

# SDS 387 Linear Models

Fall 2025

Lecture 26 - Thu, Dec 4, 2025

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- BEHAVIOR IN HIGH-DIMENSIONS:  $d = d(n)$  s.t.  $\frac{d}{n} \rightarrow \gamma$

The fixed dimensional case:  $\gamma = 0$ . Also if  $d = o(n)$  we are in the  $\gamma = 0$  scenario. Today we will study the case of  $\gamma > 0$  and even  $\gamma > 1$ .

- Let's assume a linear model with random covariates:

$$Y_i = \Phi_i^T \beta^* + \varepsilon_i \quad i=1, \dots, n$$

$$Y_i, \Phi_i \text{ are iid from some } \mathbb{P}_{Y, \Phi} \\ \beta^* \in \mathbb{R}^d \quad \varepsilon_i \stackrel{\text{iid}}{\sim} (0, \sigma^2)$$

- We are interested in the excess risk of  $\hat{\beta}$  (the OLS)

$$R(\hat{\beta}) \stackrel{\text{excess risk}}{=} \|\hat{\beta} - \beta^*\|_{\Sigma}^2 \quad \Sigma = \mathbb{E}[\Phi \Phi^T] \quad (1)$$

- We saw that an upper bound for this risk is

$$\frac{\sigma^2}{n} \operatorname{tr}(\hat{\Sigma}^{-1} \Sigma) \quad \hat{\Sigma} = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \Phi_i \Phi_i^T$$

- Mourtada's paper, Theorem 1: this is also the value of the minimax risk.

Corollary 2: If  $n > d+1$  and the distribution of the  $\Phi_i$ 's is not degenerate the minimax risk is lower bounded by

$$\sigma^2 \frac{d}{n-d-1} \approx \boxed{\sigma^2 \frac{\gamma}{1-\gamma}}$$

for large  $n$  and  $d$ .

- Also Mourtada shows that if  $d \geq n$  the minimax value for the excess risk is infinity!

- Belkin, Hsu and Xu (2020) SIAM Journal of Mathematics & Data Science

An exact analysis of the excess risk when the  $\Phi_i$ 's are iid  $N(0, I_d)$ . In this case the excess risk is

$$\frac{\sigma^2}{n} \mathbb{E}_{I_d} \left[ \operatorname{tr}(\hat{\Sigma}^{-1} \Sigma) \right] = \sigma^2 \mathbb{E} \left[ \left( \sum_{i=1}^n \Phi_i \Phi_i^T \right)^{-1} \right] \quad (2)$$

Wishart distribution  
with parameter  $I_d$   
and  $n$  degrees of freedom

$$= \begin{cases} \frac{\sigma^2 \text{tr}(I_d)}{n-d-1} = \sigma^2 \frac{d}{n-d-1} & n > d+1 \\ \infty & n \leq d+1 \end{cases}$$

$\hookrightarrow$  at interpolation, i.e.  $d \leq n$ , this is infinity!

- Assume  $d > n$ , we cannot use OLS  $\hat{\beta}$ . We use the min-norm estimator

$$\hat{\beta}_{MN} = \Phi^+ Y = \Phi^T (\underbrace{\Phi \Phi^T}_{n \times n \text{ invertible with prob. 1}})^{-1} Y$$

$\nwarrow$   $\searrow$   
 $n \times d$  matrix whose  $n$ th row is  $\Phi_n^T$        $n$ -dim vector of  $y_i$ 's

- Let's compute  $\mathbb{E}[\|\hat{\beta}_{MN} - \beta^*\|^2]$ .

The first thing to notice is that there exists a bias.

$$\begin{aligned} \beta^* - \hat{\beta}_{MN} &= \beta^* - \Phi^T (\Phi \Phi^T)^{-1} \Phi \beta^* - \Phi^T (\Phi \Phi^T)^{-1} \varepsilon \quad \varepsilon = \begin{bmatrix} \varepsilon_1 \\ \vdots \\ \varepsilon_n \end{bmatrix} \\ &= \underbrace{(\text{Id} - \underbrace{\Phi^T (\Phi \Phi^T)^{-1} \Phi}_{\Pi})}_{\text{Id} - \Pi} \beta^* - \Phi^T (\Phi \Phi^T)^{-1} \varepsilon \end{aligned}$$

orthogonal projection onto the null space of  $\Phi$

$$\begin{aligned}
 \mathbb{E} [\|\beta^* - \hat{\beta}_{MN}\|^2] &= \mathbb{E}_{\Phi} [\|(\mathbb{I} - \Pi)\beta^*\|^2] + \\
 &\quad \mathbb{E}_{\Phi} [\text{tr}((\Phi\Phi^T)^{-1} \Phi \Phi^T (\Phi\Phi^T)^{-1} \mathbb{E}[\varepsilon\varepsilon^T])] \\
 &\quad \downarrow \\
 &\quad \sigma^2 \mathbb{E}[(\Phi\Phi^T)^{-1}] \\
 &= T_1 + T_2
 \end{aligned}$$

Next  $T_1 = \|\beta^*\|^2 - \mathbb{E}[\|\Pi\beta^*\|^2]$

To compute  $\mathbb{E}[\|\Pi\beta^*\|^2]$  we will use the fact that if  $z \sim N(0, \mathbb{I}_d)$  then  $Uz \sim N(0, \mathbb{I}_d)$  for any  $U$  orthogonal. Let  $U_1, \dots, U_d$  be  $d$  orthogonal  $d \times d$  matrices s.t.

$$U_j \beta^* = \|\beta^*\| e_j \quad \text{for } j=1, \dots, d$$

$\hookrightarrow$   $j$ th standard unit vector

$\downarrow$   
so  $j=1, \dots, d$

$$\begin{aligned}
 \|\Pi\beta^*\|^2 &= \beta^{*T} \Phi^T (\Phi\Phi^T)^{-1} \Phi \beta^* \stackrel{\mathbb{I}_d}{=} \beta^{*T} U_j^T \Phi^T (\Phi U_j U_j^T \Phi^T)^{-1} \Phi U_j \beta^* \\
 &= \|\beta^*\|^2 e_j^T \Phi^T (\Phi\Phi^T)^{-1} \Phi e_j \\
 &= \|\beta^*\|^2 \text{tr}(\Phi^T (\Phi\Phi^T)^{-1} \Phi e_j e_j^T)
 \end{aligned}$$

$\downarrow$

$$\begin{aligned}
 \mathbb{E}[\|\Pi\beta^*\|^2] &= \frac{1}{d} \sum_{j=1}^d \mathbb{E}[\|\Pi\beta^*\|^2] = \frac{1}{d} \sum_{j=1}^d \mathbb{E}[\|\beta^*\|^2 \text{tr}(\Phi^T (\Phi\Phi^T)^{-1} \Phi e_j e_j^T)] \\
 &= \frac{\|\beta^*\|^2}{d} \mathbb{E}[\text{tr}(\Phi^T (\Phi\Phi^T)^{-1} \Phi \underbrace{\sum_{j=1}^d e_j e_j^T}_{\mathbb{I}_d})]
 \end{aligned}$$

$$= \frac{\|\beta\|^2}{d} \mathbb{E} \left[ \text{tr} \left( \underbrace{(\Phi\Phi^T)^{-1} \Phi\Phi^T}_{I_n} \right) \right]$$

$$= \|\beta\|^2 \frac{n}{d}$$

Next  $T_2 = \sigma^2 \mathbb{E} \left[ \text{tr} (\Phi\Phi^T)^{-1} \right] = \begin{cases} \sigma^2 \frac{n}{d-n-1} & d > n+1 \\ \infty & d = n \text{ or } d = n+1 \end{cases}$

↓

The excess risk for  $d > n+1$  is

$$\|\beta\|^2 \left(1 - \frac{n}{d}\right) + \sigma^2 \frac{n}{d-n-1}$$

and it is infinity if  $d = n$  or  $n+1$

↳ To summarize, the excess risk is

$$\begin{cases} \sigma^2 \frac{d}{n-d-1} & d \leq n-2 \\ \|\beta\|^2 \left(1 - \frac{n}{d}\right) + \sigma^2 \frac{n}{d-n-1} & d \geq n+2 \\ \infty & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

$$= \begin{cases} \sigma^2 \frac{\gamma}{1-\gamma} & \gamma < 1 \\ \|\beta\|^2 \frac{\gamma-1}{\gamma} + \sigma^2 \frac{1}{\gamma-1} & \gamma > 1 \end{cases}$$

- Optimally tuned ridge regression does not suffer from these issues - the risk is monotonic in  $\lambda$  and is uniformly (in  $\lambda$ ) smaller than the risk of ridgeless estimator, avoiding the double descent around  $\lambda=1$

The optimal value of the ridge parameter is

$$\lambda_{\text{optimal}} = \frac{\sigma^2}{\|\beta\|^2} \lambda$$

↳ cv is a good procedure to find this!