

Ahmet Gulek CV

<https://economics.mit.edu/people/phd-students/ahmet-gulek>

agulek@mit.edu

Education

Massachusetts Institute of Technology – MIT

Aug. 2019 – Present

PhD. Student in Economics

Cambridge, MA, USA

Advisors: Joshua Angrist, Amy Finkelstein, Daron Acemoglu

M.A. Economics, Koc University, 2019

B.S. Mathematics; B.A. Economics, Koc University, 2017

Lycée de Galatasaray, 2013

Fields of Interest

Labor Economics, Public Economics, Development Economics, Econometrics

Research Papers

Driving While Hungry: The Effect of Fasting on Traffic Accidents (Accepted, Journal of Development Economics)

Abstract: I study the impact of fasting on traffic accidents by exploiting the institutional feature that, in Turkey, working hours are not adjusted during Ramadan. This allows traffic to remain unaffected by Ramadan during the rush hour. I find that driving while fasting at rush hour is associated with a significant increase in road traffic accidents. Consistent with these results being due to fasting, I show that the increase in accidents is greater when there is an exogenously longer fast due to daylight savings time and in more devout provinces where more people are likely fasting. Using existing survey evidence on fasting rates in Turkey, I conclude that fasting increases the probability of an accident by 25%, which is smaller than the effect of driving while intoxicated, but larger than the effect of mild sleep deprivation.

Formal Effects of Informal Labor Supply: Evidence from the Syrian refugees in Turkey

Abstract: I study how firms and native workers respond to an informal labor supply shock, driven by an inflow of refugees who are not provided work permits and are thus only employable in the informal economy. Crucially, I distinguish between native workers in the informal and formal sectors, of which the latter may be positively or negatively impacted. The empirical setting is the Syrian refugee crisis in Turkey. Using travel distance as an instrument for refugee location, I show that a one percentage point (pp) increase in the refugee/native ratio decreases native informal salaried employment by 0.17 pp and formal salaried employment by 0.13 pp among low-skill natives. I document two mechanisms: (i) formal firms reduce their formal labor demand, and (ii) new firms relocate from formal to informal economy. These estimates imply a relatively high elasticity of substitution, of approximately 10, between formal and informal workers. This is consistent with the Turkish context, where informal employment is often in the same sectors and even in the same firms as formal employment. As a counterfactual, I predict that granting refugees work permits would have created up to 112,000 more formal jobs in the economy through higher informal wages.

Synthetic instruments in DiD designs with unmeasured confounding (joint with Jaume Vives-i-Bastida)

Abstract: Unmeasured confounding and selection into treatment are key threats to reliable causal inference in Difference-in-Differences (DiD) designs. In practice, researchers often use instrumental variables to address endogeneity

concerns, for example through shift-share instruments. However, in many settings instruments may be correlated with unobserved confounders, exhibiting pre-trends. In this paper we explore the use of synthetic controls to address unmeasured confounding in IV-DiD settings. We propose a synthetic IV estimator that partials out the unmeasured confounding and derive conditions under which it is consistent, when the standard two-stage least squares is not, and asymptotically normal. Motivated by the finite sample properties of our estimator we then propose an ensemble estimator that might address different sources of bias simultaneously. Finally, we show the relevance and pitfalls of our estimator in a simulation exercise and in an empirical application to the Syrian refugee crisis.

Work in Progress

Do Work Permits Reduce Informality? Evidence from the Venezuelan Refugees in Colombia (joint with Dany Bahar and Isabel di Tella, draft coming soon!)

Abstract: The question of whether refugees should or should not have work permits is a subject of an active policy debate. In this project, we formalize the relevant trade-offs of providing work permits to refugees and test them empirically. Our empirical setting is the Venezuelan refugee crisis in Colombia. The keys to our analysis are (1) refugees arrive without work permits initially, and (2) Colombia started granting work permits to Venezuelans in waves. Using a shift-share design and relaxing the exogeneity of shares assumption by employing Synthetic IV à la Gulek and Vives (2023), we find that the arrival of informal refugees displaced formal and informal natives in salaried jobs, which suggests high substitutability between informal and formal labor in production. Work permits allow middle to high-skill refugees to find formal jobs and work closer to their skill level, reducing the mismatch in the economy. This comes at a cost to some natives, who lose their formal jobs, and at a benefit to others, who observe increases in salaries.

Propagation of labor supply shocks through production networks - Evidence from the Syrian Refugees in Turkey (joint with Tishara Garg)

Anatomy of Child Penalty: Heterogeneity across Demographics, Space, Time, Occupations, and Industries in the US

Does Working From Home Reduce the Child Penalty? (joint with Christina Langer)

Awards, Grant, and Scholarshps

Center for International Studies Summer Study Fellowship	2022
MIT Center for International Studies Summer Study Fellowship	2023
Institute for Humane Studies Publication Accelerator Grant	2023
Institute for Humane Studies Junior Fellow	2023
MIT Hausman Dissertation Fellowship	2023

Professional Activities

Refereeing

American Economic Review: Insights, European Economic Review

Seminars and Conferences

IZA conference on Labor Markets and Innovation during Times of War and Reconstruction, Workshop on the Economics of Refugee Migration, American Causal Inference Conference (presented by coauthor), European Winter Meeting of the Econometric Society (presented by coauthor) 2023

Activities, and Interests

Languages: Turkish (native), English (fluent), French (intermediate)

Interests: Basketball, Argentine Tango, Salsa, Fitness, Chess