

# SDS 387

## Linear Models

Fall 2025

Lecture 26 - Thu, Dec 4, 2025

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

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:

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

$Y_i, \Phi_i$  are iid from some  $P_{Y_i, \Phi_i}$   
 $\beta^* \in \mathbb{R}^d$   $\varepsilon_i \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \sigma^2)$

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

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

- We saw that an upper bound for this risk is
$$\frac{\sigma^2}{n} \operatorname{tr}(\hat{\Sigma}^{-1} \Sigma) \quad \hat{\Sigma} = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \Phi_i \Phi_i^\top$$
- 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

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

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  $N(0, \mathbb{I}_d)$ . In this case the excess risk is

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

(2)

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## Weight distribution

with parameters  $T_0$

and  $n$  degrees of freedom

$$= \begin{cases} \frac{6^2 \operatorname{tr}(\mathcal{I}_{\mathbf{d}})}{n-d-1} = 6^2 \frac{d}{n-d-1} & n > d+1 \\ \infty & n \leq d+1 \end{cases}$$

↳ at interpolation, i.e. at  $n$ , this is infinity!

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

$$\hat{\beta}_{MN} = \hat{\Phi}^+ y = \hat{\Phi}^+ \underbrace{(\hat{\Phi} \hat{\Phi}^+)^{-1}}_{n \times n} y$$

↙      ↘

n x n  
invertible with prob. 1

n x n  
matrix  
whose  $i^{th}$  row  
is  $\hat{\Phi}_i^+$

n-dim  
vector of  
 $y_i$ 's

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

The first thing to notice is that there exists a best

$$\beta - \hat{\beta}_{MN} = \beta^* - \mathbb{B}^* (\mathbb{B} \mathbb{B}^*)^{-1} \mathbb{B} \beta^* - \mathbb{B}^* (\mathbb{B} \mathbb{B}^*)^{-1} \Sigma \hookrightarrow \Sigma = \begin{bmatrix} c_1 \\ \vdots \\ c_n \end{bmatrix}$$

$$= \left( \mathbf{I}_d - \underbrace{\Phi^* (\Phi \Phi^*)^{-1} \Phi}_{\Pi} \right) \mathbf{B}^* - \Phi^* (\Phi \Phi^*)^{-1} \Sigma$$

$T_d - \pi$  orthogonal projection

onto the null space of  $\Phi$

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

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 matrices s.t.

$$U_1 \beta^* = \|\beta\| e_1 \quad \downarrow \quad \text{jth standard unit vector}$$

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

$$\text{so } \pi_j = 1, \dots, d$$

$$\begin{aligned}
\|\Pi\beta^*\|^2 &= \beta^{*\top} \Phi^T (\Phi\Phi^T)^{-1} \Phi \beta^* = \beta^{*\top} U_1^T \Phi^T (\Phi U_1 U_1^T \Phi^T)^{-1} \Phi U_1 \beta^* \\
&= \|\beta\|^2 e_1^T \Phi^T (\Phi\Phi^T)^{-1} \Phi e_1 \\
&= \|\beta\|^2 \text{tr}(\Phi^T (\Phi\Phi^T)^{-1} \Phi e_1 e_1^T)
\end{aligned}$$

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

The optimal value of the ridge parameter is

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

$\hookrightarrow$  cv is a good procedure to find this!