**Adoption of Part-Time Work during the COVID-19 Crisis: an Empirical Analysis between March and May 2020.**

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**Abstract**

French employers have heavily opted for part-time work to preserve jobs during the COVID-19 crisis, placing France among the top adopters of the measure in Europe. The adoption of part-time work is a temporary, countercyclical measure that enables companies to adjust hours worked to fluctuations in business activity, with the ultimate goal of avoiding lay-offs.

In this paper, we use comprehensive government data as of June 22, 2020 to analyze why and how employers resorted to this measure during the lockdown. One of the most valuable aspects of our study is our comparison of how part-time work is being used currently against how it was used prior to the health crisis, and particularly during the Great Recession of 2008-2009.

Before they can resort to part-time work, French employers must file a prior authorization request with the government. The request reflects the employers’ anticipated need for part-time work, and companies often apply for significantly more part-time hours than they will actually use. We describe patterns observed in prior authorization requests in terms of hours requested and employees affected in relation to the characteristics of the establishments and the nature of their request, and we also analyze the factors that determine the probability that a prior request will be filed.

Employers can then make a request for the monthly reimbursement of the compensation paid to employees moved into part-time work, known as a *demande d’indemnisation* (reimbursement request). We likewise present the patterns observed in the data in terms of reimbursement requests—again in relation to the hours and the employees affected and according to the characteristics of the establishments—and the transformation of authorization requests into reimbursements requests, month by month, between March and May.

Since employers have one year to file their reimbursement requests, in this paper we also estimate, based on information observed in the data and on assumptions, the ultimate cost of this mechanism as well as the number of employees actually moved into part-time work for the months of March to May 2020.

**Keywords**: part-time work, COVID-19