Jingyao Wei

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Education

PhD in Economics, Norwegian School of Economics 2022–Present
Expected completion: Spring 2027
Visiting Scholar, Cornell University (host: Heather Schofield) Spring 2026

MSc in Economics, Norwegian School of Economics 2020–2022

MA in Economics of Education, Central China Normal University 2017–2020
Exchange: National Taiwan University of Science and Technology Spring 2019

BSc in Finance, Hubei University of Economics 2010–2014
Dual-degree program: Auburn University at Montgomery, USA 2013–2014

Research Fields

Development Economics; Environmental Economics; Health Economics

Publications

Psychological Barriers to Participation in the Labor Market: Evidence from Rural Ghana
With Leandro Carvalho, Damien de Walque, Crick Lund, Heather Schofield, and Vincent Somville.
Journal of Development Economics, **181** (2026), 103734.

Abstract: Mental health conditions are strongly associated with lower labor market participation, but the underlying channels remain unclear. We conduct a two-phase study of women in rural Ghana to examine job take-up and work outcomes. In the first phase, we ask whether women would accept cash-for-work jobs during the lean season. Women with depression or anxiety are much more likely to decline work outside the home, but equally likely to accept work-from-home positions. In the second phase, we randomly offer home-based jobs to women willing to work from home. Neither depression nor anxiety predicts work completion, earnings, or quit rates. These findings suggest that barriers to accepting work outside the home help explain the association between mental health and labor market participation, and highlight home-based employment as a potential response.

Working Papers

When Solar Energy Reaches the Poor: Evidence from Solar Expansion in China
Job Market Paper

Abstract: I study whether linking solar investment to poverty alleviation can reduce the local environmental costs of solar expansion in China. I use satellite data on 30,023 solar plants to study forest loss around nearby villages. Using a spatial difference-in-differences design, I estimate that annual forest loss near these villages rises by 7.7 percent after the first nearby plant appears in satellite imagery, relative to changes in forest farther away. The estimated increase is larger in lower-income counties. I then study China's Solar Energy Poverty Alleviation Program (SEPAP), which financed solar stations and assigned their revenues to poor households and villages. Using the same spatial design, I estimate a 10.7 percent decline in forest loss near host villages after the program began in 2014. To examine possible mechanisms, I use household panel data and a difference-in-differences design based on SEPAP county designation in 2014 and 2016. The share of households reporting firewood as their main cooking fuel falls by about 7 percent, while the share reporting electricity rises by 46 percent. Children's reported respiratory illness also declines by about 17 percent, with no detectable changes in other reported diseases. This decline is larger among children who spent more time on household chores before designation. These patterns are consistent with reduced firewood reliance and lower exposure to indoor smoke. The findings suggest that solar development linked to poverty alleviation can benefit local forests and children's health.

Working Papers (continued)

Heat, Economic Stress, and Mental Health: Evidence from Indonesia
With Simon Taye, Damien de Walque, Heather Schofield, and Hao Wang.
Revise and resubmit, Frontiers in Behavioral Economics

Abstract: Evidence on the relationship between heat and mental health varies across populations. We examine whether underlying economic stress explains this heterogeneity using panel data from Indonesia and three types of economic shocks: income losses driven by international palm oil price changes, sudden large increases in fuel costs, and job loss. In the general population, we find no association between temperature and depressive symptoms, measured using the CES-D scale, and can rule out even small harmful effects. Among those experiencing negative economic shocks, however, heat is associated with increases in depressive symptoms of 0.044–0.09 standard deviations per degree Celsius. As climate change increases both the frequency of extreme heat and the prevalence of economic shocks, our findings suggest that the psychological toll of a warming climate will be concentrated among the most economically vulnerable.

Work in Progress

The Causal Effects of Income Volatility and Income Risk
With Leandro Carvalho, Damien de Walque, Nicolas Grandstaff, Heather Schofield, and Vincent Somville.

Teaching Experience

Teaching Assistant, Norwegian School of Economics

Environmental Policy Analysis	2025
Development Economics	2024
Diversity in Firms	2024
Petroleum Economics	2023
Econometrics	2022

Presentations

European Association of Environmental and Resource Economists (EAERE), Bergen	2025
Nordic Conference in Development Economics, Gothenburg	2023

References

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