Factors Associated With Attitudes Toward U.S. Immigration, 2004–2016

Ernesto F. L. Amaral (amaral@tamu.edu), Paige Mitchell (paigemitchell396@gmail.com), Guadalupe Marquez-Velarde (guadalupe.marquez-velarde@usu.edu)

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Objective

✓ We estimated associations of attitudes toward immigration with several demographic, socioeconomic, political, and contextual factors

Data

✓ 2004–2016 General Social Surveys (GSS)

✓ 2006–2014 American Community Surveys (ACS) 5-year estimates

Sample size

Year	Reduced a lot	Reduced a little	Remain the same	Increased a little	Increased a lot	Total
2004	527	552	678	129	75	**1,961**
2008	381	305	440	104	45	**1,275**
2010	350	342	483	135	60	**1,370**
2012	290	284	502	114	57	**1,247**
2014	347	371	643	166	75	**1,602**
2016	351	410	727	216	106	**1,810**
Total	**2,246**	**2,264**	**3,473***	**864**	**418**	**9,265**

Dependent variable

✓ Opinion of respondents about how should the number of immigrants to American be nowadays
   1. Reduced a lot
   2. Reduced a little
   3. Remain the same as it is
   4. Increased a little
   5. Increased a lot

Individual-level independent variables

- ✓ Year
- ✓ Sex
- ✓ Race/ethnicity
- ✓ Age group
- ✓ Education degree
- ✓ Religion
- ✓ Occupation
- ✓ Region of interview
- ✓ Area of residence at age 16
- ✓ Political party affiliation
- ✓ Political views
- ✓ Racial resentment
- ✓ U.S. economic achievement

County-level independent variables

- ✓ Proportion of unemployment
- ✓ Proportion of college graduates
- ✓ Proportion of Protestants and Catholics (combined)
- ✓ Proportion of immigrants

Generalized ordered logit models

✓ Odds ratios indicate the factor change in odds of observing a value above the listed category versus observing values at or below the listed category
   1. Above reduced a lot: odds ratios of individuals being above "reduced a lot" versus being at "reduced a lot"
   2. Above reduced a little: odds ratios of individuals being above "reduced a little" versus being at "reduced a little" or below
   3. Above remain the same: odds ratios of individuals being above "remain the same" versus being at "remain the same" or below
   4. Above increased a little: odds ratios of individuals being above "increased a little" versus being at "increased a little" or below
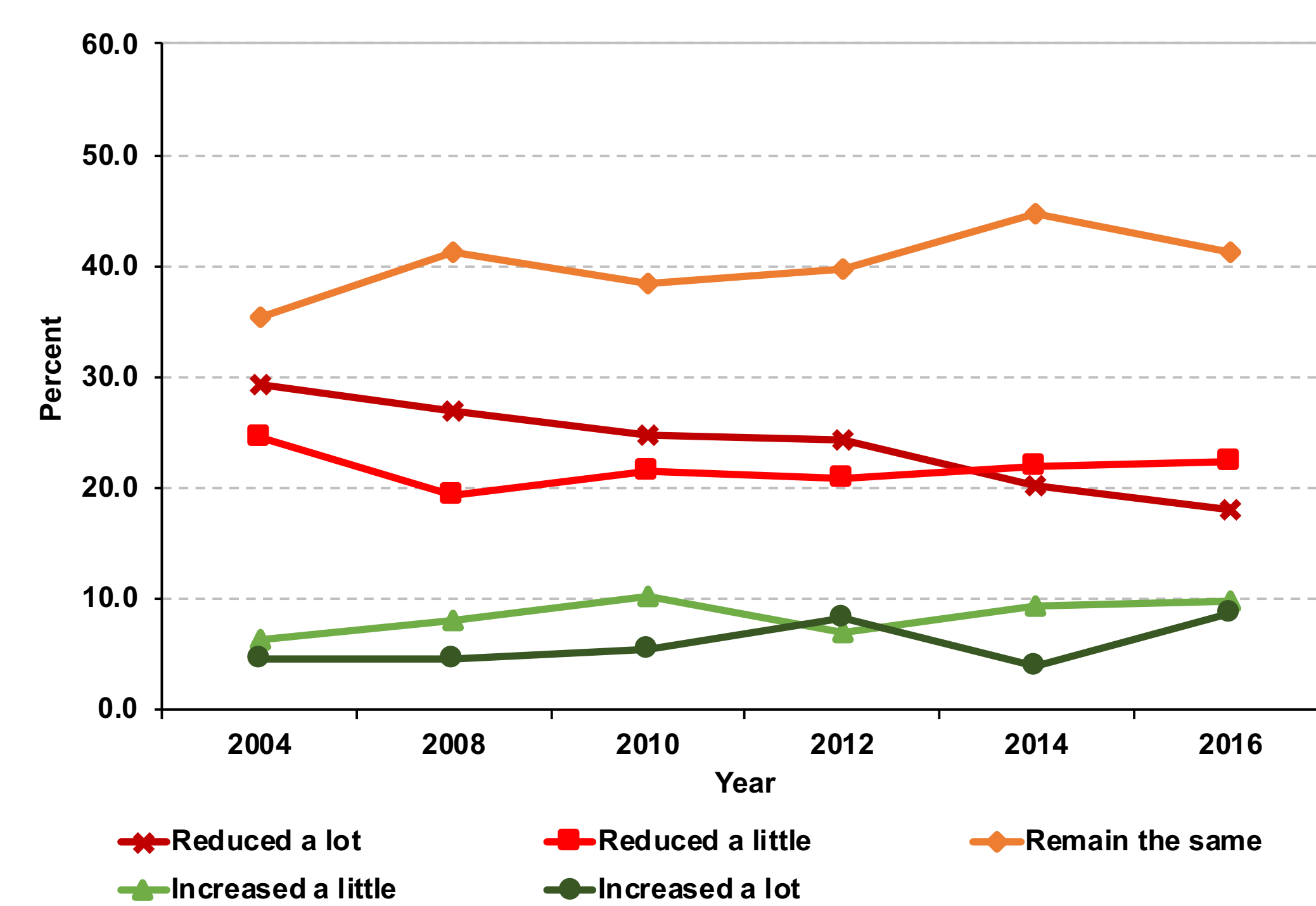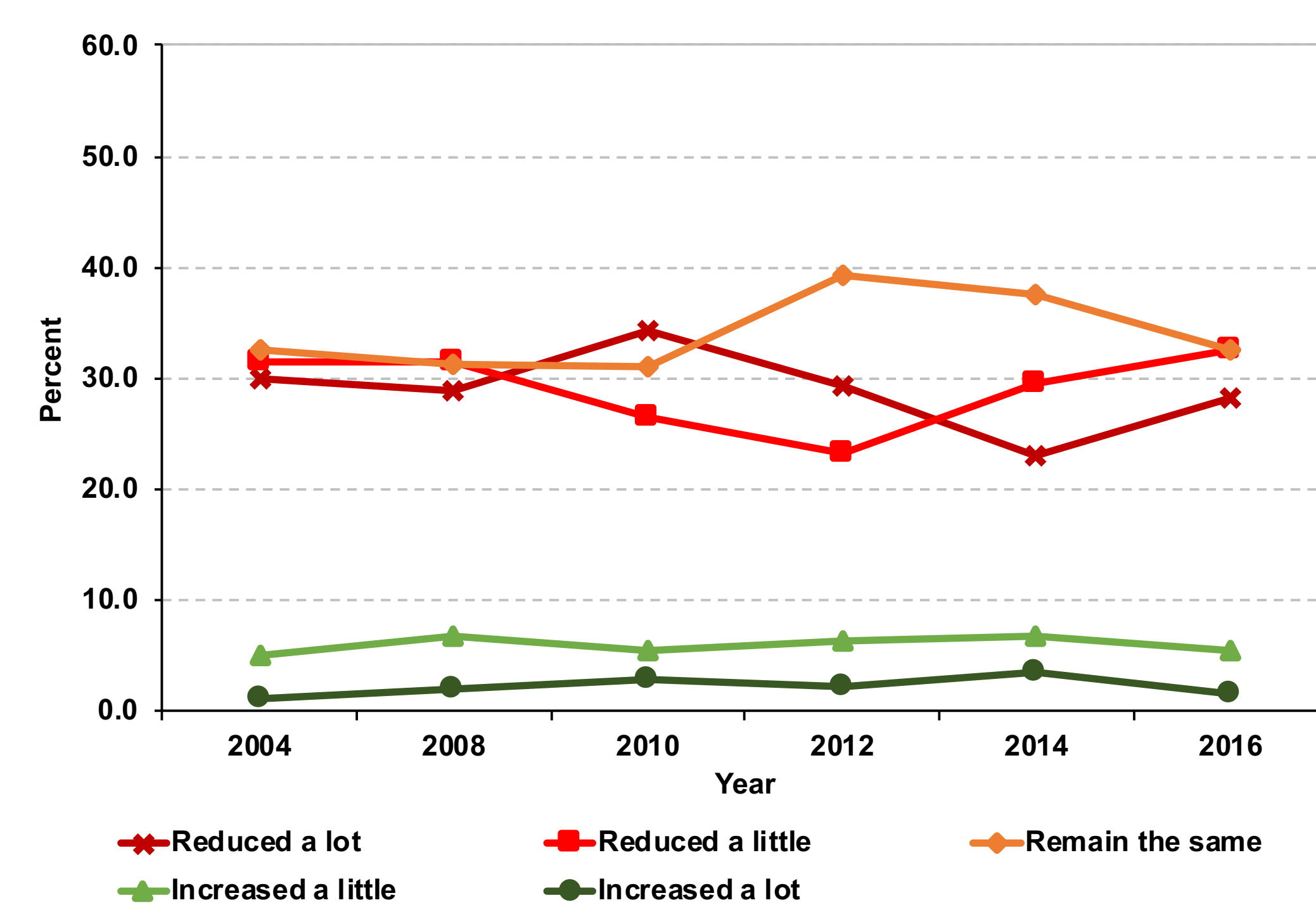
Opinion about immigration
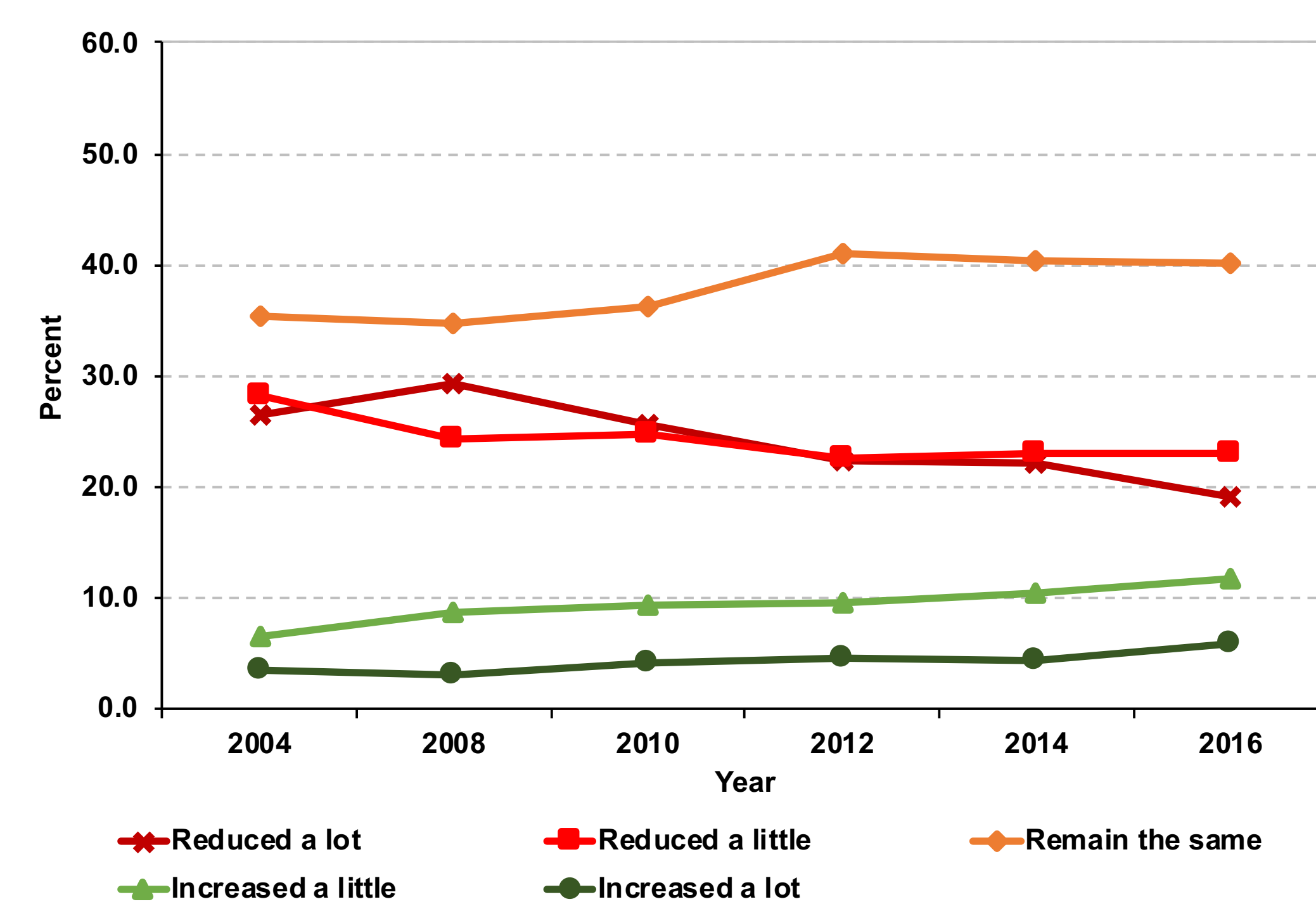
Democrats
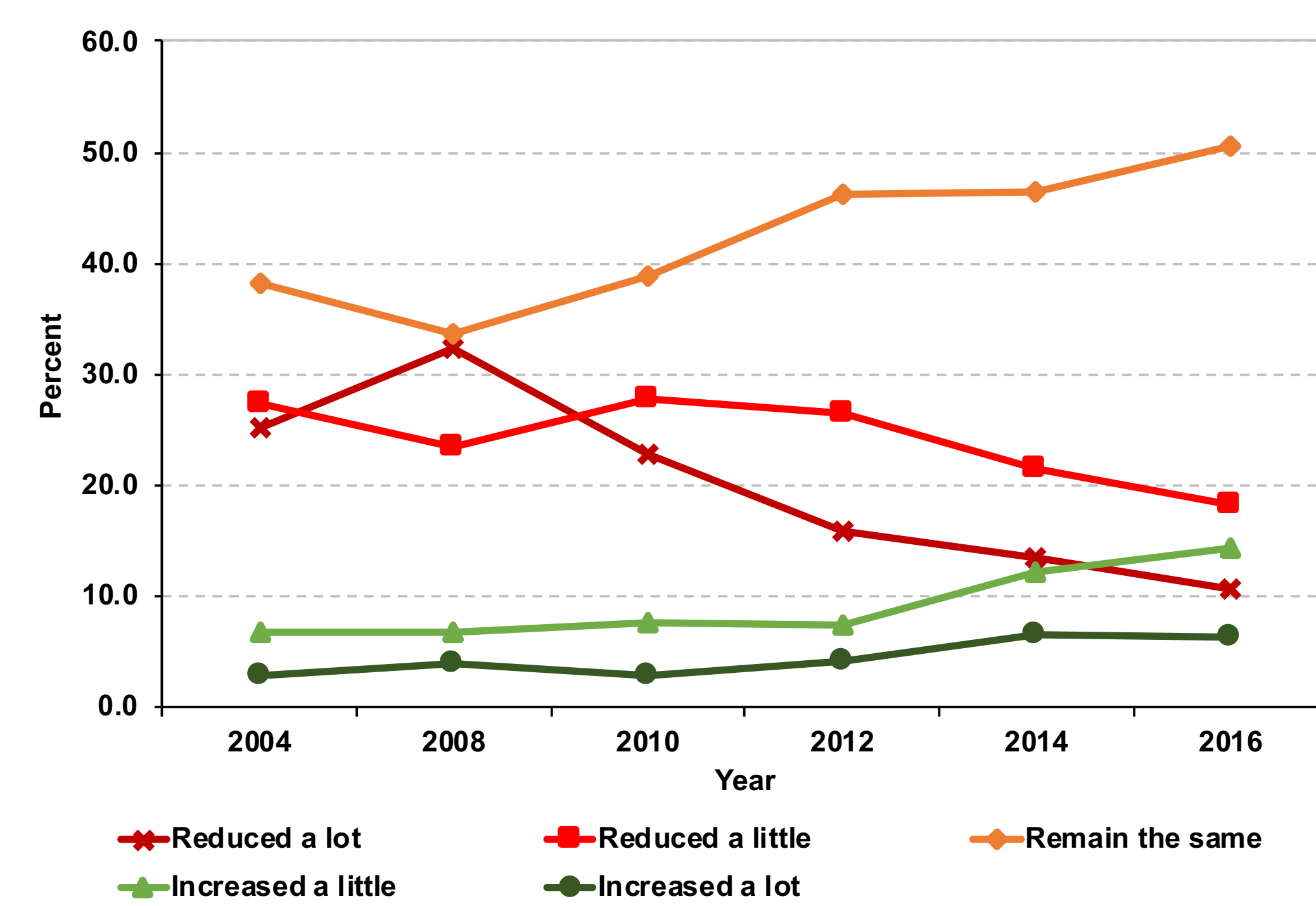
Independents

Republicans

Main generalized ordered logit model

Independent variables	Above reduced a lot Odds ratio	Exp. of std. error	Above reduced a little Odds ratio	Exp. of std. error	Above remain the same Odds ratio	Exp. of std. error	Above increased a little Odds ratio	Exp. of std. error
Year								
2004	ref.							
2008	0.942	(0.078)						
2010	1.074	(0.092)						
2012	1.206**	(0.106)						
2014	1.244***	(0.102)						
2016	1.526***	(0.117)						
Sex								
Female	ref.							
Male	1.047	(0.049)						
Race/ethnicity								
White			ref.		ref.		ref.	
Black	1.497***	(0.146)	1.455***	(0.119)	1.534***	(0.179)	2.395***	(0.451)
Hispanic	2.126***	(0.294)	2.169***	(0.214)	1.739***	(0.208)	3.113***	(0.584)
Other	1.904***	(0.372)	1.990***	(0.316)	1.339*	(0.228)	2.566***	(0.579)
Age group								
18–24	1.628***	(0.186)	1.216**	(0.117)	1.347***	(0.142)	0.965	(0.187)
25–44	ref.		ref.		ref.		ref.	
45–64	0.780***	(0.044)						
65–89	0.875*	(0.061)						
Education degree								
Less than high school	0.731***	(0.061)	0.854**	(0.068)	1.434***	(0.162)	1.732***	(0.286)
High school	ref.		ref.		ref.		ref.	
Junior college	1.074	(0.092)						
Bachelor	2.103***	(0.194)	1.648***	(0.124)	1.582***	(0.153)	1.062	(0.177)
Graduate	2.335***	(0.307)	2.128***	(0.209)	2.266***	(0.279)	1.392*	(0.271)
Religion								
Protestant	ref.		ref.		ref.		ref.	
Catholic	1.149**	(0.069)						
Christian	1.155	(0.129)						
Jewish	2.003***	(0.404)						
Other	1.622***	(0.221)						
None	1.144*	(0.090)	1.324***	(0.094)	1.284***	(0.122)	0.995	(0.166)
Occupation								
Manag., busin., science, arts	ref.							
Service	0.881	(0.068)						
Sales, office	0.789***	(0.051)						
Natural res., constr., maint.	0.707***	(0.069)						
Prod., transp., mat. moving	0.857*	(0.073)						
Military	0.651*	(0.147)						
Unspecified	0.979	(0.269)						
Unemployed	0.895	(0.120)						
Region of interview								
New England	1.359***	(0.156)						
Middle Atlantic	1.141	(0.111)						
East North Central	1.225***	(0.090)						
West North Central	1.264**	(0.126)						
South Atlantic	ref.		ref.		ref.		ref.	
East South Central	1.121	(0.133)						
West South Central	1.126	(0.105)						
Mountain	1.452***	(0.145)						
Pacific	1.440***	(0.166)	1.176*	(0.112)	1.043	(0.118)	0.874	(0.161)
Area of residence at age 16								
Foreign	3.391***	(0.575)	2.680***	(0.301)	1.988***	(0.251)	1.706***	(0.314)
Country, non-farm	0.891	(0.071)						
Farm	0.837*	(0.078)						
Town: < 50,000	ref.		ref.		ref.		ref.	
City: 50,000 to 250,000	1.126	(0.081)						
Big-city suburb	1.147*	(0.084)						
City: > 250,000	0.879	(0.083)	1.006	(0.082)	1.212*	(0.133)	1.392*	(0.249)
Political party affiliation								
Strong democrat	1.205*	(0.121)	1.259***	(0.106)	1.730***	(0.179)	1.587***	(0.214)
Democrat	ref.		ref.		ref.		ref.	
Ind., near Dem.	1.228***	(0.095)						
Independent	0.978	(0.071)						
Ind., near Rep.	0.705***	(0.065)						
Republican	0.704***	(0.055)						
Strong Republican	0.598***	(0.054)						
Other party	0.916	(0.178)	1.147	(0.203)	2.097***	(0.529)	1.735	(0.602)
Constant	1.980***	(0.220)	0.605***	(0.068)	0.067***	(0.009)	0.018***	(0.003)
Observations	9,265		9,265		9,265		9,265	

Note: Coefficients and standard errors were generated with the complex survey design of the General Social Survey. Exponential of standard errors are reported in parentheses. Empty cells denote that estimated coefficients are similar across categories of dependent variable (i.e. categories of independent variables do not violate the proportional odds/parallel lines assumption). *** Significant at p<0.01, ** Significant at p<0.05, * Significant at p<0.1. Source: 2004, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016 General Social Surveys.

Political views

Political views	Above reduced a lot	Above reduced a little	Above remain the same	Above increased a little
Extremely liberal	1.148	2.179***	3.065***	4.296***
	(0.203)	(0.342)	(0.449)	(0.875)
Liberal	1.928***			
	(0.173)			
Slightly liberal	1.331***			
	(0.113)			
Moderate	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Slightly conservative	1.157	0.913	0.928	0.632**
	(0.117)	(0.075)	(0.122)	(0.141)
Conservative	0.789***			
	(0.057)			
Extremely conservative	0.492***	0.726*	1.149	0.951
	(0.078)	(0.120)	(0.322)	(0.331)
Observations	7,925	7,925	7,925	7,925

Note: This model is controlled for year, sex, race/ethnicity, age group, education degree, religion, occupation, region of interview, and area of residence at age 16. Source: 2004, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016 General Social Surveys.

Racial resentment

Racial resentment	Above reduced a lot	Above reduced a little	Above remain the same	Above increased a little
Low	1.102	1.212***	1.760***	1.710***
	(0.092)	(0.085)	(0.155)	(0.227)
Medium	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
High	0.444***	0.598***	0.674***	0.677***
	(0.039)	(0.049)	(0.093)	(0.148)
Observations	8,189	8,189	8,189	8,189

Note: This model is controlled for year, sex, race/ethnicity, age group, education degree, religion, occupation, region of interview, area of residence at age 16, and political party affiliation. Source: 2004, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016 General Social Surveys.

County-level variables

Independent variables (proportions)	Above reduced a lot	Above reduced a little	Above remain the same	Above increased a little
Unemployment	0.790			
	(0.156)			
College graduates	1.407*			
	(0.270)			
Protestants/Catholics	0.710			
	(0.175)			
Immigrants	2.187*			
	(0.947)			
Observations	5,237	5,237	5,237	5,237

Note: Standard errors allow for intragroup correlation (i.e., we specify that observations are independent across counties, but not necessarily within counties). This model is controlled for year, sex, race/ethnicity, age group, education degree, religion, occupation, region of interview, area of residence at age 16, and political party affiliation. Source: 2008, 2010, 2012, and 2014 General Social Surveys and American Community Surveys 5-year estimates.

Economic achievement (OLS)

U.S. economic achievement	Model 1	Model 2: includes racial resentment
Very proud	0.085	0.100
	(0.062)	(0.065)
Somewhat proud	ref.	ref.
Not very proud	−0.115	−0.077
	(0.080)	(0.088)
Not proud at all	−0.197	−0.084
	(0.153)	(0.168)
R-squared	0.143	0.152
Observations	1,801	1,618

Note: These models are controlled for year, sex, race/ethnicity, age group, education degree, religion, occupation, region of interview, area of residence at age 16, and political party affiliation. Source: 2004 and 2014 General Social Surveys.

Innovation

✓ Our analysis contributes to this literature by providing an innovative approach to investigate this topic.

1. Integrate several years of GSS and ACS

2. Individual-level and contextual-level factors associated with attitude toward immigration

3. Estimate models that better capture associations between an ordinal variable about immigration attitude with independent variables

4. Explore disaggregated categories of independent variables

Final considerations

✓ *Race and social class divide in terms of attitudes towards immigration*

Pro-immigration: Non-whites, lower levels of racial resentment, higher educational attainment, and those living in counties with higher proportions of college graduates

Anti-immigration: Lower end of the occupational stratum (natural resources, construction, maintenance, production, transportation, material moving, military)

✓ *Exposure to immigrants might shape attitudes towards this issue*

Pro-immigration: Those who lived in areas at the age of 16 that tend to have higher proportions of foreign-born individuals and those living in counties with higher proportions of immigrants

✓ *Other social, demographic, and political factors*

Pro-immigration: 18–24 age group, non-Protestants, those with liberal political inclinations, and those not living in the South Atlantic region