



Homeschooling and child safety: Are kids safer at home?

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## **Homeschool Supporters**

9.6% of public school students  
experience unwanted educator  
sexual misconduct  
(Shakeshaft 2003)

## **Supporters of Restrictions**

Attending school forces exposure  
to mandatory reporters: “This  
homeschooling regime poses real  
dangers to children and to  
society” (Bartholet 2020)

# Some Proposed Laws

Hawai'i: SB 2323 (2018) to require background check for child abuse and neglect before allowed to homeschool.

Illinois: HB 3560 (2019) to require CPS to inspect the home for abuse/neglect before allowed to homeschool.

Iowa: HF 272 (2019) "The board of directors of a school district shall conduct quarterly home visits to check on the health and safety of children located within the district who are receiving independent private instruction or private instruction."

More at: [Coalition for Responsible Home Education](#)



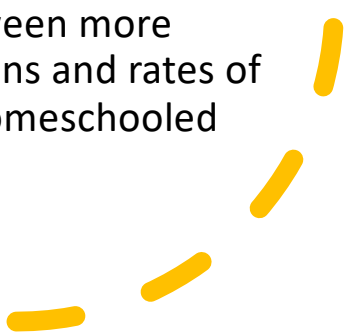
How does homeschooling affect child safety?

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## Existing evidence

No evidence on homeschooling and overall violence experienced by children.


Some on homeschooling and child abuse using Homeschooling's Invisible Children:

1. Coalition for Responsible Home Education: observed fatality rates among homeschooled children are larger than, although not statistically significantly different from, population rates
  2. Brian Ray (2018): no correlation between more stringent state homeschooling regulations and rates of abuse or neglect by the caregivers of homeschooled children.
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- A series of five short, curved yellow lines arranged in a diagonal pattern from the bottom right towards the center of the slide.



# Concerns

- Need exogenous variation in homeschooling
- Measures of child safety



Child maltreatment alone only captures one margin.  
Compared to what?

Exogenous  
variation in  
homeschooling?

Homeschool rights

Bhatt (2014): homeschool rights  
legislation increased rates of  
homeschooling among young children  
(5-8 year olds)

Table 2: States' homeschool rights and sample variation			
State	Homeschool legislation	State	Homeschool legislation
ALASKA	1997	MONTANA	1983
ARIZONA	1982	NEW HAMPSHIRE	1991
ARKANSAS	1985	NEW MEXICO	1985
COLORADO	1988	NEW YORK	1988
DELAWARE	1997	NORTH CAROLINA	1988
FLORIDA	1985	OREGON	1985
GEORGIA	1984	PENNSYLVANIA	1988
HAWAII	1991	RHODE ISLAND	1984
IOWA	1991	SOUTH CAROLINA	1988
LOUISIANA	1984	TENNESSEE	1985
MARYLAND	1987	VERMONT	1987
MICHIGAN	1996	VIRGINIA	1984
MINNESOTA	1987	WASHINGTON	1985
MISSISSIPPI	1982	WEST VIRGINIA	1987
MISSOURI	1986	WISCONSIN	1983
		WYOMING	1985
Italicized states adopted laws during the CDC sample; greyed out states during the NCANDS sample			



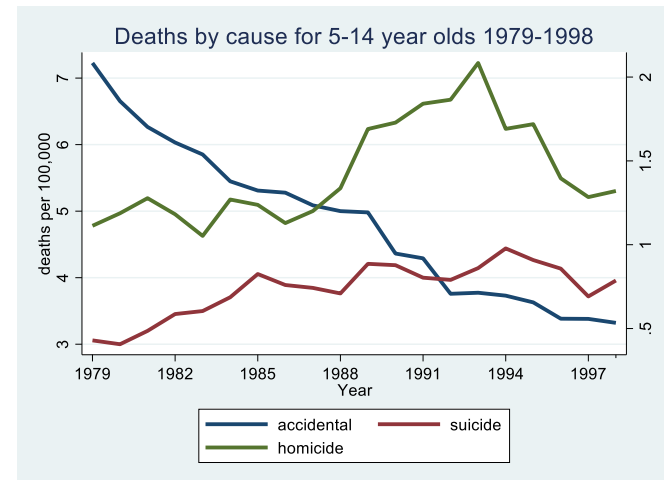
## Violent deaths of 5-9- and 10-14-year-olds (CDC): 1979-1998

### Advantages

- Well-measured
- Overall safety: trade-off between school and home.

### Disadvantages

- Few deaths
- Captures too much (community-violence)
- Captures too little (omits assaults, nonfatal abuse, bullying)



## Child maltreatment fatalities and cases (NDACAN): 1990-2008

### Advantages

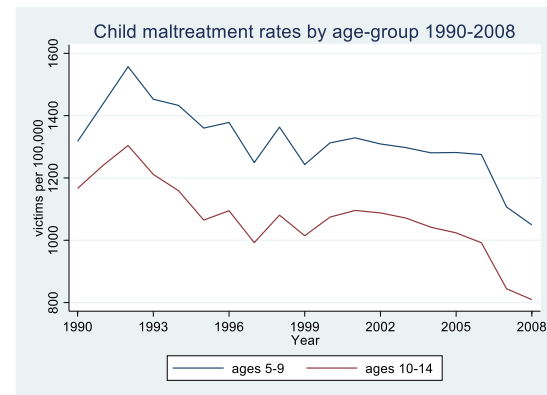
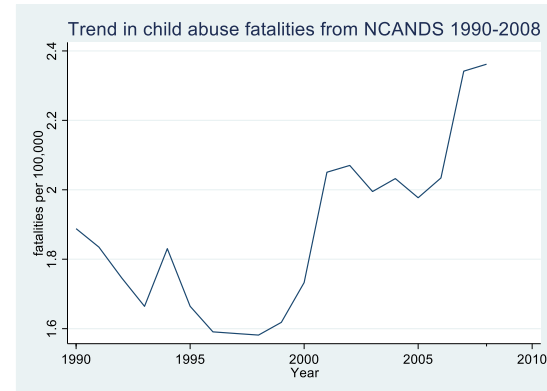
Speaks directly to policymakers' fears

### Disadvantages

Only captures effects of more time with family,  
not less time at school

Most cases are neglect

Changes in reporting?



## Two-way fixed effects

$$child\ outcome_{st} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 homeschool\ rule_{st} + X'\delta + \sigma_s +$$

$$\tau_t + \emptyset_s year_t + \varepsilon_{st}$$

Regressions include state and year fixed effects, availability of school choice programs, real AFDC benefits for a family of 3, the percent black non-Hispanic, the percent Asian non-Hispanic, the percent other race non-Hispanic, logged real per capita income, the percent of children in poverty, percent of children in household without father working, percent of children in household where mom and dad work, the percent of children in household where mom dropped out of high school, the percent of children in households where mom works, the percent of children aged 3 to 4, the percent of children aged 5 to 13, the percent of children aged 14 to 17, the unemployment rate, whether the state has a medical marijuana law, the minimum legal drinking age, BAC 0.08 law, zero tolerance law, state beer tax rate, and – for the later years – whether the state adopted an anti-cyber bullying law.

# Summary of TWFE estimates

## Deaths

- Almost all effects positive, insignificant
- one significant increase: accidental among 10-14 year olds
- Bhatt: only ages 5-8 responded to home school rights.

## Child maltreatment

- fatalities significantly *declined*
- significant *increase* in child abuse cases

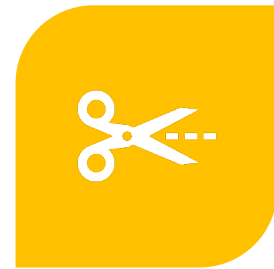
# Robustness Checks



EVENT STUDY



GOODMAN-BACON DECOMPOSITION



REPORTERS CHANGE?

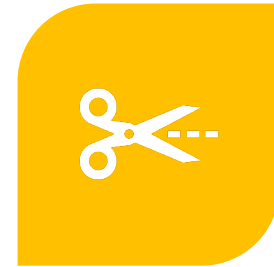
# Robustness Checks



EVENT STUDY  
NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS



GOODMAN-BACON DECOMPOSITION  
VARIETY OF PAIR-WISE EFFECTS,  
AVERAGE ZERO



REPORTERS CHANGE?  
NO



# Weak/no evidence of relationship

For additional homeschool regulations to protect need:

1. homeschooling reduces child safety (not obviously)
2. regulations improve child safety



Thank you!

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