

Anemia in Senegal: The Effect of the 2008 World Food Price Crisis

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Abstract

I explore the effect of the 2008 world food price crisis on the health of Senegalese children who were *in-utero* at the time. While previous work has looked at the effect of the 2008 crisis on child health, mine is the first to use a fetal origins approach, allowing me to use data collected several years after the crisis. As predicted by the food-policy literature, I find that the 2008 crisis had a large, negative impact on maternal health in urban areas, but no effect in rural areas. Observing the same cohort over time, I find that the effect of exposure is apparent in 2010 but not in 2012, suggesting hemoglobin catch-up. Because iron is a critical nutrient in early-life development, this catch-up masks an important negative shock to health.

1 Introduction

The world's poor, like the rich, rely on local and world markets to satisfy their basic food needs. More than half the world's population now lives in cities, where providing your own food supply is near-impossible. In rural settings the self-reliant peasant has been replaced by the petty-commodity producer and wage laborer (Bernstein 2010). Food entitlements are mediated by market forces, as both rural and urban-dwellers must exchange their labor and produce in return for food. With the reduction in trade-barriers and increased integration into the world market over the last 40 years, most poor countries now rely on imported foodstuffs to meet domestic demand, leaving their citizens vulnerable to fluctuations in international markets. The largest such fluctuation in recent times was the 2008 world food price crisis.

In early 2008, world food prices rose sharply and suddenly. The prices of rice and wheat doubled over the course of a few months, while the prices of other staples increased as well. Rising prices diminished the purchasing-power of consumers around the world, resulting in unrest and riots in low-to-medium-income countries. The causes of the price increase are debated, but include both American agriculture policy and the American real-estate market crash (Rosset 2008).

The 2008 crisis drew attention from major journals *Science* and *Nature*, as well as from the fields of peasant studies, nutrition, and development.¹ The crisis was viewed as evidence of the risk that poor countries take by specializing in cash-crops for export and relying on imported food. Much of the subsequent rhetoric in these fields advocated reduced integration into the world market, and more self-sufficiency in food production (Rosset 2008).

¹See Cohen and Garrett (2010); Hadley et al. (2011); Martin-Prevel et al. (2012); Minot (2010); Ruel et al. (2009); Wodon and Zaman (2008); Von Braun (2008); Barrett (2010); Compton, Wiggins, and Keats (2010); Headey (2013).

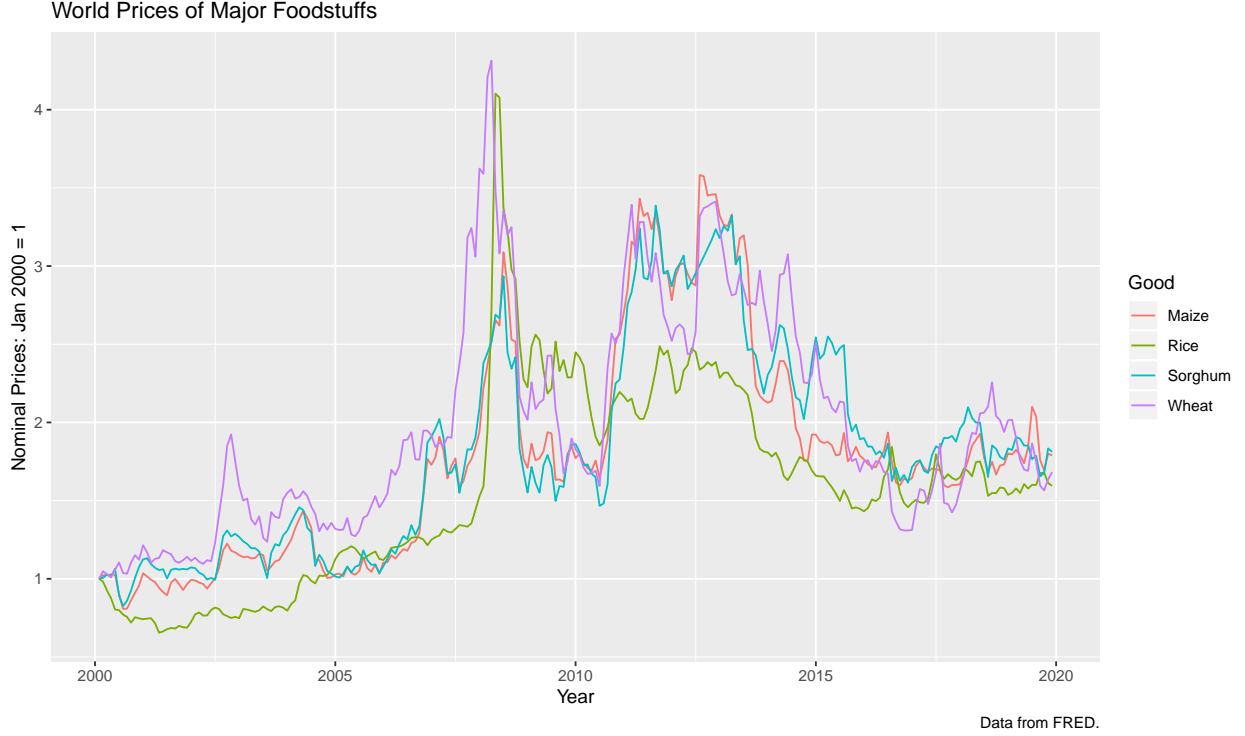


Figure 1: The 2008 Food Price Crisis

Despite the attention surrounding the crisis, there are few causal evaluations of its impact on nutrition and health, as emphasized by Compton et. al. in their 2010 review of the effects of the 2008 crisis. Identification in this setting is challenging because the shock affected the entire world at a specific moment in time, leaving no obvious control group for comparison. Existing studies find significant effects of the 2008 crisis. Arndt et. al. (2016) approach this problem by using propensity-score matching to compare the height-for-weight of children observed during to those observed after the food price crisis. Dimova et. al. (2013) take a different approach, examining the effect of the crisis on a synthetic measure of welfare, rather than looking at health. Neither paper has a clear identification strategy which can quantify the health effects of the 2008 crisis.

To address these limitations, I exploit the biological mechanism of iron-transmission and hemoglobin formation in fetuses and infants. For simple, biological reasons I explain below, fetuses are more sensitive than infants to nutritional iron-availability. Therefore, those who experienced the 2008 crisis as infants are a compelling control group for those who experienced the crisis *in-utero*. I explore the effect of the 2008 crisis on maternal-fetal health in Senegal, which imports most of its food supply and has nationally-representative surveys which measure hemoglobin 2 and 4 years after the crisis.

Using a fetal origins approach provides a clear identification strategy and allows me to disentangle the effect of the crisis from seasonal fluctuations, unlike previous studies. By looking at hemoglobin, I gain improved sensitivity relative to weight-for-height, as hemoglobin is sensitive to both quality and quantity of food. Relative to Dimova et. al., my approach measures the direct effect of the 2008 crisis on maternal and fetal health, rather than a synthetic measure of welfare. My paper most closely resembles that of Block et. al. 2004, although the crisis of interest differs. Moreover, the increased variation from the fetal origins approach allows me to bring empirical evidence to bear on previous work, which has emphasized a rural-urban divide where the urban poor suffering from increased food prices, and the rural poor are minimally affected.

My work also contributes to the literature on intergenerational transmission of anemia. The economic costs of anemia are well-understood, as are its biological causes and consequences (Zimmermann and Hurrell 2007). While it is known that maternal iron consumption affects fetal hemoglobin, the magnitude of this effect has not been quantified. Moreover, the extent to which any *in-utero* insults to iron *persist* as the infant ages

has received little attention. Previous work has focused on small, controlled trials involving anemia and iron supplementation, while I use a large, nationally representative dataset.

1.1 Senegal in the 2008 Crisis

Senegal is a small, poor economy on the western coast of Africa, with a population of 16 million and a GDP per capita of \$3,675 (PPP). The climate is Sahelian, with a rainy season starting in May. Average annual rainfall increases on a southward gradient. Dakar is the port and economic hub. The coastal areas practice horticulture and fishing, while the hinterlands close to Dakar engage in commercial groundnut production for export. The river basins in the north and south are farmed for rice, while millet, sorghum and maize are the staples in drier areas. Population is concentrated around Dakar, with smaller concentrations in the river basins in the north and south. See Appendix 1 for more information about Senegal.

Although agriculture employs three-quarters of the population (CIA Factbook), imports make up a large part of the food supply. The main staples are rice, maize, sorghum, wheat and millet. As seen in the graph below, foods which are mainly imported, like wheat and rice, have increased in importance in Senegal over the past thirty years, while locally produced staples millet and sorghum have declined in per-capita consumption.

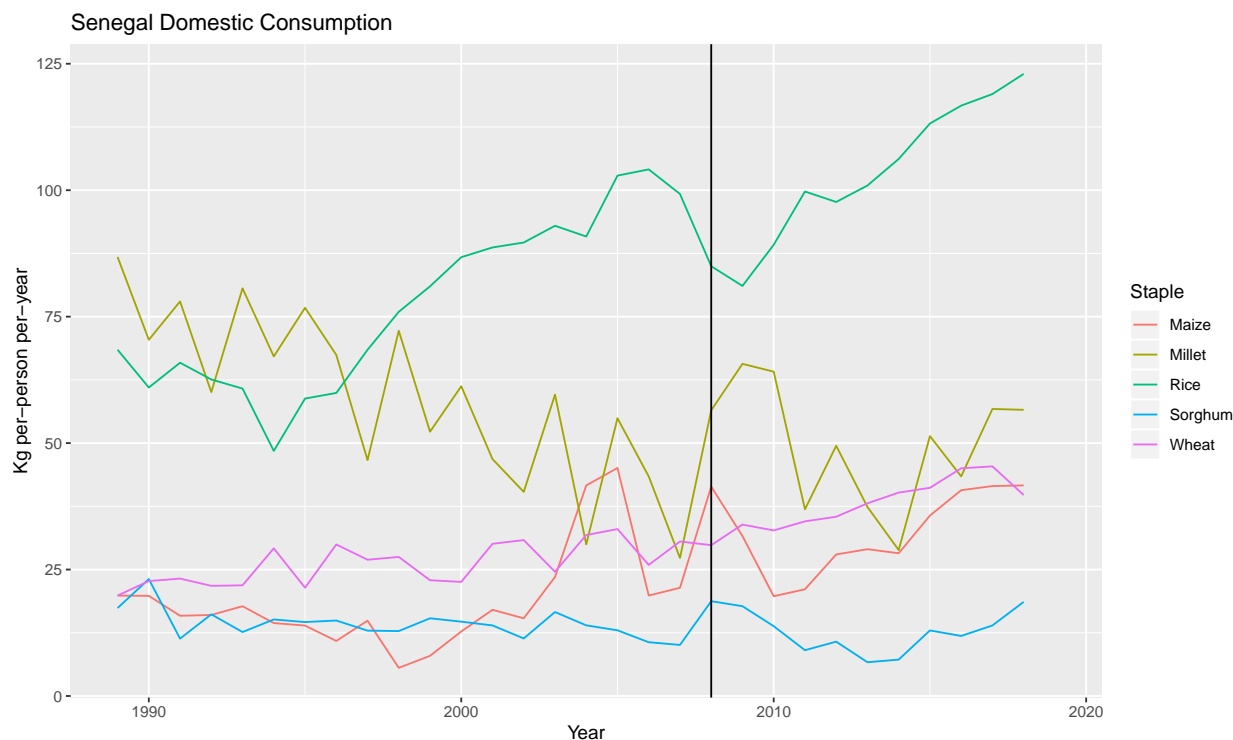


Figure 2:

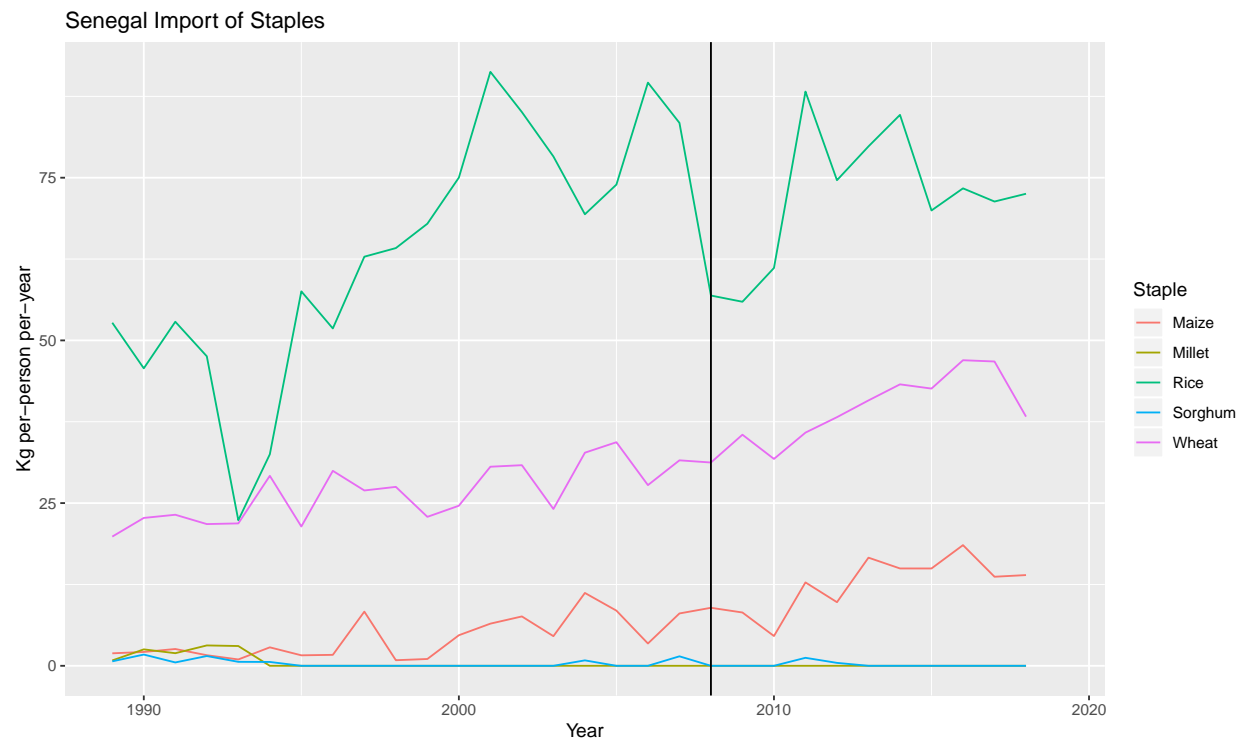


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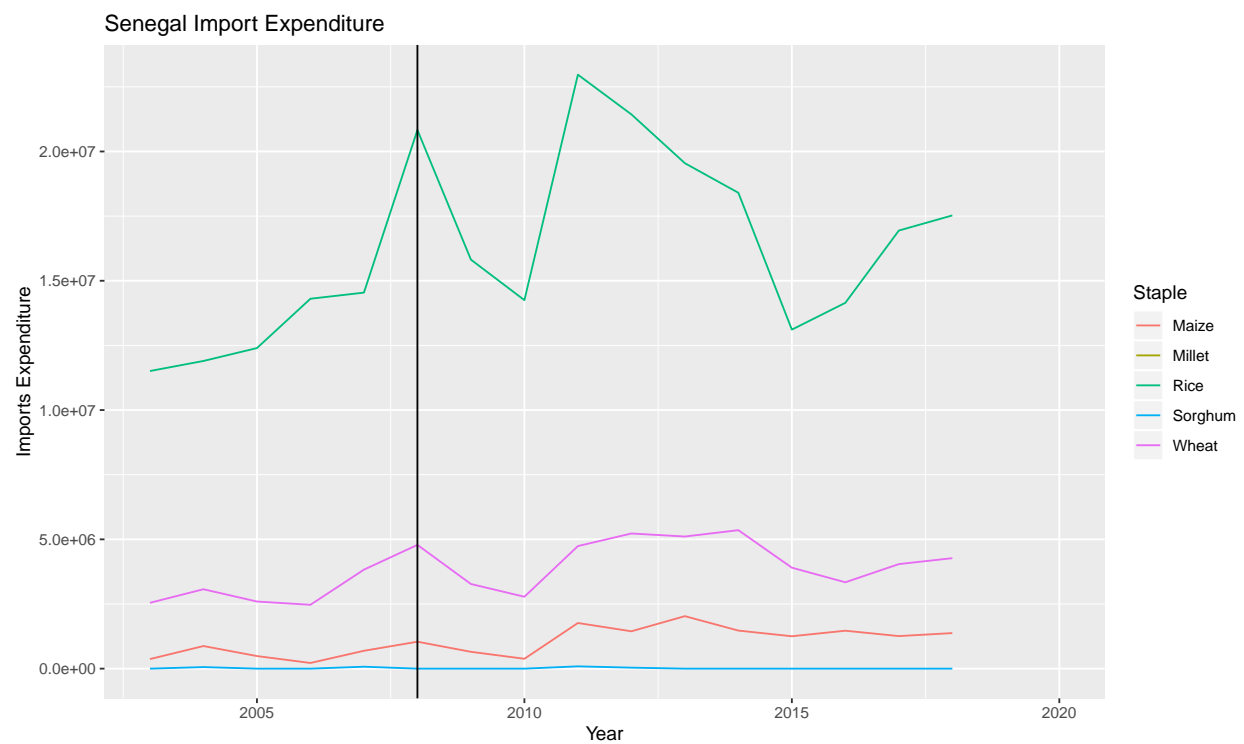


Figure 4:

We see that in 2008, when prices increased dramatically, consumption of millet and sorghum increased while that of rice decreased. This might reflect some substitution away from high-priced, imported goods.

The world price spike is apparent in retail prices in Senegal. Here I plot the retail price of rice in Dakar. Rice prices follow a similar pattern to the world price, with a delay, shifted upwards by transportation costs and retail markup.

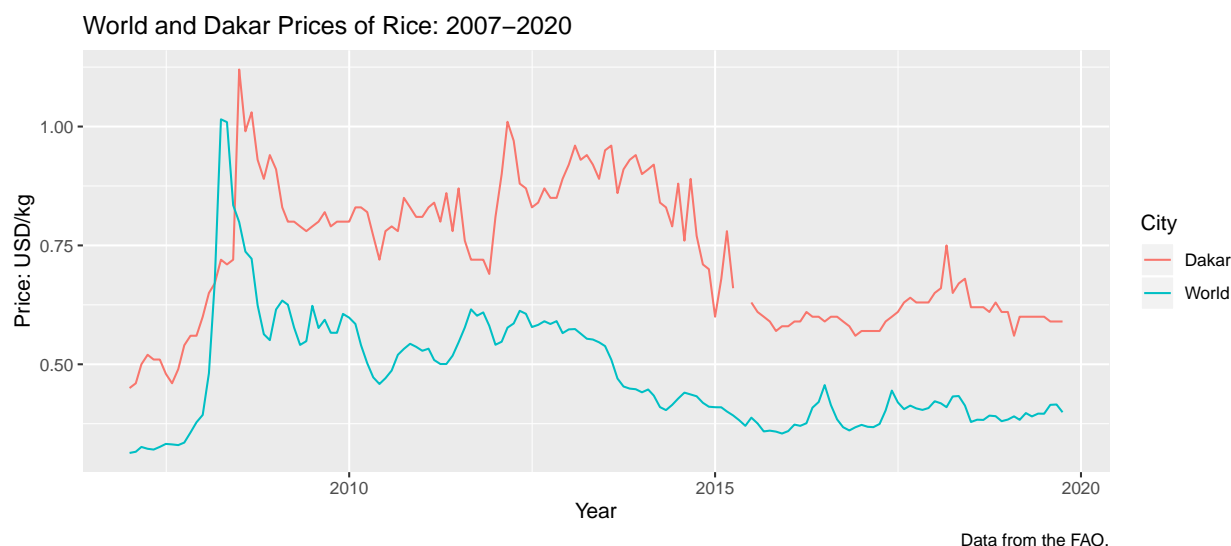


Figure 5: World Rice Price and Retail Price in Senegal

To construct a world price index that is relevant for anemia in Senegal, I use two weights. One, the amount of consumption of a particular staple in Senegal in 2008, and two, the iron per 100 grams of that staple.² I took the weighted average of the commodity prices in real USD, and multiplied by the CFA-USD exchange rate in order to get prices in terms of local currency. I plot the index in log-terms below, so that proportional changes can be easily read. This index does not enter into my analysis, but it provides a illustration of the 2008 crisis with reference to the goods consumed by Senegal.

²The final weights were 0.39 0.13 0.18 0.30 for rice, maize, sorghum and wheat respectively. I exclude millet from the study because it has not been imported or exported since the early 1990's.

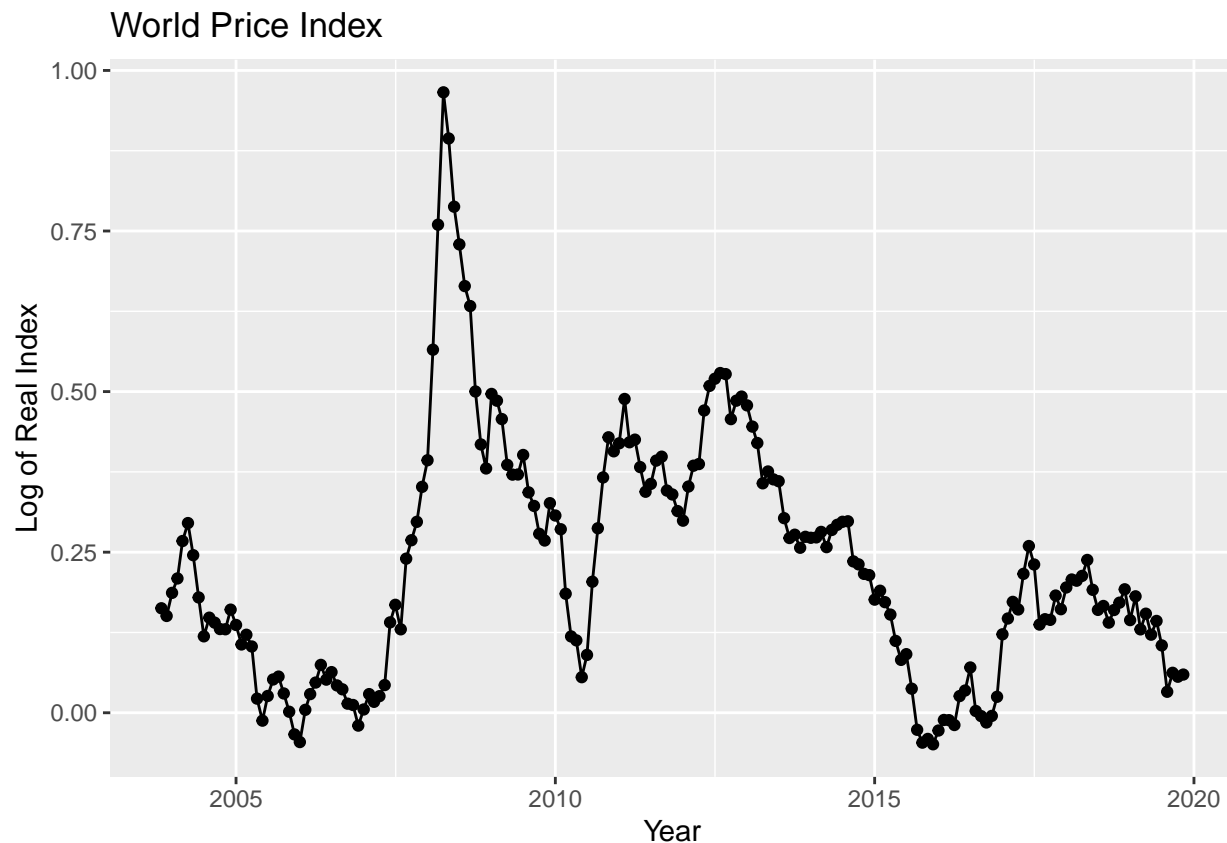


Figure 6: World Price Index, weighted by Senegal iron-consumption

2 Mechanisms

Given an increase in food prices *in-utero*, I expect a decrease in infant hemoglobin through the following chain of reasoning:

1. An increase in the world price of food leads to an increase in local prices in Senegal;
2. which causes food consumption to decrease in quality and/or quantity;
3. which causes iron intake to fall for pregnant women;
4. which reduces fetal iron stores;
5. leading to reduced hemoglobin as an infant and child.

Each of these mechanisms has specific caveats and mediators which will be considered in order to develop appropriate empirical analysis. From the first two steps, I argue that household wealth and distance to the country's port, Dakar, should mediate the effect of the 2008 crisis on health. The last 3 steps provide a clear identification strategy.

2.1 World Price, Local Price and Transportation Costs

The effect of world price on local price will depend on transportation costs and local supply (Minot 2010). Consider a two good model, with P as the price of food, and the non-food good set as the numeraire. Let P_a be the hypothetical price of food under autarky. Because Senegal is a small-open-economy (SOE), trade

provides an infinitely elastic supply curve at price $P_w + t$, the world price plus transportation costs. Given an increase in the world price of food, there are three cases for how the local price will respond:

1. Food was not imported before the price increase, and it is not be imported after the increase. Price will be determined by local supply and demand, $\frac{\Delta P_L}{\Delta P_w} = 0$.
2. Food was imported before the price increase, but is not imported afterwards. In this case, the local supply and demand curves meet at a lower price than P_w . The economy moves up the local supply curve and $0 < \frac{\Delta P_L}{\Delta P_w} < 1$.
3. Food was imported before the price increase, and continues to be imported afterwards. In this case, the new price is still $P_w + t$ and $\frac{\Delta P_L}{\Delta P_w} = 1$.

Transportation costs also change the relative price of commodities faced by producers, affecting investment. Transportation costs make commercial, export-oriented production less profitable relative to local, subsistence production. Thus, we should also expect food-producing capacity to increase with transportation costs. Greater food-producing capacity would shift the local supply curve outward, making the world price less likely to bind.

2.2 Price and Consumption

As the price of a commodity increases there are substitution and income effects which lead to lower consumption of said commodity. Given that the 2008 price increase affected all of the major, imported staples, I would expect the substitution effect to be relatively small.³ As poor families spend a greater share of income on food than rich families, the income effect, and therefore total impact of the spike, should decrease with income.

Iron, unlike calories, is a function of both food quality and quantity. As prices increase, the household must either reduce quantity or change the type of food they are consuming. In Burkina Faso, which neighbors Senegal, the 2008 price shock lead to decreased amounts and diversity of food (Martin-Prevel et al. 2012). As I am particularly interested in female iron consumption, gender inequality looms large. While there are a host of issues surrounding intra-household allocation and gender, I will not treat those in this paper. Instead, I will assume that female iron consumption decreases with prices in a similar way as household iron consumption.

Given a price shock, households try to smooth consumption across time, attenuating the effect of price on consumption. However, most households, especially the poor, are credit constrained. Thus, we would expect a nonlinear effect of price on consumption, with large increases in price having disproportionately large effect on consumption. Because the 2008 crisis is a period of exceptionally high prices, I would argue that my results capture this non-linear effect of price. As savings, and therefore ability to smooth in a credit-constrained world, are a stock, prices in previous months will also affect the ability to smooth consumption. If prices have been high for several months, then a household is less likely to be able to smooth consumption given another month of high prices.

All of this analysis assumes that the household is a net-buyer of food. If the household is a net-seller of food, then a price increase will be a windfall (Ivanic and Martin 2008). More generally, greater capacity to produce food will allow a household to mitigate the negative effects of an increase in food prices. More generally, the effect of a price increase will be proportional to the net-seller position of the household. As urban-dwellers have less opportunity to grow their own food, we would expect the negative effects of a price increase to be greater in the cities than in the countryside. This difference is well-explored in the existing literature on the effect of food price shocks on households in poor countries.

³One possibility is that the increase in the price of imported goods lead to increased consumption of local crops, like millet. Millet is relatively high in iron compared to rice, so this would attenuate any results I find.

2.3 Iron and Anemia in Mother and Child

Anemia is characterized by low levels of hemoglobin in the blood and is most often caused by iron-deficiency due to malnutrition (Camaschella 2015). By World Health Organization (WHO) estimates, 1.62 billion people around the world suffer from anemia, most of whom are poor women. Anemia causes fatigue and blindness in adults and the direct effect of anemia on productivity accounts for 4% of world GDP per year (World Bank, 2004). For pregnant women, anemia increases the probability of death during childbirth, and maternal anemia has a direct effect on fetal and infant anemia (M. M. Rahman et al. 2016). In children, iron is a critical nutrient, and anemia may impair cognitive and motor development. An anemic infant is then more likely to develop into an anemic adult. Thus, an anemic mother begets anemic infant who becomes an anemic woman who begets an anemic child. This inter-generational aspect of anemia is well appreciated by the WHO and is recognized as an important issue at the nexus of public health, nutrition and female empowerment (Camaschella 2015).

Hemoglobin is limited by iron stores in the body, which depend on disease environment and the quality and quantity of food intake. A healthy human has iron stores roughly equal to the iron in use in their blood. There is a small, constant loss of iron through the small intestines. Because hemoglobin is determined by a stock, whereas iron intake is a flow, past iron consumption will affect current iron-stores and hemoglobin levels (Camaschella 2015).

Iron is passed from the mother to fetus, facilitating the development of fetal hemoglobin, which differs from adult hemoglobin. Over the first four months of life post-birth, the infant breaks down the fetal hemoglobin and synthesizes adult hemoglobin. Little iron can be transmitted through breast-milk, so the fetus must develop sufficient stores of iron in order to transition to adult hemoglobin as they grow and their blood volume increases. The additional iron required for pregnancy is around 1,000 mg– nearly half of the total iron stores in a healthy, non-pregnant woman, making iron a scarce nutrient for most pregnant women, and increasing the risk of developing anemia (Lactation 1990).

Infants, on the other hand, need relatively little iron, given that they develop sufficient stores *in-utero*. Breast-milk contains very little iron, around 0.1 mg per gram (USDA). As illustration, consider that a typical infant would consume less than 700 grams of breast milk a day in the first six months (Neville et al. 1988), meaning a total iron intake of around 54 mg over the first six months. This is trivial compared to the 1,000 mg needed during pregnancy. Moreover, as long as the woman is breastfeeding, the absence of menstruation will reduce her iron loss rate. Thus, during the first six months of life hemoglobin in infants should be relatively insensitive to maternal iron consumption and general iron-availability in the surrounding nutritional environment.⁴ Here I list the CDC’s recommended daily intake of iron for mother and infant across different periods, which illustrates this point.

| Period | Maternal Iron Intake | Period | Infant Iron Intake |
|--------------|----------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| Pregnancy | 27 mg | | |
| Lactation | 9 mg | 0-6 mo | .27 mg |
| Menstruation | 18 mg | 7-12 mo | 11 mg |
| | | Childhood | 7 mg |

We see that iron availability is critical during the fetal period, but not during the breastfeeding period. This discontinuity in the response of infant hemoglobin to nutritional environment (very sensitive up until birth, and then insensitive) offers a clear identification strategy. Given a specific nutritional event, we can compare those who had already been born to those still *in-utero*.

⁴Note that this all relies on women breastfeeding their children. In Senegal, breastfeeding is overwhelmingly common during the first six months, with very little cessation before the child reaches a year old (Mané et al. 2006).

3 Data

The DHS measures the hemoglobin of infants and children age 6 months to 5 years. There are two DHS surveys of Senegal which include children *in-utero* during the 2008 crisis: 2010 and 2012. The DHS data includes location and households characteristics. The variables which I will use for this study are hemoglobin, child month of birth, household wealth, whether a household lives in an urban *commune* and driving-distance to Dakar.

3.1 Hemoglobin

At birth, a healthy infant will have a large amount of fetal hemoglobin which is then broken down and replaced by adult hemoglobin. In general, hemoglobin levels decrease after birth and then rebound after the first year of life. We see such a pattern in the DHS data, which I plot below. The yellow window indicates the 2008 crisis. The curves are the conditional mean of hemoglobin over month of birth, calculated via local linear regression. The grey banner is the 95% confidence interval of the mean. The highlighted region are those children exposed to the 2008 crisis *in-utero*. Note that I observe this cohort twice: first when they are 2 years old, and again when they are 4.

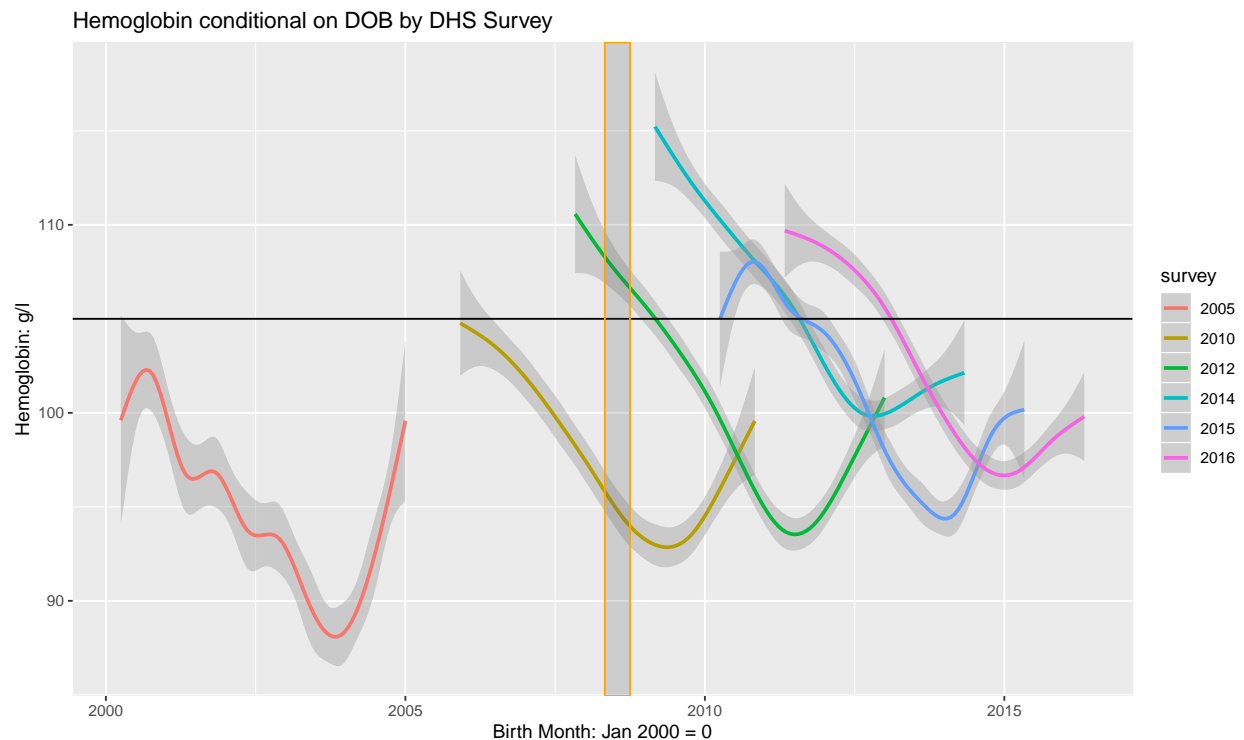


Figure 7: Senegal DHS Hemoglobin data, smoothed over time

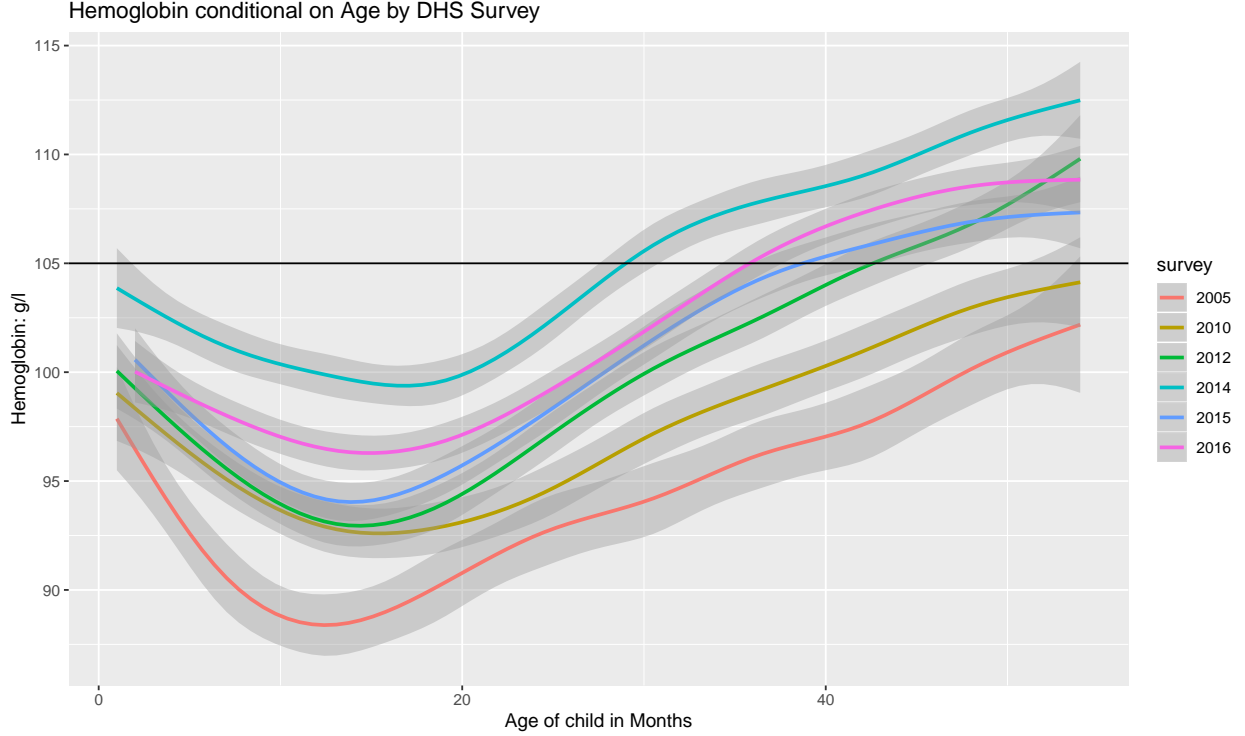


Figure 8: Senegal DHS Hemoglobin data, smoothed over time

Anemia is relatively rare in children, compared to in infants or adults. The cutoff for anemia in infants and children, 105 grams per liter of blood is shown as a black, horizontal line. Note that these curves are not a trajectory; rather, they are a single cross-section of children of multiple ages. Within an age group, hemoglobin follows a uni-modal, symmetric distribution.

In order to account for age, I will use a z-score approach analogous to how child height and weight is treated by the WHO. The only surveys which provide information on the 2008 crisis are 2010 and 2012, so I use the other 5 surveys (2005, 2014-17) to make z-scores for the surveys of interest. Taking the mean and standard deviation by age across these 5 surveys, I then normalize hemoglobin by age in the 2010 and 2012 surveys.

3.2 Other Variables of Interest

Below I list some descriptive statistics of other variables of interest. Driving distance to Dakar is in terms of hundreds of kilometers, and land refers to the proportion of households who own their own land. Wealth and distance are reported as means.

| Urban | Survey | Wealth | Distance | Land | N |
|-------|--------|---------|----------|------|------|
| Rural | 2010 | -0.0656 | 3.14 | 82% | 2252 |
| Rural | 2012 | -0.0680 | 3.01 | 84% | 3492 |
| Urban | 2010 | 0.0928 | 2.25 | 24% | 974 |
| Urban | 2012 | 0.0658 | 2.59 | 29% | 1573 |

The DHS does not record income. It measures wealth as a principle-components analysis of observed household possessions. This index is then centered around zero for each survey. Thus it not a measure of absolute wealth, but a proxy for socio-economic status.

Each DHS observation is tied to a “cluster”—generally a village or neighborhood. These clusters are geolocated with displacement, creating neutral measurement error. I use the coordinates of each cluster to measure the driving-distance to Dakar through the OpenStreetMaps API. The DHS also records whether a household is urban or rural. This urban-rural distinction is inherited directly from the census demarcation of the country being studied. In Senegal, urban is defined on the level of the *commune* (roughly translated as township). Below I plot the distribution of DHS clusters across Senegal, colored by whether they are urban or rural.

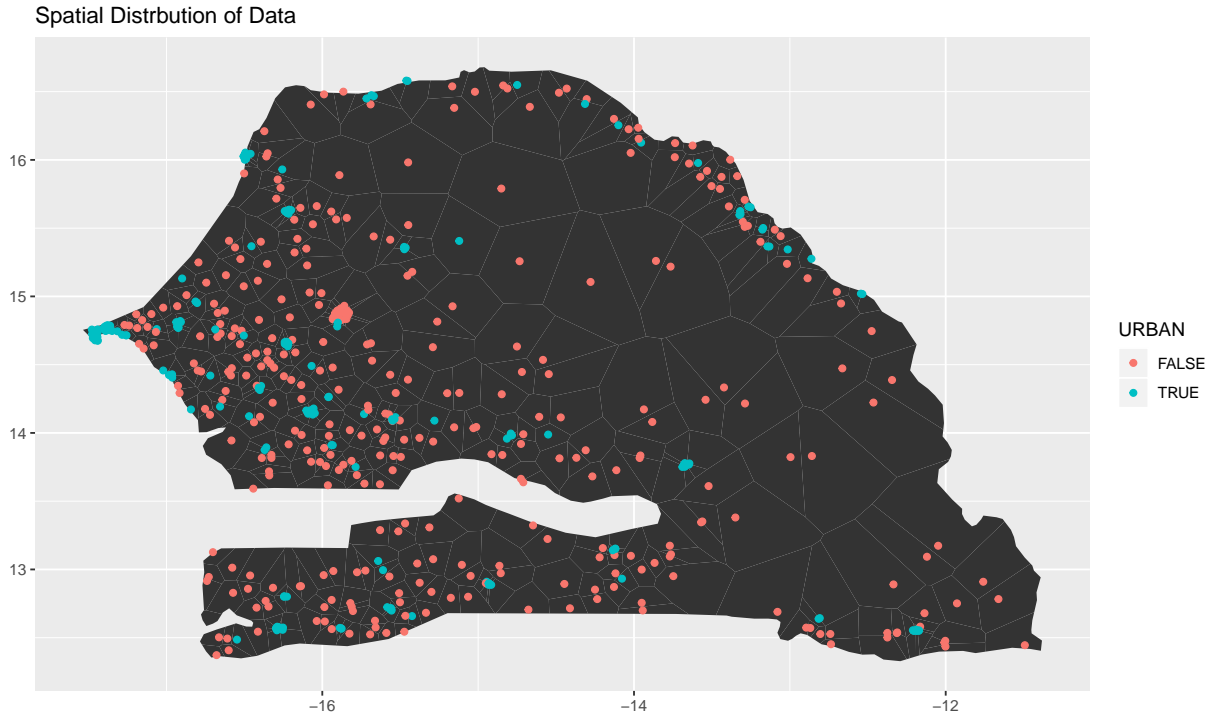


Figure 9: Distribution of DHS Clusters

We will see below that the variable of interest, “exposure”, is generally balanced across observables. However, I will also be interacting exposure with other variables. These are not balanced with respect to each other. Urban areas are wealthier than rural areas, and urban dwellers are more likely to live near Dakar. For both the rural and urban populations, wealth is negatively correlated with distance to Dakar.

4 Methods

The 2008 crisis forms a contiguous 8-month period in which the price index is greater than at any other point in the 20 year span. I take all those *in-utero* during this period, February to September 2008, to be exposed. The degree of exposure is the proportion of months of gestation which fall during the crisis period. For anyone born before March 2008, or conceived after September 2008, exposure is zero. For someone born in November 2008, exposure is $\frac{8}{9}$, as they were *in-utero* for the entirety of the 8-month crisis period.

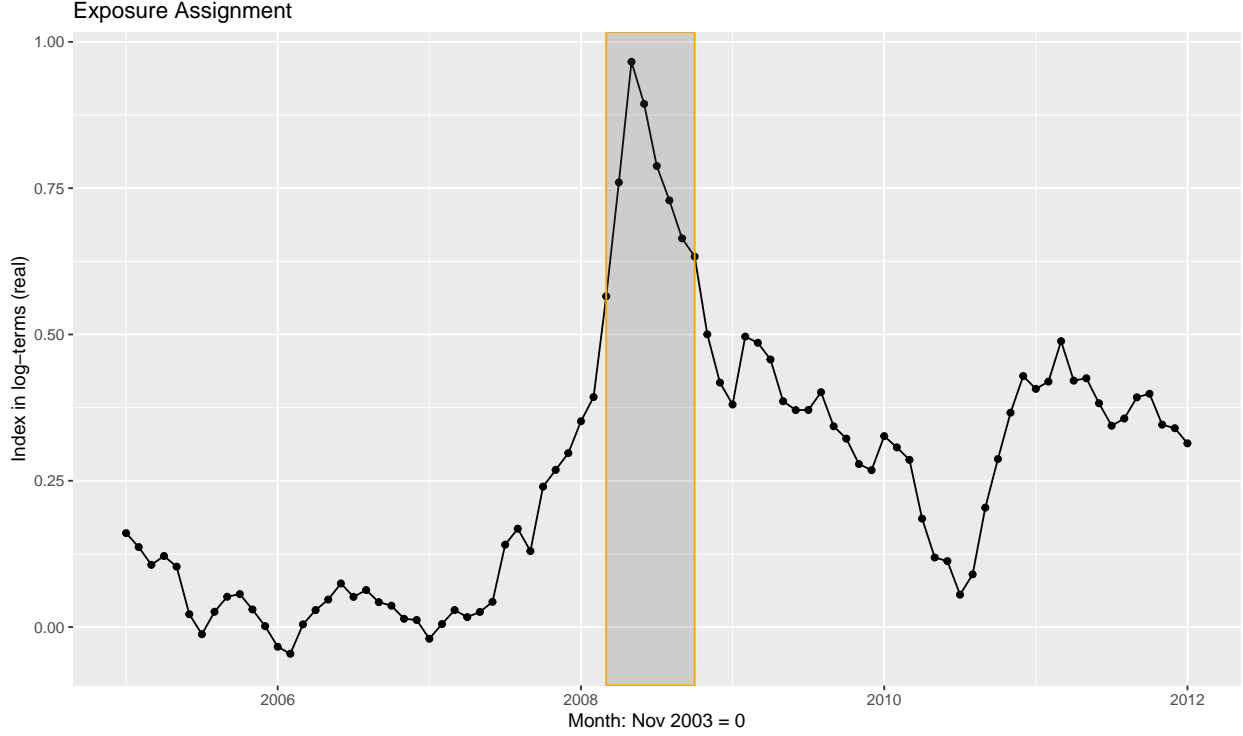


Figure 10: Definition of Exposure to the 2008 Crisis

My methodology follows that of Almond (2006) as we both analyze a cohort-level time shock. The effect should be visible in the raw data, and then this visual test is formalized with a regression characterizing deviation from a quadratic time trend. I then include additional interaction terms because I am interested in heterogeneous effects. I run these regressions separately for the 2010 and 2012 DHS surveys. These surveys identify the same cohorts, but at different points in the cohort life-cycle.

4.1 Identification

The 2008 crisis was caused by developments in large, rich economies and can be taken as external to Senegal. If the 2008 crisis indeed forms a “natural experiment,” then it ought to be unrelated to any covariates of interest, just like the treatment in a controlled experiment: i.e. $Exp_i \perp X_i$ where X_i is a vector of covariates. Below we see that exposure is balanced across observables, and we fail to reject the hypothesis of $Exp_i \perp X_i$.

| | Exposure | Exposure | Exposure | Exposure |
|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Distance to Dakar | 0.0000 (0.0000) | | | |
| Wealth | | -0.0001 (0.0003) | | |
| Urban | | | 0.0023 (0.0064) | |
| Land | | | | 0.0086 (0.0063) |
| R ² | 0.0002 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0002 |
| Adj. R ² | 0.0000 | -0.0001 | -0.0001 | 0.0001 |
| Num. obs. | 8291 | 8291 | 8291 | 8291 |
| RMSE | 0.2698 | 0.2698 | 0.2698 | 0.2698 |

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 3: Balance Test

The fetal origins strategy, which relies on a biological sensitivity to iron intake determined by whether an individual was *in-utero*, provides a strong argument that any effect I find reflects a change maternal health conditions. I would not, however, claim that my analysis identifies the effect of an increase in world prices. Rather, I am identifying the effect of being *in-utero* during a specific 8-month window, which included a price increase.

Although there is no reverse causation from developments in Senegal to world prices, my results are identified purely on the basis of time. Therefore, temporal coincidence could be responsible for my results. Although the price shock is *external* to Senegal, it is not necessarily *exogenous*, taking the distinction from Heckman (2000). Identification relies upon an understanding of developments within Senegal, and the argument that there was nothing exceptional during the period, save for the effects of the 2008 price crisis. For example, a drought in 2007-2008 might have caused reduced food-availability during the period. I have found no evidence of developments from *within* Senegal which would coincide with the 2008 price spike.⁵

4.2 Specifications

I explore two types of evidence:

1. The deviation from a quadratic time trend⁶ of the exposed cohorts, estimated by regression for each survey; and,
2. The median hemoglobin-for-age plotted by birth-quarter.

I use median-regression, rather than least-squares, as it is less sensitive to heterogeneous response across the hemoglobin distribution.⁷ I run the following regressions separately by survey and urban, in order to allow time trends to differ across the groups. The equivalent single regression would be fully saturated with respect to the survey and urban dummy variables. I exclude children born after the completion of the 2008 crisis because I expect there to be lagged effects of the crisis. Therefore, the appropriate control group are those born before the crisis began.

$$H_i = \alpha_0 + \beta Exp_i + \alpha_1 MOB_i + \alpha_2 MOB_i^2$$

⁵I would welcome any suggestions for potential coincidental factors. Falsification, after all, is the heart of science.

⁶The results are stable with cubic and quartic time trends as well.

⁷We would expect little to no response of hemoglobin to external shocks at the high and low ends of the distribution. At the high end, those in good health are presumably insulated from price shocks by SES. At the low end, a certain level of hemoglobin is required by the body, and it cannot diminish beyond some point without causing death.

Where H_i is hemoglobin-for-age, Exp_i is the number of months *in-utero* during the crisis.

I then test for heterogeneity, by allowing the effect of exposure to depend on wealth and distance-to-Dakar:

$$H_i = \alpha_0 + \beta Exp_i + \delta Exp_i * Dist_i + \alpha_1 MOB_i + \alpha_2 MOB_i^2 + \rho Exp_i * Wealth_i + \alpha_3 Dist_i + \alpha_4 Wealth_i$$

Where $Dist_i$ is the driving time to Dakar for the cluster of individual i , $Wealth_i$ is the DHS wealth index for the household of individual i .

My hypotheses are that $\delta > 0$ and $\rho > 0$. In the first regression, I expect that $\beta < 0$. In the second specification, the sign of β will depend on the underlying distributions of wealth and distance-to-Dakar.⁸

5 Results

Turning to regression, we see a small, insignificant effects of *in-utero* exposure to the 2008 crisis on hemoglobin.

| | 2010: Urban | 2010: Rural | 2012: Urban | 2012: Rural |
|------------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Intercept | -0.0088 (0.1303) | -0.3547*** (0.0850) | 0.2995 (0.2140) | 0.0664 (0.2277) |
| Exposure | -0.0657 (0.3594) | 0.0877 (0.2050) | -0.2669 (0.4066) | -0.1306 (0.4442) |
| Num. obs. | 446 | 1017 | 424 | 888 |
| Percentile | 0.5000 | 0.5000 | 0.5000 | 0.5000 |

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 4: Parsimonious Regression Results

Following the results of the above regression, I plot the median hemoglobin by birth quarter, split into rural and urban groups and only including observations from the 2010 survey. The black line represents the start of cohorts exposed to the 2008 crisis *in-utero*.

⁸I do not include land-ownership in any of my analysis because it is so highly correlated with being from a rural *commune* with wealth. Once accounting for the urban-rural split, land-ownership mostly captures the wealth of a household. In future research, with a larger, more geographically diverse data-set, I would like to include land-ownership.

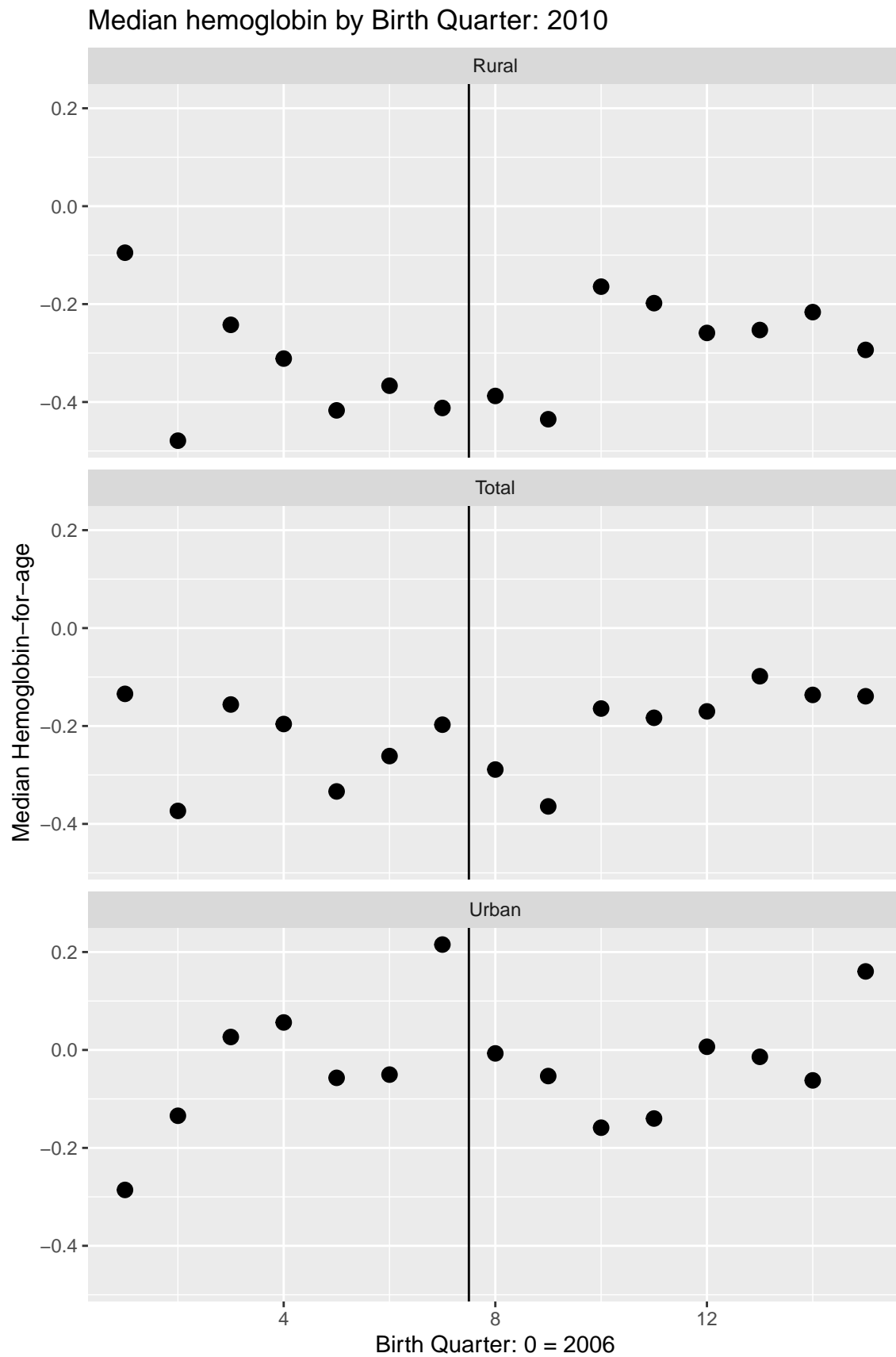


Figure 11: Hemoglobin-for-age by Birth Quarter

Next I allow the effect of exposure to depend on these wealth and distance-to-Dakar, as explained in sections 2.1-2.2.

| | 2010: Urban | 2010: Rural | 2012: Urban | 2012: Rural |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Intercept | 0.2215 (0.2200) | -0.4824*** (0.1343) | 0.0106 (0.3404) | -0.3154 (0.2484) |
| Exposure | -1.5196** (0.5523) | 0.2737 (0.2820) | -0.3105 (0.6073) | 0.8541* (0.4494) |
| Distance to Dakar | -0.0568 (0.0396) | 0.0522 (0.0375) | 0.0707 (0.0671) | 0.0944* (0.0479) |
| Wealth | 1.0099 (1.3065) | 2.3263** (0.7347) | 0.5930 (2.0272) | 1.4001 (1.0284) |
| Distance to Dakar * Exposure | 0.2574** (0.0865) | -0.0299 (0.0726) | -0.0020 (0.1152) | -0.1905** (0.0786) |
| Wealth * Exposure | 4.0122 (2.6916) | 0.0928 (2.0007) | 1.9335 (3.0848) | 2.1867 (1.8871) |
| Num. obs. | 446 | 1017 | 424 | 888 |
| Percentile | 0.5000 | 0.5000 | 0.5000 | 0.5000 |

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 5: Regression Results by Survey and Urban-Rural

Here we see that exposure is negatively related to hemoglobin for urban-dwellers. The effect of exposure is greater for the poor across all specifications. For the rural population, the effect of the crisis on 2010 hemoglobin is noisy but slightly positive. In 2012, the urban results are attenuated, while the 2012 rural cohort shows a significant, positive effect of 2008 crisis..

With many interaction terms, the magnitude of effects depends on the underlying distribution of the co-variates. The estimated coefficient on exposure above is for someone with *wealth* = 0 and living in Dakar. As Dakar is the wealthiest part of the country, only a very small fraction of the sample will be expected to have such an effect. I calculate the predicted effect of the 2008 crisis given the coefficients estimated above multiplied by each individual's values of wealth and distance-to-Dakar. I multiply this value by $\frac{8}{9}$, to capture the predicted effect of living through the entire crisis. I multiply the predicted effect size by the standard deviation of hemoglobin for the child's age, in order to depict effects in terms of hemoglobin levels. As we move to the right along the x-axis, the individuals are wealthier and live further from Dakar.

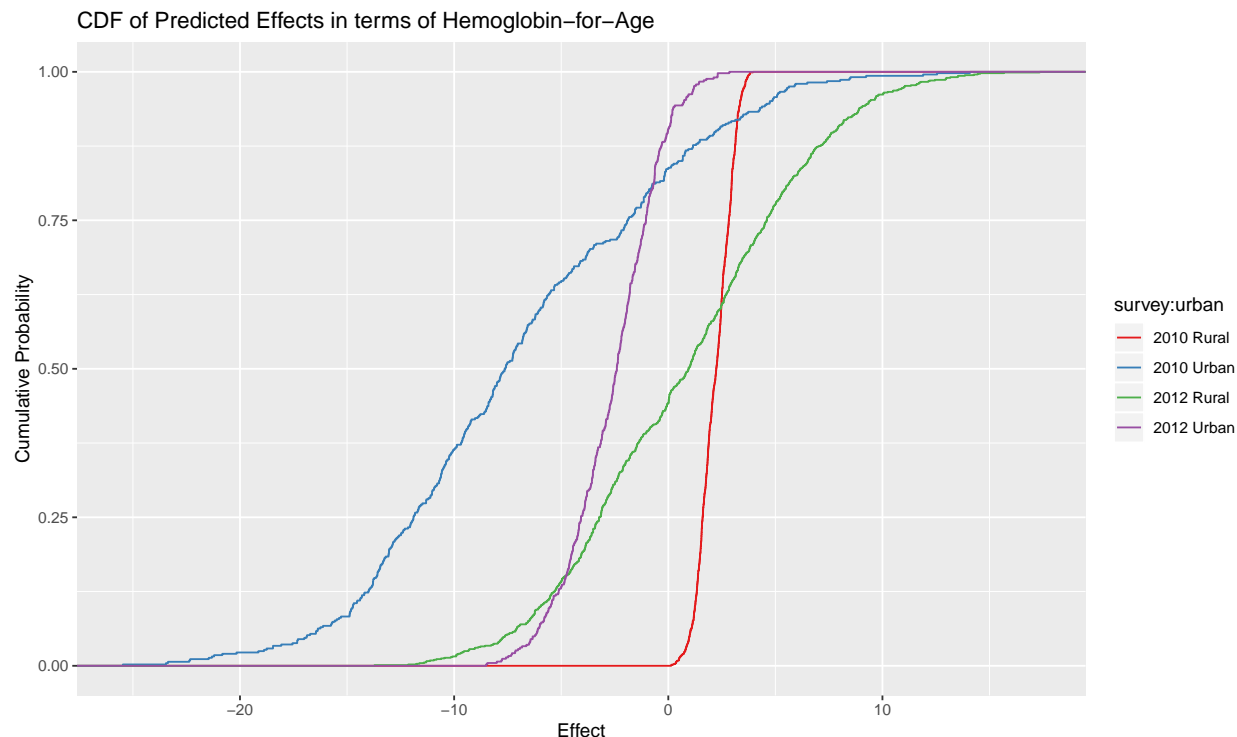


Figure 12: Distribution of Effects

From this figure, we can see that the median effect size for a child from an urban *commune* observed in 2010 is around 8 g/L of hemoglobin, which is more than an 8% change in percentage terms.

6 Discussion

The results above provide support for the following hypotheses:

1. The 2008 crisis had a negative impact on the maternal nutrition of urban-dwellers, but not rural-dwellers;
2. The effect of the 2008 crisis on nutrition was greater for the poor than the rich; and,
3. For urban dwellers, the effect of the 2008 crisis was greatest for those in and around to Dakar.

For those affected— the urban poor— the estimated effect of being exposed *in-utero* to the 2008 crisis is large: between 10-14 g/L of hemoglobin, where the cutoff for anemia is defined at 105 g/L. These effects are best understood as lower bounds. The fetal origins approach implicitly compares those *in-utero* to those already born, meaning the estimated effect of exposure is net any negative impact on children born before the crisis. Also, given the persistence in iron stocks and budget constraints, those conceived after the crisis also likely felt some negative effects. I run a more narrow regression in the Appendix, which discards half the data and focuses on those exposed and those born just before exposure. This estimated effect of the crisis is larger than in my main specification, further supporting the argument that my main results form a lower bound.

Among urban-dwellers, there is substantial attenuation of the effect of the 2008 crisis between 2010 and 2012. This should not be interpreted as recovery of health, but rather as the masking of an informative signal. Iron is a critical nutrient in human development, and deficiency impairs cognitive and motor development (Lozoff 2007). Looking at the effect of *in-utero* shocks too late in life can mask important differences. Two

children who seem the same in 2012 in terms of hemoglobin, might have had very different hemoglobin in 2010, and therefore be on very different biological trajectories.

Among rural-dwellers, we see the opposite result, as the effect of exposure observed in 2010 is smaller than that observed in 2012. This is misleading, because the estimates on the interaction terms have also changed. From figure 12, we see that the median effect in 2010 is actually larger than in 2012. Simple decomposition of effect by region (figure 16 in Appendix 2) shows that the 2012 rural effect is being driven by Tambacoumba and Kedougou— the two most isolated parts of Senegal. One could construct a narrative based on this result, but I will refrain. I would instead take this result as indicating that we ought to generally take my results with a grain of salt. Hence, I call my results “suggestive.”⁹

With regards to interpretation of exposure, I do not wish to overstate my results. Although exposure was defined with respect to prices, prices *do not* enter into any of the regressions, and the 2008 crisis makes for a coarse instrument. During the crisis there were protests, unrest and a change in the type of agricultural production, with an increase in staples like millet and sorghum. Thus, we cannot rule out that the estimated effect of the crisis has more to do with the general characteristics of the period than with prices *per se*. For example, the strong effect in Dakar might come from social unrest, as there was rioting in Dakar during the period.

Similarly, distance-to-Dakar should be considered as a general proxy for integration to the world market. Distance captures a broad set of socio-economic conditions. Areas further from Dakar are poorer, have less education and have more subsistence agriculture relative to commercial agriculture. Thus, the estimated effect will not be of transportation costs alone, but rather the combination general set of characteristics associated with being further from Dakar. Moreover, when I plot hemoglobin-by-birth-quarter for each region of Senegal, Dakar is the only place where there is an obvious discontinuity in hemoglobin around exposure to the 2008 crisis.

⁹I am, however, open to alternative narratives about my 2012 results. If the reader has any, please contact me. Any hypotheses could be tested in future research, on new data-sets.

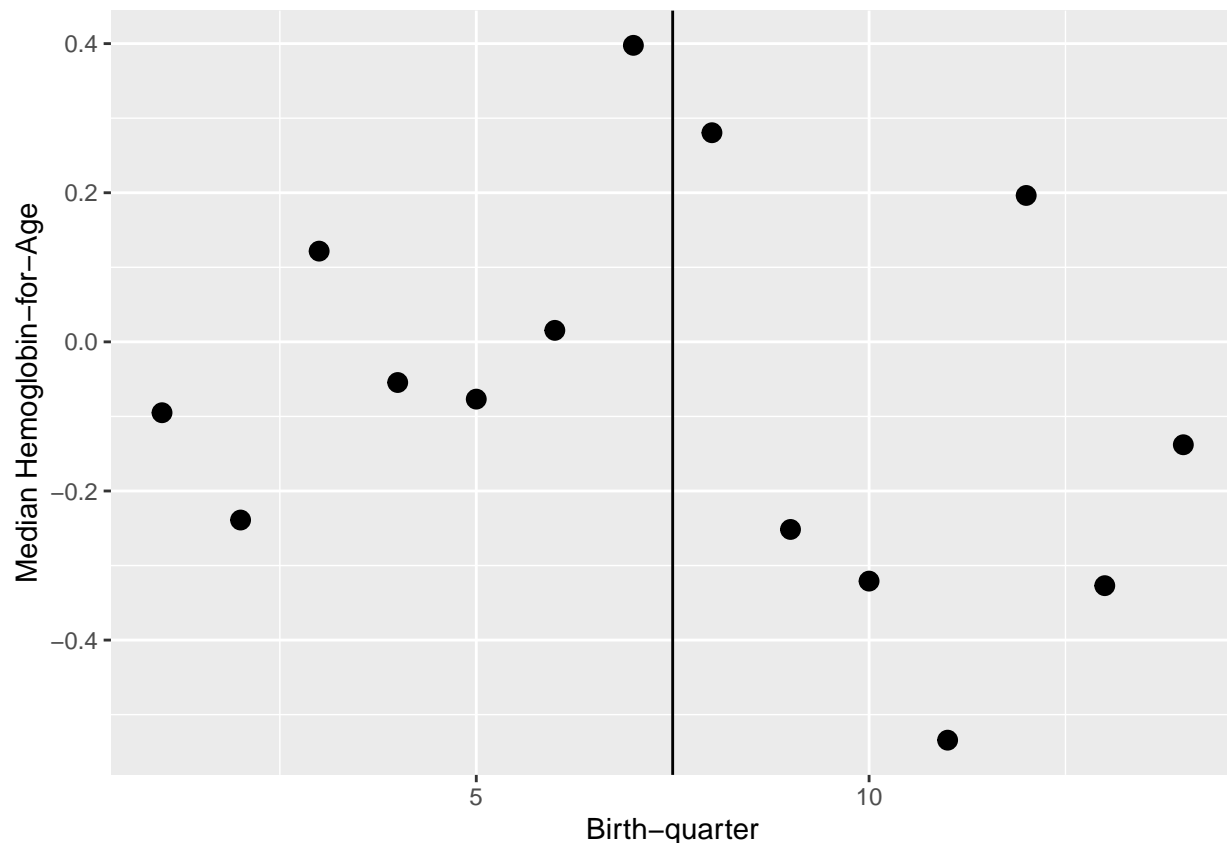


Figure 13: Median Hemoglobin-for-age by birth-quarter in Dakar

This result suggests that distance to Dakar might be less important than the qualities of Dakar itself. Dakar is a large port with a unique relationship to the world market relative to other cities of Senegal. It should not be surprising that the effect of an international crisis was felt most strongly in Dakar. The effect of the 2008 crisis also appears to be delayed. Two immediate explanations come to mind. One, the first exposed cohort only experienced 1-3 months *in-utero* during the crisis. Later cohorts were exposed for 8 months. Two, as seen in figure 5, the transmission of world prices to local prices in Dakar takes several months. For both these reasons, it is not surprising that we observe above a lag in the effect of the crisis.

All of this discussion and analysis has been *specific to Senegal*. One could expect very different effects of the 2008 crisis in a different setting. As shown above, millet production actually increased during 2008. This may reflect a reserve capacity for food production, or the good fortune of high yields coinciding with high price of imports. In either case, it suggests significant value in having reserve domestic food production capacity. Given a sudden increase in food prices, households may adapt by shifting production towards food. Even if adaptation isn't possible, the independence of world price and local weather conditions imply that having some domestic production and some imported food supply would shrink the variance of food consumption. A country which completely abandons local food production in order to specialize in cash crops, would be in a significantly *more vulnerable position* than Senegal was in 2008. Thus, my work may provide suggestive evidence to the arguments for “food-sovereignty” in the food-policy literature (Rosset 2008).

7 Conclusion

I find suggestive evidence that the 2008 world food crisis negatively affected the health of women in urban Senegal. The effect is strongest and most consistent around Dakar. Within the context of the food-policy literature, my results are direct evidence to the hypothesis that food price shocks negatively affect urban households, without having a detectable effect on rural households. These results are evidence that the health of poor people in poor countries depends on the movement of international markets. The 2008 food price crisis is a specific episode which had a strong, negative impact on the urban-poor of Senegal.

My results also suggest that a negative shock to maternal nutrition may have a large effect on the hemoglobin of infants who were *in-utero*, outweighing the effect of the same shock on children who are already born. This negative shock is apparent at age 2, but has dissipated by age 4. As iron is a critical micro-nutrient for fetal and infant neuro-development, although the shock has dissipated, its effect on long-run health and welfare will remain. I hope other scholars will note the potential for child hemoglobin, widely measured in the DHS survey, as a potential indicator of maternal health with a clear identification strategy.

This is a fetal origins paper. In general, the fetal-origins literature tends to concentrate on the fetus. I would like to draw attention to the mother. Poor fetal nutrition comes from poor maternal nutrition. Any discussion of infant health must consider gender inequality (Osmani and Sen 2003). The negative consequences of the 2008 crisis on child hemoglobin are direct evidence of the vulnerability and malnutrition of the poor, urban women of Senegal.

8 Future Research

In this project, I have found the the 2008 crisis had a large, negative impact on the urban-poor of Senegal. I also find that the effect diminishes with distance-to-Dakar. Both the distance from a particular community to Dakar and whether that community is urban are related to a host of other characteristics, such as wealth, concentration of land-ownership, and local food production capacity. An inviting avenue for future research would be the systematic exploration of these relationships, in order to examine how each of these underlying variables mediated the effect of the 2008 crisis.

Another, complementary route would be to expand my analysis to include Senegal's neighbors like Burkina Faso, Ghana, Cote D'ivoire, Liberia and Guinea. While I have argued that my results are internally valid for Senegal, it is an open question whether they apply more broadly. Conducting the same test over multiple countries could provide evidence for or against a stable pattern. Given that my dataset is relatively small, expanding coverage to more countries would also improve the power of my tests and allow for a greater number of hypotheses to be tested, such as the effect of land-ownership.

More ambitiously, I would like to connect my results to data on cognitive development, health and labor-market outcomes. Children *in-utero* during the 2008 crisis had significantly lower hemoglobin levels in 2010, indicating a general iron-deficiency early in life. Biomedical research has identified iron as a critical nutrient in development, suggesting there may be large, long-term costs to the poor from the 2008 crisis.

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10 Appendix 1: Context about Senegal

Here I present the FEW's livelihood map, which provides context on the various regions of Senegal and their agricultural production.

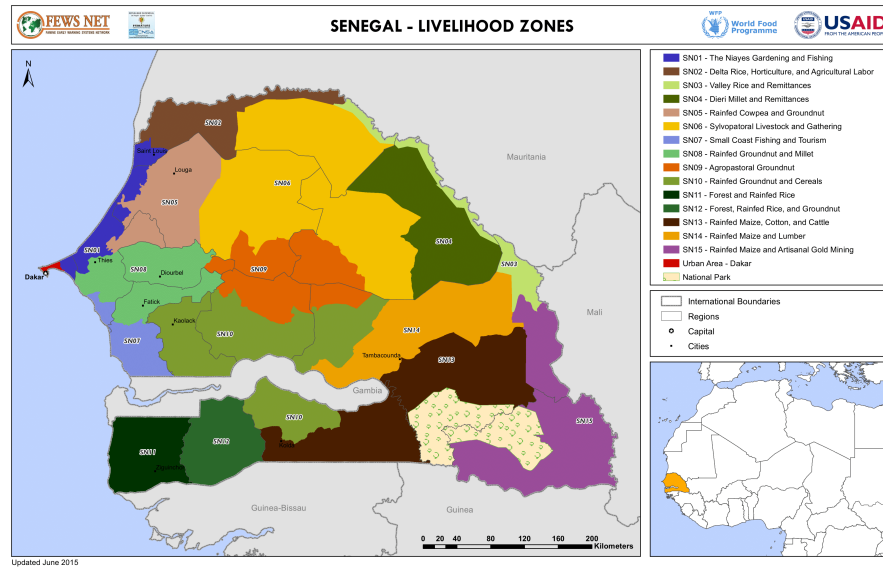


Figure 14: FEWs Livelihood Maps

10.1 Identification: Rainfall Anomaly in Senegal

Below I plot the rainfall anomaly for the Sahel region from 1950-2017. We see that 2007-08 was unremarkable, and I find no evidence for coincidental factors upsetting my identification strategy. We have already seen in the introduction that domestic food production was relatively high in 2008.

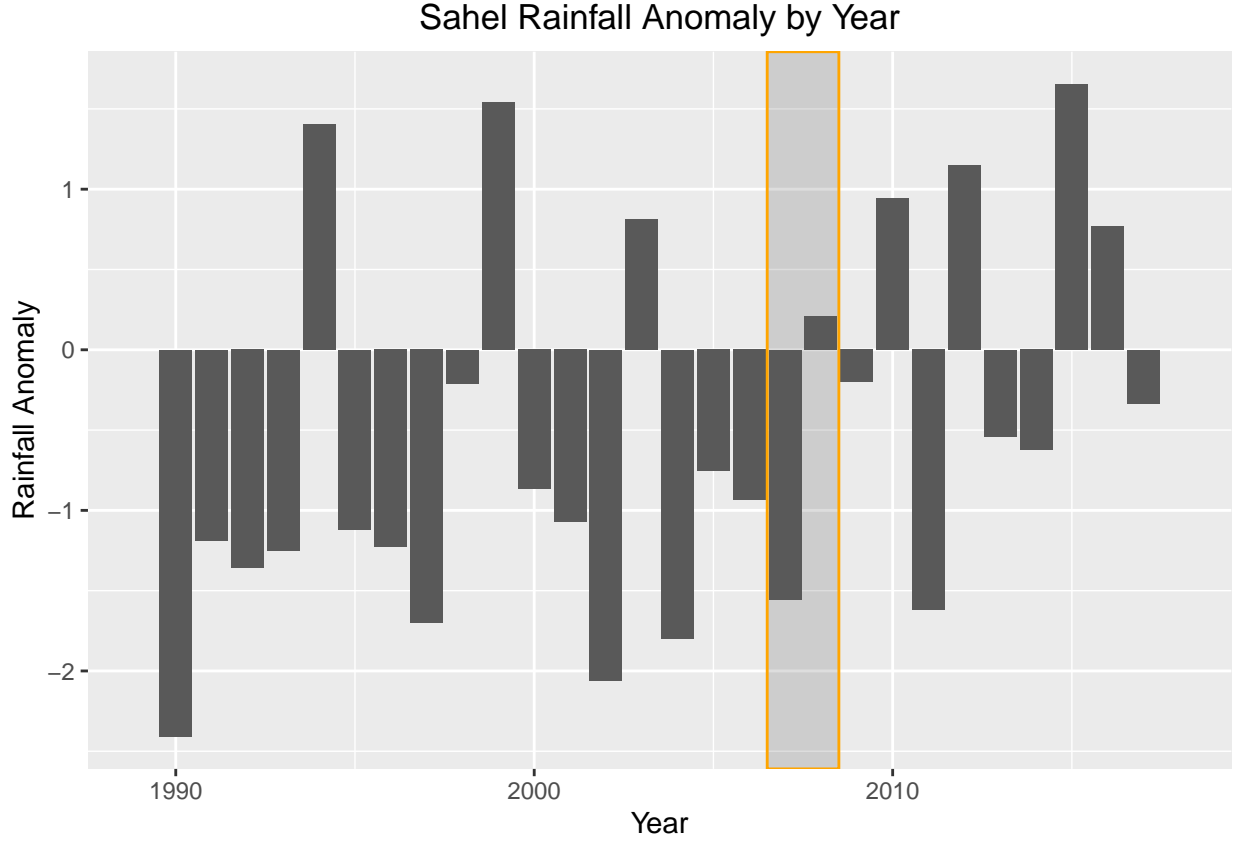


Figure 15: Searching for coincidence

Of course, this is just one test, and I can never *prove* that the identification assumption holds. I can only subject my assumption to as many falsification tests as possible. For discussion of this, go read some Popper.

11 Appendix 2: Alternate Specifications

Here I run several alternative specification to those reported above. They generally support my conclusions.

11.1 Spatial Distribution of Effects

The regressions above do not allow for spatial heterogeneity of response, except through distance-to-Dakar. Therefore, I run a more flexible regression, which allows the effect of exposure to vary by region:

$$H_i = \alpha_0 + \beta Exp_i + \delta Exp_i * Region + \alpha_1 MOB_i + \alpha_2 MOB_i^2$$

I report the predicted effect of exposure in each region.

I do not control for urban-rural or for wealth, as I want to capture the regional effects inclusive of differences in wealth and the proportion who are urban. We see that Dakar and its neighbor Thiès are most strongly affected, although both are relatively wealthy. Outside of these two regions, distance-to-Dakar seems to have no effect, indicating a nonlinear relationship of distance-to-Dakar and effect of the 2008 crisis. I include the results for 2012 in order to compare magnitudes. We see that for many regions the effect is inconsistent

across years. For Dakar and Thiès, on the other hand, the effect of the crisis is consistent across years and persists into 2012.

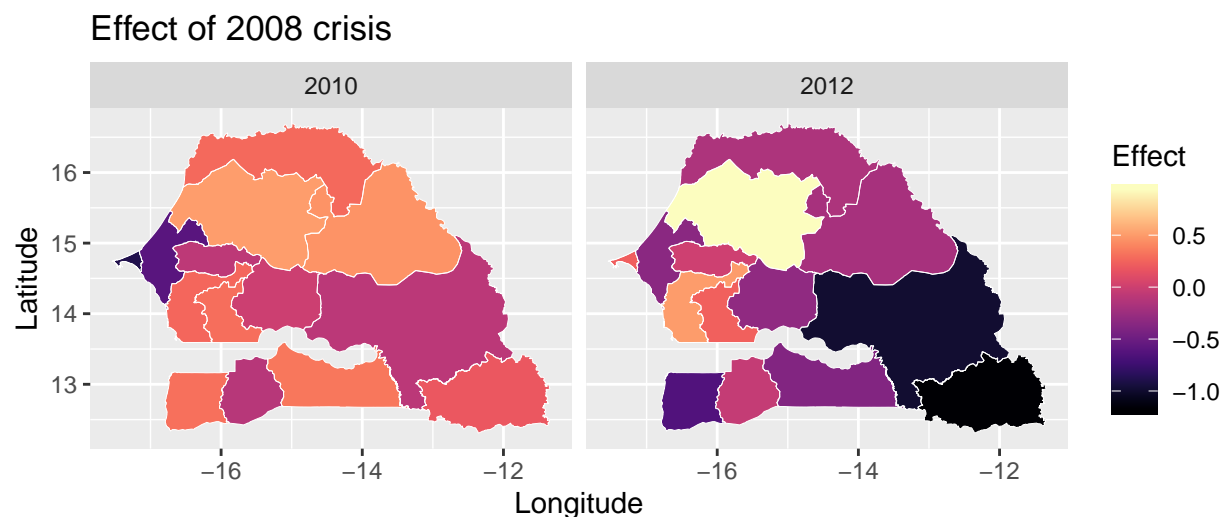


Figure 16: Effect of the 2008 crisis across Senegal by survey-year

11.2 A Test for Lagged Effects

As noted in the prices section, it can take several months for world prices to diffuse to cities in Senegal. Thus one might expect the exposure variable to be mis-assigned, as those who were really exposed to the shock were born several months later. Therefore, I take the twice lagged values of exposure, and regress them in the same way as before.

| | 2010: Urban | 2010: Rural | 2012: Urban | 2012: Rural |
|------------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Intercept | 0.0210 (0.1240) | -0.3794*** (0.0916) | 0.2987 (0.1967) | -0.2626 (0.1721) |
| Exposure | -0.1926 (0.3695) | 0.1566 (0.2285) | -0.2772 (0.3630) | 0.5054 (0.3154) |
| Num. obs. | 446 | 1017 | 424 | 888 |
| Percentile | 0.5000 | 0.5000 | 0.5000 | 0.5000 |

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 6: Test for Lagged Effects

| | 2010: Urban | 2010: Rural | 2012: Urban | 2012: Rural |
|------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Intercept | -0.0862 (0.1928) | -0.5352*** (0.1368) | 0.1400 (0.2706) | -0.3880* (0.2010) |
| Exposure | -0.5978 (0.5477) | 0.4047 (0.3089) | -0.5678 (0.4681) | 0.9791** (0.3443) |
| Distance to Dakar | -0.0247 (0.0366) | 0.0554 (0.0326) | 0.0454 (0.0574) | 0.0947* (0.0432) |
| Wealth | 2.6090* (1.2047) | 2.4189** (0.7410) | 0.6578 (1.7776) | 2.0140* (1.0369) |
| Distance to Dakar * Exposure | 0.1386 (0.0960) | -0.0397 (0.0658) | 0.0432 (0.0945) | -0.1990** (0.0764) |
| Wealth * Exposure | -1.7403 (2.6574) | -0.3079 (1.8236) | 1.6211 (2.8833) | 0.3323 (1.9677) |
| Num. obs. | 446 | 1017 | 424 | 888 |
| Percentile | 0.5000 | 0.5000 | 0.5000 | 0.5000 |

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 7: Test for Lagged Effects

11.3 Test for Selection

Next I test for fetal selection. Female fetuses are more robust than males, so if the 2008 crisis caused selection due to *in-utero* stress, we should see an increase in the number of girls. I find no such result.

| | Girl |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| (Intercept) | 1.4863*** (0.0061) |
| exposure | -0.0007 (0.0203) |
| R ² | 0.0000 |
| Adj. R ² | -0.0001 |
| Num. obs. | 8358 |
| RMSE | 0.4999 |

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 8: Test for Selection

11.4 Seasonal Fixed Effects

Here I include my main specification, with seasonal fixed effects included. The results remain largely unchanged.

| | 2010: Urban | 2010: Rural | 2012: Urban | 2012: Rural |
|------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Intercept | 0.2462 (0.2411) | -0.5187*** (0.1519) | 0.1224 (0.3605) | -0.3286 (0.2638) |
| Exposure | -1.5099* (0.6216) | 0.4504 (0.3259) | -0.4412 (0.7657) | 0.9013 (0.5294) |
| Distance to Dakar | -0.0580 (0.0433) | 0.0545 (0.0393) | 0.0585 (0.0666) | 0.0913* (0.0478) |
| Wealth | 1.2474 (1.3296) | 2.4422*** (0.7250) | 0.0502 (1.7366) | 1.0803 (1.0345) |
| Distance to Dakar * Exposure | 0.2705** (0.0915) | -0.0438 (0.0740) | 0.0151 (0.1121) | -0.1867* (0.0768) |
| Wealth * Exposure | 3.9276 (2.5898) | -0.3895 (1.8491) | 2.3134 (2.9350) | 1.4936 (1.8269) |
| Num. obs. | 446 | 1017 | 424 | 888 |
| Percentile | 0.5000 | 0.5000 | 0.5000 | 0.5000 |

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 9: Seasonal Fixed Effects

11.5 Hemoglobin by Region by Birth-quarter

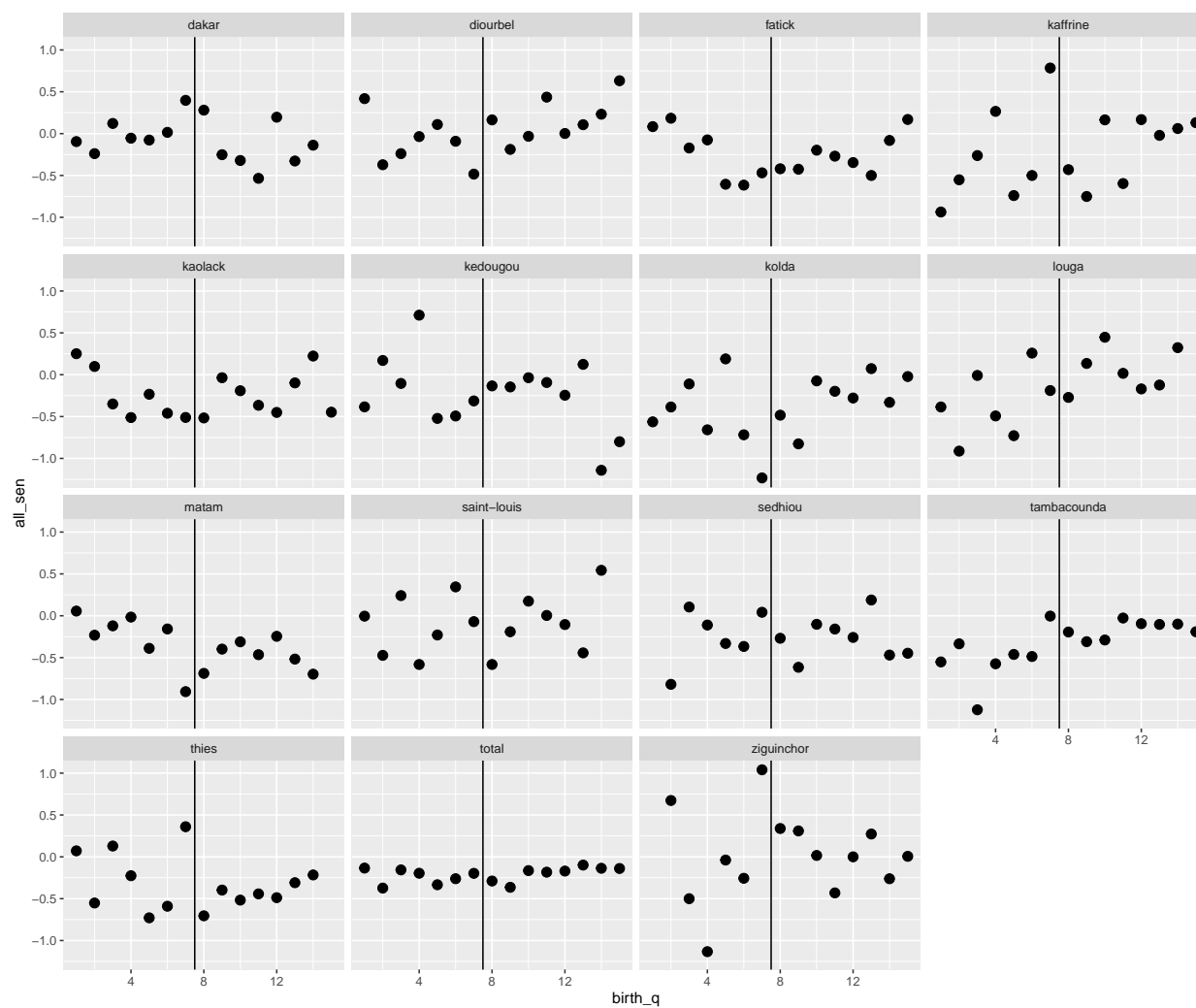


Figure 17:

Here I plot the same results as in figure 13, but for each region of Senegal. We see that Dakar is the only region where the effect of the 2008 crisis is obvious to the eye.