

Primary school reopenings and parental work (Revision) ^[1]

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Access online ^[2]

Abstract

In this paper, we exploit the geographical pattern of primary school reopenings during the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada to estimate the impact of school reopenings on parental employment and work hours. We use a triple-difference approach, in which we first compare parents of primary-school children in regions where schools reopened to similar parents in regions where schools remained closed and add parents of older, secondary-school children as an additional control group. We estimate the impact of school reopenings separately for mothers and fathers, and for single parents and parents living in dual-parent households. We find a positive impact of school reopenings on employment and on actual hours worked. The effects tend to be stronger for single mothers, but are also present for mothers and fathers in dual-parent households in the spring of 2020. Overall, single mothers experienced an 18 percentage point increase in their employment at work rate following school reopenings. We also split our sample according to whether the job can be done from home, and find stronger impacts for those whose jobs cannot easily be done from home.

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