

# Global Search Regression (GSREG): A new automatic model selection technique for cross-section, time series and panel data regressions<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** This paper presents the main features of *Global Search Regression* (GSREG), a new automatic model selection technique (AMST) for time series, cross-section and panel data regressions. As other exhaustive search algorithms (e.g. VSELECT) GSREG avoids characteristic path-dependence traps of standard backward and forward looking approaches (like PCGETS or RETINA). However, GSREG is the first STATA® code that: 1) guarantees optimality with out-of-sample selection criteria; 2) allows residual testing for each alternative; 3) retains VSELECT leaps-and-bound “shortcuts” for in-sample selection criteria; and 4) provides (depending on user specifications) a full-information dataset with outcome statistics for every alternative model.

**Keywords:** GSREG, automatic model selection, VSELECT, PC-GETS, RETINA.

**JEL Codes:** C10, C52, C87.

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<sup>1</sup>GSREG was based on FUERZA\_BRUTA, a former Stata .do file originally developed by Demian Panigo and subsequently enhanced by Diego Herrero (UBA, Argentina) and Pablo Gluzmann. Usual disclaimer applies.

# 1 Introduction.

Econometric practitioners are commonly faced with global optimization issues. Identifying the real data generating process (DGP) from a myriad of alternative econometric models is analogous to looking for a global minimum in a highly non-linear optimization problem. In both cases, some broadly accepted procedures lead to wrong or improvable results.<sup>2</sup>

While global optimization methods in mathematics evolved, for example, from Rawson-Newton to genetic algorithms (and related search strategies), econometric model selection techniques have been changing from rudimentary (backward and/or forward STEPWISE) sequential regressions to more sophisticated approaches (PC-GETS, RETINA, LARS, LASSO; see Castle, 2006)

Even though, sub-optimal path-dependent results still (and frequently) emerge. Like genetic algorithms in global optimization problems, most AMSTs cannot guarantee a “global optimum” (the best DGP from available alternatives) in model selection. Different final outcomes can be obtained depending on both search parameters (crucially test parameters) and search starting points (see Derksen and Keselman, 1992).

Newer AMSTs like PC-GETS or RETINA intended to avoid this problem by means of alternative multi path – multi sample backward and forward looking approaches, respectively. While these strategies have significantly improve AMSTs outcomes (Marinucci, 2008), they still fail to guarantee “global optima” because of unexplored reduction paths, the size-power trade-off and cumulative type-I errors of sequential testing, especially in small sample problems.

The combination of non-exhaustive search (like single or multiple path search strategies) and sequential testing (either forward or backward looking) will frequently afford some cost in term of statistical inference (depending of test size and selected paths, it will take the form of model under or overfitting) and just by chance the “terminal model” will coincide with the best DGP.

These weaknesses, altogether with increasing computational capabilities explain the widening use of alternative exhaustive search methods. Unlike global optimum search in mathematics<sup>3</sup>, a model

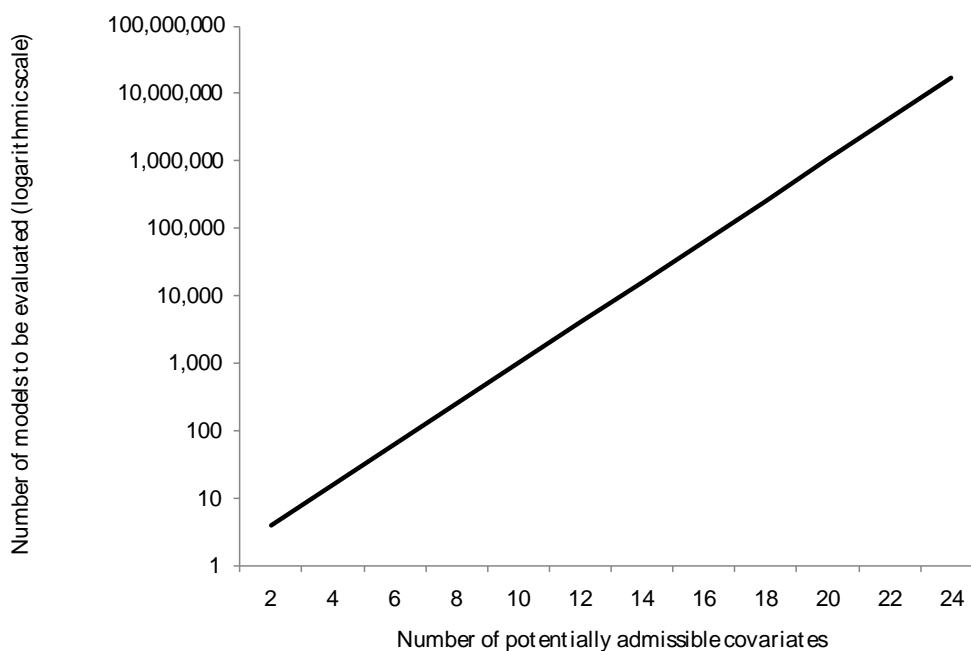
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<sup>2</sup> In econometrics, Leamer (1978) and Lovell (1983) documented the low success rates of many widely used model selection techniques, while, Forrest and Mitchell (1993) stress the limitations of new “standards” (e.g. genetic algorithms) in the numerical optimization.

<sup>3</sup> The meaning of exhaustive search in mathematics (e.g. in non-linear optimization problems) is not completely satisfactory. Algorithms like PATTERN SEARCH in Matlab© provide a useful example to understand what exhaustive search actually

selection problem in econometrics is always self-constrained. The number of point (models) to be evaluated will never be infinite but a certain integer defined by  $2^n$ , where  $n$  is the number of initially admissible covariates. This quantity, while exponentially increasing in  $n$ , is by far much more manageable than any unconstrained non-linear global optimization problem.

**Figure 1.- Exhaustive search: Alternative models to be evaluated at different number of initially admissible covariates**



All in all, the choice between exhaustive and non-exhaustive search is determined by the trade-off between time and accuracy. Last generation AMSTs try to take into account both dimensions, standing somewhere between pure time saving techniques (e.g. first generation AMSTs like STEPWISE regressions) and pure accuracy improving methods (exhaustive search). This shows that AMST evolution goes from speed to goodness-of-fit, as long as processing power innovation increases computational capabilities.

In a recent post (<http://www.stata.com/why-use-stata/fast>), Stata Corporation states that on a Intel® 2.4 GHz Core 2 Quad with Stata/SE for Windows 7, running a linear regression on 10 covariates and 10,000 observations takes 0.034 seconds. Exhaustive search of the best DGP in

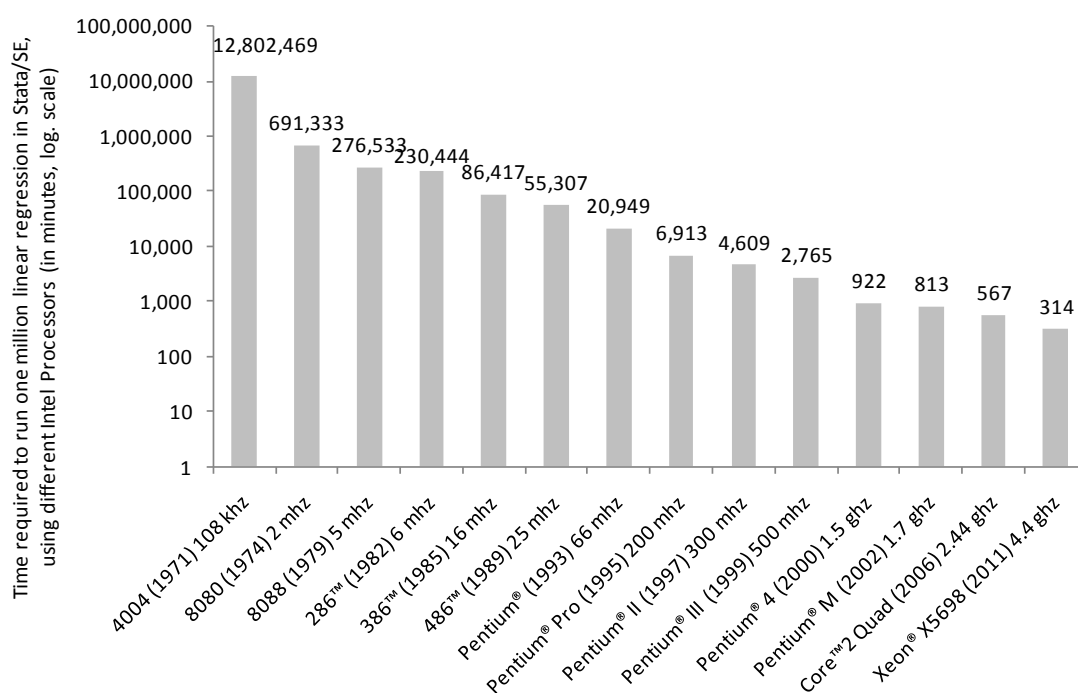
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means in a global optimization context. Indeed, the PATTERN SEARCH algorithm iterative looks for a global minimum in variable-size mesh until a threshold level is attained. However, without constraints the problem had to be evaluated at an infinite number of points. Using polling method options, the PATTERN SEARCH algorithm reduces the number of iterations to a convenient dimension. Nevertheless, the stronger the constraint, the higher the loss of the global minimum accuracy.

the same example (10,000 observation and 10 covariates) will involve 1,024 linear regressions in about 34 seconds. Moreover, using one of the last Intel® Xeon® processors (Xeon® X5698, 2011, 4.4 GHz) the same procedure will take just 19.3 seconds.

While 40 years ago, running one million regressions (e.g the number of equations to be estimated for an exhaustive search on a general model of 19-20 initially accepted covariates and 10,000 observations) would take about 25 years (using the Intel® 4004 processor of 108 KHz), today it takes only about 5 hours (using the Intel® Xeon® X5698 processor of 4.4 GHz) or even less (e.g. about 4 hours, by overclocking the last AMD® FX-9590 processor to obtain up to 5.3 GHz).

**Figure 2.- Evolution of computational capabilities: Time would required to run one million regressions over the last 40 years**



This exponential increase in (hardware) computational capabilities has been complemented by newer software codes to implement exhaustive search in econometric model selection problems (as VSELECT in Stata®). However, none of them provide neither “exhaustive outcomes” for sensitivity analysis (e.g. coefficient and/or test probability distributions for any alternative model structure) nor high accuracy when out-of-sample selection criteria are used (or hypothesis testing is necessary: e.g. testing white noise residuals).

In order to fill this gap, we develop GSREG, the first Stata® code for exhaustive search in AMST that: 1) guarantees optimality with out-of-

sample selection criteria; 2) allows residual behavior testing for each alternative; 3) retains VSELECT branch-and-bound “shortcuts” for in-sample selection criteria; and 4) provides (depending on user specifications) a full-information dataset with outcome statistics for every alternative model.<sup>4</sup>

In what follows, we structure the paper in 5 sections. First, we discuss strengths and weaknesses of main automatic model selection approaches. Next, we introduce the main characteristic GSREG (algorithm, stages and uses). In section 4 the syntax is reproduced, complemented with section 5 in which different options are explained. Then, some examples are presented to facilitate user first contact with GSREG. Section 7 is used to describe the features of saved results, while the last two sections are devoted to acknowledgments and bibliographical references.

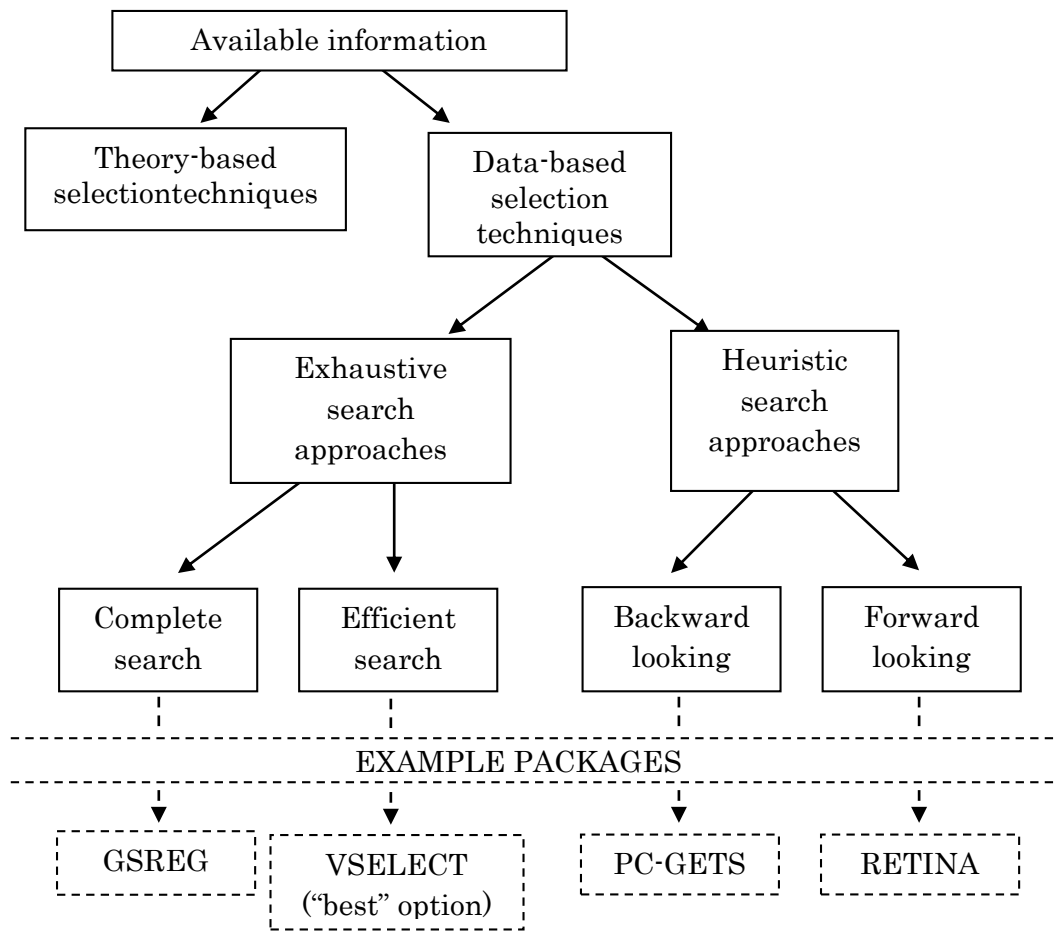
## 2 Distinctive features of main AMSTs

By combining and extending Hendry’s (1980); Miller’s (1984); Gatuand Kontoghiorghes’ (2006) and Duarte Silva’s (2009) categorizations, it is possible to generate the following “conceptual tree” of model selection techniques:

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<sup>4</sup> GSREG will initially be used for small-size problems in standard personal computers (e.g. to find the best DGP over different combinations of 20 or less potential covariates, which can be solved in a couple of hours). However, larger calculations will soon be manageable, because a “parallelization revolution” is coming soon. A few years from now, it will be unsurprising to solve a one-billion regression problem with GSREG in two hours using GPGPU computing and CUDA/OPENCL-like reengineering to improve GSREG parallelization capabilities (e.g. to fully exploit the PART option potential).

**Figure 3.- Alternative approaches for model selection**



The first level choice is related to data mining, one of the most important path-breaking controversies in applied economics, which starts in the 1930s and continues all over the twentieth century with seminal contributions of Frisch (1934), Haavelmo (1944), Leamer (1978), Lovell (1983), Gilbert (1986) and Hendry (1995), among many others.

Recent econometric developments tend to advocate for data-based model selection techniques, especially the automated ones.<sup>5</sup> Within this family, however, an internal consensus is far to be achieved. At the end of the 1960s, both exhaustive (also known as exact) and heuristic approaches were very popular.

Heuristic subset selection was pioneered by the step-wise regression algorithm of Efroymsen (1960), while exhaustive search was initially

<sup>5</sup> It is useful to examine the econometric “zeitgeist” evolution by an in-deep comparison of Miller’s (1984) discussions against more recent debates in *Econometric Theory* (vol.21, 2005, devoted to “Automated Inference and the future of Econometrics”).

associated with the “optimal/complete regression” strategy of Coen, Gomme and Kendall (1969).

Box and Newbold (1971) criticisms on exhaustive search techniques (e.g. they are unfeasible for large-size problems), and Berk (1978) objections on stepwise algorithms (e.g. they do not guarantee optimality) have brought a growing consensus on the need for better alternatives.

The number of newer exhaustive and heuristic model selection techniques grew exponentially in the past forty years. Alternative algorithms arose, such as Non-negative Garrote (Breiman, 1995), LASSO (Tibshirani, 1996); LARS (Efron, Hastie, Johnstone and Tibshirani, 2004); VSELECT-Leaps and Bound (Furnival and Wilson, 1974; Lindsey and Sheter, 2010); PCGETS/AUTOMETRICS (Krolzig and Hendry, 2001, Doornik, 2008); and RETINA (Pérez-Amaral et al., 2003).

To provide a proper context to introduce GSREG, the following subsection briefly discuss the main properties of most commonly used AMSTs

## 2.1 Main features of PC-GETS<sup>6</sup>

Following Hoover’s (2006, pp. 76) definition, the GETS approach *“involves starting with as broad a general specification as possible and then searching over the space of possible restrictions to find the most parsimonious specification. At each step in a sequential reduction (usually along multiple paths), the statistical properties of the errors are tested, the validity of the reduction is tested statistically both against the immediate predecessor and the general specification, and encompassing is tested against all otherwise satisfactory alternative specifications.”*

While some features of the GETS-LSE methodology have been used in commercial econometric packages since the 1980s, it was not until Krolzig and Hendry (2001) developed PC-GETS (written in OX language) that this methodology was fully automated with a multiple-sample/multiple-path/backward looking algorithm.

Although it is flexible enough to be applied to many other alternatives (see Castle, 2006), PC-GETS is mainly employed in big model selection problems (e.g. many covariates and large databases) where the main

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<sup>6</sup>In spite of the fact that OxMetrics™ has recently announced the replacement of PC-GETS by AUTOMETRICS, we discuss in this section the main features of the former because: 1) there is much more academic research on it, allowing pros and cons evaluation, and; 2) they share the “core algorithm” and the only difference is that AUTOMETRICS uses a tree search method, with improvements on pre-search simplification and on the objective function (see Doornik, 2008).

objective is to maximize in-sample goodness-of-fit and residual robustness. To deal with this objective, PC-GETS algorithm includes four different stages: I) Pre-simplification of the General Unrestricted Model (GUM); II) First “testimation” step; III) Second “testimation” step, and; IV) Post-selection sub-sample evaluation. The main features of each stage are summarized in table 1.

With PC-GETS, AMST’s achieved a major improvement on model selection standards. In earlier procedures (e.g STEPWISE results), the order of variable entry (or deletion) and the number of candidate covariates crucially determined the final outcome (see Derksen and Keselman, 1992). Indeed, most of the well-known Davidson and Hendy (1981)’s concerns about the GETS methodology (i.- GUM inadequacy; ii.- Small sample limitations; iii.- Path dependence; and, iv.- Cumulative type I errors) were partially surmounted by the newest code of PC-GETS.

However, the approach still faces many criticisms. Path dependence (see Pagan, 1987) has not been completely eliminated, small-sample problems persist (see Marinucci, 2008) and GETS out-of-sample results are relatively poor (see Herwartz, 2007). Even their own designers (Krolzig and Hendry, 2001; pp. 839) came to the conclusion that: “*the empirical success of PC-GETS must depend crucially on the creativity of the researcher...*”.

## 2.2 Main features of RETINA

An alternative (to PC-GETS) automatic heuristic model selection techniques is the Relevant Transformation of the Inputs Network Approach (RETINA) algorithm, a GAUSS package developed by Pérez-Amaral et al. (2003) and extended by Marinucci (2008). Although both approaches share many features (e.g. non-exhaustive, data based, multiple sample/multiple path search, residual and significance testing, etc.), they differ in methods and objectives. Unlike PC-GETS, RETINA algorithm is forward looking (specific-to-general) and its main goal is forecasting (out-of-sample accuracy). RETINA is particularly useful in small-sample model selection problems (it often provides more parsimonious final outcomes) where the functional form of the conditional mean of the dependent variable is unknown (because of its automatic level 1 covariates transforms).

In words of the authors (Pérez-Amaral et al., 2003; pp. 823), RETINA “*aims at achieving a flexible and parsimonious representation of the mean of a variable, conditional on a (potentially large) set of variables deemed of interest in situations where one does not have strong priors as to the form of the suitable function linking available information, or the relevance of individual variables. It has the flexibility of neural network models in that it accommodates nonlinearities and interaction*



*effects (through nonlinear transformations of the potentially useful variables in the conditioning set), the concavity of the likelihood in the weights of the usual linear models (which avoids numerical complexity in estimation), and the ability to identify a set of attributes that are likely to be truly valuable for predicting outcomes (which corresponds to a principle of parsimony). In performing model selection, our approach relies on an estimation/cross-validation scheme, which is aimed at limiting the possibilities that good performance is due to sheer luck.”*

RETINA deals with the issue of forecast accuracy by using the four stage/forward-looking/multiple-sample/multiple-path algorithm described in table 2.

Developed a couple of year after PC-GETS, RETINA rapidly attracted a large number of users because of its out-of-sample good properties, and its relatively better outcomes in small-sample problems (see Marinucci, 2008).

However, many of the above mentioned PC-GETS weaknesses also apply to RETINA. The Pérez-Amaral et al. (2003) software is still unable to guarantee model selection optimality because neither path dependence nor cumulative type I errors were fully removed with its multiple-sample/multiple-path specific-to-general approach.

Moreover, RETINA usual under-parameterization (which may be useful for forecasting purposes) could have some negative effects on in-sample fitting and explanation properties, and according to Castle (2006, pp.46): *“The specific-to-general methodology tends to have an ad hoc termination point for the search, and alternative path searches are unbounded, implying that the approach could miss the LDGP. Moreover, the null rejection frequency will not be controlled as the number of tests conducted will depend on the termination point, and failure of misspecification tests is likely at the initial stages, invalidating conventional tests... This does mean that there is no guarantee that the final model selected by RETINA is congruent, which may or may not be relevant for forecasting models”*.

Table 1: PC-GETS algorithm. Simplified description (from table 1 and table 2 of Krolzig and Hendry, 2001)

<p>Stage I.- Pre-simplification of the GUM: (I.a) If a diagnostic test fails for the GUM, the significance level of that test is adjusted, or the test is excluded from the test battery during simplifications of the GUM; (I.b) if all variables are significant, the GUM is the final model, and the algorithm stops; (I.c) otherwise, F-tests of sets of individually-insignificant variables are conducted: (I.c.i) if one or more diagnostic tests fails, that F-test reduction is cancelled, and the algorithm returns to the previous step; (I.c.ii) if all diagnostic tests are passed, the blocks of variables that are insignificant are removed and a simpler GUM specified; (I.c.iii) if all diagnostic tests are passed, and all blocks of variables are insignificant, the null model is the final model.</p>
<p>Stage II.- First “testimation” step: (II.1) Estimation and testing of the GUM (II.1.a): If all variables are significant, the GUM is the final model, and the algorithm stops; (II.1.b) if a diagnostic test fails for the GUM, its significance level is adjusted or the test is excluded from the test battery during simplifications of the GUM; (II.1.c) otherwise, search paths start by removing an insignificant variable, or a set of insignificant variables. (II.2) Multiple reduction paths: sequential simplification and testing of the GUM (II.2.a) If any diagnostic tests fail, that path is terminated, and the algorithm returns to the last accepted model of the search path: (II.2.a.i) if the last accepted model cannot be further reduced, it becomes the terminal model of the particular search path; (II.2.a.ii) otherwise, the last removed variable is re-introduced, and the search path continues with a new reduction by removing the next least-insignificant variable of the last accepted model. (II.2.b) If all tests are passed, but one or more variables are insignificant, the least significant variable is removed: if that specification has already been tested on a previous path, the current search path is terminated; (II.2.c) if all diagnostic tests are passed, and all variables are significant, the model is the terminal model of that search path. (II.3) Encompassing (II.3.a) If none of the reductions is accepted, the GUM is the final model; (II.3.b) if only one model survives the testimation process, it is the final model; (II.3.c) otherwise, the terminal models are tested against their union: (II.3.c.i) if all terminal models are rejected, their union is the final model; (II.3.c.ii) if exactly one of the terminal models is not rejected, it is the final model; (II.3.c.iii) otherwise, rejected models are removed, and the remaining terminal models tested against their union: (II.3.c.iii.1) if all remaining terminal models are rejected, their union is the final model; (II.3.c.iii.2) if exactly one remaining terminal model is not rejected, it is the final model; (II.3.c.iii.3) otherwise, the union of the ‘surviving’ models becomes the GUM of Stage II.</p>
<p>Stage III.- Second “testimation” step: (III.1) Estimation and testing of the new GUM (as in stage II but using the new GUM); (III.2) Multiple reduction paths (as in stage II but with the new GUM); (III.3) Encompassing and final model selection: (III.3.a) If only one model survives the second “testimation” step, it is the final model; (III.3.b) otherwise, the terminal models of stage III are tested against their union: (III.3.b.i) if all terminal models are rejected, their union is the final model. (III.3.b.ii) if exactly one terminal model is not rejected, it is the final model. (III.3.b.iii) otherwise, the set of non-dominated terminal models are reported or information criteria are applied to select a unique final model.</p>
<p>Stage IV.- Post-selection sub-sample evaluation: (IV.a) Test the significance of every variable in the final model from Stage III in two overlapping sub-samples (e.g., the first and last r%): (IV.a.i) if a variable is significant overall and both sub-samples, accord it 100% reliable; (IV.a.ii) if a variable is significant overall and in one sub-sample, accord it 75% reliable; (IV.a.iii) if a variable is significant overall and in neither sub-sample, accord it 50% reliable; (IV.a.iv) if a variable is insignificant overall but in both sub-samples, accord it 50% reliable; (IV.a.v) if a variable is insignificant overall and in only one sub-sample, accord it 25% reliable; (IV.a.vi) if a variable is insignificant overall and in neither sub-sample, accord it 0% reliable.</p>

Table 2: RETINA algorithm. Simplified description (from table 4.1 of Marinucci, 2008)

<p>Stage I.- Database management: (I.1) Generate the set of transformed variables (<math>\psi(X_t)</math>); (I.2) Divide the sample into three sub-samples.</p>
<p>Stage II.- Identify a candidate model: (II.1). Using data on the first sub-sample: (II.1.a) order the variables in <math>\psi(X_t)</math> according to their (absolute) sample correlation with the dependent variable (Y) in the first sub-sample alone. Let W(1) be the variable with the largest absolute correlation with Y; W(2) be the second most correlated, and so on. (II.1.b) Consider various sets of regressors all of which include a constant and W(1): each set of regressors <math>\psi(X_t)</math> is indexed by a collinearity threshold <math>\lambda \in [0;1]</math> and is built by including W(j) (<math>j = 2, \dots, k</math>) in <math>\psi(X_t)</math> if the R2 of the regression of W(j) on the variables already included in the model is <math>\leq \lambda</math>. (II.1.c) The number of sets of regressors is controlled by the number of values of <math>\lambda</math>, between 0 and 1 chosen, say, m. (II.2) Using Data both on the first and second Sub-sample: (II.2.a) Forecast each model by regressing Y on each set of regressors <math>\psi(X_t)</math> using the data on the first sub-sample only and compute an out-of-sample prediction criterion (the cross-validated mean square prediction error) using the data on the second sub-sample only. This involves the estimation of m models. (II.2.b) Select a “candidate” model as the one corresponding to the best out-of-sample performance <math>\psi^*(X_t)</math>.</p>
<p>Stage III.- Search Strategy: (III.1) Using data from both the second and third Sub-sample: (III.1.a) Search for a more parsimonious model: forecast all models including a constant and all the regressors in <math>\psi^*(X_t)</math>. one at a time in the order they were originally produced by procedure II.1.a, this time on the basis of the absolute correlations of the second sub-sample or of the correlations of the first and the second sub-sample together. (III.1.b) Perform an evaluation of the models out of sample (using the data on the third sub-sample) calculating a performance measure (the cross-validated mean square prediction error, possibly augmented by a penalty term for the number of parameters in the model)</p>
<p>Stage IV.- Model selection: (IV.1) Repeat Stage I and stage II changing the order of the sub-samples. Produce a candidate model for each sub-sample ordering. (IV.2) Select the model which has the best performance over the whole sample using Akaike Information Criteria or any other Asymptotic Loss efficient selection procedure.</p>

## 2.3 Main features of VSELECT

VSELECT is a very useful composite Stata code for model selection developed by Lindsey and Sheter (2010). It includes a slightly different version of the Stata’s built-in stepwise algorithm (based on Draper and Smith, 1966; in which the standard significance Wald test has been replaced by a set of alternative information criteria –R2, AIC, BIC, etc.-), and the first Stata code to include an adapted version of the Furnival and Wilson (1974) “Leaps and Bound” code (to perform “efficient exhaustive” in-sample search for model selection in linear regression).

The VSELECT-STEPWISE sub-algorithm includes both backward elimination and forward selection alternatives. In the first case, the method proceeds as follows: the initial model only contains the intercept

term. Then an iterative procedure sequentially includes the covariates providing the highest improve in the user-selected information criterion. The algorithm terminates when there is no additional covariate to include that improves the information criterion. In the second case, stepwise backward elimination starts with a model with the full set of covariates and iteration works downwards, by sequentially (one by step) selecting the covariate to be deleted to obtain the largest improve in the user-selected information criterion. As in the forward selection case, the backward elimination algorithm ends when there is no covariate removal available to improve information criterion.

Additionally, VSELECT provides the “BEST” option to select models by using the “leaps and bound” Furnival and Wilson (1974) sub-algorithm. In words of the authors (Lindsey and Sheter, 2010, pp. 655) this efficient and exhaustive alternative *“organizes all the possible models into tree structures and scans through them, skipping (or leaping) over those that are definitely not optimal...Each node in the tree corresponds to two sets of predictors. The predictor lists are created based on an automatic ordering of all the predictors by their t test statistic value in the original regression. When the algorithm examines a node, it compares the regressions of each pair of predictor lists with the optimal regressions of each predictor size that have already been conducted. Depending on the results, all or some of the descendants of that node can be skipped by the algorithm. The initial ordering of the predictors and their smart placement in sets within the nodes ensure that the algorithm completes after finding the optimal predictor lists and examining only a fraction of all possible regressions.”*

Formally, the VSELECT-BEST algorithm computes:

$$\operatorname{argmin}_S \text{RSS}(S) \text{ subject to } |S| = k \text{ for all } k = 1, \dots, n$$

Where RSS is the in-sample root mean square error, S is a set a covariates, n is the maximum number of available covariates and operator |.| denotes the size of each set S.

Taking into account the following fundamental property:

$$\text{RSS}(S_1) \geq \text{RSS}(S_2) \text{ if } S_1 \subseteq S_2$$

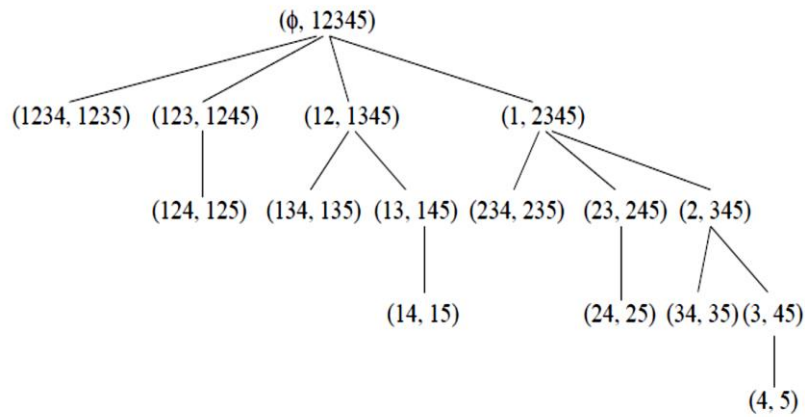
where S1 and S2 are two variable subsets of the complete set of covariates (denoted, for simplicity, by X).

In order to minimize computational requirements, the covariates i and j are arranged in such a way that that  $\text{RSS}(X - \{x_i\}) \geq \text{RSS}(X - \{x_j\})$

for each  $i \leq j$ , where  $X - \{x_i\}$  denotes the matrix  $X$  from which the  $i$ -th column has been deleted.<sup>7</sup>

A better understanding of the “leaps and bound” method can be achieved by means of the following example. The search method (top to down and left to right) across alternative sub-sets of potential covariates in this algorithm is based on two trees: the regression tree and the bound tree, which can be combined in a pair tree as follows.

**Figure 4.- Five covariates’ Leaps and bound pair tree**



In the pair tree of figure 4, each node is composed by a bound set and a regression set of covariates (see Furnival and Willson, 1974). Because of the above mentioned fundamental property and the t-test covariate ordering, we know that RSS will generally increase going from the north-west to the south-east of the tree, and, of course, the minimum RSS will always be obtained by including all the 5 variables. However, model selection is based on information criteria (rather than RSS), which also includes some kind of over-parameterization penalty function. For this reason, while it is possible to state that if  $RSS(k) \geq RSS(j) \Rightarrow IC(k) \geq IC(j)$  (where  $IC$  is some information criterion, and  $k$  and  $j$  are two different sets of covariates with the same number of variables), it is inappropriate to assert that  $IC(k) \geq IC(j)$  when  $RSS(k) \geq RSS(j)$  if the  $k$  set includes less covariates than the  $j$  set. This is why VSELECT-BEST algorithm provides the optimal solution (in terms of any  $IC$ ) for each covariate sub-set size between 1 and  $n-1$ , where  $n$  is the total number of initially admissible covariates.

In figure 4 example, VSELECT-BEST starts by calculating RSS of the root and all the first level nodes. Whether or not to compute remaining nodes’ RSS in question at the core of the algorithm. In words of Ni and Huo (2006, pp.9), computing, for example, the RSS of covariate sets included in the node  $(124, 125)$  “depends on the values of  $RSS(\{1245\})$  and

<sup>7</sup>For this purpose, covariates are automatically ordered by their t test statistic value in the original regression.

$RSS(\{123\})$ . If  $RSS(\{123\}) \leq RSS(\{1245\})$ , because  $\{124\}$  and  $\{125\}$  are subsets of  $\{1245\}$ , we immediately have  $RSS(\{123\}) \leq RSS(\{124\})$  and  $RSS(\{123\}) \leq RSS(\{125\})$ . Hence, there is no need to compute for  $RSS(\{124\})$  and  $RSS(\{125\})$ . Otherwise, they should be computed. Similarly, whether or not to compute  $RSS(\{134\})$  and  $RSS(\{135\})$  (or  $RSS(\{13\})$  and  $RSS(\{145\})$ ) depends on three values:  $RSS(\{12\})$ ,  $RSS(\{1345\})$ , and  $\min(RSS(\{123\}), RSS(\{124\}), RSS(\{125\}))$  (denoted as  $RSS(3)$ ). Note that  $RSS(3) \leq RSS(\{12\})$ . There are three cases for those three values: a) If  $RSS(\{12\}) \leq RSS(\{1345\})$ , then none of  $RSS(\{134\})$ ,  $RSS(\{135\})$ ,  $RSS(\{13\})$ , or  $RSS(\{145\})$  needs to be calculated. b) If  $RSS(3) \leq RSS(\{1345\}) < RSS(\{12\})$ , then only  $RSS(\{13\})$  and  $RSS(\{145\})$  need to be calculated to update the minimum RSS with 2 covariates. c) If  $RSS(\{1345\}) < RSS(3)$ , then all of the four RSS's need to be calculated.”

Because of this search space reduction, the original “2n order” model selection problem becomes a “2<sup>n</sup>/p order” problem (where 1/p is the reduction success rate), without losing the in-sample accuracy of (more time consuming) complete-exhaustive methods. As a result of this property (ensuring in-sample optimality with a reduced search universe), VSELECT-BEST overcomes the most important weakness of heuristic methods and emerge as the best model selection alternative for moderate-size problems (between 20 and 40 variables), in which in-sample explanation and not out-of-sample forecasting is the main objective.

However, Lindsey and Sheter (2010) package still faces three important limitations: 1) The algorithm’s main property does not apply for out-of-sample model selection problems (e.g. we cannot ensure that  $RSS_{out}(S_1) \geq RSS_{out}(S_2)$  if  $S_1 \subseteq S_2$ ); 2) While more efficient than complete-exhaustive methods, for large size problems the VSELECT-BEST approach becomes unfeasible and very time consuming (because the success reduction rate will not compensate the exponential increase of the problem size with the number of potential covariates); and 3) Since it has not been designed to deal with robustness analysis, it only keeps best model results of each subset size (leaving aside many crucial outcomes for comparison purposes).

### 3 The Global Search Regression (GSREG) procedure

Thirty years ago, Professor Alan J. Miller developed an interesting comparison of alternative (heuristic and exhaustive) model selection approaches to conclude that “*an exhaustive search... is recommended when feasible... [and] that the best 10 or 20 subsets of each size, not just the best one, should be saved. The closeness of fit of these competitors gives an indication of the likely bias in least-squares regression coefficients*” (Miller, 1984; pp. 408).

Previous proposition stylishly summarizes the underlying reasons to develop GSREG, a STATA® code (inspired by Coen, Gomme and Kendall (1969)' original insights) that: 1) guarantees optimality even with out-of-sample selection criteria; 2) allows residual testing for each alternative; 3) retains VSELECT leaps-and-bound “shortcuts” for in-sample selection criteria; and 4) provides (depending on user specifications) a full-information dataset with outcome statistics for every alternative model. These features make GSREG a valuable tool for high-accuracy forecasting and parameter robustness comparisons.

In spite of the above documented increase in computational capabilities, our complete-exhaustive algorithm is particularly recommended for small-size (less than 30 variables) model selection problems, where: 1) out-of-sample selection criteria will be used to select the optimal choice; and/or 2) the main researcher objective is about parameter stability across different model specifications.

However, its options are encompassing enough to transform GSREG in a flexible device for many other alternative uses. In what follows, all its features are presented in detail.

The `gsreg` command has two major stages. In the first one, it creates a set of lists, wherein each list contains one of the possible sets of dependent variables, and therefore, the full set of lists contains all possible combinations of candidate covariates. In the second stage, the command performs a regression for each of the lists previously created.

In the first stage the set of lists is determined according to the following steps:

- 1) The algorithm determines an inventory containing the total set of candidate variables,  $Lvc$ , according to the list of user-specified original variables and the additional covariates to be included as candidates if some of the options `dlags`, `ilags` or `rlags` are specified.
- 2) If the `ncomb` option is not specified, a first set of lists is created,  $SL$ , taking all possible combinations without repetition of candidate variables (which include all combinations taken from 1 up to the total number of variables in  $Lvc$ ). Otherwise,  $SL$  is created by taking all combinations without repetition of candidate variables taken from `integer1` to `integer2` defined in `ncomb` option. So,  $SL = \{L_{int1}, \dots, L_{int2}\}$  where each  $L_i$  is a particular subset of the set of candidate variables,  $Lvc$ .
- 3) If the `squares` option is specified, from each  $L_i$  of point 2 an additional list is created ( $SqLi$ ), which includes every covariate in  $L_i$  plus all they squares. Then, the whole set of  $SqLi$  lists ( $SqL$ ) is added to the  $SL$  set. If the `cubic` option is additionally

specified, another group of lists (*CubL*) is created from the *SqL* set by generating a *CubLi* list for each *SqLi* list, in which *SqLi* covariates are complemented by *Li* cubes. After that, the *CubL* set is added to *SL*<sup>8</sup>.

- 4) If the *interactions* option is specified, an additional *IntLi* list is created from each *Li*, which includes all *Li* variables plus all possible combinations without repetition of the interactions of these variables. Then *IntLi* lists are added to *SL*.
- 5) By using the *fixinteractions* option, users are able to create a *FintLi* new list from each *Li*, which not only includes all *Li* variables but also all possible combinations without repetition of the interactions between *Li* variables and *fixvar* variables (see below).
- 6) If the *change* option is specified, a new set of lists (*SC*) is created from *SL* (already modified, if specified, by *ilags*, *dlags*, *ncomb*, *squares*, *cubic*, *interactions*, and/or *fixinteractions*) to test the existence of structural change in every bivariate relationship, including all possible combinations without repetition of the interactions between *SL* variables and the user-defined variable of structural change (e.g. a step or a point dummy variable). Then, *SC* is added to *SL*.

In the second stage, *GSERG* exhaustively performs one regression per *SL* list, saving coefficients and different (default and user-defined) statistics in a Stata *.dbf* file. More precisely, for each *SL* list *GSREG* outcomes include:

- a) Coefficients and t-statistics of each covariate.
- b) Regression number (regression id), number of covariates and number of observations.
- c) Default additional statistics (adjusted r-squared, rmse), optional additional statistics (such as residual test p-values, out-of-sample rmse out, etc.), and other user-defined statistics that user specifies in the *cmdstat* option.

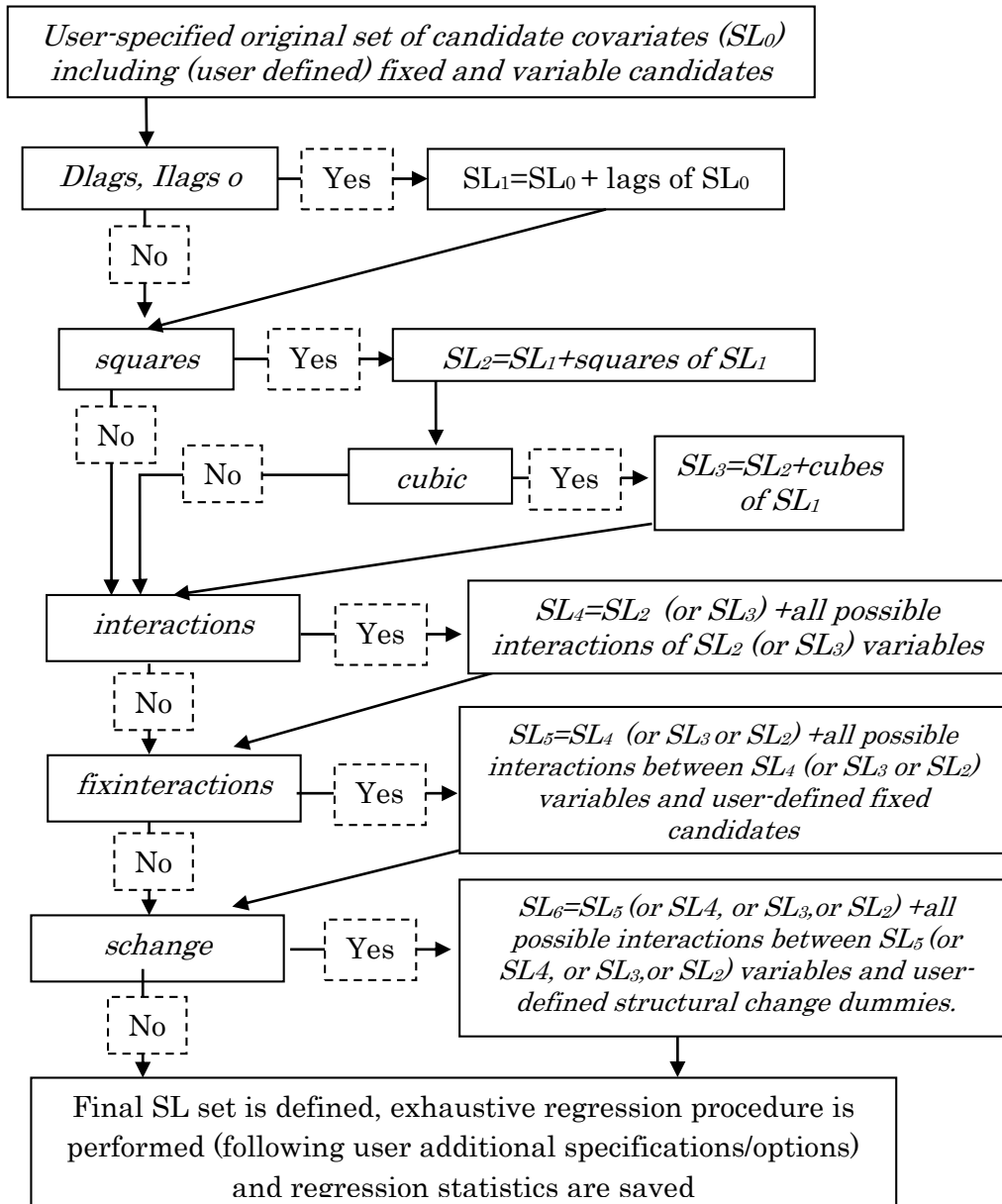
The following scheme summarizes *GSREG* procedure:

---

<sup>8</sup> Notice that this procedure dismisses all those lists (regressions) which include squares of a certain variable but do not include the original variable (e.g. in levels), thereby reducing the number of estimations to be performed. If users would like to estimate the cases where a given variable appears only in quadratic terms, they should simply include the square of that variable (or all variables he wants) as an independent variable in the original *Lvc* set. Also notice that for the case of the *cubic* option, the algorithm only generates lists with the cubes of the variables for which the square was included. Similar criteria were applied to the *interaction*, *fixinteractions* and *change* options explained in the following sections.



Figure 5.-Main features of GSREG algorithm



## 4. Syntax

The syntax for the GSREG command is:

```
gsreg depvar varlist_ocand [weight] [if] [in] [,
    ncomb(#1,#2) samesample vselect dlags(numlist)
    ilags(numlist) lags(numlist) fixvar(fixvarlist)
    schange(varschange) interactions squares cubic
    fixinteractions outsample(#) cmdest(commandname)
    cmdoptions(commandoptions) cmdstat(commandstats)
    cmdiveq(varlist_end=valist_inst) aicbic hettest
    hettest_o(hettestmoptions) archlm
    archlm_o(archlmoptions) bgodfrey
    bgodfrey_o(bgodfreyoptions) durbinalt
    durbinalt_o(durbinaltoptions) dwatson sktest
    sktest_o(sktestoptions) swilk swilk_o(swilkoptions)
    sfrancia testpass(#) resultsdta(newbasename)
    replace double nocount compact nindex(lcimplist)
    mindex(lcimplist) best(#) backup(#) part(#1,#2) ]
```

## 5 Options

### 5.1 General options

**ncomb** (#1,#2) specifies the minimum and maximum number of variable (instead of user-specified fixed) covariates to be included in the procedure. GSREG will perform all possible combinations (regressions) between candidate variables taken from #1 to #2. #1 must be less or equal to #2, and additionally, the number of candidates must be greater or equal to #2. If this option is not specified, GSREG will run all possible combinations without repetition of size1 to n (the total number of candidates)<sup>9</sup>.

**backup** (#) creates # backup (medium-term) .dta files to provide users with some insurance against unexpected gsreg early termination. Each partial-results-database will contain outcome information of 1/# of the total number of regressions, and all backup files will be saved in the ongoing working directory. These medium-term files will be stored with a composite name, using the results-database name (gsreg by default, or user specified in the resultsdta option) as an initial fixed sub-string, plus the number of each partition and the total number of backups files

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<sup>9</sup>*ncomb* allows to include 0 as minimum value, only if the option *fixvar* is specified.

specified in `#` (eg. `gsreg_part_1_of_4.dta`; `gsreg_part_2_of_4.dta`; `gsreg_part_3_of_4.dta`; and `gsreg_part_4_of_4.dta`). All these files will be deleted at the end of a successful `gsreg` execution (e.g. without any unexpected early termination), because they will be replaced by a unique total-results-database. If the number of total regressions to be performed is lower than `#`, the number backup partitions will be equal to the former. See Examples of using backup and part options.

`part(#1,#2)` allows users to simplify external parallelization strategies by running in each (of potentially many parallel) Stata instance only a user-specified share of the total number of regressions to be estimated. Among the arguments of this option, the second integer identifies the number of partitions that will be used to divide the SL set (see section 3), and also defines the number of regressions of each partition, which is about  $1/\#2$  of the total number of regressions. In turn, the first integer is used to select which-one of these partitions must be used by GSREG in each Stata instance (e.g. `part(1,3)`, `part(2,3)`, and `part(3,3)` could be combined –using only one of these options per Stata instance– in three parallel Stata instances running `gsreg` on the same SL set). If the number of total regressions to be performed is lower than `#2`, the number part partitions will be equal to the former. See Examples of using backup and part options

`samesample` makes all regressions to be performed over the same sample of observations, defined as the largest common sample. By default, GSREG performs each regression with the maximum number of observations available for the covariate subset used in each particular case.

`vselect` runs the command `vselect` (for `vselect` “best” option) developed by Charles Lindsey and Simon Sheather (2010, which has to be previously installed) to obtain the best  $n$  regressions (one for each maximum number of covariates included: e.g. the best one covariate model, the best two-covariates model and so on) in terms of in-sample RMSE. When specifying `vselect`, the only additional option that can be specified is the `fixvar` option.

## 5.2 Lag structure options

`dlags (numlist>0 integer)` allows to include dependent variable lags (`depvar`) among candidate covariates.

`dlags (#)` adds among candidates the `#` dependent variable lag. `tsset` must be specified when using this option.

`dlags (#1/#2)` adds among candidates all dependent variable lags from `#1` to `#2` considering one-unit intervals.

`dlags (#1 #2 #3)` adds among candidates the #1, the #2, and the #3 dependent variable lags.

`dlags (#1 (#d) #2)` adds among candidates all dependent variable lags from #1 to #2 considering #d unit intervals.

`dlags (#1 #2 #3 ... #4 (#d) #5)` adds among candidates dependent variable lags #1, #2, and #3, and additionally all dependent variable lags from #4 to #5 considering #d unit intervals.

`ilags (numlist>0 integer)`<sup>10,11</sup> allows including independent variable lags among original candidates. The syntax is flexible and identical to that used `inlags`.

`lags (numlist>0 integer)` allows to jointly include dependent and independent variable lags among original candidates. It replaces `dlags` and `ilags` when the argument is identical. `tsset` must be specified when using this option. `lags` must not be specified together with `dlags` or `ilags`.

### 5.3 Fixed variable options

`fixvar (varlist_fix)` allows to specify a subset of covariates which must be included in all regressions. Variables defined in `varlist_fix` must not be included among the standard candidates (`varlist_ocand`).

### 5.4 Options for transformations and interactions

`schange (varchange)` tests structural change of slopes (using dummy `varchange` as interaction with all candidates) or dependent variable levels (alternatively allowing `varchange` to interact with the intercept). Interactions of `varchange` with any candidate will only be included if this candidate is in the equation. `varchange` must not be included among original candidates (`varlist_ocand`) because it will only be used for structural change.

`interactions` includes additional covariate candidates to evaluate all possible interactions without repetition among candidates. Interactions between any two candidates will only be allowed if both of

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<sup>10</sup> Using `ilags` and `dlags` options is equivalent to generate independent and dependent variables lags (respectively) before using `GSREG` and include them among original candidates.

<sup>11</sup> Users looking for different candidate lag structures for each covariate should not specify the option `ilags` but, instead, create desired candidate lag structures before using `GSREG` and include them in the whole set of original candidates.

them are in the equation. When used together with `schange`, the structural change of interactions will only be used if these interactions are included in the estimated specification.

**squares** adds the squares of each variable in *varlist\_ocand* as new candidates. Each square will only be accepted as a regression covariate if its level (original variable) is present in the equation. Similarly, when used together with `schange`, the structural change of the squares will only be allowed if these squares are in the equation.

**cubic** is similar to `squares`. It includes cubes of each variable in *varlist\_ocand* as new candidates. These cubes will only be accepted as covariates if level and squares of the same variable are also included in the equation. As for `squares`, when used together with `schange`, the structural change of the cubes will only be allowed if these cubes are also in the equation.

**fixinteractions** is similar to `interactions`, but it only includes as additional candidates all possible interactions without repetition among each standard candidate and each fixed variable in *varlist\_fix*.

## 5.5 Options for time series and panel data forecasts

**outsample (#)** is used in time series and panel models. It splits the sample into two. The first sub-sample is used for regression purposes and the second one is applied to evaluate forecast accuracy. `outsample (#)` leaves the last #periods to make forecasts (so that regressions are performed over the first  $T\#$  periods – where  $T$  is the total number of available time series observations). When this option is specified, GSREG calculates the *rmse\_in* (*in sample root mean square error*) between period 1 and  $N\#$ , and *rmse\_out* (*out sample root mean square error*) between period  $N\#$  and  $N$ . `tsset` must be specified when using this option.

## 5.6 Regressions command options

**cmdest (commandname)**<sup>12</sup> allows choosing the regression command to be used. If the option is not specified, *commandname* default is `regress`. This option allows using `regress`, `xtreg`, `probit`, `logit`, `areg`, `qreg` and `plreg`, but it additionally accept any regression command that respects the syntax of `regress` and saves results (matrices

---

<sup>12</sup>Not all GSREG options can be used in any regression command; and for regression commands with required (compulsory) options, it will be necessary to specify them in `cmdoptions`.

$e(b)$  and  $e(V)$ ) in the same way. `ivregress` is also accepted but complementarily using option `cmdiveq(varlist_end = varlist_inst)`. See Examples of using `cmdest`, `cmdoptions`, `cmdstat` and `cmdiveq`.

`cmdoptions` (*commandoptions*) allows adding supported (by *commandname*) additional options for each regression

`cmdstat` (*commandstats*) enables GSREG (which automatically saves the number of observations `-obs.`, the number of covariates `-nvar`, the adjusted R2 `-r_sqr_a` and the *root mean square error* `-rmse_in`) to save additional regression statistics (included as scalars in `e()`) specified in *commandstats*.

`cmdiveq` (`varlist_end = varlist_inst`) is a special GSREG option for ivreg estimations, which can be used to specify varlists of endogenous variables (`varlist_end`) and instruments (`varlist_inst`). When using this option, `cmdest(ivregress 2sls)`, `cmdest(ivregress liml)` or `cmdest(ivregress gmm)` must also be specified, and the endogenous variables must also be included in `varlist_fix` or in `varlist_ocand`. See Examples of using `cmdest`, `cmdoptions`, `cmdstat` and `cmdiveq`.

## 5.7 Post-estimation options

### 5.7.1 Information criteria

`aicbic` calculates `estat ic` after each regression to obtain Akaike (*aic*) and Bayesian information criteria (*bic*)

### 5.7.2 Heteroscedasticity tests

`hettest` calculates default `estat hettest` after each regression and saves *p-values*.

`hettest_o` (*hettestmoptions*) allows adding options to `hettest`.

`archlm` runs default `estat archlm` after each regression and saves *p-values*. `tsset` must be specified when using this option.

`archlm_o` (*archlmoptions*) allows adding options to `archlm`.

### 5.7.3 Serial autocorrelation tests

**bgodfrey** computes default `estat bgodfrey` after each regression and saves *p-values*. `tsset` must be specified when using this option.

**bgodfrey\_o** (*bgodfreyoptions*) allows adding options to `bgodfrey`.

**durbinalt** calculates `estat durbinalt` after each regression and saves the *p-values*. `tsset` must be specified when using this option.

**durbinalt\_o** (*durbinaltoptions*) allows adding options to `durbinalt`.

**dwatson** runs `estat dwatson` after each regression and saves the *Durbin-Watson* statistic. `tsset` must be specified when using this option.

#### 5.7.4 Normality tests of residuals

**sktest** computes `sktest` after each regression and saves the *p-value* of the joint probability of skewness and kurtosis for normality. `tsset` must be specified when using this option.

**sktest\_o** (*sktestoptions*) allows adding options to `sktest`.

**swilk** calculates `swilk` after each regression and saves the *p-value* of the *Shapiro-Wilk* normality test. `tsset` must be specified when using this option.

**swilk\_o** (*swilkoptions*) allows adding options to `swilk`.

**sfrancia** runs `sfrancia` after each regression and saves the *p-value* of the *Shapiro-Francia* normality test. `tsset` must be specified when using this option.

**testpass** (#) allows a reduction of the outcome database size by saving only those regression results that fulfilled all user-specified residual tests (at a # significance level).

### 5.5 Output options

**resultsdta** (*newbasename*) allows results database name to be user defined in *newbasename*. By default, the name will be *gsreg.dta*.

**replace** replaces the results database if it is already created (with the same name) in the ongoing working directory.

**double** forces results to be created and saved in *double* format, that is, with double precision.

**nocount** hides from the screen the number of regression which is being estimated. If this option is not specified, GSERG will show for each regression its number (used for identification purposes) and the total number of regressions to be estimated.

**compact** reduces the results database size by deleting all coefficients and t statistics. In their place, GSREG creates a *string* variable called *regressors* that describes which candidate variables are included in each regression. This variable takes value "1" in position # if the candidate variable with position # is included in the equation, and it takes value "." if it is not. Variable positions are kept in a small database called *newbasename\_labels.dta* (where *newbasename* is the results database user defined name).

**nindex** (*lcimplist*) allows specifying an index of normalized accuracy `-nindex-`. Regressions will be ordered from highest to lowest `nindex` in the results database, and the best regression according to `nindex` will be shown on screen at the end of the GSREG execution. If not specified, `nindex` will be based on the adjusted R-squared (*r\_sqr\_a*). User choices about goodness-of-fit or forecast accuracy criteria on `nindex` can flexibly be specified in *lcimplist*. By means of user-selected weights and ranking variables, *lcimplist* allows complex arguments to create multinomial ordering criteria. Any results-database variable can be used in the *lcimplist* argument as a ranking variable (e.gr\_sqr\_a, rmse-in, rmse-out, aic, bic, etc.), but it must be preceded by a user-defined real number weight as in the following example: `nindex(0.3 r_sqr_a -0.3 aic -0.4 bic)`. It should be noticed that each variable included in *lcimplist* is normalized using the whole sample average (across of all regressions) of the same variable.

**mindex** (*lcimplist*) and **best** (#) options must be specified together. `mindex` generates a normalized ranking index like `nindex`, and has the same syntax (see `nindex` option), but the normalization of its arguments is developed using averages obtained from the `best# +I` regressions. Therefore, `mindex` is updated with each additional regression and only the best (in terms of *lcimplist*)# regressions results are saved. The joint use of `mindex` and `best` options can strongly reduce database size (and RAM requirements) making feasible larger model selection problems. However, as `mindex` must be re-calculated with every regression, GSERG could run slower than using `nindex` (particularly for small model selection problems).



## 6 Examples

GSREG can be used for many purposes. In this chapter, we introduce three straightforward illustrations of different GSREG applications. For brevity matters, option specifications are not fully discussed here. Interested users will find a much in deep explanation (and option examples) in the GSREG help file.

In the first example, we use artificial data to see how GSREG can be useful to obtain the best model in terms of in-sample goodness-of-fit, provided that regression residuals fulfill some desirable property.

The second example shows that a complete search method (as GSERG) could be indispensable if out-of-sample accuracy is the main user concern for model selection.

Our third example illustrates another valuable GSERG application: parameter stability analysis (across different control variable model structures).

### 6.1 Model selection and residual tests

The Leaps and Bound efficient model selection methodology (introduced in Stata by the `vselect` command) has two salient characteristics: 1) by using an exhaustive search method (see section 2 and sub-section 2.3), it ensures optimality in terms of any in-sample model selection criterion; and 2) the embedded Furnival and Wilson (1974) efficient algorithm allows exhaustive search to be performed over a larger number of covariates than that feasible for complete search algorithms.

However, the best model (or models) in terms of some in-sample information criterion do not necessarily fulfill required residual properties (something left aside by `veselect` and other model selection Stata commands like `stepwise`). The following very small and clear example shows why GSREG-like algorithms can be essential to deal with this problem.

Suppose we wish to obtain the best model to explain  $y$ , using some combination of two covariates,  $x$  and  $z$ , and assuming the following data generating process (DGP):

$$y_t = \beta_0 + \beta_{1t}x_{1t} + \beta_{2t}z_t + u_t$$

$$t = 1, \dots, 1000$$

$$\beta_0 = 1$$

$$\beta_{1t} = 0.9 \text{ si } t < 600, \beta_{1t} = 0 \text{ si } t \geq 600$$

$$\beta_{2t} = 0 \text{ si } t \leq 800, \beta_{2t} = 0.1 \text{ si } t > 800$$

$$z \sim U[0,1],$$

$$x \sim U[0,2] \text{ si } t < 600, x \sim U(0,2.4) \text{ si } t \geq 600$$

$$u \sim N(0,1)$$

By construction, *xcovariate* has a higher explanatory power than *z*, but tends to generate heteroscedasticity problems.

We will use *GSERG* to estimate all possible combinations. With two candidate covariates there will only be 3 possible models. For each regression, we will generate and save information (in *res1.dta* file) about: 1) the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) (using the *aic bic GSREG* option); and 2) the p-value of the standard heteroscedasticity test (by means of *hetttest GSREG* option). Finally, we will ask *GSREG* to display on screen the best regression in terms of a multinomial normalized index based on the adjusted R2, the AIC, and the BIC, using the following command statement:

```
gsreg y x z, resultsdta(res1) replace hetttest aicbic nindex(0.3 r_sqr_a -0.3 aic -0.4 bic)
```

**Table 3: Screen results for example 1**

```
-----
Total Number of Estimations: 3
-----
Estimation number 1 of 3
Estimation number 2 of 3
Estimation number 3 of 3
file res1.dta saved
-----
Best estimation in terms of 0.3 r_sqr_a -0.3 aic -0.4 bic
Estimation number 3
-----
```

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs =	1000
Model	86.5026807	2	43.2513403	F( 2, 997) =	35.02
Residual	1231.34003	997	1.23504517	Prob> F =	0.0000
Total	1317.84271	999	1.31916187	R-squared =	0.0656
				Adj R-squared =	0.0638
				Root MSE =	1.1113

```
-----
```

y	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]
x	.4360614	.0545238	8.00	0.000	.3290669 .5430559
z	.2705071	.1242505	2.18	0.030	.0266845 .5143296
_cons	.9651791	.0912015	10.58	0.000	.7862103 1.144148

```
-----
```

The best model in terms of nindex includes both x and z covariates. However, our res1.dta file (partially reproduced in table 4) shows some interesting results<sup>13</sup>:

**Table 4: Example 1 - main saved results**

order	Model	r_sqr_a	aic	bic	hetttest	nindex
1	x	0.0603	3054.7230	3064.5380	0.0006	0.5621
2	z	0.0047	3112.1610	3121.9760	0.2120	-1.1537
3	x z	0.0638	3051.9800	3066.7030	0.0005	0.5915

In table 4 above, we can see that the first model, with only x as covariate, is the best one in terms of the BIC, while the best model in terms of both, AIC and adjusted R2, is that using x and z as covariates (as already shown in table 3). However, both models fail to fulfill the residual homoscedasticity requirement (with hetttest p-values lower than 0.01).

On the other hand, the z model (model 2), while suboptimal under any selection criterion, is the only one for which the null hypothesis of homoscedasticity cannot be rejected.

A similar exercise can be simulated for related problems of serial correlation or non-normal residuals, where best models in terms on some information criteria do not fulfill residuals requirements while sub-optimal models surprisingly do it.

When user concern is focused on estimation robustness, residuals requirements become crucial and GSREG provides a better alternative than other Stata model selection commands (like `vselect` or `stepwise`) to ensure optimality among admissible models (e.g. to find the optimal model among those with white noise residuals).

## 6.2 Out of sample prediction

M. Friedman (1953) contribution still generates a vigorous debate among epistemologists confronting “instrumentalism” and “realism” (see Mäki, 1986; or Cadwell, 1992). Some still blame Friedman for having generalized the misleading idea that forecast accuracy (even using models with “false” assumptions) is the only valid mechanism to choose among competing theories.

---

<sup>13</sup>To reduce the table 4 size many res1.dta columns has been omitted: such as number of observations, number of variables, the root mean square error, regression coefficients and t statistics.

In econometrics, there is some parallelism with the “measurement without theory” debate associated to Koopmans (1947) almost 70 year ago (and reviewed by Hendry and Morgan, 1995) and more recent methodological discussions about in-sample vs out-of-sample model selection mechanisms, where renowned econometricians like Ashley, Granger and Schmalensee (1980) assert that “a sound and natural approach” to testing predictive ability “must rely primarily on the out-of-sample forecasting performance” (p. 1149).

It is not surprising that many colleagues increasingly consider to overcome this last controversy by examining both in-sample and out-of-sample model outcomes.

In this context, GSREG is able to ensure in-sample as well as out-of-sample model selection optimality, reducing user concerns about structural breaks in multivariate relationships.

To illustrate this point, suppose that we wish to get the best model of  $y$  (in terms of some out-of-sample criterion) based on  $x$  and/or  $z$ , with 100 time series observations (using the last 20 to out-of-sample model evaluation), and assuming the following data generating process:

$$y_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_{1t} + \beta_{2t} z_t + u_t$$

$$\beta_0 = 1$$

$$\beta_1 = 1$$

$$\beta_{2t} = 1 \text{ si } t \leq 70$$

$$\beta_{2t} = 0 \text{ si } t > 70$$

$$x, z, u \sim N(0,1)$$

By construction, both covariates have a high in-sample explanatory power, but  $z$  becomes non significant for out-of-sample evaluation purposes.

If the structural change is unknown (and therefore disregarded) and we don't use GSREG to evaluate forecast accuracy, the best “ $y$ ” representation will obviously include  $x$  and  $z$  as covariates.

On the contrary, users concerned about the dangerous effects of potential structural breaks will exploit some database sub-sample to check parameter stability (e.g. the last 20 observations) and use GSREG to examine both explanatory power and forecast accuracy of each alternative model. For this example, the simplest sentence could be:

```
gsreg y x z, outsample(20) replace
```

**Table 5: Screen results for example 2**

```

-----
Total Number of Estimations: 3
-----
Estimation number 1 of 3
Estimation number 2 of 3
Estimation number 3 of 3
file gsreg.dta saved
-----
Best estimation in terms of r_sqr_a
Estimation number 3
-----

      Source |           SS          df           MS          Number of obs =      80
-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----
      Model |    189.57001           2    94.7850049 Prob> F      F( 2,   77) =    67.80
      Residual |   107.654365          77    1.39810864          =    0.0000
      Total |   297.224375          79    3.76233386          R-squared   =    0.6378
                                          Adj R-squared =    0.6284
                                          Root MSE   =    1.1824
-----

y |      Coef.   Std. Err.      t    P>|t|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----
x |   1.158722   .1163415     9.96   0.000   .9270567   1.390388
z |   .9722231   .1362012     7.14   0.000   .7010119   1.243434
   _cons |  -.1121836   .1341773    -0.84   0.406  -.3793648   .1549976
-----

```

By default GSREG outcomes were saved as `gsreg.dta` and the “best” model shown on screen was selected based on the adjusted R2. The `outsample(20)` option keeps the last 20 observations to forecast evaluations. It also calculates by default the in-sample and the out-of-sample root mean square errors.

**Table 6: Example 2 – main saved results**

Order	Model	r_sqr_a	rmse_in	rmse_out
1	x	0.3904075	1.514427	0.572002
2	z	0.1605745	1.777132	0.759629
3	x z	0.6283932	1.182416	0.767093

Following table 6, the best model for in-sample criteria (adjusted R2 and/or root mean square error) is the worst in terms of the out-of-sample root mean square error criterion (model 3, with *x* and *z* as covariates). On the contrary, model 1 (which only includes *x* as covariate) has a relatively poor in-sample performance but ensures the highest forecast accuracy. By alternative selecting, for example, `rmse_out` or `rmse_in` as ranking variables, GSREG users are able to exhaustively cross-check model optimality.

### 6.3 Parameter stability analysis

By generating a database with exhaustive information about all regression alternatives, GSERG is a unique tool for parameter stability analysis.

In this example, we will use the `crisis_fr` database of Gluzmann and Guzman (2011) (containing information on financial crisis, financial reforms and a set of controls for 89 countries along the period 1973-2005) to evaluate interest parameter stability under alternative control variable structures.

As a first step, we run a pooled-data (for Latin American countries Emerging Asia and transition economies) linear regression of the probability of future financial crisis over the next 5 years (`fc5`), on a financial reform index (`ifr`) and its recent change (`d_ifr`).

```
reg fc5 ifrd_ifr if EA_LA_TR==1
```

**Table 7: Example 3 – first step regression results**

Source	SS	df	MS				
Model	5.08852674	2	2.54426337	Number of obs =	928		
Residual	168.410396	925	.182065293	F( 2, 925) =	13.97		
Total	173.498922	927	.187161729	Prob> F =	0.0000		
				R-squared =	0.0293		
				Adj R-squared =	0.0272		
				Root MSE =	.42669		

	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
<code>fc5</code>						
<code>ifr</code>	-.00711	.0025616	-2.78	0.006	-.0121372	-.0020829
<code>d_ifr</code>	.0549173	.0110602	4.97	0.000	.0332113	.0766233
<code>_cons</code>	.2793652	.0255525	10.93	0.000	.2292176	.3295128

From table 7, we obtain a negative and significant relationship between `fc5` and `ifr` and a positive (and even more significant) regression coefficient for `d_ifr`.

In their article, Gluzmann and Guzman (2011) also identify 23 theoretically relevant control variables to consider (`v1` to `v23`). Unlike previous examples, we will not use here GSREG to obtain the best model (e.g. best control variable structure) in terms of some in-sample or out-of-sample information criterion (or some linear combination of many information criteria) but examine the whole set of results to evaluate `ifr` and `d_ifr` regressions coefficient and t-statistic distributions.

With this purpose, we follow the Levine and Renelt (1992) and Sala-i-Martin (1997) approach running all possible regression using available information in the `crisis_fr` database, taking `ifr` and `d_ifr` as fixed variables and forcing GSREG to use three control variables for each alternative.

```
gsreg fc5 v1-v23 if EA_LA_TR ==1, ncomb(3) fixvar(ifrd_ifr) replace nocount
```

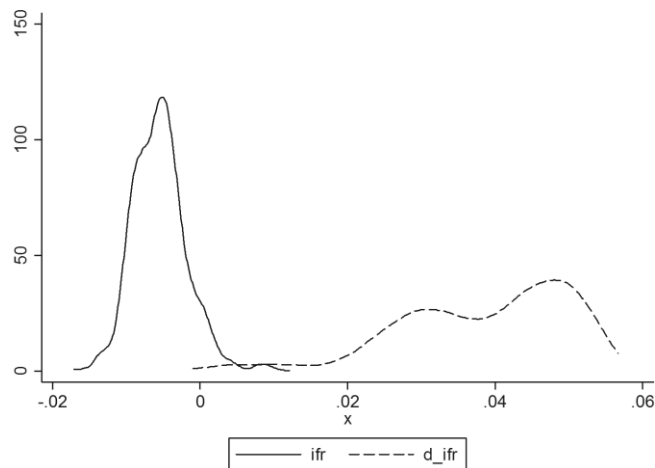
Total Number of Estimations: 1771

-----  
file gsreg.dta saved

GSERG execution time takes less than a minute using STATA/MP 12.1 for windows (64b) in a laptop with a Intel i7-3520m processor and 4Gb of DDR3 RAM memory. The `fixvar(.)` option ensures that `ifr` and `d_ifr` will be used as covariates in all regressions. The `ncomb(3)` option reduces the search space to all possible combinations (without repetition) of 23 control variables taken 3 at time.

Main command outcomes can easily be described by means of the following kernel density plot.

**Figure 6.- Example 4 – ifr and d\_ifr coefficient distribution**



From figure 6, we can see that a large share of the `ifr` coefficient distribution is concentrated around 0, while `d_ifr` coefficients are almost exclusively distributed over positive (non-zero) values.

To provide users with an enlarged example, we can replicate the analysis using alternative estimation methods, such as:

```
gsreg fc5 v1-v23 if EA_LA_TR ==1, ncomb(3) fixvar(ifrd_ifr) replace nocount  
cmdest(probit) cmdstat(r2_p ll)
```

or

```
gsreg fc5 v1-v23 if EA_LA_TR ==1, ncomb(3) fixvar(ifrd_ifr) replace nocount  
cmdest(xtreg) cmdoptions(fe robust)
```

For the probit (pooled) case, GSREG additionally computes (and saves) the pseudo-R2 and the Log Likelihood of each regression, determining that the execution time (on the same software and hardware) rose to 13 minutes.

Finally, the `xtreg` GSERG version was used to estimate the same relationship using fixed effects and robust standard errors. The execution time of the same exercise was about 11 minutes.

## 7 Saved results

The GSREG command creates a .dtafile with outcome information for all estimated alternatives. By default it includes the following columns for each regression:

- 1) regression id (variable order),
- 2) covariate regression coefficients (named  $v\_1\_b$ ,  $v\_2\_b...$ , etc., and labeled with the full covariate name plus the word “coeff.”),
- 3) coefficient t-statistics (named  $v\_1\_t$ ,  $v\_2\_t...$ , etc., and labeled with the full covariate name plus the word “tstat.”),
- 4) number of observations (variable *obs*),
- 5) number of covariates (*nvar*),
- 6) adjusted R2 (*r\_sqr\_a*),
- 7) in-sample *root mean square error* (*rmse\_in*),
- 8) normalized linear combination of user selected (and weighted) model selection criteria (*as nindex* or *mindex* if this option is specified)
- 9) additional user specified statistics (if the *cmdstat* option is specified),
- 10) out-of-sample root mean square error (if *outsample* option is specified), and
- 11) residual test statistics (if specified).

When *compact* option is specified, regression coefficients and t-statistics are omitted and replaced by a unique summary string variable as described in section 5.5.

In addition, GSREG shows on screen the best regression in terms of the user specified *nindex* or *mindex* (or the adjusted R2 if these options are not specified). Therefore, all this “best model” results are also saved in memory (as scalars, macros, matrices and functions).

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