

Yifan Wang

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Education

2020–present	Ph.D. in Economics University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA
2018–2020	M.S. in Policy Economics University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA
2014–2018	B.S. in Finance, Minor in Accounting Xi'an Jiaotong University, China

Research Fields

Primary	Development Economics, Health Economics
Secondary	Labor Economics, Environmental Economics

Job Market Paper

Local Labor and Welfare Effects of Import Competition: Evidence from PTPA

Abstract: This paper examines the impact of import competition on local labor market adjustments and the welfare of Peruvian workers, leveraging substantial tariff reductions on U.S. imports to Peru following the implementation of the U.S.–Peru Trade Promotion Agreement (PTPA) in 2009. I show that regions experiencing greater tariff reductions saw a sustained and pronounced rise in informal employment. Consistent with previous studies, my result confirms that the informal sector serves as an "employment buffer," cushioning the adverse labor demand shocks driven by import competition. Using worker-level panel data, I find that individuals in regions facing larger tariff reductions are more likely to transit toward informal employment and work significantly longer hours. This shift is more pronounced among women, skilled workers, older workers, incumbents, and those already in informal employment. I further explore the welfare implications, revealing that the informal sector also functions as a "welfare buffer" in the face of negative labor demand shocks. My findings highlight the important role of trade liberalization in giving rise to informality, a prevalent phenomenon in low-income countries.

Working Papers

Arrival of Fast Internet and Infant Mortality

Abstract: How does digital information and communication technology save babies in Africa? By exploiting the temporal variation in the arrival of submarine Internet cables in the late 2000s and early 2010s, along with the exogenous nature of lightning strikes, we analyze the causal effects of the broadband Internet on infant mortality rates. Utilizing geocoded individual-level data, our analysis employs two complementary empirical strategies: Instrumental Variable (IV) and Difference-in-

Differences (DID). Our findings reveal that the arrival of the broadband Internet leads to a significant reduction in infant mortality, with a decrease of 1.3 percentage points. In particular, this positive impact is stronger among mothers with lower educational levels and those who live in rural regions. Furthermore, our research suggests that improvements in mother's status, increased trust in medical services, and improved economic conditions could explain the observed results. This study contributes to understanding how digital advances can serve as a vital tool to improve public health outcomes in developing regions.

Political Effect of Natural Disasters

Abstract: This paper examines the impact of floods on U.S. presidential elections at the county level, using comprehensive data on floods and presidentially declared floods over the past 60 years. We estimate the political effects of floods on the incumbent vote share, finding that floods decrease the incumbent vote share, but these negative effects fade over time. Furthermore, we show that voters in flood-prone areas have more negative responses towards the incumbent after floods. We also provide theoretical and empirical evidence to suggest that presidential declarations after floods partially compensate for the negative impacts on the incumbent vote share. Finally, we evaluate the disaster declaration policy implemented in 1953 and underscore its importance in ensuring a fair democratic process. In general, our findings shed light on the electoral consequences of natural disasters and the role of government policies in mitigating their effects.

Work in Progress

Gold's Curse: Long-run Effect on Adulthood Mental Health

Presentations

2024–present	10th International Conference on Computational Social Science (UPenn, plenary talk), Applied Micro Research Lunch (UIUC), Graduate Student Research Seminar (UIUC)
2020–2023	Applied Micro Research Lunch (UIUC), Berkeley/Sloan Summer School in Environmental and Energy Economics (2021)

Experience

2020–present	Research Assistant to Professor David Molitor Department of Finance, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
2019–2020	Research Assistant to Professors Nolan Miller and David Molitor Department of Finance, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Fall 2022	Teaching Assistant for Big Data Analytics in Finance Department of Finance, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Awards & Honors

2017	Siyan Scholarship for Academic Achievement
2017	First-prize in National Undergraduate Innovation Competition
2015	Siyan Scholarship for Academic Achievement

Language and Software Skills

Language	English (fluent), Mandarin Chinese (native)
Software & Tools	R, STATA, \LaTeX , Python, Git(hub), AWS

References

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