

**Faculty Seminar, 24 June 2019**

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**Long-run Effects of Sports Club Vouchers for School Children**

**Abstract:**

This paper evaluates the effect of taxpayer-subsidized free sports club memberships on awareness, take-up rates, physical activity and health among primary school children. In 2009, along with an information campaign, the German state of Saxony distributed about 30,000 membership vouchers among third and fourth graders to induce primary school children to become sport club members and nudge them into a long-term habit of exercising regularly. We carried out a unique register-based survey among this target group in Saxony and neighboring states in 2018. Our findings show that awareness of the voucher program clearly increased due to the campaign and that children actually received and used the vouchers. However, we find no significant short- or long-term impact on sports-club enrollment or physical activity among previously inactive students. Contrarily, we find strong evidence that it was a windfall gain for parents of physically active students as they primarily redeemed the vouchers. Consistently, we find no significant impact on self-reported or objective health and health behavior measures.