

Drifting from Warmth: Americans Growing Neutral Toward Muslims

Abstract

Between June 2024 and April 2025, we conducted a series of quarterly surveys to track public perceptions of Muslims in the United States. During this time, sentiment shifted steadily from positive to neutral, with a slight increase in negative views. This growing ambivalence was most evident among young men and lower-income respondents.

Global events appeared to shape public attitudes—most notably, the sharpest drop in positive sentiment occurred shortly after Iran launched missiles toward Israel. Religious affiliation also played a role: Evangelical Christians and Hindus expressed the most negative views, with 25% of Hindus reporting unfavorable opinions by April 2025.

While frequent contact with Muslims was generally linked to more favorable views, this trend did not hold for Muslim respondents themselves, suggesting more complex intragroup dynamics.

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I. What the Survey Explored

Participants were asked to describe their feelings toward Muslims in America using one of three categories: Good, Neutral, and Bad. In addition to this overall sentiment measure, the survey explored:

1. *Comfort levels* with Muslims in everyday interactions or in business dealings.
2. *Personal contact*: we asked participants how many Muslims they had interacted with in the past 7 days to examine the relationship between sentiment and personal contact.
3. *Media exposure*: including the frequency of encountering positive stories about Muslims across traditional and social media platforms.
4. *Willingness to engage*: measured by the number of participants who are comfortable buying from Muslims and those willing to visit a mosque if invited.
5. *Demographic variation*: responses were analyzed by age, religion, income level, education, region, gender, and primary news source.

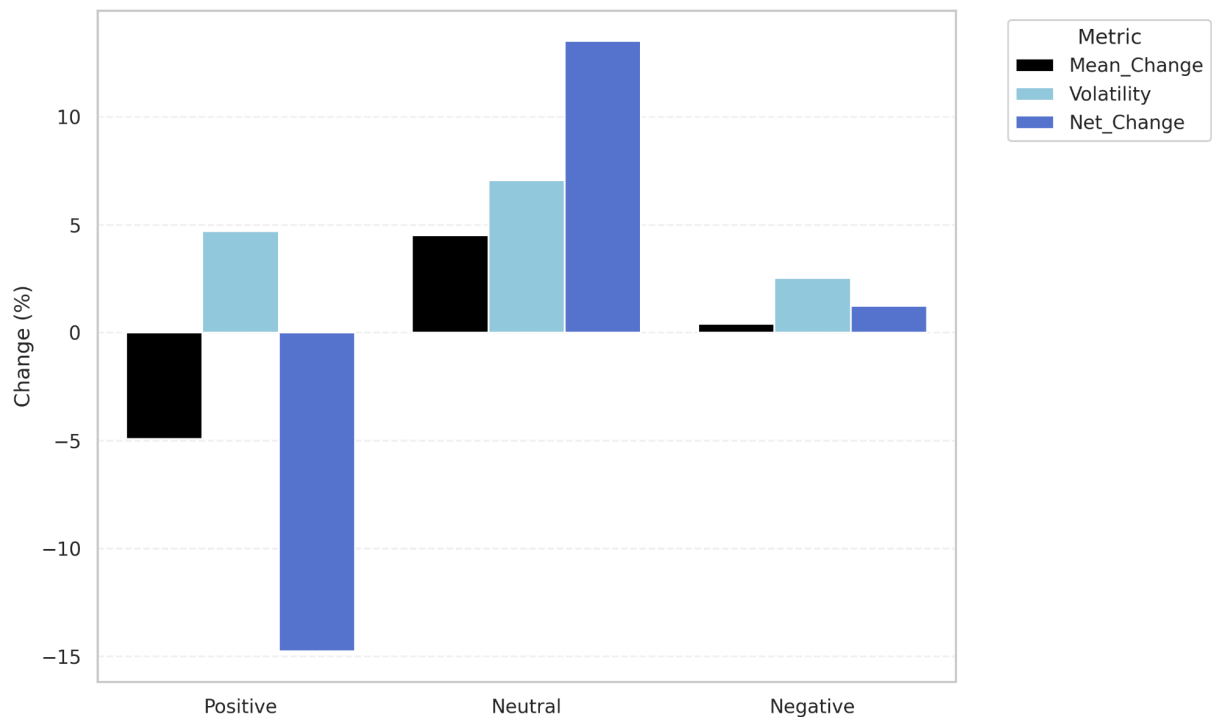
II. Key Metrics Tracked Over Time

To evaluate trends and changes in sentiment, we developed and tracked the following metrics:

1. Sentiment Proportion
The distribution of responses categorized as "Good," "Neutral," or "Bad".
2. Positive-to-Negative Ratio
The number of "Good" responses for every one "Bad" response.
3. Positive-to-Neutral Ratio
The number of "Good" responses for every one "Neutral" response.
4. Willingness to Engage
The percentage of respondents who expressed openness to visiting a mosque. More dimensions of engagement will be added over time to include willingness to hire, befriend, become neighbor with...etc
5. Sentiment Volatility Score
A composite measure of how sentiment has changed over time, which includes:
 - a. *Mean Change*: The average change in each sentiment category between survey periods.
 - b. *Volatility*: The standard deviation of those changes, reflecting consistency or fluctuation.
 - c. *Net Change*: The overall shift in sentiment from the first to the most recent survey wave.

Over the past 10 months, there has been a 15% increase in respondents viewing Muslims more neutrally, reflecting a noticeable shift away from previously positive sentiments. The negative mean change in positive sentiment, coupled with moderate volatility, suggests a consistent downward trend rather than temporary fluctuation.

Meanwhile, negative sentiment remained largely stable, exhibiting only minor fluctuations over time. The following chart presents a summary of the results.



III. Key Findings

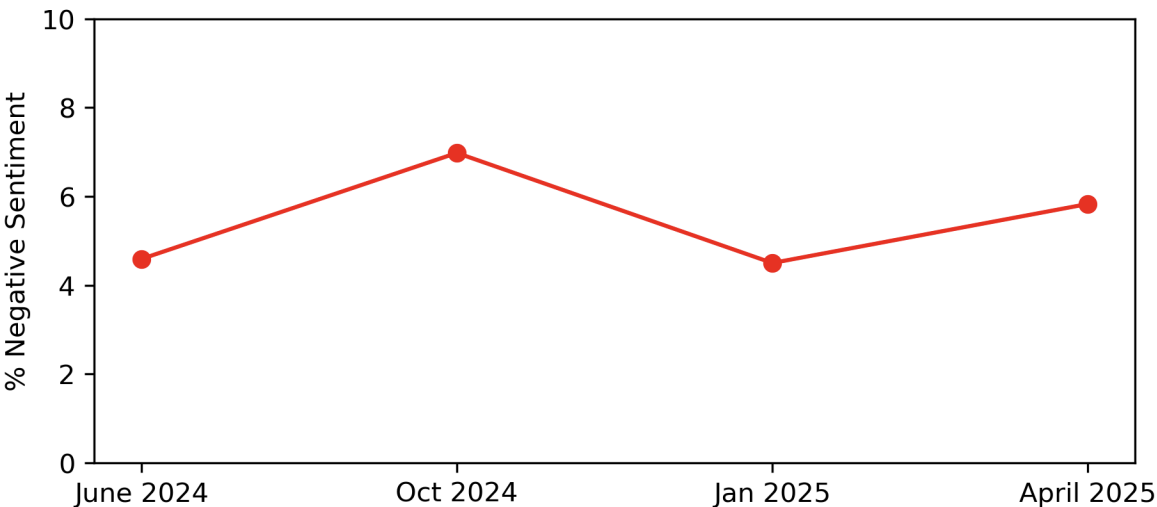
1. Decline in favorable views and comfort levels: a shift toward neutrality

Between June 2024 and April 2025, there was a noticeable decline in reported comfort around Muslims. In June, 86% of respondents said they felt either *very comfortable* or *comfortable*. By April, that number had dropped to 70%, a 16 percentage point decline. Interestingly, this shift was not driven by an increase in reported discomfort but rather a growing sense of neutrality among respondents.

A similar trend appears in overall sentiment, with a consistent decline in the number of respondents reporting positive feelings toward Muslims in America. Between June 2024 and April 2025, positive sentiment dropped by 15 percentage points.

2. Sharpest increase in unfavorable views observed in October 2024

Negative sentiment fluctuated over the course of the year, peaking in October 2024 at nearly 7%, a 52% increase from June. Although levels briefly dropped in January, they rose again by April, though remaining below the October high. Notably, the October survey was fielded just one day after Iran launched approximately 200 ballistic missiles at Israel, a significant geopolitical event that may have influenced public perception.

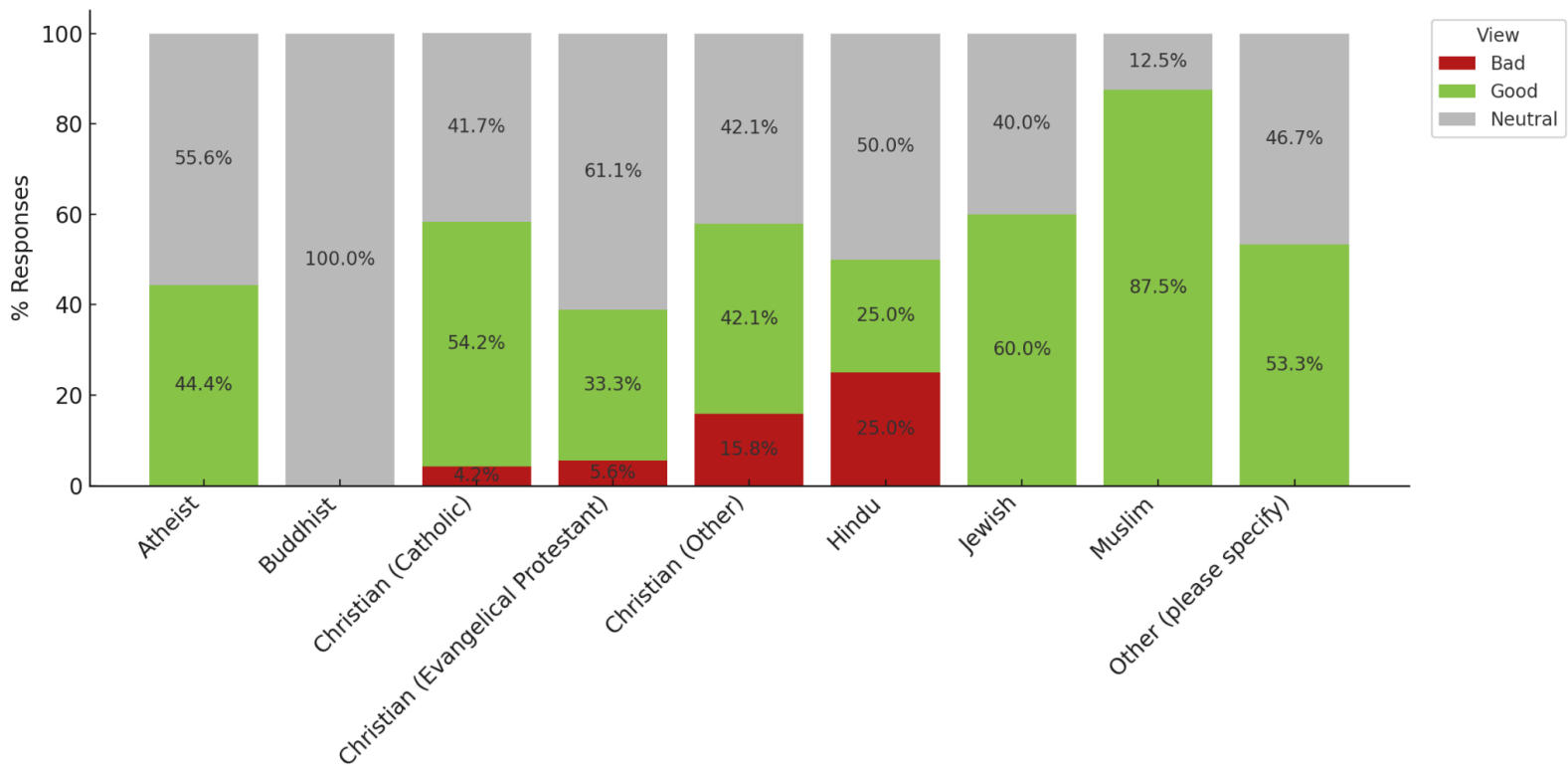


3. Negative sentiment is highest among Hindus and Christians

Among the religious groups surveyed, Hindus and some Christian denominations, particularly Evangelical Protestants and 'Christian (Other)', consistently reported higher levels of negative sentiment toward Muslims compared to other groups. This trend was

observed across multiple time points in the study. In April 2025, 25% of Hindus felt that Muslims are bad for America.

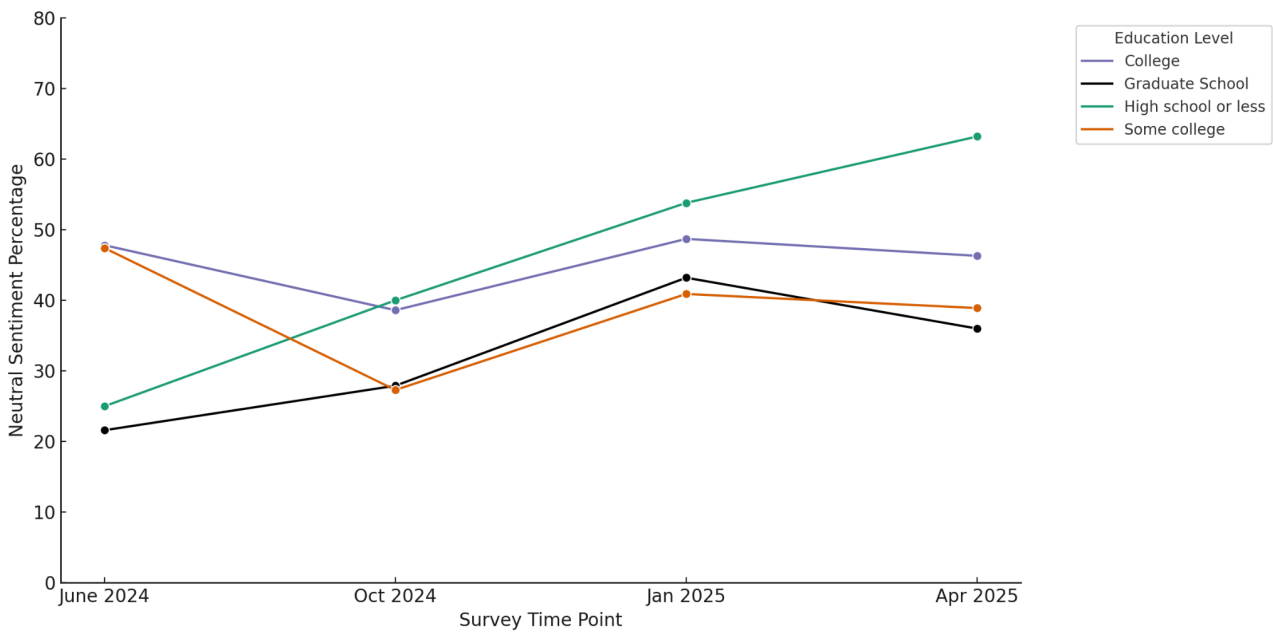
Different Religions' Views Of Muslims in April 2025



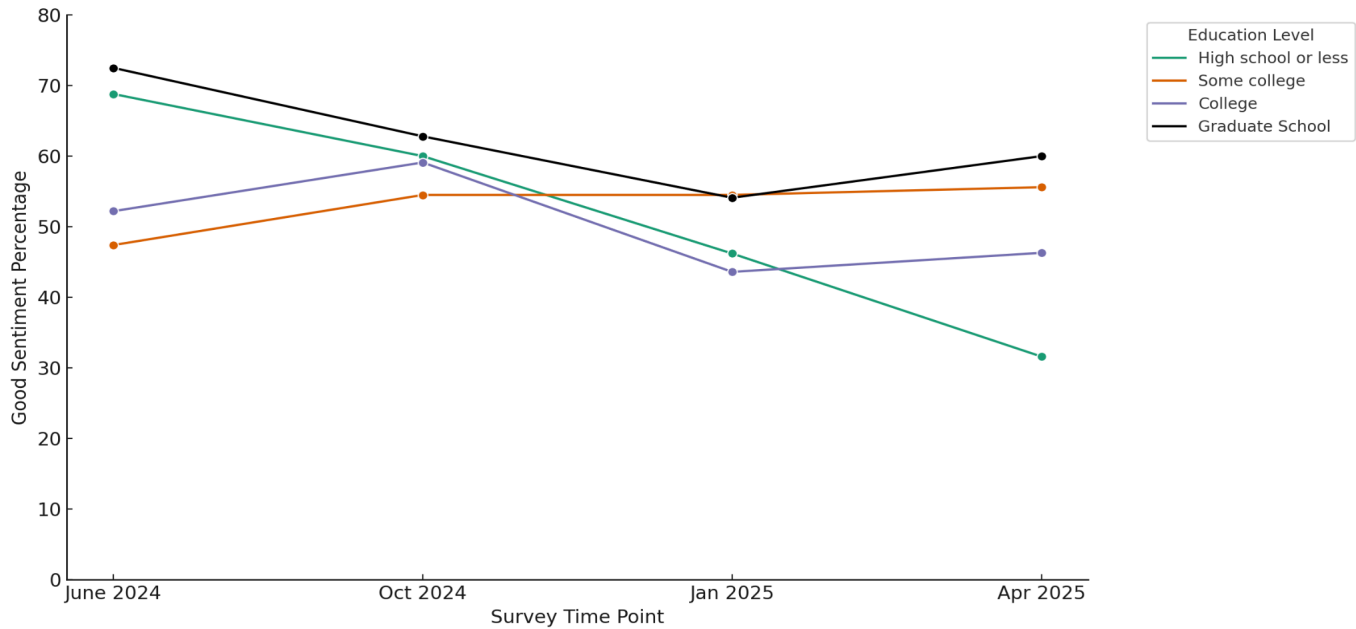
4. All educational groups experienced a rise in neutrality over time. The sharpest increase is seen in the lower education groups

Those with a high school or less educational level have increasingly shown disengagement and uncertainty, reflected in a decline in favorable views and a rise in neutral responses over time.

Sharpest Increase in neutral sentiment seen in “High School Or Less”

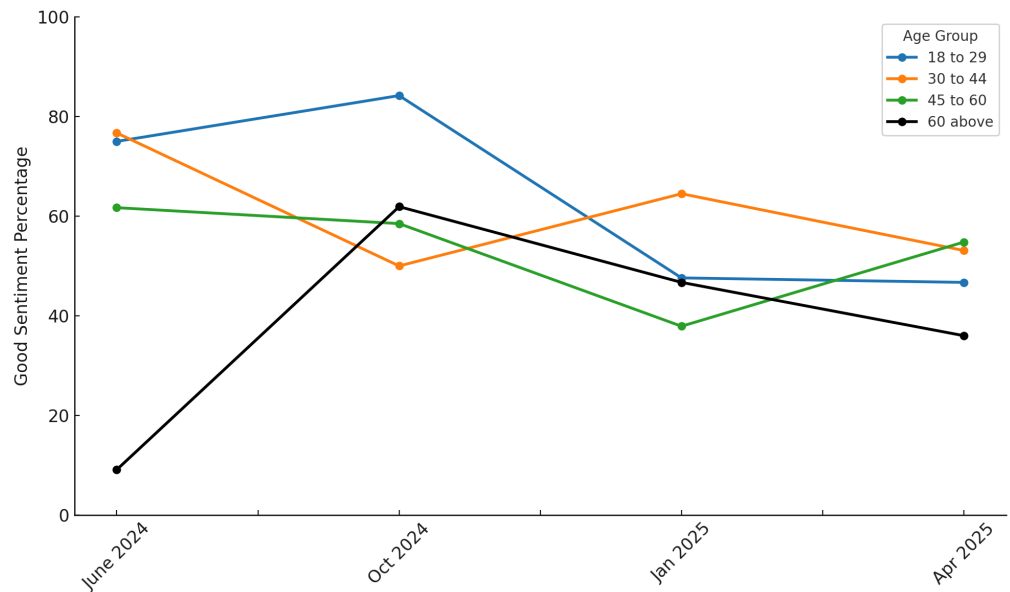


Sharpest decline in positive sentiment seen in “High School Or Less”



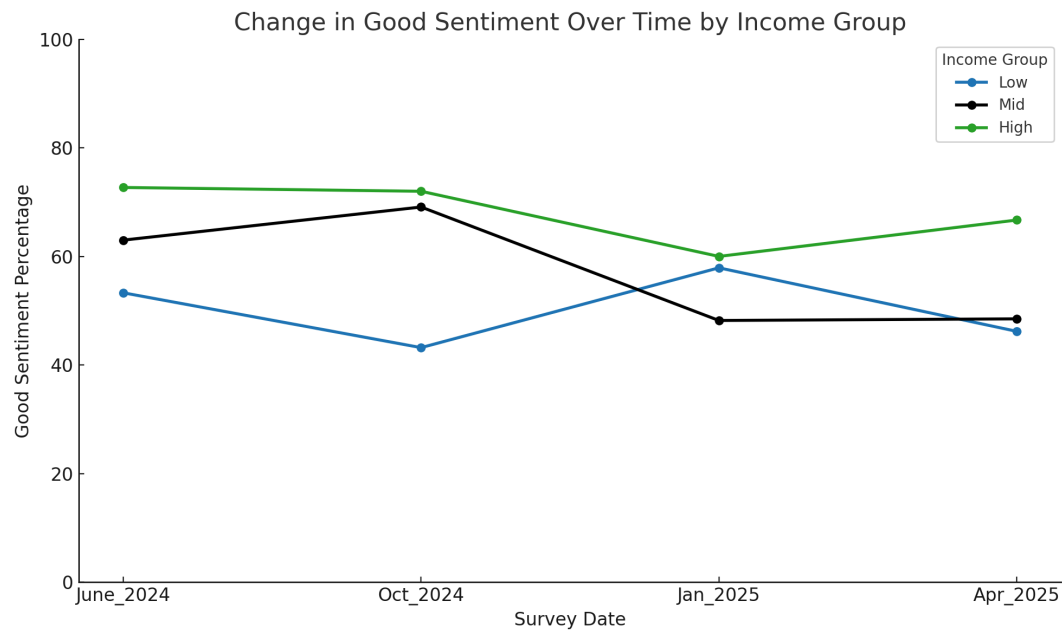
5. Sharpest decline in favorable sentiment seen in young adults

Young adults aged 18 to 29 exhibited the most severe decline in positive views towards Muslims dropping nearly 30 percentage points from June 2024 to April 2025.



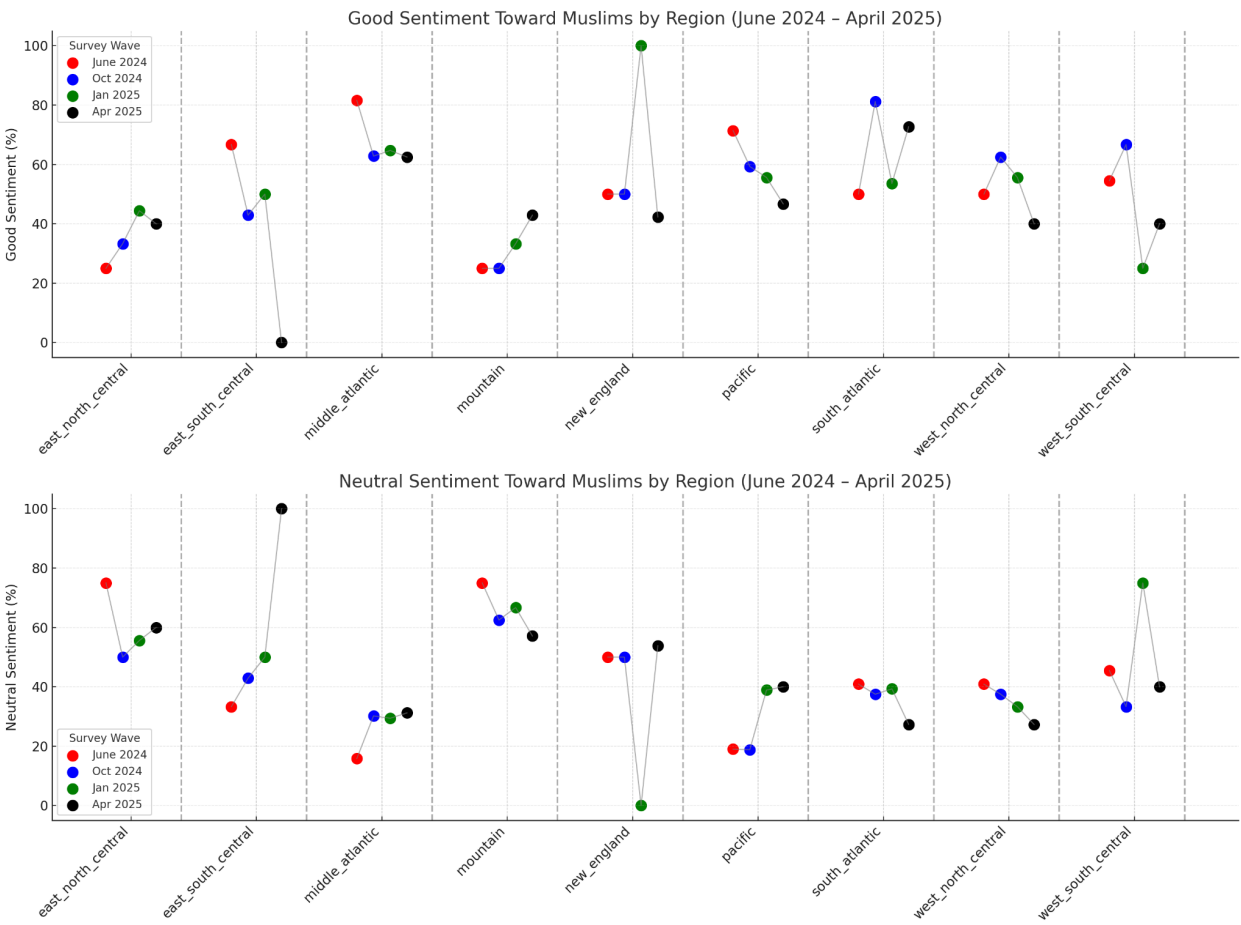
6. Higher income is correlated with more positive sentiment

Individuals in higher income brackets consistently report more favorable views of Muslims, while lower income groups hold more negative views overall—with a small but temporary improvement noted in January 2025

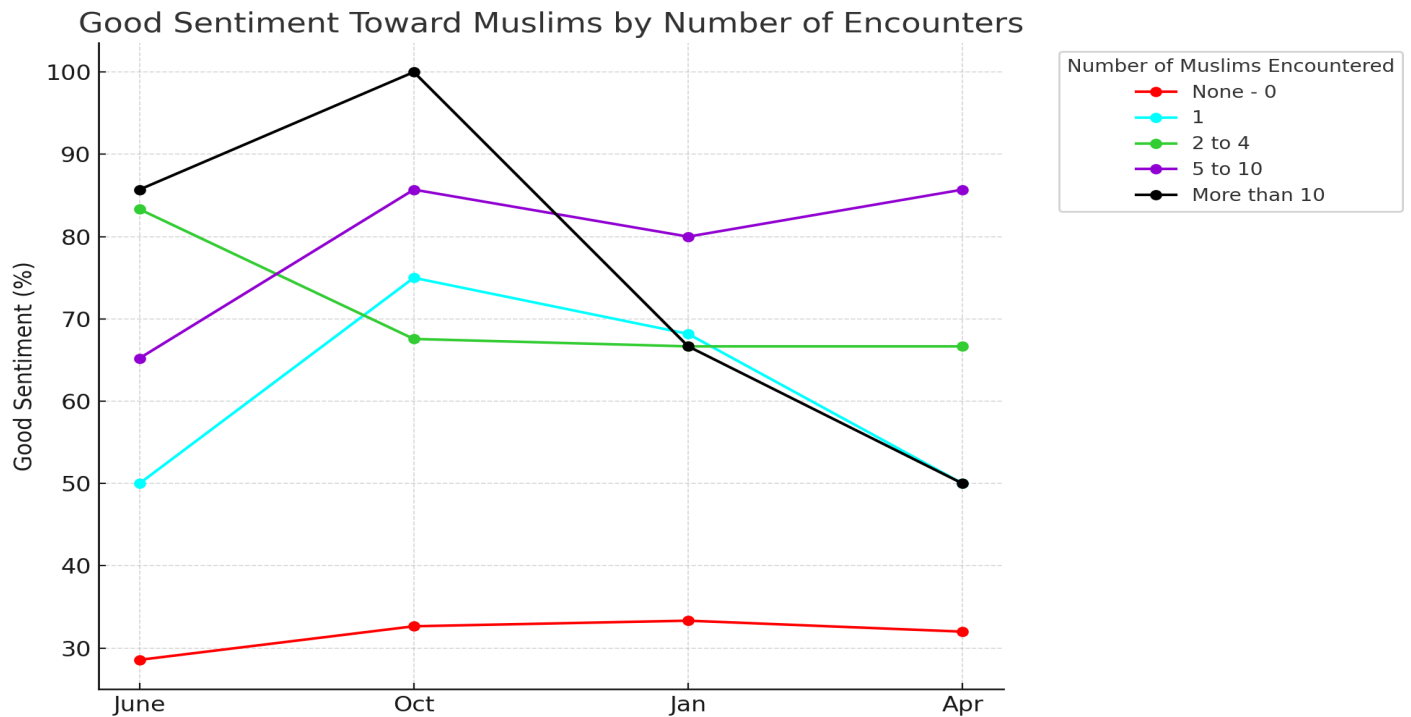


7. East South Central States experienced the sharpest decline in positive attitude

These states include: Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, and Tennessee



8. Individuals with no contact with Muslims report the lowest positive sentiment, but more frequent encounters do not necessarily lead to more favorable views



Individuals with no contact with Muslims consistently reported the lowest levels of positive sentiment and the highest levels of neutrality, suggesting disengagement or uncertainty.

Respondents with either minimal (1) or extensive (10+) contact exhibited more polarized attitudes. In October 2024, all individuals with more than 10 encounters expressed positive sentiment, but by April 2025, this dropped to 50%. Notably, the composition of this group shifted significantly: in October, 80% identified as Christian, while by April, 75% identified as Muslim.

This change may suggest that Muslims with frequent contact within their own community are more attuned to its internal diversity and complexities, across religious, ethnic, political, and generational lines, which could lead to more nuanced or critical assessments. Similarly, individuals with only a single encounter showed the greatest volatility in sentiment over time, likely reflecting the outsized influence of a single positive or negative experience.

9. Positive media exposure linked to favorable views, but the direction of influence is unclear

Across all four waves, the proportion of respondents who reported seeing positive media portrayals of Muslims fluctuated significantly—from 60% in June 2024 to less than 10% in January 2025.

Despite these variations, those who reported exposure to positive portrayals consistently expressed more favorable views of Muslims. This relationship was particularly pronounced in January, when 100% of respondents who said they "often" saw positive portrayals also reported 100% positive views of Muslims.

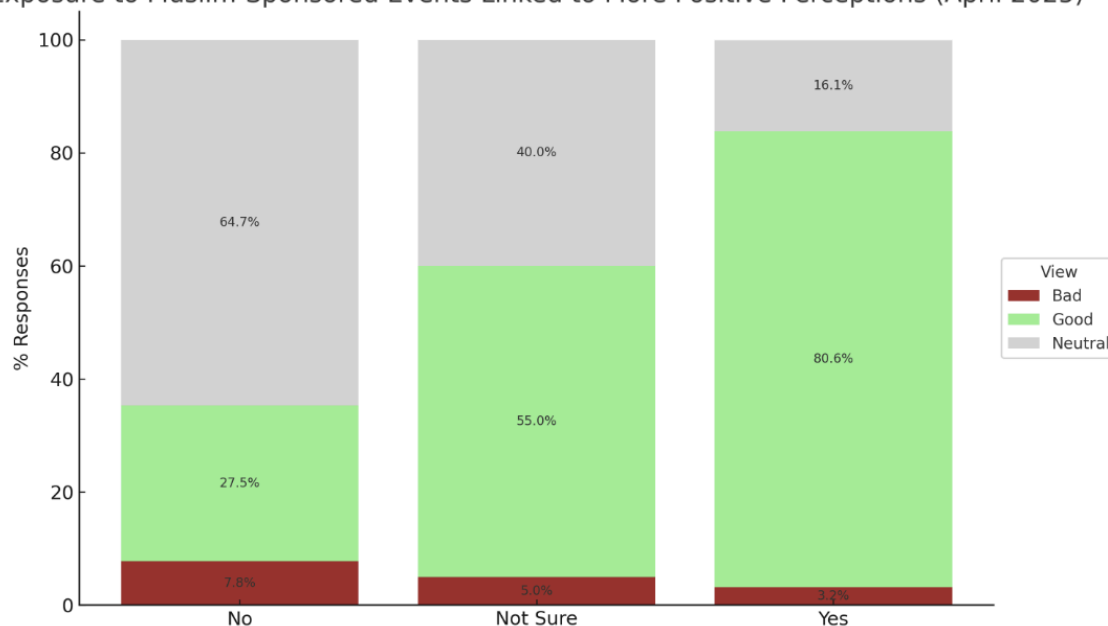
It's important to note that the direction of this association remains uncertain; individuals with favorable views may be more likely to notice, recall, or seek out positive media coverage, raising the possibility of confirmation bias.

10. Men are becoming more neutral in their views toward Muslims

Male sentiment toward Muslims has shifted from positive to neutral. In June 2024, 74% of men reported positive views, dropping to 42% by April 2025, a 43% relative decline. On the other hand, women's sentiment has remained stable, with a near-even split between positive and neutral views across all survey waves.

11. Exposure to Muslim-sponsored events is linked to a more positive attitude

Exposure to Muslim-Sponsored Events Linked to More Positive Perceptions (April 2025)

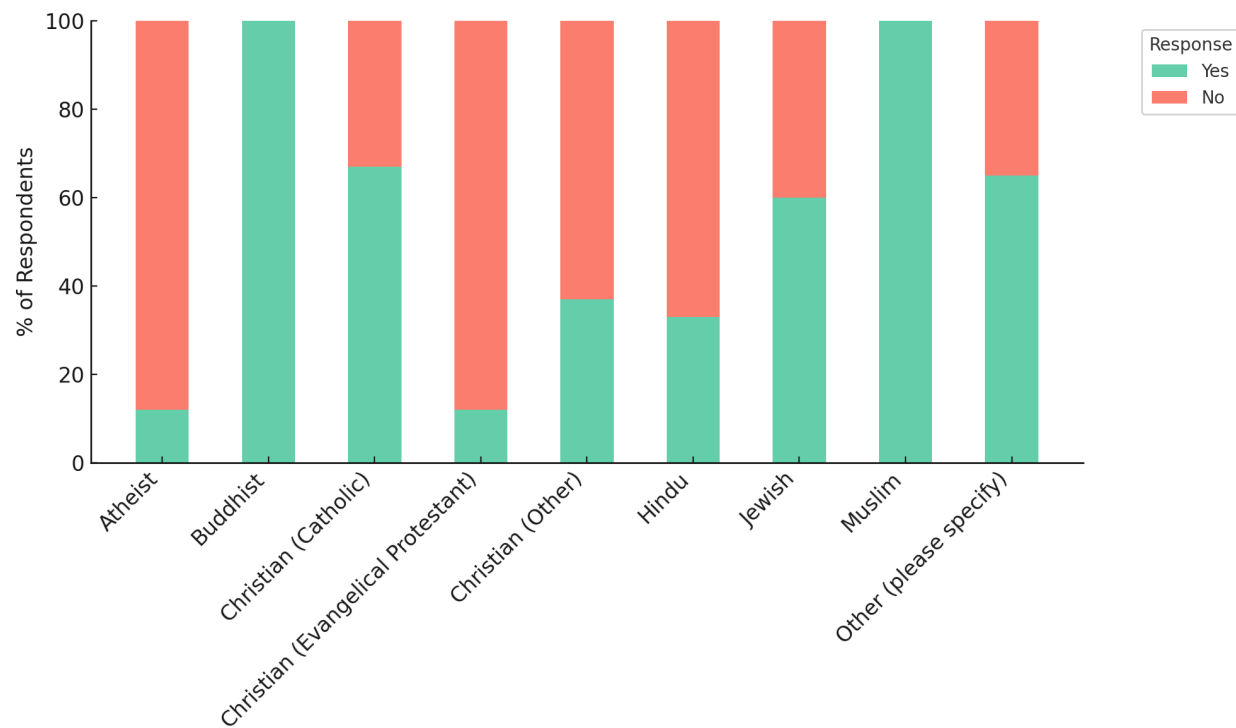


In April 2025, survey respondents were asked whether they had encountered any events sponsored by Muslims. Of those surveyed, 30% responded “yes,” and among them, 81% reported feeling positively toward Muslims.

In contrast, only 27% of those who had not attended such events expressed favorable views, highlighting a potential link between exposure to Muslim-led community initiatives and more positive perceptions.

12. Most Americans feel comfortable buying from Muslims, but far fewer are willing to visit a mosque

While 85% of respondents say they feel comfortable buying goods or services from Muslims, only 45% say they would be willing to visit a mosque if invited. Evangelical Christians and atheists are the least likely to accept such an invitation (89% would decline the invitation), while Buddhists—aside from Muslims themselves—are the most likely to say yes (100% said yes).



IV. Next Steps

1. Expand Sentiment Metrics: Incorporate Net Promoter Score (NPS) and refine the *Willingness to Engage* measure to include dimensions such as “willingness to live next to,” “willingness to work with,” and “willingness to hire.”

2. Increase Survey Frequency and Reach: Conduct surveys at shorter intervals and with larger sample sizes to improve resolution and trend reliability.
3. Gain a deeper understanding of why certain religious groups hold more negative views towards Muslims but conducting qualitative interviews within those communities
4. Pilot Interventions: Implement targeted interventions in select communities—such as Muslim-led charity initiatives, local media stories, or public events—to measure their potential impact on sentiment.
5. Correlate with Global Events: Track international events and media coverage more systematically to identify sentiment shifts and better understand public sensitivity to global Muslim-related developments.