Redefining Sanctuary

Analysis of public attitudes and media coverage of sanctuary jurisdictions and related immigration policies
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ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITY AGENDA

The Opportunity Agenda was founded in 2006 with the mission of building the national will to expand opportunity in America. Focused on moving hearts, minds, and policy over time, the organization works with social justice groups, leaders, and movements to advance solutions that expand opportunity for everyone. Through active partnerships, The Opportunity Agenda synthesizes and translates research on barriers to opportunity and corresponding solutions, uses communications and media to understand and influence public opinion, and identifies and advocates for policies that improve people’s lives.

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INTRODUCTION

This past February, as media reports began to circulate detailing a surge in Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) raids in communities across the country, Americans took to social media to offer support and warnings to their neighbors. In the days that followed, as the true scope of the raids became evident, city leaders issued defiant messages critiquing the raids and reaffirming their support of immigrant communities. These efforts on the part of members of the public and elected officials secure refuge and safety as core principles of ‘sanctuary’— principles that defines communities across the country currently providing much needed legal protection to undocumented immigrants and their families.

A sanctuary jurisdiction can be defined as a locality that limits its participation in federal immigration enforcement efforts as a matter of policy. There are an estimated 47 sanctuary jurisdictions in the United States as of December 2016, which, alongside policies like Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA), have enabled tens of thousands of undocumented immigrants to secure better paying jobs, and to pursue otherwise-unavailable education opportunities.

Despite the integral role such immigration policies continue to play, the new administration has taken persistent steps to undo them. In recent months, there has been an increase in aggressive immigration enforcement policies, the latest of which includes the ending of DAPA and DACA programs initiated by President Obama.

In the face of these challenges, local governments, immigrant rights’ advocates, and policymakers have reaffirmed their commitment to the protection of immigrant communities. However, central to their continued success will be understanding how key audiences are currently thinking and talking about pro-immigration policies and immigration more broadly, and developing effective strategies to challenge anti-immigrant discourse. What issues and policies currently define the sanctuary jurisdictions debate? How does the current discussion of sanctuary jurisdictions intersect with DACA, and overall discussions of immigration in media coverage, social media discourse, and public opinion? How can pro-immigrant advocates ensure the continued support of immigrants and their families in an increasingly anti-immigrant climate? Finally, how can pro-immigrant advocates continue to uplift the voices and leadership of immigrants in a climate where many may feel reluctant to speak out?

In an effort to answer these critical questions, we embarked on a three-part analysis, which consisted of an examination of existing public opinion research, a content analysis of media coverage, and an analysis of social media discourse since January 2016.

Our analysis of existing public opinion research revealed that when asked specifically about deportation policies and levels of support for programs such as DACA, the majority of Americans support the protection of due process that sanctuary jurisdictions provide and, critically, oppose the types of aggressive deportation efforts promoted by the current administration. Our examination of social media data shows there is currently fertile ground for social justice advocates seeking to protect sanctuary jurisdictions and challenge misinformation that attempts to conflate the protection of undocumented immigrants with the promotion of crime. At the same time, our analysis of media coverage over a 20-month period suggests there is currently a pressing need for more coordinated messaging among pro-immigrant advocates.

This report begins with an overview of our findings from our analysis of social media trends over an 18-month period, followed by findings from our analysis of existing public opinion research, and mainstream media coverage. We conclude with a series of recommendations for messaging and audience engagement through social media outreach.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Providing a welcoming safe haven to newcomers and those in need is a principle that has defined and continues to define communities throughout the nation. Policies such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and so-called sanctuary policies adopted by municipalities across the country, have enabled millions of individuals to pursue a better life for themselves and their family. Despite the positive role such commonsense immigration policies play in the lives of all Americans, the current Administration has posed numerous threats to welcoming communities and needed programs like DACA—actions that are in direct violation of our values of equal opportunity and dignity.

In an effort to better understand how members of the public are currently thinking and talking about sanctuary policies and immigration more broadly, and how the mainstream media is currently reporting on the issues, we conducted a three-part analysis of existing public opinion research, media coverage, and social media discourse over an 18-month time frame. Central questions tackled include: What issues and policies currently define the overall immigration debate? How does the current discussion of sanctuary jurisdictions intersect with DACA, Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA), and overall discussions of immigration in media coverage, social media discourse, and public opinion? How can pro-immigrant advocates ensure the continued support of immigrants and their families in an increasingly anti-immigrant climate?

Public opinion and social media discourse indicate that a plurality of Americans understand the importance of remaining a welcoming country, while the majority consistently support a pathway to citizenship for immigrants currently in the United States. Despite these positive trends, public opinion and social media data also suggest that many segments of the public’s views on immigration are extremely malleable, particularly when immigration is framed in the context of crime and public safety. The conflation between immigration and public safety has come to dominate media coverage of sanctuary jurisdictions in recent months, reflecting the pressing need for coordinated messaging among pro-immigrant advocates and policymakers. In an era where anti-immigrant and openly xenophobic rhetoric is becoming more prominent in political discourse, understanding how to effectively challenge such discourse, and tell compelling and affirmative stories about the integral role immigrants play in our nation, will prove vital.

Our goal is to provide pro-immigrant advocates, policymakers, activists, and media commentators with a clear understanding of the current public discourse across a variety of media, trends over time, and strategies for how to galvanize public support for immigration policies that support all communities.

MAJOR RESEARCH FINDINGS INCLUDE:

SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSIS

References to “sanctuary cities” have increased significantly in social media discourse in recent months:
Between January 2016 and November 2016, references to “sanctuary cities” went from occupying five percent of the total conversation (based on the search terms included in our monitor; See: Methodology) to 19 percent of the total conversation.

The language associated with sanctuary jurisdictions and deportation has shifted, with references to Donald Trump and crime seeing a sharp increase in online discussions: Since February 2017, talk of crime and public safety has become even more closely tied to “sanctuary cities”. Specifically, references to “crime,” “criminal,” and “criminals” in relation to “sanctuary cities”, deportation, and the other search terms included in our monitor went from occupying just four percent of posts in January 2017 to occupying eight percent of posts during February 2017.

Online audiences are not connecting anti-sanctuary/immigration policies to the issue of racial profiling:
Audiences engaging in online discussions of “sanctuary cities” and related issues are not generally connecting immigration enforcement by police to increased racial profiling. These topics currently occupy distinct clusters within our monitor, indicating that the current conversation of racial profiling (in relation to “sanctuary cities” and deportation) occupies a less prominent space within the overall discourse.
Pro-immigrant voices currently dominate online discussion of sanctuary policies, particularly on Twitter: Between January 2016 and June 2017, a number of individuals from both the public and private sectors spoke openly about immigration policy, the most influential of which tended to be progressive, pro-immigrant advocates, elected officials, and policymakers. Alongside individual influencers, a significant portion of the most influential online content originated from immigrant advocate organizations such as the Vera Institute and the ACLU, both organizations that topped the list of the most prolific voices on Twitter based on the volume of tweets, mentions, and potential audience reach.

Texas’ SB4 legislation is a major concern of online audiences engaging in discussions related to sanctuary jurisdictions: Within the last 18 months, Texas-related hashtags are among the top hashtags being used to discuss sanctuary jurisdictions. This is a direct result of the passage of SB4, and #SB4 is the top hashtag in our monitor, generating over 100,000 posts within the period examined. Alongside references to SB4, top hashtags also include #MAGA, #Trump, and #tcot, hashtags that have generated significantly more audience engagement than the pro-immigrant hashtag #HereToStay.

Twitter users engaging in conversations about sanctuary jurisdictions have interests that are distinct from the overall population of Twitter: Overall, both pro-immigrant and anti-immigrant audience segments have interests that are unique from the overall population of Twitter. Within the 18-month examined, anti-immigrant Twitter users who engaged in conversations about sanctuary jurisdictions were 213 times more likely to have a strong interest in Glenn Beck than the general population of Twitter. Glenn Beck tops of the list of interests among anti-immigrant Twitter users included in our audience segment. Pro-immigrant users in comparison, were significantly more likely to have an interest in immigration law, (779 times more likely than the general population of Twitter), 115 times more likely to have a strong interest in gun safety, and 79 times more likely to have a strong interest in the Affordable Care Act compared to the general population of Twitter. Alongside gun safety and the Affordable Care Act, pro-immigrant Twitter users discussing sanctuary policies also had a strong interest in NBC News, NPR, progressive politics, and “celebrity” compared to the general population of Twitter. Pro-immigrant audiences’ shared interest in “celebrity” appears specific to celebrities and entertainers who have been outspoken on social media about social justice issues, including Lin-Manuel Miranda, Ellen DeGeneres, and Christine Teigen.

PUBLIC OPINION ANALYSIS

The public is divided on support for “sanctuary jurisdictions”, particularly when discussed in the context of crime: Our analysis of existing public opinion research revealed that the context in which sanctuary jurisdictions and policies are discussed has a significant impact on the level of public support for such policies. For instance, when respondents were asked in one survey if they agree or disagree that “cities that arrest illegal immigrants for crimes should be required to turn them over to immigration authorities,” 80 percent of survey participants were in agreement with this statement. However, when a different survey removed references to “crime” and instead presented respondents with the option between two statements— “undocumented immigrants should be deported so there is no reason to have sanctuary cities” or “sanctuary cities are needed to provide services to undocumented immigrants while they are needed”—41 percent of respondents were in agreement with the “no reason” statement, and 50 percent agreed that sanctuary cities are needed.

There is a strong correlation between the perception of safety and the willingness and support of sanctuary jurisdictions/policies: Survey data also indicates that the perception of crime and safety is currently playing a major role in shaping perceptions of sanctuary jurisdictions. In the same survey, when asked about their perception of the safety of sanctuary cities, 40 percent of all voters believe sanctuary communities are less safe than cities without sanctuary policies, compared to 35 percent of respondents who think the level of safety is about the same, while 17 percent believe that sanctuary communities are safer.1

1 Harvard Harris Poll, “Inaugural Harvard-Harris Poll,” February 17, 2017
Low income Americans and those with less education are more likely to oppose living in sanctuary jurisdictions: Forty-one percent of individuals earning $200K+ expressed that they favor living in a sanctuary community, compared to just 25 percent of individuals who earn under $30,000 annually, and 34 percent of individuals earning between $50,000-$100,000 annually. A similar divergence in opinion is seen when examining responses based on education. Only 28 percent of respondents who are high school graduates favor living in a sanctuary city. This compares to 31 percent of individuals who graduated college, and 49 percent of individuals who attended graduate school.4

Americans favor a roadmap to citizenship and programs such as DACA over increased deportation efforts as a solution to undocumented immigration: In a November 2016 survey of over 1,000 registered voters, respondents were presented with the following statement: “Donald Trump has said he will repeal a policy that provides deportation relief and work authorization to immigrants who were brought to the country illegally as children...If Trump repeals this policy, these immigrants will be subject to immediate deportation, loss of jobs, and the federal government’s use of their personal information.” With this context in mind, respondents were asked their level of support for repealing the policy. Just 28 percent of respondents support Trump’s plans to repeal the program as of November 2016, compared to 58 percent who oppose a repeal.5

The majority of Americans oppose the withholding of federal funds from sanctuary jurisdictions: In an executive order issued in January 2017, the Trump administration threatened to withhold federal funding from sanctuary jurisdictions. Survey and polling data shows there is rising opposition to punitive immigration policies since Trump’s presidential victory. As of February 2017, 53 percent of those surveyed indicated they oppose the federal government cutting funds to cities that provide sanctuary for undocumented immigrants, compared to 42 percent who support the measure, and 5 percent who were unsure.6

Americans are ambivalent about the introduction of a “merit-based” immigration system: In recent months, Donald Trump has called for the movement toward so-called “merit-based” immigration as opposed to the current family-based system, which enables individuals to sponsor family members for entry into the United States. The “merit-based system” proposed by Trump would instead award points based on high-paying job offers, English-language ability and education—a system which, if implemented, could threaten the reunification of thousands of families.7 Polling responses indicate that Americans are ambivalent when it comes to support or opposition to a merit-based system. In an April 2017 survey, a plurality of those surveyed (44 percent) were in support of moving to a merit-based system, 37 percent favored keeping the existing family-based system, and another 18 percent were not sure about which system they preferred.8

MEDIA CONTENT ANALYSIS

There is significant variation in the use and definition of the term “sanctuary cities”: Media coverage between August 2016 and August 2017 exposed significant variations in the use and definition of “sanctuary cities”—a term that has now become a catchall for a variety of policies and legislation. A significant portion of media coverage focused on trying to provide clarification around what “sanctuary cities” entail and the implications of new policies for counties and cities (and to a lesser extent colleges and universities) around the country.

A focus on public safety and “rule of law” dominated media coverage related to sanctuary jurisdictions/policies between August 2016 and August 2017: The majority of coverage within this category featured an anti-immigrant spokesperson (often an elected official/policymaker), voicing concerns that “sanctuary cities” are a threat to public safety and the “rule of law.” More than half of articles within this category made references to undocumented immigrants committing crime, with several articles making specific reference to a single case – the 2015 murder of Kathryn Steinle.

8 Ibid.
These findings present several important implications for messaging and audience engagement around sanctuary cities, deportation, and related immigration policies.

**Frame sanctuary jurisdictions in terms of Strong, Safe, and Connected Communities, while avoiding associations with crime and violence:** Both public opinion research and social media data indicate that the administration’s conflation of immigration with issues of crime and public safety has gained traction in recent months, particularly following the introduction of SB4 by Texas Governor Greg Abbott. It is important to challenge and reframe the discussion, and refocus public attention on commonsense policies that already have high levels of public support. It is also necessary for immigrant rights advocates to educate persuadable audiences about pathways to citizenship, uplifting the many successes of programs like DACA. At the same time advocates should avoid myth-busting, which may simply reinforce the connection between crime and sanctuary policies in people’s minds. There are subtler ways to reframe, such as focusing on what happens when immigrants can more fully participate and contribute. This requires talking about immigrants as more than just “immigrants,” but as parents, students, neighbors, etc., in order to give an alternative idea to move to.

**Define for your audience what sanctuary policies are and do:** In order to effectively communicate the importance of sanctuary jurisdictions, we must define what such communities are, and what they provide for their residents. Sanctuaries are the last refuge of the hunted. While we want to be careful about evoking that, the connection to that place of safety when a person is hunted and exhausted is an emotionally powerful one. Drawing on these themes of safety and refuge can help audiences better understand the critical role sanctuary jurisdictions play.

**Reaction to Trump’s executive order and other anti-immigrant policies feature heavily in media coverage:** The vast majority of coverage since the release of the executive order has focused on the implications the order presents for cities and counties around the country. This includes stories detailing the reaction of elected officials to the content of the executive order, and the potential loss of federal funding faced by many jurisdictions.

**NARRATIVE, MESSAGING & STORYTELLING RECOMMENDATIONS**

**SAMPLE LANGUAGE INCLUDES:**

**VALUE:** Our country is changing, getting more and more diverse. It might make some of us uncomfortable, but it is our reality, and a constant throughout our history.

**PROBLEM:** Politicians play on this fear, trying to divide us. They push unwise and divisive ideas like ending deferred action, defunding states which provide legal protection to undocumented immigrants, or singling out Muslim Americans because of their religion.

**SOLUTION:** If we take the bait on these issues, it makes our country weaker, not stronger. Our nation is stronger when every one of us can contribute and share ideas, and when everyone’s basic rights and dignity are respected. Sanctuary jurisdictions are central to protecting the rights and dignity of all members of our community, while also safeguarding against the racial profiling of people of color that laws such as Arizona’s SB 1070 invite.

**ACTION:** We need to embrace ideas that unify us as a diverse people and make our country stronger, and policies that ensure the safety of all Americans.

Anti-immigrant quotes are highly consistent in both message and source of quote: Anti-immigrant voices were extremely consistent in terms of the sources of quote, with the vast majority of quotes from anti-immigrant elected officials coming from Donald Trump and Jeff Sessions. Anti-immigrant advocate voices were dominated by quotes from the Center of Immigration Studies, a self-identified “independent, non-partisan” research organization that has been listed by the Southern Poverty Law Center as a hate group.
Use other descriptors to describe sanctuary policies: “Sanctuary cities” has become something of a buzzword in media coverage and political discourse that often goes undefined and does not speak to the variety of ways that sanctuary policies are implemented in communities and institutions across the country. Findings from our public opinion analysis also indicate that members of the public are more likely to support policies like DACA, DAPA, and pathway to citizenship when the services the programs provide are clearly defined. Advocates should use sanctuary with other descriptors that add on to that word, like “places where everyone, including our immigrant neighbors, can contribute and participate.”

Explain how sanctuary policies benefit all residents: Our analysis of public opinion data shows strong public support for pro-immigration policies such as DACA, and opposition to widespread deportation. However, public opinion data also reveals that low-income Americans are less likely to want to reside in sanctuary jurisdictions than their higher income counterparts. This disparity is likely a product of anxieties related to competition for jobs—a source of anxiety that the new administration has leveraged to sow fear and distrust. It is necessary to address these concerns, while also not perpetuating stereotypes about the types of jobs undocumented immigrants usually occupy. Advocates should talk about the importance of communities sticking together and not letting corporate interests and politicians divide us.

Promote sanctuary policies with other solutions that expand opportunity for all: In the survey research examined, respondents were significantly more likely to support an immigration policy when they were given the details about what the program would provide, or examples of the real-world impact on immigrant communities. Explaining in plain terms what a policy entails is a vital part of telling an affirmative story that is specific, but also systemic.

Connect sanctuary policies to policies your audience supports: A number of pro-immigrant policies receive high levels of support from the public. Lifting up these popular solutions while explaining and promoting more complex or less popular ones can help to build broader and more lasting support. Solutions with the greatest support include:

- Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).
- Pathway for citizenship for undocumented immigrants already in the country.

Include racial profiling among the problems that sanctuary policies are designed to address: Audiences engaging in online discussions about sanctuary jurisdictions and related issues are not generally connecting immigration enforcement by police to increased racial profiling. These topics currently occupy distinct clusters within our monitor, indicating that the current conversation of racial profiling (in relation to sanctuary cities and deportation) occupies a less prominent space within the overall discourse. In addition, our analysis of media coverage revealed that reporting on racial profiling in relation to anti-immigration legislation only occupied a fraction of media reports. In order to better educate the public on the dangers of legislation such as Texas SB4, it is necessary to connect the dots for engaged audiences and detail the intersection between heightened policing of immigrant communities and racial profiling.

SAMPLE LANGUAGE:

Racial profiling harms all Americans: It violates the American value of equal justice that we all depend on. It disrespects and discriminates against millions of young people and others around the country. It threatens public safety and can ruin people’s lives. It is time to end racial profiling and focus law enforcement on evidence and public safety.

We need to be clear: it is unacceptable for those who enforce our laws to stereotype people based on the color of their skin, religion, or nation of origin. Law enforcement should act on facts and evidence, not racial bias. If one group can be singled out based on race or ethnicity or religion, none of us will be safe to enjoy the rights that the United States stands for. The administration’s attacks on counties and cities that provide support to undocumented immigrants and their families, and policies such as Texas’ SB4, threaten the freedom of all of us.

We are stronger when we find ways to encourage participation and contribution, not ways to divide, exclude and discriminate. We have to condemn, in the strongest terms, those who engage in and encourage racist tactics.
Is it right for a military veteran to be asked for his papers just because he is of Mexican heritage? Is it right for a mother of Asian or Latino background who speaks with an accent to get asked for her papers—right in front of her children—when her white friend next to her does not? Is it right that immigrants who work hard and aspire to be citizens live in daily fear of being stopped, arrested, and deported away from their loved ones? Is it right to create a culture of suspicion in an America that becomes more diverse every day? No. Anyone who engages in or encourages discrimination is flat out wrong. That is not who we are as a country.

SOCIAL MEDIA NARRATIVE AND AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

**Lead with values:** Identify the core values of: Diversity, Dignity, Community, and Family. Starting social media posts with a values-based message reaches persuadable audiences and crosses over into their interests.

**Use values-based and action-oriented hashtags:** Draw social media audiences in with a values-based hashtag to alert them as to why they should care about the issue. One example of a popular and effective values-based hashtag is #RefugeesWelcome. Action-oriented hashtags create a sense of urgency and purpose. Making actions clear and concise on social media allow users to actively participate in the cause. Action-oriented hashtags can also provide context for who is accountable for the problem and what is at stake. For example, #StopICECold sends a clear message about ICE detention and bringing an end to ICE raids.

**Avoid myth-busting:** In an era of social media trolls and bots, falling into the trap of a back and forth debate on social media distracts from the message. Avoid using hashtags that reinforce the opposition’s narrative. As a rule of thumb, hashtags that include the words “No” and “Not” often myth bust.

**Use (and create) hashtags that evoke a narrative:** The #BlackLivesMatter movement has shown us that values-based hashtags amplify movements throughout and even beyond social media. Black Lives Matter tells a full story and is a complete sentence. It reinforces the narrative that Black lives do matter, although Black people have not been treated with respect since being brought to the country as slaves. Immigration hashtags that evoke similar stories are: #HereToStay, #KeepFamiliesTogether, #RefugeesWelcome, and #UndocumentedAndUnafraid.

**Promote popular hashtags:** The #HereToStay hashtag has grown in popularity in recent months, due in large part to the efforts of pro-immigrant advocacy organizations. Leveraging this existing popularity could help those seeking to reach new online audiences already engaged in the discussions concerning immigration and sanctuary jurisdictions.

**Humanize the issue by creating multimedia:** Empathy is valuable currency on social media as it creates a personal connection to the issue. Photo and video are successful ways to portray the humanity of immigrants. Define America’s Undocujoy series is a prime example of how showing immigrants in their day to day lives makes a powerful impact.

ENGAGING STRATEGIC AUDIENCES

Key to building wider public support for pro-immigration policies is activating the base of existing supporters while persuading undecided groups over time. That, in turn, requires prioritizing strategic audiences by:

**Activating the base:** Our analysis of existing public opinion research indicates that Latinx Americans, Black Americans, and self-identified Democrats are highly supportive of the continuation of policies intended to protect undocumented immigrant communities, as well as efforts to challenge the Trump’s anti-immigrant actions. These audiences should be prioritized in outreach.

**Incorporating the perspectives of faith communities:** Faith leaders/communities have emerged as an important pro-immigrant voice in both news media and social media discourse. Drawing on the religious roots of the concept of sanctuary and highlighting the important role faith-based communities continue to play in providing safety and refuge to immigrant communities is a strategy to reach new audiences within faith communities.
REDEFINING SANCTUARY PART I:

SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSIS
INTRODUCTION

With the growth of digitally enabled social justice advocacy, social media platforms are now widely recognized as a space with the potential to drive movements, and foster transformative change. Social media data currently provides us with unique access to users’ thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs in real-time, and in their own words. In an era where political discourse and decision-making are becoming more closely aligned with online activity, and the reliability of survey and polls is increasingly called into question, understanding when and how social justice issues are discussed online, and how to effectively leverage social media to shift public attitudes and beliefs, will prove vital.

With this pressing need in mind, we examined online data from a variety of social media platforms and websites generated between January 2016 and June 2017. We examined how sanctuary policies have been discussed online in an effort to identify the dominant narrative defining the online discourse, the key spokespeople, influencers, and content sources shaping the conversation, and potential tipping points.

The following section provides an overview of our findings and practical recommendations for pro-immigrant advocates seeking to galvanize online communities in support of pro-immigration policies. Our analysis revealed that online conversations related to sanctuary policies have increased dramatically in recent months. Our analysis suggests that there is fertile ground for social justice advocates seeking to protect sanctuary policies and challenge misinformation that attempts to conflate the protection of undocumented immigrants with the promotion of crime.

METHODOLOGY

Analysis of social media data was conducted using Crimson Hexagon, a leading social media analytics software that aggregates publicly available social media data. Crimson Hexagon enables users to create monitors for any topic or set of phrases and establish customized timeframes for data analysis. Once a monitor is established, Crimson Hexagon’s algorithm categorizes relevant social media data—identifying content volume trends, patterns in conversation, demographics, sentiment shift over time, and audience segment interests/affinities.

A saved search or query is referred to as a monitor.
We analyzed data from an 18-month timeframe, between January 1st, 2016 and June 1st, 2017. The 18-month timeframe enabled us to conduct a longitudinal analysis and identify patterns in discourse over time. In the overall data population (which consisted of 4,146,943 posts) the majority of analyzed data originated from Twitter. A total of 3,352,690 posts originated from Twitter; 362,892 posts from Facebook, Google Plus, and forums including 4Chan and Reddit; and a total of 431,368 posts originated from the comments section from popular blogs and online news publications, such as The Atlantic and Huffington Post. Sampled social media posts are accompanied by a Klout score, which is a number between 1-100 that represents how influential the person sharing the content is. The more influential a person (in terms of share of audience and reach), the higher the Klout Score.

Search Parameters

The following search terms were included in our monitor: “287g,” “immigration taskforce,” “immigration enforcement,” “racial profiling,” “SB1070,” “SB4,” “sanctuary city,” “sanctuary campus,” “pro-immigrant policies,” “immigrant safety,” “immigrant inclusion,” “Secure Communities,” “immigration authorities,” “non-cooperation,” “non-enforcement,” “legal defense fund,” “access to counsel,” “deportations,” “deportation,” “non-citizen voting,” and “municipal identification card.”

Terminology

Monitor: The term “monitor” is used throughout this report and refers to the data extracted from Crimson Hexagon sources based on the timeframe and search terms listed above. All conclusions drawn are based on analysis of this data.
**FINDINGS**

**VOLUME OF ENGAGEMENT**

Between **January 1st, 2016 and June 1st, 2017**, over 4 million social media posts (on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram), and blog/news article comments were generated with specific references made to sanctuary cities, deportation, and the other search terms included within our monitor, averaging just over 200,000 posts a month.

Our analysis of this data revealed several important shifts in the volume of online engagement around these issues. Over the last 18 months, online discussion of sanctuary policies and deportation, as well as policies such as SB4, has dramatically increased, with a significant rise in the monthly volume of online content beginning in November 2016, the immediate aftermath of the presidential election. Between October 2016 and November 2016, the volume of engagement increased from 119,012 posts to 345,176 posts. The rise in volume of engagement peaked in February 2017, with 733,745 posts generated within a 28-day period.

![Figure 2: Social Media Post Volume: January 1st, 2016 - June 1st, 2017](image)

The initial spike in online engagement following the election was a direct result of Donald Trump’s announcement of his plan to withhold federal funding from sanctuary jurisdictions in his first 100 days in office. Throughout November, social media conversations focused heavily on Trump’s promise to deport large numbers of undocumented immigrants, with a significant portion of this discourse centered on the role of “illegal aliens” in criminal activity, a framing of the issue that appears to have gained significant traction online throughout the last 18 months.
The second significant spike in February 2017 appears to be related to widespread Immigration and Custom Enforcement raids, and the proposal put forth by Texas Governor Greg Abbott to pass Senate Bill 4, or SB4, a bill that significantly expands the ability of federal immigration enforcement to detain and deport undocumented immigrants. As seen in the sample posts in Figures 3 and 4, online commentary during this period fell into one of two broad categories: the expression of fear and anger over the raids/opposition to SB4, and the expression of support for the new measures, which generally framed the issue as one of public safety and the targeting of “criminal illegal aliens.” Alongside a significant increase in the overall volume of posts in February 2017, the hashtags #SB4, #txlege, and #HeretoStay emerged as top hashtags within our monitor for the first time, reflecting the heightened focus on Texas legislation during this period.

Alongside an examination of the volume of online content, we also explored the key phrases and terms that have tended to be included in posts, and tracked how language and terminology use has shifted over time. The top phrases and terms identified in our analysis include the most frequently used search terms (See: Methodology), as well the phrases/terms that most frequently emerged in association with our search terms.

Within the last 18 months, online discussion of sanctuary jurisdictions, deportation, and related topics has shifted significantly as engagement has grown, and the public has become more aware of particular policies. For instance, between January 2016 and November 2016, references to “sanctuary cities” went from occupying five percent of the total conversation (based on the search terms included in our monitor. See: Methodology), to 19 percent of the total conversation. By February 2017, when the second significant spike in online engagement around this issue took place, references to “sanctuary cities” had become overshadowed by a focus on Donald Trump, with phrases such as “Deportation Under Trump” and “Immigrant Deportation” becoming the most prominent terms. A closer examination of search terms within this period revealed a dramatic increase in references to crime in relation to sanctuary jurisdictions and related topics.

Since February 2017, talk of crime and public safety has become even more closely tied to sanctuary jurisdictions. Specifically, references to “crime,” “criminal,” and “criminals” in relation to sanctuary jurisdictions, deportation, and the other search terms included in our monitor went from occupying just four percent of posts in January 2017 to occupying eight percent of posts during February 2017.

A more promising trend to emerge in our analysis is the inclusion of references to “minimum wage,” and a slight increase in references to “fear of deportation” that began in May of this year. This important development suggests there is a growing intersectional understanding of the issue, and that progressive voices are beginning to occupy a larger portion of the online discussion.

Key Phrases and Terms

Alongside an examination of the volume of online content, we also explored the key phrases and terms that have tended to be included in posts, and tracked how language and terminology use has shifted over time. The top phrases and terms identified in our analysis include the most frequently used search terms (See: Methodology), as well the phrases/terms that most frequently emerged in association with our search terms.

Within the last 18 months, online discussion of sanctuary jurisdictions, deportation, and related topics has shifted significantly as engagement has grown, and the public has become more aware of particular policies. For instance, between January 2016 and November 2016, references to “sanctuary cities” went from occupying five percent of the total conversation (based on the search terms included in our monitor. See: Methodology), to 19 percent of the total conversation. By February 2017, when the second significant spike in online engagement around this issue took place, references to “sanctuary cities” had become overshadowed by a focus on Donald Trump, with phrases such as “Deportation Under Trump” and “Immigrant Deportation” becoming the most prominent terms. A closer examination of search terms within this period revealed a dramatic increase in references to crime in relation to sanctuary jurisdictions and related topics.

Since February 2017, talk of crime and public safety has become even more closely tied to sanctuary jurisdictions. Specifically, references to “crime,” “criminal,” and “criminals” in relation to sanctuary jurisdictions, deportation, and the other search terms included in our monitor went from occupying just four percent of posts in January 2017 to occupying eight percent of posts during February 2017.

A more promising trend to emerge in our analysis is the inclusion of references to “minimum wage,” and a slight increase in references to “fear of deportation” that began in May of this year. This important development suggests there is a growing intersectional understanding of the issue, and that progressive voices are beginning to occupy a larger portion of the online discussion.
### TABLE 1: TOP SEARCH TERMS AND ASSOCIATED TERMS JANUARY 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHRASES/TERMS</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>PERCENT OF TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants from Deportation</td>
<td>32,187</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raids and Deportations</td>
<td>16,431</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deportations for Millions</td>
<td>14,968</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People for Deportation</td>
<td>10,889</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass Deportation</td>
<td>10,453</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face Deportation</td>
<td>7,760</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deportation back to Texas</td>
<td>7,120</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deportation from Mexico</td>
<td>6,777</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Authorities</td>
<td>6,507</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctuary City</td>
<td>5,658</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deportations of Migrants</td>
<td>4,990</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 2: TOP SEARCH TERMS AND ASSOCIATED TERMS NOV. 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHRASES/TERMS</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>PERCENT OF TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mass Deportation</td>
<td>55,148</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants from Deportation</td>
<td>47,564</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deportation of illegals</td>
<td>36,281</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote</td>
<td>21,642</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wall</td>
<td>21,077</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctuary City Mayors</td>
<td>19,627</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>17,301</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump's Deportation Plans</td>
<td>16,496</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deportation Force</td>
<td>16,469</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctuary City for Immigrants</td>
<td>16,378</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump's Mass Deportation</td>
<td>16,113</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deportations under Donald</td>
<td>15,446</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>14,120</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>14,076</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americans</td>
<td>13,078</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of Deportation</td>
<td>11,963</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Defense Fund</td>
<td>11,615</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 3: TOP SEARCH TERMS AND ASSOCIATED TERMS FEB. 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHRASES/TERMS</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>PERCENT OF TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deportation under Trump</td>
<td>189,313</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants from Deportation</td>
<td>131,922</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People for Deportation</td>
<td>52,855</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctuary City Policies</td>
<td>27,545</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump’s Deportation Force</td>
<td>22,028</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump’s Sanctuary City</td>
<td>18,969</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding to our Cities</td>
<td>16,737</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald Trump’s Deportation</td>
<td>14,495</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority for Deportation</td>
<td>12,901</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of Deportation</td>
<td>12,889</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump’s Executive Order</td>
<td>11,621</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detention and Deportation</td>
<td>10,661</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 4: TOP SEARCH/ASSOCIATED TERMS MAY-JUNE 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHRASES/TERMS</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>PERCENT OF TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SB4</td>
<td>75,099</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants from Deportation</td>
<td>63,226</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump</td>
<td>38,286</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegals</td>
<td>36,790</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earning less than Minimum Wage</td>
<td>28,495</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB4 Txlege</td>
<td>27,457</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deportation of Illegals</td>
<td>23,663</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas Sanctuary City</td>
<td>21,896</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICE</td>
<td>21,028</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctuary City Law</td>
<td>14,777</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families because of Deportation</td>
<td>11,171</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another aspect of our inquiry was a cluster analysis, which identifies the key phrases and terms that tend to emerge in association with our search terms over an 18-month period. We also analyzed which phrases tended to emerge in relation to one another. The cluster in Figure 5 indicates that, as of June 2017, audiences engaging in online discussions of sanctuary policies and related issues were not generally connecting immigration enforcement by police to increased racial profiling. These topics currently occupy distinct clusters within our monitor, indicating that the conversation of racial profiling (in relation to sanctuary cities and deportation) occupies a less prominent space within the overall discourse.

At the same time, references to “immigration” within the context of sanctuary cities or deportation appear to be dominated by an anti-immigrant framing that connects sanctuary cities and deportation to the prevention of crime.
TOP INFLUENCERS AND SOURCES OF CONTENT

The following section provides an overview of the key influencers driving some of the online discussion around sanctuary cities, deportation, and immigration more broadly. Top influencers and content sources include individuals, public figures such as celebrities and politicians, media outlets, blogs, and websites. Influence was measured based on the volume of shares13 and likes an original social media post or website link generated within the 18-month time frame examined.

Key Spokespeople and Organizations

Between January 2016 and June 2017, individuals from both the public and private sectors spoke out openly about immigration policy, the most influential of which tended to be progressive, pro-immigrant advocates, elected officials, and policymakers. This finding was particularly true in the case of the social media platform Twitter.

\footnote{13 The number of times original social media posts or website URLs were reposted by another user.}
On Twitter, the most influential retweets (in terms of volume of retweets and audience reach) originated from pro-immigration voices challenging anti-immigrant rhetoric and in recent months, highlighting the real-world impact of the administrations’ heightened deportation efforts. As seen in Table 5, a tweet from a student organizer using the Twitter handle @jayohAye generated over 27,000 retweets, and touched on the toxic anti-immigration stereotype that undocumented immigrants do not work or contribute to the economy. This tweet, like many of the other most influential online posts, included a multimedia element (in this case a video of an agricultural worker; See: Figure 6) that helped visualize the point being made.

In addition to having a visual component, another important feature of the most influential online content appears to be the tone and voice adopted. Some of the top tweets from pro-immigrant voices tended to take on a sarcastic tone, which was often used to highlight the ineffectiveness and hypocrisy of current immigration policy, and as a tool to critique Donald Trump and his administration specifically.

For instance, one of the most influential tweets in the timeframe we analyzed was a tongue and cheek tweet from Joe Reid (who goes by the handle @joereid), a senior writer and producer for The Decider, a pop culture website operated by the New York Post. Reid’s tweet, posted on Sept. 16, 2016, alludes to Donald Trump’s prominent role in the birtherism movement, and the improbability of Trump’s ability to fulfill his campaign promise to immediately deport 2 to 3 million undocumented immigrants. As of June 2017, Reid’s tweet has generated over 8,900 retweets (See: Figure 7).
**TABLE 5: MOST INFLUENTIAL RETWEETS: JANUARY 2016-JUNE 2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RETWEET</th>
<th>OCCURRENCES</th>
<th>ORIGINAL AUTHOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RT @JayOhAye Now imagine doing this for hours, earning less than minimum wage, only to be called lazy and threatened with deportation. <a href="https://t.co/4liJN601yB">https://t.co/4liJN601yB</a></td>
<td>27000</td>
<td>JayOhAye (Jason Ajake)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You know how racist you gotta be to make Drake feel victimized by racial profiling <a href="https://t.co/mMhiUEDyBQ">https://t.co/mMhiUEDyBQ</a></td>
<td>18000</td>
<td>LilSpark713 (#Only16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT @PreetBharara Repost in honor of alleged criminal Greg Gianforte’s election. If he were an immigrant he’d face deportation; now he sets immigration policy <a href="https://t.co/vN8QdeU04S">https://t.co/vN8QdeU04S</a></td>
<td>17000</td>
<td>PreetBharara (US Attorney Bharara)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT @verainstitute BREAKING: NY Becomes First State in US To Provide Lawyers for Every Immigrant Detained, Facing Deportation: <a href="https://t.co/ZB2HNaGaxq">https://t.co/ZB2HNaGaxq</a> <a href="https://t.co/nQNowEFT7C">https://t.co/nQNowEFT7C</a></td>
<td>10000</td>
<td>verainstitute (Vera Institute)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honestly, if it takes him five years to confirm the birth nation of one man, this whole mass deportation thing is gonna be mad slow.</td>
<td>8900</td>
<td>joereid (Joe Reid)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You voted for conversion therapy, mass deportation, the propagation of rape culture. You voted for regression. And it has never been funny.</td>
<td>8700</td>
<td>can_i_not (meggroll)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran fighting deportation after 2 tours in Afghanistan <a href="https://t.co/44rnUDqvu">https://t.co/44rnUDqvu</a> <a href="https://t.co/0BFN2BTiLY">https://t.co/0BFN2BTiLY</a></td>
<td>7800</td>
<td>jaketapper (Jake Tapper)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of Trump, women are dropping their domestic abuse cases in fear of being deported <a href="https://t.co/PPfim-mGP4U">https://t.co/PPfim-mGP4U</a> <a href="https://t.co/ju3qOLiRwq">https://t.co/ju3qOLiRwq</a></td>
<td>7400</td>
<td>NylonMag (Nylon Magazine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BREAKING: US judge blocks Trump order to cut off funding to cities that limit cooperation with immigration authorities.</td>
<td>6800</td>
<td>AP (The Associated Press)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama expels 35 Russian diplomats, closes NYC compound &amp; gives them 72 hours to leave. Fortunately for Russians, NYC is a sanctuary city.</td>
<td>6200</td>
<td>AnnCoulter (Ann Coulter)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Honesty, if it takes him five years to confirm the birth nation of one man, this whole mass deportation thing is gonna be mad slow.

**FIGURE 7: SAMPLE TWITTER POST: JOE REID SEPT 16, 2016**
Alongside individual influencers, a significant portion of the most influential online content originated from policy, research, and non-profit organizations such as the Vera Institute and American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), both organizations that topped the list of the most prolific voices on Twitter based on the volume of tweets, mentions, and potential audience reach (See: Figure 12).

Publications and networks such as the Associated Press, CNN, The Washington Post, and NYLON magazine also top the list of the most influential Twitter voices contributing to the online discussion of sanctuary policies and related immigration issues. Media outlets’ prominence in online conversations appears to be a direct result of outlets’ content being shared heavily by Twitter users participating in online conversations about immigration, indicating that traditional media sources are still playing a central role in shaping online discourse. For instance, a March 2017 article published by NYLON magazine titled, “Rather Than Face Deportation Women Are Dropping Domestic Abuse Cases, Thanks Trump,” was included in over 4,000 posts over a four-month period.

While the prominence of progressive and pro-immigrant voices online reflects a positive trend, anti-immigration spokespersons also occupy a significant portion of the online conversation and, as seen in our analysis of key phrases and terminology, are playing an influential role in shaping online discourse related to immigration. For instance, anti-immigrant spokesperson Ann Coulter’s tweet, in which she expressed opposition to New York City’s sanctuary policies, was one of the top retweets in the timeframe we examined. The share of the conversation occupied by anti-immigrant voices has risen in recent months, as audiences’ attention has turned to political events in Texas, and a growing number of people turn to social media to express both their opposition to and support of SB4.

## Top Hashtags and Mentions

The rising prominence of anti-immigrant voices is reflected in the top Twitter hashtags and mentions, which provide additional insights into online influencers driving online discussion of a particular issue.

Within the last 18 months, Texas-related hashtags are among the top hashtags being used to discuss sanctuary cities. This is a direct result of the passage of SB4, which is the top hashtag in our monitor, generating over 100,000 posts within the period examined. Alongside references to SB4, top hashtags also include #MAGA, #Trump, and #tcot, generating significantly more audience engagement than the pro-immigrant hashtag #HereToStay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hashtag</th>
<th>Posts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#SB4</td>
<td>100,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#txlege</td>
<td>66,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#MAGA</td>
<td>51,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#deportation</td>
<td>45,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#Trump</td>
<td>40,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#Immigration</td>
<td>34,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#tcot</td>
<td>26,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#HereToStay</td>
<td>21,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#sanctuercities</td>
<td>14,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#ICE</td>
<td>13,000+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 8: Top Immigration Hashtags: January 2016 to June 2017*
In an effort to understand how the current online conversation is being shaped beyond social media platforms like Twitter, we examined the website addresses that generated the highest number of shares across online platforms between January 2016 and June 2017. As seen in Table 6, while the top two website links shared by online audiences are Twitter posts, the list is dominated by a combination of liberal and conservative traditional news media sources like Mother Jones, Fox News, and Daily Caller, as well as more centrist publications like The Hill. Texas-based publications such as the Texas Observer and Texas Tribune also feature heavily, again reflecting the prominent role events in Texas have played in shaping the overall conversation around sanctuary cities, deportation, and immigration.

The storylines of shared media posts typically fell into one of five broad categories:

1. **Stories about the impact of deportation and anti-sanctuary jurisdiction policies on people and municipalities (34 percent):** The majority of news media stories shared within our monitor were focused on detailing the real-world impact of the Trump administration’s immigration policies. These storylines generally presented undocumented immigrants in a sympathetic and positive light, and highlighted the widespread impact of more aggressive deportation efforts, including the risk they present to immigrant victims of crime. This category also featured stories of Dreamers and veterans being deported.

2. **Passage or expressions of support for anti-sanctuary city policies (20 percent):** These stories typically relayed the passage of Trump’s executive order and other policies aimed at limiting sanctuary policies or jurisdiction, including Texas’ Senate Bill 4.

3. **Stories about undocumented immigrants committing crime (18 percent):** A significant portion of online articles from conservative news sources, such as Fox News and The Daily Caller, focused on stories about undocumented immigrants committing crimes.
4. **Challenging Trump’s executive order (16 percent):** A portion of stories shared online in the 18-month reviewed period centered on city officials, judges, and members of the public challenging or standing in open defiance to the administration’s policies. Many of these stories reported on protests, while others detailed instances of judges blocking aspects of Trump’s executive order related to the withholding of federal funds.

5. **Stories focused on politicians and public officials (12 percent):** Stories within this category generally detailed the comments or actions of politicians or other elected officials who either support or oppose the Administration’s immigration policies. This category was largely critical of the Trump Administration.

### TABLE 6: TOP WEBSITE LINKS SHARED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Website Links Shared, Jan 2016-June 2017</th>
<th>Volume of ULR Shares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://twitter.com/_micheee_/status/869778656582803456">https://twitter.com/_micheee_/status/869778656582803456</a></td>
<td>27,917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://twitter.com/preetbharrara/status/858879677036978176">https://twitter.com/preetbharrara/status/858879677036978176</a></td>
<td>17,306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/335255-preet-bharrara-on-gianforte-if-he-were-an-immigrant-hed-face">http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/335255-preet-bharrara-on-gianforte-if-he-were-an-immigrant-hed-face</a></td>
<td>2,526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://www.texasobserver.org/texas-republican-sb-4-protesters-capitol-ice/">https://www.texasobserver.org/texas-republican-sb-4-protesters-capitol-ice/</a></td>
<td>1,691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://www.texastribune.org/2017/05/29/protesters-disrupt-house-proceedings-raise-opposition-sanctuary-cities/">https://www.texastribune.org/2017/05/29/protesters-disrupt-house-proceedings-raise-opposition-sanctuary-cities/</a></td>
<td>1,290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://twitter.com/tusk81/status/869260989627113472">https://twitter.com/tusk81/status/869260989627113472</a></td>
<td>1,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2017/05/ninth-circuit-judge-slams-trump-deportation-order">http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2017/05/ninth-circuit-judge-slams-trump-deportation-order</a></td>
<td>853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://twitter.com/rvawonk/status/869293062958329857">https://twitter.com/rvawonk/status/869293062958329857</a></td>
<td>838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://twitter.com/balkansbohemia/status/870275292090257408">https://twitter.com/balkansbohemia/status/870275292090257408</a></td>
<td>668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://creepingsharia.wordpress.com/2017/05/24/conn-terror-immam-visa-fraud-arrest/">https://creepingsharia.wordpress.com/2017/05/24/conn-terror-immam-visa-fraud-arrest/</a></td>
<td>663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://americanpolitics.com/">http://americanpolitics.com/</a></td>
<td>654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://www.facebook.com/events/1420502647996277">https://www.facebook.com/events/1420502647996277</a></td>
<td>605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://www.buzzfeed.com/adolfolflores/judge-slams-trump-administration-calls-deportation-caseutm_term=.tfrlpk1b5">https://www.buzzfeed.com/adolfolflores/judge-slams-trump-administration-calls-deportation-caseutm_term=.tfrlpk1b5</a></td>
<td>602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.criminalimmigrationlawyer.com/deportation-defense.aspx">http://www.criminalimmigrationlawyer.com/deportation-defense.aspx</a></td>
<td>580</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Between January 2016 and June 2017, audience members engaging in online discussions around sanctuary policies and related issues were slightly more likely to be men than woman (52 percent versus 48 percent), and significantly more likely to be 35 and over (85 percent).

In terms of race and ethnicity, online audiences appear to reflect the current demographics of the United States, but it is important to note that the demographic information has significant limitations. Audience demographics are calculated automatically and are based on statistical estimates of various governmental census data. As such, the demographic information provided is simply an estimate of the percentage of people from each demographic who could potentially be taking part in online discussions. Despite these limitations, audience demographics provide insights into the potential share of the audience different demographic groups have held over selected periods of time.

The estimates generated in our analysis suggest that roughly 26 percent of posts within our monitor had identifiable racial and ethnic data, with 68 percent of posts attributed to White people, 8 percent Latinx, 15 percent Black, and 9 percent Asian.

Audience Segments’ Interest and Affinities

In addition to examining online discourse over a period of time, we also set out to better understand who was generally doing the speaking, and what other issues or topics these speakers also touched upon in their online engagement. Using the affinities tool—which analyzes the social media habits of audiences partaking in particular conversations on Twitter (i.e., what brands, topics, or media sources this audience segment tends to share) and compares these habits to the overall population of Twitter—we examined the interests and affinities of individuals discussing immigration and related issues on Twitter.

The affinities of online audiences engaging in discussions about immigration within the past 18 months encompass a broad range of interests and issues, and reflect a diversity of attitudes and ideological orientations. Through analysis of the top hashtags, retweets, and multimedia associated with each interest, we were able to organize interests between pro-immigrant, anti-immigrant, and overlapping/neutral audience segments. The differing interests of each audience segment provides us with valuable insights into the media sources being consumed, and issues/policies that intersect with each segment’s interest in immigration policy.

Overall, both pro-immigrant and anti-immigrant audience segments have interests that are distinct from the overall population of Twitter. Within the 18-month period examined, anti-immigrant Twitter users who engaged in conversations about sanctuary jurisdictions and policies were 213 times more likely to have a strong interest in Glenn Beck than the general population of Twitter. Glenn Beck tops the list of interests among anti-immigrant Twitter users included in our audience segment. Pro-immigrant users, in comparison, were significantly more likely to have an interest in immigration law, (779 times more likely than the general population of Twitter), 115 times more likely to have a strong interest in gun safety, and 79 times more likely to have a strong interest in the Affordable Care Act compared to the general population of Twitter.

14 See Methodology.
15 Several interests were made up of online users who did not fall neatly into either pro or anti-immigrant categories, but encompassed a mixed of both pro and anti-immigrant sentiment, or more neutral lean.
Alongside gun safety and the Affordable Care Act, pro-immigrant Twitter users discussing sanctuary policies also had a strong interest in NBC News, NPR, progressive politics, and “celebrity” compared to the general population of Twitter. Pro-immigrant audiences’ shared interest in “celebrity” appears specific to celebrities and entertainers who have been outspoken on social media about social justice issues, including Lin-Manuel Miranda, Ellen DeGeneres, and Christine Teigen.

The anti-immigrant audience segment also showed strong interest in veterans, Fox News, Sarah Palin, and talk radio. The overlapping and neutral audience segment had a strong interest in MSNBC, Politico, and Libertarians.

**TABLE 7: PRO-IMMIGRANT INTERESTS AND AFFINITIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRO-IMMIGRATION POSTER INTERESTS</th>
<th>AFFINITY COMPARED TO OVERALL TWITTER POPULATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>immigration Law</td>
<td>779x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun Safety</td>
<td>115x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable Care Act</td>
<td>79x</td>
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<tr>
<td>NBC News</td>
<td>75x</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPR</td>
<td>57x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Progressive Politics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Celebrity</td>
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<td>Barack Obama</td>
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<tr>
<td>Star Trek</td>
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<td>Feminism</td>
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<td>Univision</td>
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<td>Social Justice</td>
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<td>Justice</td>
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<td>New York City</td>
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<td>The Left</td>
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<td>Non-Profit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activism</td>
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### TABLE 8: PRO-IMMIGRANT INTERESTS AND AFFINITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANTI-IMMIGRATION POSTER INTERESTS</th>
<th>AFFINITY COMPARED TO OVERALL TWITTER POPULATION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glenn Beck</td>
<td>213x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Veterans</td>
<td>123x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fox News</td>
<td>101x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sarah Palin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talk Radio</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Party</td>
<td>52x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitution</td>
<td>51x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benghazi</td>
<td>51x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Politics</td>
<td>43x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tea Party</td>
<td>43x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty</td>
<td>31x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannity</td>
<td>22x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPAC</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
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</table>

### TABLE 9: PRO-IMMIGRANT INTERESTS AND AFFINITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OVERLAPPING/NEUTRAL INTERESTS</th>
<th>AFFINITY COMPARED TO OVERALL TWITTER POPULATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>MSNBC</td>
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<td>Immigration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blogging</td>
<td>78x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Politico</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>33x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>6x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

Our analysis of social media data over an 18-month period revealed that social media platforms are currently providing an important space for advocacy and resistance among pro-immigrant advocates seeking to challenge the current administration’s targeting of immigrant communities, and jurisdictions committed to their protection.

As the volume of engagement around sanctuary policies and related issues has increased, pro-immigrant voices have come to occupy a significant share of the total volume of online content, with hashtags such as #heretostay growing in prominence within the last few months. At the same time, the conflation between immigration and public safety has also grown in prominence, while wider conversations about racial profiling have remained somewhat siloed from discussions of Senate Bill 4 and other legislation that promotes the targeting of immigrants, particularly immigrants of color.

The interests of pro-immigrant advocates, which include the Affordable Care Act, gun safety, and influential pro-immigrant entertainers such as Lin-Manuel Miranda, suggest there is currently an opening for not only cross-issue advocacy, but a coordinated social media campaign that draws on these existing interests and affinities.
Public opinion studies conducted over the last decade tell a consistent story of an American public that increasingly views immigration as a source of national strength, and supports a roadmap to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. As demographics continue to change and the nation becomes more diverse, these trends appear set to continue. Yet this story of a progressively more open and diverse society stands in direct opposition to recent policy decisions and the current administration’s overt attacks on immigrant communities around the nation.

In an effort to provide a more comprehensive understanding of current attitudes toward immigration and related policies, we examined existing survey and polling data with a central focus on studies conducted since November 2016. Key questions examined include: where does the public currently stand on their views of sanctuary policies, mass deportation, and related immigration policies, and how have perceptions shifted in recent months?
Our analysis revealed that, despite the toxic nature of current political discourse, public support for a roadmap to citizenship remains high—representing the widespread national will for commonsense immigration policies. Alongside continued support for the integration of undocumented immigrants, a plurality of Americans opposed Trump’s proposal to build a southern border wall and to withhold funding from sanctuary jurisdictions, while a majority oppose his plans to end Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

Despite many positive trends, several challenges still persist—the most troubling of which is the malleability of large segments of the public when immigration policies are framed within the context of law and order and public safety. Negative stereotypes and false narratives about the criminality of immigrants and the threat they pose appear to be playing a significant role shaping levels of support for pro-immigration policies such as sanctuary jurisdictions, and attitudes toward Trump’s ban on Muslim immigrants. While multiple empirical studies conducted over the years have found that immigrants do not increase local crime rates, and are in fact less likely to cause crime than their native-born peers, perceptions about the impact immigration has on crime rates emerged as a key predictor of an individual’s level of support for sanctuary jurisdictions and related immigration policies.

**METHODOLOGY**

The public opinion analysis in this report is based on our analysis of more than 30 existing publicly available survey data and public opinion studies by reputable research organizations, news outlets, government bodies, and social issue groups related to immigration and related issues. The majority of studies were conducted between November 2016 and June 2017—however historical data dating back over two decades is also referenced to highlight shifts over time.

Analysis includes an exploration of public attitudes toward immigration and immigrants more generally, as well as levels of support for specific policies including Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and perceptions about sanctuary jurisdictions and deportation.

All sources cited meet The Opportunity Agenda’s standards and best practices for research.

**FINDINGS**

Americans overwhelmingly view immigration as a national strength, however, there has been little movement in perceptions of the impact immigration has on crime and public spending.

**General Views on Immigration**

Survey and polling data from the last two decades signal that an increasing percentage of Americans recognize the integral role that immigrant communities play in shaping the cultural, social, and economic health of the United States. Americans’ movement toward positive attitudes on immigration is reflected in the growing belief that immigrants and immigration strengthen the United States. In a survey of 1,200 adults administered by NBC News/Wall Street Journal, respondents were presented with two statements, and asked which came closer to their personal beliefs:

**STATEMENT A**: Immigration adds to our character and strengthens the United States because it brings diversity, new workers, and new creative talent to this country.

**STATEMENT B**: Immigration detracts from our character and weakens the United States because it puts too many burdens on government services, causes language barriers, and creates housing problems.

Between 2005 and 2017, the percentage of Americans favoring the “strengthens the United States” statement increased from 41 percent to 64 percent as of August, 2017—representing a 23-point increase in just over a decade.\(^18\) Within the same time frame, the percentage of people favoring the “weakens the U.S.” statement decreased from 48 percent to 28 percent.\(^19\) A Pew Research Center poll shows a similar trend in overall attitudes toward immigration, with more than 6 in 10 Americans expressing the belief that “immigrants today strengthen our country” versus “are a burden to our country because they take our jobs, housing and health,” as of June, 2017.\(^20\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>% STRENGTHENS THE U.S.</th>
<th>% WEAKENS THE U.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>48</td>
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</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>% THE ECONOMY IN GENERAL BETTER</th>
<th>% THE ECONOMY IN GENERAL WORSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
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</table>


Alongside a growth in general positive opinions of immigration, survey and polling data conducted over the last two decades demonstrate that a plurality of Americans currently believe that immigration has a positive impact on the economy in general and the social and moral values of the nation. A majority also believes that immigration has a positive impact on food, music, and art.\(^21\) As of June, 2017, a plurality of surveyed Americans expressed the belief that immigration makes the economy better in general (45 percent), up from just 22 percent in 2004.\(^22\)

While these trends represent an overall positive movement in attitudes toward immigrants, there has been less positive movement in regard to public perceptions of the impact immigration has on crime and taxation. Between 2001 and 2017, the percentage of surveyed Americans who express the belief that immigration makes the tax situation in the U.S. “worse” fluctuated between 46 percent in 2001, to a height of 55 percent in 2007. As of June 2017, a larger share of Americans believe that immigration makes the tax situation worse, compared to those who believe it makes the situation better, or has no effect (41 percent versus 23 percent and 33 percent, respectively). At the same time, while there has been a decrease in the percentage of Americans who believe immigration makes the crime situation worse since 2001—when nearly 6 in 10 people surveyed expressed this belief (58 percent)—a significant portion of Americans still express this belief (45 percent) as of June 2017.


\(^{19}\) Ibid.


\(^{22}\) Ibid.
FIGURE 1: DOES IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES MAKE THE CRIME SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY BETTER OR WORSE, OR NOT HAVE MUCH EFFECT?

There is bipartisan support for a continuation of DACA and a roadmap to citizenship as solutions to undocumented immigrations.

Support for Deferred Action Programs

The seeming disconnect between Americans’ overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward immigration when discussed as a broad abstract concept and more divided attitudes when the impact of immigration is addressed, points to the pressing need for a more nuanced understanding of the specific issues and policies driving broader attitudes toward immigration. To explore this conflict further, we examined perceptions of specific policies, including sanctuary jurisdictions, mass deportation, and deferred action, and the influence that question phrasing has on levels of support for pro-immigrant policies.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), has been one of the immigration issues to garner significant media attention in recent months as a result of Trump’s announcement of his plans to wind down the program beginning March 2018.

Polling and survey data conducted since November 2016 indicates that there is widespread support for the continuation of DACA, and opposition to the deportation of DACA recipients, also referred to as Dreamers. In a November 2016 survey of over 1,000 registered voters, respondents were presented with the following statement:

“Donald Trump has said he will repeal a policy that provides deportation relief and work authorization to immigrants who were brought to the country illegally as children…. If Trump repeals this policy, these immigrants will be subject to immediate deportation, loss of jobs, and the federal government’s use of their personal information”.

"Donald Trump has said he will repeal a policy that provides deportation relief and work authorization to immigrants who were brought to the country illegally as children…. If Trump repeals this policy, these immigrants will be subject to immediate deportation, loss of jobs, and the federal government’s use of their personal information".
With this context in mind, respondents were asked their level of support for repealing the policy. Just 28 percent of respondents supported Trump's plans to repeal the program as of November 2016, compared to 58 percent who oppose a repeal. 23

A more recent poll administered by YouGov in September 2017 asked respondents specifically about their level of support for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. When asked if they “favor” or “oppose” DACA, that is, allowing young adults who were brought into the United States as children by parents who were illegal immigrants to stay here, provided they haven’t committed crimes,” 58 percent of respondents stated that they favor the program, 25 percent were in opposition, and 16 percent were not sure. 24

Polls conducted within the last few months provide conflicting information about the degree of bipartisan support for the continuation of DACA. For instance, a September Politico/Morning Consult survey found strong bipartisan support for a roadmap to legal status for current DACA beneficiaries, with 84 percent of self-identified Democrats, 69 percent of Republicans, and 74 percent of Independents expressing the belief that childhood arrivals should be allowed to stay and become citizens or allowed to stay as legal residents. 25

However, in another September 2017 survey, when asked if they want President Trump to “keep” or “end” DACA, “which would result in ‘Dreamers’ losing their temporary legal status,” only about a third of Republicans (30 percent) were in support of keeping DACA compared to 49 percent who were in support of ending the program. 26 This compares to 73 percent of Democrats who support keeping the program, and 43 percent of Independents. 27

Polls also suggest significant variations in levels of support for DACA between racial/ethnic groups. In a September 2017 survey, when asked if they think President Trump made the right or wrong decision “ending the program protecting undocumented immigrants who came to the U.S. as children, a group sometimes known as ‘Dreamers,’” only 20 percent of Black Americans surveyed expressed the view that Trump made the “right decision,” compared to 80 percent who believe it was the “wrong decision.” 28 A majority (62 percent) of “Hispanic” Americans also believe Trump made the wrong decision, compared to 38 percent who believe the right decision was made. White Americans are more divided in their attitudes, with a slight majority (52 percent) expressing the view that Trump made the right decision announcing the end of DACA, compared to 48 percent who believe the wrong decision was made. 29

While there is a divergence of opinion about the continuation of DACA as the program currently exists, the overwhelming majority of Americans support the introduction of a new program that enables childhood arrivals to remain in the United States. In the same survey, respondents were asked how important it is that Representatives in Congress create a new program to allow undocumented immigrants who came to the U.S. as children to stay in the country, 97 percent of “Hispanic” Americans, 95 percent of “other” Americans, 89 percent of Black Americans, and 86 percent of White Americans expressed the view that it is “very important” or “somewhat important” that a new program is introduced. 30

Alongside strong support for the continuation of Deferred Action programs, survey results also suggest that the vast majority of Americans oppose deportation as a solution to undocumented immigration. In a March 2017 poll administered by CNN and ORC International, participants were asked which policy they believe the U.S. government should prioritize when dealing with “illegal immigrants”: “deporting immigrants already in the U.S. illegally,” “developing a plan to stop immigrants from entering the U.S. illegally,” “developing a plan to allow those in the U.S. illegally who have jobs to become legal residents.” 31

A Pathway to Citizenship vs Mass Deportation

27 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
Between September 2015, when the question was first posed, and March 2017, the level of support for deporting all immigrants already in the United States remained relatively static. Fourteen percent of respondents selected deportation as a top priority in 2015, decreasing to 11 percent in September 2016, and remaining at 13 percent as of March 2017.32 At the same time, support for prioritizing a pathway to legal residency gradually increased over the same time span. In September 2015, 46 percent of respondents selected developing a plan to allow undocumented immigrants to become legal residents as the most important priority. By September 2016, 51 percent of those surveyed selected legal residency as a priority.33 As of March 2017, 60 percent of surveyed Americans believe that a pathway to legal residency should be a top priority of the government, over deportation efforts.34

In the same survey, when asked, “do you think the government should attempt to deport all people currently living in the country illegally or should the government not attempt to do that,” the percentage of people who believe the government “should not” deport all undocumented immigrants increased from 63 percent in November 2015, to 71 percent as of March 2017.35

A poll administered by Quinnipiac University shows a similar trend in public opinion since 2012. In the poll, respondents were asked which of the following statements came closer to their view about “illegal immigrants” currently living in the United States:

“They should be allowed to stay in the United States and eventually apply for U.S. citizenship.”

“They should be allowed to remain in the United States, but not allowed to apply for U.S. citizenship.”

“They should be required to leave the U.S.”

In 2012, 57 percent of those surveyed preferred the “stay and apply for citizenship” statement, compared to 11 percent who favored allowing immigrants to stay, but not be allowed to apply for citizenship, and 26 percent who felt that all undocumented immigrants should be required to leave.36 By 2016, support for a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants had increased slightly to 60 percent. As of August, 2017, 63 percent of those surveyed support a pathway to citizenship.

When asked explicitly about deportation, the majority of Americans continue to oppose this measure as a solution to undocumented immigration. In a CBS News Poll, participants were asked, “Do you think the government should attempt to deport all people currently living in the country illegally or should the government not attempt to do that?” When this question was posed in late 2015, 63 percent of those surveyed favored “should not,” while 35 percent felt the government “should” deport all undocumented immigrants.37

When the question was posed again in 2016, there was a slight increase in the percentage of people opposing deportation, with 66 percent of those surveyed opposing deportation, and 30 percent favoring. As of April 2017, 71 percent of those surveyed believe that undocumented immigrants should not be deported compared to 27 percent who favor deportation—representing a nine percent increase in opposition to deportation since 2015.38
Although Americans’ attitudes toward immigration are overwhelmingly positive, and there is growing public support for a roadmap to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, survey data from the last few years also indicate that public support for the deportation of undocumented immigrants shifts dramatically when discussed in the context of crime.

Washington Post contributor Michelle Ye Hee Lee provides some context for this trend, noting, “criminality is a key factor in the public’s attitude toward immigration, and support for deporting people who commit crimes—especially violent crimes—is high. The use of the word ‘crime’ and ‘arrest’ (in the survey question) could bring to mind violent crimes...But not all these arrests are of non-citizens suspected of violent crimes, or even convicted of any crimes.”

In our analysis, we found a sharp increase in support for deportation when the question made reference to undocumented immigrants committing crime. As of August 2017, the overwhelming majority of surveyed Americans (78%) support the deportation of undocumented immigrants convicted of committing a crime. While support for the deportation of undocumented immigration who have been convicted of committing a crime is high, there has been a slight decline in the level of support since 2016, when 83 percent of those surveyed supported the deportation of undocumented immigrants convicted of a crime.
Attitudes Toward Sanctuary Jurisdictions

As talk of “sanctuary cities” has become more prominent in public discourse over the last year, opinion researchers have begun to examine public attitudes toward this issue in recent survey and polling research. Polls from 2015 to 2017 suggest that the public is divided on their views of sanctuary jurisdictions. However, once again the framing of the issue is key, and when sanctuary policies are discussed in the context of crime prevention or public safety, it has a marked impact on the level of support for sanctuary jurisdictions.

The importance of the framing of the question is seen when a survey in which an explicit reference to crime in the context of “sanctuary cities” is made and opposition spikes dramatically. In the survey conducted by Harvard-Harris, respondents were asked if they agree or disagree that “cities that arrest illegal immigrants for crimes should be required to turn them over to immigration authorities?” Eighty percent of survey participants were in agreement with this statement.

However, when removed from the context of crime and public safety, opinion is much more divided. In a February 2017 poll administered by McClatchy-Marist, respondents were given the option between two statements: “undocumented immigrants should be deported so there is no reason to have sanctuary cities,” or “sanctuary cities are needed to provide services to undocumented immigrants while they are needed.” Forty-one percent of respondents were in agreement with the “no reason” statement, and 50 percent agreed that “sanctuary cities” are needed, representing a 7-point rise since 2015, when 43 percent of those surveyed expressed the belief that sanctuary jurisdictions are needed.

In another survey conducted in March 2017 by Rasmussen Reports, when asked whether they favor or oppose the community they live in declaring themselves a “sanctuary city,” 35 percent of respondents expressed that they favored such a measure, while 52 percent opposed such a proposal.

Low-income Americans are significantly less likely than high-income Americans to favor living in sanctuary jurisdictions. When posed the same question, 41 percent of individuals earning $200K+ expressed that they favor living in a sanctuary community, compared to just 25 percent of individuals who earn under $30,000 annually, and 34 percent of individuals earning between $50,000-$100,000 annually. A similar divergence in opinion is seen when examining responses based on education. Only 28 percent of respondents who are high school graduates favor living in a sanctuary city. This compares to 31 percent of individuals who graduated college, and 49 percent of individuals who attended graduate school.
There are also significant partisan differences in opinion. While a plurality (48 percent) of Democrats favors living in a sanctuary community, only 27 percent of both Republicans and voters not affiliated with either major political party agree. There is only marginal variation between racial and ethnic groups, with Black Americans only slightly more likely than White Americans and “other” Americans to favor their community declaring itself a sanctuary (34 percent versus 36 percent and 29 percent, respectively).

FIGURE 3: DO YOU FAVOR OR OPPOSE THE COMMUNITY YOU LIVE IN DECLARING ITSELF

There is a strong correlation between the perception of the level of safety in sanctuary communities and willingness to live in a sanctuary jurisdiction or support sanctuary policy. For instance, 84 percent of respondents who believe that “sanctuary cities” are safer or have about the same level of safety also favor living in a “sanctuary city”, whereas 64 percent of respondents who believe “sanctuary cities” are less safe also oppose living in a sanctuary city.

In a March 2017 survey, when asked about their perception of the safety of “sanctuary cities”, 40 percent of all voters believed sanctuary communities are less safe than cities without sanctuary policies, compared to 35 percent of respondents who thought the level of safety is about the same, while 17 percent believe that sanctuary communities are safer. In the same survey, when asked “does illegal immigration increase or decrease the level of serious crime in America,” 44 percent of those surveyed expressed the belief that undocumented immigration increases serious crime, 41 percent believed it has “no impact,” 7 percent believed undocumented immigration decreases serious crime, and 8 percent were “not sure.”

There is significant partisan divide in response to this question, with 60 percent of Republicans surveyed expressing the belief that sanctuary jurisdictions are “less safe,” compared to 20 percent of Democrats, and 43 percent of individuals who identified as “other.” Black Americans are significantly less like than White Americans and “other” Americans to express the belief that sanctuary jurisdictions are less safe (29 percent versus 43 percent and 36 percent, respectively).
Survey data suggest that belief in the connection between immigration and increased crime has declined in recent years. In a YouGov survey administered in September 2017 to 2,271 adults, respondents were asked if they agree or disagree with the statement, "immigrants increase crime rates." Thirty-one percent were in agreement with this statement, 40 percent disagreed, and 29 percent were neutral.

A Gallup poll has posed a similar question since 2001, specifically asking respondents, "will immigrants to the United States make the crime situation better, worse, or not have much effect?" When the question was first posed in 2001, 50 percent of respondents expressed their belief that immigrants to the United States make the crime situation worse, compared to 7 percent who believed immigration makes the crime situation better, and 38 percent who felt immigration did not have much effect on crime. When asked again in 2004, there had been slight decline in the association between immigrants and crime rates, with 47 percent selecting "worse," 6 percent "better," and 43 percent "not much effect." However, by 2008, which marked the election of Barack Obama, there was a sharp increase in the percentage of people who believed that immigrants had a negative impact on crime, with 58 percent of respondents expressing the belief that immigrants make the crime situation worse, compared to four percent who stated immigrants make the crime situation better, and 38 percent who felt immigrants had "not much effect" on crime/or had no opinion.

As of 2017, 45 percent of people surveyed express the belief that immigrants make the crime situation worse, marking a 13-point decrease since 2008. At the same time, belief that immigrants do not have much effect on crime rates increased from 34 percent to 43 percent, while the belief that immigrants make the crime situation better increased from four percent to nine percent in the same time frame.

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56 Ibid.
The majority of Americans oppose the Trump administration’s threat to withhold funding from sanctuary jurisdictions, and the public is divided on so-called “merit-based” immigration.

### Withholding of Federal Funding

In an executive order issued in January 2017, the Trump administration made a series of threats against sanctuary jurisdictions, specifically that jurisdictions that are seen as not complying with federal immigration agents would have federal funding withheld. Survey and polling data shows there is rising opposition to punitive immigration policies since Trump’s presidential victory.

In a November 2016 survey, when asked if “the United States Justice Department should take legal action against cities that provide sanctuary for illegal immigrants,” 50 percent of respondents were in agreement with this statement. However, this is a 12 point decrease since July 2015, when 62 percent of those surveyed were in agreement with the legal action statement. In a February 2017 poll, 53 percent of those surveyed indicated they oppose the federal government cutting funds to cities that provide sanctuary for undocumented immigrants, compared to 42 percent who support the measure, and 5 percent who were unsure.

### Border Wall and Muslim Ban

A proposal to build a wall across the U.S.-Mexico border was just one of the promises Donald Trump used as a basis for his campaign. Surveys have consistently shown that the majority of Americans oppose Trump’s proposal for a border wall, an opposition that has increased as Trump’s presidency has progressed. In July 2016, when asked “do you favor or oppose building a wall along the U.S. Mexico border to try to stop illegal immigration?” 39 percent of those surveyed favored the proposal, and 57 percent were in opposition. When the question was posed again in February 2017, there was little movement in public attitudes. However, as of August 2017, 61 percent of those surveyed are now in opposition to the building of a border wall, compared to 35 percent of people who support the measure.

While the proposal to build a U.S.-Mexico border wall has been widely opposed, attitudes toward Trump’s executive order barring people from seven Muslim-majority nations from entering the U.S., has been much more mixed. In a February 2017 survey, 54 percent of people surveyed were in support of the measure, compared to 38 percent who disapproved, and eight percent who expressed no opinion. Another poll also conducted in February found that the majority of adults (53 percent) opposed the executive order, while 47 percent were in favor.

### “Merit-based” immigration

In recent months, Donald Trump has called for the movement toward so-called “merit-based” immigration as opposed to the current family-based system, which enables individuals to sponsor family members for entry into the United States. The “merit-based” system proposed by Trump would instead award points based on high-paying job offers and English-language ability and education—a system which if implemented could threaten the reunification of thousands of families.
Polling responses indicate that Americans are ambivalent when it comes to supporting or opposition to a “merit-based” system. In an April 2017 survey, respondents were presented with the following statement: “The majority of immigrant visas awarded in the United States are based on a family relationship. A proposal has been made to award visas instead on the level of skills a potential immigrant brings to this country. Do you favor moving to a merit-based system for legal immigration or prefer to keep the existing family-based system?” A plurality (44 percent) were in support of moving to a merit-based system, 37 percent favored keeping the existing family-based system, while another 18 percent were not sure about which system they preferred.

Again, we see a significant partisan divide with the majority of Republican voters in support of moving to a merit based system, and 55 percent of Democrats supporting keeping the existing family-based system. Individuals not affiliated with either major party are more divided, with 47 percent in favor of switching to a merit-based system, and 32 percent preferring maintaining the existing family-based system.

CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

While recent years have seen a growth in positive attitudes toward immigrant communities, many Americans remain extremely malleable when it comes to support for specific pro-immigrant policies. At the same time, our analysis indicates that framing is key, and when removed from the context of crime and public safety, a plurality of Americans support commonsense immigration policies including sanctuary jurisdictions and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.


69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.
INTRODUCTION

The past 20 months have seen significant focus on “sanctuary cities” in media coverage about immigration and immigrant communities. We analyzed trends in narrative, opinion, spokespeople, and use of terminology related to sanctuary jurisdictions, immigrants, and immigration contained in news reporting and opinion articles.

Overall, focus has shifted dramatically since January 2017 as a direct result of an executive order issued by Trump and his administration, threatening the withholding of federal funds from sanctuary jurisdictions, alongside other measures intended to increase the reach of immigration and customs officers at the state level. The framing adopted by the administration, specifically, connecting sanctuary jurisdictions to public safety concerns, has had a significant impact of the tone and focus of reporting in the last few months.
The vast majority of coverage since the release of the executive order has focused on the implications it presents for cities and counties around the country. This includes stories detailing the reaction of elected officials to the content of the executive order, and the potential loss of federal funding faced by many jurisdictions. This category of reporting has followed a similar trend over the past 12 months, with news reports generally outlining arguments in support of and opposition to sanctuary jurisdictions.

Our analysis also revealed a high level of consistency among anti-sanctuary jurisdiction, and more broadly anti-immigrant voices, with a significant portion of quotes originating from a single organization, the Center of Immigration Studies.

The following sections provide an overview of key findings from our analysis of 50 articles published in regional and national media outlets between Jan. 1, 2016 and Aug. 30, 2017.

**METHODOLOGY**

The media analysis in this report is based on an examination of 50 mainstream news articles from four national publications, and 31 regional/local publications. Using the Lexis Nexis database for print and broadcast media, we entered the following search terms: “immigration” OR “immigrant” AND (“sanctuary” OR “sanctuary cities” OR “sanctuary jurisdictions”). Our search terms were deliberately broad in order to capture a wide range of stories. Our search returned a total population of 2,446 articles, and made use of quarterly random stratified sampling to select 50 articles for in-depth analysis.

The time frame for the search covers Jan. 1, 2016 through to Aug. 30, 2017. This time frame enabled us to examine media coverage over a similar time frame as our analysis of social media discourse, and identify overlapping trends in social media discourse and media commentary.

**TABLE 1: NATIONAL PUBLICATIONS SAMPLED ARTICLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATIONAL PUBLICATIONS/BROADCASTERS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Boston Herald</td>
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<td>The San Francisco Chronicle</td>
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<td>CNN</td>
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<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
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**TABLE 2: REGIONAL/LOCAL PUBLICATIONS SAMPLED ARTICLES**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGIONAL/LOCAL PUBLICATIONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Arizona Republic</td>
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<td>Tribune Review Greensboro</td>
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<td>Tribune Review PA</td>
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<td>Star Tribune Minneapolis</td>
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<td>Metro Edition Minnesota</td>
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<td>Akron Beacon Journal</td>
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<td>The Dallas Morning News</td>
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<td>Voice of America News</td>
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<td>The Hatchet: George Washington University</td>
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<td>The Santa Clara</td>
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<td>Register Star (Hudson, NY)</td>
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<td>The Press Enterprise (Riverside, CA)</td>
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<td>Time-Picayune New Orleans</td>
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<td>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</td>
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<td>St. Louis Post-Dispatch</td>
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<td>The Washington Times</td>
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<td>The Miami Herald</td>
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<td>FSVView &amp; Florida Flambeau: Florida State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Daily Pennsylvanian: University of Pennsylvania</td>
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<td>The Philadelphia Daily News</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Daily Review (Morgan City, Louisiana)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morning Call (Allentown, Pennsylvania)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daily World (Opelousas, Louisiana)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pittsburgh Tribune Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Opinion (Chambersburg, Pennsylvania)</td>
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<td>WFIN - 1330 AM (Findlay, Ohio)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Washington Times</td>
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<td>Metro - Philadelphia</td>
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<td>Winston-Salem Journal (North Carolina)</td>
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<td>The Recorder (Greenfield, Massachusetts)</td>
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<td>The Houston Chronicle</td>
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FINDINGS

Volume of Coverage

Between Jan. 1, 2016 and Aug. 30, 2017 our Lexis Nexis database search returned over 3,000 articles published in local/regional and national media outlets with references to “sanctuary,” “sanctuary cities,” and “sanctuary jurisdictions,” in the context of immigration. Media coverage of sanctuary policies has increased significantly since January 2016, with a dramatic increase in overall coverage beginning in November 2016, and reaching a peak between January and February 2017 when more than a third of articles pulled from our database search were published.

Based on our analysis, this spike in coverage was a direct result of the executive order issued on Jan. 25, 2017 by the Trump administration, announcing his administration’s plans to withhold federal funding from sanctuary jurisdictions.

![Volume of Coverage](image)

**FIGURE 1: VOLUME OF MEDIA COVERAGE**

Storylines and Topics

Mainstream news media coverage of sanctuary jurisdictions and policies fell into 5 broad categories during the time framed examined, with stories about public safety, “the rule of law”, and the passage of anti-immigrant legislation dominating media coverage in the 20-month time span examined. This was followed by stories focused on the impact of anti-immigrant policies on immigrant communities, efforts to define the term “sanctuary cities”, and discussions about the role of faith communities and other institutions in providing refuge and safety to undocumented immigrants.
Discussion of undocumented immigration in the context of crime prevention, public safety and the “rule of law” dominated mainstream media coverage of sanctuary jurisdictions and policies in the time frame we examined. Headlines within this category of coverage include:

“U.S. Justice Department intensifies efforts against sanctuary cities.” 71
“Sanctuary laws make Pennsylvania less safe.” 72
“Jeff Sessions to criticize Chicago, praise Miami-Dade County in remarks on sanctuary cities.”
“Critics distort the law, facts on sanctuary cities” 73

The majority of coverage within this category featured an anti-immigrant spokesperson (often an elected official/policy-maker), voicing opposition to “sanctuary cities” due to such jurisdictions’ threat to public safety and the “rule of law”. More than half of articles within this category made references to undocumented immigrants committing crime, with more than a third making specific reference to a single case: the 2015 murder of Kathryn Steinle, who was shot by an undocumented immigrant named Juan Francisco Lopez-Sanchez. The Kathryn Steinle case has become a central talking point for Trump and his administration, and was a central argument used against sanctuary jurisdictions.

As demonstrated by the excerpt below from an article in the Boston Herald, references to Kathryn “Kate” Steinle often emerged within the context of introducing new legislation (in this case a piece of legislation named after Kathryn Steinle), aimed at reducing the supposed risk presented by undocumented immigrants in the United States:

“The other bill, called “Kate’s Law,” is named after Kathryn Steinle, a California woman who was killed in 2015 by Juan Francisco Lopez-Sanchez, who had repeatedly re-entered the country illegally. The measure would impose tougher mandatory minimum prison sentences on people who re-enter the country without authorization and boost penalties for those convicted of other crimes.” 74

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71 VOA News, Voices of America, April 21, 2017.
The executive order issued by the Trump administration on Jan. 25, 2017, titled “Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States”, resulted in an immediate spike in media coverage of sanctuary jurisdictions. A significant portion of this coverage centered on interpreting the order, and analyzing the implications presented for sanctuary jurisdictions throughout the country.

“In a statement Friday, the Justice Department said the cities are “crumbling under the weight of illegal immigration and violent crime,” and mentioned an increase in murders in Chicago as well as gang violence in New York City. It also accused local officials of being more concerned about protecting undocumented immigrants than capturing criminals, citing the recent arrest of MS-13 gang members in California. And just several weeks ago in California’s Bay Area, after a raid captured 11 MS-13 members on charges including murder, extortion and drug trafficking, city officials seemed more concerned with reassuring illegal immigrants that the raid was unrelated to immigration than with warning other MS-13 members that they were next,” the release said.75

While the majority of articles adopted a more neutral tone and presented arguments for and against particular legislation, due to a reliance on direct-quotes from the administration, articles within this category typically featured the use of terms such as “illegal alien” or “criminal alien” to describe undocumented immigrants.

Despite this trend, many articles took on a sympathetic tone, uplifting the voices of pro-immigrant advocates attempting to debunk the connection between the passage of anti-immigration legislation and public safety. This is seen in an April 2017 article published by the Boston Herald in which a pro-immigrant advocate points out the absurdity of arguments being made in support of Trump’s executive order, specifically the notion that sanctuary jurisdictions are a safe haven for people who commit crimes.76

A smaller portion of articles within this category (20 percent) touched on public safety, but in the context of the erosion of community trust that the loss of sanctuary jurisdictions would cause between immigrant communities and local law enforcement. These articles focused specifically on the loss of community trust and safety that may result in law enforcement taking on a more active role in immigration enforcement, and the potential reluctance that undocumented immigrants may feel in reporting crimes. This focus is seen in an article featured in The Arizona Republic, which touched on the impact on victims of crime as a result of anti-sanctuary legislation:

“Communities lose trust in police agencies and are less likely to seek assistance or report crimes when they view law enforcement as “a direct gateway to permanent separation from their families,” it said.”77

Related to community trust and local law enforcement, several articles touched on the need for local/state freedom from federal intervention. This typically featured pro-immigrant voices who supported the rights of local authorities to implement sanctuary policies, and typically featured a spokesperson pointing out the hypocrisy of conservatives who argue for states’ rights but oppose sanctuary jurisdictions.

Taken as a whole, these articles reflect the effectiveness of the administration’s framing of the issue as being related to public safety and crime reduction, but also the strength of counterarguments related to community trust between law enforcement and immigrant communities.

Anti-Sanctuary/Immigrant Legislation and Immigration Raids (25 percent)

The executive order issued by the Trump administration on Jan. 25, 2017, titled “Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States”, resulted in an immediate spike in media coverage of sanctuary jurisdictions. A significant portion of this coverage centered on interpreting the order, and analyzing the implications presented for sanctuary jurisdictions throughout the country.

75 VOA News, Voices of America, April 21, 2017.
The majority of articles made specific reference to the most punitive measure within the order, that being the threat made by the administration to withhold federal funding from communities deemed to be sanctuary jurisdictions. Coverage generally included quotes from legal specialists, and in many cases elected officials, reacting to the order, and either denying or confirming their own municipality’s status as a sanctuary jurisdiction, often in an attempt to quell community fears.

The cautious approach adopted by many local elected officials is seen in this excerpt from an article published in the Arizona Daily Star, in which the Mayor of Tucson clarifies the city’s status in the wake of the executive order:

“Tucson and the city of South Tucson are not sanctuary cities”, officials said Wednesday, the day President Trump signed an executive order to withhold federal grants to communities that protect illegal immigrants. Officially, Tucson became an immigrant-welcoming city in 2012 and reaffirmed that title in December, with Mayor Jonathan Rothschild and Councilwoman Regina Romero vowing to protect all of its citizens. “Tucson remains an immigrant-welcoming community with resources available to help visitors, permanent residents and those seeking to become naturalized U.S. citizens, and none of that is going to change,” said Rothschild last month.78

A smaller portion of coverage within this category also focused on the passage of state level legislation aimed at penalizing sanctuary jurisdictions. References to Arizona’s Senate Bill 1070, Texas’ Senate Bill 4, and Texas Governor Greg Abbott featured heavily within this category of storytelling. The majority of stories also focused on the potential loss of funding faced by counties and cities around the country. Other articles, such as a March 2, 2017 article published in the Akron Beacon Journal touched on the potential legal consequences facing elected officials who chose to or are seen to defy legislation put forth and supported by the administration:

Under Trump and some of his supporters, city leaders who unwittingly harbor undocumented immigrants would be treated like criminals. Trump has promised to deny funding. Pennsylvania state lawmakers advanced a bill last month to do just that. In Ohio, Rep. Candice Keller, R-Middletown, promises to cut off funding through a bill that also would criminally charge mayors and councils of sanctuary cities.

Defining “Sanctuary Cities” and use of alternative terms (18 percent)

Within the Jan. 25 executive order, sanctuary jurisdictions are defined only as jurisdictions that “willfully refuse to comply with 8 U.S.C. 1373”. Due in large part to the vagueness of this description, the question of what constitutes a sanctuary jurisdiction featured heavily in media coverage, with 18 percent of articles within our sample featuring a segment dedicated to defining the term “sanctuary cities.”

One of the most comprehensive definitions seen within this category of coverage was featured in a regional publication, the Asbury Park Press, in which sanctuary cities were defined as “municipalities, counties or states with law enforcement policies limiting the extent to which they cooperate with federal immigration authorities.”80

Common definitions also include:

- “…cities, states, counties and school districts (that) have approved related actions - including symbolic declarations and actual policy changes limiting or prohibiting cooperation with federal immigration authorities.”81

- “…a range of policies, including barring police from questioning people solely to determine immigration status and not complying with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) requests to keep people in custody beyond their release on local charges.”82

- “laws that limit how much local law enforcement and government agencies can work with federal authorities on immigration matters.”83

79 See; https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/8/1373
83 Madison Park, “In Trump-defying move, California’s Senate passes sanctuary state bill”, CNN, April 3, 2017.
Alongside efforts to define the specifics of what sanctuary jurisdictions and policies entail, articles within this category also pointed to concerns surrounding how Trump’s administration would define and in turn, take action against, jurisdictions deemed to be sanctuaries. As such, several articles featured advocates, policymakers, and elected officials providing clarification and, to a lesser extent, attempting to distance their communities from the term, while still covertly pursuing pro-immigrant policies. These stories frequently included quotes or references from mayors and other city officials vehemently denying their municipality’s status as a sanctuary jurisdiction, or subtly avoiding use of the term, such as an article published in the Times Picayune New Orleans, which describes New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu’s strategic approach to the issue:

> Many city leaders embrace the term. But unlike mayors of New York, Chicago, Seattle, Denver, San Francisco, Los Angeles and other cities, New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu avoids the label “sanctuary city” to describe New Orleans. He relies on the unique nuances of the city’s legal situation to bolster his reasoning for doing so. The police department and the city jail are under separate federal consent decrees, agreements overseen by a judge that require each agency to improve their operations to meet constitutional standards. Under those agreements, Landrieu and Orleans Parish Sheriff Marlin Gusman implemented practices that their critics equate to “sanctuary city policies.”

Another article published in the Fresno Bee, details another mayor’s strategy to dispel concerns following the release of Trump’s executive order:

> Fresno Mayor Lee Brand, in an effort to calm concerns about his recent statement that Fresno won’t call itself a sanctuary city for refugees and undocumented immigrants, said Thursday that “the only difference between Fresno and other cities who label themselves as sanctuary cities are only words with no clear definition.”

Collectively, these stories point to a general lack of clarity regarding the official definition of “sanctuary cities,” and again, point to the effectiveness of the administration’s anti-sanctuary cities rhetoric in the months following the release of their January 2017 executive order. Our analysis indicates that one response to ambiguity and fear surrounding sanctuary cities and the implications being labelled as such was the adoption of alternative terms, which were referenced in several articles. Alternative terms included “Fourth Amendment city,” “welcoming cities,” and in the case of Tuscon and the city of South Tuscon, “immigrant-welcoming city.”

### Challenging the Trump Administration (15 percent)

The efforts of grassroots activists and organizers challenging the Trump administration’s actions against immigrant communities comprised 15 percent of media coverage, and generally focused on elected officials, university administrators, and community members speaking out in defiance of the series of executive orders issued in January 2017. The majority of coverage included pro-immigrant spokespeople speaking out against the increased presence of immigration enforcement agents in their communities, and outlining the ways their communities were working to protect immigrants. Overall, reporting within this category took on a sympathetic tone, centering the story on the real-world implications presented by Trump’s immigration policies.

Several articles made specific reference to California’s Senate Bill 54, the “sanctuary state” bill, which is intended to ensure the continued protection of immigrant communities within the state of California. An article published in April 2017 detailed legislators who supported the bill’s open resistance of President Trump’s immigration policies:

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84 Times Picayune New Orleans
85 Fresno Bee
Across discussions of the legal and financial implications of anti-sanctuary and more broadly, anti-immigrant legislation, the impact of such legislation on immigrant communities was also a common storyline featured in media coverage. This area of storytelling made frequent reference to the implications of anti-sanctuary policies on undocumented victims of crime, and the fear spreading among immigrant communities related to ICE raids.

This focus on undocumented immigrants as potential crime victims or important witnesses of crime resulted in several articles featuring spokespeople from law enforcement stressing their departments’ desire to limit their involvement in federal immigration enforcement.

Despite the more general focus on the implications of anti-sanctuary legislation, overall reporting related to sanctuary policies and jurisdiction made little reference to the issue of racial profiling, an issue that came to the forefront of media coverage over the summer as a result of Donald Trump’s pardoning of former Sheriff of Maricopa County Joe Arpaio.

In our sample, only two articles made explicit reference to racial profiling, both within the context of pro-immigrant advocates making arguments against a particular anti-immigrant bill, and the potential rise in discrimination toward immigrant communities regardless of immigration status.

In addition to an analysis of the storylines that tended to shape media coverage of sanctuary jurisdiction and policies, we also examined the types of speakers who were most frequently quoted in news stories and the dominant views that these voices reflected. The spokespeople featured in media coverage play an important role in framing and shaping the way particular stories are told.

Overall, pro-immigrant voices outnumbered anti-immigrant voices in our article sample. Pro-immigrant advocates/organizations, immigrants, pro-immigrant elected officials, service providers, and faith leaders occupied just under 40 percent of those quoted, while anti-immigrant voices occupied 28 percent of quotes. The remaining 20 percent of quotes featured academic/researcher, law enforcement, and “other” spokespeople (generally members of the public), whose quotes were typically focused on providing expert knowledge of an issue, or reactions to an event, and therefore could not be categorized either pro- or anti-immigrant.

The vast majority of pro-immigrant voices (16 percent) came of representatives from pro-immigrant advocacy organizations such as the National Immigration Law Center (NILC), and the ACLU. This was followed by quotes from pro-immigrant/sanctuary policy elected officials (13 percent). The voices of immigrants are largely absent, representing just three percent of overall quotes within our sampled articles.

Voices from pro-immigrant spokespeople, particularly in articles published since January 2017, tended to focus on the actions of the Trump administration, and the negative impact that the current administration’s policies present for communities across the nation. Many, in an attempt to debunk negative stereotypes about the criminality of undocumented immigrants, acted to reinforce anti-immigrant framing, which connects issues of crime and public safety to sanctuary policies.
A significant portion of law enforcement (which represented six percent of quotes overall), fell within the pro-immigrant category, as many local law enforcement officers warned of the potential loss of community safety that would result if local departments were forced to take a more active role in immigration enforcement. Just one example of local law enforcement’s pro-sanctuary policy stance is seen in an article published in the Philadelphia Inquirer, in which Camden, New Jersey Police Chief, Scott Thomson voices his opposition to local law enforcement taking a more active role in immigration enforcement:

In Camden - which doesn’t describe itself as a “sanctuary city” - county Police Chief Scott Thomson has said that targeting undocumented immigrants would be “completely counterintuitive to what we’re trying to do here.”

Anti-immigrant voices were extremely consistent in terms of the sources of quotes, with the vast majority of quotes from anti-immigrant elected officials coming from Donald Trump and Jeff Sessions. Anti-immigrant advocate voices were dominated by quotes from the Center of Immigration Studies, a self-identified “independent, non-partisan” research organization, which has been listed by the Southern Poverty Law Center as a hate group. Quotes from anti-immigrant voices focused almost exclusively on “illegal immigrants” or “illegal aliens” committing crime, and the need to uphold federal law.

Table 1: Pro-immigrant leaning organizations quoted in media coverage

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<th>Pro-immigrant leaning organizations quoted</th>
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<tr>
<td>Urban Institute</td>
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<td>Immigrant Legal Resource Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Civil Liberties Union (National)</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice</td>
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Voices of elected officials/policymakers

*Spokesperson from these organizations quoted in more than one media source.

The following quotes are a selected sample of quotes from each category of spokesperson.

Some California Republicans fought back. State Sen. Jeff Stone voted against the measure, saying, “I think this bill is making it that much more difficult for the federal authorities to get the most dangerous criminals that we want to deport to keep our communities safe.” (St Louis Post-Dispatch).

Five Council members and Mayor Greg Stanton have voiced opposition. The Council did not raise the issue for consideration; instead, a Phoenix resident petitioned the city to take action. Any resident can submit a petition, which requires City Council action within 15 days. Stanton said in a statement that Phoenix must respect state immigration law, and he would not ask police officers to “knowingly violate the law.” (Mayor Greg Stanton)

“We are welcoming and have many refugees that have come through the system,” Chapel Hill Mayor Pam Hemminger (D) told a local news station. “But nobody wants to be shot at by the General Assembly or the national government withholding funding. It’s hard to talk about and not have state lawmakers come at us.” (Mayor Pam Hemminger).

State Rep. Steve Drazkowski, R-Mazeppa, who has called for a tougher stance on immigration enforcement, said he is troubled by the church announcement. “We have this thing that guides us in the United States called the rule of law,” he said. “When we have organizations defying the rule of law, it undermines our democracy and weakens our state.” (Metro Edition Minneapolis).

“Our welcoming policy has been working. It’s been working for about 150 years,” Mayor Dan Horrigan said, taking a historical tone when asked about sanctuary cities at his State of the City address Tuesday. Horrigan said accepting legal immigrants - refugees included - is not akin to giving sanctuary. He dispelled notions that refugees do not work, pay taxes or help the economy grow. (Akron Beacon Journal).

“There is a lot of debate what sanctuary cities really means,” Chameides said. “What our resolution says is that our police are going to focus on safety issues. It would be ridiculous for our police to be focused on anything else. We are not stopping them or getting in the way of federal officials. We just don’t want to have to pay for our local police to follow federal mandates.” (Register Star).
Voices from the current Administration

“You lost the people that you love because our government refused to enforce our nation’s immigration laws,” Trump said to the families gathered at the White House. “We’re calling on all members of Congress to honor grieving American families by passing these lifesaving measures in the House, in the Senate and then sending them to my desk for a very rapid signature. I promise you, it will be done quickly.”

“And just several weeks ago in California’s Bay Area, after a raid captured 11 MS-13 members on charges including murder, extortion and drug trafficking, city officials seemed more concerned with reassuring illegal immigrants that the raid was unrelated to immigration than with warning other MS-13 members that they were next,” the release said.

“Countless Americans would be alive today and countless loved ones would not be grieving today if these policies of sanctuary cities were ended,” Sessions said. (The Daily Press, Newport).

Trump touted what he called the “liberation” of US towns and cities, thanks to his ramped-up immigration policies. “[Gang members] don’t want to use guns because it’s too fast and it’s not painful enough, so they’ll take a young, beautiful girl, 16, 15 and others and they slice them and dice them with a knife because they want them to go through excruciating pain before they die, and these are the animals that we’ve been protecting for so long,” Trump said. “Well, they’re not being protected any longer, folks. And that is why my administration is launching a nationwide crackdown on sanctuary cities,” he said. (CNN).

Voices of pro-immigrant advocates

But the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, which supports sanctuary policies, wrote in a report that local agencies aren’t obligated to help with federal enforcement or participate in the “jail-to-deportation pipeline.” Communities lose trust in police agencies and are less likely to seek assistance or report crimes when they view law enforcement as “a direct gateway to permanent separation from their families,” it said.

Cristina Parker is the immigration programs director of Grassroots Leadership, a group advocating for local sanctuary policies in Austin. She says that while Travis County’s policy is significant, it addresses only one aspect of local-federal cooperation and does not shield all undocumented immigrants from deportation, as some sanctuary critics point it. “It’s very much about political points to them and not about what’s actually happening here in Austin or Travis County,” Parker told Facing South. (Tribune Review Greensboro).

“In the wake of the racially charged and divisive election, the faculty, staff, and students of University of North Texas have come together to demand that our university take action and declare itself a sanctuary university,” reads a pre-written letter for students to send to UNT President Neal Smatresk and other administrators. (The Dallas Morning News).

Lofgren, a former chair on the subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security, said she believes that to ensure community trust, there must be a separation between local law enforcement and Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

“You can’t go into a community if they’re afraid to open their door, that believes you’re their enemy, that thinks you’re going to deport grandma and expect them to be a witness ... and participate in community policing,” Lofgren said. (The Santa Clara).
Voices of academics/researchers

Deepinder Mayell, of the University of Minnesota’s Center for New Americans, said immigration agents with a search warrant can detain immigrants on church premises. But he points to a 2011 memo that has advised agents to use special caution in “sensitive locations” including houses of worship and schools, and has required them to obtain approval from top officials before conducting searches and arrests there. The incoming administration can scrap these guidelines, says Mayell, who is organizing an informational event about sanctuary cities and campuses at the University later in December. “We are all figuring out what sanctuary will mean in this new kind of environment,” he said. (Metro Edition Minneapolis).

“When the law is on your side,” Dershowitz would say, “pound the law into the table. When the facts are on your side, pound the facts into the table. And when neither the law nor the facts are on your side, just pound the table.” (The San Francisco Chronicle).

“A lot of the roots of the policies during the Antebellum period (and) during the 1980s, really began with an underground movement to protect refugees or protect runaway slaves,” Colbern said. “But eventually, this spreads to state and localities and law enforcement. [There are] layers of protection on top of noncooperation that makes ‘sanctuary’ something meaningful for undocumented immigrants.” (The Santa Clara).

Voices of service providers

“Be assured that the university will stay true to its values and advocate for our undocumented students, international students and all members of our community,” wrote Kaler. (Metro Edition Minneapolis).

Attorney James Brosnahan spoke about the consequences of immigration policy, particularly the separation of families. “Do you think there’s a single family in this state that hasn’t sat around the table and [said] ‘What are we going to do if grandma goes? What are we going to do? Where’s she going to go?’” he said. (The Santa Clara).

“I think it’s important that you instill trust and communication between the local community law enforcement and the immigrant community and not treat our police as deportation officers,” she said. DeLong said her clinic will continue to help undocumented citizens. (The Hatchet).

Voices of faith leaders/clergy

“We will not let politics come before the sacredness of people,” said JaNae’ Bates, a United Church of Christ minister and communications director for ISAIAH. “As a human being, you are sacred so you should be safe in our sacred space.” (Metro Edition Minneapolis).
Tone and Focus

The regional focus of storylines with our sample of 50 articles skewed heavily Northeast and Midwest, with just over 34 percent of articles focused on localities in the Northeast, and just over 22 percent focused on activities within the Midwest. This is followed by the South, which comprised roughly 16 percent of regional focus, while the West made up about 12 percent of articles with a regional focus. The vast majority of coverage was focused at the regional/local level (80 percent), as opposed to national level focus (20 percent).

**FIGURE 4: REGIONAL FOCUS OF ARTICLES**
CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

Media coverage of sanctuary jurisdictions and policies fits into a wider story of immigration policies in the nation, and the troubling rise of anti-immigrant discourse and legalization that has come to characterize the Trump administration. As a whole, media coverage has centered on interpreting the legislative actions of the new administration, and the real-world impact presented to immigrant communities, and those committed to protecting their rights.

While pro-immigrant voices dominated media coverage in the time reviewed, the consistency of anti-immigrant voices presents important implications for pro-immigrant advocates. The messages from anti-immigrant spokespeople were consistent in not only the source of the message, but also the framing of the issue, specifically, the framing of sanctuary jurisdictions as a public safety issue. The connection between criminality and undocumented immigration was a central component of this anti-immigrant framing, and again, speaks to a wider effort on the part of the current administration to depict certain immigrant communities as a threat to national safety. This messaging appears to be reinforced by a degree of ambiguity on the part of pro-immigrant voices, in terms of their ability to define sanctuary jurisdictions and policies in a uniform and digestible way.

At the same time, reporting revealed widespread resistance to the actions of the Trump administration and the efforts of local elected officials to reassure residents of their commitments to protection of immigrant communities. This form of coverage also revealed local law enforcement as a potential ally to the pro-sanctuary movement. We found that local law enforcement agencies were regularly quoted stressing the need for trust between law enforcement and immigrant community, the warning of the potential corrosion of this trust if anti-sanctuary policies are enacted.

While the September 2017 ruling that the provision within the executive order that threatened to withhold funding from sanctuary jurisdictions is unconstitutional is a critical victory, media coverage in the time frame we explored reflects the pressing need for more coordinated messaging among pro-immigrant advocates, and better leveraging of local spokespeople who can speak to the moral and practical applications of sanctuary policies.

The following section provides recommendations for advocates, activists, and policymakers seeking to more effectively shape the narrative and messaging around sanctuary jurisdictions and immigration policies.
RECOMMENDATIONS

These findings present several important implications for messaging and audience engagement around sanctuary cities, deportation, and related immigration policies.

**Narrative, Messaging & Storytelling Recommendations**

**Frame sanctuary cities in terms of strong, safe, and connected communities, while avoiding associations with crime and violence:** Both public opinion research and social media data indicate that the administration’s conflation of immigration with issues of crime and public safety gained traction in 2017, particularly following the introduction of SB4 by Texas Governor Greg Abbott. It is important to challenge and reframe the discussion, and refocus public attention on commonsense policies that already have high levels of public support. It is also necessary for immigrant rights advocates to educate persuadable audiences about pathways to citizenship, uplifting the many successes of programs like DACA. At the same time, advocates should avoid myth-busting, which may simply reinforce the connection between crime and sanctuary policies in people’s minds. There are subtler ways to reframe, such as focusing on what happens when immigrants can more fully participate and contribute. This requires talking about immigrants as more than just “immigrants,” but as parents, students, neighbors, etc., in order to give an alternative idea to move to.

**SAMPLE LANGUAGE INCLUDES:**

**VALUE:** Our country is changing, getting more and more diverse. It might make some of us uncomfortable, but it is our reality, and a constant throughout our history.

**PROBLEM:** Politicians play on this fear, trying to divide us. They push unwise and divisive ideas like ending deferred action, defunding states which provide legal protection to undocumented immigrants, or singling out Muslim Americans because of their religion.
**SOLUTION:** If we take the bait on these issues, it makes our country weaker, not stronger. Our nation is stronger when every one of us can contribute and share ideas, and when everyone’s basic rights and dignity are respected.

**ACTION:** We need to embrace ideas that unify us as a diverse people and make our country stronger, and we need to speak out against discrimination and prejudice when we see it.

**Define for your audience what sanctuary policies are and do:** In order to effectively communicate the importance of sanctuary jurisdictions, we must define what such communities are, and what they provide for their residents. Sanctuaries are the last refuge of the hunted. While we want to be careful about evoking that, the connection to that place of safety when a person is hunted and exhausted is an emotionally powerful one. Drawing on these themes of safety and refuge can help audiences better understand the critical role sanctuary jurisdictions play.

**Use other descriptors to describe sanctuary policies:** “Sanctuary cities” has become something of a buzzword in media coverage and political discourse, but it often goes undefined and does not speak to the variety of ways that sanctuary policies are implemented in communities and institutions across the country. Findings from our public opinion analysis also indicate that members of the public are more likely to support policies like DACA, DAPA, and a pathway to citizenship when the services the programs provide are clearly defined. Advocates should use sanctuary with other descriptors that add on to that word, like “places where everyone, including our immigrant neighbors, can contribute and participate.”

**Explain how sanctuary policies benefit all residents:** Our analysis of public opinion data shows strong public support for pro-immigration policies such as DACA, and opposition to widespread deportation. However, public opinion data also reveals that low-income Americans are less likely to want to reside in sanctuary jurisdictions than their higher income counterparts. This disparity is likely a product of anxieties related to competition for jobs—a source of anxiety that the new Administration has leveraged to sow fear and distrust. It is necessary to address these concerns, while also not perpetuating stereotypes about the types of jobs undocumented immigrants usually occupy. Advocates should talk about the importance of communities sticking together and not letting corporate interests and politicians divide us.

**Promote sanctuary policies with other solutions that expand opportunity for all:** In the survey research examined, respondents were significantly more likely to support an immigration policy when they were given the details about what the program would provide, or examples of the real-world impact on immigrant communities. Explaining in plain terms what a policy entails is a vital part of telling an affirmative story that is specific, but also a systemic.

**Connect sanctuary policies to policies your audience support:** A number of pro-immigrant policies receive high levels of support from the public. Lifting up these popular solutions while explaining and promoting more complex or less popular ones can help to build broader and more lasting support. Solutions with the greatest support include:

- Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).
- A pathway for citizenship for undocumented immigrants already in the country.

**Include racial profiling among the problems that sanctuary cities are designed to address:** Audiences engaging in online discussions about sanctuary cities and related issues are not generally connecting immigration enforcement by police to increased racial profiling. These topics currently occupy distinct clusters within our monitor, indicating that the current conversation of racial profiling (in relation to sanctuary cities and deportation) occupies a less prominent space within the overall discourse. In addition, our analysis of media coverage revealed that reporting on racial profiling in relation to anti-immigration legislation only occupied a fraction of media reports. In order to better educate the public on the dangers of legislation such as Texas SB4, it is necessary to connect the dots for engaged audiences and detail the intersection between heightened policing of immigrant communities and racial profiling.

**Racial profiling harms all Americans:** It violates the American value of equal justice that we all depend on. It disrespects and discriminates against millions of young people and others around the country. It threatens public safety and can ruin people’s lives. It is time to end racial profiling and focus law enforcement on evidence and public safety.

We need to be clear: it is unacceptable for those who enforce our laws to stereotype people based on the color of their skin, religion, or nation of origin. Law enforcement should act on facts and evidence, not racial bias. If one group can be singled out based on race or ethnicity or religion, none of us will be safe to enjoy the rights that the United States stands for. The administration’s attacks on counties and cities that provide support to undocumented immigrants and their families, and policies such as Texas’ SB4, threaten the freedom of all of us.
We are stronger when we find ways to encourage participation and contribution, not ways to divide, exclude and discriminate. We have to condemn, in the strongest terms, those who engage in and encourage racist tactics.

Is it right for a military veteran to be asked for his papers just because he is of Mexican heritage? Is it right for a mother of Asian or Latino background who speaks with an accent to get asked for her papers—right in front of her children—when her White friend next to her does not? Is it right that immigrants who work hard and aspire to be citizens live in daily fear of being stopped, arrested, and deported away from their loved ones? Is it right to create a culture of suspicion in an America that becomes more diverse every day? No. Anyone who engages in or encourages discrimination is flat out wrong. That is not who we are as a country.

Social Media Narrative and Audience Engagement

**Lead with values:** Identify the core values of: diversity, dignity, community, and family. Starting social media posts with a values-based message reaches persuadable audiences and crosses over into their interests.

**Use values-based and action-oriented hashtags:** Draw social media audiences in with a values-based hashtag to alert them as to why they should care about the issue. One example of a popular and effective values-based hashtag is #RefugeesWelcome. Action-oriented hashtags create a sense of urgency and purpose. Making actions clear and concise on social media allow users to actively participate in the cause. Action-oriented hashtags can also provide context for who is accountable for the problem and what is at stake. For example, #StopICECold sends a clear message about ICE detention and bringing an end to ICE raids.

**Avoid myth-busting:** In an era of social media trolls and bots, falling into the trap of a back and forth debate on social media distracts from the message. Avoid using hashtags that reinforce the opposition’s narrative. As a rule of thumb, hashtags that include the words “No” and “Not” often myth bust.

**Use (and create) hashtags that evoke a narrative:** The #BlackLivesMatter movement has shown us that values-based hashtags amplify movements throughout and even beyond social media. Black Lives Matter tells a full story and is a complete sentence. It reinforces the narrative that Black lives do matter, although Black people have not been treated with respect since being brought to the country as slaves. Immigration hashtags that evoke similar stories are: #HereToStay, #KeepFamiliesTogether, #RefugeesWelcome, and #UndocumentedAndUnafraid.

**Humanize the issue by creating multimedia:** Empathy is valuable currency on social media as it creates a personal connection to the issue. Photo and video are successful ways to portray the humanity of immigrants. Define America’s Undocu-joy series is a prime example of how showing immigrants in their day to day lives makes a powerful impact.

Engaging Strategic Audiences

Key to building wider public support for pro-immigration policies is activating the base of existing supporters while persuading undecided groups over time. That, in turn, requires prioritizing strategic audiences by:

**Activating the base:** Our analysis of existing public opinion research indicates that Latinx Americans, Black Americans, and self-identified Democrats are highly supportive of the continuation of policies intended to protect undocumented immigrant communities, as well as efforts to challenge the Trump’s anti-immigrant actions. These audiences should be prioritized in outreach.

**Incorporating the perspectives of faith communities:** Faith leaders/communities have emerged as an important pro-immigrant voice in the media and in social media discourse. Drawing on the religious roots of the concept of sanctuary and highlighting the important role faith-based communities continue to play in providing safety and refuge to immigrant communities is a strategy to reach new audiences within faith communities.
APPENDIX I

Works Cited Public Opinion Analysis


APPENDIX II

Articles Cited: Media Content Analysis

NATIONAL PUBLICATIONS/BROADCASTERS

- The Boston Herald
- The San Francisco Chronicle
- CNN
- Los Angeles Times

REGIONAL/LOCAL PUBLICATIONS

- The Arizona Republic
- Tribune Review Greensboro
- Tribune Review PA
- Star Tribune Minneapolis
- Metro Edition Minnesota
- Akron Beacon Journal
- The Dallas Morning News
- Voice of America News
- The Hatchet: George Washington University
- The Santa Clara
- Register Star (Hudson, NY)
- The Press Enterprise (Riverside, CA)
- Time-Picayune New Orleans
- Fort Worth Star-Telegram
- St. Louis Post-Dispatch
- The Washington Times
- The Miami Herald
- FSView & Florida Flambeau: Florida State University
- The Daily Pennsylvanian: University of Pennsylvania
- The Philadelphia Daily News
- The Daily Review (Morgan City, Louisiana)
- Morning Call (Allentown, Pennsylvania)
- Daily World (Opelousas, Louisiana)
- Pittsburgh Tribune Review
- Public Opinion (Chambersburg, Pennsylvania)
- WFIN - 1330 AM (Findlay, Ohio)
- The Washington Times
- Metro - Philadelphia
- Winston-Salem Journal (North Carolina)
- The Recorder (Greenfield, Massachusetts)
- The Houston Chronicle