Mitigating the Effects of Enhanced Immigration Enforcement: Evidence from DACA

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▶ Heightened immigration enforcement actions have effects outside of their direct aims (identification and removal)

▶ These effects can accrue to both the stated targets of enforcement and others in their networks

▶ We ask whether a temporary relief from the *de jure* threats of enforcement also protects vulnerable individuals from these indirect effects

Did DACA mitigate the indirect impacts of enhanced immigration enforcement among those who received it?

Are there differential impacts of enforcement across DACA recipients and a similar control group?

- ▶ Broadly, we are interested in policies that offer relief or protection from the hazards to well-being posed by strict enforcement action

- ▶ This includes threats to unauthorized immigrants (direct targets of enforcement) and their extended networks who also are affected

- ▶ Broad literatures on
  - ▶ the effects of enforcement
  - ▶ the benefits of DACA

On Enforcement:

- ↑ Increases child poverty (Amuedo-Dorantes et al. 2018)

- ↓ Reduces childbearing among undocumented women (Amuedo-Dorantes and Arenas-Arroyo 2021)

- ↓ Reduces labor force participation and employment (East et al. 2023; Amuedo-Dorantes and Antman 2022)

- Inhibits uptake of assistance programs, even among those qualified (Watson 2014; Alsan and Yang 2024)

- ↑ Increases Hispanic youth employment through added-worker effect (Rubalcaba et al. 2024)

On DACA:

- ↓ Reduces poverty among undocumented immigrants (Amuedo-Dorantes and Antman 2016)

- Moves some undocumented immigrants into employment (Pope 2016; Amuedo-Dorantes and Antman 2017)

- ↓ Reduces teen pregnancy, likely through additional schooling (Kuka et al. 2019)

- ↑ Increases health insurance coverage (Giuntella and Lonsky 2020)

- ↓ Reduces familial and status-based dependency (Gihleb et al. 2023; Amuedo-Dorantes and Wang 2025)

Related paper:

▶ Amuedo-Dorantes and Arenas-Arroyo (2022)

▶ Compares outcomes (VAWA petitions) under an enforcement policy (Secure Communities) and a protective one (sanctuary cities)

This paper:

▶ Compares outcomes (employment, poverty) under enforcement policies (several) and a protective one (DACA)

▶ Attempts to identify the differential effect of enforcement for DACA-eligible

Enforcement Background

▶ Several legal strategies of immigration enforcement

1. Local and State-level 287(g) agreements
2. Secure Communities
3. E-Verify
4. State Omnibus Immigration Laws

▶ Considerable spatial and temporal variation in the adoption of each during sample period (2005-2017)

DACA Background:

► DACA announced in August, 2012

► Protection from deportation, plus work authorization

► Criteria for eligibility:
  1. Unauthorized as of June 15, 2012
  2. Arrived to the US before age 16
  3. Under age 31 on June 15, 2012
  4. 5 year continuous US residency
  5. HS, GED, currently in school, or honorable discharge
  6. no felonies or serious misdemeanors

Data sources:

▶ American Community Survey (ACS)

▶ Compiled enforcement data (Kostandini et al. 2014; Orrenius and Zavodny 2015; East et al. 2023; Luo and Kostandini 2023)

► CZ Enforcement Index (Amuedo-Dorantes and Lopez 2017)

$$ENF_{z,t}^k = \frac{1}{N_{z,0}} \sum_{c \in z}^{Z} \frac{1}{12} \sum_{j=1}^{12} \mathbb{1}(E_{c,j,t}^k) P_{c,0} \tag{1}$$

where $\mathbb{1}(E_{c,j,t}^k)$ is an indicator function that is equal to 1 if immigration enforcement policy, k, is active in county c in CZ z during month j in year t.

$$ENF_{z,t} = \sum_k ENF_{z,t}^k \tag{2}$$

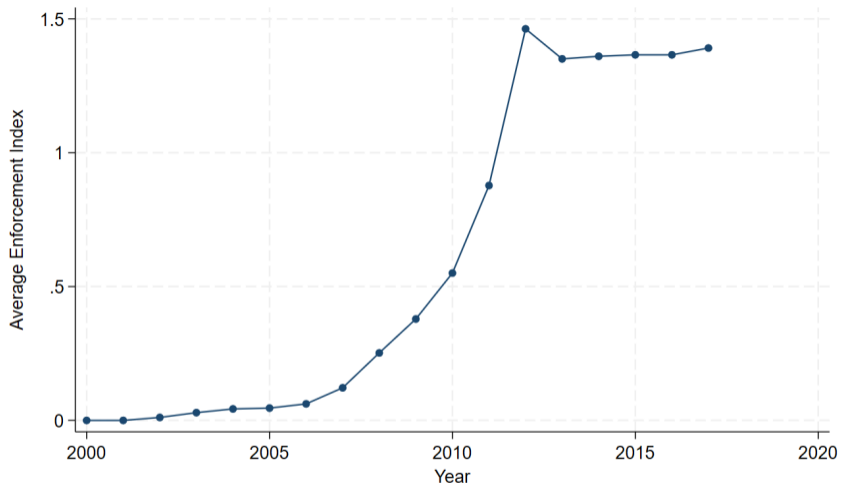for $k \in K = \{$State and local 287(g), Secure Communities, E-Verify, Omnibus Laws$\}$
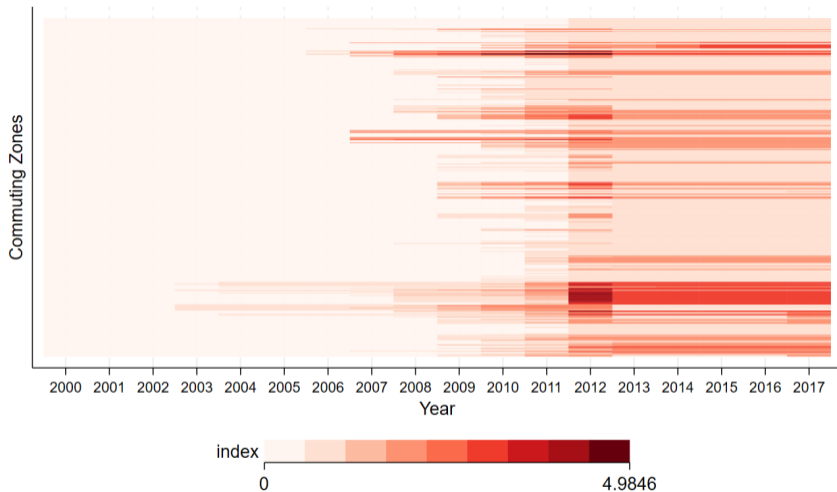
Figure 1: Indexed enforcement over time

Figure 2: Distribution of enforcement index over time

Treatment and control:

- ► Sample includes Hispanic foreign-born noncitizens who
  - ► arrived to the US between 0-17
  - ► were under age 33 in June, 2012
  - ► contemporaneous ages 18-36
  - ► have completed or are enrolled in high school

- ► these restrictions, along with the 5 year continuous residency, delineate our treatment and control groups

Table 1: Summary Statistics

	mean	sd
Age	23.512	4.22
Residence (years)	13.884	6.11
Wage income	13220.457	17598.60
Income/Poverty	191.340	129.95
Unemployed	0.072	0.26
Under poverty line	0.256	0.44
Self-employed	0.042	0.20
Children	0.574	1.02
Health insurance	0.434	0.50
Observations	141684	

Conceptual Framework and Identification:

▶ Interior immigration enforcement has varying consequences for labor and well-being across geography and time

▶ It's feasible that DACA recipients were insulated from these effects compared to others like them

▶ We assume a parallel evolution of outcomes, across commuting-zone-years, for likely DACA recipients and those who were "just ineligible" within a defined bandwidth

▶ **Outcomes of interest:** labor force participation, employment, wages, income-to-poverty ratio, binary poverty

Estimation:

► "Triple-difference-type" estimation (Regmi, 2024)

► Aggregate DDD effect: β_6

$$Y_{izt} = \alpha + \beta_1 ENF_{zt} + \beta_2 DACA_i$$
$$+ \beta_3(ENF_{zt} \times DACA_i) + \beta_4(ENF_{zt} \times Post_t) + \beta_5(DACA_i \times Post_t)$$
$$+ \beta_6(ENF_{zt} \times DACA_i \times Post_t)$$
$$+ X'_{izt}\gamma + \nu_z + \lambda_t + \xi_{tc} + \varepsilon_{izt}.$$

(3)

▶ Event Study specification:

$$Y_{izt} = \alpha + \sum_{\ell \neq -1} \theta_\ell (ENF_{zt} \times DACA_i \times \mathbf{1}\{t - t_0 = \ell\}) \qquad (4)$$
$$+ \cdots + X'_{izt}\gamma + \nu_z + \lambda_t + \xi_{tc} + \varepsilon_{izt},$$

Concerns / Threats to Identification:

▶ Variability of enforcement

▶ Treatment group likely contains authorized immigrants

▶ Eligible $\neq$ approved

▶ Definition of comparison group

Table 2: Effects on Employment Outcomes

	In Labor Force	Employed	Employed If In Labor Force
Enforcement	-0.009	-0.006	0.003
	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.007)
DACA Eligible	0.003	0.006	0.009
	(0.009)	(0.013)	(0.010)
Index x DACA Eligible	-0.003	-0.006	-0.008
	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.007)
Index x Post-DACA	-0.013	-0.019	-0.011
	(0.013)	(0.016)	(0.009)
DACA Eligible x Post-DACA	0.001	0.005	0.004
	(0.017)	(0.021)	(0.015)
Enforcement x DACA Eligible x Post-DACA	0.023**	0.028*	0.013
	(0.010)	(0.015)	(0.011)
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
CZ Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cohort Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	141,684	141,684	99,672
Adjusted R^2	0.154	0.154	0.044

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 3: Effects on Income and Poverty Status

	Log Wage Income	Income-to-Poverty Ratio	Below Poverty Line
Enforcement	0.020	1.210	0.003
	(0.022)	(1.948)	(0.009)
DACA Eligible	0.076***	6.914***	-0.021*
	(0.021)	(2.300)	(0.011)
Index × DACA Eligible	-0.002	-0.525	-0.002
	(0.016)	(1.408)	(0.006)
Index × Post-DACA	-0.053**	-3.187	0.022***
	(0.022)	(2.092)	(0.007)
DACA Eligible × Post-DACA	-0.068**	-3.418	0.036***
	(0.034)	(3.740)	(0.013)
Enforcement × DACA Eligible × Post-DACA	0.056**	5.645**	-0.030***
	(0.024)	(2.461)	(0.008)
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
CZ Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cohort Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	91,113	141,684	141,684
Adjusted R^2	0.248	0.157	0.085

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.
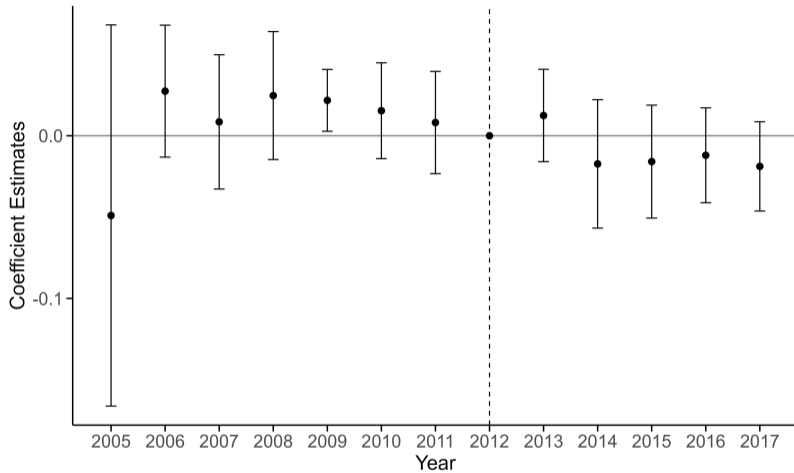
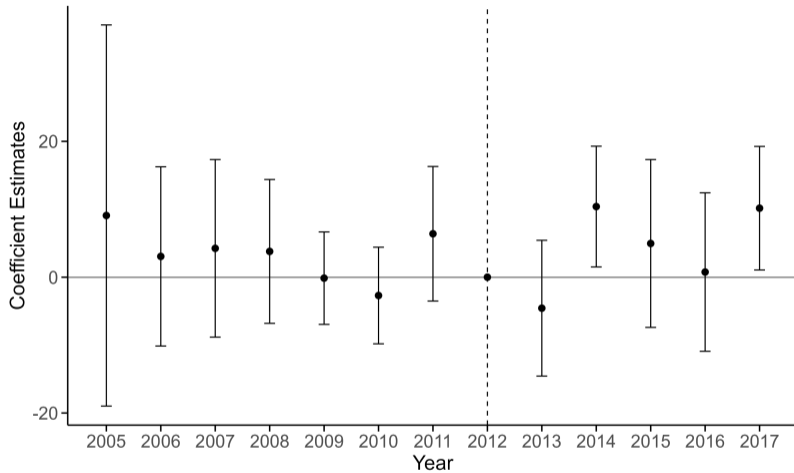Figure 3: Below poverty line

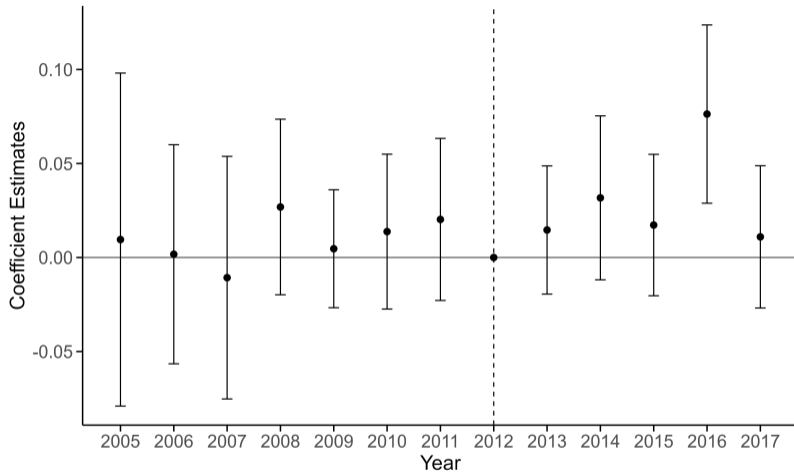Figure 4: Household-income-to-poverty ratio

Figure 5: Employed

Considerations:

- ▶ Employment and poverty effects are likely driven by the direct legal benefits of DACA (work authorization and relaxation of deportation threat)

- ▶ Secondary effects of protection with possible differentials: health outcomes, internal migration and sorting

Discussion:

- ▶ DACA is not the only protective policy; estimates could be informative for others
    - ▶ Sanctuary policies
    - ▶ Tuition relief
    - ▶ Driver's licenses

- ▶ With DACA in legislative peril, political arguments needed for future protective policies

Thank you!
Comments greatly appreciated

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