

# Welfare and Spending Effects of Consumption Stimulus Policies

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# Motivation

- ▶ Fiscal policies that aim to boost consumption spending in recessions have been tried in many countries in recent decades
- ▶ A lot of variation in such policies — may be due to little guidance from traditional macroeconomic models on which policies most effectively. . .
  - ▶ increase output (a ‘GDP metric’)
  - ▶ reduce misery (a ‘welfare metric’)
- ▶ Development of heterogeneous agent (HA) models shows that when heterogeneity (in e.g. wealth, income and/or education) is taken into account, the impact of income shocks depends on *intertemporal marginal propensity to consume* or iMPC
- ▶ In addition, availability of rich micro data (e.g. in Norway) provide first credible measures of the iMPC
- ▶ **This paper:** Aim to evaluate three consumption stimulus policies in a HA model consistent with data on liquid wealth and *intertemporal* MPCs

## Related literature

- ▶ **Effects of transitory income shocks:** Parker, Souleles, Johnson and McClelland (2013); Broda and Parker (2014); Fagereng, Holm and Natvik (2021); Ganong, Greig, Noel, Sullivan and Vavra (2022)
- ▶ **HA models consistent with high MPCs:** Kaplan and Violante (2014); Auclert, Rognlie and Straub (2018); Carroll, Crawley, Slacalek and White (2020); Kaplan and Violante (2022)
- ▶ **State dependent multipliers (ZLB):** Christiano, Eichenbaum and Rebelo (2011); Eggertson (2011); Ramey and Zubairy (2018); Hagedorn, Manovskii and Mitman (2019)
- ▶ **Extended unemployment insurance:** Ganong, Greig, Noel, Sullivan and Vavra (2022); Kekre (2022)
- ▶ **Welfare measures in HA models:** Bhandari, Evans, Golosov and Sargent (2021); Dávila and Schaab (2022)

# Quantitative Economics

- ▶ These are *quantitative* questions: require *quantitative* realism ...
- ▶ ... about the differences that make a difference
  - ▶ Unemployment is not Calvo! And this makes a big difference quantitatively
  - ▶ Distributions of income, wealth
    - ▶ Profoundly important for (i)MPCs
  - ▶ Differences in unemployment risks
  - ▶ Heterogeneity in income growth rates
- ▶ Interested in multipliers, but baseline is NOT a HANK model:
  - ▶ HANK mechanisms behind multipliers are complex
  - ▶ Away from ZLB, multipliers not necessarily much different in recessions
- ▶ Robustness Exercise: HANK model

# Quantitative Micro Realism

- ▶ Idiosyncratic income process: Friedman/Muth (transitory and permanent shocks)

$\mathbf{p}$  — ‘permanent income’

$\xi$  — ‘transitory income shock’

$\psi$  — ‘permanent income shock’

$$\mathbf{p}_{t+1} = \Gamma^e \mathbf{p}_t \psi_{t+1}$$

$$y_{t+1} = \mathbf{p}_{t+1} \xi_{t+1}$$

- ▶  $\Gamma^e$ : education-specific income growth
- ▶ Evidence for permanent shocks: See Crawley, Holm, and Tretvoll (2024)

## Preferences, Beliefs, and Wealth

Infinite horizon model: target wealth depends on 'Growth Impatience' condition:

$$\underbrace{\left( \frac{(R \beta^{e,i})^{1/\gamma}}{\Gamma^e \mathbb{E}[\psi^{-1}]} \right)}_{\text{'Growth Patience Factor'}} < 1 \quad (1)$$

*Degree* of impatience (1-GPF) determines *size* of target

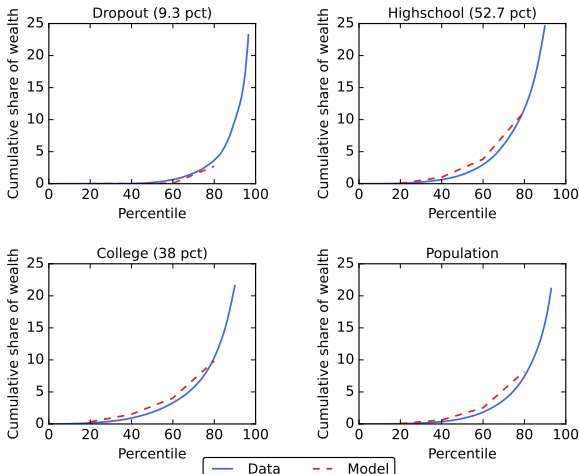
- ▶ If everybody has same GPF, then target wealth is identical
- ▶ Fact: Wealth much more unevenly distributed than permanent income  
 $\Rightarrow$  need heterogeneity in GPF
- ▶ (If  $\text{GPF} \geq 1$ , target is  $\infty$ )

We use

- ▶ *Ex-ante* heterogeneity in discount factors  $\beta^{e,i}$
- ▶  $\Gamma^e$  or  $R$  would do as well

# Consistency With Micro Evidence (1)

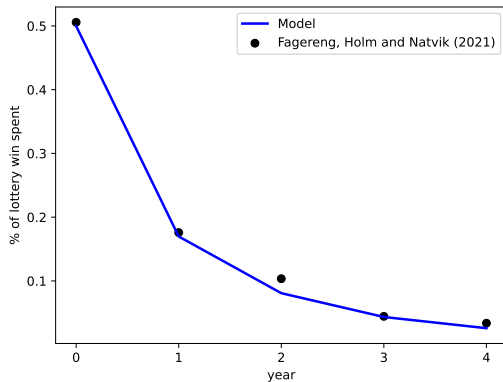
Liquid Wealth from  
Survey of Consumer  
Finances (SCF)



- ▶ Education groups:  $e \in \{\text{"Dropout"}, \text{"Highschool"}, \text{"College"}\}$
- ▶ Each group has distribution of discount factors  $\beta_{e,i}$

## Consistency With Micro Evidence (2)

Intertemporal MPC from Fagereng, Holm, Natvik (2021)



Modeling device: 'Splurge' in consumption



## Splurge consumption

- ▶ Exogenous fraction of income directly consumed
- ▶ Model consistent with spending patterns over time after a transitory income shock
- ▶ Evidence: High liquid wealth hh also have high MPCs
  - ▶ Kueng (2018); Crawley and Kuchler (2023); Graham and McDowall (2024)
- ▶ Possible microfoundations:
  - ▶ Spending on durables (Browning and Crossley, 2009; Laibson et al., 2022)
  - ▶ A form of present bias (Indarte et al., 2024, Maxted et al., 2024)
- ▶ Robustness: Model w/o splurge consumption

# Evaluation of consumption stimulus policies in the US

- ▶ Policies we consider:
  - ▶ Stimulus check for \$1200 (means-tested)
  - ▶ Extension of unemployment benefits from 6 months to 1 year
  - ▶ Payroll tax cut by 2% for 2 years
- ▶ Motivation:
  - ▶ Economic Stimulus Act of 2008 (stimulus checks)
  - ▶ Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act of 2010 (UI extension and tax cut)
- ▶ Evaluation criteria:
  - ▶ Spending multipliers
  - ▶ Welfare (only recession-related welfare impact)

## Preview of results

- ▶ Welfare measure: Extension of UI benefits is the clear winner
  - ▶ Targeted at individuals with high MPCs and high recession-related welfare losses
  - ▶ But: higher spending may continue after recession is over
- ▶ Spending multiplier: Stimulus check has the highest multiplier
  - ▶ Not well targeted, but increases income immediately
- ▶ Tax cut
  - ▶ Poorly targeted and much spending likely to occur after end of recession
- ▶ Robustness in a HANK and SAM model
  - ▶ Very similar pattern for cumulative multipliers

Model

## Household problem

- ▶ Idiosyncratic, stochastic income process  $\mathbf{y}_{i,t}$
- ▶ Estimated splurge factor  $\varsigma$ :  $\mathbf{c}_{sp,i,t} = \varsigma \mathbf{y}_{i,t}$
- ▶ Remaining consumption  $\mathbf{c}_{opt,i,t}$  is chosen to maximize utility

$$\sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \beta_{e,i}^t (1 - D)^t \mathbb{E}_0 u(\mathbf{c}_{opt,i,t}). \quad (2)$$

( $D$ : end-of-life probability,  $u$ : CRRA utility function)

- ▶ Budget constraint, given existing market resources  $\mathbf{m}_{i,t}$  and income state, and a no-borrowing constraint:

$$\mathbf{m}_{i,t+1} = R \underbrace{(\mathbf{m}_{i,t} - \mathbf{c}_{sp,i,t} - \mathbf{c}_{opt,i,t})}_{\geq 0 \text{ (no-borrowing constraint)}} + \mathbf{y}_{i,t+1} \quad (3)$$

( $R$ : exogenous gross interest rate)

## Income process

- ▶ Income subject to transitory, unempl. and permanent shocks

$$\mathbf{y}_{i,t} = \begin{cases} \xi_{i,t} \mathbf{p}_{i,t}, & \text{if employed} \\ 0.7 \mathbf{p}_{i,t}, & \text{if unemployed for } \leq 2q \\ 0.5 \mathbf{p}_{i,t}, & \text{if unemployed } \geq 2q \end{cases} \quad (4)$$

( $\xi_{i,t}$ : trans. shock,  $p$ : perm. income)

- ▶ "Permanent income":  $\mathbf{p}_{i,t+1} = \underbrace{\psi_{i,t+1}}_{\text{perm. shock}} \underbrace{\Gamma_{e(i)}}_{\text{educ.-specific growth}} \mathbf{p}_{i,t}$

- ▶ Model is a simplified model of households (no heterogeneity in hh size)
- ▶ Replacement rates reflect some degree of hh insurance (Rothstein and Valetta, 2017)

# Employment status and recessions

- ▶ Employment status is subject to a Markov process
  - ▶ Employed consumer: continue being employed or become unemployed
  - ▶ Unemployed consumers: receives benefits for two quarters
- ▶ Bureau of Labor Statistics: Report unemployment rates by education group
- ▶ Recession is given by an MIT shock
  - ▶ Unemployment rate doubles in each education group
  - ▶ Expected length of unemployment increases from 2 to 4q
  - ▶ End of recession occurs as a Bernoulli process calibrated for an avg. rec. length of 6q

# Aggregate demand effects

(as in Krueger, Mitman and Perri, 2016)

- ▶ Baseline: No feedback from aggregate consumption to income
- ▶ Extension: We allow for aggregate demand effects from consumption on income during the recession
- ▶ The AD effect is given by

$$AD(C_t) = \begin{cases} \left(\frac{C_t}{\tilde{C}}\right)^\kappa, & \text{if in a recession} \\ 1, & \text{otherwise,} \end{cases} \quad (5)$$

where  $\tilde{C}$  is the level of consumption in the steady state.

- ▶ Idiosyncratic income in the extension model is then given by

$$\mathbf{y}_{AD,i,t} = AD(C_t)\mathbf{y}_{i,t}. \quad (6)$$



## Parameters — by education group

[More parameters](#)[Policy parameters](#)

Parameters calibrated for each education group			
	Dropout	Highschool	College
Percent of population	9.3	52.7	38.0
Avg. quarterly PI of “newborn” agent (\$1000)	6.2	11.1	14.5
Std. dev. of log(PI) of “newborn” agent	0.32	0.42	0.53
Avg. quarterly gross growth rate of PI ( $\Gamma_e$ )	1.0036	1.0045	1.0049
Unemployment rate in normal times (percent)	8.5	4.4	2.7
Probability of entering unemployment ( $\pi_{eu}^e$ , percent)	6.2	3.1	1.8
Probability of leaving unemployment ( $\pi_{ue}$ )	0.667	0.667	0.667

- Mincer (1991) and Elsby and Hobjin (2010): Education groups differ in the incidence of unemployment, not its duration

## Results

## Untargeted moments (1)

### Non-targeted moments by wealth quartile

	WQ 4	WQ 3	WQ 2	WQ 1
Percent of liquid wealth (data)	0.14	1.60	8.51	89.76
Percent of liquid wealth (model, baseline)	0.09	0.96	4.55	94.40
Percent of liquid wealth (model, Splurge=0)	0.10	1.07	4.24	94.60
Avg. lottery-win-year MPC (model, incl. splurge)	0.78	0.63	0.44	0.31
Avg. lottery-win-year MPC (model, splurge=0)	0.69	0.53	0.36	0.14

## Untargeted moments (2)

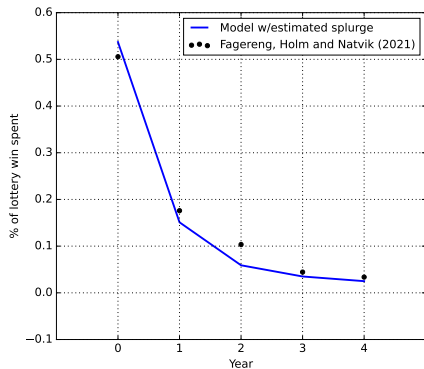


Figure: Share of lottery win spent

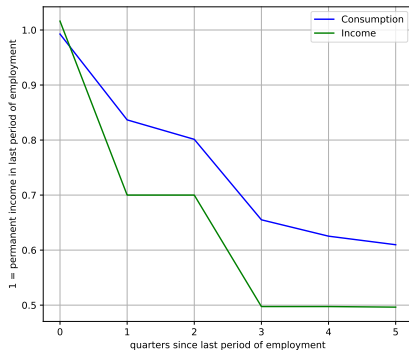
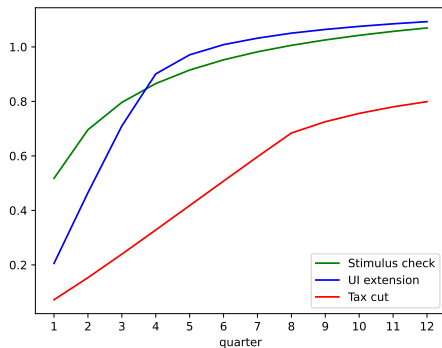


Figure: Spending upon expiry of UI benefits

- ▶ Ganong and Noel (2019): UI expiry  $\Rightarrow$  drop of 12 percent (month)
- ▶ Our model  $\Rightarrow$  drop of 18 percent (quarter)

# Multipliers

$$M_t^P = \frac{\text{NPV of induced consumption up to } t}{\text{NPV of the cost of the policy}}$$



	Stimulus check	UI extension	Tax cut
10y-horizon Multiplier (no AD effect)	0.85	0.89	0.83
10y-horizon Multiplier (AD effect)	1.20	1.18	0.95
Share of policy expenditure during recession	100.0%	80.6%	57.6 %

## Robustness: Multipliers in a HANK and SAM model — Setup

- ▶ Evaluate the policies in a relatively standard HANK and SAM model (Du, 2024)
- ▶ New Keynesian: Monopolistic competition + sticky prices
- ▶ Search and matching: Random search, labor market tightness affects job finding and vacancy filling probabilities
- ▶ Government policy: Monetary and fiscal rules
- ▶ Fiscal multipliers through an intertemporal Keynesian cross mechanism  
However: No state dependence
- ▶ Solution method  $\Rightarrow$  cannot evaluate effects starting in a deep recessionary state  
This also implies that we cannot use our welfare measure

## Robustness: Multipliers in a HANK and SAM model — Results

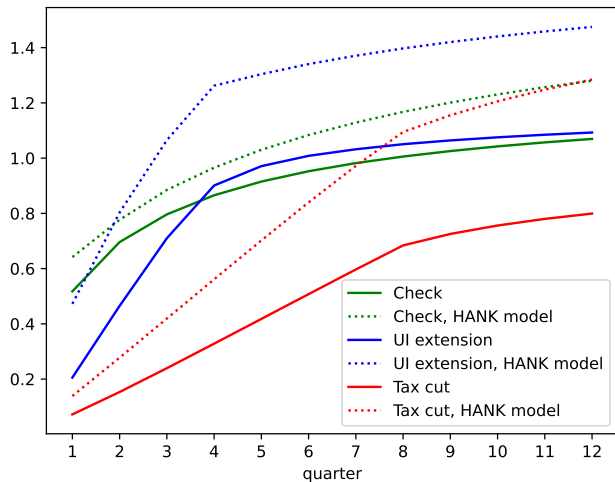


Figure: HA w/AD effects + HANK and SAM

## Welfare measure

- ▶ Aim: Welfare measure does not reflect benefits of redistribution in “normal” times
- ▶ Want: Utility-based measure of benefits of implementing a policy in a recession
- ▶ Welfare weights:  $u'(\mathbf{c}_{it,normal})$
- ▶ Measure for a given *policy* with  $Rec, AD \in \{0, 1\}$

$$\mathcal{W}(\text{policy}, Rec, AD) = \frac{1}{\mathcal{N}} \sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{R^t} \frac{u(\mathbf{c}_{it,policy,Rec,AD}) - u(\mathbf{c}_{it,none,Rec,AD})}{u'(\mathbf{c}_{it,normal})}$$

$$\mathcal{N} = NPV(\text{policy}, Rec, AD)$$

- ▶ Normal times:  $\mathcal{W}(\text{policy}, 0, 0) = 1$  (for  $\Delta \mathbf{c}_{it} \approx 0$ )



## Welfare results

	Stimulus check	UI extension	Tax cut
$\mathcal{W}(\text{policy}, \text{Rec} = 0, \text{AD} = 0)$	0.96	0.85	0.99
$\mathcal{W}(\text{policy}, \text{Rec} = 1, \text{AD} = 0)$	0.99	1.82	0.98
$\mathcal{W}(\text{policy}, \text{Rec} = 1, \text{AD} = 1)$	1.34	2.11	1.10

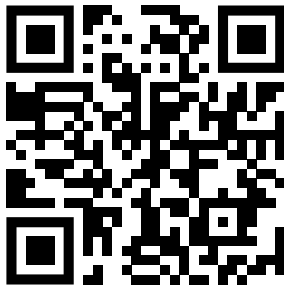
- ▶ Normal times: Welfare of UI extension  $< 1$  due to concavity of  $u(\cdot)$   
Relatively large change in  $\mathbf{c}_{it}$  for small number of households
- ▶  $\text{AD} = 0$ : Benefit of UI extension since recession increases unemployment  $\Rightarrow$  increased marginal utility for affected households
- ▶  $\text{AD} = 1$ : Stimulating spending during recession increases measure for all policies

## Conclusion: Comparing the policies

- ▶ Comparison of three consumption stimulus policies in a HA model consistent with data on the distribution of liquid wealth and intertemporal MPCs
- ▶ Welfare measure: UI extension is the clear bang-for-the-buck winner
- ▶ The stimulus check is less well targeted, but...
  - ▶ is transferred immediately ensuring that money arrives when it is most valuable
  - ▶ is more easily scaled up to provide more stimulus
- ▶ The tax cut is both poorly targeted and may yield substantial spending after the recession is over
- ▶ Framework can be used to evaluate other candidate policies

# Thank you for your attention!

- ▶ Access the paper, presentation slides and code at:  
<https://github.com/llorracc/HAFiscal>



## Appendix

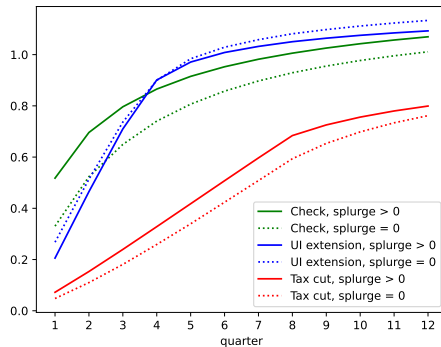
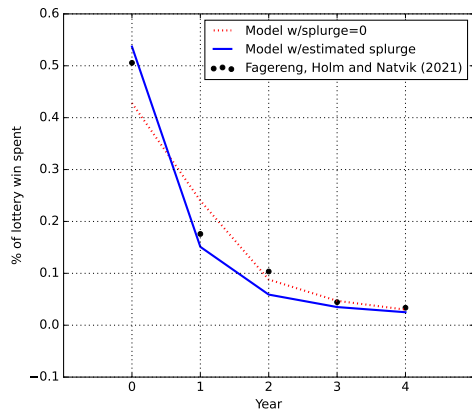
## Parameters — same for all types

Parameter	Notation	Value
Risk aversion	$\gamma$	2.0
Splurge	$\varsigma$	0.306
Survival probability, quarterly	$1 - D$	0.994
Risk free interest rate, quarterly (gross)	$R$	1.01
Standard deviation of transitory shock	$\sigma_{\xi}$	0.346
Standard deviation of permanent shock	$\sigma_{\psi}$	0.0548
Unemployment benefits replacement rate (share of PI)	$\rho_b$	0.7
Unemployment income w/o benefits (share of PI)	$\rho_{nb}$	0.5
Avg. duration of unemp. benefits in normal times (quarters)		2
Avg. duration of unemp. spell in normal times (quarters)		1.5
Consumption elasticity of aggregate demand effect	$\kappa$	0.3

## Parameters describing the policies

Parameters describing policy experiments	
Parameter	Value
Change in unemployment rates in a recession	$\times 2$
Expected unemployment spell in a recession	4 quarters
Average length of recession	6 quarters
Size of stimulus check	\$1,200
PI threshold for reducing check size	\$100,000
PI threshold for not receiving check	\$150,000
Extended unemployment benefits	4 quarters
Length of payroll tax cut	8 quarters
Income increase from payroll tax cut	2 percent
Belief (probability) that tax cut is extended	50 percent

## Robustness: Model w/o splurge consumption



	Stimulus check	UI extension	Tax cut
$\mathcal{W}(\text{policy}, Rec = 1, AD = 1)$	1.27(1.34)	2.12(2.11)	1.09(1.10)