

ECONOMIC FINDING

The Immigrant Next Door: Exposure, Prejudice, and Altruism

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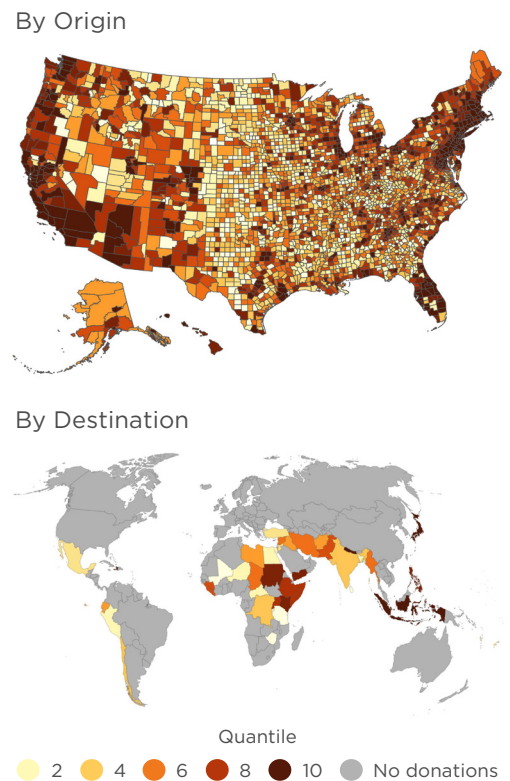
Long-run exposure to Arab-Muslims causally decreases White Americans' explicit and implicit prejudices, reduces support for Donald Trump and the proposed Muslim Ban, and increases altruism toward Arab countries. In fact, long-run exposure to any given foreign group increases Whites' altruism toward that group.

Discrimination against Arab-Muslims in the United States, including violence and hate speech, has grown substantially over the past five years. But there is hope, and it lies with more contact between Arab-Muslims and non-Muslim Whites, not less. This new research studies the effect of decades-long exposure to local Arab-Muslim communities on non-Muslim Whites' attitudes and behaviors, using a strategy based on immigration "pull" and "push" factors to isolate a causal effect rather than a simple correlation.

The authors combine three cross-county datasets, individualized donations data from two large charity organizations, and a recent large-scale custom survey to show that:

- Long-term exposure leads to more positive attitudes. Non-Muslim Whites who reside in US counties with (exogenously) larger populations of Arab ancestry are less explicitly and implicitly prejudiced against Arab-Muslims.
- These effects carry over into measures of political preferences: non-Muslim Whites in these same counties were more opposed to the 2017 "Muslim Ban" and less likely to vote for Donald Trump in 2016.
- Individuals in these counties are more likely to donate, and donate larger sums, to charitable causes in Arab countries.
- Finally, individuals in these counties are more likely to have an Arab-Muslim friend, neighbor, or workplace acquaintance, less likely to hold negative beliefs about Islam, and more knowledgeable about Arab-Muslims and Islam in general.

Figure 1 • Charitable Donations



The authors then take their analysis one step further, showing that these effects are not unique to Arab-Muslims: decades-long exposure to any given foreign ancestry increases generosity toward that ancestral group. Their results provide compelling evidence on the importance of diversity: increasing contact between different groups in natural settings can pay long-run dividends by promoting tolerance, social cohesion, and pluralism.