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IMMIGRATION THROUGH CITIZENS' EYES: PUBLIC OPINION IN TRUMP'S

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ABSTRACT

This research is meant to look at how U.S. citizens view immigration during Trump's current presidency and whether they perceive it more as a security issue or a humanitarian issue. It does not only ask whether citizens view immigration as a security threat, but also which social and political factors contribute to this understanding. The purpose is to figure out if the government's focus on national security, along with its securitization of immigration, coincide with how people understand this issue today. It is important to recognize this connection since immigration is an ongoing concern in the United States. How citizens interpret security can shape their support for different policies. The approach of this research, being mixed methods, combines a survey of forty-eight U.S. citizens with two in-depth interviews. The results bring up significant differences among age groups and political identities. Younger participants were more likely to perceive immigration mainly through humanitarian concerns and its economic benefits to the country, while older participants tended to have their focus on issues like border control, national security, and immigration bringing disorder to the country. The findings show how people's views also shift based on their backgrounds and experiences. They show how important it is to consider what people agree on when talking about immigration policy. Overall, the study provides a look at how public opinion develops during times of strong political propaganda and explains why different groups respond differently to security measures. These findings add to the debate about immigration policy by showing that not only age or political ideologies, but also personal experiences have significance when looking at how citizens react to national arguments.

Keywords: Immigration, public opinion, national security, humanitarian issues, securitization, media influence.

RESUMEN

Esta investigación busca analizar cómo los ciudadanos de Estados Unidos ven la inmigración durante la presidencia actual de Trump y si la perciben más como un tema de seguridad o como un asunto humanitario. No solo pregunta si los ciudadanos consideran la inmigración una amenaza para la seguridad, sino también qué factores sociales y políticos contribuyen a esta interpretación. El propósito es averiguar si el enfoque del gobierno en la seguridad nacional, junto con la securitización de la inmigración, coincide con cómo las personas entienden este tema hoy. Es importante reconocer esta conexión, ya que la inmigración es una preocupación constante en Estados Unidos. La forma en que los ciudadanos interpretan la seguridad puede influir en el apoyo que dan a distintas políticas. El enfoque de esta investigación, basado en métodos mixtos, combina una encuesta realizada a cuarenta y ocho ciudadanos estadounidenses con dos entrevistas a profundidad. Los resultados muestran diferencias importantes entre grupos de edad e identidades políticas. Los participantes más jóvenes tendieron a ver la inmigración desde preocupaciones humanitarias y por sus beneficios económicos para el país, mientras que los participantes mayores se enfocaron más en temas como el control fronterizo, la seguridad nacional y la idea de que la inmigración trae desorden al país. Los hallazgos también muestran cómo las perspectivas de las personas cambian según sus experiencias y contextos. Esto demuestra la importancia de tomar en cuenta los puntos en los que las personas coinciden cuando se habla de política migratoria. En general, el estudio ofrece una mirada a cómo se forma la opinión pública en tiempos de fuerte propaganda política y explica por qué diferentes grupos responden de manera distinta a las medidas de seguridad. Estos hallazgos enriquecen el debate sobre la política migratoria al mostrar que no solo la edad o la ideología política influyen, sino también las experiencias personales, que son significativas para entender cómo reaccionan los ciudadanos ante los discursos nacionales.

Palabras clave: inmigración, opinión pública, seguridad nacional, cuestiones humanitarias, securitización, influencia mediática.

Introduction

Immigration has been one of the most discussed topics in the United States, but it is more significant now under Trump's presidency, often described as a security issue. People today are exposed to certain political opinions that portray immigration as a danger to the country, leading to a national environment where it is frequently associated with crime and border security. Nevertheless, many people continue to focus on the humanitarian issues that come with immigration, emphasizing the challenges immigrants face, along with the positive impact they bring to the economy once they are settled in. Because of these different perspectives, it is important to analyze how U.S. citizens actually view immigration today and whether they see it more as a threat to national security or as a humanitarian issue.

The main question guiding this research is: "*To what extent do U.S. citizens regard immigration as a security issue in Trump's current presidency, and what influences contribute to their views?*" This question helps figure out if the government's stand on immigration coincides with how people truly perceive it. Immigration is often talked about in terms of security, which leads to stricter enforcement and more control at the borders. This study is intended to look at how people feel about this framing and their reactions to it.

This research's importance starts with how broadly this topic can be understood, going far beyond the debates of who can enter the country; this leads us to the relevance of what Americans truly believe to be a threat. When discussions on immigration start, citizens get a clearer view of the gap between Republicans and Democrats and the increasing polarization,

since Republicans tend to focus more on immigration as a security issue, while Democrats stay more concerned with the humanitarian problems behind it. Studying citizens' perceptions shows us how ideas of government officials regarding security morph into public understandings of it.

Although immigration policy has been studied a lot, most of the research concentrates on national discussions or the impact of specific policies instead of how ordinary citizens perceive immigration today. People often miss how social factors affect their views, like their political identity the media they consume, and their own life experiences. These factors provide an understanding of why U.S. citizens view immigration so differently, but they are often ignored. We still have a lot to understand about how people of different age groups perceive government's efforts to make immigration less of a threat to the country and how they react to political propaganda that frame immigration as a danger. We still need to look into how much people accept or reject this way of thinking and what factors could explain the differences in their views.

This research's general objective is to understand how U.S. citizens view immigration during Trump's current presidency, focusing on whether they see it as security concern or a humanitarian issue. The specific objectives would be to understand how age and media preferences influence how people perceive immigration, how political ideologies lead people to lean toward either security concerns or humanitarian issues, and what experiences or social factors play a role in these opinions.

The study is important because how people understand immigration affects politics, society, and even the economy. What people believe can guide elections, alter political choices, and determine how open society is to immigrants. Getting to know what citizens support helps us see if political propaganda about security is working or if people are pushing back against it. This research provides information about how people perceive immigration, consequently showing its

impact on families, communities, and national debates, beyond just political speeches and news stories.

The rest of this paper is organized in the following way: Section 2 includes the literature review, highlighting what current research reveals about immigration as a security concern or as a humanitarian issue. Section 3 explains the methodology used to collect the survey and interview data. In Section 4, the results from both methods are presented. Section 5 discusses the findings in the previous section in connection to the research question and previous research. Finally, Section 6 presents the conclusions of the research and what they mean for our understanding of public opinion on immigration in the United States.

Literature Review

1. Theoretical Background

Among the theories we use to study immigration, we find *securitization theory* (Snider, 2024). It explains how political leaders can turn normal political issues into issues that are suddenly more extreme than they really are, transforming them into actual security threats. When it comes to immigration, this means stopping talking about immigrants in terms of work, culture, or humanitarian concerns, and starting to talk about them as threats to the security and survival of the country.

Currently in the U.S., Trump frequently addresses immigration using terms like "invasion" and "crime." Snider (2024) says that policies and public opinion tend to change in favor of stricter controls when immigration is associated with terrorism and national threats. A report from Human Rights Watch (2025) also shows that many of Trump's immigration policies made people more familiar with the idea that immigrants are dangerous.

There is other research that helps explain securitization in the United States. The Pew Research Center (2025) found that many citizens are turning against Trump's immigration policies because of how extreme they are, showing how securitization can change public opinion. Another consequence of securitization is that people are more likely to support stricter regulations when immigration is related to crime (Puddy, 2024). Blackburn and Callaghan (2025) show that many people do not want strict immigration laws in sensitive areas such as schools and hospitals, even when immigration is perceived as a threat. Recent studies, like the one by Dong and Kafura (2025), show that younger Americans have a favorable view of immigration. This suggests that concerns about security do not influence public opinion in the same way as before.

2. Public Opinion and Immigration

Public opinion is an important factor to consider when studying how people in the U.S. feel about immigration. The Pew Research Center (2025) found that many citizens had mixed or negative views about the policies of Trump's administration regarding immigration. However, these views were not supported in all groups. Republicans were more likely to support strict immigration policies and see immigration as a threat to safety. On the other hand, Democrats were more likely to disagree with these ideas and emphasize the humanitarian problems linked to immigration.

When analyzing other studies, we learn that citizens' views are also influenced by different contexts. Blackburn and Callaghan (2025) demonstrated that a lot of U.S. citizens do not like the idea of immigration law enforcement in areas like hospitals or schools. This shows that even those supporting stricter regulations have mixed feelings regarding how enforcement impacts vulnerable groups. In 2024, a study found that people are more likely to back stricter immigration laws when they are linked to crime (Puddy, 2024). When immigration is discussed

in association with crime and uses words like 'threat' or 'danger,' people often lean toward supporting stricter border control. Human Rights Watch (2025) highlights how political language that connects immigration with law enforcement has led to increasing divisions among people in the U.S. This aligns with a long history of research on securitization theory, which shows how governments transform social issues into security threats to justify the need for special actions. However, when immigration is discussed without linking it to any other subjects, public opinion tends to be more balanced.

3. Media and Political Influence on Perceptions

The influence of political leaders is an important factor. People frequently refer to immigration as an "invasion" or a "threat" with Trump as president, which makes people focus on the problem more in terms of security. When these arguments are presented frequently in the media, especially in reports that back up the government, the link between immigration and danger gets deeper. Dong and Kafura (2025) discovered that even with political divisions, support for legal immigration in the U.S. reached new levels, demonstrating how media coverage and political narratives work together to influence people's views.

Another key reason for different viewpoints is how people's political identity and their environment shape their perspectives. A study by the Pew Research Center (2025) showed that Democrats often emphasize the humanitarian and economic benefits of immigration, whereas Republicans tend to see it mainly as an issue of border control and national security. In a similar way, Dong and Kafura (2025) found that people's views on legal immigration are mostly split along political ideologies, with younger Americans and Democrats showing more support for immigration. Views are shaped by media, political arguments, and even personal experiences.

4. Opposing Views: Security vs. Humanitarian Perspectives

Immigration is seen as a threat to national security by the security point of view, frequently related to crime, terrorism, or borders that are not properly controlled. A lot of Trump's policies and speeches took advantage of this perspective to call immigrants a threat to U.S. citizens. When people hear this way of talking about immigration, they are more likely to support strict enforcement and border control. In a study done in 2024, Puddy discovered that when people are told that immigration is related to crime, they want stricter rules (Puddy, 2024).

On the other hand, when we analyze immigration with a focus on humanitarian views regarding immigrants, what we are looking at are the issues that most immigrants face. This includes people doing their best to avoid suffering any kind of violence, families being separated at the border, and kids being held in jail. Human Rights Watch's report (2025) shows that many of Trump's policies had terrible effects on people's lives, such as reducing rights for refugees and making it easier for them to be deported. This highlights how many citizens interpret immigration as a moral issue rather than one of national security, since they focus on the suffering caused by stricter policies. In this context, people in the United States tend to see immigration as a moral issue instead of a security issue.

5. Polarization and Party Divisions

Immigration itself becomes important proof of how present polarization is in American politics. For example, the Pew Research Center found in 2025 that Republicans tend to support Trump's immigration policies because they think these policies are necessary for security, while Democrats disagree with them and focus on the need to help people. Dong and Kafura (2025)

point out that there are clear differences between Republicans and Democrats when it comes to immigration, with each side having distinct opinions on how it impacts the economy and society.

6. Research Gap and Contribution

Many of the studies on immigration have been looking at government policies and the perspectives of those in power, such as the regulations created during Trump's presidency or his speeches where he describes immigration as a threat. Some studies analyze polls showing partisan divisions. Other studies explore how being involved in politics, media, or online communities shapes people's opinions. Most existing studies look at perspectives using large surveys, but they often overlook how people define "security" in discussions about immigration.

This research is intended to fill that gap by using surveys and interviews, allowing participants to share, in their own words, what national security means to them regarding immigration discussions. It also explores how people view immigration, whether they see it as a security issue or a humanitarian one, and the factors that shape these opinions, as they are closely connected. By combining interviews with survey data, the study reveals patterns in how U.S. citizens view security and humanitarian issues in a deeper way.

Methodology

For this research, the methodology is going to be based on mixed methods, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative part includes a survey directed only to U.S. citizens. There were a total of forty-eight responses to this survey, all received online, as it was distributed in this way. It includes participants from different demographic backgrounds to identify patterns in how people interpret issues. The qualitative part is based on two interviews in which participants will be allowed to explain their views in more detail and in

their own words. Both interview participants took part voluntarily and provided written consent before the interview began.

This research is designed to be both descriptive and interpretive. It is descriptive because it counts how many people agree or disagree with certain answers and also shows the patterns that exist among those people. The interviews, because of their focus on how people personally explain what immigration means to them, constitute the interpretive part of the research. The interviews implement an in-depth approach, which lets participants share what "immigration" and "national security" mean to them in their own words. Keeping the conversation open allows for spontaneous responses and reflects how people understand certain topics in political debates.

The survey included questions on participants' demographics and their views on immigration and its implications. It was distributed using Google Forms, and everyone could answer voluntarily anonymously. A short informed-consent statement appeared at the beginning of the survey, explaining that participation was voluntary and that no personal information would be collected. Some of the questions seek to understand what meaning people relate to certain terms, to avoid assuming that everyone thinks of the same thing when they hear them. The survey is built with multiple-choice questions, some of which allow more than one answer, and it is designed to be simple to complete. The interviews allow participants to elaborate freely; they were conducted in person, recorded with consent, and later transcribed for analysis.

To analyze the survey's answers, there will be use of descriptive statistics so the answers provided make sense and are easier to understand. This includes a comparison across groups, figuring out how people within a certain age range or identified with one political identity interpret immigration, seeking patterns between these views. The interviews are analyzed with thematic interpretation, reading the transcripts and grouping similar answers together or pointing

out the differences between participants' points of view to identify key factors behind their perceptions. Direct quotations from the interviews will be used to analyze how participants express their ideas.

Survey and interview results were analyzed alongside national surveys and news coverage to understand how people feel and see if the findings match. One of these is the survey from the *Chicago Council on Global Affairs* titled "American Support for Legal Immigration Reaches New Heights," and also studies from organizations like the *Pew Research Center*. Another consideration includes the role of the media because nowadays, what people see or read pushes them into believing certain views. So, the study does not miss looking at news coverage and how issues are presented in the media to find out what people are being presented with, what and how threats are emphasized, and how the word "immigration" appears in daily speech.

To better understand this influence, the study looks at different news sources that talk about immigration in two different approaches: one concerned with threats to national security, and the other taking a humanitarian perspective toward immigrants. For the humanitarian perspective, it includes coverage like Sainato's (2025) article in *The Guardian* about farm workers and ICE initiatives, and Henao and Stanley's (2025) report for the *Associated Press* on how the Catholic Church reacts to recent immigration crackdowns. On the security aspect, the study reviews articles like the one by Gambino et al. (2025) in *The Guardian*, which discusses Trump's immigration emergency order, along with official *White House* communications that discuss immigration as a national security issue (The White House, 2025). By including these sources, the study shows how certain narratives are displayed in the media and how these narratives can influence how people view immigration and national security.

Going into the limitations of the methodology, since the survey is distributed online through personal connections, it is not expected to reach all parts of the U.S. population, and some groups might appear more than others. With the research using a snowball sampling method, the participants being included start with people personally known by the researcher, who then share it with their own contacts, so the sampling becomes partly random as it grows beyond one's social circle. Even if this method helps reach a wider range of participants, it can still create bias if the new participants are similar to the first group. Another limitation would be that only two people are being interviewed, getting two different perceptions but failing to get the opportunity to also compare the patterns among people who share similar opinions. Regarding the interview, it is important to point out that the interpretations from the answers given in the interview are merely from the researcher's knowledge and perception, which hold some subjectivity.

Despite those limitations, the methodology remains strong because it counts on different ways of collecting data, including analysis and comparisons. The survey provides a general view of citizens' opinions, while the interviews go deeper into those opinions, ending with the comparison with larger studies, helping confirm whether the findings are valid.

Results

The results of this research mainly come from a survey, which included the participation of forty-eight people, and two interviews, all directed toward U.S. citizens. Analyzing these results shows that perceptions of immigration shift depending on age group and political identity. The results combine quantitative data from the survey and qualitative information from the interviews.

Of the participants who completed the survey, regarding age, most were between 19 and 25 years old, and a smaller group were 50 and over (Figure A1, Appendix A). Regarding political identity, 43.8% identified as Democrats, 31.3% as Independents or undecided voters, 12.5% as Republicans, and 12.5% preferred not to say (Figure A2, Appendix A).

When asked about their main worry regarding immigration, a majority of participants agreed on humanitarian concerns (52.1%) (Figure A3, Appendix A). This answer was selected mainly by participants aged between 19 and 25 (64%), with few older participants selecting it (Figure A4, Appendix A). The belief that reducing immigration could harm the economy (22.9%) (Figure A3, Appendix A) was also selected mostly by younger participants (73%) (Figure A5, Appendix A). In contrast, concerns about border security were selected considerably less (6.3%) (Figure A3, Appendix A), and all who selected it were 50 and over (Figure A6, Appendix A). Only one participant believed that too many immigrants damage the economy (Figure A3, Appendix A), and this participant was also 50 and over (Figure A7, Appendix A). These results reveal that younger participants are the ones more likely to be concerned about humanitarian difficulties faced by immigrants, along with a negative impact on the economy if immigration is reduced.

Responses regarding the level of threat immigration poses to U.S. national security include a minority describing immigration as a very big (12.5%) or moderate (20.8%) threat, and a majority considering it either a small threat (33.3%) or no threat at all (33.3%) (Figure A8, Appendix A). Those who agreed that immigration is a major threat were mostly older adults (Figure A9 and A10, Appendix A). Those who selected that immigration represents a small threat or no threat at all were mostly aged between 19 and 25 (Figure A11 and A12, Appendix A). These results align with national reports like that of the *Chicago Council on Global Affairs*

(2025), which shows that public concerns about immigration have declined, ranking near the bottom of national worries.

Participants were also asked whether Trump's current immigration policies make the United States safer, less safe, or make no difference. Only 16.7% said these policies make the U.S. safer, 25% felt they make no difference, and the majority (58.3%) agreed that they make it less safe (Figure A13, Appendix A). Among those who selected "safer," half were 50 and over (Figure A14, Appendix A), while among those who selected "less safe," 75% were between 19 and 25 (Figure A15, Appendix A). The interview reflected this same pattern. One of the participants is between 20 and 25 years old, and the other between 55 and 60. The younger participant stated that Trump's policies make the country "less safe," describing them as more aggressive toward people. The older participant thinks that these policies "certainly make the U.S. safer," and associates immigration with disorder. The *Pew Research Center* (2025) also shows a similar age gap, with younger citizens being less likely to support the Trump administration's immigration actions.

From the claim that controlling the border is the same as protecting national security, we found that 16.7% of participants strongly agreed, 31.3% somewhat agreed, 29.2% somewhat disagreed, and 22.9% strongly disagreed (Figure A16, Appendix A). Those who agreed were more likely to be Republicans or Independents (Figure A17, Appendix A), and those who strongly disagreed were mostly Democrats (82%) (Figure A18, Appendix A). The *Pew Research Center* (2025) also found similar divisions when it came to political parties, showing that partisan identity is connected to how one perceives national security and immigration.

When asked if their views on immigration had changed in the last year, a minority group said they had become more concerned about national security, more than half (58.3%) said they

had become more concerned about humanitarian issues, and 35.4% said their views have stayed the same (Figure A19, Appendix A). Those who became more concerned about humanitarian issues were mainly Democrats and Independents, and those whose concerns grew toward national security were more likely Republicans and no Democrats (Figure A20 and A21, Appendix A).

Regarding whether immigration is seen as a challenge or an opportunity, 43.7% of participants said it is an opportunity, 27.1% said it is a challenge, and the rest said both (Figure A22, Appendix A). Those who viewed immigration as an opportunity tended to say their opinions were influenced by their social circle (81%), and those who viewed it as a challenge tended to say their opinions were not influenced by others (54%) (Figure A23 and A24, Appendix A). In the interviews, the younger participant explained that their views were shaped mainly by personal experiences, stating that they have "a lot of family and friends that are immigrants." The older participant said their views come mainly from personal study, and that their social circle can "provide me with their points of view … I will use that to evaluate my position, but I make up my own mind."

Participants' preferences on sources of information also differed. Social media platforms were the most recurrent source for immigration news (41.7%), followed by online news websites (29.2%) and television (12.5%) (Figure A25, Appendix A). Younger participants relied more on social media, while older participants relied more on television (Figure A26 and A27, Appendix A). Perceptions of the way in which media presents immigration also varied by source (Figure A28, Appendix A). Participants consuming television news were evenly split among seeing coverage as fair, exaggerated as a threat, too sympathetic toward immigrants, or inconsistent. Those relying on online news and social media were more likely to feel that immigration is often

exaggerated as a threat or that it varies depending on the account or platform (Figure A29, A30, and A31, Appendix A).

Overall, the results suggest that age, political identity, and media exposure are the main factors influencing participants' perceptions. Younger participants leaned toward humanitarian and economic interpretations, while older participants emphasized border control and security. These patterns match national findings from organizations such as the *Pew Research Center* (2025) and the *Chicago Council on Global Affairs* (2025).

Discussion

The results from the survey show that most participants, particularly the younger ones, do not consider immigration mainly as a national security threat. Instead, they tend to focus on humanitarian issues, which include all challenges immigrants face when coming into the country, along with the positive impact they believe immigrants have on the economy. At the same time, a significant number of older participants expressed concerns about border security and safety, and the older interview participant reflected this pattern by describing immigration as "disorder" and connecting it to crime.

Snider (2024) explains that when people are affected by terrorism, developing fear of it and feeling threatened, they are more likely to support stricter immigration policies. We can witness this kind of news on immigration creating fear even in official reports from *The White House* (2025), which described immigration as an "invasion." The media reports mentioned in the methodology, like the article by Gambino et al. (2025), demonstrate how Trump's immigration decisions were described as urgent emergency measures. These ways of presenting immigration explain why some people continue to perceive immigration as a security threat. In

the survey, older participants were the ones to worry about security issues. This matches Puddy's (2024) theory that when people talk about immigration and crime related to one another, their views may change. Connecting the two issues can increase concerns about safety.

However, the survey results also question the belief that securitization inevitably leads to stronger support for stricter policies. Although the government frames immigration in security terms, younger participants did not accept this view. Many selected humanitarian concerns as their main worry (Figure A4, Appendix A), and several believed that immigration, when referring to the economic aspect of it, strengthens the country rather than weakens it (Figure A5, Appendix A). This emphasis on humanitarian issues can be understood when considering the broader information environment people are exposed to. Reports such as *Human Rights Watch* (2025), Sainato (2025), and Henao and Stanley (2025) that are focused on humanitarian concerns increase awareness of the difficulties immigrants face, helping explain how younger participants might interpret immigration. We find in Blackburn and Callaghan (2025) that even people who support enforcement often want limits on where and how it is used.

From the interviews, we get a more personal narrative, and they also helped to clarify some of the reasons behind the survey responses. Participant #1, who is between 20 and 25, considers immigration mainly as a humanitarian worry, stating "you can't treat this, nor any other issue, leaving that part behind." Participant #1 thought that the U.S. was "built on immigrants," and pointed to historical figures like Hamilton and Lafayette. This participant believes national security includes topics like "livable wages, free healthcare, and human rights." Their claim on Trump's current policies is that they make the country "less safe" as they include a "more aggressive" approach toward people.

On the other hand, Participant #2, who is between 55 and 60, perceives immigration mainly as a security issue. When trying to define the current immigration issue going on in the U.S., the first word that came to mind for Participant #2 was "disorder," and they also agreed with the claim that controlling the border is the same as protecting national security. They believe Trump's current policies "certainly make the U.S. safer" and that illegal immigration leads to increased crime because these people "are in the shadows of society." Snider's (2024) research shows that when people feel more threatened, specifically when they relate immigration with danger, they tend to give extra attention to security concerns and support stricter policies. Participant #2 feels like mainstream media is "too sympathetic" toward immigrants, emphasizing the gap in how different media are perceived, as noted by the *Pew Research Center* (2025), which reveals that Republicans and Democrats have very different levels of trust in news about immigration and how they interpret the representation media gives to this issue.

The overall results suggest that not everyone interprets securitization in the same way. The survey showed the following divisions: younger participants were more likely to focus on humanitarian concerns or economic benefits, while older participants were more focused on border control, crime, and national disorder. Participant #1 relied on "personal experiences… family and friends that are immigrants," which supports the tendency of younger participants to prioritize humanitarian concerns. Participant #2, however, explained that their views came from their "study of the actual issue" and that they agreed with stricter regulations, which relates to how older survey participants felt about security. Together, the survey and interviews show that securitization does not affect all groups equally. Instead, people interpret immigration depending on their identities, beliefs, and personal experiences. This means that public opinion is an important part of understanding immigration arguments.

The research presents certain limitations, aside from its contributions. The survey included a small sample, which was mainly gathered online and through personal connections, so the results do not represent the views of all U.S. citizens. The research had just two interviews, which makes it hard to obtain a broad variety of personal narratives. The way interviews are interpreted depends somewhat on how the researcher interprets the answers, bringing in some subjectivity. The limitations listed here do not erase the findings. Instead, they suggest that the results should be considered more an investigation than a final conclusion.

This research works as a basis for future ones. Larger surveys could look into whether age differences still influence people's views on immigration, considering the Chicago Council's (2025) findings that support for legal immigration is increasing. Also, having more interviews could help researchers see how personal experiences, political identity, and media influence come together to shape how people perceive events. Future research might look into how people understand official government declarations, like the language used in White House executive orders, and see how different groups feel both emotionally and politically. Expanding the research to include more diverse communities could help in understanding how local circumstances influence national security and humanitarian perspectives.

Conclusions

This research looked into how U.S. citizens view immigration during Trump's current presidency, analyzing whether they perceive it as a threat to national security or worry about the humanitarian issues faced by immigrants. The findings show that perceptions shift depending on age groups and political identities. Most younger participants view immigration mainly as a humanitarian issue, emphasizing the challenges that immigrants face, and they also highlighted the positive economic impact immigration can bring to the country. On the other hand, older

participants tended to link immigration with border security, crime, and national disorder. Citizens react to political arguments in different ways based on their backgrounds and the factors that shape their views.

In answering the research question, the study demonstrated that securitization does not influence all groups equally. Some participants accepted the government's interpretation of immigration as a threat, but many refused to go with this idea and pointed out the weight of humanitarian issues instead. The way immigration is shown in media is crucial as well. Each platform presents it in a unique way, and people understand these messages differently. This was supported by both the interviews and the survey.

The research contributes to understanding public opinion by showing how political communication and social context influence perceptions of immigration. It demonstrates how beneficial it can be to combine different methods together. By looking at survey patterns and personal experiences, it becomes easier to understand why people perceive immigration the way they do. Even though the research has some limitations, including a small sample and only two interviews, the results still provide valuable information on how people form their opinions in a time of political division.

Future research could include a wider range of participants to explore age group differences in more detail and look more closely at how different media environments affect public opinion. It is important to understand these factors because immigration continues to be a key issue in the U.S. politics, and how citizens perceive it will influence current debates and solutions.

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Appendix A

Survey Graphs

Figure A1

Age distribution of survey participants.
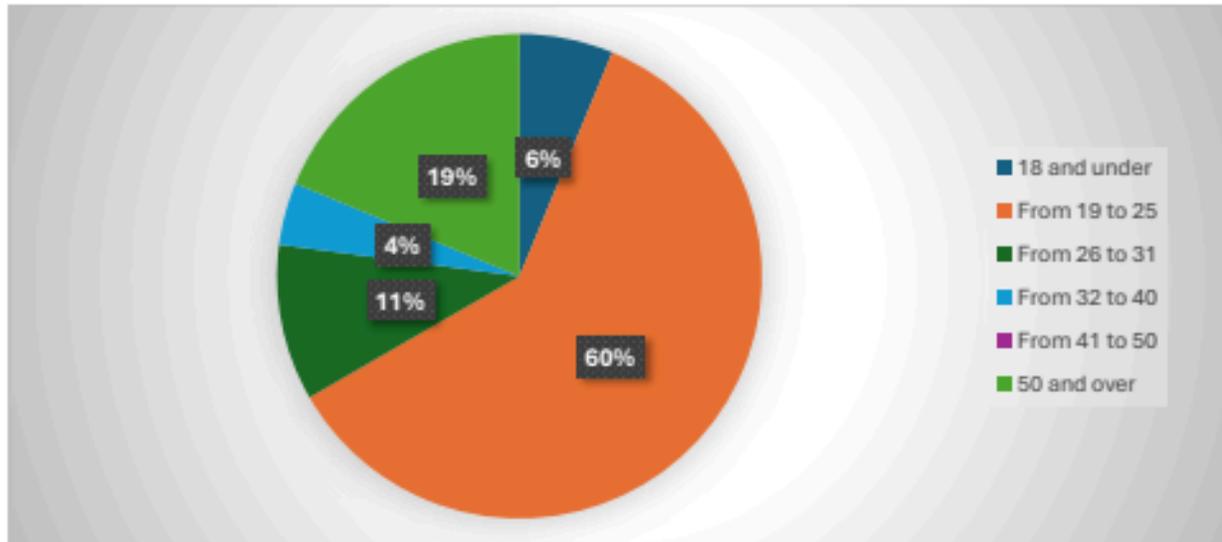
Figure A2

Political identity of survey participants.
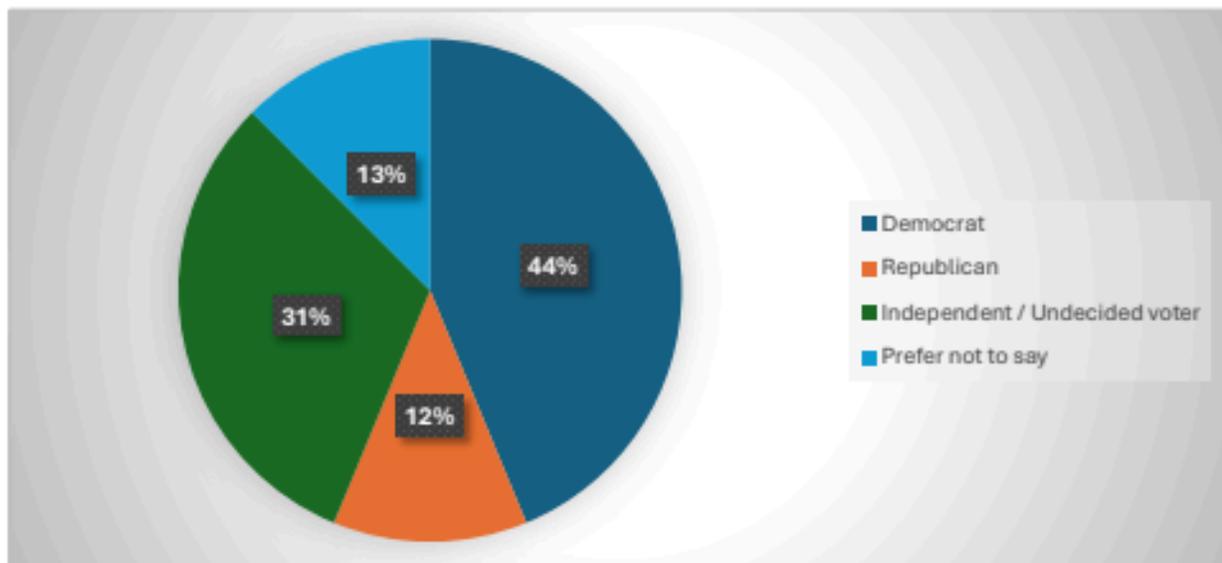
Figure A3

Participants' main concerns about immigration in the United States.
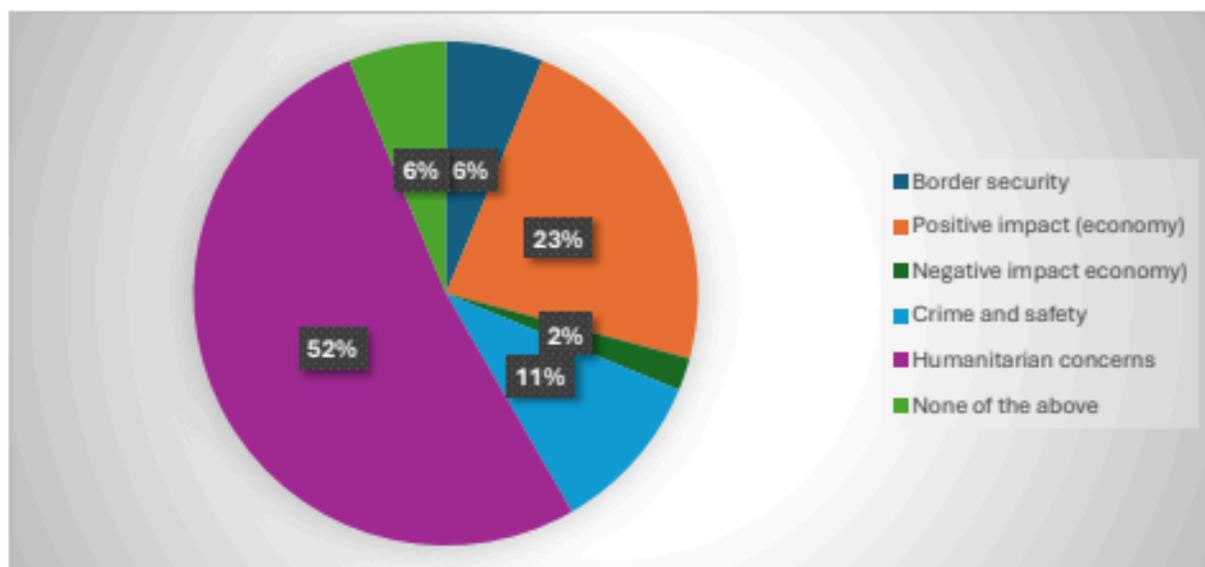
Figure A4

Age-group breakdown of participants who selected humanitarian concerns as their main worry about immigration.
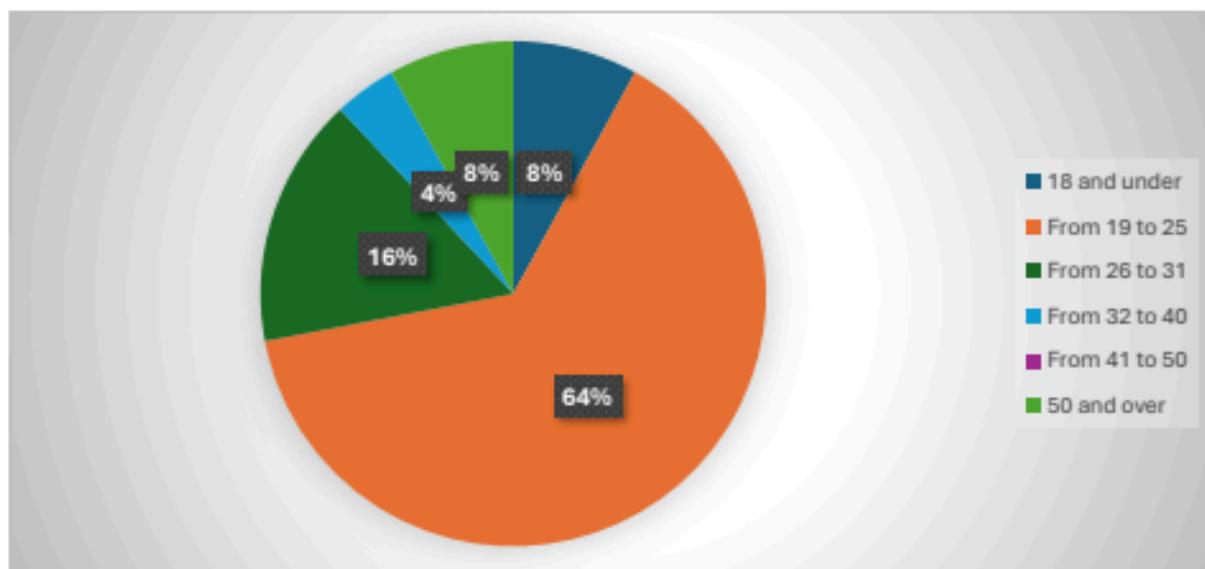
Figure A5

Age-group breakdown of participants who selected that reducing immigration could harm the economy (immigrants bring a positive impact) as their main worry about immigration.
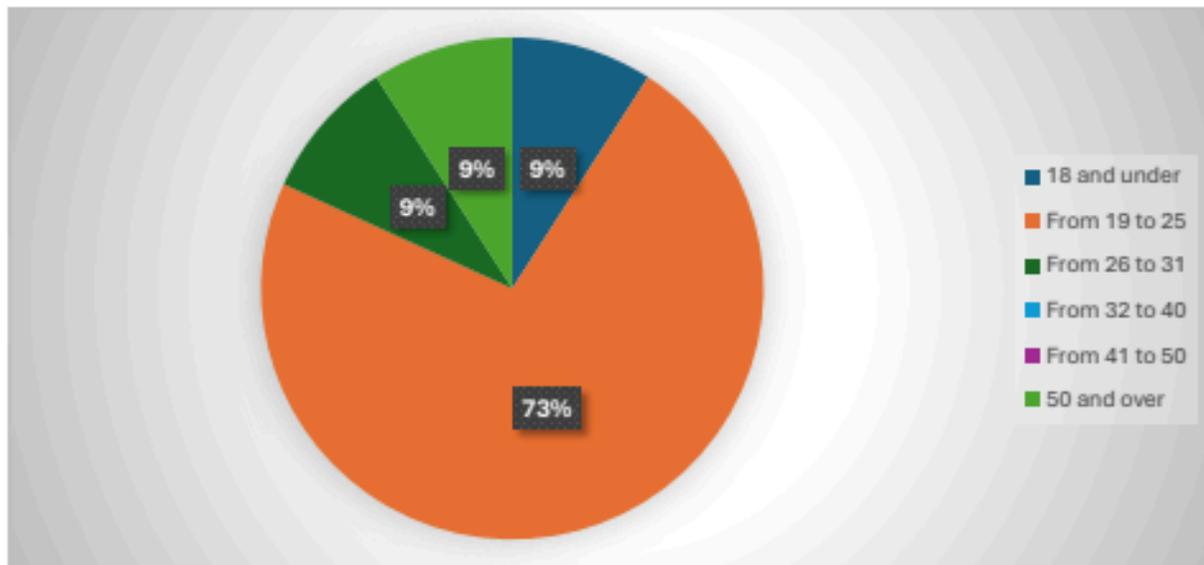
Figure A6

Age-group breakdown of participants who selected border security as their main worry about immigration.
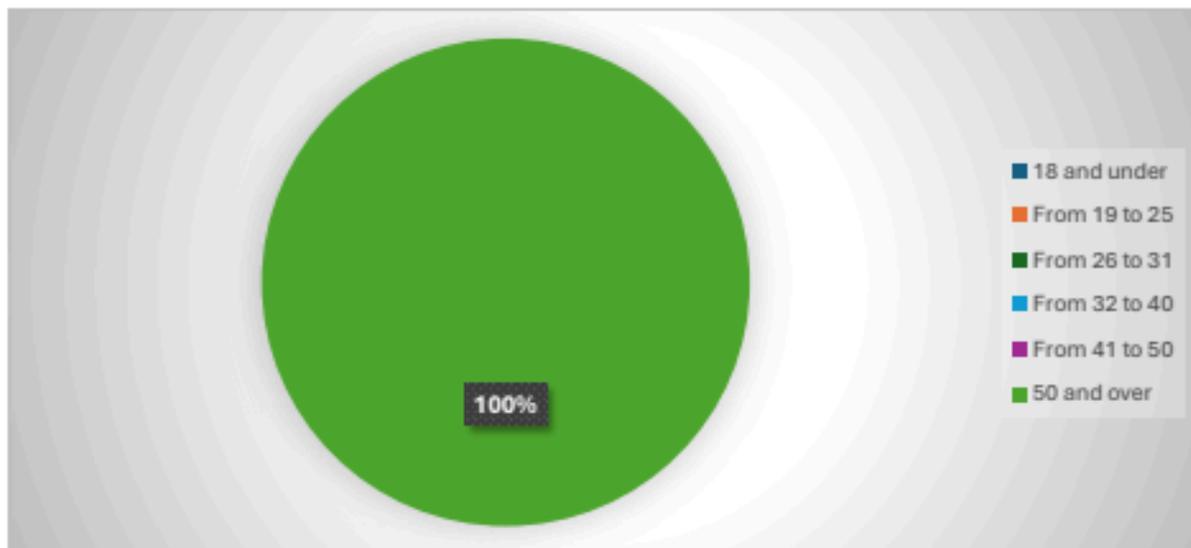
Figure A7

Age-group breakdown of participants who selected that the presence of too many immigrants damages the economy (negative impact) as their main worry about immigration.
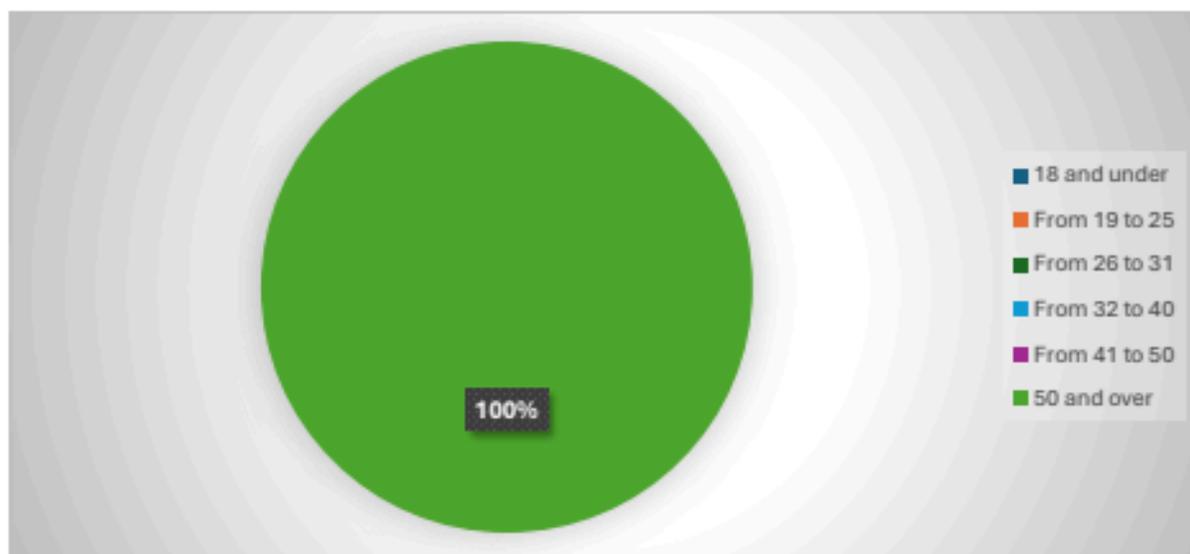
Figure A8

Participants' responses to whether immigration is a security threat.
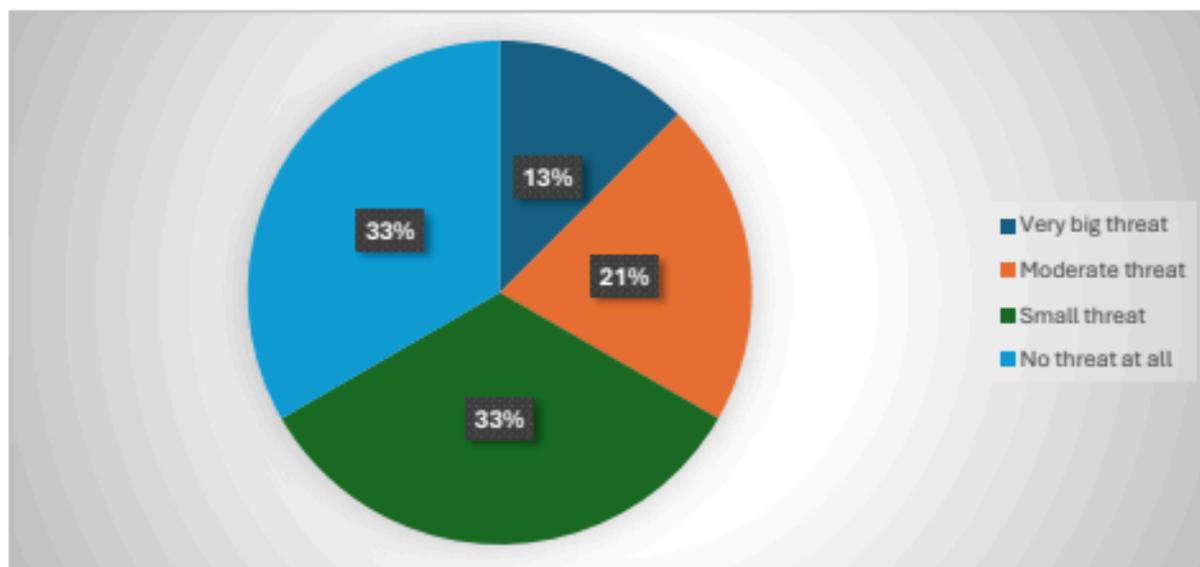
Figure A9

Age-group breakdown of participants who perceive immigration as a very big security threat.
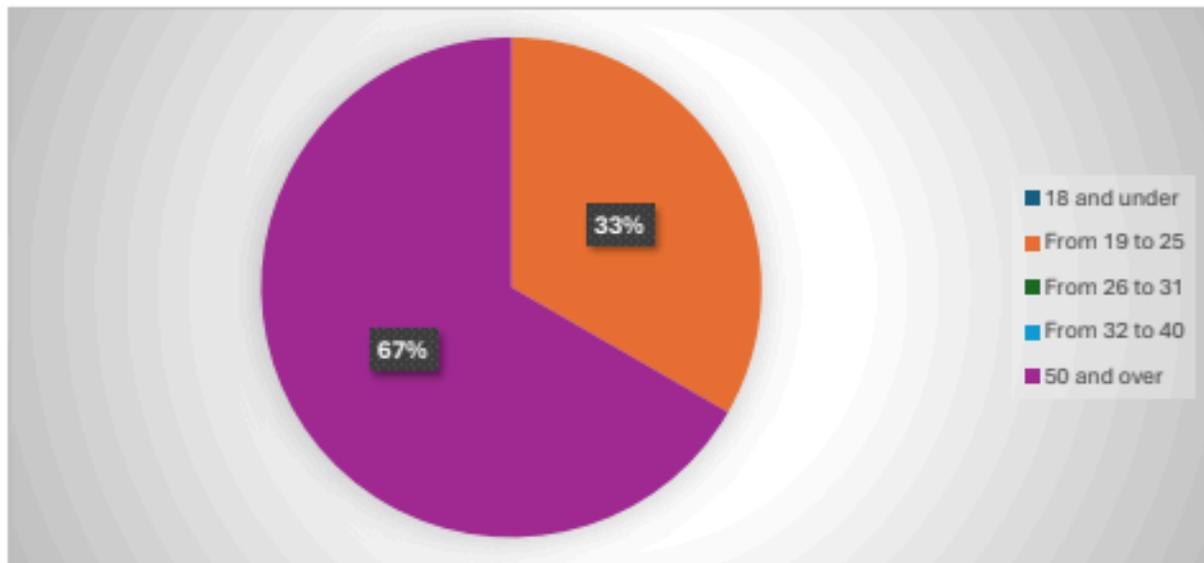
Figure A10

Age-group breakdown of participants who perceive immigration as a moderate security threat.
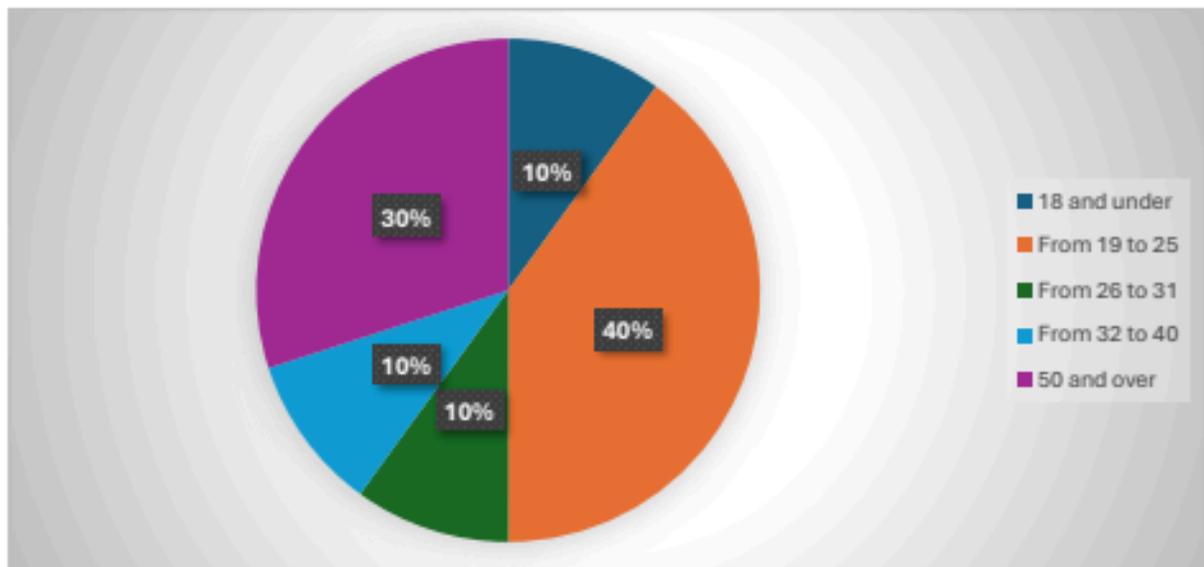
Figure A11

Age-group breakdown of participants who perceive immigration as a small security threat.
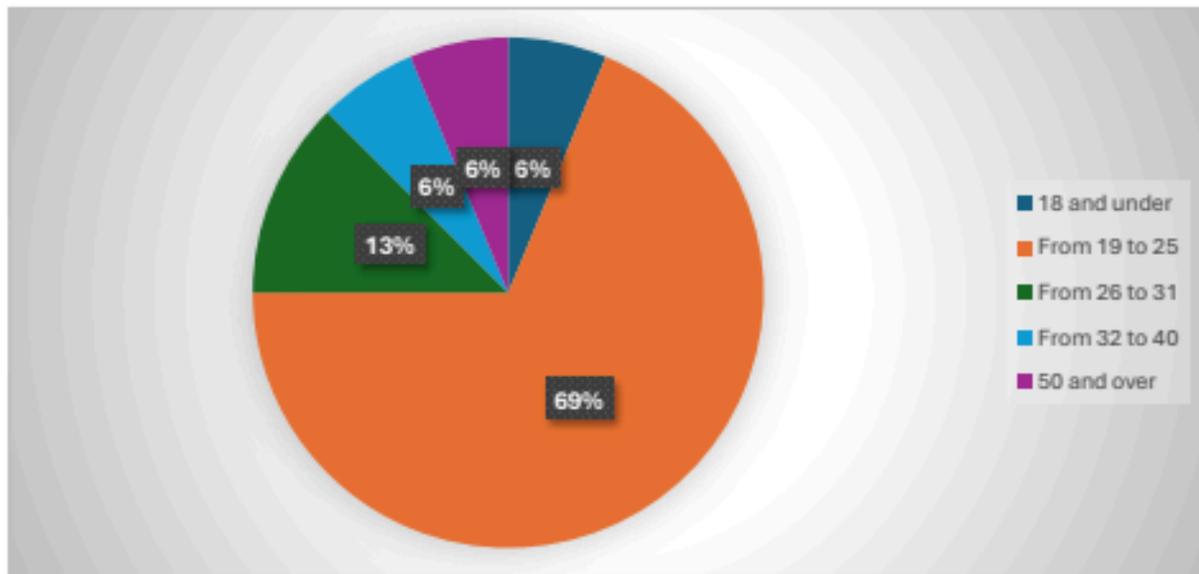
Figure A12

Age-group breakdown of participants who perceive immigration as no security threat at all.
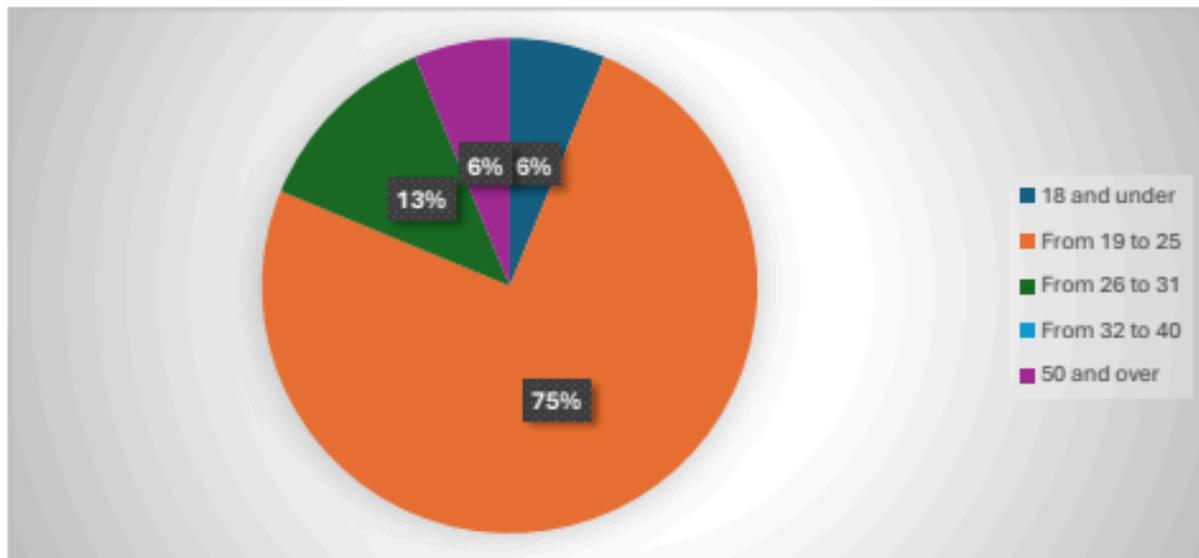
Figure A13

Participants' opinion on whether Trump's current immigration policies make the United States

safer, less safe, or make no difference.
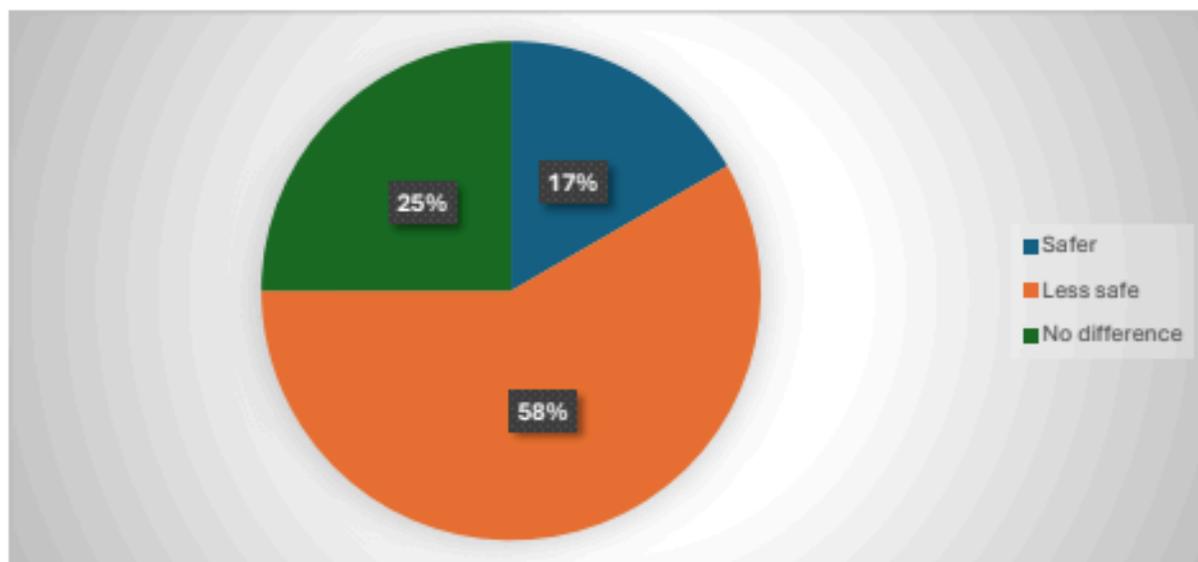
Figure A14

Age-group breakdown of participants who think that Trump's current immigration policies make

the U.S. safer.
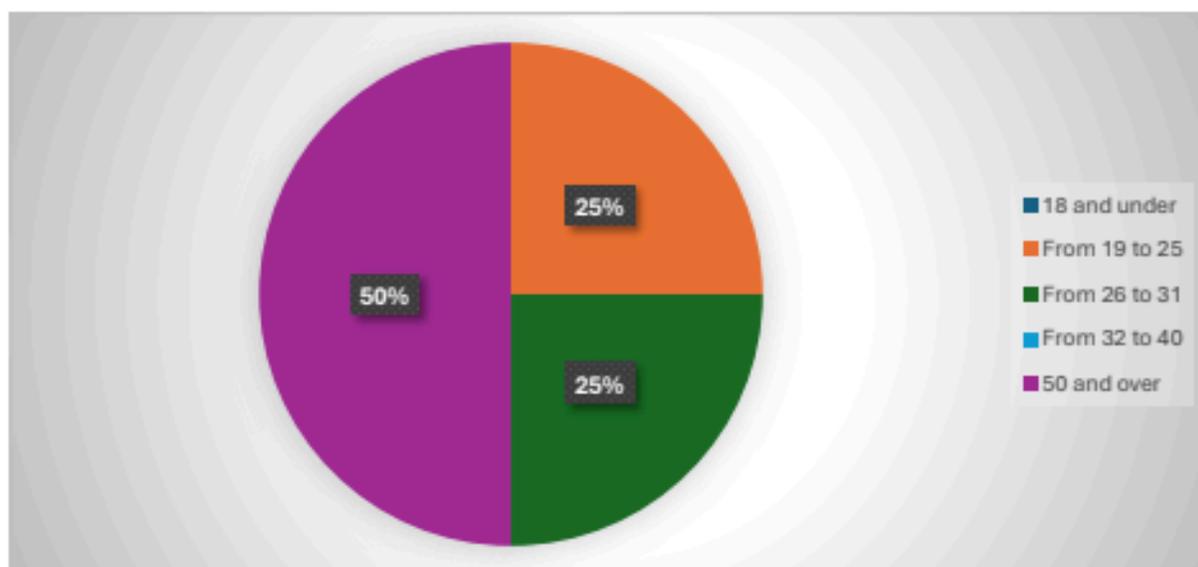
Figure A15

Age-group breakdown of participants who think that Trump's current immigration policies make

the U.S. less safe.
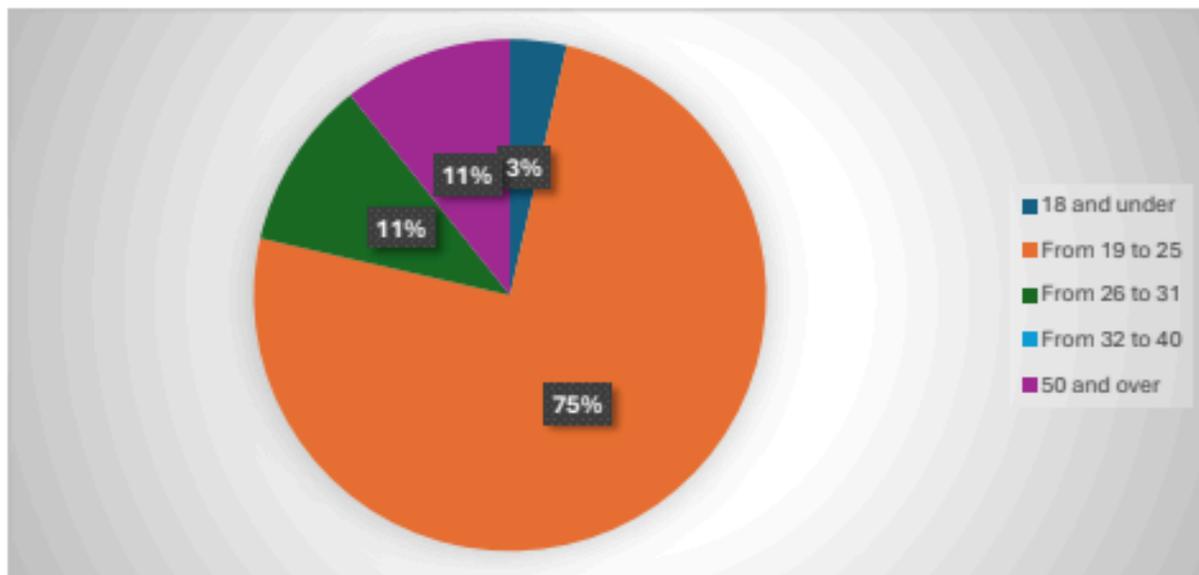
Figure A16

Participants' agreement or disagreement with the claim that controlling the border is the same as

protecting national security.
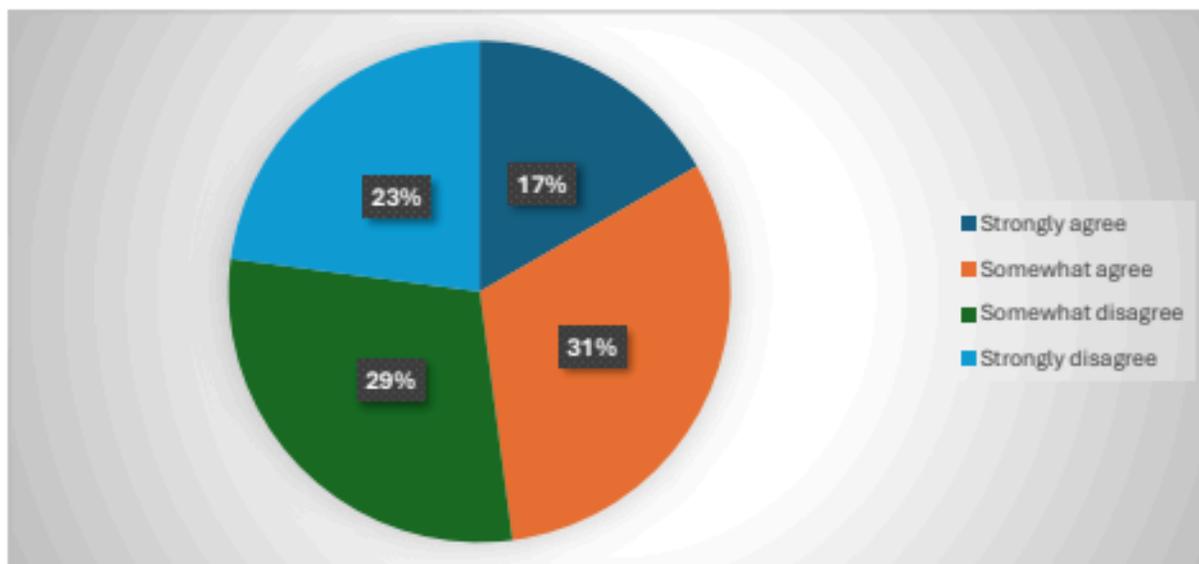
Figure A17

Political-party breakdown of participants who strongly agreed with the claim that controlling the

border is the same as protecting national security.
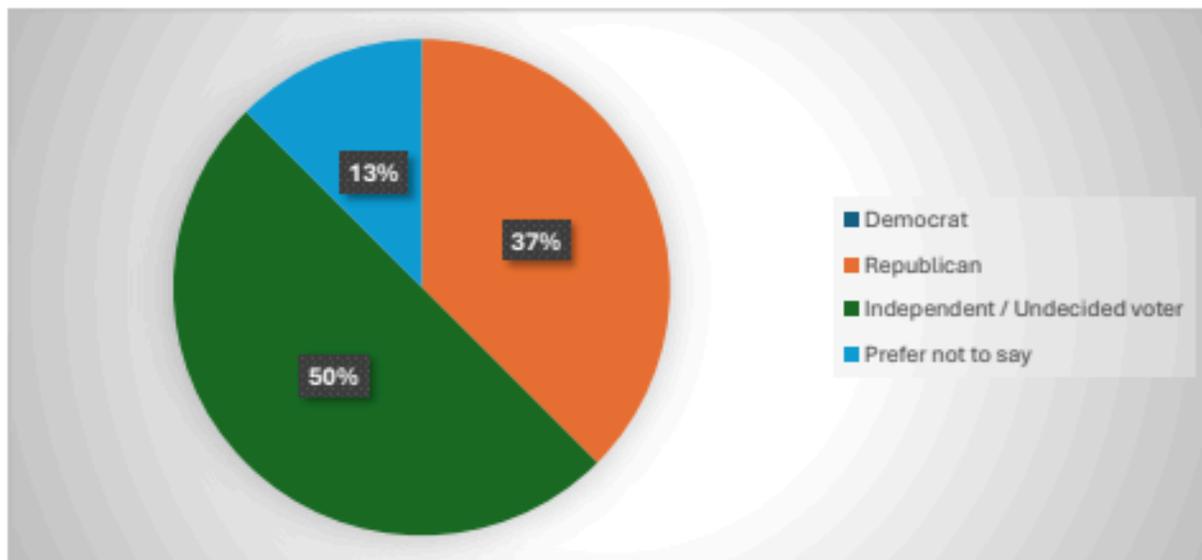
Figure A18

Political-party breakdown of participants who strongly disagreed with the claim that controlling

the border is the same as protecting national security.
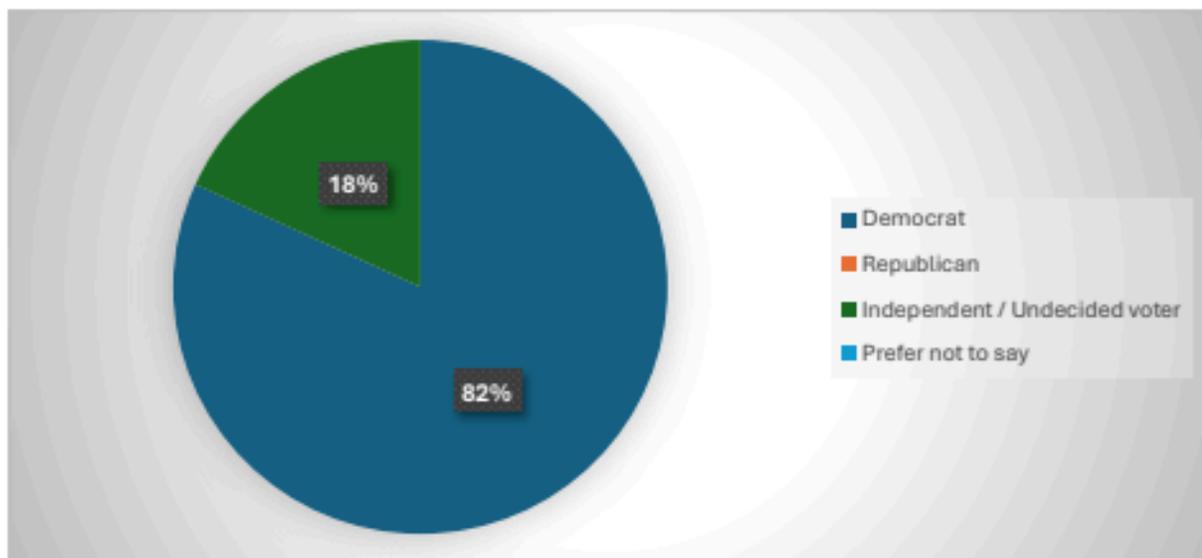
Figure A19

Participants' responses on whether their views on immigration have changed in the past year or

not.
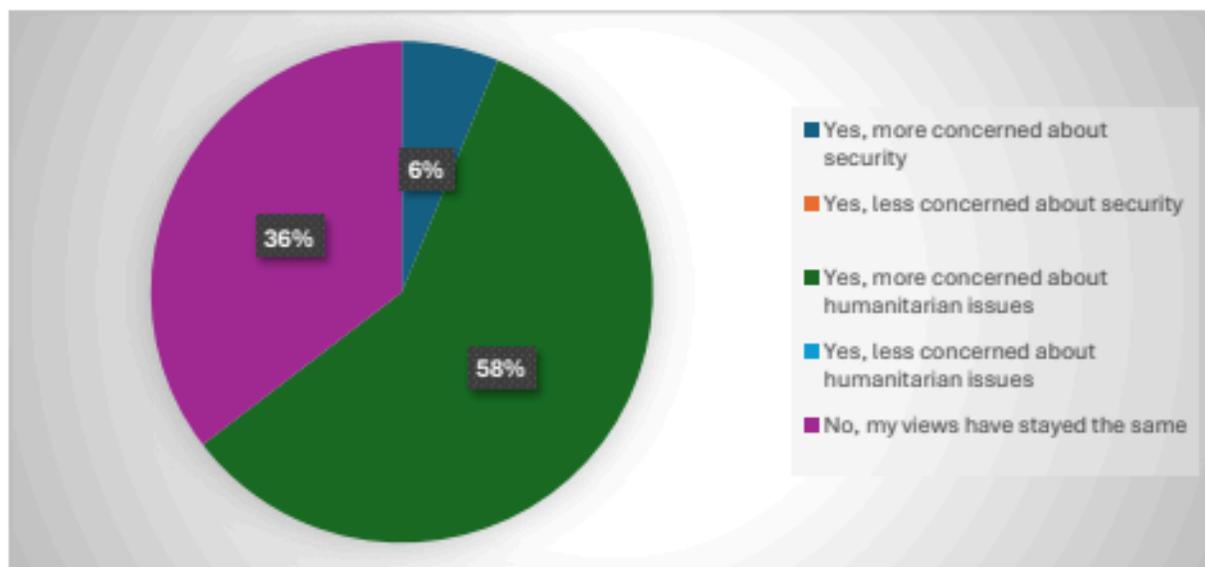
Figure A20

Political-party breakdown of participants whose views have changed in the past year and who are

now more concerned about humanitarian issues.
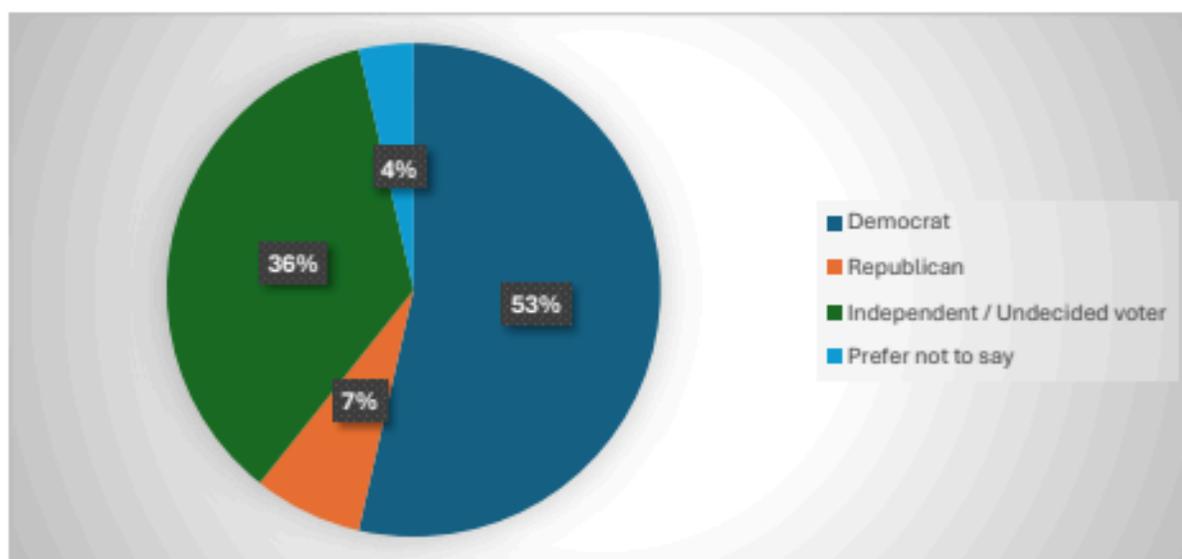
Figure A21

Political-party breakdown of participants whose views have changed in the past year and who are

now more concerned about security.
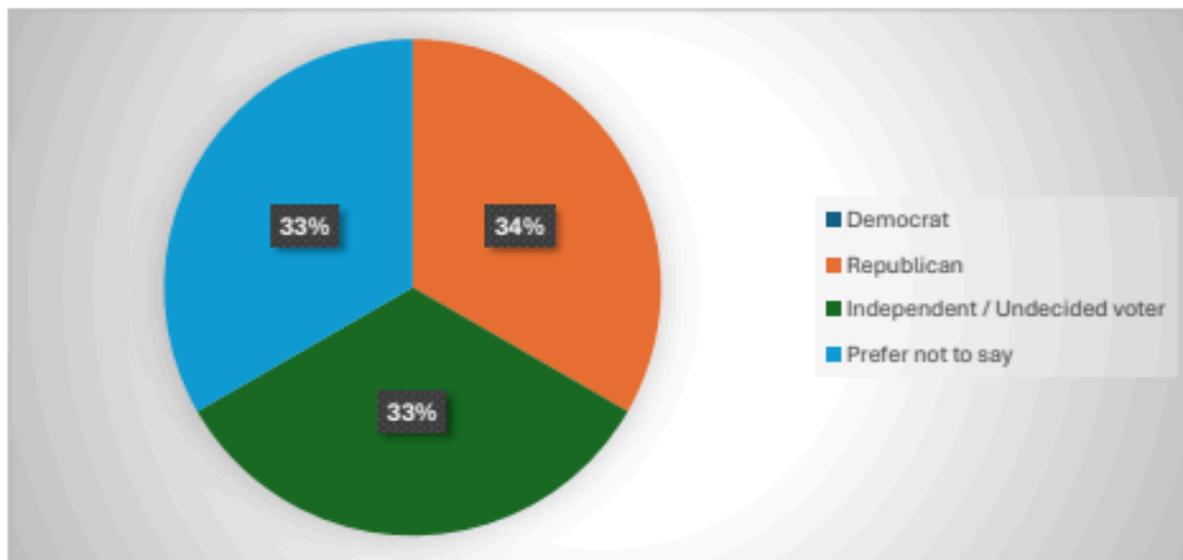
Figure A22

Participants' responses regarding whether they see immigration as a challenge or as an

opportunity for the United States.
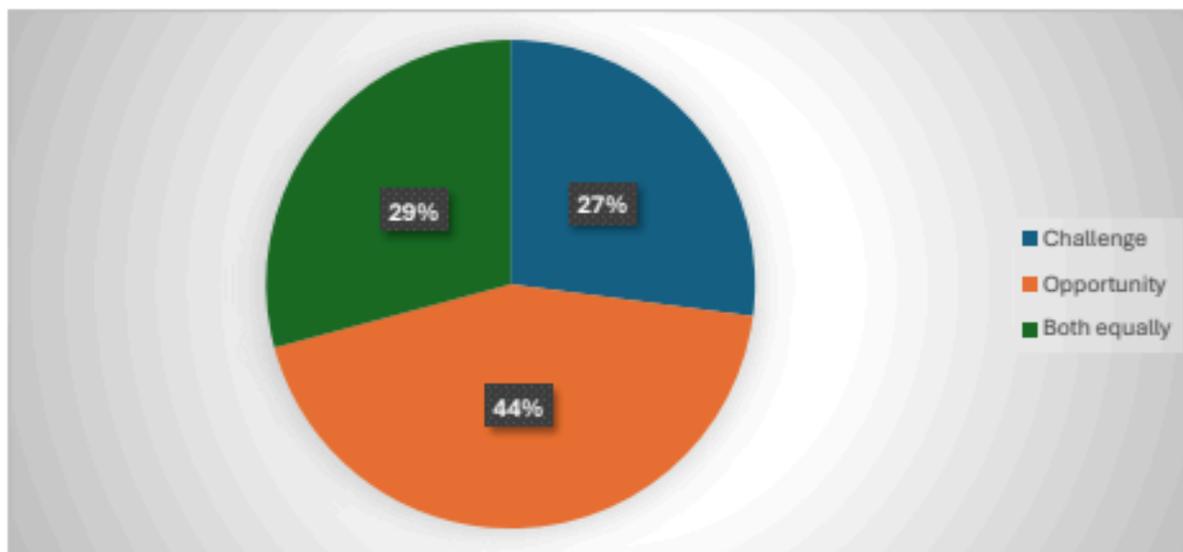
Figure A23

Breakdown of participants whose opinions are influenced or not influenced by their social circle

and who view immigration more as an opportunity.
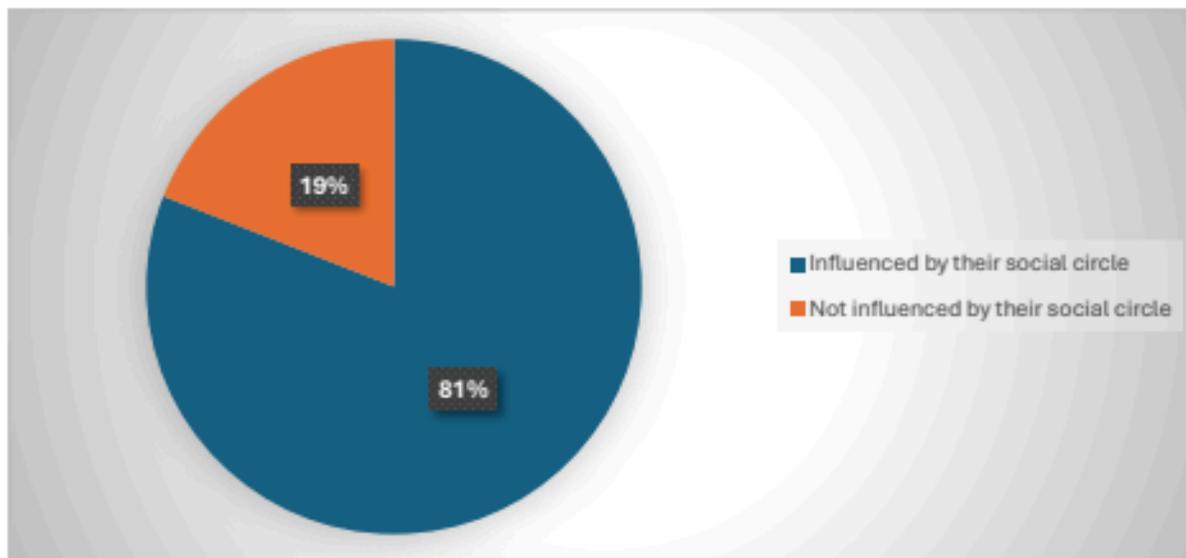
Figure A24

Breakdown of participants whose opinions are influenced or not influenced by their social circle

and who view immigration more as a challenge.
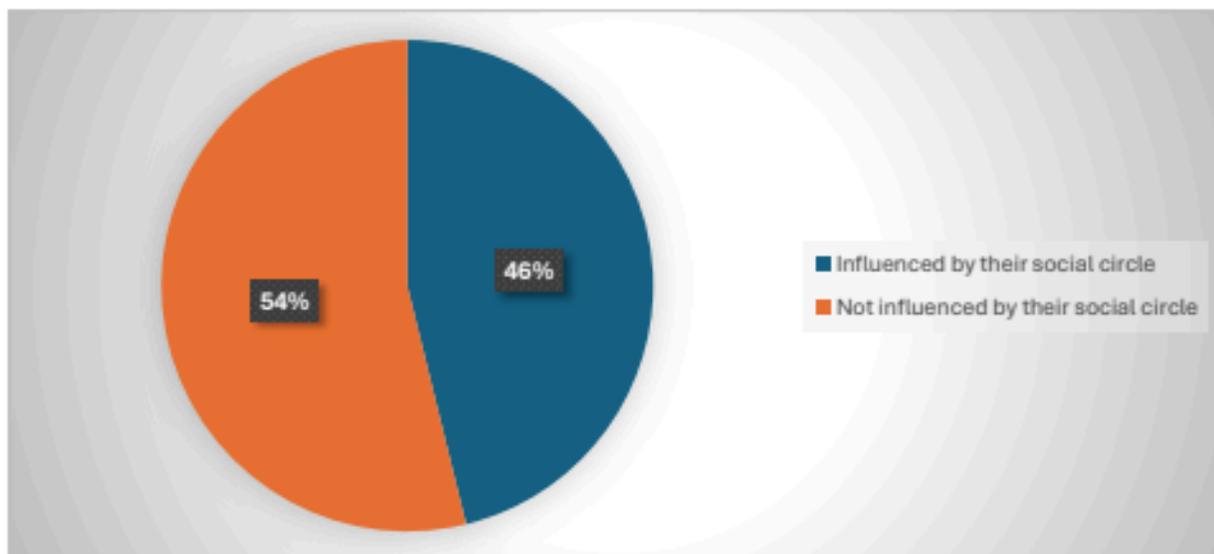
Figure A25

Participants' responses regarding the media sources they rely on most for immigration news.
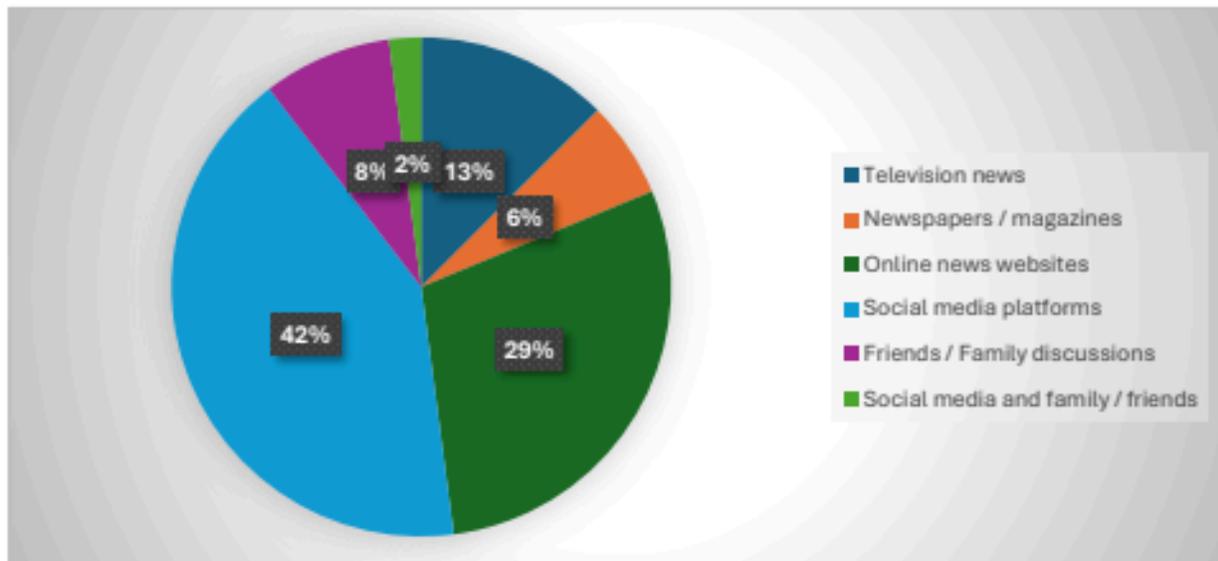
Figure A26

Age-group breakdown of participants who rely most on social media platforms for immigration news.
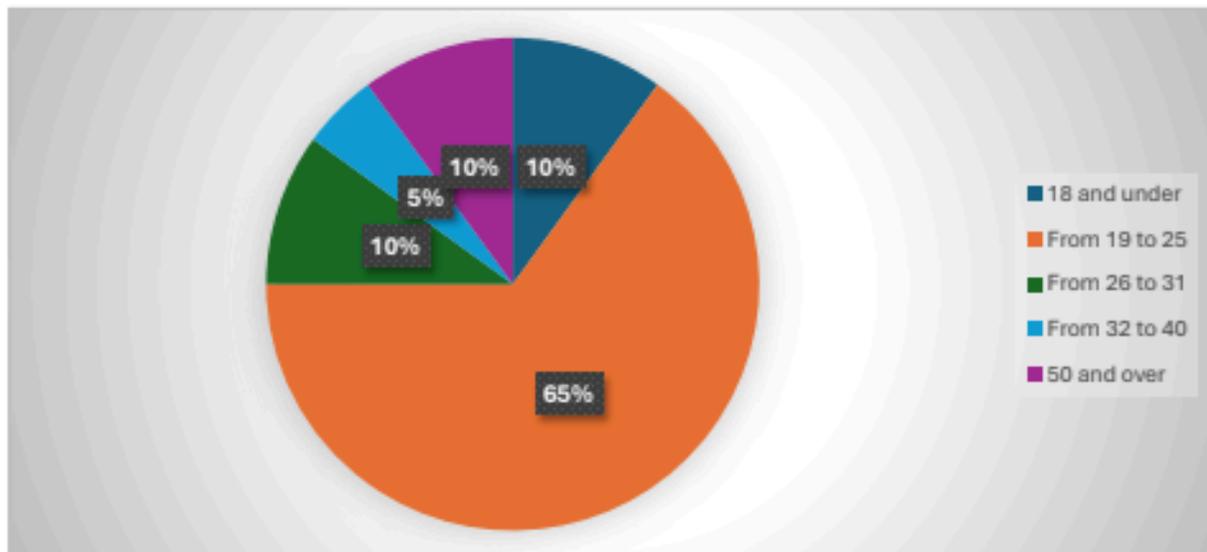
Figure A27

Age-group breakdown of participants who rely most on television news for immigration news.
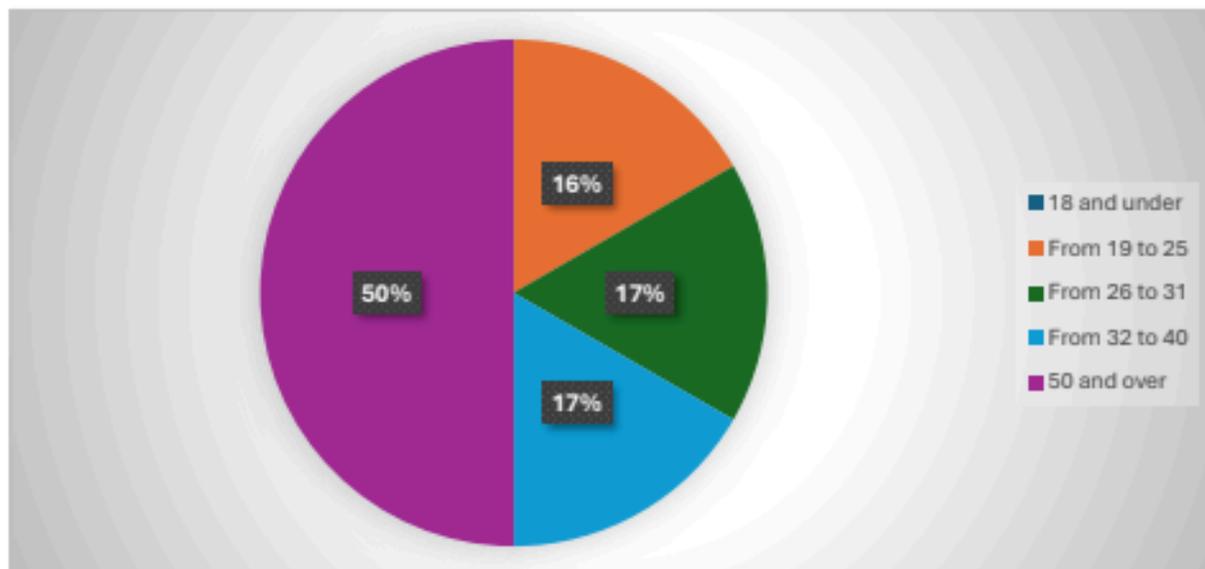
Figure A28

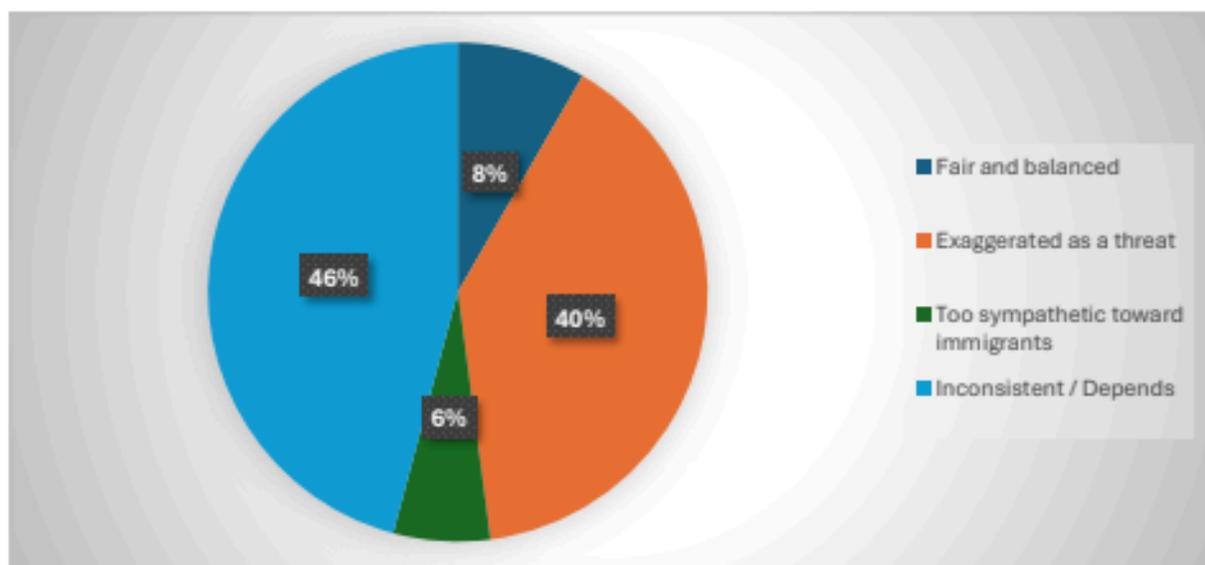Participants' responses regarding their perceptions of media coverage.

Figure A29

Breakdown of participants who rely most on television news for immigration news regarding
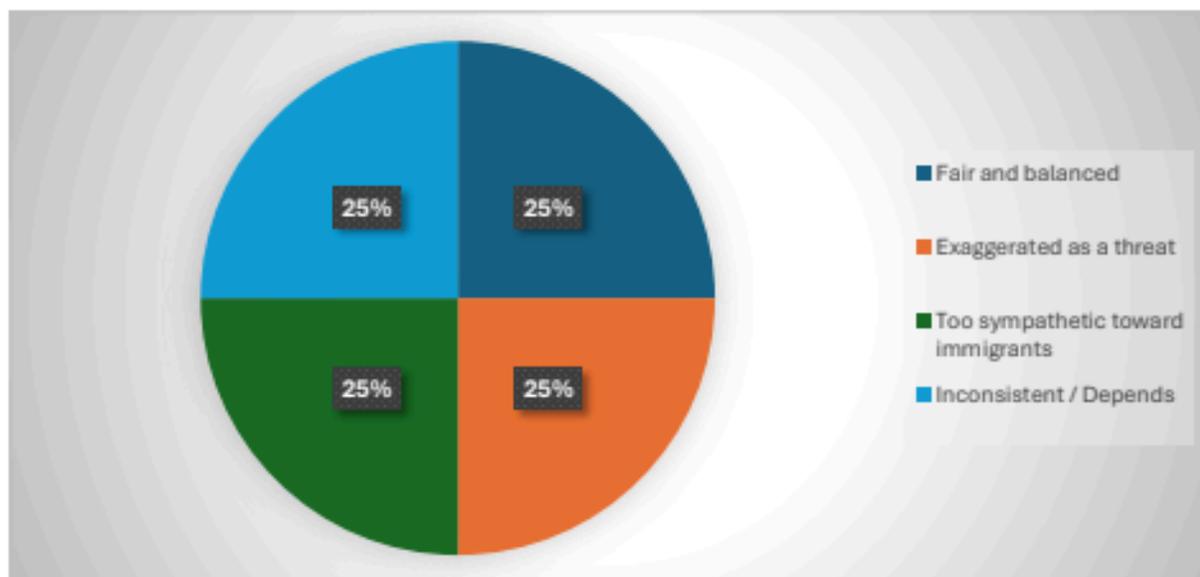
their perceptions of media coverage.

Figure A30

Breakdown of participants who rely most on online news websites for immigration news

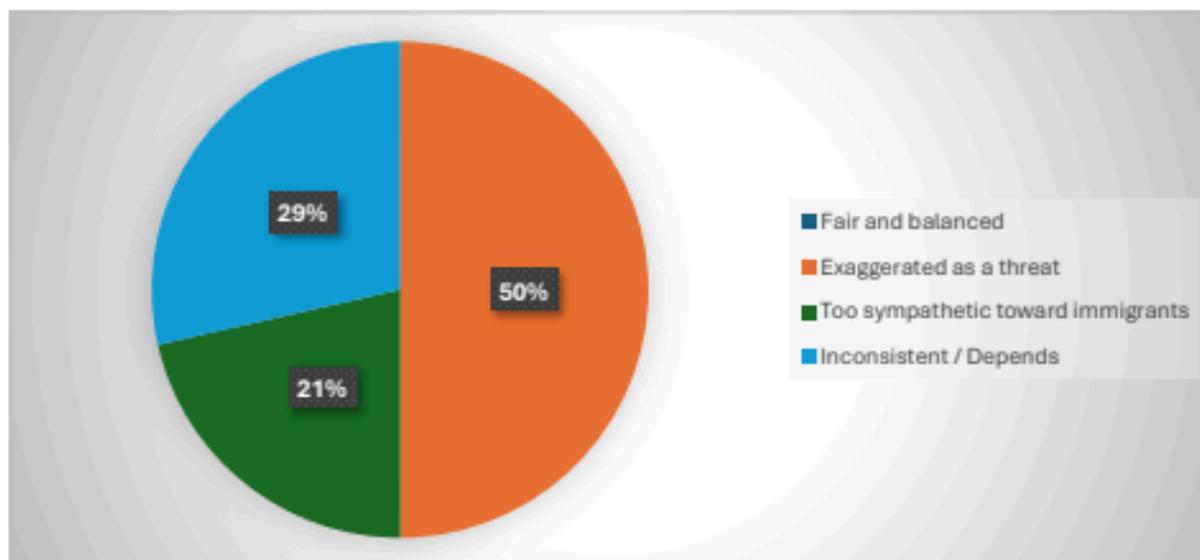regarding their perceptions of media coverage.

Figure A31

Breakdown of participants who rely most on social media platforms for immigration news

regarding their perceptions of media coverage.