

A Window into American Muslim Physicians: Civic Engagement and Community Participation

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Facts:

- This report is a first-of-its-kind portrait of American Muslim Physicians including demographics, identity and values, civic and political engagement, and challenges with discrimination.
- Over 500 American Muslim Physicians (AMPs) were surveyed or interviewed.
- AMPs consider their own faith just as important as their non-Muslim colleagues.
- About 84% of AMPs identify and affiliate with Islam; 78% practice and adhere to the laws and customs of Islam most or all of the time
- AMPs placed consistent emphasis on cultural and family values including the support of spouses, involvement with children, and compromises in their careers such as professional leaves or declining of special opportunities. AMPs sought to balance the demands of their professional and private lives.
- Those interviewed expressed a sense of responsibility to portray Muslim values (e.g., hard work, caring for others, and strict ethical behavior).
- A vast majority in the study reported responsibility to community in healthcare matters, such as in providing expertise to local community organizations (93%), being politically involved in health-related matters (88%), and encouraging medical organizations to advocate for the public's health (92%).
- A majority indicated support for and participation in civic organizations, but lag behind their physician colleagues in political activity.
- Many AMPs described their active involvement in a range of organizations that offered charitable and humanitarian services.
- AMPs reported direct or indirect experience of discrimination: some directly from co-workers and indirectly during an atmosphere of hostility. Others did not report discrimination and reasoned that 9/11 offered a chance to communicate with other communities.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations can better serve AMPs and increase their level of civic participation.

1. Increase the diversity of medical professionals.
2. Train fellow doctors and staff to increase cultural awareness.
3. Engage Muslim physicians and organizations in global health outreach.
4. Recognize the internal diversity of the American Muslim community.
5. Conduct more research on workplace discrimination against AMPs in particular and IMGs (international medical graduates) in general.

Steps:

1. Encourage health systems administrators to provide a Muslim perspective in their sensitivity training programs.
2. Encourage victims of discrimination to speak out.
3. Evaluate the impact of anti-immigrant legislation and its potential repercussions on the recruitment and retention of AMPs and other immigrant health professionals.

Full report available at www.ispu.org

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