Is Thursday the New Friday? The Four-Day School Week and Teen Traffic Safety

Kevin Estes
University of New Mexico

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School districts across the United States, particularly in rural areas, have increasingly been switching to a four-day school week the past two decades. To accommodate the lost learning time, students attend school longer each day. While this impacts the daily driving patterns of teens, notably an additional “weekend” night is created for four-day students. Weekend nights are recognized as one of the most dangerous driving times for teens. Using a detailed national dataset of fatal traffic accidents over an eight-year period, I examine how the adoption of a four-day school week affects driving age teen traffic safety in nine U.S. states. Using difference-in-differences methods to estimate the causal impact of the four-day school week on teen traffic safety I find no significant change in fatal accident involvement for teens after a district adopts a four-day school week. In sub-analyses examining time of day and day of the week these findings are confirmed (with some evidence suggesting female driving age teens benefit from the policy).