

# Introduction

fdars Package

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## Table of contents

<b>1</b>	<b>AIC Comparison (Fourier vs P-spline)</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>FFT Confidence</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>ACF Confidence</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Variance Strength</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Spectral Strength</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Simulation 1: Varying Seasonal Strength</b>	<b>4</b>
6.1	Setup . . . . .	4
6.2	Code . . . . .	4
6.3	Results . . . . .	5
6.4	Classification Performance . . . . .	7
6.5	Precision-Recall Analysis . . . . .	7
<b>7</b>	<b>Simulation 2: Non-linear Trend</b>	<b>9</b>
7.1	Setup . . . . .	9
7.2	Code . . . . .	9
7.3	Results . . . . .	9
7.4	F1 Score vs Trend Strength . . . . .	11
7.5	False Positive Rate by Trend Strength . . . . .	11
<b>8</b>	<b>Simulation 3: Multiple Trend Types</b>	<b>12</b>
8.1	Setup . . . . .	12
8.2	Code . . . . .	12
8.3	Results . . . . .	12
8.4	FPR by Trend Type . . . . .	13
8.5	Most Problematic Trend Types . . . . .	14
<b>9</b>	<b>Method Ranking</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Critical Issues Found</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>For Unknown Datasets</b>	<b>16</b>

This report describes and compares five methods for detecting seasonality in functional time series data. We evaluate each method's performance across different scenarios including varying seasonal strengths, non-linear trends, and different trend types.

The goal is to answer: **Given a time series, how can we reliably determine if it contains a seasonal pattern?**

Detection Methods

## 1 AIC Comparison (Fourier vs P-spline)

**Concept:** If data is seasonal, a Fourier basis should fit better than P-splines because Fourier bases naturally capture periodic patterns.

**Mathematical formulation:**

For a curve  $y(t)$ , we fit two models:

1. **Fourier basis:**  $\hat{y}(t) = \sum_{k=0}^K a_k \cos(2\pi kt) + b_k \sin(2\pi kt)$
2. **P-spline:**  $\hat{y}(t) = \sum_{j=1}^J c_j B_j(t)$  with penalty  $\lambda \int [\hat{y}''(t)]^2 dt$

We compute AIC for each:

$$\text{AIC} = n \log(\text{RSS}/n) + 2 \cdot \text{edf}$$

where RSS is the residual sum of squares and edf is the effective degrees of freedom.

**Detection rule:** Seasonality detected if  $\text{AIC}_{\text{P-spline}} - \text{AIC}_{\text{Fourier}} > 0$

**Interpretation:** When Fourier has lower AIC, the periodic structure is significant enough to justify the global periodic assumption over the local flexibility of splines.

## 2 FFT Confidence

**Concept:** Use Fast Fourier Transform to detect dominant frequencies. Strong peaks in the periodogram indicate periodic components.

**Mathematical formulation:**

Given a time series  $y_1, y_2, \dots, y_n$ , compute the discrete Fourier transform:

$$Y_k = \sum_{j=1}^n y_j e^{-2\pi i(j-1)(k-1)/n}$$

The periodogram (power spectrum) is:

$$P_k = |Y_k|^2$$

**Detection score:**

$$\text{Confidence} = \frac{\max_k P_k}{\text{mean}(P_k)}$$

**Detection rule:** Seasonality detected if Confidence  $> 6.0$

**Interpretation:** A high ratio indicates one frequency dominates, suggesting periodicity rather than random noise.

### 3 ACF Confidence

**Concept:** Autocorrelation at the seasonal lag should be high for seasonal data.

**Mathematical formulation:**

The autocorrelation function at lag  $h$  is:

$$\rho_h = \frac{\sum_{t=1}^{n-h} (y_t - \bar{y})(y_{t+h} - \bar{y})}{\sum_{t=1}^n (y_t - \bar{y})^2}$$

For seasonal data with period  $p$ , we expect  $\rho_p$  to be significantly positive.

**Detection rule:** Seasonality detected if ACF confidence  $> 0.25$

**Interpretation:** High autocorrelation at the seasonal lag indicates the pattern repeats.

### 4 Variance Strength

**Concept:** Decompose variance into seasonal and residual components. High seasonal variance ratio indicates seasonality.

**Mathematical formulation:**

Decompose the series:  $y_t = T_t + S_t + R_t$  (trend + seasonal + residual)

The seasonal strength is:

$$SS_{\text{var}} = 1 - \frac{\text{Var}(R_t)}{\text{Var}(y_t - T_t)}$$

**Detection rule:** Seasonality detected if  $SS_{\text{var}} > 0.2$

**Interpretation:** Values close to 1 mean the seasonal component dominates; values close to 0 mean residual noise dominates.

**Important:** The `period` parameter must be in the same units as `argvals`. For data normalized to  $[0,1]$  with 5 annual cycles, use `period = 0.2`.

## 5 Spectral Strength

**Concept:** Measure the proportion of spectral power at the seasonal frequency.

**Mathematical formulation:**

Using the periodogram  $P_k$ , identify the seasonal frequency  $f_s = 1/\text{period}$ .

$$\text{SS}_{\text{spectral}} = \frac{\sum_{k \in \mathcal{S}} P_k}{\sum_k P_k}$$

where  $\mathcal{S}$  includes the seasonal frequency and its harmonics.

**Detection rule:** Seasonality detected if  $\text{SS}_{\text{spectral}} > 0.3$

**Interpretation:** High values indicate spectral energy is concentrated at seasonal frequencies.

Simulation Studies

## 6 Simulation 1: Varying Seasonal Strength

### 6.1 Setup

This simulation tests how well each method detects seasonality at different signal strengths.

**Parameters:**

- 11 seasonal strength levels: 0.0, 0.1, ..., 1.0
- 50 curves per strength level
- 5 years of monthly data (60 observations)
- Noise standard deviation: 0.3

**Signal model:**

$$y(t) = s \cdot [\sin(2\pi \cdot 5t) + 0.3 \cos(4\pi \cdot 5t)] + \epsilon, \quad \epsilon \sim N(0, 0.3^2)$$

where  $s$  is the seasonal strength (0 = no seasonality, 1 = full seasonality).

**Ground truth:** A curve is classified as “truly seasonal” if  $s \geq 0.2$ .

### 6.2 Code

```
library(fdars)
library(ggplot2)
library(tidyr)
library(dplyr)

set.seed(42)

# Configuration
n_strengths <- 11
n_curves_per_strength <- 50
```

```

n_years <- 5
n_months <- n_years * 12
noise_sd <- 0.3

# Detection thresholds (calibrated to ~5% FPR on pure noise)
detection_thresholds <- list(
  aic_comparison = 0,
  fft_confidence = 6.0,
  acf_confidence = 0.25,
  strength_variance = 0.2,
  strength_spectral = 0.3
)

seasonal_strengths <- seq(0, 1, length.out = n_strengths)
t <- seq(0, 1, length.out = n_months)

# Generate seasonal curve
generate_seasonal_curve <- function(t, strength, noise_sd = 0.3) {
  n_cycles <- length(t) / 12
  seasonal <- strength * sin(2 * pi * n_cycles * t)
  seasonal <- seasonal + strength * 0.3 * cos(4 * pi * n_cycles * t)
  noise <- rnorm(length(t), sd = noise_sd)
  return(seasonal + noise)
}

```

## 6.3 Results

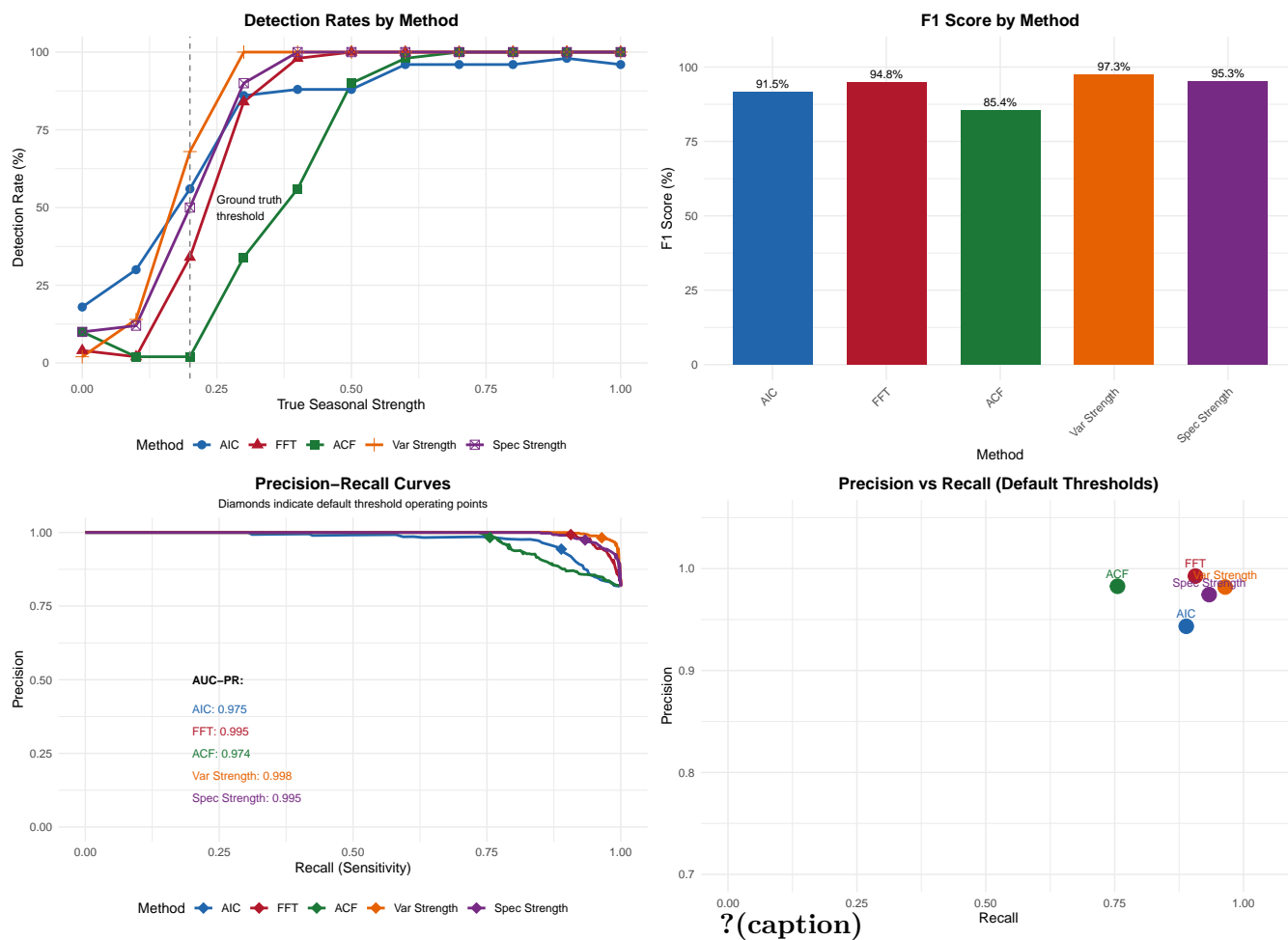


Figure 1: Detection rates by seasonal strength

#### How to interpret:

- The x-axis shows the true seasonal strength (0 = pure noise, 1 = strong seasonality)
- The y-axis shows what percentage of curves each method classified as “seasonal”
- The vertical dashed line at 0.2 marks the ground truth threshold
- **Ideal behavior:** 0% detection below the threshold, 100% above

### 6.4 Classification Performance

Method	F1 Score	Precision	Recall	FPR	Specificity
<b>Variance Strength</b>	<b>97.3%</b>	98.2%	96.4%	2.0%	92.0%
Spectral Strength	95.3%	97.4%	93.3%	10.0%	89.0%
FFT Confidence	94.8%	99.3%	90.7%	4.0%	97.0%
AIC Comparison	91.5%	94.3%	88.9%	18.0%	76.0%
ACF Confidence	85.4%	98.3%	75.6%	10.0%	94.0%

#### How to interpret:

- **F1 Score:** Harmonic mean of precision and recall (higher is better)
- **Precision:** Of curves detected as seasonal, what % are truly seasonal?
- **Recall:** Of truly seasonal curves, what % did we detect?
- **FPR:** False Positive Rate - what % of non-seasonal curves were incorrectly flagged?

### 6.5 Precision-Recall Analysis

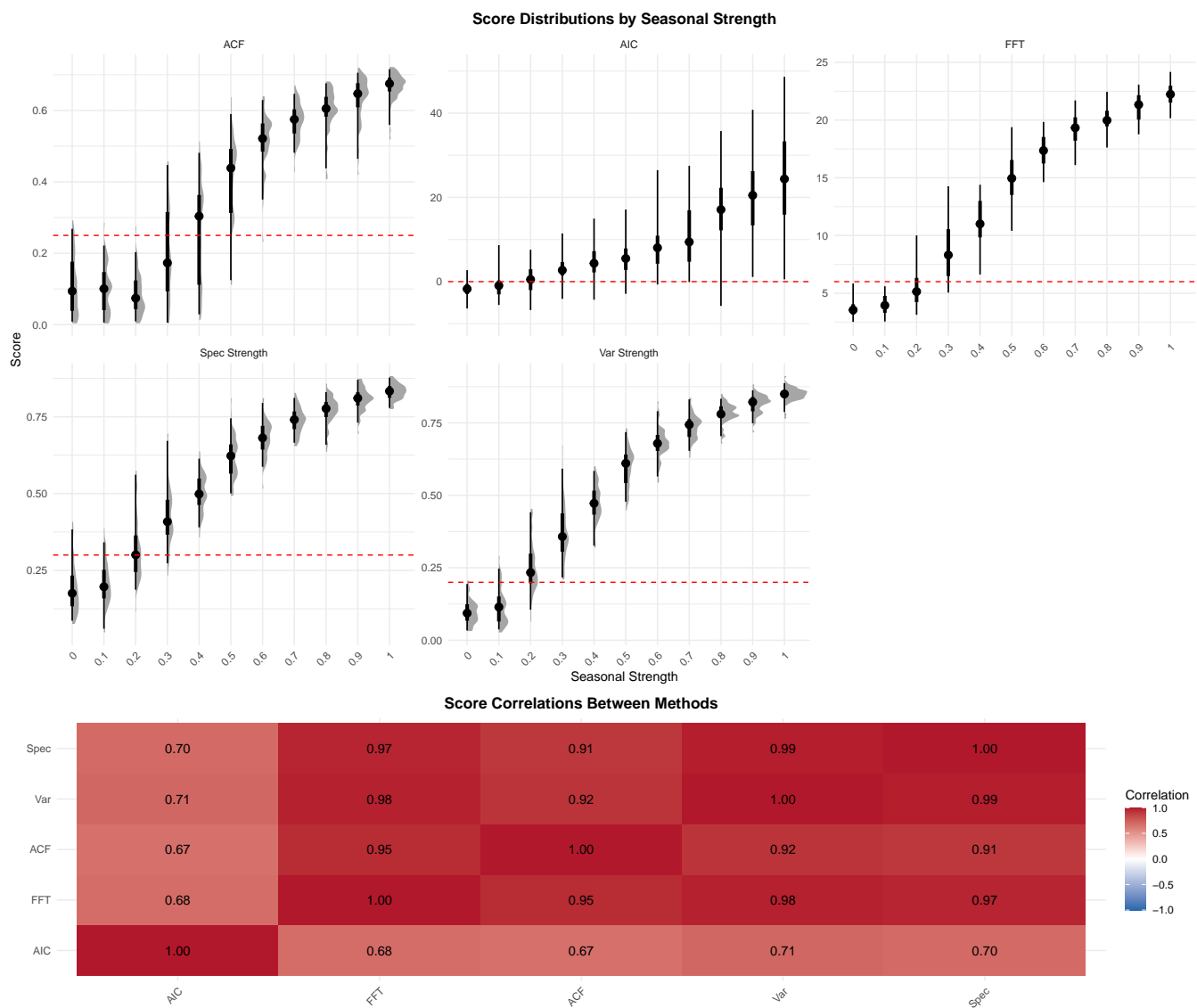


Figure 2: Precision-Recall curves



**How to interpret:**

- Curves closer to the top-right corner are better
- The diamond markers show the operating point at the default threshold
- AUC-PR (Area Under the PR Curve) summarizes overall performance

## 7 Simulation 2: Non-linear Trend

### 7.1 Setup

This simulation tests robustness when non-linear trends are added to the seasonal signal.

**Parameters:**

- 6 seasonal strength levels  $\times$  6 trend strength levels
- 30 curves per combination
- Non-linear trend: quadratic + cubic + sigmoid components

**Signal model:**

$$y(t) = \text{Trend}(t, \tau) + \text{Seasonal}(t, s) + \epsilon$$

where  $\tau$  is the trend strength and  $s$  is the seasonal strength.

**Trend function:**

$$\text{Trend}(t, \tau) = \tau \cdot [2(t - 0.5)^2 + 0.5(t - 0.3)^3 + 0.3 \cdot \sigma(10(t - 0.6)) - 0.5]$$

### 7.2 Code

```
# Non-linear trend function
generate_nonlinear_trend <- function(t, trend_strength) {
  quadratic <- 2 * (t - 0.5)^2
  cubic <- 0.5 * (t - 0.3)^3
  sigmoid <- 1 / (1 + exp(-10 * (t - 0.6)))
  trend <- trend_strength * (quadratic + cubic + 0.3 * sigmoid - 0.5)
  return(trend)
}

# Generate curve with trend + seasonal + noise
generate_curve <- function(t, seasonal_strength, trend_strength, noise_sd = 0.3) {
  trend <- generate_nonlinear_trend(t, trend_strength)
  n_cycles <- length(t) / 12
  seasonal <- seasonal_strength * sin(2 * pi * n_cycles * t)
  seasonal <- seasonal + seasonal_strength * 0.3 * cos(4 * pi * n_cycles * t)
  noise <- rnorm(length(t), sd = noise_sd)
  return(trend + seasonal + noise)
}
```

### 7.3 Results

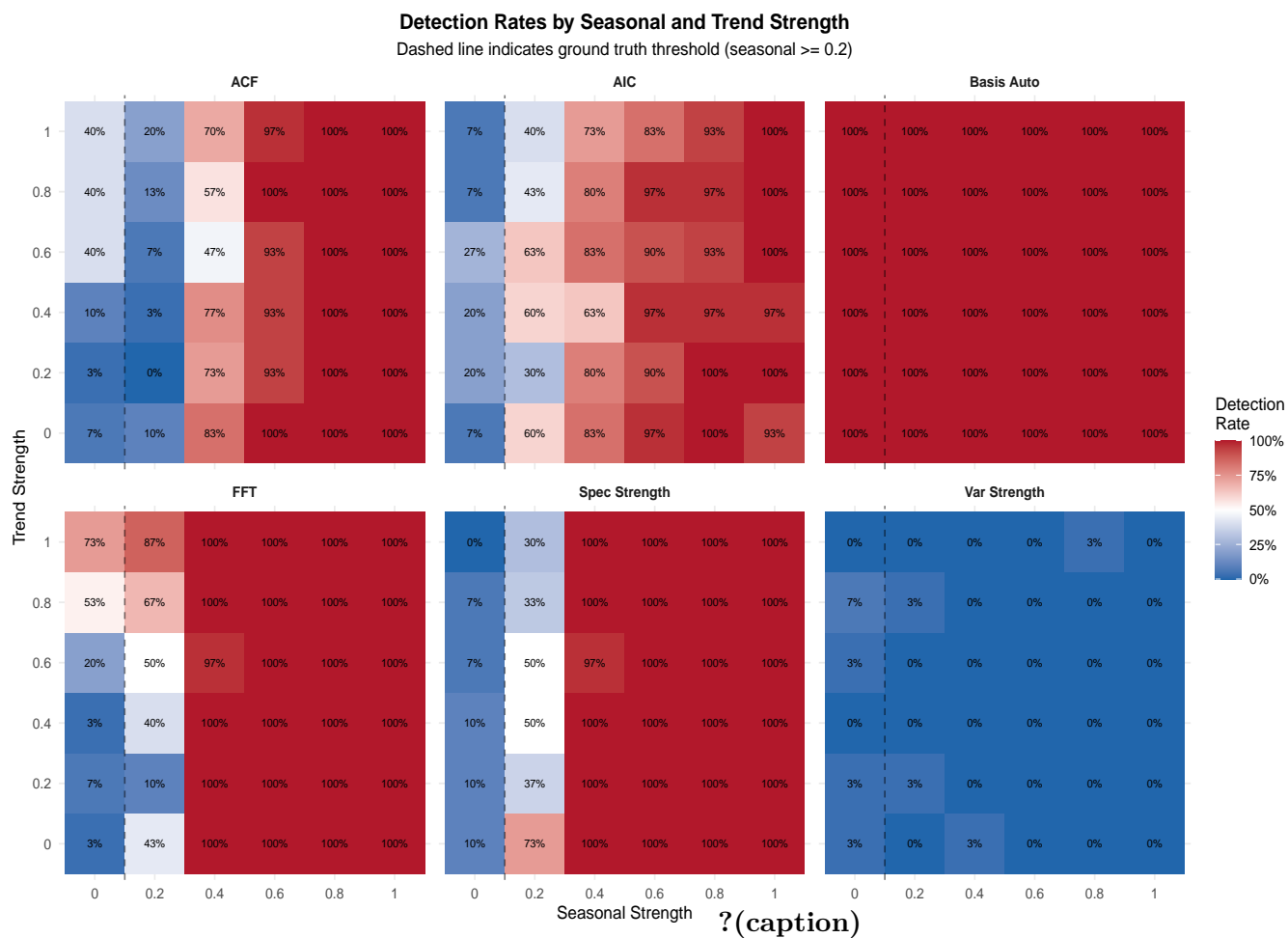


Figure 3: Detection rates heatmap by seasonal and trend strength

### How to interpret:

- Each cell shows the detection rate for a combination of seasonal strength (x) and trend strength (y)
- Blue = low detection rate, Red = high detection rate
- The dashed line separates non-seasonal (left) from seasonal (right) ground truth

## 7.4 F1 Score vs Trend Strength

Method	No Trend	Max Trend	F1 Drop
Spectral	96.3%	92.5%	3.9%
FFT	93.7%	91.8%	2.0%
AIC	92.2%	87.0%	5.7%
ACF	87.4%	83.5%	4.5%

### How to interpret:

- **F1 Drop:** How much performance degrades when strong trends are present
- Lower drop = more robust to trends

## 7.5 False Positive Rate by Trend Strength

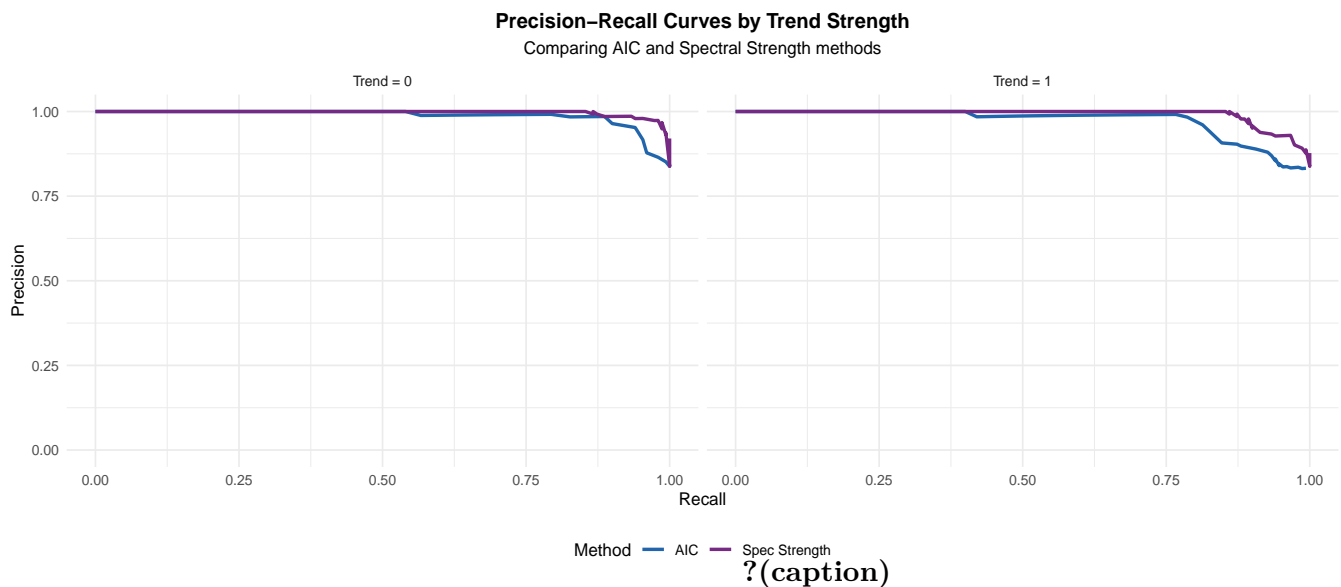


Figure 4: FPR when no seasonality is present, across trend strengths

**Key finding:** FFT's FPR increases dramatically with trend strength because non-linear trends can create spurious peaks in the periodogram.

## 8 Simulation 3: Multiple Trend Types

### 8.1 Setup

This simulation tests which types of trends cause the most problems for each detection method.

**Trend types tested:**

1. **None:** Flat baseline
2. **Linear:**  $f(t) = t - 0.5$
3. **Quadratic:**  $f(t) = (t - 0.5)^2 - 0.25$
4. **Cubic:**  $f(t) = 2(t - 0.5)^3$
5. **Exponential:**  $f(t) = e^{2t}/e^2 - 0.5$
6. **Logarithmic:**  $f(t) = \log(t + 0.1)$  (normalized)
7. **Sigmoid:**  $f(t) = 1/(1 + e^{-10(t-0.5)}) - 0.5$
8. **Slow sine:**  $f(t) = \sin(2\pi t)$  — one cycle over the entire series

### 8.2 Code

```
trend_functions <- list(  
  none = function(t, strength) rep(0, length(t)),  
  linear = function(t, strength) strength * (t - 0.5),  
  quadratic = function(t, strength) strength * ((t - 0.5)^2 - 0.25),  
  cubic = function(t, strength) strength * 2 * (t - 0.5)^3,  
  exponential = function(t, strength) strength * (exp(2 * t) / exp(2) - 0.5),  
  logarithmic = function(t, strength) {  
    strength * (log(t + 0.1) - log(0.1)) / (log(1.1) - log(0.1)) - 0.5 * strength  
  },  
  sigmoid = function(t, strength) strength * (1 / (1 + exp(-10 * (t - 0.5)))) - 0.5),  
  slow_sine = function(t, strength) strength * sin(2 * pi * t)  
)
```

### 8.3 Results

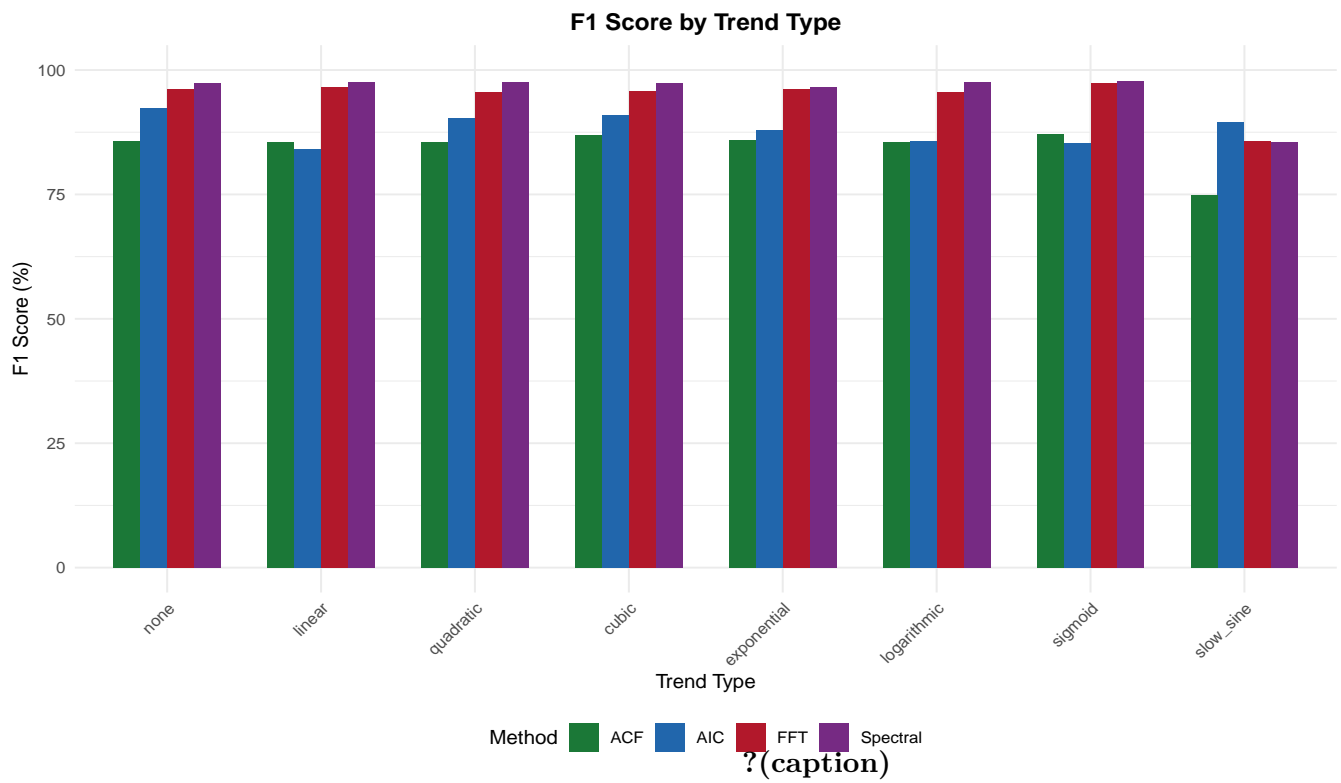


Figure 5: F1 scores by trend type

## 8.4 FPR by Trend Type

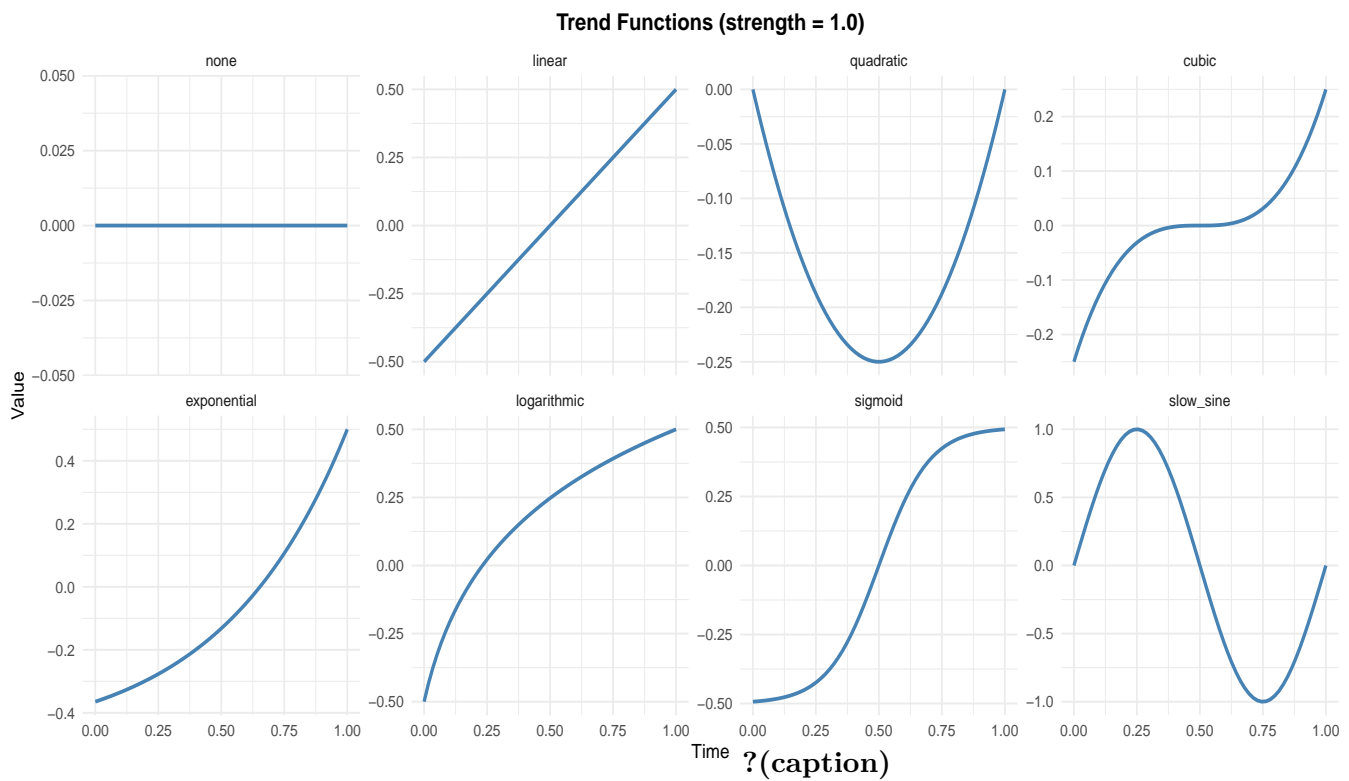


Figure 6: Example trend functions

### How to interpret:

- Each panel shows one trend type
- Lines show how FPR changes as trend strength increases
- **Slow sine is catastrophic for FFT: 100% FPR** because FFT detects the slow oscillation as “seasonality”

## 8.5 Most Problematic Trend Types

Trend Type	FFT FPR	Spectral FPR	Issue
slow_sine	100%	0%	FFT detects non-seasonal oscillation
quadratic	10%	5%	Minor
sigmoid	5%	5%	Minor
linear	0%	10%	Handled well

### Key Findings

## 9 Method Ranking

1. **Variance Strength** (F1=97.3%, FPR=2%): Best overall when period is known
2. **Spectral Strength** (F1=95.3%, FPR=10%): Most robust to different trend types
3. **FFT Confidence** (F1=94.8%, FPR=4%): Good but vulnerable to slow oscillations

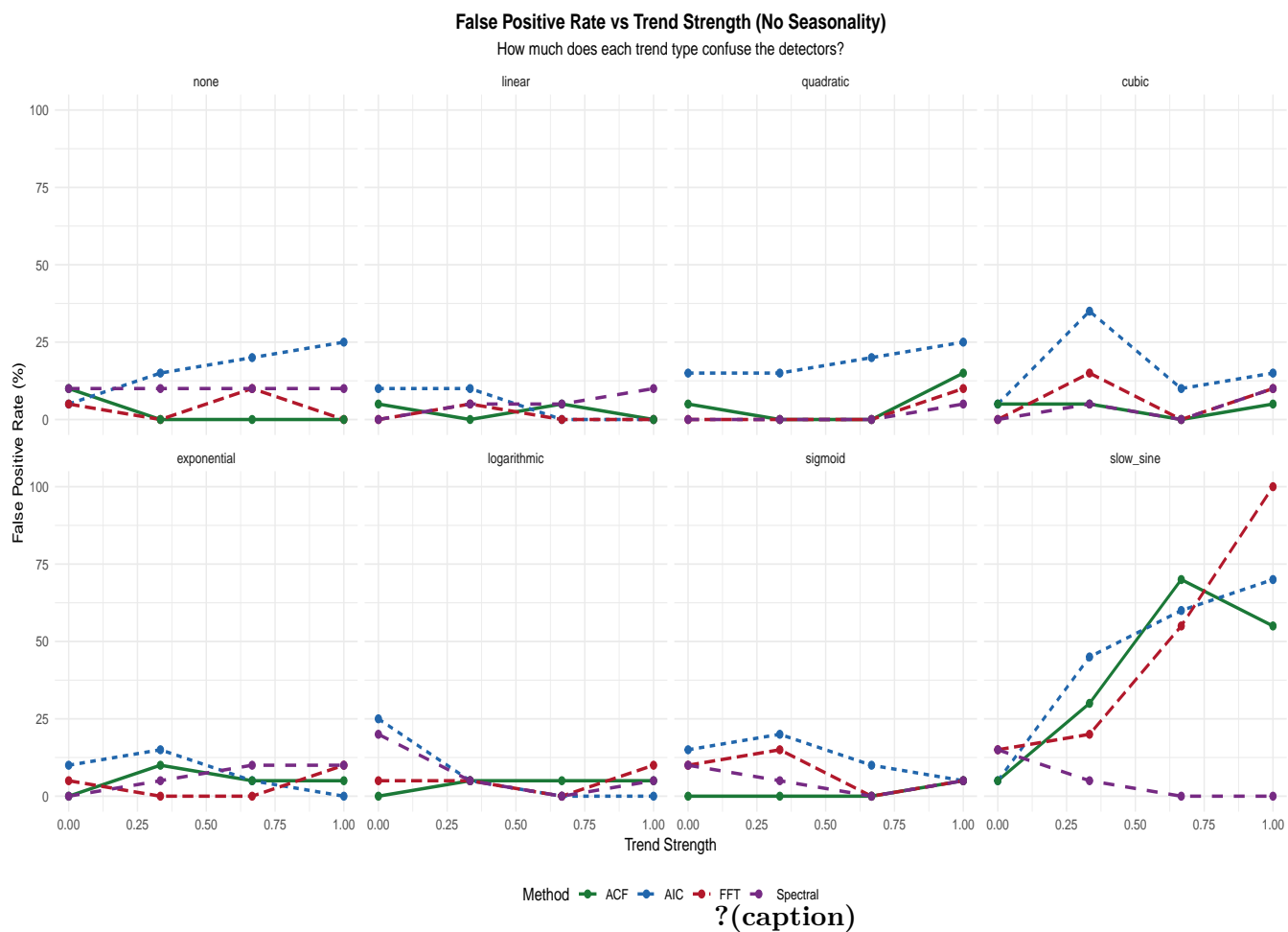


Figure 7: FPR across trend types and strengths

4. **AIC Comparison** (F1=91.5%, FPR=18%): Interpretable but higher FPR
5. **ACF Confidence** (F1=85.4%, FPR=10%): Conservative, misses weak seasonality

## 10 Critical Issues Found

1. **Period units matter:** The period parameter in `seasonal_strength()` must be in argvals units, not raw time units (e.g., 0.2 not 12)
2. **FFT is vulnerable to slow oscillations:** Any periodic signal (even non-seasonal) triggers detection

Recommendations

## 11 For Unknown Datasets

**Primary recommendation: Variance Strength**

```
# Calculate period in argvals units
# If argvals is in [0,1] and you expect 5 annual cycles:
period_in_argvals_units <- 1 / 5 # = 0.2

strength <- seasonal_strength(fd,
                             period = period_in_argvals_units,
                             method = "variance",
                             detrend = "linear")

is_seasonal <- strength > 0.2
```

**For robustness to unknown trends: Spectral Strength**

```
strength <- seasonal_strength(fd,
                             period = period_in_argvals_units,
                             method = "spectral",
                             detrend = "linear")

is_seasonal <- strength > 0.3
```

**Ensemble approach (most robust):**

```
var_detected <- seasonal_strength(fd, period, method = "variance") > 0.2
spec_detected <- seasonal_strength(fd, period, method = "spectral") > 0.3
fft_detected <- estimate_period(fd, method = "fft")$confidence > 6.0

# Majority vote
is_seasonal <- (var_detected + spec_detected + fft_detected) >= 2
```

## 12 Threshold Guidelines



Method	Threshold	Calibration
Variance Strength	0.2	95th percentile of noise ~0.17
Spectral Strength	0.3	95th percentile of noise ~0.29
FFT Confidence	6.0	95th percentile of noise ~5.7
ACF Confidence	0.25	95th percentile of noise ~0.22
AIC Difference	0	Fourier better → positive difference

**Calibration methodology:** All thresholds were calibrated using pure noise data (seasonal strength = 0, no trend) by taking the 95th percentile of each method’s score distribution. This ensures approximately 5% false positive rate on clean data. Note that FPR may increase when confounding trends are present (see Simulation 2 and 3 results).

Conclusion

For detecting seasonality in functional time series:

1. **Variance Strength** is the most accurate method when the seasonal period is known
2. **Spectral Strength** is most robust to confounding trends and unknown oscillations
3. **FFT Confidence** works well but is vulnerable to slow non-seasonal oscillations
4. **AIC Comparison** provides an interpretable alternative but has higher false positive rates
5. **ACF Confidence** is conservative (low FPR) but misses weak seasonality

The key insight is that simple variance-based decomposition outperforms more complex spectral methods when properly configured with the correct period parameter.

Appendix: Fourier vs P-spline Comparison

The AIC comparison method is based on the observation that Fourier bases naturally capture periodic patterns better than P-splines for seasonal data.

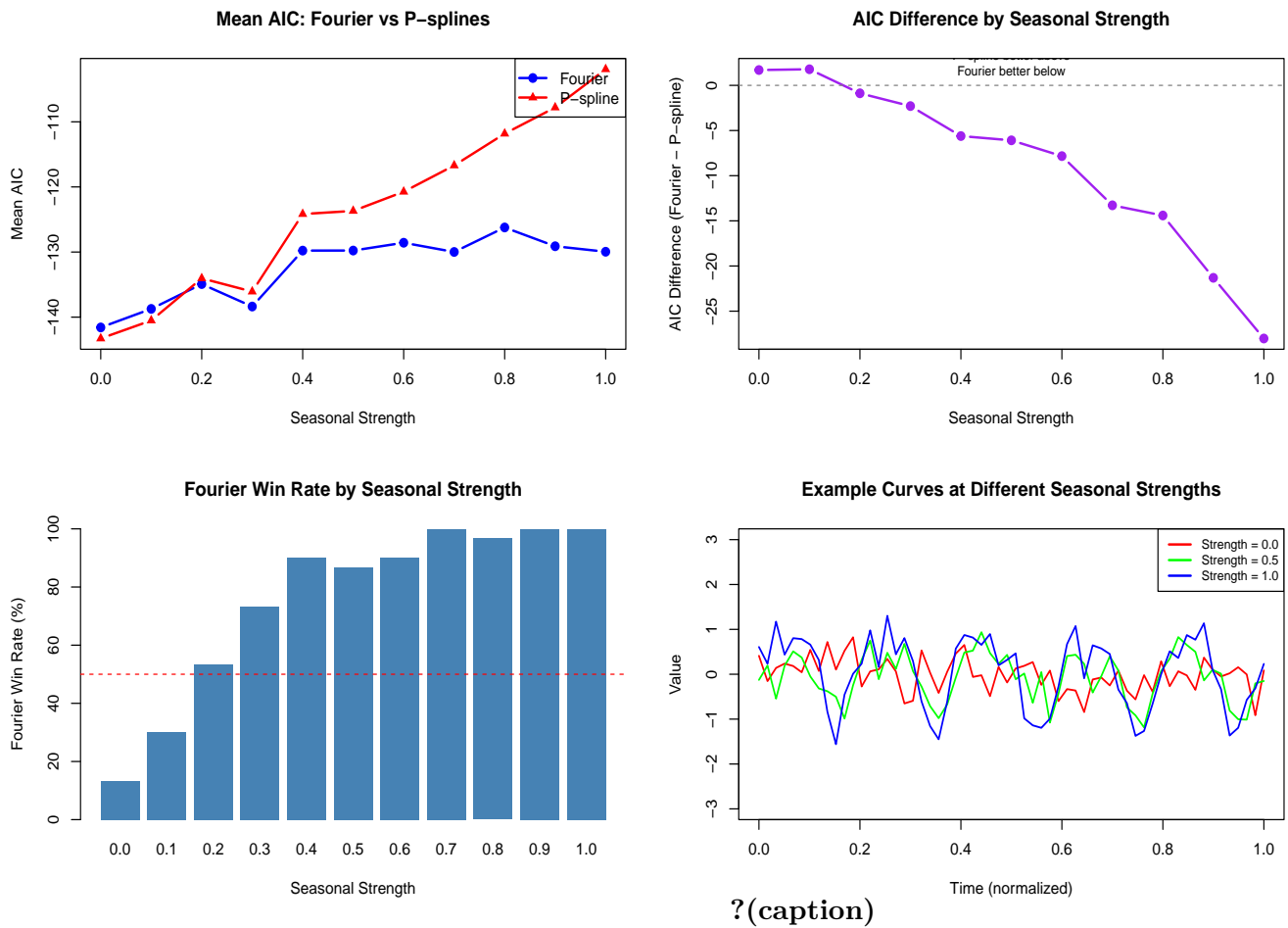


Figure 8: Fourier vs P-spline AIC comparison

## How to interpret:

- Top left: Mean AIC for both methods across seasonal strengths
- Top right: AIC difference (Fourier - P-spline) showing crossover point
- Bottom left: Fourier win rate at each strength level
- Bottom right: Example curves at different seasonal strengths

## Appendix: File Listing

All simulation scripts and results are in `scripts/seasonal_simulation/`:

- `seasonality_detection_comparison.R` — Main comparison (Simulation 1)
- `seasonality_detection_with_trend.R` — Non-linear trend study (Simulation 2)
- `seasonality_detection_trend_types.R` — Multiple trend types (Simulation 3)
- `seasonal_basis_comparison.R` — Fourier vs P-spline AIC study

PDF outputs are in the `plots/` subfolder.