

Analysis of the Political Beliefs of American Muslims  
and Members of the House of Representatives

by

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AAI	Arab American Institute
AAUG	Association of Arab American University Graduates
ADC	American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
AMA	American Muslim Alliance
AMC	American Muslim Council
AMPCC-PAC	American Muslim Political Coordinated Council Political Action Committee
ARDA	Association of Religion Data Archives
ARIS	American Religious Identification Survey
CAIR	Council on American-Islamic Relations
CFGG	Coalition for Good Government
CIS	Center for Immigration Studies
INS	Immigration and Naturalization Service
ISLA	Islamic Schools League of America
ISNA	Islamic Society of North America
MPAC	Muslim Public Affairs Council
MSA	Muslim Student Association
NAAA	National Association of Arab Americans

## **CHAPTER I**

### **DEMOGRAPHICS OF MUSLIMS IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

In representative political systems, voters are the key to the future and direction of the country. Voting behaviors of different demographic groups can be studied to ascertain the impact that certain group is having on the policies of the governmental body. The purpose of this paper is to look at the political impact the growing Muslim population is having on the national political system in the United States of America. The Muslim political influence can be determined by looking at the political beliefs and voting patterns of American Muslim citizens as well as the political ideology of Muslim members of the U.S. House of Representatives.

In order to understand the political influence Muslims are having on the American political system, it is of primary importance to understand the demographics of the American Muslim community. This study begins with an analysis of the numbers and percentages, race and ethnicity, age, gender, family status, education and income, citizenship and geographic location of Muslims in the United States.

#### **Population Percentage**

Information on the number of Muslims in America cannot be found in the United States Census data. The Census Bureau does not ask Americans for their religious affiliation in their decennial surveys based on Public Law 94-521. The 94<sup>th</sup> Congress passed this law on October 17, 1976, which states “no person shall be compelled to

disclose information relative to his religious beliefs or to membership in a religious body.”<sup>1</sup> The US Census Bureau does, however, compile data on religious affiliation into its Statistical Abstract from voluntary surveys and outside sources.

The U.S. Census Bureau Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2012 shows a comparison of religious identification for the years of 1990, 2001, and 2008 in table 1.1. The American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) 2008 conducted three surveys using random digit dialing of residential households in the continental United States. Respondents were not given a list of possible responses, but rather they were asked an open ended question to describe themselves in terms of religion. The numbers in table 1.1 are representative of thousands. According to this survey, the self-described Muslim population of the United States of America is growing. In 1990, the number of self-described Muslims in America was 527,000 out of a total population of 175,440,000. The number of Muslims self-reporting in 2001 increased to 1,104,000 out of 207,983,000 people. In 2008, the last year of the survey, 1,349,000 respondents out of a population of 228,182,000 identified with the Muslim religion. The number of self-described American Muslims increased as did the percentage of the total population. The percentages of the Americans that identify themselves as Muslims for 1990, 2001, and 2008 are 0.30%, 0.53%, and 0.59% respectively, increasing consistently over the years.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> (Federal Digital System: US Government Printing Office n.d.)

<sup>2</sup> (United States Census Bureau Compendia n.d.)

Table 1.1 Population Estimates for Religious Groups in America

Religious group	Estimates (1,000)			Religious group	Estimates (1,000)		
	1990	2001	2008		1990	2001	2008
<b>Adult population, total</b> <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	<b>175,440</b>	<b>207,983</b>	<b>228,182</b>	Christian Reform . . . . .	40	79	381
Christian, total <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	151,225	159,514	173,402	Foursquare Gospel . . . . .	28	70	116
Catholic . . . . .	46,004	50,873	57,199	Independent Christian Church . . . . .	25	71	86
Baptist . . . . .	33,964	33,820	36,148	Other Christian <sup>4</sup> . . . . .	105	254	206
Protestant—no denomination supplied . . . . .	17,214	4,647	5,187	Other religions, total <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	5,853	7,740	8,796
Methodist/Wesleyan . . . . .	14,174	14,039	11,366	Jewish . . . . .	3,137	2,837	2,680
Lutheran . . . . .	9,110	9,580	8,674	Muslim . . . . .	527	1,104	1,349
Christian—no denomination supplied . . . . .	8,073	14,190	16,834	Buddhist . . . . .	404	1,082	1,189
Presbyterian . . . . .	4,985	5,596	4,723	Unitarian/Universalist . . . . .	502	629	586
Pentecostal/Charismatic . . . . .	3,116	4,407	5,416	Hindu . . . . .	227	766	582
Episcopalian/Anglican . . . . .	3,043	3,451	2,405	Native American . . . . .	47	103	186
Mormon/Latter-Day Saints . . . . .	2,487	2,697	3,158	Sikh . . . . .	13	57	78
Churches of Christ . . . . .	1,769	2,593	1,921	Wiccan . . . . .	8	134	342
Jehovah's Witness . . . . .	1,381	1,331	1,914	Pagan . . . . .	(NA)	140	340
Seventh-Day Adventist . . . . .	668	724	938	Spiritualist . . . . .	(NA)	116	426
Assemblies of God . . . . .	617	1,105	810	Other unclassified <sup>4</sup> . . . . .	991	774	1,030
Holiness/Holy . . . . .	610	569	352	No religion specified, total <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	14,331	29,481	34,169
Congregational/United Church of Christ . . . . .	438	1,378	736	Atheist . . . . . <sup>(5)</sup>		902	1,621
Church of the Nazarene . . . . .	549	544	358	Agnostic . . . . . <sup>5</sup>	1,186	991	1,985
Church of God . . . . .	590	943	663	Humanist . . . . .	29	49	90
Orthodox (Eastern) . . . . .	502	645	824	No religion . . . . .	13,116	27,486	30,427
Evangelical/Born Again <sup>3</sup> . . . . .	546	1,088	2,154	Other no religion <sup>4</sup> . . . . .	(NA)	57	45
Mennonite . . . . .	235	346	438	Refused to reply to question . . . . .	4,031	11,246	11,815
Christian Science . . . . .	214	194	339				
Church of the Brethren . . . . .	206	358	231				
Nondenominational <sup>3</sup> . . . . .	194	2,489	8,032				
Disciples of Christ . . . . .	144	492	263				
Reformed/Dutch Reform . . . . .	161	289	206				
Apostolic/New Apostolic . . . . .	117	254	970				
Quaker . . . . .	67	217	130				
Full Gospel . . . . .	51	168	67				

Source: "United States Census Bureau Compendia." *United States Census Bureau*.

Other reports show the estimated number of Muslim participants in America as much higher than the estimate given by AIRS. The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) published a report in April of 2001 estimating the number of Muslims in America at 2,000,000. CAIR states that every mosque in America has on average 1,629 Muslims associated with them, or at least attending the Eid Prayers. Multiplying the average number of participants by the number of mosques (1,209 reported by CAIR) gives the estimated two million Muslims. CAIR also reports the total number of Muslims in 1994 was only 500,000.<sup>3</sup> The report from CAIR further documents the increasing Muslim population in the United States of America.

<sup>3</sup> (Bagby, Perl and Froehle 2001)

In 2011, the Pew Research Center estimated the Muslim population of America at 1,800,000 adults and 2,750,000 for all ages including children based on data from their surveys from that year in conjunction with data from the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>4</sup> The Census Bureau estimated the whole population of the United States at the beginning of June in 2011 to be 311,375,655.<sup>5</sup> The U.S. Census Bureau estimate was taken during the same time period that the Pew Center was obtaining an estimated number of Muslims in America. According to this data, Muslims accounted for 0.88% of Americans in 2011, confirming an increase in population percentage over the previous two decades.

### **Race and Ethnicity**

There is no one race or ethnic group that dominates the Muslim population in America; they are a racially diverse group. No particular race or ethnicity makes up over a third of the American Muslim population. The highest percentage of Muslims in America consider themselves white at 30%, followed by almost equal percentages that consider themselves black or Asian at 23% and 21% respectively. Interestingly, the racial and ethnic percentages vary drastically when broken down between foreign born and native born Muslims. Only 18% of native born Muslims consider themselves white compared to 38% of foreign born. Right at 40% of native born Muslims report that they are black in contrast with 14% of those born outside of the United States. While the

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<sup>4</sup> (Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism 2011)

<sup>5</sup> (U.S. and World Population Clock n.d.)

percentages of Muslims considering themselves either Asian or other/mixed are comparable, a higher percentage of Asians are foreign born (28%) contrasted with a higher percentage of other/mixed born in America (21%). The total racial and ethnic percentages of U.S. Muslims do not follow the same pattern as that of the general public.<sup>6</sup>

Table 1.2 Race and Ethnicity of U.S. Muslims and General American Public

	<b>U.S. Muslims</b>			<b>General Public</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>Foreign Born</b>	<b>Native Born</b>	
	%	%	%	%
White	30	38	18	68
Black	23	14	40	12
Asian	21	28	10	5
Other/Mixed	19	16	21	2
Hispanic	6	4	10	14

*\*Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.*

*Source: "Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism." Pew Research Religion and Public Life Project. August 30, 2011.*

### **Gender and Age**

The current gender breakdown of American Muslims does not mirror that of the general American public. The Muslim population has a higher percentage of males (55%) as opposed to the general public which has a greater percentage of females (52%). Similarly, the ages of United States Muslims do not follow the same pattern as that of other Americans as shown in figure 1.1. The only age range with the same

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<sup>6</sup> (Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism 2011)

population representation is the group of 40-54 year olds, both with 28% of their populations. American Muslims are significantly younger than the general American public; the majority of Muslims (59%) are under the age of 40 while relatively similar percentages (61%) of non-Muslim Americans are age 40 or above. The largest group of Muslims is in the 18-29 year old range while the largest group of non-Muslims is on the other end of the spectrum in the 55+ age group.<sup>7</sup>

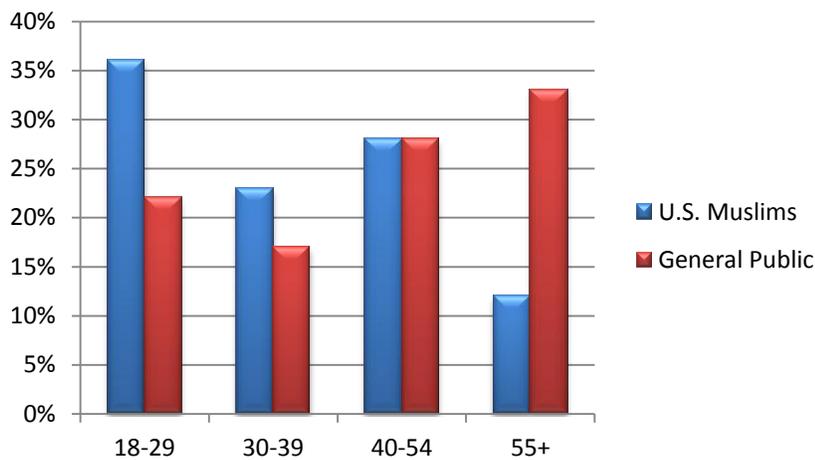


Figure 1.1. Ages of U.S. Muslims and general American public

### Family Status

The family status of U.S. Muslims is in many ways similar to that of the general public as shown in figure 1.2. A slight majority of Muslims in the United States are married. The percentage of married Muslims in America compared to non-Muslims is almost the same at 55% and 54% respectively. Similarly, the percentages of separated couples are analogous: Muslims at 1% compared to the general public at 2%. The most

<sup>7</sup> (Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism 2011)

prominent differences in the status of Muslim families and those of non-Muslims were in the areas of those who have never married and couples who have divorced. Only 5% of Muslims are divorced compared to 11% of the general public. However, a much larger percentage of Muslims have never married compared to non-Muslims: 35% to 27%.<sup>8</sup> This can be explained by the much younger ages of Muslims compared to the rest of the American public. The Pew Research Center did not have comparative data for the percentage of general public couples living with a partner but unmarried.

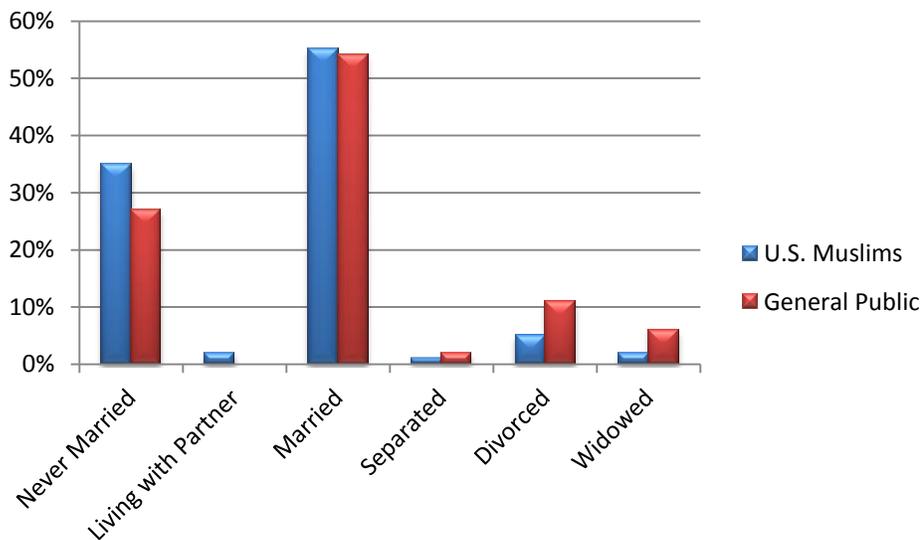


Figure 1.2. Family status of U.S. Muslims and general American public

### Education and Income

The education level of Muslims in America in many ways mirrors that of non-Muslims. The education level with the lowest percentage for both groups is respondents with some graduate study: 11% for Muslims and 10% for non-Muslims. For

<sup>8</sup> (Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism 2011)

both Muslims and the general public, the education level with the largest percentage is high school graduates at 40% and 31% respectively, although the percentages are not comparatively close. The other area with the greatest difference in percentages is respondents with some college. While only 19% of Muslims have attended some college, that number grows to 28% for the general public. Interestingly, while Muslims have attended college in a smaller proportion, the number of students currently enrolled at an institution of higher learning doesn't follow that same pattern. Muslims are currently enrolled in college at a higher rate (26%) than the general public (13%). The largest difference within the Muslim population is respondents whose highest level of education is graduation from high school. Native born Muslims make up a greater percentage with 49% compared to the foreign born Muslims at 34%. Overall, the foreign born Muslims have higher education levels than those who were born in America, and the percentage of graduate study for Muslim immigrants even surpasses that of the general public.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> (Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism 2011)

Table 1.3 Education of U.S. Muslims and General American Public

	<b>U.S. Muslims</b>			<b>General Public</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>Foreign Born</b>	<b>Native Born</b>	
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Graduate Study	11	14	7	10
College Graduate	15	18	12	18
Some College	19	19	20	28
High School Graduate	40	34	49	31
Not High School Graduate	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>13</u>
	100	100	100	100
Currently Enrolled in College	26	25	27	13

*\*Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.*

*Source: "Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism." Pew Research Religion and Public Life Project. August 30, 2011.*

The income levels of U.S. Muslims have higher percentages at the lower end of the economic spectrum. Almost half (45%) of all Muslims have an annual income of less than \$30,000 compared to just slightly over one-third (36%) of the general public. However, both Muslims and non-Muslims are similar in their percentages of the highest income bracket of over \$100,000 at 14% and 16% respectively. The differences between the income levels for Muslims and the general public are greatest for those who were not born in the United States. For the mid-range incomes, 27% of the general public enjoys an income of \$50,000-\$99,999 while only 17% of the foreign born Muslims are in that same range.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> (Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism 2011)

Table 1.4 Income of U.S. Muslims and General American Public

	U.S. Muslims			General Public
	Total	Foreign Born	Native Born	
	%	%	%	%
\$100,000+	14	18	8	16
\$75,000-\$99,999	8	8	9	12
\$50,000-\$75,999	13	9	19	15
\$30,000-\$49,999	19	17	21	21
Less than \$30,000	45	47	43	36

*\*Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.*

*Source: "Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism." Pew Research Religion and Public Life Project. August 30, 2011.*

### Citizenship of Muslim Immigrants

In a study of the voting behaviors of Muslims in America, knowing the citizenship status is of primary importance. Of course Muslims who were born in America are automatically citizens. An extremely high percentage of immigrants have also become citizens of the United States. A study by the Pew Research Center in 2011 reported that 70% of foreign born Muslims have become citizens of this country. This is a much higher representation than the immigration population as a whole. Only 46% of all immigrants received citizen status in America.<sup>11</sup> A deeper look into the immigration of Muslims will be discussed in the next chapter of this study.

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<sup>11</sup> (Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism 2011)

## Geographic Locations

The 2010 U. S. Religion Census data reported by the Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA) shows the population of Muslims within each state. The maps below show the increases in adherents to the Islamic faith as a percentage of the population. Figure 1.3 shows the Muslim population in 2000; figure 1.4 shows the population penetration in 2010. The term “adherents” was defined by this study using the question, “Approximately how many Muslims are associated in any way with the religious life of your masjid? Please include adults and children, as well as both regular and irregular participants.”<sup>12</sup> The U.S. Religion Census estimated adherents to the county level using data collected on each masjid in the United States coupled with survey information which estimated the state’s total population. The reported numbers were used for the masjids that answered the survey. For the masjids not surveyed, the counts were assigned proportionately, estimating larger numbers for the masjids that were located in the more metropolitan areas.<sup>13</sup>

In 2000, the highest population percentage of adherents was only in the 1%-4.99% range. The areas of greatest population were clustered along metropolitan areas on the coast of California, larger cities in the Midwest, urban areas in Texas, a few of the larger cities in the South and the metropolitan areas branching from Washington D.C. to New England. Smaller clusters of Muslim populations were scattered throughout

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<sup>12</sup> (RCMS: Appendix I / Muslim Estimate n.d.)

<sup>13</sup> (RCMS: Appendix I / Muslim Estimate n.d.)

various other counties in the continental U.S. and fell in the population ranges from 0.01% to 0.99%.<sup>14</sup>

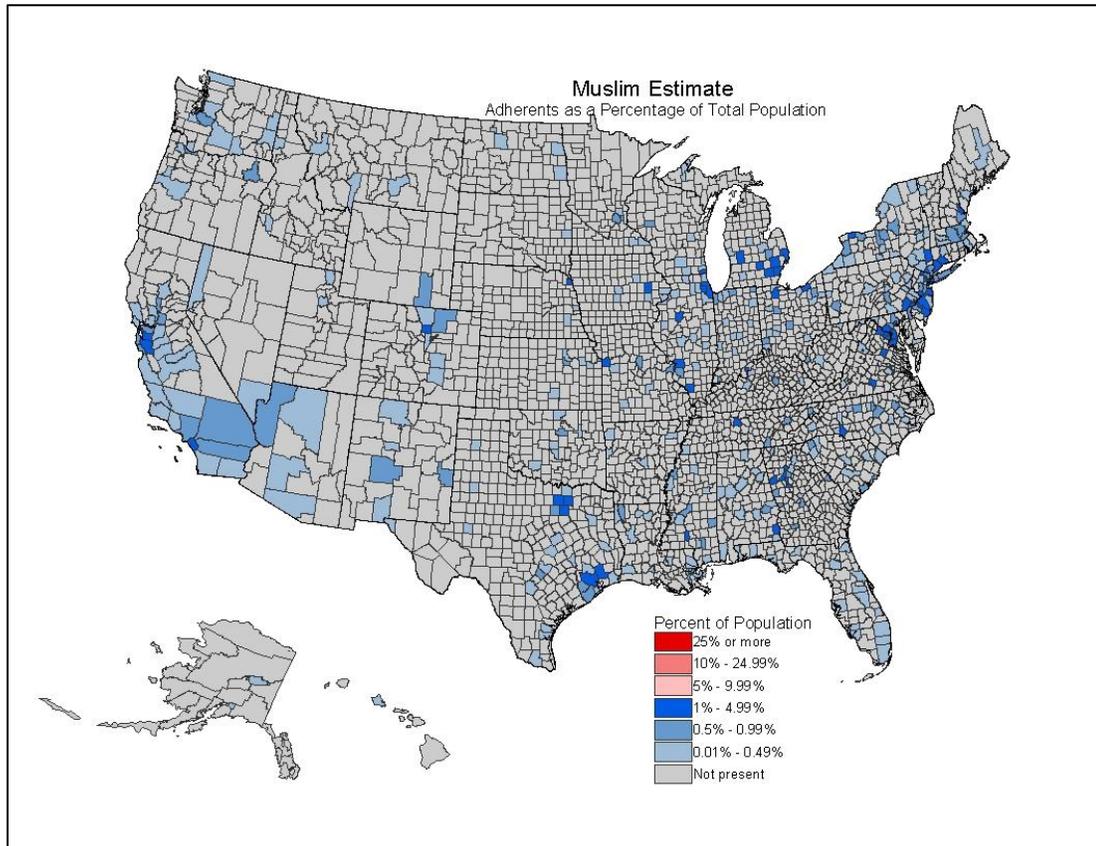


Figure 1.3. Muslim estimate: 2000

The population pattern across America did not change much over the first decade in the twenty-first century. While the United States saw growth in the Muslim communities, the growth pattern was similar to where the larger populations were at the beginning of the decade. Again, the greatest clusters of Muslim population percentages were along the coast and southern areas of California, urban regions in the

<sup>14</sup> (RCMS: 2010 U.S. Religion Census n.d.)

Midwest, metropolitan Texas areas, scattered cities in the South, and along the Northeast cities from Washington D.C. to New York. A few areas that were not some of the most highly populous Muslim regions in 2000 but saw rapid growth in 2010 were urban Washington state areas, various cities in the Rockies and Southwest, the panhandle of Texas, along with central and southern Florida. The highest population percentage during this decade rose to over 5%. Many of the areas that had been in the lower population percentages grew to between 1% and 4.99%.<sup>15</sup>

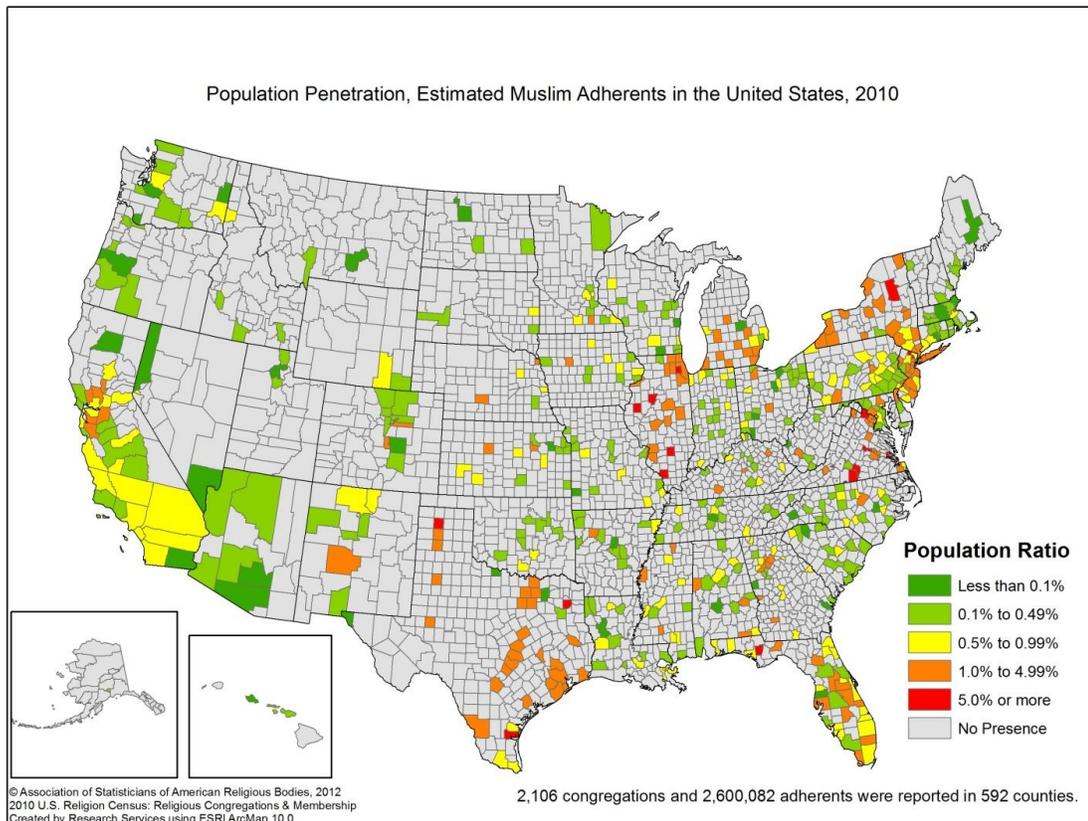


Figure 1.4. Muslim estimate: 2010

<sup>15</sup> (RCMS: Maps and Charts for 2010 n.d.)

In a study by CAIR, mosque locations in 2001 were split among four geographical regions of the United States. The region with the largest percentage of mosques was the East/New England area at 30%. This was just slightly above the Midwest at 29%. The South came in just under the Midwest at 26% while the Mountain/West area of America brought up the end of the list with only 15% of the mosques located in that region.<sup>16</sup>

Not surprisingly, the larger concentrations of Muslim mosques are in geographic locations with a higher percentage of Muslim adherents. In a study released by the 2010 U.S. Religion Census, congregation is defined as (1) a Muslim association/organization that (2) holds Jum'ah Prayer and (3) organized other Islamic activities.<sup>17</sup> The list of mosques was collected from four online sources: the 2000 Masjid Study's mosque list, Muslim Guide, Islamic Finder, and Salatomatic. The researchers then contacted local Muslims, mostly local representatives of CAIR chapters, to obtain verification of the list of mosques and report on mosques that were not on the research list.<sup>18</sup> Clusters of mosques are in areas of higher Muslim population percentages in larger cities, most notably the areas surrounding the following: Seattle, Washington; Oakland, California; Los Angeles, California; Phoenix, Arizona; the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex in Texas; Houston, Texas; the Minneapolis/Saint Paul metroplex in

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<sup>16</sup> (Bagby, Perl and Froehle 2001)

<sup>17</sup> (RCMS: Appendix I / Muslim Estimate n.d.)

<sup>18</sup> (RCMS: Appendix I / Muslim Estimate n.d.)

Minnesota; Chicago, Illinois; Detroit, Michigan; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and New York, New York.<sup>19</sup>

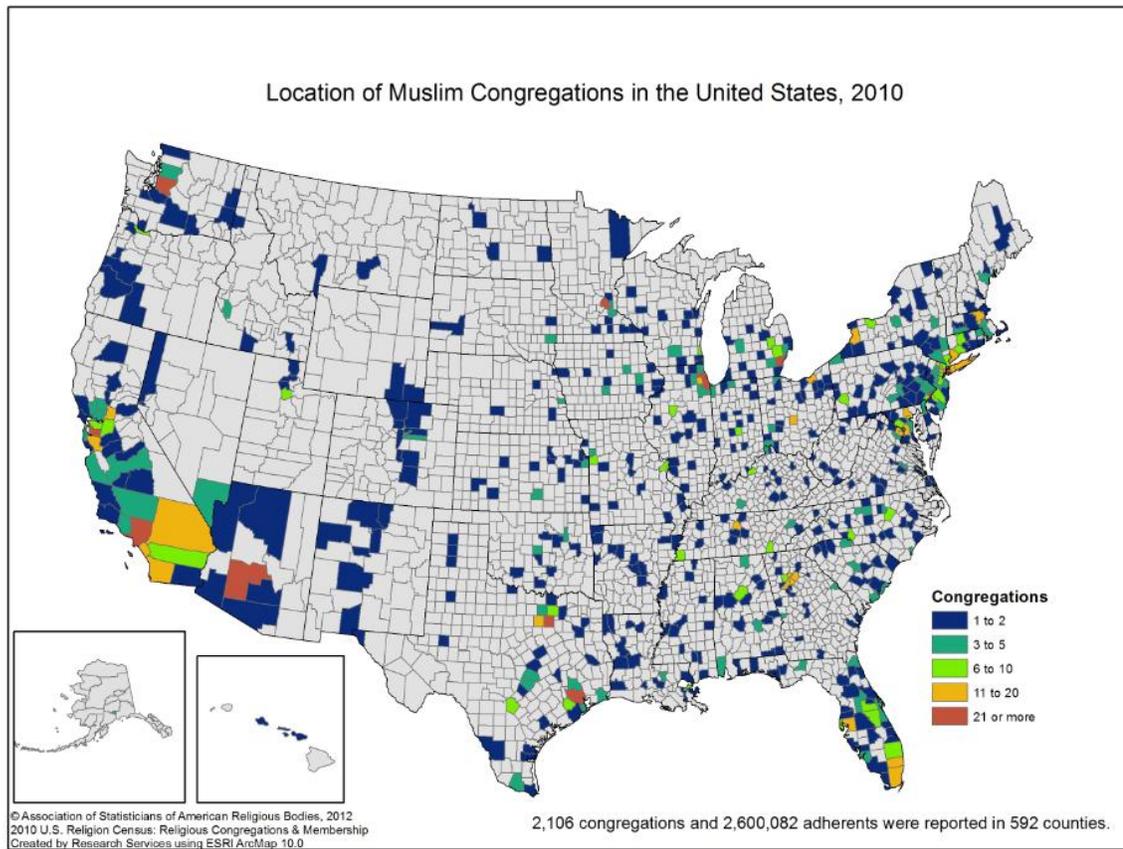


Figure 1.5. Location of Muslim congregations: 2010

<sup>19</sup> (RCMS: Maps and Charts for 2010 n.d.)

## CHAPTER II

### INCREASING MUSLIM POPULATION IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

#### Evidence of Increased Muslim American Population

##### Number of Mosques

Additional support for the growing Muslim population in America was given by the 2010 U.S. Religion Census. ARDA released a report comparing the change of Muslim congregations and adherents from 2000 to 2010. In 2000, the number of Muslim congregations was estimated at 1,209 and the number of Muslim adherents was estimated at 1,559,294. In 2010, the numbers increased to 2,106 congregations and 2,600,082 adherents. According to the ARDA report, the number of Muslim congregations increased by 897 and Muslims gained an additional 1,040,788 adherents.<sup>20</sup> This 66.75% rate of growth in adherents was the largest seen by any religious group during the decade studied. The number of mosques reported increased by 74% across the United States.

While part of the reason for the increased number is the fact that mosques can be more easily identified now due to the prevalence of web sites that note mosque locations, the fact remains that there has been a definite increase in the number of

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<sup>20</sup> (The Association of Religion Data Archives n.d.)

mosques. In a study of mosque characteristics and the attitudes of mosque leaders by Ihsan Bagby, 26% of the mosques had been established between 2000 and 2011.<sup>21</sup>

#### Number of Islamic Schools

Just as the number of mosques has increased, so has the number of Islamic schools. It was reported that in 1990 that there were only approximately 50 Islamic schools in America.<sup>22</sup> The Islamic Schools League of America (ISLA) published a report in 2008 with more current numbers. ISLA reported that as recent as 2006, there were 235 full-time Islamic schools in the United States. They estimate that as of the report date, approximately 32,000 students were enrolled in the schools.<sup>23</sup>

#### **Reasons for Increased Muslim Population**

The number of American Muslims has been steadily increasing in recent decades. The reason for this is multi-faceted. Muslim populations have increased because of immigration, higher fertility rates, and increasing conversion rates of native-born Americans.

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<sup>21</sup> (I. Bagby 2012)

<sup>22</sup> (Arabic Bible Outreach Ministry: Islam in America - Muslim Population and Growth n.d.)

<sup>23</sup> (Keyworth 2008)

## Immigration

In 2011, slightly over a third of adult American Muslims were native to the United States. Almost two-thirds have emigrated from other countries, the largest percentage coming from the Middle East and North Africa. The second largest percentage of Muslim immigrants came from South Asian countries which include Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Afghanistan.<sup>24</sup> Figure 2.1 shows the percentages for nativity and immigration of Muslims in America.

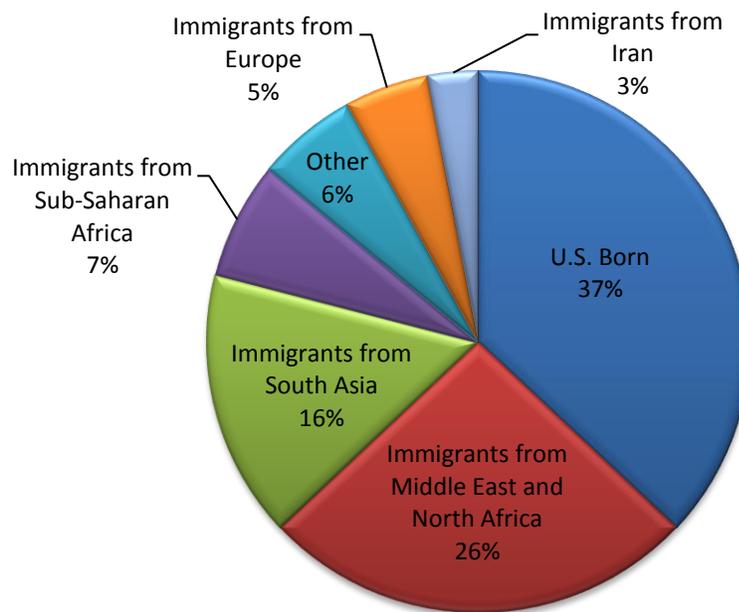


Figure 2.1. Muslim Nativity and Immigration: 2011

The Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) reported reasons why Muslim immigrants came to America over their history with the country. While the first

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<sup>24</sup> (Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism 2011)

immigrants came to America as slaves from Africa in the early 1500s, the first free Muslims began to immigrate to the United States shortly after the Civil War. The Immigration Act of 1965 began the modern era of Muslim immigration. Since this time, Muslims have come to America for three primary reasons: refuge, education, and Islamist ambitions.<sup>25</sup> Immigrants took refuge in the United States to escape different types of persecutions in their home nation, such as ethnic persecution, religious persecution and international or civil wars. The desire for more advanced education at America's colleges and universities was also among one of the top reasons the study gave for Muslim immigration. Once students came to America to further their studies, many made this country their home instead of going back to their native land. The last reason for immigration that the CIS termed "Islamist ambitions" reflects the political ambitions the immigrants had for America. They came to the United States as missionaries hoping to convert enough Americans that they would be able to change the direction of the culture as well as the government. While many came with the intention of going back home, their trips turned into permanent residence.<sup>26</sup>

The Pew Research Center conducted an updated survey of Muslims in 2007 which included their reason for immigrating to the United States. The Muslims that disclosed they were not born in America were asked to identify the main reason he/she came to America: family reasons, economic opportunities, conflict or persecution in

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<sup>25</sup> (Duran and Pipes 2002)

<sup>26</sup> (Duran and Pipes 2002)

his/her home country, educational opportunities or some other reason. Interviewers were instructed to rotate the list and not always present the options in the same order. If a respondent answered with two reasons, the interviewer would ask for the main reason once again. If the respondent still maintained two answers, they were coded as other. The four specific reasons offered by the survey had relatively similar response rates. The main reason given for immigration based on this study was educational opportunity at 26% of those interviewed. Economic opportunity and family reasons tied for second at 24%, while conflict/persecution ended with 20%.<sup>27</sup> According to Pew, there is not an overwhelming reason for why Muslims immigrate to America.

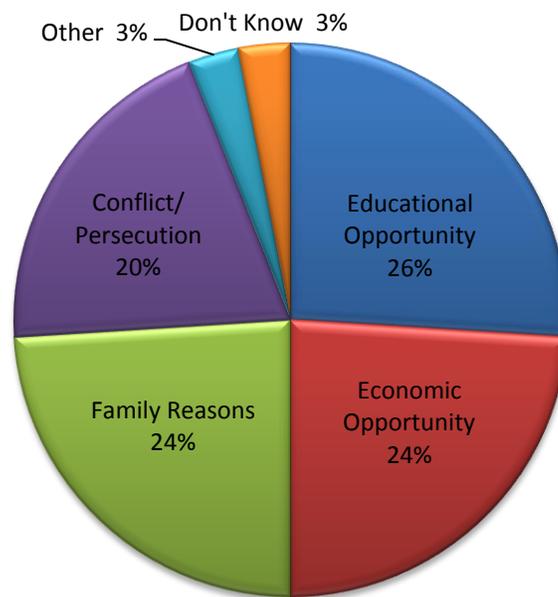


Figure 2.2. Reasons for Muslim immigration

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<sup>27</sup> (Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mainly Mainstream 2007)

## Fertility Rates

Another foundational reason for the increase in the Muslim population is the elevated fertility rate that is typical of the Muslim culture as compared to the fertility rate of Americans. The replacement fertility rate is the rate that is needed for a stable population – one that is neither shrinking nor growing. Statistically, the replacement fertility rate is 2.1 births per woman. In 2005, the top 5 nations with the highest fertility rate were Niger (7.46), Mali (7.42), Somalia (6.76), Afghanistan (6.69), and Yemen (6.58), which are all predominately Islamic nations. Comparatively, the United States fertility rate is hovering at the replacement rate of 2.1 babies per woman.<sup>28</sup> The Muslim culture typically far exceeds – even tripling – the Americans in their fertility rates. Immigrants that come to America are maintaining cultural norms in areas of life such as the size of the family. The Pew Research Center found that the families in America with the largest households are Mormons followed by Muslims.<sup>29</sup> As immigration from predominately Muslim nations increases, America will begin to notice the growing birth rates of the Islamic communities.

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<sup>28</sup> (Steyn 2006)

<sup>29</sup> (U.S. Religious Landscape Survey 2008)

### Conversion of Native-born Americans

Based on data collected by the 2010 U.S. Religion Census, the Muslim religion is the fastest growing religion in the United States.<sup>30</sup> While some of the increase is from immigration that does not account for all of its growth. The Pew Research Center reported almost a quarter (23%) of Muslims in America were converts. Out of the Muslim converts, 91% were born in the United States; only 9% were born outside of America.<sup>31</sup>

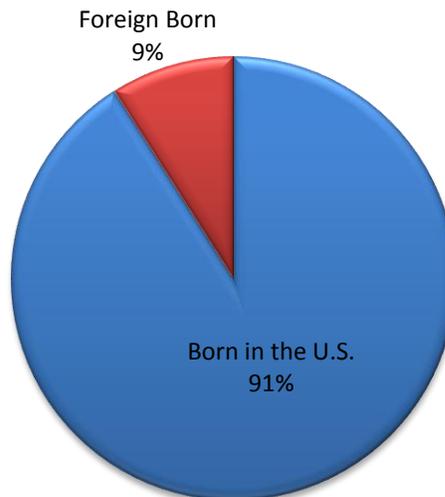


Figure 2.3. Muslim converts in America

Many Americans converted to Islam from other religious groups, but some converted from no previous religious background. The overwhelming majority of Muslim converts came from protestant denominations. This group accounts for 67% of

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<sup>30</sup> (RCMS: 2010 U.S. Religion Census n.d.)

<sup>31</sup> (Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mainly Mainstream 2007)

the convert population. The next highest religious background for Muslim converts was no religion at 15%.<sup>32</sup>

Over half the Muslim converts are African Americans (59%) with the next largest group being white at a little over a third (34%). Most converted to Islam when they were younger: 49% under the age of 21 and 34% from 21-35. Only 17% converted at age 36 or older. Various reasons were reported for the conversions, the largest of which was for religious beliefs/practices (58%). Only 18% cited family/marriage for their conversion; 22% gave the reason as “other” while 2% chose not to answer.<sup>33</sup>

### **Projected Increase of American Muslim Population**

In 2011, the Pew Research Center published a report on the projected demographics of Muslims by the year 2030. According to this study, during the next two decades, the Muslim population is projected to grow at twice the rate of the non-Muslim population worldwide with a projected annual growth rate for Muslims of 1.5% as opposed to 0.7% for non-Muslim groups.<sup>34</sup> The Pew Research Center used current population data and trends in Muslim demographics to make these projections. These projections are not necessarily predictions of what will happen. The Pew Research Center makes the distinction between their projections and a prediction. They cite the

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<sup>32</sup> (Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mainly Mainstream 2007)

<sup>33</sup> (Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mainly Mainstream 2007)

<sup>34</sup> (The Future of the Global Muslim Population 2011)

fact that there are too many variables that can influence the demographics for them to make a prediction (i.e., immigration laws, political and social movements).

The report by the Pew Research Center continues to break down the projected Muslim population increase by region. They expect the percentage of native-born Muslims to increase to almost half (44.9% to be specific) of the American Muslim population. This is based on the reasonable expectation that the young adult Muslims currently in America will begin to start families in the next couple of decades. The Pew Research Center is projecting the number of Muslims in America under the age of 15 will more than triple by 2030. This will be a large shift in the demographic make-up of Muslim Americas as this under 15 age group currently makes up only 13.1% of the American Muslim population.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> (The Future of the Global Muslim Population 2011)

## CHAPTER III

### POLITICAL BELIEFS OF AMERICAN MUSLIMS

#### Political Nature of Muslim Organizations

While a few Muslim organizations began in America before the 1960s, there were not many in existence before that time. American Muslim organizations began to grow and become more prominent with the growth of Muslim immigration beginning in the mid-1960s. There has not been a statistical study published that details the growth and involvement of Muslim organizations to determine levels of activism. It has widely been held, however, that the Muslim Student Association (MSA) and Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) convention have the largest attendance of any assembly of Muslims in the United States. In the early 1980s, it was reported that attendance at these conventions was in the low thousands.<sup>36</sup> To show the increase in Muslim attendance, it has been reported that the ISNA conventions consistently have had up to 40,000 attend annually in recent years.<sup>37</sup> As an organizational change was made from MSA to ISNA in 1981, a letter was sent to all MSA members explaining the purpose of this re-organization. Below is a portion of the letter:

There is no longer any doubt, if there ever was, that Islam has come to North America to stay for good, insha'-Allah (God willing). Islamic presence here must therefore pervade all spheres of a Muslim's life in this societal environment and must exert a positive influence on the non-Muslim segments of this society. To

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<sup>36</sup> (GhaneaBassiri 2010)

<sup>37</sup> (OnIslam 2013)

do so, Islamic work must continually grow and come to grips with new challenges and opportunities. This requires evolution and adaptation of the organizational structure of Islamic organizations so that they may provide the right type of leadership to an increasingly sophisticated and comprehensive socioeconomic order among Muslims in North America....Muslims in North America are truly at the cross-roads. The most sincere and persistent effort of every Muslim is needed to forestall fragmentation and forge a united and enlightened front of Muslims to serve the Cause of Allah.<sup>38</sup>

From some of the earliest times in the foundation of various Muslim organizations, it is apparent that there was intent to affect American society through social change.

Discussion and disagreement persisted in the early years among Islamist activists about whether or not Muslims should work within the political process to make those changes. One side wanted to use the Muslim organizations to further their causes politically, while the other side feared that involvement in politics would pollute the Muslim agenda.<sup>39</sup> The Planning Committee of ISNA took the social influence further and brought a political charge to its membership in 1986. The Committee asserted,

In order to exert influence on the political decision-making and legislation in North America, ISNA should launch a campaign to educate Muslim citizens about their voting rights and mobilize them to vote on issues affecting Islam and Muslims.<sup>40</sup>

Tariq Qureishi, member of the ISNA and director of the North American Islamic Trust, was of the dissenting opinion and wanted Muslims to stay out of the political system.

Qureishi stated,

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<sup>38</sup> (New Organizational Structure Takes Shape 1981)

<sup>39</sup> (GhaneaBassiri 2010)

<sup>40</sup> (Islamic Society of North America, Guidelines for Medium Range Planning, Report of the Planning Committee 1986)

Those people who insist on entering U.S. politics say it on the presumption as if they are some kind of Jews who have to work for some state of Israel....Some people think that one can distance himself or herself from the process, and then watch the process. But philosophically speaking it is not possible. The process will assimilate you, and then adopt you, and then change you to its own objective...Even if you are ideologically very well indoctrinated, you will have to make some compromises here and there.<sup>41</sup>

Over the following years, the Muslim organizations followed the lead of ISNA into American politics. The 1980s became a critical time period for Muslim organizations, shifting focus from only religious interest into the political arena. Islamic centers began political action committees and Muslim advocacy groups. Muslim leaders encouraged political participation among American Muslims by explaining that they saw it as an ethical necessity of Islam for them to participate to the fullest extent in both society and the politics of the United States.<sup>42</sup>

By the end of the twentieth century, a number of Muslim organizations united in order to have a greater impact on issues they saw as important for Muslims in America: Jerusalem's future, civil and human rights, involvement in American elections, and access to political institutions. The organizations that began to collaborate are Arab American Institute (AAI), Association of Arab American University Graduates (AAUG), American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), American Muslim Alliance (AMA), American Muslim Council (AMC), Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), Coalition for Good Government (CFGG), Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), and National

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<sup>41</sup> (Haleem 1987)

<sup>42</sup> (GhaneaBassiri 2010)

Association of Arab Americans (NAAA). Some of the political activities the groups promoted were voter registration drives and increasing awareness with politicians regarding issues that were of importance to Muslims.<sup>43</sup>

### Political Nature of Mosques

Political participation is encouraged by a majority of the mosque leadership in America. In Report 1 from the U.S. Mosque Study 2011, it was reported that over 91% of the mosque leaders believe that Muslims should be involved in America’s political process. The same study reported that over 98% of the leaders agree that Muslims should be involved in other American institutions as shown in figures 3.1 and 3.2.<sup>44</sup>

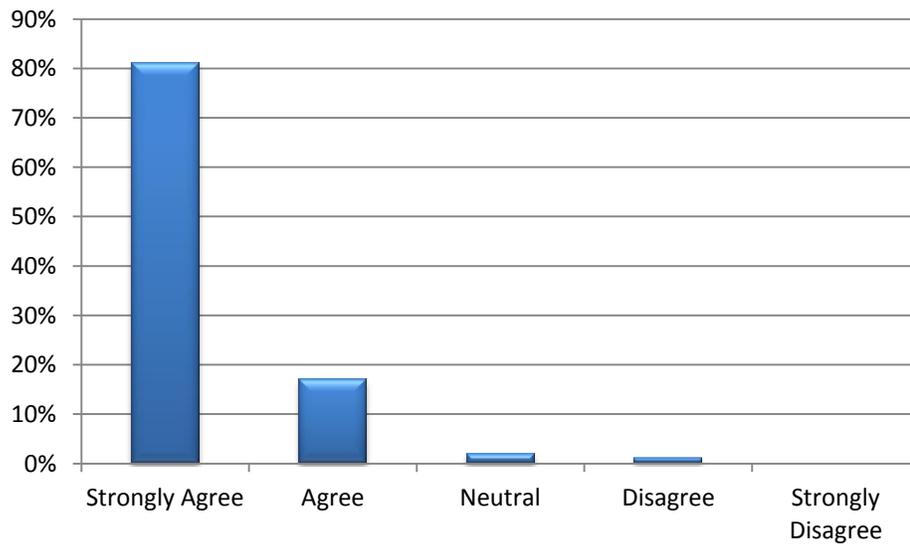


Figure 3.1. Mosque leadership support for involvement in American institutions

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<sup>43</sup> (Jamal and Albana 2013)

<sup>44</sup> (I. Bagby 2012)

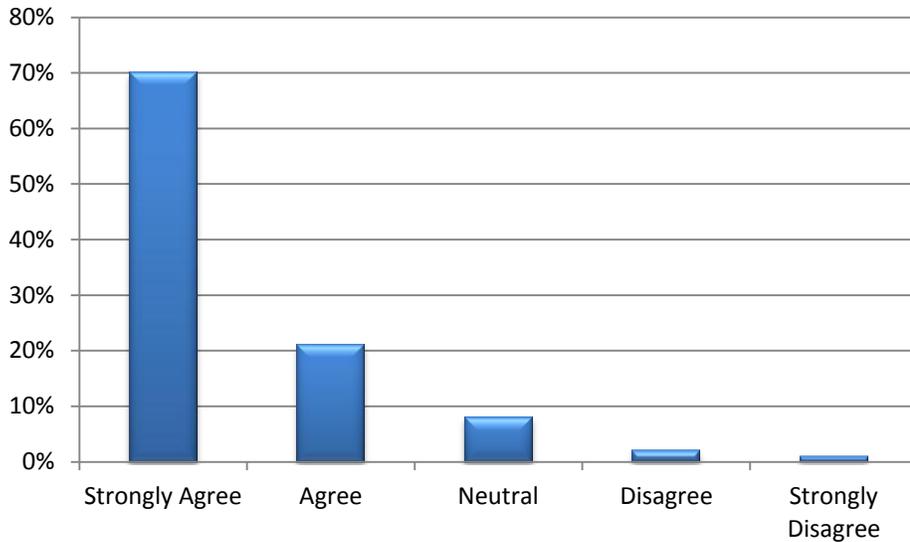


Figure 3.2. Mosque leadership support for participation in the political process

A CAIR survey of mosque leadership continues to explain that political involvement at mosques across America is prevalent. Because a high majority of mosque leaders encourage political participation, there are actual political activities that take place in the mosque beyond just encouraging the adherents to become involved in the political process. CAIR asked mosque leaders if their mosque did specific activities during the past year. Of those surveyed, 61% reported their mosque had written or called a political leader and 41% had a politician visit the mosque.<sup>45</sup>

A study by the Pew Research Center revealed that Muslims who attend services at the mosques don't necessarily hold the same view of mixing religious and political matters as the mosque leaders. Interviewers asked if in their opinion, respondents think mosques should keep out of political matters or should they express their views on day-to-day social and political questions. Neither side of the issue had a full majority of

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<sup>45</sup> (Bagby, Perl and Froehle 2001)

Muslim support, but keeping out of political matters had the higher percentage at 49% compared to 43% who stated the mosques should express social and political views.<sup>46</sup>

While mosque leaders encourage the Muslim adherents to become increasingly involved in the American political process, it appears that the leadership's influence is not the determining factor for the average membership as to whether or not they will be involved in political affairs.

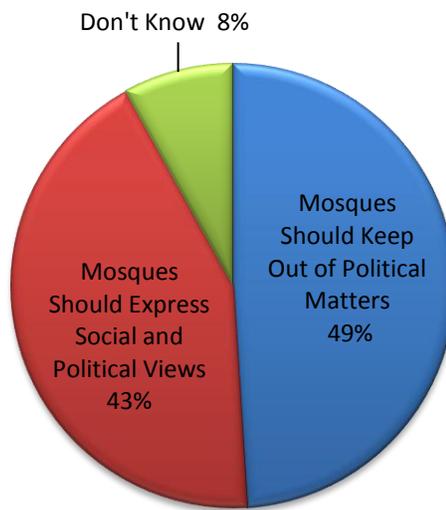


Figure 3.3. Muslim adherent views on mosques in politics

### Politics of Muslim Americans

#### Size of Government

American Muslims are decidedly more liberal in their attitude towards the size of government than the general American population. Based on interviews with Muslim

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<sup>46</sup> (Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mainly Mainstream 2007)

Americans, the Pew Research Center reported in 2011 that U.S. Muslims are more likely to prefer a bigger government with more services than the general public, 68% to 42% respectively. Inversely, only 21% of Muslims were in favor of smaller government with less services as opposed to half (exactly 50%) of the general public preferring smaller government.<sup>47</sup>

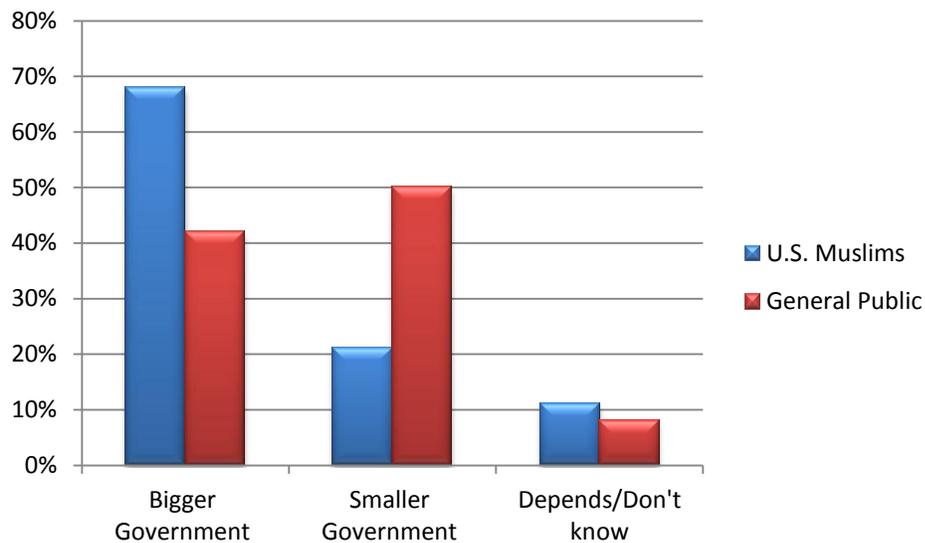


Figure 3.4. U.S. Muslim and general public preference for the size of government

### Domestic Policy

#### *Helping Needy vs. Debt*

When asked about whether it was more important for the government to help the needy or stay within budget, Muslims and the general public leaned heavily on the side of helping the poor at 73% and 63% respectively. Respondents were given the following two choices and asked which most closely represented their own views: the

<sup>47</sup> (Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism 2011)

government should do more to help needy Americans even if it means going deeper into debt, and the government today can't afford to do much more to help the needy. Only 17% of Muslims and 28% of other Americans were more concerned with the economic issues over helping the poor.<sup>48</sup>

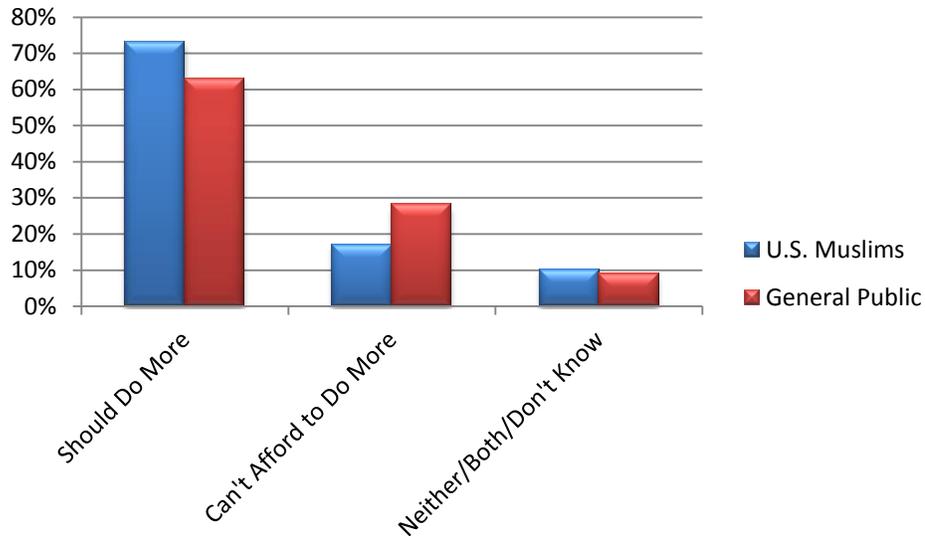


Figure 3.5. U.S. Muslim and general public opinions on government help of the needy

*Government and Morality*

When it comes to the government and its influence on morality, American Muslims are more likely than the general public to think government should do more to protect morality in society. Pew Research Center respondents were asked explicitly which of the following statements were closest to their own view: the government should do more to protect morality in society or they worry the government is getting too involved in the issue of morality. A majority of Muslims (59%) answered that the

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<sup>48</sup> (Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism 2011)

government should do more while only a little over a third (37%) of the general public agreed with this statement. A slight majority (51%) of the general public worried that the government was too involved in morality which was a much higher percentage than the Muslims with that response (29%). Both Muslims and the general population had the same percentage (12%) of respondents that replied neither, both or don't know.<sup>49</sup>

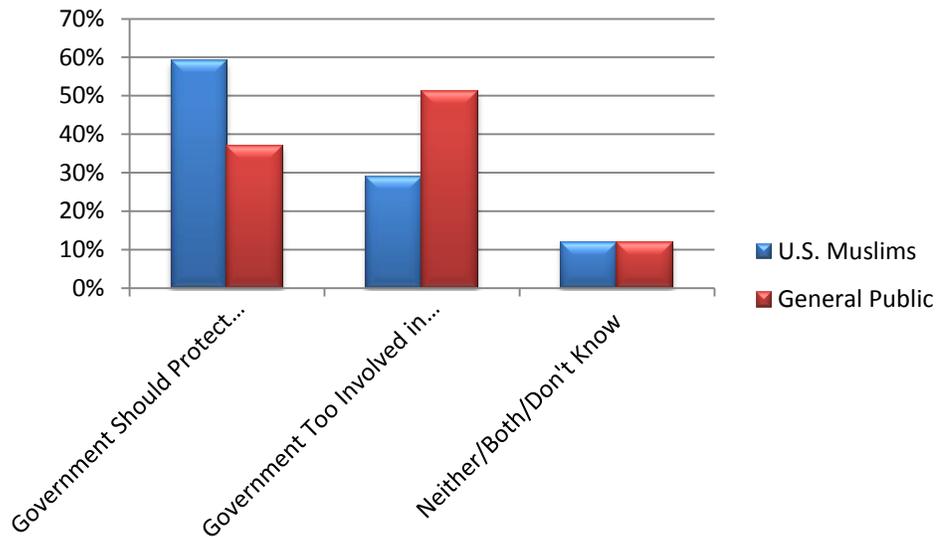


Figure 3.6. U.S. Muslim and general public beliefs about government and morality

### *Homosexuality*

In the Pew Research Center's 2007 study of Muslims in America, respondents were asked about their views on homosexuality. Specifically, they were asked if homosexuality was a way of life that should be accepted by or discouraged by society. A large majority (61%) of Muslims wanted homosexual behavior discouraged. Under one-third (27%) of Muslims responded that it should be accepted. The Muslims' belief on

<sup>49</sup> (Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mainly Mainstream 2007)

this issue did not match that of the general public. The rest of the American population showed a slight majority of acceptance for homosexual behavior at 51% compared to 38% that believed homosexuality should be discouraged. The percentages of respondents that answered neither, both or don't know was almost the same for each group: 12% of Muslims and 11% of the general public.<sup>50</sup>

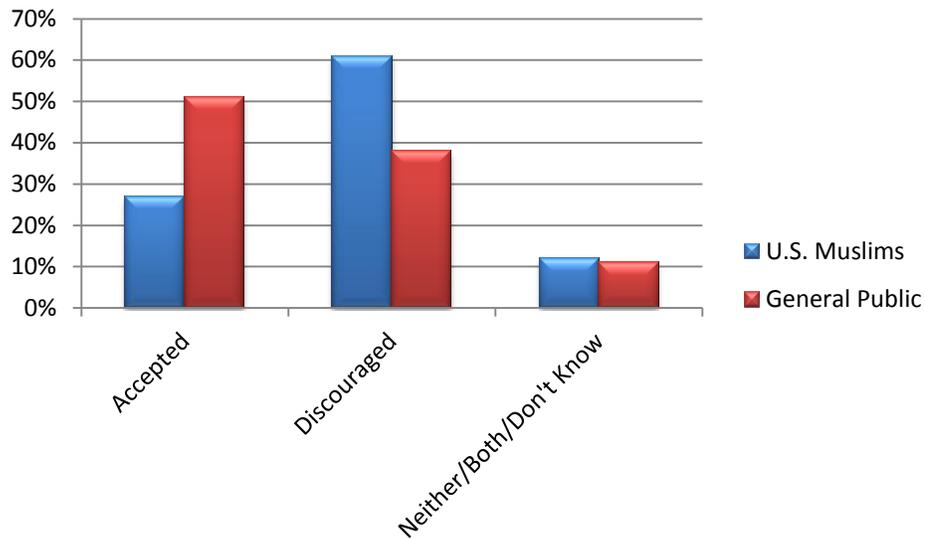


Figure 3.7. U.S. Muslims and general public views on homosexuality

*Abortion*

While Muslims are mostly in agreement that the government should ban abortion, it is not a belief held by the majority. When Muslims were asked if they agreed that the government should ban abortion, a little less than half (45%) answered

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<sup>50</sup> (Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mainly Mainstream 2007)

strongly agree or agree. The remaining respondents were evenly split between being neutral on the topic (26%) and answering disagree/strongly disagree (27%).<sup>51</sup>

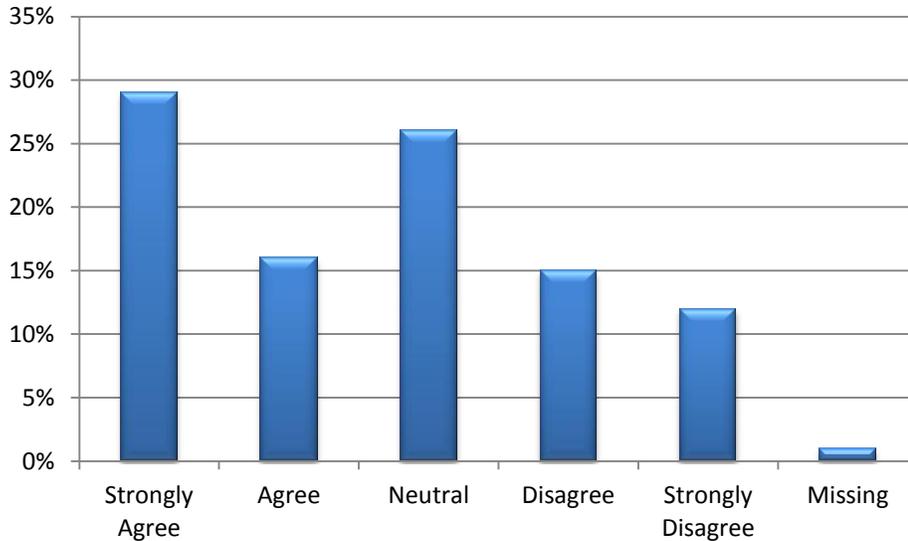


Figure 3.8. American Muslim views on banning abortion

*Islamic Extremism in America*

Muslims in America are generally concerned with the potential for Islamic extremism in the country, although not at as high of a rate of concern as the general public. Respondents were asked how concerned they were, if at all, about the possible rise of Islamic extremism in America and given a Likert scale with four options ranging from very concerned to not at all concerned. A majority of Muslims (61%) are either very concerned or somewhat concerned. While this is a strong majority, it is still significantly less than the general public where 78% of the population answered they were concerned. A minority of Muslims and the general public answered they were not

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<sup>51</sup> (Patterson 2006)

too concerned or not at all concerned, 34% and 18% respectively. Perhaps the most startling difference in the opinions of Muslims and the general public on this issue is in the not at all concerned category. Muslims had a considerably higher response rate (20%) than the general American population (5%).<sup>52</sup>

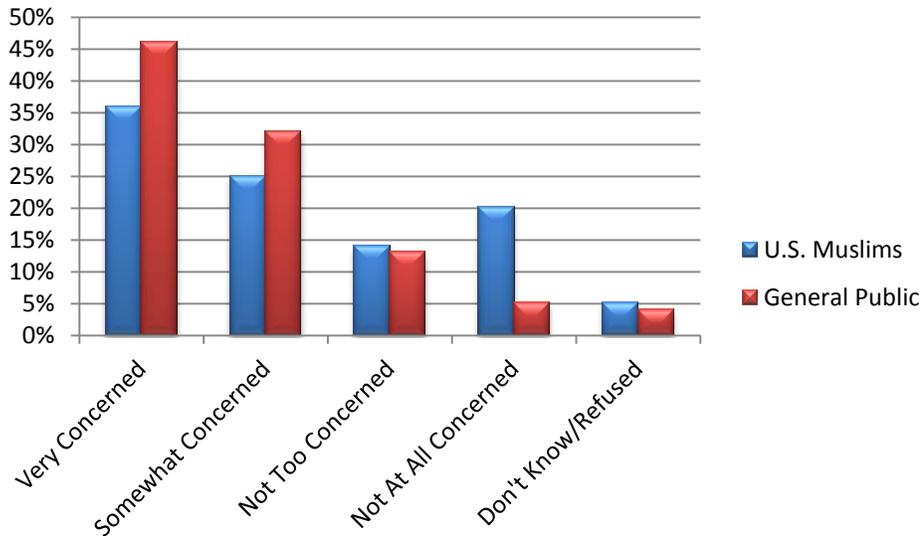


Figure 3.9. Concern about the possible rise of Islamic extremism in the U.S.

### *Anti-terrorism Policies*

The Pew Research Center asked Americans if they thought the United States government’s anti-terrorism policies singled out Muslims in America for increased monitoring and surveillance. The results of the survey are relatively similar for Muslims and the general public, the largest percentage of each group answering yes. A slight majority of Muslims responded that they thought the government singled out Muslims for increased surveillance and monitoring at 54%; the general public responded yes at

<sup>52</sup> (Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mainly Mainstream 2007)

45%. More of the general public answered that they did not think government singled out Muslims (43%) than did Muslim respondents (31%). A similar number answered don't know or refused to respond: 15% of Muslims and 12% of the general public.<sup>53</sup>

## Foreign Policy

### *Military Force in Afghanistan and Iraq*

Muslims are largely against the use of force of American troops overseas, but their degree of disagreement varies based on the country under discussion. The opinions of the American Muslims were drastically different from the opinions of the general public. The Pew Research Center asked if the respondents thought the United States made the right or wrong decision to use military force in Afghanistan and then asked the same question about the military in Iraq. In both instances, Muslims were more likely than the general public to believe the U.S. made the wrong decision in sending military troops. Muslims were against the U.S. military using force in Iraq to a greater degree than Afghanistan, 75% to 48% respectively. Only 12% of Muslims agreed with military force in Iraq compared to 35% agreeing to force being used in Afghanistan. The general population of America saw military force with a much different perspective. A majority of the general public thought it was the right decision for the U.S. to send military to Afghanistan at 61 % as opposed to 29% believing it was the wrong decision.

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<sup>53</sup> (Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mainly Mainstream 2007)

The opinions of the general public were much more divided when discussing military force in Iraq: 47% were against using military force while 45% were in favor of it.<sup>54</sup>

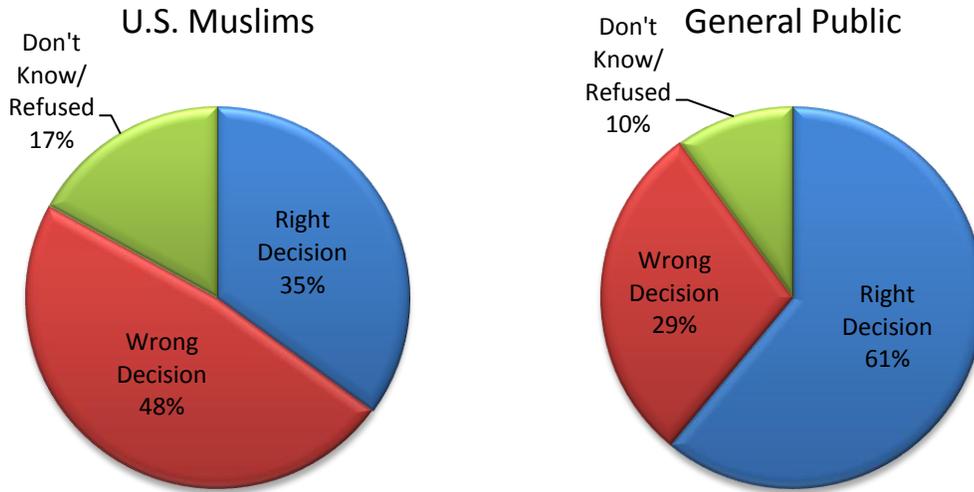


Figure 3.10. U.S. Muslims and general public opinions on U.S. military force used in Afghanistan

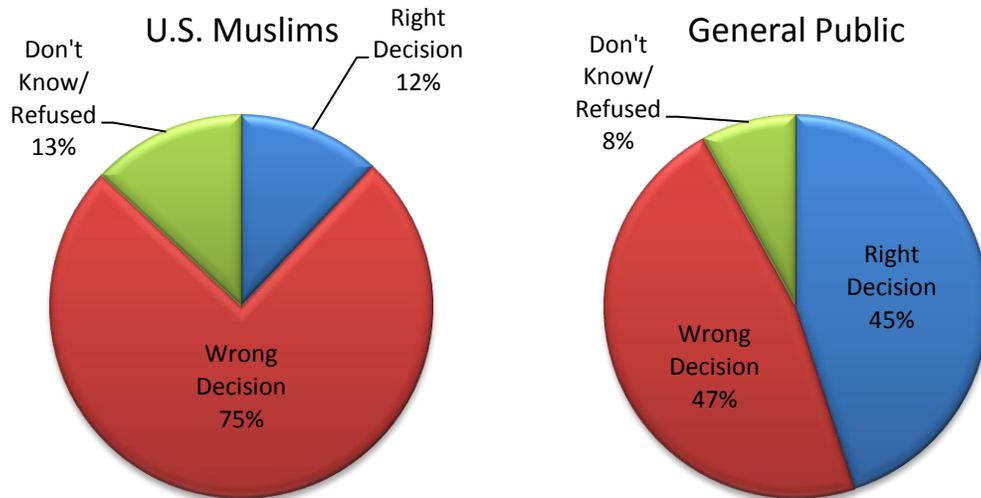


Figure 3.11. U.S. Muslims and general public opinions on U.S. military force used in Iraq

<sup>54</sup> (Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mainly Mainstream 2007)

*Al Qaeda*

A significant majority of American Muslims have an unfavorable view of Al Qaeda. The Pew Research Center asked respondents about their view of Al Qaeda giving them an option of favorable or unfavorable. Once they gave an answer of either favorable or unfavorable, they were then prodded further to clarify if it was very or somewhat favorable/unfavorable. Only 5% of Muslims answered in a favorable range; the vast majority (68%) answered unfavorable, 58% stating very unfavorable and 10% stating somewhat unfavorable. Over a quarter of respondents (27%) either refused to respond or answered that they didn't know.<sup>55</sup>

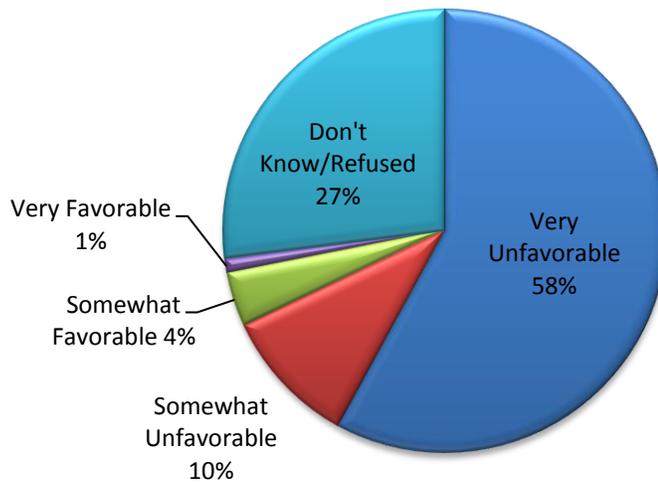


Figure 3.12. American Muslim opinion of Al Qaeda

<sup>55</sup> (Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mainly Mainstream 2007)

### Party Identity

The 2007 report from the Pew Research Center shows Muslims overwhelmingly support the Democratic Party or lean that direction politically with 63% of the respondents. Only 11% of Muslims report to lean towards the Republican Party or state they identify with the Republicans. After support of the Democrats, Muslims are more likely to be Independent with no political leaning (26%) than support Republicans. The majority favoring or leaning Democratic hold true for the general public as well with 51% identifying with the more liberal party. Where the general public differs from Muslims is the percentage identifying with Republicans (36%) or Independents (13%). The general public favors Democrats first, then Republicans, and finally Independents; Muslims first favor Democrats, next Independents, then Republicans in the end.<sup>56</sup>

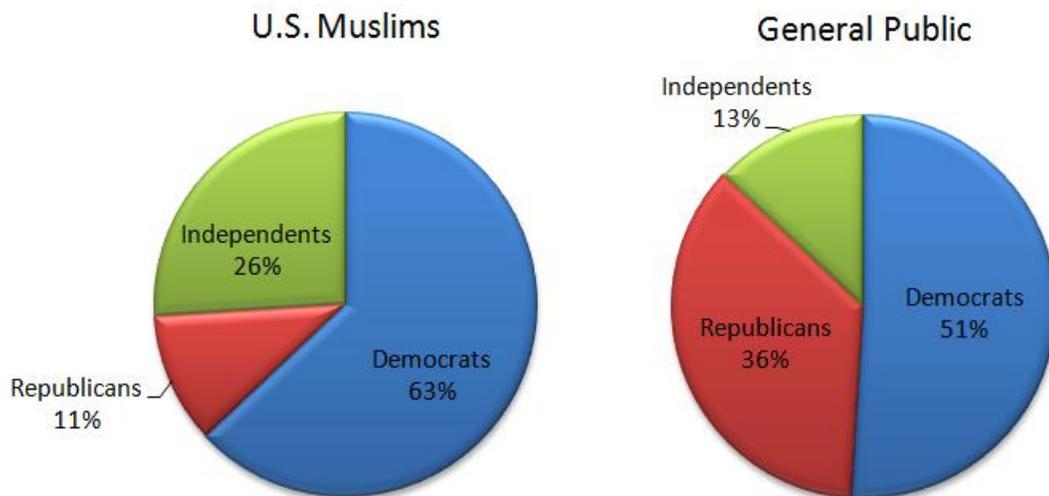


Figure 3.13. U.S. Muslims and general public party affiliation

<sup>56</sup> (Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mainly Mainstream 2007)

When researchers took the label of the political party away from a question about political views, Muslims as well as the general public responded differently about their identity on the liberal to conservative political spectrum. In analyzing the party affiliation of Muslims and the general public, it was expected to see relatively similar percentages for Democratic Party affiliation and liberal/very liberal political views as well as similar percentages for Republican Party affiliation and conservative/very conservative political views. This was definitely not the case. A greater percentage of both Muslims and the general public association with the Democratic Party (63% of Muslims and 51% of the general public) even though there is a much smaller percentage that states they have liberal or very liberal political views (24% of Muslims and 19% of the general public). While the percentage of the general population remains almost the same for those who identify with the Republican Party (36%) and those that have conservative or very conservative political views (34%), the same is not true for the Muslim population. Fewer Muslims identify with the Republican Party (11%) even though 16% of Muslims state they have conservative or very conservative political views. For both Muslims and the general American population, there is a large percentage that claim to be moderate politically. However, these moderates tend to identify with a political party instead of see themselves as Independents. Apparently, a large percentage of moderate Muslims and moderates in the general public prefer Democrats over Republicans.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> (Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mainly Mainstream 2007)

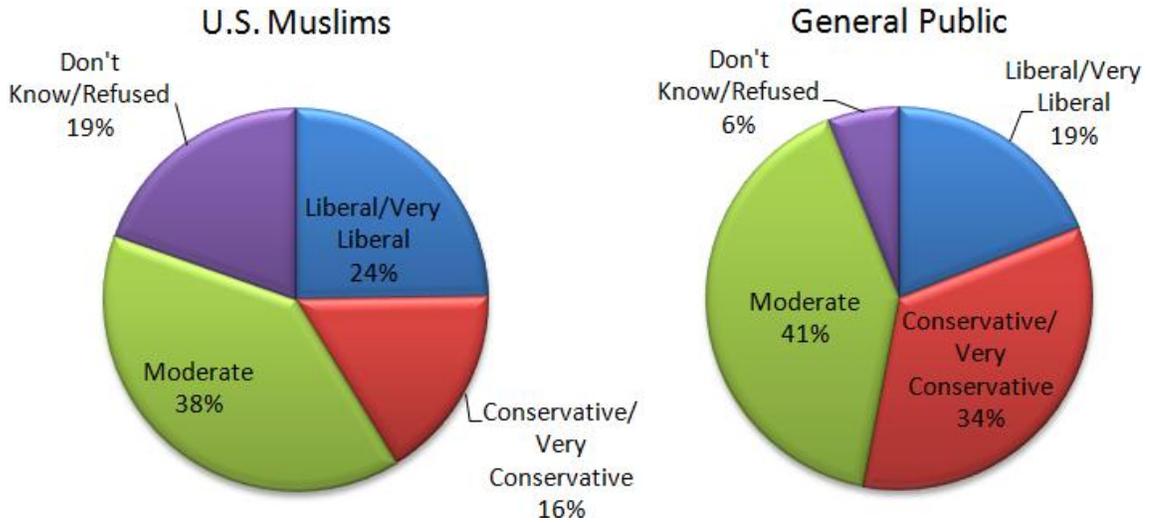


Figure 3.14. U.S. Muslims and general public on the political spectrum

In a study by the Pew Research Center in 2011, Muslims were asked about their perception of how friendly the political parties were to American Muslims. Overwhelmingly, Muslims see the Democratic Party as more friendly than the Republican Party, but neither group received a majority of support. Only 15% of respondents believe the Republican Party is friendly to Muslim Americans as opposed to 46% seeing the Democratic Party as friendly.<sup>58</sup>

### Presidential Support

#### *Support of President Clinton*

As political participation increased in the 1990s, Muslim activists engaged President Clinton. He was seen as friendly to Islamic groups based on actions that

<sup>58</sup> (Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism 2011)

showed support for the Islamic religion: acknowledgment of Ramadan in 1996 and hosting the Eid al-Fitr celebration at the White House in 2000.<sup>59</sup> It was also during his administration that the first Muslim chaplains were appointed to the United States military. Muslims overwhelmingly supported President Clinton two-to-one.<sup>60</sup>

### *2000 Presidential Election*

Based on the support the Muslim community gave to President Clinton, it would have been expected for them to stand behind Al Gore in the 2000 election. However, this was not the case; Muslim organizations unified with Arab American groups to vote for George W. Bush. The American Muslim Political Coordinated Council Political Action Committee (AMPCC-PAC) publicly endorsed then Governor Bush. The AMPCC members included American Muslim Alliance (AMA), American Muslim Council (AMC), Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), and Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC). AMPCC-PAC Chair Dr. Agha Saeed reported that the decision to endorse Bush was based on three criteria: his record, community feedback, and accessibility.<sup>61</sup>

The 2000 election was the first time that Muslim Americans voted as a bloc. According to a CAIR survey, Bush received 72% of the Muslim vote, Ralph Nader followed in second place with 19%, and Gore trailed with only 8% of their vote.<sup>62</sup> An

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<sup>59</sup> (Remarks Commemorating the End of Ramadan 2000)

<sup>60</sup> (Jamal and Albana 2013)

<sup>61</sup> (American Muslim Perspective 2000)

<sup>62</sup> (Jamal and Albana 2013)

issue of importance that Muslim leaders agreed on with Bush was the use of secret evidence by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). During the second presidential debate, Bush was on record as challenging INS use of secret evidence. Many Muslims believed that how secret evidence was used in deportation hearings was unconstitutional and it was being used disproportionately with Muslim immigrants.<sup>63</sup> Other reasons for why Bush gained favor with American Muslims were his stances on civil rights issues and Middle East policies, although many Muslims cited the AMPCC-PAC endorsement as critical in their decision to vote for him.<sup>64</sup> Taking into account the concentration of Muslims that reside in Florida and how close the election results were for that swing state, it could be argued that the presidential election of 2000 was decided by the Muslim voting bloc.

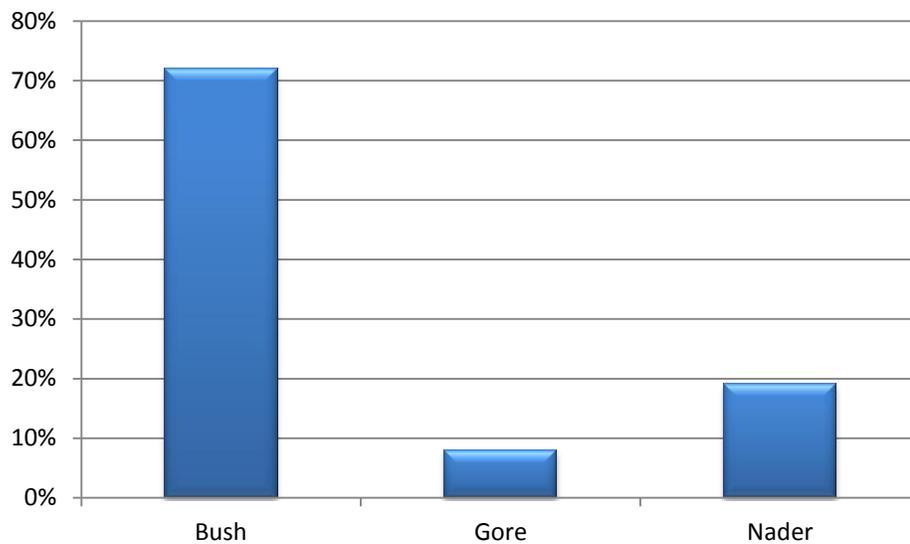


Figure 3.15. Muslim voting in the 2000 presidential election

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<sup>63</sup> (American Muslim Perspective 2000)

<sup>64</sup> (Jamal and Albana 2013)

2004 Presidential Election

Sometime between the 2000 and 2004 election, Muslim support of Bush faded. In the presidential race of 2004 between George W. Bush and John Kerry, a strong majority of American Muslims favored Kerry. The Pew Center reported that 71% of U.S. Muslims were in favor of Kerry as opposed to only 14% in favor of Bush. Muslims in America did not follow the same pattern as the general public. The broad U.S. population was more evenly divided on preference of a candidate: 48% favored Kerry and a small majority of 51% supported Bush. A much higher percentage of Muslims responded as supporting “Other” or refused to answer the question than did the general population, 15% to 1% respectively.<sup>65</sup>

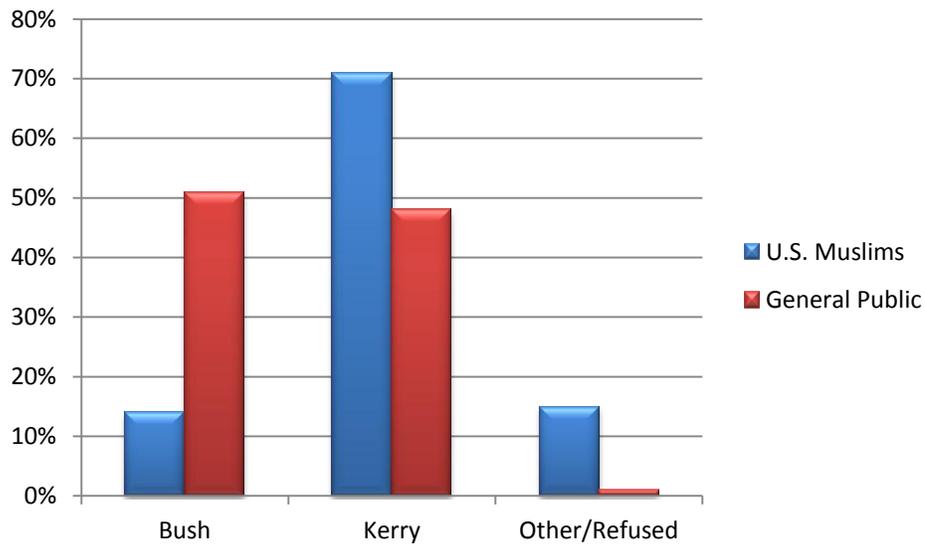


Figure 3.16. U.S. Muslim and general public voting in the 2004 presidential election

<sup>65</sup> (Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mainly Mainstream 2007)

The Zogby International/Arab American Institute poll reported that 78% of Muslims were opposed to the Bush administration's Middle East policy.<sup>66</sup> CAIR also reported statistics that showed even less support for Bush. Their exit polling for the presidential election indicated that upwards of 93% of Muslims voted in favor of Kerry.<sup>67</sup>

### *Bush Job Approval*

In 2007, a majority of both the Muslim community and the general public disapproved of President Bush, although the Muslims had a higher rate of disapproval (69%) than the general public (57%). The greater difference between the two groups comes with Bush's approval rating. Only 15% of Muslim Americans approved of Bush while significantly more of the general public was favorable to him (35%). Only 8% of the general U.S. population answered don't know or refused to answer, whereas more Muslims responded in this way (16%) which is even at a greater percentage than those that gave Bush approval.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> (Ghazali 2012)

<sup>67</sup> (Jamal and Albana 2013)

<sup>68</sup> (Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mainly Mainstream 2007)

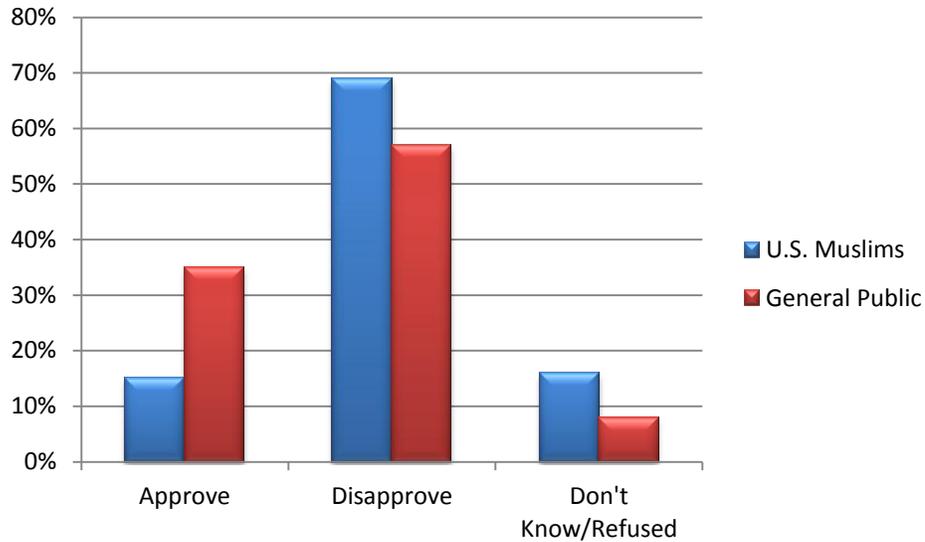


Figure 3.17. U.S. Muslim and general public approval of President Bush in 2007

### *2008 Presidential Election*

Muslims maintained their support for the Democratic Party in 2008 by voting for Barack Obama over John McCain. MuslimVotersU.S.A. reported that 89% of Muslims voted for Obama as opposed to only 2% that supported McCain in the election.<sup>69</sup> Pew Research Center reported similar results from their survey of Muslim voting in 2008. According to the Pew report, 92% of Muslims voted for Obama while only 4% voted for McCain.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> (Senzai 2012)

<sup>70</sup> (Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism 2011)

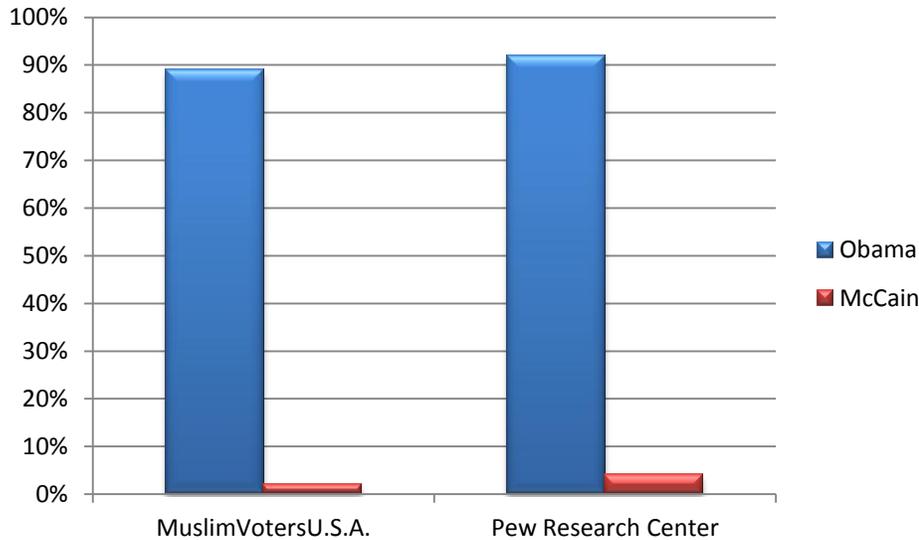


Figure 3.18. Muslim voting in the 2008 presidential election

### *Support of President Obama*

President Obama’s trip to Egypt in 2009 garnered him continued support from the Muslim community in America. His speech at Cairo University was seen as an effort to befriend Muslims. As Obama’s presidency progresses, Muslims have become less supportive and are becoming more disappointed in his administration.<sup>71</sup> However, even with skepticism, American Muslims are vastly supportive of President Obama. Pew reports that 76% of Muslims approve of Obama while only 14% disapprove. The general public is more split on their support of the current president: 46% approve while 45% disapprove.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> (Senzai 2012)

<sup>72</sup> (Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism 2011)

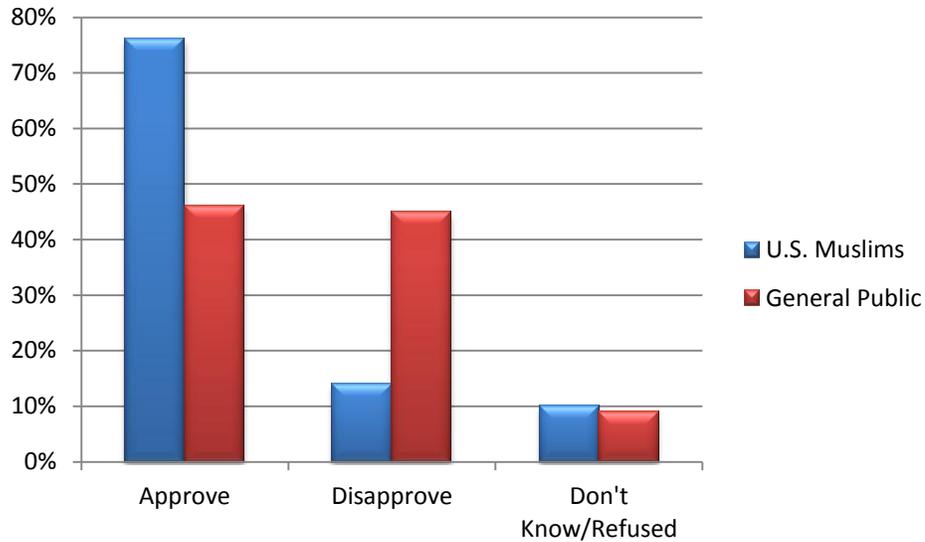


Figure 3.19. U.S. Muslim and general public approval of President Obama

*Smith v. King*

Muslim respondents were given a hypothetical election decision for President of the United States of America. They were asked about who they would vote for between two candidates: John Smith and David King. Smith is against abortion and homosexual marriage, but supports Israel and the war in Iraq. King is pro-choice and for homosexual marriage, but wants Israel to withdraw from the occupied land of 1967 and is against the war in Iraq. Smith has the conservative social values with which most Muslims agree, but King holds the same foreign policy views as a majority of Muslims. Half of the respondents sided with King in favor of foreign policy over domestic social issues while only 6% would have voted for Smith. Over a quarter of respondents answered that they would not vote in the election.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> (Patterson 2006)

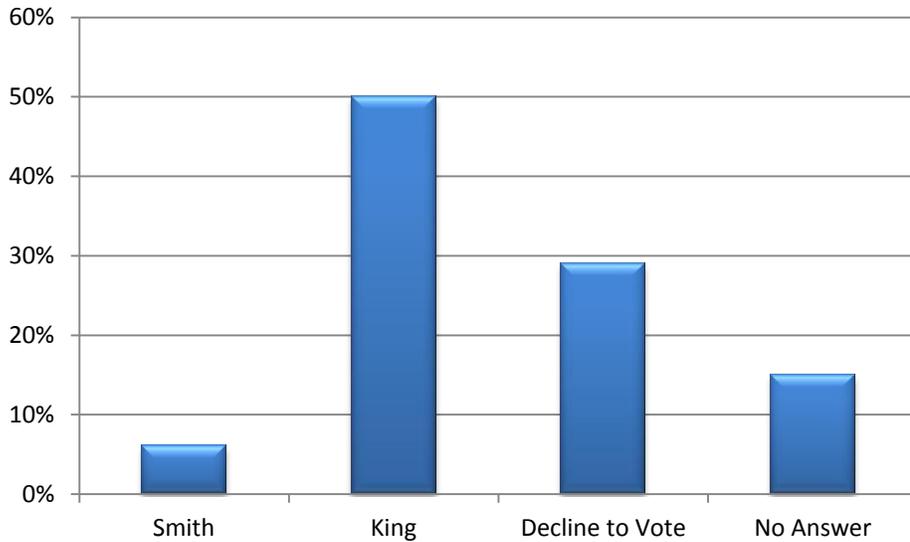


Figure 3.20. Muslim support for Smith (social issues) vs. King (foreign policy)

### **Summary of American Muslim Political Beliefs**

American Muslims have a complex set of political views. They are not easily placed within specific boundaries on the political spectrum of liberal to conservative. While there are numerous topics and areas in which a strong majority agree there are also areas in which they are moderately divided. Part of this is because the American Muslims are such a diverse group of people coming from many different countries, backgrounds, and cultures. Muslims live in scattered regions of the country and their surroundings range from large metropolitan areas to neighborhoods in the suburbs. In many demographics they are more different than alike. While a large percentage of Muslims are relatively young, they are moderately educated. Having only a moderate education, it is not surprising that most Muslim families are on the moderate to low end of the economic spectrum. It will be interesting to see how their education and income

levels change over the next couple of decades as the young Muslims begin families and become more established. In the meantime, however, Muslims are mostly moderate, average Americans. They are extremely conservative in social issues, but more liberal when it comes to the size of the government, civil rights, and foreign policy. Because civil rights and foreign policy drive their political agenda more than domestic social issues, Muslims tend to identify more with the Democratic Party, although they categorize themselves as moderates not liberals.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **POLITICAL BELIEFS OF MUSLIM AMERICANS ELECTED TO CONGRESS**

#### **Local Areas That Elected Muslim Officials**

Based solely on the information in figures 1.3 and 1.4, it is unexpected that the first Muslim representatives to Congress were elected in Minnesota and Indiana. The more likely areas would have been in districts with a higher percentage of Muslims. While the populations of the districts that elected Muslims to Congress do have a Muslim presence, it is not the highest concentration in the country. The area of Minnesota that elected the first Muslim Representative had an estimated Muslim population of 0.5%-0.99% in 2000. That estimated population percentage did not change in 2010; it remained steadily in the same range. The same is true for the estimated population percentage of Muslims in the area of Indiana that elected a Muslim to Congress. That population percentage remained at an even lower range of 0.01%-0.49% in 2000 and again in 2010.

The information in figure 1.5 begins to make the election of a Muslim congressman from Minneapolis more predictable. The greater Minneapolis area has at least 21 congregations as defined by the 2010 U.S. Religion Census and detailed earlier in chapter 1. While the population percentages might not be significant, the Muslims have a presence and are a constituency involved in their communities through various Muslim organizations and activities.

### **Political Beliefs of Muslim Members of Congress**

As American political officials have a more direct impact on the future of the country, a look at the political beliefs for Congressmen of the Islamic faith is of direct importance. Currently, there are two Muslim members of Congress: Keith Ellison and Andre' Carson. Determining how they ideologically compare and contrast with other Representatives from their respective party will help determine how their faith has impacted their political beliefs.

Keith Ellison was elected in 2006 to the U.S. House of Representatives to represent the 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional District of Minnesota. Ellison's district includes Minneapolis, and parts of Anoka, Hennepin, and Ramsey counties.<sup>74</sup> He serves a constituency of approximately 683,000 based on the American Community Survey of the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>75</sup> The second Muslim American to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives is Andre' Carson in a special election held in 2008 to fill the seat left vacant on the passing of his grandmother, the late Representative Julia Carson.<sup>76</sup> He was elected from the 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District of Indiana which includes most of Marion

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<sup>74</sup> (Open Congress: Minnesota's 5th Congressional District n.d.)

<sup>75</sup> (US Census Bureau: My Congressional District n.d.)

<sup>76</sup> (Muslim Link Paper: Second Muslim Takes His Seat in the House of Representatives n.d.)

County and Indianapolis.<sup>77</sup> His district has a constituency of approximately 736,000 according to the American Community Survey of the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>78</sup>

According to data evaluated by GovTrack.us in figures 4.1 and 4.2, both Ellison and Carson are on the liberal side of the political spectrum, with Ellison being one of the most liberal representatives in Congress and Carson being more moderately liberal in ideology. The ideology analysis of the representatives is based on the sponsorship and co-sponsorship patterns of the representatives placing them on an ideology scale of liberal to conservative. The thought behind using sponsorship and co-sponsorship to roughly determine ideology is that “Members of Congress who cosponsor similar sets of bills will get scores close together, while Members of Congress who sponsor different sets of bills will have scores far apart.”<sup>79</sup> Conventional wisdom would dictate representatives with similar views politically would likely co-sponsor each other’s bills.

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<sup>77</sup> (Open Congress: Indiana's 7th Congressional District n.d.)

<sup>78</sup> (US Census Bureau: My Congressional District n.d.)

<sup>79</sup> (Govtrack: Analysis Methodology: Ideology n.d.)

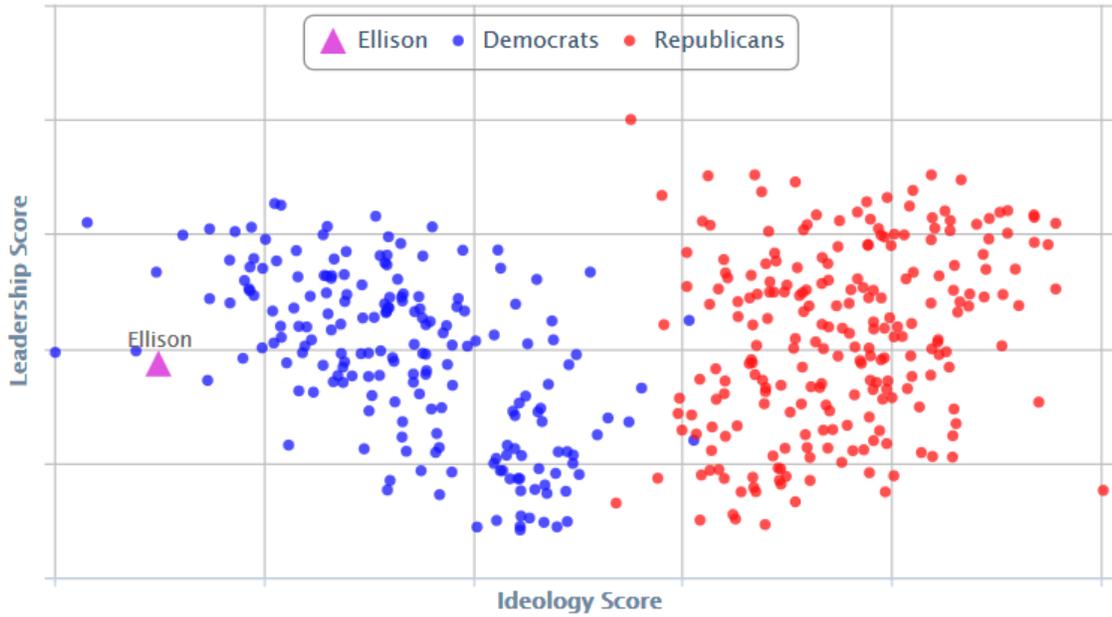


Figure 4.1. Ideology and leadership score of Representative Ellison. Source: GovTrack.us 2013. Ideology Analysis of Members of Congress. Accessed at <https://www.govtrack.us/about/analysis>.

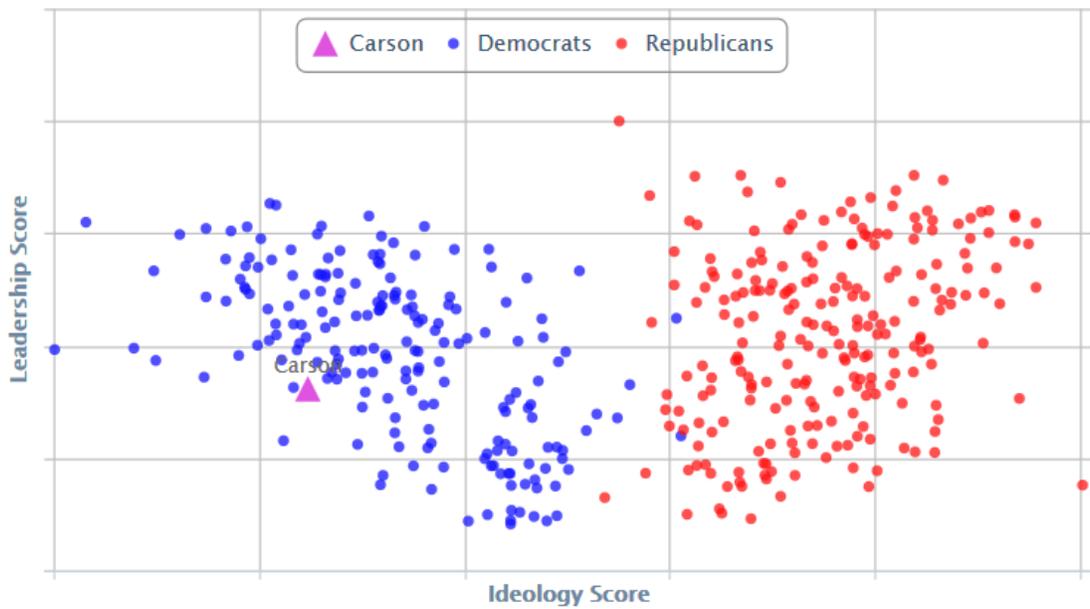


Figure 4.2. Ideology and leadership score of Representative Carson. Source: GovTrack.us 2013. Ideology Analysis of Members of Congress. Accessed at <https://www.govtrack.us/about/analysis>.

With most Muslim Americans conservative on domestic social issues, it would have been expected to see Ellison and Carson more moderately positioned on the ideology scores. Their ratings according to this study seem to reveal that their voting behavior is more closely linked to their party than political views based on Islamic beliefs.

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