



**START**

## **U.S. Muslims with Radical Opinions Feel More Alienated and Depressed**

Results of 29 March-11 April 2017 Internet  
Poll of 207 U.S. Muslims

*Report to the Office of University Programs,  
Science and Technology Directorate,  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security*

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Led by the University of Maryland

8400 Baltimore Ave., Suite 250 • College Park, MD 20742 • 301.405.6600

[www.start.umd.edu](http://www.start.umd.edu)

## About This Report

The authors of this deliverable are Clark McCauley, Professor of Psychology at Bryn Mawr College and Sophia Moskalenko, START Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Bryn Mawr College. Questions about this deliverable should be directed to Sophia Moskalenko at [smoskale@gmail.com](mailto:smoskale@gmail.com) or Clark McCauley at [cmccaule@brynmawr.edu](mailto:cmccaule@brynmawr.edu).

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## About START

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## Executive Summary

Our seventh U.S. Muslim Internet poll was conducted from March 29 to April 11, 2017; the poll was completed by 207 participants thought to be representative of the U.S. Muslim adult population. Questions included opinions of Islamic State, opinions about the Syrian conflict and about the Syrian refugee crisis. Results indicate that U.S. Muslims continue to hold very negative opinions of suicide bombing and of ISIS, and continue to favor allowing more Syrian refugees into the United States. Positive opinions about ISIS and about suicide bombing were negatively correlated with endorsement of a “United States of Islam” and positively correlated with Alienation and Depression scales that measure feelings of isolation and social rejection and feelings of depression.

These results echo those from case studies<sup>1</sup> that suggested a profile of lone-wolf terrorists as *disconnected-disordered*. That is, results of our seventh poll of U.S. Muslims indicate that the same factors of alienation (disconnected) and depression (disordered) common among lone-wolf terrorists are also found among individuals with radical opinions. Discussion points to implications of these results for programs of counter-terrorism and de-radicalization.

Looking back over all seven waves of our polling of U.S. Muslims, the Discussion section argues for the usefulness and efficiency of quick-turnaround Internet polling for tracking changes in opinions among small populations at risk of radicalization.

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<sup>1</sup> McCauley, C., & Moskalenko, S. (2014). Toward a profile of lone wolf terrorists: What moves an individual from radical opinion to radical action. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 26(1), 69-85.

## Introduction

The research presented here is a continuation of a research project ongoing since 2012 that aims to explore the efficacy and utility of Internet polling as a tool to access opinions and attitudes of U.S. Muslims. Six previous waves of surveys were carried out prior to Wave 7, which is the focus of this report. The survey instrument used in Wave 7 included most of the same questions asked in Wave 6, with the addition of two questions about depressive symptoms. Appendix B shows the complete survey as programmed for internet participants.

## Survey Methodology

Seventh wave participants were 207 U.S. Muslims. Eighty-eight participants had participated in earlier waves of the poll as part of the Knowledge Network panel, and were contacted again for the Wave 7 poll. The remaining 119 participants were first-time participants from an “opt-in sample” (see Appendix A for sampling procedure details).

### Survey Procedures

This survey, like previous surveys carried out under this research project, were carried out by the firm GfK, using its KnowledgePanel.<sup>®</sup> Unlike Internet convenience panels, that include only individuals with Internet access who volunteer themselves for research, KnowledgePanel recruitment has used dual sample frames (telephone and postal mail) to construct the existing panel. The target population is non-institutionalized adults age 18 and over residing in the United States who identify as Muslim. The current survey (Wave 7) was deployed between 29 March 2017 and 11 April 2017. Appendix A provides more information regarding sampling and survey procedures.

### Demographics

#### Gender

One hundred and five participants (51%) were male, and 102 (49%) were female.

#### Age

Participants' average age was 40.0 years old (SD=13.7). Participants between 18 and 29 years old numbered 51 (25%); 88 (43%) were between 30 and 44 years old; 47 (23%) were between 45 and 59 years old, and 21 (10%) were over 60 years old.

#### Education

Over half of participants (126, 61%) had either a Bachelor's degree or higher; 57 (28%) attended some college; 16 (8%) finished High school; and the remaining 8 (4%) had not graduated High school.

#### Race/Ethnicity

A plurality of participants (91, 44%) identified themselves as “White, non-Hispanic”; 50 (24%) said they were “Other, non-Hispanic”; 32 (16%) said they were Black, non-Hispanic; 28 (14%) said they were Hispanic; and 6 (3%) said they were of mixed lineage.

### Household Income and Employment

Participants were mostly middle class. Fifty-seven participants (28%) reported household income of less than 35,000 per year; 52 participants (30%) reported income between 35,000 and 75,000 per year, and the remaining 98 (42%) reported income over 75,000 per year.

Most participants were working, either as a paid employee (133, 64%) or self-employed (20, 10%). The remaining 54 (24%) were not working because they were disabled (3, 1%), retired (10, 5%), laid off (1, 1%) or for other reasons (21, 10%).

### Marital Status

Most participants were married (127, 61%). Six (3%) were widowed; 15 (7%) were divorced; 2 (1%) were separated; 12 (6%) were living with a partner. Forty-five participants (22%) were never married.

### Muslim Religious Tradition

Sunni Muslims comprised the largest proportion of the sample (95, 46%); 29 (14%) identified as Shi'a; 65 (31%) said they were "Muslim, non-specific"; and 14 (7%) said they were "another tradition."

## Opinion Results

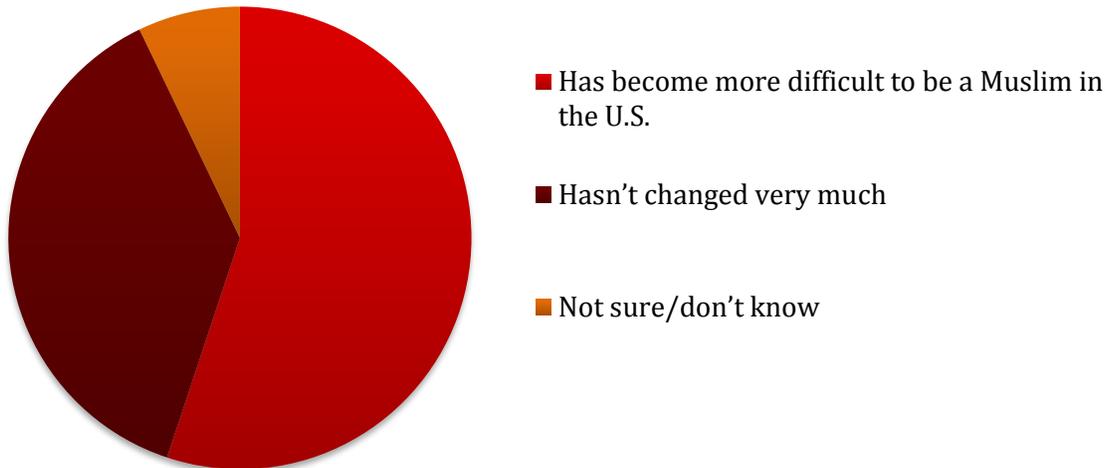
### Perceived Discrimination

In waves 4 and 5 of the Muslim survey and in the present Wave 7 we included three questions about perceived discrimination experienced by U.S. Muslims because of their faith. These questions asked about how difficult it has become to be a Muslim in the United States, whether people acted suspicious toward respondents because of respondents' Muslim faith, and whether respondents were called offensive names because they were Muslims. Below are frequencies of responses to each of the discrimination questions.

*In the past twelve months, has it become more difficult to be a Muslim in the U.S., or hasn't it changed very much?*

1. Has become more difficult to be a Muslim in the U.S. (112, 54%)
2. Hasn't changed very much (76, 37%)
3. Not sure/don't know (15, 7%)

**In the past twelve months, has it become more difficult to be a Muslim in the U.S., or hasn't it changed very much?**

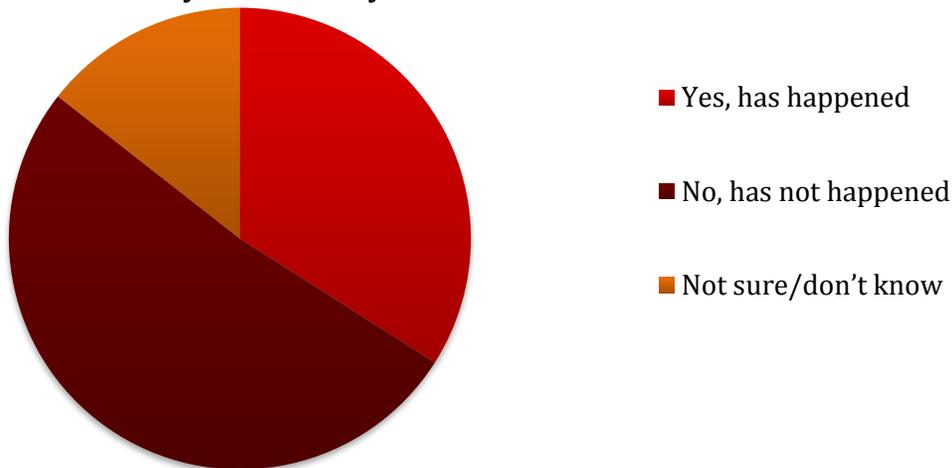


Over half of participants reported that it has become more difficult to be a Muslim in the United States in the past 12 months. About one third said it has not changed very much.

*In the past twelve months, have people acted as if they are suspicious of you because you are a Muslim?*

1. Yes, has happened (68, 33%)
2. No, has not happened (104, 50%)
3. Not sure/don't know (29, 14%)

**In the past twelve months, have people acted as if they are suspicious of you because you are a Muslim?**

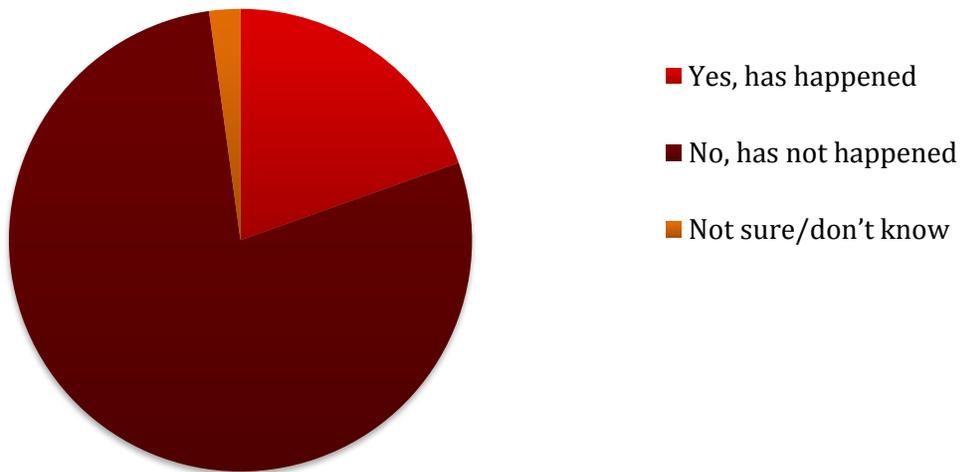


About one third of participants report having experienced suspicious treatment from others because of their Muslim faith. About half said this has not happened to them.

*In the past twelve months, have you been called offensive names because you are a Muslim?*

1. Yes, has happened (38, 18%)
2. No, has not happened (149, 72%)
3. Not sure/don't know (16, 8%)

**In the past twelve months, have you been called offensive names because you are a Muslim?**



About two thirds of participants said they have not been called offensive names because they were Muslims; about one in five Muslims reported having had that experience.

Results for the three discrimination items, as just described, are very similar to results using the same three items in Wave 5: Wave 7 showed 54%, 33%, and 18% saying Yes to these items, compared with 49%, 27%, and 19% in Wave 5.

The three Wave 7 discrimination items were analyzed together as a scale. A reliability analysis showed that the three-item discrimination scale had good internal reliability (Cronbach’s alpha =.69). Thus a scale was calculated by averaging across the three items. The resulting Discrimination scale had a mean of 2.18, SD=.70.

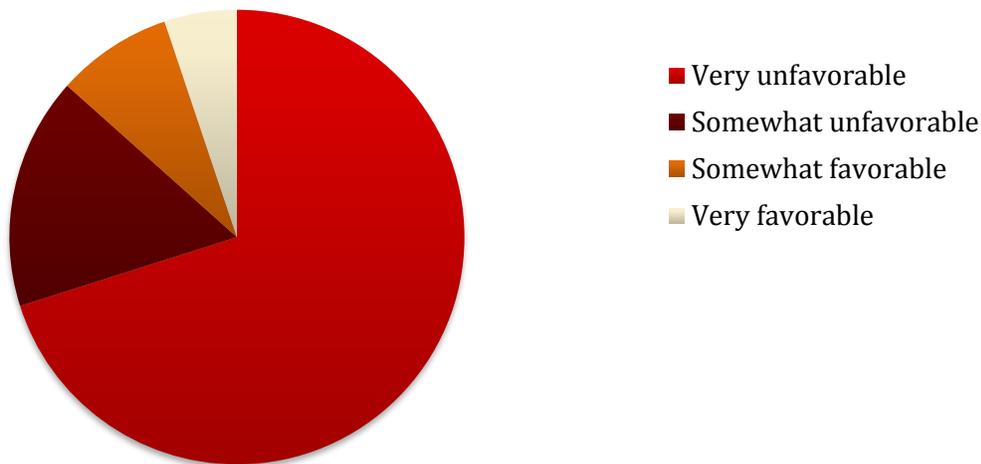
**Opinions of ISIS and fighting in Syria**

The Wave 7 survey included three questions regarding respondents’ opinions of ISIS and the conflict in Syria. Strong majorities of U.S. Muslims have a negative opinion of ISIS and disapprove of U.S. Muslims going to join ISIS, but opinions of travelling to Syria to fight Assad are more varied. The questions with responses are discussed below.

*Overall, do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)?*

1. Very unfavorable (140, 68%)
2. Somewhat unfavorable (33, 16%)
3. Somewhat favorable (17, 8%)
4. Very favorable (11, 5%)

**Overall, do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)?**



About two thirds of U.S. Muslims report a “very unfavorable” opinion of ISIS; only a small proportion (about five percent) have “very favorable” opinion of ISIS.

This question was also asked in Waves 4 through 6 of polling. While Waves 4 through 6 had largely similar results, Wave 7 results show some moderation of public opinion towards ISIS, as shown in Table 1 below. Notably, “very unfavorable” opinion of ISIS decreased by 10 percent between Wave 6 and Wave 7, while responses of “somewhat favorable” increased by three percent.

**Table 1: Changes in Opinions about ISIS, Waves 4-7**

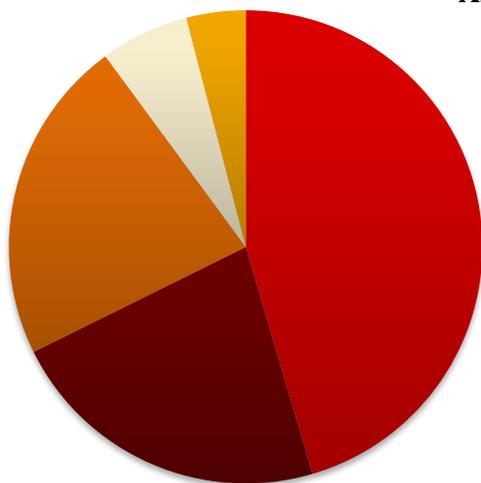
|                             | Wave 7 | Wave 6 | Wave 5 | Wave 4 |
|-----------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| <b>Very unfavorable</b>     | 68%    | 76%    | 77%    | 80%    |
| <b>Somewhat unfavorable</b> | 16%    | 13%    | 16%    | 11%    |
| <b>Somewhat favorable</b>   | 8%     | 5%     | 5%     | 4%     |
| <b>Very favorable</b>       | 5%     | 4%     | 3%     | 5%     |

The survey included two questions about Muslims travelling to Syria to fight in the conflict there.

*How do you feel about Muslims going to Syria to fight against Bashar al-Assad?*

1. Never thought about it (93, 45%)
2. U.S. Muslims should not get involved in fighting against Al Assad (45, 22%)
3. I would not do it myself, but I would not condemn anyone who did (45, 22%)
4. It’s morally justified to go to fight against Al Assad (12, 6%)
5. Joining the jihad in Syria is required for any Muslim who can do it (9, 4%)

**How do you feel about Muslims going to Syria to fight against Bashar al-Assad?**



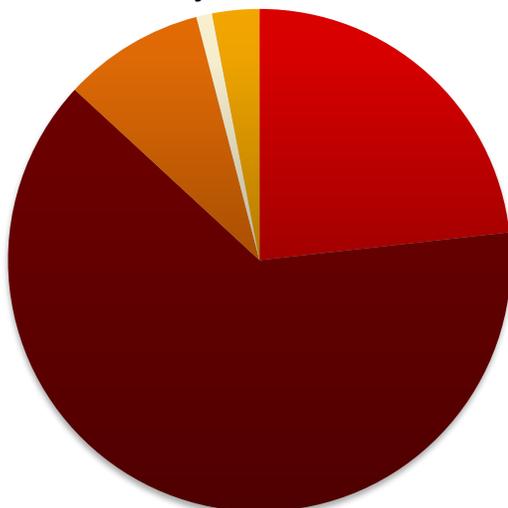
- Never thought about it
- U.S. Muslims should not get involved in fighting against Al Assad
- I would not do it myself, but I would not condemn anyone who did
- It's morally justified to go to fight against Al Assad
- Joining the jihad in Syria is required for any Muslim who can do it

About one in five participants say U.S. Muslims should not get involved in fighting against Bashar al-Assad in Syria. Another fifth of participants said they would not do it themselves but would not condemn anyone who did.

*How do you feel about U.S. Muslims going to Syria to join ISIS?*

1. Never thought about it (47, 23%)
2. U.S. Muslims should not join ISIS (130, 63%)
3. I would not do it myself, but I would not condemn anyone who did (18, 9%)
4. It is morally justified to join ISIS (2, 1%)
5. Joining ISIS is required for any Muslim who can do it (6, 3%)

**How do you feel about U.S. Muslims going to Syria to join ISIS?**



- Never thought about it
- U.S. Muslims should not join ISIS
- I would not do it myself, but I would not condemn anyone who did
- It is morally justified to join ISIS
- Joining ISIS is required for any Muslim who can do it

Nearly two thirds of respondents believe that American Muslims should not join ISIS; only a small minority support this radical behavior.

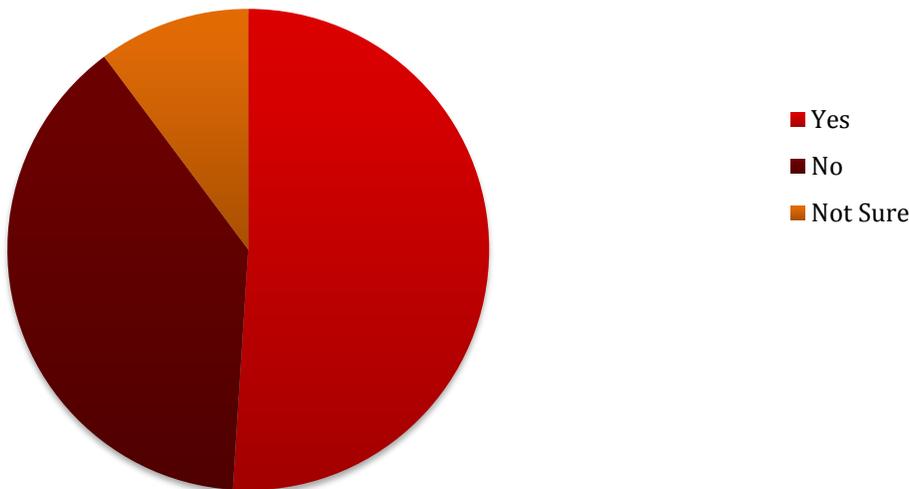
**Opinions about Islam Polity and U.S. Policies**

The survey included two questions about the idea of a “United States of Islam” and three questions focused on U.S. foreign policy. About half of U.S. Muslims have heard of the idea of a United States of Islam, and about two thirds support this idea.

*Some people say that Muslims living in predominantly Muslim countries should join together in a kind of “United States of Islam” stretching from Morocco to Indonesia. Have you ever heard of this idea?*

- 1. Yes (103, 50%)
- 2. No (79, 38%)
- 3. Not sure (21, 10%)

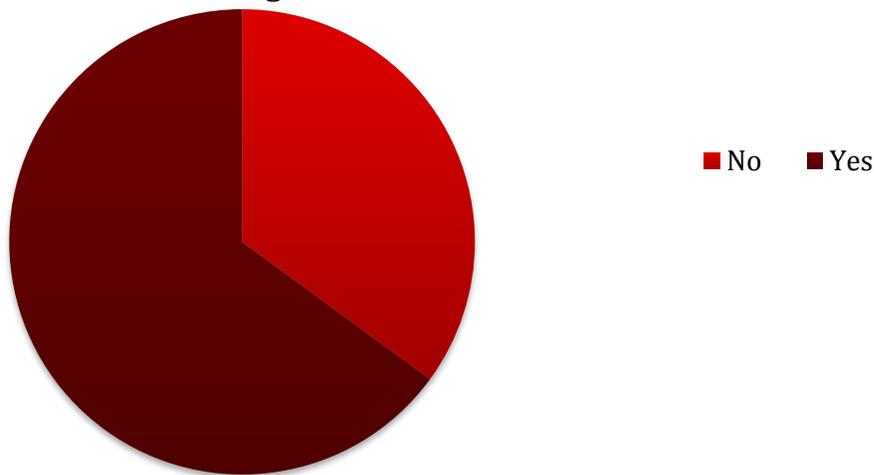
**Have you heard of the idea of a "United States of Islam"?**



*Whether or not you have heard of this idea before now, do you personally agree with this idea?*

- 1. Yes (71, 34%)
- 2. No (131, 63%)

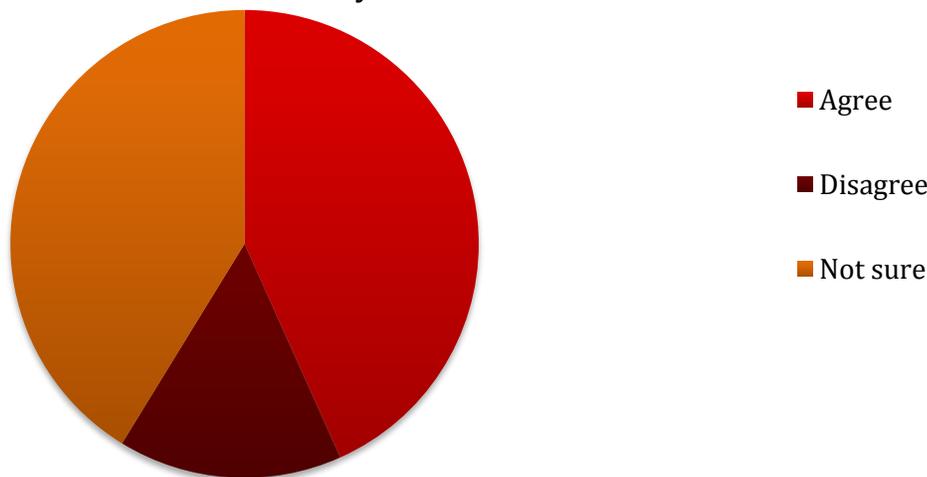
**Whether or not you have heard of this idea before now, do you personally agree with this idea?**



*Some people say that U.S. foreign policies are dictated by Jewish interests. How do you feel about this?*

1. Agree (87, 42%)
2. Disagree (31, 15%)
3. Not sure (83, 40%)

**Some people say that U.S. foreign policies are dictated by Jewish interests. How do you feel about this?**



About two-fifths of U.S. Muslims believe that the U.S. foreign policies are controlled by Jewish interests. Only 15 percent disagree with this idea. A relatively high percentage (40%) are not sure.

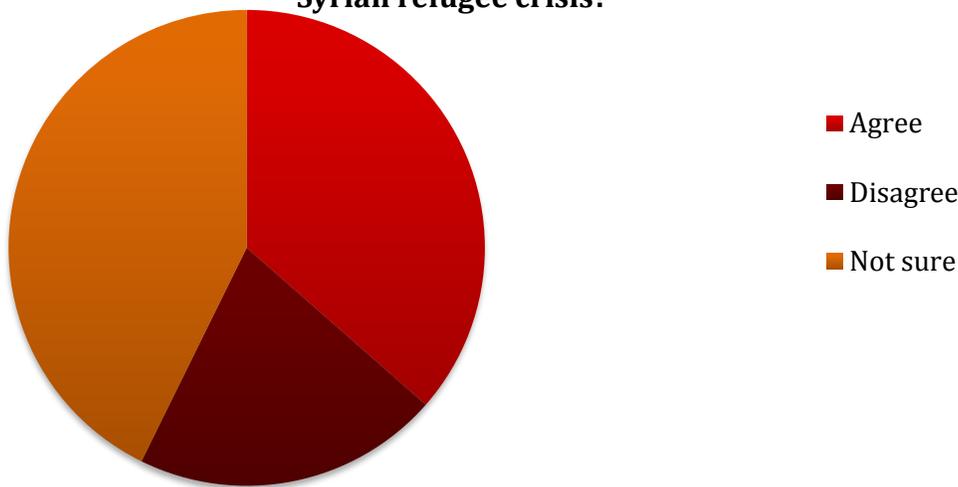
About one third of U.S. Muslims believe the United States and allies are responsible for the Syrian refugee crisis. About one in five disagrees with this idea. Over half of participants expressed support for the idea

of admitting thousands of Syrian refugees into the United States. About one in 10 opposed admitting Syrian refugees to the United States. The complete breakdown of answers for these two questions follow.

*Some believe that the U.S. and its Western allies are responsible for the Syrian refugee crisis, in which millions of Syrians have fled their country. Do you agree or disagree?*

1. Agree U.S. and its allies are responsible (73, 35%)
2. Disagree (43, 20%)
3. Not sure/don't know (84, 41%)

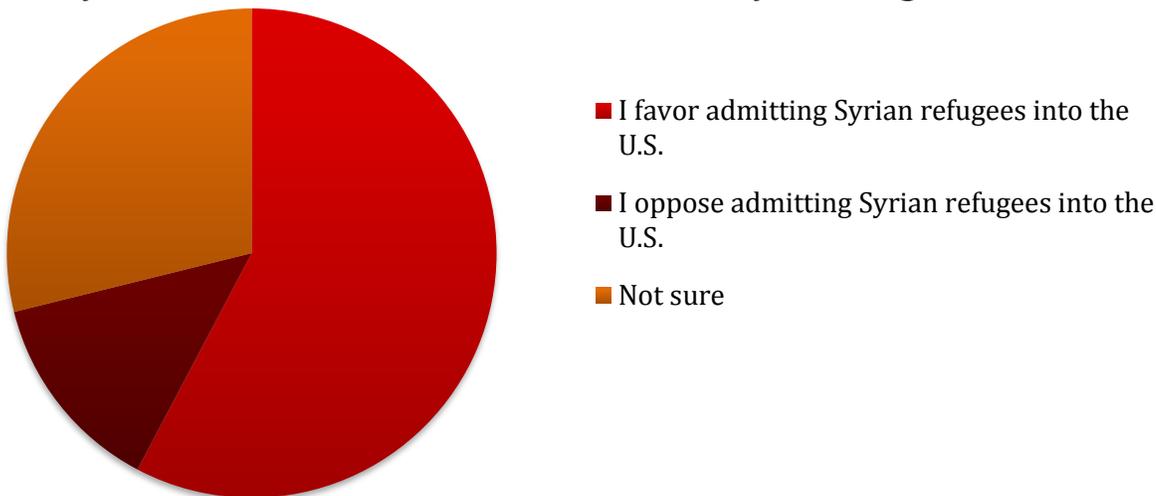
**Do you believe that the U.S. and its Western allies are responsible for the Syrian refugee crisis?**



*Some believe that the U.S. should admit thousands of Syrian refugees, others oppose admitting Syrian refugees because some may be terrorists. What do you think?*

1. I favor admitting Syrian refugees into the U.S. (116, 56%)
2. I oppose admitting Syrian refugees into the U.S. (27, 13%)
3. Not sure/don't know (58, 28%)

**Do you think the U.S. should admit thousands of Syrian refugees?**



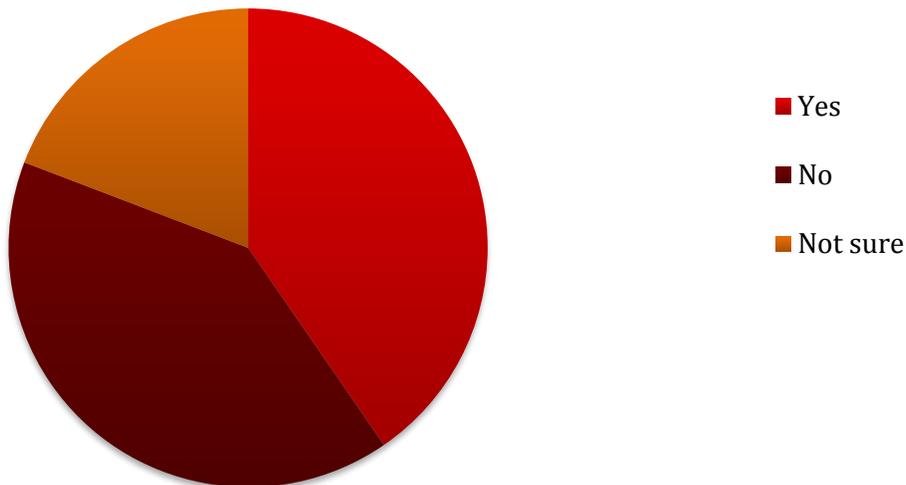
**Opinions about the War on Terrorism and Suicide Bombing**

The survey also included several questions regarding the war on terrorism (including a question regarding a parent informing on his son) and asked about support for suicide terrorism. Overall, U.S. Muslims continue to demonstrate low levels of radical opinion: only a minority view the war on terrorism as a war against Islam, few support suicide bombing, and few disagree that a father should inform authorities about his son’s radicalization. The questions and distribution of answers for each question follow.

*Do you feel the war on terrorism is a war against Islam?*

1. Yes (83, 40%)
2. No (82, 40%)
3. Not sure/don’t know (39, 19%)

**Do you feel the war on terrorism is a war against Islam?**



Two out of five U.S. Muslims agree that the war on terrorism is a war against Islam, and the same proportion disagreed with this idea. The remainder were not sure.

*On September 19, 2016, a U.S. Muslim, Ahman Khan Rahami, was arrested after a shootout with police in Linden, NJ. He is accused of planning bombings in New York City and in New Jersey. His own father Mohammad Rahami called the FBI in 2014, two years before the alleged attacks, and told the authorities his son might be a “terrorist” and to “keep an eye on him.” Do you think the father did the right thing?*

1. Yes (161, 78%)
2. No (16, 8%)
3. Not sure (25, 12%)

**Do you think the father did the right thing?**

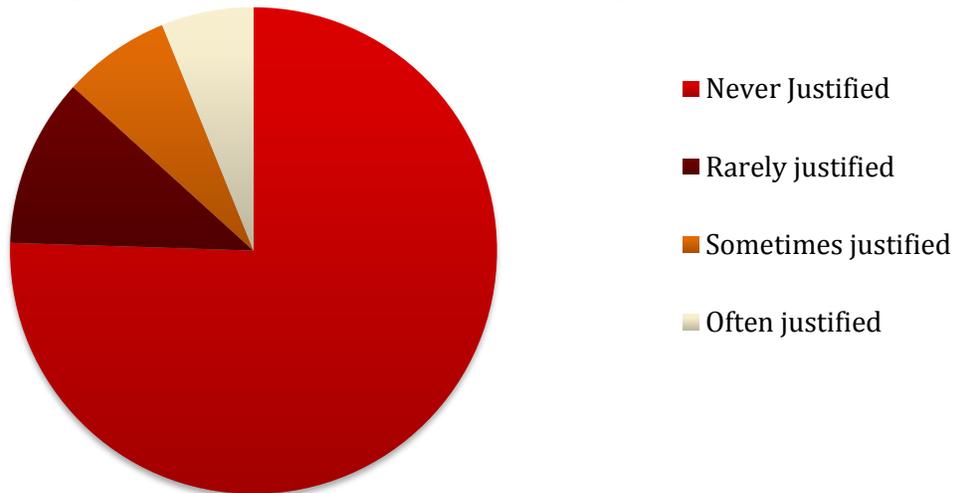


A strong majority of U.S. Muslims support the father who turned in his son to the authorities because of the son’s suspected radicalization. About four-fifths of our sample said the father did the right thing; only eight percent said the father was wrong to do it.

*Some people think that suicide bombing and other forms of violence against civilian targets are justified in order to defend Islam from its enemies. Other people believe that, no matter what the reason, this kind of violence is never justified. Do YOU PERSONALLY feel that this kind of violence is often justified to defend Islam, sometimes justified, rarely justified, or never justified?*

1. Never justified (153, 74%)
2. Rarely justified (22, 11%)
3. Sometimes justified (14, 7%)
4. Often justified (31, 6%)

**Do you personally agree that suicide bombing is justified?**



About four fifths of U.S. Muslims oppose suicide bombing as a tactic. Only a small minority (about one in 10) of U.S. Muslims say the tactic is sometimes or often justified.

### Analysis

#### **Alienation and Depression**

A recent study indicated that youth who feel alienated and rejected by their peers are especially likely to lash out against them by acting aggressively.<sup>2</sup> This result led us to consider the possibility that perceived alienation may also relate to political radicalization, especially for cases of lone-wolf terrorism.<sup>3</sup> Indeed we earlier suggested a possible profile of lone-wolf terrorists as disconnected-disordered, where our understanding of disconnection was the absence or loss of social ties that some have described as alienation.<sup>4</sup> Our Wave 6 poll of U.S. Muslims thus included the five highest-loading items from the Maddi et al. Alienation scale.<sup>5</sup> A number of questions about radical opinions in Wave 6 correlated with the Alienation scale that was computed from the five items. Therefore, in Wave 7 we again included the same

<sup>2</sup> Reijntjes, A., Thomaes, S., Bushman, B. J., Boelen, P. A., de Castro, B. O., & Telch, M. J. (2010). The outcast-lash-out effect in youth: Alienation increases aggression following peer rejection. *Psychological Science, 21*(10), 1394-1398.

<sup>3</sup> Spaaij, R. (2010). The enigma of lone wolf terrorism: An assessment. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 33*(9), 854-870.

<sup>4</sup> McCauley, C. & Mosklanko, S. (20??). Toward a profile of lone-wolf terrorists: What moves an individual from radical opinion to radical action? *Terrorism and Political Violence, 26*, 69-85.

<sup>5</sup> Maddi, S. R., Kobasa, S. C., & Hoover, M. (1979). An alienation test. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 19*(4), 73-76.

five items (see items 1A – 1E in Appendix, pp. 39-40 of this report).

In addition, in Wave 7 we included a two-item measure of depression.<sup>6</sup> The questions follow (see also items Q22 and Q23 in Appendix, p. 36 of this report).

*Over the past 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by little interest or pleasure in doing things?*

1. Not at all
2. Several days
3. More than half the days
4. Nearly every day

*Over the past 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by feeling down, depressed, or hopeless?*

1. Not at all
2. Several days
3. More than half the days
4. Nearly every day

A Principle Components Analysis with Oblimin rotation on the five alienation items and the two depression items produced two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0; rotation converged in three iterations. The first factor contained all five items that were used to form the Alienation scale in Wave 6; the second factor contained the two depression items introduced in Wave 7. The correlation between factors was  $r=.50$ . Reliability analysis on the five items in Factor 1 showed good inter-item reliability, Cronbach’s Alpha=.91. Likewise, reliability was good for the two items in Factor 2, Cronbach’s Alpha=.76. As a result, two new variables were calculated by averaging across the five items in Factor 1 (Alienation  $M=2.07$ ,  $SD=.78$ ) and across the two items in Factor 2 (Depression  $M=1.50$ ,  $SD=.71$ ).

**Table 2: Correlations (N) of the 5-item Alienation scale (Waves 6 and 7) and the 2-item Depression scale (Wave 7) with radicalization questions**

|   | Wave 6                  | Wave 7                  |                         |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
|   | Alienation              | Alienation              | Depression              |
| Heard of “United States of Islam”                 | $r(216) = -.20 \ p<.01$ | $r(203) = -.19 \ p<.01$ | $r(202) = -.11 \ ns$    |
| Agree with the idea of a “United States of Islam” | $r(215) = -.19 \ p=.01$ | $r(202) = -.12 \ ns$    | $r(201) = -.16 \ p=.02$ |
| Suicide bombing is justified                      | $r(214) = .22 \ p<.01$  | $r(202) = .13 \ ns$     | $r(202) = .32 \ p<.01$  |
| Positive opinion of ISIS                          | $r(211) = .17 \ p=.02$  | $r(203) = .12 \ ns$     | $r(202) = .15 \ p=.03$  |

<sup>6</sup>Kroenke, K., Spitzer, R., & Williams, J. (2003). The Patient Health Questionnaire-2: Validity of a Two-Item Depression Screener. *Medical Care, (41)* 1284-1294.

Table 1 shows relationships between the five-item Alienation scale and two-item Depression scale for the four radical opinion items that showed significant correlations with the Alienation scale in Wave 6. Consistently across waves 6 and 7, two questions correlated negatively with Alienation: knowledge of the idea of a “United States of Islam” and support for this idea were associated with less alienation, though in Wave 7 the correlation between Alienation and endorsement of a United States of Islam did not reach statistical significance. Similarly, endorsement of a United States of Islam was negatively correlated with the two-item Depression scale

These results indicate that U.S. Muslims who are aware of and supportive of the idea of a “United States of Islam” feel less socially alienated and less depressed than those who do not support it. Table 1 also shows that opinion of suicide bombing and support for ISIS were positively and significantly correlated with the two-item Depression scale. These positive correlations indicate that participants who have a positive opinion of ISIS are more likely to feel depressed, as are those who think suicide bombing is justified.

The Alienation scale also correlated positively with the three-item Discrimination scale ( $r(204)=.27$ ,  $p<.01$ ; not tabled) and the Depression scale similarly correlated with the Discrimination scale ( $r(203)=.21$ ,  $p<.01$ ; not tabled). These correlations indicate that U.S. Muslims who feel more alienated and depressed are also more likely to report discrimination against Muslims.

### **Opinions about U.S. foreign policy**

Two questions about U.S. foreign policy showed a positive correlation with the Alienation scale, but no correlation with the Depression scale. Thus, belief that Jewish interests dictate U.S. foreign policy correlated  $r(201)=.18$ ,  $p=.01$  with the Alienation scale; the corresponding correlation with the Depression scale was  $r(201)=.08$ , ns. Similarly, opinions about the United States and its allies being responsible for the Syrian refugee crisis correlated  $r(200)=.18$ ,  $p=.01$ . with the Alienation scale; the corresponding correlation with the Depression scale was  $r(200)=-.01$ , ns. Therefore, more alienated U.S. Muslims have more negative opinions about U.S. foreign policy, but depression is unrelated to these opinions.

### **Opinion about going to the authorities with suspicion of terrorism**

The question about a Muslim father who turned his son in to the authorities because of suspicions of terrorism correlated negatively with the Depression scale ( $r(202)=-.19$ ,  $p<.01$ , but not with the Alienation scale,  $r(202)=-.03$ , ns. In other words, U.S. Muslims with higher scores on the Depression scale were more likely to say the father was wrong to cooperate with the authorities than were U.S. Muslims with lower scores on the Depression scale, but Alienation did not correlate with opinions on this question.

### **Opinions about suicide bombing**

Table 2 below compares percent answering “*Do you think suicide bombing is justified?*” across Wave 4, Wave 5, Wave 6 and Wave 7.

**Table 3: Percent answers to the question “Do you think suicide bombing is justified in defense of Islam?”**

|                            | Wave 4 | Wave 5 | Wave 6 | Wave 7 |
|----------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| <b>Never justified</b>     | 84     | 82     | 79     | 74     |
| <b>Rarely justified</b>    | 6      | 9      | 10     | 11     |
| <b>Sometimes justified</b> | 7      | 4      | 8      | 7      |
| <b>Often justified</b>     | 3      | 4      | 1      | 6      |

Results across four waves of our U.S. Muslim survey show that U.S. Muslims continue to hold very negative opinions about suicide bombing. However, there is a small but consistent trend observable in opinions on suicide bombing becoming less negative.

**Demographic variables**

As in previous waves, several demographic variables were predictive of radical opinions. Thus, younger participants were more likely to believe that the war on terrorism is a war on Islam ( $r(204)=-.19, p<.01$ ). Additionally, younger participants were more likely to report having been discriminated against ( $r(205)=-.28, p<.01$ ), and to feel both more alienated ( $r(205)=-.18, p=.01$ ) and more depressed ( $r(204)=-.24, p<.01$ ). Less educated participants were more likely to endorse suicide bombing as a tactic,  $r(202)=-.16, p=.03$ . Finally, males were more likely than females to report discrimination ( $r(205)=.17, p=.02$ ), to endorse suicide bombing as a tactic ( $r(202)=.23, p<.01$ ), and to know and endorse the idea of a United States of Islam ( $r(202)=.21, p<.01$ ). Thus, U.S. Muslims who are less educated and male are more likely to justify suicide bombing.

**Best predictors of justifying suicide bombing**

Using only Wave 7 data, multiple linear regression was calculated to predict opinions on suicide bombing based on discrimination, alienation, depression, age, education and gender. A significant regression equation was found ( $F(6, 195)=8.96, p<.01$ ), with an  $R^2$  of .22. More favorable opinion of suicide bombing was predicted by Depression ( $Beta=.40, p<.01$ ); gender ( $Beta=.34, p<.01$ ); discrimination ( $Beta=.25, p<.01$ ); and education ( $Beta=-.18, p=.01$ ). Alienation was not significantly predictive of suicide bombing opinions ( $Beta=-.10, ns$ ), nor was age ( $Beta=.01, ns$ ). Thus more favorable opinion of suicide bombing was related to depression, perceived discrimination, male gender and lower education: less educated males who feel depressed and discriminated against are more likely to have radical opinions on suicide bombing. It is worth noting that the two-item Depression scale introduced in Wave 7 is the single best predictor of justifying suicide bombing.

**Discussion**

**Internet Panel Polling as a Tool for Tracking Opinions**

CSTAB 2.12 (Trends in U.S. Muslim Opinion) was conceived as a two-pronged project, investigating not only U.S. Muslim opinions over time, but also the utility of quick turnaround Internet polls for this kind of research. Over the course of seven waves of Internet polling across a span of over four years, both objectives have been achieved. Important and timely data about U.S. Muslim opinions have been collected

in the immediate aftermath of significant political events such as the terrorist attacks in Paris, France and in San Bernadino, CA. Opinions about political developments such as the rise of ISIS, the Syrian refugee crisis, and the success of Donald Trump have been assessed as these events unfolded. Trends of decreased radicalization over time in the general U.S. Muslim population alongside a crystallizing radical minority have been documented.

As an alternative to traditional telephone polling, Internet polling offers the advantages of lower cost and faster turnaround. These advantages can be especially useful for assessing reactions to unfolding political events or when longer-term changes require repeated assessment to observe trends.

In addition, speaking to the utility of Internet polls, a recent study from the London School of Economics found that Internet polls were more accurate in predicting Britain's vote to exit the European Union ("Brexit") than were traditional telephone polls.<sup>7</sup> Using Internet polling to study U.S. Muslim opinions may similarly be more reliable than using the more expensive and slower telephone polling. For security practitioners who are the target audience for our work, the faster, cheaper and more reliable opinion data gathered through the CSTAB project are a win-win-win alternative to telephone polling.

We believe that Internet polling might also prove useful for tracking radical opinions relating to both right-wing minorities (Neo-Nazis, Sovereign Citizen movement) and left-wing minorities (Animal Liberation Front, Environmental Liberation Front).

### **Political Correlates of Alienation and Depression—Theoretical Issues**

The most interesting and important results of our Wave 7 poll are the relations between the Alienation and Depression scales—two psychological measures—and political opinions and perceptions of U.S. Muslims. We begin by summarizing these relations.

The Alienation scale correlates .50 with the Depression scale, but as the reliabilities of the two measures are much higher—alphas of .91 and .76—we can be confident that the two scales, despite their correlation, are measuring substantially different concepts.

In Wave 7, Alienation was significantly related to age (younger more alienated), perception of discrimination against Muslims, seeing U.S. foreign policy determined by Jewish interests, and seeing the United States and its allies responsible for the Syrian refugee crisis.

In Wave 7, Depression was significantly related to age (younger more depressed), perception of discrimination against Muslims, believing the father was wrong to turn in his son for terrorist sympathies, more positive views of ISIS, and more justification of suicide bombing.

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<sup>7</sup> Clarke, H.D., Goodwin, M. & Whiteley, P. Leave was always in the lead: why the polls got the referendum result wrong. <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2016/07/12/leave-always-lead/>

In our report on the results of Wave 6 we noted that, so far as we knew, the Alienation measure was the first psychological measure to be related to radical political opinions among U.S. Muslims. Wave 7 confirms and extends this result, as Depression appears to be more strongly related to more opinions than Alienation. In regression analysis, Depression was the strongest predictor of justifying suicide bombing.

There is much yet unknown about how and why Alienation and Depression are related to political opinions of U.S. Muslims, but the results of Waves 6 and 7 are substantial enough to warrant at least an initial attempt to make theoretical sense of these results.

As noted earlier, we included a measure of Alienation in Wave 6 because of results of a previous study in which we tried to learn about the characteristics of lone-wolf terrorists by looking for the common characteristics of U.S. assassins and U.S. school attackers.<sup>8</sup> Both groups perpetrate planned and grievance-fueled violence, and the great majority of these perpetrators act alone. Despite demographic dissimilarities, several common characteristics emerged, notably that perpetrators were likely to be socially disconnected loners and to have some history of mental health problems, especially depression. We suggested that a *disconnected-disordered* profile might describe at least one kind of lone-wolf terrorist.<sup>9</sup>

Thus we came to the possibility that socially disconnected individuals might be more likely to have radical ideas, and that, in particular, U.S. Muslims suffering from social disconnection might be more likely to have radical opinions. In seeking a measure of disconnection we discovered the sociology of alienation, including a measure of alienation with questions that asked directly about feeling lonely:

- *Hardly anyone I know is interested in how I feel inside;*
- *I often feel that my family is not as close to me as I would like; and*
- *I often feel alone when I'm with other people.*

These items make clear that the Alienation measure introduced in Wave 6 is theoretically a measure of social disconnection.

Results linking Alienation with radical opinion in Wave 6 led us to try in Wave 7 a measure of the other part of the disconnected-disordered profile: a measure of Depression. The pattern of opinion correlates of the Alienation and Depression scales then provided some validation of the disconnected-disordered profile as related to radicalization. Beyond the scope of this report, we believe that the Alienation results also support the usefulness of the closely related concept of *unfreezing*, which we introduced as an individual-level mechanism of radicalization in our 2011 book, *Friction*.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> McCauley, C., Moskalkenko, S., & Van Son, B. (2013). Characteristics of lone-wolf violent offenders: A comparison of assassins and school attackers. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 7(1).

<sup>9</sup> McCauley, C., & Moskalkenko, S. (2014). Toward a profile of lone wolf terrorists: What moves an individual from radical opinion to radical action. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 26(1), 69-85.

<sup>10</sup> McCauley, C. & Moskalkenko, S. (2017). *Friction: How conflict radicalizes them and us.* New York, Oxford University Press. (Chapter 7)

Of course radical ideas in an opinion poll are importantly different from radical actions and violence perpetrated by a lone-wolf terrorist. We do not believe that high scorers on our Depression measure are suffering from clinical depression that would qualify for a psychiatric diagnosis. But we do think it is possible that a milder profile of disconnection and emotional distress may be associated with radical ideas in a way that parallels the profile of disconnected-disordered associated with lone-wolf terrorists.

The convergence of survey research results with case history materials is heartening progress, but it is important to notice how much remains unknown about the emerging patterns linking negative psychological states with radical opinions. We do not know why alienation/disconnection is related to depression/distress. It is possible that disconnection produces depression, or perhaps depression produces social disconnection, or perhaps both directions are possible.

Also we do not know whether additional and longer measures of depression would produce stronger correlations with political opinions—or even the same correlations. We do not know whether measures assessing other negative feelings—-anxiety, paranoia, humiliation—might provide additional insight into the relationship between feelings and political radicalization. We do not know whether the linkage between negative feelings and radical opinions found with U.S. Muslims might be found with other religious groups or political subcultures.

What is clear, however, is that negative feelings and emotions are related to political opinions, including radical opinions, of U.S. Muslims. We have been urging more attention to emotional experience in research on radicalization and terrorism,<sup>11</sup> as have others.<sup>12</sup> With the disconnected-disordered profile for lone-wolf terrorists and the milder disconnected-distressed profile for radical opinions now before us, it is time to consider some practical implications.

### **Political Correlates of Alienation and Depression—Practice Issues**

Counter-terrorism efforts often focus on ideology while overlooking the power of feelings. Consider, for instance, the first line of the Fact Sheet for the 2015 U.S. initiative for Countering Violent Extremism: “This week, the White House is convening a three-day summit on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) to bring together local, federal, and international leaders – including President Obama and foreign ministers – to discuss concrete steps the United States and its partners can take to develop community-oriented approaches to counter hateful extremist ideologies that radicalize, recruit or incite to violence.”<sup>13</sup> The most recent CVE Strategic Implementation Plan, dated October 2016, has a similar definition of the problem: “The Strategy defines violent extremists as ‘individuals who support or commit ideologically-motivated violence to further political goals.’”<sup>14</sup> The handicap here is that an initiative focused on bad

<sup>11</sup> McCauley, C. (2017). Toward a psychology of humiliation in asymmetric conflict. *American Psychologist*, 72(3), 255.

<sup>12</sup> Matsumoto, D., Frank, M. G., & Hwang, H. C. (2015). The role of intergroup emotions in political violence. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 24(5), 369-373.

<sup>13</sup> The White House, Office of the Press Secretary. (2015). FACT SHEET: The White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/02/18/fact-sheet-white-house-summit-countering-violent-extremism>

<sup>14</sup> Executive Office of the President of the United States. (October 2016). Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States.

ideas—ideologies—may have difficulty recognizing and responding to the power of bad feelings.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the handicap represented by defining CVE in terms of ideology, it is notable that the October 2016 Strategic Implementation Plan is all about building community trust and community connection. Particularly interesting in this regard is **Task 3.2 - Support community-based multidisciplinary intervention models**.

Local intervention teams will play a critical role in assessing the needs of individuals who may be radicalizing to violent extremism; developing appropriate support plans tailored to the individual; and making resources available to increase resiliency. Collaboration among relevant experts, stakeholders, and civil society organizations is key to ensuring that at-risk individuals have the resources needed to be redirected from violence when necessary. Many jurisdictions across the Nation already have multi-disciplinary teams in place to identify and address a variety of complex issues, including gang violence, potential active shooters, and self-destructive behaviors. These teams can be led by a variety of practitioners, including, but not limited to, behavioral and mental health professionals, local law enforcement officials, and faith-based and other non-government representatives. The CVE Task Force will coordinate support to existing programs using research, best practices, and other resources. Where such programs do not exist, DOJ, in coordination with Federal partners, will facilitate discussions with and among local stakeholders to explore the potential for developing community-led intervention programs (p.11).

It seems possible that the multidisciplinary teams envisioned in **Task 3.2**, led by a variety of practitioners, including but not limited to behavioral and mental health professionals, local law enforcement officials, and other non-government representatives, might look out for disconnected and distressed young Muslims who, according to our results, are most at-risk for radical opinions.

If feelings of Alienation and Depression are indeed related to political opinions, then several potentially useful directions are opened for counter-terrorism efforts. One possibility would be to narrow the attentions of security services from all those expressing radical ideas to the few who combine radical ideas with a personal profile of disconnection and emotional distress. Considerable savings in attention may be possible, in addition to avoiding the backlash likely to arise from a community reacting to government surveillance of its religious institutions and bookstores.<sup>16</sup>

The disconnected-distressed profile also suggests a potentially fruitful direction for deradicalization. Specifically, mental health practitioners working with communities at risk of political radicalization might be a useful resource for security services in their efforts to track levels of mass radicalization in opinion and to prevent individual radicalization to action. Another possibly useful direction in reducing

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[https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/2016\\_strategic\\_implementation\\_plan\\_empowering\\_local\\_partners\\_prev.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/2016_strategic_implementation_plan_empowering_local_partners_prev.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> McCauley, C. & Moskalenko, S. (2017). Understanding political radicalization: The two pyramids model. *American Psychologist*, 72(3), 205-216.

<sup>16</sup> Sageman, M. (2016). *Misunderstanding Terrorism*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

radicalization could be services and events designed to build social networks and reduce alienation in communities at risk. Again, this direction seems consonant with the aims of **Task 3.2**.

In short, taking feelings and emotions seriously as predictors of radicalization can open a new avenue for counter-terrorism efforts, one that would rely more on mental health services and community building than on surveillance of communities at risk of radical opinions and violent action.

## Appendix A: Sample selection, composition, and sample weights.

The sample was recruited and data were collected by KnowledgePanel<sup>® b</sup> that is currently operated by the international corporation GfK. Below is the description of sample selection procedures and data collecting procedures as performed by KnowledgePanel<sup>®</sup>.

### Panel Recruitment Methodology

When GfK began recruiting in 1999 as Knowledge Networks, the company established the first online research panel (now called KnowledgePanel<sup>®</sup>) based on probability sampling covering both the online and offline populations in the United States. Panel members are recruited through national random samples, originally by telephone and now almost entirely by postal mail. Households are provided with access to the Internet and a netbook computer, if needed.

Unlike Internet convenience panels, also known as “opt-in” panels, that include only individuals with Internet access who volunteer themselves for research, KnowledgePanel recruitment has used dual sample frames to construct the existing panel. As a result, panel members come from listed and unlisted telephone numbers, telephone and non-telephone households, and cell phone only households, as well as households with and without Internet access, which creates a representative sample. Only persons sampled through these probability-based techniques are eligible to participate on KnowledgePanel. Unless invited to do so as part of these national samples, no one on their own can volunteer to be on the panel.

The target population consists of the following: non-institutionalized adults age 18 and over residing in the United States who identify as Muslim. To sample the population, GfK sampled households from its KnowledgePanel, a probability based web panel designed to be representative of the United States.

The data collection field period was as follows: 29 March 2017 to 11 April 2017.

### Poll Sampling from Knowledge Panel

Once panel members are recruited and profiled, they become eligible for selection for client polls. In most cases, the specific poll sample represents a simple random sample from the panel, for example, a general population poll. Customized stratified random sampling based on profile data can also be conducted as required by the study design.

The general sampling rule is to assign no more than one poll per week to individual members. Allowing for rare exceptions during some weeks, this limits a member’s total assignments per month to four or six polls. In certain cases, a poll sample calls for prescreening, that is, members are drawn from a subsample of the panel (such as females, Republicans, grocery shoppers, etc.). In such cases, care is taken to ensure that all subsequent poll samples drawn that week are selected in such a way as to result in a sample that remains representative of the panel distributions. For this poll, a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults (18 and older) who identify as Muslims was selected.

## **Poll Administration**

Once assigned to a poll, members receive a notification email letting them know there is a new poll available for them to take. This email notification contains a link that sends them to the poll questionnaire. No login name or password is required. The field period depends on the client's needs and can range anywhere from a few hours to several weeks. After three days, automatic email reminders are sent to all non-responding panel members in the sample. If email reminders do not generate a sufficient response, an automated telephone reminder call can be initiated. The usual protocol is to wait at least three to four days after the email reminder before calling. To assist panel members with their poll taking, each individual has a personalized "home page" that lists all the polls that were assigned to that member and have yet to be completed.

The typical poll commitment for panel members is one poll per week or four per month with duration of 10 to 15 minutes per poll. In the case of longer polls, an additional incentive is typically provided.

## Appendix B. Poll questionnaire

2016 Survey of American Muslims – Wave 7  
March 2017  
WBS # 310.209.01183.1

Account Executive: Larry Osborn

Project Manager: Ryan Tully

Contracted Length of Interview: 15 minutes

Start Fieldwork: 03/29/2017

End Fieldwork: 04/11/2017

Document Name: 310.209.01183.1\_Bryn Mawr\_Spring Survey of American Muslims\_Wave 7\_Main\_Final Questionnaire.docx

### I. SAMPLE VARIABLES

- KP standard demographics

### II. QUOTA CHECK BASED ON SAMPLE VARIABLES

None.

### III. INTRODUCTION

Base: Ask all

**R1. [S; Prompt Once]**

What is your religion?

1. Catholic
2. Evangelical or Protestant Christian (Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Pentecostal, Church of Christ, etc.)
3. Jehovah's Witness
4. Mormon
5. Jewish
6. Islam/Muslim
7. Greek or Russian Orthodox
8. Hindu
9. Buddhist
10. Unitarian (Universalist)
11. Other Christian religion, please specify: **[small text box]**
12. Other non-Christian religion, please specify: **[small text box]**
13. No religion

**Scripter: Terminate if R1 does not equal 6 'Islam/Muslim'**

### V. MAIN QUESTIONNAIRE

*SCRIPTER: Use default instruction text for each question type unless otherwise specified.*

*SCRIPTER: Do not prompt on all questions.*

*SCRIPTER: Use default instruction text for each question type unless otherwise specified.*

**Base: Ask all**

**Intro. [D]**

You may have previously participated in a survey of U.S. Muslims earlier this year. While some of the questions found in this survey may be similar or identical to the previous survey, this is a new survey and we wish to obtain your current views and opinions on the questions asked.

Newspapers have had a lot to say about what U.S. Muslims think—usually on the basis of a few interviews. Professor Clark McCauley (Bryn Mawr College) hopes to bring better understanding of U.S. Muslims with this poll, designed to get a snapshot of how Muslims experience life in America. There are two kinds of questions: questions about your own opinions and experiences, and questions about your best guess about the opinions and experiences of other Muslims. There are no right or wrong answers. As always in an opinion poll, you may skip any item and you may quit the poll at any point.

Thank you in advance for completing this survey. Your input is very much appreciated.

#### **IV. MAIN SURVEY**

**Base: Ask all**

**D1. [S]**

Do you think of yourself as African-American?

1. Yes
2. No

**Base: Ask all**

**Q1. [S]**

In the past twelve months, has it become more difficult to be a Muslim in the U.S., or hasn't it changed very much?

1. Has become more difficult to be a Muslim in the U.S.
2. Hasn't changed very much
3. Not sure/don't know

**Base: Ask all**

**Q2. [S]**

In the past twelve months, have people acted as if they are suspicious of you because you are a Muslim?

1. Yes, has happened
2. No, has not happened
3. Not sure/don't know

**Base: Ask all**

**Q3. [S]**

In the past twelve months, have you been called offensive names because you are a Muslim?

1. Yes, has happened
2. No, has not happened
3. Not sure/don't know

**SCRIPTER: Display Q4 and Q5 on the same screen.**

**Base: Ask all**

**Q4. [S]**

Some people say that Muslims living in predominantly Muslim countries would be better off if all these countries joined together in a kind of "United States of Islam" stretching from Morocco to Indonesia. Have you ever heard of this idea?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not sure

**Base: Ask all**

**Q5. [S]**

Whether or not you have heard of this idea before now, do you personally agree with this idea?

1. Yes
2. No

**Base: Ask all**

**Q6. [S]**

Some people think that suicide bombing and other forms of violence against civilian targets are justified in order to defend Islam from its enemies. Other people believe that, no matter what the reason, this kind of violence is never justified. Do YOU PERSONALLY feel that this kind of violence is often justified to defend Islam, sometimes justified, rarely justified, or never justified?

1. Never justified
2. Rarely justified
3. Sometimes justified
4. Often justified

**Base: Ask all**

**Q8. [S]**

Do you feel the war on terrorism is a war against Islam?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not sure/don't know

**Base: Ask all**

**Q10. [S]**

Overall, do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS, also known as Islamic State or IS)?

1. Very unfavorable
2. Somewhat unfavorable
3. Somewhat favorable
4. Very favorable

**Base: Ask all**

**Q14. [S]**

How do you feel about U.S. Muslims going to Syria to fight against Bashar Al Assad?

1. Never thought about it
2. U.S. Muslims should not get involved in fighting against Al Assad
3. I would not do it myself, but I would not condemn anyone who did
4. It is morally justified to go to fight against Al Assad
5. Joining the fight against Assad is required for any Muslim who can do it

**Base: Ask all**

**Q15. [S]**

How do you feel about U.S. Muslims going to Syria to join ISIS?

1. Never thought about it
2. U.S. Muslims should not join ISIS
3. I would not do it myself, but I would not condemn anyone who did
4. It is morally justified to join ISIS
5. Joining ISIS is required for any Muslim who can do it

**Base: Ask all**

**Q16. [S]**

Some people say that U.S. foreign policies are dictated by Jewish interests. How do you feel about this?

1. Agree
2. Disagree
3. Not sure

**Base: Ask all**

**Q19. [S]**

Some believe that the U.S. and its Western allies are responsible for the Syrian refugee crisis, in which millions of Syrians have fled their country. Do you agree or disagree?

1. Agree, the U.S. and its allies are responsible
2. Disagree
3. Not sure/don't know

**Base: Ask all**

**Q20. [S]**

Some believe that the U.S. should admit thousands of Syrian refugees, others oppose admitting Syrian refugees because some may be terrorists. What do you think?

1. I favor admitting Syrian refugees into the U.S.
2. I oppose admitting Syrian refugees into the U.S.
3. Not sure/don't know

**Base: Ask all****Q20A. [S]**

On September 19, 2016, a U.S. Muslim, Ahman Khan Rahami, was arrested after a shootout with police in Linden, NJ. He is accused of planning bombings in New York City and in New Jersey. His own father Mohammad Rahami called the FBI in 2014, two years before the alleged attacks, and told the authorities his son might be a "terrorist" and to "keep an eye on him." Do you think the father did the right thing?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not sure

**Base: Ask all****1A. [S]**

**The next five questions ask about how you feel in relating to others.**

Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the statement below.

I often feel alone when I'm with other people.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree

**Base: Ask all****1B. [S]**

Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the statement below.

Hardly anyone I know is interested in how I feel inside.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree

**Base: Ask all****1C. [S]**

Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the statement below.

I feel that my family is not as close to me as I would like.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree

**Base: Ask all**

**1D. [S]**

Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the statement below.

I often feel left out of things that others are doing.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree

**Base: Ask all**

**1E. [S]**

Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the statement below.

Most people don't seem to accept me when I'm just being myself.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree

**Base: Ask all**

**Q22. [S]**

Over the past 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?

Little interest or pleasure in doing things

1. Not at all
2. Several days
3. More than half the days
4. Nearly every day

**Base: Ask all**

**Q23. [S]**

Over the past 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?

Feeling down, depressed or hopeless

1. Not at all
2. Several days
3. More than half the days
4. Nearly every day

**Base: Ask all**

**Q21. [S]**

Are you Shi'a, Sunni or another tradition?

1. Shi'a
2. Sunni
3. Another tradition
4. Muslim, non-specific

*SCRIPTER: Insert KP closing question.*

**END OF QUESTIONNAIRE**

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