Factors associated with attitudes toward U.S. immigration, 1996–2016

Ernesto F. L. Amaral
amaral@tamu.edu

Guadalupe Marquez-Velarde
gmarquez6@tamu.edu

Paige Mitchell
paige.mitchell1996@tamu.edu

TEXAS A&M
U N I V E R S I T Y.

Objective

- What social characteristics are ascribed to those who are anti or pro-immigration?

- Investigate main factors associated with immigration attitudes in the United States

- Investigate several years of data: 1996–2016

- Explore disaggregated information on
  - Age group
  - Education degree
  - Political party identification

Background

- Social identity
  - Immigration attitudes are developed when a person mentally puts their race in an "in-group" while placing other races in the "out-group" (Stets, Burke 2000)

- The development of these groups can be measured with political party, age, gender, occupation, religion, and region (Espenshade, Hempstead 1996; Fennelly, Federico 2008; Ha 2010; Knoll 2009; Wilson 1996)
  - However, there is not a direct correlation of these variables to "in-groups" and "out-groups"

Group consciousness

- Some individuals self-identify with a group and desire to engage in collective activity to improve the group's situation

- They are more likely to participate in pro-immigrant activities and express their support for immigrant's rights (Sanchez 2006, 2008)

Self and group interest

- Labor market competition hypothesis
  - Individual's believes that immigrants affect their job status or standard of living
  - This is especially expressed by people of lower socioeconomic status (Burns, Gimpel 2000; Espenshade 1995; Espenshade, Hempstead 1996)

- When majority race beliefs that minorities are purposely taking advantage of society resources, anti-minority attitudes increase (Blalock 1970)

Cultural values and beliefs

- Values and beliefs are developed at a young age through the influence of the community, family, and culture (Espenshade, Calhoun 1993; Sears 1997; Sears et al. 1997)
  - Anti-immigration attitudes are developed in areas with strong conservative politicians (Semyonov et al. 2006)

- Religion seems to play a role in defining a person's attitudes toward immigration (Knoll 2009)
  - Positive attitudes are developed by religious groups that welcome minorities or support specific minority groups

Social interactions

- People tend to dismiss negative thoughts about minority groups through interaction (Hood, Morris 1997; McLaren 2003)
  - A majority group member who lives in an area with many immigrants typically holds a positive attitude toward immigration (Dixon 2006)
  - People with positive attitudes toward immigration are typically wealthier and have more experiences with minority groups (Haubert, Fussell 2006)

- Interactions are more successful when (Pettigrew 1998)
  - People have similar class ranking
  - Local agencies stimulate contact
  - People have similar goals for the community
  - Both want to experience one another

Stereotypes

- Individual's political and stereotypical beliefs play an important role in the development of immigration attitudes (Berg 2015)
  - Subtle prejudice can be the main factor in developing stereotypes against minority groups, which shapes attitudes toward immigrants (Pettigrew, Meertens 1995)

- Prejudice against Latinos significantly shapes respondents' views on (Shin, Leal, Ellison 2015)
  - Number of immigrants who should be allowed to the U.S.
  - Consequences of immigration in relation to
    - Higher crime rates
    - Job losses for the native-born population
    - Opening up to new ideas and cultures

Political ideology

- Conservatives tend to hold more negative views toward immigration than liberals (Chandler, Tsai 2001; Haubert, Fussell 2006)

- The relationship between political partisanship and attitudes toward immigrants is not always straightforward (Neiman, Johnson, Bowler 2006)
    - In California, Republicans are more likely to think that immigration has negative effects on social and policy outcomes, but Democrats shared the same concerns

Age and sex

- Age is positively related to anti-legal immigration attitudes (Chandler, Tsai 2001)

  – Older respondents are more likely to want to decrease the number of legal immigrants

- Women are more likely to be more anti-legal immigration than males

  – But this relationship is not statistically significant for anti-illegal immigration

- Overall, age and sex have not been consistent significant predictors of attitudes toward immigrants (Espenshade, Hempstead 1996; Fetzer 2000; Chandler, Tsai 2001)

Race

- Race did not have a statistically significant relationship with anti-legal or illegal immigration (Chandler, Tsai 2001)

- Nativity and immigrant background do play a role in immigration attitudes (Haubert, Fussell 2006)
  - White immigrants and non-white immigrants are more likely to have favorable perceptions of immigrants, compared to white natives

Education

- Level of education influences an individual's pro-immigrant attitude (Berg 2010; Burns, Gimpel 2000; Chandler, Tsai 2001; Espenshade 1995; Haubert, Fussell 2006; Hood et al. 1997)

    – Individuals tend to form a positive response toward immigrant groups and beneficial government policies

- Disagreement about whether education defines an individual's immigration attitude or only teaches politically correct principles (Jackman, Muha 1984; Janus 2010)

    – This issue could be investigated with longitudinal data

Income and occupation

- Income did not have a statistically significant relationship with anti-legal or illegal immigration (Chandler, Tsai 2001)

- Occupation significantly predicted negative perceptions of immigrants (Haubert, Fussell 2006)

  – Blue-collar and service workers are more likely to hold negative perceptions

  – Immigrants are perceived as competitors in the labor market for low-skilled jobs

Data

- Analyze cross-sectional cumulative data from the General Social Survey (GSS), 1996–2016

Year	Sample size
1996	1,141
2004	1,983
2008	1,294
2010	1,393
2012	1,262
2014	1,624
2016	1,845
Total	**10,542**

- Association of attitudes toward immigration with demographic, socioeconomic, and political variables

Dependent variable

- Opinion about how should the number of immigrants to America 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
- Grouped into a three-category variable
    1. Reduce immigration
    2. Remain the same
    3. Increase immigration

Opinion about immigration

Source: 1996–2016 General Social Survey.

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Political party affiliation

- Detailed information on political party affiliation
    1. Strong Democrat
    2. Democrat
    3. Independent, near Democrats
    4. Independent
    5. Independent, near Republicans
    6. Republican
    7. Strong Republican
    8. Other party

- Previous studies usually aggregated party into Democrats, Independents, and Republicans

Political party affiliation

Immigration opinion and party
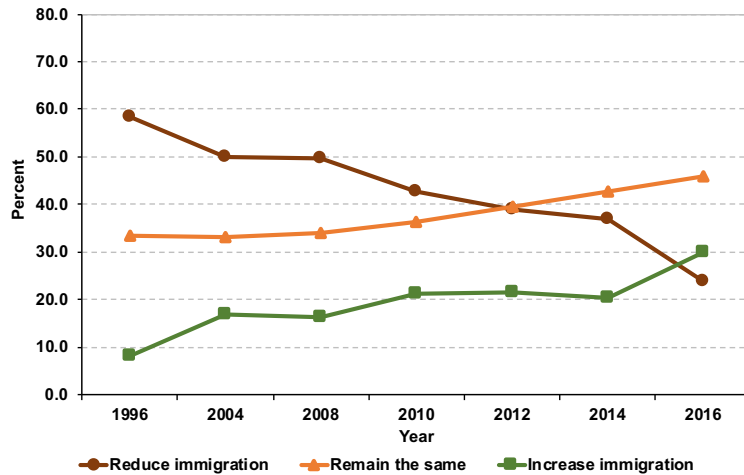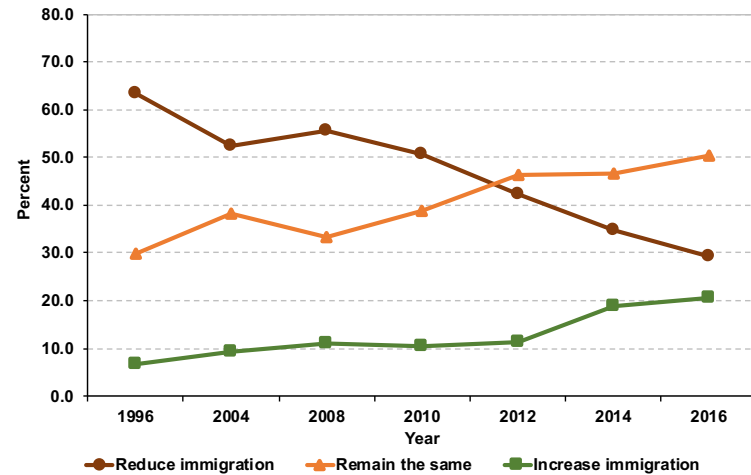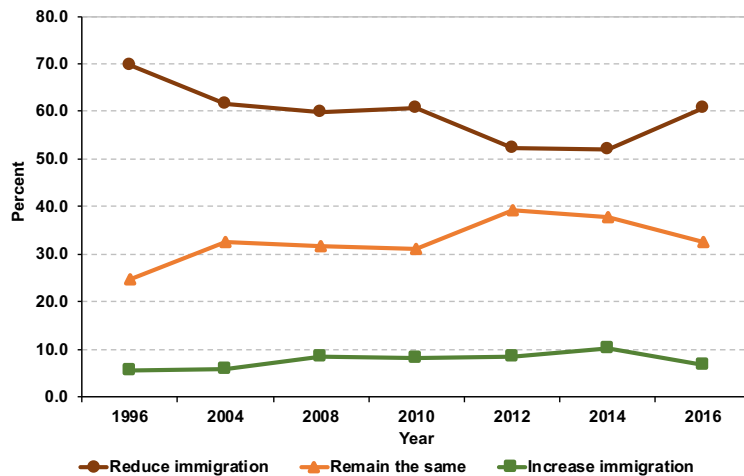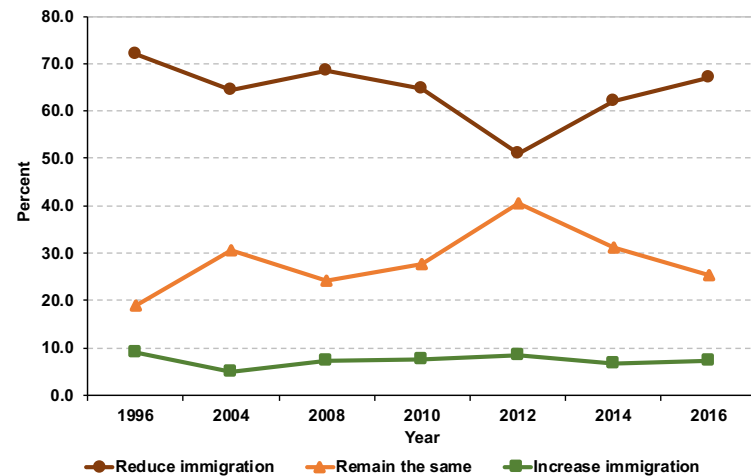
Other independent variables

- Year
  - 1996, 2004, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016
- Sex

Percent in 2016

Male	45.2
Female	54.8
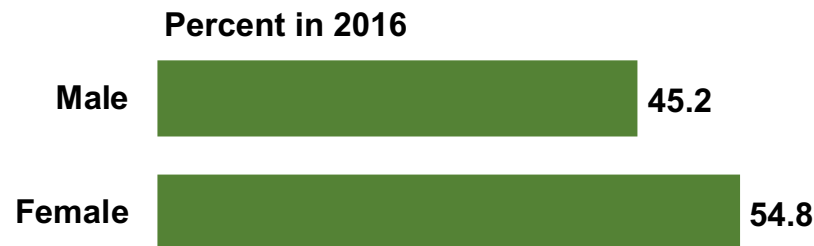
- Race/ethnicity (Hispanic available since 2000)

Percent in 2016

Non-Hispanic White	65.4
Non-Hispanic Black	15.4
Hispanic	14.5
Other	4.8
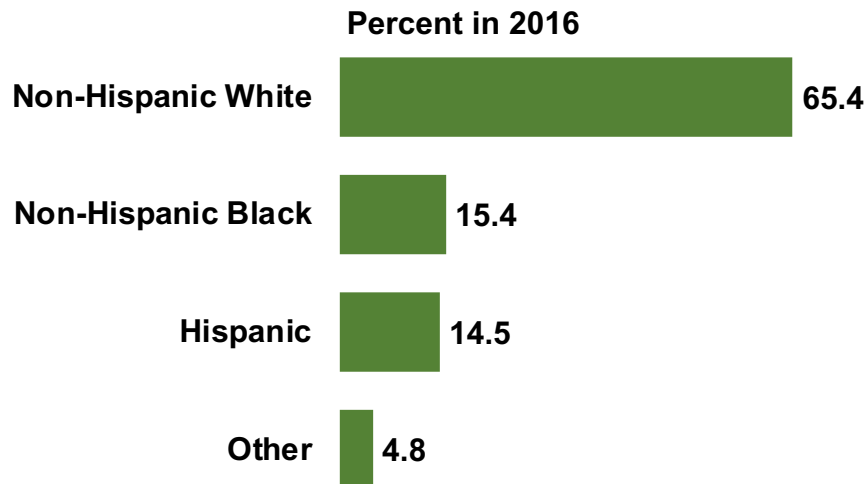
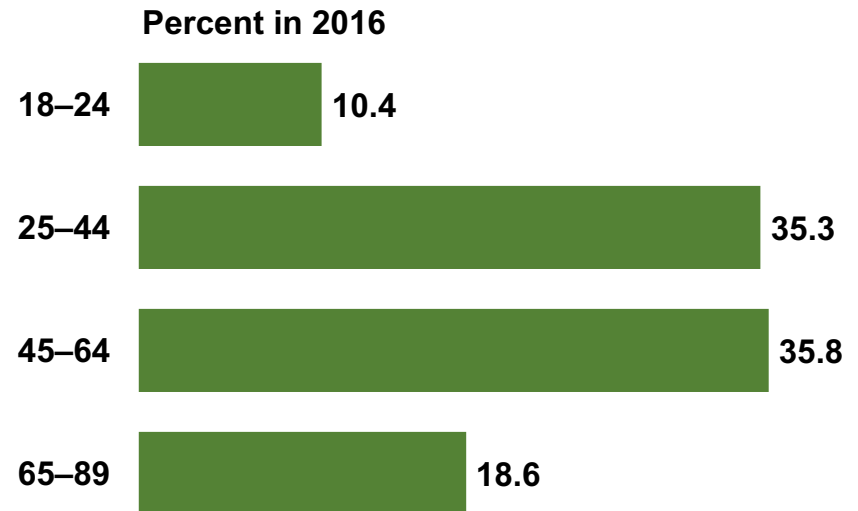# Birth cohort & Age

- Millennials (born in 1980 or after) are more in favor of immigration than non-millennials (Ross, Rouse 2015)

Percent in 2016
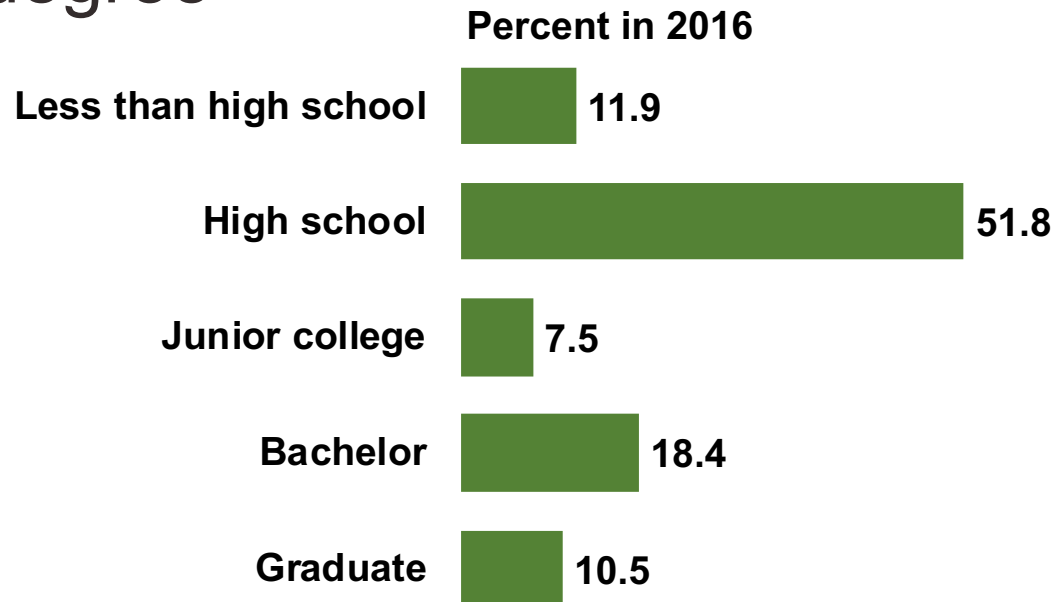
Non-Millennials	68.0
Millennials	32.0
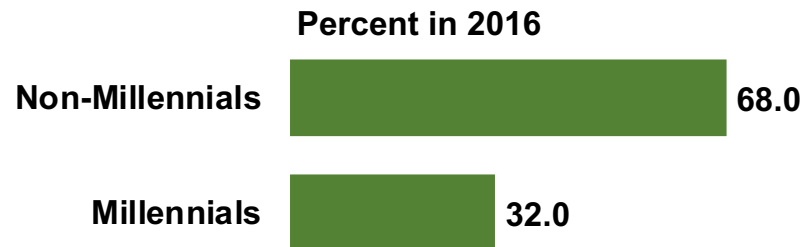
- Age group provided a deeper understanding on attitudes toward immigrants

Percent in 2016

18–24	10.4
25–44	35.3
45–64	35.8
65–89	18.6

Education

- ## Education degree

Percent in 2016

Less than high school	11.9
High school	51.8
Junior college	7.5
Bachelor	18.4
Graduate	10.5

- ## College completion

Percent in 2016

No college	71.1
At least college	28.9
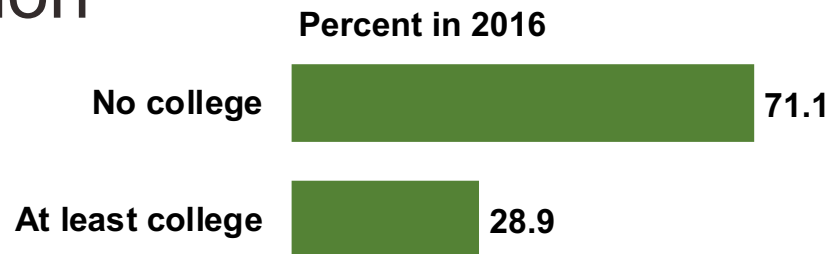
Occupation

- ## Aggregated as 2010 Census Occupation Codes

Percent in 2016

Occupation	Percent
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	34.5
Service occupations	19.4
Sales and office occupations	20.9
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	8.3
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	12.1
Military specific occupations	0.6
Unspecified occupations	0.7
Unemployed	3.6
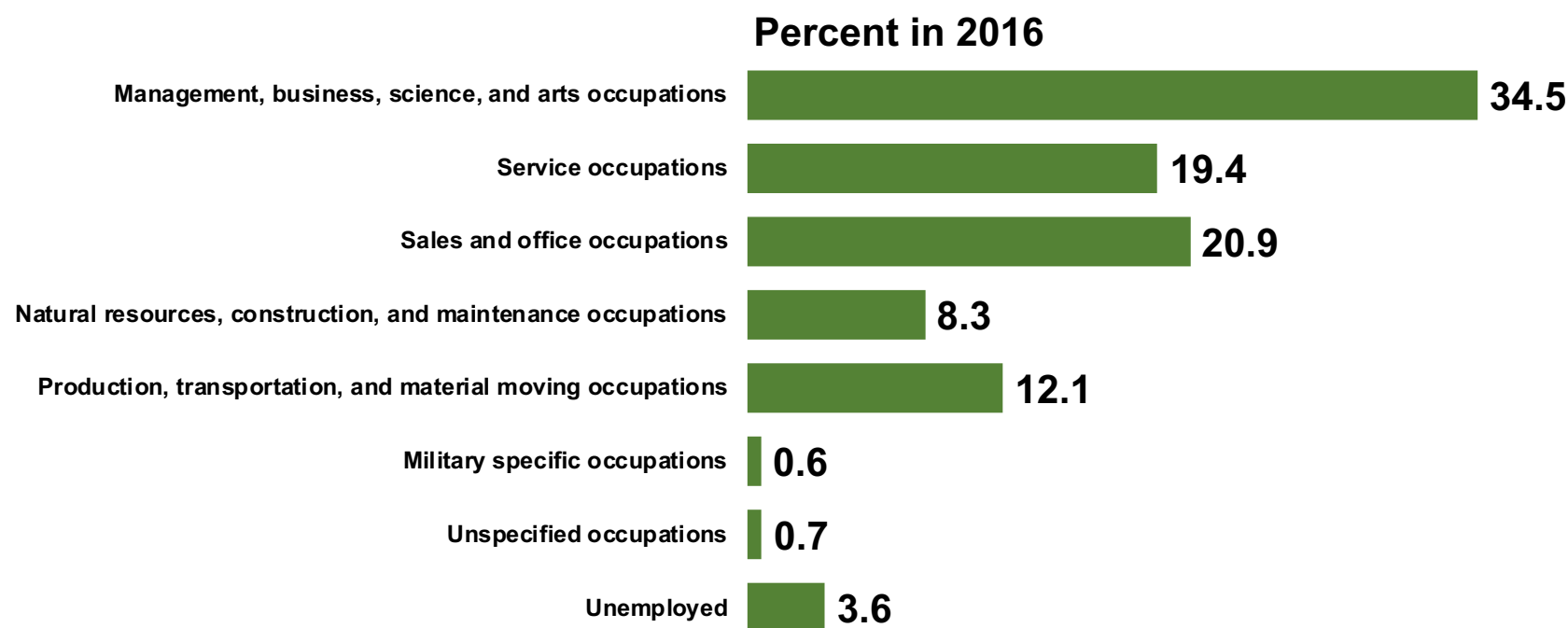
Codes: https://www.census.gov/people/io/files/2010_OccCodeswithCrosswalkfrom2002-2011nov04.xls
Source: 2016 General Social Survey.

Multinomial logistic regression

- Association of several independent variables (x'_i) with the opinion about how should the number of immigrants be in the country (y_i)

Reduce immigration (reference)

$$Pr(y_i = 1|x_i) = P_{i1} = \frac{1}{1 + exp(x'_i\beta_2) + exp(x'_i\beta_3)}$$

Remain the same

$$Pr(y_i = 2|x_i) = P_{i2} = \frac{exp(x'_i\beta_2)}{1 + exp(x'_i\beta_2) + exp(x'_i\beta_3)}$$

Increase immigration

$$Pr(y_i = 3|x_i) = P_{i3} = \frac{exp(x'_i\beta_3)}{1 + exp(x'_i\beta_2) + exp(x'_i\beta_3)}$$

- Note: Sex was not statistically significant (results not shown)

Relative risk ratios
[(Exponential of coefficient) – 1] * 100

- Next graphs show relative risk ratios
    1. Relative probability of immigration remaining the same over reducing immigration
    2. Relative probability of increasing immigration over reducing immigration

- e.g., relative probability of being
    - in favor of an increase in immigration rather than
    - being in favor of a reduction in immigration (ref.) is
    - 48% lower for Republicans than for Democrats (ref.)
    - **Not the same** as saying: probability of being in favor of an increase in immigration is lower for Republicans

Political party relative risks ratios
Reduce immigration as baseline

Chart — *Political party relative risks ratios*, with categories and values:

- **Strong Democrat**: Remain the same 8.7; Increase immigration 83.9*
- **Democrat (ref.)**: (reference, no bars)
- **Independent, near Democrats**: Remain the same 15.8; Increase immigration 44.0*
- **Independent**: Remain the same -2.0; Increase immigration 8.7
- **Independent, near Republicans**: Remain the same -29.5*; Increase immigration -42.4*
- **Republican**: Remain the same -33.8*; Increase immigration -48.3*
- **Strong Republican**: Remain the same -42.2*; Increase immigration -56.8*
- **Other party**: Remain the same -11.5; Increase immigration 100.9*

X-axis: Percent (-80.0 to 120.0)

Legend: ■ Remain the same ■ Increase immigration

*Significant at least at p<.05. Source: 2004–2016 General Social Survey.

Year relative risk ratios
Reduce immigration as baseline
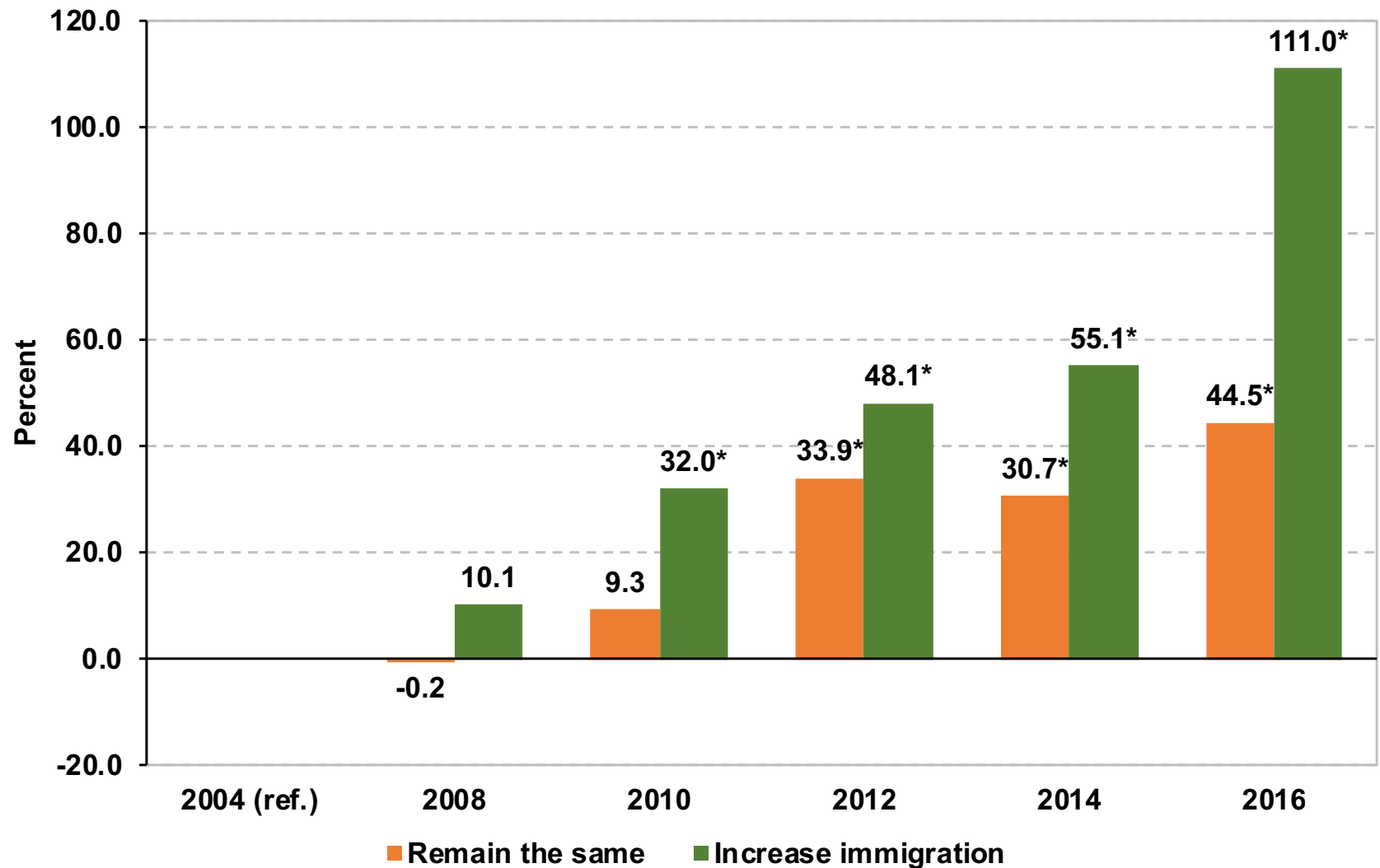
*Significant at least at p<.05. Source: 2004–2016 General Social Survey.

Race/ethnicity relative risk ratios

Reduce immigration as baseline
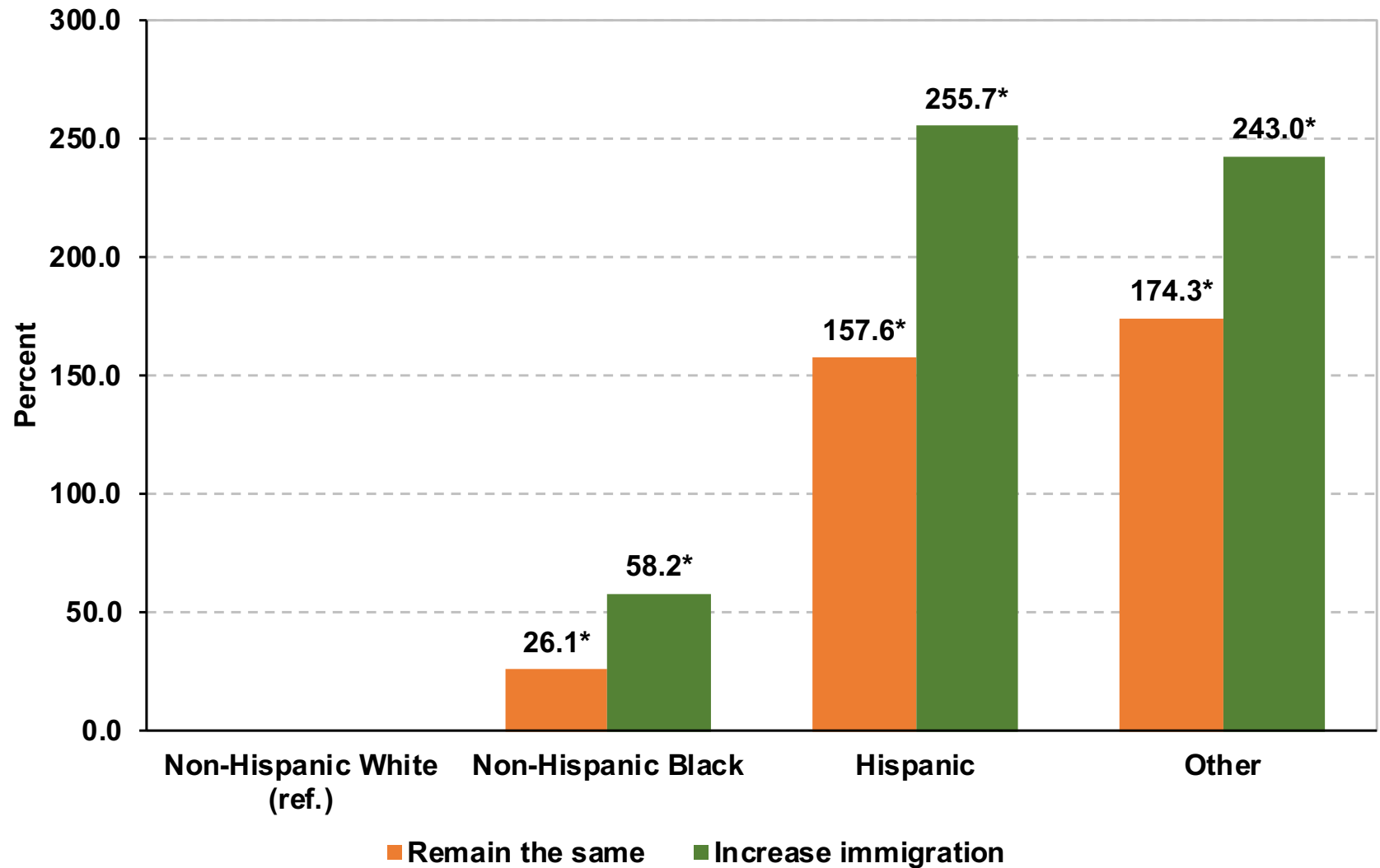
*Significant at least at p<.05. Source: 2004–2016 General Social Survey.
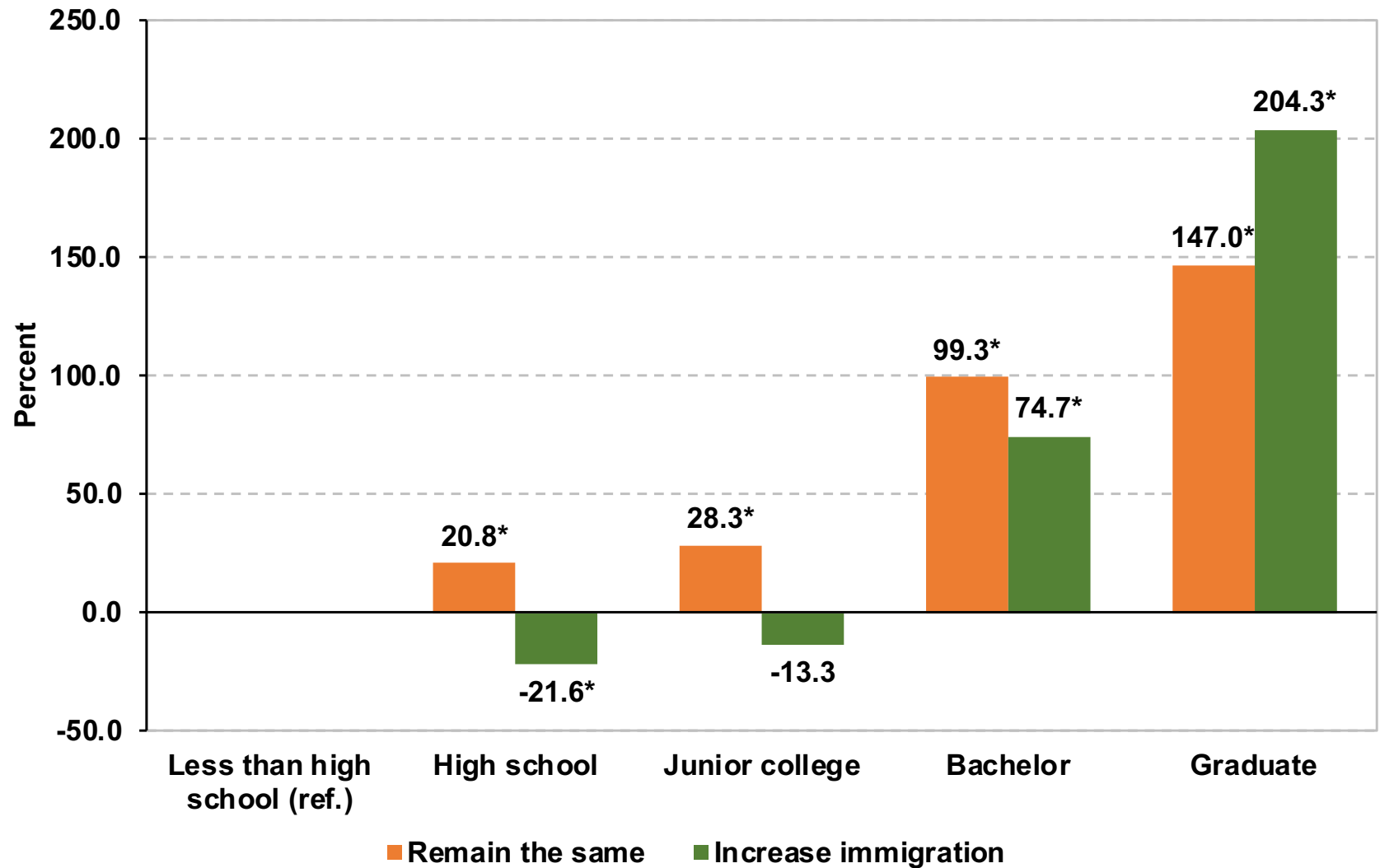
Age group relative risk ratios
Reduce immigration as baseline

*Significant at least at p<.05. Source: 2004–2016 General Social Survey.
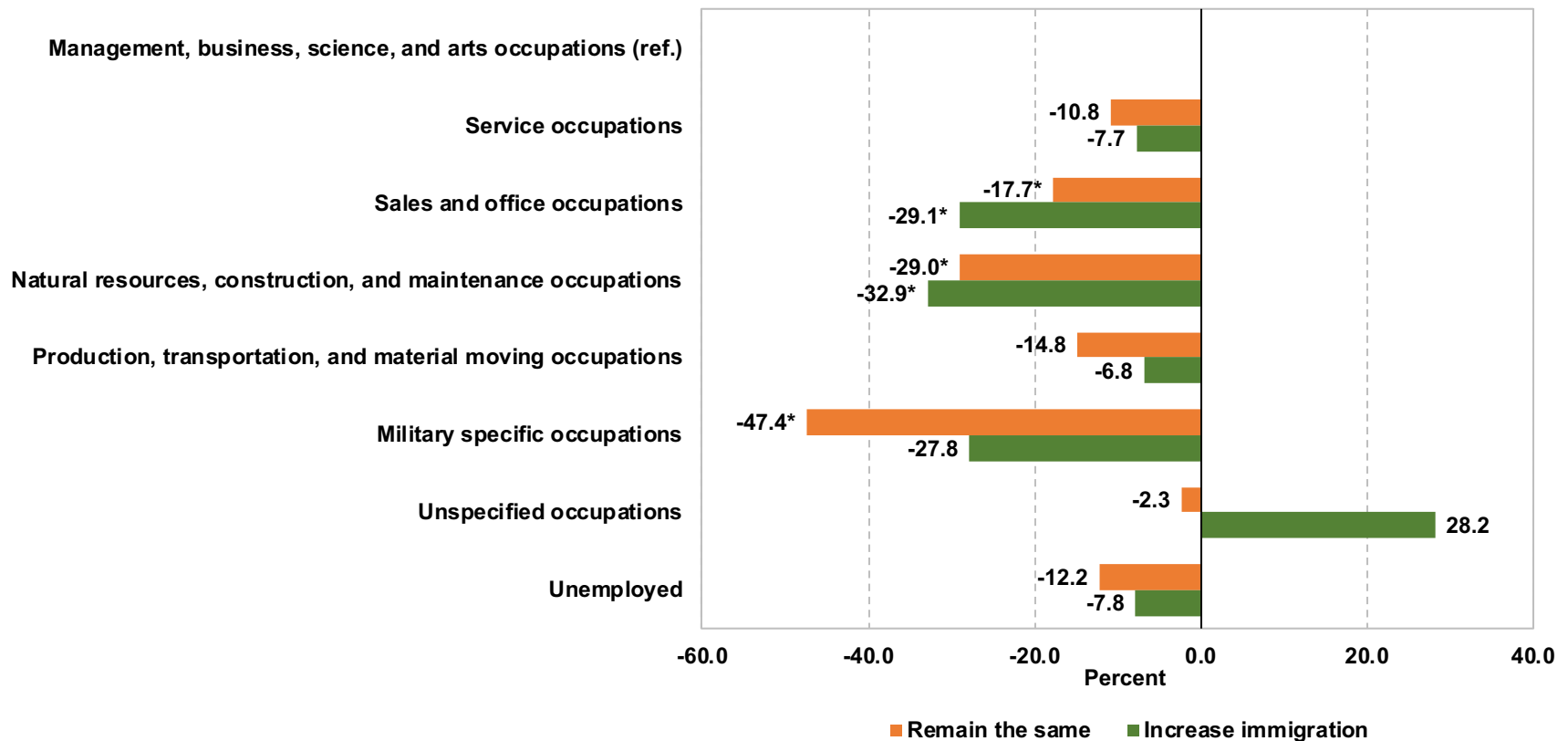
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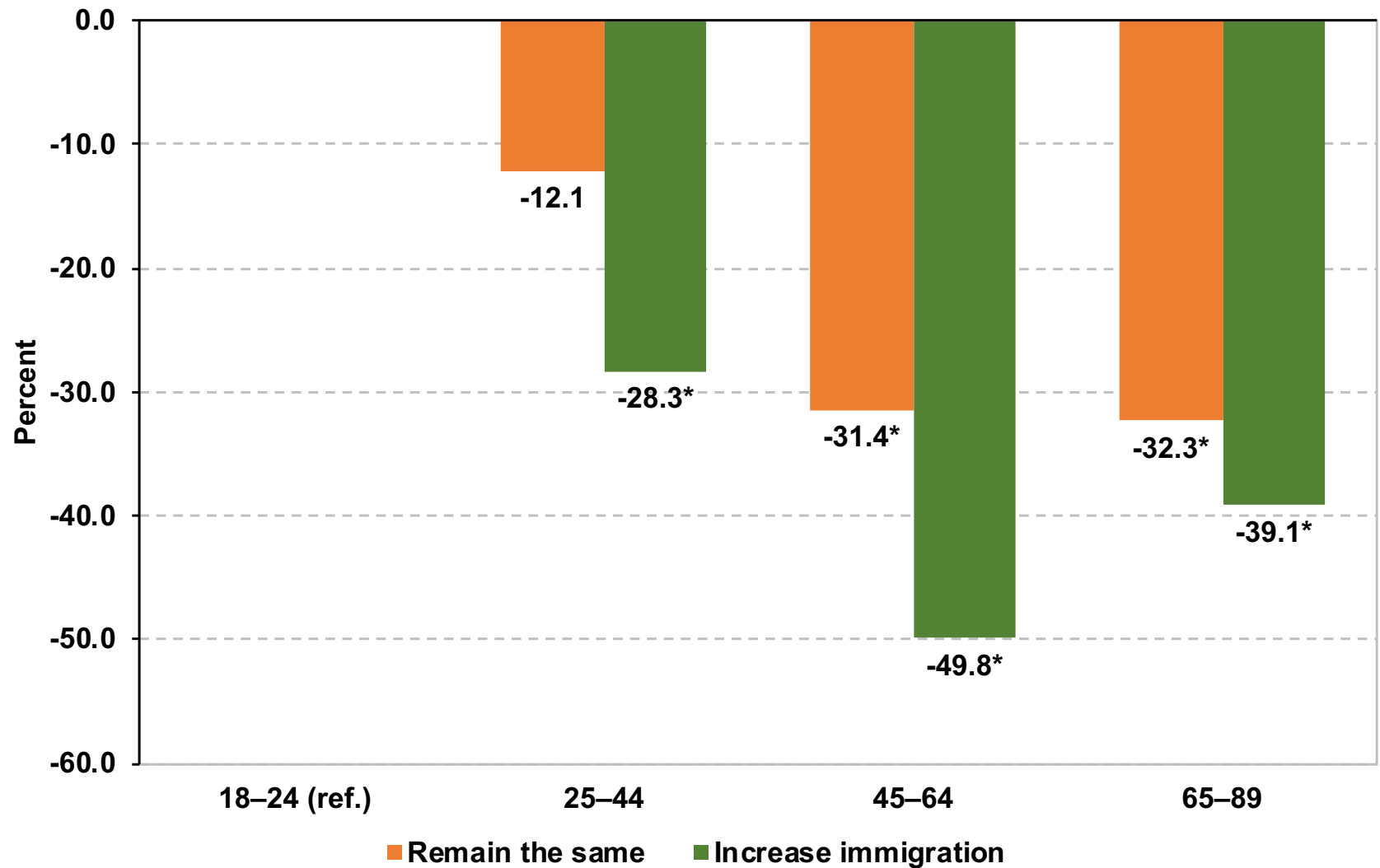
Education relative risk ratios
Reduce immigration as baseline

*Significant at least at p<.05. Source: 2004–2016 General Social Survey.

Occupation relative risks ratios

Reduce immigration as baseline

Management, business, science, and arts occupations (ref.)

Service occupations: -10.8 (Remain the same), -7.7 (Increase immigration)

Sales and office occupations: -17.7* (Remain the same), -29.1* (Increase immigration)

Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations: -29.0* (Remain the same), -32.9* (Increase immigration)

Production, transportation, and material moving occupations: -14.8 (Remain the same), -6.8 (Increase immigration)

Military specific occupations: -47.4* (Remain the same), -27.8 (Increase immigration)

Unspecified occupations: -2.3 (Remain the same), 28.2 (Increase immigration)

Unemployed: -12.2 (Remain the same), -7.8 (Increase immigration)

X-axis (Percent): -60.0, -40.0, -20.0, 0.0, 20.0, 40.0

Legend: ■ Remain the same ■ Increase immigration

*Significant at least at p<.05. Source: 2004–2016 General Social Survey.

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Marginal effects

- Marginal effects allow us to determine the effect of political party in the probability scale
  - Estimate **individual** predicted probabilities for each political party, year, and outcome
    1. Reduce immigration
    2. Remain the same
    3. Increase immigration
  - **Average** these probabilities by political party, year, and outcome
  - Estimate **difference to Democrats** for each year and outcome

- We also do this exercise for specific subgroups
  - Men, White, 25–44, High School, Construction
  - Men, Hispanic, 25–44, High School, Construction
  - Men, White, 25–44, Bachelor, Management
  - Men, Hispanic, 25–44, Bachelor, Management

Marginal effects, reduce immigration
Based on average of individual predicted probabilities
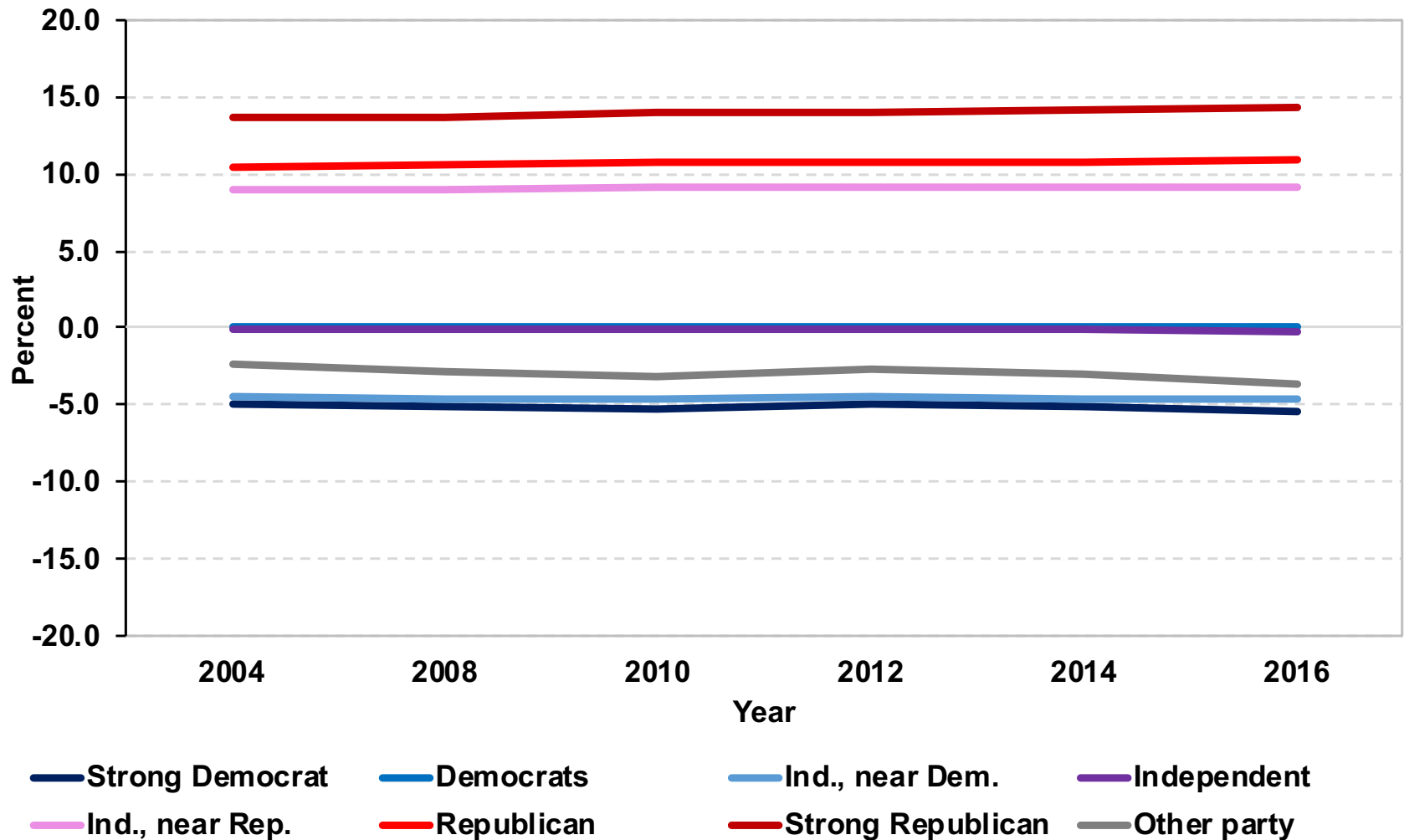
Marginal effects, reduce immigration

Men, White, 25–44, High school, Construction
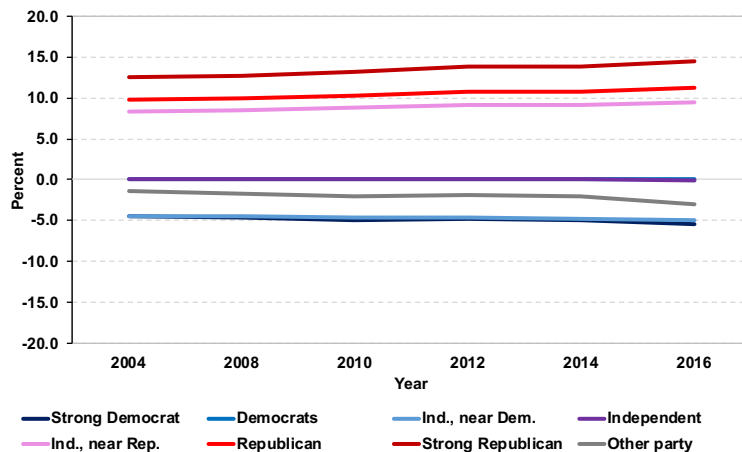
Men, Hispanic, 25–44, High school, Construction
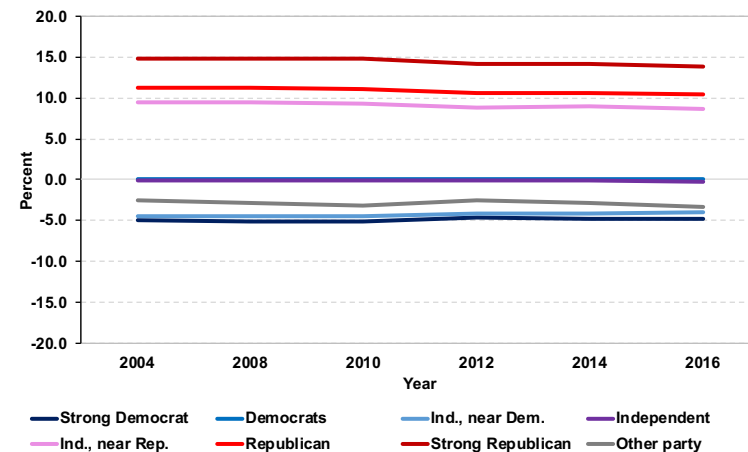
Men, White, 25–44, Bachelor, Management
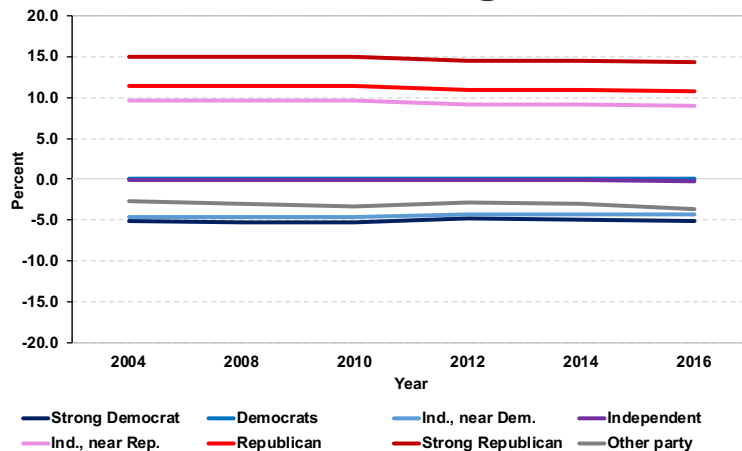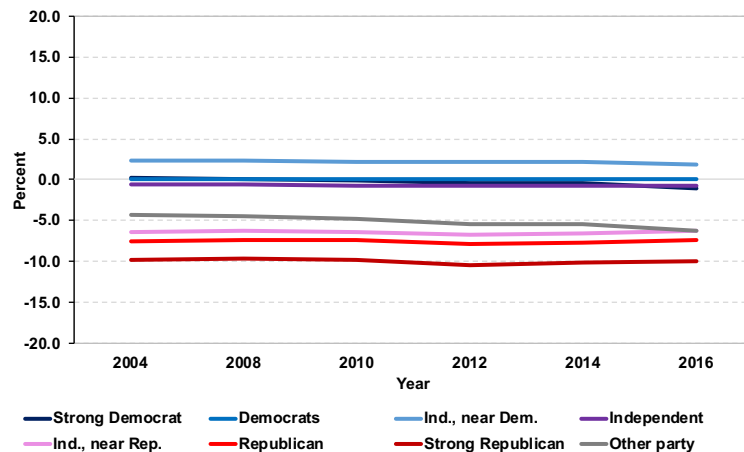
Men, Hispanic, 25–44, Bachelor, Management
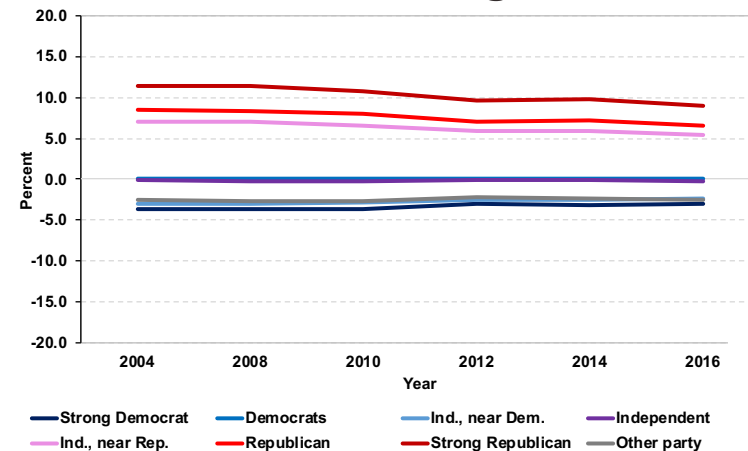
Marginal effects, remain the same
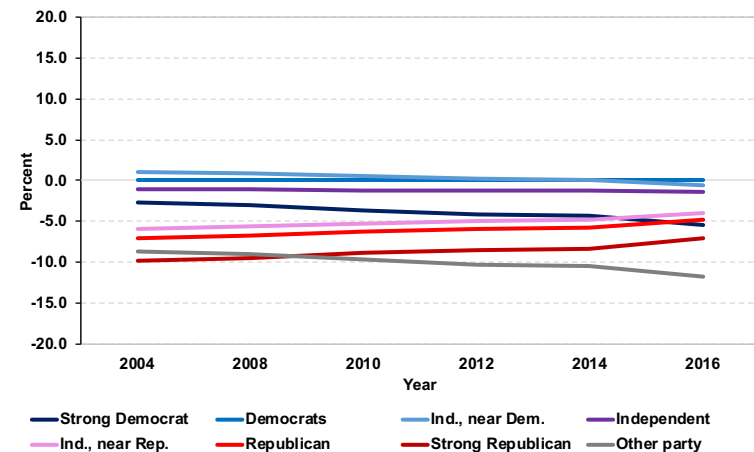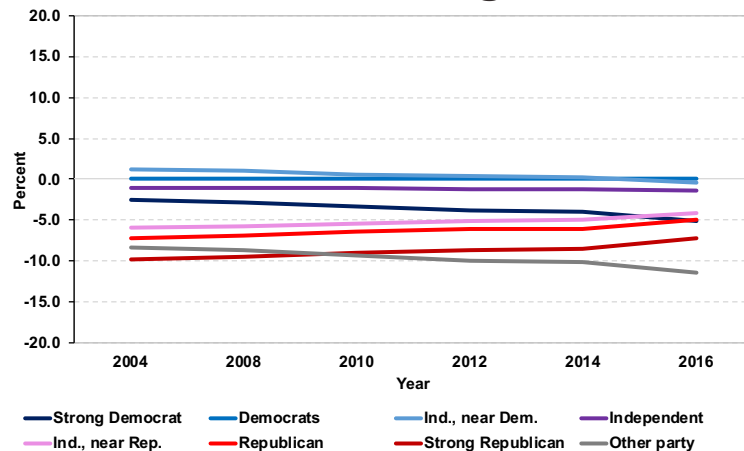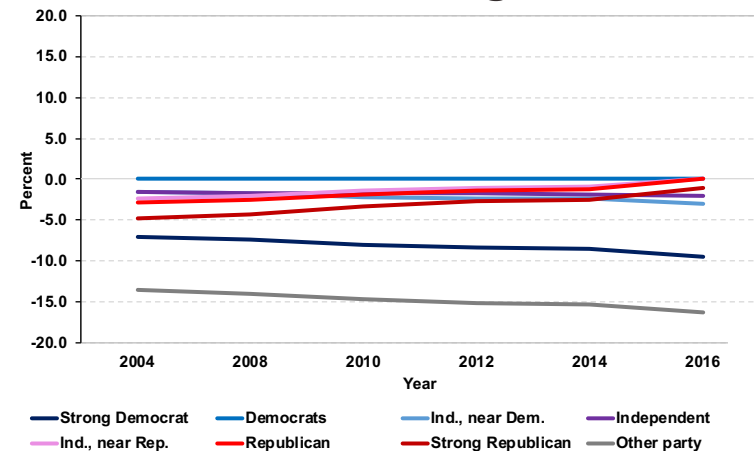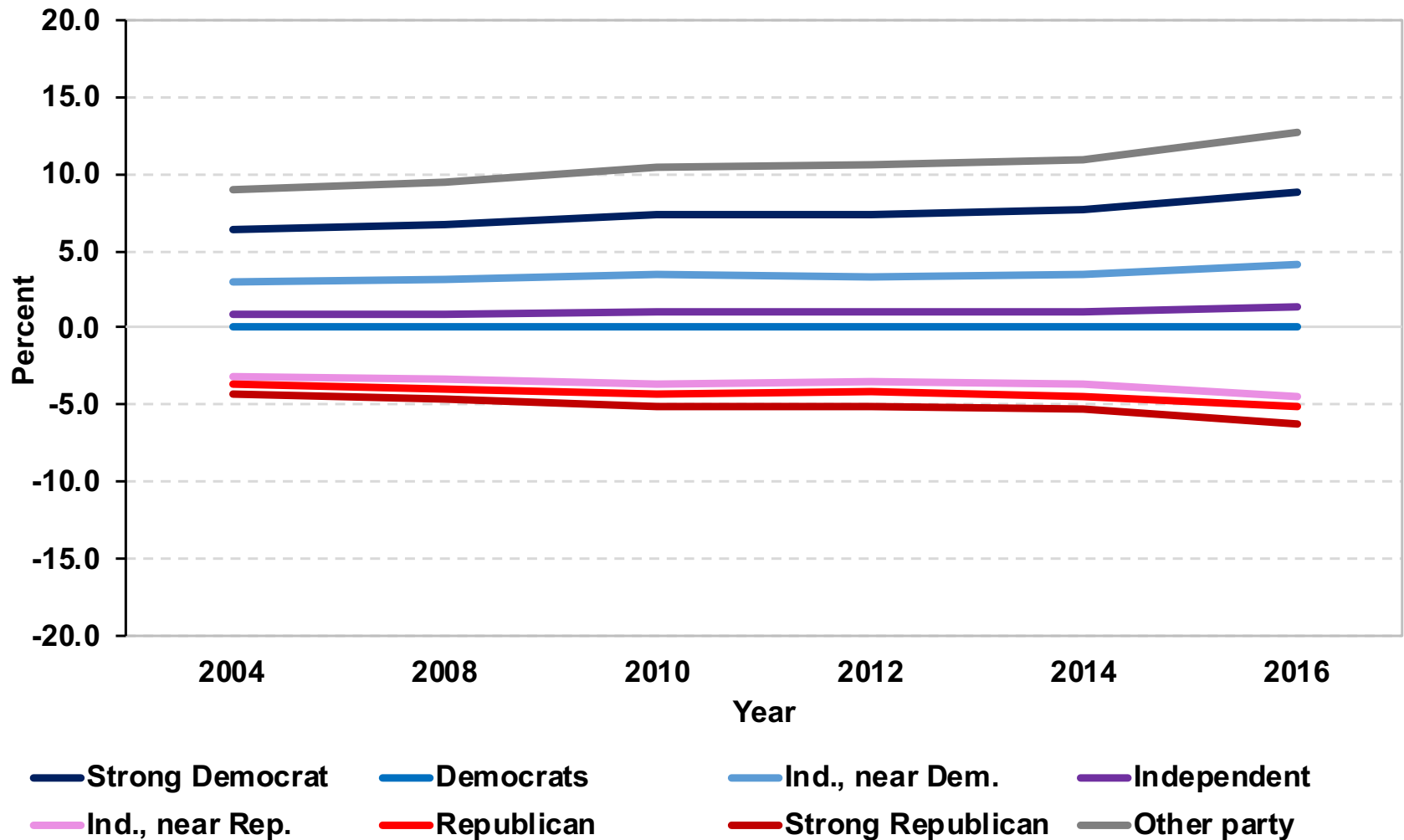
Based on average of individual predicted probabilities
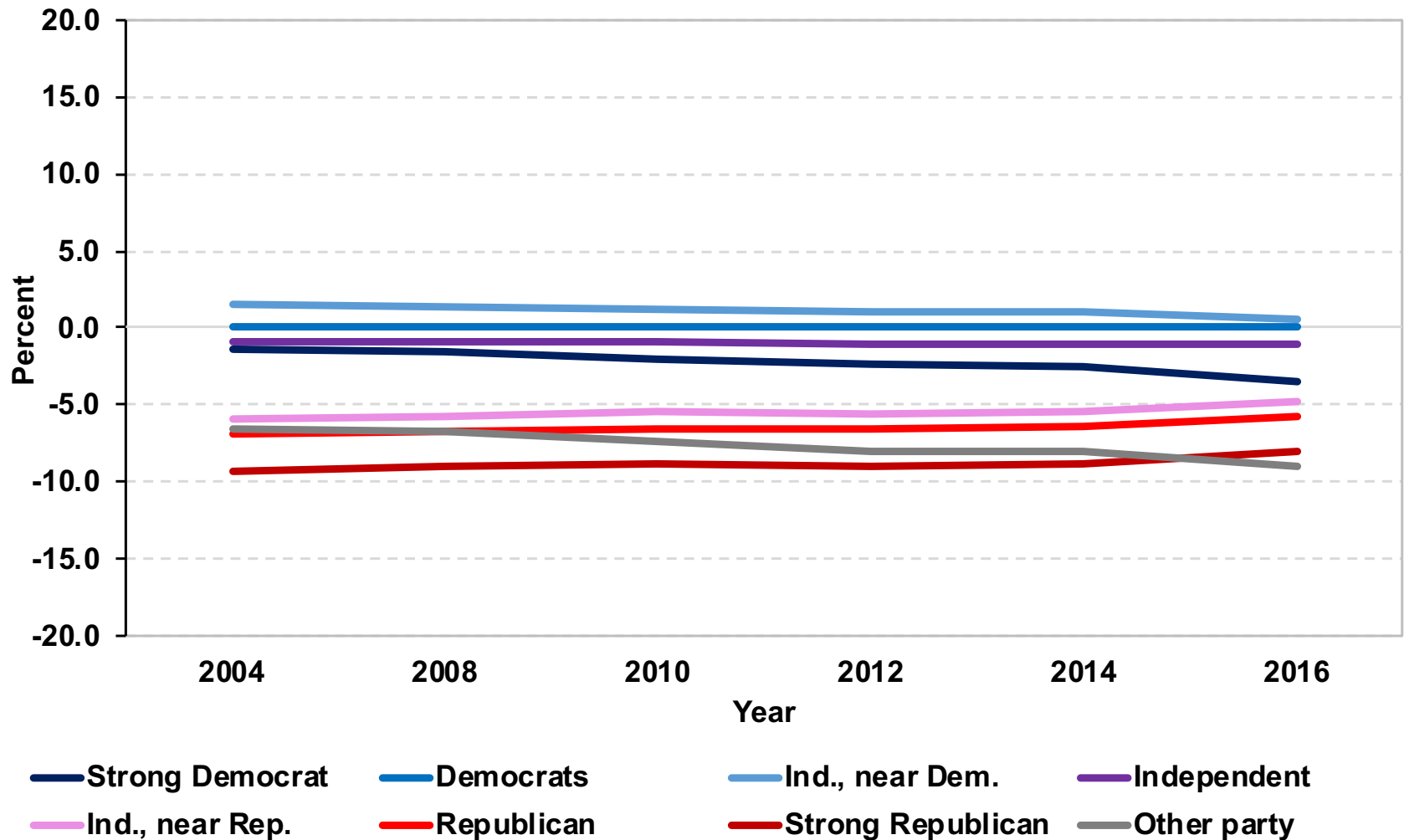
Marginal effects, remain the same

Men, White, 25–44, High school, Construction

Men, Hispanic, 25–44, High school, Construction

Men, White, 25–44, Bachelor, Management

Men, Hispanic, 25–44, Bachelor, Management

Marginal effects, increase immigration

Based on average of individual predicted probabilities
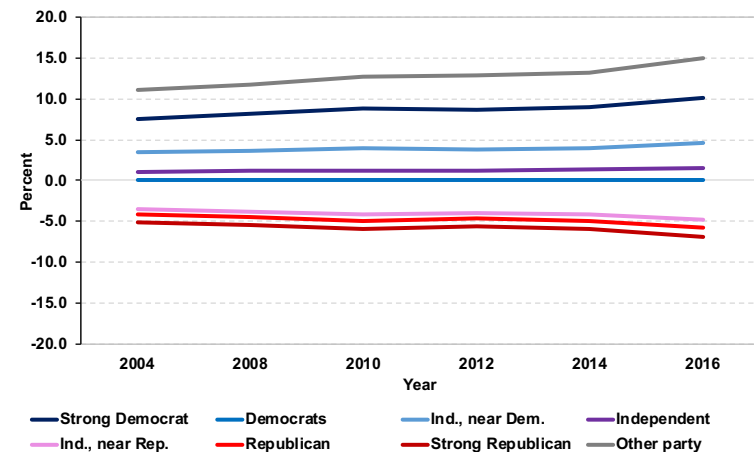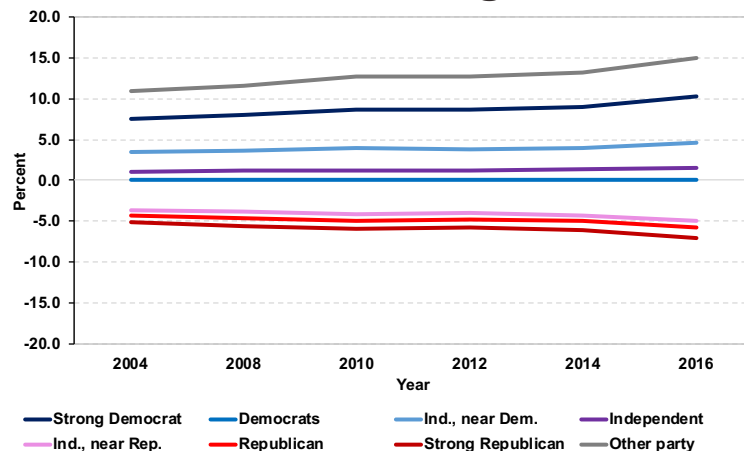
Marginal effects, increase immigration

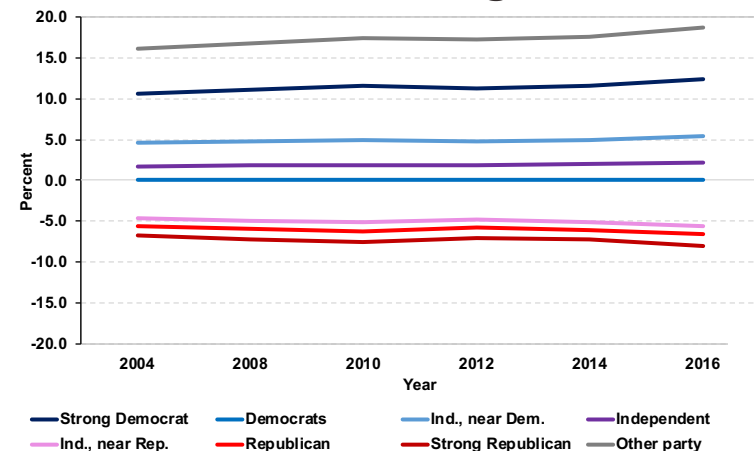**Men, White, 25–44, High school, Construction**
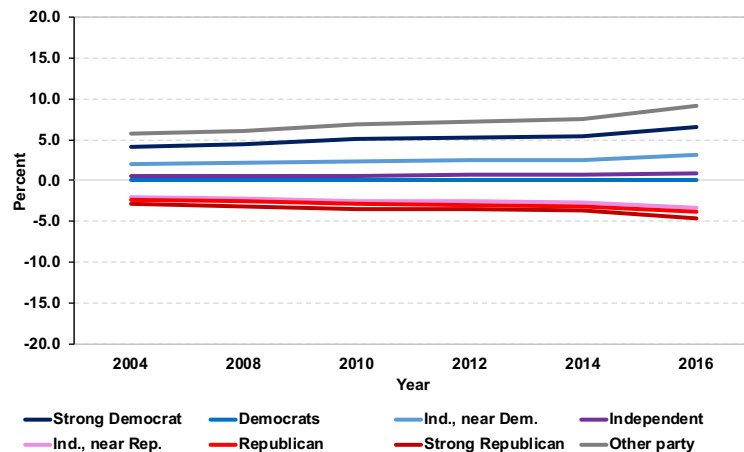
Men, Hispanic, 25–44, High school, Construction

Men, White, 25–44, Bachelor, Management

Men, Hispanic, 25–44, Bachelor, Management

Final considerations

- Differentials on attitudes toward immigration by political party affiliation are not dubious (Neiman, Johnson, Bowler 2006)

  - Republicans tend to desire immigration reduction

  - Democrats express opinion for immigration levels to remain the same or to increase

- Differentials by political party over time

  - **Reduce immigration**

    - Differentials grew for lower educated white men in natural resources/construction/maintenance occupations

    - Differentials decreased for higher educated Hispanic men in management/science/arts occupations

  - **Increase immigration**

    - Differentials grew by political party over time

Next steps

- Explore other dependent variables related to attitudes toward immigration
  - America should exclude illegal immigrants
  - Immigrants increase crime rates
  - Immigrants are good for America
  - Immigrants take jobs away
  - Legal immigrants should have the same rights as Americans

Next steps

- Investigate other independent variables
  - Geographic information
    - Region of interview
    - Region of residence at age 16
    - Type of place lived at age 16 (farm, little town, big city...)
    - State, county, census track (restricted data)
  - Subjective class identification
  - Self ranking of social position
  - Religion in which raised and religious preference
  - Political views (liberal-conservative scale)
  - Opinions about economy and government spending
  - Marital status