

An introduction to majorization and some personal thoughts about it

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Abstract

The following article is *somehow* an introduction to the theory of majorization. Its objective is to present the main ideas of the theory, as well as some personal thoughts about it. The reader can find a complete introduction to the theory in [?].

I would assume some basic knowledge in linear algebra, probability theory and familiarity with information theory.

1 Introduction

Majorization is a concept that appears in various fields of mathematics whenever we need to talk about non-uniformity, or *randomness*. Many approaches are possible depending on the field, you are working on. A satisfying definition, giving a general intuition of it, is given using the concept of Lorenz curve.

Definition 1 (Lorenz Curve). *Let $x \in \Delta_n$, the Lorenz curve \mathcal{L}_x of x is the plot of the points $\left(\frac{i}{n}, \sum_{j=1}^i x_{(j)}\right)$, where $x_{(1)} \geq x_{(2)} \geq \dots \geq x_{(n)}$ are the components of x in decreasing order.*

A Lorenz curve is somehow quantifying the weight of the largest components. In figure 1, the Lorenz curve of the vector $(0.5, 0.25, 0.25, 0)$ is plotted.

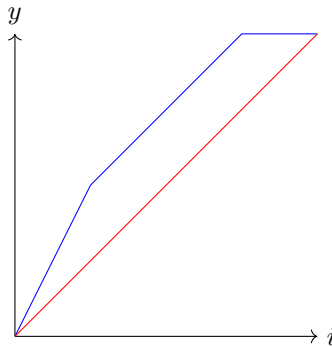
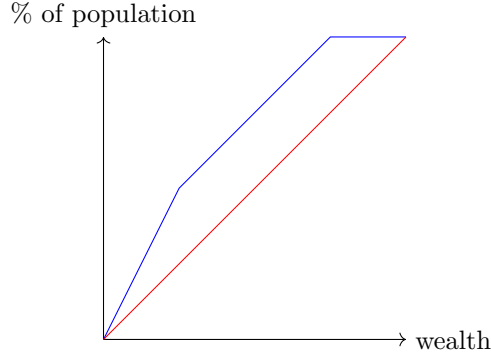


Figure 1: The Lorenz curve of the vector $(0.5, 0.25, 0.25, 0)$ in blue and the Lorenz curve of the vector $(0.25, 0.25, 0.25, 0.25)$ in red.



As you can see, the Lorenz curve of the vector $x = (0.5, 0.25, 0.25, 0)$ is *more* concave than the Lorenz curve of the vector $u = (0.25, 0.25, 0.25, 0.25)$. How can we interpret informally this fact? According to the figure, the greatest component x_1 weights more than the greatest component of u . A natural way of representing this is to say that these vectors represent the wealth of a population. x would be a situation where the 25% of the richest people would own the 50% of the wealth, while u would be a situation of perfect equality. In other words, the Lorenz curve of a vector x is one way of representing its non-uniformity. It is quite easy to state that a vector x is *less* uniform than the uniform distribution but how can we quantify this comparison of non-uniformity? This is where the concept of majorization comes in.

Definition 2 (Majorization). *Let $x, y \in \mathbb{R}^n$ be two vectors. We say that x is majorized by y , denoted $x \prec y$, if \mathcal{L}_x is below \mathcal{L}_y , that is,*

$$\sum_{i=1}^k x_{(i)} \leq \sum_{i=1}^k y_{(i)} \quad \text{for all } k \in \{1, \dots, n\} \quad (1)$$

$$\sum_{i=1}^n x_{(i)} = \sum_{i=1}^n y_{(i)}. \quad (2)$$

Remark 1. *Here, we have defined majorization for vectors in \mathbb{R}^n which is not the context of the introduction. However, the definition can be extended and some equivalent definitions can give more intuition of what happens in the general case.*

We will, most of the time, work with non-negative vectors. In this case, the introduction is still relevant.

Example 1. *Let $x = (0.5, 0.25, 0.25, 0)$ and $y = (0.25, 0.25, 0.25, 0.25)$. We have \mathcal{L}_x below \mathcal{L}_y , so $x \prec y$.*

Example 2. *Consider the set of angles Θ_Δ to construct a triangle. Let $\theta = (\theta_1, \theta_2, \theta_3)$ be a vector of angles. Basic geometry says that $\theta \in \Theta_\Delta$ if and only if $\theta_1 + \theta_2 + \theta_3 = \pi$. In other words, if and only if $\theta \prec (\pi, 0, 0)$.*

This example is quite interesting because it illustrates the comparison of non-uniformity through the comparison of triangles and we will see that this is somehow related to a characterization of majorization.

Here are some basics properties of majorization.

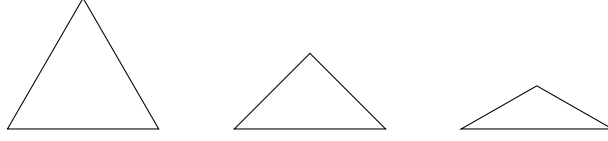


Figure 2: We have respectively $(\pi/3, \pi/3, \pi/3) \prec (\pi/2, \pi/4, \pi/4) \prec (2\pi/3, \pi/6, \pi/6)$

Proposition 1. *Let $x, y \in \mathbb{R}^n$, \prec defines a partial order on \mathbb{R}^n . Moreover,*

- *If $x \prec y$ and $y \prec x$, then there exists a permutation π such that $\pi \cdot x = y$.*
- *If $x \prec y$, then for any permutations π, π' we have $\pi \cdot x \prec \pi' \cdot y$.*
- *We have $|x|u \prec x \prec |x|\delta$ where u is the uniform distribution and δ is the Dirac distribution.*

Note that \prec is *indeed* a partial order. There exists vectors x, y such that neither $x \prec y$ nor $y \prec x$.

Before going further, I will present a more information theoretic approach of majorization.

Definition 3. *A matrix $A \in \mathbb{R}_+^{n \times n}$ is said to be stochastic if $u^T A = u^T$. Moreover, we say that A is doubly stochastic if $u^T A = u^T$ and $Au = u$.*

A stochastic matrix A can be considered in the finite case as a so-called *transition matrix* of a Markov chain. These are considered as the most basic representation of channels in information theory. source \xrightarrow{A} destination