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Final Project Proposal

For the final project, I plan to interpret and evaluate the paper "Does paid family leave save infant lives? Evidence from California's paid family leave program", by Feng Chen.

Link: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/coep.12589

The author addresses the following question: Does the introduction of parental leave reduce post-neonatal mortality rate (PNMR)?

The paper utilizes the National Vital Statistics System data on singleton births and deaths (between 28 and 365 days) in the United States from 2000 to 2008. The unit of analysis is a state-month combination (9 years * 12 months * 51 states = 5508 observations). Using evidence from California and the comparison group (other states, aggregated) within the difference in differences framework, the author estimates the causal relationship between Parental Family Leave (PFL) and PNMR. Also, to neutralize potential contemporaneous shocks that might be both associated with PFL and positively affect infant well-being, a placebo analysis is performed based on fetal mortality data.

The study finds that the introduction of a 6-week PFL in California led to a 0.135 reduction in PNMR, saving around 339 infants in California from 2004 to 2008. There were fewer deaths caused by health conditions after PFL was introduced compared to before. Also, this causal effect was estimated to be stronger for infant boys and babies born to married mothers. Several robustness checks ruled out identification concerns like increased migration and/or fertility following the early announcement of PFL and responsiveness to comparison groups (alternative groups based on parental leave policy and random states were tested) (Chen, 2021).