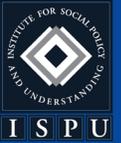


Latinos in New Study Note Shared Experiences with American Muslims, Openness to Education and Interaction



According to the [U.S. Census](#), just under 20% of Americans are Latino, a sizable proportion of the American public.¹ Demographic data from ISPU's American Muslim Poll finds that 9% of Muslims in the United States are Latino, a steadily growing percentage. In [previous research](#), ISPU found that Latinos have lower levels of Islamophobia than other racial and ethnic groups in the United States. These demographic trends, coupled with the lower levels of Islamophobia found among this population, motivate this research, which included both focus groups and individual interviews. Participants are quoted throughout. This study examines why Latinos have lower levels of Islamophobia compared to the general public and explains the persistence of even low levels of Islamophobia within this community.

Latino study participants exhibit lower levels of Islamophobia when they perceive themselves as having shared experiences with Muslims

- Participants identified experiences with discrimination and negative media portrayals in the US as a point of commonality between Latinos and Muslims.
- Participants perceive the immigrant experience as common between Latinos and Muslims, primarily based on cultural and social factors rather than political factors.
- Participant interactions with American Muslims and people from different backgrounds was an important factor that led to Latinos expressing positive views of Muslims.

“ We all feel discrimination. We all have stereotypes. Latinos, Muslims, we face discrimination in some type of way. (Woman, age 30)

Perceived misogyny in Islam is the most salient stereotype held by Latino participants, [similar to general public](#)

- We found that participants often expressed this sentiment by referring to the treatment of Muslim women outside of the United States. At the same time, some participants did make direct references to the treatment of American Muslim women.
- We observed that Latinos compared gender relations among Muslim men and women to machismo culture in the Latino community. Participants saw these as a point of cultural similarity, but they also viewed Latinos as more progressive than Muslims. They were more likely to perceive [machismo](#) culture as a problem from the past while perceiving gender relations among Muslims as a problem in the present.
- Participants also identified stereotypes of Muslims as violent, citing the media as a key institution shaping and perpetuating this false view.

“ I think [Muslim men] treat [Muslim women] as inferior beings. Completely ... like if they were things, objects. I've seen that. (Woman, age 62)

Some non-Muslim Latino participants perceive their shared religious identities as a point of unity, while others see them as a point of difference between themselves and American Muslims

- Some participants in our study viewed religion or their own religiosity as a source of commonality with American Muslims. These connections were made in a variety of ways.
- At the same time, other participants highlighted comparisons between religion as a point of difference. For example, the perception of Christians as accepting of everyone and Muslims as not.

“ I tell you I'm impressed by the dedication and devotion that they show to their religion, and that in itself is a very interesting thing. (Man, age 48)

Education about Islam and centering women's voices are effective at mitigating Islamophobia

We found that, after watching a short [video](#) about the pillars of Islam, participants were more likely to perceive Islam as a religion that was similar to Christianity and Judaism.

Participants in the final focus group watched a second [video](#) clip about why Muslim women may choose to wear a hijab and also engaged in conversation with a Latina Muslim woman who shared about her life experiences. We found that Latinas were more likely to reduce negative attitudes about Muslims when provided with information that brought them to reconsider previously held beliefs.

This research suggests that many Latinos do not have crystallized attitudes about American Muslims and that interventions and the dissemination of information in the Latino community can help build stronger bonds between these groups.

“ This is the first time in my 39 years that I see a lady with a hijab talk that way. You know, like I’ve always, [in] the long history of Islam, it’s always been negative, you know. So I guess I’m glad that I got to see that. It kind of changes my perspective. (Woman, age 39)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improve outreach to the Latino community.
- Develop effective educational materials and programming in English and Spanish. To mitigate Islamophobia, we recommend developing informational materials and programs about American Muslims and Islam for Latinos and to facilitate interactions between these communities.
- Further research. We recommend conducting similar focus groups among Asian Americans, who are the fastest growing immigrant group in the United States. Comparing Latinos to Asian Americans would help further unpack how the experiences of immigrants and their descendants shape Islamophobia. Developing new survey questions that measure the various ways that misogyny shapes Islamophobia.

