Title
Covid-19-related school closures: Impact on students in their final high school years

Authors and affiliations and contact emails
Corresponding author: Malte Sandner (malte.sandner@iab.de)

Abstract
Students in their final high school years are faced with long lasting career decisions under high uncertainty and they are pressured to perform well in their high stake exams. The government regulations following the Covid-19 pandemic such as school closures, timing of final exams, and contact restrictions may therefore particularly hit these students in this crucial career stage.

We present the effects of government regulations in Germany on students in their final high school years. We are interested in several outcomes, such as students’ career planning, learning behaviour, mental health, and life satisfaction. These were measured in a baseline survey of students in 217 schools in autumn 2019 and again in a follow-up online survey in 2020. We identify the effect of school closures on the outcome measures by exploiting that the first part of the students were surveyed in February 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic has only slightly emerged and schools not been closed in Germany, whereas the second part of students answered the online questionnaire after the school closures in March and April 2020. This sampling provides us with the possibility to apply difference-in-differences strategies to identify the effect of the school closures isolated from the overall Covid-19 effect.

Additionally, we want to identify the effect of administering and communicating the timing of the final exams effects of re-opening strategies and the lowering of contact restrictions by differences between the German states, counties and schools.

Data description
Our sample includes over 7,000 students in their graduation and pre-graduation high school year from 217 high schools in eight German federal states. We collected data in several waves. The baseline interview took place in October to November 2019 (pre-Covid-19). In the first follow-up wave 5,000 students answered an online questionnaire before the school closures, while 2,000 students answered the online questionnaire after schools have been closed. The online survey during the school closures contained specific questions on the school closures. All students will be interviewed again in autumn 2020. (Independently whether schools re-open or not). The data collection is part of the project “Helping High-School Students in Choosing their Career: Experimental Evidence from a Large Scale School Policy” https://www.socialsciergistry.org/trials/4587

JEL codes for the project
I20; I24; I28

Key-words
School closures; Students home learning, learning behaviour