

Survey reveals Islamophobia is the posh person's prejudice

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[A survey](#) led by the University of Birmingham says people from middle and upper-class occupational groups are more likely to hold prejudiced views of Islam than people from working class occupational groups.

The survey, which was carried out in conjunction with YouGov, found that 23.2 percent of people who come from the social group ABC1 harbor prejudiced views about Islamic beliefs compared with only 18.4 percent of people questioned from the C2DE group. This is based on responses to the question: "For each of the following religions [Islam, Christianity, Sikhism and Judaism] please say whether you think the religion teaches its followers that its sacred text should be taken literally, word for word, or symbolically, understanding its poetic meaning and historical context." In the survey we use the response 'totally literally' as an indicator of prejudice.

However, when asked their views about Muslims, or most other ethnic or religious minority groups, [older people](#), men, working class people and Conservative and Leave voters are consistently more likely to hold prejudiced views.

The survey, presented in a report titled "The Dinner Table Prejudice: Islamophobia in Contemporary Britain," interviewed a sample of 1667 people between 20th and 21st July 2021 which was weighted by age, gender, social grade, voting record, region and level of education to ensure representativeness. Weighting was based on the census, Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics estimates, and other large-scale data sources.

Other key notable findings in the survey are:

1. Muslims are the UK's second 'least liked' group, after Gypsy and Irish Travelers: 25.9 percent of the British public feel negative towards Muslims (with 9.9 percent feeling 'very negative'). This compares with 8.5 percent for Jewish people, 6.4 percent for black people, and 8.4 percent for white people. Only Gypsy and Irish Travelers are viewed more negatively by the British public, with 44.6 percent of people viewing this group negatively.

2. More than one in four people, and nearly half of Conservative and Leave voters, hold conspiratorial views about Sharia 'no-go areas': 26.5 percent of the British public agree that 'there are areas in Britain that operate under Sharia law where non-Muslims are not able to enter.' This increases to 43.4 percent among Conservative voters and Leave voters. In addition, 36.3 percent of British people, and a majority of Conservative voters (57.3 percent) and Leave voters (55.5 percent), also agree that "Islam threatens the British way of life."
3. Support for prohibiting all Muslim migration to the UK is 4–6 percent higher for Muslims than it is for other ethnic and religious groups: 18.1 percent of people support banning all Muslim migration to the UK (9.5 percent 'strongly support'). Overall support for prohibiting Christian Migration is 13.1 percent, Sikh migration is 11.8 percent and Jewish migration is 12 percent.
4. The British public is almost three times more likely to hold prejudiced views of Islam than they are of other religions: 21.1 percent of British people wrongly believe Islam teaches its followers that the Qur'an must be read 'totally literally.' The figure for Islam compares with 7.5 percent for Judaism and the Hebrew Bible, 3.9 percent for Sikhism and the Guru Granth Sahib, and 4.8 percent for Christianity and the Bible
5. British people are more confident in making judgements about Islam than other non-Christian religions but are much more likely to make incorrect assumptions about it: British people acknowledge their ignorance of most non-Christian religions, with a majority stating they are 'not sure' how Jewish (50.8 percent) and Sikh (62.7 percent) scriptures are taught. In the case of Islam, however, people feel more confident making a judgment, with only 40.7 percent being unsure. This is despite the fact that [people](#) are much more likely to make the incorrect assumption that Islam is 'totally' literalistic.

Dr. Stephen H. Jones from the University of Birmingham and lead author of the survey says: "Prejudice towards Islam and Muslims stands out in the UK, not only because it is much more widespread than most forms of racism, but also because prejudice toward Islam is more common among those who are wealthier and well-educated."

The survey also has made specific recommendations to scale back the rise of Islamophobia:

- Government and other public figures should publicly acknowledge and address the lack of public criticism that Islamophobic discourses and practices trigger, and how Islamophobia stands out compared with other forms of racism and prejudice.
- Civil society organizations and equality bodies concerned with prejudice and discrimination should acknowledge that systemic miseducation about Islam is common in British society and forms an important element of Islamophobia.
- Educators should provide clear guidance clarifying when tropes about the Islamic tradition move from acceptable criticism to become harmful.
- Civil society organizations should introduce religious literacy as a component part of any large-scale equality and diversity campaign or policy initiative.
- The BBC and other broadcasters should maintain their commitments to religion programming, but with renewed emphasis on combatting intolerance.

Commenting on the recommendations Dr. Stephen H. Jones says: "No-one is calling for laws regulating criticism of religion, but we have to recognize that the British public has been systematically miseducated about Islamic tradition and take steps to remedy this."

Provided by University of Birmingham

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