

Survey Examines Perceptions of Muslim Americans

*Understanding the Spread of Myths, Misinformation,
and Hate Against Muslims in the United States*

Washington, DC – Thursday, November 1, 2018 New America, in collaboration with the American Muslim Institution (AMI), today released new research that examines the general public's perceptions of Muslim Americans. The "Americans' Views of Muslims Survey" was conducted leading up to the midterm elections in November 2018 – a time period when myths and misinformation about Muslims have figured prominently in some local, state, and federal elections. The research provides insight into public perceptions of Muslim Americans at both the national and local levels in Houston, Orlando, Tampa, and the Washington, DC, metropolitan area, where oversamplings were done.

Findings include:

- **Americans are largely accepting of Muslim Americans, but express concerns.** More than half of non-Muslim Americans are concerned about extremism spreading within Muslim communities in the United States. Further, one-in-three respondents each reported feeling uncomfortable when they see Muslim Americans wearing a veil or other Islamic attire; one-in-three respondents would be concerned if a mosque or Islamic center was built in their neighborhood; and one-in-three respondents believe Muslims should be subject to extra security screenings at airports.
- **Americans have an inaccurate understanding of the scope of the Muslim population in the U.S.** Non-Muslim Americans believe one-in-six Americans are Muslim (or 17% of the population), whereas Muslim Americans actually comprise of about 1% of the U.S. population. Two-in-five respondents do not personally know a Muslim American.
- **Discrimination against Muslims is evident to respondents and skepticism around hate crime reporting is low. Recognition of discrimination against Jews is much more limited.** A majority of non-Muslim Americans (71%) agree there is a lot of discrimination against Muslim Americans, levels akin to discrimination against Transgender people (68%) and Blacks (67%). Two-thirds disagree the same discrimination is evident for Jews in America, however. It should be noted this survey was conducted prior to the October 27th Pittsburgh Synagogue shooting.
- **Demographic profile of respondents and news consumption play a role, but the strongest indicator of negative attitudes toward Muslims is ideological, following political party lines.** Republicans are at least 1.5 times more likely than respondents overall to agree with metrics indicating non-acceptance. They have greater concern about extremism spreading in Muslim communities and over a mosque being built in their neighborhood, and greater discomfort when seeing a Muslim wearing a veil or other Islamic attire. More disagreed Muslim Americans are as patriotic as other Americans or that it is positive over 100 Muslims ran for office in the 2018 elections. Further, fewer agreed that diversity is good for America.



“It’s our earnest hope to use this project to generate fresh ideas and drive a broader public conversation about confronting and addressing the scourge of myths and misinformation about Muslim Americans and other minorities,” said Robert L. McKenzie, PhD, Director and Senior fellow at New America and the project’s principal investigator.

Independent research firm SSRS conducted a multimodal study with 1,785 interviews from October 16 through October 21, 2018. The study included a national non-Muslim sample with 1,165 interviews, which was based on SSRS’s national probability web panel (N=1,031) and the SSRS Omnibus telephone survey (N=134), a nationally representative weekly telephone survey. An additional 620 interviews were conducted in four cities with non-Muslim oversamples via a nonprobability (opt in) web panel, with 151 interviews collected in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area, 150 in Houston, 165 in Orlando; and 154 in Tampa.

About New America

[New America](#) is a think tank committed to renewing American politics, prosperity, and purpose in the Digital Age. We generate big ideas, bridge the gap between technology and policy, and curate broad public conversations. Structurally, we combine the best of a policy research institute, technology laboratory, public forum, and media platform for ideas. We are a distinctive community of scholars, writers, researchers, technologists, and community activists who believe deeply in the possibility of American renewal. New America encompasses both a national headquarters and a set of local hubs designed to surface local innovation and share best practices.

For questions or information about the project or its findings, contact Robert L. McKenzie, PhD, Director and Senior Fellow at New America and the project’s principal investigator.

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About SSRS:

SSRS is a full-service market and survey research firm managed by a core of dedicated professionals with advanced degrees in the social sciences. Service offerings include the Omnibus Survey, Probability Panel and other Online Solutions as well as custom research programs – all driven by a central commitment to methodological vigor. The SSRS team is renowned for its multimodal approach, as well as its sophisticated and proprietary sample designs. Typical projects for the company include complex strategic, tactical and public opinion initiatives in the US and in more than 40 countries worldwide. SSRS is research, refined. Visit www.ssrs.com for more information.

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