

*Bullying Report of*  
**Massachusetts Muslim Youth:**

# *Standing Up & Speaking Out*



**CAIR**  
MASSACHUSETTS



# CAIR-MA Bullying Report of Massachusetts Muslim Youth:

## Standing Up & Speaking Out



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**CAIR**  
MASSACHUSETTS

The Council on American-Islamic Relations is the **largest American Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization** in the United States. **CAIR-Massachusetts is a chapter in the organization.**

**Our mission** is to enhance understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding.



**Our vision** is to be a leading advocate for justice and mutual understanding.

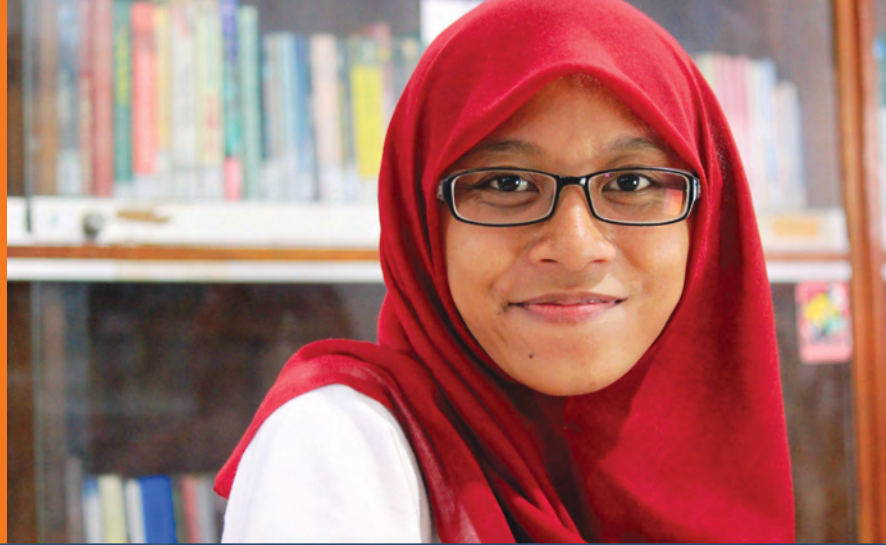


## Introduction

In this report, the Massachusetts Chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-MA) presents its **analysis of a 2019-2020 school climate survey of Massachusetts Muslim Youth**. The survey was administered to 190 students across the Commonwealth. The purpose of this report is to **understand the extent to which Islamophobia**, defined as the closed-minded prejudice against or hatred of Islam and Muslims, **manifests in the school environment** in the form of bullying and discrimination. Additionally, the survey examines the lived experiences of Massachusetts Muslim students in grades 6-12 and the issues they face, particularly as a consequence of their real or perceived Muslim identities. As such, this report **focuses on anti-Muslim bullying**: the unwanted, aggressive behavior among school-aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance that is or can be repeated and is based on the student's Islamic faith. This report features a number of **case summaries describing actual complaints** that CAIR-MA received.







## Executive Summary

Yusra,<sup>1</sup> a 14-year-old student living in the Greater Boston area, **gave up wearing her hijab in response to relentless harassment** at her high school. Girls at her school spread false rumors that she had bragged about being part of ISIS and needed to be deported. When she reported a boy who told her she looked like a terrorist even without her hijab, she faced immediate retaliation: a group of football players accosted her, telling her to lay off their friend. Others shouted “Allahu Akbar” at her in the cafeteria.

Ali, another Muslim student in the Greater Boston area, was the target of bullying at his school: when a teacher gave his class an assignment on types of buildings, another student drew a picture of the Twin Towers after 9/11, **depicting 13-year-old Ali as one of the terrorists.**

These stories, as well as other examples included in our report, illustrate vividly the human toll of youth bullying, and the **often extreme and always tragic lengths to which Massachusetts Muslim children can be dehumanized and mistreated in their learning environment.** However, despite their atrocious details, such stories had previously only been anecdotal in nature. In response, during the spring of 2019, CAIR-MA began a project to document, analyze, and publicly present data on bullying of Massachusetts Muslim youth. The goal of this research is to examine Muslim students’ bullying experiences and provide a comprehensive analysis of bullying’s impact to community members, parents, school officials, policymakers, and the media.

This report is the result of a 2019-2020 survey conducted with 190 Muslim students in grades 6-12 across Massachusetts. The survey examined student demographics, how teachers teach / talk about Islam, and the extent of anti-Muslim bullying and harassment faced by students. Lastly, the survey looked at the experience and engagement that Muslim youth have with police officers. **Additionally, while focusing on religiously based bullying, the survey also took into account the diversity among Muslim youth by examining bullying experienced based on race, socioeconomic status, and immigration status, operating on the understanding that these fields are closely interrelated and often inextricable.**

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<sup>1</sup> None of the examples given in this report use the real name of the student.

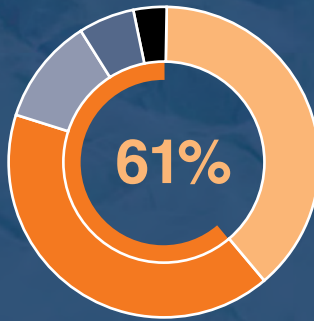
While all students deserve a safe environment in which to learn, the survey results show that this, sadly, is not the reality for many Muslim students. Findings from the survey show that **61% of respondents report being made fun of, verbally insulted, or abused for being Muslim.** This is **more than double the national statistic** for students being bullied at school.<sup>2</sup> Among our respondents, **40% confirmed that they've heard of someone who wears a hijab being physically harassed at school.** The severe bullying that these youth experienced led to students altering their appearance, behavior, or names to hide the fact that they are Muslim — put another way, 1 in 3 (or 33%) Muslim youth over an academic year could not authentically exist as themselves out of fear of retaliation. Furthermore, the survey found that 52% of students have experienced specifically racial / ethnicity-based bullying.

Another key finding from the survey is the targeting of Muslim students wearing the hijab, the Islamic head covering. **Nearly 1 in 6 — 17% — respondents reported having their hijab tugged, pulled on, or other forms of offensive touching.** As incidents of bullying continue to grow, the trust and comfort Muslim students feel at school is deteriorating. This is evidenced by the findings related to the way Muslim students view their school environment. More specifically, key findings of the survey illustrate that 14% of Muslim students do not feel comfortable letting others in their school know that they are Muslim.

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## A few results from our survey

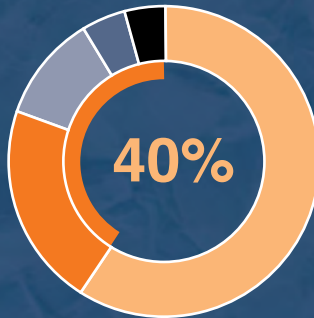
### How often have you been bullied at school for being Muslim?



**61% report being made fun of, verbally insulted, or abused for being Muslim.**

- 39% = never
- 41% = rarely (1-2 times per year)
- 11% = sometimes (1-2 times per month)
- 6% = regularly (1-2 times per week)
- 3% = constantly (everyday)

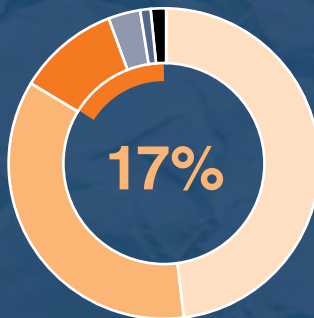
### How often have you heard of someone else who wears a hijab being physically harassed at school?



**40% have heard of someone who wears a hijab being physically harassed at their school.**

- 60% = never
- 21% = rarely (1-2 times per year)
- 11% = sometimes (1-2 times per month)
- 4% = regularly (1-2 times per week)
- 4% = constantly (everyday)

### If you wear a hijab, how often have you been physically harassed at school, such as having your hijab pulled on or removed?



**17% report having their hijab tugged, pulled on, or other forms of offensive touching.**

- 48% = I don't wear a hijab
- 35% = never
- 11% = rarely (1-2 times per year)
- 3% = sometimes (1-2 times per month)
- 1% = regularly (1-2 times per week)
- 2% = constantly (everyday)

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey, 2015, <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017004.pdf>.

Throughout the survey, we invited respondents to share in narrative detail their experiences with bullying.

**Muslim students in their own words:**

They [teachers and administrators] know what's going on but **they try and cover it up**. My freshman year I got bullied a lot and an administrator told my mom we should move to Cambridge.

I was in middle school, one guy tugged on my hijab and **I was too scared to tell anyone**.

Two of my classmates who were Muslims and wore hijab have **had their hijabs pulled** and had papers and pencils thrown at their hijab at my old school.

Bullying is something that is taken lightly in our school. Though there might not be physical bullying, there is bullying in regard to comments and teasing from classmates. In my opinion I feel like **bullying against Muslim students is not taken as serious as it should**. I think that we should have lessons in class regarding Islamophobia.

Last year a **teacher made fun of me** for fasting, another teacher exclaimed that a brown student with a beard looked "like a terrorist."

Yes, some of my teachers do a good job addressing it by saying "Bullying is unacceptable" while others don't say anything. And most times the **bullying occurs when the teacher isn't in the room**.

I was in 10th grade when it happened, it was [the anniversary of] 9/11 ... one of the students associated me with the attacks and kept on following me and **calling me Osama's daughter**. I told my parents and the school and they took care of it, although no one has said that to me since I still get glares and snickers and snarky remarks.

The findings of this report show that there is a **need to continue monitoring and challenging anti-Muslim bullying, its underlying factors, and its long-term mental health effects** in the coming years.





## Bullying & Discrimination

**This study focuses on identity-based bullying**, which is bullying that targets aspects of a person's identity (such as race / ethnicity, religion, immigrant status, and class), and the intersection of bullying and bias. In analyzing identity-based bullying, it is especially **important to consider the power and status element of the bullying concept.**

According to Joseph Roy Gillis, young people who bully “are learning how to use power and aggression to control and distress another,” emphasizing that bullying experiences are not removed from social status and structural power differentials such as gender, race, class, and religion.<sup>3</sup> **Our primary focus here is anti-Muslim bullying: unwanted, aggressive behavior among school-aged children which involves a power imbalance that is repeated and is based on the student's Islamic faith.**<sup>4</sup>

However, this study also considers the various intersecting identities these youth navigate, thus examining the specific experiences of Muslim youth and how their social identities are not self-contained, but rather multiple and intersecting. **Our findings highlight that Muslim students were not only experiencing anti-Muslim bullying: 52% reported they have experienced bullying based on their race / ethnicity, and 25% stated they have experienced bullying based on their family's income.**

Bullying is generally understood in the school context as causing one to feel unsafe, fearful, or unable to fully participate in school. It involves a real or perceived imbalance of power, with the powerful child or group attacking those who are less powerful. Bullying may be **physical** (hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing), **verbal** (taunting, malicious teasing, name calling, threatening), or **emotional** (spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships, extorting, intimidating). Bullying can occur in-person, through the spreading of rumors, or electronically, through making a public post or sending a message, text, sound, or image. Our findings indicate that **72% of respondents have experienced one or more of these forms of bullying.** Over one-third (34%) of respondents indicate being subjected to intentionally hurtful comments in-person and 15% experiencing cyberbullying through online and social media.

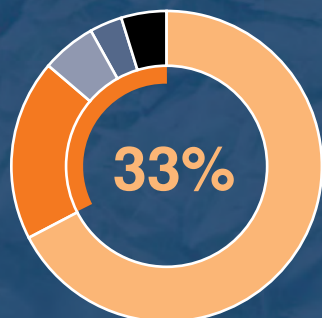
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<sup>3</sup> Joseph Roy Gillis, *Eliminating Identity-based bullying in schools: A community involved approach*, 2017.

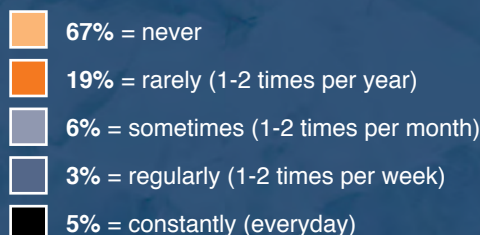
<sup>4</sup> Stopbullying.gov, “What is Bullying?” <https://www.stopbullying.gov/bullying/what-is-bullying>.

## A few results from our survey

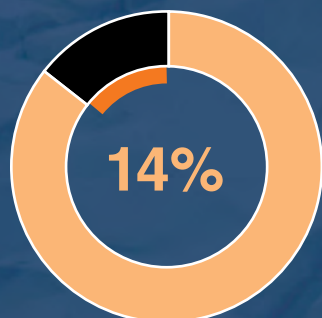
Have you altered or considered altering your appearance, behavior, or name to hide the fact that you are Muslim?



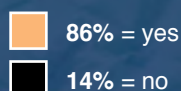
**33% have altered their appearance, behavior, or names to hide the fact that they are Muslim.**



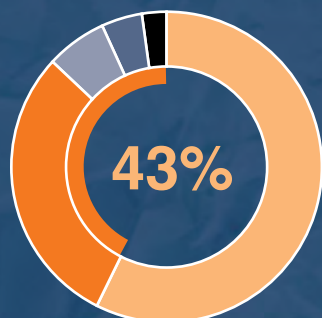
Do you feel comfortable letting others in school know that you are Muslim?



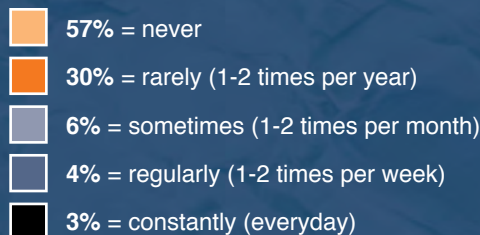
**14% report not feeling comfortable letting others know they are Muslim.**



How often do you see another Muslim being bullied at school for being Muslim?



**43% have witnessed another student being bullied for being Muslim.**



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**Bullying has serious and long-lasting or permanent effects on the mental health and overall well-being of youth.** According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, negative effects of bullying may include depression, anxiety, involvement in interpersonal violence or sexual violence, substance abuse, poor social functioning, and poor school performance including lower grade point averages, lower standardized test scores, and poor attendance.<sup>5</sup> Bullied youth also experience psychosomatic issues, such as headaches, stomachaches or sleeping problems.<sup>6</sup> Our survey findings indicate that **33% of Muslim students have altered their appearance, behavior, or names in order to hide the fact they are Muslim.** Furthermore, **14% of students do not feel comfortable letting others know they are Muslim.**

Not only are the effects of bullying detrimental to the victims, but bullying also has negative effects on those who observe the bullying of others.<sup>7</sup> Youth who have observed bullying behavior report significantly more feelings of helplessness and less sense of support from responsible adults than youth who have not witnessed bullying behavior.<sup>8</sup> Our survey results indicate that **43% of respondents have witnessed another student being bullied for being Muslim.** The toll that Islamophobia takes on the mental health of American Muslims is significant and even more substantial for students, who are expected to bear the burden of defending against Islamophobic stereotypes while simultaneously coping with possible mental distress resulting from bullying. Thus, it is more important now than ever to examine the long-term impacts of bullying on Muslim students.

<sup>5</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), The Relationships Between Bullying and Suicide: What we Know and What it Means for Schools, 2014, available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/bullying-suicide-translation-final-a.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Bullying Surveillance Among Youths, Uniform Definitions for Public Health And Recommended Data Elements, 2014, available at: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED575477>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.





## Religious Accommodations & Anti-Bullying Curriculum

Many Muslim parents in the United States are unaware of the **robust legal protections** to which their children are entitled. Furthermore, both parents and children are too often unaware that **religious traditions can and often must be accommodated** within public schools.

Young Muslim students, like all other students, must be allowed to excel in a school atmosphere that fosters feelings of inclusion rather than reinforcing feelings of otherness. This sense of belonging can be fostered by schools instituting curriculum and pedagogy that does not lead to the otherization of Muslims, but rather authentically represents Muslims and Islam in a positive light. In the post-9/11 context, **American Muslim students face constant obstacles to exercising their religion, while also bearing the burden of defending their religious identity, which is frequently undercut by stereotypical misunderstandings of Islam and Muslims.** Allowing for fair religious accommodations often facilitates Muslim students' integration in schools and reduces feelings of alienation and otherness.

Being aware of and moving to eliminate bias in the classroom can promote equity, excellence and empowerment. A simple solution for educators and schools is to **incorporate the lesson plans and materials created by Muslim organizations** to facilitate the incorporation of curricula about Islam. Educators should utilize specific lesson plans which address common misconceptions about Islam, the history of Muslims in U.S., Muslim contributions to civilizations and commonalities between Islam and other faiths.<sup>9</sup>

In a 2016 report prepared by the Department of Justice (DOJ), "Combating Religious Discrimination Today: Final Report," the government recognized that there is a need for ensuring that students have access to

reasonable religious accommodations.<sup>10</sup> The report further recognized the importance of individualized accommodations for religious beliefs, including excusal from school for religious holidays, religious clothing exceptions to school dress codes, and accommodations for prayer during the school day.<sup>11</sup> Thus, it is imperative that federal, state, and local school boards and districts **work with American Muslims to ensure schools recognize the importance of religious accommodations in the school setting.** Common accommodations requests for Muslim students include allowing for alternative uniform during a physical education class, breaks during the school day to carry out prayers, and excusing absences due to observance of Eid holidays.

<sup>9</sup> Resources for lesson plan examples include:

- ❖ The National Endowment for the Humanities project Muslim Journeys has content on the history of Islam and Muslim cultures in the United States and in global history. <https://www.neh.gov/news/neh-bridging-cultures-muslim-journeys-bookshelves-arrive-in-800-libraries>.
- ❖ Learning for Justice's "[Countering islamophobia](#)".
- ❖ Islamic Networks Group Curricula — The provided online curricula includes digital presentations related to teaching about Muslims and their faith, multifaith lessons, and a series of lessons on Muslim heroes.
- ❖ Houri, A.I & Sullivan, A.L (2016). Meeting the Needs of Muslim American Students.
- ❖ Lesson Plans on World Religions "On Islam and Muslims" <https://ing.org/academic/>.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Combating Religious Discrimination Today: Final Report, July 2016, available at: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/file/877936/download>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

## Methodology



Between July 2019 and January 2020, CAIR-Massachusetts surveyed 190 students in grades 6-12 enrolled in public schools throughout Massachusetts. The survey is the first of its kind to examine faith-based bullying and discrimination of Muslim students in Massachusetts public schools.

We took as our model a successful series of youth bullying surveys conducted by CAIR-California every two years since 2015. The survey gathered information on:

- ❖ The participant's **grade** and **race / ethnicity**
- ❖ Bullying at the student's school: what is the student's experience, and how does the **school** respond?
- ❖ How do **teachers** teach / talk about Islam?
- ❖ What is the engagement between young Muslims and **police / law enforcement**?
- ❖ What is needed for young Muslim students to **feel safe** at their schools?

Survey results were obtained either in-person or through a secure online portal. Prior to beginning, participants were given a presentation on the purpose of the survey and what they would be asked.

The survey is divided into **several key sections**. The first asked for the respondent's demographic information. The second asked respondents about their general exposure to bullying. The third solicited information about the type of bullying and discrimination respondents experienced at school as either the target or bystander. In this third section, the report examined experiences of bullying based on religious identity, race / ethnicity, immigration, income, and where respondents live. The fourth section asked questions on interaction and engagement with law enforcement within the school setting and where students live. Our survey questions examined **unique patterns of experiences from various intersections of students' social identities**.<sup>12</sup> The last section focused on teaching Islam in the classroom and the respondent's perception of their school environment. The survey was conducted at multiple mosques in the Greater Boston area during Islamic / Quran study weekend schools. We also utilized social media to spread the survey across the state and leveraged our organization's pre-existing network of young Muslim students. Full survey findings, including all questions and responses, can be found on [page 20](#).

<sup>12</sup> Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 43, no. 6, 1991, pp. 1241–1299. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/1229039](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1229039).





## Anti-Bullying Advocacy

This section describes how to address bullying and protect Muslim students by using several laws, including Massachusetts' anti-bullying law. **If your child is being bullied, or you are a young person who is being bullied, please call CAIR-MA at (617) 862-9159 or submit a request for help on our [website](#).** We can talk about which approach may be most helpful, how your family wants to handle the situation, and what role CAIR-MA can play.

### A. Starting Point: the School's Anti-Bullying Plan

Massachusetts law requires all schools with students from kindergarten through 12th grade to have a **bullying prevention and intervention plan**. It must be posted on the school's website. Even if your child isn't having any problems, it's a good idea to read it over so you are familiar with it. Each school gets to decide on the details, but very generally, the plan must:

- ❖ Apply to both staff<sup>13</sup> and students;
- ❖ Tell students and parents how to make a complaint;
- ❖ Explain what steps the school will take to respond and investigate;
- ❖ Include protections for those who file a complaint or cooperate with the investigation; and
- ❖ List the kind of discipline that may be taken against a student or staff member who bullies.

First, **report the problem**. The school needs to know what is going on in order to do something about it. Call the school and **ask for a meeting** (in person or by Zoom) with school officials. Students who are older may feel comfortable reporting a problem on their own, but the school must still notify the parents when they learn of bullying. Please **do NOT contact the aggressor or their parents** on your own; that is the role of the school.

What should the school do to the aggressor? The school gets to decide on the appropriate discipline; there is no law requiring a certain type of punishment. **A wide range of discipline is possible**, depending on the age of the aggressor, the type of bullying, and whether the aggressor has previously caused problems. The discipline could include any of these actions, or a combination of them:

- ❖ School calls the aggressor's parents;
- ❖ School meets with the aggressor and his or her parents;
- ❖ Detention or in-school suspension;
- ❖ Aggressor must complete an assignment about bullying and discrimination;
- ❖ Aggressor must apologize to your child;
- ❖ Suspension from school: short term (up to 10 days) or long term (up to 90 days);
- ❖ Suspension from school bus, if that is where the bullying took place;
- ❖ School calls the police;<sup>14</sup> and
- ❖ Expulsion.

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<sup>13</sup> The information here is about **students** who bully. If, instead, the aggressor is a **teacher or staff member**, that is a more serious situation and calls for a different kind of response by the school. Please call CAIR-MA at (617) 862-9159 to speak with a lawyer.

<sup>14</sup> Parents also have the right to call the police. See [section B](#) on page 14.

**Parents have the right to ask about options and to suggest alternatives**, but the school gets to decide what to do. In addition, it often surprises parents when the school legally cannot give details about the discipline that is imposed, since it's regarding another minor. The school may be able to give you a general sense of how the situation is being handled, but **privacy laws** may prevent them from telling you more.

A 14-year old Muslim boy broke down and told his father about the bullying he'd been subjected to for over a year by several classmates. He was constantly **accused of being part of ISIS, being responsible for 9/11, and killing people** in Syria. Ironically, the harassment became worse when his Social Studies class started a unit on Islam. The family reported the bullying to the school; the school took it seriously, and suspended the students. The son reported that the harassment stopped almost immediately.

When the parents of a 13-year old girl reported to her school that a classmate kept following her and shouting "Allahu Akbar," the **principal was dismissive** of the family's concerns. The principal said she understood the phrase to mean "God is great" — willfully ignoring the harassing manner in which it was being used — and suggested that the harassment was **just a prank**. But she did investigate and decided that the boy should be suspended for several days.

Finally, schools must also decide if the aggressor needs any services to help him or her behave properly. Bullying can be a sign that aggressors are having serious problems of their own.

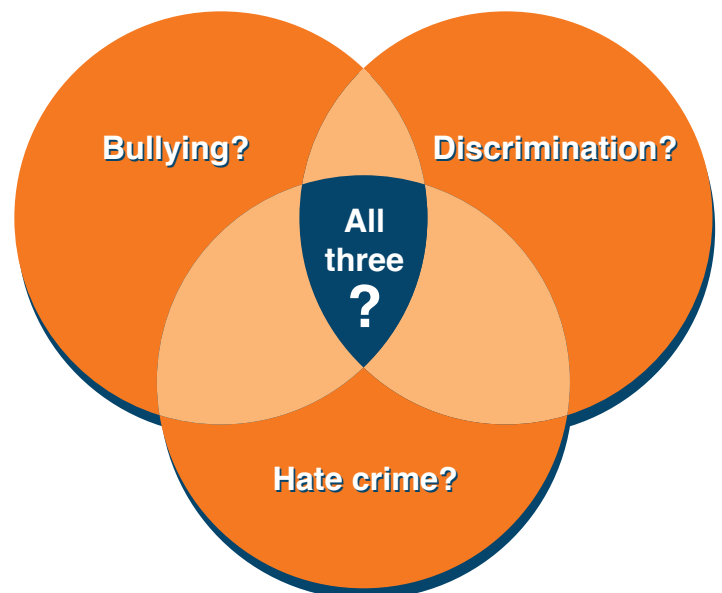
What should the school do to keep your child safe? **As with discipline, parents also have the right to discuss what the school will do to ensure your child's safety** and to offer suggestions. If the bullying is serious and repeated, or if a group of students is bullying your child, the school may need to create a **safety plan**. It could include any of these, or a combination of them:

- ❖ Naming a staff member as a "safe person" for the targeted student to go to if there are problems, or just to check in with each day or as often as needed;
- ❖ Allowing the targeted student to call a parent or other adult between classes;
- ❖ Increased supervision by staff in locations where the bullying takes place, such as hallways between classes or in the lunchroom;
- ❖ Changing seat assignments in a classroom, the lunchroom, or on the school bus; or
- ❖ Changing the schedule of the aggressor, to avoid contact with your child.

### Is your child being protected — or punished?

Students who bully often do so as part of a group. We have seen cases where the school reassigned the targeted student's class or seat, rather than moving several aggressors around. There are two problems with that approach. First, it may suggest not only to those involved but to other classmates that the targeted student is the problem. Second, it may also suggest that convenience is more important than your child's safety. In some situations, parents might agree with changes to their child's schedule or seating. But if they don't, they can push back against actions that essentially punish the child who is being bullied.

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In a case that received national attention, a Muslim 5th-grader received a note at school calling her a terrorist, followed by a **written death threat** a few days later. The person who left the notes was never caught. Her parents chose to send her to another local school. Even though she was separated from her friends, her parents knew that their daughter's safety was more important than anything else.

What happens if the school says your child is the aggressor? Sometimes the **school wrongly blames the Muslim student** if there is a problem. While most schools are committed to treating all students fairly, there are also teachers and other school officials who are anti-Muslim or racist — just like there are people in all walks of life who are anti-Muslim or racist. If the school tells you that your child has caused a problem when the opposite is true, **please call CAIR-MA**. We can help you and your child explain to the school what really happened, and work to make sure that your child is not punished unfairly.

When an 8-year old Muslim boy told a girl in his class to stop teasing him, she retaliated by telling teachers that he claimed to have a gun in his backpack (he had no gun, of course, and denies saying he did). His school first suspended him for 10 days, but then reduced the suspension to 1½ days. The police, however, insisted on searching the family's home (where no guns were found) and asked Juvenile Court to **charge him with making a bomb threat**, a serious crime with a maximum possible sentence of 20 years in prison. A judge threw out the police department's request for criminal charges.

Sometimes Muslim students **lash out at the classmates who bully them** — and then get in trouble for their reaction. Again, if this happens, **please contact CAIR-MA** so we can help you explain to the school the reason for your child's actions. Even if your child will be disciplined, keep in mind that the school can also take steps to protect your child at the same time.

A Muslim middle school student was repeatedly bullied by an older girl, whose **religious and sexual slurs escalated to threats of violence**. Knowing that the older student had physically attacked others, the Muslim girl was afraid to tell anyone. She eventually posted a photo of a gun on social media, as a way to tell the older student to back off. The school suspended the Muslim student for 10 days and threatened to expel her. But when school officials learned of the bullying, the suspension was reduced. The school created a safety plan to protect the Muslim girl while also requiring her to learn about safe social media practices.

What if the school doesn't take the bullying seriously? A bad situation only gets worse **when a school doesn't take bullying seriously** or doesn't follow its own policies. If that happens, the state's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) might get involved, but its focus will be on the overall practices at the school.

Parents and students may get better results filing a **discrimination complaint** against the school with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. See [section E](#), page 16. Parents may not get quick results, but the school will probably take the complaint seriously.

Is homeschooling the answer? Sadly, some parents feel that the only way to keep their children safe is to remove them from their current school, or to remove them from the school system altogether. While Massachusetts parents have the **right to homeschool** their children, when they do so as a last resort to keep their children safe, the schools have clearly failed them. If you are thinking about homeschooling your child, please check with CAIR-MA first, because there are rules you must follow.

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The parents of a 7th grade Muslim girl complained to her school about the constant bullying by several boys, but little was done. The bullying came to a head when four boys confronted the girl on the school bus, **threatening to gang rape and kill her**, “like ISIS does to Christian women.” When the school took no action against the boys, her parents withdrew her from school to homeschool her.

## B. Calling the Police

Massachusetts’ **anti-bullying law requires a school to call the police** if it looks like the aggressor may have committed a crime. Some schools do so, while other schools are more hesitant to get the police involved, for various reasons. Please know that **parents also have the right to call the police** on their own.

In our experience, Muslim parents are concerned about several things when it comes to calling the police:

- ❖ If they are immigrants and were fearful of the police in their home country, they don’t know if they should call the police here in Massachusetts.
- ❖ Given law enforcement’s historical mistreatment of people of color and suspicion of Muslims in the U.S., parents don’t know if the police will help them.
- ❖ If they are not U.S. citizens, they worry that attention from the police might affect their immigration cases.
- ❖ They don’t want to hurt a young aggressor; they just want him / her to stop bullying their child.

**If you are not sure about calling the police, please call CAIR-MA.** We can discuss your concerns and your options.

**When is bullying a crime?** There are many types of bullying that, while wrong and harmful, do not rise to the level of a crime. However, the actions listed below are crimes that may take place as part of bullying. If your child describes incidents like these, you may want to consider calling the police. NOTE: These are **very general descriptions** and several different laws may apply to an incident. In addition, the specific facts of each case must be considered.

- ❖ Threat to commit a crime — the threat can be spoken or written, and can include posts to social media.
- ❖ Criminal harassment — when an aggressor does something mean or cruel to the targeted student, at least three different times, that causes serious alarm to the student. The acts could be in person or through email or social media.
- ❖ Vandalism — when the aggressor damages or destroys property belonging to the targeted student, the school, or anyone else. Examples: defacing the targeted student’s locker or damaging their belongings, slashing tires on the targeted student’s car, or spray painting graffiti about the targeted student on a building.
- ❖ Assault — when the aggressor puts the targeted student in fear of physical harm, but there is no contact. Examples: the aggressor shakes a fist in the targeted student’s face, or swings but misses.
- ❖ Assault and battery — when the aggressor makes physical contact with the targeted student without the targeted student’s consent. Examples: pulling off a student’s hijab or kufi, shoving, grabbing, or tripping. There does not need to be any injury.
- ❖ Assault and battery with a dangerous weapon — when the aggressor uses anything other than their bare hands or feet. Examples: kicking someone while wearing shoes, spitting on someone, or hitting someone with a book, backpack, or hockey stick.
- ❖ Hate crimes — Massachusetts’ hate crimes laws may apply when an aggressor commits a crime because of the targeted student’s religion, race, national origin, or certain other reasons. For more information, see our flyer, [Know Your Rights: Hate Crimes & Harassment](#).

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“**Punish a Muslim Day**” was a 2019 Islamophobic campaign that began in London and spread through social media. It included a point system based on increasing levels of violence against Muslim victims. A 13-year old Muslim girl was warned by a classmate that another girl planned to “get points.” The Muslim girl was **repeatedly attacked** as the classmate tried — and eventually succeeded — in ripping off the girl’s hijab. The school called the police.

A group of boys aged 13 to 15 repeatedly harassed a 10-year old girl at a K–8 school, **calling her a terrorist** and claiming that all Muslims are killers. Their actions escalated to the point that the school called the police.

Whether the school calls the police or you call them, **ask the police for a copy of the police report**. Each police department has its own policies about police reports. They may write up a detailed report or may only note that you made a complaint. Either way, ask for a copy. If there is more than one incident, ask for a copy of the police report each time the police are involved.

It’s important to **create a record of your complaints** about the aggressor. The police may suggest that you ask your local court for a “harassment protection order” to protect your child (see section D, below) and it will help to give the court a copy of the police report(s). The police reports will also be helpful if you need to file a discrimination complaint against the school (see [section E](#) on page 16).

What about **pressing charges**? Parents can speak with the police or ask for a copy of the police report even if they don’t want the aggressor to be arrested and charged with a crime. If they do want the aggressor to be arrested, the decision whether to do so is made by the police and prosecutors based on the facts of the case and the law that applies.

### C. Restorative Justice

A few Massachusetts communities have “restorative justice” programs. Very generally, restorative justice is a voluntary process where the victim, the offender, and members of the affected community, as a group, identify and address the harm, needs, and obligations resulting from an offense. In the bullying context, the **targeted student, the aggressor, parents, school officials, and perhaps even classmates would be involved**. Depending on how serious the offense was, the police may also be part of the process.

The restorative justice model seeks to hold offenders accountable and pushes them to both acknowledge and take responsibility for their offenses. The process takes place **outside of the legal system**.<sup>15</sup> It also offers a chance for a targeted student and the aggressor to speak face-to-face, which rarely happens in the legal system. In addition, the restorative justice approach recognizes the harm that is done to the larger community — with bullying, the students and staff at a school are also affected — and tries to heal that harm, too. We recommend that every school (or school district) have some type of restorative justice program (see [Recommendations](#) on page 17).

### D. Harassment Protection Orders

In Massachusetts, parents can ask (in person or online) their local District Court to issue a harassment protection order, telling an aggressor to leave your child alone. It doesn’t cost anything to file an application. Such orders are also called “258E orders” or “restraining orders.” If you speak with the police, they may suggest this option. In order to qualify for such an order, you must show two things:

1. There have been at least **three separate acts of bullying** by the aggressor. You will need to give as specific a date as possible for each incident, along with the details.
2. Each act of bullying **meets this test**: It was done on purpose AND it was aimed at your child AND it was done to cause your child “fear, intimidation, abuse, or damage to property.” Abuse is defined as physical harm or the threat of physical harm.

If more than one classmate is bullying your child, you will need to file separate applications for each aggressor.

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<sup>15</sup> Restorative justice can also be used even if the aggressor has been arrested. In 2018, Massachusetts passed a law that allows a criminal case to be “diverted” or taken out of the legal system if the victim and prosecutor agree that a restorative justice approach is appropriate. This can help young people avoid a criminal record that can follow them for years.

**Please speak with CAIR-MA before filing an application for a Harassment Protection Order.** We may be able to represent you. And if we can't, we may be able to help you with your application.

Harassment protection orders can be very useful when quick action is needed. A court can issue an **emergency order** if the judge thinks it's needed to keep your child safe. An emergency order usually tells the aggressor to stay away from the targeted student — although this may be difficult if both students are in the same classroom — and not to contact the targeted student, either in person, through email or social media, or by asking someone else to contact your child.

An emergency order is good for up to 10 days. After that time, a **hearing must be held** where both the targeted student and the aggressor, or their parents, can give their side of the story. The hearing can be at the court, by Zoom, or by telephone. The judge will decide if the emergency order should be kept in place, for how long, and if any changes are needed.

If the aggressor violates the court order, another hearing will be held for the judge to decide what to do. The aggressor can also be arrested.

## E. Discrimination Complaint Against the School

If a school does not take action in response to repeated complaints of bullying, or only takes very weak action, parents can file a discrimination complaint against the school with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR). This is free and can be done online.

OCR enforces several federal laws, including one called "Title 6," which applies to discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin.<sup>16</sup> This law doesn't specifically mention religion, but OCR takes the position that it **protects students who belong to a religion** with "shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics." The most common example would be girls who wear hijab as an expression of their Muslim faith. This law also protects **children whose English is limited** because their family speaks a different language.

Here are a few things to know about OCR complaints:

- ❖ The complaint is against the school, not the student(s) doing the bullying. For action against the aggressor(s), see sections B, C, and D starting on page 14.
- ❖ The complaint must be filed **within 180 days** of the discrimination.
- ❖ OCR is not required to accept every complaint that is filed.
- ❖ If OCR accepts your complaint, it will investigate the complaint and then try to work out a solution.
- ❖ Most schools take it seriously when an OCR complaint is filed against them, as they will now be investigated by a federal agency.
- ❖ OCR will see if a quick resolution is possible. But if it's not, the process can take many months or longer.
- ❖ OCR acts as a neutral fact-finder, not as your advocate. Parents can be represented by their own lawyer, if they wish.

**Please speak with CAIR-MA before filing a complaint with OCR.** We may be able to represent you. And if we can't, we may be able to help you write up your complaint.

Bullying is, of course, very upsetting for both targeted students and their parents. But we hope parents will feel more confident protecting their children knowing about the legal tools described above. As always, please don't hesitate to call CAIR-MA for assistance.

<sup>16</sup> For the purposes of this report, we are looking at OCR complaints in the context of bullying. But anti-discrimination laws apply to schools in many ways, including admissions, how students are treated by staff, athletic programs, and discriminatory discipline.





## Recommendations

In this section, we share our recommendations for addressing and preventing bullying for four separate groups: **students, parents, schools, and lawmakers.**

### Recommendations for Students

**Document the incidents:** include the name(s), dates, time, description, and witnesses present.

- ❖ Immediately report the incident(s) to school administrators.<sup>17</sup>
- ❖ Inform your parent or guardian.
- ❖ Work with your parent or guardian to submit a formal complaint to your school.
- ❖ Report the incident to CAIR-MA.

While it is often hard to tell others that you are experiencing bullying, it is important to **find a trusted adult** with whom you feel comfortable speaking and working to jointly create a plan of action. There is power in numbers; if there are other Muslim students at your school, it may be beneficial to connect with one another and establish a **Muslim Student Association (MSA)** that can be a safe, supportive space of belonging for Muslim Students. If the MSA at your school needs support in building a welcoming and inclusive community for all Muslim Students, please visit CAIR-MA's website and [request a program](#) for your MSA.

Additionally, we recommend that **students continue to advocate for themselves** to gain the accommodations that they need to continue practicing their religion, such as requesting prayer breaks, prayer rooms, dress code exemptions for religious clothing, and accommodations for religious holidays. If you need support asking for these accommodations, or have trouble accessing them, please reach out to CAIR-MA. Lastly, if there is not a Muslim population at your school, you may benefit from joining the Muslim youth group at your local mosque or Islamic center. These communities will be able to help build and foster meaningful relationships, ones that will be helpful to cope with and address bullying experiences.

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<sup>17</sup> Make sure to keep copy of all communication with teachers and school administrators when you report the incident to them and share with your parents.

## Recommendations for Parents

Parents should **be aware of the following signs to determine whether their child is being bullied**: cuts, bruises, or other signs of injury that are not easily explained; personal items which are missing or damaged; avoiding or refusing to go to school. Additionally, a student who has been bullied might not want to communicate with friends, may complain of headaches and stomachaches without a medical reason, and may appear depressed or irritated more than usual.<sup>18</sup>

In the event in which a parent sees one or more of these signs presenting themselves, it is important that **parents affirm to their child that what is happening is not their fault**, stating that they did not cause this to happen, and explaining that what is happening is not acceptable. Parents should also be available to their children as a source of support. Parents should **familiarize themselves with Massachusetts' laws and regulations concerning bullying**, as parents who understand school policies on bullying can more effectively advocate for their children's interests. Concerned parents should also lobby for culturally competent teachers and school administration in their children's schools. As highlighted in the [Anti-Bullying Advocacy section](#), if you suspect that your child is experiencing bullying and you have questions or are uncertain about your school's policy, please call CAIR-MA for assistance.

## Recommendations for Schools

To support Muslim students, **schools should implement prevention and intervention programs**. When implementing bullying prevention strategies in classrooms, CAIR-MA recommends that school administrators adopt solutions tailored to each individual child. Analyzing identity-based bullying helps the school community to see how bullying in schools is part of a larger power system. This can be balanced by expanding the school community's understanding of how identity-based bullying strengthens misperceptions, biases, and existing power structures. As a result, it is critical to **question the stereotypes and prejudices** that students, teachers, and administrators have towards Muslim students, as well as how this leads to bullying and how incidents are handled by adults in the school system.<sup>19</sup>

Bullying prevention services in schools should include **anti-oppressive practices such as encouraging students to engage in self-examination and reflection**. Students, teachers, and school administrators will be able to communicate effectively and "recognize how oppressive societal structures are replicated in schools and change them" as well as recognize their own biases, stereotypes, and prejudices.<sup>20</sup> This encourages the school community to recognize that anti-Muslim bullying is linked to larger Islamophobic policies and discourse. Schools should engage their communities in a process of self-examination and reflection that recognizes and works to first remove their biases, assumptions, and prejudices. Additionally, they should **create a culture where young people have the knowledge and support they need to become allies** when they are bystanders in a bullying incident. Students can thus switch from being passive bystanders to active allies by teaching them to be respectful of those who are being harassed and to tell those who are bullying to stop. This is particularly important in situations where there are no adults present.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.stopbullying.gov/bullying/warning-signs>.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Roy Gillis "Eliminating Identity-based bullying in schools: A community involved approach.", 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Spiegler, Junnie, 2016 "What is identity-based bullying — and how can I stop it?" Edutopia <https://www.edutopia.org/article/what-is-identity-based-bullying-jinnie-spiegler>.



Moreover, teachers and school administrators must **build a climate of zero tolerance for anti-Muslim discrimination** on school grounds, not only through policies but also through modeling appropriate behavior and the establishment of cultural norms. Anti-bullying responses and interventions should therefore properly originate from authority figures within the school administration, rather than from the bullied students themselves as is too often the case.<sup>22</sup> Schools should also **provide comprehensive and accurate curriculums on Islam and Muslims** as part of their standard curriculum. As a result, we hope that both educators and students will gain a clearer understanding of Muslims and the Islamic faith.

According to our survey, currently 23% of respondents believe that when teaching lessons about Islam, teachers did NOT do so in a normal, rational, and accurate manner. Furthermore, **40% of respondents indicated that teachers or staff have made offensive comments** about Islam or Muslims inside or outside the school setting. **Teachers and staff members should participate in cultural competency trainings** on anti-Muslim discrimination and discussions of Muslim students' unique experiences with bullying. Having a qualified professional involved in the implementation of the state curriculum would provide a consistent starting point for all students. We believe that schools which intentionally engage in anti-bullying programs will develop a strong student body that takes action when they encounter or are subjected to bullying.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, **84% of survey respondents indicated that individual Muslim students are being pushed to be the voice of all Muslims**, including in classroom discussions. As a result, they are bearing responsibility themselves for educating classmates about Islam, Muslims, and Islamophobia. **Incorporating lesson plans and resources developed by Muslim organizations for curricula about Islam** is an easy solution for educators and schools.

## Recommendations for Lawmakers

There is **currently no federal law that directly addresses bullying**. As such, **Congress should pass the Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA)**. The act would prohibit bullying and harassment based on a student's religion, race, color, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity. This bill amends the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to require states to direct their local educational agencies (LEAs) to establish policies that prevent and prohibit conduct, including bullying and harassment, that is sufficiently severe persistent or pervasive that it:

1. Limits students' ability to participate in, or benefit from, school programs; or
2. Creates a hostile or abusive educational environment that adversely affects students' education.<sup>24</sup>

School districts would then be required to adopt codes of conduct specifically prohibiting bullying and harassment. SSIA would also require that states report data on bullying and harassment to the Department of Education.<sup>25</sup> The Department of Education would then be required to provide Congress with a biennial report on the state reported data from the programs and policies to combat bullying and harassment in elementary and secondary schools.<sup>26</sup> The National Center for Education Statistics would collect this state data to determine the incidence and frequency of the conduct prohibited by LEA disciplinary policies. **Please contact your congressperson and encourage them to pass this critical piece of legislation.**

<sup>22</sup> Aroian, Karen, 2012, Discrimination Against Muslim American Adolescents, The Journal of School Nursing 28(3) 206-213.

<sup>23</sup> CAIR, 2013.

<sup>24</sup> Safe Schools Improvement Act of 2017, H.R. 1957, 115th Congress (2017- 2018), bill summaries available at: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115thcongress/house-bill/1957/>.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

## Survey Findings

In this section, please find a detailed breakdown of each question and its responses.

### Question 1: Gender

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Female	72%
Male	28%

### Question 2: Grade

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
7	5.8%
8	8.5%
9	19%
10	29.6%
11	20.1%
12	16.9%

### Question 3: School

(Findings for Question 3 purposely omitted, due to space.)

### Question 4: Which ethnic group do you most identify with?

(Select more than one if necessary.)

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
African American / Black	25%
SubSaharan African	3%
East African	15%
Arab	32%
Central Asian	2%
South Asian	13%
South East Asian	3%
Latino / Hispanic	0%
White	4%
Other	3%

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**Question 5: During this school year, how often have you been bullied?**

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Constantly (everyday)	2%
Regularly (1 or 2 times a week)	5%
Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)	6%
Rarely (12 times a year)	20%
Never	67%

**Question 6: During the past school year, how often have you seen someone else being bullied?**

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Constantly (everyday)	6%
Regularly (1 or 2 times a week)	9%
Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)	27%
Rarely (12 times a year)	31%
Never	27%

**Question 7: Have you ever stood up for someone being bullied in the past?**

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Constantly (everyday)	4%
Regularly (1 or 2 times a week)	7%
Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)	30%
Rarely (12 times a year)	34%
Never	13%
I haven't seen someone being bullied	12%

**Question 8: Has a classmate ever stood up for you if/when you were bullied in the past?**

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Constantly (everyday)	3%
Regularly (1 or 2 times a week)	2%
Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)	14%
Rarely (12 times a year)	27%
Never	54%

**Question 9: Has an adult ever talked to you or your classmates about bullying?**

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Constantly (everyday)	4%
Regularly (1 or 2 times a week)	13%
Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)	32%
Rarely (12 times a year)	38%
Never	13%

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**Question 10: Do adults do a good job at addressing bullying at your school?**

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Yes, they are helpful	27%
Sometimes	40%
No, they don't understand what's going on	23%
They do not address bullying	10%

**Question 11: What can adults do at school to help stop bullying?**

(Select all that apply.)

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Supervise the school better	24%
Makes rules and discipline bullies	26%
Talk about bullying prevention in class	16%
Help students work out problems	19%
Bullying is not a problem at our school	11%
Other	4%

**Question 12: Select all that apply. If a bullying incident happened at my school, I would ...**

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Tell a friend	30%
Tell a parent	13%
Tell a teacher or administrator	53%
Tell someone else	4%

**Question 13: I feel comfortable discussing bullying with my teachers / school administrators.**

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Agree	68%
Disagree	32%

**Question 14: How often have you been bullied at school for being Muslim?**

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Constantly (everyday)	3%
Regularly (1 or 2 times a week)	6%
Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)	11%
Rarely (12 times a year)	41%
Never	39%

**Question 15: In what ways have you been bullied for being Muslim?**

(Select all that apply.)

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Online / social media bullying	15%
Taunting / yelling	12%
Physical violence	5%
Mean comments in person	34%
Have not been bullied for being Muslim	28%
Other	6%

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**Question 16: How often have you been bullied based on your ethnicity or race?**

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Constantly (everyday)	3%
Regularly (1 or 2 times a week)	4%
Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)	12%
Rarely (12 times a year)	33%
Never	48%

**Question 17: How often have you been bullied based on your or your family's immigration status? (Being an immigrant, a refugee, or not being a citizen.)**

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Constantly (everyday)	1%
Regularly (1 or 2 times a week)	2%
Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)	7%
Rarely (12 times a year)	18%
Never	72%

**Question 18: How often have you been bullied based on where you live?**

(The part of town you live in, your neighborhood.)

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Constantly (everyday)	2%
Regularly (1 or 2 times a week)	3%
Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)	5%
Rarely (12 times a year)	11%
Never	79%

**Question 19: How often have you been bullied based on your income? (Based on how much money your family makes, the type of house you live in, the car your family drives, the clothing you wear.)**

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Constantly (everyday)	3%
Regularly (1 or 2 times a week)	2%
Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)	5%
Rarely (12 times a year)	15%
Never	75%

**Question 20: I feel comfortable letting others in school know that I am Muslim.**

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Agree	86%
Disagree	14%

**Question 21: How often do you see another Muslim being bullied at school for being Muslim?**

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Constantly (everyday)	3%
Regularly (1 or 2 times a week)	4%
Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)	6%
Rarely (12 times a year)	30%
Never	57%

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**Question 22:** If you wear hijab, how often have you been physically harassed at school, such as having your hijab pulled on, removed, etc., at school?

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Constantly (everyday)	2%
Regularly (1 or 2 times a week)	1%
Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)	3%
Rarely (12 times a year)	11%
Never	35%
I don't wear hijab	48%

**Question 23:** How often have you heard of someone else who wears a hijab being physically harassed at school?

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Constantly (everyday)	4%
Regularly (1 or 2 times a week)	4%
Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)	11%
Rarely (12 times a year)	21%
Never	60%

**Question 24:** Have you altered or considered altering your appearance, behavior, or name to hide the fact that you are Muslim?

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Constantly (everyday)	5%
Regularly (1 or 2 times a week)	3%
Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)	6%
Rarely (12 times a year)	19%
Never	67%

**Question 25:** Have teachers or staff made offensive comments about Islam or Muslims inside or outside of the school?

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Constantly (everyday)	2%
Regularly (1 or 2 times a week)	2%
Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)	8%
Rarely (12 times a year)	28%
Never	60%

**Question 26:** Do you notice police officers at your school?

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	76%
No	24%

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**Question 27:** Do police officers or other law enforcement come to your school to talk about Islamophobia, Islam, and / or Muslims?

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Constantly (everyday)	0%
Regularly (1 or 2 times a week)	1%
Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)	1%
Rarely (12 times a year)	8%
Never	90%

**Question 28:** How often would you say that you notice police officers or other law enforcement present in your neighborhood?

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Constantly (everyday)	14%
Regularly (1 or 2 times a week)	17%
Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)	23%
Rarely (12 times a year)	24%
Never	22%

**Question 29:** Have you participated in youth-police dialogue?

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
I do not know what that is	65%
No	28%
Yes	7%

**Question 30:** When my teachers taught lessons about Islam, they did so in a neutral, fair, and factual manner.

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Agree	77%
Disagree	23%

**Question 31:** Have you ever felt responsible for teaching your classmates about Islam, Muslims, and / or Islamophobia?

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Constantly (everyday)	15%
Regularly (1 or 2 times a week)	20%
Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)	23%
Rarely (12 times a year)	26%
Never	16%

**Question 32:** In your classroom, have your teachers discussed the subject of Jihad, Shariah, Terrorism, or the War on Terror?

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	59%
No	41%

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**Question 33: If these subjects were discussed, how were they presented?**

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
These subjects have not been discussed in any of my classes	36%
They were associated with all Muslims	21%
They were presented as not representative of mainstream Islam	43%

**Question 34: If any of these subjects have been discussed, in which classes did the discussion occur? (Select all that apply.)**

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Social Studies, Geography, or History	57%
Language Arts, Literature, or English	18%
Science or Math	3%
Specialty Courses (art, computers, foreign languages, or gym)	3%
These subjects have not been discussed in any of my classes	19%

**Question 35: If you have ever been asked to participate in a training on online / social media / internet safety, were there references made to extremism or terrorism?**

Answer	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	38.7%
No	58.1%
I have not participated in training	3.2%

## What Do Our Findings Suggest?

The results of our survey demonstrate that the **majority of Muslim students** in Massachusetts public schools — **3 in 5** — **are experiencing identity-based bullying and harassment in their schools from peers and teachers / staff**. The report also highlights to us that Muslim students do not experience bullying solely based on the religious identity, but also their other social identities such as race, family income, and immigration status. Therefore, bullying intervention programs provided by schools and community members working with Muslim students should also look at the role played by their intersecting racial, cultural, immigration, and socio-economic identities.

We at CAIR-MA are hopeful that the findings of this survey will empower our communities to continue fighting to **ensure that our young people are provided with safe spaces in which to learn**. We also hope that those who are experiencing incidents of **bullying realize that they are not alone and feel empowered** to stand up for their rights.

CAIR-MA provides cultural competency training to schools upon request, and we work with students, parents, and school administrators in dealing with issues relating to Muslim students; please [submit a program request on our website](#). **Parents and students should reach out to CAIR-MA directly if a student is experiencing bullying or discrimination at school**. Anti-Muslim bullying is a deep issue within our state with significant human costs, but we can work to challenge and overcome it, together.





## Resources

The following resources are recommended for learning more about the topics presented in this report.

### Resources on Combating Islamophobia

- ❖ **CAIR's Counter Islamophobia Project:** <http://www.islamophobia.org/>
- ❖ **Institute for Social Policy and Understanding:** <https://www.ispu.org/>
- ❖ **Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative:** <https://www.muslimarc.org/>
- ❖ **Institute for Muslim Mental Health:** <https://muslimmentalhealth.com/>
- ❖ **Muslim Wellness Foundation:** <https://www.muslimwellness.com/>
- ❖ **Muslim Mental Health Toolkit** (this toolkit also includes specific resources for addressing the needs of American Muslim children who face the added challenge of bullying from peers and adults): <https://www.ispu.org/mental-health/>
- ❖ **Douglass, Susan and Dunn, Ross** “Interpreting Islam in American Schools,” Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 2003
- ❖ **CAIR-CA's “An Educator's guide to Islamic Religious Practices,”** which addresses common questions and misconceptions about Islam and Muslims
- ❖ **Bullying Prevention Guide Islamic Networks Group:** [http://www.ing.org/downloads/ING\\_Bullying\\_Prevention\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.ing.org/downloads/ING_Bullying_Prevention_Guide.pdf)
- ❖ **State of American Muslim Youth: Research & Recommendations Institute for Social Policy and Understanding:** [https://www.ispu.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/ISPU\\_FYI\\_Report\\_American\\_Muslim\\_Youth\\_Final-1.pdf](https://www.ispu.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/ISPU_FYI_Report_American_Muslim_Youth_Final-1.pdf)

### Organizations Providing Educational Resources on Islam

- ❖ **Islamic Networks Group (ING):** <https://ing.org/>
- ❖ **Teaching Tolerance: A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center:** <https://www.splcenter.org/news/2021/02/03/learning-justice-teaching-tolerance-changes-its-name-reflect-evolving-work-struggle-radical>
- ❖ **WhyIslam:** <http://www.whyislam.org>
- ❖ **Unity Productions Foundation:** <http://www.upf.tv>

### Resources on Restorative Justice

- ❖ **Restorative Solutions:** <http://restorativesolutions.us/resources/best-restorative-justice-books>





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