



Institute for
Immigration Research

Views of Immigrants in the Contemporary United States

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Brief Overview of the Project

This project examines attitudes towards immigrants in seven U.S. cities: Baltimore/DC Metro Area, Boston, Detroit, Miami, Philadelphia, San Jose, and Seattle. Surveys were administered to approximately 600 individuals in each city between November 2020 and June 2021. This was a Qualtrics web survey of panel respondents who were asked about their contacts with specific immigrant groups (European, African, Asian, and Latin American) in specific contexts (work, home, neighborhood, public settings). They were also asked about their race, education, political orientation, and news consumption. Finally, respondents were asked about their attitudes toward immigration:

- Should the number of immigrants increase?
- Is immigration a problem?
- During COVID, have immigrants weakened or strengthened the country?

We also conducted a multivariate analysis of the data, measuring the effects of a number of independent values on perceptions of immigration at the national and local levels. The results of the survey and analysis are presented on the following pages.

If you would like to see results for individual metropolitan areas, contact us at iir@gmu.edu.

The IIR thanks the Charles Koch Foundation for its financial support of this project.

Figure 1. Differences Across Respondents in 7 Cities:

Race, Ethnicity, Nativity, and Education

	Baltimore/DMV	Boston	Detroit	Miami	Philadelphia	San Jose	Seattle
Race							
White	54%	76%	69%	70%	67%	45%	68%
Black	25%	8%	23%	21%	21%	2%	6%
Other	21%	16%	9%	9%	12%	53%	26%
Hispanic Origin							
	10%	17%	8%	52%	14%	24%	20%
Born outside the United States							
	12%	12%	7%	32%	7%	27%	14%
Education							
HS or less	26%	24%	26%	25%	32%	20%	23%
Some college	39%	31%	45%	45%	33%	31%	37%
BA or more	34%	45%	29%	30%	35%	49%	40%

There were significant differences in race, ethnicity, nativity, and education level across the seven cities (see Figure 1):

- Respondents in Baltimore and the DC Metro area, Detroit, Miami, and Philadelphia were more likely to identify as Black, while respondents from San Jose and Seattle were much more likely to identify their race as “other,” which includes individuals who do not identify as Black or White and may include Asians and Hispanics.
- More than half of the respondents from Miami identified as Hispanic or Latino. 24% of respondents from San Jose and 20% of respondents from Seattle identified as Hispanic or Latino, and less than 20% of respondents in Baltimore and the DC Metro area, Detroit, and Philadelphia identified their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino.
- Nearly one-third of respondents from Miami were born outside of the United States. 27% of respondents from San Jose were born outside of the United States. The other 5 cities had far fewer foreign-born respondents.
- In terms of educational attainment, nearly one-third of respondents from Philadelphia had a high school education or less. Smaller shares of respondents from all other cities had a high school diploma or less. At the other end of the spectrum, nearly half of respondents from San Jose and 45% of respondents from Boston had a bachelor’s degree or higher. Detroit and Miami had the lowest shares of respondents with a bachelor’s degree or higher.

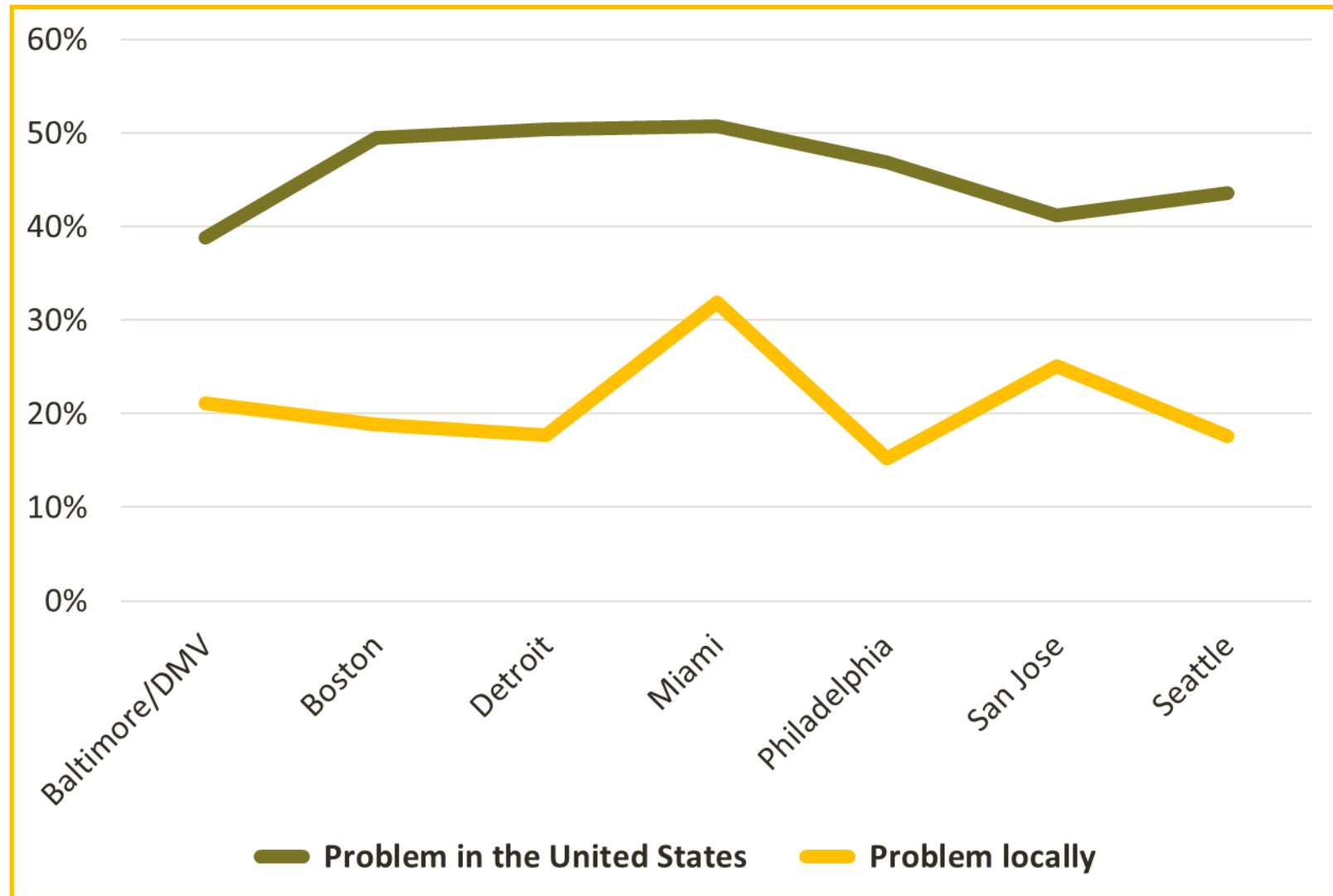
Figure 2. Differences Across Respondents in 7 Cities
Party ID, News Consumption, and Interaction with Immigrants

	Baltimore/ DMV	Boston	Detroit	Miami	Philadelphia	San Jose	Seattle
Party ID							
Republican	24%	12%	22%	22%	23%	16%	14%
News consumption							
Fox News viewer	15%	36%	39%	39%	35%	28%	29%
Interaction with immigrants							
Frequent immigrant interaction in neighborhood	35%	35%	22%	45%	27%	55%	45%
Frequent immigrant interaction in public	42%	36%	29%	48%	34%	57%	50%

There were significant differences in party identification, news consumption, and interaction with immigrants across the seven cities (see Figure 2):

- In all seven cities, less than a third of respondents identified as Republicans. The Baltimore and DC Metro area had the highest share of Republican respondents (24%) followed by Philadelphia (23%) and Detroit and Miami (22% in both cities). Seattle had the lowest share of Republicans (14%).
- Respondents in Detroit and Miami were the most likely to be Fox News viewers (39% in both cities), followed by Boston (36%) and Philadelphia (35%). Baltimore and the DC Metro area had the lowest share of Fox News viewers (15%).
- Respondents from San Jose were the most likely to have frequent interactions with immigrants in their neighborhood (55%). 45% of respondents from Miami and Seattle had frequent interactions with immigrants in their neighborhood. Respondents from Philadelphia and Detroit were the least likely to have frequent interactions with immigrants in their neighborhood (27% and 22% respectively).
- Similarly, respondents from San Jose were the most likely to have frequent interactions with immigrants in public (57%) followed by respondents from Seattle (50%). Respondents from Philadelphia and Detroit were the least likely to have frequent interactions with immigrants in public (34% and 29% respectively).

Figure 3. Perceptions of Immigration as a Problem



Respondents in all 7 cities were more likely to see immigration as a problem nationally compared to locally (see Figure 3):

- In all 7 cities, more than a third of respondents perceived immigration to be a problem nationally. 51% of respondents in Miami, 50% of respondents in Detroit, and 49% of respondents in Boston perceived immigration to be a problem in the United States. Respondents from Baltimore and the DC Metro area were the least likely to perceive immigration as a problem nationally (39%).
- Respondents in all 7 cities were less likely to perceive immigration as a problem locally. Miami had the highest share of respondents who believed immigration was a problem locally (32%), while Philadelphia had the lowest share (15%).
- Philadelphia respondents had the largest difference between perceptions of immigration as a problem nationally and locally (32 percentage points). San Jose and Baltimore and the DC Metro area had the lowest differentials (16 and 18 percentage points respectively).

Key Findings and Implications

- Our findings support the literature on attitudes towards immigrants as we find that respondents consistently had less favorable attitudes toward immigrants at the national level compared to the local level.
- Frequent contact with immigrants locally is not correlated with the belief that immigration is a problem locally. Respondents who reported frequent interaction with immigrants in their neighborhoods and in public were not likely to perceive immigration as a problem locally.
- Frequent contact with immigrants locally is correlated with the belief that immigration is a problem nationally. Respondents who reported frequent interaction with immigrants in their neighborhood were less likely to perceive immigration as a problem nationally. More frequent contact with immigrants at the local level may be a key to changing views about immigration nationally.
- Republicans and Fox News viewers are more likely to see immigration as a problem both locally and nationally, and reaching these populations is important to changing attitudes toward immigration.
 - Thinking about immigration as a local problem: Republicans are more than twice as likely as non-Republicans, and Fox News viewers are 70 percent more likely than non-Fox viewers to see immigration as a problem.
 - Turning to immigration as a national problem: Republicans are more than three times as likely as non-Republicans, and Fox News viewers are 40 percent more likely than non-Fox viewers to see immigration as a problem.
- Respondents who identified as Hispanic and those age 55 and older were more likely to see immigration as a problem locally.



The IIR's mission is to produce valid, reliable, and objective multidisciplinary research on immigrants and immigration to the United States and to disseminate this information through peer-reviewed academic journals, as well as in print and digital formats that make this research easily accessible to policy-makers, the media, the business community, and the general public. The Institute for Immigration Research is a joint venture between George Mason University and the Immigrant Learning Center, Inc. (ILC) of Malden, MA.

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