spmatrix create — Create standard weighting matrices

**Description**

spmatrix create creates standard-format spatial weighting matrices.

**Quick start**

Create contiguity spatial weighting matrix $M$ with default spectral normalization

```stata
spmatrix create contiguity M
```

Same as above

```stata
spmatrix create contiguity M, normalize(spectral)
```

Create row-standardized contiguity spatial weighting matrix $M$

```stata
spmatrix create contiguity M, normalize(row)
```

Create contiguity spatial weighting matrix $M$ without normalization

```stata
spmatrix create contiguity M, normalize(none)
```

Create spectral-normalized inverse-distance spatial weighting matrix $W$

```stata
spmatrix create idistance W
```

**Menu**

Statistics > Spatial autoregressive models
Syntax

```
spmatrix create contiguity spmatname [if] [in] [ , contoptions stdoptions ]

spmatrix create idistance spmatname [if] [in] [ , idistoption stdoptions ]
```

spmatname is a weighting matrix name.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>contoptions</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>rook</td>
<td>share a border and not just a vertex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>first</td>
<td>first-order neighbors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second[ (#) ]</td>
<td>second-order neighbors</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>idistoption</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vtruncate(#)</td>
<td>set ((i, j)) element to 0 if (1/distance \leq) #</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>stdoptions</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>normalize(normalize)</td>
<td>type of normalization; default is normalize(spectral)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>replace</td>
<td>replace existing weighting matrix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Options for spmatrix create contiguity

rook specifies that areas that share just a vertex not be treated as neighbors. For instance, consider the following map:

```
+-------+
|       |
+-------+ C |
| B     |
+-------+ A |
```

If rook is not specified, \(A\) and \(C\) are neighbors because they have a vertex (corner) in common. If rook is specified, \(A\) and \(C\) are not neighbors. Regardless of whether rook is specified, \(A\) and \(B\) are neighbors and \(B\) and \(C\) are neighbors because they share a border (line segment).

first specifies that first-order neighbors be assigned 1. If areas \(i\) and \(j\) are neighbors, then \(spmatname_{i,j} = spmatname_{j,i} = 1\). first is the default unless second or second(#) is specified.

second[ (#) ] specifies that the second-order neighbors—neighbors of neighbors—be assigned a nonzero value. second specifies that they be assigned 1. second(#) specifies that they be assigned #.

If you also specify option first, then the matrix created will set first-order neighbors to contain 1. For instance, if you specify first second, both kinds of neighbors will be set to 1. If you specify first second(.5), first-order neighbors are set to 1 and second-order neighbors are set to 0.5.
Option for spmatrix create idistance

`vtruncate(#)` specifies that areas farther apart than # be set to 0. Type `spset` without arguments to determine the units in which # is specified. The coordinates line of `spset`’s output will be one of the following:

- `coordinates: _CX, _CY (planar)`
- `coordinates: _CY, _CX (latitude and longitude, kilometers)`
- `coordinates: _CY, _CX (latitude and longitude, miles)`

Units of # will be planar, kilometers, or miles. If planar, see [SP] `spdistance` for advice on determining the units.

If `spset` reports `coordinates: none` then you cannot use `spmatrix create`.

Options for both contiguity and idistance

`normalize(normalize)` specifies how the resulting matrix is to be scaled.

- `normalize(spectral)` is the default. The matrix will be normalized so that its largest eigenvalue is 1.
- `normalize(minmax)` specifies that the matrix elements be divided by the smaller of the largest row or column sum of absolute values. The min–max calculation is much quicker than the spectral calculation and in most cases gives similar results as the spectral normalization.
- `normalize(row)` specifies that each row of the matrix be divided by the row’s sum (not absolute values). This adjustment can be performed even more quickly than the min–max adjustment.
- `normalize(none)` specifies that the matrix not be rescaled. This option has one use: To store the matrix in unadjusted form so that you can fetch it later, make changes to it while the matrix is still in its original units, and then repost the matrix, at which point it will be rescaled. See Choosing weighting matrices and their normalization in [SP] `spregress` for details about normalization.

`replace` specifies that matrix `spmatname` may be replaced if it already exists.

Remarks and examples

See [SP] `Intro 1` about the role spatial weighting matrices play in SAR models and see [SP] `Intro 2` for a thorough discussion of the matrices. To remind you, the \((i, j)\) element of a weighting matrix specifies the potential spillover from area \(j\) to \(i\).

Remarks are presented under the following headings:

- Creating contiguity matrices
- Creating inverse-distance matrices
- Creating inverse-distance contiguity matrices
- The normalize() option
- Panel data
Creating contiguity matrices

*spmatrix create contiguity* is mostly used to create matrices with elements equal to 1 or 0 (before normalization). *spmatname*\(_{i,j}\) is 1 when areas \(i\) and \(j\) are neighbors. The matrix is symmetric.

Creation of contiguity matrices requires that the Sp data in memory be linked to a shapefile. The data must look like this:

```plaintext
.spset
Sp dataset
  data: cross sectional or panel
  spatial-unit id: _ID
  coordinates: _CY, _CX (latitude and longitude, miles)
  linked shapefile: irrelevant
```

Determining whether places are neighbors requires a linked shapefile. Knowing their locations is not sufficient.

To create a contiguity matrix named \(F\) of first-order neighbors, type

```plaintext
.spmatrix create contiguity F
```

The contiguity matrix \(F\) is automatically normalized using the spectral normalization; see *Choosing weighting matrices and their normalization* in [SP] *spregress* for details about normalization.

In [SP] *Intro 1*, we discussed a spatial weighting matrix containing 1s for first-order neighbors and 0.5s for second-order neighbors. Such a matrix could be created by typing

```plaintext
.spmatrix create contiguity W, first second(0.5)
```

Also in the introduction, we considered making two weighting matrices, \(W\) for first-order neighbors and \(V\) for second. To create \(W\) and \(V\), type

```plaintext
.spmatrix create contiguity W
.spmatrix create contiguity V, second
```

The syntax of the *spmatrix create contiguity* command is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Command</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <em>spmatrix create contiguity</em></td>
<td>1st-order neighbors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <em>spmatrix create contiguity</em>, first</td>
<td>same as command 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <em>spmatrix create contiguity</em>, second</td>
<td>2nd-order neighbors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <em>spmatrix create contiguity</em>, second(1)</td>
<td>same as command 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <em>spmatrix create contiguity</em>, first second</td>
<td>1st- and 2nd-order neighbors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. <em>spmatrix create contiguity</em>, first second(1)</td>
<td>same as command 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. <em>spmatrix create contiguity</em>, first second(0.5)</td>
<td>1st- and 2nd-order neighbors, 1st set to 1, 2nd set to 0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Creating inverse-distance matrices

*spmatrix create idistance* creates matrices with elements equal to the reciprocal of distance between places (before normalization). The matrix is symmetric.
Creation of inverse-distance matrices requires that the Sp data have coordinates, but a shapefile is not required. The data must look like this:

```
  . spset
  Sp dataset
    data: cross sectional or panel
    spatial-unit id: _ID
    coordinates: _CY, _CX (latitude and longitude, miles)
    linked shapefile: irrelevant
```

Coordinates must be defined, although they are not required to be latitude and longitude. If they are latitude and longitude, however, Sp needs to know; see [SP] Intro 4. Whether units are miles or kilometers is irrelevant.

To create an inverse-distance matrix named Idist, type

```
  . spmatrix create idistance Idist
```

The inverse-distance matrix Idist is automatically normalized using the spectral normalization; see Choosing weighting matrices and their normalization in [SP] spregress for details about normalization.

spmatrix create idistance allows option vtruncate(#), which sets spillovers less than or equal to # to 0. To create an inverse-distance matrix I0 with places more than 100 apart, you could type

```
  . spmatrix create contiguity I0, vtruncate(.01)
```

Note that you specify # = 1/distance.

See the description of the vtruncate() option above for the meaning of how far apart 100 means.

### Creating inverse-distance contiguity matrices

An inverse-distance contiguity matrix is a weighting matrix that contains inverse distance for neighbors and 0 otherwise. Here is how you create such a matrix:

1. Create the inverse-distance and contiguity matrices separately.
2. Multiply them element by element in Mata. The result is a matrix containing inverse distance for neighbors because the contiguity matrix contains 1s and 0s.
3. Store the Mata result as an Sp spatial weighting matrix.

We do that below to create an inverse-distance first-order neighbor matrix named CN.

```
  . // --------------------------- create the matrices separately ---
  . spmatrix create idistance N, normalize(none) // note 1
  . spmatrix create contiguity C, first normalize(none) // note 2
  .
  . // ------------------------- multiply them element by element ---
  . mata: Wcn = Wc :* Wn // note 3
  .
  .
```

---

---
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. // ------------------------------------ save the result in Sp ---
.
. spmatrix spfrommata CN = Wcn v  // note 4
.
. // ------------------------------------ clean up ---
.
. mata: mata drop Wcn Wc Wn  // note 5
. spmatrix drop C
. spmatrix drop N
.
. // ----------------------------------------- the final result ---
.
. spmatrix dir

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weighting matrix name</th>
<th>N x N</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Normalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CN</td>
<td>254 x 254</td>
<td>custom</td>
<td>spectral</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

1. We specify normalize(none) when we create the matrices separately for speed, not because it is necessary. Normalization amounts to multiplying the matrices by a constant, and that will not matter. Calculating the constant, however, takes considerable time.

2. We created C to be first-order neighbors. We could have included second-order neighbors as well by adding option second to the command.

3. Colon-asterisk (:*) is Mata’s element-by-element matrix multiplication operator. It is called colon-multiply.

4. spmatrix spfrommata allows the normalize() option and defaults to normalize(spectral), just as spmatrix create does. Thus, the matrix stored in Sp is normalized.

5. Do not skip the clean-up step. Spatial weighting matrices are N x N and can consume considerable amounts of memory.

   It is also important that we cleared the Mata matrices by dropping them and not by typing clear mata. Sp stores the matrices you create in Mata and, if you cleared Mata, the new weighting matrix CN would also be dropped!

See [SP] spmatrix matafromsp and [SP] spmatrix spfrommata.

The normalize() option

We have hardly mentioned the normalize() option so far, because spmatrix create normalizes matrices by default. Normalization is important. All the Sp commands that create spatial weighting matrices normalize by default and include the normalize() option for cases in which you want to modify how or whether it is done.

Sp provides three normalizations:

- normalize(spectral) the default
- normalize(minmax) min–max
- normalize(row) row

normalize() provides a fourth setting to skip normalization altogether:

- normalize(none) do not perform normalization
The Sp commands are so determined you do not forget to normalize spatial weighting matrices at the last step that you must not forget to specify `normalize(none)` when you are building a custom matrix from ingredients. The spectral and min–max normalizations merely change the scale of the matrix.

`normalize(row)`, however, is a normalization of a different ilk from the others. The others merely change the scale of the matrix. Changing a matrix’s scale is performed by dividing the elements by a constant. `normalize(row)` divides each row by a different constant. Doing this transformation on the matrix changes the model specification.

See [SP] `spmatrix normalize` and *Choosing weighting matrices and their normalization* in [SP] `spregress` for details.

### Panel data

If you have panel data and want to create a weighting matrix, you must use an *if* statement with `spmatrix create` to restrict the data to a single time value.

Here is an example. We load an Sp panel dataset and type `spset` to see the Sp settings:

```
. use homicide_1960_1990
. xtset _ID year
   panel variable: _ID (strongly balanced)
   time variable: year, 1960 to 1990, but with gaps
   delta: 1 unit
. spset
   Sp dataset homicide_1960_1990.dta
   data: panel
   spatial-unit id: _ID
   time id: year (see xtset)
   coordinates: _CX, _CY (planar)
   linked shapefile: homicide_1960_1990_shp.dta
```

If we tried to create a weighting matrix the usual way, we would not be successful:

```
. spmatrix create contiguity W
   variable _ID does not uniquely identify observations in the master data
   r(459);
```

We get an error message because `spmatrix create` needs to know which observations to use. We must restrict `spmatrix create` to one observation per panel, which is easy to do using an *if* statement:

```
. spmatrix create contiguity W if year == 1990
```

Do not misinterpret the purpose of *if year == 1990*. The matrix created will be appropriate for creating spatial lags for any year, because if two spatial units share a border in 1990, they will share it in the other years too. The map does not change.

### Also see

[SP] `spmatrix` — Categorical guide to the spmatrix command
[SP] `Intro` — Introduction to spatial data and SAR models

*Mata Reference Manual*