

Pacific Journal of Mathematics

ON COMPOSITE n FOR WHICH $\varphi(n) \mid n - 1$. II

CARL POMERANCE

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The problem of whether there exists a composite n for which $\varphi(n) \mid n - 1$ (φ is Euler's function) was first posed by D. H. Lehmer in 1932 and still remains unsolved. In this paper we prove that the number of such n not exceeding x is $O(x^{1/2}(\log x)^{3/4})$. We also prove that any such n with precisely K distinct prime factors is necessarily less than K^{2K} . There are appropriate generalizations of these results to integers n for which $\varphi(n) \mid n - a$, a an arbitrary integer.

1. Introduction. In 1932, D. H. Lehmer [6] asked if there are any composite integers n for which $\varphi(n) \mid n - 1$, φ being Euler's function. The answer to this question is still not known. Lieuwens [7] has shown that any such n is divisible by at least 11 distinct primes; Kishore [5] has recently announced the analogous result for 13 primes.

If S is any set of positive integers, denote by $N(S, x)$ the number of members of S which do not exceed x . Let L denote the set of composite n for which $\varphi(n) \mid n - 1$. Although Erdős was not specifically considering the problem of estimating $N(L, x)$, as a corollary of his paper [2], we have

$$N(L, x) = O(x \exp(-c \log x \log \log \log x / \log \log x))$$

for some $c > 0$. In [11] we proved

$$N(L, x) = O(x^{2/3}(\log \log x)^{1/3}).$$

One result of this paper is

$$(1.1) \quad N(L, x) = O(x^{1/2}(\log x)^{3/4}).$$

There is still clearly a wide gap between the possibility $L = \emptyset$ and (1.1), for the latter does not even establish that the members of L are as scarce as squares! Note that we conjectured in [11] that for every $\varepsilon > 0$,

$$N(L, x) = O(x^\varepsilon).$$

Important in proving (1.1) is the consideration for $n \in L$ of the distribution in the interval $[0, \log n]$ of the numbers $\log d$ for $d \mid n$. We show that these numbers do not leave any large gaps, in that any reasonable subinterval will contain some $\log d$.

We also prove another result of independent interest about the set L : if $n \in L$ and n is divisible by precisely K distinct primes,

then

$$(1.2) \quad n < K^{2^K}.$$

This result is similar to a result of Borho [1] dealing with amicable numbers.

We establish results analogous to (1.1) and (1.2) for other sets of positive integers analogous to L . Recalling notation from [10], [11], we let

$$F(a) = \{n: n \equiv a \pmod{\varphi(n)}\}$$

for each integer a . From Sierpiński [12, p. 232], we have

$$(1.3) \quad F(0) = \{1\} \cup \{2^i \cdot 3^j: i > 0, j \geq 0\}.$$

We have seen in [10] that $F(0)$ plays a special role for the sets $F(a)$. Indeed, if $a \notin F(0)$, then $F(a)$ has no member of the form pa with p prime, $p \nmid a$. However, if $a \in F(0)$, then every such number pa is in $F(a)$. Hence we are naturally led to consider the subsets

$$F'(a) = \{n \in F(a): n \neq pa \text{ for } p \text{ prime, } p \nmid a\}.$$

Note that $F'(1) = L \cup \{1\}$. We shall prove

$$(1.4) \quad N(F'(a), x) = O(x^{1/2}(\log x)^{3/4})$$

for every integer a , where the implied constant depends on a . Note that (1.3) implies $N(F(0), x) = O((\log x)^2)$, so that (1.4) is true for $a = 0$. However other results we prove will not be true for $a = 0$. Throughout the remainder of this paper, a will represent a nonzero integer.

We also prove that if $n \in F'(a)$ and n is divisible by precisely K distinct primes, then

$$n < \max \{16|a|^3, |a| \cdot K^{2^K}\}.$$

Certain results of Norton [9] (see Suryanarayana [13]) enable us to state our theorems in a sharper form than could be done otherwise. The results of Meijer [8] might yield further improvements.

We wish to thank the referee who carefully read the paper and made several helpful suggestions.

2. Preliminary results. If n is an integer at least 2, denote by $\omega(n)$ the number of distinct prime factors of n , $P(n)$ the largest prime factor of n , and $p(n)$ the least prime factor of n .

In our work with the sets $F'(a)$ it will be convenient to isolate the square free members. Note that every member of $F'(1)$ is

square free. Let

$$F'''(a) = \{n \in F'(a) : n \text{ is square free}\}.$$

LEMMA 1. $N(F''(a), x) \leq 4a^2 + \sum_{d|a} N(F'''(a/d), x/d)$.

Proof. Let $n \in F'(a)$, $4a^2 < n \leq x$. If $n = pa$ for some prime p , then $p|a$, so $n \leq a^2$. Hence $n \neq pa$ for every prime p . Let m be the maximal square free divisor of n and let $d = n/m$. Then every prime factor of d also divides m . Hence $\varphi(m) = \varphi(n)/d$, so that $d|a$ and $m \in F'(a/d)$. Since $m \neq pa/d$ for every prime p , we have $m \in F'''(a/d)$.

Hence all we need verify is that if $n_1, n_2 \in F'(a)$ with maximal square free divisors m_1, m_2 , and if $n_1, n_2 > 4a^2$, then $m_1 = m_2$ implies $n_1 = n_2$. Now for any n we have

$$(2.1) \quad \varphi(n) > \sqrt{n}/2$$

(Sierpiński [12, p. 230]). Suppose $m_1 = m_2$. Then n_1 and n_2 have the same set of prime factors. This implies $n_1/\varphi(n_1) = n_2/\varphi(n_2)$. Let $k_i = (n_i - a)/\varphi(n_i)$ for $i = 1, 2$. Then

$$k_1 + a/\varphi(n_1) = k_2 + a/\varphi(n_2).$$

From (2.1) and the assumption $n_1, n_2 > 4a^2$, we have $0 < |a/\varphi(n_i)| < 1$ for $i = 1, 2$. But k_1, k_2 are integers and $a/\varphi(n_1), a/\varphi(n_2)$ have the same sign, so

$$a/\varphi(n_1) = a/\varphi(n_2).$$

But $n_1/\varphi(n_1) = n_2/\varphi(n_2)$, so $n_1 = n_2$, which was to be proved.

LEMMA 2. If $n \geq 16a^2$, $n \in F'''(a)$, then

- (i) $k \doteq (n - a)/\varphi(n)$ is a positive integer at least 2;
- (ii) if $m|n$, $m \neq n$, then $m/\varphi(m) < k$;
- (iii) there is a prime $q > P(n)$ with $nq/\varphi(nq) > k$;
- (iv) $\omega(n) \geq 3$.

Proof. (i) First we note that n is composite. Indeed if $n = p$, a prime, then the condition $p \in F'''(a)$ implies $p - 1|a - 1$ and $a \neq 1$. Then $p \leq |a| + 2 < 16a^2$, a contradiction.

Now $n = k\varphi(n) + a$, so if $k \leq 0$, then $n \leq a$. Suppose $k = 1$. Since n is composite, n has a divisor d with $\sqrt{n} \leq d < n$. Then $\varphi(n) \leq n - d \leq n - \sqrt{n}$. Then

$$a = n - \varphi(n) \geq \sqrt{n} \geq 4|a|,$$

a contradiction.

(ii) It is sufficient to prove (ii) for $m = n/p$ where $p = P(n)$. From (2.1) and the assumption $n \geq 16a^2$, we have $|a/\varphi(n)| < 1/2$. Hence from the equation $n/\varphi(n) = k + a/\varphi(n)$ and (i) we have

$$(2.2) \quad (3/4)k \leq k - 1/2 < n/\varphi(n) < k + 1/2 .$$

Then $m/\varphi(m) < k + 1/2 < 2k$, so

$$(2.3) \quad k\varphi(m) > m/2 .$$

Now

$$(2.4) \quad a = n - k\varphi(n) = mp - k\varphi(mp) = p(m - k\varphi(m)) + k\varphi(m) .$$

If $m = k\varphi(m)$, then (2.4) implies $a = k\varphi(m)$, so that $a = m$ and $n \in F''(a)$. Hence $m \neq k\varphi(m)$. If $m > k\varphi(m)$, then (2.3), (2.4) imply

$$a \geq p + k\varphi(m) > p + m/2 \geq (2pm)^{1/2} > n^{1/2} \geq 4|a| ,$$

a contradiction. Hence $m < k\varphi(m)$.

(iii) If $a > 0$, clearly any prime $q > P(n)$ will do. Hence assume $a < 0$. We first prove

$$(2.5) \quad P(n) < n/2|a| .$$

Indeed from (2.2) we have (with $m = n/P(n)$)

$$\frac{3}{4}k < \frac{n}{\varphi(n)} = \frac{m}{\varphi(m)} \cdot \frac{P(n)}{P(n) - 1} \leq \frac{2m}{\varphi(m)} .$$

Then from (ii) and (2.4) we have

$$P(n) = (a - k\varphi(m))/(m - k\varphi(m)) \leq |a| + k\varphi(m) < |a| + (8/3)m .$$

If (2.5) fails, we have $m = n/P(n) \leq 2|a|$, and it follows that $P(n) < (19/3)|a|$ and $n = mP(n) < 16a^2$, a contradiction.

By Chebyshev's theorem there is a prime q with $n/2|a| < q < n/|a|$, and by (2.5), $q > P(n)$. Also

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{nq}{\varphi(nq)} &> \frac{n}{\varphi(n)} \cdot \frac{n/|a|}{n/|a| - 1} = \frac{n^2}{\varphi(n)(n+a)} \\ &= \frac{kn^2}{(n-a)(n+a)} > k , \end{aligned}$$

since $n^2 > n^2 - a^2 > 0$.

(iv) We noted in the proof of (i) that $\omega(n) \geq 2$. Suppose $\omega(n) = 2$. Let $n = pq$ with $p < q$. Let r be a prime with $r > q$ and $pqr/\varphi(pqr) > k \geq 2$ (using (i) and (iii)). Since $(2/1)(3/2)(5/4) < 4$, we have $k = 2$ or 3 .

If $k = 3$, then since $(2/1)(5/4)(7/6) < 3$, we have $n = pq = 6 < 16a^2$.

Suppose $k = 2$. Since $(5/4)(7/6)(11/10) < 2$, we have $p = 2$ or 3 . By (ii), $p/\varphi(p) < 2$, so $p = 3$. Since $(3/2)(7/6)(11/10) < 2$, we have $q = 5$. That is, $n = pq = 15 < 16a^2$.

LEMMA 3. *Suppose k, n are natural numbers with n square free and $n/\varphi(n) > k$. If $m \mid n$ and $m/\varphi(m) < k$, then*

$$p(n/m) < \omega(n/m) \cdot (m + 1).$$

Proof. Let $r = \omega(n/m)$, $p = p(n/m)$. Then

$$k < \frac{n}{\varphi(n)} \leq \frac{m}{\varphi(m)} \cdot \left(\frac{p}{p-1}\right)^r,$$

so that

$$m/k\varphi(m) > (1 - 1/p)^r \geq 1 - r/p.$$

Hence

$$p < \frac{rk\varphi(m)}{k\varphi(m) - m} = r \left(1 + \frac{m}{k\varphi(m) - m}\right) \leq r(m + 1).$$

3. Members of $F'(a)$ with K prime factors.

THEOREM 1. *Suppose $n \geq 16a^2$, $n \in F''(a)$, $K = \omega(n)$. Let the prime factorization of n be $p_1 p_2 \cdots p_K$ where $p_1 > p_2 > \cdots > p_K$. Then for $1 \leq i \leq K$, we have*

$$p_i < (i + 1) \left(1 + \prod_{j=i+1}^K p_j\right).$$

Proof. Let $m = \prod_{j=i+1}^K p_j$. By (iii) of Lemma 2 there is a prime $q > p_i$ with $nq/\varphi(nq) > k$. By (ii) of Lemma 2, $m/\varphi(m) < k$. Since $p_i = p(nq/m)$ and $i + 1 = \omega(nq/m)$, Lemma 3 completes the proof.

THEOREM 2. *Suppose $n \geq 16a^2$, $n \in F'''(a)$, $K = \omega(n)$. Then there is a positive constant β independent of the choice of a, n such that*

$$(3.1) \quad p(n) < \beta K^{1/2} (\log K)^{1/2}.$$

In addition, if $K \geq 4$, then $p(n) \leq K - 1$.

Proof. Let $p = p(n)$. Since there is a prime $q > P(n)$ with $nq/\varphi(nq) > k \geq 2$ ((i) and (iii) of Lemma 2), it follows from Norton [9, Theorem 4] that there is an absolute constant $\beta_1 > 0$ with

$$K + 1 = \omega(nq) > \beta_1 p^2 / \log p.$$

By Theorem 1, $\log p < \log(2(K+1)) < \beta_2 \log K$ for some $\beta_2 > 0$ ((iv) of Lemma 2). Hence there is an absolute constant $\beta > 0$ such that $p^\beta < \beta^2 K \log K$, which proves (3.1).

Now assume $K \geq 4$. Then $p \leq K-1$ if $p=2$ or 3 . From $nq/\varphi(nq) > 2$, we have $K+1 \geq 7$ if $p=5$, so $p \leq K-1$ in this case too. If $p \geq 7$ we similarly get $K+1 \geq 15$, so that using a result of Grün [3], we have

$$p < (2/3)(K+1) + 2 < K-1.$$

THEOREM 3. *If $n \in F'''(a)$, $K = \omega(n)$, then*

$$n < \max\{16a^2, K^{2K}\}.$$

Proof. Assume $n \geq 16a^2$. By (iv) of Lemma 2 we have $K \geq 3$. If $K=3$, we can show as follows that $n \leq 435 < 3^3$. Write $n = pqr$ where $p < q < r$ are primes. By Lemma 2 there is a prime $s > r$ such that

$$(3.2) \quad pqrs/\varphi(pqrs) > k \geq 2,$$

$$(3.3) \quad pq/\varphi(pq) < k.$$

We proceed as with the proof of (iv) of Lemma 2. Say $k \geq 3$. Then (3.2) implies $k=3$, $p=2$, $q \leq 5$ or $k=4$, $n = pqr = 30$. In the former case, (3.3) implies $q=5$, so (3.2) implies $n = pqr = 70$. Now say $k=2$. Then (3.2), (3.3) imply $p=3$. Then (3.2) implies $q=5$, $r \leq 29$ (so $n \leq 3 \cdot 5 \cdot 29 = 435$) or $q=7$, $r \leq 13$ (so $n \leq 3 \cdot 7 \cdot 13 = 273$).

Assume $K \geq 4$. Let the prime factorization of n be $p_1 p_2 \cdots p_K$ where $p_1 > p_2 > \cdots > p_K$. By Theorem 2,

$$p_K + 1 \leq K.$$

By Theorem 1, $p_{K-1} < K(p_K + 1) \leq K^2$. Hence

$$p_{K-1} p_K + 1 < K^3.$$

Again by Theorem 1, $p_{K-2} < (K-1)(p_{K-1} p_K + 1)$, so that

$$p_{K-2} p_{K-1} p_K + 1 < p_{K-2} (p_{K-1} p_K + 1) < (K-1) K^3 < K^7.$$

Continuing in this fashion we get

$$n = p_1 p_2 \cdots p_K < K^{2K-1} < K^{2K}.$$

THEOREM 4. *If $n \in F''(a)$, $K = \omega(n)$, then*

$$n < \max\{16|a|^3, |a| \cdot K^{2K}\}.$$

Proof. Assume $n \geq 16|a|^3$. Following the proof of Lemma 1,

we find a positive integer d with $d | (n, a)$ and $n/d \in F'''(a/d)$. Then $n/d \geq 16a^2$, so Theorem 3 implies $n/d < K^{2K}$. Hence

$$n < d \cdot K^{2K} \leq |a| \cdot K^{2K} .$$

4. A combinatorial lemma.

LEMMA 4. Suppose $\delta \geq 0$, $a_1 \geq a_2 \geq \dots \geq a_t > 0$, $B_i = \sum_{j=i}^t a_j$ for $1 \leq i \leq t$, and

$$(4.1) \quad a_i \leq \delta + B_{i+1}$$

for $1 \leq i \leq t - 1$. Then given any y with $0 \leq y < B_1$, there is a subset S of $\{1, 2, \dots, t\}$ with

$$y - \delta - a_t < \sum_{i \in S} a_i \leq y .$$

Proof. We may assume $y \geq \delta + a_t$ for otherwise take $S = \emptyset$. We have

$$(4.2a, b) \quad B_1 > y , \quad B_t \leq y .$$

Let $s(0) = 0$. Say we have either constructed a set S as called for or we have inductively found an integer sequence $s(0) < s(1) < \dots < s(i - 1) < t$ where $i \geq 1$ and

$$(4.3a) \quad \sum_{j=1}^{i-1} a_{s(j)} + B_{s(i-1)+1} > y ,$$

$$(4.3b) \quad \sum_{j=1}^{i-1} a_{s(j)} + B_t \leq y .$$

Let $s(i)$ be maximal with

$$\sum_{j=1}^{i-1} a_{s(j)} + B_{s(i)} > y .$$

By (4.3a), (4.3b), $s(i)$ exists and $s(i - 1) < s(i) < t$. Then since $a_{s(i)} + B_{s(i)+1} = B_{s(i)}$, we have

$$(4.4a) \quad \sum_{j=1}^i a_{s(j)} + B_{s(i)+1} > y .$$

Note that $\sum_{j=1}^{i-1} a_{s(j)} + B_{s(i)+1} \leq y$. Then we may assume

$$(4.5) \quad \sum_{j=1}^{i-1} a_{s(j)} + B_{s(i)+1} \leq y - \delta - a_t ,$$

for otherwise we may take

$$S = \{s(1), s(2), \dots, s(i - 1), s(i) + 1, s(i) + 2, \dots, t\} .$$

Then from (4.5) and from (4.1) applied to $a_{s(t)}$, we have

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{j=1}^i a_{s(j)} + B_t &= \sum_{j=1}^i a_{s(j)} + a_t \\ &\leq \sum_{j=1}^{t-1} a_{s(j)} + \delta + B_{s(t)+1} + a_t \leq y ; \end{aligned}$$

that is,

$$(4.4b) \quad \sum_{j=1}^i a_{s(j)} + B_t \leq y .$$

Since there is not an infinite increasing sequence of positive integers all less than t , this process must terminate with the construction of a suitable set S .

5. Estimates for $N(F''(a), x)$.

THEOREM 5. *For every a , $N(F''(a), x) = O(x^{1/2}(\log x)^{3/4})$, where the implied constant depends on a .*

Proof. In view of Lemma 1, it will be sufficient to prove for every a that $N(F''(a), x) = O(x^{1/2}(\log x)^{3/4})$, where the implied constant depends on a . We record for future reference: there are positive constants α, γ with

$$(5.1) \quad n/\varphi(n) < \alpha \log \log n , \quad n \geq 3$$

$$(5.2) \quad \omega(n) < \gamma \log n / \log \log n , \quad n \geq 3 .$$

(Hardy and Wright [4, pp. 353-355].)

Let $n \in F''(a)$, $16a^2 \leq n \leq x$, $K = \omega(n)$. Let the prime factorization of n be $p_1 p_2 \cdots p_K$ where $p_1 > p_2 > \cdots > p_K$. We may assume $n > x^{1/2}(\log x)^{3/4}$. Theorem 1 implies

$$\log p_i < \log(2K) + \sum_{j=i+1}^K \log p_j , \quad 1 \leq i \leq K-1 .$$

We apply Lemma 4 with

$$\delta = \log(2K) , \quad t = K , \quad a_i = \log p_i , \quad y = \frac{1}{2} \log x + \frac{3}{4} \log \log x .$$

Hence there is an integer m with $m|n$ and

$$y - \delta - \log p_K < \log m \leq y .$$

Then

$$x^{1/2}(\log x)^{3/4}/2Kp_K < m \leq x^{1/2}(\log x)^{3/4} .$$

By (3.1), (5.2), we have

$$\begin{aligned} 2Kp_K &< 2\beta K^{3/2}(\log K)^{1/2} \\ &< 2\beta(\gamma \log x / \log \log x)^{3/2}(\log (\gamma \log x / \log \log x))^{1/2} \\ &< \gamma'(\log x)^{3/2}(\log \log x)^{-1} \end{aligned}$$

for some $\gamma' > 0$. Hence

$$\begin{aligned} f(x) &\doteq (1/\gamma')x^{1/2}(\log x)^{-3/4} \log \log x < m \\ &\leq x^{1/2}(\log x)^{3/4} \doteq g(x). \end{aligned}$$

For each integer m in the above interval we now count the number of choices for $n \in F'''(a)$ with $n \leq x$ and $m | n$. Since $\varphi(m) | \varphi(n)$ for such n , we have

$$n \equiv 0 \pmod{m}, \quad n \equiv a \pmod{\varphi(m)},$$

so by the generalized Chinese remainder theorem, there are at most $1 + x/[m, \varphi(m)]$ choices for such n (here $[,]$ denotes least common multiple). Now $(m, \varphi(m)) | (n, \varphi(n))$ and $(n, \varphi(n)) | a$. Hence for each m , there are at most (using (5.1))

$$\begin{aligned} 1 + x/[m, \varphi(m)] &= 1 + x(m, \varphi(m))/m\varphi(m) \\ &\leq 1 + |a|x/m\varphi(m) < 1 + |a|\alpha x \log \log x/m^2 \end{aligned}$$

choices for $n \in F'''(a)$ with $n \leq x$ and $m | n$.

Hence we have

$$\begin{aligned} N(F'''(a), x) &\leq 16\alpha^2 + x^{1/2}(\log x)^{3/4} + \sum_{f(x) < m \leq g(x)} (1 + |a|\alpha x \log \log x/m^2) \\ &= O(x^{1/2}(\log x)^{3/4}) + O(x \log \log x \sum_{f(x) < m} 1/m^2) \\ &= O(x^{1/2}(\log x)^{3/4}) + O(x \log \log x/f(x)) \\ &= O(x^{1/2}(\log x)^{3/4}). \end{aligned}$$

REMARK. Both the referee and D. Suryanarayana kindly suggest the use of a fact due to Landau,

$$\sum_{m > y} 1/m\varphi(m) = O(1/y),$$

in the proof of Theorem 5, rather than (5.1). This enables us to get the slightly stronger estimate

$$(5.3) \quad N(F'(a), x) = O(x^{1/2}(\log x)^{3/4}(\log \log x)^{-1/2})$$

where the implied constant depends on α . In addition we note that if those $n \leq x$ for which $p(n) \leq (\log x)^{1/4}$ are treated separately from the remaining choices for n , then an extra factor of $1/\log \log x$ may be introduced on the right of (5.3). It is conceivable that further

improvements are possible, even in the exponent on $\log x$ (perhaps by considering a sharper version of Lemma 4 where the constant δ is replaced by a variable δ_i which is usually small). It would seem to take a completely new idea however to lower the exponent on x .

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Received October 28, 1975.

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