Methodology

ISPU partnered with researchers from Latino Decisions, a research organization specializing in the views of the U.S. Latino community, to conduct a two-stage study about Latinos' views of American Muslims. The first stage consisted of nine in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Latinos, including two Latino Muslims. The second stage consisted of nine focus groups. The in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted between December 2022 and January 2023. The one-on-one interviews explored potential reasons why Latinos have lower levels of Islamophobia relative to other racial and ethnic groups in the United States. The interviews covered topics including experiences interacting with people from different backgrounds, experiences with and perceptions of discrimination, commonalities with American Muslims, and current political issues. Researchers used core themes from the IDIs to inform the questions asked during the focus groups.

The nine focus groups were conducted between April and May 2023. There were five to seven participants per focus group. During the initial eight focus groups, one group was all men, one group was all women, and six were mixed gender. Two focus groups were conducted in Spanish. The focus groups covered the following topics: experiences interacting with people from different backgrounds, portrayals of Muslims and Latinos in the media, knowledge of Islam, commonalities between Latinos and Muslims, experiences with and perceptions of discrimination, and perceptions of Muslim women who wear a hijab. During the focus groups, participants were shown a short video about Islam to determine whether providing Latinos with information about Islam influenced their perception of American Muslims.

After preliminary analysis of data from the eight focus groups, an additional focus group of women was convened to further probe the persistence of misogyny in Latinos' attitudes about American Muslims. Participants discussed their previous interactions with American Muslims, knowledge of Islam, experiences with perceptions of discrimination, and their perception of Muslim women who wear a hijab. The focus group included the same video about Islam as well as a second video clip about why Muslim women might choose to wear a hijab. After seeing both videos, participants discussed whether the video affected their opinions. The additional focus group concluded with a 30-minute discussion with a Latina Muslim.

Methodological approach and sample representativeness

One strength of conducting qualitative analysis of in-depth, semi-structured interviews and focus groups is the ability to generate contextually rich insights about the foundations of Latinos' views of American Muslims. While our previous quantitative research identified broad, generalizable trends about Islamophobia, quantitative methodologies are less suitable for unpacking the contextual content that shapes Latinos' attitudes toward American Muslims. To overcome this methodological issue, this research uses an inductive approach that identifies thematic contexts and mechanisms that help explain why we observe lower levels of Islamophobia among Latinos as well as its persistence.

The tradeoff between these methodologies had implications for the recruitment of participants in this research. The results in this report are not generated from a nationally representative sample of Latinos. Although our sample is not nationally representative, we recruited a diverse sample based on key demographic characteristics that our previous research identified as factors correlated with Islamophobia and that other research identified as important correlates with Latinos' attitudes. These factors include gender, ethnicity, age, religion, partisanship, and where participants live. Table 1 below summarizes our interview and focus group samples based on these key demographic characteristics.

Table 1: Key Demographics
(In-Depth Interviews – Nine Respondents)

	Count (Proportion in %)
Heritage	
Mexican	2 (22%)
Puerto Rican	2 (22%)
Dominican	2 (22%)
Other	3 (34%)
Age	
25 – 34	2 (22%)
35 – 44	4 (44%)
45 – 54	1 (11%)
55 – 64	2 (22%)
Gender	
Man	4 (44%)
Woman	5 (56%)
Religion	
Catholic	5 (56%)
Evangelical Protestant	2 (22%)
Muslim	2 (22%)
Income	
Less than $35,000	1 (11%)
$35,000 to less than $50,000	2 (22%)
$50,000 to less than $75,000	2 (22%)
$75,000 to less than $150,000	4 (44%)
Education	
High school graduate / GED	4 (44%)
4-year college graduate	3 (34%)
Post-graduate work/degree	2 (22%)

Partisanship

Democrat	3 (34%)
Independent	3 (34%)
Republican	3 (34%)

Region

Northeast	2 (22%)
Midwest	3 (34%)
South	4 (44%)

Table 2: Key Demographics
(Focus Groups – 9 Groups / 58 Respondents)

	Count (Proportion in %)
Heritage[1]	
Mexican	9 (16%)
Puerto Rican	17 (29%)
Dominican	8 (14%)
Other	24 (41%)
Age	
18 – 24	4 (7%)
25 – 34	13 (22%)
35 – 44	19 (33%)
45 – 54	14 (24%)
55 – 64	6 (10%)
65+	2 (3%)
Gender	
Man	23 (40%)
Woman	35 (60%)
Religion[2]	
Catholic	28 (48%)
Evangelical Protestant	18 (31%)
Pentecostal	6 (10%)
Non-Denominational	1 (2%)
Agnostic	2 (3%)
Jewish	1 (2%)
Atheist	2 (3%)
Income	
Less than $35,000	6 (10%)
$35,000 to less than $50,000	16 (28%)
$50,000 to less than $75,000	23 (40%)
$75,000 to less than $100,000	6 (10%)
$100,000 to less than $150,000	5 (9%)
$150,000 to less than $200,000	2 (3%)

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[1] We break down national heritage by Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Dominican because they are the three largest ethnic groups according to the U.S. Census. Other countries represented in our sample include Peru (7), Venezuela (5), Colombia (2), Costa Rica (2), Panama (2), Chile (1), Guatemala (1), Ecuador (1), Honduras (1), Uruguay (1), and Paraguay (1).

[2] Non-denominational was a self-reported, written answer. As a result, we're unable to determine whether they are Protestant but non-denominational, religious but not a particular religion, or Christian but non-denominational.

Education

High school graduate / GED	12 (21%)
Some college	19 (33%)
4-year college graduate	15 (26%)
Post-graduate work/degree	9 (16%)
Trade or technical school graduate	3 (6%)

Partisanship

Democrat	27 (47%)
Independent	19 (33%)
Republican	12 (21%)

Region

Northeast	16 (28%)
Midwest	8 (14%)
South	24 (41%)
West	10 (17%)