American Muslims

Not a Monolithic Group with Conservative Views on Many Issues



Rainey Center | MALA



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our poll finds that American Muslims align with progressives on some issues but conservatives on several key issues: social issues like crime, immigration, transgender issues and school choice.

American Muslims are a pluralistic community that want to engage with parties. Conservatives could make inroads by emphasizing these topics, particularly given the alignment between American Muslims and Republicans on many social values.

There is substantial support for the thesis that many American Muslims are closer to Republicans on social issues and hold moderate views on others. However, the primary challenge remains the **perception** that Republicans are **discriminatory** or **hostile** toward Muslims, which impedes broader engagement. Bernie Sanders' popularity with American Muslims shows that respectful engagement is critical and acknowledgement of **Muslims as part of America**, instead of being ignored as an "alien group" whose presence is barely worthy of acknowledgement beyond fear of terrorism regardless of policy alignment.

METHODOLOGY

Online sample of 600 self-identified Muslim respondents fielded over web panels from August 23-29, 2024 and weighted to age and gender. The margin of error is +/- 4.8.

Key Findings

Political Ideology

Of American Muslims, **44% identify as moderate, 20% as conservative, and 30% as liberal**.

While 37% identify exclusively with the Democratic Party and only 13% with Republicans, **40% are open to supporting both parties**, suggesting a significant number are swing voters.

Perception of Leaders

American Muslims hold negative views of both Joe Biden (-5) and Donald Trump (-29), but they view Kamala Harris more favorably (+28).

Top Concerns

The leading issues for American Muslims are the economy (45% "extremely concerned"), crime (44%), the Israel-Hamas war (43%), explicit materials in schools (42%), and transgender medical treatments for minors (33%).

Social and Religious Issues

On religious freedom (+35%) and education about race and diversity (+33%), American Muslims favor Democrats.

On LGBTQ+ education, immigration, and transgender medical treatments for minors, American Muslims show only slight preference for Democrats, suggesting room for GOP influence.

Crime and Criminal Justice

A majority (52%) believe the government should prioritize **harsher sentences** to reduce crime. Only 15% feel the current system is "**too tough**."

School Choice

There is **net support of +41%** for school choice and +44% for curriculum transparency, highlighting alignment with conservative policies.

Immigration and Border Control

41% view illegal immigration as a major problem, and 59% support hiring more border patrol agents. There is also support for a **pathway to citizenship (+20%)** and **temporary suspension of asylum (+21%)**, but American Muslims are divided on the construction of a border wall (+0%) and **oppose mass deportation (-11%)**.

Transgender and Sports Issues

61% believe athletes should compete based on their sex at birth, and **68% oppose allowing children under 18 to medically transition genders**, closely aligning with the GOP stance.

Abortion

A plurality (40%) believe abortion should be legal in all cases, while 33% believe it should be decided on a case-by-case basis. **19% believe abortion should be illegal**, a potential base for Republican engagement.

Perceptions of Antisemitism and Islamophobia

Most American Muslims express concern about both antisemitism and Islamophobia, with 53% saying the media does a poor job portraying Muslims.

Foreign Policy

In the Israel-Hamas conflict, **9% support Israel, 23% support Hamas, and 47% prefer neither**, indicating that most American Muslims seek a neutral stance or are unsure.



Age, Gender, and Level of Education

The analysis of the poll highlights the following key findings regarding American Muslims who are most likely to align with Republicans, based on gender, age, education, and party affiliation.

Gender

Republican-aligned American Muslims tend to be more evenly split between men and women compared to their Democratic counterparts. Among respondents, **51% of men and 49% of women align with Republicans**, showing no significant gender skew towards either party.

Age

Younger Muslims are more likely to align with Democrats, but a substantial portion of older American Muslims tend to lean conservative. For instance, **older age groups demonstrate a stronger alignment with Republican stances on issues like illegal immigration and crime**, reflecting traditional values around law enforcement and border control.

Education

A higher proportion of college graduates (37%) among Republicans indicates a segment of well-educated Muslims who favor the party's stances on economic policies and immigration. By contrast, Democrats have more support among those with advanced degrees, but **Republicans still capture about 33% of college graduates and 48% of those with some high school or technical education**.

Party Affiliation

While **37% of American Muslims identify with the Democratic Party, 13% openly support Republicans, and 40% of Muslims express a willingness to support both parties**, suggesting that there is a significant undecided bloc that Republicans could engage. Additionally, **56% of Republicans strongly align with conservative policies**, particularly on topics like immigration, law enforcement, and economic freedom.

These findings suggest that Republicans can appeal to a sizable portion of the Muslim community, particularly among more conservative, older, and educated demographics. The significant percentage of Muslims open to voting for either party also indicates a strong opportunity for Republican outreach, especially if they address the community's core concerns respectfully.



Argument for GOP Engagement

The poll suggests that many American Muslims agree with Republicans on critical social issues, including crime, illegal immigration, and school choice. However, the Republican Party continues to struggle with the **perception of hostility or lack of care** toward the Muslim community. Bernie Sanders' enduring popularity among American Muslims highlights a key lesson for Republicans: **respect and genuine engagement** matter as much as, if not more than, policy alignment.

The key takeaway for Republicans is clear: **Muslims respond to shows of respect and engagement**. While there is significant alignment on issues like social values, immigration enforcement, and school choice, the Republican Party loses potential support due to the perception that it is **discriminatory or unconcerned** with the Muslim community.

If Republicans were to demonstrate the same level of respect and engagement that Sanders has consistently shown, they could attract significantly more support from American Muslims, who already align with them on numerous issues. The poll underscores that Republicans must build bridges through **empathy and genuine interest** in the community's concerns if they are to overcome the perception of hostility.

Conclusion

The poll highlights a crucial insight: **American Muslims respond to genuine shows of respect**. Bernie Sanders, despite his progressive positions, has enjoyed enduring popularity among American Muslims not because of perfect alignment on issues, but because he engaged the community with respect and took their concerns seriously and repeatedly acknowledged them as an organic part of the American social fabric. His popularity demonstrates the potential reward for any political leader or party willing to invest in meaningful engagement with this community and acknowledging it as part of American society.

The key disconnect for Republicans is that, while they **win on many issues**, such as social values, economic policies, religious freedom, and even illegal immigration, they **lose overall** because they are perceived as **uncaring or hostile** toward American Muslims. This perception overshadows areas of agreement and prevents many in the Muslim community from aligning with the Republican Party.

American Muslims share many conservative values, but Republicans have struggled to capitalize on this overlap. If Republicans were to show the same level of interest and respect that Bernie Sanders has demonstrated, they could attract significantly more support from a community that already agrees with them on numerous issues. To do so, Republicans need to address the perception problem and build bridges by demonstrating empathy and genuine interest in the concerns of American Muslims.

Ultimately, the poll shows that Republicans have a **major opportunity to gain American Muslim votes**, particularly in swing states, if they can overcome the perception of hostility and engage this community with the respect they seek.





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