

Calvin Cheng

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Profile

Experienced economic policy researcher with over a decade of expertise in evidence-based economic analysis, policy advisory, and research leadership. My [published work](#) spans a range of applied economics topics, including jobs, social protection, economic development, and fiscal policy. I have [advised](#) federal and state governments, international development organisations, civil society organisations (CSOs/NGOs), and multinational corporations. Currently, I lead the Economics and Trade programme at the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) – Malaysia’s premier policy think tank under the Prime Minister’s Department – where I set research direction and policy initiatives.

Education

Master of Public Policy (Distinction) - Chevening 2022/23 Scholar 2022 – 2023

London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) - London, UK

- *Labour Economics Thesis*: "[The causal effect of retirement on wellbeing in Malaysia: a regression discontinuity approach](#)"
- *Key modules*: Labour Economics, Advanced Empirical Methods for Policy Analysis, Causal Inference for Experimental and Observational Studies

Bachelor of Economics (double majors in Economics and Econometrics) 2011 – 2014

Monash University Clayton - Melbourne, Australia

- *Key modules*: Advanced Econometrics, Economics of Developing Nations, Applied Econometrics

Work experience

Research fellow and programme lead, Economics and Trade programme Oct 2017 – Present

Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS), Malaysia

Past positions held: Senior Analyst (2020), Researcher (2017)

- Led the Economics programme, setting research direction, leading programmes, and managing partnerships to advance the Institute’s research agenda.
- Produced policy briefs, papers and reports on jobs, social protection, and fiscal policy, influencing national and regional policy frameworks – and cited by international organisations.
- Act as an expert on technical working groups and parliamentary committees, contributing to Malaysia’s Multidimensional Poverty Index.
- Built partnerships with international organisations ensuring research alignment with global policy goals.
- Managed a team of researchers, mentoring staff and fostering a collaborative intellectual environment.

Consultant, Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice Sep 2023 – Feb 2024

World Bank Group

- Worked with the Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice, co-authoring the report "[Keep the Pace: How Inflation Erodes Cash Transfers and What to Do About It](#)", providing policy recommendations to mitigate the impact of inflation on social transfers for vulnerable populations.
- Supported the development of cross-country assessments on the effectiveness of cash transfer programs, using country-level data to recommend improvements for program design and targeting efficiency.

Economics Executive, Economics Research Department Mar 2015 – Oct 2017

Public Mutual Berhad, Malaysia

- Monitored macroeconomic trends in Malaysia and ASEAN, producing timely forecasts and reports for investment strategies.
- Designed and maintained economic databases and statistical models to support corporate decision-making.

Skills, proficiencies, and miscellaneous

Technical skills: Economic modelling, causal inference, policy evaluation and impact assessment, survey analysis

Programming and tools: R, Stata, Excel, LaTeX, Python, Microsoft Suite

Languages: English (*native*), Bahasa Malaysia (*working proficiency*), Cantonese (*limited*), Mandarin Chinese (*limited*)

Awards: Chevening Scholarship Award 2022/23, UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

Certificates: Applied General Equilibrium for Policy Analysis (2019 - UPM), Economic Analysis of Microdata (2019 - UPM), Completed CFA Level 2 (2017 - CFA Institute)

Appointments: Member, Multidimensional Poverty Index technical working committee, Ministry of Economy. Industry Expert Advisory Panel, Master of Economics programme at the Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology.

Selected publications

For a full list, please see: www.calvinchengkw/publications

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|---|-------------------------|
| Novel AI technologies and the future of work in Malaysia [Working paper]
Calvin Cheng, Hanson Chong, Alyssa Farha Jasmin, Matthew Dornan | Forthcoming April 2025 |
| Novel AI technologies and impacts on jobs and development in ASEAN and East Asia [Working paper]
Calvin Cheng, Hanson Chong | Forthcoming August 2025 |
| Building a cradle-to-grave care economy for Malaysia [ISIS Malaysia Policy paper]
Lee Min Hui, Calvin Cheng, Shazana Agha, Anis Farid | June 2024 |
| Malaysia's progressive wage policy: a guide to policy design considerations for effective implementation [ISIS Malaysia Policy brief]
Calvin Cheng, Kevin Zhang | March 2024 |
| Life after work: the causal effect of retirement on wellbeing in Malaysia [Working paper]
Calvin Cheng | Oct 2023 |
| Understanding Malaysia's decline in PISA scores: causes and consequences [ISIS Malaysia Policy brief]
Calvin Cheng, Sofea Azahar | July 2024 |
| Strengthening digital trade and digitalisation in Malaysia [Report in collaboration with Google inc]
Calvin Cheng, Juita Mohamad | Feb 2022 |
| Post-Covid-19 recovery and quest for 'good jobs' [Book chapter]
Calvin Cheng | Nov 2023 |
| The socioeconomic impacts of Covid-19 in Malaysia [Paper in Asia Policy (vol. 17) - NBR]
Calvin Cheng | Jan 2022 |
| Trends in Malaysia's future of work [Paper in Journal of China-ASEAN Studies (Vol. 2)]
Calvin Cheng, H. Zainul | Aug 2021 |