

"Spurious Mobility in Imperfectly Linked Data"

Ross Mattheis

Abstract

Estimating intergenerational mobility often requires linking data across multiple sources. However, mistakes in record linkage can introduce biases in the subsequent estimates. This paper studies inference for linear models using imperfectly linked data. We first show that point identification of parameters given ambiguity in the linked data requires additional assumptions about the relationship between the information used for record linkage and the information used for model estimation. Building on this result, we propose a new method which we call Robust Inference for Imperfectly Linked data (RIILink). We apply RIILink to re-examine intergenerational mobility in the United States between 1850 and 1940.