Administrative Screening and Career Progression

A Sample Paper with Invented Data, 1990–2020

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Abstract

This sample paper shows what a paper written with EcoFin.sty looks like. Its data are invented. A panel of 12,000 personnel records and 144,000 person-years is used to estimate how senior appointments change in treated divisions after a policy break. The estimate is a decline of 18.4 per cent. The paper has a table, a figure, two equations and an online appendix with its own reference list, so that each part of the style can be seen once.

Keywords: Organizational governance; Personnel panels; Sample paper

JEL classification: C88, D23, J45, M51

We thank seminar participants for helpful comments. *Competing interests:* The authors declare none. *Data and code availability:* All data in this sample paper are invented.

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1. Introduction

Empirical studies of organisations open with the economic question and the institutional setting (Becker 1957, Alchian and Demsetz 1972). For each individual i observed in period t, we estimate

$$y_{it} = \beta \, \mathit{Treated}_i \times \mathit{Post}_t + \alpha_i + \gamma_t + \varepsilon_{it}, \tag{1}$$

where α_i and γ_t denote unit and period fixed effects and standard errors are clustered at the division level (Bertrand, Duflo, and Mullainathan 2004).

Table 1 summarises the panel. Figure 1 plots the yearly estimates of β_k in

$$y_{it} = \sum_{k \neq -1} \beta_k \, \mathit{Treated}_i \times \mathbf{1}[t - t^{*} = k] + \alpha_i + \gamma_t + \varepsilon_{it}, \tag{2}$$

where t^{*} is the year of the benchmark break and event time k runs from -5 to 8, with the year before the break as the reference. The estimates before the break are close to zero. After the break, the decline builds over the first four years. Online Appendix Table A1 shows that the illustrative baseline estimate of -18.4 per cent (s.e. 2.9) stays between -19.1 and -16.3 per cent under alternative samples and specifications, including equation (3) (see Online Appendix 1).

TABLE 1. Summary of the Panel by Roster Stratum

Roster stratum	Personnel	Person-years	Treated share (%)	Mean log pay
Core headquarters rosters	4,200	54,600	8.40	6.12
Regional directorate rosters	6,300	71,400	6.15	5.94
Auxiliary archive extracts	1,500	18,000	14.20	6.05
All strata	12,000	144,000	7.94	6.02

Sources: Invented data, made for this sample paper.
Notes: Each person is assigned to the roster stratum contributing the plurality of observed career years.

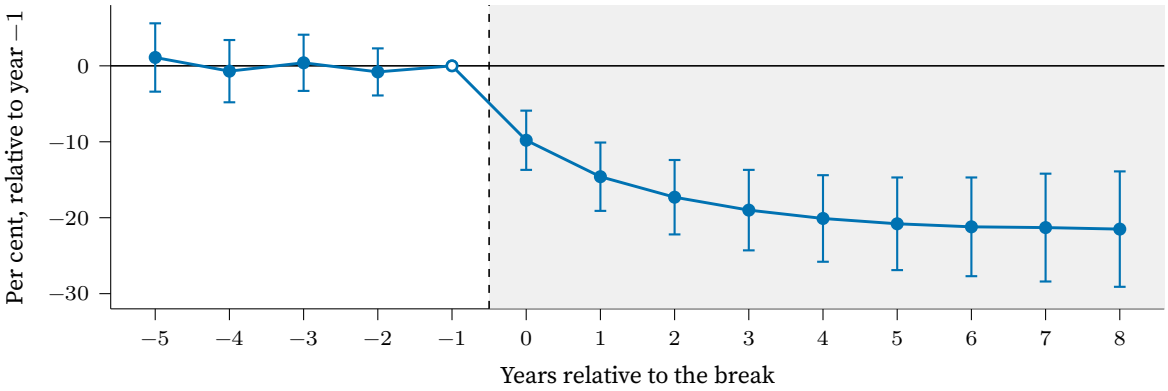
2. Data and Empirical Design

2.1 Panel Structure and Sample Construction

Two features of the panel matter for the design.

- Every promotion, transfer and pay change carries an exact effective date.
- Division and cohort fixed effects absorb the time-invariant composition of regional offices.

FIGURE 1. Senior Appointments Before and After the Benchmark Break



Sources: Invented data, made for this sample paper.
Notes: Points are the estimates of β_k from equation (2), in per cent, with 95 per cent confidence intervals (standard errors clustered by division). Year -1 is the reference and is set to zero (hollow marker). The dashed line marks the break. The shaded area covers the years after it. The post-break estimates average -18.4 per cent, the estimate from equation (1).

Measurement and inference. Cluster-robust inference follows design-based sampling principles (Abadie et al. 2023). Online Appendix 1 reports cell-by-cell sensitivity checks in Table A1.

References

Abadie, Alberto, Susan Athey, Guido W. Imbens, and Jeffrey M. Wooldridge. 2023. "When Should You Adjust Standard Errors for Clustering?" *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 138 (1): 1–35. https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjac038.

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Becker, Gary S. 1957. *The Economics of Discrimination*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bertrand, Marianne, Esther Duflo, and Sendhil Mullainathan. 2004. "How Much Should We Trust Differences-in-Differences Estimates?" *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 119 (1): 249–275.

Online Appendix

This appendix follows the order of the paper. Online Appendix 1 describes the invented data, the sample and the sensitivity checks behind Section 2 and equation (1). Tables and figures are numbered A1, A2 and so on. Equations continue the numbering of the paper. The appendix opens with a guide that answers the questions a reader is likely to ask first, each with what we did, what we found and where the evidence is.

Questions a Reader May Ask, and What We Did

Does attrition across secondary regional rosters drive the post-break gap? Within complete core rosters alone, the estimated post-break decline is -17.8 per cent (s.e. 3.1), compared with -18.4 per cent (s.e. 2.9) in the full panel (Table A1, row 2). The two estimates are not statistically different ($p = 0.78$).

Could time-varying returns to tenure explain the divergence? When tenure profiles may vary freely across periods, as in equation (3), the estimate keeps 89 per cent of its baseline size ($p < 0.001$; Table A1, row 3). Standard errors are clustered as in Bertrand, Duflo, and Mullainathan (2004) and Abadie et al. (2023).

Online Appendix 1: Sources and Specification Checks

Augmented tenure specification. To separate governance screening from time-varying tenure premia, we estimate

$$y_{it} = \beta\, \mathit{Treated}_i \times \mathit{Post}_t + \theta_t\, \mathit{Tenure}_{it} + \alpha_i + \gamma_t + u_{it}, \tag{3}$$

where θ_t allows the slope on tenure to shift in every year. Table A1 compares baseline and saturated specifications relative to Table 1.

TABLE A1. Alternative Samples and Specifications

Specification	Estimate (%)	Std. error	Observations
1. Baseline full panel	−18.4***	(2.9)	144,000
2. Core headquarters rosters only	−17.8***	(3.1)	54,600
3. Period-varying tenure slopes (eq. 3)	−16.3***	(3.3)	144,000
4. Office × region × year FE	−19.1***	(3.4)	112,800

Sources: As Table 1.
Notes: Standard errors clustered by division in parentheses. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

References for the Online Appendix

Abadie, Alberto, Susan Athey, Guido W. Imbens, and Jeffrey M. Wooldridge. 2023. "When Should You Adjust Standard Errors for Clustering?" *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 138 (1): 1–35. https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjac038.

Bertrand, Marianne, Esther Duflo, and Sendhil Mullainathan. 2004. "How Much Should We Trust Differences-in-Differences Estimates?" *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 119 (1): 249–275.