

Abstract

Access to health care amid the immigrant policy context of California: The lived experience of Mexican and Chinese immigrants

Iris Guzman-Ruiz, MPH¹, Maria-Elena De Trinidad Young, PhD, MPH², Reyna Campos³, Lei Chen, MSP, MA³, Ana Reynoso³, May Sudhinaraset, PhD, Deborah Wu, BA³, Steven P. Wallace, PhD² and Hin Wing Tse³
(1)UCLA Fielding School of Public Health, Los Angeles, CA, (2)UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, Los Angeles, CA, (3)UCLA Center for Health Policy Research

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Background: Immigrant policies are a social determinant of health, differentially impacting immigrants' access to health care. Despite growing evidence that policy is associated with access to health care, little is known about the mechanisms by which policies shape the position of immigrants' in the United States. The Research on ImmiGrant Health and State policy (RIGHTS) study interviewed Mexican and Chinese immigrants to understand how immigration-related policies shape the position of immigrants' with their communities, schools, and workplaces and how this influences their access to health care.

Methods: Sixty in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with Mexican and Chinese immigrants of various legal statuses living in Southern California. These groups were selected they face distinct structural contexts due to their histories of migration and racialization. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. A thematic analysis was used for coding and synthesis of the transcripts.

Results: Mexican and Chinese immigrants experienced marginalization and discrimination due to language and citizenship status across multiple sectors, including work and healthcare settings. These factors shaped how immigrants navigated immigration-related policies, such as, work-based visas and employer-based health insurance. Both groups relied on informal networks to navigate policies and, as a result of the differences in these networks, had distinct experience accessing care; particularly, Mexicans accessed a range of Latino and immigrant-serving organizations while Chinese immigrants sought care outside the US.

Conclusion: Mexican and Chinese immigrants shared experiences of marginalization and discrimination, however, differences in access to health care was related to structural and contextual factors.

Advocacy for health and health education Implementation of health education strategies, interventions and programs Public health or related public policy Public health or related research

