

Examples of Empirical Research Questions

1. What is the effect of working during high school (or college) on GPA?
 - a. Variations on this topic (*e.g.*, what is the effect of alcohol or drug use on GPA?)
2. Do gun control laws reduce violent crimes?
3. Are police officers compensated for working in higher-risk environments?
4. Do parental consent laws increase the teenage birth rate or reduce abortion rates among teenagers?
5. Are blacks or other minorities discriminated against in the lending market?
6. Is there a marriage premium for professional athletes (or other types of workers)?
7. Are cigarette smokers less productive? Do they take more sick days?
8. Do minimum wage laws alleviate poverty?
9. What factors affect student performance at public schools? Spending per student? Student-teacher ratios? Family income? Availability of charter or private school alternatives?
10. Can excess returns on a stock, or a stock index, be predicted by the lagged price/dividend ratio?
11. Is there discrimination in the market for baseball cards (*i.e.*, do the cards of black or Hispanic players sell at a discount)?
12. What effect, if any, does success in college athletics have on other aspects of the university (applications, quality of students, quality of non-athletic departments, endowments and alumni contributions)?
13. Do sentencing laws, such as three-strikes or the death penalty, deter crime?
14. What factors affect education spending per pupil (*i.e.*, do districts with a larger percentage of elderly people spend less on schools)?
15. Do motorcycle helmet laws, speed-limit laws, seat-belt laws, or cell-phone laws affect highway fatalities? Something similar could be done with boating laws.
16. What factors affect output growth? In particular, does investment or inflation affect the growth rate of output?
17. What factors affect the number of mergers in the U.S. economy?

18. What factors might explain racial and gender differences in employment and wages?
19. What affect do minimum wage laws have on teenage employment?
20. Does firm performance affect CEO salaries?
21. How do economic indicators affect election outcomes?
22. Do national chain stores or restaurants practice price discrimination based on characteristics of the population they serve?
23. Is the demand for college education price elastic? Is it income elastic?
24. How do the characteristics of houses affect housing prices in a particular city or region?
25. To what extent do salaries of professional athletes reflect their marginal productivities? Are these athletes over- or under-paid?
26. Do consumer confidence indices explain consumer spending?
27. Do students who experience large gains in standardized test scores earn more in the labor market than their peers who didn't experience large gains?
28. Do increases in immigration have any effect on crime rates?
29. What is the relationship between income and obesity?
30. What is the effect of home team fan attendance on team performance?
31. What factors determine the amount of donations raised for natural disaster relief efforts?
32. What is the effect of outsourcing on the labor market of a particular industry or occupation?
33. What factors have influenced the spread of casino gaming in the United States?
34. What factors affect the demand for state lotteries and lottery products?
35. What is the relationship between the number of young drivers and the number of fatal vehicle collisions in California?