# Brief Summary of Chinese COVID policy Project (Qitian Hu Dec 19, 2020)

The motivation of this project is that given similar situations (lack of knowledge, time pressure, and urgency of the initial spread of COVID), why do the lockdown policies of Chinese city officials differ, especially when the pattern does not match the risk of virus. I tried to explain this variation with hidden incentives of the local officials, using the virus as a lens through which we could discern underlying patterns of Chinese politics.

In addition to collecting a (hopefully) comprehensive dataset of the basic city information (socio-economic factors, COVID case by time), I collected information of the city secretary during the crisis (age, tenure, education, birthplace, major, etc). The reason is that under the unitary authority structure of city-level governments, city secretary is the person who makes the final decision, and past evidence shows a pattern of change in investment and policy with age and tenure. I also collected three different datasets on lockdown policy, two from published research and one from ‘objective’ big data source of Baidu.

Plain regression shows a significant positive correlation between secretary age and likelihood of lockdown on the two research datasets. This relation is significant at 10% level when I add different combinations of socio-economic control variables (at 5% level when number of controls is less than 5). Survival analysis and Cox-proportional model also supports this conclusion.

However, I didn’t find evidence for abrupt change in the effect of age, as shown in some other papers. Using Diff-in-diff with the age 57 as the cutoff reveals no significance, indicating that the effect of age is likely to be gradual rather than abrupt. This difference with prior works might be due to the different type of policy and situations: prior works focus on economic decisions like investment or privatization, and they are of a different nature than the urgent policies tacking COVID-19.