

Research Article

A new asymptotic expansion and sharp inequality for the volume of the unit ball in \mathbb{R}^n

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Abstract

For $n \in \{1, 2, \dots\}$, let $\Omega_n = \pi^{n/2} / \Gamma(\frac{n}{2} + 1)$ be the volume of the unit ball in \mathbb{R}^n . In this paper, we give a new asymptotic expansion for Ω_n . Based on the obtained result, we also establish a sharp double inequality for Ω_n .

Keywords: asymptotic expansions; gamma function; inequalities; volume of the unit n -dimensional ball.

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1. Introduction

A considerable number of properties of the volume Ω_n of the unit ball in \mathbb{R}^n have been reported by several researchers in the recent past, where

$$\Omega_n = \frac{\pi^{n/2}}{\Gamma(\frac{n}{2} + 1)}, \quad n \in \mathbb{N} := \{1, 2, \dots\}.$$

For example, monotonicity properties of Ω_n can be found in [7, p. 264] and [4, 5, 11, 12]. For diverse sharp inequalities involving Ω_n , the reader may consult [2, 3, 6, 8–10, 13–19]. In particular, for $n \in \mathbb{N}$, Chen and Lin [9, Theorem 3.4] showed that

$$\frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi(n+\theta)}} \left(\frac{2\pi e}{n}\right)^{n/2} \leq \Omega_n < \frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi(n+\vartheta)}} \left(\frac{2\pi e}{n}\right)^{n/2}, \quad (1)$$

with the best possible constants

$$\theta = \frac{e}{2} - 1 = 0.3591409\dots, \quad \vartheta = \frac{1}{3}.$$

From the right-hand side of (1), it follows that

$$\Omega_n \sim \frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi(n+\frac{1}{3})}} \left(\frac{2\pi e}{n}\right)^{n/2}, \quad n \rightarrow \infty. \quad (2)$$

Chen and Paris [10, Equation (3.18)] developed (2) to produce a complete asymptotic expansion:

$$\begin{aligned} \Omega_n &\sim \frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi(n+\frac{1}{3})}} \left(\frac{2\pi e}{n}\right)^{n/2} \left(\sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \frac{b_j}{n^j}\right) \\ &= \frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi(n+\frac{1}{3})}} \left(\frac{2\pi e}{n}\right)^{n/2} \left\{1 - \frac{1}{36n^2} + \frac{23}{810n^3} - \frac{1}{864n^4} - \frac{5261}{204120n^5} + \frac{6889}{20995200n^6} + \frac{125549}{1632960n^7} - \dots\right\}, \quad n \rightarrow \infty, \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

where the coefficients b_j are given by

$$b_0 = 1, \quad b_j = \frac{1}{j} \sum_{k=1}^j k a_k b_{j-k}, \quad j \geq 1, \quad (4)$$

and a_j are given by

$$a_j = \frac{(-1)^{j-1}}{2j \cdot 3^j} - \frac{2^j B_{j+1}}{j(j+1)}, \quad j \geq 1.$$

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Here, B_n ($n \in \mathbb{N}_0 := \mathbb{N} \cup \{0\}$) are the Bernoulli numbers defined via the generating function:

$$\frac{t}{e^t - 1} = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} B_n \frac{t^n}{n!}, \quad |t| < 2\pi. \tag{5}$$

By utilizing the Maple software, we find that

$$\Omega_n \sim \frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi(n + \frac{1}{3})}} \left(\frac{2\pi e}{n}\right)^{n/2} \left\{ 1 - \frac{\frac{1}{36}}{(n + \frac{23}{45})^2} + \frac{\frac{4007}{194400}}{(n + \frac{1865077}{3786615})^4} - \frac{\frac{22370792931839}{556505174736000}}{(n + \frac{633922198537106197381}{1270643701163933024775})^6} + \dots \right\}, \quad \text{as } n \rightarrow \infty. \tag{6}$$

The first aim of the present paper is to determine the constants λ_ℓ and μ_ℓ such that

$$\Omega_n \sim \frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi(n + \frac{1}{3})}} \left(\frac{2\pi e}{n}\right)^{n/2} \left\{ 1 + \sum_{\ell=1}^{\infty} \frac{\lambda_\ell}{(n + \mu_\ell)^{2\ell}} \right\}, \quad n \rightarrow \infty.$$

In view of (6), it is natural to ask: what is the smallest value of α and what is the largest value of β such that the inequality

$$\frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi(n + \frac{1}{3})}} \left(\frac{2\pi e}{n}\right)^{n/2} \left(1 - \frac{1}{36(n + \alpha)^2}\right) \leq \Omega_n \leq \frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi(n + \frac{1}{3})}} \left(\frac{2\pi e}{n}\right)^{n/2} \left(1 - \frac{1}{36(n + \beta)^2}\right)$$

is valid for every $n \in \mathbb{N}$? Answering this question is the second aim of the present paper.

The gamma function $\Gamma(x)$ is one of the most important functions in mathematical analysis and has applications in many diverse areas. The logarithmic derivative of $\Gamma(x)$, denoted by $\psi(x) = \Gamma'(x)/\Gamma(x)$, is called the psi (or digamma) function. It is known that

$$\Gamma(x + 1) = x\Gamma(x) \quad \text{and} \quad \psi(x + 1) = \psi(x) + \frac{1}{x}.$$

The following inequalities are needed in the present study:

$$\frac{1}{12x} - \frac{1}{360x^3} < \ln \Gamma(x + 1) - \ln \sqrt{2\pi x} - x \ln x + x < \frac{1}{12x} - \frac{1}{360x^3} + \frac{1}{1260x^5} \tag{7}$$

and

$$\frac{1}{12x^2} - \frac{1}{120x^4} < \ln x + \frac{1}{2x} - \psi(x + 1) < \frac{1}{12x^2} - \frac{1}{120x^4} + \frac{1}{252x^6} \tag{8}$$

where $x > 0$. The inequalities (7) and (8) can be found in [10]. We remark that the inequalities (7) and (8) follow from Theorem 8 of [1].

We end this introductory section with the remark that the numerical values reported in this paper are calculated by using MAPLE 11 (a software).

2. Main results

Theorem 2.1. *As $n \rightarrow \infty$, we have*

$$\Omega_n \sim \frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi(n + \frac{1}{3})}} \left(\frac{2\pi e}{n}\right)^{n/2} \left\{ 1 + \sum_{\ell=1}^{\infty} \frac{\lambda_\ell}{(n + \mu_\ell)^{2\ell}} \right\}, \tag{9}$$

where the constants λ_ℓ and μ_ℓ are given by a pair of recurrence relations as follows:

$$\lambda_\ell = b_{2\ell} - \sum_{k=1}^{\ell-1} \lambda_k \mu_k^{2\ell-2k} \binom{2\ell-1}{2\ell-2k}, \quad \ell \geq 2 \tag{10}$$

and

$$\mu_\ell = -\frac{1}{2\ell\lambda_\ell} \left\{ b_{2\ell+1} + \sum_{k=1}^{\ell-1} \lambda_k \mu_k^{2\ell-2k+1} \binom{2\ell}{2\ell-2k+1} \right\}, \quad \ell \geq 2, \tag{11}$$

with

$$\lambda_1 = -\frac{1}{36} \quad \text{and} \quad \mu_1 = \frac{23}{45}.$$

Here b_j are given in (4).

Proof. In view of (6), we can assume that

$$\Omega_n \sim \frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi(n + \frac{1}{3})}} \left(\frac{2\pi e}{n}\right)^{n/2} \left\{ 1 + \sum_{\ell=1}^{\infty} \frac{\lambda_{\ell}}{(n + \mu_{\ell})^{2\ell}} \right\}$$

as $n \rightarrow \infty$, where λ_{ℓ} and μ_{ℓ} are real numbers to be determined. This can be written as follows:

$$\frac{\Omega_n}{\frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi(n + \frac{1}{3})}} \left(\frac{2\pi e}{n}\right)^{n/2}} - 1 \sim \sum_{j=1}^{\infty} \frac{\lambda_j}{n^{2j}} \left(1 + \frac{\mu_j}{n}\right)^{-2j}, \quad n \rightarrow \infty.$$

Direct computation yields

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{j=1}^{\infty} \frac{\lambda_j}{n^{2j}} \left(1 + \frac{\mu_j}{n}\right)^{-2j} &= \sum_{j=1}^{\infty} \frac{\lambda_j}{n^{2j}} \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \binom{-2j}{k} \frac{\mu_j^k}{n^k} \\ &= \sum_{j=1}^{\infty} \frac{\lambda_j}{n^{2j}} \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} (-1)^k \binom{k + 2j - 1}{k} \frac{\mu_j^k}{n^k} \\ &= \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \frac{\lambda_{j+1}}{n^{2j+2}} \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} (-1)^k \binom{k + 2j + 1}{k} \frac{\mu_{j+1}^k}{n^k} \\ &= \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \sum_{k=0}^j \lambda_{k+1} (-1)^{j-k} \binom{j + k + 1}{j - k} \frac{\mu_{k+1}^{j-k}}{n^{j+k+2}} \\ &= \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \sum_{k=1}^{j+1} \lambda_k \mu_k^{j-k+1} (-1)^{j-k+1} \binom{j + k}{j - k + 1} \frac{1}{n^{j+k+1}} \\ &= \sum_{\ell=2}^{\infty} \left\{ \sum_{k=1}^{\lfloor \ell/2 \rfloor} \lambda_k \mu_k^{\ell-2k} (-1)^{\ell} \binom{\ell - 1}{\ell - 2k} \right\} \frac{1}{n^{\ell}}. \end{aligned}$$

We then obtain

$$\frac{\Omega_n}{\frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi(n + \frac{1}{3})}} \left(\frac{2\pi e}{n}\right)^{n/2}} - 1 \sim \sum_{j=2}^{\infty} \left\{ \sum_{k=1}^{\lfloor j/2 \rfloor} \lambda_k \mu_k^{j-2k} (-1)^j \binom{j - 1}{j - 2k} \right\} \frac{1}{n^j}, \tag{12}$$

as $n \rightarrow \infty$. On the other hand, it follows from (3) that

$$\frac{\Omega_n}{\frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi(n + \frac{1}{3})}} \left(\frac{2\pi e}{n}\right)^{n/2}} - 1 \sim \sum_{j=2}^{\infty} \frac{b_j}{n^j} \tag{13}$$

as $n \rightarrow \infty$, where b_j are given in (4). By equating coefficients of the term n^{-j} on the right-hand sides of (12) and (13), we obtain

$$b_j = \sum_{k=1}^{\lfloor j/2 \rfloor} \lambda_k \mu_k^{j-2k} (-1)^j \binom{j - 1}{j - 2k}, \quad j \geq 2. \tag{14}$$

By setting $j = 2\ell$ and $j = 2\ell + 1$ in (14), respectively, we find

$$b_{2\ell} = \sum_{k=1}^{\ell} \lambda_k \mu_k^{2\ell-2k} \binom{2\ell - 1}{2\ell - 2k}, \quad \ell \geq 1 \tag{15}$$

and

$$b_{2\ell+1} = - \sum_{k=1}^{\ell} \lambda_k \mu_k^{2\ell-2k+1} \binom{2\ell}{2\ell - 2k + 1}, \quad \ell \geq 1. \tag{16}$$

From (15) and (16) we obtain for $\ell = 1$,

$$\lambda_1 = b_2 = -\frac{1}{36} \quad \text{and} \quad \mu_1 = -\frac{b_3}{2\lambda_1} = \frac{23}{45}.$$

Also, for $\ell \geq 2$, we have

$$\sum_{k=1}^{\ell-1} \lambda_k \mu_k^{2\ell-2k} \binom{2\ell-1}{2\ell-2k} + \lambda_\ell = b_{2\ell}$$

and

$$-\sum_{k=1}^{\ell-1} \lambda_k \mu_k^{2\ell-2k+1} \binom{2\ell}{2\ell-2k+1} - 2\ell \lambda_\ell \mu_\ell = b_{2\ell+1}.$$

Consequently, we arrive at the recurrence relations (10) and (11). □

Here, we give explicit numerical values of some first terms of λ_ℓ and μ_ℓ by using the formulas (10) and (11). This shows how easily we can determine the constants λ_ℓ and μ_ℓ in Theorem 2.1. We see from (3) that

$$b_2 = -\frac{1}{36}, \quad b_3 = \frac{23}{810}, \quad b_4 = -\frac{1}{864}, \quad b_5 = -\frac{5261}{204120}, \quad b_6 = \frac{6889}{20995200}, \quad b_7 = \frac{125549}{1632960}.$$

We obtain from (10) and (11) that

$$\begin{aligned} \lambda_1 = b_2 = -\frac{1}{36}, & & \mu_1 = -\frac{b_3}{2\lambda_1} = \frac{23}{45}, \\ \lambda_2 = b_4 - 3\lambda_1\mu_1^2 = \frac{4007}{194400}, & & \mu_2 = -\frac{b_5 + 4\lambda_1\mu_1^3}{4\lambda_2} = \frac{1865077}{3786615}, \\ \lambda_3 = b_6 - 5\lambda_1\mu_1^4 - 10\lambda_2\mu_2^2 = -\frac{22370792931839}{556505174736000}, & & \mu_3 = -\frac{b_7 + 6\lambda_1\mu_1^5 + 20\lambda_2\mu_2^3}{6\lambda_3} = \frac{633922198537106197381}{1270643701163933024775}. \end{aligned}$$

We note that the values of λ_ℓ and μ_ℓ (for $\ell = 1, 2, 3$), given above, are equal to the constants appearing in (6). From a computational viewpoint, the formula (6) improves the formula (3).

Theorem 2.2. For $n \in \mathbb{N}$, the following double inequality holds:

$$\frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi(n + \frac{1}{3})}} \left(\frac{2\pi e}{n}\right)^{n/2} \left(1 - \frac{1}{36(n + \alpha)^2}\right) < \Omega_n \leq \frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi(n + \frac{1}{3})}} \left(\frac{2\pi e}{n}\right)^{n/2} \left(1 - \frac{1}{36(n + \beta)^2}\right), \tag{17}$$

where the constants

$$\alpha = \frac{23}{45} = 0.511111111\dots \quad \text{and} \quad \beta = \frac{\sqrt{3}e^{\frac{1}{4}}}{6(3\sqrt{e} - 2\sqrt{6})^{\frac{1}{2}}} - 1 = 0.70641286\dots$$

are the best possible.

Proof. First of all, we show that the double inequality (17) with $\alpha = \frac{23}{45}$ and

$$\beta = \frac{\sqrt{3}e^{\frac{1}{4}}}{6(3\sqrt{e} - 2\sqrt{6})^{\frac{1}{2}}} - 1$$

is valid for $n = 1, 2, 3$. For $n \in \mathbb{N}$, let

$$\begin{aligned} L_n &= \frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi(n + \frac{1}{3})}} \left(\frac{2\pi e}{n}\right)^{n/2} \left\{1 - \frac{1}{36(n + \alpha)^2}\right\}, \\ U_n &= \frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi(n + \frac{1}{3})}} \left(\frac{2\pi e}{n}\right)^{n/2} \left\{1 - \frac{1}{36(n + \beta)^2}\right\}. \end{aligned}$$

Direct computation yields

$$\begin{aligned} L_1 = 1.9946\dots, \quad \Omega_1 = 2, & & U_1 = 2, \\ L_2 = 3.1402\dots, \quad \Omega_2 = \pi = 3.1415\dots, & & U_2 = 3.1477\dots, \\ L_3 = 4.1882\dots, \quad \Omega_3 = \frac{4\pi}{3} = 4.1887\dots, & & U_3 = 4.1924\dots \end{aligned}$$

Now, it is clear that the double inequality (17) with $\alpha = \frac{23}{45}$ and

$$\beta = \frac{\sqrt{3}e^{\frac{1}{4}}}{6(3\sqrt{e} - 2\sqrt{6})^{\frac{1}{2}}} - 1$$

is valid for $n = 1, 2$ and 3 . For $n = 1$, the equality sign on the right-hand side of (17) holds. We now prove that the double inequality (17) with $\alpha = \frac{23}{45}$ and

$$\beta = \frac{\sqrt{3}e^{\frac{1}{4}}}{6(3\sqrt{e} - 2\sqrt{6})^{\frac{1}{2}}} - 1$$

is valid for $n \geq 4$. It suffices to show that for $x \geq 2$,

$$\frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi(2x + \frac{1}{3})}} \left(\frac{\pi e}{x}\right)^x \left(1 - \frac{1}{36(2x + \alpha)^2}\right) < \Omega_{2x} \leq \frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi(2x + \frac{1}{3})}} \left(\frac{\pi e}{x}\right)^x \left(1 - \frac{1}{36(2x + \beta)^2}\right), \tag{18}$$

where

$$\Omega_x = \frac{\pi^{x/2}}{\Gamma(\frac{x}{2} + 1)}.$$

The double inequality (18) can be written as

$$\frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi x(1 + \frac{1}{6x})}} \left(\frac{e}{x}\right)^x \left(1 - \frac{1}{36(2x + \alpha)^2}\right) < \frac{1}{\Gamma(x + 1)} \leq \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi x(1 + \frac{1}{6x})}} \left(\frac{e}{x}\right)^x \left(1 - \frac{1}{36(2x + \beta)^2}\right). \tag{19}$$

In order to prove the double inequality (19) for $x \geq 2$, it suffices to show that

$$f(x) > 0 \quad \text{and} \quad g(x) < 0 \quad \text{for} \quad x \geq 2,$$

where

$$f(x) = x \ln x - x + \ln(\sqrt{2\pi x}) - \ln \Gamma(x + 1) + \frac{1}{2} \ln \left(1 + \frac{1}{6x}\right) - \ln \left(1 - \frac{1}{36(2x + \frac{23}{45})^2}\right)$$

and

$$g(x) = x \ln x - x + \ln(\sqrt{2\pi x}) - \ln \Gamma(x + 1) + \frac{1}{2} \ln \left(1 + \frac{1}{6x}\right) - \ln \left(1 - \frac{1}{36(2x + \beta)^2}\right).$$

By (7), we obtain

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} f(x) = \lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} g(x) = 0.$$

By differentiating $f(x)$ and applying the right-hand side of (8), we obtain for $x \geq 2$,

$$\begin{aligned} f'(x) &= \ln x + \frac{1}{2x} - \psi(x + 1) - \frac{2916000x^3 + 2721600x^2 + 632070x + 43493}{2x(32400x^2 + 16560x + 1891)(90x + 23)(6x + 1)} \\ &< \frac{1}{12x^2} - \frac{1}{120x^4} + \frac{1}{252x^4} - \frac{2916000x^3 + 2721600x^2 + 632070x + 43493}{2x(32400x^2 + 16560x + 1891)(90x + 23)(6x + 1)} \\ &= -\frac{P_5(x - 2)}{2520x^6(32400x^2 + 16560x + 1891)(90x + 23)(6x + 1)}, \end{aligned}$$

where

$$P_5(x) = 227196900x^5 + 2204257890x^4 + 8399943708x^3 + 15618718041x^2 + 14027927868x + 4782272866.$$

Hence, $f'(x) < 0$ for $x \geq 2$. So, $f(x)$ is strictly decreasing for $x \geq 2$ and we have

$$f(x) > \lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} f(t) = 0, \quad x \geq 2.$$

Therefore, the left-hand side of (17) is valid for $n \in \mathbb{N}$.

Now, by differentiating $g(x)$ and applying the left-hand side of (8), we obtain for $x \geq 2$,

$$\begin{aligned} g'(x) &= \ln x + \frac{1}{2x} - \psi(x+1) - \frac{1}{2x(6x+1)} - \frac{4}{(144x^2 + 144\beta x + 36\beta^2 - 1)(2x + \beta)} \\ &> \frac{1}{12x^2} - \frac{1}{120x^4} - \frac{1}{2x(6x+1)} - \frac{4}{\left(144x^2 + 144 \cdot \frac{7}{10} \cdot x + 36 \cdot \left(\frac{7}{10}\right)^2 - 1\right)(2x + \frac{7}{10})} \\ &= \frac{29658 + 310451(x-2) + 387220(x-2)^2 + 170750(x-2)^3 + 25500(x-2)^4}{120x^4(6x+1)(20x+7)(450x^2 + 315x + 52)} > 0. \end{aligned}$$

Hence, $g(x)$ is strictly increasing for $x \geq 2$, and we have

$$g(x) < \lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} g(t) = 0, \quad x \geq 2.$$

Therefore, the right-hand side of (17) holds for $n \in \mathbb{N}$. If we write the double inequality (17) as

$$\alpha < x_n \leq \beta,$$

where

$$x_n = \frac{1}{6 \left[1 - \frac{\sqrt{\pi(n+\frac{1}{3})} \left(\frac{n}{2e}\right)^{n/2}}{\Gamma(\frac{n}{2}+1)} \right]^{1/2}} - n, \quad (20)$$

we find that

$$x_1 = \frac{\sqrt{3}e^{\frac{1}{4}}}{6(3\sqrt{e} - 2\sqrt{6})^{\frac{1}{2}}} - 1$$

and

$$\begin{aligned} \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} x_n &= \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \left\{ \frac{1}{6 \left[1 - \frac{\sqrt{\pi(n+\frac{1}{3})} \left(\frac{n}{2e}\right)^{n/2}}{\Gamma(\frac{n}{2}+1)} \right]^{1/2}} - n \right\} \\ &\stackrel{x=n/2}{=} \frac{1}{6} \lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \left\{ \frac{1}{\left[1 - \frac{\sqrt{2\pi x} \left(\frac{x}{e}\right)^x}{\Gamma(x+1)} \left(1 + \frac{1}{6x}\right)^{1/2} \right]^{1/2}} - 12x \right\} \\ &= \frac{1}{6} \lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \left\{ \frac{1}{\left[\frac{1}{144x^2} - \frac{23}{6480x^3} + \frac{1}{13824x^4} + O(x^{-5}) \right]^{1/2}} - 12x \right\} \\ &= \frac{1}{6} \lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \left\{ \frac{1}{\frac{1}{12x} - \frac{23}{1080x^2} - \frac{3557}{1555200x^3} + O(x^{-4})} - 12x \right\} \\ &= \frac{1}{6} \lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \left\{ \frac{46}{15} + O\left(\frac{1}{x}\right) \right\} = \frac{23}{45}. \end{aligned}$$

Thus, the double inequality (17) holds for $n \in \mathbb{N}$, and the constants $\alpha = \frac{23}{45}$ and $\beta = \frac{\sqrt{3}e^{\frac{1}{4}}}{6(3\sqrt{e} - 2\sqrt{6})^{\frac{1}{2}}} - 1$ are the best possible. \square

Remark 2.1. Suppose that the sequence $\{x_n\}$ is defined via (20). In order to prove Theorem 2.2, it suffices to show that the sequence $\{x_n\}$ is strictly decreasing for $n \in \mathbb{N}$.

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