

Accepted Manuscript

Title: Smoking and Local Unemployment: Evidence from Germany

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PII: S1570-677X(17)30218-6
DOI: <https://doi.org/doi:10.1016/j.ehb.2018.02.004>
Reference: EHB 698

To appear in: *Economics and Human Biology*

Received date: 16-8-2017
Revised date: 21-12-2017
Accepted date: 6-2-2018

Please cite this article as: Micha Kaiser, Mirjam Reutter, Alfonso Sousa-Poza, Kristina Strohmaier, Smoking and Local Unemployment: Evidence from Germany, *Economics and Human Biology* (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ehb.2018.02.004>

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Smoking and Local Unemployment: Evidence from Germany*

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February 27, 2018

Abstract

In this paper, we use data from the German Socio-Economic Panel to investigate the effect of macro-economic conditions (in the form of local unemployment rates) on smoking behavior. The results from our panel data models, several of which control for selection bias, indicate that the propensity to become a smoker increases significantly during an economic downturn, with an approximately 0.7 percentage point increase for each percentage point rise in the unemployment rate. Conversely, conditional on the individual being a smoker, cigarette consumption decreases with rising unemployment rates, with a one percentage point increase in the regional unemployment rate leading to a decrease in consumption up to 0.8 percent.

JEL Classification: E32, I12, J22

Keywords: Business cycle, smoking, unemployment

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