

# Principal Component Analysis

## 1 Principal components: concepts and calculation

We would like to explain the variance-covariance structure of a set of variables by a few linear combinations of these variables.

Let  $\vec{X} = \begin{bmatrix} X_1 \\ \vdots \\ X_p \end{bmatrix}$  be a random vector with population mean  $\vec{\mu}$  and population covariance matrix  $\Sigma$ . Denote the spectral decomposition of  $\Sigma$  as

$$\Sigma = \lambda_1 \vec{v}_1 \vec{v}_1^\top + \dots + \lambda_p \vec{v}_p \vec{v}_p^\top,$$

where  $\lambda_1 \geq \dots \geq \lambda_p > 0$ . Each eigenvector is represented as

$$\vec{v}_k = [v_{k1}, \dots, v_{kp}]^\top.$$

### 1.1 The first principal component

Consider a linear combination of the variates by  $\vec{a} = [a_1 \ \dots \ a_p]^\top$ :

$$Y_1 = \vec{a}^\top \vec{X} = a_1 X_1 + a_2 X_2 + \dots + a_p X_p.$$

In order to explain the variance-covariance of  $\vec{X}$  as much as possible, we want to maximize the variance of  $Y_1$ . At the same time, in order to fix the scale, we impose the constraint  $\|\vec{a}\| = 1$ . Then the first principal component for  $\vec{X}$  is defined by the following optimization:

$$\begin{aligned} \max \quad & \text{Var}(Y_1) = \text{Var}(\vec{a}^\top \vec{X}) = \vec{a}^\top \Sigma \vec{a} \\ \text{s.t.} \quad & \|\vec{a}\|^2 = 1 \end{aligned}$$

The Lagrangian for the above optimization is

$$f(\vec{a}; \lambda) = \vec{a}^\top \Sigma \vec{a} - \lambda(\vec{a}^\top \vec{a} - 1).$$

By setting the gradient to be equal to zero, we get

$$\nabla_{\vec{a}} f(\vec{a}; \lambda) = 2\Sigma \vec{a} - 2\lambda \vec{a} = \vec{0},$$

that is

$$\Sigma \vec{a} = \lambda \vec{a},$$

This implies that  $\vec{a}$  must be a unit eigenvector, and  $\lambda$  is the corresponding eigenvalue. Notice what we aim to maximize is

$$\text{Var}(Y_1) = \text{Var}(\vec{a}^\top \vec{X}) = \vec{a}^\top \Sigma \vec{a} = \lambda \vec{a}^\top \vec{a} = \lambda.$$

Since  $\lambda_1 \geq \lambda_2 \geq \dots \geq \lambda_p > 0$ , in order to maximize  $\text{Var}(Y_1)$ , we must have

$$\begin{cases} \vec{a} = \vec{v}_1 \\ \text{Var}(Y_1) = \lambda_1. \end{cases}$$

To sum up, we have the following result:

**Proposition 1.** *The first principal component is*

$$Y_1 = \vec{v}_1^\top \vec{X} = v_{11}X_1 + v_{12}X_2 + \dots + v_{1p}X_p,$$

where  $\vec{v}_1$  is the eigenvector corresponding to the leading eigenvalue  $\lambda_1$ . Moreover,  $\text{Var}(Y_1) = \lambda_1$ .

## 1.2 The second principal component

In order to define the second principal component, we also look for some linear combination of the variates

$$Y_2 = \vec{a}^\top \vec{X} = a_1X_1 + a_2X_2 + \dots + a_pX_p,$$

such that its variance is as large as possible. However, here we have two constraints: First, we need to impose  $\|\vec{a}\|^2 = 1$  in order to fix the scale; Second, we require that  $Y_2$  explains the variance-covariance of  $\vec{X}$  that has not been explained by  $Y_1$ , which amounts to  $\text{cov}(Y_2, Y_1) = 0$ . Notice that

$$\text{cov}(Y_2, Y_1) = \text{cov}(\vec{a}^\top \vec{X}, \vec{v}_1^\top \vec{X}) = \vec{a}^\top \text{Cov}(\vec{X}) \vec{v}_1 = \vec{a}^\top \Sigma \vec{v}_1 = \lambda_1 \vec{a}^\top \vec{v}_1,$$

so the constraint  $\text{cov}(Y_2, Y_1) = 0$  is equivalent to  $\vec{a}^\top \vec{v}_1 = 0$ . Consequently, the second principal component is defined through the following optimization

$$\begin{aligned} \max \quad & \text{Var}(Y_2) = \text{Var}(\vec{a}^\top \vec{X}) = \vec{a}^\top \Sigma \vec{a} \\ \text{s.t.} \quad & \vec{a}^\top \vec{a} = 1, \\ & \vec{a}^\top \vec{v}_1 = 0. \end{aligned}$$

The resulting Lagrangian is thus

$$f(\vec{a}; \lambda, \gamma) = \vec{a}^\top \Sigma \vec{a} - \lambda(\|\vec{a}\|^2 - 1) - \gamma \vec{a}^\top \vec{v}_1.$$

Again, by setting the gradient to be equal to zero, we get

$$\nabla_{\vec{a}} f(\vec{a}; \lambda, \gamma) = 2\Sigma \vec{a} - 2\lambda \vec{a} - \gamma \vec{v}_1 = \vec{0}.$$

Taking the inner product of both sides with  $\vec{v}_1$ , we have

$$\vec{v}_1^\top (2\Sigma \vec{a} - 2\lambda \vec{a} - \gamma \vec{v}_1) = 0.$$

The first term

$$\vec{v}_1^\top \Sigma \vec{a} = \vec{a}^\top \Sigma \vec{v}_1 = \vec{a}^\top (\lambda_1 \vec{v}_1) = \lambda_1 \vec{a}^\top \vec{v}_1 = 0.$$

By the constraint, the second term is  $\vec{v}_1^\top \vec{a} = 0$ . As a result,  $\gamma \|\vec{v}_1\|^2 = \gamma = 0$ . Then the stationary condition is still in the form of

$$\Sigma \vec{a} = \lambda \vec{a}.$$

This implies that  $\vec{a}$  must be a unit eigenvector while  $\lambda$  is the corresponding eigenvalue. Note that we actually want to maximize

$$\text{Var}(Y_2) = \vec{a}^\top \Sigma \vec{a} = \lambda \|\vec{a}\|^2 = \lambda.$$

Since  $\vec{a}^\top \vec{v}_1 = 0$ , the best we can get is

$$\begin{cases} \vec{a} = \vec{v}_2 \\ \text{Var}(Y_2) = \lambda_2. \end{cases}$$

To sum up, we have the following result:

**Proposition 2.** *The second principal component is*

$$Y_2 = \vec{v}_2^\top \vec{X} = v_{21}X_1 + v_{22}X_2 + \dots + v_{2p}X_p,$$

where  $\vec{v}_2$  is the eigenvector corresponding to the second largest eigenvalue  $\lambda_2$ . Moreover,  $\text{Var}(Y_2) = \lambda_2$ .

### 1.3 General concepts on principal components

In general, the  $k$ -th principal component can be defined iteratively through the following procedure. Given the existing principal components  $Y_1, \dots, Y_{k-1}$ , we look for some linear combination of the variates

$$Y_k = \vec{a}^\top \vec{X} = a_1X_1 + a_2X_2 + \dots + a_pX_p,$$

such that its variance is as large as possible. Still, we need to impose  $\|\vec{a}\|^2 = 1$  in order to fix the scale, and require that  $Y_k$  to explain the variance-covariance of  $\vec{X}$  that has not been explained by  $Y_1, \dots, Y_{k-1}$ , which amounts to

$$\text{cov}(Y_k, Y_1) = \text{cov}(Y_k, Y_2) = \dots = \text{cov}(Y_k, Y_{k-1}) = 0.$$

Consequently, the  $k$ -th principal component is defined through the following optimization

$$\begin{aligned} \max \quad & \text{Var}(Y_k) = \text{Var}(\vec{a}^\top \vec{X}) = \vec{a}^\top \Sigma \vec{a} \\ \text{s.t.} \quad & \vec{a}^\top \vec{a} = 1, \\ & \vec{a}^\top \vec{v}_1 = 0, \\ & \vdots \\ & \vec{a}^\top \vec{v}_{k-1} = 0. \end{aligned}$$

In general, we have the following result

**Proposition 3.** *The  $k$ -th principal component is*

$$Y_k = \vec{v}_k^\top \vec{X} = v_{k1}X_1 + v_{k2}X_2 + \dots + v_{kp}X_p,$$

where  $\vec{v}_k$  is the eigenvector corresponding to the  $k$ -th largest eigenvalue  $\lambda_k$ . Moreover,  $\text{Var}(Y_k) = \lambda_k$ .

The coefficients  $v_{k1}, \dots, v_{kp}$  are referred to as **loadings** on the random variables  $X_1, \dots, X_p$  for the  $k$ -th principal component  $Y_k$ .

## 1.4 Verification of covariance structures of the PCs

Denote

$$\mathbf{V} = [\vec{v}_1 \quad \dots \quad \vec{v}_p] = \begin{bmatrix} v_{11} & v_{21} & \dots & v_{p1} \\ v_{12} & v_{22} & \dots & v_{p2} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ v_{1p} & v_{2p} & \dots & v_{pp} \end{bmatrix}, \quad (1.1)$$

where the row and column indices require attention. Recall that  $\mathbf{\Sigma} = \mathbf{V}\mathbf{\Lambda}\mathbf{V}^\top$ , where

$$\mathbf{\Lambda} = \begin{bmatrix} \lambda_1 & & \\ & \ddots & \\ & & \lambda_p \end{bmatrix}.$$

The random vector of population principal components can thus be written as

$$\vec{Y} = \begin{bmatrix} Y_1 \\ \vdots \\ Y_p \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \vec{v}_1^\top \vec{X} \\ \vdots \\ \vec{v}_p^\top \vec{X} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \vec{v}_1^\top \\ \vdots \\ \vec{v}_p^\top \end{bmatrix} \vec{X} = \mathbf{V}^\top \vec{X}.$$

The linear relationship  $\vec{Y} = \mathbf{V}^\top \vec{X}$  gives

$$\text{Cov}(\vec{Y}) = \mathbf{V}^\top \text{Cov}(\vec{X}) \mathbf{V} = \mathbf{V}^\top \mathbf{V} \mathbf{\Lambda} \mathbf{V}^\top \mathbf{V} = \mathbf{\Lambda},$$

which implies

$$\text{Var}(Y_k) = \lambda_k, \text{ for } k = 1, \dots, p.$$

and

$$\text{Cov}(Y_j, Y_k) = 0 \text{ for } j \neq k.$$

## 1.5 Standardization

In certain applications, it is common to standardize the original variates  $X_1, \dots, X_p$  into

$$Z_1 = \frac{X_1 - \mu_1}{\sqrt{\sigma_{11}}}, \quad Z_2 = \frac{X_2 - \mu_2}{\sqrt{\sigma_{22}}}, \dots, Z_p = \frac{X_p - \mu_p}{\sqrt{\sigma_{pp}}}.$$

Then it is straightforward to get

$$\text{Cov}(\vec{Z}) = \begin{bmatrix} \rho_{11} & \rho_{12} & \cdots & \rho_{1p} \\ \rho_{21} & \rho_{22} & \cdots & \rho_{2p} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ \rho_{p1} & \rho_{p2} & \cdots & \rho_{pp} \end{bmatrix} = \text{Corr}(\vec{X})$$

where

$$\rho_{jk} = \frac{\sigma_{jk}}{\sqrt{\sigma_{jj}\sigma_{kk}}}.$$

If we still represent the spectral decomposition for the covariance of the standardized variables as

$$\text{Cov}(\vec{Z}) = \lambda_1 \vec{v}_1 \vec{v}_1^\top + \cdots + \lambda_p \vec{v}_p \vec{v}_p^\top$$

with  $\lambda_1 \geq \lambda_2 \geq \cdots \geq \lambda_p > 0$ . The principal components of  $Z_1, \dots, Z_p$  are

$$Y_k = \vec{v}_k^\top \vec{Z} = v_{k1}Z_1 + \cdots v_{kp}Z_p.$$

## 2 Basic Principal Component Analysis

### 2.1 Contribution of variables to the determination of PCs

One standard method to compare the contributions of different variables to the determination of a particular PC is through the formula:

$$Y_k = \vec{v}_k^\top \vec{X} = v_{k1}X_1 + v_{k2}X_2 + \cdots v_{kp}X_p.$$

In other words, we compare the contributions of  $X_1, \dots, X_p$  to the determination of  $Y_k$  based on the loadings  $v_{k1}, \dots, v_{kp}$ .

Here we introduce the second method: Compare the contributions of  $X_1, \dots, X_p$  to the determination of  $Y_k$  based on the correlations  $\text{Corr}(X_1, Y_k), \dots, \text{Corr}(X_p, Y_k)$ . Recall that we have  $\vec{Y} = \mathbf{V}^\top \vec{X}$ , where  $\mathbf{V}$  is defined in (1.1). Then,

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Cov}(\vec{Y}, \vec{X}) &= \text{Cov}(\mathbf{V}^\top \vec{X}, \vec{X}) = \mathbf{V}^\top \text{Cov}(\vec{X}) = \mathbf{V}^\top \boldsymbol{\Sigma} = \mathbf{V}^\top \mathbf{V} \boldsymbol{\Lambda} \mathbf{V}^\top = \boldsymbol{\Lambda} \mathbf{V}^\top \\ &= \begin{bmatrix} \lambda_1 & & & \\ & \ddots & & \\ & & \lambda_p & \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} v_{11} & v_{12} & \cdots & v_{1p} \\ v_{21} & v_{22} & \cdots & v_{2p} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ v_{p1} & v_{p2} & \cdots & v_{pp} \end{bmatrix} \\ &= \begin{bmatrix} \lambda_1 v_{11} & \lambda_1 v_{12} & \cdots & \lambda_1 v_{1p} \\ \lambda_2 v_{21} & \lambda_2 v_{22} & \cdots & \lambda_2 v_{2p} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ \lambda_p v_{p1} & \lambda_p v_{p2} & \cdots & \lambda_p v_{pp} \end{bmatrix}, \end{aligned}$$

The covariance between the  $k$ -th principal component and the  $j$ -th variate is

$$\text{Cov}(Y_k, X_j) = \lambda_k v_{kj}.$$

We further have

$$\text{Corr}(Y_k, X_j) = \frac{\text{Cov}(Y_k, X_j)}{\sqrt{\text{Var}(Y_k)\text{Var}(X_j)}} = \frac{\lambda_k v_{kj}}{\sqrt{\lambda_k \sigma_{jj}}} = v_{kj} \sqrt{\frac{\lambda_k}{\sigma_{jj}}}.$$

This gives the second method to compare the contributions of  $X_j$ 's to the determination of  $Y_k$  through the correlation coefficients  $v_{kj} \sqrt{\frac{\lambda_k}{\sigma_{jj}}}$  for  $j = 1, \dots, p$ .

When the variables are standardized from  $X_j$  to  $Z_j$ , we have and

$$\text{Corr}(Y_k, Z_j) = v_{kj} \sqrt{\frac{\lambda_k}{\rho_{jj}}} = v_{kj} \sqrt{\lambda_k}.$$

This implies that for a fixed  $k$ , the loadings and correlation coefficients between the  $k$ -th PC  $Y_k$  and  $Z_1, \dots, Z_p$  are proportional. Therefore, there is no difference in comparing of the contributions of variables to the determination of  $Y_k$  based on either loadings or correlations.

## 2.2 Selecting the number of PCs

Recall that the spectral decomposition of the population covariance is

$$\mathbf{\Sigma} = \lambda_1 \vec{v}_1 \vec{v}_1^\top + \lambda_2 \vec{v}_2 \vec{v}_2^\top + \dots + \lambda_p \vec{v}_p \vec{v}_p^\top.$$

Denote

$$\mathbf{\Sigma} = \begin{bmatrix} \sigma_{11} & \sigma_{12} & \dots & \sigma_{1p} \\ \sigma_{21} & \sigma_{22} & \dots & \sigma_{2p} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ \sigma_{p1} & \sigma_{p2} & \dots & \sigma_{pp} \end{bmatrix} = \mathbf{V} \mathbf{\Lambda} \mathbf{V}^\top.$$

The trace formula gives

$$\text{trace}(\mathbf{\Sigma}) = \text{trace}(\mathbf{V} \mathbf{\Lambda} \mathbf{V}^\top) = \text{trace}(\mathbf{\Lambda} \mathbf{V}^\top \mathbf{V}) = \text{trace}(\mathbf{\Lambda}),$$

which is equivalent to

$$\sigma_{11} + \sigma_{22} + \dots + \sigma_{pp} = \lambda_1 + \lambda_2 + \dots + \lambda_p.$$

Since  $\text{Var}(Y_k) = \lambda_k$  for  $k = 1, \dots, p$  and  $\text{Var}(X_j) = \sigma_{jj}$ , the trace formula gives

$$\text{Var}(X_1) + \dots + \text{Var}(X_p) = \text{Var}(Y_1) + \dots + \text{Var}(Y_p)$$

**Definition 4.** *The proportion of the total variance due to the first  $k$  principal components is defined as*

$$\frac{\text{Var}(Y_1) + \dots + \text{Var}(Y_k)}{\text{Var}(Y_1) + \dots + \text{Var}(Y_p)} = \frac{\lambda_1 + \dots + \lambda_k}{\lambda_1 + \dots + \lambda_p} = \frac{\lambda_1 + \dots + \lambda_k}{\sigma_{11} + \dots + \sigma_{pp}}.$$

Example: If

$$\frac{\lambda_1 + \lambda_2 + \lambda_3}{\sigma_{11} + \sigma_{22} + \dots + \sigma_{pp}} > 90\%,$$

then we can replace  $X_1, \dots, X_p$  with  $Y_1, Y_2$  and  $Y_3$  without much loss of information.

### 3 Sample PCA

#### 3.1 Summary of results

Let

$$\vec{x}_1, \dots, \vec{x}_n$$

be a sample with sample mean  $\bar{\vec{x}}$  and sample covariance  $\mathbf{S}$ . By considering the spectral decomposition of the sample covariance

$$\mathbf{S} = \hat{\lambda}_1 \vec{u}_1 \vec{u}_1^\top + \dots + \hat{\lambda}_p \vec{u}_p \vec{u}_p^\top,$$

where  $\vec{u}_k = [u_{k1}, \dots, u_{kp}]^\top$ , we have the following results about sample PCs in the analogy to population PCs:

- The  $k$ -th sample PC is defined as

$$\hat{Y}_k = u_{k1}X_1 + u_{k2}X_2 + \dots + u_{kp}X_p.$$

The coefficients  $u_{k1}, \dots, u_{kp}$  are referred to as loadings for the  $k$ -th sample principal component  $\hat{Y}_k$ . In particular, the  $i$ -th observation of the  $k$ -th sample principal component as

$$\hat{y}_{ik} = \vec{u}_k^\top \vec{x}_i = u_{k1}x_{i1} + u_{k2}x_{i2} + \dots + u_{kp}x_{ip}.$$

- The sample variance of  $\hat{Y}_k$  is  $\hat{\lambda}_k$ , and for  $k \neq j$ , the sample covariance between  $\hat{Y}_k$  and  $\hat{Y}_j$  is 0.
- The sample correlation between  $Y_k$  and  $X_j$  is  $u_{kj} \sqrt{\frac{\hat{\lambda}_k}{s_{jj}}}$ .
- The total sample covariances is

$$s_{11} + s_{22} + \dots + s_{pp} = \hat{\lambda}_1 + \hat{\lambda}_2 + \dots + \hat{\lambda}_p,$$

and the proportion of the total variance due to the first  $k$  sample principal components:

$$\frac{\hat{\lambda}_1 + \dots + \hat{\lambda}_k}{\hat{\lambda}_1 + \dots + \hat{\lambda}_p} = \frac{\hat{\lambda}_1 + \dots + \hat{\lambda}_k}{s_{11} + \dots + s_{pp}}.$$

#### 3.2 Reduction of number of columns in the dataset

Consider the spectral decomposition of the sample covariance in the matrix form:

$$\mathbf{S} = \hat{\lambda}_1 \vec{u}_1 \vec{u}_1^\top + \dots + \hat{\lambda}_p \vec{u}_p \vec{u}_p^\top = \mathbf{U} \hat{\mathbf{\Lambda}} \mathbf{U}^\top,$$

where

$$\hat{\lambda}_1 \geq \dots \geq \hat{\lambda}_p \geq 0,$$

$$\mathbf{U} = [\vec{u}_1, \dots, \vec{u}_p] = \begin{bmatrix} u_{11} & u_{21} & \dots & u_{p1} \\ u_{12} & u_{22} & \dots & u_{p2} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ u_{1p} & u_{2p} & \dots & u_{pp} \end{bmatrix},$$

and

$$\hat{\mathbf{\Lambda}} = \begin{bmatrix} \hat{\lambda}_1 & & \\ & \ddots & \\ & & \hat{\lambda}_k \end{bmatrix}$$

Then the  $i$ -th observation of all sample principal components is

$$\hat{\mathbf{y}}_i = \begin{bmatrix} \hat{y}_{i1} \\ \vdots \\ \hat{y}_{ip} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} u_{11}x_{i1} + u_{12}x_{i2} + \dots + u_{1p}x_{ip} \\ \vdots \\ u_{p1}x_{i1} + u_{p2}x_{i2} + \dots + u_{pp}x_{ip} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} u_{11} & u_{12} & \dots & u_{1p} \\ u_{21} & u_{22} & \dots & u_{2p} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ u_{p1} & u_{p2} & \dots & u_{pp} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} x_{i1} \\ x_{i2} \\ \vdots \\ x_{ip} \end{bmatrix} = \mathbf{U}^\top \vec{x}_i.$$

Then, the data matrix of sample principal components is

$$\hat{\mathbf{Y}} := \begin{bmatrix} \hat{\mathbf{y}}_1^\top \\ \hat{\mathbf{y}}_2^\top \\ \vdots \\ \hat{\mathbf{y}}_n^\top \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \vec{x}_1^\top \mathbf{U} \\ \vec{x}_2^\top \mathbf{U} \\ \vdots \\ \vec{x}_n^\top \mathbf{U} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \vec{x}_1^\top \\ \vec{x}_2^\top \\ \vdots \\ \vec{x}_n^\top \end{bmatrix} \mathbf{U} = \mathbf{X}\mathbf{U} = \mathbf{X}[\vec{u}_1, \dots, \vec{u}_p].$$

In particular, if we only keep the observations of the first two sample PCs, we get

$$\begin{bmatrix} \hat{y}_{11} & \hat{y}_{12} \\ \hat{y}_{21} & \hat{y}_{22} \\ \vdots & \vdots \\ \hat{y}_{n1} & \hat{y}_{n2} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} x_{11} & x_{12} & \dots & x_{1p} \\ x_{21} & x_{22} & \dots & x_{2p} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ x_{n1} & x_{n2} & \dots & x_{np} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} u_{11} & u_{21} \\ u_{12} & u_{22} \\ \vdots & \vdots \\ u_{1p} & u_{2p} \end{bmatrix}$$

In practice, one is interested in plotting the PC scores of the observations for  $\hat{Y}_1$  and  $\hat{Y}_2$ , i.e., the scatter plot of

$$\begin{bmatrix} \hat{y}_{11} \\ \hat{y}_{12} \end{bmatrix}, \begin{bmatrix} \hat{y}_{21} \\ \hat{y}_{22} \end{bmatrix}, \dots, \begin{bmatrix} \hat{y}_{n1} \\ \hat{y}_{n2} \end{bmatrix}.$$

Meanwhile, each variable  $X_j$  should be also presented in the plot as the vector of loadings  $\begin{bmatrix} u_{1j} \\ u_{2j} \end{bmatrix}$ , which will be helpful for the interpretation of  $\hat{Y}_1$  and  $\hat{Y}_2$ .

## 4 Data analysis and interpretation

See, e.g., Example 8.5 on page 451.