

Immigration and Deportation Attitudes

Sexuality, Economic Contributions, and Respondents' Partisanship

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Immigrant deportations are salient in many countries, but scholarship on deportation attitudes remains limited. Because some immigrants are especially likely to face harm if deported, we examine how immigrants' identity and economic characteristics shape deportation attitudes. We focus on unauthorized LGBTQ+ immigrants in the United States, examining the interplay between immigrants' economic contributions and respondents' partisanship. We rely on an original survey experiment with a sample of U.S. respondents that mirrors Census quotas for key socio-demographic indicators. We present three main findings. First, without any information on economic contributions, similar levels of support emerge for the deportation of gay and straight unauthorized immigrants. Second, immigrants' economic contributions substantially reduce support for deportation among both groups. Third, this apparent consensus masks important partisan differences. Democrats reward gay unauthorized immigrants significantly more than straight unauthorized immigrants for their economic contributions. The opposite occurs for Republicans: support for deportation is substantially lower for straight unauthorized immigrants who have made economic contributions. More broadly, these findings illustrate how partisan identity structures the application of deservingness heuristics in immigration attitudes, with implications for immigration policy debates around vulnerable immigrant populations.

About 3% of all immigrants in the United States identify as LGBTQ+ (roughly 640,000 people), and roughly 45% of these are estimated to be unauthorized. As a result, mass deportation could impact as many as 288,000 LGBT undocumented immigrants living in the U.S. (Flores and Sprague 2025). The potential deportation of unauthorized LGBTQ+ immigrants can be especially devastating, considering that consensual same-sex activity is illegal in over 60 countries around the world (ILGA 2025) and that homophobia remains widespread in many societies. The issue has become especially pressing at a time when the second Trump administration has ramped up deportation efforts. Does public opinion support deportation that might include LGBTQ+ immigrants?

While there is a vast social science literature on public opinion on immigration, scholarship on deportation attitudes is significantly more limited. We should not assume that attitudes toward admission and deportation are identical, given that the two decisions are meaningfully different, with deportations involving the forcible removal of people already present in the country (Margalit and Solodoch 2022; Ellermann 2005, 2009; Whitaker and Doces 2023). Research on public attitudes toward LGBTQ+ immigrants is also limited, albeit growing.

In this research note, we explore deportation attitudes toward unauthorized gay and straight immigrants in the U.S., examining the factors that can counteract support for their deportation. We ran a survey experiment with a sample of 2,100 U.S. respondents that mirrored Census quotas for age, gender, race, and education.

Our findings reveal that two key factors interact to shape support for the deportation of gay immigrants: immigrants' economic contributions and respondents' partisanship. When no information is provided about immigrants' economic contributions, similar levels of support emerge for the deportation of gay and straight unauthorized immigrants. However, when we

present immigrants who have contributed economically, Republicans and Democrats respond in opposite ways in the evaluation of gay and straight unauthorized immigrants. Among Democrats, baseline support for deporting unauthorized gay and straight immigrants is similar (25.4% vs. 20.7%). But when economic contributions are highlighted, Democrats' support for deporting gay immigrants is considerably lower (16.6%, an 8.8 p.p. difference), whereas it remains mostly unchanged for straight immigrants (19%, a 1.7 p.p. difference). The trend is reversed for Republicans. Baseline support for deportation is high for both groups (58.9% for gay and 62.6% for straight immigrants). Yet, when economic contributions are highlighted, Republicans reward straight immigrants substantially more: deportation support is 44.4% for straight immigrants (18.2 p.p. difference), compared to 50.8% for gay immigrants (8.4 p.p. difference). Overall, economic contributions reduce Democrats' willingness to deport gay immigrants more than straight immigrants, while the reverse is true among Republicans.

This study offers one of the first scholarly analyses of public opinion on deportation, presenting results that may be more nuanced than public discourse often assumes. The lack of significant difference in support for the deportation of gay vs. straight unauthorized immigrants, when no other immigrant attributes are highlighted, suggests that immigrants' unauthorized status is the dominant trait influencing calls for deportations. Additionally, immigrants' economic contributions significantly decrease support for deportation, even among Republicans. This apparent consensus, however, masks an important partisan difference. While Democrats reward economic contributions from gay immigrants more strongly, Republicans mostly reward straight immigrants.

At a time of intensifying deportation efforts, gaining a better understanding of attitudes toward immigration is crucial. Prior scholarship has shown that public opinion can substantially

affect immigration policies, especially when immigration is salient (Böhmelt 2021). Opinion polls have shown that support for deportation policies has significantly weakened in the U.S. a few months into the second Trump administration (New York Times 2025), suggesting that attitudes might change. Our study reveals the complexity of public opinion toward deportation, offering insights into how different framings may influence deportation attitudes and, in turn, affect policy outcomes.

Theoretical Expectations

Immigration, Sexuality, and Economic Contributions

A growing body of work has explored sexuality in the context of migration. Most studies have focused on the role of discrimination as a push factor. In many countries, individuals face harassment and persecution due to their sexual identity, which might lead them to flee to destinations perceived as more liberal (Sam and Finley 2015; Akin 2017; Dhoest 2019; Giametta 2020; Karimi 2020; Marnell 2021; Carrillo 2018; Cantú 2009).

Many countries accept asylum applications from individuals with a fear of persecution due to their LGBTQ+ status, but the path to becoming a refugee is challenging. LGBTQ+ migrants must navigate discrimination imposed by heteronormative social structures. Facing obstacles for being both foreigners and queer, they sometimes experience violence from both state officials and fellow asylum seekers (Bhagat 2018). In the U.S., many applications from LGBTQ+ migrants seeking asylum are denied, as the bar to prove persecution in their home country is very high (Morgan 2006; Lewis 2014). In many cases, officials draw on personal views and assumptions, thereby calling into question the credibility of applicants' identities (Mudarikwa et al., 2021).

Moreover, to convince immigration authorities, applicants often must prove their identity using Western-centric measures that reinforce stereotypes, such as changing their appearance and clothing (Fassin and Salcedo 2015). Even when asylum is granted, LGBTQ+ immigrants still face severe challenges in the destination countries (Megaw 2025; Epstein and Carrillo 2014; Fournier et al. 2018). This helps explain why, in the U.S., immigrants in same-sex couples are more likely to reside in states with progressive LGBTQ+ policies (Hoffmann and Velasco 2023).

Previous scholarship has typically relied on immigrants' accounts and official documents to show that sexual orientation matters in the immigration experience (Yang 2024, Cantú 2009). However, we lack studies on public opinion toward LGBTQ+ immigrants. Given the salience of deportations in the second Trump administration and the high number of unauthorized LGBTQ+ immigrants in the U.S., exploring deportation attitudes toward sexual minorities is critical.

A well-developed interdisciplinary literature has explored immigration attitudes. However, while preferences on admission and integration have been widely studied, we know relatively little about the drivers of preferences for deportation. Deportations are meaningfully different from admissions because they focus on immigrants already present in the country, rather than prospective immigrants (Margalit and Solodoch 2022), and involve the forcible removal of individuals (Ellermann 2005, 2009; Whitaker and Doces 2023). Moreover, deportation often targets a specific group of immigrants, i.e., unauthorized immigrants. For these reasons, we should not assume that the same factors shaping general immigration preferences necessarily apply to deportation attitudes.

The lack of prior public opinion studies focusing on immigration attitudes toward LGBTQ+ individuals makes it hard to make predictions regarding the role of immigrants' sexuality on deportation attitudes. On the one hand, homophobic attitudes may lead to a stronger

penalization of gay immigrants. On the other hand, a concern about the safety of gay immigrants if deported could lead to stronger opposition to their deportation. Furthermore, the literature on immigration attitudes highlights the prominence of legal status in shaping public opinion. Americans are less accepting of unauthorized immigrants (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2015) and more likely to support their deportation, in comparison to those who are authorized (Whitaker and Doces 2023). In the U.S., immigrants' lack of documentation often emerges as the dominant factor in deportation preferences, playing a more central role than immigrants' education level, language proficiency, employment, and even country of origin (Whitaker and Doces 2023; Magni and Ponce de León, n.d.). Given the prominence of the lack of legal status in shaping public opinion, *we expect no significant difference in support for the deportation of unauthorized gay immigrants and unauthorized straight immigrants (H1).*

Even though deportation attitudes and general immigration attitudes are likely distinct, the work on immigration attitudes that has centered on the role of belonging can be a useful starting point. Immigrants tend to be seen as less deserving of welfare support. This is a consequence of the development of the welfare state, which has historically been associated with the idea of solidarity among members of the nation-state. Thus, attitudes toward access to welfare for immigrants are linked to understandings of the boundaries of the national community, but also to who is believed to be a deserving member of the state - and who, on the other hand, does not belong (see Miller 2000, Kymlicka 2001).

Public opinion on deportation is closely linked to the conceptualization of national boundaries and belonging, including who is considered a legitimate member of the national community and therefore permitted to remain in the country. Previous research on attitudes toward welfare access for immigrants shows that those who contribute to the receiving country's

economy are viewed as more deserving of support (Kootstra 2016). This is because immigrants' economic contributions indicate reciprocity and commitment to the community (Magni 2024). In the context of deportation, however, the reasoning likely differs. Rather than focusing on whether prospective immigrants are seen as deserving of future admission and welfare, deportation attitudes depend on whether *current* immigrants have *already* demonstrated contributions that justify their permanence. Therefore, we expect that *highlighting immigrants' economic contributions will reduce support for the deportation of unauthorized immigrants (H2).*¹

Partisanship, Immigration, and LGBTQ+ Attitudes

Immigrants' characteristics are not the only factor that shapes public opinion. Citizens' backgrounds also strongly influence attitudes toward immigration. Partisanship is a key factor since immigration attitudes often fall along partisan lines. In the U.S., the gap between Democrats and Republicans on immigration preferences has widened significantly over the years (Jones 2024). Deportations have become important for Republicans, with 79% considering increasing deportations a priority in 2022 (Pew Research 2022). In 2024, 66% of Trump

¹ It is also important to acknowledge that social desirability concerns might affect self-reports on exclusionary attitudes. As a strategy to mitigate social desirability concerns, earlier work adopted list experiments to study immigration attitudes and nativism (Janus 2010, Knoll 2013). At the same time, more recent studies suggest that the magnitude and even direction of social desirability bias in immigration attitudes may vary across contexts (Carmines and Nassar 2021). We discuss in the Experimental Design section how this might affect our study and findings.

supporters agreed that unauthorized immigrants should not be allowed to remain in the country, compared to only 12% of Harris' supporters (Pew Research 2024).

While partisanship was long ignored in the scholarship exploring public opinion on immigration (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2015), more recent studies highlighted important partisan differences. Republicans are more supportive of restrictive policies, including reducing the number of immigrants in the country (Hawley 2011; Kustov, Laaker, and Reller 2021). Republicans are also more likely to perceive immigrants as a threat, particularly when it comes to security and the economy (Homola 2021). In contrast, Democrats are more likely to have more positive immigration attitudes (Zhirkov 2021); and view unauthorized immigrants as more deserving, whereas Republicans consider them as deviant (Smith and Kreitzer 2024). Nonetheless, we still lack a comprehensive examination of how partisanship impacts preferences on the deportation of unauthorized immigrants. While we might expect Republicans to be more supportive of deportations than Democrats, the story might be more complicated when various immigrant traits are considered.

Partisanship is also a strong predictor of LGBTQ+ attitudes. Democrats have been substantially more supportive of LGBTQ+ rights (Brewer 2003; Flores 2015; Jones et al. 2018). Historically, opposition to gay rights has often come from the conservative and religious right, a factor that helped integrate the conservative right in the Republican Party (Karol 2023). As a result, the Republican Party has long opposed LGBTQ+ rights. On the voters' side, partisanship has played a key role in shaping electoral results on LGBTQ+ initiatives, with Democrats consistently showing stronger support (Magni 2020). Partisanship also predicts electoral support and bias toward LGBTQ+ candidates and elected officials, with Republicans less likely to vote for LGBTQ+ candidates (Magni and Reynolds 2021, 2024). As a result, LGBTQ+ people in the

U.S. have been more likely to identify as Democrats and vote for Democratic candidates (Chan and Magni 2025).

Other factors that strongly influence attitudes toward LGBTQ+ people and rights are correlated with partisanship, thereby further strengthening the partisan divide on LGBTQ+ attitudes. Predictors of more negative opinions toward LGBTQ+ rights include conservative ideology (Jones and Brewer 2020) and religiosity (Jones et al. 2018), which are more prevalent among Republicans. In contrast, interpersonal contact with LGBTQ+ people (Lewis 2011) and media representation (Garretson 2015; Ayoub and Garretson 2017; Flores et al. 2018) positively affect LGBTQ+ attitudes. But Republicans report being less likely to have LGBTQ+ family members and close friends and to be exposed to positive LGBTQ+ media representation, which helps explain their more negative attitudes.

Survey data have also captured the partisan gap in public opinion on a variety of LGBTQ+ issues (Pew Research 2017). These include support for same-sex marriage, which has decreased among Republicans in recent years (Gallup 2024), and transgender rights, with Republicans becoming increasingly more hostile (Murib 2025). Hence, even though LGBTQ+ attitudes have improved overall over time, the change has been mostly driven by Democrats.

The centrality of partisanship with regard to both sexuality and immigration attitudes suggests the need to further explore how these factors might interact. Prior studies emphasize the importance of strategic calculations when deciding which immigrants should be rewarded and which penalized. Democrats and Republicans are more likely to support expanding voting rights to immigrants who identify as co-partisans (Alarian and Zonszein 2025). Respondents are also more likely to support the admission of immigrants who share similar ideological positions to them (Vargas Nunez n.d.). When it comes to immigrants' sexuality, it is possible that Democrats

might assume that gay immigrants are more likely to be ideologically aligned with them, whereas Republicans might assume that they are likely to have opposing ideological beliefs. These assumptions can, in turn, lead to double standards: Democrats will reward gay immigrants more for their economic contributions, while Republicans will be more supportive of straight immigrants for their economic contributions. Therefore, we expect that *when considering economic contributions from unauthorized immigrants, Republicans will be more supportive than Democrats of deporting gay immigrants compared to straight immigrants, whereas Democrats - compared to Republicans - should show the opposite pattern (H3).*

Experimental Design

To test our expectations, we conducted an online survey in the United States with the company Cint between September 19 and October 10, 2022. Our sample came from an opt-in panel, included 2,100 U.S. residents aged 18 or older, and mirrored Census quotas for age, gender, race, and education. The survey included a pre-registered experiment to measure attitudes toward deportation, along with socio-demographic and political controls (see the appendix for survey details and sample characteristics).

Our experiment examines how immigrants' sexual orientation and economic contributions interact to shape deportation attitudes. We analyze whether the sexual orientation of unauthorized immigrants affects whether they can benefit from improved attitudes when they have made significant economic contributions. To operationalize the sexual orientation of unauthorized immigrants, we asked respondents to evaluate immigrants who are portrayed as being in a same-sex vs a different-sex marriage. This operationalization does not allow us to consider whether deportation attitudes vary toward unmarried gay immigrants, but signals

sexuality in a less intrusive way, and has been adopted by several experimental studies (e.g., Ahmed et al. 2013, Baert 2014, Sterkens et al. 2025).

To test whether economic contributions decrease support for deportation for straight and gay immigrants, we measured respondents' attitudes in two steps. First, we randomized the sexual orientation of immigrants described as living in the U.S. without papers. We then measured respondents' degree of support or opposition to the deportation of these immigrants on a five-point scale ranging from "Strongly support deportation" to "Strongly oppose deportation." Hence, respondents were randomly assigned with equal probability to answer either of these questions:

Do you support or oppose deporting immigrants like Adam and his husband Matthew who are currently residing in the country illegally?

Do you support or oppose deporting immigrants like Adam and his wife Emily who are currently residing in the country illegally?

These questions were identical except for the immigrants' sexual orientation and names. In each case, we chose common first names traditionally identified as male (*Matthew*) and female (*Emily*). Therefore, our treatment focuses on male same-sex couples, and does not address attitudes towards lesbian couples.² Moreover, while our choice of majority racial group names across treatment and control groups allows us to keep that trait constant and focus on the impact of sexual orientation and economic contributions, it does not allow us to test how variations across perceived race or region of origin can interact with sexual orientation.

² Future studies should investigate how attitudes shift when the unauthorized immigrants are lesbian, bisexual, or transgender people instead of gay men.

A second question then allows us to explore how providing additional information about immigrants' economic contributions might change attitudes toward deportation. Respondents were randomly assigned with equal probability to answer either of these questions:

Do you support or oppose deporting immigrants like John and his husband Mike who are currently residing in the country illegally but started a business that created over 500 jobs in the US?

Do you support or oppose deporting immigrants like John and his wife Katie who are currently residing in the country illegally but started a business that created over 500 jobs in the US?

Respondents expressed support or opposition to deportation on a five-point scale ranging from “Strongly support deportation” to “Strongly oppose deportation.”

These questions reflect the reality that many unauthorized immigrants are entrepreneurs and business owners. In the U.S., not only does immigration law not explicitly bar unauthorized immigrants from forming and owning businesses, but the economic importance of unauthorized business owners has grown in recent years.³ In fact, entrepreneurship is often a more likely path

³ *Immigrants Rising*, a San Francisco non-profit organization, estimated the number of unauthorized entrepreneurs in the country to be 770,000 in 2016 (815,000 by 2020). In 20 states, the rates of entrepreneurship were higher among unauthorized immigrants than among naturalized immigrants and native-born citizens. As the research director for *Immigrants Rising* explained: “The federal government doesn’t require unauthorized immigrants to have work authorization or a social security number in order to be an independent contractor or start a

for unauthorized immigrants to thrive in the workforce. As of 2023, immigrants were more entrepreneurial than their non-immigrant counterparts, launching new businesses at double the rate of native citizens (Galván 2024).⁴

It is important to acknowledge that we measure deportation attitudes using direct self-reports, which raises the possibility of social desirability bias. Our survey was self-administered online, which may reduce - though not fully eliminate - interviewer-related social desirability bias compared with face-to-face interviews. This suggests that our estimates should be interpreted as conservative lower bounds of exclusionary attitudes toward deportation. Importantly, however, our experimental comparisons are based on the same measurement mode and type of question across treatments. Even if the absolute level of expressed support for deportations is downward biased, our inferences about whether immigrants (in same-sex vs. different-sex marriages, with vs. without economic contributions) receive more or less support for deportation are based on differences between randomized conditions. As a result, in our study, social desirability concerns should affect the *level* of expressed intolerance rather than the *direction* of the treatment effects.

business. Anyone, regardless of immigration status, can get an Individual Tax ID Number to open bank accounts, build credit, incorporate as a business, provide employee benefits and pay taxes. All of this makes entrepreneurship a more lucrative option for an undocumented person. They can charge higher hourly rates or have large business contracts, compared to working under the table for cash or using fake documentation” (Perez 2020).

⁴ While many immigrants are entrepreneurs, we acknowledge that not many are likely able to create this many jobs, and future work could examine how varying thresholds of economic contributions influence deportation attitudes.

Empirical Analysis

We now present the results of the analysis. We first show the percentages of respondents in the full sample who “support” or “strongly support” deportations.⁵ We present the results for the four profiles we displayed to respondents: gay immigrants, straight immigrants, gay immigrants who have made economic contributions, and straight immigrants who have made economic contributions.

Table 1: Support for the deportation of gay and straight unauthorized immigrants and of gay and straight unauthorized immigrants with economic contributions

	Gay	Straight	Gay + economic contributions	Straight + economic contributions
Support for deportation	37.5% (34.6, 40.6)	37.5% (34.6, 40.6)	29.1% (26.4, 32.0)	27.8% (25.2, 30.7)
<i>N</i>	1,049	1,044	1,048	1,045

Note: The table reports the percentages of respondents who support and strongly support deportation and the 95% confidence intervals.

⁵ We present a simple comparison of percentages because, as Table A1 in the appendix reveals, the randomization was successful.

Figure 1. Support for the deportation of gay and straight unauthorized immigrants

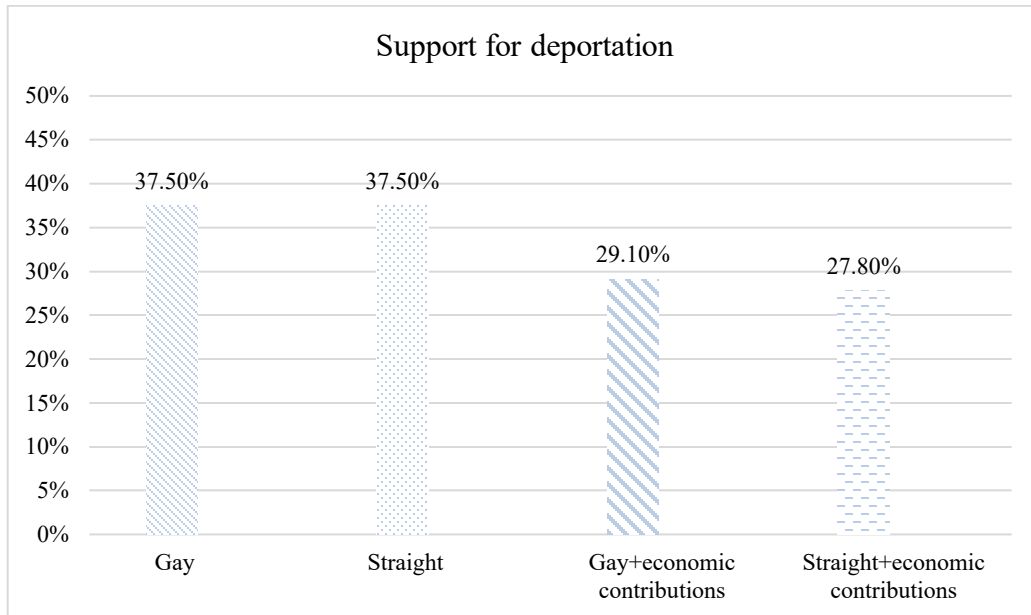


Table 1 and Figure 1 show that the same share of respondents (37.5%) supports the deportation of gay and straight unauthorized immigrants when no information about economic contributions is provided. These results confirm our H1 expectations. The unauthorized status seems to dominate over the sexual orientation of immigrants as a determinant of deportation preferences among respondents, who do not apparently display different attitudes toward gay or straight unauthorized immigrants. We can also observe that support for the deportation of unauthorized immigrants *who have made economic contributions* is considerably weaker, as predicted in H2. When they have created jobs, support for the deportation of unauthorized gay immigrants is 29.1% and for straight immigrants is 27.8%. The difference (1.3 p.p.) in support

for the deportation of gay compared to straight unauthorized immigrants who have made economic contributions is not statistically significant.⁶

Partisan differences may, however, tell a more nuanced story. With LGBTQ+ attitudes having grown more polarized in recent years, the attitudes of Democratic and Republican respondents may be pulling in opposite directions. If that is the case, they may cancel each other out in the general sample. We therefore proceed to analyze the attitudes of Democratic and Republican respondents toward the deportation of gay and straight unauthorized immigrants.⁷ Table 2 and Figure 2 report the percentages of Democratic and Republican respondents who “support” and “strongly support” the deportation of gay and straight immigrants, as well as gay and straight immigrants who have made economic contributions.

Substantial partisan differences emerge. First, unsurprisingly, support for the deportation of unauthorized immigrants is much higher among Republicans than Democrats. Second, Democratic respondents seem to penalize gay immigrants slightly more when the only information provided is immigrants’ sexual orientation, but the difference in the penalty for gay and straight immigrants is not significant, given the smaller subsample size (difference = 4.7 p.p., *p-value* .1188). Third, when economic contributions are incorporated, Democratic respondents reward gay immigrants more than straight immigrants for their contributions.

⁶ Table A3 in the appendix presents results from the second experiment conditional on treatment assignment in the first experiment. Results remain substantively unchanged regardless of treatment assignment in the first experiment.

⁷ We used the following question to capture party identification: *Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent?* Respondents then selected one of the three options.

Among Democrats, support for the deportation of gay unauthorized immigrants is 25.4%; however, when economic contributions are highlighted, the support for deporting this same group is 16.6% (8.8 p.p. difference). Meanwhile, baseline support for deporting straight unauthorized immigrants is 20.7%, and when economic contributions are highlighted, the support is at a very similar level (19%). Hence, among Democrats, the difference in support for the deportation of gay immigrants when important economic contributions are considered versus not is significantly larger than the difference for straight immigrants.

The opposite is true for Republican respondents. Among Republicans, in the absence of information about economic contributions, 58.9% are in favor of the deportation of unauthorized gay immigrants, and 62.6% of unauthorized straight immigrants (the difference is not statistically significant). But Republicans reward straight immigrants substantially more than gay immigrants for their contributions to the economy. In particular, among Republicans, support for the deportation of gay unauthorized immigrants who have made economic contributions is 50.8% (8.4 p.p. difference); whereas support for deporting unauthorized straight immigrants in the presence of economic contributions is 44.4% (18.2 p.p. difference).

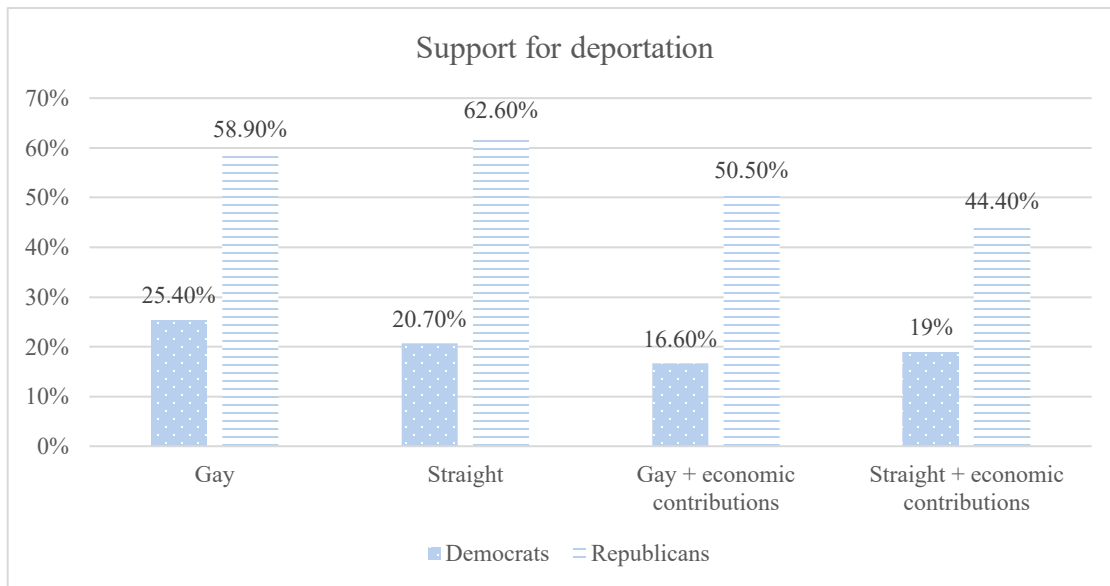
Table 2: Support for the deportation of gay and straight unauthorized immigrants among Democrats and Republicans

	Democrats		Republicans	
	Support for deportation	<i>N</i>	Support for deportation	<i>N</i>
Gay	25.4% (21.2, 30.0)	398	58.9% (52.9, 64.7)	282
Straight	20.7% (16.8, 25.1)	387	62.6% (56.7, 68.4)	276

Gay + economic contributions	16.6% (13.0, 20.5)	400	50.5% (44.5, 56.6)	279
Straight + economic contributions	19% (15.2, 23.2)	385	44.4% (38.5, 50.5)	279

Note: The table reports the percentages of respondents who support and strongly support deportation and the 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 2. Support for the deportation of gay and straight unauthorized immigrants among Democrats and Republicans



Discussion of findings

As deportations have gained increased political importance, our study helps us understand public opinion on an issue that can have serious consequences for LGBTQ+ immigrants. In the absence of other information, gay and straight unauthorized immigrants face similar deportation attitudes. While this might be surprising, it is consistent with work examining the interaction between unauthorized status and other immigrants' identity traits. For instance, Magni and Ponce de León (n.d.) found that country of origin does not significantly shape attitudes toward deportation. They

showed that, in the U.S., attitudes toward unauthorized Canadian and unauthorized Mexican immigrants are similar, and so are attitudes in Brazil toward unauthorized Portuguese versus Venezuelan immigrants.

Similar support for the deportation of gay and straight immigrants emerges among both Democrats and Republicans when no other information about the unauthorized immigrants is provided. These results align with previous scholarship that revealed a partisan consensus, showing that Americans across party lines largely agree on the evaluation of immigrant traits and negatively evaluate immigrants who entered the country without authorization (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2015).

Our results also show that unauthorized immigrants who have made economic contributions face significantly weaker calls for deportation. Interestingly, economic contributions substantively reduce support for deportations even among Republicans. This suggests that, while Republicans are generally more in favor of deportations, their preferences are sensitive to information about immigrants. Immigrants' economic contributions may help legitimize their permanence in the eyes of native citizens, even among Republicans.

Both gay and straight unauthorized immigrants benefit from highlighting their economic contributions. However, an important partisan difference emerges. Republicans reward straight unauthorized immigrants more for their contributions, while Democrats reward gay immigrants more. Even though our data do not allow us to fully test why this is the case, we can speculate on the reasons. One possibility is that Democrats may reward gay immigrants more for their economic contributions because of some traits that they might attribute to gay immigrants. For instance, they might assume that gay immigrants are more likely to be liberal. The (assumed) shared ideology then might increase positive attitudes toward this immigrant group. It is also

possible that some Democratic respondents feel greater empathy toward gay immigrants if they believe that such immigrants are at greater risk of discrimination in their home countries.

Limitations and Conclusion

This is one of the first studies focusing on the drivers of deportation attitudes, with important limitations which suggest that much remains to be explored. A limitation of our study is that we do not use indirect questions, such as list experiments specifically designed to mitigate social desirability bias. As a result, our estimates likely understate the true prevalence of support for deportation. Future research could extend our design by combining the experimental manipulations of sexual orientation and economic contributions that we adopted with list experiments, which would allow researchers to assess how much deportation support is concealed in direct questions.

Additionally, in order to adopt a subtler treatment, we signaled homosexuality through a reference to same-sex marriage. This does not allow us to consider whether deportation attitudes vary toward unmarried gay immigrants. Second, the indicator for economic contributions considers whether the (gay) immigrant is the founder of a large firm. While many immigrants are entrepreneurs, as discussed above, a much smaller number has likely created hundreds of jobs. Future work could examine how varying thresholds of economic contributions influence deportation attitudes. Third, partisanship is not a randomized trait in our experiment, but rather an observed characteristic of the respondents, adopted for subgroup analysis. Future work could manipulate partisanship, considering even immigrants' partisan identification.

Moreover, our study focuses on same-sex male couples, thereby not considering attitudes toward lesbian couples. Future work could examine how attitudes vary when the unauthorized

immigrants are lesbian, bisexual, or transgender individuals, rather than gay men. Future studies could also explore how other identity traits, such as nationality and ethnicity, interact with sexuality. Relatedly, it could be relevant to pay attention to whether homosexuality being persecuted in the prospective country of deportation affects public attitudes. This would lead to a greater understanding of an increasingly relevant policy issue that is potentially disruptive for many individuals, families, and communities.

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