# DistributionOf Primes From Primes To Riemann

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January 28, 2021

#### Experimental Mathematics

 Problems resistant to analysis → experimental exploration can provide hints

#### Number of Primes Up To n

• Number of primes up to  $n \leftrightarrow$  average number of primes up to n

$$\pi(n)$$

• 'The number of primes up to, and including, n'

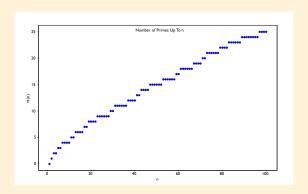
 $\pi(n)$ 

n	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
$\pi(n)$	0	1	2	2	3	3	4	4	4	4	5	5	6

•  $\pi(6)$  is the same as  $\pi(5)$  because 6 is not prime.



 $\pi(n)$ 



- Is this *In(n)* ?
- Smoothness suggests primes are governed by some constraint.

### Gauss' Approximation

• Gauss was first to approximate  $\pi(n)$  fairly well ... he was 15 years old!

$$\pi(n) \approx \frac{n}{\ln(n)}$$

- Suprisingly simple!
- What pattern is captured by that ln(n)?

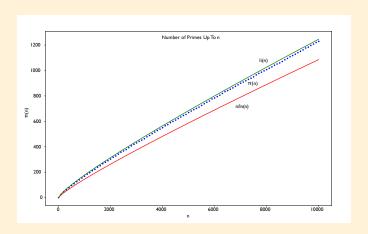
#### Gauss' Second Approximation

• A year later developed an even better approximation.

$$\pi(n) \approx \int_0^n \frac{1}{\ln(x)} dx$$

- Logarithmic integral is written as li(n)
- Appears to be a continuous form of the first approximation.

### Comparison of Approximations

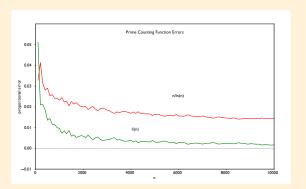


• The logarithmic integral is much closer to the real prime counts.

#### Error

- The charts (and the numbers) show the error gets larger.
- Does this mean the approximations become useless as *n* gets larger?

#### Proportional Error



- Error as a proportion of  $\pi(n)$  seems to get smaller as n grows.
- li(n) has a distinctly smaller proportional error than n/ln(n).

#### Proportional Error

- $\pi(10000) = 1229$ ,  $\text{li}(1000) = 1246 \rightarrow \text{error is just } 17$
- As a proportion of 1229, this is an impressively small 0.0138
- If proportional error falls towards zero, perhaps these approximations are correct in the limit  $n \to \infty$ ?
  - what does it mean for the error  $\to \infty$ , but the proportional error  $\to 0$  ?

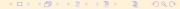
#### Prime Density

Can we interpret the form of Gauss' first approximation?

 $mass = density \times volume$ 

$$\pi(n) \approx \frac{1}{\ln(n)} \times n$$

- Suggests  $1/\ln(n)$  is the average density of primes.
- If true, this would be a remarkable insight into the primes!



#### Prime Density

What about Gauss' second approximation?

$$\mathsf{mass} = \int (\mathsf{density}) dv$$

$$\pi(n) \approx \int_0^n \frac{1}{\ln(x)} dx$$

• Again,  $1/\ln(x)$  emerges as a more locally accurate density of primes around a number x.



## Imperfect History of $\pi(n)$

- Gauss didn't always publish his work, leaving us to reconstruct history from notes and letters.
- 1797 Legendre published  $n/(A \ln(n) + B)$ , updated in 1808 to  $n/(\ln(n) 1.08366)$ .
- 1849 Gauss wrote to Encke saying that in '1792 or 1793', he developed  $\int \frac{dn}{\log n}$ .
- Collected works show that in 1791 Gauss had written about the simpler  $\frac{a}{la}$ .

#### Gauss' 1971 Some Asymptotic Laws Of Number Theory.



#### Legendre's 1797 Essai Sur La Theorie Des Nombres.

#### INTRODUCTION.

19

qu'à 1000000 la proportion sera encore moindre et ainsi de suite. En effet, la probabilité qu'un nombre pris a un haard sera premier, est d'autant moindre que ce nombre est plus grand; car plus le nombre est grand, plus il y a de divisions à essayer pour s'assurer si le nombre est premier ou s'il ne l'est pas.

XXX. Nous remarquerous encore, que si on comidére les seixe suites donte les remes généraus sont 50e  $\pm$ 1, 60e  $\pm$ 7, 60e  $\pm$ 8, 60e  $\pm$ 8, 60e  $\pm$ 8, 60e  $\pm$ 9, 60e  $\pm$ 9

de a pris dras les tables ordinaires; cette formule très simple peut être regardée comme suffisamment approchée, au moins lorsque a n'excède pas 100000. Ainsi si on demande combien il y a de nombres premiers depuis 3 jusqu'à 600000, on trouvera que ce nombre et  $\frac{600000}{25\%5}$ ,  $\frac{600}{500}$  on 35900 à-peu-près.

An rete, il est vraisombhilde que la formato rigoureuse qui donne la valeur de à borsque a est très-grand , est de la forme  $b = \frac{1}{M\log_2 a + p}$ ,  $A \in B$  étant des coefficiens constant, et  $\log_2 a$  désignant un logarithme hyperbolique. La détermination exacte de cas coefficiens seroit un problème curieux et digne d'exercer la saçocié de Sadurytes.

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#### First page of Gauss' 1849 letter to Encke.

