

# Eliciting Probability Distributions with shelf

Jeremy Oakley

School of Mathematics and Statistics

6/9/16



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

# Background

Aim: to represent an expert's subjective uncertainty about a fixed quantity using a probability distribution

# Background

Aim: to represent an expert's subjective uncertainty about a fixed quantity using a probability distribution

## Toy example

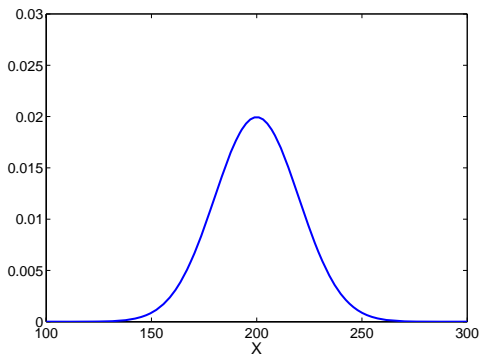
Define  $X$ : shortest distance (in miles) by road from Birmingham to Newcastle.

# Background

Aim: to represent an expert's subjective uncertainty about a fixed quantity using a probability distribution

## Toy example

Define  $X$ : shortest distance (in miles) by road from Birmingham to Newcastle.



# Applications

- Decision-making with little/no data; quantifying uncertainty about decision-model inputs

- Decision-making with little/no data; quantifying uncertainty about decision-model inputs
- Experimental design; clinical trial planning

- Decision-making with little/no data; quantifying uncertainty about decision-model inputs
- Experimental design; clinical trial planning
- Bayesian inference (but very rarely!)



# The task

# The task

- Experts usually won't provide distributions directly

# The task

- Experts usually won't provide distributions directly
- Expert(s) instead make a small number of probability judgements:

# The task

- Experts usually won't provide distributions directly
- Expert(s) instead make a small number of probability judgements:
  - Direct probability: "I think  $P(X < 150)$  is..."

# The task

- Experts usually won't provide distributions directly
- Expert(s) instead make a small number of probability judgements:
  - Direct probability: "I think  $P(X < 150)$  is..."
  - Quantile: "My median value is 200; I think  $P(X < 200) = 0.5$ ."

# The task

- Experts usually won't provide distributions directly
- Expert(s) instead make a small number of probability judgements:
  - Direct probability: "I think  $P(X < 150)$  is..."
  - Quantile: "My median value is 200; I think  $P(X < 200) = 0.5$ ."
- Analyst ("Facilitator") fits a probability distribution to these judgements and provides feedback (additional quantiles)

# The task

- Experts usually won't provide distributions directly
- Expert(s) instead make a small number of probability judgements:
  - Direct probability: "I think  $P(X < 150)$  is..."
  - Quantile: "My median value is 200; I think  $P(X < 200) = 0.5$ ."
- Analyst ("Facilitator") fits a probability distribution to these judgements and provides feedback (additional quantiles)
  - "Based on the fit, we're assuming you are 99% certain  $X < 250$ ."

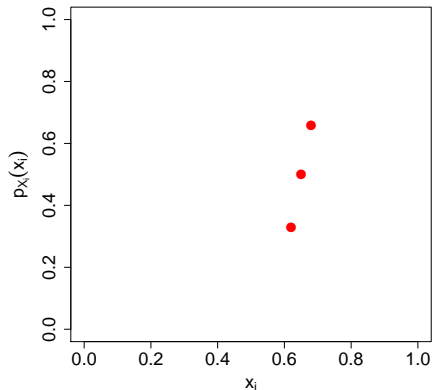
# The task

- Experts usually won't provide distributions directly
- Expert(s) instead make a small number of probability judgements:
  - Direct probability: "I think  $P(X < 150)$  is..."
  - Quantile: "My median value is 200; I think  $P(X < 200) = 0.5$ ."
- Analyst ("Facilitator") fits a probability distribution to these judgements and provides feedback (additional quantiles)
  - "Based on the fit, we're assuming you are 99% certain  $X < 250$ ."
- Software needed for fitting a range of distributions, displaying results, providing feedback.



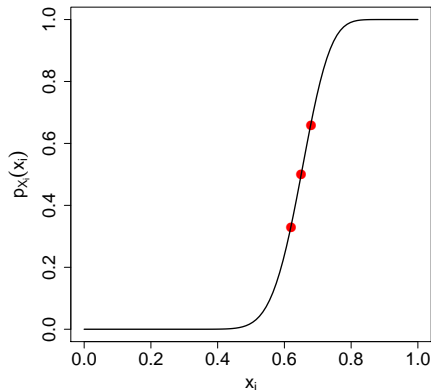
# Illustration

- Expert has provided a median and tertiles (33rd and 66th percentiles)



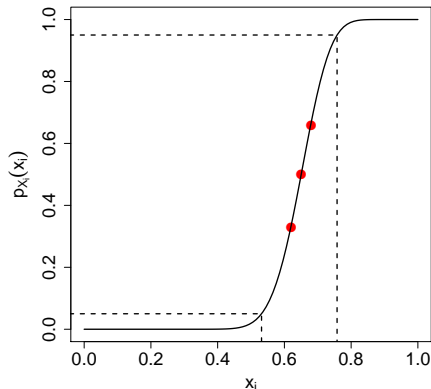
# Illustration

- Expert has provided a median and tertiles (33rd and 66th percentiles)
- Fit a distribution to these points on the CDF (the Beta(30.6, 16.6) distribution here)



# Illustration

- Expert has provided a median and tertiles (33rd and 66th percentiles)
- Fit a distribution to these points on the CDF (the Beta(30.6, 16.6) distribution here)
- Consider further percentiles from the fitted Beta(30.6, 16.6) distribution (eg 5th and 95th). Check these seem appropriate.



# SHELF and shelf

- SHELF: the SHEffield Elicitation Framework, developed by Tony O'Hagan and myself
  - Protocols and templates for eliciting a single distribution from a group of experts

# SHELF and shelf

- SHELF: the SHEffield Elicitation Framework, developed by Tony O'Hagan and myself
  - Protocols and templates for eliciting a single distribution from a group of experts
- shelf: an R package for implementing the methods

# SHELF and shelf

- SHELF: the SHEffield Elicitation Framework, developed by Tony O'Hagan and myself
  - Protocols and templates for eliciting a single distribution from a group of experts
- shelf: an R package for implementing the methods
- History:
  - Initially just functions for download

# SHELF and shelf

- SHELF: the SHEffield Elicitation Framework, developed by Tony O'Hagan and myself
  - Protocols and templates for eliciting a single distribution from a group of experts
- shelf: an R package for implementing the methods
- History:
  - Initially just functions for download
  - MATCH tool front-end, developed by Ed Morris at Nottingham



# SHELF and shelf

- SHELF: the SHEffield Elicitation Framework, developed by Tony O'Hagan and myself
  - Protocols and templates for eliciting a single distribution from a group of experts
- shelf: an R package for implementing the methods
- History:
  - Initially just functions for download
  - MATCH tool front-end, developed by Ed Morris at Nottingham
  - Now a package on CRAN (and github). Used tutorial on “R Function of the Day”, and Wickham (2015)