APPENDIX A
Focus Group Summary

Table of Contents

Introduction ............................................................................................................................ 42
Methodology .......................................................................................................................... 42
General Themes Discussed in Focus Groups .................................................................... 43
  Challenges faced by communities adapting to a changing population .................. 43
  The role of politics and media in influencing local immigration enforcement policy ... 45
  The costs and benefits of local police enforcement of federal immigration law: ....... 47
    Is it a federal or local responsibility?
  Counterterrorism and immigration enforcement ...................................................... 50
  Should undocumented immigrants and their children be entitled to public benefits? .... 51
  Proposed solutions and recommendations ................................................................. 52
Focus Group Sites ............................................................................................................. 53
  Topeka, Kansas ................................................................................................................ 53
  El Paso, Texas ..................................................................................................................... 56
  Arlington, Texas ............................................................................................................... 59
  Collier County, Florida ..................................................................................................... 63
Tables ....................................................................................................................................
  Table 1. Crime Statistics for Topeka Participating Agencies ............................................ 55
  Table 2. Crime Statistics for Some El Paso Participating Agencies ............................... 58
  Table 3. Demographic Statistics for Arlington Represented Counties – 2006 ............... 61
  Table 4. Racial Makeup of Arlington Participating Agency Sworn Personnel - 2006 ....... 61
  Table 5. Crime Statistics for Arlington Participating Agencies ........................................ 62
  Table 6. Crime Statistics for Collier County Participating Agencies ............................... 65
Figures ...................................................................................................................................
  Figure 1. Topeka Focus Group Site Map .............................................................................. 53
  Figure 2. El Paso Focus Group Site Map ............................................................................ 56
  Figure 3. Arlington Focus Group Site Map ....................................................................... 59
  Figure 4. Collier County Focus Group Site Map ............................................................... 63
Endnotes ................................................................................................................................ 66
APPENDIX A
Focus Group Summary

Introduction

The primary goal of the Police Foundation project, The Role of Local Police: Striking a Balance Between Immigration Enforcement and Civil Liberties, was to bring together law enforcement agencies, public officials, and community stakeholders to collaboratively examine one of the most timely and controversial topics in policing today—how local and state police strike the balance between civil liberties and federal immigration enforcement. One of the principal activities the Police Foundation undertook was to host a series of focus groups across the country including representatives of law enforcement, elected officials, and immigrant communities. Focus groups were held in Topeka (KS), El Paso (TX), Arlington (TX), and Collier County (FL). The objective of the focus groups was to elicit the perspectives and insights of those directly impacted by the issues surrounding immigration. As stated by the president of the Police Foundation, Hubert Williams, “It’s absolutely critical from our perspective that the people who are most directly affected at the ground level have their voices heard at the policy-making level and have some impact and discussion related to this issue.”

The information derived from focus groups is cited at various points in the final project report, was influential in the development of the agenda for the national conference, and is one of the main sources of data upon which the ultimate recommendations proposed were based. Because of the key role played by focus groups, this summary of the conversations is included here as an appendix.

This summary begins with an overview of focus group methodology, followed by a review of general themes raised across all or the majority of sites. Presented next is a description of each of the four focus group sites, including any issues unique to a specific site.

Methodology

In choosing focus group sites, the Police Foundation wanted to include a varied set of law enforcement agencies and geographic locations so that recommendations would reflect the diversity of this nation and the different environments in which law enforcement agencies throughout the country operate. Criteria established for selecting a host agency for each focus group included the police executive’s willingness to work with the Police Foundation, the makeup and size of the jurisdiction’s immigrant population, and the agency’s experience in confronting issues related to serving an immigrant population. Agencies directly involved in litigation were not selected. The local host law enforcement agency was responsible for assisting the Police Foundation in selecting a location that could accommodate focus group discussions.

Two ninety-minute sessions were conducted at each site. Law enforcement executives and officers of varying ranks attended the first session, scheduled from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Policy makers, legislators, community groups, service providers, and community members at large generally attended the second session, held from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The chief executive of the host law enforcement agency or his designee also attended the evening civilian session as an observer. A member of the Police Foundation staff with knowledge of policing and immigration facilitated the sessions. The foundation contracted with a local professional transcriber to record the conversation. As needed, the moderator or a participant interpreted for limited-English proficient participants.

The Police Foundation president and each host law enforcement executive jointly signed a letter of invitation mailed to service providers, policy makers, special interest groups, ad hoc committees, coalitions, and associations. The foundation also requested that host agencies draw
from diverse neighborhoods, government departments, and organizations in order to obtain a varied set of viewpoints and experiences at the civilian sessions. Finally, the foundation specifically requested that invitations be sent to representatives of minority groups and others impacted by immigration issues. The designated point of contact invited selected, potential participants telephonically and by a letter drafted by the Police Foundation, which included information about the nature of the meeting but not focus group questions. Names of those confirming their intention to attend were forwarded to the Police Foundation. Once the maximum number of twenty attendees was reached, the process was closed and additional persons were not permitted to attend. The host agency also invited representatives of neighboring law enforcement agencies to attend the morning law enforcement sessions. As a result, thirty-three local and state agencies were represented in the four law enforcement focus groups.

Each civilian and law enforcement session began with an introduction from the host chief and from the president of the Police Foundation, who explained to participants the purpose of the focus group. The facilitator then provided a short briefing on the process and set the ground rules for discussion. The questions asked were open-ended and designed to elicit opinions, experiences, and perspectives from participants regarding the following topics: challenges and opportunities presented serving immigrant communities, agency practices and policies on immigration enforcement and police-immigrant community relations, benefits and costs of local involvement in immigration enforcement, political and economic factors involved with immigration enforcement, constitutional and civil liberty implications, and recommended approaches to striking the balance between immigration enforcement and civil liberties.

General Themes Discussed in Focus Groups

Challenges faced by communities adapting to a changing population

In all sites except El Paso, participants discussed challenges associated with growth in the population, or a shift in the composition, of immigrant communities and the tensions produced by this change. In Arlington, for instance, law enforcement executives mentioned that the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex area has seen enormous population increases, which some participants attributed to growth in immigrant communities and “ethnic minorities.” In Topeka, where immigration is relatively new and immigrants are still a very small part of the population, participants expressed concern about the resultant budgetary burdens of a large growth in the immigrant population. In Collier County, as well, participants discussed the growth in immigrant population and the resulting fiscal burdens placed on public services.

This growth in immigrant communities produces challenges for immigrants, long-standing residents, and police departments serving them because immigrants bring with them new cultures, languages, and lifestyles. Some participants, both civilian and law enforcement, felt that the introduction of these cultural differences can produce tensions with other communities. As one police executive in the Arlington session stated:

I don’t think, generally speaking, people are complaining about the fact that someone is here in this country without official legal authorization to be here... All of a sudden their community is becoming more heavily populated with people who...
Focus Group Summary

are different from them who enjoy doing things that are unlike what other people in the community have historically done. And so rather than addressing the uneasy feeling about differences among the newcomers, they just cast this label “illegal immigration” over that, and then they want us to enforce immigration laws to get rid of the people who are different from what they are accustomed.

Arlington and Topeka law enforcement participants also talked about challenges presented by language barriers, in particular that some officers become frustrated when they cannot communicate with witnesses or victims and that Hispanic officers often are overburdened by responding to the language barrier. In El Paso, a participant mentioned that because of language barriers it is difficult for different ethnic communities to communicate, thereby creating challenges to resolving differences or creating mutual understanding.

In all sites except Collier County, many participants believed that attacks against “illegal immigration” are often motivated by racial discrimination. One Arlington participant stated:

When the public talks about the open problem with illegal immigration, the focus is really on the Latino community. That same level of concern does not extend to the Asian population. And then I think the perception of the Muslim population is not that they’re really illegal immigrants as much as they are terrorists or potential terrorists.

An El Paso participant stated, “It’s been easy for them to hide this whole racism that is happening against the immigrant Mexicans, especially Latin America people, with the issue of the legality or illegality.” Topeka participants characterized the current anti-immigrant environment as a continuation of a historical pattern of racism against African Americans in Topeka. This perspective could be due to the composition of the civilian group or the historical significance that the antiracism movement has played in Topeka, the home of Brown v. Board of Education.

One police executive from the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex provided an anecdote demonstrating that racial discrimination is underlying the immigration debate. The morning of the focus group, he had received a report that a predominantly White neighborhood was incensed that a Puerto Rican family had moved into a home there, out of which they ran a landscaping business. The homeowner employs predominantly Puerto Rican workers who come and go from the home throughout the day. Unaware that the family and their workers are Puerto Rican or that they are U.S. citizens, the community demanded that the police take action towards deporting the family and their workers. A Topeka participant, who works with youth, gave another example indicative of the racial undercurrent to the debate. He was transporting a group of Latino youth to a Hispanic orientation at a college and, while he was standing away from the group, some locals mistook the group of Latino youth for gang members. El Paso was different from other sites in that it has traditionally been a Latino-dominated city and therefore there was less discussion of local racial tension; however, participants felt the national discourse on immigration often stemmed from racist attitudes towards Latinos.

In Collier County, there was no discussion of racism against Latinos or the challenges of integrating new cultures and differences. The participants, however, discussed the financial challenges public agencies face integrating the needs of these new communities and commented
Focus Group Summary

on the belief that immigrants often do not contribute proportionately into the system by paying taxes. A law enforcement official mentioned that the majority of arrested immigrants do not have social security numbers, which he assumed meant they were not paying taxes. Other participants explained that when the costs of immigration outweigh tax revenue, it provokes a very emotional response in the community, particularly as the economy takes a downturn. In Topeka, one participant suggested that as state and local budgetary burdens resultant from increased migration rise, the local debate on immigration enforcement might grow more contentious. He believed once Midwesterners “see their emergency rooms close, as they see their school district costs go up 30 percent or 40 percent to deal with bilingual education, and as they see or perceive that they see an increase in crime based on immigrant population, then [their] attitudes [are] going to change too.” In El Paso, representatives of several law enforcement agencies talked about the additional law enforcement resources needed to address the challenges produced by the changing dynamics of migration across the southern border. For example, one officer explained that they are encountering more corpses in the desert and that additional police resources are required to deal with these bodies appropriately.

The relation of immigration to crime was discussed in some of the sessions. Many participants spoke of the public’s perception that crime problems were caused in part by immigration. A Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex chief gave the example of a drug-trafficking cartel setting up a base in his city and the resultant public outrage and perception that immigration had brought this problem to their community. The police executive, on the other hand, did not believe there was a connection between immigration and the drug traffickers’ decision to set up in his community. There were, however, different viewpoints on the relation of gang activity to immigration. In Collier County, one participant said “immigration exacerbates the gang problem,” versus an Arlington participant who said the two issues are not connected. In El Paso, the sentiment was expressed more generally that homegrown American problems are being blamed on Mexico. In Arlington, one police chief stated that he regularly receives complaints about a day labor hiring site in his city where typically twenty to forty “Latino-looking” workers congregate, which community members fear is a threat to public safety.

A couple of participants also attributed some of the tensions mentioned above not only to the growth in immigrant communities but also to the growth in their visibility politically. For instance, some Arlington law enforcement participants felt that large immigrant marches, where thousands of Latinos and other immigrants publicly demonstrated in favor of immigrant rights, exacerbated racial tensions. In addition, a Topeka participant expressed the belief that the relative youth of the Latino community also causes fear and, consequently, racial tension.

The role of politics and media in influencing local immigration enforcement policy

In every site, law enforcement complained that media coverage of the immigration debate and the role of law enforcement is often sensationalized and has exacerbated an already sensitive environment. On both sides of this highly emotional and contentious debate, law enforcement participants felt that media coverage was often inaccurate and that advocates manipulate media coverage to advance their agenda. To demonstrate this position, one Topeka participant recounted the story of an accident that occurred involving a van of undocumented immigrants. The driver
APPENDIX A

Focus Group Summary

of the vehicle had a Mexican driver’s license and since the officers had no database to verify
the validity of the document, they called Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). ICE
advised that it did not have resources available at that moment to respond to the scene and,
since no criminal law had been violated, the deputies released the driver and the passengers.
Subsequently, the police executive received a lot of criticism in the media about the decision
of his officers to release the passengers. On the other side of the immigration debate, a Collier
County law enforcement participant related his experience with the media publishing inaccurate
stories, namely that the Collier County Sheriff’s Office was preparing to initiate immigration
sweeps of undocumented immigrant communities, which he felt was an inaccurate portrayal
of their 287(g) program. The participant stated that advocates for immigrants used the media to
advance their agenda and, in the process, created fear in immigrant communities. In El Paso,
one participant also commented that the media coverage of the border after the attacks of Sep-
tember 11 was highly sensationalized and unnecessarily intensified the immigration debate.

This hyped media coverage, combined with the racial tensions resulting from the demographic
changes, can generate a lot of political pressure on local police to expand their activities into the
immigration enforcement arena. In all but the Collier County focus group, law enforcement par-
ticipants candidly talked about the pressures they face from politicians to be more aggressively
involved in immigration enforcement. It is possible that this topic did not arise in Collier County because
many of the participants were themselves elected officials, including three sheriffs. Some police
executives also said that often they feel pulled in opposite directions; they need to preserve good police-
community relations with a Caucasian majority community that often wants them to enforce immi-
gration law, while simultaneously building trust in a minority immigrant community whose cooperation
is essential to maintaining public safety. Some felt that many local politicians are under similar pres-
tures. In fact, one sheriff, who is currently campaigning for reelection, stated that immigration is a
big issue raised by constituents. Voters frustrated by the demographic changes in their communities
put pressure on local politicians, such as mayors, city council representatives, and county commis-
sioners, and these politicians in turn place pressure on police executives, some of whom were hired
by those very same politicians. As one Arlington law enforcement participant stated:

In my city and in other cities around here, [people] are getting elected and unelected
on this issue alone. It’s that big. . . So people at the municipal level are running
scared on this issue and are just trying to find their way, regardless of what their
personal beliefs are. . . . You got to figure out how far you are willing to go and what
you are willing to get fired for on this issue.

Some law enforcement participants noted that, while some politicians are merely responding
to political pressure they feel from the media and the public, other politicians use the immigra-
tion debate and emotions surrounding it to win elections. One Arlington participant recounted,
in outrage, an incident where a local politician in his community “was quoted in the media as say-
ing that we should sit at the border and shoot the illegal immigrants as they come across the
border.” Some participants noted that the politics surrounding immigration enforcement do not
always reflect overall public sentiment on the issue, because a large proportion of Latinos are either
ineligible to vote or do not choose to vote.
The costs and benefits of local police enforcement of federal immigration law: Is it a federal or local responsibility?

Focus group participants disagreed over whether immigration enforcement is and should be solely a federal responsibility or a dual responsibility of federal and local law enforcement. Generally speaking, the law enforcement perspective in three of the sites (all but Collier County) was that immigration enforcement is a federal responsibility. One law enforcement official in the Arlington session explained that local law enforcement’s authority to enforce laws comes from the state. While he agreed that local law enforcement sometimes collaborates with federal authorities on specific investigations, he stated that they must be cautious when doing so and those police officials who sit on federal task forces often become federal officers to do so. When asked whether immigration enforcement is a federal or local responsibility, one law enforcement official in the El Paso group stated, “[I]f everybody does their own job and quits trying to be something that they’re not, we could get a lot more done. Border Patrol doesn’t answer calls in my community. They don’t go and patrol neighborhoods and stuff like that. But I’ve got to go and patrol their border?”

Throughout the discussions, many arguments against and in favor of local enforcement of federal immigration laws were discussed. Prior to discussing these costs and benefits, it would be helpful to deconstruct the differing perspectives on what constitutes “immigration enforcement” because the variations in definitions often result in miscommunication. Frequently, law enforcement agencies assert they are not involved in immigration enforcement, while the immigrant communities served disagree, insisting that their community members have been deported as a result of law enforcement’s actions.

For instance, in the El Paso and Doña Ana County sessions, where law enforcement participants across the board seemed to have a policy of nonenforcement of immigration laws, many community members complained that police were indeed enforcing immigration law and had examples to support their claim. Part of the reason for these diverging perspectives might be attributed to differing conceptions of what is “immigration enforcement.” For instance, a representative of the Socorro Police Department explained that they do not ask immigrants or visitors for their immigration documentation: “These are people; they deserve to be served.” But at the same time, another representative of the Socorro Police Department stated that they do not have the kind of databases that a larger agency, such as the El Paso Police Department, has to verify the identity of people who have perpetrated a crime. Therefore, they sometimes contact Customs and Border Protection (CBP), which has access to more sophisticated criminal databases, e.g., EPIC, after which CBP typically takes steps towards deporting the undocumented immigrant. This, the speaker explained, perpetuates the perception that they work with CBP. Another police representative explained that once they arrest someone, CBP might interview the arrestee and later initiate removal proceedings. This participant also complained that the community blames the law enforcement agency for deportation of these detainees. From the community’s perspective, however, these actions described by police participants might constitute “immigration enforcement.”

Even a participant from the Collier County Sheriff’s Office, a law enforcement agency that has signed a memorandum of agreement with ICE as part of its 287(g) program (arguably the high-
est level of involvement of local law enforcement in immigration control), stated that the 287(g) program is not really an immigration enforcement program. “It is simply just so we can access the database so we [can] document the people we’re encountering who have already committed criminal law violations and informing ICE, filling out the paperwork, and subjecting those people to removal. So it’s not really performing all the duties of the ICE agency.”

In the three sites where participants considered immigration enforcement solely a federal responsibility (Topeka, El Paso, and Arlington), participants provided numerous examples of the costs of local involvement in immigration enforcement. Many believed the little trust immigrant communities have in police would disappear were local police to assist federal authorities deport unauthorized immigrants. Because so many families are mixed-status (they include both documented and undocumented members), not only would undocumented immigrants become difficult for police to work with, but also legally present relatives would be hesitant to cooperate. This reduced trust would lead to an underreporting in crime and less cooperation from witnesses, which in turn would make it more difficult to prosecute cases successfully. As one Topeka law enforcement participant expressed, “How do we police a community that won’t talk to us?” Moreover, civilian participants explained that when one victim or witness is deported, this information spreads rapidly within the social networks of immigrant communities and fear proliferates. As a result of the lack of cooperation, the decrease in crime reporting, and the challenges this lack of cooperation presents to successful prosecutions, some participants believed that ultimately it would lead to an increase in crime.

Many participants also believed that increased fear of police and deportation would lead to increased victimization and exploitation of undocumented immigrants. While there was a general consensus across sites that criminals already target undocumented immigrants, believing that they will not report the offense to police, many felt this dynamic would worsen. In particular, participants expressed concern that victims of domestic violence would not come forward and that batterers would not only use the threat of deportation of the victim but also use the threat that the principal earner in the family—the batterer—would be deported after arrest. One participant in El Paso also believed that more enforcement would lead to more human trafficking, as smugglers or traffickers are better able to use the threat of deportation to coerce undocumented immigrants into situations of forced labor. In Collier County, one participant, while agreeing that undocumented immigrants are often targets of crime, had a slightly different perspective on immigrant victimization and stated that the increased patrol resources needed to deal with this increased victimization is another cost of undocumented immigration borne by local law enforcement agencies. Several participants also believed that there would be increased employer abuse and exploitation of undocumented immigrants. In addition, these fears, some participants believed, will deter immigrants from accessing other municipal services, such as health care and education.

During the El Paso sessions, the issue of police misconduct arose. Participants supposed that immigrants’ fear of police and the threat of possible deportation would lead to an increase in police misconduct. As one police executive stated, “I might have issues out in the field with officers who are doing things that they’re not supposed to be doing, but people are afraid to tell us, simply because they’re afraid.”
Many law enforcement participants stated that the economic and labor costs of police involvement in immigration enforcement were high and would divert scarce resources from traditional law enforcement activities. Those costs include the funds needed to temporarily detain immigrants, medical costs for those in need of care while being detained by local authorities, and transportation costs to the jail. Moreover, an agency would need to invest patrol resources to arrest, to await federal response, and to process paperwork required by ICE. The federal 287(g) program merely pays for training local officers; the federal government does not cover all of these other costs. One participant explained, “You can't deficit spend in Kansas but the federal government can.”

In the two Texas locations, participants also talked about the possibility of the federal government distributing funds to local agencies to enforce immigration laws. In the Arlington law enforcement session, some participants felt the price to pay for accepting these funds was not worth the gains. One participant noted federal funds are already being diverted to the Department of Homeland Security from funds that used to be allocated to assist law enforcement with traditional crime control efforts. He stated, “How many of you are getting money from Homeland Security for that stuff that absolutely makes no sense in a rational world? . . . COPS grants have gone . . . We don’t have our local law enforcement block grants. The [Byrne] grant situation is just appalling. You have to get an earmark from a senator to get a grant.”

Participants also discussed the impact of increased deportation on children and families. When the principal earner is deported, how will those families manage? Will those families who are eligible require assistance from the state? Citizen children of deported parents might need to enter the foster care system if they do not have a legal relative that could care for them. One participant believed that because of poor outcomes in the foster care system, these children might eventually end up in the juvenile delinquency system.

Another cost of immigration enforcement many law enforcement officials raised was potential litigation costs, especially those resulting from racial-profiling and civil rights lawsuits. Across sites, law enforcement participants agreed that they could not legally arrest someone solely on the basis that they look Latino. Participants in every site also agreed that police could not just stop people on the street and ask about immigration status during a casual encounter. As one Collier County participant stated, “If you start picking them up sitting on the sidewalk because they look illegal, then I got a problem.” One Collier County law enforcement official acknowledged that the department would be exposed to litigation were it to use the 287(g) program to patrol for immigration violators. For this reason, the sheriff has limited the use of the 287(g) program to target criminals who the department has already arrested and are detained in their jails and those who are the subject of an ongoing criminal investigation. An El Paso participant also noted that local agencies would expose themselves to litigation when officers mistakenly arrest a citizen or legal permanent resident. Finally, one of the Topeka participants explained that consequences of racial profiling extend beyond civil litigation in Kansas, which has a state statute prohibiting the use of race or ethnicity as the sole criteria for arrest.

Participants in Collier County, where the sheriff’s office participates in ICE’s 287(g) program, raised most of the benefits of local enforcement of immigration laws. The Collier County Sheriff’s Office did an analysis of jail costs and found that approximately 24 percent of its jail popu-
RATION was immigration violators and that the pure jail costs associated with their cases cost the county approximately nine million dollars. This was the principal argument they gave county officials for entering into the 287(g) program. Currently, ICE removes one out of five detainees, which they contend saves the county jail costs.

The sheriff also views immigration enforcement as a criminal enforcement tool to remove criminals from his community. As he explained, the Collier County sheriff limits 287(g) activity to immigrants arrested for an independent state law violation and those who are targets of criminal investigations. Another Collier County participant contended that sophisticated criminals are not going to get caught committing crimes but, if the agency discovers that they are unauthorized residents, they could be removed from the community through deportation.

In Topeka, one participant articulated his unease with releasing undocumented immigrants on bond because they may provide false identities and because of the difficulties police agencies have verifying their addresses due to a shortage of interpreters. Another participant in Topeka also feared the establishment of vigilante movements if local and federal government do not control immigration and, in fact, provided an example of a town in Kansas where a group of citizens made such threats.

While law enforcement participants in Topeka clearly were opposed to sharing responsibility for immigration enforcement with the federal government, they seem to make an exception for immigrants who commit criminal law violations, in particular gang members. Some felt it was important for criminals to serve their criminal sentence in a state or local correctional facility prior to deportation. On the other hand, another participant explained that at times during criminal prosecutions, the defendant is offered the option to voluntarily agree to deportation in exchange for a dismissal of charges. As this participant explained, if the defendant then returns to the country, he or she can be prosecuted on the federal charge of illegal reentry. Another Topeka participant pointed out the complexity of the issue of deportation of criminal law violators, stating that while all agree that murderers should be deported, the issue becomes complicated with an undocumented immigrant who uses false documents to work in the country and has thus technically committed a felony offense.

Interestingly, in all conversations about criminal aliens, they were referred to as “illegal immigrants” who commit crimes. At no point did they mention legal permanent residents who are deported upon conviction of a crime; therefore, it is not clear if the participants’ opinions on the issue would vary based on the legal status of the immigrant.

Counterterrorism and immigration enforcement

While the topic of the attacks of September 11 and counterterrorism was surprisingly infrequently mentioned during the sessions, a few participants commented on changes that have occurred post 9/11 and the relation between immigration enforcement and counterterrorism efforts. Due to changes that have occurred as a result of the increase in the budget and resources dedicated to homeland security and immigration enforcement, participants felt that ICE is much more responsive than the legacy Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). Prior to 2001, it was very difficult to get INS to deport a criminal alien. Since then, at least regarding gang members, participants believed that ICE is more responsive. Moreover, comments were made that the
federal government also has offered funds to local agencies to get them involved in border security and immigration enforcement. As stated above, in Arlington, the participants warned that taking these funds diverts resources from traditional criminal law enforcement funding streams, such as the COPS and Byrne grants.

There was some disagreement between the various sites about the link between terrorism and immigration. In Arlington, a participant stated that there was no relationship between terrorism and the Hispanic community. In El Paso, one participant questioned the emphasis of newer security measures on the U.S.-Mexico border versus the Canadian border. The participant maintained that if counterterrorism were the primary objective, the government would not make such a distinction. Participants in the El Paso civilian session related an incident where the Uvalde County sheriff publicly stated that there were al Qaeda training camps on the other side of the border, to justify seeking federal border security funds and actively participating in immigration enforcement. When asked to substantiate his claim, the sheriff stated, “Well, that’s the whole point. They’re terrorists.” The El Paso participants also recounted an incident where an ICE official, attempting to justify raids in a town located in the region, alleged that a group of al Qaeda operatives crossed the border with a group of undocumented Mexican migrants. When a local congressional representative confronted the ICE official about the veracity of this claim, the ICE official backed down. In sum, participants in these two Texas locations generally felt that there was no connection between terrorism and immigration and that the government used fear of terrorism to justify immigration enforcement initiatives.

In the Collier County sessions, on the other hand, some expressed the position that failure to enforce our nation’s immigration laws is a threat to national security. One of the law enforcement participants suggested that potential terrorists might be coming in through Mexico, adopting Spanish surnames, learning Spanish and a Cuban accent, and being granted permission to stay in the United States under sanctuary policies directed at Cubans. This participant also stated that both President Chavez of Venezuela (who he claimed gave Venezuelan national identity cards to all that apply) and Fidel Castro are known to have close relations with foreign terrorist organizations. Also, one participant stated that they do not have access to government databases of many countries either because of the lack of technology or privacy rights (as is the case with Europe) and, therefore, are unable to verify identity of immigrants from these countries. This, the participant felt, was a national security threat.

**Should undocumented immigrants and their children be entitled to public benefits?**

During the civilian sessions of the focus groups, a question posed was, “What type of benefits, if any, do you think the government should provide to the undocumented immigrant who pays taxes? What about those who do not pay taxes?” In all but Collier County, the participants believed that undocumented immigrants were entitled to certain health and education benefits (to the extent that U.S. citizens are entitled to these benefits) and that such a public policy would generally benefit the country. Firstly, some participants explained that children have a constitutional right to education, regardless of their immigration status. Moreover, in the event that the federal government deports parents of U.S. citizen children, some commented that the government has an obligation to provide support to that child. Even in Collier County, where participants generally
felt that immigrants should not receive government benefits, one participant stated that it would be morally difficult to deny benefits to a child but simultaneously argued that providing children with benefits could provide an incentive to the undocumented to migrate to the United States.

There was much debate during several sessions over whether the undocumented pay taxes and whether these taxes outweigh public expenditures on the undocumented. One tax attorney in Topeka stated that he often prepares taxes for undocumented immigrants. An El Paso participant contended that anyone who pays rent is indirectly paying property taxes and undocumented immigrants at the very least pay sales taxes when they purchase items. Another participant argued that it would be very difficult to identify which undocumented immigrants pay taxes.

In Collier County, on the other hand, several participants claimed that the expenses incurred in serving the undocumented outweigh the revenue gained through taxes.

**Proposed solutions and recommendations**

While there may have been disagreement on the central question of whether local law enforcement shares responsibility for enforcing federal immigration laws, common to both sides of the debate was a call for a national policy to provide policy consistency from locality to locality. As one Collier County participant stated, “How would we resolve what is fundamentally a national problem when each jurisdiction deals with it differently?” In Arlington, law enforcement participants felt a national policy, or at least a regional one, would protect police chiefs against political pressure to enforce immigration laws. With a national policy (or at least regional), the public or politicians would not be able to pressure police chiefs using a comparison to a neighboring police chief’s policy of collaboration with ICE. Moreover, participants in Arlington felt that the impact of an agency’s decision to actively participate in immigration enforcement is felt in neighboring cities and counties and, therefore, it is important to have a uniform regional policy. In Topeka, where neighboring states such as Colorado, Oklahoma, and Nebraska have passed measures against unauthorized immigrants, concern was raised whether these states’ undocumented population would move to Kansas in the absence of similar Kansas state laws. One Arlington participant stated that Congress and the attorney general did an extreme disservice to local law enforcement agencies when giving them authority to enforce federal immigration laws. “The federal government needs to come in and say that enforcement of federal laws is our purview.”

Across sites, there was also a general frustration with Congress’s inability to pass immigration reform and a belief that many of the problems associated with undocumented immigration could be resolved through both administrative and legislative reform of the federal immigration benefits and enforcement system. In Topeka and Collier County, some participants stated that Congress should increase funding to the various immigration departments within the Department of Homeland Security, including CBP, ICE, and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, so that they can more effectively fulfill their respective missions. Others felt that Congress should create a pathway to legalization for the millions of undocumented immigrants currently in the country. Many also believed that the government must make the process easier for migrants to come legally to the United States and for the undocumented to adjust their status. In Collier County, one participant, who had experience hiring temporary seasonal workers, argued that the federal government should make the process easier for businesses to hire temporary lawful workers.
Several recommendations were mentioned to improve the working relationship between police and immigrant communities. In Topeka, the law enforcement group agreed that bilingual-pay incentives would help attract more bilingual officers. They also believed that police departments should offer Spanish-language training to officers. A couple of participants in different sites suggested cultural sensitivity training for police officers. And in Arlington, participants also said that police should teach immigrants about police and public safety issues.

Several participants raised additional recommendations. In Collier County, for instance, a law enforcement participant suggested broadening the T visa and U visa programs to include a broader range of crimes (these are visas for victims of trafficking and victims of certain serious crimes that assist in prosecutions). Also, they suggested that since it would be impractical to deport all undocumented immigrants in the country, local and federal government should focus on the criminal alien population. One civilian participant in Collier County suggested taking away all incentives for undocumented migration, including jobs and benefits. In El Paso, where participants expressed concern about civil rights abuses and misconduct of federal immigration officials, a participant recommended creating civilian oversight commissions to oversee federal and local law enforcement agencies involved in immigration enforcement. In Arlington, one participant suggested legislation that would shield police executives from political influence.

Focus Group Sites

Topeka, Kansas

FIGURE 1. TOPEKA FOCUS GROUP SITE MAP
Topeka is the capital of Kansas and the most populous city in Shawnee County. The Census Bureau estimated Shawnee County's population at 172,529 on average from 2005 to 2007, with Topeka's at 121,184. The location is unique in that it was the only Midwest site of the focus group project and has a relatively small population compared with the other sites. Besides providing desired geographical diversity, Topeka was chosen because of the importance of the immigration issue there and the Police Foundation's prior history working with its police chief, Ron Miller. Chief Miller invited other law enforcement officials, including the Shawnee County Sheriff and members of his agency and a representative of the Shawnee County District Attorney and Kansas Highway Patrol.

For the civilian session, the Topeka Police Department contacted community partners, such as the Law Enforcement Partnership Panel, the NAACP, and a number of Hispanic organizations, which were asked to extend invitations to their members. Once people started learning about the event, a number of additional people called the police department to request permission to attend. Ultimately, representatives attended the civilian session from the Topeka City Council, Kansas Human Rights Commission, Kansas Hispanic and Latino Commission, the NAACP, League of United Latin American Citizens, community-based organizations, private business, and the clergy. Given that Topeka is the most populous part of Shawnee County and the Topeka Police Department organized the event, it was no surprise that all of the community focus group participants were from the city of Topeka.

During focus group discussions, reference was made to Topeka's racial history. One of Topeka's school districts was the defendant in Brown v. Board of Education, the landmark Supreme Court case requiring racial integration of American public schools. In addition, in the late 1980s, a group of citizens calling themselves the Task Force to Overcome Racism in Topeka formed to address the problems associated with racism in the city, including housing segregation, disproportionate minority incarceration, and continuing school segregation.

Of all the project sites, Topeka had the smallest immigrant population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey three-year estimates of 2005 to 2007, approximately 5 percent of the population of Topeka and 4 percent of the population of Shawnee County was foreign born. Of Topeka's foreign-born residents, approximately 33 percent were naturalized citizens and 35 percent entered in the year 2000 or later. In both locations, only a slightly larger percentage of the population five years or older spoke a language other than English at home: 12 percent in Topeka and 8 percent in Shawnee County. In addition, approximately 11 percent of Topeka's population identified as Hispanic or Latino of any race, 12 percent Black or African American, 1 percent Native American, and a little less than 2 percent Asian. Similarly, in Shawnee County, approximately 9 percent of the population identified as Hispanic or Latino of any race, 9 percent Black or African American, and a little under 1 percent identified as Asian and Native American. Shawnee County saw a 58.4 percent increase in its Hispanic or Latino population between 1990 and 2000, which is slightly above the national average growth rate of 57.6 percent. From 2005-2007, median household income in Topeka was $36,071 and median family income was $46,500; median household income was $45,274 and median family income was $57,636 in Shawnee County. The Topeka Police Department is a medium-size police force with 338 full-time employees, 283 of whom are sworn personnel. Of the sworn officers, 89 percent are White, 4 percent Black, 6 percent Hispanic or Latino, and 1 percent Native American. The Topeka Police Department saw
slightly lower rates of reported violent and property crime in 2006 than in 1985 (see table 1), although the number of those crimes increased during the period. For the Shawnee County Sheriff’s Office, the rate of reported violent crimes decreased slightly while the rate of reported property crimes increased considerably. See table 1 for more detailed statistics.14

**TABLE 1. CRIME STATISTICS FOR TOPEKA PARTICIPATING AGENCIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>1985 Violent Crime Rate</th>
<th>1985 Property Crime Rate</th>
<th>2006 Violent Crime Rate</th>
<th>2006 Property Crime Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topeka Police Department</td>
<td>580.6</td>
<td>7,180</td>
<td>544.8</td>
<td>7,123.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawnee County Sheriff’s Office</td>
<td>226.7</td>
<td>1,476.1</td>
<td>205.2</td>
<td>3,310.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Crime & Justice Data Online, and Crime Trends from FBI Uniform Crime Reports. Violent and property crime rates are number of crimes reported per 100,000 population. Data are unavailable for some of the smaller agencies that participated. Violent crimes include murder and non-negligent homicide, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. The definition of property crimes includes burglary, larceny/theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

Overall, during the Topeka law enforcement session, participants made more comments about lack of ICE responsiveness than during the other sessions. To support this claim, a representative of the Kansas Highway Patrol related an incident involving seizure of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars worth of marijuana from undocumented immigrants. The officer called ICE to respond but ICE did not have officers available to do so. Some participants felt that if ICE did not respond to such a serious incident, it certainly would not have the resources to respond to all calls for service were local law enforcement to start actively enforcing immigration law. Moreover, because of ICE’s inability to respond in a timely manner, the local law enforcement agency would incur significant detention (seventy-two dollars per day) and labor costs. The local agency would also be forced to allocate valuable beds in the detention center to immigration detainees. If the agency no longer had the space to detain all criminal law violators, it would be forced to pay another jurisdiction to hold the prisoners. The reason this issue mainly arose in this site is unclear, but perhaps it is due to the relatively fewer immigration resources allocated to this region.
El Paso County, the westernmost county in Texas, borders New Mexico and the Mexican state of Chihuahua. El Paso City shares a border with Ciudad Juárez (the largest city in Chihuahua), which together make up the El Paso/Juárez Borderplex, the largest population center on any international border in the world. About 2.2 million live in the area. In the Borderplex region, there are four major border points of entry and pedestrian traffic of approximately 8.3 million annually. With a population of 609,415, El Paso is the twenty-first largest city in the nation and was the seventh fastest growing large city (cities with a population over 500,000) in the nation from 2000-2006. From 2005 to 2007, El Paso County had an estimated population of 724,217. El Paso County includes El Paso City, Horizon City, Socorro, Anthony, Clint, and Vinton.

Chief Richard Wiles of the El Paso Police Department, the host agency, invited law enforcement representatives from both El Paso County and bordering Doña Ana County, New Mexico. Doña Ana County includes the cities of Las Cruces and Sunland Park and borders the U.S.-Mexico border state of Chihuahua. A large number of the law enforcement session attendees were chiefs of police from these agencies. For the civilian session, Chief Wiles worked with community-based organizations to support efforts to get community participation. The final list of civilian session participants included...
representatives from the Border Network for Human Rights, Centro Mujeres de la Esperanza, Paseo del Norte Civil Rights Project, Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services, and a local private attorney; most of the civilian participants were based in El Paso County.

In addition to being border counties, El Paso County, and to a slightly lesser extent Doña Ana County, compared with other selected sites, are unique in that Latinos are the majority population and a significant percentage of them are eligible to vote (citizens). While the population of Latinos is very high in the region—approximately 81 percent of El Paso County and 65 percent of Doña Ana County identified as Hispanic or Latino according to three-year estimates from 2005 to 2007 of the American Community Survey—the growth rate in the Hispanic or Latino population in both counties was lower than the national average of 58 percent. El Paso County saw a 29 percent increase in Hispanic or Latino population between 1990 and 2000, while Doña Ana County saw a 45 percent increase.

Both El Paso County and Doña Ana County also have a foreign-born population well above the national rate of 12.5 percent. From 2005 to 2007, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that approximately 27 percent of residents of El Paso County were born outside the United States or its territories. Of the foreign born, approximately 41 percent were naturalized U.S. citizens and 18 percent entered the United States after 2000. In the same time period, the Census Bureau estimated that approximately 19 percent of Doña Ana County’s 193,888 residents were foreign born. Of the foreign born, 31 percent were naturalized U.S. citizens and 22 percent entered the United States in 2000 or later.

In both counties, the majority of the population speaks a language other than English at home—approximately 76 percent in El Paso and 54 percent in Doña Ana County from 2005 to 2007. During this period, median household income in El Paso was $33,684 and median family income was $36,817. In Doña Ana County, median household income was $34,118 and median family income was $39,453.

The El Paso Police Department is the largest law enforcement agency in the region and has by far the largest percentage of Hispanic or Latino officers of all agencies participating in the focus groups. As of 2000, the El Paso Police Department had 1,351 full-time employees, 1,057 of whom were sworn. Of the full-time sworn personnel, 24 percent were White (non-Hispanic), 2 percent Black (non-Hispanic), 72 percent Hispanic, 1 percent Asian, and 1 percent Native American. The second largest agency present at the El Paso law enforcement session was the Las Cruces Police Department, which had 199 full-time employees, 141 of whom were sworn personnel. Of sworn full-time personnel, 46 percent were White (non-Hispanic), 7 percent Black (non-Hispanic), 45 percent Hispanic, and 1 percent Native American.

In the past twenty years, the rate of both violent and property crimes reported in El Paso City declined considerably despite an appreciable increase in population size and despite focus group comments that in recent years crimes relating to drug trafficking increased significantly and became more violent. The El Paso County sheriff reported a slight increase in the violent crime rate, most of this increase caused by a rise in aggravated assault charges. Murder/non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, and robbery rates all declined. The other agencies with available data for the past twenty years saw slight increases in the rate of violent crimes reported but large decreases in property crime rates. Despite proximity to the border, El Paso City was named the second safest city in America (of cities with a population of 500,000 or more). See table 2 for more detailed statistics.
Because El Paso is situated on the U.S.-Mexico border, participants had particular perspectives, issues, and concerns relating to the border that were not raised in other sessions. In El Paso, law enforcement interacts with immigrant residents, undocumented migrants who have recently crossed the border and are heading to the interior of the country, and Mexican visitors legally present in the United States with a border-crossing card. Furthermore, many residents of El Paso have family on both sides of the border, which influences their viewpoints on migration issues.

El Paso and Doña Ana County law enforcement agencies, particularly those located in rural border cities, often must respond to criminal activity specific to border communities, such as drug and human trafficking and the resulting violence. Some law enforcement participants expressed concern that these criminal problems have worsened in recent years. One participant contended that the Juarez and Sinaloa drug cartels have begun to enter the human trafficking business. These local law enforcement agencies feel overwhelmed by criminal enforcement demands placed on them, and for this reason the Border County Sheriff’s Coalition sought federal funds to address border criminal activity and to deter criminal activity by having more of a presence in the rural areas of the county. One participant reported a decline in trespass and burglary complaints from farmers since more deputies were placed in these areas.

The discussions in El Paso often included comments about the role and presence of CBP in the region. In the past, as one civilian participant mentioned, the agency did not patrol beyond three miles of the border. Now, however, it is conducting enforcement activities further inland, patrolling public areas such as shopping malls. On occasion, some police agencies in the area have collaborated with CBP on criminal investigations, particularly in jurisdictions where patrol resources are limited. For example, an officer in a more rural area may call CBP for backup.
Arlington, Texas

FIGURE 3. ARLINGTTON FOCUS GROUP SITE MAP

Arlington, Texas, is part of the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington Metropolitan area, as named by the U.S. Census Bureau, or as it is commonly named in the region, the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. In 2006, the population of the Metroplex reached almost six million, making it the fourth-largest metropolitan area in the United States. It is an enormous geographic area covering 9,286 square miles, which includes the third and fifth largest cities in Texas (Dallas and Fort Worth). Fort Worth was the fastest growing city in the nation from July 2000 to July 2006, having increased its population by more than 20 percent. The Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex includes the following counties that were represented in the law enforcement focus group: Dallas, Tarrant, Collin, Johnson, and Denton. Parker, Rockwall, Kaufman, Hunt, Ellis, and Wise counties, also located in the metropolitan area, did not have their law enforcement agencies represented at the law enforcement focus group session.

According to estimates of the 2006 American Community Survey, the foreign-born population of the Metroplex area was estimated at approximately 18 percent. In 2006, 56 percent of foreign-born residents were born in Mexico and 67 percent came from Latin America. In addition, approximately 29 percent of the metropolitan area spoke a language other than English at home.
Focus Group Summary

Chief Theron Bowman of the Arlington Police Department invited local area police executives on the basis of their proximity to Arlington, agency size, and community similarities. Because this group regularly meets twice a month, they have had a lot of experience discussing complex issues, including challenges associated with immigration. Moreover, unlike other sites, almost all participants were chiefs of police. Sheriff’s offices in the metropolitan area were not represented nor were the larger police departments in the region, specifically the Dallas Police Department and the Fort Worth Police Department.

The Arlington Police Department collaborated with a variety of local-area partners, including faith-based organizations, police partners, and residential communities, to whom they drafted an invitation letter describing the purpose of the event and requesting that the community partners invite residents to attend. They used this approach to establish a layer of trust with members of the community who might normally feel uncomfortable attending an event hosted by a police agency. Many participants were too frightened to give their name and contact information, preferring to remain anonymous; thus, we do not have specific information about the composition of this group, unlike the other sites.

Since the Arlington Police Department invited focus group participants by using organizations it worked with in the past, most civilian participants were from that city. Therefore, a more detailed description of its population is available. Arlington is a suburb of Fort Worth in Tarrant County. The demographic profile for Arlington is quite similar to the entire metropolitan area. From 2005 to 2007, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated Arlington’s foreign-born population at 19 percent, and 30 percent of the population five years old or over was estimated to speak a language other than English at home. Of the 30 percent, 71 percent spoke Spanish and approximately 51 percent reported that they did not speak English “very well.” From 2005 to 2007, 32 percent of the foreign-born population were naturalized citizens and 32 percent entered in 2000 or later. Of the estimated 356,764 residents in Arlington from 2005 to 2007, 62 percent were White, 17 percent Black, 6 percent Asian, and less than 1 percent was Native American. Approximately 26 percent reported they were Hispanic or Latino (of any race). The city is relatively prosperous, with a median household income of $50,582 and median family income of $60,364. According to Chief Bowman, Arlington’s population has almost doubled in the past twenty to twenty-five years, and most of that growth is due to increases in ethnic minority communities. Specifically, Arlington’s Hispanic population growth is significant, as is the unauthorized portion of this community, according to the chief.

Table 3 presents brief demographic statistics of the five counties that had at least one police department represented in the law enforcement session and gives the reader a brief overview of the population served by this large number of police agencies. Important to note in this table is that a significant portion of the immigrant population possibly resides in the cities of Dallas and Fort Worth; those cities were not represented in the law enforcement session. All five counties experienced tremendous growth in the Latino community between 1990 and 2000. Tarrant County’s Latino population grew 104 percent; Dallas County’s, 110 percent; Collin County’s, 178 percent; Denton County’s, 177 percent; and Johnson County’s, 106 percent. Some law enforcement group participants discussed growth not only in the Latino community but in various Asian and Middle Eastern communities as well.
The Arlington Police Department was the largest agency represented in the law enforcement session, with 643 full-time employees (485 sworn) in 2000 and the largest proportion of Hispanic sworn officers, 13 percent. Sixty-nine percent of sworn full-time employees were White (non-Hispanic), 12 percent Black (non-Hispanic), 3 percent Asian, and 3 percent Native American. Hispanic composition of sworn personnel in the other police departments for which data on racial makeup were available was less than 10 percent. See table 4 for more detailed statistics.41

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Foreign Born (percent)</th>
<th>Speak a Language Other than English (percent)</th>
<th>Hispanic (percent)</th>
<th>Asian (percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dallas</td>
<td>2,336,012</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tarrant</td>
<td>1,668,042</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collin</td>
<td>695,317</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson</td>
<td>146,663</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denton</td>
<td>585,139</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**TABLE 4. RACIAL MAKEUP OF ARLINGTON PARTICIPATING AGENCY SWORN PERSONNEL – 2006**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>White (non-Hispanic) (percent)</th>
<th>Black (non-Hispanic) (percent)</th>
<th>Hispanic (percent)</th>
<th>Asian (percent)</th>
<th>Native American (percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arlington PD</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irving PD</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plano PD</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Prairie PD</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mesquite PD</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrollton PD</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denton PD</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All police departments participating in the Arlington focus group, except for the Frisco Police Department, saw a decrease in property crime rates between 1985 and 2006. A little more than half of participating police departments also saw a decrease in violent crime rates. See table 5 for more detailed statistics.\textsuperscript{42}

**TABLE 5. CRIME STATISTICS FOR ARLINGTON PARTICIPATING AGENCIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>1985 Violent Crime Rate</th>
<th>1985 Property Crime Rate</th>
<th>2006 Violent Crime Rate</th>
<th>2006 Property Crime Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arlington PD</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>8,461.1</td>
<td>731.2</td>
<td>5,271.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedford PD</td>
<td>198.6</td>
<td>6,414.4</td>
<td>510.4</td>
<td>3,239.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burleson PD</td>
<td>157.2</td>
<td>6,137</td>
<td>187.2</td>
<td>3,881.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrollton PD</td>
<td>195.5</td>
<td>5,930.5</td>
<td>187.3</td>
<td>3,093.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleyville PD</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>3,398.6</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>1,311.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denton PD</td>
<td>666.8</td>
<td>8,398.3</td>
<td>310.9</td>
<td>3,001.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duncanville PD</td>
<td>222.2</td>
<td>6,059.4</td>
<td>304.3</td>
<td>4,014.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farmers Branch PD</td>
<td>210.7</td>
<td>6,534.9</td>
<td>238.6</td>
<td>4,376.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frisco PD</td>
<td>598.1 (1988)</td>
<td>3,646.5</td>
<td>134.6</td>
<td>4,375.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Prairie PD</td>
<td>629.2</td>
<td>8,162.2</td>
<td>330.1</td>
<td>5,038.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haltom City PD</td>
<td>342.8</td>
<td>8,722</td>
<td>463.4</td>
<td>5,689.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irving PD</td>
<td>687.4</td>
<td>9,095.3</td>
<td>426.8</td>
<td>4,842.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keller PD</td>
<td>264.8</td>
<td>4,583.4</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>1,497.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mesquite PD</td>
<td>588.8</td>
<td>8,315.7</td>
<td>371.3</td>
<td>4,023</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Richland Hills PD</td>
<td>316.8</td>
<td>6,724.6</td>
<td>299.1</td>
<td>3,758.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plano PD</td>
<td>167.4</td>
<td>5,973.2</td>
<td>287.7</td>
<td>3,338.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Crime & Justice Data Online*, and *Crime Trends* from *FBI Uniform Crime Reports*. Violent and property crime rates are number of crimes reported per 100,000 population. Data are unavailable for some of the smaller agencies that participated. Violent crimes include murder and non-negligent homicide, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. The definition of property crimes includes burglary, larceny/theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.
Collier County, Florida

With the exception of a few representatives, law enforcement and civilian participants of the Collier County focus group sessions were largely from two counties, Collier County and Lee County, both located in Southwest Florida. In 1923, Collier split from Lee County and includes the incorporated cities of Everglades City, Marco Island, and the City of Naples. The unincorporated areas of the county include Immokalee and East Naples (both had representatives at the focus group). The population of Collier County from 2005 to 2007 was 311,926; Lee County's was 567,711.

Both counties saw a more than doubling of their Hispanic or Latino populations from 1990 to 2000, well above the national average. The growth rate in the Hispanic or Latino population was 137.8 percent in Collier County and 178.5 percent in Lee County. The U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2005-2007 3-Year Estimates also indicate that 25 percent of Collier County and 16 percent of Lee County were Hispanic or Latino (of any race). In addition, 24 percent of the population of Collier County was foreign born. Of the 76 percent of the population born in the United States, merely 21 percent was born in Florida. During this same period of time, 14 percent of the population of Lee County was foreign born. Of the 86 percent born in the United States, 24 percent was born in Florida (similar to Collier County). Thirty percent of the population five years or
over spoke a language other than English at home in Collier County; 19 percent in Lee County did also. Median household income in Collier County from 2005 to 2007 was $57,166, and median family income was $86,846. In Lee County, median household income in 2006 was $49,742, and median family income was $57,475.

When county statistics for Collier and Lee Counties are disaggregated into smaller geographical areas, there is much variation in racial and ethnic makeup, median income, place of birth, and languages spoken. Included within Collier County, for instance, is Immokalee, where, in 2000, 46 percent of the population was foreign born, 71 percent was Hispanic or Latino, and 78 percent spoke a language other than English at home. Immokalee is also a very poor community, with median household income of $24,315 and a median family income of $22,628 in 2000. In contrast, in the same year, Naples City, also in Collier County, had a foreign-born population of only 9 percent, a Hispanic or Latino population of 2 percent, and only 10 percent of the population spoke a language other than English at home. Naples is also a wealthier municipality than Immokalee, with a median household income of $65,641 and median family income of $83,831.

Immokalee is the home base of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), a community-based worker organization whose members are largely Latino and Haitian immigrants. It is well known nationally for boycotts against Taco Bell and McDonald’s, resulting in both companies agreeing to pay a higher price for tomatoes in order to increase workers’ wages. The CIW is also well known for its antitrafficking and antislavery programs with farm workers.

Sheriff Don Hunter and his staff coordinated participation in the Collier County focus group. Twelve of the twenty-one law enforcement session participants were from the Collier County Sheriff’s Office. Seven members of the sheriff’s office attended the afternoon civilian session, six merely as observers. The civilian session included representatives from the Collier County School Board, East Naples Civic Association, Collier County Board of County Commissioners, City of Bonita Springs, Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, Collier County government, Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce, Golden Gate Fire Commission, Collier County School District, and Marco Island City Council.

No immigrant community representatives or organizations participated in the Collier County focus group. This site was added later in the project and there was a relatively short amount of time to organize the civilian session compared with the other focus group sites. Also, the Police Foundation had requested that elected and appointed government officials were included in the civilian session.

In 2000, the Collier County Sheriff’s Office had 915 employees, 504 being full-time sworn personnel. Of full-time sworn personnel, 87 percent were White (non-Hispanic), 2 percent Black (non-Hispanic), 11 percent Hispanic, and 1 percent Asian. The Lee County Sheriff’s Office had 910 full-time employees, 410 of whom were full-time sworn personnel. Of full-time sworn personnel, 94 percent were White (non-Hispanic), 3 percent Black (non-Hispanic), and 2 percent Hispanic. The Fort Myers Police Department had 238 full-time employees, 152 of whom were full-time sworn personnel. Of full-time sworn personnel, 84 percent were White (non-Hispanic), 11 percent Black (non-Hispanic), 5 percent Hispanic, and 1 percent Asian.

The Collier County Sheriff’s Office had a higher violent crime rate in 2006 than in 1985, although the rates have been decreasing slowly since 1999 (around the period when violent crime rates were relatively high in the jurisdiction). The county has seen consistent decreases in property crime...
rates since 1996. The Naples Police Department’s violent and property crime rates both dropped during this period. As noted in table 6, the Lee and Charlotte County Sheriff’s Offices saw increases in violent crime rates and barely any change in property crime rate between 1985 and 2006. The Fort Myers Police Department’s property crime rate decreased; and while the violent crime rate was slightly higher in 2006 than in 1985, the violent crime rate has been steadily decreasing since 1992, when violent crime was at a high.

TABLE 6. CRIME STATISTICS FOR COLLIER COUNTY PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>1985 Violent Crime Rate</th>
<th>1985 Property Crime Rate</th>
<th>2006 Violent Crime Rate</th>
<th>2006 Property Crime Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collier County Sheriff’s</td>
<td>383.2</td>
<td>4,823.9</td>
<td>477.4</td>
<td>1,873.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee County Sheriff’s</td>
<td>188.4</td>
<td>3,230</td>
<td>522.6</td>
<td>3,420.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naples PD</td>
<td>500.2</td>
<td>7,218.8</td>
<td>240.1</td>
<td>3,891.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Myers PD</td>
<td>1,229.3</td>
<td>9,241.2</td>
<td>1,577.1</td>
<td>4,897.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte County Sheriff’s</td>
<td>182.9</td>
<td>3,360.6</td>
<td>483.9</td>
<td>3,505.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Crime & Justice Data Online, and Crime Trends from FBI Uniform Crime Reports. Violent and property crime rates are number of crimes reported per 100,000 population. Data are unavailable for some of the smaller agencies that participated. Violent crimes include murder and non-negligent homicide, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. The definition of property crimes includes burglary, larceny/theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

Because of the large Cuban population in Florida, participants in Collier County discussed special immigration benefits and privileges granted to Cubans. Unlike immigrants from other countries, ICE will not initiate removal proceedings against a Cuban who has committed a criminal law violation. One participant expressed his belief that Cubans should not receive such special treatment because they are no worse off than immigrants from many other countries. Some participants also claimed that the Castro administration provides support to Cuban smugglers, who are smuggling not only Cubans but also other foreign nationals. One member of the U.S. Coast Guard supported this claim, stating that the Coast Guard had recently intercepted a boat coming from Cuba where nine out of eleven of the passengers were Chinese nationals. Others claimed that Cubans are now entering the United States through the U.S.-Mexico border, and that their smuggling networks are training migrants from other countries on Cuban accents and mannerisms so that they can benefit from the immigration privileges extended to Cubans.
APPENDIX A

Focus Group Summary

Endnotes

1 Throughout this report, the term “immigrant” is used to describe any foreign-born resident, including legal permanent residents and other legally present foreign nationals, naturalized citizens, undocumented immigrants, and out-of-status immigrants.


4 Id.


7 Id.


10 Id.


13 U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Crime & Justice Data Online, Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics, 2000 (LEMAS), Law Enforcement Agency Profile for Topeka Police Department, KS. There were no LEMAS data available for Shawnee County Sheriff’s Office. http://bjsdata.ojp.usdoj.gov/dataonline/Search/Law/Local/RunLawLocalAgencyProfile.cf.


15 Id.


17 Data provided by Mayor John Cook of El Paso City in his presentation at the Police Foundation national conference on August 21, 2008.


20 Id.


22 Id.


24 Id.
Focus Group Summary


28 U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics, 2000 (LEMAS). Statistics are available only for local police and sheriffs’ agencies with one hundred or more sworn officers and fifty or more uniformed officers assigned to respond to calls for service, which is why data were unavailable for other police participating agencies. http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/lemas00.pdf.

29 Mayor John Cook’s presentation at the Police Foundation’s national conference on August 21, 2008, citing 12th Annual America’s Safest (and Most Dangerous) Cities, Morgan Quitno Awards.


APPENDIX A

Focus Group Summary


41 U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics, 2000 (LEMAS). Statistics are only available for local police and sheriffs’ agencies with one hundred or more sworn officers and fifty or more uniformed officers assigned to respond to calls for service, which is why data were unavailable for other police participating agencies. http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/lemas00.pdf.

42 Where statistics were unavailable for 1985, the comparison year is provided.


