

2020

MUSLIM CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

PREPARED BY:

America Indivisible, Emgage Action, MPower Change,
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This toolkit was reviewed by

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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."*

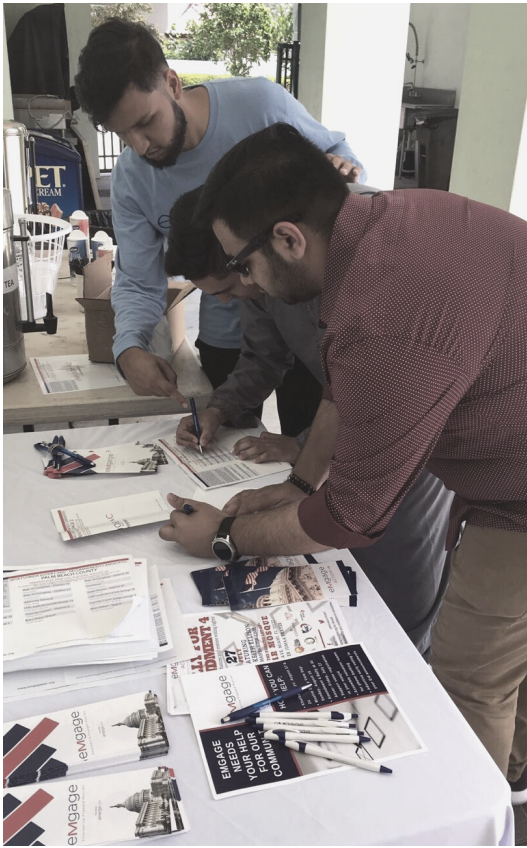
This toolkit is intended to facilitate engagement between American Muslims and both primary American political parties, and to do so at a shared value: consultation between legislators and political subjects.

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.



SPIRITUAL MANDATE



As Muslims, we aim to fulfill civic duties out of a shared religious mandate to engage in our political process and ensure a collective social good. *Shura* understood in this sense emphasizes the responsibility of civil society to engage in the political process, and of the state to ensure a representative process. In *Surah ash-Shura* (42:38), ***shura* is considered on a par with prayer (*salah*) and charity-giving (*zakat*).**

Islam only further grounds our responsibility to participate in the political process. As Muslims, our mandate is to build the world in accordance with Islamic values, and to do so in a way compatible with the current time, place, and circumstance. *Sharia* functions as a guide for how to exercise our judgment and engage with contemporary realities.

As American Muslims, our contemporary material realities generate a significant responsibility to engage politically, for the sake our *umma* but for all as well. The Trump administration has expanded its unconstitutional Muslim Ban; the question of Congressional war powers remains in flux; a slate of anti-BDS bills passed in the Senate; voter suppression remains a persistent problem; reactionary immigration policy remains a familiar axe for this administration to grind; and the COVID-19 outbreak has exposed the limitations of our nation's housing, nutrition, and healthcare systems. White supremacist terrorism persists, as does this administration's demonstrative ambivalence toward it.

Clearly, the stakes are high. We owe it to our communities to defend their political and civic rights anywhere we can, and this includes at the ballot box.

Voting on Election Day, November 3rd, serves as a great chance to do just that.





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.

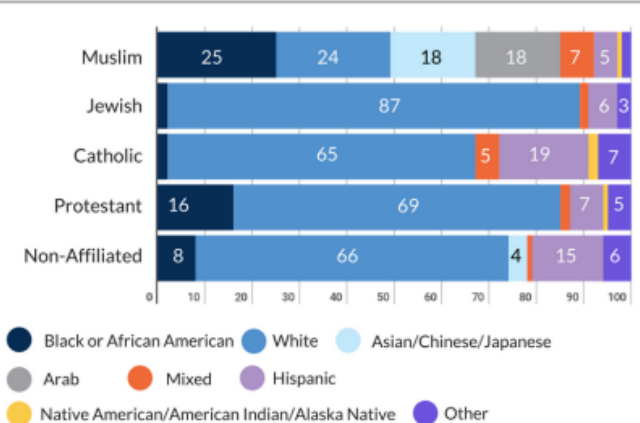
According to the Institute of Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU), **American Muslims can be a key factor in this year's election**, especially in swing states such as *Florida, Michigan, Ohio, and Virginia*. American Muslims can bring in 1 to 2 percent of the votes that are needed to swing the election in either direction. Unfortunately, in the 2016 election, polls found that **only 60% of American Muslims 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

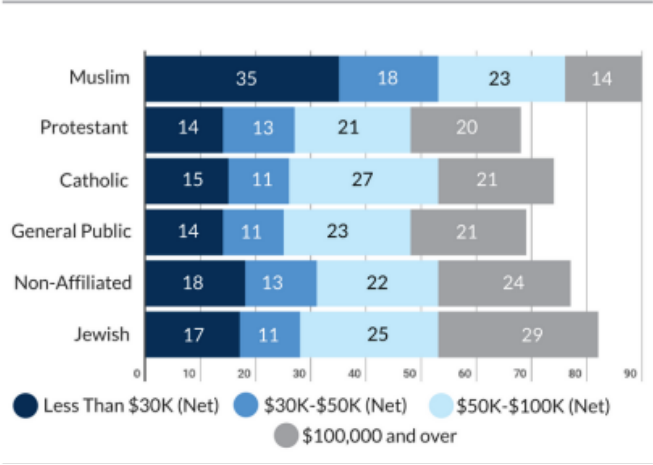
November 3, *Election Day 2020*, is just around the corner. With it, a referendum on the Trump administration and the future of our collective, American politics. The COVID-19 pandemic, and the ongoing health and economic crisis it caused, has significantly compromised matters. Through their responses 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 American Muslims. 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.

#MYMUSLIMVOTE SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE

For too long, American Muslims have had politicians and the media try to tell us what we should be for or against. It's time for us to take back our own narrative.

Muslim communities are diverse, engaged, and committed to making sure our votes and voices are counted. *Join us on social media and share your stories.* **Muslims around the country are making it clear that they have voices and votes. Tell your story today by using #MyMuslimVote!**

SAMPLE POSTS

1

#MyMuslimVote is for [tell us an issue you're passionate about]. In this critical election year, after millions have lost their jobs and suffered during COVID-19, I'm demonstrating solidarity and community power, by casting #MyMuslimVote! Join the movement: mymuslimvote.org

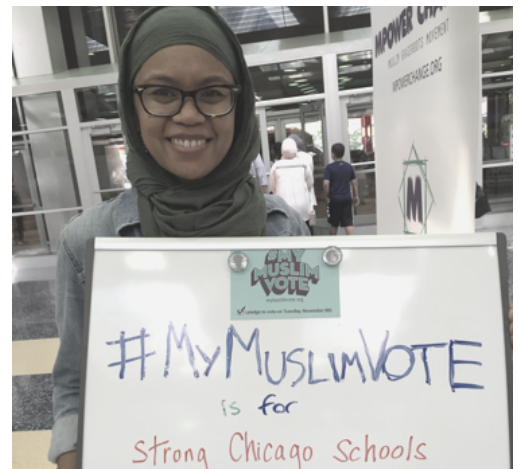


2

#MyMuslimVote will be cast, counted, and reckoned with in this critical election year. Will yours? There is too much on the line (healthcare, housing, unemployment), and we need to make sure our communities are represented! mymuslimvote.org

3

I'm making sure my voice is heard during this election cycle because **#MyMuslimVote** can change the outcome for our communities, so we can recover from a year of great loss. You can too--let's build power together! Learn more at mymuslimvote.org



4

Each election year is a chance to impact policies. With the **#MyMuslimVote** movement, we're making sure Muslim voters are registered, engaged, and mobilized! Learn more at mymuslimvote.org today.

Lately, we see people taking action towards improving society through protests and policies. Everyone has a role to play in this movement and voting is one step in creating social change by voting for people who advocate for the issues we care about; who campaign against the wrongs we suffer; and who will enact justice. This is important not only for general elections but also for our local elections. You have influence on who's in the following offices:

- *District Attorney* or *Commonwealth Attorney* who decides when an arrest leads to a charge. They can either be elected or appointed depending on your county.
- *State Attorney* or *Attorney General*, who enforces state laws that governors sign.
- *Mayor* who decides on city ordinances and usually appoints the chief of police.
- *Federal judges* who enforces federal laws that are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate.

Voting with this intention, in sha Allah, will be rewarded by God as a part of fulfilling our moral obligation to enjoin right, to forbid wrong, and to "change wrong with our tongues."

At the conclusion of the *khutbah*, please mention for worshippers to visit www.mymuslimvote.org to get resources and get involved. We encourage you to close your *khutba* with something like:

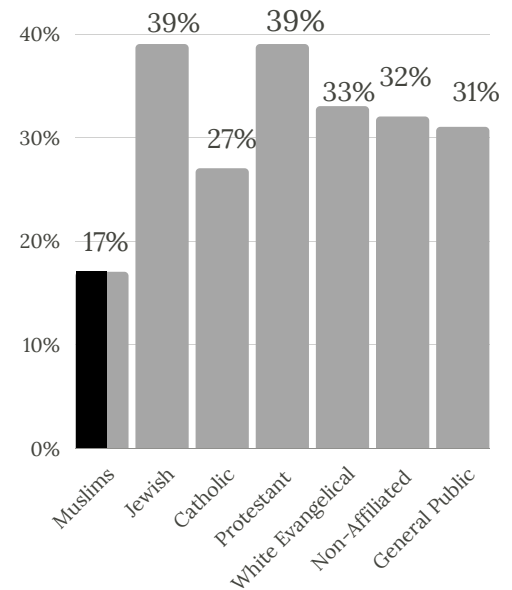


VOTING AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

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%

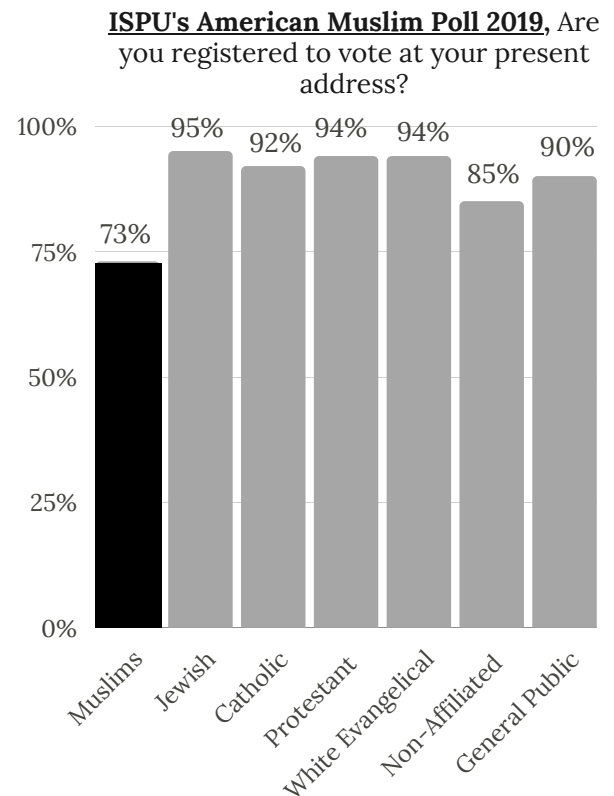
Arab
Muslims

20%

Asian
Muslims

WHO CAN VOTE?

- U.S. citizens can vote in federal, state, and local elections.
- Legal Permanent Residents, also known as Green Card holders, cannot vote in federal elections. However they are able to vote in state and local elections depending on if the local jurisdiction does not require U.S. Citizenship.
 - This information can be obtained from a local voting authority.
- Some states and municipalities, including Chicago and San Francisco, allow Green Card holders to vote in local elections. Click [here](#) to check with your state or local election office for any questions about who can and cannot vote.



MUSLIMS LEAST LIKELY TO BE REGISTERED TO VOTE IN 2019

STAY CIVICALLY ENGAGED AMIDST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC:

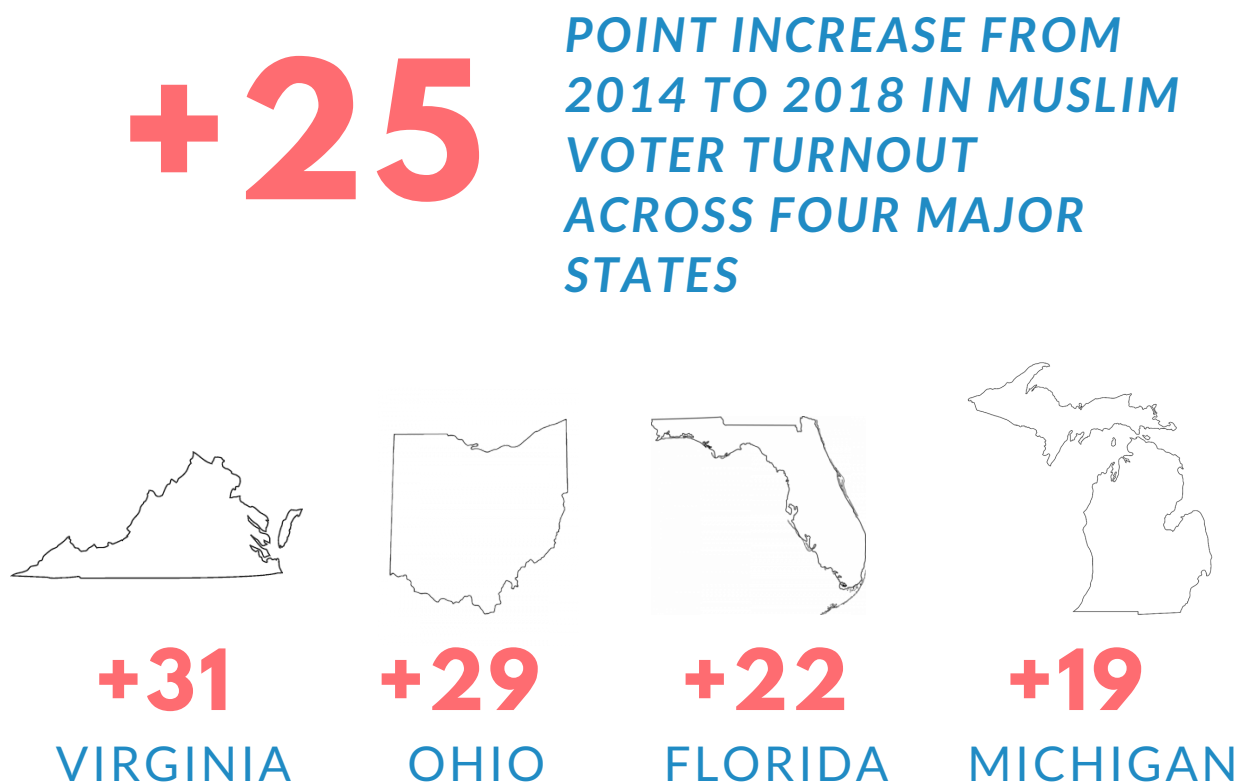
The COVID-19 pandemic and the movement for Black lives, and the economic and social catastrophes to our communities have impacted every aspect of our lives, including civic engagement and voting. We must continue to stay engaged as the pandemic sheds light on our failing political systems including health care, elections, the economy, and food security. Poligon's [COVID-19 Policy Update Center](#) has information on what's included in Congress' relief packages.

Consider voting early and requesting an absentee ballot. In addition, local and state officials are hosting virtual town halls, where you can discuss issues that matter to you at a safe distance. [Click here](#) to receive a recording of a virtual **Congressional Advocacy 101 Training Webinar** Poligon delivered on engaging with your representatives and amplifying your voice in the policymaking process from the comfort of your own home.

MIDTERM ELECTION: MUSLIM VOTER TURNOUT

The 2018 Midterm elections results highlighted some exciting movement in the Muslim community in the key states of Florida, Michigan, Ohio, and Virginia. According to data analysis of voter turnout in those states, Muslim Americans voted **25 percentage points higher** than they did in 2014. The general population voted **14 points higher** than they did in 2014 in the same four states.

The data analyzed was reported by the states' election commissions and NGP VAN database for the counties and congressional districts where GOTV efforts were focused. As part of the study, Muslim turnout data was compared with previous midterm elections, including 2014 and 2010. For the purposes of data visualization, percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number. The report from **Emgage** uses a proprietary name-match algorithm to identify likely registered Muslim voters in the NGP VAN database.



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.

THE MILLION MUSLIM VOTES CAMPAIGN

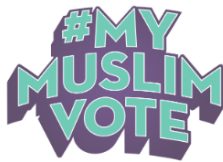


The Million Muslim Votes Campaign, led by Emgage, is a nation-wide campaign to turn out one million Muslim voters for the 2020 presidential elections. The Million Muslim Votes campaign is meant to unite Muslim communities in support of the largest voter mobilization effort in history through a diverse network of partners.

If you'd like to become a partner of this campaign, or are looking to find your voter information such as your polling location or voter registration status please visit, <https://millionmuslimvotes.com/>.



CAMPAIGN PARTNERS



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

