VARIANT OF A THEOREM OF ERDŐS ON THE SUM-OF-PROPER-DIVISORS FUNCTION

CARL POMERANCE AND HEE-SUNG YANG

Abstract. In 1973, Erdős proved that a positive proportion of numbers are not of the form \( \sigma(n) - n \), the sum of the proper divisors of \( n \). We prove the analogous result where \( \sigma \) is replaced with the sum-of-unitary-divisors function \( \sigma^* \) (which sums divisors \( d \) of \( n \) such that \( (d,n/d) = 1 \)), thus solving a problem of te Riele from 1976. We also describe a fast algorithm for enumerating numbers not in the form \( \sigma(n) - n, \sigma^*(n) - n, \) and \( n - \varphi(n) \), where \( \varphi \) is Euler’s function.

1. Introduction

If \( f(n) \) is an arithmetic function with nonnegative integral values it is interesting to consider \( V_f(x) \), the number of integers \( 0 \leq m \leq x \) for which \( f(n) = m \) has a solution. That is, one might consider the distribution of the image of \( f \) within the nonnegative integers. For some functions \( f(n) \) this is easy, such as the function \( f(n) = n \), where \( V_f(x) = \lfloor x \rfloor \), or \( f(n) = n^2 \), where \( V_f(x) = \lfloor \sqrt{x} \rfloor \). For \( f(n) = \varphi(n) \), Euler’s \( \varphi \)-function, it was proved by Erdős [Erd35] in 1935 that \( V_\varphi(x) = \frac{x}{\log x} + o(1) \) as \( x \to \infty \). Actually, the same is true for a number of multiplicative functions \( f \), such as \( f = \sigma \), the sum-of-divisors function, and \( f = \sigma^* \), the sum-of-unitary-divisors function, where we say \( d \) is a unitary divisor of \( n \) if \( d \mid n, d > 0, \) and \( \gcd(d,n/d) = 1 \). In fact, a more precise estimation of \( V_f(x) \) is known in these cases; see Ford [For98].

The arithmetic function \( s(n) := \sigma(n) - n \) has been considered since antiquity. In studying \( V_s(x) \) one immediately sees that if \( p,q \) are distinct primes, then \( s(pq) = p+q+1 \). Assuming that every even number \( m \geq 8 \) can be represented as a sum \( p+q \), where \( p,q \) are distinct primes (a slightly stronger form of Goldbach’s conjecture), it follows that all odd numbers \( m \geq 9 \) are values of \( s \). We do know that even a stronger form of Goldbach’s conjecture is almost always true (see [MV75] for example) so as a consequence all odd numbers, except for those in a set of asymptotic density 0, are values of \( s \). But what about even values? In 1973, Erdős [Erd73] showed that if \( U \) is the set of positive numbers such that no \( s(n) \in U \), then \( U \) has positive lower density. The set \( U \) is popularly known as the set of “non-aliquot” or “untouchable” numbers. It is not known if \( U \) possesses an asymptotic density nor if the upper density of \( U \) is smaller than \( \frac{1}{2} \). It is known that the lower density of the non-aliquot numbers is at least 0.06; see [CZ11].

In his thesis in 1976, te Riele [tR76] described an algorithm for enumerating all members of \( s(\mathbb{N}) \) to a given bound \( x \). He did not compute the complexity of this
algorithm, but it seems to be of the shape $x^{2+o(1)}$. In fact, his algorithm does more than enumerate: it computes all solutions to the inequality $s(n) \leq x$ with $n$ composite. In this paper we describe an algorithm that achieves the more modest goal of enumerating $s(N)$ (or equivalently, $U$) to $x$. Our algorithm has running time of the shape $x^{1+o(1)}$. The algorithm of te Riele is based on an earlier one of Alanen [Ala72]. Alanen was able to count $U$ to 5,000, while with te Riele’s improvements, he got the count to 20,000. We provide some statistics to $x = 10^8$ indicating that the density of $U$ perhaps exists.

te Riele [R76] also suggested some problems similar to the distribution of $s(N)$. Let $s^*(n) := \sigma^*(n) - n$ and let $s_\varphi(n) := n - \varphi(n)$. (te Riele did not consider the latter function.)

In both cases, we have again almost all odd numbers in the image, since for $p, q$ distinct primes, $s^*(pq) = s(pq) = p + q + 1$ and $s_\varphi(pq) = p + q - 1$. Positive numbers missing from the image of $s^*$ are sometimes called “unitary untouchable” numbers and numbers missing from the range of $s_\varphi$ are known as “noncototients”. Solving a problem of Sierpiński, it has been shown that there are infinitely many noncototients (see [BS95,FL00,GM05]), but we do not know if their lower density is positive. Nothing seems to be known about $s^*(N)$. Let $U^* = N \setminus s^*(N)$, the set of positive integers not of the form $s^*(n)$. te Riele used a version of his algorithm to enumerate $U^*$ to 20,000, finding only 160 members; perhaps a reasonable interpretation of those data might lead one to think that $U^*$ has density 0. In this paper we apply our algorithm to enumerate both $U^*$ and $\Phi := N \setminus \varphi(N)$ to $10^8$ leading us to conjecture that both sets have a positive asymptotic density, though the density of $U^*$ seems to be small. The previous best count of $U^*$ was to $10^5$, a result of David Wilson, as recorded in Guy’s Unsolved Problems in Number Theory. The previous best count for $\Phi$ was to $10^4$, by T. D. Noe, as recorded in the Online Encyclopedia of Integer Sequences.

Our principal result is the following.

Theorem 1.1. The set $U^* = N \setminus s^*(N)$ has a positive lower density.

Our proof follows the same general plan as that of Erdős [Erd73], except that an important special case is dealt with via covering congruences. That covering congruences should arise in the problem is not totally unexpected. As noted by te Riele [R76], if the conjecture of de Polignac [P49] that every large odd number can be represented as $2^w + p$, where $w \geq 1$ and $p$ is an odd prime, then since $s^*(2^wp) = 2^w + p + 1$, it would follow that $U^*$ has asymptotic density 0. However, Erdős [Erd50] and van der Corput [vdC50] independently showed that de Polignac’s conjecture is false. As an important ingredient in our proof of Theorem 1.1 we use the Erdős argument for disproving de Polignac’s conjecture, an argument which involves covering congruences.

Though it is not known if the set $U = N \setminus s(N)$ has upper density smaller than $\frac{1}{2}$ nor if the set $\Phi$ of noncototients has upper density smaller than $\frac{1}{2}$, we can achieve such a result for $U^*$.

Theorem 1.2. The set $U^*$ has upper density smaller than $\frac{1}{2}$.

Our proof of this theorem follows from noting that de Polignac’s conjecture, mentioned above, does hold for a positive proportion of numbers.

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1Note that de Polignac allowed $p = 1$ in his conjecture, but the set of numbers $2^w + 1$ has density 0.
2. Proof of Theorem 1.1

The set of positive lower density that we identify will be a subset of the integers that are \(2 \pmod{4}\). We begin with the following result.

**Lemma 2.1.** Let \(n\) be a positive integer. If \(n > 1\) is odd or if \(n\) is divisible by 4 and also two distinct odd primes, then \(s^*(n) \neq 2 \pmod{4}\).

**Proof.** If \(p^a\) is a power of an odd prime \(p\), then \(\sigma^*(p^a) = 1 + p^a\) is even. Thus, if \(n > 1\) is odd, then \(\sigma^*(n)\) is even, so that \(s^*(n)\) is odd; in particular, we have \(s^*(n) \neq 2 \pmod{4}\). Similarly, if \(n\) is divisible by \(k\) distinct odd primes, then \(2^k \mid \sigma^*(n)\). Hence, if \(k \geq 2\) and \(4 \mid n\), then \(s^*(n) \equiv 0 \neq 2 \pmod{4}\). This concludes the proof of the lemma.

We would like to handle the case of \(4 \mid n\) and \(n\) is divisible by only one odd prime. The following result almost shows that such numbers are negligible.

**Lemma 2.2.** The set of numbers \(s^*(2^w p^a)\) where \(p\) is an odd prime and \(a \geq 2\) has asymptotic density 0.

**Proof.** We have \(s^*(2^w p^a) = 1 + 2^w + p^a\). If \(s^*(2^w p^a) \leq x\), we have

\[
2^w \leq x \text{ and } p^a \leq x.
\]

The number of choices for \(2^w\) is thus \(O(\log x)\) and the number of choices for \(p^a\) with \(a \geq 2\) is thus \(O(\sqrt{x}/\log x)\). Thus, in all, there are just \(O(\sqrt{x})\) numbers \(2^w p^a\) to consider, and so just \(O(\sqrt{x})\) numbers \(s^*(2^w p^a) \leq x\). Hence such numbers comprise a set of asymptotic density 0, proving the lemma.

For the case of \(s^*(2^w p)\) we invoke the proof using covering congruences that shows that a certain positive proportion of integers are not of this form.

**Proposition 2.3.** There are integers \(c, d\) with \(d\) odd such that if \(p\) is an odd prime, \(w\) is a positive integer, then \(s^*(2^w p) \not\equiv c \pmod{d}\).

**Proof.** It is easy to verify that each integer \(w\) satisfies at least one of the following congruences:

\[
\begin{align*}
w &\equiv 1 \pmod{2}, \quad w \equiv 1 \pmod{3}, \\
w &\equiv 2 \pmod{4}, \quad w \equiv 4 \pmod{8}, \\
w &\equiv 8 \pmod{12}, \quad w \equiv 0 \pmod{24}.
\end{align*}
\]

For each modulus \(m \in \{2, 3, 4, 8, 12, 24\}\) we find an odd prime \(q\) such that the multiplicative order of 2 modulo \(q\) is exactly \(m\). Valid choices for \(q\) are listed in the table below. With a pair \(m, q\), note that for any integer \(b\), if \(w \equiv b \pmod{m}\), then \(s^*(2^w p) \not\equiv 1 + 2^b \pmod{q}\) for \(p \neq q\). Choices for \(b\) are given in the above chart, and the consequently forbidden residue class for \(N = s^*(2^w p)\) is given in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(m)</th>
<th>(b)</th>
<th>(q)</th>
<th>(2^b \pmod{q})</th>
<th>(N \pmod{q})</th>
<th>(N \equiv p \pmod{3}) or (p = 3)</th>
<th>(N \equiv 3 \pmod{7}) or (p = 7)</th>
<th>(N \equiv 0 \pmod{5}) or (p = 5)</th>
<th>(N \equiv 0 \pmod{17}) or (p = 17)</th>
<th>(N \equiv -3 \pmod{13}) or (p = 13)</th>
<th>(N \equiv 2 \pmod{241}) or (p = 241)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(N \equiv p)</td>
<td>(N \equiv 0 \pmod{3}) or (p = 3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(N \equiv 3 + p)</td>
<td>(N \equiv 0 \pmod{3}) or (p = 3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td>(N \equiv p)</td>
<td>(N \equiv 3 \pmod{7}) or (p = 7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td>(N \equiv p)</td>
<td>(N \equiv 0 \pmod{5}) or (p = 5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>(-4)</td>
<td>(N \equiv -3 + p)</td>
<td>(N \equiv 0 \pmod{17}) or (p = 17)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(N \equiv 2 + p)</td>
<td>(N \equiv -3 \pmod{13}) or (p = 13)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Upon applying the Chinese Remainder Theorem to the six forbidden residue classes in the last column, i.e.,

\[
\begin{align*}
N &\equiv 0 \pmod{3}, \quad N \equiv 0 \pmod{5}, \\
N &\equiv 3 \pmod{7}, \quad N \equiv -3 \pmod{13}, \\
N &\equiv 0 \pmod{17}, \quad N \equiv 2 \pmod{241},
\end{align*}
\]

we obtain the residue class \(c \pmod{d}\), where \(c = -1518780\) and \(d = 3 \cdot 5 \cdot 7 \cdot 13 \cdot 17 \cdot 241 = 5592405\).

To summarize the argument so far, suppose \(s^*(2^wp) \equiv c \pmod{d}\). Since the congruences \([1]\) cover all integers, we must have \(w \equiv b \pmod{m}\) for one of the six choices for \(b \pmod{m}\) in \([1]\). In particular, unless \(p\) is the prime \(q\) corresponding to \(m\), we have \(s^*(2^wp)\) forbidden from the corresponding residue class modulo \(q\) in \([2]\), and so \(s^*(2^wp)\) cannot be in the residue class \(c \pmod{d}\).

We finally consider numbers of the form \(s^*(2^wq)\) where \(q \in \{3, 5, 7, 13, 17, 241\}\). Suppose \(N \equiv c \pmod{d}\) and \(N = s^*(2^wq)\). Since \(N \equiv 3 \pmod{7}\) and none of the expressions

\[2^w + 4, \ 2^w + 14, \ 2^w + 18, \ 2^w + 242\]

can be \(3 \pmod{7}\), we can rule out \(q = 3, 13, 17,\) and \(241\). Since \(2^w + 6\) cannot be \(0 \pmod{17}\), we can rule out \(q = 5\). To rule out \(q = 7\) we note that \(2^w + 8 \equiv 2 \pmod{241}\) has no solutions. This proves the proposition.

**Remark 2.4.** The last part of the proof shows that none of the numbers of the form \(s^*(2^wq)\) with \(q \in \{3, 5, 7, 13, 17, 241\}\) lie in the residue class \(c \pmod{d}\). We note that such numbers comprise a set of asymptotic density 0, so even without this last part of the proof, we would have asymptotically almost all of the numbers in the residue class \(c \pmod{d}\) not of the form \(s^*(2^wp)\).

**Proposition 2.5.** Let

\[Q = 2 \cdot 3^\alpha \cdot 5^\beta \cdot 17^\gamma,\]

where \(\alpha, \beta, \gamma\) are positive integers. If \(s^*(Q)/Q > 1\), then the set of members of \(U^*\) which have \(Q\) as a unitary divisor has lower density at least

\[
\left(1 - \frac{Q}{s^*(Q)}\right)^{384} \frac{1}{dQ},
\]

where \(d\) is as in Proposition 2.3.

**Proof.** Consider the residue class \(c \pmod{d}\) of Proposition 2.3. We have \(c \equiv 0 \pmod{3 \cdot 5 \cdot 17}\). Thus the conditions that a number lie in the residue class \(c \pmod{d}\) and have \(Q\) as a unitary divisor are compatible and there are exactly \(\varphi(510) = 128\) such residue classes modulo \(2dQ\). (Note that the least common multiple of \(d\) and \(Q\) is \(dQ/255\), so there are 510 residue classes modulo \(2dQ\) that are \(c \pmod{d}\) and 0 \(\pmod{Q}\). Of these, \(\varphi(510) = 128\) have \(Q\) as a unitary divisor.) Fix one of these residue classes, call it \(r\). We first show that the proportion of numbers \(r \pmod{2dQ}\) that are not in the form \(s^*(n)\) is at least \(1 - Q/s^*(Q)\). By Lemmas 2.21 and 2.22 we may assume that \(n \equiv 2 \pmod{4}\) or \(n\) is divisible by 4 and just one odd prime to the first power. Since we are only looking at values in the residue class \(c \pmod{d}\), Proposition 2.3 shows that the latter case does not occur, that is, we must have \(n \equiv 2 \pmod{4}\). Then \(n\) has the unitary divisor \(n/2\) so that \(s^*(n) > n/2\).

In particular, if we are counting values \(s^*(n) \leq x\), then we must have \(n < 2x\). It follows from [1R76, Lemma 9.2] (which is attributed to [Sco73]) that the number of
Thus, we have an analogous version of Proposition 2.5 with
\[ n < 2x \text{ with } \sigma^*(n) \not\equiv 0 \pmod{2dQ} \text{ is } o(x) \text{ as } x \to \infty. \]
Thus, we may assume that
\[ \sigma^*(n) \equiv 0 \pmod{2dQ}, \]
which in turn implies that
\[ n \equiv -r \pmod{2dQ}, \]
and so \( Q \) is a unitary divisor of \( n \). This implies that
\[ s^*(n) = \sigma^*(n) - n = \sigma^*(n/Q) - n \geq \sigma^*(Q)n/Q - n = (s^*(Q)/Q)n. \]
Since \( s^*(n) \leq x \), we have
\[ n \leq (Q/s^*(Q))x. \]
Thus, the number of values of \( s^*(n) \equiv r \pmod{2dQ} \) in \([1, x]\) is at most \((Q/s^*(Q))(x/2dQ) + o(x)\) as \( x \to \infty \). Hence, within the residue class \( r \pmod{2dQ} \) the lower density of \( U^* \) is at least \((1 - Q/s^*(Q))/2dQ\).

Noting that there are 128 values of \( r \pmod{2dQ} \), we get that the lower density of \( U^* \) within the residue class \( c \pmod{d} \) and with \( Q \) as a unitary divisor is at least
\[ (1 - Q/s^*(Q))128/2dQ = (1 - Q/s^*(Q))64/dQ. \]

Note that 384 = 6 · 64. The 6-fold improvement in the proposition is explained as follows. In the proof of Proposition 2.3 after we choose the residue classes 1 (mod 2), 2 (mod 4), and 4 (mod 8), there are actually 6 choices for the remaining congruence classes mod 3, 12, and 24. In the proof we chose 1, 8, and 0, respectively. Instead we could have chosen 1, 0, 8, or 2, 0, 16, or 2, 4, 0, or 0, 4, 8, or 0, 8, 16.

Each of the 6 choices leads to a residue class \( c_j \pmod{d} \) for \( j = 1, 2, \ldots, 6 \) for which the above argument works just as well.

This completes the proof of the proposition. \(\square\)

Let \( Q = 2 \cdot 3 \cdot 5 \cdot 17 = 510 \). We have \[ s^*(Q)/Q = 131/85 > 1, \]
so that Proposition 2.5 implies that the lower density of those members of \( U^* \) with \( Q \) as a unitary divisor is at least
\[ (1 - 85/131) \cdot 384/5592405 \cdot 510 > 4.727 \times 10^{-8}. \]
This immediately proves Theorem 1.1.

We can improve our estimate for the lower bound of the lower density of \( U^* \) as follows. First, instead of choosing \( \alpha, \beta, \gamma \) as 1, 1, 1 in the definition of \( Q \), we can choose \( \alpha, \beta, \gamma \) as 1, 1, 2, or 1, 2, 1, or 1, 3, 1, or 2, 1, 1. These choices in turn lead to estimates for the lower density of the set of those numbers in \( U^* \) with these unitary divisors of
\[ 2.29 \times 10^{-9}, \quad 4.53 \times 10^{-9}, \quad 6.3 \times 10^{-10}, \quad 4.72 \times 10^{-9}, \]
respectively. A further improvement can be made by changing the residue class 4 (mod 8) in our covering to 0 (mod 8). This in turn changes our choice for residue classes modulo 3, 12, and 24 in the proof of Proposition 2.3 to 1, 8 and 12 plus 5 other triples. In this case we do not have 17 as a divisor of our value (before, the residue class modulo 17 was \( 2^4+1 \equiv 0 \pmod{17} \), but now it is \( 2^9+1 \equiv 2 \pmod{17} \)). Thus, we have an analogous version of Proposition 2.5 with \( Q = 2 \cdot 3^3 \cdot 5^2 \). Using this with \( Q = 30 \) leads to an estimate for the lower density of the set of members of \( U^* \) with 30 as a unitary divisor and not divisible by 17 of
\[ (1 - 30/s^*(30)) \cdot 24/5592405 \cdot 30 > 4.087 \times 10^{-8}. \]
There are of course other small improvements to be made, but the estimates so far imply that the lower density of \( U^* \) is greater than \( 10^{-7} \).
Remark 2.6. It is not too hard to use these ideas to show that the set \( U \cap U^* \) of numbers that are simultaneously not of the form \( s(n) \) nor \( s^*(m) \) has positive lower density. In fact, it is possible to show this set has lower density larger than \( 10^{-8} \).

To do this one can exploit the fact that for \( n \) squarefree we have \( s(n) = s^*(n) \). Thus, in trying to find values for \( s \) or \( s^* \) with 510 as a unitary divisor and in the residue class \( c \pmod{d} \), for both problems we are restricted to searching over the set \( A \) of numbers \( n \leq (510/s(510))x \) with \( n \equiv c \pmod{d} \) and with 510 as a unitary divisor. The only point of departure between the two counts comes from those members of \( A \) that are not squarefree. But a simple calculation shows that more than 97% of the members of \( A \) are squarefree, so there are not enough of the non-squarefree members to appreciably affect our estimates. That is, (3) with \( 1 - 85/131 \) replaced with \( 0.97 - 85/131 \) holds as a lower bound for the lower density of \( U \cap U^* \). Probably with a little work, the lower bound \( 10^{-8} \) can be improved to \( 10^{-7} \).

3. Proof of Theorem 1.2

We again focus on numbers \( s^*(2^wp) \) with \( w \geq 1 \) and \( p \) an odd prime, but instead of looking at even numbers not of this form, we look at even numbers that are of this form. We have
\[
s^*(2^wp) = 2^w + p + 1.
\]
Thus, Theorem 1.2 will follow if we show that the set of numbers of the form \( 2^w + p \) has a positive lower density. (The case \( w = 0 \) is not permitted in our problem, since \( s^*(2^0p) = 1 \), but the set of numbers of the form \( 2^0 + p \) has density 0. In addition, the case \( p = 2 \) is not permitted in our problem, but again the set of numbers of the form \( 2^w + 2 \) has density 0.)

Though it is not hard to prove the result directly using the Cauchy–Schwarz inequality and sieve methods, this theorem is already in the literature. In particular, in 1934, Romanov [Rom34] proved that the lower density of numbers of the form \( 2^w + p \) is positive. Chen and Sun [CS04] proved that the lower density is at least 0.0868, and this was improved in Habsieger and Roblot [HR06], Lü [L07], and Pintz [Pin06] to 0.09368. It follows that
\[
10^{-7} < dU^* \leq \bar{d}U^* \leq 0.40632,
\]
where \( d \) denotes lower asymptotic density and \( \bar{d} \) denotes upper asymptotic density.

4. The enumeration of \( U^* \)

In this section we introduce our methods on numerically enumerating \( U^* \). We begin with the following elementary observation.

**Proposition 4.1.** Let \( m, j \) be positive integers with \( m \) odd. Then
\[
\begin{align*}
(i) \quad s^*(2m) &= 3\sigma^*(m) - 2m, \\
(ii) \quad s^*(2^{j+1}m) &= 2s^*(2^jm) - \sigma^*(m).
\end{align*}
\]

**Proof.** This follows immediately from the fact that \( \sigma^*(2^jm) = (2^j + 1)\sigma^*(m) \). \( \square \)

We now can describe our procedure. Say we wish to enumerate the even members of \( U^* \) \([1, x] \). For each odd number \( 1 < m \leq x \) we compute \( \sigma^*(m) \) (more on this later). Then starting with \( t = 3\sigma^*(m) - 2m \) we iterate the recurrence \( t \mapsto 2t - \sigma^*(m) \) until we exceed \( x \). Each number \( t \) visited is an even member of \( s^*(N) \). Thus, after
exhausting this procedure, we have visited every even member of $s^*(\mathbb{N})$ in $[1, x]$, so
the even numbers not visited comprise the even members of $U^*$ in $[1, x]$.

In our implementation we used trial division to factor each odd number $m$ in $[1, x]$. Instead one might use the method of Moews and Moews \cite{MM06} which can compute each $\sigma^*(m)$ for $m$ up to $x$ in time $O(x)$. (The expression $O(x)$ denotes
the bound $x(\log x)^{O(1)}$.)

Since it is time consuming to manage set membership in the set of even members
of $s^*(\mathbb{N})$, we instead initialize a function $f$ defined as identically 1 for all even
numbers up to $x$. Whenever we visit an even number $t$ in $s^*(\mathbb{N}) \cap [1, x]$, we reassign
$f(t)$ to 0. At the end of the procedure, our function $f$ is then the characteristic
function of the even members of $U^*$ in $[1, x]$.

There remains the task of finding the odd members of $U^*$ in $[1, x]$. Note that 3, 5,
and 7 are all in $U^*$. As remarked earlier, it follows from a slightly stronger form
of Goldbach’s conjecture (namely, every even number starting at 8 is the sum of
two distinct primes) that every odd number $n \geq 9$ is of the form $s^*(pq) = p + q + 1$
where $p, q$ are distinct primes. Thus, to enumerate the odd members of $U^*$ to $x$ it
suffices to verify this slightly stronger form of Goldbach’s conjecture to $x$. On the
webpage \cite{Oli12} (maintained by Oliveira e Silva) the verification of this stronger
form of Goldbach’s conjecture is reported to $x = 4 \times 10^{18}$. In our calculation of $U^*$
we search only to $10^8$, so the numbers 3, 5, and 7 are the only odd ones in this range.
Concerning the time bound of $O(x)$, this too can stand as a time bound for verifying
the slightly stronger form of Goldbach’s conjecture that we are using, modulo the
reasonable assumption that every even $n \geq 8$ has a decomposition as $p+q$ where $p, q$
are primes and $p \leq (\log n)^{O(1)}$. Even without such an assumption, since exceptions
are rare, the theoretical time bound of $O(x)$ might still be achievable.

In the table below we record counts to $10^8$ for $U^*$. Here, $N(x)$ denotes the
number of members of $U^*$ up to $x$, $D(x) = N(x)/x$ denotes the density of $U^* \cap [1, x]$
in $[1, x]$, and $\Delta$ records the difference from the prior entry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$x$</th>
<th>$N(x)$</th>
<th>$\Delta$</th>
<th>$100D(x)$</th>
<th>$x$</th>
<th>$N(x)$</th>
<th>$\Delta$</th>
<th>$100D(x)$</th>
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<td>862</td>
<td>0.86200</td>
<td>60000000</td>
<td>60257</td>
<td>10176</td>
<td>1.00428</td>
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<td>984</td>
<td>0.92300</td>
<td>70000000</td>
<td>70518</td>
<td>10261</td>
<td>1.00740</td>
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</table>

All of our calculations were done with Mathematica, using their FactorInteger
function to factor each odd number $m$ appearing. It should be expected that
with a more serious implementation using the techniques of \cite{MM06}, one could go
considerably further.
5. The enumeration of $\Phi$ and $U$

The algorithms for enumerating $\Phi = \mathbb{N} \setminus s_{\varphi}(\mathbb{N})$ and $U = \mathbb{N} \setminus s(\mathbb{N})$ are more or less similar to the algorithm introduced in the previous section. However, the relations we employ are different. The following statement is an elementary exercise.

**Proposition 5.1.** Let $s_{\varphi}(n) := n - \varphi(n)$. Suppose also that $m, j$ are positive integers with $m$ odd. The following statements hold:

(i) $s_{\varphi}(2m) = 2m - \varphi(m)$,
(ii) $s_{\varphi}(2^{j+1}m) = 2s_{\varphi}(2^jm)$.

Since $s_{\varphi}(n) \equiv n \pmod{2}$ when $n > 2$, to count even noncototients it suffices to consider only $n = 2^d m$ with $m, j$ positive integers and $m$ odd. Further, for such a number $n$, we have $s_{\varphi}(n) > m$, so if we are enumerating to $x$, we need only consider odd numbers $m < N$. Thus, we have an entirely analogous algorithm as for $U^*$.

Below we record our counts for noncototients to $10^8$. Let $N_{\varphi}(x)$ denote the number of noncototients up to $x$ and let $D(x)$ denote their density. As before $\Delta$ records the difference in the count from the prior entry.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>$x$</th>
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<th>$\Delta$</th>
<th>$D(x)$</th>
<th>$x$</th>
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</table>

The case for $s(n)$ is somewhat different. First note that we have the analogous elementary exercise.

**Proposition 5.2.** Let $s(n) := \sigma(n) - n$. Suppose also that $m, j$ are positive integers and $m$ is odd. The following statements hold:

(i) $s(2m) = 3\sigma(m) - 2m$,
(ii) $s(2^{j+1}m) = 2s(2^jm) + \sigma(m)$.

In the case of $U$, it is not enough to check the numbers $s(2^j m) \leq x$ for odd $m \leq x$. We have $s(n)$ even if and only if

1. $n$ is even and not a square nor twice a square, or
2. $n$ is an odd square.

When enumerating the even values of $s(n)$ in $[1, x]$, in case 1 it suffices to take $s(2^j m)$ for odd $m < x$ (since $s(2^j m) > m$) with $m$ not a square. In case 2, we must consider $s(m^2)$ for odd $m < x$ (since $s(m^2) > m$). Case 1 is entirely analogous to the enumeration of $U^*$ and $\Phi$ except that if $\sigma(m)$ is odd (signifying that $m$ is a square), we do not enter a loop that increases the power of 2, and we pass over
this \(m\). To deal with the odd squares, it is helpful to use the case 1 calculation to find \(s(p^2)\) for prime \(p < x\). These are detected as follows. If \(\sigma(m) = m + 1\), signifying that \(m\) is a prime, we record the number \(m + 1\) as an even value of \(s\) since it is \(s(m^2)\). This would leave the values of \(s(m^2) \leq x\) with \(m\) odd and composite. In this case, we have that \(m < x^{2/3}\). Indeed, if \(g | m \) and \(m^{1/2} \leq g < m\), then \(s(m^2) \geq gm \geq m^{3/2}\). Thus, we may run a small side program for odd composite numbers \(m < x^{2/3}\), computing \(s(m^2)\) in each case.

We conclude that as with the enumeration of \(U^*\), both the enumeration of \(\Phi\) and \(U\) can be achieved in time \(O(x)\). Here are our counts of \(U\) to \(10^8\), where \(N_\sigma(x)\) is the number of members of \(U\) in \([1, x]\) and \(\Delta, D(x)\) are as before.

<table>
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<th>(D(x))</th>
<th>(x)</th>
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6. Discussion

We have been able to get considerably farther than prior enumerations for \(U^*\), \(\Phi\), and \(U\). As remarked earlier, our algorithm is essentially linear, while the earlier methods seem to have traversed over a substantially larger search space. The method of te Riele elaborates on an earlier method of Alanen [Ala72], and we have not seen any other algorithms discussed.

In [tR76], te Riele suggests an interesting random model that possibly could predict the approximate number of members of our various sets to \(x\). Namely, in each case, one might compute the number \(M(x)\) of integers that the functions \(s^*, s_\varphi, s\) take to even numbers in \([1, x]\). Assuming randomness, the number of even numbers not represented would be about \(\frac{1}{2}x(1 - 2/x)^{M(x)}\). This is an appealing thought, and it should be remarked that via the continuity of the distribution functions for \(\sigma^*(n)/n, \varphi(n)/n, \) and \(\sigma(n)/n, \) in each case, we have \(M(x) \sim cx\) for a positive constant \(c\) that is appropriate for the particular function. (In the case of \(s^*\) one needs to add in \(x/\log 2\) to what the distribution-function argument gives, coming from the density-0 set of integers \(2^w p\).) te Riele found that when \(x = 20,000\), the number of even members of \(U\) is 2565, compared with a prediction of 2610. For \(U^*\), the number of even ones is 157 compared with a prediction of 90.

We have worked out this computation at \(x = 10^8\). In the case of \(s^*\), we found that there are 290,100,230 numbers \(n\) with \(s^*(n)\) even and at most \(10^8\). This suggests
that there are about

\[ \frac{1}{2} 10^8 \left( 1 - \frac{2}{10^8} \right)^{290,100,230} \approx 151,075 \]

members of \( U^* \) to \( 10^8 \) compared with the actual number of 1,028,263. Thus, the heuristic model seems to be not very good for \( U^* \).

It is better for \( \Phi \). In the case of \( s_\varphi \), there are 85,719,597 values of \( n \) with \( s_\varphi(n) \) even and at most \( 10^8 \). This would suggest that there are about

\[ \frac{1}{2} 10^8 \left( 1 - \frac{2}{10^8} \right)^{85,719,597} \approx 9,003,659 \]

cototients to \( 10^8 \), compared with the actual number of 11,355,049.

It is better still for \( U \). There are 62,105,426 values of \( n \) with \( s(n) \) even and at most \( 10^8 \). The model suggests then that there are about

\[ \frac{1}{2} 10^8 \left( 1 - \frac{2}{10^8} \right)^{62,105,426} \approx 14,433,734 \]

members of \( U \) to \( 10^8 \), compared with the actual number of 16,246,940.

We record some open problems. The data suggest that in all the cases we considered, the density exists. Can this be proved? Is there a positive proportion of even numbers in \( s(N) \)? We ask the same question for \( s_\varphi(N) \). Can one prove that the lower density of \( \Phi \) is positive?

**Acknowledgments**

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**References**


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