

# Credit Misallocation During the Financial Crisis

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The analysis and conclusions expressed in this paper are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as those of the Bank of Italy - Part of this project has been carried out while Enrico Sette was visiting the BIS as a Central Bank Research Fellow

# Motivation

- Legacy of financial crisis is a weakened banking sector
- Undercapitalized banks can exacerbate the crisis by reallocating credit to weak firms, to avoid further losses in their balance sheets ("zombie lending")
- Zombie lending may contribute to delay the recovery
- Italy ideal testing ground: no injection of public capital or bad bank (in our sample period)
- Bad loans and low capitalization improving, but still an issue today

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- As a consequence, our assessment of the effects differ substantially

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- We improve on the previous literature both in terms of **data quality** and **methodologically**
- As a consequence, our assessment of the effects differ substantially
- We do find evidence that **weak banks lend more to zombies**, but this **hardly hurts healthy firms**

## Related literature

- Seminal paper by Caballero, Hoshi, Kashyap (2008) for Japan. Main message: zombie lending hurts non zombies. Confirmed by Acharya, Eisert, Eufinger, Hirsch (2016) for Europe during the crisis
- Other work on Japan in the 90s, Peek and Rosengren (2005), Kwon et al (2014), Giannetti and Simonov (2013).
- Evidence on the 2007-2008 financial crisis (Albertazzi and Marchetti 2010, Barnett et al. 2014).
- Growing literature on credit frictions and misallocation (Hsieh and Klenow 2009, Midrigan and Xu 2014 etc.) and more generally on misallocation and TFP (Olley and Pakes 1996, Bartelsmann et al 2013).



# Plan of the talk

- 1 Describe the data
- 2 What is a zombie firm? How can we identify it empirically?
- 3 Do weak banks lend more to zombie firms?
- 4 Aggregate consequences of zombie lending: impact on non zombies and productivity dispersion

# Data sources

- We match 3 data sources:
  - ① Firm data: balance sheets from CERVED – **all limited liabilities companies**. Important: representative and reduces biases.
  - ② Bank balance sheet data: Supervisory reports
  - ③ Loans data: Credit registry. **All firm-bank relationships** above 30,000 euros. Amount **granted** and drawn – we look at granted, better measure of credit supply.

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Data span 2004 to 2013 (use data back to 2002 to define zombie firms).

# Definition of Zombie Firms

- Main idea: a zombie is a firm with expected marginal return on capital below the risk adjusted market cost of capital
- Economic interpretation: returns on capital allocated to zombies would be higher elsewhere – misallocation
- A combination of low ROA and high leverage (low return and high risk)
  - Preferred Definition: zombie=1 if 3-years moving average of Ebitda/Assets < prime rate and Leverage > 40% – median Leverage in the year 2005 for low returns firms (roa<prime) that exited the market between 2006-2007 because of default (2005 first year for which this info is available).

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  - Alternative definition: zombie=1 if 3-year m.a. of EBITDA / interest expenses < 1 + similar condition on leverage

# Firms Characteristics

	Mean	Median	25pct	75pct	S.D.	N
<b>Panel B: Crisis</b>						
<b>Non-Zombie Firms</b>						
Leverage	23.92	23.05	6.71	36.36	19.09	582,406
ROA	5.54	5.26	1.77	9.46	8.50	582,406
Cash Hold / Assets	6.96	2.71	0.62	8.85	10.27	551,970
Liquidity / Assets	13.18	6.07	2.33	14.14	62.10	582,265
Assets (000 Euros)	9,414	1,999	896	5,049	119,134	582,406
<b>Zombie Firms</b>						
Leverage	56.84	52.89	45.88	63.58	15.06	119,488
ROA	-1.34	1.09	-3.35	3.35	7.98	119,488
Cash Hold / Assets	3.18	0.94	0.23	3.30	6.15	109,909
Liquidity / Assets	9.11	3.20	1.05	8.62	65.19	119,463
Assets (000 Euros)	12,896	3,156	1,245	8,653	79,031	119,488

# Bank Variables

- Bank strength: Regulatory Capital Ratio (CR): ratio of total capital (Tier 1 and Tier 2) to risk-weighted assets – **Minimum level: 8%**.
- We construct **LowCap** as a dummy=1 if below the median (11%) to **capture non linearities**

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- Other bank controls: liquidity ratio (cash and government bonds to total assets), interbank funding (interbank deposits and repos with commercial banks and total assets), ROA, log of assets.
- exclude mutual banks (bcc): they have to lend a certain share of their portfolio locally and to their shareholders.



# Identification of Credit Supply effects

- Test if low capital ratio conducive to zombie lending during the crisis
  - Weak banks particularly loss averse: hard to reconstruct the capital ratio
- Challenge: distinguish demand from supply of credit
  - Zombies may have a different demand for credit
  - Zombies may disproportionately borrow from weak banks - non random matching

## Use Khwaja-Mian (2008) identification approach

- First, consider **growth of granted credit**:  $\Delta \log$  of total credit granted (credit lines, term loans, loans backed by receivables)
- Second, rely on multiple bank relations: compare credit growth of the same firm by banks with different capital levels and include **Firm\*year FE** to capture all firm specific time-varying unobservables. Multiple relations common in Italy (Guiso et al. 2000, Degryse et al. 2009, Gobbi and Sette 2014).
- Estimating equation:

$$\Delta \log \text{credit}_{ijt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (Z_{it} * \text{LowCap}_{jt} * \text{DummyCrisis}_t) + \beta_2 \mathbf{X}_{ijt} + \text{Dummies} + \eta_{ijt}$$

## Use Khwaja-Mian (2008) identification approach

- In addition we include relationship-level ctrls: share of total credit to firm accounted by bank, share of credit granted through credit lines
- Additional concern: capital ratio and lending related to unobserved bank characteristics – include bank controls, and bank\*time FE.
- Std errors double clustered at the bank and firm level

Important: we look at the change in outstanding credit, this is a stock not a flow variable as it corresponds to the outstanding debt of a firm towards each of its lenders.

# Results: Baseline specifications

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
LowCap*Z*crisis	<b>1.906**</b> (0.790)	<b>1.745**</b> (0.703)	<b>1.957***</b> (0.694)	<b>2.042***</b> (0.704)	<b>1.982***</b> (0.680)	<b>1.893***</b> (0.671)
LowCap*Z	-1.150 (0.745)	-0.845 (0.614)	-0.857 (0.593)	-0.993* (0.581)	-0.864 (0.580)	-0.830* (0.492)
LowCap*crisis	2.156 (1.911)	2.790 (1.715)	2.658 (2.007)	2.281 (1.672)	0.514 (1.866)	
LowCap	-1.766 (1.790)	-2.189 (1.598)	-2.300 (1.664)	-1.597 (1.606)	-0.817 (1.960)	
Z*crisis	<b>-4.578***</b> (0.637)					
Z	<b>-3.088***</b> (0.468)					
Firm-bank cntrs	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Bank Controls	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
Firm FE	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Time FE	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Firm*year FE	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Bank FE	N	N	N	N	Y	N
Bank*year FE	N	N	N	N	N	Y
Obs	3,656,203	3,656,203	3,656,203	3,654,795	3,654,794	3,656,184
Rsq	0.112	0.358	0.377	0.379	0.382	0.390

# Main results

- Growth rate of credit to Zombies was 2% higher for banks with CR below the median- compared to an average growth of -8%
- Capital ratio does not matter before the crisis: evidence of zombie lending only during the crisis
  - Consistent with the view that capital requirements binding only during the crisis

# Robustness and Extensions

- Robust to different definitions of zombie firms
- Robust to different definitions of weak banks
  - Only regulatory ratios matter: not leverage or ROA.

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Bottom line: significant evidence of zombie lending.

In progress: focus on crisis period (also include regressions of total credit at the firm-level) and results qualitatively unchanged.

# Effects of zombie lending during the crisis

- Zombie lending can hurt healthy firms through two channels:
  - ① **Crowding out** of bank credit
  - ② **Implicit subsidy** and distorted competition for inputs and output
- Relevant market: sector-province-year  $pt$

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- Caballero et al. 2008, Acharya et al. 2016:

$$\Delta\mu_{ipt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ShZ_{pt} + \beta_2(1 - Z_{ipt}) * ShZ_{pt} + \beta_3 Z_{ipt} + Dummies_{ipt} + \eta_{ipt}$$

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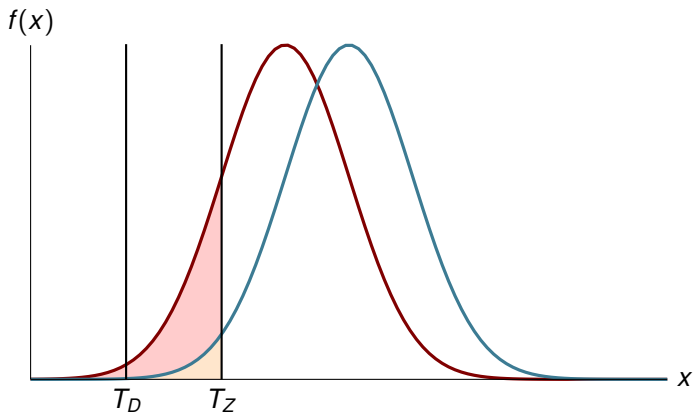
- A test of negative effects of Z on non Z is  $\beta_2 < 0$ .
- **Identification challenge**:  $pt$  shocks affect both  $ShZ_{pt}$  and firm performance
- Proposed solution: a full set of dummies at the  $pt$  level ( $\beta_1$  drops out)

# Problems in interpreting these regressions

$$\Delta\mu_{ipt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ShZ_{pt} + \beta_2(1 - Z_{ipt}) * ShZ_{pt} + \beta_3 Z_{ipt} + Dummies_{ipt} + \eta_{ipt}$$

- First, they can only identify the **relative effects** on non zombies
- Second, while they account for aggregate shocks, they face a more subtle **identification issue**
  - Define  $\mu^Z$  as the mean performance of Z, and  $\mu^{NZ}$  of non Z.
  - (Implicit) Identifying assumption: a shock at  $pt$  has the same effect on  $\mu^{NZ}$  and  $\mu^Z$ , absent negative spillovers
  - Necessary to attribute any relative change to spillovers
  - Unfortunately, this does not hold in general

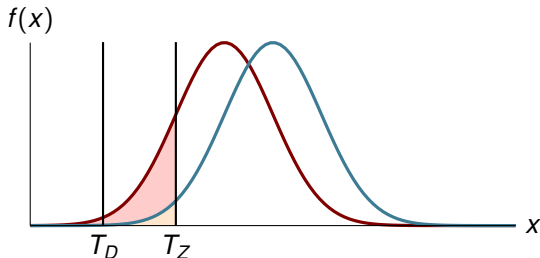
# The effect of a common shock on zombies and non zombies



The figure plots two normal distributions with unit variance and mean  $\mu_L = 4$  and  $\mu_H = 5$ , respectively.  $T_Z$  the zombie threshold and  $T_D$  is the exit threshold.

# The effect of a common shock on zombies and non zombies

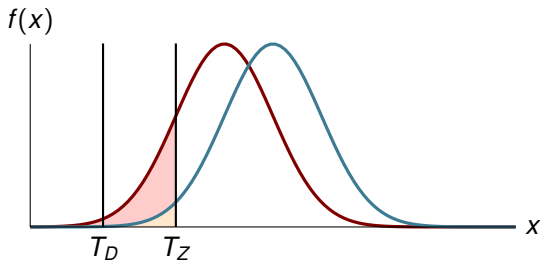
3 things happen



1. the share of zombies increases (the area to the left of  $T_Z$ )

# The effect of a common shock on zombies and non zombies

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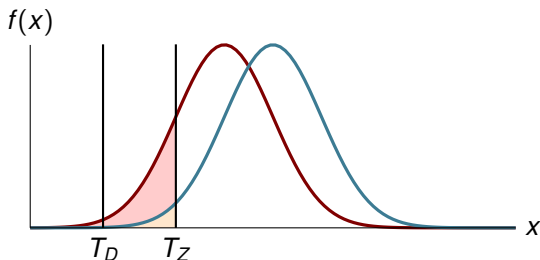


2. both conditional means  $\mu_Z$  and  $\mu_{NZ}$  change. Standard identification issue addressed in the literature



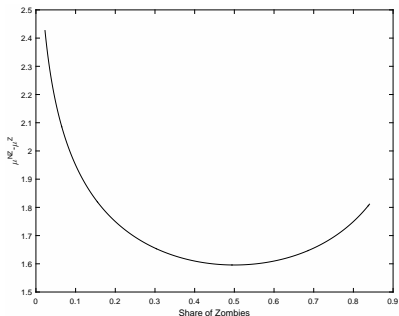
# The effect of a common shock on zombies and non zombies

3 things happen



3. The difference in the conditional means  $\mu_{NZ} - \mu_Z$  could be affected in a way which depends on the distribution.

Figure: Difference in non zombies vs. zombies average performance



Generate negative shocks which shifts the distribution to the left.

The graphs report the difference in the conditional mean of zombies and non zombies,  $\mu^{NZ} - \mu^Z$  against the share of zombies.

- Negative correlation emerges just from firm heterogeneity, absent any spillovers!
- We find this correlation [in the data](#), like the previous literature

## Alternative identification scheme

- We propose a variable that moves the shares of zombies in a province-sector-year but that is orthogonal to local-sectoral shocks.

$$\overline{LowCap}_{pt} = \frac{\sum_j LowCap_{jt} * Credit_{jpt}}{\sum_j Credit_{jpt}}$$

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- It captures the average degree of capitalization of banks lending in  $pt$
- Likely to be **exogenous with respect to local conditions** prevailing in  $pt$ 
  - Share of loans of each bank in a  $pt$  is on average 0.38%, median 0.03%
  - We have experimented excluding province-sectors that account for more than 5% of any bank loans, finding similar results
  - Remember we dropped mutual banks

# Banks capital and firms performance

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	$\Delta$ Labour		$\Delta$ Capital		$\Delta$ Sales	
LowCap	0.027*** (0.007)		0.011 (0.007)		0.026*** (0.010)	
LowCap*(1-Z)	-0.028*** (0.004)	-0.028*** (0.004)	-0.007 (0.006)	-0.001 (0.006)	-0.013** (0.005)	-0.016*** (0.005)
Z	-0.060*** (0.002)	-0.060*** (0.002)	-0.015*** (0.003)	-0.012*** (0.003)	-0.053*** (0.003)	-0.055*** (0.003)
$\beta_1 + \beta_2$	-0.001		0.004		0.013	
$H_0: \beta_1 + \beta_2 = 0$ (p-value)	0.878		0.4154		0.162	
Observations	966,968	966,968	916,559	916,559	965,755	965,755
R-squared	0.036	0.058	0.019	0.029	0.083	0.122
Province-Sector FE	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
Year FE	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
Prov-sect-year FE	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

# Real Consequences - Evidence

- Labor: We do find a negative **relative** effect of  $\overline{\text{LowCap}}$  on growth of healthy firms
- However, the **absolute** effect is zero
  - The negative relative effect comes from the fact that low capital banks help zombies, but do not hurt healthy firms
- Similar with capital and sales, and robust to modifications of the regression framework

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- Something emerges when looking at the **failure margin**: low capitalization decreases failure of zombies and increase that of non zombies, even in absolute terms (Midrigan and Xu 2014).
- We also perform an analysis of **TFP dispersion as a measure of misallocation** (Hisieh-Klenow 2009). Some (weak) evidence that lower bank capitalization increases misallocation at the province-sector level



# Evaluating the aggregate consequences of low capitalized banks

- Policy experiment: increase the capital ratio so that all banks are above the median so that  $LowCap_{pt}$  goes from an average of 0.45 to zero (4 billions required).
- effect between 0.18% and 0.35% per year.

# Evaluating the aggregate consequences of low capitalized banks

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- effect between 0.18% and 0.35% per year.
- **Contrary to previous results, it suggests that contribution of zombie lending to GDP contraction (average -3.7%) has been at best modest**
- Potentially a cost-effective policy as 4 billions are about 0.2% of GDP.

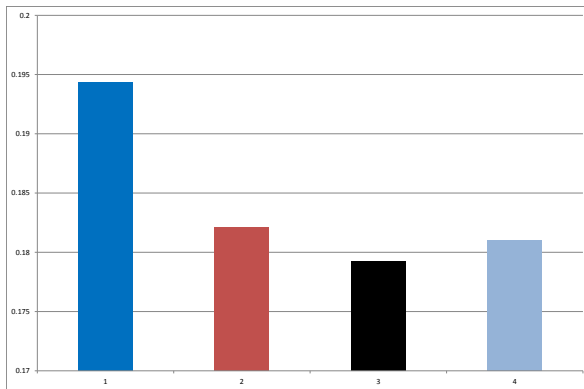
# Conclusion

- We study the extent to which credit misallocation affects resources misallocation and, in this way, economic performance.
- Weak banks (low capital banks) are relatively more likely to lend to weak firms during the crisis.
- Real effects are however small: low capitalized banks sustain zombies but do not hurt healthy firms
  - Why? Local demand externalities, low competition for inputs, prevents disruptions of supply chains
- Suggests credit misallocation caused by zombie lending not first order explanation for depth (and length?) of the crisis.
- Does not mean that recapitalizing banks is not useful.
- Things might be different during the recovery phase (although survey evidence suggests healthy firms are obtaining desired amount of credit in Italy, possibly also thanks to ECB policies?).

# Conclusion

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

# Share of credit to zombies by quartile of the capital ratio



# Alternative definitions of zombie firms

	(1)	(2)	Definition of zombie firm		(5)	(6)
	Zombie 2		PC 1		PC 2	
LowCap*Z*crisis	1.746*** (0.564)	1.855*** (0.601)	1.437*** (0.394)	1.527*** (0.413)	1.567*** (0.387)	1.648*** (0.412)
LowCap*Z	-0.112 (0.348)	-0.239* (0.127)	-0.574* (0.330)	-0.652*** (0.106)	-0.741** (0.325)	-0.819*** (0.068)
LowCap*crisis	0.690 (1.953)		0.787 (1.936)		0.669 (1.919)	
LowCap	-0.965 (2.044)		-0.947 (2.031)		-0.871 (2.019)	
Bank FE	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Bank*year FE	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Obs	3,569,638	3,570,983	3,654,794	3,656,184	3,569,638	3,570,983
Rsq	0.379	0.388	0.382	0.390	0.3780	0.388

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# Alternative definitions of weak banks

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	<b>Bank's strength definition</b>				
	Capratio < median yby	Capratio < 9	Capratio	T1 Ratio < 5	T1 Ratio
BankCap*Zombie*Crisis	1.190* (0.630)	2.452*** (0.807)	-0.398** (0.167)	3.366*** (0.827)	-0.098 (0.117)
BankCap*Zombie	0.252 (0.557)	0.160 (0.629)	0.123 (0.138)	-0.877 (0.822)	0.100 (0.114)
BankCap*Crisis	-3.387*** (1.090)	-1.368 (1.257)	0.796** (0.382)	5.835*** (2.164)	0.764*** (0.247)
BankCap	2.187* (1.319)	0.691 (1.345)	-0.440 (0.494)	-8.326*** (2.791)	-0.464 (0.505)
Firm*year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Bank FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Obs	3654794	3654794	3654794	3654794	3654794
Rs	0.382	0.382	0.382	0.382	0.382

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# Extensive Margin Regressions

Dependent variable: dummy=1 if the credit relationship is severed

	(1)	(1)	(3)	(4)	(5)
LowCap*Z*crisis	-0.831** (0.414)	-0.661* (0.390)	-0.703* (0.401)	-0.726* (0.393)	-0.760* (0.391)
LowCap*Z	-0.073 (0.169)	-0.134 (0.175)	-0.076 (0.177)	-0.107 (0.163)	-0.094 (0.163)
LowCap*Crisis	-1.041** (0.428)	-1.056*** (0.371)	-1.351*** (0.385)	-1.213*** (0.315)	
LowCap	0.611* (0.319)	0.713** (0.302)	0.475 (0.329)	1.051*** (0.289)	
Bank FE	N	N	N	Y	N
Bank*year FE	N	N	N	N	Y
Obs	4,331,355	4,331,355	4,329,493	4,329,493	4,331,341
Rsq	0.465	0.481	0.483	0.492	0.495

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# Banks' decision to classify a loan as non-performing

	(1) Bad Loan	(2) Sub-Standard	(3) Past due
LowCap*Z*crisis	-0.538** (0.255)	-0.597*** (0.171)	0.535*** (0.188)
LowCap*Z	-0.009 (0.056)	0.201** (0.081)	-0.140 (0.111)
LowCap*Crisis	0.139** (0.067)	-0.218** (0.108)	-0.085 (0.151)
LowCap	-0.076 (0.048)	0.031 (0.067)	0.116 (0.194)
Obs	4,099,406	4,099,406	4,099,406
Rsq	0.747	0.561	0.374

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# Firm growth and Share of Zombie Firms

Dependent variable:  $\Delta$ Labour

	(1)	(2)
ShZ	-0.042** (0.018)	
ShZ*(1-Z)	-0.067*** (0.013)	-0.058*** (0.013)
$\beta_1 + \beta_2$	-0.109	
Test $\beta_1 + \beta_2 = 0$ (p-val)	0.000	
Observations	966,968	966,968
R-squared	0.036	0.058
Province-Sector FE	YES	NO
Year FE	YES	NO
Prov-sect-year FE	NO	YES

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# Firm failure and banks capital ratio

$$F_{ipt} = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 \overline{LowCap}_{pt} + \gamma_2(1 - Z_{ipt}) * \overline{LowCap}_{pt} + \gamma_3 Z_{ipt} + Dummies_{ipt} + \nu_{ipt}$$

	(1) Linear probability	(2)	(3) Probit
$\overline{LowCap}$	-0.877*** (0.376)		-0.620*** (0.233)
$\overline{LowCap}*(1-Z)$	1.682*** (0.374)	1.732*** (0.383)	1.413*** (0.210)
Z	6.079*** (0.256)	6.010*** (0.260)	4.686*** (0.131)
$\gamma_1 + \gamma_2 = 0$	0.805*** (0.194)		0.792*** (0.203)
Year FE	Y	N	Y
Prov*sect FE	Y	N	Y
Prov*sect*year FE	N	Y	N
Obs	1,150,661	1,150,661	1,150,661
Rsq	0.016	0.020	0.038

## Real Consequences - Productivity dispersion

- Further implication of credit misallocation: the dispersion of (revenue) productivity across firms should increase with zombie lending.
- Regression of the standard deviation of TFPR at the sector-province-year level on *LowCapitalRatio*
- Weak banks may misallocate credit only if a market is populated by zombies, hence also important to interact with the share of zombie firms.

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## TFP dispersion and credit to zombies

$$SD(TFP)_{pt} = \lambda_0 + \lambda_1 \overline{LowCap}_{pt} + \lambda_2 \Delta TFP_{pt} + \lambda_3 \overline{LowCap}_{pt} * ShZ_{pt} + \lambda_4 ShZ_{pt} + Dummies_{pt} + \eta_{pt}$$

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
$\overline{LowCap}$	-0.001 (0.008)	-0.001 (0.006)	-0.037*** (0.010)	-0.029*** (0.008)
ShZ			-0.037 (0.025)	0.013 (0.022)
$\overline{LowCap} * ShZ$			0.154*** (0.039)	0.139*** (0.031)
Tfp growth	-0.054*** (0.013)	-0.076*** (0.008)	-0.053*** (0.013)	-0.073*** (0.008)
Observations	9,191	10,868	9,191	10,868
R-squared	0.824	0.871	0.826	0.872