TRANSITIONAL COSTS AND THE DECLINE OF COAL: WORKER-LEVEL EVIDENCE*

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Abstract

Workers' outside options play a central role in determining the transitional costs of labor demand shocks. Using comprehensive administrative data, we examine the worker-level effects of the decline of coal — a regionally concentrated labor demand shock that reduced coal sector employment by more than 50 percent between 2011 and 2021. We show that coal workers experienced large and persistent earnings losses compared to similar workers with less or no connection to coal. Unlike worker-level analyses of labor demand shocks in more spatially diffuse industries, we find that non-employment is an important margin of adjustment. When employed, coal workers earn substantially lower wages than prior to coal's decline. Sectoral or regional mobility does little to mitigate these losses, while SSDI receipt increases substantially. Our findings suggest that transitional costs are higher in geographically concentrated industries when skills do not easily transfer across sectors.

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1 Introduction

Coal fueled the industrial revolution and laid the foundation for modern growth during the 19th and 20th centuries. Without coal, the rapid technological change and economic progress that transformed the modern world would have been inconceivable. Yet, coal's role in the U.S. economy has diminished rapidly, particularly in recent years. Between 2011 and 2019, U.S. coal production and employment declined by more than 50 percent, and coal's share of primary energy consumption fell from around 24 percent to around 8 percent over the same time (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2023). This abrupt decline, largely driven by technological advances such as the shale gas revolution and substantial cost reductions in wind and solar generation, has fundamentally changed energy production in the U.S. and, in turn, reshaped the lives of coal workers and their communities.

We examine the worker-level consequences of the coal industry's precipitous decline using comprehensive employer-employee data from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Our data includes the universe of individuals employed in coal mining establishments between 2005 and 2021. Emerging evidence suggests that communities categorized as being dependent on coal have experienced reductions in employment, earnings, and local tax revenues (Morris et al., 2019; Hanson, 2022; Blonz et al., 2023; Krause, 2025). Aggregate statistics, however, mask many possible margins of adjustment and tell us little about how individual coal workers have been affected by the decline of coal. Affected workers may have adapted quickly, moving to new industries or labor markets. Alternatively, workers may have faced substantial transitional costs due to lost skills and moving costs. Understanding how workers have adjusted to this reduction in labor demand is crucial for assessing the transitional costs of coal's decline and for informing efforts to minimize the distributional labor market consequences of broader shifts away from fossil fuels. A particular feature of the decline of coal is its regional concentration, potentially yielding insights distinct from analyses of labor demand shocks in more spatially diffuse industries like manufacturing, where workers may have had a greater set of outside options, mitigating transitional costs (Jacobson et al., 1993;

Walker, 2011; Autor et al., 2014). Regionally concentrated labor demand shocks can generate substantial spillover effects that amplify initial job losses through agglomeration forces (Gathmann et al., 2020), while the concentration of skill demand in declining industries may limit workers' outside options through employer market power (Dodini et al., 2024).

We begin by characterizing the coal mining workforce, detailing workers' demographic profiles, earnings distributions, and geographic locations. Coal workers are predominantly male and non-Hispanic white, with significantly lower college attainment rates compared to the overall population. Despite this educational gap, coal workers earn substantially higher average wages. Coal employment is geographically concentrated in Central Appalachia and parts of the Mountain West, reflecting the spatial distribution of coal deposits. This contrasts with other sectors and industries, where workers are distributed more evenly across space. The spatial concentration of coal may intensify competition for local jobs, especially if displacement from the coal industry also reduces demand for local goods and services. If local opportunities are limited, coal workers may have to search beyond their home labor markets to find comparable employment. We document that 80 percent of workers separated from coal during our sample period and that non-employment is the modal activity for the plurality (33 percent) of working-age adults in the years outside of coal during this period.

To better understand the consequences for workers, we begin by descriptively evaluating the consequences of job separations. We find that separations from coal firms are associated with large and persistent reductions in earnings. By contrast, we estimate that non-coal firm separations are, on average, followed by a temporary reduction in earnings, followed by a return to trend within a few years. These descriptive estimates reflect the combined effects of both voluntary and involuntary separations, and voluntary separations may be beneficial to workers (Topel and Ward, 1992; Hahn et al., 2021). To mitigate the bias caused by these voluntary separations, we next estimate the effects of involuntary separations using an instrumental variables (IV) approach that leverages mass layoff events. Prior work shows that mass layoff events result in persistent earnings losses in other contexts (e.g., Jacobson et al., 1993; Couch and Placzek, 2010; Dodini et al., 2024). Consistent with this, our IV estimates are larger in magnitude than the descriptive estimates. Moreover, these losses are substantially larger for coal separations than for non-coal separations.

While the IV estimates provide insight into the effects of involuntary separation from the coal sector, separation is only one channel through which workers adjust to the decline of coal. To capture a broader set of adjustment margins, we exploit differential worker-level exposure to the post-2011 "coal shock" — the period in which U.S. coal mining employment declined by more than 50 percent. This decline was largely driven by plausibly exogenous macroeconomic factors, notably the influx of low-cost natural gas resulting from advances in hydraulic fracturing technology (Kolstad, 2017; Linn and McCormack, 2019; Coglianese et al., 2020; Davis et al., 2022).[1] We measure workers' exposure based on their pre-shock "attachment" to the coal mining industry, defined by their employment history in the years preceding the recent decline of coal. The richness of our data allows us to estimate differences in outcomes between workers who are observationally similar across a broad range of individual-level characteristics.

Between 2012 and 2019, workers who were previously employed full-time in coal mining experienced cumulative earnings declines equivalent to 1.6 times their 2007–2011 average annual earnings. These losses reflect a combination of working fewer years (one-third of a year less than less-exposed workers) and lower earnings, conditional on employment (17 percent less per year). These dual margins of adjustment — involving both increased time out of the labor force and reduced within-year earnings — distinguish our findings from previous worker-level studies examining the consequences of trade shocks and environmental regulations, which have typically found only the latter (Walker, 2013; Autor et al., 2014). The transitional costs associated with the decline of coal appear larger than those observed in other contexts.

We decompose coal worker responses across several margins of adjustment: out-

[1] Coglianese et al. (2020) attribute 92 percent of the decline in coal production between 2008 and 2016 to the falling price of natural gas relative to coal, with environmental regulations accounting for an additional six percent.

comes associated with the initial employer, industry, and labor market; outcomes associated with changes in employers, industries, and labor markets; and those associated with government transfers. By analyzing these margins of adjustment, we identify where potential frictions may arise. We find that, despite remaining in coal as long as — or longer than — their less-exposed counterparts, coal workers experience 12-16 percent lower annual earnings within the industry. The greatest losses occur outside the industry, driven by a substantial increase in non-employment and large reductions in earnings per year of employment — 30 percent lower annual earnings — compared to non-coal workers. Earnings losses are primarily driven by years in which workers remain in their initial commuting zones but leave the coal industry. However, we find little evidence that relocation across labor markets mitigates earnings losses. Finally, we estimate that more-exposed workers receive significantly more unearned income than non-coal workers. They draw down more retirement income (including increased IRA/401k withdrawals and pension contributions) and receive higher Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) payments compared to non-coal workers. While these alternative income sources may recoup a portion of lost earnings, the combination of increased retirement income and SSA transfers can account for only a fraction of cumulative earnings losses over the 2012–2019 period. The elevated reliance on SSDI, in particular, implies some earnings losses may be offset through this arguably "second-best" transfer mechanism.

Additionally, we examine which types of coal workers are most affected. We find that earnings and employment losses are largest among less-educated workers. While younger cohorts experience larger cumulative earnings losses, older cohorts experienced larger employment reductions, suggesting labor force exit. Across all worker characteristics explored, cumulative losses are driven by years in which workers remain in their original commuting zone but do not work in the coal industry.

Our findings contribute to the literature on the decline of coal by examining worker-level effects, building on an extensive body of work focused on community-level outcomes (Black et al., 2002, 2003, 2005; Jacobsen and Parker, 2016; Morris et al., 2019; Hanson, 2022; Krause, 2025). These studies document that the decline of coal has adversely affected connected communities, with consequences ranging from substantial reductions in total employment and average wages to increased reliance on government transfers. However, the underlying mechanisms — whether these results reflect shifts in population composition or individual-level losses — remain unclear.[2] We provide comprehensive evidence on how individual workers adjust following the post-2011 contraction in coal demand. Our detailed residential and employment histories allow us to decompose aggregate effects along various margins of adjustment, revealing that neither cross-industry nor geographic mobility play a major role in mitigating earnings losses. Instead, increased receipt of government transfers appears to be an important margin of adjustment.

We also contribute to a broader literature on the transitional costs of labor demand shocks. Previous studies have shown that job displacement can lead to substantial and persistent earnings losses, particularly in distressed labor markets or during economic downturns (Topel, 1990; Blanchard and Katz, 1992; Jacobson et al., 1993; Davis and von Wachter, 2011; Walker, 2013; Autor et al., 2014; Notowidigdo, 2020; Lachowska et al., 2020; Schmieder et al., 2023). While existing work has focused on the consequences of "trade shocks" (Autor et al., 2014; Pierce and Schott, 2016; Acemoglu et al., 2016; Hakkala and Huttunen, 2016; Keller and Utar, 2023) or environmental regulations (Greenstone, 2002; Walker, 2011, 2013), our study examines a more regionally concentrated shock. While coal mining represents a small share of total employment, it accounts for a substantial share of local employment in coal-rich regions. The regional concentration of coal mining may exacerbate the consequences of these reductions in labor demand due to increased competition over a smaller set of outside options. Moreover, the highly specialized skills developed in coal mining may not be valued as highly in other industries (Neal, 1995). Consistent with this, our findings show that reallocation across industries or labor markets does little to offset these transitional costs. In contrast with the existing literature, we find that non-employment is a key margin through which adjustment operates in this context.

[2] Rud et al. (2024) examine the worker-level earnings effects associated with separation from the coal industry in the UK context, using a mass layoff identification strategy.

2 Data and Sample Construction

We construct a balanced panel of the 2005–2021 employment, wage, and location histories of all individuals whose primary source of earnings in any year during the 17-year study period was at an establishment in the coal mining industry. We do this by combining the Census Environmental Impacts Frame (Voorheis et al., 2023) with administrative tax records (Forms W-2 and 1040) and the American Community Survey (ACS), building on the data linkages developed in Colmer et al. (2023).

We identify coal mining establishments in the Census Bureau's County Business Patterns Business Register (CBP-BR) and Longitudinal Business Database (LBD) as those with NAICS codes 2121 (coal mining) or 213113 (support activities for coal mining). We identify all employers (indexed by IRS Employer Identification Numbers, EIN) associated with these coal mining establishments using EIN-establishment links in the Business Register. Our core sample is comprised of individuals who received W-2 earnings from one of these coal mining establishments in at least one year between 2005 and 2021. We identify these workers by linking IRS Form W-2s to establishments, using the EIN for the employer from which the worker received the greatest earnings in each year. If an EIN-year pair includes multiple establishments, we link the worker to the geographically closest establishment.[3]

We then build a comprehensive longitudinal dataset by linking coal workers to the Environmental Impacts Frame (EIF) (Voorheis et al., 2023), a microdata infrastructure that provides detailed residential histories and basic demographic information (age, race, ethnicity, and sex) for nearly the entire population of the United States using the extensive administrative data available within the Census Bureau. This allows us to construct a balanced panel dataset capturing complete employment and residential histories over this period, including years in which workers do not work in coal, or do not work at all. We augment this employer-employee panel with firm characteristics from the LBD, including

[3]We define geographic proximity based on the straight-line distance between the latitude and longitude of the worker's residential address in the EIF and the establishment in the CBP-BR. Our results are not sensitive to matching workers to industries based on the (employment-weighted) modal industry within an EIN-year combination.

total employment, revenue, and industry information. To further enrich our dataset, we incorporate additional demographic information for the approximately 20 percent of individuals who responded to the ACS. This includes education, occupation, marital status, and family structure.[4] Our comprehensive coal worker panel consists of approximately 218,000 individuals.[5]

While we leverage the comprehensive coal panel (i.e., the full universe of coal workers) for our descriptive statistics, our main analyses focus on a subset of workers born between 1955 and 1985. This restriction ensures that workers are between ages 20 and 66 during the study period, and no older than 64 by 2019.[6] The resulting age-restricted panel consists of approximately 142,000 coal workers. We also construct a comparison group from a 10-percent random subsample of non-coal workers born between 1955 and 1985 drawn from the 2010 ACS. We use both the comprehensive coal panel and the age-restricted subsample of coal workers for our basic descriptive statistics. For our descriptive analysis of job separations, we consider the age-restricted coal panel and the ACS comparison group. For our main quasi-experimental analysis, we further restrict the sample to individuals who worked "full-time" in every year between 2007 and 2011 (the five years before the coal shock), defining full-time as earning at least what one would make working 1,600 hours at the federal minimum wage.[7] In our quasi-experimental analysis, we omit workers who died, those with unidentifiable locations, and those with negative AGI, yielding a final sample of approximately 152,000 individuals, including about 29,500 who worked full-time in coal throughout 2007-2011. We conclude the quasi-experimental analysis in 2019, so as to exclude effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.[8]

[4]These characteristics are measured in the year in which the worker responded to the ACS.

[5]Note that because we define a worker's place of employment by the NAICS code of his or her establishment, our definition of coal mining employment includes individuals engaged in support roles within the establishment as well as individuals directly employed as coal miners. We also capture individuals who work only part-time or relatively few hours in the industry, as long as it is their primary source of W-2 earnings in any given year.

[6]This age restriction omits about 35 percent of the original panel, split roughly equally between those born after 1985 and before 1955.

[7]In 2011, this means that reported earnings were at least $11,600.

[8]Our findings are robust to including this period.

3 Descriptive Statistics

We begin by describing the characteristics of workers and patterns of employment in the coal industry. Between 2005 and 2021, there were at most about 1,300 distinct coal mining establishments in a given year, but the number of coal mining establishments has declined precipitously since 2011. Similarly, the coal workforce peaked at over 99,000 in 2011, and then fell by over 50 percent over the subsequent decade (Figure 1).[9] This sharp decline in coal demand, which we term the "coal shock", was primarily driven by macroeconomic factors, notably the advent of inexpensive natural gas due to advances in hydraulic fracturing technology (Kolstad, 2017; Linn and McCormack, 2019; Coglianese et al., 2020; Davis et al., 2022).[10]

Table 1 presents the demographic and earnings characteristics of workers in our analysis. The statistics in column 1 are based on the comprehensive coal worker panel, including the entire universe of individuals who worked for a coal mining establishment as their primary source of earnings at some point during the period of analysis. The statistics in column 2 are based on the sample of 29,500 full-time coal workers born between 1955 and 1985. This group of workers — with significant tenure in the coal industry and greater exposure to the subsequent coal shock — serves as the treated group of workers in our quasi-experimental analysis. We refer to this group as "exposed coal workers" going forward. Column 3 provides summary statistics for the age-restricted group of workers who worked full-time between 2007 and 2011, but who did not work for a coal establishment in all five of these years. This group of workers, with less exposure to the recent coal shock, serves as the control group in our quasi-experimental analysis and is referred to as "non-coal workers" going forward.[11]

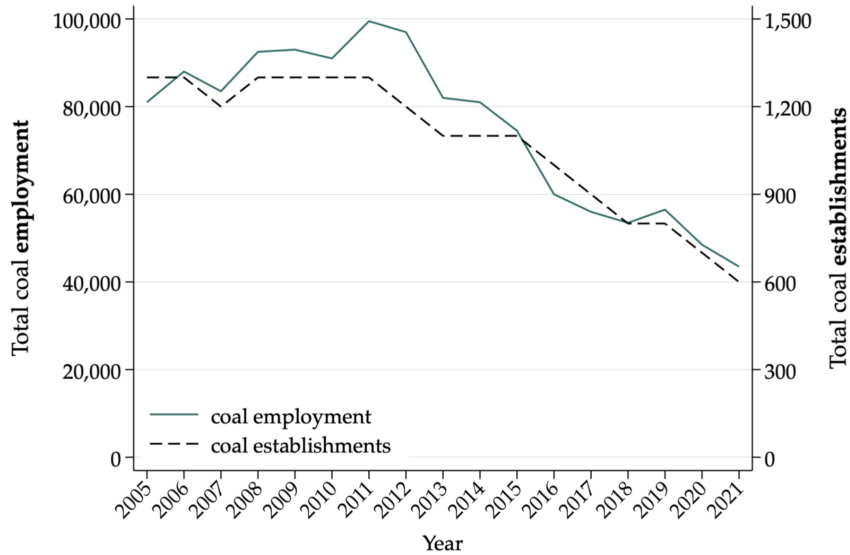
Compared to the universe of workers with any connection to the coal industry, those

[9]Our coal employment figures differ slightly from official government statistics. Appendix Figure A1 shows our data with publicly available County Business Pattern (CBP) estimates, which closely align with those from the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA).

[10]This period of declining demand for coal is not the first shock to affect the industry. The coal industry has historically experienced multiple boom-bust cycles. For instance, previous studies have investigated the effect of the surge in demand for coal during the 1970s and the subsequent collapse in the 1980s on Appalachian coal communities (Black et al., 2002, 2003, 2005).

[11]The majority (73%) of these workers had no employment in coal mining between 2007 and 2011.

Figure 1: Total coal mining establishments & employment, 2005–2021



Note: This figure shows the total number of coal mining establishments (on the left axis) and total coal mining employment (on the right axis) between 2005 and 2021. Workers are identified as coal miners if their primary employer (in terms of total earnings) in a given year was a coal mining establishment. Coal mining establishments are defined as those with NAICS codes 2121 and 213113. The number of employees and establishments are both rounded in line with Census disclosure rules. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.

in our main analysis sample are slightly more likely to be male (93 percent vs. 96 percent), white (91 percent vs. 95 percent), older (43 vs. 41), and slightly less likely to have a college degree (7 percent vs. 10 percent) than the population of coal workers as a whole (columns 1 vs. 2). They are more likely to be homeowners (91 percent vs. 84 percent). We also observe that this sample of more exposed coal workers earns substantially more than the population of coal workers as a whole ($92k vs. $64k). This is likely due to differences in tenure as well as the inclusion of part-time workers in column 1. The difference in adjusted gross incomes is smaller ($111k vs. $95k).

Compared to non-coal workers, exposed coal workers are substantially more likely to be male (95 percent vs. 68 percent), white (95 percent vs. 82 percent), and much less likely to have a college degree (7 percent vs. 38 percent) (columns 2 vs. 3). Despite lower educational attainment, the average full-time coal worker received roughly $16,000 more in total wages (W-2 earnings) in 2011 than non-coal full-time workers in the sample. That

Table 1: Characteristics of workers

	(1) All coal workers	(2) Exposed coal workers	(3) Non-coal workers
Male (%)	92.73	95.92	67.84
	(25.96)	(19.79)	(46.71)
Non-Hispanic white (%)	91.29	95.12	81.63
	(28.20)	(21.55)	(38.72)
College degree (%)	9.95	6.79	37.67
	(29.93)	(25.15)	(48.46)
Homeowner (%)	84.00	90.78	81.32
	(36.66)	(28.94)	(38.97)
Age	40.6	43.0	41.6
	(14.6)	(9.0)	(8.9)
State of birth (%)	62.72	63.35	54.74
	(48.35)	(48.19)	(49.77)
County of birth (%)	29.43	30.18	25.22
	(45.57)	(45.9)	(43.43)
Wages ($1,000s)	63.84	92.02	76.64
	(312.9)	(47.67)	(148.2)
AGI ($1,000s)	94.61	110.9	110.4
	(1276)	(103.5)	(424.2)
Observations	218,000	29,500	123,000

Note: Age, earnings, and Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) refer to 2011 values, with earnings and AGI adjusted to 2019 dollars. Born in state/county refers to 2011 residence. Educational attainment and homeownership status are drawn from ACS. Non-coal workers were identified from the 2010 ACS, and thus educational attainment and homeownership for these observations are 2010 reported values. These characteristics for coal workers are measured in the year in which the respondent took the survey, which may differ from 2010. The number of observations used to compute the means for the variables indicated may differ from the total number of observations indicated in the final row, as only about 20 percent of coal workers are matched to the ACS, some workers who ever worked for coal (column 1) have missing wages or AGI in 2011, and location of birth is missing for a small share (<5%) of workers. The sample in column 1 is the comprehensive coal panel. The sample in column 2 is exposed coal workers working full-time in coal from 2007 to 2011, defined in the text. The sample in column 3 is other full-time workers who worked in coal for fewer than five years between 2007 and 2011, defined in the text. Sample sizes are rounded to the nearest 100 or 1,000 in line with Census disclosure rules. Standard deviations are in parentheses. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.

coal offers relatively high wages to individuals with comparatively low levels of education foreshadows the potentially disruptive consequences that contractions in demand for coal could have for exposed workers. The adjusted gross incomes of the two groups of full-time workers were roughly similar in 2011. We also note that coal workers are more likely to live in their state and county of birth than non-coal workers in the sample.

Due to the high spatial clustering of coal deposits, coal mining employment is highly geographically concentrated, with large shares of the workforce located in Central Appalachia and parts of the Mountain West. In Appendix B, we compare the characteristics of coal mining establishments and employees in Eastern and Western states. Figure 2 maps coal mining employment as a share of total employment in 2011 across the continental United States. County-level coal mining employment is from the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), where employment is based on the county in which the coal mine is located. Total employment is retrieved from the public Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) data.[12]

While the median county with any coal employment had just 16 coal workers per 1,000 employees, the upper tail of the distribution is very long: counties at the 95$^{\text{th}}$ and 99$^{\text{th}}$ percentiles had 227 and 361 coal workers per 1,000 employees, respectively. For comparison, the construction industry had 40 workers at the median, 94 at the 95$^{\text{th}}$ percentile, and 143 at the 99$^{\text{th}}$ percentile.[13] This concentration can be summarized using the geographic Herfindahl–Hirschman index (HHI), $HHI_j = \sum_i s_{ij}^2$, where s_{ij} is county i's share of total employment in industry j. Coal mining's HHI of 164.5 is more than four times larger than other major industries such as construction (36), manufacturing (36), and trade, transportation, and utilities (40).[14] The most concentrated regions are in West Virginia and Eastern Kentucky, with West Virginia hosting 26 percent of the U.S. coal workforce in 2011, followed by Kentucky (20 percent), Pennsylvania (9 percent), Wyoming (7 percent), and Virginia (6 percent).[15]

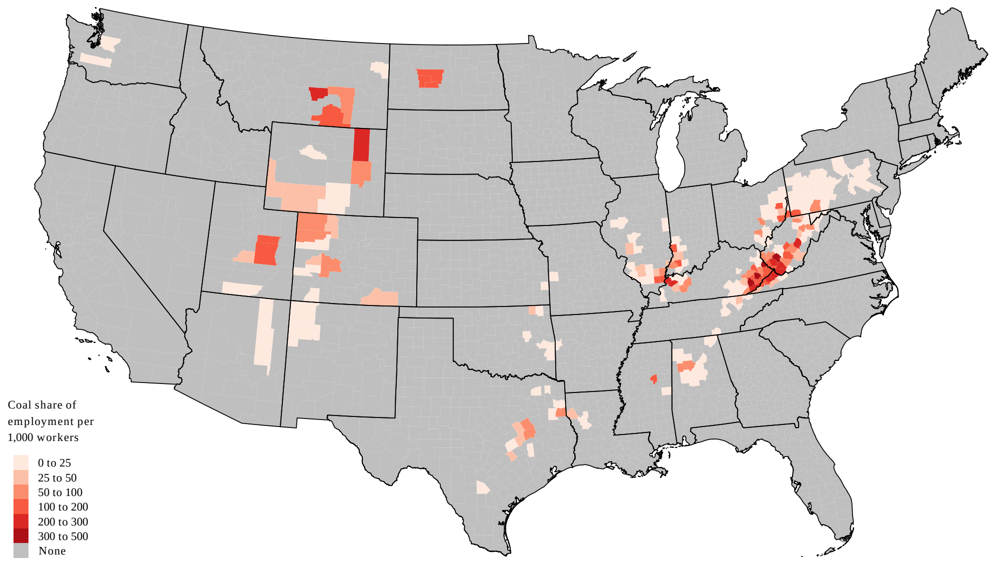
[12]We use previously released aggregate statistics for these maps to avoid additional disclosure from our microdata, noting that while these aggregate statistics deviate slightly from the confidential Census data, there are no qualitative differences between aggregates from the internal microdata and the public use statistics.

[13]County-level construction employment is based on QCEW estimates.

[14]We derive county-level employment in these industries from the QCEW.

[15]Individual workers might commute across county or state lines to work in coal mines. These state-level statistics are based on mine-level data from the MSHA and thus do not capture the location of residence of the worker, but the location of employment. Our individual-level data separately captures both residence

Figure 2: Coal share of employment, 2011



Note: This figure shows the coal mining share of total employment in 2011. Coal mining employment is defined as the number of workers employed at coal mines in the county, based on data from the MSHA. Total employment is retrieved from the QCEW. Source: Public data from MSHA and QCEW

Coal communities are typically situated in more rural settings where the local economy has historically centered around coal extraction and processing. Employment opportunities outside coal are often thought to be limited due to the lack of outside options within the community and the relative distance to more urban areas (Partridge et al., 2013; Carley et al., 2018). These limitations may reflect both concentrated local demand for narrow skill sets and monopsony power in rural labor markets (Dodini et al., 2024; Macaluso, 2025). Given these considerations, the adjustment costs associated with local labor demand shocks in coal communities may be higher than those experienced in more urban or economically diversified contexts.

4 Job Separations in Coal Mining

As documented in Figure 1, the number of coal workers declined substantially following 2011. In this section, we describe the trends in and consequences of job separations for

and place of work.

workers in coal mining.

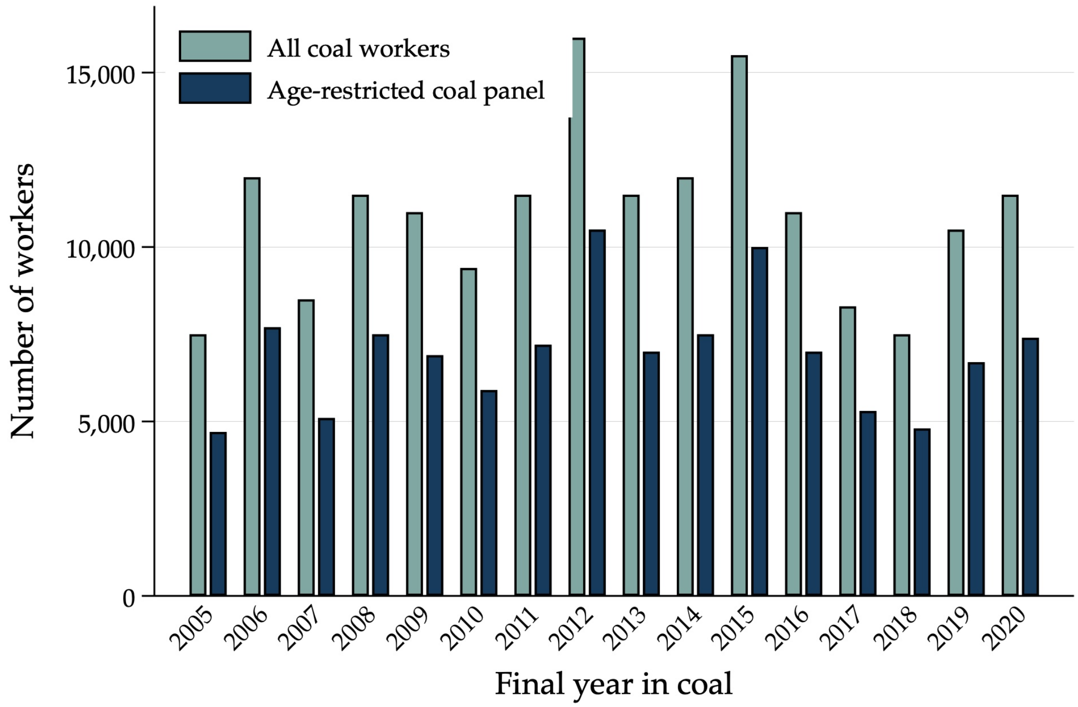
4.1 Descriptive Evidence

Of the 218,000 workers whose primary labor income was earned at a coal mining establishment in at least one year between 2005–2021, 174,000 (80 percent) separated from coal. We define a separation from the industry as a transition from a state in which a coal mining establishment is a worker's primary source of earnings to one in which it is not. This separation could occur because the worker transitions to working for a non-coal establishment or because the worker transitions into a state of not earning wages (e.g., to enter unemployment or retirement).[16] Many workers transition into and out of working for a coal mining establishment over the sample period. In Figure 3, we summarize the timing of final separations, defined as the last year in which a worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal mining industry during our study period. We omit the final year of our sample, 2021, to avoid the mechanical classification of it being a worker's final year in coal. The peak "final" year in coal mining was 2012, followed closely by 2015. The frequency of separations was evenly distributed across other years. This is consistent with the conclusions drawn from Figure 1, which showed that the decline in total coal mining employment was relatively steady after 2011.

The cumulative number of individuals whose main earnings derived from coal mining between 2005 and 2021 (218,000) is more than double the industry's peak employment in 2011 (99,500) and over five times the current workforce. This suggests there is substantial churn in the coal workforce, with workers moving in and out of coal mining and many workers only employed in the industry for brief spells. Thus, annual employment figures in any given year significantly understate the total workforce that has relied on this industry as a primary source of income. Appendix Figure A2 plots the distribution of total years of primary employment in coal mining over the 2005–2021 period. Over half of the workers in our sample were primarily employed in coal mining for fewer than five years during this 17-year span. This pattern persists even when considering the age-

[16]This may also reflect a worker's transition from a state in which coal is their primary source of earnings to one in which it is their secondary source of earnings.

Figure 3: Final separations from the coal industry by year, 2005–2020

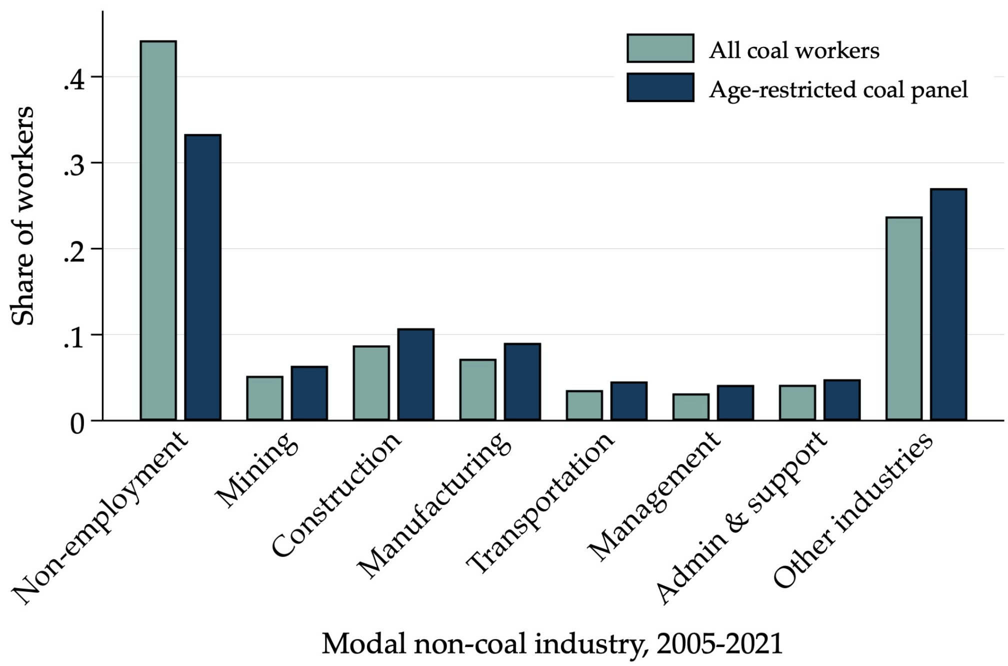


Note: Final year is defined as the last fiscal year in which the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal mining industry over the sample period. All coal workers includes all workers whose primary earnings were drawn from the coal mining industry in any year over the 2005–2021 period who separated from the industry over the sample period. The age-restricted coal panel further restricts this sample to individuals born between 1955 and 1985. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.

restricted subsample, with 46 percent of this cohort employed in coal for fewer than five years over the entire period. These findings likely understate total industry tenure, as they do not capture workers still connected to the industry in a part-time capacity while earning more income at a non-coal employer. They also do not account for employment histories predating 2005. Nevertheless, our findings indicate that a large share of workers are only marginally attached to the industry, which could attenuate the consequences of coal's decline.

To describe the labor market outcomes of coal workers during non-coal employment years, we analyze their primary sources of earnings and the prevalence of non-employment. For each worker in our coal panel, we determine the modal 2-digit NAICS industry of primary earnings across non-coal years. We include non-employment, defined as reporting no W-2 earnings, as its own category. For instance, a worker with eight years in coal, five in manufacturing, and two in management would be classified as having manufacturing as their modal non-coal industry. For a worker with three years in coal, two in construction, and ten years of non-employment, the modal non-coal industry would be classified as non-employment.

Figure 4: Modal industry during non-coal years



Note: All coal workers refers to all workers whose primary earnings were drawn from the coal mining industry in any year over the 2005–2021 period. The age-restricted coal panel further restricts this sample to individuals born between 1955 and 1985. Modal industry refers to the most frequent industry from which the worker earned his or her primary wages in the years in which coal was not the primary source of earnings. Non-employment is included as an "industry" of employment when calculating the modal industry of employment. Industries are defined based on 2-digit NAICS codes: Mining (21), Construction (23), Manufacturing (31–33), Transportation and warehousing (48–49), Management of Companies and Enterprises (55), Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services (56). Other includes all other 2-digit NAICS codes. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.

Figure 4 shows that non-employment is the predominant state for 44 percent of all coal workers during their non-coal years. To mitigate the potential for confounding effects from education or retirement, we recalculate this distribution for our age-restricted subsample. Even within this working-age cohort, non-employment remains the modal non-coal industry for the plurality (33 percent) of workers. Among the remaining sectors, coal workers are most commonly employed in construction (10 percent), manufacturing (9 percent), and other mining (6 percent).

We next examine the evolution of earnings following job separations. We define a separation or "switch" event as a transition between firms between year t and $t+1$, including transitions to non-employment.[17] For this analysis, we combine the age-restricted coal panel with the random subsample of 2010 ACS respondents and limit the sample to workers who were employed at the same firm (i.e., received positive earnings) in years t and $t-1$, ensuring that they worked at least two consecutive years before the separation event is defined.

We summarize the evolution of earnings prior to and following a separation event using the local projections estimator (Jordà, 2005, 2023). The local projections estimator provides a separate estimate for each horizon of interest, imposing limited structure on the underlying data generating process.[18] Specifically, for each time-horizon h, we estimate the following specification:

$$\Delta y_{i,t+h} = \beta_C^h SwitchC_{it} + \beta_{NC}^h SwitchNC_{it} + X_{it}^{'} + \alpha_i + \gamma_t + \delta_r + \varepsilon_{it} \tag{1}$$

where $\Delta y_{i,t+h}$ is the difference in earnings for worker i at each time horizon $t+h$, compared to $t-1$. $SwitchC_{it}$ is an indicator equal to one if worker i separates firms between year t and $t+1$ and worked in coal in year t, and zero otherwise. $SwitchNC_{it}$ is an indicator equal to one if worker i separates firms between year t and $t+1$ and the worker did not work in coal in year t, and zero otherwise.[19] We include all years 2005 through 2021 in the analysis, but our results are robust to omitting the pandemic years, 2020 and 2021.

We begin with no worker-level covariates or fixed effects. We build on this by con-

[17] We base our definition of firm on the firm ID as classified by the LBD. In most cases, this is the same as the firm's EIN code. However, if a firm has multiple employer entities (EINs), the firm ID will differ from the EIN code. Identifying a firm "switch" based on EIN code produces nearly identical results to those presented here.

[18] Basso et al. (2022) show that in the case of repeat events (multiple separations in our context), distributed-lag models can produce biased estimates of the dynamic response compared to the local projections estimator. Our results are qualitatively robust to using a distributed lag model.

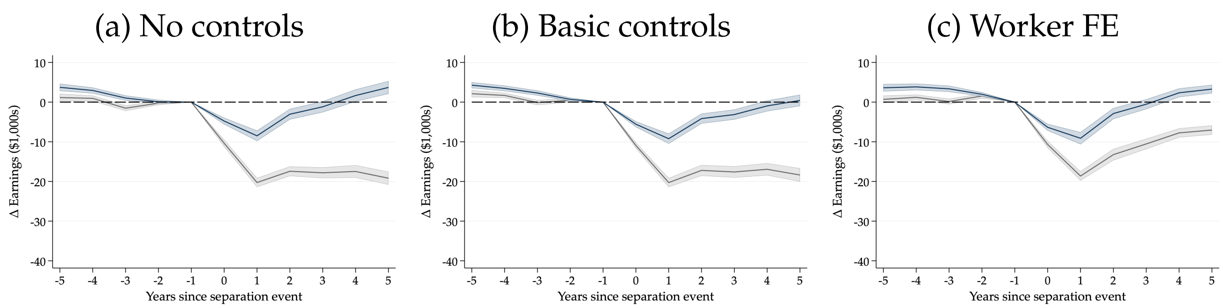
[19] Because we cannot observe the month in which a worker separates from a firm, we define the event as the final year in which the worker reports earnings from the firm. For example, if a worker separates from a firm in October 2016, 2016 will be defined as the "switch" event.

trolling for a vector of worker-level covariates, $X_{it}^{'}$, which includes worker i's age in year t and indicators for whether the worker is male or non-Hispanic white, as well as adding fixed effects for Census region (δ_r) and year (γ_t). Finally, we include worker fixed effects, α_i. This is closest to the standard regression specification estimated in the large literature on separations that follows from the seminal contribution of Jacobson et al. (1993). We initially abstract from the common approach in the literature to distinguish between "mass layoff events" from "distressed firms" and "non-distressed firms" (Jacobson et al., 1993; Von Wachter et al., 2009; Couch and Placzek, 2010; Davis and von Wachter, 2011; Gathmann et al., 2020; Fallick et al., 2021; Dodini et al., 2024; Macaluso, 2025), although we do examine mass layoff events below. Instead, we distinguish between coal separations and non-coal separations. In all specifications, we cluster standard errors at the commuting zone level. Our results are robust to two-way clustering at the worker- and firm-level, as well as including lagged separations in the regression to account for potential serial correlation.

Figure 5 presents the evolution of earnings before and after coal and non-coal separations. The estimated coefficients β_C^h, reflecting the evolution of earnings before and after coal separations, are in grey, while β_{NC}^h, reflecting the evolution of earnings before and after non-coal separations, are in navy. Across all specifications, we see that earnings are relatively stable in the years preceding a firm separation from coal mining. Coal separations are associated with substantial and persistent earnings losses. Workers experience a decline in earnings of nearly \$20,000 in the year following separation, with unconditional losses persisting at around this level five years post-separation. The magnitude of the initial losses is robust across specifications. In all panels of Figure 5, earnings fall by nearly \$20,000 in the year immediately following the coal separation relative to the year prior. Including worker fixed effects suggests a more meaningful recovery, but workers still earn about \$7,000 less five years following the separation event.

To put the magnitude of these losses into context, Appendix Figure A3 displays how coal separations affect cumulative, normalized earnings. Using the same specification described in equation 1, we redefine the outcome variable as cumulative earnings between

Figure 5: Firm Separations and the Evolution of Earnings



Note: This figure plots the association between a firm separation event and the evolution of earnings five years before and after the separation event. Point estimates in gray reflect separations from the coal industry, and those in navy reflect all other firm separations. The sample is limited to workers born between 1955 and 1985 with non-negative AGI and reporting non-zero earnings at the same firm in years t and $t-1$. Each estimate is the result of a separate OLS regression estimated at each time horizon as specified in equation 1. The leftmost figure reflects the estimates from a bivariate regression between the change in earnings relative to $t-1$ and the separation event. No additional controls are included. The middle figure reflects the estimates from a multivariate regression between the change in earnings relative to $t-1$ and the separation event, including controls for age, a dummy for being male, a dummy for being non-Hispanic white, and year and region fixed effects. The rightmost figure reflects the estimates from a multivariate regression between the change in earnings relative to $t-1$ and the separation event, including year, region, and worker fixed effects. Controls for age, sex, and race/ethnicity are collinear with individual and year fixed effects and so are not included. Shading reflects 95 percent confidence interval. Standard errors are clustered at the Commuting Zone. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.

year t and $t+h$, normalized by average annual earnings in the five years preceding the separation event (i.e., years $t-1$ through $t-5$). In our least parsimonious specification, we find that separation from a coal firm is associated with a reduction of over three years' worth of pre-separation earnings five years after the separation. Incorporating worker, year, and region fixed effects attenuates these estimated losses such that a coal separation is associated with a reduction of about 1.2 years' worth of pre-separation earnings five years after the separation event.

The navy coefficient estimates in Figure 5 reveal that non-coal separations are associated with more muted changes in earnings. Across specifications, we estimate a slight decline in earnings leading up to a separation event. Following separation, we observe an initial $8,500 reduction in earnings, which is fully recovered within five years. This pattern is robust across specifications. These estimates reflect the average effect of both voluntary and involuntary separations and span the Great Recession, when involuntary separations would have been more frequent. Part of the reduction in earnings could reflect the loss of firm- or industry-specific human capital, which workers may voluntarily forgo if they expect to earn more in the long run. Examining cumulative, normalized earnings, we see that non-coal separations are associated with subsequent earnings growth, consistent with the idea that workers move up a "job ladder" to better jobs by conducting on-the-job searches and accepting better job offers (Topel and Ward, 1992; Hahn et al., 2021).

We emphasize that these results are descriptive. We do not ascribe a causal interpretation because separations may be voluntary. Workers might separate from firms for better opportunities elsewhere, introducing an upward bias in the observed relationship between separation and subsequent earnings (Topel and Ward, 1992; Brown et al., 2006; Haltiwanger et al., 2018). Conversely, the decision to lay one worker off rather than another may be correlated with factors that shape their future earnings potential, resulting in a downward bias (Gibbons and Katz, 1991). These concerns motivate the use of "mass layoff events" to identify the causal effects of job loss, though such events apply to a selected subset of firms and workers. Nonetheless, the contrast between separations from coal and from other sectors aligns with the broader separations literature. For example, in the seminal paper by Jacobson et al. (1993), the authors document large and persistent earnings losses following mass layoffs, but much smaller and statistically insignificant effects for separations from non-distressed firms.

4.2 Evidence from Mass Layoffs

In this section, we move beyond descriptive evidence to identify the causal effect of coal separations on labor market outcomes. To do this, we employ an instrumental variables (IV) strategy that leverages plausibly exogenous variation in separations induced by large firm-level employment contractions.

4.2.1 Research Design

Following a rich literature on the effects of mass displacement events (e.g., Jacobson et al., 1993; Von Wachter et al., 2009; Schmieder et al., 2023; Lachowska et al., 2020; Huckfeldt, 2022; Dodini et al., 2024), we instrument for individual worker separations using indicators for substantial firm-level employment declines. Specifically, we define our instrument as an indicator for when a worker's firm experiences a year-over-year employment decline exceeding 30 percent:

$$Z_{it} = \mathbb{1}\left[\frac{Emp_{t+1} - Emp_t}{Emp_t} < -0.3\right]$$

This approach relies on three key identifying assumptions. First, the instrument must have a strong first-stage relationship with individual separations. This assumption is both intuitive and empirically verified in our setting: when firms shed more than 30 percent of their workforce, a large share of their workers necessarily experience involuntary separations. Indeed, we find that workers at firms experiencing such contractions are 33-37 percentage points more likely to separate than workers at other firms.[20]

Second, the exclusion restriction requires that mass layoff events affect workers' outcomes only through their effect on job separation. The key threat to this assumption is that mass layoffs may be concentrated at firms that systematically employ lower-productivity workers, who would have experienced worse outcomes even in the absence of displacement. We acknowledge that this concern is empirically relevant in our setting: firms that experience mass layoffs have lower pre-layoff wages, employment, and revenue, and are younger than those that do not experience mass layoffs. However, several features of our research design mitigate concerns that these differences invalidate our exclusion restriction. Most importantly, our main specification includes worker fixed effects, which control for all time-invariant worker characteristics that might be correlated with both firm selection and post-displacement outcomes. This addresses the primary concern that workers at firms experiencing mass layoffs are systematically different in ways that would affect their post-displacement trajectories. Additionally, the nature of the

[20] Point estimates are 0.37 at baseline (without controls), 0.35 with controls for age, male, non-Hispanic white, and year and region fixed effects, and 0.33 with year, region, and worker fixed effects.

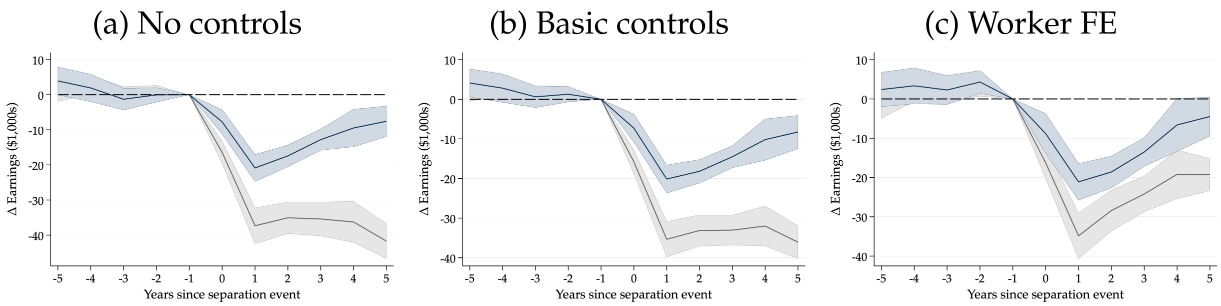
coal industry contraction provides a compelling source of quasi-random variation. The massive decline in coal demand was driven by external factors—particularly the natural gas boom and environmental regulations—rather than firm-specific productivity shocks. While some coal firms were indeed more vulnerable to this aggregate shock due to factors like mine geology, transportation costs, or contract structures, the timing and severity of workforce reductions were largely determined by market forces beyond individual firm control. This suggests that, conditional on worker fixed effects, the variation we exploit is plausibly exogenous to unobserved determinants of worker outcomes.

Finally, our IV estimates identify a local average treatment effect (LATE) for workers whose separation status is affected by firm-level contractions. One might worry that these "compliers" are negatively selected — i.e., that firms lay off their least productive workers with the worst outside options. If true, our estimates would represent an upper bound on the average cost of displacement. We assess this concern by comparing the pre-displacement characteristics of compliers to the broader population of coal workers. Specifically, we implement the methodology of Abadie (2003) to investigate complier characteristics. In Appendix Table A1, we demonstrate that compliers are remarkably similar to the average coal worker in the separations analysis across a range of observable characteristics, including age, education, tenure, and pre-displacement wages, suggesting our estimates may be informative about displacement effects for the broader population of coal workers.

4.2.2 Results

Figure 6 plots the evolution of earnings before and after coal and non-coal separations using our instrumental variables approach. The IV estimates closely mirror the patterns from the descriptive analysis but show larger earnings losses, consistent with voluntary separations attenuating the average effects in the initial descriptive results. As expected, involuntary separations lead to substantially larger and more persistent declines in earnings. In the richest specification with worker fixed effects (Panel c), mass-layoff-induced coal separations are associated with an initial annual earnings loss of $35,000, with losses narrowing to around $20,000 after five years. For comparison, mass-layoff-induced non-coal separations result in an initial earnings loss of about $20,000, followed by a near-complete recovery within five years.

Figure 6: Firm Separations and the Evolution of Earnings (IV Estimates)



Note: This figure plots the association between a firm separation event and the evolution of earnings five years before and after the separation event. Point estimates in gray reflect separations from the coal industry, and those in navy reflect all other firm separations. The sample is limited to workers born between 1955 and 1985 with non-negative AGI and reporting non-zero earnings at the same firm in years t and $t-1$. Each estimate is the result of a separate regression estimated at each time horizon as specified in equation 1. All regressions instrument for separation events with mass layoff events, as described in text. The leftmost figure reflects the estimates from a bivariate regression between the change in earnings relative to $t-1$ and the separation event. No additional controls are included. The middle figure reflects the estimates from a multivariate regression between the change in earnings relative to $t-1$ and the separation event, including controls for age, a dummy for being male, a dummy for being non-Hispanic white, and year and region fixed effects. The rightmost figure reflects the estimates from a multivariate regression between the change in earnings relative to $t-1$ and the separation event, including year, region, and worker fixed effects. Controls for age, sex, and race/ethnicity are collinear with individual and year fixed effects and so are not included. Shading reflects 95 percent confidence interval. Standard errors are clustered at the Commuting Zone. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.

While these estimates bring us closer to understanding the labor market consequences of coal's decline, job loss captures only one transitional cost associated with the macroeconomic contraction of the coal industry. In the following section, we broaden our analysis to examine the impact of coal's decline on a much wider set of extensive and intensive margins of adjustment.

5 Margins of Adjustment

In this section, we leverage the fact that the substantial decline in demand for coal after 2011 was largely driven by technological advancements in natural gas extraction and other plausibly exogenous macroeconomic factors (e.g., Coglianese et al., 2020). Rather than focusing on individual separation events, we use this broader, sector-wide contraction to evaluate the longer-term consequences of coal's decline for workers.

5.1 Research Design

Our research design is inspired by Autor et al. (2014), who evaluate the worker-level consequences of rising import penetration. We leverage variation in workers' exposure to the aggregate industry shock to assess adjustment along various margins: within their pre-decline firms, across firms within coal, across industries, across labor markets, and through transfers. This approach provides a more comprehensive picture of worker-level responses to the coal industry's contraction.

We estimate the following specification, using our main analysis sample of coal and non-coal workers born between 1955 and 1985 who were employed "full-time" in each year between 2007 and 2011:

$$E_{i\tau} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}] + X_{i,0}^{'}\gamma + \delta_r + \varepsilon_{i\tau} \tag{2}$$

where $E_{i\tau} = \sum_{t=2012}^{t=2019} \frac{E_{it}}{\overline{E}_{it_0}}$ reflects the cumulative earnings of worker i between 2012 and 2019, normalized by their average annual earnings between 2007 and 2011, $\overline{E}_{it_0}$. This measure of cumulative earnings captures the entirety of a worker's labor market activity following the coal shock. By normalizing this value to pre-shock earnings $\overline{E}_{it_0}$, we observe how exposure to the shock influences the evolution of a worker's earnings. We also examine several additional outcome variables: the cumulative number of years employed between 2012 and 2019, cumulative earnings per year employed between 2012 and 2019 (again, normalized by average annual earnings between 2007 and 2011), and measures of geographic mobility, social insurance participation, and retirement income. $\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$ is a binary variable equal to one if worker i's primary employer was a coal mining establishment in all five of the pre-shock years (2007-2011), and zero otherwise. The coefficient of interest β_1 captures the difference in outcomes between workers with more vs. less attachment to the coal industry during the pre-shock period. $X'_{i,0}$ captures a rich set of worker-level controls, including the worker's age, an indicator for being non-Hispanic white, an indicator for being male, the log of average annual wages between 2007 and 2011, the interaction of average wages with the worker's age, the change in average annual wages between 2007 and 2011, the number of years the worker worked their 2011 firm between 2007 and 2011, and 8 bins of establishment size (based on 2011 establishment). We also include Census region fixed effects, δ_r. We cluster standard errors on the worker's firm, as measured in 2011, to allow for correlation in the error terms among workers who are initially employed in the same firm.[21]

The core idea is to compare workers who are ex-ante observationally similar, but have varying attachment to the coal mining industry in the pre-shock period, and thus varying exposure to the subsequent, plausibly exogenous, macroeconomic decline in coal demand. The main identifying assumption required for a causal interpretation is conditional independence. There are two components to this. First, after accounting for differences in a rich set of observable worker characteristics, we assume that workers with more attachment to the coal industry during the pre-shock period have the same earnings and employment potential as workers with less or no attachment to the coal industry. Second, we assume that any observed differences in earnings and employment trajectories between 2012 and 2019 can be attributed to the decline of coal.

One potential concern with our approach is the inclusion of partially treated workers in the control group. Our primary treatment definition classifies workers as treated if they worked in coal in all five years prior to the start of coal's decline (2007–2011).[22] These workers are highly attached to the industry, and therefore arguably more exposed to the subsequent coal shock. Our primary control group contains all full-time workers

[21] Results are also robust to clustering standard errors at the level of the worker's 2011 commuting zone, to allow for correlation in the error terms among workers who are initially employed in the sample labor market.

[22] Our results are robust to extending the pre-shock window to 2005–2011 and to using stricter definitions of "full-time" employment based on annual earnings thresholds.

with fewer than five years of coal employment during the pre-shock period. While less attached than treated workers, some may have limited exposure to the coal industry's decline. To the extent that control workers are partially treated, this would bias our estimates toward zero — implying that our results likely represent a lower bound on the true effects of coal exposure. However, most (73%) control group workers have no coal employment history between 2007 and 2011, and our findings are robust to alternative control group definitions that exclude workers with any experience in the coal industry.

A second concern could be that while we are able to control for a rich set of individual-level characteristics, there remains unobserved heterogeneity between coal workers and non-coal workers that we are not able to adjust for. In Appendix C.1, we document that our findings are not sensitive to the inclusion or omission of individual controls. Our findings are also robust to controlling for the number of years in which a worker worked for their 2011 industry over the 2007–2011 period and to restricting comparisons between workers with more vs. less coal experience, omitting non-coal workers completely. We also consider alternative definitions of exposure, including a continuous parameterization of attachment to coal and using a set of binned variables, in which each bin represents the number of pre-decline years a worker's primary employer was a coal mining establishment. Our findings remain robust to these alternative exposure definitions. Further details can be found in Appendix C.4.

Even if one is willing to assume that workers with more tenure in the coal industry during the pre-shock period have the same earnings and employment potential as workers with less or no tenure in the coal industry, one still has to be willing to attribute any differential changes in outcomes to the decline of coal. This requires assuming that there are no other aggregate changes that differentially affect more vs. less exposed coal workers. Given the spatial concentration of coal mining activities, a concern here is that other "non-coal" shocks could differentially affect workers. For example, if coal-rich regions were differentially less likely to recover from the Great Recession, then our estimates would reflect the combined effect of both the Great Recession and the decline of coal (Yagan, 2019). Alternatively, if non-coal workers were differentially less likely to recover from the Great Recession this would attenuate any adverse consequences from the decline of coal. The labor markets most affected by the Great Recession — Sun Belt states including California and Florida, and Rust Belt states including Michigan and Indiana — do not overlap with regions in which coal is concentrated, suggesting that coal regions may have been less affected by the Great Recession. Indeed, unlike many other tradable industries, coal mining experienced a small uptick in employment during the Great Recession. While we cannot fully rule out the empirical relevance of this concern, our findings are robust to including more detailed geographic controls, e.g., state fixed effects, as well as controlling for local economic conditions.[23] As noted above, our conclusions are also robust to restricting comparisons between more vs. less exposed coal workers and omitting non-coal workers from the analysis. This within-coal analysis leverages variation in exposure among coal workers, who are more likely to share common exposure to non-coal macroeconomic changes.

Finally, our analysis relies on the identifying assumption that the decline of coal did not indirectly affect non-coal workers. Given the spatial concentration of coal, reductions in labor demand could reduce local demand and economic activity, affecting non-coal workers in the same labor market. In Appendix Section C.3, we show that our findings are robust to including an additional control variable that captures a worker's spatial proximity to local coal shocks in other labor markets. Our findings are also robust to excluding "pre-shock" non-coal workers who are in coal communities.

5.2 Results

Table 2 presents our main results, reflecting the association between exposure to the decline of coal and cumulative earnings (column 1), the number of years with positive earnings (column 2), and earnings per year (column 3). We estimate that greater pre-shock exposure to the coal industry is associated with sizeable earnings losses between 2012 and 2019. The most exposed coal workers lost an additional year and a half (1.597) of their pre-shock (2007-2011) average annual earnings relative to observationally similar

[23]Our results are insensitive to including an additional control variable that reflects county-level exposure to the Great Recession, based on the construction in Autor et al. (2021).

workers with less or no pre-shock exposure (column 1).[24] The negative coefficients in columns 2 and 3 indicate that this cumulative earnings effect stems from both fewer years of employment (the extensive margin) and lower earnings when employed (the intensive margin). We estimate that, on average, more exposed coal workers had 0.37 fewer years of work between 2012 and 2019 compared to the control group (column 2), and experienced 17.4 percent lower annual earnings during the years that they were employed (column 3).[25]

Table 2: Exposure to coal shock and the evolution of earnings, 2012-2019

	(1) Cumulative earnings	(2) # of years w/ earnings >0	(3) Earnings per year employed
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-1.597***	-0.370***	-0.174***
	(0.087)	(0.037)	(0.010)
Outcome mean (SD)	8.05 (3.71)	7.45 (1.43)	1.06 (0.43)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓
Observations	152,000	152,000	152,000

Notes: The outcome variables are defined over the 2012 to 2019 period. Cumulative earnings and earnings per year employed are normalized to average annual wages between 2007 and 2011. The primary independent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether or not the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry in all five years between 2007 and 2011. All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Columns 1 and 2 have the same number of underlying observations. There are slightly fewer observations in column 3 because the outcome variable is not observed for workers who are never employed between 2012 and 2019. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the worker's firm in 2011. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.
*** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

The magnitude of these effects is substantial. Autor et al. (2014) estimate that workers at the 75$^{\text{th}}$ percentile of import penetration experienced a reduction in cumulative

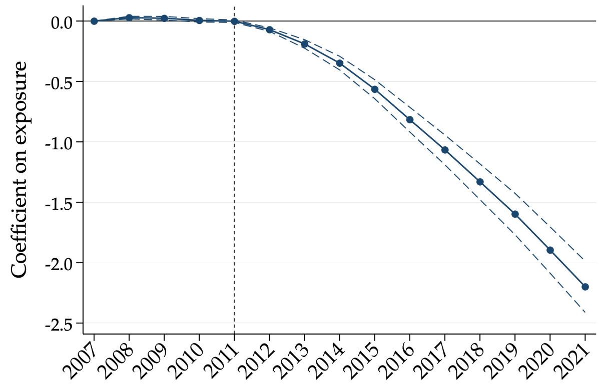
[24] As noted in section 5.1, our findings are robust to a broad range of sensitivity analyses and robustness tests. In Appendix C.1 we document that these findings are not sensitive to the inclusion or omission of individual controls. In Appendix Sections C.3 and C.4, we show that controlling for a worker's industry tenure, controlling for CZ-level exposure to spatially proximate coal shocks, and exploiting different definitions of exposure to coal's decline yield similar conclusions to our main results. Our conclusions are also robust to using alternative samples and control groups.

[25] We are not able to distinguish whether earnings reductions result from fewer working hours or lower hourly wages.

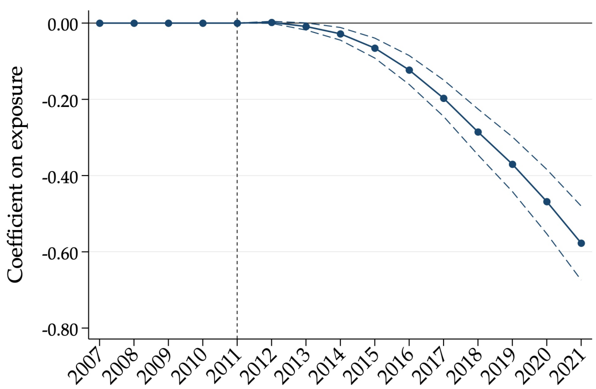
earnings over the 1992–2007 period of roughly half an annual wage, relative to workers at the 25th percentile. They find no significant effect on overall employment, suggesting that these losses are driven by reduced earnings while employed. They estimate a 2.6 percent reduction in earnings per year of employment for more exposed workers. Walker (2013) estimates that manufacturing workers affected by the introduction of the Clean Air Act experienced an initial reduction in earnings before a return to trend within 7 years. While not directly comparable, the differences in magnitude and mechanism (we estimate reductions in both years of employment and earnings per year of employment) are consistent with the premise that regionally concentrated labor demand shocks may have larger effects on workers.

To examine the temporal dynamics of these effects over the course of coal's decline, Figure 7 provides point estimates from separate regressions over varying time horizons from 2007 to 2021, reflecting the cumulative effect up to that point in time. The 2019 estimate is the same as in Table 2. Panel a of Figure 7 indicates that cumulative earnings for exposed coal workers are relatively stable compared to observationally similar workers in the years leading up to coal's decline. Beginning in 2012, the cumulative earnings losses for more exposed coal workers steadily grow. The accumulation of losses does not diminish at any point during our sample period. In Panel b, we observe that reductions in employment are relatively minimal during the initial years of coal's decline, but grow progressively more negative over time. As with cumulative earnings, we see little evidence of recovery. In Panel c, we observe, in contrast to the employment response, that earnings conditional on employment drop sharply in 2012, followed by a progressive decline over time that starts to level off by the end of the sample period. On average, exposed coal workers appear to remain relatively attached to the labor force in the initial years of coal's decline, but receive lower earnings. Over time, workers exit the labor force at increasing rates. These two forces — a sharp drop in earnings during years of employment and a slow, but progressive decline in attachment to the workforce — combine to generate the relatively linear decline in cumulative earnings losses. These patterns are consistent with the notion that the coal shock is better conceived as a gradual but persistent sectoral contraction rather than as a discrete mass layoff event.

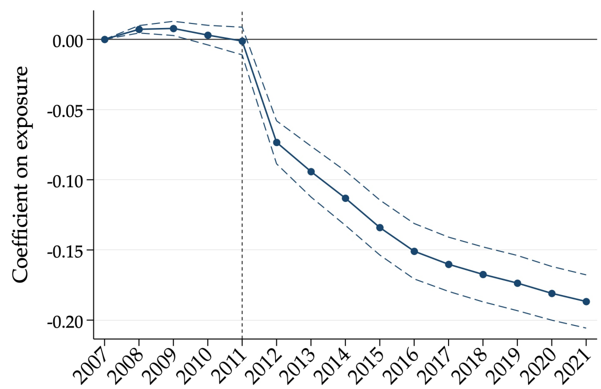
Figure 7: Extensive and intensive margin changes



(a) Cumulative earnings



(b) Cumulative employment



(c) Earnings per year employed

Note: Figure plots the regression coefficients and 95 percent confidence intervals from separate regressions of cumulative earnings (Figure 7a) cumulative employment (Figure 7b) or earnings per year employed (Figure 7c) over the specified time period. In years prior to 2012, the outcome is defined over the year indicated on the x-axis and 2011. In years 2012–2021, the outcome is defined over the period between 2012 and the year indicated on the x-axis. Cumulative earnings and earnings per year employed are normalized to average annual wages between 2007 and 2011. The primary independent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether or not the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry in all five years between 2007 and 2011. All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.

To contextualize the magnitude of these effects, we translate our estimates into dollar terms. On average, full-time coal workers most exposed to the post-2011 coal shock earned approximately \$92,000 in 2011 (in 2019 dollars). Our results imply that these workers lost the equivalent of 1.6 years' worth of their pre-shock annual earnings over the 2012–2019 period — translating to roughly \$147,200 in total lost earnings, or about

$18,400 per year. This is likely an upper bound, as it reflects losses for full-time, most-exposed workers and does not account for possible offsetting income from other sources (Section 5.3). With roughly 42,000 coal miners currently employed in the U.S., a complete phaseout of coal could imply annual earnings losses of approximately $773 million for the current mining workforce. While modest in aggregate, this estimate reflects substantial losses for each affected worker. We note that this cumulative figure does not capture losses experienced by other workers affected by the transition away from coal, such as those employed in coal-fired power plants or related industries.

5.2.1 The role of reallocation

Our main findings suggest that the decline of coal resulted in substantial reductions in earnings and employment. It is important, however, to understand the extent to which worker-level adjustments may have mitigated the consequences for some individuals, providing insights into where in the adjustment process frictions may arise and which types of workers are most affected.

In Table 3, we present the results of an analysis decomposing the average worker-level effects of the decline of coal (Table 2) into a set of additive, mutually exclusive channels that include employment observed at the worker's initial employer (column 2); employment at other firms within the worker's 2011 industry (column 3); and employment outside of the worker's 2011 industry, including non-employment (column 4). This analysis captures the direct effect of coal's decline on workers' tenure and earnings at their initial employers as well as any subsequent, potentially offsetting effects of moves across employers, within and outside of the coal mining sector. These categories are exhaustive of all possible forms of employment, such that the coefficient estimates in columns 2, 3, and 4 of Panels A and B sum to the coefficient estimate in column 1 of the corresponding panel. The estimates in Panel C (earnings per year employed) are not additive because the outcome variable is not observed in years in which a worker does not report any earnings in a given category. The estimates in column 1 correspond to our main results presented in Table 2.

Table 3: Exposure to coal shock and the evolution of earnings by employer and industry

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	All employers	**Same industry**		**Diff. industry**
		Same firm	Diff. firm	
Panel A: Cumulative earnings				
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-1.597***	-0.213	0.302*	-1.687***
	(0.087)	(0.190)	(0.149)	(0.108)
Outcome mean (SD)	8.05 (3.71)	4.03 (3.77)	1.46 (2.79)	2.55 (3.79)
Panel B: Cumulative employment				
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-0.370***	0.166	0.572***	-1.108***
	(0.037)	(0.198)	(0.154)	(0.097)
Outcome mean (SD)	7.45 (1.43)	3.66 (3.02)	1.34 (2.23)	2.45 (2.80)
Panel C: Earnings per year of employment				
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-0.174***	-0.123***	-0.161***	-0.307***
	(0.010)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.019)
Outcome mean (SD)	1.06 (0.43)	1.07 (0.35)	1.04 (0.50)	0.98 (0.59)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Obs. (Panels A and B)	152,000	152,000	152,000	152,000
Obs. (Panel C)	152,000	122,000	55,000	85,000

Note: The outcome variables are defined over the 2012 to 2019 period. Cumulative earnings and earnings per year employed are normalized to average annual wages between 2007 and 2011. The primary independent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether or not the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry in all five years between 2007 and 2011. All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2. Column 1 shows the aggregate effect on cumulative earnings and employment. Columns 2–4 decompose these effects into employment and earnings obtained at the worker's 2011 employer versus other employers, and within versus outside of the worker's 2011 industry, defined at the 2-digit NAICS code. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the worker's firm in 2011. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.
*** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

Panel A of Table 3 reveals that cumulative earnings losses for workers most exposed to the coal shock are predominantly driven by employment outside of the mining sector. Exposed coal workers suffer earnings losses equivalent to approximately 1.7 years of pre-shock annual earnings when outside of mining. These losses are marginally offset by increased earnings from working at different firms within the mining sector. Panel B exhibits a similar pattern for employment duration, with losses driven by years in which exposed workers are observed outside of mining. Exposed workers spend 1.1 fewer years employed outside of their initial industry than observationally similar workers over the 2012–2019 period. This extensive margin effect is large, representing a 45 percent decline compared to the sample mean (2.45 years of employment in different industries). While extensive margin responses are driven by years spent outside of mining, Panel C reveals that exposed coal workers experience reduced earnings per year of employment across firms and industries. Workers experience a 12 to 16 percent reduction in earnings per year of employment within their initial industry. However, in years in which exposed coal workers are employed in different industries, they suffer much larger earnings losses, on the order of 30 percent per year employed. While these losses could reflect the loss of establishment premiums, which Helm et al. (2023) identify as a key driver of wage losses for workers displaced from traditionally high-premium sectors, we show that in our setting, entering other "high-wage" industries does not attenuate losses (Appendix C.5). In fact, losses are higher in these industries. Such transitions are rare and may suggest workers move down the job ladder, working in lower-wage occupations within these "high wage" industries.

One advantage of our data is that we are able to track workers' locations throughout the study period, including during years of non-employment. In Table 4, we examine how relocation across labor markets and industries may interact to influence losses. We decompose the total worker-level effect of coal shock exposure (column 1) into total earnings or years of employment observed within the worker's 2011 CZ and 2011 industry (column 2), total earnings or years of employment observed within the 2011 CZ but in a different industry (column 3), total earnings or years of employment observed in a different CZ but within the same industry (column 4), and total earnings or years of employment observed outside of the worker's 2011 CZ and industry. In Appendix C.2, we analyze the effect of exposure to the coal shock on various dimensions of geographic mobility. We find that more exposed coal workers are only marginally less geographically mobile than non-coal workers.

Table 4: Exposure to coal shock and the evolution of earnings by sector and CZ

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	All	**Same CZ**		**Different CZ**	
		Same ind.	Diff. ind.	Same ind.	Diff. ind.
Panel A: Cumulative earnings					
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-1.597***	0.070	-1.351***	0.020	-0.336***
	(0.087)	(0.104)	(0.097)	(0.026)	(0.023)
Outcome mean (SD)	8.05 (3.71)	4.99 (3.89)	2.06 (3.39)	0.51 (1.87)	0.49 (1.90)
Panel B: Cumulative employment					
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-0.370***	0.637***	-0.899***	0.101***	-0.208***
	(0.037)	(0.113)	(0.087)	(0.023)	(0.019)
Outcome mean (SD)	7.45 (1.43)	4.57 (3.03)	2.00 (2.61)	0.43 (1.39)	0.45 (1.40)
Panel C: Earnings per year of employment					
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-0.174***	-0.134***	-0.302***	-0.162***	-0.336***
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.021)	(0.012)	(0.015)
Outcome mean (SD)	1.06 (0.43)	1.06 (0.36)	0.97 (0.58)	1.11 (0.58)	1.02 (0.71)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Obs. (Panels A and B)	152,000	152,000	152,000	152,000	152,000
Obs. (Panel C)	152,000	132,000	75,500	19,500	19,500

Note: The outcome variables are defined over the 2012 to 2019 period. Cumulative earnings and earnings per year employed are normalized to average annual wages between 2007 and 2011. The primary independent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether or not the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry in all five years between 2007 and 2011. All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2. Column 1 shows the aggregate effect on cumulative earnings and employment. Columns 2–5 decompose these effects into employment and earnings obtained in the 2011 CZ of residence versus other CZs, and within versus outside of the worker's 2011 industry, defined at the 2-digit NAICS code. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the worker's firm in 2011. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.
*** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

The coefficients in Table 4 provide a nuanced assessment of how sectoral and geographic mobility interact to shape the earnings and employment trajectories of workers exposed to the coal shock. Consistent with our findings in Table 3, we observe that earnings and employment losses for exposed coal workers are primarily driven by years spent outside their initial industry, irrespective of their geographic location. The estimates in Panel A indicate that about 85 percent of cumulative earnings losses are driven by years in which workers are not employed in mining but still reside in their initial labor market. However, relative to the sample means, the coefficient estimates reveal that, conditional on switching industries, exposed coal workers experience large relative earnings losses across labor markets. This is driven by both reductions in years of employment and reductions in earnings per year of employment. Estimates in Panel B reveal that exposed coal workers spend about 0.9 fewer years employed outside of their initial industry in their initial CZ, and about 0.2 fewer years employed outside both their initial industry and CZ. The average employment duration in the same CZ but a different industry (2 years) is more than four times that in both a different CZ and industry (0.45 years). This suggests that the extensive margin response is proportionally similar across labor markets when accounting for baseline employment patterns.

While non-employment contributes significantly to cumulative earnings losses, we find that earnings reductions during periods of employment also play a crucial role. Panel C demonstrates that exposed coal workers suffer annual earnings declines across all industry-location pairs. The reduction in earnings per year employed in a different industry, however, is more than double the reduction in earnings per year employed within their initial industry. This holds true regardless of geographic location. That aggregate losses are driven by years in which workers remain in their 2011 CZ but are not employed in their initial industry may reflect limited alternative employment opportunities in many coal communities. However, the substantial losses — especially in relative terms — observed when workers relocate to different CZs suggest that barriers to geographic mobility are unlikely the sole friction impeding workers' ability to adjust. Although movers likely differ from non-movers in ways endogenous to expected outcomes, these estimates imply that, on average, geographic mobility does not attenuate the earnings and employment losses of workers exposed to the coal shock. Conditional on staying in or switching industries, exposed coal workers experience similar earnings losses whether they remain in or leave their initial CZs.[26] Our findings suggest that relocating to different labor mar-

[26]In Appendix C.6, we explore whether workers fare differently based on the degree to which their in-

kets is insufficient to mitigate cumulative losses. This contrasts with evidence from other contexts showing that geographic mobility can fully shield younger workers from local employment declines (Gathmann et al., 2020). Instead, our results are most consistent with the presence of firm- or industry-specific skills that are not transferable, or valued less, in other settings (Neal, 1995). The magnitude of earnings losses when coal workers transition to different industries may reflect the loss of establishment premiums that are particularly valuable for workers in declining industrial sectors (Helm et al., 2023), while the concentration of specific skill demands in coal-intensive regions may limit workers' outside options through reduced labor market competition (Dodini et al., 2024; Macaluso, 2025).

In Appendix C.8, we explore heterogeneity in our results by age, educational attainment, region, and place of birth. The heterogeneity analysis reveals several important patterns in how different workers experienced the coal shock. Older workers faced smaller cumulative earnings losses compared to younger cohorts, but experienced significantly greater reductions in employment duration, suggesting they were more likely to exit the labor force entirely (Table C13). Workers with less than a high school degree suffered larger cumulative earnings losses than those with more credentials, driven by fewer years of employment (Table C14). Western coal workers fared somewhat better than their Eastern counterparts, with this heterogeneity again largely driven by differences in the extensive margin of adjustment (Table C15). These differences likely reflect differences in mining practices, local economic conditions, and the regional concentration of the coal shock.[27] Workers who were also born in their current county of residence (a proxy for attachment to place) experienced similar cumulative earnings losses compared to those living in places different from where they were born, although the former experienced larger declines in the number of years employed than the latter (Table C16). Across all

dustries are dependent on local demand. We estimate that reductions in earnings per year of employment are much larger in non-tradable, construction, and other industries compared to tradable industries. However, we do not see meaningful differences within industrial categories between labor markets, suggesting that fewer employment opportunities due to reductions in local demand are unlikely to be a major driver of losses.

[27] As shown in Appendix B, the decline of coal was concentrated in Eastern states. Eastern coal workers are more likely to be male, non-Hispanic white, and have lower levels of educational attainment than Western coal miners.

demographic groups, the greatest losses consistently occurred when workers remained in their original commuting zone but left the coal industry (Tables C18 through C21).

5.3 The role of alternative sources of income

As exposed workers experience earnings and employment declines, their income composition may shift towards alternative sources to supplement lost wages. A large body of literature has documented that declining labor market opportunities often lead to increased reliance on Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and other forms of government assistance (Black et al., 2002; Autor et al., 2003, 2013, 2014; Charles et al., 2018). While we do not directly observe SSDI receipt, we proxy for it using receipt of any Social Security benefits, defined as having received a Form SSA-1099. This will occur if the individual receives any retirement, survivor, or disability (SSDI) benefits. Given that our sample is born between 1955 and 1985, workers will be at most 64 by the end of the outcome period (2019) and thus most workers will be below the minimum age for Social Security retirement benefits (62), suggesting that SSA-1099 receipt almost certainly indicates SSDI for the majority of our sample. Of course, declining employment opportunities may induce early retirement, and thus we explore the effect of coal shock exposure on the receipt of Social Security benefits separately for individuals born in 1960 or later, such that they are less than 60 by the end of the outcome period. We additionally explore how exposure to the coal shock affects retirement withdrawals from IRA/401k accounts and pension contributions, based on Form 1099-R, in Appendix C.7.[28]

Table 5 presents our findings on the relationship between exposure to the coal shock and various sources of non-wage income. Columns 1 and 2 report estimates for the association between coal shock exposure and years of SSA-1099 receipt between 2012–2019. The most exposed workers report 0.37 additional years of SSA-1099 receipt compared to observationally similar workers (column 1). This effect declines to 0.20 years when restricting to workers born in 1960 or later, avoiding the influence of early retirement

[28] This analysis reveals that exposed coal workers spend an additional 0.43 years receiving any retirement income over the 2012–2019 period. This reflects a combination of increased IRA/401k withdrawals and increased pension contributions.

Table 5: Exposure to coal shock and receipt of SSA/self-employment income, 2012-2019

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	# of years SSA-1099 >0		Cumulative 1040 SS income		# of years self-emp. (1040) >0	
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	0.368***	0.196***	0.078***	0.039***	-0.293***	-0.286***
	(0.030)	(0.018)	(0.010)	(0.005)	(0.023)	(0.021)
Outcome mean (SD)	0.30 (1.12)	0.14 (0.80)	0.16 (0.62)	0.08 (0.43)	0.74 (1.71)	0.75 (1.69)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sample	all	born 1960-	all	born 1960-	all	born 1960-
Observations	152,000	123,000	152,000	123,000	152,000	123,000

Note: The outcome variables are defined over the 2012 to 2019 period. In columns 1 and 2, the outcome variable is defined as the number of years between 2012 and 2019 in which the worker reported any SSA-1099 income. In columns 3 and 4, the outcome variable is defined as the cumulative reported income from 1040 Social Security. In columns 5 and 6, the outcome variable is defined as the number of years between 2012 and 2019 in which the worker filed any self-employment (1040) income. In even-numbered columns, the sample is restricted to workers born on or after 1960. The primary independent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether or not the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry in all five years between 2007 and 2011. All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the worker's firm in 2011. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.
*** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

decisions (column 2), but remains substantial at over 100 percent of the sample mean. Appendix Figure A4 illustrates the dynamics of SSA-1099 receipt. Initially, there is no notable increase, but the gap in SSA receipt grows progressively larger, mirroring the inverse of the employment dynamics shown in Figure 7b. In each time horizon, the point estimate for cumulative years of employment (Figure 7b) is almost exactly offset by the point estimate for cumulative years of SSA-1099 income (Figure A4).

Columns 3 and 4 of Table 5 report how exposure to the coal shock influences total tax-unit level Social Security income from Form 1040.[29] We estimate that the most exposed coal workers receive an additional 0.078 years' worth of earnings in Social Security income compared to similar workers over 2012–2019 (column 3), declining to 0.04 years (or about a 50 percent increase over the sample mean) for the younger cohort (column 4). These findings suggest that coal workers may be able to recoup a modest portion

[29]Unlike receipt of a SSA-1099 form, which is defined at the worker level, Social Security income on Form 1040 is defined at the household level. This would include, for example, a retired spouse's retirement income, and thus we can be less certain that this measurement includes only SSDI income.

of their earnings losses through what are arguably "second-best" transfer mechanisms. This implies that there may be fiscal benefits to identifying lower-cost interventions that help smooth the transitional costs of the decline of coal. For instance, Hyman et al. (2024) show that wage insurance provisions in the U.S. Trade Adjustment Assistance Act, which support workers for whom re-training is ineffective, infeasible, or unavailable, increase short-run employment probabilities and long-run cumulative earnings.

In the final two columns of Table 5, we explore how coal shock exposure influences the receipt of self-employment (as reported on Schedule SE of Form 1040) income. We estimate that exposed workers report 0.29 fewer years of self-employment over the 2012 to 2019 period, a 40 percent decline relative to the sample mean. This may reflect the relative skills of exposed coal workers, which may translate poorly to various forms of self-employment, or the labor markets in which coal is concentrated, which may be less amenable to successful self-employment activities. Either case is consistent with the previously documented findings, which indicate that coal workers most exposed to the recent coal shock do not smoothly transition to alternative employment opportunities outside of the industry.

6 Conclusion

After its contemporary peak in 2011, U.S. coal mining employment fell dramatically, largely driven by the changing price of natural gas relative to coal. This coal shock offers a unique lens through which to examine the labor market consequences of a changing energy landscape and a regionally concentrated labor demand shock. By leveraging comprehensive administrative data on the universe of coal workers between 2005 and 2021, we provide systematic evidence on the worker-level consequences of, and responses to, the decline of coal in the United States.

Workers most exposed to the coal shock experienced substantial losses between 2012 and 2019, with cumulative earnings declining by more than a year's worth of pre-shock wages due to both reductions in years of employment and lower earnings when employed. Unlike the labor market adjustment documented in other settings, non-employment emerged as an important margin of adjustment. Decomposing these effects across firms, industries, and geographies, we find that reallocation across industries and labor markets does not mitigate these adverse consequences. Exposed workers, only marginally less geographically mobile than their counterparts, face significant employment and earnings reductions both within and outside their initial labor markets. They struggle to transition to other industries — even comparably high-paying ones — and earn substantially less when they do. These patterns are consistent with the presence of meaningful skill mismatches that may constrain workers' ability to adjust. Finally, we show that exposed workers partially offset their earnings losses through increased reliance on transfer payments like SSDI.

The recent decline in demand for coal provides a preview of the disruption that future contractions in demand for fossil fuels may cause for workers in carbon-intensive sectors. Any future energy transition will likely reduce demand for fossil fuels, as well as products from carbon-intensive industries, both of which have historically provided high wages in relatively isolated labor markets offering few alternative employment opportunities. When workers are unable to remain attached to the industries in which they might have developed firm- or industry-specific skills (Neal, 1995), the transitional costs appear to be substantial. The results in this paper are consistent with the presence of relatively large labor market frictions that prevent smooth adjustment. While both skill and geographic mismatch may play important roles in influencing workers' earnings and employment trajectories, our findings suggest that skill mismatch may be a particularly salient friction. Understanding the extent to which such frictions can be alleviated remains an important area for future research.

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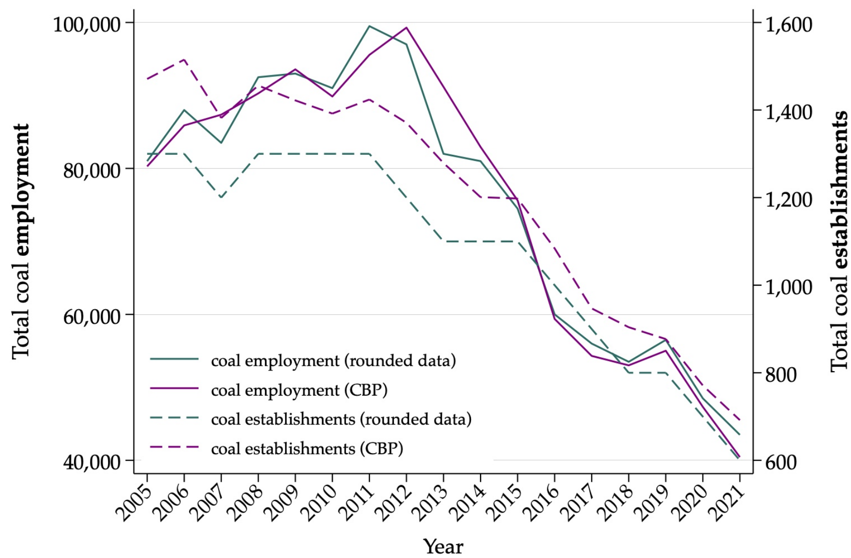
Appendix

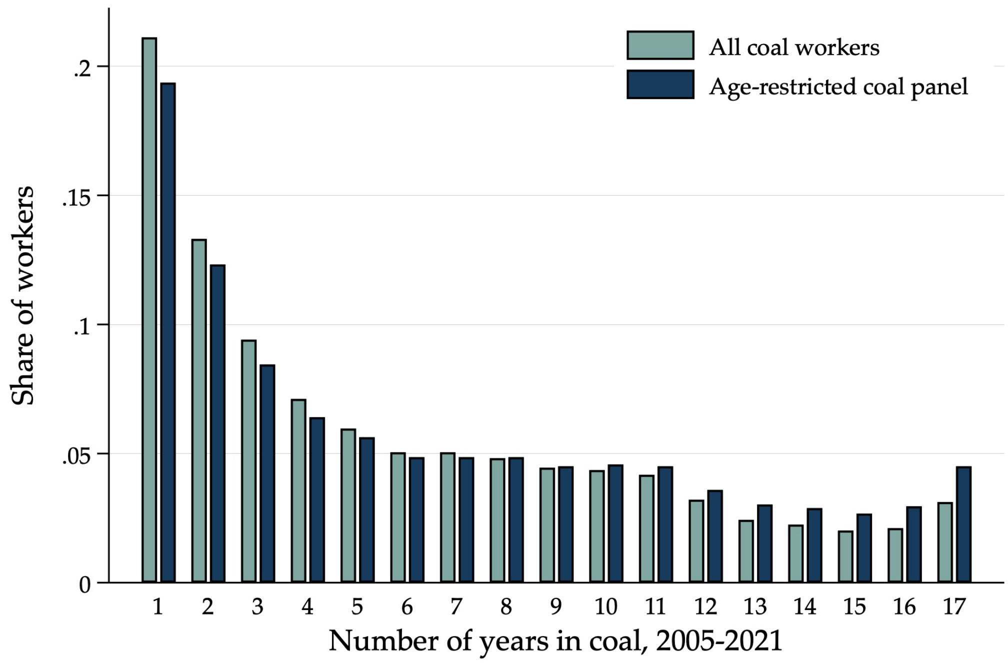
A Appendix Figures and Tables

Figure A1: Coal establishments & employment, 2005–2021, administrative data versus CBP data



Note: This figure shows the total number of coal mining establishments (on the left axis) and total coal mining employment (on the right axis) between 2005 and 2021, separately based on the (rounded) administrative data used in this paper and based on the publicly available data from the CBP. Workers are identified as coal miners if their primary employer (in terms of total earnings) in a given year was a coal mining establishment. Coal mining establishments are defined as those with NAICS codes 2121 and 213113. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, Census Business Register, and County Business Patterns database.

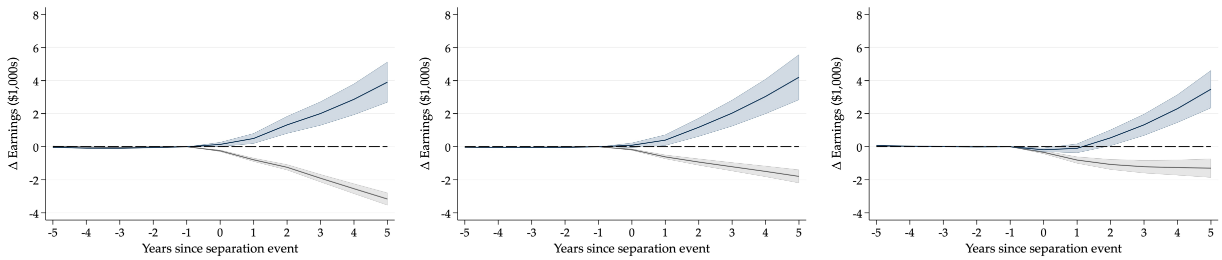
Figure A2: Number of years worked in coal, 2005–2021



Note: The value on the X-axis indicates the number of years a worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal mining industry between 2005 and 2021. All coal workers refers to all workers whose primary earnings were drawn from the coal mining industry in any year over the 2005–2021 period. The age-restricted coal panel further restricts this sample to individuals born between 1955 and 1985. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.

Figure A3: Separations and the Evolution of Cumulative, Normalized Earnings

(a) No controls (b) Basic controls (c) Worker FE



Note: This figure plots the association between a firm separation event and the evolution of earnings five years before and after the separation event. Point estimates in gray reflect separations from the coal industry, and those in navy reflect all other firm separations. The sample is limited to workers born between 1955 and 1985 with non-negative AGI and reporting non-zero earnings at the same firm in years t and $t-1$. Each estimate is the result of a separate OLS regression estimated at each time horizon as specified in equation 1. The outcome for years $t \geq 0$ is the sum of earnings between years t and the year on the x-axis, divided by $t-5$ through $t-1$ average earnings. The outcome for years $t < -1$ is the sum of earnings between years $t-2$ and the year on the x-axis, divided by average earnings in years $t-5$ through $t-1$. The leftmost first reflects the estimates from bivariate regressions of this outcome on the separation event. No additional controls are included. The middle figure includes controls for age, a dummy for being male, a dummy for being non-Hispanic white, and year and region fixed effects. The rightmost figure includes year, region, and worker fixed effects. Controls for age, sex, and race/ethnicity are collinear with individual and year fixed effects and so are not included. Shading reflects 95 percent confidence intervals. Standard errors are clustered at the Commuting Zone. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.

Table A1: Comparison of Population and Complier Characteristics

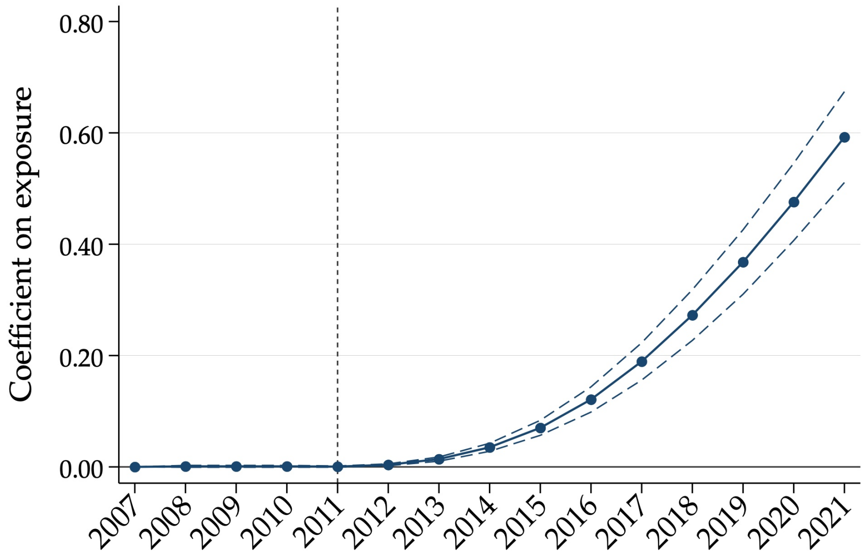
	Male	White	Age	Log Wage
Population Mean	0.945	0.920	43.09	82.06
Complier Mean	0.945	0.919	43.13	82.90
Ratio	0.999	0.999	1.001	1.010

Note: This table compares average characteristics of the overall population of coal workers in our separation analysis with those of compliers.

B Descriptive Facts: East vs. West

There are three major coal regions in the United States. The Western region includes all coal-producing states in the Western Census region as well as North and South Dakota. This region is responsible for over half of total coal production in the country. The Appalachian region, which has the highest number of coal mines and coal miners, produces

Figure A4: Cumulative number of years receiving SSA-1099, 2007–2021



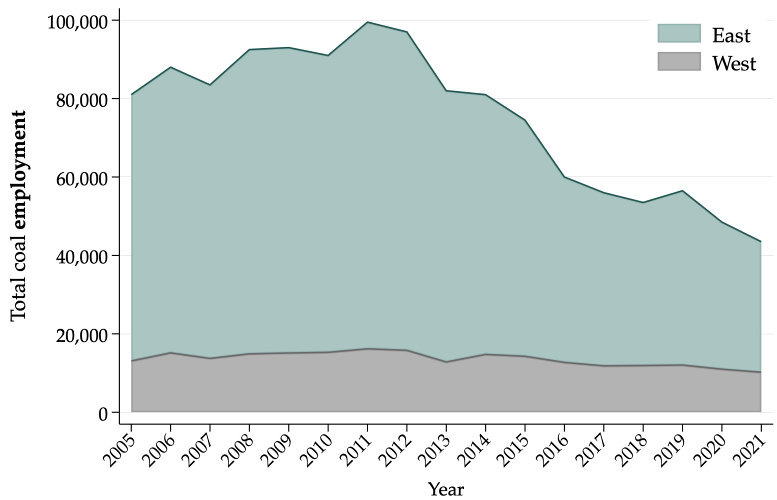
Note: Figure plots the regression coefficients and 95 percent confidence intervals from separate regressions of the number of years the worker received SSA-1099 income over the specified time period. In years prior to 2012, the outcome is defined over the year indicated on the x-axis and 2011. In years 2012–2021, the outcome is defined over the period between 2012 and the year indicated on the x-axis. The primary independent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether or not the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry in all five years between 2007 and 2011. All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.

over one-quarter of U.S. coal today, though it was responsible for most of the coal produced in the U.S. throughout the 20th century. The remainder is produced in the Interior region, which spans from Texas through Western Kentucky and Illinois.

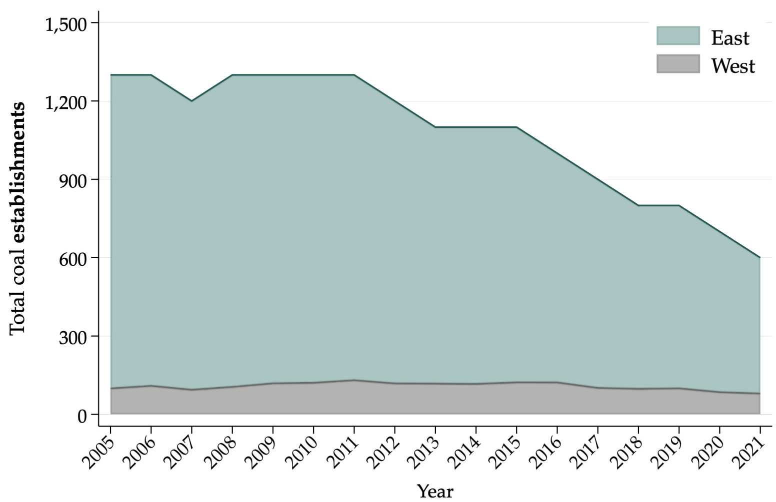
We compare the characteristics of coal workers and changes in coal mining employment in Western states to those in Eastern states, where West includes the Western Census region and the Dakotas, and East includes all other states. This effectively compares the Western coal region to the collective Interior and Appalachian regions. Figure B5 shows the total number of coal miners (upper panel) and the total number of coal mining establishments (lower panel) in Western versus Eastern states between 2005 and 2021. As indicated in the figure, the decline in coal during our study period is driven by declines in Eastern states. Within the Eastern states, aggregate employment and subsequent declines were most pronounced in Appalachia.

Figure B5: Coal mining establishments & employment, Western and Eastern states

(a) Coal employment



(b) Coal establishments



Note: This figure shows total coal mining employment (in the upper panel) and total coal mining establishments (in the lower panel) between 2005 and 2021 in Western and Eastern states. Western states are defined as those in the Western Census region, plus North and South Dakota, while all other states are defined as Eastern. Workers are identified as coal miners if their primary employer (in terms of total earnings) in a given year was a coal mining establishment. Coal mining establishments are defined as those with NAICS codes 2121 and 213113. The number of employees and establishments are both rounded in line with Census disclosure rules. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.

Table B2 describes the characteristics of full-time coal workers most exposed to the decline in coal (the "treated" workers in our quasi-experimental analysis) separately based on state of residence in 2011. Western coal miners, though smaller in numbers, are less likely to be male, less likely to be non-Hispanic white, more likely to have a college degree, and less likely to be born in their state and county of residence than those in Eastern states.

Table B2: Characteristics of exposed coal workers in Western and Eastern states

	(1) FT coal workers, West	(2) FT coal workers, East
Male (%)	90.64 (29.13)	97.23 (16.41)
Non-Hispanic white (%)	84.55 (36.14)	97.75 (14.82)
College degree (%)	9.52 (29.36)	6.04 (23.82)
Homeowner (%)	91.08 (28.52)	90.69 (29.05)
Age	43.53 (9.048)	42.81 (9.011)
Born in state (%)	36.13 (48.04)	70.03 (45.81)
Born in county (%)	13.08 (33.72)	34.38 (47.5)
Wages ($1,000s)	93.61 (36.77)	91.63 (50.01)
AGI ($1,000s)	115.7 (51.28)	109.8 (112.8)
Observations	5,900	24,000

Note: Age, earnings, and Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) refer to 2011 values, with earnings and AGI adjusted to 2019 dollars. Born in state/county refers to 2011 residence. Educational attainment and homeownership status are drawn from ACS, and are thus based on the year in which the respondent took the survey. The number of observations used to compute the means for the variables indicated may differ from the total number of observations indicated in the final row, as only about 20 percent of coal workers are matched to the ACS and location of birth is missing for a small share (<5%) of workers. The sample is exposed coal workers working full-time in coal from 2007 to 2011, defined in the text. The sample in column 1 is restricted to exposed coal workers living in Western states in 2011, while column 2 is restricted to exposed coal workers living in Eastern states in 2011. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Standard deviations are in parentheses. Sources: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.

C Margins of adjustment: Robustness and extensions

C.1 Sensitivity to controls

Table C3 displays the sensitivity of the coefficient estimates in Table 2 to the inclusion of controls. We initially omit all controls and fixed effects to display the unconditional variation in the data. In column 2, we include region fixed effects; column 3 additionally controls for basic demographic characteristics — age, an indicator for being non-Hispanic white, and an indicator for being male; column 4 further controls for firm tenure and the change in average wages in the pre-shock period; finally, column 5 controls for pre-shock wages and their interaction with age. Each additional set of controls modestly reduces the magnitude of the point estimate in Panels A and B (cumulative earnings), while the coefficient in Panel B (cumulative employment) is relatively stable across specifications. The estimated coefficient for cumulative earnings in the least parsimonious specification is 27 percent smaller in magnitude than the estimate without controls. Overall, our findings are not especially sensitive to the inclusion of controls.

C.2 Geographic mobility

In Table C4, we explore the consequences of exposure to the coal shock on geographic mobility. The outcome in column 1 is defined as the cumulative number of years between 2012 and 2019 that a worker lived in his or her 2011 CZ. The outcome in column 2 is defined analogously but considers the number of years spent in the same state. The outcome in column 3 is defined as the maximum distance (in miles) between a worker's 2011 residence and their residential locations over the 2012–2019 period. For example, the outcome for a worker who lived in Welch, West Virginia between 2011 and 2014 before moving to Raleigh, North Carolina for one year in 2015 followed by a permanent move to Beckley, West Virginia in 2016 would be the straight-line distance between the latitude-longitude of his residence in Welch to the latitude-longitude of his residence in

Table C3: Exposure to coal shock and the evolution of earnings: Sensitivity to controls

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Panel A: Cumulative earnings					
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-2.038***	-1.912***	-1.775***	-1.681***	-1.597***
	(0.119)	(0.086)	(0.087)	(0.089)	(0.087)
Panel B: Cumulative employment					
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-0.396***	-0.344***	-0.297***	-0.317***	-0.370***
	(0.049)	(0.040)	(0.038)	(0.039)	(0.037)
Panel C: Earnings per year of employment					
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-0.227***	-0.215***	-0.203***	-0.189***	-0.174***
	(0.013)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.010)
Region FE		✓	✓	✓	✓
Demographic controls			✓	✓	✓
Employment controls				✓	✓
Earnings controls					✓
Observations	152,000	152,000	152,000	152,000	152,000

Note: The outcome variables are defined over the 2012 to 2019 period. Cumulative earnings and earnings per year employed are normalized to average annual wages between 2007 and 2011. The primary independent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether or not the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry in all five years between 2007 and 2011. Demographic controls include age, an indicator for being non-Hispanic white, and an indicator for being male. Employment controls include tenure at 2011 firm between 2007 and 2011, the change in average annual wages between 2007 and 2011, and 8 bins of 2011 establishment size. Earnings controls include the log of average annual wages between 2007 and 2011 and the interaction of average wages with the worker's age. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the worker's firm in 2011. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.
*** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

Raleigh.

In column 1, we estimate that greater exposure to the coal shock is not associated with the number of years in which a worker lives in his or her 2011 CZ between 2012 and 2019. The point estimate in column 2 indicates that exposed coal workers spend a modest amount of additional time in their 2011 state. The coefficient suggests that they spend about 0.18 additional years, or over two months, in the same state over the 2012–2019

Table C4: Exposure to coal shock and geographic mobility, 2012-2019

	(1) # of years in 2011 CZ	(2) # of years in 2011 state	(3) Farthest distance from 2011 residence (miles)
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	0.069	0.183***	-42.680***
	(0.036)	(0.026)	(4.723)
Outcome mean (SD)	7.02 (2.20)	7.52 (1.56)	89.38 (309.50)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓
Observations	152,000	152,000	152,000

Note: The outcome variables are defined over the 2012 to 2019 period. The primary independent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether or not the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry in all five years between 2007 and 2011. All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the worker's firm in 2011. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

period. Exposed coal workers appear to move to less distant locations than observationally similar workers. They travel about 43 miles less to their farthest residence from their residence in 2011. This evidence offers a somewhat nuanced portrait of geographic mobility. Exposed coal workers do not appear to spend more or less time in their immediate labor market during the years of coal's decline, but they do spend more time in their 2011 state of residence and move within more proximate locations than observationally similar workers.

C.3 Spatial spillovers

Labor supply is responsive not only to the economic conditions in a local labor market but also to those conditions in possible alternative destinations (Borusyak et al., 2022). Relatedly, local labor demand depends on local economic conditions as well as the economic conditions in proximate labor markets (Adão et al., 2019; Redding, 2022). Our primary empirical strategy, detailed in section 5.1, defines "exposure" to the coal shock based on an individual worker's tenure in the coal mining industry. This strategy exploits the fact that individuals with a relatively greater attachment to the industry will be relatively more exposed to the national collapse in demand for coal. While tenure in the industry is certainly a key factor influencing whether a worker will be affected by this macroeconomic coal shock, geographic location will also play a large role. Tenured coal workers living in regions with relatively large concentrations of coal mining employment may suffer from the individual consequences of the coal shock, as well as the broader consequences the shock has on the local community.

To address these spatial spillovers, we add to equation 2 a control variable that reflects regional exposure to the coal shock. This variable for worker i in CZ j, ϕ_{ij}, is a gravity-weighted measure of the CZ's proximity to other regions' coal shock exposure:

$$\phi_{ij} = \sum_{c \in j} \gamma_c \left(\sum_{c'} \omega_{cc'} \times Coal_{c'}^{2005} \right) \tag{3}$$

where $Coal_{c'}^{2005}$ is the coal mining employment share of the population in county $c' \neq c$ in 2005. This variable serves as a county's exposure to the subsequent "coal shock.".[1] The intuition is that communities in which coal was relatively more concentrated preceding the large-scale decline in demand for coal were relatively more exposed to this macroeconomic coal shock.[2] We weight this exposure variable by $\omega_{cc'}$, which reflects the spatial proximity, or gravity-weighted distance, between county c and $c' \neq c$:

$$\omega_{cc'} \equiv \frac{N_{c'} D_{cc'}^{-\delta}}{\sum_k N_k D_{ck}^{-\delta}} \tag{4}$$

[1] The coal mining employment share of the population is highly correlated over time. Using instead the 2011 coal share to identify exposure to the shock, for example, yields similar results.

[2] This exposure variable can be thought of as the "share" in a single industry Bartik shift-share instrument, where the "shift" is the macroeconomic shift in demand for coal, which is common to all counties (Bartik, 1991; Goldsmith-Pinkham et al., 2020; Krause, 2025).

where $N_{c'}$ is the 2005 population of county c', $D_{cc'}$ is the distance (in miles) between county c and c', and δ is the trade-cost elasticity which, following Autor et al. (2021), we set equal to 5. The weight γ_c is the population of county c, and thus we take a population-weighted average of $\sum_{c'} \omega_{cc'} \times Coal_{c'}^{2005}$ for all counties c in CZ j to generate ϕ_{ij}. The variable ϕ_{ij} thus reflects a weighted sum of all other CZs' exposure to the coal shock. We define this variable for worker i based on the CZ j in which he or she lived in 2011.

Table C5: Exposure to coal shock and the evolution of earnings, controlling for spatial proximity to coal shocks

	(1) Cumulative earnings	(2) # of years w/ earnings >0	(3) Earnings per year employed
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-1.021***	-0.212***	-0.112***
	(0.083)	(0.034)	(0.010)
Outcome mean (SD)	8.05 (3.71)	7.45 (1.43)	1.06 (0.43)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Spatial proximity control (ϕ_{ij})	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓
Observations	152,000	152,000	152,000

Note: The outcome variables are defined over the 2012 to 2019 period. Cumulative earnings and earnings per year employed are normalized to average annual wages between 2007 and 2011. The primary independent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether or not the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry in all five years between 2007 and 2011. All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2, as well as the control for spatial linkages defined in equation 3. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the worker's firm in 2011. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table C5 reports the coefficient estimates β_1 from equation 2 with the inclusion of this control for regional exposure to the coal shock. The point estimates can be compared to the central estimates presented in Table 2. The magnitude of the coefficients on cumulative earnings and employment is between 36 and 43 percent smaller than the central estimates when controlling for spatial proximity to the coal shock. This indicates that controlling for the indirect effects of shocks in proximate labor markets indeed dampens the direct effects of the individual-level shock exposure (Adão et al., 2019).

While we have omitted the results from this paper, controlling for spatial linkages does not alter the conclusions drawn from the decomposition exercises reported in Tables 3 through C11. Though the coefficients are again smaller in magnitude, the conclusions drawn from this specification are similar to those drawn from the primary analysis. Our primary specification can be thought of as revealing the total effect of being a "tenured" coal worker, relatively more exposed to the coal shock, on future earnings and employment. Controlling for the indirect effects of spatial linkages somewhat attenuates the overall effect of individual-level exposure, confirming that the economic conditions in related labor markets also influence an individual's earnings and employment trajectory.

C.4 Alternatives definition of coal shock exposure

Our primary measure of individual-level "exposure" to the coal shock, $\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$, is a dummy variable characterizing whether or not the worker worked for coal in all five years between 2007 and 2011. This is a relatively conservative measure of exposure, as some workers with relatively lesser tenure in the coal industry are still exposed to the adverse labor market consequences of declining demand for coal. This would have the effect of biasing our primary estimates toward zero. In two alternative specifications, we define exposure based on the number of years in which the coal mining industry was the worker's primary source of earnings between 2007 and 2011. In the first specification, we define exposure as a continuous variable reflecting the number of years worked in a coal mining establishment. In the second, we use a binned treatment variable.

C.4.1 Continuous measure of coal exposure

Using the sample of workers who worked full-time in all years from 2007 through 2011, we estimate an analogous version of equation 2:

$$E_{i\tau} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \left(YC_{i,2007\text{-}11}\right) + X'_{i,0}\beta_2 + \delta_r + \varepsilon_{i\tau} \tag{5}$$

where $YC_{i,2007\text{-}11}$ reflects the number of years between 2007 and 2011 that worker i's primary earnings came from the coal industry. Now, β_1 represents the effect of an additional year of attachment to the coal industry in the years preceding the coal shock. We include the same set of worker-level controls and again limit our analysis to workers who worked full-time in all five of these pre-shock years. The results from this exercise are reported

Table C6: Exposure to coal shock and the evolution of earnings using a continuous measure of exposure

	(1) Cumulative earnings	(2) # of years w/ earnings >0	(3) Earnings per year employed
# Years in coal, 2007–2011	-0.434***	-0.095***	-0.048***
	(0.027)	(0.009)	(0.003)
Outcome mean (SD)	8.05 (3.71)	7.45 (1.43)	1.06 (0.43)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓
Observations	152,000	152,000	152,000

Note: The outcome variables are defined over the 2012 to 2019 period. Cumulative earnings and earnings per year employed are normalized to average annual wages between 2007 and 2011. The primary independent variable is a continuous variable indicating the number of years in which the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry between 2007 and 2011. All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the worker's firm in 2011. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

in Table C6. The point estimates reveal that an additional year of working full-time for the industry in the years preceding the shock yields a decline in cumulative earnings between 2012 and 2019 of nearly one-half of the average annual earnings earned during the 2007 to 2011 period. This additional year of attachment yields a decline in the number of years worked between 2012 and 2019 of about 10 percent of a year, or about 5 weeks, and a decline in earnings per year employed of 4.8 percent per year relative to the 2007–2011 annual wage. The qualitative conclusions are largely similar to those drawn from the primary analysis. Exposure to coal's recent decline, defined based on a worker's tenure in the coal industry in the pre-shock period, yields relatively large earnings and employment losses between 2012 and 2019 when the coal shock was in full force.

C.4.2 Binned treatment variable

The results in Section C.4.1 suggest that additional years of "exposure" to the coal shock — in terms of tenure in the coal industry — are associated with aggregate earnings and employment losses. However, if the effect of exposure is nonlinear, the average treatment captured in the estimates presented above will not reflect this nonlinearity. In Table C7, we present the estimates from transforming the continuous measure of coal exposure into a binned treatment variable, where we bin the number of years in which the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry between 2007 and 2011 into three groups: zero, between 1 and 3 years, and between 4 and 5 years.[3] The remainder of the specification is exactly as before.

The coefficient estimates in Table C7 confirm that workers with greater exposure to the coal shock, in terms of tenure in the industry between 2007 and 2011, experience larger cumulative earnings and employment losses than workers with no or partial exposure to the shock. Individuals who worked in the coal industry for 4-5 years between 2007 and 2011 lost about 2 years' worth of earnings between 2012 and 2019 in terms of their 2007–2011 annual earnings, while those who worked for 1-3 years lost only 0.7 year's worth of

[3]There are several possible cutoffs or methods to bin the continuous exposure variable, including allowing for one bin per year of exposure. The conclusions are insensitive to this choice.

Table C7: Exposure to coal shock and the evolution of earnings using a binned treatment variable

	(1) Cumulative earnings	(2) # of years w/ earnings >0	(3) Earnings per year employed
1-3 years in coal, 2007–11	-0.713***	-0.163***	-0.077***
	(0.098)	(0.027)	(0.011)
4-5 years in coal, 2007–11	-2.049***	-0.454***	-0.225***
	(0.133)	(0.043)	(0.015)
Outcome mean (SD)	8.05 (3.71)	7.45 (1.43)	1.06 (0.43)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓
Observations	152,000	152,000	152,000

Note: The outcome variables are defined over the 2012 to 2019 period. Cumulative earnings and earnings per year employed are normalized to average annual wages between 2007 and 2011. The primary independent variable is a binned variable indicating the number of years in which the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry between 2007 and 2011 (zero, between 1 and 3 years, and between 4 and 5 years). All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the worker's firm in 2011. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.
*** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

earnings. Both of these estimates are relative to workers who worked zero years in the coal industry between 2007 and 2011. The effect on the extensive margin — the number of years worked between 2012 and 2019 — is nearly three times as large for the most exposed workers relative to partially exposed workers. The effect on the intensive margin — earnings per year employed — is nearly three times as large for the most exposed workers. Scaling the coefficient estimates in columns 1-3 from Table C6 by the number of years in each bin reveals that these estimates are roughly consistent with a relatively linear effect of exposure on outcomes.[4] Comparing the magnitude of the coefficients in Table C7

[4] In separate analyses, we also consider a categorical measure of exposure, which effectively produces a bin for each possible extent of exposure (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 years). This exercise confirms that the earnings and employment effects are roughly linear in the number of years of exposure up until 4 years, after which they level off somewhat.

to those in Table 2 confirms that the inclusion of "partially exposed" coal workers in the control group in the main analysis serves to attenuate the main estimates. For this reason, we consider our central estimates a lower bound of the effect of exposure on aggregate earnings and employment losses.

C.4.3 Within-coal analysis

The estimates in Appendix sections C.4.1 and C.4.2 indicate that individuals with "partial" exposure to coal's decline also suffered earnings and employment losses during the 2012–2019 period. Thanks to the high spatial concentration of coal mining activity, if there were some other (non-coal-related) shock or change over time that differentially affected coal communities, both partially exposed coal workers and the most exposed coal workers (i.e., the "treated" coal workers) would be subject to its consequences. If another geographically concentrated change adversely influenced coal communities, we might misattribute its consequences to the decline in coal. In this section, we explore how the most exposed group of coal workers fared relative to these other, less exposed coal workers. In Table C8, we limit the analysis to individuals who worked full-time in all years 2007–2011 (as before) and whose primary employer was a coal establishment in at least one of these years. Limiting the analysis to only coal workers has the advantage of absorbing other spurious economic conditions or shocks that differentially influence coal communities. All other details about the specification are exactly as in our primary analysis. "Treated" coal workers are those who worked in coal for all five years during the pre-shock period.

The conclusions drawn from Table C8 are broadly similar to those drawn from the primary specification. Relative to other coal workers with less exposure to the shock, the most exposed coal workers experienced a decline in earnings amounting to an entire year's worth of earnings over the 2012–2019 period, with both extensive and intensive margins responses contributing. The slight attenuation of the coefficients is consistent

Table C8: Exposure to coal shock and the evolution of earnings, sample of only coal workers

	(1) Cumulative earnings	(2) # of years w/ earnings >0	(3) Earnings per year employed
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-1.083***	-0.243***	-0.118***
	(0.066)	(0.037)	(0.007)
Outcome mean (SD)	7.25 (3.40)	7.26 (1.64)	0.97 (0.38)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓
Observations	61,500	61,500	61,500

Note: The outcome variables are defined over the 2012 to 2019 period. Cumulative earnings and earnings per year employed are normalized to average annual wages between 2007 and 2011. The primary independent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether or not the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry in all five years between 2007 and 2011. The sample is limited to individuals who worked at least one year in coal between 2007 and 2011. All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the worker's firm in 2011. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

with the finding that these partially exposed coal workers are indeed treated to some extent by the decline in coal.

C.4.4 Control for industry tenure

Our central specification defines a worker's exposure to the coal shock based on his or her tenure in the coal industry during the pre-shock period. One might be concerned that workers with five years of consecutive tenure in a single industry might have different employment or earnings potential than workers who switched industries over the 2007–2011 period. The specification used to produce the estimates in Table C9 is identical to that outlined by equation 2, with one additional control variable: the binned number of years in which the worker worked for his or her 2011 (2-digit) industry over the 2007–2011 period. The point estimates are quantitatively similar to those in Table 2. Compared to

Table C9: Exposure to coal shock and the evolution of earnings, controlling for industry tenure

	(1) Cumulative earnings	(2) # of years w/ earnings >0	(3) Earnings per year employed
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-1.547***	-0.401***	-0.165***
	(0.091)	(0.040)	(0.010)
Outcome mean (SD)	8.05 (3.71)	7.45 (1.43)	1.06 (0.43)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Binned tenure in 2011 industry	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓
Observations	152,000	152,000	152,000

Note: The outcome variables are defined over the 2012 to 2019 period. Cumulative earnings and earnings per year employed are normalized to average annual wages between 2007 and 2011. The primary independent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether or not the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry in all five years between 2007 and 2011. All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2, as well as a control for the (binned) number of years in which the worker worked for his or her 2011 industry over the 2007–2011 period, where industry is based on 2-digit NAICS code. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the worker's firm in 2011. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.
*** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

observationally similar workers with substantial tenure in their respective industries during the 2007–2011 period, exposed coal workers suffered large cumulative earnings losses over the 2012–2019 period, driven both by extensive and intensive margin responses.

C.5 Does the type of outside industry matter?

Do other industries offer differential opportunities for coal workers to adjust? Coal mining has historically offered exceptionally high wages for individuals with relatively low levels of educational attainment. Card et al. (2023) notes that the coal industry offers a uniquely high wage premium. In this section, we explore whether entering other "high-wage" industries attenuates the aggregate earnings losses documented above.

In Table C10, we decompose the total worker-level effect of coal shock exposure (column 1) into earnings and employment changes by geographic location, industry, and the industry wage level. Columns 2, 3, and 5 correspond to columns 1, 2, and 4 from Table 4. We define "high-wage" industries as those that pay the same or more than the 2-digit NAICS code containing coal mining ("Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction"), and "low-wage" industries as those that pay less. We calculate industry wages at the 2-digit NAICS code by taking the mean earnings for workers in our sample who worked full-time in 2005.[5] Based on this strategy, five industries were high-wage industries compared to the mining industry (NAICS code 21): utilities (22), information (51), finance and insurance (52), professional, scientific, and technical services (54), and management (55).[6]

Table C10 shows that exposed coal workers' aggregate losses are not attenuated by earnings and employment observed in other high-wage industries. While losses are apparent in both high- and low-wage industries across labor markets, cumulative losses are driven by years observed in higher-wage industries. Exposed coal workers lose about 0.84 years' worth of earnings in other high-wage industries within their local labor market (column 3) and about 0.22 years' worth of earnings in other high-wage industries in different labor markets (column 6) relative to workers with less or no exposure. These earnings losses are large in relative terms, implying a reduction of over 100 percent of the sample means.

We observe that it is rare for coal workers to transition into these high-wage industries. Only one of these industries appears in Figure 4, which shows that management served as the modal non-coal industry for about 4 percent of coal workers in the age-restricted subsample. Consistent with this, Panel B of Table C10 implies that exposed

[5]Again, we define a worker as "full-time" if their earnings are greater than what they would earn by working 1,600 hours (about 30 hours per week) at the federal minimum wage. In 2005, the minimum wage was $5.15, so this implies workers who reported earnings of at least $8,240. We code "missing" NAICS codes (typically agriculture or government) as a single industry.

[6]We do not condition on education in determining these high-wage industries. Coal miners have relatively low levels of educational attainment compared to workers employed in these high-wage industries. The only industry that paid higher wages than the mining sector to individuals with less than a college degree in 2005 was utilities. Conducting this analysis with utilities as the only high-wage, non-mining sector yields similar conclusions to those in C10.

Table C10: Exposure to coal shock and the evolution of earnings by geographic location and industry wage

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	All		**Same CZ**			**Different CZ**	
Same industry		Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
High-wage industry		-	Yes	No	-	Yes	No
Panel A: Cumulative earnings							
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-1.597***	0.070	-0.844***	-0.507***	0.020	-0.218***	-0.118***
	(0.087)	(0.104)	(0.064)	(0.062)	(0.026)	(0.015)	(0.014)
Outcome mean (SD)	8.05 (3.71)	4.99 (3.89)	0.83 (2.35)	1.23 (2.48)	0.51 (1.87)	0.20 (1.23)	0.30 (1.32)
Panel B: Cumulative employment							
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-0.370***	0.637***	-0.656***	-0.244***	0.101***	-0.158***	-0.051***
	(0.037)	(0.113)	(0.055)	(0.066)	(0.023)	(0.011)	(0.013)
Outcome mean (SD)	7.45 (1.43)	4.57 (3.03)	0.68 (1.63)	1.31 (2.14)	0.43 (1.39)	0.15 (0.76)	0.30 (1.10)
Panel C: Earnings per year of employment							
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-0.174***	-0.134***	-0.238***	-0.285***	-0.162***	-0.312***	-0.269***
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.047)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.028)	(0.013)
Outcome mean (SD)	1.06 (0.43)	1.06 (0.36)	1.14 (0.58)	0.89 (0.57)	1.11 (0.58)	1.26 (0.77)	0.92 (0.67)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Obs. (Panels A and B)	152,000	152,000	152,000	152,000	152,000	152,000	152,000
Obs. (Panel C)	152,000	132,000	34,000	58,000	19,500	8,000	15,500

Note: The outcome variables are defined over the 2012 to 2019 period. Cumulative earnings and earnings per year employed are normalized to average annual wages between 2007 and 2011. The primary independent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether or not the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry in all five years between 2007 and 2011. All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2. Column 1 shows aggregate effect on cumulative earnings and employment. Columns 2–7 decompose these effects into employment and earnings obtained in the 2011 CZ of residence versus other CZs, within the 2011 industry of employment versus outside of this industry, and within a high-wage industry versus outside of a high-wage industry. High-wage industries include utilities, information, finance and insurance, professional, scientific, and technical services, and management. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the worker's firm in 2011. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.
*** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

coal workers spend fewer years employed in other high-wage industries compared to non-coal workers. The point estimates in column 3 (-0.656) and column 6 (-0.158) again represent about a 100 percent decline over the associated sample means, suggesting that exposed coal workers are extremely unlikely to be employed in these other high-wage industries compared to workers with less or no exposure. This is consistent with the highly specialized nature of the skills demanded by the coal industry, which may not translate well to other high-wage industries. At the same time, coal mining is concentrated in relatively remote places where job opportunities in other high-wage industries are often scarce. Still, the estimates in Table C10 reveal that exposed coal workers who do spend time employed in other high-wage industries in other labor markets experience relatively large declines in earnings per year employed.

C.6 The role of spillovers and industrial sector

In this section, we consider potential heterogeneity in earnings and employment trajectories based on the extent to which an industry depends on local demand. This exercise is motivated by the observation that local industries may be differentially exposed to the spillover effects of local employment declines in the coal industry. Non-tradable industries that rely on local demand may be more vulnerable to the negative spillovers associated with declining local labor market opportunities in other industries (Moretti, 2011; Aragón and Rud, 2013; Mian and Sufi, 2014). Given that exposure to the coal shock does not appear to promote substantial geographic mobility, exposed workers' earnings and employment trajectories in non-mining industries may be dictated to some degree by these local spillovers. We define industries as tradable, non-tradable, construction, or other, following the categorization in Mian and Sufi (2014), who define retail- and restaurant-related industries as non-tradable, and industries that show up in global trade data as tradable. Specifically, tradable industries are classified as 4-digit NAICS industries for which imports plus exports equal at least $10,000 per worker or $500M total. Non-tradable industries include the retail sector and restaurants, and construction includes 4-digit industries related to construction, real estate, or land development. Other includes all other 4-digit industries.[7]

[7]Other includes many service-oriented industries, including accommodations, education, health care and social assistance, and other services. The precise definitions of each category are provided in the supplemental materials in Mian and Sufi (2014).

Table C11: Exposure to coal shock and the evolution of earnings geographic location and industrial sector

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
	All	**Same CZ**				**Different CZ**			
		Tradable	Non-trad.	Const.	Other	Tradable	Non-trad.	Const.	Other
Panel A: Cumulative earnings									
$\mathbf{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-1.597***	2.234***	-0.160***	-0.484***	-2.871***	0.138***	-0.020***	-0.074***	-0.360***
	(0.087)	(0.206)	(0.048)	(0.037)	(0.154)	(0.032)	(0.005)	(0.010)	(0.021)
Outcome mean (SD)	8.05 (3.71)	2.53 (3.60)	0.30 (1.47)	0.56 (1.93)	3.66 (4.19)	0.36 (1.53)	0.04 (0.53)	0.09 (0.72)	0.51 (1.97)
Panel B: Cumulative employment									
$\mathbf{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-0.370***	2.721***	-0.145**	-0.407***	-2.432***	0.230***	-0.016***	-0.054***	-0.267***
	(0.037)	(0.164)	(0.045)	(0.032)	(0.150)	(0.028)	(0.004)	(0.009)	(0.016)
Outcome mean (SD)	7.45 (1.43)	2.30 (2.99)	0.31 (1.33)	0.54 (1.63)	3.42 (3.31)	0.31 (1.17)	0.04 (0.40)	0.09 (0.58)	0.45 (1.41)
Panel C: Earnings per year of employment									
$\mathbf{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-0.174***	-0.133***	-0.480***	-0.287***	-0.333***	-0.193***	-0.405***	-0.286***	-0.345***
	(0.010)	(0.007)	(0.032)	(0.014)	(0.025)	(0.017)	(0.046)	(0.024)	(0.016)
Outcome mean (SD)	1.06 (0.43)	1.08 (0.42)	0.86 (0.47)	0.95 (0.47)	1.02 (0.48)	1.13 (0.58)	0.79 (0.66)	0.96 (0.60)	1.05 (0.70)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Obs. (Panels A and B)	152,000	152,000	152,000	152,000	152,000	152,000	152,000	152,000	152,000
Obs. (Panel C)	152,000	73,500	11,000	22,000	101,000	14,500	2,300	5,100	20,000

Note: The outcome variables are defined over the 2012 to 2019 period. Cumulative earnings and earnings per year employed are normalized to average annual wages between 2007 and 2011. The primary independent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether or not the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry in all five years between 2007 and 2011. All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2. Column 1 shows aggregate effect on cumulative earnings and employment. Columns 2–9 decompose these effects into employment and earnings obtained in the 2011 CZ of residence versus other CZs, and within versus outside of different industrial sectors, defined in the text. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the worker's firm in 2011. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table C11 reports this decomposition. Noting that coal mining is classified as a tradable industry, the point estimates in column 2 demonstrate that cumulative earnings and employment losses for exposed coal workers are attenuated by employment within the tradable industry category.[8] The largest contribution to reductions in cumulative earnings and employment comes from employment in the "other" category. The point estimate in column 5 of Panel B indicates that exposed coal workers spend 2.4 fewer years employed in "other" industries within their initial CZ than observationally similar workers.

[8]Distinguishing coal from other tradable industries indicates that the positive coefficient in column 2 is almost entirely driven by years that exposed coal workers spend in coal mining (rather than other tradable industries).

Panel C of Table C11 provides additional insight into how earnings may be affected by employment opportunities in these different sectors. We estimate that reductions in earnings during years of employment are substantially larger when workers are engaged in non-tradable, construction, and other industries than when they are engaged in tradable industries (which, again, includes coal mining). Comparing the point estimates in columns 2 and 3 of Panel C indicates that the reduction in earnings per year employed is about three times as large for years employed in "non-tradable" industries compared to years employed in "tradable" industries. This could be because non-tradable industries more heavily dependent on local demand are adversely affected by the spillover effects of the decline in coal, or because exposed coal workers are relatively less productive in these industrial sectors than non-coal workers. Of note, we do not see meaningful differences in earnings per year of employment when comparing within industrial category across labor markets, indicating that indirect reductions in local demand may not be a substantial driver of the intensive margin of earnings losses relative to the direct effect on workers. Still, adverse local spillovers could contribute to the extensive margin by reducing employment opportunities within an affected labor market.

C.7 Retirement withdrawals and pension contributions

Exposed coal workers may supplement lost earned income and reduced employment opportunities with greater reliance on retirement resources. Workers may choose to retire early during contractions in the sector or following a specific displacement event, which may contribute to lower living standards later in life (Gruber and Orszag, 2003; Card et al., 2014). We observe workers' retirement income receipt from Form 1099-R, which offers the total gross retirement withdrawals or pensions a worker receives in a year. We differentiate between IRA/401k withdrawals and pension contributions. We consider the effect of exposure to the coal shock on these withdrawals and contributions over the 2012–2019 period using the strategy outlined in Section 5.1. We consider both the number of years over the 2012–2019 period that a worker receives a 1099-R, indicating any retirement/pension drawdown, as well as the cumulative gross drawdown over this period, normalized to average annual 2007–2011 earnings.

Table C12: Exposure to coal shock and retirement receipt, 2012-2019

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Any retirement		Defined contribution		Defined benefit (pension)	
Panel A: Cumulative number of years of receipt						
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	0.430***	0.347***	0.119**	0.079*	0.410***	0.318***
	0.060	0.071	0.038	0.040	0.060	0.075
Outcome mean (SD)	1.57 (2.01)	1.30 (1.70)	0.50 (1.20)	0.40 (1.04)	1.22 (1.83)	0.98 (1.48)
Panel B: Cumulative receipt, normalized by 2007–11 earnings						
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	0.135***	0.139***	0.063***	0.049***	0.072***	0.090***
	0.019	0.017	0.013	0.013	0.015	0.015
Outcome mean (SD)	0.46 (0.94)	0.34 (0.69)	0.12 (0.44)	0.09 (0.34)	0.34 (0.79)	0.25 (0.59)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sample	all	born 1960-	all	born 1960-	all	born 1960-
Observations	152,000	123,000	152,000	123,000	152,000	123,000

Note: The outcome variables are defined over the 2012 to 2019 period. In panel A, the outcome variable is defined as the cumulative number of years of receipt of the retirement type indicated over the 2012–2019 period. In panel B, the outcome is defined as the cumulative receipt from the retirement type indicated over the 2012–2019 period, normalized by average annual earnings between 2007 and 2011. Columns 1 and 2 include any distributions from a retirement account. Columns 3 and 4 consider distributions from any defined contribution account. Columns 5 and 6 consider pension annuities from a defined benefit plan. In even-numbered columns, the sample is restricted to workers born on or after 1960. The primary independent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether or not the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry in all five years between 2007 and 2011. All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the worker's firm in 2011. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table C12 reports these results. In Panel A, the outcome is the cumulative number of years between 2012 and 2019 that a worker receives the retirement resource indicated. In Panel B, the outcome is the cumulative receipt, normalized by pre-shock earnings. Columns 1 and 2 include both IRA/401k withdrawals and pension contributions. Columns 3 and 4 consider only IRA/401k withdrawals, and columns 5 and 6 consider only defined benefit (pension) contributions. The sample in even-numbered columns is restricted to workers born in 1960 or later, such that they are no more than 59 in 2019, the final year of analysis.

The point estimates in column 1 indicate that exposed coal workers spend an additional 0.43 years receiving any retirement income — an increase of over one-quarter of the sample mean. Total retirement receipts over the 2012–2019 period amount to 0.135 years' worth of pre-shock earnings. These results are relatively stable when considering the slightly younger cohort in column 2. The greater reliance on retirement income among exposed coal workers is due to both IRA/401k withdrawals and pension contributions. Exposure to the coal shock induces workers to spend 0.12 additional years receiving 1099-R income from an IRA/401k account and an additional 0.41 years receiving 1099-R income from a defined pension plan. This results in an additional 0.06 years' worth of earnings received from an IRA/401k account and an additional 0.09 years' worth of earnings from pensions. The effect of coal shock exposure on cumulative pension receipt appears to be driven by the slightly younger cohort of workers. These findings are consistent with the results related to SSA-1099 receipt. Exposed coal workers recoup some portion of lost earnings with alternative sources of income, though the combination of increased retirement and increased SSA income only amounts to a fraction of cumulative earnings losses over the 2012–2019 period.

C.8 Heterogeneity analysis

To understand the extent to which observable characteristics such as age and education modify the observed earnings and employment effects of coal shock exposure, we estimate a modified version of our central specification:

$$E_{i\tau} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}] + \beta_2 D_i + \beta_3 \left(\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}] \cdot D_i\right) +_i + X_{i,0}^{'}\gamma + \delta_r + \varepsilon_{i\tau} \quad (6)$$

where D_i is an indicator variable representing the characteristic of interest. In some cases, this is a dummy variable. For example, in comparing outcomes for workers in Western or Eastern states, $D_i = 1$ if the worker lived in a Western state in 2011, and $D_i = 0$ if the worker lived in an Eastern state in 2011, where states are categorized as in Appendix B. We additionally compare workers who were born in their 2011 county of residence ($D_i = 1$) to those born elsewhere ($D_i = 0$). We define three age categories based on the worker's age in 2011: Ages 26 to 35, 36 to 45, and 46 to 56, i.e., $D_i = \{Age_i^{26\text{-}35}, Age_i^{36\text{-}45}, Age_i^{46\text{-}56}\}$. We similarly define three categories of educational attainment for the sample of workers that responded to the ACS: Less than a high school degree, high school degree, and some college or more, i.e., $D_i = \{Educ_i^{<HS}, Educ_i^{HS}, Educ_i^{SC+}\}$. In estimating equation 6, we omit one category of D_i. We then report the estimated cumulative effect of exposure to the coal shock for the demographic characteristic of interest ($\beta_1 + \beta_3$ for the non-omitted category).

As before, we include a vector of worker-level covariates, $X_{i,0}'$, controlling for the worker's age, an indicator for being non-Hispanic white, an indicator for being male, the log of average annual wages between 2007 and 2011, the interaction of average wages with the worker's age, the change in average annual wages between 2007 and 2011, the number of years the worker worked at their 2011 firm between 2007 and 2011, and 8 bins of establishment size (based on 2011 establishment). We again include Census region fixed effects, δ_r and cluster standard errors on the worker's firm.

Tables C13, C14, C15, and C16 report the point estimates describing the effect of exposure to the coal shock on cumulative earnings, cumulative employment, and earnings per year employed between 2012 and 2019 for various demographic characteristics of interest. We report the coefficient estimate on coal shock exposure for the omitted category (β_1 in equation 6), the coefficient estimate(s) on the indicator variable for the demographic characteristic of interest (β_2), its interaction with coal shock exposure (β_3), as well as the estimated marginal effect of exposure to the coal shock for the non-omitted category.

Table C13: Exposure to coal shock and the evolution of earnings, by age group

	(1) Cumulative earnings	(2) # of years w/ earnings >0	(3) Earnings per year employed
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-2.007***	-0.102***	-0.248***
	(0.089)	(0.028)	(0.011)
$Age_i^{36\text{-}45}$	0.410***	0.400***	0.016***
	(0.058)	(0.031)	(0.006)
$Age_i^{46\text{-}56}$	0.621***	0.532***	0.030***
	(0.084)	(0.053)	(0.009)
$Age_i^{36\text{-}45} \times \mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	0.436***	-0.124***	0.065***
	(0.068)	(0.025)	(0.008)
$Age_i^{46\text{-}56} \times \mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	0.653***	-0.505***	0.125***
	(0.123)	(0.079)	(0.012)
Marginal effect of $\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$ for:			
$Age_i^{36\text{-}45}$	-1.572***	-0.226***	-0.182***
	(0.086)	(0.035)	(0.01)
$Age_i^{46\text{-}56}$	-1.355***	-0.607***	-0.123***
	(0.117)	(0.069)	(0.011)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓
Observations	152,000	152,000	152,000

Note: The outcome variables are defined over the 2012 to 2019 period. Cumulative earnings and earnings per year employed are normalized to average annual wages between 2007 and 2011. The primary independent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether or not the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry in all five years between 2007 and 2011. This variable is interacted with binned age categories based on age in 2011 (26-35, 36-45, 46-56), where 26-35 is the omitted category. Marginal effects represent the estimated cumulative effect of exposure to coal shock for the specified age groups. All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Columns 1 and 2 have the same number of underlying observations. There are slightly fewer observations in column 3 because the outcome variable is not observed for workers who are never employed between 2012 and 2019. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the worker's firm in 2011. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s and Census Business Register.
*** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

There are several key takeaways from Tables C13 through C16. First, exposed coal workers of every age group, educational category, region, and place of birth experienced

Table C14: Exposure to coal shock and the evolution of earnings, by educational attainment

	(1) Cumulative earnings	(2) # of years w/ earnings >0	(3) Earnings per year employed
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-2.067***	-0.918***	-0.186***
	(0.16)	(0.098)	(0.018)
$Educ_i^{HS}$	0.300***	0.138***	0.028***
	(0.055)	(0.027)	(0.006)
$Educ_i^{SC+}$	0.926***	0.173***	0.105***
	(0.061)	(0.027)	(0.007)
$Educ_i^{HS} \times \mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	0.563***	0.522***	0.027*
	(0.107)	(0.083)	(0.012)
$Educ_i^{SC+} \times \mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	0.498***	0.697***	0.005
	(0.144)	(0.108)	(0.016)
Marginal effect of $\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$ for:			
$Educ_i^{HS}$	-1.504***	-0.396***	-0.159***
	(0.131)	(0.045)	(0.015)
$Educ_i^{SC+}$	-1.568***	-0.221***	-0.181***
	(0.173)	(0.042)	(0.022)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓
Observations	91,500	91,500	91,000

Note: The outcome variables are defined over the 2012 to 2019 period. Cumulative earnings and earnings per year employed are normalized to average annual wages between 2007 and 2011. The primary independent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether or not the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry in all five years between 2007 and 2011. This variable is interacted with binned educational categories based on the ACS (less than high school, high school degree, some college or more), where less than high school is the omitted category. Marginal effects represent the estimated cumulative effect of exposure to coal shock for the specified educational categories. All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Columns 1 and 2 have the same number of underlying observations. There are slightly fewer observations in column 3 because the outcome variable is not observed for workers who are never employed between 2012 and 2019. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the worker's firm in 2011. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.
*** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

substantial cumulative earnings losses. Second, there is important heterogeneity in margins of adjustment across categories. In Table C13, the omitted category is the youngest

Table C15: Exposure to coal shock and the evolution of earnings, Eastern vs. Western states

	(1) Cumulative earnings	(2) # of years w/ earnings >0	(3) Earnings per year employed
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-1.722***	-0.448***	-0.183***
	(0.085)	(0.048)	(0.009)
$West_i$	0.677***	-0.068	0.090***
	(0.170)	(0.037)	(0.021)
$West_i \times \mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	0.572***	0.382***	0.041***
	(0.116)	(0.075)	(0.014)
Marginal effect of $\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$ for:			
$West_i$	-1.150***	-0.066	-0.142***
	(0.108)	(0.045)	(0.015)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓
Observations	152,000	152,000	152,000

Note: The outcome variables are defined over the 2012 to 2019 period. Cumulative earnings and earnings per year employed are normalized to average annual wages between 2007 and 2011. The primary independent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether or not the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry in all five years between 2007 and 2011. This variable is interacted with a dummy variable indicating whether the worker lived in an Eastern or Western state in 2011, where East is the omitted category. The marginal effect represents the estimated cumulative effect of exposure to coal shock for the specified category. All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Columns 1 and 2 have the same number of underlying observations. There are slightly fewer observations in column 3 because the outcome variable is not observed for workers who are never employed between 2012 and 2019. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the worker's firm in 2011. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s and Census Business Register.
*** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

cohort of workers. The point estimates indicate that older workers faced smaller cumulative earnings losses relative to younger cohorts but experienced larger reductions in cumulative employment, suggesting they were more likely to exit the labor force entirely rather than transition into lower-paid work. While younger workers lost more total earnings, they remained somewhat more attached to the labor force.

In Table C14, the omitted category is workers with less than a high school degree.

Table C16: Exposure to coal shock and the evolution of earnings, by county of birth

	(1) Cumulative earnings	(2) # of years w/ earnings >0	(3) Earnings per year employed
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-1.553***	-0.328***	-0.172***
	(0.089)	(0.035)	(0.010)
$SameCty_i$	-0.187***	-0.009	-0.024***
	(0.029)	(0.009)	(0.003)
$SameCty_i \times \mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-0.033	-0.144***	0.009
	(0.069)	(0.045)	(0.006)
Marginal effect of $\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$ for:			
$SameCty_i$	-1.586***	-0.472***	-0.163***
	(0.091)	(0.054)	(0.009)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓
Observations	143,000	143,000	143,000

Note: The outcome variables are defined over the 2012 to 2019 period. Cumulative earnings and earnings per year employed are normalized to average annual wages between 2007 and 2011. The primary independent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether or not the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry in all five years between 2007 and 2011. This variable is interacted with a dummy variable indicating whether the worker lived in their county of birth in 2011, where not living in county of birth is the omitted category. The marginal effect represents the estimated cumulative effect of exposure to coal shock for the specified category. All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Columns 1 and 2 have the same number of underlying observations. There are slightly fewer observations in column 3 because the outcome variable is not observed for workers who are never employed between 2012 and 2019. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the worker's firm in 2011. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s and Census Business Register.
*** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

This group of workers experienced substantially larger cumulative earnings losses than more educated workers, with most of these losses stemming from fewer years of employment. Exposed coal workers with less than a high school degree worked almost one year less over the 2012–2019 period than observationally similar workers. Across educational categories, exposed coal workers suffered similar declines in earnings per year of employment. Because educational attainment is only identifiable for workers who responded to the ACS, the sample in Table C14 is slightly smaller than the main analysis sample. Table

Table C17: Exposure to coal shock and the evolution of earnings, ACS sample

	(1) Cumulative earnings	(2) # of years w/ earnings >0	(3) Earnings per year employed
$\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$	-1.800***	-0.403***	-0.196***
	(0.152)	(0.043)	(0.018)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓
Observations	91,500	91,500	91,000

Note: The sample is limited to workers who were matched to the ACS. The outcome variables are defined over the 2012 to 2019 period. Cumulative earnings and earnings per year employed are normalized to average annual wages between 2007 and 2011. The primary independent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether or not the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry in all five years between 2007 and 2011. All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Columns 1 and 2 have the same number of underlying observations. There are slightly fewer observations in column 3 because the outcome variable is not observed for workers who are never employed between 2012 and 2019. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the worker's firm in 2011. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.
*** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

C17 reports the estimated effect of coal shock exposure on cumulative earnings, cumulative employment, and earnings per year employed between 2012 and 2019 based only on the sample of workers who responded to the ACS. Based on this restricted sample of ACS workers, exposure to the coal shock results in slightly larger earnings and employment penalties than for the larger sample of workers.

Table C15 examines regional differences in the adjustment to the coal shock. Coal workers in Western states fared somewhat better than their Eastern counterparts, particularly along the employment margin. Exposed coal workers in Western states experienced no statistically detectable decline in cumulative employment. This pattern likely reflects differences in mining practices, local economic conditions, and the spatial distribution of coal's decline, which was regionally concentrated in Eastern states.

Finally, Table C16 explores heterogeneity by place (county) of birth. Because place of birth is missing for a subset of workers, the sample size in this analysis is slightly smaller than in the main sample. Workers born in their county of residence may have stronger place-based attachments, such as family or community ties, that could affect their adjustment to a regionally concentrated shock. While we document similar cumulative earnings losses between workers born in-county and those born elsewhere, we find differences along the extensive margin: workers born in their county of residence experienced slightly larger cumulative employment losses, while earnings conditional on employment were similar across groups.

Tables C18, C19, C20, and C21 decompose the cumulative earnings, cumulative employment, and earnings per year of employment effect of coal shock exposure into years observed within versus outside of the worker's 2011 CZ and years observed within versus outside of the worker's 2011 industry. For brevity, we omit the point estimates on the demographic characteristics themselves, reporting only the estimated marginal effect of exposure to the coal shock for each category of the demographic characteristic of interest. As before, these are mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories, and thus the point estimates in columns 2–5 sum to the aggregate effect reported in column 1 in panels A (cumulative earnings) and B (cumulative employment). They are not additive in panel C, as the outcome variable is only observed in years in which the worker reports earnings.

Across all worker characteristics examined, cumulative earnings losses were driven by years in which workers stayed in their original commuting zone but did not work in the coal industry. This pattern holds across age groups, educational attainment levels, regions, and place-of-birth categories. In all cases, the combination of leaving the coal industry while remaining in the same local labor market was associated with the most substantial reductions in cumulative earnings and cumulative years of employment. For all types of workers, earnings per year of employment were uniformly negative in all CZ-industry combinations, although these losses were larger when employed in different

Table C18: Exposure to coal shock and the evolution of earnings by sector and CZ; marginal effects of coal shock exposure by age group

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	All	**Same CZ**		**Different CZ**	
		Same ind.	Diff. ind.	Same ind.	Diff. ind.
Panel A: Cumulative earnings					
$Age_i^{26\text{-}35}$	-2.007***	0.215	-1.579***	-0.108**	-0.535***
	(0.089)	(0.138)	(0.116)	(0.039)	(0.032)
$Age_i^{36\text{-}45}$	-1.572***	0.066	-1.405***	0.085**	-0.318***
	(0.086)	(0.114)	(0.103)	(0.034)	(0.025)
$Age_i^{46\text{-}56}$	-1.355***	0.014	-1.175***	0.043*	-0.236***
	(0.117)	(0.109)	(0.088)	(0.026)	(0.024)
Panel B: Cumulative employment					
$Age_i^{26\text{-}35}$	-0.102***	0.956***	-0.814***	0.046	-0.289***
	(0.028)	(0.134)	(0.113)	(0.031)	(0.023)
$Age_i^{36\text{-}45}$	-0.226***	0.719***	-0.917***	0.155***	-0.183***
	(0.035)	(0.129)	(0.099)	(0.031)	(0.021)
$Age_i^{46\text{-}56}$	-0.607***	0.415***	-0.932***	0.092***	-0.181***
	(0.069)	(0.109)	(0.080)	(0.024)	(0.022)
Panel C: Earnings per year of employment					
$Age_i^{26\text{-}35}$	-0.248***	-0.184***	-0.383***	-0.233***	-0.375***
	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.019)	(0.017)	(0.021)
$Age_i^{36\text{-}45}$	-0.182***	-0.143***	-0.307***	-0.151***	-0.344***
	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.018)	(0.016)	(0.020)
$Age_i^{46\text{-}56}$	-0.123***	-0.099***	-0.239***	-0.110***	-0.279***
	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.030)	(0.019)	(0.022)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Obs. (Panels A and B)	152,000	152,000	152,000	152,000	152,000
Obs. (Panel C)	152,000	132,000	75,500	19,500	19,500

Note: The outcome variables are defined over the 2012 to 2019 period. Cumulative earnings and earnings per year employed are normalized to average annual wages between 2007 and 2011. The primary independent variable is a dummy variable, $\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$, indicating whether or not the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry in all five years between 2007 and 2011. This variable is interacted with binned age categories based on age in 2011 (26-35, 36-45, 46-56), where 26-35 is the omitted category. The table displays the estimated cumulative effect of exposure to coal shock for the specified age groups. All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2. Column 1 shows the aggregate effect on cumulative earnings and employment. Columns 2–5 decompose these effects into employment and earnings obtained in the 2011 CZ of residence versus other CZs, and within versus outside of the worker's 2011 industry, defined at the 2-digit NAICS code. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the worker's firm in 2011. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s and Census Business Register.
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

industries. These results reinforce the broader conclusion that neither industry switching nor geographic mobility has significantly mitigated the transitional costs faced by coal workers.

Table C19: Exposure to coal shock and the evolution of earnings by sector and CZ; marginal effects of coal shock exposure by educational attainment

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	All	**Same CZ**		**Different CZ**	
		Same ind.	Diff. ind.	Same ind.	Diff. ind.
Panel A: Cumulative earnings					
$Educ_i^{<HS}$	-2.067***	-0.856***	-1.056***	-0.002	-0.152***
	(0.160)	(0.158)	(0.095)	(0.046)	(0.049)
$Educ_i^{HS}$	-1.504***	-0.215**	-1.226***	0.113**	-0.176***
	(0.131)	(0.103)	(0.087)	(0.050)	(0.033)
$Educ_i^{SC+}$	-1.568***	-0.349***	-1.030***	0.028	-0.217***
	(0.173)	(0.111)	(0.098)	(0.050)	(0.033)
Panel B: Cumulative employment					
$Educ_i^{<HS}$	-0.918***	-0.165	-0.724***	0.065	-0.094*
	(0.098)	(0.140)	(0.093)	(0.051)	(0.048)
$Educ_i^{HS}$	-0.396***	0.348***	-0.806***	0.170***	-0.107***
	(0.045)	(0.109)	(0.071)	(0.045)	(0.032)
$Educ_i^{SC+}$	-0.221***	0.201*	-0.477***	0.110***	-0.054**
	(0.042)	(0.108)	(0.078)	(0.037)	(0.026)
Panel C: Earnings per year of employment					
$Educ_i^{<HS}$	-0.186***	-0.161***	-0.298***	-0.141***	-0.299***
	(0.018)	(0.016)	(0.033)	(0.052)	(0.068)
$Educ_i^{HS}$	-0.159***	-0.124***	-0.300***	-0.139***	-0.275***
	(0.015)	(0.013)	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.030)
$Educ_i^{SC+}$	-0.181***	-0.124***	-0.318***	-0.182***	-0.373***
	(0.022)	(0.018)	(0.033)	(0.030)	(0.032)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Obs. (Panels A and B)	91,500	91,500	91,500	91,500	91,500
Obs. (Panel C)	91,000	81,000	39,500	10,000	9,200

Note: The outcome variables are defined over the 2012 to 2019 period. Cumulative earnings and earnings per year employed are normalized to average annual wages between 2007 and 2011. The primary independent variable is a dummy variable, $\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$, indicating whether or not the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry in all five years between 2007 and 2011. This variable is interacted with binned educational categories based on the ACS (less than high school, high school degree, some college or more), where less than high school is the omitted category. The table displays the estimated cumulative effect of exposure to coal shock for the specified educational categories. All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2. Column 1 shows the aggregate effect on cumulative earnings and employment. Columns 2–5 decompose these effects into employment and earnings obtained in the 2011 CZ of residence versus other CZs, and within versus outside of the worker's 2011 industry, defined at the 2-digit NAICS code. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the worker's firm in 2011. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.
*** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

Table C20: Exposure to coal shock and the evolution of earnings by sector and CZ; Eastern vs. Western states

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	All	**Same CZ**		**Different CZ**	
		Same ind.	Diff. ind.	Same ind.	Diff. ind.
Panel A: Cumulative earnings					
$East_i$	-1.722***	0.079	-1.434***	-0.031	-0.337***
	(0.085)	(0.109)	(0.092)	(0.021)	(0.024)
$West_i$	-1.15***	0.037	-1.049***	0.214**	-0.352***
	(0.108)	(0.162)	(0.155)	(0.109)	(0.035)
Panel B: Cumulative employment					
$East_i$	-0.448***	0.683***	-0.958***	0.053*	-0.225***
	(0.048)	(0.111)	(0.086)	(0.022)	(0.020)
$West_i$	-0.066	0.479***	-0.670***	0.282***	-0.157***
	(0.045)	(0.181)	(0.132)	(0.098)	(0.031)
Panel C: Earnings per year of employment					
$East_i$	-0.183***	-0.145***	-0.321***	-0.172***	-0.338***
	(0.009)	(0.01)	(0.017)	(0.012)	(0.017)
$West_i$	-0.142***	-0.095***	-0.223***	-0.133***	-0.331***
	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.054)	(0.028)	(0.024)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Obs. (Panels A and B)	152,000	152,000	152,000	152,000	152,000
Obs. (Panel C)	152,000	132,000	75,500	19,500	19,500

Note: The outcome variables are defined over the 2012 to 2019 period. Cumulative earnings and earnings per year employed are normalized to average annual wages between 2007 and 2011. The primary independent variable is a dummy variable, $\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$, indicating whether or not the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry in all five years between 2007 and 2011. This variable is interacted with a dummy variable indicating whether the worker lived in an Eastern or Western state in 2011. The table displays the estimated marginal effect of exposure to coal shock for the specified category. All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2. Column 1 shows the aggregate effect on cumulative earnings and employment. Columns 2–5 decompose these effects into employment and earnings obtained in the 2011 CZ of residence versus other CZs, and within versus outside of the worker's 2011 industry, defined at the 2-digit NAICS code. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the worker's firm in 2011. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table C21: Exposure to coal shock and the evolution of earnings by sector and CZ; marginal effects of coal shock exposure by county of birth

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	All	**Same CZ**		**Different CZ**	
		Same ind.	Diff. ind.	Same ind.	Diff. ind.
Panel A: Cumulative earnings					
$SameCty_i = 0$	-1.553***	0.050	-1.277***	0.070*	-0.395***
	(0.089)	(0.105)	(0.103)	(0.034)	(0.025)
$SameCty_i = 1$	-1.586***	0.093	-1.567***	-0.014	-0.098***
	(0.091)	(0.123)	(0.098)	(0.018)	(0.021)
Panel B: Cumulative employment					
$SameCty_i = 0$	-0.328***	0.586***	-0.849***	0.172***	-0.237***
	(0.035)	(0.116)	(0.091)	(0.031)	(0.021)
$SameCty_i = 1$	-0.472***	0.698***	-1.098***	-0.002	-0.070***
	(0.054)	(0.119)	(0.091)	(0.014)	(0.018)
Panel C: Earnings per year of employment					
$SameCty_i = 0$	-0.172***	-0.129***	-0.297***	-0.159***	-0.330***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.022)	(0.014)	(0.015)
$SameCty_i = 1$	-0.163***	-0.134***	-0.298***	-0.166***	-0.330***
	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.023)	(0.027)	(0.028)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Obs. (Panels A and B)	143,000	143,000	143,000	143,000	143,000
Obs. (Panel C)	143,000	124,000	71,500	18,500	19,000

Note: The outcome variables are defined over the 2012 to 2019 period. Cumulative earnings and earnings per year employed are normalized to average annual wages between 2007 and 2011. The primary independent variable is a dummy variable, $\mathbb{1}[Coal_{i,2007\text{-}11}]$, indicating whether or not the worker's primary earnings were drawn from the coal industry in all five years between 2007 and 2011. This variable is interacted with a dummy variable indicating whether the worker lived in their county of birth in 2011. The table displays the estimated marginal effect of exposure to coal shock for the specified place of birth category. All regressions include the full set of worker-level controls from equation 2. Column 1 shows the aggregate effect on cumulative earnings and employment. Columns 2–5 decompose these effects into employment and earnings obtained in the 2011 CZ of residence versus other CZs, and within versus outside of the worker's 2011 industry, defined at the 2-digit NAICS code. Sample sizes are rounded per Census disclosure rules. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered on the worker's firm in 2011. Source: ACS 2005–2021 linked with the Environmental Impacts Frame, IRS W-2s, and Census Business Register.
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05