

pyhf: pure-Python implementation of HistFactory statistical models

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Summary

Statistical analysis of High Energy Physics (HEP) data relies on quantifying the compatibility of observed collision events with theoretical predictions. The relationship between them is often formalised in a statistical model $f(\mathbf{x}|\phi)$ describing the probability of data \mathbf{x} given model parameters ϕ . Given observed data, the likelihood $\mathcal{L}(\phi)$ then serves as the basis for inference on the parameters ϕ . For measurements based on binned data (histograms), the HistFactory family of statistical models ([Cranmer et al., 2012](#)) has been widely used in both Standard Model measurements ([ATLAS Collaboration, 2013](#)) as well as searches for new physics ([ATLAS Collaboration, 2018](#)). pyhf is a pure-Python implementation of the HistFactory model specification and implements a declarative, plain-text format for describing HistFactory-based likelihoods that is targeted for reinterpretation and long-term preservation in analysis data repositories such as HEPData ([Maguire et al., 2017](#)).

Through adoption of open source “tensor” computational Python libraries, pyhf decreases the abstractions between a physicist performing an analysis and the statistical modeling without sacrificing computational speed. By taking advantage of tensor calculations, pyhf outperforms the traditional C++ implementation of HistFactory on data from real LHC analyses. pyhf’s default computational backend is built from NumPy and SciPy, and supports TensorFlow, PyTorch, and JAX as alternative backend choices. These alternative backends support hardware acceleration on GPUs, and in the case of JAX JIT compilation, as well as auto-differentiation allowing for calculating the full gradient of the likelihood function — all contributing to speeding up fits. The source code for pyhf has been archived on Zenodo with the linked DOI: ([Heinrich, Lukas and Feickert, Matthew and Stark, Giordon, 2020](#)). At the time of writing this paper the most recent release of pyhf is [v0.5.4](#).

Impact on Physics

In addition to enabling the first publication of full likelihoods by an LHC experiment ([ATLAS Collaboration, 2019](#)), pyhf has been used by the SModelS library to improve the reinterpretation of results of searches for new physics at LHC experiments ([Abdallah & others, 2020](#); [Alguero et al., 2020](#); [Khosa et al., 2020](#)).

Future work

Future development aims to provide support for limit setting through pseudoexperiment generation in the regimes in which asymptotic approximations ([Cowan et al., 2011](#)) are no longer

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valid. Further improvements to the performance of the library as well as API refinement are also planned.

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