



Institute for
Immigration Research

**The Impact of Quantity and Quality of Interaction on Attitudes towards Immigrants: A
Survey of Residents in the Washington and Baltimore Metropolitan Areas**

Selected Initial Findings from the IQQIAI

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Frequency of Contact with People based on Race and Place of Birth

Figure 1 indicates the importance of race in patterns of interaction in people’s homes and neighborhoods. It further demonstrates the profound significance of race in America, as race also structures the degree of interaction with different immigrant groups. Among white respondents, 66% report that they often interact with other whites, more than twice the percentage who say they frequently interact with blacks (32%) or with any of the immigrant groups. Among blacks, on the other hand, 71% indicate that they frequently interact with other blacks, while only 49% say they frequently interact with whites. Respondents in the “other” category—predominantly Asian-Americans—are most likely among racial minorities to say they often interact with whites.

The extent to which race influences interaction with immigrants, however, is notable here as well. Among white respondents, 16% say they often interact with immigrants from Europe and 9% say they often interact with immigrants from Africa. By contrast, 19% of black respondents say they often interact with immigrants from Europe, but 28% report that they often interact with immigrants from Africa. In the “other” race group, there is almost no difference in the percentage who say they frequently interact with European immigrants (13%) as compared to immigrants from Africa (12%).

Figure 1: Percent Who Often Interact with Different Types of People Around Their Homes or Neighborhoods

Often interact with...	Race		
	White	Black	Other
White people	66%	49%	55%
Black people	32%	71%	36%
European immigrants	16%	19%	13%
African immigrants	9%	28%	12%
Mexican or Latin American immigrants	22%	27%	24%

Figure 2 shows a similar pattern highlighting the significance of race in patterns of interaction beyond their neighborhoods, but in restaurants, stores, and malls—either as customers or fellow consumers. Whites are more likely to interact with whites; blacks are more likely to interact with blacks. Those in the “other” race category are most likely to interact with whites, in part because they are the largest racial group in the Washington and Baltimore metropolitan areas. Whites are more likely to report frequent interaction with immigrants from Europe than Africa, while blacks are more likely to say they often interact with immigrants from Africa than from Europe. There is virtually no difference in frequent interaction with immigrants from Mexico or Latin America according to race.

Figure 2: Percent Who Often Interact with Different Types of People in Restaurants, Stores, and Malls

Often interact with...	Race		
	White	Black	Other
White people	70%	53%	59%
Black people	49%	67%	37%
European immigrants	19%	17%	12%
African immigrants	14%	22%	12%
Mexican or Latin American immigrants	32%	29%	31%

Quality of Contact with People based on Race and Place of Birth

On the whole, respondents found that their interactions with people in their homes and neighborhoods were overwhelmingly positive:

- 88% said their contact with white people in their homes and neighborhoods was friendly
- 85% said their contact with black people in their homes and neighborhoods was friendly
- 82% said their contact with European immigrants in their homes and neighborhoods was friendly
- 80% said their contact with African immigrants in their homes and neighborhoods was friendly
- 85% said their contact with Mexican or Latin American immigrants in their homes and neighborhoods was friendly

When we break out these results by respondents' race, Figure 3 shows important differences among those who often interact with different groups. Most notably, compared to white respondents, black respondents are less likely to report friendly interactions with all groups, with the exception of African immigrants. In fact, white respondents who often interact with blacks around their home or neighborhood are more likely to find this interaction as friendly than black respondents who often interact with blacks around their home or neighborhood.

Figure 3: Percent Who Find Contact Friendly When They Often Interact with Different Types of People Around Their Homes or Neighborhoods

Often interact with...	Race		
	White	Black	Other
White people	94%	82%	95%
Black people	94%	84%	93%
European immigrants	86%	82%	91%
African immigrants	92%	97%	78%
Mexican or Latin American immigrants	88%	89%	100%

Looking at the quality of contact with different types of people in stores, restaurants, and malls, most of the patterns are similar. Taking the sample as a whole, respondents describe their interactions with each group as friendly:

- 85% said their contact with white people in restaurants, stores, and malls was friendly
- 82% said their contact with black people in restaurants, stores, and malls was friendly
- 81% said their contact with European immigrants in restaurants, stores, and malls was friendly
- 76% said their contact with African immigrants in restaurants, stores, and malls was friendly
- 82% said their contact with Mexican or Latin American immigrants in restaurants, stores, and malls was friendly

Figure 4 breaks out these results by respondent race. Whites report more positive interactions than blacks with both white and black people, as well as with immigrants from Europe and Africa. The quality of interaction with Mexican or Latin American immigrants is the sole exception where, compared to whites, blacks are more likely to say these interactions are friendly.

Figure 4: Percent Who Find Contact Friendly When They Often Interact with Different Types of People in Stores, Restaurants, and Malls

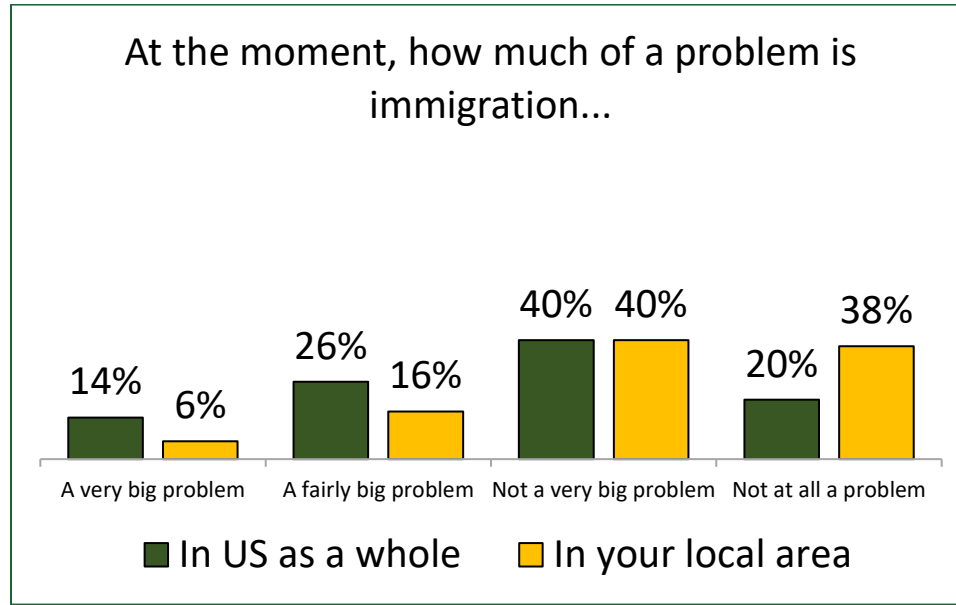
Often interact with...	Race		
	White	Black	Other
White people	91%	81%	81%
Black people	90%	87%	81%
European immigrants	89%	77%	100%
African immigrants	90%	86%	67%
Mexican or Latin American immigrants	89%	93%	83%

Views on Immigrants and Immigration

Consistent with survey data from the [Public Religion Research Institute](#) (PRRI), [Gallup](#), the [Pew Research Center](#), and the [National Opinion Research Center](#) (NORC) at the University of Chicago, IQQIAI respondents were more likely to favor increasing the number of immigrants to the United States, than to favor reducing the number of immigrants to the United States. More specifically, 41% said immigration to the country should be increased, 41% said it should remain at the current level, and 18% felt it should be reduced.

Figure 5 presents results on the extent to which respondents perceive immigration as a problem. This question was asked in two ways, as a problem in the United States as a whole and in each respondent's local area. In this way, the survey seeks to explore if the perception of immigration as a problem varies by geographic context. The question does not specify whether it is a problem because there is too many immigrants or that immigration is too difficult; however, this can be inferred from each respondent's answers to other questions. Here it can be seen that immigration is much more likely to be seen as a problem when respondents consider the United States as a whole, than when they think of immigration in a local context.

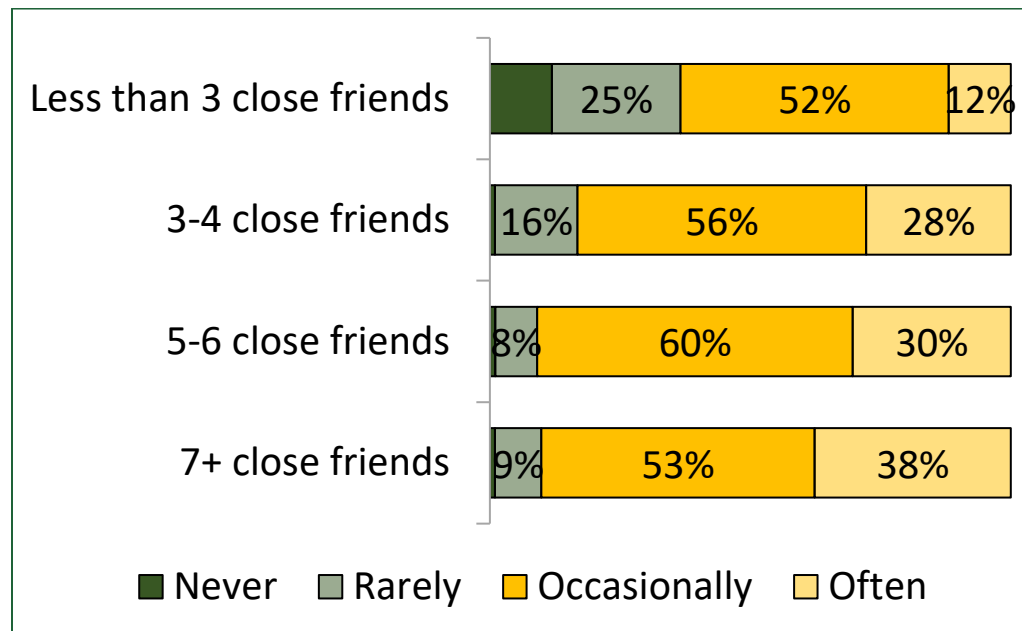
Figure 5: Extent to Which Immigration is Seen as a Problem



Friendship and Socializing

As Figure 6 shows, respondents, on average, have 5 to 6 close friends. The larger the circle of close friends, the more often they socialized with their peers, as represented in the figure below. Respondents with 5 or more friends are more likely to report socializing “Often” or “Occasionally” (45%) compared to respondents with 4 friends or less (37%) who are more likely to report socializing “Rarely” or “Never”.

Figure 6: Frequency of Interaction by Number of Friends



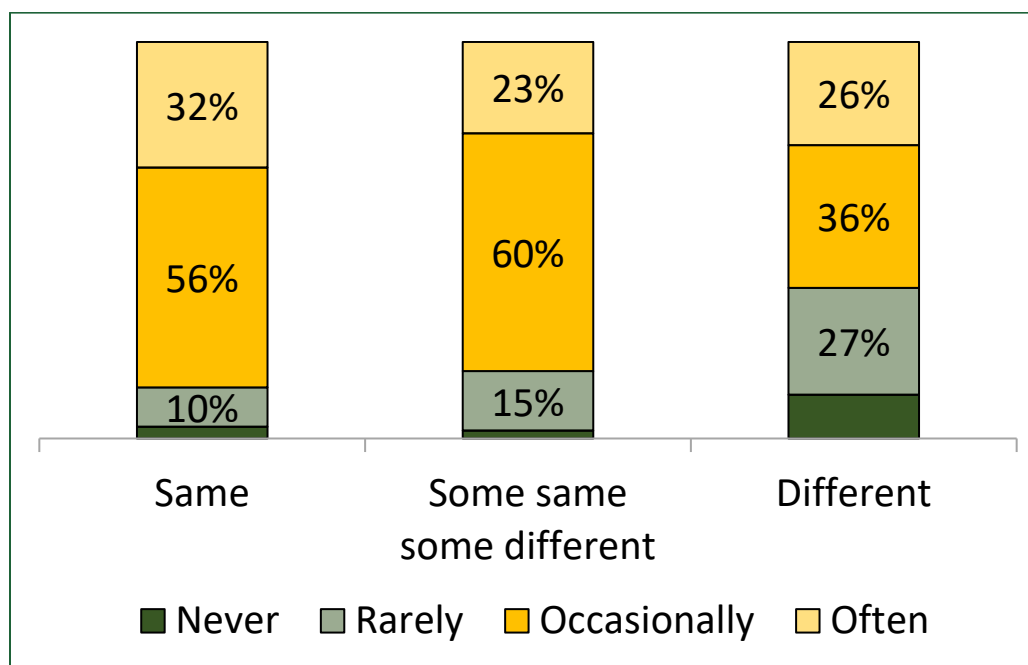
Looking at the sample as a whole, when asked how many of their close friends came from foreign countries, 41% said none, 39% said some of them, 9% said many of them, and 11% said most or all of them. Not surprisingly though, as seen in Figure 7, this result varies dramatically by whether or not one was born outside the United States (1st generation), at least one parent was born outside the United States (2nd generation), or if neither the respondent nor one of their parents was born outside the United States (3rd generation). Over half (53%) of the 1st generation immigrant respondents say that many, most or all of their close friends are foreign born, as compared to 24% of the 2nd generation respondents, and just 14% of the 3rd generation respondents. Nearly half (49%) of the 3rd generation respondents say that none of their close friends are foreign born.

Figure 7: Proportion of Friends who are Foreign Born by Immigrant Generation

	1 st generation	2 nd generation	3 rd generation
None of them	17%	20%	49%
Some of them	30%	56%	38%
Many of them	25%	14%	6%
Most or all of them	28%	10%	8%
Total	100%	100%	100%

When asked about how similar or different respondents were from their friends' political beliefs, nearly nine in ten respondents reported similar (44%) or some similar and some different (44%). Those with more friends socialize with their friends more often compared to respondents with friends who don't share their political beliefs, as indicated in Figure 8. Respondents with views similar to their friends are more likely to socialize with their friends "Occasionally" or "Often" (88%) compared to respondents with friends who don't share their political beliefs (62%).

Figure 8: Frequency of Interaction by Similarity with Friends' Political Beliefs



Immigrants and COVID-19

As summarized in a report by the [National Immigration Forum](#), the nation's experience with COVID-19 has only strengthened positive views towards immigrants, particularly with regard to the roles they have played in a range of areas from healthcare, food processing, service and delivery, to transportation, not to mention the development of vaccines. The significance of foreign-born workers in this effort has been [widely recognized](#), including during a hearing conducted by [the House Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship](#).

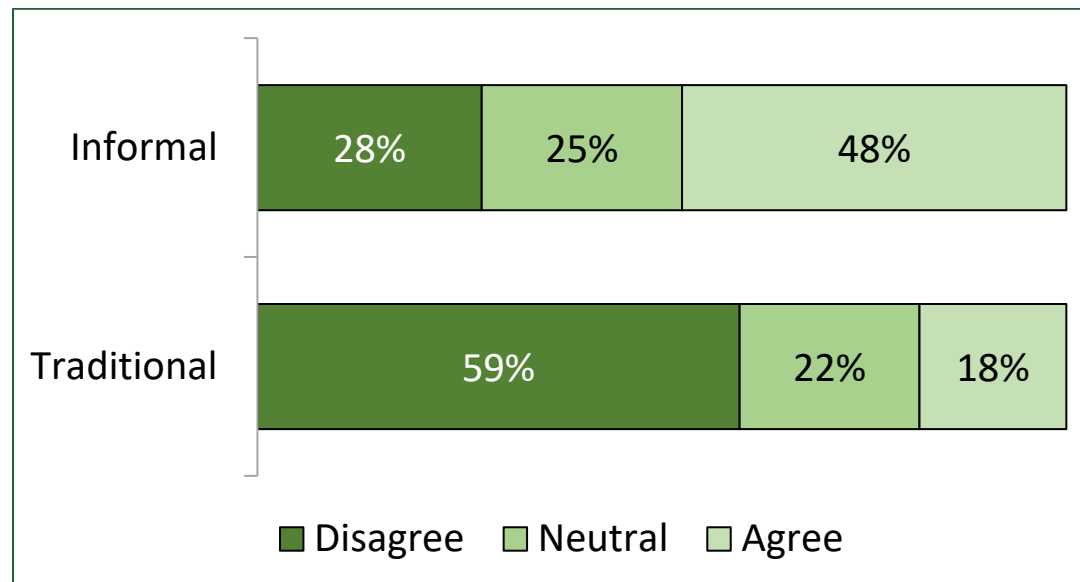
The IQQIAI survey results show that, for many in the Washington and Baltimore metropolitan areas, the experience of COVID-19 has also reinforced the view that new Americans are assets to the nation. More specifically, when respondents were asked to what extent they agree that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has shown that **immigrants strengthen the country** as they fill essential roles in the economy, 61 percent agreed. On the other hand, 23 percent agreed with the statement that **immigrants weaken the country** as they may introduce new diseases.

Media Consumption and Views on Immigrants and COVID-19

Survey respondents are frequent consumers of news, with a majority indicating they consume news daily (58%) or almost daily (22%). Approximately four in five respondents report getting their news from traditional news sources, such as network or cable news, newspapers, or radio.

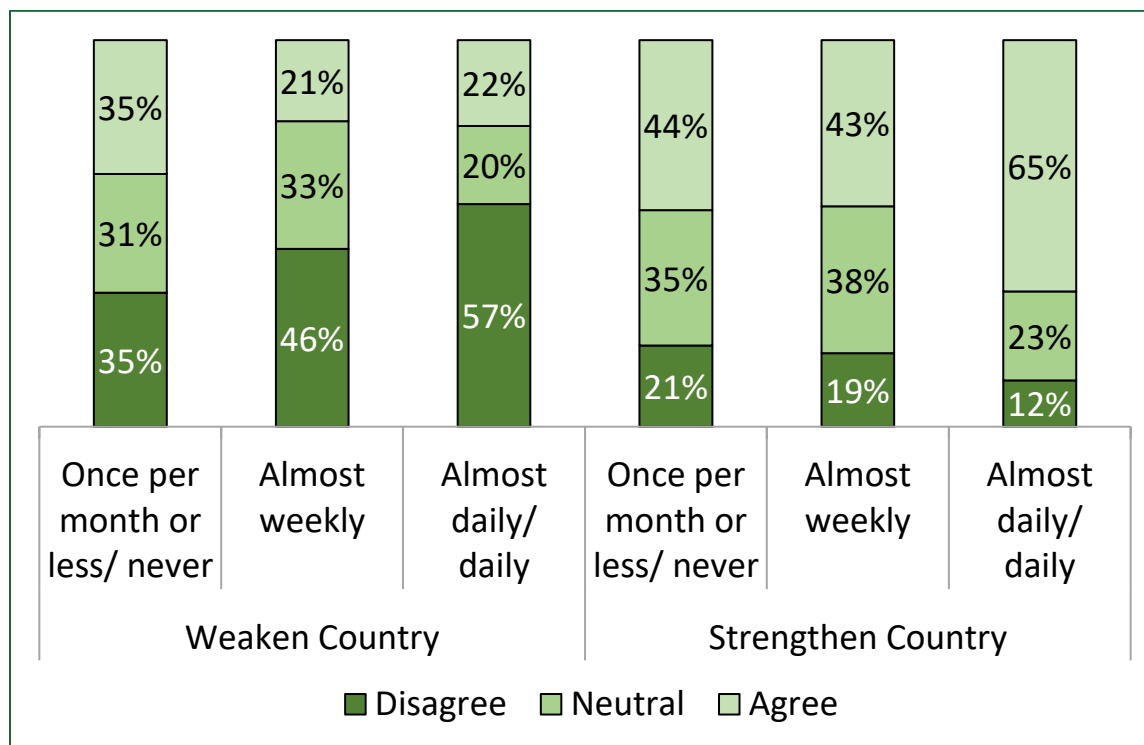
Other survey questions allow for the analysis of whether the source and frequency of news are found to predict opinions on immigrants. As indicated by Figure 9, when asked about their preferred source of news, 48% of those who preferred more informal channels of obtaining news, such as social media or word-of-mouth, agreed with the statement that immigrants weakened the United States as they “may introduce new diseases,” as compared to just 18% of those who relied on more formal news sources. Interestingly, whether or not a respondent agreed that immigrants strengthened the nation as essential workers did not significantly vary with the primary source of news.

Figure 9: Belief that Immigrants Weaken the Economy by News Source



As seen in Figure 10, regardless of the source, 22% of those who reported obtaining the news almost daily or daily, and 21% of weekly news consumers agreed that immigrants weakened the nation during the pandemic, as compared to 35% of less frequent news consumers. The difference is striking, however, when it comes to immigrants strengthening the country as essential workers, where 65% of frequent news consumers agreed that they had strengthened the nation, as compared to only 43% of somewhat less frequent news consumers, and 44% of those who consumed news once per month or less. Preferred source and frequency of obtaining news varied by age, with younger audiences consuming news less frequently and more informally compared to older adults.

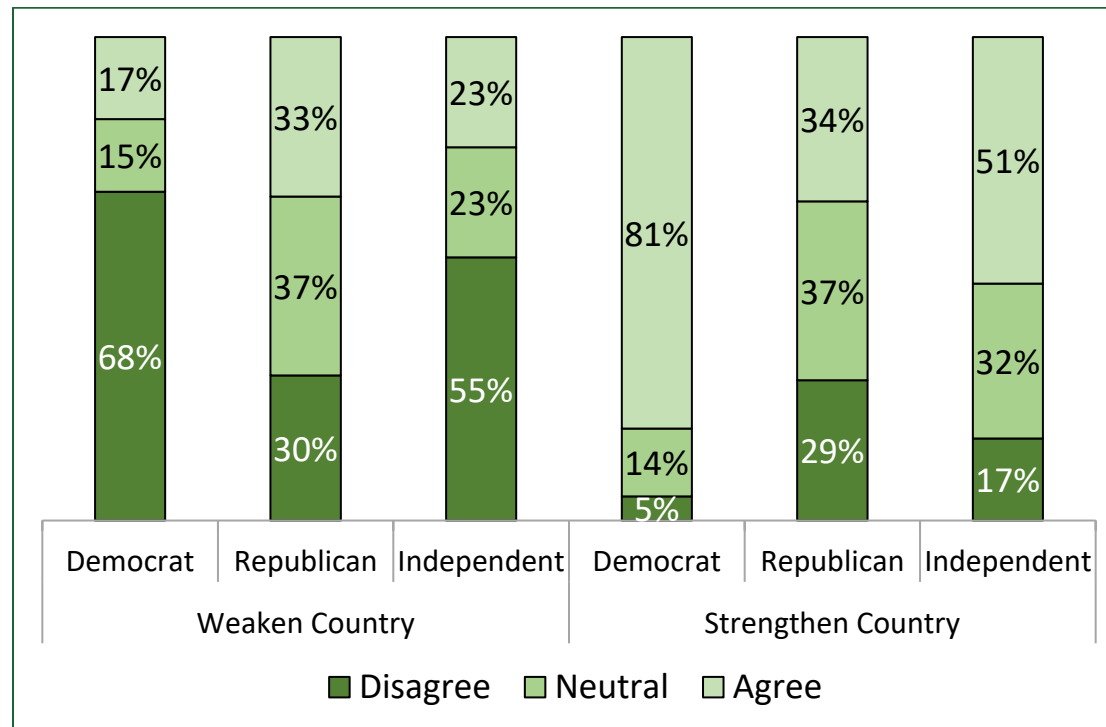
Figure 10: Opinions on Immigrants and COVID-19 by Frequency of News Consumption



Political Party and Views on Immigrants and COVID-19

Opinions of immigrants are linked to political parties, with democrats expressing greater support of immigrants. As captured by Figure 11, slightly more than two in three democrats (68%) disagreed with the statement that immigrants weaken the nation by introducing diseases, compared to 30% of republicans and 55% of independents. By contrast, approximately 81% of democrats agreed with the statement that immigrants strengthen the country by filling essential roles, as compared to 34% of republicans and 51% of independents.

Figure 11: Views on Immigrants and COVID-19 by Political Party



Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Survey respondents represent the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, including Baltimore. Over half of the sample is drawn from Maryland (56.1%), while the remainder of participants report living in Virginia (39.3%) and District of Columbia (4.6%). Participants are middle age, with nearly half the sample (47%) ranging in age from 35 – 54 years old. Older adults (55+) constitute the next largest age group (39%), followed by younger adults, 18 – 34 years old, who make up the smallest segment of the sample. Over half the sample are males (57.3%). Nearly seven in ten respondents identify as white (71.3%), while the remaining respondents identify as black (16%), Asian or Pacific Islander (8.7%), Other (6.7%), or two or more races (1.7%). A minority of respondents identify as Hispanic (6.5%). Weights representative of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, including Baltimore, were designed and used in analysis.

The Sampling Approach Used for the IQQIAI

This survey was administered online via Qualtrics- a cloud-based platform for distributing web-based surveys- using a convenient sample approach. An email with an introduction to the study and an invitation to participate was sent to market research panels. Eligible participants included respondents in the Washington, D.C. and Baltimore metro areas, who were 18 years or older. While the sample design was non-probabilistic, findings from this study are still considered representative of the Washington, D.C. and Baltimore metro areas due to use of weights. Weights were calibrated using race, age, and household income based off the American Community Survey 5-Year Data (2014 – 2018).

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