

Yisroel Cahn | Research Statement

19 West 4th Street, New York, NY 10012

☎ (443) 204-6202 • ✉ yisroel.cahn@nyu.edu

📁 izzy-cahn.github.io/website/ • [in](#) LinkedIn • [G](#) Github

My research interests lie at the intersection of labor economics, economic mobility, and the application of advanced empirical methods, particularly those that address issues of selection bias, nonlinearity, and high-dimensional data. In my work, I aim to provide insights into how policy changes, such as increases in the minimum wage, affect low-wage workers, as well as to explore the underlying mechanisms driving intergenerational mobility and income inequality.

One area of my research focuses on the effects of minimum wage policy on the distribution of hours worked. While much of the debate around raising the U.S. federal minimum wage centers on its potential to increase the earnings of low-wage workers, the impact on the distribution of hours worked remains an open question. This is due in part to the challenge of accounting for labor market entry and exit, which complicates the estimation of such effects. In my paper on this topic, I employ a Heckman-type selection model to estimate how changes in the minimum wage affect both the quantity of hours worked and the labor force participation decisions of affected workers. By controlling for the potential endogeneity of employment participation, my analysis aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of the distributional effects of minimum wage increases, which are critical for informing policy decisions intended to improve the welfare of low-wage workers.

Another strand of my research focuses on upward economic mobility, with an emphasis on measuring the intergenerational transmission of economic outcomes. In my recent work, I propose a set of measures to assess upward mobility based on the conditional probability that an offspring's economic outcome is at least as good as their parent(s)' outcome. To estimate these mobility probabilities, I use robust machine learning tree methods, which are particularly well-suited for high-dimensional data and complex nonlinear relationships. These methods have two primary advantages: they allow for nonparametric estimation, which accounts for nonlinearities, and they rank predictors by their overall contribution to mobility outcomes.

In my study, I find that parental income is the strongest predictor of both absolute and relative income mobility. However, family wealth, while still less important than parental income, plays a relatively larger role in predicting large movements in income and income rank. These findings contribute to our understanding of the factors driving economic mobility, suggesting that interventions aimed at reducing income inequality may benefit from addressing both parental income and wealth disparities. Moreover, my work underscores the utility of machine learning tools in economic research, offering a way to identify and quantify key factors influencing mobility while avoiding the limitations of traditional parametric models.

My future research will continue to explore the dynamics of economic mobility, with a particular focus on the role of public policy, education, and wealth inequality. I am particularly interested in investigating how changes in educational policy, access to higher education, and wealth redistribution programs can influence long-term economic mobility

across generations. Furthermore, I plan to extend my work on minimum wage policy by examining the impact of wage increases on labor market outcomes for different demographic groups, including racial and gender disparities in wage growth and hours worked. As part of this, I aim to integrate more granular data and machine learning techniques to better understand heterogeneity in responses to policy changes.

In addition to policy-oriented questions, I plan to continue developing and applying advanced econometric techniques, such as machine learning methods, to study economic phenomena where traditional methods may fall short. The ability of these techniques to handle complex datasets and uncover nonlinear relationships holds great promise for advancing our understanding of critical issues in labor economics, income inequality, and mobility.