Introduction

The new volume includes the results of survey of 1614 Muslims living in North America. The Islamophobia, Muslim Safety and Violence survey was designed on June 9 and administered from June 10 through midnight on June 13, 2021. Survey data were collected from 1,614 individuals in North America (the US and Canada), representing a sizable sample from Muslim communities. Over the three days, the survey was shared online on Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter. Also, the survey was sent to all national Muslim organizations, Shura councils, and numerous WhatsApp groups connected to diverse communities. Lastly, the Islamophobia Studies Center’s email list was utilized to share the survey, urge everyone to share, and get as many people as possible to respond within the limited time frame.

Surveys reflect opinions and attitudes of a given set of the population that decides to respond within the allotted time frame. As such, the scope of the survey was intended to be general in scope on the Islamophobia front and offer a few narrowly tailored questions. In addition, we decided to limit the survey to 20 questions to reach a large audience, with under five minutes needed to complete it. Some additional questions could have been included, but there was a fear that a longer survey would have reduced the response rates and limited the reach to the diverse communities. A follow-up survey is warranted, and an additional set of questions will be added, modified, or completely removed. The plan is to make this an annual survey that provides an ongoing measurement of Muslim opinions, attitudes, and feelings on the Islamophobia front. The context of the survey is also essential to highlight. Two significant events provided the context for the survey.

The Islamophobia Studies Center designed the survey following several meetings (Zoom and in person) across North America in the aftermath of Israel’s assault on Al-Aqsa Mosque and the bombing of Gaza on the last ten days of Ramadan, and the murder of four Muslims in the Islamophobic terrorist attack in London, Ontario. These two significant events impacted Muslim communities across the globe, and the effects are still unfolding and need more work to be measured and documented. Before moving to the actual results, it is vital to recognize and point out the limitation and challenges in conducting this survey.

First, the primary focus is on the rise of Islamophobia and how it was expressed concerning Israel’s attacks and the London, Ontario, terrorist attack. Thus, the survey did not deal with critical issues related to Islamophobia in Kashmir, India, China, and France, among many others. We will address this as we move forward to design another iteration of the survey in the future. Second, the survey responded to specific settings where Islamophobia and the silencing of Muslims in civil society, social media, and professional settings was normalized. Blanket protection of Israel and Zionism coalesced to create a hostile and unsupportive work environment. Consequently, the survey did not delve into more complex and context-specific expressions of Islamophobia. The only primary exception was Islamophobia relating to Muslim women, who tend to be the primary targets for violent attacks in the public sphere. Lastly, the survey did not attempt or entertain any questions about the solution or possible responses to Islamophobia. A survey to identify and measure specific responses is outside the scope of this effort and cannot be accomplished within the limits of this work.
METHODOLOGY, SCOPE, AND CONTEXT

The survey results point to the persistence of isolation and lack of support for Muslims in Western civil society. A few questions brought this to light and called for an urgent examination of how Islamophobia functions to double the painful impacts on Muslim communities.

- 81.73% stated that Islamophobia is not taken seriously by civil society, corporate, and political leadership.
- 79.32% feel (strongly or somewhat) insecure and afraid for their family and kids
- 14.01% feel (somewhat or strongly) secure and safe for their family and kids
- 64.69% expressed that Muslim women facing Islamophobic attacks are not supported by civil society’s institutions and women’s rights groups.
- 14.26% feel that Muslim women are supported (4.05% strongly and 10.21% agree)
- 38.59% said that Muslim professionals feel isolated and demonized in the workplace, while only 5.30% and 24.88% stated they are strongly or somewhat supported.

The results point to the lack of recognition of Islamophobia in general and the gap between Muslim experiences and civil society leaders and institutions. More work on this is needed, and possibly mixed-method research is needed to explore this serious problem. A mix of focus groups and a qualitative one-on-one interview with respondents may bring more issues to the surface. Also, the responses in the professional settings point to the limits of HR approaches to addressing Islamophobia at the corporate level, and more attention and new strategies are warranted.

Negative media coverage and association of Islam and violence are persistent concerns for Muslims. Research on media coverage of Islam and Muslims is possibly one of the most well-documented areas of Islamophobic discourses, an effort that predates the events of September 11, 2001. Muslims’ feelings toward media coverage can also be understood in the context of the rise of right-wing political discourses and the amplification of their voices across mainstream channels.

- 88.36% disagree or strongly disagree that media coverage of attacks directed at Muslims is covered fairly and equally.
- 1.99% feel that the media cover attacks on Muslims fairly and equally.
- 93.27% feel that the rise of right-wing political discourses and Islamophobic organizations contributes to violence against Muslims.
- Only 3.31% disagree or strongly disagree that the rise of right-wing political discourses and Islamophobic organizations contributes to violence against Muslims.
- 86.02% feel that the term terrorism is not used equally to describe all violent events targeting civilians for political purposes.

Stated differently, respondents feel that the term terrorism in the media and political discourses is almost exclusively reserved for Muslims.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY

Islamophobia is expressed in many ways in society, and the survey attempts to get a sampling of what Muslims experience daily at work or in civil society. Indeed, Islamophobia has become normalized, and people feel emboldened to taunt and mock Muslims publicly and on
social media platforms without reservations. If expressions of public racism are sanctioned, then it is in Islamophobia for the Muslims are posited as a legitimate target of bigotry and mockery.

- 46.91% of respondents stated that either they or a family member who wears the headscarf had experienced negative incidents directed at their headscarf.
- 52.47% of respondents expressed that over the past twelve months, they have experienced verbal Islamophobic incidents (this is during a lock-down pandemic).
- 2.12% of those responding experienced verbal Islamophobia 30 or more times in the past twelve months.
- 9.25% of those responding (148 individuals) said they had experienced a violent attack based on their Muslim identity.
- 24.22% of those responding (387 individuals) said they had experienced Islamophobic incidents in employment or professional settings.
- 75.78% positively said that they had not experienced Islamophobic incidents in employment or professional settings.

Speaking publicly about Palestine and having a sense of belonging in the society was a significant challenge for respondents. Expressing a political point of view is undoubtedly an area that can impact a person’s standing within a group setting. However, Muslim respondents feel a double standard or attempt to silence their voices regarding Palestine.

- 73.46% felt strongly or somewhat discouraged and ostracized when speaking about Palestine in society and a professional setting.
- 2.87% strongly and 6.75% felt somewhat encouraged and welcome to do it.
- 57.43% of respondents expressed a little or no sense of belonging and inclusion when asked how they felt as Muslim in Western society.
- Only 2.56% had a great sense of belonging and inclusion while another 6.80% had a lot of belonging and inclusion.

Islamophobia and attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque and the bombing of Gaza impacted Muslims’ mental state of being. The link between Islamophobia and mental health is a newly emerging area of research and focus, and this survey attempted to get a basic view of the problem. Indeed, a more detailed survey and further studies are needed to explore this link more systematically and methodically. However, the few questions in the survey provided a window into Islamophobia and the attacks on Palestine on the mental well-being of Muslims.

- 85.92% had a negative or very negative impact on their mental state of being since the attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque and bombing of Gaza.
- Only 2.12% had a very positive and 2.74% positive mental state of being since the attacks.
- 23.69% of Muslim respondents are extremely anxious or very anxious in public space, while 41.83% are somewhat anxious.
- Only 13.97% are not anxious in public space and another 20.51 slightly anxious.
- Put differently, 86.03% of Muslims feel anxious at one level or another in public space.
- 33.97% of respondents rated fair or poor (424 and 122 individuals) their overall mental and emotional health, while 32.05% said it was good (515 individuals).
- 33.98% rated excellent or very good (188 and 358 individuals) their overall mental and emotional health.
The Islamophobia, Muslim Safety and Violence survey provided a snapshot of the North American Muslim community during a difficult and challenging period. This is not to imply that the period in question is distinct or different than what is experienced daily by Muslims; on the contrary, the survey captures the overall persistence of Islamophobia in civil society and the lack of sustained efforts to address it by decision makers. Symbolic acts of solidarity are welcomed and essential after a terrorist or violent attacks on Muslims. However, they are a first step and not the end result in confronting the scourge of Islamophobia. Political leadership is linked to pushing latent Islamophobia by stitching into policy a mosaic of securitization, surveillance, demonization of Muslims, and the all too familiar unconditional support for Israel’s violence against the Palestinians and the Apartheid regime. Confronting and challenging Islamophobia must go beyond symbolic gestures and enter the arena of substantive and transformative approaches to the pressing problem. We hope that this survey can initiate a much-needed conversation and discussion on making a real difference to arrive at a more inclusive and transformative horizon.