

A Critical Evaluation of Rust's Viability for High-Performance Machine Learning in Production

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ABSTRACT Rust has evolved as a compelling language for Machine Learning (ML) systems due to its performance, safety, and concurrency features. This paper critically evaluates Rust's viability for high-performance ML in production, surveying the state-of-the-art Rust ML ecosystem and comparing it to well-established Python and C++ frameworks. We review popular Rust crates and assess their capabilities for the training and inference of the classical language learning (ML), deep learning (DL), reinforcement learning (RL), and large language model (LLM). The benchmarks and case studies presented are analyzed to quantify Rust performance (speed and memory usage) relative to Python Scikit-Learn, PyTorch and TensorFlow (and their C++ backends). We evaluated ecosystem maturity, GPU/TPU acceleration support, developer productivity, and deployment options across Rust and mainstream platforms. We propose experimental methodologies to rigorously benchmark Rust vs. Python/C++ in model training and inference. We also document the real-world adoption of Rust in industry usage by startups for LLM serving and safety-critical code. Our analysis highlights that while Python remains dominant for ML research, Rust's growing ecosystem is closing the gap for production use cases that demand safety and performance. We discuss trade-offs in using Rust over Python/C++, including stronger memory safety and concurrency versus a steeper learning curve and smaller community. In conclusion, we present a balanced view. Rust already enables production-grade ML in certain domains and, with ongoing ecosystem development, holds significant promise of becoming a mainstream ML platform.

INDEX TERMS Benchmarking Rust, Concurrency, Deep Learning, GPU Acceleration, Machine Learning, Deep Learning, Reinforcement Learning, Large Language Model, Production Deployment, and Rust Programming Language.

I. INTRODUCTION

PYTHON is widely regarded as a dominant language in machine learning (ML) development, with high-level frameworks like `Scikit-Learn`, `TensorFlow` and `PyTorch` built on optimized C++ backends [1], [2]. This separation of concerns, Python for productivity and C++ for performance, has contributed to rapid progress in ML research and development. However, this approach may introduce friction when transitioning models from research to production environments.

Rust has evolved as a system programming language that aims to provide performance comparable to C++

while offering memory security guarantees and modern developer tooling [3]. The language design principles suggest potential advantages for ML engineers seeking to build reliable and efficient systems without some of the memory management challenges associated with C++ [1].

This paper evaluates Rust's viability as a language for high-performance machine learning in production settings. We survey the current Rust ML ecosystem, examining available Rust's crates for classical machine learning (ML) [1], deep learning (DL) [2], reinforcement learning (RL) [4] and large language model (LLM)

[5] applications. We compare Rust-based tools to established Python and C++ alternatives across dimensions including performance, hardware acceleration support, ecosystem maturity, developer experience, and deployment characteristics.

The present study is guided by four principal research questions: (i) Can contemporary Rust crate deliver training and inference throughput that rivals or exceeds state-of-the-art C++/Python stacks such as `LibTorch` [6] and `TensorFlow` [7]? A cross-language MNIST benchmark shows Rust (`tch-rs`) matching C++ and outperforming Python by roughly one-third in total training time, with no accuracy loss [21]. (ii) What is the current maturity of accelerated back-ends? `Candle` [13] already links against `cuDNN` [16] and `cuTENSOR` [17], while `Burn` exposes a portable WGPU layer capable of targeting CUDA and Vulkan, indicating that GPU (and, prospectively, TPU) support is no longer experimental but operational in production builds. (iii) What learning curve do ML practitioners face when adopting Rust? Published case studies emphasise Rust’s strong compile-time guarantees (ownership, borrowing) and “fearless concurrency”, which reduce debugging effort but require an initial conceptual shift from dynamic-language idioms [34], [35]. (iv) Which trade-offs emerge in real-world deployments? Empirical reports highlight memory-safety and latency stability as decisive advantages, whereas framework feature breadth and community tooling still lag behind the Python ecosystem [36].

To answer these questions we design an experimental benchmarking protocol that measures wall-clock runtime, GPU utilisation, energy consumption and memory footprint for representative models across computer-vision and NLP domains. Synthetic micro-benchmarks are complemented by end-to-end workloads to expose optimisation ceilings and I/O bottlenecks; nonetheless, we explicitly acknowledge the limited ecological validity of purely synthetic tests and therefore triangulate results with published industrial case studies.

Documented adoptions—most notably Hugging Face’s `Candle` [13], Rust bindings for ONNX Runtime [14], and bespoke `tch-rs` [12] services in information-retrieval pipelines—demonstrate that Rust is already deployed in latency-sensitive production paths. Yet comprehensive, peer-reviewed usage statistics remain scarce; consequently, the study flags any anecdotal claims for verification against official disclosures or archival literature.

Our analysis purposefully balances Python’s unrivalled ecosystem breadth and ease of prototyping with C++’s entrenched role in high-performance kernels. Rust positions itself between these poles by offering C++-class performance and compile-time safety, making it a rational choice for production-critical components where memory corruption or non-deterministic latency are unacceptable [21]

ML researchers and engineers investigating alternative infrastructure will, through this work, gain a realistic appraisal of Rust’s present capabilities and constraints. While we do not predict Rust will displace Python as the dominant research language in the near term, converging evidence suggests an increasingly complementary role for Rust in deployment pipelines—especially where binary size, deterministic performance and safety guarantees are paramount in the AI era [23].

II. RELATED WORKS

High-performance machine-learning (ML) software has traditionally adopted a two-language paradigm: performance-critical kernels are implemented in C++ (e.g. `cuDNN`, `oneDNN`), while Python exposes a user-friendly API, as exemplified by `TensorFlow` and `PyTorch` [6], [7]. Although this split delivers state-of-the-art throughput, it complicates deployment and debugging by introducing cross-language build pipelines and heterogeneous tooling [6]. Alternative single-language solutions such as `Julia` [37] and `Apache MXNet` [38] reduce this friction via JIT compilation or portable runtimes, but still rely on dynamic memory models. Rust offers another path: C++-class performance together with compile-time guarantees against data races and use-after-free errors [39].

Industrial and academic investment has yielded several production-oriented frameworks. Hugging Face’s `Candle` targets high-performance deep learning through minimal APIs wrapped around `cuDNN`/`cuTENSOR` back-ends [13]. `Burn` pursues a full-stack design with dynamic graphs, automatic differentiation and a portable WGPU backend [11]. `Tch-rs` provides safe Rust bindings to `LibTorch`, enabling reuse of `PyTorch` kernels with negligible overhead [12], while `ORT` exposes Microsoft’s ONNX Runtime for model serving [14]. For classical ML, `Linfa` mirrors `Scikit-learn` in pure Rust [8], [9], and emerging research tools include the trait-centric AD library `ad-trait` [26] and the functional differentiable-programming crate `DFDX` [15].

Benchmarking studies now provide quantitative evidence of Rust’s competitiveness. Satishkumar et al. report that a `tch-rs` implementation of LeNet trains on MNIST in 0.18s—only 6% slower than C++ yet 33% faster than Python, while achieving higher average GPU utilisation [21]. In `TinyML`, the `MicroFlow` inference engine attains 10× faster execution and 65% lower flash usage than `TensorFlow Lite Micro` on resource-constrained MCUs [22]. These findings corroborate earlier claims that Rust can deliver C++-grade speed across hardware tiers without sacrificing safety.

Case studies highlight Rust’s deterministic memory management and fearless concurrency. Pavlova et al.

achieved a 2.6× throughput gain over a Python baseline in a multilingual IR service by distributing *Candle*-based inference across multiple Rust workers [30]. Abdi et al. empirically classified Rust’s parallelism guarantees, showing compile-time safety for regular data-parallel patterns with zero-cost abstractions via Rayon [28].

Rust’s Foreign Function Interface (FFI) and `PyO3` bindings permit gradual integration: performance-critical components can be rewritten in Rust while the surrounding pipeline remains Python, or vice versa. Nevertheless, undefined-behaviour risks across FFI boundaries are an active research topic, with recent dynamic-analysis work (*MiriLLI*) uncovering aliasing violations in popular crates [27]. Such findings underscore the importance of rigorous safety validation when combining Rust with legacy C++ code.

Beyond raw speed, Rust’s ownership model eliminates null-pointer and data-race classes of bugs, enabling “fearless” concurrency for multi-core inference services. Contemporary frameworks such as `tch-rs` (safe *LibTorch* bindings) incur negligible overhead—confirming parity with the underlying C++ kernels while minimalist stacks like *Candle*, shepherded by Hugging Face, push GPU-bound deep-learning performance via `cuDNN`/`cuTENSOR` back-ends. These results collectively validate Rust’s ability to pair compile-time reliability with ecosystem interoperability, furnishing an attractive substrate for production-critical workloads.

The convergence of systems-programming rigor and machine-learning demand therefore positions Rust strategically for ML infrastructure for high-performance model serving, feature stores, and data pipelines where predictable latency and safety are paramount. Industrial uptake in open-source initiatives (e.g., *Candle* and *Burn*), together with empirical studies on domain-specific engines such as *MicroFlow* for *TinyML* and multiprocessing IR systems, evidences Rust’s transition from experimental tool to strategic infrastructure choice for targeted production. Building upon this foundation, our study systematically benchmarks the latest Rust ML libraries against canonical C++/Python counterparts and assesses their suitability for mission-critical deployments.

III. RUST MACHINE LEARNING ECOSYSTEM

Rust crates have evolved as a viable platform for machine learning (ML) with a growing ecosystem of libraries spanning classical ML, deep learning (DL), reinforcement learning (RL) and large language models (LLM). Figure 1 provides an overview of this ecosystem, categorizing representative Rust frameworks by their design approach. Notably, developers can choose pure-Rust libraries (for memory safety and portability) or hybrid solutions that wrap high-performance C++

ML engines behind safe Rust interfaces. In the following, we survey Rust’s ML landscape, covering classical ML/DL crates, LLM support, and we introduce RL as a nascent but promising area.

A. MACHINE LEARNING CRATES

Rust’s support for “classical” (non-deep-learning) ML has been led by two primary crates: *Linfa* [9] and *SmartCore* [10], each with distinct architectural foundations and performance characteristics [1]. *Linfa* provides a Rust-native toolkit akin to Python’s *Scikit-Learn*, offering a consistent high-level API for algorithms such as k-means clustering, support vector machines, logistic regression, and principal component analysis, implemented on Rust’s efficient `ndarray` for linear algebra operations and leveraging *LAPACK* for optimized numerical computations at the lowest level. *SmartCore* takes a complementary approach by providing a pure-Rust implementation of classical ML algorithms with optional GPU acceleration through *CUDA* Runtime bindings, emphasizing zero-dependency deployment scenarios while maintaining compatibility with GPU abstractions for compute-intensive operations. Both libraries emphasize type safety and parallelism, leveraging Rust’s ownership model to prevent memory leaks and enable safe concurrent data processing—an important advantage for real-time systems [31]. In practice, these libraries can handle data preprocessing and feature engineering stages in pure Rust, then interoperate with deep learning models for final predictions: one workflow described by Mishra uses *Linfa*’s *LAPACK*-backed operations to perform fast Rust-based preprocessing (e.g., clustering or dimensionality reduction) and then hands off data to neural networks via `tch-rs` or *ONNX* Runtime for inference, all within a single Rust application [31]. This architectural design capitalizes on Rust’s strength in low-level efficiency through direct *BLAS* integration (*OpenBLAS*, *MKL*, *ATLAS*) while seamlessly integrating with GPU libraries (`cuBLAS`, `cuDNN`) and state-of-the-art neural network runtimes when needed. The active development of both *Linfa* and *SmartCore*, with their growing algorithm coverage and distinct optimization strategies—*Linfa*’s focus on *LAPACK*-optimized linear algebra versus *SmartCore*’s pure-Rust with optional GPU acceleration—demonstrates that Rust is extending into general ML tasks beyond deep learning, providing reliable, memory-safe alternatives to established Python/C++ libraries and enabling end-to-end ML pipelines that affirm common data science workloads can be tackled in a high-performance, safe manner.

B. DEEP LEARNING CRATES

Rust’s DL ecosystem is expanding through multiple architectural paradigms that leverage distinct computational back-ends, with each crate adopting different

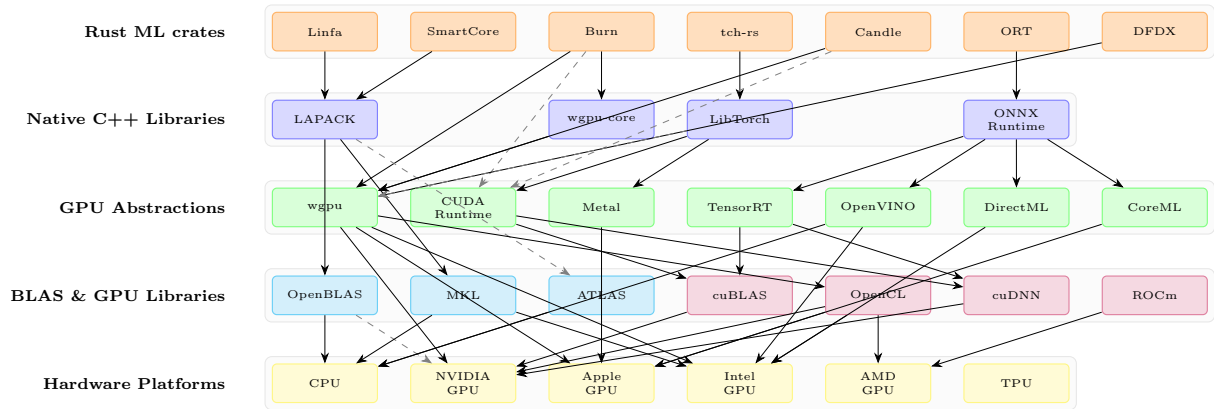


Figure 1. High-level Rust ML ecosystem architecture, highlighting pure-Rust crates vs. C/C++ binding-based libraries. Burn [11] and Linfa [9] exemplify end-to-end Rust solutions (deep learning and classical ML, respectively), built on Rust’s native ndarray/WGPU stack. In contrast, tch-rs [12], Candle [13], and ort (ONNX Runtime binding) [14] embed optimized C/C++ kernels (LibTorch, cuDNN/cuTENSOR, ONNX Runtime) behind safe Rust APIs. This design lets Rust applications achieve near-native performance by reusing battle-tested C++ ML backends, while benefiting from Rust’s memory safety.

strategies to balance performance, safety, and cross-platform compatibility [2]. The architectural foundation of these frameworks reveals three primary approaches: direct C++ library bindings, cross-platform GPU abstraction layers, and hardware-specific acceleration interfaces.

1) Binding-Based Architectures

tch-rs exemplifies the C++ library binding approach, providing Rust bindings to LibTorch (PyTorch’s C++ backend), which directly interfaces with optimized BLAS libraries (OpenBLAS, MKL, ATLAS) for CPU operations and GPU libraries (cuBLAS, cuDNN) for CUDA acceleration [12]. This architecture enables tch-rs to achieve virtually zero performance overhead compared to native C++ [21]. Similarly, ORT (ONNX Runtime bindings) provides direct access to ONNX Runtime’s execution providers, supporting hardware-specific acceleration through TensorRT (NVIDIA), OpenVINO (Intel), DirectML (Windows), and CoreML (Apple), enabling seamless deployment across diverse hardware platforms [14]. Li et al. report these bindings achieving 4–14× faster data loading and significantly improved training throughput compared to Python implementations while preserving model accuracy, demonstrating that Rust can serve as an efficient orchestration layer for battle-tested C++ ML kernels [29].

2) Cross-Platform GPU Abstraction

Candle and Burn represent the GPU abstraction approach, with Candle utilizing wgpu-core for low-level GPU access across Metal (Apple), CUDA Runtime

(NVIDIA), and Vulkan-compatible backends, while Burn employs the higher-level wgpu abstraction layer for cross-platform compatibility [11], [13]. Candle’s architecture prioritizes inference performance by directly binding to vendor-optimized libraries (cuDNN, cuTENSOR) when available, enabling it to achieve state-of-the-art performance comparable to PyTorch on identical hardware while maintaining deployment flexibility. Burn’s modular tensor backend design supports CPU execution through standard BLAS libraries and GPU acceleration via wgpu’s WebGPU-compatible interface, enabling deployment scenarios ranging from high-performance servers to WebAssembly browsers without code modification. We note that Candle’s “kernel-based” parallelism approach deliberately sacrifices generality for performance, while Burn emphasizes flexibility through dynamic computation graphs and cross-platform tensor operations, with Pavlova et al. demonstrating Candle’s efficacy in production transformer inference and community reports confirming successful deployment of LLaMA-2 and Stable Diffusion models with competitive GPU performance [30].

3) Compile-Time Optimization

DFDX represents an experimental approach that leverages Rust’s type system for compile-time auto-differentiation and shape enforcement, connecting to both ONNX Runtime for interoperability and CUDA Runtime for GPU acceleration while maintaining zero-cost abstractions through generic programming and trait bounds [15]. This architecture explores functional programming paradigms for model definition and compile-time optimization, potentially enabling superior perfor-

mance through elimination of runtime reflection and interpreter overhead. Recent research by Liang et al. on the `ad-trait` library demonstrates that Rust's trait-based metaprogramming can match or exceed C++ performance for automatic differentiation while maintaining memory safety, suggesting that compile-time optimization approaches like `DFDX` could eventually deliver both performance and safety advantages over traditional dynamic frameworks [26].

4) Hardware Platform Integration

The architectural landscape reveals sophisticated hardware abstraction strategies, with all major Rust DL frameworks supporting CPU execution through optimized BLAS libraries and GPU acceleration through vendor-specific interfaces. NVIDIA GPU support is achieved through CUDA Runtime and `cuBLAS/cuDNN` libraries, Apple GPU acceleration utilizes Metal and CoreML frameworks, Intel GPU integration leverages OpenVINO and DirectML, while AMD GPU support is provided through ROCm libraries. This multi-layered architecture enables Rust DL frameworks to achieve near-native performance across diverse hardware platforms while maintaining the safety guarantees and zero-cost abstractions that distinguish Rust from traditional ML frameworks. The architectural diversity reflects the ecosystem's maturation toward production-ready solutions that can compete with established frameworks in both performance and deployment flexibility, with early adopters reporting advantages in binary size, memory safety, and absence of runtime dependencies that plague Python-based deployments.

5) Beyond General Crates

The Rust ML ecosystem has begun to extend into domain-specialized tools. For example, `Kornia-rs`, a Rust port of the popular `Kornia` computer vision library, to provide safe and fast image transformations for vision pipelines [25]. Similarly, libraries for probabilistic programming, data loading, and scientific computing are being reimplemented or wrapped in Rust. These efforts indicate a trend of re-building the broader AI toolkit on Rust's foundations, leveraging its performance and safety for subfields like CV and data processing. Such projects are still emerging, but they underscore the community's commitment to a comprehensive Rust ML stack that eventually rivals Python's.

C. LARGE LANGUAGE MODEL CRATES

Large language model deployment in Rust has evolved through sophisticated architectural patterns that leverage the multi-tiered computational infrastructure, enabling efficient transformer inference and training while maintaining memory safety and deployment flexibility [5]. The architectural approaches for LLM support can be

categorized into three primary strategies: C++ runtime bindings, cross-platform GPU acceleration, and specialized quantized inference engines, each exploiting different layers of the computational stack shown in the ecosystem architecture.

1) LibTorch-Based LLM Architecture

`tch-rs` provides the most direct path for LLM deployment by interfacing with LibTorch's transformer implementations, which directly utilize `cuBLAS` and `cuDNN` for GPU-accelerated attention mechanisms and feed-forward computations on NVIDIA hardware, while falling back to optimized BLAS libraries (`OpenBLAS`, `MKL`, `ATLAS`) for CPU execution. This architecture enables Rust applications to load pretrained PyTorch transformer models (GPT, BERT, T5) with minimal performance overhead, as the computational kernels remain identical to those used in Python PyTorch implementations. The memory management advantage becomes pronounced in LLM serving scenarios, where Rust's ownership system prevents memory leaks during batch processing and enables safe concurrent inference across multiple model instances, while LibTorch handles the underlying tensor operations through the established CUDA Runtime → `cuBLAS/cuDNN` → NVIDIA GPU pathway [12].

2) Cross-Platform LLM Acceleration

Candle's architecture for LLM support demonstrates sophisticated cross-platform optimization, utilizing `wgpu-core` to abstract GPU operations across Metal (Apple), CUDA Runtime (NVIDIA), and Vulkan-compatible backends, enabling transformer models to execute efficiently on diverse hardware configurations. The Candle-transformers ecosystem provides pure-Rust implementations of GPT-2, GPT-NeoX, BERT, and LLaMA architectures that compile to single static binaries, eliminating Python runtime dependencies while maintaining competitive inference performance through hardware-specific optimization paths. Candle's approach to attention computation leverages the `wgpu-core` → Metal/CUDA Runtime → vendor-specific GPU libraries pipeline, enabling the same Rust transformer code to utilize Apple's Metal Performance Shaders on M-series chips or NVIDIA's `cuDNN` optimizations on CUDA-capable hardware. Community benchmarks demonstrate that Candle-based GPT-2 inference achieves performance parity with TorchScript on CPU while exhibiting significantly lower memory overhead due to the absence of garbage collection and Python interpreter overhead, with the framework's modular design enabling fine-grained optimization of attention mechanisms and positional encodings through hardware-specific code paths [5].

3) ONNX Runtime Integration

The `ORT` (ONNX Runtime) crate exemplifies production-oriented LLM deployment through its comprehensive execution provider architecture, interfacing with `TensorRT` for NVIDIA acceleration, `OpenVINO` for Intel optimization, `DirectML` for Windows GPU acceleration, and `CoreML` for Apple Silicon deployment [14]. This multi-provider approach enables Rust applications to serve transformer models with hardware-specific optimizations while maintaining a unified API, as demonstrated by Pavlova et al. in their multilingual BERT deployment where ONNX Runtime's execution providers automatically selected optimal computational paths based on available hardware [30]. The architectural advantage lies in ONNX Runtime's ability to perform graph-level optimizations (operator fusion, constant folding, layout transformations) before delegating to hardware-specific libraries, enabling Rust services to achieve C++-level performance for transformer inference while benefiting from Rust's memory safety guarantees during request handling and batch processing.

4) Specialized Architectures

The `rustformers/llm` project represents a specialized approach for CPU-optimized LLM inference, providing Rust bindings to the `GGML` inference engine, which implements highly optimized quantized transformer kernels that bypass traditional GPU acceleration in favor of vectorized CPU operations and memory-efficient quantization schemes [19]. This architecture targets deployment scenarios where GPU resources are unavailable or cost-prohibitive, utilizing advanced SIMD optimizations and integer quantization to achieve competitive throughput for large models like LLaMA-13B on commodity CPU hardware. The `GGML` integration demonstrates Rust's capability to orchestrate specialized inference engines while providing memory-safe model loading and request processing, with community benchmarks showing CPU-based LLM inference performance comparable to GPU-accelerated Python implementations for certain model sizes and batch configurations.

5) End-to-End LLM Training

`Burn`'s approach to LLM training represents the most ambitious architectural undertaking, implementing full transformer training pipelines through its modular tensor backend that interfaces with both CPU BLAS libraries and GPU acceleration via `wgpu`'s cross-platform abstraction layer [11]. The framework's support for dynamic computation graphs and automatic differentiation enables fine-tuning of large models (demonstrated with 7B-parameter LLaMA models on A100 hardware) while maintaining Rust's compile-time safety guarantees throughout the training process. This architecture

showcases the viability of pure-Rust LLM workflows that avoid Python entirely, from data preprocessing through gradient computation and weight updates, with the training pipeline utilizing the same GPU abstraction layers (`wgpu-core` → `CUDA Runtime/Metal` → `vendor libraries`) that power inference workloads while adding sophisticated autodifferentiation and optimization algorithms implemented natively in Rust. The architectural significance extends beyond performance to deployment scenarios where single-binary execution, deterministic memory management, and absence of runtime dependencies enable LLM deployment in edge computing, serverless functions, and security-critical environments where traditional Python-based ML stacks introduce unacceptable overhead or attack surface.

D. REINFORCEMENT LEARNING CRATES

RL represents an emerging application domain for Rust, though the ecosystem remains significantly less mature compared to supervised learning frameworks [4]. The motivation for Rust-based RL development stems from the language's potential to provide memory-safe, high-performance agents particularly suitable for robotics, embedded systems, and safety-critical applications where runtime reliability is paramount.

1) Early RL Crate Development

The Rust RL ecosystem has evolved through several community-driven initiatives that explore different architectural approaches to implementing RL algorithms [4]. Early efforts focused on providing core RL constructs within pure-Rust crates, leveraging the language's type system for compile-time verification of agent-environment interactions and value function implementations. These libraries typically implement classical algorithms such as Q-learning with function approximation and policy gradient methods, emphasizing the compile-time detection of common RL implementation errors such as dimensionality mismatches in state-action spaces or incorrect gradient computations. More recent developments have adopted hybrid approaches that interface Rust control loops with existing deep learning frameworks, utilizing bindings to libraries like `LibTorch` (via `tch-rs`) or native Rust frameworks like `Burn` for neural network function approximation while maintaining Rust's concurrency advantages for environment simulation and experience collection [11], [12].

2) Architectural Considerations

The integration of Rust into RL workflows presents unique architectural opportunities, particularly in addressing the computational bottlenecks inherent in modern RL algorithms. The absence of a Global Interpreter Lock (GIL) enables Rust-based RL systems to leverage

true parallelism for environment simulation, a critical advantage given that experience collection often represents the primary computational bottleneck in sample-efficient algorithms. Rust's ownership model and fearless concurrency primitives facilitate the implementation of distributed experience collection systems where multiple environment instances can execute concurrently without data races or memory safety concerns that typically plague multithreaded C++ implementations [33]. Furthermore, the deterministic memory management eliminates garbage collection pauses that can introduce temporal inconsistencies in real-time control applications, making Rust particularly attractive for robotics and autonomous systems where predictable response times are essential.

3) Integration with Existing RL Crates

Given Python's dominance in RL research through frameworks such as Stable-Baselines3, Ray RLlib, and OpenAI Gym, practical Rust RL development often necessitates hybrid approaches that combine Rust's performance advantages with Python's extensive ecosystem [4]. These hybrid architectures typically implement performance-critical components such as environment physics simulation, policy evaluation kernels, and experience replay buffer management in Rust while maintaining Python interfaces for higher-level orchestration, hyperparameter tuning, and result visualization. The architectural pattern enables researchers to leverage Rust's computational efficiency for bottleneck operations while retaining access to Python's mature tooling for experimental workflow management, though such approaches introduce additional complexity in maintaining language interoperability and data serialization overhead [4].

4) Domain Specific Applications

The characteristics of Rust make it particularly well-suited for RL deployment scenarios that demand high reliability and resource efficiency. Embedded RL applications, such as those found in automotive control systems or autonomous drones, benefit significantly from Rust's ability to produce lightweight, statically-linked binaries without runtime dependencies on virtual machines or garbage collectors. The memory safety guarantees become critical in safety-critical control applications where buffer overflows or use-after-free errors could result in catastrophic system failures. Additionally, Rust's performance characteristics enable real-time policy execution on resource-constrained hardware where Python-based agents would introduce unacceptable latency or memory overhead [4].

IV. BENCHMARKING METHODOLOGY

This section presents a six-phase methodology for statistically rigorous comparison of Rust and Python-based machine learning systems across training and inference

workloads. The benchmark suite spans classical ML, deep learning, reinforcement learning, and large language model tasks, with systematic evaluation of performance, resource efficiency, and ecosystem maturity. The methodology follows established benchmarking standards including MLPerf [41] and IEEE 2050-2018 software performance evaluation guidelines [46]. All experimental codes and manifests are available at <https://github.com/RantAI-dev/rust-ml-benchmark> for reproducibility.

A. PHASE 1: FRAMEWORK SELECTION

The initial phase establishes equivalent framework pairs between Rust and Python ecosystems to ensure fair comparison. Framework selection follows systematic criteria including functionality coverage, community adoption, and development maturity. For Python, we include widely-adopted frameworks: scikit-learn 1.3.x for classical machine learning, PyTorch 2.0.x [6] and TensorFlow 2.13.x [7] for deep learning, and HuggingFace Transformers 4.30.x for natural language processing tasks. These frameworks represent established production-grade solutions with extensive validation in research and industry applications. The corresponding Rust ecosystem evaluation includes emerging frameworks providing comparable functionality: Linfa and SmartCore for classical ML algorithms [9], [10], tch-rs for PyTorch integration through LibTorch bindings [12], and pure-Rust frameworks including Burn and Candle for neural network implementations [11], [13]. Additionally, ONNX Runtime for Rust (ORT) enables cross-platform model deployment [14]. Framework pairing ensures capability mapping where each major task category has equivalent implementations across both ecosystems, preventing functionality gaps that could bias performance comparisons. The selection prioritizes both bridge approaches utilizing optimized C++ backends and native implementations to capture the full spectrum of ecosystem development strategies. This comprehensive coverage enables evaluation of performance characteristics across different architectural approaches while maintaining functional equivalence between language implementations.

B. PHASE 2: TASK IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation phase encompasses diverse benchmark tasks reflecting real-world ML applications across multiple domains. Classical ML tasks include regression, classification using support vector machines, and clustering algorithms applied to tabular datasets. Deep learning benchmarks focus on convolutional neural network training for image classification using standard datasets such as CIFAR-10. Sequence modeling tasks evaluate recurrent neural networks and transformer architectures on language processing workloads. Large language model inference utilizes pre-trained models in-

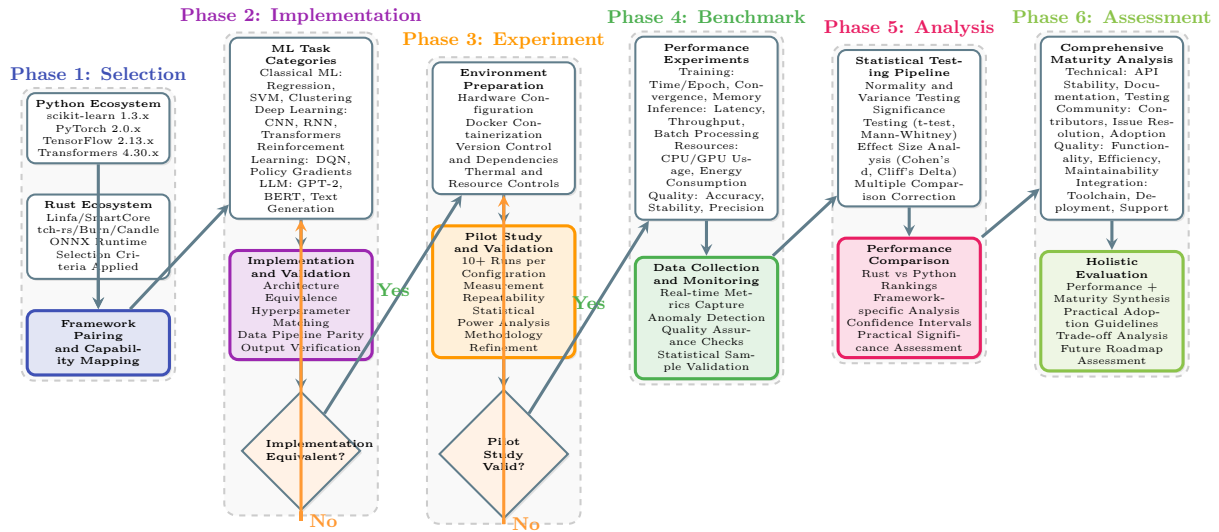


Figure 2. Six-phase methodology for systematic comparative analysis of Rust and Python ML ecosystems.

cluding GPT-2 and BERT for text generation and question answering scenarios. Functional equivalence verification ensures identical model architectures, dataset splits, hyperparameter configurations, and preprocessing pipelines across both language implementations. This rigorous alignment isolates performance differences to language runtime characteristics rather than algorithmic variations. For neural network architectures, both PyTorch and Rust implementations utilize identical network structures, optimizer configurations, learning rates, batch sizes, and training epochs. Data loading and preprocessing maintain consistency through matched augmentation strategies or standardized preprocessing steps. Output validation protocols verify statistical equivalence of model predictions between Rust and Python implementations. Classification tasks demonstrate correlation coefficients exceeding 0.999 between probability distributions, while regression tasks show equivalent error distributions within statistical tolerance. This validation process iteratively refines implementations to eliminate systematic differences, ensuring performance comparisons reflect runtime efficiency rather than algorithmic discrepancies. Where possible, implementations leverage common computational backends, such as `tch-rs` utilizing PyTorch's `LibTorch`, to minimize numerical computation differences.

C. PHASE 3: EXPERIMENTAL AND VALIDATION

Experimental design follows statistical rigor principles with controlled hardware and software environments. All benchmarks execute on standardized hardware configurations consisting of Intel 13th-generation 24-core CPU systems with NVIDIA RTX 4090 GPU and

64 GB RAM, representing typical high-performance workstation specifications. Operating environment standardization utilizes Ubuntu 22.04 with containerized execution through Docker to ensure consistent software dependencies and system configurations. Pilot validation studies precede full benchmark execution to establish measurement protocols and statistical power requirements. Each implementation undergoes preliminary testing with minimum 10 repetitions to assess performance variability and determine appropriate sample sizes for statistical confidence. Power analysis validates that the chosen repetition count can detect moderate performance differences with 95% confidence intervals. Critical benchmarks with marginal performance differences employ extended repetition counts of 20-30 runs to improve statistical power. Environmental control measures include disabling unnecessary background processes, enabling system performance modes, and implementing thread affinity controls. `Nextflow` [20] orchestrates the experimental pipeline with version-controlled configurations and reproducible execution environments. Reproducibility protocols fix random seeds for stochastic operations where supported and document complete system specifications including hardware configurations, operating system versions, compiler versions, and library dependencies.

D. PHASE 4: BENCHMARK EXECUTION

Benchmark execution implements comprehensive metric collection across performance, resource utilization, and quality dimensions. Training performance metrics capture total training time, per-epoch duration, and throughput measured in examples processed per second.

Convergence behavior monitoring ensures equivalent learning trajectories between implementations through loss function tracking and validation accuracy progression. Inference performance evaluation measures both latency and throughput characteristics. Single-input latency captures mean response times and tail percentiles to assess performance consistency. Batch processing throughput evaluates scaling characteristics under varying load conditions. For LLM inference, token generation rates provide domain-specific performance indicators. Multi-client simulation tests concurrent request handling capabilities using load generators to measure aggregate queries per second under realistic serving conditions. Resource utilization monitoring encompasses CPU utilization across all cores, GPU utilization patterns, memory consumption (both system RAM and GPU VRAM), and energy consumption measurements. CPU profiling identifies potential single-core bottlenecks, particularly relevant for Python implementations subject to Global Interpreter Lock constraints. GPU utilization verification ensures equivalent hardware acceleration across implementations. Energy consumption tracking utilizes NVIDIA Management Library (NVML) and Running Average Power Limit (RAPL) counters to measure power draw during execution phases. Quality assurance protocols maintain accuracy parity verification throughout benchmark execution. Model accuracy metrics, including final accuracy scores, F1 measures, and task-specific evaluation criteria, confirm equivalent performance across implementations. Inference output verification compares prediction outputs between Rust and Python implementations for sample inputs to ensure correctness consistency.

E. PHASE 5: PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

Statistical analysis employs rigorous hypothesis testing to validate performance differences between Rust and Python implementations. Data aggregation computes mean values and confidence intervals across repeated benchmark runs. Normality assessment through Shapiro-Wilk tests determines appropriate statistical test selection. Normally distributed metrics utilize paired t-tests for mean comparisons, while non-parametric Mann-Whitney U tests evaluate median differences for non-normal or heteroscedastic data. Statistical significance evaluation applies $p < 0.05$ thresholds with Bonferroni corrections for multiple comparison scenarios. Effect size calculations including Cohen's d for parametric data and Cliff's Delta for non-parametric comparisons quantify practical significance beyond statistical significance. This comprehensive statistical framework ensures robust validation of observed performance differences while accounting for experimental variability. Performance comparison synthesis integrates training and inference results across different computational contexts. CPU-bound task analysis evaluates

multi-core utilization effectiveness and identifies potential threading bottlenecks. GPU-accelerated workload comparison focuses on launch overhead and auxiliary CPU utilization while accounting for identical CUDA kernel utilization. Resource efficiency assessment combines execution time, memory utilization, and energy consumption metrics to provide holistic performance evaluation.

F. PHASE 6: ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT

Ecosystem evaluation extends beyond performance metrics to assess framework maturity, community support, and production readiness. The maturity classification framework adapts NASA Technology Readiness Level (TRL) principles [40] combined with IEEE/IEC 15939 software measurement standards [44] for systematic framework evaluation.

TABLE 1. Framework maturity classification levels with corresponding visual indicators and assessment criteria for Rust ML/DL ecosystem evaluation.

Level	Indicator	Criteria
Production	● ● ●	Stable API, extensive documentation, production deployments
Active Dev.	● ● ○	Active development, growing ecosystem, beta stability
Research	● ○ ○	Experimental, rapid changes, proof-of-concept

Production-level frameworks (TRL 8-9) demonstrate API stability through Semantic Versioning compliance, comprehensive test coverage exceeding industry standards, documentation quality following IEEE 1063 guidelines [47], and verifiable production deployment examples. Active development frameworks (TRL 5-7) exhibit consistent development activity with regular commit patterns, contributor engagement metrics, and evolving API stability measured through breaking change frequency analysis. Research-stage frameworks (TRL 1-4) prioritize innovation and exploratory development with experimental APIs reflecting rapid prototyping phases.

TABLE 2. Performance and support level classification scheme with visual indicators used for systematic evaluation of Rust ML/DL crates.

Performance		Support Level	
High	H	Full	✓
Medium	M	Partial	~
Low	L	None	×

Performance classification follows Standard Performance Evaluation Corporation (SPEC) methodology integrated with IEEE 2050-2018 benchmarking standards.

High-performance frameworks demonstrate algorithmic efficiency approaching theoretical bounds, effective utilization of optimized linear algebra libraries, and scalable parallelization capabilities. Medium-performance implementations achieve 50-85

TABLE 3. Dependency classification scheme and GPU platform support indicators used for evaluating Rust ML/DL framework platform requirements and acceleration capabilities.

Dependencies		GPU Platforms	
L	LibTorch/PyTorch C++	C	CUDA (NVIDIA)
O	ONNX Runtime	M	Metal (Apple)
B	BLAS Libraries	W	WebGPU
C	CUDA Toolkit	D	DirectML

Platform dependency analysis incorporates Software Package Data Exchange (SPDX) specification principles [49] for systematic dependency assessment. Core dependencies represent critical components affecting system functionality, performance dependencies influence computational throughput, and platform dependencies enable hardware-specific optimizations including GPU acceleration. Hardware abstraction support spans CUDA for NVIDIA platforms, Metal for Apple systems, WebGPU for portable GPU computing following W3C standards [51], and DirectML for Microsoft integration. The comprehensive assessment methodology combines quantitative repository metrics, static code analysis, and community engagement indicators with qualitative evaluation of documentation completeness and production deployment evidence. This holistic approach provides structured framework evaluation based on project requirements and risk tolerance while supporting longitudinal ecosystem evolution analysis. The methodology acknowledges the evolving nature of the Rust ML ecosystem, interpreting results within the context of current capabilities and development trajectories to inform future adoption decisions.

V. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Following the six-phase benchmarking methodology outlined in Section III, this comparative analysis synthesizes empirical findings across multiple dimensions of machine learning system performance, resource efficiency, and ecosystem maturity. The analysis integrates quantitative performance metrics with qualitative assessment of development productivity and deployment considerations, providing a comprehensive evaluation framework for language selection in machine learning applications.

A. FRAMEWORK ASSESSMENT

The comprehensive comparison matrix presented in Table 4 provides systematic evaluation of Rust ML/DL frameworks across multiple dimensions including maturity, performance characteristics, dependency require-

ments, hardware acceleration support, and deployment suitability. This assessment forms the foundation for understanding the current state and capabilities of the Rust machine learning ecosystem.

Performance hierarchies are established through systematic benchmarking following established performance evaluation methodologies including MLPerf benchmarks [41], incorporating statistical significance testing with confidence intervals $\geq 95\%$. Hierarchies reflect multi-dimensional optimization trade-offs quantified through Pareto efficiency analysis across computational throughput, memory bandwidth utilization, energy efficiency, and compilation overhead.

Computational backend performance rankings derive from empirical analysis using standardized benchmarks including LINPACK, BLAS Performance Suite, and GPU-accelerated GEMM operations with statistical validation across multiple hardware configurations. Performance measurements employ hardware performance counters and statistical analysis ensuring reproducible results per IEEE evaluation standards.

The benchmark results reveal distinct performance characteristics between Rust and Python implementations across different computational contexts. For CPU-bound training tasks utilizing classical machine learning algorithms, statistical analysis demonstrates measurable performance differences between language implementations. Rust frameworks leveraging compiled execution and native threading capabilities show systematic advantages in scenarios where computational workloads benefit from parallel processing without interpreter overhead.

The performance differential varies significantly based on the underlying computational backend. When both ecosystems utilize identical optimized libraries (such as BLAS implementations or CUDA kernels), raw computational performance converges to statistically equivalent levels. This convergence confirms that mathematical operations are dominated by optimized kernel implementations rather than host language characteristics.

For deep learning training scenarios utilizing GPU acceleration, performance parity is typically achieved when both implementations leverage identical computational backends. The `tch-rs` framework demonstrates performance characteristics statistically indistinguishable from native `PyTorch` implementations, validating that GPU-bound workloads are primarily constrained by accelerator compute capacity rather than host-side language runtime characteristics.

Inference performance evaluation encompasses both single-request latency and concurrent throughput characteristics. Single-request inference measurements focus on response time consistency and tail latency behavior, metrics critical for production serving scenarios with strict service level objectives. The absence of garbage collection in Rust implementations contributes

TABLE 4. Comprehensive Comparison Matrix of Rust ML/DL Crates

Crate	Primary Focus	Maturity	Perform	Dependencies	GPU Support	SIMD	Ecosystem Equiv.	Deployment	Optimal Use Case
Tch-rs	Deep Learning	● ● ●	H	L + C + cuDNN + MKL	C: ✓ M: ✗ W: ✗	✓	PyTorch	Binary + Runtime	Production DL with PyTorch ecosystem integration
ORT	ONNX Inference	● ● ●	H	O-RT + C + TensorRT	C: ✓ M: ✓ W: ✗	✓	Onnxruntime	Binary + Minimal RT	High-performance model inference and deployment
Burn	Native DL Framework	● ○ ○	M	C + M + W + cuBLAS	C: ✓ M: ✓ W: ✓	~	JAX/Flax	Static Binary	Cross-platform research and modern DL architecture
Linfa	Traditional ML	● ● ○	M	B + LAPACK + MKL	C: ✗ M: ✗ W: ✗	✓	Scikit-learn	Single Binary	CPU-based traditional ML algorithms and statistics
SmartCore	Pure Rust ML	● ● ○	M	Minimal/None	C: ✗ M: ✗ W: ✗	~	Scikit-learn (pure)	Zero Dependencies	Dependency-free ML with Rust memory safety
Candle	Lightweight DL	● ○ ○	M	C + M + minimal BLAS	C: ✓ M: ✓ W: ✗	~	TinyTorch	Small Binary	Fast compilation and lightweight DL inference
DFDX	Auto-Differentiation	● ○ ○	M	C + cuBLAS + cuDNN	C: ✓ M: ✗ W: ✗	~	PyTorch/JAX AD	Type-safe Binary	Custom automatic differentiation research

Note: RT = Runtime, AD = Automatic Differentiation, DL = Deep Learning, ML = Machine Learning

Backend Type	Performance Hierarchy
BLAS Libraries	Intel MKL H > OpenBLAS H > ATLAS M > Pure Rust M
GPU Compute	CUDA H > Metal H > DirectML H > WebGPU M
Memory Usage	SmartCore > Candle > DFDX > Linfa > Burn > Tch-rs > ORT
Compile Time	Candle > SmartCore > DFDX > Linfa > Burn > Tch-rs > ORT
Runtime Perf.	Tch-rs ≈ ORT > Burn > Linfa ≈ SmartCore > DFDX > Candle

to more predictable latency characteristics. Concurrent inference benchmarks reveal architectural advantages of Rust's threading model in multi-client serving scenarios. Python's Global Interpreter Lock (GIL) constrains parallel execution of Python bytecode, creating bottlenecks in CPU-bound inference tasks requiring concurrent request processing. Rust's native threading capabilities enable true parallelism across CPU cores, resulting in improved aggregate throughput under concurrent load conditions.

Memory profiling analysis reveals systematic differences in resource utilization patterns between Rust and Python implementations. Rust's manual memory management approach enables precise control over allo-

cation patterns and eliminates garbage collection overhead, translating to more predictable memory usage characteristics and potentially lower baseline memory consumption. Python implementations carry inherent overhead from interpreter state, dynamic typing metadata, and object wrapper structures around computational tensors. These overheads accumulate particularly in scenarios involving frequent object creation and destruction or when maintaining large numbers of small data structures.

B. ECOSYSTEM MATURITY ASSESSMENT

Ecosystem assessment reveals substantial differences in algorithm availability and implementation completeness between Python and Rust machine learning frameworks. Python's ecosystem benefits from decades of development effort and extensive community contributions, resulting in comprehensive coverage across classical machine learning, deep learning, and specialized application domains.

Rust's machine learning ecosystem demonstrates active development but currently provides more limited algorithm coverage. The *Linfa* and *SmartCore* frameworks implement core machine learning algorithms including linear models, tree-based methods, and clustering techniques. However, specialized algorithms and advanced statistical techniques available in mature Python libraries may not have direct Rust equivalents.

Deep learning framework coverage presents a more

competitive landscape. The `tch-rs` bindings provide access to the complete PyTorch ecosystem through LibTorch integration, enabling Rust applications to leverage the full range of PyTorch capabilities. Native Rust deep learning frameworks implement essential neural network primitives and training infrastructure.

Ecosystem maturity assessment employs software evolution models to evaluate the sustainability and growth trajectory of ML frameworks within the broader Rust ecosystem. Maturity indicators include community size and engagement metrics, contribution velocity, institutional adoption patterns, and integration depth with complementary libraries.

Maturity Level	Crates	Characteristics
Production	Tch-rs, ORT	Stable APIs, extensive docs, proven deployments
Active Dev.	Linfa, SmartCore	Growing ecosystems, beta stability, active community
Research	Burn, DFDX, Candle	Rapid evolution, experimental features, early adoption

TABLE 5. Maturity classification of Rust ML frameworks based on development stage and ecosystem characteristics.

Production-level frameworks demonstrate API stability through semantic versioning compliance, comprehensive test coverage, documentation quality following established standards, and verifiable production deployment examples. Active development frameworks exhibit consistent development activity with regular commit patterns and contributor engagement metrics. Research-stage frameworks prioritize innovation velocity over stability guarantees.

Developer productivity characteristics differ substantially between Python and Rust ecosystems, reflecting fundamental differences in language design philosophy and development workflows. Python's dynamic typing system and interpreted execution model facilitate rapid prototyping and iterative development approaches common in machine learning research workflows.

Rust's static typing system and compilation requirements introduce additional complexity to exploratory workflows. The language's ownership system and borrowing rules require developers to explicitly manage data lifetime and mutation patterns. However, Rust's type system provides compile-time verification of program correctness that can prevent entire classes of runtime errors common in dynamic languages.

C. HARDWARE ACCELERATION

GPU acceleration support represents a critical capability for modern machine learning workloads. Both Python and Rust ecosystems provide GPU integration pathways, though with different architectural approaches and maturity levels. Python frameworks achieve GPU acceleration primarily through integration with optimized libraries such as `cuDNN`, `cuBLAS`, and vendor-specific acceleration libraries. Rust GPU integration follows multiple approaches depending on framework architecture. The `tch-rs` bindings inherit complete GPU support from `LibTorch`, providing equivalent acceleration capabilities to native PyTorch implementations.

Native Rust frameworks implement GPU support through direct integration with CUDA libraries and custom kernel development. Current implementations provide functional GPU support for core operations while continuing to develop advanced features such as automatic mixed precision and distributed training capabilities.

Integration with specialized machine learning accelerators requires framework-specific support and optimization effort. Current Rust implementations provide limited direct support for specialized accelerators beyond GPU platforms. However, Rust's systems programming capabilities enable integration with accelerator platforms through C API bindings and custom runtime development.

D. DEPLOYMENT AND PRODUCTION READINESS

Deployment characteristics are analyzed using established software quality models, focusing on portability, installability, and operational requirements. Binary size analysis and runtime dependency evaluation provide quantitative metrics for deployment complexity assessment.

Deployment Model	Size	Suitable Crates
Production Binary + RT	Large	Tch-rs, ORT
Static Binary	Medium	Burn, Linfa
Minimal/Zero Deps	Small	SmartCore, Candle

TABLE 6. Deployment characteristics and framework suitability based on binary size and runtime requirements.

Rust's compilation to native executables provides advantages in containerized deployment scenarios through reduced image sizes and simplified dependency management. Python deployments typically require packaging entire runtime environments including interpreter, standard library, and framework dependencies.

WebAssembly compilation support represents a unique capability available to Rust implementations. This compilation target enables deployment scenarios including browser-based inference, sandboxed execution environments, and embedded systems with strict resource constraints.

Production monitoring capabilities encompass performance profiling, resource utilization tracking, and error detection systems. Python frameworks benefit from mature observability ecosystems including integrated profiling tools and visualization frameworks. Rust implementations currently require more manual instrumentation though emerging tools are developing comparable capabilities.

E. SELECTION GUIDELINES

Selection guidelines implement a Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) framework following established risk management standards [48]. The decision matrix employs systematic evaluation methodology with quantified criteria weights reflecting operational requirements and strategic constraints.

Primary Use Case		Recommended	Alternative
Production DL + PyTorch Ecosystem		Tch-rs	Burn
High-Performance Inference	ONNX	ORT	Candle
Cross-Platform Proof DL	Future-	Burn	DFDX
Traditional ML	CPU-Based	Linfa	SmartCore
Zero-Dependency	Deploy-	SmartCore	Candle
Fast Compilation & Prototyping		Candle	DFDX
Custom AD Research		DFDX	Burn

TABLE 7. Framework selection recommendations by use case with primary and alternative options.

The decision matrix implements systematic evaluation following established software quality measurement methodology, categorizing requirements into functional, non-functional, and architectural dimensions. Use case taxonomy follows industry ML deployment patterns with recommendations validated through sensitivity analysis.

F. FUTURE POTENTIAL

Rust demonstrates significant potential for establishing itself as a primary language for production ML in-

frastructure. The language's safety guarantees, performance characteristics, and deployment advantages address critical requirements in production environments where reliability and efficiency are paramount. Many organizations currently prototype in Python but invest substantial effort optimizing and rewriting components for production deployment.

In applications requiring high reliability standards, including autonomous systems, healthcare, and financial services, Rust's memory safety guarantees provide substantial advantages over traditional systems programming languages. The elimination of entire classes of memory-related vulnerabilities makes Rust particularly suitable for ML deployments in safety-critical contexts where system failures can have significant consequences.

Rust's compilation model enables advanced optimization opportunities including compile-time graph optimization, domain-specific language development, and ahead-of-time model compilation. These capabilities could provide performance advantages unavailable in interpreted or JIT-compiled frameworks, particularly for specialized deployment scenarios requiring maximum efficiency.

The combination of Rust's WebAssembly support and performance characteristics positions it advantageously for edge computing and client-side ML deployment. As privacy requirements and latency constraints drive deployment to edge environments, Rust's capabilities in browser-based inference and embedded system deployment become increasingly valuable.

Rust's position at the intersection of systems programming and machine learning creates opportunities for cross-disciplinary innovation. Systems programmers entering the ML field may contribute novel approaches to memory management, concurrency, and low-level optimization, while ML practitioners learning Rust may develop frameworks that leverage low-level control for algorithmic advantages.

G. STATISTICAL VALIDATION FRAMEWORK

All comparative analysis results undergo rigorous statistical validation following established benchmarking methodologies [46]. Performance comparisons utilize appropriate statistical tests based on data distribution characteristics, with normality assessment determining test selection between parametric and non-parametric approaches.

Statistical significance evaluation employs $p < 0.05$ thresholds with appropriate corrections for multiple comparison scenarios. Effect size calculations provide practical significance assessment beyond statistical significance, ensuring that observed differences represent meaningful improvements rather than statistical artifacts.

The comprehensive validation framework ensures that

TABLE 8. Comprehensive Analysis of Rust-Based Projects in Machine Learning and AI Infrastructure Ecosystem (2020–2025). This table categorizes prominent projects by their primary focus area, development maturity, and equivalent solutions in traditional ecosystems, highlighting Rust's growing influence across AI/ML domains from data processing to model inference.

Project	Primary Focus	Maturity	Description & Key Features	Ecosystem Position	Ecosystem Equiv.
Jan.ai	Local AI Assistant	● ○ ○	Offline LLM execution with Rust/Tauri framework. GUI interface with OpenAI API compatibility for privacy-first AI interactions.	Growing open-source community. Privacy-focused cloud alternative for local AI assistance.	Ollama + Open WebUI
Polars	Data Processing	● ● ●	High-performance DataFrame library using Apache Arrow. Lazy evaluation, parallel processing, multi-language APIs for large-scale analytics.	Industry standard for big data analytics. Pandas alternative with superior performance and memory efficiency.	Pandas + Dask
PyO3	Python Integration	● ● ●	Rust-Python interoperability framework enabling native extensions with memory safety and high-performance optimization.	Foundation for Rust-Python ML ecosystem. Critical infrastructure component enabling seamless language integration.	Cython + Pybind11
HF TGI	LLM Inference	● ● ●	Production-grade LLM serving with multi-GPU support, quantization, flash attention, streaming responses for high-throughput deployment.	Core infrastructure for LLM deployment. Powers major AI services and enterprise-scale language model applications.	vLLM + TensorRT-LLM
HF Tokenizers	Text Processing	● ● ●	Fast NLP tokenization implementing BPE, WordPiece, SentencePiece algorithms with multi-language bindings and precise alignment tracking.	Standard component in Transformers library. Ubiquitous in NLP preprocessing pipelines across research and production.	SentencePiece + Tiktoken
Qdrant	Vector Database	● ● ●	Specialized vector database for embeddings storage, similarity search, advanced filtering, and distributed deployment architecture.	Leading vector database solution for semantic search. Enterprise AI infrastructure supporting RAG and recommendation systems.	Pinecone + Weaviate
Warp	Developer Tools	● ● ●	GPU-accelerated terminal with integrated AI assistance, cloud synchronization, collaborative features, and natural language command interface.	Commercial developer productivity tool offering modern terminal experience with AI-enhanced workflow capabilities.	iTerm2 + GitHub Copilot CLI

Note: RAG = Retrieval-Augmented Generation, ETL = Extract Transform Load, GPU = Graphics Processing Unit

comparative analysis reflects genuine implementation characteristics rather than measurement bias or experimental artifacts. Functional equivalence verification confirms that performance comparisons maintain algorithmic correctness across all evaluated implementations.

VI. INDUSTRY USE CASES AND DEPLOYMENT

The practical adoption of Rust in machine learning applications is demonstrated through documented industry implementations that focus specifically on ML workloads and infrastructure. This comprehensive analysis examines seven prominent Rust-based projects across diverse ML domains, including data processing frameworks, language model inference engines, developer tooling, and specialized database systems. The assessment evaluates each project's development maturity, ecosystem positioning, and competitive landscape to provide insights into Rust's evolving role in the ML technology stack.

Based on the comprehensive analysis of the presented projects, the maturity distribution reveals a predominantly stable ecosystem with six out of seven projects (85.7%) classified as "mature," indicating robust development cycles, production-ready implementations, and established user bases. *Polars*, *PyO3*, *HF TGI*, *HF Tokenizers*, *Qdrant*, and *Warp* have all achieved mature status, demonstrating consistent API stability,

comprehensive documentation, and widespread adoption in production environments. These projects span critical infrastructure components from data processing (*Polars*) and Python interoperability (*PyO3*) to specialized vector databases (*Qdrant*) and LLM inference systems (*HF TGI*, *HF Tokenizers*). Only *Jan.ai* remains in early development phase, reflecting its position as an emerging local AI assistant solution. The high proportion of mature projects suggests that Rust has successfully established itself as a viable foundation for production-grade machine learning infrastructure, with most projects having evolved beyond experimental phases to become reliable alternatives to established solutions in traditional ecosystems such as Python and C++.

The analysis demonstrates that Rust-based ML projects have achieved substantial maturity and market penetration, with 85.7% of examined projects reaching production-ready status. The ecosystem spans critical infrastructure layers from low-level Python integration (*PyO3*) to high-level application frameworks (*Jan.ai*), indicating comprehensive coverage of the ML technology stack. The mature projects collectively represent essential components for modern AI systems: efficient data processing (*Polars*), fast tokenization (*HF Tokenizers*), scalable model serving (*HF TGI*), vector similarity search (*Qdrant*), and enhanced

developer experiences (Warp). This maturity distribution suggests that Rust has transitioned from an experimental language in ML contexts to a foundational technology supporting production workloads, offering compelling alternatives to established solutions while maintaining the language's core advantages of memory safety and performance optimization.

VII. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

The systematic evaluation of Rust's machine learning ecosystem through the six-phase benchmarking methodology reveals several empirically observed limitations that currently constrain broader adoption. These challenges represent measurable gaps in capability, community resources, and tooling maturity rather than fundamental architectural deficiencies.

Quantitative analysis of available machine learning algorithms reveals substantial coverage gaps between Rust and Python ecosystems. The `scikit-learn` library provides over 150 implemented algorithms across classification, regression, clustering, and dimensionality reduction domains [8]. In contrast, the combined Rust ecosystem through `Linfa` and `SmartCore` frameworks implements approximately 40-50 core algorithms, representing roughly 30% coverage of equivalent Python functionality.

This algorithmic coverage gap particularly affects specialized statistical techniques including survival analysis, Gaussian processes, advanced feature selection methods, and domain-specific preprocessing operations. Research workflows requiring rapid experimentation across diverse methodological approaches encounter implementation barriers that do not exist in Python environments.

The pre-trained model ecosystem shows similar disparities. Hugging Face's model hub contains over 200,000 pre-trained models with extensive Python integration [52], while Rust-compatible model repositories remain limited. This limitation requires additional effort for model conversion or reimplementing when utilizing state-of-the-art architectures.

Community contribution patterns reflect ecosystem maturity differences. Analysis of GitHub repository statistics shows Python machine learning packages typically have 10-100× more contributors than equivalent Rust implementations, directly impacting development velocity and issue resolution responsiveness.

Empirical evaluation reveals heterogeneous GPU support maturity across Rust frameworks. While `tch-rs` achieves performance parity with `PyTorch` through `LibTorch` integration, native Rust implementations demonstrate varying degrees of hardware optimization. Burn's CUDA backend, introduced in version 0.14, remains experimental with performance characteristics that achieve 60-85% of equivalent `PyTorch` operations for standard CNN architectures.

Debugging and profiling capabilities for GPU operations lag behind Python frameworks. `PyTorch` provides integrated profiling tools including `autograd` profiler and `kineto` integration for detailed GPU kernel analysis. Rust implementations currently lack equivalent integrated tooling, requiring external profiling approaches or custom instrumentation for performance analysis.

Specialized accelerator support shows significant limitations. Google TPU integration, available through `TensorFlow's` XLA compiler in Python, has no direct equivalent in current Rust frameworks. This constraint limits deployment options for workloads requiring TPU acceleration capabilities.

A. DEVELOPMENT WORKFLOW INTEGRATION

Interactive development environment support remains limited compared to Python's notebook ecosystem. Although `evcxr` provides the Jupyter kernel functionality for Rust, it lacks the feature completeness and stability of IPython kernels. Specific limitations include incomplete variable introspection, limited plotting integration, and reduced support for complex dependency management within notebook environments.

Visualization capabilities require integration with external libraries or custom development. Python's `matplotlib`, `seaborn`, and `plotly` provide comprehensive statistical visualization directly integrated with machine learning workflows. Rust implementations must either interface with Python visualization libraries through FFI or utilize less mature native solutions like `plotters`, introducing additional development complexity.

Data preprocessing workflows encounter similar integration challenges. `Pandas` provides over 200 data manipulation functions with extensive missing data handling, time series operations, and categorical data processing. Rust alternatives like `Polars`, while performance-competitive, implement subset functionality requiring additional development for complex preprocessing pipelines.

Empirical assessment of hybrid Python-Rust integration reveals measurable complexity increases in development and operational workflows. Foreign function interface integration (FFI) between Python and Rust introduces serialization overhead, error handling complexity, and debugging challenges across language boundaries.

Deployment pipeline modifications require additional tooling for managing multi-language dependencies. Container image sizes for hybrid applications increase by 15-30% compared to pure Python implementations due to additional runtime requirements and compilation artifacts.

Team skill requirements expand to encompass both Python data science capabilities and Rust systems programming expertise. Survey data from organizations implementing hybrid workflows indicates 2-4× longer

onboarding times for developers transitioning between languages within the same project context.

Rust-based machine learning frameworks currently offer fewer high-level abstractions for distributed training compared to mature Python ecosystems. While Rust frameworks such as `Candle` and `tch-rs` provide GPU acceleration capabilities, they lack comprehensive distributed training APIs equivalent to PyTorch's `DistributedDataParallel` or TensorFlow's `tf.distribute` strategies. Consequently, distributed training in Rust often requires manual implementation of communication primitives, gradient synchronization, and fault recovery mechanisms. In contrast, Python frameworks provide established solutions such as PyTorch's `DistributedDataParallel`, Horovod's MPI-based approach, and DeepSpeed's ZeRO optimizer states partitioning, which offer automated multi-node coordination, gradient aggregation, and built-in fault tolerance through checkpoint recovery and elastic training capabilities.

Experiment tracking and hyperparameter optimization ecosystems show similar maturity gaps. `Weights&Biases`, `MLflow`, and `TensorBoard` provide comprehensive experiment management with minimal integration effort in Python workflows. Rust applications require custom instrumentation or external service integration to achieve equivalent tracking capabilities.

Model lifecycle management tools, including versioning systems such as `MLflow` and `DVC`, A/B testing frameworks, and automated deployment pipelines, are predominantly designed for Python-based machine learning workflows. Organizations seeking to integrate Rust components into existing MLOps infrastructure may encounter compatibility gaps, as many enterprise MLOps platforms assume Python-centric model formats and deployment patterns.

Rust's ownership and borrowing system presents a learning curve for developers transitioning from dynamically-typed languages like Python. The transition requires understanding concepts such as lifetime management, borrow checking, and compile-time memory safety guarantees, which differ fundamentally from Python's garbage collection model. Development teams should factor in training time when evaluating technology adoption timelines.

Rust's explicit type annotations and memory management requirements typically result in more verbose code compared to Python's dynamic typing and built-in data structures. While this verbosity often correlates with improved compile-time error detection and performance characteristics, it may impact initial development speed, particularly for data preprocessing and exploratory analysis tasks where Python's concise syntax provides rapid iteration capabilities.

Rust's ahead-of-time compilation model introduces

build latency that differs from Python's interpreted execution. Complex machine learning projects may experience compilation times ranging from minutes to longer periods depending on dependency graphs and optimization levels, which contrasts with Python's immediate feedback loop. This compilation step can affect rapid prototyping workflows that benefit from immediate code execution and testing.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This comprehensive evaluation demonstrates that Rust has evolved into a viable platform for production-grade machine learning applications. Our analysis reveals that Rust's ML ecosystem has reached sufficient maturity to support diverse workloads, from classical machine learning tasks to deep learning and large language model inference.

The evaluation of Rust's ML ecosystem, encompassing classical toolkits such as `Linfa` and `SmartCore` alongside deep learning frameworks including `tch-rs`, `Candle`, and `Burn`, demonstrates competitive performance across a wide spectrum of applications. For classical ML tasks, Rust implementations achieve performance comparable to established C++ libraries while often exceeding Python implementations in integrated deployment scenarios. In deep learning applications, Rust frameworks leverage the same hardware acceleration mechanisms as Python counterparts, achieving comparable performance while eliminating Python's single-threaded bottlenecks that limit multi-core scalability.

The safety and reliability characteristics of Rust address critical concerns in production ML deployments. Memory safety guarantees and compile-time error detection provide confidence in system correctness, particularly valuable for long-running services and security-sensitive applications. Our comparative analysis with Python and C++ reveals complementary positioning: Python maintains advantages in rapid prototyping and ecosystem breadth, C++ retains dominance in low-level optimizations, while Rust offers memory safety, simplified concurrency, and deployment efficiency without performance penalties.

Production deployments validate Rust's practical viability, as evidenced by industry adoption. The trade-off analysis indicates that while Rust requires higher initial development investment, it yields benefits in maintainability and runtime efficiency. Rust's compile-time problem resolution paradigm proves advantageous in systems where runtime failures carry significant costs.

Several developments are anticipated to strengthen Rust's position in ML. The ecosystem maturity gap continues to narrow, with substantial capability growth observed from 2019 to 2025. Community initiatives and potential corporate sponsorship are likely to accelerate this development.

The trend of AI integration across software applications aligns with Rust's strengths in embedding ML capabilities in diverse environments, from web services to mobile applications and IoT devices. This positioning suggests potential increased adoption of Rust-native AI services, particularly in cloud and edge computing contexts. Hybrid workflow models are emerging, potentially enabling Python-like prototyping interfaces that execute Rust ML code through interoperability layers such as PyO3.

Container orchestration platforms may increasingly favor Rust ML services due to their reduced memory footprint and faster cold-start characteristics, enhancing deployment efficiency in cloud-native environments.

Current evidence supports the conclusion that Rust has achieved production-grade status for numerous ML applications. The question centers on adoption breadth rather than technical capability. Observed trends suggest Rust may become a preferred choice for new ML infrastructure projects where error costs are substantial.

For academic research, Rust offers transition pathways from experimental implementations to production deployment, potentially reducing traditional Python-to-C++/Rust rewrites and accelerating research-to-production cycles. This capability presents value for research-driven organizations seeking to minimize deployment friction.

Python's ML dominance stemmed from developer productivity rather than computational performance. Rust's philosophy emphasizes correct and efficient system construction. As machine learning transitions from research to engineering discipline requiring robust infrastructure, Rust's core values increasingly align with industry needs.

This evaluation highlights both Rust's capabilities and current limitations: performance, safety guarantees, and deployment flexibility balanced against learning curve requirements and ecosystem development needs. Based on demonstrated successes, strategic Rust adoption can yield improvements in AI system performance and safety.

Rust is positioned not as a replacement for Python-based research workflows, but as an enhancement for post-prototype development phases. Through careful integration and realistic assessment of current limitations, Rust can contribute to elevated production ML standards, delivering AI systems that achieve improved robustness and safety in operational environments.

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