

# THE CIVIC HEALTH AND INSTITUTIONS PROJECT



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## THE CIVIC HEALTH AND INSTITUTIONS PROJECT: A 50-STATE SURVEY REPORT #109: HAITIAN AMERICANS: ISSUES IN ELECTION 2024

USA, October 2024

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HARVARD Kennedy School  
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on Media, Politics and Public Policy





# THE CIVIC HEALTH AND INSTITUTIONS PROJECT

**Report of October 22, 2024, v.1**

***The Civic Health and Institutions Project***  
**and**  
***The COVID States Project***

***A joint initiative of:***

Northeastern University,  
Harvard University,  
Rutgers University,  
University of Rochester

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# COVER MEMO

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## **Note on methods:**

Between August 30, 2024, and October 8, 2024, we collected a total of 28,025 responses from individuals age 18 and older across all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. Two online, nonprobability surveys were conducted by PureSpectrum: one from August 30, 2024, to October 8, 2024, with 24,631 respondents, and another from September 24, 2024, to October 8, 2024, with 3,394 respondents. The larger survey posed questions about US-Haiti relations only to respondents who were born in Haiti, had family born in Haiti, or knew someone who is Haitian. The survey also asked all respondents feeling thermometer questions used in the report. The smaller survey asked all respondents about U.S.-Haiti relations, as well as about false rumors related to pets. For the US-Haiti relations questions, the “Respondent or family born in Haiti”, “Knows Haitian Person”, and “No relation to Haiti” (referenced in the appendix) include respondents from both surveys. Thus, the questions about pets only included respondents from the smaller survey, where the sample was too small to provide cross tabulations by a respondent’s relation to Haiti. The feeling thermometer questions, conversely, only included respondents from the larger survey. The national sample responses were weighted on gender, race, age, urbanicity, and education to reflect the U.S. population. More information on methodology is available at [www.chip50.org/survey-methodology](http://www.chip50.org/survey-methodology).

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# Haitian Americans: Issues in Election 2024

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## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The general public in the United States has limited awareness of current events in Haiti, with just 9% saying they are very familiar and 31% saying they are somewhat familiar with the current crisis situation in that nation.
- More people support increasing migration from Haiti than oppose it: 34% of the general U.S. public somewhat or strongly supports allowing more people from Haiti to immigrate, while only 29% of the general public said they are somewhat or strongly opposed.
- A slight majority of the general public (51%) supports increasing aid to Haiti (based on respondents who said they “somewhat” or “strongly” support aid).
- 44% of Haitian-Americans said they felt the Biden-Harris administration’s policies had a positive effect on Haiti. Only 16% of Haitian Americans felt that Biden-Harris policies had a negative effect.
- Persons of Haitian descent reported more favorability for Democrats, President Joe Biden, and Vice President Kamala Harris than the general public did. They also indicated higher favorability for Republicans, compared to average respondents.
- Regarding the debunked election campaign-driven story relating to immigrants in Springfield, Ohio, eating pets, 62% of the general public said they had heard about it.
- For those respondents who indicated awareness of the false “eating pets” story, 69% recalled that it referenced Haitian immigrants, while 18% were not sure. About 9% of respondents in total – nearly 1 in 10 – falsely recalled that immigrants from four entirely different, but specific, countries had been accused of eating pets: Mexico, China, Kenya, and Russia.

# Introduction

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Haitians have migrated to the United States in significant numbers since the mid-twentieth century, and their population [now stands](#) at roughly three-quarters of a million persons, representing the 15<sup>th</sup> largest foreign-born population in the country, according to the Migration Policy Institute. People born in the U.S. to Haitian parents make up another significant portion of the population, pushing the number of Haitian Americans above the 1 million mark. Because of the ongoing socio-political turmoil in Haiti, located just 850 miles off the coast of Florida, the country of roughly [11.6 million persons](#) and its diaspora maintains a unique place in the American political and foreign policy spotlight.

Recently, the U.S. presidential campaign has brought even greater attention to the community as controversies over immigration policy have taken center stage. Misinformation about Haitians has exacerbated tensions, and campaign-related comments by Sen. J.D. Vance and former president Donald J. Trump have included falsehoods about Haitian immigrants.

Further, the nation of Haiti has been wracked by gang-driven violence directed at civilians and state institutions, which are reportedly near collapse in many places. As the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [noted in a September report](#), “violence has spread beyond the capital to other regions of Haiti, fueled by the trafficking of weapons and ammunition into the country and compounded by the State’s lack of means and resources to stem such violence. Human rights violations and abuses have persisted at alarmingly high levels.”

The United States has provided Haiti with \$1.2 billion in development, economic, health, security assistance, and humanitarian assistance between 2021 and September 2024, according to the [U.S. State Department](#).

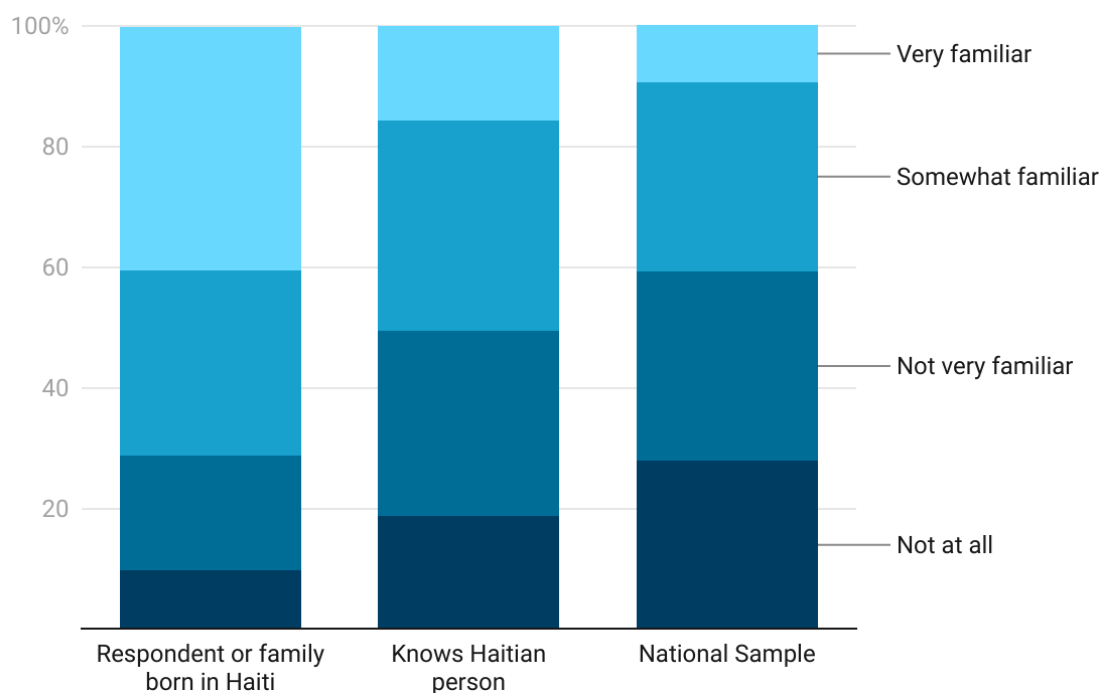
This survey report takes stock of recent election-driven controversies as well as turmoil in Haiti itself by assessing public opinion across three relevant groups in the United States: respondents who themselves were born in Haiti or have family born in Haiti (n = 396); respondents who know someone who is Haitian but are not themselves Haitian (n = 2,641); and a national sample of respondents (a 3,000+ sample that varies across two groups of questions). This sample is weighted to

match U.S. demographics and is intended to be reflective of general U.S. public opinion.

The survey examines views relating to American foreign aid policy, immigration, and controversies over Haitians and immigrants generally in the United States. The following are highlights from the findings; full data tables are detailed in the Appendix to this report.

## Current Situation in Haiti

### How familiar, if at all, are you with the current situation in Haiti?



National Sample, N = 6341, 08/30/2024-10/08/2024

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (A joint project of Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and the University of Rochester) • Created with Datawrapper

**Figure 1.**

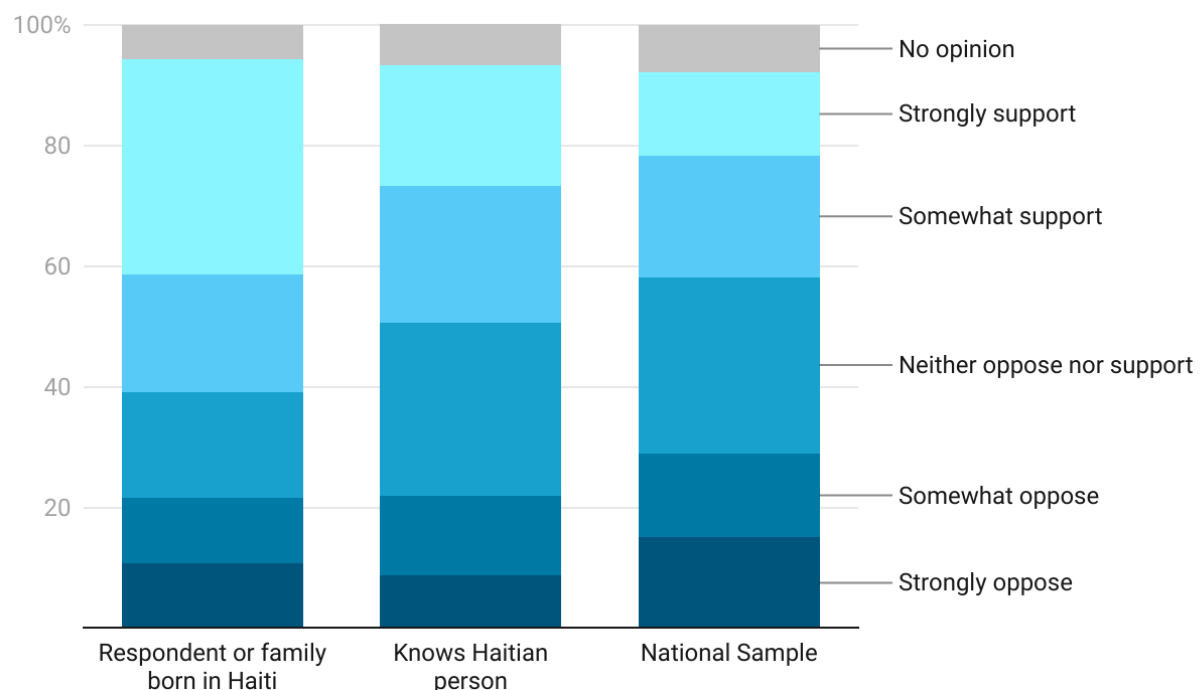
Despite dramatic events and some mainstream news reporting about the crisis in Haiti, the general U.S. public has limited awareness of the situation, with just 9% saying they are very familiar and 31% saying they are somewhat familiar. This level of awareness compares with a combined 71% of Haitians who indicated they are very or somewhat familiar with the current crisis. On this question, respondents

who said they knew someone who is Haitian were somewhat more familiar with the current crisis – 16% of the group that knew a Haitian person said they were very familiar and 35% said they were somewhat familiar with the situation in Haiti.

## Views on Immigration

People of Haitian descent in the United States are more supportive of immigration from Haiti, with 55% somewhat or strongly supporting. This compares to 34% of the general U.S. public that supports allowing more people from Haiti to immigrate to the U.S. Notably, only 29% of the general public said they are somewhat or strongly opposed to more Haiti migration to America. People who know someone from Haiti were moderately more supportive of allowing immigration from the island, with 43% somewhat or strongly supporting more immigration, while 22% somewhat or strongly opposed it.

### Do you oppose or support allowing people from Haiti to immigrate to the US?



National Sample, N = 6341, 08/30/2024-10/08/2024

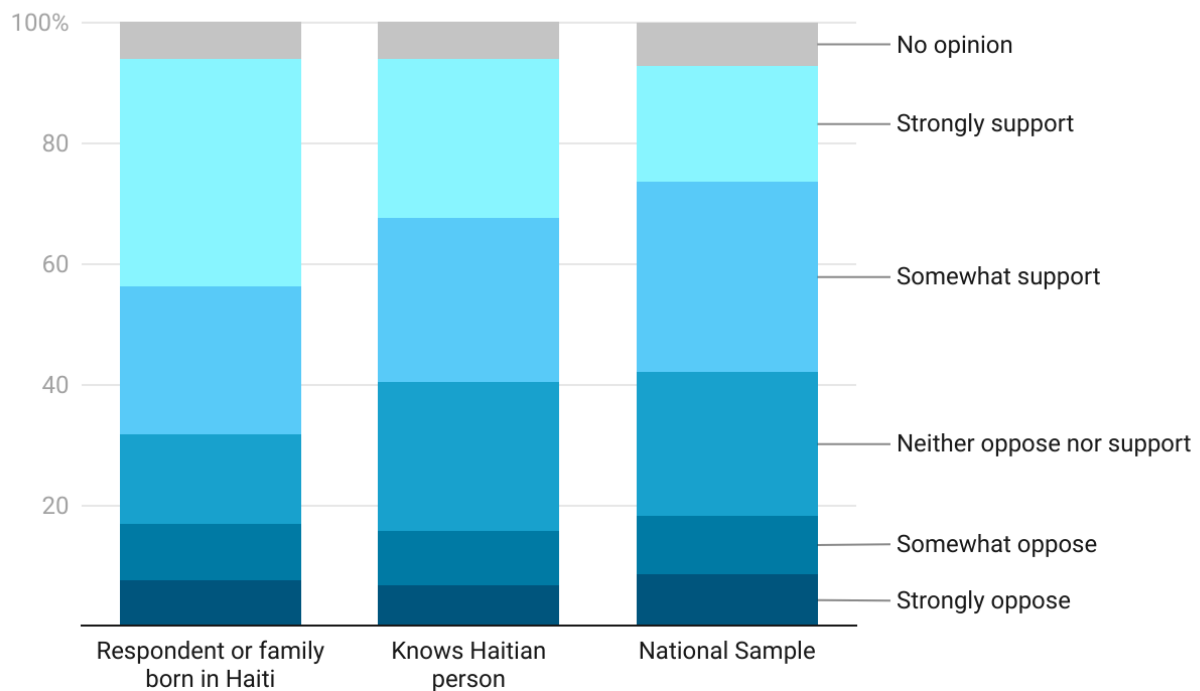
Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (A joint project of Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and the University of Rochester) • Created with Datawrapper

**Figure 2.**

## U.S. Aid to Haiti

The United States has provided \$1.2 billion in assistance to Haiti over the past four years, but that sum [ranks well below](#) assistance levels for countries such as Ukraine, Israel, and Afghanistan. Given that Haiti is facing a deep political and economic crisis, there have been many proposals to increase foreign aid and assistance to Haiti. A slight majority of the general public (51%) “somewhat” or “strongly” supports aid to Haiti. Persons of Haitian descent and respondents who know Haitian persons also expressed support for U.S. aid (62% “somewhat” or “slightly” support).

### Do you oppose or support US aid to Haiti?



National Sample, N = 6341, 08/30/2024-10/08/2024

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (A joint project of Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and the University of Rochester) • Created with Datawrapper

**Figure 3.**

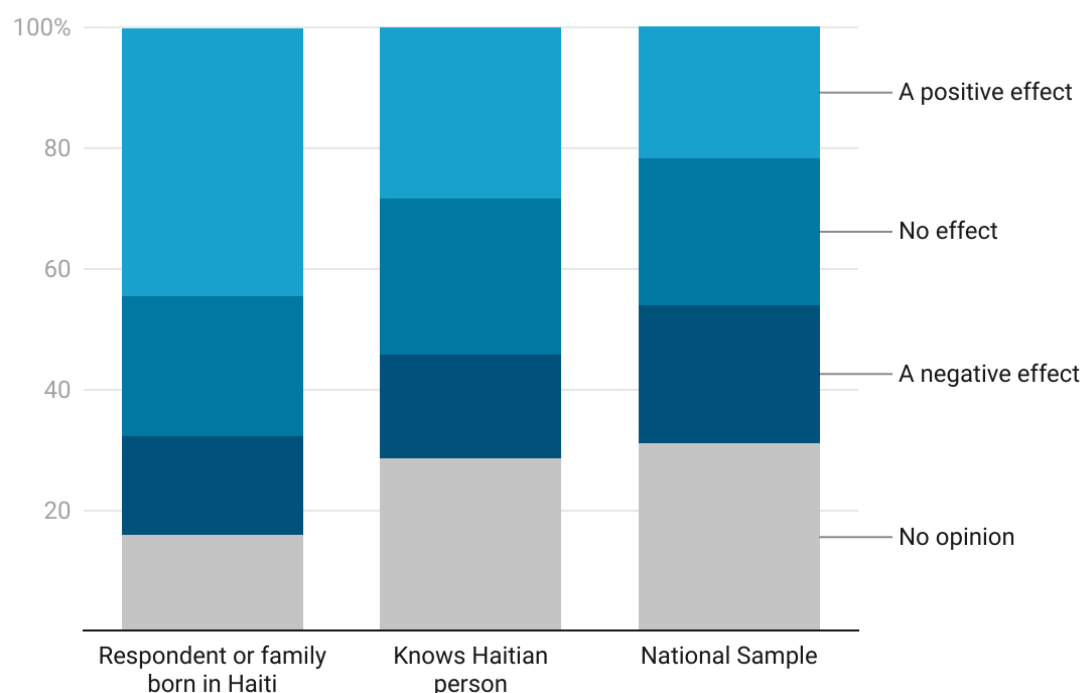
## Current U.S. Administration Policy

More Haitian Americans hold positive views than negative on the policies of the Biden-Harris administration toward Haiti. Some 44% of persons of Haitian descent



said they felt the administration’s policies had a positive effect, compared to 28% positive for respondents who know a Haitian person and 22% positive for those who do not know a person of Haitian descent. Only 16% of Haitian Americans felt that Biden-Harris policies had a negative effect on Haiti. It is worth noting that about 30% of those who know someone of Haitian descent, as well as the general public, expressed having no opinion on the matter of administration policy.

## Would you say US policies under the Biden-Harris administration had a positive, negative, or no effect on Haiti?



National Sample, N = 6341, 08/30/2024-10/08/2024

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (A joint project of Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and the University of Rochester) • Created with Datawrapper

### Figure 4.

Our survey also included questions for the general public about a prominent false narrative in American political and media discourse began during mid-2024 that stemmed from statements by Sen. JD Vance and former president Donald J. Trump. Both repeated false claims that Haitian immigrants in Springfield, OH, were stealing and eating household pets and local wildlife. Trump, notably, did not specify the immigrant group in question during a nationally televised debate with Vice President Kamala Harris, but Vance – who represents Ohio in the U.S.

Senate – had directly called out Haitian immigrants in a social media post prior to the debate.

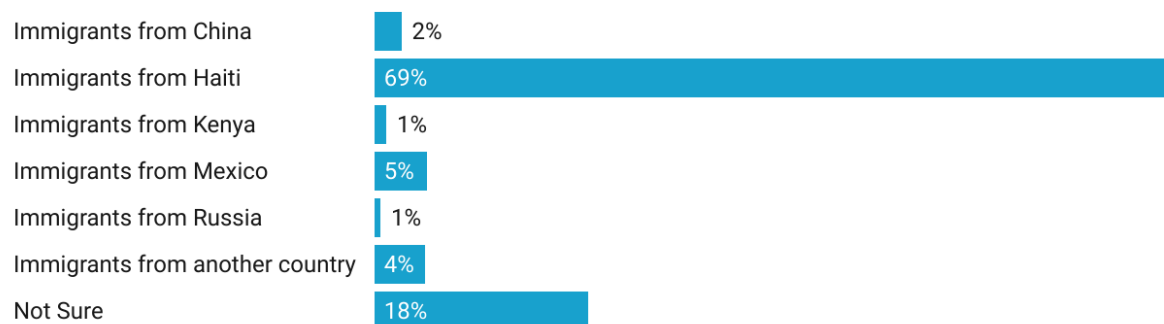
*Note:* Because these statements occurred as we were fielding national surveys, we were only able to gather sufficient data among the general public, not subgroups based on Haitian origin or respondents who know someone who is Haitian.

## Awareness of the False “Eating Pets” Claim

We asked respondents, “Recently, some sources have suggested that immigrants in Springfield, Ohio, were caught eating the pets of local residents. Did you happen to hear or see this story?” Among the 3,394 people surveyed on this question, 62% indicated that they had heard of the story.

To those respondents who indicated “yes” in terms of awareness of the “eating pets” story, we asked if they recalled which immigrant group was accused. 69% recalled that Haitian immigrants were accused, while 18% were not sure. About 9% of respondents in total – nearly 1 in 10 – wrongly recalled that immigrants from four entirely different, but specific, countries had been accused of eating pets: Mexico, China, Kenya, and Russia. Mexico led this category of false recall, with 4.5% (nearly 1 in 20) of respondents falsely recalling that Mexicans had been accused of eating pets.

### Do you remember what specific immigrant group was involved in this story?



*National Sample, N = 2094, 09/24/2024-10/03/2024*

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (A joint project of Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and the University of Rochester) • Created with Datawrapper

**Figure 5.**

## Perceived Truth of the False “Eating Pets” Claim

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We also asked respondents who indicated “yes” in terms of awareness of the “eating pets” story about whether they believed the story about immigrants eating pets in Springfield, Ohio. 54% thought it was very unlikely or somewhat unlikely, and about one-third (34%) thought it was very or somewhat likely.

### How likely do you think it is that the story about immigrants eating pets in Springfield, Ohio is true?



National Sample, N = 2094, 09/24/2024-10/03/2024

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (A joint project of Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and the University of Rochester) • Created with Datawrapper

**Figure 6.**

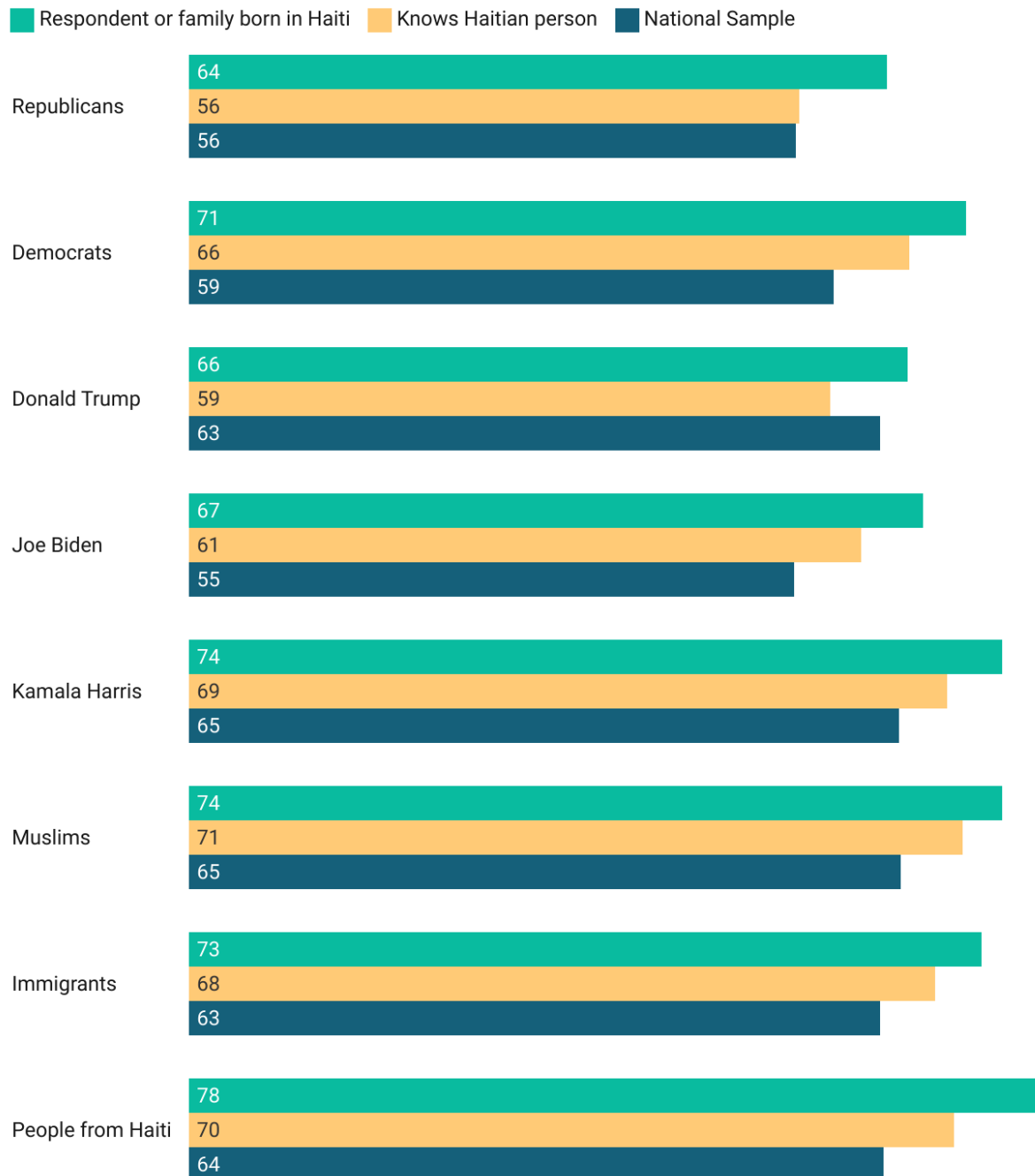
## Feeling Thermometer

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We asked respondents across all three categories – persons of Haitian descent, people who know someone who is Haitian, and those with no one of Haitian origin in their social network – how favorably or unfavorably they felt about a variety of topics. Persons of Haitian descent indicated greater favorability for Democrats, President Joe Biden, and Vice President Kamala Harris than the general public did. Notably, Haitian Americans also expressed greater favorability toward Republicans, Muslims, and immigrants generally. Those with social ties to Haitian persons were significantly more favorable toward people from Haiti than the national sample, expressing 70% favorability on average, compared with 64% among people with no such ties.

## How would you rate each of the following groups on the feeling thermometer?

Average of ratings on a scale of 0 to 100 with 0 = "Unfavorable, cold" and 100 = "Favorable, warm".



National Sample, N = 24,631, 08/30/2024-10/08/2024

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (A joint project of Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and the University of Rochester) • Created with Datawrapper

**Figure 7.**

## Conclusion

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This survey provides unique insights relevant to the Haitian-American community generally in the United States, and to issues affecting the nation of Haiti. Persons of Haitian descent indicated more favorability for Democrats, President Joe Biden, and Vice President Kamala Harris than the general public did, but they also showed more favorability toward Republicans and even, by a narrow margin, toward former President Donald Trump than the general population did. In terms of Haitian Americans' feelings toward the Biden-Harris administration and its policies, nearly half (44%) said they felt the administration's policies had a positive effect and only 16% felt the current administration's policies had a negative effect on Haiti. Overall, we find that the general U.S. public has limited awareness of current events in Haiti. That said, the general population shows openness both to persons from Haiti and to helping the nation of Haiti. More people support increasing migration from Haiti than oppose it: 34% of the general U.S. public supports allowing more people from Haiti to immigrate, while 29% of the general public said they are somewhat or strongly opposed. Further, a slight majority of the general public supports increasing aid to Haiti. With regard to the debunked election campaign-driven story relating to immigrants in Springfield, Ohio, eating pets, almost two-thirds (62%) of the general public said they had heard about it, and among those respondents who had heard about it about two-thirds recalled that people from Haiti were the group being accused.

## Appendix A: Data Tables

*Note: Counts and percentages are weighted for national sample questions. All other statistics are unweighted. Any slight discrepancies between the true sample size and weighted sample sizes among the weighted national sample is due to the weighting procedure. Nonresponses are not included, so the total number of responses may be below the actual reported sample sizes in the Methods Note.*

Table 1: How familiar, if at all, are you with the current situation in Haiti?

	Respondent or Family Born in Haiti		Respondent Knows Haitian Person		No relation to Haiti		Weighted National Sample	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
<b>Not at all</b>	39	9.8%	495	18.8%	884	26.8%	948	27.9%
<b>Not very familiar</b>	75	18.9%	806	30.6%	1043	31.6%	1065	31.4%
<b>Somewhat familiar</b>	122	30.8%	919	34.9%	1069	32.4%	1065	31.4%
<b>Very familiar</b>	160	40.4%	413	15.7%	306	9.3%	318	9.4%
<b>Total</b>	396	100%	2633	100%	3302	100%	3396	100%

Table 2: Do you oppose or support allowing people from Haiti to immigrate to the US?

	Respondent or Family Born in Haiti		Respondent Knows Haitian Person		No relation to Haiti		Weighted National Sample	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
<b>Strongly oppose</b>	42	10.7%	231	8.8%	475	14.4%	509	15%
<b>Somewhat oppose</b>	43	10.9%	345	13.1%	464	14.1%	476	14%

<b>Neither oppose nor support</b>	69	17.5%	758	28.7%	972	29.5%	990	29.2%
<b>Somewhat support</b>	77	19.5%	599	22.7%	705	21.4%	682	20.1%
<b>Strongly support</b>	141	35.8%	529	20.1%	451	13.7%	470	13.9%
<b>No opinion</b>	22	5.6%	176	6.7%	230	7%	264	7.8%
<b>Total</b>	394	100%	2638	100%	3297	100%	3391	100%

Table 3: Do you oppose or support US aid to Haiti?

	<b>Respondent or Family Born in Haiti</b>		<b>Respondent Knows Haitian Person</b>		<b>No relation to Haiti</b>		<b>Weighted National Sample</b>	
	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Strongly oppose</b>	30	7.6%	178	6.8%	269	8.1%	292	8.6%
<b>Somewhat oppose</b>	37	9.4%	236	9%	324	9.8%	326	9.6%
<b>Neither oppose nor support</b>	58	14.7%	650	24.7%	791	24%	811	23.9%
<b>Somewhat support</b>	97	24.6%	716	27.2%	1045	31.6%	1071	31.5%
<b>Strongly support</b>	149	37.7%	694	26.3%	664	20.1%	651	19.2%
<b>No opinion</b>	24	6.1%	162	6.1%	209	6.3%	245	7.2%
<b>Total</b>	395	100%	2636	100%	3302	100%	3396	100%

Table 4: Would you say US policies under the Biden-Harris administration had a positive, negative, or no effect on Haiti?

	Respondent or Family Born in Haiti		Respondent Knows Haitian Person		No relation to Haiti		Weighted National Sample	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
<b>No opinion</b>	63	15.9%	753	28.6%	1012	30.6%	1056	31.1%
<b>A negative effect</b>	65	16.4%	452	17.2%	755	22.9%	777	22.9%
<b>No effect</b>	92	23.2%	683	25.9%	814	24.7%	824	24.3%
<b>A positive effect</b>	176	44.4%	747	28.3%	721	21.8%	739	21.8%
<b>Total</b>	396	100%	2635	100%	3302	100%	3396	100%

Table 5: Recently, some sources have suggested that immigrants in Springfield, Ohio were caught eating the pets of local residents. Did you happen to hear or see this story? (National sample only)

	Count	Percent
<b>Yes</b>	2094	61.9%
<b>No</b>	1292	38.1%
<b>Total</b>	3386	100%

Table 6: Do you remember what specific immigrant group was involved in this story? (National sample, only asked if answered "Yes" to question in Table 5)

	Count	Percent
<b>Immigrants from China</b>	51	2.4%
<b>Immigrants from Haiti</b>	1436	68.6%
<b>Immigrants from Kenya</b>	23	1.1%
<b>Immigrants from Mexico</b>	95	4.5%



<b>Immigrants from Russia</b>	12	0.6%
<b>Immigrants from another country</b>	92	4.4%
<b>Not Sure</b>	384	18.3%
<b>Total</b>	2094	100%

Table 7: How likely do you think it is that the story about immigrants eating pets in Springfield, Ohio is true? (National sample, only asked if answered "Yes" to question in Table 5)

	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Very unlikely</b>	955	45.7%
<b>Somewhat unlikely</b>	174	8.3%
<b>Neither likely nor unlikely</b>	250	11.9%
<b>Somewhat likely</b>	357	17.1%
<b>Very likely</b>	355	17%
<b>Total</b>	2091	100%

Table 8: How would you rate each of the following groups on the feeling thermometer? (Rated on a Scale of 0 to 100 with 0 = "Unfavorable, cold" and 100 = "Favorable, warm".) Summary statistics reported as Mean (Standard Deviation).

	<b>Respondent or Family Born in Haiti (n = 306)</b>	<b>Respondent Knows Haitian Person (n = 2641 )</b>	<b>No relation to Haiti (n = 21,684)</b>	<b>Weighted National Sample (n = 24,631)</b>
<b>Republicans</b>	63.9(29.8)	55.9(30.7)	55.4(31.5)	55.6(31.5)
<b>Democrats</b>	71.1(28.4)	66(29)	57.3(31.5)	59.1(31.1)
<b>Donald Trump</b>	65.7(31.7)	58.8(33.3)	64.4(34)	63.2(34)
<b>Joe Biden</b>	67.2(30.4)	61.5(31.2)	54(33.1)	55.4(32.7)
<b>Kamala Harris</b>	74.4(28.1)	69.4(30.8)	64(34)	65(33.4)
<b>Asian people</b>	73.7(25)	75.1(23.6)	73.6(23.9)	73.6(23.9)

<b>Black people</b>	78.9(23.5)	78.4(22.9)	75.6(23.6)	75.4(23.8)
<b>Hispanic people</b>	77.3(22.1)	76.3(23.4)	73.9(24.1)	74.8(23.9)
<b>White people</b>	75(24.3)	75.7(23.5)	76.1(22.5)	76.1(22.6)
<b>Jews</b>	71.5(26)	71.8(25.6)	72.6(24.6)	72.1(25)
<b>Muslims</b>	74.4(24.9)	70.9(26.5)	64.4(27.9)	65.2(27.8)
<b>Immigrants</b>	72.6(25.1)	68.4(26.9)	62(28.6)	63.3(28.4)
<b>People from Haiti</b>	77.9(23)	70(26.6)	62.2(28.3)	63.5(28.3)
<b>Scientists</b>	75.5(22.4)	75(23.3)	72.3(24.6)	72.7(24.4)