BRIAN CURRAN

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Education

University of Chicago, Ph.D. Public Policy *2021–present (expected June 2027)*

Dartmouth College, A.B. Economics and Mathematics *2015–2019*
High Honors in Economics; *magna cum laude*

References

Professor Bruce D. Meyer (Chair)
University of Chicago
Harris School of Public Policy
bdmeyer@uchicago.edu

Professor Dan Black
University of Chicago
Harris School of Public Policy
danblack@uchicago.edu

Sheng-Hao Lo
Assistant Instructional Professor
University of Chicago
Harris School of Public Policy
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Research and Teaching Fields

Primary:	Labor Economics, Public Economics
Teaching:	Principles of Economics, Statistics, Econometrics, Intermediate Microeconomics, Labor Economics, Public Economics, Data Analysis, Game Theory

Job Market Paper

The Rise of Non-Employment Among Prime-Aged Men: Trends, Household Support, and Persistence (with Bruce D. Meyer and Derek Wu)

Abstract: *The non-employment rate of prime-aged men (ages 25-54) nearly quadrupled from 2.9% in 1965 to 11.1% in 2023. Using more than five decades of survey and Census data, we examine what this rise represents and what it implies for well-being. The increase occurred during recessions, as non-employment rose by 11.1 percentage points across the 15 recession years and fell by only 2.8 percentage points across the 44 non-recession years. About two-thirds of the long-run increase was among men primarily supported by other members of their household, most commonly family, and increases in household-supported non-employment persisted through expansions. Household-supported non-employed men were also more likely than other non-employed men to be out of work two years later. Most of the rise in household-supported non-employment was among men who did not report illness or disability as their reason for not working, and non-employed men spent little more time than employed men on caregiving or home production. Chinese import competition raised non-employment mainly among men not supported by their households, while oxycodone exposure raised it mainly among household-supported men, but neither accounted for most of the long-run increase (about 6% and 17%, respectively). The results also provide limited support for explanations in which the rise mainly reflected short-term family insurance, a shift into caregiving or home production, or a smooth rise in the value of leisure. Instead, our evidence suggests that adverse employment and health conditions played an important role and that temporary shocks had lasting effects on employment. As a result, recessions may be more costly than their immediate effects on employment suggest, with other household members financing much of the non-employment that persists. On balance, the losses to non-employed men from worse employment and health conditions appear to outweigh their gains from more time outside work.*

Working Papers

The Geography of Disadvantage: Do Cost-of-Living Adjustments Improve Poverty Measurement and Program Targeting? (with Bruce D. Meyer and Derek Wu)

Abstract: *Individuals are commonly assumed to be more disadvantaged in higher-cost areas. As a result, geographic adjustments for local prices are embedded in many federal payments and have been proposed or implemented for various poverty measures. We assess whether such adjustments achieve a central objective of a poverty measure: identifying the least advantaged population. We examine ten domains of well-being – material hardships, appliances owned, home quality, food security, public services, health, education, assets, permanent income, and mortality – drawing on 71 indicators from linked survey and administrative records. Within each domain, we contrast those classified as poor under the Supplemental Poverty Measure and the new Comprehensive Income Poverty Measure, with and without a geographic adjustment. In nine of ten domains, we find that incorporating a geographic adjustment instead identifies a less deprived poor population. This result reflects local prices being sufficiently correlated with public goods and locational amenities that those with low incomes appear less disadvantaged in higher-cost areas. Because poverty thresholds underpin eligibility for many transfer programs and the geographic allocation of federal funding, geographic adjustments may direct resources away from the most disadvantaged.*

Misleading Estimates from Nonlinear Models with a Binary Outcome (with Bruce D. Meyer and Derek Wu)

Under review

Abstract: *When estimating nonlinear models for binary outcomes, such as probit and logit models, researchers often rely on average partial effects (APEs) to summarize the effect of a regressor. Because the marginal effect of a variable in these models depends on the values of all other variables, the value of an APE hinges on the portion of the sample used for the calculations. When averaged over parts of the sample drawn from a subpopulation not used to define the object of interest, the APE may be misleading. This paper highlights common situations, such as differences-in-means with a secondary group and difference-in-differences designs, where APEs calculated for the full sample deviate from marginal effects for the appropriate part of the sample. We propose a simple and costless solution in specific cases and demonstrate through simulations that recalculating APEs over the appropriate subsample yields unbiased results. Reexamining published results from multiple papers, we find statistically significant discrepancies between the reported estimates and the appropriately calculated APEs.*

Innovation and Health Behavior: Evidence from the American Public Bath Movement
(with Michael McKelligott)

Abstract: *The prominent decline in urban mortality rates during the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the United States is primarily attributed to reductions in deaths caused by infectious and food- and waterborne diseases. While existing literature has explored the role of public health initiatives in explaining this decline from the latter of these types, this paper focuses on the contribution of innovations in and provision of hygienic technologies and their role in eradication of the former. Specifically, we investigate the health impact of the rapid adoption and utilization of bathhouses in urban working-class neighborhoods following the technological advancement of what we recognize today as the modern-day shower. By exploiting differential timing of bathhouse openings beginning around 1890 and utilizing city-level mortality data for U.S. urban areas, we estimate the mortality effects of these facilities introduced prior to the widespread adoption of modern household sanitation infrastructure and critical implications generated by the germ theory of disease. This paper highlights the role that hygienic infrastructure and behavior may have played in improving public health, shedding light on mechanisms policy makers can utilize when designing interventions aimed at encouraging behavioral take-up today.*

Awards and Honors

Outstanding Teaching Assistant of the Year, Harris School of Public Policy	*2026*
Economics Department Outstanding Achievement Award, Dartmouth College	*2019*
Rufus Choate Scholar, Dartmouth College	*2017–2019*

Teaching Experience

Instructor		
Introduction to Programming in Stata	Instructor (Executive Education)	*2023*
Undergraduate		
BA Thesis Seminar	Preceptor for Prof. Bautista	*2024–2027*
Expanding Discovery in Economics+	TA, Chicago Booth	*2025–2026*
Expanding Diversity in Economics	TA, Becker Friedman Institute	*2024*
Introductory Game Theory	Lead TA for Prof. Fang	*2023–2024*
Graduate (Master of Public Policy unless noted)		
Data and Programming for Public Policy	Head TA for Prof. Clapp	*2025–2026*
Advanced Statistics for Data Analysis II	Head TA for Prof. Grogger	*2026*
Advanced Microeconomics for Public Policy I	Head TA for Prof. Lo	*2025*
Advanced Statistics for Data Analysis II	Head TA for Prof. Meyer	*2025*
Advanced Statistics for Data Analysis I	Head TA for Prof. Black	*2024*
Principles of Microeconomics and Public Policy II	Head TA for Prof. Sonin	*2023–2024*
Game Theory (PhD)	Head TA for Prof. Sonin	*2023*
Principles of Microeconomics and Public Policy I	Head TA for Prof. Brot	*2022*
Executive Education		
Who Wants to Be an Economist? (Saudi Arabia)	Head Program TA	*2024*
Applied Econometrics	TA for Prof. Clapp	*2023*
Empirical Analysis Seminar	TA for Prof. Durlauf	*2022*
Applied Regression Analysis	TA for Prof. Black	*2022*

Research Experience and Other Employment

Pre-Doctoral Fellow, University of Chicago, for Professor Bruce D. Meyer *2019–2021*

Presentations

2026	Society of Labor Economists (SOLE) Annual Meeting; Allied Social Science Associations/American Economic Association (ASSA/AEA) Annual Meeting
2025	National Tax Association (NTA) Annual Conference; Midwest Economics Association (MEA) Annual Meeting
2024	Southern Economic Association (SEA) Annual Conference; ASSA/AEA Annual Meeting
2023	SEA Annual Conference

Service

Organizer, Census Bureau Data Application Information Session *2026*

PhD Social Committee Chair, Harris School of Public Policy *2022–2023*

PhD Admissions Committee Member, Harris School of Public Policy *2021–2023*

Social Programming and Events Committee, Graduate Council *2021–2022*

Additional Information

Citizenship	United States of America
Data Access	U.S. Census Bureau Special Sworn Status
Programming Skills	Stata, R, Python

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