



A Welcoming City? An Analysis of Attitudes Towards Chicago Migrants and Migrant Policies

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Background

On **August 31, 2022**, the first bus of migrants arrived from Texas. In the years since, **over 30,000** migrants have arrived in Chicago. Chicago stands firm in its welcoming city ordinance, but some members of the public have risen in opposition to these policies as the arrival of migrants has turned into a humanitarian crisis. This study asks how do Chicagoans feel about the migrant busing, what do they think should be done to assist these migrants, and how does aid for these migrants affect those already in need in Chicago?

Methods

- Descriptively representative sample of Cook County collected for the 2024 wave of the Cook County Community Survey from January 10 to February 16, 2024
- Cross analysis of dependent variables with 6 independent variables: awareness of migrant presence in the neighborhood, a measure of political participation, location, ethnoracial identity, political affiliation, and education level

Survey Questions

Q1: As far as you know, are any of these migrants being housed temporarily in churches, police stations, or other facilities in your neighborhood?

A: Yes / No / I'm not Sure

Q2: Thinking about migrants from Central and South America who have come to the Chicago area and are seeking asylum, do you think communities in the area should...

1. refuse to accept these migrants when they arrive?
2. provide housing, work, and healthcare to migrants who end up in the Chicago area?
3. work with the state and federal governments to slow the flow of migrants to the Chicago area?

A: Yes / No

Q3: How do local efforts to help migrants seeking asylum affect efforts to help other area residents who may be in need?

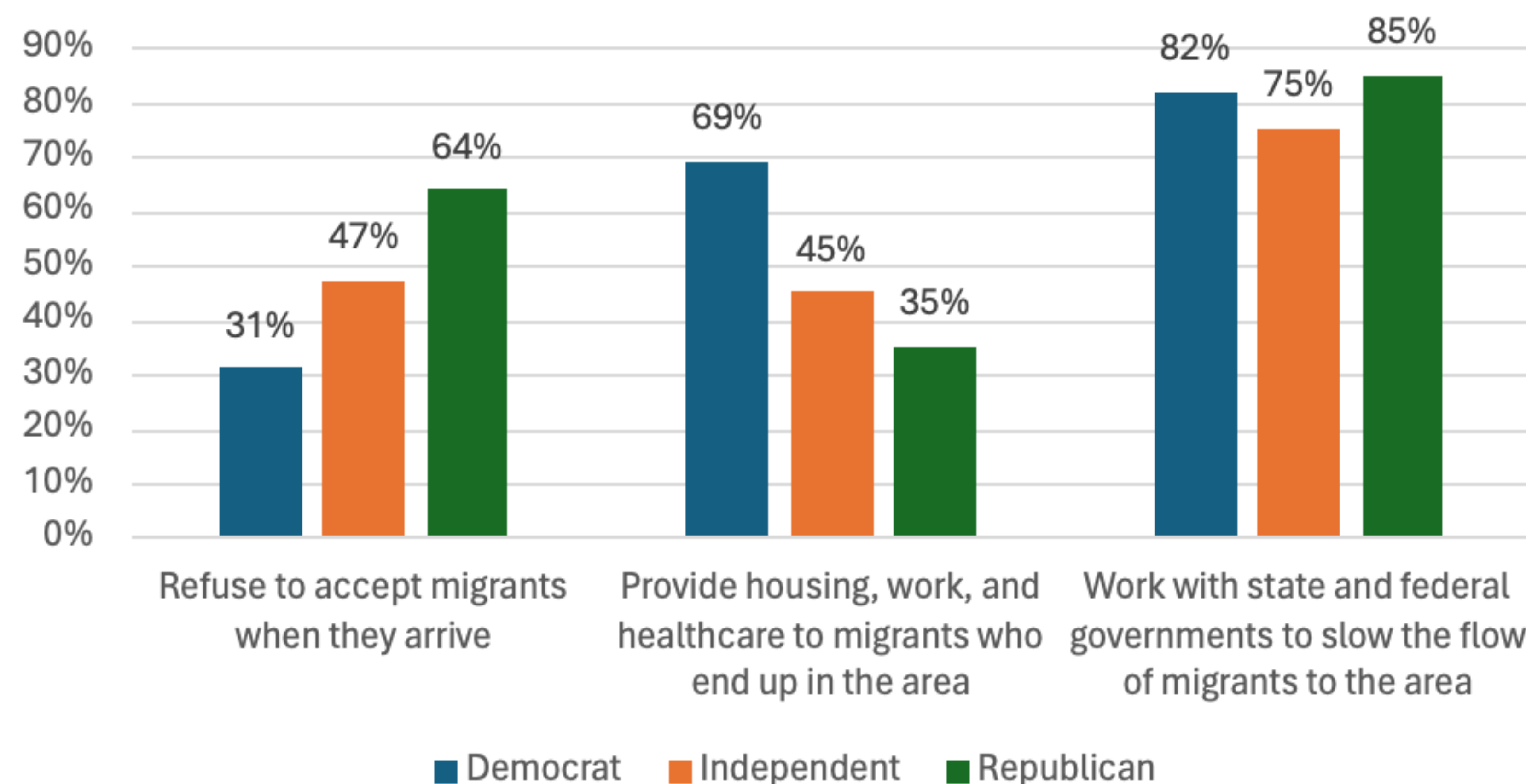
A: Makes it much more difficult to help other residents/ Makes it somewhat more difficult to help other residents/ Does not affect help for other residents/ Makes it somewhat easier to help other residents/ Makes it much easier to help other residents

Results

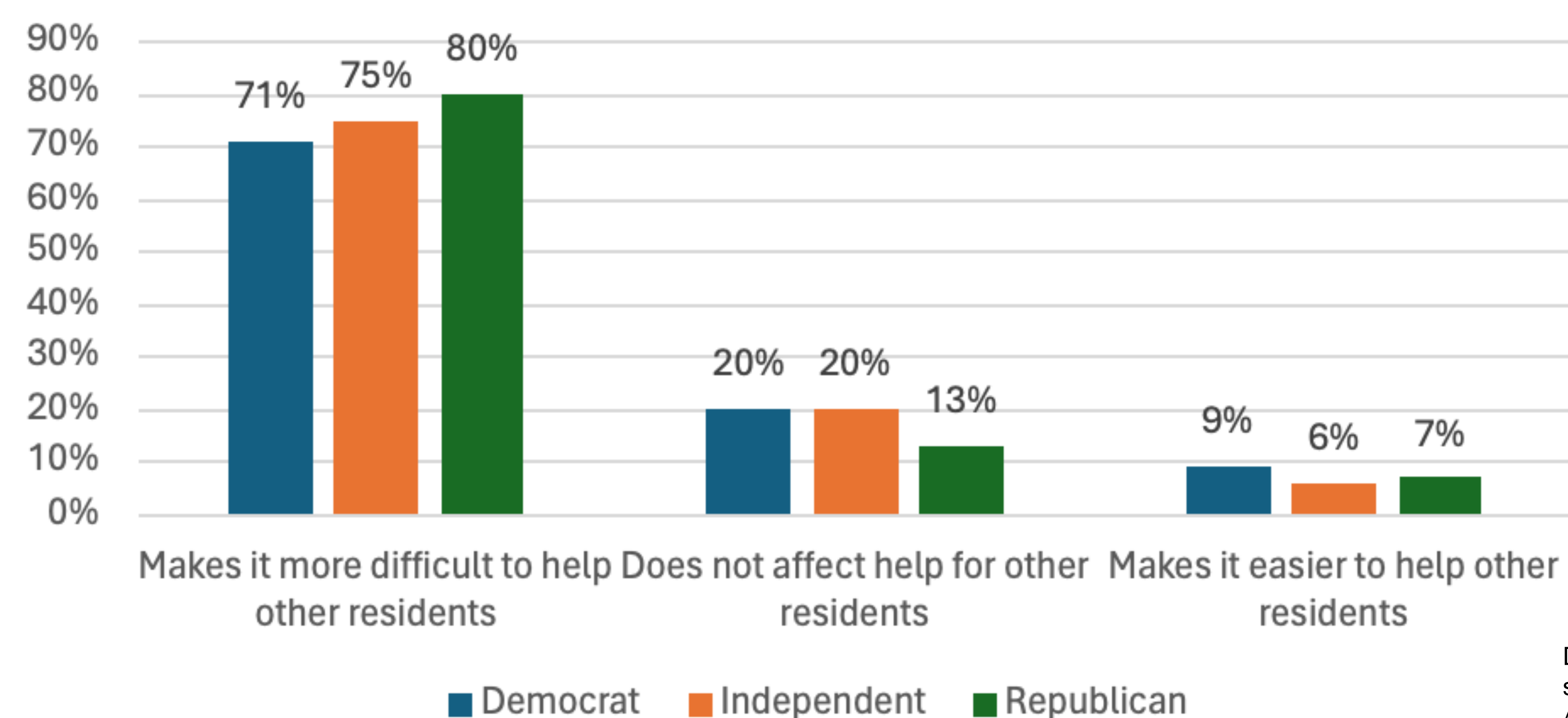
The survey received 2,581 responses total, and a large majority (82%) of Chicagoans believed that the city should work with federal and state governments to slow the flow of migrants to the city. 58% believed that not only should Chicago continue to accept migrants, but that the city should provide housing, work, and healthcare. A slimmer 40% believed the city should refuse to accept more migrants at all. In addition, when asked if migrants were being housed in their neighborhood, 32% of Chicagoans responded yes, 29% no, and the remaining 38% were unsure.

When analyzing support for the migrant proposals by the six independent variables, one variable stood out: political party affiliation. With responses following traditional party rhetoric. Support for each proposal by party affiliation is shown below.

Support for Proposals by Party Affiliation



How Help for Migrants Affects Other Residents by Party Affiliation



How Help for Migrants Affects Other Residents

	Frequency	Percentage
Makes it much more difficult to help other residents	1,056	40.99
Makes it somewhat more difficult to help other residents	829	32.18
Does not affect help for other residents	477	18.52
Makes it somewhat easier to help other residents	141	5.47
Makes it much easier to help other residents	73	2.83
Total	2,576	100.00

Chicagoans are united in the belief that helping these migrants is a strain on our public resources. An overwhelming 73% said that aid for these migrants makes it more difficult to help other residents compared to only 8% that said it makes it easier. In addition, party affiliation once again stood out as causing a clear trend in the results, with democrats less likely to claim the migrants make it harder, although the difference is relatively small overall.

Conclusion

- Amongst the independent variables political affiliation and the measure of political participation led to the greatest variation in responses
- Previous studies of the crisis found 70% believed aid for migrants hurt Chicagoans and that only 39% believed Chicago should remain a sanctuary city (M3 Strategies, 2023)
- While this study also found a large number believed aid hurt current residents, it does not suggest that Chicagoans no longer want to be a sanctuary city

During times of crisis or influx, sanctuary city policies tend to become especially precarious, as witnessed through the opposition in Chicago. Chicago must vigilantly and constantly work to uphold the dignity and rights of all its residents. Further studies can build off this work by analyzing more in depth the reasons Chicagoans believe what they do and by capturing public understandings of this crisis as it continues to unfold through time.

References

Duly, Maggie. 2023. "New survey reveals how voters feel about Chicago's sanctuary city status." Fox 32 News. October 6. <https://static.fox32chicago.com/www.fox32chicago.com/content/uploads/2023/10/Chicago-Migrant-Crisis-Poll-Memo-October-2023.pdf>

Welcoming City Ordinance. Municipal Code of Chicago. Chapter 2 §173-005 - 070. (2021) <https://www.ctulocal1.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/09/Welcoming-City-Ordinance.pdf>.