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Special issue: ICEA Public Policy Lesson conference, part of the After the Pandemic Conference Series

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Article abstract

Papers in the special issue were presented at the **Public Policy Lessons** conference, the third conference in the After the Pandemic Conference Series, organized by the International Centre for Economic Analysis (ICEA) and held online, Nov 12-13, 2021.

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Special issue: ICEA Public Policy Lesson conference, part of the After the Pandemic Conference Series

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Papers in the special issue were presented at the **Public Policy Lessons** conference, the third conference in the After the Pandemic Conference Series, organized by the International Centre for Economic Analysis (ICEA) and held online, Nov 12-13, 2021.

Keywords: Public Policy Lessons, Pandemic, Covid-19

The Covid-19 Pandemic has been a singular event that affected health, economic situation and social cohesion around the world. The International Centre for Economic Analysis (ICEA) organized a series of conferences under the general theme After the Pandemic. The conference series is devoted to analyzing various aspects of the pandemic and their long-term consequences.

The first part of the series consisted of six online conferences in Oct-Nov 2021:

- Happiness and Age, with keynote by David Blanchflower (Dartmouth College)
- Inequality, with keynote by Wojciech Kopczuk (Columbia University)
- Public Policy Lessons, with keynote by Judith A. Chevalier (Yale University)
- Working from Home, with keynote by Nicholas Bloom (Stanford University)
- Public Health, with keynote by Alan Whiteside (Wilfrid Laurier University)
- Gender Inequality, with keynote by Stefania Albanesi (University of Pittsburgh)

Several conference participants submitted papers presented at the conference to special issues of the *Review of Economic Analysis*, which is the official journal of the International Centre for Economic Analysis. This special issue consists of four papers from the Public Policy Lessons conference, the third conference in the Series, which was held online, November 12-13, 2021. The keynote: *COVID Policy Lessons for Vulnerable Populations*, was delivered by Judith A. Chevalier (Yale University School of Management).

The program of the conference, as well as of the other conferences in the series, can be found on the International Centre for Economic Analysis website, <https://ICEAnet.org>.

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In the first paper in the Special Issue, Gans (2022) reviews the literature that incorporates behavioural elements into epidemiological models of pandemics. Standard SIR models of viral spread are mechanistic in that agents do not react to the prevalence of disease. Behavioural models consider changes in agent behaviour over the pandemics and allow for richer dynamics but are non-stationary. The author proposes a shortcut that leads to a model with the reproduction number \hat{R} equal one and argues that the analysis of the model provides a useful tool to evaluate the effects of containment policies and predict the course of the pandemic.

In the second paper, Peter A.G. Bergeijk analyzes policy failures during Covid-19 and proposes solutions for the next pandemic. He stresses that we cannot count on modern medicine to provide a solution. A pandemic is not so much a purely medical problem, but rather an epidemiological-economic crisis. The self-interested approach to health care in rich countries needs to be replaced by global solutions. To ameliorate pandemic vulnerabilities, Sustainable Development Goals need to be redirected towards reduction of global inequalities. Without preparation, health and economic costs of the next pandemic may be disastrous.

Moses Ogenyi and Karim Nchare (2022) study the effect of ethnic inequality on the preference for democracy over authoritarian rule, using Afrobarometer panel data on 29 countries and over 350 ethnic groups. Across ethnic group inequality is positively associated with the rejection of non-democratic regimes, and the rejection is stronger for lower within-group inequality. The interpretation is that homogenous (with respect to wealth) ethnic groups have stronger sense of identity and when across-group inequality is high, they feel excluded and seek democratic solutions for income redistribution.

In the last paper, Samira Hasanzadeh and Modhrgan Alishari (2022) analyze the effects of public health policies on private health behaviour through Google searches for words related to physical activity and food choices, using data from US states that imposed lockdowns. Google search patterns start to change several weeks before lockdowns are imposed and reach a peak around the time of lockdown. Searches for *Workout*, *Physical Activity*, *Exercise* and *Wine* rise significantly while searches for *Diet* and *Nutrition* decline. Overall, the results show the effects of public health policies that may be helpful in the design of mitigation policies in the future.

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