vec.len = 3)

'data.frame': 7185 obs. of  5 variables:
 $ schoolid: int  1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 ...
 $ math    : num  5.88 19.71 20.35 8.78 ...
 $ ses     : num  -1.53 -0.59 -0.53 -0.67 -0.16 0.02 -0.62 -1 ...
 $ msess   : num  -0.43 -0.43 -0.43 -0.43 -0.43 -0.43 -0.43 -0.43 ...
 $ sector  : Factor w/ 2 levels "public","private": 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 ...

## Estimate a linear regression model:
fit <- lm(math ~ ses + sector, data = LeeBryk)

## Calculate the residual ICC:
ICC::ICCbare(x = LeeBryk$schoolid, y = resid(fit))

[1] 0.07487712
```

# Example

```
## Robust tests:
```

```
coeftest(fit, vcov = vcovCL(fit, ~ schoolid))
```

```
t test of coefficients:
```

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t )
(Intercept)	11.79965	0.20318	58.0746	< 2.2e-16 ***
ses	2.94860	0.12794	23.0475	< 2.2e-16 ***
sectorprivate	1.93495	0.31717	6.1006	1.111e-09 ***

```
---
```

```
Signif. codes:
```

```
0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1
```

```
## Raw tests:
```

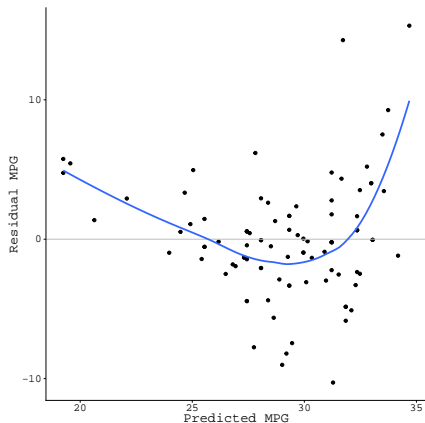
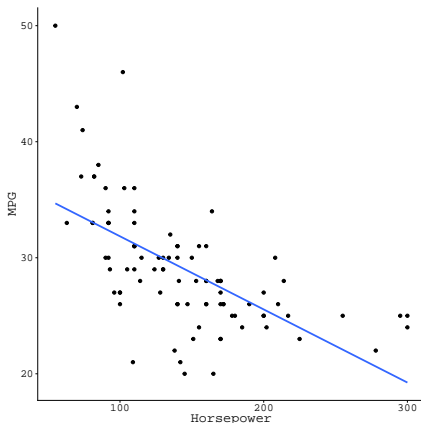
```
summary(fit)$coefficients
```

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t )
(Intercept)	11.799654	0.10612759	111.18366	0.000000e+00
ses	2.948605	0.09782968	30.14019	5.002687e-188
sectorprivate	1.934953	0.15249200	12.68888	1.676478e-36

# Linearity

Each modeled  $X$  must exhibit a linear relation with  $Y$ .

- We can define  $X$  via nonlinear transformations of the original data.



# Treating Residual Nonlinearity

---

Nonlinearity in the residual plots is usually a sign of either:

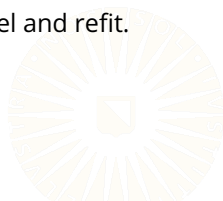
1. Model misspecification
2. Influential observations

This type of model misspecification usually implies omitted functions of modeled variables.

- Polynomial terms
- Interactions

The solution is to include the omitted term into the model and refit.

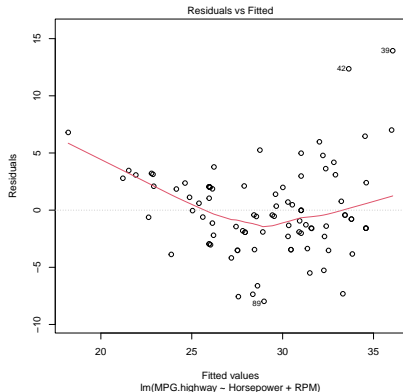
- This is very much easier said than done.



# Limitations of Residual Plots

In multiple regression models, basic residual plots won't tell us which predictors exhibit nonlinear associations.

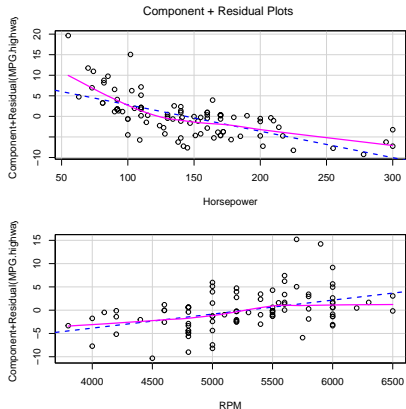
```
out3 <-  
lm(MPG.highway ~ Horsepower + RPM,  
    data = Cars93)
```



# Component + Residual Plots

We can use *Component + Residual Plots* (AKA, partial residual plots) to visualize the unique effects of each *X* variable.

```
library(car)
crPlots(out3)
```





# Omitted Variables

---

The most common cause of endogeneity (i.e., violating Assumption 3) is *omitted variable bias*.

- If we leave an important predictor variable out of our equation, some modeled predictors will become endogenous and their estimated regression slopes will be biased.
- The omitted variable must be correlated with  $Y$  and at least one of the modeled  $X_p$ , to be a problem.



# Omitted Variables

---

Assume the following is the true regression model.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \beta_2 Z + \varepsilon$$

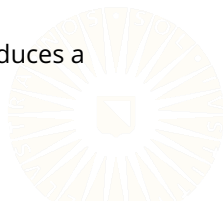
Now, suppose we omit  $Z$  from the model:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \omega$$

$$\omega = \varepsilon + \beta_2 Z$$

Our new error,  $\omega$ , is a combination of the true error,  $\varepsilon$ , and the omitted term,  $\beta_2 Z$ .

- Consequently, if  $X$  and  $Z$  are correlated, omitting  $Z$  induces a correlation between  $X$  and  $\omega$  (i.e., endogeneity).



# Treating Omitted Variable Bias

---

Omitted variable bias can have severe consequences, but you can't really test for it.

- The *errors* are correlated with the predictors, but our model is estimated under the assumption of exogeneity, so the *residuals* from our model will generally be uncorrelated with the predictors.
- We mostly have to pro-actively work to include all relevant variables in our model.

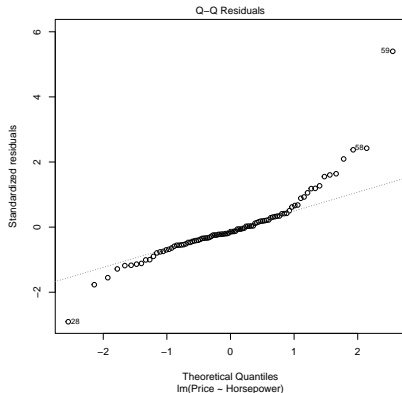


# Normality Assumption

```
plot(out1, 2)
```

One of the best ways to evaluate the normality of the error distribution with a Q-Q Plot.

- Plot the quantiles of the residual distribution against the theoretically ideal quantiles.
- We can actually use a Q-Q Plot to compare any two distributions.



# Consequences of Violating Normality

---

In small samples, with fixed predictors, normally distributed errors imply normal sampling distributions for the regression coefficients.

- In large samples, the central limit theorem implies normal sampling distributions for the coefficients, regardless of the error distribution.



# Consequences of Violating Normality

---

In small samples, with fixed predictors, normally distributed errors imply normal sampling distributions for the regression coefficients.

- In large samples, the central limit theorem implies normal sampling distributions for the coefficients, regardless of the error distribution.

Prediction intervals require normally distributed errors.

- Confidence intervals for predictions share the same normality requirements as the coefficients' sampling distributions.



# Consequences of Violating Normality

---

In small samples, with *fixed* predictors, normally distributed errors imply normal sampling distributions for the regression coefficients.

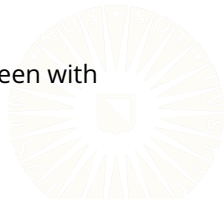
- In large samples, the central limit theorem implies normal sampling distributions for the coefficients, regardless of the error distribution.

Prediction intervals require normally distributed errors.

- Confidence intervals for predictions share the same normality requirements as the coefficients' sampling distributions.

Parameter estimates will not be fully efficient.

- Standard errors will be larger than they would have been with normally distributed errors.



# Treating Violations of Normality

---

We usually don't need to do anything about non-normal errors.

- The CLT will protect our inferences.





# Treating Violations of Normality

---

We usually don't need to do anything about non-normal errors.

- The CLT will protect our inferences.

We can use *bootstrapping* to get around the need for normality.

1. Treat your sample as a synthetic population from which you draw many new samples (with replacement).
2. Estimate your model in each new sample.
3. The replicates of your estimated parameters generate an empirical sampling distribution that you can use for inference.



# Treating Violations of Normality

---

We usually don't need to do anything about non-normal errors.

- The CLT will protect our inferences.

We can use *bootstrapping* to get around the need for normality.

1. Treat your sample as a synthetic population from which you draw many new samples (with replacement).
2. Estimate your model in each new sample.
3. The replicates of your estimated parameters generate an empirical sampling distribution that you can use for inference.

Bootstrapping can be used for inference on pretty much any estimable parameter, but it won't work with small samples.

- Need to assume that your sample is representative of the population

