



Illinois Muslims: Needs, Assets, and Opportunities

Who are Illinois Muslims, and what are their assets and needs?

What opportunities exist for leaders, officials, volunteers, policymakers, corporations, media members, and social/civic/philanthropic organizations on how best to understand and support the Muslim community in Illinois?

This report presents an empirical assessment of the strengths and struggles of the Illinois Muslim community, with a comparison to the Illinois general public.



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For more information about the study:

www.ISPU.org/illinois-muslims and
www.ILMuslimCivicCoalition.org





Executive Summary

This report presents an empirical assessment of the strengths and struggles of the Illinois Muslim community based on nearly 1,800 completed surveys collected from October 15, 2021 to January 31, 2022, with a comparison to the Illinois general public, and four focus groups with Illinois Muslims held between March 22 and March 25. The focus groups consisted of two with Muslim respondents of any age, race or ethnicity, one with African American Muslims only, and one with young adults aged 18-29. The topics examined, in both the survey and focus groups, were curated with community stakeholder input to reflect the priorities of those impacted.

This report is the product of three years of tireless effort by Illinois leaders to define, fund, and execute this historic study. The results of this research can help guide leaders, officials, volunteers, policymakers, corporations, media members, and social/civic/philanthropic organizations on how best to understand and support the Muslim community in Illinois.

Methodology

This survey used an outreach method referred to as “snowball” sampling, whereby online surveys were distributed through Illinois Muslim community mailing lists associated with mosques, businesses, student

associations, individual influencers, cultural centers, and civic organizations. The survey was offered in English, Arabic, Urdu, Bosnian, Farsi, Turkish, Spanish, and French to ensure access to as many respondents as possible. The conveners and researchers also accessed nearly 100 diverse community activists and influencers to provide guidance at different stages throughout the process and to help reach a representative pool of survey respondents. All were asked to share the survey with their own networks, thus the name “snowball” sampling. Conveners and researchers reached out to a diverse group of ethnic and racial communities representing different schools of thought within the Islamic tradition across the state and received surveys from more than 20 counties representing rural and urban communities.

The ideal mix of respondents in any survey would closely resemble the actual population of that target group as a whole in the demographic areas important to the study. For this survey of Illinois Muslims, key demographics included race, age, socioeconomic status, and gender, among other factors.

Addressing Sample Limitations

This methodology is helpful for generating a large sample size but can be difficult to achieve representation despite every effort since respondents are self-selected and not randomly identified by researchers. To account for

this anticipated challenge, the research team monitored the demographic mix of the sample as surveys came in and targeted outreach to African American and African immigrant Muslim communities through trusted leaders and influencers. The fielding period was also extended two full months in an effort to maximize representativeness. At the close of the survey, not unlike the national census, the results underrepresented African Americans, low-income Muslims, and refugees. This was then addressed by dedicating a specific focus group to the perspectives of African American Muslims and through the statistical process of “weighting” the data to smooth out some unevenness in representation. Despite these steps, it is recognized that future surveys and research will need to make additional steps to ensure that true representativeness is achieved.¹

Results

The results are broken down by responses to survey questions pertaining to the individual respondent themselves, their family, their community, and their perspectives on the broader society beyond their community. Most observations are described as either an “asset” of the Illinois Muslim community or a “need.” Following the results are recommendations and opportunities for a range of stakeholders on how to address the needs.

Individual Assets

ASSET Strong Faith Identity: The Illinois Muslim community has several assets at the individual level. For one, Illinois Muslims in our sample have a strong faith identity. More than 4 in 5 Illinois Muslim respondents (84%) reported that their faith is very important to them; 72% attended their house of prayer once a month or more prior to the pandemic.² Previous [research](#) has linked a strong faith identity with a strong national/American identity.

ASSET Strong Educational Attainment and Expertise: Illinois Muslims are a rich pool of knowledge and expertise. In terms of education, 40% of respondents in the Muslim sample have a college degree or higher, compared with 28% of the Illinois general public sample. Professionally, Muslim respondents were a diverse talent pool, especially in the fields of healthcare, STEM, business, and education.

Individual Needs

NEED More Halal Options: Muslims in our sample stated they need more access to halal choices, particularly when it comes to food, but halal living includes many other products and services pertaining to all aspects of life. (Halal means “permissible” in Arabic and is most often used when referring to food or consumable goods.) In particular, 94% of the Illinois Muslim sample reported that it is ‘somewhat’ or ‘very’ important that

their purchase decision be halal. At the same time, 39% of Muslim respondents with school-age children and 32% of students enrolled in college said they didn’t have access to halal food at their school, pointing to a need for administrators at grade schools and institutions of higher learning to work to address the religious dietary needs of their Muslim students.

NEED Access to Appropriate Healthcare: Findings point to a need for more research on the obstacles Muslims face when accessing health care services. One-quarter of Illinois Muslim respondents who said they needed immediate medical care in the past year reported that they ‘sometimes’ or ‘never’ got immediate care. This finding underscores the need to conduct further research as to why Muslim patients are less likely to get the care they need in a timely fashion.

NEED Affordable, Culturally Appropriate Mental Health Services: When it comes to mental health, Muslims within our sample were less likely than the general public to seek out therapy services (13% vs. 24%) despite suffering from mental illness symptoms at the same rate as the general Illinois population (47% and 51%, respectively). Roughly one-third (35%) of respondents in the Illinois Muslim sample who reported mental health symptoms but did not seek treatment cite cost as a barrier to seeking treatment. Moreover, 8% among the Muslim sample reported attempting suicide. Though lower than the 18% of individuals in the Illinois general public sample who said the same, these findings reiterate the significant need for culturally appropriate and affordable mental health services for the Illinois Muslim community.

Family Assets

ASSET Muslim Marriage: In terms of family makeup, 63% of the Muslim sample responded that they were married at the time of the survey, while 39% of the Illinois general public sample reported the same. Though simply being married is no guarantee for a thriving and healthy family, marriage is still a foundation for healthy family units which extensive [research suggests](#) are linked to better outcomes for children.

ASSET Strong Intergenerational Support: Compared to the Illinois general population sample, a greater percentage of the Illinois Muslim sample care for their elderly relatives (29% vs. 21%, respectively), suggesting the elderly in the Muslim community are more likely to have family engagement and companionship, which [research suggests](#) contributes to better mental and physical health outcomes.

Family Needs

NEED More Support for Divorced Families: Respondents in the Illinois Muslim sample indicated a need to better support divorced families. This can include

As the youngest and most diverse faith community in the state and country, Illinois Muslims are a rich source of capable labor, innovative ideas, and professional expertise.

divorced and separated families as well as those going through divorce. Ninety-one percent agree that their faith community should be more supportive of divorced people. This presents an important opportunity for faith-based organizations, counselors, and houses of faith to advocate for more resources devoted to support programs for divorcees.

NEED Greater Education and Support for Domestic Violence Survivors: The Illinois Muslim sample was as likely as the Illinois general public sample to know someone in their faith community who was a victim of domestic violence (17% vs. 14%, respectively). However, compared to the Illinois general public sample, respondents in the Illinois Muslim sample were less likely to report cases of domestic violence to law enforcement (35% vs. 58%, respectively) or a community leader (31% vs. 53%, respectively), underscoring the need to adequately and appropriately serve victims with regard to both law enforcement and victim services.

NEED Sandwich Generation Is Common: Many Muslims in Illinois are taxed with caring for parents and children at the same time in ways that make demands on their time as well as their finances. Nearly all respondents in the Illinois Muslim sample who indicated that they care for elders reported providing hands-on work (91%), while fewer indicated that they help their parents financially (9%). Further research is recommended to understand the impact of this added mental and emotional labor on Muslim mental health.

NEED Improved Access and Awareness of Job Placement Opportunities and Social Services: Findings indicate that the Illinois Muslim sample needs more support for finding jobs and accessing social services to help with financial assistance and food insecurity. Almost one-third, 30%, of the Illinois Muslim sample and the Illinois general public sample reported that they have struggled with job loss. About 20% of both samples have had a household member laid off in the past year. Further, 28% of our Muslim respondents stated they have accessed social welfare programs like SNAP/TANFF, compared with 35% of Illinois general public respondents. Fourteen percent of the Illinois Muslim sample reported not having enough food in the house at some point over the past year. Economically disadvantaged communities are often harder to reach with online surveys that rely on snowball sampling, so the need, in fact, may be even greater than indicated here.

Community Assets

ASSET Young and Diverse: As the youngest and most diverse faith community in the state and country, Illinois Muslims are a rich source of capable labor, innovative ideas, and professional expertise.

ASSET Illinois Muslims Give Generously: Muslims in our sample are generous with their wealth. Eighty-three percent donated to organizations or causes associated with their faith community in the past year, compared with 46% of the Illinois general public sample. While roughly a third of both the Muslim sample and the Illinois general public sample contributed between \$100 and \$500 annually, the Muslim sample was more likely to give at the higher end of the spectrum. Roughly a quarter of the Muslim sample contributed between \$1,000 and \$5,000 annually compared to 16% of the Illinois general public sample.

ASSET Frequent Mosque Attendance Is an Asset for Community Mobilization and Mental Health: Roughly 70% of the Muslim sample attended their mosque at least once a month prior to the pandemic. Higher mosque attendance is linked with increased volunteerism and higher civic engagement for the group.³ In addition, more frequent mosque attendance is linked to better mental health outcomes, such as lower sadness and anger.⁴

ASSET Muslim Community Reports Less Drug Use But Favors More Support For Addiction Care: Muslims in our sample report consuming significantly less alcohol on a weekly basis than the general public (5% vs. 52%, respectively) and know fewer people in their faith community who struggle with addiction (33% vs. 41%, respectively). However, respondents in the Illinois Muslims sample show concern for community members struggling with addiction, and this concern, rather than condemnation, is an asset to build on. A greater proportion of the Illinois Muslim sample (75%) stated their faith community should provide more support to those struggling with addiction, compared with 53% of the Illinois general public sample.

Community Needs

NEED Greater Investment in Nontraditional Nonprofits: We found that while 80% of Muslims do donate to nonprofit organizations, just 9% give to civic organizations, while 3% donate to family and youth organizations or research organizations associated with their faith community. This lack of funding to non-Mosque or relief organizations may

leave the Illinois Muslim community with less capacity to inform and advocate and points to a need to invest in such organizations.

NEED ***More Responsive Muslim Sacred Spaces:*** This research suggests a need for mosque leadership to better engage those who attend their institutions and find ways to better listen and address their needs. Compared to the Illinois general public sample, Muslims in our sample who attended their house of prayer at least once a month are twice as likely to state that their opinion doesn't count in their house of worship (28% vs. 14%, respectively). This sentiment held across lines of race, with 37% of Black Muslims and 30% of both Arab and Asian Muslims stating their opinion doesn't count compared with 10% of white Muslims. Men and women were equally likely to say their opinions don't seem to count (26% and 30%, respectively). Moreover, one-third of Muslim respondents said young people's opinions are not included in their house of worship.

NEED ***Gender Discrimination:*** Muslim women face gender discrimination within and outside of their faith community. Muslims in our sample stated they have experienced equal amounts of gender discrimination both inside (28%) and outside (34%) their faith community. Muslim women in our sample experienced more gender-based discrimination both inside (47%) and outside (49%) the faith community compared to both Muslim men (14% within the community and 23% outside of the community) and women (25% within their faith community and 31% outside their faith community) in the Illinois general public.

NEED ***Anti-Black Racial Discrimination Inside and Outside Muslim Communities:*** Black Muslims in our sample report more racial discrimination inside their faith community (51%) compared with other racial/ethnic groups. Roughly half of Black Muslims as well as Arab and Asian Muslims report experiencing racial discrimination from outside their faith community.

Broader Society Assets

ASSET ***Illinois Muslims Create Jobs:*** Among Muslim respondents in Illinois, 12% of are self-employed or run their own business, creating more than 350,000 jobs—that's nearly 6% of [all jobs](#) in Illinois, while Muslims only make up 2.8% of the population.

ASSET ***Strong Civic and Political Engagement:*** Muslims in Illinois who responded to our survey report strong civic engagement with room to grow. Three-quarters of the sample (75%) are registered to vote with an additional 16% expressing an intention to register, opening the door for voter registration drives. Muslim respondents in Illinois were slightly more likely than those in the general public to report deeper civic engagement such as volunteering. Twenty-three percent volunteered for a political campaign

in the past 12 months, compared to 17% of the general public, and roughly 30% have contacted an elected official compared to roughly a quarter of the general public. We found that the Muslims in our sample typically had the same policy concerns as the general public, including the economy and healthcare. Muslim respondents, however, stood apart from the public in also prioritizing Islamophobia as a top concern.

ASSET ***Politically Independent:*** As a community with a significant percentage identifying as "Independent," Muslims in Illinois may be less tied to partisanship and more to principles when making political choices. It also opens opportunities for both parties to win over segments of the community.

Broader Society Needs

NEED ***Mosque and Faith Center Opposition Remains a Challenge:*** More than one-third of Muslims in our sample (39%) stated they experienced significant resistance by the local community when trying to move, build, or expand their house of worship. This may present an opportunity for greater interfaith cooperation and allyship between neighbors when religious communities are seeking to build or expand their houses of worship and a need to raise awareness about the impact of national political rhetoric on local community [opposition to mosques](#).

NEED ***Religious Discrimination:*** Roughly half of all respondents in the Illinois Muslim sample have faced religious discrimination (52%), more likely than 24% of the Illinois general public sample. This has repercussions ranging from public health to employment, to political representation, and should be a focus for government and non-government organizations tasked with ensuring equal rights for all.

NEED ***Hate Crimes:*** Muslim respondents were just as likely as the Illinois general public respondents to be a victim of a hate crime (9% vs. 10%, respectively). These results point to the need for greater support for all vulnerable communities against bias-inspired crimes and an opportunity for coalition building.

NEED ***Bullying:*** At a national level, [half of Muslim families](#) with children in K-12 say their child has been bullied in the past year because of their religious identity, twice as



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likely as the general public. While we found that Muslim students in our Illinois sample were bullied less than the national rate (29% vs. 51%), any bullying is a problem that should be addressed by educators and advocates.

The Muslim community is large and diverse, and one or few organizations can no longer meet every need. There is no one voice in this diverse community, so intra-community collaboration and coalition-building is critical between races, ethnicities, genders, etc.

Recommendations and Opportunities

The survey and focus group results presented in this report describe a vibrant and diverse Muslim community in Illinois—a community that brings tremendous assets to Illinois' civic, economic, and cultural spheres, yet also has important and urgent needs. Based on the assets and needs identified in this research, we offer the following recommendations for specific stakeholders.

Funders/Philanthropists

- Recognize community diversity and service to all marginalized and often invisible residents. Invest equitably in Muslim-led nonprofits based on demographics and needs.
- Invest in social services supporting Muslim communities, especially related to culturally appropriate family safety, [elder care](#), poverty alleviation, accessibility, addiction, and affordable health and mental health care services.
- Invest in 'non-traditional' and therefore underfunded Muslim-led nonprofits such as research and civic organizations.
- Focus on racial equity by recognizing the racialized nature of Islamophobia and supporting efforts to combat it among the general public and within

schools, hospitals, and other public and private institutions.

- Leverage community generosity and capacity to donate, engaging with Muslim philanthropists to tackle pressing community challenges.
- Invest in civic engagement efforts to support full community participation in our democratic processes and institutions.

Educators

- Include implicit bias training related to Islamophobia and religious-based bullying awareness in staff cultural sensitivity training.
- Ensure educators have access to resources and experts within the Muslim community to better understand and serve our diverse students.
- Partner with Muslim-led community organizations to provide halal options for Muslim students. Also note that all students can consume halal food, so switching to halal providers will address the needs of every student.
- Include information on Muslim contributions to the state of Illinois and the nation in curricula based on recently passed laws. Invite Muslim community members to present on career days and to host interns.
- Include information on accessing social services to low-income families in school material to make sure every child has access to nutritious meals and is ready to learn.
- Raise awareness about recently passed laws addressing faith-based equity to ensure no discrimination based on faith. See <https://www.ilmuslimciviccoalition.org/> for more information.

Direct Social Service Providers

- Increase outreach to Muslim communities regarding job training and employment support.
- Invest in affordable and culturally appropriate mental health support for Muslims.
- Invest in serving Muslims with disabilities, providing addiction prevention and treatment, supporting aging community members and their families, supporting divorcees, and addressing domestic violence and supporting victims.
- Educate disadvantaged members of the Muslim community on how to access government programs

to alleviate food insecurity and access employment support.

- Ensure better access and outreach, provide language access, and connect with trusted messengers to center the voices of Muslim-led organizations to lead this work.

Business Community

- Raise awareness in the business community about the Illinois Muslim chambers of commerce, Muslim-led businesses, and the Illinois Muslim community as job creators.
- Better understand and cater to the Muslim consumer who has strong disposable income and purchasing power.
- Understand halal as a healthy, ethical way of living.
- Provide more [halal products and services](#) to address the unmet needs of Muslim consumers, especially related to availability of halal food options on college campuses, halal financial options, and halal cultural activities.
- For Muslim business leaders, leverage their collective economic and job-creating clout to advocate for those with less privilege with policymakers (see ISPU's [Strategies to Increase Effective Political Engagement Case Study](#) as an example).

Muslim Community Leaders and Members

- Invest in and support specialized faith, social, and civic organizations to address specific needs. The Muslim community is large and diverse, and one or few organizations can no longer meet every need. There is no one voice in this diverse community, so intra-community collaboration and coalition-building is critical between races, ethnicities, genders, etc.
- Mosque leadership should seek ways to better hear and address the opinions of all congregants, including women, young people, and Black Muslims (see ISPU's research on [Reimagining Muslims Spaces](#)).
- Address intra-Muslim racism with education on the impacts and history of white supremacist ideas.
- Leverage the Muslim business community as job creators to address Muslim unemployment in Illinois.

- Invest in community-based resources providing affordable and culturally appropriate mental health support.
- Increase awareness of the [Muslim Mental Health Directory](#).
- Invest in and support services and organizations serving people with disabilities, providing addiction prevention and treatment, supporting aging community members and their families, supporting divorcees, and addressing domestic violence and supporting victims.
- Engage in civic engagement efforts through support and partnership to build community participation and influence.
- Support and educate the community about [Laws](#) that empower and help change the narrative about the Muslim Community.

Government and policymakers

- Ensure Muslim experts are at the table when policy is being made, not after it's already developed.
- Increase and sustain outreach to Muslim constituents and communities, in all their diversity, and understand and address needs.
- Engage Muslim business leaders as job creators and an economic engine for the state.
- Engage Muslim healthcare professionals as a brain trust for health policy in Illinois.
- Invest in social services supporting Muslim communities, especially related to culturally appropriate family safety, elder care, poverty alleviation, accessibility, addiction, and affordable health and mental health care services.
- Muslims vote, contribute, and engage in the political landscape. Ensure Muslim representation grows in elected office. This will ensure communities are integrated and even more engaged in civic society.
- Understand bias/discrimination/[Islamophobia](#), where it comes from, how it manifests, and the role of political rhetoric in both inflaming and dampening it.
- Include Muslim communities in racial equity programming and outreach.

Allies, Advocates, and Practitioners

- Recognize the presence of and seek education about [Muslim communities](#), their contributions, and the impact of Islamophobia and discrimination. Consider diversity training for board, staff, and others involved to ensure cultural competency.
- Amplify the voices of Muslim advocates and community leaders seeking equity and partner with them for greater impact.
- Organize and speak up against local efforts to disenfranchise Muslim communities, in the form of [mosque opposition](#) as one example.
- Partner with Muslim serving organizations and combine forces for greater impact and culturally appropriate services and programs.
- Access expertise in the Muslim community for advisors, boards, and commissions in every sector, not just for faith or religious needs. Muslims are clearly experts in healthcare, business ownership, education, etc.
- Ensure that your own and/or your organization's programs take into account the unique needs of Muslim communities and their diverse populations.

Future Researchers

- Further research that robustly examines the perspectives of Black Muslims.
- Further research that focuses on the needs of economically disadvantaged Muslims in Illinois.
- Greater exploration of the health care needs of Muslim patients, especially why they are less likely than the general public to receive care when they need it.
- Deeper dives into some of the issue areas discussed in this report to understand their contributing and mitigating factors and uncover evidence-based solutions to challenges identified.
- Further research on the mental health impact of the added cognitive and emotional labor of caring for parents and children at the same time.





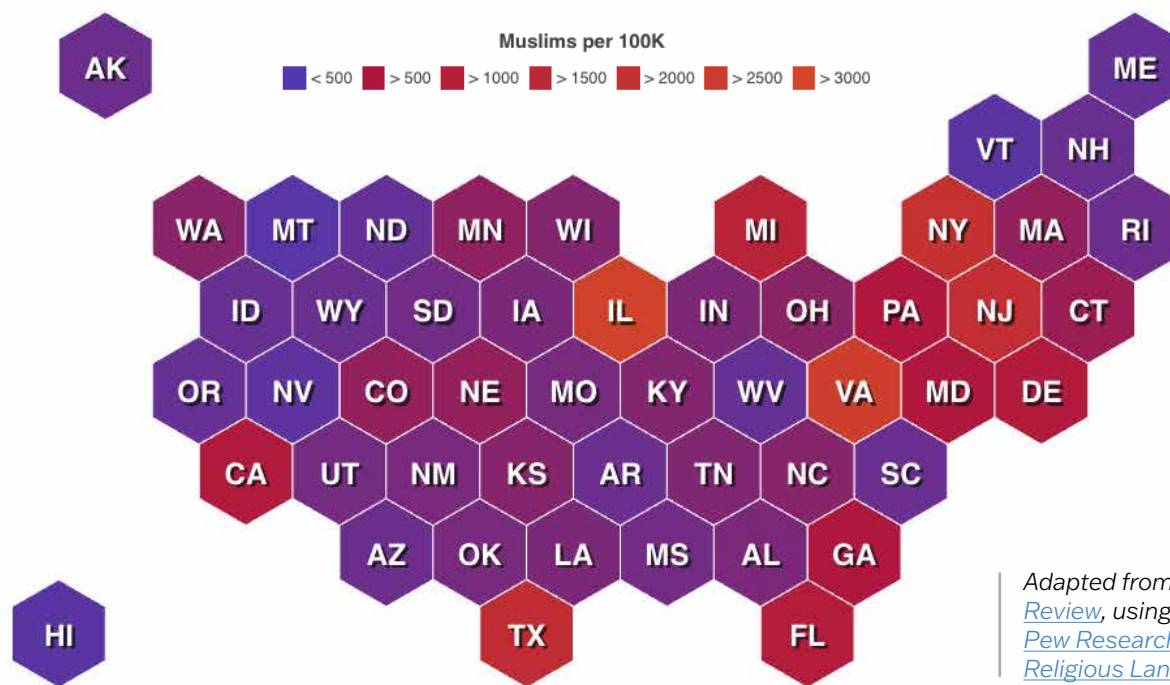
Illinois Muslims: Report Results

Introduction

Illinois is home to a large and diverse community of Muslims, with the most recent available estimates placing the size at around 2,800 Muslims per 100,000 Illinoisans.⁵ Given that there are around 12.5 million

people in Illinois according to the 2020 census, that means at least 350,000 residents who self-identify as Muslims call Illinois home.

Muslim Population by State in 2022



Adapted from [World Population Review](#), using data from [Pew Research Center's 2014 Religious Landscape Study](#).

Despite being home to one of the larger populations of Muslims in America, there has never been an evidence-based portrait of this vibrant and diverse community statewide nor an assessment of their needs and opportunities. This report seeks to do just that.

Amidst the backdrop of a pandemic that disproportionately affects minority communities, systemic racial inequities, and an election year amidst widespread economic hardships, 2022 brings urgency to this initiative. Understanding the needs of diverse residents is critical for policy makers, social service agencies, businesses, employers, funders, journalists, and others.

Evidence-based decisions are vitally important. Quality research informs effective public, social, public health, and business policies. It enables smart activism, advocacy and community development programs and promotes fact-based versus fear-based decision-making and nuanced and accurate media reporting. Modeled after ISPU's [Bay Area Study](#), this research examines the needs, challenges, opportunities, and demographics of Illinois' Muslim residents. The evidence-based portrait will help those working to strengthen our communities and build a more just and equitable Illinois, impacting philanthropic, social, civic, faith, public health, and business outcomes for decades. Researchers can use this report as a place to forge further research, and the general public can use this as an easy tool to understand an established and ever-growing population.

This research study is a collaboration between the Institute for Policy and Civic Engagement (IPCE) at the University of Illinois Chicago and the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU), convened by the IL Muslim Civic Coalition (the Coalition) and its partners and allies across the region. This study is 100% funded by the generous contributions of Muslim community members and organizations.

This research builds on the important work of previous scholars. The last [demographic survey on Muslims in Illinois](#) was conducted in 1997 by Professor Ilyas Ba-Yunus. This predated the spread of online questionnaires but had a similar methodology to the present study, using snowball sampling within the city of Chicago and the surrounding suburbs and engaging Muslims who lived outside the Chicago metropolitan area by partnering with community centers, social service and civic organizations, and individual influencers across Illinois. Professor Ba-Yunus and the researchers acknowledged that his sample underrepresented African American Muslims. In addition, his team acknowledged that their focus was mainly on demographic qualities of the Muslim population. The researchers of the previous study did not look at attitudes and perceptions within the Muslim community nor did it closely examine the needs and assets of these

communities. Our present study is therefore the first of its kind. We aim to conduct regular updates to this study over the years to provide stronger data and analysis.

Methodology

This research involved two components; an in-depth survey and focus groups. Fielding the survey was the first step. With inspiration from the Bay Area study, a total of 74 questions were prepared in the following topic areas:

- Healthcare Access
- Mental Health
- Political and Civic Engagement
- Drug Abuse
- Poverty and Inequality
- Discrimination
- Bullying
- Inclusion
- Importance of Faith
- Philanthropy
- General Demographics

The questions were gathered from various sources such as census questionnaires, ISPU's bank of questions, community leaders, and other verified sources. Due to the pandemic, the entire questionnaire was created and fielded online through Qualtrics, and then a link to the survey was distributed to Muslims across various email databases and shared through new and existing networks by the Coalition and ISPU. A total of 1,760 individuals identifying as Muslim responded to the survey. This is a strong number of responses, almost twice what was expected by researchers. In an effort to engage Muslims across ethnicities and English language abilities, the survey was made available in eight different languages in Qualtrics: English, Bosnian, Urdu, French, Spanish, Turkish, Farsi, and Arabic. Each week, the results were reviewed, and basic demographic statistics were collected about the population that filled out the survey that week. The survey was kept open from October 10, 2021, to February 9, 2022. See Appendix A for a copy of the survey.

For the basis of comparison, we fielded the same survey to a sample of the Illinois general public from November 18, 2021, to December 1, 2021. A non-probability sample of 820 Illinois residents aged 18 or older was sourced from [Qualtrics](#), a leading online survey company. We used demographic quotas based on Census Population Study (CPS) data for Illinois. Based on this: 22% identified as Hispanic and 20% identified as Black; in terms of educational attainment, 28% had a college degree or higher. The general public sample also reflected the state's partisan breakdown; the sample was 34% Republican, 58% Democrat, and 8% Independent.

The survey data was cleaned and analyzed using the R programming language. For each question, cross-tables were created by race, gender, and age. For the Muslim sample, the race cross-tabs consisted of white, Black, Asian, and Arab, while the race cross-tabs for the Illinois general public sample were white, Black, and Hispanic. Small sample sizes prevented the use of additional cross-tabs in this analysis. Chi-squared testing was done to determine the significance of these findings. Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding. See Appendix B for top-line results.

Focus group questions expanded on the topics within the survey, such as inter-ethnic Muslim unity, community relationships (especially with non-Muslims), faith and leadership, mental health, civic engagement, and access to halal food and services. A google form was created and posted to various online groups and networks to recruit focus group participants, with a maximum of eight participants per focus group.

The focus groups were conducted the week before the start of Ramadan, from Tuesday, March 22 to Friday, March 25. Four focus groups were held—two with Muslim respondents of any age, race or ethnicity, one with African American Muslims only, and one with young adults aged 18-29. Each focus group comprised a moderator who asked questions and moderated the discussion between the participants and a notetaker who transcribed the notes verbatim.

By race/ethnicity, across all four focus groups, we had one Bosnian participant, one African participant, three South Asian participants, one Malay participant, 10 African American participants, and one white American participant. Some participants were not comfortable sharing their ages, yet among those who disclosed their ages, nine individuals were aged 18-29, three were 30-49, and four were 50 or over.

Addressing Sample Limitations

In any research there are limitations to comparing two sets of data. One set of constraints was unique to the context of fielding a survey during the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited the range of options. Additionally, the need to compare the Illinois Muslim survey respondent group to the public at-large in Illinois has limitations, particularly in how any differences can be interpreted. Per consultation with SSRS, a respected independent research and data analytics firm, “the challenge with non-probability samples like our Illinois general public sample is that there is no theoretical basis for assuming that the sample would look the same the next time it is drawn, which is the theoretical basis of the statistical testing. However, in market research, non-probability samples are used regularly for a variety of valid reasons and use many of the same statistical tools to understand that data, including margins of error and statistical testing.”

Following that convention, we conducted statistical testing to indicate where differences between how the two survey respondents answered were unlikely to be due to chance.

This survey used an outreach method referred to as “snowball” sampling, which is helpful for generating a large sample size but can make achieving representation difficult. To account for this anticipated challenge, the research team monitored the demographic mix of the sample as surveys came in and targeted outreach to African American and African immigrant Muslim communities through trusted leaders and influencers. The fielding period was also extended two full months in an effort to maximize representativeness. At the close of the survey, the raw survey results included an overrepresentation of Asian individuals and an underrepresentation of African Americans. This was addressed by dedicating a specific focus group to the perspectives of African American Muslims and through the statistical process of “weighting” the data to smooth out some unevenness in representation. Despite these steps, it is recognized that future surveys and research will need to make additional steps to ensure true representativeness is achieved.

The collected sample also skewed toward wealthier respondents. As noted, this was anticipated for the “snowball” method used in this study. This is mitigated by weighting the data, a complex process that mathematically adjusts the data to account for relative imbalances in the respondent mix to better match the mix of respondents with the demographics of the general population in Illinois. The weighting was done by SSRS, a respected independent research and data analytics firm, who weighted the data by gender, age, and education (see Appendix C for further detail). Weighting the data by race was not possible due to differences in the way the question about race was asked in the Muslim survey and how it was asked in the census.

Results

The 74-question survey with nearly 1,800 respondents resulted in a large volume of data. Tables 1 and 2 summarize who responded to the survey, including the demographics of the respondent sample. The actual question responses are summarized in the subsections that follow: Demographics “Young and Diverse,” questions pertaining to the individual respondent (Individual), questions about the respondent family (Family), questions pertaining to the Muslim community (Community), and questions regarding perspectives beyond the Muslim community (Broader Society).

TABLE 1.**Summary of Demographics:
Young and Diverse**

	Illinois Muslim Sample	Illinois General Public
Gender		
Men	58%	38%
Women	42%	62%
Age		
18-35	50%	42%
36-55	35%	30%
56+	15%	29%
Nativity		
Born in the US	45%	89%
Born outside the US	55%	11%
Faith at Birth		
Born into current faith	92%	n/a
Born into a different faith	8%	n/a
Education		
Less than high school	6%	4%
Graduated high school	22%	26%
Some college/technical degree	33%	42%
College degree or higher	40%	28%
Have a Disability	8%	21%
Political Party Affiliation		
Democrat	58%	58%
Republican	4%	34%
Independent	38%	8%
Identify as LGBTQ	3%	13%

TABLE 2.**Racial/Ethnic Makeup of Survey Sample and
Representative State Estimates**

Race/Ethnicity	Illinois Muslim Sample (this study)	Representative Illinois Muslim Estimates*
Black	6%	35%
White	21%	23%
Asian	50%	31%
Arab	17%	No Data
Hispanic	2%	8%
Other	7%	4%

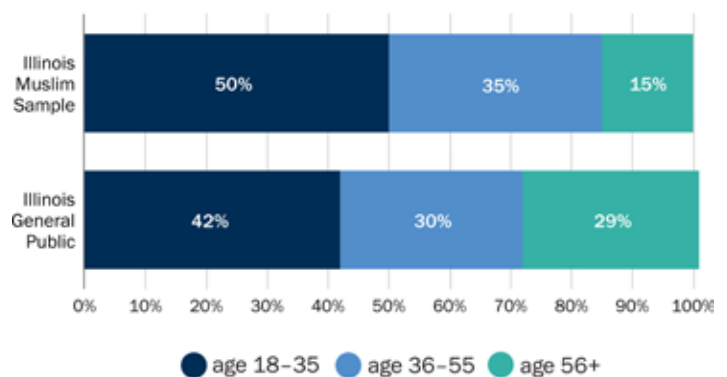
* Source: Estimates from the SSRS polling firm are based on Multilevel Regression and Post-stratification (MRP) estimates using data from several sources collected across multiple years, including the 2019 American Community Survey, the SSRS weekly telephone Omnibus (2019 to 2021), and the SSRS Opinion Panel (2015 to 2022).

Demographics: Young and Diverse

Respondents were relatively young and diverse across a broad range of demographic and socioeconomic factors. Over half (58%) of the Muslim sample was comprised of men while 38% of the Illinois general public sample was comprised of men. It is typically found that women respond to surveys more than men, so the slight overrepresentation of men in this sample is an interesting deviation from the norm.

The Illinois Muslim sample was on average younger than the state's general public, with 50% of the Muslim sample between 18 and 35, compared to 42% of the general public. The general public is also roughly twice as likely as the Muslim sample to be over the age of 56 (29% vs. 15%).

Illinois Muslim Sample Younger than Illinois General Public

**Figure 1:** *In what year were you born?* Base: Total respondents, 2021.

In terms of racial breakdown, the Muslim sample consisted of 50% Asian Muslim, 21% white Muslim, 17% Arab Muslim, 6% African American Muslim, and 1% American Indian/Alaska Native Muslim. Latinos accounted for 2% of the Muslim sample. As previously noted, this is an underrepresentation of African Americans and an overrepresentation of Asian Americans. Estimates from SSRS,⁶ a nationally recognized polling firm, reveals the following racial/ethnic makeup of Illinois Muslims: 23% non-Hispanic white, 35% non-Hispanic Black, 8% Hispanic, 31% Asian, and 4% non-Hispanic other. It is important to note that these estimates did not include "Arab" as a racial/ethnic category, which is available in ISPU's national representative American Muslim Poll. According to these representative national surveys, the racial representation of American Muslims is 28% African American or Black and 19% Asian.

Representative Polling Data Reveals a Diverse Illinois Muslim Community

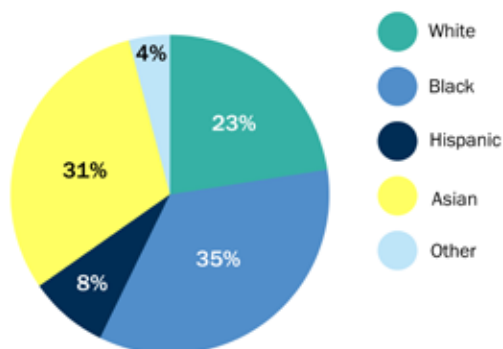


Figure 2: Estimates from the SSRS polling firm are based on Multilevel Regression and Post-stratification (MRP) estimates using data from several sources collected across multiple years, including the 2019 American Community Survey, the SSRS weekly telephone Omnibus (2019 to 2021), and the SSRS Opinion Panel (2015 to 2022).

ISPU Nationally Representative Data Reveals a Diverse American Muslim Community

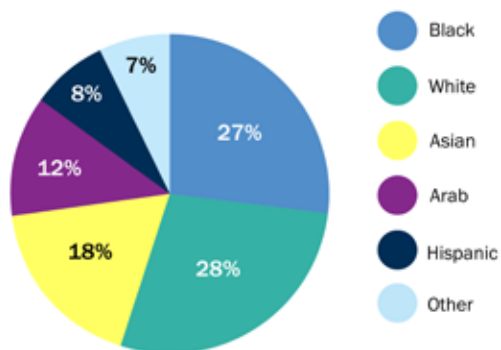


Figure 3: Data from ISPU American Muslim Poll 2022 questions: *Are you of Hispanic origin or background? Do you consider yourself...?* Base: Total Muslim respondents, 2022.

Sixty-three percent of respondents in the Illinois Muslim sample spoke English at home. Fifteen percent of respondents stated that in addition to English, they spoke Arabic, while 9% responded that they speak Bosnian at home in addition to English. Four percent of the respondents stated they speak another language that wasn't listed in our options, and 2% stated they speak Turkish at home in addition to English.

Roughly Two-Thirds of the Illinois Muslim Sample Speaks English at Home

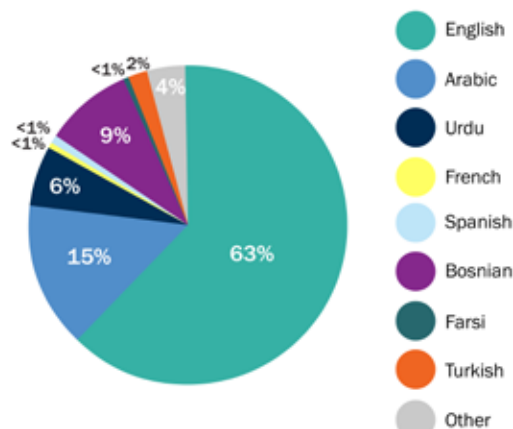


Figure 4: *In addition to English, what if any other languages do you speak at home?* Base: Total Illinois Muslim respondents, 2021.

More than 50% of the Muslim sample was born in the United States, as opposed to 89% of the Illinois general public sample. That said, 92% of our Muslim sample is eligible to vote. This result mirrors ISPU's [national survey](#) of Americans who are Muslim, where roughly half are native born and half are immigrants. In our Illinois Muslim sample, of those born in a different country, 50% were born in South Asia, 20% were born in the Middle East, 20% were born in Europe, 2% were born in Southeast Asia, and 7% were born in Africa. Despite self-identified Asians making up 50% of survey members born outside the United States, only 6% of all individuals spoke Urdu at home in addition to English.

About Half of the Illinois Muslim Sample Was Born Outside of the United States

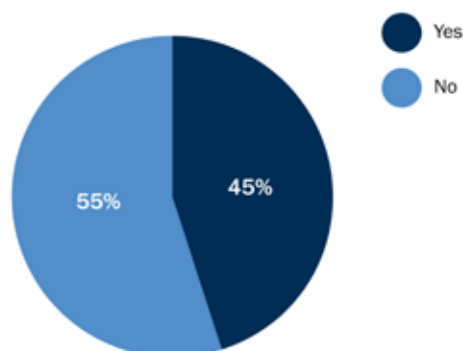


Figure 5: *Were you born in the United States?* Base: Total Illinois Muslim respondents 2021.

In the Muslim sample, 92% of the respondents stated they were raised Muslim. Additionally, 1% were raised Protestant, 1% were raised agnostic, 2% were raised Roman Catholic, and 4% were raised in some other religion. Of the individuals who identify as Muslim, 69% identify as Sunni Muslim, 2% identify as Shiite Muslim, and 1% identify as either Sufi or Salafi. Fewer than 1% identify as either Ahmedi, Ismaili, or a member of the Nation of Islam. It is important to note that 26% of individuals referred to themselves as just Muslim, foregoing sub-religious identification.

Eight Percent of the Illinois Muslim Sample Was Raised in Some Other Faith or Non-Faith

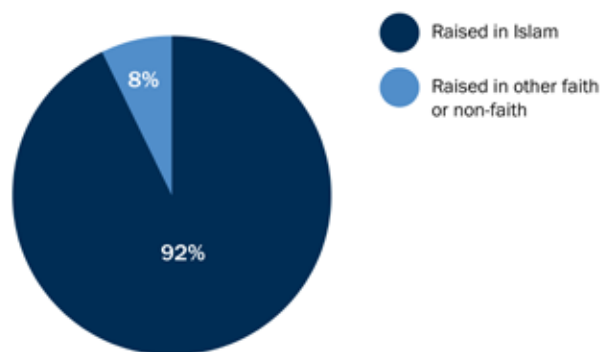


Figure 6: Thinking about when you were a child, in what religion were you raised? Base: Total Illinois Muslim respondents, 2021.

Nearly 7 in 10 from the Illinois Muslim Sample Identify as Sunni Muslim

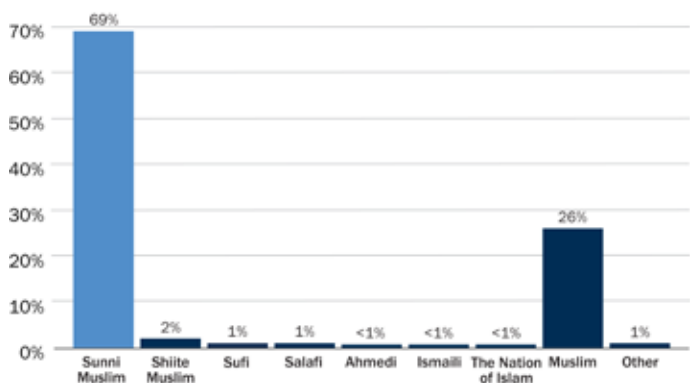


Figure 7: What best describes you now? Base: Total Illinois Muslim respondents, 2021

In terms of education, 40% of respondents in the Muslim sample have a college degree or higher, compared with 28% of the Illinois general public sample. An additional one-third (33%) of the Muslim sample and 42% of the Illinois general public have completed some college or

a technical degree. Similar proportions of the Muslim sample and general public have graduated high school (22% and 26%, respectively). Among the Muslim sample, 6% had less than a high school education while 4% of the Illinois general public sample had less than a high school education.

Illinois Muslim Respondents More Likely than General Public to Hold College Degree or Higher

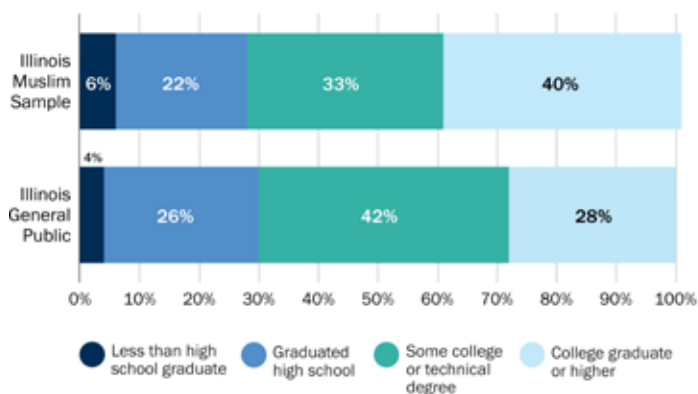


Figure 8: What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? Base: Total respondents, 2021.

Eight percent of respondents in the Muslim sample stated they have a disability. Nationally, one in three Muslims [reports](#) they or an immediate family member have a disability. Community leaders cannot afford to ignore the needs of this segment of any community and should start by listening to the impacted members to learn how faith spaces can better meet their needs.

Roughly Ten Percent of the Illinois Muslim Sample Report That They Have a Disability

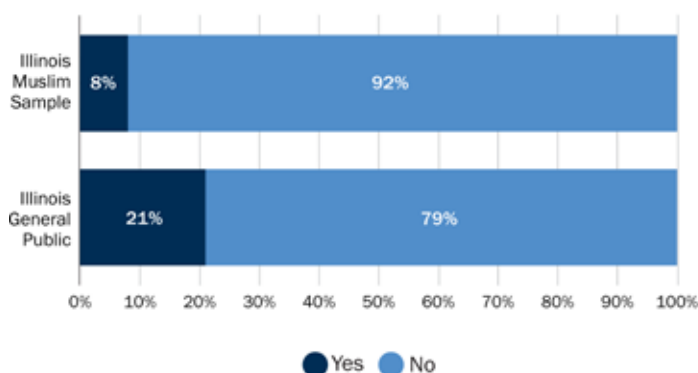


Figure 9: Do you consider yourself to have a disability? Base: Total respondents, 2021

Politically, 58% of the Muslim sample and the Illinois general public identify as Democratic, and 38% identify as independent, more likely than the general public in the state where only 8% claim this political description. As a community with a significant percentage identifying as “Independent,” Muslims in Illinois may be less tied to partisanship and more to principles when making political choices. It also opens opportunities for both parties to win over segments of the community. Among the Muslim sample, 4% identify as Republicans less likely than the Illinois general public (34%).

Significant Segment of Illinois Muslim Sample Identify as Democrats or Independent

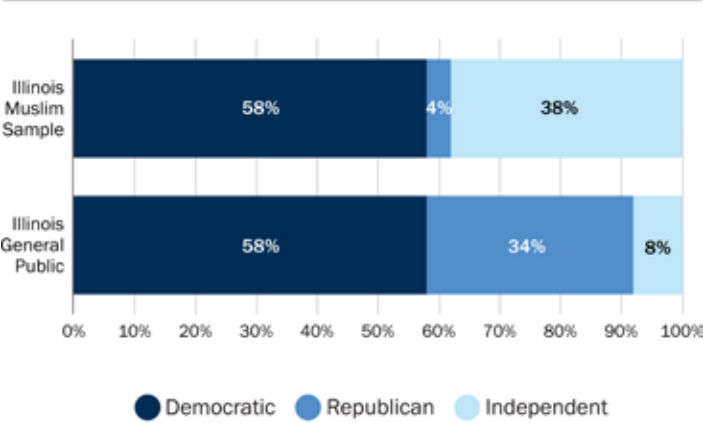


Figure 10: Which of the following best describes your political affiliation? Base: Total respondents, 2021.

Among the Muslim sample, 3% of the Muslim sample identified as LGBTQ, compared to 13% of the Illinois general public sample.

Three Percent of the Illinois Muslim Sample Identify as Members of the LGBTQI Community

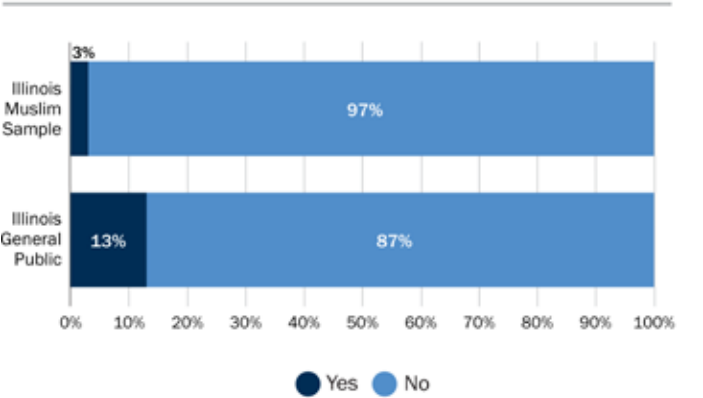


Figure 11: Are you a member of the LGBTQI community? Base: Total respondents, 2021.

In total, respondents in the Illinois Muslims sample reside in 22 counties in Illinois. Most of our participants (roughly 50%) came from Cook County, which consists of Chicago and the surrounding areas of Evanston, Schaumburg, Orland Park, and Tinley Park. Twenty-eight percent of respondents came from DuPage County, which comprises the suburbs of Naperville, Oak Brook, and Downers Grove. Eight percent came from Will County and 4% of respondents came from Lake County, which consists of North Chicago and Waukegan.

Top 10 Counties Represented in Illinois Muslim Sample

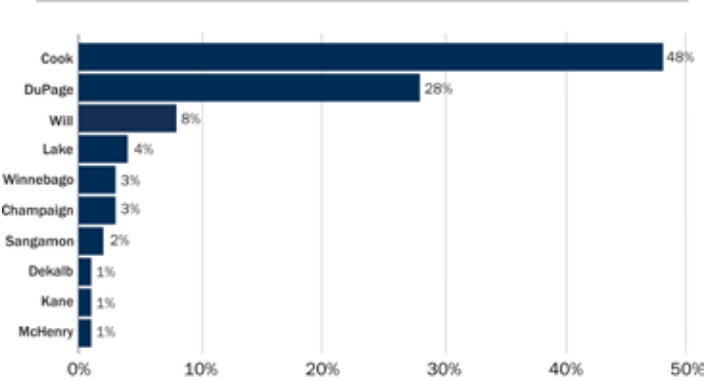


Figure 12: What is your zip code? Base: Total Illinois Muslim respondents, 2021.

Individual

Survey questions pertaining to the individual included a broad range of topics: identity, health, food access, volunteering, and faith-based giving. Our analysis focused on identifying assets and needs, which we discuss below.

ASSET Strong Faith Identity

Muslim respondents in our study identified strongly with their faith. Around 84% of Muslim respondents stated their faith was very important to their self-perception, compared with 39% of the Illinois general public respondents. Previous research shows that a stronger faith identity among Muslims is linked with a stronger national identity. In fact, in a study from 2016, 91% of Muslims who stated they had a strong faith identity also had a strong American identity, while only 68% with a weak faith identity identified strongly with being American.⁷ [Previous research](#) has also suggested that faith can act as a protective factor against negative mental health outcomes.

While faith was a strong identifying factor, focus group participants were quite varied with regard to how they talked about their identities. Some describe multiple national identities, including American, a country of origin if they were immigrants as well as an ethnicity in combination with the other two identities. Notions of

what it means to be American were complex as well. For example, the identity of what some might describe as the proud immigrant was discussed, where one might say living in America and being American is a privilege with specific rights and responsibilities. Yet, another view on identity heard in the focus groups was a bit mixed. It is that of a Muslim who is American but believes that being a Muslim in America requires one to acknowledge America's history of injustice and present-day inequities while also committing to confronting those inequities.

“For me being American is having the rights and freedoms of each and every American that makes us feel we are Americans, if we have rights and freedom just like everyone else.”

- MUSLIM RESIDENT OF ILLINOIS, 24

In a focus group with African American participants, the sense was that faith is inextricably a part of their self-identity to such an extent that questions about their race separate from their faith do not align with how they see themselves. Being Muslim is a part of being Black for them and vice versa.

“When we make a conscious decision to follow the tenets of Islam, we become formally Muslim. But beyond the African American tradition, we are Muslim by nature.”

- AFRICAN AMERICAN RESPONDENT, 72, CHICAGO SOUTH SIDE

NEED **More Halal Options**

With this finding, however, it should be noted that there also need to be systems in place to support their faith needs. Specifically, 94% of Muslims stated it is ‘somewhat’ or ‘very’ important that their purchase decisions be halal (74% stated it was very important, and 20% stated it was somewhat important). Yet, 39% of Muslim respondents with school-age children and 32% of students enrolled in college said they didn’t have access to halal food at their school. In contrast, around 48% of respondents in the Illinois general public sample stated their faith was an important factor in their purchase decisions. One quarter of Illinois general public respondents with school-age children (24%) and none of the college students reported not having access to food that met their religious dietary restrictions at their school. This is, of course, not surprising as the majority of the general public do not have religious dietary restrictions.

Illinois Muslim Sample More Likely to Lack Access to Food That Meets Religious Dietary Restrictions

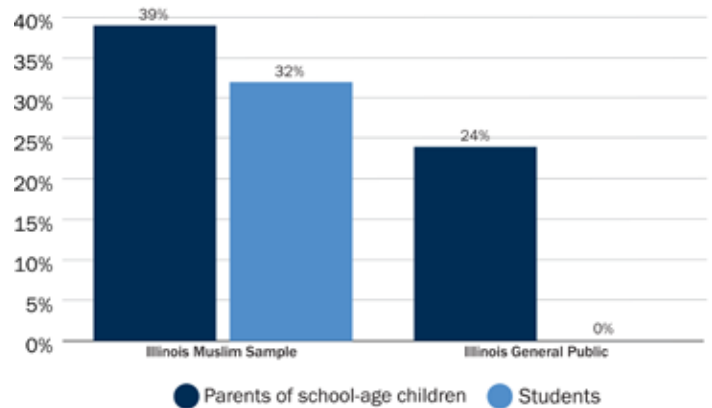


Figure 13: Does your child have access to food that meets your family's religious dietary needs at their school? Do you have access to food that meets your religious dietary needs in your school cafeteria? (% no shown). Base: Respondents with school-age children and respondents who identify as students, 2021.

Focus group participants reinforced the importance of observing halal or at least trying to eat halal. Some indicated they or someone in their network may drive great distances to access halal food. However, they note that it is becoming increasingly more accessible.

“We drive to Peoria, St. Louis, Champaign, Chicago to get halal. Now, the big stores carry halal meat. ...Walmart has halal meat. Meijer is also starting to carry halal meat. [I’m] buying up the lamb they had and I’ve started seeing the halal mark on it. We are starting to see more international things in grocery stores because we have a big population.”

- AFRICAN AMERICAN RESPONDENT, 57, SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

Illinois Muslim Sample Reports a Harder Time Getting Medical Care in the Past Year than the Illinois General Public

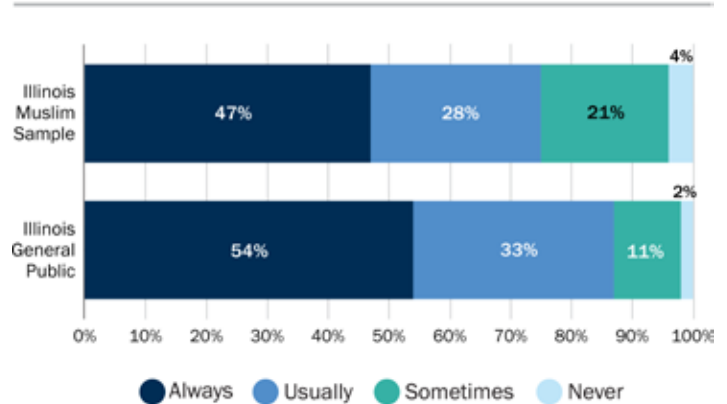


Figure 14: In the last 12 months when you needed care right away how often did you get care as soon as you needed? (Adult Medicaid). Base: Respondents who said that they needed immediate care right away, 2021.

NEED Access to Appropriate Healthcare

While Muslim respondents reported needing immediate care less often than did those in the state’s general public when they did need care, Muslims in our survey had a harder time getting it. One-fifth (21%) of Muslim respondents said they needed immediate care in the last 12 months, but 25% of those who needed care stated they ‘sometimes’ or ‘never’ got care as soon as they needed it. In comparison, around 30% of the Illinois general public sample stated they needed immediate medical care right away in the past 12 months, and around 13% of those individuals stated they ‘sometimes’ or ‘never’ got care as soon as they needed it. That means Muslims in our sample who needed care right away were twice as likely as the general public to sometimes or never get it (25% vs. 13%, respectively).

Future research is needed to assess what factors explain this result, and how much, if at all, implicit bias may play a role in Muslims’ greater likelihood to report difficulty receiving timely healthcare. According to ISPU’s 2020 national survey of American Muslims, roughly a third of Muslims who reported experiencing religious discrimination said it occurred while seeking healthcare.

NEED Affordable, Culturally Appropriate Mental Health Services

The need for support extends to mental health. In the year prior to the survey, half of survey respondents, both Muslim and the general public, experienced some sort of mental illness symptom (47% and 51%, respectively). These symptoms included anxiety, sadness, and loss of joy. While the pandemic and its stressful effect on so many individuals may explain some of this, it is a longer term challenge, as 53% of the Muslim sample and 56% of the Illinois general public sample reported they had experienced mental health symptoms at some point in their life. Most respondents who reported experiencing mental illness symptoms at some point in their life also reported experiencing them in the past year.

However, despite similar rates of reported negative mental health symptoms, Muslim respondents are less likely than their Illinois general public counterparts to seek treatment. Thirteen percent of the Muslim sample sought help from a licensed therapist in the year prior to the survey, as opposed to 24% of the Illinois general public. When asked about reasons for reluctance in seeking treatment, among respondents in the Illinois Muslim sample who reported symptoms of mental illness but did not seek treatment, 35% reported that it would be too expensive, 11% said they didn’t trust mental health professionals, and 10% said they would feel embarrassed. This finding indicates that more affordable mental health services are a significant need within the Muslim population.

The survey also asked respondents if they have ever attempted to take their own life. Among the Muslim sample, 8% reported attempting suicide. While lower than the 18% of individuals in the Illinois general public

sample who report the same, any number is too high, and these findings reiterate the significant need for culturally appropriate and affordable mental health services for the Illinois Muslim community.

Cost Identified as the Largest Barrier to Accessing Treatment from a Mental Health Professional

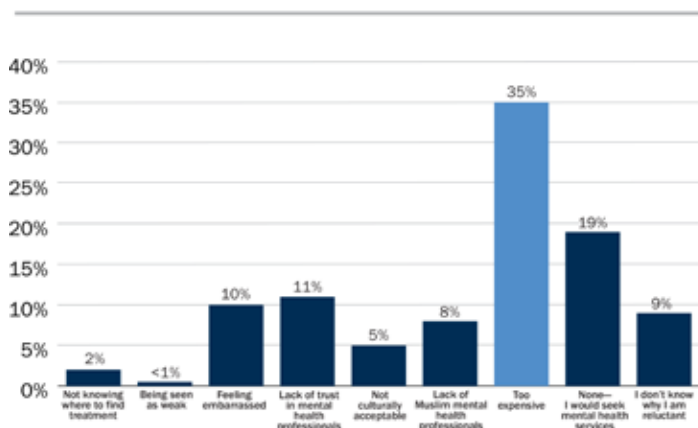


Figure 15: If you ever felt that you needed to see a mental health professional, which of the following would make you reluctant to seek treatment? (Select all that apply). Base: Muslim respondents who have not sought treatment from a mental health professional and reported symptoms of mental illness, 2021.

In exploring these findings further, focus group participants identified mental health support as a critical need within the community, specifically indicating they feel that such services need to be more accessible. Participants also consistently mentioned a very strong stigma, although not always using the word “stigma,” identifying a negative association or perception of mental health within the community. Some participants indicated that mental health issues are sometimes perceived as a result of individual behavior or failure to do something, as if the individual is being blamed for causing the mental health condition. This notion of “self-blame” or “blaming the victim” sentiment discourages individuals from seeking help when they need it, regardless of whether that help comes from within the community. The main point of their comments was that efforts should be made within the Illinois Muslim community to reduce or address this stigma.

“I think the public, we are not good at dealing with mental health. The only hope is within ourselves. You can share with a friend and that person can help you in cases of stigma. A friend you can talk to personally. I need a friend who is a Muslim like me who can understand and get whatever I’m talking to him or her about.”

- AFRICAN AMERICAN ILLINOIS RESIDENT, AGE 24

“It may just be my own impression, but mental health isn’t something talked about. If anyone has it they are told to do what needs to be done but don’t dare talk about it or share your experiences. It’s a mix of both peer pressure and clearly stated. People have said ‘if that’s something you’re dealing with, you can go talk to someone, but you don’t have to say that to bring everyone else down.’”

- ILLINOIS RESIDENT OF SOUTH ASIAN ORIGIN, AGE 20

Family

The survey included questions about the needs and assets of the family and the household unit. Questions pertaining to family touched on topics such as marriage and divorce, care for extended family, access to jobs, and household expenses.

ASSET Muslim Marriage

In terms of family makeup, 63% of the Muslim sample responded that they were married at the time of the survey while 39% of the Illinois general public sample reported the same. Though simply being married is no guarantee for a thriving and healthy family, marriage is still a foundation for healthy family units which extensive [research suggests](#) are linked to better outcomes for children.

Fewer in the Illinois Muslim Sample Are Currently Divorced/Separated than the Illinois General Public

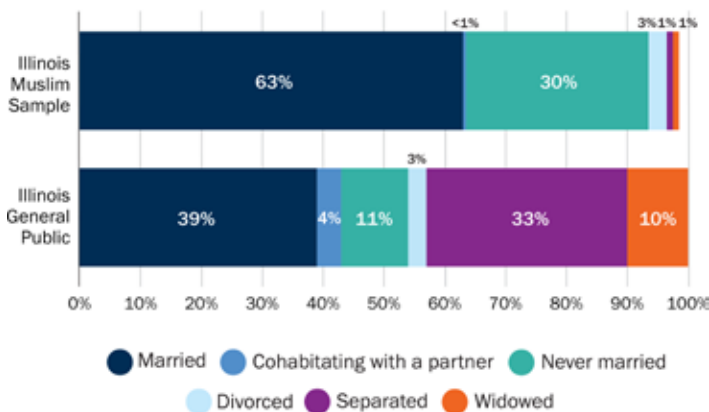


Figure 16: Which of the following best describes your marital status? Base: Total respondents, 2021.

Most in the Illinois Muslim Sample Report That Their Faith Community Should Be More Supportive of Divorced People

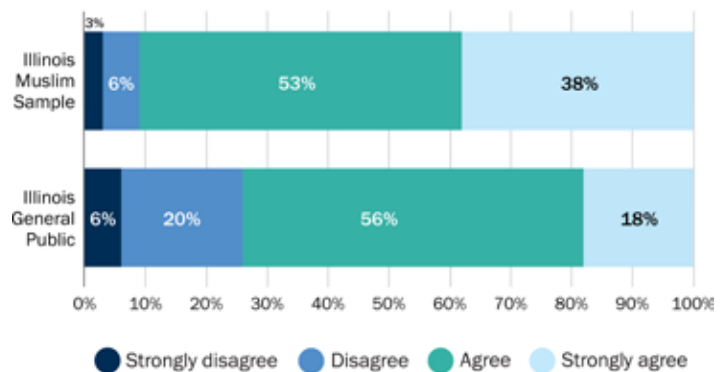


Figure 17: Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements: My faith community should be more supportive of divorced people. Base: Total respondents, 2021.

ASSET Strong Inter-generational Support

Compared to the Illinois general population sample, a greater percentage of the Illinois Muslim Sample care for their elderly relatives (29% vs. 21%, respectively), suggesting the elderly in the Muslim community are more likely to have family engagement and companionship, which [research suggests](#) contributes to better mental and physical health outcomes.

NEED More Support for Divorced Families

Despite only eleven percent of Muslim respondents saying they have ever been divorced, 91% of Muslim respondents agreed that their faith community should be more supportive of divorced families. This can include divorced and separated families as well as those going through divorce. This presents an important opportunity for community organizations, Muslim-run counseling and support organizations, as well as houses of faith, to advocate for more resources devoted to support programs for divorcees. By contrast, 74% of Illinois general public respondents said they believe their house of worship needs to do more to accommodate divorcees.

Reasons for Divorce Common Across Communities

Of those in the Illinois general public sample and the Muslim sample who responded that they have ever been divorced, the reasons given are very similar across both samples. The most common reason for divorce was cited as infidelity, listed by 30% of Muslim respondents and 27% of Illinois general public respondents. The next most commonly cited reason within the Muslim sample was incompatible goals, stated by 16% of our Muslim respondents, compared with 8% of the Illinois general public sample. For the Illinois general public, an equally important reason for divorce were conflicts over money and finances, which 10% of the Illinois general public sample cited. In comparison, 6% of the Muslim population cited financial conflicts as a reason for divorce.

NEED Greater Education and Support for Domestic Violence Survivors

Muslim respondents face similar rates of domestic violence as the Illinois general public respondents. Among Muslim respondents, 17% stated they know someone in their faith community who has been a victim of domestic violence, on par with the 14% of Illinois general public respondents who stated the same. Conversely, Muslim respondents were less likely to report these transgressions to either law enforcement or a community leader. Among those who knew a victim of domestic violence, 35% of Muslim respondents stated that the individual reported the transgression to a member of law enforcement while 58% of Illinois general public sample responded the same. Similarly, 31% of Muslims in the Illinois sample who knew someone in their faith community that was a victim of domestic violence stated that the individual reported the violence to a community leader while 53% of the Illinois general public responded the same.

This differs from ISPU’s [American Muslim Poll 2017](#) findings on American Muslims in which it was found that [54% of Muslims](#) who knew someone in their community who was a victim of domestic violence reported the transgression to law enforcement and 51% reported the transgression to a faith leader.

Fewer in the Illinois Muslim Sample Report Domestic Violence to Law Enforcement

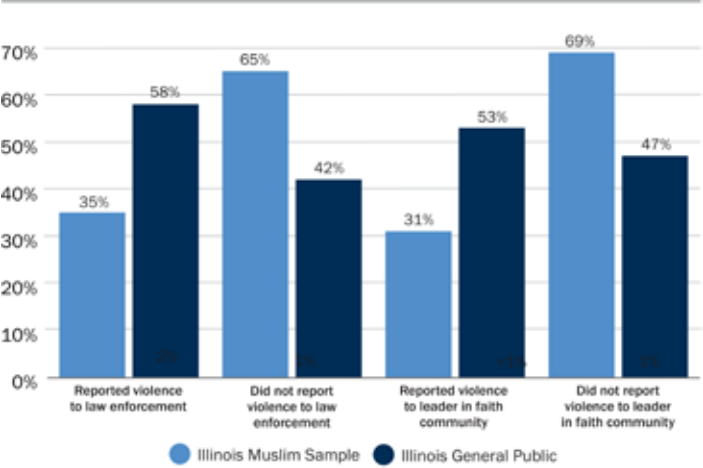


Figure 18: Did this person report the violence to law enforcement? Base: Respondents who know someone who was the victim of domestic violence, 2021.

NEED Sandwich Generation Common

Among the Illinois Muslim sample, as stated earlier, 29% reported that they are currently caring for an older family member (either a grandparent or a parent), compared with 21% of the Illinois general public respondents. Of those who stated they are caring for an elderly member of their family, 91% reported that they help out with hands-on work, including 8% providing help with errands and housework, 34% with transportation, 32% with health-related tasks (such as monitoring blood pressure or blood sugar), and 17% acting as a main social outlet. A greater proportion of the Illinois general public sample reported supporting their parents financially (37% of the Illinois general public vs. 9% of Illinois Muslims). This suggests that many Muslims in Illinois are taxed with caring for parents and children at the same time in ways that make demands on their time, not just their finances, pointing to a need in the community for [elderly care](#) support. Further research is recommended to understand the impact of this added mental and emotional labor on Muslim mental health.

Those in the Illinois Muslim Sample Who Care for Elder Parents Most Often Provide Transportation, Health Tasks, and Social Interaction

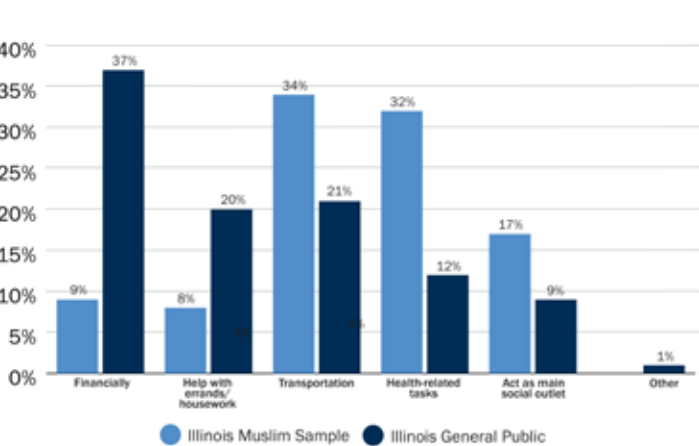


Figure 19: Over the past 12 months have you helped your parent/guardian/grandparent with any of the following? Base: Respondents who are currently responsible for a parent, grandparent or guardian, 2021.

NEED Improved Access and Awareness of Job Placement Opportunities and Social Services

When comparing the financial health of the Muslim community sample to the Illinois general public, we found that the Muslim sample respondents struggled with job loss on par with the those in the Illinois general public (30% in both samples). This is an area where social service organizations of all kinds can concentrate resources. In addition, 22% of Muslim respondents have been laid off, as have 21% of Illinois general public respondents. Unsurprisingly, significant shares of the Muslim and general public sample report worrying about paying the bills—33% of Muslim respondents and 46% of our Illinois general public respondents—pointing to a need in Illinois across communities.

One-Third of the Illinois Muslim Sample Was Worried About Being Able to Pay Their Bills

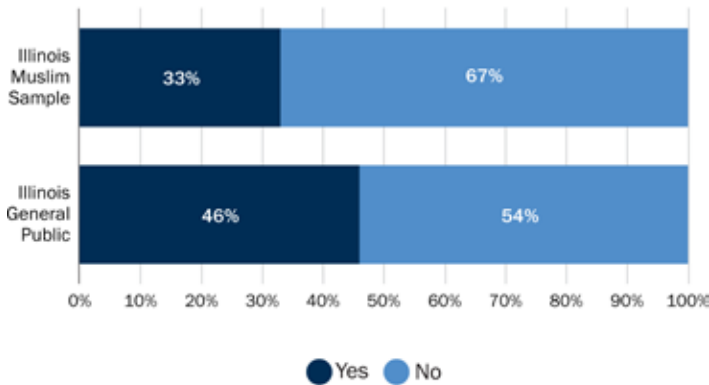


Figure 20: Over the last 12 months, have you or anyone in your household worried that they may not be able to pay their bills? Base: Total respondents, 2021.

Further, 28% of our Muslim respondents stated they have accessed social welfare programs like SNAP/TANFF, compared with 35% of the Illinois general public respondents. Respondents in the Illinois Muslim sample were less likely to struggle with food insecurity in the past year. That being said, it is still important to note that 14% of Muslim respondents in our sample have struggled with food insecurity, which can be addressed by increasing knowledge about accessing social services. By comparison, 38% of the Illinois general public sample stated they faced food insecurity. The Muslim sample is more likely to be married and less likely to be separated or divorced and, therefore, part of a family unit, which may explain why the economic impact of job loss is less severe. Since our sample likely skews wealthy, the actual share of the Muslim population that is food insecure is likely higher, especially considering that [nationally representative](#) figures show that a third of Muslims in the US are low income, the largest share of any faith or non-faith community. Any amount of food insecurity is a need in any community and may be partially addressed by educating those in need about available social services.

Illinois Muslim Sample Accessed Social Welfare Programs Less than the Illinois General Public

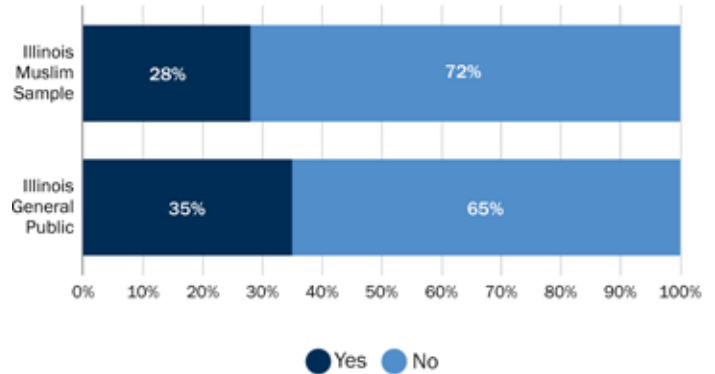


Figure 21: Over the last 12 months, have you or anyone in your household accessed social welfare programs (e.g. unemployment insurance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)? Base: Total respondents, 2021.

Community

Topics covered by assets and needs in this section pertained to questions about the Muslim community in Illinois. This included questions about giving to Muslim organizations; mosque attendance; support for health and social services; inclusivity in mosque decision-making; and discrimination within and toward the Muslim community.

ASSET Illinois Muslims Give Generously

Another asset found within the sample of Muslim respondents is a willingness to contribute to their community. Around four out of five Muslims have donated to an organization associated with their faith community in the last 12 months. This is compared with just half of the Illinois general public sample.

Majority of Muslim Respondents Donate to Community Organizations

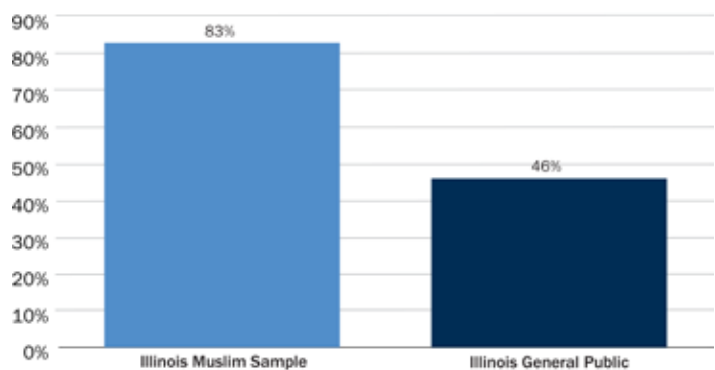


Figure 22: Have you contributed money to a cause or institution associated with your faith community in the last 12 months? (% Yes shown) Base: Total respondents, 2021.

While roughly a third of both the Muslim sample and the Illinois general public sample contributed between \$100 and \$500 annually, the Muslim sample was more likely to give at the higher end of the spectrum. Roughly a quarter of the Muslim sample contributed between \$1,000 and \$5,000 annually compared to 16% of the Illinois general public sample.

Illinois Muslim Sample More Likely to Donate at Higher Dollar Amounts

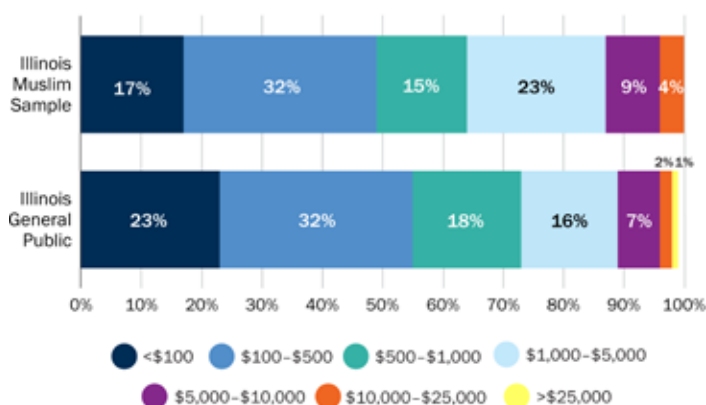


Figure 23: How much money have you donated to these organizations in the last 12 months? Base: Total respondents who donated to a faith-based organization in the past 12 months, 2021.

ASSET Frequent Mosque Attendance Is an Asset for Community Mobilization and Mental Health

Around 72% of the Muslim sample attended their mosque at least once a month prior to the pandemic. This has important ramifications for community building. Higher mosque attendance is linked with increased volunteering and higher civic engagement for the group.⁸ In addition, more frequent mosque attendance is linked to better mental health outcomes, such as lower sadness and anger.⁹ By way of comparison, around 47% of the Illinois general public sample attends a house of worship once a month.

More Than Half of the Illinois Muslim Sample Attend Their House of Prayer at Least Once Per Week

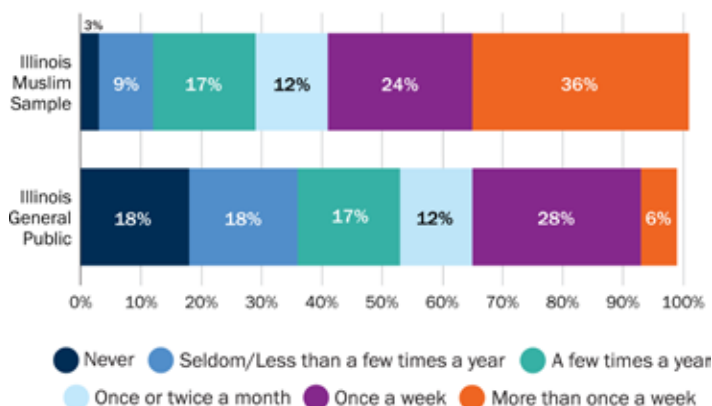


Figure 24: Prior to the pandemic, how often did you visit your house of prayer? Base: Total respondents, 2021.

ASSET Muslim Community Reports Less Drug Use but Favors More Support for Addiction Care

Muslims report consuming significantly less alcohol than the Illinois general public. Of the Muslim sample, 95% stated they do not consume any alcohol as opposed to 48% of the Illinois general public sample. One-third of the Muslim sample indicated they know an individual within their faith community who has struggled with addiction, compared to 41% of individuals in the Illinois general public sample.

Those in the Illinois Muslim Sample Consume Substantially Less Alcohol than the Illinois General Public

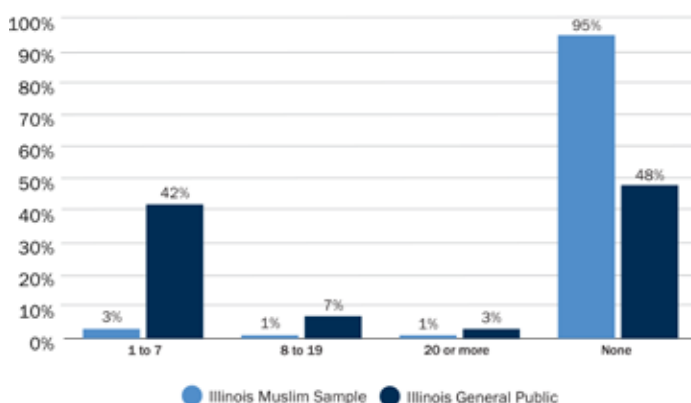


Figure 25: Approximately how many drinks of any kind of alcoholic beverages did you drink in the past seven days? Base: Total respondents, 2021.

However, 75% of the Muslim respondents stated their faith community needs to do more work to support individuals with addictions. This is an important asset within the Muslim community as it shows a deep level of empathy for their fellow community members and presents an opportunity for organizations and leaders in this field to gain momentum. In contrast, 53% of the general public indicated their faith community should do more to support individuals struggling with addiction.

Three-Quarters of the Muslim Sample Believe Their Faith Community Should Provide More Support for Those Struggling with Addiction

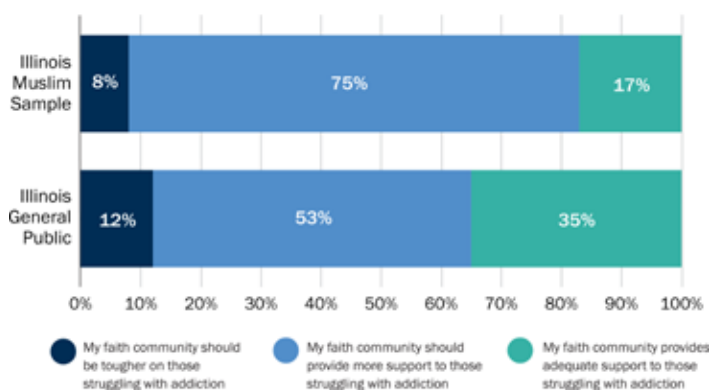


Figure 26: Which of the following statements comes closest to your view on how your faith community deals with people struggling with addiction? Base: Total respondents 2021.

NEED Greater Investment in Nontraditional Nonprofits

We found that while 80% of Muslims do donate to nonprofit organizations, just 3% donate to family and youth organizations or research organizations associated with their faith community while 9% give to “civic” or civil rights organizations. A lack of funding to these organizations may leave the community with less capacity to inform and advocate for their needs with policymakers. This points to a need within the Illinois Muslim community to invest in all such organizations.

Of those who donated to a faith-based community organization, 30% of Muslim respondents stated they had given to an overseas organization while around 28% of respondents said they had given to their house of worship. This compares to 15% of the general public who donated to an overseas relief organization and 41% who donated to their house of prayer.

While Muslim respondents were more likely than the general public in Illinois to support overseas relief, they were equally likely to support domestic relief organization (20% and 17%, respectively).

Illinois Muslims Equally Likely as General Public to Give to Domestic Relief Organizations

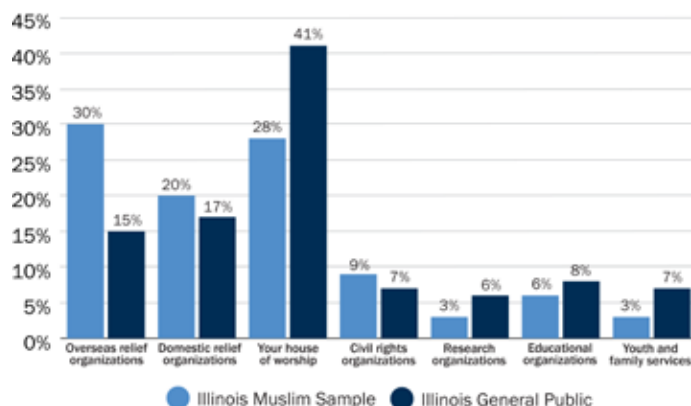


Figure 27: Which of the following have you contributed to? (Select all that apply). Base: Total respondents who stated that they have donated to an organization associated with their faith community in the last 12 months, 2021.

These results depart slightly from trends in the nation as a whole where Muslims were found to be as likely as other faith communities in the US to donate to overseas relief.

NEED More Responsive Muslim Sacred Spaces

Among respondents who attended their house of prayer at least once a month, Muslim respondents were twice as likely as the Illinois general public to state that their opinion doesn't matter in their house of prayer (28% of the Muslims sample vs. 14% of the Illinois general public sample). That being said, 72% of Muslim respondents said that their opinion does count in their house of prayer as did 86% of the Illinois general public respondents. This presents a need for mosque leadership to better engage those who attend their institution and find ways to better listen and address their needs.

Those in the Illinois Muslim Sample Are Twice as Likely as the Illinois General Public to State Their Opinion Doesn't Count in Their House of Prayer

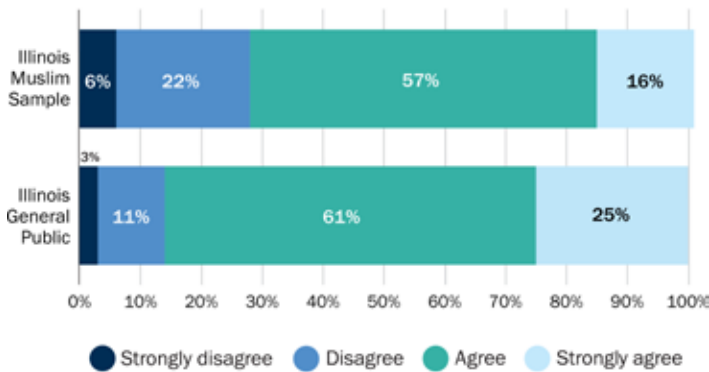


Figure 28: In my house of prayer, My opinions seem to count. Base: Those who responded that they visited their house of prayer at least once or twice a month, 2021.

There is little difference within the Muslim sample along gender lines with 26% of men and 30% of women stating their opinion doesn't matter in their house of prayer. When examined more closely and looking specifically at the role of women in decision-making within the mosque, 25% of Muslim respondents stated they don't believe that women are included in decision-making in their house of faith. This number is significantly higher than the Illinois general public sample, where 10% of respondents stated they don't believe women are included in decision-making in their house of faith. Within the Muslim sample that responded to the question, 22% of men stated they believed women were not included in decision-making while 34% of women stated they believed they weren't included in decision-making.

Men and Women in the Illinois Muslim Sample Are on Par in their Assessment of Whether Their Opinion Counts in Their House of Prayer

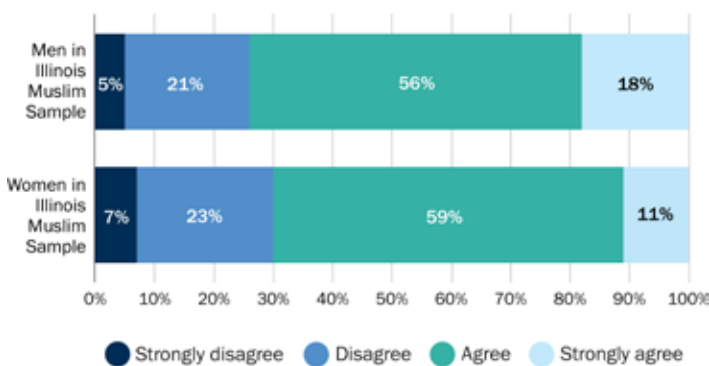


Figure 29: In my house of prayer, my opinions seem to count. Base: Those who responded that they visited their house of prayer at least once or twice a month, 2021.

When examined along lines of race, 37% of Black Muslim respondents and 30% of both Arab Muslim respondents and Asian Muslim respondents agreed that their opinion does not count in their house of prayer while only 10% percent of white Muslims said the same. When looking across age demographics, almost 34% of Muslim respondents stated they believed young people were not included in decision-making in their house of prayer; this consisted of 37% of young adults aged 18-29, 30% of individuals aged 30-49, and 27% of individuals aged 50+. By contrast, 20% of the Illinois general public believed that young people are not included in decision-making in their house of prayer.

Illinois Muslim Sample Reports a Higher Level of Disagreement that Young Adults Are Included in Decision-Making at Their House of Prayer

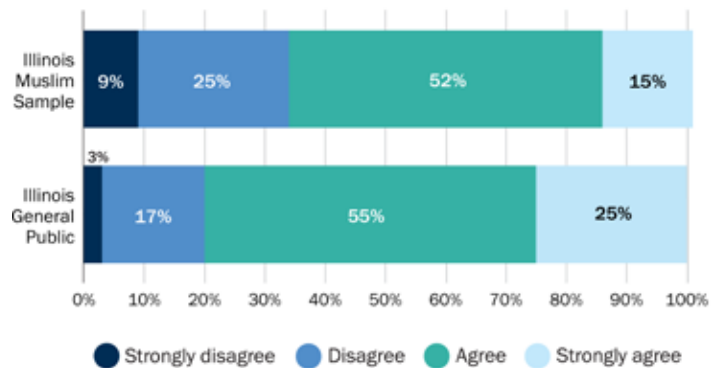


Figure 30: In my house of prayer, young adults are included in decision making. Base: Those who responded that they visited a house of prayer at least once or twice a month before the pandemic, 2021.

NEED Gender Discrimination

The proportion of Muslim respondents in our sample that face gender discrimination outside their faith community is similar to the proportion of respondents that face gender discrimination inside their faith community. Among the Illinois Muslim sample, 28% stated they experience gender discrimination within their faith community and 34% of Muslim respondents stated they experience discrimination outside their faith community.

Illinois Muslim Sample Reports Gender Discrimination Similarly Both Within and Outside Their Faith Community

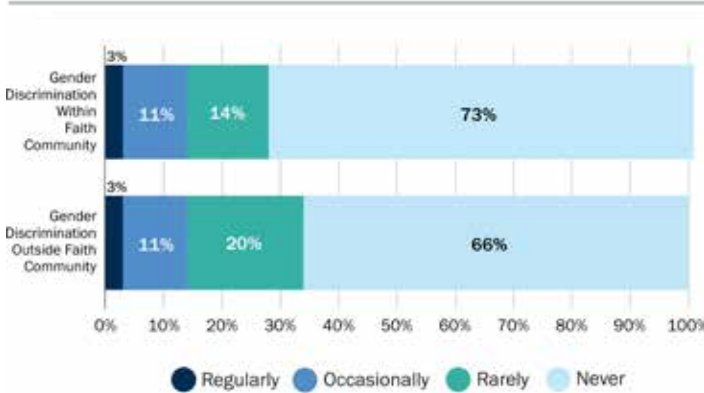


Figure 31: Over the past 12 months, how often have you experienced the following? Discrimination by someone *OUTSIDE* your faith community because of your gender. Discrimination by someone *INSIDE* your faith community because of your gender. Base: Total Illinois Muslim respondents, 2021.

Not surprisingly, this issue affects Muslim women much more than it affects Muslim men. While 14% of Muslim men in our sample reported experiencing gender discrimination within their faith community, 47% of Muslim women in our sample reported experiencing discrimination within their faith community. When compared to gender discrimination faced outside the faith community, 23% of Muslim men in our sample said they face discrimination, as opposed to 49% of the Muslim women in our sample who said they face gender discrimination. So, in our sample, Muslim women were roughly as likely to report gender discrimination from outside their faith community as inside.

Women in the Illinois Muslim Sample Report Significantly Higher Gender Discrimination from Within Their Faith Community than Women in the Illinois General Public

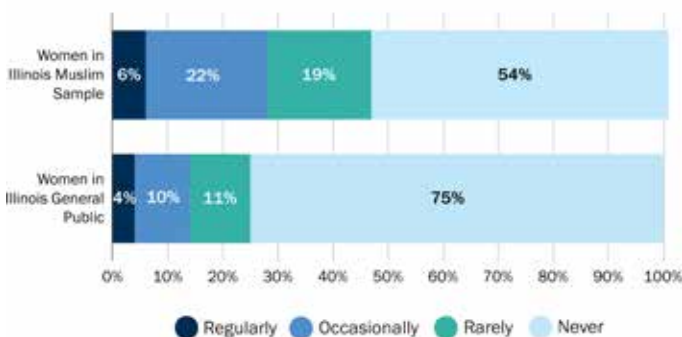


Figure 32: Over the past 12 months, how often have you experienced the following? Discrimination by someone *INSIDE* your faith community because of your gender. Base: Total female respondents, 2021.

In comparison, 25% of women in the Illinois general public sample reported facing gender discrimination from within

their faith community while 31% reported facing gender discrimination from outside their faith community.

Women in the Illinois Muslim Sample More Likely than Women in the Illinois General Public to Report Facing Gender Discrimination from Outside Their Faith Community

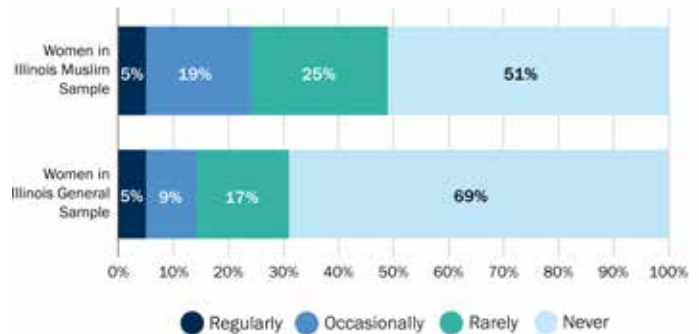


Figure 33: Over the past 12 months, how often have you experienced the following? Discrimination by someone *OUTSIDE* your faith community because of your gender. Base: Total female respondents, 2021.

NEED Anti-Black Racial Discrimination Inside and Outside Muslim Community

Muslim respondents also reported facing more racial discrimination outside their faith community than inside. While 28% of Muslim respondents stated they experienced racial discrimination within their faith group, 51% of Muslim respondents stated they experienced racial discrimination outside their faith group. Within the faith community, Black Muslims face the most discrimination (51%), followed by Arab Muslims (28%), Asian Muslims (30%), and white Muslims (10%).

Black Muslim Sample Experienced the Most Discrimination Inside their Faith Community Because of Race

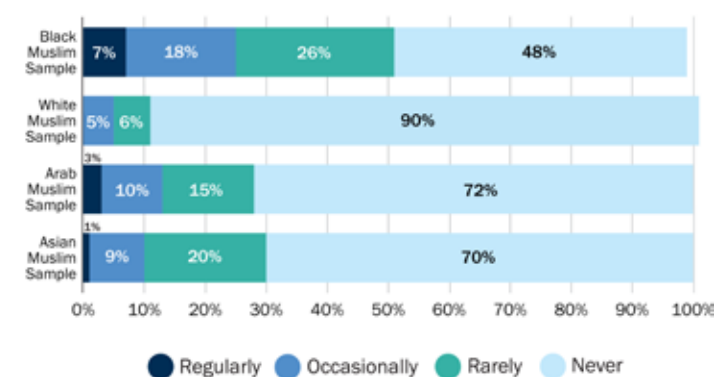


Figure 34: Over the past 12 months, how often have you experienced the following? Discrimination by someone *INSIDE* your faith community because of your race. Base: Total Illinois Muslim respondents, 2021.

Outside the faith community, Black Muslims still face high levels of racial discrimination (59%), on par with Arab Muslims (59%) and Asian Muslims (58%). About one in five white Muslims (19%) report facing racial discrimination outside their faith community. This presents a clear need to address intra-Muslim racism, particularly anti-Black racism, as well as racism in wider society.

White Muslims Least Likely to Face Discrimination Outside Their Faith Community Because of Race

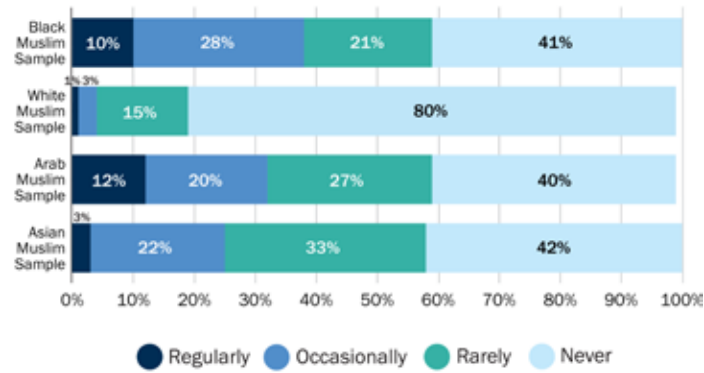


Figure 35: Over the past 12 months, how often have you experienced the following? Discrimination by someone OUTSIDE your faith community because of your race. Base: Total Illinois Muslim respondents, 2021.

Broader Society

Survey respondents were asked questions regarding the contributions of the Muslim community to the broader society, such as economic and civic contributions as well as questions about policy priorities. Related questions included topics such as business ownership and job creation; sectoral employment; civic engagement activities; policy priorities and concerns; and external religious discrimination.

ASSET Illinois Muslims Create Jobs

Around 12% of Muslim respondents identify as self-employed, compared with 7% of Illinois general public respondents. As part of our survey, we asked people who reported being self-employed or owning a business how many people they employed. By using this data and projecting to the entire population of Illinois Muslim adults,¹⁰ estimated to be 220,000, we find that Muslims in Illinois create more than **350,000** jobs—that’s nearly 6% of [all jobs](#) in Illinois while Muslims make up only 2.8% of the population. However, it is also important to note that 20% of Muslims in our sample are unemployed, which presents a need.

More than One in Ten in the Illinois Muslim Sample Are Self-Employed or Business Owners

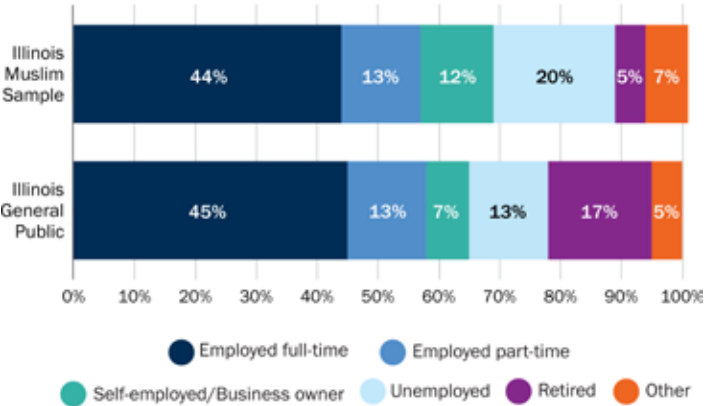


Figure 36: Which of the following best describes your current employment status? Base: Total respondents, 2021.

ASSET Diverse Expertise

In terms of type of work, one-fifth of the of the Muslim sample (21%) reported they work in healthcare. Eleven percent stated they work in each of the following categories: Education, Business, and Technology (that wasn’t engineering). In addition, around 50% of Muslim respondents reported that they had an annual income that was greater than \$100k before taxes. Twenty percent made between \$25k and \$50k, and around 31% of respondents made between \$50k and \$100k. In the Illinois general public sample, by comparison, 21% made below \$25k, 27% made between \$25 and \$50k, and 16% made above \$100k. This discrepancy in income was also reflected in the rates at which social welfare programs were accessed in the Muslim sample vs. the Illinois general public sample. ISPU national surveys show that roughly 35% of Muslims make \$30,000 or less while 18% make \$100K or more, suggesting our sample overrepresents the rich and underrepresents the poor. We took this into account as we analyzed the data and addressed it in our focus groups.

About One-Fifth of the Illinois Muslim Sample Works in the Healthcare Field

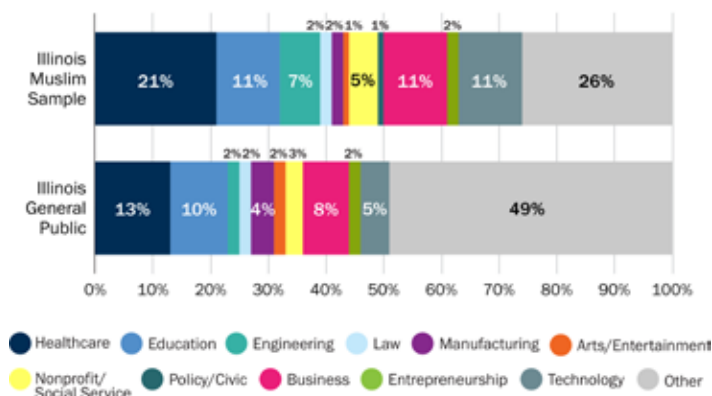


Figure 37: Which of the following best describes your work sector? Base: Total respondents, 2021.

ASSET Strong Civic and Political Engagement

Roughly nine in 10 Muslims (92%) are eligible to vote, which is similar to the Illinois general public sample (98%). Ninety-one percent are registered or planning to register with 75% of respondents registered and 16% planning to register. In comparison, 92% of the Illinois general public sample are registered to vote and 6% intend to register. The demographic among the Illinois Muslim sample that plans to register (16%) is an important opportunity for civic organizations to increase voter turnout within the Muslim population in Illinois, especially with the upcoming elections.

However, despite having a lower voter registration rate, the Muslim sample showed slightly higher rates of deeper civic engagement, such as volunteering, compared to the Illinois general public. About a quarter (23%) of Muslim respondents have volunteered for a political candidate in the past 12 months alone, compared to 17% of Illinois general public respondents.

Nearly One-Fourth of the Illinois Muslim Sample Has Volunteered for a Political Organization or Candidate in the Past 12 Months

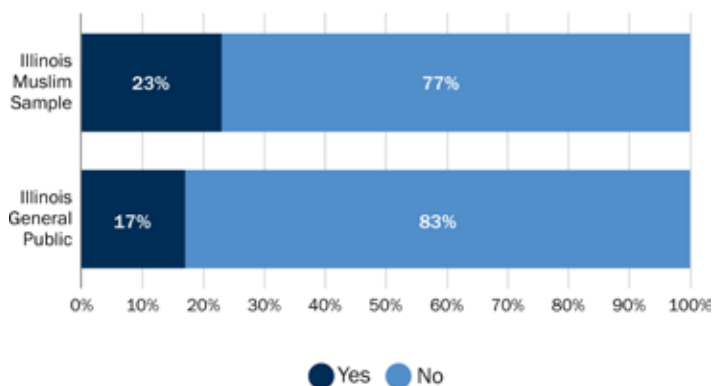


Figure 38: Have you in the past 12 months volunteered or done community organizing/rallying for a political organization or candidate? Base: Total respondents 2021.

Moreover, about a third (32%) of Muslim respondents have volunteered for a political candidate at some point in their lives, compared with 24% of Illinois general public respondents. This engagement extends to communication with elected officials even after the election is over. Roughly 30% of Muslim respondents stated they have contacted their federal elected officials, and the same report contacting their local elected officials in the last year. This is similar to the general public where 23% and 25% of Illinois general public respondents, respectively, said the same. This trend is seen nationally as well; nationally, Muslims are more likely to attend town hall meetings (22%), compared with Jews or Catholics (both at 18%).¹¹

About One-Third of the Illinois Muslim Sample Has Ever Volunteered for a Political Organization or Candidate

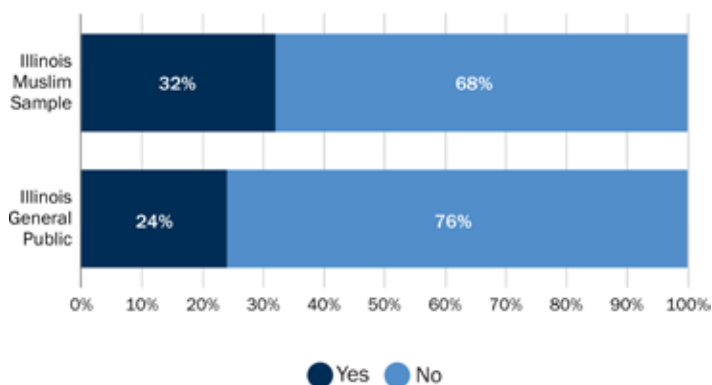


Figure 39: Have you ever volunteered or done community organizing/rallying for a political organization or candidate? Base: Total respondents, 2021.

Muslim respondents shared similar policy priorities as the general public, with some unique differences. These priorities are important for elected officials to understand in order to meet the needs of their Muslim constituents. The economy was among the top three policy concerns among 29% of Muslim respondents and 40% of members of the general Illinois public. After that was healthcare, which 20% of Muslim respondents and 19% of Illinois general public chose as a top concern. It is to be noted that 6% of Muslim respondents said that foreign policy was a big issue for them, as did 5% of Illinois general public respondents. Perhaps not surprisingly, 31% of Muslim respondents said that Islamophobia was a top issue for them, while only 1% of Illinois general public respondents rated it as one of their top concerns.

Illinois Muslims Report Islamophobia, the Economy, and Healthcare as Their Top Policy Concerns

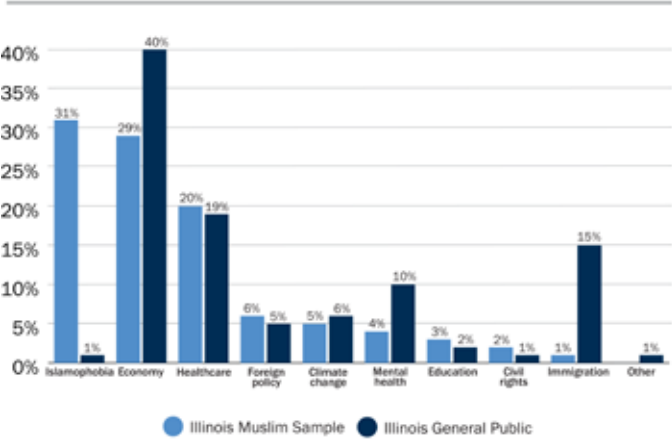


Figure 40: What policy areas are you most concerned about? (select up to 3) Base: Total respondents, 2021.

NEED Mosque Opposition Remains a Challenge

When comparing the experiences of Muslim faith groups with other faith groups in terms of creation of spaces of worship, more than one-third (39%) of respondents in the Muslim sample reported that their house of worship experienced significant resistance within their local community to move, build, or expand their mosque. Interestingly, a similar percentage of the general public reported the same challenge. However, the general public was more likely to not have a need to seek permission, with 46% of Illinois general public respondents stating that they did not seek approval from the city or zoning board, compared to 30% of the Muslim sample. This suggests that Muslims are not more likely than Illinois residents of other faiths to face city or zoning board resistance when building or expanding their house of worship but are also more likely to face the situation of needing to seek permission, perhaps due to a more rapidly growing community. This may present an opportunity for greater interfaith cooperation when faith communities are seeking to build or expand their

houses of worship. To learn more about the resistance Muslim communities sometimes face when seeking to build or expand their house of worship, see ISPU's report [Countering Anti-Muslim Opposition to Mosque and Islamic Center Construction and Expansion](#).

More than One-Third of the Illinois Muslim Sample Reported Resistance to Mosque Expansion or Building Plans

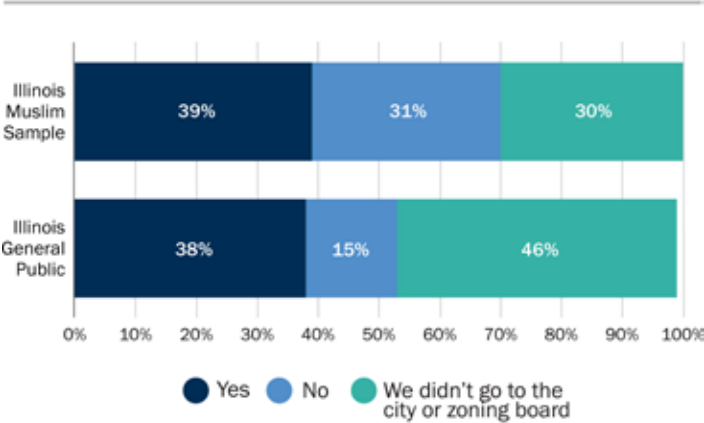


Figure 41: If your house of prayer went to the city or zoning board to obtain permission to build, move, or expand, was there significant resistance in the general community to your move, expansion, or building? Base: Total respondents, 2021.

NEED Religious Discrimination

Muslim respondents reported significant religious discrimination from outside their faith community, which has repercussions ranging from public health, to employment, to political representation and needs to be an important focus for government and non-government organizations tasked with ensuring equal rights. While 52% of Muslim respondents stated they faced religious discrimination outside of their community, 24% of Illinois general public respondents said they have faced religious discrimination.

More Than Half of the Illinois Muslim Sample Reported Facing Religious Discrimination

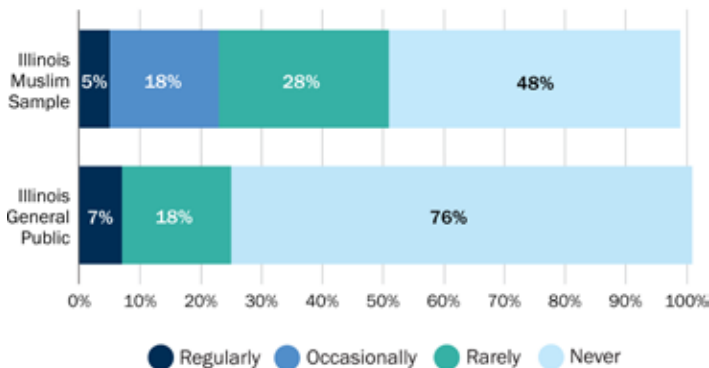


Figure 42: Over the past 12 months, how often have you experienced the following? Discrimination by someone OUTSIDE your faith community because of your religious beliefs. Base: Total respondents, 2021.

Discrimination poses a significant challenge to the Illinois Muslim community and was a consistent theme among focus group respondents, as noted in their policy priorities. There was quite a bit of variety within this theme, ranging from the most specific sort of discrimination directly targeted at Muslims, to discrimination directed toward immigrant communities or racial and ethnic groups that included Muslims, such as African Americans and, more specifically, African American Muslims. A less consistent but also present theme was discrimination within the Muslim community, particularly interethnic and interracial discrimination.

“In my view the greatest challenge is Islamophobia which is causing a security issue for Muslims. Being an Imam, we had to hire a security guy to protect us... It is hard for me when we have a security guy who is armed. He must be present at the door when people come to worship and it’s hard to see him when children come and they ask why he has to be here... Just to have him we feel insecure. When will we feel safe again to go back to normal?”

- WHITE MALE FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

“Racism. Anti-black racism. Clear cut between African American Muslims and Muslims from South Asia. Family is from Sudan. We identify as black; we are African. Being in that space, I’m aware of the fault lines. Anti-black racism and racism in general: class division between aspiring middle class/upper class life in the US and the values connected to that. Lack of solidarity with working class people across racial and religious grounds. Biggest fault lines.”

- AFRICAN AMERICAN FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

NEED Hate Crimes

Muslim respondents were just as likely as the Illinois general public respondents to be victims of hate crimes (9% vs. 10% respectively). These results point to the need for greater support for all vulnerable communities against bias-inspired crimes and an opportunity for coalition building.

NEED Bullying

Forty-one percent of Illinois Muslim sample respondents stated they have a child between kindergarten and twelfth grade. Of those respondents with school-age children, 80% stated their child attends a public school, 10% attend a private non-Muslim school, and the remaining 11% attend a Muslim school.

Just as a significant portion of adults in the Illinois Muslim sample report facing discrimination, the children of Muslim respondents face bullying. Specifically, 29% of Muslim respondents who have a child in K-12 stated their child has experienced some form of bullying. By contrast, 49% of Illinois general public respondents with a child in K-12 stated their child has been bullied. It is worth noting that national data shows that 50% of Muslims have experienced religious-based bullying, as opposed to 27% of the general public.¹² Among Muslim respondents, 14% stated their children were bullied because of their race, 6% said national origin, and 9% said religion.

Nearly One-Third of the Illinois Muslim Sample with School-Aged Children Reported Having a Child Who Faced Bullying

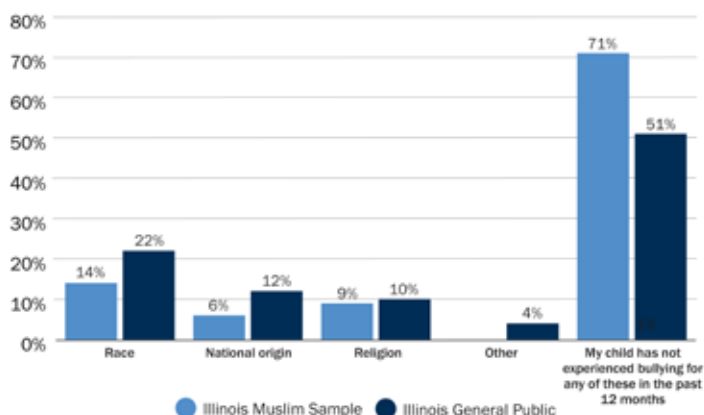


Figure 43: In the past 12 months, have you had a child experience bullying (insults or physical assaults)? (select all that apply) Base: Total respondents with school-age children, 2021.

Finally, it was found that Muslim respondents' children who were bullied were most often bullied by their own peers (68%) while 10% said a teacher did the bullying and 5% said the bullying was anonymous.

Muslim Families of Children Who Have Been Bullied Most Often Cite Peers as the Source of the Bullying

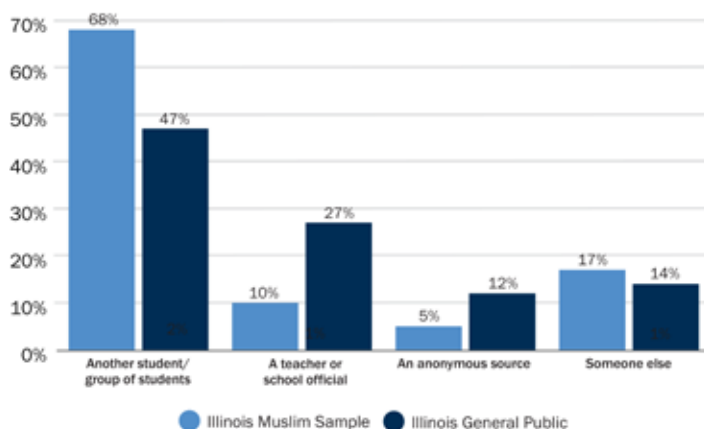


Figure 44: Who has bullied your child? (select all that apply) Base: Total respondents with school-age children who have been bullied, 2021.

Recommendations and Opportunities

The survey and focus group results presented in this report describe a vibrant and diverse Muslim community in Illinois—a community that brings tremendous assets to Illinois' civic, economic, and cultural spheres, yet also has important and urgent needs. Based on the assets and needs identified in this research, we offer the following recommendations for specific stakeholders.

Funders/Philanthropists

- Recognize community diversity and service to all marginalized and often invisible residents. Invest equitably in Muslim-led nonprofits based on demographics and needs.
- Invest in social services supporting Muslim communities, especially related to culturally appropriate family safety, [elder care](#), poverty alleviation, accessibility, addiction and affordable health and mental health care services.
- Invest in 'nontraditional' and, therefore, underfunded Muslim-led nonprofits such as research and civic organizations.
- Focus on racial equity by recognizing the racialized nature of Islamophobia and supporting efforts to combat it among the general public and within schools, hospitals, and other public and private institutions.
- Leverage community generosity and capacity to donate, engaging with Muslim philanthropists to tackle pressing community challenges.
- Invest in civic engagement efforts to support full community participation in our democratic processes and institutions.

Educators

- Include implicit bias training related to Islamophobia and religious-based bullying awareness in staff cultural sensitivity training.
- Ensure educators have access to resources and experts within the Muslim community to better understand and serve our diverse students.
- Partner with Muslim-led community organizations to provide halal options for Muslim students. Also note that all students can consume halal food, so switching to halal providers will address the needs of every student.

Include information on Muslim contributions to the state of Illinois and the nation in curricula based on recently passed laws. Invite Muslim community members to present on career days and to host interns.

- Include information on accessing social services to low-income families in school materials to ensure every child has access to nutritious meals and is ready to learn.
- Raise awareness about recently passed laws addressing faith-based equity to ensure no discrimination based on faith. See <https://www.ilmuslimciviccoalition.org/> for more information.

Direct Social Service Providers

- Increase outreach to Muslim communities regarding job training and employment support.
- Invest in affordable and culturally appropriate mental health support for Muslims.
- Invest in serving Muslims with disabilities, providing addiction prevention and treatment, supporting aging community members and their families, supporting divorcees, and addressing domestic violence and supporting victims.
- Educate disadvantaged members of the Muslim community on how to access government programs to alleviate food insecurity and access employment support.
- Ensure better access and outreach, provide language access, and connect with trusted messengers and center the voices of Muslim-led organizations to lead this work.

Business Community

- Raise awareness in the business community about the Illinois Muslim chambers of commerce, Muslim-led businesses, and the Illinois Muslim community as job creators.
- Better understand and cater to the Muslim consumer who has strong disposable income and purchasing power.
- Understand halal as a healthy, ethical way of living.
- Provide more [halal products and services](#) to address the unmet needs of Muslim consumers, especially related to availability of halal food options on college campuses, halal financial options, and halal cultural activities.

- For Muslim business leaders, leverage their collective economic and job-creating clout to advocate for those with less privilege with policymakers (see ISPU's [Strategies to Increase Effective Political Engagement Case Study](#) as an example).

Muslim Community Leaders and Members

- Invest in and support specialized faith, social, and civic organizations to address specific needs. The Muslim community is large and diverse, and one or few organizations can no longer meet every need. There is no one voice in this diverse community, so intra-community collaboration and coalition-building is critical between races, ethnicities, genders, etc.
- Mosque leadership should seek ways to better hear and address the opinions of all congregants, including women, young people, and Black Muslims (see ISPU's research on [Reimagining Muslims Spaces](#)).
- Address intra-Muslim racism with education on the impacts and history of white supremacist ideas.
- Leverage the Muslim business community as job creators to address Muslim unemployment in Illinois.
- Invest in community-based resources providing affordable and culturally appropriate mental health support.
- Increase awareness of the [Muslim Mental Health Directory](#).
- Invest in and support services and organizations serving people with disabilities, providing addiction prevention and treatment, supporting aging community members and their families, supporting divorcees, and addressing domestic violence and supporting victims.
- Engage in civic engagement efforts through support and partnership to build community participation and influence.
- Support and educate the community about [Laws](#) that empower and help change the narrative about the Muslim Community.

Government and Policymakers

- Ensure Muslim experts are at the table when policy is being made, not after it's already developed.
- Increase and sustain outreach to Muslim constituents and communities, in all their diversity, and understand and address needs.
- Engage Muslim business leaders as job creators and an economic engine for the state.
- Engage Muslim healthcare professionals as a brain trust for health policy in Illinois.
- Invest in social services supporting Muslim communities, especially related to culturally appropriate family safety, elder care, poverty alleviation, accessibility, addiction, and affordable health and mental health care services.
- Muslims vote, contribute, and engage in the political landscape. Ensure Muslim representation grows in elected office. This will ensure communities are integrated and even more engaged in civic society.
- Understand bias/discrimination/[Islamophobia](#), where it comes from, how it manifests, and the role of political rhetoric in both inflaming and dampening it.
- Include Muslim communities in racial equity programming and outreach.

Allies, Advocates, and Practitioners

- Recognize the presence of and seek education about [Muslim communities](#), their contributions, and the impact of Islamophobia and discrimination. Consider diversity training for board, staff, and others involved to ensure cultural competency.
- Amplify the voices of Muslim advocates and community leaders seeking equity and partner with them for greater impact.

- Organize and speak up against local efforts to disenfranchise Muslim communities, such as in the form of [mosque opposition](#), as one example.
- Partner with Muslim-serving organizations to combine forces for greater impact and culturally appropriate services and programs.
- Access expertise in the Muslim community for advisors, boards, and commissions in every sector, not just for faith or religious needs. Muslims are clearly experts in healthcare, business ownership, education, etc.
- Ensure that your own and/or your organization's programs take into account the unique needs of Muslim communities and their diverse populations.

Future Researchers

- Further research that robustly examines the perspectives of Black Muslims.
- Further research that focuses on the needs of economically disadvantaged Muslims in Illinois.
- Greater exploration of the health care needs of Muslim patients, especially why they are less likely than the general public to receive care when they need it.
- Deeper dives into some of the issue areas discussed in this report to understand their contributing and mitigating factors and uncover evidence-based solutions to challenges identified.
- Further research on the mental health impact of the added cognitive and emotional labor of caring for parents and children at the same time.



Notes

1. The collected sample also skewed toward wealthier respondents. As noted, this was anticipated for the “snowball” method used in this study. This is mitigated by weighting the data, a process that mathematically adjusts the data to account for relative imbalances in the respondent mix to better match with the demographics of the general population in Illinois. The weighting was done by SSRS, a respected independent research and data analytics firm, with data weighted by gender, age, and education (see Appendix C for further detail). Weighting the data by race was not possible due to differences in the way the question about race was asked in the Muslim survey and how it was asked in the census.
2. While our sample may have overrepresented mosque-going Muslims because it was a self-selected sample, these numbers are not far from those we see among a random [representative national sample](#) of American Muslims in which 67% say their religion is very important to their daily life and 52% attended their house of prayer once a month or more.
3. https://www.ispu.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/AMP-2016-8_Logo.png?x46312
4. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/148931/presentation-muslim-americans-faith-freedom-future.aspx>
5. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/muslim-population-by-state>
6. Estimates from the SSRS polling firm are based on Multilevel Regression and Poststratification (MRP) estimates using data from several sources collected across multiple years, including the 2019 American Community Survey, the SSRS weekly telephone Omnibus (2019 to 2021), and the SSRS Opinion Panel (2015 to 2022).
7. https://www.ispu.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/AMP-2016-12_Logo.png?x46312
8. https://www.ispu.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/AMP-2016-8_Logo.png?x46312
9. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/148931/presentation-muslim-americans-faith-freedom-future.aspx>
10. Population estimate for Illinois Muslims were based on findings from the Pew Research Center: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/01/03/new-estimates-show-u-s-muslim-population-continues-to-grow/>
11. <https://www.ispu.org/american-muslim-poll-2020-amid-pandemic-and-protest/#voting>
12. https://www.ispu.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/AMP-2020_29_Logo.png?x46312



About This Report



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