

## American Muslim Poll 2018: *Pride and Prejudice*

*Featuring the first-ever national Islamophobia Index in partnership with The Bridge Initiative*

### Key Findings:

#### **Muslims are less satisfied with the direction of the country vs previous years, but more politically engaged.**

- American Muslims (27%) are just as likely as the general public overall (29%) to report satisfaction with the country's current trajectory.
- Among Muslims, satisfaction with the direction of the nation is down from 41% in 2017 and 63% in 2016.
- Across all faith groups and the non-affiliated, however, Muslims (13%) are the least likely to approve of Donald Trump's performance in office. This compares to 17% of non-affiliated Americans, 31% of Jews, 36% of Catholics, 41% of Protestants, and 72% of white Evangelicals.
- Muslim disapproval is more likely to be channeled electorally, as 75% of the Muslims in our survey report being registered to vote (an increase of 7 percentage points over last year's tally, which itself was 8 percentage points higher than the 2016 mark).

#### **The majority of Americans across faith and non-faith groups support Muslim civil rights.**

- The majority of Americans (86%) say they "want to live in a country where no one is targeted for their religious identity." Agreement across faith communities ranges from 95% of Jews to 78% of white Evangelicals.
- The majority of Americans (66%) agree that "the negative things politicians say regarding Muslims is harmful to our country." Agreement across faith groups ranges from 78% of Muslims and non-affiliated Americans to 45% of white Evangelicals, the only group lacking majority agreement to this statement.
- Most Americans (79%) oppose banning the building of mosques. This ranges from 88% of non-affiliated Americans to 67% of white Evangelicals.
- Most Americans oppose the surveillance of U.S. mosques. This ranges from 77% of non-affiliated Americans to 45% of white Evangelicals, the only group lacking a majority agreement to this statement.

- Most Americans also reject collective blame of Muslims for the acts of individuals. The majority of Americans (69%) believe Muslims are no more responsible for violence carried out by a Muslim than anyone else. Majorities across faith groups (76% of non-affiliated to 64% of Protestants) agree.
- Though at a lower rate, the majority of Americans (55%) say that most Muslims living in the United States are committed to the well-being of America. This ranges from 81% of Muslims who agree to 36% of white Evangelicals, the only group lacking a majority who agree to this statement.

### **The Islamophobia Index measures the level of anti-Muslim sentiment in America.**

This year's survey introduces ISPU's annual **Islamophobia Index (II)**, an additive scale ranging from 0-100 that measures anti-Muslim prejudice in America (with 0 as the lowest level of prejudice and 100 as the highest). The Islamophobia Index measures the endorsement of anti-Muslim stereotypes (violent, misogynist), perceptions of Muslim aggression toward the United States, degree of Muslim dehumanization (less civilized), and perceptions of Muslim collective blame (partially responsible for violence), all of which have been shown to predict public support for discriminatory policies toward Muslims.<sup>1</sup>

We surveyed and scored Americans across a spectrum of religious affiliations, from non-affiliated (14) and Muslims (17) on one end expressing the lowest levels of Islamophobia to white Evangelicals (40) on the other end who express some of the highest levels of Islamophobia.

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<sup>1</sup> See Nour Kteily and Emile Bruneau, "Backlash: The Politics and Real-World Consequences of Minority Group Dehumanization," *Personal and Social Psychology Bulletin* 43, no. 1 (2017): 87–104 by the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Inc.; Emile Bruneau, Nour Kteily, and Emily Falk, "Interventions Highlighting Hypocrisy Reduce Collective Blame of Muslim for Individual Acts of Violence and Assuage Anti-Muslim Hostility," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 44, no. 3 (2018): 430–48; and Nour Kteily, Emile Bruneau, and Gordon Hodson, "They See Us as Less Than Human: Metadehumanization Predicts Intergroup Conflict via Reciprocal Dehumanization," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 110, no. 3 (2016): 343–70.

## Islamophobia Index

Most Muslims living in the United States... (% Net agree shown)	Muslim	Jewish	Catholic	Protestant	White Evangelical	Non-Affiliated	General Public
Are more prone to violence	18%	15%	12%	13%	23%	8%	13%
Discriminate against women	12%	23%	29%	30%	36%	18%	26%
Are hostile to the United States	12%	13%	9%	14%	23%	8%	12%
Are less civilized than other people	8%	6%	4%	6%	10%	1%	6%
Are partially responsible for acts of violence carried out by other Muslims	10%	16%	11%	12%	14%	8%	12%
Index (0 min – 100 max)	17	22	22	31	40	14	24



**Table 1:** Most Muslims living in the United States are more prone to violence than other people. Most Muslims living in the United States discriminate against women. Most Muslims living in the United States are hostile to the United States. Most Muslims living in the United States are less civilized than other people. Most Muslims living in the United States are partially responsible for acts of violence carried out by other Muslims. (% Net agree shown) Base: Total respondents

**The minority of the public (roughly 15%) with more negative views of Muslims, as measured by the Islamophobia Index, are more likely to:**

- Approve of discriminatory policies targeting Muslims (banning Muslims, surveilling mosques)
- Agree to limiting democratic freedoms when the country is under threat (suspending checks and balances, limiting freedom of the press)
- Condone military and individual attacks on civilians.

**Islamophobia’s impact includes Muslims reporting both discrimination and internalized shame.**

- A higher proportion of Muslims (61%) than any other faith group (or the non-affiliated groups) report experiencing some frequency of religious discrimination in the past year (compared to 48% of Jews, 29% of white Evangelicals, and less than 25% of all other groups).
- Among Muslims, those who are women (69%), Arabs (73%), and people between the ages of 18-29 (66%) are the most likely to say they experienced religious discrimination.
- Muslims are the most likely faith community to “strongly agree” (44%) with the following statement: “When I hear that a member of my faith community committed an act of violence, I feel personally ashamed.” This compares to roughly a third of Jews (34%), Catholics (34%), Protestants (35%), and white Evangelicals (33%).
- Muslims are more likely (30%) than any other faith community studied (13% or less) to agree with this statement: “*I believe my faith community is more prone to negative behavior than other faith communities.*”

### **Muslims Mirror False Public Perception Regarding Muslims and Violence**

- Muslims are more likely to agree with the sentiment that Muslims are “more prone to violence than other people” (18%) than is the general public (13%) or non-affiliated Americans (8%).
- Muslims are as likely as Jews (15%), Catholics (12%), Protestants overall (13%), and white Evangelicals (23%) to hold this view about *themselves*.

What explains this finding? Is it that Muslims are simply as impacted by media portrayals of their community as are others, or are they “admitting” some measurable reality? This finding warrants deeper discussion.

### **Muslims in America reject violence more than other Americans.**

- According to our 2018 survey, Muslims are more likely than the general public to reject violence against civilians by the military (71% of Muslims vs. 42% of the general public) and as likely to reject violence carried out by an individual or small group (80% of Muslims and 74% of the general public).
- According to Pew’s 2017 survey of Muslim Americans, “Although both Muslim Americans and the U.S. public as a whole overwhelmingly reject violence against civilians, Muslims are more likely to say such actions can *never* be justified. Three-quarters of U.S. Muslims (76%) say this, compared with 59% of the general

public. Similar shares of Muslims (12%) and all U.S. adults (14%) say targeting and killing civilians can ‘often’ or ‘sometimes’ be justified.” ([Pew, 2017](#))

### **Most American terrorist fatalities are at the hands of white supremacists.**

- According to [a study](#) conducted by Professors Charles Kurzman and David Schanzer, the majority of American fatalities at the hands of extremists are from right-wing terrorists not extremists acting in the name of Islam.
- The same study also found that law enforcement agencies ranked anti-government extremists as a greater threat than Al Qaeda or like-minded terrorist organizations.

So how do we explain Muslim assessments of their own community being prone to violence as no different than those of other Americans and sometimes even higher? The media may have something to do with it since virtually no American Muslim has personal experience with a Muslim terrorist. According to Kurzman and Schanzer, “Since 9/11, an average of nine American Muslims per year have been involved in an average of six terrorism-related plots against targets in the United States.” Other studies have also found that these individuals are rarely part of the mainstream mosque communities and are being radicalized [online](#). Since there are several million American Muslims, the probability that a member of the community actually knows someone personally involved in violence is next to zero. Instead, like everyone else, American Muslims are getting their perception of Muslims and violence from the media, not personal experience.

### **US media portrays Muslims as more prone to violence than other people.**

- According the ISPU report *Equal Treatment?: Measuring the Legal and Media Responses to Ideologically Motivated Violence in the United States*, someone perceived to be Muslim accused of a terror plot will receive **seven and half times** the media coverage as someone not perceived to be Muslim.
- According to a 2017 Georgia State University study, "Controlling for target type, fatalities, and being arrested, attacks by Muslim perpetrators received, on average, **357% more coverage** than other attacks."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Erin M. Kearns, Allison Betus, and Anthony Lemieux. *Why Do Some Terrorist Attacks Receive More Media Attention Than Others?* (Georgia State University, 2017, updated 2018).

- A 2015 [study](#) conducted by Media Tenor found that the “protagonists,” i.e., individuals portrayed as representing Islam were most often armed militants, where as those representing other faiths were religious leaders.

**For Muslim women (and men), Islam is a source of pride and happiness, but prejudice in the form of racism and Islamophobia threaten them.**

- Though roughly half of women of all backgrounds, including Muslim women, report experiencing some frequency of gender-based discrimination in the past year, Muslim women’s more frequent complaints are racial (75%) and religious (69%) discrimination.
- Most Muslim women (68%) agree that most people associate negative stereotypes with their faith identity. Among these, more than half (52%) “strongly agree” that being Muslim is correlated with negative stereotypes.
- In the 2018 poll, most Muslim women (72%) and Muslim men (76%) reject the notion that “most Muslims in America discriminate against women.”
- Among Muslim women, 46% report wearing a visible symbol all of the time that makes their faith identity known to others, such as a headcover or hijab.
- Of Muslim women who report wearing hijab all the time, the top reasons given for this are piety or to please God (54%), to be identified as a Muslim (21%), and modesty (12%). Just 1% said it was because a family member or a spouse required it of them.
- Despite many feeling stigmatized, a large majority of Muslim women (87%) say they are proud to be identified as a member of their faith community.
- Most Muslim women (87%) and Muslim men (84%) say that they “see their faith identity as a source of happiness in their life.”

For more details on polling methodology, visit [www.ispu.org/poll](http://www.ispu.org/poll).