# The Effect of Attitudes toward Immigration on Support for COVID-19 Mitigation Policies in Immigration Detention Centers in the United States

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January 20, 2023

## Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted existing disparities in healthcare and public policies in the United States. Although measures such as social distancing and hygiene behaviors have been advocated for, many were impossible to do for certain populations, leaving them at greater risk of contracting and spreading the virus. Conditions in immigration detention facilities have long been criticized, but deficiencies in sanitation and safety exponentiated the spread of COVID-19 in these facilities. The current studies assess the primary factors that underlie support of policies designed to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in immigration detention centers. We hypothesized that fear of COVID may overtake attitudes towards immigrants in predictive strength of policy support. Data gathered in Summer of 2020 (n=141) and Spring of 2021 (n=137) were analyzed using regression analyses to identify attitudes and variables most predictive of policy support. Contrary to our hypothesis, perceived risk of COVID-19 did not predict attitudes in either study. Rather, results indicate that attitudes towards immigrants proved to be the most significant predictor of support for these policies. The results indicate that negative attitudes towards immigrants remain the most impactful factors in support of policies aimed at reducing illness and death, even during a worldwide pandemic.

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