

Parzen-PNN Gaussian Mixture Estimator: Experiment Report

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Abstract

This report will describe the results and performance differences between Parzen Window and Parzen Neural Network (PNN) estimation methods. They will be benchmarked against two-dimensional Probability Density Functions formed by a Mixture of Gaussians; while varying the cardinality of the extracted point set, the architecture of the neural network (kernel parameterization), and the hyperparameters of both estimation methods.

1 Introduction

1.1 Project Objective

The objective of the project is to study *non-parametric* density estimation in \mathbb{R}^2 when the ground truth is a two-dimensional Gaussian Mixture Model (GMM). Given an unlabeled sample set $\{x_i\}_{i=1}^n \subset \mathbb{R}^2$ drawn i.i.d. from an unknown target density $p(x)$, the goal is to construct an estimate $\hat{p}(x)$ that approximates the true density on a fixed evaluation domain.

1.2 Ground Truth and Sampling

The estimators are benchmarked against three synthetic target PDFs in \mathbb{R}^2 , each given by a mixture of Gaussians with an odd number of components $M \in \{1, 3, 5\}$:

$$p(x) = \sum_{m=1}^M \pi_m \mathcal{N}(x; \mu_m, \Sigma_m), \quad \pi_m \geq 0, \quad \sum_{m=1}^M \pi_m = 1. \quad (1)$$

The unlabeled dataset is generated using **ancestral sampling** from the mixture:

$$J \sim \text{Categorical}(\pi_1, \dots, \pi_M), \quad X | (J = m) \sim \mathcal{N}(\mu_m, \Sigma_m). \quad (2)$$

In practice, an index J is sampled according to the mixture weights and then X is sampled from the chosen Gaussian component. Only the sample locations $\{x_i\}_{i=1}^n$ are used to train the estimators.

1.3 Methods Compared

Two non-parametric density estimators are compared:

- **Parzen Window (PW / KDE):** a kernel density estimator that averages local kernel contributions centered at the samples.
- **Parzen Neural Network (PNN):** a neural surrogate trained by regression on Parzen-style targets computed from the samples.

2 Theoretical Foundations of Density Estimation

2.1 The Parzen Window Method (KDE)

Let $Y = \{x_1, \dots, x_n\} \subset \mathbb{R}^d$ be i.i.d. samples drawn from an unknown density $p(x)$. For a query point x_0 , consider a region $R_n(x_0) \subset \mathbb{R}^d$ with volume V_n and let k_n be the number of samples falling in R_n . A generic non-parametric density estimator is

$$p_n(x_0) = \frac{k_n/n}{V_n}. \quad (3)$$

Since k_n depends on the random sample, $p_n(x_0)$ is itself a random variable. The estimator is consistent in probability if and only if

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} V_n = 0, \quad \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} k_n = \infty, \quad \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{k_n}{n} = 0. \quad (4)$$

Two complementary constructions satisfy these conditions: fixing V_n (Parzen Window) or fixing k_n (k -nearest neighbors).

In modern form, Parzen Window estimation is presented directly as *kernel density estimation* (KDE):

$$\hat{p}_n(x) = \frac{1}{n h_n^d} \sum_{i=1}^n K\left(\frac{x - x_i}{h_n}\right), \quad K(u) \geq 0, \quad \int_{\mathbb{R}^d} K(u) du = 1. \quad (5)$$

The historical rectangular window corresponds to choosing K as an indicator over a hypercube; however, the experiments considered here use only smooth kernels.

For $d = 2$ and an isotropic Gaussian kernel, Eq. (5) becomes

$$\hat{p}_n(x) = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \mathcal{N}(x; x_i, h_n^2 I_2) = \frac{1}{n(2\pi h_n^2)} \sum_{i=1}^n \exp\left(-\frac{\|x - x_i\|^2}{2h_n^2}\right). \quad (6)$$

2.2 Kernel Choice

The counting derivation above is typically introduced with a *rectangular* (hard) window, which produces discontinuous estimates and visually blocky density

surfaces on a grid. Here a extbf{Gaussian} kernel is used to obtain smooth, infinitely differentiable (C^∞) density estimates. Compared to a rectangular kernel, Gaussian KDE avoids discontinuities at window boundaries and yields better numerical behavior when gradients are involved (e.g., when KDE targets are distilled into a neural surrogate). Importantly, the choice of kernel is a numerical/modelling choice and does *not* assume any knowledge of the parametric family of the true density.

2.3 Bandwidth Parameterization

A distinction is made between a user-chosen *base* bandwidth h_1 and the *effective* bandwidth h_n used in the kernels, using the rule

$$h_n = \frac{h_1}{\sqrt{n-1}}, \quad V_n = h_n^d. \quad (7)$$

The subscript n indicates explicit dependence on the sample size. In standard KDE theory, consistency for a smooth kernel in d dimensions is typically obtained by choosing a sequence h_n such that

$$h_n \rightarrow 0, \quad nh_n^d \rightarrow \infty \quad (n \rightarrow \infty), \quad (8)$$

which balances vanishing bias (from $h_n \rightarrow 0$) and vanishing variance (from $nh_n^d \rightarrow \infty$). A common parametric family is $h_n = h_1 n^{-\alpha}$ with $0 < \alpha < \frac{1}{d}$.

The specific decay in Eq. (7) corresponds to the borderline case $\alpha = \frac{1}{2}$ in $d = 2$, for which nh_n^2 does *not* diverge asymptotically. Therefore, the choice in Eq. (7) is treated here as a *finite-sample heuristic* that shrinks the bandwidth aggressively as more samples are available. This makes the bias-variance trade-off explicit: if h_n decreases too slowly the estimator remains biased (over-smoothing), while if it decreases too fast the estimate becomes noisy (under-smoothing) because too few samples contribute effectively to each kernel. In the experiments, sweeps are reported in terms of h_1 , while kernel computations use h_n .

3 Parzen Neural Networks (PNN)

3.1 Architecture and Training Algorithm

A Parzen Neural Network is an artificial neural network trained to regress non-parametric Parzen Window density estimates. Given samples $\tau = \{x_1, \dots, x_n\} \subset \mathbb{R}^d$, the network learns an approximation of the Parzen estimator and is then used as a continuous surrogate of the probability density.

Algorithm 1: Train Parzen Neural Network

Data: samples $\tau = \{x_1, \dots, x_n\}$, bandwidth h_1 , kernel ϕ , ANN architecture and optimizer hyperparameters

Result: Trained ANN parameters; unnormalized density surrogate $\hat{p}_\theta(\cdot)$

Use effective bandwidth h_n (Eq. (7)) and $V_n = h_n^d$;

for $i = 1$ **to** n **do**

$$\left[\begin{array}{l} \tau_i \leftarrow \tau \setminus \{x_i\}; \\ y_i \leftarrow \frac{1}{n-1} \sum_{x \in \tau_i} \frac{1}{V_n} \phi\left(\frac{x_i - x}{h_n}\right); \end{array} \right]$$

$S \leftarrow \{(x_i, y_i)\}_{i=1}^n$;

Sample k auxiliary points $u_j \sim \text{Unif}(D)$;

for $j = 1$ **to** k **do**

$$\left[\begin{array}{l} \tilde{y}_j \leftarrow \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{1}{V_n} \phi\left(\frac{u_j - x_i}{h_n}\right); \\ S \leftarrow S \cup \{(u_j, \tilde{y}_j)\}_{j=1}^k; \end{array} \right]$$

Train ANN by regression on S (e.g. MSE loss);

$\hat{p}_\theta(\cdot) \leftarrow$ function computed by the trained ANN;

3.2 Output Constraints and Non-Negativity

A PNN is trained to regress density targets and is used as a non-negative density surrogate $\hat{p} : \mathbb{R}^d \rightarrow \mathbb{R}_+$. Non-negativity is enforced by choosing the output as

$$\hat{p}(x) = g(z(x)), \quad g : \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}_+, \quad (9)$$

so that

$$\hat{p}(x) \geq 0, \quad \forall x \in \mathbb{R}^d. \quad (10)$$

Typical choices are ReLU or a scaled sigmoid.

Three practical ways of enforcing non-negativity are considered:

- **ReLU output:** $\hat{p}(x) = \max(0, z(x))$.
- **Scaled sigmoid:** $\hat{p}(x) = A \sigma(z(x))$ with $A > 0$.
- **Log-parameterized mode:** the network outputs an unconstrained scalar $s_\theta(x) \in \mathbb{R}$ interpreted as a log-density score.

In log-density mode, define

$$\hat{p}_\theta(x) = \exp(s_\theta(x)). \quad (11)$$

Training becomes regression on log-targets:

$$\min_{\theta} \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n (s_\theta(x_i) - \log(y_i + \varepsilon))^2 \equiv \min_{\theta} \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n (\log \hat{p}_\theta(x_i) - \log(y_i + \varepsilon))^2. \quad (12)$$

This transformation compresses the dynamic range of density values and turns multiplicative errors in density space into additive errors in log-space, which is typically more numerically stable.

For the scaled-sigmoid output, the scale A is chosen to match the typical magnitude of the Parzen targets. A simple and effective heuristic is to set

$$A = c \max_i y_i, \quad c > 1, \quad (13)$$

so that the network is not artificially prevented from exceeding the maximum observed target during approximation. In the reported experiments, $c = 1.5$ is used as a conservative “headroom” factor.

The targets y_i are constructed with a leave-one-out Parzen estimator, which avoids the self-kernel contribution and yields an (asymptotically) unbiased estimate at sample locations:

$$y_i = \frac{1}{n-1} \sum_{x \in \tau \setminus \{x_i\}} \frac{1}{V_n} \phi\left(\frac{x_i - x}{h_n}\right). \quad (14)$$

Since targets are available only at the sample locations, the behavior between and outside samples is determined by the inductive bias of the network architecture.

3.3 Normalization over a Finite Domain

A PNN does not enforce normalization:

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^d} \hat{p}(x) dx \neq 1 \quad \text{in general.} \quad (15)$$

Therefore \hat{p} is interpreted as an unnormalized density estimate. When a proper pdf is required, normalization is performed on a fixed rectangle $D \subset \mathbb{R}^2$ discretized by a uniform grid $\mathcal{G} = \{u_m\}_{m=1}^{M_D}$. Let $\Delta A = \Delta x \Delta y$ be the elementary cell area. The normalizing constant is approximated by the Riemann sum

$$Z \approx \sum_{u_m \in \mathcal{G}} \hat{p}_\theta(u_m) \Delta A, \quad \hat{p}_{\text{norm}}(x) = \frac{\hat{p}_\theta(x)}{Z}. \quad (16)$$

The accuracy of Eq. (16) depends on both grid resolution and the choice of domain D . If D is too small, non-negligible probability mass may lie outside D , biasing the normalization and any likelihood-style metric computed on D .

4 Advanced Regularization Techniques

4.1 PDF Support and Boundary Penalty

Standard activations are non-local basis functions; therefore fitting $\hat{p}(x_i) \approx y_i$ does not imply $\hat{p}(x) \rightarrow 0$ away from the data and may generate heavy tails.

To encourage compact support, boundary constraints can be introduced. Let $X \subset \mathbb{R}^d$ denote the chosen support rectangle (typically the same domain used for evaluation). Let ξ be the diameter of X and set $\delta = \alpha\xi$ with small $\alpha \in (0, 1)$. Define

$$B_\delta = \{x \in \mathbb{R}^d \mid \text{dist}(x, X) < \delta\}, \quad \overline{B}_\delta = B_\delta \setminus X, \quad (17)$$

with $\text{dist}(x, X) = \inf_{y \in X} \|x - y\|$. Sample $\tilde{x}_j \sim \text{Unif}(\overline{B}_\delta)$ and add zero-density labels $S_\delta = \{(\tilde{x}_j, 0)\}$. Training on $S \cup S_\delta$ can be interpreted as minimizing the empirical regularized objective

$$\min_{\theta} \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n (\hat{p}_\theta(x_i) - y_i)^2 + \lambda \frac{1}{k} \sum_{j=1}^k \hat{p}_\theta(\tilde{x}_j)^2, \quad (18)$$

which penalizes probability mass near the boundary of X , stabilizes numerical normalization, and mitigates spurious heavy tails.

4.2 Internal Uniform Supervision

The training set may be augmented with additional points sampled uniformly inside the evaluation domain D . For each uniform point $u_j \sim \text{Unif}(D)$ a Parzen/KDE target is computed using the same kernel (with bandwidth h_n) and the pairs $\{(u_j, \hat{p}_{\text{KDE}}(u_j))\}$ are added to the regression dataset. This provides supervision away from sample locations and reduces extrapolation artifacts when training only on pointwise leave-one-out targets.

5 Experimental Setup and Model Selection

5.1 Dynamic Variables

The experiments are organized as controlled sweeps over:

- **Sample size n :** approximately 50 to 200 samples per Gaussian component.
- **PW bandwidth:** a grid of h_1 values spanning under- to over-smoothing.
- **PNN optimization:** learning-rate sweeps for Adam over a predefined grid; representative bandwidth values $h_1 \in \{2, 7, 12, 16\}$ are used for PNN training runs.

5.2 Candidate Architectures

MLPs with sigmoid hidden activations and non-negative outputs (ReLU or scaled sigmoid) are tested. The architectures used in the sweeps include the following hidden-layer widths:

- [20] and [30,20] with **output ReLU**.

- [20] and [30,20] with **output scaled-sigmoid** (with A chosen automatically in the implementation).

This isolates the effect of capacity (width/depth) and output parameterization while keeping the target generation mechanism fixed (leave-one-out Parzen targets).

From a modelling standpoint, increasing depth (e.g., moving from one to two hidden layers) can improve representation of anisotropy and multimodality within a compact domain (pro), but may increase overfitting risk and exacerbate spurious “heavy tails” outside high-density regions if not properly regularized (con).

5.3 Validation Criteria

To select hyperparameters without using the ground truth, a held-out validation set $\{x_j\}_{j=1}^m$ and compute the **validation negative log-likelihood (NLL)**:

$$\text{NLL}(\hat{p}; \{x_j\}_{j=1}^m) = -\frac{1}{m} \sum_{j=1}^m \log (\hat{p}(x_j) + \varepsilon). \quad (19)$$

For PW/KDE, \hat{p} is already normalized. For PNNs, normalization is performed on the finite domain D (Section 3.3) before computing the NLL. This aligns with the principle of selecting the simplest model that performs well on held-out data (an MDL-style viewpoint).

6 Results Analysis and Discussion

6.1 Quantitative Performance

Performance is evaluated on a fixed grid over a rectangle $D \subset \mathbb{R}^2$ that covers the target mixtures. Accuracy is summarized via the L_2 error over the grid (a Riemann approximation of the $L_2(D)$ norm):

$$\|\hat{p} - p\|_{L^2(D)}^2 \approx \sum_{u_m \in \mathcal{G}} (\hat{p}(u_m) - p(u_m))^2 \Delta A. \quad (20)$$

This allows direct comparison between PW and PNN as n and h_1 vary.

Figure 1 reports the data-only cross-validation criterion (validation NLL on held-out points) across bandwidths. Because PNNs are normalized on a finite domain D (Section 3.3), their NLL depends on D ; the comparison is still meaningful as long as the same D is used consistently.

For additional context (not usable for model selection), Table 1 summarizes the best oracle grid MSE achieved among the saved training logs, where the MSE is computed against the known mixture ground truth on the evaluation grid.

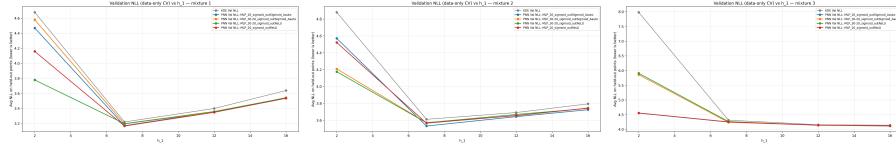


Figure 1: Validation NLL (data-only cross-validation) as a function of bandwidth h_1 for the three target mixtures. Lower is better.

Mixture	Best PNN configuration (logged)	h_1	best grid MSE
1	MLP [30,20], out ReLU (log-density training)	2.0	2.68×10^{-5}
2	MLP [30,20], out scaled-sigmoid (A=auto, log-density training)	7.0	1.48×10^{-5}
3	MLP [30,20], out ReLU (log-density training)	12.0	8.84×10^{-6}

Table 1: Best oracle grid MSE observed in the saved training logs for each mixture. These values use ground truth and are included only for analysis and sanity-checking, not for selecting hyperparameters.

6.2 Qualitative Analysis (Overlays)

In addition to scalar metrics, 3D surface plots are inspected comparing (i) the true mixture density and (ii) the estimated density. Overlay visualizations help diagnose oversmoothing (large bandwidth), spurious bumps (small bandwidth), and missing/merged modes.

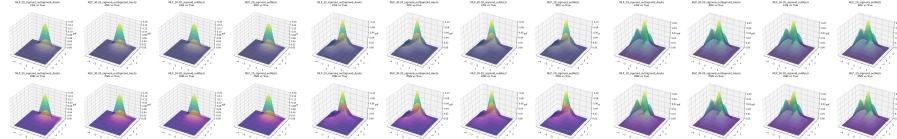


Figure 2: Overlay comparison (KDE vs true and PNN vs true) for a representative bandwidth ($h_1 = 12$), showing the effect of architecture and output parameterization across mixtures.

6.3 Complexity Analysis

Let T be the number of query points where the density is evaluated. Parzen Window / KDE requires evaluating n kernels per query point, giving inference complexity $\mathcal{O}(nT)$. A PNN has a potentially expensive training phase (including leave-one-out target generation), but after training the test-time cost does not scale with n : evaluating a fixed network on T points is $\mathcal{O}(WT)$, where W is the number of network parameters (often summarized as linear in T for fixed architecture).

The main training-time cost specific to PNNs is the construction of leave-one-out targets: for each of the n samples, $n-1$ kernel evaluations are required,

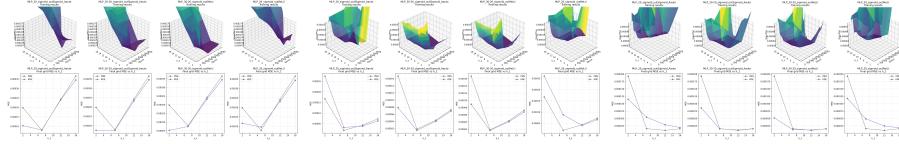


Figure 3: PNN learning behavior across bandwidths: training curves (top) and final oracle grid MSE vs h_1 (bottom), compared to KDE.

yielding

$$\text{exttargetgenerationcost} = \mathcal{O}(n^2). \quad (21)$$

Training the network for E epochs with W parameters incurs an additional cost $\mathcal{O}(nEW)$, so the total training complexity can be summarized as

$$\mathcal{O}(n^2 + nEW). \quad (22)$$

To support the asymptotic analysis with empirical evidence, Table 2 reports measured wall-clock runtimes on this machine for a single evaluation of $T = 10^4$ query points.

Method	n	T	time (s)
PW (Gaussian KDE)	2000	10^4	0.923
PNN forward (fixed W)	–	10^4	7.66×10^{-4}

Table 2: Measured inference time for PW vs PNN on $T = 10^4$ points (single run).

6.4 Effect of Boundary Penalty

When boundary regularization (Section 4.1) is enabled, the model is discouraged from placing probability mass near/outside the domain boundary. This reduces heavy tails, stabilizes finite-domain normalization, and can improve validation NLL when an unregularized model assigns excessive mass to low-density regions. The effect is assessed jointly via shape changes in overlay plots and validation NLL curves.

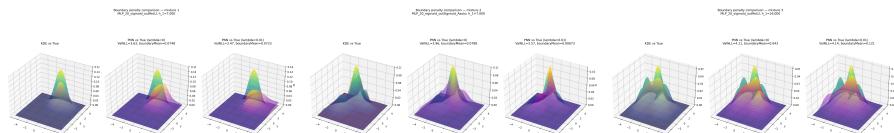


Figure 4: Boundary penalty comparison for each mixture, using the configuration selected by validation NLL. For each mixture: KDE vs true (left), PNN with $\lambda = 0$ (middle), PNN with $\lambda = 10^{-2}$ (right).

7 Conclusions

The experiments compare a memory-based non-parametric estimator (PW/KDE) and a learned surrogate (PNN) trained on Parzen-derived targets. The PNN can be viewed as a *compressed* model that, with enough capacity, can approximate complex multi-modal densities on a chosen compact domain.

This viewpoint is supported by the Universal Approximation Theorem: for a compact set $X \subset \mathbb{R}^d$ and any continuous target function $f \in C(X)$, a single-hidden-layer MLP with sigmoid activations can approximate f uniformly to arbitrary precision. In particular, for any $\varepsilon > 0$ there exists a network f_θ such that

$$\sup_{x \in X} |f_\theta(x) - f(x)| < \varepsilon. \quad (23)$$

Therefore, on a compact evaluation domain D , sufficiently wide sigmoid MLPs provide a principled function class for approximating smooth density surfaces (after enforcing non-negativity and normalization).

Compared to PW/KDE, PNNs shift computation from test time to training time: once trained, inference is efficient and does not grow with the number of samples. Overall performance depends on bandwidth choice, architecture capacity, and regularization (boundary penalty and uniform supervision).

References

- [1] G. Cybenko, “Approximation by superpositions of a sigmoidal function,” *Mathematics of Control, Signals and Systems*, vol. 2, no. 4, pp. 303–314, 1989.