



## Master Seminar in Empirical Labor Economics Summer term 2026

### Schedule

Date	Location	
Tuesday, 21.04.2026 16.00 – 18.00h	HS VI (ReWi II)	Kick-Off (introduction, organizational issues, assignment of topics)
Monday, 27.04.2026 12.00 – 14.00h and 16.00 – 18.00h	RW 6 (ReWi I)  PC-Pool 265 (00 265)	Introduction to SOEP dataset  Introduction to Mikrozensus dataset
Sunday, 21.06.2026 23.59h		Deadline for submission of presentation slides and a preliminary draft of the seminar paper to <a href="mailto:sekretariat.schank@uni-mainz.de">sekretariat.schank@uni-mainz.de</a>
Tuesday 23.06.2026 14.00 – 18.00h and Thursday, 25.06.2026 08.00 – 16.00h	RW 6 (ReWi I)  Senatssaal (07 232) NatFak Building	Presentations of seminar papers (final schedule will depend on the number of participants)
Thursday, 09.07.2026 23.59h		Deadline for submission of the final seminar thesis to <a href="mailto:sekretariat.schank@uni-mainz.de">sekretariat.schank@uni-mainz.de</a>

### Pre-requisites:

For students not from the QDEM program, it is expected that you have previously taken a master course from our chair (Professor Schank) or that you will take any of the two courses Microeconometrics A (Prof. van Ewijk) or Microeconometrics B (Prof. Schank) offered in the coming summer term. Students who have not taken in the past or who will not take any other advanced empirical module in the coming summer term are **NOT recommended** to choose

this seminar. Since working with Stata is an integral part of the seminar, we encourage students without sound knowledge of Stata to take part in the Stata Introduction course offered by Dr. Klaas Staal in the first week of the lecture period.

### **General Description:**

The seminar can be regarded as an ideal preparation for an empirical master thesis.

The aim of the seminar is to empirically re-investigate research questions from the field of labor economics, based on the listed references as a benchmark. Using Stata, students carry out the analysis with either a student version of the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) or the Scientific Use-File of the German Microcensus (Mikrozensus), which is supplied by the chair. Hands-on introductions to both datasets are given on Monday, April 27. Students are expected to take part in the introduction sessions to both datasets.

### **Topics**

#### **1. Parental leave benefits and parental labor market outcomes**

In 2007 German federal law reformed parental benefits to counter decreasing fertility rates and low labor market participation of women. The newly introduced parental benefit scheme grants 2/3 of the pre-birth monthly net-income to either the father or the mother for up to 12 months with a minimum of 300€ and a maximum of 1800€. This topic investigates the effect of the reform on parental labor market participation using a difference-in-differences approach. Based on the German Microcensus, students are expected to replicate the results on mothers of Kluge & Schmitz (2017) and extend the analysis to fathers.

Kluge, J., & Schmitz, S. (2017). Back to Work: Parental Benefits and Mothers' Labor Market Outcomes in the Medium Run. *ILR Review*, 71(1), 143-173.

#### **2. A natural experiment on sick pay cuts, sickness absence and labor costs**

In 1996 German federal law reduced the legal obligation of German employers to provide 100% continued wage pay for up to six weeks per sickness episode. Statutory sick pay was decreased to 80% of foregone gross wages. This topic assesses the reform effects of a reduction in statutory sick pay levels on sickness absence behavior and labor costs, by using a difference-in-differences approach to identify the effect of the reform. Students are expected to replicate the main regressions and some of the robustness checks of the paper using the German Socioeconomic Panel.

Ziebarth, N., & Karlsson, M. (2010). A natural experiment on sick pay cuts, sickness absence, and labor costs. *Journal of Public Economics*, 94, 1108-1122.

### 3. Parental leave benefits and fertility responses

In 2007 German federal law reformed parental benefits to counter decreasing fertility rates and low labor market participation of women. The newly introduced parental benefit scheme grants 2/3 of the pre-birth monthly net-income to either the father or the mother for up to 12 months with a minimum of 300€ and a maximum of 1800€. This topic investigates the effect of the reform on fertility using a difference-in-differences approach. Students are expected to replicate the results of Cygan-Rehm (2016) on higher-order births and extend the analysis to other fertility measures using the German Microcensus.

Cygan-Rehm, K. (2016). Parental leave benefit and differential fertility responses: evidence from a German reform. *Journal of Population Economics*, 29, 73–103

### 4. Working from home, hours worked and job satisfaction

The practice of working from home (WFH) has become widespread since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, yet prior to the pandemic there was limited research on how hybrid work arrangements impact labor market outcomes. Adoption of WFH may influence working hours by increasing the labor supply, possibly due to the reduction of schedule constraints stemming from personal commitments such as childcare. Additionally, there is evidence that WFH can improve job satisfaction by reducing commuting costs and allowing for more flexibility in work arrangements. This seminar paper aims to investigate the determinants of taking-up of WFH and the impact of WFH on working hours, wages and job-satisfaction. Students are expected to conduct OLS and fixed-effects regressions to investigate these issues using the German Socioeconomic Panel.

Arntz, M., Yahmed, S. B., & Berlingieri, F. (2022). Working from Home, Hours Worked and Wages: Heterogeneity by gender and parenthood. *Labour Economics*, 76, 102169.

### 5. The impact of regional mobility of working individuals on life and job satisfaction

In a study using the British BHPS and the Australian HILDA dataset, Perales (2017) shows that the decisions of young individuals to move between regions is consistent with theories assuming utility-maximizing behavior. The study shows that satisfaction increases after moving. In order to test if this results also holds for Germany and using the German Socioeconomic Panel, students are expected to estimate OLS and fixed-effects regressions of job and life satisfaction. Estimations are carried out for several subgroups (e.g., singles, partnered individuals, high educated). Note that, unlike the BHPS and HILDA, the SOEP does not consistently include information on the reason for migration, so students must find a workaround to address the research question using the available data.

Perales, F. (2017). Dynamics of job satisfaction around internal migrations: a panel analysis of young people in Britain and Australia. *The Annals of Regional Science*, 59(3), 577-601.

## 6. After work shopping? Employment effects of a deregulation of shop opening hours in the German retail sector

Between November 2006 and July 2007, 14 of the 16 German states deregulated shop closing hours on weekdays, including exceptions on store business hours for Sundays and public holidays. This topic investigates the impact on the employment in Germany. It uses the variation in the change in the opening times of shops across states and applies a difference-in-differences approach. Students are expected to replicate the main regressions results (for the probability of employment and for the probability of part-time employment) and some of the robustness checks of the paper using the German Socioeconomic Panel.

Paul, A. (2015). After work shopping? Employment effects of a deregulation of shop opening hours in the German retail sector. *European Economic Review*, 80, 329-353.

## 7. The influence of the German minimum wage introduction on wages.

In 2015, Germany introduced a federal minimum wage of 8.50€ in order to reduce wage inequality by increasing wages at the lower end of the wage distribution. Amongst others, Bureau et al. (2020) document a positive effect on wage growth in hourly wages and on monthly earnings at the bottom of the distribution until 2016. Based on the German Socioeconomic Panel and using a difference-in-differences approach, students are expected to replicate the respective results of Bureau et al. and to extend it to further years. Moreover, students are expected to discuss different methodological approaches in other studies on the impact of the German minimum wage.

Bureau, P., Caliendo, M., Grabka, M., Obst, C., Preuss, M., Schröder, C. & Shupe, C. (2020). The Impact of the German Minimum Wage on Individual Wages and Monthly Earnings. *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik*, 240(2-3), 201-231.

## 8. The influence of public holidays on sick leaves and overtime

In light of ongoing discussions about economic growth and labor supply, it is often suggested that reducing the number of public holidays could increase an economy's output. However, the theoretical effect of public holidays remains ambiguous. While, *ceteris paribus*, they reduce hours worked and thus output, this may be offset by compensatory mechanisms, such as increased overtime on surrounding working days.

Public holidays vary across years—for example, in 2027 and 2028, May 1st falls on a weekend—and they also differ, to some extent, across German federal states. For instance, January 6th is a public holiday only in Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, and Saxony-Anhalt. Using data from the German Socio-Economic Panel or the German Microsurvey, this variation is to be exploited to examine the impact of public holidays on the extent of paid and unpaid overtime through OLS regressions. In a further task, students are asked to identify additional datasets that could be used to study the effect of public holidays on productivity.

Related literature: Böheim, R. & Leoni, T. (2020). Absenteeism on bridging days. Applied Economics Letters, 27:20, 1667-1671.

### Further information

We will send before the first meeting an http-address where participants can state their preferences by ranking the topics from 1 (most preferred) to 8 (least preferred), but students can modify their preferences at the end of the introductory meeting. Topics will be assigned (according to the stated preferences) to groups of two or three students directly after the introductory meeting. Students within groups can work together and use a joint do-file in Stata. Group members should also present their results jointly. However, note that each person should write up her/his seminar thesis independently. The thesis should cover **not more than 12 pages**, including tables and figures, but without references.

The main task is to investigate the research topic using Stata and to write up the findings in the style of a research paper. Therefore, it is expected that students are able to work independently with Stata. Students are expected to use the reference articles as a benchmark for their own investigations, though not all regressions of the papers have to be mimicked. Neither is it the goal to reproduce exactly the same results as the papers which are already based on the SOEP or the German Microcensus. Students should adhere to the requirements stated above and should discuss the outline of their paper with their supervisor.

We will supply either a student version of the German Socio-Economic Panel or the Scientific Use-File of the German Microcensus, the dataset to be used for the analysis. Instructions on how to access the data will be provided in the first meeting.

Students need to submit an electronic version of their seminar thesis by e-mail to sekretariat.schank@uni-mainz.de, together with the literature cited in the thesis (except for the papers referenced above), a Stata log-file and a do-file which produces all results reported in the seminar thesis. Before submission, students should make sure that the do-file runs through from the beginning to the end and should also appropriately comment in the do-file which table, etc., is produced by which command.

Further formal requirements will be discussed during the introductory meeting. The slides from this introductory meeting will be downloadable from Moodle. Participants are expected to follow all guidelines listed on the slides.

### Contact

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