

WEIZHENG LAI
University of Maryland
Department of Economics
College Park, MD 20742
Phone: (240) 413-0847
Email: laiwz@umd.edu
Website: <https://laiwz.github.io>

PLACEMENT DIRECTORS

Prof. Luminita Stevens	stevens7@umd.edu	(301) 405-3515
Prof. Pablo Ottonello	ottonell@umd.edu	(301) 405-7842
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: Development Economics, Political Economy, Labor Economics
Secondary: Applied Microeconometrics

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 relaxed 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. Exploiting variation due to the reform’s population cutoff rule, we find that the reform significantly reduced labor unrest. We suggest that one important mechanism behind our finding is the enhancement of migrants’ settlement intentions, which makes migrants less engaged in unrest to secure the opportunity of settlement offered by the reform. We provide evidence that the reform increased migrants’ likelihood of remaining in their destinations. Through a novel causal mediation analysis, we find that heightened settlement intentions can explain 61 percent of decreased labor unrest due to the reform in the immediate term and 27 percent in the long term. We find no evidence that the reform led to compositional changes among migrants, delivery of benefits to migrants, or tighter government social control. Our results highlight how migration policy can influence stability by shaping migrants’ attachment to their destinations.

PUBLICATIONS

[“Anti-Corruption and Political Trust: Evidence from China,”](#) forthcoming at *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, with Ming Fang and Congling Xia.

[“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.

[“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.

WORKING PAPERS

[“Property Rights, State Capacity, and Social Capacity: The Lasting Impacts of the Taiping Rebellion,”](#) revise and resubmit at *Journal of Economic Growth*, with Lixin Colin Xu and Li Yang.

[“Adverse Experience and Occupational Outcomes: Evidence from Children of the Cultural Revolution,”](#) Working Paper.

[“Foreign Economic Relations and Domestic Politics: The Case of Taiwan,”](#) Working Paper.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor, Intermediate Microeconomics (undergraduate), University of Maryland, 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

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

Award in the Economics Poster Competition, University of Maryland, 2023

Best Third-Year Paper Prize, University of Maryland, 2022

Melville Ulmer Prize for the Best Second-Year Paper, University of Maryland, 2022

Scholarship for Academic Excellence, Wuhan University, 2015-2019

CONFERENCE AND SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS

2025: West Virginia University

2024: Society of Labor Economists, Chinese Economists Society, Urban Economics Association, DC
Political Economy Center, Southern Economic Association, University of Queensland

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 Economic Growth*, *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