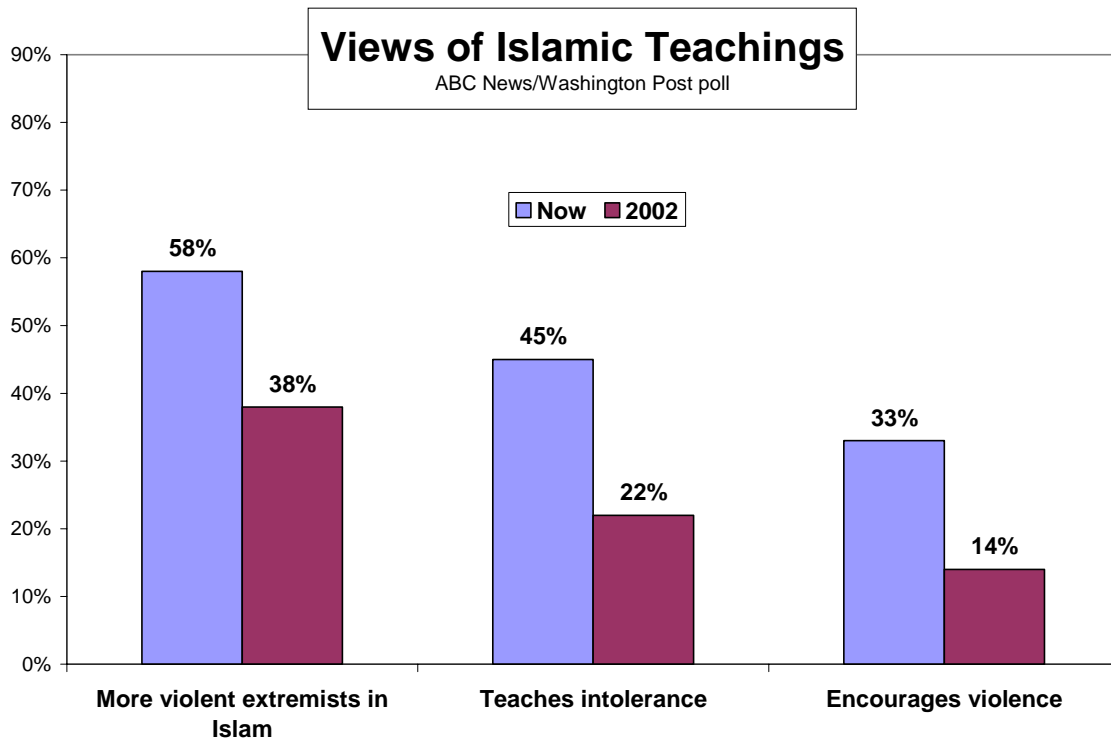


Broad Skepticism of Islam Marks Post-9/11 Sentiment

Public views of Islam are one casualty of post-9/11 conflict: Nearly six in 10 Americans think the religion is prone to violent extremism, nearly half regard it unfavorably and a remarkable one in four admit to prejudicial feelings against Muslims and Arabs alike.

Such views have worsened in the crucible of the post-9/11 world. Fifty-eight percent think there are more violent extremists within Islam than within other religions, up 20 points since early 2002. Forty-five percent think mainstream Islam doesn't teach respect for the beliefs of non-Muslims, double what it was. And a third believe mainstream Islam encourages violence against non-believers, more than double its early 2002 level.

In the most basic measure, 46 percent of Americans express a generally unfavorable opinion of Islam, a new high and again nearly double what it was in early 2002 – a troubling assessment of the world's second-largest religion, one practiced by an estimated 1.3 billion people worldwide, or about 20 percent of humanity.



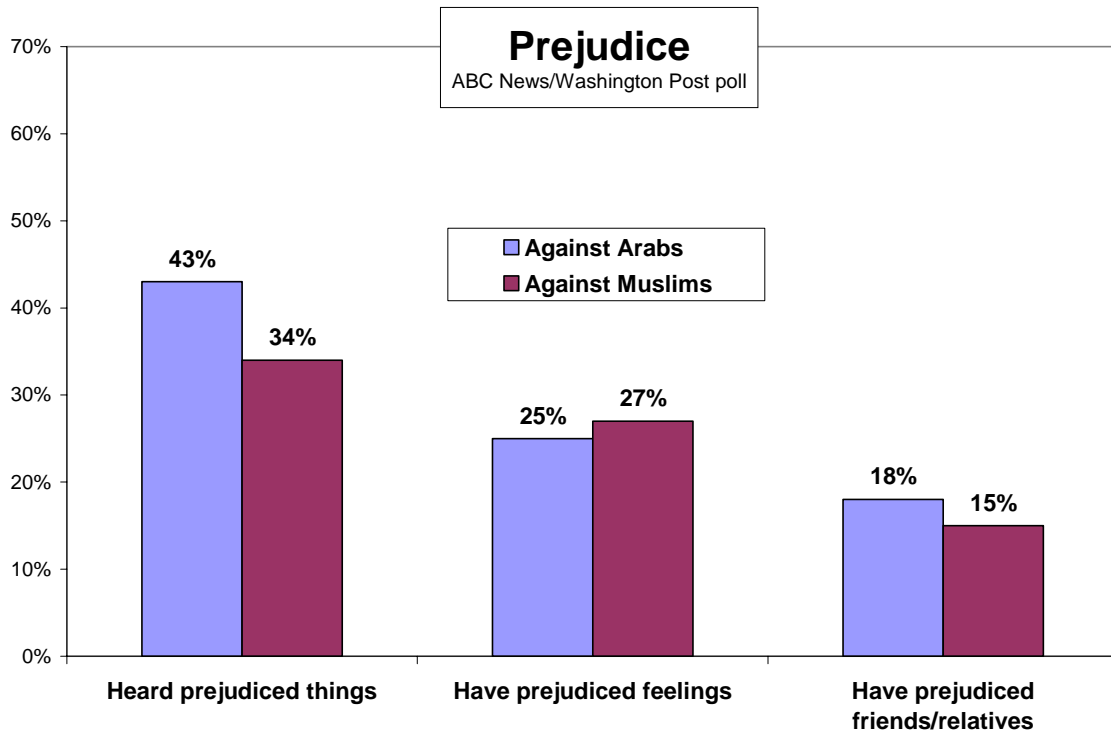
Unfamiliarity accompanies these suspicions: Nearly six in 10 Americans say they don't have a basic understanding of Islam, a number that hasn't changed substantially in recent years. Those who are more familiar with the religion are a good deal more likely to view it favorably, and to think of it as peaceful and respectful of other faiths.

	Views of Islam:		
	Generally favorable	Peaceful religion	Respects other beliefs
All	43%	54%	41%
Familiar with Islam (40%)	51	64	53
Unfamiliar with it (59%)	37	48	34

Still, while people who feel familiar with Islam regard it more favorably, they're about as likely as others to report some personal feelings of prejudice against Arabs and Muslims. Knowledge alone is not the key to tolerance.

PREJUDICE – Admissions of prejudice are not unique; in a 1999 ABC News poll about a third of Americans (whites and blacks alike) admitted at least some "racist feelings." Far fewer in a 2000 poll, six percent, admitted feelings of prejudice against Jews.

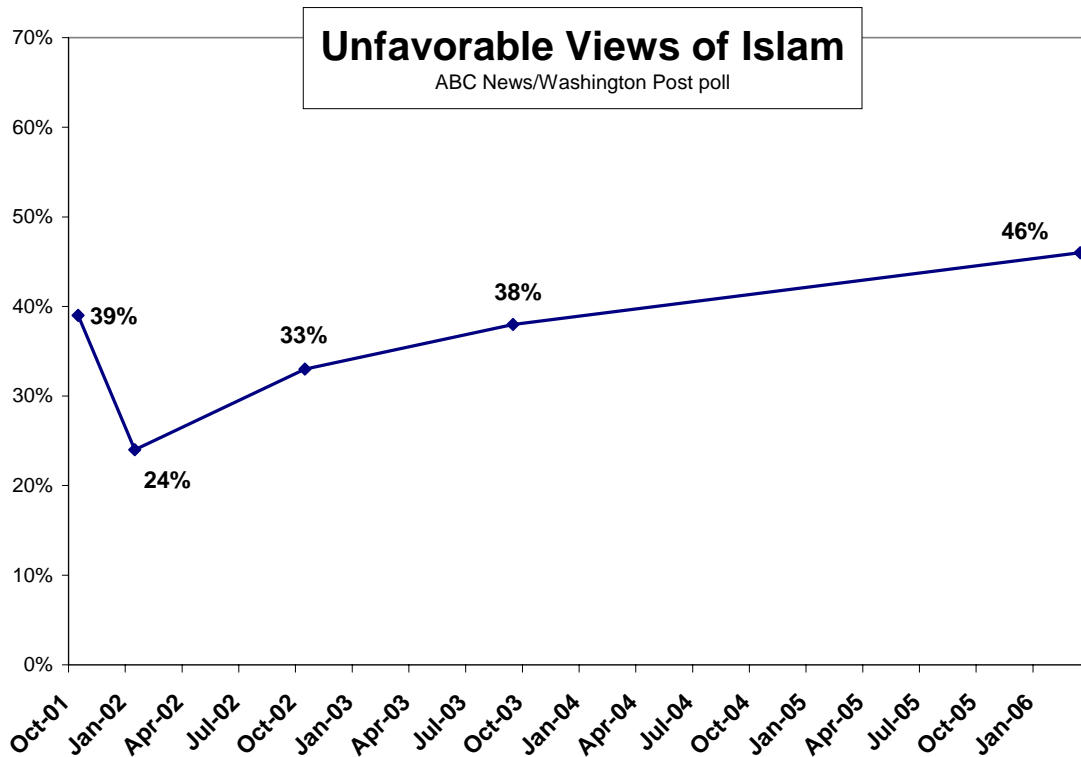
In this survey, 27 percent of Americans admit at least some feelings of prejudice against Muslims; about as many, 25 percent, say they've had prejudiced thoughts toward Arabs. There are some differences among groups; such feelings about Muslims peak among evangelical white Protestants, and among Republican men.



Such views do get expressed publicly. More than four in 10 say they've recently heard prejudiced comments against Arabs; and about a third say they've heard biased remarks against Muslims. And about one in six they say have friends or relatives who are outright prejudiced against these groups.

TREND – Not all of the recent trends have been negative. Skepticism about Islamic teachings grew mainly in 2002 and 2003, and have steadied since. And some positive views also have improved, with “undecideds” going down. For example, 41 percent now say mainstream Islam does teach respect for other faiths, compared with 31 percent in 2003. And 54 percent call it a peaceful religion; it was 46 percent in 2003.

Still, as noted, basically negative views of Islam are up: The 46 percent who hold an unfavorable view of the religion represents an eight point increase since 2003, to the most since 9/11.



There are some differences between the sexes on these questions. Fifty-two percent of men have an unfavorable view of Islam; that declines to 40 percent of women. One reason: Sixty-six percent of men think Islam has more violent extremists than other religions; fewer women, 51 percent, agree.

There also are some racial differences. Thirty percent of whites, compared with 18 percent of nonwhites, admit to feelings of prejudice against Muslims. Similarly, whites are 11 points more likely than nonwhites to admit to feelings of prejudice against Arabs.

RELIGION AND POLITICS – Attitudes about Islam are intertwined with both political and religious components. On several measures, as noted, wariness toward Islam peaks among evangelical white Protestants, about 18 percent of the U.S. population. (Muslims, by contrast, account for just about one percent.)

While 46 percent of all Americans have an unfavorable opinion of Islam overall, among evangelical white Protestants it's 61 percent. Likewise, evangelical white Protestants are 12 points more apt to think Islam encourages violence and nine points more apt to say it teaches intolerance. And 36 percent of evangelical white Protestants admit to some feelings of prejudice against Muslims.

Views of Islam, its teachings and its followers are somewhat more positive among Catholics and those with no professed religion. But even among these groups, skepticism is common, as are feelings of prejudice.

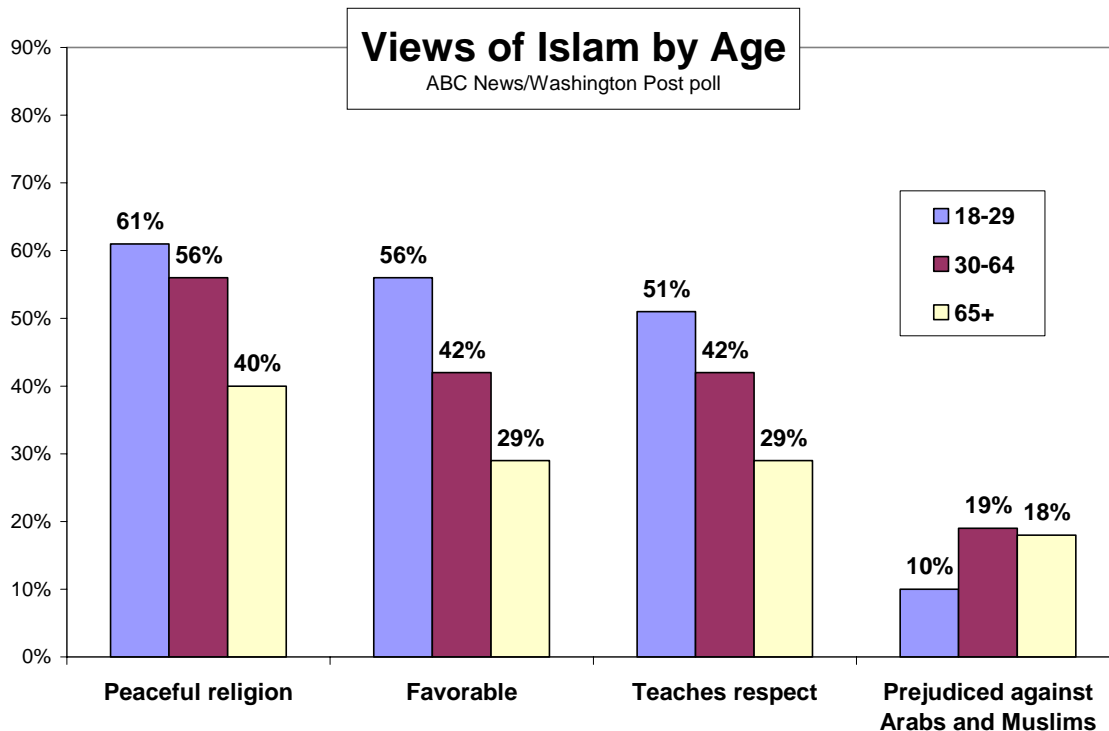
Views of Islam:	Evang. white			No
	All	Protestants	Catholics	Religion
Unfavorable	46%	61	42	33
Teaches intolerance	45	54	43	38
Encourages violence	33	45	27	27
Has more extremists	58	64	57	53
Prejudiced feelings:				
against Muslims	27	36	27	22
against Arabs	25	32	19	24
against both	17	24	13	12

Like the white evangelical Protestants who make up part of the party's base, Republicans tend to hold more negative views of Islam. They're more likely than Democrats to think Islam fails to teach tolerance, that it encourages violence and that it contains a disproportionate number of violent extremists.

Correspondingly, Republicans are 14 points more likely than Democrats to have an unfavorable view of Islam; they're also more likely to have some feelings of prejudice against Muslims. (Republicans and Democrats are equally likely to admit prejudice toward Arabs.)

GENERATIONAL DIVIDE – Views on Islam are generally more favorable among young adults, aged 18 to 29, than among those over 30, with seniors (who are least familiar with the religion) being the most negative.

Fifty-six percent of those under 30 hold a favorable view of the religion, compared with 43 percent of all adults. (Among seniors, favorability sinks to 29 percent.) Young adults also are more likely to see Islam as a peaceful religion and say it teaches respect. And one in 10 young adults admits some feelings of prejudice against both Arabs and Muslims, compared with 19 percent of those over 30.



METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone March 2-5, 2006, among a random national sample of 1,000 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Jon Cohen.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollvault.html>.

Media contact: Cathie Levine, (212) 456-4934.

Full results follow (*= less than 0.5 percent).

1-27. Previously released.

28. On another subject, do you feel you do or do not have a good basic understanding of the teachings and beliefs of Islam, the Muslim religion?

	Yes	No	No opin.
3/5/06	40	59	1
9/7/03	33	64	3
10/15/02	25	73	2
1/6/02	31	61	8
10/9/01	34	65	1

29. Would you say you have a generally favorable or unfavorable opinion of Islam?

	Favorable	Unfavorable	No opin.
3/5/06	43	46	11
9/7/03	39	38	23
10/15/02	42	33	26
1/6/02	41	24	35
10/9/01	47	39	13

30. Every religion has mainstream beliefs, and also fringe elements or extremists. Thinking of mainstream Islam, do you think mainstream Islam teaches respect for the beliefs of non-Muslims, or not?

	Yes	No	No opin.
3/5/06	41	45	14
9/7/03	31	43	26
10/15/02	37	35	28
1/6/02	41	22	38

31. Do you think mainstream Islam encourages violence against non-Muslims, or is it a peaceful religion?

	Encourages violence	Peaceful religion	No opin.
3/5/06	33	54	13
9/7/03	34	46	20
10/15/02	23	53	25
1/6/02	14	57	29

32. Compared to other religions, do you think there are more violent extremists within Islam, fewer, or about the same number as in other religions?

	More	Same	Fewer	No opinion
3/5/06	58	34	3	5
1/6/02	38	41	5	17

33. Have you recently heard other people say prejudiced things against Muslims, or not? IF YES: Have you heard that kind of thing a lot, or not much?

	-----Yes-----				No opinion
	NET	Lot	Not much	No	
3/5/06	34	13	21	65	1

34. Do you have any close friends or relatives who you'd describe as prejudiced against Muslims, or not?

	Yes	No	Depends (vol.)	No opinion
3/5/06	15	83	1	*

35. If you honestly assessed yourself, would you say that you have at least some feelings of prejudice against Muslims?

	Yes	No	No opinion
3/5/06	27	72	1

Jews:			
8/7/00	6	93	*

Compare to: If you honestly assessed yourself, would you say that you have at least some racist feelings?

	Yes	No	No opin.
10/19/99	34	66	*

36. Now thinking about Arabs, not Muslims, have you recently heard other people say prejudiced things against Arabs, or not? IF YES: Have you heard that kind of thing a lot, or not much?

	-----Yes-----				
	NET	Lot	Not much	No	No opinion
3/5/06	43	14	29	57	*

37. Do you have any close friends or relatives who you'd describe as prejudiced against Arabs, or not?

	Yes	No	Depends (vol.)	No opinion
3/5/06	18	81	*	*

38. If you honestly assessed yourself, would you say that you have at least some feelings of prejudice about Arabs, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
3/5/06	25	74	1

Jews:			
8/7/00	6	93	*

Compare to: If you honestly assessed yourself, would you say that you have at least some racist feelings?

	Yes	No	No opin.
10/19/99	34	66	*

38-43. Held for release.