Impact of COVID-19 on impact evaluation studies

Edoardo Masset

19 May 2020
• Portfolio of 25 CEDIL-funded studies: mix of impact evaluations, evidence syntheses and methods paper
• Secondary data analysis only unaffected study
• 3 studies added COVID modules
• All studies are delayed, more obvious in the case of impact evaluations conducting fieldwork
• All studies to rely on computer assisted phone interviews
• Not a perfect substitute. Several issues:
  • Switching through survey rounds
  • Short surveys and aggregations
  • Difficult to monitor
  • Response rates (<50%)
• Measurement error: less likely to find impact when project has an effect
• Systematic bias: more likely to estimate the wrong effect
Changes in project implementation and in the context: mobility, economic activity, school attendance

Difficult to conduct qualitative work

“Uncontrolled” randomised trials, not clear what is evaluated:
  - Results are internally valid but null
  - Results are affected by COVID
  - Interaction with other policies
Opportunities

• Alternative study designs: predictive studies, descriptive surveys, monitoring and surveillance studies (more about process than impact)

• New data collection methods: non-survey data, satellite images.

• Quasi-experimental methods:
  • Time series analysis (interrupted design and discontinuities)
  • COVID and policies are not random: quasi-experimental designs once COVID is better understood (matching methods)
  • Exploit existing baseline data
  • Explore heterogeneity (policy relevance)