
On the Optimal Design of Consumption Taxes

Michael Barczay
European University Institute

Study Center Gerzensee
March 20th, 2024

Motivation: Heterogeneous Consumption Baskets

Expenditure shares of two example categories (Data: US CEX, 2001-2019)

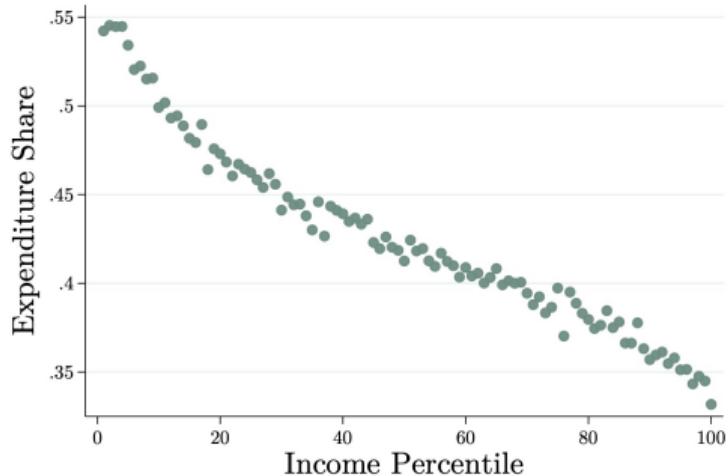


Figure 1: Food at home

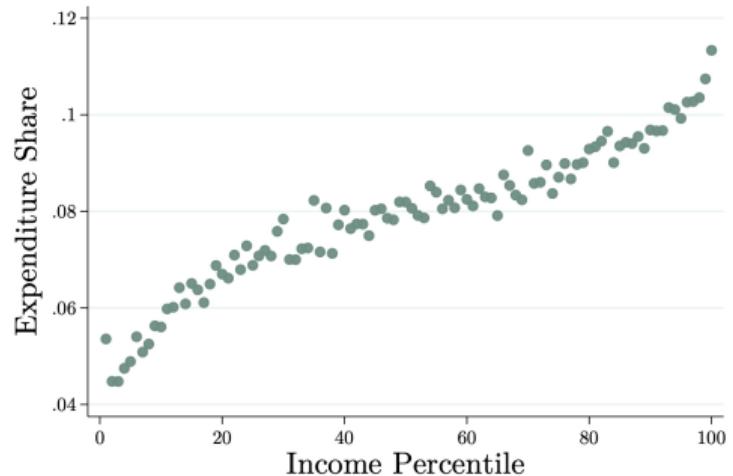


Figure 2: Food away from home

Motivation: Heterogeneous Consumption Tax Rates

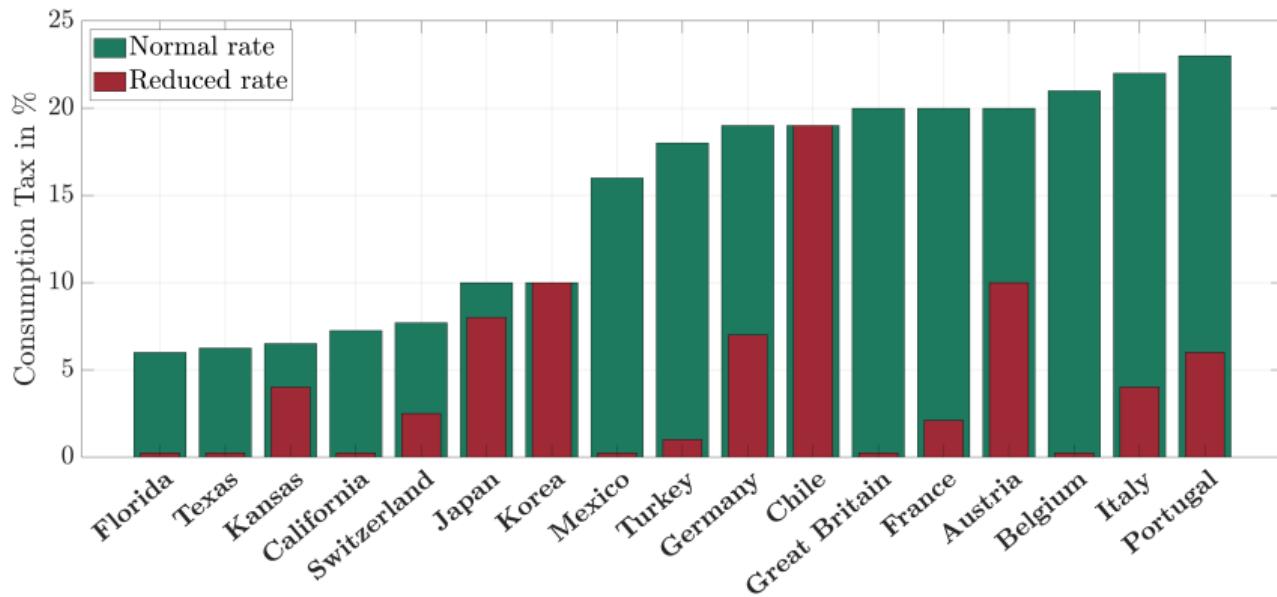


Figure 3: Normal and reduced consumption tax rates in the OECD and 4 US states
Source: OECD and collected by the author

Question

Consumption taxes are a crucial tax instrument to study

- Heterogeneous consumption baskets across the income and wealth distribution
- Differentiated tax rates \Rightarrow heterogeneous average tax rates
- Taxing luxuries (**equity focus**) vs. necessities (**efficiency focus**)
- Public finance literature highlights interaction with (labor) income taxes

How are consumption taxes optimally designed in the presence of
(progressive) income taxation?

Question

Consumption taxes are a crucial tax instrument to study

- Heterogeneous consumption baskets across the income and wealth distribution
- Differentiated tax rates \Rightarrow heterogeneous average tax rates
- Taxing luxuries (**equity focus**) vs. necessities (**efficiency focus**)
- Public finance literature highlights interaction with (labor) income taxes

How are consumption taxes optimally designed in the presence of (progressive) income taxation?

What I do

- ▶ Revisit this question from a quantitative perspective
- ▶ Aiyagari-type **incomplete markets model**
 - non-homothetic preferences → heterogeneous consumption baskets
- ▶ **Estimation** using US data
 - Match consumption baskets along the income distribution
- ▶ Quantitative **Ramsey Problem**
 - Allow planner to jointly choose heterogeneous consumption tax rates and non-linear labor income tax

What I do

- ▶ Revisit this question from a quantitative perspective
- ▶ Aiyagari-type **incomplete markets model**
 - non-homothetic preferences → heterogeneous consumption baskets
- ▶ **Estimation** using US data
 - Match consumption baskets along the income distribution
- ▶ Quantitative **Ramsey Problem**
 - Allow planner to jointly choose heterogeneous consumption tax rates and non-linear labor income tax

What I do

- ▶ Revisit this question from a quantitative perspective
- ▶ Aiyagari-type **incomplete markets model**
 - non-homothetic preferences → heterogeneous consumption baskets
- ▶ **Estimation** using US data
 - Match consumption baskets along the income distribution
- ▶ Quantitative **Ramsey Problem**
 - Allow planner to jointly choose heterogeneous consumption tax rates and non-linear labor income tax

What I find

- ▶ Optimal consumption taxes **highly non-uniform**
 - 7% **tax** on luxury goods
 - 52% **subsidy** on necessities
 - Even under optimal labor income tax
- ▶ Optimal policy **shrinks the economy**
 - GDP ↓ by 4.1%
- ▶ Extensive **welfare gains**
 - 3.1% increase in aggregate welfare
 - 73.3% approve the tax reform
 - Loss only for high-wealth-high-productivity households

What I find

- ▶ Optimal consumption taxes **highly non-uniform**
 - 7% **tax** on luxury goods
 - 52% **subsidy** on necessities
 - Even under optimal labor income tax
- ▶ Optimal policy **shrinks the economy**
 - GDP ↓ by 4.1%
- ▶ Extensive **welfare gains**
 - 3.1% increase in aggregate welfare
 - 73.3% approve the tax reform
 - Loss only for high-wealth-high-productivity households

What I find

- ▶ Optimal consumption taxes **highly non-uniform**
 - 7% **tax** on luxury goods
 - 52% **subsidy** on necessities
 - Even under optimal labor income tax
- ▶ Optimal policy **shrinks the economy**
 - GDP ↓ by 4.1%
- ▶ Extensive **welfare gains**
 - 3.1% increase in aggregate welfare
 - 73.3% approve the tax reform
 - Loss only for high-wealth-high-productivity households

Literature

Joint design of consumption taxes

Atkinson and Stiglitz (1976), Cremer (2001), Saez (2002), Nishiyama and Smetters (2005), Conesa (2020), Parodi (2023)

→ Focus on the design of **consumption taxes** with realistic consumption behavior

Optimal taxation in quantitative incomplete markets models

Kindermann and Krueger (2022), Boar and Midrigan (2022), Ferriere et al. (2023), Carroll et al. (2023), Macnamara et al. (2023)

→ Focus on the interaction of **income and heterogeneous consumption taxes**

Heterogeneity in households' consumption choices

Aguiar and Bils (2015), Jaimovich, Rebelo and Wong (2019), Oni (2023), Nord (2023)

→ Implications of differences in consumption baskets for **optimal taxes**

Consumption Taxes in Theory

Two concerns

- **Equity concerns:** Redistribute using consumption tax → tax luxuries?
- **Efficiency concerns:** Tax inelastic goods → tax necessities?

Role of other tax instruments

- Degree of redistribution can determine weight on each concern
 - In simple setting: can make consumption taxes obsolete ([Atkinson & Stiglitz, 1976](#))
- Recent work highlights importance of consumption taxes in homothetic, 1-good, HA economies. What about when **consumption baskets differ**?

Model

Model Overview

Aiyagari-type incomplete markets economy

► Households

- Infinitely lived
- Consume various goods and services
- Labor supply

► Government

- Collects various taxes
- Pays targeted transfers
- Debt

► Firms

- Use capital and labor to produce various goods and services

Household Problem

$$V_t(z_t, a_t, s) = \max_{\{c_{jt}\}_{j=1}^J, c_{ot}, n_t, a_{t+1}} \{U(\{c_{jt}\}_{j=1}^J, c_{ot}) - v(n_t) + \beta \mathbb{E}_{z_{t+1}|z_t} V_{t+1}(z_{t+1}, a_{t+1}, s)\}$$

subject to budget constraint, $c_{jt}, c_{ot}, a_{t+1} \geq 0$ and $n_t \in [0, 1]$

with states:

- Idiosyncratic productivity z_t
- Skill type s
- Assets a_t

and choices:

- Consumption bundle $\{c_{jt}\}_{j=1}^J$
- Outside good c_{ot} 
- Labor supply n_t and assets a_{t+1}

Households

Intertemporal Household Problem: a_{t+1}

$$\max_{\{\{c_{jt}\}_{j=1}^J, \underline{c}_{ot}, n_t, a_{t+1}\}_{t=0}^{\infty}} \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \beta^t \mathbb{E}_0 \left\{ U(\{c_{jt}\}_{j=1}^J, \underline{c}_{ot}) - v(n_t) \right\}$$

1. Intratemporal Decision: E_C, E_o Details

$$U(\cdot) = \frac{(\underline{c}^\eta (\underline{c}_o - c_o)^{1-\eta})^{1-\theta}}{1-\theta}$$

2. Intratemporal Decision: c_j

$$\sum_{j=1}^J \Upsilon_j^{\frac{1}{\sigma}} \left(\frac{c_j}{C^{\psi j}} \right)^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} = 1$$

Budget Constraint

$$\underbrace{\sum_{j=1}^J c_{jt} p_{jt} (1 + \tau_{jt})}_{E_C} + \underbrace{\underline{c}_{ot} p_{ot} (1 + \tau_{ot})}_{E_o} + a_{t+1} + \underbrace{\mathcal{T}(w z s n)}_{\substack{\text{Labor} \\ \text{income} \\ \text{tax/transfer}}} \leqslant \underbrace{(1 + (1 - \tau_k) r_t) a_t}_{\substack{\text{Capital} \\ \text{income}}} + \underbrace{w_t z_t s n_t}_{\substack{\text{Labor} \\ \text{income}}}$$

Households

Intertemporal Household Problem: a_{t+1}

$$\max_{\{\{c_{jt}\}_{j=1}^J, c_{ot}, n_t, a_{t+1}\}_{t=0}^{\infty}} \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \beta^t \mathbb{E}_0 \left\{ U(\{c_{jt}\}_{j=1}^J, c_{ot}) - v(n_t) \right\}$$

1. **Intratemporal Decision:** E_C, E_o ► Details

$$U(\cdot) = \frac{(\mathcal{C}^\eta(c_o - c_o)^{1-\eta})^{1-\theta}}{1-\theta}$$

2. **Intratemporal Decision:** c_j

$$\sum_{j=1}^J \Upsilon_j^{\frac{1}{\sigma}} \left(\frac{c_j}{\mathcal{C}^{\psi_j}} \right)^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} = 1$$

Budget Constraint

$$\underbrace{\sum_{j=1}^J c_{jt} p_{jt} (1 + \tau_{jt})}_{E_C} + \underbrace{c_{ot} p_{ot} (1 + \tau_{ot})}_{E_o} + a_{t+1} + \underbrace{\mathcal{T}(w z s n)}_{\substack{\text{Labor} \\ \text{income} \\ \text{tax/transfer}}} \leqslant \underbrace{(1 + (1 - \tau_k) r_t) a_t}_{\substack{\text{Capital} \\ \text{income}}} + \underbrace{w_t z_t s_n t}_{\substack{\text{Labor} \\ \text{income}}}$$

Households

Intertemporal Household Problem: a_{t+1}

$$\max_{\{\{c_{jt}\}_{j=1}^J, \underline{c}_o, n_t, a_{t+1}\}_{t=0}^{\infty}} \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \beta^t \mathbb{E}_0 \left\{ U(\{c_{jt}\}_{j=1}^J, \underline{c}_o) - v(n_t) \right\}$$

1. **Intratemporal Decision:** E_C , E_o Details

$$U(\cdot) = \frac{(\underline{c}^\eta (\underline{c}_o - c_o)^{1-\eta})^{1-\theta}}{1-\theta}$$

2. **Intratemporal Decision:** c_j

$$\sum_{j=1}^J \Upsilon_j^{\frac{1}{\sigma}} \left(\frac{c_j}{\underline{c}^{\psi_j}} \right)^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} = 1$$

Budget Constraint

$$\underbrace{\sum_{j=1}^J c_{jt} p_{jt} (1 + \tau_{jt})}_{E_C} + \underbrace{\underline{c}_o p_{ot} (1 + \tau_{ot})}_{E_o} + a_{t+1} + \underbrace{\mathcal{T}(w z s n)}_{\substack{\text{Labor} \\ \text{income} \\ \text{tax/transfer}}} \leqslant \underbrace{(1 + (1 - \tau_k) r_t) a_t}_{\substack{\text{Capital} \\ \text{income}}} + \underbrace{w_t z_t s n_t}_{\substack{\text{Labor} \\ \text{income}}}$$

Consumption Bundles: Intuition

Relative consumption shares

$$\begin{aligned}\log \left(\frac{\omega_j}{\omega_k} \right) &= (1 - \sigma) \log \left(\frac{p_j(1 + \tau_j)}{p_k(1 + \tau_k)} \right) \\ &\quad + (1 - \sigma) (\psi_j - \psi_k) \left[\log \left(\frac{E_c}{p_b} \right) + \frac{1}{1 - \sigma} \log \omega_b \right] + \log \left(\frac{\Upsilon_j}{\Upsilon_k} \right)\end{aligned}$$

- Assume $\psi_{\text{Food away from home}} > \psi_{\text{Food at home}}$
- Increase in income (expenditures) $\Rightarrow \frac{\omega_{\text{Food away from home}}}{\omega_{\text{Food at home}}} \uparrow$

▶ Level

Budget Constraint ($\forall t$)

$$\sum_{j=1}^J C_j p_j \tau_j + C_o p_o \tau_o + \int Tax(wzsn) + r\tau_k K + D = (1+r)D_{-1} + G + \int Tr(wzsn)$$

Labor Income Tax

Bénabou (2002), Heathcote et al. (2017), Ferriere et al. (2023)

$$Tax(y) - Tr(y) \equiv \mathcal{T}(y) = y - \lambda(y)^{(1-\tau)} - T$$

– $\tau \uparrow \Rightarrow$ tax more progressive

Budget Constraint ($\forall t$)

$$\sum_{j=1}^J C_j p_j \tau_j + C_o p_o \tau_o + \int Tax(wzsn) + r\tau_k K + D = (1+r)D_{-1} + G + \int Tr(wzsn)$$

Labor Income Tax

Bénabou (2002), Heathcote et al. (2017), Ferriere et al. (2023)

$$Tax(y) - Tr(y) \equiv \mathcal{T}(y) = y - \lambda(y)^{(1-\tau)} - T$$

- $\tau \uparrow \Rightarrow$ tax more progressive

Firms

- ▶ Single firm produces output, households decide how to consume it
 - Choice determines utility and tax applied to good
- ▶ Cobb-Douglas technology

$$Y_t = AK_t^\alpha L_t^{(1-\alpha)}$$

- ▶ Labor hired at wage rate w_t
- ▶ Capital rented at rental rate $R_t = r_t + \delta$

Estimation & Calibration

Estimation

Need to estimate/calibrate **68 parameters**, related to **households**, **government**, and **firms**

3-step procedure

1. Set externally or estimate outside the model
 $\mu_1, \mu_2, \sigma_1, \sigma_2, \theta, \beta, \chi, p_o, \omega_s, \delta, A, \alpha, \tau_o, \tau_k, g, d, \{\tau_j\}_{j=1}^{11}$
2. GMM using US micro data
 $\{\psi_j\}_{j=1}^{11}, \sigma$
3. Target US data moments using model
 $\{\Upsilon_j\}_{j=1}^{11}, \eta, B_l, \underline{c}_o, T, \tau, \phi$

Step 1: Assigned Parameters

Income Process

Guvenen, Karahan, Ozkan, and Song (2021), Ferriere et al. (2023)

$$\log z_t = \rho \log z_{t-1} + \xi_t$$

$$\xi_t \sim \begin{cases} \mathcal{N}(\mu_1, \sigma_1^2) & \text{with probability } p \\ \mathcal{N}(\mu_2, \sigma_2^2) & \text{with probability } 1 - p \end{cases}$$

Government Parameters

Parameter	Description	Value	Source
τ_k	Capital Income Tax	0.36	Trabandt and Uhlig (2011)
g	Government Spending G/Y	0.218	Ferriere et al. (2023)
d	Public Debt D/Y	1.064	Ferriere et al. (2023)
τ_n	Consumption Tax Necessities	0%	Data
τ_j	Consumption Tax Luxuries	5%	Ferriere et al. (2023)
T	Lump Sum Transfer	11.43% of median income	estimated
τ	Progressivity Income Tax	0.12	estimated

as well as: $\{\beta, \omega_s, s, \theta, \underline{a}, \chi, p_o, p_j, \delta, \alpha, \gamma_j, \tau_o\}$ • Values

Step 1: Assigned Parameters

Income Process

Guvenen, Karahan, Ozkan, and Song (2021), Ferriere et al. (2023)

$$\log z_t = \rho \log z_{t-1} + \xi_t$$

$$\xi_t \sim \begin{cases} \mathcal{N}(\mu_1, \sigma_1^2) & \text{with probability } p \\ \mathcal{N}(\mu_2, \sigma_2^2) & \text{with probability } 1 - p \end{cases}$$

Government Parameters

Parameter	Description	Value	Source
τ_k	Capital Income Tax	0.36	Trabandt and Uhlig (2011)
g	Government Spending G/Y	0.218	Ferriere et al. (2023)
d	Public Debt D/Y	1.064	Ferriere et al. (2023)
τ_n	Consumption Tax Necessities	0%	Data
τ_j	Consumption Tax Luxuries	5%	Ferriere et al. (2023)
T	Lump Sum Transfer	11.43% of median income	estimated
τ	Progressivity Income Tax	0.12	estimated

as well as: $\{\beta, \omega_s, s, \theta, \underline{a}, \chi, p_o, p_j, \delta, \alpha, \gamma_j, \tau_o\}$ ▶ Values

Step 2: “Demand Functions” using GMM

→ Empirical representation of relative expenditure share of **household** n , for **good** j , at **time** t Comin et al. (2021):

$$\log \left(\frac{\omega_{jt}^n}{\omega_{bt}^n} \right) = (1 - \sigma) \log \left(\frac{p_{jt}^n (1 + \tau_{jt}^n)}{p_{bt}^n (1 + \tau_{bt}^n)} \right) + (1 - \sigma) (\psi_j - 1) \log \left(\frac{E_{Ct}^n}{p_{bt}^n (1 + \tau_{bt}^n)} \right) + (\psi_j - 1) \log \omega_{bt}^n + \xi_j^n + \epsilon_{jt}^n$$

- **Data:** US CEX (2001-2019) and regional price data [► More](#)
- **Shares:** $\xi_j^n = \log \left(\frac{\tau_j^n}{\tau_b^n} \right) \rightarrow \xi_j^n = \beta'_j X^n + \mu_{j,r}$
- **Instruments** for E_{Ct}^n and p_{jt}^n [► More](#)

Results

Variable	Estimates	$\eta_{j,1}$	$\eta_{j,5}$
σ	0.16 (0.03)		
ψ : Food at home	0.16 (0.01)	0.43	0.36
ψ : Utilities	0.36 (0.01)	0.77	0.61
ψ : Housing Material & Communication	0.48 (0.01)	0.98	0.76
ψ : Public Transportation	0.61 (0.02)	1.20	0.92
ψ : Alcohol & Tobacco	0.71 (0.02)	1.37	1.05
ψ : Entertainment	0.96 (0.02)	1.81	1.37
ψ : Domestic Services	1.00 (-)	1.87	1.42
ψ : Personal Services	1.31 (0.02)	2.41	1.81
ψ : Vehicle Expenses	1.32 (0.03)	2.42	1.82
ψ : Food away from home	1.49 (0.03)	2.71	2.03
ψ : Recreation & Sports	2.01 (0.04)	3.61	2.69

Comments: Estimated using GMM and CEX (2000-2019),

N = 89'187, clustered SE in parentheses (clustered at household level)

$\eta_{j,p}$: Expenditure elasticity for p-th income quintile implied by the estimates

Domestic Services constitutes the base category and its ψ is normalized to 1

► Categorization

Estimated parameters

$$\sum_{j=1}^J \Upsilon_j^{\frac{1}{\sigma}} \left(\frac{c_j}{C^{\psi_j}} \right)^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} = 1$$

Exp. Elasticity $\eta_{j,q}$

$$\eta_{j,q} \equiv \frac{\partial \log C_j}{\partial \log E_C} = \sigma + (1 - \sigma) \frac{\psi_j}{\psi_q}$$

Step 3: Estimate Model

Estimate remaining parameters by targeting data moments

$$\hat{\Theta} = \arg \min_{\Theta} (\hat{M} - \hat{m}(\Theta))' W (\hat{M} - \hat{m}(\Theta))$$

where $\hat{\Theta} = \left\{ \{\Upsilon_j\}_{j=1}^J, T, \tau, \underline{c}_o, \phi, \eta, B_l \right\}$

- **Share parameters** nh-CES $\Upsilon_j \rightarrow$ avg. expenditure shares
- **Labor disutility** $B_l \rightarrow$ avg. $n = 0.33$
- **Tax-Transfer system** $T, \tau \rightarrow$ Tax-Tr. rate income Q1 and Q5
- **Parameters “outer utility”** $\eta, \underline{c}_o \rightarrow$ avg. shares of E_o in total E

Match: Inequality

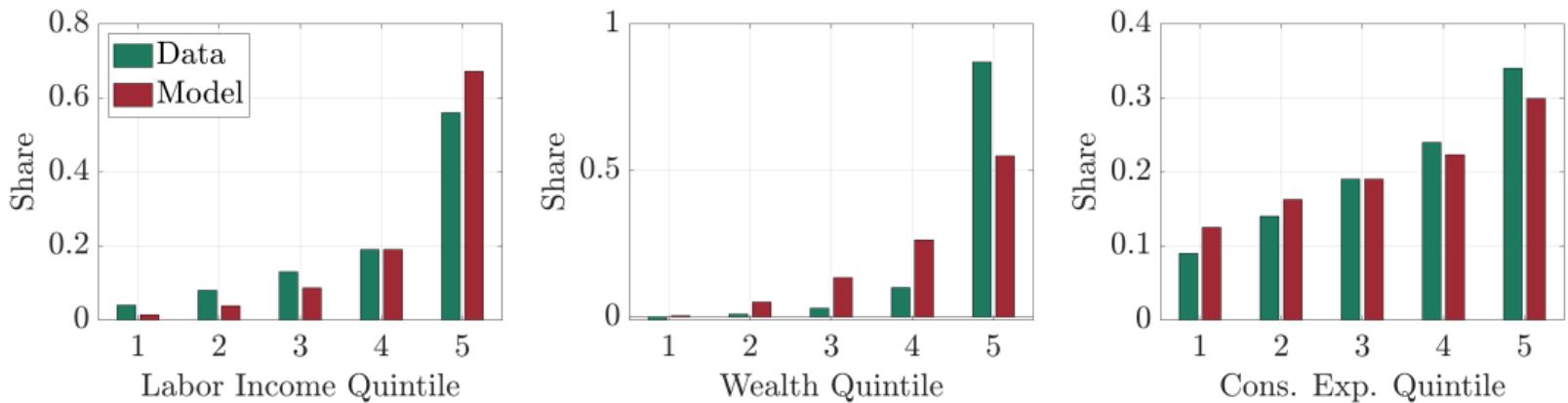


Figure 4: Data: *Labor Income* and *Wealth*: SCF, 2013,
Consumption Expenditures: CEX, 2001-2019, ▶ Match E_c/E

Match: Tax System

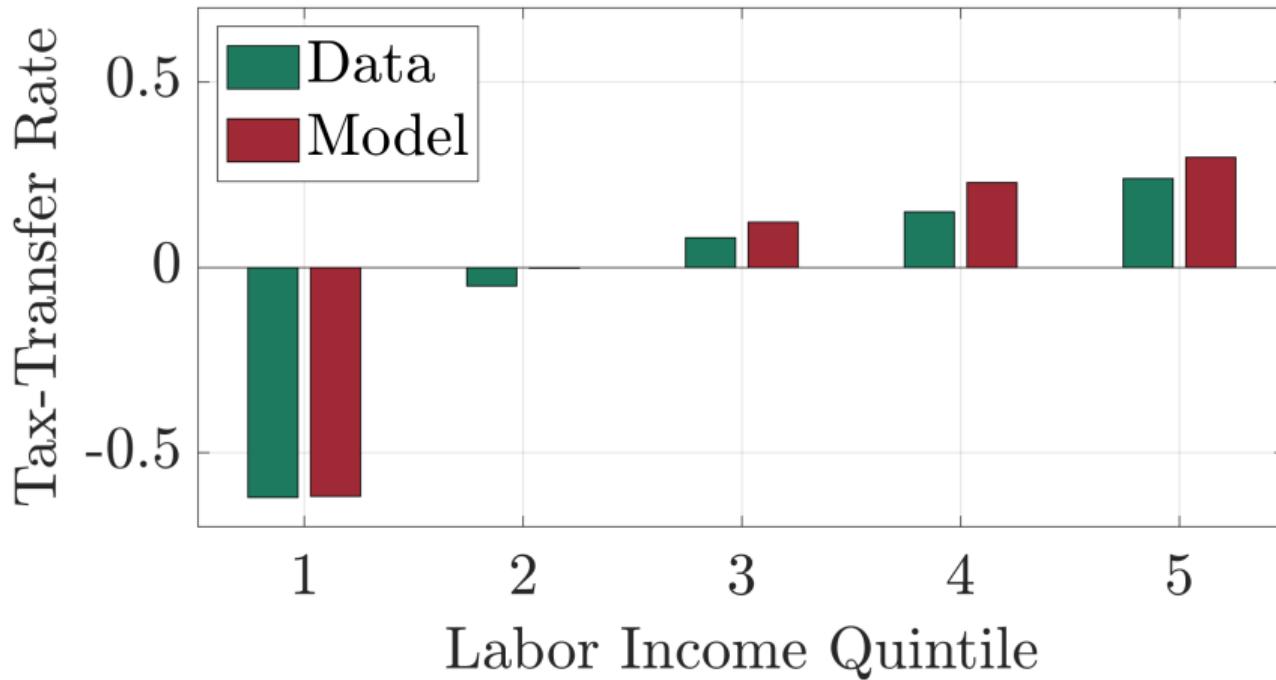
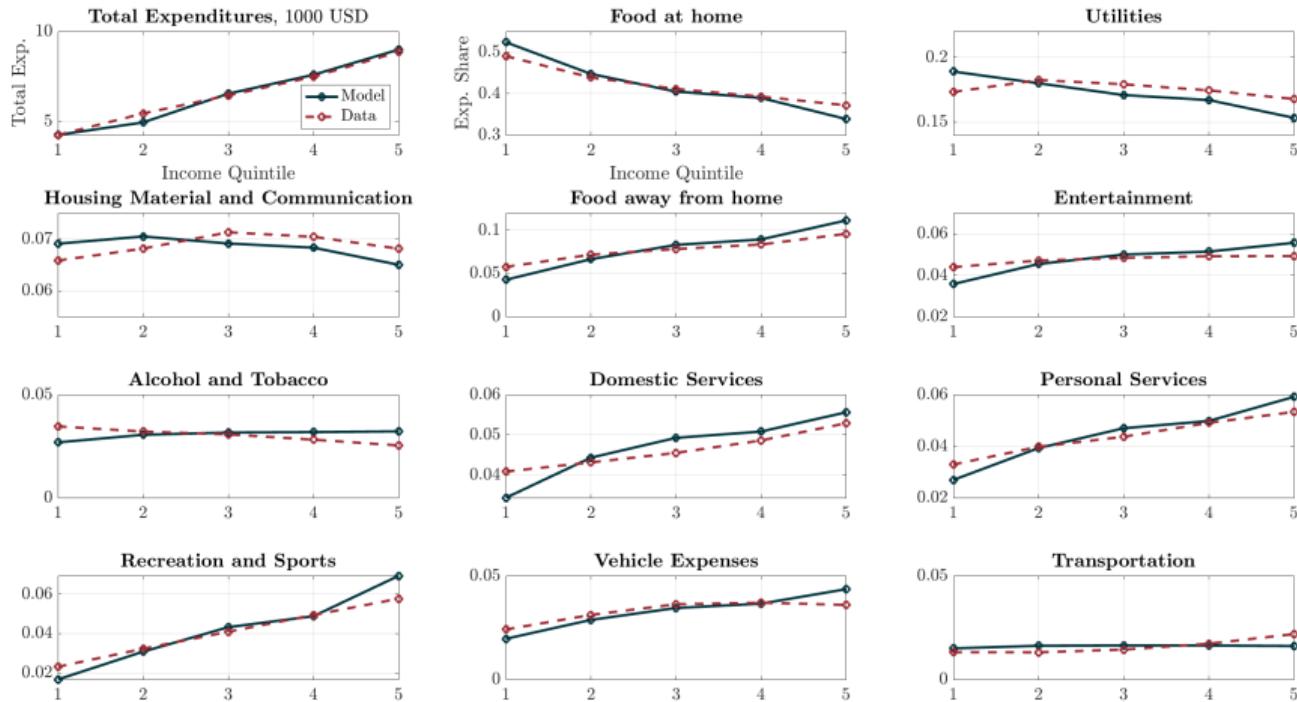


Figure 5: Tax and Transfer Rate (Computed as percentage difference between pre and post-tax income),
Data: CBO, 2019

Match: Consumption Behavior



Optimal Tax Problem

Government Objective

Utilitarian welfare function taking into account the **transition** from the calibrated to the final steady state:

$$\max_{\tau} \mathcal{W}(\tau) = \int V_0(a, z, s; \tau) d\mu_0(a, z, s)$$

Tax instruments: $\tau = \{\tau_n, \tau_l, \tau, \lambda\}$

- τ_n : Tax on necessities
- τ_l : Tax on luxuries
- τ : Progressivity labor income tax
- λ : Level labor income tax

Government Objective

Utilitarian welfare function taking into account the **transition** from the calibrated to the final steady state:

$$\max_{\tau} \mathcal{W}(\tau) = \int V_0(a, z, s; \tau) d\mu_0(a, z, s)$$

Tax instruments: $\tau = \{\tau_n, \tau_l, \tau, \lambda\}$

- τ_n : Tax on necessities
- τ_l : Tax on luxuries
- τ : Progressivity labor income tax
- λ : Level labor income tax

Optimal Policy

Necessities: Food at home, Utilities, Housing and communication material

Luxuries: Transportation, Alcohol and tobacco, Entertainment, Domestic services, Personal services, Vehicle expenses, Food away from home, Recreation and sports

Optimal Policy

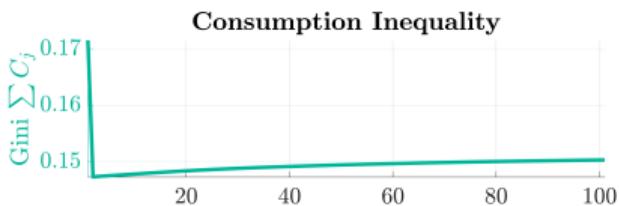
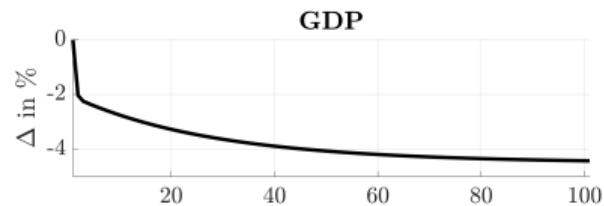
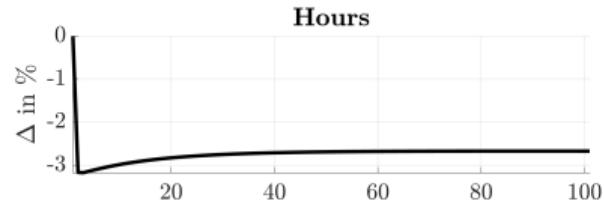
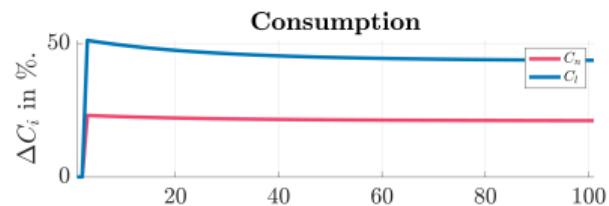
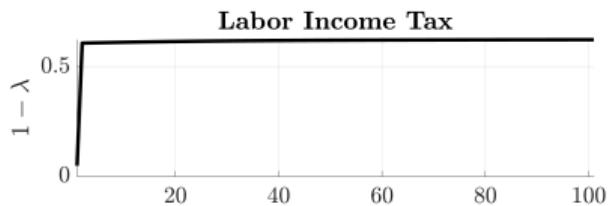
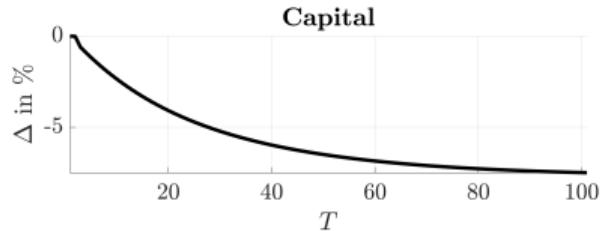
Necessities: Food at home, Utilities, Housing and communication material

Luxuries: Transportation, Alcohol and tobacco, Entertainment, Domestic services, Personal services, Vehicle expenses, Food away from home, Recreation and sports

Optimal Policy

	Tax Instrument			
	τ_n	τ_l	τ	λ
Benchmark	0%	5%	0.12	0.95
$\tau_n = \tau_l, \tau = \tau_{SQ}$	-26%	-26%	0.12	0.63
$\tau = \tau_{SQ}$	-40%	0%	0.12	0.55
Optimal	-52%	7%	-0.07	0.37

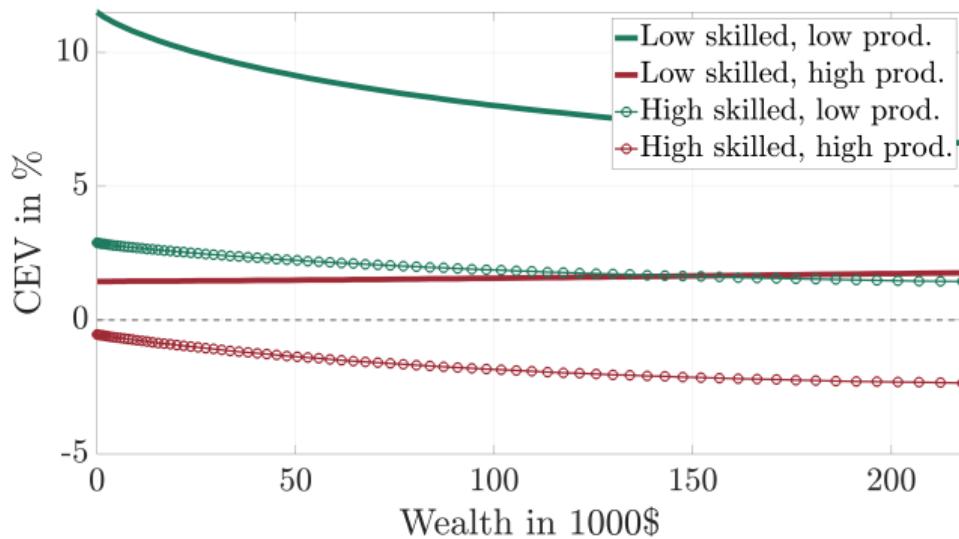
Aggregate Effects



Partial Reforms

Variable	Benchmark	$+ \Delta \tau_n$	$+ \Delta \eta$	$+ \Delta \tau$
Taxes				
τ_n	0%	-52%	-52%	-52%
τ_l	5%	5%	7%	7%
τ	0.12	0.12	0.12	-0.07
λ	0.95	0.53	0.54	0.37
Aggregate				
<i>Capital</i>	103.5	-22.6%	+0.56%	+18.7%
<i>Hours</i>	1.9	-8.6%	+0.2%	+6.3%
<i>GDP</i>	27.36	-13.9%	+0.3%	+10.6%
<i>Wage</i>	9.0	-5.8%	+0.12%	+4.07%
<i>Return</i>	7.98%	+1.07pp.	-0.02pp.	-0.72pp.
Inequality				
<i>Wealth Gini</i>	0.55	-0.01	+0.00	+0.02
<i>Earnings (after - tax)</i>	0.39	+0.02	+0.00	+0.07
$\sum C_j$ <i>Gini</i>	0.17	-0.04	-0.01	+0.02
$\sum C_j + C_o$ <i>Gini</i>	0.23	-0.03	+0.00	+0.03

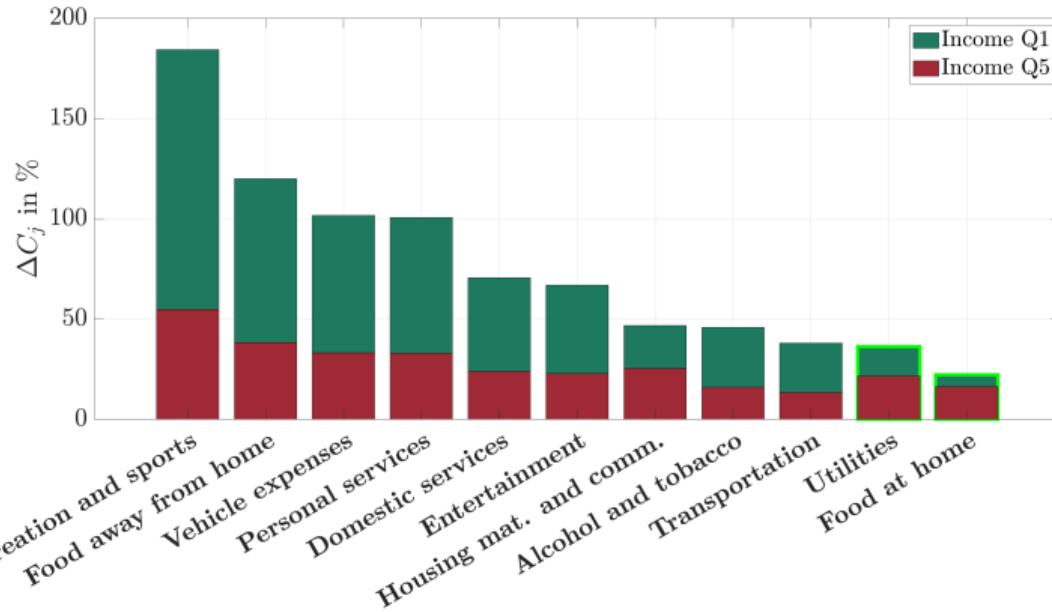
Distribution of Gains and Losses



- Overall, **73.3% of households benefit** from tax reform
- High labor-income taxes hurt productive households
- More wealth \Rightarrow higher share of luxuries \Rightarrow higher avg. consumption-tax ► Density

Mechanisms

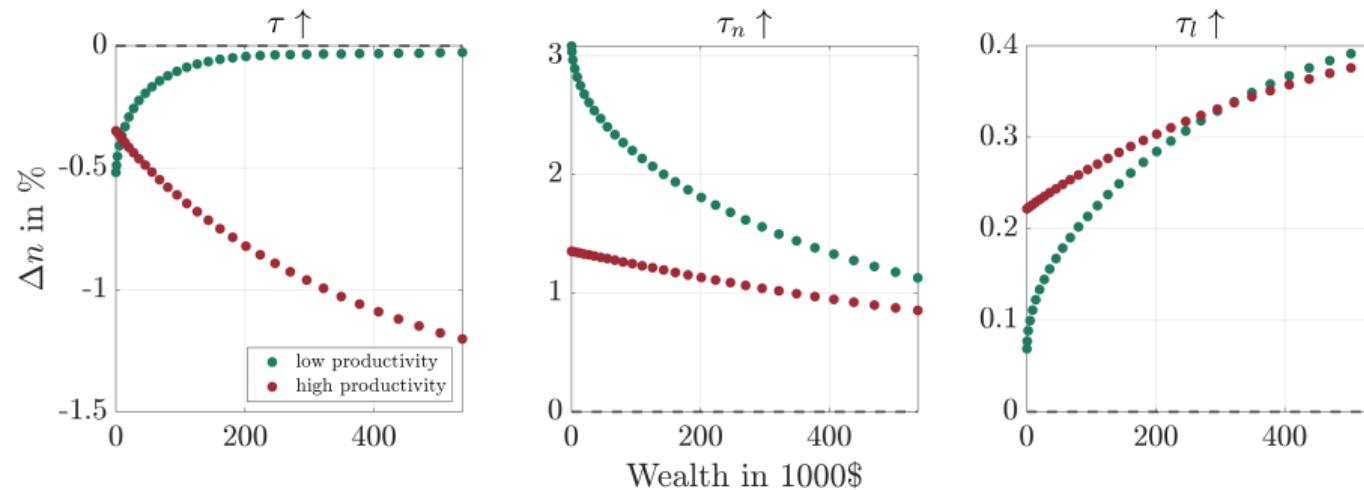
Redistribution



- Very large increases in C_j for low-income households
- Elastic luxury goods respond strongest
- Counteracted by Δc_o and reinforced by Δn ▶ Values

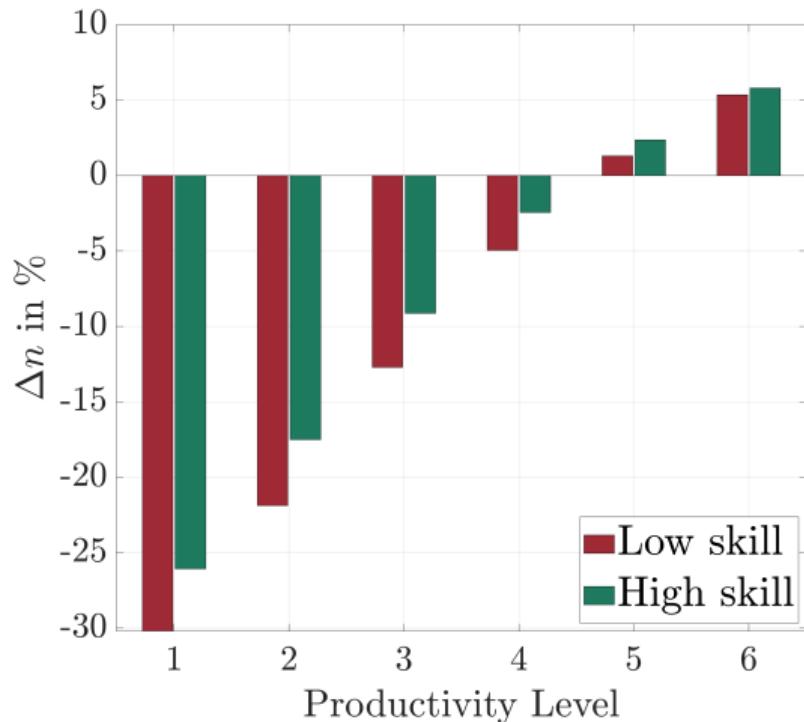
Labor Supply Responses: Partial Equilibrium

Δn conditional on **productivity** and **wealth**:



- $\tau \downarrow$ reduces **insurance** but **incentivizes labor supply** of productive HH
- $\tau_l \uparrow$ **incentivizes labor supply** of productive households

Labor Supply Responses: General Equilibrium



- Shift towards production using highly productive labor
- ⇒ Less hours for same output
- Reinforces redistribution
- ▶ Implicit Wealth Tax

Conclusion

- ▶ Model captures **heterogeneous consumption behavior**
- ▶ Estimated to match various features of the US economy
- ▶ Optimal Policy
 - Substantial **rate differentiation**
 - Optimal labor income tax regressive
- ▶ **Redistribution, implicit tax on initial wealth** and **labor supply effects** provide rationale for non-uniform rates
- ▶ Highlights settings where non-uniform rates are optimal by modeling empirically relevant trade-offs

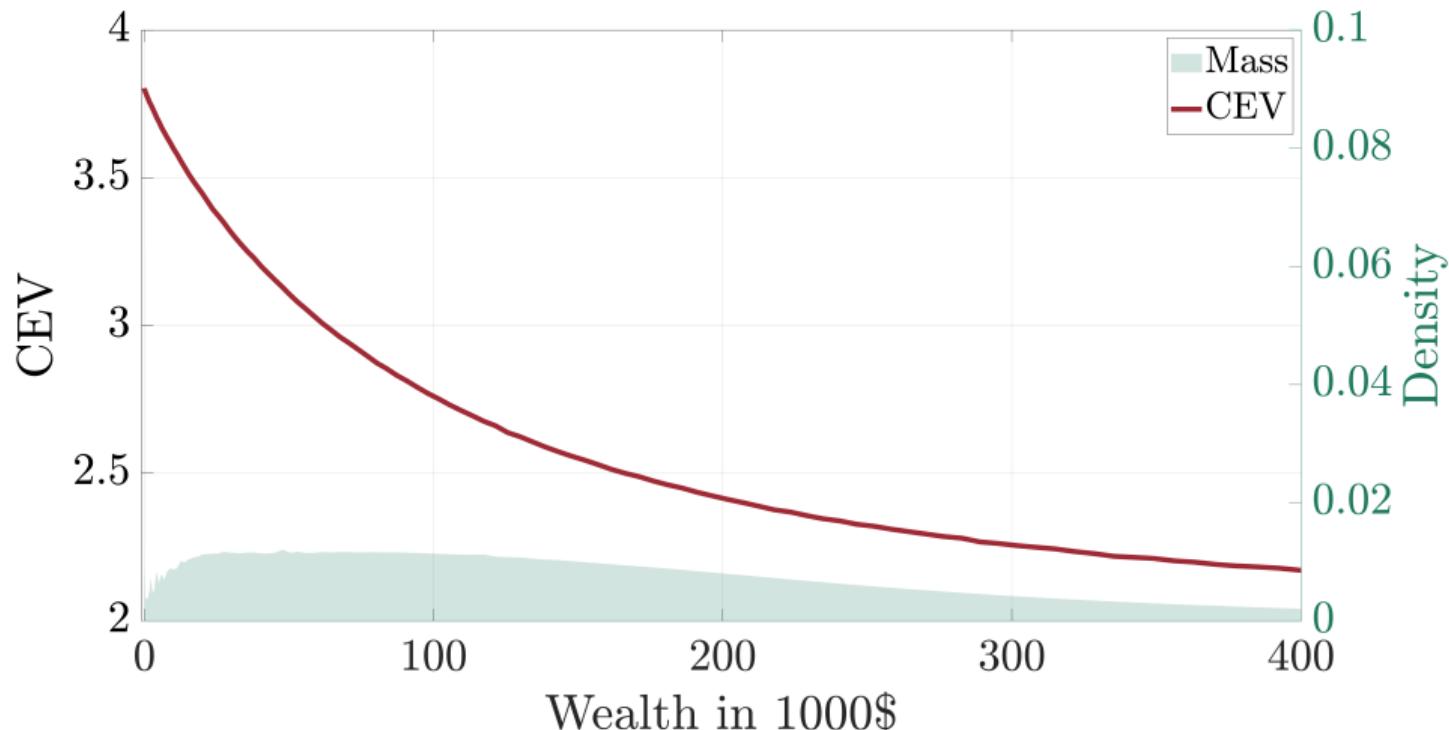
Thank you!

michael.barczay@eui.eu
michaelbarczay.com

Literature

- Aguiar, M., & Bils, M. (2015). Has consumption inequality mirrored income inequality?. *American Economic Review*, 105(9), 2725-2756.
- Atkinson, A. B., & Stiglitz, J. E. (1976). The design of tax structure: direct versus indirect taxation. *Journal of Public Economics*, 6(1-2), 55-75.
- Benabou, R. (2002). Tax and education policy in a heterogeneous-agent economy: What levels of redistribution maximize growth and efficiency?. *Econometrica*, 70(2), 481-517.
- Boar, C., & Midrigan, V. (2022). Efficient redistribution. *Journal of Monetary Economics*, 131, 78-91.
- Carroll, D., Doherty Luduvic, A. V., & Young, E. R. (2023). Optimal fiscal reform with many taxes. *Cleveland Fed WP 23-07*.
- Comin, D., Lashkari, D., & Mestieri, M. (2021). Structural change with long-run income and price effects. *Econometrica*, 89(1), 311-374.
- Conesa, J. C., Li, B., & Li, Q. (2020). Welfare implications of switching to consumption taxation. *Journal of Economic Dynamics and Control*, 120, 103991.
- Cremer, H., Pestieau, P., & Rochet, J. C. (2001). Direct versus indirect taxation: the design of the tax structure revisited. *International Economic Review*, 42(3), 781-800.
- Ferriere, A., Grübener, P., Navarro, G., & Vardishvili, O. (2023). On the Optimal Design of Transfers and Income Tax Progressivity. *Journal of Political Economy Macroeconomics*, 1(2), 000-000.
- Heathcote, J., Storesletten, K., & Violante, G. L. (2017). Optimal tax progressivity: An analytical framework. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 132(4), 1693-1754.
- Jaimovich, N., Rebelo, S., & Wong, A. (2019). Trading down and the business cycle. *Journal of Monetary Economics*, 102, 96-121.
- Kindermann, F., & Krueger, D. (2022). High marginal tax rates on the top 1 percent? Lessons from a life-cycle model with idiosyncratic income risk. *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics*, 14(2), 319-366.
- Macnamara, P., Pidkuyko, M., & Rossi, R. (2022). Taxing consumption in unequal economies. School of Social Sciences, The University of Manchester.
- Nishiyama, S., & Smetters, K. (2005). Consumption taxes and economic efficiency with idiosyncratic wage shocks. *Journal of Political Economy*, 113(5), 1088-1115.
- Nord, L. (2022). Shopping, Demand Composition, and Equilibrium Prices. *SSRN 4178271*.
- Parodi, F. Taxation of Consumption and Labor Income: a Quantitative Approach. *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics*, 2023.
- Ramsey, F. P. (1927). A Contribution to the Theory of Taxation. *The Economic Journal*, 37(145), 47-61.
- Trabandt, M., & Uhlig, H. (2011). The Laffer curve revisited. *Journal of Monetary Economics*, 58(4), 305-327. March '24

Welfare Gains and Density



▶ back

Expenditure Behavior in the Data

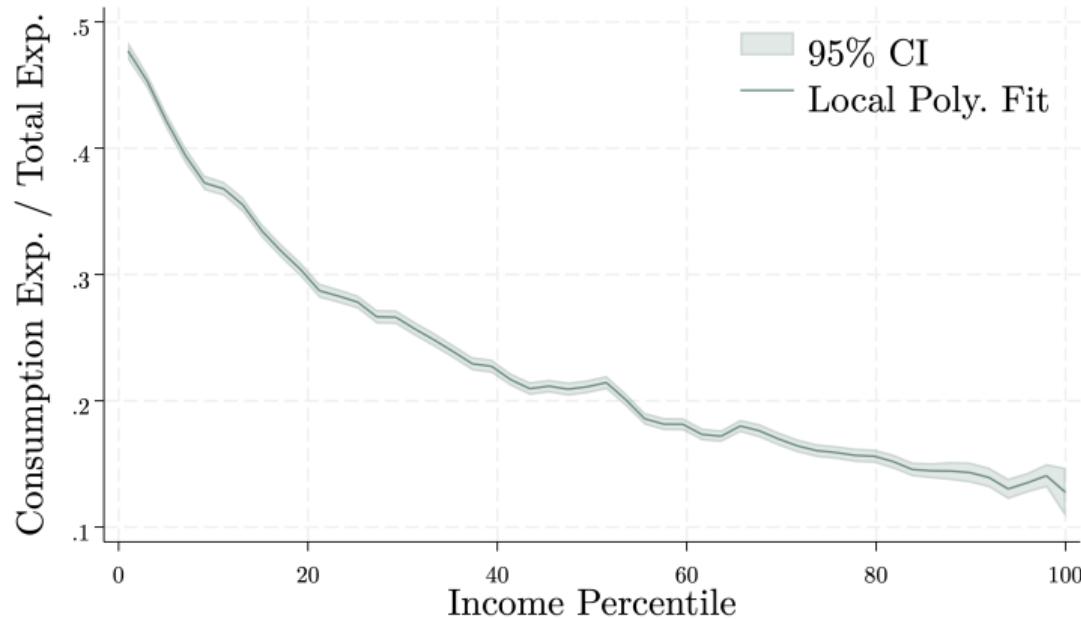


Figure 6: Share of consumption expenditures in total expenditures as a function of the income percentile,

Data: CEX, 2001-2019

Composition Outside Good

back

Implicit Tax on Wealth

- Consumption tax as an implicit tax on initial wealth (Nishiyama and Smetters, 2005)
- Differentiated consumption tax can “tag” households (Akerlof, 1978)
 - ▶ → High implicit wealth tax for high-wealth households [back](#)

	Income source		Add. Wealth	
	Capital	Labor	no wealth	with wealth
Post-tax Income	30.44	30.45	5.49	17.54
Labor income	1.10	14.95	1.55	1.55
Capital income	25.26	11.42	0.45	12.15
Wealth	494.27	223.39	0.87	234.69
Cons. share necessities	51%	56%	84%	60%
Cons. share luxuries	49%	44%	16%	39%

Split: Consumption Good - Outside Good

Problem

$$\max_{c_o, \mathcal{C}} \frac{(\mathcal{C}^\eta(c_o - \underline{c}_o)^{1-\eta})^{1-\theta}}{1-\theta} \quad \text{s.t.} \quad \mathcal{P}\mathcal{C} + c_o(1 + \tau_o)p_o = E$$

Analytical **solution** for split:

$$c_o = \underline{c}_o + \frac{1-\eta}{p_o(1+\tau_o)}(E - c_o(1 + \tau_o)p_o) \tag{1}$$

which implies:

$$E_o = p_o(1 + \tau_o)\underline{c}_o + (1 - \eta)(E - c_o(1 + \tau_o)p_o) \tag{2}$$

and consequently:

$$E_{\mathcal{C}} = E - E_o = \eta(E - p_o(1 + \tau_o)\underline{c}_o)$$

which all follow from the Stone-Geary specification. See Sancho (2022) for details. [▶ back](#)

Issues

1. **Issue:** measurement error at product level results in large measurement error for aggregate E
2. **Issue:** Regional affects can affect both prices and expenditure shares

Instruments

1. **Instrument:** Use reported total income as instrument for $E \rightarrow$ one question and not the sum of many subquestions
2. **Instrument:** Construct price instrument in two steps:
 - 2.1 Compute price of subcategories of category j as average of all other regions.
 - 2.2 Obtain price index for HH n for category j using region-averages of the expenditure shares on each subcategory.
3. 2.1 addresses regional shocks whereas 2.2 alleviates issues related to measurement error (given that they cancel out)

▶ back

Standard Errors

Variable	Estimates	$\eta_{j,1}$	$\eta_{j,5}$
σ	0.16 (0.03)		
ψ : Food at home	0.16 (0.01)	0.43	0.36
ψ : Utilities	0.36 (0.01)	0.77	0.61
ψ : Housing Material & Communication	0.48 (0.01)	0.98	0.76
ψ : Public Transportation	0.61 (0.02)	1.20	0.92
ψ : Alcohol & Tobacco	0.71 (0.02)	1.37	1.05
ψ : Entertainment	0.96 (0.02)	1.81	1.37
ψ : Domestic Services	1.00 (-)	1.87	1.42
ψ : Personal Services	1.31 (0.02)	2.41	1.81
ψ : Vehicle Expenses	1.32 (0.03)	2.42	1.82
ψ : Food away from home	1.49 (0.03)	2.71	2.03
ψ : Recreation & Sports	2.01 (0.04)	3.61	2.69

Comments: Estimated using GMM and CEX (2000-2019),

N = 89'187, clustered SE in parentheses (clustered at household level)

$\eta_{j,p}$: Expenditure elasticity for p-th income quintile implied by the estimates

Domestic Services constitutes the base category and its ψ is normalized to 1

Estimated parameters

$$\sum_{j=1}^J \Upsilon_j^{\frac{1}{\sigma}} \left(\frac{c_j}{C^{\psi_j}} \right)^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} = 1$$

Exp. Elasticity $\eta_{j,q}$

$$\eta_{j,q} \equiv \frac{\partial \log C_j}{\partial \log E_C} = \sigma + (1-\sigma) \frac{\psi_j}{\bar{\psi}_q}$$

▶ back

US Consumption Expenditure Survey

- ▶ Interview survey
- ▶ 2001-2019, ~ 6000 households per quarter

Prices

- Regional price data
- Construct household specific price per category

Instruments

- Total expenditures E_C : reported income
- Prices p_j^n : Hausman price instruments

⇒ identify income elasticities using within-region covariation between expenditure shares and total household expenditures (controlling for household characteristics)

▶ back

Estimated preference parameters

- ▶ Target average expenditure share of 1st and 5th income quintile
- ▶ Easy to implement under the condition that the levels of consumption in the model match the data (Step 3)

Variable	Estimated Υ_j
Food at home	2.22
Utilities	1.14
Housing Material & Communication	0.51
Public Transportation	0.15
Alcohol & Tobacco	0.26
Entertainment	0.55
Domestic Services	0.59
Personal Services	0.72
Vehicle Expenses	0.51
Food away from home	1.34
Recreation & Sports	1.17

Table 1: $\{\Upsilon_j\}_{j \in J}$ as estimated by targeting economy-wide average expenditure shares

Calibration

Variable	Description	Value
<u>General</u>		
ϕ	Scaling of economy	3.354
p_o	Price outside good	1.0
<u>Households</u>		
θ	Elasticity of substitution	2.0
η	Share outer utility	0.22
β	Elasticity of substitution	2.0
χ	Inverse Frisch elasticity	2.5
B_l	Labor disutility	2.03
c_o	Subsistence outside good	-8.14
ω_s	Share skilled	0.37
s	Skill productivities	1.0ϕ and 1.8ϕ
<u>Firms</u>		
δ	Depreciation	1.5%
A_p	Aggregate productivity	1.0ϕ
γ_j	Transformation technology	$1.0 \forall j$

Table 2: Calibrated values of remaining parameters

Responses in n and c_o

Income Quintile	Variable	
	c_o	n
Q1	-33.08	-15.2
Q2	-24.24	-9.7
Q3	-20.06	-7.9
Q4	-16.16	-7.5
Q5	-11.59	-5.8

Table 3: Labor supply and outside good response when changing to optimal policy (by total post-tax income quintile and in %)

▶ back

Consumption Bundles

Level of consumption of good j

$$c_j = \Upsilon_j \left(\frac{p_j(1 + \tau_j)}{E_{\mathcal{C}}} \right)^{-\sigma} \mathcal{C}(E_{\mathcal{C}})^{(1-\sigma)\psi_j}$$

Relative consumption shares

$$\begin{aligned} \log \left(\frac{\omega_j}{\omega_k} \right) &= (1 - \sigma) \log \left(\frac{p_j(1 + \tau_j)}{p_k(1 + \tau_k)} \right) \\ &\quad + (1 - \sigma) (\psi_j - \psi_k) \left[\log \left(\frac{E_{\mathcal{C}}}{p_b} \right) + \frac{1}{1 - \sigma} \log \omega_b \right] + \log \left(\frac{\Upsilon_j}{\Upsilon_k} \right) \end{aligned}$$

▶ back

Match E_c/E

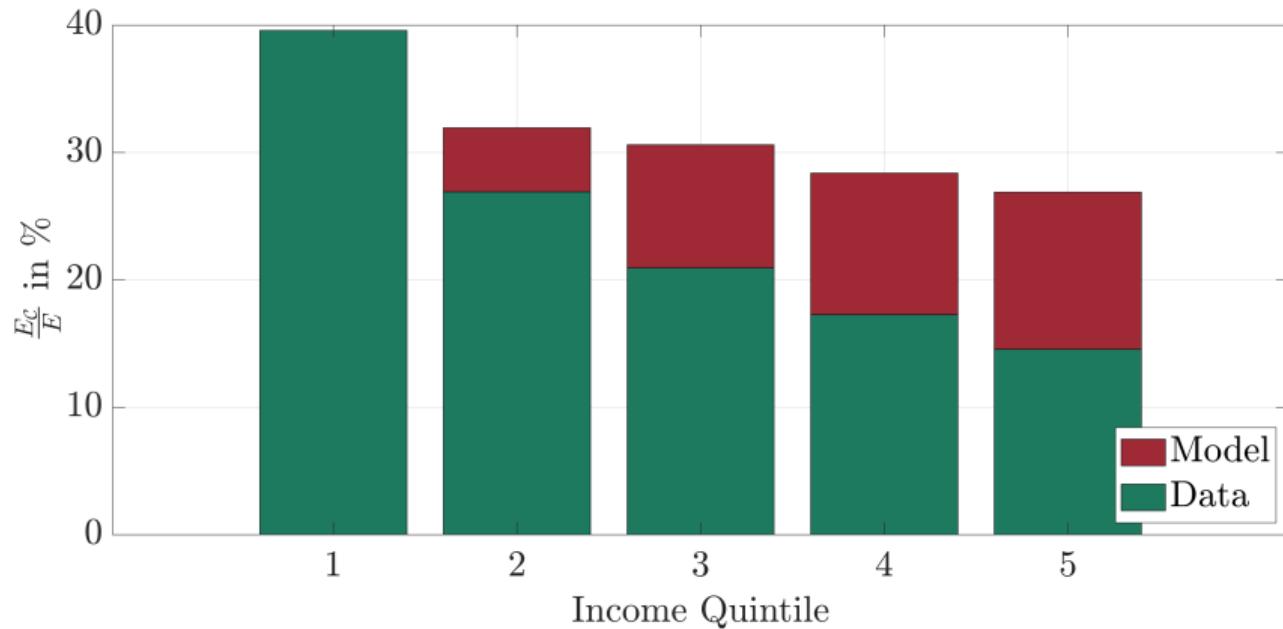


Figure 7: $\frac{E_c}{E}$ in the data and the model counterpart

▶ back

Composition Outside Good

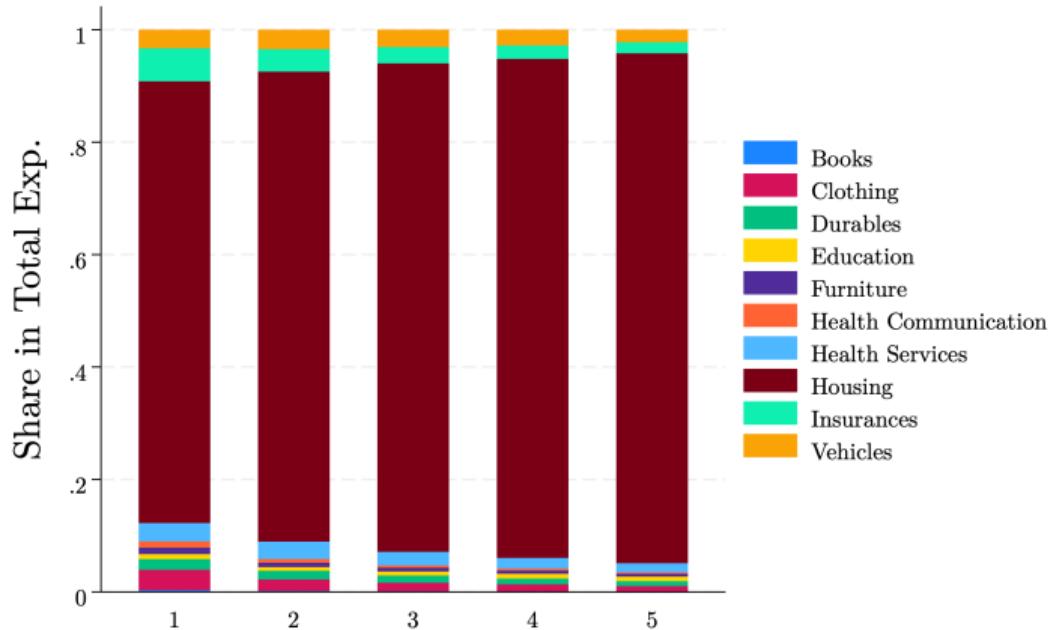


Figure 8: Composition of the outside good in the data (by income quintile), Data from the CEX,

2001-2019 ▶ back

Categorization of Goods and Services

Name	Code	Category
FOOD OR BOARD WHILE AT SCHOOL	190901	foodaway
FOOD OUT OF TOWN TRIPS	190903	foodaway
ALC. BEV. PURCHASED ON TRIPS	200900	alcaway
PLMB/WTR HEAT LABOR/MAT OWND	230113	domserv
ALCOHOL AT RESTAURANTS ETC	790420	alcaway
MGMT SERVICES/IMP OF OTH PROP	790620	domserv
Dinnerware, glassware, serving pieces	320345	furniture

Table 4: Manual assignment of expenditure items to consumption categories (example items), total number of items: 844, [▶ back](#)

Average Consumption Tax

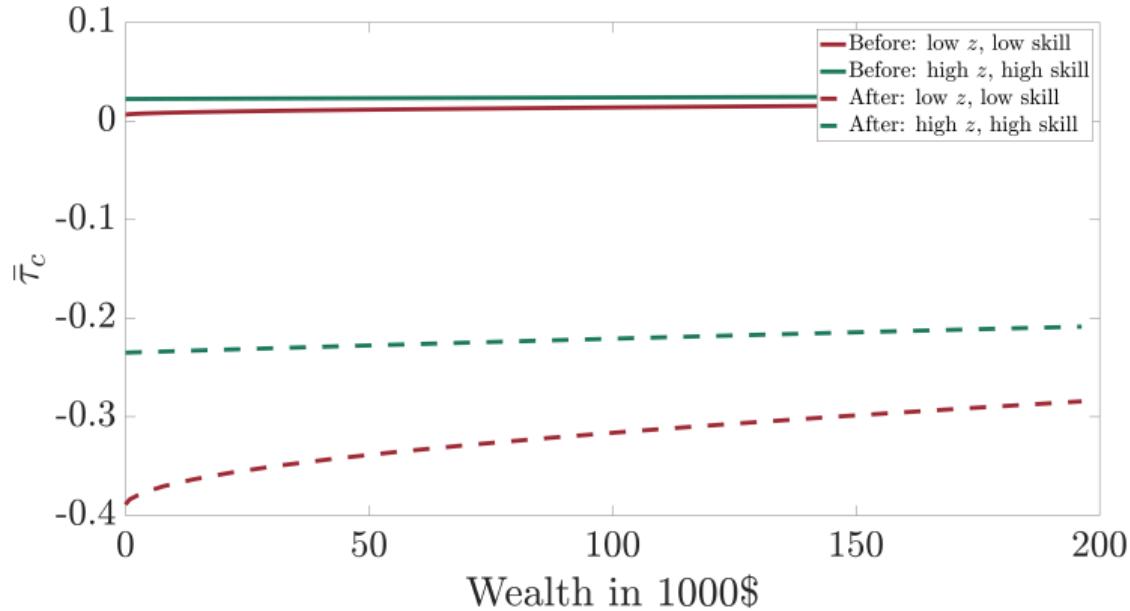


Figure 9: Average Consumption Tax before and after reform (green: minimum productivity in sample, red: maximum productivity) [◀ back](#)

Average Labor Income Tax: with Lump-Sum

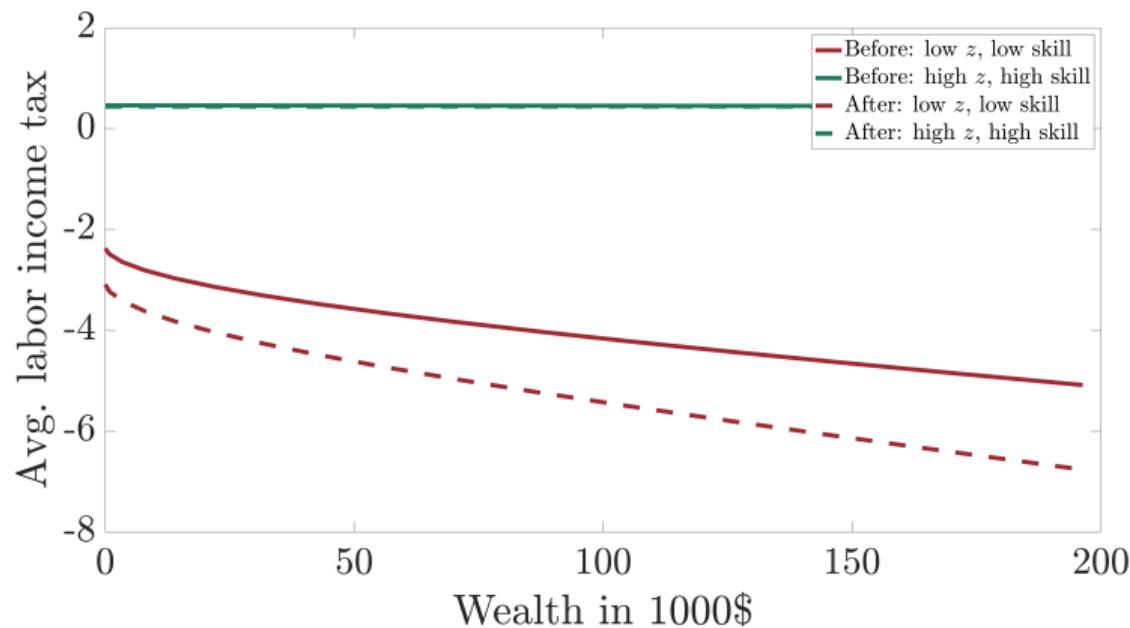


Figure 10: Average Labor Income Tax before and after reform (green: minimum productivity in sample, red: maximum productivity), including lump-sum transfer [back](#)

Average Labor Income Tax: without Lump-Sum

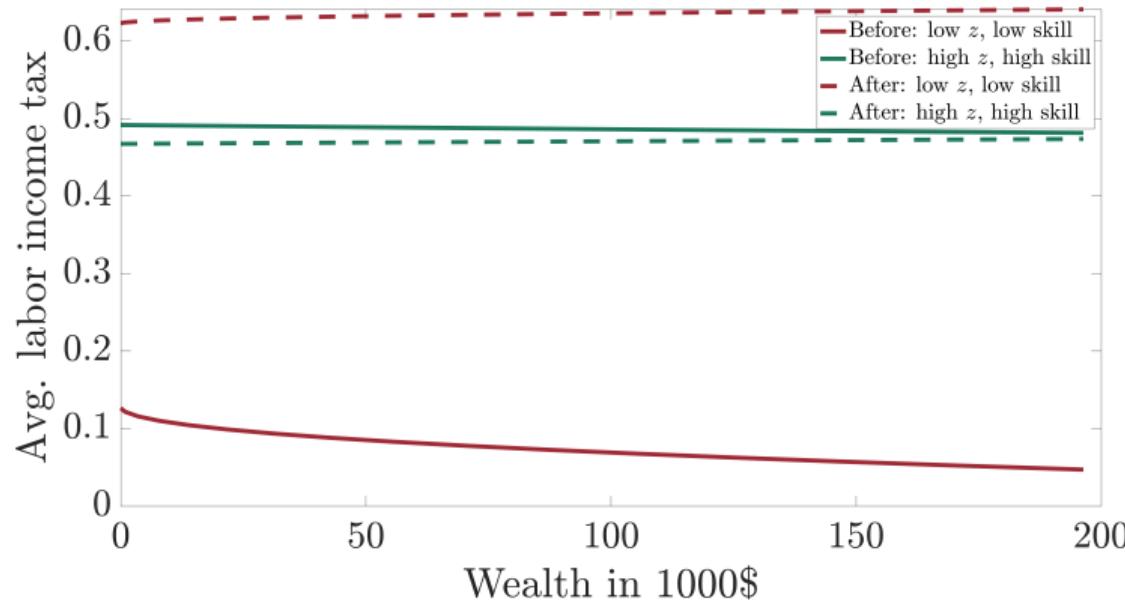


Figure 11: Average Consumption Tax before and after reform (green: minimum productivity in sample, red: maximum productivity), excluding lump-sum transfer [▶ back](#)