
ECON 351* -- NOTE 15
Marginal Effects of Explanatory Variables: Constant or Variable?
**1. Constant Marginal Effects of Explanatory Variables:
A Starting Point**

Nature: A continuous explanatory variable has a *constant marginal effect* on the dependent variable if it enters the regressor set only linearly and additively.

Model 1:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \beta_2 X_{2i} + u_i \quad (1)$$

- Model 1 contains only two *explanatory variables* – X_1 and X_2 – and two *regressors*.
- The population regression function, or conditional mean function, $f(X_{1i}, X_{2i})$ in Model 1 takes the form

$$E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \beta_2 X_{2i}.$$

- The *marginal effects on Y of the two explanatory variables X_1 and X_2* in equation (1) are obtained analytically by partially differentiating Y, or the conditional mean of Y given X_1 and X_2 , with respect to each of the explanatory variables X_1 and X_2 .

1. The marginal effect of X_1 in Model 1 is:

$$\frac{\partial Y_i}{\partial X_{1i}} = \frac{\partial E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i})}{\partial X_{1i}} = \beta_1 = \text{a constant}$$

2. The marginal effect of X_2 in Model 1 is:

$$\frac{\partial Y_i}{\partial X_{2i}} = \frac{\partial E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i})}{\partial X_{2i}} = \beta_2 = \text{a constant}$$

Example of Model 1:

$$\text{price}_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{wgt}_i + \beta_2 \text{mpg}_i + u_i \tag{1*}$$

where

price_i = the price of the i-th car (in US dollars);

wgt_i = the weight of the i-th car (in pounds);

mpg_i = the miles per gallon (fuel efficiency) for the i-th car (in miles per gallon).

```
. * Model 1: constant marginal effects of wgt and mpg
. regress price wgt mpg
```

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs =	74
Model	186321280	2	93160639.9	F(2, 71) =	14.74
Residual	448744116	71	6320339.67	Prob > F =	0.0000
				R-squared =	0.2934
				Adj R-squared =	0.2735
Total	635065396	73	8699525.97	Root MSE =	2514.0

price	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]
wgt	1.746559	.6413538	2.72	0.008	.467736 3.025382
mpg	-49.51222	86.15604	-0.57	0.567	-221.3025 122.278
_cons	1946.069	3597.05	0.54	0.590	-5226.244 9118.382

2. Variable Marginal Effects and Interaction Terms: Squares and Cross Products of Continuous Explanatory Variables

Nature: *Interactions* between two *continuous variables* refer to products of pairs of explanatory variables.

- If X_{ji} and X_{hi} are two continuous explanatory variables, the interaction term between them is the product $X_{ji}X_{hi}$.
- The interaction of the variable X_{ji} with itself is simply the product $X_{ji}X_{ji} = X_{ji}^2$.
- Inclusion of these regressors in a linear regression model allows for ***variable – or nonconstant – marginal effects*** of the explanatory variables on the conditional mean of the dependent variable Y .

Usage: *Interaction terms* between *continuous variables* allow the marginal effect of one explanatory variable to be a linear function of both itself and other explanatory variables.

Model 2:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \beta_2 X_{2i} + \beta_3 X_{1i}^2 + \beta_4 X_{2i}^2 + \beta_5 X_{1i} X_{2i} + u_i \quad (2)$$

- Model 2 contains only ***two explanatory variables*** – X_1 and X_2 – but ***five regressors***.
- Formally, the ***population regression function*** $E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i}) = f(X_{1i}, X_{2i})$ in PRE (2) can be derived as a second-order Taylor series approximation to the function $f(X_{1i}, X_{2i})$. A second-order Taylor series approximation to the population regression function $f(X_{1i}, X_{2i})$ takes the form

$$E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \beta_2 X_{2i} + \beta_3 X_{1i}^2 + \beta_4 X_{2i}^2 + \beta_5 X_{1i} X_{2i}.$$

Marginal Effects in Model 2:

- The *marginal effects on Y of the two explanatory variables X₁ and X₂* in equation (2) are obtained analytically by partially differentiating Y, or the conditional mean of Y given X₁ and X₂, with respect to each of the explanatory variables X₁ and X₂.

The **population regression function for Model 2** is:

$$E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \beta_2 X_{2i} + \beta_3 X_{1i}^2 + \beta_4 X_{2i}^2 + \beta_5 X_{1i} X_{2i}$$

1. The **marginal effect of X₁ in Model 2** is:

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial Y_i}{\partial X_{1i}} &= \frac{\partial E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i})}{\partial X_{1i}} = \beta_1 + 2\beta_3 X_{1i} + \beta_5 X_{2i} \\ &= \text{a linear function of both } X_{1i} \text{ and } X_{2i} \end{aligned}$$

2. The **marginal effect of X₂ in Model 2** is:

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial Y_i}{\partial X_{2i}} &= \frac{\partial E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i})}{\partial X_{2i}} = \beta_2 + 2\beta_4 X_{2i} + \beta_5 X_{1i} \\ &= \text{a linear function of both } X_{1i} \text{ and } X_{2i} \end{aligned}$$

Squares of Continuous Explanatory Variables

Purpose: Allow for *increasing or decreasing marginal effects* of an explanatory variable on the dependent variable -- sometimes called *increasing or decreasing marginal returns*.

Determining whether the *marginal effect of X₁* is *increasing or decreasing*

- Whether the *marginal effect of X₁* is *increasing or decreasing* – i.e., whether X₁ exhibits *increasing or decreasing marginal returns* – is determined by the sign of the regression coefficient β₃ on the regressor X_{1i}² in Model 2.

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \beta_2 X_{2i} + \beta_3 X_{1i}^2 + \beta_4 X_{2i}^2 + \beta_5 X_{1i} X_{2i} + u_i \quad (2)$$

- We previously saw that the *marginal effect of X₁ in Model 2* is given by the *first-order partial derivative* of Y_i, or E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i}), with respect to X_{1i}:

$$\frac{\partial Y_i}{\partial X_{1i}} = \frac{\partial E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i})}{\partial X_{1i}} = \beta_1 + 2\beta_3 X_{1i} + \beta_5 X_{2i}$$

- To determine whether the *marginal effect of X₁ in Model 2* is *increasing or decreasing in X₁*, we need to examine the *second-order partial derivative* of Y_i, or E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i}), with respect to X_{1i}:

$$\frac{\partial^2 Y_i}{\partial X_{1i}^2} = \frac{\partial}{\partial X_{1i}} \frac{\partial E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i})}{\partial X_{1i}} = \frac{\partial^2 E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i})}{\partial^2 X_{1i}^2} = 2\beta_3$$

- The *marginal effect of X₁* is *increasing in X₁* – meaning X₁ exhibits *increasing marginal returns* – when

$$\frac{\partial^2 Y_i}{\partial X_{1i}^2} = \frac{\partial^2 E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i})}{\partial^2 X_{1i}^2} = 2\beta_3 > 0 \quad \text{i.e., when } \beta_3 > 0$$

- The *marginal effect of X₁* is *decreasing in X₁* – meaning X₁ exhibits *decreasing marginal returns* – when

$$\frac{\partial^2 Y_i}{\partial X_{1i}^2} = \frac{\partial^2 E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i})}{\partial^2 X_{1i}^2} = 2\beta_3 < 0 \quad \text{i.e., when } \beta_3 < 0$$

Determining whether the *marginal effect of X₂* is *increasing or decreasing*

- Whether the *marginal effect of X₂* is *increasing or decreasing* – i.e., whether X₂ exhibits *increasing or decreasing marginal returns* – is determined by the sign of the regression coefficient β₄ on the regressor X_{2i}² in Model 2.

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \beta_2 X_{2i} + \beta_3 X_{1i}^2 + \beta_4 X_{2i}^2 + \beta_5 X_{1i} X_{2i} + u_i \quad (2)$$

- We previously saw that the *marginal effect of X₂ in Model 2* is given by the *first-order partial derivative* of Y_i, or E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i}), with respect to X_{2i}:

$$\frac{\partial Y_i}{\partial X_{2i}} = \frac{\partial E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i})}{\partial X_{2i}} = \beta_2 + 2\beta_4 X_{2i} + \beta_5 X_{1i}$$

- To determine whether the *marginal effect of X₂ in Model 2* is *increasing or decreasing in X₂*, we need to examine the *second-order partial derivative* of Y_i, or E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i}), with respect to X_{2i}:

$$\frac{\partial^2 Y_i}{\partial X_{2i}^2} = \frac{\partial}{\partial X_{2i}} \frac{\partial E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i})}{\partial X_{2i}} = \frac{\partial^2 E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i})}{\partial^2 X_{2i}^2} = 2\beta_4$$

- The *marginal effect of X₂* is *increasing in X₂* – meaning X₂ exhibits *increasing marginal returns* – when

$$\frac{\partial^2 Y_i}{\partial X_{2i}^2} = \frac{\partial^2 E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i})}{\partial^2 X_{2i}^2} = 2\beta_4 > 0 \quad \text{i.e., when } \beta_4 > 0$$

- The *marginal effect of X₂* is *decreasing in X₂* – meaning X₂ exhibits *decreasing marginal returns* – when

$$\frac{\partial^2 Y_i}{\partial X_{2i}^2} = \frac{\partial^2 E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i})}{\partial^2 X_{2i}^2} = 2\beta_4 < 0 \quad \text{i.e., when } \beta_4 < 0$$

Products of Two Continuous Explanatory Variables

Purpose: Allow for relationships of *complementarity* or *substitutability* between X_1 and X_2 in determining Y .

- Whether X_1 and X_2 are *complementary* or *substitutable* is determined by the *sign of the regression coefficient* β_5 on the interaction term $X_{1i}X_{2i}$ in Model 2.

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \beta_2 X_{2i} + \beta_3 X_{1i}^2 + \beta_4 X_{2i}^2 + \beta_5 X_{1i} X_{2i} + u_i \quad (2)$$

- The *marginal effects of X_1 and X_2 in Model 2* are given by the *first-order partial derivatives* of Y_i , or $E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i})$, with respect to X_{1i} and X_{2i} :

$$\frac{\partial Y_i}{\partial X_{1i}} = \frac{\partial E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i})}{\partial X_{1i}} = \beta_1 + 2\beta_3 X_{1i} + \beta_5 X_{2i}$$

$$\frac{\partial Y_i}{\partial X_{2i}} = \frac{\partial E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i})}{\partial X_{2i}} = \beta_2 + 2\beta_4 X_{2i} + \beta_5 X_{1i}$$

- To determine whether the *marginal effect of X_1 (X_2) in Model 2* is *increasing* or *decreasing in X_2 (X_1)*, we need to examine the *second-order cross partial derivative* of Y_i , or $E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i})$, with respect to X_{1i} and X_{2i} :

$$\frac{\partial^2 Y_i}{\partial X_{2i} \partial X_{1i}} = \frac{\partial^2 E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i})}{\partial X_{2i} \partial X_{1i}} = \beta_5$$

- The *marginal effect of X_1 is increasing in X_2* (or the *marginal effect of X_2 is increasing in X_1*) -- meaning X_1 and X_2 are *complementary* -- when

$$\frac{\partial^2 Y_i}{\partial X_{2i} \partial X_{1i}} = \frac{\partial^2 E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i})}{\partial X_{2i} \partial X_{1i}} = \beta_5 > 0$$

- The *marginal effect of X_1 is decreasing in X_2* (or the *marginal effect of X_2 is decreasing in X_1*) -- meaning X_1 and X_2 are *substitutable* -- when

$$\frac{\partial^2 Y_i}{\partial X_{2i} \partial X_{1i}} = \frac{\partial^2 E(Y_i | X_{1i}, X_{2i})}{\partial X_{2i} \partial X_{1i}} = \beta_5 < 0$$

Example of Model 2:

$$\text{price}_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{wgt}_i + \beta_2 \text{mpg}_i + \beta_3 \text{wgt}_i^2 + \beta_4 \text{mpg}_i^2 + \beta_5 \text{wgt}_i \text{mpg}_i + u_i. \quad (2^*)$$

where

price_i = the price of the i-th car (in US dollars);

wgt_i = the weight of the i-th car (in pounds);

wgt_i^2 = the square of wgt_i ;

mpg_i = the miles per gallon (fuel efficiency) for the i-th car (in miles per gallon);

mpg_i^2 = the square of mpg_i ;

$\text{wgt}_i \text{mpg}_i$ = the product of wgt_i and mpg_i for the i-th car.

. * Model 2: variable marginal effects of wgt and mpg
 . regress price wgt mpg wgtsq mpgsq wgtmpg

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs =	74
Model	308384833	5	61676966.6	F(5, 68) =	12.84
Residual	326680563	68	4804125.93	Prob > F =	0.0000
				R-squared =	0.4856
				Adj R-squared =	0.4478
Total	635065396	73	8699525.97	Root MSE =	2191.8

price	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]
wgt	-31.88985	9.148215	-3.49	0.001	-50.14483 -13.63487
mpg	-3549.495	1126.464	-3.15	0.002	-5797.318 -1301.672
wgtsq	.0034574	.0008629	4.01	0.000	.0017355 .0051792
mpgsq	38.74472	12.62339	3.07	0.003	13.55514 63.93431
wgtmpg	.5421927	.1971854	2.75	0.008	.1487154 .9356701
_cons	92690.55	25520.53	3.63	0.001	41765.12 143616

Hypothesis Tests on the Marginal Effects of wgt and mpg

$$\text{price}_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{wgt}_i + \beta_2 \text{mpg}_i + \beta_3 \text{wgt}_i^2 + \beta_4 \text{mpg}_i^2 + \beta_5 \text{wgt}_i \text{mpg}_i + u_i \quad (2^*)$$

Test 1: The marginal effect of wgt_i on price_i is zero for all cars.

- ♦ The marginal effect of wgt_i on price_i in Model 2* is:

$$\frac{\partial \text{price}_i}{\partial \text{wgt}_i} = \frac{\partial E(\text{price}_i | \text{wgt}_i, \text{mpg}_i)}{\partial \text{wgt}_i} = \beta_1 + 2\beta_3 \text{wgt}_i + \beta_5 \text{mpg}_i$$

- ♦ *Null and Alternative Hypotheses*

$H_0: \beta_1 = 0$ and $\beta_3 = 0$ and $\beta_5 = 0$ specifies **three** coefficient restrictions

$H_1: \beta_1 \neq 0$ and/or $\beta_3 \neq 0$ and/or $\beta_5 \neq 0$

- ♦ *Unrestricted Model Corresponding to H_1 :* regression equation (2*)
- ♦ *Restricted Model Corresponding to H_0 :* set $\beta_1 = 0$ and $\beta_3 = 0$ and $\beta_5 = 0$ in (2*).

$$\text{price}_i = \beta_0 + \beta_2 \text{mpg}_i + \beta_4 \text{mpg}_i^2 + u_i$$

. * Test 1: Test hypothesis that marginal effect of wgt equals zero for all cars
 . test wgt wgtsq wgtmpg

(1) wgt = 0.0
 (2) wgtsq = 0.0
 (3) wgtmpg = 0.0

F(3, 68) = 6.42
 Prob > F = 0.0007

Test 2: The **marginal effect of mpg_i on price_i is zero** for all cars.

$$\text{price}_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{wgt}_i + \beta_2 \text{mpg}_i + \beta_3 \text{wgt}_i^2 + \beta_4 \text{mpg}_i^2 + \beta_5 \text{wgt}_i \text{mpg}_i + u_i \quad (2^*)$$

- ♦ The **marginal effect of mpg_i on price_i in Model 2*** is:

$$\frac{\partial \text{price}_i}{\partial \text{mpg}_i} = \frac{\partial E(\text{price}_i | \text{wgt}_i, \text{mpg}_i)}{\partial \text{mpg}_i} = \beta_2 + 2\beta_4 \text{mpg}_i + \beta_5 \text{wgt}_i$$

- ♦ **Null and Alternative Hypotheses**

$H_0: \beta_2 = 0$ and $\beta_4 = 0$ and $\beta_5 = 0$ specifies **three** coefficient restrictions

$H_1: \beta_2 \neq 0$ and/or $\beta_4 \neq 0$ and/or $\beta_5 \neq 0$

- ♦ **Unrestricted Model Corresponding to H₁:** regression equation (2*)
- ♦ **Restricted Model Corresponding to H₀:** set $\beta_2 = 0$ and $\beta_4 = 0$ and $\beta_5 = 0$ in (2*).

$$\text{price}_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{wgt}_i + \beta_3 \text{wgt}_i^2 + u_i$$

. * Test 2: Test hypothesis that marginal effect of mpg equals zero for all cars
 . test mpg mpgsq wgtmpg

(1) mpg = 0.0
 (2) mpgsq = 0.0
 (3) wgtmpg = 0.0

F(3, 68) = 4.03
 Prob > F = 0.0106

Test 3: The marginal effect of wgt_i on $price_i$ is constant.

$$price_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 wgt_i + \beta_2 mpg_i + \beta_3 wgt_i^2 + \beta_4 mpg_i^2 + \beta_5 wgt_i mpg_i + u_i \quad (2^*)$$

- ◆ The marginal effect of wgt_i on $price_i$ in Model 2* is:

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial price_i}{\partial wgt_i} &= \frac{\partial E(price_i | wgt_i, mpg_i)}{\partial wgt_i} = \beta_1 + 2\beta_3 wgt_i + \beta_5 mpg_i \\ &= \beta_1 \text{ (a constant) if } \beta_3 = 0 \text{ and } \beta_5 = 0 \end{aligned}$$

- ◆ *Null and Alternative Hypotheses*

$H_0: \beta_3 = 0 \text{ and } \beta_5 = 0$ specifies **two** coefficient restrictions

$H_1: \beta_3 \neq 0 \text{ and/or } \beta_5 \neq 0$

- ◆ *Unrestricted Model Corresponding to H_1 :* regression equation (2*)
- ◆ *Restricted Model Corresponding to H_0 :* set $\beta_3 = 0$ and $\beta_5 = 0$ in (2*).

$$price_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 wgt_i + \beta_2 mpg_i + \beta_4 mpg_i^2 + u_i$$

```
. * Test 3: Test hypothesis that marginal effect of wgt is constant
. test wgtsq wgtmpg
```

```
( 1) wgtsq = 0.0
( 2) wgtmpg = 0.0
```

```
F( 2, 68) = 8.80
Prob > F = 0.0004
```

Test 4: The marginal effect of mpg_i on $price_i$ is constant.

$$price_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 wgt_i + \beta_2 mpg_i + \beta_3 wgt_i^2 + \beta_4 mpg_i^2 + \beta_5 wgt_i mpg_i + u_i \quad (2^*)$$

- ◆ The marginal effect of mpg_i on $price_i$ in Model 2* is:

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial price_i}{\partial mpg_i} &= \frac{\partial E(price_i | wgt_i, mpg_i)}{\partial mpg_i} = \beta_2 + 2\beta_4 mpg_i + \beta_5 wgt_i \\ &= \beta_2 \text{ (a constant) if } \beta_4 = 0 \text{ and } \beta_5 = 0 \end{aligned}$$

- ◆ *Null and Alternative Hypotheses*

$H_0: \beta_4 = 0$ and $\beta_5 = 0$ specifies **two** coefficient restrictions

$H_1: \beta_4 \neq 0$ and/or $\beta_5 \neq 0$

- ◆ *Unrestricted Model Corresponding to H_1 :* regression equation (2*)
- ◆ *Restricted Model Corresponding to H_0 :* set $\beta_4 = 0$ and $\beta_5 = 0$ in (2*).

$$price_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 wgt_i + \beta_2 mpg_i + \beta_3 wgt_i^2 + u_i$$

```
. * Test 4: Test hypothesis that marginal effect of mpg is constant
. test mpgsq wgtmpg
```

```
( 1) mpgsq = 0.0
( 2) wgtmpg = 0.0
```

```
F( 2, 68) = 4.75
Prob > F = 0.0117
```

Test 5: The **marginal effects of both wgt_i and mpg_i on $price_i$ are constant.**

$$price_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 wgt_i + \beta_2 mpg_i + \beta_3 wgt_i^2 + \beta_4 mpg_i^2 + \beta_5 wgt_i mpg_i + u_i \quad (2^*)$$

- ♦ The **marginal effect of wgt_i on $price_i$ in Model 2*** is:

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial price_i}{\partial wgt_i} &= \frac{\partial E(price_i | wgt_i, mpg_i)}{\partial wgt_i} = \beta_1 + 2\beta_3 wgt_i + \beta_5 mpg_i \\ &= \beta_1 \text{ (a constant) if } \beta_3 = 0 \text{ and } \beta_5 = 0 \end{aligned}$$

- ♦ The **marginal effect of mpg_i on $price_i$ in Model 2*** is:

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial price_i}{\partial mpg_i} &= \frac{\partial E(price_i | wgt_i, mpg_i)}{\partial mpg_i} = \beta_2 + 2\beta_4 mpg_i + \beta_5 wgt_i \\ &= \beta_2 \text{ (a constant) if } \beta_4 = 0 \text{ and } \beta_5 = 0 \end{aligned}$$

- ♦ **Null and Alternative Hypotheses**

$H_0: \beta_3 = 0 \text{ and } \beta_4 = 0 \text{ and } \beta_5 = 0$ specifies **three** coefficient restrictions

$H_1: \beta_3 \neq 0 \text{ and/or } \beta_4 \neq 0 \text{ and/or } \beta_5 \neq 0$

- ♦ **Unrestricted Model Corresponding to H_1 :** regression equation (2*)
- ♦ **Restricted Model Corresponding to H_0 is Model 1*:** set $\beta_3 = 0$ and $\beta_4 = 0$ and $\beta_5 = 0$ in (2*).

$$price_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 wgt_i + \beta_2 mpg_i + u_i \quad (1^*)$$

. * Test 5: Test hypothesis that marginal effects of wgt and mpg are constants
 . test wgtsq mpgsq wgtmpg

(1) wgtsq = 0
 (2) mpgsq = 0
 (3) wgtmpg = 0

F(3, 68) = 8.47
 Prob > F = 0.0001