



Latino Attitudes Toward American Muslims and Islam



A

According to the U.S. Census, just under 20% of Americans are Latino, a sizable proportion of the American public. Demographic data from ISPU's American Muslim Poll finds that 9% of Muslims in the United States are Latino, a steadily growing percentage. In previous research, ISPU found that Latinos have lower levels of Islamophobia than other racial and ethnic groups in the United States and the general public. These demographic trends, coupled with the lower levels of Islamophobia found among this population, motivate this research, which included individual interviews and focus groups. Our findings include themes relating to lower levels of Islamophobia, what manifestations of Islamophobia still persist, and research-based recommendations for mitigating it.

Research Team

Dr. Andrew Proctor, Co-Principal Investigator, Latino Decisions

Dr. Alex Flores, Co-Principal Investigator, Latino Decisions

Mark Rosenkranz, Latino Decisions

Dalia Mogahed, Director of Research, ISPU

Erum Ikramullah, Research Project Manager, ISPU

Communications Team

Katherine Coplen, Director of Communications

Rebecka Green, Communications & Creative Media Specialist

Tahirah Blanding, Communications Campaigns Specialist

Advisory Team

Jaime “Mujahid” Fletcher,

Founder and CEO, IslamInSpanish; Founder and CEO, FocusPoint Studios

Zainab Ismail

Founder, Fit for Allah

Wilfredo A. Ruiz, Esq

Media and Outreach Director, Council on American Islamic-Relations, FL (CAIR-Florida)

Photos were provided by IslamInSpanish, the preeminent outreach and education organization on Islam in the Spanish language. These images depict outreach and community events hosted by IslamInSpanish.

For more information about the study, please visit:
<http://www.ISPU.org/latino-views>

Acknowledgements

This publication was produced by the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) with support from and through partnership with IslamInSpanish, alongside additional generous support from the Doris Duke Foundation and El Hibri Foundation.



ISPU would like to acknowledge our research partner, **Latino Decisions**.

Latino Decisions

Suggested citation: Proctor, Andrew, Flores, Alex, and Mogahed, Dalia. *Latino Attitudes Toward American Muslims and Islam*. ISPU, 2023



Contents

Introduction	3
Executive Summary	4
Results	6
Conclusions and Recommendations	17
Methodology	20
Endnotes	23



Latino Attitudes Toward American Muslims and Islam

Introduction

The Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) has been tracking Islamophobia since 2018. ISPU's [Islamophobia Index](#) measures the level of agreement with five tropes about Muslims that are shown to be linked to support for anti-Muslim policies. The Islamophobia Index ranges from zero to 100, with higher scores indicating greater Islamophobia. Since 2018, we have found relatively stable levels of Islamophobia among the general public, with a score of 24 in 2018, 28 in 2019, 27 in 2020, and 25 in 2022. These data suggest that Islamophobia is not a one-off problem, but rather a deeply rooted problem that requires strategic and evidence-based education and counteraction to resolve.

The first step toward countering Islamophobia is to better understand it. In an effort to do this, ISPU analyzed Islamophobia Index scores among American subgroups, revealing that some groups score higher or lower on the Index than others. When looking at Islamophobia by race/ethnicity in 2019, we found that Latino Americans have significantly lower levels of Islamophobia compared with white and Black Americans (23 vs. 28 and 33,

respectively).¹ Through this study we sought to employ a [positive deviance](#) approach to understand how and why Latino Americans stand out from others with more positive behavior (lower Islamophobia).

According to recent [Census Bureau estimates](#), nearly one-fifth (19%) of the U.S. population is of Hispanic origin. Studying Islamophobia among a group that represents such a significant portion of the population will present possible solutions and strategies that can then be applied to the rest of the population.

Just as the Latino population in the U.S. has grown and continues to grow, the proportion of Latino Muslims is also growing. According to ISPU's American Muslim Poll, 9% of American Muslims self-identified as Latino in 2020, compared with 5% in 2017. This growth points to possible increases in Latino-Muslim interactions. In fact, ISPU's [2019 American Muslim Poll](#) found that Latino Americans were more likely than white and Black Americans to know a Muslim personally (see Table 3). Greater intersectionality between the two American communities warrants more research on Latino views

of Muslims.

Finally, we understand that Latino Americans, like American Muslims, are not a monolith. They are ethnically and geographically diverse and, also like Muslims, include various immigrant, generational, and citizenship statuses in the United States. Research into whether and where there are differences in views of Muslims by various subsets of Latino Americans will aid our understanding of where the positive deviance lies.

ISPU was proud to partner with [IslamInSpanish](#) in this important research project. IslamInSpanish is the preeminent outreach and education organization on Islam in the Spanish language, reaching millions of Latinos in the US and Latin America with accurate information about the beliefs and Islamic roots found within the Latino culture. This research sought to inform their educational and audiovisual material with evidence.

The research team made thoughtful consideration as to the language to use when recruiting participants, conducting interviews, and writing this report, in particular around the decision to use 'Latino' vs. 'Latinx.' The decision to use 'Latino' is based on the following points: First, it represents how the community refers to itself as a group. Over the course of fifteen years of polling, for example, Pew Research Center has consistently found that Latinos do not have a preference between the use of Hispanic and Latino as a pan-ethnic term to refer to the group (Pew 2020). In addition, just 3% use the term Latinx to identify themselves and only one-quarter of U.S. Hispanics have heard the term 'Latinx'. Additionally, some critics have called into question the term's origin among English speakers in the United States (Pew 2020). In light of this research and ongoing debates about the use of Latinx, we decided to use the term Latino.

What follows is a synthesis of our research on Latino views of Muslims and Islam. We summarize our findings in each section as well as provide direct quotes as evidence that illustrate our conclusions.² After the results, we offer recommendations for stakeholders and future research.

Executive Summary

Why this research?

According to the U.S. Census, just under 20% of Americans are Latino, a sizable proportion of the

American public.³ Demographic data from ISPU's American Muslim Poll finds that 9% of Muslims in the United States are Latino. In fact, IslamInSpanish, an organization that educates the Latino community about Islam, finds that Latinos are the fastest growing ethnic group embracing Islam (Abeyta 2023).⁴ In previous research, ISPU found that Latinos have lower levels of Islamophobia than other racial and ethnic groups in the United States.⁵ These demographic trends coupled with the lower levels of Islamophobia found among this population motivate this research, which examines why Latinos have lower levels of Islamophobia compared to the general public as well as what explains the persistence of even low levels of Islamophobia within this community.

Methodology

This report presents a qualitative assessment of Latinos' attitudes about American Muslims and Islam based on a two-stage study that consisted of nine in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Latinos, including two Latino Muslims and nine focus groups with a diverse cross section of participants from the Latino community in the United States. The interviews and focus groups were conducted online between December 2022 and May 2023.

Results

Our research found several themes that can help us understand Latinos' lower levels of Islamophobia. Broadly speaking, Latinos exhibited lower levels of Islamophobia when they perceived themselves as having similar life experiences to or personal interactions with American Muslims. Commonality emerged across different themes, including experiences with discrimination, partaking in the immigrant experience and aspirations of the American dream, negative media portrayals, and everyday interactions with American Muslims. Religiosity was also important, but these results were nuanced. We found that some religious participants perceived their shared faiths as a point of unity, while others saw it as a point of difference between themselves and American Muslims.

Our research also identified that, despite lower levels of Islamophobia among Latinos, Islamophobia persists within this community. Perceived misogyny is a key factor that explains its persistence. This report delves into multiple subthemes that explain how misogyny structures Latinos' Islamophobia, including perceptions of patriarchy in Islam, perceptions that women lack autonomy, and comparisons to machismo culture in the

Latino community. In addition, negative stereotypes that cast American Muslims as violent or terrorists continue to shape prejudice among Latinos. Our participants identified the media as the primary institution that perpetuates these negative stereotypes.

We conclude our report with several recommendations regarding future research and messaging to mitigate Islamophobia. We recommend conducting similar focus groups among Asian Americans, who are the fastest growing immigrant group in the United States. Comparing Latinos to Asian Americans would help further unpack how the experiences of immigrants and their descendants shape Islamophobia. We also suggest developing new survey questions that measure the multiple ways that misogyny shapes Islamophobia. Finally, to mitigate Islamophobia, we recommend developing materials and programming that provide information about American Muslims to Latinos and facilitate interactions between Latinos and American Muslims. Our study participants often had limited knowledge about American Muslims, yet they were receptive to updating their beliefs based on exposure to video clips about [Islam](#) and [women who wear a hijab](#), and conversation with Latinos who are Muslim.



Results

The results are broken down into three sections that illustrate our key findings. We identified factors that explain Latinos' relatively lower levels of Islamophobia, factors that explain how and in what ways Islamophobia persists, and factors that can mitigate Islamophobia. We summarize our findings in each section as well as provide direct quotes as evidence that illustrate our conclusions.⁶ After the results, we offer recommendations for stakeholders and future research.

Factors contributing to lower levels of Islamophobia among Latinos

Our research identified several themes in the interviews and focus groups that allow us to unpack why Latinos have relatively lower levels of Islamophobia. Broadly speaking, our participants exhibited lower levels of Islamophobia when they perceived themselves as having similar life experiences to American Muslims.

The most common mechanisms through which Latinos made these connections were experiences with discrimination, the immigrant experience and aspirations of the American dream, and negative media portrayals of both groups. In addition, we found that everyday

interactions with American Muslims played an important role in shaping Latinos' attitudes. Religiosity was also an important theme, but these results were more nuanced. Some religious participants perceived their faiths as a point of unity. Other religious participants viewed their faiths as a point of difference.

Broadly speaking, our participants exhibited lower levels of Islamophobia when they perceived themselves as having similar life experiences to American Muslims.

Theme 1: Experiences with discrimination

The first theme that contributes to lower levels of Islamophobia among Latinos is the perception that both groups have similar experiences with discrimination in the United States. We found that participants identified this as a point of commonality between Latinos and Muslims when we asked them directly

about experiences with discrimination but also in other contexts. Participants expressed this view when we asked them what they think of when they hear the word Muslim as well as when asked about whether Latinos and Muslims can work together to solve problems. The prominence of this theme in the interview and focus group transcripts leads us to conclude that it is

a foundational component of Latinos' lower levels of Islamophobia.

The following statements illustrate how our participants talked about common experiences with discrimination and being part of a racialized minority group. As one focus group participant stated in response to a word association exercise, "...[when] I think about [the word] Muslim...I just think of another brown person. I'm like, oh, that's another person who's brown like me... that's my association." In another focus group, a participant responded in the following way when asked whether Latinos and Muslims could work together on common issues:

Inequality, I would say...we [are] both treated like we're the underdogs. So we have similarities in the way we're seen and treated. So yeah, we can work together. ... I could see them and us working together (Man, age 49).

Other participants express a similar sentiment to this question. In our second focus group, which was a group of six women, we observed the following exchange:

Discrimination. We all feel discrimination. We all have stereotypes. Latinos, Muslims, we face discrimination in some type of way. For example, women as a whole. You know whether we are Muslim, Catholic, Christian...we're all oppressed in a way (Woman, age 30).

[In response, another participant said:] And you know that's why I said unity first [referring back to a previous response]. Because there is power in unity ... [it's] so important to be able to come together (Woman, age 59).

[Following participant 2's response, a third participant said:] I think the same. ... Our main concern is discrimination. We all ... face discrimination. And if we have a common goal...it would be to eliminate or try to eliminate the discrimination that we face, you know, every day as a group (Woman, age 59).

Participants in focus groups five and six expressed similar sentiments that discrimination was a point of commonality between Latinos and Muslims and that discrimination against Muslims was rooted in negative stereotypes. For example, a participant stated:

I feel like discrimination. We [can] work together because [people] discriminate [against] Muslims and they discriminate [against] Latino people. ... We could communicate and work something out where we ... make people see that we're not bad people, and they can show exactly how Muslim people are ... and how similar we are, and that there is no need for the hate that we get (Woman, age 25).

Theme 2: Partaking in the immigrant experience and the American dream

We found that our participants often made connections between their experiences as immigrants, and the experiences of American Muslims. Typically, this connection was framed by drawing on the idea of the American dream and its themes, including desires for

These findings suggest to us that Latinos perceive common immigrant experience with American Muslims based on cultural and social factors rather than political factors.

liberty and freedom, being financially stable, and the opportunity to make a better life for oneself and one's family through hard work. Interestingly, participants did not perceive a common immigrant experience through a political lens. For example, few participants mentioned similarities between rhetoric about undocumented immigrants and attempts to ban

Muslims from entering the United States. Similarly, when asked about whether Latinos and Muslims could work together to solve common problems, participants did not mention immigration. These findings suggest to us that Latinos perceive common immigrant experience with American Muslims based on cultural and social factors rather than political factors.

The following statements from participants demonstrate the various ways that Latinos perceived the immigrant experience as a point of commonality with American Muslims. One participant, for example, mentioned that Latinos and Muslims are Americans who aspire to the same values and ideals.

[When asked about similarities between Latinos and Muslims]: First of all, we're both Americans. [The thing about] being an American is that it's not really a race or a specific religion. It's just a bunch of group[s] of people who loosely believe in the same kind of system, like democracy, freedom, individual liberty, and all that (Man, age 24).

Another participant discussed a desire to have the American dream through financial stability, ties to their

country of origin, and family.

They wanted to have, you know, their own American dream as well [as] be a homeowner [and] be well set financially. They also communicated frequently with their family, and they have strong ties back to their country of origin, so I feel that they were no different from anybody else (Woman, age 45).

In some instances, our participants drew these connections based on their interactions with American Muslims, reflecting the importance of exposure and interaction for perceiving commonalities with American Muslims.

I have neighbors that are Muslims, too, and they go to the pool. ... You know they live normal lives. They are not different from everybody else. So, sometimes, we have misconceptions about the religion. ... They also come to work. They come to have a better life for whatever reason. They [are] also leaving their countries for political situations. That's why they come here, just like everybody else (Woman, age 37).

Theme 3: Interactions with American Muslims and people from different backgrounds

Our research also found that interactions with American Muslims and people from different backgrounds was an important factor that led Latinos to express positive views of American Muslims. This finding is consistent with academic research on the contact hypothesis (Allport 1954), which has demonstrated that interacting with people from different groups can attenuate prejudicial attitudes (Abrams, McGaughey, and Haghighat 2018).⁷

The participants in our study interacted with American Muslims across multiple institutional contexts, including school, work, and the neighborhoods where they live. Exposure to different cultures is an important factor that shapes Latinos' attitudes about Muslims.

As one participant stated:

I grew up in Georgia [in] Gwinnett which is kind of known for having a Koreatown. Since then, I went to school, first in Marietta, which has a pretty large Black population, and then, well, one thing that I've noticed here at [my university] is that there's a lot of Indians. So [there's] a lot of Hindus and Muslims. I've just generally been exposed to many different cultures growing up. ... I grew up around a lot of

Italians [and] Pakistani people ... and [it's] the same as ... communicating with another Hispanic person for me ... I don't even think about language. I don't think about religion. I just look at the person as a human being, you know (Man, age 24).

Another person talked about how their interactions at work were important for how they perceived American Muslims. She stated:

I actually used to work with them. It was [a] woman, the one that I work with, and I learned a lot about [Muslims]. What we have in mind sometimes is just kind of like what we hear from people. But when you actually interact ... You see that they're very normal people. ... They're more by the book when it comes down to religion, like the women, are covered because they're protected, because the Bible and the Quran say that women [are] supposed to be protected. ... Because of that, they ... decide to cover themselves. The men don't force them. ... They're just more by the book compared to other religions (Woman, age 37).

Some participants also talked about their experiences with friends converting to Islam and how they supported them. For example, in one focus group, we observed:

[Responding to a question about how they would react if someone close to them expressed an interest in converting:] ... Like my friend married someone who was Muslim, and they felt like they had to convert in order to marry her. I will support them. ... The practice [of religion] is different, but at the end of the day it is like one God (Woman, age 25).

[A second participant responded:] I actually had a friend ... that was marrying a girl from Malaysia and he converted to being Muslim, and he told me prior to doing that. And I feel very happy for him, because, as we say in Spanish, the salvation is individual (Woman, age 45).

Theme 4: Religion and religiosity as a source of commonality and positive attitudes

Some participants in our study viewed religion or their own religiosity as a source of commonality with American Muslims. These connections were made in a variety of ways. Some participants talked broadly about similarities they saw between themselves and American Muslims. Other participants identified specific similarities.

The following statements show how participants identified broad similarities between themselves and American Muslims and Islam. In one focus group, for example, a participant stated:

[When discussing their husband's colleague] I have had a lot of conversation with him about religion, and I'm Catholic, Christian, and I found out that we have a lot in common in our beliefs (Woman, age 59).

Similarly, a participant who said they had little knowledge about Islam was impressed by the faith and religiosity of Muslims. They stated:

They believe in Allah, and ... well, I don't know much about the religion itself, but I do know that they're very dedicated ... I tell you I'm impressed by the dedication and the devotion that they show to their religion, and that in itself is a very interesting thing (Man, age 48).

Another participant similarly stated:

So, from this side, without knowing much about their religion, I admire them because they are people who are faithful to their beliefs. They even seek at all costs to assert their rights. For example, I recently went through immigration, and I was taking a passport-type photo and they have a section in the passport-type photo, you have to [take your passport photo] without hair on your face. This must be uncovered for immigration purposes, and they have their exception: Muslims. Muslim women can go out with their [hijab] ... that is something that they have fought for and they have asserted it. And I wish other religions or other, let's say, customs were as faithful as they are to their beliefs. For me, they are admirable people, honestly (Woman, age 33).

We found that many participants perceived Islam as similar to other religions after they watched a [short video](#) that talked about the pillars of Islam. The following examples show how respondents talked about these similarities.

It was pretty similar to me, like I said. It's just like every religion has a different name for God. But I think for the most part, it was similar. You know Ramadan is like what we do, for, like, what Semana Santa [Holy Week] or Ash Wednesday, where you're giving up something right? Or you're fasting, you're

giving something up that you like, so it's kind of pretty much the same (Woman, age 43).

Actually, it has a lot of similarities to the Christian religion. A lot of similarities (Man, age 49).

The three religions [Islam, Christianity, and Judaism] ... are extremely similar. ... There's just nuances that differentiate them. But ultimately they're similar enough to anybody looking from the outside (Man, age 24).

Well, what surprised me the most was what [she] said—the fasting, the willpower to go the whole day without eating. Regarding the other four, I see that there are things that other religions also have but with certain differences, right? For example, the annual 2.5 [% of savings required to give to charity (zakat)] seems like what some religions do, like tithing. What else? I think they see Jesus as a messenger; they respect him, but they don't pray to Jesus. I understand that there are other religions that also do it that way. They don't ask Jesus, but they do respect him (Woman, age 33).

“For me, they are admirable people, honestly. (Woman, age 33)”

Similarities in religion were also referenced to rebut negative stereotypes that Muslims are religious extremists. In one exchange during a focus group, we observed the following:

If you get rocked to death and then burned, and everything else, I mean, I will, I would say that's extreme (Man, age 49).

[A second participant responds:] ... I think there's definitely an extremist group, but I also believe that there is a peaceful group of Muslims. ... It just depends on the route that you take, because Christians have the same sort of sections where it could be taken a little bit extreme, and then you have your everyday approach where people can follow Christianity a different way and the Muslim religion a different way (Man, age 23).

[A third participant responds:] [Muslims] are just like other people. They are not a monolith, right? You're going to have some extremists. You're going to have a lot of people who are more or less just normal people with different traditions and cultures (Man, age 24).

Other evidence shows how our study participants made positive evaluations of Islam and American Muslims.



One participant, for example, made references to purity and beauty when talking about American Muslims and Islam. She said:

What I don't mind from Muslims is that they have a kind of, from my point of view ... they have a kind of purity. They believe in Mohammed. They believe in one God (Woman, age 59).

Later, in the same focus group, this participant talked about how Muslim women are misunderstood and described wearing a hijab as beautiful. She said:

The belief behind [wearing a hijab] can be a beautiful thing as long as the woman's power is not taken away from them. I feel like ... they are misunderstood to a certain degree (Woman, age 59).

Factors that explain the persistence of Islamophobia among Latinos

This research identified three common themes that stood out as factors that explain the persistence of Islamophobia among Latinos: perceived misogyny, stereotypes of Muslims as violent or terrorists, and religion as a point of difference. Because perceived misogyny was especially central to Latinos' Islamophobia, we further break this theme down into subthemes that help to characterize the many ways misogyny manifests in Latinos' attitudes of American Muslims.

Theme 1: Islamophobia manifests through misogyny

Perceived misogyny is central to the persistence of Islamophobia in the general public (AMP2022) and, among Latinos, and it manifested in their attitudes about American Muslims and Islam in various ways. One common subtheme was the perception that Muslim men mistreat Muslim women. A second subtheme was framing Islam as a patriarchal religion. A third subtheme was misogyny through comparison to Christians/Catholics. Finally, a fourth subtheme was the connections made between machismo in Latino culture and Islam and Muslim culture.

Subtheme 1: Perceived mistreatment of women

One of the most common forms of Islamophobia that we observed in this research was the perceived mistreatment of Muslim women by Muslim men. We found that participants often expressed this sentiment by referring to the treatment of Muslim women outside of the United States. At the same time, however, some participants did make direct references to the treatment of American Muslim women.

We offer the following quotes as evidence that perceived misogyny is a key mechanism that explains the persistence of Islamophobia, despite Latinos' lower levels of Islamophobia relative to other racial groups in the United States.

I got a different take. I respect everybody. But, you know, I just look at them different. Okay, and [it's] based [on] the way they treat their women in their country. I mean, it's just tough. You're gonna kill a woman because she wants to be educated (Man, age 49).

[Muslim women] live in fear; you know there's fear. And it's the same thing, as you know. I'm Cuban, and it's the same thing as in Cuba. You know, we live in fear of [the] government. I think Muslims, probably the women, are more fear[ful] of [men]. You know, the men, because they're not looked at as you know they're not equal, and I say it right exactly. Not equal. So yeah ... definitely fear. You know there's a lot of fear (Woman, age 59).

I had a Muslim woman who was in one of my classes, and it was a blessing to have her because her ... husband died suddenly, and she found herself ... All she knew to do was to cook and house chores—that's it. And when her husband died, you know, then they had [no] money, so she found herself totally lost, because she didn't know what to do, how to man [the house]. ... There's just so much bondage and so much fear, and the way that her husband, you know, she was in so much fear. ... Today she goes "I love my husband, but if he wouldn't have passed away, I wouldn't have been free, and I wouldn't have been where I am today" (Woman, age 59).

When I speak to a Muslim family, I always speak to the husband and the wife is there, and I never get to interact with the wife. And I always have an issue with that, because the one who's not going to be home is the husband. [It will] be the wife that's gonna be home taking care of the children, and he's doing all the questions. But she doesn't know how to do what she has to do to raise the children. So that's been my interaction. That's why I always have an issue with the male side of Muslims (Woman, age 44).

I think [Muslim men] treat [Muslim women] as inferior beings. Completely ... like if they were things, objects. I've seen that (Woman, age 62).

The woman is a possession for them. It is the man who is in control ... I think that women don't have the freedom to do, well, many, many things, I mean, as long as they can't answer the door. I did know an American girl who married a Muslim and, yes, she totally lost control, I mean, to the

point that she said, 'I can't go out.' And it was the store next door without a man of the family accompanying me, or the mother-in-law. So the woman has, I mean, ... she has no freedom at all. She is simply a possession of the man (Woman, age 51).

The culture is not the same. ... Women, at least in our country, Latinos are more liberal; they can do many things. While [Muslim] women can't do anything, they can't do anything because they are very restricted (Man, age 49).

Subtheme 2: Patriarchy in Islam

In addition to perceiving that Muslim women are mistreated by Muslim men, Latinos in our focus groups perceived Islam as a patriarchal religion. We differentiate this evidence from perceptions that women are mistreated because participants drew explicit connections to the practice of Islam rather than general relations between Muslim women and men.

One participant, for example, discussed how the Old Testament is the same in the Bible, Quran, and Torah but then distinguished Muslims as restrictive. They stated:

The Old Testament is the same in the Bible, the Quran, and the Torah. So we shared that. And I know that most of the [Muslim] people being ... I know that they are very ... they shelter very much. Their wives and everything, and I know that some of them can be very, I will say, protective. But, sometimes, the line is crossed. You know, to be restrictive ... He doesn't allow ... [his] wife to go out, or he doesn't allow his wife to be seen (Woman, age 59).

The perception that Islam is a patriarchal religion also emerged when we asked participants about their views regarding Muslim women who choose to wear a hijab. The following quotes show how many of our participants perceived the hijab as a symbol of Muslim men's dominance over Muslim women.

I do have a question, though I mean all the power to [Dalia for wearing a hijab], and if, you know, if it's your decision, or whatever you want to wear ... but my frustration that I don't understand why women have to cover their hair. And how, in a way, how sick can you be to sexualize women's hair to have to cover it? (Woman, age 44).

They're, like, some kind of belonging to the

husband and they ... don't want [their hair] displayed in any way to any other man outside or for anybody to see it (Man, age 38).

The perception that Islam is a patriarchal religion was especially prominent when we asked participants about whether they would be concerned if someone close to them was planning to convert to Islam. Many respondents stated that they would be concerned if the person close to them was a woman. The following exchange in one of our focus groups characterizes this perception:

It depends if it is about women. I do not admire them. So, there's very little to respect [about] the way they treat women in that religion. And, if they're okay with that, super. But I'm not in favor of the way women are treated, so if it's a woman, a friend of mine, a sister of mine, I obviously think I'm going to help her do a lot of research on what it's all about and what she's getting into ... (Woman, age 51).

[Another participant responded:] ... Like she said, if it's my sister or an acquaintance, I'd say, 'You know what? Are you sure about what you're going to do? Think twice.' Because going in there, there's probably not a way out. Because unless this person is so submissive, they have to take orders ... I would say think twice, think about it, or you are really in love, but you have to change all your habits. It is a very drastic change. It is not just anything and for a man I think it would be easier because men are like that—it is easier for them because they have more freedom than a woman (Woman, age 39).

[A third participant replied as a response to a statement about men being allowed to have multiple wives:] Well, if she were a man ... I would understand why she wants to convert to that religion. If she is a woman, more than advising her, I would ask her more, to learn about her reasons for wanting to get into it. The only option I see is that she is very, very much in love, because it is a change, totally, a radical change of life. And even more so if she is a Latina like us. It is a very, very, very, very, very radical change of life. So, more than advising her, I would like to learn and know what her reasons are, especially if she is a person close to me (Woman, age 33).

Subtheme 3: Perceived misogyny through comparison of Catholicism/Christianity to Islam

We found that when participants distinguished between Catholicism/Christianity and Islam they often centered gender relations as a point of difference. In one focus group, for example, a participant talked about how Muslim women and men do not worship together. He stated:

I think the men are in one place, and the women are in another place. It's not like church, where the men and women are together. Men in one place, women in another place, and it's definitely like that when it comes to a wedding (Man, age 50).

Similar attitudes emerged in the conversations our participants had regarding conversion to Islam. When discussing their concerns regarding women converting to Islam, the participants in our focus groups would mention how they were Catholic/Christian, suggesting that they perceived their religion as more open than Islam. Since many of these quotes are similar to those in the previous section, we simply note this general trend as a source of how religion and perceptions of gender roles interact to shape Islamophobia among Latinos.

In the focus groups, we also asked participants about whether Catholic Latinas wearing a veil and Muslim women wearing a hijab had the same cultural and religious meaning. While some participants perceived both as a display of respect, many viewed them as different. The following quotes are examples of how participants viewed wearing a veil and wearing a hijab as culturally and religiously different.

The question was whether the motivations for Catholic Latinas to wear a veil is that similar or different than the motivations for a Muslim woman to wear a hijab. I think it's different because with the Muslim[s], it's like I said earlier: You have no option. The woman [covers] herself, doesn't show ... you can barely see her eyes, and with the other religion, it's just like it used to be more often. And now, you don't see that much back. Then it was normal. It's a way of respect to the church, but it's not the same to me, [not] the same thing (Man, age 39).

They're completely different from what we believe. At least to me, they seem a little bit weird because of the way they think. Weird because they are very orthodox in some things. For example, the way

they treat women, right? That seems completely retrograde to me (Woman, age 62).

Of course it's very different because I understand that Muslims already do it for a matter of purity and exclusivity, for their husband, whereas what we see in some Spanish-speaking religions is that they wear the veil on their head at the time of the ceremony, as if to understand that maybe above their head there is a superior being. Those are feeling their worship, and I think that is the difference (Man, age 38).

I think the Latino women... they just [wear it] to church as a respect to God or to the home of God. But they don't really use it outside (Woman, age 42).

I would always say that I was always told that the veil for women in church was more so of a reflection of the Virgin Mary. So that's what I remember... I don't think it's the same as a hijab at all. There's nowhere within the Bible that tells you that you should or that you must. I think it's more of an act of respect, I guess, kind of like if you have a hat on and then you walk into church, and you take it off, or if you're eating at a table, or you're at the dinner table, and then you just take your hat off (Man, age 39).

They do wear that kind of attire, but I imagine that it's only for that moment that they go to worship God and it's like something of a ritual instead. That of the Muslims. The woman is different, because it's everywhere (Woman, age 40).

Subtheme 4: Comparisons to machismo culture

Finally, we observed that Latinos compared gender relations among Muslim men and women to machismo culture in the Latino community. Participants saw these as a point of cultural similarity, but they also viewed Latinos as more progressive than Muslims. In other words, they were more likely to perceive machismo culture as a problem from the past while perceiving gender relations among Muslims as a problem in the present. Some of our women participants also mentioned how Latinas were more willing to push back on this culture than Muslim women.

The following evidence demonstrates how perceptions of machismo culture were linked to perceptions of gender relations among Muslims.

I feel like it's called 'machismo' in the Latino

community, which is actually very common. They're not allowed to have so many wives, but as far as the responsibility of the woman, it's always to take care of the house and take care of the children. But I think that was back in the day, not so much now anymore, especially in the United States. ... It's kind of changing now, where women are more advanced than the men. So the men have to take a little, you know, like a break from all that machismo and all that, because women are kind of becoming more independent, especially in the Latino community (Woman, age 37).

Well, I grew up hearing mainly that Mexican men were machistas. I really never experienced that ... in my life, I will say. ... But yeah, I guess in the Latin culture we do have a lot of machistas to a certain point (Woman, age 42).

We're not very submissive, you know. Not at all. You know you're gonna find a fight with a Hispanic girl, you know. So, we're not gonna be quiet (Woman, age 52).

I've seen it in the Honduran community, and you know it probably does happen in the Muslim religion as well with Muslims. ... But we say that it is different because we don't hear much about Muslim women rebelling (Man, age 29).

They don't see us [Latinas] as equal. I understand. You know, I've dealt with a machismo because Puerto Ricans ... also have that problem, but they don't humiliate, and they don't make us walk behind them ... [or] cover us (Woman, age 66).

My wife just came home. I'm in the basement. She just came home with my two kids, and I'm thinking, 'Oh, man... I gotta give my girls a shower.' ... Times have changed. You know I mean ... I don't consider myself a machista (Man, age 39).

The first thing that came to my mind was the word Arabic. I know it's not just the Arabs; they are Muslims. I also think about women, the oppression of women, the clothes they wear, the covering of their hair, and their faces; as a culture, they're quite dominated by machismo (Woman, age 51).

Generally, the interactions I have had with Muslims have been positive. As I had a friend of mine and we were very close friends. So, if I went to his house and things like that, where his parents were, and the only thing I noticed negative, to say, was the way they treated the woman. For

example, when they are husbands, mmm ... a lot of machismo, a lot of 'whatever the man says goes.' So, there is not much. ... The woman does not have much authority in the house, if she is respected, in such a way, but between the husband and the wife, there is a lot of talk about the woman being lesser than the man (Man, age 38).

Theme 2: Stereotypes of Muslims as violent or terrorists

As with previous research,^{8,9,10,11} we found that American Muslims continue to be stereotyped as terrorists and extremists. A common response to our word association exercise was that the average American thinks about violence, extremism, and terrorism when they hear the word Muslim. Latinos in our study perceived the media as a key institution that shaped this negative stereotype of Muslims. We also found that Latinos expressed similar sentiments about their community being negatively portrayed by the media. Despite this similarity, some participants perceived Latinos as too different from Muslims to work together. Since this stereotype is well established by previous research, we note these general trends rather than presenting detailed quotes.

Theme 3: Religion and religiosity as a point of difference

As previously mentioned, we observed that religion was central to Latinos' perceptions that gender relations were different in their community compared to American Muslims. In addition to that subtheme regarding misogyny, we also found general comparisons between religions as points of difference.

One participant, for example, perceived Christians as accepting of everyone and used this belief to differentiate Christians from Muslims. He said:

But I got a better story—like my son. He went out with a Muslim girl, but she wouldn't dare take him to meet her family or anything. If you're not Muslim, you won't be accepted like that. You know, like you won't be able to marry into the family unless you yourself become Muslim. If not, you won't be accepted. There is a lot to that religion. It's tough. It's not even like that, you know, for regular Christians because Christians are accepting of everyone for the most part, right, because I'm a Christian myself (Man, age 49).

We found other types of evidence where participants

did not view their religions as similar. The following quotes demonstrate how this evidence emerged as a factor that leads to the persistence of Islamophobia.

[Whether Muslims and Latinos can work together] As long as it has nothing to do with religion, with one's faith, I think it's fine (Man, age 37).

No, I don't. They don't believe in the same God. It's like oil and water, pretty much (Man, age 39).

I tried reading the Quran ... the majority of the religions are ... the same. ... They pretty much change the names and so on. ... The Quran, however, was one of the religions that was so extreme ... I'm not going to lie. A lot of things in the Bible make ... sense (Woman, age 40).

Christians are accepting, and we're okay with the fact that God will love and allow anyone into heaven as long as they're a good person, and they do certain things. ... If you've been a good person, and you've done the right things. If you're living like Jesus, even if you're an atheist, I feel like you should be, or will be, accepted into heaven, and other religions don't really follow that (Woman, age 49).

For me, I would be concerned about their salvation because ... I believe that you only go to heaven ... through Christ. (Man, age 28).

Their [Muslims'] religion seems a little bit more legalistic in the sense that you have to pray five times a day. I [don't] see Christians praying five times a day. ... I fast when I pray, but to go a whole month fasting from sunset to sundown. It's really tough. ... Once they start putting a whole lot of restrictions, then, I don't know, it goes from religion to something else (Man, age 29).



Mitigating Islamophobia

One goal of this research was to probe whether it was possible to mitigate Islamophobia by providing participants with information about Islam. We incorporated the following approach into our research design to test this hypothesis. First, we asked focus group participants about their knowledge of Islam. Then we showed them a two-minute [video clip](#) that provided information about the pillars of Islam. After watching the video, participants were asked whether they learned something new from watching the video as well as to reflect on whether the new information changed their views regarding the questions that were asked immediately prior to watching the video clip.

Providing foundational information about Islam

We found that after watching the [video clip](#), they were more likely to perceive Islam as a religion that was similar to Christianity and Judaism. This included drawing connections between Ramadan and Lent, religious fasting, and believing in one higher being:

I was surprised by the fact of the pilgrimage [Hajj] and the number of people that went. And I know obviously all religions do it. They go to the Vatican; they go to St. Peter's Square; and the Jewish go to the Wailing Wall. In the end, you see the same principle of all religions as well. I mean, where people when they do collective meditation, they're looking for the end and it's God. The pilgrimage

that I saw there, I think it's the same, when the Catholics come and come and come and come and gather at mass, and a lot of people are at least in St. Peter's Square in the Vatican. I think it is the same as long as what I was telling you is not bad. As long as you go looking for God, everything is fine. And that's what caught my attention too—that it is practically seemed to be the same, the same purpose ... (Man, age 37).

The following statements further characterize the evidence that lead us to conclude that providing Latinos with information about Islam led them to update their beliefs and that exposure to information can help mitigate Islamophobia:

I was really surprised to see what are the beliefs and the five pillars that they have to follow. Yes, something very interesting and look there [in the video] and much ... of those pillars are good things, are things that understand, help the society and each person that follows it. And, well, there we also learned about who Mohammed is and that in the end, he is a messenger (Man, age 38).

So that video in and of itself was very peaceful and positive and educational. And it made it, you know, put it in plain language, what the followers of Islam believe. And I don't think that is any of the stuff that is portrayed in the media, or, you know, like just

everyday conversations between people who exist anywhere. [Whether representations of Muslims and Islam in media are accurate representations of Islam based on the video] No, not at all, not at all (Woman, age 49).

Centering women's voices

After observing that misogyny was central to the persistence of Islamophobia in our initial eight focus groups, we organized an additional focus group of Latinas to further examine these attitudes. In this final focus group, we incorporated two additional tests into our research design to determine whether it was possible to mitigate the influence of misogyny on Islamophobia. This decision was motivated by our observations that the initial [video clip](#) had an influence on participants. In addition to watching the video clip about Islam, participants in the final focus group watched a second [video clip](#) about why some Muslim women may choose to wear a hijab. We found that Latinas were more likely to attenuate their negative attitudes about Muslim women and American Muslims when they were provided with information that brought them to reconsider previously held beliefs.

I think [the woman in the [video](#)] was very articulate to me. I felt like she was very articulate, and she was able to express herself and what her belief was ... I feel like some women do make the decision based off their devotion to the faith (Woman, age 43).

This is the first time in my 39 years that I see a lady with a hijab talk that way. You know, like I've always, [in] the long history of Islam, it's always been negative, you know. So I guess I'm glad that I got to see that. It kind of changes my perspective (Woman, age 39).

The final focus group concluded with a conversation between participants and a Latina Muslim who provided new perspectives about her life experiences as a Muslim woman as well as other Muslim women. She provided participants with additional information about what it means for Muslim women to wear hijab and, more generally, what it means to be a follower of Islam. While these types of interventions are less scalable than other approaches to mitigating Islamophobia, we find similar

evidence that providing Latinas with information about Islam and Muslim culture influenced their attitudes. The evidence from this intervention corroborates the evidence we observed in the video clip interventions. This suggests that increasing interactions between these groups may further attenuate Islamophobia.

“ This is the first time in my 39 years that I see a lady with a hijab talk that way. You know, like I've always, [in] the long history of Islam, it's always been negative, you know. So I guess I'm glad that I got to see that. It kind of changes my perspective. (Woman, age 39)

This research suggests that many Latinas do not have crystallized attitudes about American Muslims and that interventions and the dissemination of information through outreach in the Latino community can help build stronger bonds between these groups.

Yes, [the discussion did change my perception and understanding of Muslim women that wear a hijab] because it's different. It's different to hear it from somebody than to not know and get to hear her say they have to wear this ... so you know they just have to do it then (Woman, age 39).

Some people do it out of devotion, they feel like they're doing that for God, and it makes them feel good like you do. What makes you feel good ... it makes them feel good to wear that (Woman, age 39).



Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, our research generated several key insights that help to unpack the contours of Islamophobia within the Latino community. We identified several themes that suggest why this minoritized racial and ethnic group has lower levels of Islamophobia.

1. Theme 1: Common experiences with discrimination
2. Theme 2: Partaking in the immigrant experience and the American dream
3. Theme 3: Interactions with American Muslims
4. Theme 4: Religion and religiosity as a point of unity

We also identified several themes regarding the persistence of Islamophobia among Latinos.

1. Theme 1: Misogyny
 - a. Perceptions that Muslim women are mistreated by Muslim men
 - b. Perceptions that Islam is patriarchal
 - c. Perceived differences between Muslim women and Catholic/Christian women
 - d. Comparisons to machismo culture
2. Theme 2: The persistence of negative stereotypes

- of Muslims as violent or terrorists
3. Theme 3: Religion and religiosity as a point of difference

Finally, our research explored whether providing information to Latinos about Islam, why women might choose to wear a hijab, and how conversation with a Latina Muslim could work to mitigate Islamophobia or misconceptions about American Muslims and Islam. We found that these interventions were successful in changing Latinos' attitudes about Muslims and Islam.

Recommendations

In light of our findings, we offer the following recommendations to stakeholders and researchers, which include expanding outreach to the Latino community to increase knowledge about Islam and American Muslims and to increase interactions between these groups, developing additional measures to understand the relationship between misogyny and Islamophobia, and exploring the immigrant experience as a factor that reduces Islamophobia by conducting research with other immigrant groups in the United States.

Improving outreach to the Latino community

A consistent finding across our in-depth interviews and focus group is that many Latinos had limited knowledge about Islam and Muslims. One potential explanation for lower levels of Islamophobia among this group might be related to the fact that Latinos do not have crystallized or deeply entrenched views about American Muslims. Such an explanation would be consistent with our findings that Latinos were more likely to frame their attitudes about American Muslims in general rather than specific terms as well as draw heavily on media portrayals and common stereotypes about Muslims. Considering this finding, we recommend increased outreach to the Latino community to improve their knowledge about and interactions with American Muslims. Increased exposure and interactions should facilitate the crystallization of Latinos' attitudes about American Muslims and attenuate prejudice.

We further view this approach as important for developing deeper ties with the Latino community. As explained earlier in this report, our focus group participants were receptive to receiving new information when they were exposed to a [video clip](#) that discussed the pillars of Islam. For those who were religious or familiar with Christianity and Catholicism, many noted the parallels and that they did not know this information. Some participants expressed that this had influenced them to think differently about Islam and American Muslims. While we are unable to determine whether attitude change persisted beyond the focus group setting, research on prejudice and discrimination has often found the continued exposure and interaction between groups can facilitate long-term attitude change, especially when there are shared identity bonds between them such as religious similarities. The dynamic in our final focus group also demonstrated this point. When given the opportunity to interact with a Latina Muslim, participants were engaged, open-minded, and curious to learn more about her life after converting to Islam. This suggests that increasing engagement within the Latino community is a useful step forward in overcoming negative stereotypes and Islamophobia.

As part of outreach efforts, we recommend that organizations, researchers, and stakeholders work to educate Latinos about the diversity of the American Muslim community. More than half of American Muslims are born in the United States and many are Black or African American. The participants in this research

connected the American Muslim experience to shared status between Latinos and Muslims as immigrant groups—even though many Latinos and Muslims are also born in the United States. Relatedly, the participants generally did not make explicit references to Black or Asian Muslim groups or the diversity of the Muslim community. Instead, American Muslims were narrowly perceived to be from the Middle East and often respondents talked about Muslims in the Middle East rather than American Muslims. As interactions between Muslims and Latinos increase, there is an opportunity to highlight the diversity of American Muslim communities.

Developing effective educational materials and activities

The findings in this research have implications for the development of effective educational materials and activities. When engaging in outreach to Latino communities, organizations should create educational materials

that emphasize how Latinos and American Muslims share common values, including the importance of family, being hardworking, aspiring for the American dream, and devotion of faith. Latinos' perceptions of these shared values were factors that influenced positive attitudes about American Muslims and are likely to resonate in future efforts to deepen ties within Latino communities. Our research found that video educational

materials were effective at shifting Latinos attitudes about Islam as well as about Muslim women who choose to wear a hijab. Therefore, we recommend the development of video materials as a scalable option for future outreach. All educational materials should be produced in Spanish and English language.

Educational materials should not only be produced in a video format. This research also found that interpersonal interactions between Latinos and American Muslims were associated with lower Islamophobia. Although not as scalable as producing video materials, creating opportunities for Latinos and American Muslims to interact with and learn from one another can help deepen ties and build understanding in Latino communities. Researchers and organizations should be cognizant of potential challenges when designing activities that facilitate interpersonal interactions. The influence of misogyny on Islamophobia, for example, suggests that the messenger in educational content and activities

***This suggests
that increasing
engagement within the
Latino community is a
useful step forward in
overcoming negative
stereotypes and
Islamophobia.***

will be important. We found that there was strong resonance among non-Muslim Latinas who interacted with a Latina Muslim to learn about why some women choose to wear a hijab. Since Latinas and Latinos had similarly gendered attitudes about American Muslims and Islam, Latina Muslims might be particularly effective messengers in future content. Latino Muslims may also be effective messengers due to shared racial and ethnic group identity, but our research cannot speak directly to whether that is the case. Relatedly, this research suggests that activities centered around perceived commonalities between Latinas and American Muslims could be particularly effective. For example, an activity organized around a tradition shared by Islam and Christianity could be an opportunity to increase interpersonal interactions while simultaneously tapping into a common devotion of faith. Other research on engagement with Latino communities finds that churches play a key role in civic engagement for Latinas and, therefore, we anticipate that activities centering similarly shared religious values would be effective. Although shared religious values are important, researchers and organizations should consider that educational materials and activities should be contextually specific and remember that not all Latinas are Catholic or religious. Thus, a multi-pronged outreach effort that considers religion as one commonality among many is more likely to be successful than one that is only about religion or faith.

Our research also identified several challenges related to lowering Islamophobia. Among Latinas, Islamophobia persists due to the influence of misogyny and negative stereotypes of Muslims as violent and Islam as ideologically extreme. Educational materials and outreach will need to address these negative stereotypes. One way to do so is to emphasize commonalities that are related to negative portrayals of Latinas and American Muslims. Participants in our research, for example, viewed the negative portrayal of Muslims in media as similar to the negative portrayal of Latinas. As a result, educational materials or outreach that make this commonality salient might be more likely to resonate with Latinas and help reduce prejudice. Likewise, many participants in our research perceived the gender dynamics of machismo culture as similar to gender dynamics within Islam and Muslim communities. Although perceiving these cultural similarities, there was also a perception that Latino culture was more progressive. Therefore, we recommend designing educational materials and activities that lead people to reflect on their own experiences dealing with negative stereotypes and experiences to build mutual understanding about the

experiences of American Muslims. Similar to the above, we note that Muslim women may be particularly effective at communicating about misperceptions regarding gender dynamics and Islam.

Further Research

Measuring how perceptions of misogyny influence Islamophobia

Our findings demonstrated how perceptions of misogyny were central to the persistence of Islamophobia despite Latinas' less prejudicial attitudes relative to other racial groups in the United States. This evidence suggests a need to further understand how the contours of misogyny manifest in persistence of Islamophobia among other racial groups. Since our findings are drawn from a qualitative analysis, a useful next step would be to develop quantitative measures that capture the different ways that perceptions of misogyny shaped Islamophobia. We recommend that future research develop a scale of questions to examine the extent to which these attitudes are widespread and which among them have a greater impact on the persistence of Islamophobia. The ability to conduct analyses across groups would help identify whether the patterns observed in this study are general factors or whether different racial groups link perceptions of misogyny to Islam and American Muslims in different ways.

Does the immigrant experience mitigate Islamophobia among other groups?

Finally, we suggest that future research should probe how aspirations for the American dream and the immigrant experience in the United States lead to lower levels of Islamophobia among immigrant groups. Since Asian Americans are the fastest growing immigrant group in the United States, they would be particularly well-suited to further explore this relationship. If similar attitudes are identified among Asian Americans, our findings would suggest that this is a general mechanism that reduces Islamophobia among immigrant groups rather than specific to the Latino community.

There are also differences between the Latino and Asian communities that suggest this research could yield fruitful insights. There are millions of Asians around the world who are Muslim. This suggests that Asian Americans may have more knowledge about and exposure to Muslim culture and Islam, which would allow for comparison between immigrant groups that have varying levels of knowledge and exposure. These differences could help researchers further identify the factors that shape the development and persistence of Islamophobia.



Methodology

ISPU partnered with researchers from [Latino Decisions](#), a research organization specializing in the views of the U.S. Latino community, to conduct a two-stage study about Latinos' views of American Muslims. The first stage consisted of nine in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Latinos, including two Latino Muslims. The second stage consisted of nine focus groups. The in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted between December 2022 and January 2023. The one-on-one interviews explored potential reasons why Latinos have lower levels of Islamophobia relative to other racial and ethnic groups in the United States. The interviews covered topics including experiences interacting with people from different backgrounds, experiences with and perceptions of discrimination, commonalities with American Muslims, and current political issues. Researchers used core themes from the IDIs to inform the questions asked during the focus groups.

The nine focus groups were conducted between April and May 2023. There were five to seven participants per focus group. During the initial eight focus groups, one group was all men, one group was all women, and six were mixed gender. Two focus groups were conducted in Spanish. The focus groups covered the following topics: experiences interacting with people from different backgrounds, portrayals of Muslims and Latinos in the media, knowledge of

Islam, commonalities between Latinos and Muslims, experiences with and perceptions of discrimination, and perceptions of Muslim women who wear a hijab. During the focus groups, participants were shown a [short video about Islam](#) to determine whether providing Latinos with information about Islam influenced their perception of American Muslims.

After preliminary analysis of data from the eight focus groups, an additional focus group of women was convened to further probe the persistence of misogyny in Latinos' attitudes about American Muslims. Participants discussed their previous interactions with American Muslims, knowledge of Islam, experiences with perceptions of discrimination, and their perception of Muslim women who wear a hijab. The focus group included the same video about Islam as well as a second video clip about [why Muslim women might choose to wear a hijab](#). After seeing both videos, participants discussed whether the video affected their opinions. The additional focus group concluded with a 30-minute discussion with a Latina Muslim.

Methodological approach and sample representativeness

One strength of conducting qualitative analysis of in-depth, semi-structured interviews and focus groups is the ability to generate contextually rich insights about

the foundations of Latinos' views of American Muslims. While our previous quantitative research identified broad, generalizable trends about Islamophobia, quantitative methodologies are less suitable for unpacking the contextual content that shapes Latinos' attitudes toward American Muslims. To overcome this methodological issue, this research uses an inductive approach that identifies thematic contexts and mechanisms that help explain why we observe lower levels of Islamophobia among Latinos as well as its persistence.

The tradeoff between these methodologies had implications for the recruitment of participants in this research. The results in this report are not generated from a nationally representative sample of Latinos. Although our sample is not nationally representative, we recruited a diverse sample based on key demographic characteristics that our previous research identified as factors correlated with Islamophobia and that other research identified as important correlates with Latinos' attitudes. These factors include gender, ethnicity, age, religion, partisanship, and where participants live. Table 1 below summarizes our interview and focus group samples based on these key demographic characteristics.

Table 1: Key Demographics
(In-Depth Interviews - Nine Respondents)

Heritage	Count (Proportion in %)
Mexican	2 (22%)
Puerto Rican	2 (22%)
Dominican	2 (22%)
Other	3 (34%)

Age	Count (Proportion in %)
25–34	2 (22%)
35–44	4 (44%)
45–54	1 (11%)
55–64	2 (22%)

Gender	Count (Proportion in %)
Man	4 (44%)
Woman	5 (56%)

Religion	Count (Proportion in %)
Catholic	5 (56%)
Evangelical Protestant	2 (22%)
Muslim	2 (22%)

Income	Count (Proportion in %)
Less than \$35,000	1 (11%)
\$35,000 to less than \$50,000	2 (22%)
\$50,000 to less than \$75,000	2 (22%)
\$75,000 to less than \$100,000	4 (44%)

Education	Count (Proportion in %)
High school graduate / GED	4 (44%)
4-year college graduate	3 (34%)
Post-graduate work/degree	2 (22%)

Partisanship	Count (Proportion in %)
Democrat	3 (34%)
Independent	3 (34%)
Republican	3 (34%)

Region	Count (Proportion in %)
Northeast	2 (22%)
Midwest	3 (34%)
South	4 (44%)

Table 2: Key Demographics
(Focus Groups - 9 Groups / 58 Respondents)

Heritage ¹²	Count (Proportion in %)
Mexican	9 (16%)
Puerto Rican	17 (29%)
Dominican	8 (14%)
Other	24 (41%)

Age	Count (Proportion in %)
18–24	4 (7%)
25–34	13 (22%)
35–44	19 (33%)
45–54	14 (24%)
55–64	6 (10%)
65+	2 (3%)

Gender	Count (Proportion in %)
Man	23 (40%)
Woman	35 (60%)

Religion ¹³	Count (Proportion in %)
Catholic	28 (48%)
Evangelical Protestant	18 (31%)
Pentecostal	6 (10%)
Non-Denominational	1 (2%)
Agnostic	2 (3%)
Jewish	1 (2%)
Athiest	2 (3%)

Income	Count (Proportion in %)
Less than \$35,000	6 (10%)
\$35,000 to less than \$50,000	16 (28%)
\$50,000 to less than \$75,000	23 (40%)
\$75,000 to less than \$150,000	6 (10%)
\$100,000 to less than \$150,000	5 (9%)
\$150,000 to less than \$200,000	2 (3%)

Education	Count (Proportion in %)
High school graduate / GED	12 (21%)
Some College	19 (33%)
4-year college graduate	15 (26%)
Post-graduate work/degree	9 (16%)
Trade or technical school graduate	3 (6%)

Partisanship	Count (Proportion in %)
Democrat	27 (47%)
Independent	19 (33%)
Republican	12 (21%)

Region	Count (Proportion in %)
Northeast	16 (28%)
Midwest	8 (14%)
South	24 (41%)
West	10 (17%)

Endnotes

¹<https://www.ispu.org/american-muslim-poll-2019-predicting-and-preventing-islamophobia/#ll>

² In some instances, the quotes we cite as evidence have been corrected for grammatical errors and issues. Since people speak differently than they write and participants were articulating thoughts and ideas, their statements in the transcripts were sometimes less coherent as they talked through complex thoughts. Interviews conducted in Spanish were also transcribed into English and some discrepancies were related to language differences. As a result, research analysts with Latino Decisions reviewed the transcripts and videos to make determinations about how to clarify any errors or issues while maintaining the authenticity of the participants' statements. All original interview and focus group recordings and transcripts have been archived by Latino Decisions.

³<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/RHI725222>

⁴<https://www.cbsnews.com/colorado/news/more-hispanics-converting-to-islam/>

⁵<https://www.ispu.org/american-muslim-poll-2019-predicting-and-preventing-islamophobia/#ll>

⁶ In some instances, the quotes we cite as evidence have been corrected for grammatical errors and issues. Since people speak differently than they write and participants were articulating thoughts and ideas, their statements in the transcripts were sometimes less coherent as they talked through complex thoughts. Interviews conducted in Spanish were also transcribed into English and some discrepancies were related to language differences. As a result, research analysts with Latino Decisions reviewed the transcripts and videos to make determinations about how to clarify any errors or issues while maintaining the authenticity of the participants' statements. All original interview and focus group recordings and transcripts have been archived by Latino Decisions.

⁷ Allport, Gordon. 1954. *The Nature of Prejudice*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books.; Abrams, Jessica R., Karen J. McGaughey, and Hannah Haghghat. 2018. "Attitudes toward Muslims: A Test of the Parasocial Contact Hypothesis and Contact Theory." *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* 47 (4): 276–92. doi:10.1080/17475759.2018.1443968.

⁸ <https://www.ispu.org/islamophobia-index/>

⁹<https://pillarsfund.org/content/uploads/2021/06/Missing-Maligned-in-Film-FINAL.pdf>

¹⁰<https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-study-muslim-erased-or-extremists-20220901.pdf>

¹¹<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2017/08/09/muslims-and-islam-key-findings-in-the-u-s-and-around-the-world/>

¹² We break down national heritage by Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Dominican because they are the three largest ethnic groups according to the U.S. Census. Other countries represented in our sample include Peru (7), Venezuela (5), Colombia (2), Costa Rica (2), Panama (2), Chile (1), Guatemala (1), Ecuador (1), Honduras (1), Uruguay (1), and Paraguay (1).

¹³ Non-denominational was a self-reported, written answer. As a result, we're unable to determine whether they are Protestant but non-denominational, religious but not a particular religion, or Christian but non-denominational.