

Governance and Policy in High-Immigration Cities: Results from Surveys of Elected Officials, Planners, and Police

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Introduction

The 2000 Census revealed the striking extent to which immigration has reached into virtually every corner of California. By that year, foreign-born residents represented 26 percent of the state population. Furthermore, although some large cities such as Los Angeles have long been a prime destination for newcomers, the Census indicated that most communities around the state have seen a substantial entry of foreign-born residents. Indeed, immigrants made up at least 15 percent of the resident population in nearly two-thirds of California's municipalities in 2000. These high-immigration cities include nearly all of the state's traditional central cities, but also a large and growing share of suburban and rural communities.

As researchers, our interest was piqued by these Census findings – and by news stories discussing the problems and successes that immigrant communities and some city governments have faced in relating to one another. Immigrants occupy a somewhat uncertain role in local civic affairs, for a number of reasons: They are often recent arrivals; a high proportion either cannot or do not vote; and they are often not well-connected to associations and interest groups that are important in local affairs in many cities. In addition, some subpopulations of immigrants raise new sets of issues for many cities, such as communicating policies and providing services to non-English speakers, dealing with “day laborers” and informal business activities, and reconciling local land-use policies to the housing needs of a growing immigrant population.

Accordingly, we launched a study of “cities in transition” to examine how cities across California, and their officials, are adjusting to the increased presence of immigrants. In this study, we are interested in the degree to which officials consider immigrants as politically relevant; the ways in which local officials become aware of the needs and preferences of foreign-born residents; and the types of policies and administrative procedures that city governments have adopted to respond to the issues raised by immigrants and immigration in their city.

The overall study, which will be published upon completion of the research, will include results from interviews, case studies, analyses of media coverage, and mail surveys of local officials in these municipalities. *This paper* presents preliminary findings from the survey element of this project – in which we solicited the views of mayors, councilmembers, police chiefs, and planning directors in high-immigration communities – based on questionnaires that were completed and returned by December 22, 2003. While some additional surveys will be returned, they will likely be few enough in number that the results reported here will not change much. These updated results will be reflected in our more extensive report, which will be published in the coming months. In addition, the case studies and interviews we are now working on will provide more depth and context for the survey results that are tabulated in this paper.

We undertook three separate, but interconnected, mail surveys for this project. The most detailed questionnaire was sent to all councilmembers and mayors in a set of 304 cities with sizeable shares of foreign-born residents. In this *elected officials survey*, we were interested in the perceptions of local officeholders about immigrant-related issues, how they learn about

the needs and concerns of immigrant residents and communicate policies to such residents, and the policies their cities have adopted. The survey of elected officials also included detailed modules of questions about law enforcement and housing issues. Much shorter and more tightly focused questionnaires were also sent to police chiefs and to city planning directors. These *police* and *planner* surveys focused, respectively, on questions of law enforcement and of housing and planning policy that are relevant to immigrants in many communities. In addition to repeating some questions from the elected officials' survey, we asked these appointed officials more specific questions about department procedures and experiences.¹

We sent these surveys to officials in 304 California municipalities (of the 478 in existence).² This study sample includes the 299 cities with a population that was at least 15 percent foreign-born, according to the 2000 Census. We also included five cities that are just a shade below the 15-percent threshold, but which had at least 10,000 foreign-born residents, on the assumption that immigrant-related issues were also of significance to these communities (some of which have likely exceeded the 15-percent threshold since 2000). We excluded cities with smaller shares of immigrant residents, since local officials in low-immigration communities might have perceived the survey questions as less relevant and thus might have been unlikely to respond.

The surveys were mailed in the late summer and fall of 2003. As of December 22, 2003, we received usable responses from 60 percent of the police officials contacted, 69 percent of the planning officials, and 32 percent of the elected officials. These levels of participation are well within the range of acceptable to good response rates, based on similar surveys conducted by various research organizations. The elected officials responded at a significantly lower rate than the police or planners, but this was expected, given the busy lives of local politicians, the part-time nature of their city positions (in most cases), and the substantially greater length of the survey questionnaire they received. Nevertheless, it is very heartening to report that *we received responses from one or more elected officials (mayor or councilmember) in 86 percent of the cities we surveyed*. For those 86 percent of cities that responded, we received an average of two responses (for a total of 526 elected officials). Please consult the Appendix for additional information about survey procedures and response rates.

Some of the questions in the *elected officials survey* pertained to these officials *as individuals*, whereas other questions related to the experiences of their *city, or city government, as a whole*. Therefore, in reporting the results below, we refer alternatively to "individual-level responses" of elected officials or to "citywide responses." The individual responses weigh each responding mayor or councilmember equally, regardless of whether there were several respondents from their city or only one. The citywide responses summarize the average or

¹ In cities with "contract" police services carried out by another jurisdiction (generally the county), we attempted to contact the officer who commanded the patrol staff for the city in question (such as a lieutenant in a county sheriff's department that serves the city). This contract service relationship is most common in Los Angeles County.

² The planner survey was mailed to 301 communities, because there were two cities in which the mayor was identified as the planning liaison and one city that contracted out its planning function to the county. The police survey was mailed to 297 cities, because there were two contract cities in which we were unable to identify relevant commanding officers, four contract cities that shared commanding officers with larger cities already in our sample, and one city that was part of a special district patrol area.

predominant response for all of the elected officials in a given city, and then weigh each *city* equally.³ For example, assume there were three respondents from City A, rating a problem on a 1 to 5 scale of seriousness. Two respondents rated the problem as a “1,” while another respondent rated the problem as a “2.” In this case, the citywide response to this question is a 1.33 rating. On the other hand, if two respondents answered “no” to a question about their city, and the third respondent answered “yes,” we report the citywide response to this question as “no” due to the preponderance of responses in that category. In cases where there was no clear-cut citywide response (e.g., one “no” and one “yes” response), we are not able to allocate a citywide response to the city for that question. Of course, if there is only one respondent from a given city, we take that respondent’s answers as the citywide response.

³ Averages are used for survey items using continuous scales, whereas the predominant response is used for dichotomous (yes/no) or mutually exclusive answer categories.

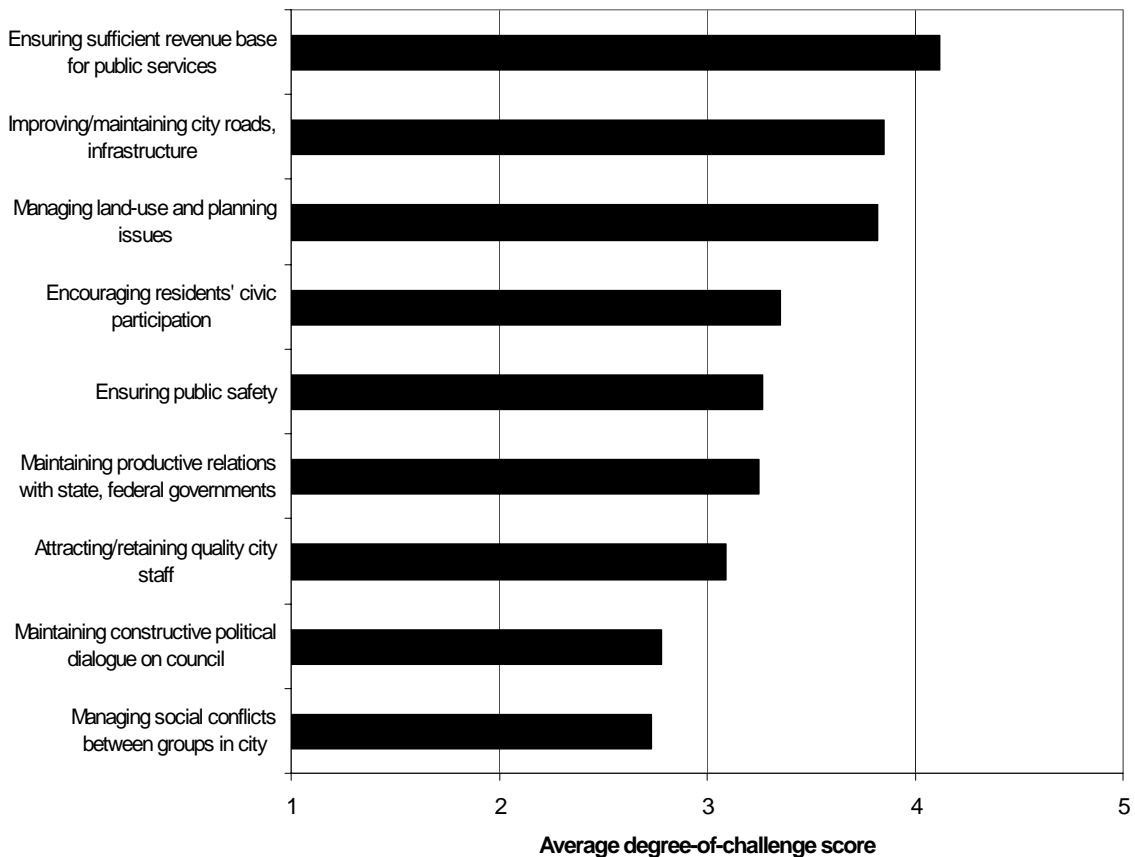
Elected Officials' Assessments of Local Issues and Challenges

Many issues can pose difficulties or challenges for local governments – whether for fiscal, political, technical, or other reasons. This section highlights the challenges facing city governments in high-immigration cities as well as their resident populations.

Challenges for the City Government

We asked elected officials responding to our survey to rate nine sets of issues on a five-point scale from “not much of a challenge” to “very serious challenge.” Figure 1 shows the average ratings given to these issues, aggregated to a *citywide basis* (i.e., averaging the scores provided by respondents in each city, and then weighing each city equally).

Figure 1
Challenges for Municipal Governments in Responding Cities



Not surprisingly, in this period of fiscal stringency and uncertainty “ensuring a sufficient revenue base to provide public services” stood out as the most serious challenge for these city governments. Examining the other issues that are seen as relatively challenging, we find that “improving/maintaining city roads and infrastructure” – a challenge closely connected with the fiscal constraints noted above – ranks second. “Managing land-use and planning issues” and “encouraging participation of local residents in civic affairs” are also areas of concern to this group of cities, perhaps due to their rapid rates of change and the presence of immigrants. Housing issues such as crowding and affordability are often prevalent in high-immigration cities, and civic participation in such municipalities may be limited by language barriers and low rates of citizenship and voting among newcomers.

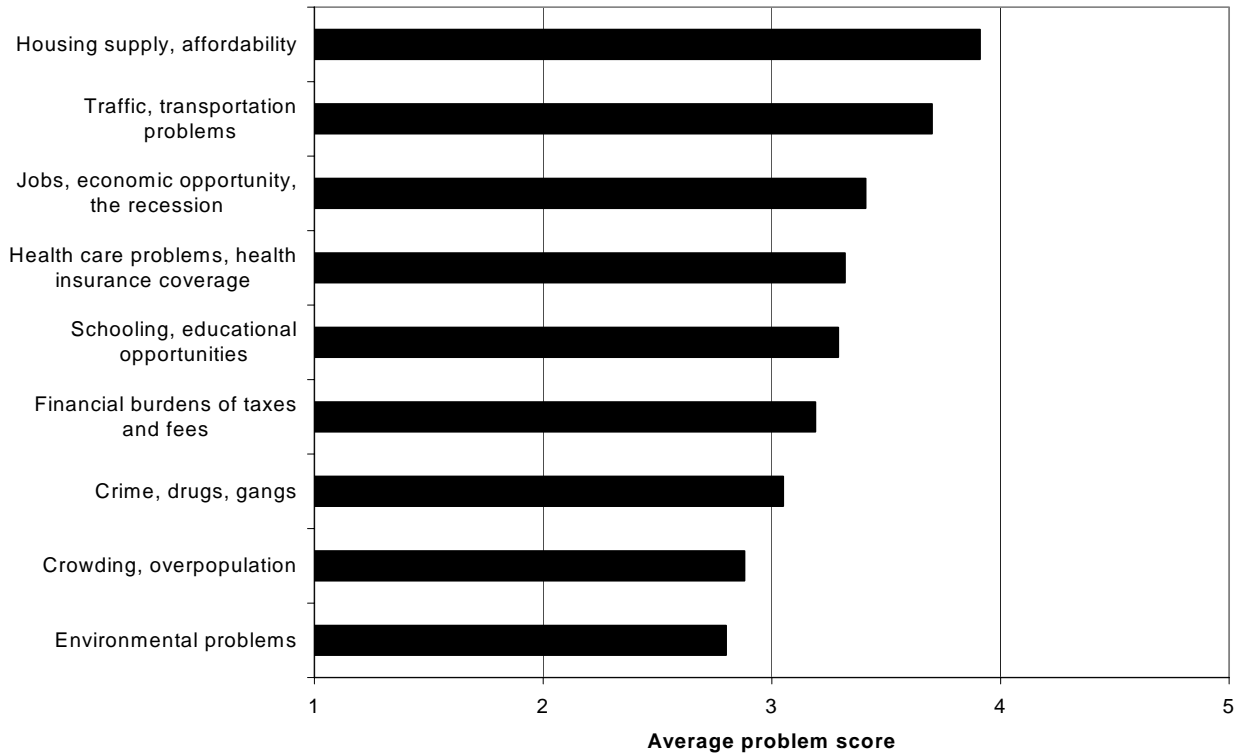
Surprisingly, however, the issue of “managing social conflicts between different groups in the community” is viewed as the least challenging issue by elected officials in these cities (with an average citywide score of 2.7), despite what one might expect in an era of rapid demographic change. If these perceptions of low group-conflict levels are correct, this news is heartening for political life and the incorporation of new groups in California civic affairs. Still, 15 percent of the cities with a score on this item rated the challenge as 4 or higher on the 5-point scale. In our future work, we will examine which city characteristics (demographic, economic, and political) are associated with high scores on this question, so that we can judge the degree to which immigration might be a contributing factor.

Problems Faced by Immigrants and Other Residents

The results presented so far relate to officials’ assessments of the problems faced by their *city government*. We also asked them directly about the degree of problems various issues posed for their *residents*, with the mayors and councilmembers rating a list of nine issue areas on a one-to-five scale from “not much of a problem” to “very serious problem.” A follow-up question then asked the officials to list the three issues (of the nine listed) that posed the biggest problems for immigrant residents of their city (and for minor children of immigrants).

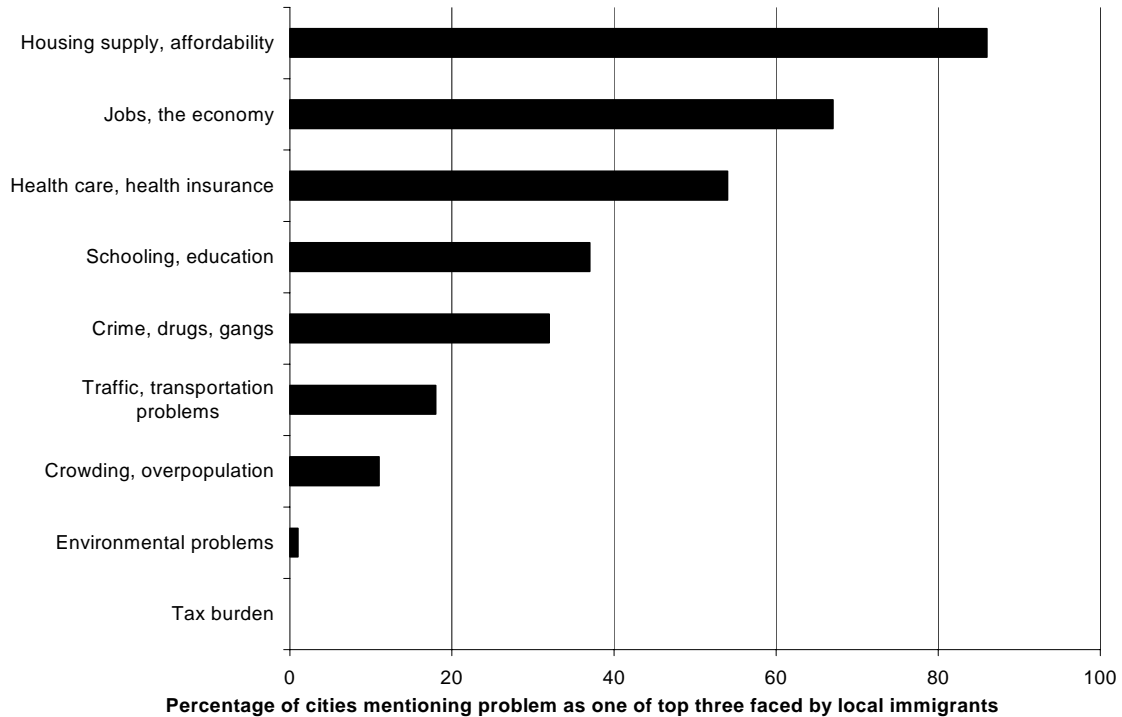
Figure 2 shows the assessment of problem areas for all residents, again showing the average citywide response. Although none of the problems appears to show a dominating level of importance, housing issues and traffic/transportation problems clearly rate highest in seriousness.

Figure 2
Problems Faced by All Residents, According to Councilmembers and Mayors
(Citywide Average Response)



What are the top perceived problems specifically facing *immigrant* residents (and their children) in these cities? As shown in Figure 3, housing issues were most often named by elected officials as being among the three most difficult problems for local immigrants. This issue alone received top-three mention among respondents in 86 percent of the cities, followed by the lack of jobs/economic opportunities (67%) and health care issues (54%). The relative ranking of these problems for immigrant residents is generally similar to the ranking for the general population, although it is more clear that housing is perceived as the most prominent problem. And while traffic and transportation problems are seen as a major problem among the general population, they are not seen as a large problem for immigrant residents. Overall, basic economic needs seem to be considered as a greater concern for immigrant residents than for the general population, which perhaps indicates a greater vulnerability of the foreign-born population to economic downturns and social service cuts.

Figure 3
Top Problems Faced by Immigrant Residents,
According to Councilmembers and Mayors



Immigrants and Local Civic Life

Resolving the issues and problems that concern immigrant communities will depend on the ability of foreign-born residents, or groups that are concerned with immigrant issues, to articulate their needs and views on local issues. Since many foreign-born residents either cannot or do not vote, the electoral mechanism may not be as useful or direct a way for these concerns to be brought to the fore as among native-born residents. In addition to organizing within their own groups or on a pan-ethnic basis, the ability and willingness of immigrants to participate in the broader civic life of the community (through traditional organizations such as social clubs, service organizations, and political clubs) will likely prove important. Of course, the willingness and proactive nature of such groups in welcoming or recruiting membership and participation from among foreign-born members is another key ingredient in incorporating newcomers into a community’s public life.

Our survey of elected city officials includes various questions about their perception of how immigrants are interacting with city government and civic organizations. We also included some normative questions on how immigrants may or may not be contributing to the economic and civic vitality of their municipalities. The elected officials made their evaluations along a five-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 3 (neutral) to 5 (strongly agree). Table 1 provides the results of this exercise, both for individual respondents and for citywide

averages. The first group of statements relates to immigrant interactions with city hall, while the latter deal with how elected officials view immigrants in relation to the economic and civic vitality of the city.

Table 1
Views of Elected City Officials on Immigrant/City Relations

	<u>% of Citywide Responses</u>		<u>% of Individual Responses</u>	
	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>
The immigrant population in our city has led to an increased demand for municipal services.	12	29	15	22
Language barriers have created challenges for city officials and staff in dealing with immigrants.	10	30	14	25
I have a hard time finding out about the political or policy interests of local immigrants.	8	29	12	23
Immigrants in our city mainly seem to keep to themselves.	20	37	22	30
Existing social or civic groups in our city represent the interests of immigrants effectively.	2	20	4	18
Immigrants and their supporters are vocal and well-organized in local civic matters.	1	9	3	12
Overall, immigrants have contributed to the economic vitality of local businesses.	24	40	26	35

These results reveal a mixed picture in the way that city officials view immigrants and civic life in their communities. About two in five respondents see immigrants as increasing demands for municipal services and believe that language barriers have created challenges for city officials in dealing with immigrants. Similarly, 35 percent of individual officials (aggregated to 37 percent on a citywide basis) say that they have a hard time learning about the political or policy concerns of immigrants. So, as far as interactions with city government are concerned, many elected officials see the presence of immigrants as a challenge to governance.

City councilmembers and mayors also cite challenges regarding the civic incorporation of immigrants in their communities. A majority of respondents say that immigrants in their city seem to keep primarily to themselves, and less than one in four officials believe that existing civic groups effectively represent the interests of immigrants. An even smaller proportion of city officials see immigrants as vocal and well-organized in local civic affairs. There is, however, one exception to the general impression that immigrants pose a challenge to city governance and civic life: A solid majority of respondents say that immigrants have

contributed to the economic vitality of their city, a view that is the majority opinion in 64 percent of the cities that responded to our survey.

Immigration Itself as a Local Issue

In some communities, the demographic changes taking place in the community have themselves risen as the subject of local debate among residents and city officials. In other cities, immigrants as a group, or immigration as a phenomenon, have remained off the political radar screen. We asked mayors and councilmembers whether, over the past five years, immigrants or immigration have been “an issue debated in the local politics of your city.” The plurality response is that immigrants and immigration have *not* risen to the level of being an issue; this is the case for 43 percent of responses as aggregated citywide and for 49 percent of individual responses. Nevertheless, a substantial share of these cities (24%) and individuals (35%) maintain that these topics have been debated as a minor issue, whereas a smaller percentage (10% of cities, 16% of individuals) view the immigrant topic as a major city issue.⁴ In future analysis, we will describe the typical characteristics of communities where issues of immigrants and immigration have risen to major prominence.

⁴ At the citywide level, we are unable to allocate 23 percent of cities to one of these response categories due to disagreement among respondents.

Communication Channels between Immigrants and City Hall

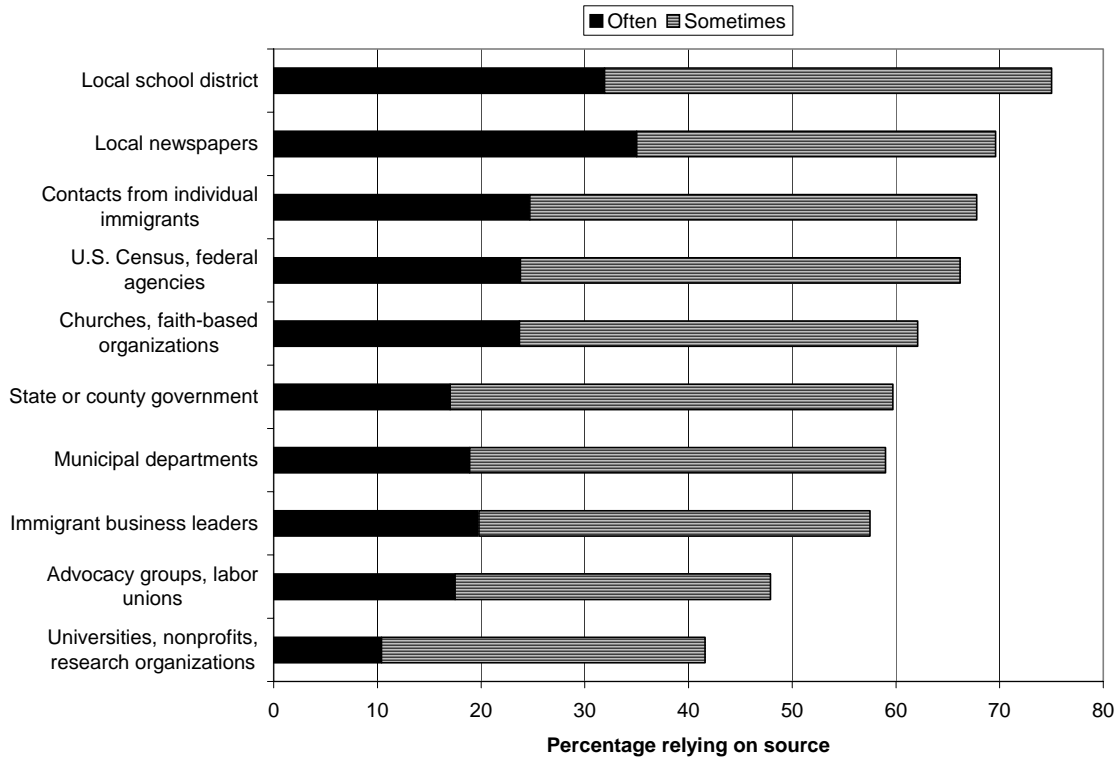
If city governance involves learning about local conditions and populations and responding to those conditions, then communication of local needs to public officials holds an important place in the process. But learning about immigrants can sometimes be challenging for local officials, whether because of language barriers, immigrants' lower rate of electoral participation, or sometimes the absence of influential civic organizations in the immigrant community. For these same reasons, communicating city decisions and local issues to immigrant populations can sometimes prove difficult.

Learning about Immigrant Issues: Sources of Information for Elected Officials

From what sources do elected officials learn about the needs and conditions of immigrants or immigrant groups in their community? Figure 4 (reporting on individual respondents) shows that local politicians learn most often about local immigrants from emphatically *local* sources – but interestingly, not from departments of the city government itself. The local school district, local newspapers, and contacts from individual immigrants (exclusive of immigrant business leaders) are most frequently cited as being sources of relevant information. These information sources, which may be more likely to provide anecdotal information, are turned to slightly more frequently than potentially more authoritative sources, such as the U.S. Census, state government data sources, or municipal departments. Elected officials also report that churches and other faith-based organizations play an important role in articulating the needs and conditions of immigrant groups in their cities, with over 60 percent citing information received from such institutions. By contrast, advocacy groups and labor unions occupy a less prominent role, while universities and research organizations are relied upon least.

One might speculate that it is the uniquely local, contextual knowledge provided by school personnel, local media, and individual contacts that seems most useful and persuasive to these officials. By contrast, Census, state, or researcher sources may provide information at too broad of a geographic or topical level to be as useful. Also, the greater reliance on churches than on advocacy organizations may be attributed to the fact that faith-based organizations with significant immigrant constituencies are more numerous than labor unions or political advocacy groups, and especially so in smaller cities. Such advocacy groups may also be oriented more toward policy issues at the state and county levels than at the local level. Finally, the lesser reliance on labor unions and advocacy groups for immigrant-related information may also reflect a lower receptivity to such organizations by city councilmembers and mayors.

Figure 4
Sources of Information on Local Immigrants Relied Upon by Mayors and Councilmembers



Translation and Language Issues

Many immigrants are not fluent English speakers, which can make translation an important consideration if they are to participate in local government affairs. We asked the elected officials whether city government documents, such as council agendas or minutes, are “routinely translated” into non-English languages. There was a fair amount of disagreement on this issue among different respondents from the same city, which led us to assign 21% of cities to an “unallocated” category because of uncertainty as to the city’s actual practices. However, most cities (52% of the total) provided “typically no translation,” according to our respondents. One-fifth (20%) provide translation “only upon request,” whereas only a small share of high-immigration cities (6% of the 254 with answers to this item) routinely translate city documents into foreign languages. As for the languages of such translation, Spanish was overwhelmingly the language of choice for translation of documents, with officials in only a handful of communities indicating that documents were regularly prepared in Chinese, Tagalog, or other non-English languages.

In addition to documents written in languages other than English, in-person interpreters can be important if non-English speakers wish to transact business at city hall or participate in hearings or meetings. We asked the mayors and councilmembers whether “interpreters are available through the municipal government so that residents who do not speak English can discuss issues with city staff or at public hearings.” Here, translation is far more common than

for city documents. More than two-thirds of high-immigration cities either often (29%) or sometimes (40%) provide such interpreters, though in 20 percent of the cities such interpretation is almost never available and in 11 percent is never available. It is important to bear in mind that the wording of this question allows for informal types of translation (such as a bilingual city clerical worker helping an administrator communicate with an immigrant at city hall) as well as more formal types of translation (such as by a paid interpreter at a public hearing).

As Table 1 indicated, elected officials in about four cities in ten say that language barriers have posed challenges for city staff in dealing with immigrants. When we asked our planning director respondents this same question, specifically as pertains to planning issues and planning staff, a smaller share (only 22%) agreed with the statement. This difference may indicate that planning officials are less likely to be approached by non-English speaking residents without a bilingual family member, attorney, or other representative in the room. Also, planning officials may have fewer opportunities to interact with immigrants, who may be reluctant to participate due to a lack of familiarity with city bureaucracy or to language barriers (perceived or real). Immigrants' interactions with other types of city staff may be more impromptu and therefore subject to more language difficulties – an issue we will discuss below in the case of police.

City Boards and Commissions

In many communities, appointive positions in local government, such as those on planning, parks, or civil service commissions, are quite important in local policymaking. Furthermore, occupants of these positions may gain experience and name recognition that help them become leaders in local affairs, either by subsequently running for elective office themselves or by attaining leadership positions in civic organizations and other groups. Immigrants hold a somewhat tenuous position in some cities when it comes to service on these bodies. Such positions are often used to reward longtime community residents, and some cities have official or unofficial rules against naming non-U.S. citizens to such offices.

We did not ask elected officials directly about how well immigrants *per se* are represented on city boards and commissions, but did ask about the officials' perceptions of how well Latinos, Asian Americans, and African Americans were represented. Table 2 indicates (according to citywide average responses among elected officials) that Latinos are far more likely to be very or somewhat well represented on such bodies than are the other two groups. Of course, the quality of such representation is in the eyes of the beholder, and many California cities – even among this group of high-immigration jurisdictions – have very small populations of Asians or African Americans. In our future work, we will examine how these results relate to the proportions of each of the various ethnic or racial groups in a city's population.

Table 2
Elected Officials’ Views of How Well Various Groups are Represented
on City Boards and Commissions (Citywide Average Responses, in Percent)

	<u>Very Well</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Marginal/None</u>
Latinos	27	45	28
Asian Americans	9	36	55
African Americans	11	31	58

We also asked about the presence of one particular type of city commission: the human relations commission (“or other such group with the responsibility of dealing with conflicts and equity issues among members of various ethnic, racial, or other demographic groups”). These bodies are among the few in local politics that are explicitly designed to raise and consider issues related to immigrants and intergroup relations. According to our citywide responses from elected officials, about one-quarter (24%) of high-immigration cities have a human relations commission, whereas 69 percent do not. In the remaining 7 percent of cities, officials did not know or had contradictory responses.

Intermediary Groups between City Officials and Immigrants

Sometimes, city governments and local officials wish to publicize issues of community concern or inform constituents about new policies, upcoming meetings, or other news. We asked elected officials, “If there were an issue or a government program or service that you thought local immigrant residents should become aware of, are there particular groups or organizations you would be likely to turn to in order to help reach such residents?” Respondents could name as many as two organizations. To some degree, this question is intended to investigate the prevalence of civic groups and organizations that speak for immigrants or have immigrants among their members; it also is, in part, a measure of the familiarity of officials with any such organizations.

Among the individual mayors and councilmembers responding to the survey, 45 percent were able to name one or more such groups, with more than 200 individual organizations mentioned. Among the most common types of organizations were many specific churches or religious congregations, ethnic service organizations (e.g., Fil-Am Association, Latino Town Hall), ethnic chambers of commerce, local charitable organizations, and neighborhood organizations. The remaining 55 percent of elected officials did not name any groups (but did answer the prior survey question, indicating they did not simply skip this entire section or page of the questionnaire).⁵

Contacts with Foreign Government Officials

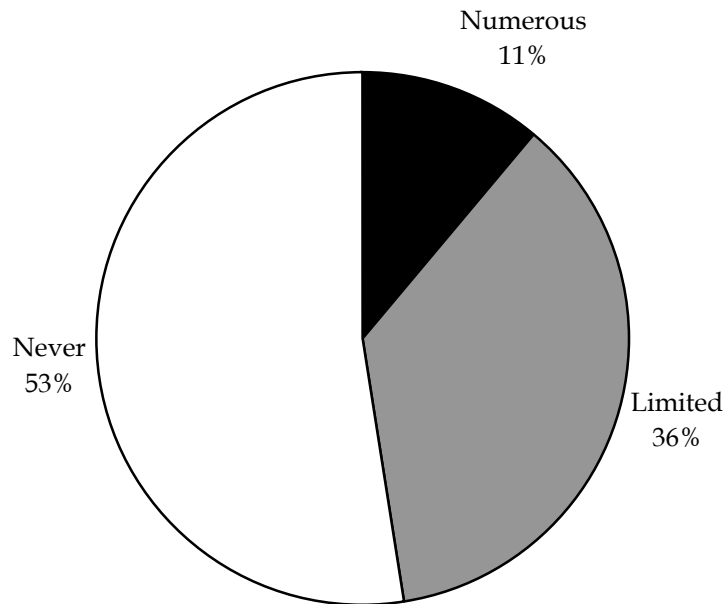
In California, with its strategic position along the Pacific rim and the Mexican border, the “local” often interacts with the “global,” as communities establish ties of kinship or trade to other parts of the world – often, the sending nations of local immigrant residents. To assess this increasing transnationalism, we asked councilmembers and mayors whether, in their role as city

⁵ Unfortunately, the nature of this question, and the uneven number of responses per city, makes it difficult to aggregate individual responses into a citywide aggregate.

officials, they have had contacts with officials of foreign governments (such as embassy or consulate staff) on topics relating to ethnic groups in their communities.

The results indicate that such contacts are fairly common (see Figure 5). Nearly half (47%) of individual respondents have had such contacts, although they are more frequently described as “limited” (36%) than as “numerous” (11%). At the citywide level, in 54 percent of these cities, half or more of the elected officials who responded indicated that they have had contacts with foreign officials.

Figure 5
Degree of Contact with Foreign Officials among Councilmembers and Mayors



Law-Enforcement Issues in High-Immigration Cities

Policing and law enforcement are among the most important – and potentially sensitive – issues confronting municipalities with changing populations and large numbers of newcomers to the country. In their home countries, some immigrants dealt with law enforcement officials who were corrupt or who used force frequently; some immigrants lived in fear of government authorities more generally. Moreover, cultural practices among some immigrants may be very distinctive and may make them “stand out” in certain California communities.

Our questionnaire for police chiefs and commanding officers therefore touched on several key issues related to law enforcement in high-immigration communities, including the style of police patrol, language issues, enforcement of rules against informal or unlicensed businesses, and procedures for interactions with individuals who lack official U.S. documentation. Some of these questions were also asked of the mayors and councilmembers, and in these cases we present the survey results from both the police and the elected-official groups.

Local Conditions, Police Practices, and Police-Community Relations

Some – but certainly not all – high-immigration communities experience conditions that can make policing particularly challenging and sensitive. We sought to understand the degree to which some problems and conditions that have marked some ethnic neighborhoods at some points of time in the United States are widespread in California’s high-immigration communities. Many of these conditions, listed as statements in Table 3, are linked in the popular imagination or in the media with certain big-city neighborhoods. Among the entire set of police departments responding to our survey, however, most of these problems do not appear widespread.

For example, only about one-quarter of the police chiefs indicate that immigrant residents have been special targets for con artists or other fraudulent activity, and fewer than one in ten indicate that immigrant-owned businesses have been the subject of extortion attempts. Moreover, mistrust of local police among residents is not seen as a major problem (and responses among elected officials to this question are very similar, perhaps indicating that the police officials are not simply viewing this issue through rose-colored glasses). On the other hand, 38 percent of the police chiefs agree with the statement that immigrants are often reluctant to seek police help. And half of the police respondents say that youth gangs – which may or may not be comprised heavily of immigrants or first-generation residents – are a major source of criminal activity in their city. (In a separate question to the mayors and councilmembers, officials in 75 percent of cities indicated that the local police had a special unit or program to fight gang activity.)

Table 3
Conditions of Policing, According to Police Chiefs/Commanders (in Percent)

	Strongly Agree	Agree
Immigrant residents of our city are often reluctant to seek help from the police.	6	32
Mistrust of police by residents is a major problem in our city.*	2	7
Youth gangs are a major source of criminal activity in this city.	22	28
Immigrant-owned businesses in our city have had problems with extortion attempts.	1	8
There have been problems in our city in which immigrant residents have been the targets of fraud, confidence schemes, or other scams.	6	22
The police department often receives complaints that there are too many people living in a housing unit.	7	14

* This question was also asked of mayors and councilmembers. The citywide responses among the elected officials for this question were 2 percent strongly agree, 9 percent agree.

What practices and patrol methods do police use in high-immigration communities to deal with these and other potentially sensitive issues? First of all, getting to know the community and its law enforcement needs may demand special effort in cities with many newcomers. We asked the police chiefs whether they agreed with several statements about police practices in their city. To get a perspective that is perhaps more neutral, we also asked elected officials for their views on the same set of statements, along with a few others (Table 4).

The first four statements in the table are associated with the “community policing” approach that has become very popular among police organizations. Here, we find wide agreement among both police and elected officials that the department is engaged in community policing, that it holds frequent community meetings, and that it coordinates well with local school officials. On a more specific question about police patrol, however – the use of foot or bike patrols as a major component of policing – there is less widespread indication that these cities are using this technique.

Most police departments in high-immigrant cities are also apparently devoting major efforts to breaking up the drug trade. Moreover, elected-official responses indicate that most departments are relatively well-trained to deal with residents of various cultural backgrounds and that they devote some efforts toward combating fraud and other activities that target vulnerable groups (such as seniors and, in some places, immigrants). Finally, elected officials in about one in seven cities indicated that the use of police force in their city had often been a source of concern for residents.

Table 4
Local Police Practices, According to Police and Mayor/Council Respondents

	<i>% of Police Chiefs/ Commanders</i>		<i>% of Citywide Responses among Elected Officials</i>	
	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>
The police regularly hold neighborhood meetings and engage in community outreach.	36	36	28	35
Foot or bike patrols are a major component of police patrol efforts.	8	29	13	29
The department has made major efforts to implement a “community policing” approach.	59	31	48	34
On matters relating to juveniles, the police department’s relationship with the local school district(s) has been close and cordial.	66	27	50	34
Police devote major resources and time attempting to break up the drug trade.	20	35	24	45
Police make special efforts to combat fraud and other activities that target vulnerable groups.	not asked		12	46
Police officers are adequately trained to deal with persons of different cultural backgrounds.	not asked		26	46
Residents have often expressed concerns about allegedly inappropriate use of force by police.	not asked		4	10

Also related to police/community relations is the issue of review of police behavior by a civilian body or other authority outside the police department. We asked both police officials and elected officials whether their city has a “citizen review commission or other officially constituted group that has the power to review complaints and allegations by residents against police officers and recommend remedies or punishments.” Among the police officials, 9 percent agreed with this question, compared to 17 percent of citywide responses among elected officials. The level of differences here may reflect the somewhat different set of communities responding to each survey, as well as differing interpretations of the question. On nearly all of the other questions that were asked on both surveys, however, there was a reasonable degree of congruence between the responses of the two groups of officials.

Translation and Language Issues

In police work, time is of the essence. What if officers respond to a call, but a victim or a witness is unable to speak English and the officers do not speak that person’s native language? We presented police chiefs with this hypothetical scenario in our questionnaire and asked how officers in their department would typically proceed. As Table 5 shows, 9 percent of the

respondents refused to be pinned down to one answer, often pointing out that the response would be dictated by the circumstances (i.e., whether an officer speaking that language was on duty, whether the incident was an emergency or a routine call, etc.) Nevertheless, we thought it useful to ask the police respondents to check one answer showing how an officer would proceed in a “typical” situation. About seven in ten chiefs said that the officer would likely call the department to send an officer fluent in that language – an indication that language diversity and the need for bilingual officers is already a fact of life in these departments. About one in seven chiefs said that a civilian would typically be called on for translation.

Table 5
Typical Response of an Officer if Victim/Witness Unable to Speak English,
According to Police Chiefs/Commanders

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Ask the department to send an officer who speaks the person's language.	69
Call on a translator employed by the city or county.	2
Call on a translation service the department contracts with for this purpose.	5
Ask a civilian family member, neighbor, etc., to translate.	14
More than one of the above/it depends (volunteered).	9

Some of the challenges of translation may not occur if some share of police officers patrolling a high-immigration city are themselves bilingual. We asked our police respondents whether their departments offered a salary bonus to officers capable of speaking a language other than English, and whether such bilingualism was a factor taken into account in favor of candidates applying for a position as a police officer in their department. Indeed, it appears that the vast majority of police departments have made efforts toward more language diversity among police personnel. Specifically, 81 percent of departments responding to the survey count bilingualism as a favorable factor in the recruitment process, and 87 percent offer additional pay to bilingual officers (Table 6).

Table 6
Department Policies Regarding Bilingual Police Personnel (in Percent)

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
<u>Ability to speak a second language...</u>			
...counted as favorable factor for job applicants?	81	14	4
...rewarded with bonus in pay?	87	13	1

Day Laborers

Some cities have issues with so-called day laborers – individuals who gather, often outdoors, to seek manual labor jobs or other employment for the day. Without formal employment, these individuals – who may or may not have legal residency status in the United

States – seek work from passersby, who often know the locations where the laborers gather. Although day labor has a long history in the United States and other societies, this issue has risen to a level of community controversy in some California cities, judging by media reports. Concerns have been raised over a host of issues, ranging from traffic congestion, crime, or visual blight in day-labor areas, to shakedowns and unsafe working conditions on the part of employers. Local police are sometimes asked to respond to these concerns. Some city governments have made policy decisions to reduce day-labor activity or regulate its location; some cities have attempted to move the activity off the streets by supporting hiring halls, often in partnership with nonprofit groups. Although certainly not all day laborers are immigrants, the issue is closely associated with immigration, both legal and illegal.

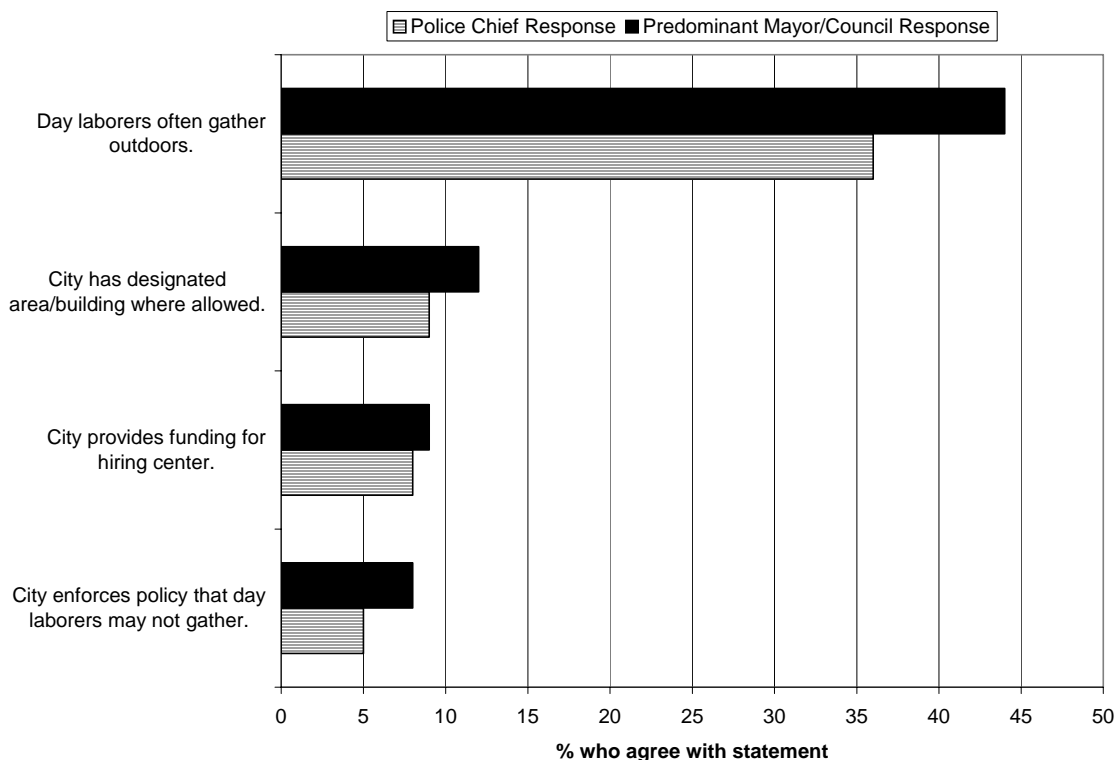
We asked both police respondents and elected-official respondents whether four statements about day labor and local policy were true in their community:

- “Day laborers often gather outdoors at one or more locations in our city, looking for work from passersby.”
- “The city has designated an area or building at which day-labor activity is allowed.”
- “The city provides funding to support a hiring center for day laborers (either locally or elsewhere in the region).”
- “The city actively enforces a policy that forbids day laborers to congregate in outdoor locations.”

Based on our experience with the mayor/council survey, we gave police officials the additional option of indicating that day-labor issues were not present in their city, and 58 percent agreed that that was the case.

Figure 6 shows the percentage of police officials agreeing with each statement, along with the predominant response of the elected officials to these questions, at the citywide level. Although the mayors and councilmembers are more likely to agree with each of the statements, the overall story is consistent across the two groups: More than one-third of high-immigration cities have “visible” day-labor markets, but relatively few have responded with specific policy measures. Specifically, about one city in ten has designated an area where such activity is permitted, 8 or 9 percent provide funding for a hiring center, and 5–8 percent of communities attempt a “prohibition” policy. In short, most city governments – and their police departments – do not experience this issue, but of the substantial minority that do, there is no policy response that has gained clear popularity, except perhaps avoidance of the issue.

Figure 6
Day Labor Conditions and Policies
(in percent)



Informal Businesses

Immigrants are a select group, by virtue of their decision to uproot themselves from familiar surroundings and move to the United States. For many, economic advancement is the major goal, and many immigrants historically have engaged in small business ownership – stores, services, restaurants – to advance their fortunes. However, those newcomers with few formal resources, little access to credit, and incomplete knowledge of business regulation in their new country may resort to running small businesses informally or “under the table.” Undocumented immigrants may also engage in informal businesses in an attempt to avoid detection by authorities.

Although many such businesses are fairly invisible to the outside community, in other cases conflicts have arisen with neighbors and local authorities. Home-based businesses, such as car repair shops or beauty salons; street peddlers selling food or flowers in public areas; personal services operating without a business license; and other such businesses are tolerated in some communities but considered nuisances in others. Of course, not all informal businesses are attributable to immigrants, but we suspect the issue is more likely to arise in cities with larger immigrant populations. We therefore asked police officials about the policy approach

taken with respect to informal businesses and illegal peddling.⁶ We recognize, however, that in many cities employees from other city departments – building or health inspectors, for example – might be the primary point of contact with such business operators. Therefore, these results should be considered illustrative rather than definitive.

Table 7 indicates that – as appears to be the case with day labor – overt policy responses to informal businesses, or aggressive enforcement against such activities, seem to be the exception rather than the rule. About 44 percent of the police chiefs indicate that such issues are either investigated only in response to specific complaints or are generally resolved informally. About one in seven chiefs indicates that the city is more aggressive in finding and citing such illegal operators. Another one-third of chiefs say that some other city department is typically responsible for responding. Only a handful indicate that such issues do not occur locally.

Table 7
Typical Police Response to Informal Businesses,
According to Chief/Commander

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent of Cities</u>
Aggressively seek out such activities and cite offenders	15
Investigate in response to specific complaints only	37
Usually try to resolve the issue informally	7
Another city department handles such issues	33
More than one of the above (volunteered)	6
No such issues in this city	3

Identification of Undocumented Immigrants

One of the most controversial issues in recent years surrounding immigration in California concerns the question of whether foreign government identifications – particularly, the *matricula consular* issued by the Mexican government for Mexicans abroad – may be used as a valid form of identification for a variety of official purposes in the United States. Since law enforcement personnel often ask residents to identify themselves, this issue has particular relevance to police departments. Of the chiefs and commanding officers responding to our survey, 62 percent indicated that their departments generally accept consular or other Mexican ID cards as a valid form of identification, while 29 percent said they do not. (The remaining 9 percent didn’t know, which probably indicates that the issue has not, as of yet, formally presented itself in these communities.)

Another issue that has received some attention is whether local police make contacts with the Immigration and Naturalization Service if they determine that a suspect or other individual is in the United States illegally. We asked the police officials whether their

⁶ We took care to indicate that this question was not directed at “vice” businesses like illegal drug sales or prostitution.

department would typically contact the INS “if an individual in police custody is unable to produce a valid ID and is suspected to be an undocumented immigrant.” Just over one-quarter of respondents (27%) said their department would likely contact the INS, whereas 70 percent said this was unlikely and 3 percent did not know.

We also asked elected officials these questions. Interestingly, despite the occasionally intense political interest in these issues, many elected officials do not have much knowledge about their police department’s policies on identification. Among the mayors and councilmembers, more than two-thirds simply did not know whether consular IDs were accepted by the police in their city, and more than seven in ten did not know whether the INS would be contacted if the local police had a suspected undocumented immigrant in custody.

Hate Crimes

Police in more than half of departments responding to the survey (55%) indicated that their department had investigated at least one “hate crime” incident in the previous year. Asked whether any of the alleged hate crimes had been targeted against an immigrant or immigrants, among those departments indicating that they had investigated hate crimes, 29 percent said that immigrants were targeted, 54 percent said the targeted persons were not immigrants, and 17 percent did not know if the victims were immigrants.

On the elected-officials survey only, we asked whether the mayors and councilmembers felt that police in their city “aggressively investigate hate crimes or incidents of ethnic/racial harassment.” Nearly three-quarters of citywide responses either strongly agreed (28%) or agreed (46%) with this statement.

Ethnic and Racial Diversity among Police Personnel

Recruitment and retention of a diverse police force may be one way in which police departments can help ease relations with a changing community. Accordingly, some police administrators have gone to some lengths to try to create a police force that “looks like the community,” although such efforts can be complicated by hiring, testing, and promotional rules.

We asked the chiefs or commanders to indicate the number of sworn officers working in their city, and the number of those officers who are Hispanic/Latino, African-American/black, or Asian or Pacific Islander. Several respondents chose not to complete this section. For the 173 cities where respondents substantially completed this survey question, Table 8 shows the aggregate number of police officers in each category. About four officers in ten in these high-immigration cities are members of these minority groups, with Latino officers and African American officers reaching 25 percent and 8 percent of the total, respectively. However, both Latinos and Asian/Pacific Islanders are represented in police forces to a significantly lower degree than their presence in the overall population in these communities, as the table documents.

Table 8
Ethnic/Racial Makeup of Police Force
in 173 High-Immigration Cities

	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Group's Proportion of Total Population of These Cities (%)</u>
Total sworn officers	28,216	100	--
Hispanic or Latino	7,107	25	36
African American or black	2,398	8	6
Asian or Pacific Islander	1,855	7	11

It should be noted that the ethnic/racial makeup of police forces varies considerably across cities. For example, the median department in this group has a force in which Latino officers are 17 percent of the total, but at least two small departments are more than 70 percent Latino, and in about one-fifth of the departments, Latino officers are less than 10 percent of the total police force. These differences are likely due, in large part, to differences in the racial and ethnic composition of each city, and we will explore this relationship in greater detail in our full report.

Housing and Planning Issues in High-Immigration Cities

As noted above, elected officials saw housing issues as the biggest challenges facing residents of these high-immigration cities, and as a particularly great concern for foreign-born residents. In addition to the challenge of finding an affordable place to live that faces so many Californians, immigrants – in some cities at least – have introduced some new considerations that may affect local efforts to plan for growth and enforce housing regulations. Immigrant household sizes are often larger – that is, there are more persons per dwelling unit – than households of the native-born. This pattern is likely due to a combination of factors, including a cultural tradition in many Latin American and Asian societies of multiple generations living together in the same home, poverty among some immigrants that leads to doubling-up in housing units, and a high rate of childbearing among first-generation Latinas.⁷ Some have suggested that California’s housing market is mismatched to its emerging demographic needs, since developers have largely concentrated on building for more traditional households, and production of rental and attached housing has slowed compared to single-family units.

In addition, media articles have reported on numerous cases of high-immigration cities – typically the less affluent communities in this group – experiencing controversies over overcrowded housing. In some such circumstances, longtime residents or city officials have complained about the large numbers of (sometimes unrelated) individuals living in a given housing unit, about illegal conversion of garages or other structures into dwelling units, or about neighborhood parking shortages ostensibly brought on by increases in the number of people (and their associated cars) in a given area. These conditions have also raised fire-safety and sanitation concerns in at least a few communities. In this section, we attempt to determine how widespread some of these conditions and concerns are, as well as the extent to which city officials are considering issues of immigrants and affordability in their housing plans and policies. We draw here upon our survey of planning directors as well as the elected officials’ survey.

Housing Conditions and Plans

Do city governments in high-immigration cities devote special consideration to immigrant housing needs, or are immigrants not considered separately from the city’s population as a whole? We began the planners’ questionnaire by asking them whether housing conditions among immigrant residents have been “an issue debated by your city’s planning commission or city council.” Respondents from the vast majority of cities (71%) indicated that immigrant housing conditions had not been debated by these local bodies. By contrast, 13 percent said immigrant housing conditions had been a major issue before the council or planning commission, and 14 percent said it had been a minor issue. (The other 2 percent did not know.)

⁷ See Rosa M. Moller, Hans Johnson, and Michael Dardia, *What Explains Crowding in California?* (Sacramento: California Research Bureau, 2002); Dowell Myers, “Demographic Futures as a Guide to Planning: California’s Latinos and the Compact City,” *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 67:4 (2001), pp. 383-97.

A city's *housing element* is a state-required portion of its general plan that discusses the community's existing and anticipated housing needs, conditions, and policies. More than three-quarters of the planners (77%) indicated that their city's housing element does not specifically address immigrant housing needs or conditions, whereas 19 percent said the local plan does discuss immigrants. Thus, by and large, immigrants' housing issues are not treated as distinctive from the housing needs of other groups in these cities (e.g., low-income persons, renters, farmworkers).

Housing Crowding

Residential overcrowding – particularly in areas where many immigrants live – is perceived as a problem in a sizeable minority, but not a majority, of California's high-immigration cities. Responses from planners and elected officials on an equivalent set of crowding-related questions showed a fair amount of agreement, although the elected officials were slightly more inclined to see problems (Table 9). Among responding mayors and councilmembers (citywide responses), in about four cities in ten – compared to about one in three among planners – there was agreement or strong agreement that overcrowded housing was a problem, that residents often complained about shortages of parking in the neighborhoods, and that overcrowding and housing code violations were mainly a problem in the sections of the city where immigrants tend to live. (Bear in mind that parking shortages may occur for a number of reasons, some of which have little to do with crowded housing units.)

Table 9
Conditions Relating to Housing Crowding,
According to Planners and Elected Officials

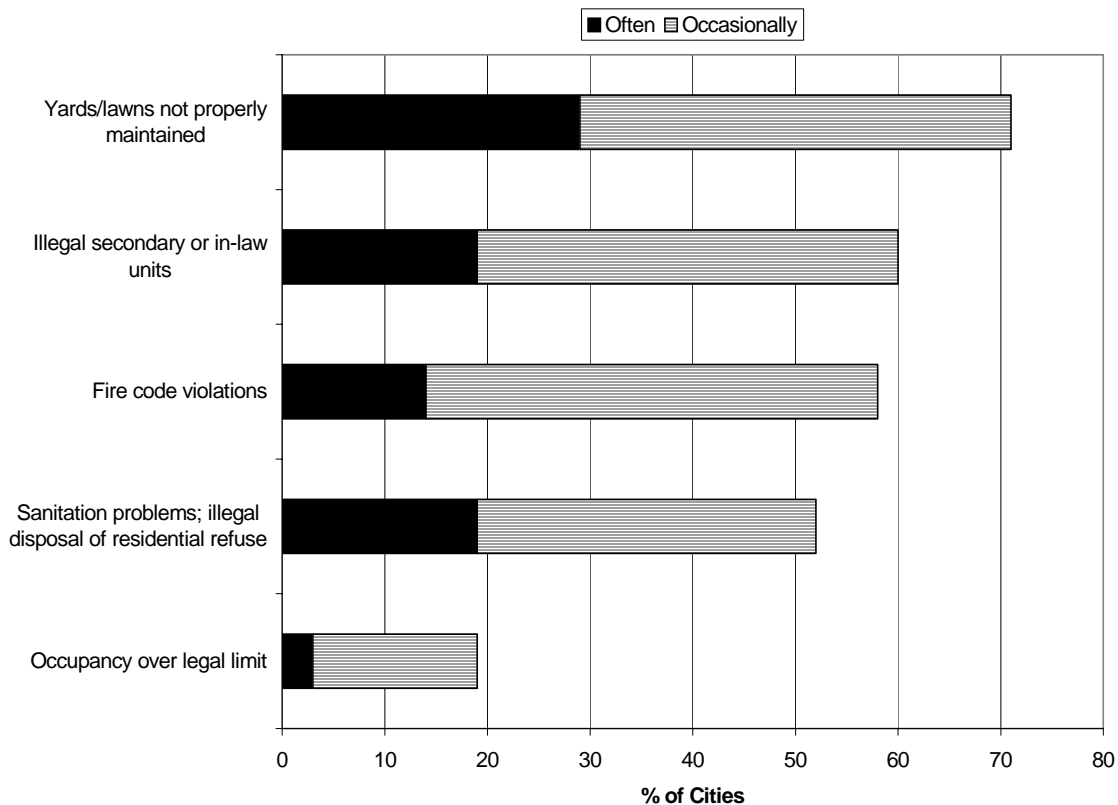
	<u>% Who Agree or Strongly Agree</u>	
	<u>Planners</u>	<u>Elected Officials (Citywide Average)</u>
Residential overcrowding is a major problem in this city.	31	39
Residents often complain about a shortage of street parking in residential areas.	38	40
Overcrowding and housing code violations are a problem mainly in the parts of town where many immigrants live.	31	38

Code Enforcement of Residential Buildings

We were interested in what specific types of housing code violations might be present in these high-immigration cities and how often such problems were cited by city inspectors. Media accounts of controversies over immigrant housing issues in some Southern California cities have identified concerns about overcrowding, fire code violations, and sanitation problems (e.g, too much residential waste for the size of garbage receptacles in apartment buildings).

We asked the planners about the prevalence of citations for five possible types of code violations (Figure 7). Respondents could indicate that the city cited property owners for such problems often, occasionally, or rarely, or that such conditions were not present in the city. Although building inspectors are often located in a different city department than the planners, the planning directors might be expected to have close firsthand knowledge of local housing problems, given the substance of their work.⁸

Figure 7
Prevalence of Citations for Housing Code Violations,
According to Planning Directors



Few planners indicate that their cities cite many properties for occupancy over the legal limit. In California, cities are legally constrained in their discretion to set standards for residential occupancy beyond the relatively lax standards set by the state.⁹ On the other hand, about six in ten high-immigration cities cite property owners for illegal secondary units at least occasionally, according to the planners, and 19 percent cite this condition often. Fire code

⁸ We asked the same code-violation questions of the elected officials. However, the elected officials were much more likely to answer “don’t know” than the planners, and our ability to determine citywide responses was compromised for a fair number of cities due to don’t-know or contradictory responses among mayors and councilmembers from that community.

⁹ See the discussion in Stacy Harwood and Dowell Myers, “The Dynamics of Immigration and Local Governance in Santa Ana: Neighborhood Activism, Overcrowding, and Land-Use Policy,” *Policy Studies Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 2002, pp. 78-82.

violations and sanitation problems are also cited with some frequency in these cities, whereas the most often cited of these conditions is for poor maintenance of yards or lawns.

Of course, we do not mean to imply that these issues occur only in high-immigration communities, nor that immigrants are the responsible parties for most code violations. However, for reasons discussed at the beginning of this section, we do suspect that some of these concerns, particularly those resulting from crowding, are more prevalent in high-immigration cities. In our follow-up work, we will examine the prevalence of housing code problems and its relationship to a city’s size, socioeconomic status, percentage of foreign-born residents, and other factors.

Affordable Housing Issues

Given the expressed views of elected officials that housing is a top problem among these cities – and a particular problem for foreign-born residents – it is interesting to take note of the perceptions of local officials toward current affordability conditions in their cities. Table 10 reports on the share of planners and the share of citywide elected-official responses indicating agreement with four statements about local housing conditions. The first two statements evoke positive views of local housing opportunities, whereas the next two are indicative of serious housing problems (homelessness or very marginal shelter) among at least a segment of the local population.

Table 10
Local Housing Affordability Conditions,
As Perceived by Planners and Elected Officials

	<u>% Who Agree or Strongly Agree</u>	
	<u>Planners</u>	<u>Elected Officials (Citywide Average)</u>
There are plenty of rental units in the city that are affordable to low-income residents.	16	20
Most of our police, teachers, and city staff are able to buy housing in or near this city.	36	39
Quite a few people live in garages, cars, or other informal dwellings in this city.	26	27
Homelessness is a visible problem in this city.	21	24

The perceptions of the two groups of respondents are remarkably similar – and quite distressing. Taken together, only about one city in five is seen as having “plenty” of affordable rental units, and in fewer than four cities in ten are civil servants such as teachers and police seen as having a reasonable ability to purchase housing in or near the town they work in. Perhaps worse still, about one city in four has a visible homelessness problem or “quite a few” residents living in garages, cars, or the like.

What are some policy responses to local housing affordability problems? One common approach in California and other states is the “inclusionary housing” requirement, by which developers of new residential projects are required to include a proportion of units in their projects priced to be affordable to low- or moderate-income buyers or renters. We asked planners whether their city had a formal inclusionary housing requirement for at least some types of residential projects. Slightly less than half (44%) indicated that their city had such a requirement, compared to 54 percent who said the city did not have such rules.

Given that it is widely held by local officials that many of these high-immigration cities have critical needs for affordable housing, it is interesting to ask whether local politics gives much weight to those in favor of affordable housing development, as against those who might be expected to oppose it. We asked both the planners and elected officials whether there was a group in the community – “not including homebuilders, real estate interests, or city staff” – that “actively lobbies for increased housing opportunities or affordable housing.” Among the planners responding to this question, there was an even split – 48% yes, 48% no. (The rest did not know.) The citywide responses of elected officials (that is, the predominant response in the city among mayors and councilmembers responding) were extremely similar in character: 42% yes, 44% no. (The remaining cities could not be allocated to one or another category due either to “don’t know” or conflicting responses.) Thus, approximately half of high-immigration cities appear to have organized interests working on behalf of affordable housing.

Additional Background on These Cities, Their Officials, and Their Politics

We asked the mayors and councilmembers for some additional information about themselves and their communities, as well as about the local political scene. These data help set the context for city government relationships with immigrants. We also collected data on the ethnic or racial background and experience level of the respondents to all three surveys – elected officials, planners, and police.

Experience in City Government

Elected officials in high-immigration cities are typically not rookies to local politics. The median mayor or council respondent was elected to municipal office twice in his or her city (mean of 2.2 times). The median respondent has held elected office in his or her community for five years, although the mean length of service is 7.1 years, due to the presence of several elected officials with very long tenures in office.

Moreover, most of these officials did not face a very challenging electoral environment in their most recent election. Asked how they would characterize their most recent election victory, three-quarters of respondents either said they had a “fairly easy” victory (65%) or were unopposed for office (12%). Only 23 percent viewed their election victory as “fairly slim.” This finding supports earlier research by PPIC which found that many local elections in California are fairly lopsided contests, with the vast majority of incumbents who stand for reelection achieving success.¹⁰

Police chiefs, almost by definition, have a great deal of experience in local law enforcement, although tenures in the high-profile position of Chief can sometimes be brief. Our median police respondent had served as Chief in his or her present department for three years, but had worked in a local police department in California for 27 years. As for planners, our median respondent had worked in a local department of planning or development in California for 20 years.

Demographic Characteristics of These Officials

Although there are numerous exceptions to the rule, elected officials in California’s high-immigration cities are much more likely to be white, male, and older than the residents of their city. Table 11 shows the age and sex distribution of the mayors and councilmembers responding to the survey. The median respondent was a 55 year-old male.

¹⁰ Zoltan L. Hajnal, Paul G. Lewis, and Hugh Louch, *Municipal Elections in California: Turnout, Timing, and Competition*, Public Policy Institute of California, San Francisco, CA, 2002, Chapter 4.

Table 11
Sex and Age of Elected Officials Responding to Survey

<u>Sex</u>	<u>%</u>
Male	64
Female	36
<u>Age</u>	
< 35	4
35-44	13
45-54	29
55-64	34
65+	21

Table 12 shows the racial and ethnic distribution of these officials. (In indicating race or ethnicity, the questionnaire instructed respondents to check “all that apply” among these demographic categories.) As the table shows, a large majority of the elected officials were white, although about one in six indicated that they were Hispanic/Latino, and fewer than one in twenty were Asian or Pacific Islander. By way of reference, the average makeup of the population among the cities that were part of the survey included 39 percent Latinos, 11 percent Asians or Pacific Islanders, and 5 percent African-Americans.

Table 12
Race/Ethnicity of Respondents to Elected Officials Survey*

<u>Group</u>	<u>%</u>
African-American/black	5
Asian	4
Caucasian/white	72
Hispanic/Latino	17
Native American	3
Pacific Islander	<1
Other	3

* Sums to more than 100% because some respondents identified as more than one race/ethnicity.

Turning to the surveys of appointed officials, the median police chief or commander responding to the survey was 51 years old, and 97 percent were male. Similarly, among the planning directors, the median respondent was 49 years old and 78 percent were male. Police chiefs showed a similar ethnic/ racial distribution to the elected officials, whereas planning directors were more likely to be white and less likely to be Latino than the elected officials or police chiefs (Table 13).

Table 13
Race/Ethnicity of Respondents to Police and Planner Surveys*

<u>Group</u>	<u>% of Police Chiefs</u>	<u>% of Planning Directors</u>
African-American/black	6	2
Asian	2	6
Caucasian/white	72	84
Hispanic/Latino	15	9
Native American	5	2
Pacific Islander	1	1
Other	2	1

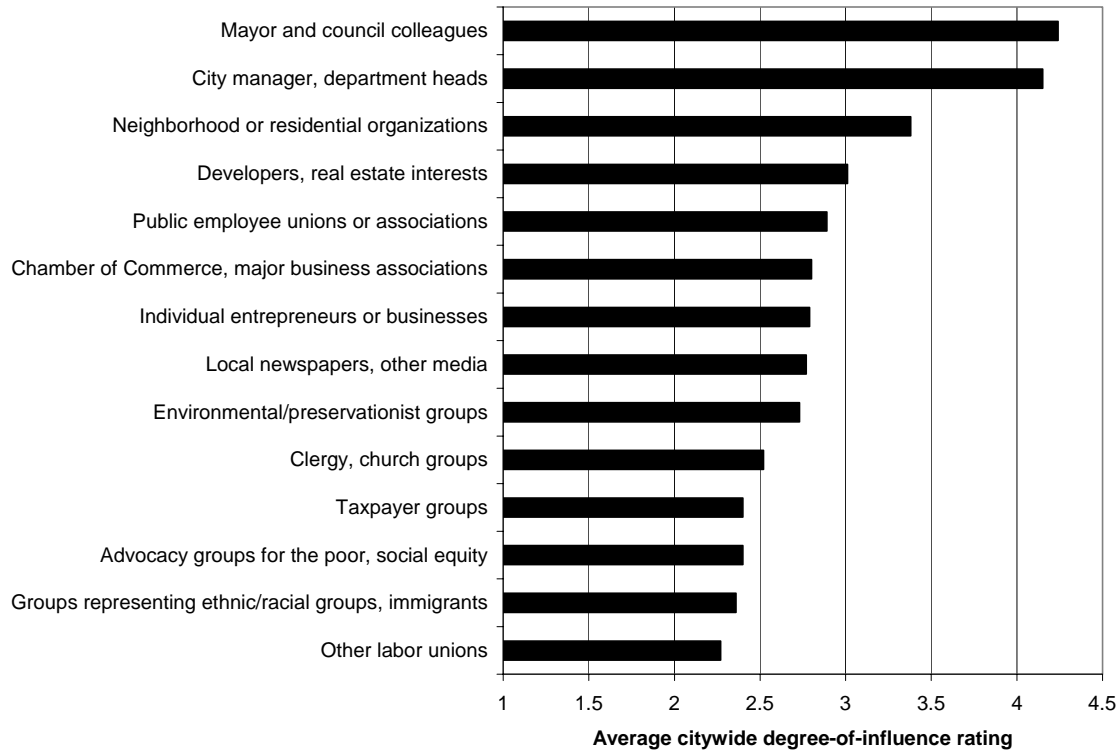
* Sums to more than 100% because some respondents identified as more than one race/ethnicity.

Assessments of Group Influence in Local Politics

In our attempts to see where immigrants fit in to local politics, we asked the elected officials to discuss their communities' power structure, in terms of activity by a range of groups and organizations. Specifically, we asked the respondents to rate the amount of influence of 14 types of groups regarding issues that come before the council and mayor, using a five-point scale from "not influential" to "very influential." Again, in characterizing these ratings for each city government surveyed, we simply take the average influence rating given by the respondents from that community.

Figure 8 illustrates the citywide responses to this item. In the elected officials' judgment, the two most influential groups in council matters, perhaps not surprisingly, were their elected-official colleagues and high-level city staff (city manager or administrator and department heads). Beyond these "in-house" groups, most respondents gave relatively few groups high ratings for influence in city politics. The next highest rated groups were neighborhood groups, developers, and public employee associations or unions. Groups with relatively low levels of perceived influence included taxpayer groups, advocacy organizations working for social equity, groups representing ethnic or racial groups or immigrants, and labor unions other than those for public employees. In future work, we will assess the relationship between these influence ratings and the characteristics of the community, such as the partisanship of local voters, the rate of local population growth, the percentage of minorities in the population, and the job/population balance of the city.

Figure 8
Group Influence in Municipal Affairs, According
to Mayors and Councilmembers (Citywide Scores)



Ideology of Elected Officials

We asked mayors and councilmembers to describe the ideology of themselves and their council colleagues – specifically the city council *majority* – using the standard conservative, moderate, or liberal classification. In our future work, we intend to assess the degree to which the ideology of the respondent and his or her colleagues shapes their answers to some of the other questions about immigrants and citywide issues. For now, we simply describe the responses to these ideology questions.

We first examine the responses on an individual basis. More than half (52%) of the elected officials view themselves as moderates, with roughly equal numbers seeing themselves as liberal (22%) or conservative (21%). In assessing the political leanings that individual elected officials ascribe to the city council majority in their community, the most common response was again moderate (40%). A higher percentage saw their city council majority as conservative (29%) than described themselves in those terms, and fewer than one in five respondents said their council has a liberal majority (18%). A fairly sizeable minority (12%) say their city council has equal numbers of liberals and conservatives, or no real majority.

Of course, the individual responses about their colleagues may not accurately reflect the overall distribution of city-council majorities in high-immigrant cities, since we had unequal numbers of responses from the various cities. We constructed citywide responses to this question by taking the average of each elected official’s rating of his or her council’s majority on

a liberal-conservative scale. For purposes of this exercise, responses of “equal numbers of liberals and conservatives; no real majority” were recoded as moderate. In this manner, we found that the council majority in 56 percent of cities was placed in the moderate category, whereas it was seen as conservative in 35 percent of the cities and liberal in only 9 percent of the cities. These responses were fairly close to those provided by the planning directors, whom we also asked to describe the political leanings of their council. Among the 197 planners responding to the question, 53 percent described the council majority as moderate (or as equal numbers of liberals and conservatives), 30 percent as conservative, and 13 percent as liberal.

An interesting question is whether there is an ideological “skew” among our elected-official survey respondents – specifically, whether liberal elected officials were more likely to respond to a survey about immigrant-related conditions than their conservative colleagues. Although we suspect there may be a skew of this sort, it is impossible to definitively answer this question with the available data, for a number of reasons. First, mayors – who in some California cities do not sit on the council – are included in the data, whereas the question only asked about council colleagues. Second, the question asked officials to assess the council *majority’s* ideology rather than that of each council member. And third, of course, every individual is likely to have a somewhat different sense of what constitutes liberalism or conservatism. We hope in our forthcoming report to provide more analysis of this thorny question. Nevertheless, by averaging responses for each city for many of the results presented here, we feel we have a more reliable basis of information regarding citywide patterns of policy and politics than if we had simply surveyed one local informant, such as the mayor or city manager.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have presented interim results from surveys of elected officials, planning directors, and police chiefs in the California municipalities that we have classified as high-immigration – generally those with at least 15 percent foreign-born residents. Although all of these cities are marked by a major presence of foreign-born residents, high-immigration communities are not a homogenous group by any means. They range from wealthy suburban enclaves with few economic strains to large, polyglot cities to rural towns marked by a range of challenges.

Much research remains to be done to characterize the relationship between newcomers to America and the governments of the cities in which they live. Nevertheless, it is possible to draw several important impressions from the survey data reviewed above:

- Despite the diversity and in many cases rapid demographic change in these communities, relatively few report overt conflicts between different cultural groups in the city. Mistrust of police, always a risk in diverse communities, appears to be at refreshingly low levels, according to our survey respondents.
- There remains a major demographic difference between the elected officialdom of these communities (largely white, older, and male) and the constituents (increasingly ethnic, younger). Police forces, however, appear to be diversifying in the high-immigration cities.
- Immigrants' civic participation and political organization in these communities is still in its infancy in many cases. Elected officials do not see groups that represent immigrants or ethnic minorities as being particularly influential or vocal in local politics. There has been limited entrée of ethnic minorities onto city boards and commissions. Immigrants are seen as “keeping to themselves” in most cities, and about one-third of elected officials admit having a hard time finding out about the political or policy interests of immigrants.
- On the other hand, immigrants have made major inroads into city government employment in many cities, and are overwhelmingly viewed by officials as having contributed to the vitality of local businesses.
- Housing is seen as the biggest challenge facing immigrant residents, and indeed all residents, in these communities. But land-use and planning issues are among the biggest challenges faced by city government, according to the elected officials. Most cities are not overtly discussing immigrant housing needs or conditions in public meetings or in the housing elements of their general plans. Respondents see housing affordability conditions as poor in many cities, and perceived overcrowding has become a source of concern in about four in ten of these communities.
- Also, in roughly four in ten high-immigration cities, day laborers frequently gather outdoors looking for work. In addition, most cities surveyed encounter issues with

unlicensed business activity. Nevertheless, most cities have not developed an overt policy to deal with these concerns, and many simply look the other way.

- Language barriers make life more complicated for city employees, officials, and immigrants alike. Translation services, sometimes informal, are available in most city halls, but few cities routinely translate council agendas or minutes into non-English languages. As for police activities, departments rely heavily on bilingual officers to provide translation where necessary.

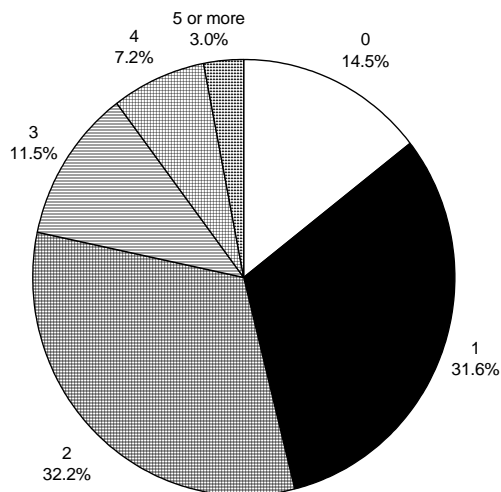
In our future work, we will examine in more detail the patterns of policies and conditions that mark high-immigration cities. In particular, we will use Census and other contextual data on California cities to investigate which types of municipalities are more likely than others to face issues or conditions or to pass policies related to immigrants in their communities (looking at day labor, ethnic representation on commissions, community policing, and translation of city documents, for example). We also hope to present in-depth portraits of a number of cities, illustrating the varied relationships between city governments and immigrants in various parts of California. These portraits will rely on interviews, case studies, and analysis of media coverage to supplement the survey results, with an eye toward identifying some approaches that may expedite the incorporation of immigrants and their concerns into the local decisionmaking process.

Appendix A. Survey Procedure and Response Rates

Surveys, printed in booklet format, were mailed to recipients in 304 high-immigration cities in California during the late summer and fall of 2003, using updated lists of mayors, councilmembers, planning or community development directors, and police chiefs, purchased from the League of California Cities.¹¹ The elected officials survey was pre-tested with several local officials. Nonrespondents were contacted two or three times by mail or email to encourage participation. Phone and email contacts were made with some respondents to clarify questions or responses.

As of December 22, 2003, the response rates were 32 percent for elected officials (with one or more responses from 86 percent of the cities), 60 percent of police chiefs/commanders, and 69 percent of planning directors. For the elected officials' survey, Figure A-1 shows the number of respondents per city.

Figure A-1
Number of Elected Officials Responding to Survey, by City



Participation in such a survey may vary by city size and across the various regions of California. Table A-1 presents the response rates for police and planning officials, as well as individual elected officials and citywide responses. (The "citywide response" column refers to

¹¹ For the police survey in cities that contract for police services, we ascertained the proper contact in the contract agency through phone calls and websites. We were thus able to identify the relevant commanding officer in all but seven cases. In our survey sent to police representatives for these contract cities (typically part of a county sheriff's department), we specified on the cover of the survey which city we were asking about. We also specified that the race/ethnic breakdown of police officers should pertain only to officers patrolling the city in question. Finally, we omitted the question regarding how long the respondent had served as Chief in their current department, since these respondents typically lacked the "chief" title.

the percentage of cities with at least one useable response from an elected official.) The data indicate that the citywide elected officials response rates are excellent across all categories. However, individual elected official response rates are somewhat lower than average in the Central Valley and in Los Angeles County, and among cities with small populations. Response rates for police officials are lowest outside of the four major regions and in small-to-medium sized communities. Planner response rates are relatively high across all categories. Results in this paper have not been weighted, and it is important to bear these differential response rates in mind when considering the evidence.

Table A-1
Response Rates by Region, Population Size, and Proportion of Immigrants

	Number of Cities (of 304 High-Immigration Cities)	Response Rates (%)			
		Elected Officials (Citywide Response)	Elected Officials (Individual Responses)	Police Chiefs/ Commanders (of 297 surveyed)	Planning Directors (of 301 surveyed)
Region*					
Los Angeles County	77	82	29	63	65
Other Southern California	68	88	33	61	68
San Francisco Bay Area	68	96	38	68	72
Central Valley	60	75	28	59	73
Rest of state	31	87	34	53	72
Population Size					
Less than 25,000	113	78	28	60	72
25,000 to 49,999	72	89	37	47	67
50,000 to 199,999	105	90	33	70	70
200,000 or more	14	100	38	86	57
Proportion of Immigrants					
13–24%	142	85	33	58	74
25–34%	82	93	35	66	74
35% or higher	80	80	30	65	56

* Los Angeles includes cities in Los Angeles County. Other Southern California refers to cities in Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego Counties. San Francisco Bay Area includes cities in Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma Counties. Central Valley includes cities in Butte, Colusa, El Dorado, Fresno, Glenn, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Shasta, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Tulare, Yolo, and Yuba Counties.

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