

Immigration Enforcement, Sanctuary Cities, and Rising Hispanic Suicide Rates

Immigration Enforcement and Hispanic Suicide

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Immigration enforcement affects millions of individuals and families

Immigration enforcement has intensified in recent years

11-12 million undocumented immigrants live in mixed-status families (Passel and Krogstad, 2025)

Enforcement creates ripple effects beyond targeted individuals

Examples of recent immigration enforcement



World ▾ Business ▾ Markets ▾ Sustainability ▾ Legal ▾ Commentary ▾ Technology ▾ Investigations

Immigration raids in Los Angeles hit small business owners: 'It's worse than COVID'

By Tim Reid and Kristina Cooke

June 17, 2025 6:01 PM CDT · Updated June 18, 2025



The New York Times

Immigration | **LIVE** Nationwide Protests | Travel Ban Map | Pressure on ICE | Risks of Self Depo

Trump Shifts Deportation Focus, Pausing Most Raids on Farms, Hotels and Eateries

The abrupt pivot on an issue at the heart of Mr. Trump's presidency suggested his broad immigration crackdown was hurting industries and constituencies he does not want to lose.

Immigration enforcement may affect mental health through several mechanisms

More strict enforcement leads to:

- * **Increased fear and anxiety**
- * **Family separation**
- * **Economic hardship**

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Or it could lead to:

- * **Community support that mitigates negative effects**
- * **More community cohesion and solidarity in response to enforcement**



I use the recent developments in DiD literature to answer the following question

What is the **causal effect** of immigration enforcement on suicide rates among **Hispanic** populations in the United States?

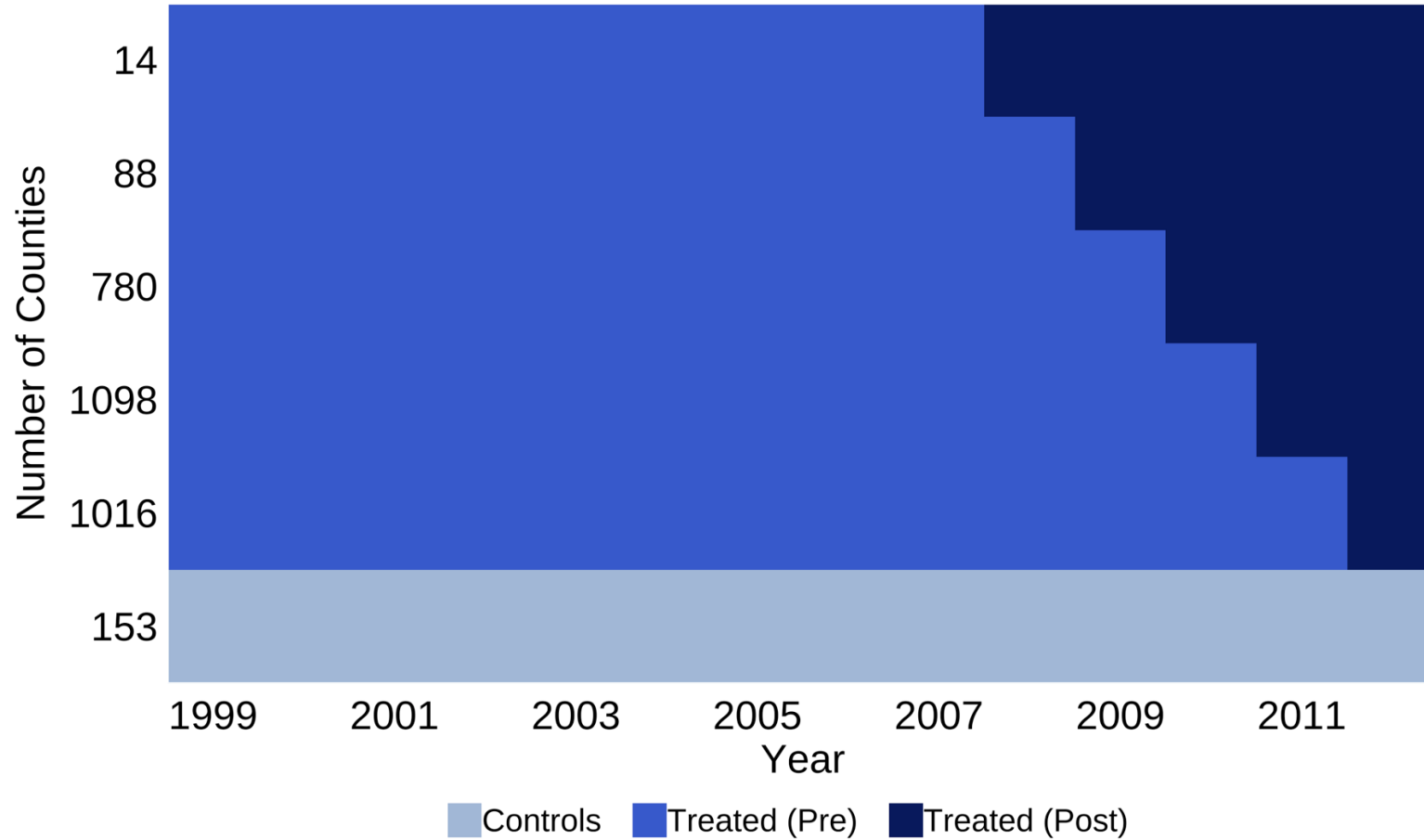


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I use the **staggered rollout** of **Secure Communities** (2008-2013)---a deportation expansion program---to estimate **triple difference-in-differences (DDD)**

The **staggered rollout** of Secure Communities



I use two main data sources for my analysis

Mortality data from the National Vital Statistics System (NVSS) (National vital statistics system, 2007)

- **Annual count of suicides by county, race, and age group**
- **Sample period: 1999-2013 to align with SC implementation**

Secure Communities (SC) data (Alsan and Yang, 2024)

- **They use data from Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests**
- **Determined when counties opted into the program**

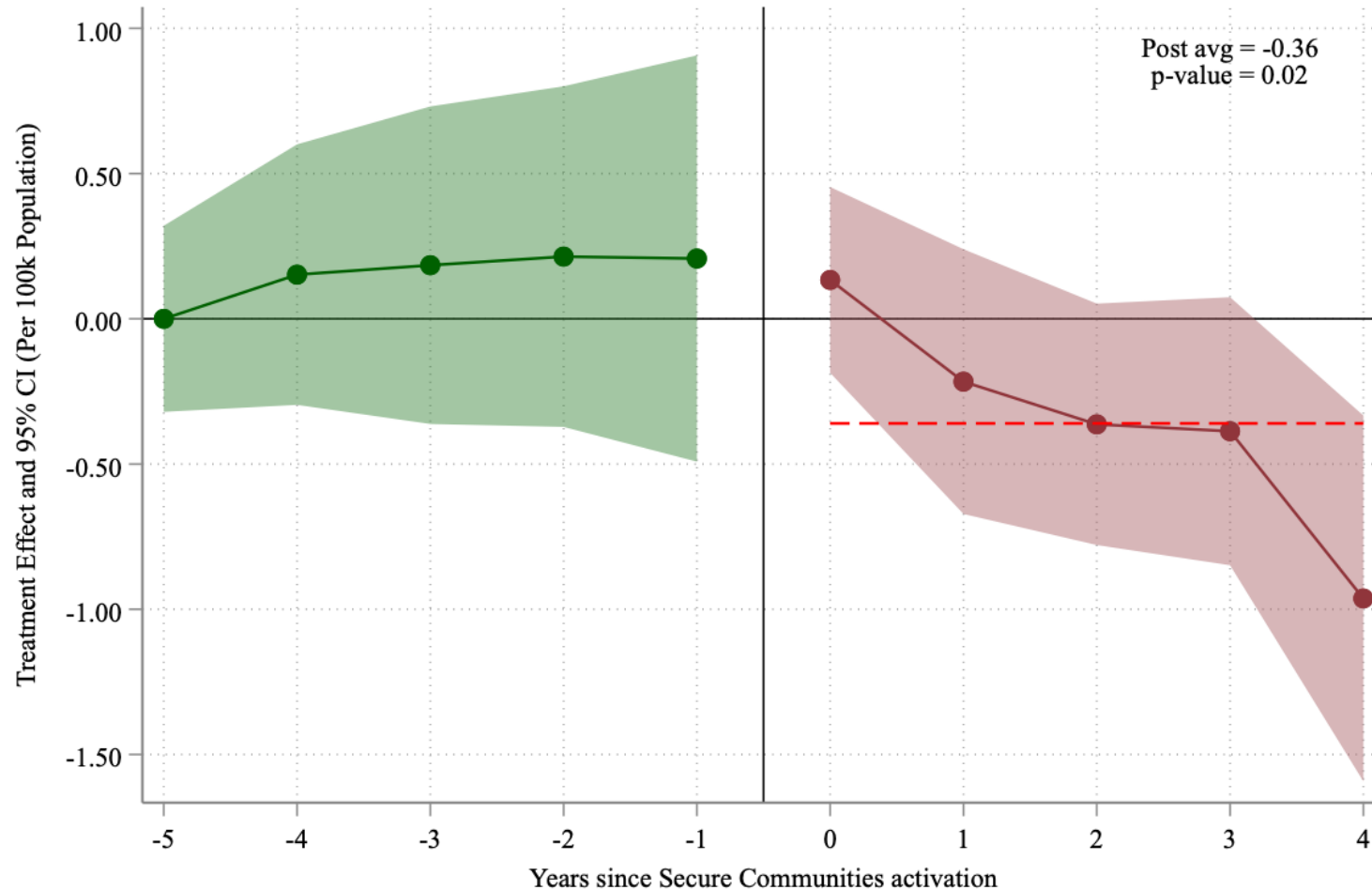
Triple Difference-in-Differences (DDD) event study specification

$$y_{crst} = \mathbf{1}\{t - E_c = l\} \times \text{Hispanic}_r + \theta_{cr} + \lambda_{rt} + \gamma_{ct} + \varepsilon_{crst}$$

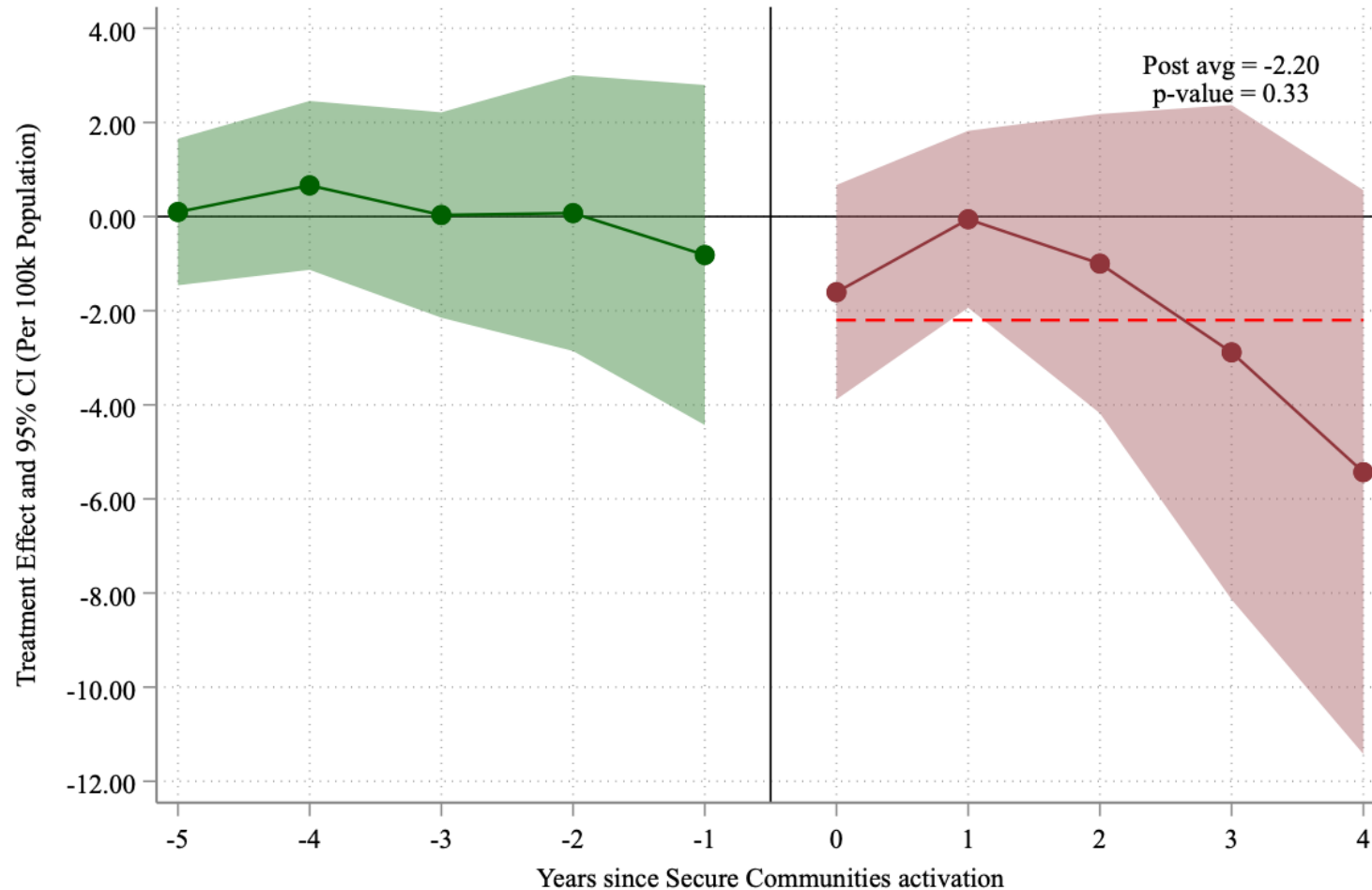
I use Borusyak, Jaravel, and Spiess (2024) to estimate a **causal impact** of **SC** on **Hispanic** suicide rates

- **Outcome:** y_{crst} per 100,000 suicide rate by county c , race r , state s , and time t
- **Treatment interaction:**
 - $\mathbf{1}\{t - E_c = l\}$ is an indicator variable equal to 1 when time t is l years away from the adoption of waiting years in county c
 - **Hispanic indicator** (1 for Hispanic, 0 for White)
- **Fixed-effects:** County-race (θ_{cr}), race-year (λ_{rt}), county-year (γ_{ct})

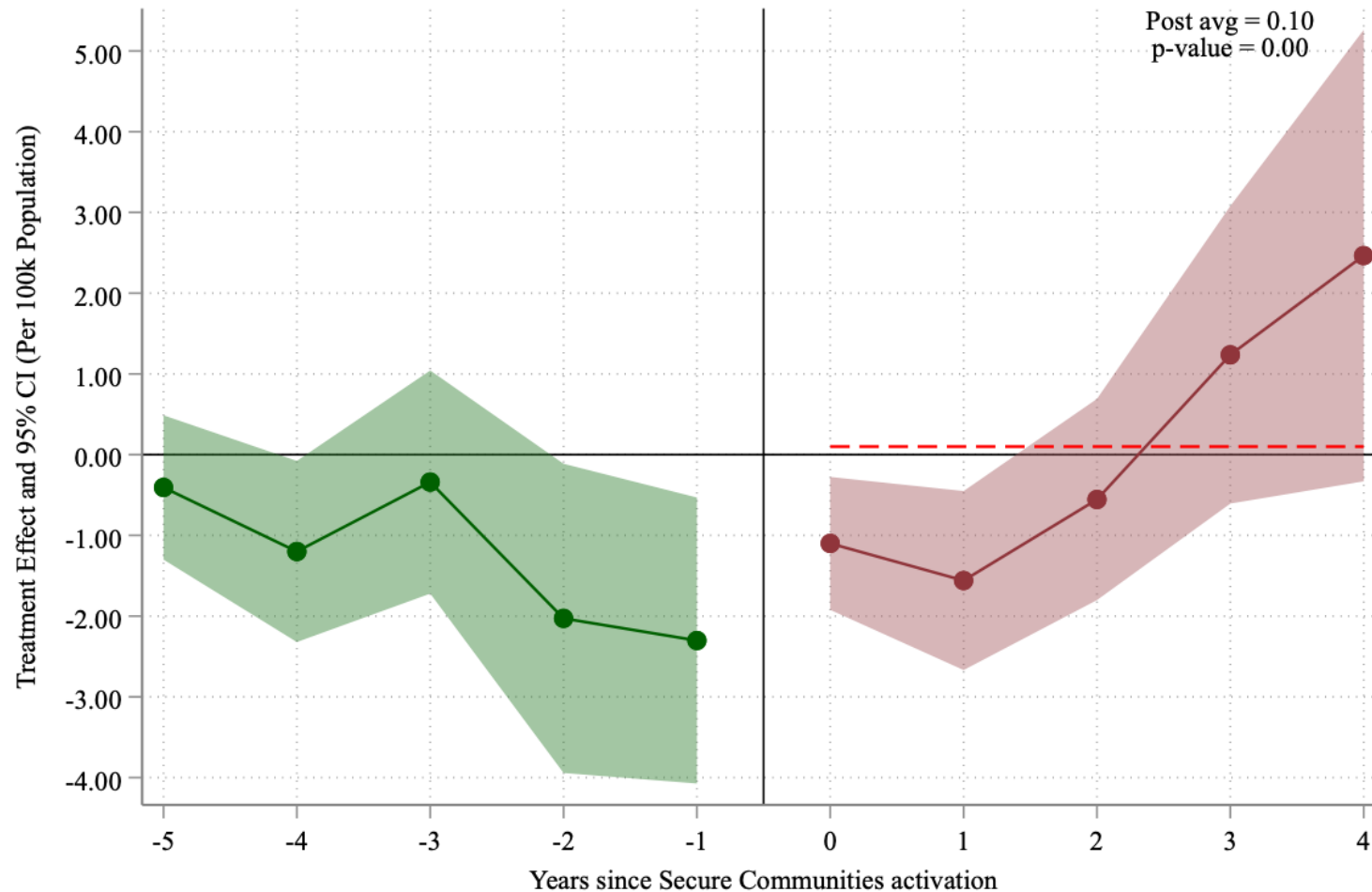
I find significant **decreases** in suicide rates among **ages 5-14** year old Hispanic children



I find a small **decreases** in suicide rates among **ages 15-24** year old Hispanic youth

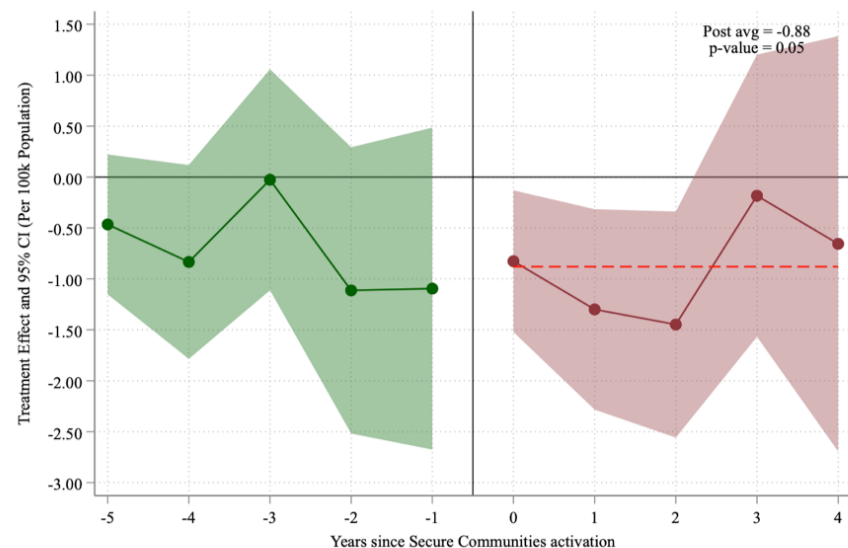


I find a large and significant increase in suicide rates among ages 34+ Hispanics

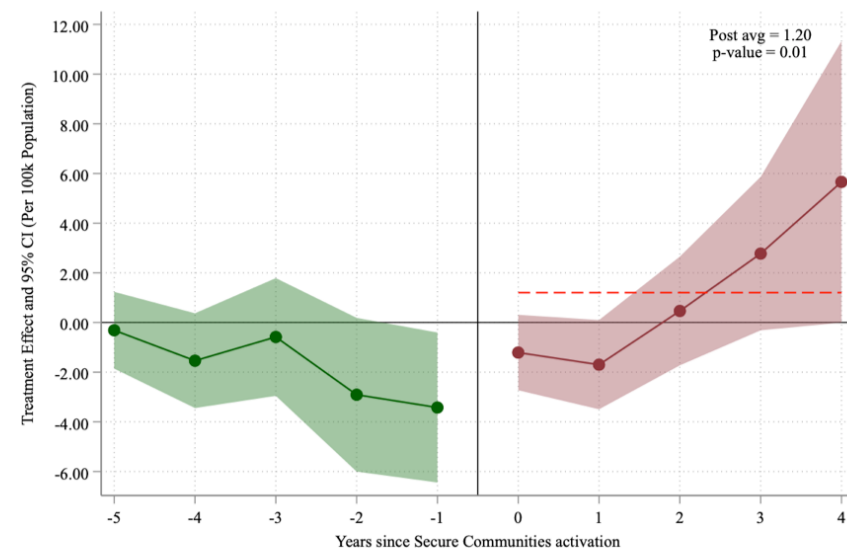


Gender differences in **ages 34+** Hispanic suicide rates

Female (Ages 34+)

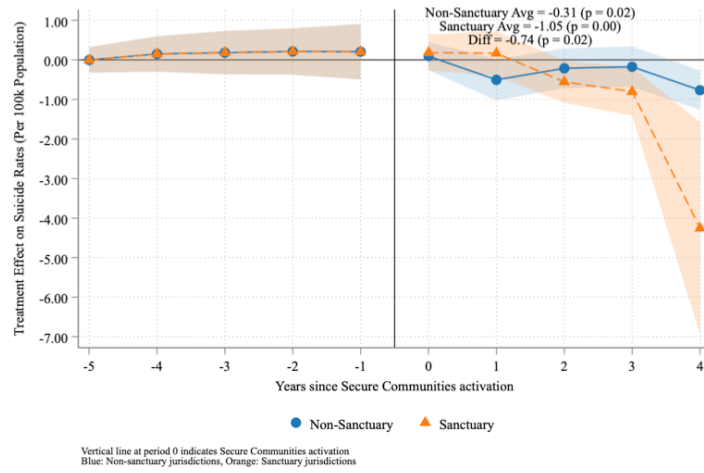


Male (Ages 34+)

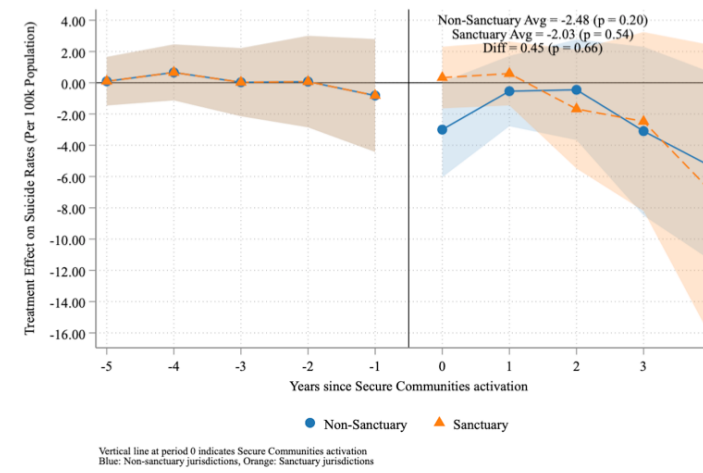


Sanctuary cities heterogeneity

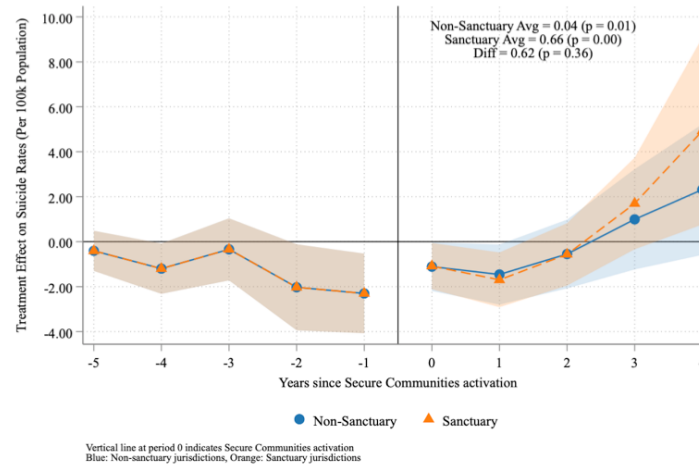
Ages 5-14



Ages 15-24



Ages 34+



Mechanisms + Moderators

- Economic conditions dominate: **low-unemployment** counties see protective declines post-SC, while **high-unemployment** areas experience persistent increases in Hispanic suicides. [Unemployment results]; [LAUS results]
- Local political climate matters: **Democratic-leaning** counties, especially adult males 34+, absorb the largest post-SC spikes. [Political leanings results]
- Anti-Hispanic bias and population density show **limited**, inconsistent moderation, and countywide mentally unhealthy days miss the Hispanic-specific burden. [Density results]

Secure Communities has heterogeneous effects on Hispanic suicide rates across age groups

- **Hispanic children (5-14): 35-100% decrease** vs. **Hispanic adults (34+): 18-60% increase** in suicide rates relative to Whites
- **Sanctuary cities** provide protective effects among the younger age groups by limiting local cooperation with federal enforcement
- **Low unemployment** serves as a key mechanism moderating the effects of immigration enforcement on Hispanic suicide rates
- Effects vary significantly by **political affiliation**: Democratic counties show larger increases in adult suicide rates

Thank you!



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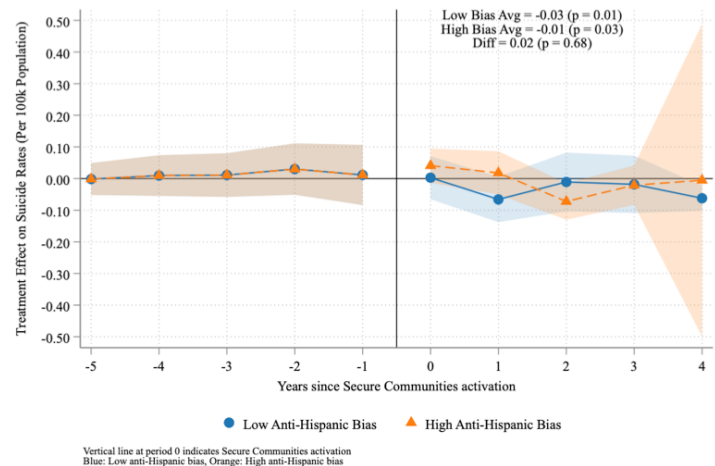
Appendix



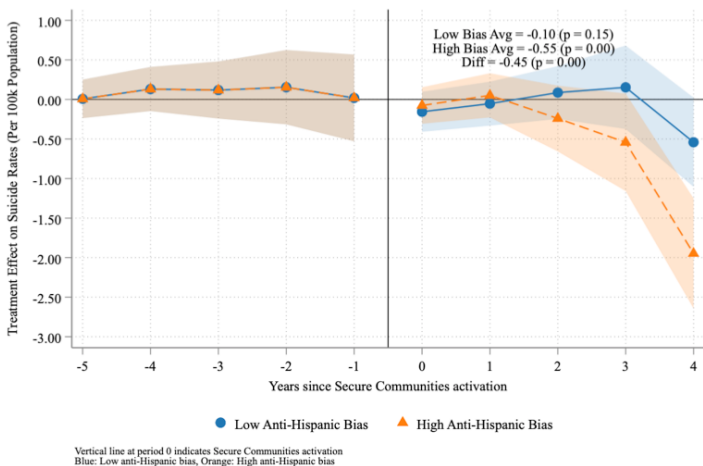
Heterogeneous effects by county-level anti-Hispanic bias

[\[Back\]](#)

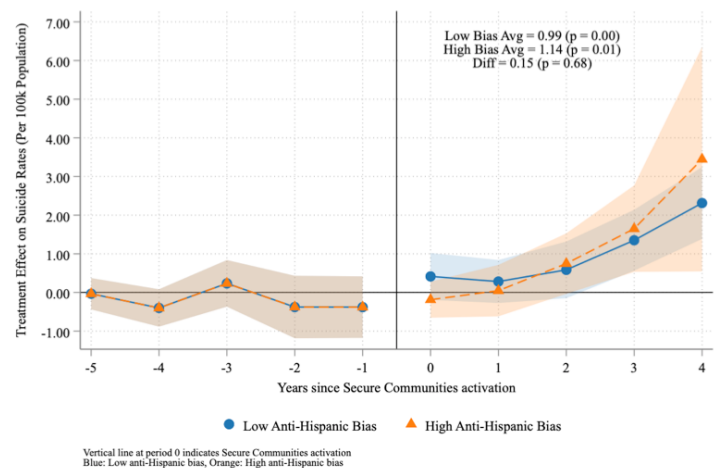
Ages 5-14



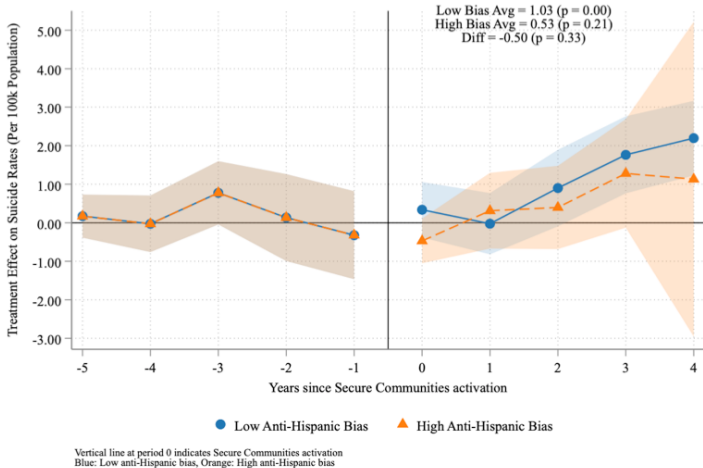
Ages 15-24



Ages 34+



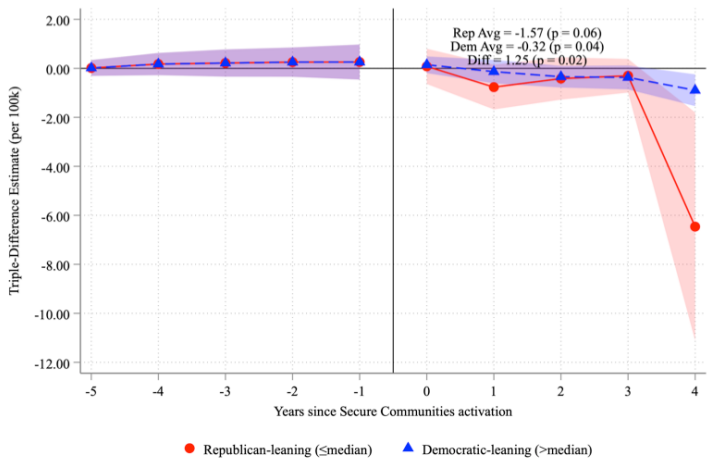
All Ages



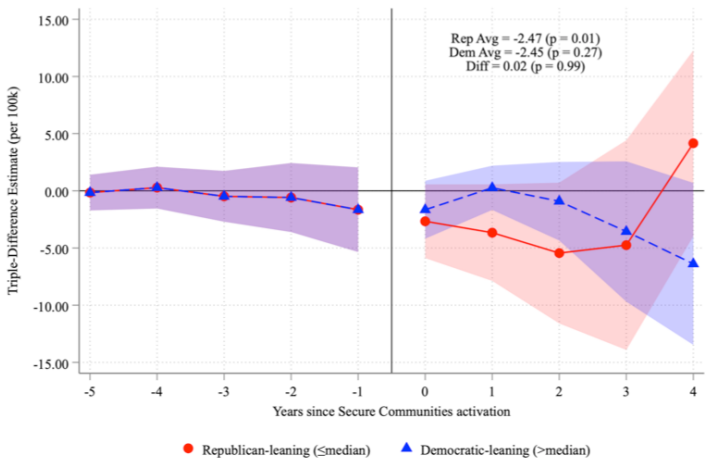
Heterogeneous effects by county-level political affiliation

[\[Back\]](#)

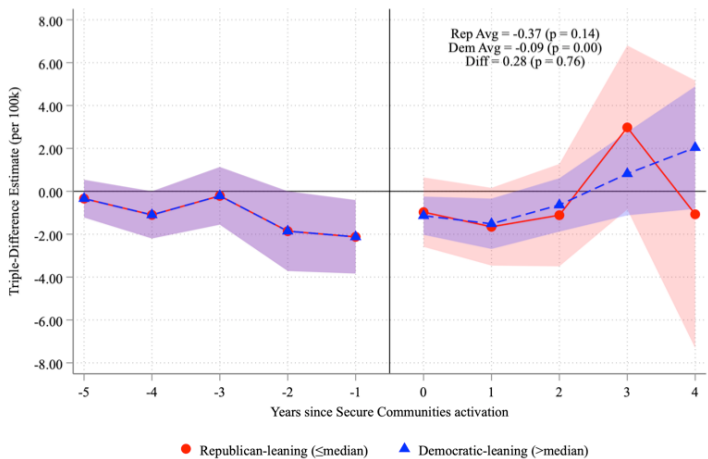
Ages 5-14



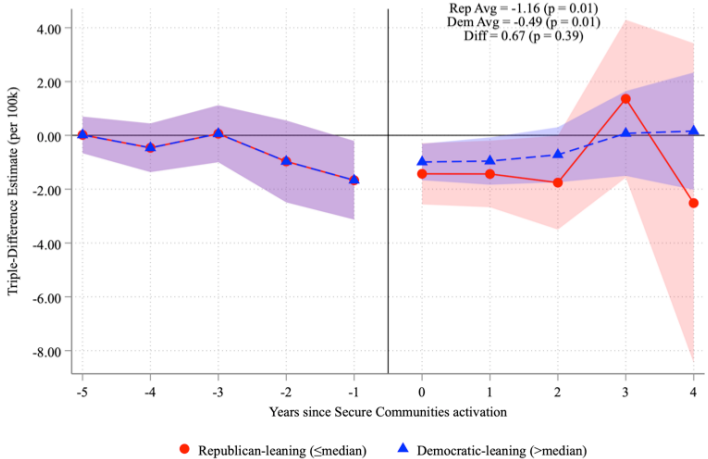
Ages 15-24



Ages 34+



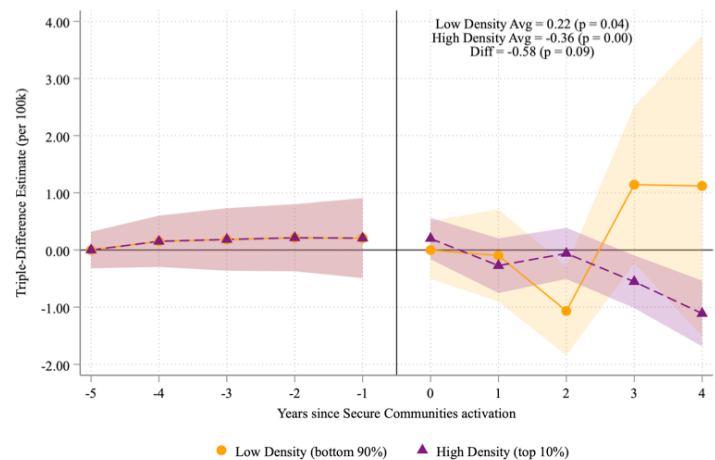
All Ages



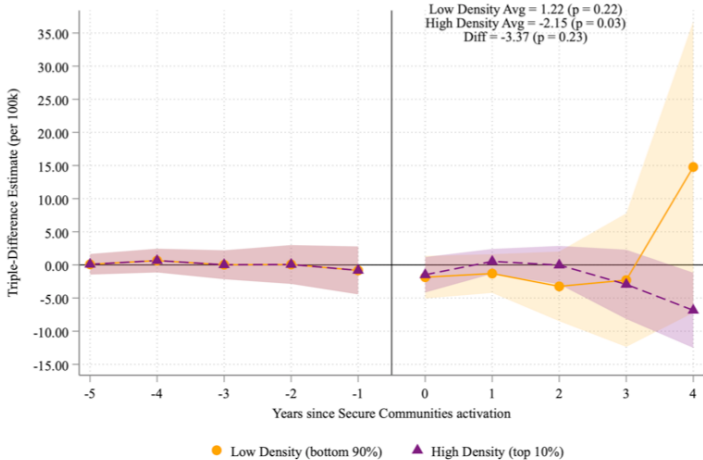
Heterogeneous effects by county-level population density

[\[Back\]](#)

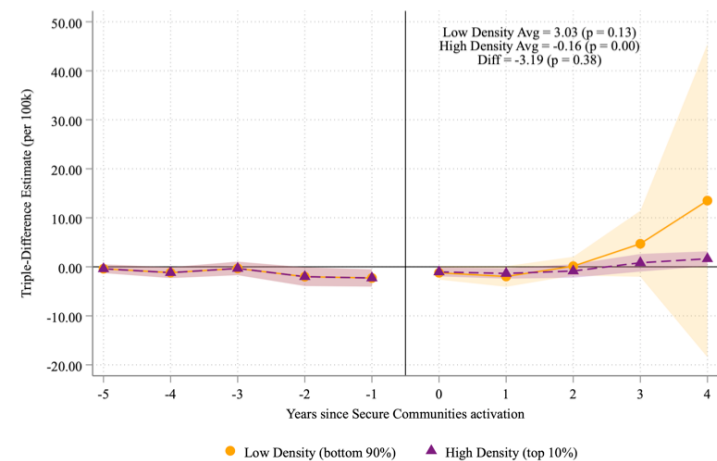
Ages 5-14



Ages 15-24



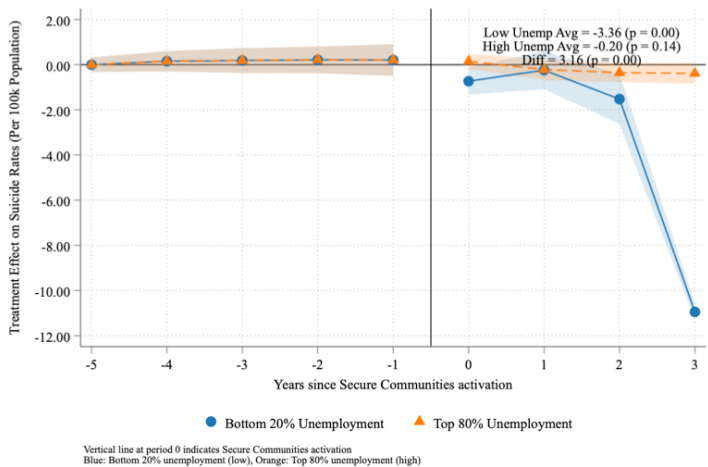
Ages 34+



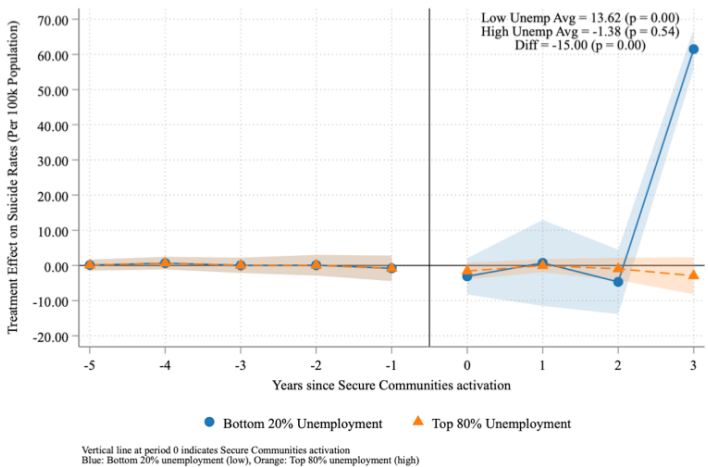
Heterogeneous effects by county-level unemployment rate

[Back]

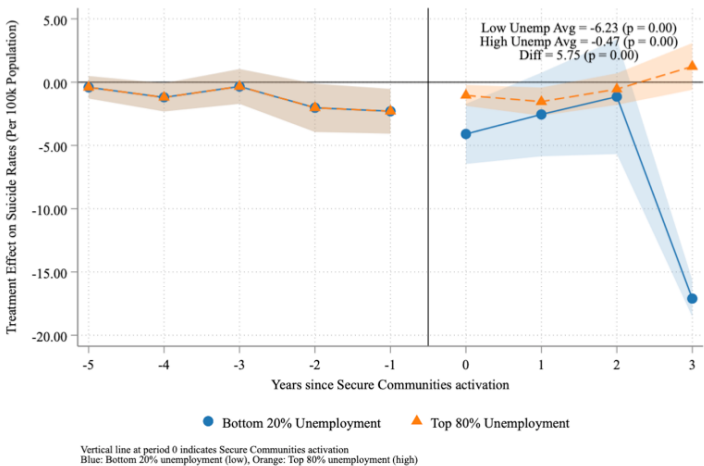
Ages 5-14



Ages 15-24



Ages 34+



Heterogeneous effects by county-level unemployment rate (LAUS)

[Back]

