American Muslim Poll 2020: Amid Pandemic and Protest
Featuring Five Years of Civic Engagement Trends

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Key Findings: Civic Engagement

Muslims More Likely Than General Public to Express Satisfaction with Direction of Country

- American Muslims (37%) are more likely than the general public (27%) to report satisfaction with the direction of the country
- Looking at the last five years, American Muslim satisfaction with the direction of the country peaked in 2016 with nearly two thirds of Muslims (63%) reporting satisfaction. In 2017, the proportion satisfied dropped significantly to 41%.
- In 2020, white Muslims (46%) are significantly more likely than Black Muslims (28%) to express satisfaction, while Asian and Arab Muslims are midway between (both at 38%). Additionally, Muslim men (41%) are more likely than Muslim women (31%) to report satisfaction with the direction of the country.
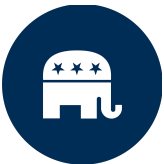
Muslim Approval of President Trump Doubled since 2019 but Varies across Muslims of Different Backgrounds

- Of note, Muslim approval of President Trump increased from 13% in 2018 and 16% in 2019 to 30% in 2020.
- Muslim men (34%) are more likely than Muslim women (24%) to approve of President Trump.
- 50% of white Muslims approve of the way Donald Trump is handling his job as president, on par with 48% of white Americans in the general public. In contrast, non-white Muslims are statistically on par with each other, and are significantly less likely than white Muslims to express such approval, with 20% of Black Muslims, 21% of Arab Muslims, and 27% of Asian Muslims reporting approval of the president.
- Non-white Muslims approve of President Trump at levels similar to non-white Americans in the general public (16% of Black Americans and 24% of Hispanic Americans).
- Despite the increase over time *among Muslims*, Muslim presidential approval remains significantly lower compared with other faith communities. Seven out of ten white Evangelicals approve of the president's job performance, the highest among all faith and non-faith groups surveyed. Catholics (44%), Protestants (46%), and the general public (39%) are all more likely than Muslims (30%) to approve of President Trump.

Muslim Trump Supporters Examined

- In an effort to better understand Muslim Trump supporters, we carried out a linear regression analysis to identify variables that predict support for Trump in both the Muslim and the general public sample.[1]

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[1] For the general public, this analysis was run only among respondents who self-identified with a faith group.

For full details on polling methodology, visit www.ispu.org/poll

Muslim Trump Supporters Similar to Trump Supporters in General Public

We tested a battery of variables to determine which were linked to support for Donald Trump as a 2020 presidential candidate using linear regression.

	Muslims	General Public
Political leanings and activity	- Identifying as a Republican - Opposition to faith group building coalitions with Black Lives Matter - Support for faith group building coalitions with political conservatives on religious liberty issues - Economy as most important policy priority for judging a candidate	- Identifying as a Republican - Moderate or conservative political ideology - Opposition to faith group building coalitions with Black Lives Matter - Support for faith group building coalitions with political conservatives on religious liberty issues - Economy as most important policy priority for judging a candidate
SES and Socialization	None	- Earning an income of $30,000 or more - Having less than a college education - Being born in the U.S.
Demographics	Identifying as white	- Being age 50 or older - Identifying as white
Islamophobia Index	Higher Islamophobia (endorsement of anti-Muslim tropes)	Higher Islamophobia (endorsement of anti-Muslim tropes)
Variables with no significant predictive power	- Political ideology - Political activity in the past year - Support/opposition for faith community building coalitions with pro-life groups	- Political activity in the past year - Support/opposition for faith community building coalitions with pro-life groups - Support/opposition for faith community building coalitions with LGBTQ groups

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	● Support/opposition for faith community building coalitions with LGBTQ groups ● Income ● Education ● Nativity ● Age ● Gender ● Religious practice	● Gender ● Religious practice

Muslim Voter Registration Continues to Climb but Remains Lower Than Other Faith Communities

- American Muslim voter registration among eligible voters continues to lag behind other faith communities. Nearly four out of five Muslims are registered to vote (78%), compared with about nine out of ten from other faith groups.
- Though lower than other groups, over time, Muslim voter registration continues to climb. The proportion of eligible Muslim voters *not* registered to vote has declined by about half from 39% in 2016 to 21% in 2020.

Fewer Muslims Are "Insha'Allah Voters"

- In 2016, ISPU identified a segment of the Muslim community we coined the "insha'Allah voter," those who intend to vote but have not registered to do so. In 2016, 60% of eligible voters were registered to vote by January of election year, but 81% said they planned to vote, a difference of 21%. In 2020, 78% of eligible voters were registered to vote by March of election year, and 81% planned to vote, a difference of only 3%, a significant reduction in the share of "insha'Allah voters."
- A constant segment of the eligible-to-vote Muslim population (roughly 15%) do not intend to vote (14% in 2016 and 2018, and 16% in 2020). In 2016, we asked why. The top reasons stated were:
    - "My vote will make no difference"
    - "No one represents my priorities"

A Sizeable Proportion of Muslims Are Not Eligible to Vote

- A full quarter (26%) of Muslims in America cannot vote, mostly due to being non-citizens. This is much higher than any other faith or non-faith group. Only 7% of Jews, 1% of Catholics, 2% of Protestants, 4% of white Evangelicals and the general public, and 5% of those with no religious affiliation are not eligible to vote.
- With 74% of American Muslims eligible to vote and only 78% of those registered to vote, this translates to only 57% of *all* Muslims in America registered to vote.

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Muslim Political Activity Exceeds General Public

- Though less likely to be registered to vote, at nearly one quarter, a surprisingly sizable proportion of Muslims report attending a town hall meeting in the year prior to the survey (22%). This is significantly higher than Protestants (15%), white Evangelicals (12%), non-affiliated Americans (14%), and the general public (15%).
- At 16%, both Muslims and Jews are the most likely to volunteer for a political campaign over the past year, compared with 5% of Catholics, 8% of Protestants, 9% of white Evangelicals, 4% of the non-affiliated, and 7% of the general public.
- In terms of campaign contributions, Jews (35%) are the most likely group to say they contributed money to a political campaign. Muslims (21%) are on par with other groups.

While Support for Trump Rose, Muslims Still Prefer Democratic President

- Muslims overwhelmingly prefer a Democrat for President, both in 2016 and in 2020. In 2016, 67% of Muslims chose a Democrat as their candidate of choice, while 16% chose a Republican. In 2020, 51% selected a Democrat, compared with 16% who selected a Republican.
- More Muslims are still undecided in March 2020 than were in January 2016.
- Support for President Trump's reelection climbed 10% between 2016 and 2020 (4% vs. 14%, respectively) among Muslims. Upon closer examination, we find that this increase is partially driven by white Muslims being more likely than non-white Muslims to select Donald Trump as their presidential candidate of choice. Nearly one third of white Muslims (31%) chose Donald Trump, compared with 8% of Black and Arab Muslims and 6% of Asian Muslims.

Muslims Least Likely Faith Group to Support Trump in 2020 Election, Most Likely to Support Sanders

- Looking *across* faith and non-faith groups, Sanders (the only Jewish candidate) enjoyed more support among Muslims (29%) and non-affiliated Americans (31%) than he did with any other faith group measured, including Jews (14%), Catholics (8%) Protestants (7%), and white Evangelicals (2%).
- Jews (42%) were more likely than all other groups except Protestants (35%) to select Joe Biden as their candidate of choice (22% of Muslims, 27% of Catholics, 19% of white Evangelicals, 22% of the non-affiliated, and 27% of the general public). By far, Muslims (14%) and the non-affiliated (16%) are least likely to prefer Donald Trump for president (27% of Jews, 34% of Catholics, 39% of Protestants, 61% of white Evangelicals, and 30% of the general public). White Evangelicals are more likely than all other groups to prefer Trump.
- Almost one third (28%) of Muslims are undecided on who they prefer for the next president as of March 2020, more than Jews (12%), Protestants (12%), white Evangelicals (10%), and the general public (19%). Twenty-two percent of Catholics and the non-affiliated are undecided, on par with Muslims. Muslim women are more likely than Muslim men to be undecided (33% vs. 24%).

Key Findings: Political Coalition Building

Black Lives Matter Tops Muslim Support

- Muslims are the most likely faith group surveyed to favor their faith community building alliances with Black Lives Matter (BLM). Nearly two thirds of Muslims (65%) favor such political coalition building, compared with 54% of Jews, 42% of Catholics, 37% of Protestants, 30% of white Evangelicals, and 44% of the general public.
- Muslim women are more likely than men in their faith community to favor this alliance (74% of Muslim women vs. 58% of Muslim men). Young Muslims aged 18–29 are more likely than Muslims aged 50 and older (72% vs. 56%, respectively). While the majority of white and Asian Muslims support BLM coalition building (both at 58%), Black (72%) and Arab (62%) Muslims are the most likely.
- BLM is the most popular alliance posed to Muslims. Sixty-five percent of Muslims favored BLM coalition building compared with less than half favoring an alliance with political conservatives on religious liberty issues (49%), pro-life activists (47%), and LGBTQ activists (39%).

Muslims on Par with Catholics in Level of Support or Opposition to LGBTQ Alliance

- The majority of Muslims (55%) are *not* in favor of political alliances with LGBTQ activists, but this lack of support is on par with Catholics (61% are not in favor) and *lower* than the general public (62%), Protestants as a whole (69%), and white Evangelicals specifically (82%).
- Jews (58%) are the most likely group to favor building alliances with LGBTQ groups and are the only faith community where a majority are in favor, whereas 37% oppose.
- Younger Muslims (18–29 years old) are more supportive of coalition building with LGBTQ activists, compared with their elders. Nearly half of Muslims aged 18–29 (48%) support such coalitions, compared with about one quarter (26%) of Muslims aged 50+ and 38% of Muslims aged 30–49. This pattern holds true for the general public, where younger Americans are most likely to support LGBTQ coalition building (43% of those 18–29 years old and 40% of those 30–49 years old vs. 27% of those 50+ years old). Support for coalition building with LGBTQ groups does not differ by race among Muslims.

Muslims Split in Support for Coalitions with Political Conservatives on Religious Liberty Issues and Pro-Life Activists

- Both Muslims and white Evangelicals are evenly divided in how much they favor alliances with political conservatives to work on religious liberty issues (49% of Muslim in favor vs. 47% of Muslims not in favor, and 53% of white Evangelicals in favor vs. 46% not in favor).
- Only 29% of both Catholics and Jews favor such alliances, compared with 65% among both groups who oppose. White Muslims are more likely than Asian and Arab Muslims to express support for religious liberty coalitions (56% vs. 42% and 35%, respectively), and Black Muslims (51%) are higher in support than Arab Muslims.

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- Muslims are also split in their support for building coalitions with pro-life activists (47% in favor vs. 46% not in favor). Muslims are more likely than Jews, Catholics, and the general public to support such alliances (21%, 36%, and 40%, respectively) and are on par with Protestants (41%) and white Evangelicals (57%). Again, white Muslims are more likely than Asian and Arab Muslims to support pro-life coalitions (57% vs. 40% and 41%, respectively). At 44%, Black Muslims are on par with white Muslims in their level of support for building coalitions with pro-life activists.

Among Muslims, Political Leanings Predict Coalition Preferences in Predictable Ways, but Religious Practice Has No Significance

- We used linear regression to test a battery of variables to determine which were linked to higher or lower support for faith activists building coalitions with political groups. We ran separate models for Muslims and for the general public.

Political Leanings, Not Religious Practice, Predict Coalition Support among Muslims
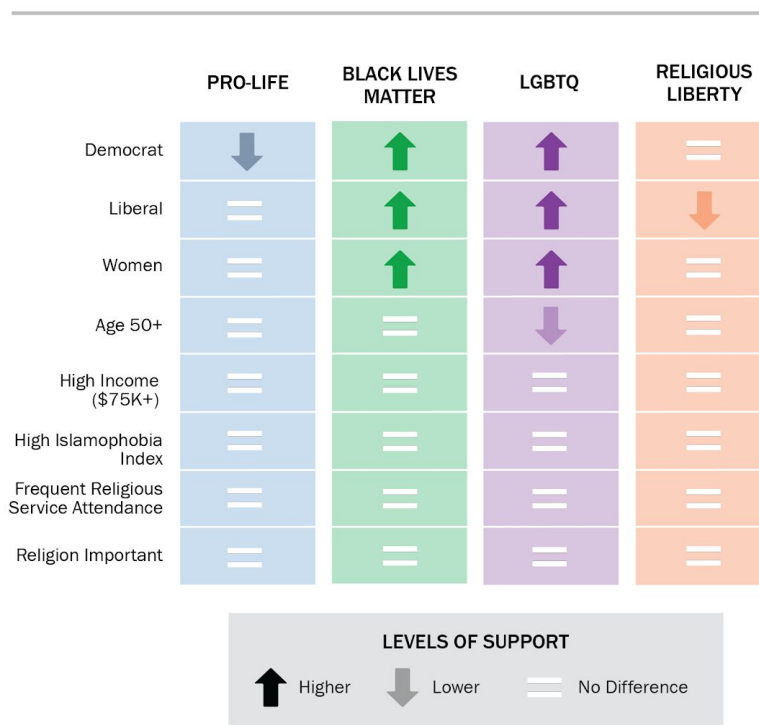

FIGURE 19: *Some activists in your faith community have sought to build political coalitions with others who may share their political goals. Would you support politically working with... pro-life activists? Black Lives Matter? LBGTQ activists? political conservatives on religious liberty issues?* Base: Total Muslim respondents, 2020

We used linear regression to test a battery of variables to determine which were linked to higher or lower support for faith activists building coalitions with political groups.

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Among Muslims, Political Activity Predicts Support for BLM and Religious Liberty Coalition Building

- Among Muslims, higher levels of political activity in the past year (attending a town hall, donating to a political campaign, or volunteering for a political campaign) are significantly associated with support for both building coalitions with political conservatives on religious liberty issues *and* BLM. Level of political activity is not significantly linked to pro-life or LGBTQ coalition building. Among the general public, greater political activity is linked to support for coalition building with BLM, but not any other group.

For Muslims, Socioeconomic Characteristics Are Not Significant Predictors of Support for Coalition Building While Some Demographic Factors Are

- For Muslims, income, education (college educated vs. not), and nativity (U.S.-born vs. not) have *no association* with support for coalition building. Among the general public, having a higher income is positively linked to support for LGBTQ coalitions, while education and nativity have no significant association with coalition support.
- Race did emerge as a significant factor for Muslim support for coalitions. Specifically, being white (vs. non-white) is linked to support for coalition building with religious liberty groups, but not with any other groups.
- Among the general public, being Black (vs. white) is linked to support for building coalitions with all groups: religious liberty, pro-life, BLM, and LGBTQ.
- Age is another significant demographic factor, with younger Muslims more in favor of building coalitions with LGBTQ groups. Being 18–29 years old is significantly linked to positive support of LGBTQ coalitions, especially compared with being 50 years old or older (those 18–29 years old vs. 30–49 years old show a more modest association). Gender is also a significant predictor of support for coalition building for Muslims. Being a woman is significantly linked to support for BLM and LGBTQ coalition building.
- Age and gender are also significant for the general public. While being age 50 or older has no significant association with support for LGBTQ coalitions, being 50+ vs. 18–29 is significantly linked to favorability for religious liberty coalitions. Being a woman is significantly linked to *less* support for religious liberty coalitions and *more* support for LGBTQ coalitions.

Islamophobic Views Predict Less Support for BLM among General Public
- For the general population, higher scores on the Islamophobia Index are linked to *less* support for coalitions with BLM but no other group, underscoring the ways anti-Black racism and Islamophobia are linked.

Key Findings: Islamophobia and Discrimination

The Islamophobia Index is a measure of the level of public endorsement of five negative stereotypes associated with Muslims in America. ISPU analysts chose these five variables based on previous research[2] linking these perceptions with greater tolerance for anti-Muslim policies

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[2] 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

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such as mosque surveillance, racial profiling, and greater scrutiny of Muslims at airports, the so-called Muslim ban, and even taking away voting rights from Americans who are Muslims. These five measures are not meant to cover the totality of public Islamophobia, which can and does include many other false beliefs about Muslims. They are instead meant to offer an evidence-based measure of five perceptions known to be linked to acceptance of discriminatory policies.

Answers to this battery of questions were used to construct an additive scale that measures overall anti-Muslim sentiment.[3] 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.[4]

Most Muslims Living in the U.S.… (% Net agree shown)	Muslim	Jewish	Catholic	Protest-ant	White Evangel-ical	Non-Aff-iliated	General Public
Are more prone to violence	17%	8%	15%	14%	13%	6%	11%
Discriminate against women	16%	19%	24%	29%	35%	24%	26%
Are hostile to the United States	15%	6%	12%	19%	22%	8%	13%
Are less civilized than other people	15%	6%	7%	11%	12%	4%	8%
Are partially responsible acts of violence carried out by other Muslims	12%	6%	9%	16%	12%	4%	9%
Index (0–100)	20	16	29	30	34	21	27

It is noteworthy that this index, while called simply the "Islamophobia Index," only measures anti-Muslim sentiment *among the public* and not the degree to which Islamophobia is institutionalized by the state. Islamophobia is not simply a phenomenon of societal sentiment, but is a structural phenomenon, manifesting in legislation, budget decisions, and law enforcement practices at the local, state, and federal levels. While our index does not measure structural Islamophobia, public tolerance for many of these practices is linked to higher scores on the Islamophobia Index.

Jewish Opinions of Muslims Have Improved over the Past Three Years

- In 2020, the general public scored 27 on the Islamophobia Index (on a scale of 0-100), on par with the 2019 score of 28. In 2020, Muslims, Jews, and the non-affiliated had lower levels of

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Islamophobia (20, 16, and 21, respectively), compared with Catholics, Protestants, white Evangelicals (29, 30, and 34, respectively), and the general public (27).

- Among Muslims themselves, Islamophobia increased between 2019 and 2020, from a score of 14 to 20. However, overall since 2018, the level of Islamophobia among Muslims has remained relatively stable (17 in 2018 and 20 in 2020).
- In contrast to the worrying trend of rising Islamophobia among Muslims themselves, endorsement of anti-Muslim tropes has *declined* steadily since 2018 among Jews.
- Among Jews, Islamophobia declined steadily from 22 in 2018, to 18 in 2019, to 16 in 2020.

Politics, Not Religion, Predicts Islamophobia

- Among the general public, several factors emerge as significantly associated with higher Islamophobia.
  - ***Political party and ideology.*** Identifying as a Republican and/or holding political ideology other than very liberal are associated with higher Islamophobia for the general public.
  - ***Socioeconomic status.*** Being poor (having an annual income below $30,000) and/or holding less than a college education is associated with greater levels of anti-Muslim prejudice in the general public.
  - ***Experience with religious discrimination.*** Having experienced any religious discrimination is associated with more Islamophobia in the general public.
- Factors not significantly associated with Islamophobia include race, religiosity (frequency of religious attendance and importance of religion), and religious affiliation.

White Muslims Reporting Regular Discrimination Are More Likely to Have Islamophobic Views

- **Among Muslims**, the only factor significantly linked to higher Islamophobia is experiencing religious discrimination —Muslims who have experienced religious discrimination are significantly more likely to *endorse* anti-Muslim tropes.
- White Muslims were the most likely to report experiencing "regular" religious discrimination (22% compared with between 8% and 12% among non-white Muslims). Among this 22% of white Muslims who experience religious discrimination 'regularly,' Islamophobic views are especially prevelent.

Religious Discrimination of Muslims Remains High

- Muslims and Jews are the most likely groups to experience any religious discrimination (60% of Muslims and 58% of Jews, compared with 26% of Catholics, 29% of Protestants, 43% of white Evangelicals, 27% of non-affiliated Americans, and 33% of the general public). White Evangelicals are more likely than Catholics, Protestants, the non-affiliated, and the general public to report facing religious discrimination.
- Muslims' frequency of religious discrimination have held steady for five years, with 60–62% of Muslims reporting that they faced discrimination in the year prior to the survey.
- In 2017, 38% of Jews reported experiencing religious discrimination, compared with 58% in 2020, bringing them on par with Muslims.

Muslims Uniquely Experience Institutional Religious Discrimination

- More than any other group that experiences religious discrimination, Muslims do so on an *institutional*, not just interpersonal, level.
- This includes
  - at the **airport** (44% of Muslims vs. 2% of Jews and 5% of the general public)
  - when **applying for a job** (33% of Muslims vs. 5% of Jews and 8% of the general public)
  - when **interacting with law enforcement** (31% of Muslims vs. 2% of Jews and 8% of the general public)
  - and when **receiving healthcare** (25% vs. 5% Jews and the general public).

Muslims Higher on Interpersonal Religious Discrimination

- In contrast, all who experience discrimination because of their faith are equally likely to perceive this coming from family and friends (30% of Muslims, 27% of Jews, and 33% of the general public).
- Muslims are still more likely than others to face interpersonal discrimination when interacting in a public place such as a restaurant (49% of Muslims vs. 30% of Jews and 23% of the general public) and when interacting with peers at work or school (42% of Muslims vs. 22% of Jews and 24% of the general public).

Muslim Men and Women Report Similar Experiences of Discrimination

- Though Muslim women have consistently reported religious discrimination more often than men in years prior, this year (2020) there is no statistical difference by gender (57% of Muslim men and 65% of Muslim women). Muslim men and women who report experiencing discrimination also did not differ as to *where* they experienced it.

Muslim Families Most Likely to Report a Child Has Faced Religious-Based Bullying

- In 2020, half of Muslim families with a child/children in K-12 schools say their child has been bullied for their faith in the past year (51%). This compares to 42% in 2017, which is statistically on par with what we found in 2020.
- The proportion of Muslim families reporting that their child has faced religious-based bullying in 2020 is nearly double the level of families in the general public (51% among Muslims vs. 27% among the general public).
- In 30% of the instances for Muslim families, the bully was a teacher or other school official. Sixty-nine percent of these families reported the bully was another student or group of students.