

Muslims Widely Seen As Facing Discrimination*

9 September 2009



Overview

Many See Muslims as Facing Discrimination	
<i>There is a lot of discrimination against...</i>	
Religious groups	%
Muslims	58
Jews	35
Evangelical Christians	27
Atheists	26
Mormons	24
Other groups	
Gays and lesbians	64
Hispanics	52
Blacks	49
Women	37

Eight years after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Americans see Muslims as facing more discrimination inside the U.S. than other major religious groups. Nearly six-in-ten adults (58%) say that Muslims are subject to a lot of discrimination, far more than say the same about Jews, evangelical Christians, atheists or Mormons. In fact, of all the groups asked about, only gays and lesbians are seen as facing more discrimination than Muslims, with

* Results from the 2009 Annual Religion and Public Life Survey, the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. <http://www.pewforum.org>. Washington, DC, USA. Complete survey results located at: <http://pewforum.org/newassets/images/reports/summer09/survey0909.pdf>

nearly two-thirds (64%) of the public saying there is a lot of discrimination against homosexuals.

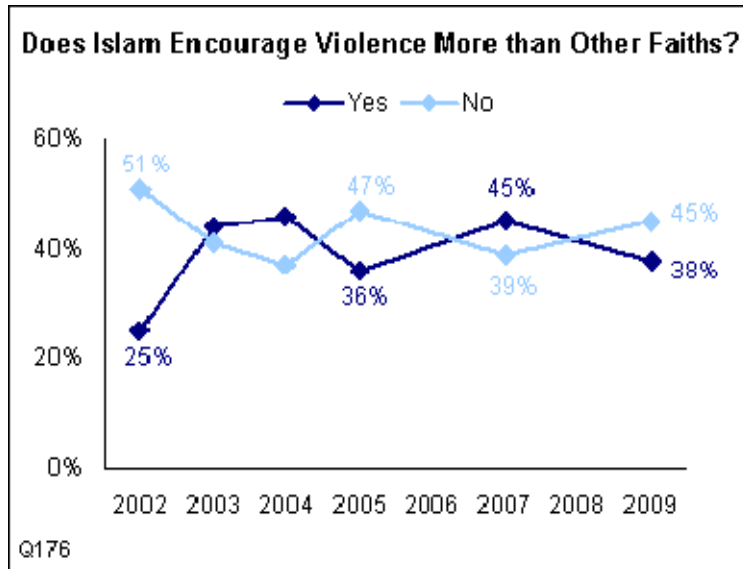
The poll also finds that two-thirds of non-Muslims (65%) say that Islam and their own faith are either very different or somewhat different, while just 17% take the view that Islam and their own religion are somewhat or very similar. But Islam is not the only religion that Americans see as mostly different from their own. When asked about faiths other than their own, six-in-ten adults say Buddhism is mostly different, with similar numbers saying the same about Mormonism (59%) and Hinduism (57%).

<i>Compared with your religion, is...</i>	Very/ Somewhat Similar	Very/ Somewhat Different	DK
	%	%	%
Protestantism	44	38	18
Catholicism	43	49	8
Judaism	35	47	18
Mormonism	21	59	20
Islam	17	65	19
Buddhism	15	60	25
Hinduism	12	57	32

Based on respondents who are not affiliated with the religion in question. Those without a religious affiliation asked whether each is similar to or different from their own beliefs rather than their own religion.

By a smaller margin, Americans are also inclined to view Judaism and Catholicism as somewhat or very different from their own faith (47% different vs. 35% similar for Judaism, 49% different vs. 43% similar for Catholicism). Only when asked about Protestantism do perceived similarities outweigh perceived differences, with 44% of non-Protestants in the survey saying Protestantism and their own faith are similar and 38% saying they are different.

Results from the latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, conducted Aug. 11-17 among 2,010 adults reached on both landlines and cell phones, reveal that high levels of perceived similarity with religious groups are associated with more favorable views of those groups. Those who see their own faith as similar to Catholicism, Judaism, Mormonism and Islam are significantly more likely than others to have favorable views of members of these groups.



Detailed questions about perceptions of Islam show that a plurality of the public (45%) says Islam is no more likely than other faiths to encourage violence among its believers; 38% take the opposite view, saying that Islam does encourage violence more than other faiths do. Views on this question have fluctuated in recent years, with the current findings showing that the view that Islam is connected with violence has declined since 2007, when 45% of the public said that Islam encourages violence more than other religions do.

Almost half of Americans (45%) say they personally know someone who is Muslim. Also, slim majorities of the public are able to correctly answer questions about the name Muslims use to refer to God (53%) and the name of Islam's sacred text (52%), with four-in-ten (41%) correctly answering *both* "Allah" and "the Koran." These results are consistent with recent years and show modest increases in Americans' familiarity with Islam compared with the months following the 9/11 attacks. Those people who know a Muslim are less likely to see Islam as encouraging of violence; similarly, those who are most familiar with Islam and Muslims are most likely to express favorable views of Muslims and to see similarities between Islam and their own religion.

Views of Islam and Violence

Americans' views of the link between Islam and violence have fluctuated in recent years. Currently, a plurality (45%) says Islam is no more likely than other faiths to encourage violence among its believers, compared with 38% who say that Islam does encourage violence more than other religions. This is similar to positions on this issue in 2005. By contrast, in Pew Research Center surveys conducted in 2004 and 2007, more people said Islam does encourage violence than said it does not.

**Is Islam More Likely Than Other Faiths
To Encourage Violence?**

	Mar <u>02</u> %	Jul <u>03</u> %	Jul <u>04</u> %	Jul <u>05</u> %	Aug <u>07</u> %	Aug <u>09</u> %
More likely	25	44	46	36	45	38
Not more likely	51	41	37	47	39	45
Neither	3	3	2	3	4	1
Don't know*	21	12	15	14	12	15

Figures read down. Q176.

Among conservative Republicans, 55% say Islam is more likely than other faiths to encourage violence, down 13 percentage points in two years. However, conservative Republicans are still more likely than other political groups to express a negative view of Islam on this question. Views of Islam and violence have also changed considerably among conservative and moderate Democrats (with the number saying Islam encourages violence more than other faiths down nine percentage points since 2007), while holding steady among other political groups.

Fewer Say Islam Encourages Violence

	Aug 2007 %	Aug 2009 %	2007-2009 Change
Total	45	38	-7
Conserv Rep	68	55	-13
Mod/Lib Rep	45	42	-3
Independent	41	40	-1
Cons/Mod Dem	45	36	-9
Liberal Dem	26	25	-1
Protestant	48	43	-5
White evangelical	57	50	-4
White mainline	48	39	-9
Black Protestant	30	30	-
Catholic	46	37	-9
White non-Hispanic	49	38	-11
Unaffiliated	40	33	-7

Q176.

White evangelical Protestants are significantly more likely than other religious groups to say Islam is inclined toward violence, with more than half (53%) taking this view. Within other religious groups, fewer than four-in-ten people express this opinion (39% of white mainline Protestants, 38% of white Catholics, 33% of the religiously unaffiliated and 30% of black Protestants).

Nearly Half Personally Know a Muslim		
	Know a Muslim	Do not
	%	%
Total	45	54
Men	51	49
Women	40	58
White	44	56
Black	57	43
Hispanic	39	60
18-29	52	47
30-49	48	51
50-64	46	53
65+	30	69
College grad+	66	33
Some college	55	45
HS or less	29	70
Conservative	41	59
Moderate	51	49
Liberal	50	50
Protestant	43	57
White evang	41	58
White mainline	40	60
Black Prot	61	39
Catholic	42	57
White non-Hisp	43	57
Unaffiliated	49	51

Figures read across. Q175.

Familiarity with Muslims

Just under half of Americans know a Muslim, a figure unchanged from 2007 and slightly higher than in November 2001, when 38% of Americans said they personally knew a Muslim. Familiarity with Muslims varies greatly by age and education.

Two-thirds of college graduates (66%) know a person who is Muslim, as do a smaller majority of those with some college (55%). But that drops to just 29% among those who have not attended college. Similarly, 52% of people under age 30 know a Muslim, as do almost half of those ages 30-64. But among those over age 65, just three-in-ten personally know a Muslim.

Men are more likely than women to say they know a Muslim (51% vs. 40%), and blacks are more likely to know a Muslim (57%) than are whites (44%) or Hispanics (39%). Half of moderates (51%) and liberals (50%) say they are acquainted with a Muslim, compared with 41% of conservatives.

White evangelical Protestants are now 11 percentage points more likely to know a Muslim than they were in 2007 (41% vs. 30%), bringing them more in line with the 40%

of mainline Protestants and 43% of white Catholics who also say they know a Muslim. Interaction with Muslims is much more common among black Protestants, among whom 61% say they know a Muslim.

Knowledge of Islam			
<i>Percent who know...</i>			%
Allah is name Muslims use for God			53
Koran is Islamic equivalent to Bible			52
Answer both correctly			41
	Both	One	Neither
	correct	correct	correct
	%	%	%
Total	41	23	36
Men	47	23	30
Women	35	23	42
White, non-Hisp	43	24	33
Black, non-Hisp	38	20	43
Hispanic	28	19	53
18-29	42	22	36
30-49	45	22	33
50-64	43	22	35
65+	26	27	47
College grad+	64	22	13
Some college	48	25	28
HS or less	24	22	53
Cons Rep	49	24	27
Mod/Lib Rep	33	30	37
Independent	44	22	34
Cons/Mod Dem	33	21	46
Lib Dem	56	22	22
Protestant	39	24	36
White evang	39	28	33
White mainline	40	25	36
Black Prot	42	19	40
Catholic	35	24	41
White non-Hisp	41	24	35
Unaffiliated	44	20	36

Figures read across. Q178-179.

Knowledge of Islam

A slim majority of Americans know the Muslim name for God is Allah, and a similar number can correctly name the Koran as the Islamic sacred text. Overall, 41% of the public is able to answer both questions correctly, 23% can answer one but not the other, and 36% of Americans are unfamiliar with either term.

Men are generally more knowledgeable about Islam than women; 47% know the Muslim name for God and name the holy book correctly, compared with 35% of women. This knowledge is also higher among whites than among Hispanics, and Americans under age

65 are much more likely than seniors to know these facts about Islam.

Still, as with knowing a Muslim personally, education makes the greatest difference: Almost two-thirds of college graduates (64%) answered both questions about Islam correctly, compared with less than half of those with some college (48%) and 24% of those who have not attended college.

A majority of liberal Democrats (56%) named both Allah and the Koran correctly, as did nearly as many conservative Republicans (49%). Fewer than half of independents (44%) and just a third of moderate and liberal Republicans and conservative and moderate Democrats answered both correctly.

Knowledge of Islam is fairly equal across religious groups, though it is highest among the unaffiliated (44% answered both questions correctly) and lowest among Catholics (35% answered both correctly).

More Americans can correctly identify both the Koran and Allah today (41%) than could do so in 2002 or 2003 (33% and 31% respectively), though there has been only a marginal increase in Americans' knowledge about Islam since 2005, when 38% were familiar with both Allah and the Koran. Awareness of the Muslim holy book and name for God has increased noticeably among some groups while remaining steady among others. For instance, 42% of those under age 30 can correctly name the Koran and Allah, up eight percentage points from 2002. Knowledge is also significantly higher among those ages 30 to 64, but familiarity with Islam is largely unchanged among seniors, the group that was least knowledgeable about the religion to begin with; 26% can name both the Koran and Allah today, compared with 23% in 2002.

Americans More Knowledgeable About Islam					
	<i>% correctly identifying both Koran and Allah</i>				
	<u>March 2002</u>	<u>July 2003</u>	<u>July 2005</u>	<u>Aug 2009</u>	<u>02-09 Change</u>
	%	%	%	%	
Total	33	31	38	41	+8
18-29	34	35	36	42	+8
30-49	38	34	41	45	+7
50-64	33	31	43	43	+10
65+	23	21	24	26	+3
College grad+	59	55	60	64	+5
Some college	38	39	45	48	+10
HS or less	19	16	21	24	+5
Protestant	31	31	36	39	+8
White evang	29	27	36	39	+10
White mainline	32	34	37	40	+8
Black Prot	27	36	36	42	+15
Catholic	29	24	34	35	+6
White non-Hisp	32	28	36	41	+9
Unaffiliated	42	38	45	44	+2

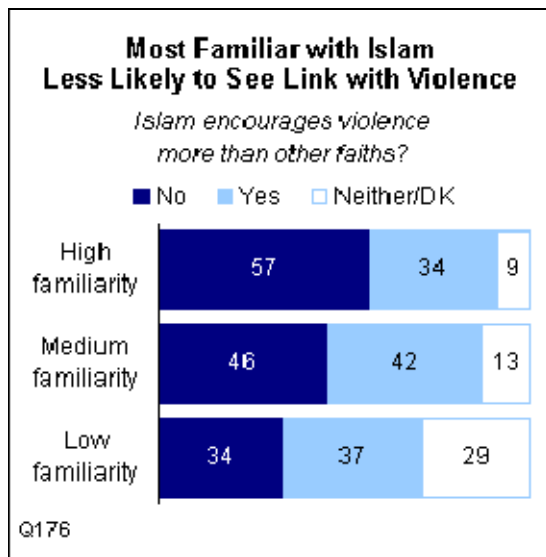
Q178-179.

Knowledge has grown markedly among many religious groups. The increase is most obvious among black Protestants, among whom 42% can name both the Koran and Allah today, compared with 27% in 2002. White Catholics as well as evangelical Protestants are also much more familiar with Islam today than they were in 2002. However, the trend is not apparent among the religiously unaffiliated; 44% of this group can name both Allah and the Koran today, compared with 42% in 2002. The unaffiliated stood out for possessing the most knowledge of Islam in 2002, whereas today there is less of a gap between them and other religious groups.

Familiarity With Islam Affects Views

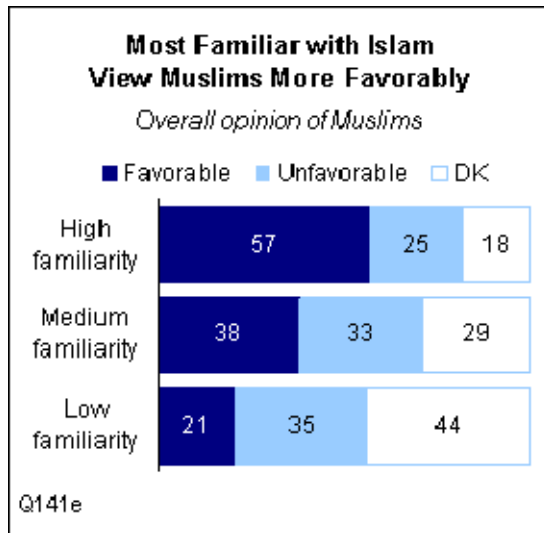
Roughly a fourth of Americans (26%) have a relatively high level of familiarity with Islam, that is, they know the names Muslims use to refer to God and to their sacred text, and they are also personally acquainted with a Muslim. Another fourth of the population (27%) is basically unfamiliar with the Muslim religion, neither knowing a Muslim nor having knowledge of Allah or the Koran. The remaining half of the population (47%) falls somewhere between these two groups in terms of familiarity with Islam.

The survey shows that higher levels of familiarity with Islam, and especially knowing someone who is Muslim, are associated with more positive views toward the religion. For example, among the group with the highest level of familiarity with Islam, most reject the idea that Islam encourages violence (57%). By contrast, fewer than half of those with medium familiarity with Islam (46%) and one-third of those with little familiarity (34%) reject the idea of a link between Islam and violence. Not surprisingly, people with lower levels of familiarity with Islam exhibit higher levels of non-response in attitudes about Islam, saying they do not know whether it is more or less likely than other religions to encourage violence.

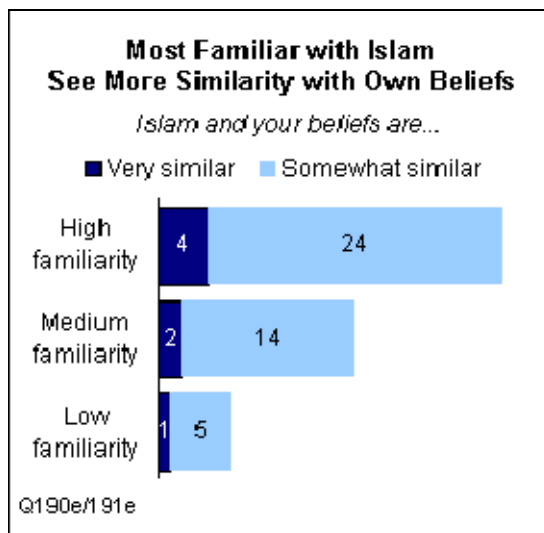


Similarly, those with the highest levels of familiarity with Islam express the most favorable views of Muslims. Nearly six-in-ten of those most familiar with Islam express

favorable views of Muslims, compared with less than four-in-ten among those with less familiarity.



Regardless of their familiarity with Islam, more Americans say that their beliefs are different from rather than similar to the Muslim religion. However, even on this question, those who are most familiar with Islam stand out as being more likely to say that their religion is similar to Islam (27% vs. 7% among those with low familiarity). More than a third (35%) of those with low familiarity say they do not know whether their religion is similar to or different from Islam.



A similar pattern exists with regard to whether Americans perceive a lot of discrimination against Muslims. Those who are most familiar with Islam are significantly more likely than those with minimal exposure to say that there is a lot of discrimination against Muslims today. Seven-in-ten say this, compared with just 44% of those with a low level of familiarity. As on the question of Islam and violence, a large portion (25%) of those

with minimal knowledge of Islam say they do not know whether there is a lot of discrimination against Muslims today.

