

Muslim Identity and Practice

Muslim Identity

Most strongly identify as both Muslim and Canadian, although the Muslim identity tends to be the stronger of the two, especially among individuals under 35 years of age. Among immigrants, attachment to Islam is more likely to have strengthened than weakened since moving to Canada.

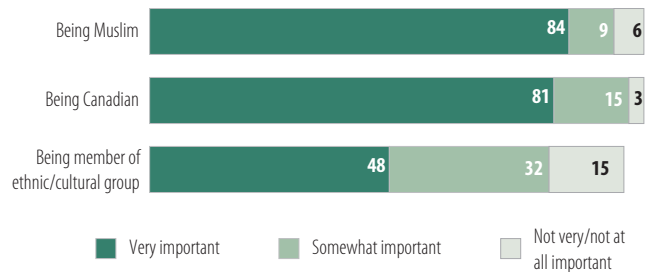
Most Muslims express strong connection to Canada, but to what degree does this extend to their sense of personal identity as Canadians as compared to their identity as followers of Islam? The survey reveals that strong majorities consider both religion (84%) and country (81%) to be very important parts of their personal identity. By comparison, fewer than half (48%) place the same level of importance on their ethnic or cultural background.

Muslims who strongly identify with their religion include women, younger individuals (especially those under 45), those born in Canada, and immigrants who have arrived in the past 10 years. Those identifying strongly as Canadian tend to be older, and immigrants arriving more than 20 years ago.

Among those who consider both religion and country to be very important to their identity (72% of the population), half (50%) say that being Muslim is more important, compared with 15 percent who place greater emphasis on being Canadian, and 27 percent who maintain that both parts of their identity are equally important. These proportions are similar to what was recorded in 2006, but a larger percentage now say they place equal importance on their religious and country identities (up from 16% in 2006). Those who identify equally as Muslim and Canadian tend to be older, as well as being male and from Pakistan.

How do others in this country consider the relative importance of their Canadian and religious identities? Non-Muslim Canadians affiliated with a religion are not as likely as Muslims to place strong importance on their religious identity, but are also less apt to place strong importance on their Canadian identity (with the exception of mainline Protestants). In terms of what takes precedence,

Important part of personal identity

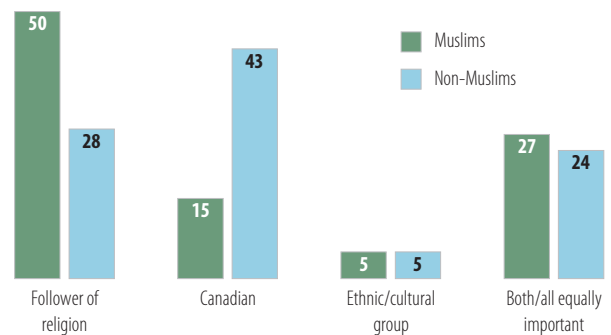


Q.8

Do you consider each of the following to be very important, somewhat important or not very important as part of your own personal identity?

Most important part of personal identity*

Those who have a religious affiliation



* Among those who identify more than one as very important

Q.9/FC Q.6

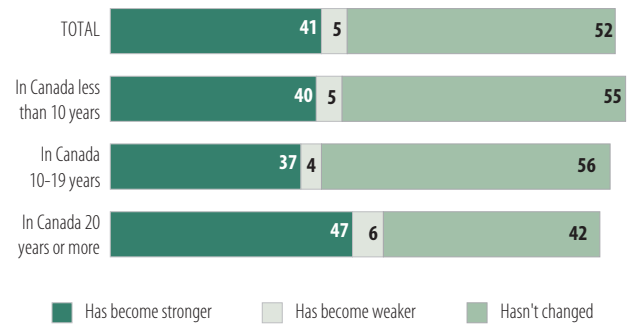
And which one of these would you say is the most important part of your personal identity?

non-Muslims overall are more likely to identify with being Canadian (43%) than with their religious identity (28%), with another one-quarter (24%) placing equal emphasis on both their Canadian and religious identities.

IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION. For immigrants, how has moving to Canada affected their personal attachment to Islam? About half (52%) report that living in Canada has not really made a difference, but among the rest most (41%) say the move has strengthened their connection to their religion, compared with only five percent who report it has become weaker. Stronger attachment is most widely cited by immigrants who have been in Canada for 20 or more years, as well as residents of Ontario, women, younger Muslims, and those born in Pakistan or Africa.

Attachment to Islam since moving to Canada

Those born in another country – by years in Canada



Q.13

Since moving to Canada, has your personal attachment to Islam become stronger, become weaker, or hasn't really changed?

Muslim Practice

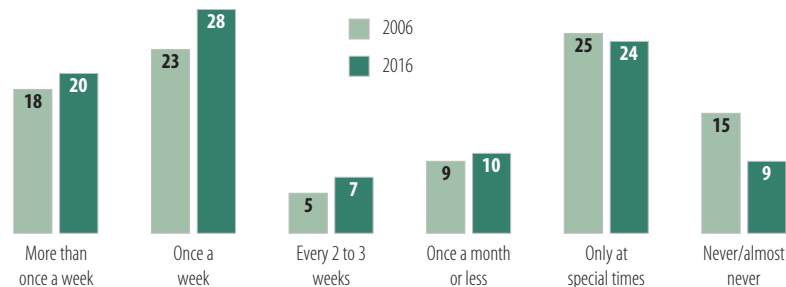
An increasing proportion of Muslims regularly visit mosques for prayers, with attendance for education or social functions much less frequent. The wearing of head coverings (in most cases the hijab) has also increased over the past decade, especially among younger women.

MOSQUE ATTENDANCE. Many Muslims make a regular practice of visiting a mosque for prayer, and attendance levels have increased over the past decade. Close to half (48%) now report they do so at least once a week, and this proportion has increased modestly since 2006 when 41% reported this frequency. Another one in six (17%) visits a mosque more occasionally (several times a month or year) (up 3 points), while one-quarter (24%) says they attend only at special times of the year. Only one in ten (9%) says he or she visits a mosque never or almost never, down from 15 percent in 2006.

As before, regular attendance is twice as apt to be reported by men as by women, although this has increased among both genders since 2006.³ Frequent attendance is also more widely reported by those who identify most strongly as Muslim and by immigrants from Pakistan (and least so among those immigrating from the Middle East and West Asia). Over the past decade, regular attendance has increased among younger Muslims, who are now more likely than older generations to visit at least once a week.

Muslims also visit mosques for education and socializing, but less frequently. One in five (22%) reports doing so at least once a week, while one in four (24%) does so only for special occasions, and more than one-third (36%) do so rarely or never. Frequent attendance for non-prayer purposes is most widely reported by residents of western Canada, Muslims under 45 years of age, and those born in Pakistan.

Frequency of attending mosque or Muslim community centre for prayer



Q.15

How often do you attend a mosque or Muslim community centre for prayer?

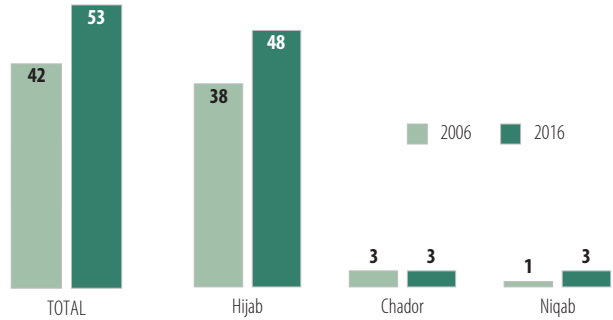
³ The religious requirement to attend prayer at a mosque is stronger for men than for women.

WEARING A HEAD COVERING. Head coverings worn by Muslim women have been a flash point in western countries including Canada. Some non-Muslims view this practice as an indication of religious subjugation of women, and others have been offended by the niqab because it covers the face except for the eyes.

Despite such controversy the practice of wearing head coverings is widespread and growing in Canada. More than half (53%) of Muslim women surveyed say they wear a hijab, chador or niqab in public, with this proportion up from 42 percent in 2006. Most wear the hijab (48%, up 10 points since 2006), with comparatively fewer wearing the chador (3%, unchanged) or niqab (3%, up 2).

This practice has grown across the population, but most noticeably among women 18 to 34 where it is now most prevalent (comprising 60% of this group). Head coverings in public continue to be most widely reported by women with no more than a high school education, but this practice has seen the most growth in the past decade among those with a college or university education. Women who visit mosques at least once a week are much more likely to wear a hijab (72%) than those who rarely do (34%), but the practice has increased more noticeably among this latter group. Moreover, it is women who rarely or never visit mosques for prayer who make up the majority who wear a chador or niqab.

Wear a headcovering in public
Women



Q.10
Do you wear a hijab, chador, or niqab in public?

Sources of guidance

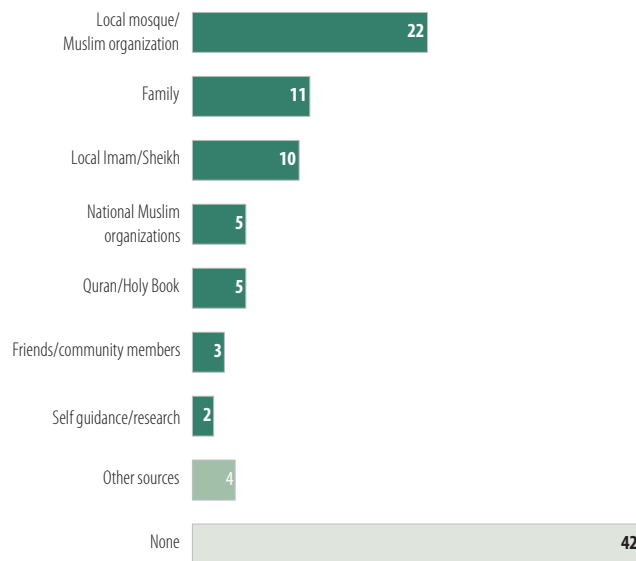
Muslims are most likely to look for religious guidance from local Muslim organizations, local leaders or their own family. Four in ten, however, do not rely on any particular sources of guidance for their faith.

Where do Canadians personally look for religious guidance as a Muslim? In response to this question (asked without prompting), the most common sources are local Muslim organizations or mosques (22%), one's own family (11%) or the local Imam or sheik (10%), followed by national Muslim organizations and the Quran. Very few (1%) mentioned religious leaders outside of Canada. More than four in ten

(42%), however, say they look nowhere in particular for guidance as a Muslim.

Sources of guidance are generally similar across the population, but younger Muslims (and those Canadian-born) are most likely to identify at least one source (especially local organizations or family), while older individuals are less apt to name any (although the Quran is most apt to be mentioned by those 60 plus). Canadian-born Muslims are also more likely to seek guidance from at least one source than are those born in another country.

Sources of guidance as a Muslim



Q.11

What individuals or organizations, if any, do you personally look to to offer you guidance as a Muslim? Anyone else?