**Cohort 12**

**Mortality Probability Team**

**Final Project Report**

**Introduction**

The US Center for Disease Control has long emphasized that social factors are contributing elements in one’s mortality at any given age (Song *et al.* 2011). Researchers indicate that socio-economic factors such as income, education, race and gender, as well as medical technology (Case and Deaton, 2017 and Cutler, Huang and Lleras-Muney, 2016), help determine the age at which individuals die. Although improving medical technology across time attenuates impact of illnesses, social factors play a great role in exposure to illnesses and how one can access this health improving technology. It is not hard to imagine that socio-economic factors impact health and thereby mortality: income can help access health insurance; one’s location shapes the difficulty of accessing health care during life threatening emergencies; one’s income and social status, determined through such factors as race, education or occupation, may induce dietary and other habits detrimental to one’s health.

Since 1980, motivated by on-going research on socio-economic determinants of mortality, the US Census Bureau has provided data that follows up a sample of individuals from the census to match death certificates of individuals in case when death occurs within a particular time period. Socio-economic data provided for each person is from the census year; and no further socio-economic data is collected after that year. These data have been made available as public use microdata sample (or PUMS). The National Longitudinal Mortality Study (NLMS) provides the PUMS data as a specialized extract of the full NLMS that is designed to provide easy access to an extract of the main NLMS while protecting the confidentiality of those who have responded to the original surveys on which the NLMS is based. The first set of NLMS data made available as a PUMS provided basic data from the 1980 census and matched the death certificates of individuals dying within the subsequent eleven years. In the cases where death occurred NLMS provided the figure for elapsed number of days between the day the individual was interviewed and death; it also provided a cause of death. To the census questions an added question indicated the status of enrolment into a health insurance (US Census Bureau, 2013, and CDC 2015).

NLMS data was intended primarily to identify distal and proximal causes of death; this type of information would lead to establishing both social policies as well as priorities for medical research. For insurers, from this data set, it may also be possible to show how the distal socio-economic causes can yield predictive probabilities for death of a given person. As one of the primary purposes of data analytics is to generate predictions, the PUMS data on mortality was used towards predicting the probability of dying given the socio-economic profile and the age of the person.

**Hypothesis**

To explain an occurrence of death amid a population, an event binomially distributed, most authors use a logistic relation where person’s age figures prominently. Age is a primary factor in determining the probability of death; it is almost the basic notion of risk in demography: for example, CDC reports that average age a person living in the US died in 1950 was 68, while it was nearly 80 by 2007 (CDC, 2008). While the US population death rate for the overall population is 0.8%, for those above 55 it starts to reach 1.3% and becomes 15% at age 85. Age is a primary factor in being able to predict the probability of person’s death.

The standard socio-economic factors that are likely to shape mortality are education, income, social status determined by the type of occupation and one’s ethnic status, conditions of one’s birth and childhood rearing and access to medical care. Aside from generating income, education provides understanding that help adopt healthy behavior such as exercising and dietary habits. Income enables one to have more suitable housing, access health care and afford healthier dietary habits. It has been noted that childhood conditions can affect health in later years (Case, Fertig and Paxon, 2005); as where one is born may determine some childhood condition, varying situations in one’s birth country may contribute to future health.

Place of residency impacts health through availability of medical care, crime, community cohesion and pollution. PUMS version of NLMS did not provide finer details of location; it provided residency status of a person by states. At the state level one can capture the state-level factors such as average access to medical care, social cohesion and some occupational factors. For example, coastal states have fishing industries or off-shore drilling which are among the most dangerous of all occupation. It is possible that states within a region are similar.

Health insurance gives access to medical care and should be a factor in improving health. However, ascertaining the impact of health insurance even on usage of care, let alone health, has been extremely difficult through statistical methods (see Finkelstein, 2017). Changing medical technology when used at a mass scale contributes to health of the population; usually this is seen as a statistical control for missing variable when socio-economic factors are used to explain mortality. Various methods have been used for this approach; for example, a time factor can be used to note technological change.

Obviously, health condition of a person at a particular time is a strong predictor of death probability in the near future. In order to reduce missing variables’ impact, one should include health conditions at the time of survey when analyzing contribution of socio-economic factors to explain mortality. However, data on obtaining health information in most surveys are difficult. Self-reporting in health is usually biased; and collecting objective information is difficult (Murray and Chen, 1992).

We, members of the project team, tested the central hypothesis: *One can predict individual mortality through finding a relation between whether a person died or not within a period of 11 years and factors or features such as poverty, education, employment status, martial status, place of birth, being in the labor market, state residency and health insurance status.*

PUMS version of NLMS data set provided all these variables. We approximated being in the labor market (not necessarily employed or currently seeking employment) through having a social security number, this also shows the level at which a person is established in the US. The citizenship information was incomplete, as this may not have been a question always asked during a census. Our presentation shows how these features were used. We had no features representing technology.

Deaths occurred at different times following the initial census interview and we ascertained that across the eleven years there are visible signs of age patterns in mortality rate, we could not incorporate time as a proxy for technology in our analysis. If a temporal factor such as follow-up time till death were to be used, it would create a spurious relation as mortality increases with time due to people in the sample getting older. Most likely to measure the impact of technology in constructing probability of death would require a different approach than we were able to use for this project. Information on health conditions at the time of survey was incomplete in the data set. Correlated with health condition are indicators that describe healthy behavior. No such data was available. These limitations, however, do not prevent us from providing a way to estimate a probability measure for one’s death using mostly socio-economic factors.

**Application and Motivation**

Our intention was to provide a method that can be used to predict 11-year death probability for a given person. Due to the data acquired for this project, we incorporated primarily socio-economic status of an individual to predict mortality of a given person within the next 11 years. The intention was not to limit us completely to socio-economic factors; this was a data constraint that could not be changed by extracting more data. We report on the probability of dying within the next eleven years as opposed to the probability of dying within the 11 years given that one has not died at a particular point of time. The latter is a hazard rate which we do not report.

We incorporated one of the standard methods from epidemiology, to consider the target variable, probability of death, to be distributed as a logistic relation. This entailed that our first attempt was to use logistic regression. Thus, our motivation was to see how models can compete with the logistic relation to yield results that report probability of death. The logistic relation resembles the linear probability relation if the proportion of outcome of interest in the data set is away from 0 or 1. In our case the proportion dying in the data set was around 0.12. Thus, our basic model is logistic regression. The logistic regression and other types of models we consider predicts the death or non-death occurrence within a subsequent period of 4018 days through use of basic socio-economic data collected at date 0. It is possible the socio-economic data may have changed substantially for some people during this time.

Within the data set, younger people die infrequently within the eleven years. It is also possible for those under 40 years of age, one would see a great deal of social and economic changes within the eleven years. Further, for certain factors considerable amount of data were not collected for those under 21. In most instances we did not include the age group below 21. Thus, we predict mortality probability for those above 21.

Of course, the current exercise is an initial attempt. Perhaps an improved model predicting death can become an user-facing application. A current motivation is to provide a web application that incorporates a model such as the one we ultimately chose which shows the probability of death.

**Project Pipeline**

***Data Ingestion, Wrangling and Exploratory Analysis***

**Don** describe the data set in terms of what you said yesterday: number of features, missing data etc.

Wrangling was carried differently for purpose of showing different types of results. For example, showing the density of death in the days following the census interviews was shown through Kaplan-Maier Method using the un-wrangled data. For formulation of the hypotheses—mostly using visualization, we carried out descriptive analysis using wrangled data.

***Computation and Modeling***

Insights which we gained during exploratory analysis let us further proceed with feature analysis and subsequent feature selection. Due to the class imbalance hurdle we faced with the dataset, we were forced to drop some features with very high rates of missing data and keep as many underrepresented positive (death) class records as possible. In additional to the class imbalance issue, we realized that our data was very prone to bias due to including such sensitive features as race, ethnicity, income etc. Having recently read “Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy” by Cathy O’Neil, as well as consulted some members of the faculty, it was decided to drop those sensitive variables. Subsequent feature selection utilized such methods as correlation coefficients, Lasso, Ridge and Elastic Net, in combination with Kaplan-Meier models to gain deeper understanding of which features from the data were highly deterministic in individual’s mortality. Selected features were transformed into categorical and used in the predictive models which are discussed below.

Having addressed data bias, missing variables and hierarchical features, we now had to overcome class imbalance issue, and for that purpose it was decided to attempt taking two routes:

1. Use regression and classification models while balancing the classes (**[class\_weight=”balanced”](http://contrib.scikit-learn.org/imbalanced-learn/stable/api.html" \l "module-imblearn.combine" \o "imblearn.combine)** ).
2. Use **[imblearn.combine](http://contrib.scikit-learn.org/imbalanced-learn/stable/api.html" \l "module-imblearn.combine" \o "imblearn.combine)** methods to combine over-sampling and under-sampling of under-represented and over-represented classes respectively.

Obtained results showed that the first method yielded very high scores in combination with very little time spent on model training, while second route took significantly more time for data over- and under-sampling while having score results comparable to the first one.

For model evaluation purposes we focused on recall score, as well as f1 score with weighted average. Since our positive class was smaller, i.e. underrepresented class with death outcomes, and the ability to detect correctly positive samples was our main focus (correct detection of negatives examples was less important to the problem) recall proved to be a better model assessment metric.

Selected logistic regression model was “pickled” and deployed in final data product – web application for calculating 11-year mortality probability.

**Arun** can add a few things

***Final Data Product***

Final data product produced at the end of the project was a logistic regression model based web application, designed to calculate individual 11-year mortality probability based on user input. Application was written in Python and utilized such open source technologies as Flask web development platform and Heroku PaaS. Web application can be access at this URL:

<https://mortality-predictor.herokuapp.com/>

**Conclusion**

**Rob or all.**

GitHub Repository: <https://github.com/georgetown-analytics/Mortality-Probability>

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