U.S. Immigration Policy and Public Opinion

Between 2007 and 2016

By

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Thank you to CM, the O.G. advisor, for empowering me to get to this point in the first place.
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Abstract

In the last few decades, immigration policy has once again risen to the forefront of United States politics. A 2018 Gallup poll found that up to a fifth of U.S. residents identify immigration as “the most important problem” facing the country.\(^1\) Despite high issue prioritization in the mass public, political elites have been unable to implement policy changes to confront what the public views as a problem.

This thesis aims to better understand a) how the voting population’s immigration policy preferences have shifted in the last decade, b) how politics, geography, and immigrant interaction play a role in these shifts, and c) how other major discernable factors such as state median age and unemployment rate covary with policy preferences. In order to understand these concepts, it is necessary to provide a brief account of U.S. immigration history, explore some of the existing theoretical frameworks, and consider the disconnect between public policy and public opinion.

Background

The U.S. is often called “a nation of immigrants” because most U.S. citizens, excluding Native Americans, descend from other nations and heritages. Throughout history, the U.S. has heavily relied on immigrants for much of the country’s economic and population growth. However, I place the phrase in “scare quotes” because the U.S. has historically accepted only certain types of “desirable” immigrants. This section explores the history of U.S. immigration policy to understand how it informs today’s immigration policy debate.

Discriminatory Immigration Practices

The U.S. has always favored certain groups of immigrants over others, a strange irony for “a country of immigrants.” For example, U.S. founders Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson -- both of British heritage -- wrote of German inferiority in their respective works. Jefferson critiqued Germans for choosing to settle in clusters, writing that they should instead choose to distribute themselves amongst the population in order to assimilate. ² Franklin took a more direct approach, characterizing German immigrants to the U.S. as “generally of the most ignorant Stupid Sort of their own Nation” in a letter written in 1753.³ Though this anti-German sentiment was not translated into law, many other influential political figures with anti-immigrant views successfully translated their views into policy.

³ Benjamin Franklin, Founders Online: From Benjamin Franklin to Peter Collinson, (National Archives and Records Administration, 1753).
Racially discriminatory laws and practices have marred the United States’ immigration policy history. Just three years after signing the Constitution, the 1790 Naturalization Act moved to exclude non-white naturalization.\(^4\) Eight years later, the Alien Friends Act and Alien Enemies Act each worked to legalize deportation.\(^5\) The same year brought the Sedition Act, which criminalized false criticisms of the U.S. government. These four acts foreshadowed a long line of restrictive policies meant to favor particular types of immigrants and exclude others.

Four policies shaped the immigration scene of the 1800s: the Immigration Act of 1864, the Naturalization Act of 1870, the Asian Exclusion Act, and the Chinese Exclusion Act. The Immigration Act of 1864 encouraged immigration due to post-Civil War labor shortages, and the Naturalization Act of 1870 allowed African American residents to naturalize. These two policies promoted immigration and resulted in a higher naturalization rate than had previously been recorded. The latter two, the Asian Exclusion Act of 1875 and Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, laid the groundwork for explicit discrimination against individuals from Asia who hoped to immigrate to the United States. These Exclusion Acts persisted until the 1943 Magnuson Act, which repealed the Exclusion Acts, created a path to citizenship for Chinese residents, and permitted slightly more than 100 Chinese immigrants per year.

The 1900s yielded different policies aimed to attract particular demographics and target newly-introduced quotas. For example, the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 favored immigration

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from northern and western European countries while the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act removed race as a disqualifier altogether. This era of policy saw a shift in racial preferences, moving the policy-based racial discrimination away from Asia and towards Mexico and Central America. Throughout this time period, racial discrimination within immigration also became less overt.

**Bracero Agreement and IRCA**

Congressional committees, bureaucracies, and interest groups comprise “iron triangles”. In the 1930s, an iron triangle based in the south and southwest parts of the U.S. supported Mexican labor importation. The entities believed that Mexican labor was the optimal choice because laborers could return to Mexico and as such would not settle in the United States. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Bracero Agreement of 1942 formalized this triangle to mitigate farm labor shortages during World War II. The program allowed Mexican individuals to visit the U.S. to complete short-term agricultural work. Despite being the U.S.’s largest guest worker program, the Bracero Program developed a controversial reputation because farmers exploited it to contract cheaper labor. In 1964, Congress ended the Bracero Program after years of contentious extensions.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, more Mexican individuals entered the U.S. in search of greater economic opportunity. Many of the men became “economic agents” for their families back in Mexico, which prompted further migration to the United States. Eventually,

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6 U.S. Department of State, *The Immigration Act of 1924 (The Johnson-Reed Act).*
8 Center for History and New Media, *About the Bracero Program*, Bracero History Archive.
U.S. citizens and their government noticed this mass migration. By the late 1970s, the U.S. began taking steps to control the situation.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) has been one of the most relevant pieces of U.S. immigration policy to date. The legislation, signed into law by Ronald Reagan and sometimes derisively referred to as the Reagan Amnesty, granted a path to citizenship for the undocumented individuals who had continuously resided in the U.S. since 1982. IRCA also legalized certain agricultural workers, penalized employers who knowingly hired undocumented individuals, and increased U.S. border enforcement by building walls at the most prolific entrance points.\(^\text{10,11}\)

**1990s, 2000s, and 2010s**

Following IRCA, immigration policy became more accepting and sought to provide exceptions for particular circumstances. Under President H.W. Bush, the Immigration Act of 1990 altered immigration policy and transformed it into the structure we see today, though minor variations have been implemented throughout the years. This act increased the annual immigration cap to 700,000 total individuals and created the Diversity Visa, which acts as a lottery for applicants around the world wherein winners are granted a path to citizenship. Temporary Protected Status allows immigrants from disaster-ridden countries to seek temporary refuge in the U.S. until their home country can support them again.

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\(^{10}\) *Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA)*, (USCIS).

Since the reforms of the late 1980s and early 1990s, little immigration reform has passed through Congress. The sparse policy that has been written into law largely revolves around border security and program modernization to account for today’s technologically-advanced society. For example, the Secure Fence Act of 2006 authorized about 700 miles of fences along the U.S-Mexico border but has not been carried out due to lack of funding.\textsuperscript{12} There have been a number of failed pushes to further increase border patrol and improve border security between the U.S. and Mexico.

\textbf{The DREAM Act and DACA}

The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, or the DREAM Act, is an unsuccessful U.S. legislative proposal that has been reintroduced multiple times throughout the last two decades. If passed, the legislation would create a conditional path to citizenship for certain undocumented immigrants who were brought to the U.S. in their youth.

In response to Congress’ inability to act, President Obama enacted a program called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, in 2010. Starting in 2012, individuals who entered the U.S. without documentation after 1981 while under the age of 16 became eligible to enroll in the program. DACA provides program participants with work authorization and temporarily prevents deportation. Participants must re-enroll every two years, and program acceptance depends on good standing.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{13} Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), (USCIS, 2016).
DACA stands in a unique space separate from other immigration policy issues. Unlike most immigration initiatives of the last fifty years, it has become a highly partisan issue. President Barack Obama implemented it, and Republicans, most notably President Donald Trump, have castigated it. As a result, many people have developed strong opinions about the program. Fake news sources circulate misinformation about DACA, which more reputable news sources rarely dispute effectively. Additionally, DACA benefits from having ambitious college-aged participants who bring positive attention to the program. This combination of high issue relevance, public opinion polarization, and misinformation pervasiveness separates DACA from the remainder of immigration policy.

**Immigration Theory**

There are two distinct aspects of the immigration process: first, the physical movement from country of origin to the new “host” country; and second, the integration into the host country’s society and culture. For policymakers, the former is termed “immigration theory” while the latter is “immigrant theory”. Each state implements its own policies pertaining to immigrant integration within society, resulting in a wide range of policies that interact with one another. Statewide immigrant policies also interact with federal immigration policy. In some cases, the interactions are antagonistic while in others they are more synergistic.

Immigration policy can either be expansive or restrictive. An expansive one promotes immigration and a restrictive one looks to limit or cut off immigration, especially from certain regions. According to Tichenor, no “neutral option” exists because any effort to

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maintain the status quo inevitably creates new structures to combat change, which, in turn, changes the structure of immigration.\textsuperscript{15} Immigration policy can also be expansive or restrictive towards immigrant rights, wherein expansive policy strives to grant immigrants close to full citizenship rights and restrictive policy does not.\textsuperscript{16} The U.S.’s consistently high intake of immigrants points to an expansive policy overall, but the limitations put on certain geographic areas point to restrictive tendencies.

**Immigration & Public Opinion Today**

An issue’s salience for the public depends on context. This thesis’ second sentence, which noted that a fifth of U.S. residents believed immigration was the most important problem at the moment, illustrates this point exceedingly well. The Gallup poll is administered monthly, and the salience of immigration has differed significantly over time. The results from July 2018 found that 22\% prioritized immigration, but, in June, that percentage was less than half of that at 10\%.\textsuperscript{17} While immigration policy is clearly still important, public opinion shifts constantly because it is contextualized by current events. Thus, public opinion cannot be measured at one time; it must instead be aggregated and viewed over time to understand how the context has changed.

Generally speaking, public opinion polls find that U.S. residents view immigrant groups more positively as generations pass. For example, many groups that immigrated to the U.S. about a century ago were discriminated against and strongly disliked at the time of


immigration, but today are considered a benefit to society. In the same vein, the general populace views today’s immigrant groups more negatively.

Historical literature suggests that U.S. immigration policy and public opinion are often at odds with one another. When the public supported expansive policy, government was more likely to have implemented a comparatively restrictive policy, and vice versa.

A number of other factors influence immigration public opinion. Many of these influences were included as control variables in the analysis in order to pinpoint covariation. They are listed and explained in the Data and Methods section.

This Thesis
Just as new immigration legislation has been limited in recent decades, so has research on immigration policy. Most recent research has focused on the impact of immigration via theoretical research or utilizing an economic-based approach. The latter, in particular, extends an everlasting debate on the economic advantage or disadvantage of immigration. Through all of this, research and society itself do not fully understand society’s opinion of immigration, nor does academic research approach U.S. immigration from a geographic, state-based perspective. This thesis endeavors to explore immigration policy public opinion using a quantitative approach and the state as the unit of analysis.

Data and Methods

This section outlines the thesis dataset assembly process and the methods used to analyze the data. To access the full dataset and Stata do-file, please contact Amy Burton at acburton19@gmail.com. Two Excel files exist: one optimized for Excel, “Burton Excel”, and the other for Stata, “Burton Stata”.

Dataset Assembly

CCES Survey Questions

I first worked to identify data that measures public opinion about immigration policy. Because this analysis takes place at the state level, data collections needed to be sufficiently large to include enough respondents in all fifty states to make meaningful comparisons. The Cooperative Congressional Election Study, or CCES, fulfilled these requirements. The CCES is a national stratified sample survey of approximately 50,000 people that measures public opinion on a variety of issues. In order to accurately discern how elections shift public opinion, each “wave” of the CCES conducted during an election year consists of two sub-waves, one before the election and another afterward. For non-election years, the survey has a single wave during the same time period. Because this study focuses on the importance of changing political context to understanding public opinion, it is also helpful that the CCES has asked the same questions about immigration across multiple waves.

Specifically, the CCES includes three questions about immigration across four waves of the data collection: 2007, 2010, 2014, and 2016. The three questions are as follows:

Table 1. CCES questions and associated IDs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q#</th>
<th>Question Phrasing</th>
<th>CCES Codebook ID</th>
<th>Burton Excel ID</th>
<th>Burton Stata ID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Q1 | Grant legal status to all illegal immigrants who have held jobs and paid taxes for at least 3 years, and not been convicted of any felony crimes. | 2007: CC12x_2  
2010: CC322  
2014: CC14_322_1  
2016: CC16_331_1 | Q1_SFreq | q1 |
| Q2 | Increase the number of border patrols on the U.S.-Mexican border. | 2007: CC12x_4  
2010: CC322  
2014: CC14_322_2  
2016: CC16_331_2 | Q2_SFreq | q2 |
| Q3 | Fine U.S. businesses that hire illegal immigrants. | 2007: CC12x_1  
2010: CC322  
2014: CC14_322_4  
2016: CC16_331_4 | Q3_SFreq | q3 |

Because CCES data are collected at the individual level, I aggregated individuals’ responses to the three questions by state using Stata’s cross-tabulation command, which is coded as “tab var1 var2”. The binary outputs of each question made for three columns of interest for each question: number of individuals per state who selected “yes” (Q1_S), number of individuals per state who selected “no” (Q1_NS), and total individuals per state who responded to the survey (Q1_R). After being copied to Excel, the sum of Q1_S and Q1_NS served as a data entry check with total individuals responded.

To obtain a comparable value by state, these responses translated into frequencies by Q1_S / Q1_R = Q1_SFreq. I repeated this process for each question and for each of the four CCES waves.
**Political Lean**

Over the last decade, immigration has become an increasingly partisan political issue. As such, it is important to control for the partisan composition of a state to avoid attributing the effect of partisanship to variables of interest. Given that the Republican party has become the anti-immigration party, I suspect that states that vote more Republican will also be less supportive of immigration. However, I could not create a standard variable to represent political lean. Of the CCES survey years, only 2016 is a presidential election year, so I would have needed to utilize state elections in order to get the most time-specific results. Because state election political platforms vary so widely, I recognized that I could not compare the %Democrat in Alabama to the same in %Hawaii. Hawaii’s Democratic candidate would run on a far more progressive platform than Alabama’s. Therefore, I needed to use Presidential elections in a way that represented non-election years.

I decided to make Political Lean a fixed effect variable, which means that one value applies to a state across all four years of interest. To create this variable, state election results from 2004, 2008, and 2012 were inputted as a measure between 0 (all voting Republican) and 100 (all voting Democrat). The 2016 election was omitted because a) it occurred at the end of 2016 and therefore does not necessarily represent the entirety of the year, and b) because so many individuals broke party alliances for the election, the inclusion of these results would skew the overall averages. The three elections averaged to create an index of mean political lean. Though an average might mask some smaller statewide shifts, significant shifts in political lean are reflected in the average.
Region

States’ geographic situation also has the potential to be important to understanding immigration attitudes. A 2017 study found that anti-immigration policies proliferate regionally in the U.S., particularly in the Southeast region.20 Here, I use the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis’ preset regional division (see below, Figure 1). This particular map represents this study’s regions for two reasons: first, the federal government has fewer outside motivations that could introduce bias into the study; second, the map grouped Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas together in the Southwest category. These three states have the most miles directly connected to the U.S.-Mexico border, which acts as a relevant component of geography in this study. I suspect that the Southwest region will have more polarized policy views, but am unsure whether they will be pro- or anti-immigration.

The Far West category includes Hawaii and Alaska. For the regressions, Southeast intentionally serves as the reference category for the model in order to form a null to which the other categories can be compared. The Southeast acts as the null due to the region’s suspected anti-immigrant sentiment.

**Legal Permanent Resident Measures**

A 2004 NPR poll found that native-born U.S. citizens who interact with immigrants less are more likely to view immigrants negatively. For this study, the measure %Legal Permanent Residents captures the potential amount of interaction that respondents have with

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immigrants. A higher percentage of legal permanent residents in a state increases the chances that non-immigrants will have the opportunity to interact with immigrants.

The number of legal permanent residents (LPRs) by state was taken from the Department of Homeland Security, LPR 2016, Table 4. Because states vary widely by population, I divided the number of LPRs by the total population per state, which I found through the American Community Survey (ACS). I repeated this process for the four waves of CCES data.

*Other Variables of Interest*

In addition, I calculated a range of other control variables to isolate the effects of variables of interest. I list them below in Table 2 alongside their code IDs within the data files. Table 3 details the rationale for including them in the models, how I coded them, and the sources from which they were drawn.
Table 2. Control variables and associated IDs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Burton Excel Codebook ID</th>
<th>Burton Stata Codebook ID</th>
<th>Regression ID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>● White</td>
<td>● whitepct</td>
<td>● %White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Black</td>
<td>● blackpct</td>
<td>● N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Asian</td>
<td>● asianpct</td>
<td>● N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Islander</td>
<td>● islanderpct</td>
<td>● N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Native</td>
<td>● nativepct</td>
<td>● N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Other</td>
<td>● otherpct</td>
<td>● N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Latinx</td>
<td>● latex</td>
<td>● %Latinx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>Median House Income</td>
<td>p50income</td>
<td>Median Income (in thousands)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>State Unemp</td>
<td>unemppct</td>
<td>%Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPLC Hate Group Tally</td>
<td>SPLC Tally</td>
<td>splc</td>
<td>SPLC Hate Group Tally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Age</td>
<td>Median Age</td>
<td>p50age</td>
<td>Median Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Lean*</td>
<td>Political Lean</td>
<td>dempct</td>
<td>%Democrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban / Rural*</td>
<td>Urban/Rural</td>
<td>urbanpct</td>
<td>%Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumina Education Index*</td>
<td>Lumina</td>
<td>lumina</td>
<td>Lumina Foundation Ed Profile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Variables with a * beside them are fixed: they were only captured once per state and do not change by wave. Urban/Rural was only captured by the 2010 U.S. Census; however, because today’s urbanization occurs at very slow speeds, any variation between years would have been minimal. Likewise, Lumina did not offer year-based indexes. Because Lumina measures a massive education infrastructure, I made the assumption that education infrastructure does not shift significantly per year.
### Table 3. Control Variables, Inclusion Rationales, Coding Explanations, and Data Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Inclusion Rationale</th>
<th>Coding Explanation</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Race is a common indicator of policy attitudes and voting outcomes.</td>
<td>%White and %Latinx are the percentage of each race found in a state on a scale of 0 to 100.</td>
<td>ACS 1-Year Estimates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>Wealth is an insulator for economic pressure.</td>
<td>This control is a measure of wealth, or longer-term economic well-being, in thousands of U.S. dollars.</td>
<td>U.S. Census Time-Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>Outside of racial prejudice, economic insecurity directly influences immigration policy attitudes.</td>
<td>This control is a measure of short-term economic well-being on a scale between 0 and 100.</td>
<td>ACS 1-Year Estimates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPLC Hate Group Tally</td>
<td>As the term “immigrant” shifts closer to negatively-stereotyped minority groups, immigration policy will be increasingly decided by racial prejudices.</td>
<td>This control measures those negative racial tensions by state via a summation of hate groups.</td>
<td>Southern Poverty Law Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Age</td>
<td>Age has been found to impact immigration policy attitudes.</td>
<td>This control measures average age by state to account for concentration-based opinion differences.</td>
<td>ACS 1-Year Estimates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Lean*</td>
<td>Political ideology also influences immigration policy public opinion, separately from economic security, education, or racism.</td>
<td>On a scale between 0 (Republican) and 100 (Democrat), Political Lean endeavors to capture the voting tendencies of the state throughout the 2004, 2008, and 2012 elections.</td>
<td>Election results, accessed at 270towin.com/states</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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24 Burns and Gimpel, "Economic Insecurity", 205.
25 Ibid, 204.
26 Ibid, 204.
29 Burns and Gimpel, "Economic Insecurity", 205.
Increasing rurality has been linked with stronger anti-immigrant attitudes. On a scale between 0 (rural) and 100 (urban), this variable looks at population distribution by state. U.S. Census, 2010

Increased education has been linked to higher levels of tolerance for immigrants. On a scale between 0 (uneducated) and 100 (well-educated), this variable evaluates states by their educational systems and attainment. Lumina Foundation

Although the meaning of many of the variables is self-evident, one requires more explanation.

_Lumina Education Index_

The Lumina Foundation is an education foundation “committed to making opportunities for learning beyond high school available to all”. One of their initiatives, Stronger Nation, used 2016 data to measure post-secondary educational attainment by state as an index measuring from 0 to 100. This index had a national average of 46.9, which showed that the index was not too stringent or lenient. This control functions as a proxy for average educational attainment. I anticipate that higher educational attainment will be linked with higher support for pro-immigration policy and less support for anti-immigration policy.

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30 Katherine Fennelly and Christopher Frederico, "Rural Residence as a Determinant of Attitudes Toward US Immigration Policy" (International Migration 46, no. 1, 2008), 151-90.
31 Burns and Gimpel 2000, page 205.
32 Lumina Foundation.
Data Cleaning & Manipulation

Following data collection, the data underwent iterative cleaning. Part of this process included assistance from data visualization librarian Lorin Bruckner and Odum Institute ResearchHub Statistical Consultant Bailey.

After importing the Excel file into Stata, I estimated a series of ordinary least squares regression models. The mean response by state by year to CCES questions served as the dependent variable with the remaining variables cast as explanatory variables. From the race category, I included only whitepct and latinxpet as controls due to concerns about collinearity causing statistical problems if I included other race variables. Though the two variables exhibited some collinearity, I felt confident that enough variation existed to find any discernable racially-based patterns.

The third question of interest, fining businesses, had a small sample size in 2010. Here, Montana and Nebraska’s low or nonexistent response rates prompted omission.
Results

Recall that the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) asked three questions to better understand public opinion about immigration. These questions also allow me to identify factors that influence these opinions. The CCES prefaced the three questions in the same way: “Should the U.S. government enact the following policy: [Question #]” Study participants responded either yes or no.

To begin, I looked at CCES question support by year, which is shown below in Table 4. From this, I garnered an understanding of the general trends within each CCES question of interest.

Table 4. CCES Question Percentage Support by Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Grant Legal Status</th>
<th>Increase Border Patrol</th>
<th>Fine Businesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>31.9744</td>
<td>55.34937</td>
<td>69.56453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>38.2494</td>
<td>62.4829</td>
<td>74.03996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>46.11484</td>
<td>57.56476</td>
<td>62.65957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>54.7422</td>
<td>49.66244</td>
<td>65.80738</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first policy of interest is:

“Grant legal status to all illegal immigrants who have held jobs and paid taxes for at least 3 years, and not been convicted of any felony crimes.”
Effectively, this survey question asks whether people support granting legal status for undocumented immigrants. It does not use the inflammatory language or key phrases that prompt a party response rather than a personal opinion. This phrasing can be both an asset and a limitation because, while this question reveals how individuals feel about the topic when presented dispassionately, immigration is often not presented as such in real political dialogue.

As shown in Figure 2, which appears to the right, public support for granting legal status increases steadily between 2007 and 2016. In 2007, the average statewide support for the policy was 31.97%; in 2016, this number increased by 22.77 percentage points to 54.74% support. 2007 had a wide range of responses: Massachusetts recorded 50.45% public support while Wyoming recorded 11.11%. In 2010, the average support in a state rose to 38.25%, with Vermont showing the most support at 63.04 and Idaho showing the least at 27.38%. 2014’s results showed heightened public support again with a state average of 46.11%. Hawaii had the highest support for granting legal status with 60.22%, and South Dakota had the lowest with 35.34% public support. 2016 recorded the highest average state support of the four years at 54.74%. The most supportive state was Maryland (60.67%) and the least supportive was West Virginia (46.62%).

Figure 2. Granting Legal Status Public Support by Year
Because there are three years between waves 1 and 2, four years between waves 2 and 3, and only two years between waves 3 and 4, the approximately 8-point gap between each wave means that the question has garnered support at a higher rate between the last two waves than in previous iterations.

As identified in Data and Methods, political lean should play a large role in affecting public support for immigration policies. Because the Democrats are the pro-immigration party of the early 2000s, a higher percentage of Democrats in a state should increase support for granting legal status in that state. Therefore, I created a scatterplot comparing %Democrat to public support for granting legal status, shown below in Figure 3. Because %Democrat is an index of Presidential elections, the variable would not properly show variation over time. As such, this scatterplot shows each state’s average public support for granting legal status over the four waves of interest.
Figure 3 shows that more Democrat-leaning states have higher support for granting legal status. For example, states with higher Republican voting tendencies such as Wyoming and Idaho are shown on the left half of the graph and have 36.60 and 36.31 percent average support for this policy, respectively. On the other hand, Hawaii and Vermont tend to vote for Democrats at high rates; these states have 46.87 and 65.80 percent average support for granting legal status. The two states closest to the 50% x-axis marker, swing states Florida and Virginia, have 44.09% and 44.42% public support, respectively. Both political lean and public support vary widely in this figure, and the trend line captures a large amount of covariation.

The trend line accounts for most, but certainly not all, of the variation within the graph. In the top left corner of the graph, Utah sits alone as the outlier. Utah is extremely conservative
with 47.34% public support for granting legal status. This high support could be attributed to Utah’s religious uniquity or the state’s significantly younger median age.

Party is likely only one of many areas that affects support for immigration. Another potential source of variation is region of the country. I expect that states further away from the U.S.-Mexico border will have lower support for pro-immigration policy since residents of these states face immigration-related issues less frequently. In order to better understand these overarching trends, the data visualization below showcases the continental U.S. state averages for each of the four waves. The legend beside the graph indicates the range of public opinion outputs by state with the same gradient standardized for each wave.
Figure 4. Geographic visualization of public support for granting legal status per wave of the CCES

Note first how the map gradually darkens throughout the four iterations, which reflects the increased support for the policy. Second, the Midwest has slightly lighter colors throughout the visualization. Perhaps this is due to a sense of resentment from agricultural workers in the region. Because of this difference, regions will likely have a significant impact on attitudes, even after controlling for other factors in a regression.

Finally, recall that my key variable of interest is people’s experience with those who are immigrants. I operationalized potential contact with immigrants with the percentage of legal
permanent residents within each state. Below, I plot this measure across states with the percentage of people from those states who support granting legal status.

Figure 5. Granting Legal Status Percentage Support by Percent Legal Permanent Resident Line of Best Fit: \[ Q1 \text{ Support} = 18.23 \times \%LPR + 38.41 \mid R^2 = 0.09 \]

Figure 5 finds that higher percentages of legal permanent residents within a state loosely correlate with higher support for granting legal status. States on the left side of the figure have lower LPR frequencies. For example, Montana in 2007 has a %LPR of 0.06% and 39.39% public support, which puts the point directly on the trend line. Further right, Florida in 2014 partially touches the trend line; the state’s higher %LPR (0.55%) corresponds with 48.80% public support for granting legal status. Public support varies much more widely than %LPR, and the trend line does not capture much of this vertical variation. That said, %LPR’s lack of variation also limits the significance of the graph since the states range from
0.0393 (West Virginia) to 0.8097 (New York). This limited range of %LPR, wide range of public support, and wide variation from the trend line confirms that %LPR likely does not strongly influence public support for granting legal status.

Now that I have identified several of the main factors that influence how the public supports granting legal status, I will repeat this process for the second CCES question.
The second policy from the CCES is:

“Increase the number of border patrols on the U.S.-Mexican border”.

Unlike the previous model, higher responses here signal anti-immigration policy views. Additionally, note that the question measures the proportion of individuals who want to increase, not maintain, patrols.

This policy’s public opinion is not necessarily an inversion of the previous one, which suggests that citizens think about immigration issues in different ways. For example, in the 1980s, IRCA created both a path to citizenship and a physical barrier to stop new individuals from crossing over the border. This policy strove to improve life for those already in the U.S. but simultaneously cut off the opportunity for people to continue exploiting the system.

Public opinion on increasing border patrol looks to have fluctuated throughout the study period. The first year of interest, 2007, had an average public support level of 55.35%. In this year, Vermont had significantly less support than other states with 28.00% public support. Wyoming (72.22%) had the highest support of any state. 2010 recorded 62.48% support on average with a much smaller range of responses. Alabama (69.84%) had the highest support and Vermont (50.00%) had the lowest support. In 2014, the average state had 57.56% of the
public’s support. State support ranged from Hawaii with 47.31% to Mississippi with 66.40%. Finally, 2016 showed the average as 49.66%, with state public support percentages ranging from 43.53% (California) to 57.58% (West Virginia).

2007 stands as a time of high variation and low consensus on the topic; as time passes, this variation decreases. In 2010, both increasing border patrol and fining businesses had higher public support for their respective policies than in any other CCES wave. This is likely due to the Great Recession and its economic stressors; the event triggered a seemingly short wave of anti-immigrant sentiment. Following 2010, support for increasing border patrol has dropped steadily. This decrease in support led to a 2016 average of 49.7%, which creates a distinct split within U.S. residents who do and do not support the proposed policy.

As with the analysis above, political lean should account for some of variation in support. Since increasing border patrol inherently counts as anti-immigrant, I anticipate higher support for the policy from increasingly Republican states.
As Figure 7 shows, increasing Democrat sway results in lower support for increasing border patrol. The two most Republican-leaning states, Utah and Wyoming, had 53.69% and 59.48% respective public support for the policy. On the right-hand side of the figure, Vermont and Hawaii were the most Democrat-leaning and had 44.11 and 47.05 percent public support, respectively. Florida and Virginia took the central ground with 57.18% and 55.74%, respectively. Figure 7 may be better represented by a quadratic equation or other curved equation given the scatterplot’s inverted U shape.

States with direct access to the border, California, New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas, were not outliers on this question. Texas and Arizona polled only slightly above the line of best fit while California and New Mexico fell below the line. However, given that Texas and Arizona vote Republican at a higher rate while California and New Mexico lean Democrat, a
line of best fit with only these four states yields a stronger relationship between increase border patrol and %Democrat.

To better understand the regional differences in public support for increasing border patrol, I made a geographic visualization to compare state public support over time. I expect that the Midwest will maintain more anti-immigrant sentiment than their regional neighbors.

Figure 8. Geographic visualization of public support for increased border patrol per wave of the CCES
Unlike granting legal status, increased border patrol experiences both growth and decline in public support during this time period. As explained above, the increase in public support in 2010 likely points to the Great Recession; the decrease in support since that period corresponds with the economic recovery that has taken place since then. 2016’s map shows significantly lower support for the policy than any other iteration, including 2007.

In 2007, 2014, and 2016, the Midwest region has some of the darkest colors, signaling higher public support for increased border patrol. Comparatively, the Far West region, New Mexico, and Vermont have lighter colors than their surroundings throughout all four waves.

A large amount of the variation seen thus far has not yet been explained, so I also looked at %LPR by state to understand what impact immigrant interaction has on increasing public support for enhanced border patrol. I anticipate a negative relationship between %LPR and public support because immigrants are unlikely to advocate for a more difficult immigration path.
As expected, higher levels of %LPR by state correlates with lower public support for increased border patrol. In 2010, Wyoming recorded 58.02% public support with 0.0801% LPR within the state’s population. New Jersey in 2007 had a significantly higher %LPR of 0.64% and a lower public support percentage of 51.56.

Though the trend line seems to capture most of the data’s variation, it’s worth noting that the points are largely clustered on the left half of the graph, signifying lower %LPRs. For example, Louisiana’s 2010 survey found 65.82% supported increased border patrol with 0.0968% LPR; but at 0.0974% LPR, Alabama in 2010 reported 51.01% support. Even though both states have very similar %LPRs, their results vary widely.
A fewer number of points on the right-hand side of the graph likely have more influence over the trend line. Just as in the previous CCES policy question, the small range of %LPRs limits the practical application of this relationship.

This graph’s outlier is Vermont in 2007 with a %LPR of 0.1273 and the lowest public support of any state at 28.00%. In 2016, Vermont’s support had increased to 45.45%. The four points furthest to the right are New York over the four waves with the furthest right being in 2016.

I again repeated this process for the third policy of interest, attitudes about businesses who hire individuals who are in the country illegally.
The CCES phrased the third question as:

“Fine businesses that hire illegal immigrants.”

Like the previous question, this is also a measure of anti-immigrant sentiment. Unlike either of the other questions, this CCES question relates to the business aspect of immigration. Some people might support fining businesses if they harbor negative feelings towards immigrants or if they dislike businesses and want to see them held accountable. As such, answers to this question are the least likely to conform to a party platform.

The 2010 iteration of the CCES had a lower sample size than the other waves of the study. This especially applies to this third question, wherein some of the states’ 2010 results had to be omitted due to low sample size. I withheld these results from both the geographic visualizations. In addition, the subsequent regression has 48 of the 50 data points from the 2010 wave; the other waves had large sample sizes, which allowed me to include all states.

Figure 10 shows majority support for fining businesses that hire undocumented immigrants. In 2007, the average state had 69.56% support for fining businesses, with Kansas (82.42%) measuring the highest support and Vermont (48.00%) showing the least. 2010’s surge of anti-immigrant support led to a higher mean of 74.04%. In this year, Idaho (94.12%) and Nevada (92.59%) had the highest support while Alaska (25.00%) and Hawaii (40.00%) had the lowest. 2014 showed the lowest levels of support for fining

Figure 10. Fining Businesses
Public Support by Year
businesses out of the four years with an average of 62.66% support; here, South Dakota had the highest support with 72.18% and New York had the lowest with 51.77%. In 2016, the average increased to 65.81%, which is only 5 percentage points lower than the 2007 survey’s average. South Dakota showed the most support for fining businesses with 80.00% and Vermont showed the lowest with 54.55%.

Fine businesses has an unknown trend and points to a general lack of consensus among the general populace. The wide range of public support percentages has no obvious path forward and may vary in any number of ways in future surveys as public knowledge about fining businesses oscillates.

In order to pinpoint some of the factors influencing this CCES question, I first turned to political lean.
Figure 11 shows a weak negative correlation between increasing Democrat support and support for fining businesses. While the trend line captures the general direction of movement as %Democrat increases, it does not capture the majority of variation in public support. Likewise, %Democrat fails to differentiate states’ public support for this CCES question. Wyoming and Iowa, for example, respectively record 71.42% and 71.53% public support for fining businesses, but Wyoming leans strongly Republican with %Democrat at 30.60% while Iowa leans slightly Democrat at 52.50%.

Three states with moderate Republican lean, Nebraska, Alaska, and Montana, have significantly lower support for fining businesses than the rest of the states and likely skew the trend line downward.
Given that partisanship is not strongly related to support for fining businesses, other variables must play a more sizable role. Because anti-immigrant policies can cluster subnationally, region could account for this variation. To test this theory, I created the same geographic visualization as in the previous CCES questions. I hypothesize that states without access to a coast or country border will have higher levels of support because their lower levels of immigrant interaction will make these states less sympathetic when considering immigrant-focused policies.

Figure 12. Geographic visualization of public support for fine businesses per wave of the CCES
As with increased border patrol, this geographic visualization shows that fining businesses experienced a significant bump in support in the 2010 iteration, but support dipped in subsequent surveys. States with direct access to a border look to have only minimally lower support for fining businesses. Besides this, Figure 12 does not uncover any additional major trends of interest.

Perhaps %LPR will play a larger role in explaining support for fining businesses that hire illegal immigrants. I expect that higher %LPR will result in lower support for fining businesses given that immigrant populations, including LPRs, should have greater empathy for other members of the current immigrant population.
Figure 13. Fine Businesses Percentage Support by Percent Legal Permanent Resident
Line of Best Fit: $Q_3$ Support $= -11.65 \times \%LPR + 70.76 \mid R^2=0.05$

As seen above, the line of best fit seems to capture the general trend: higher %LPRs by state correspond with lower support for the policy. Two points directly on the line, Montana and New York, showcase this trend’s practical applicability. Montana in 2014 had a %LPR of 0.04% and 69.79% public support for fining businesses. In 2010, New York reported a higher %LPR (0.76%) and lower support for fining businesses (61.65%). This 8% difference in public support could potentially be due to differing levels of immigrant interaction.
As with previous graphs comparing %LPR to public support, the narrow range in %LPR limits the utility of the wide range in public support. Fining businesses, unlike the other CCES questions studied, looks to have a stronger, possibly significant, correlation with %LPR.

A fair number of outliers litter the graph, such as Alaska in 2010 with 25% support and Hawaii in 2010 with 40% support. Despite these outliers, this trend is still significant and should be further explored in the multivariate model.

These three CCES policy questions all have intriguing correlations with political lean, region, and %LPR. In order to better understand which variables have a stronger influence, I ran an OLS regression for each question. Regression allows me to account for the independent influence of a range of different variables in the same model while controlling for the influence of the others. In addition to the three variables I have analyzed above in detail, I include a number of other variables as controls.

%White, %Latinx, %Urban, and %Unemployed all capture percentages by state, measuring rates in order to be comparable across states of different population sizes. Median Income and Median Age measure the central counts while avoiding the skew associated with means. SPLC is a tally of hate groups in each state. Lumina is a standardized measure of state education systems. These variables, their collection, and my expected outcomes are further detailed in Data and Methods.
Table 5. Regression Outputs, Granting Legal Status

| Variable                     | Coefficient (Std Error) | t    | P>|t| | 95% Confidence Intervals |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|------|----|-------------------------|
| %Legal Permanent Res.        | 5.819359 (4.009141)     | 1.45 | 0.148 | -2.091306 - 13.73002     |
| %White                       | .0689927 (.048927)      | 1.41 | 0.160 | -.027548 .1655333       |
| %Latinx                      | -.0218178 (.0659809)    | -0.33| 0.741 | -.1520084 .1083728      |
| %Democrat                    | .3608528* (.0832277)    | 4.34 | 0.000 | .1966315 .5250742       |
| %Urban                       | -.027958 (.0423591)     | -0.66| 0.510 | -.1115391 .0556232      |
| %Unemployed                  | -.2376582 (.1627055)    | -1.46| 0.146 | -.5587017 .0833853      |
| Median Income (in thousands) | -.0018328 (.0704339)    | -0.03| 0.979 | -.14081 .1371444        |
| Median Age                   | -.9637013* (.2587527)   | -3.72| 0.000 | -1.474261 -.4531416     |
| SPLC Hate Group Tally        | .0117466 (.026784)      | 0.44 | 0.661 | -.0411025 .0645957      |
| Lumina Foundation Ed Profile | .2396803* (.1033099)    | 2.32 | 0.021 | .0358337 .4435269       |
| Year                         | 2.52122* (.1179728)     | 21.37| 0.000 | 2.288441 2.753999       |

*Regional Analysis*

<p>| Far West                     | -.5813038 (1.67818)     | -0.35| 0.729 | -3.892616 2.730009      |</p>
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<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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%Democrat, median age, Lumina education profile, and year all held statistical significance at the 95% CI within this model. All else held equal, increasing Democrat lean resulted in positive support for granting legal status. This positive relationship also stood for Lumina and year; increasing each variable individually led to higher public support. In contrast, higher median ages reduced support for granting legal status. Plains was the only region to garner statistical significance; state averages from this region were lower than other regions. Increased percentages of legal permanent residents in each state resulted in higher public support as expected. However, this variable fell short of statistical significance.
The results of the regression model largely follow expectations as it relates to the influence of key variables in the model. Take the influence of party. In this model, for every 1% increase in Democrat lean, the state’s support for granting legal status increased by 0.36 of a percentage point. The most Republican-leaning state, Utah (29.2%), and the most Democrat-leaning state, Hawaii (66.4%), therefore have a 13.39 percentage-point gap in public opinion based solely on political lean, other things being equal.

Year has the strongest covariation within this model, with each passing year resulting in a 2.5 percentage point increase in support for granting legal status. Over the span of 2007 to 2016, this becomes a sizeable increase in support measuring 22.5 percentage points.

Although age has not been a central focus thus far, it is influential within this model. As the median age of a state rises by 1 year, statewide support for granting legal status drops by 0.96 percentage points. This becomes practically significant when looking at the wide range of median ages; for example, Texas’s low median age of 33.2 and Maine’s high median age of 41.7 would have a 8.16 percentage-point difference due to median age.

Lumina Foundation’s Education Profile also found statistical significance. For every percentage point increase on the Lumina profile, public opinion increased by 0.24 percentage points. West Virginia (34.7) has the lowest score and Massachusetts (56.2) has the highest. The 21.5 point range between the two generates a 5.16 percentage-point difference in public opinion attributable to education system strength.
Surprisingly, Plains is the singular region with a statistically significant relationship for this CCES question. States in this region, which include North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, and Missouri, consistently recorded support for granting legal status about 3.85 percentage points lower than the Southeast. Because no other region in the U.S. differed significantly from the Southeast, this public opinion difference is also applicable to the Far West, Rocky Mountains, Southwest, Great Lakes, Mideast, and New England regions. I hypothesized that the Southeast would poll as the least immigrant-friendly, so Plains is an unexpected result. This anti-immigrant sentiment could be due to lower immigrant exposure throughout the region. Alternatively, the Plains’ overwhelmingly agricultural role could indicate that agricultural workers place immigrants in a negative light.

Several variables do not hold statistical significance; these include %Unemployed, %Urban, and Median Income. %Unemployed and %Urban become significant in the latter two models, so their lack of significance here prompts special interest. Unemployment’s triviality here means that economic fluctuations are unlikely to impact public support. Also, the fact that urban and rural environments hold the same views suggests that increases in support are not due to a loud minority in either geographic subsect. Year also accounts for more of the covariation in this model before dropping to a less significant (though still relevant) position for the latter two CCES questions. Together, these variables confirm that granting legal status has a support system separate from other immigration policy topics.

Median Income is not statistically significant in the first two models but becomes significant for the final model. In this model, Median Income and %Unemployed’s combined lack of
significance suggests that support for granting legal status may not depend on financial stability.
Table 6. Regression Outputs, Increase Border Patrol

| Variable                  | Coefficient (Std Error) | t     | P>|t|  | 95% Confidence Intervals |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------|------|---------------------------|
| %Legal Permanent Res.     | -8.144355 (4.521466)    | -1.80 | 0.073| -17.06592 .7772074        |
| %White                   | -0.02948 (.0551793)     | -0.53 | 0.594| -.1383574 .0793975        |
| %Latinx                  | -0.0265591 (.0744125)   | -0.36 | 0.722| -.1733867 .1202684        |
| %Democrat                | -.4462427* (.0938633)   | -4.75 | 0.000| -.6314498 -.2610357       |
| %Urban                   | .1049522* (.0477721)    | 2.20  | 0.029| .0106903 .199214          |
| %Unemployed              | 1.546644* (.1834975)    | 8.43  | 0.000| 1.184575 1.908714         |
| Median Income (in thousands) | .0625212 (.0794346)   | 0.79  | 0.432| -.0942157 .2192582        |
| Median Age               | 1.060798* (.2918185)    | 3.64  | 0.000| .4849943 1.636602         |
| SPLC Hate Group Tally    | .0177285 (.0302067)     | 0.59  | 0.558| -.0418741 .0773311        |
| Lumina Foundation Ed Profile | -.072086 (.1165117)   | -0.62 | 0.537| -.3019819 .15781          |
| Year                     | -.6102639* (.1330484)   | -4.59 | 0.000| -.8727893 -.3477385       |

Regional Analysis

| Far West                 | -1.95752 (1.892633)     | -1.03 | 0.302| -5.691982 1.776942        |
This regression found the following variables to be statistically significant: %Democrat, Median Age, Year, %Urban, and %Unemployed. %Democrat and Year both had negative relationships in which higher levels of the variable led to lower public support. Increasing any one of Median Age, %Urban, and %Unemployed prompted higher support for increasing border patrol. Additionally, the Plains region had significantly higher public support than other regions. Though not statistically significant at the 95% CI, %LPR’s t-value of -1.80 means that the variable had practical significance, wherein higher percentages of LPRs in a state resulted in lower public support.

%Democrat showed strong statistical significance again in this model. For each 1% increase in Democrat lean, support for increased border patrol dropped by 0.45 of a percentage point.
To put this into context, this model indicates that a Republican-leaning state with an average 60/40 vote margin would support increased border patrol 9 percentage points more than a Democrat-leaning state with a 60/40 vote margin.

Compared to the previous model, Year is far less significant. Though the variable still clearly plays a role in survey responses here, the variable accounts for less of the variation than for granting legal status. Here, the regression indicates that, for each additional year, support for border patrol drops by 0.61 of a percentage point. From 2007 to 2016, this translates to a 5.49 drop in support.

While not statistically significant, %LPR’s coefficient of -8.144 and -1.80 t-value hold practical significance. Take 2016, for example. New York’s %LPR of 0.81 is 0.76 percentage points higher than West Virginia’s 0.05. According to this regression model, this difference in %LPR accounts for a 6.19 percentage-point difference in public support for fining businesses.

%Unemployed becomes significant in this model with each additional percentage point of unemployment corresponding with a 1.63 percentage point increase in support for border patrol. The controversial argument claiming that immigrants, especially illegal immigrants, take jobs from U.S. citizens logically results in a lower level of support from those who do not currently have jobs and may look to place blame elsewhere.
Median Age shows covariation that is both statistically and practically significant: for every 1-year increase in a state’s median age, the support for border patrol increases by 1.06 percentage points. In 2016, the gap between a state with an older median age, such as Maine’s median age of 44.5, compared to Oklahoma’s younger median age of 36.4 would be expected to have a 8.59 percentage point gap with Oklahoma less supportive of border patrol.

Those in the Plains region support increased border patrol 5.77 percentage points more than the Southeast. Again, because none of the other regions differed significantly from the Southeast, this result can be extrapolated to say that the Plains region supports increased border patrol 5.77 percentage points more than the rest of the United States.
| Variable               | Coefficient (Std Error) | t    | P>|t|  | 95% Confidence Intervals |
|------------------------|-------------------------|------|------|--------------------------|
| %Legal Permanent Res.  | -15.62286* (6.86641)    | -2.28| 0.024| -29.17238                |
| %White                 | .1463427 (.0840663)     | 1.74 | 0.083| -.0195458                |
| %Latinx                | .030003 (.1133694)      | 0.26 | 0.792| -.1937094                |
| %Democrat              | -.1819937 (.1435162)    | -1.27| 0.206| -.465195                |
| %Urban                 | .210459* (.0724955)     | 2.90 | 0.004| .0674033                 |
| %Unemployed            | 1.486165* (.2787454)    | 5.33 | 0.000| .9361152                 |
| Median Income (in thousands) | .334365* (.1212747) | 2.76 | 0.006| .095053                  |
| Median Age             | .4832335 (.4479292)     | 1.08 | 0.282| -.4006676               |
| SPLC Hate Group Tally  | .0469535 (.0459518)     | 1.02 | 0.308| -.437234                |
| Lumina Foundation Ed Profile | -.3915718* (.1770166) | -2.21| 0.028| -.7408796               |
| Year                   | -.9450847* (.2021746)   | -4.67| 0.000| -1.344037               |

**Regional Analysis**

| Far West               | -5.827496* (2.89362)    | -2.01| 0.046| -11.53749                |

53
Fining businesses relies on different variables than the prior two models. As foreshadowed by Figure 11, %Democrat was not statistically significant. Instead, a myriad of other variables influenced public support: %LPR, Lumina, Year, %Urban, %Unemployed, and Median Income. %LPR, Lumina, and Year each had a negative coefficient, meaning that increasing any one of them would result in lower public support. Conversely, %Urban, %Unemployed, and Median Income had positive relationships in which an increase in one related to an increase in public support.

Regionally, Plains had significantly higher public support than surrounding areas. Far West also garnered statistical significance with lower public support than other regions.
%Legal Permanent Resident’s coefficient of 15.62 seems incredibly significant at first glance; however, because every state has <1% LPR in each wave, this result must be scaled back for correct interpretation. Consider West Virginia and New York: West Virginia’s 2010 %LPR of 0.039 differs from New York’s 2010 % LPR of 0.763 by 0.724. When applying the coefficient to this, %LPR represents a 11.31 percentage point difference in public opinion with higher %LPR resulting in lower public support for the policy.

For every percent increase in %Urban, support for fining businesses increases by 0.21. When comparing a state with low urban clustering, such as Maine in 2007, to a state with high urban concentration, such as California in 2007, the range accounts for a 8 percentage point difference in public opinion.

Support for fining businesses increases by 1.49 percentage points for every percentage point increase in %Unemployed. In 2016, the range between New Hampshire’s low and Mississippi’s high unemployment rates comprises a 6.11 percentage point difference in public opinion, wherein Mississippi residents have greater support for fining businesses.

Every thousand dollar increase in median income correlates with a public opinion increase of 0.33 percentage points. Again, when comparing New Hampshire’s 2007 median income of 67.58 thousand dollars and Mississippi’s 37.28 thousand dollars, median income becomes a practically significant variable representing a 10 percentage point gap in public opinion.
For every percentage point in Lumina, the support for fining businesses decreases by 0.38 percentage points. The gap between West Virginia’s 34.7 and Colorado’s 55.7 results in a 7.98 percentage point public opinion differentiation.

Every year between 2007 and 2016, support for fining businesses dropped 0.95 percentage points. Over nine years, this becomes a 8.55 percentage point decrease in support.

As in the prior two models, residents in the Plains region differ significantly from the remaining regions. In this particular model, this region supports fining businesses 6.91 percentage points higher than elsewhere in the United States. Far West also garners significance in this model, but it moves in the opposite direction: residents in the region support fining businesses 5.83 percentage points less than in the Southeast and other statistically insignificant regions.
Limitations

This project relies on secondary data. It would have been impossible for me to collect the data myself, but secondary data also comes with a hefty limitation: without collecting the data yourself, the collection methodology cannot ever be truly confirmed. Fortunately, the CCES has a relatively long history of high-quality work. It is not a true random cross-section of the American public, but it does approximate one.

Below are a number of smaller, yet important limitations that might have introduced bias into the study. The CCES 2010 codebook phrases Question 3 as “fine businesses”; the other iterations phrase the question as “fine businesses that hire illegal immigrants”. A copy of the actual survey could not be located. It seems unlikely that the survey would change the sample question for that single wave of the study given that “fine businesses” is so vague as to be unanswerable. Therefore, I assumed that the survey phrased the question as “fine businesses that hire illegal immigrants”. All other questions had exact phrasing throughout all four waves.

In addition, Question 3’s 2010 sample size is smaller than the remaining 2010 questions’ sample sizes, and 2010 sample sizes are smaller than the other three waves of the survey. For example, 2010 Q1 and Q2 each had a sample size of 2061 for the state of Ohio, but Q3 only had 113 observations. In 2007, Q3 had 395; in 2014, 2452; and in 2016, 473. This small sample size for 2010 Q3 may have resulted in samples that are less representative of the population.
Measuring education by state also presented a challenge. Because an education index by state could not be found through the U.S. government website, I used the Lumina index instead. Background research suggested that a) Lumina has no political partiality, and b) the organization utilized a methodology to measure not only outcomes but also infrastructure in each state. Additionally, Lumina’s index yielded similar results as education outcomes found by ACS surveys, which are reputable and used regularly in social sciences research. Although Lumina is a largely unknown actor that withheld their full index methodology from the public, there is no outward reason to discount its index’s validity. Still, the lack of methodological understanding warrants the label of limitation.

For the Regions portion of the study, I struggled to place Hawaii and Alaska. The Far West category includes Hawaii and Alaska, but these states are physically remote from the other states in the category. In addition, Alaska’s more conservative politics departs from the rest of the region, which might have influenced Far West’s outputs within the regressions section.

Finally, fixed effects may also limit the results. I recorded Political Lean, Urban/Rural, and Lumina Education only once and used those variables across the four study waves. The lack of variability could result in misallocated significance for the variables; however, this seems unlikely since all three measured long-term trends. For example, Urban/Rural on a state level shifts so slowly as to be invisible. Likewise, education infrastructure does not radically change in a decade; quick infrastructure shifts require a myriad of actors at different levels to synchronize their intentions. Because actors in education often have competing interests, education policy evolves incrementally. As explained earlier, the 2016 election would have
misrepresented Political Lean because voters broke party alliances. Because I hoped to
measure political party alliance, I knew that the 2016 election would introduce too much bias
into the results. Therefore, I chose to make the Political Lean variable a fixed effect. Though
these three have limitations as fixed effects, I believe they would have greater limitations if
they were not fixed.
Major Takeaways and Implications

This section highlights some of the more practically significant results found in my project. Public support for granting legal status has increased markedly over the last decade. Policymakers should begin to weigh the long-term implications of either granting legal status or denying that path for an extended period of time with this rising public support. Republicans’ conservative position on this matter might become politically untenable.

The first regression gauged public support for granting legal status to undocumented immigrants, which is a pro-immigrant policy proposal. Political lean, median age, educational system strength, and year were all statistically significant in the model. Year had the strongest relationship: moving forward by a year increased public support by 2.52 percentage points. Political lean (0.36) and educational system strength (0.24) both also had positive coefficients. Median age had a negative relationship in which an added year resulted in a 0.96 percentage point loss in public support. States in the Plains region had lower public support by about 3.85 percentage points.

Second, I ran a regression to test public support for increasing border patrol. In this model, political lean, median age, year, percent population in urban areas, and percent unemployment all achieved statistical significance. Because increasing border patrol is anti-immigrant, political lean, median age, and year flipped their direction from the first model. Political lean had a negative relationship; a percentage point higher Democrat partisanship resulted in lower support by 0.45 of a percentage point. Likewise, each year had a 0.61 percentage point drop in support, again suggesting that public opinion trends in a liberal
direction on immigration. A single year increase in median age accompanied a 1.06 percentage point increase in public support. Percent urban (0.10) and unemployment (1.55) also had positive relationships with public support. Percent LPR had a practically, though not statistically, significant negative relationship as well wherein a one percentage-point increase in LPR led to a 8.14 percentage-point decrease in public support. As with granting legal status, the Plains region was the sole region to garner statistical significance. For increasing border patrol, states in the region had a 5.77 boost in public support.

Fining businesses covaried with a number of unexpected variables. Education system strength, year, percent population in urban areas, percent unemployment, percent LPR, and median household income all played a significant role in this model. Additionally, the Far West region (-5.83) joined Plains (6.91) in statistical significance, though Far West resulted in lower support while states in the Plains had higher support. Education system strength (-0.39), year (-0.95), and percent LPR (-15.62) had negative relationships, meaning that higher education, more recent years, and higher immigrant contact all resulted in lower support for fining businesses. A percentage point increase in urban proportion by state, unemployment rate, or median household income resulted in 0.21, 1.49, and 0.33 respective increases in public support.

Whether or not to fine businesses that hire illegal immigrants showed no clear trend over time. Perhaps that means that the public feels unsure about this policy altogether. Part of this ambiguity exists because of the policy’s unknown externalities, both positive and negative. In
order for individuals and lawmakers to make informed decisions on this matter, the public must have a greater understanding of the topic and its long-term tradeoffs.

Both increasing border patrol and fining businesses had significant non-characteristic fluctuations in public support in the 2010 survey, likely due to the economic strain of the Great Recession. The 2016 survey results showed that the public moved back towards the 2007 levels of support for both questions. Moving forward, we should monitor whether the public support levels off at the 2007 levels or whether support moves past those original percentages.

Granting legal status and increasing border patrol had statistically significant relationships with political lean but not with %LPR. Conversely, %LPR, but not political lean, was significant in fining businesses. Because political lean and %LPR had no overlap in statistical significance, further research should consider whether the variables interact or overlap to eclipse one another’s significance.

%White and %Latinx do not yield significant results in any of the three models. This indicates that race likely plays an insignificant role in immigration public opinion. Because 34% of the U.S. Latinx population is foreign-born, %Latinx was expected to have a high correlation with and act as a proxy for immigrant interaction.\textsuperscript{33} Instead, %LPR likely accounted for any significance of race. Future studies should seek to separate race and immigration more effectively.

The SPLC Hate Group Tally does not differentiate between different types of hate groups; for example, a white supremacist group and a black supremacist group each count as a hate group and cannot be separated using the measure. This lack of differentiation could explain why SPLC failed to have significance in the models. It is also possible that this particular variable’s lack of predictive power suggests that public opinion might not be significantly affected by extremism.

On an aggregate level, median age’s significance for granting legal status and increasing border patrol confirms an overarching trend: younger individuals are more likely to view immigration positively and therefore possess more open-minded views about those entering the U.S. in search of opportunity, regardless of legal status. In the future, older voters will be replaced by the younger ones, which may begin to move public opinion to the left. This majority will likely be pro-immigrant, and, given the rising importance of immigration policy, politicians and policymakers might consider shifting party platforms toward pro-immigrant or immigrant-neutral policies if they intend to capture the demographic.

Individuals in the Plains region hold more anti-immigrant sentiment than the other regions, and this should be kept in mind when campaigning.

Immigration policy has always been unique due to its ability to break from party platforms more effectively than other policy topics. Additionally, because of the rapid influx of immigrants into the U.S. combined with rising xenophobia on a global scale, immigration
policy has gained traction as a key policy issue in the United States. This study looked at several specific policy proposals within this topic from the state perspective in order to gain unique insights and create new policy implications that can be used by both political entities and the public moving forward.
Bibliography


