



Cornell University

ICMA



# 2018

## Local Government & Immigrant Communities Survey

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SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

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February 2019

ICMA | survey research

# 2018 LOCAL GOVERNMENT & IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES SURVEY

## INTRODUCTION

ICMA and Cornell University partnered on this survey to gain a better understanding of local government policies, programs, and other activities related to immigrant populations in their communities. The survey was distributed in the spring of 2018 to chief administrative officers of all municipalities with a population over 10,000 and counties of all populations across the United States. It was completed by 1,201 local governments, yielding an overall response rate of 17% with a 3% margin of error. Not all respondents answered every question.

The summary table below displays the distribution of responses by population and geographic division. Almost half of survey respondents are from communities with a population between 10,000 and 25,000. Geographically, the response rate is highest in the Mountain and Pacific regions and lowest in the Middle Atlantic.

|                                |                    | Number<br>Surveyed | Number<br>Responding | Response<br>Rate |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| <b>Overall</b>                 |                    | 7,244              | 1,201                | 16.6%            |
| <b>Population</b>              | Over 500,000       | 138                | 20                   | 14.5%            |
|                                | 100,000 - 499,999  | 700                | 115                  | 16.4%            |
|                                | 50,000 - 99,999    | 938                | 130                  | 13.9%            |
|                                | 25,000 - 49,999    | 1,638              | 260                  | 15.9%            |
|                                | 10,000 - 24,999    | 3,157              | 530                  | 16.8%            |
|                                | 5,000 - 9,999      | 379                | 80                   | 21.1%            |
|                                | Under 5,000        | 294                | 66                   | 22.4%            |
| <b>Geographic<br/>Division</b> | New England        | 407                | 62                   | 15.2%            |
|                                | Middle Atlantic    | 881                | 91                   | 10.3%            |
|                                | East North-Central | 1,587              | 256                  | 16.1%            |
|                                | West North-Central | 907                | 179                  | 19.7%            |
|                                | South Atlantic     | 987                | 193                  | 19.6%            |
|                                | East South-Central | 551                | 74                   | 13.4%            |
|                                | West South-Central | 798                | 114                  | 14.3%            |
|                                | Mountain           | 479                | 99                   | 20.7%            |
|                                | Pacific Coast      | 647                | 133                  | 20.6%            |
| <b>Type of<br/>Government</b>  | Municipality       | 4,222              | 738                  | 17.5%            |
|                                | County             | 3,022              | 463                  | 15.3%            |

## KEY FINDINGS

### DEMOGRAPHIC PERCEPTIONS

- The majority of respondents (71%) estimated the size of immigrant population in their community to be small or very small.
- Immigrant populations are perceived to be growing in almost one in three of the responding local governments; nearly 60% of local governments reported little to no growth.
- Demand for low-wage workers, uniting with family members, and the success of prior waves of immigrants are perceived as the major forces for growth among local governments experiencing an increase in their immigrant population.
- Overall, respondents perceive Mexico as the largest source of local immigrant populations, followed by Central America, and South and East Asia.

## ENGAGEMENT & INCLUSION

- Despite some language-related or cultural barriers, local governments have taken steps to improve communication with immigrants in their communities.
- Almost half of the local governments provide multilingual access to their community information.
- In more than one third of the local governments, public safety officials perform regular outreach to immigrant populations. The share of local governments doing this is higher among larger communities.
- Almost one in three local governments hold community events to celebrate cultural diversity that includes new immigrants.
- Having a task force, staff position, or office for immigrant affairs is not common (11% or fewer report doing so):
  - The ratio of local governments with a task force, staff position, or office for immigrant affairs is higher among larger communities compared to the smaller ones.
  - Less than 2% of local governments reported having a local office for immigrant services.
- Most of the responding local governments are not familiar with Welcoming America's [Welcoming Cities Initiative](#), which is a network for cities and counties welcoming and recognizing immigrants' social and economic contributions to improving communities.

## SERVICES & PROGRAMS

- Almost one third of local governments are involved in providing housing assistance and health services, and the share of local governments providing these services is higher among larger communities compared to the smaller ones. However, nonprofit or faith-based organizations are the largest group offering these services to immigrants.
- Other support services, such as food pantries or child care programs, were the

most commonly reported services available for immigrants in communities, and they were most often provided by nonprofit or faith-based organizations (80%). These groups are also key providers of all direct services.

- Few local governments provide programs highlighting economic opportunities related to immigrant populations (less than 15%).
- Local governments are not active in providing economic and workforce development programs to immigrants or to employers who want to work with immigrant populations (less than 12% of local governments are active in these). Mostly, nonprofit/faith-based organizations or schools/universities offer such programs.
  - Programs for employers who want to hire immigrant or minority populations and offer credentialing programs for immigrants—regardless of who delivers—were less commonly reported than other economic programs (less than 43%).

## PUBLIC SAFETY & ENFORCEMENT

- Few communities (4%) reported experiencing a significant civil unrest event related to immigration, ethnic, or cultural issues.
  - Those that had experienced such an event described a wide range of examples, including events dating as far back as the Civil Rights Movement, Black Lives Matter, and immigration protests.
- Few responding local governments have enacted or even considered local policies related to illegal immigration issues.
  - A total of 7% have enacted local policies prohibiting the hiring of unauthorized workers.
  - Less than 4% have enacted a local measure providing some form of sanctuary to immigrants.
  - Less than 5% have enacted a policy to collaborate with federal authorities to share immigrant information. ■

## SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

| 1. Which best describes the size of the recent immigrant population (arriving in the past decade) in your community? | Percent of respondents |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Large and growing recent immigrant population                                                                        | 12.2%                  |
| Large and with relatively little growth of the recent immigrant population                                           | 5.4%                   |
| Small and growing recent immigrant population                                                                        | 19.6%                  |
| Small and with relatively little growth of the recent immigrant population                                           | 22.1%                  |
| Very small, almost negligible recent immigrant population                                                            | 29.3%                  |
| Don't know                                                                                                           | 11.3%                  |

| 2. If you have experienced growth in the immigrant population in your community, which of the following are driving that growth? | Percent of respondents |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Demand for low-wage workers                                                                                                      | 35.7%                  |
| To unite with family members in the community                                                                                    | 30.3%                  |
| Success of prior waves of immigrants                                                                                             | 21.8%                  |
| Proximity to traditional immigration gateway cities                                                                              | 16.6%                  |
| Demand for skilled or specialized workers                                                                                        | 15.8%                  |
| Pursuit of educational opportunities                                                                                             | 14.9%                  |
| Attractiveness of services/reception provided                                                                                    | 13.2%                  |
| Lack of federal immigration enforcement                                                                                          | 6.2%                   |
| Other                                                                                                                            | 8.5%                   |
| Don't know                                                                                                                       | 31.6%                  |

| 3. Which of the following countries/regions of origin are represented in your community's immigrant population? | Percent of respondents |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Mexico                                                                                                          | 79.3%                  |
| Central America                                                                                                 | 39.2%                  |
| South and East Asia                                                                                             | 34.3%                  |
| Middle East                                                                                                     | 25.4%                  |
| South America                                                                                                   | 18.9%                  |
| Europe                                                                                                          | 18.6%                  |
| Sub-Saharan Africa                                                                                              | 14.9%                  |
| Caribbean                                                                                                       | 13.5%                  |
| Canada                                                                                                          | 9.7%                   |
| All other                                                                                                       | 6.6%                   |

| 4. Which of the following countries/regions of origin comprise the largest share of your community's immigrant population? | Percent of respondents |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Mexico                                                                                                                     | 61.6%                  |
| South and East Asia                                                                                                        | 13.0%                  |
| Central America                                                                                                            | 5.9%                   |
| Middle East                                                                                                                | 4.4%                   |
| Europe                                                                                                                     | 3.1%                   |
| Sub-Saharan Africa                                                                                                         | 2.7%                   |
| South America                                                                                                              | 2.5%                   |
| Caribbean                                                                                                                  | 2.4%                   |
| Canada                                                                                                                     | 1.7%                   |
| All other                                                                                                                  | 2.8%                   |

| 5. Has your local government engaged in any of the following activities?                                       | Yes   | No    | Don't know |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|------------|
| Providing multi-lingual access to community information                                                        | 45.0% | 47.6% | 7.4%       |
| Regular outreach to immigrant populations by public safety officials                                           | 34.3% | 38.3% | 27.4%      |
| Holding community events to celebrate cultural diversity that includes new immigrants                          | 30.4% | 60.7% | 8.9%       |
| Encouraging or requiring cultural competency training for local government employees                           | 21.1% | 70.7% | 8.3%       |
| Giving preferential consideration to job applicants with multi-lingual skills                                  | 19.7% | 65.9% | 14.4%      |
| Direct outreach about local government services to immigrant populations                                       | 19.3% | 72.6% | 8.1%       |
| Creating or participating in a local task force or commission devoted entirely or in part to immigrant affairs | 10.6% | 81.8% | 7.6%       |
| Designating a "community engagement coordinator" or other staff focused on engaging with immigrant populations | 9.3%  | 84.6% | 6.1%       |
| Maintaining a formal local government office devoted solely to immigrant affairs                               | 1.4%  | 94.2% | 4.4%       |

| 6. Which groups are involved in providing the following services to immigrants in your community? | Local gov't | Nonprofit/ faith-based orgs | Schools or university | Other entity | None  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|-------|
| English as a second language training                                                             | 6.6%        | 36.4%                       | 61.5%                 | 8.3%         | 22.8% |
| Citizenship or naturalization assistance                                                          | 8.1%        | 37.9%                       | 9.6%                  | 20.8%        | 38.2% |
| Health services                                                                                   | 29.5%       | 44.5%                       | 7.1%                  | 26.9%        | 23.4% |
| Housing assistance                                                                                | 30.3%       | 46.2%                       | 3.5%                  | 19.4%        | 28.6% |
| Other support services (e.g., food pantry, child care)                                            | 18.4%       | 68.8%                       | 11.3%                 | 19.7%        | 17.2% |

| 7. Have you heard of the Welcoming Cities initiative before? | Percent of respondents |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Yes                                                          | 17.7%                  |
| No                                                           | 76.8%                  |
| Don't know                                                   | 5.5%                   |

8. If your community has identified a particular opportunity and/or challenge related to immigration, please describe it here.

*See full dataset for open-ended responses.*

| 9. Does your community highlight racial and ethnic diversity driven by immigration in marketing for economic development? | Percent of respondents |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Yes                                                                                                                       | 10.8%                  |
| No                                                                                                                        | 65.3%                  |
| Don't know                                                                                                                | 24.0%                  |

| 10. Do any of your local government's programs or planning initiatives highlight the following economic opportunities or priorities related to immigrant populations? | Yes   | No    | Don't know |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|------------|
| One stop shop permitting programs for start-ups and minority owned businesses                                                                                         | 14.3% | 67.2% | 18.6%      |
| Grant or loan programs for immigrant entrepreneurs                                                                                                                    | 5.8%  | 74.6% | 19.6%      |
| Fostering immigrant entrepreneurship through microenterprise training programs                                                                                        | 4.7%  | 75.4% | 19.9%      |
| Technical support for micro-financing programs targeting immigrants                                                                                                   | 4.0%  | 77.0% | 19.1%      |
| Marketing initiatives to attract more immigrant entrepreneurs (e.g., EB-5 Immigrant Investor Program*)                                                                | 3.5%  | 76.0% | 20.5%      |

| 11. Which groups in your community offer any of the following?                     | Local gov't | Nonprofit/<br>faith-based<br>orgs | Schools or<br>university | Other<br>entity | None  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Assistance with internship and job placement for international students            | 5.4%        | 17.6%                             | 34.1%                    | 9.3%            | 48.9% |
| Credentialing programs for immigrants                                              | 2.9%        | 19.8%                             | 18.0%                    | 10.7%           | 58.8% |
| Job training and employability skills                                              | 11.4%       | 37.6%                             | 35.2%                    | 15.8%           | 31.5% |
| Matching programs to link skilled immigrants to potential employers and industries | 7.5%        | 28.0%                             | 15.3%                    | 16.4%           | 49.1% |
| Programs for employers that want to hire immigrant or minority populations         | 5.9%        | 22.4%                             | 9.7%                     | 15.2%           | 57.5% |

| 12. Do your public safety officials regularly engage in community outreach with immigrants? | Percent of respondents |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Yes                                                                                         | 34.3%                  |
| No                                                                                          | 38.3%                  |
| Don't know                                                                                  | 27.4%                  |

| 13. Has your community ever experienced a significant civil unrest event related to immigration, ethnic or cultural issues? | Percent of respondents |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Yes                                                                                                                         | 4.4%                   |
| No                                                                                                                          | 87.6%                  |
| Don't know                                                                                                                  | 8.0%                   |

| 14. Has your community considered and/or enacted any of the following?                                                              | Considered | Not considered | Enacted | Policy not allowed | Don't know |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------|---------|--------------------|------------|
| A policy that prohibits employers from hiring unauthorized workers                                                                  | 8.6%       | 63.0%          | 7.0%    | 2.8%               | 23.1%      |
| A policy that requires landlords to verify citizenship or immigration status                                                        | 0.8%       | 67.1%          | 0.1%    | 2.4%               | 26.3%      |
| A policy to collaborate with the federal authorities to share information about immigrants                                          | 7.7%       | 57.1%          | 4.8%    | 2.7%               | 29.4%      |
| A policy <i>not</i> to collaborate with the federal authorities to share information about immigrants (e.g., sanctuary city policy) | 7.0%       | 62.1%          | 3.4%    | 3.0%               | 25.1%      |
| A policy for the care of unattended children resulting from an Immigration Control and Enforcement action                           | 1.3%       | 63.9%          | 0.6%    | 0.8%               | 29.5%      |
| Other measures that provide some sort of sanctuary to unauthorized immigrants                                                       | 4.0%       | 62.9%          | 2.1%    | 2.3%               | 26.6%      |

15. Is there any additional information you wish to share about immigration in your community? (Optional).  
*See full dataset for open-ended responses.*