

A prime number “game of life”

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In this paper, the author discusses the existence of a real number y such that $q = \lfloor p\#y \rfloor$ is a prime number for every $p \geq 2$.

Definitions:

$\lfloor x \rfloor$ is the floor function, i.e. the largest integer less than x .

$p\#$ is the primorial function, the product of all primes $\leq p$. $1\# = 1$ by convention.

$[a, b[$ is the open interval containing real numbers x such that $a \leq x < b$.

Objective? There is no objective.

The objective of most any kind of game is to get acquainted with the cornucopia of different situations in everyday life. In the same fashion, playing with numbers can clear the path to surprising mathematical insights one didn't originally intend to find.

While large portions of this paper consist of artisan work with known tools of number theory, there may something to be gained in-between the lines, for example a way to calculate $\theta(x)$ directly from known values of $\text{Li}(x) - \pi(x)$ which I haven't seen before in literature. There are also a couple of open problems which may or may not be worth investigating further.

Setting the stage

Any real number y such that $q = \lfloor p\#y \rfloor$ is a prime number for every $p \geq 2$ must lie in the interval $[1, 1.5[$. If $y < 1$, then $\lfloor 2\#y \rfloor < 2$, which is less than the first prime number. For $y \geq 1.5$, $\lfloor 2\#y \rfloor$ must be an odd prime $2m-1$ for some integer $m > 1$. Then $\lfloor 3\#y \rfloor$ is a number in the interval $[6m-3, 6m-1]$, only the latter of which can be prime because $6m-3$ is divisible by 3 and $6m-2$ is divisible by 2. Likewise, any integer in the successive intervals $[p\#m-p, p\#m-1]$ is divisible by a small prime $\leq p$ except for $p\#m-1$. Hence there would have to be an integer m for which $p\#m-1$ is always prime, i.e. the sequence $f(0) = m-1$, $f(s+1) = (f(s)+1) \cdot p_s - 1$ with p_s being the s^{th} prime number must only produce primes, which is practically impossible (but hasn't been disproven yet!).

It is possible, however, to find arbitrarily long sequences for some m , albeit only finite ones:

r	m	r	m
5	2	23	384,427
7	2	29	16,114,470
11	9	31	259,959,472
13	9	37	13,543,584,514
17	9	41	100,318,016,379
19	224,719	43	100,318,016,379

Table 1. Smallest integers m for which $p\#m-1$ is prime for $p \leq r$. A quick-and-dirty analysis suggests that the next entry in this table is not likely to occur before 10^{14} .

To find out about an admissible value for y , we have to look for primes q , where each q requires the primality of $\lfloor q/p\#*r\#\rfloor$ for every $r \leq p$. In the following setup, Y will denote the interval in which any number y as described above can lie, setting $Y = [1, 1.5[$ for a start, and then successively sharpen the bounds where, for every p , $Y*p\#$ must contain at least one prime to satisfy the conditions.

- Stage 1: $p = 2 \rightarrow 2*Y = [2, 3[\rightarrow \lfloor 2*Y \rfloor = 2$ – no further action required yet
- Stage 2: $p = 3 \rightarrow 6*Y = [6, 9[$ – 7 is the only prime in here, so Y narrows down to $[7/6, 8/6[$
- Stage 3: $p = 5 \rightarrow 30*Y = [35, 40[$ – one prime (37) in this interval, Y adjusts to $[37/30, 38/30[$
- Stage 4: $p = 7 \rightarrow 210*Y = [259, 266[$ – once again, one prime in here and any possible y lies between $263/210$ and $264/210$
- Stage 5: $p = 11 \rightarrow 2,310*Y = [2,893, 2,904[$ – now it's getting interesting, since there are two primes in that interval, 2,897 and 2,903. We will split Y into two separate intervals, $Y_1 = [2,897/2,310, 2,898/2,310[$ and $Y_2 = [2,903/2,310, 2,904/2,310[$ and proceed
- Stage 6: $p = 13 \rightarrow$ each Y_1 and Y_2 brings forth one prime, 37,663 and 37,747 respectively. Cutting back both Y 's, then
- Stage 7: $p = 17 \rightarrow Y_1$ leads to 640,279, whereas Y_2 gives 641,701 and 641,713, and Y_2 will be split into Y_2 and Y_3 in accordance with the primes
- Stage 8: $p = 19 \rightarrow 9,699,690*Y_1$ contains a prime triplet, $12,165,311+d$ for $d=\{0, 2, 6\}$, while Y_2 and Y_3 both fail to produce any further prime
- etc.

The results can be put into a nice grid:

[Y]	1								
* 2	+ 0								
* 3	+ 1								
* 5	+ 2								
* 7	+ 4								
* 11	+ 4						+ 10		
* 13	+ 2						+ 8		
* 17	+ 8						+ 2	+ 14	
* 19	+ 10	+ 12				+ 16		(end)	(end)
* 23	+ 16	+ 8				+ 16	+ 18		
* 29	+ 16	+ 6	+ 14	+ 24	+ 26	+ 10	(end)		
* 31	(end)	+ 14	+ 24	(end)	+ 6	+ 14	(end)	(end)	
* ...		+ ...	+ ...		(end)	+ ...			

Table 2. This seems to be the new “game of life”, a family tree of prime numbers.

Will the evolution go on forever? Here is a table that shows how many partial intervals (or primes, respectively) n there are after stage s , up to $s = 60$:

s	p	n	s	p	n	s	p	n
1	2	1	21	73	5	41	179	18
2	3	1	22	79	4	42	181	17
3	5	1	23	83	6	43	191	14
4	7	1	24	89	3	44	193	24
5	11	2	25	97	2	45	197	24
6	13	2	26	101	1	46	199	28
7	17	3	27	103	3	47	211	30
8	19	3	28	107	1	48	223	36
9	23	4	29	109	1	49	227	49
10	29	6	30	113	3	50	229	44
11	31	4	31	127	2	51	233	52
12	37	5	32	131	5	52	239	53
13	41	5	33	137	6	53	241	55
14	43	9	34	139	12	54	251	67
15	47	11	35	149	21	55	257	69
16	53	10	36	151	19	56	263	72
17	59	12	37	157	15	57	269	81
18	61	8	38	163	16	58	271	79
19	67	6	39	167	24	59	277	85
20	71	11	40	173	18	60	281	83

Table 3. The only prime at stage 29 is 350,842,542,483,891,235,293,716,663,559,065,020,274,899,073. Talking about a bottleneck.

Although the population increases considerably after stage 33, the data doesn't provide too much confidence that it will continue to do so. We have to take a closer look at why this sequence is so erratic.

Analyzing the game

The size of the primes at each stage s with the corresponding p , p_s being the s^{th} prime, is always about $1.25 \cdot p_s \#$. The probability of a random number of this size being prime is $1/(\log p_s \# + 0.23)$, or $1/(\theta(p_s) + 0.23)$ where $\theta(p)$ is the first Chebyshev function.

For one prime q of the stage $s-1$ there has to be on average at least one prime in the interval $[q \cdot p_s, (q+1) \cdot p_s]$ in order to have a chance that the sequence keeps on producing ever more primes. More precisely, the probability of getting at least one prime out of the respective interval must be bigger than getting no prime at all.

$$(1) \quad \frac{\binom{p-1}{1}}{(\log q-1)^1} \left(1 - \frac{1}{\log q}\right)^{p-1} > \frac{\binom{p-1}{0}}{(\log q-1)^0} \left(1 - \frac{1}{\log q}\right)^{p-1} \quad \text{or simply} \quad \frac{p-1}{\theta(p)-0.77} > 1$$

This is true for $p \geq 3$ if and only if $\theta(p) < p-0.23$, or $\theta(p) < p$ for short, since the constant value $0.23 = \log(y)$ is negligible for large p .

Now $\theta(p)$ is in fact smaller than p most of the time – but only slightly so. And indeed $p-\theta(p)$ behaves just like the mercurial $\text{Li}(p)-\pi(p)$, along with the infinitude of sign changes (see Littlewood [4]):

Using the simple sum $\sum_{x=2}^p \frac{1}{\log x}$ for $\text{Li}(p)$ ¹⁾,

$$(2) \quad p - \theta(p) = \log(p) [\text{Li}(p) - \pi(p)] + 1 - \sum_{x=2}^{p-1} \left[\log\left(\frac{x+1}{x}\right) (\text{Li}(x) - \pi(x)) \right]$$

This formula makes it also clear that $p-\theta(p)$ changes sign quite a while before $\text{Li}(p)-\pi(p)$ acquires negative values. For the sake of a ballpark figure: assuming $\text{Li}(x)-\pi(x)$ is on average close enough to $x^{1/2}/\log(x)$, then $p-\theta(p)$ drops below zero by the time $\text{Li}(p)-\pi(p) < [2p^{1/2}+O(p^{1/3})] / [(\log p)(-2+\log p)]$. It can be expected that this happens for the first time close to the first $\text{Li}(p)-\pi(p)$ crossover near $1.4 \cdot 10^{316}$ (Bays and Hudson [1], more extensive calculations by Saouter and Demichel [9]). The results of Platt and Trudgian [6] also confirm this.

¹⁾ As opposed to the “European convention” $\int_2^p \frac{dx}{\log x}$ and the “American convention” $\int_0^p \frac{dx}{\log x}$ which each differ from said sum by less than 1 for $p \geq 12.00501071$ (EC) or $p \geq 2$ (AC).

(Actually, the sum becomes equivalent to $\int_a^p \frac{dx}{\log x}$ for $a = 1.549831773645\dots$ for large p .)

Empirical data and heuristical reasoning suggests that $p-\theta(p)$ can usually be found in the vicinity of $p^{1/2}$. The bias is given by Riemann’s prime counting formula [8]

$$(3) \quad \pi(x) = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{\mu(n)}{n} \left[\text{Li}\left(\sqrt[n]{x}\right) - \sum_{\rho} \text{Li}\left(\sqrt[n]{x^{\rho}}\right) + \int_{\sqrt[n]{x}}^{\infty} \frac{du}{u(u^2-1)\log u} - \log(2) \right]$$

If the Riemann Hypothesis is true, $\text{Li}(p)-\pi(p)$ oscillates along $p^{1/2}/\log(p)$ with a magnitude of at most $O(p^{1/2} \log p)$ (von Koch [10]), and so $p-\theta(p)$ oscillates along $p^{1/2}$ with a magnitude of at most $O(p^{1/2} \log^2 p)$. Ingham [3] also proved this bias for sufficiently large p .

On a large scale, the number of intervals should increase slowly and asymptotically with $p-\theta(p)$, thus it may also decrease whenever $\theta(p) > p$. Yet the actual development strongly depends on the local irregularities of the distribution of prime numbers, so one can only assign the probability that the initial conditions are adequate.

Admittedly, (1) wasn't quite accurate. The number of primes in an interval after a semiprime as it is the case, especially in this short type of interval, is on average a bit smaller than for a randomly chosen interval. The following table demonstrates this sort of difference for a small interval of ten numbers:

number	divisible by					not divisible	interval sum
	2	3	5	7	11		
<i>random</i> <i>+ [1..10]</i>	50%	33%	20%	14%	9%	21%	2.08
prime+1	100%	50%	25%	17%	10%	0%	0
prime+2	0%	50%	25%	17%	10%	28%	0.28
prime+3	100%	0%	25%	17%	10%	0%	0.28
prime+4	0%	50%	25%	17%	10%	28%	0.56
prime+5	100%	50%	0%	17%	10%	0%	0.56
prime+6	0%	0%	25%	17%	10%	56%	1.13
prime+7	100%	50%	25%	0%	10%	0%	1.13
prime+8	0%	50%	25%	17%	10%	28%	1.41
prime+9	100%	0%	25%	17%	10%	0%	1.41
prime+10	0%	50%	0%	17%	10%	38%	1.78

Table 4. For a random interval start and interval length 10, the average of numbers that are coprime to 2,310 = 11# is above 2, whereas for an interval of the same length after a prime number (or any number coprime to 11#), significantly less than 2 such numbers are to be expected. Hardy and Littlewood [2] laid a solid foundation regarding this issue.

Ultimately, the number of numbers that are relatively prime to k# in the intervals in question $[q*p+1, (q+1)*p-1]$ – denoted by $\Phi(p-1, k)$ – is

$$(4) \quad \prod_{u=3}^k \left(1 - \frac{1}{u-1}\right) \left[\left\lfloor \frac{p-1}{2} \right\rfloor + \sum_{v=3}^{\min(\frac{p-1}{2}, k)} \frac{\lfloor \frac{p-1}{2v} \rfloor}{v-2} + \sum_{v_1=3}^{\min(\sqrt{\frac{p-1}{2}}, k)} \sum_{v_2=v_1+2}^{\min(\frac{p-1}{2v_1}, k)} \frac{\lfloor \frac{p-1}{2v_1v_2} \rfloor}{(v_1-2)(v_2-2)} + \dots \right]$$

where the variables u and v run through prime values only. Yet disregarding the fact that p itself doesn't appear as a factor in said interval, this particular formula is only valid for $2 < k < p$ when used as described above.

In contrast, for a random interval this is $(p-1)*W(k)$, where $W(k) = \prod_{u \text{ prime}}^k \left(1 - \frac{1}{u}\right)$

If $\Phi(p-1, k)$ is then divided by $W(k)*[(p-2)/(p-1)]$, then the result is a "corrected" interval length. For this, k must be appropriately large to attain the desired value ($k > \log(p)$, say).

There is a special connection between said corrected interval length and the twin prime constant $C_2=0.6601618\dots$: for $k \rightarrow \infty$, the corrected interval length $\Phi(p-1, k) / W(k)$, on the basis of a prime number preceding the interval, can be expressed as $C_2*(p-1+\alpha)$, with α being a rational number defined by

$$(5) \quad 2 \sum_{x=1}^{\frac{p-1}{2}} \left(\prod_r \frac{r-1}{r-2} - 1 \right)$$

Where r runs through every distinct odd prime factor of x .

Some values of α include

$p-1$	α	$p-1$	α
2	0	20	116/15
4	0	30	6,866/495
6	2	40	141,274/8,415
8	2	50	1,329,632/58,905
10	8/3	100	129,132,288,244/2,731,483,755
12	14/3	150	123,443,421,975,532,168/1,666,745,013,838,905

Table 5. The value of $\alpha/(p-1)$ is asymptotic to $1/C_2 - 1 - O(\log(p)/2pC_2)$.

While $k \rightarrow \infty$, the “corrected” interval length (for our case with the semiprimes) is – apart from $p = 3, 7$, and 13 – always a bit smaller than $p-1$. Dividing it again by $\log(q^*p)$ and we arrive at the expected average number of primes in one interval.

The ratio of the “corrected” interval length vs. $p-1$, which is equivalent to $\lim_{k \rightarrow \infty} \Phi(p-1, k) / [W(k) \cdot (p-2)]$, will be denoted below by $\psi(p)$.

Proposing practical predictions

Using these heuristics, which are so far in very good agreement with the factual data, we can start to calculate the probabilities for the game to continue.

For example, there are 594 primes at stage 100, where $p = 541$ and every prime $q = \lfloor p \cdot Y \rfloor$ has 220 decimal digits. Each q then has a certain chance to yield n primes in the following stages:

s	p	$n = 0$	$n = 1$	$n = 2$	$n = 3$	$n = 4$	$n = 5$	$n = 6$	$n = 7$	$n > 7$
101	547	34.52%	36.75%	19.53%	6.90%	1.83%	0.39%	0.07%	0.01%	0.00%
102	557	49.78%	19.46%	14.17%	8.22%	4.33%	2.16%	1.03%	0.47%	0.36%
103	563	58.57%	12.14%	10.10%	7.05%	4.63%	2.95%	1.83%	1.12%	1.62%
104	569	64.34%	8.33%	7.46%	5.75%	4.22%	3.03%	2.14%	1.50%	3.22%
105	571	68.45%	6.11%	5.72%	4.68%	3.68%	2.84%	2.17%	1.64%	4.71%
...
110	601	78.69%	2.06%	2.14%	1.99%	1.80%	1.62%	1.44%	1.27%	8.99%
150	863	90.06%	0.10%	0.11%	0.11%	0.11%	0.11%	0.11%	0.11%	9.20%
200	1,223	91.20%	0.01%	0.02%	0.02%	0.02%	0.02%	0.02%	0.02%	8.69%
1,000	7,919	91.48%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	8.52%
2,000	17,389	91.48%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	8.52%

Table 6. Only the fittest will survive.

The column for $n = 0$ is of importance to find out about the overall probability. Within the first few thousand values of s , this value approaches $\omega \approx 91.476\%$. This gives the overall probability of $\omega^{594} \approx 1.039 \cdot 10^{-23}$ that the sequence fails at this point.

Generally the value $\omega(s)$ can be defined for every $s \geq 1$ as the probability that a prime q at stage s will not cause an infinite sequence of primes in the further process.

For convenience, a recursive formula can be considered where, with

$\psi(p) = \lim_{k \rightarrow \infty} \Phi(p-1, k) / [W(k)^*(p-2)]$ from above,

$$(6) \quad \omega(s-1) = \left(1 - \frac{\psi(p)}{\log q}\right)^{(p-1)} \sum_{j=0}^{p-1} \frac{\binom{p-1}{j} \omega(s)^j}{\left(\frac{\log q}{\psi(p)} - 1\right)^j}$$

and a starting point $\omega(t) = 1 - 2p^{-1/2}$ for some t can be set to quickly compute the values for all $s < t$. Varying $\omega(t)$ between 0 and $1 - \varepsilon$ for an $\varepsilon > 0$ leads to a lower and upper bound on $\omega(s)$. It may be useful that if $\omega(t) = \omega(s) + \delta$ then $\omega(t+1)$ is asymptotic to $\omega(s+1) + \delta^*(1 - \omega(s+1))/2$.

Again, we should bear in mind that these primes are not as flexible as (6) takes them to be: the probability of obtaining n primes in the following step is zero when n exceeds the maximal possible number of primes in the given interval (e.g. $n > 97$ for $p-1 = 546$) as fixed in the specific rules for the k -tuple conjecture. To take account of that – at least to some degree –, $W(k)$ is deployed again such that $k\# < p$. For $p = 547$, this means $k = 7$ and $W(k) = 48/210 = 1/4.375$. As p gets larger than $11\# = 2,310$, $W(k)$ can be adjusted to $480/2,310 = 1/4.8125$ and so on.

$$(7) \quad \omega(s-1) = \left(1 - \frac{\psi(p)}{W(k)\log q}\right)^{W(k)(p-1)} \sum_{j=0}^{W(k)(p-1)} \frac{\binom{W(k)(p-1)}{j} \omega(s)^j}{\left(\frac{W(k)\log q}{\psi(p)} - 1\right)^j}$$

This refined calculation reveals a slightly smaller value for $\omega(100)$, namely 91.435%. The entire probability that the sequence fails at this point drops by 24% to $7.937 \cdot 10^{-24}$.

To show how vague these percentages are (especially at this rather early stage of computation), the actual portion of primes that don't survive after stage 100 – at least 547 out of 594 – is $\geq 92.088\%$: to the 594th power, this is over 68 times more than the value from the “refined” calculation! In other terms, 47 surviving primes as opposed to a predicted number of 51, from this point of view the deviation is not that bad.

$\omega(100)$ with $W(1)$: 91.4760031% (simple formula)

$\omega(100)$ with $W(2)$: 91.4637729% (refined formula)

$\omega(100)$ with $W(3)$: 91.4515074%

$\omega(100)$ with $W(5)$: 91.4422850%

$\omega(100)$ with $W(7)$: 91.4345844%

$\omega(100)$ with $W(11)$: 91.4291857%

It is difficult to pin down exact values there, but the refined calculation should at least give some indication on how large the error might be.

Not too surprisingly, $\omega(s)$ is largely situated in the neighborhood of $1 - 2p_s^{-1/2}$. This can be verified heuristically as follows:

Proceed as to be seen in Table 6, starting with stage s . Consider regular intervals with evenly distributed primes q , the size of the intervals being $z^* \log(q)$ for a chosen $z \geq 1$, so for $\lim q \rightarrow \infty$, the probability that one interval doesn't contain a prime at stage $s+1$ is e^{-z} .

The probability to get 0 primes after t steps at stage $s+t$ is $f(s+t)$, where $f(s)=0$ and recursively $f(x+1) = e^{z[f(x)-1]}$. Then $\omega(s) = [x: e^{z(x-1)} = x] (= [x: e^{zx} = e^{zx}])$. As $\lim z \rightarrow 1$, $x = 1 - 2(z-1) + O((z-1)^2)$, which can be approximated by $1 - 2p^{-1/2}$ for $z = p/\theta(p) \approx 1 + p^{-1/2}$ (at least for small p).

What is more, for $\theta(p) = p + m \cdot p^{1/2}$, $m = -1 + O(\log^2 p)$ (Riemann Hypothesis), it can be shown that

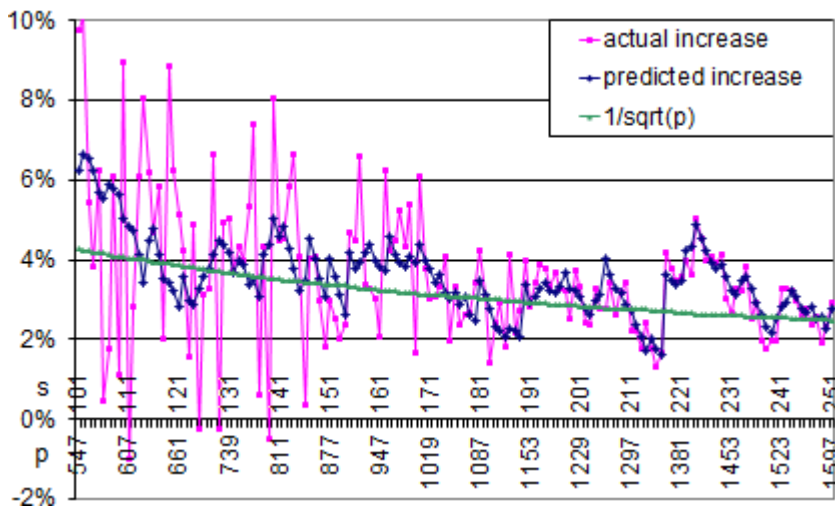
$$(8) \quad \omega(s+1) - \omega(s) \sim (\omega(s) - 1) \left[\frac{m}{\sqrt{p}} + \frac{1}{p} + \frac{1 - \omega(s)}{2} \right] + O\left(\frac{\log p}{\sqrt{p^3}}\right) + O\left(\frac{1 - \omega(s)}{\sqrt{p}}\right)$$

with error terms depending on either p or $\omega(s)$. As long as $m \approx -1$ as is expected on average in the long run, if $\omega(s)$ is chosen a bit larger than $1 - 2p_s^{-1/2}$, the values for the following $\omega(s+x)$ by the recursion formula above quickly head towards 1, so the first term in the parenthesis above, $m/p^{1/2}$, becomes the most significant. If then at some point $\text{Li}(p) \approx \pi(p)$, thus $m \approx 0$, while $\omega(s)$ is very close to one, then the second term $1/p$ becomes the most significant, but doesn't nearly have the (then opposite) impact on $\omega(s)$ as in the region where $m \approx -1$. Now what does that say? If $\omega(s)$ stays close to 1, the initially chosen value is \geq the actual value, which is good because the actual value – the probability that the sequence terminates – is desired to be as small as possible.

An m -value of $+1$ would adequately counter the effect of the expected value -1 , then again that should happen just as often as an m -value of -3 . It should be noted that there is yet no known effective region where $|m+1| \geq 2$, making it a candidate for a future endeavor.

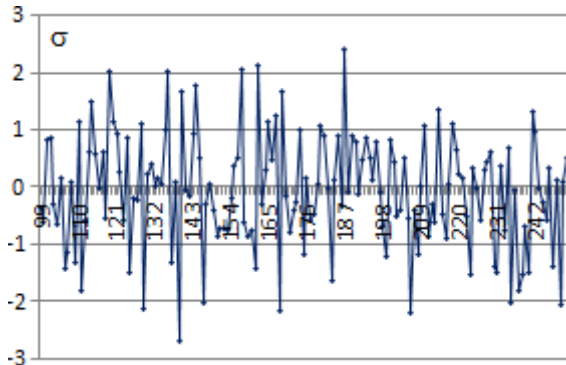
Once the number of primes n – the number of possibilities for y – reaches a “stable” value, one may give a rough estimate as to how the sequence continues. For instance, with $p = 1,153$ we have $n = 19,690$. In the next stage, with $p = 1,163$, one is likely to find approximately $n = 19,690 \cdot \psi(p) \cdot (p-1) / (\theta(p) + 0.23) \approx 20,298$ primes.

Most of the time, the actual value lies between $n - n^{1/2}$ and $n + n^{1/2}$, and, by standard deviation measures, more than 99.7% of the time it should be well within $n \pm 3n^{1/2}$. But even considering a negative deviation of $4n^{1/2}$, $-4 \cdot 20,298^{1/2} = -569.88\dots$ is still outnumbered by the predicted growth $20,298 - 19,690 = 608$, corroborating the fact that the initial assumption holds with a very high probability if the distribution is normal (a sufficient but not particularly necessary condition).



Graph 1. Comparison. With the prime number output becoming more generous, the forecast is increasingly accurate.

Expanding this supposition, we can say the sequence is “stable” when $n > p$, where the average absolute growth rate $n/p^{1/2}$ is bigger than the majority of the local deviations of order $n^{1/2}$. This critical boundary is firmly overstepped at $s = 98$: $p = 521$ vs. $n = 559$ (compared to $s = 97$ with $p = 509$ vs. $n = 490$), and the following 153 stages seem to behave pretty “normal”:



Graph 2. Standard deviation from the predicted number of primes at each stage $s = 99 \dots 251$. 70.6% of the values are within 1σ , 92.2% within 2σ , and all within 3σ . There are 78 negative deviations vs. 75 positive ones.

Long-term predictions suggest that the number of primes may surpass 10^6 at \approx stage 337 ($p = 2,269$), 10^9 at \approx stage 700 ($p = 5,279$), 10^{12} at \approx stage 1,207 ($p = 9,787$), 10^{100} at \approx stage 118,945 ($p = 1,568,263$), 10^{1000} at \approx stage 19,240,445 ($p = 358,604,317$), and may have reached $n \approx 10^{10^{155}}$ by the time that $\theta(p) > p$ where we expect to see the next slight decline of the sequence ever since stage 139 (see Table 7).

The following approximation formula for n can be used in the medium term:

$$(9) \quad \frac{\sqrt{e^{\sqrt{3s}}}}{8}$$

which is surprisingly accurate in spite of its simplicity in the narrow sense that it is off by less than 20, with one little exception, for $s \leq 61$, off by at most 20% for $98 \leq s \leq 114$, and off by at most 10% for $115 \leq s \leq 251$ – compared to more elaborate predictions, the latter may hold even for $115 \leq s \leq 400$ and beyond. Furthermore, (9) may be off by a factor of no more than 2 for $66 \leq s \leq 1,000+$. In light of the time it would take to meticulously calculate n for all $s \leq 1,000$, the exact crossover on the large side of the inequality will always remain a mystery, thus calling into question any more daring predictions regarding (9).

The status quo, pt. I: risk of failure

At stage 251 ($p = 1,597$) there are 117,842 probable primes, and $\omega(251) \approx 95.460921\%$. $0.95460921^{117,842} \approx 4.08 \cdot 10^{-2,378}$ – that is, for the time being, the probability that the game fails for some $s > 251$.

Up to that point, 4,007,583 numbers have not yet been tested for certified primality, the smallest of those being in the ballpark of $2.38 \cdot 10^{247}$.

No counterexample is known for the combination of a Baillie-Pomerance-Selfridge-Wagstaff pseudoprimal test and a strong Lucas test which were performed on the probable primes, yet if there is one among all the established PRPs, it could take effect on at most 11,939 PRPs (the most prolific branch at $p=601$). $0.95460921^{117,842-11,939} \approx 3.97 \cdot 10^{-2,137}$, i.e. $7.28 \cdot 10^{240}$ times larger. It is yet unclear how much this will affect the above evaluation, especially by taking a look at Pomerance [7] who gives a heuristic argument that the number of counterexamples for a BPSW primality test up to x is $\gg x^{1-\epsilon}$ for any $\epsilon > 0$ and sufficiently large x . In either case, said ratio can be systematically reduced by checking the primality of the prolific branches in the sequence.

The status quo, pt. II: closing in on y

Now, what about the initially proposed values for y ? The lower and upper bounds are easily obtained by picking the smallest prime $q_{s,1}$ and the largest prime $q_{s,n}$ of the last computed stage and dividing by $p\#$: $y_{\min} = q_{s,1}/p\#$ and $y_{\max} = (q_{s,n}+1)/p\#$.

The calculations so far demonstrate that any y lies in a very small range between

1.25419610157801193627767955491421342377986921804262219583272255460886469942875

and

1.25419610157801193627767955491421342377986921804262219583272255460886469942905.

More precisely, $y_{\min} =$

1.25419610157801193627767955491421342377986921804262219583272255460886469942
875144751323169673647331200713029313835829410519...

and $y_{\max} = y_{\min} + 2.9314187260027917698243059721184867955612840891... \cdot 10^{-76}$.

Although it is not dead certain that such a y exists, if it actually does, then there should be infinitely many of those. Otherwise, we'd have to assume a unique solution where the probability of getting one prime for $p \rightarrow \infty$ – the column for $n = 1$ in Table 6 – is greater than zero. But if this is the case, then at every stage a factor of approximately $1/e$ falls back on the column for $n = 0$ which then would converge to 1, challenging our assumption that there is a unique solution. It would be nice, however, to have a rigorous proof.

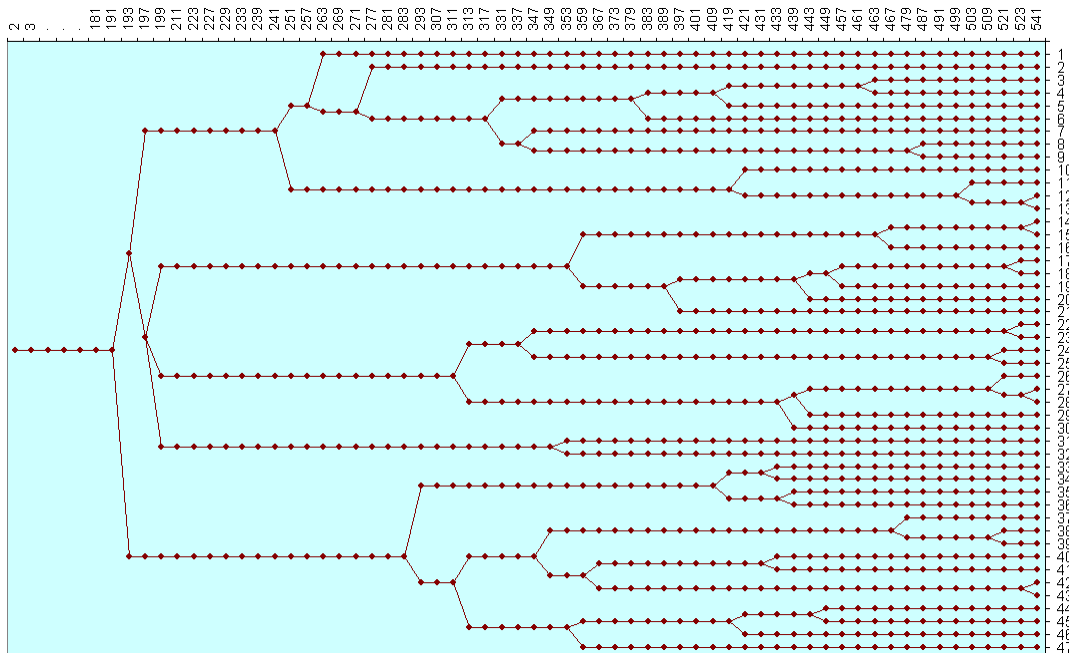
Having calculated all primes up to stage s , we can trace back these primes for previous stages and see which of those have “survived” in the long run. As it turns out, all probable primes from stage 251 originated from one prime at stage 43. Recall that there were a total of 14 primes at stage 43, so the other 13 “petered out” along the way, including one branch that originated in stage 37 tenaciously keeping up until it succumbed at stage 95.

The first split then appears to be at stage 44. From there on, at least two values of y may satisfy the hitherto harsh conditions. And suddenly there's a lot more to come:

at runs of consecutive non-surviving primes of a given stage – can be shown to fail), in practice, it will be a safe bet that no-one will explicitly find a counterexample for branches with more than $\frac{1}{2} * p^{1/2} * \log p$ primes for respective values of p .

Yet there might be a bound $\lim_{\max} n / (\frac{1}{2} * p^{1/2} * \log p) \leq c$ for finite branches for some constant c , and so far $c > 0.7478$ (7th branch/prime of stage 37 at stage 59 dissipating at stage 95). So two more questions are probably to remain unanswered: Is there such a bound, maybe with $c > 1$? If yes, what is the heuristically/actually largest c ? If no, is there any other bound?

The bifurcation tree as depicted in Graph 3 gets quite impressive when expanded. For example, tracing back the primes from stage 251 to stage 100 crystallizes out 47 primes (compared to originally 594) with an eventful history.

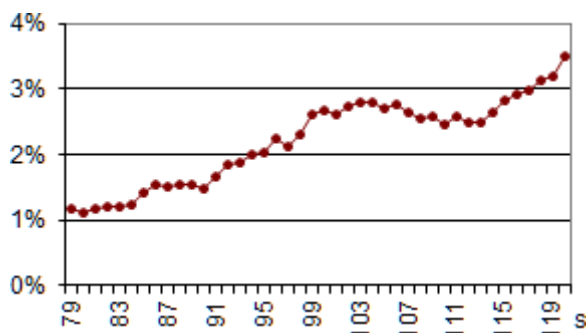


Graph 4. Alleged number of possibilities up to stage 100.

It is interesting to note the threefold split at stage 46, $p = 199$. If all of these primes persist an infinite run, this still is the only point for $s \leq 100$ where more than two primes out of a single prime from the previous stage will simultaneously continue the race. But how probable is this now? We have to consider the possible number of primes arising from one prime of the previous stage and the possibility that at least three of them become stable sequences, including the permutations if more than three primes show up simultaneously in the current stage:

$$(10) \sum_{x=3}^{\infty} \frac{\binom{p-1}{x}}{(\log q - 1)^x} \left(1 - \frac{1}{\log q}\right)^{p-1} (1 - \omega_{s-1})^x \binom{x}{3}$$

For $s = 101$, this value is 0.0043%, thus approximately 2.76% for all 594 primes of stage 100.



Graph 5. The value is growing in the process (> 52% for $s = 252$), so we can soon expect another threefold split. In fact, the next one appears to be in the upper region of $p = 613$, $s = 112$.

Substituting 3 for k in the above formula, it can handily be used to calculate the approximate probability of a k -fold split for any $k \geq 2$.

The possibly last stage without any split, that is without a temporarily increasing number of admissible values for y , is found at $s = 103$ ($p = 563$).

Rambling on

Instead of finding primes q for which $\lfloor q/p\#r\# \rfloor$ is always prime for $r < p$, we could go in the opposite direction and find primes for which $\lfloor q/r\# \rfloor$ is always prime for $r\# < q$. Such primes include 5, 23, 83, 107, 179, 587, 1,619, and 170,099. If we allow 1 as a quasi-prime number, then this list can be extended by 2, 3, 7, 11, 47, 227, and 359. If we furthermore allow $1 < r\# < q$, then the composite numbers 4, (6, 10,) 14, 15, 22, (34, 35, 46,) 82, 106, 118, 119, 178, (226, 358,) 538, 539, 586, 1,618, (2,386, 2,387, 2,518, 2,519,) 12,598, 12,599, 16,738, 16,739, 17,638, 17,639, 170,098, 6,722,098, 6,722,099, 128,274,298, 128,274,299, 465,404,806, 465,404,807, (6,530,443,918, 6,530,443,919, 8,338,243,906, 8,338,243,907,) 2,804,268,786,838, 2,804,268,786,839, (13,521,051,163,486, and 13,521,051,163,487) follow. There are no others $< 2.3 \cdot 10^{36}$, and sample calculations suggest that there may be no others at all, the chance for only one more such number being about 0.017%.

And for those who can't get enough sequences that grow like $p\#y$, here is a definition for "semi- $p\#Y$ -sequences": find y such that $\lfloor p\#y \rfloor$ is a prime number for every $p \geq 3$. The only difference here is that $\lfloor 2\#y \rfloor$ is allowed to be an even number other than 2 (maybe even a semiprime, depending on the taste about restrictions, though it's hard to find such an example like $\lfloor y \rfloor = 210,457,743,323$ – with 1,124 primes at $s = 331$). This leaves a lot of sequences that are on the verge of extinction for quite a while during the calculations. Some of them should survive an infinite run, however:

- $0 < y < 1$: this gives a sequence which is stronger than the original $p\#Y$ -sequence ($1 < y < 2$: original sequence)
- $25 < y < 26$: stronger than the original sequence up to stage 166, weaker after stage 168
- $1,411 < y < 1,412$: a weak sequence with only 883 primes at $s=168$, $p=997$
- $3,432 < y < 3,433$: a very weak sequence, only 168 primes at $s=168$, $p=997$
- $13,948 < y < 13,949$: another weak sequence

201,420 < y < 201,421: another one which has somewhat good chances to survive
6,007,103 < y < 6,007,104: rather weak
25,510,020 < y < 25,510,021: very weak, but a bit stronger than 3432 until s=167, p=991
101,422,747 < y < 101,422,748: extremely weak, only 82 primes at stage 185 (but picks up after that)

... Can you find others? Not like these, they're only finite:

2 < y < 3: extinct at stage 4
3 < y < 4: extinct at stage 7
5 < y < 6: extinct at stage 11
16 < y < 17: extinct at stage 14
978 < y < 979: extinct at stage 17
6,640 < y < 6,641: extinct at stage 23
11,456 < y < 11,457: extinct at stage 35
160,563 < y < 160,564: extinct at stage 38
283,257 < y < 283,258: extinct at stage 68
1,117,230 < y < 1,117,231: extinct at stage 78
1,594,501 < y < 1,594,502: extinct at stage 86
55,990,660 < y < 55,990,661: extinct at stage 106
108,286,142 < y < 108,286,143: extinct at stage 114

Some sketchy heuristics show that the number of y's with different integer part that result in infinite semi-sequences should also be infinite.

Additional information # 1: more on the evolution

s	p	n	s	p	n	s	p	n	s	p	n	s	p	n
61	283	93	97	509	490	133	751	2,548	169	1,009	10,329	205	1,259	30,707
62	293	81	98	521	559	134	757	2,649	170	1,013	10,722	206	1,277	31,555
63	307	81	99	523	573	135	761	2,791	171	1,019	11,048	207	1,279	32,633
64	311	67	100	541	594	136	769	2,998	172	1,021	11,387	208	1,283	33,494
65	313	66	101	547	652	137	773	3,017	173	1,031	11,769	209	1,289	34,556
66	317	74	102	557	718	138	787	3,148	174	1,033	12,251	210	1,291	35,744
67	331	91	103	563	757	139	797	3,132	175	1,039	12,490	211	1,297	36,546
68	337	88	104	569	786	140	809	3,385	176	1,049	12,905	212	1,301	37,363
69	347	90	105	571	835	141	811	3,537	177	1,051	13,209	213	1,303	38,018
70	349	95	106	577	839	142	821	3,698	178	1,061	13,556	214	1,307	38,936
71	353	102	107	587	854	143	823	3,914	179	1,063	13,918	215	1,319	39,633
72	359	126	108	593	906	144	827	4,175	180	1,069	14,393	216	1,321	40,152
73	367	152	109	599	916	145	829	4,345	181	1,087	15,006	217	1,327	40,822
74	373	154	110	601	998	146	839	4,360	182	1,091	15,472	218	1,361	42,524
75	379	166	111	607	988	147	853	4,537	183	1,093	15,695	219	1,367	44,138
76	383	187	112	613	1,016	148	857	4,722	184	1,097	16,075	220	1,373	45,674
77	389	214	113	617	1,078	149	859	4,862	185	1,103	16,548	221	1,381	47,308
78	397	206	114	619	1,165	150	863	4,951	186	1,109	16,852	222	1,399	49,203
79	401	201	115	631	1,237	151	877	5,099	187	1,117	17,548	223	1,409	50,999
80	409	220	116	641	1,295	152	881	5,228	188	1,123	17,926	224	1,423	53,578
81	419	241	117	643	1,371	153	883	5,334	189	1,129	18,415	225	1,427	56,009
82	421	249	118	647	1,399	154	887	5,460	190	1,151	19,145	226	1,429	58,245
83	431	269	119	653	1,523	155	907	5,715	191	1,153	19,690	227	1,433	60,614
84	433	320	120	659	1,618	156	911	5,971	192	1,163	20,364	228	1,439	63,012
85	439	354	121	661	1,701	157	919	6,366	193	1,171	21,154	229	1,447	65,622
86	443	354	122	673	1,773	158	929	6,582	194	1,181	21,954	230	1,451	67,609
87	449	365	123	677	1,801	159	937	6,799	195	1,187	22,688	231	1,453	69,411
88	457	369	124	683	1,889	160	941	7,006	196	1,193	23,528	232	1,459	71,677
89	461	358	125	691	1,885	161	947	7,151	197	1,201	24,295	233	1,471	73,978
90	463	387	126	701	1,944	162	953	7,599	198	1,213	25,085	234	1,481	76,816
91	467	413	127	709	2,008	163	967	7,920	199	1,217	25,717	235	1,483	78,753
92	479	426	128	719	2,141	164	971	8,276	200	1,223	26,680	236	1,487	81,051
93	487	446	129	727	2,136	165	977	8,708	201	1,229	27,569	237	1,489	82,647
94	491	454	130	733	2,241	166	983	9,086	202	1,231	28,242	238	1,493	84,106
95	499	491	131	739	2,354	167	991	9,577	203	1,237	28,917	239	1,499	85,756
96	503	456	132	743	2,442	168	997	9,736	204	1,249	29,871	240	1,511	87,469

s	p	n	s	p	n	s	p	n	s	p	n
241	1,523	90,333	244	1,549	99,150	247	1,567	107,041	250	1,583	114,508
242	1,531	93,284	245	1,553	101,723	248	1,571	109,795	251	1,597	117,842
243	1,543	96,279	246	1,559	104,560	249	1,579	111,912	total		4,026,820

Table 7. Data for $s > 60$, using BPSW-pseudoprimality for $s > 110$. Stage 139 is the last known point where the number of primes decreases. (Interestingly enough, just before that happens, $n = 4 \cdot p$, which is the only known – but certainly not the only – example where n is a multiple of p .)

The calculation up to the point given above takes about a week with Pari/GP [5] on a single CPU core of a state-of-the-art PC with the following program, which in the given form starts at $s = 29$ and keeps track of the numbers as $a = q_{s,1}$ and a memory-friendly vector d consisting of only the consecutive differences between the numbers of a given stage where $d_1 = 0$ and, for $i > 1$, $d_i = q_{s,i} - q_{s,i-1}$:

```

{
a=350842542483891235293716663559065020274899073;
d=[0]; \\ a and d can also be read in from previously calculated data

i=0;
b=a;
while(b>1,i++;b\=prime(i));
n=#d;
gettime();
while(1,
  i++;
  p=prime(i);
  q=a*p;
  c=d;
  e=floor(exp(sqrt(3*i)/2)/7);
  d=vector(e);
  m=n;
  n=0;
  for(j=1,m,
    q+=c[j]*p;
    y=vector(p);
    forprime(b=3,p-2,
      r=b-lift(Mod(q,b));
      forstep(l=r,p,b,y[l]=1)
    );
    forprime(b=p+2,floor(p^1.9),
      r=b-lift(Mod(q,b));
      if(r<p,y[r]=1)
    );
    forstep(k=2,p-1,2,
      if(!y[k],
        s=q+k;
        if(ispseudoprime(s),
          n++;
          if(n>1,d[n]=s-z,a=s);
          z=s
        )
      )
    );
  );
g=floor(gettime()/1000);
x="[";
f=floor(g/3600); if(f,x=Str(x,f"h "));
f=floor(g/60); if(f,x=Str(x,f"%60m "));
x=Str(x,g%60"s]");
t=Str("Level "p);
print(t": "n" possibilities "x);
t=Str("p#Y "t".txt");
write(t,"a="a"; d="vecextract(d,Str("1.."n)))
)
}

```


Additional information # 2: “mille” stone

The first 1,000-digit p#Y-prime (stage 350, $p = 2,357$, primality proved over all stages):

29758880294466900456743298893508664189221825395080834665460679966641670340323538611062658
74760710002626916716792245132115751760492949133469320566753486211657967302638955616142480
56123980950034528686832211500014435248604833958209819278373161550816949962259892736268616
00173134044275121432942599704993068937691714687995630444495169838508853924608153197637684
34329781194956097848054398473868538461756097734062947802989545222272955432147884759489532
15376258100904758911480647631719489690751598932601226480640025811451192259365414314027908
66860125691576735599044176066331722784025970993680631190650895731667486261763755572968055
05524999457560919427667284621117997598039465130796334009757240891094211460440403405892625
06167584698451951787089619451193713787721236181896575926339065362406372104874478640876833
78420101530205735028722118337344173284720533914178728403489723916268463274475422687256573
36629787247428617722407540470581500497332256038129464337230773818385423630283496477698386
126623480539308646019

It's a nice fact that $2,357\#$ of all primorials has exactly 1,000 digits.

The ostensibly first 1,000-digit p#Y-prime that survives in the long run, the 16th smallest of them all at $p = 2,357$, spanning its branch beyond 10,499# ($s > 1,284$), is

29758880294466900456743298893508664189221825395080834665460679966641670340323538611062658
74760710002626916716792245132115751760492949133469320566753486211657967302638955616142480
56123980950034528686832211500014435248604833958209819278373161550816949962259892736268616
00173134044275121432942599704993068937691714687995630444495169838508853924608153197637684
34329781194956097848054398473868538461756097734062947802989545222272955432147884759489532
15376258100904758911480647631719489690751598932601226480640025811451192259365414314027908
66860125691576735599044176066331722784025970993680631190650895731667486261763755572968055
05524999457560919427667284621117997598039465130796334009757240891094211460440403405892625
06167584698451951787089619451193713787721236181896575926339065362406372104874478640883322
68449347705777327982403840592614459180457549087430477857232202558684147149935045507388563
59599138619848676656187348665352889477837618920577507694760849690878954719797386115178812
164029571622386455709,

or (1st prime of stage 350) +

64889002924617557159295368172225527028589573701517325174945374247864241568387545962282013
19902296935137242005893377980819477138898050536288244804335753007587249353108951388963748
0426037406091083077809690,

which leads to $y_{\min} \geq$

1.2541961015780119362776795549142134237798692180426221958327225546088646994287514475132316
96736473312007130293138358294105190550680714644545957773479897214724735498508703837740455
38648544910432104569800625071405146132797606019221734399136669410231685026270656941987419
82202020697300428070508912125952580185561130361070261494006514520485290723407780280085443
16734128253583224021277855951903443706113250453367301336848062710640304848112964348021638
78424799778915265485948593800601469382480980040875271653561997759928697347239814789283725
10626767239907651287196033024235612690794916068309080426270552340800815890991120958620839
87783158432601041511728803871417616354122955584764825564835336501561572838431790634989265
72476414145174204072485693292701787200666665412458613015446492323282769411572687097469909
61201441174340560542916263010050038510570942549389471624556445283494302636805685513980901
74046059310097968393716013493042619454507538255565123810953362966551870774863385941160720
014897114954349144158...

Additional information # 3: tuplets (multiple primes in one interval)

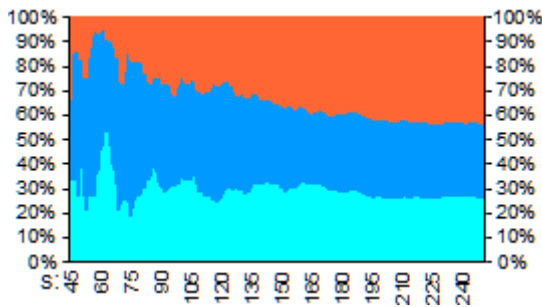
First twin: (1st prime of stage 4)*11+ {4, 10}
 First triplet: (1st prime of s = 7)*19+ {10, 12, 16}
 First quadruplet: (2nd prime of s = 9)*29+ {6, 14, 24, 26}
 First quintuplet: (18th prime of s = 46)*211+ {42, 110, 140, 144, 194}
 First sextuplet: (69th prime of s = 69)*349+ {18, 40, 234, 262, 292, 298}
 First septuplet: (238th prime of s = 84)*439+ {34, 228, 252, 282, 364, 378, 382}
 First octuplet: (5,687th prime of s = 159)*941+ {170, 234, 294, 462, 696, 740, 752, 812}
 First nonuplet: (270th prime of s = 181)*1,091+ {18, 46, 60, 166, 180, 312, 850, 1,062, 1,080}
 No decuplets up to stage 251.

The setup of the data from the Pari program above allows for a convenient search for those tuplets, setting t as the size of the tuple, and, depending on the number of precalculated levels p_s, a starting point s and an end point e:

```
{
t=9;
s=127;
e=1597;

forprime(p=s, e,
  read(Str("p#Y Level "p".txt"));
  q=[]; f=[]; l=[]; j=0; r=0;
  for(i=1, #d,
    a+=d[i];
    if(d[i]<p, j++; r+=d[i], j=1; r=0);
    if(j==t,
      if(i==#d, d=concat(d, p+1));
      if(d[i+1]>p,
        c=vector(t);
        b=a%p-r;
        c[1]=b;
        for(k=2, t, c[k]=c[k-1]+d[i-t+k]);
        print("# "i-t+1"- "i" of "p"#: q*"p" + "c");
        q=concat(q, a%p);
        f=concat(f, c);
        l=concat(l, i)
      )
    )
  );
  if(#q,
    read(Str("p#Y Level "precprime(p-2)".txt"));
    h=0;
    i=0;
    while(h<#q,
      i++;
      a+=d[i];
      if(a==q[h+1],
        write(Str(t"-tuplets.txt"), "q("i") @ "precprime(p-
2)"# * "p" + "vecextract(f, Str(t*h+1"..t*(h+1)))" (# "l[h+1]-t+1"-
"l[h+1]"");
        h++
      )
    )
  )
}
```

Additional information # 4: relative strength of split intervals



Graph 6. A nice and colorful edit showing the strength of the first three split intervals, starting at stage 45. The 117,842 probable primes at stage 251 are here divided into three groups (31,521 + 35,980 + 50,341) with the respective relative strength 26.75%, 30.53%, and 42.72%. These values may or may not stabilize while the number of primes in the sequence continues to grow – proving whichever event occurs should pose an interesting task. In any case, giving the exact percentages for $p \rightarrow \infty$ will be rather difficult.

Additional information # 5: bifurcations, specifically

For numeric information on how the branches in Graph 3 and 4 evolve, refer to this table:

s	p	split *	ω_{251}^n	s	p	split *	ω_{251}^n	s	p	split *	ω_{251}^n
44	193	0 / 1	$3 \cdot 10^{-1016}$	71	353	4 / 15	$6 \cdot 10^{-32}$	86	443	16 / 29	$2 \cdot 10^{-14}$
45	197	0 / 2	$1 \cdot 10^{-726}$	72	359	2 / 16	$9 \cdot 10^{-282}$	86	443	9 / 30	$6 \cdot 10^{-55}$
46	199	2 / 3	$9 \cdot 10^{-289}$	72	359	10 / 17	$1 \cdot 10^{-30}$	87	449	10 / 31	$1 \cdot 10^{-21}$
46	199	2 / 4	$7 \cdot 10^{-38}$	73	367	14 / 18	$6 \cdot 10^{-16}$	88	457	16 / 32	$4 \cdot 10^{-115}$
54	251	0 / 5	$9 \cdot 10^{-361}$	76	383	7 / 19	$7 \cdot 10^{-23}$	90	463	7 / 33	$5 \cdot 10^{-18}$
56	263	0 / 6	$2 \cdot 10^{-238}$	78	397	16 / 20	$6 \cdot 10^{-87}$	91	467	2 / 34	$7 \cdot 10^{-88}$
59	277	6 / 7	$6 \cdot 10^{-212}$	81	419	7 / 21	$1 \cdot 10^{-45}$	92	479	8 / 35	$1 \cdot 10^{-89}$
62	293	1 / 8	$1 \cdot 10^{-795}$	81	419	1 / 22	$5 \cdot 10^{-97}$	93	487	12 / 36	$4 \cdot 10^{-12}$
65	313	3 / 9	$3 \cdot 10^{-167}$	82	421	5 / 23	$2 \cdot 10^{-304}$	96	503	23 / 37	$4 \cdot 10^{-199}$
65	313	8 / 10	$7 \cdot 10^{-418}$	82	421	10 / 24	$7 \cdot 10^{-359}$	98	521	13 / 38	$5 \cdot 10^{-7}$
67	331	7 / 11	$3 \cdot 10^{-26}$	84	433	1 / 25	$2 \cdot 10^{-99}$	98	521	9 / 39	$1 \cdot 10^{-69}$
69	347	11 / 12	$5 \cdot 10^{-22}$	84	433	14 / 26	$2 \cdot 10^{-6}$	98	521	35 / 40	$2 \cdot 10^{-63}$
69	347	3 / 13	$1 \cdot 10^{-68}$	85	439	9 / 27	$2 \cdot 10^{-2}$	99	523	16 / 41	$6 \cdot 10^{-22}$
70	349	8 / 14	$6 \cdot 10^{-229}$	85	439	22 / 28	$4 \cdot 10^{-26}$	99	523	3 / 42	$8 \cdot 10^{-42}$

Table 8. With this information, the specific numbers y_i can be labeled.

* The number on the left side indicates from which branch the split comes from, while the number on the right side (i) denominates the new branch.

ω^n is an indication on the probability that the sequence of the branch terminates, taken from the number of primes n from that branch at stage 251 ($p = 1,597$). Branch # 27 is obviously the weakest there, only 90 out of a total of 117,842 primes stem from that line. Consequently, it has been checked further, and at stage 344 ($p = 2,311$), 355 primes cut ω^n back to $2 \cdot 10^{-7}$.

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