**Sludging the Safety Net 1: The Public Charge Rule**

**Outline:**

1. **What happened**

On October 10, 2018, the U.S. federal government proposed to change how noncitizens applications for legal permanent residence or a temporary visa are evaluated. This so-called ‘public charge’ rule would include penalize immigrants that use safety programs such as Medicaid and SNAP (food stamps). Although the proposed rule exempts certain groups like children of noncitizen families and refugees would be exempt. In addition, the WIC program is exempt since it provides formula and other support to mothers with citizen children under 5. However, previous research shows clearly that the change will significantly reduce access to crucial safety net programs for low-income immigrant adults and their citizen children. In August 2019, the public charge rule change was instituted and, although subject to multiple lawsuits, is set to take effect October 15, 2019.

1. **How others have reacted?**

Most social scientists and immigrant advocates predict that the proposed change will lead to a chilling effect on access to safety net services for immigrants and their families, many of whom are U.S. citizens (Kenney et al. 2018). There is of course much uncertainty and misinformation about the rule. For example, although the WIC program is not technically part of the rule, many health providers suggest that WIC enrollment is declining because of the public charge rule even though the program is not included in it.

1. **What did we do?**

We took publicly available data at the county level from CA and TX and investigated how changes in enrollment in three of the most effective anti-poverty safety net programs correlate with the proportion of undocumented immigrants in the county.

1. **What did we find?**

We find X, Y, Z.

**Figure 1: Change (%) in enrollment on WIC vs % of county population undocumented immigrants**

**Figure 2: Change (%) in SNAP enrollment vs % of county population undocumented immigrants**

**Figure 3: Change (%) in Medicaid enrollment vs % of county population undocumented immigrants**

**Map – Maybe show changes in enrollment in SNAP over time by county**

**Data sources:**

Unauthorized population estimates by county for the counties with the Migration Policy Institute, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/us-immigration-policy-program-data-hub/unauthorized-immigrant-population-profiles>, Accessed 9/27/2019.

US Census Data, County Level Population Estimates for the U.S. 2010-2018, <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>, Accessed 9/27/2019.

--- Add WIC, SNAP, Medicaid data source references here. ----

References:

Urban Institute

<https://www.citylab.com/equity/2019/09/immigration-public-charge-rule-lawsuits-immigrant-benefits/598711/>

Medicaid welcome-mat: <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2013.0360>

Public Comments