"Crime, Documentation Status, and Content Analysis: Evidence from American Surveys Evaluating the Public's Perception of Deportations"
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Abstract

How does the public evaluate US deportations? This paper conducts two original, experimental surveys in the United States, asking the public about their perceptions of immigrant deportations from the US. The first section of this paper utilizes an experimental design to determine how documentation status and criminality impact the public's views of deportations. The second section of this paper asks an open-ended question about perceptions of deportations and uses automatic content analysis to determine the emotional sentiment of respondents' answers. This paper determines that Americans view deportations as an appropriate punitive measure for undocumented immigrants and immigrants who have committed crimes.

Keywords: *Public Opinion, Immigration, Sentiment Analysis, Deportations*.

Introduction

What explains American perceptions of deportations? Past public opinion research has focused on American perceptions of immigration or undocumented immigrants, but relatively little survey work examines deportations. The limited available research on deportations has found that Americans are split on whether the government should deport certain groups of immigrants, particularly those undocumented or who have committed a crime (e.g., Gallup, 2021; Cosby et al., 2013). This paper contributes to the literature analyzing immigration through two original surveys assessing public opinion on deportations. The first survey utilizes an embedded experimental design to determine that respondents view deportations more favorably for undocumented immigrants and / or have committed crimes. The second survey uses novel sentiment analysis to analyze an open-ended question asking respondents about deportations and finding the specific emotional connotations associated with them.

Historically, the US has relied on deportations to respond to unwanted immigration. In the simplest sense, undocumented immigrants are deported from the United States because they are not legally residing in the US. However, many undocumented immigrants are deported for criminal convictions, improper documentation, or administrative errors (King & Obinna, 2018). In the past, US courts have argued that deportations are not a method of

punishment, but rather a method of returning foreign individuals who have not followed US law (Hester, 2010). However, many scholars argue that deportations are a form of retribution and social control, which can lead to discrimination and undermine due process (e.g., Hester, 2010; Golash-Boza & Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2013).

This paper progresses as follows. First, I review the literature on past public opinion data, emphasizing the factors influencing perceptions of deportations, and provide my hypothesis. Second, I present my research design and empirical results, divided into two sections, the first focusing on experimental question results and the second on sentiment analysis interpreting results from an open-ended question. The experimental design results found that respondents are significantly more likely to support deportations when an immigrant is undocumented and / or has committed a crime. Additionally, the sentiment results found that respondents evaluate deportations fairly neutrally, slightly skewing negatively. Finally, the conclusion summarizes key findings and the implications and suggests avenues for future research.

Literature Review

While public opinion surveys often assess the public's views on immigration, the related issue of deportation is rarely focused on in public opinion surveys. A 2019 Gallup survey asked Americans 2019 whether all undocumented immigrants should be deported from the US, and respondents were split, with approximately 40% supporting the policy and 60% against the policy (Gallup, 2021). Cosby et al. (2013) analyzed the 2009 SCSHI national public opinion survey and the 2006 Pew Hispanic Center survey and asked respondents whether undocumented immigrants should be deported, allowed to stay temporarily on a worker's permit, or allowed to stay permanently. Figure 1 shows the descriptive results of both surveys. Respondents appeared substantially more likely to support deportations in 2009 compared to 2006 (51% vs. 27%), while they were much more likely to advocate for allowing undocumented immigrants to stay in 2006 (11% vs. 32%). In 2015, most Americans believed undocumented immigrants should be provided a path to citizenship (Gallup, 2021). Most Americans supported allowing immigrants brought to the US illegally as children to stay in the United States (National Immigration Forum, 2020).

Figure 1: US Policy Response to Undocumented Immigration
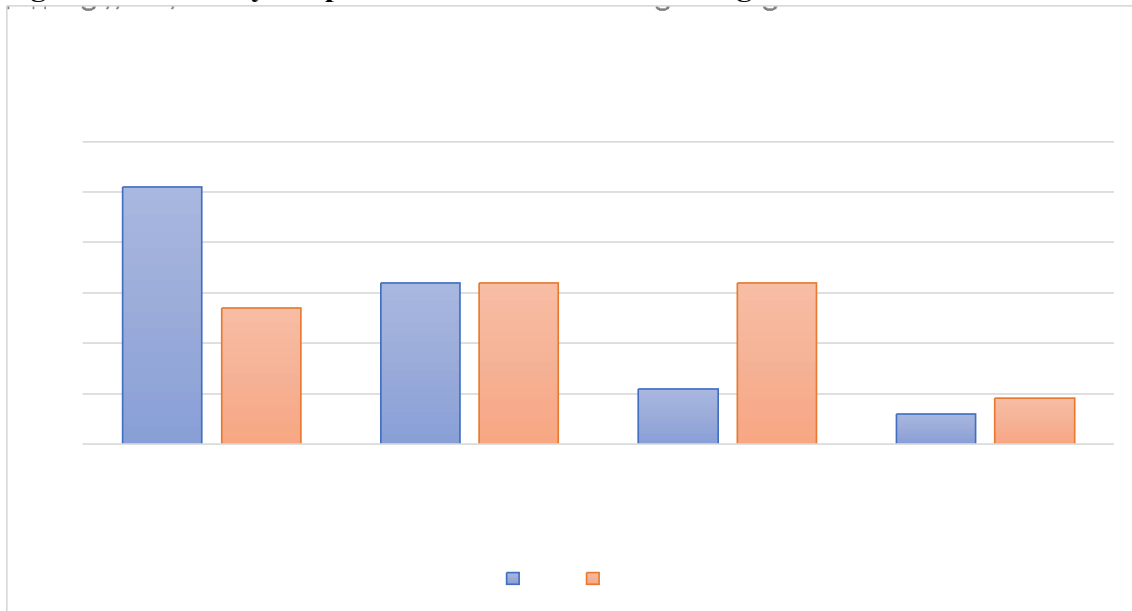
While descriptive statistics can help understand aggregate results, delving into the factors that correspond with support for deportation with support for deportation helps further understand the public's opinions. Several factors are theorized to help explain public support for deportation, described below.

Documentation Status

One potential factor influencing whether the public supports deportation is the immigrant's documentation status. Americans tend to be overwhelmingly more supportive of legal immigration than undocumented immigration (e.g., Suro, 2009; Taylor-Clark, 2008). One explanation is that Americans are likelier to view undocumented immigrants as lazy and taking the easy way into the US (Emamzadeh, 2019; Flores & Schachter, 2018). Emamzadeh (2018) analyzed psychological studies on perceptions of undocumented immigrants, arguing that many Americans relied on stereotypes of undocumented immigrants, such as that they were freeloading or disease-ridden, causing negative perceptions

of those who are undocumented. Alternatively, the theory of in-group identification could explain American distaste for undocumented immigrants (Emamzadeh, 2018). The theory argues that some Americans view their identity as superior to the rest of the world, to the point of group narcissism, leading some to reject those they believe have a different culture and lack an understanding of English (Emamzadeh, 2018). Finally, another explanation is that Americans could have an absolutist view of the law and believe that crossing the border illegally should always lead to deportation. Thus, even though deported immigrants are sometimes permanent residents, Americans could be more supportive of deporting undocumented immigrants.

Crime

Historically, there has been an association between immigration and crime, which could manifest in public distrust of undocumented immigrants. For example, in a Gallup survey that asked the same question for approximately ten years, 33-40% of

Americans worried greatly about immigration, and up to 50% reported being concerned about high numbers of undocumented immigrants (Gallup, 2021). Though this question does not explicitly identify crime as the cause of concern, many respondents could have been thinking about crime when answering the question. However, when asked about crime specifically, nearly 75% of Americans believed that immigrants were at least somewhat more likely to increase overall crime rates (Rumbaut & Ewing, 2007, citing the National Opinion Research Center's 2000 General Social Survey).

Though immigrants are not associated with increased crime rates (e.g., Rumbaut & Ewing, 2007), Sohoni and Sohoni (2016) studied public discourse on immigrants. They found that the media is likely to sensationalize immigrants committing crimes. They found many erroneous news articles in which undocumented immigrants were considered criminals who lacked morals or came from cultures where crime was acceptable (Sohoni & Sohoni, 2016). Additionally, stereotypes and television could perpetuate perceptions of immigrants as criminals, such as depictions of the Italian mafia, Colombian drug cartels, and other groups (Rumbaut & Ewing, 2007). Past studies have found that concerns over immigrant crime correspond with reduced support for immigration (e.g., McLaren & Johnson, 2007). Suppose Americans are presupposed to believe that undocumented immigrants are more likely to commit crimes. In that case, they are also probably more likely to favor harsh responses to immigrant crime, such as deportations.

Demographics

We can expect certain demographic factors to influence perceptions of deportations—first, age. Past research has found that older Americans are more likely to perceive undocumented immigrants negatively, often because of anticipated negative consequences (Espenshade & Calhoune, 1993). Second, race and ethnicity. While white Americans have empirically advocated for harsh responses to undocumented immigration (e.g., Cohen, 2021), Latinos are theorized to view immigrants more positively since they are likely to have more cultural connections (Espenshade & Calhoune, 1993). Third, education. Less educated Americans have been found to support undocumented immigrants less (Emamzadeh, 2018), with possible explanations ranging from educated individuals having more experience and knowledge of immigration to education facilitating the development of more nuanced thinking (Espenshade & Calhoune, 1993)—fourth, income. Low-income individuals might be more supportive of deportations because they are wary that undocumented immigrants, often their competition in the labor market, could take their jobs (e.g., Emamzadeh, 2018)—finally, ideology. Many polls found that conservatives are more likely to favor deportations than liberals (e.g., Cosby et al., 2013) because of ideological differences about the role of immigration. For example, a 2020 survey found that Republican respondents were more concerned about illegal immigration than COVID-19 (National Immigration Forum, 2020).

Hypothesis

Based on my review of the literature, I hypothesize the following:

H1: *Respondents are more likely to view deportations favorably if immigrants are*

(a) undocumented and / or (b) convicted of a crime.

H2: *Respondents who perceive legal immigration to the US as easy are more likely to support deportations as a response to undocumented immigrants.*

H3: *Respondents have a nuanced perspective of deportations and will use emotional language to describe them.*

Research Design and Empirical Results

I analyze two original surveys conducted in the United States, focusing on public perceptions of deportations from the US. I implemented each via Qualtrics web survey and used quota sampling based on age, gender, and region. The first survey was conducted from June 24-26th, 2021, each with 625 respondents, and the second survey was conducted from November 10-12th, 2021, with 1,007 respondents. Summary statistics are available for the surveys in Appendix A and Appendix B[99].

This chapter is divided into two sections; the first section focuses on the results from an experimental question asked in the June survey. The second section conducts content analysis based on responses from an open-ended question on the Number survey.

Experimental Analysis

In the June US survey, I asked an experimental question to determine the level of animosity directed at undocumented immigrants and immigrants committing crimes. Additionally, the question allowed me to determine if respondents believed that deportation is more acceptable in specific contexts, such as when an immigrant is

undocumented or has committed a crime. In this survey, I focused explicitly on deportations to Mexico because most deportations from the US are to Mexico (DHS, 2016). I asked the question below, with a version randomly assigned to each respondent, which they were asked to evaluate on a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to agree strongly:

Version 1: The US should deport undocumented Mexican immigrants back to Mexico.

Version 2: The US should deport undocumented Mexican immigrants who have committed crimes in the US back to Mexico.

Version 3: The US should deport undocumented Mexican immigrants who have committed violent crimes in the US back to Mexico.

Version 4: The US should deport documented Mexican immigrants back to Mexico.

Version 5: The US should deport documented Mexican immigrants who have committed crimes in the US back to Mexico.

Version 6: The US should deport documented Mexican immigrants who have committed violent crimes in the US back to Mexico.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of responses to the question of interest. For clarity in the images, I combined the answers for strongly disagree and disagree and strongly agree and agree. Most respondents agreed with every prompt, except version four which discussed deporting documented immigrants to Mexico. Unsurprisingly, respondents were much more likely to support deporting immigrants who had committed a crime and even more so those who had committed a violent crime. Additionally, respondents were more likely to

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[99] Each survey was fairly representative of the population; however, Hispanic individuals were slightly under-sampled in the second US survey (15% vs 18%).

agree with the prompt regarding deporting undocumented immigrants than documented immigrants. The descriptive results suggest that the public supports harsher responses to undocumented immigrants committing the same crime as documented immigrants.

Figure 2: Deportations to Mexico Results, by Version
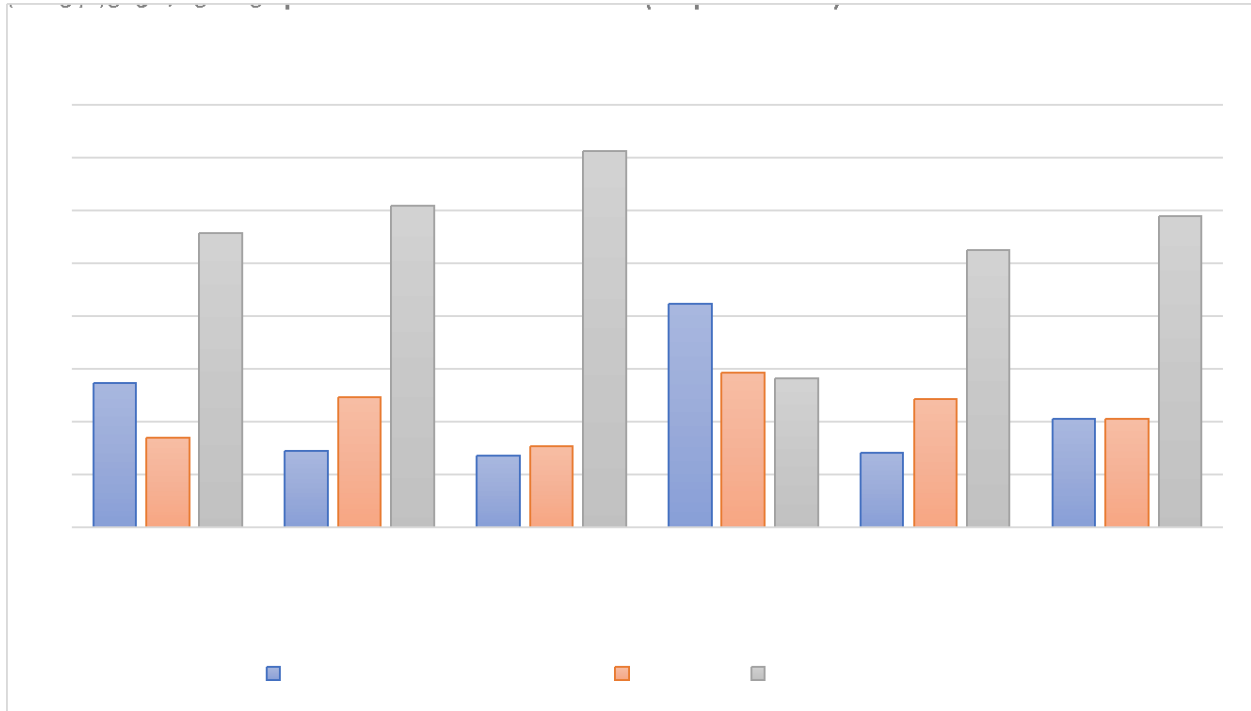
Interestingly, nearly 30% of Americans support deporting documented immigrants who have not committed any crime. Some respondents did not understand or glossed over the phrase "deported," while others might be so anti-immigrant that they wanted most immigrants deported from the US. To further explore this, I calculated a t-test between the responses to version one (undocumented immigrants) and version four (documented immigrants) by support for legal immigration[100] and found a significant, positive response. Thus, while some respondents likely misread or misinterpreted the phrase "documented immigration," a

significant portion were against legal immigration.

To further analyze perceptions of deportations, I aggregate the data to compare Americans' perceptions of immigrants who have committed crimes, regardless of documentation status, and Americans' perceptions of undocumented vs. documented immigrants, ignoring the prompt for crime type. Figure 3 depicts respondents' perceptions of immigrants who have committed a crime or a violent crime, compared to the baseline of no crime mentioned. Americans are about 15% more likely to agree with the prompt when primed that the immigrant committed a crime and an additional 10% more likely to agree when told the immigrant committed a violent crime. Figure 4 compares respondents' perceptions

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[100] On the survey, I asked respondents whether they supported legal immigration and they could either select yes or no.

of documented and undocumented immigrants, with respondents approximately 16% more likely to support deporting undocumented immigrants. These findings are consistent with expectations, which is that Americans view undocumented immigrants and those who have committed crimes negatively.

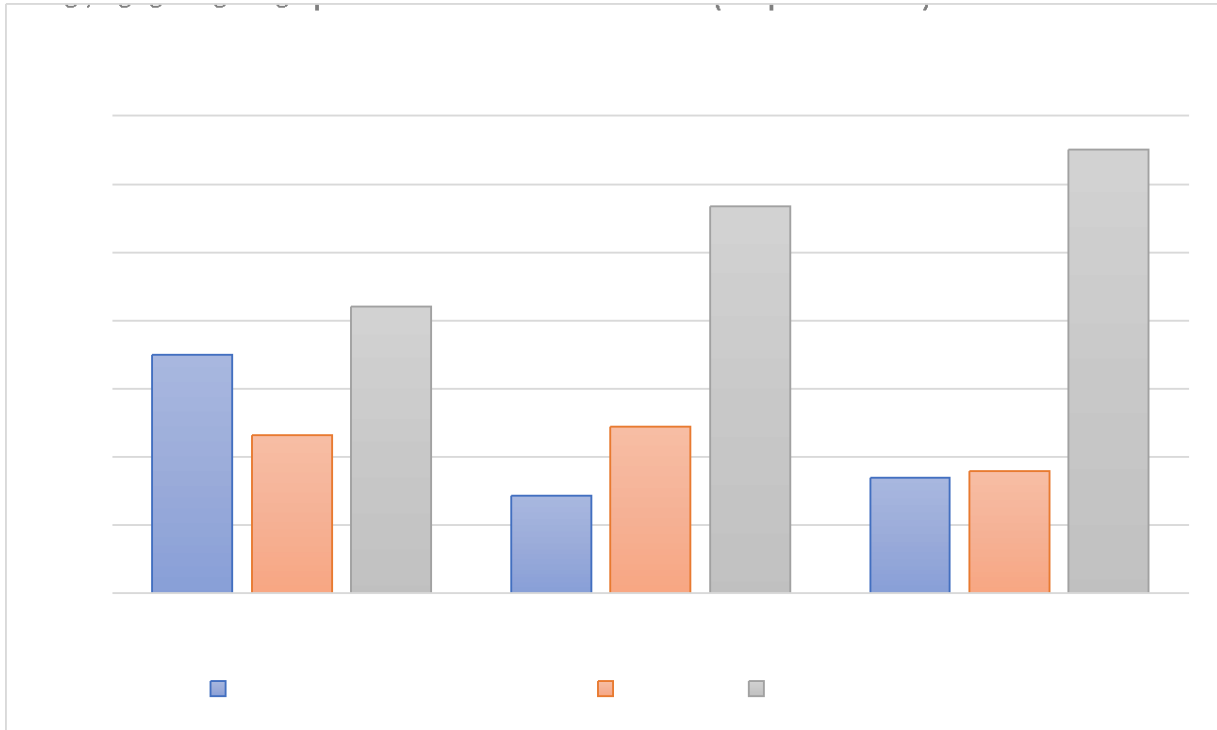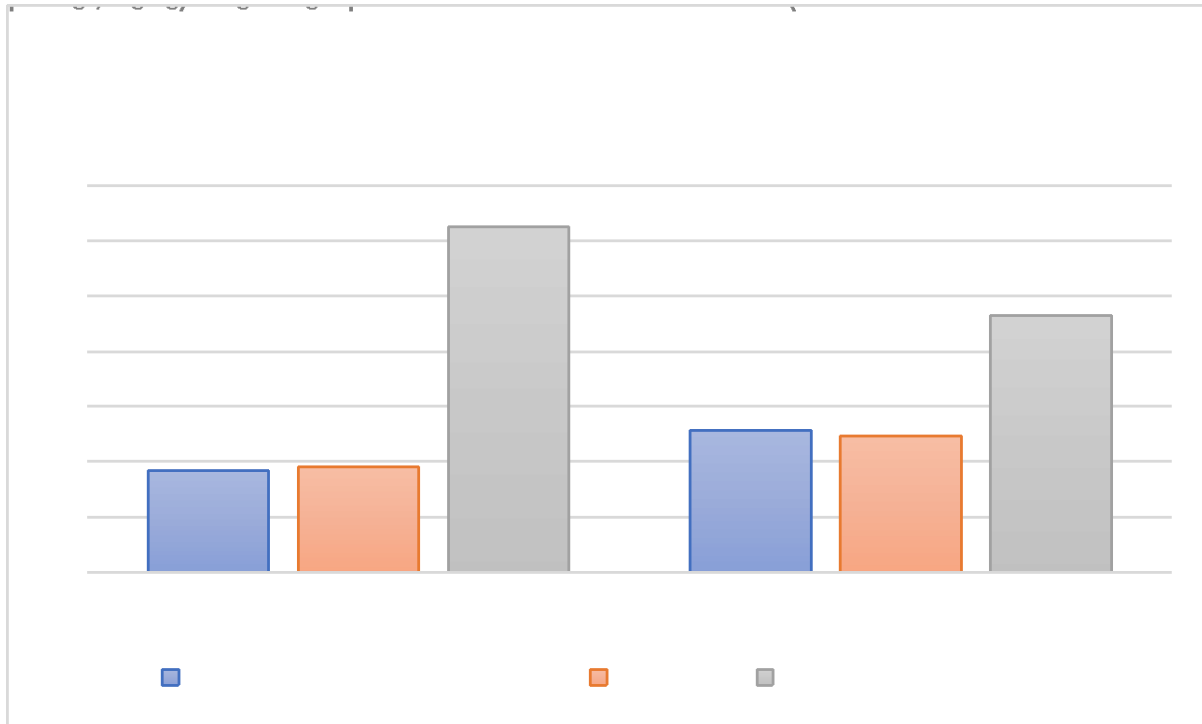**Figure 3: Deportations to Mexico Results by Crime Type**

Figure 4: Deportations to Mexico Results by Immigration Status

Finally, I ran a series of ordered logistic regressions with the respondent's answer to the prompt as my dependent variable. I ran three models: the first tested the significance of the experiment by adding dummy variables for respondents receiving versions 2-6 of the experiment, the second included demographic controls, and the final model added a series of attitudinal variables. For independent variables, I included a variable for age (9-point cohort measure), a dummy variable for gender (female), a dummy variable for race (White), a variable for education (7-point cohort measure), a variable for income (12-point cohort measure), and a dummy variable for political ideology (Democrat). Additionally, the survey included several attitudinal questions that I added as independent variables. First, a dummy variable for those agreeing with the statement, "I support free trade between the US and Mexico." I used this question to help determine if respondents desired a more open relationship between the US and Mexico, which might signify more robust support for more free movement of people. Second, a dummy variable for those agreeing with the statement, "I support continued tariffs on imported Chinese goods." Though this question focuses on China, support for tariffs suggests a desire for a more isolated US, focusing more US specific interests, which could signify reducing immigration inflows. Third, a dummy variable for those agreeing with the statement "I support legal immigration" is included because support for legal immigration likely suggests respondents desire less harsh responses to immigration inflows. Fourth, I included a dummy variable for respondents answering no to the question, "In your opinion, is it easy for Mexicans to immigrate legally to the U.S.?". I included this variable because Americans who believe legal immigration is simply likely are more supportive of deportations than those who have "gamed" the system via illegal entry or committed a crime. Finally, I included the

question, "On a 1-10 scale, with "1" being very negative and "10" very positive, how do you feel about the following countries [Mexico]?". I presume that Americans who view Mexico positively are likely more accepting of all immigrants from the country. However, perceptions of Mexico may be shaped by vi: Americans or deportation, so the inclusion of this question could understate the influence of the experimental design. Figure 5 displays the regression results below.

Across all three models, versions 2-4 of the experimental design significantly differed from the baseline. Thus, respondents appear more likely to support deporting migrants who have committed a crime or violent crime and less likely to support deporting documented immigrants, supporting my first hypothesis. The findings for my demographic variables are unsurprising: older Americans and white Americans are more likely to support deportations, while Democrats are less likely to support deportations. Regarding attitudinal variables, those perceiving legal immigration as easy and supporting additional tariffs are more likely to support deportations. At the same time, those who view Mexico positively were less likely to support deportations, consistent with my second hypothesis.

Figure 5: June US Survey Regression Results

model	(1) model	(2) model	(3) model
version2	0.424* (0.247)	0.491** (0.248)	0.507** (0.251)
version3	0.729*** (0.255)	0.679*** (0.258)	0.723*** (0.262)
version4	-0.935*** (0.250)	-1.120**** (0.256)	-1.155**** (0.258)
version5	-0.085 (0.248)	-0.111 (0.250)	-0.110 (0.253)
version6	0.207 (0.248)	0.260 (0.249)	0.351 (0.253)
Age		0.159*** (0.045)	0.097** (0.048)
Female		0.014 (0.167)	0.006 (0.170)
White		0.593*** (0.183)	0.659*** (0.186)
Education		-0.068 (0.057)	-0.036 (0.058)
Income		0.050* (0.026)	0.062** (0.027)
Democrat		-0.473*** (0.152)	-0.242 (0.156)
FreeTrade			-0.296 (0.186)
Tariffs			0.433** (0.185)
Immigration1			-0.287 (0.176)
Immigration2			0.550*** (0.155)
Mexico			-0.129*** (0.034)
N	625	625	625
pseudo R-sq	0.026	0.058	0.084

Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01, **** p<0.0001

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Next, I ran additional ordinal logistic regressions that condensed the versions into dummy variables for immigrants who have committed crimes and violent crimes and a dummy variable for documented immigrants. Otherwise, I used the exact model specifications. Figure 6 includes dummy variables for the versions referencing crimes and violent crimes, and Figure 7 includes a dummy variable for the versions identifying

documented immigrants. The additional models supported my original models, finding that Americans are sensitive to crime and documentation status. Though versions five and six are insignificant in the first set of regressions, the conflicting factors of crime and documentation status are canceled out. The following two regressions prove that crime and documentation status impact public opinion. Additionally, the variable control results remained relatively consistent with the earlier models.

Figure 6: Deportations & Crime

	(1) model	(2) model	(3) model
model			
Crime	0.625*** (0.176)	0.718**** (0.178)	0.731**** (0.181)
ViolentCrime	0.903**** (0.180)	0.973**** (0.183)	1.055**** (0.186)
Age		0.147*** (0.045)	0.084* (0.048)
Female		-0.045 (0.165)	-0.060 (0.168)
White		0.586*** (0.181)	0.649*** (0.184)
Education		-0.058 (0.056)	-0.027 (0.058)
Income		0.041 (0.026)	0.051* (0.026)
Democrat		-0.426*** (0.151)	-0.198 (0.155)
FreeTrade			-0.263 (0.184)
Tariffs			0.467** (0.183)
Immigration1			-0.324* (0.175)
Immigration2			0.549*** (0.154)
Mexico			-0.124*** (0.034)
N	625	625	625
pseudo R-sq	0.014	0.043	0.069

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p<0.1$, ** $p<0.05$, *** $p<0.01$, **** $p<0.0001$

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Figure 7: Deportations & Immigration Status

	(1) model	(2) model	(3) model
model			
Documented	-0.627**** (0.145)	-0.667**** (0.147)	-0.664**** (0.149)
Age		0.163*** (0.045)	0.106** (0.048)
Female		0.018 (0.166)	0.008 (0.168)
White		0.512*** (0.181)	0.578*** (0.184)
Education		-0.058 (0.057)	-0.028 (0.058)
Income		0.048* (0.026)	0.059** (0.026)
Democrat		-0.406*** (0.150)	-0.191 (0.155)
FreeTrade			-0.248 (0.185)
Tariffs			0.348* (0.183)
Immigration1			-0.268 (0.174)
Immigration2			0.561*** (0.153)
Mexico			-0.119*** (0.034)
N	625	625	625
pseudo R-sq	0.010	0.038	0.062

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p<0.1$, ** $p<0.05$, *** $p<0.01$, **** $p<0.0001$

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I ran several additional variations of the model, omitted for brevity. Specifically, I included a dummy variable for living in a state bordering Mexico, a dummy variable for having children, support for expansion in US foreign affairs, believing oneself to be a global citizen, believing one is likely to become unemployed soon, believing Biden improved ICE policies, and supporting increasing yearly US refugee intake. However, none of these inclusions changed the model's core findings.

What do the results tell us? Americans are significantly more likely to support deporting undocumented immigrants who have committed crimes than those who are documented and / or have not committed crimes. While many Americans are concerned about undocumented immigrants (e.g., Suro,

2009; Gallup, 2021), there is little public consensus on the 'solution' to undocumented immigrant inflows, with some supporting deportations (Gallup, 2021), a path to citizenship (Gallup, 2021), or other alternatives. I have found that most Americans support deporting undocumented immigrants and immigrants who have committed crimes. Though most Americans recognize that immigrants are not disproportionately likely to commit crimes (Gallup, 2021), many media sources report that groups of Americans believe that undocumented immigrants are heavily associated with criminal organizations (e.g., Barriere, 2019; Rumbaut, 2008). Furthermore, when explicitly told immigrants have committed a crime, particularly a violent crime, Americans support deportation as a 'solution.'

Several of the other control variables, outside of the experiment itself, provide insightful information about US public opinion on deportations. Interestingly, respondents who view legal immigration to the US as easy are more likely to favor deportation. Many of these Americans likely believe that immigrants should come to the US the 'right' way rather than 'cheating' the system by entering the US illegally, consistent with hypothesis two. Deportations might be a logical punitive measure taken for those they believe purposefully immigrated illegally when they had a legal option. I also controlled for respondents' perceptions of legal immigration, but the results were null. A possible explanation is that respondents who view legal immigration favorably diverge in opinion on deportations because some support all immigration. In contrast, others believe undocumented immigrants deserve to be deported for 'cheating' the system. Thus, ease of immigration is likely a better indicator of support for deportations than general support for legal immigration.

I also found that Americans who agree with tariffs are more supportive of deportations. I used support for tariffs on China as a proxy for analyzing one's desire for America to isolate itself from the international community, suggesting an America-centric view of global affairs. Additionally, trade with China is a uniquely controversial issue, where many Americans take an "America First" stance, similar to the issue of undocumented immigration from Mexico. Similarly, support for Mexico was significant, and Americans who viewed Mexico positively likely viewed Mexican immigrants as an asset to the American community rather than a hindrance. The results for the demographic variables were reasonably consistent with past research, with older Americans and white Americans more supportive of deportations, though the dummy variable for Democrats was insignificant.

Content Analysis

In the second section of this chapter, I conduct content and sentiment analysis of open-ended questions asked in the November survey. Each respondent was given unlimited space to write whatever came to mind about the prompt. I removed respondents who had written a string of letters or words rather than a substantive response. I fixed easily identifiable spelling errors to analyze the specific words used by each respondent.

For my content and sentiment analysis, I used the Syuzhet package in R, which has three options for sentiment analysis: the Syuzhet, Bing, and Affin packages. The entire package was developed by researchers at Stanford University to associate specific words with certain emotions allowing researchers to determine the sentiment patterns in the text (Mhatre, 2020). Syuzhet, Bing, and Affin each have a similar overall goal of determining how positive, neutral, or damaging the language used by respondents

was. The Syuzhet lexicon comprises 10,748 words labeled as positive or negative based on linguistics research and matched with words in the response text to determine if they have a positive or negative sentiment (Naldi, 2019). For example, "evil" would be given a very low score because it is a highly negative phrase. The Bing package comprises 6,789 words, including 2,006 positive words, and does not code for neutral words (Naldi, 2019).

Similarly, the Affin package includes slang words. It comprises 2,477 words, including 878 positive words, and the scale is broader, categorizing each word on a much broader scale than the Syuzhet and Bing packages. (Naldi, 2019). Fortunately, the type of sentiment analysis I am conducting avoids the most common problem researchers encounter with the Syuzhet, Bing, and Affin packages, which is that the packages do not pick up on negative modifiers (Naldi, 2019) (i.e., the package would categorize the phrase "immigrants are not scary" as unfavorable because it focuses on the world "scary" and ignores the modifier "not") because most respondents just answered with a single word. I did not find any modifiers used in the respondent's answers.

In the November US survey, I asked the open-ended question: "What is the first word or phrase that comes to mind when you think about deportations from the United States?" This question allowed me to hone in on one specific opinion of deportations rather than much broader opinions determined by the open-ended question on the June survey. Table 1 shows the 20 most frequent words and their count from the open-ended questions.

Table 1: Word Frequency Perceptions of Deportations

Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency
Illegal(s)	62	Yes	14
Good	57	Cruel	13
Sad	48	Wrong	13
Mexican	30	Enough	13
None	29	Bad	12
Necessary	21	Justice	12
Nothing	20	Freedom	11
Immigration	32	Legal	11
Unfair	16	ICE	11
Great	15	Back	10

While many people provided descriptive responses, such as "Immigration" or "Illegal," quite a few answered with an opinion-based response, such as "Good" or "Cruel." Of the 20 most frequent word choices, "Good," "Necessary," and "Great" suggests positive perceptions of deportations, while "Sad," "Unfair," "Cruel," "Wrong," and "Bad" are harmful. However, some responses likely suggest a certain opinion (i.e., illegals), but I cannot definitively determine their opinion of deportations. Some responses, such as "Mexican," suggest that people attribute deportees to certain characteristics, mainly based on nationality. Figure 8 shows a word cloud of the 200 most common words respondents used to describe deportations.

Figure 8: Word Cloud on Perceptions of Deportations

Next, I analyze how positive or negative respondents' evaluations of deportations were. Figure 9 shows the Kernel Density of one's emotional connotation toward deportations. Syuzhet, Bing, and Affin find similar results regarding the positivity or negativity of responses, which is confirmed by statistical tests[101]. Most people had a neutral or slightly negative response to deportations, typically meaning that they supported deportations or viewed undocumented immigrants negatively. Table 2 shows the summary statistics for the emotional response to deportations for each type of sentiment analysis conducted. After analyzing individuals' responses, the Affin package best interprets the answers because its dictionary includes slang words used by many respondents.

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[101] I ran Pearson Correlation tests and found that all three sentiment analysis packages were highly correlated.
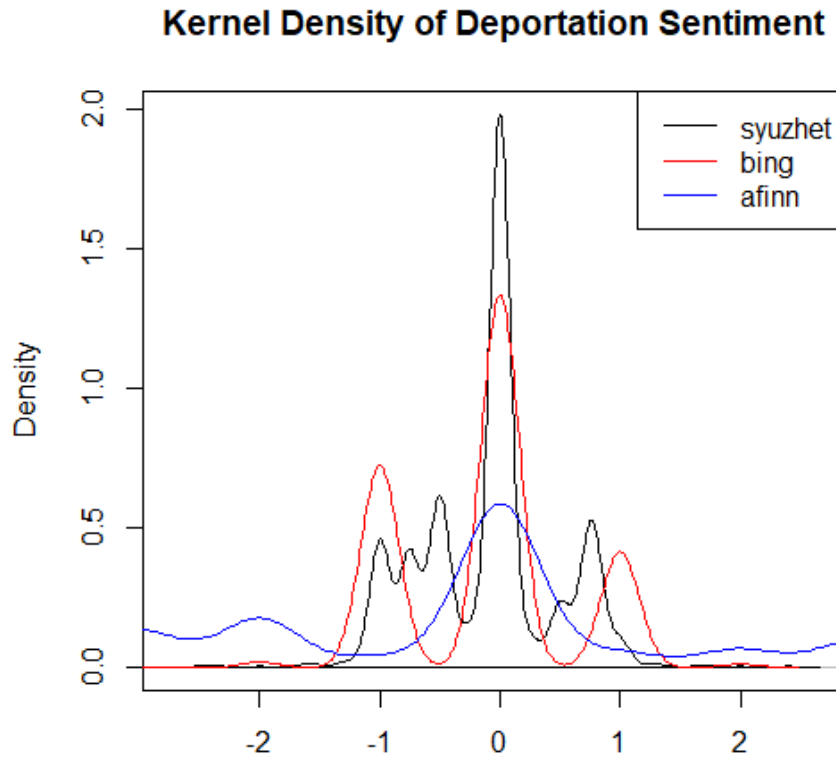
Figure 9: Kernel Density of Deportation Sentiment

Kernel Density of Deportation Sentiment

Table 2: Summary Statistics for Sentiment Analysis

	Minimum	First Quartile	Median	Mean	Third Quartile	Max
Syuzhet	-2.5	-0.5	0	-0.11	0	2.4
Bing	-3	-1	0	-0.13	0	2
Affin	-10	-2	0	-0.32	0	7

Next, I determined the types of emotions respondents used when answering the prompt. The Syuzhet package goes beyond just positive and negative labeling but also determines if words in a text use language denoting anger, anticipation, disgust, fear, joy, sadness, surprise, and / or trust (e.g., Mhatre,

2020; Kelbel, 2021). Table 3 displays the results of the sentiment analysis based on specific emotions. The most common emotional responses were trust, joy, and fear. Quite a few respondents appeared to trust the US immigration system or were joyful when describing immigrants being deported. Alternatively, many respondents expressed fear or anger when describing the US

immigration system, possibly in line with partisan differences. The emotional responses calculated least often were disgust, surprise, and sadness, suggesting that respondents skewed toward deportations. Interestingly, 1,008 respondents answered the open-ended questions, and only 366 responses coded to one of the eight emotions, meaning only approximately 1/3rd of responses fit into these emotional categories.

Table 3: Emotional Responses to Deportations

Sentiment	Percent	Count
Disgust	10.38%	38
Surprise	10.93%	40
Sadness	11.20%	41
Anticipation	11.75%	43
Anger	12.02%	44
Fear	12.30%	45
Joy	14.21%	52
Trust	17.21%	63
	Total	366

Finally, I ran a series of ordered logistic regressions to further interpret the open-ended responses. I used the scale calculated by the Affin sentiment analysis package for my dependent variable. Since the scale used negative numbers as low as -6, I added 7 points to every observation, so that every number would be coded above zero.[102] For my independent variables, I included the standard demographic variables age, gender, race, ethnicity, income, education, political affiliation, and whether one was born in the US. Additionally, I included attitudinal variables measuring the favorability of deportations[103], perceptions of ease of immigration, and faith in US democracy.

Figure 10 shows the regression results, finding that older Americans, those with higher incomes, respondents supporting deportations, those believing legal immigration is simple, and respondents with a strong faith in US democracy had more positive perceptions of deportations. Most likely, many of the respondents who provide positive evaluations of deportations are supporting deportations or advocating for additional deportations.

Figure 10: Ordered Logit Regressions on Affin Sentiment Analysis

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[102] I removed two extreme outliers. The respondents wrote very long paragraph, which is more difficult for sentiment packages to analyze, compared to words or short phrases.

[103] I was concerned about multicollinearity between support for deportations and the dependent variable. However, statistical tests confirm that there is insufficient evidence to assume multicollinearity.

	(1) Model	(2) Model
Model		
Age	0.130***	0.080**
	(0.035)	(0.036)
Female	0.041	0.050
	(0.120)	(0.121)
White	0.247*	0.183
	(0.138)	(0.140)
Hispanic	0.141	0.096
	(0.165)	(0.168)
Income	0.081****	0.062***
	(0.019)	(0.019)
Education	0.014	-0.023
	(0.043)	(0.044)
Democrat	-0.060	-0.112
	(0.118)	(0.125)
BornUS	0.838****	0.585**
	(0.196)	(0.200)
Deportations		0.281****
		(0.045)
Immigration2		0.310**
		(0.121)
FaithDem		0.196****
		(0.042)
N	1074	1067
pseudo R-sq	0.023	0.048

Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01, **** p<0.0001

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What does the analysis from this question tell us? Most of the nuance in an individual's responses cannot be captured by questions answered on a Likert scale, which makes this open-ended question particularly useful. Many respondents used strong language to describe deportations, relying on phrases such as "sad," "cruel," "justice," or "freedom," and describing issues such as family separation or even advocating for violence against immigrants. This means deportations are a very salient issue for many Americans, with responses highlighting extreme opinion polarization. Overall, perceptions of deportations skewed slightly negative, which is consistent with the results from the survey question on support for deportations. The regression results are reasonably consistent with the earlier results from the November US survey. Americans who have positive opinions on deportation are more likely to support deportation as a solution to undocumented immigration.

Conclusion

My findings suggest Americans view deportations as a salient issue yet are aggregately fairly neutral about deportations. Americans support the deportation of undocumented immigrants and immigrants who have committed crimes, particularly violent crimes, consistent with my first hypothesis. Additionally, Americans who view legal immigration as easy are more likely to support deporting undocumented immigrants, consistent with my second hypothesis. The public appears to desire an improved immigration system but favors deportations as an option to 'deal' with undesirable immigrants. The results are accordant with past research, which finds that Americans are overwhelmingly more supportive of immigrants who enter the United States legally (e.g., Suro, 2009; Taylor-Clark, 2008) and finds that Americans are concerned about immigrant's association with crime (e.g., McLaren & Johnson, 2007). The sentiment analysis helps further analyze the nuance in Americans' perception of deportations, finding that many wrote emotionally charged responses, such as "sad," "cruel," "justice," or "freedom," consistent with my third hypothesis. The results from the open-ended question were particularly informative, given that overall responses tended to be neutral, yet a deeper look determines that deportations are a topical issue.

Admittedly, this paper has several limitations. While I analyze perceptions of deportations, many respondents would prefer other options, such as a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants or imprisonment for immigrants who have committed crimes (e.g., Gallup, 2021). Thus, future work could provide respondents with a list of increasingly punitive responses to immigration to determine if the public still desires deportations, even if given other options. Additionally, many Americans may have little understanding of the US immigration system, how deportations work, or even of immigration-specific terms (i.e., undocumented vs. documented immigration). Future work could provide more information on the immigration system to yield more accurate results. Though there are limitations to my result, this paper still helps fill a gap in the public opinion literature base regarding deportations.

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