

2020

MUSLIM CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT FOR FAITH LEADERS

PREPARED BY:

America Indivisible, Emgage Action, MPower Change,
Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), and Poligon Education Fund

This toolkit was reviewed by
Dr. Ahmed Soboh, Religious Director of Chino Valley Islamic Center

INTRODUCTION

Civic engagement means "working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes."*

This toolkit is intended to facilitate engagement between American Muslims and both primary American political parties, and to do so at a shared value: consultation between legislators and political subjects.

It comes equipped with resources for faith leaders, community leaders, and members alike, as well as information for those hoping to engage this November as either civic leaders or participants.

*Civic Responsibility and Higher Education, edited by Thomas Ehrlich, published by Oryx Press, 2000.



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WHY CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IS IMPORTANT

American Muslims are similar to any other religious community in the United States, having the same concerns with election topics like the environment, education, and jobs. And just like other minority communities in the United States, Muslims have the power to be vital and active citizens in our nation's decision-making process. We are a community that can and will affect elections. Elections and advocacy are crucial mechanisms in holding our representatives accountable. They ensure your voice is heard, thereby creating an America that is for you and me.

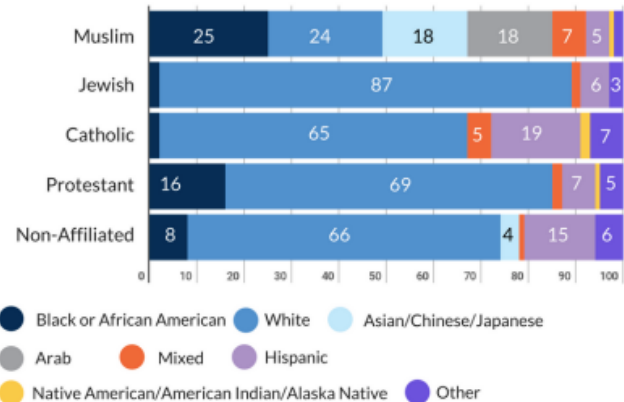
According to the Institute of Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU), **American Muslims can be a key factor in this year's election**, especially in swing states such as *Florida, Michigan, Ohio, and Virginia*. American Muslims can bring in 1 to 2 percent of the votes that are needed to swing the election in either direction. Unfortunately, in the 2016 election, polls found that **only 60% of Muslim Americans were registered to vote** in comparison to 94% of Protestants, making **American Muslims the least likely group to vote or even plan to vote in comparison to other religious groups**.

AMERICAN MUSLIM DIVERSITY

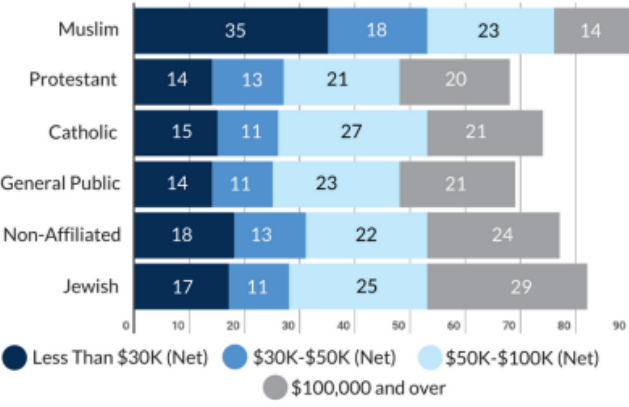
November 3, *Election Day 2020*, is just around the corner. With it, a referendum on the Trump administration and the future of our collective, American politics. The COVID-19 pandemic, and the ongoing health and economic crisis it caused, has significantly compromised matters. Through their responses to the COVID-19 crisis, the Republican and Democratic parties are effectively auditioning for the role of governing party. **Situated at the crossroads of this event are American Muslims this nation’s most diverse religious community as well as one of its most socioeconomically diverse.**

However, rather than engage with us as the politically diverse demographic society has largely engaged us as a monolith. In so doing, they ignore those Muslims whose experiences do not fit the monolith.

Muslims Most Ethnically Diverse Faith Community



Muslims Most Likely to Report Low Income



Institute for Social Policy and Understanding | [American Muslim Poll 2017](#)

Since people at the lower rungs of the socioeconomic spectrum are more likely to be negatively impacted by the health and economic consequences of COVID-19, these figures are politically significant for Muslims in America. They demonstrate that **our communities will tend to have less access to healthcare coverage and are living paycheck-to-paycheck**, making them uniquely vulnerable to budget cuts and healthcare inaccessibility.

MY MUSLIM VOTE KHUTBA DAY

2020 has been about COVID-19 and the movement for Black lives and the economic and social catastrophes to our communities. As Muslims, there is still so much we can do as we move forward. This is a critical year for not only for Muslims, but for all communities looking to elect officials that reflect their interests, their hopes, and their pressing needs. This year, all **435 seats in the House of Representatives** are up for election, as are **35 Senate seats**. 2020 will be an historic opportunity for Muslims to vote in record numbers - and to vote in officials who will support an equitable and just system.

This year, **#MyMuslimVote** will continue to recruit, engage and activate thousands of grassroots leaders in key regions of the United States. We all must get involved in voter registration drives, neighborhood canvassing, and phone banking efforts to ensure we're represented in 2020. Organizations like MPower Change, CAIR, Poligon Education Fund, Emgage, America Indivisible, MPAC, and so many more are doing the work and making it easy for us all to plug in.

IMPORTANT POINTS

01

As people of this country and this state, who pay taxes and contribute in other ways to the country and community we live in, it is imperative that we make use of a right that others have given their lives for, both here and around the world.

02

The upcoming election is critical for American Muslims. At the beginning of the Trump administration, the first policy implemented was the **#MuslimBan**. It was during his campaign and election into office that we saw surges in anti-Muslim rhetoric and violence, more than we've seen in recent years. Mobilizing voters around hate is easy, but Muslims must mobilize votes to demonstrate strength and solidarity during times when so many communities are under attack.

03

This election will determine the future of our children as American Muslims; a vote for candidates who speak out against Islamophobia is a vote that challenges this racist rhetoric per the Prophetic responsibility of *amr bil ma'rouf wal naahee 'an al munkar* (the obligation to enjoin the good and forbid the evil.)

04

There are many other important ethical issues at stake in this election, including income inequality, state violence against our Black sisters and brothers, and the very future of our planet - which Islamic teachings clearly emphasize as a religious and moral issue with the numerous Qur'anic verses and ahadith emphasizing the importance of acting as good stewards and *khulafa* (vicegerents) on this Earth.

RELIGIOUS REFERENCES

Provided by Munes Tomeh, Attorney and Professor of Islamic Law, Zaytuna College

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala says in the Noble Qur'an, in surat Aal-'Imran: "Let there be among you a community calling to the good, enjoining right, and forbidding wrong. It is they who shall prosper" (3:104). And in a famous Hadith, the Prophet salla Llahu `alaihi wa sallam is reported to have stated something similar to this:

من رأى منكم منكرا فليغيره بيده
فإن لم يستطع فبلسانه ،
فإن لم يستطع فبقلبه ،
وذلك أضعف الإيمان

"Whosoever of you sees wrong, then let him change it with his hand, and if he is not able to, then let him change it with his tongue, and if he is no able to, then let him change it with his heart [that is, let him recognize it as wrong inside his heart], and that ["changing" it in the heart] is the weakest of faith."

We see from this verse in the Qur'an and selection from the sayings of the Prophet, salla Llahu `alaihi wa sallam, that "calling to the good, enjoining right, and forbidding wrong" are things that Allah has commanded us to do. It is not sufficient for us as a community to simply pray, fast, perform Hajj, and to concern ourselves with ourselves and our worship, while ignoring that which is around us. We have to be engaged, discussing issues of common concern, "calling to the good." We must enjoin that which is right, and we should not sit idly by when we see wrong, but rather should be people, as individuals and as a community, that forbids wrong through the various means at our disposal.

One of the most important Hadiths that is a basis for law in general--whether Islamic law and even secular notions of law is: لا ضرر ولا ضرار

"Let there be no harm, nor any reciprocation of harm."

Based upon this Hadith, Muslim scholars have posited a general legal principle الضرر يزال
"Harm must be removed."

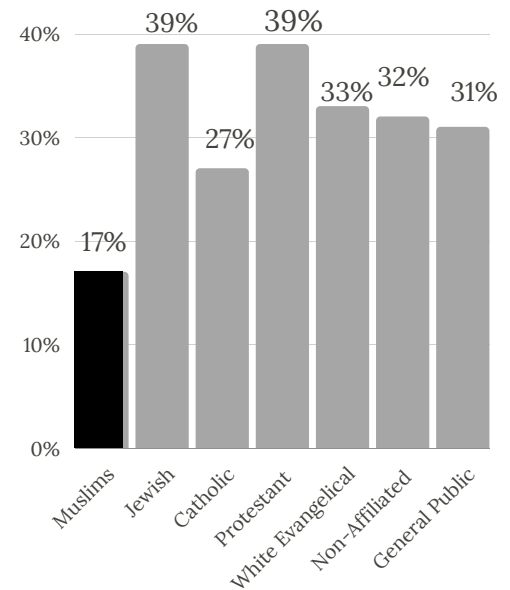
Based on the ideas above, we can understand that it is a responsibility of our community, both as individuals and collectively, to be engaged in the larger society around us, in which we work towards justice and equity in our community.

VOTING AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

American Muslims are the *least likely* to communicate with local and federal elected officials. Here are some stats from a **recent ISPU study**:

- In the 2016 election, only 60% of American Muslims were registered to vote - compared to the 85% to 95% of eligible voters in other faith groups.
- In the 2018 mid-term election, only 58% of American Muslims voted.
- In 2019, 73% of American Muslims were registered to vote, making them the faith group least likely to be registered to vote.
- Only 20% of Muslim men and 21% of Muslim women reported to have communicated with a local official.
- Only one out of six (17%) of Muslims directly contacted their congressional representatives in 2018. Of those, white Muslims were the most likely to conduct outreach (25%), while Arab Muslims were the least likely (10%).

HAVE YOU MET OR COMMUNICATED BY EMAIL, PHONE OR MAIL WITH YOUR FEDERAL ELECTED REPRESENTATIVE OR THEIR STAFF WITHIN THE LAST YEAR?



MUSLIM CONGRESSIONAL OUTREACH BY RACIAL & ETHNIC IDENTITY

According to **ISPU's American Muslim Poll 2019**, Muslims of different racial/ethnic groups reached out to local officials at similar rates.

12%

Black Muslims

25%

White Muslims

10%

Arab Muslims

20%

Asian Muslims

INTERESTED IN DOING MORE?

In the era of COVID-19, more and more states are turning to vote by mail options, by increasing funding and extending voting deadlines. For the latest updates and comprehensive list of state-based primary voting instructions and deadlines check out the [US Vote Foundation](#) or your state or regional board of election office website.

Voting by mail is also known as absentee voting. Although every state provides the option to vote by mail, there are different rules and criteria to be able to request an absentee ballot.

A request to vote by mail is generally accepted for these 4 main exceptions:

- ✓ An illness, injury, or disability
- ✓ Business travel or vacation
- ✓ Students at out of state college or universities
- ✓ A pandemic like COVID-19

Don't forget to contact your friends and loved ones with a friendly reminder to request their ballots as well! There is strong evidence that personal engagement is far more effective than a broader, distant call for action. Digital communities can be created through mediums like Whatsapp groups or Facebook pages to harness collective power.

ESTABLISHING A MOSQUE AS A POLLING LOCATION

Polling locations are *extremely* important for elections, other than the fact that it's a center for voters to cast their ballots, the quantity and distance of polling places have become the target of voter suppression in previous years. Many locations have been cut from official operation and disproportionately affect minority voters.

What can you do? Double check your polling location, organize a local petition to reopen polling locations and send it to your local County Clerk, and carpool together according to CDC guidelines to your local polling location.

However, establishing a polling location is simple enough. Although requirements may differ from state to state the general criteria for a polling facility include the following:

- 1 Ample space for voting booths, ID check-in, a designated space for voters to stand, parking etc.
- 2 Compliant with the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)
- 3 Commitment to host a polling location at least 30 days before an election

If your Mosque can meet these requirements, you can contact your local board of elections to officially register your Mosque as a polling place.

Here are some additional guidelines for a polling location:

- A polling place must be located in a publicly owned or controlled facility such as a school building, fire station or police station.
- If it is not a publicly owned or controlled facility, the building must be owned or controlled by an organization that is “exempt from federal income tax pursuant to section 501(c) other than 501(c)(4), (5), or (6) of the internal revenue code of 1986...”
- A polling location cannot be in the same facility of another business, individual, firm, organization, etc. that has established, directs, controls or financially supports the administration of a Political or Independent Committee registered under the Campaign Finance Act.

SUCCESS STORY

In 2019, the County Clerk in Houston, Texas was able to designate the community center in the Islamic Institute & Houston Blue Mosque as an official polling location. This opened up new opportunities for Muslims to get involved and build relationships with local community officials.

MUSLIM CIVIC CHECK LIST

WHAT CAN YOU DO

CHECK YOUR VOTER INFORMATION

- Check your **registration status** [here](#)
- Confirm your **polling location** [here](#)
- Pledge to vote and join the **1 Million Muslim Campaign** [here](#)

GET INVOLVED

- Engage with your local mosque: ask your Imam to do a **Khutbah Day**
- Advocate for your mosque to be a polling place for your community

BRING IN YOUR FOLKS

- Carpool with the people you are sheltering with on Election Day and vote together

FOLLOW US ONLINE FOR MORE INFORMATION

- [America Indivisible](#)
- [Engage](#)
- [MPower Change](#)
- [Muslim Public Affairs Council](#)
- [Poligon Education Fund](#)



MUSLIM
PUBLIC
AFFAIRS
COUNCIL

