

# Kai Zen

510-345-9582 | [kai.zen@berkeley.edu](mailto:kai.zen@berkeley.edu) | <https://kai-zen-1.github.io> | <https://www.linkedin.com/in/kai-zen-48a5221b7/>

## EDUCATION

### UC Berkeley

Berkeley, CA

*PhD in Economics*

*Jul 2018 – May 2024 (expected)*

- Fields: Labor Economics, Personnel Economics, Public Economics
- References: [David Card \(Chair\)](#), [Sydnee Caldwell](#), [Christopher Walters](#)

### University of New South Wales (UNSW)

Sydney, Australia

*Bachelor of Commerce/Bachelor of Economics (Honors Class 1 and the University Medal)*

*2012 – 2016*

- Majors: Economics, Econometrics, Finance

## EXPERIENCE

### Graduate Student Researcher

Berkeley, CA

*UC Berkeley*

*May 2019 – Aug 2019, Jul 2020 – Dec 2020*

- For Prof. Sydnee Caldwell (Jul 2020 – Dec 2020): Re-estimated Caldwell and Danieli (2022) measure of worker outside options using large Census data (CPS). Cleaned and analyzed survey data to predict job search methods.
- For Prof. Ulrike Malmendier (May 2019 – Aug 2019): Wrote custom code to convert archival EBCDIC-formatted data on schools, applied fuzzy string matching with US politician biographies for analysis on voting determinants.

### Policy Analyst

Canberra, Australia

*Department of the Treasury (Australia)*

*Feb 2017 – Jun 2018*

- Responsible for production and analysis of several components of the government's main fiscal policy publications.
- Created key internal responsibility tracking tool used department-wide in every production cycle.

### Economics and Finance Intern

Sydney, Australia

*Reserve Bank of Australia*

*Nov 2015 – Jan 2016*

- Analyzed and presented on banks' funding composition responses to 'Basel III' liquidity regulations.

### Research Assistant

Sydney, Australia

*UNSW*

*Jun 2015 – Nov 2015, Mar 2016 – Jul 2016*

- Wrote web scrapers in Python to extract historical forecasts and meeting dates from central bank websites.

### Research Analyst (part-time)

Sydney, Australia

*Deloitte Access Economics*

*Jul 2015 – Nov 2015*

- Assisted with data collection and visualization, updating internal resources, literature reviews.

## ACADEMIC WORKS

### Employer Learning and Screening Heterogeneity (Job market paper)

- Constructed novel firm-level metric of hiring quality using a 'revealed-preference' proxy of new hire productivity (AKM effects) estimated later in their career. Implemented using administrative data comprising a 1.5% sample of all German firms from 1975-2017. Validated metric by correlating with hiring practices from subsample survey.
- Conducted analysis showing hiring quality of initial employers accelerates market-level learning of worker ability.

### Information Asymmetry in Job Search (with Michelle Jiang)

- Co-designed and conducted a two-part, survey-based randomized controlled trial (RCT) implemented with the UC Berkeley Career Center to estimate biased perceptions of the labor market and the causal impact of information provision on job search behavior and outcomes.

### How Fixed are Worker Fixed Effects?

- Estimated regressions showing 80% of 'scarring' effect of recessions on wages can be attributed to matching with lower-wage firms, and less than 20% to worker-specific productivity.

### The Impact of Selective High Schools on Student Achievement (Honors thesis)

- Applied regression discontinuity methods to quasi-experimentally estimate causal effects of attending academically selective schools on exit exam test scores using Australian administrative data.

## TECHNICAL SKILLS

**Languages:** Python, SQL, Stata, L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X

**Causal Inference:** Experiments (A/B Testing), Quasi-experimental Designs (Difference-in-differences, Regression Discontinuity, Synthetic Control, Instrumental Variables)

## FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

Doctoral Completion Fellowship (2023-24); Institute for Research on Labor and Employment (IRLE) Dissertation Fellowship (2022-23); Center for Equitable Growth/Stone Center on Wealth and Income Inequality Fellowship (2022-23); George Break Prize for Outstanding Performance in Public Finance (2021); Departmental Fellowship (2018-2021)