

Discussion of “Fertility, Labor Markets, Education and Religious practice: a look at recent trends” by Alicia Adsera

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stylised message I'm taking home:

- religiosity drives fertility intentions
- economic constraints drive realized fertility

some reactions...

- methodological refinements are possible
 - change happens **within** religions, not just through secularisation
 - labour market uncertainty as logically **orthogonal** to unemployment
 - is this one paper or two?
- ➔ missing link: endogeneity of labour market conditions?

technical methodological issues

- are numbers in all cells large enough to justify modelling the # of children as Gaussian, or is count regression more appropriate?
- predictive simulations are highly appreciated!
 - however, how valuable in light of modest model fit? (Especially if the latter is not an artefact of a stochastic outcome model.)

measurement issues

- denominations among immigrants indicate very different countries of origin in different destinations
 - for example, Turks in Germany vs. Maghrebi in France
 - great differences in “inherited” demographic regimes
- heterogeneity of the non-religious?
 - being “not Catholic” in Spain vs. being “not Protestant” in Norway

measurement issues

- *“religious practice may be only one of the dimensions through which religiosity is expressed”*
- Quite! Can distinguish, for example:
 - intellectual dimension
 - faith
 - public practice
 - private practice
 - experience
 - centrality

“An increase in the share of individuals not identifying with a religious denomination and a widening of the fertility gap between affiliated and non-affiliated individuals appears to be a necessary condition to sustain the argument that secularization and value change explain the overall decrease in total fertility rates.”

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But what about...

religion is not static

- changes in official teachings
 - where there is such a thing to begin with!
- changes in interpretation
- pluralism in interpretation
- ignoring “awkward” or inconvenient teachings even among the faithful
- creative reconciliation with pragmatic requirements in modern society

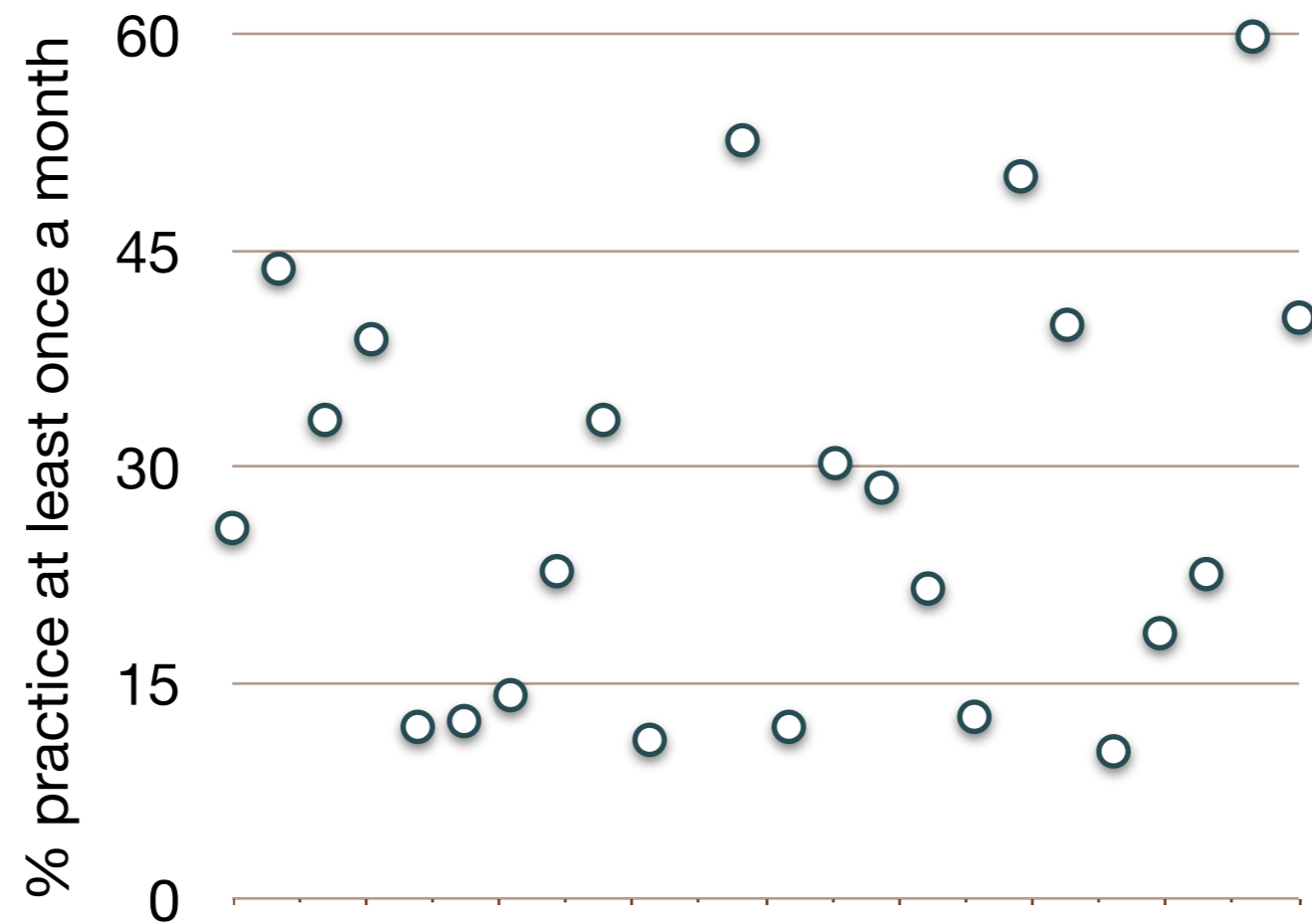
labour market uncertainty

- high unemployment \neq high uncertainty!
- how different are temporary contracts vs. easily dissolved “permanent” contracts in terms of induced uncertainty (and hence fertility implications)?

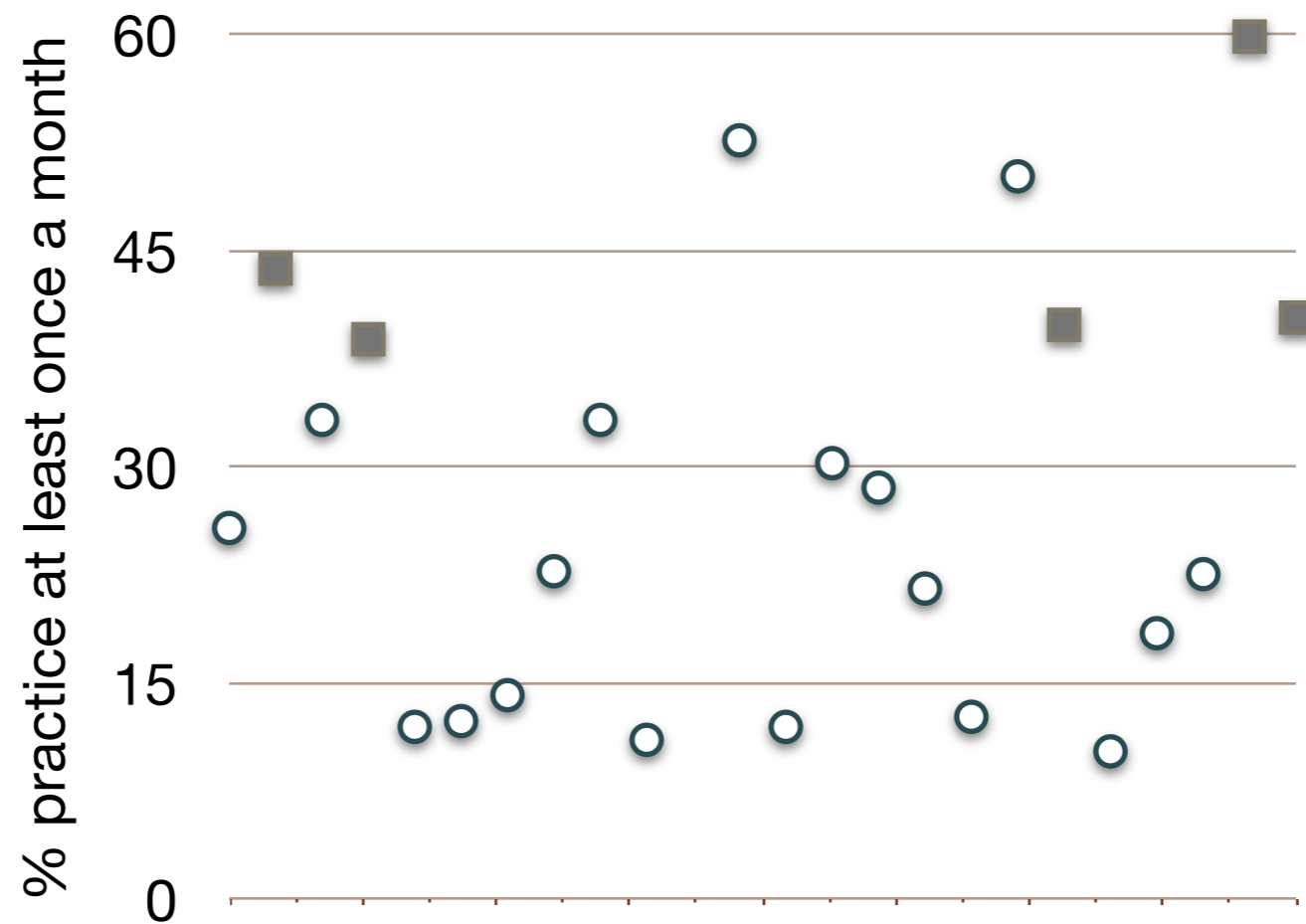
endogeneity of labour market conditions?

- what about “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism”?
- should we expect government policies to reflect values prevalent in the population?

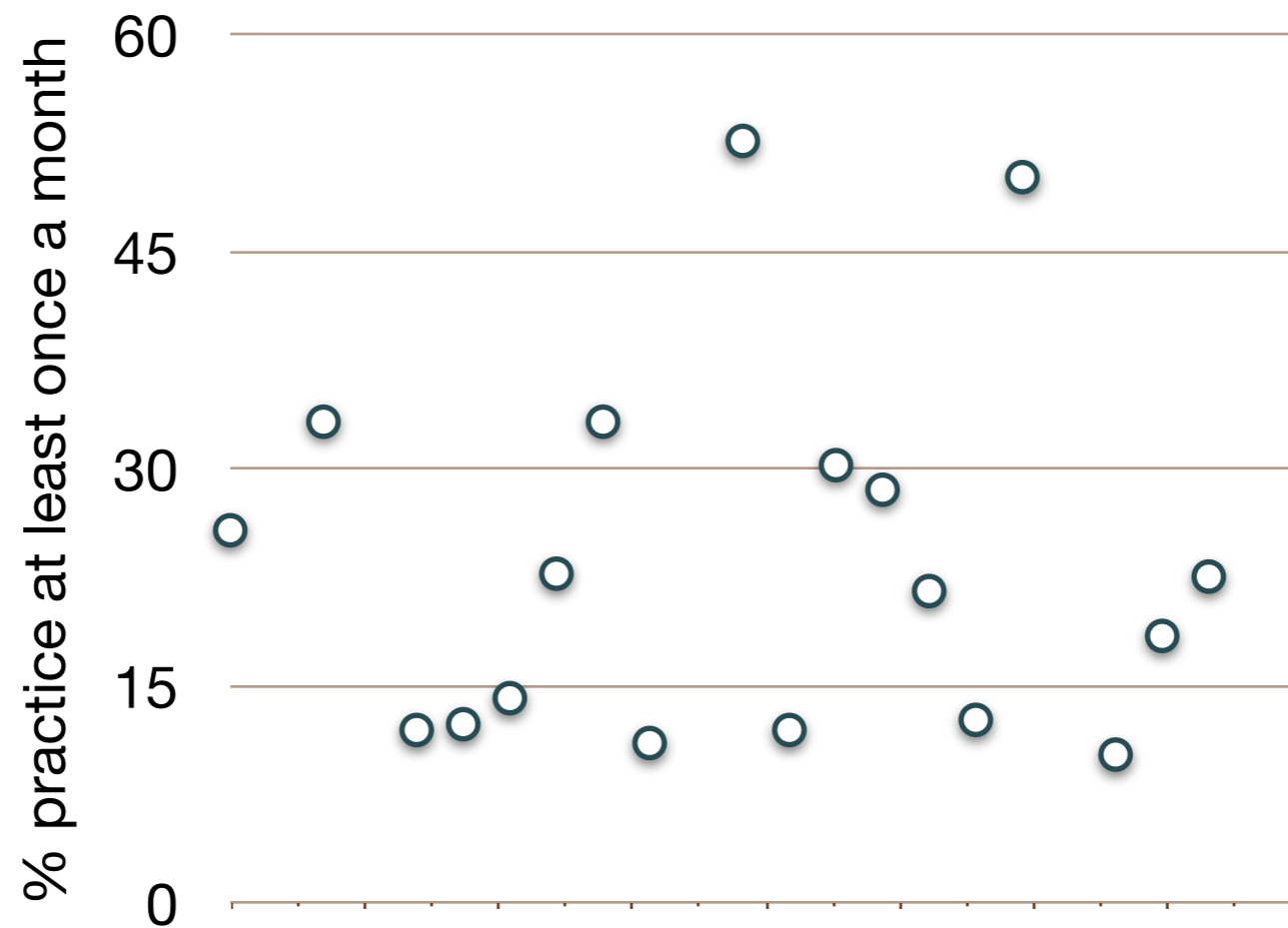
re-analysis of religious practice data



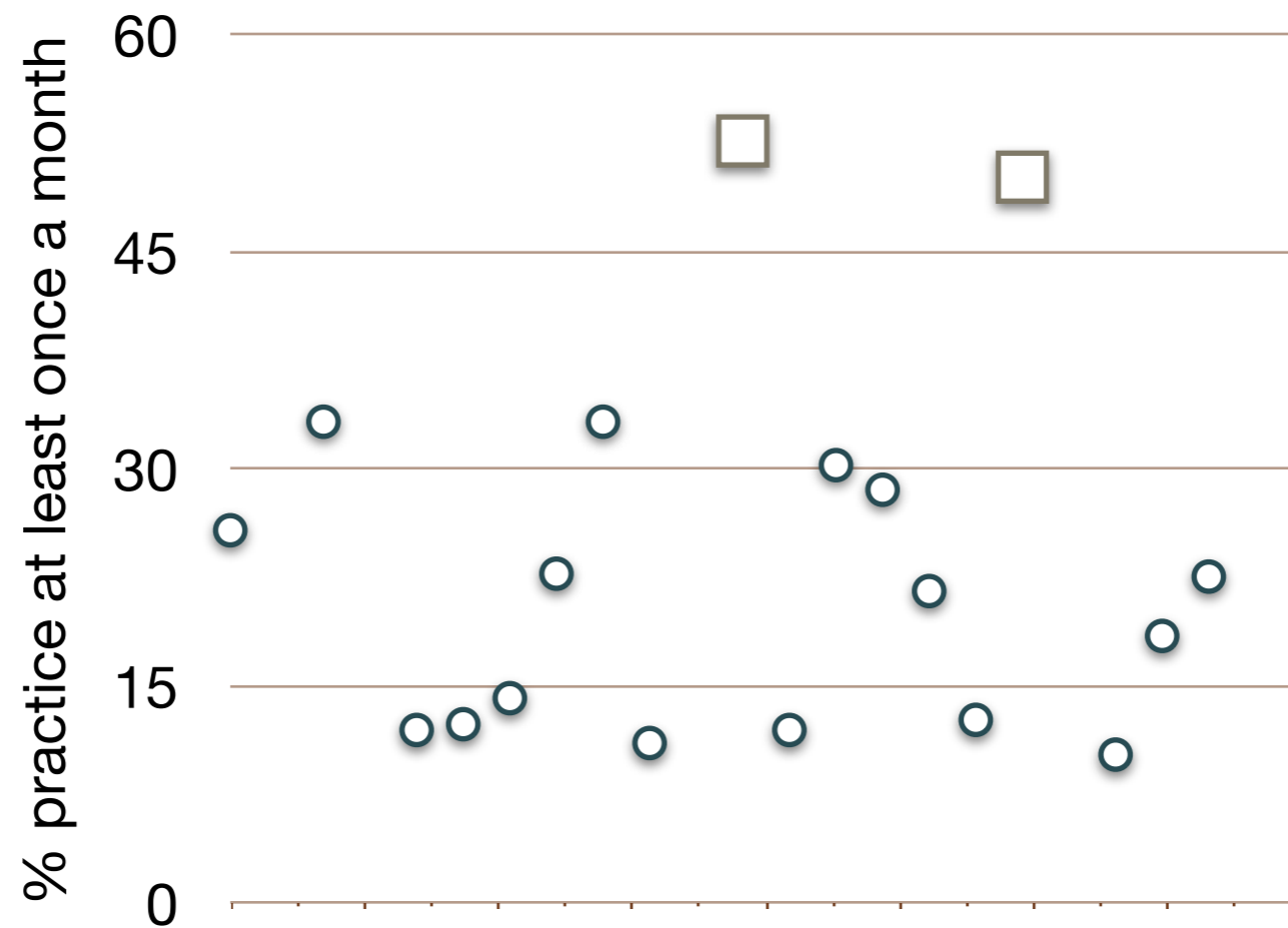
Step 1: identify outliers using domain knowledge



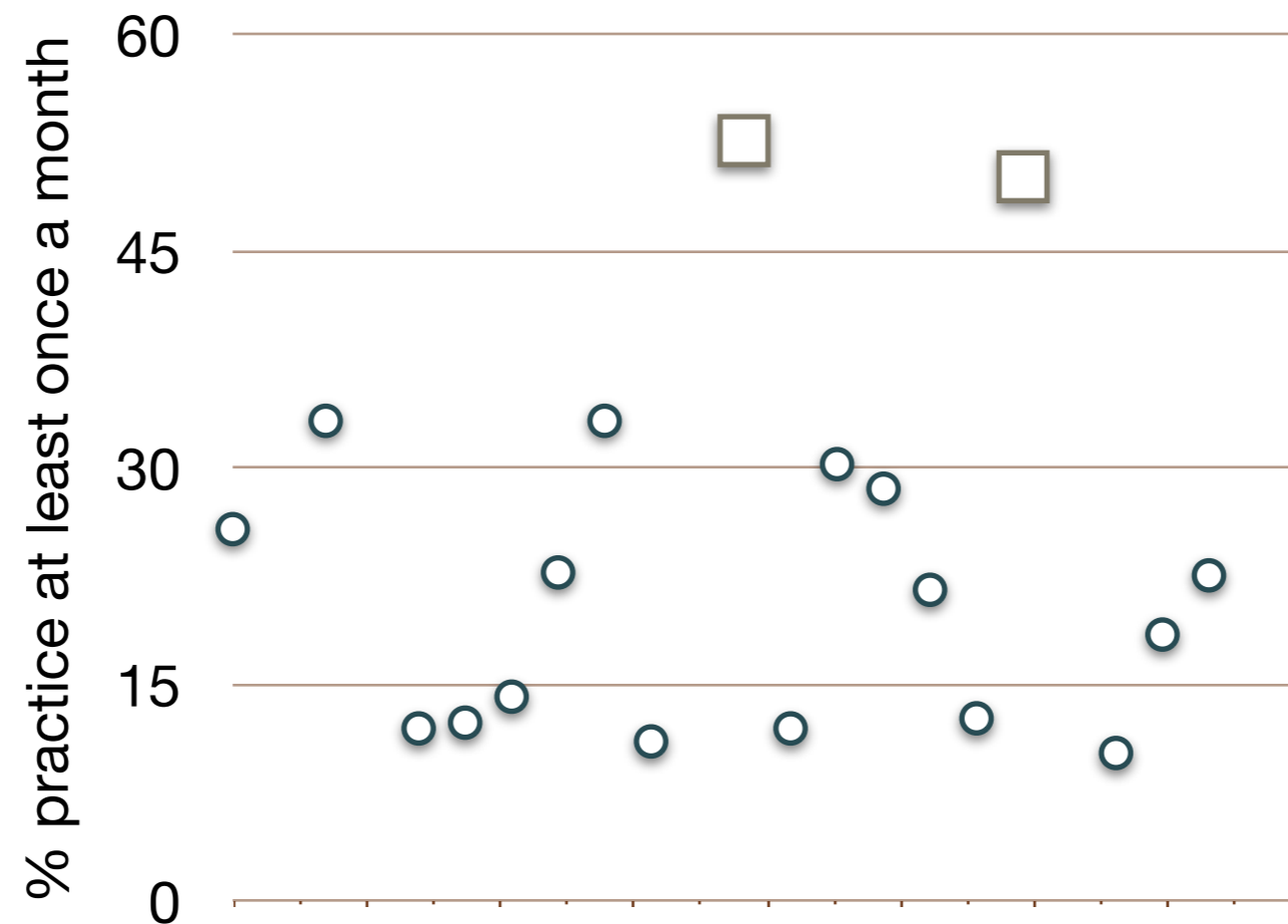
Step 2: mark special cases



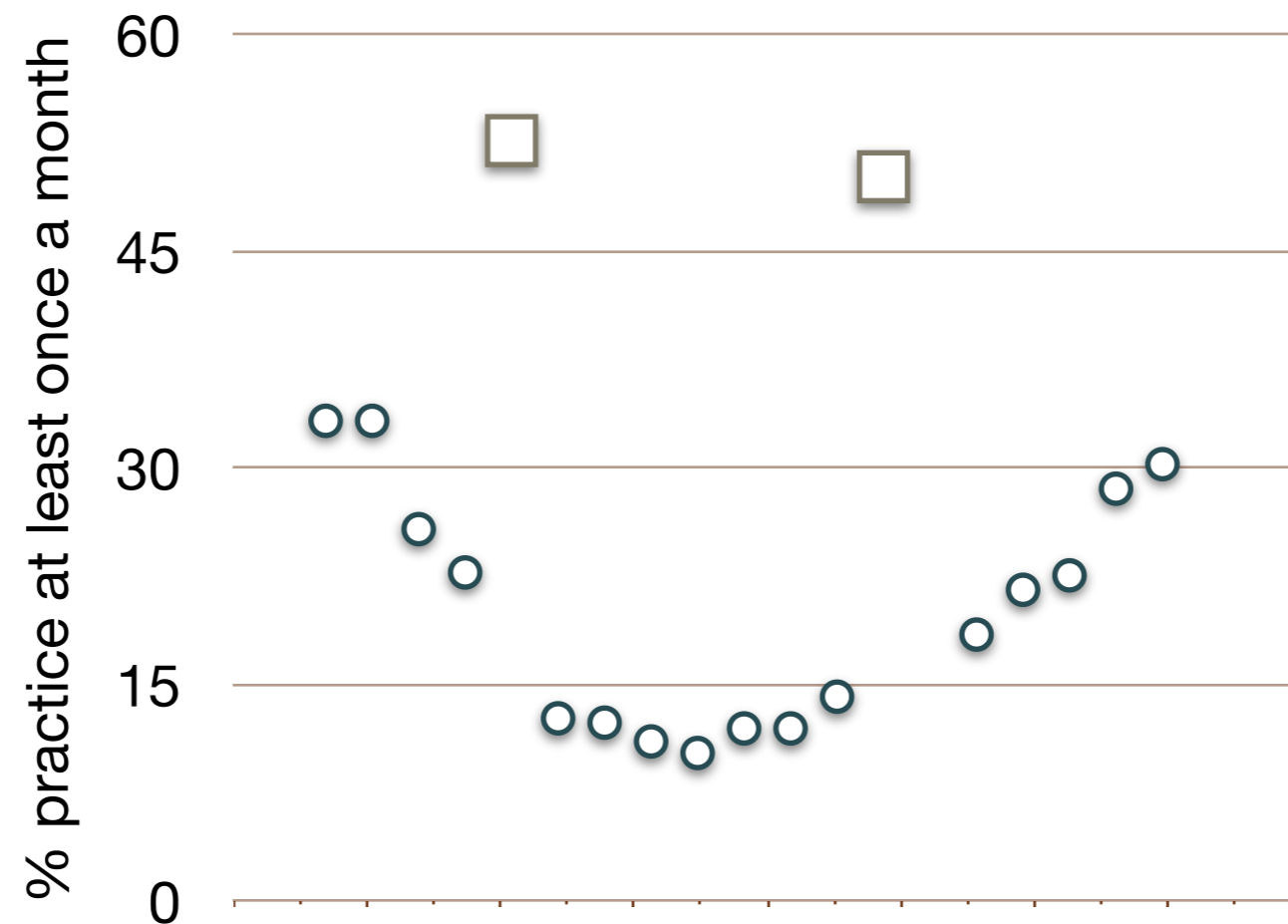
Step 2: mark special cases



Step 3: re-order cases to highlight significant patterns



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Thank you for your attention.