

Demographic Changes of Free Clinic Patients after Medi-Cal Expansion



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Background

- Medi-Cal began covering undocumented immigrants over 50 years old on 5/1/2022 under the Older Adult Expansion (AB 133).¹
- An estimated 169,000 undocumented immigrants live in San Diego County, the majority of whom were born in Mexico/Central America (74%).²
- UCSD Student-Run Free Clinic (SRFC) has historically provided medical care to this population.

Methods

- Retrospective database analysis of all 415 active patients in a student-run free clinic as of 4/30/22 and 52 newly enrolled patients between 5/1/22 and 7/31/23.
- Cross-sectional analysis of self-reported patient demographics: age (as of 4/20/22 for existing patients and 5/1/22 for new patients), sex, primary language, ethnic group, and marital status.
- Age was analyzed using a two-tail t-test, and the remaining variables were analyzed using chi-squared tests, conducted via Excel.

References

1. Department of Health Care Services. *Older Adult Full Scope Expansion Eligibility and Enrollment Plan*. Assembly Bill (AB) 133 (Chapter 143, Statutes of 2021). Welfare and Institutions Code Section 14007.8 (2)(A). Accessed March 10, 2025. <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/medi-cal/eligibility/Documents/OAE/Eligibility-and-Enrollment-Plan-OAE.pdf>
2. Migration Policy Institute. "Unauthorized Immigrant Population Profiles: County of San Diego, California." Accessed January 5, 2025. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/unauthorized-immigrant-population/county/6073>.

Objective

To identify whether there was a difference in patient demographics between existing and new patients enrolled at a free clinic in San Diego after the May 2022 Medi-Cal expansion.

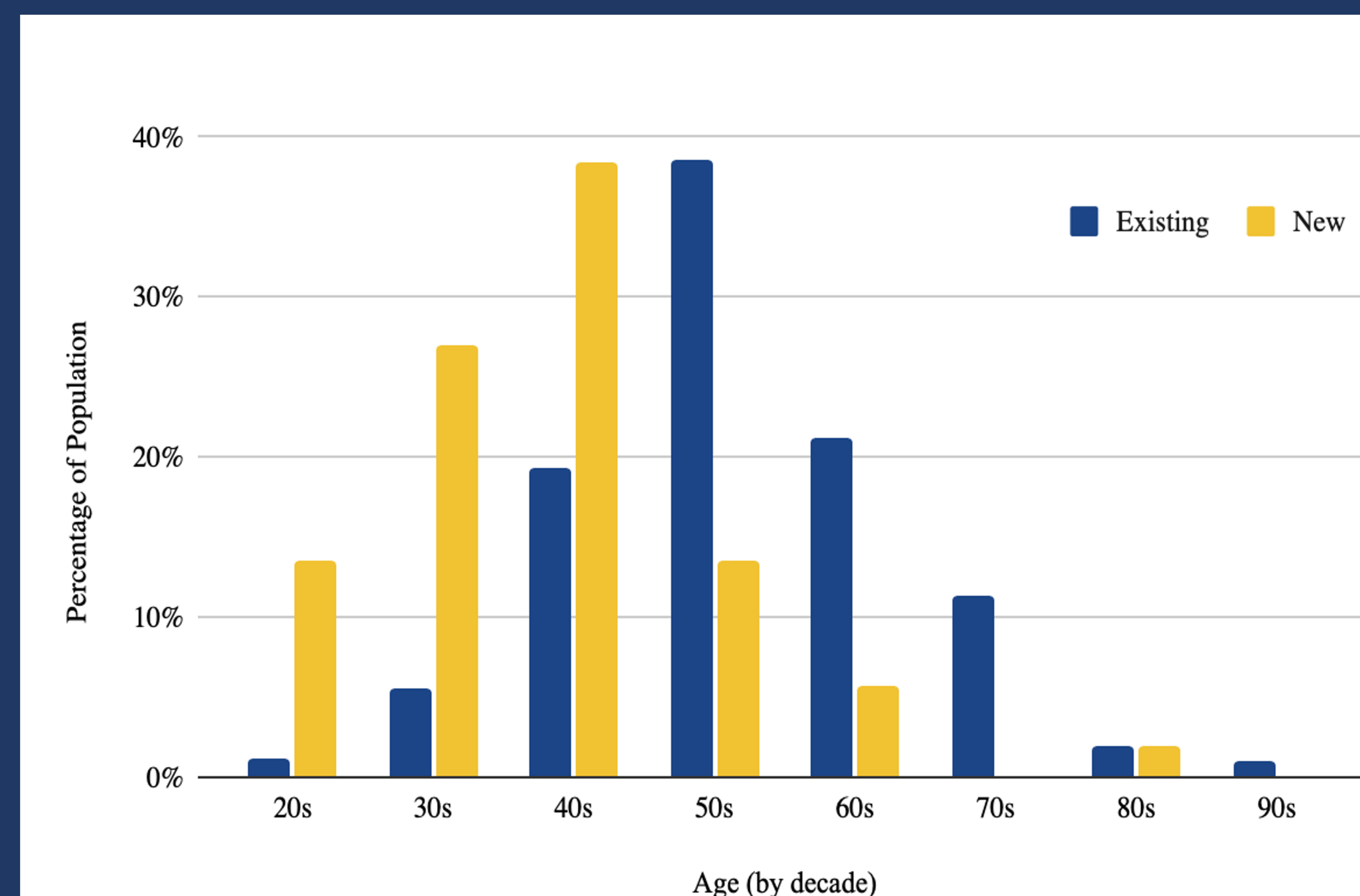


Figure 1. Comparison of age by decade between existing patients and newly enrolled patients.

Results

- New patients were significantly younger than existing patients (average age 42.51 years vs 56.92 years, $p < 0.001$).
- Both new and existing patients were predominantly Spanish-speaking.
- New patients were more likely than existing patients to list English as their primary language (30.8% vs. 19.3%).
- New patients were less likely than existing patients to be female (50% vs. 73%).
- New patients were less likely than existing patients to be Hispanic/Latino (57.7% vs. 76.4%).
- There was no significant difference in marital status.

Conclusions

- Compared to existing patients, those enrolled after the Medi-Cal expansion were:
 - significantly younger
 - more likely to speak English
 - less likely to be female
 - less likely to be Hispanic/Latino
- The Medi-Cal change likely provided accessible coverage to undocumented individuals 50 and older, allowing them to pursue insurance-based healthcare options.
- SRFC should allocate resources and health programs to a younger population.

Average Patient Demographics

	Existing	New
Age:	56.9 years	42.5 years
Sex:	♀	Equal ♀ and ♂
Language:	Spanish	Spanish
Ethnic Group:	Other Hispanic/Latino	Other Hispanic/Latino
Marital Status:	Married	Married