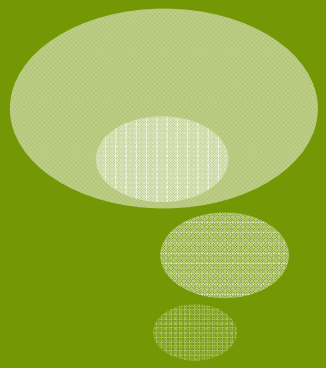

Engaging Mexican Immigrants in U.S. Civic life:

Assessing Barriers to Incorporation

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Trinity University
katsuo.nishikawa@trinity.edu

37,000,000 Foreign Born
57% Have yet to Naturalize
32% Lack Authorization

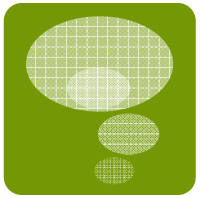
How big of an issue is it?

Little systematic research on the civic implications of documentation and naturalization status

Who becomes civically engaged?

- Migrant Stats
- Socio Economic Status
- Geographic Context

The Sample



A two wave panel survey

Conducted in September 2008

N=1,112

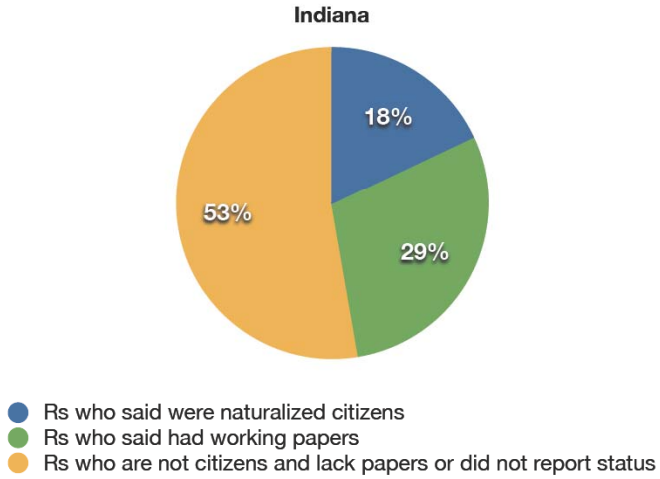
633 in San Antonio

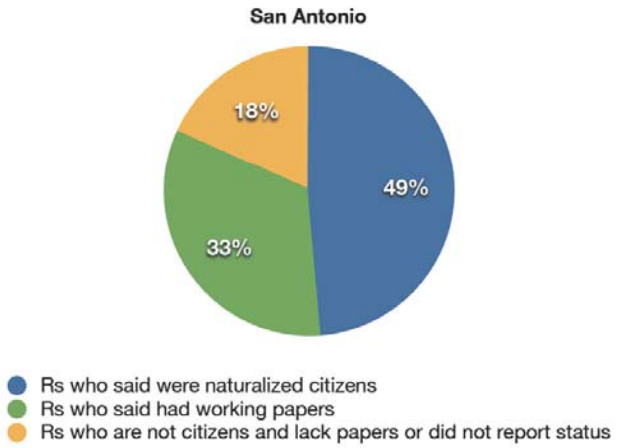
590 in North–central Indiana

Immigrant Status

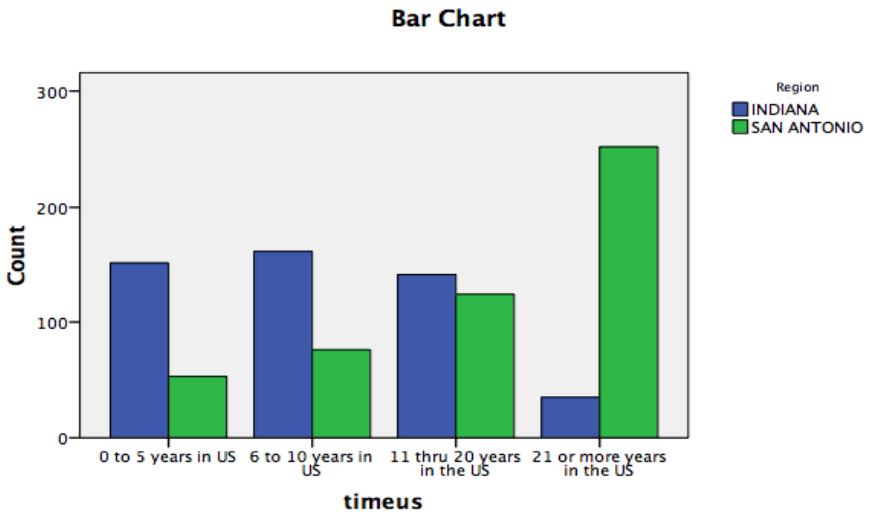
Indiana

San Antonio





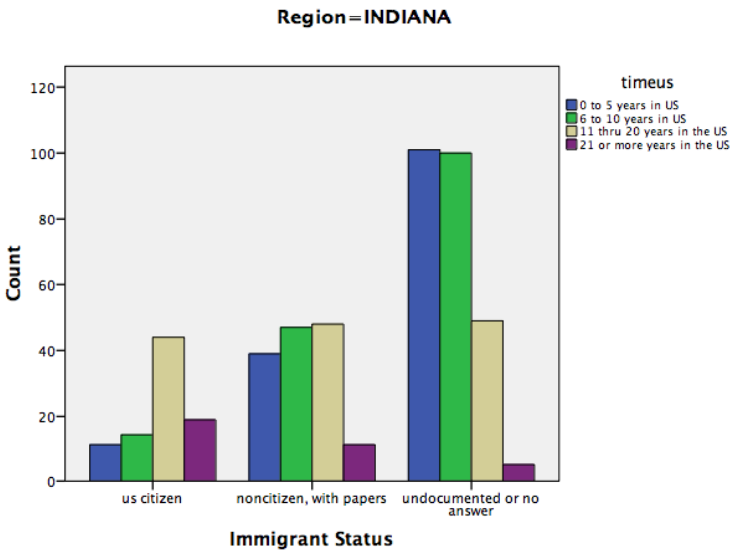
Does Time Spent in the US Matter?

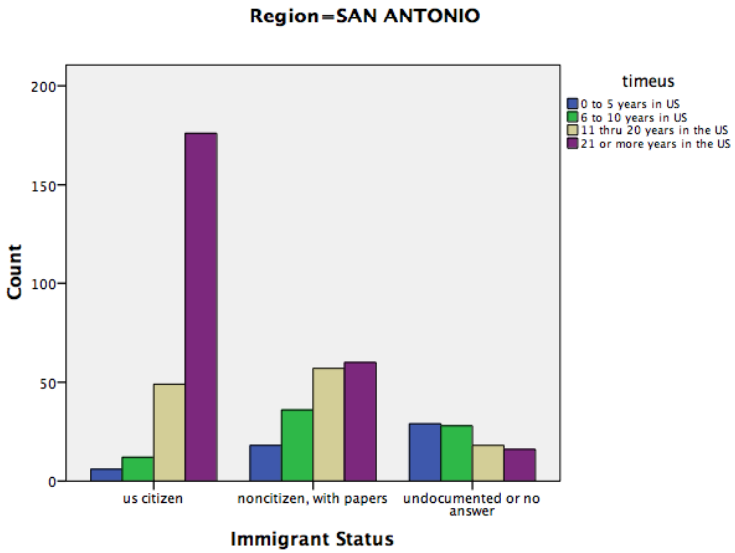


Time Spent in the US by Locality and by Status

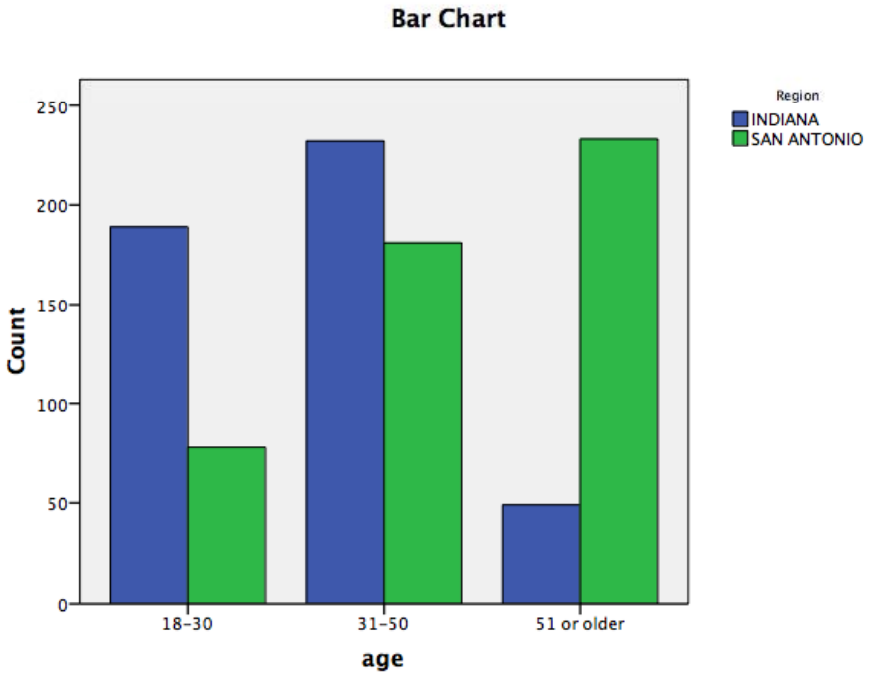
Indiana

San Antonio





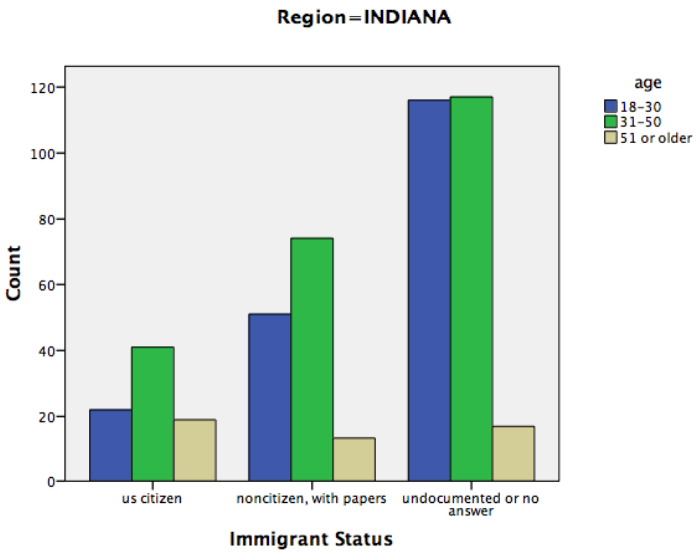
Does Age Matter?

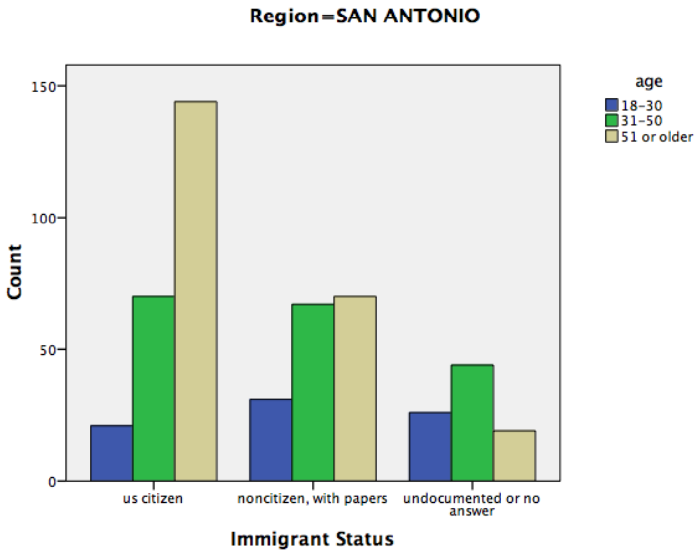


Age by Locality and by Status

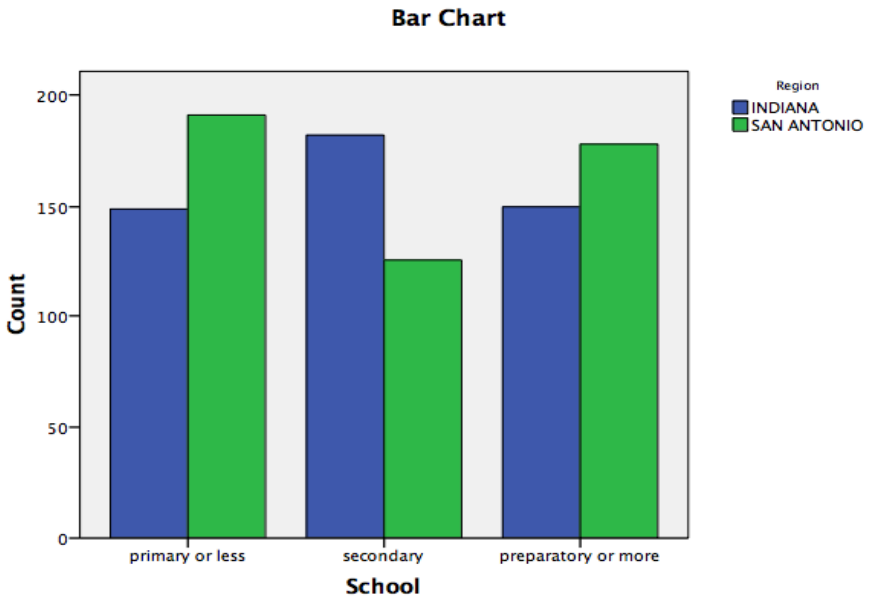
Indiana

San Antonio





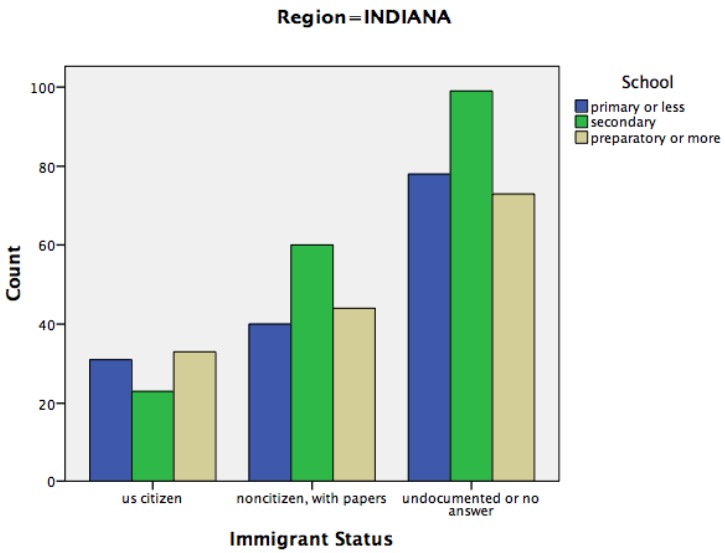
Does Education Matter?

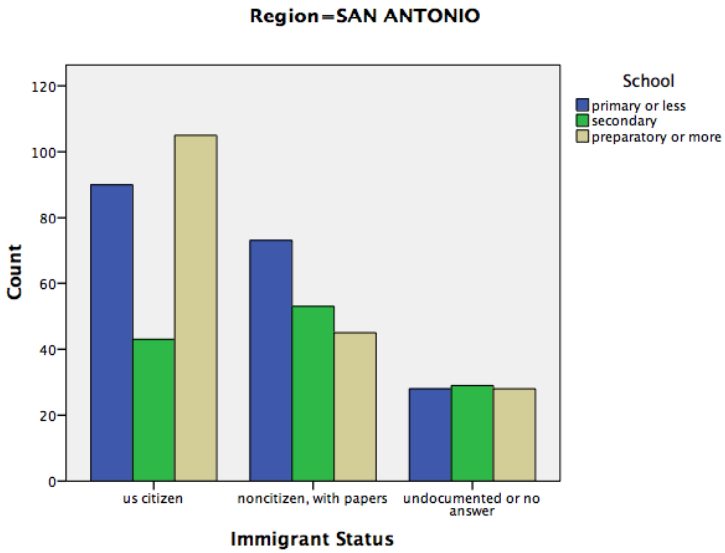


Education by Locality and by Status

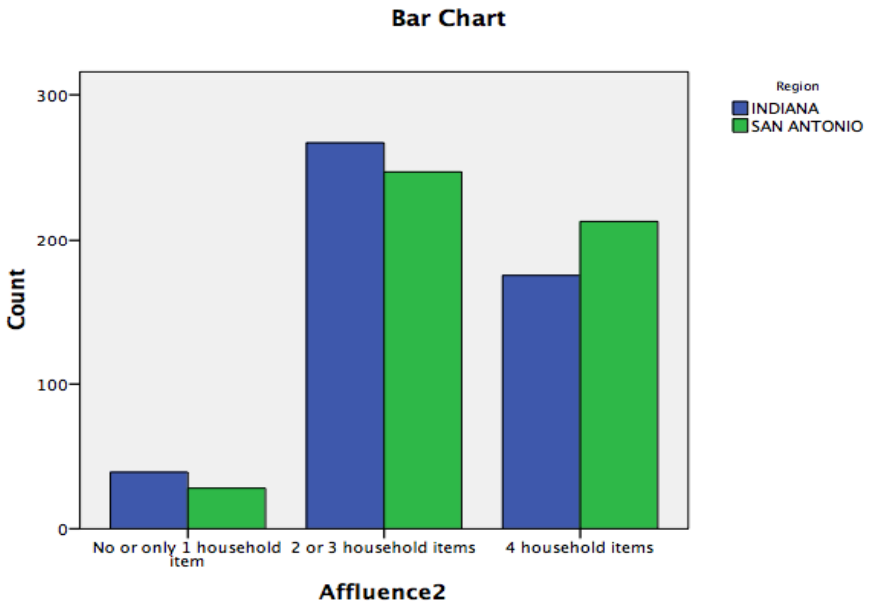
Indiana

San Antonio





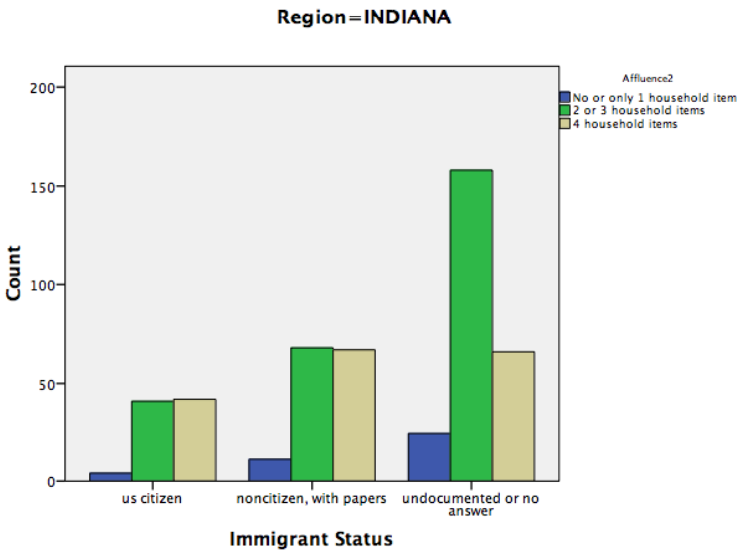
Does Affluence Matter?

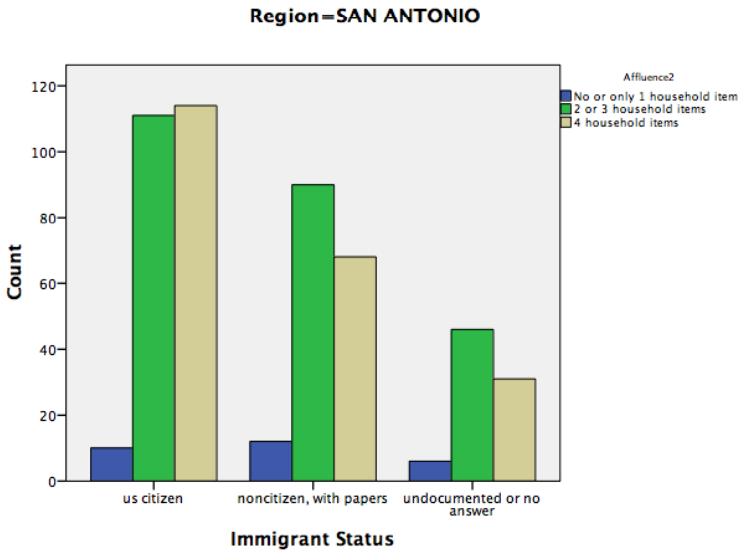


Affluence by Locality and by Status

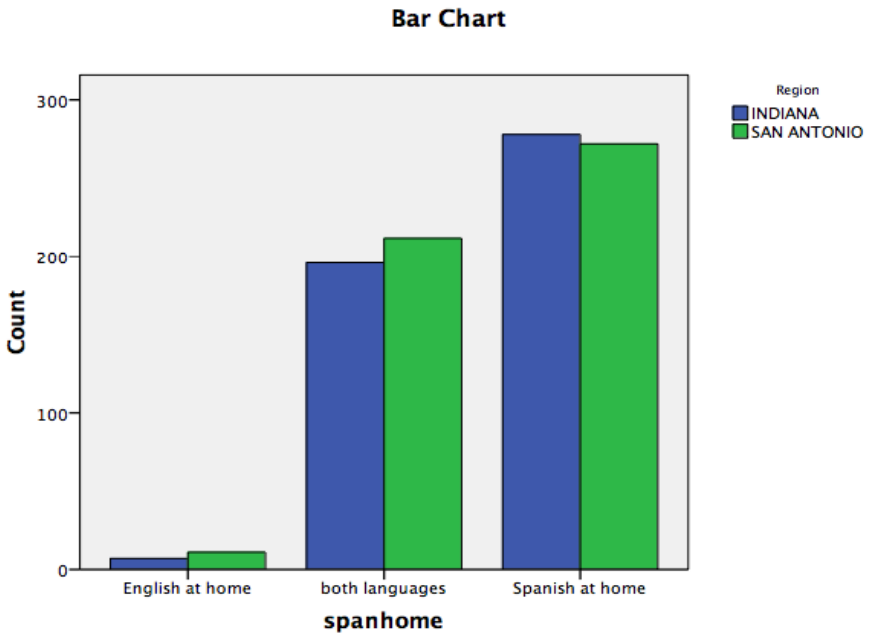
Indiana

San Antonio





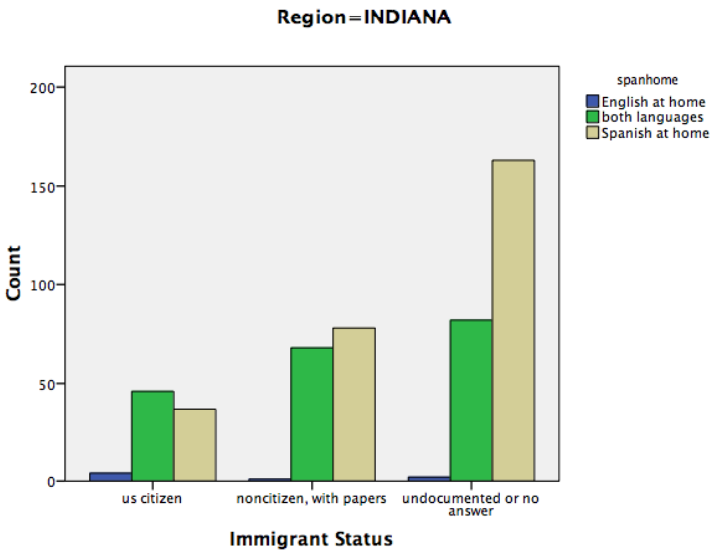
Does Speaking Spanish at Home Matter?

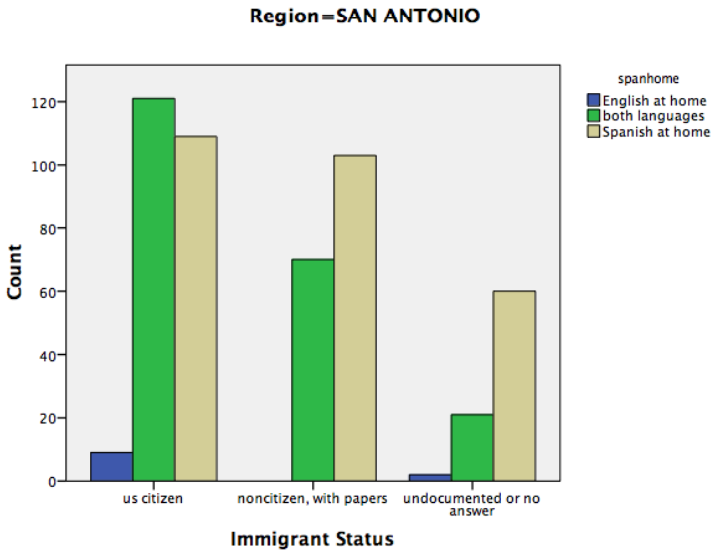


Spanish Spoken at Home by Locality and by Status

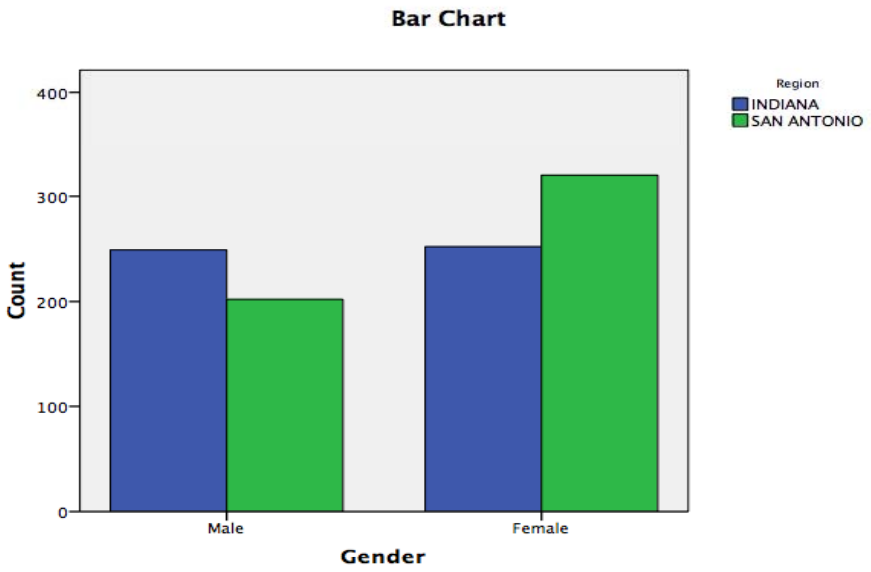
Indiana

San Antonio





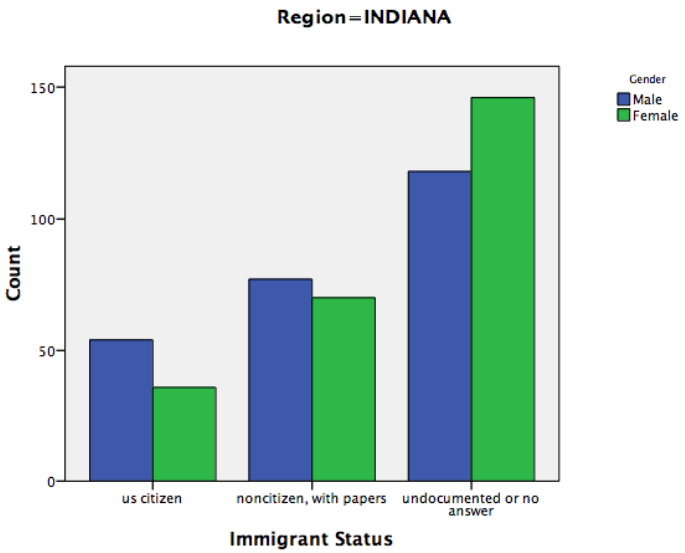
Does Gender Matter?

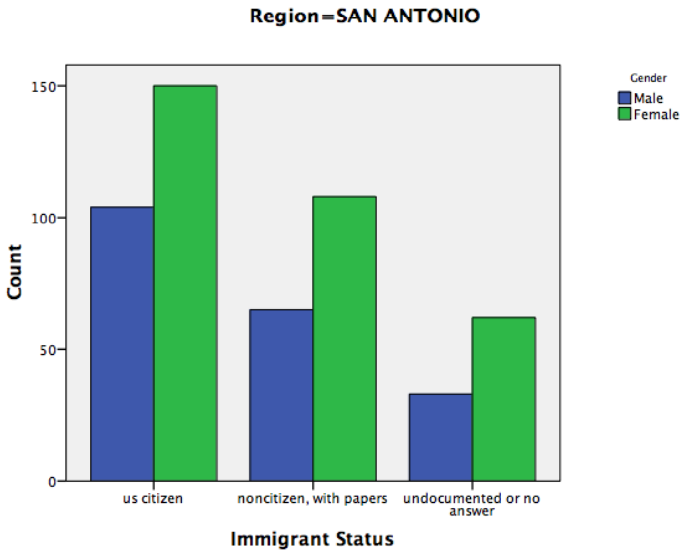


Gender by Locality and by Status

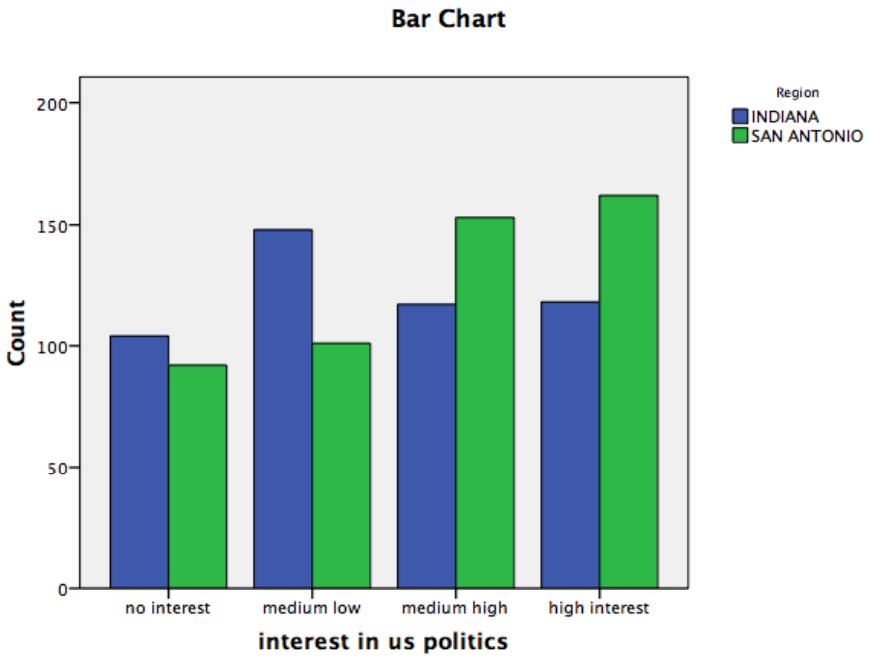
Indiana

San Antonio





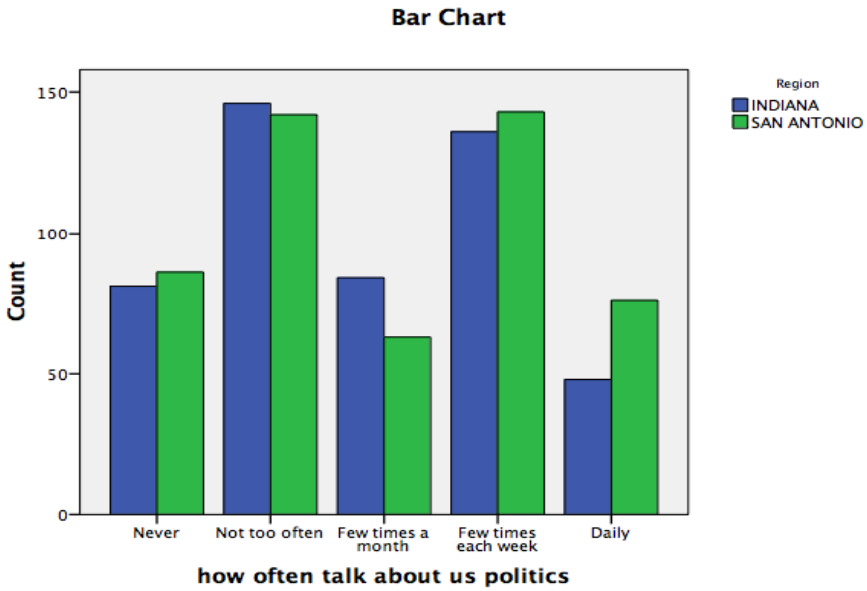
Interest in US Politics



Interest in US Politics

	Complete Population	Indiana Only	San Antonio Only
Constant	1.513***	1.451***	1.884***
	(0.257)	(0.352)	(0.393)
U.S. Citizen	.230**	.034	.327**
	(0.091)	(0.152)	(0.115)
Lacking Documentation	.052	.214*	-.206
	(0.089)	(0.117)	(0.150)
Education	.183***	.162**	.199**
	(0.048)	(0.069)	(0.068)
Age	.208***	.281***	.064
	(0.054)	(0.083)	(0.079)
Affluence Level	.111*	.170*	.022
	(0.064)	(0.088)	(0.094)
Spanish at Home	.007	-.135	.122
	(0.071)	(0.103)	(0.099)
Female	-.063	-.106	-.052
	(0.072)	(0.103)	(0.103)
N	887	436	450
Adjusted R^2	.049	.045	048

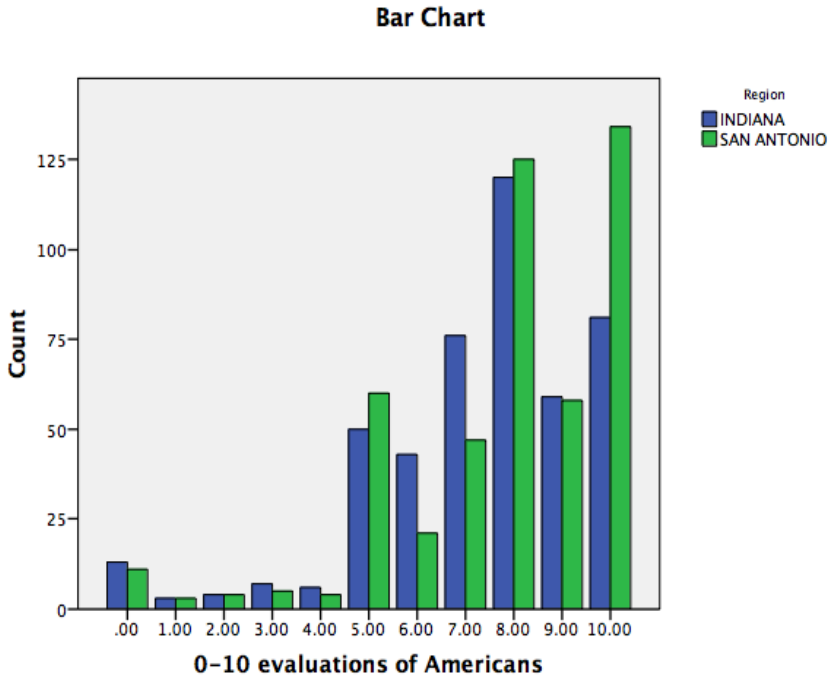
How Often do you Talk About US Politics



How Often do you Talk About US Politics

	Complete Population	Indiana Only	San Antonio Only
Constant	1.892***	2.193***	1.806***
	(0.296)	(0.392)	(0.470)
U.S. Citizen	.035	.148	-.032
	(0.105)	(0.171)	(0.138)
Lacking Documentation	.041	.168	-.019
	(0.103)	(0.131)	(0.178)
Education	.406***	.342***	.460***
	(0.056)	(0.077)	(0.081)
Age	.141**	.178*	.063
	(0.062)	(0.093)	(0.094)
Affluence Level	.187**	.168*	.175
	(0.073)	(0.098)	(0.112)
Spanish at Home	-.240**	-.414***	-.096
	(0.082)	(0.115)	(0.118)
Female	-.319***	-.434**	-.225
	(0.083)	(0.114)	(0.123)
N	888	444	450
Adjusted R^2	.117	.128	108

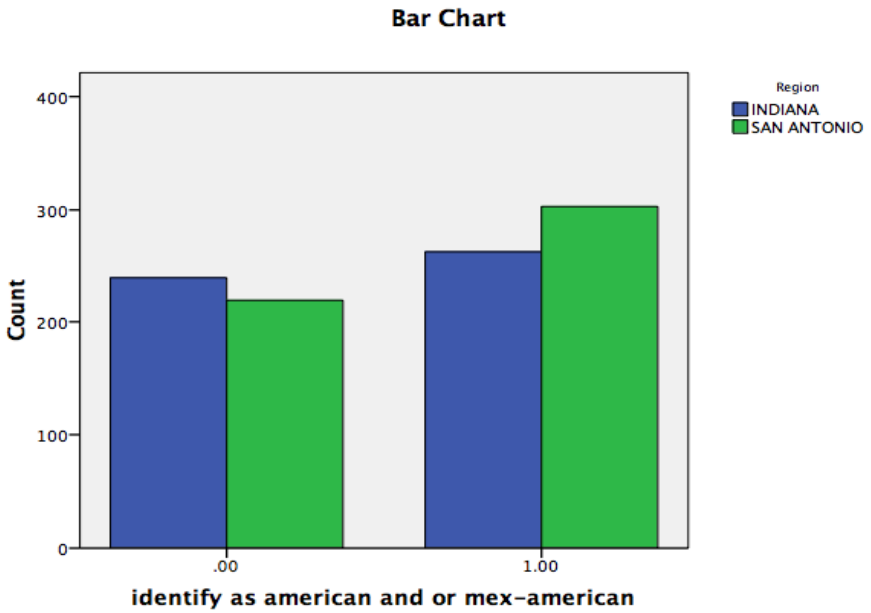
Evaluation of Americans



Evaluations of Americans

	Complete Population	Indiana Only	San Antonio Only
Constant	7.498***	7.806***	7.725***
	(0.550)	(0.726)	(0.877)
U.S. Citizen	-.094	.029	-.206
	(0.194)	(0.311)	(0.257)
Lacking Documentation	-.227	-.165	-.083
	(0.189)	(0.241)	(0.333)
Education	.125	.007	.201
	(0.102)	(0.141)	(0.150)
Age	.140	.181	-.002
	(0.115)	(0.173)	(0.174)
Affluence Level	-.052	-.155	-.024
	(0.136)	(0.180)	(0.211)
Spanish at Home	-.153	-.151	-.183
	(0.151)	(0.209)	(0.218)
Female	-.013	-.184	.119
	(0.153)	(0.209)	(0.228)
N	836	417	418
Adjusted R^2	.0	.007	-.006

Identifying as an American or Mexican American



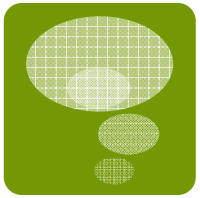
Identifying as a American or Mexican American

Model Estimates	Coefficient	Odds Ratio
Constant	.209	
U.S. Citizen	1.09***	2.974
Lacking Documentation	-.0179	0.836
Education	0.074	1.077
Age	0.116	1.123
Affluence Level	0.012	1.012
Spanish at Home	-0.346**	0.707
Female	-0.285**	0.752
Model Summary	**Value**	
-2 Log Likelihood	91.379***	

Identifying as a American or Mexican American (Indiana)

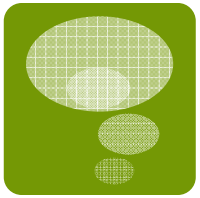
Model Estimates	Coefficient	Odds Ratio
Constant	-0.199	
U.S. Citizen	.720**	2.053
Lacking Documentation	-0.349	0.706
Education	0.111	1.117
Age	365**	1.441
Affluence Level	-0.0144	0.986
Spanish at Home	-0.296	0.744
Female	0.018	1.018
Model Summary	Value	
-2 Log Likelihood	28.959***	

Identifying as a American or Mexican American (San Antonio)



Model Estimates	Coefficient	Odds Ratio
Constant	.533	
U.S. Citizen	1.367***	3.923
Lacking Documentation	-0.259	0.772
Education	0.045	1.046
Age	0.022	1.022
Affluence Level	0.003	1.003
Spanish at Home	-0.408**	0.665
Female	-0.524**	0.592
Model Summary	Value	
-2 Log Likelihood	72.270***	

Conclusions



These results suggest that legal status – whether an immigrant is a naturalized citizen, a noncitizen with residency papers, or undocumented – has only modest effects on civic engagement. Interestingly, the same can be said for regional context. Indiana-based Mexicans have as much potential for civic inclusion as their counterparts in Texas.