

Youth Washington Muslim Survey Report 2025



CAIR
WASHINGTON

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About CAIR-WA

CAIR Washington (CAIR-WA) serves the Muslim community across Washington state. Our mission is to enhance the understanding of Islam, protect civil rights, promote justice, and empower Washington's Muslims.

We fulfill our mission by providing free legal services to Muslims who've been discriminated against because they are Muslim, providing free immigration legal services to Muslims in Washington state who face barriers to immigration due to their ethnic and/or religious identities, working to combat Islamophobia and bigotry through education and storytelling, and empowering our community to be politically and socially engaged while shaping laws and policies that impact it.

CAIR Washington is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and a chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a grassroots civil rights and advocacy group. CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil liberties group, with regional offices nationwide.

For more information about CAIR-WA and the services we offer, please visit our website at cairwa.org.

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Introduction



Introduction

The need for students to have safe and affirming school environments is essential to their emotional wellbeing, academic success, and overall development. Muslim students across Washington State have not always experienced school to be a place of belonging or safety. Youth and families have consistently shown concerns about the persistence of harmful stereotypes, in addition to ignorance around Islam and Islamic practices. These challenges are presented not only by peers, but from school administrations, teachers, and parents, turning school environments into unsafe spaces where Muslim students can feel marginalized and unwelcome.

With a documented rise of increasing Islamophobia nationally and within the state, Muslim students are heavily affected by harassment and bias in their places of learning. Dealing with Islamophobia in educational spaces can affect students' mental health, confidence, and overall ability to learn. When this hate and prejudice goes unnoticed, it lets students know that their identities are not valuable enough to be protected, like their peers.

Bullying is one of the most damaging and visible ways that this harm tends to manifest. Bullying can lead to decreased academic performance, in addition to depression, anxiety, and long-term emotional distress. When students are targeted for their religious beliefs in educational spaces, the damages are often amplified by feelings of isolation, and a lack of response from institutions.

Despite how severe these issues are, there is a significant lack of data documenting the experiences of Muslim youth in Washington. Many people choose not to report incidents



of harassment, bullying, or discrimination, due to a lack of trust in reporting systems, fear of retaliation, or exhaustion from having to repeatedly explain their experiences. Gaps in data are caused by underreporting, which limits what actions can be taken to increase advocacy and accountability.

This survey was developed to help address this gap. It builds on continuous efforts to support Muslim students and educators, including sending letters to schools and educators twice a year, advocacy with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), direct engagement with schools, and strengthening the network of Muslim Student Associations, to promote peer support. This report aims to provide a clearer image of the challenges Muslim students face, so that informed and effective policies can be put in place, and interventions can happen in the future.

Executive Summary

Young Muslims in Washington are generally from families with an immigration story within the past few generations, though in our study the majority of respondents were born in the United States. There is incredible racial and ethnic diversity among young Muslims in Washington, with no racial or ethnic category exceeding 24% of the total, and nearly all respondents speaking multiple languages.

Muslim students in Washington are more than twice as likely to be bullied as the general student population in the U.S. According to stopbullying.gov, the national average is 19%, while for Muslim students in Washington the rate of students who were bullied in the past school year is 42%. Additionally, over one-third (37%) of Muslim students in Washington have seen adults in their school make comments or act in a way that is offen-

sive to Islam or Muslims in the past 2 school years, and one-third (33%) have experienced discriminatory policies or practices.

Respondents noted hearing pervasive language from both other students and from teachers linking Islam to violence and spreading misinformation about Islam and Muslims.

Our sample size was small, and so correlations with a statistical significance were few. However, two clear correlations were as follows. Muslim girls in Washington are more likely to experience discriminatory policies, and Muslim students who are “African” or “Black/African-American and African” were more likely to be discouraged from pursuing their education and to feel that their teachers do not understand Islam or Muslims.



Methodology

Between May 1 and October 15, 2025, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, Washington state chapter (CAIR-WA), surveyed 147 Muslims who were between 11 and 18 years of age and living in Washington state.

The following sources were used to recruit respondents.

- CAIR-WA social media
- CAIR-WA and mosque email listservs
- the CAIR-WA website
- flyer distribution
- tabling at community events
- announcements at mosques and community centers
- community group messages on platforms such as WhatsApp
- partner organizations and community members participated in independent outreach

All respondents were directed to a survey hosted on SurveyMonkey's website.

Respondents who reported living in Washington state, identified as Muslim, and were between the ages of 11 and 18 were included in the survey. Responses which did not meet these criteria were removed from the data.

Disqualified, Partial, and Complete Responses

CAIR Washington received 193 total responses. Out of these responses, 46 were disqualified.

- 16 were disqualified due to age (under 11 or over 18)
- 10 for not residing in Washington state
- 7 for not being Muslim
- 13 were disqualified due to being poor quality responses (likely not valid data)

After disqualification, we had 147 responses. Sixty-six (66) of these responses were complete.

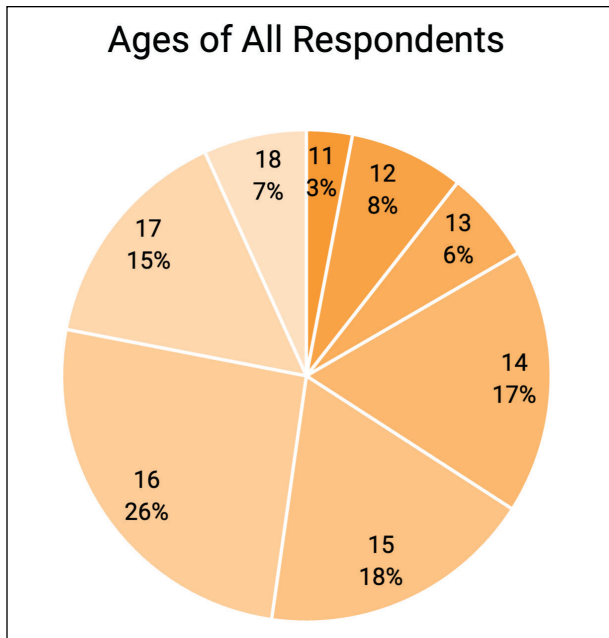
For analysis of each question, we used all responses to a given question. When analyzing across portions of the survey, we used only complete responses. In other words, whenever we are using two or more questions in analysis, such as looking at if visibly Muslim young people experience more bullying, we used only complete responses.

Findings and Discussion



Findings and Discussion

Part 1: Demographics



Respondents were between 11 and 18. See chart for breakdown.

Out of those who answered our question about gender, (107), 60% identified as female, 39% as male, and 1% preferred not to answer. Out of complete responses, 52% identified as female, 47% as male, and 2% preferred not to answer.

Of respondents (107), 86% attend public school, 7% attend Islamic private school, 6% attend a non-Islamic private school, and 2% attend a public charter school.

Of respondents (107), 67% attend school in King County, 8% in Pierce County, 7% in Snohomish County, 4% in Thurston County, and 2% or less in Franklin, Columbia, and Benton counties. Nine percent (9%) of respondents did not know what county in which they

attend school. The cities and towns in which respondents most commonly attend school are Seattle (17%), Redmond (13%), and Bellevue (10%).

Out of 107 respondents, 8% identified as a person with a disability, and 3% preferred not to answer.

Sixty percent (60%) of respondents identify as being visibly Muslim. The percentage was the same in both samples—all respondents (107) and all complete responses (66).

Sixty percent (60%) of respondents identify as being visibly Muslim.

Immigration Experience

Sixty-one percent (61%) of respondents have an immigration story within two generations of their family.

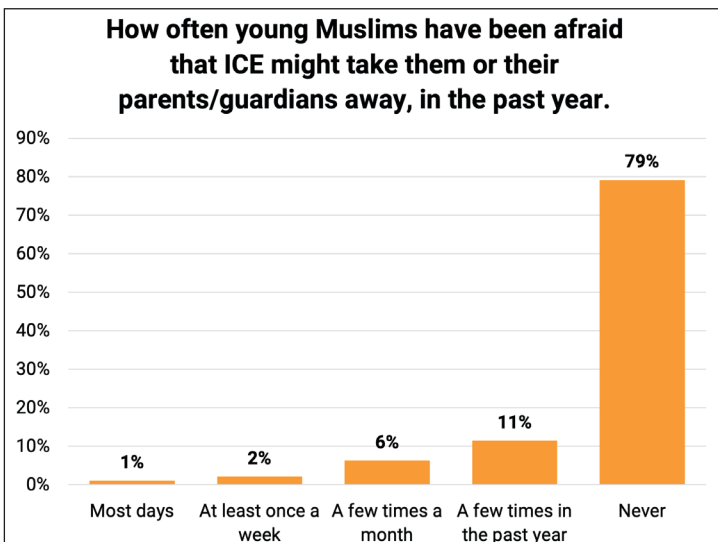
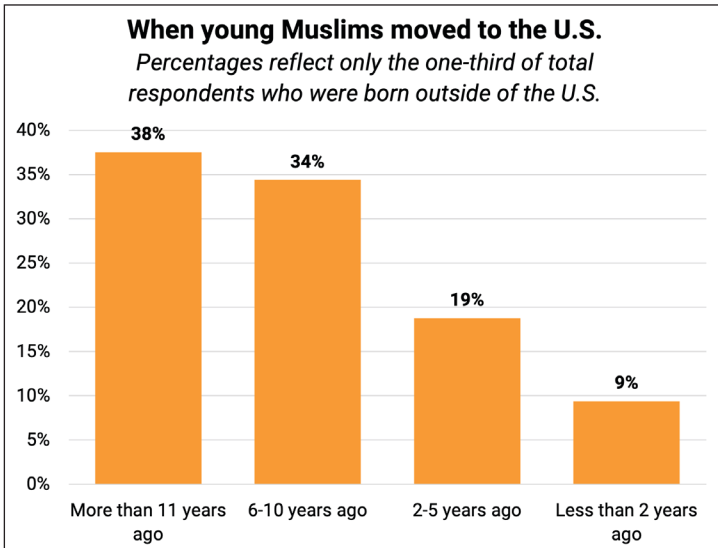
Sixty-four percent (63.6%) of respondents were born in the United States, 34.6% born outside of the U.S., and 1.9% preferred not to answer.

Of respondents born outside of the U.S. (32 total), two (2) identified that their families were forced to leave the country of origin because of trouble or safety, and one (1) preferred not to answer.

For the young people who were not born in the U.S., their families most commonly

immigrated from Canada, Egypt, India, Jordan, Libya, and Saudi Arabia.

Over the past year, just over one-fifth of young Muslims in Washington (21%) have been afraid that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) would take them or their parents away.



Race and Ethnicity

Young Muslims in Washington are very diverse, with no one ethnic category making up more than 24% of the total. See chart on page 8 for breakdown.

The following list is a sample of responses that respondents gave when asked to



Findings and Discussion

Part 2: Bullying and Discrimination

Bullying

Bullying by other students

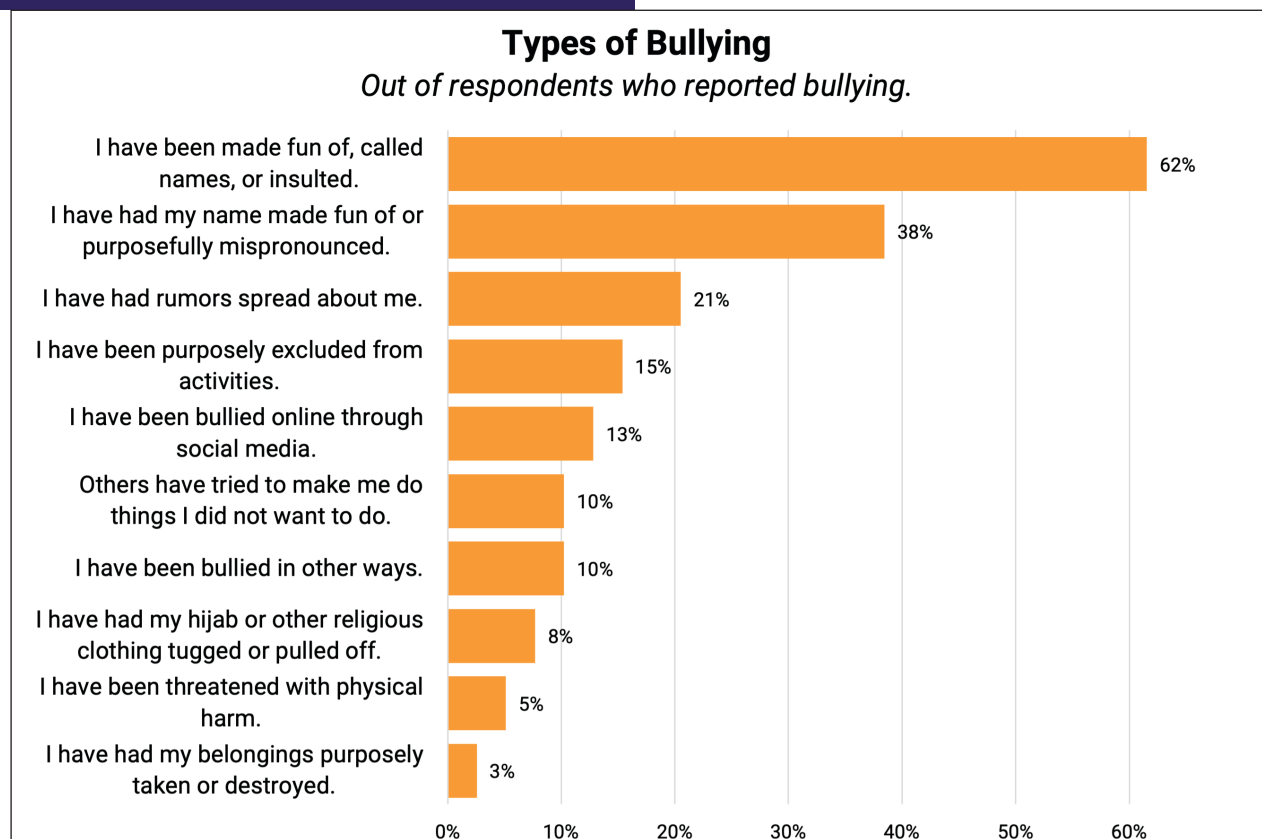
When asked, “During the current school year and the prior school year, how often have you been bullied at school by another student because you are Muslim?” 25% indicated that they were bullied a few times a year or more frequently, 18% that they had been bullied less than once a year, and 57% replied “never”. In total, 43% of Muslim students

have been bullied in the past two school years.

According to StopBullying.gov, “About 19.2% of students ages 12–18 enrolled in grades 6–12 experienced bullying nationwide during the 2021–2022 school year,” meaning that **Muslim students in Washington are more than twice as likely to be bullied as the general student population in the U.S.**

When asked for more details about the bullying, students replied that they were called things like “bomber” or “terrorist,” were harassed and assaulted for wearing hijab, that other students referenced 9/11 in offensive jokes, and that students or teachers singled out and excluded them for being Muslim.

43% of Muslim students have been bullied in the past 2 school years



We asked respondents who indicated that they had experienced some bullying by other students if they or a family member reported the bullying to an adult at their school. Out of these respondents, **33% did not report the bullying**, 31% did, and 33% indicated that they had not been bullied, despite indicating some experience of bullying on a previous question.

Out of the students who did report the bullying, one-third (33%) said that the school's response fully resolved the issue, another third (33%) said that the school's response partially resolved the issue, and the final third (33%) indicated that the school did not respond or that their response didn't make a difference or made the bullying worse. Note: 12 students responded to this question; each third was 4 students, adding up to 100%.

Of the students who did not report the bullying (15 total), 60% said that they "don't think it's a big deal," 33% said that they "don't think it will make a difference," and

one or two students each said that they don't feel comfortable, don't want to be a "snitch," are afraid that the report will lead to retaliation, and don't know who to report it to.

Seeing other students being bullied

When asked, "During the current school year and the prior school year, how often have you seen another Muslim student at school being bullied by another student?" 26% indicated that they have seen another student bullied a few times a year or more frequently, 16% that they had seen another student bullied less than once a year, and 58% replied "never".

When asked to provide more detail, respondents said that they saw other Muslim students being called things like "terrorist" and "bomber", having their appearance made fun of for wearing hijab or a beard, or hearing students mocking the Arabic language. Other respondents mentioned physical violence. Many young people mentioned micro-aggressions that were framed as "jokes" or making fun of Muslims and Islam.

Offensive comments on social media

When asked, "How often do students at your school make offensive comments or posts about Islam or Muslims on social media such as Tiktok, Instagram, YouTube or Snapchat?" 28% indicated that they have seen offen-



Photo by Patty Tang



49% of Muslim students have seen offensive comments or posts from fellow students about Islam or Muslims on social media in the past 2 school years

sive comments or posts on social media a few times a year or more frequently, 21% that they had seen offensive comments or posts on social media less than once a year, and 51% replied “never”. In total, 49% of Muslim students have seen offensive comments or posts on social media in the past 2 school years.

When asked to provide more details, respondents said that they see jokes about 9/11, people making fun of Islam/Allah/the prophets, hate towards Palestinians, and disregard for Muslim lives.

Hijab harassment

We asked, “If you wear hijab, how often have you had your hijab tugged, pulled, or in any way offensively touched by another student during the current school year and the prior school year?” After removing respondents who don’t wear hijab, **28% of students who do wear hijab had experienced hijab harassment in the past 2 school years.**

Discrimination from adults in school

When asked, “During the current school year and the prior school year, how often has a teacher, administrator, or other adult at your school made offensive comments about Islam or Muslims or acted in a way that is offensive to Islam or Muslims?” 11% responded that they experienced this a few times a year or more, and 26% said that they experienced this less than once a year. In total, 37% of Muslim students have seen adults in their school make comments or act in a way that is offensive to Islam or Muslims in the past 2 school years.

When asked to provide more details, **one respondent described a teacher physically assaulting a student, saying, “A teacher once punched a student because he was ‘making too much noise’ when he was opening the door to the prayer room”.** Others mentioned being taught incorrect and/or biased information about Islam and Muslims, including that Islam is “oppressive” or “violent”. Multiple respondents mentioned teachers looking at Muslim students during lessons/lectures anytime they say words like “Taliban” or “Hamass”.



37% of Muslim students have seen adults in their school make comments or act in a way that is offensive to Islam or Muslims in the past 2 school years.

When asked, “Have you ever been discouraged by a teacher or advisor from continuing your education?” 8% replied yes.

When asked, “Do you feel your free speech and expression rights have been limited or denied at school?” 35% replied yes.

When asked, “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: ‘When I have asked for an accommodation because of my religious needs, my teachers and administrators have been responsive (e.g. they gave me time for prayer, an excused absence for Eid, alternative food options, allowed me to wear a different P.E uniform, etc.),’” 75% agreed or strongly agreed, 8% were neutral, and 8% disagreed.

When asked, “How often have you experienced discriminatory policies and practices at school? For example: not being given time to pray, being required to dress in a way that doesn’t align with your religious practices,” 6% replied that they experienced these policies a few times a month or more frequently, 13% said a few times a year, 14% said less than once a year, and 66% said never. In total, one third (33%) of Muslim students have experienced discriminatory policies or practices at school in the past 2 years.

When asked, “Based on your experiences, do your teachers understand the experiences and needs of Muslim students? For exam-

ple: understanding the basics of Islam, such as daily prayers, holidays, and fasting during Ramadan,” 54% agreed or strongly agreed, 16% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and the remaining 30% were neutral or marked not applicable.

Thirty-five percent (35%) of Muslim students feel that they have experienced heightened discrimination or bullying at school since October 7, 2023.

Safety at School

When asked, “How often do you feel unsafe or unwelcome at school because of your personal characteristics, including race/ethnicity, religion, or immigration status?” 13% said a few times a month or more frequently, 10% said a few times a year, 25% less than once a year, and 52% said never.

When asked, “In the last year, how often have you stayed home from school because you felt unsafe or unwelcome at school?” 10% said a few times a year or more frequently, 4% said less than once a year, and 83% said never.

When asked “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: ‘Being bullied because I am Muslim has negatively impacted my physical, mental, or emotional well-being,’” 15% agreed or strongly agreed, 19% were neutral, 28% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 39% said the question was not applicable.

Of those who agreed that being bullied has negatively impacted their wellbeing, they were most likely to identify “feelings of stress or anxiety” as the way that it has impacted them. However, respondents also indicated that they were impacted by feelings of sadness or depression, feelings of loneliness and isolation, changes in sleeping patterns, changes in eating patterns, negative feelings about their selves, performance at school, relationships with my family and friends, losing interest in previously enjoyable activities, and being impacted in other ways.

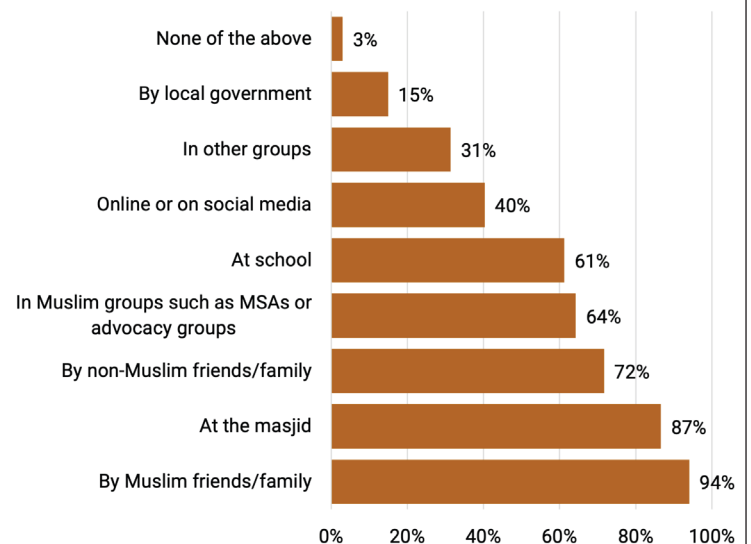
Protective Factors

We asked young people where they feel safe and supported, and where they feel that



33% of Muslim students have experienced discriminatory policies and practices at school in the past 2 school years.

Where young Muslims feel safe and supported



Where young Muslims can ask for help

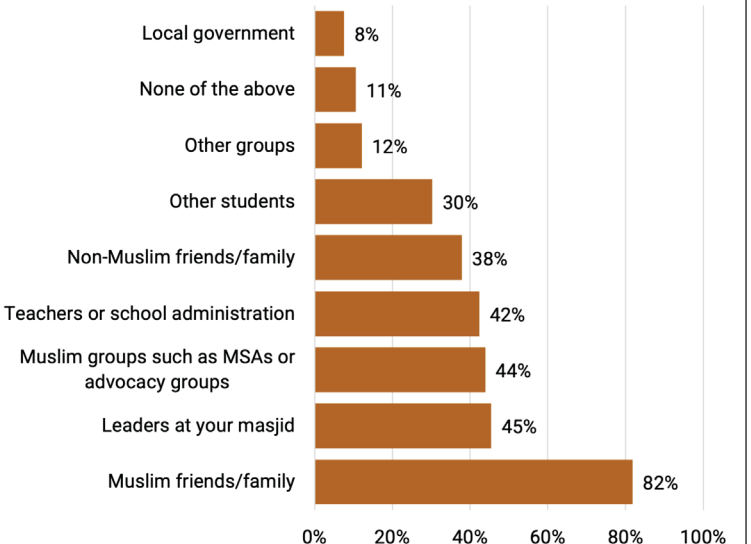




Photo by Patty Tang

they could ask for help or support if they experience hate, discrimination and bias. Respondents could mark as many boxes as they wanted on these questions, so percentages add up to over 100%.

Ninety-four percent (94%) of respondents feel safe and supported, including in their Muslim identity, by Muslim friends/family, 87% at the masjid (mosque), 72% by non-Muslim friends/family, 64% in Muslim groups such as Muslim Student Associations, and 61% at school. Only 40% of respondents feel safe and supported online or on social media, 31% in other groups, 15% in local government, and 3% responded “none of the above”.

In terms of who they could ask for help or support after experiencing bias, discrimination, or hate, the order was similar though the percentages were lower for every category. Eighty-two percent (82%) of respondents could ask for help from Muslim friends/family, 45% from leaders at the masjid, 44% from Muslim groups such as MSAs, 42% from teachers or school administration, and



42% of Muslim students have felt unsafe or unwelcome at school because of who they are in the past 2 school years.

38% from non-Muslim friends/family. Only 30% felt that they could ask for help from other students, 12% from other groups, 8% from local government, and 11% said “none of the above”.

Of respondents, 29% attend a mosque or Islamic community center nearly every day, 39% at least once a week, 23% a few times a month, and the remaining 10% a few times a year or less.

Findings and Discussion

Part 3: Correlations

Correlations

Girls are more likely to experience discriminatory policies and practices. Girls may be slightly more likely to feel that their free speech has been limited.

Muslim students who are African or Black/African-American and African were more likely to be discouraged from pursuing their education and to feel that their teachers do not understand Islam or Muslims. We didn't find any correlations for other racial or ethnic groups, or the sample sizes were too small to draw conclusions.

Feeling safe and supported at school, unsurprisingly, is correlated with lower levels of bullying and harassment across the board. Students who did not mark that they feel safe and supported, including in their Muslim identity, at school were more likely to: experience bullying; see offensive comments on social media more often; hear offensive comments from their teachers; feel that their free speech has been limited; feel that their teachers are not responsive to their needs as Muslim students; feel that their teachers do not understand Islam or Muslims; and to feel unsafe at school.

Muslim students who were not born in the U.S. did not report being more likely to experience bullying or discrimination.

Expanding our statistical significance to look at p-values under 0.1, visibly Muslim students may be more likely to experience discriminatory policies and practices, to feel that their teachers do not understand Islam or Muslims, and to feel that their free speech has been limited.



Notes



Limitations

Limitations

The main limitation to this survey was a small sample size. We had 147 total qualified responses, but only 66 complete responses. Our hope is that in future years we will expand the sample size in order to draw more conclusions.

Possible Limitations

Anonymity and Self-Reporting

An initial limitation is that the survey was anonymous and self-reported. The survey was kept anonymous in order to ensure that respondents could answer truthfully and were not influenced by privacy concerns. The tradeoff of this is the possibility of inauthentic, misleading, or duplicate responses. Due to this survey's disqualification criteria—respondents must be Muslim, living in Washington, and between 11 and 18 years of age, the likelihood of bot responses or inauthentic responses is minimal. For example, even if a response passed the qualifying page, any responses with zip codes outside of the state of Washington were excluded. As further precautions, the team used Survey Monkey's built in tool to identify low-quality responses, as well as reviewing duplicate IP addresses and responses with similar/identical demographic information, in case a community member took the survey more than once.

Language Access

Another major limitation was that the survey was conducted in English only, which may have skewed demographics of respondents.

Location

Finally, most survey responses came from King County, which likely reflects the population make-up of Washington's Muslims. However, since the CAIR-WA team is based in King County and most outreach was done locally, this area may be overrepresented relative to true population levels.

Resources and Further Reading

If you are interested in further resources regarding Islamophobia and bullying in schools, please refer to the list of resources below.

- **CAIR-WA's incident report form:** [cairwa.org/gethelp](https://www.cairwa.org/gethelp). Fill out if you or someone you know has experienced bias, hate, or discrimination because they are Muslim (or perceived as Muslim), or to reach our Immigrant Justice Project.
 - **CAIR-WA's Know Your Rights Website** at [knowyourrightswa.com](https://www.knowyourrightswa.com)
 - **The Seattle Office of Civil Rights** at seattle.gov/civil-rights
 - **CAIR National Civil Rights Reports** at [cair.com](https://www.cair.com)
 - **An Educator's Guide to Islamic Religious Practices** by CAIR National at [cairwa.org/resources](https://www.cairwa.org/resources)
 - **CAIR's Guide to Addressing Bullying and Bias in Schools** by CAIR National at [islamophobia.org/anti-prejudice-tools/cairs-guide-to-bullying-and-bias-in-schools/](https://www.islamophobia.org/anti-prejudice-tools/cairs-guide-to-bullying-and-bias-in-schools/)
 - **CAIR'S 2025-2026 Back to School Resource Guide** at [islamophobia.org/anti-prejudice-tools/unhostile-campus-back-to-school-guide/](https://www.islamophobia.org/anti-prejudice-tools/unhostile-campus-back-to-school-guide/)
 - **The Othering & Belonging Institute's** section on Islamophobia at [belonging.berkeley.edu/islamophobia](https://www.belonging.berkeley.edu/islamophobia)
 - **CAIR California's 2023 Bullying Report** at [ca.cair.com/publications/2023-bullying-report/](https://www.ca.cair.com/publications/2023-bullying-report/)
- **[StopBullying.gov](https://www.stopbullying.gov)**
 - **The Institute for Social Policy and Understanding's** page on Youth at [ispu.org/social-policy/youth/](https://www.ispu.org/social-policy/youth/)



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