More Than Words? Media, Immigration and Persuasion through Slanted Language *

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Abstract

Can the language used by mass media to cover policy relevant issues affect readers' views on these issues? I examine this question for the case of immigration, exploiting an abrupt ban on the term "illegal immigrant" in wire content distributed to media outlets by the Associated Press (AP). Using text data on AP dispatches and the content of a large number of US print and online outlets, I find that after the ban, articles mentioning "illegal immigrant" decline by 20% in outlets that rely more heavily on AP relative to others. This change in language appears to have had a tangible impact on readers' views on immigration. Following AP's ban, individuals exposed to outlets relying more heavily on AP tend to support less restrictive immigration and border security policies. The effect is driven by frequent readers and does not apply to views on issues other than immigration.

1 Introduction

Political actors choose carefully the words they put out in the media. In the US different sides of the political debate often use strikingly different language to describe the same issue, in an attempt to promote an opinion favorable to their platform. While the right speaks about the "estate tax", "tax breaks" and "undocumented workers", the left speaks about the "death

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tax", "tax relief" and "illegal aliens".[1] Social psychology suggests that such framing strategies may indeed influence the formation of political opinion (Chong and Druckman 2007). Yet, despite its widespread use in political rhetoric, commentary and news reporting, there is no large-scale empirical evidence as to whether exposure to slanted language may causally affect policy views.

This question poses an empirical challenge for at least two reasons. First, votes-maximizing politicians and profit-maximizing media have an incentive to choose their language to appeal to the audience's preference for like-minded content (Gentzkow and Shapiro 2006). Second, slanted language can be accompanied by other politically motivated choices, ranging from selective coverage of certain issues to outright endorsement of a policy or candidate. A correlation between exposure to slanted language and public opinion is hence vulnerable to both reverse causality and omitted variable biases.

To overcome these challenges, I propose a supply-side source of variation in the use of slanted language in the media. I take advantage of the fact that many US media outlets source some of their content from the Associated Press (AP) – a newswire agency that gathers and distributes news to subscribing outlets. Since AP distributes a single news feed to all subscribers, their aim is to produce neutral coverage that appeals to outlets from all sides of the political spectrum (Fenby 1986). This philosophy has led to quite strict and rigid guidelines for the use of politically sensitive language.

In this paper, I exploit an abrupt reversal in AP's guidelines on the use of a specific politically sensitive term – "illegal immigrant". In April 2013, AP switched from officially *recommending* this term to refer to people living in the US without legal authorization, to *banning* its use in AP wire articles. The ban happened in the context of high politicization of the language used to talk about immigration. Figure 1 illustrates the partisan divide in usage of the term – while Republican congressmen mention "illegal immigrant" about 40% of the time they mention the word "immigrant", for Democrats this is the case less than 5%

[1] https://www.businessinsider.com/political-language-rhetoric-framing-messaging-lakoff-luntz-2017-8?IR=T

of the time.[2]

The setting of AP's ban on "illegal immigrant" is attractive to study the causal effect of slanted language for several reasons. First, the ban caused a sharp and, due to the importance of the topic at the time, very salient change in the language of AP dispatches. Second, the ban affected the news feed distributed to all AP subscribers alike, independently of their ideological leaning. Furthermore, the decision on the ban was taken centrally by AP executives, and, given that AP has thousands of subscribing outlets, it was plausibly exogenous from the perspective of an individual outlet. Hence, this setting produces variation in slant that is orthogonal to the attitudes of readers and to other politically motivated editorial choices.

In the first part of the paper I analyze how the language of immigration-related wire articles distributed by AP changed in response to the ban. I document that, as intended, the ban caused the phrase "illegal immigrant" to virtually disappear from the text of AP dispatches. Yet, text analysis reveals that the synonyms proposed by AP – i.e. "living in the county illegally" or "without legal permission" – compensate for less than half of this decline, while the majority of post-ban AP articles simply omit any reference to legal status.

In the second part of the paper, I track how the change in AP's language propagates into the language of AP-subscribing outlets. I employ a difference-in-difference strategy comparing the monthly share of articles mentioning "illegal immigrant" before and after the ban, in media outlets with different baseline reliance on AP content. In particular, I measure the rate of AP reliance, or henceforth ''AP-intensity", as the share of "immigrant(s)" articles published by each outlet in the 12 months prior to the ban that either (1) credit AP explicitly, or (2) are flagged by a plagiarism detection algorithm comparing their text to that of recent AP articles. My results suggest that: (i) The ban is very effective – one standard deviation

[2]Republican pundit Frank Luntz calls the linguistic distinction between "illegal immigrant" and "undocumented immigrant" – the alternative preferred by Democrats – the "political battle of the decade", arguing that "the label used to describe those who enter America illegally determines the attitudes people have toward them" (Luntz 2007). Even more interestingly, he explicitly urges Republican representatives to always use the term "illegal", arguing that because of connotations related to rule of law and border security, "the label used to describe those who enter America illegally determines the attitudes people have toward them" (Luntz 2007).

in AP-intensity causes a decline in the frequency of "illegal immigrant" articles by roughly 9 percent; (ii) This decline is driven by articles sourced from from AP, rather than by original articles; (iii) While the ban changes the *language* of immigration coverage, it has no effect on its *volume*; (iv) The effect on language is present in both left- and right-leaning media, although somewhat weaker in the latter.

In the final part of the paper I exploit these findings to identify the effect of exposure to the phrase "illegal immigrant" on readers' preferences on immigration policy, using data from pre- and post-ban waves of a large electoral survey – the CCES. Using the timing of the ban combined with variation in the average AP-intensity of newspapers circulated in the respondent's county of residence, I estimate that one standard deviation increase in local media's AP intensity is associated with 1 percentage point, or 1.8% decline in public support for restrictive immigration policies after the ban. This effect is driven by (self-reported) regular newspaper readers and is robust to limiting the sample to counties with only one major newspaper, which allows a reliable match between survey respondents and the AP-intensity of the outlet they are likely exposed to. In line with the parallel trends assumption, I find no differential trends in policy preferences prior to the ban. Furthermore, I find no significant effect on support for other policies associated with the platform of the Republican party, except ones related to immigration. In sum, these results lend support to a causal interpretation linked to the change in the language used by local media to talk about immigration.

This paper contributes to a large literature on the effects of media on political attitudes and outcomes. One strand exploits quasi-random or experimentally manipulated variation in access to a particular media outlet to estimate its causal effects (DellaVigna and Kaplan 2007; Martin and Yurukoglu 2017; Enikolopov et al. 2011; Durante et al. 2019; Gerber et al. 2009). By design, the "treatment" in this strategy consists of the bundle of editorial choices that differentiate the outlet of interest from alternative sources of information. Fewer studies are focused on a specific mechanism of media persuasion – e.g. the volume of coverage of a politician or a politically sensitive issue (Snyder and Strömberg 2010) or direct endorsement

of candidates for office (Chiang and Knight 2011). This paper fits into the second category, but differs by studying a different and arguably more subtle mechanism – that of slanted language. In terms of it's focus on the role of copying in content production, my paper complements recent work that documents the propagation of content in online media (Cage et al. 2017).

This paper is also closely related to the literature on media slant (Groseclose and Milyo 2005; Gentzkow and Shapiro 2010; Gentzkow et al. 2019), which has been focused on the measurement of slant and on its determinants, among which the pre-existing attitudes of the audience have been shown to play an important role. My paper differs by studying the reverse direction of causality – from exposure to slanted language towards political attitudes.

Beyond the media literature, my study is related to recent work that documents a large degree of misinformation on the number of immigrants in the US and Europe and their characteristics (Alesina et al. 2019; Grigorieff et al. 2019; Hatte et al. 2019). Interestingly, the evidence suggest that correcting misperceptions about immigrants' *characteristics* can to shift policy preferences.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In section 2 I discuss the details of the ban and analyze how the text of immigration-related articles distributed by AP changed. In section 3 I track the propagation of AP's language into the language of AP-dependent media. In section 4 I analyze the effect of the ban on attitudes related to immigration policy.

2 The Ban and It's Effect on AP's Language

2.1 Background

The phrase 'illegal immigrant" was dropped from AP's guidelines on April 3rd 2013. The decision was rather unexpected since AP had previously resisted pressures from advocacy groups (e.g. "Define American") to change their language policy. Up until the change was announced, AP's guidelines stated that "illegal immigrant" was the *preferred* term while the alternative endorsed by the left – "undocumented immigrant" – was not allowed as AP

considers it legally inaccurate (as continues to be the case to this day).

Appendix A presents the exact formulation of AP's guidelines before and after April 2013. As "illegal immigrant" was banned, AP proposed the following substitutes: "living / entering the county illegally / without legal permission". Yet, AP executives recognized in their statement that these alternatives are likely harder for writers to use in text compared to the simple label "illegal" (`https://blog.ap.org/announcements/illegal-immigrant-no-more`). I return to this point in the interpretation of the results.

Two more details in the guidelines are worth highlighting. First, the ban does not concern usage of the phrase in direct quotes. Second, while "illegal *immigrant*" was banned, "illegal *immigration*" was not.

The ban took effect immediately with its announcement in the online guidelines (which are also embedded in text editors, see figure 16) and was updated in the print version shortly after.

2.2 Data

To analyze how the language used by AP changed in response to the ban, I obtain the text of all immigration-related AP-articles released in the period 2009-2017 from *Factiva* (`https://global.factiva.com`). I search the database for mentions of the word "immigrant(s)", limiting the source to "Associated Press Newswires" and record the date, headline, word-count and full text of each article.

2.3 Text Analysis Results

As a first check of how AP's language on the issue of immigration changed after the ban, I examine the headlines of AP dispatches. Figure 3 depicts the most frequent 3-grams encountered in headlines of "immigrant(s)" articles. The label "illegal" clearly features prominently before the ban, and virtually disappears after. Interestingly, rather than substitute "illegal" by another adjective, many headlines appear to simply omit any direct reference to legal status. Appendix A illustrates this point with two examples of AP dispatches covering the

same issue – state laws on immigrants drivers licenses – but released just before vs just after the ban.

The timing of this change in language coincides very precisely with the announcement of the ban. Figure 4 shows the monthly number of AP articles mentioning the phrase "illegal immigrant(s)" as percent of articles mentioning "immigrant(s)". This percentage drops from an average of 40% in the period before April 2013, to less than 5% after, suggesting close to perfect compliance.[3] The lower panel of the same figure suggests no sharp change in the total volume of articles mentioning the word "immigrant(s)".

To examine more systematically the potential substitutes for the banned term "illegal", I compute the correlations between the word "immigrant(s)" and each other unigram featured in the full-text corpus of AP dispatches, pre- and post-ban.[4] I plot the results for the top 50 correlates of "immigrant(s)" in figure 5, showing correlations in articles' text in the upper panel, and correlations in headlines in the lower panel. The first pattern that emerges from the figure is that "illegal" is clearly an outlier from the 45-degree line – its pre-ban correlation with "immigrant(s)" is 0.66 (0.54) – more than twice the magnitude of the next-highest coefficient – and it drops dramatically to 0.21 (0.07) post-ban. The second noticeable pattern is that no unigram alone compensates for this decline. The closest candidate in article text is "illegally" – indeed, its correlation with"immigrant(s)" increases significantly after the ban, but the magnitude of this increase is only about half of what would be needed to compensate for the decline of "illegal". In headlines, the substitution is of an even smaller magnitude, likely due to the fact that the synonyms proposed by AP are rather long and hence difficult to use in a headline.[5]

An alternative, and arguably more flexible way to examine how language changes due to the ban, is to ask which words and phrases have the highest power in predicting whether a given AP article was published before or after the ban. Let $f_{pl,before}$ and $f_{pl,after}$ denote the

[3]Note that this figure includes mentions of "illegal immigrant(s)" in direct quotes, which are not affected by the ban.

[4]I stem all words with the exception of "illegal" and "illegally" to account for the fact that while "illegal" was banned,"illegally" was, if anything, endorsed in the new guidelines.

[5]I obtain very similar results with sentence- rather than article-level correlations.

total number of times phrase p of length l (one to or four words) is used before and after the ban, respectively. Let $f_{\sim pl,before}$ and $f_{\sim pl,after}$ denote the total occurrences of length-l phrases that are not phrase p – before and after the ban respectively. Let χ^2_{pl} denote Pearson's χ^2 statistic for each phrase:

$$\chi^2{}_{pl} = \frac{(f_{pl,before}f_{\sim pl,after}f_{\sim pl,after}f_{\sim pl,before})^2}{(f_{pl,before}+f_{pl,after})(f_{pl,before}+f_{\sim pl,before})(f_{pl,after}+f_{\sim pl,after})(f_{\sim pl,before}+f_{\sim pl,after})} \tag{1}$$

Figure 6 presents the 20 words and phrases with highest χ^2_{pl}. "Illegal", "illegal immigrant" and "illegal immigrants" clearly emerge as the phrases most diagnostic of whether an article is published before or after the ban. Notably, "illegally" has only 1/4 of the predictive power of "illegal", confirming that AP's synonyms were adopted only partially.

To rule out the possibility that these results reflects a shift in topics occupying the news cycle over the sample period, in appendix A I repeat the exercise separately for each of five topics estimated with a Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) model. The estimated topics can be labeled as follows: law enforcement, immigration-related legislation, immigrants' integration and social issues, international issues such as the refugee crisis in Europe, and elections (Figure 17). Within each of the five topics I find a large decline in the correlation between "immigrant(s)" and "illegal", and an only partial compensation by "illegaly" accounting for less than half of the decline (Figure 18). Similarly, within each topic, with the exception of international issues, "illegal" and "illegal immigrants" rank in the top 3 phrases with highest χ^2, and "illegal" and other synonyms suggested by AP have less than a quarter of their predictive power (Figure 19).

Taking these results together, the analysis of AP text suggests that: (1) As intended, the label "illegal" virtually disappears after the ban; (2) This decline is only partially compensated by the substitutes proposed by AP, while the remainder appears to omit any direct reference to legal status.

3 Propagation

In this section I analyze the propagation of AP's ban into the language of more than 2500 media outlets with different baseline reliance on AP copy ("AP-intensity").[6]

3.1 Data

3.1.1 Media Content: Mentions of "Illegal Immigrant"

My main data source for media content is Newslibrary (`newslibrary.com`). I focus on print and online outlets that are covered by Newslibrary continuously between 2009 and 2017 – there are 2566 such outlets. While Newslibrary covers many outlets, some of the largest US newspapers are not contained in this data set. I therefore supplement with another datasource – ProQuest (`proquest.com`), which adds 125 newspapers to this sample.

To construct measures of the language used in immigration coverage I search the database for articles that mention the phrase "illegal immigrant(s)", and separately, for articles that mention the word "immigrant(s)". This search results in one million "immigrant(s)" articles and 200,000 "illegal immigrant(s)" articles. I record each article's date of publication, name of the publishing outlet, by-line, headline, word-count, and the text of the first paragraph.

Using this information, I compute for each outlet and each month the number of articles that mention "illegal immigrant(s)" normalized by the monthly number of articles that mention "immigrant(s)". I repeat the procedure with wordcount instead of number of articles, for the phrase "illegal immigration" as a percentage of "immigration", and for the potential synonyms "undocumented immigrant" and "unauthorized immigrant" normalized by "immigrant". Lastly, I collect mentions of the alternatives endorsed by AP – "living in / entering the country illegally" or "[...] without legal permission".

[6]This sample includes all US print and online outlets for which I am able to gather content data. However, the second stage analysis of readers policy views is restricted to the sample of print newspapers which allow me match geographic media markets to the location of survey respondents. Therefore, for consistency with the second stage, Appendix presented in this section restricting the sample to print newspapers.

3.1.2 Identifying articles copied from AP

I classify an article as sourced from AP if either one of two conditions is true: (1) AP is explicitly mentioned in the article (e.g. "according to AP"), or (2) a large portion of the text of the article is verbatim identical of to the text of a recent AP dispatch.

To capture the cases in which AP is credited explicitly, I search for mentions of "Associated Press" or "AP" in the text or byline of the article. A similar procedure was employed by Gentzkow and Shapiro (2010) to identify and, in their case, *exclude* news-wire content. Their audit of excluded articles suggests that "virtually all" articles identified in this way are indeed wire-copy. However, if media outlets use AP-content without explicit attribution, this procedure alone is likely to produce false negatives.

Therefore, I additionally run the text through a plagiarism-detection algorithm. The first step of the algorithm is to assign to each article a set of AP dispatches that could potentially have been used in the writing of the article. I focus on AP dispatches released in the day before publication and mentioning the word "immigrant(s)".[7] This is a simplified version of the procedure used in Cage et al. (2017), which first clusters articles by the event they cover, and then forms the set of potentially plagiarized articles as those that cover the same event and are published prior to the article of interest. The second step in the algorithm is to compute a measure of verbatim copying. I pre-process all texts by removing punctuation and stop-words, stemming, and tokenizing into 5-grams. I then measure the share of the article's text that is identical to each paired dispatch and take the maximum over all paired dispatches. I label an article as copied from AP if the maximum text overlap exceeds 20% (equivalent to 70 characters, relative to the mean text length of 350).

Figure 7 presents the relationship between copying and crediting AP, plotting the average share of credited articles by bin of the copy-rate distribution (i.e. by share of text overlapping with an AP dispatch). It is notable that even among articles whose lead paragraph is virtually identical to an AP dispatch (with 90-100% identical text), the rate of crediting AP never

[7] I do not use contemporaneous (same-day) AP-dispatches because the origin of the content is more ambiguous in this case – text similarity could be due the media outlet copying AP, or to AP redistributing content produced by a member outlet.

exceeds 60%. In other words, relying on attribution to AP alone would have missed a substantial volume of copied articles. When collapsed at the media outlet level however, the correlation between the two measures is 0.83.

3.1.3 AP-Intensity

To proxy a media outlet's exposure to changes in AP style, I measure the rate of copying from AP over the 12-months prior to the announcement of the ban. I focus on this period to avoid concerns about potential endogenous selection into or out of AP usage based on the change in AP's language policy. I measure *AP-intensity* as the log number of articles copied from AP per 1000 articles in this period.

3.2 Empirical Strategy

To estimate the rate of propagation from AP's language into that of AP-subscribing outlets, I implement a Difference-in-Difference strategy. Specifically, I exploit the time-variation produced by the announcement of the ban and variation across media outlets in their exposure to the ban, proxied by AP-intensity.

I estimate equations of the following form:

$$Illimm/Imm_{mt} = \alpha_m + \beta_t + \rho AP_m \times PostBan_t + \epsilon_{mt}, \tag{2}$$

where $Illimm/Imm_{mt}$ denotes the number of articles in media outlet m and month t that mention the phrase "illegal immigrant(s)" as percent of articles mentioning "immigrant(s)", AP_m is AP-intensity measured in the 12 months prior to the ban, $PostBan_t$ is a dummy for post-April 2013, and α_m and β_t are outlet- and calendar month FEs respectively. Standard errors are clustered at the outlet level. To account for the fact that $Illimm/Imm_{mt}$ is imprecisely estimated when the number of "immigrant" articles is low, this regression is weighted by number of "immigrant" articles.

The identifying assumption of this strategy is that the frequency of "illegal immigrant"

articles in outlets with high AP-intensity vs outlets with low AP-intensity would have followed parallel trends in the absence of the ban.

3.3 Results

Before proceeding to the estimation of the regression specified in 2, I examine visually the raw frequency of "illegal immigrant" articles in AP-intensive vs non AP-intensive outlets. Figure 8 shows these two series. While non AP-intensive media appear to gradually decrease their usage of the phrase already prior to the ban, the usage by AP-intensive media remains flat and quite high up until it exhibits a sharp decline coinciding with the ban. This pattern is in line with anecdotal evidence: AP was resistant to prior demands to change their language policy while in other media usage of the phrase was gradually declining.

Table 1 presents the main regression results. I find a significant negative effect of the ban on usage of the phrase – the magnitude suggests that one standard deviation increase in AP-intensity leads to roughly 1 p.p lower frequency of "illegal immigrant" after the ban, or about 5% relative to the mean. In addition to calendar-month fixed effect, in columns (3) and (7) I control for calendar-month times state fixed effects to absorb the effects of potentially confounding factors that vary over time and by state, such as the availability of state-specific newsworthy events related to illegal immigration. In columns (4) and (8) I control for outlet-specific linear time trends to account for the possibility of selection into or out of AP-membership in anticipation of the change in their language policy. Reassuringly, the estimates are stable to these controls, and if anything, *increase* in magnitude.

In table 2 I perform several checks for robustness of the results to changes in the specification and definition of the variables: in column (1) I replace the dependent variable with the log of 1 + number of "illegal immigrant" article, in column (2) I drop weights, in column (3) I replace number of articles with word-count, in column (4) I replace number of articles with number of headlines, in column (5) I replace continuous AP-intensity with a dummy for positive AP-intensity, and in column (6) I replace *PostBan* with the time-series of "illegal immigrant" articles (normalized by "immigrant" articles) released monthly by AP. The result

that outlets with higher AP-intensity decrease their usage of the phrase"illegal immigrant" after the ban is stable to all of these checks.

In figure 9 I examine which part of the distribution of *AP-intensity* drives this effect. I split the continuous measure of AP-intensity into quintiles and estimate a regression where a dummy for each quintile is interacted with *PostBan*, and non AP-intensive outlets are the reference category. I find a roughly monotonic relationship between AP-intensity and the decline in "illegal immigrant" mentions. The strongest effect comes from the fifth quintile, for which the effect amounts to a decline of 12 percentage points, or more than 50% relative to the mean.

To verify that trends in the usage of "illegal immigrant" in high-AP-intensity outlets versus low-AP-intensity outlets did not start to diverge already prior the ban, I split the interaction of a dummy for *high AP intensity* and *Post Ban* into a set of interactions with quarterly leads and lags. The results are plotted in figure 10. I find that if anything, the relative frequency of"illegal immigrant" seems to increase up until the ban (in other words, trends were diverging rather than converging), at which point it falls abruptly. The decline is persistent, in line with the permanently low supply of "illegal immigrant" wire articles after the ban.

In figure 11 I decompose this decline into articles produced by AP vs. original content. In line with the interpretation of a causal effect of the ban, the decline is driven primarily by articles sourced from AP (either credited or plagiarized).

Does "compliance" with the ban depend on the outlet's political leaning? To answer this question I analyze a sub-sample of about 340 newspapers which I can match to the index of political slant constructed by Gentzkow and Shapiro (2010). Splitting this sample at the 25th and 75th percentile with respect to this measure of pre-existing slant, I find that the effect is negative for each tercile of the distribution, though democrat leaning outlets appear to be most compliant (table 4).

Having established that the change in AP's language propagated into the *language* used to talk about immigration across different media outlets, in table 5 I examine whether it

also affected the *volume* of immigration coverage. I find that the synonyms proposed by AP ("live(-ing)/enter(-ing) the country illegally / without legal permission") compensated for some of the decline in the phrase"illegal immigrant". Overall, the number of articles mentioning the word "immigrant(s)" (normalized by total articles) was not affected by ban. I find the same null-effect for articles mentioning the word "immigration". In other words, I find no evidence that the ban did not change the volume of coverage of the topic of immigration.

4 Effects on Immigration Policy Attitudes

In this section I analyze how the ban affected public opinion on immigration policy by comparing pre- and post-ban responses in the CCES electoral survey for respondents living in counties with different AP-intensity of locally circulated newspapers.

4.1 Data

4.1.1 County-Level AP-Intensity

Since I am relying on respondents' location to assess their media exposure, the first step in this analysis is to aggregate AP-intensity from the newspaper level to the county level.[8] To do so, I obtain cross-sectional data on the geographic distribution of daily newspapers' circulation from Alliance of Audited Media (AAM). I use their Fall 2012 report, which includes circulation by newspaper and zip-code from the most recent audit prior to this date. I aggregate zip-code level data to the county level. For the largest nationally circulated newspapers AAM only reports circulation at the DMA level. For these cases I assign circulation to counties in proportion to voting-age population. Finally, since AAM does not collect geographically disaggregated data for low-circulation newspapers, I impute these observations with E&P's data on total circulation (which covers the universe of daily newspapers), assuming that small newspapers circulate mainly in the county of their headquarters.[9]

[8]CCES does not ask *which* newspaper the respondent reads. There is however a question on *whether* the respondent has read a newspaper in the previous day – I exploit this information below.

[9]The same procedure is used by Seamans and Zhu (2014)).

I match this data to the sample of Newslibrary/ProQuest media outlets based on the name, town and state of the newspaper. I then keep counties for which newspapers matched to the Newslibrary/ProQuest sample account for at least 90% of total county circulation. This ensures that the county-level data on media content is measured with reasonable precision. The resulting dataset contains about about 2300 counties (out of a total of 3000), and 800 daily newspapers (out of a total of 1200).

I aggregate AP-intensity to the county level by averaging the AP-intensity of newspapers circulated within the county, weighting each newspaper by its county-specific circulation. Formally:

$$AP_c = \frac{\sum_m (circ_{mc} \times AP_m)}{\sum_m circ_{mc}}, \tag{3}$$

where $circ_{mc}$ is circulation of newspaper m in county c. Figure 12 presents the resulting geographic distribution of AP-intensity.

Similarly, I aggregate the percentage of "illegal immigrant" relative to "immigrant" articles by county and year, again weighting by circulation:

$$Illimm_{cy} = \frac{\sum_m (circ_{mcy} \times Illimm_{my})}{\sum_m circ_{mcy}}. \tag{4}$$

4.1.2 County Characteristics

In order to understand the correlates of AP-intensity and control for them, I collect data on county-level demographic, economic and political characteristics for the year 2012 (the year before the ban). Data on annual county population, its composition by race, and urban share in 2010 are from the US Census, share of the population with college degree and income per capita are from the 2012 5-year *American Community Survey*, and the Republican vote share in the 2012 presidential election is from Dave Leip's Atlas.

4.1.3 Immigration Policy Attitudes

Data on immigration policy attitudes comes from the *Cooperative Congressoional Election Study* (CCES)– a repeated cross-section with more than 50,000 respondents per wave that

includes a section on the topic of immigration reforms.

In this section the respondent is asked to select policies she thinks the US government should undertake, with different options offered in each wave. (See Appendix A for the complete list of questions.) Two options are offered consistently in all years between 2009 and 2017 – *Increase the number of border patrols on the U.S.-Mexican border* and *Grant legal status to all illegal immigrants who have held jobs and paid taxes for at least 3 years, and not been convicted of any felony crimes.* I code support for *restricting* immigration (i.e. increasing border control/ *not* granting amnesty) as 1, and opposition as 0, and label the first question "Border", and the second question "No Amnesty".

Finally, I compute an index aggregating choices on all options offered in the immigration section (following Kling et al. (2007)) – I recode each choice in the direction of restricting immigration, and take the average across all standardized choices. I label the resulting variable "Restrict Immigration". Alternatively, I simply count the share of restrictive policies supported by the respondent.

4.1.4 Placebo Outcomes

To make sure that this analysis captures a shift in opinions on immigration policy, and not a general change in social attitudes or economic circumstances favorable to the Republican party, I also collect data on CCES questions that relate to policy issues other than immigration. Specifically, I create (1) A dummy variable for opposing a woman's right to choose to have an abortion under any circumstances; (2) A dummy variable for preferring to cut public spending rather than increase taxes; (3) A dummy variable for opposing gay marriage; (4) A dummy variable for believing that the state of the economy has gotten worse over the past year.

4.2 Empirical Strategy

To estimate the effect of exposure to the phrase "illegal immigrant" on attitudes on immigration policy, I estimate 2SLS equations of the following form:

$$Att_{cy} = \alpha_c + \beta_y + \rho \widehat{Illimm}_{cy} + \phi_y W_c + \epsilon_{cy}, \tag{5}$$

$$Illimm_{cy} = \alpha_c + \beta_y + \gamma AP_c \times PostBan_y + \phi_y W_c + \epsilon_{cy} \tag{6}$$

where Att_{cy} denotes an index of immigration policy preferences of respondents in county c and year y, $Illimm_{cy}$ denotes the share of "illegal immigrant" articles read in that county and year, AP_c is the county-level average AP-intensity, $PostBan_y$ is an indicator equal to one for years after 2013, and α_c and β_y are county and survey-year fixed effects respectively. Standard errors are clustered by county.

Note that the first-stage equation is the same difference-in-difference as in the previous section, but now estimated at the county and survey-year level. The excluded instrument for the potentially endogenous frequency of "illegal immigrant" articles $Illimm_{cy}$ is the interaction of AP-intensity with an indicator for the period after the ban $AP_c \times PostBan_y$. The approach is thus akin to a shift-share strategy where $PostBan$ is an aggregate shock and AP_c is local exposure to that shock.

The identifying assumption is that AP intensity of locally circulated media interacted with the timing of the ban affects attitudes only through exposure to the phrase "illegal immigrant". While it is possible that AP intensity may be correlated with unobserved characteristics of local media or demographics of readers, if these characteristics are to confound my results, their effect on attitudes would have to *change* at the same as the ban took effect. To account for this possibility, I include as controls a host of county characteristics measured at beaseline (i.e. the 2010 census or the 2012 ACS) and interacted with an indicator for the period after the ban.

Since the identifying variation is at the county $\times$ survey year level, this equation can be estimated by aggregating individual survey responses up to that level. Alternatively, it can be estimated at the respondent-level, which allows including as controls respondent characteristics which are likely to correlate with immigration policy attitudes.

4.3 Results

Before turning to the effects on immigration policy attitudes, I replicate my analysis of the frequency of "illegal immigrant" articles for this new sample and unit of analysis (i.e., at the county times year level). The results presented in figure 13 suggest a similar magnitude to the one discussed in the previous section.

I next examine the effects on support for the policy most directly associated with the connotations of the term "illegal immigrant" – border security. The first panel of table 10 presents the reduced form relationship between the ban and demand for stricter border control in a diff-in-diff setting. I find a negative effect that is robust to controlling for respondent- and county controls, as well as to the inclusion of state times survey year fixed effects, which should absorb any state-level policy changes or other state-specific shocks. The magnitude suggests that one standard deviation increase in local media's AP intensity is associated with 1 percentage point, or 1.8% decline in public support for increasing border security. The 2SLS regressions instrumenting the frequency of "illegal immigrant" with AP-intensity interacted with the timing of the ban confirm this result. Put in terms of variation in the frequency of "illegal immigrant", the estimates suggest that a 1 pp. increase in the frequency of the phrase (relative to a mean of 25%) increases support for strict border control by 0,55 pp., or about 1% relative to the mean.

I find similar effects for support for questioning suspected illegal immigrants (Table **??**), and for support for fining businesses that hire illegal immigrants (Table 11). However, I find no significant effect on support for amnesty (Table 9).

Table 6 presents the results for the index aggregating *all* immigration-related policies mentioned in the survey in the respective year, and Table 7 for the share of restrictive policies the respondent supports. In table 8 I replicate the estimation at the county rather than the respondent level, which leads to similar results.

Reassuringly, the effect described above is driven by respondents who report that they read a newspaper (table 13). While I do not observe *which* newspaper the respondent prefers, the results are preserved when I limit the sample to counties with only 1 dominant locally

circulated newspaper, defined as holding more than 10% of local circulation.

To examine the validity of the common trend assumption, I estimate the effect of AP-intensity separately by year, setting 2012 as the reference year for which the difference between low-AP and high-AP is normalized to 0. In this analysis I can furthermore add the survey years 2007 and 2017, in order to examine longer-term trends. The results show no evidence of pre-trends (figures **??** and 14) – instead, the shift in policy attitudes happens in the period after the ban, and remains roughly constant in following waves.

In table 14 I present the results of a placebo exercise that tests for an effect on support for policies related to taxation, abortion, gay rights, and the repsondent's assessment of the state of the economy. I find no significant effect of the on any of these outcomes, which suggests that the change in attitudes in not driven by a general trend.

4.4 Magnitude

To facilitate interpretation of the magnitudes of the estimated effects and comparison to other studies in the media literature, it is useful to express them in terms of persuasion rates. The persuasion rate is defined as the share of people who change their behavior in response to the treatment, out of the ones who could have potentially done so (DellaVigna and Gentzkow 2010).

Expressed in terms of one standard deviation higher AP-intensity, the estimated treatment effect suggests exposure to 9% fewer "illegal immigrant" articles per year.[10] The effect of this "treatment" is 1 percentage point lower support for restricting immigration in the sample of all survey respondents, or 1.6 percentage points in the sample of regular newspaper readers.

The persuasion rate for this treatment, that is, the share of respondents who are dissuaded to support restrictive immigration policy, can be expressed as:

$$f = \frac{db}{de}\frac{1}{1-b_0}, \tag{7}$$

[10]Relative to the mean in the ProQuest/ Newslibrary sample, this would mean 12 fewer articles per year. However, the coverage of these data is not universal, so that this should be taken as a lower bound.

where b is support for restring immigration, e is exposure to "illegal immigrant" articles, and b_0 is the share of the population that would oppose restrictive immigration policy in absence of the treatment. With the coefficient estimated for the sample of all respondents, and taking into account that about 1/3 of them report that they read a newspaper and an average of 56% support restrictive immigration policy, this implies a persuasion rate of $f = (0.01)/(0.33 * 1) * (1/0.56) \approx 5\%$. With the coefficient estimated from the sample of newspaper readers, the implied persuasion rate is $f = (0.016)/(1*1)*(1/0.59) \approx 2.7\%$.[11] This magnitude is in the lower end of persuasion rates found in the literature. For comparison, Chiang and Knight (2011) estimate a persuasion rate of 6,5% for the effect of a (surprising) newspaper electoral endorsement on voting intentions for that candidate.

5 Conclusion

This paper has documented a large degree of propagation of content from news wires to media outlets. Changes in the language rules for wire content, which are determined centrally rather than in consideration of the political leanings of the owners or readers of an individual media outlet, are therefore a useful source of variation to estimate the effects of media slant on readers. Applying this strategy, I find evidence that suggests that reducing exposure to the phrase "illegal immigrant" shifts preferences towards less restrictive immigration policy. Thus, this evidence provides proof of concept for the hypothesis that words can matter for policy preferences. Yet, more work is needed to uncover the mechanisms driving this effect, to characterize the compliers, i.e. the type of readers who are persuaded by the change, and to establish the external validity of the result with respect to other types of politically sensitive language.

[11] It should be noted that here, as standard in the calculations of persuasion rates in the media literature, I am assuming that a newspaper reader reads every article. Relaxing this assumption, e.g. assuming that only a fraction of articles are actually read, would lead to a higher persuasion rate. On the other hand, as documented in section 2, the ban appears to be more "effective" when it comes to the language used in headlines. Assuming that readers are more likely to pay attention to headlines would therefore lead to a lower persuasion rate.

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6 Figures

Figure 1: "Illegal Immigrant" in Congressional speech, by party of the speaker

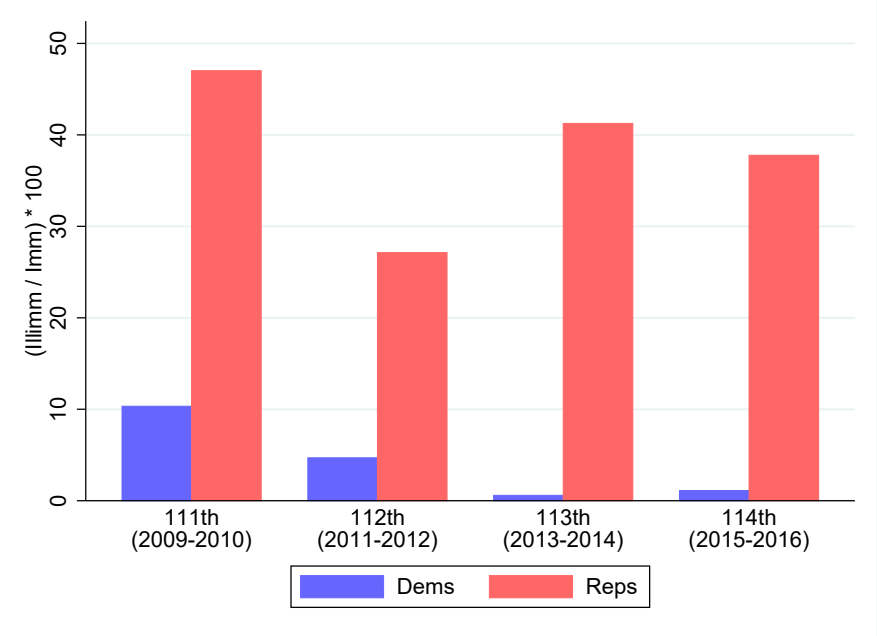


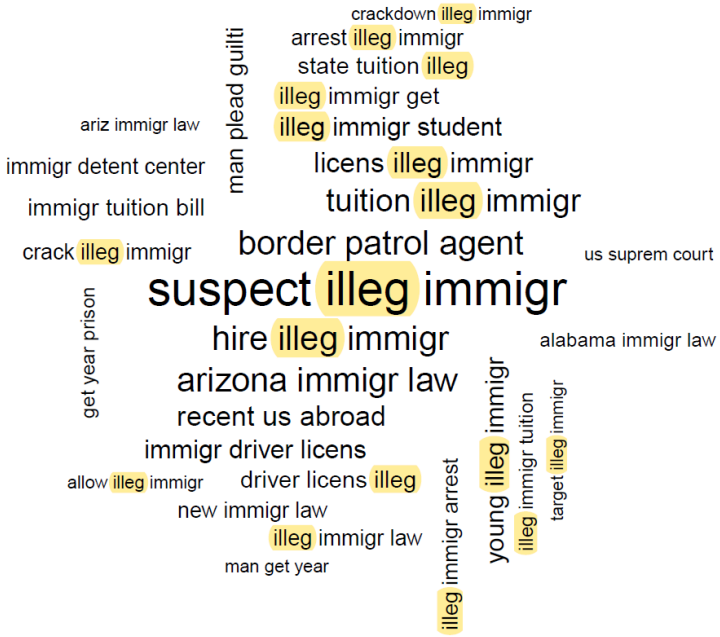
Figure 2: The ban reported in the Atlantic



6.1 Text Analysis of AP articles

Figure 3: Headlines of "immigrant" wire articles distributed by AP pre- and post-ban

Pre-ban



Post-ban



Figure 4: Monthly number of "immigrant" and "illegal immigrant" wire articles released by AP over time

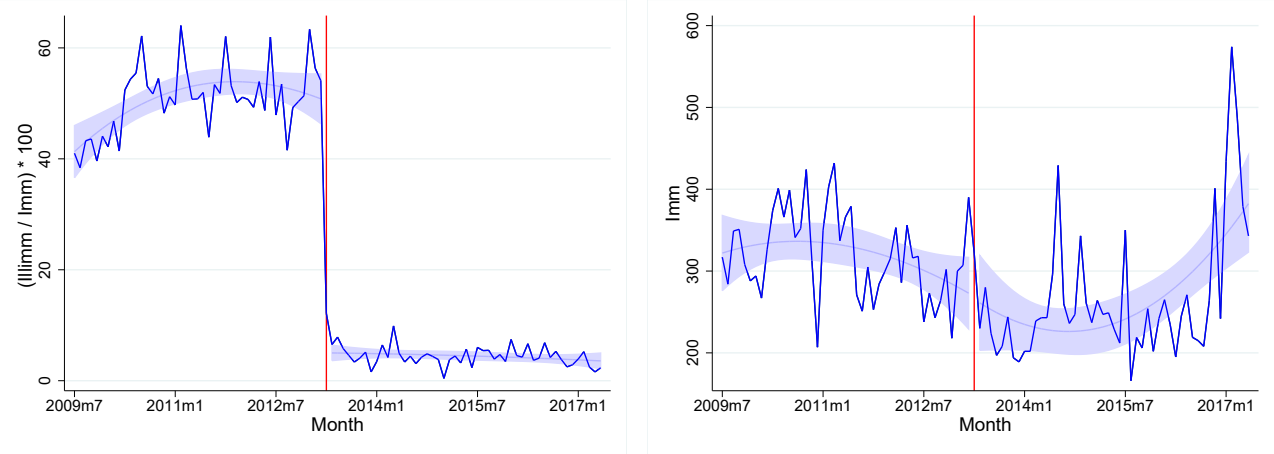
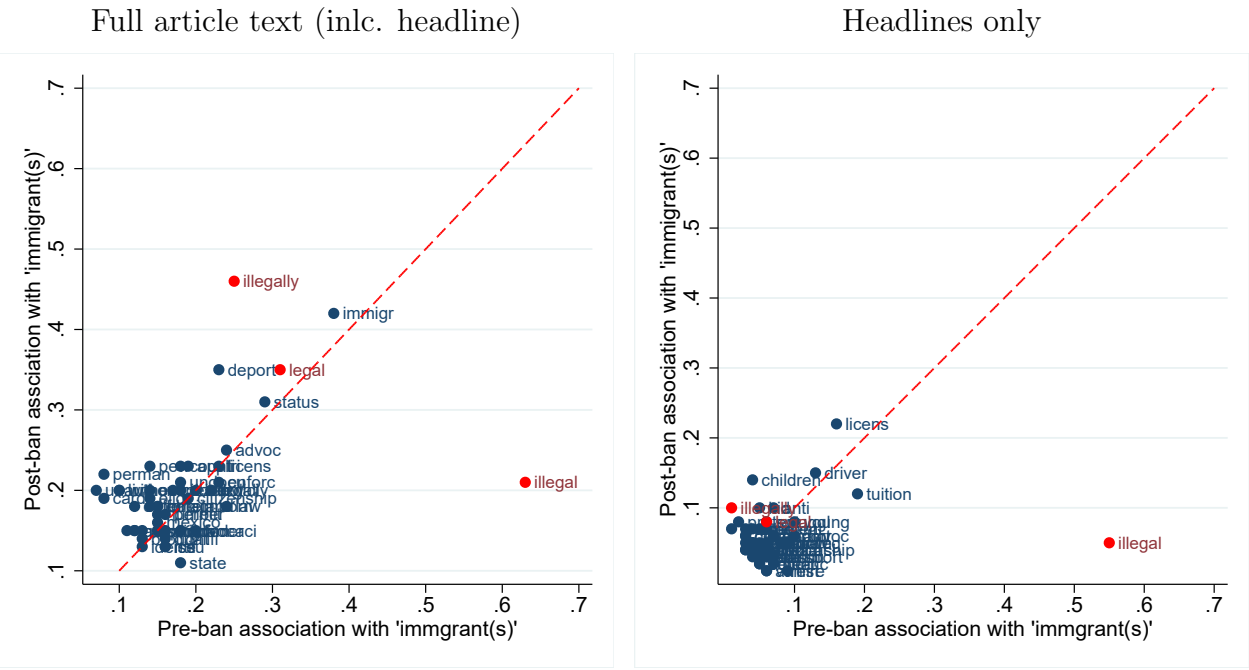
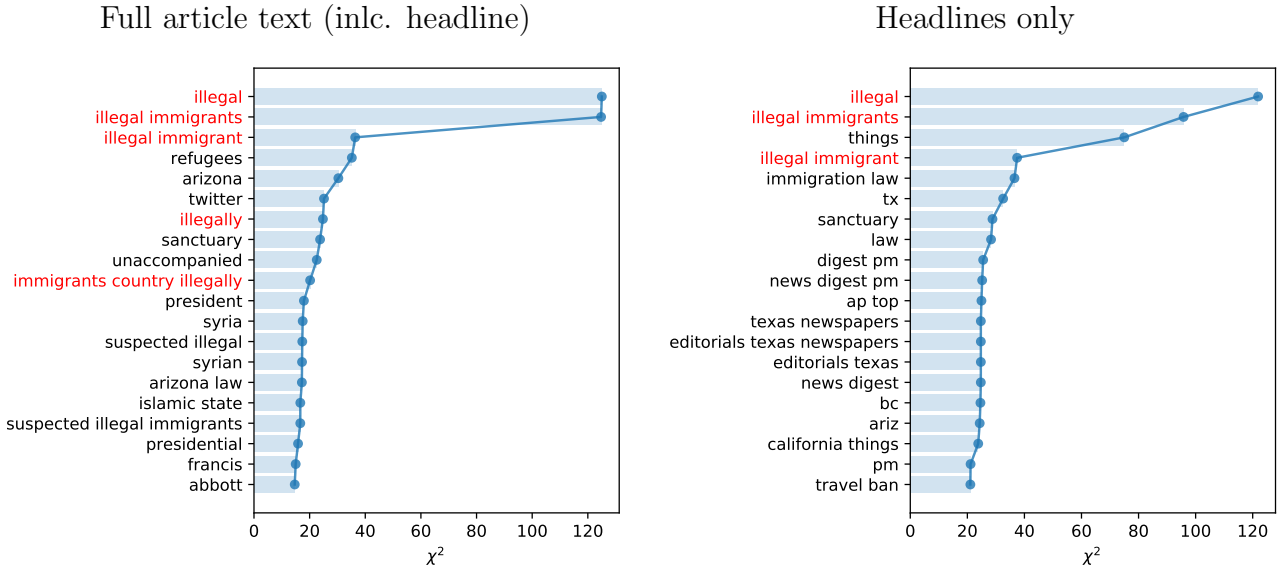


Figure 5: Correlates of the word "immigrant(s)" before and after the ban



Notes: Top 50 unigrams with highest correlation with the word "immigrant(s)", before and after the ban. Correlations defined based on rate of occurrence within the same article/ sentance. Derivatives of 'immigr' and 'illeg' are not stemmed for illustration purposes.

Figure 6: Phrases most predictive of post-ban publishing date



Notes:

6.2 Propagation Results

Figure 7: AP-copy rate: Attribution and plagiarism

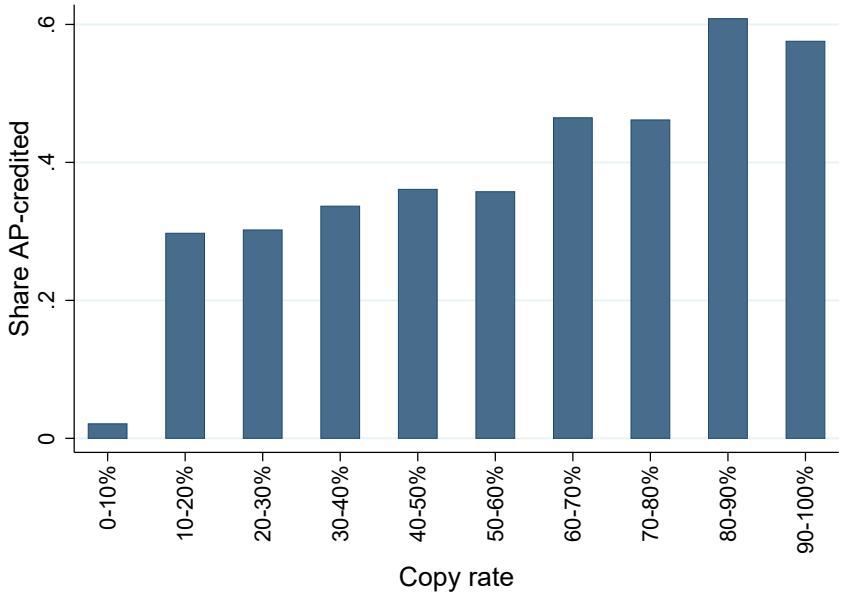
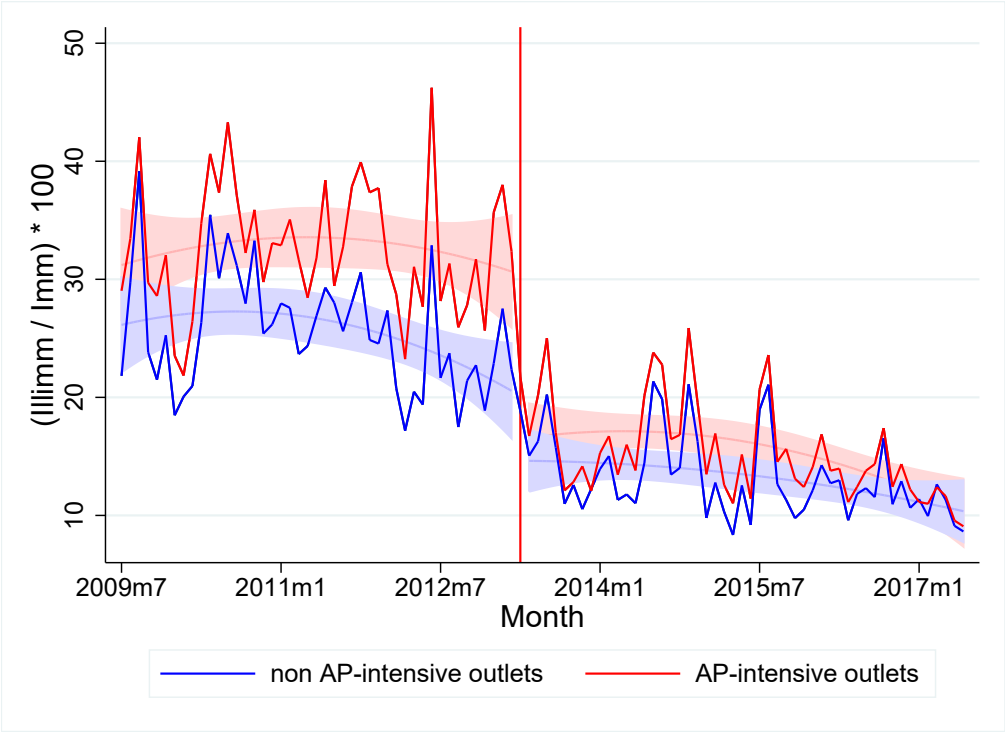
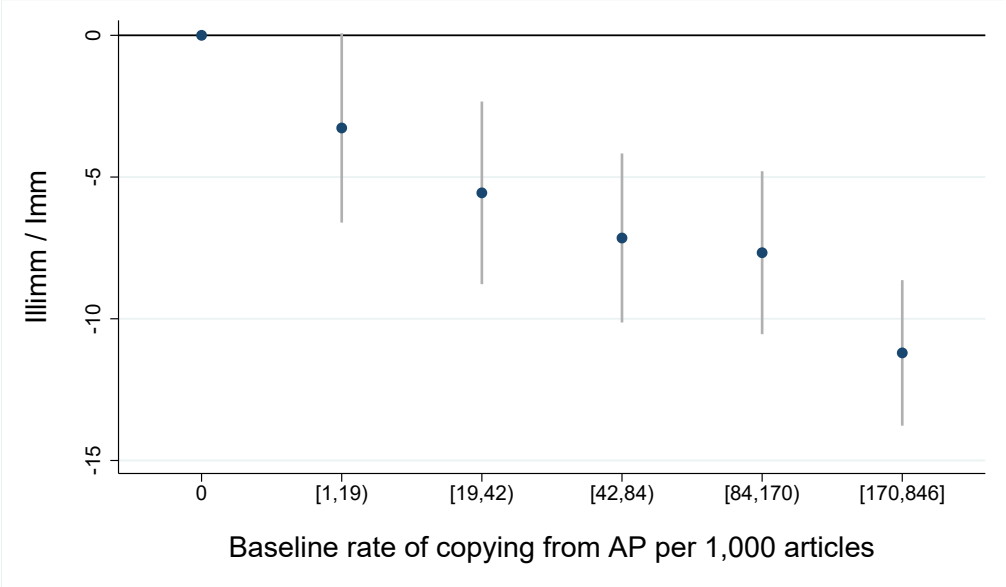


Figure 8: Monthly frequency of "illegal immigrant" articles, as percent of "immigrant" articles, for AP-intensive vs non AP-intensive outlets.



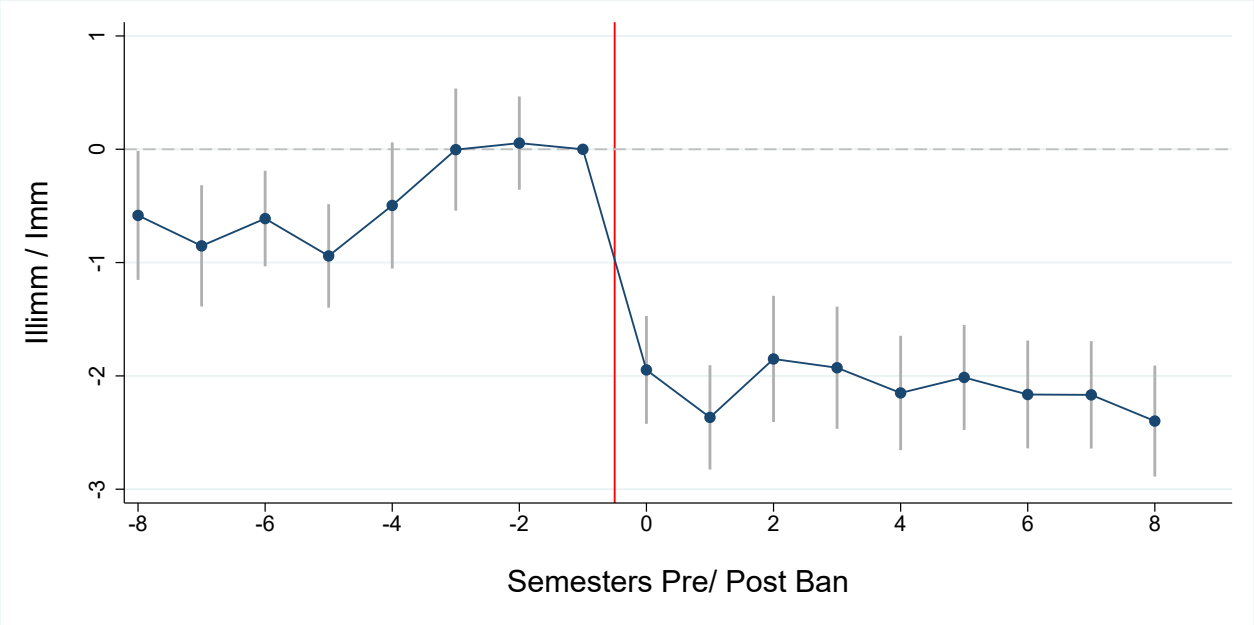
Notes: Averages weighted by number of "immigrant" articles.

Figure 9: Effect of the ban on the number of "illegal immigrant" articles, broken down by degree of AP-intensity



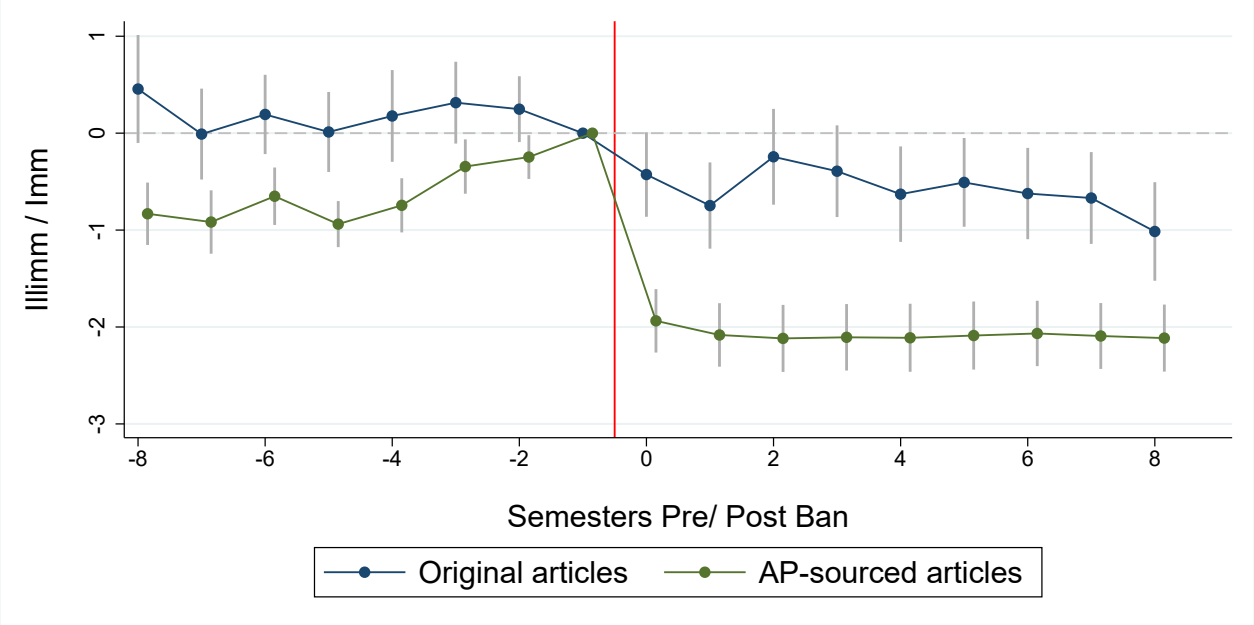
Notes: Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals from a regression of frequency of "illegal immigrant" articles as percent of "immigrant" articles on a full set of indicators for quintile of (positive) AP-intensity interacted with Post Ban, controlling for outlet and year-month FEs. The omitted category is AP-intensity = 0. Weighted by number of "immigrant" articles. Standard errors clustered by outlet.

Figure 10: Leads and Lags of the effect of the ban on the number of "illegal immigrant" articles



Notes: Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals from a regression of frequency of "illegal immigrant" articles as percent of "immigrant" articles on full set of indicators for semester pre-/post-ban interacted with AP-intensity, controlling for outlet and year-month FEs. The omitted category is the semester before the ban. Weighted by number of "immigrant" articles. Standard errors clustered by outlet.

Figure 11: Leads and Lags of the effect of the ban on the number of "illegal immigrant" articles – AP-sourced vs original articles



Notes: Green: Articles sourced from AP (attributed or plagiarized). Blue: All other articles. Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals from a regression of frequency of "illegal immigrant" articles as percent of "immigrant" articles on full set of indicators for semester pre-/post-ban interacted with AP-intensity, controlling for outlet and year-month FEs. The omitted category is the semester before the ban. Weighted by number of "immigrant" articles. Standard errors clustered by outlet.

6.3 Results on Immigration Policy Attitudes

Figure 12: Geographic Distribution of AP-Intensity

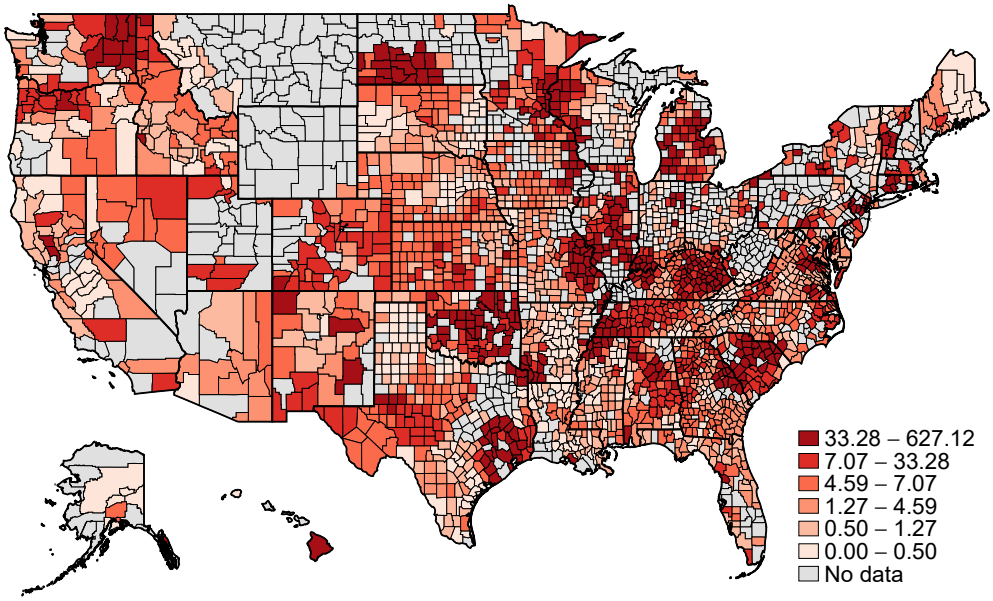
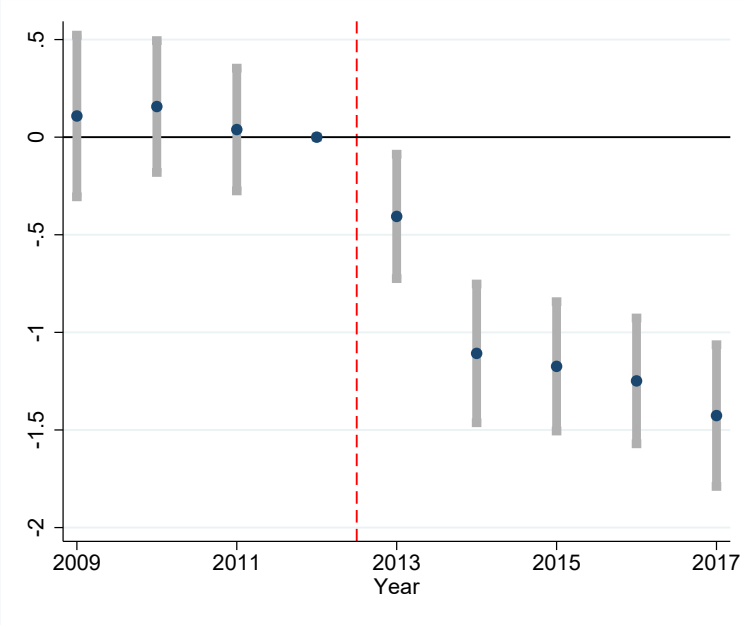
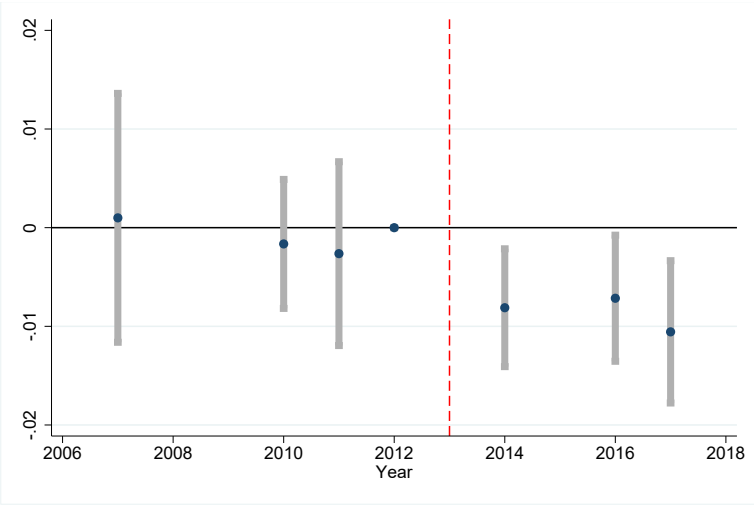


Figure 13: First Stage Leads and Lags, collapsed at county and survey year level



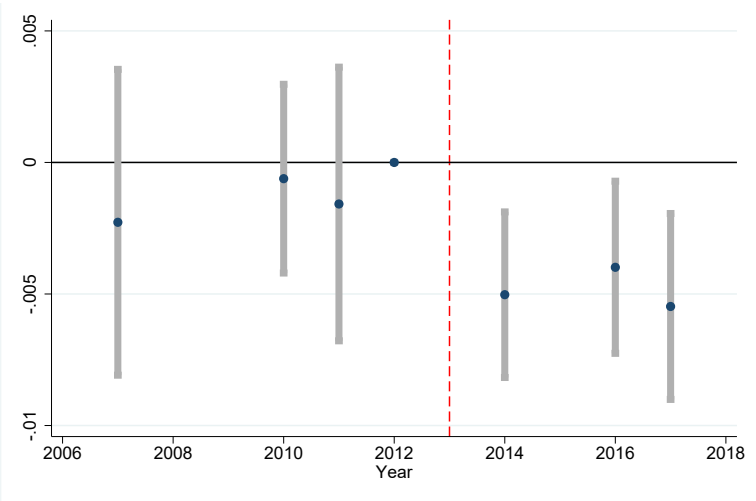
Notes: Point estimates and 95% confidence intervals on the interactions of AP-intensity with survey year, conditional on year and county FEs, respondent and county controls interacted with linear time trend and year FEs. Respondent controls: age, age squared gender, indicators for race, college, and 1st or 2nd generation immigrant. County controls: log population, racial composition, share foreign born, share college degree, log income per capita, share urban, republican vote share (2012 pres. election) – 2012 levels interacted with post-ban and quadratic time-trend. Standard errors clustered by county.

Figure 14: Index of Support for Restricting Immigration: Reduced Form Leads and Lags



Notes: Point estimates and 95% confidence intervals on the interactions of AP-intensity with survey year, conditional on year and county FEs, respondent and county controls interacted with linear time trend and year FEs. Respondent controls: age, age squared gender, indicators for race, college, and 1st or 2nd generation immigrant. County controls: log population, racial composition, share foreign born, share college degree, log income per capita, share urban, republican vote share (2012 pres. election) – 2012 levels interacted with post-ban and quadratic time-trend. Standard errors clustered by county.

Figure 15: Share of Restrictive Policies: Reduced Form Leads and Lags



Notes: Point estimates and 95% confidence intervals on the interactions of AP-intensity with survey year, conditional on year and county FEs, respondent and county controls interacted with linear time trend and year FEs. Respondent controls: age, age squared gender, indicators for race, college, and 1st or 2nd generation immigrant. County controls: log population, racial composition, share foreign born, share college degree, log income per capita, share urban, republican vote share (2012 pres. election) – 2012 levels interacted with post-ban and quadratic time-trend. Standard errors clustered by county.

7 Tables

7.1 Propagation Results

Table 1: Frequency of "illegal immigrant" articles

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	'Illigal immigrant', pct. of 'Immigrant'				'Illegal immigration' pct. of 'Immigration'
PostBan × AP intensity	-1.714***	-1.692***	-1.638***	-2.014***	-0.976***
	(0.222)	(0.199)	(0.171)	(0.230)	(0.145)
AP intensity	1.980***				
	(0.234)				
PostBan	-12.652***				
	(0.759)				
Outlet FEs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FEs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State × Year-Month FEs	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Outlet-specific linear trend	No	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	133349	133347	133329	133329	106324
Number of outlets	2271	2269	2269	2269	2150
R^2	0.15	0.42	0.49	0.53	0.42
Mean dep. var.	20.79	20.79	20.79	20.79	31.19

Notes: WLS weighted by number of number of "immigrant" articles in columns (1)-(4), and by number of "immigration" articles in column (5). Standard errors clustered by outlet.
Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 2: Frequency of "illegal immigrant" articles: Robustness

	Not normalized	Unweighted	Word-count	Headlines	AP dummy	Elasticity
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Log(1 + 'Illegal Immigrant')	'Illigal immigrant', pct. of 'Immigrant'				
PostBan × AP intensity	-0.066***	-1.873***	-2.039***	-1.233***		
	(0.006)	(0.143)	(0.237)	(0.323)		
PostBan × I[AP-int > 0]					-5.732***	
					(1.059)	
$(Illimm/Imm)_{AP}$ × AP intensity						0.125***
						(0.022)
Outlet FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	216709	133347	124232	18976	133347	131920
Number of outlets	2271	2269	2160	1414	2269	2269
R^2	0.56	0.21	0.36	0.24	0.42	0.42
Mean dep. var.	0.34	19.52	19.17	14.46	19.52	20.93

Notes: Replication of the first column of table 1 with the following modifications: (1) Replacing the dependent variable with the log of 1 + number of "illegal immigrant" articles and dropping weights; (2) Regression without weights; (3) Replacing number of articles with word-count; (4) Replacing articles with number of headlines; (5) Replacing continuous AP-intensity with a dummy for positive AP-intensity; (6) Replacing *PostBan* with the time-series of "illegal immigrant" articles (normalized by "immigrant" articles) released monthly by AP. Standard errors clustered by outlet.
Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 3: Frequency of "illegal immigrant" articles: AP-sourced vs. original articles

	(1) 'Illigal immigrant' & **AP-attributed** pct. of 'Immigrant'	(2) 'Illigal immigrant' & **AP-plagiarised**, pct. of 'Immigrant'	(3) 'Illigal immigrant' & **not AP-sou** pct. of 'Immigrant'
PostBan × AP intensity	-1.303***	-0.214***	-0.722***
	(0.148)	(0.026)	(0.211)
Outlet FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	133469	133469	133404
Number of outlets	2269	2269	2269
R^2	0.43	0.10	0.44
Mean dep. var.	0.77	0.22	16.31

Notes: WLS weighted by number of number of "immigrant" articles. Standard errors clustered by outlet.
Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 4: Frequency of "illegal immigrant" articles: Decomposition by slant

	(1) Slant < p33 Dem.	(2) p33 ≥ Slant ¡ p66 Center	(3) Slant ≥ p66 Rep.
PostBan × AP intensity	-1.756***	-0.871	-1.247**
	(0.495)	(0.555)	(0.570)
Outlet FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	10062	10145	9825
Number of outlets	110	113	116
R^2	0.55	0.48	0.50
Mean dep. var.	17.86	22.09	25.36

Notes: WLS weighted by number of "immigrant" articles. Standard errors clustered by outlet.
Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 5: Synonyms of "illegal immigrant" and volume of immigration coverage

	(1) AP-approved synonyms pct. of 'Immigrant'	(2) 'Undocumented immigrant' pct. of 'Immigrant'	(3) 'Immigrant' pct. of total articles	(4) 'Immigration' pct. of total articles
PostBan × AP intensity	0.438***	0.190	-0.002	0.003
	(0.071)	(0.147)	(0.007)	(0.006)
Outlet FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	133188	133330	204175	204180
Number of outlets	2269	2269	2162	2162
R^2	0.20	0.34	0.55	0.48
Mean dep. var.	5.06	8.74	0.62	0.51

Notes: WLS weighted by number of "immigrant" articles in column (1), and by total articles in columns (2) and (3). Standard errors clustered by outlet. AP-approved synonyms are "living in the country illegally/ without legal permission", "enter(-ing/-ed) the country illegally/ without legal permission". Standard errors clustered by outlet.
Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

7.2 Results on Immigration Policy Attitudes

Table 6: Index of support for restricting immigration

	Reduced Form				2SLS		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Restrict Immigration: Average of standardized questions						
PostBan × AP-intensity	-0.0058**	-0.0072***	-0.0065***	-0.0057**			
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)			
AP intensity	0.0091**						
	(0.004)						
PostBan	-0.0720***						
	(0.007)						
'Illegal imm.', pct. of 'Imm.'					0.0070**	0.0065**	0.0084*
					(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)
Respondent controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs × County controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
County FEs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year × State FEs	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
First-Stage F stat.	.	.	.	.	13.97	26.27	10.68
Observations	167962	167852	167382	167382	167852	167382	167382
Number of counties	2244	2134	2125	2125	2134	2125	2125
R^2	0.11	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.08	0.08	0.08
Mean dep. var.	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02

Notes: Reduced form OLS regressions in the left hand-side panel, 2SLS regressions in the right hand-side panel. Respondent controls: age, age squared, gender, indicators for race, college, and 1st or 2nd generation immigrant. County controls: log population, racial composition, share foreign born, share college degree, log income per capita, share urban, republican vote share (2012 pres. election). Standard errors clustered by county.
Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 7: Share of restrictive policies

	Reduced Form				2SLS		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Restrict Immigration: Share restrictive policies selected						
PostBan × AP-intensity	-0.0037***	-0.0044***	-0.0041***	-0.0037***			
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)			
AP intensity	0.0052**						
	(0.002)						
PostBan	0.0256***						
	(0.004)						
'Illegal imm.', pct. of 'Imm.'					0.0042***	0.0041***	0.0054**
					(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.003)
Respondent controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs × County controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
County FEs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year × State FEs	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
First-Stage F stat.	.	.	.	.	13.97	26.27	10.68
Observations	167962	167852	167382	167382	167852	167382	167382
Number of counties	2244	2134	2125	2125	2134	2125	2125
R^2	0.10	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.08	0.08	0.08
Mean dep. var.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Notes: Reduced form OLS regressions in the left hand-side panel, 2SLS regressions in the right hand-side panel. Respondent controls: age, age squared, gender, indicators for race, college, and 1st or 2nd generation immigrant. County controls: log population, racial composition, share foreign born, share college degree, log income per capita, share urban, republican vote share (2012 pres. election). Standard errors clustered by county.
Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 8: Index of support for restricting immigration: County-level

	Reduced Form			2SLS			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Restrict Immigration: Average of standardized questions						
PostBan × AP-intensity	-0.0130**	-0.0105*	-0.0107*	-0.0128**			
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)			
AP intensity	0.0142***						
	(0.004)						
PostBan	-0.0757***						
	(0.015)						
'Illegal imm.', pct. of 'Imm.'					0.0094*	0.0101*	0.0130**
					(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Year FEs × County controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
County FEs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year × State FEs	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
First-Stage F stat.	.	.	.	.	57.18	52.18	39.60
Observations	7851	7708	7680	7668	7708	7680	7668
Number of counties	2239	2096	2088	2085	2096	2088	2085
R^2	0.02	0.43	0.44	0.45	-0.05	-0.04	-0.06
Mean dep. var.	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15

Notes: Reduced form OLS regressions in the left hand-side panel, 2SLS regressions in the right hand-side panel. County controls: log population, racial composition, share foreign born, share college degree, log income per capita, share urban, republican vote share (2012 pres. election). Standard errors clustered by county.
Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 9: Opposition to amnesty

	Reduced Form				2SLS		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	"Grant legal status to all illegal immigrants who...": Not selected						
PostBan × AP-intensity	-0.0007	-0.0013	-0.0006	-0.0004			
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)			
AP intensity	0.0025						
	(0.002)						
PostBan	-0.0763***						
	(0.004)						
'Illegal imm.', pct. of 'Imm.'					0.0013	0.0006	0.0006
					(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Respondent controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs × County controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
County FEs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year × State FEs	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
First-Stage F stat.	.	.	.	.	13.97	26.27	10.68
Observations	167962	167852	167382	167382	167852	167382	167382
Number of counties	2244	2134	2125	2125	2134	2125	2125
R^2	0.05	0.08	0.08	0.09	0.04	0.04	0.04
Mean dep. var.	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53

Notes: Reduced form OLS regressions in the left hand-side panel, 2SLS regressions in the right hand-side panel. Respondent controls: age, age squared, gender, indicators for race, college, and 1st or 2nd generation immigrant. County controls: log population, racial composition, share foreign born, share college degree, log income per capita, share urban, republican vote share (2012 pres. election). Standard errors clustered by county.
Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 10: Support for increasing border control

	Reduced Form				2SLS		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	"Increase the number of border patrols on the US-Mexican border.": Se						
PostBan × AP-intensity	-0.0052***	-0.0060***	-0.0052***	-0.0050**			
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)			
AP intensity	0.0065***						
	(0.002)						
PostBan	-0.0297***						
	(0.004)						
'Illegal imm.', pct. of 'Imm.'					0.0058***	0.0052***	0.0074**
					(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.004)
Respondent controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs × County controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
County FEs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year × State FEs	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
First-Stage F stat.	.	.	.	.	13.97	26.27	10.68
Observations	167962	167852	167382	167382	167852	167382	167382
Number of counties	2244	2134	2125	2125	2134	2125	2125
R^2	0.05	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.03	0.03	0.03
Mean dep. var.	0.56	0.56	0.56	0.56	0.56	0.56	0.56

Notes: Reduced form OLS regressions in the left hand-side panel, 2SLS regressions in the right hand-side panel. Respondent controls: age, age squared, gender, indicators for race, college, and 1st or 2nd generation immigrant. County controls: log population, racial composition, share foreign born, share college degree, log income per capita, share urban, republican vote share (2012 pres. election).
Standard errors clustered by county. Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 11: Opposition to Hiring: Respondent-level

	Reduced Form				2SLS		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	"Fine US businesses that hire illegal immigrants.": Selected						
PostBan × AP-intensity	-0.0070***	-0.0072***	-0.0075***	-0.0066***			
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)			
AP intensity	0.0065***						
	(0.002)						
PostBan	-0.0145***						
	(0.005)						
'Illegal imm.', pct. of 'Imm.'					0.0058**	0.0061***	0.0065**
					(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Respondent controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs × County controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
County FEs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year × State FEs	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
First-Stage F stat.	.	.	.	.	16.46	27.54	17.75
Observations	84926	84749	84510	84510	84749	84510	84510
Number of counties	2141	1964	1956	1956	1964	1956	1956
R^2	0.08	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.06	0.06	0.06
Mean dep. var.	0.63	0.63	0.63	0.63	0.63	0.63	0.63

Notes: Reduced form OLS regressions in the left hand-side panel, 2SLS regressions in the right hand-side panel. Respondent controls: age, age squared, gender, indicators for race, college, and 1st or 2nd generation immigrant. County controls: log population, racial composition, share foreign born, share college degree, log income per capita, share urban, republican vote share (2012 pres. election). Standard errors clustered by county.
Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 13: Heterogeneity by newspaper readership: Respondent-level

	Reduced Form			2SLS		
	(1) Not Reader	(2) Reader	(3) Print Reader	(4) Not Reader	(5) Reader	(6) Print Reader
PostBan × AP-intensity	-0.0021	-0.0046*	-0.0072**			
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)			
'Illegal imm.', pct. of 'Imm.'				0.0028	0.0063	0.0097**
				(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.005)
Respondent controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
First-Stage F stat.	.	.	.	10.44	11.31	10.06
Observations	57837	66591	40103	57837	66591	40103
Number of counties	1844	1805	1596	1844	1805	1596
R^2	0.15	0.16	0.16	0.10	0.11	0.09
Mean dep. var.	0.54	0.56	0.59	0.54	0.56	0.59

Notes: 2012 is dropped as the newspaper readership question was not asked. Reader = 1 if read (print) newspaper in the past 24 hours. Respondent and county controls as in the previous table.
Standard errors clustered by county. Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 14: Views on other policies

	Reduced Form				2SLS			
	(1) Taxes	(2) Economy	(3) Abortion	(4) Gay marriage	(5) Taxes	(6) Economy	(7) Abortion	(8) Gay marriage
PostBan × AP-intensity	-0.0000	0.0004	-0.0011	-0.0025				
	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)				
'Illegal imm.', pct. of 'Imm.'					0.0000	-0.0004	0.0011	0.0025
					(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Respondent controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs × County controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
First-Stage F stat.	.	.	.	.	27.03	26.84	27.21	26.99
Observations	158737	157848	160631	160265	158737	157848	160631	160265
Number of counties	2108	2109	2110	2112	2108	2109	2110	2112
R^2	0.08	0.23	0.20	0.22	0.05	0.16	0.13	0.17
Mean dep. var.	0.45	0.42	0.47	0.42	0.45	0.42	0.47	0.42

Notes: "Taxes"= 1 if would rather cut public spending than increase taxes.
"Economy"= 1 if believe the economy has gotten worse over the past year.
"Abortion"= 1 if oppose always allowing women to have an abortion as matter of choice.
"Gay marriage"= 1 if oppose gay marriage.
Respondent controls: age, age squared gender, indicators for race, college, and 1st or 2nd generation immigrant. County controls: log population, racial composition, share foreign born, share college degree, log income per capita, share urban, republican vote share (2012 pres. election) – 2012 levels interacted with year fixed effects.
Standard errors clustered by county. Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

A Appendix: Background on AP and the AP Stylebook

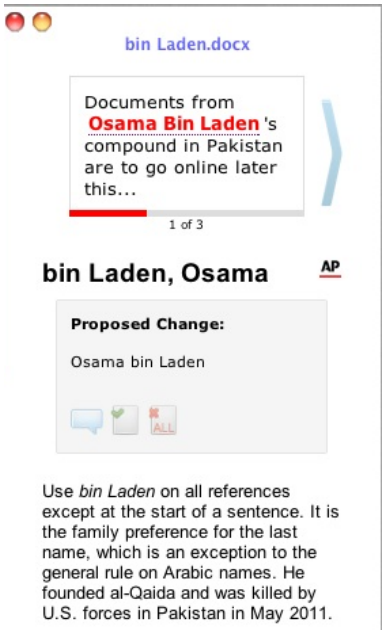
The Stylebook entry before the ban

> **illegal immigrant** Used to describe those who have entered the country illegally, it is the preferred term, rather than *illegal alien* or *undocumented worker*.
> Do not use the shortened term *illegals*.

The Stylebook entry after the ban

> **illegal immigration** Entering in a country in violation of civil or criminal law. Except in direct quotes essential to the story, use *illegal* only to refer to an action, not a person: *illegal immigration*, but not *illegal immigrant*. Acceptable variations include *living in* or *entering a county illegally* or *without legal permission*.
> Expect in direct quotations, do not use the terms *illegal alien, an illegal, illegals* or *undocumented*.
> Do not describe people as violating immigration laws without attribution. Specify wherever possible how someone entered the country illegally and from where. Crossed the border? Overstayed a visa? What nationality?
> People who were brought into the county as children should not be described as having immigrated illegally. For people guaranteed a temporary right to remain in the U.S. under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, use *temporary resident status*, with details on the program lower in the story.

Figure 16: AP style after the ban



A Appendix: Additional Analysis of AP Text

A.1 Examples

Pre-Ban

Senate panel OKs letting non-citizens, including illegal immigrants, get driver's licenses
18-Mar-2013 – ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Bills that would let illegal immigrants get a Minnesota driver's license are moving forward at the Capitol. The Senate Transportation and Public Safety Committee on Monday passed a bill to ease restrictions on driver's licenses for non-U.S. citizens. A House committee endorsed a similar bill last week. Sen. Bobby Joe Champion, a Minneapolis Democrat, says his bill would make Minnesota roads safer by funneling more drivers through the state's driving test and making it easier for them to buy automobile insurance. Republicans say the change could lead to unintended consequences, like illegal immigrants using state IDs to vote. The bill passed 10-7, with all Democrats in favor and all Republicans voting against it.

Post-Ban

Immigrant driver's license bill takes step forward in Oregon Senate committee work
16-Apr-2013 – SALEM, Ore. (AP) – An Oregon Senate committee has advanced a bill granting four-year driver's licenses to people who can't prove they're legally in the United States. The Senate Business and Transportation Committee approved the measure Monday on a 4-2 vote. The bill would allow immigrants who have lived in Oregon for at least a year and meet other requirements to apply for driver's cards without proving legal presence. The card would be valid for only four years– half as long as a standard Oregon license– and would state "driving privilege only." Supporters say it will make Oregon roads safer because there would be fewer untrained and uninsured drivers, but opponents say it could create a culture of crime in the state. The bill goes to a legislative budget committee.

A.2 Text Analysis by Topic

Topic Model Estimation. In order to classify AP's articles mentioning into into distinctive topics, I estimate a Latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA) model on the corpus covering the entire sample period. In order to limit possible mechanical effects due . I set the number of topics to 5, which produce compact and interpretable topics – a larger number of topics tends to produce more subtopics of the 5 overarching ones – e.g. a separate topic on immigrant crimes versus their prosecution. The resulting topics are presented in Figure 17 and can be labeled as follows: law enforcement and prosecution, legislation related to immigration, immigrants' integration and social issues such schools and family, international immigration issues such as the European refugee crisis, and immigrants' role in elections.

The lower panel shows the distribution of the average topic weights before and after the ban. Enforcement, legislation and integration emerge as the main topics, while European immigration and elections play a lesser role.

I assign each AP dispatch the single topic with the highest estimated weight. Finally, with this classification at hand, in Figures 18 and 19 I replicate the analysis from Figures 5 and 6 separately for each topic.

Figure 17: Topics of "immigrant" wire articles distributed by AP pre- and post-ban

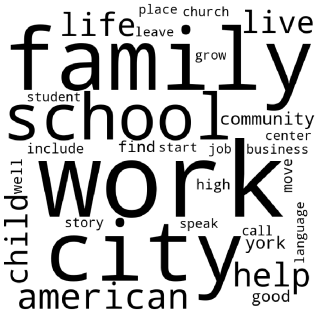
Topic 1 "Enforcement"



Topic 2 "Legislation"



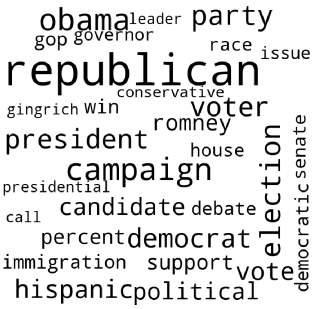
Topic 3 "Integration"



Topic 4 "Europe"



Topic 5 "Elections"



Topic weights pre- and post-ban

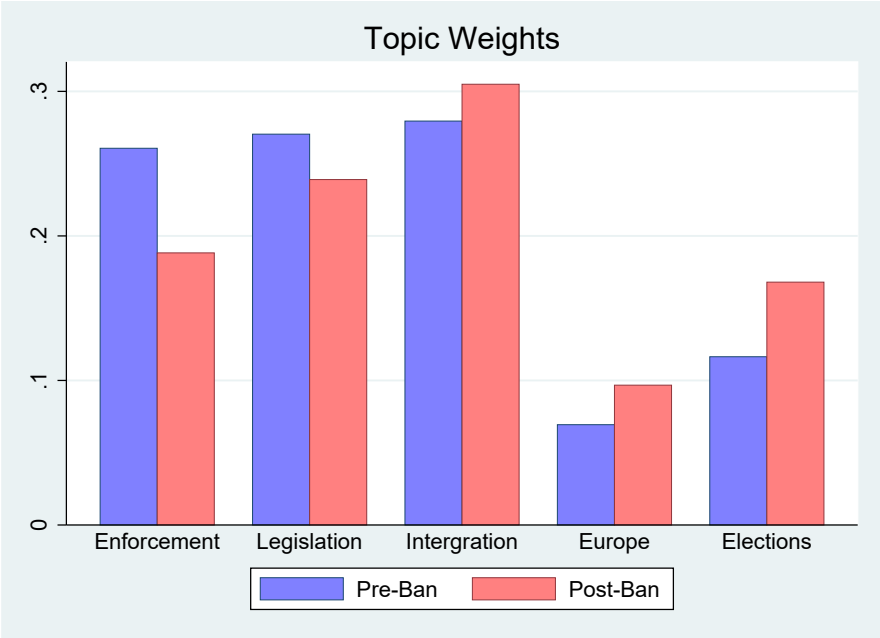
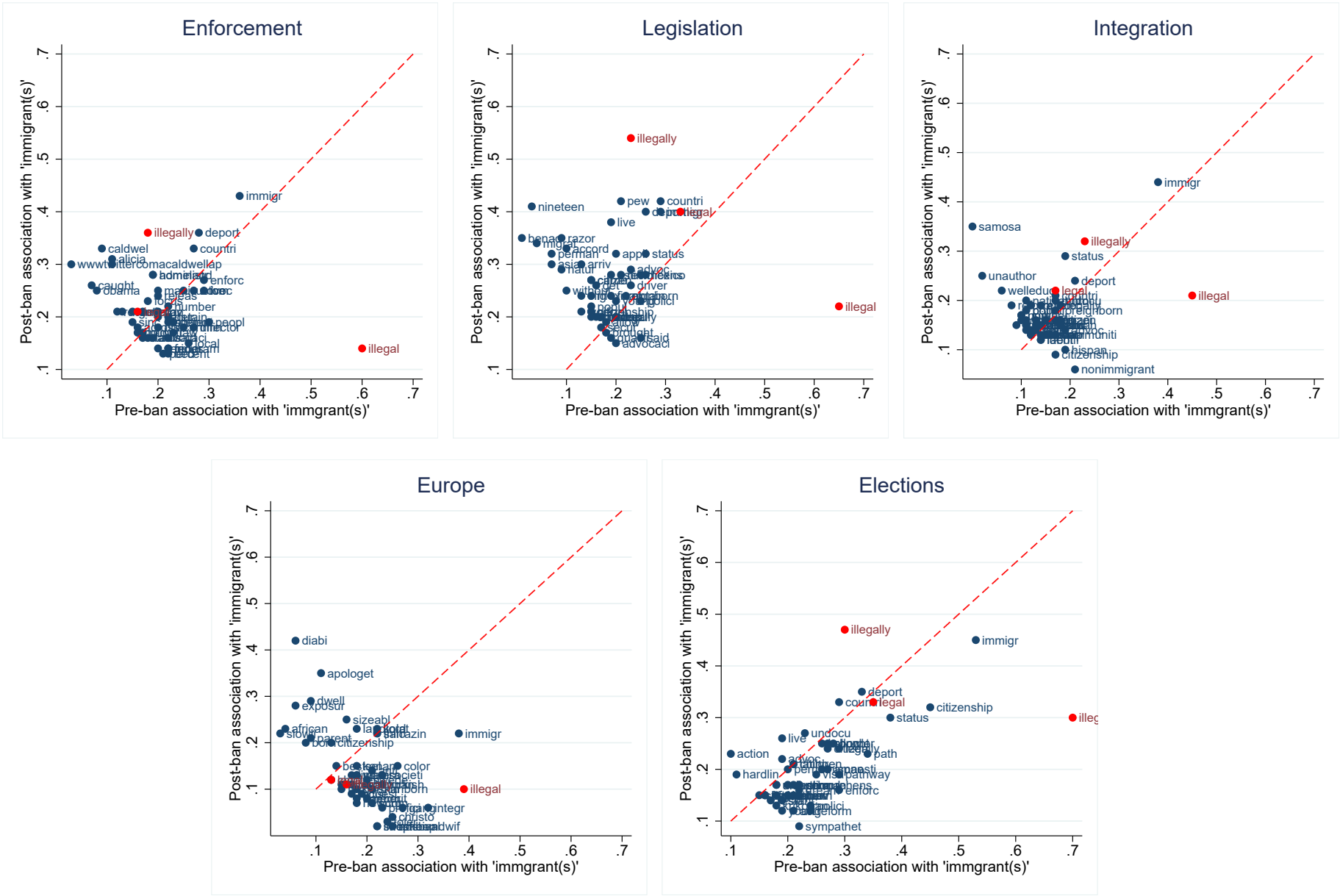
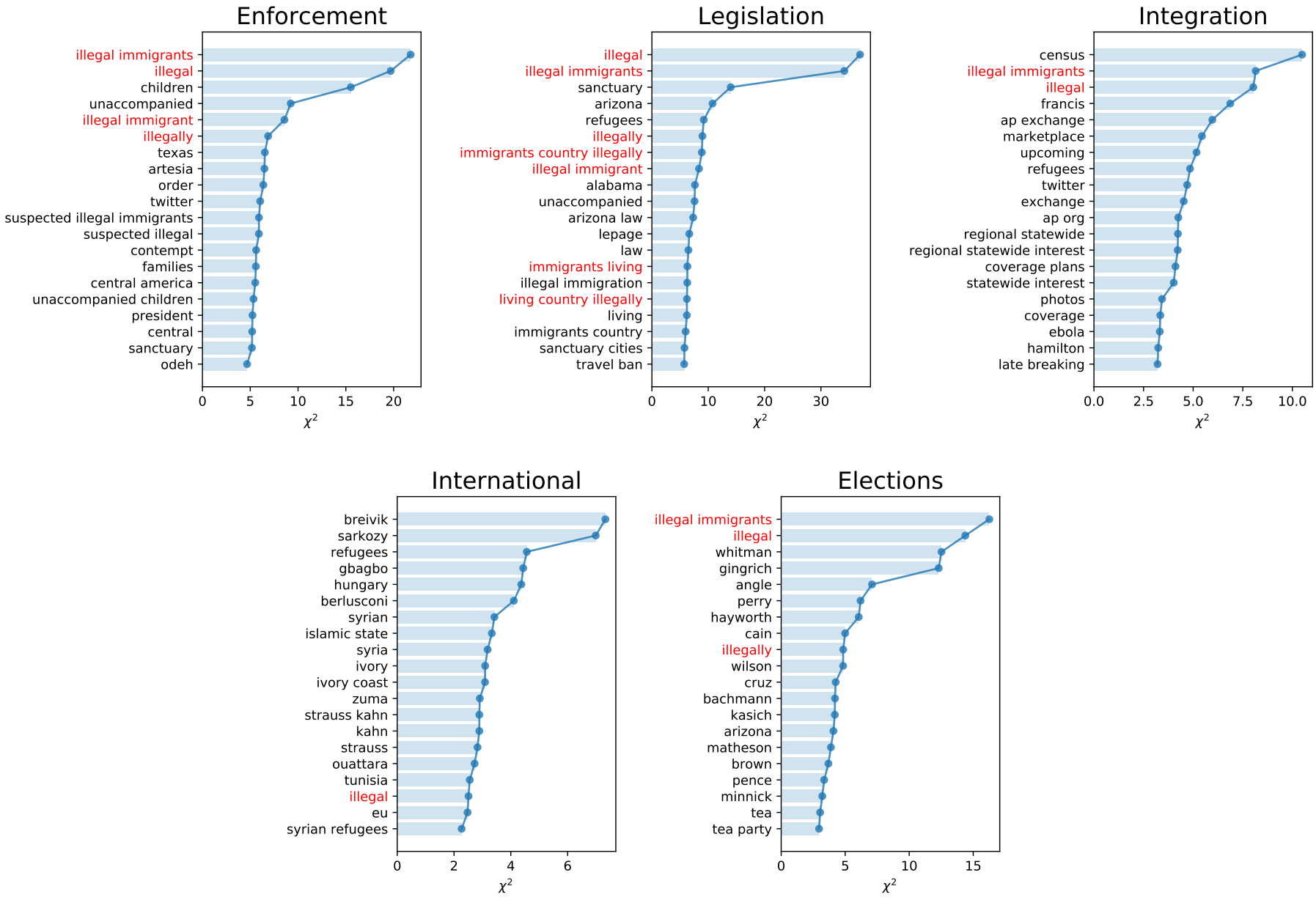


Figure 18: Correlates of the word "immigrant(s)" before and after the ban; Estimated separately by topic



Notes: Top 50 unigrams with highest correlation with the word "immigrant(s)", before and after the ban. Correlations defined based on rate of occurrence within the same article. Derivatives of 'immigr' and 'illeg' are not stemmed for illustration purposes.

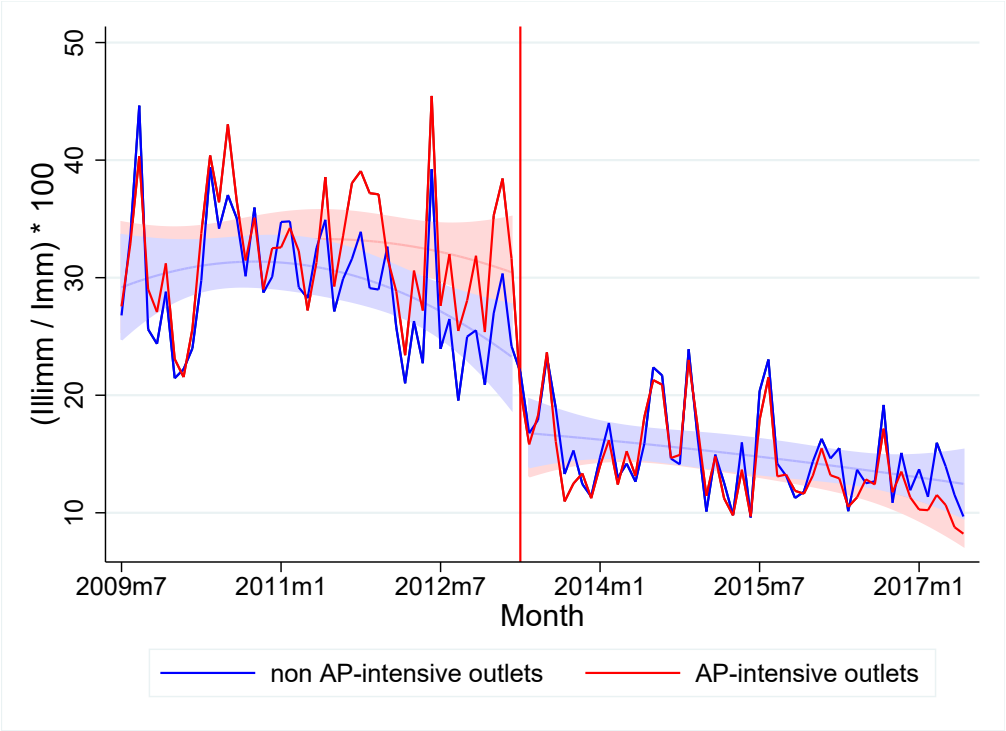
Figure 19



Notes:

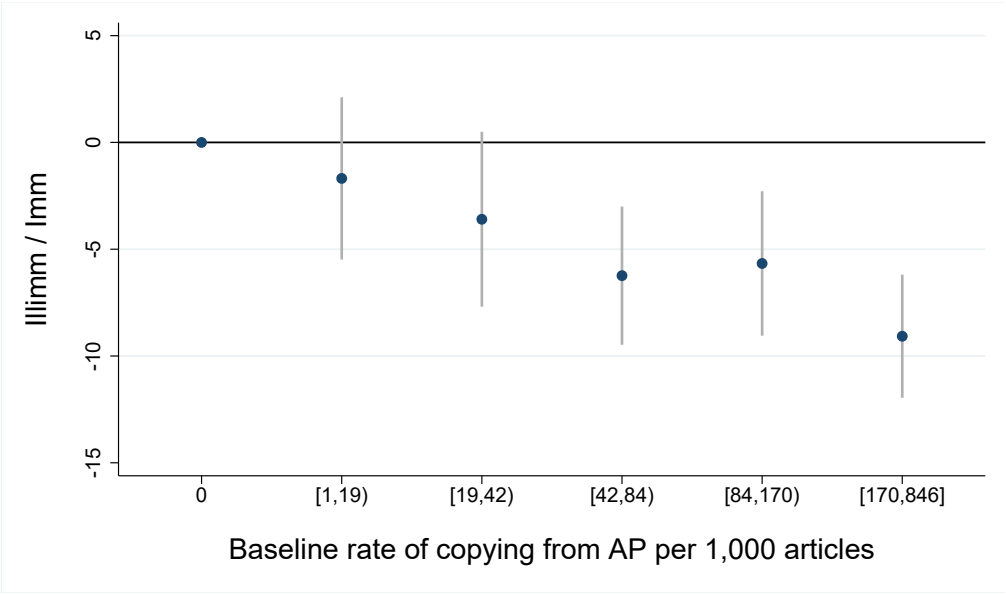
A Propagation Results for the Sample of Print Newspapers

Figure 20: Monthly frequency of "illegal immigrant" articles, as percent of "immigrant" articles, for AP-intensive vs non AP-intensive outlets.



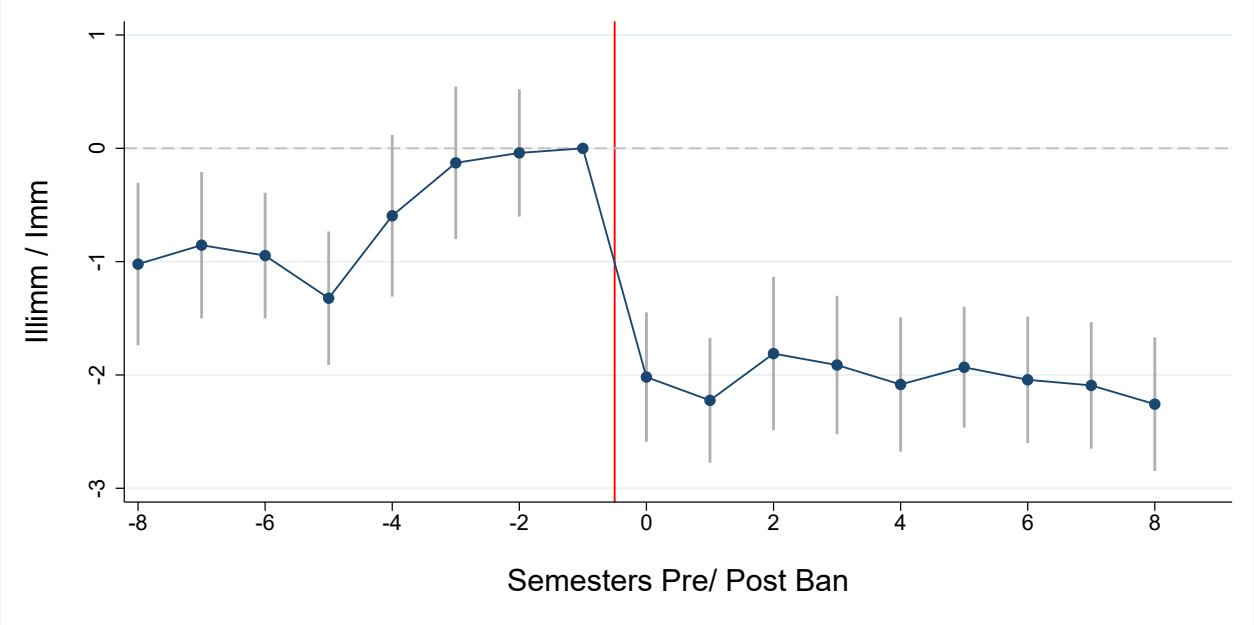
Notes: Averages weighted by number of "immigrant" articles.

Figure 21: Effect of the ban on the number of "illegal immigrant" articles, broken down by degree of AP-intensity



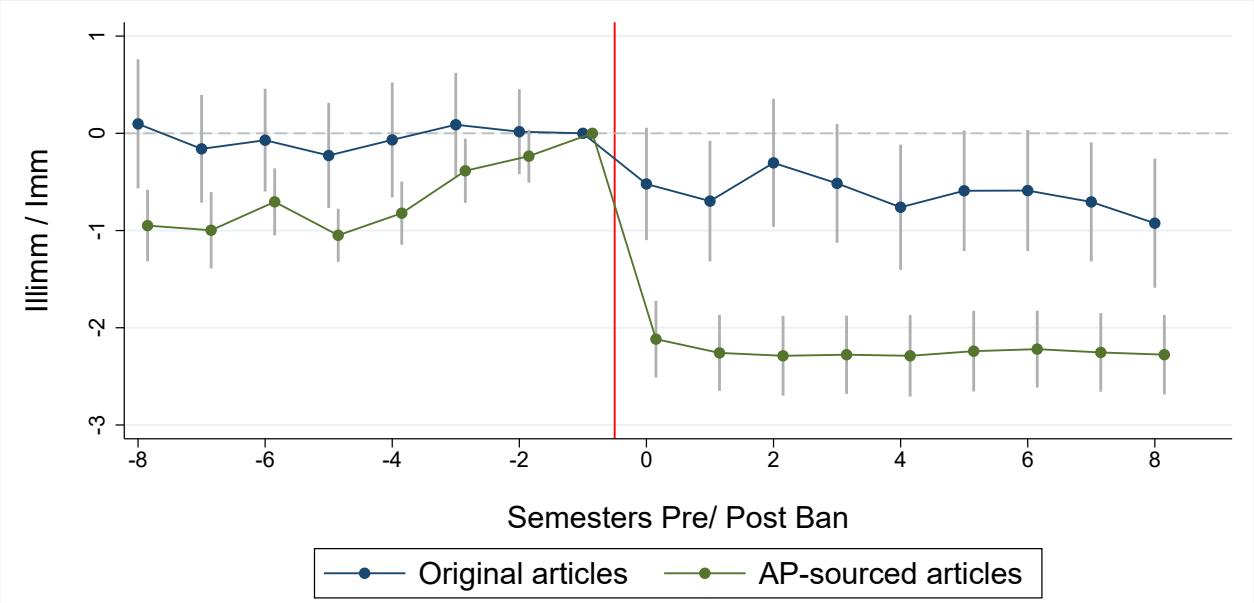
Notes: Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals from a regression of frequency of "illegal immigrant" articles as percent of "immigrant" articles on a full set of indicators for quintile of (positive) AP-intensity interacted with Post Ban, controlling for outlet and year-month FEs. The omitted category is AP-intensity = 0. Weighted by number of "immigrant" articles.
Standard errors clustered by outlet. Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Figure 22: Leads and Lags of the effect of the ban on the number of "illegal immigrant" articles



Notes: Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals from a regression of frequency of "illegal immigrant" articles as percent of "immigrant" articles on full set of indicators for semester pre-/post-ban interacted with AP-intensity, controlling for outlet and year-month FEs. The omitted category is the semester before the ban. Weighted by number of "immigrant" articles.
Standard errors clustered by outlet. Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Figure 23: Leads and Lags of the effect of the ban on the number of "illegal immigrant" articles – AP-sourced vs original articles



Notes: Green: Articles sourced from AP (attributed or plagiarized). Blue: All other articles. Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals from a regression of frequency of "illegal immigrant" articles as percent of "immigrant" articles on full set of indicators for semester pre-/post-ban interacted with AP-intensity, controlling for outlet and year-month FEs. The omitted category is the semester before the ban. Weighted by number of "immigrant" articles.
Standard errors clustered by outlet. Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table C1: Effect of the ban on the number of "illegal immigrant" articles

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	'Illigal immigrant', pct. of 'Immigrant'				'Illegal immigration' pct. of 'Immigration'
PostBan × AP intensity	-1.413***	-1.417***	-1.460***	-2.020***	-0.939***
	(0.258)	(0.240)	(0.204)	(0.284)	(0.145)
AP intensity	1.207***				
	(0.277)				
PostBan	-14.539***				
	(0.981)				
Outlet FEs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FEs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State × Year-Month FEs	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Outlet-specific linear trend	No	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	63820	63820	63568	63568	51939
Number of outlets	815	815	813	813	731
R^2	0.20	0.43	0.53	0.56	0.44
Mean dep. var.	21.68	21.68	21.64	21.64	32.06

Notes: WLS weighted by number of number of "immigrant" articles in columns (1)-(4), and by number of "immigration" articles in column (5). Standard errors clustered by outlet.
Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table C2: Effect of the ban on the number of "illegal immigrant" articles: Robustness

	Not normalized	Unweighted	Word-count	Headlines	AP dummy	Elasticity
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Log(1 + 'Illegal Immigrant')	'Illigal immigrant', pct. of 'Immigrant'				
PostBan × AP intensity	-0.068***	-1.215***	-1.434***	-1.319***		
	(0.007)	(0.188)	(0.269)	(0.385)		
PostBan × I[AP-int > 0]					-4.121***	
					(1.268)	
$(Illimm/Imm)_{AP}$ × AP intensity						0.091***
						(0.026)
Outlet FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	77204	63820	57014	12662	63820	63141
Number of outlets	815	815	733	659	815	815
R^2	0.52	0.20	0.38	0.22	0.43	0.43
Mean dep. var.	0.64	22.95	20.67	14.86	22.95	21.82

Notes: Replication of the first column of table 1 with the following modifications: (1) Replacing the dependent variable with the log of 1 + number of "illegal immigrant" articles and dropping weights; (2) Regression without weights; (3) Replacing number of articles with word-count; (4) Replacing articles with number of headlines; (5) Replacing continuous AP-intensity with a dummy for positive AP-intensity; (6) Replacing *PostBan* with the time-series of "illegal immigrant" articles (normalized by "immigrant" articles) released monthly by AP.
Standard errors clustered by outlet. Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table C3: Effect of the ban on the number of "illegal immigrant" articles: AP-sourced vs. original articles

	(1) 'Illigal immigrant' & **AP-attributed** pct. of 'Immigrant'	(2) 'Illigal immigrant' & **AP-plagiarised**, pct. of 'Immigrant'	(3) 'Illigal immigrant' & **not AP-sourced**, pct. of 'Immigrant'
PostBan × AP intensity	-1.408***	-0.217***	-0.560**
	(0.181)	(0.031)	(0.275)
Outlet FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	63890	63890	63853
Number of outlets	815	815	815
R^2	0.45	0.11	0.48
Mean dep. var.	1.00	0.30	16.40

Notes: WLS weighted by number of number of "immigrant" articles.
Standard errors clustered by outlet. Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table C4: Effect of the ban on the number of "illegal immigrant" articles: Decomposition by slant of the outlet

	(1) Slant < p33 Dem.	(2) p33 ≥ Slant ¡ p66 Center	(3) Slant ≥ p66 Rep.
PostBan × AP intensity	-2.056***	-0.995*	-1.316**
	(0.496)	(0.507)	(0.562)
Outlet FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	9295	9522	9421
Number of outlets	101	107	111
R^2	0.55	0.48	0.50
Mean dep. var.	17.61	22.28	25.32

Notes: WLS weighted by number of "immigrant" articles.
Standard errors clustered by outlet. Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table C5: Effect of the ban on the number of "illegal immigrant" articles: Decomposition by slant of the outlet

	(1) AP-approved synonyms pct. of 'Immigrant'	(2) 'Undocumented immigrant' pct. of 'Immigrant'	(3) 'Immigrant' pct. of total articles	(4) 'Immigration' pct. of total articles
PostBan × AP intensity	0.370***	0.154	-0.005	-0.003
	(0.091)	(0.188)	(0.006)	(0.005)
Outlet FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Month FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	63810	63863	70111	70110
Number of outlets	815	815	733	733
R^2	0.21	0.39	0.54	0.46
Mean dep. var.	5.21	8.31	0.63	0.50

Notes: WLS weighted by number of "immigrant" articles in column (1), and by total articles in columns (2) and (3). Standard errors clustered by outlet. AP-approved synonyms are "living in the country illegally/ without legal permission", "enter(-ing/-ed) the country illegally/ without legal permission".
Standard errors clustered by outlet. Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

A Appendix: CCES Questions

A.1 Immigration Questions

What do you think the U.S. government should do about immigration? Select all that apply.

- Fine US businesses that hire illegal immigrants.
(-07, -12, -14, -16, -17)
- Grant legal status to all illegal immigrants who have held jobs and paid taxes for at least 3 years, and not been convicted of any felony crimes.
(-07, -10, -11, -12, -14, -16, -17)
- Increase the number of border patrol on the US-Mexican border.
(-07, -10, -11, -12, -14, -16, -17)
- Build a wall between the US and Mexico.
(-07, -17)
- Allow police to question anyone they think may be in the country illegally.
(-10, -11, -12, -14, -17)
- Prohibit illegal immigrants from using emergency hospital care and public schools.
(-12)
- Deny automatic citizenship to American-born children of illegal immigrants.
(-12)
- Identify and deport illegal immigrants.
(-14, -16, -17)
- Grant legal status to people who were brought to the US illegally as children, but who have graduated from a U.S. high school.
(-16)
- Require local police departments to report to the federal government anyone they identify as an illegal immigrant.
(-17)

Excluded items:

- Increase the number of guest workers allowed to come legally to the U. S.
(-07, -10)
- Increase the number of visas for overseas workers to work in the U.S.
(-16, -17)

- Admit refugees from Syria.
  (-16)
- Ban Muslims from immigrating to the US.
  (-16)