



Australian
National
University

CENTRE FOR SOCIAL
RESEARCH & METHODS



ANU

POLICY EXPERIMENTS LAB

About

The Policy Experiments Lab (PELab) is a collaborative team of researchers and related resources that work on experimental and quasi-experimental studies with an explicit causal and policy focus.

Location

Based in Canberra at the Australian National University (ANU), PELab sits within the Centre for Social Research and Methods (CSRM), in the Research School of Social Sciences (RSSS). CSRM focuses on: the development of social research methods; analysis of social issues and policy; training in social science methods; and providing access to social scientific data. RSSS is one of the four foundation research schools of the Institute of Advanced Studies and Australia's major institution for theoretical and empirical research in the social sciences.

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Background

The PELab was initiated in 2017 to fill a recognised need in the Australian and Asia-Pacific policy environment for high quality, academically rigorous, experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations with an explicit focus on causal inference for policy design.

The ultimate aim of the PELab is to improve the evidence in Australia and the region around what works, and what doesn't work, to improve the lives of the Australian population and the populations of the Asia-Pacific region.

Partners

Researchers in the PELab have worked on experimental or quasi-experimental analysis with a number of Commonwealth Departments (for example the Department of Education, Skills and Employment; Australian Tax Office; Department of Social Services; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare; Department of Human Services), State/Territory Departments (Department of Education Victoria, Victoria Department of Justice and Registration, ACT Treasury) and non-government organisations (Smith Family, Reconciliation Australia).

The PELab is interested in partnering with any organization committed to high quality evaluations of programs and policies.

Services

Staff in the PELab work with policy makers and service providers to help design and evaluate programs and policies for their effectiveness in improving the lives of the Australian and Asia-Pacific population. We also design and deliver our own online and face-to-face experiments where they have a policy focus and/or relevance.

The PELab advocates pre-registration of trials and making data available for secondary use. We work with our partners to collect and archive data from experimental studies.

Work with us

Staff at the PELab are interested in a range of projects from small to large. We are committed to publication of academic findings, and making data from experimental research available for secondary analysis. We undertake commissioned work, as well as collaborative projects with clear policy relevance and academic merit

People

The PELab is led by Prof Nicholas Biddle, a quantitative social scientist and Associate Director of the ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods.

The team in the PELab includes Dr Ralf Steinhauser; Dr Maria Jahromi; Dr James (Jilu) Zhang; Kate Sollis; Dinith Marasinghe; and Lucy Ellen.

Senior ANU staff who are associated with the PELab are Prof Matthew Gray, Prof Robert Breunig, Prof Naomi Priest, A/Prof Ben Edwards, A/Prof Ann Neville, A/Prof Mathias Sinning, Dr Steven McEachern, and Rob Bray.

We also have a number of PhD students working on projects within the PELab.

ANU Partners

The PELab has been set up as a partnership with the Social Research Centre (Australia's leading research service organization), the Australian Data Archive (a national service for the collection, preservation and distribution of digital research data) and the Tax and Transfer Policy Institute in the Crawford School of Public Policy. The PELab also works closely with our CSRM partners in the Centre for Gambling Research (CGR).

Completed and ongoing projects

Staff in the PELab have completed or are currently working on a range of evaluation projects using administrative or survey data. Some of our larger projects include evaluations of:

- The COVID-19 vaccination program in Australia;
- The recall of Takata airbags;
- Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Education;
- The On-PAR (Participation, Attendance, Retention) Program;
- 2014-15 Work for the Dole pilot; and
- Jobhelp Trial (a pre-release prisoner labour market program).

Since the spread of COVID-19 in Australia, staff from the PELab have also been working on the ANU CSRM COVID-19 Impact Monitoring Survey Program, tracking the wellbeing, economic, and mental health outcomes of Australians during the pandemic

<https://csrm.cass.anu.edu.au/research/publications/covid-19>