

# MAKING NONCITIZENS' RIGHTS REAL:

## Where Are Noncitizens Coming Forward to Denounce Legal Services Fraud?

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### INTRODUCTION TO IMMIGRATION SCAMS

Noncitizens applying for immigration benefits encounter a bureaucratic labyrinth. Limited information, costly fees, and fear of coming out of the shadows create incentives to defraud immigrants. Noncitizens denouncing fraud are turning to the federal government (Federal Trade Commission, FTC) to shine a light on immigration scams.

#### RESEARCH ON IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

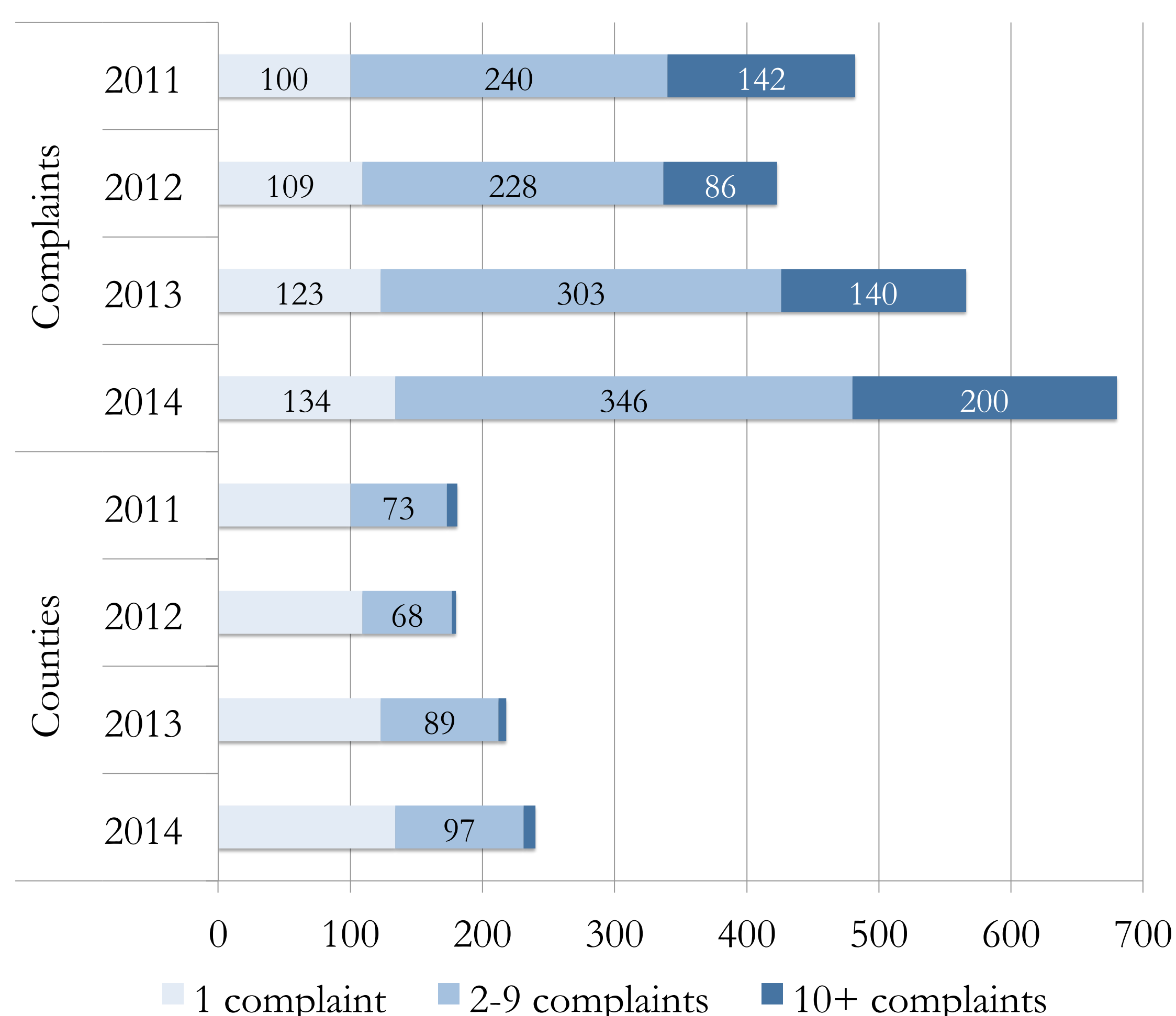
- The integration of immigrants, especially noncitizens, is facilitated by bureaucratic incorporation and community-based organizations (1) (5)
- Marginalized groups are more likely to make claims to justice (e.g., wage theft and employment discrimination) where local organizations exist to broker the rights of immigrants and victims of crime (3) (6)
- Legal aid and safety net staff provide tangible benefits to clients (2) (4), but local capacity is unevenly distributed across the US (7)

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Where are noncitizens coming forward to report immigration legal services fraud?

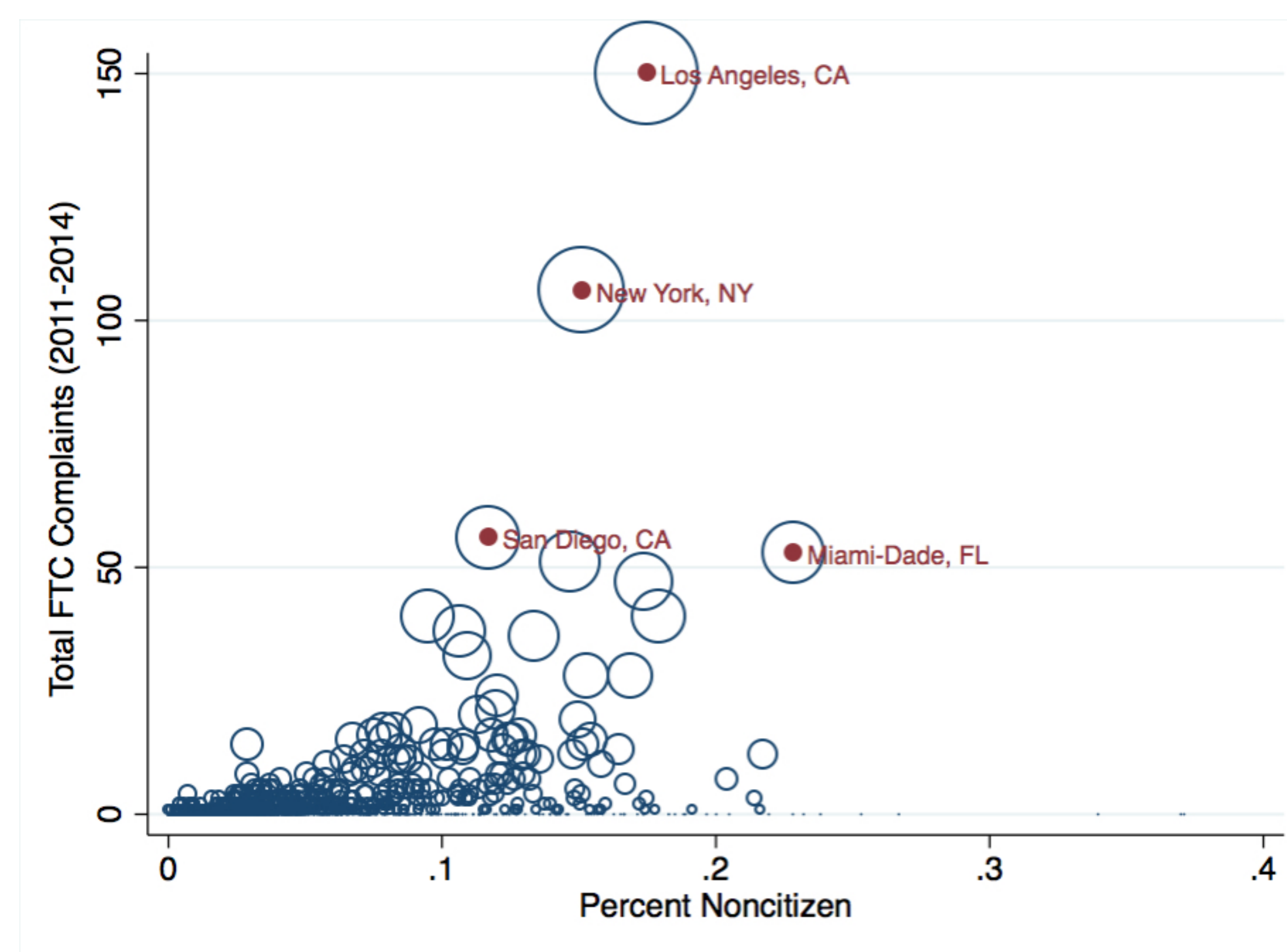
- Does organizational capacity in the nonprofit and public sectors predict where immigration scams come to light?
- Do such efforts make a difference after accounting for correlates of consumer crime and local immigration climate?

#### 1. FTC DATA



Since 2011, the FTC has tracked immigration services complaints across the country. Outcome data (2,151 complaints, 2011-2014) obtained via Freedom of Information Act.

### 2. REPORTS OF LEGAL SERVICES FRAUD

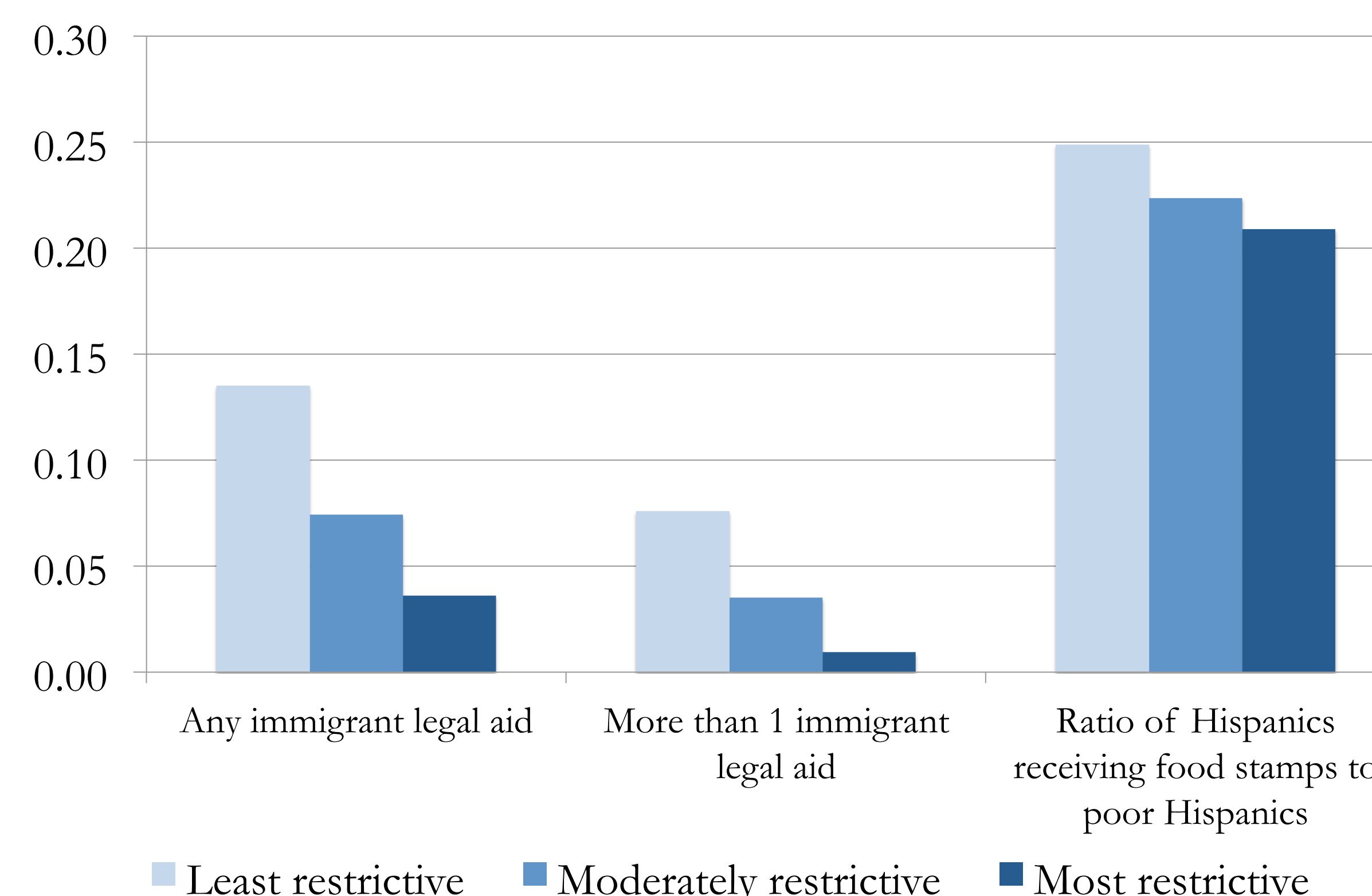


#### ACCESS TO LEGAL AID & FOOD STAMPS

- **Immigrant-serving, nonprofit legal aid services:** Less than one-twelfth of counties have nonprofits with experience providing legal services to immigrants. Half of those only have a single organization.
- **Public safety net services:** Access to food stamps among poor households varies across the country. In a typical county, the ratio of Hispanics with access to food stamps to Hispanics in poverty is 1:5. However, in the least restrictive counties, the ratio falls to 1:4.

#### 3. Variation in Immigrant Integration by Local Climate

(climate is an index of Republican support & deportations)



### 4. MULTIVARIATE COUNT MODELS

Model	Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Cross-sectional count model (zinb)	Legal aid capacity	13% **	12% **	9% *
	Food stamp access	28% ***	24% **	21% **
	Deportation rate		-10% *	-6%
	Republican voter support			-11% **
Panel count model (xtnbreg)	Legal aid capacity	8% **	8% **	5% †
	Food stamp access	28% ***	24% **	21% **
	Deportation rate		-11% *	-7%
	Republican voter support			-13% ***
Controls	Population (total & noncitizen, log)	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Arrest rate (6 crime categories)	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Anti-Hispanic hate crimes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Google Trends search activity	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Year	Yes	Yes	Yes

#### IMPLICATIONS

- Both measures of immigrant integration predict noncitizens and their brokers reporting scams to the FTC (2011-2014).
- **Nonprofit sector** would need to reach more communities to approach the **public sector's** dispersed influence.
- **Legal aid capacity** predicts FTC reports if we measure the presence and concentration of nonprofits (reported above) or non-executive staff levels in these same organizations.
- **Restrictive climates** seem to blunt justice-seeking efforts.

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