On the maximal order of numbers in the "factorisatio numerorum" problem

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Abstract

Let $m(n)$ be the number of ordered factorizations of $n \geq 1$ in factors larger than 1. We prove that for every $\varepsilon > 0$

$$m(n) < \frac{n^\rho}{\exp \left( (\log n)^{1/\rho}/(\log \log n)^{1+\varepsilon} \right)}$$

holds for all integers $n > n_0$, while, for a constant $c > 0$,

$$m(n) > \frac{n^\rho}{\exp \left( c(\log n/\log \log n)^{1/\rho} \right)}$$

holds for infinitely many positive integers $n$, where $\rho = 1.72864\ldots$ is the real solution to $\zeta(\rho) = 2$. We investigate also arithmetic properties of $m(n)$ and the number of distinct values of $m(n)$. 

1
1 Introduction

Let $m(n)$ be the number of ordered factorizations of a positive integer $n$ in factors bigger than 1. For example, $m(12) = 8$ since we have the factorizations $12, 2 \cdot 6, 6 \cdot 2, 3 \cdot 4, 4 \cdot 3, 2 \cdot 2 \cdot 3, 2 \cdot 3 \cdot 2$, and $3 \cdot 2 \cdot 2$. By the definition, $m(1) = 0$ but we will see that in some situations it is useful to set $m(1) = 1$ or $m(1) = 1/2$. Kalmár [13] found the average order of $m(n)$: for $x \to \infty$,

$$M(x) = \sum_{n \leq x} m(n) = cx^\rho(1 + o(1)),$$

where $\rho = 1.72864\ldots$ is the real solution to $\zeta(\rho) = 2$ and $c = 0.31817\ldots$ is given by $c = -1/\rho \zeta'(\rho)$. (As usual, $\zeta(s) = \sum_{n \geq 1} n^{-s}$.) Further detailed and strong results on the average order of $m(n)$ were obtained by Hwang [9].

In contrast, good bounds on the maximal order of $m(n)$ were lacking. Erdős claimed in the end of his article [4] that there exist positive constants $0 < c_2 < c_1 < 1$ such that

$$m(n) < \frac{n^\rho}{\exp \left(\left(\log n\right)^{c_2}\right)}$$

holds for all $n > n_0$, while

$$m(n) > \frac{n^\rho}{\exp \left(\left(\log n\right)^{c_1}\right)}$$

holds for infinitely many $n$, but he gave no details. To our knowledge, the best proved bounds on the maximal order state that $m(n) < n^\rho$ for every $n \geq 1$ (Chor, Lemke and Mador [1], a simple proof by induction was recently given by Coppersmith and Lewenstein [3]) and that for any $\varepsilon > 0$ one has $m(n) > n^{\rho-\varepsilon}$ for infinitely many $n$ (Hille [8], [3] gives an explicit construction). (In Lemma 2.3 we strengthen the argument of [1] and show that $m(n) \leq n^\rho/\sqrt{2}$ for every $n \geq 1$.)

Here we come close to determining the maximal order of $m(n)$. We prove that it is, roughly, $n^\rho/\exp \left(\left(\log n \right)^{1/\rho}\right)$. More precisely, we prove that for every $\varepsilon > 0$,

$$m(n) < \frac{n^\rho}{\exp \left(\left(\log n \right)^{1/\rho}/\left(\log \log n \right)^{1+\varepsilon}\right)}$$
holds for all $n > n_0$ (Theorem 3.1), while
\[ m(n) > \frac{n^\rho}{\exp \left( c \frac{(\log n)^{1/\rho}}{\log \log n} \right)} \]
holds with certain constant $c > 0$ for infinitely many positive integers $n$ (Theorem 4.1).

The paper is organized as follows. In Section 2 we give auxiliary results, of which Lemma 2.3 on the speed of convergence $\rho_k \to \rho$ ($\rho_k$ is a “finite” counterpart of $\rho$ for $m(n)$ restricted to smooth numbers $n$ with no prime factor exceeding $p_k$, the $k$th prime number) and Lemmas 2.4–2.6 giving explicit inequalities for $m(n)$ and $m_k(n)$ ($m_k(n) = m(n)$ if $n$ has no prime factor $> p_k$ and $m_k(n) = 0$ else) may be of independent interest. Section 3 is devoted to the proof of the upper bound. The proof is elementary (uses real analysis only) and is obtained by combining the combinatorial bounds on $m(n)$ in Lemmas 2.4 and 2.5, standard bounds from the prime numbers theory, and the convergence bound in Lemma 2.3. Section 4 is devoted to the proof of the lower bound. In the first version of this article, still available at [15, version 1], we proved by an elementary approach similar to that in Section 3, with the additional ingredient being Kalmár’s asymptotic relation 11, a weaker lower bound that has $(\log n)^{1/\rho}$ in the denominator replaced with the bigger power $(\log n)^{\rho/(\rho^2-1)+o(1)}$. Here, we prove in Section 4 a lower bound with the matching exponent $1/\rho$ of the log $n$ by a method suggested to us by an anonymous referee. The method works in the complex domain and combines the uniform (i.e., with error estimates independent on $k$) version of 11 for $m_k(n)$, bounds on smooth numbers, and again Lemma 2.3. In Section 5, we give further references and comments on the history of $m(n)$ and some related problems. We also investigate arithmetical properties of $m(n)$ and prove, for example, that $m(n)$ is not eventually periodic modulo $k$ for any integer $k > 1$, and that $m(n)$ is not a holonomic sequence.

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Let us begin with recalling some notation. For a positive integer \( n \) we write \( \omega(n) \) and \( \Omega(n) \) for the number of distinct prime factors of \( n \) and the total number of prime factors of \( n \) (including multiplicities), respectively. We use the letters \( p \) and \( q \) with or without subscripts to denote prime numbers. We put \( P(n) \) for the largest prime factor of \( n \). We write \( \log \) for the natural logarithm. In the complex domain (mainly in Section 4) we use \( s \) to denote a generic variable and write \( \sigma \) and \( \tau \) for its real and imaginary part, respectively, so \( s = \sigma + i\tau \), where \( i = \sqrt{-1} \). We use the Vinogradov symbols \( \ll \) and \( \gg \) and the Landau symbols \( O \) and \( o \) with their usual meanings.

The proof of the following estimate is standard and we omit it.

**Lemma 2.1.** If \( \delta > \delta_0 > 1 \), then the estimate

\[
\sum_{p > t} \frac{1}{p^\delta} = \frac{(\delta - 1)^{-1}}{t^{\delta-1}\log t} + O \left( \frac{1}{t^{\delta-1}(\log t)^2} \right)
\]

holds uniformly for \( t > 2 \).

Let \( p_k \) be the \( k \)th prime. We shall use the well known asymptotic relations

\[
\sum_{p \leq x} \log p = x + O(x/\log x)
\]

(equivalent to the Prime Number Theorem) and

\[
p_k = k \log k + k \log \log k + O(k)
\]

(the full asymptotic expansion \( p_k = k(\log k + \log \log k - 1 + \cdots) \) was found by Cipolla [2]). Let \( \mathcal{P}_k \) be the set (including 1) of positive integers composed only of the primes \( p_1 = 2, p_2, \ldots, p_k \), and \( m_k(n) \) be the number of ordered factorizations of \( n \) in factors lying in \( \mathcal{P}_k \setminus \{1\} \). We allow \( k = \infty \), then \( p_k = \infty \), \( \mathcal{P}_\infty = \mathcal{P} \) is the set of all primes, and \( m_\infty(n) = m(n) \). Note that, for \( k \in \mathbb{N} \), \( m_k(n) > 0 \) iff \( n \in \mathcal{P}_k \), if \( m_k(n) > 0 \) then \( m_k(n) = m(n) \), and if \( n \leq p_k \) then \( m_k(n) = m(n) \). Let, for complex \( s \) with \( \sigma > 1 \) and \( k \in \mathbb{N} \cup \{\infty\} \),

\[
\zeta_k(s) = \prod_{p \leq p_k} \left( 1 - \frac{1}{p^\alpha} \right)^{-1} = \sum_{n \in \mathcal{P}_k} \frac{1}{n^s}
\]
and $\rho_k$ be the real solution to $\zeta_k(\rho_k) = 2$. For $k = \infty$ we get the Euler-Riemann zeta function $\zeta(s) = \zeta_\infty(s)$ and the number $\rho = \rho_\infty$. Note that for $k \in \mathbb{N}$ the series for $\zeta_k(s)$ converges absolutely even for $\sigma > 0$. For every $s$ with $\sigma > 1$ we have the convergence $\zeta_k(s) \to \zeta(s)$ as $k \to \infty$. For $k \in \mathbb{N} \cup \{\infty\}$, one has the identity (setting $m_k(1) = 1$ for every $k$

$$\sum_{n \geq 1} \frac{m_k(n)}{n^s} = \sum_{l \geq 0} (\zeta_k(s) - 1)^l = \frac{1}{2 - \zeta_k(s)},$$

which implies that $m_k(n) = o(n^{\rho_k+\varepsilon})$ for every fixed $\varepsilon > 0$. Our approach to estimating $m(n)$ is based on approximating the “infinite” quantities $m(n)$, $\rho$, and $\zeta(s)$ with their “finite” counterparts $m_k(n)$, $\rho_k$, and $\zeta_k(s)$ for $k \in \mathbb{N}$ but $k \to \infty$. We quantify the degrees of approximation in the following two lemmas. The first lemma is obtained by considering the infinite series defining $\zeta_k(s)$ and $\zeta(s)$ and its easy proof is omitted.

**Lemma 2.2.** We have

$$\rho_1 = 1 < \rho_2 = 1.43527 \ldots < \rho_3 = 1.56603 \ldots < \ldots < \rho = 1.72864 \ldots$$

and $\rho_k \to \rho$ as $k \to \infty$. The convergence $\zeta_k(s) \to \zeta(s)$ as $k \to \infty$ is uniform on every complex domain $\sigma > \sigma_0 > 1$ and the same is true for the convergence $\zeta'_k(s) \to \zeta'(s)$ and for all higher derivatives. Also, for every $k \in \mathbb{N} \cup \{\infty\}$ we have $\zeta'_k(\rho_k) < 0$.

We shall use this lemma to bound various expressions containing $\rho_k$, $\zeta_k(\rho_k)$, $\zeta_k(s)$, $1/\zeta'_k(\rho_k)$ etc. by constants independent on $k$.

**Lemma 2.3.** The estimate

$$\rho - \rho_k = \frac{1}{(\rho - 1)|\zeta'(\rho)|} \cdot \frac{1}{k^{\rho-1}(\log k)^{\rho}} \left( 1 + O \left( \frac{\log \log k}{\log k} \right) \right)$$

holds for all $k \geq 2$.

**Proof.** We will assume that $k \geq 2$. The equation $\zeta_k(\rho_k)^{-1} = \zeta(\rho)^{-1} = 1/2$ implies that

$$\prod_{2 \leq p \leq \rho_k} \left( 1 - \frac{1}{p^{\rho_k}} \right) = \prod_{\rho \geq 2} \left( 1 - \frac{1}{p^\rho} \right).$$


Taking logarithms and regrouping, we get
\[ \sum_{2 \leq p \leq p_k} \left( \log \left( 1 - \frac{1}{p^\rho} \right) - \log \left( 1 - \frac{1}{p^{\rho_k}} \right) \right) = -\sum_{p > p_k} \log \left( 1 - \frac{1}{p^\rho} \right). \]

The left side satisfies, by Lagrange’s Mean-Value Theorem (the derivative of the function \( x \mapsto \log(1 - 1/p^x) \) is \((\log p)/p^x - 1\)),
\[ \sum_{2 \leq p \leq p_k} \log \left( 1 - \frac{1}{p^\rho} \right) - \log \left( 1 - \frac{1}{p^{\rho_k}} \right) = (\rho - \rho_k) \sum_{2 \leq p \leq p_k} \frac{\log p}{p^{\sigma_p} - 1} \] \[ > (\rho - \rho_k)(\log 2)/3 \]
for some numbers \( \sigma_p \in (\rho_k, \rho) \subset (1.4, 1.8) \). The right side is
\[ -\sum_{p > p_k} \log \left( 1 - \frac{1}{p^\rho} \right) = \sum_{p > p_k} \frac{1}{p^\rho} + O \left( \sum_{p > p_k} \frac{1}{p^{2\rho}} \right) \]
\[ = \frac{(\rho - 1)^{-1}}{p^{\rho-1} \log(p_k)} \left( 1 + O \left( \frac{1}{\log k} \right) \right) \]
\[ = \frac{(\rho - 1)^{-1}}{k^{\rho-1}(\log k)^\rho} \left( 1 + O \left( \frac{\log k}{\log k} \right) \right), \] \[ (4) \]
where we used Lemma 2.1 and the fact that \( p_k = k(\log k + O(\log \log k)) \). We get immediately that
\[ \rho - \rho_k \ll \frac{1}{k^{\rho-1}(\log k)^\rho}. \] \[ (5) \]

To do better, we return to (3) and write
\[ \frac{\log p}{p^{\sigma_p} - 1} = \frac{\log p}{p^\rho - 1} \left( 1 + \frac{p^{\sigma_p}}{p^{\sigma_p} - 1} \left( p^{\rho - \sigma_p} - 1 \right) \right). \]

We have \( 1 \leq p^{\sigma_p}/(p^{\sigma_p} - 1) \leq 2 \) and, using (5),
\[ p^{\rho - \sigma_p} - 1 \leq \exp((\rho - \rho_k) \log p_k) - 1 \ll (\rho - \rho_k) \log p_k \ll \frac{1}{k^{\rho-1}(\log k)^{\rho-1}}. \]

Hence the right side of (3) equals
\[ (\rho - \rho_k) \sum_{2 \leq p \leq p_k} \frac{\log p}{p^{\sigma_p} - 1} = (\rho - \rho_k)(1 + O(k^{1-\rho}(\log k)^{1-\rho})) \sum_{2 \leq p \leq p_k} \frac{\log p}{p^\rho - 1} \]
\[ = (\rho - \rho_k)(1 + O(k^{-1/2})) \sum_{2 \leq p \leq p_k} \frac{\log p}{p^\rho - 1}. \]
Equating the right side of (3) and (4) we get the relation
\[(\rho - \rho_k) \sum_{2 \leq p \leq \rho} \frac{\log p}{p^\rho - 1} = \frac{(\rho - 1)^{-1}}{k^{\rho - 1}(\log k)^\rho} \left(1 + O\left(\frac{\log \log k}{\log k}\right)\right).\]

All is left to notice is that
\[|\zeta'(\rho)| = \sum_{p \geq 2} \frac{\log p}{p^\rho - 1} = \sum_{p \leq p_k} \frac{\log p}{p^\rho - 1} + \sum_{p > p_k} \frac{\log p}{p^\rho - 1} = \sum_{p \leq p_k} \frac{\log p}{p^\rho - 1} + O(k^{-1/2}),\]

where the last estimate follows again from Lemma 2.1 via the fact that \(\log p \ll p^{1/10}\):
\[\sum_{p > p_k} \frac{\log p}{p^\rho - 1} \ll \sum_{p > p_k} \frac{1}{p^{\rho - 1/10}} \ll \frac{1}{p_k^{\rho - 1/10} \log p_k} < 1/\sqrt{k}.\]

The claimed estimate now follows. \(\square\)

In the next three lemmas, we prove combinatorial inequalities involving \(m_k(n)\) and \(m(n)\). In the first lemma, we slightly improve the result from \([1, \text{Theorem 5}]\) that \(m_k(n) < n^{\rho_k}\) for every \(n \geq 1\). The second lemma is crucial for obtaining bounds of the type \(m(n) = o(n^\rho)\). The third lemma gives some lower estimates on \(m(n)\).

**Lemma 2.4.** For every \(k \in \mathbb{N} \cup \{\infty\}\) and \(n \geq 1\) (with \(m_k(1) = 0\)),
\[m_k(n) \leq \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} n^{\rho_k}.\]

**Proof.** For every \(r, s \geq 1\) we have (now setting \(m_k(1) = 0\))
\[m_k(rs) \geq 2m_k(r)m_k(s).\] (6)

To show this inequality, we assume that \(r, s \geq 2\) (for \(r = 1\) or \(s = 1\) it holds trivially) and consider the set \(X\) of all pairs \((u, v)\) where \(u, v\) is an ordered factorization of \(r\) (\(s\)) in factors lying in \(\mathcal{P}_k \setminus \{1\}\), and the set \(Y\) of the same
factorizations of \( rs \). If \( u = r = d_1 \cdot d_2 \cdot \ldots \cdot d_i \) and \( v = s = e_1 \cdot e_2 \cdot \ldots \cdot e_j \), we define the factorizations of \( rs \)

\[
F((u, v)) = d_1 \cdot d_2 \cdot \ldots \cdot d_i \cdot e_1 \cdot e_2 \cdot \ldots \cdot e_j \\
G((u, v)) = d_1 \cdot d_2 \cdot \ldots \cdot d_{i-1} \cdot (d_i e_1) \cdot e_2 \cdot \ldots \cdot e_j.
\]

The inequality (6) follows from the fact that the mappings \( F \) and \( G \) are injections from \( X \) to \( Y \) which moreover have disjoint images. We leave a simple verification of this fact to the reader.

Suppose now that \( m_k(n_0) > n_0^{\rho_k}/\sqrt{2} \) for some \( n_0 \geq 2 \). By (6), we have \( m_k(n_0^2) \geq 2m_k(n_0)^2 > n_0^{2\rho_k} \) and hence we can take some \( \varepsilon > 0 \) so that \( m_k(n_0) \geq (n_0^{2\rho_k+\varepsilon}) \). Then, again by (6), \( m_k(n_0^{2i}) \geq (n_0^{2i})^{\rho_k+\varepsilon} \) for every \( i = 1, 2, \ldots \), which is in contradiction with \( m_k(n) = o(n^{\rho_k+\varepsilon}) \).

\[\Box\]

**Lemma 2.5.** Suppose that \( q_1, \ldots, q_k \) are primes, not necessarily distinct, such that the product \( q_1q_2 \ldots q_k \) divides \( n \). Then, with \( m(1) = 1 \),

\[
m(n) < (2\Omega(n))^k \cdot m(n/q_1q_2 \ldots q_k).
\]  

(7)

\[\text{Proof.}\] It suffices to prove only the case \( k = 1 \); i.e., the inequality

\[
m(n) < 2\Omega(n) \cdot m(n/p),
\]  

(8)

where \( p \) is a prime dividing \( n \), because the general case follows easily by iteration. Let \( X \) be the set of all pairs \((u, i)\) where \( u \) is an ordered factorization of \( n/p \) (in parts bigger than 1) and \( i \) is an integer satisfying \( 1 \leq i \leq 2r + 1 \), where \( r \) is the number of parts in \( u \). Let \( Y \) be the set of all ordered factorizations of \( n \) in parts bigger than 1. We shall define a surjection \( F \) from \( X \) onto \( Y \). This will prove (6) because \( r \leq \Omega(n/p) = \Omega(n) - 1 \), and therefore for every \( u \) we have \( 2r + 1 < 2\Omega(n) \) pairs \((u, i)\), and so

\[
m(n) = |Y| \leq |X| < 2\Omega(n) \cdot m(n/p).
\]

For \((u, i) \in X\), where \( u \) is \( n/p = d_1 \cdot d_2 \cdot \ldots \cdot d_r \), we define \( j = i - r \) and set \( F((u, i)) \) to be the factorization

\[
n = d_1 \cdot \ldots \cdot d_{i-1} \cdot (pd_i) \cdot d_{i+1} \cdot \ldots \cdot d_r
\]

if \( 1 \leq i \leq r \) and

\[
n = d_1 \cdot \ldots \cdot d_j \cdot p \cdot d_{j+1} \cdot \ldots \cdot d_r
\]

if \( r + 1 \leq i \leq 2r + 1 \) (for \( j = 1 \), \( p \) is the first part and for \( j = r + 1 \) it is the last one). It is clear that \( F \) is a surjection. \[\Box\]
Lemma 2.6. If $n_1, n_2, \ldots, n_k$ are positive integers such that for no $i \neq j$ we have $n_i | n_j$, then

$$m(n_1n_2 \ldots n_k) \geq k! \cdot m(n_1)m(n_2) \ldots m(n_k).$$

This implies that for every $n \geq 1$ we have

$$m(n) \geq \omega(n)! \cdot 2^{\Omega(n)-\omega(n)} \quad \text{and} \quad m(n) \geq 2^{\Omega(n)-1}.$$

Proof. Let $X$ be the set of all $k$-tuples $(u_1, u_2, \ldots, u_k)$, where $u_i$ is an ordered factorization of $n_i$ in parts bigger than 1 and let $Y$ be the set of these factorizations for $n_1n_2 \ldots n_k$. For every permutation $\sigma$ of $1, 2, \ldots, k$, we define a mapping $F_\sigma : X \to Y$ by

$$F_\sigma((u_1, u_2, \ldots, u_k)) = u_{\sigma(1)} \cdot u_{\sigma(2)} \cdot \ldots \cdot u_{\sigma(k)},$$

i.e., we concatenate factorizations $u_i$ in the order prescribed by $\sigma$. It is clear that each $F_\sigma$ is an injection. Suppose that $F_\sigma((u_1, u_2, \ldots, u_k)) = F_\tau((v_1, v_2, \ldots, v_k))$ for some permutations $\sigma, \tau$ and factorizations $u_i$ and $v_i$. It follows that $u_{\sigma(1)}$ is an initial segment of $v_{\tau(1)}$ or vice versa, and hence $n_{\sigma(1)}$ divides $n_{\tau(1)}$ or vice versa. This implies that $\sigma(1) = \tau(1)$ and $u_{\sigma(1)} = v_{\tau(1)}$. Applying the same argument, we obtain that $\sigma(j) = \tau(j)$ and $u_{\sigma(j)} = v_{\tau(j)}$ also for $j = 2, \ldots, k$. Thus $\sigma = \tau$ and $u_j = v_j$ for $j = 1, 2, \ldots, k$. We have proved that the $k!$ mappings $F_\sigma$ have mutually disjoint images. Therefore

$$k! \cdot m(n_1)m(n_2) \ldots m(n_k) = k!|X| \leq |Y| = m(n_1n_2 \ldots n_k).$$

If $n = q_1^{a_1}q_2^{a_2} \ldots q_k^{a_k}$ is the prime factorization of $n$, applying the first inequality to the $k$ numbers $n_i = q_i^{a_i}$ and using that $m(p^a) = 2^{a-1}$, we obtain

$$m(n) \geq k! \prod_{i=1}^k 2^{a_i-1} = k! \cdot 2^{\Omega(n)-k},$$

which is the second inequality. Using that $k!/2^k \geq 1/2$ for every $k \geq 1$, we get the third inequality. \[\Box\]

Note that $m(n) \geq 2^{\Omega(n)-1}$ is tight for every $n = p^a$. 9
3 The upper bound

We prove the following upper bound on the maximal order of \( m(n) \).

**Theorem 3.1.** For every \( \varepsilon > 0 \) we have

\[
m(n) < \frac{n^\rho}{\exp \left( (\log n)^{1/\rho} / (\log \log n)^{1+\varepsilon+o(1)} \right)}
\]

for integers \( n > 2 \).

**Proof.** Let \( \varepsilon > 0 \) be given. To bound \( m(n) \) from above, we split the integers \( n > 0 \) in two groups, those with \( \omega(n) \leq k \) and those with \( \omega(n) > k \), which we shall treat by different arguments; the optimum value of the parameter \( k = k(n) \) will be selected in the end.

The case \( \omega(n) \leq k \). Let \( n = q_1^{a_1} q_2^{a_2} \ldots q_r^{a_r}, r \leq k \), be the prime decomposition of \( n \) where \( q_1 < q_2 < \ldots < q_r \). We denote by \( \tilde{n} \) the number obtained from \( n \) by replacing \( q_i \) in the decomposition by \( p_i \), the \( i \)th smallest prime. Then \( \tilde{n} \leq n \). From the fact that \( m(n) \) depends only on the exponents \( a_i \) and from Lemma 2.4 we get

\[
m(n) = m(n) = m_r(\tilde{n}) < \tilde{n}^{\rho_r} \leq n^{\rho_k}.
\]

Thus, by Lemma 2.3

\[
m(n) < n^{\rho_k} = n^{\rho} \exp \left( -(\rho - \rho_k) \log n \right)
= n^{\rho} \exp \left( -\left( c + o(1) \right) \frac{\log n}{k^{\rho - 1} (\log k)^{\rho}} \right)
\]

where \( c = (\rho - 1)^{-1}\zeta'(\rho)^{-1} > 0 \).

The case \( \omega(n) > k \). Let \( l(n) \) be the product of some \( k \) distinct prime factors of \( n \); then \( l(n) \geq p_1 p_2 \ldots p_k \), the product of the \( k \) smallest primes. We have the estimates

\[
\sum_{p \leq p_k} \log p = p_k + O(\log p_k) = k \log k + k \log \log k + O(k)
\]

and

\[
2\Omega(n) = (2/\log 2) \log n < 3 \log n.
\]

10
By Lemmas 2.4, 2.5 and these estimates,

\[ m(n) < (2\Omega(n))^k m(n/\ell(n)) < (3 \log n)^k \frac{n^\rho}{\ell(n)^\rho} \]

\[ \leq (3 \log n)^k \frac{n^\rho}{(p_1 \ldots p_k)^\rho} \]

\[ = n^\rho \exp \left( - k(\rho \log k + \rho \log \log k - \log \log n + O(1)) \right). \quad (10) \]

To determine the best upper bound on \( m(n) \), we begin with \( k \) in the form

\[ k = k(n) = (\log n)^{\alpha + o(1)} \]

where \( \alpha \in (0, 1) \) is a constant. Necessarily \( \alpha \geq 1/\rho \), for else the argument of \( \exp \) in (10) is eventually positive and we get a useless bound. It follows that the optimum is \( \alpha = 1/\rho \) when the arguments of both \( \exp \)s in (9) and (10) are

\[ - (\log n)^{1/\rho + o(1)} \]

provided that

\[ \rho \log k + \rho \log \log k - \log \log n + O(1) > c > 0 \quad (11) \]

for big \( n \). Now we set, more precisely,

\[ k = k(n) = \frac{(\log n)^{1/\rho}}{(\log \log n)^{d + o(1)}} \]

with a constant \( d > 0 \). With this \( k \), the function in (11) becomes \( \rho(1 - d + o(1)) \log \log n + O(1) \) and we see that condition (11) is satisfied for \( d < 1 \) (for \( d > 1 \) the argument of the \( \exp \) in (10) is again eventually positive). With this \( k \), the arguments of the \( \exp \)s in (9) and (10) are, respectively,

\[ - \frac{(\log n)^{1/\rho}}{(\log \log n)^{1+(\rho-1)(1-d)+o(1)}} \quad \text{and} \quad - \frac{(\log n)^{1/\rho}}{(\log \log n)^{d+o(1)}}. \]

Setting \( d = 1 - \varepsilon/2(\rho - 1) \), we obtain the stated bound.

\[ \square \]

**4 The lower bound**

We prove the following lower bound on the maximal order of \( m(n) \).

**Theorem 4.1.** There is a constant \( c > 0 \) such that the inequality

\[ m(n) > \frac{n^\rho}{\exp (c(\log n / \log \log n)^{1/\rho})} \]

holds for infinitely many integers \( n > 0 \).
We shall see that it is possible to take $c = 2.01630 \cdots - \varepsilon$. We begin with explaining the effective Ikehara–Ingham theorem on Dirichlet series. Then we apply it to $1/(2 - \zeta_k(s))$ to obtain an asymptotic relation for the average order of $m_k(n)$ with error estimate independent on $k$. Finally, combining this relation with an estimate on density of smooth numbers we obtain Theorem 4.4. For the background on Dirichlet series we refer to Tenenbaum [27].

Suppose that $(a_n)_{n \geq 1}$ is a sequence of nonnegative real numbers with the summatory function

$$A(t) = \sum_{n \leq e^t} a_n$$

and the Dirichlet series

$$F(s) = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{a_n}{n^s} = \int_0^\infty e^{-st} dA(t).$$

Suppose that $F(s)$ converges for $\sigma > a > 0$. We may assume that $a$ is the abscissa of (absolute) convergence; then by the Phragmén–Landau theorem, $a$ is a singularity of $F(s)$. The effective Ikehara-Ingham theorem, proved by Tenenbaum [27] (who used the method of Ganelius [5]), extracts an asymptotic relation for $A(x)$ as $x \to \infty$ from the local behavior of $F(s)$ near $a$ and, moreover, it provides an explicit estimate of the error term in terms of the regularity of $F(s)$ on the vertical segments $a + \sigma + i\tau$, $-T \leq \tau \leq T$, as $\sigma \to 0^+$. We quote the theorem verbatim from Tenenbaum [27, p. 234].

**Theorem 4.2. (“Effective” Ikehara-Ingham).** Let $A(t)$ be a non-decreasing function such that the integral

$$F(s) := \int_0^\infty e^{-st} dA(t)$$

converges for $\sigma > a > 0$. Suppose that there exist constants $c \geq 0$, $\omega > -1$, such that the function

$$G(s) := \frac{F(s + a)}{s + a} - \frac{c}{s^{\omega+1}} \quad (\sigma > 0)$$

satisfies

$$\eta(\sigma, T) := \sigma^\omega \int_{-T}^T |G(2\sigma + i\tau) - G(\sigma + i\tau)| d\tau = o(1) \quad (\sigma \to 0^+) \quad (12)$$

12
for each fixed \( T > 0 \). Then we have

\[
A(x) = \left\{ \frac{c}{\Gamma(\omega + 1)} + O(\rho(x)) \right\} e^{ax} x^\omega \quad (x \geq 1),
\]

with

\[
\rho(x) := \inf_{T \geq 32(a+1)} \{ T^{-1} + \eta(1/x, T) + (Tx)^{-\omega-1} \}.
\]

Furthermore, the implicit constant in (13) depends only on \( a, c, \) and \( \omega \). An admissible choice for this constant is

\[
52 + 1652c(a+1)(\omega + 1) + 69c(1 + (\omega + 1)e^{1-\omega(\omega + 1)^{\omega+2}})/\Gamma(\omega + 1).
\]

Note that for a meromorphic \( F(s) \) with a simple pole at \( s = a \) (so \( \omega = 0 \)), the condition (12) is satisfied iff \( F(s) \) has on the line \( \sigma = a \) no other poles.

We shall apply Theorem 4.2 to the functions

\[
F(s) = F_k(s) = \sum_{n \geq 1} \frac{m_k(n)}{n^s} = \frac{1}{2 - \zeta_k(s)}
\]

for \( k \geq 2, a = \rho_k, c = c_k = -1/\rho_k \zeta'_k(\rho_k), \) and \( \omega = 0 \). It is not hard to prove (we do this in the next Proposition) that \( \rho_k \) is the only pole of \( F_k(s) \) on \( \sigma = \rho_k \) when \( k \geq 2 \) (this is not true for \( k = 1 \)) and thus by Theorem 4.2

\[
\sum_{n \leq x} m_k(n) = (c_k + o(1))x^{\rho_k} \quad (x \to \infty)
\]

for each fixed \( k \geq 2 \). (In contrast, \( \sum_{n \leq x} m_1(n) = 2^r - 1 \) where \( 2^r \leq x < 2^{r+1} \).)

To get a good lower bound on \( m(n) \), we have to strengthen this by obtaining uniformity in \( k \) of the error term \( o(1) \). This follows from Theorem 4.2 once we prove that for \( F(s) = F_k(s) \) the condition (12) is satisfied uniformly in \( k \).

**Proposition 4.3.** Let, for \( k \geq 2 \),

\[
G_k(s) = \frac{F_k(s + \rho_k)}{s + \rho_k} - \frac{c_k}{s} = \frac{1}{(2 - \zeta_k(s + \rho_k))(s + \rho_k)} - \frac{c_k}{s}
\]

and \( T > 0 \) be arbitrary but fixed. Then

\[
\lim_{\sigma \to 0+} \int_{-T}^{T} |G_k(2\sigma + i\tau) - G_k(\sigma + i\tau)| \, d\tau = 0
\]

uniformly in \( k \geq 2 \); that is, the condition (13) holds uniformly in \( k \).
Proof. Let \( t(\sigma) = \sigma^{1/5} \); any function \( t(\sigma) > 0 \) satisfying, as \( \sigma \to 0+ \), that \( t(\sigma) \to 0 \) and \( \sigma/t(\sigma)^4 \to 0 \) would do in our argument. For every fixed \( T > 0 \), we bound the integrand by a quantity that depends only on \( \sigma \) and not on \( \tau \) and \( k \geq 2 \) and that goes to 0 as \( \sigma \to 0+ \); this will prove the statement. We manage doing this by splitting \([-T, T] \) in two ranges, \( t(\sigma) \leq |\tau| \leq T \) and \(|\tau| \leq t(\sigma) \), in which we apply different arguments.

The range \( t(\sigma) \leq |\tau| \leq T \). Denoting by \( \gamma \) the horizontal segment with endpoints \( \sigma + i\tau \) and \( 2\sigma + i\tau \), we have the bound

\[
|G_k(2\sigma + i\tau) - G_k(\sigma + i\tau)| = \left| \int_{\gamma} G'_k(z) \, dz \right| \leq \sigma |G'_k(s_0)|
\]

where \( s_0 \) is some point lying on \( \gamma \). The derivative of \( G_k(s) \) equals

\[
G'_k(s) = \frac{(s + \rho_k)\zeta'_k(s + \rho_k) + \zeta_k(s + \rho_k) - 2}{(2 - \zeta_k(s + \rho_k))^2(s + \rho_k)^2} + \frac{c_k}{s^2}.
\]

We bound the numerators and denominators of this expression. As for the numerators, by Lemma 2.2, there is a constant \( c = c(T) > 0 \) depending only on \( T \) such that

\[
| (s + \rho_k)\zeta'_k(s + \rho_k) + \zeta_k(s + \rho_k) - 2 |, \ |c_k| < c
\]

holds for every \( k \geq 2 \) and \( s \) with \( 0 < \sigma < 1 \) and \( |\tau| \leq T \). For the second denominator, we have, in our range and for \( 0 < \sigma < 1 \),

\[
\frac{\sigma}{|s_0|^2} \leq \frac{\sigma}{\sigma^2 + t(\sigma)^2} = \frac{\sigma^{3/5}}{\sigma^{3/5} + 1} < \sigma^{3/5}.
\]

We bound the first denominator. Clearly, \( |s + \rho_k|^2 \geq \rho_k^2 \) for every \( s \) with \( \sigma > 0 \). For every \( k \geq 2 \) and every \( s \) with \( 0 < \sigma < 1 \) and any \( \tau \) we have

\[
|2 - \zeta_k(s + \rho_k)| \geq \text{Re}(2 - \zeta_k(s + \rho_k)) = \sum_{n \geq 1, P(n) \leq \rho_k} \frac{1}{n^{\rho_k + \sigma}} (n^\sigma - \cos(\tau \log n))
\]

and, consequently, (recall that \( k \geq 2 \) and \( 1 < \rho_k < 2 \))

\[
|2 - \zeta_k(s + \rho_k)|^2 > \left( \frac{2 - \cos(\tau \log 2) - \cos(\tau \log 3)}{27} \right)^2 =: h(\tau).
\]

14
Since \( 2^\alpha = 3 \) holds for no fraction \( \alpha \), \( h(\tau) = 0 \) only for \( \tau = 0 \). The function \( h(\tau) \) is continuous and even and \( h(\tau) \sim \beta \tau^4 \) as \( \tau \to 0 \) for a constant \( \beta > 0 \). Thus there is a constant \( \beta_1 = \beta_1(T) < 1 \) depending only on \( T \) such that if \( 0 < \sigma < \beta_1 \) then the minimum of \( h(\tau) \) on \([t(\sigma), T]\) is attained at \( t(\sigma) \) and \( h(t(\sigma)) > \beta t(\sigma)^4/2 \). Hence, in our range and for \( 0 < 2\sigma < \beta_1 \),

\[
\frac{\sigma}{|2 - \zeta_k(s_0 + \rho_k)|^2 \cdot |s_0 + \rho_k|^2} < \frac{2\sigma}{\beta t(\sigma)^4} = \frac{2\sigma^{1/5}}{\beta}.
\]

Taking together all estimates, we have in our range and for \( 0 < \sigma < \beta_1/2 \) that

\[
|G_k(2\sigma + i\tau) - G_k(\sigma + i\tau)| \leq \sigma |G_k'(s_0)| < c(2\sigma^{1/5}/\beta + \sigma^{3/5}),
\]

which is the required bound.

The range \(|\tau| \leq t(\sigma)\). We prove that there is an absolute constant \( \delta > 0 \) such that for every \( k \geq 2 \) and \( s \) with \(|s| < \delta\) we have the expansion

\[
G_k(s) = d_k + O(s),
\]

where \( d_k \) is a constant and the constant implicit in \( O \) is absolute. (We need independence on \( k \) both for the constant in \( O(s) \) and for the domain of validity of the error estimate.) Then if \( 0 < \sigma < \delta^5/32 \) and \(|\tau| \leq t(\sigma)\), both numbers \( \sigma + i\tau \) and \( 2\sigma + i\tau \) satisfy \(|s| < \delta\), and we have the bound

\[
|G_k(2\sigma + i\tau) - G_k(\sigma + i\tau)| = O(|\sigma + i\tau| + |2\sigma + i\tau|) = O(\sigma^{1/5})
\]

with absolute constants in \( O(s) \), which is the required bound.

We begin with the origin-centered closed disc \( B = B(0, 0.1) \); the point of the radius 0.1 is only that \( \rho_2 - 0.1 > 1 \). We define functions \( f_k(s) \) by

\[
f_k(s) = \frac{\zeta_k(s + \rho_k) - 2 - s\zeta_k'(\rho_k) - s^2\zeta_k''(\rho_k)/2}{s^3}.
\]

Let \( a_k \) be the maximum value taken by \(|\zeta_k(s)|\) on the circle \(|s - \rho_k| = 0.1\). By the maximum modulus principle \( (f_k(s) \) is holomorphic on \( B \), for every \( s \in B \) we have

\[
|f_k(s)| \leq 10^3(a_k + 2 + 10^{-1} \zeta_k'(\rho_k) + 10^{-2} \zeta_k''(\rho_k)/2).
\]

Thus, by Lemma 2.2 there is an absolute constant \( M > 0 \) such that

\[
|f_k(s)| < M
\]

15
holds for every $s \in B$ and every $k \geq 2$. We rewrite $\zeta_k(s + \rho_k) = 2 + s\zeta_k'(\rho_k) + s^2\zeta_k''(\rho_k)/2 + s^3 f_k(s)$ as
\[
\frac{1}{(2 - \zeta(s + \rho_k))(s + \rho_k)} = -\frac{1}{s\rho_k \zeta_k'(\rho_k)} \times \frac{1}{1 + s/\rho_k} \times \frac{1}{1 + s/\rho_k} = -\frac{1}{s\rho_k \zeta_k'(\rho_k)} \times \frac{1}{1 + s/\rho_k} \times \frac{1}{1 + s/\rho_k} \times \frac{1}{1 + s/\rho_k} = \frac{1}{(2 - \zeta(s + \rho_k))(s + \rho_k)}.
\]
It follows, by Lemma 2.2 and the bound $|f_k(s)| < M$ valid on $B$, that there is a $\delta$, $0 < \delta < 0.1$, such that $|s/\rho_k| < 1/2$ and $|s\rho_k + s^2 h_k(s)| < 1/2$ whenever $|s| < \delta$ and $k \geq 2$. Using the estimate $(1 + s)^{-1} = 1 - s + O(s^2)$, valid for $|s| < 1/2$, and Lemma 2.2 we obtain for $k \geq 2$ and $|s| < \delta$ the expansion
\[
\frac{1}{(2 - \zeta(s + \rho_k))(s + \rho_k)} = \frac{c_k}{s} \left(1 - \frac{s}{\rho_k} + O(s^2)\right) \left(1 - s \frac{\zeta_k''(\rho_k)}{2\zeta_k'(\rho_k)} + O(s^2)\right) = \frac{c_k}{s} - c_k \left(1 - \frac{s}{\rho_k} + \frac{\zeta_k''(\rho_k)}{2\zeta_k'(\rho_k)}\right) + O(s),
\]
where $c_k = -1/\rho_k \zeta_k'(\rho_k)$ and the constants in $O$s are absolute. Now the required expansion $\zeta_k(s) = d_k + O(s)$ (valid for $|s| < \delta$ and with an absolute constant in $O$) is immediate. \hfill \square

**Corollary 4.4.** There is a constant $\beta_2 > 2$ such that for every $x > \beta_2$ and every $k \geq 2$ we have
\[
\sum_{n \leq x \atop p(n) \leq \rho_k} m(n) = \sum_{n \leq x} m_k(n) > x^{\beta_k}/5.
\]

**Proof.** By Theorem 1.2 and Proposition 4.3 there is a function $e(x) > 0$ such that $e(x) \to 0$ as $x \to \infty$, and for every $x \geq 1$ and every $k \geq 2$ we have
\[
\left|\sum_{n \leq x} m_k(n) - c_k x^{\beta_k}\right| < e(x) x^{\beta_k}.
\]
The sequence of $c_k = -1/\rho_k \zeta_k'(\rho_k), k = 1, 2, \ldots$, monotonically decreases and converges to $c_\infty = -1/\rho \zeta'(\rho) > 0.3$. Thus if $x$ is big enough so that $e(x) < 0.1$, the sum $\sum_{n \leq x} m_k(n)$ must be bigger than $0.2 x^{\beta_k}$. \hfill \square
We proceed to the proof of Theorem 4.1. We denote, as usual,
\[ \Psi(x, y) = \#\{n \leq x : P(n) \leq y\} \].

By Corollary 4.4, for every \( k \geq 2 \) and \( x > \beta_2 \) there exists an \( n_0 \leq x \) such that
\[ \Psi(x, p_k)m(n_0) > \frac{x^\rho}{5 \exp((\rho - \rho_k) \log x)}. \]

We select \( k = k(x) \) so that it satisfies
\[ k = (\log x)^{\alpha + o(1)} \]
as \( x \to \infty \), for some absolute constant \( \alpha \in (0, 1) \) (we make our choice of \( k \) more precise later). Then
\[ p_k = (1 + o(1))k \log k = (\log x)^{\alpha + o(1)}. \]

A theorem due to de Bruijn, see Theorem 2 in Tenenbaum’s book [27, p. 359], shows that
\[ \log(\Psi(x, p_k)) = (1 + o(1))Z, \]
where
\[ Z = \frac{\log x}{\log p_k} \log \left(1 + \frac{p_k}{\log x}\right) + \frac{p_k}{\log p_k} \log \left(1 + \frac{\log x}{p_k}\right) \]
\[ = \frac{p_k}{\log p_k} (1 + o(1)) + \frac{p_k}{\log p_k} \log \left(1 + \frac{\log x}{p_k}\right) \]
\[ = (1 + o(1))k(\log \log x - \log k). \]

By Lemma 2.3,
\[ \rho - \rho_k = \frac{c_1 + o(1)}{k^{\rho - 1}(\log k)^\rho} \]
where \( c_1 = 1/((\rho - 1)\zeta'(\rho)) \). Substituting both estimates in the lower bound on \( \Psi(x, p_k)m(n_0) \), we get (absorbing the 5 in the denominator in the \( o(1) \) terms)
\[ m(n_0) > \frac{x^\rho}{\exp \left(c_1(1 + o(1))\frac{\log x}{k^{\rho - 1}(\log k)^\rho} + (1 + o(1))k(\log \log x - \log k)\right)}. \]
This suggests to choose \( k \) so that both terms in the argument of the exponential,

\[
\frac{\log x}{k^{\rho - 1}(\log k)^\rho} \quad \text{and} \quad k(\log \log x - \log k),
\]

are of the same order of magnitude. This occurs when \( \alpha = 1/\rho \), more precisely when

\[
k = \lfloor d(\log x)^{1/\rho}(\log \log x)^{-(\rho + 1)/\rho} \rfloor
\]

with any constant \( d > 0 \), because then

\[
\frac{\log x}{k^{\rho - 1}(\log k)^\rho} = d^1 - \rho(1 + o(1)) \left( \frac{\log x}{\log \log x} \right)^{1/\rho}
\]

and

\[
k(\log \log x - \log k) = (1 - \rho^{-1})d(1 + o(1)) \left( \frac{\log x}{\log \log x} \right)^{1/\rho}.
\]

Thus, for this selection of \( k \),

\[
m(n_0) > \frac{x^\rho}{\exp \left( (c + o(1)) \left( \frac{\log x}{\log \log x} \right)^{1/\rho} \right)}
\]

where \( c > 0 \) is a constant depending only on the choice of \( d \). The lower bound eventually increases monotonically to infinity, and we conclude that there exist infinitely many numbers \( n_0 \) satisfying

\[
m(n_0) > \frac{n_0^{\rho}}{\exp \left( (c + o(1)) \left( \frac{\log n_0}{\log \log n_0} \right)^{1/\rho} \right)}.
\]

The proof of Theorem 4.1 is complete.

It is not difficult to find the optimal value of \( d \); it yields the value

\[
c = (\rho^{\rho + 1}c_1)^{1/\rho} = \left( \frac{\rho^{\rho + 1}}{(\rho - 1) |\zeta'(\rho)|} \right)^{1/\rho} \approx 2.0163.
\]
5 Historical remarks and arithmetical properties of $m(n)$

We begin with a survey of some previous results on $m(n)$. We restrict our attention only to works dealing directly with this quantity. There are many other variants of factorization counting functions (with restrictions on factors, counting unordered factorizations etc.) and for a survey on these we refer the reader to Knopfmacher and Mays [16].

Kalmar proved in [14] that the error term $o(1)$ in (1) is

$$O(\exp(-\alpha \log \log x \cdot \log \log \log x)),$$

with $\alpha < \frac{1}{2(\rho - 1) \log 2} \approx 1.97996$.

Ikehara devoted three papers to the estimates of $M(x)$. In [10], he gave weak bounds of the type $M(x) > x^{\rho - \varepsilon}$ on a sequence of $x$ tending to infinity, and $M(x) < x^{\rho + \varepsilon}$ for all large enough $x$. In the review of [10], Kalmar pointed out a gap in the proof and sketched a correct argument. In [11], Ikehara gave a proof of (1) with an error bound $O(\exp(q \log \log x))$ for some constant $q < 0$, which is slightly weaker than Kalmar’s result. Finally, in [12], he succeeded to get a stronger error bound

$$O(\exp(-\alpha (\log \log x)^\gamma)),$$

with $\alpha > 0$ and $\gamma < 4/3$.

Hwang [9] obtained an improvement of Ikehara’s last bound by replacing $4/3$ with $3/2$.

Rieger proved in [23], besides other results, that for all positive integers $k, l$ with $(k, l) = 1$ one has

$$\sum_{n \leq x, n \equiv l(k)} m(n) = \frac{1 + o(1)}{\varphi(k)} M(x) = \frac{-1}{\varphi(k) \rho \zeta'(\rho)} \cdot x^\rho (1 + o(1)).$$

Warlimont investigated in [28] variants of $m(n)$ counting ordered factorizations with distinct parts and with coprime parts and estimated their summatory functions. Hille in [3] proved that $m(n) = O(n^\rho)$ and that $m(n) > n^{\rho - \varepsilon}$ for infinitely many $n$. We already mentioned in Section 1 the remark of Erdos on $m(n)$ in [4] and we mentioned (and improved) the result of Chor, Lemke and Mador [1] that $m(n) < n^\rho$ for all $n$. Other elementary and constructive
proofs of the bounds \( m(n) \leq n^\varepsilon \) and \( \limsup_n m(n)/n^\theta - \varepsilon = \infty \) were recently given by Coppersmith and Lewenstein [3].

We now turn to recurrences and explicit formulas. The recurrence \( m(1) = 1 \) and
\[
m(n) = \sum_{d|n, \ d < n} m(d) \quad \text{for } n > 1
\]
(14)
is immediate from fixing the first part in a factorization. If we set \( m^*(1) = 1/2 \) and \( m^*(n) = m(n) \) for \( n > 1 \), then \( 2m^*(n) = \sum_{d|n} m(d) \) holds for all \( n \geq 1 \). By Möbius inversion, \( m(n) = 2 \sum_{d|n} \mu(d) m^*(n/d) \) for all \( n \geq 1 \). By Möbius inversion,
\[
m(n) = 2 \sum_{d|n} \mu(d) m^*(n/d) \quad \text{for all } n \geq 1.
\]
(15)
in which we must set \( m(1) = 1/2 \). Formulas (14) and (15) are from Hille’s paper [8]. In fact, (15) is stated there incorrectly with \( m(1) = 1 \), as was pointed out by Kühnel [17] and Sen [24].

Clearly, \( m(p^a) = 2^{a-1} \) because ordered factorizations of \( p^a \) in parts \( > 1 \) are in bijection with (additive) compositions of \( a \) in parts \( > 0 \). If \( p \neq q \) are primes and \( a \geq b \geq 0 \) are integers, we have the formula
\[
m(p^a q^b) = 2^{a+b-1} \sum_{k=0}^b \binom{a}{k} \binom{b}{k} 2^{-k}
\]
that was derived in [1] and before by Sen [23] and MacMahon [21]. In particular,
\[
m(p^a q) = (a + 2)2^{a-1} \quad \text{and} \quad m(p^a q^2) = (a^2 + 7a + 8)2^{a-2}.
\]
(16)
In general, for \( n = q_1^{a_1} q_2^{a_2} \ldots q_r^{a_r} \), and \( a = a_1 + a_2 + \cdots + a_r \), MacMahon [21] derived the formula
\[
m(q_1^{a_1} q_2^{a_2} \ldots q_r^{a_r}) = \sum_{j=1}^r \sum_{i=0}^{j-1} (-1)^i \binom{j}{i} \prod_{k=1}^r \frac{a_k + j - i - 1}{a_k}
\]
A more complicated summation formula for \( m(q_1^{a_1} q_2^{a_2} \ldots q_r^{a_r}) \) but involving only nonnegative summands was obtained by Kühnel in [17] and [18]. Let
be the number of solutions of $n = n_1 n_2 \ldots n_k$, where $n_i \geq 1$ are positive integers; so $d_2(n)$ is the number of divisors of $n$. Sklar \cite{25} mentions the formula
\[
m(n) = \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \frac{d_k(n)}{2^k+1}.
\]

Somewhat surprisingly, $m(n)$ has an additive definition in terms of integer partitions. We say that a partition $(1^{a_1}, 2^{a_2}, \ldots, k^{a_k})$ of $n$ is perfect, if for every $m < n$ there is exactly one $k$-tuple $(b_1, \ldots, b_k)$, $0 \leq b_i \leq a_i$ for all $i$, such that $(1^{b_1}, 2^{b_2}, \ldots, k^{b_k})$ is a partition of $m$. MacMahon \cite{19} proved the identity
\[m(n) = \# \text{ perfect partitions of } (n-1).\]

For example, since $m(12) = 8$, we have 8 perfect partitions of 11, namely $(1^2, 3, 6)$, $(1, 2^2, 6)$, $(1^5, 6)$, $(1, 2, 4^2)$, $(1^3, 4^2)$, $(1^2, 3^3)$, $(1, 2^5)$, and $(1^{11})$.

In conclusion of the survey of previous results we should remark that from an enumerative point of view it is natural to consider $m(n)$ as a function of the partition $\lambda = (a_1, a_2, \ldots, a_k)$ of $\Omega(n)$, where $n = q_1^{a_1} q_2^{a_2} \cdots q_k^{a_k}$ with $a_1 \geq a_2 \geq \cdots \geq a_k$, rather than $n$. Then $m(\lambda)$ is defined as the number of ways to write $\lambda = v_1 + v_2 + \cdots + v_t$ where each $v_i$ is a $k$-tuple of nonnegative integers, the order of summands matters, and no $v_i$ is a zero vector. So $m(\lambda)$ is naturally understood as the number of $k$-dimensional compositions of $\lambda$. This approach was pursued by MacMahon in his memoirs \cite{19,20,21}, see also \cite{22}.

The sequence
\[(m(n))_{n \geq 1} = (1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 3, 1, 4, 2, 3, 1, 8, 1, 3, 1, 8, 1, 8, 3, 3, 1, 20, 2, \ldots)\]
forms entry A074206 of the database \cite{26}. Continuing the sequence a little further, we notice that $m(48) = 48$ and that $n = 48 = 2^4 \cdot 3$ is the smallest $n > 1$ such that $m(n) = n$. The first formula in \cite{16} produces infinitely many $n$ with this property: setting $n = 2^{q-2} q$ with a prime $q > 2$, we get $m(n) = n$. We record this observation as follows:

**Proposition 5.1.** There exist infinitely many positive integers $n$ such that $m(n) = n$.

This result was obtained independently also by Knopfmacher and Mays \cite{16}.

We look at periodicity properties of the numbers $m(n)$. The recurrence \cite{16} implies easily the following result.
Proposition 5.2. The number \( m(n) \) is odd if and only if \( n \) is squarefree.

It would be interesting to characterize the behavior of \( m(n) \) with respect to other moduli besides 2. In the next Proposition we give a partial result in this direction. Recall that an integer valued function \( f(n) \) defined on the set of positive integers is called eventually periodic modulo \( k \) if there exist integers \( n_0 \) and \( T \) such that \( f(n) \equiv f(n+T) \pmod{k} \) for all \( n > n_0 \). We show that \( m(n) \) is not eventually periodic modulo \( k \) by proving a stronger result that \( m(n) \) is not eventually constant modulo \( k \) on any infinite arithmetic progression with coprime difference and the first term.

Proposition 5.3. The function \( m(n) \) is not eventually constant modulo \( k \), where \( k \geq 2 \), on any infinite arithmetic progression \( n \equiv A \pmod{K} \), \( K \geq 2 \), with coprime \( A \) and \( K \).

Proof. By Dirichlet’s theorem, this arithmetic progression contains infinitely many prime numbers and therefore \( m(n) = 1 \) for infinitely many \( n \equiv A \pmod{K} \). We select a prime \( q \) not dividing \( K \) and an integer \( z \) (coprime with \( K \)) such that \( qz \equiv A \pmod{K} \). Since there are infinitely many prime numbers congruent to \( z \) modulo \( K \), there are also infinitely many \( n \equiv A \pmod{K} \) of the form \( qp \) where \( p \) is a prime. Thus there are infinitely many \( n \equiv A \pmod{K} \) with \( m(n) = 3 \). Because \( 1 \not\equiv 3 \pmod{k} \) for \( k > 2 \), we are done if \( k > 2 \). For \( k = 2 \), \( m(n) \equiv 1 \pmod{2} \) for infinitely many \( n \equiv A \pmod{K} \) as before. As we noted, \( m(n) \) is even iff \( n \) is not squarefree. It follows that \( m(n) \equiv 0 \pmod{2} \) for infinitely many \( n \equiv A \pmod{K} \) as well, which settles the case \( k = 2 \). \(\square\)

The condition \((A, K) = 1\) cannot be omitted because if \((A, K) \) is not squarefree, \( m(n) \) is even for all \( n \equiv A \pmod{K} \).

Recall now that a sequence \( (f(n))_{n \geq 1} \) is holonomic if there exist positive integer polynomials \( g_0, \ldots, g_k \), not all zero, such that

\[
g_k(n)f(n+k) + g_{k-1}(n)f(n+k-1) + \cdots + g_0(n)f(n) = 0 \quad \text{for all } n \geq 1.
\]

Proposition 5.4. The sequence \( m(n) \) is not holonomic.

Proof. Dividing (18) by one of the (nonzero) coefficients \( g_j \) with the largest degree, we obtain the relation

\[
f(n+j) = \sum_{0 \leq i \leq k, i \neq j} h_i(n)f(n+i)
\]
where the $h_i$'s are rational functions such that each $h_i(x)$ goes to a finite constant $c_i$ as $x \to \infty$ (we may even assume that $|c_i| \leq 1$ for every $i$). Hence there is a constant $C > 0$ (depending only on $k$ and the polynomials $g_i$) such that

$$|f(n)| \leq C \max \{|f(n+i)| : -k \leq i \leq k, i \neq 0\} \text{ for every } n \geq k + 1.$$ 

We show that $(m(n))_{n \geq 1}$ violates this property.

We fix two integers $k, a \geq 1$ with the only restriction that $a$ is coprime to each of the numbers $1, 2, \ldots, k$. It is an easy consequence of the Fundamental Lemma of the Combinatorial Sieve (see [6]) that there is a constant $K > 0$ depending only on $k$ so that

$$\Omega((an-k)(an-k+1)\ldots(an-1)(an+1)\ldots(an+k)) \leq K$$

holds for infinitely many integers $n \geq 1$. For each of these $n$'s the $2k$ values $m(an+i), -k \leq i \leq k$ and $i \neq 0$, are bounded by a constant (depending only on $k$) while the value $m(an)$ is at least $m(a)$ and can be made arbitrarily large by an appropriate selection of $a$. This contradicts the above property of holonomic sequences.

Remark 5.5. The above proof can be adapted in a straightforward way to show that other number theoretical functions such as $\omega(n)$, $\Omega(n)$ and $\tau(n)$, where $\tau(n)$ is the number of divisors of $n$, are not holonomic.

We present two more estimates related to the function $m(n)$.

Proposition 5.6. The estimate

$$\#\{m(n) : n \leq x\} \leq \exp\left(\pi \sqrt{2/\log 8(1 + o(1)) (\log x)^{1/2}}\right)$$

holds as $x \to \infty$.

Proof. Because $m(n)$ depends only on the partition $a_1 + \cdots + a_k = \Omega(n)$, where $n = q_1^{a_1} \cdots q_k^{a_k}$ ($q_1, \ldots, q_k$ are distinct primes and $a_1 \geq a_2 \geq \cdots \geq a_k > 0$ are integers), we have that

$$\#\{m(n) : n \leq x\} \leq p(1) + p(2) + \cdots + p(r) \leq rp(r)$$

where $p(n)$ denotes the number of partitions of $n$ and $r = \max_{n \leq x} \Omega(n)$. The result follows from $r \leq \log x/\log 2$ and the classic asymptotic relation $p(n) \sim \exp(\pi \sqrt{2n/3})/(4n \sqrt{3})$ due to Hardy and Ramanujan [7].
We show that the same bound on the number of distinct values of $m(n)$ holds when the condition $n \leq x$ is replaced with $m(n) \leq x$.

**Proposition 5.7.** The estimate

$$\#\{m(n) : m(n) \leq x, n \geq 1\} \leq \exp\left(\pi \sqrt{2/\log 8(1+o(1))(\log x)^{1/2}}\right)$$

holds as $x \to \infty$.

**Proof.** As in Proposition 5.6 we have

$$\#\{m(n) : m(n) \leq x, n \geq 1\} \leq p(1) + p(2) + \cdots + p(r) \leq rp(r)$$

where now $r = \max_{m(n) \leq x} \Omega(n)$. By the third inequality in Lemma 2.6, $2^{r-1} = 2^{\Omega(n)-1} \leq m(n) \leq x$ for some $n$. Thus $r \leq 1 + \log x/\log 2$ and the result follows as in the proof of Proposition 5.6 using the asymptotics of $p(n)$. \qed

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