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Closed-Form Power and Sample Size Calculations for Bayes Factors

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Sample Size Determination

$$n = ?$$

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How large should the sample size be?

- Too large: Unethical and/or waste of resources
 - Too small: High chance of inconclusive results
- **Accurately estimating sample size is crucial!**

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How to estimate sample size?

- “As ye shall analyse is as ye shall design” (Julious, 2023, p. 179)
- **Design needs to take into account the planned analysis**

Frequentist Hypothesis Testing

- **Closed-form solutions** for power and sample size of z-test:

$$1 - \beta = 1 - \Phi \left(\frac{z_{1-\alpha/2} - \mu + \theta_0}{\sigma/\sqrt{n}} \right) \quad \text{and} \quad n = \frac{2\sigma^2(z_{1-\alpha/2} + z_{1-\beta})^2}{(\mu - \theta_0)^2}$$

Frequentist Hypothesis Testing

- **Closed-form solutions** for power and sample size of z-test:

$$1 - \beta = 1 - \Phi \left(\frac{z_{1-\alpha/2} - \mu + \theta_0}{2\sigma^2/n} \right) \quad \text{and} \quad n = \frac{2\sigma^2(z_{1-\alpha/2} + z_{1-\beta})^2}{(\mu - \theta_0)^2}$$

- **Numerical solutions** for many common tests:

```
power.t.test(...)  
power.prop.test(...)  
power.anova.test(...)
```

Bayes Factor Hypothesis Testing

$$\text{BF}_{01} = \frac{\Pr(H_0 \mid \text{data})}{\Pr(H_1 \mid \text{data})} \bigg/ \frac{\Pr(H_0)}{\Pr(H_1)} = \frac{p(\text{data} \mid H_0)}{p(\text{data} \mid H_1)}$$

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 - Relatively unknown among users of Bayes factors
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⇒ **Reasons why Bayes factors rarely used by researchers?**

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Closed-Form Power and Sample Size Calculations for Bayes Factors

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- Synthesize and extend previous results on **closed-form power**
- Derive **closed-form sample size** formulae for z-test Bayes factor
- Implement in **R package bfpwr** (doi.org/10.32614/CRAN.package.bfpwr)

z-test Bayes Factor

- **Parameter estimate** $\hat{\theta}$ with **standard error** $\sigma_{\hat{\theta}}/\sqrt{n}$ where $\sigma_{\hat{\theta}}^2$ a unit variance and n the effective sample size
→ Assume **approximate normality**: $\hat{\theta} \mid \theta \sim N(\theta, \sigma_{\hat{\theta}}^2/n)$

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- **Normal prior** for effect: $\theta \mid H_1 \sim N(\mu, \tau^2)$
- **Bayes factor**

$$\text{BF}_{01} = \sqrt{1 + \frac{n\tau^2}{\sigma_{\hat{\theta}}^2}} \exp \left[-\frac{1}{2} \left\{ \frac{(\hat{\theta} - \theta_0)^2}{\sigma_{\hat{\theta}}^2/n} - \frac{(\hat{\theta} - \mu)^2}{\tau^2 + \sigma_{\hat{\theta}}^2/n} \right\} \right]$$

→ Point prior at μ when $\tau \downarrow 0$ and Bayes factor becomes likelihood ratio

Types of Parameter Estimates

Outcome	Parameter estimate $\hat{\theta}$	Interpretation of n	Unit variance $\sigma_{\hat{\theta}}^2$
Continuous	Mean	Sample size	σ^2
Continuous	Mean difference	Sample size per group	$2\sigma^2$
Continuous	Standardized mean difference	Sample size per group	2
Continuous	z-transformed correlation	Sample size minus 3	1
Binary	Arcsine square root difference	Sample size per group	1/2
Binary	Log odds ratio	Total number of events	4
Survival	Log hazard ratio	Total number of events	4
Count	Log rate ratio	Total count	4

Parameters based on two groups assume equal allocation

Power Calculations for the z-test Bayes Factor

- **Normal design prior** $\theta \sim \mathbf{N}(\mu_d, \tau_d^2)$
→ not necessarily the same as analysis prior $\theta \mid H_1 \sim \mathbf{N}(\mu, \tau^2)$

Power Calculations for the z-test Bayes Factor

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- **Probability of evidence for H_1**

$$\Pr(\text{BF}_{01} \leq k \mid \mu_d, \tau_d^2)$$

- When $\mu_d = \theta_0$ and $\tau_d \downarrow 0$ this is the frequentist **type I error rate**
- Otherwise the **(predictive) power**

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$$\Pr(\text{BF}_{01} \leq k \mid \mu_d, \tau_d^2)$$

→ When $\mu_d = \theta_0$ and $\tau_d \downarrow 0$ this is the frequentist **type I error rate**

→ Otherwise the **(predictive) power**

- **Probability of evidence for H_0**

$$\Pr(\text{BF}_{01} > k_0 \mid \mu_d, \tau_d^2)$$

→ Symmetric thresholds $k_0 = 1/k$

→ When $\mu_d = \theta_0$ and $\tau_d \downarrow 0$ this is the “power for H_0 ”

Closed-Form Power Functions

- **Normal analysis prior** (Weiss, 1997; De Santis, 2004)

$$\Pr(\text{BF}_{01} \leq k \mid n, \mu_d, \tau_d, \tau > 0) = \Phi(-\sqrt{X} - M) + \Phi(-\sqrt{X} + M)$$

$$\text{with } M = \left\{ \mu_d - \theta_0 - \frac{\sigma_{\hat{\theta}}^2}{n\tau^2}(\theta_0 - \mu) \right\} \frac{1}{\sqrt{\tau_d^2 + \sigma_{\hat{\theta}}^2/n}},$$

$$X = \left\{ \log \left(1 + \frac{n\tau^2}{\sigma_{\hat{\theta}}^2} \right) + \frac{(\theta_0 - \mu)^2}{\tau^2} - \log k^2 \right\} \left(1 + \frac{\sigma_{\hat{\theta}}^2}{n\tau^2} \right) \frac{\sigma_{\hat{\theta}}^2}{n\tau_d^2 + \sigma_{\hat{\theta}}^2}$$

Closed-Form Power Functions

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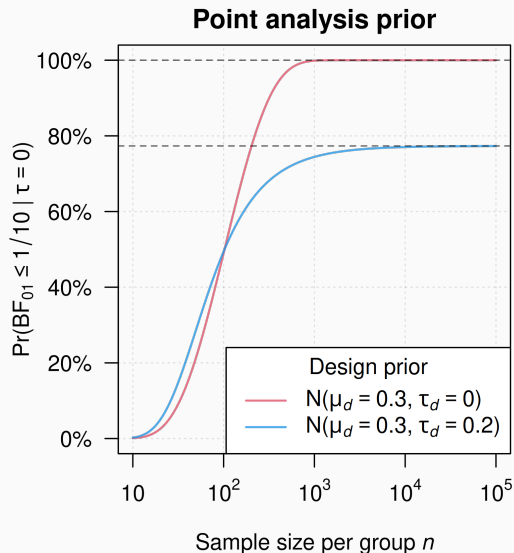
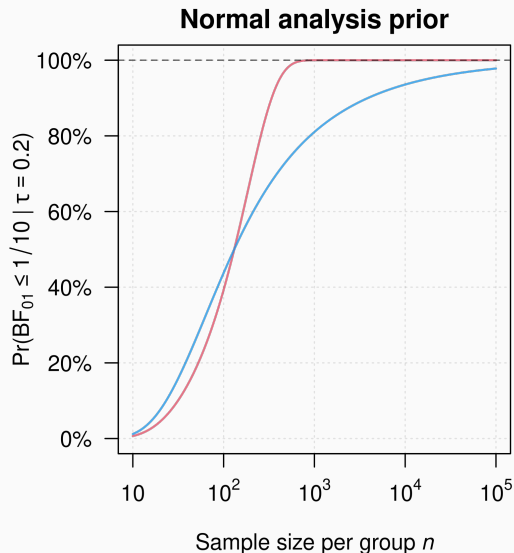
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- **Point analysis prior**

$$\Pr(\text{BF}_{01} \leq k \mid n, \mu_d, \tau_d, \boldsymbol{\tau} = \mathbf{0}) = \begin{cases} 1 - \Phi(Z) & \text{if } \mu - \theta_0 > 0 \\ \Phi(Z) & \text{if } \mu - \theta_0 < 0 \end{cases}$$

$$\text{with } Z = \frac{1}{\sqrt{\tau_d^2 + \sigma_{\hat{\theta}}^2/n}} \left\{ \frac{\sigma_{\hat{\theta}}^2 \log k}{n(\theta_0 - \mu)} + \frac{\theta_0 + \mu}{2} - \mu_d \right\}$$

Example Power Calculations



Availability of Closed-Form Sample Size

- Sample size can be easily computed with **numerical root-finding**
- Is there also a **closed-form solution**? YES, in some cases!

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Design prior	Analysis prior	
	Point prior (likelihood ratio)	Normal prior (Bayes factor)
Point prior (conditional power)	✓	✗
Normal prior (predictive power)	✓	✓ (for local normal priors)

Closed-Form Sample Size – Point Analysis Prior ($\tau = 0$)

- General formula

$$n = \left[\left\{ z_{1-\beta} + \sqrt{z_{1-\beta}^2 - \frac{\Delta_{\mu_d} \log k^2}{\Delta_{\mu}} + \left(\frac{\tau_d \log k^2}{\Delta_{\mu}} \right)^2} \right\}^2 - \left(\frac{\tau_d \log k^2}{\Delta_{\mu}} \right)^2 \right] \times \frac{\sigma_{\hat{\theta}}^2}{\Delta_{\mu_d}^2 - 4z_{1-\beta}^2 \tau_d^2}$$

where $\Delta_{\mu_d} = 2\mu_d - \mu - \theta_0$ is the generalized effect size

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- Simplified formula** assuming $\mu_d = \mu$ and $\tau_d = 0$

$$n = \frac{\sigma_{\hat{\theta}}^2 \left\{ z_{1-\beta} + \sqrt{z_{1-\beta}^2 - \log k^2} \right\}^2}{(\mu - \theta_0)^2}$$

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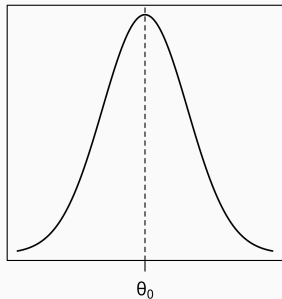
- **Related to frequentist sample size:** $z_{1-\alpha/2}$ replaced by $\sqrt{z_{1-\beta}^2 - \log k^2}$
- Matches with **likelihoodist sample size** (Royall, 1997; Strug et al., 2007)
- Enables **hybrid Bayesian-likelihoodist design**

Closed-Form Sample Size – Normal Analysis Prior ($\tau > 0$)

- Assuming the **same local analysis and design prior** ($\mu = \mu_d = \theta_0$ and $\tau_d = \tau$) leads to

$$n = \frac{\sigma_{\hat{\theta}}^2}{\tau^2} \underbrace{k^2 \exp \{ -W_{-1}(-k^2 z_{(1-\beta)/2}^2) \}}_{n_{k,\beta}}$$

with $W_{-1}(\cdot)$ the Lambert W function (Corless et al., 1996)



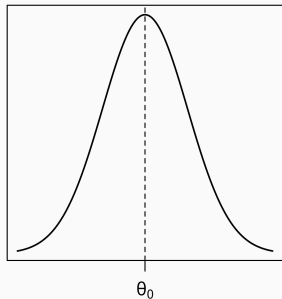
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→ **Unit-information sample size** $n_{k,\beta}$ for $\tau^2 = \sigma_{\hat{\theta}}^2$



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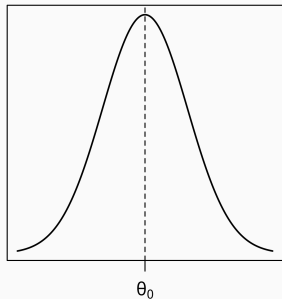
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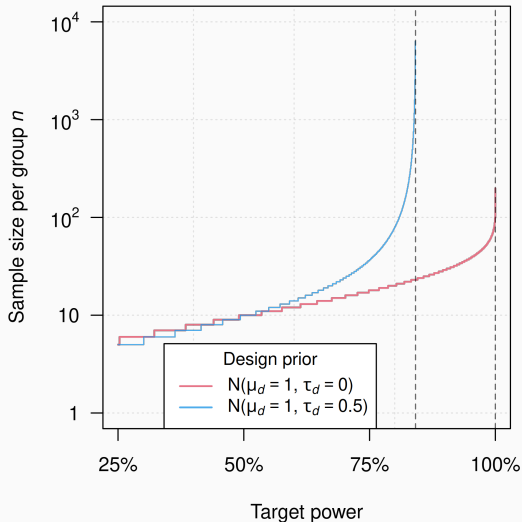
→ **Unit-information sample size** $n_{k,\beta}$ for $\tau^2 = \sigma_{\hat{\theta}}^2$

→ Local normal design prior may be **unrealistic** in practice

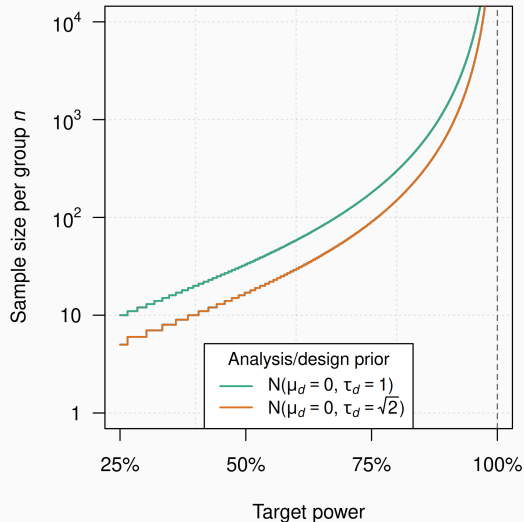


Closed-Form Sample Size Determination

Point analysis prior



Local normal analysis prior

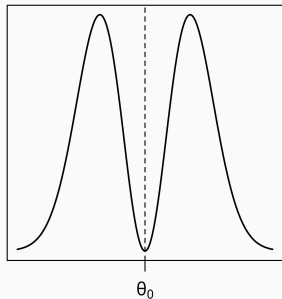


Extensions – Nonlocal Analysis Priors

- **Normal moment prior** (Johnson and Rossell, 2010)

$$p(\theta) = N(\theta \mid \theta_0, \tau^2) \times (\theta - \theta_0)^2 / \tau^2$$

→ Faster accumulation of evidence for H_0



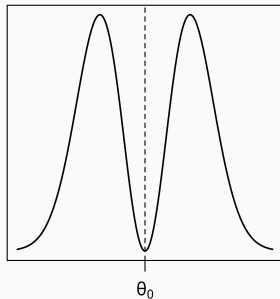
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- **Power** available in **closed-form**
- **Sample size** computable with **root-finding**

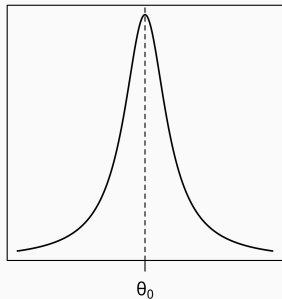


Extensions – Bayesian t -Test

- **Truncated location-scale t prior** (Gronau et al., 2020)

$$BF_{01} = \frac{T_{\nu}(t \mid 0, 1)}{\int_{-\infty}^{+\infty} NCT_{\nu}(t \mid \theta\sqrt{n}) T_{\kappa}(\theta \mid \mu, \tau)_{[a,b]} d\theta}$$

→ Generalizes popular **Jeffreys-Zellner-Siow BF**



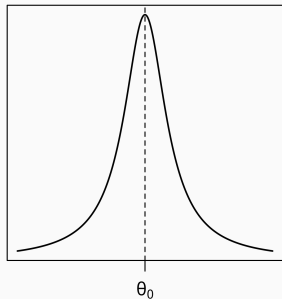
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→ Generalizes popular **Jeffreys-Zellner-Siow BF**

- **Power and sample size** computable with **root-finding**



Example: Bayesian t -Test (1)

```
install.packages("bfpwr")  
library("bfpwr")  
result <- powertbf01(power = 0.8, k = 1/10, plocation = 0,  
                     pscale = 1, pdf = 1, dpm = 0.5,  
                     dpsd = 0.3, alternative = "greater")  
result
```

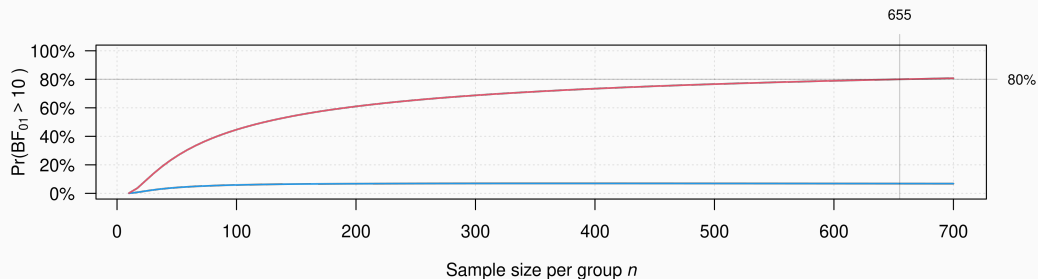
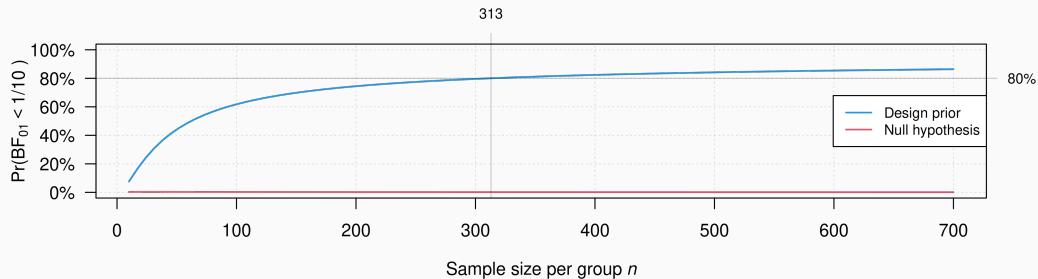
Example: Bayesian t -Test (2)

```
##  
##      Two-sample t-test Bayes factor power calculation  
##  
##              n = 312.1429  
##            power = 0.8  
##              sd = 1  
##            null = 0  
##          alternative = greater  
## analysis prior location = 0  
##   analysis prior scale = 1  
##   analysis prior df = 1  
##   design prior mean = 0.5  
##   design prior sd = 0.3  
##     BF threshold k = 1/10  
##  
## NOTE: BF oriented in favor of H0 (BF01 < 1 indicates evidence for H1 over H0)  
##       n is number of *observations per group*  
##       sd is standard deviation of one observation (assumed equal in both groups)
```

Example: Bayesian t -Test (3)

```
plot(result, nlim = c(10, 700))
```


Example: Bayesian t -Test (4)



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- **Bayes factor power and sample size calculations can be done without simulation in many common settings**
 - Fast, deterministic, requires no simulation parameters
 - More familiar and easier to use for applied researchers
- Main limitation: **Asymptotic normality assumption**
 - Student t likelihood (Wong and Tendeiro, 2025)
 - Binomial likelihood (Kelter and Pawel, 2025)
- Still left to do: **Sequential designs** and **multivariate parameters**

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