

The SOEP 2026 - 16th International German Socio-Economic Panel User Conference

CNEF Special Session on: Parental Labor Supply Responses to COVID School Closures Across Countries

Paper 1: **The Effect of School Closures during the Pandemic on Parental Labor Supply in China**
Boyan Zheng, Jim Raymo, Yi Zhou, Qiang Ren; presented by **Yang Shi**

Paper 2: **The impact of school disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic on parental labor supply and earnings in Australia**; Nicolás Salamanca (presenter); Tanya Gupta; Irma Mooi-Reci; Mark Wooden

Paper 3: **Labor supply responses to granular COVID-induced school disruptions in Canada and the United States**; Dean R. Lillard (presenter), Joseph J. Sabia, Zihao Sheng, Casey Warman

Paper 4: **School Closures and Parental Labor Supply: Evidence from Germany**; Blanka Imre, Markus M. Grabka (presenter), Oskar Breer, Neil Murray

Abstracts:

The Effect of School Closures during the Pandemic on Parental Labor Supply in China: This study examines parents' employment responses to school closure policies enacted during the COVID-19 pandemic and how they are related to distinctive features of the Chinese labor market. Using granular policy data merged with individual data from the China Family Panel Studies, we find no evidence of an overall effect of school closure policies on parents' employment status or work hours. However, we also find that this general pattern masks substantial heterogeneity with respect to gender, urban-rural residence, and public-private sector distinctions in the labor market. Exposure to partial (hybrid) school closure policies reduced work hours for men, especially those with non-rural residence (hukou) and married men living separately from their spouse. We also find that men and women employed in public work units (danwei) were less likely than those in the private sector to reduce work hours when exposed to partial school closure policies. These patterns, especially the impact on men's work hours, differs from both theoretical and empirical expectations, evidence of a contextually distinctive response to COVID-19 mitigation policies in China.

The impact of school disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic on parental labor supply and earnings in Australia: We use quasi-experimental variation in suspension of in-person teaching at schools to estimate the causal impact of school disruptions on parents' labor supply. School disruptions have a large negative effect on labor force participation, especially for women and for people with weaker labor force attachment. Conditional on remaining employed, school disruptions have no impact on hours worked or on wages. Exploring potential mechanisms, we find that school disruptions sharply increase working from home, which can help explain our

null effects, and point to even more negative effects on labor force participation in the absence of this margin of adjustment.

Labor supply responses to granular COVID-induced school disruptions in Canada and the

United States: We investigate whether and how US parents adjusted their labor supply when state and local governments closed schools to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. We use granular policy data on COVID-19 school closures in over 7,000 US places. We use panel data on monthly labor supply from January 2019 through December 2022. When we characterize closures as the extant literature does, we find that partnered mothers, single mothers, and single fathers adjusted their labor supply. While we find some immediate change in monthly earnings affected parents apparently compensate because we find little evidence that annual earnings varied with school closures.

School Closures and Parental Labor Supply: Evidence from Germany: We study the impact of unexpected school restrictions on parental labor supply by exploiting temporal, geographical, and school-grade-level variation in Covid-19-related education restrictions in Germany. We estimate treatment effects using the estimator of de Chaisemartin and D'Haultfoeuille (2024) to accommodate the multi-valued discrete, non-absorbing, staggered treatment, and monthly data on employment status from employment biographies. We find that Covid-19-related school restrictions had little to no effect on parental labor supply in Germany. Our results are in line with studies that investigate the same problem in the context of other European countries with strong employment protection and a well-developed digital infrastructure, such as Sweden and Switzerland.