

## Documents

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**Impact of National Pandemic Lockdowns on Perceived Threat of Immigrants: A Natural Quasi-Experiment Across 23 Countries**

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**Abstract**

Xenophobia and anti-immigrant attacks rose during the COVID-19 pandemic, yet this may not be solely due to the disease threat. According to theories of frustration and scapegoating, situational obstructions and deprivation can motivate prejudice against outgroups. Using a global natural quasi-experimental design, this study tests whether the restrictiveness of national lockdowns can explain higher individual-level perceptions of immigrant threat. Data of 45,894 participants from 23 countries were analyzed. Both lockdown duration and lockdown severity were positively associated with individuals' perceived threat of immigrants. The lockdown effects were independent of objective and subjective measures of disease threat, and there was no evidence that disease threat drives people's prejudice toward immigrants. Subgroup analysis suggested the lockdown effects were reliable in Europe and the Americas, but not in Asia. These findings suggest a need to mitigate frustration and scapegoating when implementing lockdowns, and to distinguish the influence of societal restrictions from disease threat. © The Author(s) 2022.

**Author Keywords**

COVID-19; lockdown; natural experiment; perceived threat of immigrants

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