

The Right to Counsel at Scale

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Abstract

Our paper assesses the impact of the Right to Counsel on housing stability. The Right to Counsel is a policy which ensures that low-income tenants facing eviction have access to free legal representation. Exploiting the recent zip code level adoption of this policy across the state of Connecticut, we provide empirical estimates regarding whether legal representation improves legal & housing outcomes for those currently housed and whether the policy adversely effects those who are currently unhoused. Regression analysis for the intention-to-treat and IV estimates are performed using linear models, fine-tuned large language models and cluster regularized neural networks. Additionally, we provide insight about the type of tenants most likely to respond to the policy as well as how lawyers can alter their aims to improve the downstream outcomes of their clients.

Keywords: Evictions

1 Introduction

There is a silent tension in a formal eviction move out that is cut only by the sequence of questions racing through one’s mind. The most pressing, of course, being where will the tenants end up that evening. And the most incomprehensible – how did things get to this in the first place.

As jarring as an eviction can feel, though, they are a regular part of the business for some landlords working with low-income households (figure 1a).¹ Tenants fall behind rent. A landlord or property manager files for an eviction. And the tenant, often without a lawyer (figure 1b), most often loses their case (figure 1c). On net, across the United States there are more than one million evictions each year with the greatest likelihood falling on children (Graetz et al. [2023]).

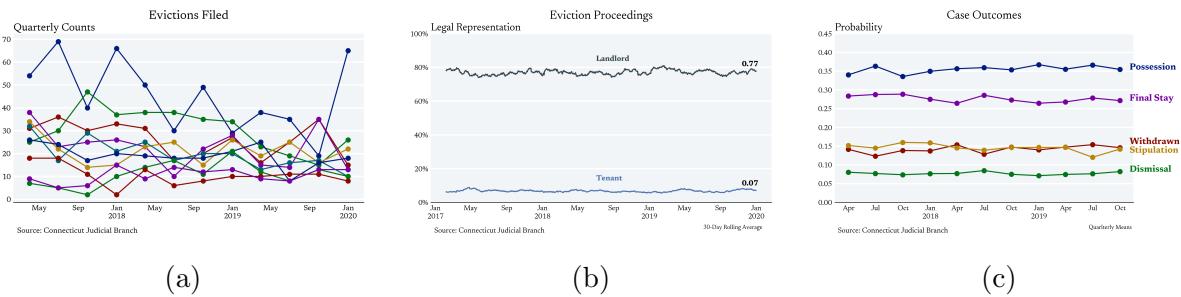


Figure 1: (a) Quarterly Counts of Evictions Filed by top ten filers in the State of Connecticut (b) Representation Rate in Eviction Cases in Connecticut (c) time series of eviction case outcomes

Since 2017, a growing number of cities and states have adopted the Right to Counsel as a means of closing this gap in representation. The Right to Counsel provides tenants with access to free legal representation. Given the well documented costs associated with eviction (Collinson et al. [2022]), the multitude of factors which contribute to its occurrence (Desmond [2016]), and the typical manner in which an eviction case evolves (Nelson [2022]), many hope that by providing access to free legal representation, the adverse effects of eviction might be mitigated.

To date, though, there is little empirical work on the effects that the Right to Counsel has on the housing outcomes both for those who are facing eviction as well as those who are seeking housing.²³ Prior empirical work, Seron et al. [2001], Greiner et al. [2012], Cassidy

¹ “Evictions are a regular part of the business.” – quote attributed by to Sharena the landlord

² Evans et al. [2019]: “There is some rigorous evidence that providing legal assistance helps the tenant receiving services (Seron et al. 2001; Greiner et al. 2013). However, such an intervention may hurt other tenants if housing supply contracts because universal legal representation reduces the profitability of renting a unit. While theoretically plausible, such market-level effects have been investigated little in the empirical literature.”

³ O’Flaherty [2019]: Whether anti-eviction programs reduce or increase homelessness, then, is an open question, and one which individual-level studies cannot resolve. The comparison that must be made is between housing markets with anti-eviction programs and housing markets without them, and then only

Implementation of the Right to Counsel in Eviction Proceedings

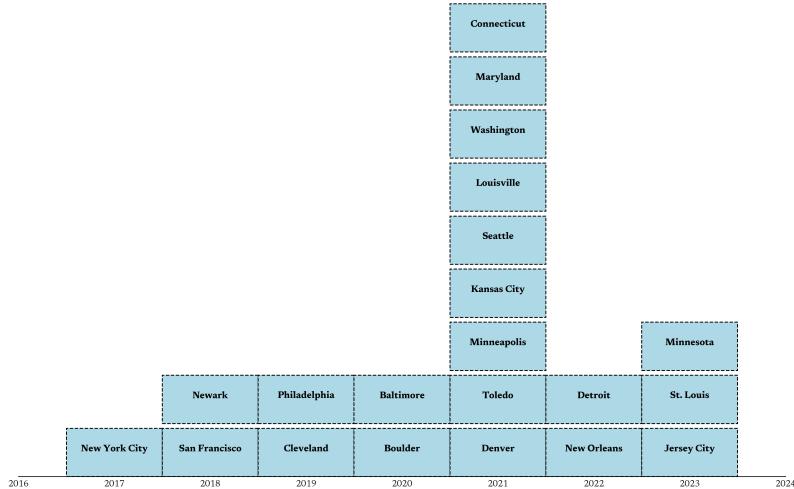


Figure 2: Adopting the Right to Counsel

and Currie [2022], focuses on housing court related outcomes – whether having a lawyer decreases the likelihood of a Judgement of Possession. Recent Macroeconomic work on the topic, Abramson [2021], provides a coherent framework for thinking about potential mechanisms involved.

We address this gap in the literature by exploiting the zip code level implementation of the Right to Counsel across the State of Connecticut. Importantly for our aim, the zip codes which adopted the policy in the first phase, January 2022, were not exclusively those with the highest level of evictions filings (figure 3). We therefore exploit this quasi-exogenous rollout to examine the effects of the Right to Counsel both on those facing eviction and those seeking housing.



Figure 3: Highlighting the overlap between treated and control zip codes, each dot corresponds to a zip code where either the Right to Counsel went into effect on January 31, 2022 (Treated) or it did not (Control). The x-axis shows the average number of eviction filings over the years 2017, 2018, and 2019.

after landlords and tenants have had enough time to adjust to the new rules. Of course, the housing markets for this comparison should be chosen as-if randomly, and so doing the right study will be hard. But it is worth doing.”

Contributions

We exploit the underlying text that makes up an eviction case. Using [OpenAI's LLM API](#), we extract a rich set of details from each case file: monthly rental price, type of lease, length of lease, landlords reason(s) for filing, and tenant's stated defense. These textual features (a) provide us with a better understanding of the rental market that is most affected by evictions (b) strengthen our identification strategy by providing us with a richer set of controls and (c) allows to understand what types of tenants are most responsive to the policy. In addition to extracting numerical representations from each case, we also estimate intention-to-treat and IV parameters by fine-tuning large language completion models directly on the text which provides us with a novel robustness check.

We assess the impact of legal representation on housing stability. As previous literature has pointed out, legal outcomes are a noisy predictor of whether tenants remained housed in their current unit.⁴ Following an unsatisfactory legal ruling, landlords might remove tenants from their units informally.⁵ Using consumer reference data which tracks individuals' addresses overtime, we therefore explore whether having a lawyer decreases the likelihood of an observed move.

We also examine whether having a lawyer decreases the likelihood that a tenant enters an emergency shelter. Prior work has illustrated that emergency shelter usage is a low probability event for those people experiencing housing instability ([Evans et al. \[2016\]](#), [Phillips and Sullivan \[2023\]](#)). That that said, measuring the effects of a lawyer on this outcomes allows us to understand whether lawyers are meaningfully assisting the extreme cases in housing court.

We consider the potential negative impact of the Right to Counsel on those currently without housing. Specifically, we explore whether the housing search process becomes more difficult for low-income households following the implementation of this policy. Explaining how landlords may transfer the costs of this policy onto the unhoused, [Abramson \[2021\]](#) writes, “Low income households, who are priced out of the rental market, are intuitively the main losers.” Using data from HMIS on families and individuals who are currently homeless but don’t face significant barriers to rehousing,⁶ we estimate whether the **search length** and the **total voucher cost** (which we proxy for a price of housing) increases in response to the Right to Counsel. For each household, we observe a rich set of characteristics including

⁴[Greiner et al. \[2012\]](#) - “In at least one treated-group case of which we are aware, the following chain of events occurred: The landlord served a facially defective notice to quit. After a GBLS staff attorney moved to dismiss, the landlord agreed voluntarily to dismiss the case. For our purposes, this agreement meant that the occupant retained possession at the end of the piece of litigation that entered our study, so we coded this case accordingly, and that was the end of the matter as far as this case’s contribution to the District Court Study. We happen to know in this case that the landlord did as one would expect, meaning that the landlord served a corrected notice to quit on the occupant, then filed another lawsuit. Thus, litigation between the parties continued, but the subsequent litigation was not part of our dataset.”

⁵An informal eviction is any type of coerced moved by the landlord

⁶We use HMIS data on Rapid Rehousing Programs. Importantly for our work, these programs (1) are restricted to households who don’t face significant barriers to housing, (2) provide limited short-term financial assistance and (3) require that the rental agreements that households sign have “the same rights and responsibilities as a typical lease holder.” -[Reference](#)

race, gender, disability, previous living situation, income, and household size.

Finally, focusing specifically on lawyers' strategies, we explore how the implementation of the Right to Counsel could be improved. Specifically, we assess whether tenant outcomes could be improved if lawyers pushed more for formal agreements sanctioned by the court rather than the informal agreements that occur following either a Dismissal or a Withdraw. Exploiting this systematic variation across lawyers in their tendency to achieve certain case outcomes, we adopt an instrumental variable strategy. We posit aprioir that that a formal agreement is more effective as tenants likely have more bargaining power in the presence of their attorney.

Preview of Results

For many of our results, we report estimates using Ordinary Least Squares, Fine-Tuned Large Language Model, and Zip Code Regularized Neural Networks⁷. Across these models, we find the following:

1. The Right to Counsel increases the legal representation of tenants between 9-12 percentage points.
2. A lawyer reduces the likelihood of a Judgement of Possession, while increasing the likelihood of a Withdraw and Stipulation agreement.
3. A lawyer decreases the probability that we observe the tenant moving to a new address by more than 15 percentage points, decreases the poverty rate surrounding a tenant by more than 2 percentage points, but has no effect on the probability of entering a homeless shelter.
4. Preliminary estimates suggest that individuals without significant barriers to housing see rental prices increase by \$35.
5. Lawyers who push for a court approved agreement between tenant and landlord (as opposed to a dismissal or withdraw of the case) decrease the likelihood the we observe the tenant moving to a new address by roughly 20 percentage points.

Summary: Exploiting the ongoing implementation of the Right to Counsel across the state of Connecticut, we provide empirical evidence which suggests that having legal representation improves legal outcomes which importantly translates into improved housing stability. We emphasize though, that as with any empirical work, put perhaps even more so given our specific context, that these are limited results and should be interpreted cautiously. [Gyourko and Glaeser \[2008\]](#) “Moreover, if rent control is meant to redistribute income, then it is hard to see why current landlords are the only people who should pay for that redistribution or why current tenants are its natural recipients. Nobody believes that farmers should be the primary funders of the Food Stamp program.”

⁷Controls for the zip code level adoption of the policy

2 Background

Rental Market

The vast majority of eviction filings correspond to month-to-month leases. These include both leases that start as a month-to-month, as well as those which begin with a one year contract and then continue on a month-to-month bases.⁸ For example, it's typical to see descriptions of the lease such as "On or about [DATE], Plaintiff, Defendant [NAME1], and Defendant [NAME2] entered into a written one-year lease for the Premises ("Lease"). After expiration, the Lease renewed automatically for successive terms of one month."

Lease agreements last from as little as one month to several years. We measure the end of the lease agreements as the date when the landlord files for an eviction against the tenant. About 25% of leases last less than 6 months, 50% less than 13, and 75% less than 27. It's worth pointing out that about 7% last less than the initial month of the lease.

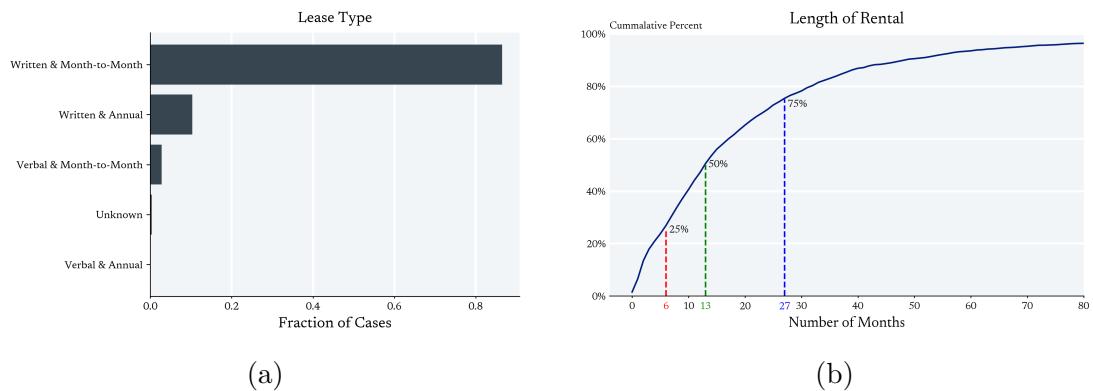


Figure 4: (a) Bar graph of the Types of Leases. (b) Cumulative Distribution Function of the Length of the Lease.

There is a relatively large dispersion in the monthly rental price of a unit. The interquartile range is \$500 with the 25th percentile starting at \$800 and the 75th percentile ending at \$1300. We use this measure later on in the paper to understand what types of tenants are most likely to seek legal representation when it becomes freely available.

Eviction filings are most frequent in higher poverty locations. We plot the empirical CDF of the poverty rates using the 5-year ACS first with respect to a uniform distribution over census tracts and then by the distribution generated by the addresses associated with each eviction filing.

⁸A Landlord's guide to Summary Process (Eviction) states, "Be sure to indicate in the Complaint whether you and the defendant had an oral or written week-to-week, month-to-month, or year-to-year lease."

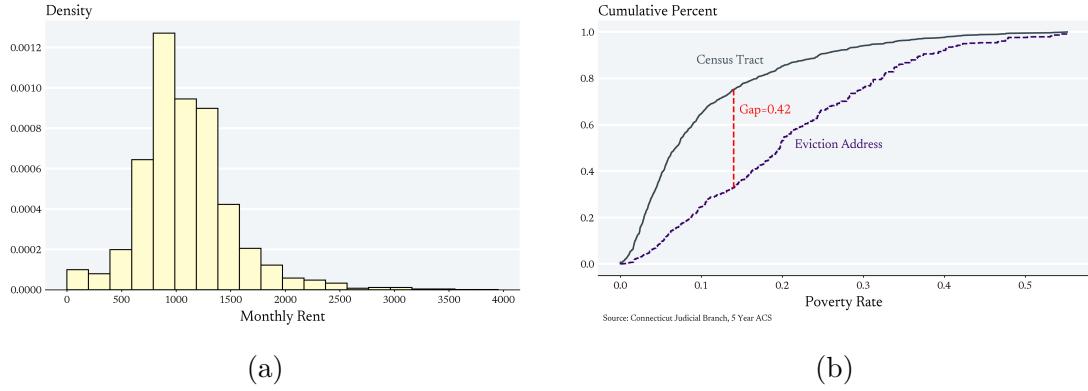


Figure 5: (a) Histogram of Monthly Rental Price(b) Cumulative Distribution Function of Poverty Rate.

Eviction Process

The Eviction process begins with the **Notice to Quit**. Usually served by a State Marshal, the Notice to Quit explains to the tenants that they are in violation of their lease and must move out within three days.⁹ The most common reason given, figure 6a, is that the tenants have failed to pay their rent. It's worth pointing out, though, that Landlords are not obliged to file an Eviction case immediately upon a failure to pay rent. Indeed, as mentioned in [Desmond \[2016\]](#), there is money to be made in working with tenants who fall behind for various reasons. And empirically, figure 6b, illustrates that landlords tend to provide tenants with some time before filing an eviction.¹⁰

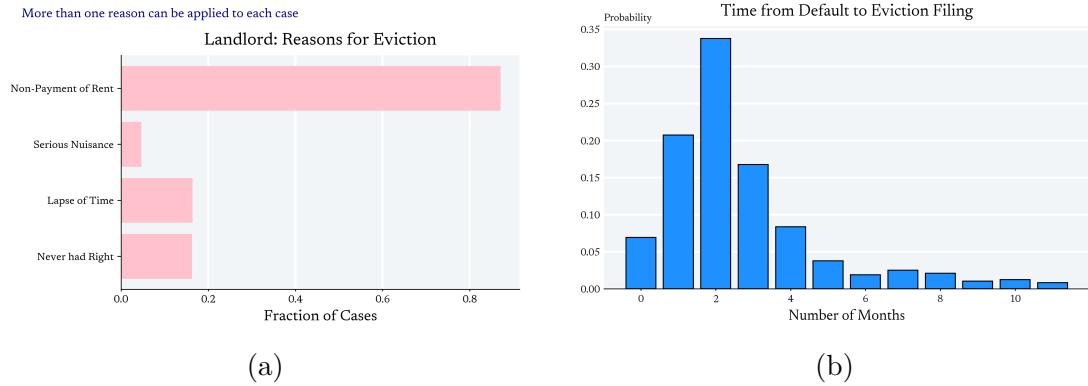


Figure 6: (a) Bar graph of Landlords' reasons for filing an eviction case. (b) Bar graph of the elapsed time between when the tenant fell behind on rent and when the landlord filed the case

If the tenants fail to move out in response to the Notice, a landlord can then file a **Summons** and **Complaint**. The summons informs the tenant that they are “being sued for possession of the premises.”¹¹ The Complaint expands upon the Notice to Quit

⁹A Landlord’s Guide to Summary Process (Eviction)

¹⁰Evictions in the private rental market compared to public housing – In the 21,000 eviction filings in Public Housing Units that [Leung et al. \[2023\]](#) focuses on, nearly half experienced repeated filings

¹¹A Landlord’s Guide to Summary Process (Eviction)

by including details regarding the lease agreement – the date the tenants first occupied the unit, the nature of the lease, the date the tenants fell behind on their rent – as well as details concerning the reasons for the eviction filing which can range from the rather mundane, such as a complaint about the tenants’ pet, to the extremely severe, such as a physical altercation which resulted in a fatality.

At this point, the tenants must file an **Appearance** and either an **Answer**. In the Answer, the tenant indicates whether they agree with the landlord’s Complaint and provides additional “facts” for why they should not be evicted. Only about 15% of Answers include these additional facts and as figure 11 highlights, the majority invoke some type of procedural dispute, but can also include details regarding financial hardship, health and safety concerns. We use this categorization of tenant defense to explore treatment effect heterogeneity.

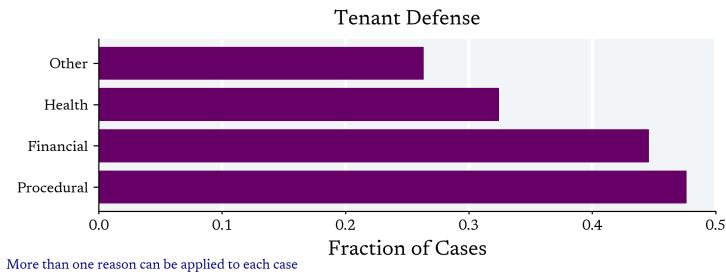


Figure 7: Self-Reported Special Defense

Cases can ultimately be settled in several different ways. For a more detailed description, we recommend the work by Kyle Nelson. For our purposes, though we classify cases outcomes into five categories: Judgement of Possession in favor of the landlord, a Dismissal of the case, a Withdraw of the case, a Final Stay by Stipulation and a Stipulation Agreement. A Final Stay by Stipulation corresponds to a case where a landlord receives possession of the unit, but give the tenant additional time to move out. A Stipulation Agreement corresponds to a case where the tenant and landlord have agreed to a plan that if adhered to (such as catching up on back rent) will allow the tenant to remain in the unit.

Implementation

Signed into law in June of 2021, the Right to Counsel went into effect on January 31, 2022, as rental relief services in response to Covid-19 were coming to an end, well after the expiration of the CDC’s eviction moratorium for nonpayment of rent (August 26, 2021).

Because the expected demand for legal services under the Right to Counsel exceed the level of legal support, state representatives rolled the policy out in phases. In the first phase, the policy was implemented across a subset of the zip codes which accounted for 30% of evictions and 20% percent of the renter population pre-pandemic. Individuals and families within these zip codes who made 80% or less than the area median income

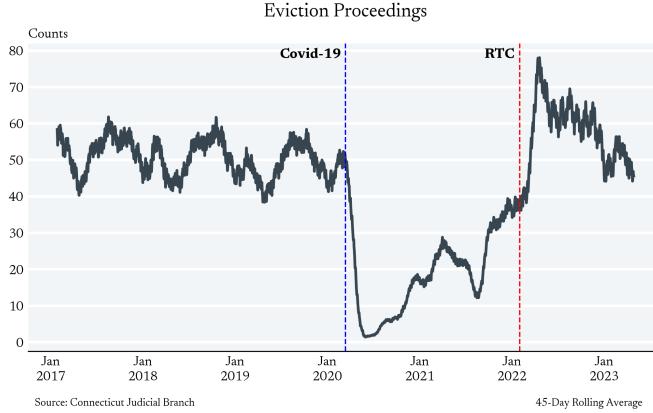


Figure 8: Eviction Filings Within Connecticut

were eligible. Importantly for our purposes, there was substantial overlap in the average number of evictions across the “treated” and “control” zip codes. Table 1 reports results from a per-implementation balance test with only month and housing court controls. In our empirical specifications, we also include for monthly rent, landlord’s reason for an eviction, and tenant’s reason for an eviction as additional controls.

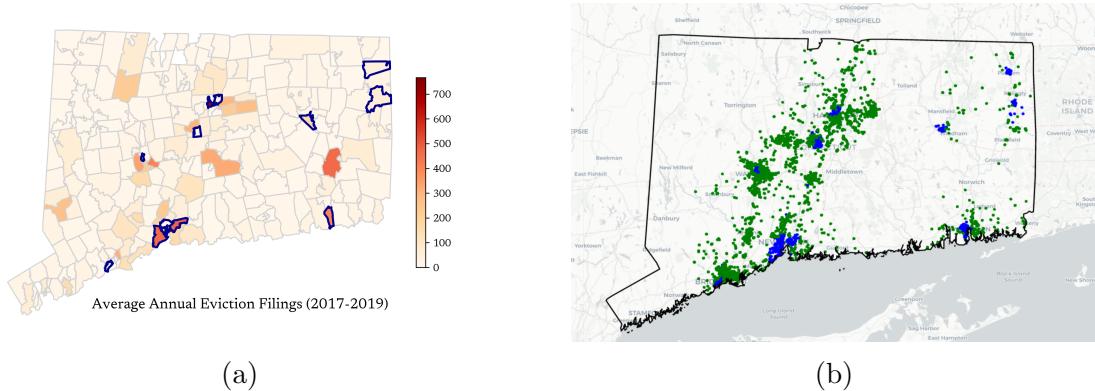
| Model | Est | S.E. | %Δ | RMSE | N | Params |
|----------------|--------|-------|----|--------|-------|--------|
| Appearance | 0.012 | 0.002 | 1 | 0.363 | 41391 | 28 |
| Representation | 0.007 | 0.001 | 49 | 0.115 | 41391 | 28 |
| Possession | -0.011 | 0.002 | -4 | 0.437 | 41391 | 28 |
| Stipulation | 0.030 | 0.003 | 6 | 0.490 | 41391 | 28 |
| Case Length | -3.606 | 0.264 | -7 | 80.146 | 42059 | 28 |
| Homeless | 0.002 | 0.001 | 14 | 0.106 | 42063 | 28 |

Table 1: Cross-Section Robustness Check

Beginning on October 1, 2021, landlords were to notify individuals of the existence of this policy when serving tenants with a Notice to Quit. From conversations with State Marshals, we learned that even if a landlord forgot to attach the document the State Marshall office would do so any. In addition, courts were expected to inform tenants of the policy when and if tenants appeared in court.¹²

For our analysis, we restrict our focus to the subset of eviction cases in Connecticut between January and August of 2022 that are filed in a housing court which saw cases from both treated and control zip codes. With this sample, we can include court house controls in our regression models and follow the tenant’s outcomes for at least 12 months.

¹²Reference



(a)

(b)

Figure 9: (a) Average eviction filing counts by zip code (2017-2019). A blue outline indicates that the Right to Counsel was implemented in that zip code. (b) The address of all eviction filings from February - September 2022 across the housing courts of interest. Blue indicates that the address is in a zip code where the Right to Counsel is in effect.

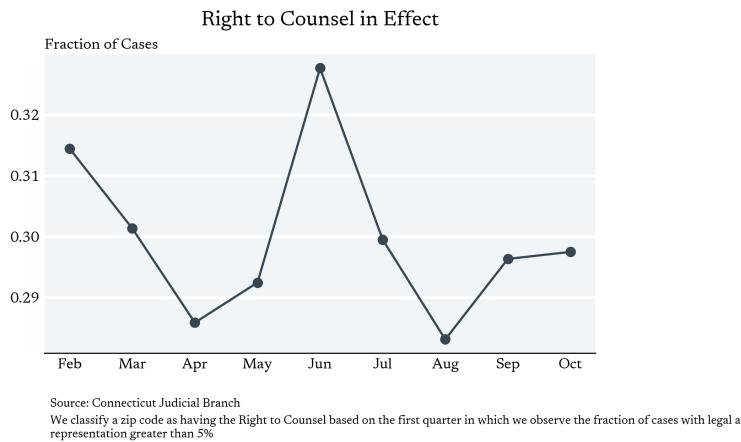


Figure 10: Staggard Rollout of the Right to Counsel

3 Data

Judicial Data

The data for this section consists of (1) tabular data provided to us by the Connecticut Judicial Branch and (2) publicly available pdf files related to eviction cases that we acquired from the Connecticut Judicial Branch website. As figure 11 illustrates, we extract additional information about a case by processing the associated pdf files with a computer vision model that extracts handwritten text and a large language model ([gpt-3.5-turbo](#)) which can perform a number of **prompt based tasks**.¹³ For example, to extract the monthly rent of the unit for a case, we prompt the language model with the case text and a question about monthly rent. The model then returns the monthly rent as its answer/completion to the prompt. We note that while this approach allows us to collect a rich set of variables for our analysis, it also introduces measurement error ([Liu et al. \[2023\]](#)). We are currently in the process of assessing the frequency of these errors. All code will be made available via our [GitHub Repository](#).

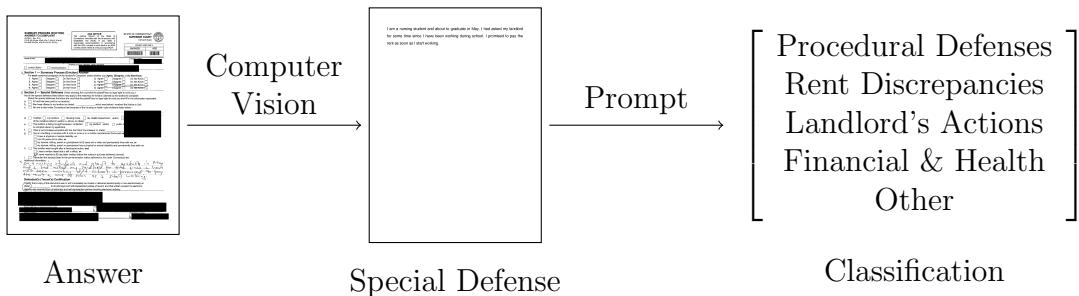


Figure 11: The Answer is only redacted because we are sharing this paper publicly. In our own analysis, we do not redact the Answer. To extract the handwritten defense by the Tenant we use Microsoft’s Computer Vision v3.2 GA Read API.

Consumer Reference Data

We process the names and addresses associated with tenants in an eviction case through a consumer identity management system (Infutor) to find a tenant’s most recent address. This data system is typically used by fortune 1000 companies to track consumers. We use Infutor’s *CRM Freshlink Premium* matching system to learn the most recent address of the tenant as of August 2023. We compare this address to the one on the associated eviction case file to determine whether a tenant moved following an eviction filing and if so whether they move to a better census tract.

¹³As [Liu et al.](#) writes, “These models perform downstream tasks primarily via prompting: all relevant task specification and data to process is formatted as a textual context, and the model returns a generated text completion.”

Homeless Management Information System

Emergency Shelters

In addition to examining whether a tenant moved to a new address, we also consider whether they entered an emergency shelter within the state of Connecticut. The Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness together with Nutmeg Consulting provided us with the names, dates, and previous zip code associated with each individual who entered a homeless shelter between January 1, 2017 and July 31, 2023. We classify tenants as entering an emergency shelter if we observe someone from the same zip code with the same name show up in the emergency shelter dataset following the eviction filing date.

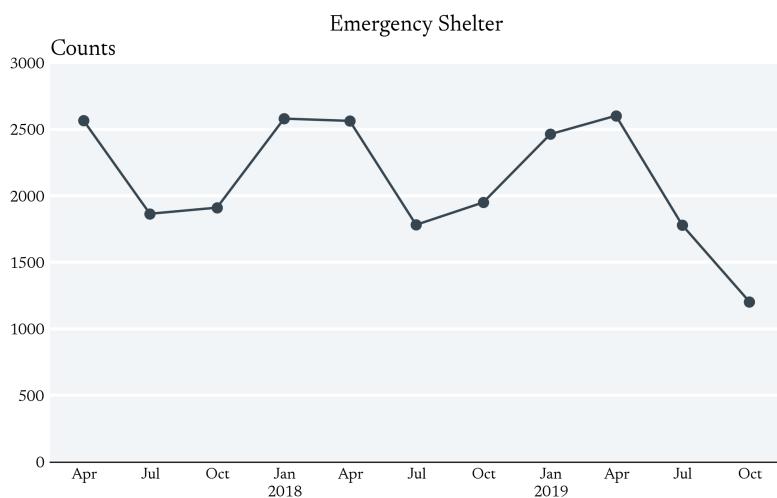


Figure 12: Emergency Shelter

Rapid Rehousing

To explore the potential unintended consequences of the Right to Counsel, we use data on Rapid Rehousing Programs within the State of Connecticut.¹⁴ Rapid Rehousing programs provide time-limited stipends and case management services to individuals experiencing homelessness who do not face significant barriers to housing. In this way, the program acts like a “trampoline”¹⁵ by assisting families to quickly regain housing.

While distinct from an independent housing search, we believe that the core outcomes we observe in a Rapid Rehousing Program (Search Length and Voucher Amount) are a reasonable proxy to those that we might observe by tracking very low-income individuals for the following five reasons. First, Rapid Rehousing programs “serve people experiencing

¹⁴We are grateful to Rose Kelly from the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness who made this possible. Working with us over the course of two years, Rose was instrumental in helping us identify the key variables of interest and ensuring that the data was high quality.

¹⁵CCEH

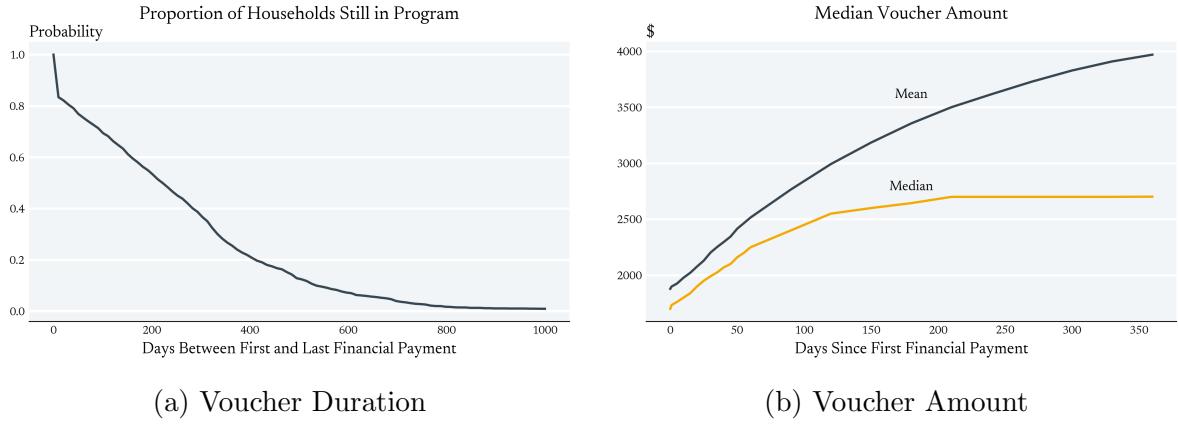


Figure 13: Rapid Rehousing Voucher Amounts

homelessness with no preconditions such as employment, income, absence of criminal record, or sobriety.”¹⁶ In essence, as [Evans et al. \[2019\]](#) notes, Rapid Rehousing is a Housing First initiative. Second, programs target individuals who don’t face significant barriers to rehousing.¹⁷ Third, the lease agreement households sign come with “the same rights and responsibilities as a typical lease holder.”¹⁸ Fourth, it’s emphasized that clients treat the housing identification process like a regular housing search.¹⁹ And fifth, we observe a rich set of controls for these individuals: Year & Month, Age, Domestic Violence, White, VI Score, Household Size, Rapid Rehousing Program, Drug Use, Prior Living Situation, Income, English, Physical Disability, Male.

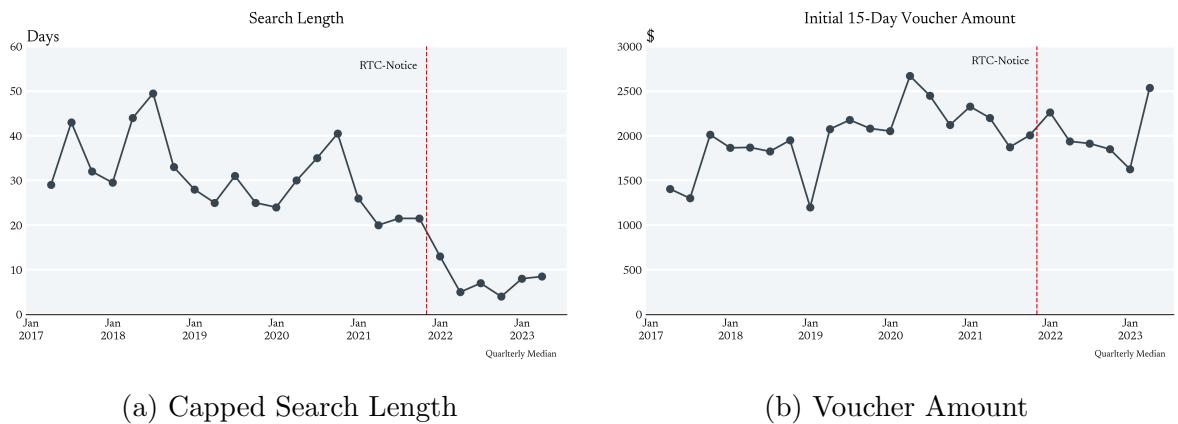


Figure 14: Rapid Rehousing Voucher Amounts

We assign treatment to individuals and families based on their previous address. As

¹⁶[Reference](#)

¹⁷“Although we can not promise a financial subsidy for the entire time of the lease we can assure that our case managers will be working with the household on financial literacy, budgeting and connecting them to community resources to fill in the gaps within their budget.” –CCEH : A Business Approach to Landlord Engagement

¹⁸It is imperative that any lease agreement provides the tenant with **the same rights and responsibilities as a typical lease holder** and that the financial terms of the lease are such that the household has a reasonable ability to assume rental costs once financial support ends (keeping in mind that in the majority of cases, even households with no income at move-in retain their housing)”

¹⁹CCEH : A Business Approach to Landlord Engagement

figure 15 illustrates, the vast majority of clients who enter multiple rapid rehousing programs do so exclusively from either zip codes that implement the Right to Counsel (treated) or zip codes that do not (control).

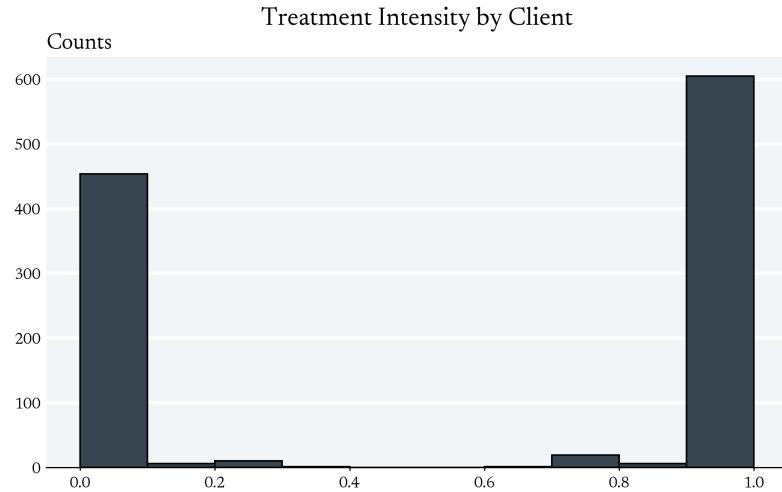


Figure 15: Treatment Intensity by Clients with Multiple Rapid Rehousing Entries

| Variable | Treated | Control | Difference |
|---------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Age | 36.87 (0.900) | 33.89 (0.975) | 2.98 (1.327) |
| Household Size | 2.45 (0.110) | 2.41 (0.128) | 0.04 (0.169) |
| Domestic Violence | 0.31 (0.031) | 0.40 (0.039) | -0.09 (0.050) |
| VI-Score | 6.42 (0.143) | 7.17 (0.201) | -0.75 (0.247) |
| Drug Use | 0.22 (0.028) | 0.21 (0.033) | 0.01 (0.043) |
| Entry Family Total Income | 834 (48.0) | 611 (47.0) | 223.000 (67.2) |
| English | 0.86 (0.024) | 0.96 (0.015) | -0.10 (0.028) |
| Physical Disability | 0.19 (0.027) | 0.17 (0.030) | 0.02 (0.040) |
| Male | 0.28 (0.031) | 0.30 (0.037) | -0.02 (0.048) |
| White | 0.37 (0.033) | 0.48 (0.040) | -0.11 (0.051) |

Rapid Rehousing Data Provided by Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness

Table 2: Rapid Rehousing Balance Table

4 Empirical Strategy

Notation

We adopt the following notation to explore the effects of lawyers on housing outcomes.

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Controls} &:= \text{Details of the case} & X_i \\
 \text{Instrument} &:= \text{Tenant Covered by the Right to Counsel} & Z_i \\
 \text{Treatment} &:= \text{Legal Aid Lawyer} & D_i \\
 \text{Outcome} &:= \begin{cases} \text{Judgment of Possession} \\ \text{Observed Move} \\ \text{Change in Poverty Rate} \\ \text{Emergency Shelter} \end{cases} & Y_i
 \end{aligned}$$

Identification Strategy

We exploit the cross-sectional variation of the Right to Counsel controlling for details of the case. More specifically, we assume that conditional on case level controls, the Right to Counsel can be thought of as good as randomly assigned.

$$\tilde{Y}_i \perp \text{Right to Counsel} | \text{Case Level Controls}$$

In order to interpret our results under the LATE framework, we need to clarify who the compliers are and what the exclusion restriction implies. In this context, the compliers are tenants who receive legal representation under the Right to Counsel but who wouldn't receive it otherwise. The exclusion restriction assumes that the effect of legal aid on downstream outcomes is only through the assistance of a lawyer. For example, if tenants responded to the Right to Counsel flier attached to the Notice to Quit by showing up at court but without a lawyer this would be a violation of the exclusion restriction and bias our estimates upwards.

Residualized Instrumental Variables

In addition to fitting linear models, we also fit the following nonlinear residualized model as a robustness check. We do so because (a) it's a nonlinear relaxation of linear IV, (b) it allows us to incorporate text as control variables and (c) it is computationally attractive relative to a fully nonparametric model. We expand upon these points in the appendix (see section 12).

$$Y_i = \beta_1 (\mathbb{E}[D_i | X_i, Z_i] - \mathbb{E}[D_i | X_i]) + \varepsilon_i$$

Cluster Regularized Neural Networks

We fit zip code regularized neural networks for the following three reasons. First, [Cassidy and Currie \[2022\]](#) illustrate “The [RTC] had a much greater impact in some target zip codes than in others, likely due to heterogeneity in housing court personnel and legal services providers across boroughs.” This introduces additional variance into our estimator. Second because the Right to counsel is rolled at the zip code level, our instrument is collinear with zip code fixed effects. Therefore because we cannot exploit within zip code variation, we have to partial out the zip code effects which we do in a nonparametric manner via bi-level gradient descent as described in our accompanying paper “Regularizing the Forward Pass.”

5 Legal Results

5.1 Legal Representation

Our first empirical results concern whether the Right to Counsel increases the representation rate for tenants. The **core** set of controls include the month, courthouse, whether the Plaintiff has a lawyer, monthly rent, poverty rate at the census tract level, fraction of tenants female, number of tentants, majority race of tenants²⁰, and whether the tenant’s address appears in Infutor’s data base. In some specification, we also control for the landlords reasons for filing the eviction case as well as the tenants stated defense.²¹ Fitting a linear model, a fine-tuned large language model, and zip code regularized neural network to the data, we find that the representation rate increases by **11**, **9**, and **13** percentage points respectively.²²

| Model | Est | Std | %Δ | N | Params | Core | Tenant | Landlord |
|------------|--------|--------|-----|-------|--------|------|--------|----------|
| Linear (1) | 0.0790 | 0.0020 | 333 | 31374 | 27 | ✓ | | |
| Linear (2) | 0.0790 | 0.0020 | 333 | 31374 | 27 | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Linear (3) | 0.0790 | 0.0020 | 333 | 31374 | 27 | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Linear (4) | 0.0790 | 0.0020 | 333 | 31374 | 27 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| FT-LLM | 0.0983 | 0.0014 | 549 | 4786 | 350 M | | | ✓ |
| RFP-NN | 0.1273 | 0.0006 | 712 | 9178 | 2016 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Table 3: Effect on Legal Representation

We are interested in understanding which factors influence the decision to seek legal representation when it is made available. Using a linear model, we see that the fraction female and the poverty rate associated with the household increase the likelihood that

²⁰Gender and Race were predicted based on the names

²¹For continuous control variables which we do not observe for a case, we impute the mean value and include an additional dummy variable to indicate that the variable is missing.

²²Details on the construction of the standard errors are explained in the appendix

tenant receive legal assistance following the policy whereas the monthly rental price (\$100) has a negative effect.

| Variable | Est | Std | N | Params | Core | Tenant | Landlord |
|-----------------|---------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|----------|
| Fraction Female | 0.0239 | 0.0109 | 9178 | 30 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Poverty Rate | 0.1002 | 0.0456 | 9178 | 30 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Monthly Rent | -0.0104 | 0.0129 | 3667 | 30 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Procedural | 0.0408 | 0.0228 | 121 | 2 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Financial | 0.0636 | 0.0243 | 111 | 2 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Health | 0.1377 | 0.0434 | 85 | 2 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Table 4: Effect on Legal Representation

5.2 Legal Outcomes

We are interested in the effect of legal representation on case outcomes. We classify cases outcomes into five categories: Possession, Dismissal, Non-Final Stay, Stipulation. Letting Z denote the Right to Counsel (i.e. the instrumental variable), Y the outcome, X the same controls as above, and S as the status of the individual (Complier: $S=C$, Never-taker: $S=N$, Always-Taker: $S=A$), we define our parameter of interest as follows:

$$\theta = \mathbb{P}_{Y|X,Z=1,S=C}(y) - \mathbb{P}_{Y|X,Z=0,S=C}(y)$$

As with the first stage, we report estimates from a linear model, a fine-tuned large language completions model and a zip code regularized neural network. Across these models, the direction of the effects are largely consistent - legal representation decreases the likelihood of a Judgement of Possession and a Dismissal, and increases the likelihood that the case is Withdrawn or that the tenant(s) and landlord reach a stipulation agreement.

| Model | Est | Std | %Δ | N | Params | Core | Tenant | Landlord |
|------------|--------|-------|-----|------|--------|------|--------|----------|
| Linear (1) | 94.010 | 5.624 | 129 | 9178 | 19 | ✓ | | |
| Linear (2) | 93.509 | 5.592 | 128 | 9178 | 22 | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Linear (3) | 94.340 | 5.633 | 130 | 9178 | 23 | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Linear (4) | 93.800 | 5.598 | 129 | 9178 | 26 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| FT-LLM | 72.092 | 9.336 | 129 | 9178 | 350 M | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| FT-LLM | 72.092 | 9.336 | 99 | 9178 | 350 M | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Table 5: Local Effect of Legal Representation on Case Length

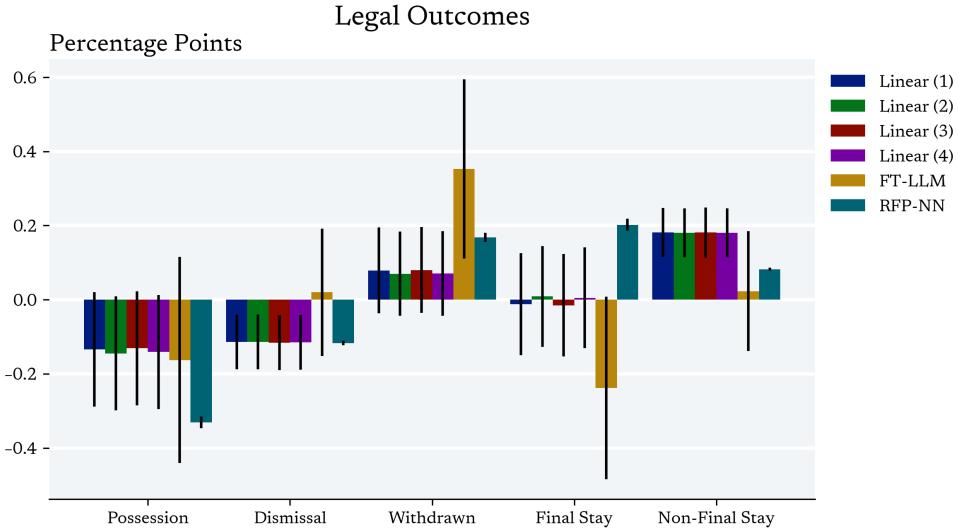


Figure 16: The Effects of a Lawyer on Case Outcomes

6 Housing Stability

Observed Move

We examine whether legal aid increases the likelihood of remaining housed. We do so by matching housing court data to consumer reference data provided by Verisk Marketing Solutions. We classify a tenant as moving if the most recent address as of August 2023 is different from the address at which the eviction was filed against. As figure 17 illustrates, the probability of an observed move is roughly the same across eviction cases which originated from February through October of 2022.

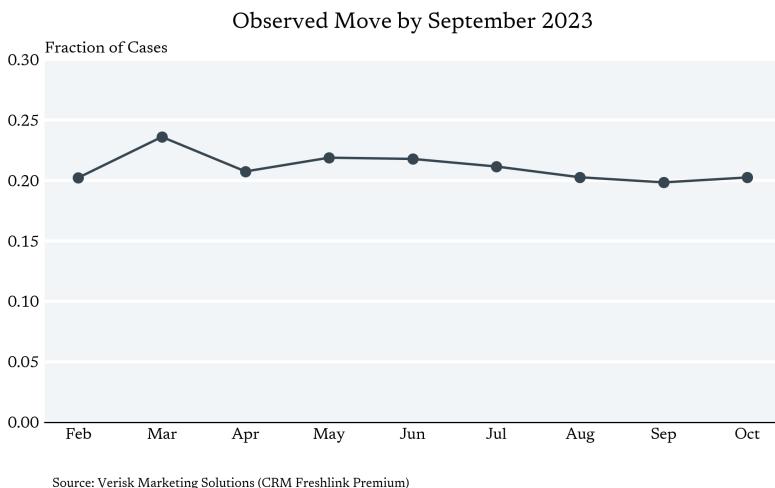


Figure 17: The Probability of an Observed Move

We find that a lawyer decreases the likelihood of an observed move by roughly **20** percentage points. The regularized neural network produces an estimate slightly below this

number while the linear model results are slightly above.

| Model | Est | Std | \bar{Y} | N | Params | Core | Tenant | Landlord |
|------------|---------|--------|-----------|-------|--------|------|--------|----------|
| Linear (1) | -0.191 | 0.038 | 0.22 | 12898 | 22 | ✓ | | |
| Linear (2) | -0.191 | 0.038 | 0.22 | 12898 | 22 | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Linear (3) | -0.191 | 0.038 | 0.22 | 12898 | 22 | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Linear (4) | -0.191 | 0.038 | 0.22 | 12898 | 22 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| FT-LLM | -0.195 | 0.128 | 0.21 | 4677 | 350 M | | | ✓ |
| RFP-NN | -0.1795 | 0.0117 | 0.22 | 9178 | 2016 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Table 6: Local Effect of Legal Representation on Moving

Poverty Rate

We explore the effect a lawyer has on the poverty rate of the tenant’s surrounding neighborhood. In this context, the poverty rate can only change if the tenant moves. However conditioning on those tenants who move would bias the analysis as the decision to move is directly influenced by a lawyer. We therefore fit a series of regression models where we restrict the underlying sample to those tenants with a predicted probability of moving greater than some value. Using the addresses provided by Verisk Marketing Solutions, we generate tenant specific probabilities of moving by fitting a logistic regression model to the control group.

We find that a lawyer decreases the poverty rate of the tenant’s surrounding census tract. As figure 18, the effect size generally tends to get larger as we restrict the underlying sample to those tenants with the greatest predicted probability of moving. We allow the threshold value (shown along the x-axis) to range from one standard deviation below the mean probability of moving to one standard deviation above.

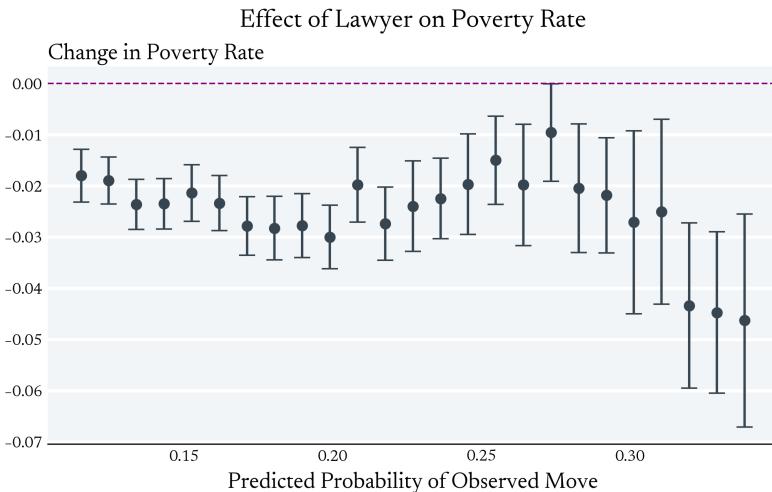


Figure 18: The Effect of a Lawyer on the Poverty Rate across subsets of the sample corresponding to tenants who have a greater predicted probability of moving.

Emergency Shelter

As a final measure on housing stability, we consider whether a lawyer decreases the likelihood that a tenant enters an emergency shelter. As [Evans et al. \[2019\]](#) notes, “Evictions are thought to represent a gateway into homelessness for many.” We match housing court records to emergency shelter records based on zip code, date of the eviction filing and entry into an emergency shelter and name.

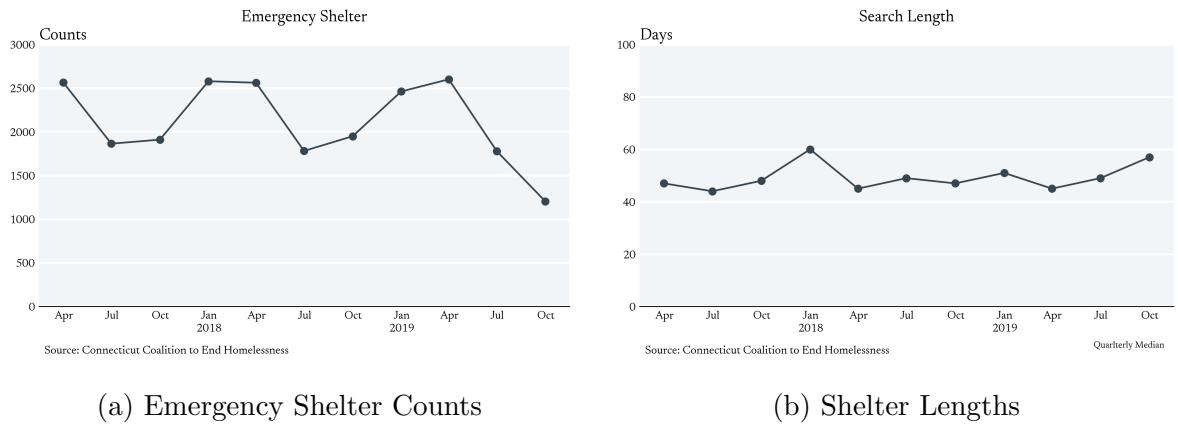


Figure 19: Emergency Shelters

We find that a legal aid lawyer has no effect on the probability of entering a homeless shelter.²³ There are a couple of possible explanations for why we find a null result. For one, we might not have allowed for sufficient amount of time to pass between when a tenant is evicted and our collection of the Homeless Information Management Data (July 2023). This doesn’t seem likely as [Evans et al. \[2016\]](#) considers transitions into shelters within 6 months which is well within our time frame. Two, it may be that given that homelessness is a low probability event to begin with, our identification strategy is not suitable. Three, it may be that individuals that are likely to end up homeless are the most challenging cases to intervene in. We leave this as an open question.

| Model | Est | Std | \bar{Y} | N | Params | Core | Tenant | Landlord |
|------------|---------|--------|-----------|-------|--------|------|--------|----------|
| Linear (1) | 0.005 | 0.019 | 0.02 | 13079 | 22 | ✓ | | |
| Linear (2) | 0.005 | 0.019 | 0.02 | 13079 | 22 | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Linear (3) | 0.005 | 0.019 | 0.02 | 13079 | 22 | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Linear (4) | 0.005 | 0.019 | 0.02 | 13079 | 22 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| FT-LLM | -0.081 | 0.020 | 0.03 | 4757 | 350 M | | | ✓ |
| RFP-NN | -0.0717 | 0.0012 | 0.020 | 9178 | 2016 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Table 7: Local Effect of Legal Representation on Becoming Homeless

²³There are additional outcomes that would be worth exploring such as the effects on child welfare and income assistance as considered in [Rolston et al. \[2013\]](#)

7 Potential Unintended Consequences

Prior research has long speculated that the provision of free legal aid to households facing eviction might adversely effect those who are currently experiencing homelessness. As [Gunn \[1995\]](#) writes, “By increasing landlords’ costs of doing business, legal services attorneys may enrich their clients at the expense of all other similarly situated poor tenants.” To date though, there is no empirical work that explores this potential adverse effect.²⁴ We provide preliminary results by measuring whether the search length and first-month voucher of clients in Rapid Rehousing Programs increase following the implementation of the Right to Counsel.

We consider a head of household in a Rapid Rehousing program to be “treated” by the Right to Counsel if their previous zip code was one of the first adopters. While an imperfect classification of the clients whose search process is likely to be affected by the policy, figure [26](#) illustrates that heads of households with multiple Rapid Rehousing stints tend to remain exclusively within a treated or control zip code which provides some justification for our classification strategy.

Our estimation strategy parallels our empirical work with housing court data. We control for the Rapid Rehousing program (like we previously controlled for housing court) because as figure [20](#) illustrates, there is tremendous variation across programs in terms of average outcomes. We also further condition on Year & Month, Age, Domestic Violence, White, VI Score, Household Size, Drug Use, Prior Living Situation, Income, English, Physical Disability, Male. It’s important to control for this set of variables as they are imperfectly balanced across the treatment groups (table [8](#)) and likely impact both the search length and voucher amount.

| Variable | Treated | Control | Difference |
|---------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Age | 36.87 (0.900) | 33.89 (0.975) | 2.98 (1.327) |
| Household Size | 2.45 (0.110) | 2.41 (0.128) | 0.04 (0.169) |
| Domestic Violence | 0.31 (0.031) | 0.40 (0.039) | -0.09 (0.050) |
| VI-Score | 6.42 (0.143) | 7.17 (0.201) | -0.75 (0.247) |
| Drug Use | 0.22 (0.028) | 0.21 (0.033) | 0.01 (0.043) |
| Entry Family Total Income | 834 (48.0) | 611 (47.0) | 223.000 (67.2) |
| English | 0.86 (0.024) | 0.96 (0.015) | -0.10 (0.028) |
| Physical Disability | 0.19 (0.027) | 0.17 (0.030) | 0.02 (0.040) |
| Male | 0.28 (0.031) | 0.30 (0.037) | -0.02 (0.048) |
| White | 0.37 (0.033) | 0.48 (0.040) | -0.11 (0.051) |

Rapid Rehousing Data Provided by Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness

Table 8: Rapid Rehousing Balance Table

²⁴[Evans et al. \[2019\]](#) writes, “By definition, market-level interventions affect all properties in a jurisdiction and are thus more difficult to evaluate. To our knowledge, there is no rigorous experimental or quasi-experimental work examining how these policies affect homelessness.”

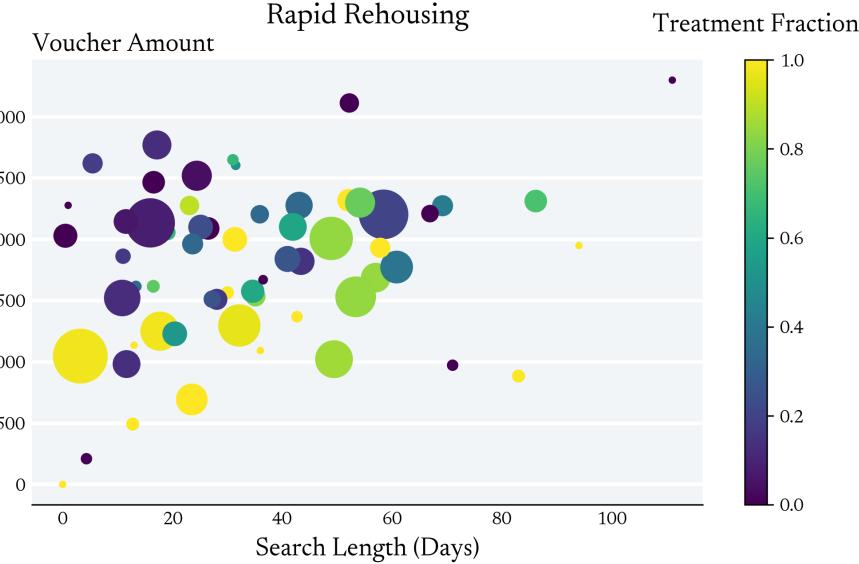


Figure 20: Mean Voucher Amount and Search Length by Rapid Rehousing Provider

As a placebo exercise, we fit our regression model on heads of households who entered rapid rehousing programs prior to October 1, 2019. Controlling for the core set of variables mentioned above, table 9 captures relatively small effects. The search length estimate is less than 2 days and the rental amount is fewer than \$6.

| Outcome | Est | Std | %Δ | N | Params | Core |
|----------------|--------|----------|----|-----|--------|------|
| Search Length | 1.8323 | 5.0240 | 4 | 379 | 85 | ✓ |
| Voucher Amount | 5.7022 | 113.4337 | 13 | 379 | 85 | ✓ |

Table 9: Placebo Effect on Legal Representation

In Table 10, we keep only heads of households who entered programs after October 1, 2021 to account for the potential anticipation effects of the policy. We observed that the estimate on search length is nearly 6 days and the Voucher Amount is greater than \$125.

| Outcome | Est | Std | %Δ | N | Params | Core |
|----------------|----------|---------|-----|-----|--------|------|
| Search Length | 5.6111 | 3.4303 | 26 | 412 | 70 | ✓ |
| Voucher Amount | 126.5639 | 99.0089 | 591 | 412 | 70 | ✓ |

Table 10: Effect on Legal Representation

8 Policy Improvement

“The authors posit that these different results may be the result of assertive strategies adopted in Boston, versus a non-confrontational approach on the North

Shore. More work is needed in this area, particularly regarding legal tactics and the underlying housing market.” - [Evans et al. \[2019\]](#)

We are interested in exploring how the implementation of the Right to Counsel can be improved. We focus on the question of whether lawyers should push more for a formal court approved agreement between tenant and landlord versus a dismissal or withdraw if their aim is to keep the tenant housed in their current unit. To estimate the relative effectiveness, we adopt an instrumental variable strategy based on the variation across lawyers in their tendency to achieve certain outcomes.

In an ideal setup, we would take two cases which are similar in nature and assign different legal aid lawyers to each case, one which tended to reach formal agreements with the landlord and the other less so. We could then attribute any difference between the tenant’s housing outcomes to the different strategies employed by the lawyers assuming that they don’t assist tenants in any other way.²⁵ Doing so, we could understand the relative effectiveness of a formal agreement.

We attempt to mimic this ideal setup via an instrumental variables approach where we construct the regressor of interest by taking the predicted difference between a model trained on both the case and the lawyer inputs, and a model trained only on the case.²⁶ As Figure 21 highlights, there is tremendous variation across lawyers in their tendency to achieve certain outcomes. Figure 21 plots the distribution across case outcomes in counterfactual worlds where there is only one legal aid lawyer. We have 26 legal aid lawyers in the data set which produces these 26 separate graphs.

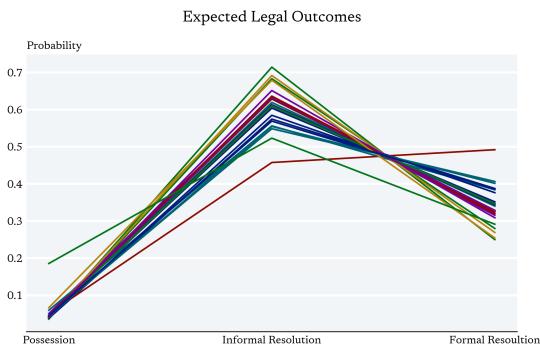


Figure 21: Counterfactual Expected Case Outcomes

We don’t want our identification to come from cases which have low probability of both a Dismissal or an Agreement. In the second equation that we fit as part of our partially linear instrumental variable approach,

$$\begin{aligned}\tilde{S}_i &= \mathbb{E}[\text{Dismissal}|\text{case, lawyer}] - \mathbb{E}[\text{Dismissal}|\text{case}] \\ Y_i &= \beta \tilde{S}_i + \varepsilon_i\end{aligned}$$

²⁵Exclusion restriction

²⁶We estimate these two conditional expectation functions by training a neural network via bi-level gradient descent where the clustering is done with respect to the lawyer.

we therefore restrict our sample to those cases with a predicted probabilities of both outcomes of at least ‘x’ percent, where ‘y’ corresponds to the y-axis in figure 22. Meaningful for us, we observe that as the quality of the sample improves, that is as the set of cases is further refined to those which might likely result in either a dismissal or a stipulation, we see the effects associated with these strategies widen with a formal agreement being the more successful of the two approaches. **Caveats:** We want to emphasize though that these estimates should be interpreted very cautiously. They are sensitive to the moving data that we match to as well as the hyperparameters we used to train the neural network.

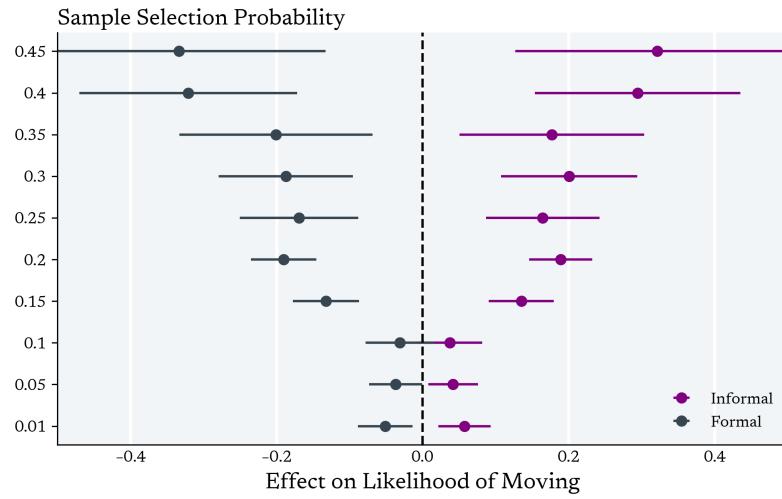


Figure 22: IV Estimates on the Effect of a Dismissal and a Stipulation Agreement on the Likelihood of an Observed Move.

9 Conclusion

There is a silent tension in an eviction that is cut only by the sequence of questions that races through one’s mind. The most pressing being - where will the tenants go this evening, and the most incomprehensible - how did things get to this point. Standing just inside the door, as the four men with the moving company make repeated trips out to the truck, the taped up boxes filled with an assortment of kitchen and living room items, it’s natural to wonder whether such an ordeal might be avoided in the first place.

Exploiting the ongoing implementation of the Right to Counsel across the state of Connecticut, we provide empirical evidence which suggests that having legal representation improves legal outcomes which importantly translates into improved housing stability. We emphasize though, as with any empirical work, but perhaps even more so given our context, these are results limited and should be interpreted cautiously.

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10 Appendix

It's not yet 8:30 a.m., and the four men milling around an oversized moving truck are anxious to get started. A few cars back out of their places, and a dog is let out across the street. No one seems to mind the tenants in the central unit, their front lawn disappearing underneath a heap of furniture and clothes as they make repeated trips to the basement. Several minutes pass before the State Marshall walks through the doorway to ask for the keys. There's no squabble. No one asks for more time. It's eerily similar to a "Pens Down" command at the end of an exam period, except instead of turning over a paper, they're turning over their half emptied apartment. As the tenants turn their attention towards clearing the front lawn, the four men from the moving company set to work inside: taping up boxes and hauling the remaining items out to the truck. The back of a t-shirt reads, *If You Don't Pay ... You Can't Stay.*

- From Shadowing a State Marshall

Standard Errors

Standard Errors for linear models are constructed via two-step bootstrapping. First, 80% of the housing courts are sampled without replacement according the their empirical probabilities. Then 80% of the observations within the subsampled housing courts are sampled. The model is fit to this final subsample. Standard Errors for the Large Language Model are constructed via two-step bootstrapping. First, 80% of the housing courts are sampled without replacement according the their empirical probabilities. Then 80% of the estimated individuals level treatment effects within the subsampeld housing courts are sampled. We take the mean of this final subsample.

| Model | Est | Std | %Δ | N | Params | Core | Tenant | Landlord |
|------------|--------|--------|-----|------|--------|------|--------|----------|
| Linear (1) | 0.1134 | 0.0056 | 477 | 5020 | 20 | ✓ | | |
| Linear (2) | 0.1133 | 0.0056 | 477 | 5020 | 23 | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Linear (3) | 0.1132 | 0.0056 | 477 | 5020 | 24 | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Linear (4) | 0.1131 | 0.0056 | 476 | 5020 | 27 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| FT-LLM | 0.0875 | 0.0006 | 368 | 5020 | 350 M | | | ✓ |
| RFP-NN | 0.1184 | 0.0006 | 536 | 9178 | 2016 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Table 11: Effect on Legal Representation

| Model | Possession | Dismissal | Withdrawn | Final Stay | Non-Final Stay | Core | Tenant | Landlord |
|------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|------|--------|----------|
| Linear (1) | -0.134 (0.077) | -0.114 (0.037) | 0.079 (0.058) | -0.012 (0.069) | 0.181 (0.033) | ✓ | | |
| Linear (2) | -0.145 (0.077) | -0.114 (0.037) | 0.070 (0.057) | 0.009 (0.068) | 0.180 (0.033) | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Linear (3) | -0.131 (0.077) | -0.116 (0.037) | 0.080 (0.058) | -0.015 (0.069) | 0.181 (0.034) | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Linear (4) | -0.141 (0.077) | -0.115 (0.037) | 0.071 (0.057) | 0.005 (0.068) | 0.180 (0.033) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| FT-LLM | -0.163 (0.139) | 0.020 (0.086) | 0.353 (0.121) | -0.238 (0.123) | 0.023 (0.081) | | | ✓ |
| RFP-NN | -0.331 (0.008) | -0.117 (0.003) | 0.168 (0.006) | 0.202 (0.008) | 0.082 (0.002) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Table 12: Effect on Legal Outcomes

Take Up Rate

Legal Outcomes

| Model | Possession | Dismissal | Withdrawn | Final Stay | Stipulation | Core | Tenant | Landlord |
|------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------|--------|----------|
| Linear (1) | -0.256 (0.086) | -0.116 (0.027) | 0.100 (0.061) | 0.121 (0.057) | 0.160 (0.027) | ✓ | | |
| Linear (2) | -0.262 (0.085) | -0.117 (0.028) | 0.099 (0.061) | 0.136 (0.057) | 0.154 (0.027) | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Linear (3) | -0.247 (0.083) | -0.118 (0.027) | 0.100 (0.060) | 0.115 (0.055) | 0.160 (0.027) | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Linear (4) | -0.253 (0.082) | -0.119 (0.028) | 0.099 (0.061) | 0.129 (0.055) | 0.154 (0.027) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| FT-LLM | -0.282 (0.076) | 0.023 (0.035) | 0.138 (0.067) | 0.089 (0.082) | 0.032 (0.046) | | | ✓ |
| RFP-NN | -0.204 (0.008) | -0.151 (0.004) | 0.060 (0.009) | 0.230 (0.012) | 0.072 (0.002) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Table 13: Effect on Legal Outcomes

Fine-Tuning Laguage Model

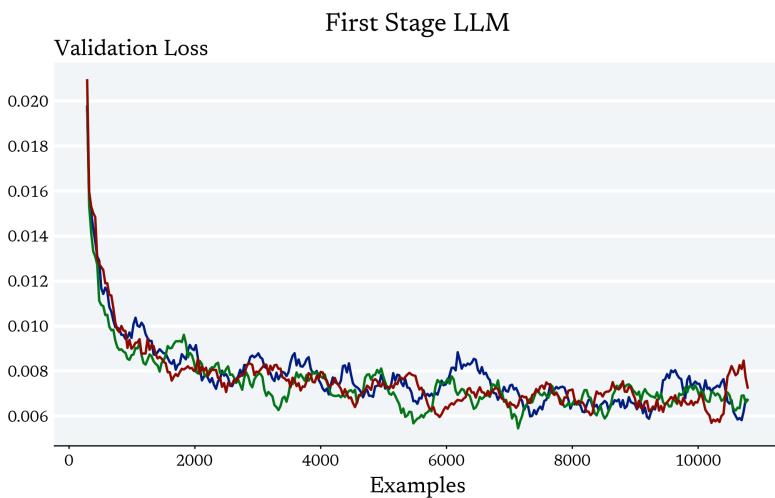


Figure 23: Training Loss of Fine-Tuned First Stage Model

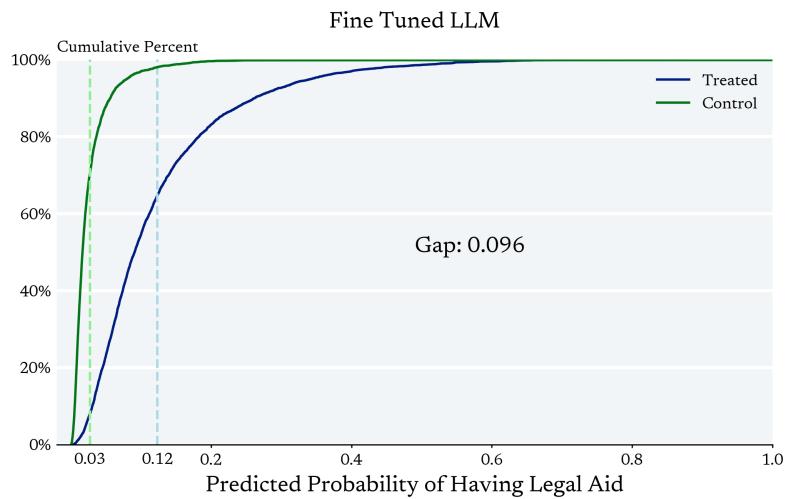


Figure 24: Textual First Stage

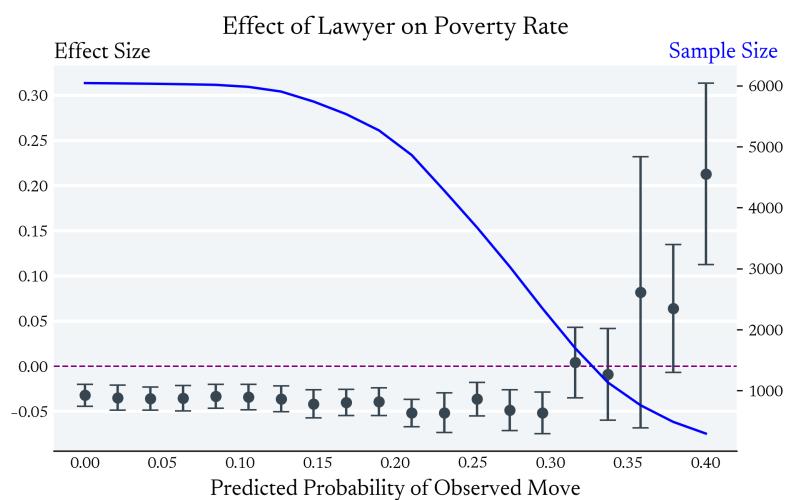


Figure 25: Caption

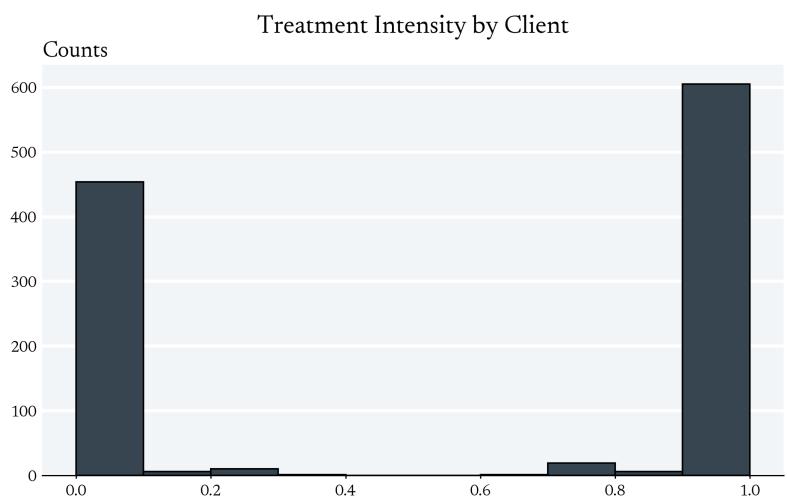


Figure 26: Softmax Weighted Average of Fraction of Observations in a Treated Zip Code for Individuals with Multiple Rapid Rehousing Stints

Downstream Effects

Potential Unintended Consequences

| Service Type | Amount |
|---|---------|
| Signing Bonus Not Shared Housing | 1980.0 |
| Rental/Security Deposit | 1300.0 |
| Lease Payment | 1247.5 |
| Emergency Housing Assistance | 1246.0 |
| Shared Housing Signing Bonus | 725.0 |
| Rental Assistance | 720.0 |
| Motel/Hotel Costs | 530.0 |
| Extended Shallow Subsidy - Rental Assistance | 525.0 |
| General Housing Stability Assistance | 494.24 |
| Moving Costs | 283.155 |
| Utility Deposit | 270.0 |
| Home Repair | 86.095 |
| Utility Assistance | 81.85 |
| Application Fees | 50.0 |
| Financial assistance for rent | 30.0 |
| Financial assistance for Moving On (e.g., security deposit, moving expenses) | 30.0 |
| Housing Referral | 30.0 |
| Housing Services: Planning of housing | 30.0 |
| Housing referral/placement | 30.0 |
| Continuation of Services | 30.0 |
| Subsidized housing application assistance | 22.5 |
| Emergency financial assistance | 22.5 |
| Non-financial assistance for Moving On (e.g., housing navigation, transition support) | 22.5 |
| Direct provision of other public benefits - Legal services - eviction protection | 1.0 |
| Apartment fees | 0.0 |
| Motel/Hotel Vouchers | 0.0 |
| Landlord and Tenant Assistance / Mediation | 0.0 |
| Housing services | 0.0 |
| Housing Placement | 0.0 |
| Housing Assistance | 0.0 |
| Financial Services | 0.0 |
| Extended Shallow Subsidy | 0.0 |
| Housing Search and Info | 0.0 |

Table 14: Median Service Total by Service Type

Policy Improvements

11 Model

We write down a model to clarify the potential adverse effects of the Right to Counsel.



Figure 27: Number of Cases by Legal Aid Lawyer

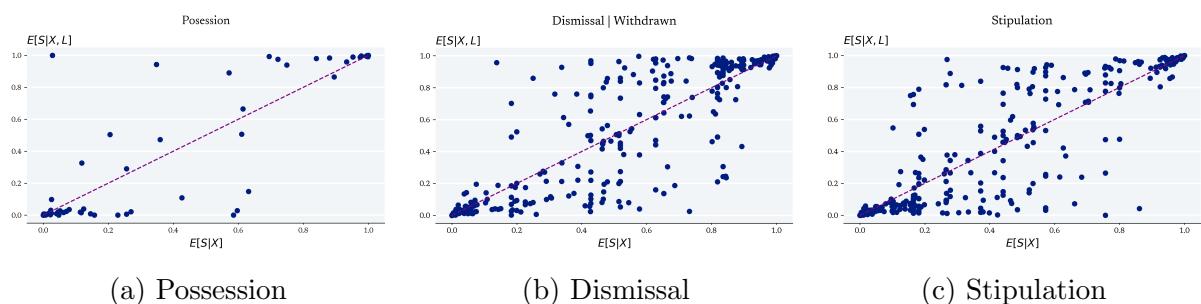


Figure 28: IV Diagnostics for Policy Improvement

11.1 Tenants

From the tenant's perspective, having access to a lawyer is a form of social insurance. And as such, the issue of moral hazard comes into play. If a tenant knows that a lawyer can help them dismiss their eviction case, they may be more likely to "short" their landlord on the monthly rent.²⁷

To keep things simple, we model this potential issue as a single period optimization problem. Maximizing their expected utility, the tenant spends part of their income on consumption, c , and the rest on housing, $h = I - c$. Housing expenditure together with the rental price, the Right to Counsel status and the state of the world, ω , determine if the tenant is evicted.²⁸

$$\text{Evicted} :: \text{Rent} \rightarrow \text{RTC} \rightarrow \text{HousingExpenditure} \rightarrow \Omega \rightarrow \{0, 1\}$$

If the tenant is evicted, they receive the value of the outside option. If they aren't, then they receive the monthly rental amount which can be greater than the amount they paid to their landlord.

$$\text{MonetaryValue} :: \text{Rent} \rightarrow \text{Outside Option} \rightarrow \{0, 1\} \rightarrow \text{HousingDollars}$$

$$\text{MonetaryValue}(r, \bar{q}, x) = \begin{cases} \bar{q}, & \text{if } x = 1, \\ r, & \text{if } x = 0. \end{cases}$$

$$\text{Utility} :: \text{Income} \rightarrow \text{HousingDollars} \rightarrow \text{Utils}$$

By partially evaluating these functions on the exogenous variables (Monthly Rent, Outside Option, and Right to Counsel), we can compose them to express the quality of the tenant's housing as a function of their housing expenditure and state of the world.

$$\text{Quality}_{I, r, \bar{q}, \text{RTC}} :: \text{Housing Expenditure} \rightarrow \Omega \rightarrow \text{Utils}$$

$$\text{Quality}_{I, r, \bar{q}, \text{RTC}} := \text{Utility}_I \circ \text{MonetaryValue}_{r, \bar{q}} \circ \text{Evicted}_{r, \text{RTC}}$$

Introducing a utility function which maps income and housing quality into utils, we can define the tenant's objective function by integrating over all states of the world.

$$V_{r, I, \bar{q}, \text{RTC}, h} := \int_{\Omega} \text{Quality}_{I, r, \bar{q}, \text{RTC}, h} d\mathbb{P}$$

$$h^*(r, I, \bar{q}, \text{RTC}) := \underset{h \in [0, I]}{\text{argmax}} V_{r, I, \bar{q}, \text{RTC}}(h)$$

²⁷Desmond [2016] notes how tenants may short their landlords in the summer in order to keep steady with the utility bill and then do the reverse in the winter, responding to policy that utility companies won't disconnect families during the winter.

²⁸All random variables in this section are defined with respect to the underlying probability space $(\Omega, \mathcal{F}, \mathbb{P})$

Moral Hazard arises if under the Right to Counsel, tenants find it optimal to decrease their housing expenditure. We provide a python notebook which simulates this result.

$$\text{Moral Hazard} \iff h^*(r, I, \bar{q}, \text{True}) < h^*(r, I, \bar{q}, \text{False})$$

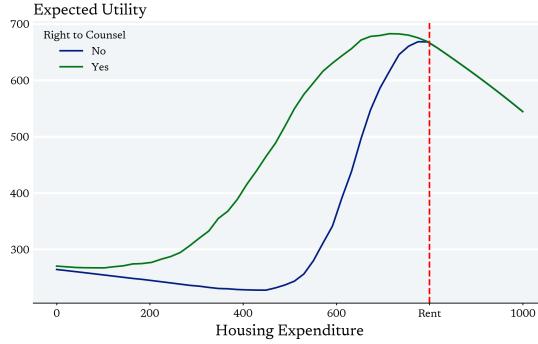


Figure 29: Tenant’s Objective Function

11.2 The Landlord

We write down a model of the landlord’s behavior to illustrate the potential adverse effects of the Right to Counsel. We start by defining the probabilistic relationship between the credit type of a tenant and the likelihood of default.

$$\text{Default} :: \text{Credit Type} \rightarrow \Omega \rightarrow \{0, 1\}$$

We then define the landlord’s payment function which takes into account the monthly rent, the status of the Right to Counsel and the tenant’s default status.

$$\text{Payment} :: \text{Rent} \rightarrow \text{RTC} \rightarrow \{0, 1\} \rightarrow \mathcal{R}$$

We can then define revenue as a function of the rent, the Right to Counsel, the tenant’s credit type, and the state of the world.

$$\text{Revenue} :: \text{Rent} \rightarrow \text{RTC} \rightarrow \text{Credit Type} \rightarrow \Omega \rightarrow \mathcal{R}$$

$$\text{Revenue}_{\text{rent}, \text{rtc}} := \text{Payment}_{\text{rent}, \text{RTC}} \circ \text{Default}$$

If we want to allow for heterogeneity across landlord types to capture that some landlords are more risk averse than others, we would need to only compose the payment function with a utility function. Since we can get the same point across without doing so, we omit this detail. Finally, we wrap up the model by writing down the landlord's objective function which is simply the integral of the Revenue function partially evaluated on the exogenous variables over the product of the states of the world and the tenants credit types that are above the minimum acceptable level (the landlord's choice variable).

$$V_{\text{rent,RTC}}(\min_ctype) = \int_{\Omega} \int_{\min_ctype} \text{Revenue}_{\text{rent,rtc}} d\lambda_{\min_ctype} d\mathbb{P}$$

By placing specifying specific functional relationships, which we do in this [Colab notebook](#), we can generate the following figures which importantly demonstrate how in response to the Right to Counsel, the minimum acceptable Credit Type can increase, thereby echoing [Abramson \[2021\]](#) about how the costs of the policy may be pushed onto those who are unable to secure housing.

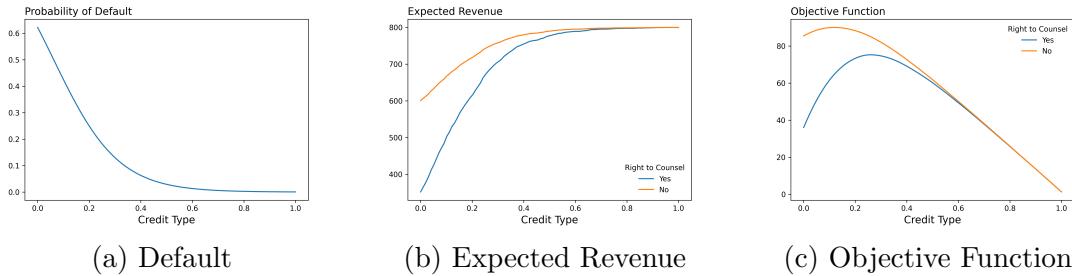


Figure 30: Model of Landlord Behavior

12 Appendix: Residualized IV

12.1 Linear Relaxation

Let's start by writing down the regression model which corresponds to linear instrumental variables.

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \hat{D}_i + \beta_2 X_i + \varepsilon_i, \quad \hat{D}_i = \hat{\gamma}_1 X_i + \hat{\gamma}_z Z_i$$

Under the Frish Waugh Lovell Theorem, the two β_1 's are equivalent where $\bar{\hat{D}}_i$ is the predicted value of regression \hat{D}_i on X_i .

$$Y_i = \beta_1 (\hat{D}_i - \bar{\hat{D}}_i) + \eta_i,$$

We arrive at our preferred nonlinear residualized model by simply replacing the linear models which form the residualized term with their nonlinear counterparts.

$$Y_i = \beta_1(\mathbb{E}[D_i|X_i, Z_i] - \mathbb{E}[D_i|X_i]) + \varepsilon_i$$

12.2 Fine-tuned Large Language Models

There are many applied microeconomics contexts - think health care, education and housing - where the underlying data is text. Data analysis in these areas have traditionally proceeded by hand selecting numerical representations of the data and performing regression analysis on these representations. Recent developments in natural language processing, though, have opened up a more flexible²⁹ avenue of empirical research whereby the regression analysis is performed “directly” on the underlying text.

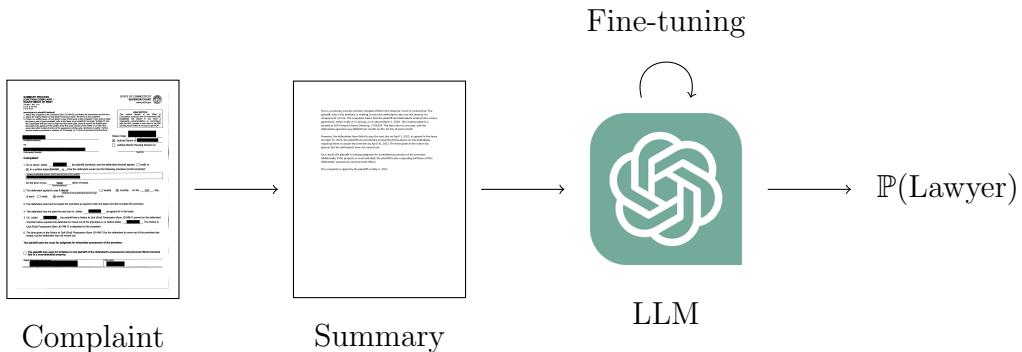


Figure 31: Pipeline

To do so in our context, we start by concatenating a textual indicator for the Right to Counsel Policy with a summary of the landlords complaint. Here, the summarized complaint acts as the control variable. With the concatenated text as the prompt, we fine tune the model across cases so that the model learns to predict a single token (Yes/No) for whether the tenant in the case has a lawyer. We can then estimate the effect of the Right to Counsel on legal aid by averaging the log probs associated with the token ‘Yes’ over the empirical distribution of complaints.

Formally, we can express this entire process as the following optimization problem, where we “learn” the parameters of the completions model which maximize the conditional probabilities of the observed legal status. These large completions model are usually only fine-tuned for 2-4 epochs which we capture via a regularization function, $R(\cdot, \cdot)$.

$$\underset{\theta}{\text{maximize}} \prod_i \mathbb{P}_{\theta}(\text{Lawyer}_i | \text{Treatment}_i, \text{Complaint}) - R(\theta_{\text{init}}, \theta)$$

The average effect on legal representation is then computed by integrating the probabilities generated via the fine-tuned completions model over the empirical distributions of com-

²⁹An interesting avenue is [Lin et al. \[2022\]](#) on verbalized probability

plaints.

$$\hat{\beta} = \int \left(\mathbb{P}_\theta(\text{Lawyer}|\text{Treated}, \text{Complaint}_i) - \mathbb{P}_\theta(\text{Lawyer}|\text{Control}, \text{Complaint}_i) \right) d\mathbb{P}_{\text{Complaints}}$$

12.3 Computationally Attractive

This approach is computationally attractive because it requires only fine tuning two large language models regardless of the number of outcomes that we consider.

$$Y_i = \beta_1 (\mathbb{E}[D_i|X_i, Z_i] - \mathbb{E}[D_i|X_i]) + \varepsilon_i$$

In practice, instead of estimating $\mathbb{E}[D_i|X_i]$ directly, we estimate $\mathbb{E}[D_i|X_i, Z_i]$ and $\mathbb{P}(Z_i|X_i)$ and use the following relationship to construct $\mathbb{E}[D_i|X_i]$

$$\mathbb{E}[D_i|X_i] = \mathbb{E}[D_i|X_i, Z_i = 1]\mathbb{P}(Z_i = 1|X_i) + \mathbb{E}[D_i|X_i, Z_i = 0]\mathbb{P}(Z_i = 0|X_i)$$