

Improving Research Transparency Through Easier, Faster Access to Studies in the AEA RCT Registry

By [James Turitto](#) and [Keesler Welch](#)

Editor's note: This is a cross-posting which appeared originally on [J-PAL's blog page](#).

J-PAL and the American Economic Association (AEA) have been working together over the past year to create digital object identifiers, or DOIs, for each trial registered in the [AEA Registry for Randomized Controlled Trials](#).

We are happy to announce that as of August 13, 2019, the Registry has officially launched this new feature! DOIs provide persistent links to web content to ensure that the content is discoverable at all times—even if its URL or location within a site changes.

Using DOIs for trial registration in the social sciences is still something new, and we see it as an important move forward for research transparency. DOIs offer persistence and permanence that standard URLs do not, and are widely used across academia to provide permanent links to published journal articles as well as data (e.g., the new [AEA Data and Code Repository at openICPSR](#)).

This will make it easier for researchers to link their study designs and their (optional) pre-analysis plans directly to their publications and published research data. This also ensures that research study designs that have been registered will remain findable in perpetuity.

What exactly is a digital object identifier?

It is a string of numbers, letters, and symbols used to permanently identify an article or document and link to it on the web.

Using a standard URL to cite or share a document can be risky. Technological updates, or organizational changes, may change URLs. When assigning DOIs, organizations like the AEA insulate researchers and publications from such changes. Because DOIs are permanent, they allow users to consistently cite other people's work without the risk of broken links.

Furthermore, the underlying registry monitors citations and records when a DOI is used as part of a reference list, regardless of which journal ultimately publishes the citing article. It

thus becomes easier for researchers and organizations to document the impact of their work.

As a member of [Crossref](#), an official DOI Registration Agency of the International DOI Foundation, the AEA has a DOI prefix unique to the organization and has provided the AEA RCT Registry a set of suffix numbers that include “RCT” in the DOI handle, along with the same ID number as the registration.

10.1257	/	rct	.	2646	-	4	.	2
<hr/>				<hr/>				<hr/>
<i>AEA prefix</i>				<i>registry ID</i>				<i>trial ID</i> <i>major</i> <i>minor</i>

We encourage all registry users to cite the registry DOI in their publications to increase visibility and permanence of their research. For more information, see the [FAQ page](#) of the AEA RCT Registry.

Adding DOIs to auto-generated registry citations will make trial registration entries not only more permanent but also more searchable and accessible. [Learn more about J-PAL's research transparency efforts.](#)

August 15, 2019