

BRIDGE

TWO DECADES OF AMERICANS' VIEWS ON ISLAM & MUSLIMS

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OVERVIEW



In a climate of increased suspicion and skepticism towards Islam and Muslims, polling data collected over the years reveals how Americans have come to view their country's third-largest religious group.

This Super Survey, which compiles and analyzes polling questions collected by over a dozen polling organizations from 1993 to 2014, finds that Americans remain unfamiliar with Islam; feel more coldly towards Muslims than any other religious group; and tend to see Islam as “more violent” than other religions during national debates about military action in the Middle East.

Additionally, while they have been supportive of mosques in their communities, a sizeable portion has favored various measures of religious profiling.

In the twenty-first century, on average, six in 10 Americans has reported that they don’t know a Muslim personally. And while a plurality of Americans has reported having favorable views of Muslims since 2000, unfavorable views have persisted, with relatively little fluctuation over time.

1993

2014

At least one in five Americans has reported unfavorable views of their Muslim compatriots since 2000, and since 1993, the same percentage has reported unfavorable views of Muslims globally.

Today, Americans are unfamiliar with Islam, as they have been for the past 20 years.

In the decade after 9/11, Americans' self-reported knowledge of Islam increased, but in 2010, a majority still felt uninformed about the religion. After 9/11 Americans had favorable views of Islam, but by the middle of the Iraq War their views had flipped, with more expressing negative views than positive ones. Though most agreed that Islam is a "peaceful" religion, and that only a small minority of Muslims support terrorism, Islam was often seen by Americans as more "violent" when compared to other religions. More recently, as the government and many media commentators have considered the pros and cons of responding to the emergence of ISIS, Americans have expressed that Islam is "more likely" to encourage violence than other religions.

Domestically, two-thirds or more of all Americans have been at least "somewhat concerned" with the "rise of Islamic extremism" in America, and when asked about their views on policies that would single out Muslims for increased scrutiny, a quarter or more expressed approval for measures like religious profiling, monitoring, internment, and requiring special IDs.

When it comes to the construction of mosques in their communities, Americans have been generally supportive, though the majority opposed the so-called "Ground Zero Mosque" in New York. And while most Americans have seen their Muslim compatriots as patriotic and loyal, about half of the population has reported that they would not support, or would be uncomfortable with, a Muslim

president. (A 2015 poll by Gallup, which was conducted after this study was completed, found that a majority of Americans, 60%, would vote for a Muslim president.)

What this Super Survey shows is that Americans have tended to be more leery of Islam and Muslims when they're presented in a general way or tied up in a political issue. But Americans have been more supportive of the religion and its followers within the context of local, everyday issues.



INTRODUCTION

I

If there is one thing that can unite the atheist television host Bill Maher, and the Christian televangelist Pat Robertson, it is their impassioned criticism of Islam.

The same could be said of the liberal neuroscientist Sam Harris and conservative shock jock Rush Limbaugh. Conversely, America's revered Secretary of State, General Colin Powell, and one of Hollywood's most prominent political activists, Ben Affleck, have passionately defended against attacks on the religion. So too have the brazenly provocative actor Russell Brand and the target of his many jokes, President George W. Bush.

As unlikely as these pairings may seem — avowed atheists and born-again believers, foreign policy brass and war critics, capitalism-bashing firebrands and oil-wealthy presidents — they are telling. In the last three decades, the American public has become increasingly fixated on Islam.

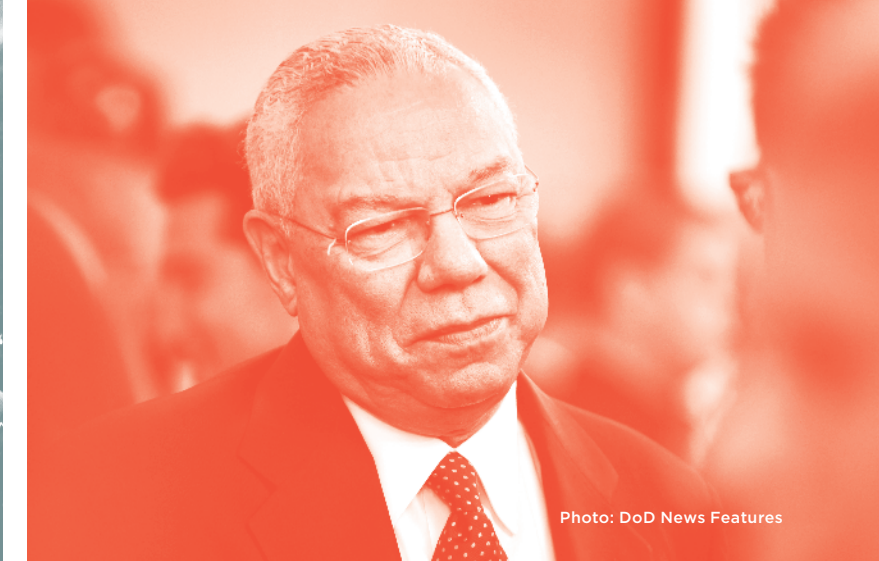
Almost everyone has an opinion about this religion and its 1.6 billion followers.

Since 1980, the United States has invaded, bombed, or occupied 14 Muslim-majority countries;¹ militant groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda have increasingly grabbed headlines with wanton violence; and the American Muslim population has grown such that it is on track to more than double by 2030.²

No other religion so regularly figures into evening news cycles or discussions about American foreign policy.

No other religion occupies such a significant chunk of our social interaction online, spurring memes and counter-memes, hashtag campaigns and Twitter wars, sincere conversations and snarky agitations, viral videos and virulent diatribes.

No other religion inspires such diverse and, at times, polarized public opinions.



What do Americans really think about Islam and Muslims? What do those views look like over time?

While Islam and Muslims are habitual subjects of inquiry and debate, less has been said about how Americans actually perceive the religion and its followers.

Anecdotally, we hear of the ebbs and flows in America's complex relationship with its third-largest religious group — the public protests against Park 51, the “Ground Zero Mosque” that opponents dubbed a “monument to terrorism;” the first-ever Muslim prayer service in the historic Washington National Cathedral; political and media commentators questioning the loyalty of Muslim citizens; and efforts to accommodate Muslims' religious practices in schools and workplaces.

We also digest the grimmer stories of discrimination, hate speech, and flashpoints of violence that reflect a climate of mistrust and animosity: the slaying of Muslim students in North Carolina, vandalisms of local mosques and homes, or online threats and harassment.

Periodically, we get readings of the public's pulse from studies offered by polling organizations that provide valuable information about society's views on Islam and Muslims at particular moments in time.

But what does the bigger picture look like? How have Americans' opinions evolved over time? How can we trace the changing contours of those views?

Dozens of surveys on Americans' views of Islam and Muslims exist, but are housed in disparate quarters and rarely examined in concert with one another. It's easy to cite a single poll by a single group, but that gives us a limited view of a fuller and more nuanced portrait.

This Super Survey changes that.

For the first time ever, major polling data on Americans' views of Islam and Muslims, collected by more than a dozen organizations from 1993 to 2014, has been aggregated into one central location, and analyzed to highlight trends over the last two decades.

From our analysis of 480 questions in 179 surveys, five themes emerged:

- 1 Impressions of Muslims
- 2 Views of Islam
- 3 Opinions on the relationship between Islam and violence
- 4 Views of policies that “single out” Muslims
- 5 Feelings about Muslims’ place in American society.

These themes are featured in respective chapters, which discuss Americans’ familiarity with the teachings of Islam; how favorably Americans viewed their Muslim neighbors; the degree to which Americans link Islam and violence; public support for religious profiling; and beliefs about the patriotism and loyalty of American Muslims.

What results is a story that is neither overly optimistic, nor entirely bleak.

The data presented in the following chapters shows that while Americans feel more coldly towards Muslims than other religious groups, and that significant portions of the population express support for practices and policies that curb the freedoms of American

Muslims, those who feel this way are often a minority and rarely equal half of the U.S. population. On one hand, most Americans opposed the construction of an Islamic center near the site of the 9/11 attacks in New York, but on the other, the vast majority said they would support the construction of a mosque in their neighborhood. While many Americans are uncomfortable with travelers wearing Islamic garb on an airplane, most Americans said they’d support the rights of Muslims to wear religious clothing in schools or at work.

We hope this Super Survey, which distills a wealth of raw polling data into an easily navigable and visually engaging report, will be a resource for those who seek to better understand how Americans view Muslims and their religion.

OUR METHODOLOGY

> The 480 polls included in this study were gathered using the iPoll Databank at the University of Connecticut’s Roper Center for Public Opinion Research. This online archive catalogs thousands of polling datasets that measure American national opinion on a variety of issues. Wanting to gauge Americans’ views of American Muslims and Muslims globally, their opinions and knowledge about the religion of Islam, and their perspectives about a range of issues which affect or involve Muslims in the United States, we entered the search terms “Muslim,” “Muslims,” “Islam,” and “Islamic” into the database. Questions that fit this profile were included in this study.

The many other questions that were generated by these search strings but did not fit this set of criteria were excluded. Because the iPoll Databank did not include surveys from Rasmussen, a prominent polling organization, data from Rasmussen that fit the criteria was also incorporated into the study. An in-depth survey conducted by Cornell University, which solicited views about restrictions on Muslims’ civil liberties, was also included. Select polls from Zogby, Gallup, and the National Conference for Community and Justice, which also address these topics, were included, though they were not housed in iPoll. Data collection began on September 10, 2014 and concluded on December 10, 2014.

CHAPTER ONE

1

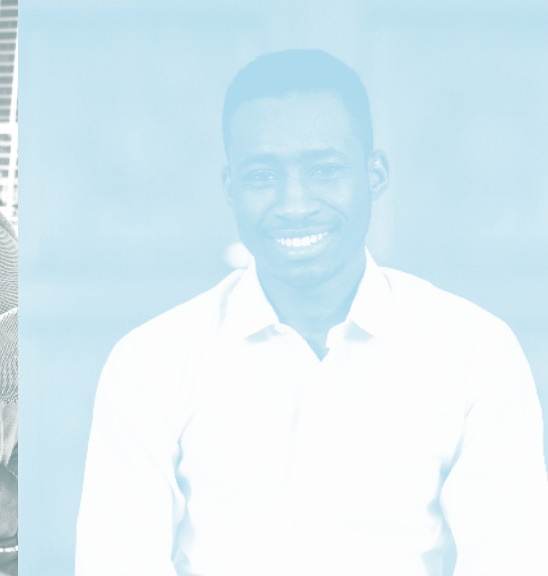
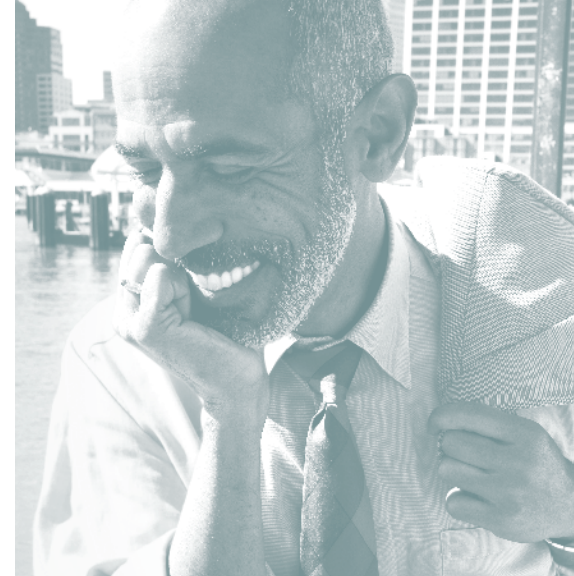
Muslims: Mostly unknown,
not entirely unliked

Muslims are one of the largest and most diverse religious groups on earth.

According to a 2012 Pew Global Landscape Report, an estimated 1.6 billion people — or nearly one-quarter of the world's population — are Muslims, making Islam second to Christianity in number of global followers.¹ Muslims live in virtually every corner of the world, and contrary to common assumptions, the Middle East is home to just 20% of the total population.

In the United States, the Muslim population is small but growing. Its three million followers outnumber Episcopalians today, and by 2030, the American Muslim population is expected to be on par with the Jewish community.² It is also the most diverse of any religious group in the country. American Muslims include African Americans as well as immigrants from at least

77 countries.³ They have widely differing views on the role that religion plays in their daily lives, and, according to Pew Research Center, they are as religiously observant as Christian Americans.⁴ Though they are the third-largest religious group in America today, Muslims face the challenge of normalizing their status as religious (and often ethnic) minorities.



Episodes of violence often eclipse the diversity and lived realities of Muslim communities around the world. The brutality of groups like Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and Boko Haram dominates headlines, and the religious language they use to legitimate their actions and mobilize support, elicits suspicion and resentment towards all those who share their faith. In Europe and the United States, this has resulted in a persistent climate of **Islamophobia** — prejudice towards or discrimination against Muslims due to their religion, or perceived religious, national, or ethnic identity association.⁵ Hate crimes that target American Muslims are five times more common today than they were before 9/11.⁶ In Europe, where

Muslims comprise the second-largest religious group in many countries, rising anti-immigrant and nationalist parties also threaten Muslims' civil liberties.

In this climate, what do Americans believe about Muslims? How have American attitudes towards Muslims changed over the past decades? How do American perceptions of Muslims compare to those of other religious groups?

In this chapter we outline polling data that measures Americans' familiarity with Muslims, favorability of American Muslims and Muslims abroad, and feelings about the group's personal characteristics and Islamic religious practices.



MEDIA INFLUENCES VIEWS

> A 2007 Pew survey found that one-third of Americans reported that the “media” influenced their views of Muslims most, while one in five reported that “personal experience” bore greatest influence on their views of Muslims. Similarly, one in five reported that “education” had the biggest influence on their views.⁷

> How Well Do Americans Know Their Muslim Neighbors?

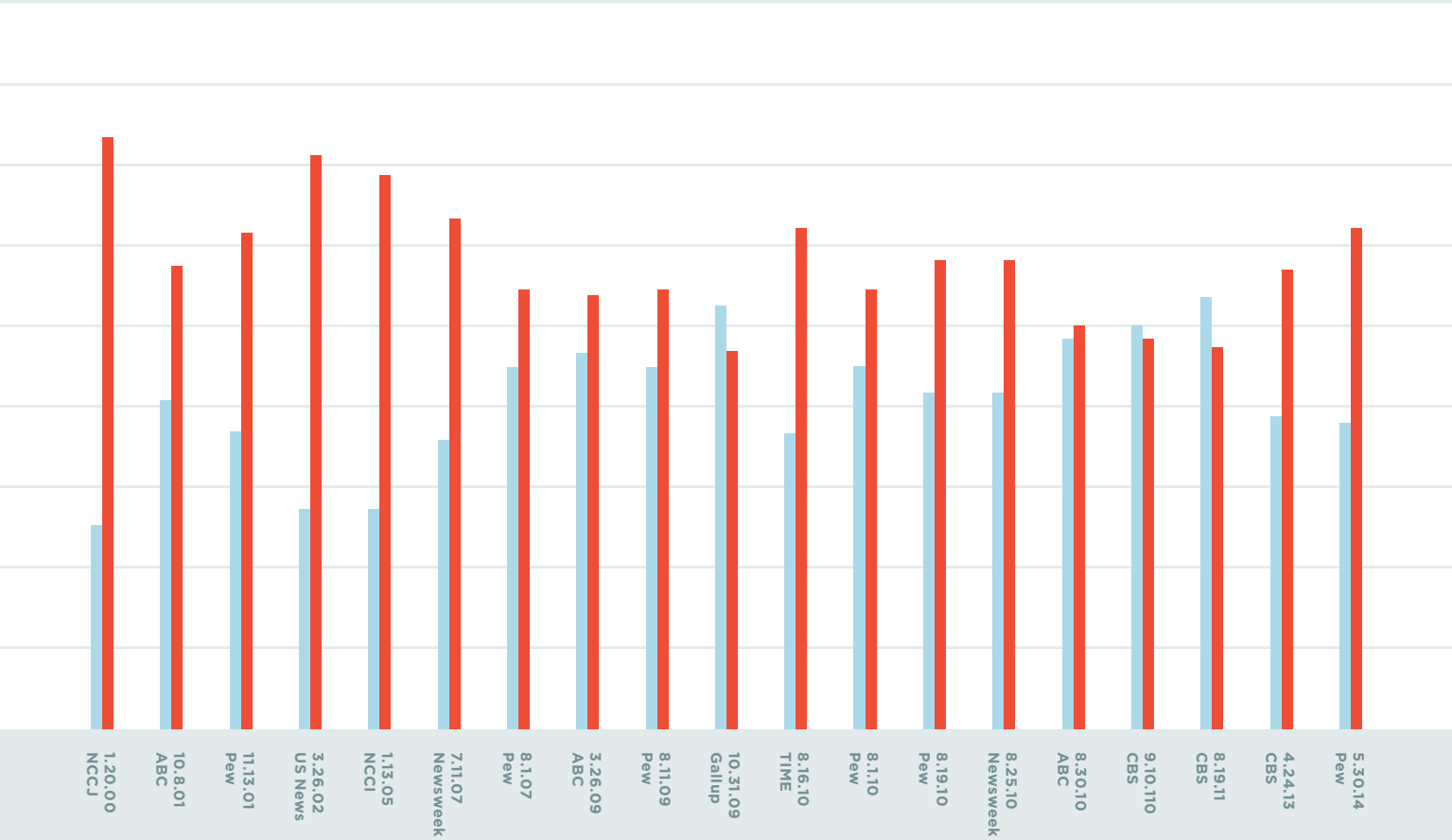
When it comes to Americans’ familiarity with people from religious groups other than their own, Muslims regularly rank near the bottom.

In the twenty-first century, on average, approximately six in 10 Americans have reported that they don’t know a Muslim personally.



Nineteen polls conducted by eight organizations between 2000 and 2014 show that, on average, four in 10 (41%) Americans reported that they personally knew a Muslim, while almost six in 10 (58%) reported that they did not.⁸ (See Figure 1.)

FIGURE 1 Americans’ Personal Familiarity with Muslims
19 polls from 2000-2014 from various organizations



Most Americans
Haven't Had a
Conversation
with a Muslim

Two polls conducted by Pew and the Public Religion Research Institute asked Americans about conversations they'd had with Muslims. In 2000, Pew found that 80% of Americans had never had an in-depth conversation about religion with a Muslim. Ten years later, PRRI asked Americans how often they'd had a conversation with a Muslim in the past 12 months. Sixty eight percent said they "seldom" or "never" had a conversation with a Muslim.¹⁰

FLASHBACK

> In 1993, the National Conference Survey on Intergroup Relations determined that 53% of Americans had "hardly any" contact with Muslims. Only a quarter of Americans responded that they had "a great deal" or "some" contact with Muslims.⁹

> How Favorably Do Americans View Muslims?

Polling organizations asked Americans about their views of Muslims as a general religious group, and of their Muslim compatriots specifically.

Since 2000, a plurality of Americans have reported favorable views of both American Muslims, and Muslims globally. However, unfavorable views have persisted.

This is according to analysis of a total of 30 questions about favorability of Muslims conducted by various organizations between 2000 and 2014.¹¹ (This analysis excludes five question on the subject conducted by Zogby, whose results were so drastically different that they were unable to be compared.)

An average of Americans' views from 2002 to 2012 show that approximately half of all Americans had favorable views of both groups. Unfavorable views of the two groups have been nearly even as well, at 30%.¹²

Now we'll turn to Americans' impressions of Muslims living in the U.S.

SOME AMERICANS
ADMIT PREJUDICE

> In 2006, ABC News found that 27% of Americans agreed that they "had at least some feelings of prejudice against Muslims." That same year, Gallup found that 39% also agreed with this.¹³

> Impressions of American Muslims

At least one in five Americans has reported unfavorable views of their Muslim compatriots since 2000.¹⁴



From 2000 to 2012, a total of 13 questions were asked about favorability of U.S. Muslims.

“Very favorable” views of American Muslims never exceeded 16%, and, on average, hovered around 11%.¹⁵

Eight of these polls were conducted by Pew between 2000 and 2007 show unfavorable views of American Muslims increasing while favorable views of American Muslims decrease slightly. (See Figure 2.)¹⁶

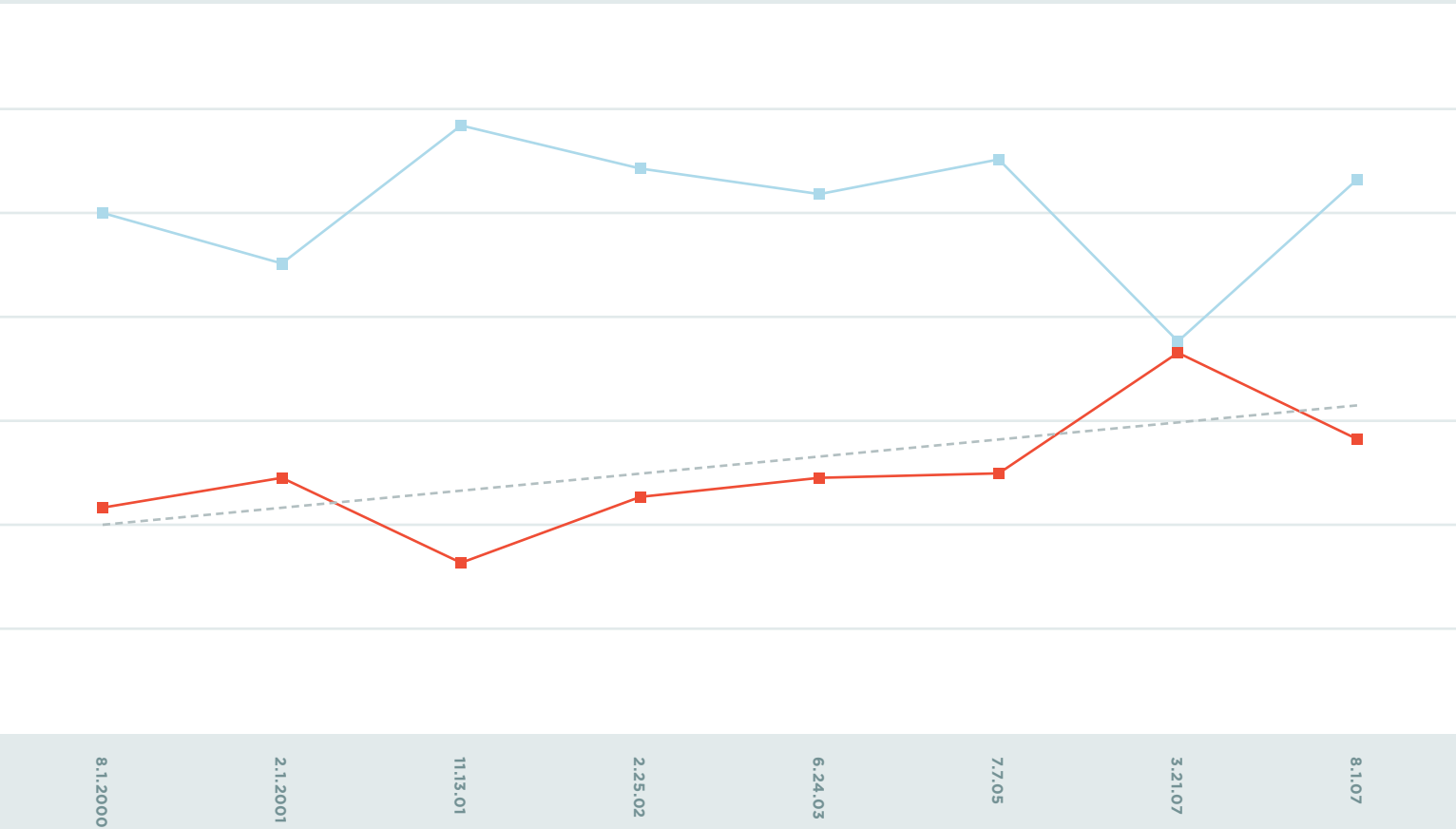
Gallup polling data from 2006 and 2008 also shows that “positive” views of American Muslims decreased (by 9%).¹⁷

FIGURE 2

Unfavorable Views of American Muslims Grow Steadily

Pew polls, 2000-2007

Favorable
Unfavorable



> Impressions of Muslims as a Global Religious Community

When it comes to Americans’ opinions of Muslims worldwide, the numbers look similar.

Since 1993, at least one in five Americans (22%) has reported unfavorable views of Muslims.

No more than two-thirds of the American population have ever expressed favorable views of Muslims.

These statistics are based off 26 polls on favorability of Muslims conducted between 1993 and 2014 by different polling organizations.¹⁸

1993 Attack on World Trade Center
A Zogby poll conducted in March 1993 found that 55% of Americans said “the series of events following the World Trade Center bombing will not impact negatively their view of Muslims.”¹⁹

2001 Attack on World Trade Center
Two polls conducted in 2010 and 2011 by CBS and the *New York Times* found that about one in five Americans admitted to having “negative feelings toward Muslims because of the attack on the World Trade Center” on 9/11.²⁰

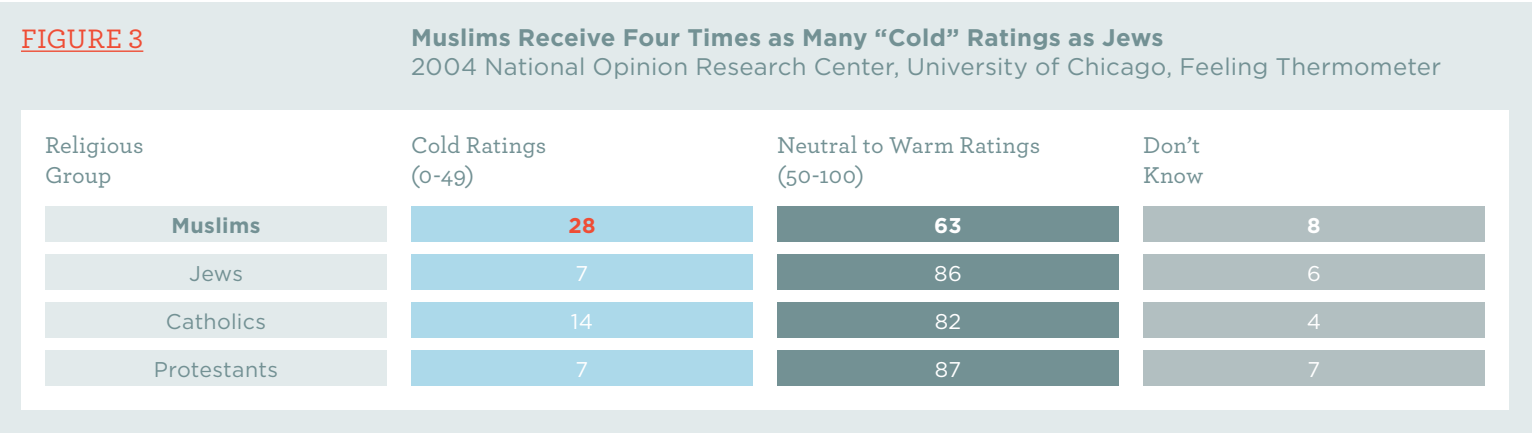
The Impact of Terror

Some polling organizations measured favorability of Muslims using the “feeling thermometer,” a survey tool that allows respondents to express their attitudes about a particular group by applying a numeric rating.

Five surveys between 2004 and 2014, found that Americans felt colder towards Muslims than other religious groups, often by large margins.²¹

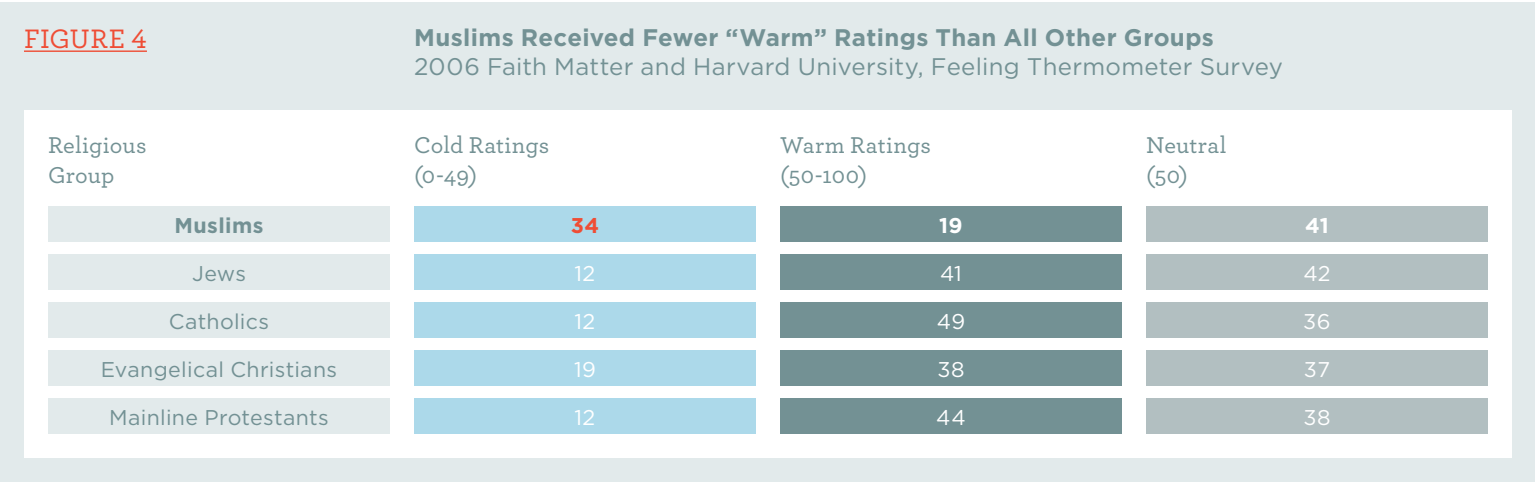
Here’s what that looks like:

A 2004 poll by the National Opinion Research Center and the University of Chicago found that Muslims received twice as many “cold” or “not favorable” ratings as Catholics did, and four times as many “cold” ratings as Jews and Protestants received. Muslims received fewer “warm” or “favorable” ratings that Jews, Catholics, and Protestants received (by 20 points).²² (See Figure 3.)



A 2006 poll by Harvard University found that Muslims received more cold ratings than any other group mentioned. Muslims received three times as many cold ratings as Catholics and nearly four times as many cold ratings and Protestants.²³

A June 2006 poll by Faith Matters (with Harvard University) found that Muslims received far more “cold” ratings and fewer “warm” ratings than all other religious groups.²⁴ Muslims received nearly three times as many “cold” ratings as Jews, Catholics, and Mainline Protestants. Muslims also received fewer “warm” ratings (19) than all other groups, which received ratings in the 30s and 40s. Muslims received less than half the “warm” ratings that all other groups received. (See Figure 4.)



A **2013 PRRI survey** found that Americans felt “coldest” towards Muslims. Muslims received the lowest average rating of all groups mentioned, including Atheists.²⁵

A **2014 poll** by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life found that *Muslims received the lowest mean rating (40) of all religions mentioned*, the least amount of “warm” ratings,” and the highest amount of “cold” ratings.²⁶ (See Figure 5.)

FIGURE 5

Did You Know?
2014 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life

Religious Group	Cold Ratings (0-33)	Warm Ratings (67-100)	Mid-range Ratings (34-66)	Mean Rating
Muslims	41	16	41	40
Jews	10	44	44	63
Catholics	14	44	41	62
Evangelical Christians	20	44	35	61
Atheists	40	20	37	41
Mormons	29	23	46	48
Buddhists	22	31	46	53
Hindus	23	24	52	50

> What Traits Characterize Muslims?

What types of characteristics do Americans attribute to Muslims? Beyond “favorable,” “unfavorable,” “cold,” or “warm,” what are the specific personality traits and features that Americans associate with Muslims?

Pew conducted two surveys in 2006 and 2011 that asked Americans which of the following characteristics they associated with Muslims.²⁷

GENEROUS 2006 Yes 26% No 50% Don't Know 24% 2011 Yes 33% No 50%	HONEST 2006 Yes 44% No 36% Don't Know 20% 2011 Yes 49% No 36% Don't Know 16%	IMMORAL 2006 Yes 19% No 65% Don't Know 16% 2011 Yes 24% No 65% Don't Know 11%
GREEDY 2006 Yes 24% No 60% Don't Know 16% 2011 Yes 20% No 68% Don't Know 12%	SELFISH 2006 Yes 27% No 56% Don't Know 17% 2011 Yes 29% No 59% Don't Know 12%	ARROGANT 2006 Yes 35% No 53% Don't Know 12% 2011 Yes 34% No 54% Don't Know 11%
FANATICAL 2006 Yes 43% No 41% Don't Know 16% 2011 Yes 41% No 49% Don't Know 10%	DEVOUT 2006 Yes 67% No 18% Don't Know 14% 2011 No data available	TOLERANT 2006 Yes 28% No 58% Don't Know 15% 2011 Yes 33% No 55% Don't Know 11%

BRITISH MUSLIMS DONATE MORE

> According to a 2013 survey by a London-based polling agency, British Muslims donate more money to charities than any other religious group. A Pew study that year surveyed 38,000 Muslims in 39 countries around the world. It found that 77% donate to the needy each year.²⁸



> Americans' Views of Muslim Treatment of Women and Non-Muslims

In two surveys (2006 and 2011), Pew Research Center found that a vast majority of Americans (69% and 71% respectively) did not think that Muslims were respectful of women.³⁰

In 2006, Gallup asked the same question about Muslims living in the US and found that fewer Americans thought that American Muslims were disrespectful of women (52%).³¹ According to an August 2008 Transatlantic Trends survey, **half** of Americans say that Muslim women “often have a lower social standing than Muslim men in the United States.”³²

The 2008 Transatlantic Trends survey found that 60% of Americans believe that Muslims are respectful of other cultures. Gallup data from 2006 shows that roughly half of Americans say that “Muslims living in the US are respectful of other religions.”³³

FLASHBACK

> A 1993 Zogby poll found that one in three Americans believed that “the vast Majority of Muslims hate terrorism,” while roughly four in 10 believed that Muslims “tend to be religious fanatics.” The poll also found that 56% of Americans believed that Muslims “segregate and suppress women,” while approximately one in three said they are “not tolerant of others.”²⁹

DID YOU KNOW?

> In February of 2015, the first all-female mosque opened in Los Angeles. In China, home to more than 23 million Muslims, all-female mosques have existed for hundreds of years.

MUSLIM WOMEN AMONG MOST EDUCATED IN US

> A 2008 Gallup study showed that American Muslim women are the second-most educated female religious group after Jewish women.³⁴

> How Do Americans Feel about Muslims’ Religious Beliefs and Practices?

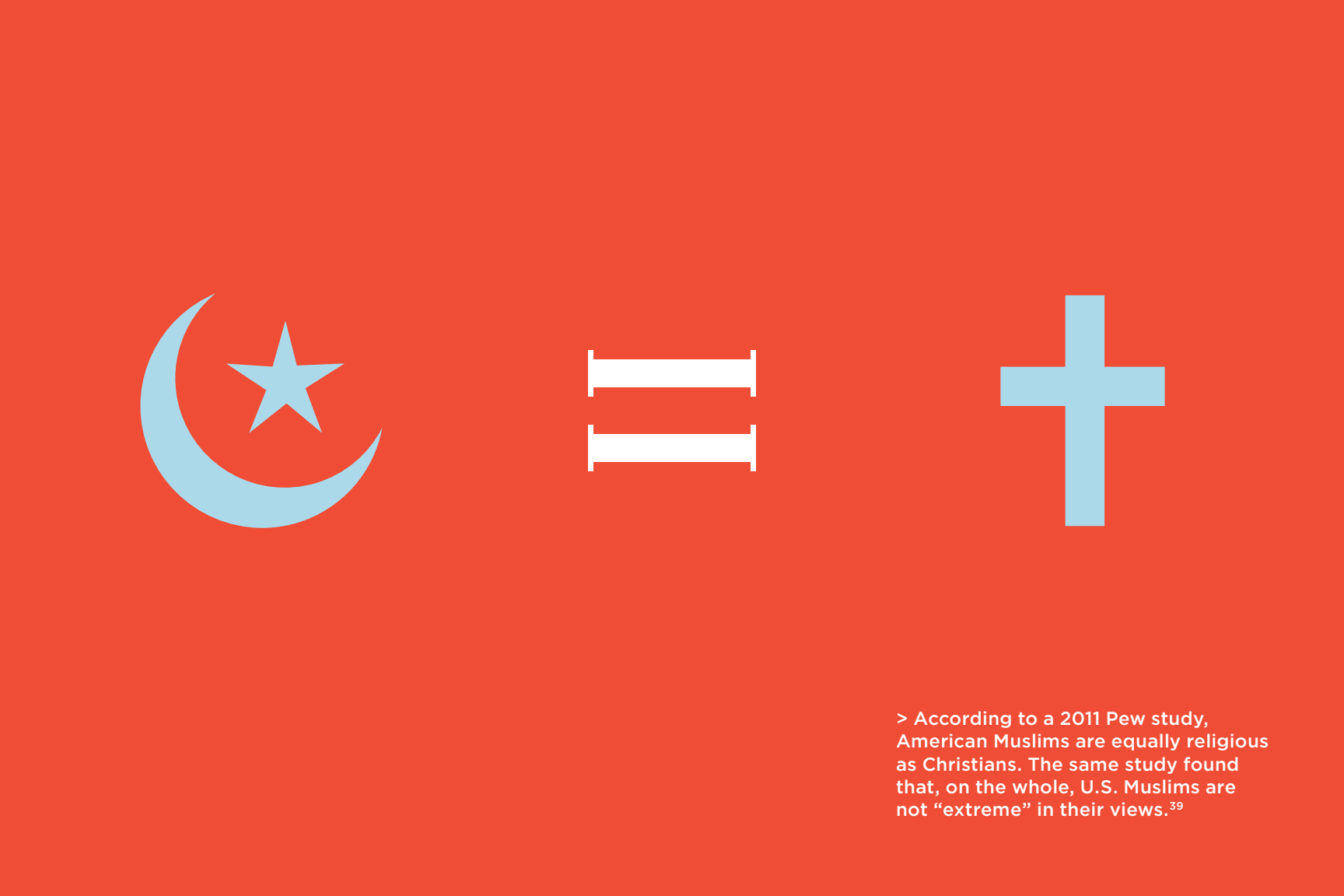
A 1993 survey conducted by the National Conference Survey on Intergroup Relations (NCSIR) found that an overwhelming majority — 84% — of Americans agreed with the statement: “Muslims take pride in their cultural and religious heritage.” A large majority — 77% — also agreed that they are “deeply religious people and follow and strict code of personal behavior.”³⁵

According to two Pew polls conducted in May of 2005 and May of 2006, approximately half of Americans believe that there is a “growing sense of Islamic identity among Muslims in our country.”³⁶ A July 2005 Pew poll indicated that two-thirds of Americans believe that Muslims in the United States have a “strong sense” of Islamic identity.³⁷

Gallup asked Americans if Muslims living in the US were “committed to their religious beliefs” and if they were “ too extreme.”³⁸ Here’s what they said:

<u>“Are Muslims living in the US committed to their religious beliefs?”</u>	
Gallup, July 2006 Yes 87% No 7% No Opinion 7%	Gallup, March 2011 Yes 82% No 8% No Opinion 11%

<u>“Are Muslims living in the United States too extreme in their religious beliefs?”</u>	
Gallup, July 2006 Yes 44 % No 46% No Opinion 10%	Gallup, March 2011 Yes 36% No 50% No Opinion 15%

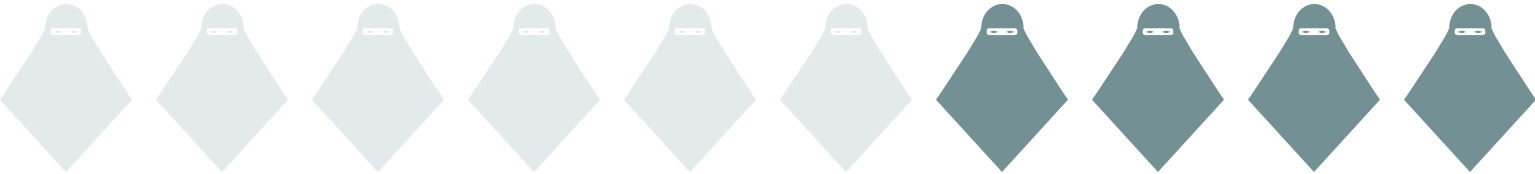


> According to a 2011 Pew study, American Muslims are equally religious as Christians. The same study found that, on the whole, U.S. Muslims are not “extreme” in their views.³⁹

> Islamic Garb Makes Many Americans Uneasy

When it comes to Muslims wearing traditional religious clothing while traveling, views are fairly mixed.

According to an October 2010 poll conducted by Fox News, nearly six in 10 indicated that they would not be “nervous” if they “saw fellow airplane passengers dressed in Muslim clothing.”⁴⁰



AMERICANS THINK OTHER
AMERICANS FEAR MUSLIMS

> A Fox survey in June 2002 asked if Americans were more likely to feel fear or sympathy towards Muslims. Sixty-three percent of Americans said their compatriots would likely feel fear, while 12% said they would likely feel sympathy.⁴¹

An August 2011 Public Religion Research Institute poll found that half of Americans (48%) would be “uncomfortable with Muslim women wearing clothing that covers their whole body, including their faces,” while approximately the same percentage (53%) said that they would be “comfortable” with “a group of Muslim men praying in an airport.”⁴²

According to a Gallup study from 2006, gender of Muslim travelers influences views. One in five Americans, the poll reports, would feel “nervous if they noticed a Muslim woman flying on the same airplane” as them, while more — one in three — would feel “nervous if they noticed a Muslim man” flying on the same airplane.⁴³

>> Next, we’ll examine American opinions of the religion of Islam over two decades.⁴⁴

CHAPTER TWO

2

Islam: Unfamiliar to most,
unfavorable to many

The headlines scream:

“Islamic State beheads American Kassig.”¹

“Islamist extremism rears its head across swath of Africa.”²

“Muslim Rage.”³

Islam, it seems, is always the front-page boogeyman. It’s impossible to read the news in major outlets like the *Washington Post*, *CNN*, or *Newsweek* without noticing references to Islam and its adherents in the context of

war, violence, and destruction. In recent decades, particularly since the attacks of 9/11, news media coverage of Islam has been incessant — and largely negative. According to MediaTenor, a research institute that examined two million Western news stories, the media’s coverage of Islam has rarely been positive.⁴ And in the 10 years after 9/11, the average tone of coverage has

only become worse.⁵ (See Figure 6.) Most coverage of Islam, Muslims, and Muslim organizations usually centers on international conflicts in the Middle East or relates to domestic homeland security concerns. In 2014, negative coverage of Islam reached an all-time high, as ISIS gained a foothold in Iraq and in American news headlines.⁶

FIGURE 6

Media Coverage Becomes Increasingly Negative

Media Tenor International Statistics on Average Tone of Media Coverage from 2011 to 2014

■ Average Negative Tone



Stories that portray Islam and its followers positively, or even neutrally, occasionally appear in local news outlets, but rarely in national ones. In the absence of stories about small town mosques or the daily activities of Muslims worldwide, **Americans are left with a monolithic picture of the religion**. With each new terrorist attack or U.S. military incursion in Muslim-majority countries, the perceived link between Islam and conflict is reinforced in the Western imagination.

Given that Americans' are constantly bombarded with negative news about Islam, it's unsurprising that they have strong views about the religion. In this chapter, we outline polling data on Americans' views of Islam: Do they view it favorably or unfavorably? Do they report having a good understanding of the religion? Do they see Islam as similar to Christianity? How do they describe the religion in a single word?

> How Favorably Do Americans View Islam?

After 9/11 Americans had favorable views of Islam, but by the middle of the Iraq War, Americans' views had flipped. More people had negative views of the religion than positive ones.

Over the last two decades, pollsters regularly asked Americans about whether or not they had “favorable” or “unfavorable” views of Islam. Nine polling organizations questioned Americans 30 times on this topic.⁷ A majority of polls conducted after 9/11, and through the first few years of the Iraq war, found that a plurality of Americans held “favorable” views of Islam. More Americans viewed Islam favorably than unfavorably.

But Americans' views changed as the Iraq War continued and the troop surge began. From 2006 onward, all polls found that more Americans had unfavorable views of Islam than had favorable ones.⁸

FLASHBACK

> In a poll conducted before the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, nearly two-thirds of Americans (64%) responded “don't know” when asked about their views of Islam. After the 9/11 attacks, no more than 35% of the population responded that they were unsure. This indicates that between the early 1990s and the early 2000s, a number of Americans made up their mind about Islam.⁹

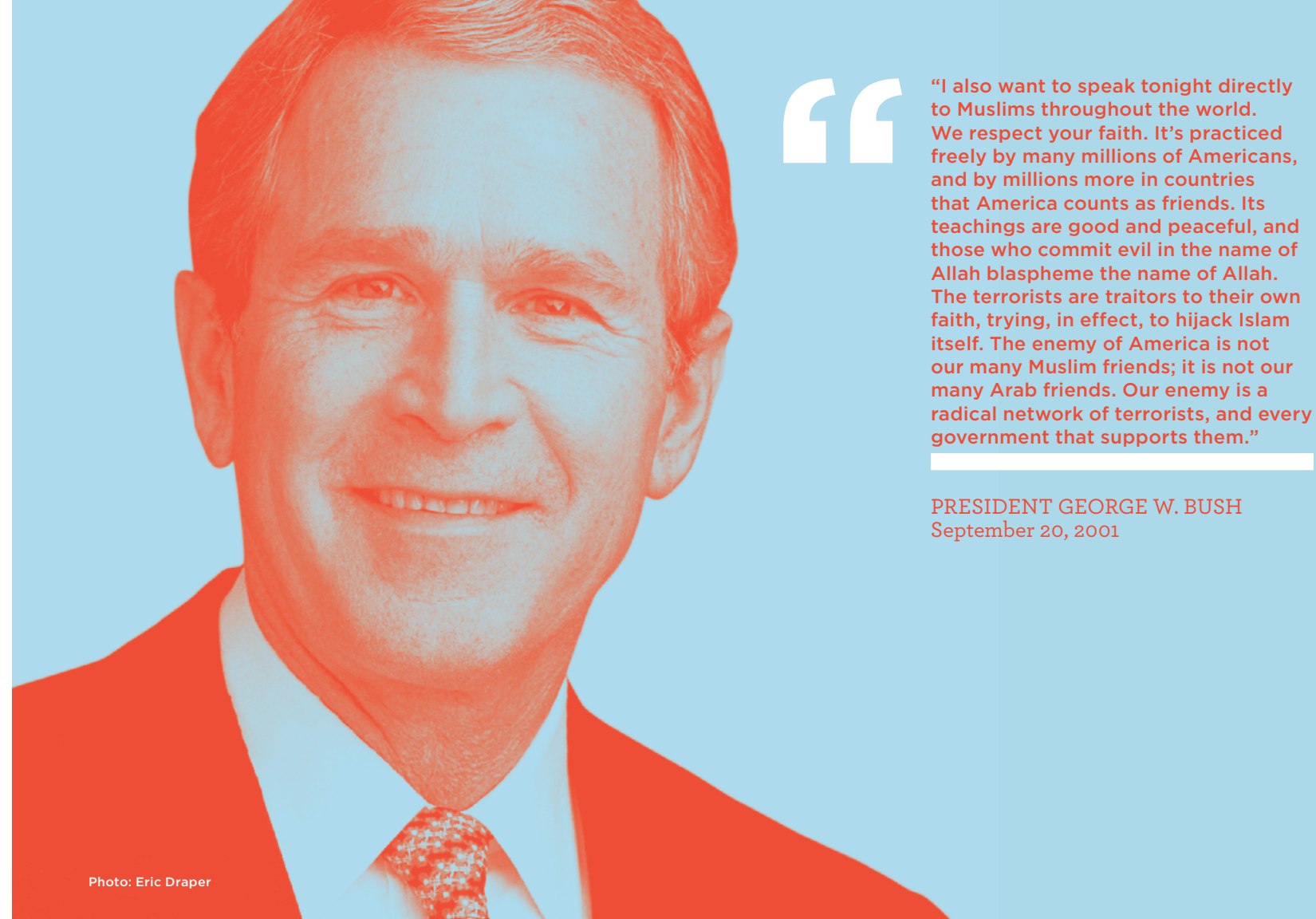
On average, four in 10 Americans viewed Islam unfavorably.¹⁰



Analysis of these 30 polls also found that

those who viewed Islam favorably never exceeded 50% of the U.S. population.

There was one exception: a Gallup poll conducted immediately after 9/11, in which 66% reported having favorable views.



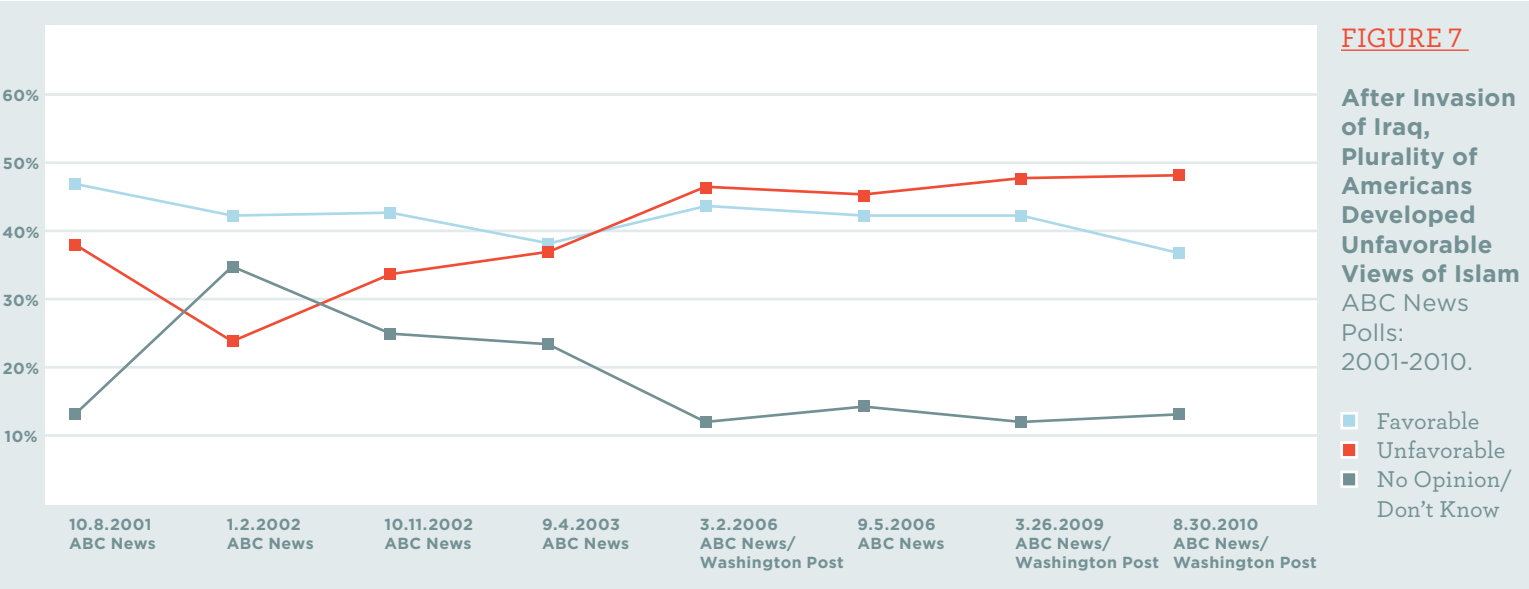
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“I also want to speak tonight directly to Muslims throughout the world. We respect your faith. It’s practiced freely by many millions of Americans, and by millions more in countries that America counts as friends. Its teachings are good and peaceful, and those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah. The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself. The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends; it is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists, and every government that supports them.”

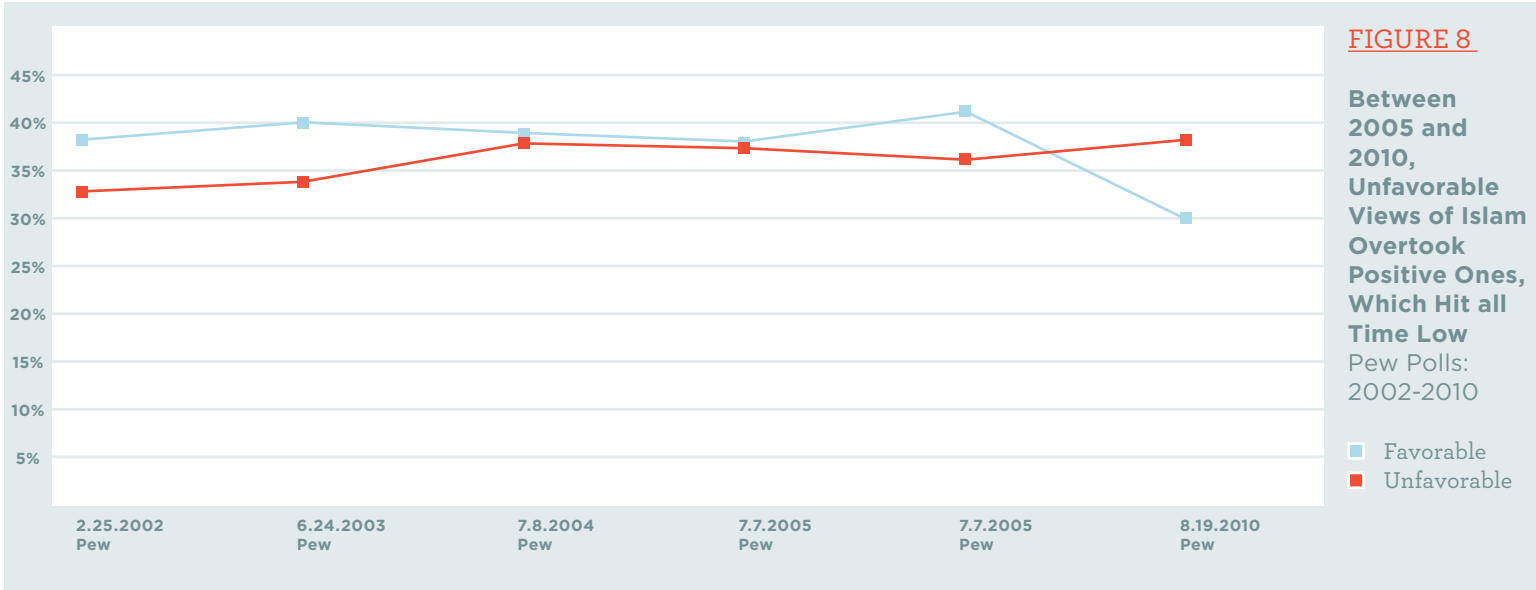
PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH
September 20, 2001

Three polling organizations, ABC News, Pew, and CBS News, asked the question on favorability most often. Taken on their own, these respective data sets reflect the general trend gleaned from the analysis of all 30 questions taken together.

ABC News polls: 2001-2010 Immediately after 9/11, more people responded that they had favorable views than unfavorable ones, but from 2006 to 2010, unfavorable views exceeded favorable opinions. ABC News polls also found that the number of *those reporting unfavorable views of Islam increased sharply* from 2002 to 2010, while those responding “no opinion” dropped considerably. This indicates that *as Americans made up their minds about the religion of Islam, more people developed unfavorable views*.¹¹ (See Figure 7.)



Pew polls: 2002-2010 Pew polls also indicate a similar trend. From 2002 to 2005, more people expressed favorable views than unfavorable ones, but in 2010, the number of Americans reporting unfavorable views exceeded those with favorable views.¹² (See Figure 8.)



CBS News polls: 2002-2013 CBS News polls presented a consistently negative picture. The number of Americans reporting *unfavorable views of Islam was always higher* than those reporting favorable views. In seven out of nine CBS polls, more Americans said they “hadn’t heard enough” about Islam to make a judgment, than those who expressed favorable views. Unlike other polling organizations, CBS gave respondents the option “haven’t heard enough,” which was always chosen by 20 to 30% of the population.¹³

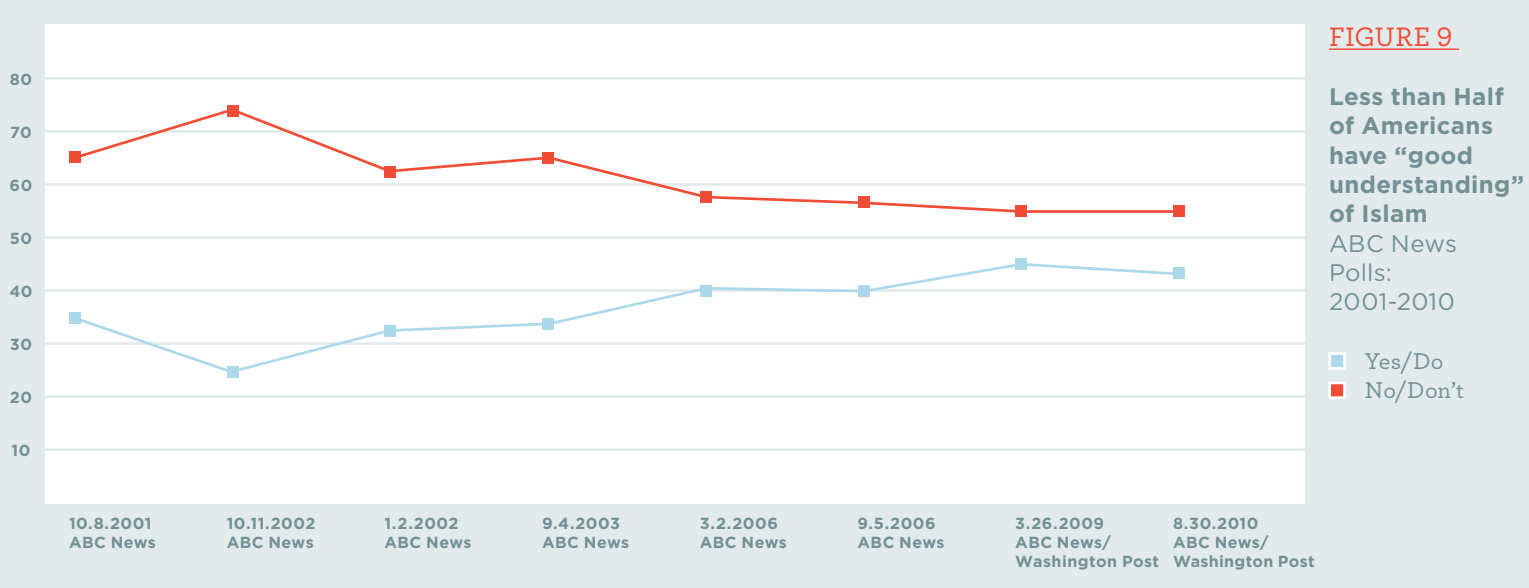
> **How Familiar are Americans with Islam?**

Over the past several decades, information about Islam has become increasingly available through countless books, magazine articles, and online outlets. In universities across the country, students have opportunities to study its basic teachings and history, and resources about the religion stock the shelves of public libraries and bookstores. References to Islam continue to abound in media coverage of episodic violence carried out by Muslims around the world.

From 2001 to 2010, Americans’ self-reported knowledge of Islam increased, but in 2010, a majority still felt uninformed about the religion.

Despite this continued exposure, a majority of Americans still felt uninformed about Islam. This is according to 15 questions asked on the subject.¹⁴

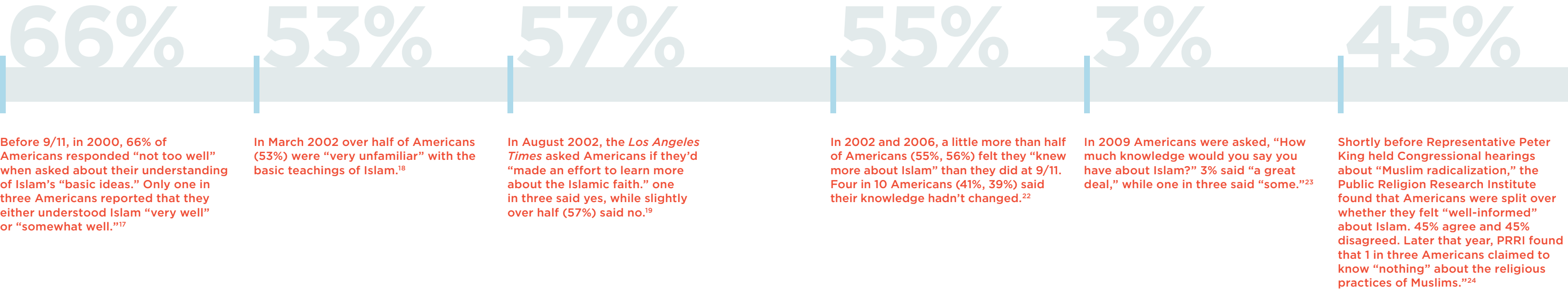
According to eight of those polls, by ABC news, the number of Americans who claimed to have a “good understanding” of Islam rose slightly in the decade after 9/11. Despite this rise, in 2010, more than half of the population still said they did not have a good “understanding” of the religion.¹⁵ (See Figure 9.)



The other seven polls, six by Pew and one by CBS News/*New York Times*, asked Americans “How much would you say you know about the Muslim religion and its practices?”¹⁶ Those responding that they knew “some” or “a great deal” about Islam rose slightly, while those responding “not very much” or “nothing at all” decreased slightly. Still, over that decade, *less than one in 10 Americans felt they knew “a great deal about Islam,” and approximately one in three Americans said they “didn’t know very much.” One in four Americans confessed to knowing “nothing at all.”* Those responding that they “didn’t know very much” or “nothing at all” always equaled more than half of the population.

Less Than Half of Americans Knew Basic Islamic Terms

Two Pew polls conducted in 2002 and 2003 asked Americans if they knew “what name Muslims use to refer to God.” In both polls, approximately half of Americans (47% and 45% respectively) answered correctly with “Allah,” while about half provided incorrect answers or said they “didn’t know.”²⁰ In those same years, Pew also found that slightly fewer Americans (43% and 42% respectively) could accurately state the “name of the Islamic equivalent to the Bible,” the Qur’an. By 2005, half of Americans (51%) knew the name of Islam’s holy book.²¹



Snapshots of Self-Reported Knowledge of Islam

> Islam: Similar to Other Religions?

Islam and Christianity, along with Judaism, are often called “the Abrahamic religions,” a reference that alludes to their common origin in the prophetic personalities of the ancient Near East. Despite this shared heritage,

Many Americans — the vast majority of whom are Christian — don’t see similarities between their religion and Islam.

This is according to five Pew polls conducted between 2001 and 2007, a majority of Americans said that Islam was “very different” from their own religion.²⁵ Americans expressed this again in 2009, when Pew found that two in three Americans said Islam was “different from their own religion.”²⁶ Only 17% said it was “similar.”

A 2004 Cornell poll found that 27% of Americans reported that “Islamic values are similar to Christian values.”²⁷

AMERICANS USE NEGATIVE
TERMS TO DESCRIBE ISLAM

A Pew poll conducted in 2007 asked Americans to provide “one word that best describes their impression of Islam.” Thirty-four percent of the population responded with a generally negative term, which is more than double those who provided a positive term (15%). Twelve percent used a neutral description, while one-third of Americans (32%) said they “didn’t know” and didn’t provide a word.²⁸

Associated characteristics were grouped by Pew. The characteristics were organized into categories (negative, neutral, and positive) by the Bridge Initiative.

NEGATIVE
General Negative 6
Fanatical/Radical 6
Strict/Dogmatic/Controlling 4
Cult/Wrong/Not Real 3
Misguided/Confused 3
Confusing/Mysterious 3
Terrorist/Kill/Death 2
Angry/Dangerous/Violent 2
Bad/Evil 2
Crazy/Strange 1
Fearful/Scary 1
Separate/Closed Off/Secretive 1
TOTAL > 34

NEUTRAL
Religious/Cultural Reference 6
Different 2
Allah/Qur’an/Muhammad 2
Misunderstood 1
Organized/Unified 1
TOTAL > 12

POSITIVE
Faithful/Devout/Committed 7
Generally Positive 3
Peaceful/Respectful/Compassionate 3
Acceptable/Ok 1
Strong/Good 1
TOTAL > 15

CHAPTER THREE

3

Islam and violence: Americans see Islam as “more violent” during debates about military action in the Middle East

Of all the images and characteristics commonly associated with Islam, none are more prominent and prevalent than violence.

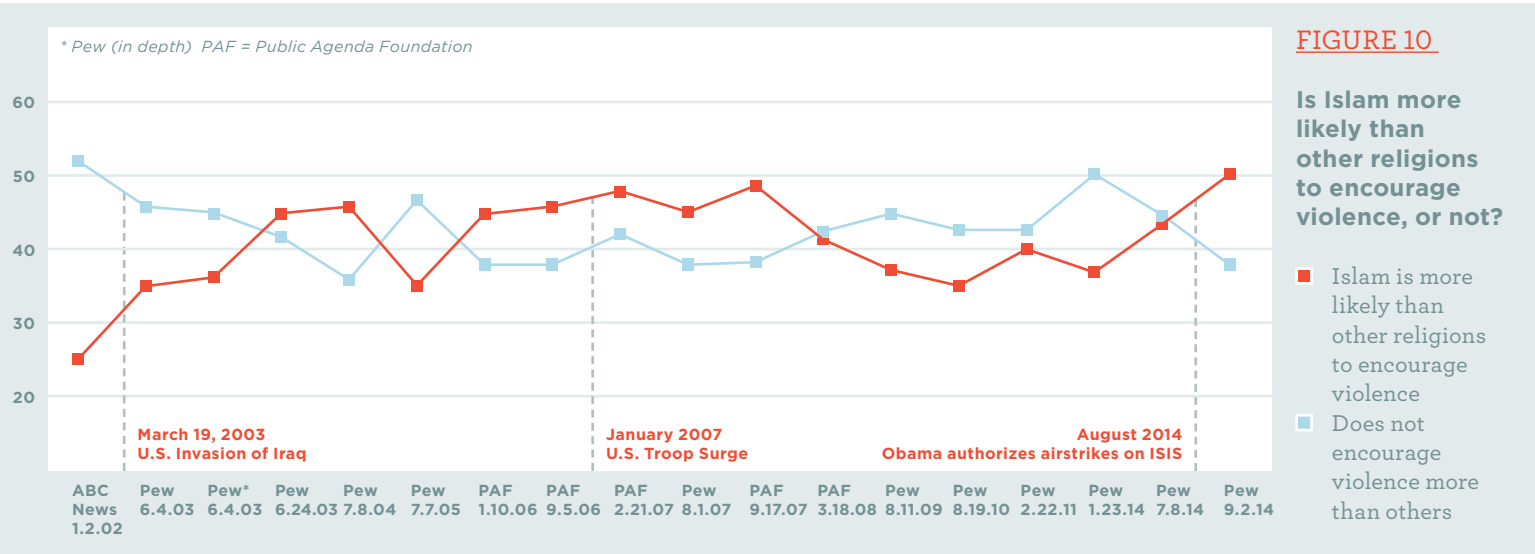
This is especially so in Western societies, where since the Iranian revolution in the late 1970s the public has been presented with a particularly menacing picture of the religion and its followers. Since 1980, the United States has been involved militarily in over a dozen Muslim-majority countries, resulting in media coverage saturated with simplistic depictions of Muslims as violent.

This one-sided view is also compounded by the rise and exposure of terrorist groups like the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, and ISIS. While these groups represent a small fraction of the world’s 1.6 billion Muslims, their attacks attract significant attention. And while the motivation for much terrorism is political, the religious language that terrorists use to justify their acts contributes to perceptions of a link between Islam and violence as well.

What does the American public think about the supposed relationship between Islam and violence? Do they believe that Islam sanctions violence more than other religions? Do Americans think that terrorism in the name of Islam is a perversion of the faith, or an accurate interpretation? What are their views of Muslims efforts to combat violent extremists in their communities? The following data explains Americans’ views on these issues over time.

> Is Islam More Violent Than Other Religions?

In the 13 years after 9/11, Americans were asked whether or not they believed that Islam is “more likely to encourage violence” than other religions. Eighteen polls conducted between 2002 and 2014 by Pew, ABC News, and the Public Agenda Foundation asked Americans about their views on this. Americans’ responses fluctuated over time — sometimes more agreed with this statement, and at other times, they disagreed. The lead-up to the Iraq War in 2003, the high numbers of U.S. troops deaths prompting a troop surge in 2007, and the debate over how to deal with the emergence of ISIS coincide with instances where a plurality of Americans said that Islam is “more likely to encourage violence than other religions.”¹ (See Figure 10.)



Prior to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, more than 50% of the population believed that Islam “does not encourage violence more than other religions.”² However, as the nation debated over whether or not to invade Iraq and as the war began, views shifted. From 2003 to 2004, more Americans believed that Islam was uniquely violent.

Again in 2006 and 2007, as record numbers of American troops killed, and as officials considered deploying additional troops to quell Iraq’s civil war, a plurality believed that Islam was “more likely to encourage violence.”³ During the next four years, as Americans turned their attention to the economic recession and domestic issues, fewer Americans said that Islam was unique in encouraging violence.

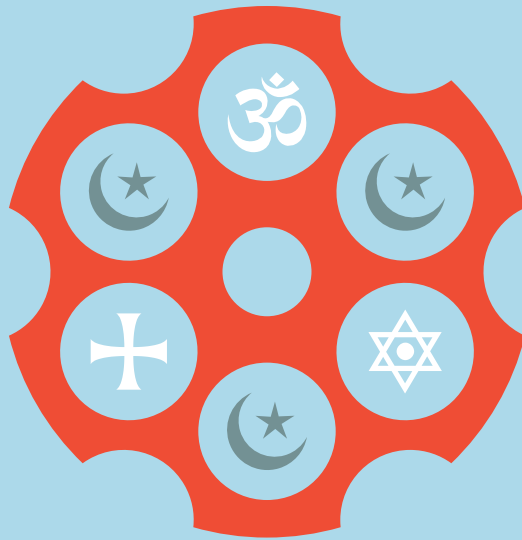


But by 2014, the number of Americans who believed this had grown to a record high. As the public again debated how to address the rise of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, half of Americans held this view.

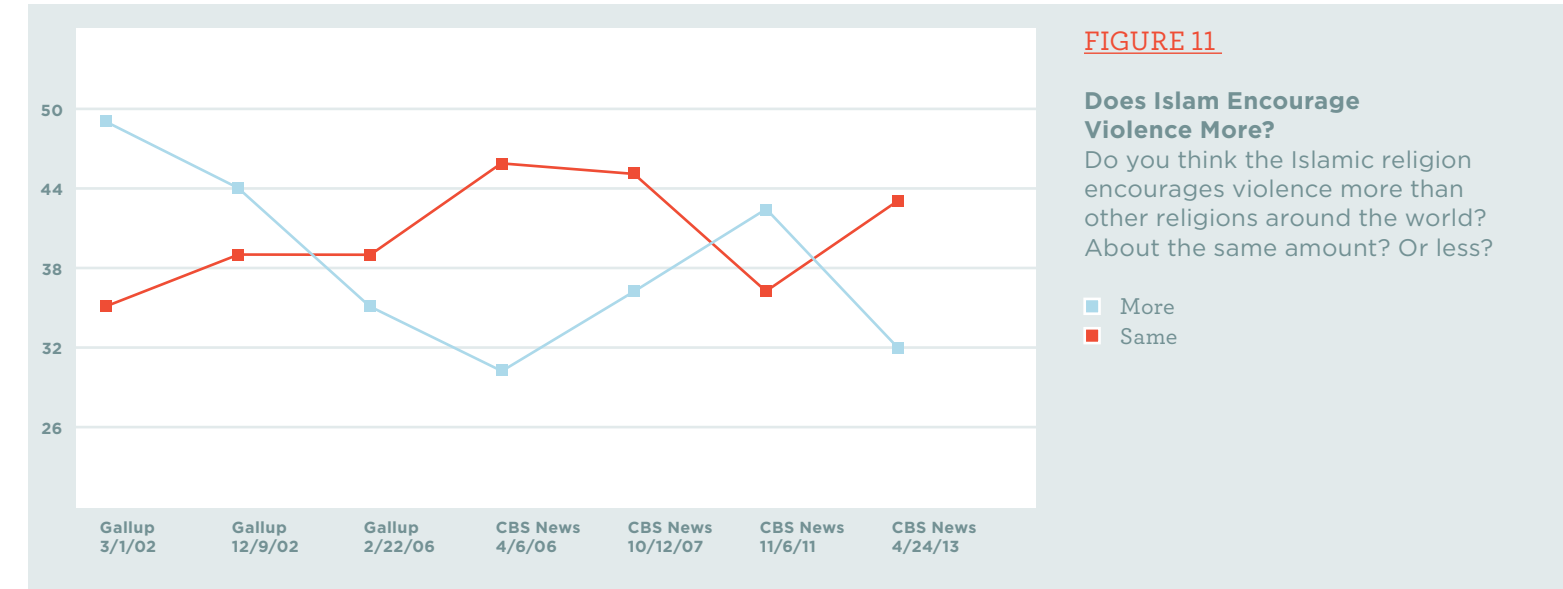
While in 2002, more than half the population expressed that Islam “does not” encourage more violence than other religions, by September 2014, views had completely flipped.⁴



In summary, more Americans said that Islam was “more likely to encourage violence than other religions” during three significant times: when some government officials and media personalities had made (or were currently making) the case for U.S. military involvement in the Middle East (Iraq in 2003, Iraq surge in 2007, and ISIS in 2014.)⁵

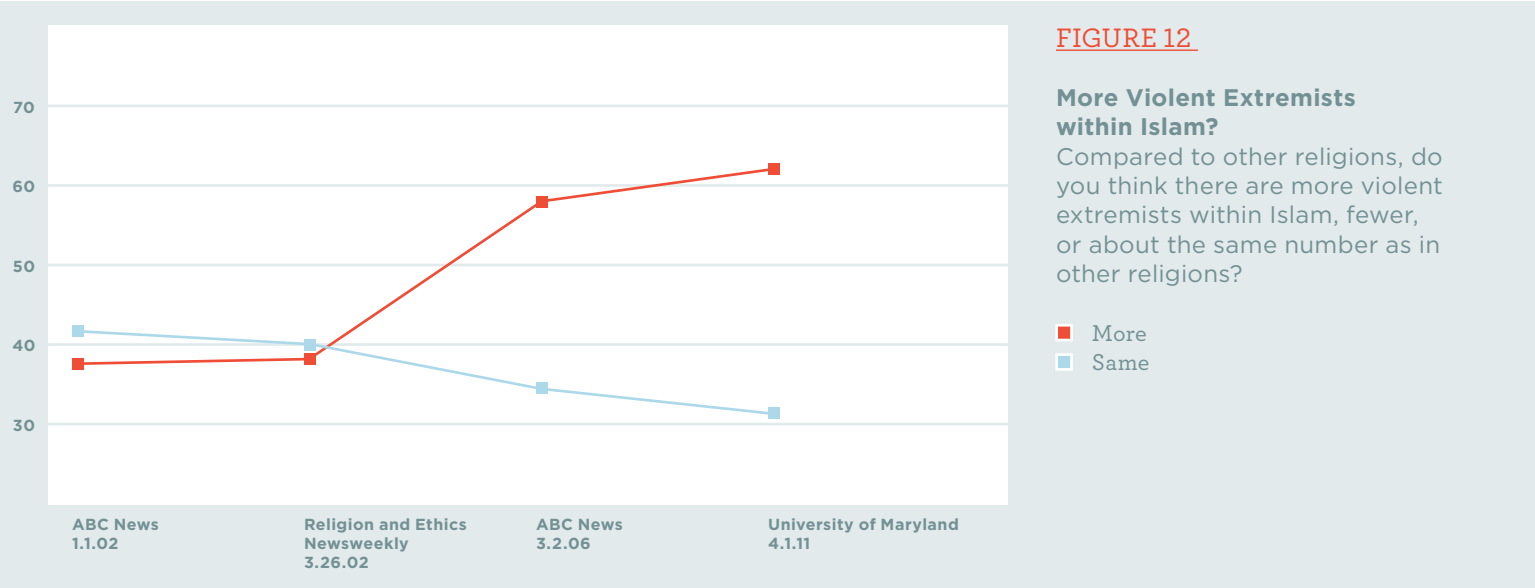


Between 2002 and 2013, Gallup and CBS News conducted a total of seven polls asking a similar question. The results show a similar trend: Increases in the number of Americans who believed that Islam “encourages violence more than other religions” correspond with the Iraq War troop surge and the rise of ISIS (2006, 2007, and 2013).⁶ (See Figure 11.)



> “Are there more violent extremists within Islam?”

Four polls conducted between 2002 and 2011 by ABC News (2), Religion and Ethics Newsweekly (1), and the University of Maryland (1) show a steep increase in the number of Americans reporting that they think: “there are more violent extremists within Islam.”⁷ (See Figure 12.)



> Pluralities Claim Islam is More Violent

Despite the fluctuation in views reported above, polling data from the same period (but which wasn’t gathered consistently over time) suggests that a plurality of Americans believes that Islam is more violent than other religions.

- > According to a Cornell poll in October in 2004, 47% of Americans said that Islam was more likely to encourage violence than other religions.”⁸
- > When asked in a 2005 survey about which religion is the “most violent” — Christianity, Islam, Judaism, or Hinduism — two-thirds (67%) of Americans responded “Islam.” That percentage is seven times higher than those who chose Christianity (9%). Judaism received 4% of responses while Hinduism received 5%.⁹
- > According to a June 2007 poll, Americans were nearly twice as likely to say that Christianity “promotes peace” than to say the same about Islam. Similarly, Americans were three times as likely to say that Islam “promotes violence” than they were to say the same about Judaism.¹⁰ That poll also found that seven in 10 Americans believed that, compared to other religions, Islam is mostly likely to have followers that “would use violence in an attempt to spread their religion.”¹¹
- > In 2010, *Time* found that nearly half of Americans (46%) believed that Islam was “more likely than other religions to encourage violence against non-believers.” Roughly one in four said Islam encourages violence to the same degree as other religions.¹²
- > In 2011 and 2012, CBS News conducted three polls in which they asked Americans if they thought “Islam is a more peaceful religion, a less peaceful religion, or about as peaceful as most other religions?” On average, one third (34%) of Americans believed Islam was “less peaceful” than other religions, while nearly half of Americans (45%) believe Islam is “about as peaceful” as other religions.¹³

> Terrorism: Supported by Islamic teachings?

Most Americans believe that only a minority of Muslims supports terrorism, and that it is not condoned by Islamic teachings.

In 2001 and 2002, *Newsweek* found that seven in 10 Americans responded that they thought suicide bombings are a “perversion of Islam by extremists.”¹⁴ Similarly, a total of three polls conducted by Wirthlin Worldwide (2001), the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (2002), and the University of Maryland (2011) found that a majority of Americans believed that the 9/11 attacks “do not at all”, or “not very much,” represent the “true teachings of Islam.”¹⁵

According to three surveys conducted by the Public Agenda Foundation in 2007 and 2008, approximately three in four Americans expressed that they think only a “small minority” of Muslims support terrorism.¹⁶

While a majority of Americans believe that Islam doesn’t condone violence, sizable portions still think it does. Approximately one in five respondents to the Public Agenda Foundation polls mentioned above believed that a “majority” supports terrorism.¹⁷ According to two polls conducted by ABC News between 2001 and 2011, the number of people who believed that “the terrorists who attacked the United States on 9/11 held views that were close to the mainstream teachings of Islam” *tripled*, jumping from 7% immediately after 9/11 to 22% more than a decade later.¹⁸

FLASHBACK

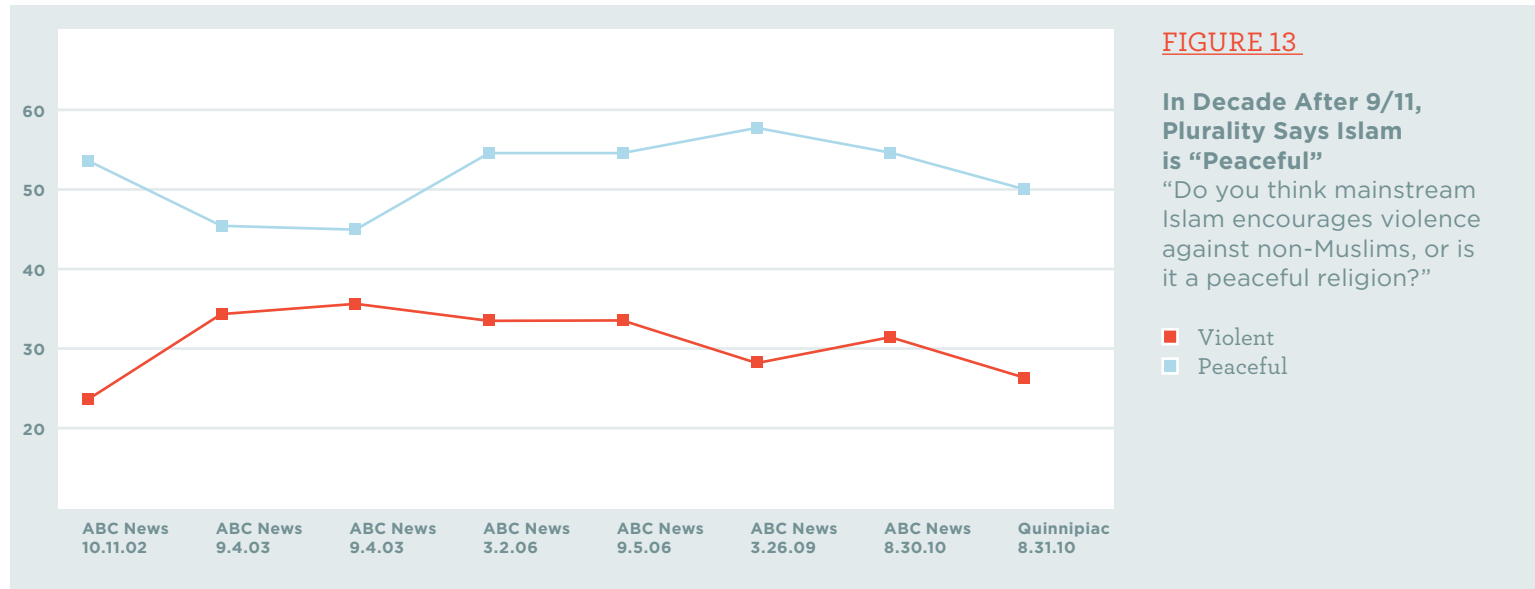
> A 1993 Poll conducted by the National Conference Survey on Intergroup Relations found that half of Americans agreed that “Muslims belong to a religion that condones or supports terrorism.”¹⁹

> Is Islam a Peaceful or Violent Religion?

In the decade after 9/11, most Americans believed that Islam was a “peaceful” religion, though a third maintained that it “encourages violence against non-Muslims.”²⁰



In a total of eight polls conducted by ABC News (7) and Quinnipiac (1), Americans were asked if they thought “mainstream Islam encourages violence against non-Muslims” or if it is “a peaceful religion.” In each poll, more Americans responded that they believed Islam is a “peaceful religion.” Still, on average, three in 10 Americans believe Islam “encourages violence against non-Muslims.”²¹ (See Figure 13.)



> According to a 2002 ABC News poll, half of Americans think that calling Islam a “violent religion” is “an example of anti-Muslim prejudice.”²² Another ABC News poll that year found that 57% of Americans believe that Islam is a peaceful religion, whereas 14% said it was violent.²³

Other questions that were asked only once or twice show a more mixed picture when it comes to opinions about violence and Islam.

- > **Pew polls in 2006 and 2011** asked if “violence” was a characteristic they associated with Muslims, Americans were generally split. In both polls 45% said yes, while 42% and 46% said no.²⁴
- > **A July 2007 *Newsweek* poll** showed that approximately one in four Americans think that “the Qur’an condones violence.” The same poll found that Americans were split when it came to their views about whether or not “the Muslim culture glorifies suicide.” The results showed that 41% thought it did, while 40% said it didn’t. The same poll reported that 63% of American Muslims “do not condone violence.”²⁵
- > **A 2011 Fox News poll** asked Americans if they thought Islam is a “peaceful religion trying to get along with other religions” or a “violent one trying to take over the world.” Slightly more than four in 10 Americans (43%) said Islam is “peaceful” while roughly the same number (38%) said it is “violent.”²⁶
- > **A 2011 poll by the Public Religion Research Institute** found that Americans were generally split over whether or not they believe “Muslims who commit acts of violence in the name of Islam are really Muslim,” or not. Forty-four percent responded affirmatively, while 48% responded negatively.²⁷

> Are Muslims Sympathetic Towards Al-Qaeda?

According to a March 2002 survey by Gallup, 72% of Americans believed that “some” or “most” Muslims admire Osama bin Laden.²⁸ Four years later, in 2006, Pew asked how many American Muslims support the terrorist group. One in five (19%) said “most” or “many.”²⁹ In 2010, *Newsweek* asked Americans if they believed that most Muslims support the goals of Al-Qaeda. Eleven percent said that “most” Muslims support the group’s goals, while one-quarter of the population said “only some.”³⁰ A plurality, 42%, said “very few.” Gallup polls conducted in 2006 and 2011 found that approximately one-third of Americans believed that “Muslims living in the US are sympathetic to the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization.” Approximately half of Americans disagreed.³¹



Photo: Hamid Mir

> Have Muslims done enough to stop extremists in their communities?

Immediately following acts of terrorism or violence carried out by Muslims, pundits and commentators inevitably ask: Where are moderate Muslims, and will they condemn these attacks? Embedded in that refrain is the problematic and false presumption that ordinary Muslims, by virtue of belonging to the same religion as the attackers, have a special responsibility to speak out against violence or work to prevent it.³² Five separate questions asked after 9/11, the language of which also presumes a connection between terrorism and Muslims, asked Americans what they thought about how Muslims have responding to such acts.³³

“People of Muslim faith, who oppose terrorist activities, have a special obligation to help defeat Osama bin Laden.”

Agree 54%
Disagree 32%
Fox News
Oct. 3, 2001

Agree 60%
Disagree 32%
Fox News
Oct. 31, 2001

“Do you think mainstream Islamic leaders are doing enough to try to stop Muslim extremists from committing acts of terrorism?”

Yes 13%
No 73%
Fox News
Oct 11, 2005

Yes 20%
No 64%
Fox News
Oct 26, 2010

“American Muslims have not done enough to oppose extremism in their own communities. Do you agree or disagree?”

Agree 46%
Disagree 33%
PRRI
Feb 11, 2011

> Are American Muslims Violent?

Do Americans think that Muslims living in the United States support the use of violence? Several polls since 2002 offer some answers.

In August of 2010, *Newsweek* reported that a plurality of Americans — 48% — believed that “very few” Muslims living in the US “support the use of violence by Muslims against non-Muslims.” The same percentage said that “most” Muslims are peaceful and “do not condone violence.”³⁴

A July 2011 study conducted by Pew found that 40% of Americans said that there was “at least a fair amount of support for extremism” among Muslims living in the United States, and one in three Americans reported that they believed support for extremism was “increasing.”³⁵

Again in 2011, CBS News asked if Americans believed that Muslims currently living in the United States are planning acts of terrorism. Three out of four — 76% — said yes, while only 11% said no.³⁶

> How Worried Are Americans About Muslim-led Violence?

Six polls conducted between 2005 and 2011, indicate that two-thirds or more of all Americans are at least “somewhat concerned” with the “rise of Islamic extremism” in the United States.³⁷

According to two polls conducted by *Newsweek* in 2007 and 2010, slightly more than half of the population expressed that they were “worried about radicals within the American Muslim community.”³⁸

A Fox News poll found similar results in March of 2011. Half of Americans (49%) expressed that they were “very” or “extremely” concerned about the radicalization of Muslims in America.³⁹

>> In the next chapter, we turn to Americans’ support or opposition to government policies and public practices — like mosque infiltration, religious profiling at the airport, and making jokes about Muslims — all of which “single out” Muslims in different ways.

FLASHBACK

> In an August 1993 poll conducted by the National Conference Survey on Intergroup Relations, most Americans — 64% — said they hardly feel threatened at all by Muslims.⁴⁰

CHAPTER FOUR

4

Views on “singling out” Muslims:
It happens, & it’s expected

In 2010, a Santa Clara college student took his car to get its oil changed.

While the car was being serviced, he noticed a black box attached to the car’s underbody. Two days later, as he left his apartment complex, FBI agents approached him and asked where he’d put their tracking device.

The experience of Yasir Afifi, who the FBI followed simply because he was an Egyptian Muslim, is not an uncommon one.¹ In the

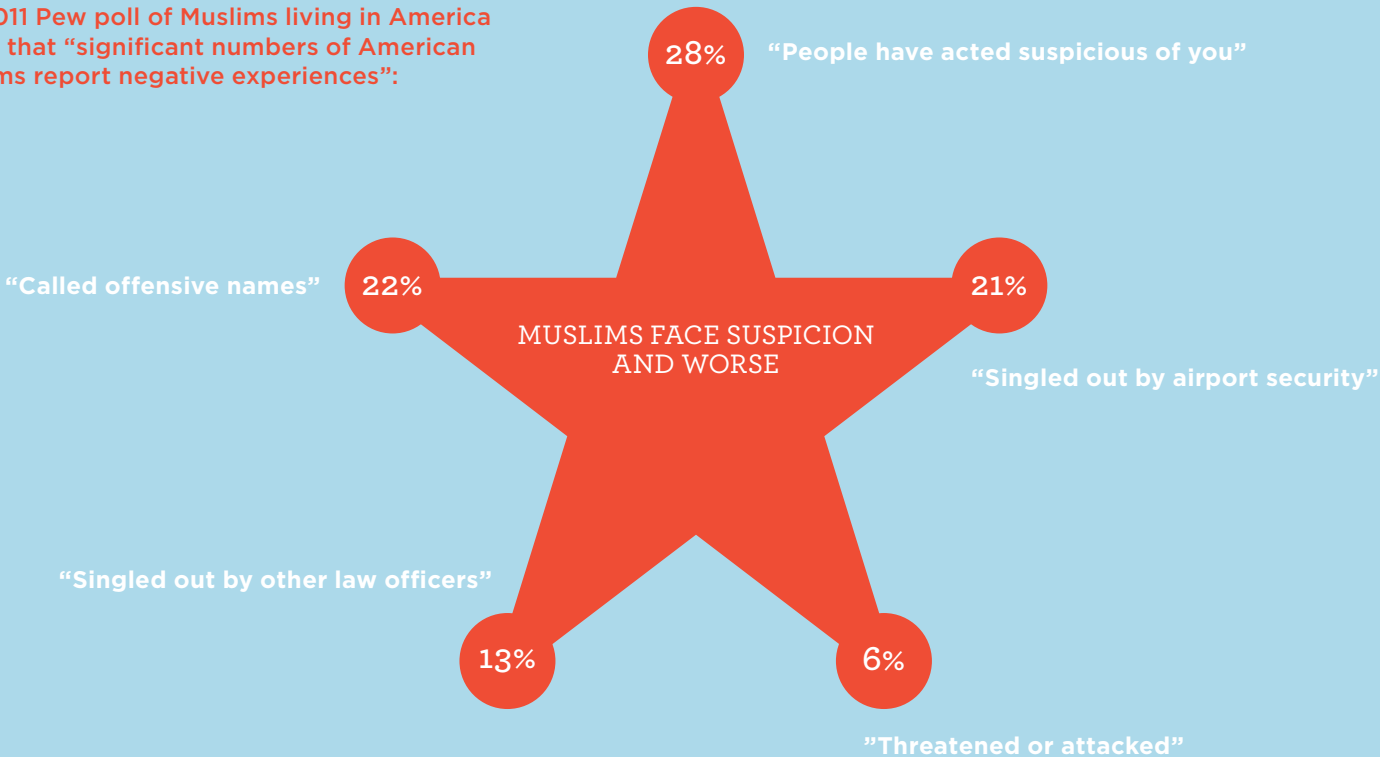
wake of 9/11, American Muslims have experienced innumerable instances of monitoring, profiling, and even detention.

In southern California, an undercover FBI informant was paid to sleep with Muslim women who attended the local mosque as part of a larger scheme to infiltrate Muslim houses of worship and entrap individuals in fake terror plots.²

In New York and around the country, law enforcement agencies “mapped” Muslim communities, placing spies in mosques, businesses, and popular restaurants and generating detailed reports on the religious activities of ordinary people.³

ADDING INSULT TO INJURY:

> A 2011 Pew poll of Muslims living in America found that “significant numbers of American Muslims report negative experiences”:



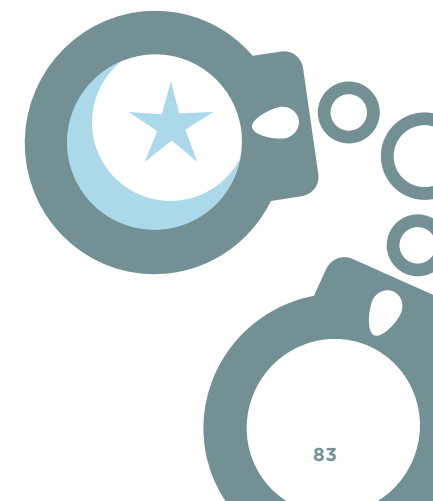
Forty-three percent of American Muslims have experienced one or more of these five hostile acts. This is slightly up from 2007, when 40% responded that they’d experienced one or more.⁴



At the Canadian border, American Muslims experienced “repeated handcuffing, brandishing of weapons, prolonged detentions, invasive and humiliating body searches at the border, and inappropriate questioning that pertains to religion and religious practices.”⁵

In the years since 9/11, government and law enforcement agencies have instituted policies that have put the

American Muslim community under increased scrutiny, and in some cases violated their constitutional rights. As the public debated these programs, polling organizations asked Americans about their opinions of these measures. They also asked Americans if they believed Muslims were being “singled out” or discriminated against at all, and gauged opinions about whether certain attitudes and behaviors constituted prejudice.



> Should Muslims Receive Increased Scrutiny?

In 16 questions, Americans were asked about their views on policies that would single out Muslims. Their responses showed that a sizeable portion of the population — **a quarter or more** — expressed approval for measures like religious profiling, monitoring, internment, and requiring special IDs.



Planes, Trains, and Muslims, Oh My!

A poll conducted immediately after 9/11 found that a majority of Americans (58%) thought, “There should be tighter controls on all Muslims...while traveling on airlines or trains.”⁶ Two polls conducted in 2006 found that over 40% of Americans favored “extra checks” for Muslims before boarding airplanes.⁷ A Fox News poll in 2006 found that two-thirds of Americans thought there should be “special screening for Muslims who want to immigrate to the United States.”⁸ A 2010 poll found that four in five of Americans (79%) thought that the new TSA policy requiring “extra screening of all air travelers” of 13 predominantly Muslim countries was a “good idea.”⁹

Is Religious Profiling OK?

Immediately after 9/11, an ABC News poll found 51% of Americans agreed that “being Arab or Muslim” should be an “important” or “secondary” part of the “suspected terrorist” profile.¹⁰ The same poll found that that four in 10 Americans supported “giving the police powers to stop and search anyone who appears to be Arab or Muslim, at random.”¹¹ Just over half of Americans (55%) opposed that.

A 2004 poll found that 22% of Americans thought that “U.S. government agencies should profile citizens as potential threats based on being Muslim or having Middle Eastern heritage.”¹²

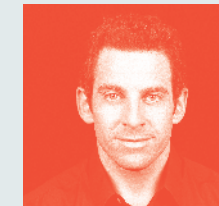


Photo:
Wikimedia Commons



Photo:
Facebook.com/EricBolling

“PROFILING: A BIPARTISAN ISSUE”

> **“We should profile Muslims. Or anyone who looks like he or she could conceivably be Muslim. And we should be honest about it.”¹³**
SAM HARRIS, Author of *The End of Faith*

“We know how to find terrorists among us: Profile, profile, profile.”¹⁴
ERIC BOLLING, Fox News host

Monitoring and infiltration

September 2001

Eighty-two percent of Americans said they’d either “favor” or “accept” the government “closely monitoring the whereabouts of legal immigrants to the United States from Arab and Muslim countries.” Only 17% said this action would “go too far.”¹⁵

2002 and 2003

Roughly one in four Americans believed that “the government should have more power to monitor Muslims more than other groups.” Both polls also indicated that half of Americans believed the government should *not* have “the power to monitor Muslims more than other groups.”¹⁶

2004

One in four Americans also thought that “mosques should be closely monitored and surveilled by US law enforcement agencies.” A slightly higher percentage, 29%, believed that “Muslim civic and volunteer organizations should be infiltrated by undercover law enforcement agents to keep watch on their activities and fundraising.”¹⁷

July 2007

Fifty-two percent of Americans felt that the FBI “should wiretap mosques to try to keep an eye out for radical preaching by Muslim clerics.” Thirty-nine percent disagreed and 9% didn’t know.¹⁸

“We have to go all out with surveillance. We have to monitor what’s happening in those communities and we have to be quick to call it terrorism.”

REPRESENTATIVE PETER KING¹⁹

Mass Internment of Muslims?

In 2007, one in four Americans said that they would “favor mass detentions of US Muslims if there were another 9/11.”²⁰ Sixty percent said they would oppose this action, and 15% were unsure.



DEJA VU

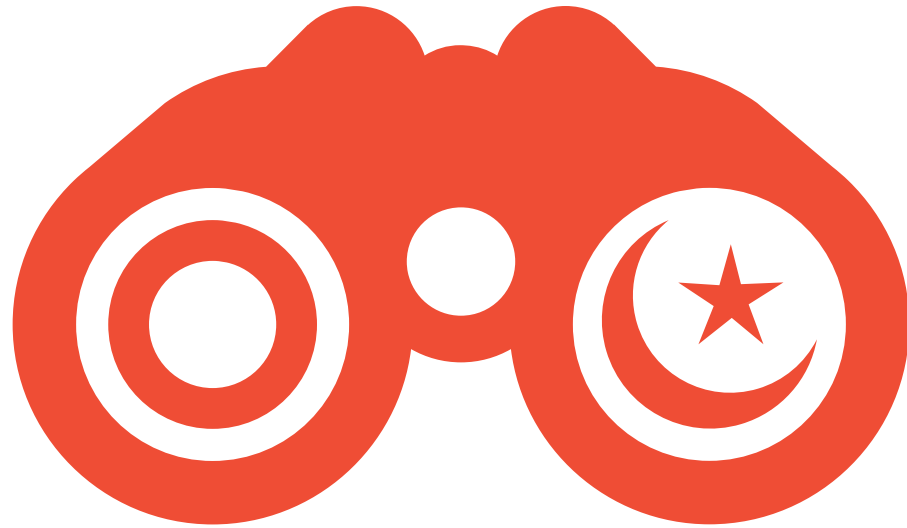
> “We should have been profiling on September 12, 2001. Let’s take a trip down memory lane here: The last war this country won, we put Japanese-Americans in internment camps, we dropped nuclear bombs on residential city centers. So, yes, profiling would be at least a good start.”
JONATHAN HOENIG²¹

Should Muslims Carry Special IDs?

In 2004, a quarter of Americans (27%) agreed that “all Muslim Americans should be required to register their whereabouts with the federal government.”²² In 2006, one in four Americans favored “requiring Muslims, including those who are US citizens, to carry a special ID as a means of preventing terrorist attacks.”²³ Six in 10 Americans opposed this idea.

> Perceptions of Muslims' Treatment

In the post-9/11 climate, Americans expected that Muslims would be targeted specifically, but many didn't see this targeting as "unfair" or as a violation of Muslims' rights.



Across four polls, and five questions, conducted between 2001 and 2003, a majority of Americans (at least 60%) believed that the "U.S. government was doing enough to protect the rights" of Muslims, whether they are citizens or not.²⁴ Another poll in 2002 found that a slightly smaller majority felt that the "civil rights of Muslims were being respected by this country's criminal justice system."²⁵

A 2005 poll found that half of Americans (49%) said it was "extremely" or "very likely" that "the Patriot Act would be used to investigate Muslim Americans."²⁶ Another 36% of Americans said it was somewhat likely, while only 15% thought it was "not too likely" or "not at all likely."

Polls conducted in 2007 and 2011 found that, approximately half of Americans thought that Muslims were treated fairly by law enforcement. When asked, they disagreed that "Muslims in the United States were targeted unfairly by law enforcement."²⁷

> In 2007 and 2011, Americans were split over whether they thought that the "government's anti-terrorism policies singled out Muslims." Of this population, a little over half of the population expressed that they were "bothered" at least "to some degree" while slightly under half of the population expressed that they were bothered "not much" or "not at all" by the "singling out of Muslims."²⁸

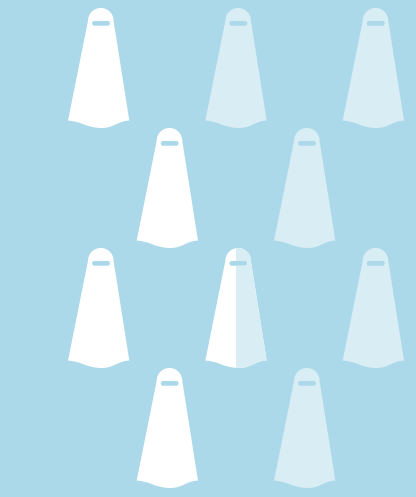
> Do Muslims Face Discrimination?

In the decade after 9/11, the number of Americans who believed that Muslims faced discrimination in the U.S. rose.

Four polls, conducted between 2000 and 2013 asked Americans how much discrimination Muslims faced.²⁹ In 2000, half the population (53%) said that Muslims faced at least “some” discrimination.³⁰ In the later polls (2005, 2009, and 2013), more Americans perceived that Muslims were facing discrimination (67%, 81%, and 73% respectively).

During the 10 years after 9/11, nine polls found that a vast majority of Americans thought it was “very” or “somewhat likely” that “Muslims would be singled out unfairly by people in this country.”³¹ An average of 37% thought it was “very likely” and 43% thought it would be “somewhat likely.” An average of 16% thought it was “not too likely” or “not at all likely.”

In later years, however, Americans’ responses to Muslim discrimination were varied. Three polls conducted between 2009 and 2014 by PRRI and Pew indicate that approximately two-thirds of Americans believed that “there is a lot of discrimination against Muslims in the United States today.”³² But according to two polls conducted by Rasmussen in 2011 and 2013, approximately two-thirds of Americans do not believe their Muslim compatriots are “treated unfairly because of their religion and ethnicity.”³³



FLASHBACK

> Back in 1993, only 45% thought that “Muslims really face discrimination” and 43% believed there was “a tendency to discriminate against Muslims in the US.”³⁴

> What Do Americans Think About Prejudice Towards Muslims?

While Americans are not generally aware of specific threats or episodes of prejudice towards Muslims, they are aware of a more general climate of prejudice.

> Threats and Jokes: Not Okay, But Expected

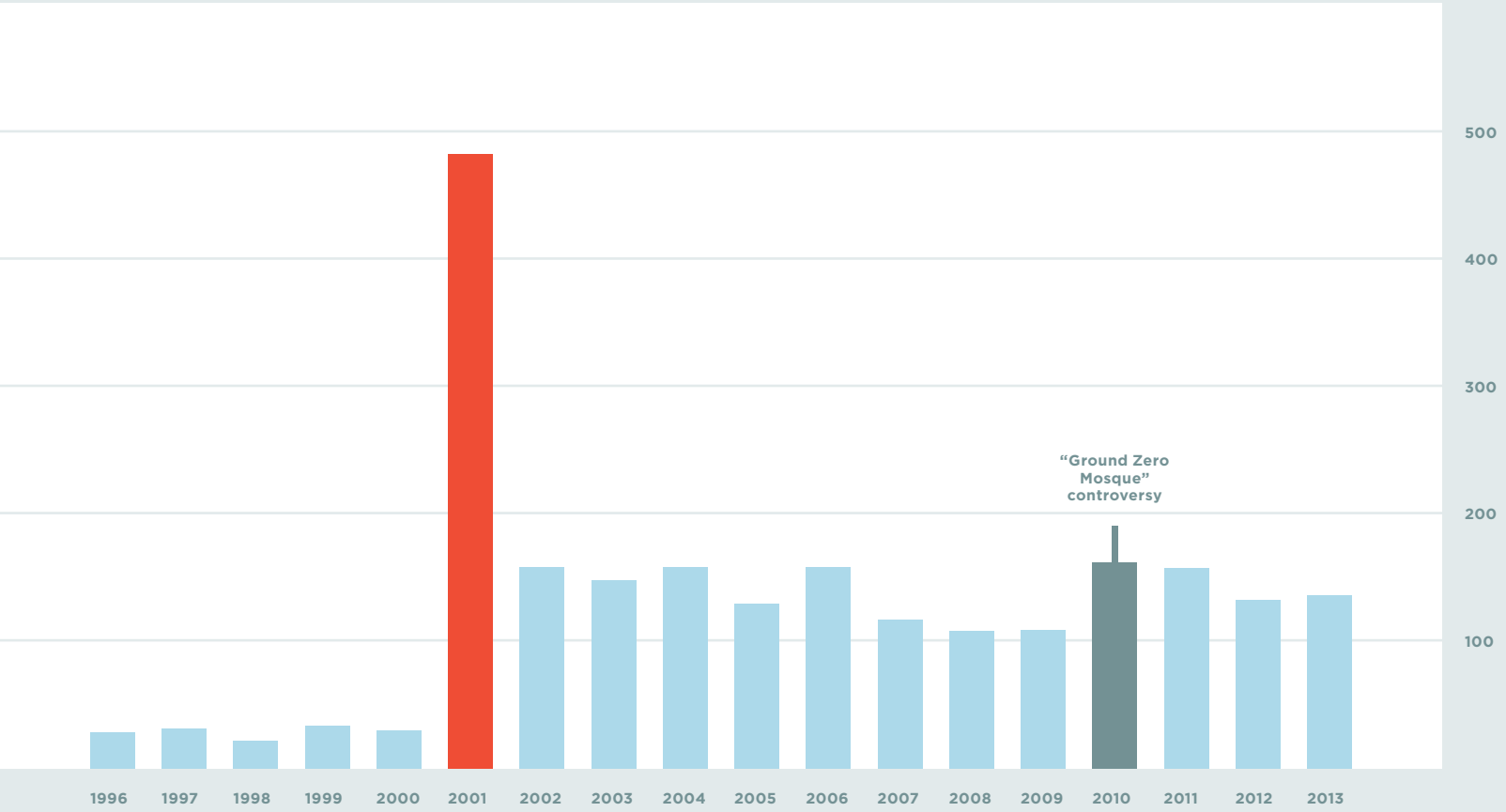
In the days following 9/11, 96% of Americans thought that vandalism of mosques and the threatening of Muslims was “inappropriate.”³⁴ Sixty-four percent of that group said it was absolutely “inexcusable” while 32% said it was “understandable considering the severity of the attacks.” Though Americans overwhelmingly were against this behavior, hate crimes against Muslims reached an all time high after 9/11.³⁵

A few months later, when asked about the appropriateness of people making “jokes or negative remarks about Arabs or Muslims,” 51% said “there is no excuse for it” and 43% said it was “understandable” but that they “wish it didn’t happen.”³⁶

FIGURE 14

Hate crimes against Muslims are five times than before 9/11
Hate crime incidents against Muslims, by year

Source: FBI Uniform Crime Statistics
Washingtonpost.com/wonkblog



> Hatred and hostility in the decade after 9/11?

Even though hate crimes against Muslims were at an all-time high in the months after 9/11, 61% of Americans surveyed in the fall of 2001 said they hadn't "seen or heard about discrimination in their area since 9/11."³⁷

In 2006, 65% of Americans claimed they had *not* "recently heard other people say prejudiced things against Muslims."³⁸ One in three reported that they had heard a prejudiced comment recently. In that same year, 83% of Americans said that they didn't have any "close friends or relatives who they would describe as prejudiced against Muslims."³⁹

According to Pew, between 2006 and 2011, Americans began noticing more hostility towards Muslims. Between those years, the number of Americans responding that "most" or "many" Americans were "hostile towards Muslims" nearly doubled.⁴⁰

MUSLIMS AS TERRORISTS

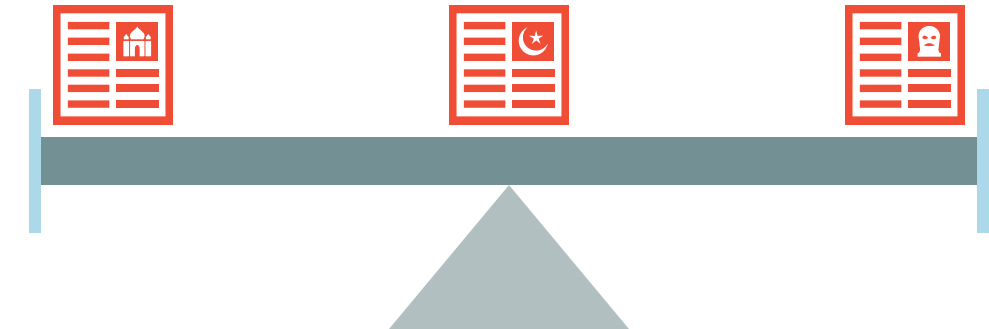
> In August 2011, 60% of Americans believed that "too many Americans think that all Muslims are terrorists."⁴¹

> Muslims in the media: Is coverage fair?

After the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, when some in the media initially reported that the attack was likely committed by an Arab Muslim, 60% of Americans said that "the media coverage of the bombing was fair."⁴²

In August 2010, amid the so-called Ground Zero Mosque controversy, 42% of Americans thought coverage of Muslims is "too negative," while one in three thought it is "generally fair."⁴³

>> Now we'll take a look at the ways in which Americans have come to view their Muslim compatriots' place in American society.



CHAPTER FIVE

5

Belonging in America:
Community mosques are okay,
Muslims in politics are not

Muslims have long been a part of the American story.

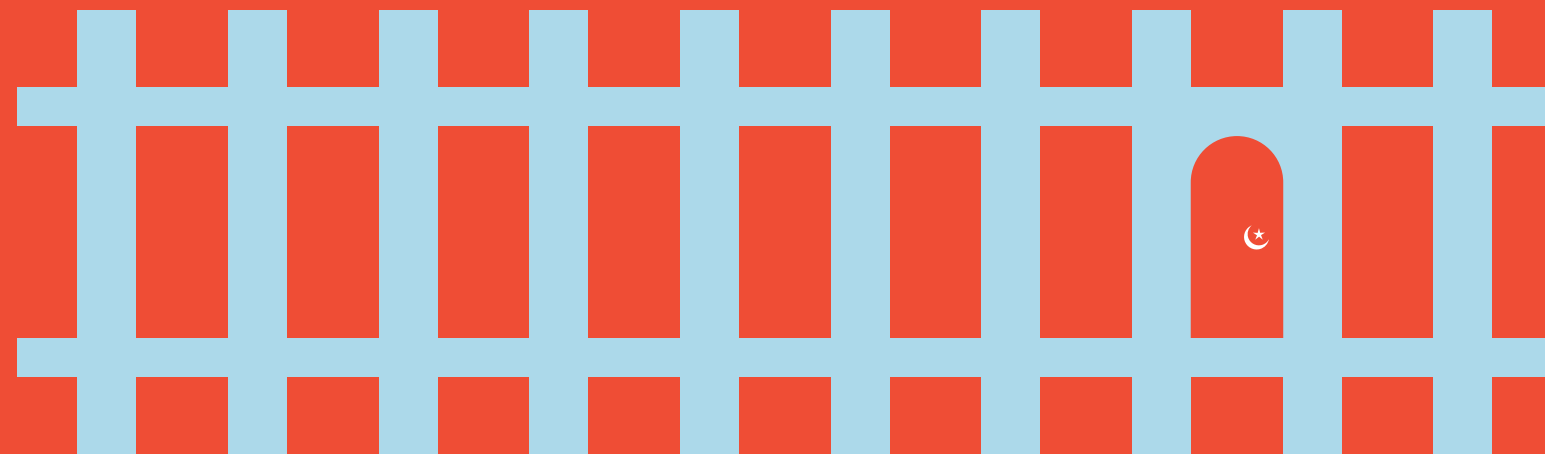
While historians debate the exact dates of their arrival, few question the circumstances of it: the first wave was by force, the second by choice. Muslims comprised between 15% and 30% of the African slaves brought to colonial America.¹ Later in the nineteenth century, immigrants from former territories of the Ottoman Empire arrived, and in the mid-twentieth century Muslims emigrated from

North Africa, South Asia, and elsewhere. Today, the Muslim population in the United States hovers around three million.²

Today, most American Muslims are socially, politically, and economically integrated. According to Gallup, American Muslim women are one of the most highly educated religious groups in the country, second

only to Jewish women.³ American Muslims have higher degrees of economic gender parity than any other group, and an overwhelming majority — 93% — consider themselves “loyal to the United States.”⁴ American Muslims express that they are “satisfied with the way things are going in their lives,” and nearly 80% are happy with “how things are going in their communities.”⁵

> In a 1995 Gallup poll, 12% of Americans indicated that they would not like to have a Muslim neighbor.⁶ Two polls conducted more than 10 years later, show a 10% increase. According to data from the *Los Angeles Times* and Gallup, approximately one in five Americans say they would not like to have a Muslim as a neighbor.⁷ Still, three out of four Americans reported that they would be okay with — or even like — a Muslim neighbor.



**But Muslims' integration
does not mean that they
are always accepted in
American society.**

**Acts of violence and
terrorism in many Muslim
countries — and in the
US and Europe —**

have triggered a climate of suspicion and fear of Muslims. Discrimination, hate crimes and the erosion of civil liberties are often consequences. More than half of all American Muslims have reported that after 9/11 life became more difficult.⁸

As images of violence and brutality from groups like ISIS ricochet throughout the world, American Muslims negotiate their religious and national identities, often under pressure from

detractors who demand that they choose between their faith and their country. Do Americans feel that Muslims deserve the same rights as their other compatriots? Are they loyal to the values of the United States? Do Americans believe that they should be political leaders? Are they integrated into the cultural, social, and political fabrics of this country? This chapter examines the degree to which Americans believe their Muslim co-citizens belong in this country.

> Muslims in the Neighborhood: How Close is Too Close?

The Mother Mosque of America, once known as the Rose of Fraternity Lodge, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, was built in 1934. Though it's not the oldest one in the country (a mosque in Ross, North Dakota was erected in 1929 but torn down several decades later) it is the longest-standing. For more than four decades, Muslims who had migrated to America's heartland gathered inside the small white structure to worship.⁹ Since the 1930s, mosques have grown in number along with the American Muslim population.

Today there are more than 2,000 mosques in the United States.¹⁰ Most are located in or around major metropolitan areas, and cities with larger Muslim communities. Between 1990 and 2000, the total number of mosques increased by 42%.¹¹ From 2000 to 2010, they increased by 74%.¹² What do Americans think about mosques in their communities? What does polling data tell us about their views on the so-called "Ground Zero Mosque?"



> American Views of Mosques, Big and Small

In the wake of the 2010 controversy over the construction of the Park51 Islamic Community Center — dubbed the “Ground Zero Mosque” by its opponents — Americans were asked about their views of new mosque construction in the United States.

Polling data shows that Americans have been generally supportive of mosques being built in their communities.

In 2010, the Public Religion Research Institute found that three out of four Americans (76%) reported that they would favor the construction of mosques in their community.¹³ A 2010 *Newsweek* poll reported similar results (72%), as did a 2011 survey by CNN (69%).¹⁴

A *Time* poll conducted in 2010 showed that more than half of all American (55%) said they would be okay with a mosque being built just two blocks from their home.¹⁵

Despite Americans’ support for mosque construction near their homes, they were significantly less supportive of the proposed Park51 Islamic Community Center in New York. Though most did acknowledge that the Muslim owners of the property had the right to build the facility, they opposed its construction. This caused concern among the mosque’s supporters, who believed that opposition to the project was rooted in the notion that Islam was responsible for the attacks of 9/11.

> According to three Pew surveys conducted in 2001, 2008, and 2009, approximately one in four Americans favored “Muslim mosques” being able to “apply for government funds to provide social services to people who need them.”¹⁶ On average, half of the population “opposed” mosques being able to apply. While the Constitution prohibits the use of federal funds for religious activities, it does not prohibit funds for non-religious social services. According to a Gallup poll from 2003, 56% of Americans disapprove of Islamic religious organizations using federal funds to support social programs like daycare and drug rehabilitation.¹⁷



Photo: David Shankbon

Twelve surveys conducted during the “Ground Zero Mosque” controversy found that a majority of Americans were against the center’s construction.

Four polls conducted in August and September of 2010 indicated that more than six in 10 Americans believed that building a mosque and Islamic center near Ground Zero was “wrong” or “not appropriate.”¹⁸

Five surveys that asked whether Americans “support” or “oppose” the project found similar results: roughly six in 10 Americans said they “oppose” the construction of an Islamic Center near Ground Zero, while approximately one in four said they support it.¹⁹

Three other polls, each conducted by different organizations, found that a majority of Americans also indicated that the center “should not” be built; that they “generally opposed” its construction; and agreed with its opponents.²⁰

Despite the fact that most Americans didn’t want the mosque to be built, constitutional rights that limit government interference protected the project. And while they weren’t happy about it, many Americans understood that. In four polls conducted in August and September of 2010 by Fox News and Quinnipiac, Americans expressed overwhelmingly that Muslims “had the right to build a mosque near Ground Zero” in Manhattan. Between one-quarter and one-third of the population thought that Muslims “did not have the right.”²¹

> Muslims in the Classroom and Workplace

As the American population becomes more diverse, discussions about minority rights become more necessary. This is particularly so in classrooms and workplaces across the country.

How have Americans viewed work and school accommodations over the years?

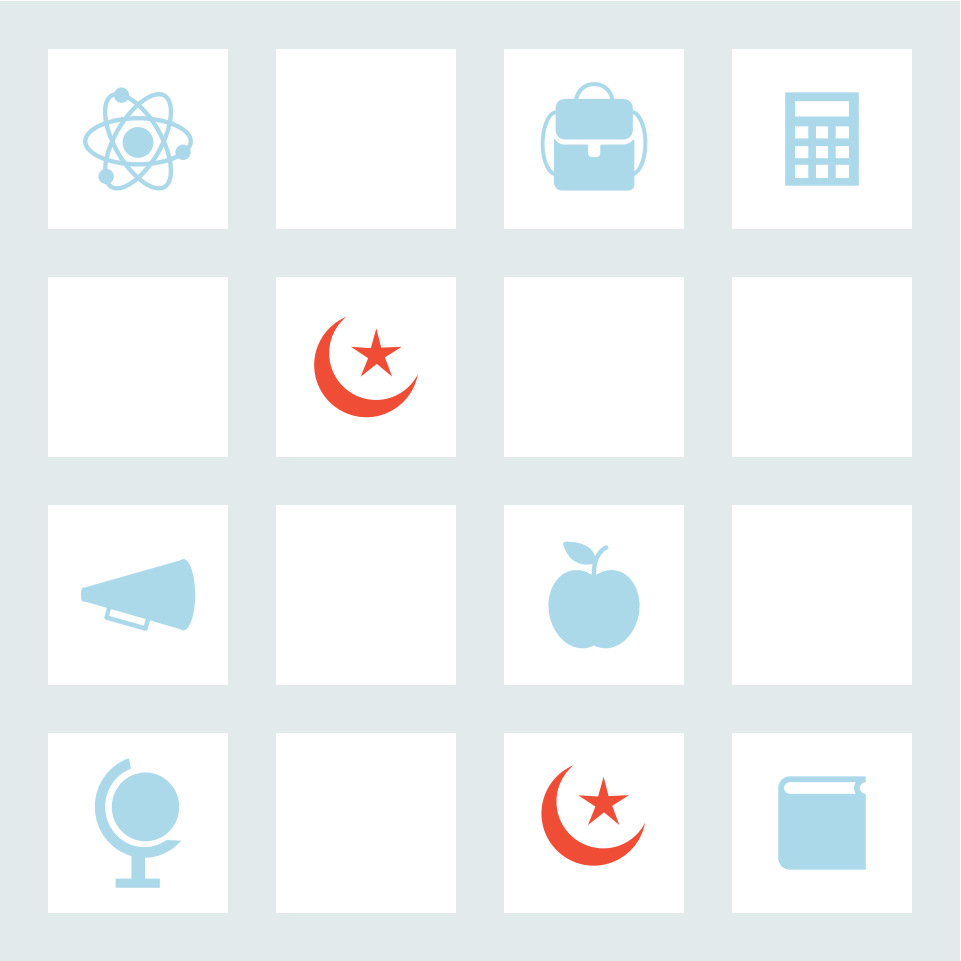
A 2004 study by the Public Agenda Foundation reported that over half of Americans (57%) didn’t think “companies should be required to give Muslim workers daily breaks for religious observances,” i.e. prayer.²²

Americans view accommodations at school slightly more favorably. A Pew survey conducted in 2000 showed that over half of Americans thought that Muslim holidays should be given the same attention by public schools as Christmas celebrations. A third of Americans thought that this is unnecessary.²³

A 1993 Zogby poll found that Americans were split over whether or not “school cafeterias should recognize unique dietary needs of Muslim students.”²⁴ Thirty-eight percent agreed at least “somewhat” that schools should accommodate Muslim dietary needs, while 37% disagreed at least “somewhat.” One-quarter expressed that they were unsure.

FLASHBACK

> A 1993 Zogby poll indicated that half of Americans (49%) believed that Muslims should not get “days off with pay” on major Islamic holidays. The same poll found that one in three Americans did not think that “Muslims should be allowed time off from work on Fridays [the Muslim holy day] to pray.”²⁵



> In March of 2015, New York mayor Bill De Blasio announced that New York City schools would close in observance of two Muslim religious holidays, Eid Al-Adha and Eid Al-Fitr.

> Views on the Veil

In 1993, a majority of Americans (59%) believed that “Muslim women should be allowed to veils to work, if they desire.” Twenty percent disagreed.²⁶ In a 2005 survey conducted by Pew, 57% of Americans believed that “banning the Muslim headscarf in public places, including schools” was a “bad idea.” One in three expressed that a ban would be a “good idea.”²⁷

How about Muslim students who wear the headscarf? A 2007 *Newsweek* poll found that 69% of Americans believed that they should be allowed to.²⁸

HOW WOULD PARENTS FEEL
ABOUT A MUSLIM ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL TEACHER
IN THEIR COMMUNITY?

> According to a 2011 Public Religion Research Institute survey, roughly four in 10 would be “uncomfortable” with it, while a majority — 57% — would be okay with it.²⁹

> Muslims and Political Office

The degree to which American Muslims “belong” extends beyond the confines of school and work. Politics is important, too. Participating in the democratic project is one way to express one’s patriotism. For American Muslims, whose loyalty to the ideals of the United States is often questioned, that participation is particularly important. Yet, when Muslims do get involved politically, their participation is often met with skepticism. In the lead-up to the 2012 president election, Senator Michele Bachmann claimed that then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s chief of staff, Huma Abedin, was connected to the Muslim Brotherhood.

The two Muslim members of Congress — Representatives Keith Ellison and Andre Carson — have experienced character assassination and charges that they are “infiltrating” the U.S. government.

In the past two presidential election cycles, the label “Muslim” has been transformed into an accusation. In 2008, some opponents of then-Senator Barack Obama labeled him a Muslim, turning an inaccurate description of his religious affiliation (Obama is a Christian) into a slur that was intended to diminish support for him. A 2014 Harvard survey found that 54% of Republicans believe that “deep down,” Obama is a Muslim.³⁰

In September of 2015 — after this study was completed — Republican presidential candidate Ben Carson appeared on *Meet the Press*, and said that he would “not advocate putting a Muslim in charge” of the United States. When pressed further, he suggested that the values of Islam are at odds with the Constitution, and that a potential Muslim president must reject certain tenets of their faith. His controversial remarks revived an American discussion about religion and the presidency.

What do Americans think about Muslims in politics? Could a Muslim ever be elected President? How about a Muslim Supreme Court Justice?

> A Muslim in the White House?

Many Americans, around half in some polls, reported that they would be unsupportive of a Muslim presidential candidate or be “uncomfortable” with a Muslim in the White House.



In the years following 9/11, three polling agencies asked Americans if they would vote for a Muslim president. In a 2003 Pew poll, 56% agreed they would vote for a Muslim candidate nominated by their party of choice.³¹ A 2006 *Los Angeles Times* poll asked if “you could vote for a Muslim candidate for president” and only 34% said yes, and a majority (54%) said no.³² A 2008 poll also asked this and 45% said yes while 48% said no.³³

In four polls conducted between 2003 and 2007, nearly half of Americans responded that they would be “less likely” to “vote for” or “support” a presidential candidate if he or she were Muslim. Approximately the same percentage reported that it “doesn’t matter.”³⁴ (See Figure 15.)

FIGURE 15

Americans “Less Likely” to Vote for a Muslim President

Organization	Date	Positive, more likely to vote/support	Negative, less likely	Doesn't matter
Fox News	1.14.2003	3	49	44
Fox News	12.5.2006	5	45	42
Pew	2.7.2007	1	46	49
Pew	8.1.2007	3	45	49

In 2007 a Fox survey found that eight in 10 Americans (83%) believed that “most Americans would not be comfortable with a Muslim president.”³⁵

When the Associated Press asked Americans in 2007 how they felt about a potential Muslim presidential candidate, more than four in 10 (42%) said “very uncomfortable.”³⁶ In 2011, the Public Religion Research Institute reported that six in 10 Americans (63%) would be “uncomfortable” with a Muslim serving as president.³⁷

(A 2015 poll by Gallup, which was conducted after this study was completed, found that a majority of Americans, 60%, would vote for a Muslim president).³⁸

> A 2010 *Time* poll found that roughly one in three Americans believed that a Muslim should not be allowed to be President of the United States or a justice on the American Supreme Court.³⁹ That year, Fox News reported that 53% of Americans would be “uncomfortable” with a Muslim Supreme Court justice.⁴⁰

> Views on American Muslims’ Patriotism and Loyalty

Several polls over the years have asked Americans what they think about the loyalty and patriotism of American Muslims, and the compatibility of their religious values with the values of the United States.

While many Americans have viewed their Muslim neighbors as “patriotic,” significant portions of the population have doubted their loyalty over the years.

A 2006 German Marshall Fund survey, for example, indicated that over half of all Americans (56%) do not believe that the values of Islam are compatible with the values of America’s democracy.⁴¹

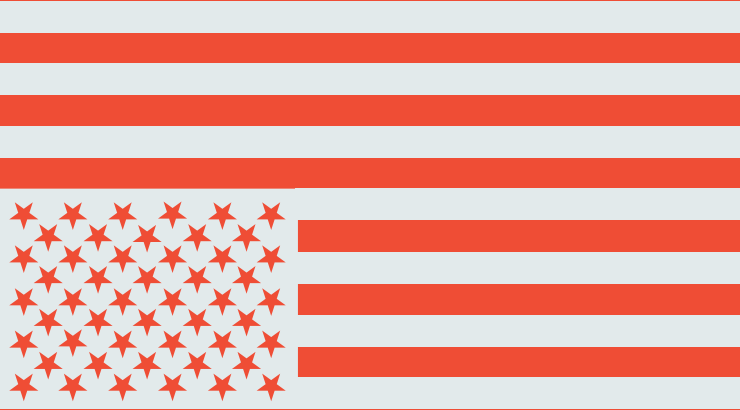
In 2007, *Newsweek* found that while four in 10 Americans said that Muslims are “equally loyal” to their religion and the United States, one in three said that they were less loyal to the United States.⁴²

“America counts millions of Muslims amongst our citizens, and Muslims make an incredibly valuable contribution to our country. Muslims are doctors, lawyers, law professors, members of the military, entrepreneurs, shopkeepers, moms and dads. And they need to be treated with respect. In our anger and emotion, our fellow Americans must treat each other with respect.”

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH, speaking at the Islamic Center of Washington, DC after the attacks of 9/11.

FLASHBACK

> A 1993 poll conducted by the National Conference Survey on Intergroup Relations asked if American Muslims are “anti-American.” More than half (53%) said they agreed.⁴³ In the wake of 9/11, Wirthlin Worldwide posed a similar question, asking Americans “how many” Muslims in this country are anti-American. Four in 10 said “just a few.”⁴⁴



One in four Americans, according to a *Time* poll from 2010, believed that their Muslim compatriots are not “patriotic.”⁴⁵ Over four years later, ahead of the 2012 elections, Gallup found that over half of Americans (53%) reported that American Muslims are supportive of the United States, while one in three said they are not.⁴⁶

What do Americans say about the contributions of their Muslim neighbors? Do they view them as an important part of the religious community in the United States?

The Public Religion Research Institute asked Americans in 2011 and 2012 if they thought that American Muslims were an important part of the country’s religious community. Here’s how they responded:⁴⁷ (See Figure 16.)

FIGURE 16 Agree or Disagree?: “American Muslims are an important part of the religious community in the US.”

Organization	Date	Completely agree	Mostly agree	Mostly disagree	Completely disagree	Don’t know/ Refused
PRRI	2/11/2011	24	38	17	13	8
PRRI	8/1/2011	15	39	27	16	3
PRRI	2/1/2012	21	33	19	14	14

Later, in 2013, PRRI found that one in four Americans believe that “Muslims are changing American culture and way of life for the worse,” while just 18% believe they are “changing it for the better.”⁴⁸

> Immigrants and Integration

Muslim immigration to the United States has increased in recent years. In the two decades between 1992 and 2012, Muslim immigration to the United States doubled.⁴⁹ According to a 2013 study, since 1992 the United States has admitted an estimated total of 1.7 million Muslims.⁵⁰ What do Americans think about Muslim immigration to the United States? Do they believe that Muslims who immigrate to America will be loyal to her values?

According to two polls conducted in the year after 9/11, three-quarters of Americans believed that the US government should “restrict” the number of immigrants from Arab and Muslim countries.⁵¹ This level of support for restrictions on immigrants is much higher than it was after the first World Trade Center bombings in 1993, when less than half of Americans believed Muslim immigration should be restricted.⁵²

FLASHBACK

> A 1993 Zogby poll asked if the Muslim population was growing too rapidly. 20% agreed, while 71% disagreed.⁵³

Other data shows similar views. A 2002 Gallup poll reported that four in 10 Americans wanted to reduce the number of immigrants from Muslim-majority countries, while the same number think immigration should continue at its current level.⁵⁴ A 2007 *Newsweek* poll found that 45% of Americans felt that the United States was allowing “too many” Muslim immigrants.⁵⁵

It’s not just immigration that concerns some, but rather how Muslim immigrants integrate once they are here. In general, though, polling data has indicated over the years that Americans tend to believe that Muslims coming to the United States want to be equal participants and support its values.

Three Pew surveys from 2005, 2006 and 2011 found that one-third of Americans believed that Muslim immigrants want to “adopt our customs and way of life.” Still, nearly half of respondents said Muslims wanted to be “distinct from the larger United States society.”⁵⁶

A Fox News survey on the fifth anniversary of 9/11 reported that just under half (46%) of Americans believed that Muslim immigrants “really want to become a part of this country and support American traditions and culture,” while approximately four in 10 (38%) say they don’t.⁵⁷

A 2008 Transatlantic Trends survey reported that six in 10 Americans agreed that Muslims coming into the United States today want to integrate. That organization also found in 2010 that 45% of Americans believed that Muslims had integrated “well,” while 40% believed they had integrated “poorly.” For children of Muslim immigrants born in the United States, a stark difference emerged. Sixty-two percent of Americans reported they were well integrated, while only 24% said they were “poorly” integrated.⁵⁸

For additional polling questions related to the topic of belonging, see Chapter 5 Notes.⁵⁹

CONCLUSION

C

This Super Survey tells a story that is neither overly optimistic, nor entirely bleak. It paints a paradoxical picture that is **sometimes hopeful and at other times discouraging.**

On the one hand, Americans feel more coldly towards Muslims than other religious groups, and significant portions of the population have expressed support for practices and policies that would curb the freedoms of American Muslims. On the other hand, most Americans have favorable views of their Muslim compatriots and have no problem with Muslim women donning headscarves at school and work. Most Americans opposed the construction of an Islamic center near the site of the 9/11 attacks in New York, yet the vast majority have also said they would support the construction of a mosque in their own neighborhood.

What this Super Survey shows is that **Americans have tended to be more weary of Islam and Muslims when they're presented in a general way or tied up in a political issue.** But Americans have been more supportive of the religion and its followers within the context of local, everyday issues.

This report also provides important insights into the state of Islamophobia in America today. By some estimates, prejudice towards and discrimination against Muslims is at an all time high in the United States. Hate crimes against Muslims today are five times more likely than they were before 9/11, having spiked considerably in 2010 during the controversy surrounding the so-called Ground Zero Mosque.¹ This rise in hate crimes accompanies increasingly negative views about Muslims' religion. More Americans believe Islam "encourages violence"

today than did after 9/11. This correlation between increased hate crimes and negative views of Islam suggests what many have long thought: **that negative views translate into hostile actions.**

Between December 2014 and July 2015, nine Muslims were shot and killed in attacks in the U.S. and Canada. Only one of those incidents, the shooting in Chapel Hill that took the lives of three students, received national media coverage.² This uptick in hate crimes is dangerous for America's pluralistic society, which endeavors to be a melting pot where all citizens, regardless of religion, can achieve the American Dream.

Though most of the polling data in this report doesn't measure Americans' support for prejudice towards or discrimination against Muslims, occasionally it does. In numerous polls, sizeable minorities of Americans responded in support of policies that would discriminate against Muslims: increasing profiling at airports, unwarranted spying on Muslim communities, and even detention of the U.S. Muslim population. These findings should also be troubling for Americans.

This report shows that while there is much to praise about Americans' attitudes towards Muslims—both at home and abroad—**there is still much work to be done.** We hope this Super Survey can inform lawmakers, journalists, activists, and ordinary Americans, as we all strive to make this country a more inclusive place for all.

ABOUT

A

Based in Georgetown University's Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, the Bridge Initiative is a multi-year research project that connects the academic study of Islamophobia with the public.

This pioneering “crossover” initiative brings together celebrated faculty, subject-matter experts, and seasoned researchers to examine attitudes and behaviors towards Muslims; dissect public discourses on Islam; and uncover the operational mechanisms of engineered Islamophobia in an effort to raise public awareness and enrich public discourse on this pernicious form of prejudice.

Through its website, The Bridge Initiative disseminates original and accessible research, offers engaging commentary on contemporary news, and hosts a repository of high-caliber studies, polls, articles, and other informational resources. By wedding rigorous research and analysis with the accessibility and reach of the Internet, the Bridge Initiative seeks to fulfill Thomas Jefferson’s dream of a “well-informed citizenry.”

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N

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CONCLUSION

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