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NORTH AMERICA
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
December 2023

Good afternoon,

As we reflect on 2023, we are excited about our many emerging, innovative projects and collaborations, and are grateful for the long-standing partnerships and engagements that have advanced policy-relevant research and transformed rigorous evidence into policy action to improve lives across North America for the past decade.

This year, J-PAL North America launched several exciting new areas of work. In collaboration with our newly formed [Racial Equity Advisory Committee](#), we developed a strategic plan to advance inclusion in economics, embedded a call for research that centers racial equity within our [broader research initiatives](#), and [highlighted equitable and inclusive research practices in our network](#). In partnership with Results for America, our [Leveraging Evaluation and Evidence for Equitable Recovery \(LEVER\)](#) program supported nearly eighty state and local governments in their use of data, evaluation, and evidence in the face of Covid-19's effects. We formed the [Tutoring Evaluation Accelerator](#) to support ten tutoring providers in building evidence on innovative new tutoring models. And most recently, we joined the [Learning Engineering Virtual Institute](#) as the Evaluation Hub to prepare organizations for rigorous evaluation of learning products that harness the potential of AI and machine learning to improve middle school math achievement.

We also expanded the evidence base in critical social policy areas. We shared a [Policy Insight on reducing court nonappearance](#) that outlines how simple reminders through text messages, mail, or phone can be effective in reducing court nonappearance—an act that is criminalized in 46 US states and can result in jail time. We also published a [Policy Insight on strategies to increase FAFSA filing](#), which demonstrates that nudges can increase filing, particularly when messaging is personalized, timely, and paired with hands-on assistance. Our Health Care Delivery Initiative launched a [Policy Insight on strategies to increase health insurance take-up](#) and an [Evidence Wrap Up on the spillover effects of health care interventions](#). In June, we announced the [Health Care Evaluation Toolkit](#), a set of research resources for social scientists conducting randomized evaluations of health care interventions, within health systems, or using health care data.

2023 also marks J-PAL's [twentieth year](#) of evidence-based policymaking and J-PAL North America's tenth. To honor these milestones, we hosted a [two-day event](#) in September—one of several regional convenings to honor J-PAL's anniversaries worldwide—to celebrate the progress that our office and our partners have made over the past decade.

We feel incredibly grateful for all of you—service providers, funders, government officials, researchers, staff, and peer organizations—without whom J-PAL North America wouldn't be where it is today.

As we enter our next decade, we have our sights set on making an even bigger impact on evidence-based policymaking. We would be grateful if you would consider us in your end of year giving and [make a donation to J-PAL North America](#) this holiday season.

Thank you for joining us in our mission of reducing poverty in North America by ensuring policy is informed by rigorous evidence. We are looking forward to our continued partnership in 2024 and beyond!

[Give to J-PAL North America](#)

Laura Feeney and Vincent Quan
Co-Executive Directors, J-PAL North America



Photo credit: Lucy Nguyen, J-PAL

Reflecting on ten years of evidence-based policymaking in North America

In September, we gathered with our network of partners, funders, researchers, and staff from across North America to celebrate a decade of impact in evidence-based policymaking. Our two-day convening agenda showcased promising evidence-based interventions across different policy areas. The convening featured a discussion between Esther Duflo, J-PAL's co-founder and director, and Laura Arnold, Arnold Ventures' co-

founder, on the role of research in shaping policy; [read more](#) about the insights shared. On the J-PAL blog, we share [three key takeaways](#) from the event on how to generate evidence and inform policies effectively and equitably. Interested in learning more? Watch [convening session recordings](#) and visit our recently launched [impact webpage](#) depicting J-PAL North America's past decade of work in numbers.



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Researching racial equity: The value of centering lived experience in the research process

Research can play a critical role in identifying structural inequities in systems and policies that disproportionately affect communities of color. In this [blog post](#)—part of a larger series on research and racial equity—Anthony Barrows, managing partner and founder of the Center for Behavioral Design and Social Justice, provides an overview of centering lived experiences throughout the research process and important considerations for how researchers can apply such practices in impact evaluations.



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Encouraging rigorous, actionable research for opioid epidemic interventions in the United States

The opioid overdose epidemic in the United States is recognized as a public health emergency. Addressing this complex crisis, which Covid-19 has exacerbated, requires a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of interventions meant to prevent opioid misuse, how to treat people experiencing opioid use disorder, and how to curtail its associated health risks. [A new post](#) on the J-PAL blog reviews the ongoing studies conducted by J-PAL's affiliated researchers on promising and innovative interventions and calls for further research in this pressing area.

FEATURED EVALUATION SUMMARY



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Characterizing firm-level discrimination: Evidence from a resume variation experiment

There is a growing body of evidence that employers discriminate against applicants who are perceived to be Black. Researchers in the J-PAL network Patrick Kline (UC Berkeley), Evan Rose (University of Chicago), and Christopher Walters (UC Berkeley) investigated the frequency and concentration of discrimination among large US employers by sending fictional resumes, with varying demographic information, to determine whether certain characteristics would lead to different follow-up contact rates. They found that resumes with distinctively Black names received lower contact rates than those with distinctively white names, an effect that was concentrated among certain firms. In addition, researchers found that firms that were more biased against Black-sounding names were less profitable than those who were less biased.

FEATURED RESEARCH RESOURCE



Photo credit: J-PAL

MicroMasters program in Data, Economics, and Design of Policy

The [MicroMasters Program in Data, Economics, and Design of Policy \(DEDP\)](#) offers online courses for policymakers, researchers, and students looking to generate and use evidence to inform policy. The program's new Public Policy Track covers a range of key public policy areas with examples drawn from the United States and other high-income countries. These topics include domestic issues such as minimum wage and employment, food assistance programs and consumer welfare, and economics of risk and safety regulation, as well as global issues such as trade, climate change, and immigration. Students who complete the DEDP MicroMasters credential are eligible to apply for the on-campus [DEDP Master's](#) program at MIT starting in fall 2025 or pursue

accelerated studies at one of the pathway universities.
Spring courses start on January 16, [enroll today!](#)

Have an idea of content you would like to see in this newsletter? We want to hear from you! Please send your feedback to J-PAL North America Policy and Communications Lead, [Erin Graeber](#).



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