Policing, Allergens, and Recidivism: Officer Disposition and Driver Incentives

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I leverage inter-temporal variation in ambient allergen density and inter-personal variation in allergen sensitivity to estimate the causal impact of traffic citations on recidivism. Using a structural model of officer preferences and driver conduct, I find that over 15% of Florida Highway Patrol officers significantly alter their tendency towards leniency with local pollen density. Using this variation as an instrument for interaction-level lenience, I find that drivers receiving a warning (rather than a citation) are nearly 20% more likely to be involved in a traffic accident and over 35% more likely to receive a speeding citation from the FHP in the following year. I find similar results when repeating the analysis using inter-officer variation in lenience as an instrument.