

Narrowing The Gap



Justice Inequality

More Trust Needed Between Muslim Populations and Police: Community Policing Can Help

According to the Sanford School of Public Policy, Muslims are often harassed and discriminated against because people blame them for events like 9/11. Sanford's January 2016 report, "[The Challenge and Promise of Using Community Policing Strategies To Prevent Violent Extremism](#)," looks at how police who build relationships within the Muslim communities they serve experience higher trust levels. Respondents said it is crucial that these "outreach" officers be distinct from and not be involved in criminal investigations.

Based on [interviews with Muslims](#), the report finds their impressions of local law enforcement are favorable, but they are skeptical of outreach efforts if they appear as if they are part of federal counter-terrorism programs.

Best practices for law enforcement included in the report include:

- Recruiting and hiring of Muslims
- Mandating cultural awareness training
- Offering basic language training to outreach officers who interact with Muslim communities
- Providing outreach to women in the Muslim community
- Developing a non-criminal intervention program for individuals at risk of violent extremism
- Integrating local government agencies into community outreach

NYC Equality Indicators Finds Trust In Police Noticeably Different Among Religious Groups

ISLG's 2015 Public Survey asked a diverse group of respondents if they strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, somewhat disagreed, or strongly disagreed with the statement: "If I were in trouble, I would feel comfortable asking a police officer for help."

Out of those reporting a religious affiliation, the majority across religious groups responded they "strongly agreed" with the statement: 53.7% Protestant, 60.9% Catholic, 67% Jewish, and 57% Muslim.

However, some respondents indicated they "strongly disagreed" with the statement, and this percentage varied by religious affiliation: 4.4% Jewish, 7.5% of Catholic, 8.3% of Protestant, and 14% of Muslim respondents.

Since the 2001 terror attacks, the NYPD, city government officials and federal law enforcement have made numerous efforts to build relationships with the Muslim community. However, this and other studies show that trust in police among Muslims remains limited.

Organizations like [the ACLU](#) have monitored the activities of the NYPD as they relate to surveillance of Muslims and found that "the NYPD's Intelligence Division has singled out Muslim religious and community leaders, mosques, student associations, organizations, businesses, and individuals for pervasive surveillance that is discriminatory and not conducted against institutions or individuals belonging to any other religious faith, or the public at large."

Education Inequality

Legal Guidelines For Public School Religious Holidays

Public schools must respect religious holiday observances, but not show favoritism towards one religion over another in choosing which become designated holidays, according to the [Center for Public Education](#). Religious expression is a First Amendment right of all public school students, but schools cannot be perceived as involved in establishing preferential treatment for any particular religion.

In cases where religious holiday observance becomes legally contentious, the Supreme Court is charged with interpreting the Constitution and opining on whether schools have acted correctly in designating certain religious holidays over others. Promotion of any particular religious holiday is prohibited. Teachers may [teach about holidays](#), but not celebrate them in the classroom.

NYC Public Schools Add Two Muslim Holidays

Muslims comprise [10% of all NYC public school students](#). In acknowledgement of their history and culture, in 2015 Mayor de Blasio mandated NYC public schools recognize [Eid al-Fitr](#) (marking the end of Ramadan) and [Eid al-Adha](#) (honoring the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son) as official holidays.

Department of Education Chancellor Carmen Fariña said the recognition of the two holidays made NYC the largest school district in the nation to observe the holidays. [Mayor de Blasio](#) called the calendar change one "that respects the diversity of our city."

Fariña added she felt it would be a "teachable moment" about religious tolerance and Muslims' cultural contributions. Linda Sarsour, Executive Director of the Arab American Association of New York, [called it](#) "a win for our children and for future generations in this country."

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In this issue of *Narrowing The Gap*, we focus on one of the groups adversely affected by inequality: **Religious Minorities**. Other issues will describe inequalities faced by children, immigrants, individuals currently in jail or on probation, individuals living in poverty, individuals with a physical or intellectual disability, individuals with less than a high school diploma, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer, racial and ethnic minorities, seniors, single parents, and women.

Health Inequality

Breast and Ovarian Cancer Rates Among Orthodox Jewish Women

A 2014 study on “[Breast Cancer Incidence Rates Among Orthodox Jewish Women](#),” published in the *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, sought to understand breast and ovarian cancer rates of Orthodox Jewish women compared to their non-Orthodox peers in the U.S.

Orthodox Jews are predominantly [Ashkenazi](#) (a distinct ethnic group with origins in Eastern and Central Europe). Ashkenazi Jews carry a higher risk for breast and ovarian cancer compared to the general population, because Ashkenazi Jews are carriers of a BRCA1/BRCA2 gene mutation present in 2.5% of this population.

The researchers found that predominantly Orthodox areas had higher breast cancer rates compared to areas with fewer Jewish residents (rate of 188.9/100,000 compared to 161.7/100,000), but that ovarian cancer rates were not dramatically different (20.7/100,000 compared to 19.7/100,000), which would have been expected were the gene mutation to blame for the differences in breast cancer rates. The authors suggest more research is needed on why breast cancer rates are higher among Orthodox Jewish women.

Birth Outcomes Among Fasting vs. Non-Fasting Muslim Women During Ramadan

Given the importance of maternal nutrition to fetal and infant health, [researchers have examined](#) whether fasting by pregnant women during Ramadan can affect the birth weights of their infants. While some studies compare fasting to non-fasting women and conclude there is no statistically significant difference between the women who fast in terms of infant birth weight and the women that do not, others have found differences between the two.

In light of these concerns, [a 2014 U.K. study](#) on 310 pregnant Muslim women (of Asian or Asian British ethnicity) at the Bradford Royal Infirmary sought to identify variables affecting Muslim women’s decisions to fast or not to fast while pregnant. Co-variables like the mother’s education, employment, and marital status were recorded.

The study found fasting behavior was negatively correlated with mother’s age and educational levels (as both age and education levels increased, the odds of fasting were reduced). Factors that increased the odds of fasting included obese BMI and Bangladeshi origin. No correlations were found between mother’s employment, health status or marital status and fasting.

Economic Inequality

Workplace Religious Discrimination

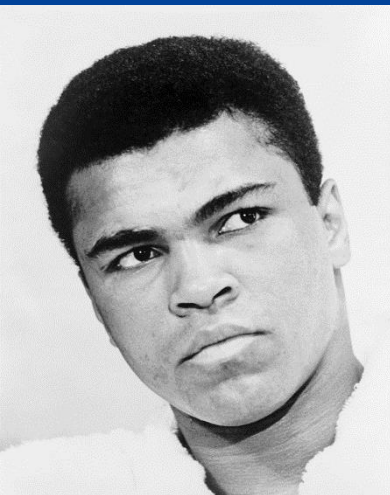
The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is charged with ensuring U.S. employers do not discriminate against religious minorities. In 2015, in the wake of the San Bernadino shootings, the commission issued a [statement](#) reminding employers that Muslim and Middle Eastern employees were vulnerable to “harassment, intimidation, and discrimination in the workplace.”

EEOC Chair, Jenny R. Yang, said the following:

“America was founded on the principle of religious freedom. As a nation, we must continue to seek the fair treatment of all, even as we grapple with the concerns raised by the recent terrorist attacks. When people come to work and are unfairly harassed or otherwise targeted based on their religion or national origin, it undermines our shared and longstanding values of tolerance and equality for all.”

Her statement came [amid findings](#) that a number of U.S. businesses in Nebraska, California, and Colorado, violated Muslim civil rights by prohibiting prayer breaks and banning headscarves (hijabs) on the job. These prohibitions can lead to a hostile workplace for Muslims and those of Middle Eastern descent and breach the Title VII protections of the First Amendment.

One of the more high-profile discrimination cases decided by the Supreme Court in 2015 was that against [Abercrombie & Fitch](#) which was found to have refused to hire Samantha Elauf, a religiously observant Muslim, because she wore a head scarf.



“Rivers, ponds, lakes, and streams – they all have different names, but they all contain water. Just as religions do – they all contain truths.”

Muhammad Ali

The Equality Indicators is a project of [the Institute for State and Local Governance](#) (ISLG) of the City University of New York.

The project measures progress towards greater equality across six themes related to **Economy, Education, Health, Housing, Justice, and Services** using 96 indicators. Each indicator is scored from 1 to 100, where 1 represents the most inequality and 100 the least inequality. For more information please visit our website at equalityindicators.org and follow us on twitter [@equalityISLG](https://twitter.com/equalityISLG)