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On the asymptotic densities of certain subsets of N^k (**)

1 - Introduction

Let $k \geq 2$ be a fixed integer. What is the asymptotic density δ_k of the set of ordered k -tuples $(n_1, \dots, n_k) \in N^k$, such that there exists no prime power p^a , $a \geq 1$, appearing in the canonical factorization of each n_i , $1 \leq i \leq k$?

This problem is analogous to the following one: What is the asymptotic density d_k of the set of k -tuples which are relatively prime, i.e. k -tuples $(n_1, \dots, n_k) \in N^k$ such that there exists no prime p , appearing in the canonical factorization of each n_i , $1 \leq i \leq k$?

It is known that $d_k = 1/\zeta(k)$, where ζ is the Riemann zeta function, and this value can be considered as the probability that k integers ($k \geq 2$) chosen at random are relatively prime. More precisely,

$$(1.1) \quad N_k(x) := \#\{(n_1, \dots, n_k) \in (N \cap [1, x])^k : \gcd(n_1, \dots, n_k) = 1\} = \frac{1}{\zeta(k)} x^k + R_k(x),$$

where $R_k(x) = O(x^{k-1})$ for $k > 2$, $R_2(x) = O(x \log x)$ for $k = 2$, and $d_k = \lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} N_k(x)/x^k = 1/\zeta(k)$. This result goes back to the work of J. J. SYLVESTER [9] and D. N. LEHMER [3], see also J. E. NYMANN [5].

There are several generalizations of (1.1) in the literature. For example, let S

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(**) Received May 5, 2001. AMS classification 11 A 25, 11 N 37.

be an arbitrary subset of N . Then

$$(1.2) \quad N_k(x, S) := \#\{(n_1, \dots, n_k) \in (N \cap [1, x])^k : \gcd(n_1, \dots, n_k) \in S\} = \frac{\zeta_S(k)}{\zeta(k)} x^k + T_k(x),$$

where

$$\zeta_S(k) = \sum_{\substack{n=1 \\ n \in S}}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^k}$$

and $T_k(x) = O(x^{k-1})$ for $k > 2$, $T_2(x) = O(x \log^2 x)$ for $k = 2$, for every $S \subseteq N$, due to E. COHEN [1]. Therefore the asymptotic density of the set of ordered k -tuples (n_1, \dots, n_k) for which $\gcd(n_1, \dots, n_k)$ belongs to S is $\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} N_k(x, S)/x^k = \frac{\zeta_S(k)}{\zeta(k)}$.

J. E. NYMANN [6] shows that if the characteristic function ϱ_S of $\emptyset \neq S \subseteq N$ is completely multiplicative and if $\#\{n : n \in S \cap [1, x]\} = Ax + O(1)$, where A is the asymptotic density of S , then

$$(1.3) \quad \#\{(n_1, \dots, n_k) \in (S \cap [1, x])^k : \gcd(n_1, \dots, n_k) = 1\} = A^k \prod_{p \in S} \left(1 - \frac{1}{p^k}\right) x^k + R_k(x),$$

where $R_k(x)$ is the same as above. Therefore, if $P_k^S(n)$ denotes the probability that k integers ($k \geq 2$) chosen at random from $S \cap [1, n]$ are relatively prime, then

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} P_k^S(n) = \prod_{p \in S} \left(1 - \frac{1}{p^k}\right).$$

This result can be applied for $S = \{n : \gcd(n, p_1 \dots p_r) = 1\}$, where $\{p_1, \dots, p_r\}$ is a given finite set of distinct primes.

Now return to the problem at the beginning. It is obvious that $\delta_k \geq d_k = 1/\zeta(k)$ for every $k \geq 2$ and thus $\lim_{k \rightarrow \infty} \delta_k = 1$. Which is the exact value of δ_k ?

In order to solve this problem we use the concept of the unitary divisor. For $d, n \in N$, d is called a unitary divisor (or block divisor) of n if $d|n$ and $\gcd(d, n/d) = 1$, notation $d||n$. Various other problems concerning unitary divisors, including properties of arithmetical functions and arithmetical convolutions defined by unitary divisors, have been studied extensively in the literature, see for example [4] and its bibliography. Denote the greatest common unitary divisor of n_1, \dots, n_k by $gcd(n_1, \dots, n_k)$.

Our question can be reformulated in this way: What is the asymptotic density

δ_k of the set of ordered k -tuples (n_1, \dots, n_k) such that $gcd(n_1, \dots, n_k) = 1$, or more generally, $gcd(n_1, \dots, n_k) \in S$?

Furthermore, what is the probability that for k integers n_1, \dots, n_k chosen at random from $S \cap [1, n]$ one has $gcd(n_1, \dots, n_k) = 1$?

In this paper we determine the value δ_k and deduce asymptotic formulae with error terms analogous to (1.1)-(1.3), regarding these problems. We give numerical approximations of the constants δ_k and also improve the error term of (1.2) of E. COHEN.

The treatment we use is based on the inversion functions μ_S^* and μ_S attached to the subset S . We point out that this is applicable also in case $k = 1$ in order to establish asymptotics regarding the densities of certain subsets S of \mathbf{N} , generalizing in this way an often cited result of G. J. RIEGER [7].

Note that the value δ_2 is given by D. SURYANARAYANA and M. V. SUBBARAO [8], Corollary 3.6.3, applying other arguments as those of the present paper.

Using the concept of regular cross-convolution, see [11], [12], it is possible to deduce more general results, including (1.1) - (1.3) and (2.1) and (2.4) of this paper. We do not go into details.

2 - Results

Let $S \subseteq \mathbf{N}$. We say that S is (completely) multiplicative if $1 \in S$ and its characteristic function $\varrho_S(n)$ is (completely) multiplicative. Define the function $\mu_S^*(n)$ by

$$\sum_{d|n} \mu_S^*(d) = \varrho_S(n), \quad n \in \mathbf{N},$$

that is

$$\mu_S^*(n) = \sum_{d|n} \varrho_S(d) \mu^*(n/d), \quad n \in \mathbf{N},$$

where the sums are extended over the unitary divisors of n and $\mu^*(n) := \mu_{\{1\}}^*(n) = (-1)^{\omega(n)}$, $\omega(n)$ denoting the number of distinct prime factors of n .

Furthermore, let $\phi(n)$ and $\theta(n)$ denote Euler's function and the number of squarefree divisors of n , respectively.

Theorem 2.1. *If $k \geq 2$ and S is an arbitrary subset of \mathbf{N} , then*

$$(2.1) \quad \#\{(n_1, \dots, n_k) \in (\mathbf{N} \cap [1, x])^k : gcd(n_1, \dots, n_k) \in S\} = \delta_k(S) x^k + V_k(x, S),$$

where

$$\delta_k(S) = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{\mu_S^*(n) \phi^k(n)}{n^{2k}}$$

and the remainder term can be evaluated as follows:

(1) $V_k(x, S) = O(x^{k-1})$ for $k > 2$ and for an arbitrary S ,

(2) $V_2(x, S) = O(x \log^4 x)$ for an arbitrary S ,

(3) $V_2(x, S) = O(x \log^2 x)$ for an S such that $\sum_{n \in S} \frac{\theta(n)}{n} < \infty$ (in particular for every finite S) and for every multiplicative S ,

(4) $V_2(x, S) = O(x)$ for every multiplicative S such that $\sum_{p \notin S} \frac{1}{p} < \infty$ (in particular if the set $\{p : p \notin S\}$ is finite).

If S is multiplicative, then

$$\delta_k(S) = \prod_p \left(1 - \left(1 - \frac{1}{p} \right)^k \sum_{\substack{a=1 \\ p^a \notin S}}^{\infty} \frac{1}{p^{ak}} \right).$$

If $S = \{1\}$, then

$$\delta_k := \delta_k(\{1\}) = \prod_p \left(1 - \frac{(p-1)^k}{p^k(p^k-1)} \right).$$

Theorem 2.2. If $k \geq 2$ and S is an arbitrary subset of \mathbf{N} , then the asymptotic densities of the sets of ordered k -tuples (n_1, \dots, n_k) such that $\gcd(n_1, \dots, n_k) \in S$ and $\gcd(n_1, \dots, n_k) = 1$ are $\delta_k(S)$ and δ_k , respectively, given in Theorem 2.1.

Theorem 2.3. Let p_n denote the n -th prime and for $r \in \mathbf{N}$ let $N = 10^r/2$. Then

$$\delta_k \approx \prod_{n=1}^N \left(1 - \frac{(p_n-1)^k}{p_n^k(p_n^k-1)} \right)$$

is an approximation of δ_k with r exact decimals.

In particular, $\delta_2 \approx 0.8073$, $\delta_3 \approx 0.9637$, $\delta_4 \approx 0.9924$, $\delta_5 \approx 0.9983$, $\delta_6 \approx 0.9996$, $\delta_7 \approx 0.9999$, with $r = 4$ exact decimals.

Theorem 2.4. For $k = 2$ the error term $R_2(x)$ of (1.2) can be improved into $R(x, S)$, where

(i) $R(x, S) = O(x \log x)$ for an S such that $\sum_{n \in S} \frac{1}{n} < \infty$ (in particular for every finite S) and for every multiplicative S ,

(ii) $R(x, S) = O(x)$ for every multiplicative S such that $\sum_{p \notin S} \frac{1}{p} < \infty$ (in particular if the set $\{p : p \notin S\}$ is finite).

Remark. It is noted in [1] that if $k = 2$ and if the function $\mu_S(n)$ is bounded, cf. proof of Theorem 2.4 of the present paper, then the error term is $R_2(x) = O(x \log x)$.

Theorem 2.5. Suppose that $S \subseteq \mathbf{N}$ is multiplicative and $\min\{a : p^a \notin S\} \geq r \geq 2$ for every prime p . Then

$$(2.2) \quad \sum_{n \leq x} \varrho_S(n) = d(S)x + O(x^r \sqrt{x}),$$

where

$$(2.3) \quad d(S) = \prod_p \left(1 - \frac{1}{p}\right) \left(1 + \sum_{\substack{a=1 \\ p^a \in S}} \frac{1}{p^a}\right)$$

is the asymptotic density of S .

Remark. In the special case $S =$ the set of K -void integers we reobtain from (2.2) the result of G. J. RIEGER [7]. The K -void integers are defined as follows. Let K be a nonempty subset of $\mathbf{N} \setminus \{1\}$. The number n is called K -void if $n = 1$ or $n > 1$ and there is no prime power p^a , with $a \in K$, appearing in the canonical factorization of n .

Does the density exist for an arbitrary multiplicative subset S ? Yes, and it is $d(S)$ given by (2.3), where the infinite product is considered to be 0 when it diverges (if and only if $\sum_{p \notin S} \frac{1}{p} = \infty$). This follows from a well-known result of E. WIRSING [13] concerning the mean-values of certain multiplicative functions f . A short direct proof for the case f multiplicative and $0 \leq f(n) \leq 1$ for $n \geq 1$, hence applicable for the characteristic function of an arbitrary multiplicative S , is given in the book of G. TENENBAUM, [10], p. 48.

Theorem 2.6. Let $k \geq 2$ and suppose that S is a completely multiplicative subset of \mathbf{N} such that $\#\{n : n \in S \cap [1, x]\} = Ax + O(1)$. Then

$$(2.4) \quad \#\{(n_1, \dots, n_k) \in (S \cap [1, x])^k : \text{gcd}(n_1, \dots, n_k) = 1\} = A^k \beta_k(S) x^k + T_k(x),$$

where

$$\beta_k(S) = \prod_{p \in S} \left(1 - \frac{(p-1)^k}{p^k(p^k-1)} \right),$$

and $T_k(x) = O(x^{k-1})$ for $k > 2$, $T_2(x) = O(x \log^2 x)$ for $k = 2$.

If $Q_k^S(n)$ denotes the probability that for k integers n_1, \dots, n_k chosen at random from $S \cap [1, n]$ one has $\text{gcd}(n_1, \dots, n_k) = 1$, then

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} Q_k^S(n) = \beta_k(S).$$

3 - Proofs

Proof of Theorem 2.1. Using the definition of μ_S^* , the fact that $d \parallel \text{gcd}(n_1, \dots, n_k)$ if and only if $d \parallel n_i$ for every $1 \leq i \leq k$, which can be checked easily, and the well-known estimate

$$\sum_{\substack{n \leq x \\ \text{gcd}(n, m) = 1}} 1 = \frac{\phi(m)x}{m} + O(\theta(m))$$

which holds uniformly for $x \geq 1$ and $m \in \mathbf{N}$, we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} \#\{(n_1, \dots, n_k) \in (\mathbf{N} \cap [1, x])^k : \text{gcd}(n_1, \dots, n_k) \in S\} &= \sum_{n_1, \dots, n_k \leq x} \varrho_S(\text{gcd}(n_1, \dots, n_k)) = \\ &= \sum_{n_1, \dots, n_k \leq x} \sum_{d \parallel (n_1, \dots, n_k)} \mu_S^*(d) = \sum_{n_1, \dots, n_k \leq x} \sum_{d \parallel n_1, \dots, d \parallel n_k} \mu_S^*(d) = \\ &= \sum_{d \leq x} \mu_S^*(d) \sum_{\substack{a_i \leq x/d \\ (a_i, d) = 1 \\ 1 \leq i \leq k}} 1 = \sum_{d \leq x} \mu_S^*(d) \left(\sum_{\substack{a \leq x/d \\ (a, d) = 1}} 1 \right)^k \\ &= \sum_{d \leq x} \mu_S^*(d) \left(\frac{x\phi(d)}{d^2} + O(\theta(d)) \right)^k = \sum_{d \leq x} \mu_S^*(d) \left(\frac{x^k \phi^k(d)}{d^{2k}} + O\left(\frac{x^{k-1} \theta(d)}{d^{k-1}} \right) \right) \\ &= x^k \sum_{d \leq x} \frac{\mu_S^*(d) \phi^k(d)}{d^{2k}} + O\left(x^{k-1} \sum_{d \leq x} \frac{|\mu_S^*(d)| \theta(d)}{d^{k-1}} \right) \\ &= \delta_k(S) x^k + O\left(x^k \sum_{d > x} \frac{|\mu_S^*(d)|}{d^k} \right) + O\left(x^{k-1} \sum_{d \leq x} \frac{|\mu_S^*(d)| \theta(d)}{d^{k-1}} \right). \end{aligned}$$

The given error term yields now from the next statements:

(a)

$$\sum_{n \leq x} \frac{\theta(n)}{n^s} = \begin{cases} O(\log^2 x), & s = 1, \\ O(1), & s > 1. \end{cases}$$

$$\sum_{n \leq x} \frac{\theta^2(n)}{n^s} = \begin{cases} O(\log^4 x), & s = 1, \\ O(1), & s > 1, \end{cases}$$

$$\sum_{n > x} \frac{1}{n^s} = O\left(\frac{1}{x^{s-1}}\right), \quad \sum_{n > x} \frac{\theta(n)}{n^s} = O\left(\frac{\log x}{x^{s-1}}\right), \quad s > 1.$$

(b) For an arbitrary $S \subseteq \mathbf{N}$ and for every $n \in \mathbf{N}$, $|\mu_S^*(n)| \leq \sum_{d|n} \varrho_S(d) \leq \theta(n)$, $|\mu_S^*(n)|\theta(n) \leq \sum_{d|n} \varrho_S(d) \theta(d) \theta(n/d)$ and

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{n \leq x} \frac{|\mu_S^*(n)|\theta(n)}{n} &\leq \sum_{d \leq x} \frac{\varrho_S(d) \theta(d)}{d} \sum_{e \leq x/d} \frac{\theta(e)}{e} \\ &= O\left(\log^2 x \sum_{d \leq x} \frac{\varrho_S(d) \theta(d)}{d}\right) = \begin{cases} O(\log^2 x), & \text{if } \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{\varrho_S(n) \theta(n)}{n} < \infty, \\ O(\log^4 x), & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases} \end{aligned}$$

(c) If S is multiplicative, then μ_S^* is multiplicative too, $\mu_S^*(p^a) = \varrho_S(p^a) - 1$ for every prime power p^a ($a \geq 1$) and $\mu_S^*(n) \in \{-1, 0, 1\}$ for each $n \in \mathbf{N}$.

(d) Suppose S is multiplicative. Then

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_p \sum_{a=1}^{\infty} \frac{|\mu_S^*(p^a)|\theta(p^a)}{p^a} &= 2 \sum_p \sum_{a=1}^{\infty} \frac{1 - \varrho_S(p^a)}{p^a} \\ &\leq 2 \sum_p \left(\frac{1 - \varrho_S(p)}{p} + \sum_{a=2}^{\infty} \frac{1}{p^a} \right) = 2 \sum_{p \in S} \frac{1}{p(p-1)} + 2 \sum_{p \notin S} \frac{1}{p-1} \\ &\leq 4 \left(\sum_{p \in S} \frac{1}{p^2} + \sum_{p \notin S} \frac{1}{p} \right) < \infty \quad \text{if} \quad \sum_{p \notin S} \frac{1}{p} < \infty. \end{aligned}$$

It follows that in this case the series $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{|\mu_S^*(n)|\theta(n)}{n}$ is convergent.

If S is multiplicative, then the series giving $\delta_k(S)$ can be expanded into an infinite product of Euler-type.

Proof of Theorem 2.2. This is a direct consequence of Theorem 2.1.

Proof of Theorem 2.3. Consider the series of positive terms

$$\begin{aligned} & \sum_p \log \left(1 - \frac{(p-1)^k}{p^k(p^k-1)} \right)^{-1} \\ &= \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \log \left(1 + \frac{(p_n-1)^k}{p_n^k(p_n^k-1) - (p_n-1)^k} \right) = -\log \delta_k, \end{aligned}$$

where p_n denotes the n -th prime.

The N -th order error R_N of this series can be evaluated as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} R_N &:= \sum_{n=N+1}^{\infty} \log \left(1 + \frac{(p_n-1)^k}{p_n^k(p_n^k-1) - (p_n-1)^k} \right) < \sum_{n=N+1}^{\infty} \frac{(p_n-1)^k}{p_n^k(p_n^k-1) - (p_n-1)^k} \\ &< \sum_{n=N+1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{p_n^k-1} \leq \sum_{n=N+1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{p_n^2-1}. \end{aligned}$$

Now using that $p_n > 2n$, valid for $n \geq 5$, we have

$$R_N < \sum_{n=N+1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{4n^2-1} = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{n=N+1}^{\infty} \left(\frac{1}{2n-1} - \frac{1}{2n+1} \right) = \frac{1}{2(2N+1)}.$$

In order to obtain an approximation with r exact decimals we use the condition

$$\frac{1}{2(2N+1)} \leq \frac{1}{2} \cdot 10^{-r}$$

and obtain $N \geq \frac{1}{2}(10^r - 1)$.

The numerical values were obtained using the software package MAPLE.

Proof of Theorem 2.4. Define the function $\mu_S(n)$ by

$$\sum_{d|n} \mu_S(d) = \varrho_S(n), \quad n \in \mathbf{N},$$

that is

$$\mu_S(n) = \sum_{d|n} \varrho_S(d) \mu(n/d), \quad n \in \mathbf{N},$$

where $\mu(n) := \mu_{\{1\}}(n)$ is the Möbius function, see [1]. We have

$$\begin{aligned} N_k(x, S) &:= \#\{(n_1, \dots, n_k) \in (\mathbf{N} \cap [1, x])^k : \gcd(n_1, \dots, n_k) \in S\} \\ &= \sum_{n_1, \dots, n_k \leq x} \varrho_S(\gcd(n_1, \dots, n_k)) = \sum_{n_1, \dots, n_k \leq x} \sum_{d|(n_1, \dots, n_k)} \mu_S(d) \end{aligned}$$

and the proof runs parallel to the proof of Theorem 2.1.

Proof of Theorem 2.5

$$N_1(x, S) = \sum_{n \leq x} \varrho_S(n) = \sum_{n \leq x} \sum_{d|n} \mu_S(d) = x \sum_{d \leq x} \frac{\mu_S(d)}{d} + O\left(\sum_{d \leq x} |\mu_S(d)|\right).$$

Here μ_S is multiplicative, $\mu_S(p^a) = \varrho_S(p^a) - \varrho_S(p^{a-1})$, $a \geq 1$ and since $p, p^2, \dots, p^{r-1} \in S$ we have $\mu_S(p) = \mu_S(p^2) = \dots = \mu_S(p^{r-1}) = 0$ for every prime p . Hence for each $n \in \mathbf{N}$, $|\mu_S(n)| \leq \varrho_{L_r}(n)$, where L_r is the set of r -full numbers, i. e. $L_r = \{1\} \cup \{n > 1 : p|n \Rightarrow p^r | n\}$. We get

$$N_1(x, S) = d(S)x + O\left(x \sum_{d > x} \frac{\varrho_{L_r}(d)}{d}\right) + O\left(\sum_{d \leq x} \varrho_{L_r}(d)\right),$$

and using the elementary estimate

$$\sum_{n \leq x} \varrho_{L_r}(n) = C^r \sqrt{x} + O(r^{r+1} \sqrt{x}),$$

where C is a positive constant, due to P. ERDÖS and G. SZEKERES [2], obtain the given result.

Proof of Theorem 2.6

$$\begin{aligned} &\#\{(n_1, \dots, n_k) \in (S \cap [1, x])^k : \gcd(n_1, \dots, n_k) = 1\} \\ &= \sum_{n_1 \leq x} \varrho_S(n_1) \dots \sum_{n_k \leq x} \varrho_S(n_k) \sum_{d|(n_1, \dots, n_k)} \mu^*(d) = \sum_{n_1 \leq x} \varrho_S(n_1) \dots \sum_{n_k \leq x} \varrho_S(n_k) \sum_{d|n_1, \dots, d|n_k} \mu^*(d) \\ &= \sum_{d \leq x} \mu^*(d) \sum_{\substack{a_1 \leq x/d \\ (a_1, d) = 1}} \varrho_S(da_1) \dots \sum_{\substack{a_k \leq x/d \\ (a_k, d) = 1}} \varrho_S(da_k) \\ &= \sum_{d \leq x} \varrho_S(d) \mu^*(d) \left(\sum_{\substack{a \leq x/d \\ (a, d) = 1}} \varrho_S(a) \right)^k. \end{aligned}$$

Here we use the estimate, valid for every $l \in \mathbf{N}$,

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{\substack{n \leq x \\ \gcd(n, l) = 1}} \varrho_S(n) &= \sum_{n \leq x} \varrho_S(n) \sum_{d | \gcd(n, l)} \mu(d) \\ &= \sum_{d | l} \mu(d) \varrho_S(d) \sum_{e \leq x/d} \varrho_S(e) = \sum_{d | l} \mu(d) \varrho_S(d) \left(A \frac{x}{d} + O(1) \right) \\ &= Ax \prod_{\substack{p | l \\ p \in S}} \left(1 - \frac{1}{p} \right) + O(\theta(l)) \end{aligned}$$

and obtain the desired result, see the proof of Theorem 2.1.

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Abstract

We determine the asymptotic density δ_k of the set of ordered k -tuples $(n_1, \dots, n_k) \in \mathbf{N}^k$, $k \geq 2$, such that there exists no prime power p^a , $a \geq 1$, appearing in the canonical factorization of each n_i , $1 \leq i \leq k$, and deduce asymptotic formulae with error terms regarding this problem and analogous ones. We give numerical approximations of the constants δ_k and improve the error term of formula (1.2) due to E. Cohen. We point out that our treatment, based on certain inversion functions, is applicable also in case $k = 1$ in order to establish asymptotic formulae with error terms regarding the densities of subsets of \mathbf{N} with additional multiplicative properties. These generalize an often cited result of G. J. Rieger.

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