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Sarah Smith
University of Bristol, United Kingdom

Changing Perceptions of Economics

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Understanding Labor Markets in Low-income Countries

Session A1: Labour Market Choices and Economic Inequality

When Love Is Scarce: Early Marriage Market Competition and Labor Market Outcomes

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KEYWORDS

marriage-market competition
early marriage
fertility timing
human capital accumulation

JEL CLASSIFICATION

J12, J13, J24

ABSTRACT

Early career wage growth is driven by job mobility and occupational sorting, particularly during the first decade of labor-market experience. At the same time, key family formation decisions, such as marriage and childbearing, often occur during this high-return phase. This paper studies the effect of early marriage-market competition on family formation decisions and long-run labor-market outcomes. Using population-wide administrative data from Austria, we construct individual-level measures of local marriage-market tightness based on spatially overlapping partner and competitor sets. Tighter marriage markets delay marriage and fertility, increase educational attainment and geographic mobility, and ultimately lead to higher long-run earnings, particularly for women. Our findings highlight how early family formation can permanently reshape careers by constraining search when search matters most.

Pay transparency: coworkers' wages, market benchmarks, and intentions to negotiate pay or search for a job

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KEYWORDS

pay transparency
gender pay gap
wage differentials
compensation

JEL CLASSIFICATION

D31, J31, J71

ABSTRACT

Despite legal guarantees of equal pay for equal work, women continue to earn less than men. In 2022, the unadjusted gender pay gap was 7.8% in Poland, compared with 12.2% across the European Union. After accounting for productivity-related characteristics, the Polish gap rises to 12.7% and has changed little over the past decade (Leythienne & Pérez-Julián, 2025; Magda & Roszczypała, 2025). The EU Pay Transparency Directive, adopted in May 2023, responds to this inequality by strengthening employees' right to obtain information on average pay levels for the same or equivalent work, disaggregated by gender. Relative earnings affect job satisfaction, engagement, and intentions to search for another job, particularly among employees earning less than their coworkers (Card et al., 2012; Dube et al., 2019). These responses depend on whether wage differences appear justified by productivity. Moreover, employees may use same-gender peers, rather than all coworkers, as their primary reference group (Baggio & Marandola, 2023). We use a survey experiment to examine how information about coworker wages and market salary benchmarks affects intentions to request a raise or search for another job. The results show that market salary information moderates the effects of relative coworker pay on both outcomes. In the absence of market information, employees form moderately pessimistic beliefs about their market value, similar to those observed when market salaries are 10% lower. We also investigate whether same-gender coworkers constitute the primary comparison group. If they do, coworker pay transparency may have only limited effects on the gender pay gap.

Firm Pay, Amenities, and Inequality

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KEYWORDS

discrete choice experiments
amenities
pay

JEL CLASSIFICATION

J01, J30, J33

ABSTRACT

Do high-paying firms provide worse non-wage amenities? We estimate firm-specific amenity valuations using discrete choice experiments embedded in a large-scale survey of German workers linked to administrative records. Workers rank hypothetical offers from real firms they would consider joining, with randomized wages identifying money-metric valuations. Valuations vary substantially across firms and demographic groups, yet a single index performs surprisingly well. Valuations are approximately orthogonal to firm wage premia; they therefore do not offset between-firm wage inequality. Male-female differences in amenity valuations explain part of the gender wage gap.

Session A2: Education Policies and Long-Term Human Capital Outcomes

If You Study, You Learn: The Effect of High-Stakes Entry Exams on Later Achievement

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KEYWORDS

high-stakes testing
elite schools
student achievement
educational inequality

JEL CLASSIFICATION

I21, I24, J24

ABSTRACT

High-stakes testing is a central but controversial feature of contemporary education systems. While a large literature documents its effects on short-term achievement, incentives, and strategic behaviour, much less is known about whether exposure to high-stakes exams has lasting effects on students' general human capital. This proposed paper studies whether the presence of high-stakes entry examinations generates durable gains in overall low-stakes test performance beyond the exam itself, or whether observed advantages primarily reflect selection into more in-demand schools. The main empirical question is whether students exposed to high-stakes written entry exams perform better on subsequent low-stakes tests, and if so, whether this reflects selection (i.e. higher-ability or more motivated students sorting into exam-requiring schools) or a causal effect of the high-stakes environment itself (through increased effort, human capital accumulation, or improved test-taking skills). I further examine whether any effects persist into later grades and whether they differ by subject, gender, or socioeconomic background. I focus on the Hungarian lower-secondary school system, where a subset of academically oriented (elite) schools require students to pass competitive, high-stakes written entry exams in grade 6. These exams are externally (centrally) administered and have clear consequences for school admission. At the same time, all students - regardless of school type - participate in a nationwide, standardized, low-stakes assessment (the National Assessment of Basic Competencies, NABC) a few months later. This institutional setting allows a comparison of students who face high-stakes testing early in the academic year (around January) with otherwise similar students in the same class, who do not, but who later (around May) sit the same low-stakes standardized test. Using variation in time and space in schools' entry requirements as an instrument, I estimate the causal effect of taking high-stakes written exams in mathematics and Hungarian language on subsequent low-stakes mathematics and reading literacy test scores a few months later.

Helping High-School Students in Choosing Their Careers: Experimental Evidence from a Large-Scale School Policy in Germany

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KEYWORDS

career counseling
college choice
field of study
education decisions

JEL CLASSIFICATION

I23, I26, I28

ABSTRACT

The post-secondary education choice influences long-term life and labor market outcomes, and poses a complex decision problem under uncertainty for high school students. This study examines the causal effects of a large-scale school policy in Germany that expands the free access to assistance from professional career counselors. By randomly varying the start of the policy for a subset of schools, we find that the students in treatment schools are more likely to attend a career presentation and personal one-on-one meetings. The policy translates to unanticipated effects on the actual education decisions. Students in treatment schools move away from college education, particularly from universities and are less likely to choose natural science and engineering degrees. However, they report greater satisfaction with their choice and a lower likelihood to drop out. While these findings may suggest a previous mismatch in the post-secondary education choice, we find evidence that the career counseling provides limited personalized assistance and that students focus on short-term outcomes in their decision.

Identification of Long-Term Treatment Effects via Temporal Links, Observational, and Experimental Data

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KEYWORDS

long-term effects
partial identification
random set theory

JEL CLASSIFICATION

C21

ABSTRACT

Recent literature proposes combining short-term experimental and long-term observational data to provide alternatives to conventional observational studies for the identification of long-term average treatment effects (LTEs). This paper re-examines the identification problem and uncovers that assumptions restricting temporal link functions – relationships between short-term and mean long-term potential outcomes – are central in this context. The experimental data serve to amplify the identifying power of such assumptions; absent them, the combined data are no more informative than the observational data alone. Plausible inference thus hinges on justifiable restrictions in this class. Motivated by this, I introduce two treatment response assumptions that may be defensible based on economic theory or intuition. To utilize them and facilitate future developments, I develop a novel unifying identification framework that computationally produces sharp bounds on the LTE for a general class of temporal link function restrictions and accommodates imperfect experimental compliance – thereby also extending existing approaches. I illustrate the method by estimating the long-term effects of Head Start participation. The findings indicate that the effects on educational attainment, employment, and criminal involvement are lasting but smaller in magnitude than those established by sibling comparisons.

Session B1: Family Decisions and Investments under Labour Market Uncertainty

When Careers Stall: The Effects of Temporary Employment on Fertility and Infant Health

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KEYWORDS

temporary employment
fertility
perinatal health

JEL CLASSIFICATION

I12, I14, I18

ABSTRACT

We study how temporary employment affects fertility and neonatal health by exploiting the 1984 Spanish labor-market reform, which sharply expanded fixed-term contracts at labor-market entry. The reform generated a strong first stage for low-skilled women: exposed cohorts entered work earlier but experienced less stable careers, fewer days worked, and lower earnings. Combining administrative birth records with the 1999 and 2018 Fertility Surveys, we estimate a within-cohort difference-in-differences design comparing low- and high-skilled women around the reform. Exposed low-skilled mothers have 0.245 fewer births in the administrative cohort measure, an 18.5% decline, and 0.142 fewer completed children in the Fertility Survey, a 7.1% decline. The birth records also show delayed motherhood: age at first birth rises by 0.757 years, with fewer births at young ages and more births at ages 35 and above. Average infant-health effects are small, but adverse outcomes emerge for older mothers and older first births, including lower birthweight and gestational age and higher low-birthweight and preterm risk. Lee-style bounds preserve the positive maternal-age effects, including age at first birth. Mechanism evidence points to persistent labor-market insecurity rather than lower desired fertility: exposed mothers are about 25 percentage points more likely to hold temporary jobs. We build and calibrate a stochastic life-cycle model with fertility, labor-market status, partner status, desired fertility, and maternal-age biological risk. The model matches the main labor-market, fertility-timing, completed-fertility, and mechanism moments, and counterfactuals show that contract instability can reduce long-run fertility and worsen perinatal risk by delaying births in dual labor markets.

Why Wanting a Child Is Not Enough: Marriage-Time Future Constraints and Fertility Realization in Japan

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KEYWORDS

fertility realization
fertility intentions
intrahousehold allocation
gender specialization

JEL CLASSIFICATION

J13, J12, J16

ABSTRACT

This paper studies why fertility intentions are not always translated into realized births, focusing on newly married couples in Japan. While many married childless women report wanting a child, first-birth realization is substantially lower. I argue that this gap can partly be explained by future constraints already visible at marriage. Couples may anticipate post-birth arrangements characterized by asymmetric specialization, weaker work continuity for wives, limited domestic substitutability by husbands, and stronger pressure for women to adjust their labor supply. Using the Japanese Panel Survey of Consumers, I construct a marriage-time measure of anticipated specialization pressure. It combines the expected pace of transition from marriage to first birth within prefecture and marriage-cohort cells with expected relative wage growth between wives and husbands. Higher pressure corresponds to earlier expected parenthood and weaker expected female relative wage growth. The empirical analysis documents three findings. First, fertility desire substantially exceeds first-birth realization within two to three years of marriage. Second, stronger anticipated specialization pressure predicts lower wife work hours and income, lower husband housework, and higher husband income, suggesting that allocation patterns move toward asymmetric specialization before childbirth. Third, stronger pressure is associated with a lower probability of first-birth realization, including among women who report wanting a child. The paper contributes by shifting attention from fertility intentions alone to the constraints shaping whether those intentions are realized. The findings suggest that low fertility reflects not simply a lack of desire for children, but also the expected organization of work, income, and care within marriage.

Secure Old Age: The Effect of Job Insecurity on Parental Investment

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KEYWORDS

job insecurity
parental investment
human capital
old-age insurance

JEL CLASSIFICATION

J24, D14, J13

ABSTRACT

This paper examines how job insecurity affects parental investment decisions within households, using China's late-1990s State-Owned Enterprise (SOE) reform — which dismantled the lifetime employment guarantee for roughly 34 million urban workers — as a natural experiment. In a difference-in-differences design comparing SOE and government (GOV) households between 1995 and 1999 in the Chinese Household Income Project (CHIP), I find that continuously employed urban SOE households with school-age children increased real education expenditure by approximately 40–50% (about 509 yuan in 1995 prices) relative to GOV households after the reform, while financial savings showed no significant response in the same sample. Three pieces of evidence support an interpretation in which children function as a substitute for financial wealth in old-age insurance: SOE workers' current income fell by roughly 13% relative to GOV; the education-spending response follows an inverted-U pattern across the pre-reform income distribution, peaking in the middle tercile; and a two-period model with endogenous intergenerational transfers reproduces both the positive investment response and the null saving response. A pronounced gender dimension emerges: the response is concentrated in households with daughters, reflecting both a catching-up of pre-existing gender investment gaps and the one-child-policy-era reality that an only daughter is the sole vehicle for future intergenerational support.

The Effect of Maternal Job Loss on School Dropout and Educational Trajectories

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KEYWORDS

maternal job loss
school dropout
educational trajectories
intergenerational mobility

JEL CLASSIFICATION

I21, I24, J13

ABSTRACT

This paper studies whether maternal job loss during early adolescence affects children's educational trajectories. We use linked Hungarian administrative register data that connect mothers' labor market histories to children's school enrollment, standardized test scores, grades, and secondary-school track choices. Identification relies on a timing-based difference-in-differences design: we compare children whose mothers lose employment shortly after the child is observed in grade 6 with children whose mothers also lose employment, but only after the main educational outcomes are measured. Preliminary results show that maternal job loss increases dropout by about 3–4 percentage points by the age at which children should be in grade 10. We find little evidence of an average effect on maturity-track enrollment, but this masks important heterogeneity. Children of low-educated mothers are less likely to enter maturity-track programs after maternal job loss, especially among students with weaker prior academic performance. Mechanism analyses suggest that the results are not primarily driven by maternal earnings losses or by broad declines in achievement. Instead, the evidence points to differences in maternal educational resources and school-related involvement: job loss is associated with higher grade repetition among children of low-educated mothers, while changes in school-related discussions, test scores, and aspirations appear more favorable among children of more educated mothers.

Session B2: Pensions, Retirement and Labour Market Behaviour

Pension System Size Preferences along the Bismarckian-Beveridgean Spectrum: Experimental Evidence from the UK

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KEYWORDS

pension schemes
intragenerational redistribution
progressivity
pension preferences

JEL CLASSIFICATION

H55, H23, J26

ABSTRACT

State pension schemes are characterised by intense cross-country heterogeneity in terms of intragenerational progressivity and size. However, it remains unclear how the distributive properties of pension schemes affects individuals' scheme-size preferences and scheme support. We address this gap by conducting a survey-based experiment among a sample of UK residents in which participants are presented with different pension schemes that vary in generosity and intragenerational transfer progressivity. Participants are asked to choose the contribution rate they consider appropriate for each scheme, as well as the scheme they prefer for the UK among the ones presented. At moderate levels of progressivity, participants choose significantly higher contribution rates compared to a very progressive scheme granting universal flat benefits. Additionally, participants are significantly more likely to select high-progressivity schemes over low-progressivity ones, and to select moderately progressive schemes over minimally progressive ones. By controlling for how individuals are affected by each scheme design, we are able to isolate the effect of design features on individuals' choices. This paper provides novel evidence that individuals display other-regarding motivations when deciding over the design of state pension schemes.

Exposing the gap: Gender inequality in occupational pension coverage and income across Europe

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KEYWORDS

occupational pensions
gender inequality
pension coverage
pension income

JEL CLASSIFICATION

H75, I38, J32

ABSTRACT

Using data from the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement (SHARE), this paper examines occupational pension income and coverage gaps between men and women. The focus is on a group of countries with comparable occupational pension regulations: Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands and Switzerland. The results show that after accounting for observable characteristics, over half of the gender gap in occupational pension coverage is explained, largely driven by women's shorter labour market participation, greater part-time work, and lower wages. Factors driving this gap remain constant across birth cohorts. Conditional on receiving an occupational pension, women receive nearly 40 percent less occupational pension income than men, partly due to part-time work and industry of employment. Selection into pension receipt has only a limited impact on the gender pension gap. While the mechanisms explaining the coverage gap are similar across countries, factors explaining the gender pension gap in occupational pension income differ between countries.

The Unintended Consequences of a Pension Age Increase: Evidence from Ireland

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KEYWORDS

pension age
labour supply
welfare
health

JEL CLASSIFICATION

I10, J14, J18

ABSTRACT

We examine the labour market, welfare receipt and health effects of a reform to the Irish State Pension system which increased the age at which some workers could claim a State Pension. We use longitudinal data on ageing in Ireland and a causal identification strategy based on the random date of birth threshold around which workers with adequate contributions are differently affected by the reform. We find that the reform does not increase the employment probability of those affected. However, we find an increased probability of disability payment receipt for those affected by the reform (+12-13 pp). This effect is robust to extensive sensitivity analysis, multiple hypothesis testing and alternative identification methods. We also find an increase in the probability of receiving unemployment benefit. We find little evidence of worsening mental health outcomes and no effect on subjective or objective physical health outcomes for those affected by the reform.

First Flight from the Nest: Child Departure and Parental Labour Market Outcomes

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KEYWORDS

child departure
parental labour supply
gender differences
SHARE

JEL CLASSIFICATION

J16, J21, J22

ABSTRACT

This paper examines how parents adjust their labour market behaviour following the first child's departure from the parental home, a life-course transition that has received little attention in the economic literature. While previous research has focused almost exclusively on empty-nest transitions near retirement, we analyse the first move-out, which typically occurs earlier in the life cycle, when parents remain actively attached to the labour market. Using data from the SHARE Job Episodes Panel for European countries over the period 1990–2017, we apply a staggered difference-in-differences event-study design based on the estimator proposed by Callaway and Sant'Anna (2021). Our results reveal pronounced gender differences in labour market responses. Fathers experience a gradual increase in the probability of retirement following the first child's departure, consistent with an income effect driven by relaxed household budget constraints. This effect is primarily driven by Mediterranean countries, where early retirement schemes provide accessible exit pathways. In contrast, mothers respond differently depending on their prior labour market status. Those who were employed were more likely to become unemployed or inactive, while those who were not employed were more likely to enter employment, signalling possible labour market reactivation. Regime-specific analysis further reveals that mothers in Eastern European countries experience increased inactivity after the departure, pointing to structural barriers to re-entry. These findings highlight the importance of tailoring policy responses to both gender and institutional context.

Session C1: Labour Market Institutions and Work Organisation

Short-run effects of career counseling for employed workers

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KEYWORDS

labor market policy
career counseling
vocational training

JEL CLASSIFICATION

J18, J24, I21

ABSTRACT

This paper provides novel evidence on the short-run labor market effects of a newly introduced public career counseling program that targets employed workers facing professional reorientation. The study exploits regional variation in program intensity, which is arguably exogenous conditional on detailed local labor market characteristics. Using rich German administrative data, I estimate treatment effects up to 18 months after program entry. The results show that counseling accelerates career reorientation but initially reduces regular employment. After 18 months, participants are 9 percentage points less likely to be in regular employment compared to the counterfactual without counseling. Part of this decline appears to be driven by lock-in effects, as counseling increases human capital investments, including participation in vocational training programs. The results point to effect heterogeneity by gender and show more pronounced effects for workers with lower skill levels. Overall, the findings highlight the role of counseling as a complementary service in supporting skill adjustment during labor market transformation.

Locking In or Pushing Out: The Caseworker Dilemma

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KEYWORDS

active labour market policy
program evaluation
causal inference
machine learning

JEL CLASSIFICATION

J08, D04, C21

ABSTRACT

Using rich administrative data on job seekers registered with the Slovak public employment service, we employ a dynamic, double-machine-learning approach to describe a country's implementation of the Youth Guarantee initiative through employment policy programs. The spectrum of programs considered ranges from classroom training to hiring incentives and subsidised employment in the private sector to public works organised at the municipal level. We estimate the impact of participation in the specific sequences of programs on the absence of individuals from registered unemployment after three and four years. Our results confirm that the impact of these programs is greater: i) if applied earlier in the unemployment period, ii) for workplace experience in the private sector, and iii) if various types of programmes are combined. Furthermore, to facilitate caseworker decision-making, we quantify the impact of the programs on more or less employable job seekers, thus documenting the advanced data-mining functionality of a recently developed machine-learning estimator applied in an information-rich data context.

Working days and working hours: Substitutes or Complements?

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KEYWORDS

working-time allocation
work schedules
working days
working hours

JEL CLASSIFICATION

J22, J23, J81

ABSTRACT

This paper studies extended work schedules in China by decomposing working time into two intensive margins: working days per week and working hours per day. Using panel data from the China Household Finance Survey for 2011–2019, we ask whether working days substitute for working hours, and whether extended schedules are driven mainly by worker-side constraints or employer-side scheduling requirements. Joint distributions, dynamic evidence, and fixed-effect two-stage least-squares estimates provide no evidence that longer daily hours are offset by fewer working days, rejecting a simple substitution view. Instead, the two margins show a moderate complementarity and are associated with similar worker, firm, and industry characteristics. A two-sector equilibrium framework further suggests that this co-movement is more consistent with employer-side scheduling requirements than with worker-side supply pressure. Overall, the evidence suggests that working days are not a residual adjustment to working hours, but a distinct margin of work intensity that helps explain how extended schedules are organized in China.

Session C2: Health, Institutions and Well-being

Health Outcomes of Electricity Reallocation

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KEYWORDS

electricity reallocation
health
air pollution
China

JEL CLASSIFICATION

I14, Q40, Q53

ABSTRACT

This paper examines how electricity reallocation affects individual health outcomes in China, using the rollout of ultra-high-voltage connection as an exogenous variation in regional electricity supply. The analysis applies a staggered difference-in-differences design to physician-diagnosed disease report data from the China Health and Retirement Longitudinal Study. The results show that connecting to electricity inflows reduces the incidence of respiratory diseases and memory-related disease. Health improvements are concentrated in receiving regions and are absent in coal-based output regions where local generation continues. The effects are larger among older individuals, higher-income households, more educated individuals, and urban residents, and are strongest in regions with moderate pre-treatment coal dependence. These patterns are robust to alternative specifications and a range of robustness checks. The findings are consistent with the interpretation that electricity reallocation improves health primarily by reducing local air pollution, with health gains depending on the extent to which grid connection displaces coal-based generation.

Strategic Effort and Organizational Performance: Evidence from a Hospital Reform

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KEYWORDS

hospital management
healthcare productivity
organizational economics

JEL CLASSIFICATION

I11, L23

ABSTRACT

Interactions among organizational units may have a significant impact on efficiency. We examine a hospital reform that changed the emergency department's (ED) method for allocating admissions across internal medicine departments from a "first-available-bed" policy, which disproportionately burdened efficient departments, to "equal-load," which distributed admissions evenly. Comparing outcomes before and after the reform with the same period in the previous year, we find that the reform reduced ED wait times by 25% (1.5 hours per patient) and inpatient length of stay by 20% (one day per patient), with no change in readmission or mortality outcomes. A queuing model with strategic departmental effort demonstrates that these improvements are consistent with reduced incentives for free-riding. Findings highlight opportunities for managers in hospitals and other service organizations with distributed workload systems to significantly ease congestion through incentive alignment rather than resource expansion.

The Youth Loneliness Epidemic: Real Trend or Survey Artifact?

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KEYWORDS

well-being measurement
youth loneliness
survey mode effects

JEL CLASSIFICATION

I31, C83, C81

ABSTRACT

Major health organizations have raised concerns about rising loneliness among young people. Yet reported prevalence rates vary substantially across surveys and data collection modes, raising a central question: to what extent does the observed rise in youth loneliness reflect genuine changes in well-being rather than differences in survey methodology? This paper examines the role of survey mode in shaping reported loneliness, with particular attention to heterogeneity by age. Using data from the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), we compare loneliness reports across web-based, face-to-face, and telephone interviews, and assess whether mode effects differ systematically between younger and older respondents. We further assess the robustness of the findings using alternative stigma-prone outcomes and the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), a representative longitudinal survey that allows us to examine within-individual variation across interview modes. The results reveal large and strongly age-dependent mode effects. Young adults report substantially higher levels of loneliness in self-completed online interviews than in interviewer-administered modes, whereas older adults display the opposite pattern, reporting higher loneliness in face-to-face settings. These findings suggest that stigma and social desirability bias associated with loneliness vary markedly across the life cycle and may distort comparisons of loneliness prevalence across age groups and survey modes.

Session D1: Migration, Mobility and Labour Market Integration

The Power of Healthcare Portability: Evidence from Internal Migration in China

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KEYWORDS

healthcare portability
internal migration
labor mobility
China

JEL CLASSIFICATION

I13, J61, O15

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the causal effect of healthcare portability on internal migration in China, exploiting cross-city variation in the intensities of the 2017 interprovincial online direct-settlement reform, which enabled migrants to directly reimburse medical expenses at the point of care. Using the China Labor-Force Dynamics Survey and the China Migrants Dynamic Survey, we find that rural households that were more exposed to the reform increased out-migration, while cities with higher hospital connectivity attracted more rural migrant inflows. No significant changes are found for out-migration of urban households and immigration of urban workers. Moreover, at the destination, the reform generated heterogeneous labor market effects that suggest crowding-out due to increased labor supply and occupation sorting from retail and catering towards manufacturing. These results provide novel evidence that healthcare portability forms a meaningful driver of geographic labor mobility and structural transformation in a developing country context.

Immigrant–Native Wage Differences in Hungary: Sorting into High-Paying Workplaces

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KEYWORDS

wage differentials
immigration
segregation
wage sorting

JEL CLASSIFICATION

J31, J61, J71

ABSTRACT

Immigrants' economic integration remains one of the most debated aspects of international migration, as they often experience persistent employment and wage disadvantages compared to natives. We provide the first large-scale evidence on immigrant pay gaps in Hungary (and more generally from Central Eastern Europe) based on administrative matched employer–employee data. Contrary to the pattern documented in Western Europe and North America, most immigrant groups in Hungary earn more than native-born workers on average. We show that this advantage is largely explained by sorting: immigrants are disproportionately employed in higher-paying firms and higher-paying occupation–firm cells, rather than receiving higher pay than natives for the same job in the same workplace. Within-job pay differences are close to zero for transborder Hungarians (ethnic Hungarians born abroad) and remain small but positive for other immigrant groups. These results suggest that immigrant wage differentials in Hungary reflect employer demand and selective recruitment into relatively well-paying segments of the labor market, rather than systematic under or overpayment. Decomposition results (based on the AKM literature) reinforce our interpretation: immigrant–native wage differentials in Hungary are driven mainly by between-job sorting along skill composition and firm and occupation pay premia, not within-job pay inequality.

Brexit and Citizenship

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KEYWORDS

Brexit referendum
international migration
European Union
uncertainty

JEL CLASSIFICATION

F22, J61, J48

ABSTRACT

This paper examines how the 2016 Brexit referendum affected settlement behaviour among European Union (EU) nationals in the United Kingdom (UK). Using Home Office administrative data and a synthetic difference-in-differences design, we find that citizenship applications and grants more than doubled following the referendum, despite no immediate legal change. The increase was strongest among migrants from low remittance-receiving countries and coincided with spikes in exchange rate volatility and Brexit-related uncertainty. These patterns indicate a political rather than economic response – EU residents sought the security of British citizenship as insurance against institutional uncertainty surrounding the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

Session D2: Environmental Risks, Health and Productivity

Air Pollution and Infant Outcomes: Evidence from Serbia

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KEYWORDS

human capital formation
in-utero exposure
air pollution
infant health

JEL CLASSIFICATION

I15, J13, O15

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the short-term effects of in-utero exposure to air pollution on infant health outcomes in Serbia, a highly polluted but understudied middle-income country. Using individual-level administrative birth records from 2010–2023 and satellite-derived PM2.5 data, we estimate the causal impact of prenatal pollution exposure through a cross-sectional and within-mother (sibling fixed effects) design. Our results show that higher PM2.5 exposure during pregnancy, particularly in the first and third trimesters, significantly reduces birth weight, with the strongest effects observed among socio-economically disadvantaged groups and male infants. We find no significant association between PM2.5 and the incidence of preterm birth or low birth weight overall, and detect no adverse effects in the relatively cleaner Vojvodina region. The estimated impacts are attenuated after 2019, coinciding with increased public awareness, highlighting the importance of both environmental quality and behavioural responses in mitigating health risks.

Wildfire smoke, longer hours, and the hidden costs to urban workers

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KEYWORDS

wildfire smoke
air pollution
working hours
urban workers

JEL CLASSIFICATION

J22, Q53, Q54

ABSTRACT

Instrumental-variables estimates from Canadian cities show that wildfire-smoke-driven fine particulate matter (PM2.5) increases employment and average hours worked, the opposite of the labour-market impact previously documented among more rural, outdoor, and low-income workers. Two mechanisms may explain why urban workers work more when air quality decreases: pollution-induced productivity losses that lead workers to extend their hours to meet normal output expectations, and degraded environmental conditions that reduce the value of non-work time. Both mechanisms decouple hours worked from economic and social value, suggesting that standard output-based measures of environmental damage systematically understate the costs of wildfire smoke in high-income urban economies.

Session E1: Gender Inequality and Structural Change in Labour Markets

Manager Gender and Employee Preferences: Evidence from a Survey Experiment

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KEYWORDS

occupational segregation
manager gender
discrete choice experiment
job preferences

JEL CLASSIFICATION

J16, C93, J24

ABSTRACT

Occupational gender segregation is persistent worldwide and contributes to wage gaps. Gender differences in preferences over workplace characteristics, including flexibility and gender diversity, may contribute to horizontal segregation, while men's higher attainment within organizational hierarchies, including in female-dominated sectors, contributes to vertical segregation. Preferences for supervisor gender may represent another dimension of gendered sorting, yet little is known about whether workers value female and male supervisors differently. We study whether workers value female and male supervisors differently, whether these preferences differ by worker gender, and whether they are associated with gendered beliefs about managerial characteristics. We implement an online survey experiment with UK residents recruited through Prolific. A discrete choice experiment estimates willingness to pay for job characteristics, including supervisor gender. We then elicit perceived importance and gender stereotyping of managerial characteristics. Finally, a randomized information treatment measures interest in employment opportunities at companies with majority-female or majority-male top earners. We additionally elicit stated preferences and examine heterogeneity across industries. We find a preference for female supervisors in willingness to pay, link clicks and stated preferences. This preference is driven by female workers, in both female-dominated and more gender-balanced industries. However, we find no evidence that respondents associate female supervisors with characteristics rated as more important. The preference therefore appears intrinsic rather than reflecting perceived differences in managerial characteristics.

Breaking Barriers: Women's Employment, Career Development, and Gender Equality in European and Serbian Railways

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KEYWORDS

railways
gender equality
employment
career development

JEL CLASSIFICATION

J16, L92, M51

ABSTRACT

Of the total number of railway workers in Europe, women make up only 23% (2023), still below their participation in the entire European economy (46%). Bearing in mind the continuous global modernization and the need for further development of railway transport, this sector must attract the best professionals, especially women. This paper aims to determine, based on research conducted over the past decade, whether a balanced and gender-equal relationship has been achieved in the railway sector, and what measures have proven most effective. The paper employs a descriptive-comparative analysis of secondary data from six CER annual surveys (2012-2018), the 2025 New Women in Rail (WiR) Report, and official reports of the Infrastructure of Serbian Railways. From 2012 to 2018, the overall share of women in eleven comparable railway companies rose by 3.4 percentage points, while the absolute number of women employed increased by 13.1%. By 2023, the overall share of women in European railways rose to 23%, with women's representation in top executive positions improving from 25% (2018) to 28% (2023). The findings are interpreted through gendered organization theory and the glass ceiling concept, and support evidence-based policymaking, highlighting vocational training, mentoring, and gender equality policies as key instruments for expanding women's professional integration and entrepreneurial capacity within this sector.

Gender wage gap along the unconditional wage distribution in Central Eastern European countries

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KEYWORDS

gender wage gap
OB-RIF decomposition
unconditional wage distribution
CEE countries

JEL CLASSIFICATION

J31, J16, C21

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the heterogeneity in the gender wage gap across different quantiles of the unconditional wage distribution in twelve Central Eastern European countries in 2006, 2013 and 2023. We use an extension of Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition methodology with recentered influence function regressions and re-weighting to identify the 'pure treatment effect', i.e., unequal treatment in terms of the wages received for the same characteristics as men (Firpo, Fortin and Lemieux, 2009, 2018). Our results reveal significant heterogeneity between countries and years. We observe that treatment effect reduced in 2023 compared with 2013 and 2006 for majority of CEE countries, with the exceptions of Croatia and Slovenia. We found the highest reduction in Estonia, the country that had very high unequal treatment for decades. A stronger 'glass-ceiling' than a 'sticky-floor' effect was found in majority of CEE countries. Women within the higher percentiles of the wage distribution exhibit the greatest advantage relative to men in terms of their pay determining characteristics. However, a large unequal treatment in terms of the wages received for the same characteristics as men is found and persistent.

Serbian Labour Market Occupational Structure Change: Evidence from LFS Data

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KEYWORDS

occupational restructuring
education–occupation mismatch
worker allocation
shift-share exposure

JEL CLASSIFICATION

J20, J24, J62

ABSTRACT

Occupational restructuring can alter employment composition without producing uniform adjustment across workers or improving education–occupation matching. We examine these relationships using anonymised Serbian Labour Force Survey microdata for 2010–2024, organised into three survey-consistent analytical windows. We measure changes in broad and three-digit occupational employment, estimate workers' adjusted allocation across expanding and declining segments, construct shift-share exposure for 120 demographic-regional cells, and relate initial educational mismatch to subsequent occupational growth. Occupational change was substantial but strongly period-specific, with no consistent pattern of upgrading or polarisation. Reallocation measured at the detailed occupational level was 1.8 to 2.6 times greater than reallocation across ten broad groups, indicating extensive change within major occupational categories. Adjusted differences by sex and age were generally limited, while education became strongly associated with allocation to expanding and declining segments in 2021–2024. Predicted occupational exposure was not systematically associated with employment rates, employment in expanding occupations, or total education–occupation mismatch. Initial mismatch was also not a stable predictor of occupational growth, although higher mismatch was associated with weaker growth in 2014–2020. The findings reveal an asymmetry between visible occupational restructuring and weak or period-specific group-level adjustment, underscoring the importance of occupational granularity and cautious interpretation of education-based mismatch.

Acknowledgment

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Session E2: Preferences, Institutions and Political Economy

Who Deserves What? Inequality Perceptions and Preferences for Redistribution in Croatia

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KEYWORDS

subjective inequality
redistribution
fairness
inequality perceptions

JEL CLASSIFICATION

D31, D63, H23

ABSTRACT

This paper examines how subjective perceptions of inequality and fairness shape preferences for redistribution in Croatia. While previous research has primarily focused on objective measures of inequality, we distinguish between perceived (actual) inequality, ethically acceptable inequality, and the gap between them, which captures individuals' normative assessment of market injustice. The analysis is based on pooled data from the 2009 and 2019 International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) modules on social inequality. Subjective inequality measures are constructed using respondents' occupation-specific wage assessments and grouped-distribution inequality indices following Kuhn's framework of subjective inequality measurement. We derive respondent-specific measures of perceived inequality, ethical inequality, and the desired equalization of market wages using subjective Gini and Atkinson indices. The descriptive evidence reveals a substantial discrepancy between perceived and ethically acceptable inequality. Respondents generally support meritocratic principles such as education, ambition, and hard work, but simultaneously perceive social connections, political influence, and corruption as important determinants of economic success. Moreover, respondents consistently prefer a substantially more equal wage distribution than the one they perceive to prevail in society. Regression results show that subjective inequality perceptions are strongly associated with redistributive preferences. Individuals perceiving larger discrepancies between actual and fair inequality express significantly stronger support for redistribution by the state, progressive taxation, and government protection of vulnerable groups. The estimated effects remain robust across alternative weighting schemes and alternative inequality measures. The findings suggest that support for redistribution is shaped not only by material self-interest, but also by normative evaluations of fairness and distributive justice.

Ideology, Inequality, and Preferences for Redistribution in Post-pandemic Europe: Western, Eastern, and Balkan Perspectives

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KEYWORDS

ideology
inequality
preferences for redistribution
regional differences

JEL CLASSIFICATION

H23, D63, D72

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the determinants of preferences for redistribution (PFR) across Europe, with a particular focus on regional heterogeneity. The results show that inequality and left-wing ideology are positively associated with redistributive preferences, while satisfaction with democracy and trust in politicians are negatively related to PFR. Going beyond average effects, the analysis demonstrates that these relationships are highly conditional. The effect of inequality is concentrated among right-leaning and low-trust individuals, while the influence of ideology is strongest in low-inequality, high-trust contexts. Institutional factors also vary in importance: it is more salient in stable environments and in the countries with higher shares of right-wing and low-altruism individuals. These interaction effects, combined with regional differences in the distribution of key characteristics, help explain cross-regional variation. In Eastern Europe, redistributive preferences are primarily shaped by inequality and institutional distrust, while in Western and Northern Europe they are more strongly linked to ideology and long-term institutional evaluations. Southern Europe and the Balkans are characterized by persistently high support for redistribution, driven mainly by ideology and altruism in the former and predominantly by altruism in the latter.

The Unorthodox Orthodox? Religion, Compromise, and Attitudes Toward Women in the Labor Market

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KEYWORDS

religion and attitudes
cultural economics
female labor force participation
labor market constraints

JEL CLASSIFICATION

J10, J71, N30

ABSTRACT

We study the effect of adherence to Eastern Orthodox Christianity on attitudes toward women's participation in the workforce. To do so, we first develop a novel theoretical framework that defines religion as a constraint on one's attitudes and actions. Next, building on research in social psychology, we argue that the four most numerous religious denominations (Catholicism, Protestantism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Islam) differ in the extent to which religious believers consult external ideas and opinions to shape their own opinions. We show that those of Orthodox belief are most likely to seek and empathize with others' ideas and beliefs, implying that Orthodox followers will also have the most liberal attitudes toward women's work compared to the other three denominations. To test our hypotheses, we exploit the last five waves of the World Values Survey (1995-2022) and utilize four broad groups of questions as dependent variables: motivation for labor market participation, social constraints, family constraints, and incentives to join the labor market. The findings align with our theoretical prediction and indicate that Orthodox Christians have attitudes most supportive of women's work. Our findings are not driven by differences in religiosity, the prevalence of communism and differences in governmental institutions, or migration, and highlight the link between religion and attitudes toward women's work.

Remote Work and Research Productivity: The Case of Social Sciences and Humanities in Serbia

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KEYWORDS

remote work
productivity
scientific research sector
hybrid work
HRM
Serbia

JEL CLASSIFICATION

J24, J81, I23, J22, O15

ABSTRACT

The expansion of remote and hybrid work, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic, has raised important questions about their implications for productivity, particularly in knowledge-intensive activities. Empirical evidence from academic and research sectors remains limited and context-dependent, especially in countries where flexible work arrangements are not systematically regulated. This study examines the relationship between work modality and research productivity among researchers employed in the sector of social science and humanities in Serbia. Drawing on survey data from 353 researchers, three ordered logistic regression models have been developed to assess productivity through publication output, publications in high-quality journals, and participation in research projects, while controlling for individual and organizational characteristics. The findings indicate no significant differences in publication productivity between office-based, hybrid, and remote researchers. In contrast, hybrid and remote work are positively associated with participation in research projects. Academic rank, type of institution, and job satisfaction have been identified as more important correlates of specific productivity dimensions than work location itself. The findings should be interpreted as associational rather than causal due to self-selection into work arrangements, self-reported productivity measures, and the non-representative cross-sectional sample. Future research should employ longitudinal designs, broader and multidimensional productivity indicators, and more detailed institutional-level measures to examine how organizational conditions shape the relationship between flexible work arrangements and research performance.

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