

The Lockdown, (im)mobility, and health disparities in the Covid-19 pandemic in major American Cities



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Date: 7 Mar 2024 (Thursday)

Time: 14:30 – 16:00 (HKT)

Venue: AAB1312, HKBU

Zoom Link: <https://hkbu.zoom.us/j/92569132277>

Abstract

This study investigates the impact of lockdowns and work-from-home (WFH) policies on COVID-19 health disparities within major U.S. cities. Analyzing spatial data and cellphone mobility, findings reveal that increased home confinement, with people spending 20% more time at home and 40% working remotely in 2020, correlates with lower infection and death rates. However, the effectiveness of these measures varies by neighborhoods. Areas with higher minority and lower-income populations showed less mobility reduction and consequently higher COVID-19 rates, suggesting that lockdown and WFH policies are less effective in these communities. The study highlights how public infrastructure and behavioural patterns mediate pandemic outcomes and emphasizes the intersection of race, socioeconomic status, and health disparities. By examining the role of mobility, the research provides insights into the structural factors influencing health inequities during the pandemic.

Biography

Prof. Youqin Huang is a Professor and Chair of Geography and Planning at University at Albany, State University of New York. Her research aims to understand the impact of socioeconomic transformation and government policies, focusing on housing, migration, and health and wellbeing. Her research appears in top-tier journals like PNAS, the China Quarterly, Annals of American Association of Geographers, Urban Studies, Cities, Housing Studies, Environment and Planning A and B. As a dedicated promoter of urban China studies and mentor to emerging China scholars, she holds leadership roles such as the Co-Director of Urban China Research Network (UCRN), Vice-President of the Research Committee on Housing and Built Environment (RC 43) of International Sociological Association, and a Standing Board member of Research Grants Council of University Grants Committee of Hong Kong. Her excellence in service and research has been recognized with multiple awards, including “President’s Award for Exemplary Public Engagement” in 2020 and the “President’s Excellence Award in Research and Creative Activities” in 2023 from UAlbany.