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Who Belongs? Millennial Attitudes on Immigration

A summary of key findings from the first-of-its-kind bimonthly survey of racially and ethnically diverse young adults 18-34

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<http://www.genforwardsurvey.com/>

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About GenForward

> *The Survey*

The GenForward Survey is the first of its kind—a nationally representative survey of over 1,750 young adults ages 18-34 conducted bimonthly that pays special attention to how race and ethnicity influence how young adults or Millennials experience and think about the world. Given the importance of race and ethnicity for shaping the diverse perspectives and lived experiences of young people, we believe researchers make a mistake when they present data on young adults in a manner that assumes a monolithic Millennial generation and young adult vote.

Millennials now represent the largest generation of Americans, and they are by far the most racially and ethnically [diverse generation](#)¹ in the country. About 21 percent of Millennials identify as Latinx, Latina/o or Hispanic, 14 percent as Black or African American, 7 percent as Asian American, and 56 percent as white. Thus, to fully understand how young adults think about politics and public policy, as well as their economic futures and race relations, we apply an intersectional lens and pay attention to characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality.

In this report, we present GenForward survey data collected between October 26 and November 10, 2017. We provide an extensive look at how Millennials think about American identity, the characteristics of citizenship, and immigration policy in the U.S.

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¹ Hyperlinks are used throughout this report as citations. Click on the linked text to view and learn more about each citation.

Key Findings

- > **DACA Eligibility.** Over 75% of Millennials across race and ethnicity groups agree that undocumented immigrants who meet the current Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) eligibility requirements should be allowed to gain American citizenship.
- > **Trump Voters and their Contradictions.** A majority of Millennials who voted for Trump support creating pathways to citizenship for law-abiding immigrants (76%), DACA-eligible immigrants (66%), and immigrants who have served in the military (83%). These same voters also support the construction of a border wall (75%) and the idea of deporting all undocumented immigrants (64%).
- > **Border Security and Enforcement.** A majority of white Millennials (57%) support increasing government spending on security measures and enforcement at U.S. borders, but considerably fewer Millennials of color (44% of Asian American, 42% of African American, and 37% of Latinx) agree with such measures.
- > **Trump's Handling of Immigration.** Approximately 43% of whites, compared to fewer than 25% African American, Latinx and Asian American Millennials, approve of how President Trump has handled immigration.
- > **Deportation Concerns.** Nearly half of Latinx Millennials in our survey (49%) say they worry that a family member, close friend, or they themselves might be deported, compared to 25% of Asian American, 21% of African Americans, and 10% of whites.
- > **American by Birth.** A majority of African Americans (57%) and Latinxs (55%) say it is somewhat or very important to have been born in America to be *truly American*, compared to 48% of whites and 29% of Asian Americans.
- > **European Heritage and Trump Voters.** Nearly 20% of white Millennials who voted for Trump agree that being of European heritage is “very” or “somewhat” important to be considered truly American.
- > **Full and Equal Citizen.** While white Millennials (86%) overwhelmingly report feeling that they are full and equal citizens, the perception of full and equal citizenship is shared by only 56% of African American Millennials.
- > **Patriotism and Intolerance.** Large majorities of Asian Americans (75%) and African Americans (74%) say that strong patriotic feelings in America lead to intolerance, while smaller majorities of Latinxs (61%) and whites (55%) agree with this statement.

I. Introduction

Immigration is front-and-center in our country's politics. As we write this report, the federal government has shut down due to disagreement over funding the government, with Democrats arguing against any arrangement that does not also protect the legal status of undocumented immigrants. Earlier this month it was reported that President Trump slandered with racist comments the continent of Africa and the country of Haiti. His comments came in a discussion of immigration, where he made clear who he believed was worthy of being allowed to immigrate to the United States. From President Trump's perspective countries in Africa and the Caribbean are "shitholes" or "shithouses" and American immigration policy should target people from countries like Norway.

The President's focus on immigration and citizenship is not new; immigration was one of the central pillars upon which Donald Trump built his presidential campaign. Since beginning his path to the White House by proclaiming Mexicans to be rapists and criminals in his initial announcement speech, Trump has repeatedly denounced "bad hombres" and initiated chants of "build the wall!" during campaign rallies and other public appearances after assuming office.

Trump's focus on immigration, however, has not been limited to the United States' southern border. As we have witnessed, he and his administration have taken aim at immigrants from across the globe as well as ignited debate around the meaning of patriotism, what it means to be an American and who is welcome in the United States. For example, just seven days after his inauguration, President Trump signed an executive order suspending entry into the United States by individuals from seven predominantly Muslim countries. Since then, the "Muslim Ban," as it is now known, has been challenged in courts and re-issued in various forms.

But the President's attack on our current immigration structure goes beyond his "Muslim Ban" and the recent racist comments about Africa and Haiti. The Trump administration has taken additional, concrete steps to alter existing immigration policies. Among these are arguing for the elimination of the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program and ending Temporary Protected Status for over 260,000 beneficiaries from El Salvador, Haiti, Sudan, and Nicaragua. In a move that has alarmed many, the administration has gone so far as revoking the U.S. citizenship of an Indian-born man who was naturalized in 2006, the first of over 300,000 cases of citizenship through

naturalization that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) plan to investigate.

It is not just the President's focus on immigration that makes it an important subject for Millennials. Immigration increasingly shapes who is part of the Millennial generation in the U. S. For example, the share of Millennials in the United States born outside of the U.S. is [over 15 percent](#). Approximately 20% of Millennials are children of immigrants and, according to recent [estimates](#), over half of newly arrived immigrant workers are Millennials. Given Millennials' relationship with immigration, it is important to interrogate and center their perspectives in the current immigration debate.

This GenForward report presents Millennials' views on immigration in the United States. We begin by outlining their preferences on a number of different immigration policy proposals. We then offer a picture of the demographics of Millennial on such key factors as citizenship status and language dominance. Finally, we explore how Millennials conceptualize and understand American identity, citizenship, and patriotism.

Our findings flesh out the diversity of experiences and opinions of Millennials by race/ethnicity and, when appropriate, also by generation of migration and vote choice in the 2016 presidential election. In doing so, we provide important yet otherwise unavailable data on topics associated with immigration from America's largest and most racially and ethnically diverse generation, that of Millennials. We hope our data will benefit and support the work of scholars, journalists, policymakers, and activists by offering a window into how race and ethnicity shape attitudes and preferences among Millennials.

II. Immigration Policy

Immigration is a central component of the lived experience of many Millennials, particularly those of Asian American and Latinx background.² The easiest example of

² See Section III of this report for more details.

the centrality of Millennials is that many Latinx and Asian American Millennials sit at the center of the immigration debate about DACA and “Dreamers.” As such, debates over immigration policy are particularly personal for many Millennials. Despite this, the perspectives of Millennials on issues of immigration policy are rarely engaged by politicians and policy-makers. Here we hope to remedy this omission by detailing how Millennials view immigration policy.

We asked respondents to evaluate a number of policy proposals that have been prominently discussed in recent immigration debates. Millennials’ support for these proposals for each racial and ethnic group are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Immigration Policy Preferences

	African American	Asian American	Latinx	White
<i>Require employers to verify that all new hires are living in the U.S. legally.</i>				
% Support	65	73	46	78
<i>Create a path to citizenship in which law-abiding immigrants currently living in this country illegally are allowed to eventually apply for citizenship.</i>				
% Support	89	85	89	84
<i>Increase government spending on security measures and enforcement at U.S. borders.</i>				
% Support	42	44	37	57
<i>Allow undocumented immigrants brought to the U.S. as children to gain citizenship if they have received a high school degree, the equivalent of a high school degree, or are currently in school.</i>				
% Support	84	78	88	79
<i>Grant citizenship to undocumented immigrants who serve in the U.S. military and receive an honorable discharge.</i>				
% Support	84	86	90	88
<i>Expand ‘guest worker’ programs that would give a temporary visa to non-citizens who want to work legally in the United States.</i>				
% Support	82	82	88	75
<i>Identify and deport all immigrants currently living in this country illegally.</i>				
% Support	30	22	15	37
<i>Build a wall along the Mexican border to help stop illegal immigration.</i>				
% Support	23	22	17	40
N=	541	250	508	527

While President Trump and members of Congress seem unable to agree on how to resolve the status of Deferred Action Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients³ overwhelming numbers of Millennials across race and ethnicity support offering a path to citizenship to those who meet the current eligibility requirements of DACA. Roughly 8 out of 10 white (79%) and Asian American (78%) Millennials, and nearly 9 out of 10 African American (84%) and Latinx (88%) Millennials, favor a pathway to citizenship for DACA-eligible immigrants.

Like support for DACA, a few policies in the table also receive strong support from Millennials across racial and ethnic categories. For instance, more than 80 percent of Millennials in all racial and ethnic groups support creating a pathway to citizenship for all law-abiding immigrants, not just those with DACA status. They also support granting citizenship to undocumented immigrants who serve in the U.S. military and receive an honorable discharge. Though the magnitudes of agreement vary somewhat, 75 percent or more of Millennials in all racial and ethnic categories also support expanding guest worker programs.

Other policy proposals on immigration generate less overall support and larger differences across racial and ethnic groups. For example, requiring employers to verify that new hires have legal residency, is most popular among white Millennials (78%) and, to a slightly less degree, Asian American (73%) and African American (65%) Millennials. Latinx Millennials (46%), however, largely oppose the policy with less than half of respondents expressing support.

White Millennials are also more strongly supportive of increasing government spending on security at national borders, identifying and deporting all immigrants living in the U.S. without legal status, and building a wall along the Southern border. Indeed, white Millennials are the only racial/ethnic group where a majority (57%) agrees that spending on border security should be increased. White support for specifically building a wall to curb unauthorized immigration is less than a majority, but 17 percentage points higher than it is for any other racial or ethnic group.

More draconian immigration policies, such as deporting all undocumented immigrants living in the U. S., also find support among some Millennials. **More than one out of**

³ Undocumented immigrants brought to the U.S. as children that have received a high school degree, the equivalent of a high school degree, or are currently in school.

every three white Millennials (37%) and nearly one out of every three African American Millennials (30%) support deporting all immigrants currently living in the United States without authorization.

The fact that 30% of African Americans and 37% of whites support deporting all undocumented immigrants while 89% and 84% of these same groups support creating a pathway to citizenship for law-abiding immigrants is, to say the least, puzzling and may point to a lack of understanding or coherent ideology when it comes to immigration policy among those less directly impacted by such policies.

Overall, when looking at Millennial support for immigration policies through the lens of race and ethnicity, we find that white Millennials stand out as the racial group that is most supportive of restrictive policy measures, African Americans and Asian Americans also support some of the more restrictive immigration policies included in our survey and listed in Table 1. African Americans support identifying and deporting undocumented immigrants and, to a lesser degree, building a border wall to protect against unwanted illegal immigration whereas Asian Americans favor increasing spending on border security enforcement and requiring that employers verify new hires live in the U.S. legally. Latinx Millennials are the least supportive across all of these policies and display, in general, the most liberal immigration policy preferences.

Millennial Trump Voters and Immigration Policy

There are also stark differences in policy preferences between Millennial voters who said they cast a ballot for Donald Trump versus Millennials who said they voted for somebody else, as shown in Table 2. As expected given Trump's rhetoric on immigration, Millennial Trump voters display much more support for restrictive immigration proposals such as requiring that employers verify new hires are living in the U.S. legally (93%), increasing government spending on border security and enforcement (86%), identifying and deporting all immigrants that are living in the U.S. without proper documentation (64%), and building a wall along the length of southern border (75%), than Millennials who did not vote for Trump.

Somewhat unexpectedly, however, considerable numbers of Trump voters also support more liberal proposals, such as creating pathways to citizenship for immigrants currently living in the U.S. Indeed, a majority of Trump voters support extending

citizenship opportunities to law-abiding immigrants (76%), DACA-eligible immigrants (66%), and immigrants who serve in the military (83%). A majority of Millennial Trump voters also support expanding guest worker programs for non-citizens (65%).

That Trump supporters simultaneously support restrictive and liberal immigration policies — policies that are diametrically opposed to one another — is perplexing. That support for both deportation and citizenship efforts exist among Trump voters, however, could be a contributing factor in why Republicans in Congress and the Trump administration have not been able to agree on a coherent immigration policy bill.

Table 2: Immigration Policy Preferences among Millennial Voters in the 2016 Election

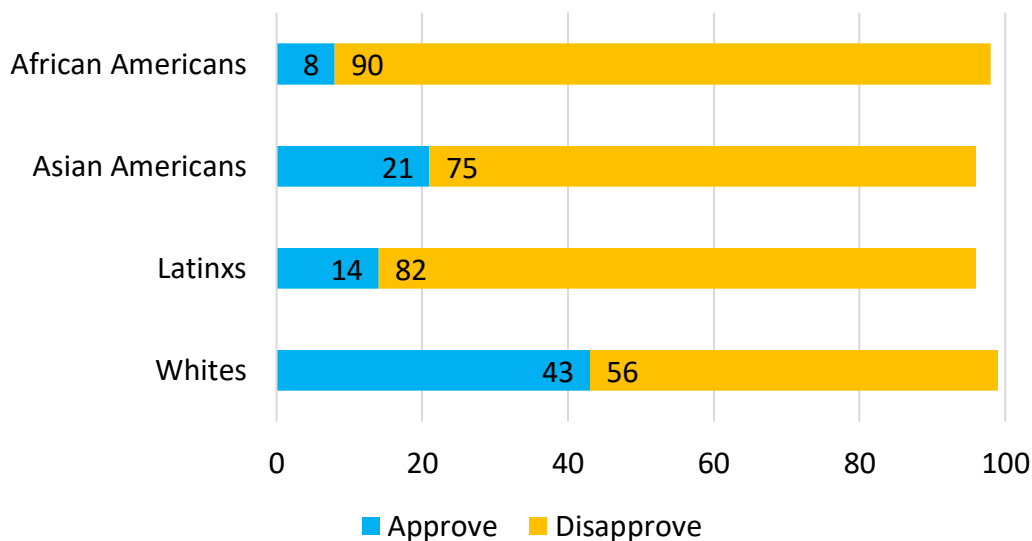
	Non-Trump Voter	Trump Voter
<i>Require employers to verify that all new hires are living in the U.S. legally.</i>		
Support	64	93
Oppose	35	6
<i>Create a path to citizenship in which law-abiding immigrants currently living in this country are allowed to eventually apply for citizenship.</i>		
Support	91	76
Oppose	8	24
<i>Increase government spending on security measures and enforcement at U.S. borders.</i>		
Support	36	86
Oppose	63	14
<i>Allow undocumented immigrants brought to the U.S. as children to gain citizenship if they have received a high school degree, the equivalent of a high school degree, or are currently in school.</i>		
Support	89	66
Oppose	10	33
<i>Grant citizenship to undocumented immigrants who serve in the U.S. military and receive an honorable discharge.</i>		
Support	91	83
Oppose	9	16
<i>Expand “guest worker” programs that would give a temporary visa to non-citizens who want to work legally in the United States</i>		
Support	85	65
Oppose	15	33
<i>Identify and deport all immigrants currently living in this country illegally.</i>		
Support	20	64
Oppose	79	36
<i>Build a wall along the Mexican border to help stop illegal immigration.</i>		
Support	16	75
Oppose	84	23
<i>N</i>	<i>1,109</i>	<i>262</i>

Donald Trump's Handling of Immigration

When asking respondents whether they approve of the way Donald Trump has handled immigration, a familiar gap in opinion between white Millennials and their peers of color reappears in stark relief. As can be seen in Figure 1, majorities of Millennials of every racial background disapprove of Trump's handling of immigration, but 43% of white Millennials approve of Trump's approach to immigration—a substantial percentage, especially when compared to the next highest approval rating of 21% among Asian Americans and his overall approval rating of 30% among white Millennials.

Perhaps unexpectedly, given their stance on some restrictive immigration proposals, African Americans express the lowest approval of 8% of how Trump is handling immigration—lower than Latinx Millennials' 14% approval rating. However, this low rating may be explained as spillover of African Americans' general disapproval and dislike of Donald Trump rather than a narrow consideration of immigration issues.

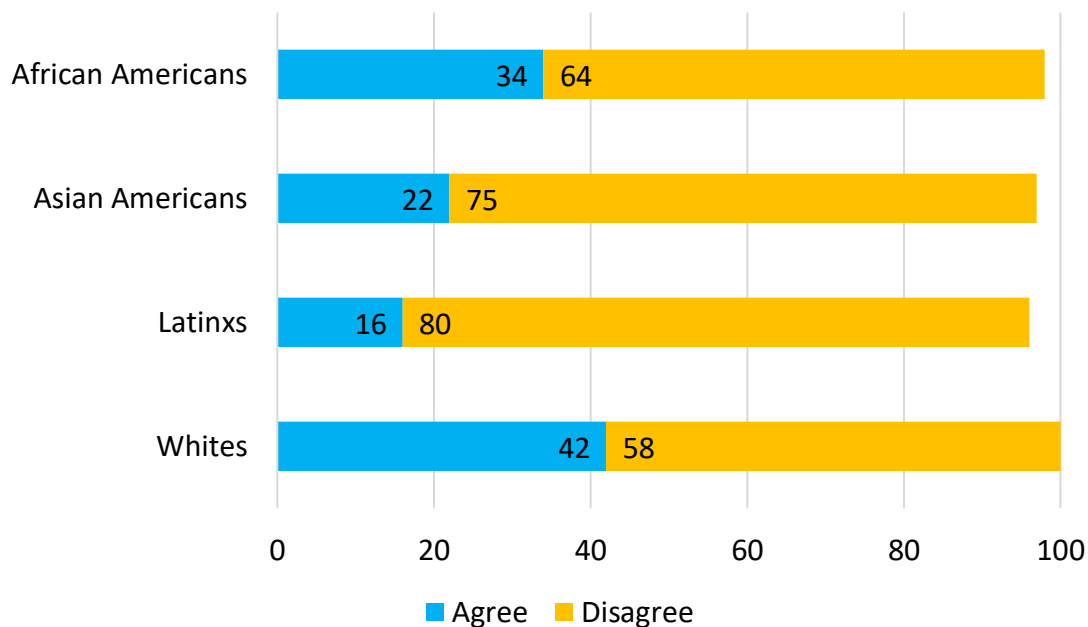
Figure 1: Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump has handled immigration?



Attitudes Toward Immigrants

What do Millennials think about immigrants currently in the United States? We focused on three primary areas that are often mentioned in discussions of immigrants and immigration: job competition, cultural assimilation, and the crime rate. Figure 2 presents the findings from our question that focused on perceptions of job competition. Overall, majorities of all Millennials largely disagree that immigrants take jobs away from people born in the United States. A sizeable proportion of white Millennials (42%), however, do agree with the idea that immigrants take jobs from people born in the United States. Similarly, approximately one third of African Americans also agree that immigrants take jobs away from people born in the U.S., perhaps lending limited support to the [argument](#) that African Americans perceive a degree of economic threat from immigrants.

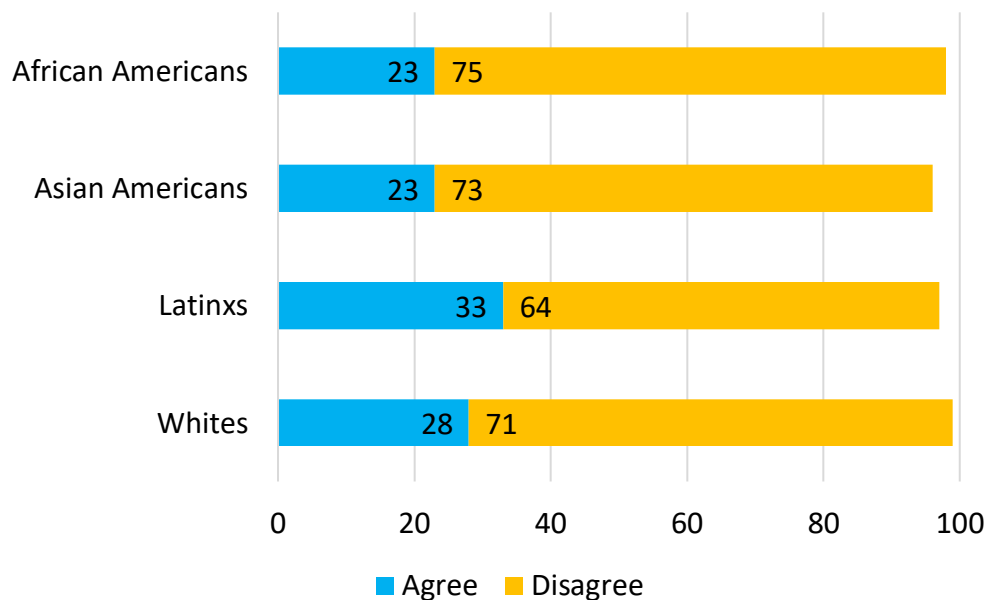
Figure 2: Immigrants take jobs away from people who were born in the United States.



Latinxs, a population closely linked to immigration both in popular discourse and in family relationships, are the least likely to report that immigrants present serious job competition. They are, however, most likely to express agreement that a strategy of assimilation would increase acceptance into American society.

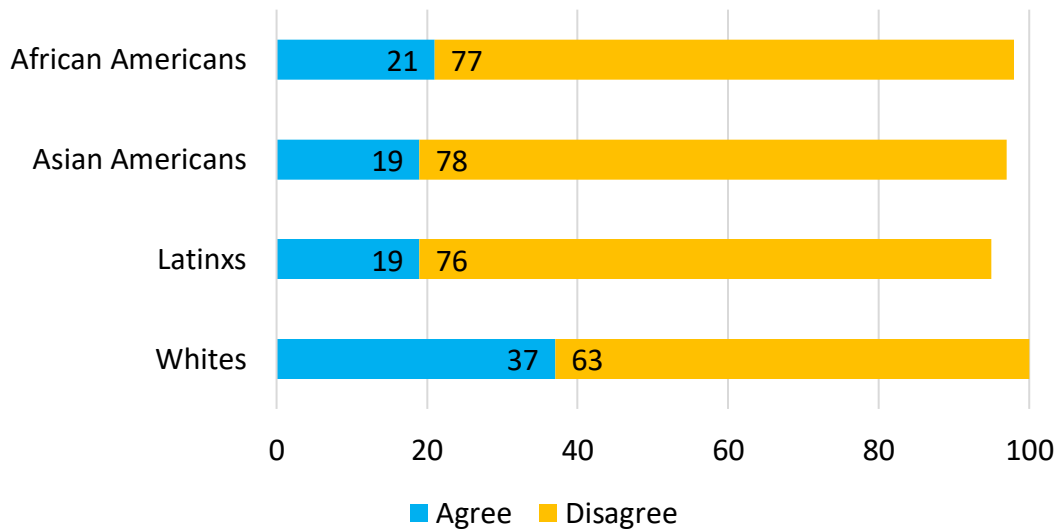
As Figure 3 shows, relatively few Millennials of any racial or ethnic group believe that immigrants' cultural differences would be better-embraced by Americans if they exhibited greater assimilation. And while Latinxs were the group to demonstrate the most support for this idea, only about a third (33%) of Latinxs agreed that immigrants would be better accepted if they tried harder to fit in with American society. Levels of agreement among other groups of Millennials were even lower.

Figure 3: If immigrants only tried harder to fit in, then more Americans would accept their cultural differences.



When it comes to perceptions of immigrants and crime rates, Latinx Millennials hold attitudes similar to African Americans and Asian Americans as can be seen in Figure 4. The vast majority of Millennials in these groups disagree that immigrants are linked to increased crime rates. A majority of white Millennials also disagree with the claim that immigrants increase crime rates (63%). However, the proportion of white Millennials (37%) that does link immigrants to an increase in crime is much larger relative to Millennials of color. White Millennials, on average, are approximately 17 percentage points more likely to say that immigrants increase crime rates compared to African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinxs.

Figure 4: Immigrants increase crime rates in the United States.



Immigrant Resentment

To better understand feelings toward immigrants and how they compare to other marginalized groups in the U.S., namely African Americans, we adapt and examine two measures that comprise a portion of the “racial resentment” scale, a common measure of racial attitudes.⁴

Racial resentment is a theory of racism that stands as a complement to traditional understandings of racism, which are often thought to be more explicit in nature. Racial resentment, instead, reflects a racialized belief system that Blacks no longer face discrimination, and thus assumes that most of the difficulties they encounter result from having different or bad cultural norms and a poor work ethic. Blacks are therefore thought to be undeserving of “special” treatment like government benefits.⁵ The level of racial resentment whites hold has been shown to influence a number of different attitudes.⁶

⁴ While the racial resentment scale most often used by academics is comprised of four measures, we use an abridged version of the scale similar to the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) that only includes two measures.

⁵ See Kinder and Sanders 1996 for an overview.

⁶ See Tesler 2016.

The first measure in the traditional racial resentment scale asks respondents if they agree or disagree with the statement “Irish, Italian, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.” When we last asked this question in September of 2017, we found that a majority of white (59%) and Latinx (51%) respondents agree with the statement. In contrast, majorities of African American (59%) and Asian American (55%) Millennials disagree with the statement. These results can be seen in Figure 5.

When the subject group is changed to immigrants instead of Blacks, we observe fairly similar results. Figure 6 illustrates these results. Not only does a similar pattern of responses across racial group emerge, the level of agreement with the statement is also comparable. The most notable difference is that the level of agreement with the statement that immigrants should overcome prejudice without any special favors among Asian Americans and Latinxs is slightly lower than when the question focused on Blacks, perhaps reflecting their experiences with and proximity to immigrants and immigration, though it is a relatively small difference in magnitude.

Figure 5. Irish, Italian, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.

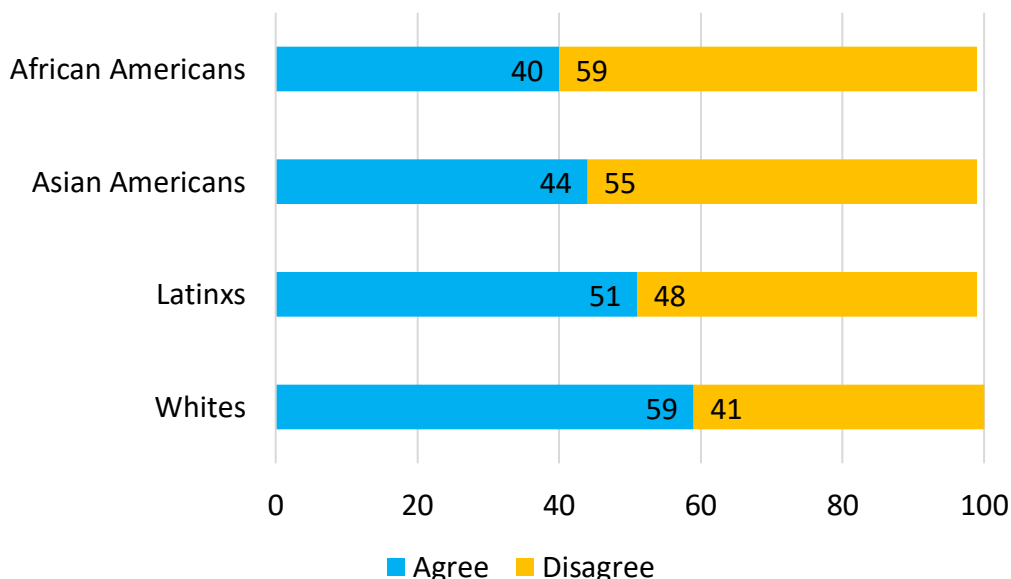
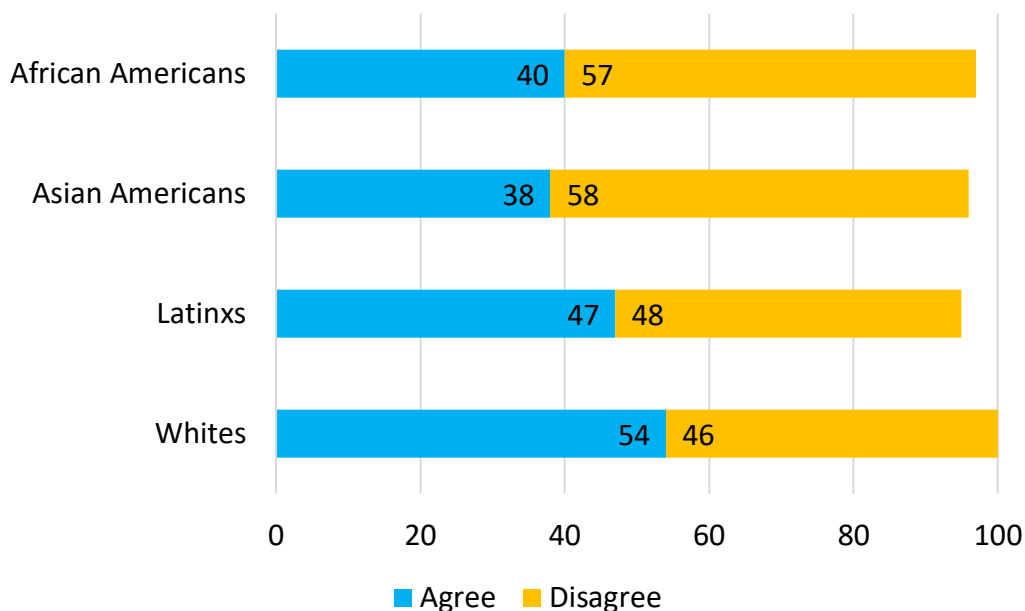


Figure 6: Irish, Italian, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Immigrants should do the same without any special favors.



The second question in the classic racial resentment scale asks respondents to indicate whether they agree or disagree with the statement that “generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for Blacks to work their way out of the lower class.” As is evident in Figure 7, overwhelming majorities of African American (79%) and Asian American (78%) Millennials and a smaller majority of Latinx Millennials (59%) agree with the statement. White Millennials are evenly split between agree (49%) and disagree (49%).

Figure 8 presents these same findings for immigrants as the subject group, though with the omission of slavery from the question wording. A comparison of the two figures clearly illustrates some important differences. Most notably, Latinxs and whites express considerably greater agreement that generations of discrimination have made it difficult for immigrants to work their way out of the working class than they do when Blacks are the reference group.

Conversely, African Americans and Asian Americans express somewhat lower agreement that discrimination has made it difficult to work their way out of the working class when immigrants, rather than Blacks, are the reference group.

Figure 7: Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for Blacks to work their way out of the lower class.

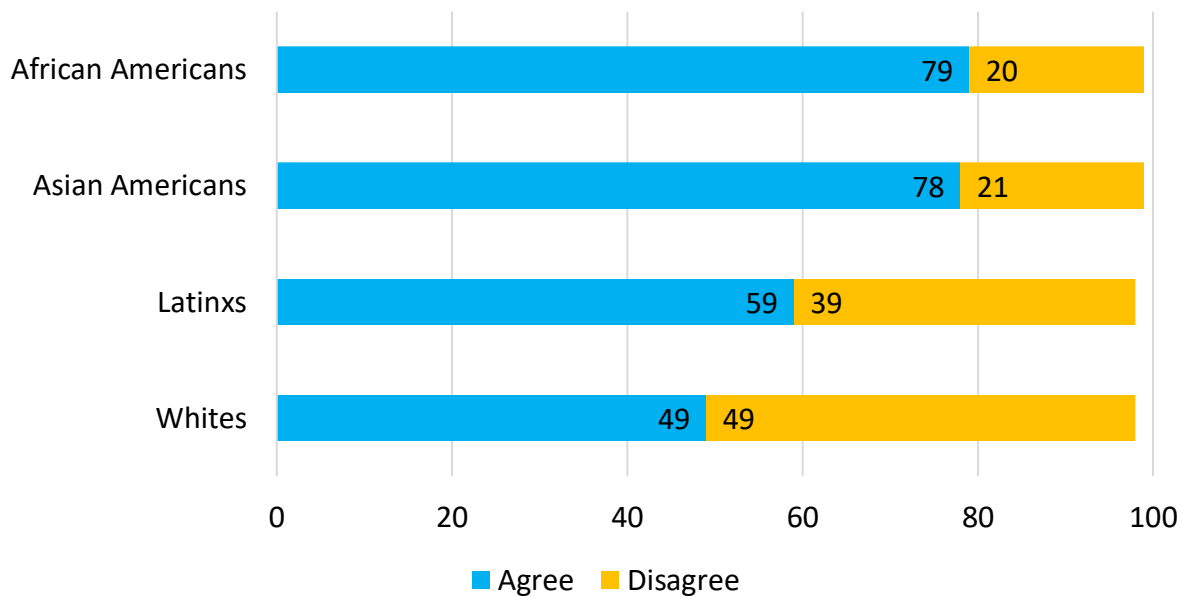
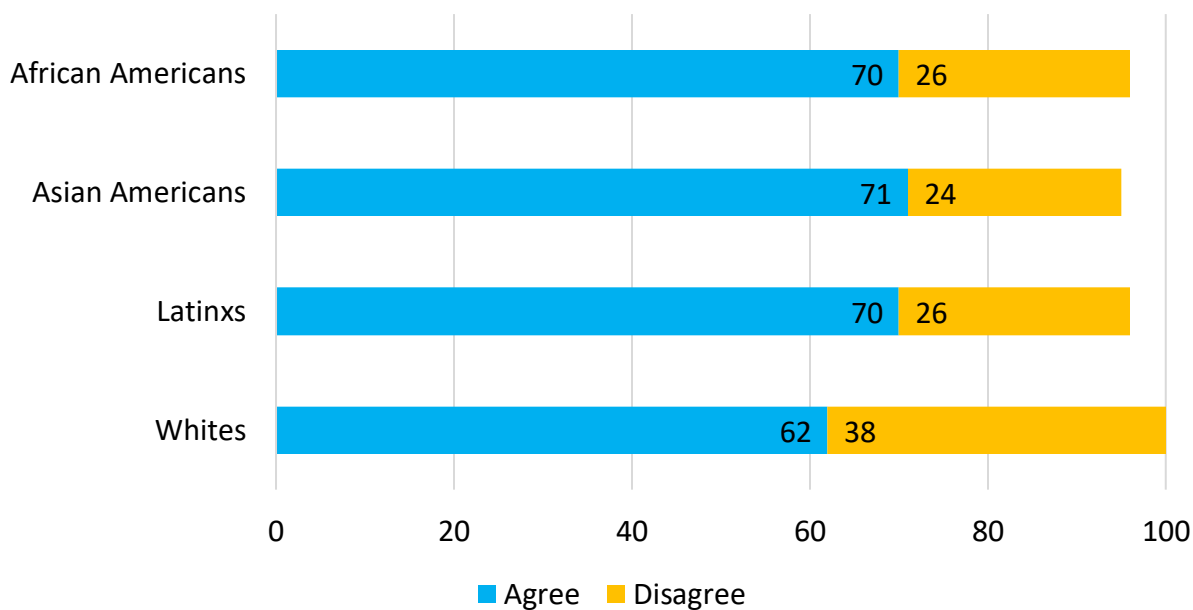


Figure 8: Generations of discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for immigrants to work their way out of the lower class.



So, how do Millennials view immigrants vis-à-vis African Americans? Comparing responses on measures of resentment, which ostensibly explain disproportionate outcomes among marginalized groups through bad cultural norms or a poor work ethic instead of explicit racism, there does not seem to be much difference between the two groups. This is particularly true when looking only at the first measure about overcoming prejudice without any special favors. However, it seems that whites in particular are more “forgiving” of immigrants than they are of African Americans, at least as it relates to the second racial resentment question on whether generations of discrimination have made it difficult to work one’s way out of the lower class.

III. Immigration, Citizenship, & Language

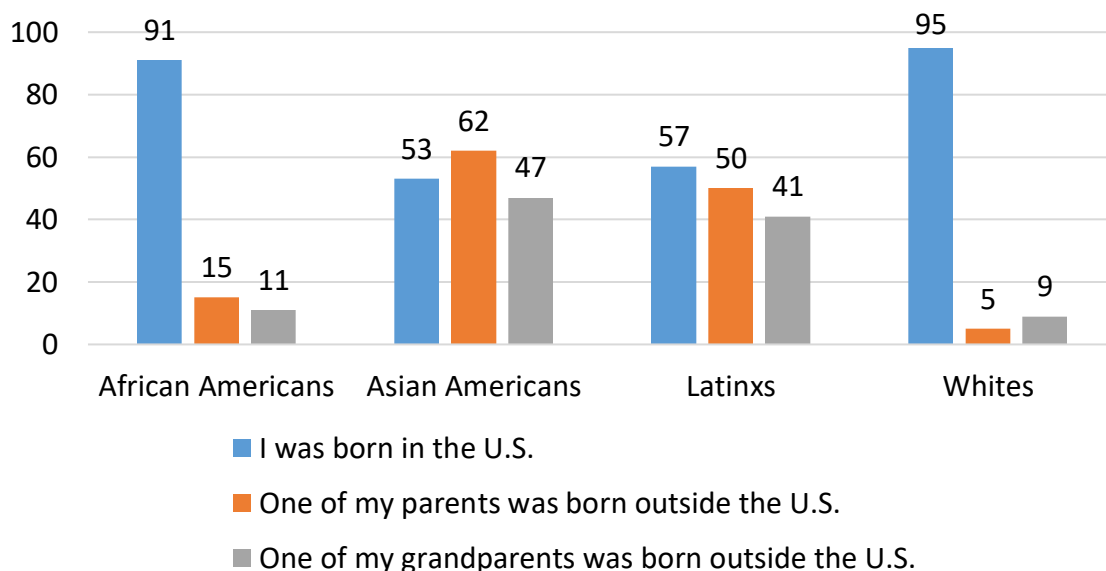
To provide more context about why immigration is integral to so many Millennials, we now turn to data on immigration, citizenship, and language among Millennials. More specifically, this section offers an overview of Millennials’ experiences with immigration and citizenship before turning to data on how Millennials conceptualize American identity and the role of patriotism on society.

When it comes to nativity (i.e., whether respondents were born in the United States or somewhere else) and generation of migration⁷ recent [Census estimates](#) find that approximately 15% of 18-34-year-olds are foreign-born. While this figure comports with our findings, we find significant variation among Millennials in our sample.

As Figure 9 illustrates, large majorities of African American (91%) and white (95%) Millennials report that they were born in the U.S. What is more, the vast majority of African American and white Millennials have at least one parent or grandparent who were native born. Thus, they have been tied to the U.S, in terms of lineage, for at least three generations. Only 15% of African American and 5% of white Millennials report that at least one of their parents was born outside of the U.S.

⁷ First-generation Americans are defined as people who were born in another country before coming to the United States as immigrants while second-generation Americans are the children of foreign-born immigrants.

Figure 9: Birth location of Millennials, their parent(s), and grandparent(s)



The overwhelming levels of domestic nativity found among African American and white Millennials is not the case for Asian American or Latinx Millennials. While majorities of both groups report being born in the United States, the figures are much smaller than their African American and white peers. Approximately 53% of Asian Americans and 57% of Latinxs were born in the U.S. Asian American and Latinx Millennials are also much more likely to have at least one parent or grandparent who was born in a different country. For instance, 62% of Asian Americans have at least one parent who was born outside the U.S., and 47% have at least one grandparent who was born outside the U.S. Similarly, 50% of Latinx Millennials report that at least one parent is non-native born with 41% reporting that at least one grandparent is non-native born. Thus, Asian American and Latinx Millennials are more likely to be first- or second-generation Americans.

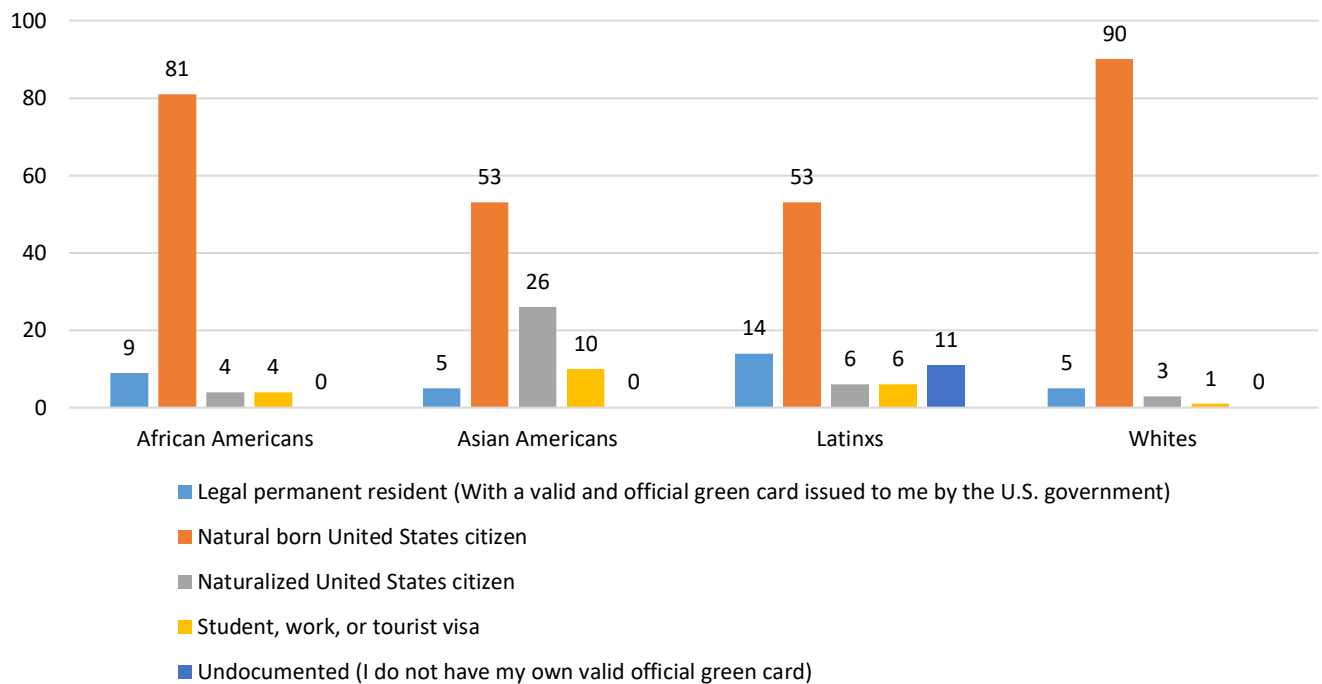
This variation in birthplace among Millennials of different racial and ethnic backgrounds is manifested in the distribution of immigration statuses, as presented in Figure 10. Not surprisingly, large majorities of African American (81%) and white (90%) Millennials report being natural-born citizens of the United States, with a handful of respondents in each racial category identifying as naturalized citizens, legal permanent

residents, visa holders, refugees, or undocumented.⁸ In contrast, only 53% of both Asian American and Latinx Millennials identify as natural-born citizens.

Comparing Asian Americans and Latinxs across the other categories of citizenship reveals interesting variation with important potential policy consequences. For instance, the second and third most common immigration statuses among Asian Americans are naturalized citizenship (26%) and visa grantee (10%), both legal statuses. Indeed, naturalized citizens are awarded all of the rights and privileges guaranteed to natural-born citizens and thus face little risk of deportation or removal.

In contrast, only 6% of Latinx Millennials identify as naturalized citizens or visa holders. Instead, the second most common immigration status among Latinxs is legal permanent residency (14%) followed closely by undocumented status (11%). Latinx Millennials stand out as the only group with a non-zero percentage of individuals who report being undocumented, the most unstable and at-risk status for deportation.

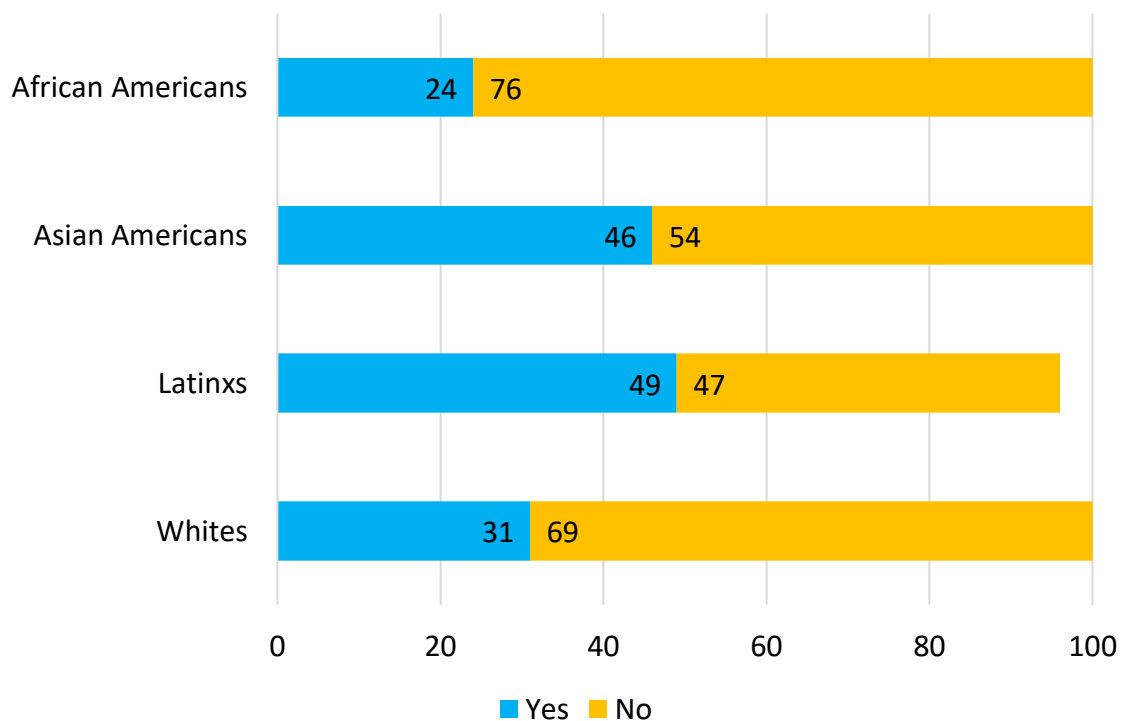
Figure 10: Thinking of your current citizenship/immigration status right now, please indicate which of the following best describes your situation.



⁸ See [here](#) for more discussion on the definitions and differences across immigration status categories.

Asian Americans and Latinx Millennials are also distinctive in the implications of immigration for their familial and friendship networks. Figure 11 illustrates that 46% of Asian Americans and 49% of Latinxs report having friends or relatives who are recent immigrants, compared with 24% of African Americans and 31% of whites. This difference, again, likely reflects the more proximate immigration histories of Asian Americans and Latinxs. It also suggests that even among native born Millennials, Asian American and Latinx Millennials likely have greater exposure than whites and African Americans to others' experiences with immigration given their closer proximity to recent immigrants through their family and friends.

Figure 11: Do you have any friends or relatives who are recent immigrants?

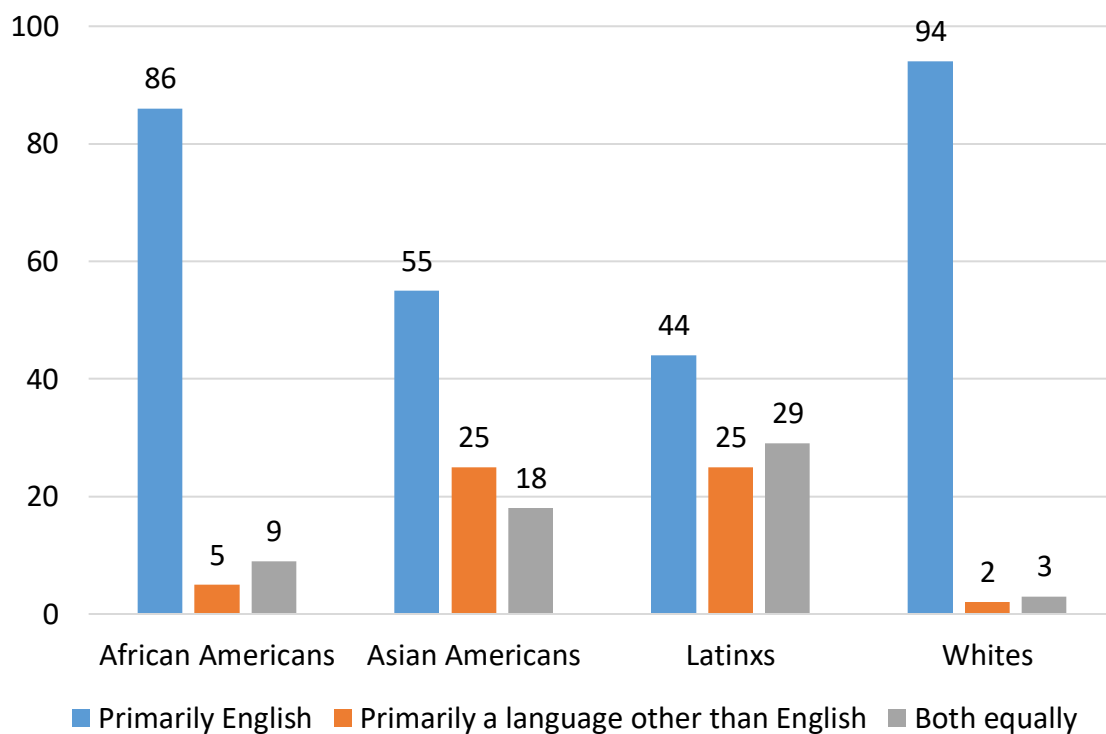


That Asian American and Latinx Millennials have higher levels of contact with immigrant friends and relatives helps explain the variation in language use by race and ethnicity highlighted in Figure 12. Perhaps unsurprisingly, 94% of whites and 86% of African Americans report speaking primarily English when at home.

While the majority of Asian Americans (55%) and a plurality of Latinxs (44%) also identify English as the primary language they speak at home, a quarter of both groups

report that that they primarily speak a language other than English at home. Indeed, the majority of Latinx Millennials do not primarily speak English at home; they either speak a language other than English or an equal combination of English and another language.

Figure 12: Do you primarily speak English or a language other than English at home?



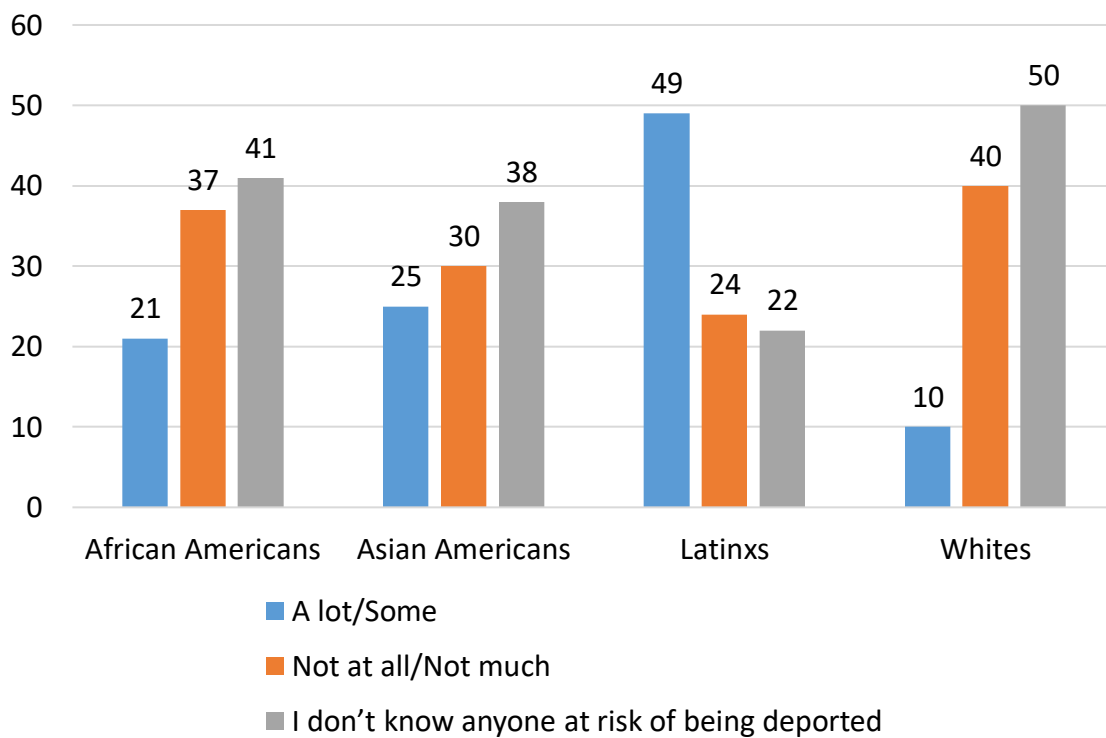
Latinx Millennials are also the only group with a plurality (49%) who say that they worry at least “some” or “a lot” about the possibility that a close friend or family member could be deported. Moreover, as Figure 13 shows, Latinx Millennials are the group least likely to say that they do not know anyone at risk of being deported.

On the other side of the spectrum, only 10% of white Millennials worry some or a lot that a close friend or family member will be deported and exactly half of white Millennials report not knowing anyone at risk of deportation.

Asian American and African American Millennials fall somewhere in between. While pluralities of both groups say that they do not know anyone who is at risk of

deportation, 21% of African American and 25% of Asian American Millennials report worrying that a close friend or relative may be deported, at least to some extent.

Figure 13: Regardless of your own immigration or citizenship status, how much, if at all, do you worry that you, a family member, or a close friend could be deported?



IV. Defining American Identity

Given many Millennials' own histories and proximity to immigration, we were also interested in how Millennials conceptualize American identity. What characteristics do Millennials consider necessary for being an American? How important is being an American to Millennials? And do Millennials of all racial backgrounds feel like full and equal citizens?

To assess what constitutes being an American, we asked Millennials about how important a number of different criteria – ranging from location of birth to religious identity – are to being “truly American.” The full list of proposed criteria and the percentage of Millennials who stated that it was “somewhat” or “very” important can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3. Characteristics of being “Truly American” by Race/Ethnicity
(% Respondents Indicating Very/Somewhat Important)**

	African American	Asian American	Latinx	White
<i>To have been born in America</i>	57	29	55	49
<i>To have American Citizenship</i>	82	72	80	87
<i>To have lived in America for most of one’s life</i>	60	54	61	59
<i>To be able to speak English</i>	76	78	80	79
<i>To be Christian</i>	34	7	33	24
<i>To respect America’s political institution’s and laws</i>	82	83	85	93
<i>To accept people of diverse racial and religious backgrounds</i>	95	95	90	95
<i>To be of European heritage or descent</i>	18	10	13	13
N=	503	258	505	510

In general, there is little variation in what Millennials report as important factors for being considered American. Being born in America, having American citizenship, having lived in America for most of one’s life, the ability to speak English, respect for the nation’s institutions and laws, and acceptance of diversity are all criteria that many Millennials agree are important to being an American.

However, we do find some important variation across racial and ethnic groups among few other measures. For instance, while majorities of African American (57%) and Latinx (55%) Millennials believe it is important to have been born in the United States to be “truly American,” slightly less than half of white (49%) Millennials believe being born in America is important to be considered truly American, and only about 29% of Asian Americans share this belief.

Asian Americans also stand out for their low levels of support for the idea that being Christian is an important characteristic of being truly American. While only 7% of Asian Americans agree that being Christian is important for being considered truly American, 34% of African American and 33% of Latinx Millennials, and almost a quarter of white Millennials (24%) believe that to be **truly American** one needs to be Christian.

Generational Differences on What Makes Someone Truly American

Given the importance of immigration and generational status to Latinx and Asian American Millennials, we explored the possibility of generational differences *within* the Latinx and Asian American groups. Table 4 illustrates those differences.

In general, second-generation Latinx and Asian American Millennials⁹ are less likely to rely on traditional measures of American identity such as the ability to speak English and Christian religious beliefs than are first-generation Latinx and Asian American immigrants. The notable exception to this pattern is accepting people of diverse racial and religious backgrounds. Second-generation Latinx and Asian American Millennials are more likely than their first-generation peers to say that tolerance of racial and religious diversity is important for being considered truly American.

While there are similar generational patterns between Latinxs and Asian Americans, there is important variation in the magnitude of agreement across the two groups. These differences are evident not only when comparing first-generation Latinxs to first-generation Asian Americans and second-generation Latinxs to second-generation Asian Americans, but also when comparing the difference in responses between first- and

⁹ We exclude African American and white Millennials from the generational analysis due to their relatively high levels of U.S. nativity and citizenship.

second-generation Latinxs to the differences in responses between first- and second-generation Asian Americans.

Table 4. Definitions of American Among First- and Second-Generation Latinxs and Asian Americans (% Respondents Indicating Very Important)

	Latinxs		Asian Americans	
	First-Generation	Second-Generation	First-Generation	Second-Generation
<i>To have been born in America</i>	22	24	18	6
<i>To have American Citizenship</i>	43	38	35	22
<i>To have lived in America for most of one's life</i>	29	19	20	14
<i>To be able to speak English</i>	67	46	39	22
<i>To be Christian</i>	27	5	6	0
<i>To respect America's political institution's and laws</i>	64	44	39	32
<i>To accept people of diverse racial and religious backgrounds</i>	65	72	62	91
<i>To be of European heritage or descent</i>	1	0.25	4	0
<i>N=</i>	<i>148</i>	<i>118</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>104</i>

For example, 64% of first-generation Latinxs versus 39% of first-generation Asian Americans agree that respecting American's laws and institutions is "very" or "somewhat" important to be considered American. These percentages drop for both groups in the second generation. Among Latinxs, however, the percentage who hold this belief drops by approximately 20 percentage points from first- to second-generation. The drop among first- and second-generation Asian Americans, on the other hand, is just 7 percentage points.

Trump Voters on What Makes Someone Truly American

Latinx and Asian American Millennials are not the only groups to exhibit important within-group variation on what qualifies a person to be considered truly American; there are also important differences among white Millennials, particularly among those who report voting for Trump versus white Millennials who say they did not vote for Trump.

As Table 5 demonstrates, majorities of Millennial Trump voters agree that to be truly American one should be: born in America, have American citizenship, have lived in America for most of one's life, be able to speak English, and respect American laws and institutions. Similarly, while not registering a majority, Millennial Trump voters are more likely than non-Trump voters to support the idea that being Christian and being of European heritage or descent are important to be truly American. Indeed, the only criterion Trump voters deem less important to being truly American than non-Trump voters, though by a relative small difference of 7 percentage points, is accepting people of diverse racial and religious backgrounds.

**Table 5. Definitions of American by Trump Vote among White Millennials
(% Respondents Indicating Very/Somewhat Important)**

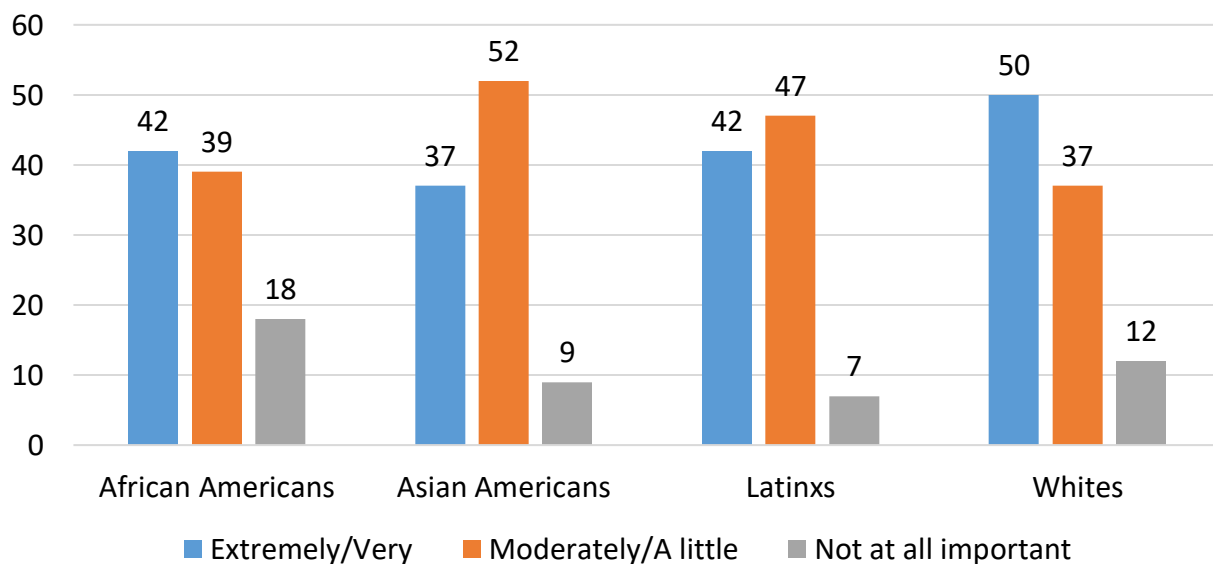
	Non-Trump Voter	Trump Voter
<i>To have been born in America</i>	34	56
<i>To have American Citizenship</i>	81	96
<i>To have lived in America for most of one's life</i>	49	63
<i>To be able to speak English</i>	68	93
<i>To be Christian</i>	11	42
<i>To respect America's political institution's and laws</i>	92	99
<i>To accept people of diverse racial and religious backgrounds</i>	97	90
<i>To be of European heritage or descent</i>	5	19
N=	269	164

Despite the differences in what different racial and ethnic groups of Millennials believe are defining characteristics of being truly American, their sense of the importance of American identity to them seems to be equally present across groups. In Figure 14, it is evident that white Millennials are the group most likely (50%) to state that being an American is extremely or very important to their identity.

Like their white peers, the most common response among African American Millennials is also that being American is extremely or very important to their identity, with the percentage of African Americans (42%) who give this response only slightly lower than it is for whites. However, African American Millennials are also the group most likely (18%) to say that being American is not at all important to their identity.

Though large majorities of Latinx and Asian American Millennials report that being American is an important part of their identity, overall they evaluate American identity as somewhat less important compared to white Millennials. A plurality of Latinx (47%) and a majority of Asian American Millennials (52%) report that being American is a little or moderately important to their identity, with smaller percentages reporting that American identity is “extremely” or “very” important. Interestingly, however, Asian Americans (9%) and Latinxs (7%) are the groups least likely to say being American is not at all important to their identity.

Figure 14: How important is being American to your identity?

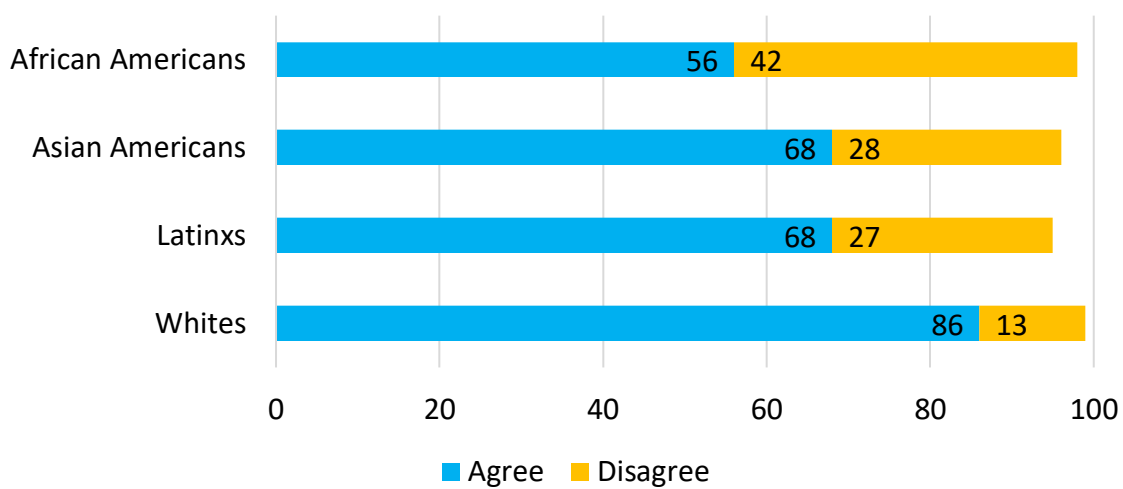


While majorities of Millennials of all racial backgrounds indicate that being American is at least moderately important to their identity, not all feel like full and equal citizens in the United States. Figure 15 illustrates this variation by race and ethnicity.

As is evident from Figure 15, white Millennials are the most likely to agree (86%) with the statement, “I feel like a full and equal citizen in this country with all the rights and protections that other people have.” African Americans, on the other hand, are the least likely to agree (56%) with the statement. And even though a majority of African Americans do agree with the statement, there exists a 30-percentage point difference between the number of African Americans and white Millennials who feel like a full and equal citizen.

Asian Americans and Latinxs find themselves somewhere between African Americans and whites, with over two-thirds of Asian American (68%) and Latinx (68%) Millennials agreeing that they feel like full and equal citizens of the U.S. It is striking that Asian Americans and Latinxs report feeling like full and equal citizens at greater rates than African Americans even though those these groups are the least likely to have been born in the United States. This suggests, and Table 3 above helps confirm, that being born in America is just one of many indicators of American citizenship, broadly defined, and that feelings of equity and belongingness are not equally dispersed among Millennials of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Figure 15: Generally, I feel like a full and equal citizen in this country with all the rights and protections that other people have.

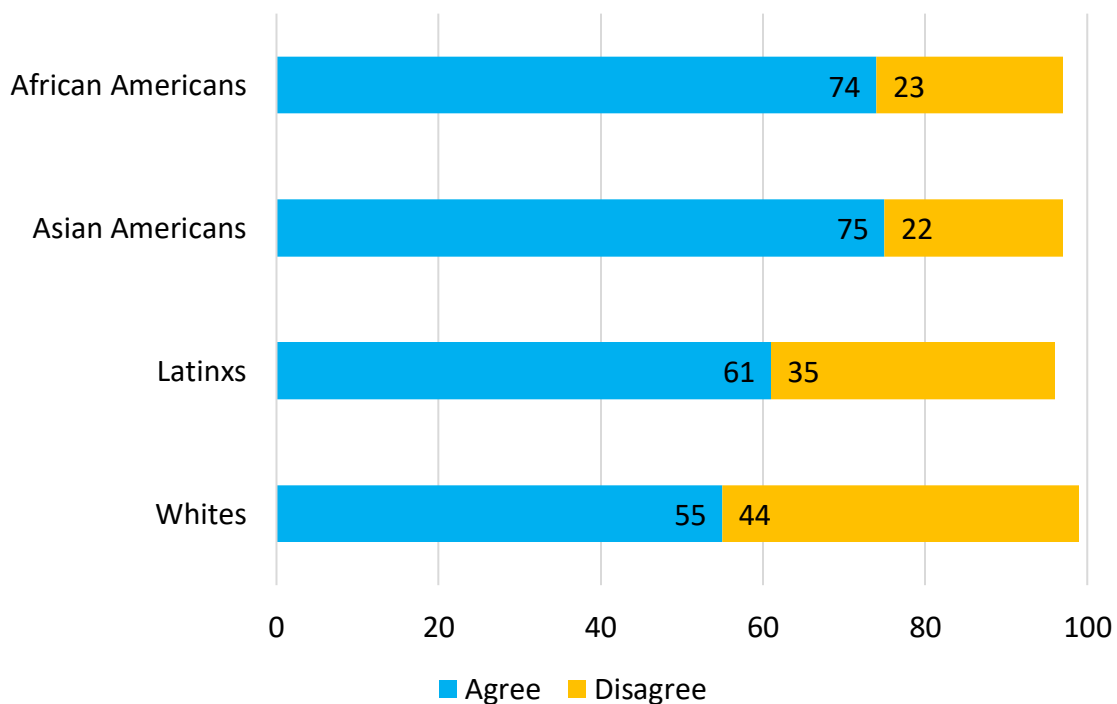


Patriotism

The differences exhibited by race and ethnicity on whether Millennials feel like full and equal citizens may also affect individuals' orientation toward patriotism. To further explore racial and ethnic attitudes on American identity we asked a series of questions on the benefits and drawbacks of patriotism.

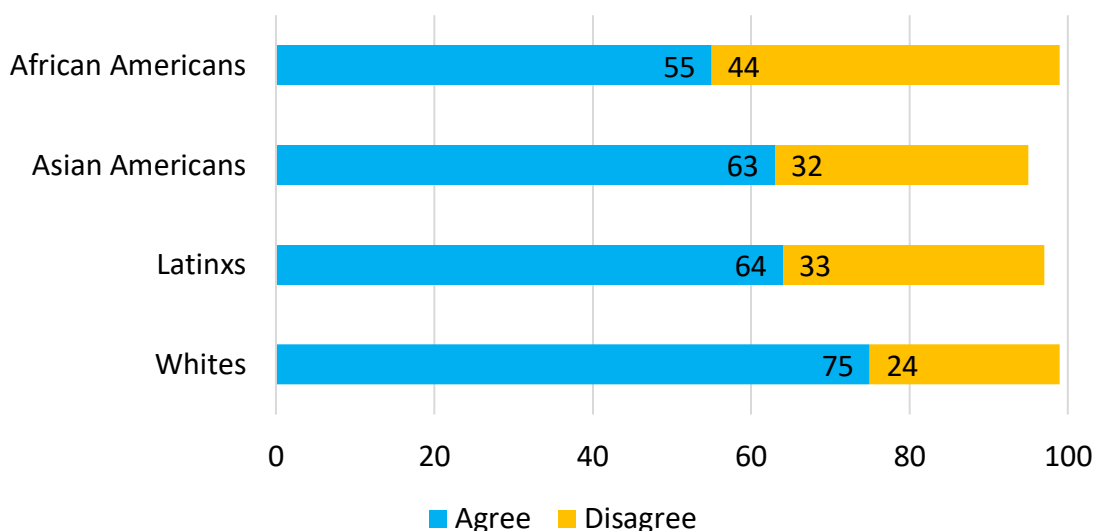
Figure 16 presents the results to the first of these questions, which measures whether respondents believe patriotism leads to intolerance in America. While the majority of white Millennials agree that patriotic feelings lead to intolerance (55%), they are approximately twenty percentage points less likely to agree than African Americans or Asian Americans. African American (74%) and Asian American (75%) Millennials are the most likely to agree. It is important to note, however, that the majority of respondents in every racial and ethnic group agree that patriotic feelings lead to intolerance.

Figure 16: Percentage of Millennials who agree that strong patriotic feelings lead to intolerance in America



Despite believing that patriotism leads to intolerance, majorities of Millennials across racial and ethnic backgrounds also believe that patriotism is necessary for America to remain united. Here, however, an inverse pattern to that in Figure 16 emerges. As shown in Figure 17, African American Millennials are the least likely (55%) to say that patriotic feelings are needed to keep America united while white Millennials are the most likely (75%) to hold this view. Roughly equivalent percentages of Asian (63%) Americans and Latinxs (64%) agree that patriotism is necessary for national unity.

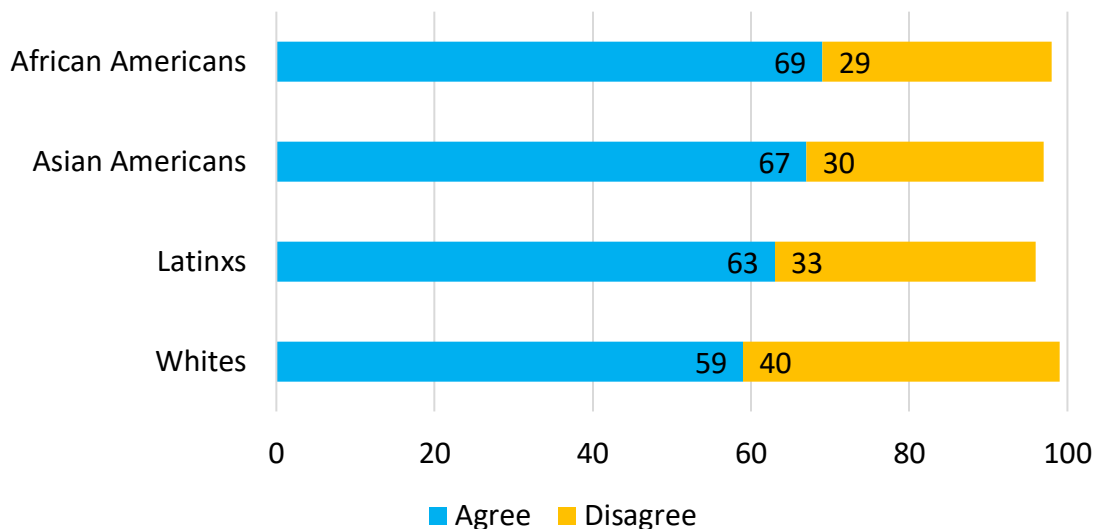
Figure 17: Percentage of Millennials who agree that strong patriotic feelings are needed for America to remain united



Despite reporting that patriotic feelings are needed to keep national unity, Millennials also largely believe that patriotic feelings lead to negative attitudes toward immigrants in America, as seen in Figure 18. A majority of Millennials in each racial and ethnic group report that patriotism leads to negative attitudes toward immigrants.

These three measures suggest that Millennials may hold contradictory attitudes toward patriotism—patriotic feelings are believed to be good in that they are necessary for national unity and bad in that they lead to intolerance and negative feelings toward immigrants.

Figure 18: Percentage of Millennials who agree that strong patriotic feelings lead to negative attitudes towards immigrants in America



In spite of what might be perceived as inconsistencies in the attitudes of Millennials about patriotism, a large pattern does emerge. White Millennials are most likely to agree that patriotism generates national unity but are least likely to agree that it produces intolerance and negative feelings toward immigrants. In contrast, Millennials of color—and especially African Americans—exhibit the greatest levels of agreement with the negative evaluations of patriotism and the least amount of agreement with the positive evaluation. Patriotism, in other words, may be considered a complicated and somewhat problematic sentiment by all Millennials, but it is overall considered more positively by white Millennials than African American, Asian American, and Latinx Millennials.

VI. Conclusion

Immigration has been a thorny subject in American politics for much of the country's history. Defining the boundaries of citizenship, making decisions on the inclusion—and, perhaps more often, the exclusion—of certain groups, and assimilating and incorporating an increasingly diverse polity has resulted in some of the country's most [controversial legislative](#) and [political](#) actions as well as shaped the demographics of the American population. This report has offered an overview of what Millennials, the most

diverse generation and direct products of immigration policy – not only think about immigration policy proposals and how the current administration is handling the issue of immigration, but also how immigration has shaped their interactions with language, family, friends, and their fear of deportation. We have also outlined how Millennials understand and define American identity, citizenship, patriotism more generally.

How immigration has shaped the lives of Millennials varies significantly between groups, with Asian Americans and Latinxs much more likely to be an immigrant, have a close friend or relative that is a recent immigrant, and speak a language other English at home than African Americans or whites. These differences are sometimes, though not always, seemingly correlated with support or opposition for specific policy proposals.

Creating pathways to citizenship for DACA-eligible individuals, military veterans, and law-abiding citizens as well as expanding guest worker programs, for example, garner strong support from Millennials of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. More restrictive proposals, such as identifying and deporting all immigrants living in the U.S. without legal documentation and increasing spending on border security and enforcement, however, witness greatest support among white, and to a lesser degree, African American Millennials. These differences in histories, lived experiences, as well as the policy attitudes and preferences outlined between members of different racial and ethnic groups are vital factors to consider when thinking about a policy agenda around the issue of immigration.

VII. Survey Methodology

The GenForward survey is a project of Professor Cathy J. Cohen at the University of Chicago. Interviews for this survey were conducted with a representative sample from GenForwardSM, a nationally representative survey panel of adults ages 18-34 recruited and administered by NORC at the University of Chicago and funded by grants to the University of Chicago from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Ford Foundation.

A total of 1,876 interviews were conducted between October 26 and November 10, 2017 with adults ages 18-34 representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia, including completed interviews with 541 African American young adults, 250 Asian American young adults, 508 Latinx young adults, 527 white young adults, and 50 young adults with other racial and ethnic backgrounds. The survey was offered in English and Spanish and via telephone and web modes.

The GenForward survey was built from two sample sources: Sixty-seven percent of the completed interviews are sourced from NORC's AmeriSpeak® Panel. AmeriSpeak is a probability-based panel that also uses address-based sample but sourced from the NORC National Frame with enhanced sample coverage. During the initial recruitment phase of the AmeriSpeak panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face).

Thirty-three percent of the completed interviews are sourced from Professor Cohen's Black Youth Project (BYP) panel of young adults recruited by NORC. The BYP sample is from a probability-based household panel that uses an address-based sample from a registered voter database of the entire U.S. Households were selected using stratified random sampling to support over-sampling of households with African Americans, Latino/as, and Asian Americans ages 18-34. NORC contacted sampled households by U.S. mail and by telephone, inviting them to register and participate in public opinion surveys twice a month. Panelists on both the BYP and AmeriSpeak panels are invited to register for the panel via the web or by telephone to participate in public opinion surveys.

Of the 1,876 completed interviews in the GenForward June survey, 94 percent were completed by web and 6 percent by telephone. The survey completion rate is 27

percent. The weighted household panel recruitment rate is 26.6 percent and the weighted household panel retention rate is 88.9 percent, for a cumulative AAPOR Response Rate 3 of 5.0 percent. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 3.92 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. Among subgroups, the margin of sampling error at the 95 percent confidence level is +/- 5.85 percentage points for African Americans, +/- 8.75 percentage points for Asian Americans, +/- 7.05 percentage points for Latino/as, and +/- 5.85 percentage points for whites.

To encourage cooperation, respondents were offered incentives for completing the survey that ranged from the cash-equivalent of \$3 to the cash-equivalent of \$10.

The interviews from the two probability-based sample sources were combined for statistical weighting and analysis. The combined panel samples provide sample coverage of approximately 97% of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings. The statistical weights incorporate the appropriate probability of selection for the BYP and

AmeriSpeak samples, nonresponse adjustments, and also, raking ratio adjustments to population benchmarks for 18-34-year-old adults. A post stratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any non-coverage or under- and over-sampling resulting from the study-specific sample design. The post stratification process was done separately for each racial/ethnic group and involved the following variables: age, gender, education, and census region. The weighted data, which reflect the U.S. population of adults ages 18-34, and the 18-34-year-old populations for African Americans, Latino/as, Asian Americans, and non-Latino/a whites, were used for all analyses.