

# How Do Interest Rates Affect Consumption? Household Debt and the Role of Asset Prices

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Us: natural experiments + consumption/mortgage microdata to isolate household debt channel

- Find an important role for asset prices

# A Natural Experiment for Changing Interest Rates

**Natural experiment:** UK mortgage market [Cloyne et al '19, '20]

- Households choose mortgage “deal” for 2, 3 or 5 years
  - Interest rate determined at start, fixed over deal [floating rate during deal uncommon]
  - When deal expires, strong incentives to start new deal
  - No cost of mortgage borrowing at deal start, large costs otherwise
- $\Delta$ interest rate + refinancing at **pre-determined**, **staggered** + **anticipated** times

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**Literature:** estimates of the household debt channel. [e.g. Di Maggio et al '17, Holm et al '21 ... ]

- **Previous:** “cashflow effects” / debt service. **Us:** **asset prices** + borrowing

# Merged Mortgage & Consumption Data

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  - **Transaction-level** data from bank accounts, 1 700 000 individuals total
  - Classify transactions with machine learning → aggregate to **durables + non-durables**
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Study both: mortgage dataset, **merged mortgage + consumption dataset**

- Where possible: show similar outcomes in both datasets
- Reweight merged mortgage + consumption dataset on observables

Both datasets available at **monthly frequency**

# Setting: Mortgage Deals in the UK

# Mortgage Deals + Refinancing in the United Kingdom

Households choose mortgage deals for 2, 3 or 5 years: [Cloyne, Huber, Ilzetzki & Kleven '19]

- Interest rate typically fixed over deal at low teaser rate [floating rates uncommon]
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- Or pay fixed cost to **start new deal** [ $\approx$ 1000 pounds]

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+ **No additional cost** to mortgage borrowing when new deal starts

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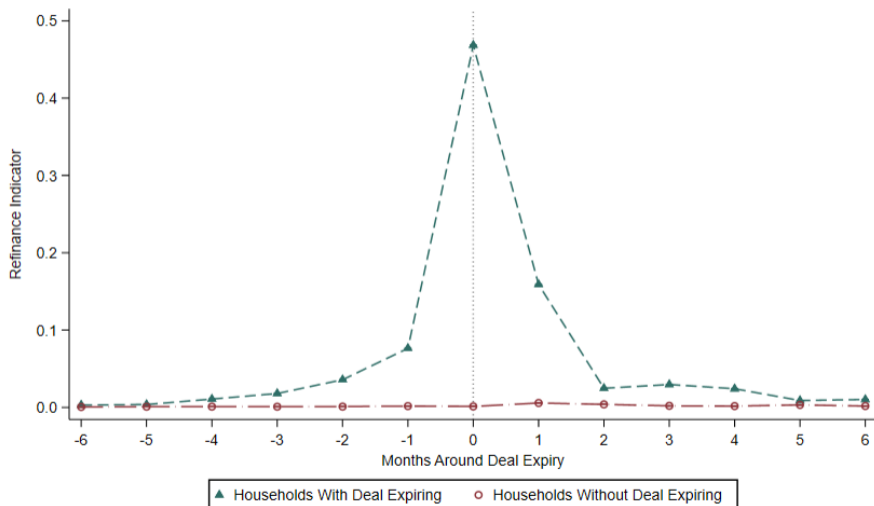
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$\Delta$ interest rate + refinancing opportunity at **pre-determined**, **staggered**, and **anticipated** times

## Deal Expiration: Behavior of Refinancing



Cumulatively  $\approx 90\%$  of households refinance when deal expires

# Household Debt Channel—Simple Framework

# Simple Framework: Incomplete Markets + Collateral

Standard model with mortgages [e.g. Maxted et al '24] + collateral [e.g. Bernanke et al '95; Auclert '19]

Aims:

- Define household debt channel, importance of borrowing + asset prices
- Map into natural experiment

# Simple Framework: Incomplete Markets + Collateral

Household problem: old mortgage deal from  $-n$  to  $0$ , new deal from  $0$  to  $N$  [ignore moving]

$$\max_{\{c_t, a_t, d_t\}_{t=0}^N} E_0 \left[ \sum_{t=0}^N \beta^t u(c_t) + \beta^{N+1} v(a_{N+1}, d_{N+1}) \right]$$

$$c_t + a_t - d_t = y_t + (1 + r_t^a) a_{t-1} - (1 + r_t^d) d_{t-1}$$

$$d_t - d_{t-1} = -\xi \quad t \neq 0 \quad a_t \geq \underline{a}$$

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Mortgage rate increasing in loan-to-value at start of deal

$$r_t^d = \begin{cases} r_0 + \omega_0 & t \geq 0 \\ r_{-n} + \omega_{-n} & t < 0 \end{cases} \quad \omega_t = \omega \left( \frac{d_t}{p(r_t) h} \right)$$

“Soft” collateral constraint, nests “hard” constraint ( $\omega' \rightarrow \infty$  at max. LTV)

[Bernanke et al '95; Kiyotaki & Moore '97; Iacoviello '05; Auclert '19]

UK rate schedule

# Defining the Household Debt Channel

Household debt channel of interest rates on consumption:

$$\Delta c_0 \approx \text{MPC} \left( \frac{\partial \text{cash on hand}_0}{\partial r} \right) (r_0 - r_{-n}) + \underbrace{\mathcal{Y} \Delta y}_{\text{income}}$$

$$\frac{\partial \text{cash on hand}_0}{\partial r} = \frac{\partial \text{borrowing}_0}{\partial r} - \frac{\partial \text{debt service}_0}{\partial r}$$

MPC out of cash on hand

- Cf. HANK: household debt channel vs. indirect effect of income [Kaplan et al '18; Auclert '19]
- Previous: debt service / “cashflow effects”. But: borrowing also important
- Role of asset prices— $\partial \text{borrowing} / \partial r$  depends on:
  - Intertemporal substitution
  - Response of house prices to rates ( $p'(r)$ )

## Main Regression Specification—Estimating Household Debt Channel (1/2)

Now: estimate household debt channel with natural experiment

Later: importance of borrowing + asset prices

## Main Regression Specification—Estimating Household Debt Channel (1/2)

Consumption response

$$\Delta c_{it} = \left( \frac{\partial \text{cash on hand}}{\partial r} \right) (r_t - r_{t-N_i}) + \mathcal{Y} \Delta y_{it}$$

# Main Regression Specification—Estimating Household Debt Channel (1/2)

Consumption response as a regression

$$\Delta c_{it} = \text{MPC} \left( \frac{\partial \text{cash on hand}}{\partial r} \right) (r_t - r_{t-N_i}) + \alpha_t + \varepsilon_{it}$$

- $\alpha_t$  = time fixed effect,  $\varepsilon_{it}$  = idiosyncratic income [+ other GE shocks]

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Identification assumption: ( $\Delta$ interest rate over past deal)  $\perp$  (future idiosyncratic income)

- Natural experiment “differences out” general equilibrium movements in income Wealth effects

[cf. Liu '22]

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[cf. Liu '22]

Comparison to US: regression always biased because refinancing is endogenous

## Regression Specification—Estimating Direct Effect (2/2)

Main specification for household  $i$  and month  $t$

$$\sum_{j=-4}^h [Y_{i,t+j} - Y_{i,t_0}] = \alpha_{th} + \beta^h (r_t - r_{t-N_i}) + \varepsilon_{ith}$$

Key outcomes  $Y_{it}$ : **cash-on-hand** + **consumption expenditure**

→ Response of consumption relative to cash-on-hand identifies MPC

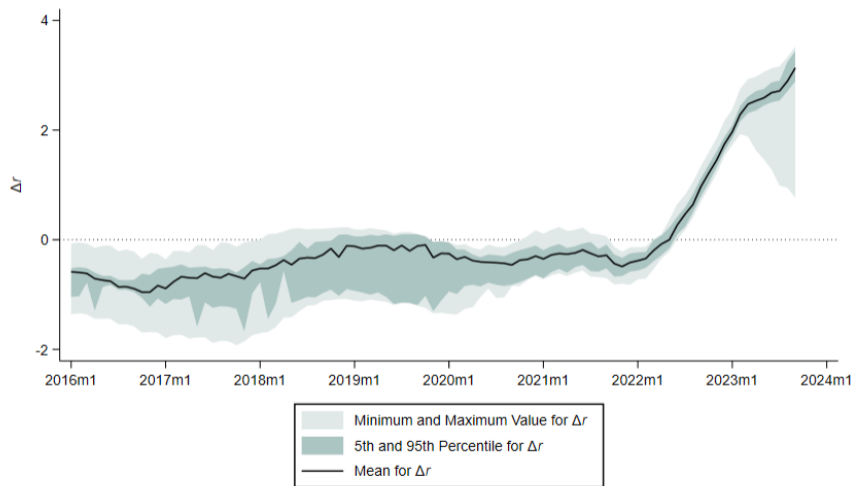
$r_t - r_{t-N_i}$  is the change in **aggregate** mortgage rate over deal length

Pre-period measures **anticipation effects**

Sample: households with expiring deals

≈ **3.5 million** households shocked at least twice → can add **household fixed effects**

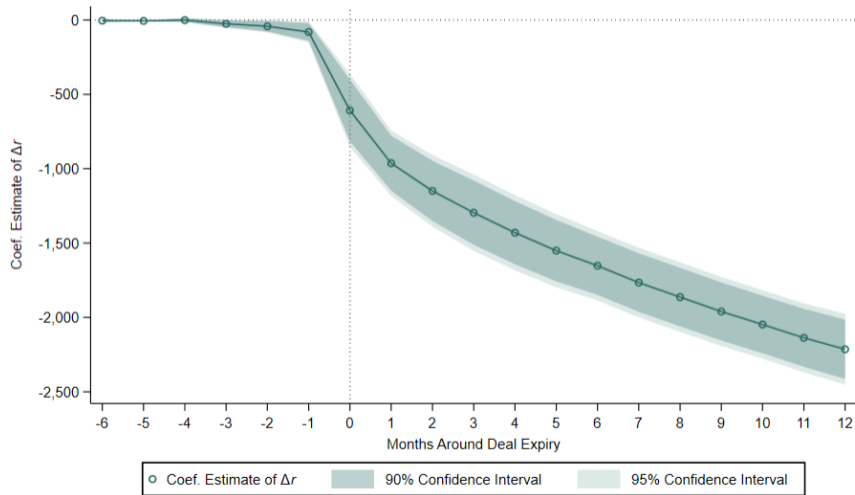
# Interest Rate Variation Corresponding to Main Regression



From 6 million natural experiments

# Estimates: Household Debt Channel

# Impulse Response of Cash on Hand



## Impulse Response of Cash on Hand—Sources of Variation

	6-month response of cash on hand
Coefficient	-1 766*** (98)
Observations	6 788 665
Year FE	✓
Age FE	✓

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Coefficient	-1 766*** (98)	-1 706*** (134)
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Year FE	✓	✓
Age FE	✓	✓
Deal length × year FE		✓

Sources of variation:

- Deal length × year FE: deals of same length expiring at different times within year

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	6-month response of cash on hand		
Coefficient	-1 766*** (98)	-1 706*** (134)	-2 243*** (213)
Observations	6 788 665	6 788 665	6 788 665
Year FE	✓	✓	✓
Age FE	✓	✓	✓
Deal length × year FE		✓	
Household FE			✓

Sources of variation:

- Deal length × year FE: deals of same length expiring at different times within year
- Household FE: same household experiencing rate changes at different points in time

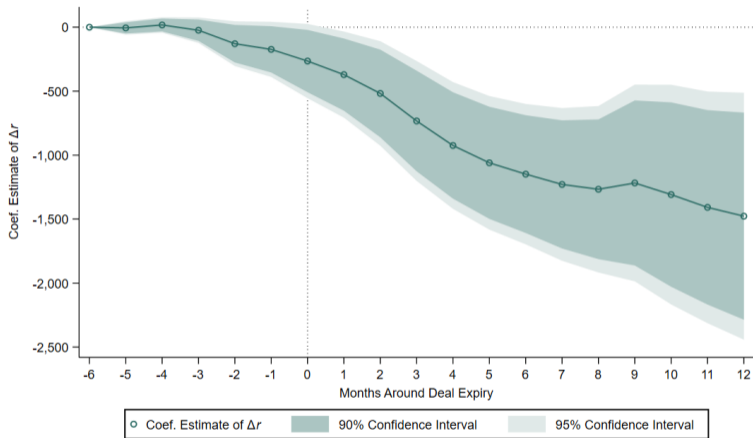
## Impulse Response of Cash on Hand—Sources of Variation

Coefficient	6-month response of cash on hand			
	-1 766*** (98)	-1 706*** (134)	-2 243*** (213)	-1 791*** (115)
Observations	6 788 665	6 788 665	6 788 665	3 675 859
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Age FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Deal length × year FE		✓		
Household FE			✓	
Month FE				✓

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- Month FE: deals of different length expiring in same month

# Impulse Response of Consumption



- MPC out of cash on hand  $\approx 0.7$
- 1 pp rate cut raises spending by 3% of annual consumption = 0.3% of GDP
- Comparable to effect of rate cuts on aggregate consumption [cf. Cloyne et al '17]

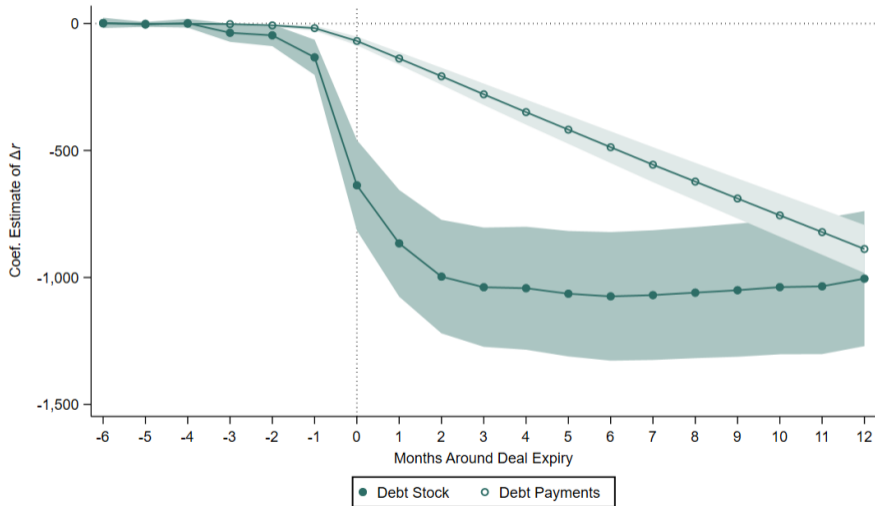
Mortgage vs. consumption sample

Table

Scatters

# The Role of Asset Prices

# Borrowing Accounts for Majority of Cash-on-Hand Response



Borrowing accounts for 60-80% of response of cash-on-hand → asset prices could matter

## Asset Prices Important for Response of Borrowing

Regression—how does borrowing response depend on regional house price response  $\eta_j$ ?

$$\Delta \text{borrowing}_{ijt} = \alpha_t + \gamma_j + \beta_0 (r_t - r_{t-n_i}) + \beta_{AP} \times \eta_j (r_t - r_{t-n_i}) + \varepsilon_{it} \quad \eta_j \equiv \frac{d \log P_j}{dr}$$

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Intuition for identification:

- After aggregate interest rate cut, house prices rise in London relative to York
- Is household debt channel of rates on borrowing larger in London than York?

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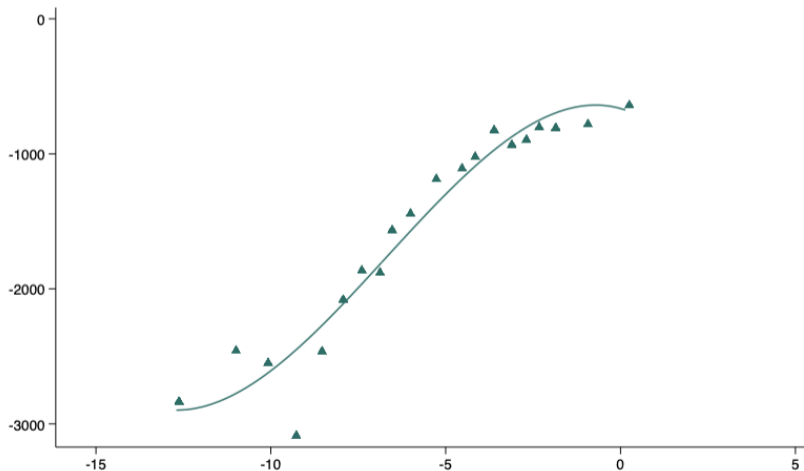
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- Is household debt channel of rates on borrowing larger in London than York?

In paper: instruments for  $\eta_j$

- Land supply elasticity [cf. Guren et al '21]
- Duration of housing stock [cf. Giglio et al '13; Backer-Peral et al '26]

# Asset Prices Important for Response of Borrowing

Regional house price response (x axis) vs. household debt channel for borrowing (y axis)



Asset price mvt accounts for  $\approx 60\%$  of household debt channel, MPC housing wealth  $\approx 0.03$

# Conclusion

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This paper estimates how rate cuts affect consumption via the **household debt channel**

Exploits:

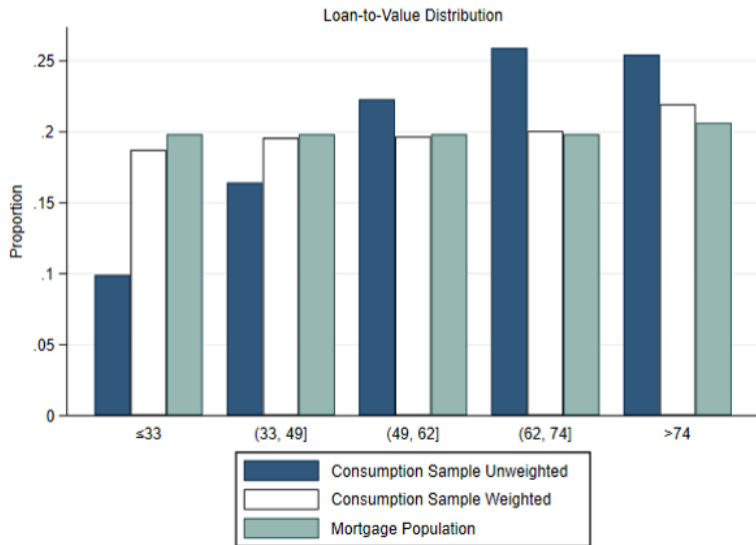
- Merged **mortgage + consumption** dataset
- **Natural experiments** from mortgage deal expiry

Results:

1. Household debt channel is sizeable
2. **Borrowing + collateral** accounts for most of household debt channel

Figures/Figures\_May\_2025/FigA0\_ONS\_v\_CSMDB.png

## Consumption Data Validation (2/6)



## Consumption Data Validation (3/6)

Figures/Figures\_May\_2025/FigA2\_consumption\_sample\_distn\_age.png

## Consumption Data Validation (4/6)

Figures/Figures\_May\_2025/FigA3\_consumption\_sample\_distn\_homevalue.png

## Consumption Data Validation (5/6)

Figures/Figures\_May\_2025/FigA4\_consumption\_sample\_distn\_income.png

## Consumption Data Validation (6/6)

Figures/Figures\_May\_2025/FigA5\_consumption\_sample\_distn\_region.png

XX Belinda to add



# Model Details on Response of Consumption

[Return](#)

# Model Details on Labor Supply

[Return](#)



## Effect Omitting Pandemic

	Full Sample				Omit Pandemic (2020-2021)			
	$\Delta$ Cash on Hand	$\Delta$ Principal	$-\Delta$ Payments	$\Delta$ Consumption	$\Delta$ Cash on Hand	$\Delta$ Principal	$-\Delta$ Payments	$\Delta$ Consumption
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
$\Delta$ Mortgage Rate	-1818.206*** (104.530)	-1100.080*** (119.383)	-718.125*** (38.187)	-937.840*** (277.453)	-1749.650*** (115.184)	-1033.995*** (131.344)	-715.655*** (40.593)	-953.621*** (290.716)
Observations	6796488	6796488	6796488	68735	4876119	4876119	4876119	39805
Adjusted $R^2$	0.011	0.007	0.111	0.003	0.013	0.008	0.124	0.003
Trigger Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Age FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

\* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

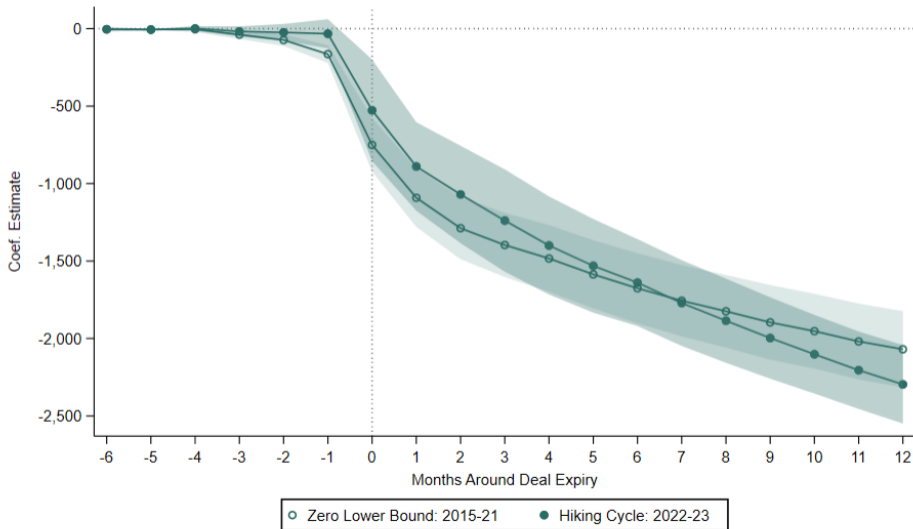
## Alternative Mortgage Rates

	$\Delta$ Cash on Hand				
	OLS		IV: Agg. Rate Change	IV: Init. Deal Rate Change	IV: Init. LTV Rate Change
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
$\Delta$ Mortgage Rate	-1818.206*** (104.530)				
$\Delta$ Individual Mortgage Rate		-1825.962*** (58.729)	-1664.483*** (94.195)	-1645.488*** (92.655)	-1494.208*** (101.511)
Observations	6796488	6796488	6796488	6796488	6740237
Adjusted $R^2$	0.011	0.020	0.010	0.010	0.009
K-Papp F-Stat			444.975	238.655	280.483
Trigger Year FE	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Age FE	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

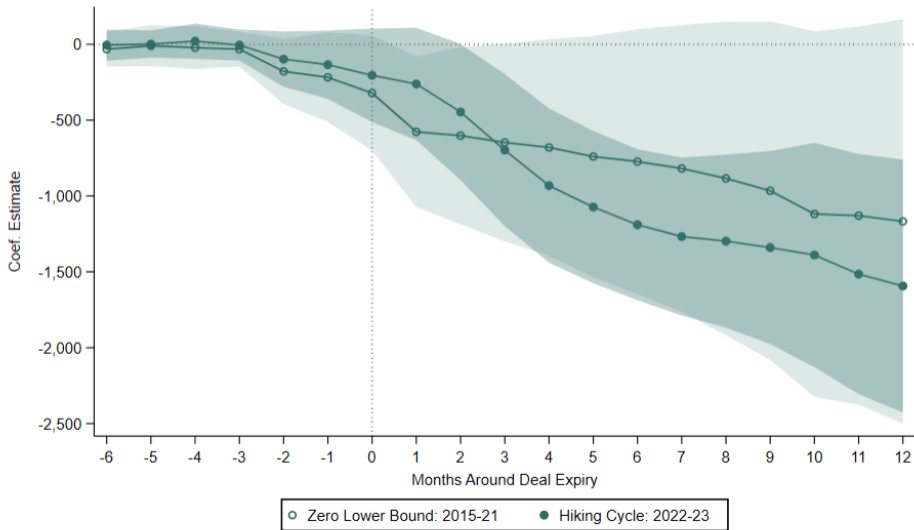
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# Asymmetry in Cash on Hand Response

[Return](#)



# Asymmetry in Consumption Response



## Response of Cash on Hand in Consumption Sample

	$\Delta$ Cash on Hand						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
$\Delta$ Mortgage Rate	-1316.663*** (101.644)	-1885.352*** (247.679)	-1918.610*** (252.544)	-1625.445*** (259.722)	-1574.126*** (257.744)	-1981.385*** (246.974)	-1580.123** (770.878)
Observations	68735	68735	68735	68735	68735	68734	17614
Adjusted $R^2$	0.005	0.006	0.009	0.009	0.010	0.019	0.112
Trigger Year FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Age FE	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Deal Length FE	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Deal Length $\times$ Year FE	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Household Controls	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Household FE	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes

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## 6 Month Impulse Response of Consumption

	$\Delta$ Consumption						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
$\Delta$ Mortgage Rate	-275.546*	-914.035***	-937.840***	-914.482***	-834.833**	-899.112***	-1814.119***
	(154.020)	(278.201)	(277.453)	(300.098)	(320.430)	(281.981)	(584.802)
Observations	68735	68735	68735	68735	68735	68734	17614
Adjusted $R^2$	0.000	0.002	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.007	0.040
Trigger Year FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Age FE	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Deal Length FE	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Deal Length x Year FE	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Household Controls	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Household FE	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes

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## Response Instrumenting with High Frequency Shocks

	$\Delta$ Cash on Hand				$\Delta$ Consumption			
	OLS (1)	IV (2)	OLS (3)	IV (4)	OLS (5)	IV (6)	OLS (7)	IV (8)
$\Delta$ Mortgage Rate	-1818.206*** (104.530)	-2102.758 (1357.213)	-1816.882*** (114.602)	-2320.410*** (193.350)	-937.840*** (277.453)	-1011.706 (764.653)	-1363.772*** (388.158)	-1313.391** (607.037)
Observations	6796488	6796488	6796488	6796488	68735	68735	68735	68735
Adjusted $R^2$	0.011	0.001	0.012	0.000	0.003	0.000	0.011	0.000
K-Papp F-Stat		0.231		290.056		4.192		194.098
Trigger Year FE	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Trigger Month FE	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Age FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

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# First Stage with High Frequency Shocks

## First Stage with Shocks

	$\Delta$ Mortgage Rate			
	Mortgage Sample		Consumption Sample	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
HF Mon Policy Shock	-0.258 (0.536)	1.970*** (0.116)	-1.187** (0.580)	1.935*** (0.139)
Observations	6796488	6796488	68735	68735
Adjusted $R^2$	0.879	0.981	0.868	0.984
F-Stat	0.231	290.056	4.192	194.098
Trigger Year FE	Yes	No	Yes	No
Trigger Month FE	No	Yes	No	Yes
Age FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

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## MPC Estimates

	$\Delta$ Consumption		
	Baseline (1)	Household FE (2)	Month FE (3)
$\Delta$ Cash on Hand	0.516*** (0.153)	0.798*** (0.257)	0.751*** (0.214)
Second Stage Observations	68735	17614	68735
Adjusted $R^2$	0.003	0.040	0.011
K-Papp F-Stat	302.555	112.830	251.343
Trigger Year FE	Yes	Yes	No
Trigger Month FE	No	No	Yes
Age FE	Yes	No	Yes
Household FE	No	Yes	No

\* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

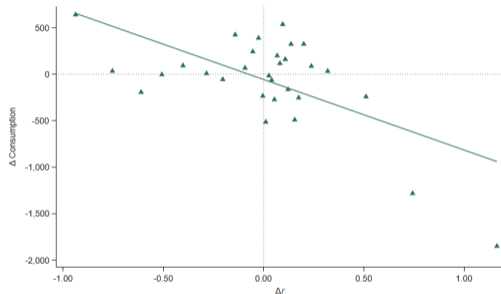
## Response of Borrowing vs. Debt Service

	$\Delta$ Cash on Hand	$\Delta$ Principal	$-\Delta$ Payments	$\Delta$ Cash on Hand	$\Delta$ Principal	$-\Delta$ Payments
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
$\Delta$ Mortgage Rate	-1818.206*** (104.530)	-1100.080*** (119.383)	-718.125*** (38.187)	-2272.775*** (213.965)	-1566.959*** (227.213)	-705.816*** (45.409)
Observations	6796488	6796488	6796488	3681291	3681291	3681291
Adjusted $R^2$	0.011	0.007	0.111	0.073	0.071	0.068
Trigger Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Age FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Household FE	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

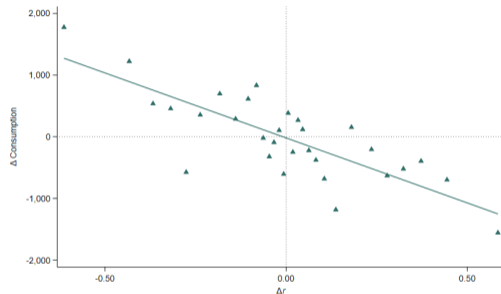
\* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

# Consumption Scatterplots

Return



Without Household Fixed Effects



With Household Fixed Effects

# Placebo Income Response

[Return](#)