Evanston 311: Neighborhood Characteristics and Behavioral Science
Maxwell X Lab

• Use behavioral science to create interventions to improve public service
• Conduct field experiments (RCTs) to confidently estimate the benefits
• Partner with nonprofits, states, and local governments
• Utilize deep bench of scholars at the Maxwell School
Evanston 311
Approach

- Used resident history data from 25% of all 311 requests since 2014
- Assigned residents to Census tract neighborhood (18 in Evanston)
- Analyzed differences in use across neighborhoods
Participation Rates

-Average rate = 1.3%
-Range 0.8% to 2.3%
-East/Southeast sections have lower participation rates
-Neighborhoods west of Chicago Ave have higher rates
Demographics and Participation Rates

Higher poverty tracts participate less (correlation = -.47)

Education: diverse tracts participate more (correlation with at least college degree = -.39)

Race/Ethnicity:
- Asian pop correlation = -.53
- Hispanic pop correlation = +.34
Other Findings

-Across various categories, calls vary significantly

-For example, trash or infrastructure calls are similar in higher poverty and higher participation tracts

-Suggests either overutilization, underutilization, or both
Next Steps and Behavioral Interventions

Increasing 311 Participation

- Leverage existing communication
- Social norming around participation
- Share timely information on usual requests and response times
- Experiment in Denver, CO doubled online platform use with social norm letter

Proactively Addressing Requests

- Using prior data, notify residents about potential future issues:
  - Text residents about schedule change or weather related issues
- Experiment in San Jose, CA increased bulky item requests 146% with targeted outreach