

WEIZHENG LAI

University of Maryland
Department of Economics
College Park, MD 20742
Phone: (240) 413-0847
Email: laiwz@umd.edu

Website: <https://sites.google.com/umd.edu/laiwz>

PLACEMENT DIRECTORS

Prof. Luminita Stevens	stevens7@umd.edu	(301) 405-3515
Prof. Pablo Ottonello	ottonell@umd.edu	(301) 405-3266
Prof. Nolan Pope	npope@umd.edu	(801) 995-9184

EDUCATION

Ph.D. Economics, University of Maryland at College Park, expected May 2025
M.A. Economics, University of Maryland at College Park, 2021
B.A. Economics (with distinction), Wuhan University, China, 2019
B.S. Mathematics (with distinction), Wuhan University, China, 2019

FIELDS OF SPECIALIZATION

Primary: Political Economy, Chinese Economy
Secondary: Applied Microeconomics

DISSERTATION

Essays on the Political Economy of China

Committee: Prof. Allan Drazen (Co-Chair), Prof. Ethan Kaplan (Co-Chair), Prof. Peter Murrell

JOB MARKET PAPER

“From Settlement to Stability: The Political Impact of Relaxing Migration Barriers in China,” with Yu Qiu.

Abstract: There are growing concerns that lax migration policy may undermine social stability. We study this issue by estimating the causal effect on labor unrest of China's recent reform to its internal migration institutions, which facilitated permanent settlement for migrants in small and medium sized cities. Using the reform's population cutoff rule as identifying variation, we find that the reform significantly reduced labor unrest. We suggest that one mechanism behind our finding is the enhancement of migrants' settlement intentions, which increases their dependence on the state and promotes obedient behavior. Evidence shows that the reform raised the likelihood of migrants staying in their destinations. Through a novel causal mediation analysis, we show that heightened settlement intentions explain up to 27 percent of the reform's total effect on labor unrest. We find no evidence that the reform led to compositional changes among migrants, immediate deliveries of benefits to migrants, and tighter government social control. Our results highlight the influence of migration policy on stability by shaping migrants' prospects in their destinations.

OTHER RESEARCH PAPERS

“China’s Anticorruption Campaign and Civil Servant Fever,” *Journal of Law and Economics*, Vol. 67, No. 2, May 2024, with Xun Li.

“The Effect of Education on Voter Turnout in China’s Rural Elections,” *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, Vol. 221, May 2024. [*Melville Ulmer Prize for the Best Second-Year Paper, University of Maryland, 2022*]

“Housing Market Regulations and Strategic Divorce Propensity in China,” *Journal of Population Economics*, Vol. 35, July 2022, with James Alm and Xun Li.

“Role of Professional Bureaucracy in the Policy Response to COVID-19: Does a Public Health or Medical Background Help?” *China Economic Review*, Vol. 71, February 2022, with Xun Li, Qianqian Wan, and Xi Chen.

“Anti-Corruption and Political Trust: Evidence from China,” revise and resubmit at *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, with Ming Fang and Congling Xia.

“Property Rights, State Capacity, and Social Capacity: The Lasting Impacts of the Taiping Rebellion,” reject and resubmit at *Journal of Economic Growth*, with Li Yang and Colin Xu.

“Adverse Experience and Occupational Outcomes: Evidence from Children of the Cultural Revolution,” Working Paper. [*Best Third-Year Paper Prize (2nd Place)*, University of Maryland, 2022]

“Foreign Economic Relations and Domestic Politics: The Case of Taiwan,” Working Paper. [*2nd Place in the Economics Poster Competition*, University of Maryland, 2023]

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor, Intermediate Microeconomics (undergraduate), Summer 2023

Teaching Assistant, Econometrics I (PhD core), University of Maryland, Fall 2022, 2023

Teaching Assistant, Econometrics II (PhD core), University of Maryland, Spring 2022, 2023, 2024

Teaching Assistant, Probability & Statistics (PhD preparatory), Summer 2022, 2023, 2024

RESEARCH AND RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant, Dr. Lixin Colin Xu, World Bank, Summer 2022

GRANTS AND AWARDS

Chiang Ching-kuo Doctoral Fellowship (for China Studies), Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation, 2024 (declined due to conflict with another grant)

Ann G. Wylie Dissertation Fellowship, University of Maryland, 2024

Jacob K. Goldhaber Travel Grant, University of Maryland, 2024

Scholarship for Academic Excellence, Wuhan University, 2015-2019

CONFERENCE AND SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS

2024: Society of Labor Economists, Chinese Economists Society, Urban Economics Association, Southern Economic Association (scheduled)

2022: University of Queensland

2021: Global Labor Organization & Renmin University Joint Conference

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Referee for *Agribusiness: An International Journal*, *British Medical Journal: Leader*, *China: An International Journal*, *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, *Journal of Population Economics*

LANGUAGES

English (fluent), Mandarin Chinese (native)

COMPUTATIONAL SKILLS

Stata, Matlab, R

REFERENCES

Prof. Allan Drazen	University of Maryland	drazen@umd.edu	(301) 405-3477
Prof. Ethan Kaplan	University of Maryland	edkaplan@umd.edu	(301) 405-3501
Prof. Peter Murrell	University of Maryland	pmurrell@umd.edu	(301) 405-3476