



## **Trump's speech may have been tame, but it wasn't normal**

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Donald Trump made it clear at the beginning of his campaign that he wasn't going to follow the normal rules or tone of politics. And almost daily since winning the election in November, the businessman and former reality-TV star has continued to defy precedents set by the 44 Oval Office occupants who came before him.

We're keeping track of all the ways Trump's presidency veers from the norm, in terms of policy and rhetoric, starting from Nov. 9, the day he became president-elect. We're also highlighting the ways in which policymakers and pundits normalize Trump's abnormal actions, words, and policies.

Below you'll find a reverse-chronological list of everything not normal Trump has done in February. See earlier updates from [November](#), [December](#), [January](#), and [February](#).

### **Trump's speech may have been tame, but it wasn't normal**

In his first address to Congress Tuesday night, [Donald Trump was the president Republicans wanted](#): a calm, collected one focused on policy, not feuds. But just because Trump's speech was tame doesn't mean it followed typical protocol.

We've broken out several moments where the president departed from the norm.

### **Trump Uses Three Words Past Presidents Have Avoided: "Radical Islamic Terrorism"**

Trump defended some of his most controversial actions, such as the travel and immigration ban, as "strong measures to protect our nation from radical Islamic terrorism."

The phrase "radical Islamic terrorism" has become politically divisive in recent years. And his speech Tuesday night wasn't the first time Trump dropped it. On the campaign trail, he said that "anyone who cannot condemn the hatred, oppression, and violence of radical Islam lacks the moral clarity to serve as our president."

### **Why it's not normal:**

In the 15 years since 9/11 and the start of America's so-called "War on Terror," presidents have taken great pains to not associate the religion of Islam and its billion-plus believers with terrorism. Both George W. Bush and Barack Obama avoided the phrase "radical Islamic terrorism" in fear of characterizing Islam as a violent religion and ignored criticism for the decision. Trump, however, has repeatedly flouted that bipartisan norm.

Critics on the right, such as Breitbart's Stephen Bannon — now Trump's chief strategist — felt leaders were being willfully ignorant of the threat posed by the Muslim world and that American values were inherently at odds with much of Islam. Such voices found a receptive ear last year in Trump.

Trump's new National Security Advisor Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, however, reportedly suggested that the president not use the term in his speech to Congress, advice that was ultimately ignored.

### **Trump Relies On Problematic Data To Say That Most Terrorists Are Foreign**

Trump touched one of his well-worn subjects Tuesday night: immigrants committing crimes against U.S. citizens. The statistics he used to back up his claim, however, don't tell the whole story.

The president said: "According to data provided by the Department of Justice, the vast majority of individuals convicted of terrorism and terrorism-related offenses since 9/11 came here from outside of our country."

Trump was likely citing a 2016 report from then-senator Jeff Sessions, now Trump's attorney general, who analyzed a Department of Justice list of 580 terrorism and terrorism-related convictions, 380 of which were foreign-born individuals. While the claim helps justify Trump's immigration ban, which was blocked by federal courts, it obscures some details.

### **Why it's not normal:**

The Sessions report is misleading and leaves out some important context. It combines terrorism convictions with people "implicated" in a terrorist investigation, the latter being a much broader category. Only 40 percent of those 580 convictions were for planning acts of terrorism on U.S. soil and 42 percent were not even for terrorist acts. As Alex Nowrasteh of the Cato Institute explains in a post, many of these convictions began with a terrorism tip but ended in a mundane conviction for something completely unrelated to terrorism — like receiving stolen cereal.

Other studies show an even different picture than the one Trump stated. The majority of terrorism-related charges since 9/11 have been by American citizens or legal residents, according to a study by the New America Foundation. According to that study, 84 percent of terrorism convictions since 9/11 were by U.S.-born citizens or permanent residents and 16 percent were by non-citizens or those with unknown nationality. In total, 192 U.S.-born citizens have been

charged with, or died while carrying out, jihadi terrorism since 2001. This is compared to only eight undocumented immigrants, and 16 refugees who have similarly been charged.

What's more, none of the foreign-born people from the seven countries on Trump's travel ban list — Syria, Libya, Iraq, Sudan, Somalia, Iran, and Yemen — have killed anybody in a domestic terrorist attack.

Multiple studies on this topic have shown that an American is far more likely to be killed in a far-right extremist attack or homegrown terrorism than by a foreign-born terrorist.

### **Trump Expands The Traditional Definition Of Unemployment**

Trump used his speech before Congress as another opportunity to give his vision of how badly the economy is doing under Obama's legacy. The problem: He inflated the normal definition of "unemployment" to do it.

"Ninety-four million Americans are out of the labor force," Trump said Tuesday night.

#### **Why it's not normal:**

While it's true that 94 million Americans age 16 or older aren't employed, that's not the number economists use to measure the health of the economy or the labor force.

When presidents talk about jobs and the economy, they're usually referring to the unemployment rate, measured by the percent of people over 16 who would like to work but can't find jobs.

For his speech to Congress, Trump cited the number of Americans who cannot or do not want to be working, including high school and college students, people with disabilities, stay-at-home parents, and millions of retirees.

The actual number of unemployed people is closer to 7.6 million, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

On the campaign trail, Trump showed he understood what unemployment meant — he just doesn't agree with how the government measures it. He said:

"The unemployment number, as you know, is totally fiction. If you look for a job for six months and then you give up, they consider you give up. You just give up. You go home. You say, 'Darling, I can't get a job.' They consider you statistically employed. It's not the way."