

Losing Medicaid and Crime

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We study the impact of losing health insurance on criminal activity by leveraging one of the most substantial Medicaid disenrollments in U.S. history, which occurred in Tennessee in 2005 and led to 190,000 non-elderly and non-disabled adults without dependents unexpectedly losing coverage. Using police agency-level data and a difference-in-differences approach, we find that this mass insurance loss increased total crime rates with particularly strong effects for non-violent crime. We test for several potential mechanisms and find that our results may be explained by economic stability and access to healthcare, in particular mental healthcare.