Abstract
Government transfer programs infuse a substantial amount of resources into the budgets of millions of low-income families each month. Under some states' aid disbursement schemes, there are extended periods of time within each month in which no recipients receive transfers, generally limiting the amount of resources in communities. In this paper, we study the effects of nutritional aid disbursement on crime, utilizing two main sources of variation: (i) a policy change in Illinois which substantially increased the number of SNAP distribution days, and (ii) an existing Indiana policy that issues SNAP benefits by last name. We find that staggering SNAP benefits throughout the month leads to a 32 percent decrease in grocery store theft and reduces monthly cyclicity in grocery store crimes. Moreover, we find that the relationship between time since SNAP issuance and crime is nonlinear. Findings show that criminal behavior decreases in the second and third weeks following receipt, but increases in the last week of the benefit cycle, potentially due to resource constraints.