The Dark Side of Technological Progress? Impact of E-Commerce on Employees at Brick-and-Mortar Retailers

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- Technological advances have the potential to create enormous economic benefits to society
- Technological progress can also reshape and transform some labor markets
 - Changing the way some tasks are conducted
 - Augmenting some workers
 - Potentially replacing some workers

- Technological advances have the potential to create enormous economic benefits to society
- Technological progress can also reshape and transform some labor markets
 - Changing the way some tasks are conducted
 - Augmenting some workers
 - Potentially replacing some workers
- One manifestation: E-commerce
- Question: What's the impact of e-commerce on the employees of the traditional brick-and-mortar retail stores?

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Why Retail Sector?

- The retail sector employed approximately 16 million workers, or 13% of the private sector employment, at the end of 2016 (BLS)
- The rise of technology led by e-commerce caused the recent disruption
 - ► Retail sales by e-commerce: \$35.9 billion / 3.8% (2009Q4) ⇒ \$102.7 billion / 8.3% (2016Q4)
- In the earlier decades, the disruption in the retail sector was mainly driven by the expansion of retail chains
 - Jia (2008), Holmes (2011)

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Rise in e-commerce retail sales

Convenience, pricing, etc

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 - Convenience, pricing, etc
- Does it lead to decrease in sales of brick-and-mortar retail stores?



- Rise in e-commerce retail sales
 - Convenience, pricing, etc
- Does it lead to decrease in sales of brick-and-mortar retail stores?
- Do retail stores cut wages or lay-off workers?

What's the economic magnitude? Can we estimate the causal effect? How? Is the effect homogeneous across the US? Are certain regions affected more?

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 - Using the staggered rollout of a major e-commerce retailer's fulfillment centers (FCs) as a proxy for local e-commerce presence

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- How workers are affected? Which types of workers are more vulnerable?

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 - Using the staggered rollout of a major e-commerce retailer's fulfillment centers (FCs) as a proxy for local e-commerce presence
- How workers are affected? Which types of workers are more vulnerable?
 - Use comprehensive consumer data from a major credit bureau

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- The establishment of a FC in a county has a negative effect on the income of retail workers in that county and neighboring counties within 100 miles
 - The effect is driven by a cut in the number of hours worked
 - Wages of hourly workers, especially part-time workers, decrease significantly
 - The effect has a U-shaped pattern over worker's age

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 - The effect is driven by a cut in the number of hours worked
 - Wages of hourly workers, especially part-time workers, decrease significantly
 - The effect has a U-shaped pattern over worker's age
- Retail stores in counties around FCs experience a reduction in sales
 - There is a reduction in employment, a decrease in entry and an increase in exits of retail stores

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Related Literature

- Effect of technological changes / competition on labor market
 - Technological changes: Krueger (1993), Autor, Katz, and Krueger (1998), Acemoglu (2002), Autor, Levy, and Murnane (2003), Autor (2015), Autor, Dorn, and Hanson (2015)
 - Competition: Basker (2005), Neumark, Zhang, and Ciccarella (2008), Autor, Dorn, and Hanson (2013), Autor, Dorn, Hanson, and Song (2014)
- Cause and consequence of disruptions in the retail sector
 - Holmes (2011), Jia (2008), Basker (2005), Neumark, Zhang, and Ciccarella (2008)
- Impact of e-commerce
 - Brynjolfsson and Smith (2000), Brynjolfsson, Hu, and Smith (2003), Ghose, Smith, and Teland (2006), Subramanian and Walden (2001), Pozzi (2013)

Comprehensive consumer data from a major credit bureau

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- Match income and employment data to credit file
 - Zip code of residence and demographics data
 - Credit score and balance information

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- Match income and employment data to credit file
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- Identify workers employed in 2010Q1 and track these workers over the sample period
 - Quarterly worker data (2010 to 2016) for 2.6 million workers associated with 57 retail stores

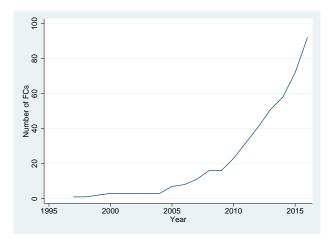
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	N	Mean	Median	Std Dev
Hourly Workers				
Total Income (\$ per quarter)	34,806,676	7,326	6,889	4,197
Wage Income (\$ per quarter)	34,689,666	6,362	6,007	3,553
Bonuses (\$ per quarter)	32,510,284	1,030	738	1,105
Hours Worked (per week)	34,489,187	30.9	33.7	10.1
Wage Rate (\$ per hour)	34,489,187	14.9	13.9	4.54
Salary Workers				
Total Income (\$ per quarter)	5,438,083	21,504	16,357	18,271

Other Data

- Annual establishment data (2010 to 2014) from the National Establishment Time-Series (NETS) Database
 - Sales and employment data
- Quarterly county-industry employment data (2010 to 2016) from Quarterly Census of Employment & Wage (QCEW)
- Fulfillment centers data from MWPVL International
 - Exclude establishment of FCs if a FC has been built in the same county or within 20 miles (Houde, Newberry, and Seim (2017))
- County distance table from NBER
- Analysis is conducted on 6-digit NAICS industries selected based on the major e-commerce retailer's product catalog
 List of Retail Industries

Fulfillment Centers



The staggered rollout of FCs

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Fulfillment Centers

Fulfillment Center Network, 2016



The establishment of FCs allows optimized inventory placement, which in turn allows the e-commerce retailer to cut the shipping costs and shipping times

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Determinant of FCs Locations

- Strong local demand: Higher retail sales and population density
- Weak local economic condition: Lower wages

			FC		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Δ Log(Retail Sales)	0.012***	0.005	0.005	0.005	0.005
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
△ Log(Population Density)		0.114***	0.115***	0.115***	0.116***
		(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)
∆ Unemployment rate			-0.000	-0.000	-0.000
			(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Δ Log Median household income				-0.008	-0.008
				(0.019)	(0.019)
Δ Perc. age b/w 18 and 65					0.000
					(0.001)
Observations	3128	3109	3109	3109	3109
R ²	0.04	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05

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- Objective: Evaluate the local effect of the establishment of a new FC
 - Counties with FCs
 - Counties within 50/100 miles of the FC (excluding counties with FCs)
- Treat each county as treated in the first quarter that a FC opens within county or within 50/100 miles
 - Match worker to a county based on the zip code of residence

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- Treat each county as treated in the first quarter that a FC opens within county or within 50/100 miles
 - Match worker to a county based on the zip code of residence
- Include counties ever treated by the opening of an FC in the analysis Demographics
 - Exploit the variation in the timing of the establishment of FCs
 - Focus on FCs established after 2009

$Y_{i,c,t} = \alpha + \beta \textit{PostFC}_{c,t} + \eta_i + \theta_t + \epsilon_{i,c,t},$

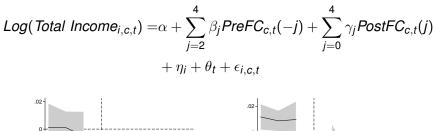
- ▶ *i*: worker, *c*: county, *t*: time
- PostFC is an indicator that equals 1 in the quarter that a FC is established in county *c* or within 50/100 miles of county *c* and remains 1 for all subsequent quarters
- η_i : worker FEs, θ_t : year-quarter FEs
- Standard errors are clustered at the county level

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Effect of FCs on Income of Retail Workers

	Log(Total Income)				
	All Workers	Hourly Workers	Salary Workers		
	(1)	(2)	(3)		
	Panel A: Co	ounties with FCs			
PostFC	-0.024***	-0.025***	-0.010		
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.008)		
Observations	2,175,144	1,881,184	293,960		
Adjusted R ²	0.845	0.809	0.849		
Pane	el B: Counties	s within 50 Miles	of FCs		
PostFC	-0.020***	-0.022***	-0.001		
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.008)		
Observations	5,643,934	4,744,111	899,823		
Adjusted R ²	0.865	0.828	0.856		
Worker FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark		
YearQtr FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark		

Dynamic Effect



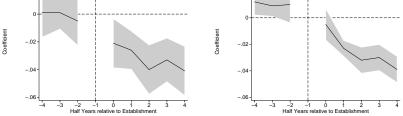


Figure: Counties with FCs

Figure: Counties within 50 Miles

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Can Omitted, Unobservable Firm-Specific Variables or Local Economic Conditions Be Driving the Results?

► The timing of negative shocks to firms with concentrated operations coincide with the timing of FC ⇒ Include firm-year-quarter fixed effects

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Can Omitted, Unobservable Firm-Specific Variables or Local Economic Conditions Be Driving the Results?

- ► The timing of negative shocks to firms with concentrated operations coincide with the timing of FC ⇒ Include firm-year-quarter fixed effects
- Differences in state-level economic and regulatory environments ⇒ Include state-year-quarter fixed effects

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Can Omitted, Unobservable Firm-Specific Variables or Local Economic Conditions Be Driving the Results?

- ► The timing of negative shocks to firms with concentrated operations coincide with the timing of FC ⇒ Include firm-year-quarter fixed effects
- Differences in state-level economic and regulatory environments ⇒ Include state-year-quarter fixed effects
- County-level time-varying unobservables ⇒ Use workers in other industries as a control group & include county-year-quarter fixed effects

Firm-Specific Unobservables and Local Economic Conditions

	Log(Total Income) Hourly Workers								
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)					
	Panel A: Counties with FCs								
PostFC	-0.021***	-0.008***	-0.011***						
	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.002)						
PostFC*Retail				-0.044***					
				(0.006)					
Observations	1,881,184	1,881,184	1,881,184	5,596,632					
Adjusted R ²	0.841	0.811	0.842	0.850					
Pan	el B: Countie	s within 50 N	liles of FCs						
PostFC	-0.017***	-0.020***	-0.018***						
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)						
PostFC*Retail				-0.029***					
				(0.007)					
Observations	4,744,111	4,744,111	4,744,111	14,247,756					
Adjusted R ²	0.862	0.830	0.863	0.852					
Worker FE	√	√	√	✓					
Firm-YearQtr FE	\checkmark		\checkmark						
State-YearQtr FE		\checkmark	\checkmark						
County-YearQtr FE				\checkmark					

How Does the Impact of FCs Vary with Distance from the Focal County?

The negative effect exhibits an inverse U-shape with distance

			L	og(Total Incon	ne)			
		Hourly Workers						
	FC	FC 50 miles 100 miles 150 miles 200 miles 250 miles 500 miles						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	
PostFC	-0.019**	-0.039***	-0.023***	-0.020***	-0.018***	-0.014***	-0.002	
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	
Observations	1,075,790	1,503,517	3,675,332	4,902,589	6,241,358	7,524,622	11,185,880	
Adjusted R ²	0.846	0.856	0.839	0.839	0.842	0.849	0.864	
Worker FE	~	\checkmark	\checkmark	~	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	
YearQtr FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	

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Decomposing the Impact of FC Establishment on Wages

Reduction in hours worked and bonuses and no change in wage rate

	Log(Wage Income)	Log(Bonus)	Log(Hours Worked)	Log(Wage Rate)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)				
Panel A: Counties with FCs								
PostFC	-0.007***	-0.012	-0.007***	0.001***				
	(0.002)	(0.008)	(0.002)	(0.000)				
Observations	1,875,176	1,764,173	1,866,683	1,866,683				
Adjusted R ²	0.842	0.740	0.731	0.970				
Panel B: Counties within 50 Miles of FCs								
PostFC	-0.014***	-0.026***	-0.014***	-0.000				
	(0.002)	(0.009)	(0.002)	(0.001)				
Observations	4,730,532	4,414,584	4,711,647	4,711,647				
Adjusted R ²	0.856	0.744	0.761	0.968				
Worker FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark				
Firm-YearQtr FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark				
State-YearQtr FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark				

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Are All Retail Workers Affected?

U-shaped pattern based on worker's age

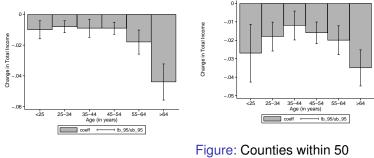


Figure: Counties with FCs

Figure: Counties within 50 Miles

- Part-time workers are affected more
- No difference between male and female workers

Figure

- If labor markets are frictionless, the short-run displacement of some traditional retail store workers may not matter
- ► However, labor markets have frictions and the scope of work differs between traditional retail stores and warehouses ⇒ Some workers can be worse off

- If labor markets are frictionless, the short-run displacement of some traditional retail store workers may not matter
- ► However, labor markets have frictions and the scope of work differs between traditional retail stores and warehouses ⇒ Some workers can be worse off
- Hard to identify any other source of income
- Instead, look at the credit outcomes of the workers
 - The declines in income may lead to worse credit outcomes
 - Especially for the workers who are living on the margin (e.g. high bank card utilization)

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Credit Outcomes

	Counties	Counties within
	with FCs	50 Miles of FCs
	(1)	(2)
	Pane	el A: Credit Scores
PostFC*Low (1)	0.593	0.004
	(0.786)	(0.433)
PostFC*High (2)	-2.500***	-0.835*
	(0.220)	(0.506)
Difference ((2)-(1))	-3.089***	-0.849
	(0.735)	(0.609)
Observations	1,210,611	3,191,674
Adjusted R ²	0.812	0.826
	Panel B: Bank	Card 90+ Day Delinquency
PostFC*Low (3)	-0.001*	-0.000
	(0.001)	(0.001)
PostFC*High (4)	0.006***	0.002**
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Difference ((4)-(3))	0.007***	0.003***
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Observations	1,081,133	2,879,747
Adjusted R ²	0.108	0.111
Worker FE	√	\checkmark
Low-Firm-YearQtr FE	\checkmark	\checkmark
Low-State-YearQtr FE	\checkmark	

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How Do FCs Affect Local Brick-and-Mortar Stores Retail Stores?

- Do FCs affect retail stores in other dimensions?
 - Retail sales
 - Employment
 - Store closure
 - Store opening

The analysis can potentially highlight the channel

Effect of FCs on Sales of Retail Stores

Retail stores in counties around FCs experience a reduction in sales

	Log(1+Sales)			
	All	Small	Medium	Large
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Pa	anel A: Cou	inties with	FCs	
PostFC	-0.028***	-0.029**	-0.020***	-0.034***
	(0.009)	(0.012)	(0.005)	(0.012)
Observations	184,829	63,636	58,799	62,394
Adjusted R ²	0.959	0.808	0.728	0.918
Panel B:	Counties v	vithin 50 N	liles of FCs	S
PostFC	-0.009	0.010	-0.024***	-0.017
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.018)
Observations	509,182	172,954	164,848	171,362
Adjusted R ²	0.956	0.801	0.744	0.914
Establishment FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Ind-Year FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
State-Year FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark

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Increase in store-exit, especially for small and young stores > Exit (Size) > Exit (Age)

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 Increase in store-exit, especially for small and young stores Exit (Size)

Lower entry rate Entry

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- Increase in store-exit, especially for small and young stores Exit (Size) Exit (Age)
- Lower entry rate Entry
- No change in restaurants sales Restaurant

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- Increase in store-exit, especially for small and young stores Exit (Size) Exit (Age)
- Lower entry rate Entry
- No change in restaurants sales Restaurant
- Consistent results with aggregate county-industry data from QCEW county-Industry

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- Limited to the short-run impact of the technological innovation on the retail sector
- Cannot quantify the benefits to consumers
 - Lower prices
 - More choices
 - Additional leisure time
- There are potential positive spillovers in the local community and other sectors
- Quantifying the aggregate effect of e-commerce is beyond the scope of this paper

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- Wages of hourly retail workers in counties with FCs decrease by 2.5%, equivalent to \$825, after the establishment of FCs
- Annual retail sales decrease by 2.8%, about \$64,000 per store. Retail sales for large stores decrease by \$200,000

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List of Retail Industries

NAICS	Industry Name
441310	Automotive parts and accessories stores
441320	Tire dealers
442110	Furniture stores
442210	Floor covering stores
442291	Window treatment stores
442299	All other home furnishings stores
443141	Household appliance stores
443142	Electronics stores
444110	Home centers
444120	Paint and wallpaper stores
444130	Hardware stores
444190	Other building material dealers
444210	Outdoor power equipment stores
444220	Nursery, garden, and farm supply stores
446120	Cosmetic and beauty supply stores
446191	Food, health, supplement stores
446199	All other health and personal care stores
448110	Men's clothing stores
448120	Women's clothing stores
448130	Children's and infants' clothing stores
448140	Family clothing stores
448150	Clothing accessories stores
448190	Other clothing stores
448210	Shoe stores
448310	Jewelry stores
448320	Luggage and leather goods stores
451110	Sporting goods stores
451120	Hobby, toy, and game stores
451130	Sewing, needlework, and piece goods stores
451140	Musical instrument and supplies stores
451211	Book stores
451212	News dealers and newsstands
451220	Precorded tape, cd, and record stores
452111	Department stores, except discount
452112	Discount department stores
452910	Warehouse clubs and supercenters
452990	All other general merchandise stores
453110	Florists
453210	Office supplies and stationery stores
453220	Gift, novelty, and souvenir stores
453310	Used merchandise stores
453910	Pet and pet supplies stores
453920	Art dealers
453930	Manufactured, mobile, home dealers
453991	Tobacco stores
453998	Store retailers not specified elsewhere

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	Full Sample	Counties	Counties within	Counties within
		with FCs	50 Miles of FCs	100 Miles of FCs
Ν	3,135	50	445	1,141
Total Population	308,674,608	30,774,770	86,724,715	163,939,679
Population	98,460.80	615,495.40	194,887.00	143,680.70
Population Density	259.49	672.84	698.24	531.76
Retail Sales (in millions)	431.71	2,827.55	821.65	615.01
Retail Sales per Capita	3,552.72	4,623.48	3,692.95	3,679.81
Median Household Income	43,419.43	56,220.34	51,179.56	47,123.08
Unemployment Rate	9.36	9.64	10.17	10.27
Percent Age under 18	23.49	24.80	23.77	23.22
Percent Age over 65	15.93	12.16	14.08	15.31
Percent High School Graduate or Higher	82.51	85.84	83.04	82.31
Percent Bachelor's Degree or Higher	18.73	27.52	21.74	19.73

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Are All Retail Workers Affected?

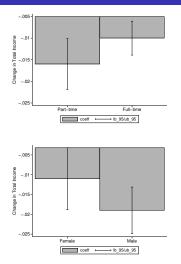


Figure: Counties with FCs



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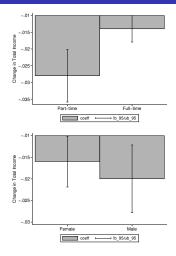


Figure: Counties within 50 Miles

Effect of FCs on Employment of Retail Stores

Retail stores in counties around FCs experience a reduction in employment

	Log(1+Employment)			
	All	Small	Medium	Large
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Р	anel A: Cou	unties with	FCs	
PostFC	-0.024***	-0.027***	-0.019***	-0.025***
	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.009)
Observations	184,829	63,636	58,799	62,394
Adjusted R ²	0.973	0.871	0.907	0.955
Panel B: Counties within 50 Miles of FCs				
PostFC	-0.007	-0.003	-0.015***	-0.005
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.007)
Observations	509,182	172,954	164,848	171,362
Adjusted R ²	0.973	0.875	0.912	0.956
Establishment FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Ind-Year FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
State-Year FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark

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Retail Store Closures: Size Effect

	Exit			
	All	Small	Medium	Large
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Pa	nel A: Cou	nties with	FCs	
PostFC	0.029***	0.038**	0.027***	0.023***
	(0.010)	(0.014)	(0.009)	(0.007)
Observations	161,520	53,753	53,470	54,297
Adjusted R ²	0.214	0.222	0.213	0.207
Panel B:	Counties w	vithin 50 N	liles of FC	s
PostFC	0.023***	0.035***	0.022***	0.012**
	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.005)
Observations	446,770	148,440	148,708	149,604
Adjusted R ²	0.202	0.207	0.201	0.200
Establishment FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Ind-Year FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
State-Year FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark

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Retail Store Closures: Age Effect

	Exit			
	All	Young	Medium	Old
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Pai	nel A: Cou	nties with	FCs	
PostFC	0.032**	0.041**	0.043***	0.007
	(0.012)	(0.016)	(0.013)	(0.010)
Observations	75,162	26,080	25,093	23,984
Adjusted R ²	0.204	0.217	0.199	0.185
Panel B: (Counties v	vithin 50 N	liles of FC	s
PostFC	0.032***	0.040***	0.030***	0.025***
	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.009)	(0.007)
Observations	226,182	79,011	72,694	74,465
Adjusted R ²	0.198	0.212	0.190	0.182
Establishment FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Ind-Year FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
State-Year FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark

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Opening of Retail Stores

	Log(1+Entrants)			
	All	Small	Medium	Large
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Par	nel A: Cou	nties with	FCs	
PostFC	-0.015	-0.118**	0.095	0.019
	(0.040)	(0.052)	(0.083)	(0.078)
Observations	180	180	180	180
Adjusted R ²	0.989	0.974	0.981	0.968
Panel B: C	Counties w	/ithin 50 M	liles of FC	S
PostFC	-0.088**	-0.054	-0.043	-0.133**
	(0.039)	(0.053)	(0.073)	(0.055)
Observations	2,205	2,205	2,205	2,205
Adjusted R ²	0.966	0.937	0.933	0.934
Establishment FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Ind-Year FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
State-Year FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark

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Placebo Tests: Sales of Full-Service Restaurants

No change in restaurants sales

	Log(1+Sales)			
	All	Small	Medium	Large
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Pan	el A: Cou	nties with	FCs	
PostFC	0.002	0.012***	-0.002	-0.002
	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.004)
Observations	110,043	36,097	40,546	33,400
Adjusted R ²	0.979	0.895	0.856	0.944
Panel B: C	ounties w	ithin 50 M	iles of FCs	;
PostFC	0.003	0.010	-0.003	0.000
	(0.003)	(0.008)	(0.004)	(0.008)
Observations	311,132	100,077	115,726	95,329
Adjusted R ²	0.980	0.892	0.806	0.956
Establishment FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
State-Year FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark

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	Log(1+Total Wage)	Log(1+Employment)	Log(1+Average Wage)	Log(1+Establishment)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
		Panel A: Counties w	ith FCs	
PostFC	-0.054	-0.017	-0.040	0.002
	(0.103)	(0.038)	(0.065)	(0.011)
Counties	47	47	47	47
Observations	35,146	35,146	35,146	35,146
Adjusted R ²	0.346	0.615	0.180	0.861
	Panel	B: Counties within 50) Miles of FCs	
PostFC	-0.185*	-0.062**	-0.132**	-0.019***
	(0.097)	(0.031)	(0.066)	(0.007)
Counties	340	340	340	340
Observations	136,336	136,336	136,336	136,336
Adjusted R ²	0.376	0.628	0.210	0.873
County FE	√	√	√	√
Ind-YearQtr FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
State-YearQtr FE	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark

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