Title: When school closes, dad works and mum stays home?

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Abstract:
What is the division of childcare between mothers and fathers, and how does this division affect labor supply? The spread of COVID-19 has led to temporary closures of childcare facilities and schools in many countries. This is particularly challenging for working parents who have to educate their children at home. Due to prevailing gender norms, it is likely that this additional burden is not equally split between mothers and fathers. In this project, we study whether differences in childcare responsibilities between parents can lead to larger gender differences in the labor market. Specifically, we estimate if mothers are more likely than fathers to reduce their labor supply as a response to the crisis and if a differential response widens the gender earnings gap.
To identify the impact of school closures, we analyze social security records from Austria. First, we compare the employment outcomes of parents to those of non-parents, before and after school closures. Second, we test whether these differences differ between women and men. If gender differences in childcare responsibilities exist, we expect that mothers are more likely than fathers to reduce their labor supply. Because demand shocks induced by the pandemic can be different between groups, we control for a number of confounding factors such as the sector of employment.

Data description:
The analysis is based on social security data provided by the Austrian public employment service AMS and the Austrian ministry of labor and social affairs. The data cover all work spells in Austria which are subject to social security contributions. Our dataset allows linking fathers to mothers and their children based on coinsurance spells. Next to personal characteristics of parents and children such as age and gender, we also observe previous work spells of workers including information on type of employment, employer, sector and earnings.

JEL codes:
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Keywords:
Labor supply, gender differences, child care