

# Simultaneous statistical inference for epidemic trends: the case of COVID-19

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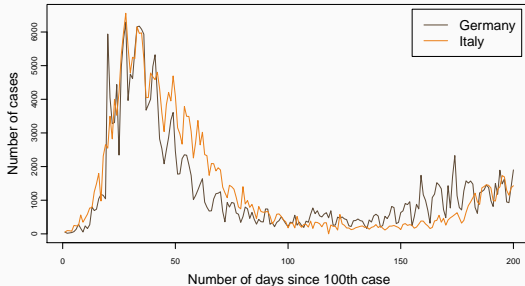
# Introduction

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# Motivation

## Research question:

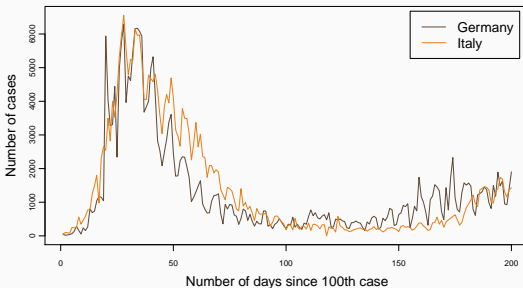
How do outbreak patterns of COVID-19 compare across countries?



# Motivation

## Research question:

How do outbreak patterns of COVID-19 compare across countries?



## Aim of the paper

To develop new inference methods that allow to *identify* and *locate* differences between time trends.

# Model

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We observe  $n$  time series  $\mathcal{X}_i = \{X_{it} : 1 \leq t \leq T\}$  of length  $T$ :

$$X_{it} = \lambda_i\left(\frac{t}{T}\right) + \sigma\sqrt{\lambda_i\left(\frac{t}{T}\right)}\eta_{it},$$

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where

- $\lambda_i$  are unknown trend functions on  $[0, 1]$ ;
- $\sigma$  is the overdispersion parameter;
- $\eta_{it}$  are error terms that are independent across  $i$  and  $t$  and have zero mean and unit variance.



Comparison of deterministic trends:

- Park et al. (2009), Degras et al. (2012), Zhang et al. (2012), Hidalgo and Lee (2014), Chen and Wu (2019).

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Studies of COVID-19:

- SEIR models: Yang et al. (2020), Wu et al. (2020), De Brouwer et al. (2020).
- Time series analysis: Gu et al. (2020), Li and Linton (2020).
- Dong et al. (2020).

# Testing

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# Testing problem

Let  $\mathcal{F} = \{\mathcal{I}_k \subseteq [0, 1] : 1 \leq k \leq K\}$  be a family of intervals on  $[0, 1]$ , and for a given interval  $\mathcal{I}_k$  we want to test whether the functions  $\lambda_i$  and  $\lambda_j$  are the same on this interval. Formally, the testing problem is

$$H_0^{(ijk)} : \quad \lambda_i(w) = \lambda_j(w) \text{ for all } w \in \mathcal{I}_k.$$

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$$H_0^{(ijk)} : \lambda_i(w) = \lambda_j(w) \text{ for all } w \in \mathcal{I}_k.$$

We want to test these hypothesis  $H_0^{(ijk)}$  simultaneously for all pairs of countries  $i$  and  $j$  and all intervals  $\mathcal{I}_k$  in the family  $\mathcal{F}$ .

# Test statistic

For the given interval  $\mathcal{I}_k$  and a pair of time series  $i$  and  $j$  we calculate

$$\hat{s}_{ijk,T} = \frac{1}{Th_k} \sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{1}\left(\frac{t}{T} \in \mathcal{I}_k\right) (X_{it} - X_{jt}),$$

where  $h_k$  is the length of  $\mathcal{I}_k$ .

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$$\text{Var}(\hat{s}_{ijk,T}) = \frac{\sigma^2}{T^2 h_k^2} \sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{1}\left(\frac{t}{T} \in \mathcal{I}_k\right) \left\{ \lambda_i\left(\frac{t}{T}\right) + \lambda_j\left(\frac{t}{T}\right) \right\}.$$



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In order to normalize the variance of the statistic  $\hat{s}_{ijk,T}$ , we scale it by an estimator of its variance:

$$\widehat{\text{Var}}(\hat{s}_{ijk,T}) = \frac{\hat{\sigma}^2}{T^2 h_k^2} \sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{1}\left(\frac{t}{T} \in \mathcal{I}_k\right) (X_{it} + X_{jt}),$$

with  $\hat{\sigma}^2 = n^{-1} \sum_{i=1}^n \hat{\sigma}_i^2$  and  $\hat{\sigma}_i^2 = \frac{\sum_{t=2}^T (X_{it} - X_{it-1})^2}{2 \sum_{t=1}^T X_{it}}$ . Idea

Test statistic for the hypothesis  $H_0^{(ijk)}$  is defined as

$$\hat{\psi}_{ijk,T} = \frac{\sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{1}\left(\frac{t}{T} \in \mathcal{I}_k\right)(X_{it} - X_{jt})}{\hat{\sigma}\left\{\sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{1}\left(\frac{t}{T} \in \mathcal{I}_k\right)(X_{it} + X_{jt})\right\}^{1/2}}.$$

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Under certain conditions and under the null,  $\hat{\psi}_{ijk,T}$  can be approximated by the Gaussian version of the test statistic:

$$\phi_{ijk,T} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2Th_k}} \sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{1}\left(\frac{t}{T} \in \mathcal{I}_k\right)(Z_{it} - Z_{jt}),$$

where  $Z_{it}$  are independent standard normal random variables.

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3. Adjust the quantile  $q_{T,\text{Gauss}}(\alpha)$  by the scale-dependent constants:  
 $c_{T,\text{Gauss}}(\alpha, h_k) = b_k + q_{T,\text{Gauss}}(\alpha)/a_k.$  Idea



# Test procedure

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## Test procedure

For the given significance level  $\alpha \in (0, 1)$  and for each  $(i, j, k)$ , reject  $H_0^{(ijk)}$  if  $|\hat{\psi}_{ijk,T}| > c_{T,\text{Gauss}}(\alpha, h_k)$ .

# Theoretical properties

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$\mathcal{C}1$  The functions  $\lambda_i$  are uniformly Lipschitz continuous:  
 $|\lambda_i(u) - \lambda_i(v)| \leq L|u - v|$  for all  $u, v \in [0, 1]$ .

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# Assumptions

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$\mathcal{C4}$   $\mathbb{E}[\eta_{it}] = 0$ ,  $\mathbb{E}[\eta_{it}^2] = 1$  and  $\mathbb{E}[|\eta_{it}|^\theta] \leq C_\theta < \infty$  for some  $\theta > 4$ .

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- $\mathcal{C5}$   $h_{\max} = o(1/\log T)$  and  $h_{\min} \geq CT^{-b}$  for some  $b \in (0, 1)$ .
- $\mathcal{C6}$   $p := \{\#(i, j, k)\} = O(T^{(\theta/2)(1-b)-(1+\delta)})$  for some small  $\delta > 0$ .



## Proposition

Denote  $\mathcal{M}_0$  the set of triplets  $(i, j, k)$  where  $H_0^{(ijk)}$  holds true. Then under  $\mathcal{C}1 - \mathcal{C}6$ , it holds that

$$\mathbb{P}\left(\forall (i, j, k) \in \mathcal{M}_0 : |\hat{\psi}_{ijk, T}| \leq c_{T, \text{Gauss}}(\alpha, h_k)\right) \geq 1 - \alpha + o(1)$$

# Theoretical properties

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## Proposition

Consider any sequence of functions  $\lambda_i = \lambda_{i, T}$ ,  $\lambda_j = \lambda_{j, T}$  with the following property: There exists an interval  $\mathcal{I}_k$  such that  $\lambda_{i, T}(w) - \lambda_{j, T}(w) \geq c_T \sqrt{T \log T / h_k}$  for all  $w \in \mathcal{I}_k$ , and  $c_T \rightarrow \infty$ . Then under  $\mathcal{C}1 - \mathcal{C}6$ , it holds that

$$\mathbb{P}\left(|\hat{\psi}_{ijk, T}| \leq c_{T, \text{Gauss}}(\alpha, h_k)\right) = o(1).$$

In order to proceed with the proof, we will need the following notation:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \hat{\psi}_{ijk,T} &= \frac{\sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{1}\left(\frac{t}{T} \in \mathcal{I}_k\right)(X_{it} - X_{jt})}{\hat{\sigma}\left\{\sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{1}\left(\frac{t}{T} \in \mathcal{I}_k\right)(X_{it} + X_{jt})\right\}^{1/2}}, \\
 \hat{\psi}_{ijk,T}^0 &= \frac{\sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{1}\left(\frac{t}{T} \in \mathcal{I}_k\right) \sigma \bar{\lambda}_{ij}^{1/2}\left(\frac{t}{T}\right)(\eta_{it} - \eta_{jt})}{\hat{\sigma}\left\{\sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{1}\left(\frac{t}{T} \in \mathcal{I}_k\right)(X_{it} + X_{jt})\right\}^{1/2}} & \hat{\Psi}_T &= \max_{(i,j,k)} a_k(|\hat{\psi}_{ijk,T}^0| - b_k), \\
 \psi_{ijk,T}^0 &= \frac{1}{\sqrt{2Th_k}} \sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{1}\left(\frac{t}{T} \in \mathcal{I}_k\right)(\eta_{it} - \eta_{jt}) & \Psi_T &= \max_{(i,j,k)} a_k(|\psi_{ijk,T}^0| - b_k), \\
 \phi_{ijk,T} &= \frac{1}{\sqrt{2Th_k}} \sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{1}\left(\frac{t}{T} \in \mathcal{I}_k\right)(Z_{it} - Z_{jt}) & \Phi_T &= \max_{(i,j,k)} a_k(|\phi_{ijk,T}| - b_k).
 \end{aligned}$$

# Strategy of the proof

1. We prove that  $|\hat{\Psi}_T^0 - \Psi_T| = o_p(r_T)$ , where  $\{r_T\}$  is some null sequence.
2. With the help of results from Chernozhukov et al. (2017), we prove

$$\sup_{q \in \mathbb{R}} \left| P(\Psi_T \leq q) - P(\Phi_T \leq q) \right| = o(1).$$

3. By using these two results, we now show that

$$\sup_{q \in \mathbb{R}} \left| P(\hat{\Psi}_T^0 \leq q) - P(\Phi_T \leq q) \right| = o(1). \quad (1)$$

4.  $P(\Phi_T \leq q_{T,\text{Gauss}}(\alpha)) = 1 - \alpha$  by definition of the quantile  $q_{T,\text{Gauss}}(\alpha)$ . From this and (1), it immediately follows that

$$P(\hat{\Psi}_T^0 \leq q_{T,\text{Gauss}}(\alpha)) = 1 - \alpha + o(1),$$

which in turn implies the desired statement.

## Minimal intervals

An interval  $\mathcal{I}_k \in \mathcal{F}_{\text{reject}}(i, j)$  is called **minimal** if there is no other interval  $\mathcal{I}_{k'} \in \mathcal{F}_{\text{reject}}(i, j)$  with  $\mathcal{I}_{k'} \subset \mathcal{I}_k$ . The set of minimal intervals is denoted  $\mathcal{F}_{\text{reject}}^{\min}(i, j)$ .

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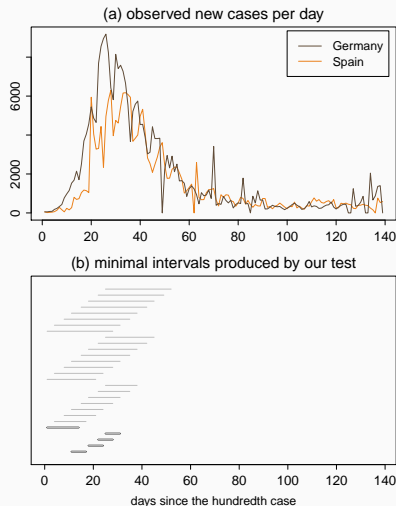
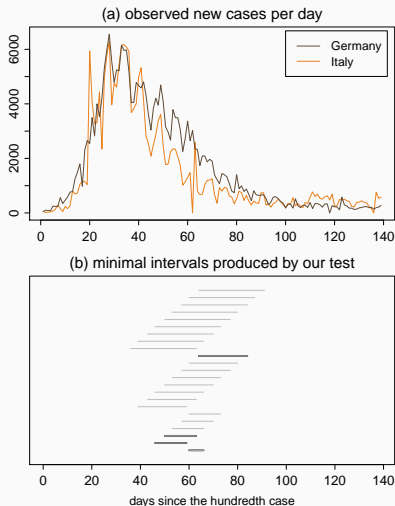
We can make very similar confidence statement about the set of minimal intervals as well:

$$P\left(\forall (i, j, k) \in \mathcal{M}_0 : \mathcal{I}_k \notin \mathcal{F}_{\text{reject}}^{\min}(i, j)\right) \geq 1 - \alpha + o(1).$$

# Application

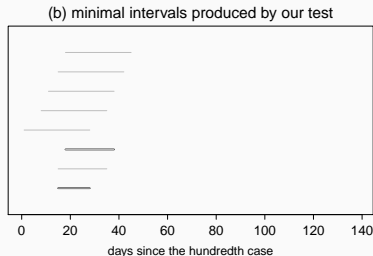
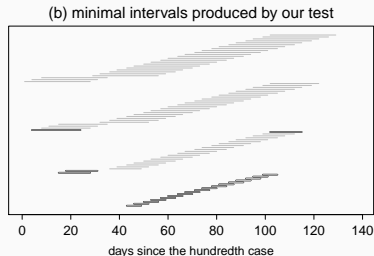
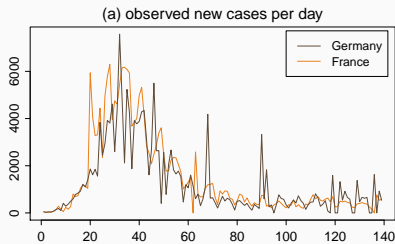
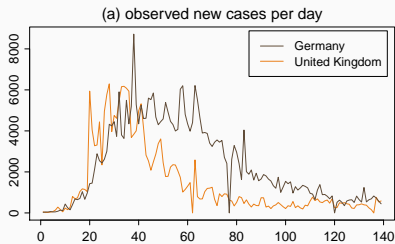
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# Application results





# Application results, part 2



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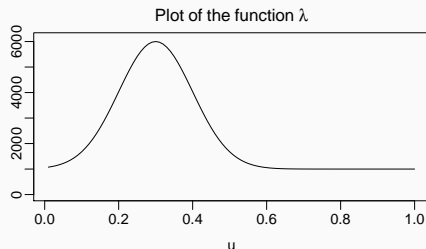
Further possible extensions:

- introduce scaling factor in the trend function, that allow for adjusting for the size of the country (population, density, testing regimes, etc.);
- connect with data-driven techniques such as machine learning;
- cluster the countries based on the trends they exhibit;
- build in policy changes.

**Thank you!**



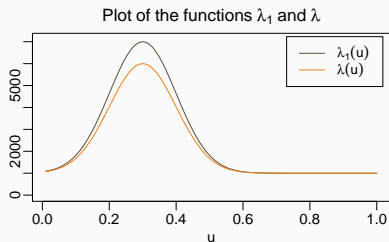
# Simulation results for the size of the test



**Table 1:** Size of the multiscale test

	$n = 5$			$n = 10$			$n = 50$		
	significance level $\alpha$			significance level $\alpha$			significance level $\alpha$		
	0.01	0.05	0.1	0.01	0.05	0.1	0.01	0.05	0.1
$T = 100$	0.011	0.047	0.093	0.010	0.044	0.087	0.008	0.037	0.075
$T = 250$	0.009	0.047	0.091	0.009	0.046	0.087	0.008	0.035	0.069
$T = 500$	0.010	0.044	0.083	0.008	0.048	0.093	0.007	0.035	0.077

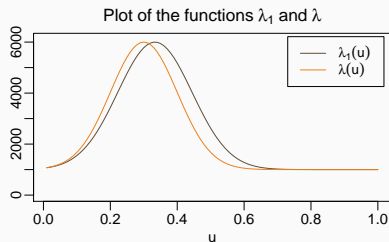
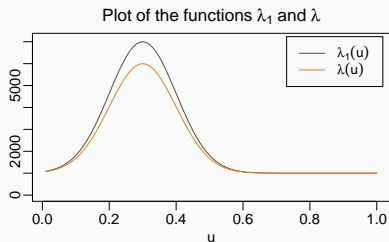
# Simulation results for the power of the test



**Table 2:** Power of the multiscale test for scenario A

	$n = 5$			$n = 10$			$n = 50$		
	significance level $\alpha$			significance level $\alpha$			significance level $\alpha$		
	0.01	0.05	0.1	0.01	0.05	0.1	0.01	0.05	0.1
$T = 100$	0.335	0.518	0.597	0.306	0.474	0.545	0.212	0.352	0.418
$T = 250$	0.615	0.790	0.836	0.580	0.764	0.800	0.470	0.648	0.705
$T = 500$	0.736	0.905	0.917	0.738	0.884	0.890	0.636	0.799	0.830

# Simulation results for the power of the test



**Table 3:** Power of the multiscale test for scenario B

	$n = 5$			$n = 10$			$n = 50$		
	significance level $\alpha$			significance level $\alpha$			significance level $\alpha$		
	0.01	0.05	0.1	0.01	0.05	0.1	0.01	0.05	0.1
$T = 100$	0.824	0.910	0.903	0.812	0.893	0.890	0.738	0.847	0.857
$T = 250$	0.991	0.972	0.941	0.991	0.960	0.920	0.991	0.965	0.933
$T = 500$	0.997	0.973	0.949	0.995	0.961	0.923	0.996	0.969	0.932

## Idea behind $\hat{\sigma}$

We assume that  $\lambda_i$  is Lipschitz continuous. Then

$$X_{it} - X_{it-1} = \sigma \sqrt{\lambda_i\left(\frac{t}{T}\right)} (\eta_{it} - \eta_{it-1}) + r_{it},$$

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Together with

$$\frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T X_{it} = \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T \lambda_i(t/T) + o_p(1),$$

we get that  $\hat{\sigma}_i^2 = \sigma^2 + o_p(1)$  for any  $i$  and thus  $\hat{\sigma}^2 = \sigma^2 + o_p(1)$ .

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## Idea behind $a_k$ and $b_k$

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How to construct critical values  $c_{ijk,T}(\alpha)$ ?

- Traditional approach:  $c_T(\alpha) = c_{ijk,T}(\alpha)$  for all  $(i, j, k)$ .
- A more modern approach:  $c_{ijk,T}(\alpha)$  depend on the length  $h_k$  of the time interval (Dümbgen and Spokoiny (2001)). In our context:

$$c_{ijk,T}(\alpha) = c_T(\alpha, h_k) := b_k + q_T(\alpha)/a_k,$$

where  $a_k = \{\log(e/h_k)\}^{1/2}/\log\log(e^e/h_k)$  and  $b_k = \sqrt{2\log(1/h_k)}$  are scale-dependent constants and  $q_T(\alpha)$  is the  $(1 - \alpha)$ -quantile of the statistic

$$\hat{\Psi}_T = \max_{(i,j,k)} a_k (|\hat{\psi}_{ijk,T}^0| - b_k)$$

in order to ensure control of the FWER at level  $\alpha$ .

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# Idea behind the additive correction

Consider the uncorrected Gaussian statistic

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Then we can rewrite the uncorrected test statistic as

$$\Phi_T^{\text{uncor}} = \max_{i,j} \max_{\substack{1 \leq l \leq L, \\ 1 \leq m \leq 1/h_l}} \left| \frac{1}{\sqrt{2Th_l}} \sum_{t=1}^T 1\left(\frac{t}{T} \in [(m-1)h_l, mh_l]\right) (Z_{it} - Z_{jt}) \right|$$

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$\Rightarrow \max_m \dots = \sqrt{2 \log(1/h_l)} + o_P(1) \rightarrow \infty$  as  $h \rightarrow 0$  and the stochastic behavior of  $\Phi_T^{\text{uncor}}$  is dominated by the elements with small bandwidths  $h_l$ . [Go back](#)