

Package ‘sparseHessianFD’

July 23, 2025

Type Package

Title Numerical Estimation of Sparse Hessians

Version 0.3.3.7

Date 2022-10-19

Maintainer Michael Braun <braunm@smu.edu>

URL <https://braunm.github.io/sparseHessianFD/>,
<https://github.com/braunm/sparseHessianFD/>

BugReports <https://github.com/braunm/sparseHessianFD/issues/>

Description Estimates Hessian of a scalar-valued function, and returns it in a sparse Matrix format. The sparsity pattern must be known in advance. The algorithm is especially efficient for hierarchical models with a large number of heterogeneous units. See Braun, M. (2017) <[doi:10.18637/jss.v082.i10](https://doi.org/10.18637/jss.v082.i10)>.

License MPL (== 2.0)

LazyData true

Depends R (>= 4.0.0)

Imports Matrix (>= 1.4), methods, Rcpp (>= 0.12.13)

Suggests testthat, numDeriv, scales, knitr, xtable, dplyr

LinkingTo Rcpp, RcppEigen (>= 0.3.3.3.0)

Encoding UTF-8

VignetteBuilder knitr

SystemRequirements C++11

RoxygenNote 7.2.1

NeedsCompilation yes

Author Michael Braun [aut, cre, cph] (ORCID:
<<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4774-2119>>)

Repository CRAN

Date/Publication 2022-10-19 22:40:02 UTC

Contents

sparseHessianFD-package	2
binary	3
binary-data	3
coloring	4
Coord.to.Pointers	5
deprecated	6
get_colors	8
Matrix.to.Coord	9
Matrix.to.Pointers	9
sparseHessianFD	11
subst	13

Index	15
--------------	-----------

sparseHessianFD-package

Estimate sparse Hessians using finite differences of gradients.

Description

Estimate sparse Hessians using finite differences of gradients.

Details

The Hessian is returned as a sparse Matrix (dgCMatrix-class). The user supplies the objective function, the gradient, and the row and column indices of the non-zero elements of the lower triangle of the Hessian (i.e., the sparsity structure must be known in advance).

In a typical case, you should only need to use the [sparseHessianFD](#) initializer, and the `fn`, `gr` and `hessian` methods of the `sparseHessian` class, and the [Matrix.to.Coord](#) utility function.

References

- Braun, Michael. 2017. sparseHessianFD: An R Package for Estimating Sparse Hessian Matrices. Journal of Statistical Software 82 (10): 1-22.
- Coleman, Thomas F, and Jin-Yi Cai. 1986. The Cyclic Coloring Problem and Estimation of Sparse Hessian Matrices. SIAM Journal on Algebraic Discrete Methods 7 (2): 221-235
- Coleman, Thomas F, Burton S Garbow, and Jorge J More. 1985. Software for Estimating Sparse Hessian Matrices. ACM Transaction on Mathematical Software 11 (4) (December): 363-377.
- Coleman, Thomas F and Jorge J More. 1984. Estimation of Sparse Hessian Matrices and Graph Coloring Problems. Mathematical Programming 28 (3) (October): 243-270
- Powell, M J D and Ph L Toint. 1979. On the Estimation of Sparse Hessian Matrices. SIAM Journal on Numerical Analysis 16 (6) (December): 1060-1074.

binary

Binary choice example

Description

Functions for binary choice example in the vignette.

Usage

```
binary.f(P, data, priors, order.row = FALSE)
```

```
binary.grad(P, data, priors, order.row = FALSE)
```

```
binary.hess(P, data, priors, order.row = FALSE)
```

Arguments

P	Numeric vector of length $(N + 1)k$. First Nk elements are heterogeneous coefficients. The remaining k elements are population parameters.
data	Named list of data matrices Y and X, and choice count integer T
priors	Named list of matrices inv.Omega and inv.Sigma
order.row	Determines order of heterogeneous coefficients in parameter vector. If TRUE, heterogeneous coefficients are ordered by unit. If FALSE, they are ordered by covariate.

Details

These functions are used by the heterogeneous binary choice example in the vignette. There are N heterogeneous units, each making T binary choices. The choice probabilities depend on k covariates.

Value

Log posterior density, gradient and Hessian. The Hessian is a dgCMatrix object.

binary-data

Sample simulated data for binary choice example in vignette

Description

Sample datasets for vignette

Details

The package provides four sample datasets for the hierarchical binary choice model described in the vignette. These datasets are:

binary $N = 50, k = 3$

binary_small $N = 20, k = 2$

binary_large $N = 800, k = 3$

binary_super $N = 1200, k = 3$

N is the number of heterogeneous units. k is the number of covariates.

The datasets were generated using the code in data-raw/binary_sim.R.

coloring

Triangular partitioning of variables

Description

cyclic coloring from a lower triangular pattern matrix

Usage

```
coloring(L)
```

Arguments

L sparsity pattern of the Hessian as a lower triangular pattern matrix

Details

For internal use. Exported in order for replication files for JSS article to run.

Value

Integer vector of length nvars with color assignments for each variable.

Coord.to.Pointers	<i>Convert a matrix defined by row and column indices to one defined by a row- or column-oriented compression scheme.</i>
-------------------	---

Description

Returns indices and pointers that define a sparse Hessian in compressed format. Inputs are the row and column indices.

Usage

```
Coord.to.Pointers(
  rows,
  cols,
  dims,
  triangle = TRUE,
  lower = TRUE,
  symmetric = FALSE,
  order = c("column", "row", "triplet"),
  index1 = TRUE
)
```

Arguments

rows, cols	row and column indices of non-zero elements
dims	2-element vector for number of rows and columns.
triangle	Is input intended to be a triangular (TRUE) or full (FALSE) matrix. See details for how this argument is interpreted for different values of order.
lower	If triangular is true, this argument identifies the input matrix as lower- or upper-triangular. This argument is ignored if triangle is FALSE.
symmetric	If TRUE, and matrix is triangular, then the matrix will be treated as symmetric, with only the triangular elements provided. If matrix is neither triangular nor symmetric, then symmetric=TRUE will probably trigger an error.
order	Determines the indexing/compression scheme for the output matrix. Use "triplet" to get row and column indices. Defaults to the same class as M.
index1	TRUE if using 1-based indexing. FALSE for 0-based indexing.

Details

triangle and order have the following interpretation:

triangle=TRUE Input rows and cols represent lower or upper triangle of a matrix. If order="symmetric", then the output list will be for a full, symmetric matrix. Otherwise, the output list will be for only the lower or upper triangle. Any elements outside of the specified triangle will trigger an error.

triangle=FALSE Input rows and cols represent a full matrix. If that matrix is not symmetric, then `order=="symmetric"` will trigger an error. If `symmetric=FALSE` and `order='triplet'`, the output list should contain the same row and column indices as the input list.

Value

A list. See `Matrix.to.Pointers` (no values are included in return list).

See Also

`Matrix.to.Pointers`

deprecated

Deprecated functions

Description

These functions were in earlier versions, but will no longer be maintained, and are not even guaranteed to work now.

Build sparse matrix from data in CSC (column compressed) format.

Converts row and column indices to a pattern Matrix object of Matrix class

This function is deprecated. Use `sparseHessianFD` instead.

Usage

```
Sym.CSC.to.Matrix(H, nvars)
```

```
Coord.to.Sym.Pattern.Matrix(H, nvars)
```

```
Coord.to.Pattern.Matrix(
  rows,
  cols,
  dims,
  compressed = TRUE,
  symmetric = FALSE,
  index1 = TRUE
)
```

```
new.sparse.hessian.obj(
  x,
  fn,
  gr,
  hs,
  fd.method = 0L,
  eps = sqrt(.Machine$double.eps),
  ...
)
```

```

)

sparseHessianFD.new(
  x,
  fn,
  gr,
  rows,
  cols,
  direct = NULL,
  eps = sqrt(.Machine$double.eps),
  ...
)

```

Arguments

<code>H</code>	a list containing Hessian data. See details.
<code>nvars</code>	the number of rows (and columns) in the matrix.
<code>rows, cols</code>	row and column indices of non-zero elements
<code>dims</code>	2-element vector for number of rows and columns in matrix
<code>compressed</code>	If TRUE, returns a matrix is compressed column (default=TRUE)
<code>symmetric</code>	If TRUE, matrix will be symmetric, and only the lower triangular elements need to be provided (default=FALSE)
<code>index1</code>	TRUE if input row and col use 1-based indexing, and FALSE for 0-based indexing.
<code>x</code>	variable vector for initialization
<code>fn</code>	R function that returns function value
<code>gr</code>	R function that returns the gradient of the function
<code>hs</code>	list of two vectors: row and column indices of non-zero elements of lower triangle of Hessian. See details.
<code>fd.method</code>	If TRUE, use direct method for computation. Otherwise, use indirect/substitution method. See references.
<code>eps</code>	The perturbation amount for finite differencing of the gradient to compute the Hessian. Defaults to <code>sqrt(.Machine\$double.eps)</code> .
<code>...</code>	Other parameters to be passed to <code>fn</code> and <code>gr</code> .
<code>direct</code>	If TRUE, use direct method for computation. Otherwise, use indirect/substitution method. See references.

Details

Use `Matrix::sparseMatrix` instead of `Sym.CSC.to.Matrix`.

Use `Coord.to.Pattern.Matrix` with `symmetric=TRUE` instead of `Coord.to.Sym.Pattern.Matrix`.

This function is useful to prototype a sparsity pattern. No assumptions are made about symmetry.

`hs` is a list of two elements:

iRow Integer vector of row indices of non-zero elements in lower triangle of Hessian.

jCol Integer vector of column indices of non-zero elements in lower triangle of Hessian.

This function is deprecated. Use `sparseHessianFD` instead.

Value

An object of `Matrix` class.

A sparse pattern matrix

An object of class `sparseHessianFD`

get_colors	<i>Vertex coloring of a sparse undirected graph</i>
------------	---

Description

Generate proper vertex coloring of a sparse undirected graph.

Usage

```
get_colors(pntr, idx, nvars)
```

Arguments

pntr, idx	row pointers and column indices of the adjacency matrix, in compressed column-oriented format. Must use zero-based indexing.
nvars	Number of vertices.

Details

For internal use. You should not have to call this function directly.

Value

An integer vector of length `nvars`, where each element represents the color of the corresponding vertex. Indices are zero-based.

Matrix.to.Coord	<i>Row and column indices from sparse matrix.</i>
-----------------	---

Description

Utility function to extract row and column indices of the non-zero elements of a sparse matrix.

Usage

```
Matrix.to.Coord(M, index1 = TRUE)
```

Arguments

M	A matrix that is a subclass of <code>sparseMatrix</code> , as defined in the Matrix package.
index1	TRUE if the index of the first element should be 1, and FALSE if 0.

Details

A wrapper to [Matrix.to.Pointers](#) for `order='triplet'` and `values=FALSE`, for extracting the row and column indices of a sparsity pattern from a matrix that has that same pattern.

Value

A list with two named elements.

rows Integer vector containing row indices of non-zero elements

cols Integer vector containing column indices of non-zero elements

Examples

```
M1 <- as(kronecker(diag(3), matrix(TRUE,2,2)), "sparseMatrix")
C <- Matrix.to.Coord(M1)
M2 <- Matrix::sparseMatrix(i=C$rows, j=C$cols)
all.equal(M1,M2)
```

Matrix.to.Pointers	<i>Extract row and column indices, pointers and values from a sparse matrix.</i>
--------------------	--

Description

Returns a list of row indices, column indices, pointers, and/or values of a sparse Hessian.

Usage

```
Matrix.to.Pointers(
  M,
  as.symmetric = Matrix::isSymmetric(M),
  values = !is(M, "nMatrix"),
  order = NULL,
  index1 = TRUE
)
```

Arguments

M	A sparse Matrix, as defined in the Matrix package.
as.symmetric	Defaults to isSymmetric(M). If M is symmetric, and as.symmetric is FALSE, then index/pointer elements in the output list will be labeled according to order. If M is not symmetric, and as.symmetric is TRUE, then an error will be triggered.
values	If TRUE, values are returned in list as 'x'. Defaults to TRUE for numeric and logical matrices, and FALSE for pattern matrices. If M is a pattern matrix, values=TRUE will trigger a warning.
order	Determines the indexing/compression scheme for the output matrix. Use 'triplet' to get row and column indices. Defaults to the same class as M.
index1	TRUE (default) if return indices and pointers should use 1-based indexing. FALSE for 0-based indexing.

Details

This function is included primarily for debugging purposes. It is used internally, but would not ordinarily be called by an end user.

Value

A list with the following elements. If order=='row',

jCol Integer vector containing column indices of non-zero elements

ipntr Integer vector containing pointers to elements of jCol at which the next row begins.

If order=='column'

iRow Integer vector containing row indices of non-zero elements

jpntr Integer vector containing pointers to elements of iRow at which the next column begins.

If order=='triplet'

rows Row indices of non-zero elements

cols Column indices of non-zero elements

If as.symmetric is TRUE, then the row/column orientation does not matter.

idx Integer vector containing indices of non-zero elements

pntr Integer vector containing pointers to elements of `idx` at which the next row or column begins.

If `values=TRUE`, the return list includes `x`, the values of the non-zero elements. The 'class' element is the name of the sparse matrix class to which the output corresponds (identifies numeric type, pattern, and indexing/compression scheme).

See Also

Matrix.to.Coord

sparseHessianFD	<i>sparseHessianFD</i>
-----------------	------------------------

Description

A reference class for computing sparse Hessians

Details

The `sparseHessianFD` function calls the initializer for the `sparseHessianFD` class, and returns a `sparseHessianFD` object.

```
sparseHessianFD(x, fn, gr, rows, cols, delta, index1, complex, ...)
```

The function, gradient and sparsity pattern are declared as part of the initialization.

Once initialized, the `$hessian` method will evaluate the Hessian at `x`.

```
obj <- sparseHessian(x, fn, gr, rows, cols, ...)
obj$hessian(x)
```

For convenience, the class provides wrapper methods to the `fn` and `gr` functions that were specified in the initializer.

```
obj$fn(P) ## wrapper to objective function
obj$gr(P) ## wrapper to gradient
obj$fngr(P) ## list of obj function and gradient
obj$fngrhs(P) ## list of obj function, gradient and Hessian.
```

Arguments to initializer:

x an vector at which the function, gradient and Hessian are initialized and tested.

fn, gr R functions that return the function value and gradient, evaluated at `x`.

rows, cols Numeric vectors with row and column indices of the non-zero elements in the lower triangle (including diagonal) of the Hessian.

delta The perturbation amount for finite difference (or complex step) of the gradient to compute the Hessian. Defaults to `1e-07`.

index1 TRUE if rows and cols use 1-based (R format) indexing (FALSE for 0-based (C format) indexing).

complex TRUE if Hessian will be computed using the complex step method, and FALSE (default) if using finite differences. If TRUE, both `fn` and `gr` must accept complex arguments and return complex values.

... other arguments to be passed to `fn` and `gr`.

Other methods are described below. Do not access any of the fields directly. The internal structure is subject to change in future versions.

Fields

`fn1` A closure for calling `fn(x, ...)`.

`gr1` A closure for calling `gr(x, ...)`.

`iRow, jCol` Numeric vectors with row and column indices of the non-zero elements in the lower triangle (including diagonal) of the Hessian.

`delta` The perturbation amount for finite differencing of the gradient to compute the Hessian. Defaults to `1e-07`.

`index1` TRUE if rows and cols use 1-based (R format) indexing (FALSE for 0-based (C format) indexing).

`complex` TRUE if Hessian will be computed using the complex step method, and FALSE (default) if using finite differences.

`D` raw finite differences (internal use only)

`nvars` Number of variables (length of `x`)

`nnz` Number of non-zero elements in the lower triangle of the Hessian.

`ready` TRUE if object has been initialized, and Hessian has been partitioned.

`idx, pntr` Column indices and row pointers for non-zero elements in lower triangle of the permuted Hessian. Row-oriented compressed storage.

`colors` A vector representation of the partitioning of the columns. There are `nvars` elements, one for each column of the permuted Hessian. The value corresponds to the "color" for that column.

`perm, invperm` Permutation vector and its inverse

Methods

`fn(x)` Return function value, evaluated at `x`: `fn(x, ...)`

`fngr(x)` Return list of function value and gradient, evaluated at `x`

`fngrhs(x)` Return list of function value, gradient, and Hessian, evaluated at `x`

`get_invperm()` Return integer vector of inverse of permutation used for computing Hessian

`get_nnz()` Return number of non-zero elements in lower triangle of Hessian

`get_nvars()` Return dimension (number of rows or columns) of Hessian

`get_pattern()` Return pattern matrix of lower triangle of Hessian

`get_perm()` Return integer vector of permutation used for computing Hessian

`get_perm_pattern()` Return pattern matrix of lower triangle of *permuted* Hessian

`gr(x)` Return gradient, evaluated at `x`: `gr(x,...)`

`hessian(x)` Return sparse Hessian, evaluated at `x`, as a `dgCMatrix` object.

`initialize(x, fn, gr, rows, cols, delta = 1e-07, index1 = TRUE, complex = FALSE, ...)`
 Initialize object with functions to compute the objective function and gradient (`fn` and `gr`), row and column indices of non-zero elements (`rows` and `cols`), an initial variable vector `x` at which `fn` and `gr` can be evaluated, a finite differencing parameter `delta`, flags for 0 or 1-based indexing (`index1`), whether the complex step method will be used, and other arguments (...) to be passed to `fn` and `gr`.

`partition()` Return the partitioning used to compute finite differences

`pointers(out.index1 = index1)` Return list with indices (`idx`) and pointers (`pntr`) for sparsity pattern of the compressed sparse Hessian. Since the Hessian is symmetric, the indices and pointers for row-oriented and column-oriented storage patterns are the same.

Examples

```
## Log posterior density of hierarchical binary choice model. See vignette.
set.seed(123)
data("binary_small")
N <- length(binary[["Y"]])
k <- NROW(binary[["X"]])
T <- binary[["T"]]
P <- rnorm((N+1)*k)
priors <- list(inv.Sigma = rWishart(1,k+5,diag(k))[, ,1],
              inv.Omega = diag(k))
true.hess <- binary.hess(P, binary, priors)
pattern <- Matrix.to.Coord(Matrix::tril(true.hess))
str(pattern)
obj <- sparseHessianFD(P, fn=binary.f, gr=binary.grad,
                      rows=pattern[["rows"]], cols=pattern[["cols"]],
                      data=binary, priors=priors)
hs <- obj$hessian(P)
all.equal(hs, true.hess)

f <- obj$fn(P) ## obj function
df <- obj$gr(P) ## gradient
fdf <- obj$fngr(P) ## list of obj function and gradient
fdfhs <- obj$fngrhs(P) ## list of obj function, gradient and Hessian.
```

 subst

Estimate sparse Hessian

Description

Estimate Hessian using triangular substitution algorithm

Usage

```
subst(Y, colors, jCol, ipntr, delta, nvars, nnz)
```

Arguments

<code>Y</code>	Matrix of finite differences of gradients
<code>colors</code>	Vector of length <code>nvars</code> that identifies color of each variable
<code>jCol, ipntr</code>	Column indices and row pointers for non-zero elements of lower triangle of Hessian (row-oriented compressed format).
<code>delta</code>	Perturbation factor used to compute finite differences of gradients.
<code>nvars</code>	Dimension of Hessian (number of variables)
<code>nnz</code>	Number of non-zero elements in the lower triangle of the Hessian.

Details

For internal use. You should not have to call this function directly.

Value

A sparse Hessian of class `dgCMatrix`.

Index

- * **package**
 - sparseHessianFD-package, [2](#)

- binary, [3](#)
- binary-data, [3](#)
- binary_large (binary-data), [3](#)
- binary_large-data (binary-data), [3](#)
- binary_small (binary-data), [3](#)
- binary_small-data (binary-data), [3](#)
- binary_super (binary-data), [3](#)
- binary_super-data (binary-data), [3](#)

- coloring, [4](#)
- Coord.to.Pattern.Matrix (deprecated), [6](#)
- Coord.to.Pointers, [5](#)
- Coord.to.Sym.Pattern.Matrix
 (deprecated), [6](#)

- deprecated, [6](#)

- get_colors, [8](#)

- Matrix.to.Coord, [2](#), [9](#)
- Matrix.to.Pointers, [9](#), [9](#)

- new.sparse.hessian.obj (deprecated), [6](#)

- sparseHessianFD, [2](#), [11](#)
- sparseHessianFD-package, [2](#)
- sparseHessianFD.new (deprecated), [6](#)
- subst, [13](#)
- Sym.CSC.to.Matrix (deprecated), [6](#)