

Re: R: RIG-24267 / Retraction of your article in Journal of Population Economics, response needed

Da Ciacci, Riccardo <Riccardo.Ciacci@alumni.eui.eu>

Data mer 18/06/2025 16:19

A researchintegrityteam <researchintegrityteam@springernature.com>

Cc Klaus F. Zimmermann <klaus.f.zimmermann@gmail.com>; Alfonso Flores-Lagunes <afloresl@syr.edu>

Dear Mr. Kersjes,

I'm sorry to trouble you again before receiving a reply, but I felt compelled to follow up, as I remain deeply concerned about this issue.

As you know, a scientific committee spent nearly a year carefully reviewing the results, my writing, and replication code related to this paper before reaching a decision. That process concluded with the decision that a retraction did not proceed. It is therefore extremely distressing to see this matter being reconsidered now, especially in light of a renewed wave of online harassment that has continued unchecked for over a year. Given such a context, a retraction should be firmly discarded, as it would not only disregard the conclusions of the scientific review process but also risk legitimizing an external harassment campaign as a basis for editorial decisions.

I would also like to inform you that I will have limited availability over the next four days and may not be able to respond promptly if further short-notice input is requested.

Thank you for your attention and your work on this matter. I trust you understand the seriousness of my concerns and the importance of ensuring that any public statement accurately reflects the sequence of events and the integrity of the process.

Sincerely,
Riccardo Ciacci

On 13 Jun 2025 11:59, "Ciacci, Riccardo" <Riccardo.Ciacci@alumni.eui.eu> wrote:

Dear Mr. Kersjes,

Thank you for your message.

I am truly sorry and deeply disappointed to learn that the Head of Research Integrity is aligned with the decision to retract the paper, not on scientific grounds, but following a renewed wave of online harassment. This is easy to demonstrate: neither the responsible editors nor the journal considered retraction after the publication of the new and old results—only after the online harassment campaign resumed was this course of action initiated. This sequence speaks volumes.

Let me be unequivocally clear: *you do not have my permission to include my name in the retraction notice*. If you insist on publishing a retraction, you must either include the explanatory note I previously provided—one that clearly outlines the true context and

acknowledges that retraction was not considered until well after both results were available—or you must omit my name entirely from the notice. You are also welcome to reproduce my correspondence with the editor in full and publish it alongside the retraction. I will likewise make that correspondence publicly available on my own webpage. If you choose not to publish my explanatory note, and still go ahead with the retraction, you must exclude my name. You are not authorized to associate me with a retraction that misrepresents the chronology of editorial actions and fails to acknowledge the broader context. I repeat: my name cannot be used in a statement that does not reflect the truth. It is extremely troubling that, to this day, the journal and affiliated parties have not taken any meaningful action to address the online harassment campaign that is ongoing and well-documented. I have raised this matter repeatedly, and it continues to be ignored. That failure speaks directly to the integrity of this process and casts serious doubt on the motivations behind this retraction.

I will be transparent with the public. If you proceed with a retraction that does not include my clarifying note, I will publish the full correspondence with the editors, demonstrating the absence of scientific rationale for this decision and the timeline that shows it was triggered by external harassment.

Once again: if the journal does not wish to publish the truth, it must omit my name. That is non-negotiable.

Sincerely,
Riccardo Ciacci

Riccardo Ciacci
<https://sites.google.com/site/riccardociacci/>
 Associate Professor of Economics
 Universidad Pontificia Comillas

Da: researchintegrityteam <researchintegrityteam@springernature.com>

Inviato: giovedì 12 giugno 2025 14:28

A: Ciacci, Riccardo <Riccardo.Ciacci@alumni.eui.eu>

Oggetto: RE: RIG-24267 / Retraction of your article in Journal of Population Economics, response needed

Dear Riccardo Ciacci,

Thank you again for your follow up emails. I'm truly sorry to hear that you have been on the receiving end of online harassment, and I hope appropriate action can be taken.

We will proceed with the retraction of your article, following the Editor-in-Chief's recent decision to retract, and in line with the retraction guidelines of the Committee on Publication Ethics. The retraction notice will read:

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The Editor-in-Chief has retracted this article. Following publication, concerns were raised regarding the analysis presented in this article. Postpublication review [1] concluded that the original results and conclusions are incorrect and are not supported by the data, as confirmed by a re-analysis of the data by the author [2].

The author disagrees with this retraction.

[1] Zimmermann, K.F. Comment on “ Banning the purchase of sex increases cases of rape: evidence from Sweden”. J Popul Econ 38, 40 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-025-01096-1>

[2] Ciacci, R. Additional evidence on the effects of banning the purchase of sex on cases of rape in Sweden. J Popul Econ 38, 41 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-025-01094-3>

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I would like to emphasize once more that a retraction of any article is not carried out because of alleged misconduct, but in order to correct the published record if it's found that the results and conclusions of the original article can no longer be relied upon, for example due to an error. I would like to note again that the retraction decision has not been the result of a misconduct investigation, as this would be beyond our and the Editor-in-Chief's remit. However, having become aware of this matter and having evaluated the concerns, the research integrity team liaised with the Editor-in-Chief and recommended a retraction, which the EiC then confirmed. In our view the retraction adheres to the COPE retraction guidelines of which this journal is a member. If you believe the retraction decision is not in line with COPE recommendations, you can raise your concerns with COPE directly, here: <https://publicationethics.org/facilitation-and-integrity> In the interest of transparency, I would like to declare that I serve as a COPE trustee board member, but in that capacity I am not a member of the Facilitation and Integrity subcommittee, and will be excluded from any cases involving Springer Nature journals.

Regarding citations: I appreciate your comment that the two articles are meant to be read together. This would work well if the articles are sourced from Springer Nature Link, where the re-analysis is bidirectionally linked to the original article. However, we cannot ensure that this happens outside Springer Nature Link. Issuing a formal retraction ensures that the wider context also becomes part of the published record beyond our own platforms, as retractions are indexed by relevant indexers, increasing its discoverability. I would also like to clarify that the retraction of the article does not mean the article will be removed entirely and be made unavailable: following the retraction readers can still access the article and read it in tandem with the re-analysis, though the original article will be clearly marked as being retracted.

Sincerely,

Tim Kersjes.

From: Ciacci, Riccardo <Riccardo.Ciacci@alumni.eui.eu>
Sent: Friday, June 6, 2025 11:09 AM
To: researchintegrityteam <researchintegrityteam@springernature.com>
Subject: R: RIG-24267 / Retraction of your article in Journal of Population Economics, response needed

Dear Mr. Kersjes,

Thank you for your message. It took me several days to review all the relevant materials and carefully consider your request.

I understand that this retraction request may be influenced by a public shaming campaign, of which I have been — and continue to be — a victim. This campaign, led by a senior professor, has taken place on social media platforms, primarily Twitter and now Bluesky. I am currently evaluating legal options in response to this situation, and I have already filed a formal harassment complaint with the Ombudsperson of the American Economic Association.

I was surprised to read that you believe there is an issue with citations, as I have prior correspondence from the journal clearly stating otherwise. The two articles in question are intended to be read together, which reflects the iterative nature of scientific inquiry. This is precisely why the retraction was previously dismissed. My original article used the best available methodology at the time. The subsequent article reanalyzed the a subsample of the data using the methodology determined by the competent body and concluded that the results may be of similar magnitude but lack statistical significance. This type of scholarly dialogue — where findings are refined, questioned, and built upon — is fundamental to the scientific process, including in economics, where many similar examples exist. In particular, the reanalysis found large and positive point estimates in their main regressions (which were even estimating a different target parameter), this established that such large and positive point estimates were not due to the code of the old paper.

Additionally, I have compiled a set of documents and correspondence that further justify why a retraction is not appropriate.

The journal appointed a competent body — comprising a new editor, an associate editor, an external committee, and anonymous referees — to assess the case. At different stages, they weighed all possible outcomes (retraction vs. correction note). After a thorough review of my code, documentation, and conduct, they concluded that the article should not be retracted. From a research integrity standpoint, I have consistently cooperated with their requests and accepted their guidance. Their final decision was to publish an additional evidence article so readers could form their own opinions. Disregarding or overturning this outcome would contradict their

authoritative judgment.

The proposed retraction notice would obscure the alleged citation issue. For this reason, and in line with research integrity standards, I prefer to ensure that the entire correspondence between myself and the journal is transparently preserved and posted online if the retraction proceeds.

There is no problem with the relevant literature. The competent body explicitly stated that if a suitable article meeting their standards was published, there would be no retraction. Readers should be given the opportunity to compare both articles. Moreover, they recognized that the new article estimates a different target parameter than the original. As is often the case in the literature (e.g., on the minimum wage and unemployment, or in methodological revisions of instrumental variables or two-way fixed effects difference in differences), conclusions evolve over time. Citing only one of the two articles without context would be misleading.

The findings of the original article are not refuted by the new one. The initial concern was that the original result was driven by a coding error. However, the methodology recommended by the journal's review process produced four estimates — columns 1 and 3 of Tables 1 and 2 — which are not statistically different from those of the original paper. Importantly, while these results are not robust, their point estimates are not close to zero, it is large and positive in sign, thus results cannot be interpreted as null effects. This does not invalidate the original article. In fact, when the new paper is extended to estimate the same target parameter, its findings are robust to the three main robustness checks used in the original article. This suggests the effect is not an artifact of the initial coding error. As is common in early-stage research, more granular data might provide further clarity.

Retracting the original article would be inappropriate from a research integrity perspective. The new paper explicitly cites the original, and the journal's own decision-making process indicated that publication of the new article would obviate the need for retraction.

I would also like to underline that I published the additional article under pressure and in a position of inferior bargaining power. At the time, I complied with the requests made by the journal's editors in order to avoid retraction. I now realize that the alternative being proposed would set a very dangerous precedent: namely, that a published article may be withdrawn not for fraud or misconduct, but because subsequent research — often by ideologically motivated critics — refines or questions its conclusions.

This undermines the very foundations of scientific inquiry. If we were to adopt this standard, a vast amount of early-stage empirical research would be subject to retraction, simply because newer data or alternative methods yield different results.

I have already suffered significant reputational damage due to the character assassination efforts of the individuals mentioned earlier. I have not committed any misconduct, as certified by the journal's designated experts. Including my article in the category of retracted publications — alongside cases involving fraud or ethical breaches — would cause further unjustified harm. The reputational consequences of such a retraction would not only be personally damaging but would also dissuade

other junior researchers from publishing innovative findings, in general, and, in particular, related to these topics.

I appreciate your clarification that a retraction is considered a neutral corrective tool and not an accusation of misconduct. However, I must emphasize that such neutrality does not mitigate the significant reputational consequences that will inevitably result from retraction — particularly when the decision contradicts the journal's responsible editor decision once results were estimated, which concluded that a retraction did not proceed.

Should the journal decide to proceed regardless, I request that the following statement be clearly included in the retraction notice:

"The author did not agree to the retraction since he followed what the responsible editor decided after seeing the results of the analysis. The responsible editor decided to write an additional evidence article to uncover the truth and let the readers form their own judgement with the new evidence and conclusion of lack of robustness. Results have not changed since then and so there is no reason to retract the paper in June 2025. The author will transparently post such correspondence online on his webpage for readers."

For all these reasons, I respectfully request that the retraction be formally withdrawn and that the Publisher's Note regarding the ongoing investigation be removed from the article's page. I have documentation showing that the journal's competent review body recommended that both articles be read and considered together. I have attached a piece of correspondence with the responsible editor.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if further clarification or documentation is needed.

Sincerely,
Riccardo Ciacci

Riccardo Ciacci

<https://sites.google.com/site/riccardociacci/>

Associate Professor of Economics

Universidad Pontificia Comillas

Da: Springer Nature Research Integrity Support

<researchintegrityteam@springernature.com>

Inviato: venerdì 6 giugno 2025 09:56

A: researchintegrityteam@springernature.com

<researchintegrityteam@springernature.com>; Ciacci, Riccardo

<Riccardo.Ciacci@alumni.eui.eu>

Oggetto: Re: RIG-24267 / Retraction of your article in Journal of Population Economics, response needed

Dear Riccardo Ciacci,

thank you for your messages.

First I would like to emphasize again that a retraction is a corrective decision. A retraction is to be a neutral tool to correct the literature. It signals to readers that an Editor-in-Chief has determined that in light of concerns raised with an article, the results and conclusions can no longer be relied upon. I would like to make it very clear that a retraction is not to be seen as a form of punishment of alleged misconduct. I would therefore like to make it very clear in writing that neither the publisher, journal nor Editor-in-Chief is accusing you of any form of misconduct. In general we see retractions as a normal part of academic publishing, and certainly not something to be ashamed of.

The decision to retract the article was made on the basis of errors identified in the original article that, in our understanding and that of the Editor-in-Chief, do impact the interpretation of the analysis in the original article. The follow up re-analysis and the accompanying editorial commentary sufficiently explain the matter, but doesn't take away from the fact that the original article still warrants a retraction. Not only would this be in line with the retraction guidelines of the Committee on Publication Ethics, but it also minimizes the risk that the original article is further disseminated without this appropriate context.

The Editor-in-Chief has therefore decided to retract the article, and it is my understanding that he

recommended to you to agree to a retraction and have this reflected as such in the retraction notice, and I agree with this. Nevertheless, the decision to retract has been made, and as this is an editorial decision, it is not dependent on an author's agreement or disagreement. However, as indicated before, if you disagree with the retraction, this will also be reflected in the retraction notice.

Please let me know if you have any further questions.

Best regards,

Tim Kersjes.

From:	Ciacci, Riccardo < Riccardo.Ciacci@alumni.eui.eu >
Sent:	2025-06-04 23:51:00.0
To:	researchintegrityteam@springernature.com
Subject:	Re: RIG-24267 / Retraction of your article in Journal of Population Economics, response needed

Dear Mr. Kersjes, In an effort to reply as promptly as possible, as requested, I would like to confirm that my understanding of the matter — as described in my previous email — is not only supported by the content of the two articles, but also

Dear Mr. Kersjes,

In an effort to reply as promptly as possible, as requested, I would like to confirm that my understanding of the matter — as described in my previous email — is not only supported by the content of the two articles, but also by a correspondence thread I have located with the editor who oversaw the publication of the follow-up article.

In that correspondence, the editor explicitly affirms that the results of the reanalysis do not invalidate those of the original article, and that a retraction should not proceed. Instead, the position taken — consistent with the judgment of the competent review body appointed by the journal — was that both articles should be published, and that readers should be allowed to consider both pieces of research in order to form their own opinion. This was presented as a conclusive resolution to the matter — thereby also resolving the initial issue related to citations that you raised in your first email.

Should the journal now choose to proceed with a retraction regardless, it is essential that this editorial correspondence be made publicly available. Scholars publishing in Springer journals deserve to be informed that their work may be subject to retraction not due to misconduct, but simply because later research offers refinements or updates — even in cases where the responsible editor had explicitly concluded that a retraction should not proceed after examining precisely the results of those refinements/updates.

To this end, and as I noted in my previous email, please let me know on what basis your claim is

made that the results of the first article are incorrect according to the second article.

I would be grateful if you could provide clarification on these points at your earliest convenience, so that I can respond to your original message by the deadline you set of Friday, 6 June.

Best regards,

Riccardo Ciacci

On 4 Jun 2025 15:52, "Ciacci, Riccardo" <Riccardo.Ciacci@alumni.eui.eu> wrote:

Dear Mr. Kersjes,

Further to my previous message, I would appreciate a clarification regarding the wording of the proposed retraction notice.

Are you stating that the results of the original article are incorrect? If so, could you please clarify on what basis this conclusion is made?

To the best of my understanding, the follow-up article reanalyzes the data using a different subsample and revised methodology, and finds that the results are not robust. However, statistical non-robustness is not equivalent to being incorrect. In fact, the reanalysis produces point estimates that are similar in magnitude and sign to those in the original paper, though with much larger standard errors. As such, the estimates are statistically indistinguishable both from zero and from the original findings. Given the large and positive point estimates, these results cannot be interpreted as evidence of null or negative effects and therefore do not invalidate — nor do they refute — the thesis of the original article. Are you aware of this distinction?

I am concerned that this may be overlooked, possibly as a result of the public shaming and character assassination campaign to which I have been subjected for over a year on social media — a situation the journal's editors are also aware of.

If you could provide clarification on this point at your earliest convenience, I would be grateful, as I intend to reach a final decision by the deadline of Friday, 6 June, as you previously indicated.

Best regards,
Riccardo Ciacci

On 4 Jun 2025 14:25, "Ciacci, Riccardo" <Riccardo.Ciacci@alumni.eui.eu> wrote:

Dear Mr. Kersjes,

Thank you for your follow-up.

I am carefully considering the entire situation, including the correspondence with the journal, the conclusions of the competent review body designated by the editorial board, and the content and implications of both research articles.

I am also reflecting on the wider context, in particular the ongoing public shaming and

character assassination to which I have been subjected on social media. Until recently, I did not imagine that the journal would wish to align itself, even inadvertently, with such a campaign.

I am currently in contact with the legal department of my university to determine the appropriate course of action, and I expect to be in a position to respond formally by this Friday, 6 June, as indicated in your message.

Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Best regards,
Riccardo Ciacci

On 4 Jun 2025 12:00, Springer Nature Research Integrity Support <researchintegrityteam@springernature.com> wrote:

Dear Riccardo Ciacci,

I'm following up regarding our email below. I was wondering if you had an opportunity have a look at the email below? It would be great if we could move ahead with this retraction with your agreement.

If you choose not to agree to a retraction with this author-led retraction notice, we will revert to an editor-led retraction notice, including an author statement as below:

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The Editor-in-Chief has retracted this article. Following publication, concerns were raised regarding the analysis presented in this article. Postpublication review [1] concluded that the original results and conclusions are incorrect and are not supported by the data, as confirmed by a re-analysis of the data by the author [2].

To be amended as appropriate: Authors XXX agree with this retraction and/ or Authors XXX disagree with this retraction and/ or Authors XXX did not explicitly state whether or not they agree with this retraction and/ or Authors XXX did not respond to correspondence from the Publisher about this retraction.

[1] Zimmermann, K.F. Comment on “ Banning the purchase of sex increases cases of rape: evidence from Sweden”. J Popul Econ 38, 40 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-025-01096-1>

[2] Ciacci, R. Additional evidence on the effects of banning the purchase of sex on cases of rape in Sweden. J Popul Econ 38, 41 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-025-01094-3>

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Please let me know if you have any further questions at this point, I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Tim Kersjes.

From:	Springer Nature Research Integrity Support < researchintegrityteam@springernature.com >
Sent:	2025-05-30 23:10:26.0
To:	riccardo.ciacci@eui.eu
Subject:	RIG-24267 / Retraction of your article in Journal of Population Economics, response needed

Ciacci, R. Banning the purchase of sex increases cases of rape: evidence from Sweden. *J Popul Econ* **37**, 37 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-024-00984-2>

Dear Riccardo Ciacci,

I hope you are well. I'm the Head of Research Integrity, Resolutions with the Springer Nature Research Integrity Group. I'm reaching out to you regarding the retraction of your 2024 articles in the Journal of Population Economics, referenced above.

It is our understanding that following concerns raised with this article, you have worked diligently with the journal to review the concerns and indeed re-analyze the data, resulting in the publication of [this re-analysis](#). As the results and conclusions of your first article have been found to be incorrect, we have recommended to the journal's Editor-in-Chief that, considering the [retraction guidelines](#) of the Committee on Publication Ethics (of which this journal is a member), the first article should be retracted. The Editor-in-Chief has agreed with our recommendation and decided that the article should be retracted.

We appreciate that the re-analysis, together with an explanatory commentary by the Editor-in-Chief, is linked to the article on Springer Nature Link. However, this context will not be visible to readers who access the original article elsewhere, and therefore may not be aware of the concerns and the invalid conclusions of the article. In the interest of the integrity of the published record, we believe that corrective action is necessary and do a retraction of the article. This means that the original article will remain available and accessible, but marked as retracted. We will also publish a retraction notice that will be bidirectionally linked to the article. The retraction of the article will also be visible beyond Springer Nature Link, together with the retraction notice.

I would like to emphasize here that we view any retraction as a corrective measure and not a punitive one: a retraction is designed to be a neutral tool to correct the literature. While the retraction is an editorial decision, we'd like to propose that the retraction notice appropriately reflects your previous cooperation on this matter, with the following notice as agreed upon with the Editor-in-Chief:

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The author has retracted this article. Following publication, concerns were raised regarding the analysis presented in this article. Postpublication review [1] concluded that the original results and conclusions are incorrect and are not supported by the data, as confirmed by a re-analysis of the data by the author [2].

[1] Zimmermann, K.F. Comment on “ Banning the purchase of sex increases cases of rape: evidence from Sweden”. J Popul Econ 38, 40 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-025-01096-1>

[2] Ciacci, R. Additional evidence on the effects of banning the purchase of sex on cases of rape in Sweden. J Popul Econ 38, 41 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-025-01094-3>

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While we await your response, we will in the meantime add a Publisher's Note to the article that states the following ' *Publisher's Note: Concerns have been raised with the Publisher regarding this article and discussions are being held with the Editor of the journal regarding next steps.* '

We look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible, but preferably before 6 June . Please let us know if you have any questions at this point.

Sincerely,

Tim Kersjes.

==

Tim Kersjes

Head of Research Integrity, Resolutions



Springer Nature Research Integrity Group

Springer ** Nature

Van Godewijckstraat 30 | 3311 GX Dordrecht | The Netherlands

Tel: +31 (0)78 657 6042

E-mail: Tim.Kersjes@springernature.com!

[\[https://jira.springernature.com/images/icons/mail_small.gif\]](https://jira.springernature.com/images/icons/mail_small.gif)https://jira.springernature.com/images/icons/mail_small.gif] <Tim.Kersjes@springernature.com
<Tim.Kersjes@springernature.com>>

www.springernature.com

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