

Research suggests Trump's 'Muslim ban' produced rare shift in public opinion

January 12 2018, by Tess Eyrich

President Donald Trump signed Executive Order 13769 on Jan. 27, 2017, effectively barring individuals from seven predominately Muslim countries from entering the United States for 90 days.

Within a day of his decree, thousands of protesters flooded airports around the country in opposition to what was quickly deemed a "Muslim ban," and by March 6, the order had been formally revoked.

According to a political scientist at the University of California, Riverside, and his colleagues, visible resistance to the order in the immediate aftermath of its signing may have produced a rare shift in public opinion that resulted in mass opposition to Trump's policy.

The shift was caused by "an influx of information portraying the ban as being at odds with egalitarian principles of American identity and religious liberty," said researchers Loren Collingwood, an assistant professor of political science at UCR; Nazita Lajevardi of Michigan State University; and Kassra A. R. Oskooii of the University of Delaware.

Their [findings](#), published last week in the journal *Political Behavior*, suggest the bounty of information that surfaced after the order went into effect—information that painted the ban as deeply un-American and in fact "incompatible with American values"—contributed to a broad-based increase in opposition to it.

The researchers compared the results of two surveys of the same 311 people—one conducted just days before the order's announcement, and the other in the two weeks after. They found that among those respondents, more than 30 percent moved against the ban in the interim.

Those who shifted most radically, meanwhile, were "high American identifiers." Such respondents were shown to consider their status as Americans who belong to one nation to be a defining element of their identities.

Media coverage of anti-ban demonstrations, the researchers noted, often depicted protesters "shrouded in American flags," visually linking the concept of more inclusive immigration policies to American egalitarianism. The movement against the ban also benefited from the outspokenness of various news commentators and publications, many of whom were quick to criticize the order by characterizing it as antithetical to core American ideals.

To test their results, the researchers also looked at attitudes toward two other hot-button issues linked to executive orders that were signed just days before No. 13769: the Keystone Pipeline and the U.S.-Mexico border wall. They found that although attitudes toward both did shift slightly, the differences were not statistically significant.

The profound response to the ban, the researchers wrote, represents "one instance in which the priming of American identity shifted citizens' opinions toward more *inclusive*, rather than restrictive, immigration-related policy stances."

Overall, their findings suggest that American identity can be "primed" to produce shifts in public opinion. It also demonstrates that [public opinion](#) may be more malleable than previously thought, especially as certain policy issues cycle in and out of the news.

More information: Loren Collingwood et al, A Change of Heart? Why Individual-Level Public Opinion Shifted Against Trump's "Muslim Ban", *Political Behavior* (2018). [DOI: 10.1007/s11109-017-9439-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-017-9439-z)

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