

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Abstract

Arman Khachiyan
Department of Economics

Master of Science

Differential Impacts of COVID-19 Policy Enforcement on Food Security Dynamics

by Shiv GARGÉ

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated food insecurity in the United States, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations. This paper investigates the county-level impact of various COVID-19 policies on food insecurity using data from the U.S. COVID-19 County Policy (UCCP) Database and Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap study. The study employs a Difference-in-Difference (DiD) approach and a Two-Stage Least Squares (2SLS) regression with two political instrumental variables to address potential endogeneity concerns. The DiD estimates did not show significant effects on the rate of change in food insecurity but indicated promising signs for absolute population values. The 2SLS results reveal that policies such as religious restrictions, curfew requirements, and movie theater closings may reduce food insecurity rates but no significant effect on the absolute population value. The effectiveness of these policies in reducing food insecurity depends on factors such as the duration of the policy, the level of support provided, and the specific needs of the affected populations. We further discuss the relevance of absolute population values to rates of change in food insecurity and why the use of the political instruments could be perceived as the long term effects of the political climate and resulting policy decisions. This highlights the importance of considering the differential impacts of COVID-19 policies on food security dynamics at the county level. Understanding these nuances can inform targeted interventions and policies to mitigate food insecurity during the next public health crises.