

Assignment 3: Nonlinear Equations and Numerical Optimization

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The goal of this exercise is to introduce basic numerical methods. We use data from a field experiment. Each choice is binary, and the lotteries are denoted (\mathcal{C}_1 and \mathcal{C}_2). They are composed of a low and high payoffs. Subjects are presented with five gambles entailing binary choices. In each case, the first option has lower expected value and dispersion than the second. At the fifth choice, expected values are similar across lotteries, and the second option still has higher variance. In total, there is 25 decisions, which are stored in `dat_choices`.

Table 1: Risk Aversion Lotteries: Ordered Lotteries Selection

	\mathcal{C}_1				\mathcal{C}_2			
	\mathbb{P}_1	\mathbb{P}_2	EV	SD.	\mathbb{P}_1	\mathbb{P}_2	EV	SD.
List 1	48	48	48	0	40	64	52	16.97
	40	64	52	16.97	32	80	56	33.94
	32	80	56	33.94	24	96	60	50.91
	24	96	60	50.91	16	112	64	67.88
	16	112	64	67.88	8	120	64	79.2
List 2	48	48	48	0	42	66	54	16.97
	42	66	54	16.97	36	84	60	33.94
	36	84	60	33.94	30	102	66	50.91
	30	102	66	50.91	24	120	72	67.88
	24	120	72	67.88	16	128	72	79.2
List 3	48	48	48	0	38	62	50	16.97
	38	62	50	16.97	28	76	52	33.94
	28	76	52	33.94	18	90	54	50.91
	18	90	54	50.91	8	104	56	67.88
	8	104	56	67.88	0	112	56	79.2
List 4	42	42	42	0	36	60	48	16.97
	36	60	48	16.97	30	78	54	33.94
	30	78	54	33.94	24	96	60	50.91
	24	96	60	50.91	18	114	66	67.88
	18	114	66	67.88	10	122	66	79.2
List 5	54	54	54	0	44	68	56	16.97
	44	68	56	16.97	34	82	58	33.94
	34	82	58	33.94	24	96	60	50.91
	24	96	60	50.91	14	110	62	67.88
	14	110	62	67.88	6	118	62	79.2

Notes: Table lists five lotteries. \mathcal{C}_1 and \mathcal{C}_2 refer to the choices of the lottery, while \mathbb{P}_1 and \mathbb{P}_2 refers to the payoffs. EV is for expected value, while SD is the standard deviation across payoffs. Payoffs are in Canadian \$. Source: SRDC-CIRANO Field Experiment on Education Financing.

Exercise 1 Part 1

Let individuals be endowed with a CRRA utility function. The utility of an individual with risk aversion θ over choice c

$$u(c, \theta) = \begin{cases} \frac{c^{1-\theta}}{1-\theta} & \text{if } \theta \neq 1 \\ \log(c), & \text{if } \theta = 1 \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

- Write a function `crra` that as input c and θ and return utility.
- Illustrate the shape of the utility function, for $c = 50$, and risk aversion θ ranging from -5 to 5.

Exercise 2 Part 2

- Create a matrix that records all choices in Table 1.
- Using bisection techniques, find the level of risk aversion that makes an individual indifferent between each of the 25 choices.
- Use turning points to construct identified sets for each set of lotteries.
- Use these identified sets along with `dat_choice` to construct the distribution of risk aversion in the population for each list of questions.

Exercise 3 Part 3

Consider an individual i endowed with an initial wealth w_i which is set to 20. Consider the choice between $\mathcal{C}_{1l} = (c_1^1, c_1^2)$ and $\mathcal{C}_{2l} = (c_2^1, c_2^2)$. The utility of an agent i for lottery \mathcal{C}_{1l} is:

$$V_i^r(w_i + \mathcal{C}_{1l}) = \bar{V}_{il}^{1r} + \xi_{il}^r = u(w_i + c_{1l}^1, \theta_i) + u(w_i + c_{1l}^2, \theta_i) + \xi_{il}^r \quad (2)$$

The associated probability of choosing \mathcal{C}_{1l} over \mathcal{C}_{2l} is:

$$\Pr[V_i^r(w_i + \mathcal{C}_{1l}) > V_i^r(w_i + \mathcal{C}_{2l})] = \Pr[\xi_{il}^{2r} - \xi_{il}^{1r} < \bar{V}_{il}^{1r} - \bar{V}_{il}^{2r}] \quad (3)$$

1. Write the likelihood associated to least risky lottery under the assumption that $\xi_{il}^r \sim EV_1$ (extreme value type 1 = gumbel)
2. One parameter optimization: Grid search: Simulate a grid of potential values for θ , evaluate the likelihood for each of value of the grid and select the maximum. Apply this for individuals 900 and 115.

Exercise 4 Part 4

Consider the Beale function

$$f(x, y) = (1.5 - x + xy)^2 + (2.25 - x + xy^2)^2 + (2.625 - x + xy^3)^2 \quad (4)$$

We are interested in the minimum of this function.

1. Brute force. Create a grid of values for (x, y) from -5 to 5 with a step size of 0.01 and evaluate $f(x, y)$ for all those points. Find the minimum of the function on this grid and let it be denoted (x_0, y_0)
2. Using the approximation of the gradient seen in the lecture, compute $df(x_0, y_0)$

Exercise 5 Part 5

Consider the Rosenbrock Banana function

$$f(x, y) = (1 - x)^2 + 5(y - x^2)^2 \quad (5)$$

We are interested in the minimum of this function.

1. Program the steepest descent algorithm to find the minimum of this function.

Exercise 6 Part 6

In this part, we are interested in the empirical question: Do Workplace Smoking Bans Reduce Smoking? We will use the dataset "SmokeBan" from the AER package, which contains 10,000 observations on 7 variables.

- smoker factor. Is the individual a current smoker?
 - ban factor. Is there a work area smoking ban?
 - age. age in years.
 - education. factor indicating highest education level attained: high school (hs) drop out, high school graduate, some college, college graduate, master's degree (or higher).
 - afam factor. Is the individual African-American?
 - hispanic factor. Is the individual Hispanic?
 - gender factor indicating gender.
1. Estimate the effect of all variables on the probability of smoking using a probit model. For estimation purpose, use the pre-programmed packages in optim.

2. Using Fisher Information, derive the standard error of the estimates.

Exercise 7 Part 7

Consider an individual i endowed with an initial wealth w_i which is set to 20. Consider the choice between $\mathcal{C}_{1i} = (c_i^1, c_i^2)$ and $\mathcal{C}_{2i} = (c_2^1, c_2^2)$. The utility of an agent i for lottery \mathcal{C}_{1i} is:

$$V_i^r(w_i + \mathcal{C}_{1i}) = \bar{V}_{il}^{1r} + \xi_{il}^r = u(w_i + c_{1i}^1, \theta_i) + u(w_i + c_{1i}^2, \theta_i) + \xi_{il}^r \quad (6)$$

The associated probability of choosing \mathcal{C}_{1i} over \mathcal{C}_{2i} is:

$$\Pr[V_i^r(w_i + \mathcal{C}_1) > V_i^r(w_i + \mathcal{C}_2)] = \Pr[\xi_{il}^{2r} - \xi_{il}^{1r} < \bar{V}_{il}^{1r} - \bar{V}_{il}^{2r}] \quad (7)$$

1. Write the likelihood associated to the choice problem under the assumption that $\xi_{il}^r \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \sigma)$.
2. Using `dat_choices`, estimate risk aversion and sigma for individual 5.
 - `nloptr` has the largest collection of optimization tools in R.
 - Install the `nloptr` packages.
 - Using starting values of 2.1 and 0.8 for risk aversion and σ respectively, test the following algorithms
 - ISRES (Improved Stochastic Ranking Evolution Strategy)
 - LBFGS
 - BOBYQA
 - Nelder-Mead Simplex
 - Select the algorithm that gives you the best performance, and estimate the pair risk aversion/*sigma* for everyone in the sample.
 - Represent the distribution of estimated risk aversion.