

# Statistics for Particle Physicists

## Lecture 3: Hypothesis Tests, Confidence Intervals



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# Outline

Lecture 1: Introduction, probability,

Lecture 2: Parameter estimation

→ Lecture 3: Hypothesis tests and confidence intervals  
(some exercises [here](#)).

Lecture 4: Systematic uncertainties and further examples

# Frequentist hypothesis tests

Suppose a measurement produces data  $\mathbf{x}$ ; consider a hypothesis  $H_0$  we want to test and alternative  $H_1$

$H_0, H_1$  specify probability for  $\mathbf{x}$ :  $P(\mathbf{x}|H_0), P(\mathbf{x}|H_1)$

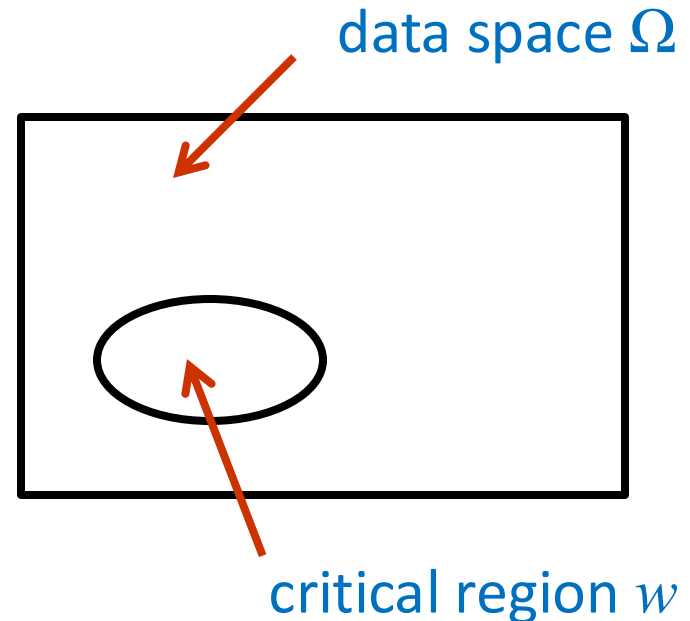
A test of  $H_0$  is defined by specifying a critical region  $w$  of the data space such that there is no more than some (small) probability  $\alpha$ , assuming  $H_0$  is correct, to observe the data there, i.e.,

$$P(\mathbf{x} \in w \mid H_0) \leq \alpha$$

Need inequality if data are discrete.

$\alpha$  is called the size or significance level of the test.

If  $\mathbf{x}$  is observed in the critical region, reject  $H_0$ .

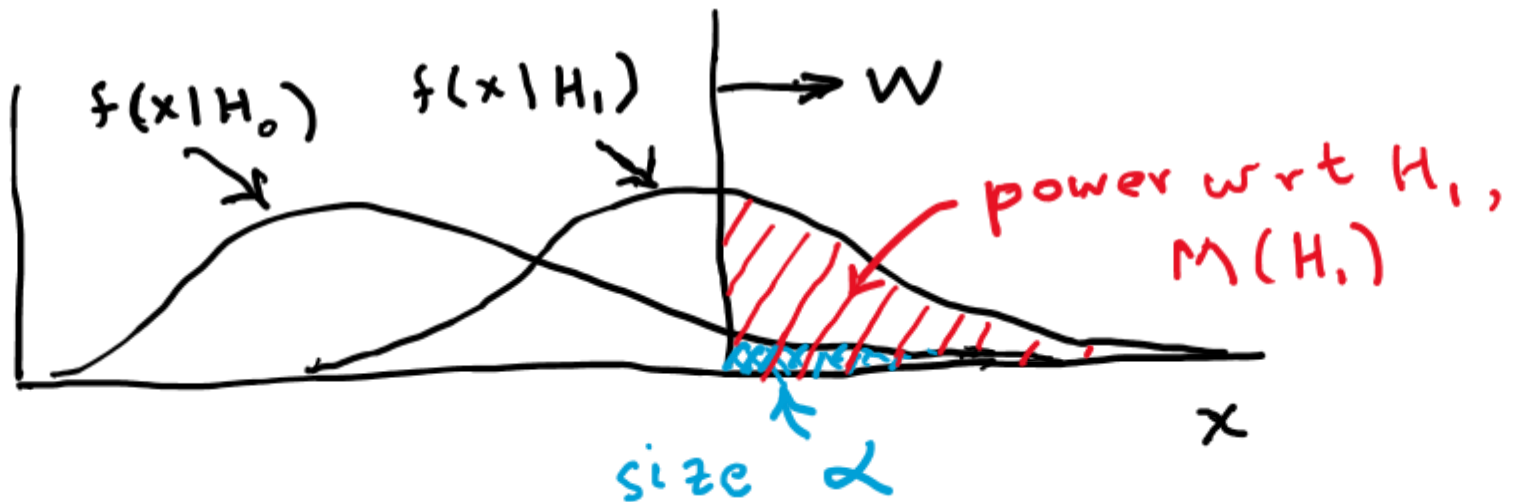


## Definition of a test (2)

But in general there are an infinite number of possible critical regions that give the same size  $\alpha$ .

Use the alternative hypothesis  $H_1$  to motivate where to place the critical region.

Roughly speaking, place the critical region where there is a low probability ( $\alpha$ ) to be found if  $H_0$  is true, but high if  $H_1$  is true:



# Classification viewed as a statistical test

Suppose events come in two possible types:

s (signal) and b (background)

For each event, test hypothesis that it is background, i.e.,  $H_0 = b$ .

Carry out test on many events, each is either of type s or b, i.e., here the hypothesis is the “true class label”, which varies randomly from event to event, so we can assign to it a frequentist probability.

Select events for which where  $H_0$  is rejected as “candidate events of type s”. Equivalent Particle Physics terminology:

background efficiency  $\varepsilon_b = \int_W f(\mathbf{x}|H_0) d\mathbf{x} = \alpha$

signal efficiency  $\varepsilon_s = \int_W f(\mathbf{x}|H_1) d\mathbf{x} = 1 - \beta = \text{power}$

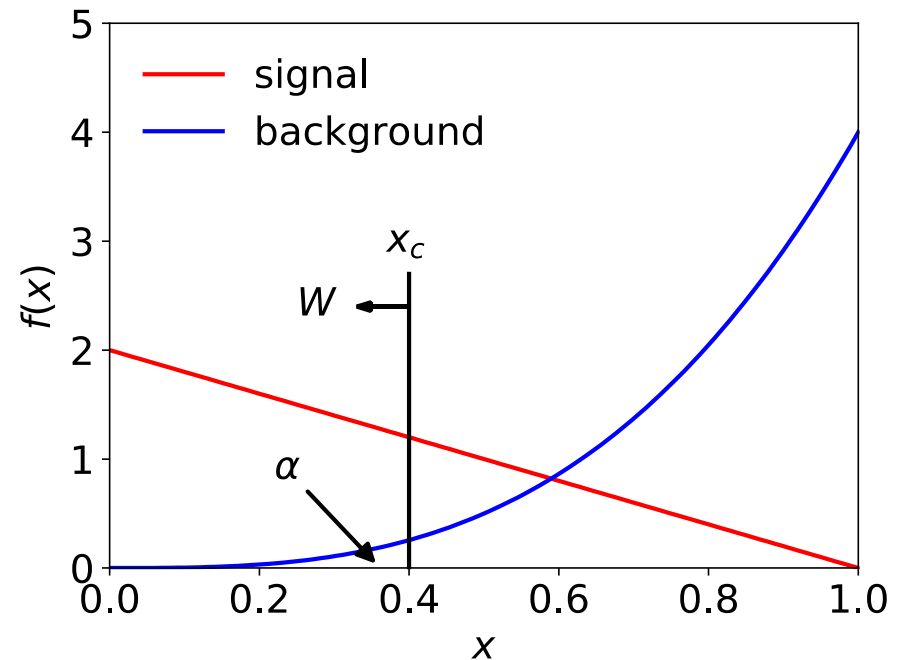
# Example of a test for classification

Suppose we can measure for each event a quantity  $x$ , where

$$f(x|s) = 2(1 - x)$$

$$f(x|b) = 4x^3$$

with  $0 \leq x \leq 1$ .



For each event in a mixture of signal (s) and background (b) test

$H_0$  : event is of type b

using a critical region  $W$  of the form:  $W = \{x : x \leq x_c\}$ , where  $x_c$  is a constant that we choose to give a test with the desired size  $\alpha$ .

## Classification example (2)

Suppose we want  $\alpha = 10^{-4}$ . Require:

$$\alpha = P(x \leq x_c | b) = \int_0^{x_c} f(x|b) dx = \left. \frac{4x^4}{4} \right|_0^{x_c} = x_c^4$$

and therefore  $x_c = \alpha^{1/4} = 0.1$

For this test (i.e. this critical region  $W$ ), the power with respect to the signal hypothesis (s) is

$$M = P(x \leq x_c | s) = \int_0^{x_c} f(x|s) dx = 2x_c - x_c^2 = 0.19$$

Note: the optimal size and power is a separate question that will depend on goals of the subsequent analysis.

## Classification example (3)

Suppose that the prior probabilities for an event to be of type s or b are:

$$\pi_s = 0.001$$

$$\pi_b = 0.999$$

The “purity” of the selected signal sample (events where b hypothesis rejected) is found using Bayes’ theorem:

$$\begin{aligned} P(s|x \leq x_c) &= \frac{P(x \leq x_c|s)\pi_s}{P(x \leq x_c|s)\pi_s + P(x \leq x_c|b)\pi_b} \\ &= 0.655 \end{aligned}$$



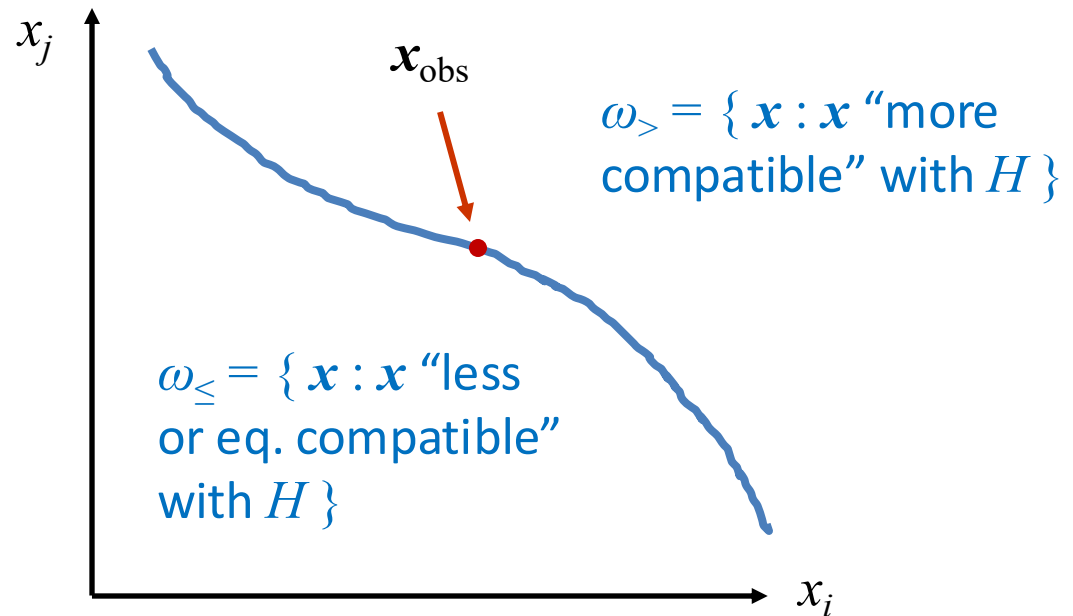
# Testing significance / goodness-of-fit

Suppose hypothesis  $H$  predicts pdf  $f(\mathbf{x}|H)$  for a set of observations  $\mathbf{x} = (x_1, \dots, x_n)$ .

We observe a single point in this space:  $\mathbf{x}_{\text{obs}}$ .

How can we quantify the level of compatibility between the data and the predictions of  $H$ ?

Decide what part of the data space represents equal or less compatibility with  $H$  than does the point  $\mathbf{x}_{\text{obs}}$ . (Not unique!)



# $p$ -values

Express level of compatibility between data and hypothesis (sometimes ‘goodness-of-fit’) by giving the  $p$ -value for  $H$ :

$$p = P(\mathbf{x} \in \omega_{\leq}(\mathbf{x}_{\text{obs}}) | H)$$

- = probability, under assumption of  $H$ , to observe data with equal or lesser compatibility with  $H$  relative to the data we got.
- = probability, under assumption of  $H$ , to observe data as discrepant with  $H$  as the data we got or more so.

Basic idea: if there is only a very small probability to find data with even worse (or equal) compatibility, then  $H$  is “disfavoured by the data”.

If the  $p$ -value is below a user-defined threshold  $\alpha$  (e.g. 0.05) then  $H$  is rejected (equivalent to hypothesis test of size  $\alpha$  as seen earlier).



## $p$ -value of $H$ is not $P(H)$

The  $p$ -value of  $H$  is not the probability that  $H$  is true!

In frequentist statistics we don't talk about  $P(H)$  (unless  $H$  represents a repeatable observation).

If we do define  $P(H)$ , e.g., in Bayesian statistics as a degree of belief, then we need to use Bayes' theorem to obtain

$$P(H|\vec{x}) = \frac{P(\vec{x}|H)\pi(H)}{\int P(\vec{x}|H)\pi(H) dH}$$

where  $\pi(H)$  is the prior probability for  $H$ .

For now stick with the frequentist approach;  
result is  $p$ -value, regrettably easy to misinterpret as  $P(H)$ .

# The Poisson counting experiment

Suppose we do a counting experiment and observe  $n$  events.

Events could be from *signal* process or from *background* – we only count the total number.

Poisson model:

$$P(n|s, b) = \frac{(s + b)^n}{n!} e^{-(s+b)}$$

$s$  = mean (i.e., expected) # of signal events

$b$  = mean # of background events

Goal is to make inference about  $s$ , e.g.,

test  $s = 0$  (rejecting  $H_0 \approx$  “discovery of signal process”)

test all non-zero  $s$  (values not rejected = confidence interval)

In both cases need to ask what is relevant alternative hypothesis.

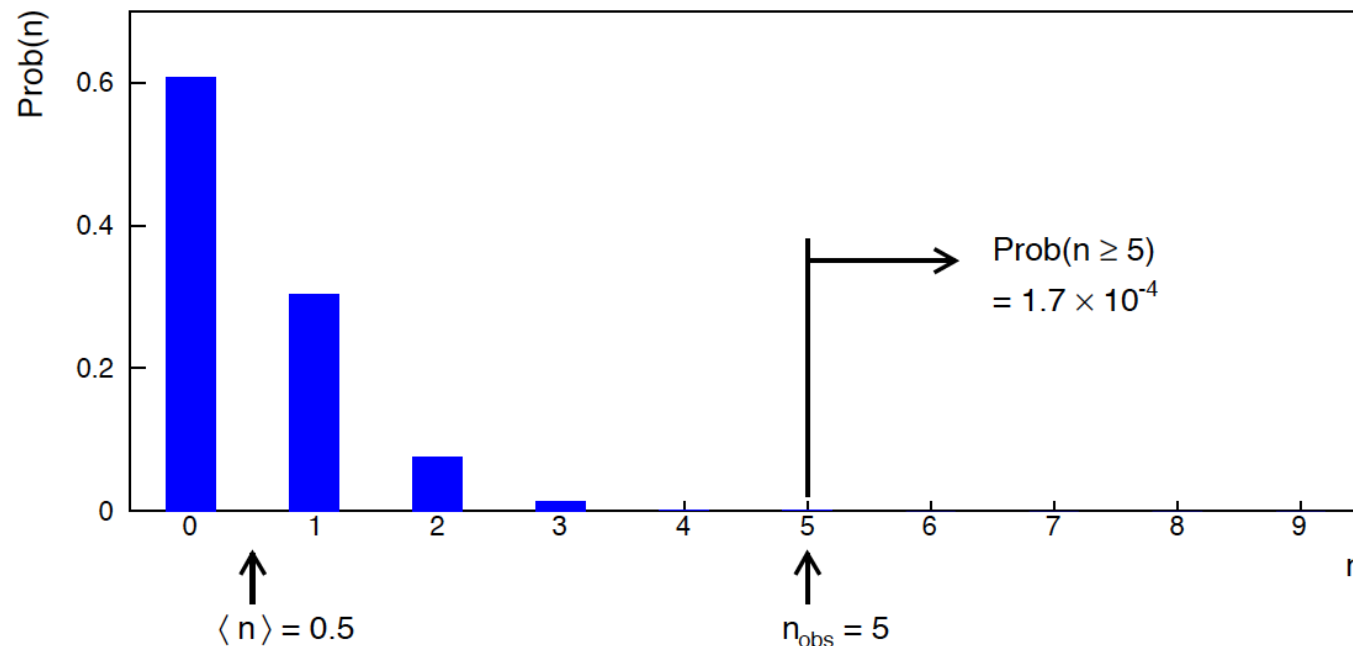
# Poisson counting experiment: discovery $p$ -value

Suppose  $b = 0.5$  (known), and we observe  $n_{\text{obs}} = 5$ .

Should we claim evidence for a new discovery?

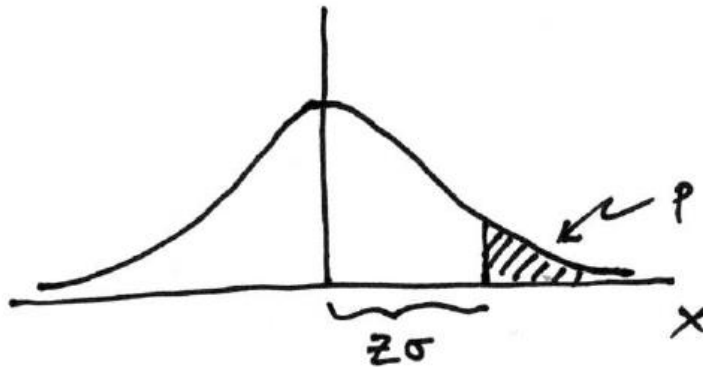
Give  $p$ -value for hypothesis  $s = 0$ :

$$\begin{aligned} p\text{-value} &= P(n \geq 5; b = 0.5, s = 0) \\ &= 1.7 \times 10^{-4} \neq P(s = 0)! \end{aligned}$$



# Significance from $p$ -value

Often define significance  $Z$  as the number of standard deviations that a Gaussian variable would fluctuate in one direction to give the same  $p$ -value.



$$p = \int_Z^{\infty} \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{-x^2/2} dx = 1 - \Phi(Z)$$

$$Z = \Phi^{-1}(1 - p)$$

in ROOT:

```
p = 1 - TMath::Freq(Z)
Z = TMath::NormQuantile(1-p)
```

in python (scipy.stats):

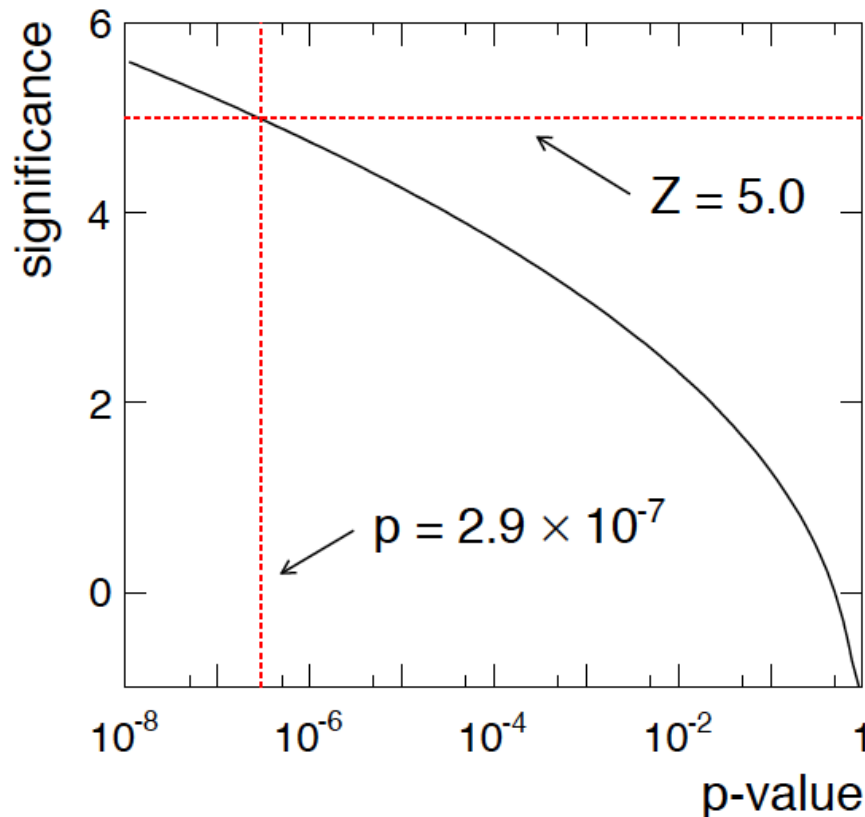
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p = 1 - norm.cdf(Z) = norm.sf(Z)
Z = norm.ppf(1-p)
```

Result  $Z$  is a “number of sigmas”. Note this does not mean that the original data was Gaussian distributed.

# Poisson counting experiment: discovery significance

Equivalent significance for  $p = 1.7 \times 10^{-4}$ :  $Z = \Phi^{-1}(1 - p) = 3.6$

Often claim discovery if  $Z > 5$  ( $p < 2.9 \times 10^{-7}$ , i.e., a “5-sigma effect”)



In fact this tradition should be revisited:  $p$ -value intended to quantify probability of a signal-like fluctuation assuming background only; not intended to cover, e.g., hidden systematics, plausibility signal model, compatibility of data with signal, “look-elsewhere effect” ( $\sim$ multiple testing), etc.

# Confidence intervals by inverting a test

In addition to a 'point estimate' of a parameter we should report an interval reflecting its statistical uncertainty.

Confidence intervals for a parameter  $\theta$  can be found by defining a test of the hypothesized value  $\theta$  (do this for all  $\theta$ ):

Specify values of the data that are 'disfavoured' by  $\theta$  (critical region) such that  $P(\text{data in critical region} | \theta) \leq \alpha$  for a prespecified  $\alpha$ , e.g., 0.05 or 0.1.

If data observed in the critical region, reject the value  $\theta$ .

Now invert the test to define a confidence interval as:

set of  $\theta$  values that are not rejected in a test of size  $\alpha$  (confidence level CL is  $1 - \alpha$ ).



# Relation between confidence interval and $p$ -value

Equivalently we can consider a significance test for each hypothesized value of  $\theta$ , resulting in a  $p$ -value,  $p_\theta$ .

If  $p_\theta \leq \alpha$ , then we reject  $\theta$ .

The confidence interval at  $CL = 1 - \alpha$  consists of those values of  $\theta$  that are not rejected.

E.g. an upper limit on  $\theta$  is the greatest value for which  $p_\theta > \alpha$ .

In practice find by setting  $p_\theta = \alpha$  and solve for  $\theta$ .

For a multidimensional parameter space  $\theta = (\theta_1, \dots, \theta_M)$  use same idea – result is a confidence “region” with boundary determined by  $p_\theta = \alpha$ .

# Coverage probability of confidence interval

If the true value of  $\theta$  is rejected, then it's not in the confidence interval. The probability for this is by construction (equality for continuous data):

$$P(\text{reject } \theta | \theta) \leq \alpha = \text{type-I error rate}$$

Therefore, the probability for the interval to contain or “cover”  $\theta$  is

$$P(\text{conf. interval “covers” } \theta | \theta) \geq 1 - \alpha$$

This assumes that the set of  $\theta$  values considered includes the true value, i.e., it assumes the composite hypothesis  $P(x|H, \theta)$ .

# Frequentist upper limit on Poisson parameter

Consider again the case of observing  $n \sim \text{Poisson}(s + b)$ .

Suppose  $b = 4.5$ ,  $n_{\text{obs}} = 5$ . Find upper limit on  $s$  at 95% CL.

Relevant alternative is  $s = 0$  (critical region at low  $n$ )

$p$ -value of hypothesized  $s$  is  $P(n \leq n_{\text{obs}}; s, b)$

Upper limit  $s_{\text{up}}$  at  $\text{CL} = 1 - \alpha$  found from

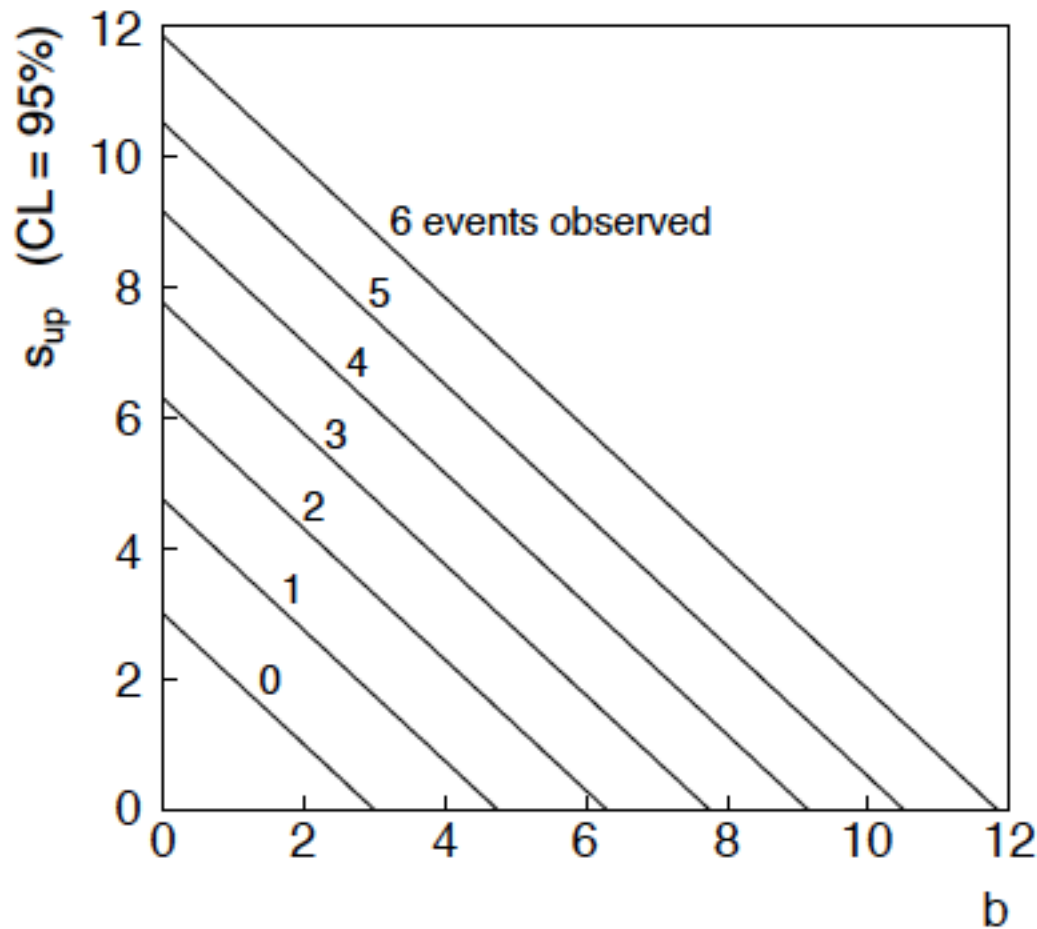
$$\alpha = P(n \leq n_{\text{obs}}; s_{\text{up}}, b) = \sum_{n=0}^{n_{\text{obs}}} \frac{(s_{\text{up}} + b)^n}{n!} e^{-(s_{\text{up}} + b)}$$

$$s_{\text{up}} = \frac{1}{2} F_{\chi^2}^{-1}(1 - \alpha; 2(n_{\text{obs}} + 1)) - b$$

$$= \frac{1}{2} F_{\chi^2}^{-1}(0.95; 2(5 + 1)) - 4.5 = 6.0$$

$n \sim \text{Poisson}(s+b)$ : frequentist upper limit on  $s$

For low fluctuation of  $n$ , formula can give negative result for  $s_{\text{up}}$ ; i.e. confidence interval is empty; all values of  $s \geq 0$  have  $p_s \leq \alpha$ .



# Approximate confidence intervals/regions from the likelihood function

Suppose we test parameter value(s)  $\theta = (\theta_1, \dots, \theta_n)$  using the ratio

$$\lambda(\theta) = \frac{L(\theta)}{L(\hat{\theta})} \quad 0 \leq \lambda(\theta) \leq 1$$

Lower  $\lambda(\theta)$  means worse agreement between data and hypothesized  $\theta$ . Equivalently, usually define

$$t_\theta = -2 \ln \lambda(\theta)$$

so higher  $t_\theta$  means worse agreement between  $\theta$  and the data.

$p$ -value of  $\theta$  therefore

$$p_\theta = \int_{t_{\theta, \text{obs}}}^{\infty} f(t_\theta | \theta) dt_\theta$$

need pdf

# Confidence region from Wilks' theorem

Wilks' theorem says (in large-sample limit and provided certain conditions hold...)

$$f(t_\theta|\theta) \sim \chi_n^2$$

chi-square dist. with # d.o.f. =  
# of components in  $\theta = (\theta_1, \dots, \theta_n)$ .

Assuming this holds, the  $p$ -value is

$$p_\theta = 1 - F_{\chi_n^2}(t_\theta) \quad \leftarrow \text{set equal to } \alpha$$

To find boundary of confidence region set  $p_\theta = \alpha$  and solve for  $t_\theta$ :

$$t_\theta = F_{\chi_n^2}^{-1}(1 - \alpha)$$

Recall also

$$t_\theta = -2 \ln \frac{L(\theta)}{L(\hat{\theta})}$$

# Confidence region from Wilks' theorem (cont.)

i.e., boundary of confidence region in  $\theta$  space is where

$$\ln L(\theta) = \ln L(\hat{\theta}) - \frac{1}{2} F_{\chi_n^2}^{-1}(1 - \alpha)$$

For example, for  $1 - \alpha = 68.3\%$  and  $n = 1$  parameter,

$$F_{\chi_1^2}^{-1}(0.683) = 1$$

and so the 68.3% confidence level interval is determined by

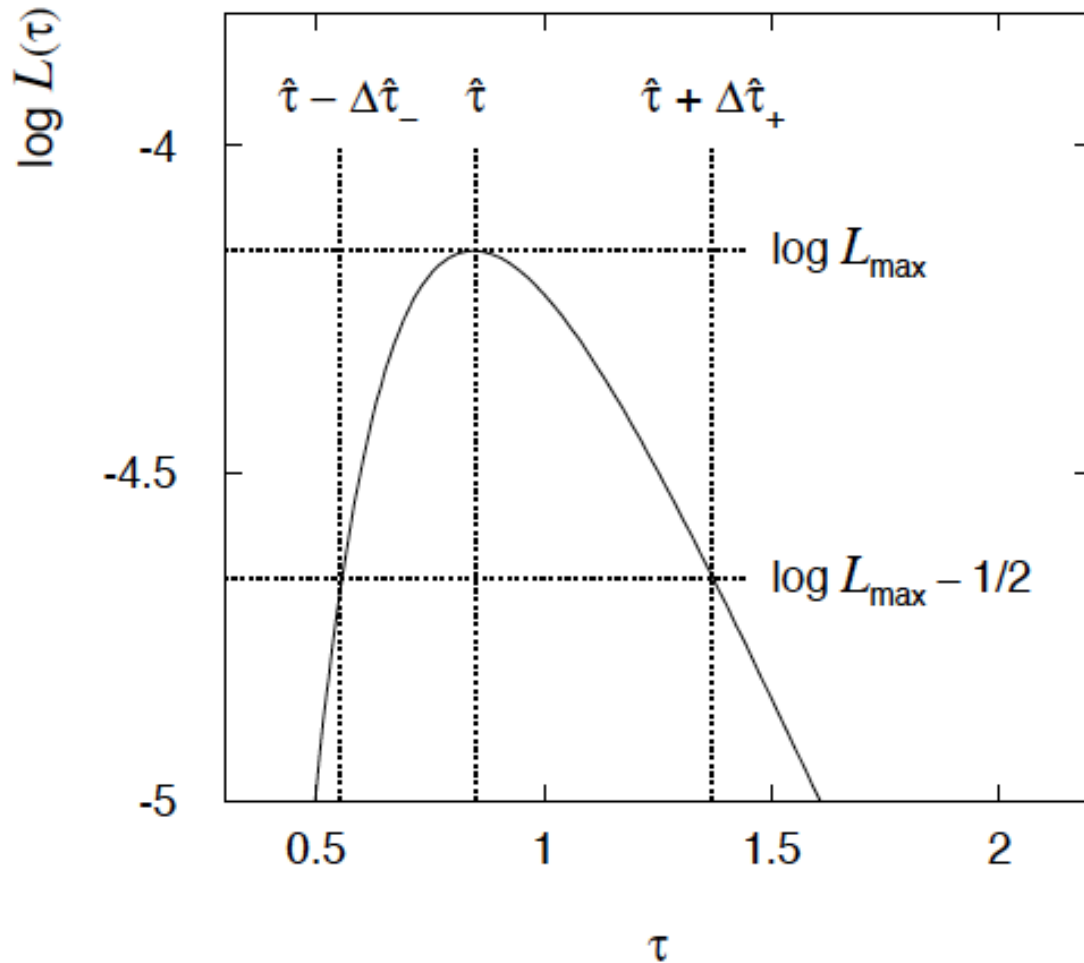
$$\ln L(\theta) = \ln L(\hat{\theta}) - \frac{1}{2}$$

Same as recipe for finding the estimator's standard deviation, i.e.,

$[\hat{\theta} - \sigma_{\hat{\theta}}, \hat{\theta} + \sigma_{\hat{\theta}}]$  is a 68.3% CL confidence interval.

# Example of interval from $\ln L(\theta)$

For  $n=1$  parameter,  $\text{CL} = 0.683$ ,  $Q_\alpha = 1$ .



Our exponential example, now with only  $n = 5$  events.

Can report ML estimate with approx. confidence interval from  $\ln L_{\max} - 1/2$  as “asymmetric error bar”:

$$\hat{\tau} = 0.85^{+0.52}_{-0.30}$$



# Multiparameter case

For increasing number of parameters,  $CL = 1 - \alpha$  decreases for confidence region determined by a given

$$Q_\alpha = F_{\chi_n^2}^{-1}(1 - \alpha)$$

$Q_\alpha$	$1 - \alpha$				
	$n = 1$	$n = 2$	$n = 3$	$n = 4$	$n = 5$
1.0	0.683	0.393	0.199	0.090	0.037
2.0	0.843	0.632	0.428	0.264	0.151
4.0	0.954	0.865	0.739	0.594	0.451
9.0	0.997	0.989	0.971	0.939	0.891

# Multiparameter case (cont.)

Equivalently,  $Q_\alpha$  increases with  $n$  for a given  $\text{CL} = 1 - \alpha$ .

$1 - \alpha$	$\tilde{Q}_\alpha$				
	$n = 1$	$n = 2$	$n = 3$	$n = 4$	$n = 5$
0.683	1.00	2.30	3.53	4.72	5.89
0.90	2.71	4.61	6.25	7.78	9.24
0.95	3.84	5.99	7.82	9.49	11.1
0.99	6.63	9.21	11.3	13.3	15.1

# Extra slides

# Limits near a boundary of the parameter space

Suppose e.g.  $b = 2.5$  and we observe  $n = 0$ .

If we choose  $CL = 0.9$ , we find from the formula for  $s_{\text{up}}$

$$s_{\text{up}} = -0.197 \quad (CL = 0.90)$$

Physicist:

We already knew  $s \geq 0$  before we started; can't use negative upper limit to report result of expensive experiment!

Statistician:

The interval is designed to cover the true value only 90% of the time — this was clearly not one of those times.

Not uncommon dilemma when testing parameter values for which one has very little experimental sensitivity, e.g., very small  $s$ .

# Expected limit for $s = 0$

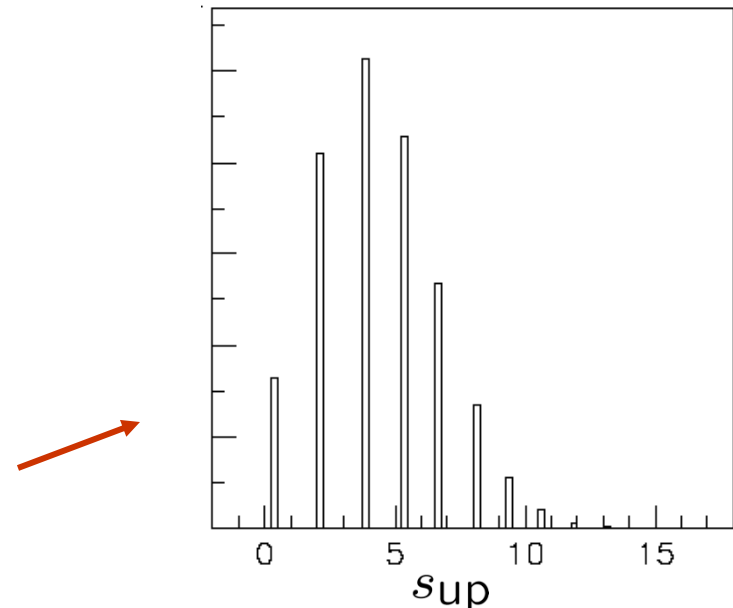
Physicist: I should have used  $CL = 0.95$  — then  $s_{\text{up}} = 0.496$

Even better: for  $CL = 0.917923$  we get  $s_{\text{up}} = 10^{-4}$  !

Reality check: with  $b = 2.5$ , typical Poisson fluctuation in  $n$  is at least  $\sqrt{2.5} = 1.6$ . How can the limit be so low?

Look at the mean limit for the no-signal hypothesis ( $s = 0$ ) (sensitivity).

Distribution of 95% CL limits  
with  $b = 2.5$ ,  $s = 0$ .  
Mean upper limit = 4.44

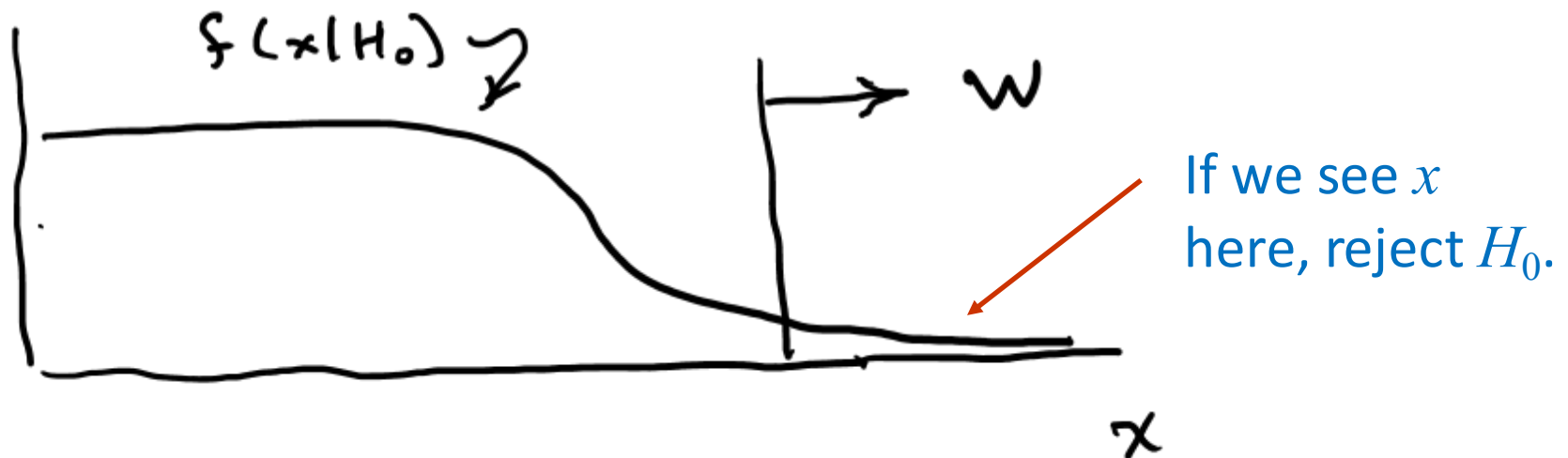


# Obvious where to put $W$ ?

In the 1930s there were great debates as to the role of the alternative hypothesis.

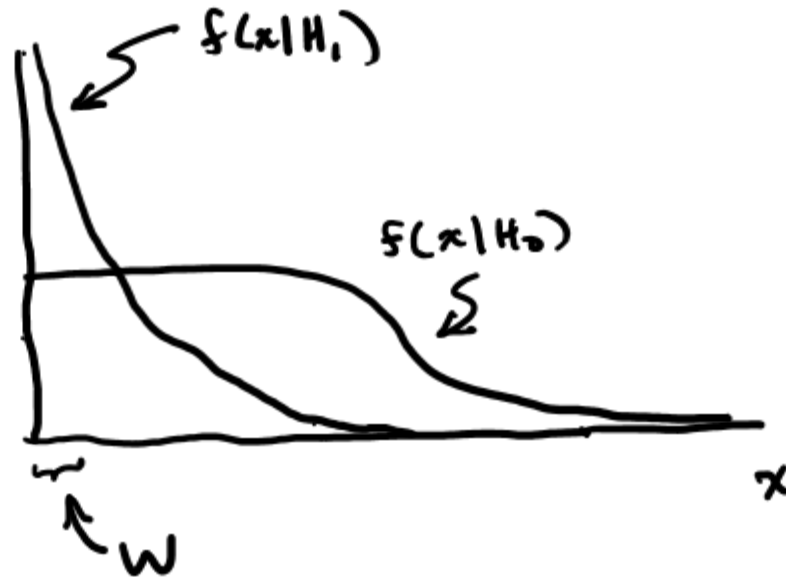
Fisher held that one could test a hypothesis  $H_0$  without reference to an alternative.

Suppose, e.g.,  $H_0$  predicts that  $x$  (suppose positive) usually comes out low. High values of  $x$  are less characteristic of  $H_0$ , so if a high value is observed, we should reject  $H_0$ , i.e., we put  $W$  at high  $x$ :



# Or not so obvious where to put $W$ ?

But what if the only relevant alternative to  $H_0$  is  $H_1$  as below:



Here high  $x$  is more characteristic of  $H_0$  and not like what we expect from  $H_1$ . So better to put  $W$  at low  $x$ .

Neyman and Pearson argued that “less characteristic of  $H_0$ ” is well defined only when taken to mean “more characteristic of some relevant alternative  $H_1$ ”.

# Type-I, Type-II errors

Rejecting the hypothesis  $H_0$  when it is true is a Type-I error.

The maximum probability for this is the size of the test:

$$P(x \in W \mid H_0) \leq \alpha$$

But we might also accept  $H_0$  when it is false, and an alternative  $H_1$  is true.

This is called a Type-II error, and occurs with probability

$$P(x \in S - W \mid H_1) = \beta$$

One minus this is called the power of the test with respect to the alternative  $H_1$ :

$$\text{Power} = 1 - \beta$$



# Distribution of the $p$ -value

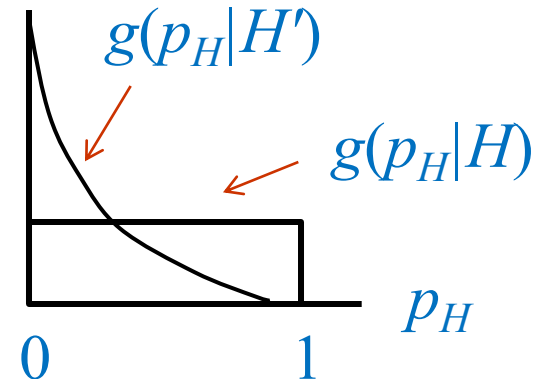
The  $p$ -value is a function of the data, and is thus itself a random variable with a given distribution. Suppose the  $p$ -value of  $H$  is found from a test statistic  $t(\mathbf{x})$  as

$$p_H = \int_t^\infty f(t'|H) dt'$$

The pdf of  $p_H$  under assumption of  $H$  is

$$g(p_H|H) = \frac{f(t|H)}{|\partial p_H / \partial t|} = \frac{f(t|H)}{f(t|H)} = 1 \quad (0 \leq p_H \leq 1)$$

In general for continuous data, under assumption of  $H$ ,  $p_H \sim \text{Uniform}[0,1]$  and is concentrated toward zero for some (broad) class of alternatives.

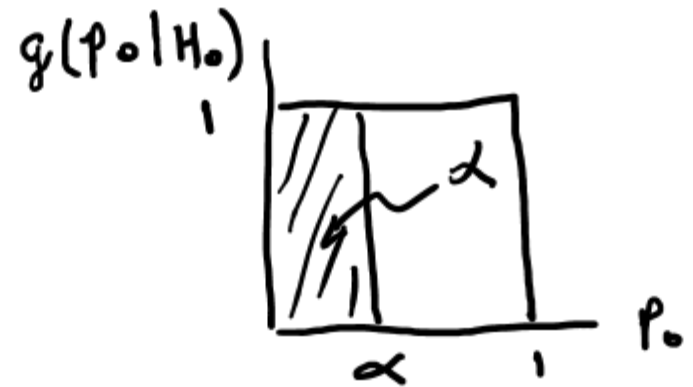


# Using a $p$ -value to define test of $H_0$

One can show that under assumption of a hypothesis  $H_0$ , its  $p$ -value,  $p_0$ , follows a uniform distribution in  $[0,1]$ .

So the probability to find  $p_0$  less than a given  $\alpha$  is

$$P(p_0 \leq \alpha | H_0) = \alpha$$



So we can define the critical region of a test of  $H_0$  with size  $\alpha$  as the set of data space where  $p_0 \leq \alpha$ .

Formally the  $p$ -value relates only to  $H_0$ , but the resulting test will have a given power with respect to a given alternative  $H_1$ .