

# Treatment of Muslims in Broader Society

## How Muslims are treated in Canada

Muslims are a bit more positive than in 2006 about how they are viewed by mainstream society, and most agree they are better off than Muslims in other western countries. There are mixed expectations for the future, especially among Muslim youth.

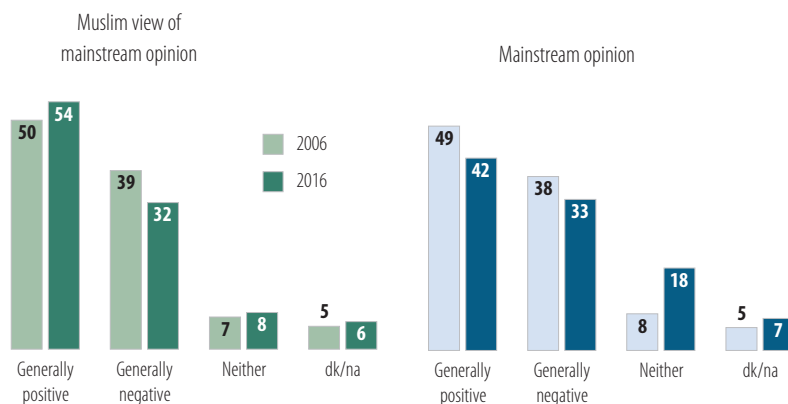
**NON-MUSLIM OPINIONS OF MUSLIMS.** How do Muslims think their religion is viewed by the broader Canadian society? Perceptions are more positive than negative, and this balance has improved modestly over the past 10 years. Just over half (54%) believe Canadians' opinion of Islam is generally positive (up 4 points since 2006) compared with 32 percent who think it is generally negative (down 7), and another one in six who cannot say either way.

Perceptions about general public opinion have improved most noticeably in Quebec and western Canada (while declining marginally in Ontario), as well as among men, Muslims under 45, and those who identify primarily as Canadian. Those most likely to feel Islam is well thought of by non-Muslims include individuals 35 to 44, those without a high school degree, and immigrants with less than 10 years in the country. The least positive views are expressed by Muslims born in Canada (36%, but up 10 points since 2006) and those who have experienced discrimination due to their religion or ethnic background.

Muslims are reasonably accurate in their estimate of general public opinion, although not about the trend. Four in ten (42%) non-Muslim Canadians say they have a generally positive view of Islam (down 7 points since 2006), compared with one-third (33%) who have a generally negative view (down 5 points). Compared with 2006, a larger proportion of non-Muslims across the country do not hold a clear opinion about the religion of Islam (25% who say neither or don't know, up 12 points). Impressions of Islam is now most likely to be positive among Atlantic Canadians (50%), individuals under 35 (49%), those with a university degree (52%) and those who are not religious (50%), while this view is least widely held among Quebecers (32%), Canadians who are Catholic (35%), or Evangelical (34%), and those without a high school diploma (31%)

As on previous Environics surveys, opinions about Islam are closely tied to the degree of personal contact with Muslims: Canadians who say they often have contact with Muslims are twice as likely to have positive as negative impressions of Islam (53% versus 22%), in contrast to those who have rare or no contact (29% positive versus 46% negative). This relationship, however, is less robust than in 2006, with the increase in the proportion having no clear opinion about Islam coming almost exclusively from Canadians who report often or occasional contact with Muslims.

Canadian mainstream opinion of the religion of Islam



Q.22/FC Q.7

Do you think Canadians' impression of the religion of Islam is generally positive or generally negative?

## HOW MUSLIMS ARE TREATED BY OTHER

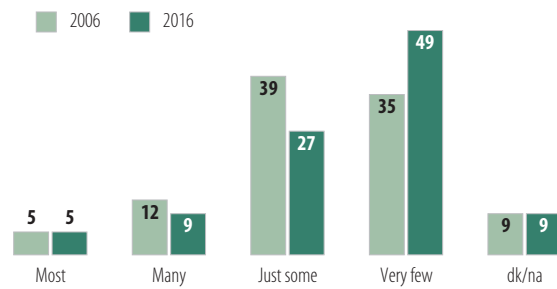
**CANADIANS.** On a related question, Muslims were asked to estimate the proportion of Canadians they believe are hostile to Muslims. One in six believes that most (5%) or many (9%) Canadians are hostile toward their community, compared with 27 percent who say “just some” and half (49%) who say “very few.” This reflects a modest improvement since 2006, when only 35 percent felt the proportion was very few. Across the population, perceptions of widespread hostility toward their community is most widely shared by women (20%) and those who identify primarily as Muslim (20%), while this view is least apt to be shared by individuals 60 and older (6%) and those who identify primarily as Canadian (8%).

How does the non-Muslim population answer this same question? One in four believes that most (7%) or many (18%) Canadians are hostile to Muslims, compared with 43 percent who say some, and one-quarter (26%) who believe it is very few. Perceptions have changed very little since 2006. The view that most or many feel this hostility is most prevalent in Quebec (39%) and among those with a generally negative impression of Islam (40%), and is least evident in Ontario (18%) and among immigrants (17%).

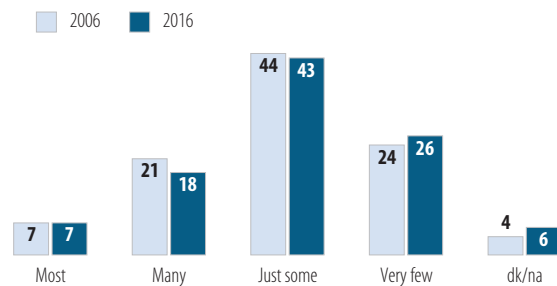
Apart from whatever hostility Muslims may experience from other Canadians, a strong majority (84%) believe they are treated better in Canada than Muslims in other western countries, up from 77 percent who expressed this view in 2006. Only two percent believe Muslims in Canada are treated worse, while others say it is about the same (9%) or have no opinion (3%). This view is widely held across the Muslim community, but has strengthened most noticeably in Ontario and the west, among those in the top income bracket, those Canadian-born, and infrequent prayer goers. This view is least apt to be shared in Quebec (70%, down 9 points since 2006), although only one percent of Quebecers say the treatment is worse than in other countries. Opinions on this question do not appear to be influenced by personal experiences with discrimination due to religion or ethnic background.

A majority (61%) of non-Muslim Canadians also holds the view that Muslims in this country are treated better than in other western countries, compared with only three percent who say they are treated worse, and another 11 percent who believe it is about the same. Opinions on this question are similar across the country and largely unchanged since 2006.

Estimated number of Canadians hostile to Muslims  
Canadian Muslims



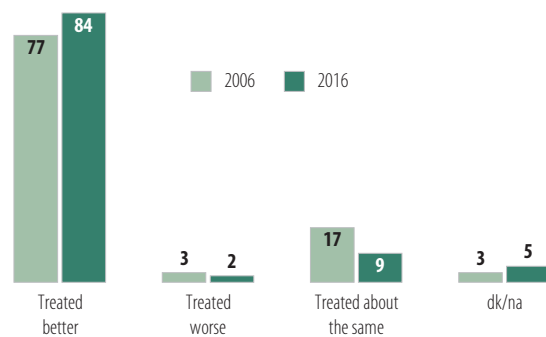
Estimated number of Canadians hostile to Muslims  
Non-Muslim Canadians



Q.24/FC Q.9

In your opinion, how many Canadians do you think are hostile toward Muslims? Would you say most, many, just some or very few?

Treatment of Muslims in Canada compared to that in other western countries



Q.23

Do you think that the way that Muslims are treated in Canada is better, worse, or about the same as they are treated in other western countries?

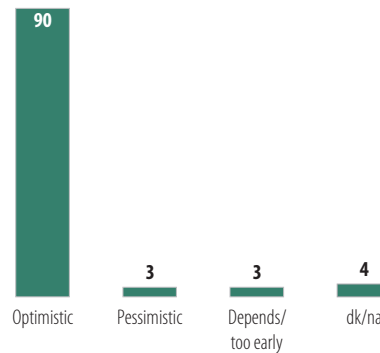
**FUTURE TREATMENT.** How do Muslims envision the future in terms of how their community and faith will be treated by broader society? Opinions are markedly divided. One-third (35%) believe the next generation will face more discrimination and stereotyping than they do today, compared with 29 percent who expect they will face less. The remainder believes it will remain about the same (21%) or have no clear opinion to offer (15%).

Opinions vary noticeably across the Muslim community. A negative forecast is most prevalent among Canadian-born Muslims (50% expect more discrimination, versus 15% who say less), while those born in other countries are less apt to hold this view (especially among those who have immigrated in the past 10 years). Expectations for rising discrimination are also more evident among younger Muslims, individuals with higher incomes, those who identify primarily as Muslim, and those who have experienced discrimination. By comparison, belief in a future with less discrimination is most evident in Quebec (40%) and among immigrants who have been in Canada less than 10 years.

On a more positive note, Muslims in Canada are almost uniformly hopeful about the recent change of government in Ottawa. Nine in ten (90%) say they are optimistic that the

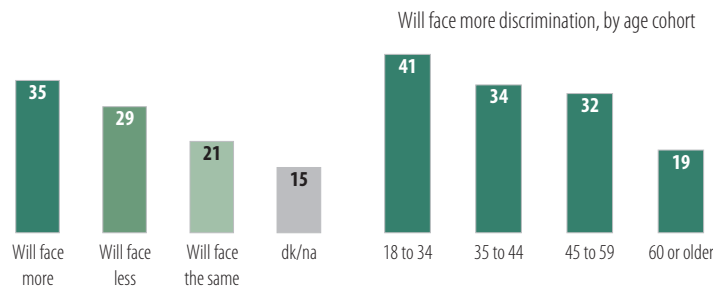
new majority Liberal government led by Justin Trudeau will improve relations between Muslims and other Canadians, compared with only three percent who are pessimistic. Such optimism is evident across the Muslim community, including those who voted for other parties in the October 2015 federal election, as well as those who believe the next generation will face more discrimination and stereotyping.

Optimistic or pessimistic the new federal government will improve relations between Muslims and other Canadians?



Q.39  
With a new majority Liberal government led by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, are you optimistic or pessimistic that relations between Muslims and other Canadians will improve?

What will next generation of Muslims face in terms of discrimination/stereotyping?



Q.30  
Do you believe the next generation of Muslims in Canada will face more, face less, or face about the same level of discrimination and stereotyping as Muslims do today?

## Personal experience with discrimination

*One-third of Muslims in Canada have experienced discrimination or unfair treatment in the past five years due to their religion, ethnicity/culture, language or sex. Such treatment is most commonly experienced in the workplace, public spaces, retail establishments and schools or universities.*

What has been the personal experience of Muslims in Canada in terms of their treatment by broader society? One-third (35%) of those surveyed report to have experienced discrimination or being treated unfairly by others in Canada in the past five years because of their religion (22%), ethnic or cultural background (22%), language (13%) or sex (6%) [note: individual percentages exceed total because some individuals have experienced discrimination for more than one of these reasons]. The combined total for discrimination due to religion and/or ethnicity/culture is 30 percent, which is the same percentage reported by Muslims in 2006.

By comparison, for the general Canadian population overall in 2013, 21 percent have experienced discrimination for one or more of these reasons, most commonly because of

ethnicity or culture (11%) or sex (11%). Incidence levels are notably higher for Canadians who fit the Statistics Canada definition of “visible minority”; especially in the case of discrimination due to ethnicity or culture (31%), and to a lesser extent due to language (15%) or religion (10%).<sup>7</sup>

Among Muslims in Canada, the likelihood of experiencing unfair treatment is higher in certain groups, and for specific reasons:

- Canadian-born (50%) – mostly because of their religion, but also due to ethnicity and sex
- African born (45%) – mostly due to their religion
- Women (42%) – mostly because of their religion and sex
- Individuals who identify primarily as Muslim (41%) – mostly due to their religion
- Quebecers (40%) – mostly because of their religion
- Muslims under 45 years of age (40%) – mostly because of their religion and ethnicity/culture; also language for those 35 to 44

Experienced discrimination or unfair treatment by others in Canada – past five years



\* Source: Statistics Canada (2013 General Social Survey)

Q.26a-d

*In the past five years, have you experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others in Canada because of any of the following: Your religion ...Your ethnicity or culture ... Your sex ... Your language?*

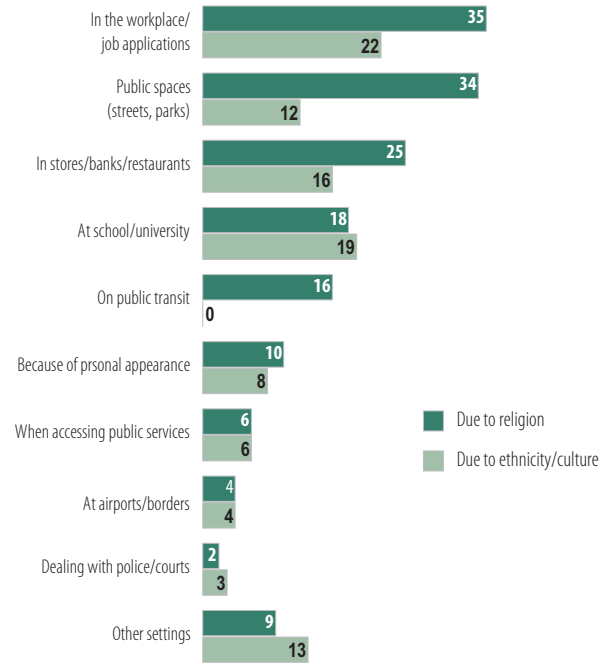
<sup>7</sup> Source: GSS 2013 Survey. Note that the data for the Muslim subsample from this larger survey show incidence levels very close to the results of this survey (net discrimination – 34%; discrimination by religion – 22%; by ethnicity/culture – 28%; by language – 13%; by sex – 7%).

Muslims 60 years and older are least apt to report discrimination or poor treatment (18%), and this experience is evenly divided between religion, ethnicity/culture and language, with fewer reporting issues because of their sex.

The survey asked those reporting negative experiences to identify the types of situations in which such unfair treatment have taken place, due to their religion or ethnicity/culture. The most common settings are the workplace, followed by public spaces (e.g., streets, parks), retail establishments (banks, restaurants), at school or university, and on public transit (in the case of one's religion).

The survey also probed specifically about problems Muslims have faced crossing borders, given the additional scrutiny from security officials that individuals of this faith often experience. One in four (25%) Muslims in Canada reports having experienced difficulties travelling across borders or through airports because of his or her race, ethnicity or religion. The likelihood of this experience is notably consistent across the population, but most widely reported by Canadian-born Muslims and those in the highest income bracket (likely because they are the most frequent travelers).

### Where discrimination has taken place in past five years



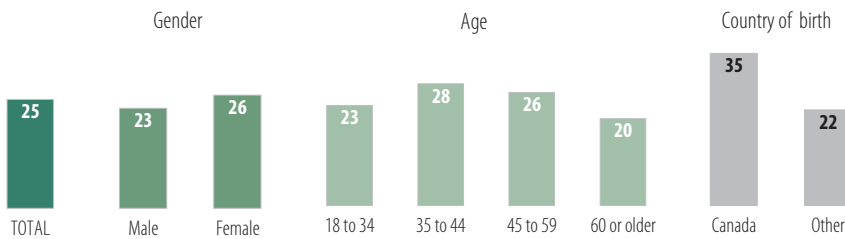
Q.27

In what types of situations have you experienced discrimination in the past five years due to your religion?

27b.

In what types of situations have you experienced discrimination in the past five years due to your ethnicity or culture?

### Experienced difficulties crossing borders due to race, ethnicity or religion



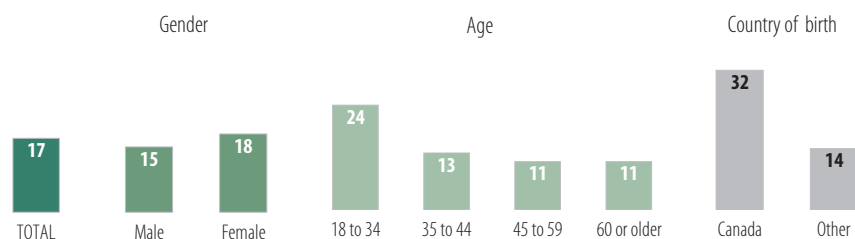
Q.28

Have you ever experienced difficulties travelling across the border or through airports because of your race, ethnicity or religion?

**INHIBITIONS ON FREE EXPRESSION.** How does treatment by broader society affect Muslims' level of comfort with expressing their views and opinions on social or political issues of the day? One in six (17%) says he or she has felt inhibited about doing so because of religion, ethnicity or religion. This impact is most apt to be expressed by Canadian-

born Muslims (32%), those under 35 years of age (24%), and those who have experienced difficulties crossing borders (27%). This feeling is somewhat less evident in Quebec (12%), among older Muslims, individuals with lower levels of education and income, and those born in the Middle East, Asia (outside of Pakistan) and Africa.

Felt inhibited about expressing opinions because of your race, ethnicity or religion



Q.29

Have you ever felt inhibited about expressing your opinions on social or political issues because of your race, ethnicity or religion?