

---

# **American Attitudes Toward Arabs and Muslims**

---

July 29, 2014





## **Executive Summary**

Since we first began our polling on American attitudes toward Arabs and Muslims in 2010, there has been continued erosion in the favorable ratings given to both communities, posing a threat to the rights of Arab Americans and American Muslims. Favorable attitudes have continued to decline - from 43% in 2010 to 32% in 2014 for Arabs; and from 35% in 2010 to 27% in 2014 for Muslims.

A direct consequence of this disturbing trend is that a significant number of Americans (42%) support the use of profiling by law enforcement against Arab Americans and American Muslims and a growing percentage of Americans say that they lack confidence in the ability of individuals from either community to perform their duties as Americans should they be appointed to an important government position. 36% of respondents felt that Arab Americans would be influenced by their ethnicity and 42% of respondents felt that American Muslims would be influenced by their religion.

While the persistence of negative Arab and Muslim stereotypes is a factor in shaping attitudes toward both groups, our polling establishes that lack of direct exposure to Arab Americans and American Muslims also plays a role in shaping attitudes. What we find is that Americans who say they know either Arabs or Muslims have significantly higher favorable attitudes toward both (33% higher in both cases) and also have greater confidence in their ability to serve in important government positions. This is especially true among younger and non-white Americans, greater percentages of whom indicate knowing Arabs and Muslims and having more favorable attitudes toward both communities.

Another of the poll's findings establishes that a majority of Americans say that they feel that do not know enough about Arab history and people (57%) or about Islam and Muslims (52%). Evidence of this comes through clearly in other poll responses where respondents wrongly conflate the two communities - with significant numbers assuming that most Arab Americans are Muslim (in reality, less than a third are) or that most American Muslims are Arab (less than one-quarter are).

The way forward is clear. Education about and greater exposure to Arab Americans and American Muslims are the keys both to greater understanding of these growing communities of American citizens and to insuring that their rights are secured.

### **Methodology:**

Zogby Analytics conducted an online survey of 1110 likely voters in the United States between June 27, 2014 and June 29, 2014. Based on a confidence interval of 95%, the margin of error for 1110 is +/- 3.0 percentage points.

## I. Attitudes toward Arabs and Muslims

Please tell me your opinion on each of the following – is it very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, very unfavorable, or are you not familiar enough to make a judgment?

Religion/Group		Total	Dem	Rep	Independent	18-29	65+	White	Non-White
Roman Catholics	Favorable	58	55	67	53	54	73	62	49
	Unfavorable	21	20	21	21	24	16	21	21
Presbyterians	Favorable	60	55	69	55	52	79	64	48
	Unfavorable	14	14	13	14	15	9	13	15
Born Again Christians	Favorable	57	50	72	51	62	58	57	58
	Unfavorable	23	26	17	26	17	30	25	18
Jews	Favorable	66	64	75	62	63	84	71	56
	Unfavorable	12	10	13	14	16	5	11	17
Arabs	Favorable	<b>32</b>	38	28	27	<b>42</b>	32	30	<b>38</b>
	Unfavorable	<b>39</b>	30	<b>54</b>	34	38	<b>50</b>	<b>40</b>	27
Hindus	Favorable	44	47	45	41	50	52	45	44
	Unfavorable	23	18	35	17	16	23	24	20
Chinese	Favorable	47	50	56	43	52	49	45	53
	Unfavorable	25	19	36	21	15	35	29	15
Buddhists	Favorable	51	55	47	49	55	57	52	48
	Unfavorable	19	14	30	13	20	19	19	19
Muslims	Favorable	<b>27</b>	35	21	22	<b>38</b>	23	25	32
	Unfavorable	<b>45</b>	33	<b>63</b>	39	25	<b>58</b>	<b>50</b>	33

Religion/Group		2010	2012	2014
Arabs	Favorable	43	41	32
	Unfavorable	41	39	39
Muslims	Favorable	35	40	27
	Unfavorable	55	41	45

1. Arabs and Muslims have the lowest favorable/highest unfavorable ratings among the groups covered.
2. Note that one in four Americans were either unfamiliar with or not sure of their attitudes toward these two communities.
3. There is a deep partisan divide on unfavorable attitudes towards Arabs and Muslims. While Democrats give Arabs a net 38%/30% favorable rating and Muslims a net 35%/33% rating, Republicans give Arabs a net 28%/54% unfavorable rating and Muslims a 21%/63% unfavorable rating.
4. The partisan divide masks a generational and racial divide. Younger Americans (18-29) view Arabs and Muslims more favorably than older Americans (65+). Favorable attitudes toward Arabs and Muslims are significantly higher among African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans.

## II. Do You Know Arabs or Muslims?

*Do you personally know anyone who is Arab or Muslim?*

Response	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	18-29	65+	White	Non-White
<b>Yes, I know*</b>	<b>47</b>	49	46	45	<b>53</b>	<b>44</b>	43	59
<b>No, I don't know</b>	41	39	43	40	34	46	45	28

*\*Includes those who know either an Arab or a Muslim, and those who know both.*

*Attitudes toward Arabs and Muslims by those who know and those who do not know anyone who is Arab or Muslim.*

Religion/Group		Yes, I Know	No, I don't know
<b>Arabs</b>	Favorable	<b>42</b>	<b>23</b>
	Unfavorable	39	<b>44</b>
<b>Muslims</b>	Favorable	<b>36</b>	<b>19</b>
	Unfavorable	45	<b>49</b>

1. More respondents know an Arab or Muslim than don't know an Arab or Muslim.
2. Young people are more likely to know an Arab or Muslim than older Americans.
3. Those who do not know an Arab or Muslim are more likely to view the groups unfavorably, in both instances, favorable attitudes nearly double.

### **III. Arab Americans and American Muslims Working in the Government**

*If an Arab American were to attain an important position of influence in the government, would you feel confident that person would be able to do the job, or would you feel that any ethnic loyalty would influence their decision-making?*

Arab American	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	18-29	65+	White	Non-White
<b>Confident they could do the job</b>	36	<b>48</b>	25	33	<b>44</b>	34	35	40
<b>Their ethnicity would influence their decision-making</b>	36	24	<b>50</b>	36	30	<b>41</b>	58	32

*If an American Muslim were to attain an important position of influence in the government, would you feel confident that person would be able to do the job, or would you feel that their religion would influence their decision-making?*

American Muslim	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	18-29	65+	White	Non-White
<b>Confident they could do the job</b>	34	<b>45</b>	23	31	<b>53</b>	27	31	42
<b>Their religion would influence their decision-making</b>	42	29	<b>57</b>	42	23	<b>53</b>	45	32

Group	Response	2010	2014
<b>Arab Americans</b>	Confident they could do the job.	42	36
	Their ethnicity would influence their decision-making.	32	36
<b>American Muslims</b>	Confident they could do the job.	38	34
	Their religion would influence their decision-making.	38	42

*Confidence in Arab Americans and American Muslims by those who know and those who do not know anyone who is Arab or Muslim.*

<b>Group</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Yes, I know</b>	<b>No, I don't know</b>
<b>Arab American</b>	Confident they could do the job	<b>46</b>	<b>30</b>
	Their ethnicity would influence their decision-making	37	37
<b>American Muslim</b>	Confident they could do the job	<b>43</b>	<b>29</b>
	Their religion would influence their decision-making	43	46

1. Respondents, as a whole, are divided as to whether Arab Americans and American Muslims, if appointed to a government post, could do the job without their ethnicity or religion influencing their work. Again, there is a deep partisan divide on this question.

2. Democrats and Republicans are deeply divided. Their assessments of an Arab American's or an American Muslim's ability to do the job are mirror images of each other. In both cases, Republicans fear that the ethnicity and religion of members of these communities would influence their work.

3. There is a significant generational divide between younger and older generations.

4. Overall, White Americans felt that ethnicity or religion would influence decision-making, whereas Non-White Americans were confident that Arab Americans and American Muslims could do the job.

5. Those who do not know an Arab or Muslim are less confident that the two groups could perform the job without their religion or ethnicity influencing their decision-making.

## IV. Knowledge of Arabs and Muslims

*Do you know enough about Arab countries and Arab people or do you feel you need to know more?*

Response	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	18-29	65+	White	Non-White
Know enough	31	29	36	30	30	27	31	33
Need to know more	57	59	54	57	55	64	59	50

*Do you know enough about Islam and Muslims or do you feel you need to know more?*

Response	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	18-29	65+	White	Non-White
Know enough	36	29	48	34	25	41	39	29
Need to know more	52	59	43	52	59	50	52	52

1. Every category said they need to know more about Arabs, and every category (except Republicans) said they need to know more about Muslims. Today's numbers are nearly identical to numbers from four years ago.
2. When comparing, older Americans feel they need to know more about Arabs, but younger Americans feel they need to know more about Muslims.
3. Compared with other groups, more Republicans felt they already knew enough about Muslims than those who felt the need to know more.



## **V. Ethnicity and Religion**

*Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements: - The majority of Arab Americans are Muslim.*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>18-29</b>	<b>65+</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Non-White</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>44</b>	41	<b>50</b>	42	43	47	44	43
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>24</b>	21	28	22	25	23	25	20

*Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements: - The majority of American Muslims are Arab.*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>18-29</b>	<b>65+</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Non-White</b>
<b>Agree</b>	30	25	<b>40</b>	25	36	27	30	30
<b>Disagree</b>	33	56	32	30	23	26	34	30

1. Although a plurality of Republicans said they know enough about Muslims, a majority of them inaccurately said that most American Muslims are Arabs, and most Arab Americans are Muslims. In fact, less than one third of Arab Americans are Muslim, and less than one quarter of American Muslims are Arab.

2. Majorities of all groups mistakenly believe that most Arab Americans are Muslim, illustrating the need for more education.

## **VI. Profiling**

*Do you think it is justifiable for law enforcement to use profiling toward Arab Americans or American Muslims?*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>18-29</b>	<b>65+</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Non-White</b>
<b>Yes</b>	42	32	<b>59</b>	38	32	<b>53</b>	<b>47</b>	29
<b>No</b>	40	<b>54</b>	25	37	<b>54</b>	34	34	<b>57</b>

1. Republicans and Democrats show a deep divide on whether or not profiling of these communities by law enforcement is justified. A majority of Democrats (54%) do not find profiling justifiable, while a majority of Republicans (59%) believe it is.

2. This divide continues between older and younger Americans, and White and Non-White respondents.

