



# Shared Values:

HOW IMMIGRANTS ALIGN WITH  
THE REPUBLICAN AND DEMOCRATIC  
PARTIES ON SOCIAL VALUES ISSUES

A REPORT FROM  
Partnership for a New American Economy  
The Latino Coalition  
American Principles in Action Latino Partnership

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Where do immigrants in this country fall on the political spectrum? And more importantly, what are their opinions on key social values issues? After the 2012 election, many news outlets focused on the heavy support that Democrat Barack Obama garnered from both Asians and Hispanics in the voting booth, an election when an estimated 71 percent of Hispanics and 73 percent of Asians cast their ballots for the president.<sup>1</sup> In both groups, immigrants played a huge role driving up the total numbers of voters: The U.S. Census Department estimates that 65 percent of Asian voters that year and more than one in four Hispanic ones were originally born abroad.<sup>2</sup>

It would be a mistake, however, to view immigrant voters in our country as overwhelmingly liberal. More than 50 percent of immigrants don't identify with either the Republican or the Democratic Party. Among recent Hispanic immigrants, those in the country fewer than 15 years, only 38 percent see themselves as a Democrat or a Republican.<sup>3</sup> The immigrants who do identify with a party are a far more heterogeneous group than media accounts and public discourse would suggest. Immigrants in America—both those naturalized and those here temporarily—come from a wide variety of countries and backgrounds. In many cases, their unique histories and experiences back home actually make them more natural allies for conservative candidates and causes than for liberal ones. Immigrants from Russia and Vietnam, shaped by experiences with communism,

for instance, tend to overwhelmingly identify as Republicans.<sup>4,5</sup> The strong Roman Catholic influence in places like Central and South America makes foreign-born residents from those counties inherently conservative on values issues like abortion and gay marriage. Korean and Nigerian Christians are similarly influenced by their religion—with the country's 2.4 million Asian-American born-again Christians ranking higher than almost any group in the country on some measures of religiosity.<sup>6</sup>

In this study, we set out to paint a fuller picture of the wide variety of social and political views held by the 18.6 million immigrant citizens in America. Relying on pooled data from the 2008–2012 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey, one of the largest and most exhaustive surveys capturing political viewpoints in the country, we examine the views held by various immigrant groups in the U.S. on key social values issues. We also construct a statistical model to determine the overall conservative leanings of various immigrant groups, and their likelihood of siding with various parties. Our findings suggest that immigrants are strikingly different than how they're often portrayed: Most foreign-born citizens don't identify with either major political party. Even those who do favor Democrats are on average much more conservative than their native-born Democratic counterparts, making them potential swing voters in the future.

# Key findings:

## **Immigrants have low levels of party affiliation.**

Among immigrants who are eligible to vote, a full half, or 50 percent, report not identifying with either of the two major U.S. political parties. For recent Hispanic immigrants—those who have been in the United States fewer than 15 years—62 percent do not identify with either party.

## **Immigrants who do identify as Democrats are more conservative than members of the Democratic party overall.**

Foreign-born citizens are more than twice as likely as the general U.S. population to hold conservative or very conservative views yet identify as Democrats. While 11 percent of the general U.S. population falls into that category, 24 percent of the foreign-born population does, as well as 30 percent of foreign-born Hispanics. Forty three percent of Hispanic immigrant Democrats and 39 percent of all immigrant Democrats oppose allowing same sex marriage, compared with just 30 percent of Democrats who are native-born.

## **Immigrant citizens often don't identify with the party one would expect based on their religious values.**

Sixty-three percent of native-born individuals who attend church once a week or more identify as Republicans or independents. Among immigrants, the equivalent figure is 51 percent. Similarly, 38 percent of the U.S.-born Evangelical or born-again Christian population identifies as Republican. Among immigrant Evangelicals, that figure is only 26 percent.

**Some key and growing groups of immigrants could be critical to strengthening conservative causes in the future.** In recent years, there has been a surge in the number of Hispanic immigrants who identify as Evangelical or born-again Christians.<sup>7</sup> Among those Hispanics, 73 percent oppose abortion, compared to 43 percent of the U.S. population as a whole. Another growing group, black immigrants, is also more conservative than the broader U.S. population on some issues. Fifty-three percent of black immigrants, for instance, oppose gay marriage—a figure 9 percentage points higher than the opposition rate among the US population as a whole.

## **Young immigrants today are more conservative and religious than young people in the country overall.**

Among Americans older than age 50, the foreign-born population is less religious than the U.S.-born population on a variety of measures. Among younger people, however, the trend is reversed: While 32 percent of native-born Americans ages 18 to 29 rank religion as “very important” to their lives, 41 percent of immigrants in that age group do. The same pattern exists for both gay marriage and abortion, where young immigrants are about 15 to 20 percent more likely to oppose such practices than young people born in America.

The low levels of party affiliation among immigrants—coupled with their religious and traditional views—indicate that they are not a voting block that can be taken for granted by either party. Studies have shown that immigrants who do identify with a party often identify less strongly with their party than voters born in America—a factor influenced by the shorter time they’ve had to develop ingrained political views.<sup>7,8</sup> This could indicate that foreign-born Democrats may be more open to conservative ideas and candidates than U.S.-born Democrats. In recent years, Republicans have also counted on conservatives and so called “values voters” to strengthen their vote count in crucial elections. In 2004, for instance, polls found that “moral values” were cited by 22 percent of voters as the one issue that mattered most in how they decided to vote for President—more than any other factor in the election. Eighty percent of such so-called “values voters” cast their ballots for Republican President George W. Bush.<sup>10,11</sup>

Similarly, in 2012, Mitt Romney earned the vote of 63 percent of voters who said they attended religious services more than once a week.<sup>12</sup> The continued presence of values issues in the news—both through the Supreme Court’s Hobby Lobby decision, which allows some companies to deny employees coverage for contraception, and the growing number of states embracing same-sex marriage—makes it likely these issues will be meaningful factors in the 2016 election contest and beyond.

Our results also counter some of the arguments traditionally made by conservatives for eschewing immigration reform. Pundits including Ann Coulter and Rush Limbaugh have argued that passing immigration reform—and welcoming more immigrants as citizens—would doom the electoral future of the Republican Party by ushering in millions of new Democratic voters.<sup>13</sup> Our study shows that immigrants are not hostile to Republican candidates and the issues that are often important to them. On the contrary, instead of being a liability for the Republican Party, immigrants represent a great opportunity for the party to rebuild support with key electoral groups. After the 2008 and 2012 elections, many pundits focused on the large number of young people that sided with Democratic President Barack Obama.<sup>14,15</sup> Our results show that among young people, foreign-born residents are far more likely to hold conservative and religious views than their native-born counterparts.

Rather than representing the challenges Republicans may have appealing to coming generations of voters, they could well represent the party’s future. As America becomes less religious, pockets of the immigrant community with particularly strong religious values could also become an important part of the Republican base.<sup>16</sup>

Still, it is far from certain today that Republicans will be able to successfully appeal to such immigrant voters. Perceived Republican hostility to the DREAM Act has likely already damaged the party’s stance with young voters and foreign-born Hispanics, groups that largely support the measure.<sup>17,18</sup> There is also evidence that the immigration issue—and the charged rhetoric surrounding it—has hurt the ability of the party to gain traction with some key foreign-born groups, particularly newly naturalized citizens.<sup>19,20,21</sup> If Republicans were to take action on immigration reform, they would set aside an issue that is currently alienating at least some foreign-born voters. This could help Republicans appeal to immigrant voters on the social values issues where they have much more in common—helping closing key gaps in the party’s support that currently exist among both religious and conservative immigrants. In an era when naturalized citizens make up 8.1 percent of the voting age citizen population<sup>22</sup>—and 4.2 million newly naturalized Hispanics and Asians are projected to become eligible to vote by 2020<sup>23</sup>—doing so could be a key to winning elections in key states like Colorado, Virginia, and Nevada in the future.

# PART I: INTRODUCTION

Amado Lobatos, a 45-year-old Mexican immigrant, says he was profoundly shaped by some of his early experiences in the United States. At the age of eight, his parents brought him over the border from Mexico, settling the family in the small, rural farming town of Lingle, Wyoming. Lobatos says that at the time he spoke no English and he felt dismayed to be in such an unfamiliar place so far from home. “Thankfully, we met this wonderful, wonderful family in our small community, who welcomed us to the area, treated us like family, and taught us how to live in this country,” Lobatos says. That family also instilled in Lobatos their strong Christian values. By the time he was a teenager, Lobatos says he knew he wanted to be a pastor. Today, he says the Bible and his desire to please God are the most important forces shaping how he approaches major decisions in his life.

That strong moral compass, however, has not made it easy for Lobatos to navigate the U.S. election process. Lobatos, who now serves as a born-again pastor in suburban Chicago, became a citizen nine years ago. Despite his strong opposition to abortion and gay marriage, however, Lobatos says he doesn’t identify with either political party. “I think there was a time when you could say the Republican Party was more committed

to morality and upholding Christian values,” Lobatos says, “I don’t feel like either party is fully committed to those values anymore.” Lobatos says that after years of favoring Republicans, his opinion of the party began to shift in recent years as he saw several high-profile Republican candidates express hostility towards immigration reform and undocumented immigrants themselves. Loath to vote for any candidate favoring abortion rights—and turned off by what he saw as a lack of compassion for immigrants in need—Lobatos began to feel disillusioned with politicians altogether. “At this point,” he says, “I’d almost rather not vote at all.”

As this report demonstrates, the sort of conundrum faced by Lobatos is not an uncommon one. Our research uses data from the Cooperative Congressional Election Survey to examine the opinions held by the 18.6 million immigrant citizens in America on a whole host of social and moral values issues. We also detail their religious attendance and beliefs, as well as their marriage and divorce rates. We find that, much like Lobatos, many immigrants have conservative views on issues like abortion and gay marriage—and a personal commitment to marriage and family—that make them natural allies for the Republican Party. Despite that

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## *Many immigrants have conservative views on issues like abortion and gay marriage—and a personal commitment to marriage and family—that make them natural allies for the Republican Party.*

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though, the majority of immigrants remain unaffiliated with either major political party, and immigrants who do identify as Democrats are on average strikingly more conservative than Democrats in the country overall.

Many factors likely go into the decision of immigrants in America to not ally with the party we would expect based on their religious and social values. For many individuals like Lobatos, a party's stance on immigration reform plays an important role. Experts and policy strategists have consistently argued that many foreign-born voters view immigration as a "gateway issue": Although they may agree with Republicans on a variety of core policy platforms, they are not open to hearing the party out on such issues while immigration remains unresolved.<sup>24,25</sup> This is especially true for Hispanics, a group that makes up almost one in three eligible immigrant voters in the United States.<sup>26</sup> One poll released earlier this summer by the firm Latino Decisions found that if immigration were dealt with, more than 60 percent of registered Hispanic voters would be eager to give Republicans a second chance, given their agreement with them on issues like taxes and school improvement.<sup>27</sup> There are

reasons to believe that other ethnic groups, particularly naturalized Asian voters, would behave similarly.<sup>28</sup>

Lobatos is well aware of how powerfully the immigration issue has impacted his voting behavior. As a long time admirer of former Republican President Ronald Reagan, he says he'd eagerly embrace the Republican Party again if they only tackled the immigration issue. "I want to vote with my conscience," Lobatos says, "But right now I'm just choosing between the lesser of two evils."

# PART II: POLITICAL PARTY AFFILIATION

Immigrants come to the U.S. steeped in the tradition of their home countries, often with knowledge about the parties and political dynamics that exist there. In America, however, the political landscape may be less familiar, and newly settled immigrants often don't arrive with strong feelings of support for one party or another. Studies consistently bear this out. The Pew Hispanic Center has found that while 63 percent of Hispanic immigrants who have been in the U.S. at least 15 years identify with one of the two major political parties, only 38 percent of those here for fewer than 15 years do.<sup>29</sup> Researchers have found similar patterns among the Asian immigrant population—with party affiliation growing the longer an immigrant has been naturalized.<sup>30</sup>

Our research finds, likely because of these trends, that foreign-born citizens in the country have particularly low levels of party affiliation as compared to the U.S. population overall. More than half of the foreign-born population that is eligible to vote—or just over 50 percent—reports that it doesn't identify with either the Democrat or the Republican Party, a figure seven percentage points higher than the equivalent figure for the U.S.-born. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced among some key age groups within the immigrant population. Currently a full 51 percent of the foreign-born population ages 18 to 29 doesn't identify with either

political party—a surprising statistic given the role that President Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (or DACA program) has played mobilizing such voters.<sup>31</sup> Among the 30 to 49 year old age group, the share of immigrant citizens who don't identify as either Democrats or Republicans reaches 55 percent, or close to three in five of all naturalized citizens.

Politicians on both sides of the aisle should be encouraged by the low level of partisan affiliation among immigrants—a reality indicating that they may be open to considering candidates of either party. To fully understand the dynamics of immigrant partisanship, however, it is necessary to look a bit deeper than simple affiliation numbers. Scholars who study partisanship often focus on two factors in their analysis—the direction of someone's partisan leanings as well as the strength and intensity of their attachment to a given party.<sup>32</sup> Among the native born, research has shown that one of the more prominent drivers shaping the strength of someone's partisan identity is their political exposure in childhood.<sup>33,34</sup> Children born to parents with a real engagement and interest in the U.S. political system often adopt their parents' views. These ingrained opinions can form a core part of the person's identity and the lens they use to view current events—a bias that can be difficult to shake in adulthood.<sup>35</sup>

Immigrants, however, often have a far different process of attaining political allegiances. Many immigrants are the first in their family to gain the right to vote in America, and lack the same childhood socialization that so strongly shapes the political views of many individuals born on U.S. soil. As a result, there is some evidence that immigrants who do positively identify with one of the country’s two major political parties have weaker allegiance to that party than the native born, particularly if their arrival in the U.S. is fairly recent. The National Latino Survey, a large study of Latinos in America, has found that only 40 percent of Latinos who identify with a party and have naturalized within the last three years describe their party affiliation as “strong.”<sup>36</sup> A comparative study of the U.S. population as a whole found that 53 percent of American voters who identified as members of a political party in 2008 considered themselves “strong partisans.”<sup>37</sup>

Using our data from the CCES, we were able to estimate the strength of partisan affiliation exhibited by a wider group—the entire population of foreign-born and native-born citizens in the country from 2008–2012. Within both parties, immigrants are more likely to call

their party affiliation as weak in nature. Specifically, our figures show that foreign-born citizens aligned with a political party are 8.1 percent more likely to describe their party affiliation as “weak” than U.S.-born individuals of the same political party. This may indicate that foreign-born citizens, more so than the U.S.-born population, could be more easily persuaded to shift their political views in the future.

Jan Kish, a 65-year-old real estate executive in Houston, Texas, in some ways exemplifies the sort of experience many immigrants have deciding on a political party. Kish immigrated to the U.S. from her native Taiwan in the 1970s, after her parents determined it would offer her more educational opportunities and political freedoms. In the late 1980s, as she was becoming more involved in local civic groups, she says she was approached by an Asian Texas Republican group that was eager to have her join their organization. “At the time,” Kish says, “I literally had no idea what a Republican even was.” She took up their free dinner invitation though, and says that after four hours of conversation, she was convinced to join the organization’s board.

**Table 1: Political Party Affiliation, by Nativity and Age Group**

*% of population identifying as Democrat, Republican, Unaffiliated, or Other, by nativity and age group*

	Democratic	Republican	Other	Unaffiliated	Not Aligned with Either Major Party
<b>Foreign-born citizen (total)</b>	36%	15%	12%	38%	50%
Ages 18–29	40%	10%	10%	41%	51%
30–49	33%	12%	13%	42%	55%
50–64	38%	16%	11%	35%	46%
65+	36%	27%	11%	26%	37%
<b>Total Native-Born Population</b>	35%	22%	7%	36%	43%
Ages 18–29	31%	15%	10%	44%	54%
30–49	35%	21%	7%	38%	44%
50–64	39%	22%	7%	33%	40%
65+	36%	29%	5%	30%	34%

**Table 2: Strength of Partisan Identity, by Nativity and Political Party Identification**

*% of population identifying as strong or weak partisans, by party identification and nativity*

	DEMOCRATS		REPUBLICANS		EITHER PARTY	
	Strong Partisans	Weak Partisans	Strong Partisans	Weak Partisans	Strong Partisans	Weak Partisans
Foreign-Born	64.9%	35.1%	54.1%	45.9%	61.3%	38.8%
Native-Born	64.9%	35.1%	63.0%	37.0%	64.1%	35.9%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>64.9%</b>	<b>35.1%</b>	<b>62.7%</b>	<b>37.3%</b>	<b>63.9%</b>	<b>36.1%</b>

Kish says her dinner companions won her over mostly by emphasizing the Republican Party’s approach to taxes, support for small business, and commitment to the values of the Founding Fathers. Today, she says she also agrees with the party’s stance that the term “marriage” should be reserved for a man and a woman. (She does, however, believe gays deserve the right to enter civil unions and not face discrimination in the workforce.) Despite her involvement in the GOP though, Kish says she is still open to voting for either party. “More than anything, I am looking for candidates who are sincere about wanting to serve, and those who really want to see their communities succeed,” she says. Kish has voted for Democrats in many local elections. She also voted in a major statewide contest for one prominent Democrat—former Texas Governor Ann Richardson. After a local highway project had been delayed for months, Kish says Richardson came through town on a campaign stop, heard the complaints of constituents, and announced a fix to the problem within two weeks. “I was very impressed,” Kish says, “She was a politician who listened and got things done.”

The sort of openness that even partisans like Kish have towards the other party is an important piece of background for this report. In the following sections, we highlight how foreign-born Democrats often have considerably more conservative views on key issues like abortion and gay marriage—and higher levels of religiosity—than Democrats born in America. If these immigrant Democrats have a more open and fluid partisan identity, their conservative viewpoints present an opportunity for

Republicans to engage them and win their votes. Were Congress to pass immigration reform, and deal with an issue that has hurt Republicans in recent elections, immigrants with a weak connection to either party could become open to reevaluating the parties based on other policy areas—or the many values they have in common.

# PART III: OPINIONS ON MORAL VALUES ISSUES

## ABORTION

The debate surrounding laws governing abortion continues to be at the forefront of political dialogue and an especially contentious issue between the Democrat and Republican parties. The views on abortion range from most conservative (by law abortion should never be permitted) to most liberal (by law always allow abortion). In the tables presented here we combine categories, defining those who oppose abortion as individuals who believe abortion should be illegal in “all” or “mostly all” cases. Those who favor abortion rights believe it should be legal in “all” or “mostly all” cases. As would be expected, citizens who identify as Republicans are strikingly more conservative on this issue than those who don’t identify with the party: 64.1 percent of Republicans oppose abortion, compared to just 26.4 percent of Democrats.

When we look at the views that foreign-born citizens specifically hold on this issue, some interesting patterns emerge. For one, despite their reputation as a liberal voting block, immigrants are slightly more conservative on the issue of abortion than the U.S.-born population overall. While 59 percent of the U.S.-born population believes that abortion should be legal in all or most cases, the equivalent figure for the foreign-born citizen population is 57 percent. Hispanic immigrants are particularly unlikely to favor abortion rights. Only 49 percent of naturalized Hispanic citizens say that abortion should be legal in all or most cases. This marks the

**Table 3: Views on Abortion, by Ethnic Group and Nativity**

*% of population that says abortion should be legal in all/most cases OR illegal in all/most cases, by race/ethnic group and nativity*

	All/ mostly illegal	All/ most legal
White native-born	42%	58%
White immigrants	37%	63%
Black native-born	37%	63%
Black immigrants	49%	51%
Hispanic native-born	43%	57%
Hispanic immigrants	51%	49%
Asian native-born	31%	69%
Asian immigrants	36%	64%
Other native-born	42%	58%
Other immigrants	44%	56%
All native-born	41%	59%
All Immigrants	43%	57%
<b>U.S. Population Overall</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>58%</b>

*\*Note: numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding or missing variables including “don’t know,” which are not presented in the table.*

Hispanic immigrant population as more conservative on this issue than Hispanics born in the United States, a finding that has been echoed in other studies that have found Hispanic immigrants to be more conservative on social issues than their native-born counterparts.<sup>38</sup>

Our analysis also looks at the opinions held by the foreign-born individuals who already identify with a political party. Within the Democratic Party, immigrants have far more conservative views on abortion than the native born. While 74.7 of U.S.-born Democrats believe that abortion should be legal, only 61.0 percent of foreign-born Democrats hold that opinion. As discussed earlier, the misalignment between the values that immigrants hold and the party they choose to identify with may indicate that other policy issues, like immigration, are driving them away from the Republican Party. Immigrants may also be more inherently moderate in their views across the board: Among Republicans, immigrants are more likely to believe that abortion should be legal than Republicans born in America.

### SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

In recent years, the share of Americans supporting same-sex marriage has been growing.<sup>39</sup> What’s more, the recent decision by the Supreme Court to decline to hear the cases of states looking to preserve their same-sex marriage bans has resulted in rapid growth in the number of states that now recognize such unions.<sup>40</sup> Still, as the issue begins to fade as an election issue, there remains a strong subset of individuals in the U.S. who oppose same-sex marriage. Recent polls show that more than two out of every five Americans continue to oppose the practice. It is this group that is of interest to us in the study. Although gay marriage may not be heavily emphasized in future elections, opposition to it is one strong gauge of a person’s conservative views. Given the perception that many pundits have of immigrants as a largely liberal-minded population, we would expect the foreign-born to be more supportive than Americans of same-sex marriage and the push to legally recognize such unions than voters born in America.

Our analysis of public opinion data, however, finds that this is not the case. In the population overall, the share of foreign-born citizens who support same-sex marriage (53 percent) is equal to the share of U.S.-born individuals who say they support such unions. Similar

**Table 4: Views on Abortion, by Political Party Preference and Nativity**

*% of population that says abortion should be legal in all/most cases OR illegal in all/most cases, by party identification and nativity*

	Oppose	Favor
<b>Democrat overall</b>	26.4%	73.6%
Foreign-born Democrat	39.0%	61.0%
Native-born Democrat	25.3%	74.7%
Foreign- born Hispanic Democrat	36.0%	64.0%
Native-born Hispanic Democrat	27.0%	72.8%
<b>Republican overall</b>	64.1%	35.9%
Foreign-born Republican	58.4%	41.6%
Native-born Republican	64.4%	35.6%
Foreign- born Hispanic Republican	55.8%	44.2%
Native-born Hispanic Republican	63.2%	36.8%
<b>Independent overall</b>	37.0%	63.0%
Foreign-born Independent	39.5%	60.5%
Native-born Independent	36.8%	63.2%
Foreign- born Hispanic Independent	37.0%	63.0%
Native-born Hispanic Independent	39.0%	61.0%
<b>Unaffiliated overall</b>	34.5%	65.5%
Foreign-born Unaffiliated	40.8%	59.2%
Native-born Unaffiliated	33.9%	66.1%
Foreign- born Hispanic Unaffiliated*	58.3%*	41.7%*
Native-born Hispanic Unaffiliated	37.0%	63.0%

*\*Difference in percentages are not statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval.*

to what we saw on abortion, foreign-born Democrats are also more conservative on the issue of gay marriage than Democrats born in America: Almost 70 percent of native-born Democrats support legalizing gay marriage, while the equivalent figure for foreign-born Democrats is only 61.5 percent. Once again, foreign-born Hispanics identifying with the Democratic Party stand out as particularly conservative compared to the broader party. Only 57 percent of foreign-born Hispanics who are Democrats support same sex marriage, a figure more than 12 percentage points lower than the share of support for that position among Democrats overall.

Although foreign-born citizens overall have views on gay marriage that are virtually indistinguishable from the views held by the U.S.-born population, our analysis finds that some pockets of the immigrant population hold particularly conservative views on this issue. For instance, more than half of black immigrants—or 53 percent—oppose same sex marriage, a group that also skews more conservative than average on the issue of abortion. There is similarly strong opposition to gay marriage among immigrants who do not identify as black, white, Hispanic, or Asian also—a group made up of Native American, Middle Eastern, mixed race or other groups. In an era when the votes of naturalized citizens may be relatively up-for-grabs by either party, the presence of strong conservative views among black immigrants may indicate that they are a group Republicans could make inroads into in the future.

### UNIQUE PATTERNS AMONG YOUNGER VOTERS

Examining the views of the foreign-born population on key social issues yields particularly interesting findings when broken down into individual age groups. Recent studies on young people in the country as a whole have indicated that America’s young people look far different on both social values issues and religious affiliations than generations that have come before them. A Pew Research Center survey published last year, for instance, found that half of Millennials living in America, or 50 percent, identify as political independents, and 29 percent are not affiliated with any religion—marking this group more disaffiliated or equally disaffiliated to any generation Pew has polled in its almost three decades of conducting such surveys.<sup>41</sup> The social values of such young people also spell worrying trends for

**Table 5: Opinion on Same Sex Marriage, by Political Party Preference and Nativity**

*% of population that favors OR opposes allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally, by party identification and nativity\**

	Oppose	Favor
<b>Democrat overall</b>	28.2%	69.1%
Foreign-born Democrat	34.9%	61.5%
Native-born Democrat	27.5%	69.8%
Foreign- born Hispanic Democrat	43.0%	57.0%
Native-born Hispanic Democrat	21.4%	78.6%
<b>Republican overall</b>	70.6%	27.4%
Foreign-born Republican	66.2%	31.6%
Native-born Republican	70.8%	27.2%
Foreign- born Hispanic Republican	75.4%	24.6%
Native-born Hispanic Republican	65.5%	34.5%
<b>Independent overall</b>	40.6%	57.3%
Foreign-born Independent	41.7%	55.3%
Native-born Independent	40.4%	57.5%
Foreign- born Hispanic Independent	35.4%	64.6%
Native-born Hispanic Independent	34.3%	65.7%
<b>Unaffiliated overall</b>	32.6%	67.4%
Foreign-born Unaffiliated	37.8%	62.2%
Native-born Unaffiliated	32.1%	67.9%
Foreign- born Hispanic Unaffiliated	54.9%	45.1%
Native-born Hispanic Unaffiliated	37.3%	62.7%

conservatives. Millennials, a group defined as those ages 18 to 33, are more likely to support same-sex marriage, marijuana legalization, and an activist government than any other age group in the population, positions far more likely to be supported by Democrats.<sup>42</sup> Only on abortion and gun control do their views appear to align more closely with the population as a whole.<sup>43</sup>

When we examine data for the 18 to 29 year old age group in our sample, however, we find that foreign-born citizens on average are more conservative than young people born in America. As Table 6 below shows, 47.9 percent of foreign-born citizens ages 18 to 29—or almost half—oppose abortion. This is almost six percentage points more than the share of native-born Americans in that age group opposed to abortion, and 12 percentage points more than the share of the elderly foreign-born population (ages 65 or older) who hold that view. Foreign-born young people are also notably more conservative on the issue of gay marriage: 37.5 percent of young, foreign-born citizens oppose gay marriage, compared to 30.9 percent of the young, native-born population.

The conservative stance of foreign-born young citizens has major implications for both parties. In the 2008 and 2012 election, young voters were among the strongest supporters of Democratic President Barack Obama. In 2008, for instance, 66 percent of young people, ages 18 to 29, cast their votes for the President. This compared to just 45 percent of the population older than age 65—the largest young-old gap in support recorded since the 1960s.<sup>44</sup> This strong support for Democrats among young people has led some Republican Party officials, concerned about the party’s electoral future, to take major steps to reach young voters.<sup>45</sup> Our numbers show that, given their conservative views, the foreign-born portion of this population could represent one group that Republicans could potentially appeal to in the future on a “shared values” platform. The opportunity certainly seems to be there: A full 41 percent of young immigrant citizens have yet to choose a party at all, as demonstrated in Table 1.

The relatively conservative views of young immigrants may be driven in part by their religious views. Almost one in three young, foreign-born individuals in the country are of Hispanic origin. Within the Hispanic community, more than half of the population, or 55 percent,

identifies as Roman Catholic and 27 percent as evangelical or born-again Christian—religions that promote anti-abortion views.<sup>46, 47</sup> We discuss such factors, and the higher than average levels of religiosity exhibited by young immigrants in general, in the following section.

**Table 6: Views on Same-Sex marriage, by Ethnic Group and Nativity**

*% of population that favors OR opposes allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally, by race/ethnicity and nativity\**

	Oppose	Support
White native-born	45%	53%
White immigrants	41%	57%
Black native-born	48%	48%
Black immigrants	53%	43%
Hispanic native-born	39%	58%
Hispanic immigrants	43%	52%
Asian native-born	28%	68%
Asian immigrants	36%	61%
Other native-born	47%	51%
Other immigrants	56%	41%
All native-born	44%	53%
All Immigrants	44%	53%
<b>U.S. Population Overall</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>53%</b>

*\*Note: numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding or missing variables including “don’t know,” which are not presented in the table.*

**Table 7: Views on Abortion, by Nativity and Age**

*% of population that says that abortion should be legal in all/most cases OR illegal in all/most cases, by nativity and age group*

**Abortion Stance of Foreign-Born, by Age**

Age Group	Oppose	Favor
18-29	47.9	52.1
30-49	44.2	55.8
50-64	39.2	60.8
65+	35.9	64.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>43.5</b>	<b>56.5</b>

**Abortion Stance of Native-Born, by Age**

Age Group	Oppose	Favor
18-29	42.0	58.0
30-49	39.5	60.5
50-64	40.3	59.7
65+	46.3	53.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>41.4</b>	<b>58.6</b>

**Table 8: Views on Same-Sex Marriage, by Nativity and Age**

*% of population that favors OR opposes allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally, by nativity and age group*

**Same-Sex Marriage Stance of Foreign-Born, by Age**

Age Group	Oppose	Favor
18-29	37.5	58.7
30-49	43.7	53.1
50-64	49.3	47.5
65+	51.6	46.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>43.7</b>	<b>53.1</b>

**Same-Sex Marriage Stance of Native-Born, by Age**

Age Group	Oppose	Favor
18-29	30.9	66.1
30-49	42.8	54.5
50-64	49.2	48.6
65+	57.3	40.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>44.4</b>	<b>53.1</b>

# PART IV: **RELIGIOUS VALUES OF IMMIGRANTS**

A person's religious values, and the strength of their beliefs, obviously can exert a major influence on their stances on major social and moral values issues. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life has found that even though relatively few Americans say religion is the primary force shaping their social views, there is a strong relationship between a person's religious denomination, practices, and beliefs and the views they hold on social and political issues—suggesting religion may play a stronger role in shaping Americans' viewpoints than many of individuals realize.<sup>48</sup> Multiple studies have also found that those who attend religious services frequently are considerably more likely to oppose abortion and believe that the government should do more to discourage homosexuality than those who are less regular service goers of the same religious denomination.<sup>49, 50</sup>

In this section, we explore the degree of religiosity of foreign-born citizens versus the native-born population, as measured by factors like the frequency with which they report going to religious services or praying each week. We also discuss briefly how shifting patterns of religious affiliation in the country may be impacting the social values of foreign-born citizens in the country. Once again, we also look for unexpected patterns in the parties supported by the foreign-born population, given their religious

affiliation and strength of beliefs, and discuss how such misalignment could impact U.S. elections in the future.

## **DEGREE OF RELIGIOSITY:**

Overall, immigrants have levels of religiosity on par with the population as a whole. Our figures show that 44 percent of the U.S.-born population rates religion as “very important” to their lives, compared to 43 percent of the foreign-born population. Once again, however, some interesting trends emerge when we look at the religious values held by young immigrants ages 18 to 29. As mentioned in the previous section, recent studies have found particularly high levels of America's young people today report being unaffiliated with any religion, an issue that worries those concerned about the strength and growth of religious institutions in the coming decades.<sup>51</sup> Our work, however, finds that young immigrants are often counteracting the move away from religion among young people in America today. On a variety of measures, we find that the young, foreign-born population is more religious than young people born in America. They also play a far different role within their age group than older immigrants do keeping up religious practices and preserving religious values.

To understand the unique role played by young immigrants today, it's valuable to look at how their religiosity compares to that of older immigrant

**Table 9: Importance of Religion, by Nativity and Age**

*% of population that says religion is very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important, by nativity and age group*

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not too important	Not at all important
Native-born 18–29	32%	34%	16%	18%
Foreign-born 18–29	41%	30%	15%	14%
Native-born 30–49	41%	28%	14%	16%
Foreign-born 30–49	45%	26%	14%	15%
Native-born 50–64	48%	27%	13%	12%
Foreign-born 50–64	43%	27%	13%	17%
Native-born 65+	54%	25%	11%	9%
Foreign-born 65+	39%	30%	14%	17%
<b>Total (average) Native-born</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Total (average) Foreign-born</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>15%</b>

**Table 10: Church Attendance, by Nativity and Age**

*% of population that reported attending religious services more than once a week, once a week, once or twice per month, a few times a year, seldom, and never, by nativity and age group*

	More than once a week	Once a week	Once or twice per/month	A few times a year	Seldom	Never	Don't Know
Native-born 18–29	8%	16%	10%	16%	21%	27%	2%
Foreign-born 18–29	11%	20%	12%	15%	18%	20%	3%
Native-born 30–49	9%	16%	9%	15%	25%	24%	1%
Foreign-born 30–49	11%	18%	9%	18%	20%	21%	2%
Native-born 50–64	11%	19%	9%	15%	26%	20%	1%
Foreign-born 50–64	10%	18%	9%	15%	25%	21%	2%
Native-born 65+	14%	25%	7%	13%	25%	15%	1%
Foreign-born 65+	7%	23%	11%	17%	20%	22%	1%
<b>Total (average) Native-born</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Total (average) Foreign-born</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>2%</b>

groups. Among the U.S. population age 50 and older, the foreign-born population is less religious than the U.S.-born population on a number of measures. For instance, while 54 percent of the native-born population ages 65 or above say religion is “very important” to their lives, just 39 percent of the elderly foreign-born population has a similar view. Similarly large gaps exist in the amount such groups report praying each week or attending religious services. For instance, 40 percent of the elderly native-born population reports praying multiple times a day. Among the foreign-born elderly population, the equivalent figure is just 28 percent.

Among the younger population though, immigrants play a far different role in the religious landscape. For every variable we consider in this report, the young foreign-born citizen population appears to be more religious than U.S.-born individuals in the same age group. For example, only 32 percent of native-born 18 to 29 year olds in America rank religion as “very important” to their lives, while 41 percent of immigrants in that age group hold that viewpoint. Compared to their U.S.-born counterparts, young, foreign-born citizens are also more likely to report attending religious services more than once a week (11 versus 8 percent) or once a week (20 versus 16 percent). They are also somewhat more likely to report praying once a day or more.

### **AFFILIATION PATTERNS:**

In the last few years, there appears to have been rapid growth in the share of the foreign-born citizen population that identifies as Evangelical Christian. Much of this is due to changes that have occurred within the foreign-born Hispanic population, which made up almost a third of all foreign-born citizens in the United States in 2013.<sup>52</sup> In 2010, 75 percent of foreign-born Hispanics in the country identified as Roman Catholic. By 2013, that figure had fallen to 60 percent.<sup>53</sup> Although some of this was due to some foreign-born Hispanics choosing to become religiously unaffiliated, the move towards Evangelical Christianity also explains much of this drop. In 2000, only one in 10 Hispanic immigrants in the country identified as Evangelical Christians. By 2013, almost one in six did.<sup>54</sup>

This sort of shift has dramatically impacted the share of Hispanics immigrants in the country identifying as born-again Christians in some form. Our analysis of

CCES indicates that when the definition of “born again Christian” or Evangelical is widened to include those outside the Protestant faith, as much as 27 percent of Hispanic immigrants in the country—or more than 5 million people—identify as born-again or evangelical.<sup>55</sup> Although exact figures are not widely available, there appears to be a strong and potentially growing contingent of Evangelical Christians present in the Asian immigrant population as well. Currently, almost 1.4 million Asian immigrants in the U.S. are of Korean origin<sup>56</sup>—a group that has experienced rapid growth in its numbers in the last decade.<sup>57</sup> Koreans are also the most likely of any Asian subgroup to identify as Protestant, a group that likely includes large numbers of Evangelical Christians.<sup>58</sup> Such Asian Evangelicals play an important role upholding the faith: Pew has reported that Asian-American Evangelicals are among the most religious groups in the country, with the share of the population reporting attending church at least weekly surpassing rates among white Evangelicals, 76 to 64 percent.<sup>59</sup>

The move towards born-again and Evangelical denominations could play an important role pushing the social values of our country’s immigrants in a more conservative direction in the years to come. Our research finds that immigrants who identify as Evangelical Christian are particularly conservative on social issues. While 42 percent of the U.S. population overall believes abortion should be illegal in all or most cases, for instance, 67 percent of immigrant evangelical Christians do. This is almost 20 percentage points higher than the share of foreign-born Catholics who hold that opinion, and 2 percentage points higher than the figure for native-born evangelicals. Among the Hispanic community, where the shift towards evangelicalism has been pronounced, the differences in viewpoints between Catholics and Evangelical Christians is particularly large: 73 percent of Hispanic immigrant Evangelical Christians oppose gay marriage, compared to just 39 percent of Hispanic immigrant Catholics.

Trends within the broader foreign-born population’s religious profile are also important drivers of the social values held by today’s immigrants. Asians, for instance, recently became the country’s most rapidly growing immigrant group.<sup>60</sup> Although more than half of Asian immigrants do not identify as Christian,<sup>61</sup> assimilation plays a heavy role in the broader Asian

**Table 11: Frequency of Prayer, by Nativity and Age**

*% of population that reported praying several times a day, once a day, a few times a week, once a week, a few times a month, seldom, and never, by nativity and age group*

	Several times a day	Once a day	A few times a week	Seldom	Never	Don't Know
Native-born 18–29	21%	13%	13%	18%	20%	2%
Foreign-born 18–29	22%	15%	14%	15%	16%	4%
Native-born 30–49	30%	16%	15%	15%	13%	2%
Foreign-born 30–49	22%	19%	14%	16%	14%	3%
Native-born 50–64	38%	17%	15%	13%	9%	2%
Foreign-born 50–64	28%	21%	12%	15%	15%	1%
Native-born 65+	40%	19%	13%	12%	7%	2%
Foreign-born 65+	28%	21%	12%	12%	16%	2%
<b>Total (average) Native-born</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Total (average) Foreign-born</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>4%</b>

**Table 12: Views on Abortion, by Religion and Nativity**

*% of population that says abortion should be legal in all/most cases OR illegal in all/most cases, by religious group identification and nativity*

	All/mostly illegal	All/most legal
Protestant (native-born population)	52%	48%
Protestant (overall immigrant population)	55%	45%
Protestant (Hispanic immigrant population)	73%	27%
Born-again or Evangelical (native-born population)	65%	35%
Born-again or Evangelical (overall immigrant population)	67%	33%
Born-again or Evangelical (Hispanic immigrant Population)	73%	27%
Roman Catholic (native-born population)	45%	55%
Catholic (overall immigrant population)	48%	52%
Catholic (Hispanic immigrant population)	49%	51%
Unaffiliated (native-born population)	28%	72%
Unaffiliated (overall immigrant population)	32%	68%
Unaffiliated (Hispanic immigrant population)	36%	64%

*\*Note: numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding or missing variables including “don’t know,” which are not presented in the table.*

community. The Pew Research Center has reported that about three-quarters of Asian American Buddhists and Hindus celebrate Christmas.<sup>62</sup> What’s more, 17 percent of Buddhists who come to America ultimately convert to Christianity.<sup>63</sup> Considering that Buddhists have particularly liberal views on abortion—81 percent believe the practice should be legal in all or most cases<sup>64</sup>—such conversions among the foreign-born population could result in more conservative views in the Asian immigrant population in the future.

**RELIGIOUS VALUES AND PARTY CHOICE:**

To get a sense of whether conservatives or value-minded candidates might be able to appeal to foreign-born citizens in the future, our analysis also looks at the religious affiliation of the 50 percent of foreign-born citizens who are already aligned with one of the two major political parties. Once again, we see a similar pattern to what we described in the section on moral values stances. We find that on a variety of measures, foreign-born Democrats appear to be more religious than Democrats born in America. It also appears that Republicans have not been able to garner the

same level of support among some immigrants in key religious groups that they have among their native-born adherents of the same religion. If Republicans were able to make better inroads into such communities, this could represent a real vulnerability for Democrats dependent upon such religious immigrants for support.

For many Americans, the religion they hold—and the values that derive from their religion—play an important role in the formation of their political views. In our analysis, however, we find that immigrants are often not as strongly aligned with the party we would expect based on patterns among native-born individuals with similar religious views. For example, among the native-born population, 38 percent of evangelical or born-again Christians identify as Republican. Only 26 percent of foreign-born evangelical and born-again Christians, however, do the same. U.S.-born Catholics are also considerably more likely to identify with the Republican Party than Catholic citizens who immigrated to America. Among the foreign-born population, Republicans have also been unable so far

**Table 13: Views on Same-Sex marriage, by Religion and Nativity**

*% of population that favors OR opposes allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally, by religious group identification and nativity \**

	Oppose	Support
Protestant (native-born population)	59%	39%
Protestant (overall immigrant population)	58%	40%
Protestant (Hispanic immigrant population)	67%	32%
Born-again or Evangelical (native-born population)	65%	35%
Born-again or Evangelical (overall immigrant population)	67%	33%
Born-again or Evangelical (Hispanic immigrant Population)	73%	27%
Roman Catholic (native-born population)	42%	55%
Catholic (overall immigrant population)	42%	53%
Catholic (Hispanic immigrant population)	39%	55%
Unaffiliated (native-born population)	30%	67%
Unaffiliated (overall immigrant population)	34%	62%
Unaffiliated (Hispanic immigrant population)	35%	61%

**Table 14: Political Party Preference, by Religion and Nativity**

*% of population that identified as Democrat, Republican, Independent, or Other by nativity and religious-group affiliation*

	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Other	Not sure
Native-born Born-again or Evangelical Christian	29%	38%	24%	4%	6%
Foreign-born Evangelical born again Christian	43%	26%	22%	2%	7%
Native Born Roman Catholic	35%	30%	27%	3%	6%
Foreign Born Roman Catholic	43%	22%	25%	2%	8%
Native born Protestants	30%	36%	25%	3%	5%
Foreign born Protestants	40%	26%	25%	3%	5%

**Table 15: Political Party Preference of Population that views Religion as Important or Very Important, by Nativity**

	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Other	Not sure
Native-born	33%	32%	25%	3%	7%
Foreign-born	41%	21%	26%	2%	10%

**Table 16: Political party preference of citizen population that prays once per day or more, by nativity (foreign-born and native-born)**

	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Other	Not sure
Native-born	32%	33%	25%	4%	6%
Foreign-born	40%	22%	25%	3%	10%

**Table 17: Political party preference of citizen population that attends church once per week or more, by nativity**

	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Other	Not sure
Native-born	28%	40%	23%	4%	5%
Foreign-born	38%	26%	25%	3%	9%

to capture the same levels of support from those who report frequently praying or attending church services.

Like data in previous sections, this info once again shows that the foreign-born population plays a unique, centrist role within the Democratic Party. Among Democrats, immigrants are somewhat more religious than native-born members of their party. For example 44 percent of immigrant Democrats consider religion “very important” to their lives compared to 40 percent of native-born Democrats. Similarly, 28 percent of immigrants who identify as Democrats attend church once a week or more, whereas 23 percent of native-born Democrats do. Taken as a whole, our analysis shows that immigrants have commonalities with the Republican Party along the lines of religious and social values. Democratic immigrants are more religious and more conservative than the broader pool of Democratic voters in America, giving Republicans a valuable potential inroad to the immigrant community in the future.

# PART V: **FAMILY STRUCTURE**

Family values are heralded as a centerpiece of the Republican Party platform, and advocates for such family values often place a strong emphasis on traditional, married households. Because of that, we assume that those who view family values as important are more likely to be married and less likely to be divorced or separated than those who place relatively less importance on such issues. In this section, we examine the share of foreign-born citizens versus native-born citizens who fell into different marital-status categories during the period covered in our sample (2008–2012). Nationally, these figures show that more than half the U.S. population overall was married during that period. The majority of such married individuals, however, were older than age 30. To control for the immigrant population skewing younger in age, we look at this data broken down by age group when comparing the two groups.

Our figures show that immigrants have notably higher marriage rates than the population overall, a possible indicator of their strong sense of family values. In every single individual age group examined, immigrants were more likely to be married than the equivalent U.S.-born population. (See table 16 below.) With the exception of immigrants ages 18 to 29, immigrants in each age

cohort were also less likely to be divorced. Because immigrants tend to be younger—and the youngest populations are less likely to be married—the overall marriage rate for immigrants overall is lower than it is for the overall native-born population, something we would expect. The divorce rate for immigrants, however, remains lower across the board. Nationally, eight percent of foreign-born citizens are divorced, compared to 10 percent of native-born citizens.

As previously discussed, we assume in this section that those with a strong focus on traditional family values will be more likely to be married and less likely to be divorced. Looking at figures broken down by party affiliation, we find that, consistent with that idea, Republicans overall are far more likely to be married than those who identify with Democrats. As Table 18 shows, 65 percent of Republicans in the country are married compared to 46 percent of Democrats. Immigrant Democrats, however, are more likely to be married than Democrats born here in the United States. Once again, this indicates something foreign-born Democrats have in common with the Republican Party, and an area the party could use to appeal to such foreign-born voters in the future.

**Table 18: Marital Status of Overall U.S. Population, by Age**

*% of population who are married, separated, divorced, widowed, single or in domestic partnerships, by age group\**

Age Group	Married	Separated	Divorced	Widowed	Single	Domestic
18-29	25%	1%	1%	0.1%	67%	6%
30-49	58%	3%	10%	1%	23%	6%
50-64	64%	2%	16%	5%	9%	4%
65+	62%	1%	14%	17%	3%	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>5%</b>

*\*Note: numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding or missing variables including "don't know," which are not presented in the table.*

**Table 19: Marital Status of Foreign-Born Population, by Age**

*% of foreign-born population who are married, separated, divorced, widowed, single or in domestic partnerships, by age group \**

Age Group	Married	Separated	Divorced	Widowed	Single	Domestic
18-29	27%	2%	2%	0.0%	65%	4%
30-49	62%	3%	8%	0.3%	22%	5%
50-64	66%	4%	16%	3%	7%	4%
65+	66%	2%	10%	15%	5%	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>4%</b>

*\*Note: numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding or missing variables including "don't know," which are not presented in the table.*

**Table 20: Marital Status, by Political Party Identification and Nativity**

*% of population that is married, separated, divorced, widowed, single or in domestic partnerships, by political party preference and nativity\**

	Married	Separated	Divorced	Widowed	Single	Domestic Partner
Democrat (General U.S. Population)	46%	2%	11%	5%	30%	7%
Democrat (Immigrant population)	50%	3%	8%	2%	32%	5%
Republican (General U.S. Population)	65%	2%	9%	5%	18%	2%
Republican (Immigrant population)	64%	3%	7%	2%	31%	3%
Independent (General U.S. Population)	54%	2%	11%	4%	25%	5%
Independent (Immigrant Population)	54%	1%	8%	2%	31%	4%
Other (General U.S. Population)	53%	2%	11%	4%	27%	4%
Other (Immigrant Population)	45%	3%	20%	3%	27%	3%

# PART VI: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

## CONSERVATIVE SCALE

In the sections above, we see that immigrants overall have social and moral values largely similar—although somewhat more conservative—than the population overall. Immigrants who identify with the Democratic Party, however, are notably more conservative than native-born Democrats on a whole variety of measures. In this section, we take these findings a step further and construct an overall measure of conservative stance. (The methods used to construct this model are detailed in Appendix A). This scale ranks the relative conservative stance of a person from 0 (least conservative) to 3 (most conservative) based on the questions and variables explored throughout the report. For the U.S. citizen population overall, roughly two thirds of individuals rank above the level zero. The remaining parts of the population are fairly evenly distributed between levels one through three.

When foreign-born citizens are looked at in isolation, we can see some of the ways that their political stances on moral values issues differ from the population as a whole. Relative to the native-born population, immigrants have a higher share of respondents in the middle two categories and fewer in the outlying sections. This observation runs counter to the idea that immigrants favor liberal causes or issues. To the contrary, immigrants are *less* likely than the population as a whole to have the most liberal stance on social views. Instead, they identify more often as centrists, the type of voter capable of being courted by either side.

The results also yield interesting findings when we control for a number of external variables, including education, marital status, age group, and income, among others (see Appendix A for regression output). Without controlling for religion, immigrants score on average higher on the conservative scale, indicating that they are more conservative in many ways than the U.S. population as a whole. When we take into account their religious values and control for them, however, immigrants become indistinguishable from natives on the conservative scale. This indicates that the key reason that immigrants have more conservative values on social issues appears to be the higher levels of religiosity among the foreign-born population in general.

**Table 21: Strength of Conservative Stance, by Nativity**

*% of population across conservative stance category (least to most), by nativity*

Conservative Stance	Entire sample	Immigrants	Natives
0	37%	34%	37%
1	21%	28%	20%
2	21%	23%	20%
3	22%	15%	22%

## SELF IDENTIFICATION

Our work synthesizing data on immigrant political views also looks at how various groups within the population describe their own political views—and how this aligns with their choice of what party to support. This data shows definitively that immigrants are indeed more likely to have a conservative political ideology yet have preference or vote along Democratic Party lines than the U.S. population as a whole.<sup>65</sup> More than 70 percent of the U.S. general population with liberal or very liberal views identifies with the Democratic Party—and more than two-thirds of the liberal or very liberal foreign-born population follows this trend. But when we turn our attention to the segment of the population that identifies as having conservative or very conservative views a far different picture emerges:

Immigrants are twice as likely as the general public to identify as Democrat despite having conservative or very conservative views. Specifically, while only 11 percent of citizens in the U.S. overall who say they have conservative or very conservative views identify as Democrats, 22 percent of the conservative or very conservative immigrant population does so. For Hispanics the phenomenon is even more pronounced, with 30 percent of conservative or very conservative Hispanic immigrants currently choosing to side with the Democratic Party.

While this could be viewed as a major success story for the Democratic Party, it also represents a real vulnerability for candidates on the left. To demonstrate this concept, we once again revisit the concept of our conservative scale. Figure 1 shows the probability of being level 3 (most conservative) of the conservative

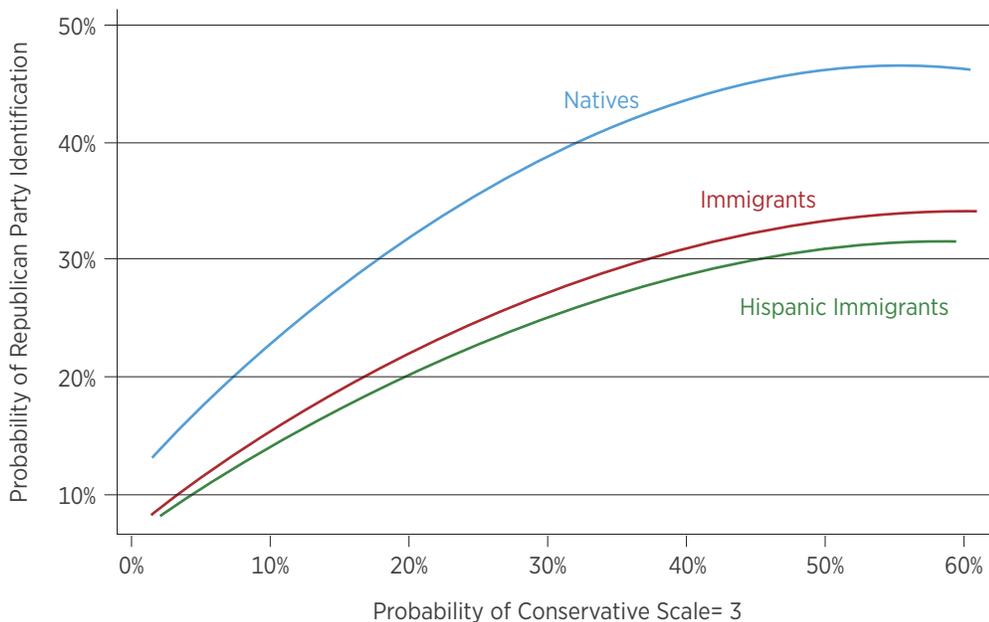
**Table 22: Political Ideology, by Political Party Identification and Nativity**

*% of population identifying as very liberal or liberal, moderate, conservative or very conservative, or unsure, by political party preference and nativity*

	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Other	Not sure
Very liberal/liberal (General U.S. Population)	71%	3%	22%	2%	3%
Very liberal/liberal (Immigrant Citizen Population)	68%	5%	22%	2%	3%
Very liberal/liberal (Hispanic Immigrant Citizen Population)	67%	4%	23%	3%	4%
Moderate (General U.S. Population)	38%	14%	39%	2%	7%
Moderate (Immigrant Citizen Population)	39%	11%	40%	2%	8%
Moderate (Hispanic Immigrant Citizen Population)	30%	44%	33%	1%	11%
Conservative/Very Conservative (General U.S. Population)	11%	57%	24%	5%	3%
Conservative/Very Conservative Immigrant Citizen Population)	24%	47%	21%	4%	5%
Conservative/Very Conservative (Hispanic Immigrant Citizen Population)	30%	44%	17%	4%	5%
Not sure (General U.S. Population)	29%	10%	21%	4%	36%
Not sure (Immigrant Citizen Population)	30%	8%	20%	3%	40%
Not sure (Hispanic Immigrant Citizen Population)	44%	19%	24%	3%	10%

scale, and estimates how that relates to Republican Party identification among native, immigrant, and Hispanic immigrant groups. The figure shows that overall as one's probability to score high on the conservative scale increases one is more likely to identify with the Republican Party. We can see that for immigrants, however, the trend is similar but not as powerful, a factor that holds true even when we control for education, income, and age. This figure indicates that if Republicans found a way to appeal to foreign-born citizens based on the values they share, they could potentially gain large numbers of potential new supporters.

**Figure 1: Probability of Republican Party Identification and Conservative Leaning, Controlled for Income, Education, and Age**



# PART VII: CONCLUSION

In the coming electoral cycles, winning the support of foreign-born citizens in America will be critical for members of both parties. In 2012, an estimated 8.1 percent of the voting-age citizens in America were immigrants who had naturalized and gained citizenship.<sup>66</sup> In the next several decades, a huge number of additional naturalized citizens will join the country's pool of eligible voters. It's estimated that between 2014 and 2030, 4.2 million additional naturalized citizens will become eligible to vote of Hispanic and Asian descent alone.<sup>67</sup> In an era when many recent Presidential elections have been decided by less than 10 million votes, winning the support of such new immigrants could prove critical for both parties.

This report demonstrates that immigrants are a group that neither major U.S. party will be able to take for granted in the coming years. Currently, roughly half of foreign-born residents report not being aligned with either major political party. The 36 percent that does identify with Democrats is also considerably more conservative than Democrats overall on a wide range of variables. Given that immigrants who identify with a political party are on average weaker partisans than the native-born, this conservative slant among immigrant Democrats may indicate that these voters could become swing voters in coming electoral cycles. On a variety of other fronts, our figures indicate areas where Republicans could do more to make inroads into immigrant communities. Young immigrants, for instance, are considerably more conservative than their native-born counterparts. Foreign-born citizens who identify as Evangelical Christians are also less likely to identify as Republican than their native-born counterparts, a gap could potentially be bridged with more outreach to this community specifically.

Although this report clearly has hopeful news for Republicans or moderates hoping to build support among immigrants, the news should not be viewed as overwhelmingly positive for those on the right. Like almost any group of American voters, many issues are important to foreign-born citizens at the voting booth. Although immigration rarely appears to be the top issue cited as deciding their vote,<sup>68</sup> the immigration debate will clearly be important in determining how and why immigrants vote. Studies have consistently found that Hispanic immigrants who naturalize or come of voting age during periods of harsh or polarizing rhetoric surrounding immigration reform are typically more mobilized and motivated to vote—often in a way that preserves their interests.<sup>69, 70</sup> Some of this process has already occurred in recent years, given the harsh debates around amnesty, the DREAM Act, and immigration reform that have dominated recent national Presidential elections, making the most newly naturalized immigrants a potentially difficult group for Republicans to court.<sup>71</sup>

Passing immigration reform and steering away from harsh rhetoric surrounding immigrants, however, would likely help Republicans to more effectively appeal to immigrant voters on a whole range of issues, be it taking the country in a new economic direction or recognizing the importance of the values they share. In the 2014 midterm elections, Republicans captured 35 percent of the Hispanic vote nationally, a eight-point boost over their showing in the 2012 presidential election.<sup>72</sup> Although that represents the beginning of a shift, taking immigration off the table as a polarizing issue would likely help Republicans make more substantial inroads into the foreign-born population—including foreign-born Hispanics.

# APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY AND REGRESSION OUTPUT

This report, as discussed in the text, was put together using a pooled sample from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) for the period from 2008 to 2012. The CCES is a 50,000+ person national stratified sample survey administered by YouGov/Polimetrix.<sup>73</sup> The data from years 2008–2012 were appended to enlarge the sample size to 176,685 observations and the yearly weights were averaged and applied to the entire appended sample. All tabulations presented are significant at the 95 percent confidence level.

## **MEASURE OF CONSERVATIVE STANCE:**

The measure on conservative stance is obtained by summing the answers relating to: a) abortion (equal to one if abortion is never supported or supported only in life-threatening circumstances, and zero otherwise), b) gay marriage (equal to one if opposed and zero otherwise), and c) ideology (equal to one for respondents defining themselves “conservative” or “very conservative” and zero otherwise).<sup>74</sup> Therefore, a higher score signals a more intense conservative stance.

Regression models taking into account that a higher score signals higher intensity are called “ordered.” The regression analysis estimates the probability of being at a point on the conservative scale given immigration status, geographical region, income class, age group, educational attainment, Hispanic ethnicity, marital status, and religion.<sup>75</sup> Appendix Table 1 reports the results. We comment on the results derived from ordered logistic

regressions (so called because they take into account that the values taken by the dependent variable—in this case conservative level—signal higher intensity, i.e. they are “ordered”). In all the regressions, we use sample weights. All regressions use robust standard errors.

## **CHARTING LIKELIHOOD OF IDENTIFYING WITH A PARTY GIVEN CONSERVATIVE STANCE**

To estimate the propensity of party identification, we use multinomial logistic regressions (so called because they take into account that the respondents have multiple—but not ordered—options to choose from and because choices are taken from a logistic distribution). The models control for the same explanatory variables used in the conservative stance regressions.<sup>76</sup> The coefficients in Appendix Table 2 are differences between the probability of identifying oneself with the Republican Party or as an independent relative to the probability of identifying oneself with the Democratic Party. For instance, looking at the “immigrant” variable, the table shows that immigrants are less likely to identify themselves with the Republican Party (the coefficient is negative and statistically different from zero) rather than with the Democratic Party, holding all other variables constant. Immigrants are also slightly less likely to identify themselves as independents rather than with the Democratic Party but the difference is not observable with sufficient precision (the coefficient is negative but not statistically different from zero).

**Appendix Table 1: Regression Used in Calculating Conservative Stance**

Explanatory variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	W/out Hispanic and religion controls		With Hispanic, w/out religion controls		W/out Hispanic, with religion controls		With Hispanic and religion controls	
	Coeff.	P-value	Coeff.	P-value	Coeff.	P-value	Coeff.	P-value
Immigrant	0.224	0.000	0.192	0.002	-0.056	0.426	-0.078	0.281
Hispanic	-	-	-0.139	0.000	-	-	-0.218	0.000
Hispanic immigrant	-	-	0.239	0.000	-	-	0.250	0.001
Midwest	0.390	0.000	0.386	0.000	0.181	0.000	0.175	0.000
South	0.559	0.000	0.560	0.000	0.145	0.000	0.148	0.000
West	0.189	0.000	0.201	0.000	0.120	0.000	0.140	0.000
Immigrant in Midwest	-0.254	0.010	-0.243	0.013	0.091	0.406	0.100	0.360
Immigrant in South	-0.313	0.000	-0.327	0.000	0.030	0.736	0.023	0.793
Immigrant in West	-0.237	0.004	-0.263	0.001	0.069	0.463	0.045	0.634
Age 30–49	0.360	0.000	0.356	0.000	0.205	0.000	0.201	0.000
Age 50–64	0.569	0.000	0.561	0.000	0.295	0.000	0.283	0.000
Age 65+	0.770	0.000	0.760	0.000	0.466	0.000	0.448	0.000
Some college/2-year degree	-0.193	0.000	-0.196	0.000	-0.196	0.000	-0.201	0.000
BA and above	-0.604	0.000	-0.609	0.000	-0.514	0.000	-0.524	0.000
Income: \$50K-99.9K	0.067	0.000	0.067	0.000	0.160	0.000	0.159	0.000
Income: \$100K-\$149.9K	0.026	0.311	0.026	0.317	0.212	0.000	0.210	0.000
Income: \$150K+	-0.189	0.000	-0.190	0.000	0.063	0.098	0.060	0.118
Income not reported	0.217	0.000	0.215	0.000	0.291	0.000	0.287	0.000
Separated/Divorced	-0.252	0.000	-0.253	0.000	-0.225	0.000	-0.225	0.000
Born-again/evangelical	-	-	-	-	0.961	0.000	0.956	0.000
Religion: somewhat important	-	-	-	-	-0.780	0.000	-0.781	0.000
Religion: not too important	-	-	-	-	-1.332	0.000	-1.338	0.000
Religion: not at all important	-	-	-	-	-2.025	0.000	-2.033	0.000

Ordered logit regressions. Observations for models 1 and 2: 161,431. Observations for models 3 and 4: 155,092.

**Appendix Table 2: Determinants of Political Party Identification**

Explanatory variables	Model 2				Model 4			
	With Hispanic, w/out religion controls				With Hispanic and religion controls			
	Baseline: Democratic party				Baseline: Democratic party			
	Republican party		Independent/ Not sure		Republican party		Independent/ Not sure	
Coeff.	P-value	Coeff.	P-value	Coeff.	P-value	Coeff.	P-value	
Immigrant	-0.485	0.000	-0.033	0.705	-0.688	0.000	-0.022	0.810
Hispanic	-0.491	0.000	-0.224	0.000	-0.555	0.000	-0.222	0.000
Hispanic immigrant	-0.205	0.033	-0.276	0.002	-0.235	0.024	-0.281	0.002
Midwest	0.231	0.000	0.091	0.002	0.080	0.014	0.083	0.006
South	0.331	0.000	0.074	0.009	0.065	0.035	0.036	0.209
West	0.264	0.000	0.102	0.001	0.219	0.000	0.078	0.013
Immigrant in Midwest	0.028	0.858	0.027	0.842	0.272	0.111	-0.051	0.720
Immigrant in South	-0.011	0.934	0.041	0.707	0.256	0.069	0.039	0.731
Immigrant in West	-0.027	0.842	0.221	0.049	0.171	0.234	0.203	0.085
Age 30–49	0.249	0.000	0.082	0.005	0.140	0.000	0.089	0.004
Age 50–64	0.295	0.000	-0.010	0.735	0.110	0.001	0.019	0.518
Age 65+	0.613	0.000	0.061	0.077	0.409	0.000	0.106	0.002
Some college/2-year degree	0.067	0.005	0.023	0.331	0.094	0.000	0.069	0.005
BA and above	-0.188	0.000	-0.116	0.000	-0.102	0.000	0.070	0.004
Income: \$50K-99.9K	0.410	0.000	0.118	0.000	0.448	0.000	0.123	0.000
Income: \$100K-\$149.9K	0.514	0.000	0.154	0.000	0.644	0.000	0.160	0.000
Income: \$150K+	0.585	0.000	0.179	0.000	0.773	0.000	0.189	0.000
Income not reported	0.492	0.000	0.480	0.000	0.535	0.000	0.470	0.000
Separated/Divorced	-0.252	0.000	-0.029	0.319	-0.220	0.000	0.048	0.096
Born-again/evangelical	-	-	-	-	0.596	0.000	0.158	0.000
Religion: somewhat important	-	-	-	-	-0.228	0.000	0.064	0.014
Religion: not too important	-	-	-	-	-0.539	0.000	0.059	0.061
Religion: not at all important	-	-	-	-	-1.278	0.000	0.100	0.001

Multinomial logit regressions. Observations for model 2: 161,431. Observations for model 4: 155,092. We omit reporting on the estimated constants.

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72. Elizabeth Llorente, Fox News Latino, "Political Parties Take Note: Latino Electorate is Independent, Sophisticated, and Issues do Matter," (Nov. 7, 2014). Accessed Nov. 10, 2014, available here: <http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/politics/2014/11/07/political-parties-take-note-latino-electorate-is-independent-sophisticated-and/>.
73. Cooperative Congressional Election Study [Website], accessed Oct. 28, 2014. Available here: <http://projects.iq.harvard.edu/cces/data>.
74. Respondents indicating "not sure" to the ideology question were assigned a missing value and therefore are excluded from the regression analysis. By summing the variables, we essentially assume that the components of the intensity scale are substitutes (e.g., responders indicating "conservative" ideology that support gay marriage and oppose abortion receive the same intensity as "conservative" responders that oppose gay marriage but support more permissive abortion regulation). As expected, the three components of conservative intensity are positively correlated, with coefficients ranging between 46% and 50%.
75. Mark Hugo Lopez, Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, and Jens Manuel Krogstad, Pew Research Hispanic Trends Project, "Latino Support for Democrats Falls, but Democratic Advantage Remains (Oct. 29, 2014). Accessed Nov. 1, 2014, available here: <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2014/10/29/latino-support-for-democrats-falls-but-democratic-advantage-remains/>.
76. There are more respondents to the party identification answer than used in the conservative scale regressions. For consistency, we use the same subsamples of respondents in the party identification regressions. We added the relatively few respondents "not sure" of their identification to those identifying themselves as "independent/other." In the text, we refer to this residual category as "independent."



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