

Did You Know?

Information on Second Generation Immigrants and Immigration Attitudes

Sonia A. Vargas

GVPT Summer Workshop
July 7, 2026





Department of Homeland Sec...

1h · 🌐



We will have our country back.

[JOIN.ICE.GOV](https://www.ice.dhs.gov)



The Immigration Conversation Is Missing Someone

What the public hears about:

- Border crossings and deportations
- Undocumented populations
- Foreign-born flows from Latin America

What gets left out:

- The **second generation** — U.S.-born children of immigrants
- Now **12.7%** of the U.S. population (Pew, 2023)
- Citizens by birth, eligible voters at 18
- A major source of Latinx population growth

Why It Matters

If the public does not know this population exists, we cannot understand how it will be perceived politically as it grows.

RQ

Does providing demographic information about the second generation shift immigration attitudes?

What We Know About Information and Immigration Attitudes

But content matters:

- Grigorieff et al. (2020) — correcting misperceptions about immigrant *characteristics* (not just numbers) produces modest attitude change, **largest among Republicans**.
- Hopkins, Sides & Citrin (2019) — 7 *experiments, 11 years*: providing accurate information about immigrant population size updates perceptions but **does not change policy attitudes**.

Why attitudes resist change:

- Immigration attitudes are driven by **symbolic threat and group affect** — not personal economic concerns (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014; Valentino et al., 2013).

The gap: All prior corrective information work targets the **foreign-born**. The second generation has never been tested as an informational target.

Why the Second Generation Is a Different Informational Target

The dominant frame (foreign-born):

- Anxiety-driven media coverage
- Latino immigrants = threat
- Undocumented = illegal
- Established, overwhelmingly negative frame (Brader et al., 2008; Valentino et al., 2013)

The second generation:

- U.S. citizens by birth
- No established media frame
- Could be seen as asset *or* threat

The Great Replacement

A Concern Surrounding Immigration

The second generation is predominantly non-Anglo and growing. 29% of Americans subscribe to Great Replacement beliefs (PRRI, 2022): 60% of Republicans, 36% of whites. This means information about second generation growth could *increase* anti-immigrant attitudes.

Competing Hypotheses

H1 — Demographic Asset

Exposure to informational passage about the second generation will **increase pro-immigrant** orientations.

Mechanism: Centering a civically incorporated, U.S.-born population challenges the threat-based foreign-born frame.

H2 — Demographic Threat

Exposure to informational passage about the second generation will **increase anti-immigrant** orientations.

Mechanism: Information about non-Anglo demographic growth activates Great Replacement-style threat perceptions.

Both outcomes are theoretically plausible. This study distinguishes between them.

Survey experiment

- College-aged adults, GVPT Experiment Lab
- Institutions: UCLA, UMD, UC Boulder, Pitzer
- N = 1,408 total

Subgroup moderators:

- Race (White / Non-White)
- Party ID (Dem / Non-Dem)
- Immigrant generation (1st / 2nd / 3rd+)

Three outcome measures:

- 1 **Immigration Policy**
Support/oppose restricting immigration (5-pt scale)
- 2 **ICE Approval**
Approve/disapprove of ICE enforcement
- 3 **Trump Immigration Policy**
Support/oppose Trump's immigration priorities

Analysis: Logistic regression + subgroup analyses

America Counts

The median income of households headed by someone with a bachelor's degree or higher was more than double that of households headed by someone with a high school degree but no college in 2024, according to new Census Data.

Read more on the stories behind the numbers.



United States[®]
Census
Bureau

America Counts

The number of second generation immigrant Americans, U.S. born children of immigrants, has grown significantly over the past two decades, becoming one of the fastest expanding segments of the population.

Second generation immigrant Americans now make up a substantial share of young adults, with especially high representation among Hispanic, Asian, and African-origin families.

Analysts say their growing numbers could influence future elections and policy debates, particularly on issues related to racial equity, immigration, education, and economic opportunity.



United States[®]
Census
Bureau

Control and Treatment Conditions

The median income of households headed by someone with a bachelor's degree or higher was more than double that of households headed by someone with a high school degree but no college in 2024, according to new Census Data. Read more on the stories behind the numbers.

The number of second generation immigrant Americans, U.S. born children of immigrants, has grown significantly over the past two decades, becoming one of the fastest expanding segments of the population. Second generation immigrant Americans now make up a substantial share of young adults, with especially high representation among Hispanic, Asian, and African-origin families. Analysts say their growing numbers could influence future elections and policy debates, particularly on issues related to racial equity, immigration, education, and economic opportunity.

United States Census Bureau



1,904 likes

uscensusbureau #ICYMI: Dive into the stories behind the latest #income, and #education numbers on #AmericaCounts.

- How Education Impacted Income and Earnings From 2004 to 2024
- No Significant Change in Estimated U.S. Median Household Income

#CensusData #MedianIncome #Education

The number of second generation immigrant Americans, U.S. born children of immigrants, has grown significantly over the past two decades, becoming one of the fastest expanding segments of the population. Second generation immigrant Americans now make up a substantial share of young adults, with especially high representation among Hispanic, Asian, and African-origin families. Analysts say their growing numbers could influence future elections and policy debates, particularly on issues related to racial equity, immigration, education, and economic opportunity.

United States Census Bureau



1,904 likes

uscensusbureau Just Released: #CensusData on Foreign-Born Population by Generation!

The second generation makes up 12.6% of the U.S. population according to the 2024 CPS.

Researchers say the growing second generation population immigrant trend reflects long-term demographic change that is reshaping communities across the country. Demographers note that this group tends to have high rates of English proficiency, educational attainment, and political

Sample Composition

	Control	Treatment
Race		
White	192	236
Non-White	260	504
Party ID		
Democrat	373	412
Non-Dem	151	178
Generation		
1st	66	83
2nd	188	221
3rd+	298	321
Total N	554	854

Key features of the sample:

- Heavily **Democratic**: 785 Dems vs. 83 Republicans
- Majority **non-white**: 764 vs. 428
- High baseline **pro-immigrant** attitudes
- UCLA + UMD \approx 1,200 respondents

Implication

Ceiling effects are likely. Strong Democratic, pro-immigrant baseline limits detectable treatment variation.

Descriptive Results: Pro-Immigrant Attitudes by Condition (%)

	Control			Treatment		
	Policy	ICE	Trump	Policy	ICE	Trump
Race						
White	64.1	85.4	88.5	64.4	82.1	90.2
Non-White	72.3	89.2	96.1	68.4	89.9	95.5
Party ID						
Democrat	81.5	96.0	99.2	79.7	94.6	99.2
Non-Dem	36.4	70.2	78.5	39.7	70.3	77.0
Generation						
1st	63.6	74.2	92.2	61.4	84.3	95.5
2nd	70.2	90.4	93.0	64.4	88.0	91.6
3rd+	67.1	89.6	92.6	70.3	87.2	92.3

Treatment and control groups produce **very similar rates** across most subgroups.

The Republican Exception

Descriptive pattern among Republicans:

	Policy	ICE	Trump
Control	47.6	57.1	42.9
Treatment	84.6	100	100
Δ	+37	+43	+57

Republicans in the treatment condition appear substantially more pro-immigrant.

Caution:

- Republican subsample is **very small** ($n = 83$)
- Differences do **not survive** formal regression tests
- High variance estimates

But directionally consistent with:

Grigorieff et al. (2020) — characteristic-based information effects are **largest among those with the most negative baseline attitudes**

Future work with larger, more ideologically diverse samples should test this directly.

Regression Results: Treatment Effects (Log-Odds)

	No Controls	Controls
Treatment		
Policy	-0.02	-0.1
ICE	-0.1	-0.1
Trump	-0.03	0.2
	<i>None significant</i>	
Controls (Policy)		
Non-Dem		-1.7**
Female		0.6**
Non-religious		0.6**
White		0.1
1st gen		-0.2
3rd+ gen		-0.2

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Key takeaways:

- **Treatment is null** across all six models (bivariate and controlled)
- **Party ID dominates:** Non-Democrats substantially less pro-immigrant on all three outcomes
- **Gender gap:** Women more pro-immigrant across all outcomes
- **Religion matters:** Non-religious more supportive of immigration
- **Generation does not predict** immigration attitudes in this model

What the Null Result Tells Us

Primary finding

The second generation informational treatment produces **no significant average treatment effect** on immigration attitudes.

Two interpretations:

- 1 **Ceiling effects:** The sample is too pro-immigrant already. There is simply no room to move upward among a heavily Democratic, college-aged sample.
- 2 **The second generation is a neutral cue:** Respondents are neither more pro- nor anti-immigrant after receiving information about the second generation. The population does not yet activate strong feelings in either direction.

Party identification is the dominant organizing force — not generation, race, or treatment.

What this study establishes:

- The second generation is a **politically understudied informational target**
- Demographic information about it does not shift immigration attitudes among this sample
- Critically: it also does **not trigger threat** — the second generation is a largely neutral cue for now
- Immigration attitudes are organized primarily by **partisanship**

Future directions:

- Nationally representative or ideologically diverse sample
- Higher-intensity treatments (not just a social media post)
- Longitudinal tracking as second generation grows electorally
- Elite framing: *will* the second generation be framed as asset or threat?

Thank you

Sonia A. Vargas

Ph.D. Candidate

Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland