

## Islamophobia in America

### What is Islamophobia

- ☑ Islamophobia is an unfounded fear and hostility toward Islam and Muslims that results in discrimination, bias, marginalization, and at times, violence. It describes mentalities and actions that demean an entire class of people. It is unfortunately a trend in bigotry.<sup>1</sup>

### Islamophobia in the United States Since 9/11

- ☑ Islamophobia in the United States has risen since September 11, 2001. The first surge in anti-Muslim rhetoric from political leaders came in September 2015, coinciding with increased reporting on the deepening Syrian refugee crisis. It surged again following the terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015 and San Bernardino in December 2015.<sup>2</sup>
- ☑ During 2015, anti-Muslim hate crimes were at the highest rates since 9/11: 174 reported incidences of anti-Muslim violence or vandalism, more than 60 percent of which occurred in the last four months of the year.<sup>3</sup>
- ☑ Such rhetoric has been accompanied by calls from some U.S. politicians for extreme and xenophobic policies such as patrolling Muslim neighborhoods, shutting down mosques, or banning Muslims from entering the United States entirely.<sup>4</sup> Ten states have enacted anti-Islam laws.<sup>5</sup>

### Americans' Views on Muslims and Islam

- ☑ According to May and June 2016 Brookings Institute polls, 41 percent and 38 percent of Americans have an unfavorable view of Islam.<sup>6</sup> Much of the distrust and hostility toward Muslims can be attributed to a lack of understanding. Nearly six in ten Americans report that they don't know a Muslim personally.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gallup.com/poll/157082/islamophobia-understanding-anti-muslim-sentiment-west.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <http://bridge.georgetown.edu/when-islamophobia-turns-violent-the-2016-u-s-presidential-elections/>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.islamophobia.org/images/ConfrontingFear/Final-Report.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2016/07/11-muslims-islam-american-attitudes-telhami/poll\\_presentation\\_final.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2016/07/11-muslims-islam-american-attitudes-telhami/poll_presentation_final.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://bridge.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/The-Super-Survey.pdf>

- ☑ Most Americans believe that Islam is an inherently peaceful religion, though a third maintain that it encourages violence against non-Muslims.<sup>8</sup> The appalling acts of violence committed by extremist fringe groups such as ISIS are forbidden by the Qur'an and have no basis in the faith practiced by the more than 1.5 billion Muslims around the world.
- ☑ Muslim Americans are active members of their communities, contribute to our national economy, and serve in the U.S. military. Yet over half of Americans believe that the values of Islam are at odds with American values and way of life.<sup>9</sup>
- ☑ Islam and Muslims are more likely to be held collectively responsible for the actions of an aberrant few.<sup>10</sup> Although terrorist groups do not represent the Islamic faith, since 9/11 Muslim leaders have still had to swiftly and resolutely condemn atrocities committed by terrorists—something that is not expected of other faith groups when such acts occur in the name of their religion.
- ☑ 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.<sup>11</sup>

## Why Combating Islamophobia Is Important

- ☑ There are approximately seven million Muslim Americans in the United States, about 2 percent of the population. They are our friends, neighbors, colleagues, and allies, not unlike any immigrant community in the United States. We must ensure that the lives and freedoms of our fellow citizens are respected.
- ☑ America's strength is that we are unified not by a single culture, history, or religion, but by ideals about liberty and how to order a fair and just society. Those American values are undermined when we engage in broad discrimination against our American Muslim friends, neighbors, and fellow military members.

Help us speak out against Islamophobia. Visit [www.humanrightsfirst.org/topics/Islamophobia](http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/topics/Islamophobia).

Are you a veteran? Join our movement to advocate policies that match our ideals. Visit [www.vfai.org](http://www.vfai.org).

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.islamophobia.org/images/ConfrontingFear/Final-Report.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <http://bridge.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/The-Super-Survey.pdf>