

Lecture 7:
Estimation Methods
Maximum Likelihood & Bayesian Estimation
Big Data and Machine Learning for Applied Economics
Econ 4676

Ignacio Sarmiento-Barbieri

Universidad de los Andes

September 1, 2020

Recap

- ▶ Computation
- ▶ QR decomposition
- ▶ MapReduce and Spark
- ▶ Demo Scraping
- ▶ Message: web scraping involves as much art as it does science

Agenda

- 1 Motivation
- 2 Maximum Likelihood Estimation
- 3 Conditional Likelihood Estimation
- 4 Bayesian Estimation
- 5 Further Readings

Motivation

- ▶ Maximum Likelihood is, by far, the most popular technique for deriving estimators
- ▶ Developed by Roanld A. Fisher (1890-1962)
- ▶ “If Fisher had lived in the era of “apps,” maximum likelihood estimation might have made him a billionaire” (Efron and Tibshiriani, 2016)
- ▶ Why? MLE gives “automatically”
 - ▶ Unbiasedness
 - ▶ Minimum variance

Maximum Likelihood Estimation

Let $X_1, \dots, X_n \sim_{iid} f(x|\theta)$, the likelihood function is defined by

$$L(\theta|x) = \prod_{i=1}^n f(x_i|\theta) \quad (1)$$

A maximum likelihood estimator of the parameter θ :

$$\hat{\theta}^{MLE} = \underset{\theta \in \Theta}{\operatorname{argmax}} L(\theta, x) \quad (2)$$

- ▶ Intuitively, MLE is a reasonable choice for an estimator.
- ▶ MLE is the parameter point for which the observed sample is most likely
- ▶ *It is kind of a 'reverse engineering' process: to generate random numbers for a certain distribution you first set parameter values and then get realizations. This is doing the reverse process: first set the realizations and try to get the parameters that are 'most likely' to have generated them*

Maximum Likelihood Estimation

Note that maximizing (1) is the same as maximizing

$$l(\theta|x) = \ln L(\theta|x) = \sum_{i=1}^n l_i(x|\theta) \quad (3)$$

Advantages of (3)

- ▶ It is easy to see that the **contribution** of observation i to the likelihood is given by $l_i(x|\theta) = \ln f(x_i|\theta)$
- ▶ Eq. (1) is also prone to underflow; can be very large or very small number that it cannot easily be represented in a computer.

Maximum Likelihood Estimation

If the likelihood function is differentiable (in θ) a possible candidate for the MLE are the value of θ that solve

$$\frac{\partial L(\theta|x)}{\partial \theta} = 0 \quad (4)$$

- ▶ These are only *possible candidates*, this is a necessary condition for a max
- ▶ Need to check SOC

Maximum Likelihood Estimation

Let $X_1, \dots, X_n \sim N(\mu, 1)$. We want to estimate $\theta = \mu$
Here

$$L(\theta) = \frac{1}{(\sqrt{2\pi})^n} e^{-\frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \mu)^2} \quad (5)$$

taking logs

$$l(\theta) = -\frac{n}{2} \log(2\pi) - \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \mu)^2 \quad (6)$$

FOC

$$\frac{\partial l(\theta)}{\partial \mu} = 0 \quad (7)$$

Maximum Likelihood Estimation

$$\frac{\partial l(\theta)}{\partial \mu} = 2 \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \mu)}{2} = 0 \quad (8)$$

$$\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \hat{\mu}) = 0 \quad (9)$$

then

$$\hat{\mu} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n x_i}{n} = \bar{x} \quad (10)$$

The MLE is the sample mean. Next we check the SOC

$$\frac{\partial^2 L(\theta|x)}{\partial \theta^2} = -n < 0 \quad (11)$$

We are in a global maximum

Conditional Likelihood

Suppose now, that $f(y, x|\eta)$ is the joint density function of two variables X and Y . Then, it can be decomposed as

$$f(y, x|\eta) = f(y|X, \theta)f(x|\phi) \quad (12)$$

- ▶ $\theta, \phi \subset \eta$
- ▶ The parameter vector of interest is θ
- ▶ Maximizing the joint likelihood is achieved through maximizing separately the conditional and the marginal likelihood
- ▶ The MLE of θ also maximizes the conditional likelihood
- ▶ We can obtain ML estimates by specifying the conditional likelihood only

Example 1

Let $y_i|X_i \sim_{iid} \text{Bernoulli}(p)$, where $p = PR(y = 1|X) = F(X\beta)$ and $F(\cdot)$ normal cdf. Then the conditional likelihood is

$$L(\beta, Y) = \prod_{i=1}^n p_i^{y_i} (1 - p_i)^{1-y_i} \quad (13)$$

The log likelihood is then

$$l(\beta, Y) = \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i \ln F(X_i\beta) + (1 - y_i) \ln(1 - F(X_i\beta))) \quad (14)$$

Example 1

FOC

$$\frac{\partial l(\beta|y, X)}{\partial \beta} = 0 \quad (15)$$

$$\sum_{i=1}^n y_i \frac{1}{F(X_i' \beta)} f(X_i' \beta) X_i' + \sum_{i=1}^n (1 - y_i) \frac{1}{(1 - F(x_i' \beta))} - f(X_i' \beta) X_i' = 0 \quad (16)$$

\vdots

$$\sum_{i=1}^n \frac{(y_i - F(X_i' \beta)) f(X_i' \beta) x_i}{F(X_i' \beta) (1 - F(X_i' \beta))} = 0 \quad (17)$$

Note:

- ▶ This is a system of K non linear equations with K unknown parameters.
- ▶ We cannot explicitly solve for $\hat{\beta}$

Example 2: Linear Regression

Now consider the following linear model

$$y = X\beta + u \quad u \sim_{iid} N(0, \sigma^2 I) \quad (18)$$

Note that $y_i|X_i \sim N(X_i\beta, \sigma^2)$ thus the pdf of $y_i|X$

$$f_i(y_i|\beta, \sigma, X_i) = \frac{1}{(\sqrt{2\pi\sigma^2})} e^{-\frac{1}{2\sigma^2} (y_i - X_i\beta)^2} \quad (19)$$

Example 2: Linear Regression

The contribution to the log likelihood from observation i

$$l_i(y_i|\beta, \sigma, X_i) = -\frac{1}{2}\log 2\pi - \frac{1}{2}\log \sigma^2 - \frac{1}{2\sigma^2}(y_i - X_i\beta)^2 \quad (20)$$

Since we assumed that obs are *iid*, then the log likelihood

$$l(y|\beta, \sigma, X) = -\frac{n}{2}\log 2\pi - \frac{n}{2}\log \sigma^2 - \frac{1}{2\sigma^2} \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - X_i\beta)^2 \quad (21)$$

$$= -\frac{n}{2}\log 2\pi - \frac{n}{2}\log \sigma^2 - \frac{1}{2\sigma^2} (y - X\beta)' y - X\beta) \quad (22)$$

The ML estimators for β and σ result from maximizing this last line

Example 2: Linear Regression

The first step in maximizing $l(y|\beta, \sigma, X)$ is to **concentrate** it with respect to σ

$$\frac{\partial l}{\partial \sigma} = -\frac{n}{2\sigma} - \frac{1}{\sigma^3}(y - X\beta)'y - X\beta) = 0 \quad (23)$$

Solving for σ^2

$$\hat{\sigma}^2(\beta) = \frac{1}{n}(y - X\beta)'y - X\beta) \quad (24)$$

Example 2: Linear Regression

Replacing this in the log likelihood we get the concentrated (profile) likelihood

$$l^c(y|\beta, X) = -\frac{n}{2}\log 2\pi - \frac{n}{2}\log \left(\frac{1}{n}(y - X\beta)'y - X\beta) \right) - \frac{n}{2} \quad (25)$$

1 Get $\hat{\beta}$

2 Replace β in $\hat{\sigma}^2(\beta) = \frac{1}{n}(y - X\beta)'y - X\beta) \rightarrow$ get $\hat{\sigma}^2$

This is not the only way, you could concentrate relative to β first and solve for σ^2

Bayesian Estimation

- ▶ The Bayesian approach to stats is fundamentally different from the classical approach we have been taking
- ▶ In the classical approach, the parameter θ is thought to be an unknown, but fixed quantity, e.g., $X_i \sim f(\theta)$
- ▶ In the Bayesian approach θ is considered to be a quantity whose variation can be described by a probability distribution (*prior distribution*)
- ▶ Then a sample is taken from a population indexed by θ and the prior is updated with this sample
- ▶ The resulting updated prior is the *posterior distribution*

Bayesian Estimation

For this updating we use *Bayes Theorem*

$$\pi(\theta|X) = \frac{f(X|\theta)p(\theta)}{m(X)} \quad (26)$$

with $m(X)$ is the marginal distribution of X , i.e.

$$m(X) = \int f(X|\theta)p(\theta)d\theta \quad (27)$$

Bayesian Linear Regression

Consider

$$y_i = \beta x_i + u_i \quad u_i \sim_{iid} N(0, \sigma^2 I) \quad (28)$$

The likelihood function is

$$f(y|\beta, \sigma, x) = \prod_{i=1}^n \frac{1}{(\sqrt{2\pi}\sigma)^2} e^{-\frac{1}{2\sigma^2}(y_i - \beta x_i)^2} \quad (29)$$

Now consider that the prior for β is $N(\beta_0, \tau^2)$

$$p(\beta) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}\tau^2} e^{-\frac{1}{2\tau^2}(\beta - \beta_0)^2} \quad (30)$$

Bayesian Linear Regression

The Posterior distribution then

$$\pi(\beta|y, x) = \frac{f(y, x|\beta)p(\beta)}{m(y, x)} \quad (31)$$

$$= \frac{f(y|x, \beta)f(x|\beta)p(\beta)}{m(y, x)} \quad (32)$$

by assumption $f(x|\beta) = f(x)$

$$= f(y|x, \beta)p(\beta) \frac{f(x)}{m(y, x)} \quad (33)$$

$$\propto f(y|x, \beta)p(\beta) \quad (34)$$

Bayesian Linear Regression (Detour)

Useful Result:

Suppose a density of a random variable θ is proportional to

$$\exp\left(\frac{-1}{2}(A\theta^2 + B\theta)\right) \quad (35)$$

Then $\theta \sim N(m, V)$ where

$$m = \frac{-1B}{2A} \quad V = \frac{1}{A} \quad (36)$$

Bayesian Linear Regression (we are back)

$$P(\beta|y, X) \propto \left(\frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi\sigma^2}} \right)^n \exp \left(\frac{-1}{2\sigma^2} \sum (y_i - \beta x_i)^2 \right) \exp \left(\frac{-1}{2\tau^2} (\beta - \beta_0)^2 \right) \quad (37)$$

$$\propto \exp \left[\frac{-1}{2} \left(\frac{1}{\sigma^2} \sum (y_i - \beta x_i)^2 + \frac{-1}{\tau^2} (\beta - \beta_0)^2 \right) \right] \quad (38)$$

Bayesian Linear Regression (we are back)

Using the previous detour

$$A = \frac{1}{\sigma^2} \sum x_i^2 + \frac{1}{\tau^2} \quad (39)$$

$$B = -2 \frac{1}{\sigma^2} \sum y_i x_i + \frac{1}{\tau^2} \beta_0 \quad (40)$$

Then $\beta \sim N(m, V)$ with

$$m = \frac{\frac{1}{\sigma^2} \sum y_i x_i + \frac{1}{\tau^2} \beta_0}{\left(\frac{1}{\sigma^2} \sum x_i^2 + \frac{1}{\tau^2} \right)} \quad (41)$$

$$V = \frac{1}{A} \quad (42)$$

Bayesian Linear Regression (we are back)

$$m = \left(\frac{\frac{\sum x_i^2}{\sigma^2}}{\frac{\sum x_i^2}{\sigma^2} + \frac{1}{\tau^2}} \right) \frac{\sum x_i y_i}{\sum x_i^2} + \left(\frac{\frac{1}{\tau^2}}{\frac{\sum x_i^2}{\sigma^2} + \frac{1}{\tau^2}} \right) \beta_0 \quad (43)$$

$$m = \omega \hat{\beta}_{MLE} + (1 - \omega) \beta_0 \quad (44)$$

Remarks

- ▶ If prior belief is strong $\tau \downarrow 0 \rightarrow \omega \downarrow 0 \implies m = \beta_0$
- ▶ If prior belief is weak $\tau \uparrow \infty \rightarrow \omega \uparrow 1 \implies m = \beta_{MLE}$

Review & Next Steps

- ▶ Maximum Likelihood Estimation
- ▶ Conditional Maximum Likelihood Estimation
- ▶ Bayesian Estimation
- ▶ **Next Class:** Cont. Bayesian Stats.
- ▶ Questions? Questions about software?

Further Readings

- ▶ Casella, G., & Berger, R. L. (2002). Statistical inference (Vol. 2, pp. 337-472). Pacific Grove, CA: Duxbury.
- ▶ Davidson, R., & MacKinnon, J. G. (2004). Econometric theory and methods (Vol. 5). New York: Oxford University Press.
- ▶ Efron, B., & Hastie, T. (2016). Computer age statistical inference (Vol. 5). Cambridge University Press.
- ▶ Friedman, J., Hastie, T., & Tibshirani, R. (2001). The elements of statistical learning (Vol. 1, No. 10). New York: Springer series in statistics.
- ▶ Hayashi, F. (2000). Econometrics. 2000. Princeton University Press. Section, 1, 60-69.