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NORTH AMERICA
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
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Good morning,

In our mission to reduce poverty through scientific evidence, one of the most pressing questions we face is how to improve equity—how to ensure that all communities benefit from policies that promote well-being and economic mobility. The field of economics, where J-PAL North America’s work is centered, is best equipped to answer this broad, complex challenge when many perspectives are represented.

However, economics does not currently reflect the diversity of lived experiences within North America. This lack of diversity is not only a problem of numerical representation but also of inclusion and belonging. The 2019 [American Economic Association](#) climate survey found that people from groups underrepresented in economics, including Black economists and women economists, were more likely to take actions to avoid harassment—like refraining from presenting their research ideas or participating in conferences—than white economists or men economists. Taken together, the lack of diversity and inclusion in the field is likely hampering our collective ability to generate evidence and inform policies that reduce poverty and increase equity. We can more fully benefit from the [contributions of researchers from all backgrounds](#) to topics of social policy, race, and discrimination by making the field more inclusive and welcoming.

In this newsletter, we highlight [some of the efforts within and beyond J-PAL to make economics more welcoming](#), including the work of our affiliated researchers to foster inclusivity within the discipline. While we don’t have all the answers on how to make economics a more diverse and inclusive field, we are eager to learn, grow, and change. As we do, we’re excited to see new research questions generated and [randomized evaluations conducted](#)—both those that will give us new perspectives on addressing poverty and equity and those that can help effectively advance diversity and inclusion within the field of economics and J-PAL.

Laura Feeney
Co-Executive Director, J-PAL North America



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Fostering inclusion in economics

The field of economics, and our work at J-PAL, is at its most powerful when it includes everyone. In a new series on the J-PAL blog, we speak to J-PAL affiliated researchers who are working to cultivate an environment where economists of all backgrounds are able to contribute to the quality and credibility of the field, and feel safe and valued. The series features [Marianne Bertrand](#) (University of Chicago) on professional conduct at the American Economics Association; [Alicia Sasser Modestino](#) (Northeastern University) on the gendered dynamics of economics seminars; and [Matt Notowidigdo](#) (University of Chicago) on the role of mentorship in creating inclusivity.



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Building the evidence base to address the United States' maternal health crisis

The United States' rates of maternal and child morbidity and mortality are rising and are higher than peer nations', with stark racial and socioeconomic disparities. A [recent article](#) in the Washington Post discusses strategies for addressing the maternal health crisis in the United States, highlighting J-PAL affiliated researcher [Jessica Cohen's](#) (Harvard University) perspective on the critical need for more comprehensive postpartum care. The piece also cites the results of an ongoing randomized evaluation led by J-PAL affiliated researcher [Margaret](#)

McConnell (Harvard University) and Rebecca Gourevitch (University of Maryland) of Nurse Family Partnership (NFP), an intensive nurse home visiting program. New results from the evaluation found that NFP did not have a measurable impact on the use of prenatal care, adding to previous results finding no impact on birth outcomes. [Read a summary of the results to date >>](#)



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New policy insight on higher education financial aid take-up

Accessing financial aid, loans, and Federal Pell Grants—programs essential to many students' ability to afford college—requires students to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). However, many students do not complete this form due to an array of administrative burdens associated with the application process. A new [J-PAL Policy Insight](#) synthesizes evidence from eight randomized evaluations of interventions aiming to increase FAFSA filing in the United States. The insight finds that nudge interventions (e.g., text messages) can increase filing, particularly when they are personalized and timely. An [accompanying post](#) on the J-PAL blog situates these findings in the larger context of administrative burdens and higher education.

FEATURED EVALUATION SUMMARY



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New results on the impact of reminders and financial incentives on Covid-19 booster take-up

Despite the availability of Covid-19 vaccines, a large number of individuals remain only partially vaccinated, increasing their risk of hospitalization and death from Covid-19. A recently published paper on a [randomized evaluation](#) led by J-PAL affiliated professor Mireille Jacobson (University of Southern California) and Tom Chang (University of Southern California) found that

one-time reminders, but not financial incentives, increased Covid-19 booster take-up among individuals in Contra Costa County, California.

FEATURED RESEARCH RESOURCE



Lessons for assessing power and feasibility from studies of health care delivery

Designing well-powered studies is critical in all fields, but health care interventions present particular challenges, particularly when it comes to measuring impacts on health. Health care delivery settings also present unique opportunities, as implementing partners have important complementary expertise, such as additional data or estimates of effect size. This [resource on power calculations](#) emphasizes the importance of discussing power with partners early and often, discusses considerations for choosing health outcome measures, and provides guidance on how to think carefully about subgroup analysis and heterogeneous effects.

This resource is part of our "Health Care Evaluation Toolkit," supported by the MIT Roybal Center and the National Institute on Aging of the National Institutes of Health.

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