

SAMUEL STOLPER

Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Department of Economics, Building E-52, Room 512
50 Memorial Drive
Cambridge, MA 02142

Email: sstolper@mit.edu
Phone: 617-548-9107
Web: <http://scholar.harvard.edu/sstolper>

Academic Positions:

Assistant Professor, University of Michigan, School of Natural Resources and Environment	Sep 2017 –
Postdoctoral Fellow, MIT (jointly through the MIT Energy Initiative, the Center for Energy and Environmental Policy Research, and the Department of Economics)	Sep 2016 – Aug 2017

Education:

Ph.D. in Public Policy, Harvard University Dissertation: <i>Oil and Water: Essays on the Economics of Natural Resource Usage</i> Advisors: Joseph Aldy, Nathaniel Hendren, Robert Stavins, James Stock	2010 – 2016
B.Sc. in Biomedical Engineering (with honors), Brown University	2002 – 2006

Teaching Experience:

Economics of Climate Change, Harvard University Dept. of Economics (undergraduate), course creator and sole lecturer	2014
Economic Analysis of Public Policy, Harvard Kennedy School of Government (master), teaching fellow for Professor Joseph Aldy	2014

Other Research Experience:

Resources For the Future, Research Intern to Dr. Allen Blackman	2011
Center for International Development at Harvard Kennedy School, Research Assistant to Professors Rema Hanna and Michael Greenstone	2008 – 2010

Professional Activities:

Blog writer, Sense and Sustainability (http://www.senseandsustainability.net)	2014 –
Policy brief writer, Harvard Environmental Economics Program	2014 – 2016
Referee, <i>Environment and Development Economics</i>	2015
Co-administrator, Harvard Environmental Economics Lunch	2013 – 2015

Invited Presentations:

2016: National Tax Association, University of Michigan, Analysis Group, The Brattle Group, Congressional Budget Office, Institute for Policy Integrity (New York University), London School of Economics, Resources for the Future, Seoul National University, Suffolk University
2015: Environmental Defense Fund, National Commission on Markets and Competition (Madrid, Spain), Seoul National University
2014: International Growth Centre (Delhi, India)

Honors and Fellowships:

Enel Endowment Prize for Best Doctoral Research Paper, Harvard Environmental Economics Program	2016
Joseph Crump Fellowship, Harvard Kennedy School (HKS)	2014 – 2015
Certificate of Excellence in Teaching, Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, Harvard University	2014
International Growth Centre Research Grant, International Growth Centre	2013 – 2014
Giorgio Ruffolo Doctoral Fellowship in Sustainability Science, HKS	2012 – 2013
Vicki Norberg-Bohm Fellowship, HKS	2012 – 2013

Working Papers:

“*Who Bears the Burden of Energy Taxes? The Role of Local Pass-Through*”. Harvard Environmental Economics Program Discussion Paper 16-70 (May 2016).

Abstract: Existing estimates of energy tax incidence assume that the pass-through of taxes to final consumer prices is uniform across the affected population. I show that, in fact, variation in local market conditions drives significant heterogeneity in pass-through, and ignoring this can lead to mistaken conclusions about the distributional impacts of energy taxes. I use data from the Spanish retail automotive fuel market to estimate station-specific pass-through, focusing on the effects of competition and wealth. A novel informational mandate provides access to a national, station-daily panel of retail diesel prices and allows me to investigate market composition at a fine level. Event study and difference-in-difference regression reveal that, while retail prices rise nearly one-for-one (100%) with taxes on average, station-specific pass-through rates range from 70 to 115%. Greater market power -- measured by brand concentration and spatial isolation -- is strongly associated with higher pass-through, even after conditioning on detailed demand-side characteristics. Furthermore, pass-through rises monotonically with area-average house prices. While a conventional estimate of the Spanish diesel tax burden suggests roughly equivalent incidence across the wealth distribution, overlaying the effect of heterogeneous pass-through reveals the tax to be unambiguously progressive.

“*Competition and Incidence: Automotive Fuel Tax Pass-Through at State Borders*” (September 2016).

Abstract: I estimate the pass-through of automotive fuel tax changes to final consumer prices, while accounting for how much of a retail market is covered by a tax change. In Spain, retail taxes on automotive fuel have a state-specific component. At state borders, then -- where local competition straddles multiple states -- a tax hike in one state only affects the marginal costs of *some* stations in a market. I show that incidence changes significantly when a cost shock is not uniform throughout a market: while average tax pass-through is nearly 100% (i.e., one-for-one) *away* from state borders, it is reduced to 57% within 5 km of a cross-border rival. At the same time, unaffected cross-border rivals actually *raise* retail prices, which causes some of the state tax's burden to fall on other, neighboring states. The magnitudes of responses on both sides of a border rise in the number and proximity of cross-border rivals. The results show a clear incentive for firms to raise their rivals' costs. More generally, accounting for firm-specific costs in pass-through estimation can inform both forecasting of (e.g., carbon) tax incidence and analysis of potential mergers.

“Can Environmental Policy Reduce Infant Mortality? Evidence from the Ganga Pollution Cases” (Joint with Quy-Toan Do and Shareen Joshi). World Bank Policy Research Discussion Paper #7799 (August 2016).

Abstract: In many developing countries, environmental quality remains low and policies to improve it have been inconsistently effective. We conduct a case study of environmental policy, focusing on an unprecedented ruling by the Supreme Court of India, which targeted industrial pollution in the Ganga River. Difference-in-difference estimations indicate that the ruling led to reductions in river pollution and one-month infant mortality. To look at the mechanisms of impact, we test whether the identified health impact is fully explained by changes in pollution induced by the policy, and fail to reject that it indeed is. In so doing, we also quantify the adverse impact of water pollution on infant health and document the persistence of such impacts in downstream communities.