

Why Regression?

EC 607, Set 03

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Prologue

Schedule

Last time

- The Experimental Ideal
- Fundamentals of R

Today

What's so great about linear regression and OLS?

Read *MHE* 3.1

Upcoming

Assignment₁ Custom OLS function fun. **Assignment**₂ First step of project proposal.

Regression

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Why?

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A As we discussed, regression allows us to control for covariates that *can* assist with (1) causal identification and (2) inference.

There's a deeper reason that we care about *linear* regression and ordinary least squares (OLS): ***the conditional expectation function (CEF)***.

[†] we = empirically inclined applied economists

Regression

Why?

Even ignoring causality, we can show important relationships between

1. **the CEF** (the conditional expectation function),
2. the **population regression function**,
3. and the **sampling distribution of regression estimates**.

Regression

The CEF

Definition The **conditional expectation function** for a dependent variable Y_i , given a $K \times 1$ vector of covariates X_i , tells us the expected value (population average) of Y_i with X_i held constant.

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Written as $E[Y_i | X_i]$, the CEF is a function of X_i .[†]

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Examples

- $E[\text{Income}_i | \text{Education}_i]$

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- $E[\text{Wage}_i | \text{Gender}_i]$

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- $E[\text{Wage}_i | \text{Gender}_i]$
- $E[\text{Birth weight}_i | \text{Air quality}_i]$

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Regression

The CEF

Formally, for continuous \mathbf{Y}_i with conditional density $f_y(t|\mathbf{X}_i = x)$,

$$E[\mathbf{Y}_i \mid \mathbf{X}_i = x] = \int t f_y(t|\mathbf{X}_i = x) dt$$

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and for discrete \mathbf{Y}_i with conditional p.m.f. $\Pr(\mathbf{Y}_i = t|\mathbf{X}_i = x)$,

$$E[\mathbf{Y}_i \mid \mathbf{X}_i = x] = \sum_t t \Pr(\mathbf{Y}_i = t|\mathbf{X}_i = x)$$

Notice We are focusing on the **population**.

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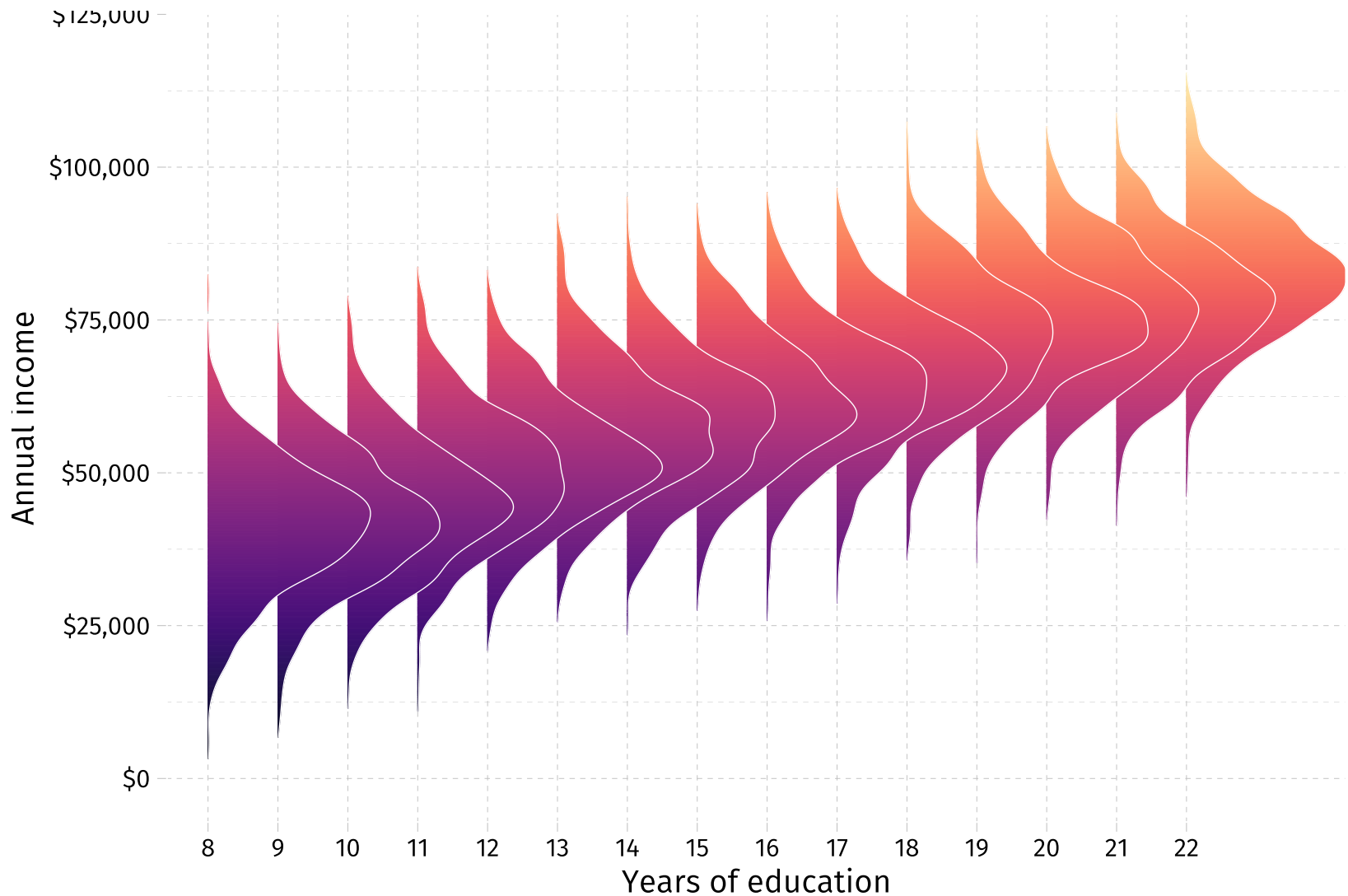
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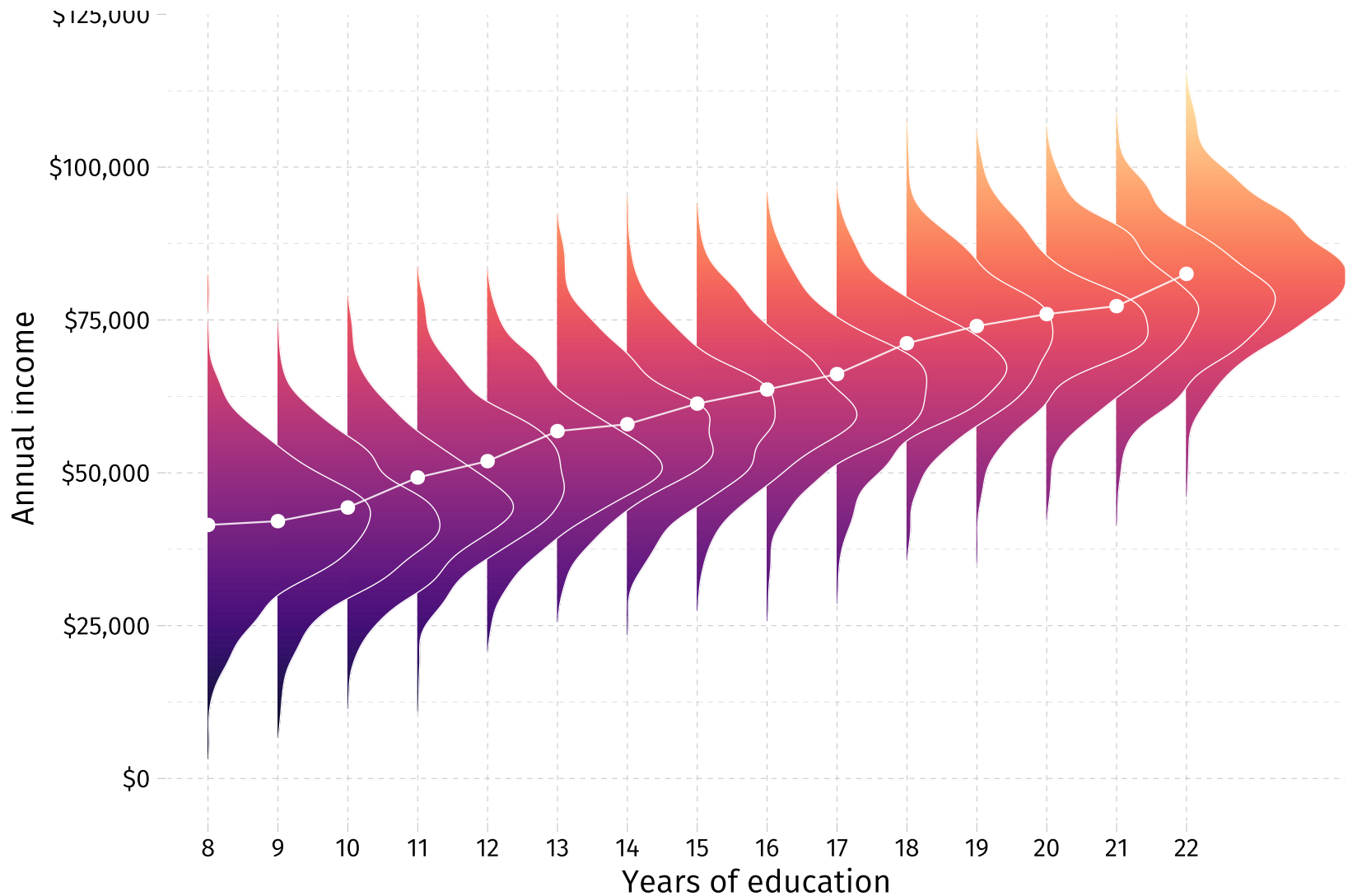
Notice We are focusing on the **population**. We want to build our intuition about the parameters that we will eventually estimate.

Graphically...

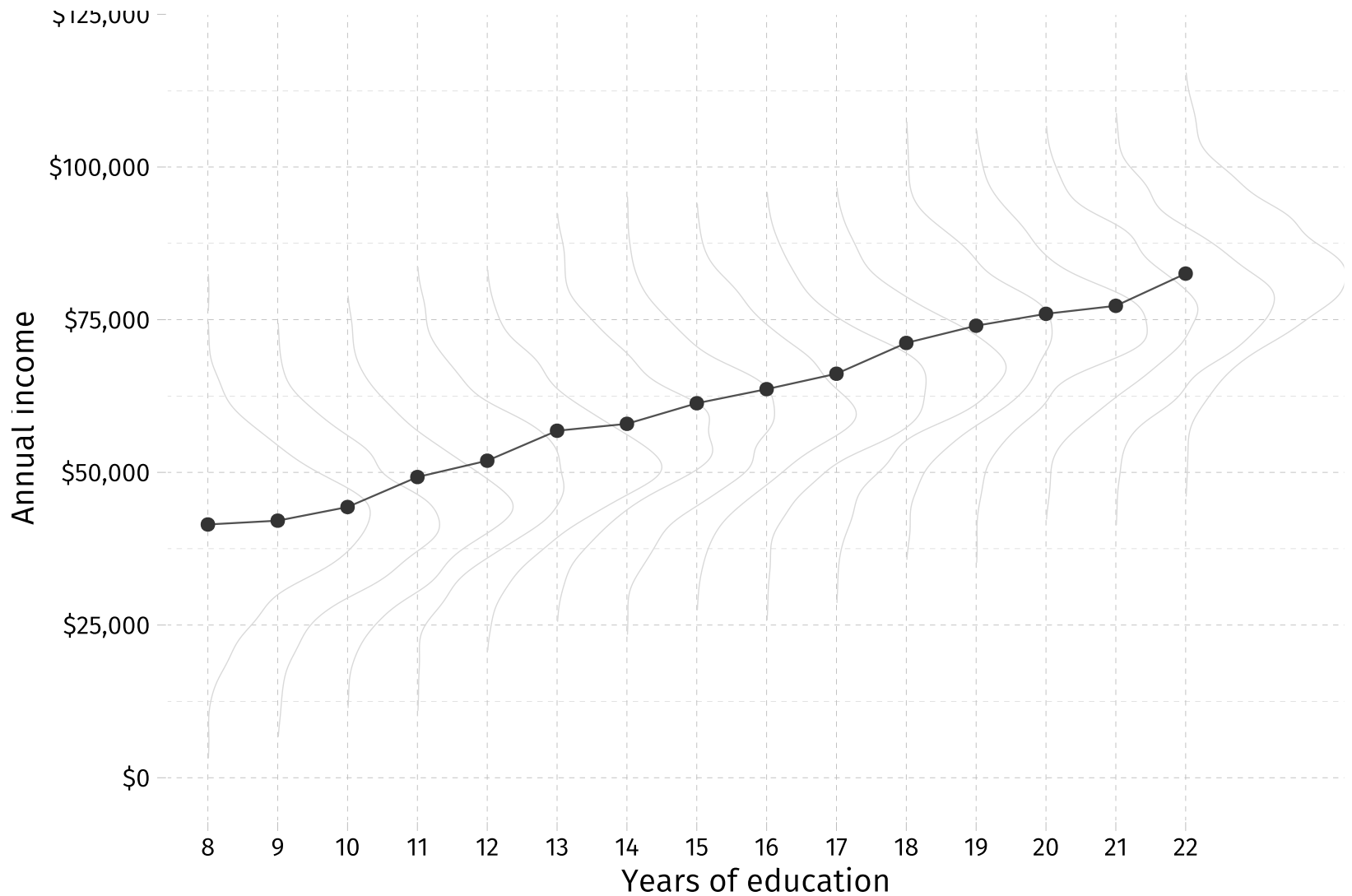
The conditional distributions of Y_i for $X_i = x$ in 8, ..., 22.



The CEF, $E[Y_i | X_i]$, connects these conditional distributions' means.



Focusing in on the CEF, $E[Y_i | X_i]$...



Q How does the CEF relate to/inform regression?

Regression

The CEF

As we derive the properties and relationships associated with the CEF, regression, and a host of other estimators, we will frequently rely upon ***the Law of Iterated Expectations*** (LIE).

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Regression

The CEF

As we derive the properties and relationships associated with the CEF, regression, and a host of other estimators, we will frequently rely upon ***the Law of Iterated Expectations*** (LIE).

$$E[Y_i] = E\left(E[Y_i | X_i]\right)$$

which says that the **unconditional expectation** is equal to the **unconditional average** of the **conditional expectation function**.

Regression

A proof of the LIE

First, we need notation...

Let $f_{x,y}(u, t)$ denote the joint density for continuous RVs $(\mathbf{X}_i, \mathbf{Y}_i)$.

Let $f_{y|x}(t \mid \mathbf{X}_i = u)$ denote the conditional distribution of \mathbf{Y}_i given $\mathbf{X}_i = u$.

And let $g_y(t)$ and $g_x(u)$ denote the marginal densities of \mathbf{Y}_i and \mathbf{X}_i .

Regression

A proof of the LIE

$$E\left(E[Y_i | X_i]\right)$$

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A proof of the LIE

$$\begin{aligned} E\left(E[Y_i | X_i]\right) \\ = \int E[Y_i | X_i = u] g_x(u) du \end{aligned}$$

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$$\begin{aligned} E\left(E[Y_i | X_i]\right) \\ &= \int E[Y_i | X_i = u] g_x(u) du \\ &= \int \left[\int t f_{y|x}(t | X_i = u) dt \right] g_x(u) du \end{aligned}$$

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Great. What's the point?

Regression

The *LIE* and the *CEF*

Theorem The CEF decomposition property (3.1.1)

The LIE allows us to **decompose random variables** into two pieces

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The LIE allows us to **decompose random variables** into two pieces

$$Y_i = E[Y_i | X_i] + \varepsilon_i$$

1. **the conditional expectation function**
2. **a residual** with special powers[†]
 - i. ε_i is mean independent of X_i , i.e., $E[\varepsilon_i | X_i] = 0$.
 - ii. ε_i is uncorrelated with any function of X_i .

[†] Angrist and Pischke go with *special properties*.

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Mean independence, $E[\varepsilon_i \mid \mathbf{X}_i] = 0$

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Zero correlation bwn. ε_i and $h(\mathbf{X}_i)$

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$$\begin{aligned} E[h(\mathbf{X}_i)\varepsilon_i] &= E\left(E[h(\mathbf{X}_i)\varepsilon_i | \mathbf{X}_i]\right) \\ &= E\left(h(\mathbf{X}_i) E[\varepsilon_i | \mathbf{X}_i]\right) \\ &= E[h(\mathbf{X}_i) \times 0] \\ &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

Regression

The *LIE* and the *CEF*

The **CEF decomposition property**

says that we can decompose any random variable (e.g., Y_i) into

1. a part that is explained by X_i (i.e., the CEF $E[Y_i | X_i]$),
2. a part that is orthogonal to[†] any function of X_i (i.e., ε_i).

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The CEF also presents an intuitive summary of the relationship between Y_i and X_i , since we are often use means to characterize random variables.

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Why the CEF?

The CEF also presents an intuitive summary of the relationship between Y_i and X_i , since we are often use means to characterize random variables.

But (of course) there are more reasons to use the CEF...

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Regression

The *LIE* and the *CEF*

Theorem The CEF prediction property (3.1.2)

Let $m(\mathbf{X}_i)$ be any function of \mathbf{X}_i . The CEF solves

$$E[\mathbf{Y}_i \mid \mathbf{X}_i] = \arg \min_{m(\mathbf{X}_i)} E[(\mathbf{Y}_i - m(\mathbf{X}_i))^2]$$

In other words, the **CEF** is the minimum mean-squared error (MMSE) predictor of \mathbf{Y}_i given \mathbf{X}_i .

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In other words, the **CEF** is the minimum mean-squared error (MMSE) predictor of \mathbf{Y}_i given \mathbf{X}_i .

Notice

1. We haven't restricted m to any class of functions—it can be nonlinear.
2. We're talking about *prediction* (specifically predicting \mathbf{Y}_i).

Proof The CEF prediction property

$$\left(Y_i - m(X_i) \right)^2 \tag{1}$$

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$$\begin{aligned} & \left(Y_i - m(X_i) \right)^2 \\ &= \left(\{ Y_i - E[Y_i \mid X_i] \} + \{ E[Y_i \mid X_i] - m(X_i) \} \right)^2 \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

Proof The CEF prediction property

$$\left(Y_i - m(X_i) \right)^2 \tag{1}$$

$$= \left(\{ Y_i - E[Y_i | X_i] \} + \{ E[Y_i | X_i] - m(X_i) \} \right)^2$$

$$= \left(Y_i - E[Y_i | X_i] \right)^2 \tag{a}$$

$$+ 2 \left(E[Y_i | X_i] - m(X_i) \right) \times \left(Y_i - E[Y_i | X_i] \right) \tag{b}$$

$$+ \left(E[Y_i | X_i] - m(X_i) \right)^2 \tag{c}$$

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Recall: We want to choose the $m(\mathbf{X}_i)$ that minimizes (1) in expectation.

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(b) equals zero in expectation: $E[h(\mathbf{X}_i) \times \varepsilon_i] = 0$.

(c) is minimized by $m(\mathbf{X}_i) = E[Y_i | \mathbf{X}_i]$, i.e., when $m(\mathbf{X}_i)$ is the CEF.

Regression

The *LIE* and the *CEF*

∴ the *CEF* is the function that minimizes the mean-squared error (MSE)

$$E[Y_i | X_i] = \arg \min_{m(X_i)} E[(Y_i - m(X_i))^2]$$

Regression

The *LIE* and the *CEF*

One final property of the *CEF* (very similar to the decomposition property)

Theorem The ANOVA theorem (3.1.3)

$$\text{Var}(Y_i) = \text{Var}(E[Y_i | X_i]) + E[\text{Var}(Y_i | X_i)]$$

which says that we can decompose the variance in Y_i into

1. the variance in the *CEF*
2. the variance of the residual

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Example Decomposing wage variation into (1) variation explained by workers' characteristics and (2) unexplained (residual) variation

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Example Decomposing wage variation into (1) variation explained by workers' characteristics and (2) unexplained (residual) variation

The proof centers on the independence from the decomposition property of the *CEF*.

We now understand the CEF a bit better.
But how does the CEF actually relate to regression?

Regression

The *CEF* and regression

We've discussed how the *CEF* summarizes empirical relationships.

Previously we discussed how regression provides simple empirical insights.

Let's link these two concepts.

Regression

The *CEF* and regression

Population least-squares regression

We will focus on β , the vector (a $K \times 1$ matrix) of population, least-squares regression coefficients, *i.e.*,

$$\beta = \arg \min_b E \left[(Y_i - \mathbf{X}_i' b)^2 \right]$$

where b and \mathbf{X}_i are also $K \times 1$, and Y_i is a scalar.

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$$\beta = \arg \min_b E \left[(Y_i - X_i' b)^2 \right]$$

where b and X_i are also $K \times 1$, and Y_i is a scalar.

Taking the first-order condition gives

$$E[X_i (Y_i - X_i' b)] = 0$$

Regression

The *CEF* and regression

From the first-order condition

$$E[\mathbf{X}_i (\mathbf{Y}_i - \mathbf{X}_i' \mathbf{b})] = 0$$

we can solve for \mathbf{b} . We've defined the optimum as β . Thus,

$$\beta = E[\mathbf{X}_i \mathbf{X}_i']^{-1} E[\mathbf{X}_i \mathbf{Y}_i]$$

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$$E[\mathbf{X}_i (\mathbf{Y}_i - \mathbf{X}_i' \mathbf{b})] = 0$$

we can solve for \mathbf{b} . We've defined the optimum as β . Thus,

$$\beta = E[\mathbf{X}_i \mathbf{X}_i']^{-1} E[\mathbf{X}_i \mathbf{Y}_i]$$

Note The first-order conditions tell us that our least-squares population regression residuals ($e_i = \mathbf{Y}_i - \mathbf{X}_i' \beta$) are uncorrelated with \mathbf{X}_i .

Regression

Anatomy

Our "new" result: $\beta = E [X_i X_i']^{-1} E[X_i Y_i]$

In **simple linear regression** (an intercept and one regressor x_i),

$$\beta_1 = \frac{\text{Cov}(Y_i, x_i)}{\text{Var}(x_i)} \quad \beta_0 = E[Y_i] - \beta_1 E[x_i]$$

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For **multivariate regression**, the coefficient on the k^{th} regressor x_{ki} is

$$\beta_k = \frac{\text{Cov}(Y_i, \tilde{x}_{ki})}{\text{Var}(\tilde{x}_{ki})}$$

where \tilde{x}_{ki} is the residual from a regression of x_{ki} on all other covariates.

Regression

Anatomy

This alternative formulation of least-squares coefficients is quite powerful.

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Why?

Regression

Anatomy

This alternative formulation of least-squares coefficients is quite powerful.

$$\beta_k = \frac{\text{Cov}(Y_i, \tilde{x}_{ki})}{\text{Var}(\tilde{x}_{ki})}$$

Why? This expression illustrates how each coefficient in a least-squares regression represents the bivariate slope coefficient **after controlling for the other covariates**.

Regression

Anatomy

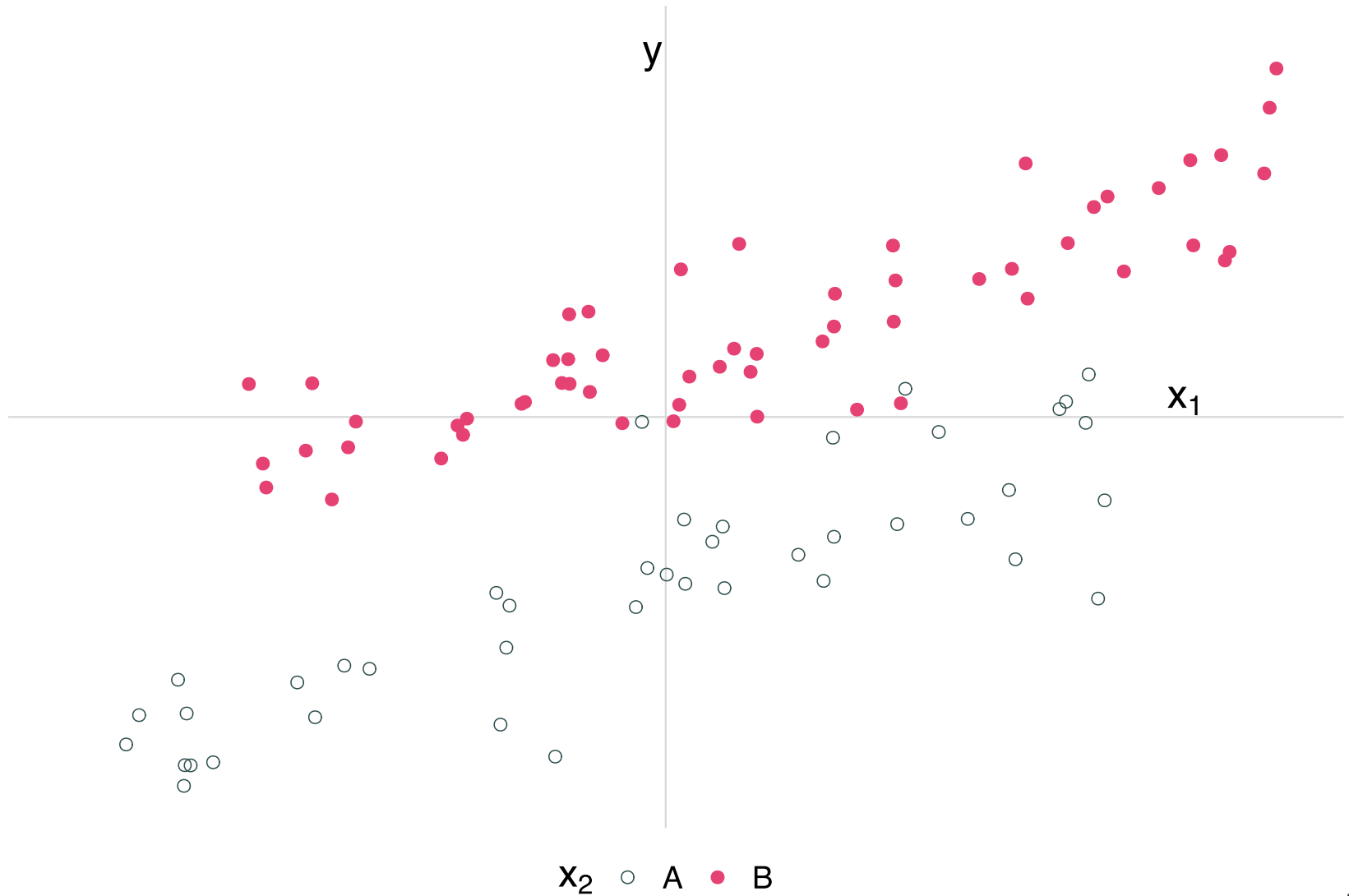
In fact, we can re-write our coefficients to further emphasize this point

$$\beta_k = \frac{\text{Cov}(\tilde{Y}_i, \tilde{x}_{ki})}{\text{Var}(\tilde{x}_{ki})}$$

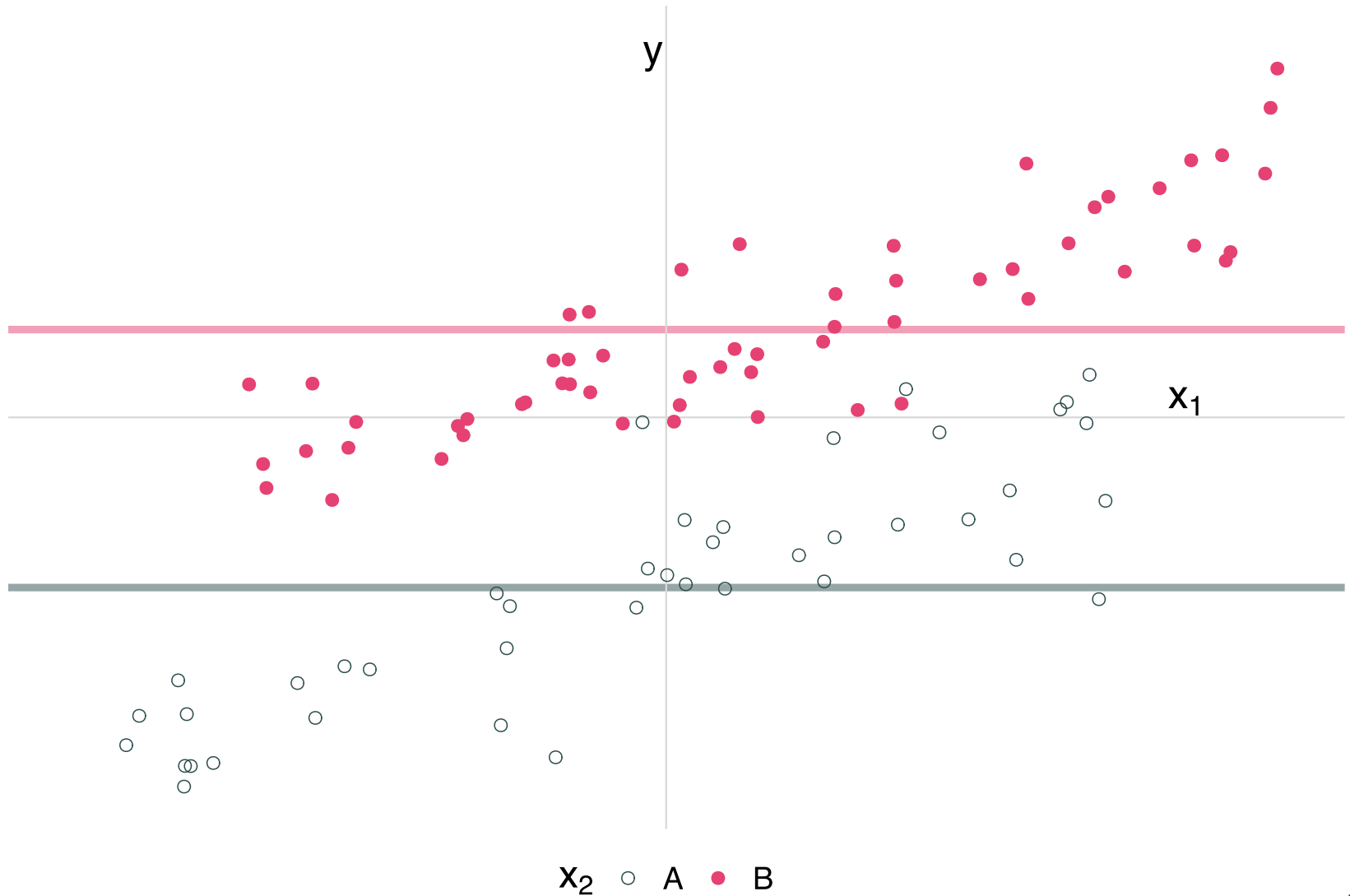
\tilde{Y}_i denotes the residual from regressing Y_i on all regressors except x_{ki} .

Graphical example

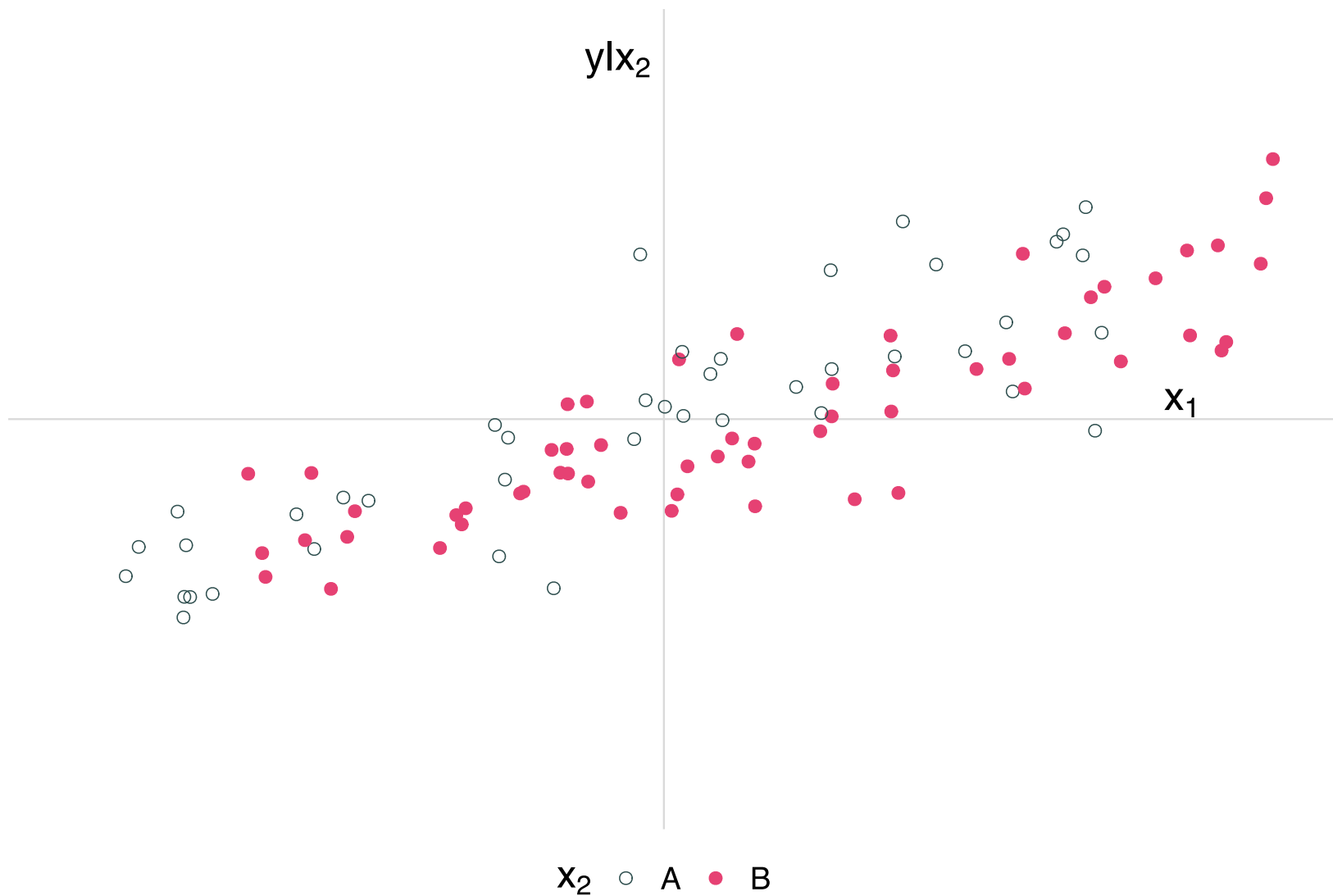
$$y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_{1i} + \beta_2 x_{2i} + \varepsilon_i$$



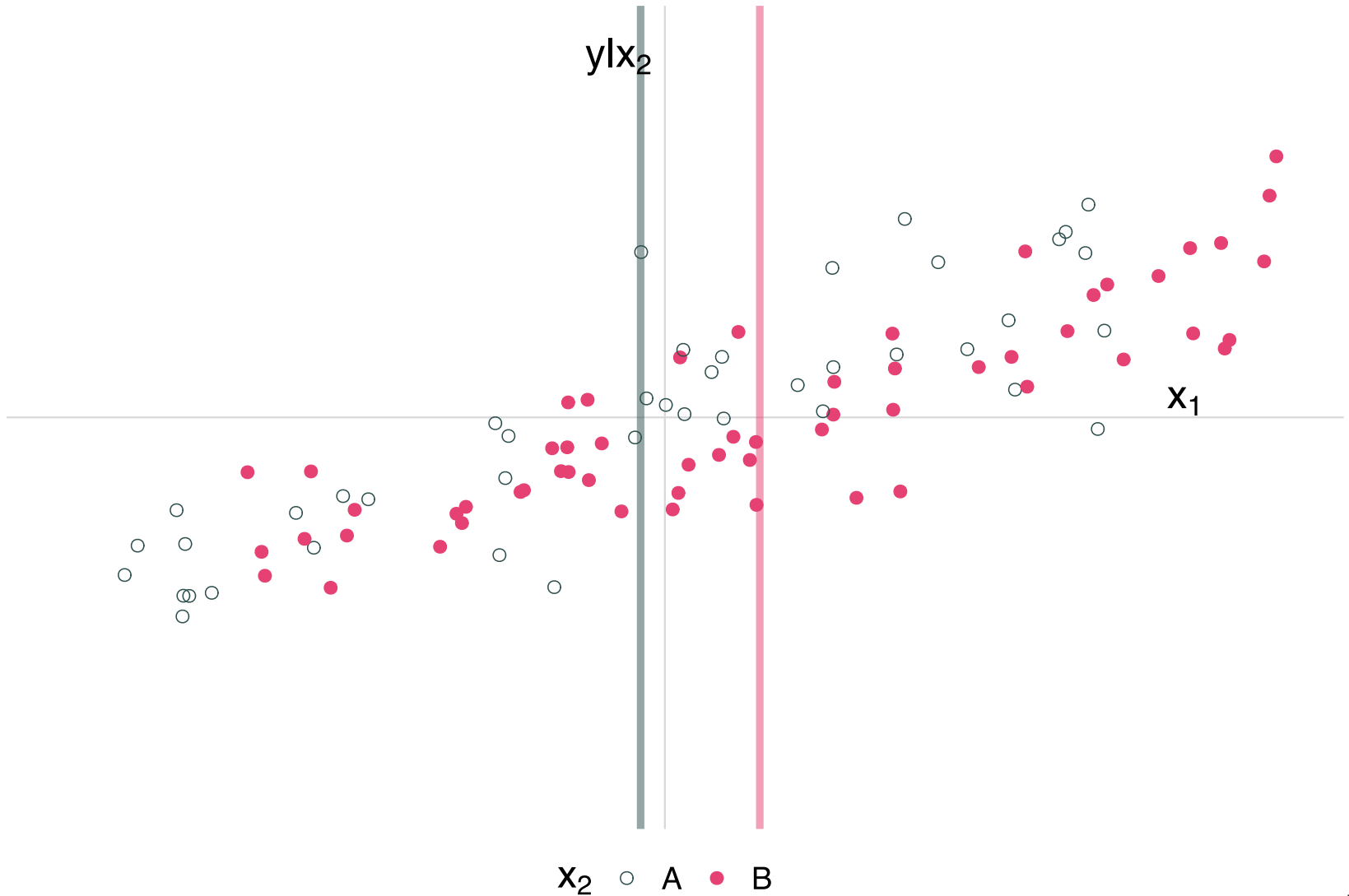
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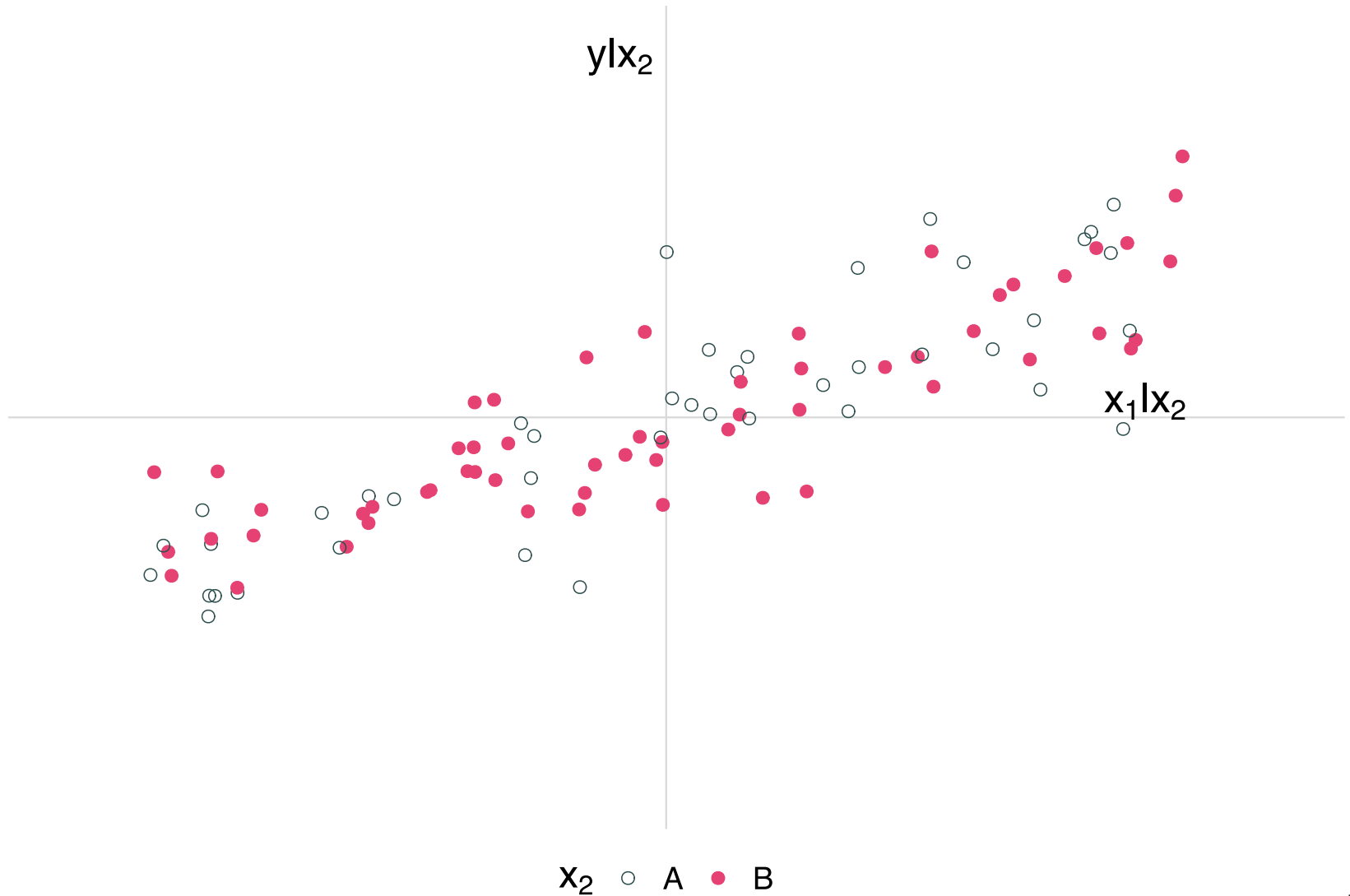
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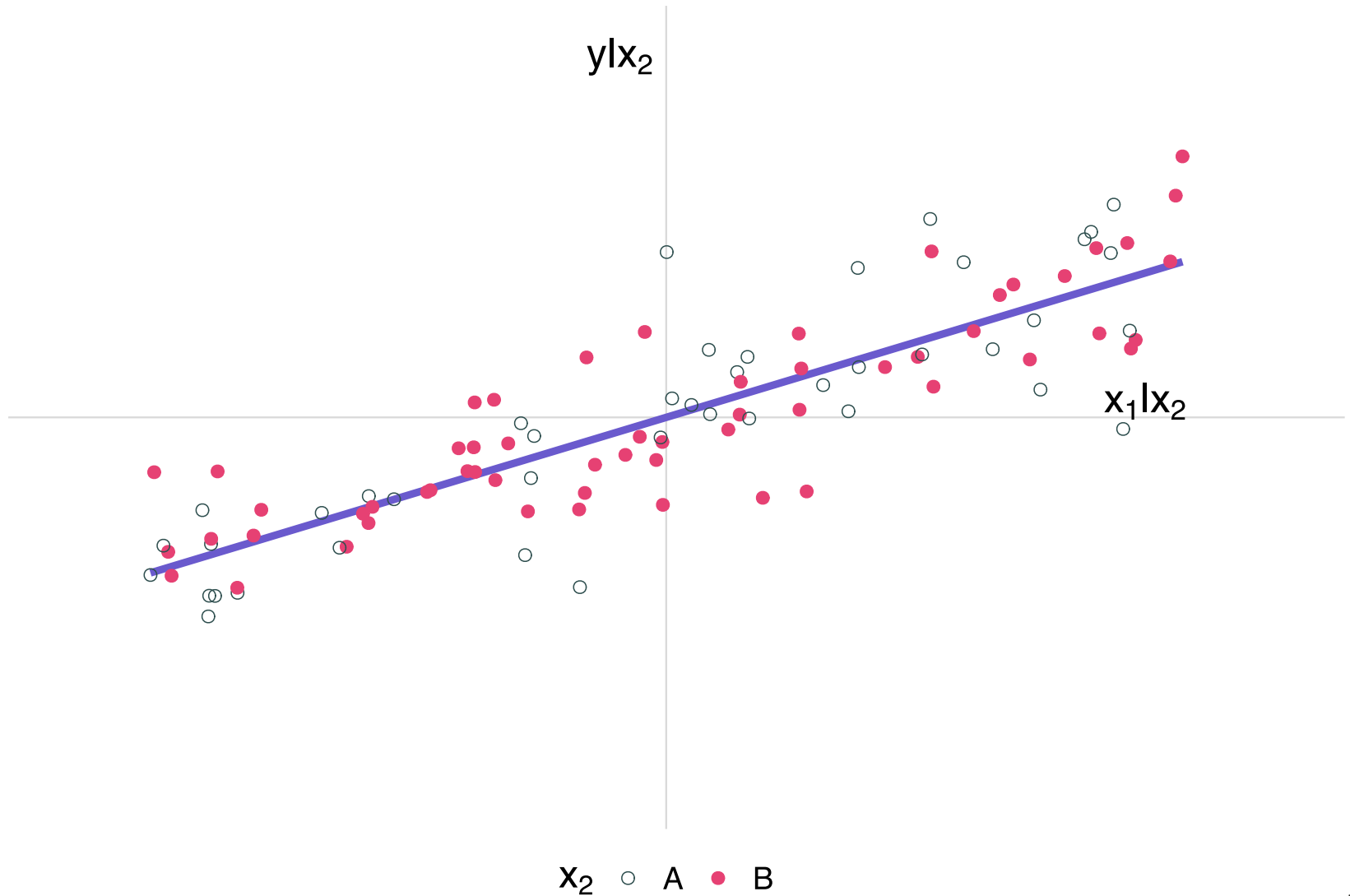
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Now that we've refreshed/deepened our regression knowledge, let's connect regression and the CEF.

Regression

Regression and the *CEF*

Angrist and Pischke make the case that

... you should be interested in regression parameters if you are interested in the CEF. (*MHE*, p.36)

Q What is the reasoning/connection?

Regression

Regression and the CEF

Angrist and Pischke make the case that

... you should be interested in regression parameters if you are interested in the CEF. (*MHE*, p.36)

Q What is the reasoning/connection?

A We'll cover three reasons.

1. *If the CEF is linear*, then the population regression line is the CEF.
2. The function $\mathbf{X}_i' \boldsymbol{\beta}$ is the min. MSE *linear* predictor of \mathbf{Y}_i given \mathbf{X}_i .
3. The function $\mathbf{X}_i' \boldsymbol{\beta}$ gives the min. MSE *linear* approximation to the CEF.

Regression

Regression and the *CEF*

Theorem The linear CEF theorem (3.1.4)

If the CEF is linear, then the population regression is the CEF.

Regression

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Proof Let the CEF equal some linear function, i.e., $E[Y_i | X_i] = X_i' \beta^*$.

From the CEF decomposition property, we know $E[X_i \varepsilon_i] = 0$.

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$$\implies \beta^* = E[X_i X_i']^{-1} E[X_i Y_i] = \beta, \text{ our population regression coefficients.}$$

Regression

Regression and the *CEF*

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If the CEF is linear, then the population regression is the CEF.

Linearity can be a strong assumption. When might we expect linearity?

Regression

Regression and the CEF

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Linearity can be a strong assumption. When might we expect linearity?

1. Situations in which $(\mathbf{Y}_i, \mathbf{X}_i)$ follows a multivariate normal distribution.

Concern Might be limited—especially when \mathbf{Y}_i or \mathbf{X}_i are not continuous.

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2. Saturated regression models

Example A model with two binary indicators and their interaction.

Regression

Regression and the *CEF*

Theorem The best linear predictor theorem (3.1.5)

$\mathbf{X}_i'\beta$ is the best *linear* predictor of \mathbf{Y}_i given \mathbf{X}_i (minimizes MSE).

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Regression and the CEF

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Proof We defined β as the vector that minimizes MSE, *i.e.*,

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- The population-regression function $(\mathbf{X}_i'\beta)$ is the best (min. MSE) *linear* predictor of \mathbf{Y}_i given \mathbf{X}_i .
- The CEF ($E[\mathbf{Y}_i \mid \mathbf{X}_i]$) is the best predictor (min. MSE) of \mathbf{Y}_i given \mathbf{X}_i across *all classes* of functions.

Regression

Regression and the *CEF*

Q If $\mathbf{X}_i'\beta$ is **the best linear predictor** of \mathbf{Y}_i given \mathbf{X}_i , then why is there so much interest machine learning for prediction (opposed to regression)?

Regression

Regression and the CEF

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A A few reasons

1. Relax *linearity*
2. Model selection
 - choosing \mathbf{X}_i is not always obvious
 - overfitting is bad (bias-variance tradeoff)
3. It's fancy, shiny, and new
4. Some ML methods boil down to regression
5. Others?

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Counter Q Why are we (still) using regression?

Regression

Regression and the CEF

Theorem The regression CEF theorem (3.1.6)

The population regression function $\mathbf{X}_i'\beta$ provides the minimum MSE linear approximation to the CEF $E[\mathbf{Y}_i \mid \mathbf{X}_i]$, i.e.,

$$\beta = \arg \min_b E \left\{ \left(E[\mathbf{Y}_i \mid \mathbf{X}_i] - \mathbf{X}_i' b \right)^2 \right\}$$

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Regression and the CEF

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Put simply Regression gives us the *best* linear approximation to the CEF.

Proof First, recall that, in expectation, β is the b that minimizes $(Y_i - X_i' b)^2$

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$$+ \left(E[Y_i | X_i] - X_i' b \right)^2 \tag{b}$$

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\therefore (In expectation) If $b = \beta$ minimizes (1), then $b = \beta$ minimizes (b).

Regression

Regression and the CEF

Let's review our new(-ish) regression results

1. When the CEF is linear, the regression function *is* the CEF.
Too small Very specific circumstances—or big assumptions.
2. Regression gives us the best *linear* predictor of \mathbf{Y}_i (given \mathbf{X}_i)
Off point We're often interested in β —not $\hat{\mathbf{Y}}_i$.
3. Regression provides the best *linear* approximation of the CEF.
Just right? (Depends on your goals)

Regression

Regression and the *CEF*

Motivation (**3**) tends to be the most compelling.

Even when the CEF is not linear, regression recovers the best linear approximation to the CEF.

Regression

Regression and the CEF

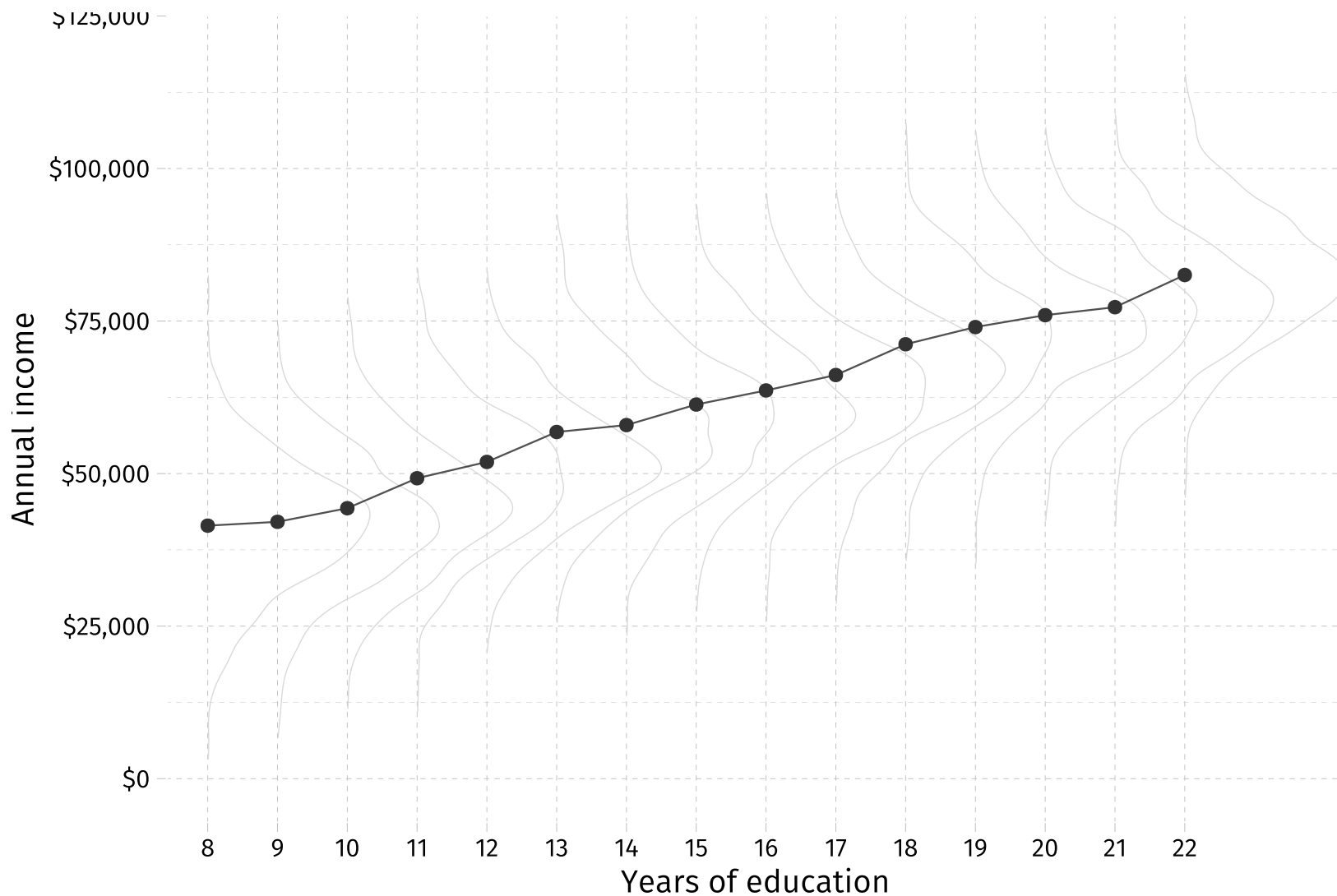
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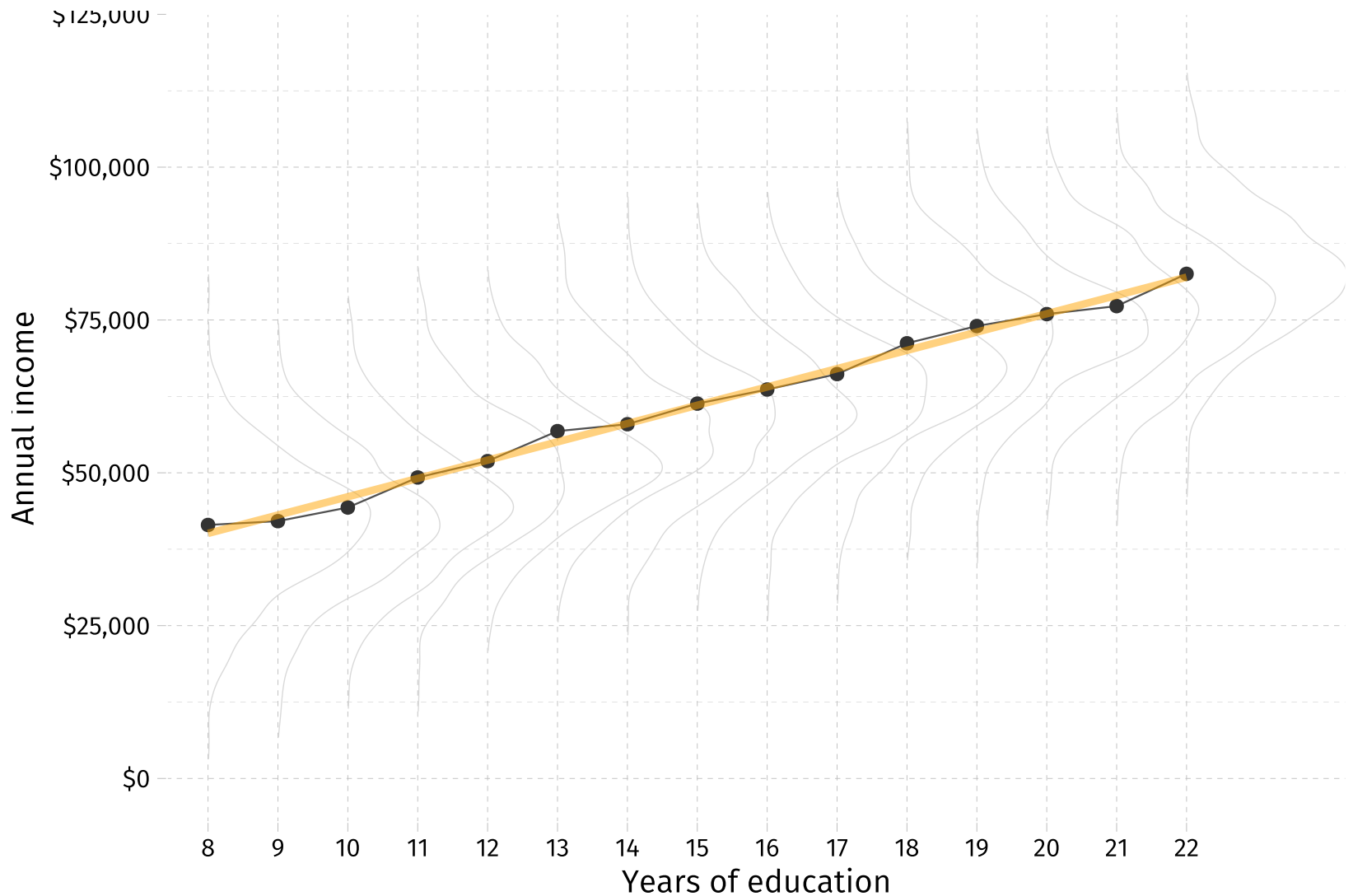
The statement that regression approximates the CEF lines up with our view of empirical work as an effort to describe the essential features of statistical relationships without necessarily trying to pin them down exactly. (*MHE*, p.39, emphasis added)

Let's dig into this linear-approximate to the CEF a little more...

Returning to our **CEF**



Adding the population **regression function**



Regression

Regression and the *CEF*

As the previous figure suggests, one way to think about least-squares regression is **estimating a weighted regression on the CEF** rather than the individual observations.

Regression

Regression and the CEF

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TLDR Use $E[Y_i | X_i]$ as the outcome, rather than Y_i , and properly weight.

Regression

Regression and the CEF

As the previous figure suggests, one way to think about least-squares regression is **estimating a weighted regression on the CEF** rather than the individual observations.

TLDR Use $E[Y_i | X_i]$ as the outcome, rather than Y_i , and properly weight.

Suppose X_i is discrete with pmf $g_x(u)$

$$E\left[\left(E[Y_i | X_i] - X_i' b\right)^2\right] = \sum_u \left(E[Y_i | X_i = u] - u' b\right)^2 g_x(u)$$

i.e., β can be expressed as weighted-least squares regression of $E[Y_i | X_i = u]$ on u (the values of X_i) weighted by $g_x(u)$.

Regression

Regression and the *CEF*

We can also use LIE here

β

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Regression and the *CEF*

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$$\begin{aligned}\beta &= E[X_i X_i']^{-1} E[X_i Y_i] \\ &= E[X_i X_i']^{-1} E[X_i E(Y_i | X_i)]\end{aligned}$$

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Pro Useful for aggregated data when microdata are sensitive/big.

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Table of contents

Admin

1. Schedule

Regression

1. Why?
2. The CEF
 - Definition
 - Graphically
 - Law of iterated expectations
 - Decomposition
 - Prediction
3. Population least squares
4. Anatomy
5. Regression-CEF theorem
6. WLS