

# Aggregate Welfare with Discrete Choice Across Places and Jobs

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## Motivation

- ▶ Discrete choice models are standard in macro, labor, trade, and spatial.
- ▶ Popular because they capture rich heterogeneity in tastes, skills, and choices.
- ▶ But, these models make it hard to answer a seemingly basic question:

*When the economy changes, people are differentially affected. How can we aggregate across different people in a meaningful way?*

- ▶ Answer matters because it summarizes overall changes in welfare and can guide policy.

## Popular Alternative Measures

- ▶ To measure aggregate welfare, literature typically relies on one of these measures:
  1. **Real GDP** (as in national accounts)
  2. **Utilitarian welfare or average utility**
  3. **Sum of compensating variations (cost benefit analysis)**
- ▶ All three have **serious** flaws, which motivates our search for an alternative.

## What We Do

- ▶ Aggregate welfare via productivity-equivalent from Debreu (1951) & Baqaee-Burstein (2025).
- ▶ In response to a change, define the associated change in aggregate welfare by:  
**How much we could shrink TFP s.t. everyone at least as well off as before the shock.**
- ▶ If we can reduce TFP and keep everyone indifferent, then aggregate productivity increased.
- ▶ Cost-benefit in GE: how much factors (not money) left over after winners compensate losers.
- ▶ We characterize it in terms of supply and demand curves, using tools of welfare economics.
- ▶ For example, in perfectly competitive economies, our measure obeys Hulten and coincides with multi-factor productivity growth as measured by BEA, to a first order.

## Selection of Related Papers

- ▶ **Welfare in discrete choice models in partial equilibrium**

McFadden (1981), Small & Rosen (1981), Anderson, De Palma, & Thisse (1992).  
Dagsvik & Karlstrom (2005), Bhattacharya (2015, 2021), Kim & Vogel (2020).

- ▶ **Related measures of aggregate productivity, without discrete choice**

Allais (1978), Debreu (1951), Luenberger (1996), Baqaee & Burstein (2025).

- ▶ **Aggregation using real GDP or average utility**

Hsieh et al. (2019), Lamadon et al. (2022), Bagga et al. (2025).  
Redding (2016), Caliendo et al. (2019), Dingel & Tintelnot (2020), Allen & Arkolakis (2022).

- ▶ **Decompositions of social welfare functions in discrete choice models**

Donald, Fukui & Miyauchi (2023), Mongey & Waugh (2025).

# Agenda

Simple Economy

General Setup

Extensions

## Simple Economy: Setup

- ▶ Agent  $h$  has preferences  $\succeq_h$  over location choice  $l_h \in \{1, \dots, R\}$  and a consumption good  $c_h$ .
- ▶ Budget constraint for  $h$ , given real wages  $\{w_r\}$ , TFP shifter  $Z$ , and transfer  $T_h$ :

$$c_h = \sum_{r \in R} Z w_r 1[l_h = r] + T_h.$$

- ▶ Every region produces good linearly from labor with productivity  $z_r$ , so  $w_r = z_r$ .
- ▶ Aggregate resource constraint:

$$\sum_h c_h = \sum_r Z z_r L_r \text{ or, equivalently, } \sum_h T_h = 0.$$

where  $L_r = \sum_h 1[l_h = r]$  is the share of households that choose  $r$ .

## Simple Economy: Decentralized Equilibrium

- ▶ Agents choose location  $r \in R$  to maximize  $u_h(w_r Z, r)$ .
- ▶ Aggregate labor supply function  $L_r(\mathbf{w}Z)$  is share of households choosing location  $r$ .
- ▶ Example:  $u_h(c_h, l_h) = \bar{\varepsilon}_h \varepsilon_{hl_h} c_h$ , where  $\varepsilon_{hr}$  is Fréchet with shape  $\theta$ , and  $\bar{\varepsilon}_h$  is  $h$ -level shifter,

$$L_r(\mathbf{w}Z) = \frac{w_r^\theta}{\sum_{r'} w_{r'}^\theta}.$$

Note:  $\{\bar{\varepsilon}_h\}$  is nuisance parameter with no observable/testable implications.

- ▶ Perfect competition, so equilibrium is Pareto efficient.

## Simple Economy: Aggregate Measures

- ▶ Consider change in technologies from  $\mathbf{z}(0)$  to  $\mathbf{z}(t)$ .
- ▶ What is the “aggregate effect”?
- ▶ Before showing the change in our measure, let's look at what the literature currently does:
  1. Real GDP (following procedures in system of national accounts)
  2. Utilitarian welfare or “expected” utility.

## Simple Economy: Real GDP

- ▶ In this economy, real GDP is just the change in the total quantity of the good:

$$Y(t) = \frac{\sum_h c_h(t)}{\sum_h c_h(0)} = \frac{\sum_r z_r(t)L_r(t)}{\sum_r z_r(0)L_r(0)}.$$

- ▶ The elasticity of real GDP with respect to productivity of  $r$  is:

$$\frac{d \log Y}{d \log z_r} \approx \underbrace{\frac{w_r(0)L_r(0)}{\sum_k w_k(0)L_k(0)}}_{\text{change in real wages for stayers}} + \underbrace{\sum_{r'} \frac{w_{r'}(0)L_{r'}(0)}{\sum_k w_k(0)L_k(0)} \frac{d \log L_{r'}}{d \log z_r}}_{\text{change in real wages for movers.}}$$

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- ▶ Substituting the expression for  $L_r$  under Frechet,

$$\frac{d \log Y}{d \log z_r} \approx \frac{w_r(0)L_r(0)}{\sum_k w_k(0)L_k(0)} + \theta \left[ \frac{w_r(0)}{\sum_k w_k(0)L_k(0)} - 1 \right] L_r(0).$$

- ▶ Real GDP falls if  $r$  has below average real wage and enough people move there.
- ▶ But everybody is weakly better off. Problem is that real GDP ignores amenity value.

## Simple Economy: Utilitarian Welfare

- ▶ Average utility is:  $W = \mathbb{E}[\max_r u_h(c_r, r)]$ . This is not vNM expected utility, meta-preferences over preference parameters cannot be elicited. Agents are just heterogenous.

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- ▶ Consider Frechet example,  $u_h = \bar{\varepsilon}_h \varepsilon_{hr} c_h$ . Literature assumes  $\bar{\varepsilon}_h = 1$ , so that:

$$\frac{W(t)}{W(0)} = \left[ \frac{\sum_r c_r^\theta(t)}{\sum_r c_r^\theta(0)} \right]^{\frac{1}{\theta}}.$$

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- ▶ Observationally equivalent to  $\bar{\varepsilon}_h = [\sum_r \varepsilon_{hr} / R]^{-1}$ , so taste intensity is the same for everyone.
- ▶ But now we obtain a completely different nonlinear function, e.g. with  $R = 2$ ,

$$\frac{W(t)}{W(0)} = \frac{\sum_r D(L_r(t)) c_r(t)}{\sum_r D(L_r(0)) c_r(0)} \quad \text{where } D(x) = \int_0^x u^{-\frac{1}{\theta}} / (u^{-\frac{1}{\theta}} + (1-u)^{-\frac{1}{\theta}}) du.$$

- ▶ Different assumptions about  $\bar{\varepsilon}_h$  give different rankings. No possible guidance from data since observationally equivalent.

## Simple Economy: Place-Based Policies with Utilitarian Welfare

- ▶ The different choices about  $\bar{\varepsilon}_h$  matter!
- ▶ Planner chooses consumption in each location subject to resource and implementability

$$\max W(c_1, c_2) \quad \text{s.t.} \quad \sum_r L_r c_r = \sum_r L_r z_r, \quad L_r = \frac{c_r^\theta}{\sum_{r'} c_{r'}^\theta}.$$

- ▶  $\bar{\varepsilon}_h = 1$  and  $\bar{\varepsilon}_h = [\sum_r \varepsilon_{hr} / R]^{-1}$  imply different policies.
- ▶ These choices make equilibrium inefficient, sacrificing efficiency to pursue redistribution.

## Aggregating Across Households in a Coherent Way

- ▶ So, real GDP does not respect the Pareto principle.
- ▶ Average utility is affected by arbitrary functional form choices. These influence preferences for redistribution in unintuitive ways, which result in Pareto-inefficient place-based policies.
- ▶ How can we aggregate given these issues?
- ▶ Build on ideas from Kaldor, Hicks, Debreu, Allais, etc. Loosely, we ask:  
**“If winners could compensate losers, how much stuff would be left over?”**

## TFP-Equivalent Aggregate Productivity

- ▶  $A(t)$  is max reduction in  $Z$  to make everyone indifferent to status quo given some transfers.

$$A(t) \equiv \max \left\{ Z \in \mathbb{R} : \begin{array}{l} \text{there is a feasible } (\mathbf{c}, \mathbf{l}) \text{ given lump-sum transfers,} \\ \text{and aggregate productivity shifter } 1/Z, \\ \text{such that } (c_h, l_h) \succeq_h (c_h(0), l_h(0)) \text{ for every } h \end{array} \right\}.$$

- ▶ If  $A(t) > A(0) = 1$ , there exists a potential Pareto improvement.
- ▶ e.g. If  $A(t) = 1.1$ , it is possible to keep everyone indifferent and discard 10% of every factor.
- ▶ Unlike real GDP, it takes amenity into account and respects Pareto principle.
- ▶ Unlike average utility, it is invariant to monotone transformations of utility (it is empirical).

## First-Order Characterization

- ▶ We characterize  $A(t)$  nonlinearly. But start with a startling first-order approximation.
- ▶ **Proposition:** The elasticity of aggregate productivity with respect to productivity of  $r$  is

$$\frac{d \log A}{d \log z_r} = \frac{w_r(0)L_r(0)}{\sum_k w_k(0)L_k(0)}.$$

This holds for any collection of  $\succeq_h$ .

- ▶ Generalizes to perfectly competitive economy with arbitrary technologies & preferences.
- ▶ To a first-order, we do not need to solve the model — spending shares suffice.
- ▶ Intuition: to a first-order, ignore relocations caused by productivity shocks. Any change in real wage from moving is offset by change in amenity value. (so  $\Delta \text{ real GDP} \neq \Delta \log A$ ).

## Relationship between $A(t)$ and Real GDP

- ▶ Unlike real GDP,  $A$  always increases in response to a positive productivity shock.
- ▶ To a first order, the gap between real GDP and  $A$  is:

$$\Delta \log Y - \Delta \log A \approx \sum_r \frac{w_r}{\sum_{r'} w_{r'} L_{r'}} \Delta L_r.$$

Second term is just the change in quality-adjusted labor inputs (QALI in national accounts).

- ▶ Hence, to a first-order  $\Delta \log A$  coincides with multifactor productivity (e.g. computed by BEA).
- ▶ Beyond first-order, multifactor productivity suffers from similar issues as real GDP.

## Compensated Equilibrium

- ▶ To go beyond first order, we compute  $A(t)$  using a *compensated equilibrium*.
- ▶ Every  $h$  receives transfer  $T_h$  to keep them indifferent & TFP is contracted by  $A(t)$ .

## Compensated Equilibrium

- ▶ To go beyond first order, we compute  $A(t)$  using a *compensated equilibrium*.
- ▶ Every  $h$  receives transfer  $T_h$  to keep them indifferent & TFP is contracted by  $A(t)$ .
- ▶ Define the expenditure function:

$$T_h^{\text{comp}}(\mathbf{w}) = \min_{r \in R} \{ \bar{c}_{hr} - w_r \},$$

where  $\bar{c}_{hr}$  is the consumption  $h$  needs in location  $r$  to be indifferent to  $u_h(0)$ .

- ▶ Note that  $T^{\text{comp}}$  is a partial equilibrium object — can solve agent-by-agent.
- ▶  $A(t)$  is pinned down by budget balance:

$$\int_h T_h^{\text{comp}}(\mathbf{z}(t)/A(t)) dh = 0,$$

using the fact that real wages are  $\mathbf{z}(t)/A(t)$ .

## Exact Formula for $A(t)$ using Compensated Supply

- ▶ Let the compensated individual location choice be:

$$l_h^{\text{comp}}(\mathbf{w}) = \arg \max_{r \in R} \{w_r - \bar{c}_{hr}\}.$$

- ▶ Define the aggregate compensated location supply to be:

$$L_r^{\text{comp}}(\mathbf{w}) = \int_h 1[l_h^{\text{comp}}(\mathbf{w}) = r] dh.$$

This is also a partial equilibrium object.

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This is also a partial equilibrium object.

- ▶ **Proposition:**  $A(t)$  solves this equation:

$$\int_{\mathbf{z}(0)}^{\mathbf{z}(t)/A(t)} \sum_r L_r^{\text{comp}}(\mathbf{x}) d\mathbf{x} = 0.$$

- ▶  $A(t)$  is adjustment in  $\mathbf{z}(t)$  such that the area under the compensated supply function is zero.

## Computing Compensated Labor Supply

- ▶  $L_r^{\text{comp}}(\mathbf{w})$  is simple to compute by simulation, but sometimes has closed form solution.
- ▶ If  $u_h(c, r) = f_h(c + \varepsilon_{hr})$ , then compensated and uncompensated labor supply are the same:

$$L_r^{\text{comp}}(\mathbf{w}) = L_r(\mathbf{w}).$$

Because transfers do not alter choices.

- ▶ If  $\varepsilon_{hr}$  is type I extreme-value distribution, then

$$L_r(\mathbf{w}) = L_r^{\text{comp}}(\mathbf{w}) = \frac{e^{\theta w_r}}{\sum_{r'} e^{\theta w_{r'}}}.$$

- ▶ We can integrate labor supply analytically, so  $A(t)$  solves

$$\log\left(\sum_r \exp(\theta z_r(t)/A(t))\right) = \log\left(\sum_r \exp(\theta z_r(0))\right).$$

## Approximate Formulas for $A(t)$

$$\int_{\mathbf{z}(0)}^{\mathbf{z}(t)/A(t)} \sum_r L_r^{\text{comp}}(\mathbf{x}) d\mathbf{x} = 0.$$

- ▶ Log differentiate once and evaluate at  $t = 0$  to get

$$d \log A = \sum_r \frac{w_r(0) L_r(0)}{\sum_{r'} w_{r'}(0) L_{r'}(0)} d \log z_r = \sum_r \lambda_r(0) d \log z_r.$$

This is the formula we saw before.

## Approximate Formulas for $A(t)$

- ▶ To second order, we get

$$\Delta \log A = \sum_r \lambda_r(0) d \log z_r + \frac{1}{2} \sum_r d \lambda_r^{\text{comp}}(0) d \log z_r.$$

If compensated shares rise with productivity,  $A$  is convex in  $\mathbf{z}$ .

- ▶ In the paper we provide a formula for  $d \lambda_r^{\text{comp}}(0)$  in terms of uncompensated supply elasticities (directly estimable, no simulations needed).

## Example: Approximate Formulas for $A(t)$ for Frechet

- ▶ For Frechet supply system, we have

$$L_r(\mathbf{w}) = \frac{w_r^\theta}{\sum_{r'} w_{r'} L_{r'}},$$

so uncompensated cross elasticities satisfies:

$$\frac{\partial L_r}{\partial w_{r'}} = -\theta L_{r'} L_r \frac{1}{z_{r'}},$$

Using general formula in the paper, we get

$$\Delta \log A = \mathbb{E}_\lambda[\Delta \log \mathbf{z}] + \frac{1}{2}(1 + \theta) \text{Var}_\lambda(\Delta \log \mathbf{z}),$$

the higher is  $\theta$ , the more convex is  $A(t)$  in productivity shocks.

## Quantitative Illustration

- ▶ Calibrate 50-state economy with isoelastic labor supply with migration elasticity  $\theta = 1.5$ .
- ▶ Set productivities  $z_r$  & amenities  $B_r$  to match GDP-per-capita & shares of workers by state.
- ▶ Counterfactual: one percent increase in productivity in selected states.
- ▶ Report elasticity of  $A$ , real GDP, average utility with  $\bar{\varepsilon}_h = 1$  and with  $\bar{\varepsilon}_h = (\sum_r \varepsilon_{hr}/R)^{-1}$ .

## Numerical Illustration

<b>State</b>	<b>log <math>A</math></b>	<b>Sales share</b>
California	0.141	0.139
New York	0.080	0.079
West Virginia	0.003	0.003
Mississippi	0.005	0.005

- ▶ Hulten works well.

## Numerical Illustration

<b>State</b>	$\log A$	Sales share	$\log \mathbf{RGDP}$
California	0.141	0.139	0.177
New York	0.080	0.079	0.112
West Virginia	0.003	0.003	0.001
Mississippi	0.005	0.005	0.001

- ▶ Hulten works well.
- ▶ Real GDP too high for rich states and too low for poor states.

## Numerical Illustration

State	$\log A$	Sales share	$\log RGDP$	$\log EU_1$
California	0.141	0.139	0.177	0.118
New York	0.080	0.079	0.112	0.059
West Virginia	0.003	0.003	0.001	0.005
Mississippi	0.005	0.005	0.001	0.007

- ▶ Hulten works well.
- ▶ Real GDP too high for rich states and too low for poor states.
- ▶ Average utility assuming  $\bar{\epsilon}_h = 1$  is off by similar magnitude as real GDP.

## Numerical Illustration

State	$\log A$	Sales share	$\log RGDP$	$\log EU_1$	$\log EU_2$
California	0.141	0.139	0.177	0.118	0.141
New York	0.080	0.079	0.112	0.059	0.065
West Virginia	0.003	0.003	0.001	0.005	0.003
Mississippi	0.005	0.005	0.001	0.007	0.006

- ▶ Hulten works well.
- ▶ Real GDP too high for rich states and too low for poor states.
- ▶ Average utility assuming  $\bar{\varepsilon}_h = 1$  is off by similar magnitude as real GDP.
- ▶ Assuming  $\bar{\varepsilon}_h = (\sum_r \varepsilon_{hr}/R)^{-1}$  makes a difference.

# Agenda

Simple Economy

General Setup

Extensions

# Generality

- ▶ Results from simple model generalize considerably.
- ▶ General model is quite flexible, allowing for arbitrary:
  - ▶ Many goods, non-traded goods, and home bias,
  - ▶ heterogeneity in preferences and skills,
  - ▶ different “types” of primary factors (e.g. by education or landlords/labor),
  - ▶ input-output linkages,
  - ▶ commuting (agents consume & work in different places), as in Monte et al (2018).
- ▶ Perfectly competitive benchmark.

## Environment – Household Problem

- ▶ Choices  $r \in \{1, \dots, R\}$  index occupation, region, consumption/work location, etc.
- ▶ Agents have idiosyncratic skills across occupations, regions.
- ▶ Consumption prices vary across locations.
- ▶ Budget constraint is

$$\underbrace{\sum_{r \in R} p_r c_h 1[l_h = r]}_{\text{spending}} = Z \underbrace{\sum_{r \in R} a_{hr} w_r 1[l_h = r]}_{\text{labor income}} + \underbrace{T_h}_{\text{transfer}},$$

- ▶ Household-side summarized by partial equilibrium aggregate labor supply of labor type  $r$

$$L_r(\mathbf{w}, \mathbf{p}, \mathbf{T}) = \int a_{hr} 1[l_h = r] dh,$$

and aggregate demand for consumption good in location  $r$

$$E_r(\mathbf{w}, \mathbf{p}, \mathbf{T}) = w_r L_r + \int T_h 1[l_h = r] dh.$$

## Environment – Firms and Equilibrium

- ▶ Producer of  $i \in N$  maximizes profits taking prices as given:

$$p_i y_i - \sum_{j \in N} p_j x_{ij} - \sum_{r \in R} w_r L_{ir}, \quad \text{s.t.} \quad y_i = z_i F_i(\{x_{ij}\}_{j \in N}, \{L_{ir}\}_{r \in R}).$$

- ▶ Prices clear goods market:

$$\sum_r E_r 1[i \text{ is consumption in } r] + \sum_{j \in N} p_j x_{ji} = p_i y_i$$

and wages clear factor market:

$$\sum_{i \in N} L_{ir} = Z L_r.$$

## Solving for $A(t)$ using Compensated Equilibrium

- ▶ Definition of  $A(t)$  is same as in simple setting, compute using compensated equilibrium.
- ▶ In this equil., every  $h$  receives a  $T_h$  to keep them indifferent and TFP is contracted by  $A(t)$ .
- ▶ Expenditure function  $T_h^{\text{comp}}(\mathbf{w}, \mathbf{p})$  same as before but depends on consumption prices too.

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- ▶ Expenditure function  $T_h^{\text{comp}}(\mathbf{w}, \mathbf{p})$  same as before but depends on consumption prices too.
- ▶ Aggregate compensated labor supply function defined as before:

$$L_r^{\text{comp}}(\mathbf{w}, \mathbf{p}).$$

- ▶ Now, we need one more function:

$$E_r^{\text{comp}}(\mathbf{w}, \mathbf{p}) = w_r L_r^{\text{comp}}(\mathbf{w}, \mathbf{p}) + \int_h T_h^{\text{comp}}(\mathbf{w}, \mathbf{p}) 1[l_h^{\text{comp}} = r] dh.$$

- ▶  $L_r^{\text{comp}}$  and  $E_r^{\text{comp}}$  are partial equilibrium objects.

## Solving for $A(t)$ using Compensated Equilibrium

- ▶ Compensated equil. conditions are standard but market clearing uses

$$L_r^{\text{comp}}(\mathbf{w}/A(t), \mathbf{p}) \quad \text{and} \quad E_r^{\text{comp}}(\mathbf{w}/A(t), \mathbf{p}).$$

- ▶ There is one extra unknown:  $A(t)$  is pinned down by budget balance

$$\sum_r E_r^{\text{comp}}(\mathbf{w}/A(t), \mathbf{p}) = \sum_r L_r^{\text{comp}}(\mathbf{w}/A(t), \mathbf{p}) w_r / A(t).$$

- ▶ Given  $E_r^{\text{comp}}$  and  $L_r^{\text{comp}}$ , solving for  $A(t)$  is straightforward.

## Formulas for $A(t)$ in General Setting

- ▶ **Proposition:** For any preferences and technologies,  $A(t)$  satisfies:

$$\log A(t) = \int_0^t \sum_i \lambda_i^{\text{comp}}(s) \frac{d \log z_i}{ds} ds,$$

as area under sales shares in compensated equilibrium,  $\lambda_i^{\text{comp}}$ .

- ▶ Generalizes simple economy to general technologies and shocks to those technologies.

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- ▶ Generalizes simple economy to general technologies and shocks to those technologies.
- ▶ Evaluating at  $t = 0$  yields generalization of Hulten's Theorem:

$$d \log A = \sum_i \lambda_i(0) d \log z_i,$$

holds for any perfectly competitive discrete choice economy, no need to solve model.

- ▶ Paper provides second-order approximation in terms of supply and demand elasticities.

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## Extensions

- ▶ Changes in amenities (e.g. weather in a region, health risk of occupation).  
Index location characteristic by  $t$  and apply the same definition of  $A(t)$ .
- ▶ Define TFP-equivalent productivity for a subset of agents (e.g. by gender, or age).  
Indifference conditions and transfers in  $A(t)$  apply only to agents in the chosen subset.
- ▶ Limited redistributive tools (e.g. place-based policies) rather than lump-sum transfers.
- ▶ Distorted equilibrium (e.g. agglomeration externalities).

## Aggregate Productivity with Place-Based Compensations

- ▶ We defined  $A$  as factor savings after winners compensate losers using lump-sum transfers.
- ▶ Now extend definition to cases where only place-based redistributive policies are available.
- ▶  $A^{pb}(t)$  is maximum reduction in  $Z$  needed to make everyone indifferent to status quo given location-level consumption taxes.
- ▶ We characterize it for the simple economy.
- ▶ To a first-order approximation,  $A^{pb}(t)$  and  $A(t)$  agree and obey Hulten's theorem, because distortions from place-based policies are second-order around Lessaiz-faire.

## Aggregate Productivity with Externalities

- ▶ Consider simple model with agglomeration externalities.
- ▶ Output of single good in location  $r$  is  $z_r L_r^\gamma$ . Benchmark assumes  $\gamma = 1$ .
- ▶ Equilibrium has wage equal to private marginal product,  $w_r = z_r L_r^{\gamma-1}$ , and transfers  $T_h$ .
- ▶ Same definition of  $A(t)$ . Pinned down by budget balance in compensated equilibrium:

$$\int_h T_h^{\text{comp}}(\mathbf{w}(t)) dh = 0 \quad \text{where} \quad w_r = z_r (L_r^{\text{comp}}(\mathbf{w}))^{\gamma-1} / A(t).$$

Only difference: wages in compensated equilibrium depend on compensated labor supply.

## Agglomeration Externalities $\gamma = 1.05$

State	$\log A$	$\log RGDP$	$\log EU_1$	$\log EU_2$
California	0.143	0.182	0.118	0.143
New York	0.082	0.117	0.059	0.066
West Virginia	0.004	0.001	0.005	0.003
Mississippi	0.005	0.000	0.007	0.006

- ▶ Change in aggregate productivity is increasing in  $\gamma$ .

## Conclusion

- ▶ Standard aggregate measures (real GDP, average utility, sum of CVs) flawed.
- ▶ But conventional tools of welfare economics do still apply to GE with discrete choice.
- ▶ First-order: TFP-equivalent satisfies Hulten, exactly as in continuous choice models.
- ▶ Higher order depends on compens. supply/demand, exactly as in continuous choice models.
- ▶ Paper shows that computation is straightforward in practice, depends only on observables.
- ▶ Future work: optimal policy where maximizing  $A(t)$  is the policymaker's objective.

# Agenda

Simple Economy

General Setup

Extensions

## Comparison to Sum of Compensating Variations

- ▶ Traditional approach in partial equilibrium (Small&Rosen/McFadden) is to do welfare analysis by looking at the sum of compensating variations.
- ▶ Sum of compensating variations additively changes income until indifference is attained.
- ▶ In PE,  $A(t)$  multiplicatively scales income until indifference attained, so two measures similar.
- ▶ In GE, scaling factors or income can be quite different b/c relative prices are endogenous.
- ▶ Easy to construct examples where a pure redistribution (movement along Pareto frontier) causes sum of CVs to be positive, even though there is no surplus.
- ▶ Intuition: redistributions raise prices for winners and lower them for losers — so it is feasible to compensate losers at  $t$  prices and have money left-over.
- ▶ So, even if sum of CVs is positive, there may not be any Pareto improvement possible.

## Using Social Surplus to Calculate $A$

- ▶ If indirect utility function is linear in price of good, then “social surplus function” (McFadden 1981) can be used to calculate sum of compensating variations (Small & Rosen 1981).
- ▶ We show a counterpart of this result in general equilibrium.
- ▶ Define “Social Surplus Function” as  $U(\mathbf{c}) = \mathbb{E}[\max_r u_h(\mathbf{c}_r, r)] = \mathbb{E}[\max_r g(\mathbf{c}_r) + \varepsilon_{hr}]$ .
- ▶ If  $g(\mathbf{c})$  is linear (symmetric second derivatives of  $L_r$ ) and common consumption good, then

$$U(\mathbf{w}(t)/(A(t)p^c(t))) = U(\mathbf{w}(0)/p^c(0)),$$

where real wages are those in decentralized equilibrium with tech.  $\mathbf{z}(t)$  and TFP  $1/A(t)$ .