

# Immigrants, Athletes, and Civic Engagement

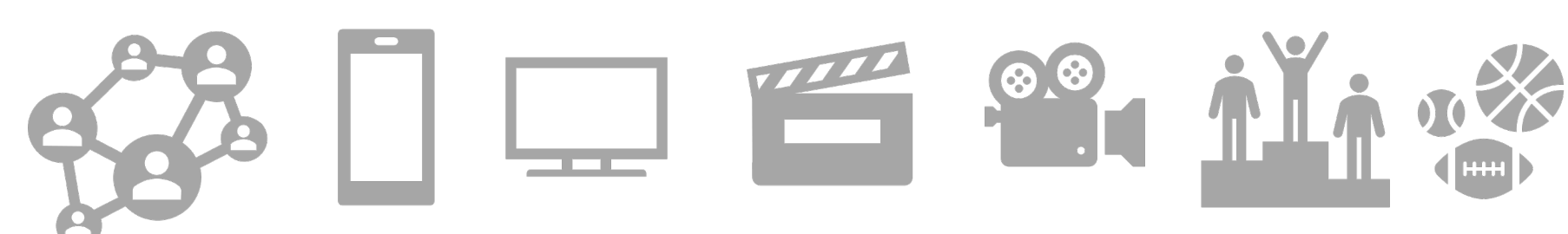
Jim Witte, PhD and Marissa Kiss, PhD

## INTRODUCTION

- Scholars have long recognized the value of sport participation, not only for the physical benefits, but also for the development of social skills, and the ability for sports to unite individuals from different cultures.
- Building off of classical contact theory that examines the impact of personal contact on prejudices, our project examines the impact of the **para-social contact hypothesis** on reducing anti-immigrant feelings and prejudice toward immigrant and minority groups in the United States.
- The para-social contact hypothesis looks at indirect contact with celebrities, athletes, or others across social lines, through social media, media coverage, TV viewing, or in-person events on the potential to reduce prejudice and break down barriers.
- Our **research aim** is to determine if increased contact and engagement with foreign-born athletes fosters more positive attitudes towards immigrants both on and off the field and court.

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA

- A Qualtrics **web-based survey** was launched to a panel of respondents in seven select metropolitan areas at the end of March 2023.
- The aim of the survey was to understand individuals' attitudes about immigrants/immigration in the United States and in their local area, their level of sport engagement and participation, social media usage, news media consumption, and political beliefs.
- Sampling quotas for age, race, and median income were implemented.
- 3,430** respondents completed the survey.
- Correlations, crosstabulations, and ANOVA/multivariate regression and Bonferroni post-hoc tests/correction for multiple comparisons were implemented.
- Data was weighted to account for sample quotas.



The more interaction individuals have with immigrants, the more likely they are to have positive friendly contact.

Respondents who are sports fans reported more positive friendly interactions with immigrants compared to respondents who are not sport fans.

By developing social media and in-person campaigns to highlight the diversity of the players on local, collegiate, and/or professional sport teams in Year 2, we can better understand if these interventions can foster positive sentiments toward immigrant athletes and non-athletes and help reduce anti-immigrant feelings and prejudice toward immigrant and minority groups in the United States.

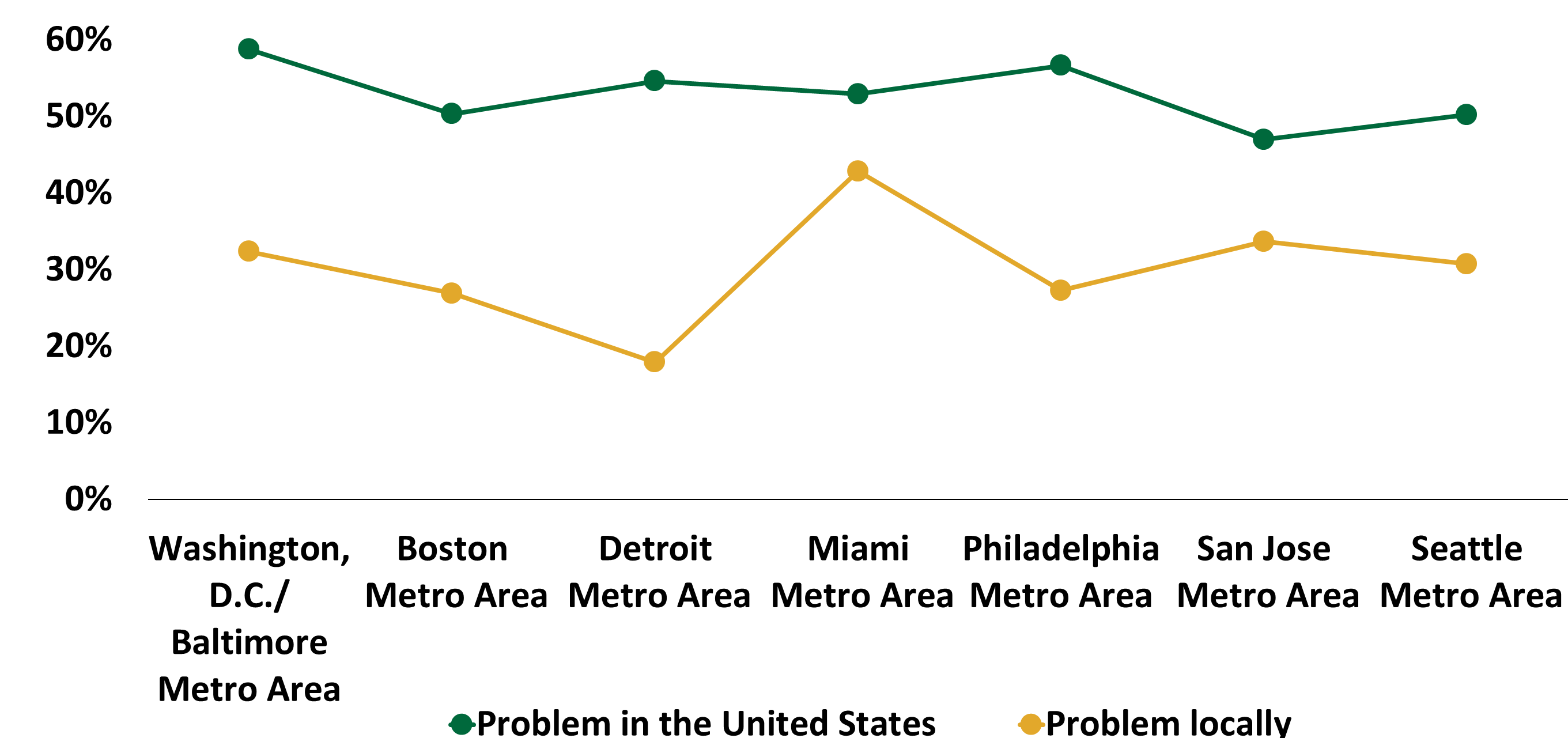


Scan to download the suite of research materials.

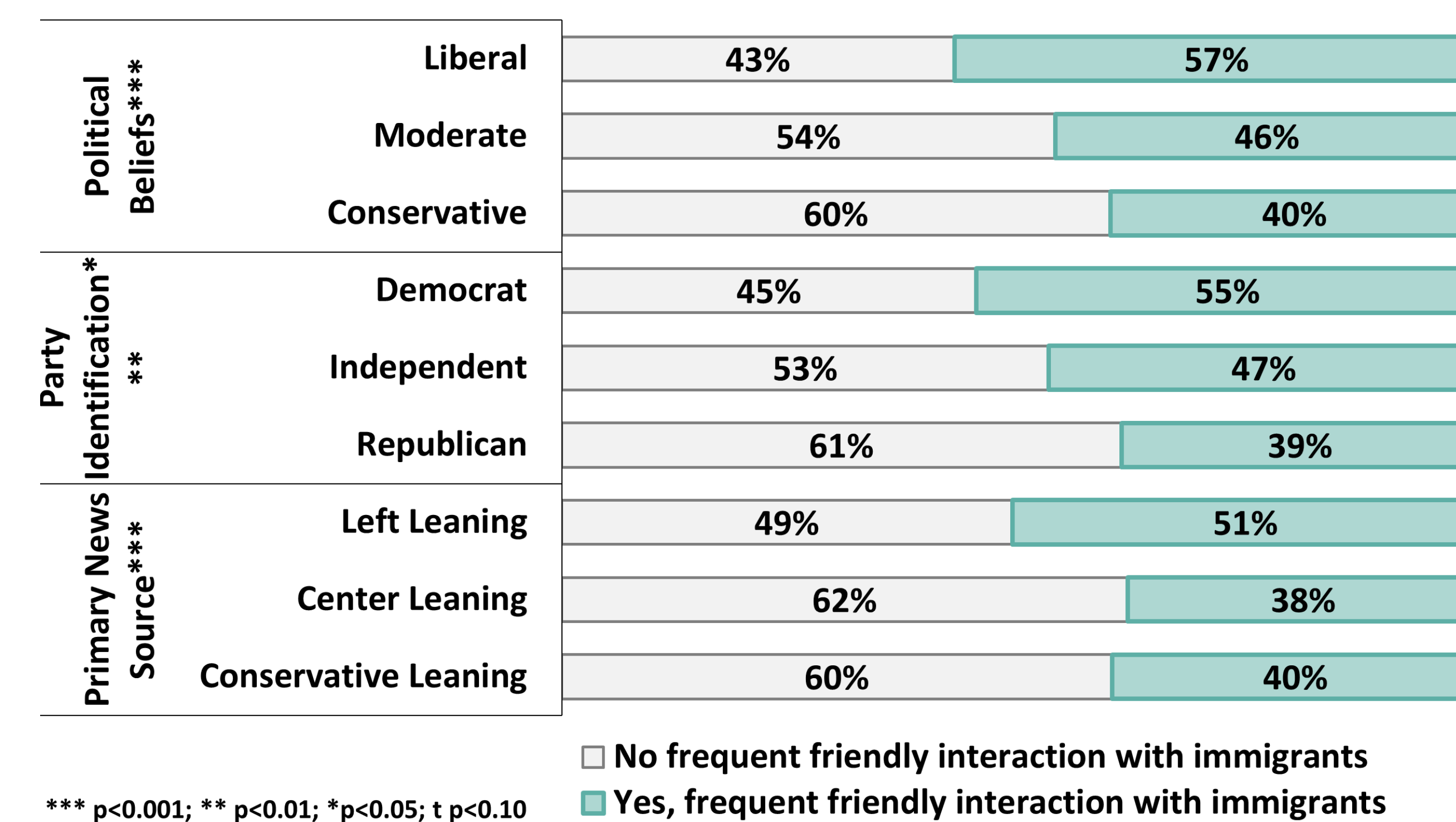
For more information, contact: [jwitte@gmu.edu](mailto:jwitte@gmu.edu) or [mkiss@gmu.edu](mailto:mkiss@gmu.edu)

## RESULTS

- Overall, respondents were more likely to perceive immigration to be a problem nationally than to perceive immigration as a problem locally.



- The more frequent interaction individuals have with immigrants, the more likely they are to have positive friendly contact with immigrants and the less likely they are to see immigration to be less of a problem at the national level.
- Respondents interaction with immigrants varied by their political leaning, party identification, and primary news source.



- The more sport oriented a respondent is, the more frequent and positive interaction individuals have with immigrants.

