

US Muslims see friendly neighbours but wary about Trump

Rachel Zoll

New York

US Muslims said they have experienced widespread suspicion about their faith in the first months of Donald Trump's presidency but also received more support from individual Americans and remain hopeful they can be fully accepted in American society, a new survey indicated.

Nearly three-quarters of US Muslims asked said they view Trump as unfriendly to them, a Pew Research Centre report stated. Approximately 62% of respondents said Americans do not view Islam as part of the mainstream after a presidential election that saw a surge in hostility towards Muslims and immigrants.

At the same time, nearly half of Muslims polled said they received expressions of encouragement from non-Muslims in the past year, an increase over past polls. Muslims said they remain optimistic about their future: 70% of those asked said they believe hard work can bring success in America, a figure largely unchanged for a decade.

"There's a sense among the American-Muslim population that others are beginning to understand them and beginning to sympathise with them," said Amaney Jamal, a Princeton University political sci-

entist and adviser to Pew researchers. Prejudice against Muslims has "pushed the average American to say: 'This is really not fair. I'm going to knock on my neighbour's door to see if they're all right,'" Jamal said.

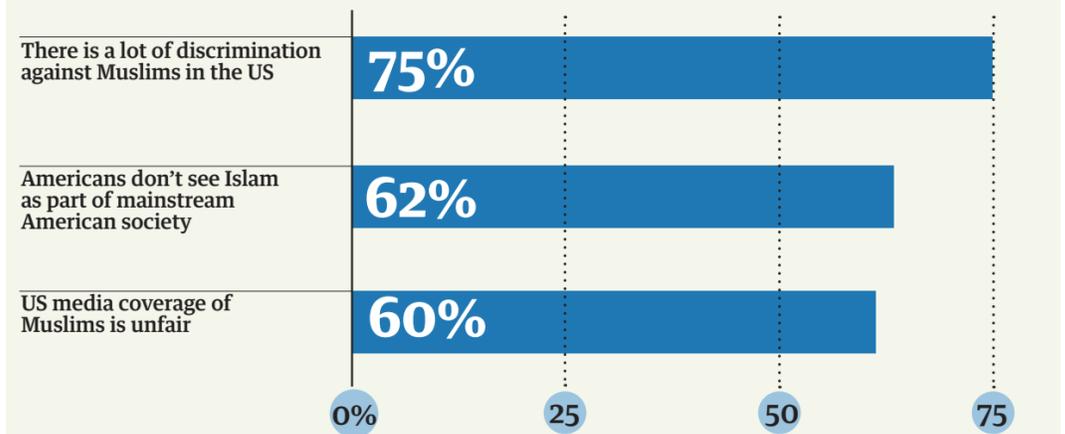
The Pew survey is the centre's third on American Muslims since 2007 and its first since Trump took office January 20. He promised to fight terrorism through "extreme vetting" of refugees and had a plan to temporarily ban travellers from six Muslim-majority countries.

The latest poll of 1,001 adults was conducted by phone, both landline and cell phones, from January 23-May 2, in English, Arabic, Farsi and Urdu and has a margin of error of 5.8 percentage points.

About 80% of American Muslims polled expressed concern about Islamic extremism.

The last several months have seen an uptick in reports of anti-Muslim harassment, including arson and vandalism at mosques and bullying at schools. In the Pew survey, nearly half of US Muslims said they faced some discrimination in the last year, such as being treated with distrust, threatened or called

US Muslims say they face discrimination % of US Muslims who say ...



Source: Survey conducted Jan. 23-May 2, 2017.

"US Muslims Concerned About Their Place in Society, but Continue to Believe in the American Dream"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

an offensive name. That percentage is a slight increase over previous surveys.

However, the figure is much higher for respondents who said they were more visibly identified as Muslim, for example by a hijab for women. Nearly two-thirds of respondents with a more distinct Muslim identity said they had recently faced some type of discrimination.

The survey reported evidence of a growing sense of Muslim belonging in the United States. While 89% said they were proud to be both Muslim and American, nearly two-thirds said there was no conflict between Islam and democracy.

A larger share of American Muslims told Pew they had registered to vote and actually voted. About 44% of Muslims eligible to vote said they cast ballots in last year's presidential election, compared to 37% reported in a poll in 2007. Those numbers on Muslim voting

are compared to 60% of eligible voters overall who cast ballots in 2016.

American-Muslim leaders, alarmed by anti-Muslim rhetoric in the campaign, made an unprecedented push to register voters in mosques and at community events. Turnout overall was higher after the highly contested 2016 campaign.

Muslims overwhelmingly backed Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton, who drew 78% of their vote compared to 8% for Trump.

Following a trend found in other American faith groups, a slight majority of US Muslims polled said they now accept homosexuality, a dramatic reversal from a decade ago when 61% said same-sex relationships should be discouraged.

Pew researchers estimate the number of US Muslims has been growing by 100,000 per year, reaching 3.35 million, or 1% of the American population. Just more than half of US Muslims identify as Sunni and

16% say they are Shia. Nearly 60% adult American Muslims were born outside the United States.

The largest share of immigrants was from South Asian countries, such as Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. Others were from Iraq, Iran, sub-Saharan Africa and Europe. American-born blacks comprise about 13% of all Muslims in the United States but their share is shrinking. Overall, 80% are US citizens, the survey indicated.

Eight-in-ten American-Muslim poll respondents said they were concerned about Islamic extremism and more than 70% said they were very or somewhat concerned about Islamic extremism in the United States. However, three-of-ten said most of those arrested recently on suspicion of planning a terrorist attack had been tricked by law enforcement authorities and did not represent a real threat.

(The Associated Press)

Omar Khadr's long journey to freedom divides Canadians

Viewpoint



Tom Regan

When Omar Khadr was 11, his extremist father took him from his home in Alberta, Canada, to fight for al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. In 2002, when he was 15, Khadr was part of a firefight with US troops who invaded Afghanistan after 9/11.

By the time the shooting was over, Khadr was wounded and the only al-Qaeda member alive in the area. During the fight, a US Army medic named Christopher Speer was killed.

As the only al-Qaeda member left alive, and despite the absence of evidence he was the one responsible, Khadr was blamed for Speer's death and sent to the US military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Under international law, Khadr should have been treated as a child soldier and separated from the adult prisoners. In those days, however, the Bush administration really didn't care much about following international law. During his years in captivity, Khadr alleges he was tortured and coerced into signing a confession. Khadr became the only child soldier prosecuted for war crimes in the years since the protections against just such a prosecution were put in place.

And that's where the problems for the Canadian government started.

A group of lawyers in Canada heard about Khadr's situation

and started legal proceedings on his behalf. In 2008, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Khadr's rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms had been severely violated. The conservative Canadian government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, however, ignored the ruling and let Khadr stay in the prison in Cuba.

When Khadr's lawyers petitioned to have him returned to serve his sentence in Canada, in 2010 the Supreme Court again ruled that his rights as a Canadian had been seriously violated. Again, the Canadian government did nothing until 2012 when he was repatriated to Alberta.

Because the US Supreme Court had twice ruled that the military trials at Guantanamo Bay were illegal under US and international law, Khadr's Canadian lawyers appealed his conviction. The judge in the case could see the writing on the wall and released him on bail. (That appeal is proceeding.) Khadr then sued the Canadian government for violating his rights.

Which brings us to July 4 of this year. Current Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that the government had settled the suit with Khadr for \$10.5 million. Trudeau also officially apologised to him.

That's when the fireworks started.

Many Canadians were outraged at the settlement and apology. Conservative politicians argued that the Canadian government had paid millions of dollars to an admitted terrorist. They said it showed that Trudeau was soft on terrorism. Other Canadians, who were not

so outraged, pointed out that the facts of the case meant that the government had no choice but to settle.

Trudeau made just that argument. He said he understood why people were upset but, if the Canadian government had fought Khadr's suit, it could have resulted in \$30 million-\$40 million in legal fees and court costs alone and probably a much larger settlement. Conservatives argued that the government might have won the case if it had stayed the course but almost every prominent lawyer interviewed by Canadian media said Khadr had the law on his side

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and that Trudeau made the right decision.

As we have learned, however, facts often don't matter. Emotions rule the day. Many Canadians, furious with Trudeau's actions, donated to a US fund to support Speer's family and the family of another US soldier blinded during the same attack who had tried – unsuccessfully – to have Khadr's settlement frozen. (A Utah court had already awarded the families \$134 million in a wrongful death suit against Khadr.)

The Conservatives' all-out attack on Trudeau and Khadr seems to have misfired. Two polls taken towards the end of July, well after the Khadr settlement was made public, indicated that Trudeau's Liberals had gained support and that the Conservatives had lost it. This might signal that the Conservatives and much of the mainstream media misread what a majority of Canadians thought about the Khadr matter.

The truth is that no one really knows what role Khadr may have played in the death of Speer. There is no disputing the facts, however, that he was convicted as a child soldier despite prohibitions in international law and that he was tortured during his time at Guantanamo Bay.

If previous Canadian governments had fulfilled their legal obligations at the time, the chances are Omar Khadr would have been back in Canada much sooner and the lawsuit that so divided Canadians might never have happened.

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Ruled by emotions. Former Guantanamo Bay prisoner Omar Khadr seen at a home in Mississauga, Ontario, on July 6. (AP)