CHRISTOPHER M. KAISER

Economics PhD Student | Duke University

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Education

Duke University 2024–present
PhD in Economics, Expected 2030

George Washington University 2017–2021
BA in Economics and Political Science, Public Policy Focus

Research Interests

Industrial Organization, Labor Economics, Applied Econometrics

Publications

Minimum Wage Laws and Job Search (with David Neumark, Vitor Melo, Liya Palagashvili, and Michael D. Farren)

Journal of Public Economics, August 2026

> Simple theoretical models of job search can imply that a higher minimum wage increases the number of job seekers for affected jobs. Researchers often appeal to these models in defending or explaining non-negative estimated employment effects of minimum wages. We use novel data on job search in U.S. states to examine the effect of minimum wage increases on the number of job seekers for low-skilled positions. We find little if any evidence that higher minimum wages increase job search for low-skilled jobs, and more evidence that higher minimum wages decrease the number of workers seeking employment in these jobs.

Assessing the Impact of Worker Reclassification: Employment Outcomes Post–California AB5 (with Liya Palagashvili, Paola A. Suarez, and Vitor Melo)

Mercatus Center Working Paper, January 2024

> Using a difference-in-differences design, we assess the employment effects of California's AB5 worker reclassification law by comparing nonexempt occupations in California with those in states whose classification rules remained unchanged. We estimate average declines of 10.5 percent in self-employment and 4.4 percent in overall employment, with no robust evidence of increased traditional employment. Declines were larger in occupations with a higher prevalence of self-employed workers.

Work in Progress

Markets for Worker Representation: Evidence from Chile (with Sebastián Gallardo)

> We study how competition among unions affects wages when multiple unions may represent workers within the same firm. Motivated by Chile's institutional setting, we develop a model of differentiated worker preferences, bilateral union–firm bargaining, and union entry financed by membership dues. Additional unions strengthen incentives to negotiate higher wages to attract future members, but fragment bargaining leverage by dividing workers across smaller organizations. The model characterizes these opposing forces and compares free entry with a policy allowing at most one union, as well as with the worker welfare maximizing number of unions. Our empirical work draws on Chilean firm surveys and union administrative records to describe worker representation markets and assess how these mechanisms can be taken to the data.

Research Experience

Mercatus Center at George Mason University Arlington, VA
Predoctoral Research Assistant July 2021–May 2024

- Conducted empirical research on minimum wages, immigration restrictions, worker reclassification, and unemployment insurance.
- Analyzed large datasets using Stata and Python, and designed a correspondence field experiment with coauthors.

Methods and Software

Methods: Structural modeling; demand estimation; instrumental variables; staggered-treatment difference-in-differences; synthetic difference-in-differences; design-based statistical inference; experimental design.

Software: Julia, Python, Stata, R, and LaTeX.

References

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