

The Mental Health Impact of Immigration Policy on the Hispanic Population in U.S.

Tianyuan Luo¹, Zhengfei Guan¹

¹ University of Florida, 14625 CR 672, Wimauma, FL 33598, USA

Background

- Mental-health epidemic in the US has become a serious issue over the years. In addition, the mental disorder disparities are also becoming more and more prominent across ethnicities.
- The disparities in mental health can be attributed to the education, culture, and income factors (Fiscella et al. 2002). However, one important factor that is becoming a major catalyst to the disparities is immigration policy.
- The hostility accompanying immigration policy may create anti-immigration stigma, economic hardship, multilevel discrimination, and interracial tension (Morey 2018), consequently it could adversely affect the mental health of the Hispanic population that have a closer relationship with undocumented immigrants (Philbin et al. 2018).

Objectives

- The goal of this study is to examine the impact of E-Verify mandate on the mental health of the Hispanic population and compare them to other ethnicities.
- E-Verify is a web-based system established by the U.S. federal government to help employers verify the employment eligibility of newly hired employees and thus prevent the employment of workers who do not have legal employment permit in the U.S.
- Following Arizona, more states adopted statewide E-Verify such as Georgia, North Carolina, Mississippi, South Carolina, Mississippi, and Utah.

Data and Methodology

- The data used in this study are seasonal cross-sectional data from 2003-2016 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey.
- This study first uses difference-in-differences model to examine the impact of E-Verify on the mental health. The treated observation are those in statewide E-Verify adopting states and controlled observations are those that in non-adopting states.

$$mentalhealth_{ist} = \alpha + \beta_1 EVerify_{ist} + \beta_2 X'_{ist} + \delta_s + \gamma_t + \varepsilon_{ist}$$

$mentalhealth_{ist}$ denotes the mental health outcomes such as the days mental health not good for individuals i in state s and year t . The interested indicator $EVerify_{ist}$ has a value of one if an individual is in statewide E-Verify adopting states after the adopting year, and zero otherwise. We include X'_{ist} in the model to control for other confounding effects. We also include year fixed effect γ_t and state fixed effect δ_s . ε_{ist} is the error term. The standard errors are clustered at the state level.

Results

Table 2. The impact of E-Verify on days mental health not good by different ethnicities

	Hispanic (1)	White (2)	Black (3)	Other (4)
E-Verify	0.570** (0.256)	0.058 (0.052)	0.156 (0.151)	-0.434 (0.232)
N	211394	2170755	222939	122303

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the days mental health not good. Controlled variables include gender, age, education, marital status, employment status, health insurance, household income, state unemployment rate, governmental expenditure per capita, Secure Community program, 287(g) agreement, state fixed effect, and year fixed effect. BRFSS weighted are used for all regressions. Robust standard errors are clustered at the state level. ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 4. The estimates of heterogeneity impact on mental health of Hispanics

	Male (1)	Female (2)	High school graduate (3)	College (4)	Age<=35 (5)	Age>=35 (6)	Likely undoc (7)	Likely doc (8)
<i>A. Days mental health not good</i>								
E-Verify	0.746** (0.345)	0.081 (0.170)	0.732** (0.305)	0.403** (0.205)	0.883*** (0.320)	0.077 (0.261)	1.639*** (0.616)	0.183 (0.209)
N	100466	110926	116327	95067	81955	129439	26184	185210
<i>B. Have severe mental health issue</i>								
E-Verify	0.034*** (0.011)	-0.01 (0.005)	0.020** (0.009)	0.012** (0.005)	0.021** (0.010)	0.008 (0.008)	0.062*** (0.020)	0.012 (0.005)
N	94054	110926	108317	88081	77456	118942	24904	171496

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is if an individual has severe mental health issues. Controlled variables include gender, age, education, marital status, employment status, health insurance, household income, state unemployment rate, governmental expenditure per capita, Secure Community program, 287(g) agreement, state fixed effect, and year fixed effect. BRFSS weighted are used for all regressions. Robust standard errors are clustered at the state level. ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Conclusions

- The results of this research suggest that among all ethnicities, E-Verify causes a negative impact on the Hispanic population's mental health, increasing their mental health not good days by 0.57 days.
- E-Verify's impact on the Hispanic population would enlarge the mental health disparities among ethnicities.
- This study finds that E-Verify has spillover effects that would extend the adverse mental health impact to the general Hispanic population that are unlikely to be undocumented, which is not the targets of E-Verify mandates.
- Government needs to take into consideration of the possible consequences of adopting E-Verify and utilize more information in their decision-making process of immigration enforcement.