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Immigration at the Ballot Box: Immigration and Electoral Outcomes

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Abstract

As the inflammatory comments from political candidates about immigration seem to increase, there appears to be a disconnect between voters' concerns and behavior and the demographics of their localities. This leads one to wonder: to what extent does immigration affect electoral outcomes across states? I theorize that political candidates push rhetoric that advances a negative view of immigration, connecting voters' concerns over issues such as safety and the economy, to an increase in immigrants. This rhetoric should be particularly effective in areas with more immigration, and more advantageous to Republican candidates to utilize. Thus, I hypothesize that states with higher levels of immigration will have higher voter turnout and a higher percentage of the vote share for the Republican candidate. I test my argument through a quantitative approach using data from the 2024 election cycle. I find minimal support for my first hypothesis, and no support for my second hypothesis. These findings suggest, on a local level, immigration alone is not a motivating phenomenon to voters.

Introduction

The rhetoric and inflammatory comments surrounding immigration in the United States have increased in recent election cycles. On a national level, this arguably escalated in the 2024 Presidential Election. In a December 2023 rally, Donald Trump stated that immigrants are, "poisoning the blood of our country," a statement that some claimed echoed Adolf Hitler (Gibson 2023). Later, at the September 2024 Presidential Debate, Donald Trump spread the false claim that Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio were "eating the pets of the people that live there." (Hoffman 2024). For both campaigns, it was a defining issue in the debates, and for voters as well. In polling shortly before the 2024 election, 44% of polled registered voters named immigration as one of their three most important issues (YouGov 2024).

This national focus on immigration has effects that have trickled down to all levels of American politics, including at the state level. Only 4.9% of Missouri's population is foreign-born, as of 2024, and just over half of them are already citizens (U.S. Census Bureau 2024). Despite this, the Missouri General Assembly created the Special Interim Committee on Illegal Immigrant Crimes (Sanchez 2024), evidently seeing crime committed by undocumented immigrants as a pressing policy matter. Another such example of this is the state of Montana. An October 2024 poll asked if respondents, as citizens of Montana, were worried about immigration. Over half of them responded in the affirmative (Montana State University Bilings 2024). However, as of 2024, the United States Census Bureau reports only 2.1% of Montana's population being foreign-born and that it has one of the lowest estimates of undocumented immigrants in the country. In context, the foreign-born population in the United States is 14.8%. There is a clear disconnect between the data and the response, both from concerned citizens and politicians alike. These discrepancies raise the question: to what extent does immigration affect electoral outcomes across states?

To answer this question, I argue that higher levels of immigration in a state correspond to higher voter turnout and vote share for the Republican party in that state. I argue that political candidates will use rhetoric that associates voters' concerns over crime and the economy with immigration, motivating voters to turn out to vote, especially in states with higher levels of immigration. In recent elections, the Republican Party has taken a position of being tough on illicit immigration, so it is particularly advantageous for Republican candidates to use this rhetoric. To test my hypotheses, I use data from the 2024 Presidential Election cycle. I find minimal support for my claims, concluding that there is a lack of evidence to support the idea that immigration affects voting behavior on a statewide basis. There is debate in the literature over the extent of this effect, most of which focuses on municipal level effects. In my analysis, I seek to contribute to this body

of work by providing data that covers state-level differences. In understanding how immigration affects elections, we can understand how much of the aforementioned concern from citizens and politicians is a result of real experiences, or merely exaggerated rhetoric geared to win elections.

In what follows, I survey the literature on the impact of immigration on electoral behavior. Next, I advance an argument about the relationship between immigration and voter turnout and candidate choice. I then conduct a statistical analysis and present the results of this analysis. I conclude with a discussion of the implications of the disconnect between electoral outcomes and immigration levels.

Literature Review

There is no shortage of research surrounding the impact of immigration on American elections and voter behavior. Often, the concept of the "Latino threat" is central to many of the arguments therein. This is the idea that Latino immigrants to the United States are, in some way, a threat to the country and the way of life of non-Latino citizens. While some scholars have denounced this way of thinking as a myth (Chavez 2025), it persists in American society and thus affects voter behavior.

However, in the literature, there is a lack of consensus over whether immigration has a significant impact on voter turnout. Gordon (1970) argues that in areas where the immigrant population is higher, voters are also more active because of the perception of higher stakes. Gordon attributes this to a variation in ethnic demographics leading to political splits, and therefore an increase in the competitiveness of local elections. Other explanations, though, include the native-born population feeling threatened by the presence of immigrants. Gordon's analysis found some degree of a relationship between the foreign-born population and voter turnout in municipal elections, but this relationship varied between election cycles. Similarly, Loughran et al. (2020) argue immigration increases turnout, but for very different reasons than Gordon. They argue that it is higher sense of civic duty among immigrants that influences turnout among non-immigrants over generations. Notably, this effect appeared to be limited to migration from an external nation. While their research is based on the United Kingdom, it still provides an explanation for a change in voter behavior that is contrary to much of the social science literature on this phenomenon.

There is also debate over the impact of immigration on voter choice. Some research focuses on immigration policy specifically. For example, Hawley (2012) found little to no evidence that the record of an incumbent member of Congress on immigration affected which candidate both Latino and non-Hispanic white voters as a whole chose. However, when isolating the analysis to non-Hispanic White voters who supported paths to

citizenship for undocumented immigrants, the record of the incumbent seemed to affect their choice in candidate. Other research takes a different approach, studying vote switching between elections. Their findings support the idea that immigration and racial views impact voter choice. Mayda, Peri and Steingress (2022) directly address how voters may see immigration as a cost to society and themselves, influencing their vote. Specifically, they argue that when voters perceive immigration as a cost, there is an increase in votes for the Republican party, which is regarded as having stricter immigration policies. However, their findings are complicated by the difference between high-skilled immigration and low-skilled immigration. They find that an increase in high-skilled immigration is associated with a decrease in votes for the Republican party, while an increase in low-skilled immigration is associated with an increase in votes for the Republican party. This suggests that immigration itself may not impact choice, as much as the circumstances surrounding immigration in a particular area.

Further, a commonality in the literature was the impact of regional differences. The areas with the highest percentages of foreign-born people or largest increases in this percentage tended to be areas that are urban, which are predisposed to voting, more often, for Democratic candidates. Gordon (1970), Reny et al. (2019) and Hawley (2012) all explore this variation at the county, district and municipal levels of government. In my analysis, I seek to contribute to existing literature by studying the impact of immigration on electoral behavior at the state level.

Theory

First, I assume that voters are self-interested. While there are a variety of factors that impact voter choice, I assume that a dominant factor is the rationality of voters. People decide whether to vote based on their perceived benefits from doing so. Similarly, voters select candidates based on which candidate would benefit them and their personal well-being. In particular, I assume that among the most salient issues to voters are their safety and economic circumstances. I also assume that political candidates want to be elected. In order to achieve these goals, candidates will adopt rhetoric and policy stances that they believe will contribute to their electoral success. They have to appeal to the concerns of voters to be elected.

Immigration is a never-ending reality for the United States, and how to handle immigration has become a pressing policy matter. Although immigration is typically increasing in the country as a whole, some states tend to receive more of an influx of immigrants than others. This means that while perceptions of immigration are generally increasing across the country, these states with higher inflows are experiencing this impact more. The vast majority of immigration to the United States comes from Latin

American countries. While Hispanic & Latino people comprise the second-largest ethnic group in the United States, they are still only a fraction of the population when compared to non-Hispanic white people. As such, this increase in immigration is noticed more by non-Hispanic/Latino groups, who make up the majority of voters, and are most sensitive to changes in demographics and diversity in their communities.

Politicians, responding to the concerns of their constituents, notice this as well. Voters are concerned about matters such as the economy, crime, the opioid epidemic, public services, and taxes, and have a tendency to blame outsiders for these problems. Politicians, seeking to capitalize on voters' policy concerns, push claims about how immigration, both lawful and unlawful, negatively impacts these concerns. These sorts of claims include that immigration causes higher crime rates, higher taxes, more drug smuggling, and a decrease in resources for citizens. Regardless of their validity, these claims can cause negative perceptions of immigration. With the view of immigration as a threat, there is a perceived cost to voters if they do not vote. This association motivates prospective voters. As such, I hypothesize:

H1: States with higher levels of immigration have higher voter turnout.

Further, immigration is an issue that is of concern to people across the political spectrum. However, the Republican Party platform has historically called for stricter immigration reform and enforcement of immigration laws. As an increasingly more central part of the Republican Party platform, it behooves conservative candidates, in particular, to use rhetoric related to immigration to corral votes. Thus, it is most oftentimes Republican politicians who are espousing negative claims about immigration. In states with more immigrants, this rhetoric feels more relevant and tangible, and the discussion of immigration leads voters to trust these candidates more on immigration policy. As such, I hypothesize:

H2: States with higher levels of immigration have a higher percentage of the vote share for the Republican candidate.

Empirics

To test my hypotheses, I take a quantitative approach. The unit of analysis is the American state. This yields a sample size of 50. In order to measure the impact on elections, the data corresponding to each variable was collected from the months and years leading up to the 2024 election cycle. I focus on the 2024 election cycle due to data availability, especially with respect to my independent variables. In addition to this, immigration was particularly salient in the 2024 election cycle. It was a central part of the Republican Party platform. It also put the Biden-Harris and Harris-Walz campaigns in the spotlight, particularly with respect to the Biden administration's perceived handling of

immigration. This focus on immigration during the 2024 election serves as a clear test of my hypothesis, as the salience of this issue should have had an impact on voter behavior in an election cycle where immigration is a central national issue.

With respect to my first hypothesis, the dependent variable is voter turnout in the 2024 election in a state. This is measured as the percentage of eligible voters who cast ballots in the election. The source of this data was Ballotpedia, a nonpartisan encyclopedia of American election information. The state with the lowest turnout was Hawaii, with 50.3% of eligible voters having participated. The state with the highest turnout was Wisconsin, at 76.9%. The average was 64.97%.

For my second hypothesis, the dependent variable is the percentage of ballots cast for the conservative candidate. This is measured as the percentage cast for Donald Trump, the Republican candidate for president. This data was sourced from CNN's reporting of the 2024 election results. The lowest percentage of votes for Donald Trump in 2024 was 32.3%, from Vermont. The highest was Wyoming, at 71.6%. The average share of votes for Donald Trump was 52.37%.

The main independent variable for this analysis is the prevalence of immigration in a state. I measure this variable in two ways. The first way was the number of foreign-born people per 100,000 in each state in 2023, the year prior to the election. The state with the highest number of immigrants was California with 26,984 immigrants per 100,000 people. The state with the lowest number was West Virginia, with 1,826 immigrants per 100,000 people. The average was 9,743. Recognizing that most of the rhetoric surrounding immigration pertains to unlawful immigration, I chose to also measure immigration through the estimated number of undocumented immigrants in a state per 100,000 people as of 2019, the most recent year for which data is available. The number of undocumented immigrants was lowest in West Virginia, with 225 undocumented immigrants per 100,000 people. Conversely, Texas had the highest with 5,557 undocumented immigrants per 100,000. The average for all states was 2,137. The data for immigration comes from the Migration Policy Institute (MPI). MPI is a think-tank that focuses on research and analysis of immigration data and policy in the United States and Europe. The data for population is sourced from the U.S. Census Bureau.

In an election, a variety of factors influence voters' motivation and candidate choice. As such, my control variables include indicators for swing states, voter ID laws, the economy, race and urbanity. I chose to control for swing states because these states tend to determine the outcome of an election, potentially increasing voters' motivation and thus, turnout. In addition, every swing state in 2024 had a majority vote for Donald Trump. I coded the 7 swing states (Fitzgerald 2024) as "1", and the other 43 states as "0". For Voter ID laws, I used Ballotpedia (n.d.) to record which states have laws that require voters to present identification to cast their ballots. I anticipate that these policies would decrease

turnout, by creating an additional barrier to voting. Additionally, these barriers often affect the voting access of specific groups (Horine 2023), influencing the outcome of an election. I code the 35 states with these policies as "1", and the remaining 15 states as "0". For the purposes of my analysis, I do not distinguish between states like North Carolina and Florida, which have photo identification laws, and states like Arizona and Colorado, for which the required identification does not need a photo.

The economy is a salient issue to voters, as well. I measure the economy through the rate of unemployment in each state in October 2024, as reported by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. The state with the minimum percentage of unemployment was South Dakota at 1.6%. The state with the highest unemployment rate was Nevada at 5.5%. The average was 3.57%. There is evidence to suggest a link between race and voter choice, so I control for race by measuring the non-Hispanic White population of each state, with data 2024 data from the U.S. Census Bureau. Hawaii is the state with the lowest percentage of White Americans at 20.7%. The state with the highest percentage is 89.3%, in Vermont. The average is 64.54%. In addition, previous literature has found that municipalities that are within cities are more likely to vote for more liberal candidates. If this applies to states, then this may have influenced the statewide outcome of the 2024 election. To control for this, I used the 2020 urban population as a percentage of the total population, from the U.S. Census Bureau. The least urban state was Vermont, with 35.1% of the population living in urban areas. The most urban state was California, with 94.2% of the state's population living in urban areas. The average was 72.44%.

Results

Hypothesis 1

To evaluate my hypotheses, I estimate a series of linear regressions. In my first regression, the dependent variable is state-level voter turnout, and the main independent variable is the number of immigrants per 100,000 people in a state. The results are in Table 1.

As seen in Table 1, the variable for immigration has a coefficient of 0.0004. This is positive, meaning the effect is in the anticipated direction. This indicates that an increase of one immigrant per 100,000 residents corresponds to a 0.0004% increase in voter turnout. This may seem completely insignificant, but when this is scaled up to 1,000 immigrants per 100,000 residents, this turns into a 0.4% increase. As the demographics in the country and among the states continue to change, this increase is not beyond the realm of possibility. However, the effect is small, so the support for my first hypothesis is

Table 1. Total Immigration and Turnout Regression Results. This table shows the results of a linear regression using the first main independent variable, the number of immigrants per 100,000 people, with a number of other variables, to predict turnout. Immigration, swing states, voter identification laws, white percentage and urban percentage all have effects in the anticipated direction. Swing states and the percentage White have results that are also statistically significant.

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	P-value
Intercept	38.402	8.017	<0.05
Immigrants per 100,000	0.0004	0.0003	0.144
Swing State	6.867	2.093	0.002
Voter ID Law	-1.241	1.890	0.515
Unemployment	-1.089	0.888	0.227
White %	0.310	0.068	<0.05
Urban %	0.090	0.091	0.327

weak. The effect is also not statistically significant.

The swing state and voter identification law variables both have effects in the expected direction. In swing states, I observe a coefficient of 6.867, which translates to a 6.867% increase in voter turnout. This increase is significant both statistically and substantively. In states with voter identification laws, the coefficient was -1.241. This means that states with voter identification laws have a 1.241% decrease in voter turnout. This result, again, is in the anticipated direction, but there is not a large difference between two categories, and it is not statistically significant.

For unemployment, the coefficient was -1.089. This result was in the opposite direction than what was anticipated. This coefficient means that for each percentage increase of unemployment, voter turnout would decrease by 1.089%. However, the effect is not statistically significant. The results pertaining to the percentages of the population that were White or living in urban areas were expected. The coefficient for the percentage White was 0.310, meaning that an increase of 1% of the state's White population lead to a 0.31% increase in voter turnout. This result was statistically significant. Similarly to immigration, the demographics of states are constantly changing, so this much of an increase could be notable. The percentage urban coefficient was 0.90, meaning a one percentage increase in the urban population coincides with almost a one percent increase in voter turnout. This result is not statistically significant but might be more significant in practicality.

In my second regression to test Hypothesis 1, the dependent variable is voter turnout again, but the independent variable is now the number of undocumented immigrants per 100,000 people. The results are shown in Table 2.

The coefficient for the number of undocumented immigrants per 100,000 residents in a state is -0.0002. This is not in the anticipated direction. This means that an increase of one undocumented immigrant per 100,000 people in a state correlates with a 0.0002%

decrease in voter turnout in that particular state. While this scales up easily, the number of undocumented immigrants in a state tends to be substantially lower than the number of residents in a state, immigrants or otherwise. The threshold for scalability is lower than for the number of immigrants in total. This result is also not statistically significant, and the direction contradicts the results of the first regression analysis for the first hypothesis.

Similar to the results for the first regression for Hypothesis 1, the results for swing states and states with voter identification laws were in the anticipated direction. Swing states, compared to other states, had a 6.164% increase in voter turnout. This result was statistically significant. States with voter identification laws had a coefficient of -2.721,

Table 2. Undocumented Immigration and Turnout Regression Results. This table shows the results of a linear regression using the second main independent variable, the number of undocumented immigrants per 100,000 people, with a number of controls. The result for undocumented immigration is not in the anticipated direction. Swing states, voter identification laws, white percentage and urban percentage are all in the anticipated direction. Swing states and the percentage White have results that are statistically significant.

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	P-value
Intercept	39.271	8.521	<0.05
Undocumented per 100,000	-0.0002	0.001	0.893
Swing State	6.164	2.091	0.005
Voter ID Law	-2.721	1.688	0.114
Unemployment	-1.028	0.910	0.265
White %	0.262	0.080	0.002
Urban %	0.192	0.084	0.027

which translates to a 2.721% decrease in voter turnout in these states. While substantively more notable than in the first regression, this result is still not statistically significant.

Again, the effect of unemployment is not in the anticipated direction. It has a coefficient of -1.028, meaning a one percent increase in unemployment leads to a 1.028% decrease in voter turnout. This is not statistically significant and does not have many real-world implications unless unemployment rises to an extreme level. The direction of the results for the percentage of the population that were White and urban, respectively, is as expected. The coefficient for percentage White was 0.262, which means that a one percentage increase in the White population of a state increases turnout by 0.262%. This result is statistically significant, and as a trend over a period of time, could have a significant impact on election outcomes. The coefficient for percentage urban was 0.192, meaning a one percentage increase in the urban population leads to a 0.192% increase in voter turnout. This result is not significant, statistically or substantively.

Hypothesis 2

In my first regression to test Hypothesis 2, the dependent variable is the percentage of a state's vote share that went to Donald Trump, and the independent variable is the number of immigrants per 100,000 people in a state. The results are shown in Table 3.

The coefficient for the number of immigrants per 100,000 people is -0.0007. This effect is not in the anticipated direction. This indicates that for an increase of one immigrant per 100,000 people in a state, there is a 0.0007% decrease in the state's Republican vote share. This decrease could become more prominent when looking at increases of 1,000 immigrants per 100,000 people, for example, which could change the outcome of an election in states with a small difference between the Republican and Democrat vote share. This effect is not statistically significant, however. As such, there is a lack of support for my second hypothesis.

Table 3. Total Immigration and Republican Vote Regression Results. This table shows the results of a linear regression using the first main independent variable, the number of immigrants per 100,000 people, with a number of controls. The result for immigration is not in the anticipated direction. Voter identification laws, unemployment and urban percentage are all in the anticipated direction. Voter identification laws have an effect that is statistically significant.

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	P-value
Intercept	54.585	11.910	<0.05
Immigrants per 100,000	-0.0007	0.0004	0.060
Swing State	-0.608	3.109	0.846
Voter ID Law	9.018	2.808	0.002
Unemployment	2.082	1.319	0.122
White %	-0.052	0.101	0.611
Urban %	-0.072	0.135	0.595

The coefficient for swing states is -0.608. Considering that Donald Trump received a greater percentage of the vote in every swing state in the 2024 election, this result is not in the anticipated direction. This indicates swing states have a 0.608% decrease in the Republican vote share. Notably, this effect is not statistically significant and could be due to the close margins observed in swing states. Voter identification laws, however, have results in the anticipated direction. The coefficient is 9.018, indicating states with voter identification laws observe a 9.018% increase in votes for Donald Trump. This could be due to the fact that states with a Republican-controlled legislature, which are already more likely to vote for a Republican candidate in the presidential election, are likely to have voter identification laws implemented. This effect is statistically significant.

Unemployment had a result in the anticipated direction. The coefficient of 2.082 indicated that each percentage increase in unemployment in a state increases the

Republican vote share by 2.082%. This effect is not statistically significant, but substantively, a 2.082% increase is enough to change an election in states with close margins. The effect of the percentage White was not in the anticipated direction, with a coefficient of -0.052. This indicates that an increase of 1% in the White population of a state decreases the Republican vote share by 0.052%. This effect is small, and not statistically significant. The results of the percentage urban are in the anticipated direction. The coefficient of -0.072 indicates a 0.072% decrease in the Republican vote share for a 1% increase in a state's urban population. This effect is not statistically or substantively significant.

In my second regression to test Hypothesis 2, the dependent variable is the percentage of votes for the Republican candidate again, but the independent variable is now the number of undocumented immigrants per 100,000 people. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Undocumented Immigration and Republican Vote Regression Results. This table shows the results of a linear regression using the second main independent variable, the number of undocumented immigrants per 100,000 people, with a number of controls. All variables have effects in the anticipated direction. Voter identification laws and urban percentage have an effect that is statistically significant.

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	P-value
Intercept	53.341	12.874	<0.05
Undocumented per 100,000	0.000087	0.002	0.962
Swing State	0.742	3.159	0.815
Voter ID Law	11.819	2.550	<0.05
Unemployment	1.968	1.375	0.159
White %	0.033	0.122	0.790
Urban %	-0.258	0.126	0.047

The results for the number of undocumented immigrants per 100,000 people in a state was in the anticipated direction. The coefficient of 0.000087 indicates a 0.000087% increase in the Republican vote share for an increase of one undocumented immigrant per 100,000 people. However, this effect is too miniscule to have a meaningful impact on elections, even when the number of undocumented immigrants per 100,000 people increases. This effect is also not statistically significant, showing that the number of undocumented immigrants seems to have no real effect on elections, and no support for my hypothesis.

The results for swing states and voter identification laws were both in the anticipated direction. Swing states had a coefficient of 0.742. Compared to other states, this means that swing states had a 0.742% increase in the Republican vote share. While this result is not statistically significant, it is consistent with the results that were observed during the 2024 election. The coefficient for voter identification laws is 11.819. Again, consistent with

the results in Table 3, the presence of voter identification laws corresponds to an 11.819% increase in the Republican vote share. This effect is statistically significant.

Unemployment, percentage White and percentage urban had results in the anticipated direction. The coefficient of 1.968 indicated that each percentage increase in unemployment in a state increases the Republican vote share by 1.968%. This effect is not statistically significant. Again, this result can be impactful in an election with close margins. The coefficient for percentage White is 0.033. This means an increase of 1% in the White population of a state is associated with a 0.033% increase in the Republican vote share. This effect is small, and not statistically significant. The coefficient for the urban population is -0.258, which indicates a 0.258% decrease in votes for the Republican candidate for an increase of 1% in the urban population of a state. While this effect is not large, it is statistically significant.

Conclusion

I argued that, in order to achieve electoral ends, political candidates will use rhetoric that creates a negative association between voters' concerns and immigration. I argued that this association motivates people not only to vote, but to vote more often for the Republican candidate. This should be particularly effective in states with higher levels of immigration, so I posited the hypotheses that increases in immigrant populations in a state increases voter turnout and the percentage of votes for the Republican party. However, I found minimal support for my hypothesis regarding voter turnout, and no support for my hypothesis regarding the impact on the Republican vote share.

An interesting aspect of my results was the conflicting direction of the effect when measuring immigration as total immigration as opposed to undocumented immigration. When measuring immigration as a whole, I observed a small increase in voter turnout and decrease in the Republican vote share. However, I observed the reverse effect in my regression analyses for undocumented immigration specifically. This result could suggest that if local immigration levels matter, then the legal status of immigrants does not matter to voters. Even though voters seem to care about "illegal" immigrants, it is impossible to know someone's immigration status from looks alone, especially when a large portion of unauthorized immigrants have entered legally and simply overstayed their visas.

I acknowledge that a limitation of my research is that the 2024 Presidential Election is the only time period examined. There are circumstances specific to this particular election that might have influenced my findings, such as the incumbent party, major party nominees, and foreign policy. These were not only contentious issues in the 2024 Presidential Election, but generally, public dissatisfaction with policy decisions can influence electoral outcomes significantly. In addition, alternative measures of my

variables could have been more useful in studying this election. For instance, while unemployment is an applicable measure of the economy, in 2024, voters were likely more concerned with inflation than unemployment. In future research, I believe it would be useful to include multiple election cycles.

More definitive results could also be gathered by looking at an interaction term between variables, such as the economy and immigration together. Another avenue would be to expand on previous research by using the rate of change of immigrant populations. As immigration is an issue partially rooted in demographics, future research could also divide the results by demographic group, to identify if immigration influences all groups equally. For example, the rhetoric that works on White voters may not appeal to voters of color. It could also be that the nationalization of immigration (such as the framing of immigration as an "invasion") makes a local analysis a less effective lens to view the impact of immigration on elections. Immigration has consistently been under the purview of the federal government, potentially making it an issue in which state boundaries are less important. This may be especially so in 2024, in which immigration was so heavily debated, publicized and polarized. To explore this phenomenon further, it may be of use to include some measure of voter attitudes and public opinion about immigration to get a more holistic view of this.

The lack of strong results in either direction highlights a significant problem with the perception of immigration as a pressing issue in U.S. politics. While it is undeniably a major issue to voters and candidates on both sides of the aisle, these results could be a result of a nationalized mindset surrounding immigration. Voters in Missouri, Montana, and other states with relatively few immigrants are perhaps not concerned with immigrants in their own communities, but those hundreds or thousands of miles away, whose presence in the country may not have a tangible impact on them. However, the idea of immigration as a national threat leads voters to see it as a major issue, regardless.

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