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# **SaTScan<sup>TM</sup> User Guide**

**for version 7.0**

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**<http://www.satscan.org/>**

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# Introduction

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## The SaTScan Software

### *Purpose*

SaTScan is a free software that analyzes spatial, temporal and space-time data using the spatial, temporal, or space-time scan statistics. It is designed for any of the following interrelated purposes:

- Perform geographical surveillance of disease, to detect spatial or space-time disease clusters, and to see if they are statistically significant.
- Test whether a disease is randomly distributed over space, over time or over space and time.
- Evaluate the statistical significance of disease cluster alarms.
- Perform repeated time-periodic disease surveillance for early detection of disease outbreaks.

The software may also be used for similar problems in other fields such as archaeology, astronomy, botany, criminology, ecology, economics, engineering, forestry, genetics, geography, geology, history, neurology or zoology.

### *Data Types and Methods*

SaTScan uses either a Poisson-based model, where the number of events in a geographical area is Poisson-distributed, according to a known underlying population at risk; a Bernoulli model, with 0/1 event data such as cases and controls; a space-time permutation model, using only case data; an ordinal model, for ordered categorical data; an exponential model for survival time data with or without censored variables; or a normal model for other types of continuous data. The data may be either aggregated at the census tract, zip code, county or other geographical level, or there may be unique coordinates for each observation. SaTScan adjusts for the underlying spatial inhomogeneity of a background population. It can also adjust for any number of categorical covariates provided by the user, as well as for temporal trends, known space-time clusters and missing data. It is possible to scan multiple data sets simultaneously to look for clusters that occur in one or more of them.

### *Developers and Funders*

The SaTScan™ software was developed by Martin Kulldorff together with Information Management Services Inc. Financial support for SaTScan has been received from the following institutions:

- National Cancer Institute, Division of Cancer Prevention, Biometry Branch [v1.0, 2.0, 2.1]
- National Cancer Institute, Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences, Statistical Research and Applications Branch [v3.0 (part), v6.1 (part)]
- Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, through a grant to the New York Academy of Medicine (Farzad Mostashari, PI) [v3.0 (part), 3.1, 4.0, 5.0, 5.1]
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, through Association of American Medical Colleges Cooperative Agreement award number MM-0870 [v6.0, 6.1 (part)].
- National Institute of Child Health and Development [7.0]

Their financial support is greatly appreciated. The contents of SaTScan are the responsibility of the developer and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the funders.

**Related Topics:** *Statistical Methodology, SaTScan Bibliography*

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## Download and Installation


To install SaTScan, go to the SaTScan Web site at: <http://www.satscan.org/> and select the SaTScan download link. After downloading the SaTScan installation executable to your PC, click on its icon and install the software by following the step-wise instructions.

**Related Topics:** *New Versions.*

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## Test Run

Before using your own data, we recommend trying one of the sample data sets provided with the software. Use these to get an idea of how to run SaTScan. To perform a test run:

1. Click on the SaTScan application icon.
2. Click on ‘Open Saved Session’.
3. Select one of the parameter files, for example ‘nm.prm’ (Poisson model), ‘NHumberside.prm’ (Bernoulli model) or ‘NYCfever.prm’ (space-time permutation model).
4. Click on the Execute  button. A new window will open with the program running in the top section and a Warnings/Errors section below. When the program finishes running the results will be displayed.

**Note:** The sample files should not produce warnings or errors.

**Related Topics:** *Sample Data Sets.*

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## Sample Data Sets

Six different sample data sets are provided with the software. They are automatically downloaded to your computer together with the software itself. These and other sample data sets are also available at <http://www.satscan.org/datasets/>.

### ***Poisson Model, Space-Time: Brain Cancer Incidence in New Mexico***

**Case file:** nm.cas

**Format:** <county> <cases=1> <year> <age group> <sex>

**Population file:** nm.pop

**Format:** <county> <year> <population> <age group> <sex>

**Coordinates file:** nm.geo

**Format:** <county> <x-coordinate> <y-coordinate>

**Study period:** 1973-1991

**Aggregation:** 32 counties

**Precision of case times:** Years

**Coordinates:** Cartesian

**Covariate #1, age groups:** 1 = 0-4 years, 2 = 5-9 years, ... 18 = 85+ years

**Covariate #2, gender:** 1 = male, 2 = female

**Population years:** 1973, 1982, 1991

**Data source:** New Mexico SEER Tumor Registry

This is a condensed version of a more complete data set with the population given for each year from 1973 to 1991, and with ethnicity as a third covariate. The complete data set can be found at: <http://www.satscan.org/datasets/>

***Bernoulli Model, Purely Spatial : Childhood Leukemia and Lymphoma Incidence in North Humberside***

**Case file:** NHumberside.cas

**Format:** <location id> <# cases>

**Control file:** Nhumberside.ctl

**Format:** <location id> <# controls>

**Coordinates file:** Nhumberside.geo

**Format:** <location id> <x-coordinate> <y-coordinate>

**Study period:** 1974-1986

**Controls:** Randomly selected from the birth registry

**Aggregation:** 191 Postal Codes (most with only a single individual)

**Precision of case and control times:** None

**Coordinates:** Cartesian

**Covariates:** None

**Data source:** Drs. Ray Cartwright and Freda Alexander. Published by J. Cuzick and R. Edwards, Journal of the Royal Statistical society, B:52 73-104, 1990

***Space-Time Permutation Model: Hospital Emergency Room Admissions Due to Fever at New York City Hospitals***

**Case file:** NYCfever.cas

**Format:** <zip> <#cases=1> <date>

**Coordinates file:** NYCfever.geo

**Format:** <zip> <latitude> <longitude>

**Study period:** Nov 1, 2001 – Nov 24, 2001

**Aggregation:** Zip code areas

**Precision of case times:** Days

**Coordinates:** Latitude/Longitude

**Covariates:** None

**Data source:** New York City Department of Health

### ***Ordinal Model, Purely Spatial: Education Attainment Levels in Maryland***

**Case file:** MarylandEducation.cas

**Format:** <county> <# individuals> <category #>

**Coordinates file:** MarylandEducation.geo

**Format:** <county> <latitude> <longitude>

**Study period:** 2000

**Aggregation:** 24 Counties and County Equivalents

**Precision of case times:** None

**Coordinates:** Latitude / Longitude

**Covariates:** None

**Categories:** 1 = Less than 9<sup>th</sup> grade  
2 = 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, but no high school diploma  
3 = High school diploma, but no bachelor degree  
4 = Bachelor or higher degree

**Data source:** United States Census Bureau: Information about education comes from the long Census 2000 form, filled in by about 1/6 households.

**Note:** Only people age 25 and above are included in the data. For each county, the census provides information about the percent of people with different levels of formal education. The number of individuals reporting different education levels in each county was estimated as this percentage times the total population age 25+ divided by six to reflect the 1/6 sampling fraction for the long census form.

### ***Exponential Model, Space-Time : Artificially Created Survival Data***

**Case file:** SurvivalFake.cas

**Format:** <location id> <# individuals> <time of diagnosis> <survival time> <censored>

**Coordinates file:** SurvivalFake.geo

**Format:** <location id> <x-coordinate> <y-coordinate>

**Study period:** 2000-2005

**Aggregation:** 5 Locations

**Precision of times of diagnosis:** Year

**Precision of survival/censoring times:** Day

**Coordinates:** Cartesian

**Covariates:** None

**Data source:** Artificially created data.

***Normal Model, Purely Spatial : Artificially Created Continuous Data***

**Case file:** NormalFake.cas

**Format:** <location id> <# individuals> <weight increase>

**Coordinates file:** NormalFake.geo

**Format:** <location id> <x-coordinate> <y-coordinate>

**Study period:** 2006

**Aggregation:** 26 Locations

**Coordinates:** Cartesian

**Covariates:** None

**Data source:** Artificially created data.

**Related Topics:** *Test Run, Input Data.*



# Statistical Methodology

Scan statistics are used to detect and evaluate clusters in a temporal, spatial or space-time setting. This is done by gradually scanning a window across time and/or space, noting the number of observed and expected observations inside the window at each location. In the SaTScan software, the scanning window is either an interval (in time), a circle or an ellipse (in space) or a cylinder with a circular or elliptic base (in space-time). Multiple different window sizes are used. The window with the maximum likelihood is the most likely cluster, that is, the cluster least likely to be due to chance. A p-value is assigned to this cluster.

The general statistical theory behind the spatial and space-time scan statistics used in the SaTScan software is described in detail by Kulldorff (1997)<sup>1</sup> for the Bernoulli and Poisson models, by Kulldorff et al. (2005)<sup>5</sup> for the space-time permutation model, by Jung et al. (2006)<sup>6</sup> for the ordinal model, by Huang et al. (2006)<sup>7</sup> for the exponential model and by Kulldorff et al. (2006)<sup>8</sup> for the normal model. Here we give a brief non-mathematical description. For all probability models, the scan statistic adjusts for the uneven geographical density of a background population, and the analyses are conditioned on the total number of cases observed.

**Related Topics:** *The SaTScan Software, Basic SaTScan Features, Advanced Features, Analysis Tab, Methodological Papers.*

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## Bernoulli Model

With the Bernoulli model<sup>1,2</sup>, there are cases and non-cases represented by a 0/1 variable. These variables may represent people with or without a disease, or people with different types of disease such as early and late stage breast cancer. They may reflect cases and controls from a larger population, or they may together constitute the population as a whole. Whatever the situation may be, these variables will be denoted as cases and controls throughout the user guide, and their total will be denoted as the population. Bernoulli data can be analyzed with the purely temporal, the purely spatial or the space-time scan statistics.

*Example:* For the Bernoulli model, cases may be newborns with a certain birth defect while controls are all newborns without that birth defect.

The Bernoulli model requires information about the location of a set of cases and controls. Separate locations may be specified for each case and each control, or the data may be aggregated for states, provinces, counties, parishes, census tracts, postal code areas, school districts, households, etc, with multiple cases and controls at each data location. To do a temporal or space-time analysis, it is necessary to have a time for each case and each control as well.

**Related Topics:** *Likelihood Ratio Test, Analysis Tab, Probability Model Comparison, Methodological Papers.*

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## Poisson Model

With the Poisson model<sup>1</sup>, the number of cases in each location is Poisson-distributed. Under the null hypothesis, and when there are no covariates, the expected number of cases in each area is proportional to its population size, or to the person-years in that area. Poisson data can be analyzed with the purely temporal, the purely spatial or the space-time scan statistic.

*Example:* For the Poisson model, cases may be stroke occurrences while the population is the combined number of person-years lived, calculated as 1 for someone living in the area for the whole time period and  $\frac{1}{2}$  for someone dying or moving away in the middle of the time period.

The Poisson model requires case and population counts for a set of data locations such as counties, parishes, census tracts or zip code areas, as well as the geographical coordinates for each of those locations.

The population data need not be specified continuously over time, but only at one or more specific ‘census times’. For times in between, SaTScan does a linear interpolation based on the population at the census times immediately proceeding and immediately following. For times before the first census time, the population size is set equal to the population size at that first census time, and for times after the last census time, the population is set equal to the population size at that last census time. To get the population size for a given location and time period, the population size, as defined above, is integrated over the time period in question.

**Related Topics:** *Likelihood Ratio Test, Analysis Tab, Probability Model Comparison, Methodological Papers.*

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## Space-Time Permutation Model

The space-time permutation model<sup>5</sup> requires only case data, with information about the spatial location and time for each case. The number of observed cases in a cluster is compared to what would have been expected if the spatial and temporal locations of all cases were independent of each other so that there is no space-time interaction. Therefore, we get a cluster in a geographical area if, during a specific time period, that area has a high proportion of excess cases or a smaller deficiency of cases than surrounding areas. This means that if, during a specific week, all geographical areas have twice the number of cases than normal, none of these areas constitute a cluster. On the other hand, if one geographical area has twice the number of cases while other areas have a normal amount of cases, then there will be a cluster in that first area. The space-time permutation model automatically adjusts for both purely spatial and purely temporal clusters. Hence there are no purely temporal or purely spatial versions of this model.

*Example:* In the space-time permutation model, cases may be daily occurrences of ambulance dispatches to stroke patients.

It is important to realize that space-time permutation clusters may be due either to an increased risk of disease, or to different geographical population distribution at different times, where for example the population in some areas grows faster than in others. This is typically not a problem if the total study period is less than a year. However, the user is advised to be very careful when using this method for data spanning several years. If the background population increases or decreases faster in some areas than in others, there is risk for population shift bias, which may produce biased p-values when the study period is

longer than a few years. For example, if a new large neighborhood is developed, there will be an increase in cases there simply because the population increases, and using only case data, the space-time permutation model cannot distinguish an increase due to a local population increase versus an increase in the disease risk. As with all space-time interaction methods, this is mainly a concern when the study period is longer than a few years<sup>159 161</sup>. If the population increase (or decrease) is the same across the study region, that is okay, and will not lead to biased results.

**Related Topics:** *Likelihood Ratio Test, Analysis Tab, Probability Model Comparison, Methodological Papers.*

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## Ordinal Model

With the ordinal model<sup>6</sup>, each observation is a case, and each case belongs to one of several ordinal categories. If there are only two categories, the ordinal model is identical to the Bernoulli model, where one category represents the cases and the other category represent the controls in the Bernoulli model. The cases in the ordinal model may be a sample from a larger population or they may constitute a complete set of observations. Ordinal data can be analyzed with the purely temporal, the purely spatial or the space-time scan statistics.

*Example:* For the ordinal model, the data may consist of everyone diagnosed with breast cancer during a ten-year period, with three different categories representing early, medium and late stage cancer at the time of diagnosis.

The ordinal model requires information about the location of each case in each category. Separate locations may be specified for each case, or the data may be aggregated for states, provinces, counties, parishes, census tracts, postal code areas, school districts, households, etc, with multiple cases in the same or different categories at each data location. To do a temporal or space-time analysis, it is necessary to have a time for each case as well.

With the ordinal model it is possible to search for high clusters, with an excess of cases in the high-valued categories, for low clusters with an excess of cases in the low-valued categories, or simultaneously for both types of clusters. Reversing the order of the categories has the same effect as changing the analysis from high to low and vice versa.

**Related Topics:** *Likelihood Ratio Test, Analysis Tab, Bernoulli Model, Probability Model Comparison, Methodological Papers.*

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## Exponential Model

The exponential model<sup>7</sup> is designed for survival time data, although it could be used for other continuous type data as well. Each observation is a case, and each case has one continuous variable attribute as well as a 0/1 censoring designation. For survival data, the continuous variable is the time between diagnosis and death or depending on the application, between two other types of events. If some of the data is censored, due to loss of follow-up, the continuous variable is then instead the time between diagnosis and time of censoring. The 0/1 censoring variable is used to distinguish between censored and non-censored observations.

*Example:* For the exponential model, the data may consist of everyone diagnosed with prostate cancer during a ten-year period, with information about either the length of time from diagnosis until death or from diagnosis until a time of censoring after which survival is unknown.

When using the temporal or space-time exponential model for survival times, it is important to realize that there are two very different time variables involved. The first is the time the case was diagnosed, and that is the time that the temporal and space-time scanning window is scanning over. The second is the survival time, that is, time between diagnosis and death or for censored data the time between diagnosis and censoring. This is an attribute of each case, and there is no scanning done over this variable. Rather, we are interested in whether the scanning window includes exceptionally many cases with a small or large value of this attribute.

It is important to note, that while the exponential model uses a likelihood function based on the exponential distribution, the true survival time distribution must not be exponential and the statistical inference (p-value) is valid for other survival time distributions as well. The reason for this is that the randomization is not done by generating observations from the exponential distribution, but rather, by permuting the space-time locations and the survival time/censoring attributes of the observations.

**Related Topics:** *Likelihood Ratio Test, Analysis Tab, Probability Model Comparison, Methodological Papers.*

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## Normal Model

The normal model<sup>8</sup> is designed for continuous data. For each individual, called a case, there is a single continuous attribute that may be either negative or positive. The model can also be used for ordinal data when there are very many categories. That is, ties are allowed.

*Example:* For the normal model, the data may consist of the birth weight and residential census tract for all newborns, with an interest in finding clusters with lower birth weight.

It is important to note that while the normal model uses a likelihood function based on the normal distribution, the true distribution of the continuous attribute must not be normal. The statistical inference (p-value) is valid for any continuous distribution. The reason for this is that the randomization is not done by generating simulated data from the normal distribution, but rather, by permuting the space-time locations and the continuous attribute (e.g. birth weight) of the observations. While still being formally valid, the results can be greatly influenced by extreme outliers though, so it may be wise to truncate such observations before doing the analysis.

**Note:** If all values are multiplied with or added to the same constant, the statistical inference will not change, meaning that the same clusters with the same log likelihoods and p-values will be found. Only the estimated means and variances will differ.

**Related Topics:** *Likelihood Ratio Test, Analysis Tab, Probability Model Comparison, Methodological Papers.*

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## Probability Model Comparison

For count data, there are three different probability models available in SaTScan: Poisson, Bernoulli and space-time permutation. The ordinal model is designed for categorical data with an inherent ordering from for example low to high. There are two models for continuous data: Normal and Exponential. The latter is primarily designed for survival type data.

The Poisson model is usually the fastest to run. The ordinal model is typically the slowest.

With the Poisson and space-time permutations models, an unlimited number of covariates can be adjusted for, by including them in the case and population files. With the Bernoulli, ordinal, exponential and normal models, covariates can be adjusted for by using multiple data sets, which limits the number of covariate categories that can be defined, or through a pre-processing regression analysis done before running SaTScan.

All probability models can be used for either individual locations or aggregated data.

With the Poisson model, population data is only needed at selected time points and the numbers are interpolated in between. A population time must be specified even for purely spatial analyses. Regardless of model used, the time of a case or control need only be specified for purely temporal and space-time analyses.

The space-time permutation model automatically adjusts for purely spatial and purely temporal clusters. For the Poisson model, purely temporal and purely spatial clusters can be adjusted for in a number of different ways. For the Bernoulli, ordinal, exponential and normal models, spatial and temporal adjustments can be done using multiple data sets, but it is limited by the number of different data sets allowed, and it is also much more computer intensive.

### ***Few Cases Compared to Controls***

In a purely spatial analysis where there are few cases compared to controls, say less than 10 percent, the Poisson model is a very good approximation to the Bernoulli model. The former can then be used also for 0/1 Bernoulli type data, and may be preferable as it has more options for various types of adjustments, including the ability to adjust for covariates specified in the case and population files. As an approximation for Bernoulli type data, the Poisson model produces slightly conservative p-values.

### ***Bernoulli versus Ordinal Model***

The Bernoulli model is mathematically a special case of the ordinal model, when there are only two categories. The Bernoulli model runs faster, making it the preferred model to use when there are only two categories.

### ***Normal versus Exponential Model***

Both the normal and exponential models are meant for continuous data. The exponential model is primarily designed for survival time data but can be used for any data where all observations are positive. It is especially suitable for data with a heavy right tail. The normal model can be used for continuous data that takes both positive and negative values. While still formally valid, results from the normal model are sensitive to extreme outliers.

### ***Normal versus Ordinal Model***

The normal model can be used for categorical data when there are very many categories. As such, it is sometimes a computationally faster alternative to the ordinal model. There is an important difference though. With the ordinal model, only the order of the observed values matters. For example, the results are the same for ordered values '1 – 2 – 3 – 4' and '1 – 10 – 100 – 1000'. With the normal model, the results will be different, as they depend on the relative distance between the values used to define the categories.

### ***Temporal Data***

For temporal and space-time data, there is an additional difference among the probability models, in the way that the temporal data is handled. With the Poisson model, population data may be specified at one or several time points, such as census years. The population is then assumed to exist between such time points as well, estimated through linear interpolation between census years. With the Bernoulli, space-time permutation, ordinal, exponential and normal models, a time needs to be specified for each case and for the Bernoulli model, for each control as well.

**Related Topics:** *Bernoulli Model, Poisson Model, Space-Time Permutation Model, Likelihood Ratio Test, Methodological Papers.*

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## **Spatial, Temporal and Space-Time Scan Statistics**

### **Spatial Scan Statistic**

The standard purely spatial scan statistic imposes a circular window on the map. The window is in turn centered on each of several possible grid points positioned throughout the study region. For each grid point, the radius of the window varies continuously in size from zero to some upper limit specified by the user. In this way, the circular window is flexible both in location and size. In total, the method creates an infinite number of distinct geographical circles with different sets of neighboring data locations within them. Each circle is a possible candidate cluster.

The user defines the set of grid points used through a grid file. If no grid file is specified, the grid points are set to be identical to the coordinates of the location IDs defined in the coordinates file. The latter option ensures that each data location is a potential cluster in itself, and it is the recommended option for most types of analyses.

As an alternative to the circle, it is also possible to use an elliptic window shape, in which case a set of ellipses with different shapes and angles are used as the scanning window together with the circle. This provides slightly higher power for true clusters that are long and narrow in shape, and slightly lower power for circular and other very compact clusters.

**Related Topics:** *Analysis Tab, Coordinates File, Elliptic Scanning Window, Grid File, Maximum Spatial Cluster Size, Spatial Window Tab.*

## Space-Time Scan Statistic

The space-time scan statistic is defined by a cylindrical window with a circular (or elliptic) geographic base and with height corresponding to time. The base is defined exactly as for the purely spatial scan statistic, while the height reflects the time period of potential clusters. The cylindrical window is then moved in space and time, so that for each possible geographical location and size, it also visits each possible time period. In effect, we obtain an infinite number of overlapping cylinders of different size and shape, jointly covering the entire study region, where each cylinder reflects a possible cluster.

The space-time scan statistic may be used for either a single retrospective analysis, using historic data, or for time-periodic prospective surveillance, where the analysis is repeated for example every day, week, month or year.

**Related Topics:** *Analysis Tab, Spatial Window Tab, Temporal Window Tab.*

## Temporal Scan Statistic

The temporal scan statistic uses a window that moves in one dimension, time, defined in the same way as the height of the cylinder used by the space-time scan statistic. This means that it is flexible in both start and end date. The maximum temporal length is specified on the Temporal Window Tab.

**Related Topics:** *Analysis Tab, Temporal Window Tab. Space-Time Scan Statistic.*

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## Likelihood Ratio Test

For each location and size of the scanning window, the alternative hypothesis is that there is an elevated risk within the window as compared to outside. Under the Poisson assumption, the likelihood function for a specific window is proportional to<sup>1</sup>:

$$\left( \frac{c}{E[c]} \right)^c \left( \frac{C-c}{C-E[c]} \right)^{C-c} I()$$

where C is the total number of cases, c is the observed number of cases within the window and E[c] is the covariate adjusted expected number of cases within the window under the null-hypothesis. Note that since the analysis is conditioned on the total number of cases observed, C-E[c] is the expected number of cases outside the window. I() is an indicator function. When SaTScan is set to scan only for clusters with high rates, I() is equal to 1 when the window has more cases than expected under the null-hypothesis, and 0 otherwise. The opposite is true when SaTScan is set to scan only for clusters with low rates. When the program scans for clusters with either high or low rates, then I()=1 for all windows.

The space-time permutation model uses the same function as the Poisson model. Due to the conditioning on the marginals, the observed number of cases is only approximately Poisson distributed. Hence, it is no longer a formal likelihood ratio test, but it serves the same purpose as the test statistic.

For the Bernoulli model the likelihood function is<sup>1,2</sup>:

$$\left(\frac{c}{n}\right)^c \left(\frac{n-c}{n}\right)^{n-c} \left(\frac{C-c}{N-n}\right)^{C-c} \left(\frac{(N-n)-(C-c)}{N-n}\right)^{(N-n)-(C-c)} I()$$

where  $c$  and  $C$  are defined as above,  $n$  is the total number of cases and controls within the window, while  $N$  is the combined total number of cases and controls in the data set.

The likelihood function for the ordinal, exponential and normal models are more complex, due to the more complex nature of the case data. We refer to papers by Jung, Kulldorff and Klassen<sup>6</sup>; Huang, Kulldorff and Gregorio<sup>7</sup>; and Kulldorff et al<sup>8</sup> for the likelihood functions for these models.

The likelihood function is maximized over all window locations and sizes, and the one with the maximum likelihood constitutes the most likely cluster. This is the cluster that is least likely to have occurred by chance. The likelihood ratio for this window constitutes the maximum likelihood ratio test statistic. Its distribution under the null-hypothesis is obtained by repeating the same analytic exercise on a large number of random replications of the data set generated under the null hypothesis. The p-value is obtained through Monte Carlo hypothesis testing<sup>11</sup>, by comparing the rank of the maximum likelihood from the real data set with the maximum likelihoods from the random data sets. If this rank is  $R$ , then  $p = R / (1 + \text{\#simulation})$ . In order for  $p$  to be a ‘nice looking’ number, the number of simulations is restricted to 999 or some other number ending in 999 such as 1999, 9999 or 99999. That way it is always clear whether to reject or not reject the null hypothesis for typical cut-off values such as 0.05, 0.01 and 0.001.

The SaTScan program scans for areas with high rates (clusters), for areas with low rates, or simultaneously for areas with either high or low rates. The latter should be used rather than running two separate tests for high and low rates respectively, in order to make correct statistical inference. The most common analysis is to scan for areas with high rates, that is, for clusters.

### ***Non-Compactness Penalty Function***

When the elliptic window shape is used, there is an option to use a non-compactness (eccentricity) penalty to favor more compact clusters<sup>10</sup>. The main reason for this is that the elliptic scan statistic will under the null hypothesis typically generate an elliptic most likely cluster since there are more elliptic than circular cluster evaluated. At the same time, the concept of clustering is based on a compactness criterion in the sense that the cases in the cluster should be close to each other, so that we may be more interested in more compact clusters. When the non-compactness penalty is used, the pure likelihood ratio is no longer used as the test statistic. Rather, the test statistic is defined as the log likelihood ratio multiplied with a non-compactness penalty of the form  $[4s/(s+1)^2]^a$ , where  $s$  is the elliptic window shape defined as the ratio of the length of the longest to the shortest axis of the ellipse. For the circle,  $s=1$ . The parameter  $a$  is a penalty tuning parameter. With  $a=0$ , the penalty function is always 1 irrespectively of  $s$ , so that there is never a penalty. When  $a$  goes to infinity, the penalty function goes to 0 for all  $s>1$ , so that only circular clusters are allowed. Other than this, there is no clear intuitive meaning of the penalty tuning parameter  $a$ . In SaTScan, it is possible to use either a strong penalty ( $a=1$ ) or a medium size penalty ( $a=1/2$ ).

**Related Topics:** Batch Mode, Bernoulli Model, Covariate Adjustments, Elliptic Scanning Window, Exponential Model, Monte Carlo Replications, Ordinal Model, Poisson Model, Secondary Clusters, Space-Time Permutation Model, Standard Results File.



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## Secondary Clusters

For purely spatial and space-time analyses, SaTScan also identifies secondary clusters in the data set in addition to the most likely cluster, and orders them according to their likelihood ratio test statistic. There will almost always be a secondary cluster that is almost identical with the most likely cluster and that have almost as high likelihood value, since expanding or reducing the cluster size only marginally will not change the likelihood very much. Most clusters of this type provide little additional information, but their existence means that while it is possible to pinpoint the general location of a cluster, its exact boundaries must remain uncertain.

There may also be secondary clusters that do not overlap with the most likely cluster, and they may be of great interest. The user must decide to what extent overlapping clusters are reported in the results files. The default is that the geographically overlapping clusters are not reported.

For purely temporal analyses, only the most likely cluster is reported.

**Related Topics:** *Adjusting for More Likely Clusters, Likelihood Ratio Test, Clusters Reported Tab, Criteria for Reporting Secondary Clusters, Standard Results File.*

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## Adjusting for More Likely Clusters

When there are multiple clusters in the data set, the secondary clusters are evaluated as if there were no other clusters in the data set. That is, they are statistically significant if and only if they are able to cause a rejection of the null hypothesis on their own strength, whether or not the other clusters are true clusters or not. That is often the desired type of inference. Sometime though, it is also of interest to evaluate secondary clusters after adjusting for other clusters in the data.

As an advanced option, SaTScan is able to adjust the inference of secondary clusters for more likely clusters in the data<sup>18</sup>. This is done in an iterative manner. In the first iteration SaTScan runs the standard analysis but only reports the most likely cluster. That cluster is then removed from the data set, including all cases and controls (Bernoulli model) in the cluster while the population (Poisson model) is set to zero for the locations and the time period defining the cluster. In a second iteration, a completely new analysis is conducted using the remaining data. This procedure is then repeated until there are no more clusters with a p-value less than a user specified maxima or until a user specified maximum number of iterations have been completed, whichever comes first.

For purely spatial analyses it has been shown that the resulting p-values for secondary clusters are quite accurate and at most marginally biased.

**Related Topics:** *Clusters Reported Tab, Criteria for Reporting Secondary Clusters, Iterative Scan, Likelihood Ratio Test, Secondary Clusters, Standard Results File.*

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## Covariate Adjustments

A covariate should be adjusted for when all three of the following are true:

- The covariate is related to the disease in question.

- The covariate is not randomly distributed geographically.
- You want to find clusters that cannot be explained by that covariate.

Here are three examples:

- If you are studying cancer mortality in the United States, you should adjust for age since (i) older people are more likely to die from cancer (ii) some areas such as Florida have a higher percent older people, and (iii) you are presumably interested in finding areas where the risk of cancer is high as opposed to areas with an older population.
- If you are interested in the geographical distribution of birth defects, you can but do not need to adjust for gender. While birth defects are not equally likely in boys and girls, the geographical distribution of the two genders is geographically random at time of birth.
- If you are studying the geography of lung cancer incidence, you should adjust for smoking if you are interested in finding clusters due to non-smoking related risk factors, but you should not adjust for smoking if you are interested in finding clusters reflecting areas with especially urgent needs to launch an anti-smoking campaign.

When the disease rate varies, for example, with age, and the age distribution varies in different areas, then there is geographical clustering of the disease simply due to the age covariate. When adjusting for categorical covariates, the SaTScan program will search for clusters above and beyond that which is expected due to these covariates. When more than one covariate is specified, each one is adjusted for as well as all the interaction terms between them.

**Related Topics:** *Covariate Adjustment Using the Input Files, Covariate Adjustment using Statistical Regression Software, Covariate Adjustment Using Multiple Data Sets, Methodological Papers.*

## Covariate Adjustment Using the Input Files

With the Poisson and space-time permutation models, it is possible to adjust for multiple categorical covariates by specifying the covariates in the input files. To do so, simply enter the covariates as extra columns in the case file (all models) and the population file (Poisson model). There is no need to enter any information on any of the window tabs.

For the Poisson model, the expected number of cases in each area under the null-hypothesis is calculated using indirect standardization. Without covariate adjustment the expected number of cases in a location is (spatial analysis):

$$E[c] = p * C / P$$

where  $c$  is the observed number of cases and  $p$  the population in the location of interest, while  $C$  and  $P$  are the total number of cases and population respectively. Let  $c_i$ ,  $p_i$ ,  $C_i$  and  $P_i$  be defined in the same way, but for covariate category  $i$ . The indirectly standardized covariate adjusted expected number of cases (spatial analysis) is:

$$E[c] = \sum_i E[c_i] = \sum_i p_i * C_i / P_i$$

The same principle is used when calculating the covariate adjusted number of cases for the space-time scan statistic, although the formula is more complex due to the added time dimension.

Since the space-time permutation model automatically adjusts for purely spatial and purely temporal variation, there is no need to adjust for covariates in order to account for different spatial or temporal densities of these covariates. For example, there is no need to adjust for age simply because some places have a higher proportion of old people than other. Rather, covariate adjustment is used if there is space-time interaction due to this covariate rather than to the underlying disease process. For example, if children get sick mostly in the summer and adults mostly in the winter, then there will be age generated space-time interaction clusters in areas with many children in the summer and vice versa. When including child/adult as a covariate, these clusters are adjusted away.

**Note:** Too many covariate categories can create problems. For the space-time permutation model, the adjustment is made at the randomization stage, so that each covariate category is randomized independently. If there are too many covariate categories, so that all or most cases in a category belong to the same spatial location or the same aggregated time interval, then there is very little to randomize, and the test becomes meaningless.

**Related Topics:** *Covariate Adjustments, Covariate Adjustment using Statistical Regression Software, Covariate Adjustment Using Multiple Data Sets, Methodological Papers, Poisson Model, Space-Time Permutation Model, Case File, Population File.*

## Covariate Adjustment Using Statistical Regression Software

SaTScan cannot in itself do an adjustment for continuous covariates. Such adjustments can still be done for the Poisson model<sup>15,16</sup>, but it is a little more complex. The first step is to calculate the covariate adjusted expected number of cases for each location ID and time using a standard statistical regression software package like SAS. These expected numbers should then replace the raw population numbers in the population file, while not including the covariates themselves.

The use of external regression software is also an excellent way to adjust for covariates in the exponential model<sup>7</sup>. The first step is to fit an exponential regression model without any spatial information, in order to obtain risk estimates for each of the covariates. The second step is to adjust the survival and censoring time up or down for each individual based on the risk estimates his or her covariates.

For the normal model, covariates can be adjusted for by first performing a linear regression model using standard statistical software, and then replacing the observed value with their residuals.

**Related Topics:** *Covariate Adjustments, Covariate Adjustment Using the Input Files, Covariate Adjustment Using Multiple Data Sets, Exponential Model, Methodological Papers, Poisson Model, Population File.*

## Covariate Adjustment Using Multiple Data Sets

It is also possible to adjust for categorical covariates using multiple data sets<sup>9</sup>. The cases and controls/population are then divided into categories, and a separate data set is used for each category. This type of covariate adjustment is computationally much slower than the one using the input files, and is not recommended for large data sets. One advantage is that it can be used to adjust the ordinal model for covariates, for which other adjustment procedures are unavailable. A disadvantage is that since the

maximum number of data sets allowed by SaTScan is twelve, the maximum number of covariate categories is also twelve.

The adjustment approach to multiple data sets is as follows (when searching for clusters with high rates):

1. For each window location and size, the log likelihood ratio is calculated for each data set.
2. The log likelihood ratio for all data sets with less than expected number of cases in the window is multiplied with negative one.
3. The log likelihood ratios are then summed up, and this sum is the combined log likelihood for that particular window.
4. The maximum of all the combined log likelihood ratios, taken over all the window locations and sizes, constitutes the most likely cluster, and this is evaluated in the same way as for a single data set.

When searching for clusters with low rates, the same procedure is performed, except that it is then the data sets with more than expected cases that we multiply by one. When searching for both high and low clusters, both sums are calculated, and the maximum of the two is used to represent the log likelihood ratio for that window.

**Related Topics:** *Multiple Data Sets Tab, Covariate Adjustment, Covariate Adjustment Using the Input Files, Covariate Adjustment using Statistical Regression Software, Methodological Papers, Bernoulli Model.*

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## Spatial and Temporal Adjustments

### Adjusting for Temporal Trends

If there is an increasing temporal trend in the data, then the temporal and space-time scan statistics will pick up that trend by assigning a cluster during the end of the study period. If there is a decreasing trend, it will instead pick up a cluster at the beginning of the time period. Sometimes it is of interest to test whether there are temporal and/or space-time clusters after adjusting for a temporal trend.

For the space-time permutation model, the analysis is automatically adjusted for both temporal trends and temporal clusters, and no further adjustments are needed. For the Poisson model, the user can specify whether a temporal adjustment should be made, and if so, whether to adjust with a percent change or non-parametrically.

Sometimes, the best way to adjust for a temporal trend is by specifying the percent yearly increase or decrease in the rate that is to be adjusted for. This is a log linear adjustment. Depending on the application, one may adjust either for a trend that SaTScan estimates from the data being analyzed, or from the trend as estimated from national or other similar data. In the latter case, the percent increase or decrease must be calculated using standard statistical regression software such as SAS or S-plus, and then inserted on the Risk Adjustments Tab.

For space-time analyses, it is also possible to adjust for a temporal trend non-parametrically. This adjusts the expected count separately for each aggregated time interval, removing all purely temporal clusters. The randomization is then stratified by time interval to ensure that each time interval has the same number of events in the real and random data sets.

The ability to adjust for temporal trends is much more limited for the Bernoulli, ordinal and exponential models, as none of the above features can be used. Instead, the time must be divided into discrete time periods, with the cases and controls in each period corresponding to a separate data set with separate case and control files. The analysis is then done using multiple data sets.

**Related Topics:** *Spatial and Temporal Adjustments Tab, Time Aggregation, Poisson Model.*

## Adjusting for Purely Spatial Clusters

In a space-time analysis with the Poisson model, it is also possible to adjust for purely spatial clusters, in a non-parametric fashion. This adjusts the expected count separately for each location, removing all purely spatial clusters. The randomization is then stratified by location ID to ensure that each location has the same number of events in the real and random data sets.

This option is not available for the Bernoulli, ordinal, exponential or space-time permutation models, in the latter case because the method automatically adjusts for any purely spatial clusters.

**Note:** It is not possible to simultaneously adjust for spatial clusters and purely temporal clusters using stratified randomization, and if both types of adjustments are desired, the space-time permutation model should be used instead.

**Related Topics:** *Spatial and Temporal Adjustments Tab, Poisson Model, Adjusting for Temporal Trends.*

## Adjusting for Known Relative Risks

Sometimes it is known a priori that a particular location and/or time has a higher or lower risk of known magnitude, and we want to detect clusters above and beyond this, or in other words, we want to adjust for this known excess/lower risk. One way to do this is to simply change the population at risk numbers in the population file. A simpler way is to use the adjustments file. In this file, a relative risk is specified for any location and time period combination. The expected counts are then multiplied by this relative risk for that location and time. For example, if it is known from historical data that a particular location typically have 50 percent more cases during the summer months June to August, then for each year one would specify a relative risk of 1.5 for this location and these months. A summer cluster will then only appear in this location if the excess risk is more than 50 percent.

This option is only available for the Poisson model.

**Related Topics:** *Adjustments File, Spatial and Temporal Adjustments Tab, Time Aggregation, Poisson Model, Missing Data*

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## Missing Data

If there is missing data for some locations and times, it is important to adjust for that in the analysis. If not, you may find statistically significant low rate clusters where there is missing data, or statistically significant high rate clusters in other locations, even though these are simply artifacts of the missing data.

### ***Bernoulli Model***

To adjust a Bernoulli model analysis for missing data, do the following. If cases are missing for a particular location and time period remove the controls for that same location and time. Likewise, if controls are missing for a particular location and time, remove the cases for that same location and time. This needs to be done before providing the data to SaTScan. If both cases and controls are missing for a location and time, you are fine, and there is no need for any modification of the input data.

### ***Ordinal Model***

To adjust an ordinal model analysis for missing data, do the following. If one or more categories are missing for a particular location and time period, remove all cases in the remaining categories from that same location and time. This needs to be done before providing the data to SaTScan. If all cases in all categories are missing for a location and time, you are fine, and there is no need for any modification of the input data.

### ***Poisson Model***

To adjust the Poisson model for missing data, use the adjustments file to define the location and time combinations for which the data is missing, and assign a relative risk of zero to those location/time combinations.

### ***Space-Time Permutation Model***

It is a little more complex to adjust for missing data in the space-time permutation model, but still possible<sup>5</sup>. First add day-of-week as a covariate in the analysis file. When a particular location / time period is missing, then for that location, remove all data for the days of the week for which any data is missing. For example, if data from Thursday 10/23 and Friday 10/24 are missing for zip-code area A and data from Saturday 10/25 are missing from area B, remove data from all Thursdays and Fridays for area A and data from all Saturdays from area B, while retaining all data from Saturdays through Wednesdays for area A and all data except Saturdays from area B. For all other zip code areas, retain all data for all days. Note that, in addition to adjusting for the missing data, this approach will also adjust for any day-of-week by spatial interaction effects.

The same approach can be used with other categorization of the data, as long as the categorizations is in some time-periodic unit that occur several times and is evenly spread out over the study period. For example, it is okay to categorize into months if the study period spans several years, but not if you only have one years worth of data.

Two more crude approaches to deal with missing data in the space-time permutation model is to remove all data for a particular location if some data are missing for that location or to remove all data for a particular time period for dates on which there is missing data in any location. The latter is especially useful in prospective surveillance for missing data during the beginning of the study period, to avoid removing recent data that are the most important for the early detection of disease outbreaks.

**Note:** When there are location/time combinations with missing data, either remove the whole row from the case file or assign zero cases to that location/time combination. If you only remove the number of cases, but retain the location ID and time information, there will be a file reading error.

**Warning:** The adjustment for missing data only works if the locations and times for which the data is missing is independent of the number of cases in that location and time. For example, if data is missing for all locations with less than five observed cases, the adjustment procedures described above will not work properly.

**Related Topics:** *Adjustments File, Adjusting for Known Relative Risks, Bernoulli Model, Ordinal Model, Poisson Model, Space-Time Permutation Model, Spatial and Temporal Adjustments Tab, Time Aggregation*

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## Multivariate Scan with Multiple Data Sets

Sometimes it is interesting to simultaneously search for and evaluate clusters in more than one data set. For example, one may be interested in spatial clusters with excess incidence of leukemia only, of lymphoma only or of both simultaneously. As another example, one may be interested in detecting a gastrointestinal disease outbreak that effect children only, adults only or both simultaneously. If SaTScan is used to analyze one single combined data set, one may miss a cluster that is only present in one of the subgroups. On the other hand, if two SaTScan analyses are performed, one for each data set, there is a loss of power if the true cluster is about equally strong in both data sets. A SaTScan analysis with multiple data sets and the multivariate scan option solves this problem.

The multivariate scan statistic with multiple data sets works as follows<sup>9</sup> (when searching for clusters with high rates):

1. For each window location and size, the log likelihood ratio is calculated for each data set.
2. The log likelihood ratios for the data sets with more than expected number of cases is summed up, and this sum is the likelihood for that particular window.
3. The maximum of all the summed log likelihood ratios, taken over all the window locations and sizes, constitutes the most likely cluster, and this is evaluated in the same way as for a single data set.

When searching for clusters with low rates, the same procedure is performed, except that we instead sum up the log likelihood ratios of the data sets with fewer than expected number of cases within the window in question. When searching for both high and low clusters, both sums are calculated, and the maximum of the two is used to represent the log likelihood ratio for that window.

**Note:** All data sets must use the same probability model and the same geographical coordinates file.

**Related Topics:** *Multiple Data Sets Tab, Covariate Adjustment Using Multiple Data Sets, Coordinates File.*

# Comparison with Other Methods

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## Scan Statistics

Scan statistics were first studied in detail by Joseph Naus<sup>163</sup>. A major challenge with scan statistics is to find analytical results concerning the probabilities of observing a cluster of a specific magnitude and there is a beautiful collection of subsequent mathematical theory obtaining approximations and bounds for these probabilities under a variety of settings. Excellent reviews of this theory have been provided by Glaz and Balakrishnan<sup>153</sup>; and Glaz, Naus and Wallenstein<sup>154</sup>. Two common features for most of this work are: (i) they use a fixed size scanning window, and (ii) they deal with count data where under the null hypothesis, the observed number of cases follow a uniform distribution in either a continuous or discrete setting, so that the expected number of cases in an area is proportional to the size of that area.

In disease surveillance, neither of these assumptions is met, since we do not know the size of a cluster a priori and since the population at risk is geographically inhomogeneous. Under the null hypothesis of equal disease risk one expects to see more disease cases in a city compared to a similar sized area in the country side, just because of the higher population density in the city. The scan statistics in the SaTScan software were developed to resolve these two problems. Since no analytical solutions have been found to obtain the probabilities under these more complex settings, Monte Carlo hypothesis testing is instead used to obtain the p-values<sup>11</sup>.

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## Spatial and Space-Time Clustering

### *Descriptive Cluster Detection Methods*

In 1987, Openshaw et al.<sup>164</sup> developed a Geographical Analysis Machine (GAM) that uses overlapping circles of different sizes in the same way as the spatial scan statistic, except that the circle size does not vary continuously. With the GAM, a separate significance test is made for each circle, leading to multiple testing, and in almost any data set there will be a multitude of 'significant clusters' when defined in this way. This is because under the null hypothesis, each circle has a 0.05 probability of being 'significant' at the 0.05 level, and with 20,000 circles we would expect 1,000 'significant' clusters under the null-hypothesis of no clusters. GAM is hence very useful for descriptive purposes, but should not be used for hypothesis testing.

Another nice method for descriptive cluster detection was proposed by Rushton and Lolonis<sup>166</sup>, who used p-value contour maps to depict the clusters rather than overlapping circles. As with GAM, it does not adjust for the multiple testing inherent in the many potential cluster locations evaluated.

### *Cluster Detection Tests*

The spatial scan statistic is a cluster detection test. A cluster detection test is able to both detect the location of clusters and evaluate their statistical significance without problems with multiple testing. In 1990, Turnbull et al.<sup>170</sup> proposed the first such test using overlapping circles with fixed population size, assigning the circle with the most cases as the detected cluster.



The spatial scan statistic was in part inspired by the work of Openshaw et al.<sup>164</sup> and Turnbull et al.<sup>170</sup>. By applying a likelihood ratio test, it was possible to evaluate clusters of different sizes (as Openshaw et al. did) while at the same time adjusting for the multiple testing (as Turnbull et al. did).

In a power comparison<sup>2</sup>, it was shown that Turnbull's method has higher power if the true cluster size is within about 20 percent of what is specified by that method, while the spatial scan statistic has higher power otherwise. Note that the cluster size in Turnbull's method must be specified before looking at the data, or the procedure is invalid.

### ***Focused Cluster Tests***

Focused tests should be used when there is a priori knowledge about the location of the hypothesized cluster. For example, a cluster around a toxic waste site in one country may spur an investigation about clusters around a similar toxic waste site in another country. The spatial scan statistic or other cluster detection tests should then not be used, as they will have low power due to the evaluation of all possible locations even though the hypothesized location is already known. Examples of focused tests are Stone's Test<sup>167</sup>, Lawson-Waller's Score Test<sup>160,171</sup> and Bithell's Test<sup>149</sup>.

Focused tests should never be used when the foci were defined using the data itself. This would lead to pre-selection bias and the resulting p-values would be incorrect. It is then better to use the spatial scan statistic. If on the other hand, the point source was defined without looking at the data, then it is better to use the focused test rather than the spatial scan statistic, as the former will have higher power as it focuses on the location of interest.

In addition to various scan statistics, the SaTScan software can also be used to do a focused test in order to evaluate whether there is a disease cluster around a pre-determined focus (ref. 2, p809). This is done by using a grid file with only a single grid point reflecting the coordinates of the focus of interest.

### ***Global Clustering Tests***

Most proposed tests for spatial clustering are tests for global clustering. These include among many others the methods proposed by Alt and Vach<sup>146</sup>, Besag and Newell<sup>148</sup>, Cuzick and Edwards<sup>150</sup>, Diggle and Chetwynd<sup>151</sup>, Grimson<sup>155</sup>, Moran<sup>162</sup>, Ranta<sup>165</sup>, Tango<sup>168,169</sup>, Walter<sup>172</sup> and Whittemore et al.<sup>173</sup>. These methods test for clustering throughout the study region without the ability to pinpoint the location of specific clusters. As such, these tests and the spatial scan statistic complement each other, since they are useful for different purposes.

### ***Global Space-Time Interaction Tests***

Knox<sup>157</sup>, Mantel<sup>161</sup>, Diggle et al.<sup>152</sup>, Jacquez<sup>156</sup>, Baker<sup>147</sup>, and Kulldorff and Hjalmarsson<sup>159</sup>, have proposed different tests for space-time interaction. Like the space-time permutation<sup>5</sup> version of the space-time scan statistic, these methods are designed to evaluate whether cases that are close in space are also close in time and vice-versa, adjusting for any purely spatial or purely temporal clustering. Being global in nature, these other tests are useful when testing to see if there is clustering throughout the study region and time period, and the preferred method when for example trying to determine whether a disease is infectious. Unlike the space-time permutation based scan statistic though, they are unable to detect the location and size of clusters and to test the significance of those clusters.

**Related Topics:** *Likelihood Ratio Test, SaTScan Methodology Papers*

# Input Data

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## Data Requirements

**Required Files:** The input data should be provided in at least two different files: a case file and a coordinates file. The Poisson model also requires a population file while the Bernoulli model requires a control file.

**Optional Files:** One may also specify an optional special grid file that contains geographical coordinates of the centroids defining the circles used by the scan statistic. If such a file is not specified, the coordinates in the coordinate file will be used for that purpose. As part of the advanced features, there is also an optional max circle size file and an optional adjustments file.

**File Format:** The data input files must be in SaTScan ASCII file format or you may use the SaTScan import wizard for dBase, comma delimited or space delimited files. Using such files, the wizard will automatically generate SaTScan file format files. Both options are described below.

**Spatial Resolution:** Separate data locations may be specified for individuals or data may be aggregated for states, provinces, counties, parishes, census tracts, postal code areas, school districts, households, etc.

**Temporal Information:** To do a temporal or a space-time analysis, it is necessary to have a time related to each case, and if the Bernoulli model is used, for each control as well. This time can be specified as a day, month or year. When the Poisson model is used the background denominator population is assumed to exist continuously over time, although not necessarily at a constant level. The population file requires a date to be specified for each population count. For times in-between those dates, SaTScan will estimate the population through linear interpolation. If all population counts have the same date, the population is assumed to be constant over time.

**Multiple Data Sets:** It is possible to specify multiple case files, each representing a different data set, with information about different diseases or about men versus women respectively. For the Bernoulli model, each case file must be accompanied with its own control file, and for the Poisson model, each case file must be accompanied with its own population file. The maximum number of data sets that SaTScan can analyze is twelve.

**Covariate Adjustments:** With the Poisson and space-time permutation models, it is possible to adjust for multiple categorical covariates by including them in the case and population files. For the Bernoulli, ordinal or exponential models, covariates can be adjusted for using multiple data sets.

**Related Topics:** *Input Tab, Multiple Data Sets Tab, Case File, Control File, Population File, Coordinates File, Grid File, SaTScan Import Wizard, SaTScan ASCII File Format, Covariate Adjustments.*

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## Case File

The case file provides information about cases. It should contain the following information:

**location id:** Any numerical value or string of characters. Empty spaces may not form part of the id.

**#cases:** The number of cases for the specified location, time and covariates.

**time:** Optional. May be specified in years, months or days. All case times must fall within the study period as specified on the Input Tab.

**attribute:** A variable describing some characteristic of the case. These may be covariates (Poisson and space-time permutation models), category (ordinal model), survival time (exponential model), censored (exponential model) or a continuous variable value (normal model). The covariates are optional variables, and any number of categorical covariates may be specified as either numbers or through characters. The categories for the ordinal model can be specified as any positive or negative numerical value. The survival times must be positive numbers. Censored is a 0/1 variable with censored=1 and uncensored=0.

**Example:** If on April 1, 2004 there were 17 male and 12 female cases in New York, the following information would be provided:

```
NewYork 12 2004/4/1 Female
```

```
NewYork 17 2004/4/1 Male
```

**Note:** Multiple lines may be used for different cases with the same location, time and attributes. SaTScan will automatically add them.

**Related Topics:** *Input Tab, Case File Name, Multiple Data Sets Tab, Covariate Adjustment Using Input Files, SaTScan Import Wizard, SaTScan ASCII File Format.*

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## Control File

The control file is only used with the Bernoulli model. It should contain the following information:

**location id:** Any numerical value or string of characters. Empty spaces may not form part of the id.

**#controls:** The number of controls for the specified location and time.

**time:** Optional. Time may be specified in years, months or days. All control times must fall within the study period as specified on the Analysis tab. The format of the times must be the same as in the case file.

**Note:** Multiple lines may be used for different controls with the same location, time and attributes. SaTScan will automatically add them.

**Related Topics:** *Input Tab, Control File Name, Multiple Data Sets Tab, SaTScan Import Wizard, SaTScan ASCII File Format.*

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## Population File

The population file is used for the Poisson model, providing information about the background population at risk. This may be actual population count from a census, or it could be for example covariate adjusted expected counts from a statistical regression model. It should contain the following information:

**location id:** Any numerical value or string of characters. Empty spaces may not form part of the id.

**time:** The time to which the population size refers. May be specified in years, months or days. If the population time is unknown but identical for all population numbers, then a dummy year must be given, the choice not affecting result.

**population:** Population size for a particular location, year and covariate combination. If the population size is zero for a particular location, year, and set of covariates, then it should be included in the population file specified as zero. The population can be specified as a decimal number to reflect a population size at risk rather than an actual number of people.

**covariates:** Optional. Any number of categorical covariates may be specified, each represented by a different column separated by empty spaces. May be specified numerically or through characters. The covariates must be the same as in the case file.

**Example:** If age and sex are the covariates included, with 18 different age groups, then there should be  $18 \times 2 = 36$  rows for each year and census area. With 3 different census years, and 32 census areas, the file will have a total of 3456 rows and 5 columns.

**Note:** Multiple lines may be used for different population groups with the same location, time and covariate attributes. SaTScan will automatically add them.

**Note:** For a purely temporal analysis with the Poisson model, it is not necessary to specify a population file if the population is constant over time.

**Related Topics:** *Input Tab, Population File Name, Multiple Data Sets Tab, Covariate Adjustment Using Input Files, Max Circle Size File, SaTScan Import Wizard, SaTScan ASCII File Format.*

---

## Coordinates File

The coordinates file provides the geographic coordinates for each location ID. Each line of the file represents one geographical location. Area-based information may be aggregated and represented by one single geographical point location. Coordinates may be specified either using the standard Cartesian coordinate system or in latitude and longitude. If two different location IDs have exactly the same coordinates, then the data for the two are combined and treated as a single location.

A coordinates file is not needed for purely temporal analyses.

**Related Topics:** *Input Tab, Coordinates File Name, Coordinates, Cartesian Coordinates, Latitude and Longitude, Grid File.*

## Cartesian Coordinates

Cartesian is the mathematical name for the regular planar x,y-coordinate system taught in high school. These may be specified in two, three or any number of dimensions. The SaTScan program will automatically read the number of dimensions, which must be the same for all coordinates. If Cartesian coordinates are used, the coordinates file should contain the following information:

**location id:** Any numerical value or string of characters. Empty spaces may not form part of the id.

**coordinates:** The coordinates must all be specified in the same units. There is no upper limit on the number of dimensions.

**x and y-coordinates:** Required

**z1-zN coordinates:** Optional

**Note:** If you have more than 10 dimensions you cannot use the SaTScan Import Wizard for the coordinates and grid files, but must specify them using the SaTScan ASCII file format.

**Related Topics:** *Input Tab, Coordinates, Latitude and Longitude, Coordinates File, Grid File, SaTScan Import Wizard, SaTScan ASCII File Format.*

## Latitude and Longitude

Latitudes and longitudes should be entered as decimal number of degrees. Latitude represents the north/south distance from the equator, and locations south of the equator should be entered as negative numbers. Longitude represents the east/west distance from the Prime Meridian (Greenwich, England), and locations west of the Prime Meridian should be entered as negative numbers. For example, the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, which is located at 39.00 degrees north and 77.10 degrees west, should be reported as 39.00 and -77.10 respectively.

Latitudes and longitudes can, for the purpose of this program, not be specified in degrees, minutes and seconds. Such latitudes and longitudes can easily be converted into decimal numbers of degrees (DND) by the simple formula:  $DND = \text{degrees} + \text{minutes}/60 + \text{seconds}/3600$ .

If latitude/longitude coordinates are used, the coordinates file should contain the following information:

**location id:** Any numerical value or string of characters. Empty spaces may not form part of the id.

**latitude:** Latitude in decimal number of degrees.

**longitude:** Longitude in decimal number of degrees.

**Note:** When coordinates are specified in latitudes and longitudes, SaTScan does not perform a projection of these coordinates onto a planar space. Rather, SaTScan draws perfect circles on the surface of the spherical earth.

**Related Topics:** *Input Tab, Coordinates File, Coordinates, Cartesian Coordinates, Latitude and Longitude, Grid File, SaTScan Import Wizard, SaTScan ASCII File Format, Computing Time.*

---

## Grid File

The optional grid file defines the centroids of the circles used by the scan statistic. If no grid file is specified, the coordinates given in the coordinates file are used for this purpose. Each line in the file represents one circle centroid. There should be at least two variables representing Cartesian (standard) x,y-coordinates or exactly two variables representing latitude and longitude. The choice between Cartesian and latitude/longitude must coincide with the coordinates file, as must the number of dimensions.

**Related Topics:** *Input Tab, Grid File Name, Coordinates, Cartesian Coordinates, Latitude and Longitude, Coordinates File, SaTScan Import Wizard, SaTScan ASCII File Format, Computing Time.*

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## Neighbors File

This is an optional file. It cannot be defined using the SaTScan Import Wizard, but has to be specified using the ASCII file format. With this option, the coordinates and grid files are not needed, and ignored if provided.

With the standard parameter settings, SaTScan uses the coordinates file to determine which locations are closest to the center of each circle constructed. This is done using Euclidean distances. In essence, for each centroid SaTScan finds the closest neighbor, the second closest, and so on, until it reaches the maximum window size. With the neighbors file, it is possible for the user to specify these neighbor relations in any way without being constrained to Euclidean distances. For example, the neighbors may be sorted according to distance along a subway network or a water distribution system.

The first column of this file contains the location IDs defining the centroids of the scanning window. The subsequent entries on each row are then the centroids neighbors in order of closeness. The scanning window will expand in size until there are no more neighbors provided for that row. That means that this file also defines the maximum window size. It is allowed to have multiple rows for the same location ID centroid, each with a different set of closest neighbors.

**Related Topics:** *Coordinates File, Input Tab, Non-Euclidean Neighbors Tab, SaTScan ASCII File Format.*

---

## Max Circle Size File

This optional file is used to determine the maximum circle size of the scanning window, when the maximum is defined as a percentage of the ‘population’. Normally, the percentage is based on the population in the population file, but by using the max circle size file, a different ‘population’ can be specified for this purpose. One important reason for using the max circle size file is for prospective space-time analyses, where the regular population file may change over time, but one wants to evaluate the same set of geographical circles each time. This is critical in order to properly adjust the prospective space-time scan statistic for earlier analyses. It can also be used for other purposes.

The file should contain one line for each location, with the following information:

**location id:** Any numerical value or string of characters. Empty spaces may not form part of the id.

**‘population’:** Any non-negative number.

The name of the special max circle size file is specified on the Analysis Tab → Advanced Features → Spatial Window Tab.

**Note:** If a location ID is missing from this file, the population is assumed to be zero. If a location ID occurs more than once, the population numbers will be added.

**Related Topics:** *Input Tab, Population File, Spatial Window Tab, SaTScan Import Wizard, SaTScan ASCII File Format.*

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## Adjustments File

The adjustments file can be used to adjust a Poisson model analysis for any temporal, spatial and space-time anomalies in the data, with a known relative risk. It can for example be used to adjust for missing or partially missing data. (Note: Covariates are adjusted for by using the case and population files or by analyzing multiple data sets, not with this file). The adjustments file should contain one or more lines for each location for which adjustments are warranted, with the following information:

**location id:** Any numerical value or string of characters. Empty spaces may not form part of the id. Alternatively, it is possible to specify ‘All’, in which all location will be adjusted with the same relative risk.

**relative risk:** Any non-negative number. The relative risk representing how much more common disease is in this location and time period compared to the baseline. Setting a value of one is equivalent of not doing any adjustments. A value of greater than one is used to adjust for an increased risk and a value of less than one to adjust for lower risk. A relative risk of zero is used to adjust for missing data for that particular time and location.

**start time:** Optional. The start of the time period to be adjusted using this relative risk.

**end time:** Optional. The end of the time period to be adjusted using this relative risk.

If no start and end times are given, the whole study period will be adjusted for that location. If ‘All’ is selected instead of a location ID, but no start or end times are given, that has the same effect as when no adjustments are done.

The name of the adjustments file is specified on the Analysis Tab → Advanced Features → Risk Adjustments.


**Note:** Assigning a relative risk of x to half the locations is equivalent to assigning a relative risk of 1/x to the other half. Assigning the same relative risk to all locations and time periods has the same effect as not adjusting at all.

**Note:** It is permissible to adjust the same location and time periods multiple times, through different rows with different relative risks. SaTScan will simply multiply the relative risks. For example, if you adjust location A with a relative risk of 2 for all time periods, and you adjust 1990 with a relative risk of 2 for all locations, then the 1990 entry for location A will be adjusted with a relative risk of  $2 \times 2 = 4$ .

**Related Topics:** *Adjustments with Known Relative Risk, Missing Data, Spatial and Temporal Adjustments Tab, SaTScan Import Wizard, SaTScan ASCII File Format.*

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## SaTScan Import Wizard

The SaTScan Import Wizard can be used to import dBase, comma-delimited, or space-delimited files. It works for all import files except the optional Neighbors File. Launch the Import Wizard by clicking on the File Import  button to the right of the text field for the file that you want to import. Use the **Next** and **Previous** buttons to navigate between the dialogs. Follow the steps below to import files.

### **Step 1 – Selecting the Source File**

1. At the bottom of the Select Source File dialog, select the file type extension you are looking for. If you are unsure, select the All Files option.
2. Browse the folders and highlight the file you want to open. It will appear in the File Name text field.
3. Click on Open. The SaTScan Import Wizard will now appear.

### **Step 2: Specifying the File Format**

If you are importing a dBase file, this step is automatically skipped. For all other source files, you need to specify the file structure using the File Format dialog box.

1. First specify whether you have a character delimited or fixed column file format, using the radio buttons under the **Source File Type** heading.
2. If there are extraneous lines in the beginning of the file, type the number lines that you would like to ignore in the text field in the upper right corner.
3. If you have a character delimited file, use the scrolling menus to select the field separator to be either a comma, a semicolon or white space.
4. If you have a fixed column file, define the fields using the Field Information box. For each field type the name, the start column, and the length (maximum number of characters) into the appropriate spaces. Click on the **Add** button to add another field. The information will appear in the panel on the right. Continue adding fields until you have the appropriate number. To change the information in the right panel, highlight the line you want to change. The information will appear in the **Field Information** box. Edit the information and click on the **Update** button when you are done. The updated information will appear in the right panel.
5. Click on **Next** to proceed to the next dialog box.

### **Step 3: Matching Source File Variables with SaTScan Variables**

The top grid in this dialog box links the SaTScan variables with the input file variables from the source file. The bottom grid displays sample data from the chosen input file.



1. If there are headers in your file, click the checkbox in the lower left corner.
2. To match the variables, click on one of the places where it says `unassigned`.
3. Select the appropriate variable from the input file to go with the chosen SaTScan variable.
4. When all the required and optional variables that you selected have been matched, click on the Execute button to import the file. This will create a temporary file in SaTScan ASCII file format.
5. If the input file has headings that are exactly the same as the SaTScan variable names, you can click on the Auto Align button to match these automatically.

When importing the case file, the variables to match varies depending on the probability model used. By selecting the probability model at the top of the import wizard will only display the variables relevant to that model.

#### **Step 4: Saving the Imported File**

The imported file, which is in SaTScan ASCII file format, must be saved at least temporarily. The default is to save it to the TEMP directory and after the analysis is completed you may erase the file. You can also save it to some other directory of your choice and use it for future analyses without having to recreate it by using the Import Wizard again.

**Related Topics:** *Input Tab, Case File, Control File, Population File, Coordinates File, Grid File, Max Circle Size File, Adjustments File.*

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## **SaTScan ASCII File Format**

As an alternative to using the SaTScan Import Wizard, it is also possible to directly write the name of the input files in the text fields provided on the Input Tab, or to browse the file directories for the desired input files using the button to the right of that box. The files must then be in SaTScan file format, which are space delimited ASCII files with one row for each location/covariate combination and with columns as defined below. Such files can be created using any text editor and most spreadsheets. The order of the columns in the file is very important, but the rows can be in any order. The optional variables, defined above, are optional columns in the SaTScan file format.

Case File Format (\*.cas):

**<location id> <#cases> <time> <attribute#1> ... <attribute#N>**

The number of attributes and their meaning depends on the probability model, as shown in Table 1.

Probability Model	attribute#1	attribute#2	attribute#N
Poisson	covariate#1	covariate#2	covariate#N
Bernoulli	not used	not used	not used
Space-Time Permutation	covariate#1	covariate#2	covariate#N
Ordinal	category	not used	not used

Exponential	survival time	censored	not used
Normal	continuous variable	not used	not used

Table 1: Attributes used for different probability models.

Control File Format (\*.ctl):

**<location ID> <#controls> <time>**

Population File Format (\*.pop):

**<location ID> <time> <population> <covariate#1> ... <covariate#N>**

Coordinates File Formats (\*.geo):

**<location ID> <latitude> <longitude> OR**

**<location ID> <x-coordinate> <y-coordinate> <z1-coordinate> ... <zN-coordinate>**

Special Grid File Formats (\*.grd):

**<latitude> <longitude> OR**

**<x-coordinate> <y-coordinate> <z1-coordinate> ... <zN-coordinate>**

Neighbors File Format (\*.nbr):

**<location ID> <location ID of closest neighbor> <location ID of 2<sup>nd</sup> closest neighbor> etc**

Special Max Circle Size File Format (\*.max):

**<location ID> <'population'>**

Adjustment File Format (\*.adj):

**<location ID> <relative risk> <start time> <end time>**

## ***Time Formats***

Times must be entered in a specific format. The valid formats are:

2003  
2003/10, 2003/10/24  
2003-10, 2003-10-24  
10/2003, 10/24/2003  
10-2003, 10-24-2003

Single digit days and months may be specified with one or two digits. For example, September 9, 2002, can be written as 2002/9/9, 2002/09/09, 2002/09/9, 2002/9/09, 2002-9-9, etc.

**Note:** SaTScan v7.0 also support a couple of other time formats used in earlier versions, but they are no longer recommended.

**Related Topics:** *Input Tab, Case File, Control File, Population File, Coordinates File, Grid File, Max Circle Size File, Neighbors File, Adjustments File, SaTScan Import Wizard.*

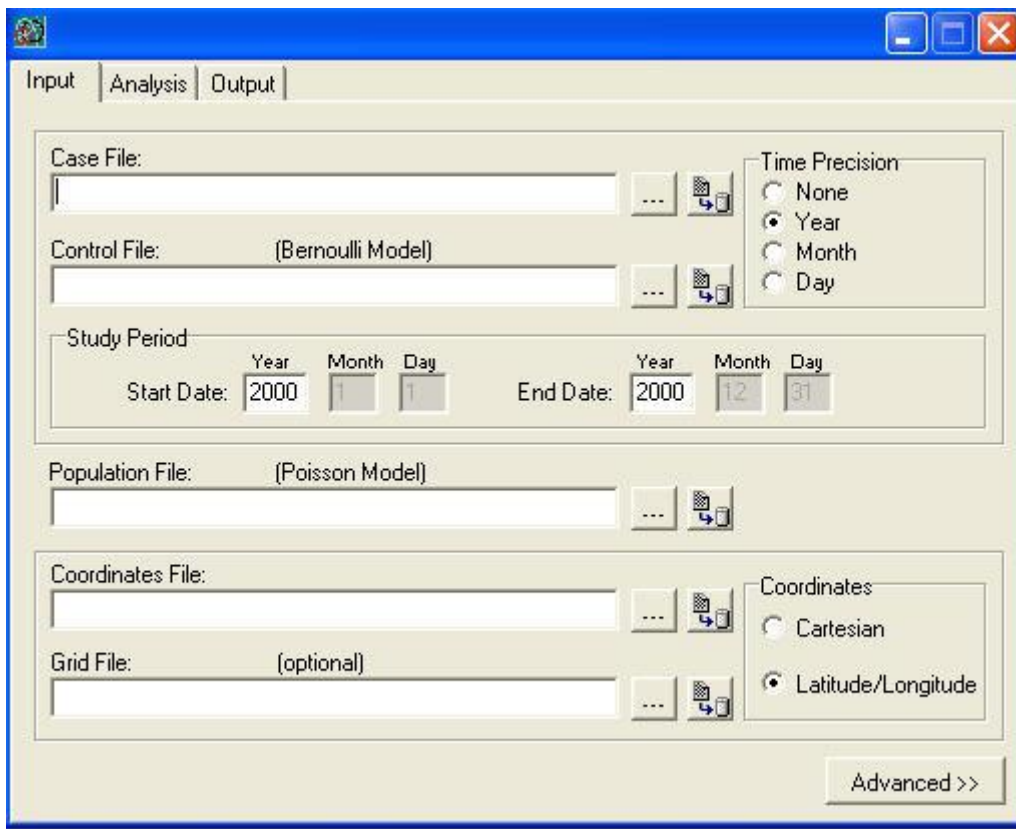
# Basic SaTScan Features

Most SaTScan analyses can be performed using the basic analysis and data features. The users specify these on three different window tabs for input, analysis and output options respectively. These contain all required specifications for a SaTScan analysis as well as a few optional ones. Additional features, all optional, can be specified on the advanced features tabs.



**Related Topics:** *Statistical Methodology, Input Tab, Analysis Tab, Output Tab, Advanced Features.*

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## Input Tab

The screenshot shows the 'Input' tab of the SaTScan dialog box. It has three tabs: 'Input', 'Analysis', and 'Output'. The 'Input' tab is active. It contains several sections for file selection and date specification. The 'Case File' section has a text box and a browse button. The 'Control File' section has a text box with '(Bernoulli Model)' and a browse button. The 'Study Period' section has 'Start Date' and 'End Date' fields, each with 'Year', 'Month', and 'Day' sub-fields. The 'Population File' section has a text box with '(Poisson Model)' and a browse button. The 'Coordinates File' section has a text box and a browse button. The 'Grid File' section has a text box with '(optional)' and a browse button. On the right side, there are two groups of radio buttons: 'Time Precision' with options 'None', 'Year' (selected), 'Month', and 'Day'; and 'Coordinates' with options 'Cartesian' and 'Latitude/Longitude' (selected). At the bottom right, there is an 'Advanced >>' button.

*Input Tab Dialog Box*

The Input Tab is used to specify the names of the input data files as well as the nature of the data in these files. If the files are in SaTScan ASCII file format, they may be specified either by writing the name in the text box or by using the browse button . If they are not in SaTScan ASCII file format, they must be specified using the SaTScan import wizard, by clicking on the File Import  button. Both the SaTScan ASCII file format and the SaTScan import wizard are described in the Input Data section.

**Related Topics:** *Basic SaTScan Features, Input Data, Multiple Data Sets Tab.*

## Case File Name

Specify the name of the input file with case data. This file is required for all analyses, irrespective of the probability model used.

**Related Topics:** *Input Tab, Case File.*

## Control File Name

Specify the name of the input file with control data. This file is only used for analyses with the Bernoulli probability model.

**Related Topics:** *Input Tab, Control File.*

## Time Precision

Indicate whether the case file and the control file (when applicable) contain information about the time of each case (and control), and if so, whether the precision should be read as days, months or years. If the time precision is specified to be days but the precision in the case or control file is in month or year, then there will be an error. If the time precision is specified as years, but the case or control file includes some dates specified in terms of the month or day, then the month or day will be ignored.

For a purely spatial analysis, the case and control file need not contain any times. If they do, it has to be specified that they do contain this information, but the information is ignored.

**Note:** The choice defines only the precision for the times in the case and control files. The precision of the times in the population file can be different.

**Related Topics:** *Input Tab, Case File, Control File, Study Period, Time Aggregation.*

## Study Period

Specify the start and end date of the time period under study. This must be done even for a purely spatial analysis in order to calculate the expected number of cases correctly. Allowable years are those between 1753 and 9999.

All times in the case and control files must fall on or between the start and end date of the study period. Dates in the population file are allowed to be outside the start and end date of the study period.

**Start Date:** The earliest date to be included in the study period.

**End Date:** The latest date to be included in the study period.

**Note:** The start and end dates cannot be specified to a higher precision than the precision of the times in the case and control files.

If the user does not specify month, then by default it will be set to January for the start date and to December for the end date. Likewise, if day is not specified, then by default it will be set to the first of the month for the start date and the last of the month for the end date.

**Related Topics:** *Input Tab, Case File, Control File, Time Precision, Time Aggregation.*

## Population File Name

Specify the name of the input file with population data. This file is only used for analyses using the Poisson probability model.

**Related Topics:** *Input Tab, Population File.*

## Coordinates File Name

Specify the name of the input file with geographical coordinates of all the locations with data on the number of cases, controls and/or population. When multiple data sets are used, the coordinates file must include the coordinates for all locations found in any of the data sets.

**Related Topics:** *Input Tab, Coordinates, Coordinates File.*

## Grid File Name

Specify the name of the optional grid file with the coordinates of the circle centroids used by the spatial and space-time scan statistics. If no special grid file is specified, then the coordinates in the coordinates file are used for this purpose.

**Related Topics:** *Input Tab, Coordinates, Coordinates File, Grid File.*

## Coordinates

Specify the type of coordinates used by the coordinates file and the grid file, as either Cartesian or latitude/longitude. Cartesian is the mathematical name for the regular x/y-coordinate system taught in high school.

**Related Topics:** *Cartesian Coordinates, Latitude/Longitude, Coordinates File, Grid File.*

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## Analysis Tab

The screenshot shows the 'Analysis' tab of the SaTScan software interface. It features three main sections: 'Type of Analysis', 'Probability Model', and 'Scan for Areas with:'. The 'Type of Analysis' section is divided into 'Retrospective Analyses' and 'Prospective Analyses'. 'Retrospective Analyses' includes 'Purely Spatial', 'Purely Temporal', and 'Space-Time' (selected). 'Prospective Analyses' includes 'Purely Temporal' and 'Space-Time'. The 'Probability Model' section includes 'Poisson' (selected), 'Bernoulli', 'Space-Time Permutation', 'Ordinal', 'Exponential', and 'Normal'. The 'Scan for Areas with:' section includes 'High Rates' (selected), 'Low Rates', and 'High or Low Rates'. Below these sections is a 'Time Aggregation' section with 'Units' (Year selected, Month and Day are disabled) and 'Length' (1 Year). At the bottom, there is a text box for 'Monte Carlo Replications (0, 9, 999, or value ending in 999):' with the value '999' entered. An 'Advanced >>' button is located in the bottom right corner.

*Analysis Tab Dialog Box*

The Analysis Tab is used to set various analysis options. Additional features are available by clicking on the Advanced button in the lower right corner.

**Related Topics:** *Basic SaTScan Features, Statistical Methodology, Spatial Window Tab, Temporal Window Tab, Spatial and Temporal Adjustments Tab, Inference Tab.*

### Type of Analysis

SaTScan may be used for a purely spatial, purely temporal or space-time analyses. A purely spatial analysis ignores the time of cases, even when such data are provided. A purely temporal analysis ignores the geographical location of cases, even when such information is provided.

Purely temporal and space-time data can be analyzed in either retrospective or prospective fashion. In a retrospective analysis, the analysis is done only once for a fixed geographical region and a fixed study period. SaTScan scans over multiple start dates and end dates, evaluating both 'alive clusters', lasting until the study period and date, as well as 'historic clusters' that ceased to exist before the study period end date. The prospective option is used for the early detection of disease outbreaks, when analyses are

repeated every day, week, month or year. Only alive clusters, clusters that reach all the way to current time as defined by the study period end date, are then searched for.

**Related Topics:** *Spatial Temporal and Space-Time Scan Statistics, Analysis Tab, Methodological Papers, Computing Time, Spatial Window Tab, Temporal Window Tab, Time Aggregation.*

## Probability Model

There are five different probability models that can be used: Poisson, Bernoulli, space-time permutation, ordinal and exponential. For purely spatial analyses, the Poisson and Bernoulli models are good approximations for each other in many situations. Temporal data are handled differently, so the models differ more for temporal and space-time analyses.

**Poisson Model:** The Poisson model should be used when the background population reflects a certain risk mass such as total person years lived in an area. The cases are then included as part of the population count.

**Bernoulli Model:** The Bernoulli model should be used when the data set contains individuals who may or may not have a disease and for other 0/1 type variables. Those who have the disease are cases and should be listed in the case file. Those without the disease are 'controls', listed in the control file. The controls could be a random set of controls from the population, or better, the total population except for the cases. The Bernoulli model is a special case of the ordinal model when there are only two categories.

**Space-Time Permutation Model:** The space-time permutation model should be used when only case data is available, and when one wants to adjust for purely spatial and purely temporal clusters.

**Ordinal Model:** The ordinal model is used when individuals belong to one of three or more categories, and when there is an ordinal relationship between those categories such as small, medium and large. When there are only two categories, the Bernoulli model should be used instead.

**Exponential Model:** The exponential model is used for survival time data, to search for spatial and/or temporal clusters of exceptionally short or long survival. The survival time is a positive continuous variable. Censored survival times are allowed for some but not all individuals.

**Normal Model:** The normal model is used for continuous data. Observations may be either positive or negative.

**Related Topics:** *Analysis Tab, Bernoulli Model, Exponential Model, Methodological Papers, Ordinal Model, Poisson Model, Probability Model Comparison, Space-Time Permutation Model, .*

## Scan for High or Low Rates

It is possible to scan for areas with high rates only (clusters), for areas with low rates only, or simultaneously for areas with either high or low rates. The most common analysis is to scan for areas with high rates only, that is, for clusters. For the exponential model, high corresponds to short survival. For the ordinal and normal models, high corresponds to large value categories/observations.

**Related Topics:** *Analysis Tab, Likelihood Ratio Test, Methodological Papers.*

## Time Aggregation

Space-time analyses are sometimes very computer intensive. To reduce the computing time, case times may be aggregated into time intervals. Another reason for doing so is to adjust for cyclic temporal trends. For example, when using intervals of one year, the analysis will automatically be adjusted for seasonal variability in the counts, and when using time intervals of 7 days, it will automatically adjust for weekday effects.

**Units:** The units in which the length of the time intervals are specified. This can be in years, months or days. The units of the time intervals cannot be more precise than the time precision specified on the input tab.

**Length:** The length of the time intervals in the specified units.

**Example:** If interval units are years and the length is two, then the time intervals will be two years long.

**Note:** If the time interval length is not a fraction of the length of the whole study period, the earliest time interval will be the remainder after the other intervals have received their proper length. Hence, the first time interval may be shorter than the specified length.

**Important:** For prospective space-time analyses, the time interval must be equal to the length between the time-periodic analyses performed. So, if the time-period analyses are performed every week, then the time interval should be set to 7 days.

**Related Topics:** *Analysis Tab, Time Precision, Study Period, Computational Speed.*

## Monte Carlo Replications

For hypothesis testing, the SaTScan program generates a number of random replications of the data set under the null hypothesis. The test statistic is then calculated for each random replication as well as for the real data set, and if the latter is among the 5 percent highest, then the test is significant at the 0.05 level. This is called Monte Carlo hypothesis testing, and was first proposed by Dwass<sup>11</sup>. Irrespective of the number of Monte Carlo replications chosen, the hypothesis test is unbiased, resulting in a correct significance level that is neither conservative nor liberal nor an estimate. The number of replications does affect the power of the test, with more replications giving slightly higher power.

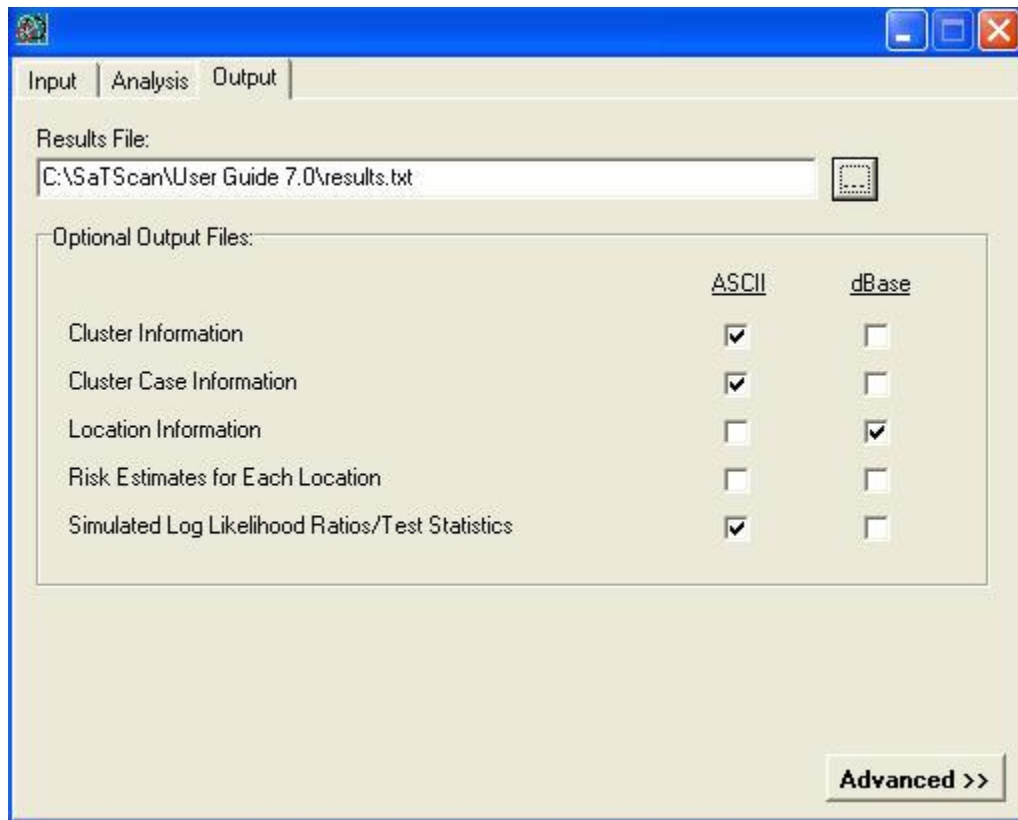
In SaTScan, the number of replications must be at least 999 to ensure excellent power for all types of data sets. For small to medium size data sets, 9999 replications are recommended since computing time is not a major issue.

**Related Topics:** *Analysis Tab, Likelihood Ratio Test, Computational Speed, Random Number Generator.*



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## Output Tab



*Output Tab Dialog Box*

Use the Output Tab is used to set parameters defining the output information provided by SaTScan.

**Related Topics:** *Results of Analysis, Standard Results File, Results File Name, Additional Output Files, Clusters Reported Tab.*

### Results File Name

Specify the output file name to which the results of the analysis are to be written. This is the standard results file, automatically shown after the completion of the calculations. Four optional output files may also be created, but must be opened manually by the user.

**Warning:** If you specify the name of a file that already exists, the old file will be overwritten and lost.

**Related Topics:** *Output Tab, Additional Output Files, Standard Results File.*

## Additional Output Files

In addition to the standard results file that is automatically shown at the completion of the calculations, it is possible to request four additional output files with different types of information.

- Cluster Information, with each row containing summary information for each cluster.
- Cluster Cases Information, with data set and ordinal category specific information for each cluster, concerning observed and expected cases, their ratio and the relative risk. This file is primarily used for the ordinal model or when there are multiple data sets. For other analyses this file is redundant as it contains a subset of the information already in the Cluster Information file.
- Location Information, with each row containing information about a particular location and its cluster membership.
- Risk Estimates for Each Location
- Simulated Log Likelihood Ratios

You must manually open all these files after the run is completed. They are provided in either ASCII or dBase format so that they can be easily imported into spreadsheets, geographical information systems or other database software.

**Related Topics:** *Output Tab, Results of Analysis, Cluster Information File, Location Information File, Risk Estimates for Each Location, Simulated Log Likelihood Ratios.*

# Advanced Features

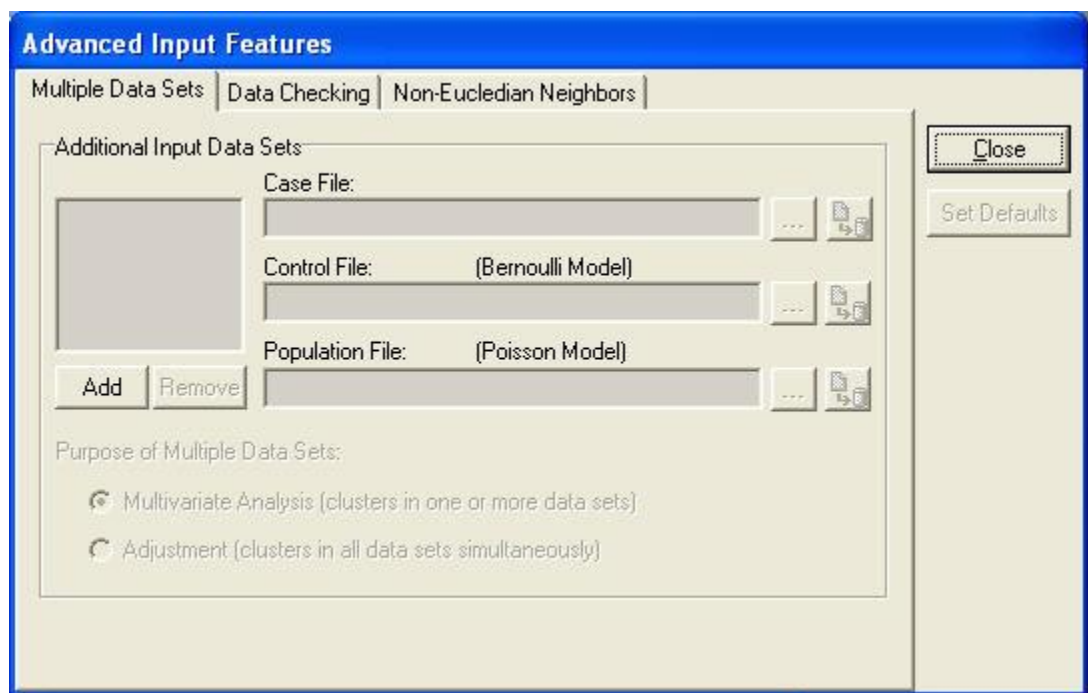
While most SaTScan analyses can be performed using the features on the three basic tabs for input, analysis and output parameters, additional options are warranted for some types of analyses, and these are available as advanced features. These features are reached through the Advanced button on the lower right corner of each of the three main tabs. ‘Advanced’ should be interpreted as ‘additional’ or ‘uncommon’ rather than ‘complex’, ‘difficult’ or ‘better’.

Since many of the advanced options depend on the selections made on the Input and Analysis Tabs, it is recommended that those two tabs be filled in first.

**Related Topics:** *Basic SaTScan Features, Multiple Data Sets Tab, Spatial Window Tab, Temporal Window Tab, Spatial and Temporal Adjustments Tab, Inference Tab, Clusters Reported Tab.*



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## Multiple Data Sets Tab



*Multiple Data Sets Tab Dialog Box*

It is possible to search and evaluate clusters in multiple data sets, as described in the Statistical Methodology section. The first data set is defined on the Input Tab. Up to eleven additional data sets can be defined on the Multiple Data Sets Tab. These files must be of the same class as the first one. That is, if the first data set consists of a case and a control file, so must all the others as well. The time precision and study period must also be the same as on the Input Tab.

Data sets are added by first clicking on the “Add” button, and then entering the file names by either typing it in the text box, by using the browser button  or through the SaTScan Import Wizard, Import File  button. Remove a data set by selecting it and clicking on the “Remove” button.

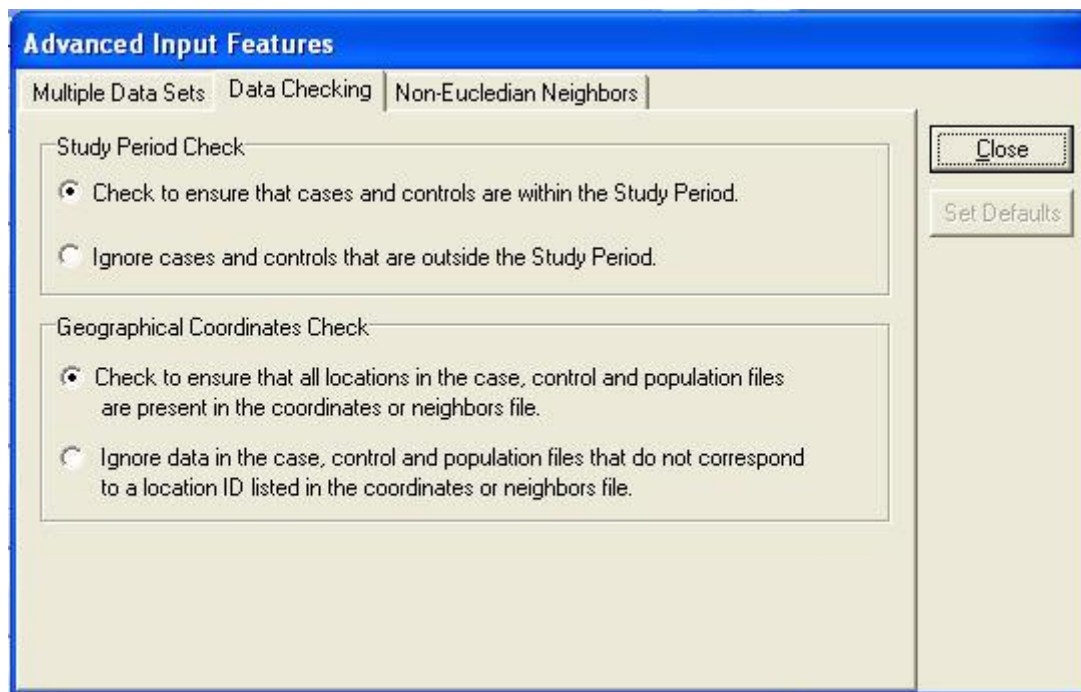
Multiple data sets can be used for two different purposes. One purpose is when there are different types of data, and we want to know if there is a cluster in either one or more of the data sets. The evidence for a cluster could then come exclusively from one data set or it may use the combined evidence from two or more data sets. The other purpose is to adjust for covariates. In this case the evidence of a cluster is based on all data sets. The difference is discussed in more detail in the statistical methodology section.

**Warning:** The computing time is considerably longer when analyzing multiple data sets as compared to a single data set. Hence, it is not recommended to use multiple data sets when there are many locations in the coordinates file.

**Related Topics:** *Advanced Features, Input Tab, Multivariate Scan with Multiple Data Sets, Covariate Adjustments Using Multiple Data Sets, Computing Time, Case File, Control File, Population File.*

---

## Data Checking Tab



*Data Checking Tab Dialog Box*

## Study Period Check

By default, SaTScan will check that all the cases and all the controls are within the specified temporal study period. On this tab, it is possible to turn this off. Cases and controls outside the study period will then be ignored. This may be used if, for example, you only want to analyze a temporal subset of the data in the case and control input files.

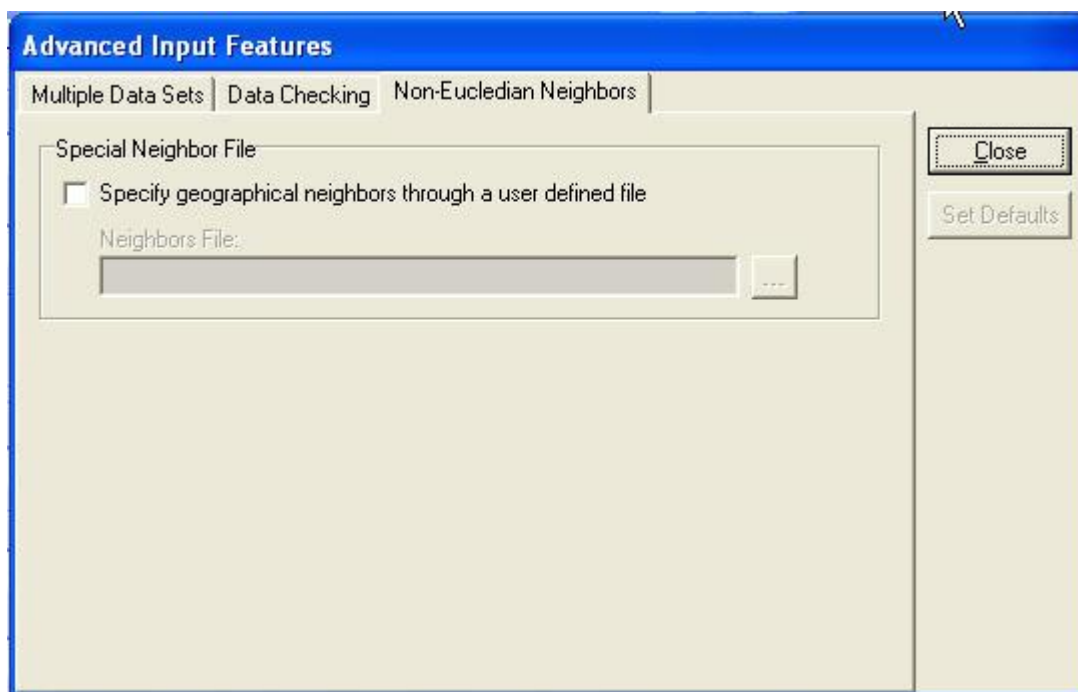
## Geographical Coordinates Check

By default, SaTScan will check that all the cases, controls and population numbers are within one of the locations specified in the coordinates file. On this tab, it is possible to turn this off. Data in other locations not present in the coordinates file are then ignored. This may be used if, for example, you only want to analyze a geographical subset of the data, in which case only the geographical coordinates file has to be modified while the other files can be used as they are.

**Related Topics:** *Advanced Features, Case File, Input Tab, Study Time Period.*

---

## Non-Euclidean Neighbors Tab



*Non-Euclidean Neighbors Tab Dialog Box*

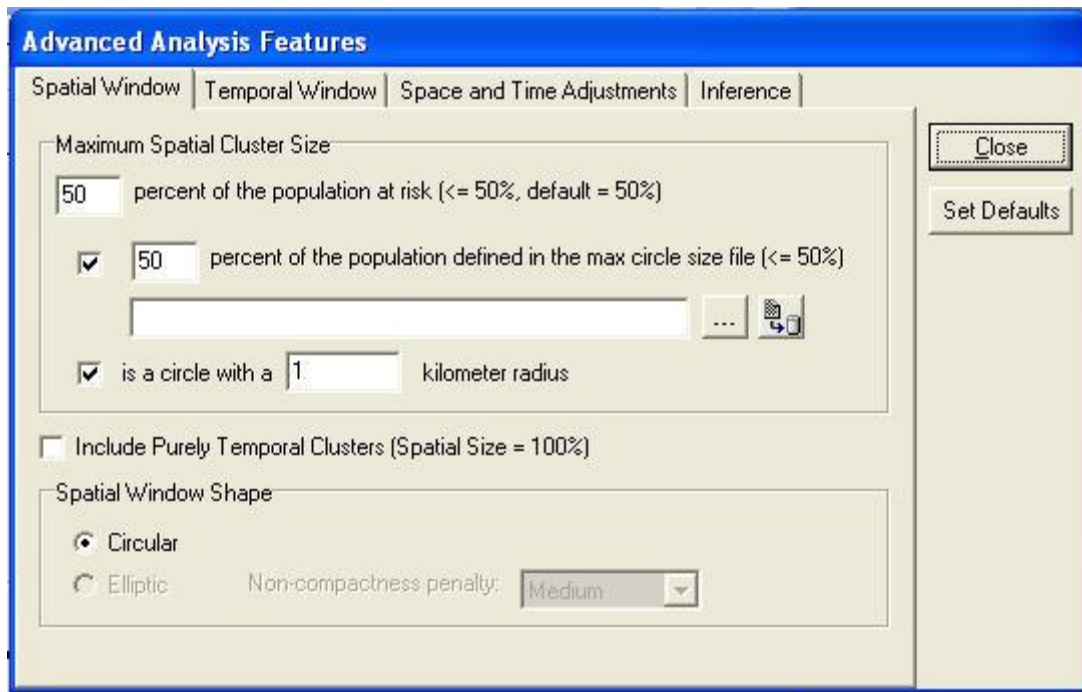
Rather than using circles or ellipses defined by the Euclidean distances between the locations specified in the coordinates and grid files, it is possible to manually specify a neighborhood matrix. For each centroid, its closest, 2<sup>nd</sup> closest, 3<sup>rd</sup> closest neighbors are specified in turn and so on. This option is activated by checking the box on this tab and specifying the name of the neighbors file containing the

neighbor matrix information. The format of the neighbors file is described in the ASCII File format section.

**Related Topics:** *Advanced Features, Input Tab, Neighbors File, ASCII File Format.*

---

## Spatial Window Tab



*Spatial Window Tab Dialog Box*

Use the Spatial Window Tab to define the exact nature of the scanning window with respect to space.

**Related Topics:** *Advanced Features, Analysis Tab, Temporal Window Tab, Maximum Spatial Cluster Size, Include Purely Temporal Clusters.*

### Maximum Spatial Cluster Size

The program will scan for clusters of geographic size between zero and some upper limit defined by the user. The upper limit can be specified either as a percent of the population used in the analysis, as a percent of some other population defined in a max circle size file, or in terms of geographical size using the circle radius. The maximum can also be defined using a combination of these three criteria.

The recommended choice is to specify the upper limit as a percent of the population at risk, and to use 50% as the value. It is possible to specify a maximum that is less than 50%, but not more than 50%. A cluster of larger size would indicate areas of exceptionally low rates outside the circle rather than an area of exceptionally high rate within the circle (or vice-versa when looking for clusters of low rates). When

in doubt, choose a high percentage, since SaTScan will then look for clusters of both small and large sizes without any pre-selection bias in terms of the cluster size. When calculating the percentage, SaTScan uses the population defined by the cases and controls for the Bernoulli model, the covariate adjusted population at risk from the population file for the Poisson model, the cases for the space-time permutation, ordinal, exponential and normal models. When there are multiple data sets, the maximum is defined as a percentage of the combined total population/cases in all data sets.

It is also possible to specify the maximum circle size in terms of actual geographical size rather than population. If latitude/longitude coordinates are used, then the maximum radius should be specified in kilometers. If Cartesian coordinates are used, the maximum radius should be specified in the same units as the Cartesian coordinates.

Alternatively, for either probability model, it is possible to specify a max circle size file to define the maximum circle size. This file must contain a ‘population’ for each location, and the maximum circle size is then defined as a percentage of this population rather than the regular one. This feature may be used when, for example, you want to define the circles in the Bernoulli or space-time population models based on the actual population rather than the locations of cases and controls. It may also be used if you want the geographical circles to include for example at most 10 counties out of a total of 100, irrespectively of the population in those counties. This is accomplished by assigning a ‘population’ of 1 to each county in the special max circle size file and then set the maximum circle size to be 10% of this ‘population’.

If a prospective space-time analysis is performed, adjusting for earlier analyses, and if the max circle size is defined as a percentage of the population, then the special max circle size file must be used. This is to ensure that the evaluated geographical circles do not change over time.

**Related Topics:** *Advanced Features, Spatial Window Tab, Max Circle Size File, Include Purely Temporal Clusters, Computing Time.*

## Include Purely Temporal Clusters

A purely temporal cluster is one that includes the whole geographic area but only a limited time period. When doing a space-time analysis, it is possible to allow potential clusters to contain the whole geographical area under study, as an exception to the maximum spatial cluster size chosen. In this way, purely temporal clusters are included among the collection of windows evaluated.

**Note:** This option is not available for the space-time permutation model, as that model automatically adjusts for purely temporal clusters. When adjusting for purely temporal clusters using stratified randomization, all purely temporal clusters are adjusted away, and this parameter has no effect on the analysis.

**Related Topics:** *Advanced Features, Spatial Window Tab, Maximum Spatial Cluster Size, Include Purely Spatial Clusters, Temporal Trend Adjustment, Computing Time.*

## Elliptic Scanning Window

As an advanced option, it is possible to use a scanning window that consists not only of circles but also of ellipses of different shapes and angles. When the elliptic spatial scan statistic is requested, SaTScan

uses the circular window plus five different elliptic shapes where the ratio of the longest to the shortest axis of the ellipse is 1.5, 2, 3, 4 or 5. For each shape, a different number of angles of the ellipse are used, equal to 4, 6, 9, 12 and 15 respectively. The north-south axis is always one of the angles included, and the remainder is equally spaced around the circle. For each shape and angle, all possible sizes of the ellipses are used, up to an upper limit specified by the user in the same way as for the circular window.

When using an elliptic window shape, it is possible to request a non-compactness (eccentricity) penalty, which will favor more compact over less compact ellipses even when they have slight lower likelihood ratios but the less compact ellipses when the difference is larger. The formula for the penalty is  $[4s/(s+1)^2]^a$ , where  $s$  is the elliptic window shape defined as the ratio of the length of the longest to the shortest axis of the ellipse. With a strong penalty  $a=1$ , with a medium penalty  $a=1/2$  and with no penalty  $a=0$ .

**Note:** In batch mode, it is possible to request SaTScan to use any other collection of ellipses to define the scanning window and any value of the eccentricity penalty parameter greater than zero.

**Note:** The elliptic window option can only be used when regular two-dimensional Cartesian coordinates are used, but not when they are specified as latitude/longitude. If you have the latter, you must first do a planar map projection from the latitude/longitude coordinates, of which there are many different ones proposed in the geography literature.

**Related Topics:** *Advanced Features, Computing Time, Include Purely Spatial Clusters, Likelihood Ratio Test, Maximum Spatial Cluster Size, Spatial Temporal and Space-Time Scan Statistics, Spatial Window Tab.*

## Temporal Window Tab

**Advanced Analysis Features**

Spatial Window | **Temporal Window** | Space and Time Adjustments | Inference

Maximum Temporal Cluster Size

☒ is 50 percent of the study period (<= 90%, default = 50%)

☐ is 1 years

☐ Include Purely Spatial Clusters (Temporal Size = 100%)

Flexible Temporal Window Definition

☐ Include only windows with:

Start time in range: 2000 1 1 to: 2000 12 31

End time in range: 2000 1 1 to: 2000 12 31

Close

Set Defaults



### *Temporal Window Tab Dialog Box*

Use the Temporal Window Tab to define the exact nature of the scanning window with respect to time.

**Related Topics:** *Advanced Features, Analysis Tab, Spatial Window Tab, Maximum Temporal Cluster Size, Include Purely Spatial Clusters, Flexible Temporal Window Definition.*

## **Maximum Temporal Cluster Size**

For purely temporal and space-time analyses, the maximum temporal cluster size can be specified in terms of a percentage of the study period as a whole or as a certain number days, months or years. The maximum must be at least as large as the length of aggregated time interval length. If specified as a percent, then for the Bernoulli and Poisson models, it can be at most 90 percent, and for the space-time permutation model, at most 50 percent. The recommended value is 50 percent

**Related Topics:** *Temporal Window Tab, Maximum Spatial Cluster Size, Include Purely Spatial Clusters, Flexible Temporal Window Definition, Time Aggregation.*

## **Include Purely Spatial Clusters**

In addition to the maximum temporal cluster size, it is also possible to allow clusters to contain the whole time period under study. In this way, purely spatial clusters are included among the evaluated windows. The purpose of specifying a maximum temporal size, but still including purely spatial clusters, is to eliminate clusters containing the whole study period except a small time period at the very beginning or at the very end of the study period.

**Note:** When adjusting for purely spatial clusters using stratified randomization, all purely spatial clusters are adjusted away, and this parameter has no effect on the analysis.

**Related Topics:** *Temporal Window Tab, Maximum Temporal Cluster Size, Include Purely Temporal Clusters, Spatial Adjustment.*

## **Flexible Temporal Window Definition**

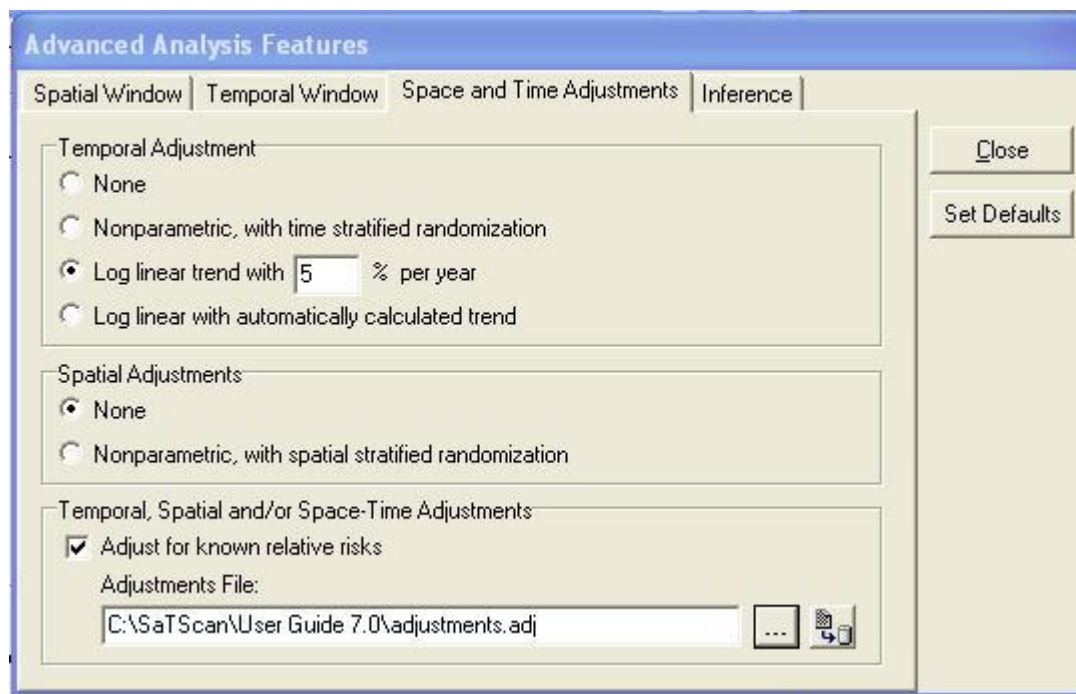
For retrospective analyses, SaTScan will evaluate all temporal windows less than the specified maximum, and for prospective analyses the same is true with the added restriction that the end of the window is identical to the study period end date. When needed, SaTScan can be more flexible than that, and it is possible to define the scanning window as any time period that start within a predefined ‘start range’ and ends within a predefined ‘end range’.

This option is only available when a retrospective purely temporal or a retrospective space-time analysis is selected on the Analysis Tab.

**Related Topics:** *Temporal Window Tab, Maximum Temporal Cluster Size, Include Purely Spatial Clusters, Study Period, Time Aggregation.*

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## Spatial and Temporal Adjustments Tab



*Spatial and Temporal Adjustments Tab Dialog Box*

Covariates are adjusted for either by including them in the case and population files or by using multiple data sets, depending on the probability model used. The features on this tab are used to adjust for temporal, spatial and space-time trends and variation. They are only available when using the Poisson probability model.

**Related Topics:** *Advanced Features, Analysis Tab, Spatial and Temporal Adjustments, Temporal Trend Adjustment, Spatial Adjustment, Adjustment with Known Relative Risk, Poisson Model.*

### Temporal Trend Adjustment

Temporal trends can be adjusted for in three different ways:

*Non-parametric:* When the adjustment is non-parametric, SaTScan adjusts for any type of purely temporal variation. This is done by stratifying the randomization by the aggregated time intervals, so that each time interval has the same number of cases in the real and random data sets. That is, it is only the spatial location of a case that is randomized.

*Log linear trend, specified by user:* Specify an annual percent increase or decrease in the risk. A decreasing trend is specified with a negative number. For example, if the rate decreases by 1.4 percent per year, then write "-1.4" in the "% per year" box.

*Log linear trend, automatically calculated:* Rather than the user specifying the adjusted relative risk, SaTScan can calculate the observed trend in the data and then adjust for exactly that amount of increase or decrease.

The default is no temporal trend adjustment.

**Related Topics:** *Spatial and Temporal Adjustment Tab, Spatial and Temporal Adjustments, Spatial Adjustment, Adjustment with Known Relative Risk, Poisson Model.*

## Spatial Adjustment

When a purely spatial analysis is performed the purpose is to find purely spatial clusters. For space-time analyses, this feature adjusts away all such clusters, to see if there are any space-time clusters not explained by purely spatial clusters. This is done in a non-parametric fashion, through stratified randomization by location, so that the total number of cases in each specific location is the same in the real and random data sets. That is, only the time of a case is randomized.

The default is no spatial adjustment.

**Note:** It is not possible to simultaneously adjust for spatial clusters and purely temporal clusters using stratified randomization. If both types of adjustments are desired, the space-time permutation model should be used instead. It is possible to adjust for purely spatial clusters with stratified randomization together with a temporal adjustment using a log linear trend.

**Related Topics:** *Spatial and Temporal Adjustment Tab, Spatial and Temporal Adjustments, Temporal Trend Adjustment, Adjustment with Known Relative Risk, Poisson Model.*

## Adjustment with Known Relative Risks

The most flexible way to adjust a Poisson model analysis is to use the special adjustments file. In this file, a relative risk is specified for any location and time period combination, and SaTScan will adjust the expected counts up or down based on this relative risk. One use of this option is to adjust for missing data, by specifying a zero relative risk for those location and time combinations for which data is missing.

The required format of the Adjustments File is described in the section on Input data.

**Related Topics:** *Spatial and Temporal Adjustment Tab, Spatial and Temporal Adjustments, Temporal Trend Adjustment, Spatial Adjustment, Adjustments File, Poisson Model.*

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## Inference Tab

The screenshot shows the 'Advanced Analysis Features' dialog box with the 'Inference' tab selected. The dialog has four main sections: 'Early Termination', 'Prospective Surveillance', 'Critical Values', and 'Iterative Scan'. In the 'Early Termination' section, the checkbox 'Terminate the analysis early for large p-values' is checked. The 'Prospective Surveillance' section has an unchecked checkbox 'Adjust for earlier analyses performed since:' followed by date pickers for Year (2000), Month (12), and Day (31). The 'Critical Values' section has a checked checkbox 'Report critical values for an observed cluster to be significant'. The 'Iterative Scan' section has an unchecked checkbox 'Adjust for more likely clusters', a 'Maximum number of iterations' spinner set to 10, and a 'Stop when p-value is greater than:' spinner set to 0.05. On the right side of the dialog are 'Close' and 'Set Defaults' buttons.

*Inference Tab Dialog Box*

This tab is reached by clicking the Advanced button in the lower right corner of the Analysis Tab.

**Related Topics:** *Advanced Features, Analysis Tab, Early Termination of Simulations, Adjust for Earlier Analyses in Prospective Surveillance.*

### Early Termination of Simulations

With more Monte Carlo replications, the power of the scan statistic is higher, but it is also more time consuming to run. When the p-value is small, this is often worth the effort, but for large p-values it is often irrelevant whether for example  $p=0.7535$  or  $p=0.8545$ . SaTScan provides the option to terminate the simulations early when the p-value is large. With this option, SaTScan will terminate after 99 simulations when  $p>0.5$  at that time, after 199 simulations when  $p>0.4$ , after 499 simulations when  $p>0.2$  and after 999 simulations when  $p>0.1$ . If it passes all of these without terminating early, it will run the full length with the number of Monte Carlo replications specified on the Analysis Tab.

**Note:** With this option, the p-values obtained after an early termination will be slightly conservative. The interpretation does not change for p-values obtained from a full run.

**Related Topics:** *Inference Tab, Monte Carlo Replications, Results of Analysis, Computing Time.*

## Adjust for Earlier Analyses in Prospective Surveillance

When doing prospective purely temporal or prospective space-time analyses repeatedly in a time-periodic fashion, it is possible to adjust the statistical inference (p-values) for the multiple testing inherent in the repeated analyses done. To do this, simply mark the 'adjust for earlier analyses' box, and specify the date for which you want to adjust for all subsequent analyses. This date must be greater or equal to the study period start date and less than or equal to the study period end date, as specified on the Input Tab.

For the adjustment to be correct, it is important that the scanning spatial window is the same for each analysis that is performed over time. This means that the grid points defining the circle centroids must remain the same. If the location IDs in the coordinates file remain the same in each time-periodic analysis, then there is no problem. On the other hand, if new IDs are added to the coordinates file over time, then you must use a special grid file and retain this file through all the analyses. Also, when you adjust for earlier analyses, and if the max circle size is defined as a percentage of the population, then the special max circle size file must be used.

**Related Topics:** *Inference Tab, Computing Time, Type of Analysis, Spatial Temporal and Space-Time Scan Statistics.*

## Iterative Scan

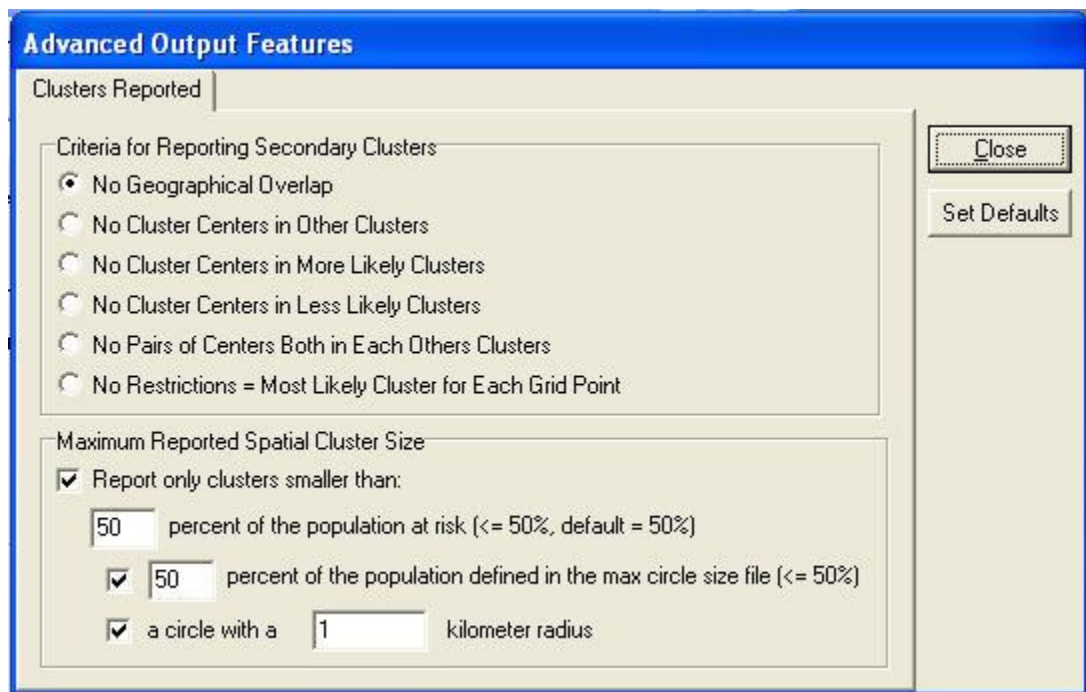
The iterative scan option is used to adjust the p-values of secondary clusters for more likely clusters that are found and reported. This is done by doing the analysis in several iteration, removing the most likely cluster found in each iteration, and then reanalyzing the remaining data. The user must specify the maximum number of iterations allowed, in the range 1-32000. The user may also request that the iterations stop when the cluster has a p-value greater than a specified lower bound.

In terms of computing time, each iteration takes approximately the same amount of time as a regular analysis with the same parameters.

**Related Topics:** *Adjusting for More Likely Clusters, Inference Tab, Computing Time.*

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## Clusters Reported Tab



*Clusters Reported Tab Dialog Box*

This tab is reached by clicking the Advanced button in the lower right corner of the Output Tab.

**Related Topics:** *Advanced Features, Output Tab, Results of Analysis, Criteria for Reporting Secondary Clusters, Report Only Small Clusters.*

### Criteria for Reporting Secondary Clusters

SaTScan evaluates an enormous amount of different circles/cylinders in order to find the most likely cluster. All of these may be considered secondary clusters with either a high or a low rate. To present all of these secondary clusters is impractical and unnecessary since many of them will be very similar to each other. For example, to add one location with a very small population to the most likely cluster will not decrease the likelihood very much, even if that location contains no additional cases. Such a secondary cluster is not interesting even though it could have the second highest likelihood among all the clusters evaluated.

Rather than reporting information about all evaluated clusters, SaTScan only reports a limit number of secondary clusters using criteria specified by the user. A three-stage procedure is used to select the secondary clusters to report:

1. For each circle centroid, SaTScan will only consider the cluster with the highest likelihood among those that share that same centroid (grid point).
2. These clusters will be ordered in descending order by the value of their log likelihood ratios, creating a list with the same number of clusters as there are grid points.

3. The most likely cluster will always be reported. Options for reporting secondary clusters follow. Except under the last option, secondary clusters will only be reported if  $p < 1$ .

**No Geographical Overlap:** Default. Secondary clusters will only be reported if they do not overlap with a previously reported cluster, that is, they may not have any location IDs in common. Therefore, no overlapping clusters will be reported. This is the most restrictive option, presenting the fewest number of clusters.

**No Cluster Centers in Other Clusters:** Secondary clusters are not centered in a previously reported cluster and do not contain the center of a previously reported cluster. While two clusters may overlap, there will be no reported cluster with its centroid contained in another reported cluster.

**No Cluster Centers in More Likely Clusters:** Secondary clusters are not centered in a previously reported cluster. This means that there will be no reported cluster with its center contained in a previously reported more likely cluster.

**No Cluster Centers in Less Likely Clusters:** Secondary clusters do not contain the center of a previously reported cluster. This means that there will be no reported cluster with its center contained in a subsequently reported less likely cluster.

**No Pairs of Centers Both in Each Others Clusters:** Secondary clusters are not centered in a previously reported cluster that contains the center of a previously reported cluster. This means that there will be no pair of reported clusters each of which contain the center of the other.

**No Restrictions = Most Likely Cluster for Each Grid Point:** The most extensive option is to all present clusters in the list, with no restrictions. This option reports the most likely cluster for each grid point. This means that the number of clusters reported is identical to the number of grid points.

**Note:** The criteria for determining overlap is based only on geography, and ignoring time. Hence,

**Warning:** ‘No Restrictions’ may create output files that are huge in size.

**Related Topics:** *Advanced Features, Inference Tab, Results of Analysis, Maximum Spatial Cluster Size, Report Only Small Clusters.*

## Report Only Small Clusters

When the most likely clusters are very large in size, it is sometimes of interest to know whether they contain smaller clusters that are statistically significant on their own strength. One way to find such clusters is to play around with the maximum circle size parameter, but that leads to incorrect statistical inference as the maximum circle size is then chosen based on the results of the analysis, leading to pre-selection bias. To avoid this problem, this option allows one to keep the original maximum on the circle size for the statistical inference, and at the same time limit the size of the clusters reported. This will typically result in SaTScan reporting many clusters that were not reported from the original analysis, due to the fact that they shared the centroid of a more likely cluster.

The unit by which to define the maximum size of the reported cluster is the same as the unit used to define the maximum cluster size for inference purposes, as defined on the Spatial Window Tab.


**Related Topics:** *Advanced Features, Inference Tab, Results of Analysis, Criteria for Reporting Secondary Clusters, Maximum Spatial Cluster Size, Log Likelihood Ratio, Standard Results File.*



# Running SaTScan

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## Specifying Analysis and Data Options

The SaTScan program requires that you specify parameters defining input, analysis and output options for the analysis you wish to conduct. A tabbed dialog is provided for this purpose. To access the parameter tab dialog, either press the  button or select the File/New menu item. Specify the parameters for your session on the following tabs:

- Input Tab
- Analysis Tab
- Output Tab

See the section on Basic SaTScan Features for instructions on how to fill in these tabs.


Most analyses can be performed using only these three tabs. For each tab, there are additional features that can be selected by first clicking on the Advanced button in the lower right corner of the tab. These additional features may be useful in special circumstances.

The available choices for some features may depend on what was selected in other places. For example, if a purely spatial analysis is chosen, the space-time permutation model is not available, and vice versa.

**Related Topics:** *Basic SaTScan Features, Input Tab, Analysis Tab, Output Tab, Advanced Features, Launching the Analysis.*

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## Launching the Analysis

Once the data input files have been created, and the parameters defining the input, analysis and output options have been specified, select the Execute  button to launch the analysis and produce the results file. A special job status window will appear containing status, warning and/or error messages. Once the analysis has been completed, the standard results file will appear in the job status window.

Multiple parameter session windows may be opened simultaneously for data entry, and multiple analyses may be run concurrently. If you are running multiple analyses concurrently, please verify that the output files have different names.

**Related Topics:** *Input Data, Data Requirements, Specifying Analysis and Data Options, Status Messages, Warnings and Errors, Computing Time, Batch Mode.*

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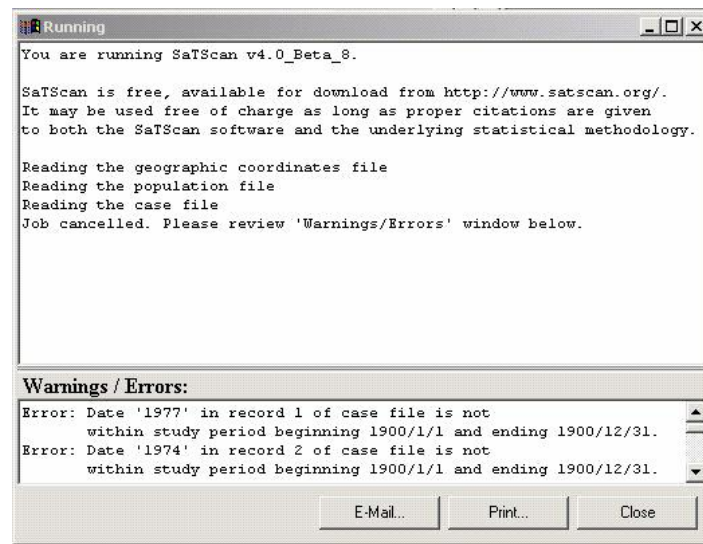
## Status Messages

Status messages are displayed as the program executes the analysis, as the data is read and at each step of the analysis. Normal status messages are displayed in the top box of the job status window. Warnings and error messages are displayed in the bottom box of the job status window. Upon successful completion of the calculations, the standard results file will be shown in the job status window.

**Related Topics:** *Launching the Analysis, Warnings and Errors.*

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## Warnings and Errors



*SaTScan Status Messages and Warnings/Errors Dialog Box*

### *Warning Messages*

SaTScan may produce warnings as the job is executing. If a warning occurs, a message is displayed in the Warnings/Errors box on the bottom of the job status window. A warning will not stop the execution of the analysis. If a warning occurs, please review the message and access the help system if further information is required.

If you do not want to see the warning messages, they can be turned off by clicking "Session > Execute Options > Do not report warning messages".

### *Error Messages*

If a serious problem occurs during the run, an error message will be displayed in the Warnings/Errors box on the bottom of the job status window and the job will be terminated. The user may resolve most errors by reviewing the message and using the help system.

If the error message cannot be resolved, you may press the email button on the job status window. This will generate an automatic email message to SaTScan technical support. The contents of the “Warnings/Errors” box will be automatically placed in the e-mail message. All a user needs to do is press their e-mail Send key. Users may also print the contents of the Warnings/Errors box and even select, copy (ctrl c) and paste (ctrl v) the contents if necessary.

One of the most common errors is that the input files are not in the required format, or that the file contents are incompatible with each other. When this occurs, an error message will be shown specifying the nature and location of the problem. Such error messages are designed to help with data cleaning.

**Related Topics:** *Input Data, Data Requirements, SaTScan Support.*

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## Saving Analysis Parameters


Analysis parameters, specified on the Parameter tab dialog, can be saved and reused for future analyses. It is recommended that you save the parameters with a “.prm” file extension. The parameter file is stored in an ASCII text file format.

### To save analysis parameters

1. If the parameters have not previously been saved, select Save As from the File menu. A ‘Save Parameter File As’ dialog will open.
2. Select a directory location from the ‘Save In’ drop-down menu at the top of the dialog box.
3. Enter a name for your parameter file in the ‘File Name’ text box. It is recommended that the ‘Save As Type’ selection remain as Parameter Files (\*.prm).
4. Press the Save button.

Once the parameter file is initially saved, save changes to the file by selecting ‘Save’ on the File menu. The file will save without opening the ‘Save Parameter File As’ dialog.

### To open a saved parameter file

1. Select ‘Open’ from the File menu or click on the  button in the toolbar. A Select Parameter File dialog will open.
2. Locate the desired file using the Look in drop-down menu.
3. Once the file is located, highlight the file name by clicking on it.
4. Press the Open button.

A Parameter tab dialog will open containing the saved parameter settings. The location and name of the parameter file is listed in the title bar of this dialog.

**Related Topics:** *Specifying Analysis and Data Options, Basic SaTScan Features, Advanced Features, Batch Mode.*


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## Parallel Processors

If you have parallel processors on your computer, SaTScan can take advantage of this by running different Monte Carlo simulations using different processors, thereby increasing the speed of the calculations. The default is that SaTScan will use all processors that the computer has. If you want to restrict the number, you can do that by clicking on Session > Execute Options, and selecting the maximum number of processors that SaTScan is allowed to use.

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## Batch Mode

SaTScan is most easily run by clicking the Execute  button at the top of the SaTScan window, after filling out the various parameter fields in the Windows interface.

An alternative approach is to skip the windows interface and launch the SaTScan calculation engine directly by either:

1. Dragging a parameter file onto the 'SaTScanBatch.exe' executable.
2. Writing 'SaTScanBatch.exe \*.prm' in a batch file or at the command prompt, where \*.prm is the name of the parameter file.

Using the batch mode version, it is possible to write special software that incorporates the SaTScan calculation engine with other applications, such as an automated daily surveillance system for the early detection of disease outbreaks. To use SaTScan in this manner requires a reasonable amount of computer skills and sophistication.

When running SaTScan in batch mode, the parameter file may still be changed using the SaTScan windows interface. It is also possible to change the parameter manually using any text editor or automatically by using some other software product.

When the batch mode version of SaTScan is run, the standard results file does not automatically pop up on the screen, but must be opened manually using any available text editor such as Notepad.

**Opportunity:** There are some parameter options that are not allowed when SaTScan is run under the windows interface but which can be set when run in batch mode. A few such examples are the number of Monte Carlo replications, the use ellipses rather than circles, and an unlimited number of multiple data sets. Parameter options not allowed by the windows interface have not all been thoroughly tested though, so there is some risk involved when running such analyses.

**Related Topics:** *Launching the Analysis, Basic SaTScan Features, Advanced Features, Saving Analysis Parameters.*

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## Computing Time

The spatial and space-time scan statistics are computer intensive to calculate. The computing time depends on a wide variety of variables, and depending on the data set and the analytical options chosen, it could range from a few seconds to several days or weeks. The ordinal model is in general much more computer intensive than the other probability models. Other than that, the three main things that increase the computing time is the number of locations in the coordinates and special grid files, the number of time intervals (for space-time analyses) and the number of data sets used.

### ***Single Data Set***

For a single data set, the computing time is approximately on the order of:

$$L \times SG \times mg \times TI^k \times mt \times MC / P$$

where:

L = number of geographical data locations in the coordinates file (L=1 for purely temporal analyses)

SG = number of geographical coordinates in the special grid file. If there is no such file, SG=L.

mg = maximum geographical cluster size, as a proportion of the population (  $0 < mg = \frac{1}{2}$  , mg=1 for a purely temporal analysis)

TI = number of time intervals into which the temporal data is aggregated (TI=1 for a purely spatial analysis)

mt = maximum temporal cluster size, as a proportion of the study period (  $0 < mt = 0.9$  , mt=1 for purely spatial analysis)

MC = number of Monte Carlo replications

P = number of processors available on the computer for SaTScan use

k = 0 for a purely spatial analysis

k = 1 for prospective temporal and prospective space-time analyses without adjustments for earlier analyses

k = 2 for retrospective temporal and retrospective space-time analyses

The unit of the above formula depends on the probability model used and on the speed of the computer. When the total number of cases is very large compared to the number of locations and time intervals, the computing time is instead on the order of:

$$C \times MC / P$$

where:

C = the total number of cases

MC = number of Monte Carlo replications

P = number of processors available on the computer for SaTScan use

## Multiple Data Sets

An analysis using multiple data sets is considerably more computer intensive than the analysis of a single data set. Except for the ordinal model, the computing time for two data sets is much more than twice the time for a single data set. The computing time for  $s > 2$  data sets is approximately  $s/2$  times longer than the computing time for two data sets.

**Related Topics:** *Coordinates File, Grid File, Spatial Window Tab, Temporal Window Tab, Monte Carlo Replications, Early Termination of Simulations, Multiple Data Sets Tab.*

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## Memory Requirements

SaTScan uses dynamic memory allocation. Depending on the nature of the input data, SaTScan will automatically choose one of two memory allocation schemes: the standard one and a special one for data sets with very many spatial locations but few time intervals and few simulations.

### Standard Memory Allocation

Using the standard memory allocation scheme, the amount of memory needed for large data sets is approximately:

$2 \times L \times G \times mg + (b + 4 \times \text{CONT} \times P) \times L \times \text{TI} \times \text{CAT} \times D + 8 \times C \times R \times P$  bytes if  $L < 65,536$ ,  
and

$4 \times L \times G \times mg + (b + 4 \times \text{CONT} \times P) \times L \times \text{TI} \times \text{CAT} \times D + 8 \times C \times R \times P$  bytes if  $L > 65,536$

where

$L$  = the number of location IDs in the coordinates file

$G$  = the number of coordinates in the grid file ( $G=L$  if no grid file is specified)

$mg$  = maximum geographical cluster size, as a proportion of the population ( $0 < mg = \frac{1}{2}$ ,  $mg=1$  for a purely temporal analysis)

$\text{TI}$  = number of time intervals into which the temporal data is aggregated ( $\text{TI}=1$  for a purely spatial analysis)

$b = 12$  for the Poisson, space-time permutation and exponential models

$b = 16$  for the Bernoulli model

$b = 4$  for the ordinal model

$b = 20$  for the normal model

$\text{CAT}$  = the number of categories in the ordinal model ( $\text{CAT}=1$  for other models)

$\text{CONT} = 3$  for exponential model,  $\text{CONT} = 4$  for normal model, and  $\text{CONT} = 1$  for all other models

$C$  = the total number of cases (for the ordinal model or multiple data sets,  $C=0$ )

$R = 1$  when scanning for high rates only or low rates only,  $R=2$  when scanning for either high or low rates

$D$  = number of data sets

$P$  = number of processors available on the computer for SaTScan use

For purely spatial analyses and most space-time analyses, TI is much less than G, and so it is the expression to the left of the first plus sign above that is critical in terms of memory requirements. Table 2 provides estimates of the memory requirements when G=L, mg=0.5 and TI=1.

SG=L	Memory Needed	SG=L	Memory Needed
3,500	32Mb	44,000	2Gb
6,500	64Mb	63,000	4Gb
10,000	128Mb	89,000	16Gb
15,000	256Mb	126,000	32Gb
22,000	512Mb	178,000	64Gb
32,000	1Gb	250,000	128Gb

Table 2: Approximate memory requirements for a purely spatial analysis when the maximum geographical cluster size is 50% of the population.

### ***Special Memory Allocation***

When the number of locations is very large while the number of cases, time intervals and simulations are not, SaTScan sometimes uses an alternative memory allocation scheme to reduce the total memory requirement. This selection is done automatically. The amount of memory needed for large data sets is then approximately:

$$4 \times L \times TI \times CAT \times EXP \times D \times MC + 8 \times MC \times C \times R \times P \text{ bytes}$$

where MC is the number of Monte Carlo simulations and the other variables are defined as above.

### ***Insufficient Memory***

If there is insufficient memory available on the to run the analysis using either memory allocation scheme, there are several options available for working around the limitation:

- Close other applications.
- Aggregate the data into fewer data locations (reduce L).
- Decrease the number of circle centroids in the special grid file (reduce G).
- Reduce the upper limit on the circle size (reduce mg).
- Run the program on a computer with more memory.

It is highly desirable that there is sufficient RAM to cover all the memory needs, as SaTScan runs considerable slower when the swap file is used, so these techniques may also be used to avoid the swap file. Not all of these above options will work for all data sets. Please note that the following SaTScan options do not influence the demand on memory:

- The length of the study period.
- The maximum temporal cluster size.
- Type of space-time clusters to include in the analysis.

**Note:** The 32-bit windows operating system can allocate a maximum of 2 GBytes of memory to a single application, and that is hence the upper limit on the memory for the 32-bit windows version of SaTScan. The Linux version of SaTScan can be used to analyze larger data sets.

**Related Topics:** *Coordinates File, Grid File, Spatial Temporal and Space-Time Scan Statistics, Spatial Window Tab, Temporal Window Tab, Monte Carlo Replications, Multiple Data Sets Tab, Warnings and Errors.*



# Results of Analysis

As output, SaTScan creates one standard text based results file in ASCII format and up to five different optional output files in column format, that can be generated in either ASCII or dBase format. Some of the optional files are useful when exporting output from SaTScan into other software such as a spreadsheet or a geographical information system.

**Related Topics:** *Output Tab, Clusters Reported Tab, Standard Results File, Cluster Information File, Location Information File, Risk Estimates for Each Location, Simulated Log Likelihood Ratios, Analysis History File.*

---

## Standard Results File (\*.out.\*)

The standard results file is automatically shown after the calculations are completed. It is fairly self-explanatory, but for proper interpretation it is recommended to read either the section on the statistical method, or even better, one of the methodological papers listed in the bibliography.

**SUMMARY OF DATA:** Use this to check that the input data files contain the correct number of cases, locations, etc.

**Total population** (Poisson model): This is the average population during the study period.

**Annual rate per 100,000** (Poisson model): This is calculated taking leap years into account and is based on the average length of a year of 365.2425. If calculated by hand ignoring leap years, the numbers will be slightly different, but not by much.

**Variance** (normal model): This is the variance for all observations in the data assuming a common mean.

**MOST LIKELY CLUSTER:** Summary information about the most likely cluster, that is, the cluster that is least likely to be due to chance.

**Radius:** When latitude and longitude are used, the radius of the circle is given in kilometers. When regular Cartesian coordinates are used, the radius of the circle is given in the same units as those used in the coordinates file.

**Population:** This is the average population in the geographical area of the cluster. The average is taken over the whole study period even when it is a space-time cluster whose temporal length is only a part of the study period.

**Unexplained Variance** (normal model): This is the estimated common variance for all observations in the data that cannot be explained by this particular cluster. It is calculated by using the different estimated means inside and outside the cluster.

**P-value:** The p-values are adjusted for the multiple testing stemming from the multitude of circles/cylinders corresponding to different spatial and/or temporal locations and sizes of potential

clusters evaluated. This means that under the null-hypothesis of complete spatial randomness there is a 5% chance that the p-value for the most likely cluster will be smaller than 0.05 and a 95% chance that it will be bigger. Under the null hypothesis there will always be some area with a rate higher than expected just by chance alone. Hence, even though the most likely cluster always has an excess rate when scanning for areas with high rates, the p-value may actually be very close or identical to one.

**Recurrence Interval:** For prospective analyses, the recurrence interval<sup>12</sup> (or, null occurrence rate) is shown as an alternative to the p-value. The measure reflects how often a cluster of the observed or larger likelihood will be observed by chance, assuming that analyses are repeated on a regular basis with a periodicity equal to the specified time interval length. For example, if the observed p-value is used as the cut-off for a signal and if the recurrence interval is once in 14 months, then the expected number of false signals in any 14 month period is one.

If no adjustments are made for earlier analysis, then the recurrence interval is once in  $D/p$  days, where  $D$  is the number of days in each time interval. If adjustments are made for a number of earlier analyses, then the recurrence interval is once every  $D / [ 1 - (1-p)^{1/A} ]$  days.

**SECONDARY CLUSTERS:** Summary information about other clusters detected in the data. The information provided is the same as for the most likely cluster.

P-values listed for secondary clusters are calculated in the same way as for the most likely cluster, by comparing the log likelihood ratio of secondary clusters in the real data set with the log likelihood ratios of the most likely cluster in the simulated data sets. This means that if a secondary cluster is significant, it can reject the null hypothesis on its own strength without help of any other clusters. It also means that these p-values are conservative<sup>1</sup>.

**PARAMETER SETTINGS:** A reminder of the parameter settings used for the analysis.

**Additional results files:** The name and location of additional results files are provided, when applicable.

**Related Topics:** *Output Tab, Clusters Reported Tab, Cluster Information File, Location Information File, Risk Estimates for Each Location, Simulated Log Likelihood Ratios, Cartesian Coordinates, Additional Output Files.*

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## Cluster Information File (\*.col.\*)

In the cluster information file, each cluster is on one line, with different information about the cluster in different columns. For each cluster there is information about the location and size of the cluster, its log likelihood ratio and the p-value. Except for the ordinal model and when multiple data sets are used, there is also information about the observed and expected number of cases, observed/expected and relative risk. For the ordinal model and multiple data sets, these numbers depend on the data set and/or category, and the information is instead provided in the Cluster Cases Information File.

The exact columns shown depend on the chosen analysis, as shown in Table 3. The file will have the same name as the standard results file, but with the extensions \*.col.txt and \*.col.dbf respectively, and will be located in the same directory.

Output Variable	dBase Name	Poisson, Bernoulli, Circular, Lat/Long, One Data Set	Poisson, Bernoulli, Circular, Cartesian, One Data Set	Poisson, Bernoulli, Circular, Cartesian 5 Dimensions, One Data Set	Space-Time Permutation, Circular, Lat/Long, One Data Set	Exponential, Circular, Lat/Long, One Data Set	Poisson, Bernoulli, Elliptic, Cartesian, One Data Set	Ordinal, Circular, Lat/Long, One Data Set	Poisson, Bernoulli, Circular, Lat/Long, Multiple Data Sets	Normal, Circular, Lat/Long, One Data Set
Cluster Number	CLUSTER	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Central Location ID	LOCATION_ID	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Latitude	LATITUDE	3	-	-	3	3	-	3	3	3
Longitude	LONGITUDE	4	-	-	4	4	-	4	4	4
X-coordinate	X	-	3	3	-	-	3	-	-	-
Y-coordinate	Y	-	4	4	-	-	4	-	-	-
Z1-coordinate	Z1	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Zn-coordinate	Zn	-	-	6,7	-	-	-	-	-	-
Circle Radius	RADIUS	5	5	8	5	5	-	5	5	5
Ellipse, Length of Minor Axis	E_MINOR	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-
Ellipse, Length of Major Axis	E_MAJOR	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-
Ellipse Angle	E_ANGLE	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	-
Ellipse Shape	E_SHAPE	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	-
Cluster Start Date	START_DATE	6	6	9	6	6	9	6	6	6
Cluster End Date	END_DATE	7	7	10	7	7	10	7	7	7
# Location IDs	NUMBER_LOC	8	8	11	8	8	11	8	8	8
Log Likelihood Ratio	LLR	9	9	12	-	9	12	9	9	9
Test Statistic	TEST_STAT	-	-	-	9	-	13	-	-	-
P-Value of Cluster	P_VALUE	10	10	13	10	10	14	10	10	10
Observed Cases	OBSERVED	11	11	14	11	11	15	-	-	11
Expected Cases	EXPECTED	12	12	15	12	12	16	-	-	-
Observed / Expected	ODE	13	13	16	13	13	17	-	-	-
Relative Risk	REL_RISK	14	14	17	-	-	18	-	-	-
Mean Inside	MEAN_IN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12
Mean Outside	MEAN_OUT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13
Unexplained Variance	VARIANCE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14
Standard deviation	DEVIATION	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15

*Table 3: Content of the cluster information output file, with dBase variable names and examples of column ordering for a few different types of analyses.*

**Related Topics:** Cluster Cases Information File, Location Information File Output Tab, Results of Analysis, Standard Results File

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## Cluster Cases Information File (\*.cci.\*)

In the cluster cases information file, there is one line for each ordinal category, in each data set for each cluster. For each cluster/category/data set combination, there is one column for the observed number of cases, the expected number of cases, observed divided by expected and the relative risk. If neither the ordinal model nor multiple data sets are used, then there is only one line for each cluster, and there is no information in this file that is not also in the Cluster Information File.

The file will have the same name as the standard results file, but with the extensions \*.cci.txt and \*.cci.dbf respectively, and will be located in the same directory.

**Related Topics:** *Cluster Information File, Location Information File, Output Tab, Results of Analysis, Standard Results File.*

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## Location Information File (\*.gis.\*)

As an option, a special output file may be created describing the various clusters in a way that is easy to incorporate into a geographical information system (GIS). This file may be requested in ASCII and/or dBase format, and can be accessed using any text editor or spreadsheet program. It will have the same name as the results file, but with the extensions \*.gis.txt and \*.gis.dbf respectively, and it will be located in the same directory. This file has one row for each location belonging to a cluster. The columns shown depends on the chosen analysis, including among other the following information:

- <Location ID>
- <Cluster Number>
- <P-Value of Cluster>
- <Observed Cases in Cluster>
- <Expected Cases in Cluster>
- <Observed/Expected in Cluster>
- <Observed Cases in Location>
- <Expected Cases in Location>
- <Observed/Expected in Location>

**Note:** The second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth column entries are the same for all locations belonging to the same cluster.

**Related Topics:** *Output Tab, Results of Analysis, Standard Results File, Cluster Information File.*

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## Risk Estimates for Each Location File (\*.rr.\*)

If the option to include risk estimates for each location is selected, a file with a list of all data locations and the corresponding number of observed cases, number of expected cases, the observed/expected ratio and the relative risk for each location is provided. This may be useful when examining a cluster area in

more detail. The information is purely descriptive. There is one line for each Location ID, and the content of the five columns is as follows:

**<Location ID><Observed Cases> <Expected Cases><Observed/Expected><Relative Risk>**

This file may be accessed using any text editor or spreadsheet program. It will have the same name as the results file, but with the extension \*.rr.txt or \*.rr.dbf, and it will be located in the same directory.

**Related Topics:** *Output Tab, Results of Analysis, Standard Results File.*

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## **Simulated Log Likelihood Ratios File (\*.llr.\*)**


The log likelihood ratio test statistics from the random data sets are not provided as part of the standard output. If desired, they can be printed to a special file which by default has the same name as the output file but with the extension \*.llr.txt or \*.llr.dbf. There is typically no need for this file, but it can be useful for statistical researchers who may be interested in the distributional properties of the scan statistic under various scenarios.

**Related Topics:** *Output Tab, Results of Analysis, Standard Results File, Monte Carlo Replications.*

# Miscellaneous

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## New Versions

To check whether there is a later version than the one you are currently using, simply click on the update button  on the tool bar. If a newer version exists, you will be asked whether you want to automatically download and install it. At any given time, it is also possible to download the latest version of the SaTScan from the World Wide Web at '<http://www.satscan.org/>'.

**Related Topics:** *Download and Installation.*

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## Analysis History File

In the analysis history file, SaTScan automatically maintains a log of all the SaTScan analyses conducted. Included in the log is an assigned analysis number together with information about the time of the analysis, parameter settings, a very brief summary of the results, as well as the name of the standard results file created.

The analysis history is in a dBase file with the name AnalysisHistory.dbf, located in the same directory as the SaTScan executable. It can be opened and read using most database and spreadsheet software, including Excel. You can erase the file at any time. A new file will then be created the next time you run SaTScan, starting the list of analyses from scratch.

**Related Topics:** *Running SaTScan, Results of Analysis.*

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## Random Number Generator

The choice of random number generator is critical for any software creating simulated data. SaTScan uses a Lehmer random number generator<sup>20</sup> with modulus  $2^{31}-1 = 2147483647$  and multiplier 48271, which is known to perform well<sup>21</sup>.

**Related Topics:** *Monte Carlo Replications.*

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## Contact Us

Please direct technical questions about installation and running the program, as well as the web site, to:

techsupport@satscan.org

Please direct substantive questions about the statistical methods and suggestions about new features to:

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### Comments and Suggestions

Feedback from users is greatly appreciated. Very valuable suggestions concerning the SaTScan software have been received from many individuals, including:

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Frank Boscoe, New York State Health Department  
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# Frequently Asked Questions

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## Input Data

- 1. I tried running SaTScan using one of the sample data sets, and all went well, but when I try it on my own data there is an error. What should I do?**

SaTScan makes sure that the input data is compatible with each other, and with the options specified on the windows interface. For example, it complains if there is a location ID in the case file that is not present in the coordinates file, as it must know where to localize those cases. For most data sets there is some need for data cleaning and SaTScan is designed to help with this process by spotting and pointing out any inconsistencies found.

- 2. I have constructed the ASCII input files exactly according to the description in the SaTScan User Guide, but SaTScan complains that they are not in the correct format. What is wrong?**

The most likely explanation is that the files are in UNICODE rather than ASCII format. Just convert to ASCII and it should work.

- 3. In my data, there are zero or only one case in most locations. Can I use SaTScan for such sparse data?**

Yes, you certainly can. One of the main reasons for using SaTScan is to avoid arbitrary geographical aggregation of the data, letting the scan statistic consider different smaller or larger aggregations through its continuously moving window. With finer geographical resolution of the input data, SaTScan can evaluate more different cluster locations and sizes without restrictions imposed by administrative geographical boundaries, minimizing assumptions about the geographical cluster location and size.

- 4. If my data is sparse, won't the rates be statistically unstable?**

The stability of rates does not depend on the geographical resolution of the input data, but on the population size of the circles constructed by SaTScan.

- 5. What is the minimum number of spatial locations needed to run SaTScan?**

The purely temporal scan statistic can be run with only one geographical location. The space-time scan statistic needs at least two locations. With only two locations, the space-time scan statistic will look for temporal clusters in either or both of the locations. Technically, the purely spatial scan statistic can also be run using only two geographical locations, providing correct inference. There is no point using a purely spatial scan statistic for such data though, for which a regular chi-square statistic can be used instead, as there is no multiple testing to adjust for. With three locations or more, the fundamental scan statistic concept of including different combinations of locations into the potential clusters is being utilized. In most practical applications though, the spatial and space-time scan statistics are used for data sets with

hundreds or thousands of geographical locations. If there is a choice, less spatial aggregation of the data is typically better, which means more geographical locations.

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## Analysis

### **6. With latitude/longitude coordinates, what planar projection is used?**

No projection is used. SaTScan draws perfect circles on the spherical surface of the earth.

### **7. When should I use the Bernoulli versus the Poisson model?**

Use the Bernoulli model when you have binary data, such as cases and controls, late and early stage cancer or people with and without a disease. Use the Poisson model when you have cases and a background population at risk, such as population numbers from the census.

### **8. SaTScan adjusts for categorical covariates, but I want to adjust for a continuous variable. Is that possible?**

One way to do this is to categorize the continuous variable. A better approach is to (i) calculate the adjustment using a regular statistical software package such as SAS, (ii) use the result from that analysis to calculate the covariate adjusted expected number of cases at each location, and (iii) use these expected values instead of the population in the population file. With this approach, there should not be any covariates in either the case or the population files.

### **9. What should I use as the maximum geographical cluster size? Is that an arbitrary choice?**

If you don't want to be arbitrary, choose 50% of the population as the maximum geographical cluster size. SaTScan will then evaluate very small and very large clusters, and everything in-between.

### **10. Why can't I select a maximum geographical cluster size that is larger than 50% of the population?**

Clusters of excess risk that are larger than 50% of the population at risk are better viewed as cluster with lower risk outside the scanning window, and the area outside will always have a very irregular geographical shape. If there is interest in clusters with lower risk than expected, it is more appropriate to select the low rates option on the analysis tab.

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## Results

### **11. I get an error stating that the output file could not be created. Why?**

Windows 2000 and Windows XP have tighter default security settings than Windows 95/98/NT/ME, and under these newer versions of Windows, permission to write to the "Program Files" folder is given only to administrators and power users of that machine. If the output file path includes the "Program Files" folder and you do not have administrative or power user privileges on your computer, Windows prevents SaTScan from creating the output file in the

designated location. The solution is to specify a different output file name using a different directory.

- 12. Since the SaTScan results are based on Monte Carlo simulated random data, why are the p-values the same when I run the analysis twice?**

All computer-based simulations are based on pseudo-random number generators. When the same seed is used, exactly the same sequence of pseudo-random numbers will be generated. Since SaTScan uses the same seed for every run, you obtain the same result for two runs when the input data is the same.

- 13. I ran exactly the same data using two different versions of SaTScan v2.1 and SaTScan v3.0/3.1/4.0/5.0/5.1/6.0/7.0, but the p-values are different. Why? Which one is the correct one?**

Compared to v2.1, the pseudo-random number generation is done slightly differently in SaTScan v3.0 and later, typically resulting in slightly different p-values. While both are valid and correct, only one p-value should be used. We recommend always using the p-value that was calculated first.

- 14. I ran exactly the same data using SaTScan v2.1/3.0/3.1/4.0 and SaTScan v5.0/5.1/6.0/7.0, but the results are different. Why?**

In earlier version, SaTScan defined overlapping clusters based on whether the two circles were overlapping. In SaTScan v5.0 and later, two clusters overlap if they have at least one location ID in common. These two definitions are usually the same, but in rare cases they may be different. If you were running the Poisson model, another possible reason for the difference is that SaTScan v5.0 and later uses a more precise algorithm for calculating the expected number of cases when the population dates in the population file are specified using days rather than months or years.

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## Interpretation

- 15. In SaTScan, after adjusting for population density and covariates such as age, the null-hypothesis is complete spatial randomness. For most disease data that is not true. Does this mean that the null hypothesis is wrong?**

When accepting the notion of statistical hypothesis testing one must also accept the fact that the null hypothesis is never true. For example, when comparing the efficacy of two different surgical procedures in a clinical trial we know for sure that their efficacy cannot be equal, but we still use equality as the null hypothesis since we are interested in finding out whether one is better than the other. Likewise, with geographical data we know that disease risk is not the same everywhere but we still use it as the null hypothesis since we are interested in finding locations with excess risk. Hence, the null hypothesis is wrong in the sense that we know it is not true but it is not wrong in the sense that we should not use it.

- 16. Does SaTScan assume that there is no spatial auto-correlation in the data? (Note: Spatial auto-correlation means that the location of disease cases is dependent on the location of other disease cases, such as with an infectious disease where an infected individual is likely to infect those living close by.)**

No, SaTScan does not assume that there is no spatial auto-correlation in the data. Rather, it is a test of whether there is spatial auto-correlation or other divergences from the null hypothesis. In this sense it is equivalent to a statistical test for normality, which does not assume that the data is normally distributed but tests whether it is.

**17. If I am interested in whether there is spatial auto-correlation in the data, why should I use the spatial scan statistic rather than a traditional spatial auto-correlation test?**

If you are only interested in whether there is spatial auto-correlation or not, but don't care about cluster locations, there are tests for spatial auto-correlation / global clustering that have higher power than the spatial scan statistic and should be used instead. The spatial scan statistic should be used when you are interested in the detection and statistical significance of local clusters.

**18. In spatial statistics, is it not always important to adjust for spatial auto-correlation? This cannot be done in SaTScan.**

Whether to adjust for spatial auto-correlation depends on the question being asked from the data. As an example, let's assume that we have geographical data on people who get sick due to food poisoning. In such data there is clearly spatial auto-correlation, since bad food sold at restaurants or grocery stores are often sold to multiple customers, many of who will live in the same neighborhood.

If we are doing spatial regression trying to determine what neighborhood characteristics such as mean income, house values, educational levels or ethnic origin contribute to a higher risk for food poisoning, it is critical to adjust for the spatial auto-correlation in the data. If not, the confidence in the risk relationships will be overestimated with biased p-values that are too small, providing 'statistically significant' results when none exist. Here, the null hypothesis should be that there is spatial auto-correlation and the alternative hypothesis that there are geographical differences in the risk of food poisoning.

On the other hand, if we are interested in quickly detecting food poisoning outbreaks, we should not adjust for the spatial auto-correlation since we are interested in detecting clusters due to such correlation, and if they are adjusted away, important clusters may go undetected. Here, the null hypothesis is that the food poisoning cases are geographically randomly distributed (adjusted for population density etc.) and the alternative hypothesis is that there is some clustering either due to differences in underlying risk factors or spatial auto-correlation. Once the location of a cluster has been detected, it is for the local health officials to determine the source of the cluster to prevent further illness.

**19. If there are multiple clusters in the data, does that mean that the p-values are more likely to be significant than their 0.05 nominal significance level suggests, so that chance clusters are detected too often?**

No. The opposite is actually true. Looking at United States mortality, suppose we have 1000 cases of a disease in Seattle and 30 in New York City. Seattle is clearly a significant cluster but 30 cases in New York City out of 1030 in all of the USA is not exceptional since the City has about 3 percent of the U.S. population. If we accept that there is a cluster in Seattle though, and if we adjust for that by removing Seattle from the analysis, then 30 cases in the City out of 30 nationwide is statistically significant. This is similar to a regular multiple regression, where if we adjust for one variable, another variable may suddenly become statistically significant. Note that

the opposite is also true. If we remove an area with significantly fewer cases than expected, than a significant cluster with an excess number of cases may become non-significant.

- 20. For count data, the spatial scan statistic uses a particular alternative hypothesis with an excess risk in a circular cluster, where the number of cases follows a Poisson or Bernoulli distribution. Does this mean that it can only be used to detect such alternative hypotheses?**

Many proposed and widely used test statistics do not specify an alternative hypothesis at all. This neither means that they cannot be used for any alternative hypotheses nor that they are good for all alternatives. Likewise, if an explicit alternative is defined, as with the spatial scan statistic, that does not mean that it cannot be used for other alternative hypotheses as well. It is simply a question of the test statistic having good power for some alternative hypotheses and low power for other. The advantage of having a well-specified alternative is that it gives some information about the alternatives for which the test can be expected to have good power.

- 21. For the exponential model, it is assumed that the survival times follow an exponential distribution. Are the results biased if the survival times follow a different distribution.**

No matter which distribution generated the survival times, the p-values from the statistical inference are still valid and unbiased, no matter which distribution. This is because rather than generating the random data from an exponential distribution, each random data is a spatial permutation of the survival times. A greatly misspecified distribution may lead to a loss in power though. For example, if the data is Bernoulli distributed, the exponential model has less power to detect a cluster than the Bernoulli model. For continuous distributions such as gamma and lognormal, the exponential model has been shown to work well.

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## Operating Systems

- 22. Is SaTScan available for Linux machines?**

A Linux version of SaTScan is available. It can be downloaded from the [www.satscan.org](http://www.satscan.org) web site.

- 23. Is SaTScan available for Unix machines?**

There is a Unix version of SaTScan available for Solaris. It has not been thoroughly tested so it may not work on all computers. Anyone interested in trying this version should send an email to 'kulldorff@satscan.org'.

# SaTScan Bibliography

Different SaTScan analysis options were developed at different times and they are described in different scientific publications. The following bibliography contains selected papers and reports intended to help you find information on the following:

1. Find the methodological paper(s) in which the various analysis options are presented and discussed in more detail than what is available here in the SaTScan User Guide.
2. Find applications in different scientific areas.
3. Determine the relevant scientific papers to cite.

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## Suggested Citations

The SaTScan software may be used freely, with the requirement that proper references are provided to the scientific papers describing the statistical methods. For the most common analyses, the suggested citations are:

*Bernoulli and Poisson Models:* Kulldorff M. A spatial scan statistic. Communications in Statistics: Theory and Methods, 26:1481-1496, 1997. [\[online\]](#)

*Space-Time Permutation Model:* Kulldorff M, Heffernan R, Hartman J, Assunção RM, Mostashari F. A space-time permutation scan statistic for the early detection of disease outbreaks. PLoS Medicine, 2:216-224, 2005. [\[online\]](#)

*Ordinal Model:* Jung I, Kulldorff M, Klassen A. A spatial scan statistic for ordinal data. Manuscript, 2005. [\[online\]](#)

*Exponential Model:* Huang L, Kulldorff M, Gregorio D. A spatial scan statistic for survival data. Manuscript, 2005. [\[online\]](#)

*Normal Model:* Manuscript in preparation. Until available, please cite this User Guide.

*Software:* Kulldorff M. and Information Management Services, Inc. SaTScan™ v7.0: Software for the spatial and space-time scan statistics. <http://www.satscan.org/>, 2006.

Users of SaTScan should in any reference to the software note that: “SaTScan™ is a trademark of Martin Kulldorff. The SaTScan™ software was developed under the joint auspices of (i) Martin Kulldorff, (ii) the National Cancer Institute, and (iii) Farzad Mostashari of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.”

**Related Topics:** *SaTScan Bibliography, Methodological Papers.*

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# SaTScan Methodology Papers

## ***Statistical Methodology***

General Statistical Theory, Bernoulli and Poisson Models

1. Kulldorff M. A spatial scan statistic. Communications in Statistics: Theory and Methods, 26:1481-1496, 1997. [[online](#)]

### *Spatial Scan Statistic, Bernoulli Model*

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### *Retrospective Space-Time Scan Statistic*

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### *Multivariate Scan Statistic*

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### *Adjusting for More Likely Clusters*

18. Zhang Z, Kulldorff M, Assunção R. Spatial scan statistics adjusted for multiple clusters. Manuscript under review.

## **Computational Aspects**

### *Algorithms*

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**Related Topics:** *SaTScan Bibliography, Selected Applications by Field of Study, Suggested Citation.*

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## **Selected SaTScan Applications by Field of Study**

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**Related Topics:** *Methodological Papers, SaTScan Bibliography, Suggested Citation.*

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