Syria strikes, travel ban, refugees, and Muslims: American attitudes on Trump’s early policies

A PUBLIC OPINION POLL BY SHIBLEY TELHAMI
A survey of the

Valuable assistance was provided by Neil Schwartz, Scott Willoth, and Jordan Evangelista from Nielsen Scarborough. Brittany Kyser, Rachel Slattery, and Anne Peckham were particularly helpful.

*The University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll probes domestic and international issues that are central to our policy discourse and is led by Professors Shibley Telhami and Stella Rouse.
Survey Methodology

The survey was conducted April 12-17, 2017 with a panel consisting of a probability-based representative sample. The panel was recruited by Nielsen Scarborough from its larger probability-based national panel, which was recruited by mail and telephone using a random sample of households provided by Survey Sampling International. A national sample of 2,138 panelists completed the survey. Responses were weighted by age, gender, income, education, race, and geographic region using benchmarks from the U.S. Census. The survey was also weighted by partisan identification.

The margin of error is 2.12%
American Attitudes toward Syria
On April 6, 2017, President Trump ordered a missile strike against a Syrian air force base after reports that the regime of Bashar Assad used chemical weapons and wounded dozens of Syrians. How do you feel about these strikes?
How do you feel about these strikes?

- **Support**: 81 total, 31 Republicans, 34 Democrats, 34 Independents
- **Oppose**: 43 total, 9 Republicans, 43 Democrats, 34 Independents
- **Don't know**: 30 total, 10 Republicans, 26 Democrats, 30 Independents

April 2017
How do you feel about these strikes?

- **Support**
  - 18-34: 36
  - 35-54: 54
  - 55+: 64

- **Oppose**
  - 18-34: 39
  - 35-54: 26
  - 55+: 19

- **Don't know**
  - 18-34: 25
  - 35-54: 19
  - 55+: 16

April 2017
How do you feel about these strikes?

- **Support**: 61 Men, 44 Women
- **Oppose**: 23 Men, 31 Women
- **Don't know**: 15 Men, 24 Women

April 2017
How do you feel about these strikes?

- **Support**
  - Black/African American: 19
  - Not Black/African American: 57

- **Oppose**
  - Black/African American: 49
  - Not Black/African American: 24

- **Don't know**
  - Black/African American: 31
  - Not Black/African American: 18

April 2017
How do you feel about these strikes?

- **Support**: 37 (Spanish/Hispanic Origin) 55 (Not Spanish/Hispanic Origin)
- **Oppose**: 24 (Spanish/Hispanic Origin) 44 (Not Spanish/Hispanic Origin)
- **Don't know**: 19 (Spanish/Hispanic Origin) 20 (Not Spanish/Hispanic Origin)

April 2017
How do you feel about these strikes?

- **Support**
  - Lean toward Israel: 77
  - Lean toward Palestinians/Neither Side: 38

- **Oppose**
  - Lean toward Israel: 11
  - Lean toward Palestinians/Neither Side: 38

- **Don't know**
  - Lean toward Israel: 11
  - Lean toward Palestinians/Neither Side: 25

April 2017
Thinking about how President Trump made his decision to launch a military attack on Syria, how has this affected your confidence in the president’s decision-making?
Thinking about how President Trump made his decision to launch a military attack on Syria, how has this affected your confidence in the president’s decision-making?

- More confidence than before: Republicans 7, Democrats 17, Independents 29, Total 56
- Less confidence than before: Republicans 8, Democrats 31, Independents 27, Total 44
- About the same level of confidence: Republicans 36, Democrats 48, Independents 49, Total 49

April 2017
Given what you may have read or heard about the use of chemical weapons in Syria this month, which of the following is closest to your view?
Given what you may have read or heard about the use of chemical weapons in Syria this month, which of the following is closest to your view?

- Assad probably used chemical weapons
- A party other than Assad probably used chemical weapons
- I am not convinced chemical weapons were used
- I am uncertain

**Republicans**

- Assad probably used chemical weapons: 75
- A party other than Assad probably used chemical weapons: 6
- I am not convinced chemical weapons were used: 3
- I am uncertain: 16

**Democrats**

- Assad probably used chemical weapons: 66
- A party other than Assad probably used chemical weapons: 6
- I am not convinced chemical weapons were used: 5
- I am uncertain: 23

**Independents**

- Assad probably used chemical weapons: 39
- A party other than Assad probably used chemical weapons: 10
- I am not convinced chemical weapons were used: 5
- I am uncertain: 23

**Total**

- Assad probably used chemical weapons: 66
- A party other than Assad probably used chemical weapons: 6
- I am not convinced chemical weapons were used: 5
- I am uncertain: 44

April 2017
How do you think the strike on Syria will affect the prospects of ending the violence in Syria?
How do you think the strike on Syria will affect the prospects of ending the violence in Syria?

- **It will make it more likely**
  - Republicans: 10
  - Democrats: 15
  - Independents: 14
  - Total: 33

- **It will make it less likely**
  - Republicans: 15
  - Democrats: 35
  - Independents: 36
  - Total: 50

- **It will have no impact**
  - Republicans: 20
  - Democrats: 27
  - Independents: 46
  - Total: 53

April 2017
How do you believe the strikes on the Syrian air base will affect the level of American military involvement in Syria?
How do you believe the strikes on the Syrian air base will affect the level of American military involvement in Syria?

- **It will make it more likely that American military involvement will grow**
  - Republicans: 55
  - Democrats: 72
  - Independents: 54
  - Total: 63

- **It makes it less likely that American military involvement will grow**
  - Republicans: 9
  - Democrats: 8
  - Independents: 15
  - Total: 9

- **It will have no impact**
  - Republicans: 33
  - Democrats: 19
  - Independents: 27
  - Total: 26
In your opinion, how will the strikes on Syria affect Assad’s likely behavior?
In your opinion, how will the strikes on Syria affect Assad’s likely behavior?

- It will make him more aggressive in attacking the Syrian opposition:
  - Republicans: 30
  - Democrats: 42
  - Independents: 42
  - Total: 54

- It will likely make him less aggressive in attacking the Syrian opposition:
  - Republicans: 12
  - Democrats: 17
  - Independents: 23
  - Total: 36

- It will have no impact:
  - Republicans: 32
  - Democrats: 37
  - Independents: 33
  - Total: 33
American Attitudes toward Refugees
In general, do you support or oppose the United States taking in refugees from the conflicts in Syria and other Middle Eastern countries after screening them for security risks?
In general, do you support or oppose the United States taking in refugees from the conflicts in Syria and other Middle Eastern countries after screening them for security risks?

- **Republicans**
  - Support strongly/somewhat: 36
  - Oppose strongly/somewhat: 15

- **Democrats**
  - Support strongly/somewhat: 51
  - Oppose strongly/somewhat: 15

- **Independents**
  - Support strongly/somewhat: 51
  - Oppose strongly/somewhat: 47

- **Total**
  - Support strongly/somewhat: 83
  - Oppose strongly/somewhat: 39

*April 2017*
In general, do you support or oppose the United States taking in refugees from the conflicts in Syria and other Middle Eastern countries after screening them for security risks?

Support strongly/somewhat

Oppose strongly/somewhat

18-34: 64%
35-54: 52%
55+: 62%

18-34: 35%
35-54: 45%
55+: 37%

April 2017
In general, do you support or oppose the United States taking in refugees from the conflicts in Syria and other Middle Eastern countries after screening them for security risks?

**Support strongly/somewhat**
- Men: 55
- Women: 63

**Oppose strongly/somewhat**
- Men: 44
- Women: 35

April 2017
In general, do you support or oppose the United States taking in refugees from the conflicts in Syria and other Middle Eastern countries after screening them for security risks?

- **Support strongly/somewhat**
  - Black/African American: 63
  - Not Black/African American: 59

- **Oppose strongly/somewhat**
  - Black/African American: 32
  - Not Black/African American: 40
In general, do you support or oppose the United States taking in refugees from the conflicts in Syria and other Middle Eastern countries after screening them for security risks?

- **Support strongly/somewhat**
  - Spanish/Hispanic Origin: 63
  - Not Spanish/Hispanic Origin: 59

- **Oppose strongly/somewhat**
  - Spanish/Hispanic Origin: 35
  - Not Spanish/Hispanic Origin: 40

April 2017
In general, do you support or oppose the United States taking in refugees from the conflicts in Syria and other Middle Eastern countries after screening them for security risks?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support strongly/somewhat</th>
<th>May 2016</th>
<th>April 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

59

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oppose strongly/somewhat</th>
<th>May 2016</th>
<th>April 2017</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

41

39
In general, do you support or oppose the United States taking in refugees from the conflicts in Syria and other Middle Eastern countries after screening them for security risks?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>May 2016</th>
<th>April 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support strongly/somewhat</strong></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oppose strongly/somewhat</strong></td>
<td>63</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support strongly/somewhat</strong></td>
<td>77</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oppose strongly/somewhat</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support strongly/somewhat</strong></td>
<td>55</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oppose strongly/somewhat</strong></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In general, do you support or oppose the United States taking in refugees from the conflicts in Syria and other Middle Eastern countries after screening them for security risks?

Lean toward Israel  Lean toward Palestinians/Neither Side

Support strongly/somewhat
- Support: 40
- Oppose: 28

Oppose strongly/somewhat
- Support: 59
- Oppose: 72

April 2017
American Views of Arguments for and against the travel ban
This past March, the White House issued an executive order to limit travel to the United States from six Muslim-majority nations. The order also aimed to suspend the Refugee Admission Program (USRAP) for 120 days and impose a cap of 50,000 refugees in 2017. This order has been blocked by federal judges including in Hawaii and Maryland.
ARGUMENT FOR THE BAN

Now tell me how much you agree or disagree with each of the following.

The executive order is necessary to ensure the safety of all Americans. The government has a responsibility to ensure that nobody entering our country is coming here to do us harm. It is only reasonable to limit immigration from those six countries until we know that the people coming do not pose a threat. While it may be true that many who do not pose a threat will be kept out in the process, our top priority must be reducing the threat to American citizens by keeping potential terrorists out.
The executive order is necessary to ensure the safety of all Americans.

- **Agree strongly/somewhat**
  - Republicans: 21
  - Democrats: 11
  - Independents: 48
  - Total: 84

- **Neither agree nor disagree**
  - Republicans: 5
  - Democrats: 11
  - Independents: 14
  - Total: 30

- **Disagree strongly/somewhat**
  - Republicans: 11
  - Democrats: 37
  - Independents: 40
  - Total: 68

April 2017
ARGUMENT AGAINST THE BAN

Now tell me how much you agree or disagree with each of the following.

The United States is a nation of immigrants, one with a long history of taking in those fleeing persecution in their home countries. Refugees have also contributed considerably to America. Data shows that only a handful of refugees have been charged with terrorist plotting among hundreds of thousands who arrived to the United States in the past decade and a half. The Constitution prohibits restricting immigration based on religion, which some courts have found this order to do.
The United States is a nation of immigrants, one with a long history of taking in those fleeing persecution in their home countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Republicans</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
<th>Independents</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree strongly/somewhat</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree strongly/somewhat</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Having thought about it, do you support or oppose the travel ban?
Having thought about it, do you support or oppose the travel ban?

- **Support**
  - Republicans: 13
  - Democrats: 47
  - Independents: 49
  - Total: 88

- **Oppose**
  - Republicans: 11
  - Democrats: 52
  - Independents: 50
  - Total: 86

April 2017
Having thought about it, do you support or oppose the travel ban?

- **Support**
  - 18-34: 37
  - 35-54: 55
  - 55+: 53

- **Oppose**
  - 18-34: 63
  - 35-54: 44
  - 55+: 46

April 2017
Having thought about it, do you support or oppose the travel ban?

- Support: 54 Men, 44 Women
- Oppose: 46 Men, 54 Women
Having thought about it, do you support or oppose the travel ban?

- Support
  - Black/African American: 21
  - Not Black/African American: 53

- Oppose
  - Black/African American: 79
  - Not Black/African American: 46

April 2017
Having thought about it, do you support or oppose the travel ban?

- **Support**
  - Spanish/Hispanic Origin: 36
  - Not Spanish/Hispanic Origin: 51

- **Oppose**
  - Spanish/Hispanic Origin: 62
  - Not Spanish/Hispanic Origin: 48

April 2017
Having thought about it, do you support or oppose the travel ban?

- Lean toward Israel: 80
- Lean toward Palestinians/Neither Side: 30

Support

Oppose

April 2017
In your opinion, is this ban principally intended to keep Muslims out of the U.S.?
In your opinion, is this ban principally intended to keep Muslims out of the U.S.?

- **Yes**: 86 total, 23 Republicans, 56 Democrats, 41 Independents
- **No**: 77 total, 13 Republicans, 56 Democrats, 43 Independents

*April 2017*
When deciding which immigrants should be allowed to enter the United States, should we give priority to people who are Christians or should we treat all immigrants the same regardless of religion?
When deciding which immigrants should be allowed to enter the United States, should we give priority to people who are Christians or should we treat all immigrants the same regardless of religion?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Republicans</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
<th>Independents</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian immigrants should be given priority</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All immigrants, regardless of religion should be treated the same</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

April 2017
American Views of Muslims and Islam
What is your attitude about each of the following?

The Muslim People
What is your attitude about each of the following?

The Muslim People

- **Very/Somewhat Favorable**
  - Nov. 2015: 53%
  - May 2016 (Pre-Orlando): 58%
  - June 2016 (Post-Orlando): 62%
  - Oct. 2016: 70%
  - April 2017: 71%

- **Very/Somewhat Unfavorable**
  - Nov. 2015: 46%
  - May 2016 (Pre-Orlando): 41%
  - June 2016 (Post-Orlando): 38%
  - Oct. 2016: 28%
  - April 2017: 27%
What is your attitude about each of the following?

The Muslim People

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Republicans</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
<th>Independents</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very/Somewhat Favorable</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very/Somewhat Unfavorable</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27</td>
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April 2017
What is your attitude about each of the following?
The Muslim Religion
What is your attitude about each of the following?

The Muslim Religion

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<tr>
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<td>37</td>
<td>42</td>
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What is your attitude about each of the following?

The Muslim Religion

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very/Somewhat Favorable</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very/Somewhat Unfavorable</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>48</td>
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April 2017