

Erased or Extremists: The Stereotypical View of Muslims in Popular Episodic Series

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ERASED OR EXTREMISTS:

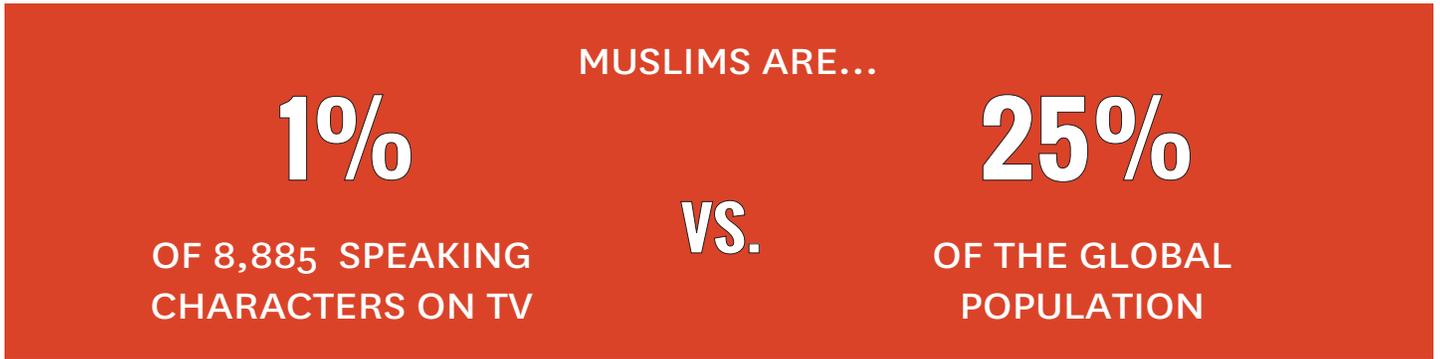
THE STEREOTYPICAL VIEW OF MUSLIMS IN 200 POPULAR EPISODIC SERIES

USC ANNEBERG INCLUSION INITIATIVE



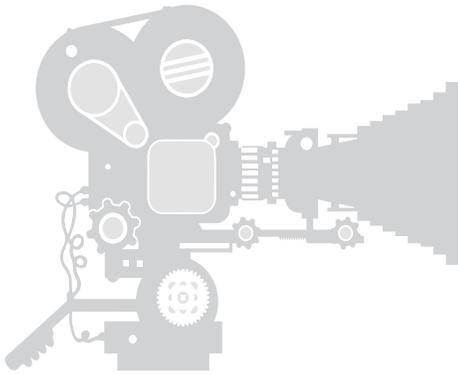
MUSLIM CHARACTERS ARE MISSING IN POPULAR EPISODIC SERIES

Percentage of Muslim characters across 200 popular series, 2018-2019



MUSLIM SERIES REGULARS ARE RARE

Across 200 series from 2018 and 2019...



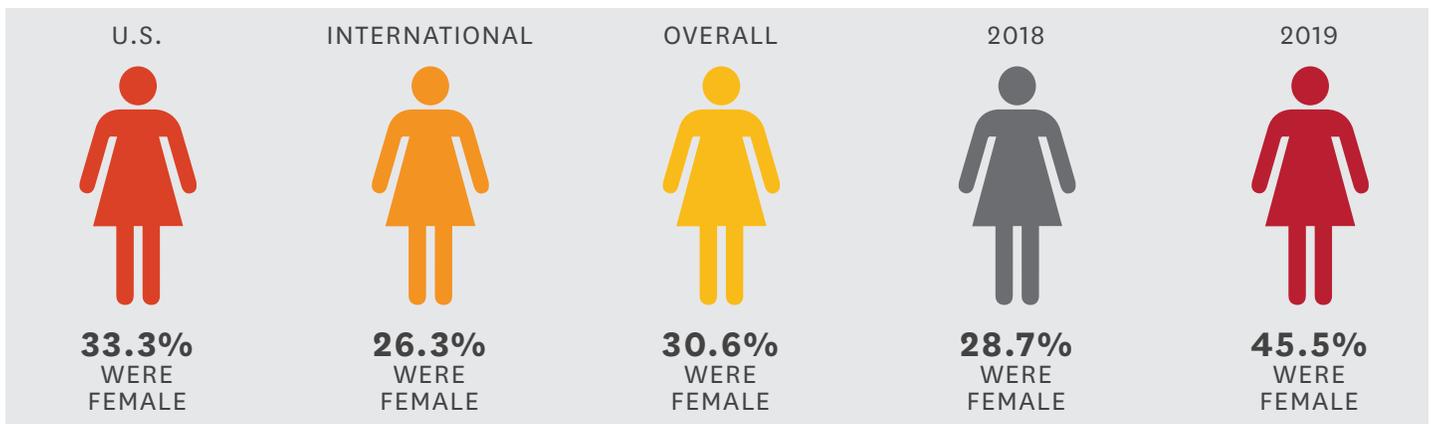
Of those 12 series regulars...

- 7** were perpetrators or targets of physical violence.
- 5** were **women & girls**. Seven were **men & boys**.

12 series regulars were Muslim. These 12 series regulars appeared in 5 programs.

MUSLIM GIRLS & WOMEN REMAIN UNDERREPRESENTED ON SCREEN

Percentage of Muslim female characters across 200 popular films by country, 2018-2019



MUSLIM CHARACTERS FACE AN EPIDEMIC OF INVISIBILITY ON SCREEN

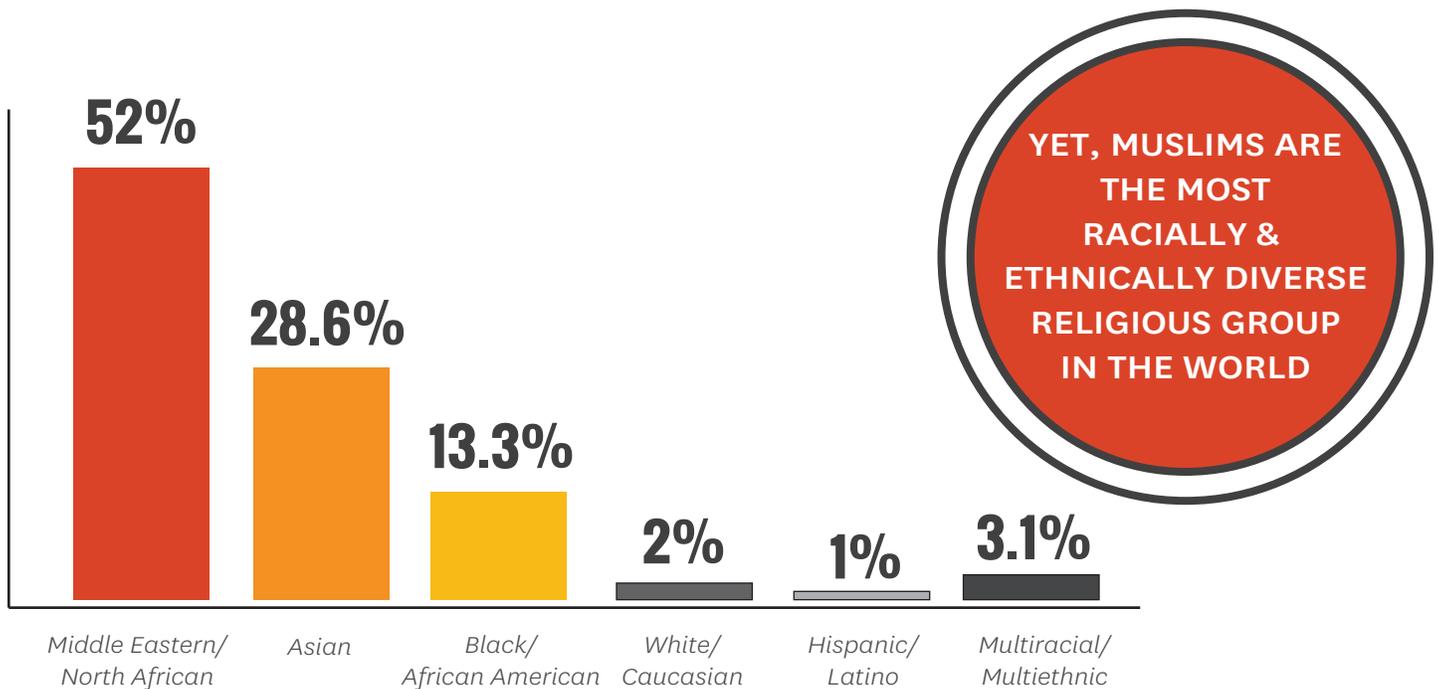
Number and percentage of 200 series missing Muslim characters, 2018-2019



87% OF 200 SERIES
DID NOT FEATURE
EVEN ONE
MUSLIM SPEAKING
CHARACTER.
MOST SERIES HAD **ONLY ONE**
MUSLIM CHARACTER (8%).

MUSLIM CHARACTERS ARE RACIALLY PROFILED IN SERIES

Race/ethnicity of Muslim characters across 200 series, 2018-2019



MUSLIM CHARACTERS ARE OFTEN SHOWN AS 'FOREIGNERS'

Percentage of Muslim characters by story setting



MUSLIM WOMEN RARELY APPEAR IN POPULAR EPISODIC SERIES

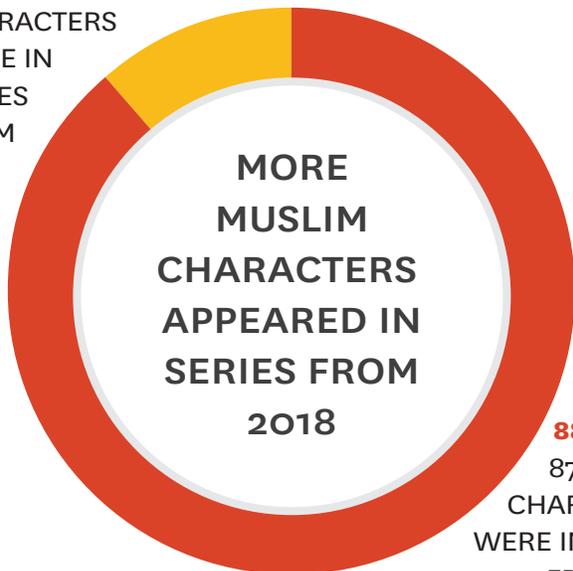
THE RATIO OF ALL MALE CHARACTERS TO MUSLIM FEMALE CHARACTERS
ACROSS 200 SERIES IS

174 TO 1

MUSLIM REPRESENTATION BY YEAR

Number and percentage of Muslim characters by year

11.2% OR 11 MUSLIM
CHARACTERS
WERE IN
SERIES
FROM
2019



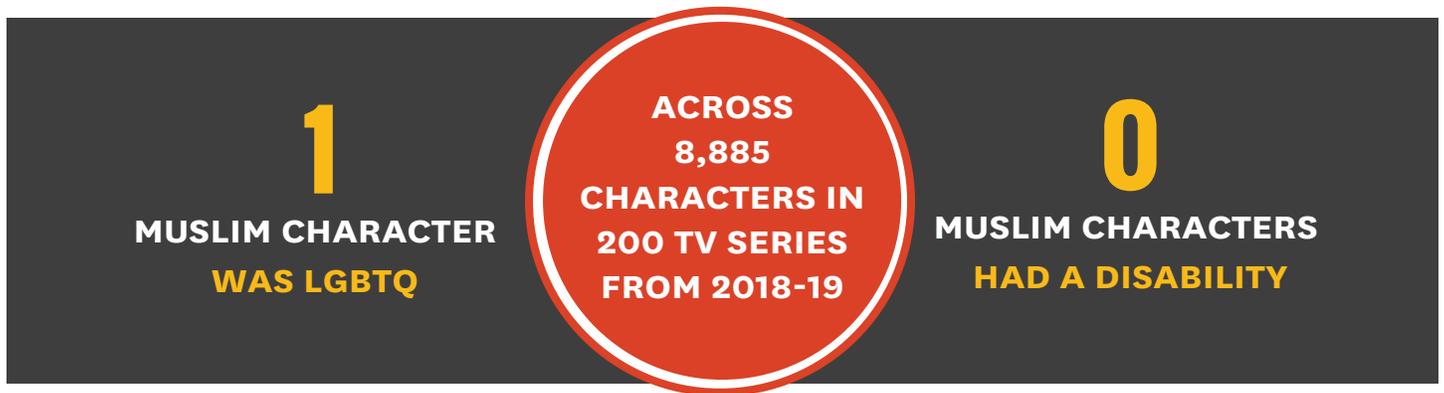
88.8% OR
87 MUSLIM
CHARACTERS
WERE IN SERIES
FROM 2018

17 SERIES FROM 2018
FEATURED AT LEAST
ONE MUSLIM
SPEAKING CHARACTER
VERSUS 9 SERIES
FROM 2019

6 SERIES IN 2018
HAD MUSLIM SERIES
REGULARS VERSUS
2 SERIES IN 2019

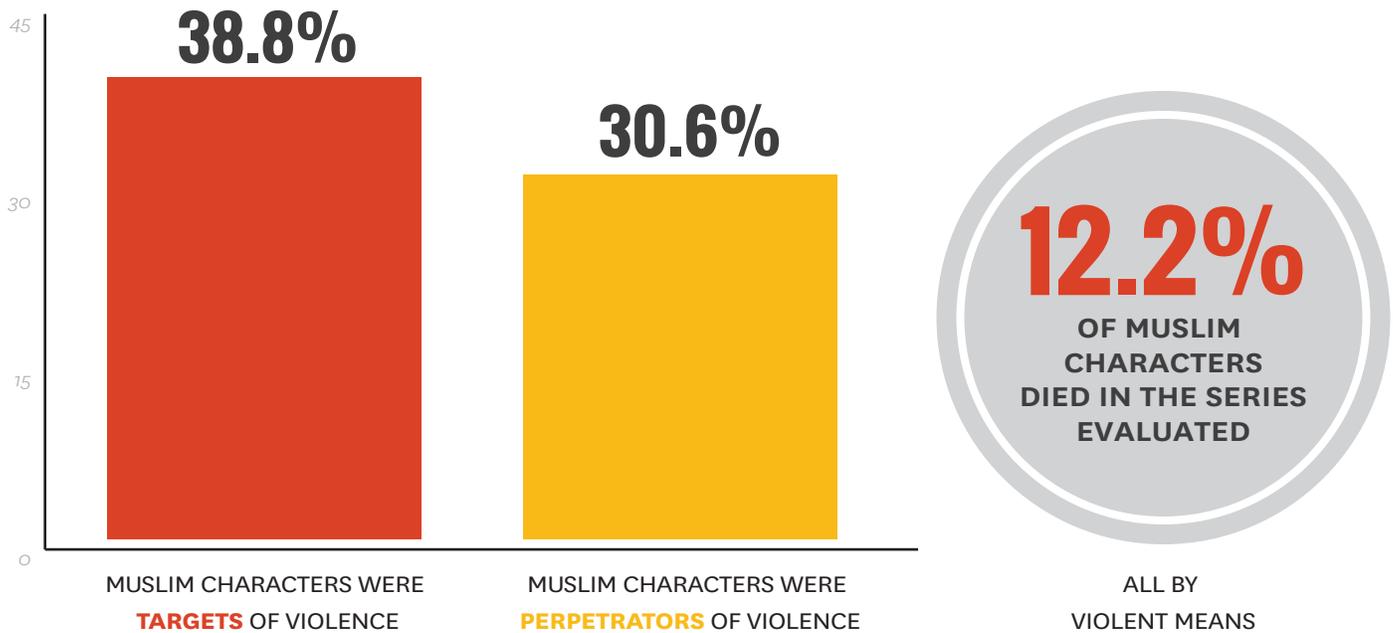
MUSLIM CHARACTERS DO NOT REFLECT A DIVERSE COMMUNITY

Muslim characters shown as part of the LGBTQ community or with a disability across 200 series



MUSLIM CHARACTERS ARE LINKED TO VIOLENCE

Percentage of Muslim characters involved with violence



MUSLIM CHARACTERS ARE CUT OUT OF COMEDY SERIES

Muslim characters and series genre across 200 series, 2018-2019

OF 200 POPULAR SERIES, 65% WERE DRAMAS AND 35% WERE COMEDIES

ONLY 11.5% OR 3 OF THE 26 SERIES FEATURING MUSLIM CHARACTERS WERE COMEDIES

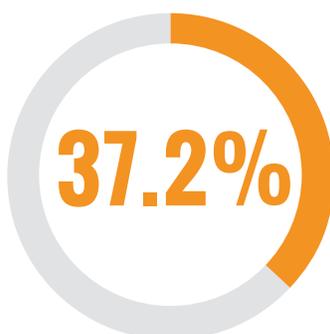
MUSLIM CHARACTERS HOLD A LIMITED ARRAY OF OCCUPATIONS

Percentage of Muslim characters shown with a profession and the nature of the occupation...

OF 98 MUSLIM CHARACTERS...



WERE SHOWN
WITH AN
OCCUPATION



WERE SHOWN
IN CRIMINAL
ACTIVITIES



WERE SHOWN
IN LAW
ENFORCEMENT

MUSLIM CHARACTERS IN MEDICAL OCCUPATIONS

Of the 10 Muslim characters shown with careers in healthcare...



MUSLIM CHARACTERS ARE DISPARAGED BY OTHERS

Words and phrases used to disparage 98 Muslim characters...

PSYCHOPATH MURDEROUS GANG OF FANATICS
TERRORIST PEDOPHILE MONSTER
LITTLE F*CKER SADISTIC PIG
SCHOOL SHOOTER PREDATOR IDIOT

Erased or Extremists: The Stereotypical View of Muslims in Popular Episodic Series

Annenberg Inclusion Initiative

The present investigation examines the frequency and nature of Muslim portrayals across 200 popular episodic scripted series from four countries. This study includes 100 fictional programs from 2018 and 100 from 2019, representing the top rated series that were popular in the U.S. ($n=64$), U.K. ($n=23$), Australia ($n=11$), and New Zealand ($n=2$) in those years. The first three episodes of the season airing in 2018 and 2019 were examined to identify every speaking or named character, consistent with other studies from the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. Each character was evaluated to determine if they were Muslim. Then, a series of measures were used to assess the nature or context of Muslim portrayals. As such, the study captures both quantitative and qualitative aspects of Muslim depictions on the small screen. Below, we highlight the approach and key findings from each section.

Key Findings

Quantitative

For all quantitative analyses, we first looked at the overall distribution of Muslim characters for on screen prevalence (i.e., frequency, prominence, erasure) and portrayal (i.e., gender, race/ethnicity, age, LGBTQ, disability). With select variables, we examined whether these measures varied by year released (2018 vs. 2019) and country (U.S. vs. International).

Prevalence. Of the 8,885 speaking or named characters coded across 200 popular scripted series, only 98 or 1.1% were Muslim. This translates into 89.7 non Muslim characters on screen to every 1 Muslim character. Yet there are 1.9 billion Muslims accounting for 24.9% of the total worldwide population. Relative to this percentage, Muslims were vastly underrepresented on screen (23.8 percentage points).

The sheer number of Muslim speaking characters in 2018 was substantially higher than in 2019. Three shows in 2018 accounted for the largest number of Muslims per series: *Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan* (33 characters), *Next of Kin* (19 characters), and *Our Girl* (9 characters). After removing these shows, 2018 (26 Muslims coded) series still had numerically more than twice as many Muslim speaking characters than did 2019 (11 Muslims) series. In terms of country, the US (1%) was no more or less likely to depict a Muslim speaking character on screen than their non US counterparts (1.3%).

Of the 200 scripted series evaluated, 13% ($n=26$) depicted one or more Muslims across the first three episodes evaluated. This variable deviated marginally by year, as 17% of shows featured at least one Muslim character in 2018 and 9% in 2019. The analysis of country was not related to the prevalence of shows with at least one Muslim speaking character.

The vast majority or 87% ($n=174$) of scripted series erased Muslim speaking characters altogether. Of the remaining shows, the mode or most frequent number of Muslim characters in a series was 1 (8% or 16 programs). One percent of shows ($n=2$) had 2 Muslim characters, 2% ($n=4$) had 3 Muslim characters, and 2% ($n=4$) had 4 or more.

Of the 98 Muslim characters across the sample, only 12 were coded as series regulars. Half of the Muslim series regulars were in the US sample of shows and only 2 series regulars appeared in the 2019 sample (Wendell Pierce, *Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan*, Ali Karim, *Shortland Street*).

The vast majority (60.2%, $n=59$) of Muslim speaking characters on screen were inconsequential. Fifty-two (59.8%) of the 87 Muslim speaking characters were inconsequential to the plot in 2018 and 7 (63.6%) of 11 were in 2019. By country, US shows were far more likely than international shows to feature inconsequential Muslim speaking characters on screen (71.7%, 42.1%, respectively). The ratio of inconsequential Muslim characters is 4.92 to every 1 series regular.

Portrayal. Of the 98 Muslim speaking characters across the 200 scripted series, 69.4% were male ($n=68$) and 30.6% ($n=30$) were female. This pattern deviated substantially from the overall sample where 41.7% of non Muslim speaking characters were girls and women. Muslim characters' gender did not vary by year or country.

No Muslim speaking characters were coded as non binary across the sample. 180 series erased or did not feature at least one male Muslim speaking character on screen and 184 erased or did not feature at least one female Muslim speaking character on screen.

Muslim speaking characters were most likely to be Middle Eastern/North African (52%, $n=51$), followed by Asian (28.6%, $n=28$) and Black (13.3%, $n=13$). Few Muslim speaking characters in the sample were White (2%, $n=2$), Hispanic (1%, $n=1$), or multi-racial/multi-ethnic (3.1%, $n=3$). While the majority of Muslim speaking characters were MENA, only 37.5% ($n=51$) of all MENA characters sample wide ($n=136$) were Muslim.

No deviation for race/ethnicity of Muslim speaking characters emerged by year. However, there was a significant relationship by country. US series were more likely to showcase MENA Muslims and international series were more likely to showcase Asian and Black Muslims.

Of the 98 Muslim characters coded, 0 were young children (0-5 years), 13.4% ($n=13$) were children (6-12 years), 10.3% ($n=10$) were teens, 48.5% ($n=47$) were young adults, 25.8% ($n=25$) were middle aged and 2.1% ($n=2$) were elderly. One Muslim speaking character was coded as "can't tell" for age and thus was not included in this distribution. It is important to point out that there were no Muslim children 0-5 years of age across the entire sample of 200 popular scripted series. Only 2 elderly speaking characters were coded as Muslim and none appeared on screen in the US sample or across 100 popular shows in 2019.

Across the 98 Muslim speaking characters, only one was part of the LGBTQ community on screen. That character was a 21-to-39-year-old Asian lesbian who played a supporting role in the UK series, *Next of Kin*. No gay, bisexual or transgender Muslims were depicted on screen. Focusing on disability, not one Muslim speaking character across the 200 scripted series was shown with a significant and persistent cognitive, communicative, and/or physical impediment.

In total, the demographic and attributive qualities of Muslim speaking characters were antiquated on screen across the sample of shows evaluated. The "typical" Muslim speaking character in popular global scripted series was male, a young adult in his 20s or 30s and MENA with no ties to the LGBTQ or disability communities.

Qualitative

To examine the portrayal of Muslims in popular series, we conducted a qualitative analysis of the 98 Muslim characters who appeared across highly rated shows in 2018 and 2019. For each character, a series of questions tapped attributes related to the depiction of Muslim characters (i.e., occupations, relationships, association with violence, cultural focus, settings). The goal was rich description of these 98 characters, with coding completed by 14 research assistants who were Muslim and another 6 who had a strong understanding of and/or ties to the Muslim community via exposure, education, and/or relationships.

Muslims were Rendered “Foreign” Through Settings and Language. Of the 98 Muslim characters shown in popular television series, 45.9% ($n=45$) lived in Muslim-dominated countries or areas. The remaining 54.1% ($n=53$) of Muslim characters lived in countries that were not Muslim-dominated (e.g., U.S., U.K., India, France, New Zealand). Only 13.3% ($n=13$) of all Muslim characters were native to non-Muslim dominated countries, while 2 were immigrants.

Apart from the setting where characters appeared, language was also a way that stories stereotyped Muslim characters. Less than one-third (31.6%, $n=31$) of Muslim characters spoke English as their native language, compared to 63.3% ($n=62$) who were native speakers of another language, and 5.1% ($n=5$) whose portrayal was too brief to be evaluated for this measure. Of the 62 non-native English speakers, 51.6% ($n=32$) spoke accented English while the remaining 48.4% ($n=30$) of characters spoke only in non-English languages, such as Arabic, French, Urdu and Hausa (a Nigerian dialect).

Muslims Had Limited On Screen Occupational Opportunities. Of the 98 Muslim characters identified across 200 series, 51 (60%) were shown with an occupation. Male Muslim characters (78.4%, $n=40$) were more likely than female Muslim characters (21.6%, $n=11$) to be employed. The highest percentage of Muslim characters (37.2%, $n=19$) were involved with criminal activities while 15.7% ($n=8$) of Muslim characters worked in law enforcement.

Other Muslim characters held occupations outside of the justice system. Roughly one-fifth (19.6%, $n=10$) of Muslim characters were shown with careers in healthcare, while the remaining characters held jobs in religious domains (7.8%, $n=4$), in travel and logistics jobs (7.8%, $n=4$), financial services (3.9%, $n=2$), politics (2%, $n=1$), media (2%, $n=1$), personal care (2%, $n=1$), and retail (2%, $n=1$).

Violent Villains: Muslims Were Still Terrorizing on Screen. Of the 98 Muslim characters in the sample, 30.6% ($n=30$) perpetrated violent actions against another character. These individuals primarily used firearms (43.3%, $n=13$), though characters were also shown with bombs or vests with explosive devices (36.7%, $n=11$) and using natural means (e.g., punching, kicking; 26.7%, $n=8$) to attack and physically harm others. The majority of the Muslim perpetrators of violence were in roles that defined them as antagonists to the plot (76.7%, $n=23$).

Although they perpetrated violence, nearly 40% of Muslims were also targets of violence (38.8%, $n=38$). More than half of these victims (52.6%, $n=20$) were the story’s antagonists or affiliated with villains. Of all Muslim characters shown across the sample, 12.2% ($n=12$) died during the first three episodes evaluated. All died by violent means.

Muslims Were Shown with Cultural Artifacts & Religious Identifiers. Nearly half of Muslim characters (49%, $n=48$) made some form of verbal reference that was indicative of their faith while 23.5% of characters ($n=23$) were identified as Muslim through non-verbal depictions. Expressions of Islam were

also shown through tangible artifacts and clothing. Only 11 characters (11.2%, 5 secondary and 6 tertiary characters) were presented with artifacts affiliated with their Muslim identity. More than half of Muslim characters (52%, $n=51$) were shown wearing attire related to or affiliated with Islam. Twenty-two of the Muslim women in popular series distinctly wore hijabs, including in non-Muslim dominated settings. Men's attire was more diverse, including kurtas, topis, ghutras, and thobes.

Muslim Women Were Fearful and Endangered. A consistent theme across the way Muslim girls and women are characterized: they experience fear and peril, typically at the hands of men. Muslim women experienced both emotional distress as well as physical danger. Muslim girls and women were shown to be fearful, upset, or anxious about a variety of circumstances. Physical peril was also common for Muslim women who faced direct threats and actual violence, including the threat of sexual violence. At least three series included depictions or discussion surrounding the vulnerability of Muslim women to sexual exploitation. This was directly shown through predatory behavior aimed at Muslim girls and women, as conversations and portrayals of child marriage, and storylines regarding girls who had been kidnapped, raped, and become pregnant by militants.

Lack of Series Regulars & Focus on Dramatic Programming Stifled Nuanced Portrayals. Although there were 39 primary or secondary Muslim characters across the series evaluated, only 12 Muslim characters held series regular roles. These roles, though few, offered the greatest opportunity to showcase diversity within the Muslim community. Series regulars appeared in 5 programs across the sample. Compared to the full sample, Muslim series regulars were less likely to be women, and more likely to be Middle Eastern/North African and Asian. In terms of genre, 65% of the 200 series ($n=130$) examined were dramas and 35% ($n=70$) were comedies. Of the 26 series featuring Muslim characters, however, only 11.5% ($n=3$) were comedies while 88.5% ($n=23$) were dramas.

The final section of the report concludes by describing potential solutions to increase the prevalence and improve the portrayal of Muslims on screen. These solutions include telling more stories about Muslim characters, deepening the richness of portrayals for supporting Muslim characters, ending a focus on terrorism and extremism, and casting Muslims in ways that emphasize their participation in broader society. Additionally, hiring Muslim creatives behind the camera as writers, directors, producers, and in other key roles (e.g., executives, agents, managers) is necessary to change the landscape of entertainment for this community.

Erased or Extremists: The Stereotypical View of Muslims in Popular Episodic Series

Annenberg Inclusion Initiative

After a renewal of protests and activism regarding racial justice in 2020, concern about discrimination and prejudice continues to be on the minds of Americans. This includes prejudice toward religious communities, and one group in particular: Muslims. According to the Pew Research Center, 78% of Americans said that Muslims in the U.S face “some” or “a lot” of discrimination.¹ This is critical, as this faith-based community encompasses not only a religious identity, but marginalized racial/ethnic groups as well— meaning that discrimination may be felt in many ways by Muslims. For example, in the same Pew survey, 80% of respondents reported that Black Americans face some or a lot of discrimination, as do 70% of Asian American. These prejudices are not limited to the U.S. A 2022 report found that 25.9% of Britons hold negative views of Muslims, making the community second only to Gypsy and Irish Travelers as the “least liked” group in the UK.²

Attitudes toward Muslims may be formed by a variety of factors. However, one in particular, the mass media, is a component within the control of storytellers and content creators. Thus, it is important to understand both how often and in what context Muslim characters appear in entertainment. Previously, the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative investigated the prevalence and portrayal of Muslim characters in popular films from the U.S., U.K., Australia, and New Zealand. The results demonstrated that Muslims rarely appear on screen and are often stereotyped in negative ways. Yet, movies are not the only entertainment media that may provide audiences with information on Muslim communities. As a follow-up to that initial report, the present investigation examines popular television series from the same countries to understand the frequency and nature of Muslim portrayals.

This study includes 100 episodic programs from 2018 and 100 from 2019, representing series that were popular in the U.S. ($n=64$), U.K. ($n=23$), Australia ($n=11$), and New Zealand ($n=2$) in those years.³ The first three episodes of the season airing in 2018 and 2019 were examined to identify every speaking or named character, consistent with other studies from the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative.⁴ Each character was evaluated to determine if the individual was Muslim. Then, a series of measures were used to assess the nature of Muslim portrayals.

The report below proceeds in three major sections. First, we overview the quantitative trends that emerged from the analysis. Then, we turn to qualitative findings focused on Muslim representation. Lastly, we offer a set of overall conclusions across both film and episodic storytelling and present solutions for change.

Quantitative Analyses

For all quantitative analyses, we first looked at the overall distribution of Muslim characters for on screen prevalence (i.e., frequency, prominence, erasure) and portrayal (i.e., gender, race/ethnicity, age, LGBTQ, disability). With select variables, we examined whether these measures varied by the year the series was released (2018 vs. 2019) and country (U.S. vs. International). For the latter analyses, we grouped all international content together due to the small sample sizes of Australian ($n=22$) and New Zealand ($n=4$) shows in comparison to the UK series ($n=46$). All details of the sample and methodology can be found in the footnotes of the report.

In terms of analyses, we first report the frequency of overall trends. To determine whether there was deviation by year or country on each measure, two tests were executed. First, the statistical test between variables (e.g., chi-square) had to be significant at the $p < .05$ level. Marginal results are presented at $p < .10$. Second, the difference between comparisons had to be 5 percentage points or greater. This latter criterion was imposed to ensure that we did not make noise about meaningless deviation (e.g., 1-2 percentage points) between groups.

Prevalence

A total of 8,885 speaking or named characters were coded across 200 scripted series from the US and international samples (UK, Australia, and New Zealand). Of these, only 98 **speaking characters** or 1.1% were Muslim. This translates into 89.7 non Muslim characters on screen to every 1 Muslim character. Yet there are 1.9 billion Muslims who account for 24.9% of the total worldwide population.⁵ Clearly, Muslims were vastly underrepresented on screen (23.8 percentage points) in popular scripted series.

Table 1
Prevalence of Muslim Speaking Characters by Year

Measures	2018	2019	Overall
% of Muslim Speaking Characters	2% (<i>n</i> =87)	.2% (<i>n</i> =11)	1.1% (<i>n</i> =98)
% of Scripted Series w/at least one Muslim	17% (<i>n</i> =17)	9% (<i>n</i> =9)	13% (<i>n</i> =26)
Total # of scripted series evaluated	100	100	200

Does the frequency of Muslims vary by year (2018 vs. 2019) or country (US vs. international)? In terms of year, the analyses revealed a non meaningful difference.⁶ As shown in Table 1, the prevalence of Muslim speaking characters in 2018 was substantially higher than in 2019. The percentage difference did not meet our threshold for meaningful deviation (± 5 percentage points), however. Given that the numerical prevalence by year substantially varied (87 vs. 11 Muslims), we examined further where these faith-based characters appeared across the series evaluated.

Three shows in 2018 accounted for the largest number of Muslims per series: *Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan* (33 characters), *Next of Kin* (19 characters), and *Our Girl* (9 characters). After removing these outliers, we reran the analyses to examine how this might affect the findings. The analysis was significant, but again did not reach our criterion for meaningful deviation.⁷ Numerically, however, 2018 (26 Muslims coded) series had more than twice as many Muslim speaking characters than did 2019 (11 Muslims) series. It is important to underscore that out of 4,432 speaking characters across 100 popular US, UK, Australian, and New Zealand series in 2019, only 11 were Muslim!

Table 2
Prevalence of Muslim Speaking Characters by Country

Measure	US	International	Overall
% of Muslim Speaking Characters	1% (n=60)	1.3% (n=38)	1.1% (n=98)
% of Scripted Series w/at least one Muslim	13.3% (n=17)	12.5% (n=9)	13% (n=26)
Total # of scripted series evaluated	128	72	200

Pivoting to country, the relationship between origin of scripted shows (U.S. vs. International) and prevalence of Muslim speaking characters (no, yes) was evaluated. The analysis was not significant (see Table 2), with shows in the US (1%) no more or less likely to depict a Muslim speaking character on screen than their non US counterparts (1.3%).⁸

The above analyses focused on all speaking characters across the sample. Here, we turn to evaluating **programs** for the presence of Muslim characters. Of the 200 scripted series evaluated, 13% (n=26) depicted one or more Muslims across the first three episodes evaluated. This variable deviated marginally by year, as 17% of shows featured at least one Muslim character in 2018 and 9% in 2019 (see Table 1).⁹ The analysis of country was not related to the prevalence of shows with at least one Muslim speaking character (see Table 2).¹⁰

Another form of prevalence is **saturation**. For this measure, we were interested in how many Muslim speaking characters were found in popular scripted series. Of the 200 shows, the vast majority or 87% (n=174) erased Muslim speaking characters altogether. Of the remaining shows, the mode or most frequent number of Muslim characters in a series was 1 (8% or 16 programs)! One percent of shows (n=2) had 2 Muslim characters, 2% (n=4) had 3 Muslim characters, and 2% (n=4) had 4 or more.

Table 3
Number of Muslim Speaking Characters per Show

# of Muslims	% of Shows	Number
0 Muslims	87%	174
1 Muslim	8%	16
2 Muslims	1%	2
3 Muslims	2%	4
5 or more Muslims	2%	4

Note: The shows with 5 or more Muslim speaking characters included: *Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan* (2018, n=33), *Next of Kin* (2018, n=19), *Our Girl* (2018, n=9), *FBI* (2018, n=5).

The last prevalence indicator was **prominence** in the story. For this measure, the number of Muslim characters appearing as series regulars or main cast was first evaluated.¹¹ Of the 98 Muslim characters across the sample, only 12 were coded as series regulars. Half of the Muslim series regulars were in the US sample of shows and only 2 series regulars appeared in the 2019 sample (James Greer, *Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan*; Ali Karim, *Shortland Street*).

Second, we turned to examine the number of Muslim characters in scripted series that were on screen but completely tertiary to the plot. The vast majority (60.2%. $n=59$) of Muslim speaking characters on screen were inconsequential. By year, 52 (59.8%) of 87 Muslim speaking characters were inconsequential in 2018 and 7 (63.6%) of 11 were in 2019. This difference did not meet our criterion for a meaningful deviation.¹² By country, US shows were far more likely than international shows to feature inconsequential Muslim speaking characters on screen (71.7%, 42.1%, respectively).¹³ The ratio of inconsequential Muslim characters was 4.92 to every 1 series regular.

Overall, the prevalence data present a clear and present problem. Muslims have been grossly underrepresented in, or completely erased from, popular series across four countries. When Muslims do appear, it is likely they will be filling inconsequential or meaningless roles in stories. Little deviation emerged by country, but 2018 scripted series depicted more Muslims numerically on screen than did 2019 scripted series. Thus, the prevalence of Muslims on screen went from bad to worse across the two years sampled!

On Screen Portrayal

Gender. What are the demographic characteristics of Muslims on screen? To answer this query, we first looked at the distribution of Muslim speaking characters' gender (male, female, nonbinary). Of the 98 Muslim speaking characters across the 200 scripted series, 69.4% were male ($n=68$) and 30.6% ($n=30$) were female.¹⁴ This pattern deviated substantially from the overall sample where 41.7% of non Muslim speaking characters were girls and women.

Three caveats are important to note. One, no Muslim speaking characters were coded as non binary across the sample. Two, Muslim characters' gender did not vary by year¹⁵ or country.¹⁶ Three, 180 series erased or did not feature at least one male Muslim speaking character on screen and 184 erased or did not feature at least one female Muslim speaking character on screen.

Table 4
Muslim Females by Year and Country

Measure	2018	2019	US	International	Overall
% of Muslim Females	28.7% ($n=25$)	45.5% ($n=5$)	33.3% ($n=20$)	26.3% ($n=10$)	30.6% ($n=30$)
Total # of Muslim Characters	87	11	60	38	98

Note: The percentage of Muslim male speaking characters can be found by subtracting each cell from 100%. The number of male Muslim characters can be determined by subtracting the total number of Muslim speaking characters within each column by the sample size (n) of female speaking characters.

Race/Ethnicity. Every character was categorized into one of the following mutually exclusive racial/ethnic groups: White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (including Maori People), Middle Eastern/North African, or multi-racial/multi-ethnic/other (including aboriginal Australian). The international nature of the sample required that the

application of this variable accommodate indigenous groups from other nations. Please see footnote 17 for an explanation.

Muslim speaking characters were most likely to be Middle Eastern/North African (52%, $n=51$), followed by Asian (28.6%, $n=28$) and Black (13.3%, $n=13$). Few (see Table 5) Muslim speaking characters in the sample were White (2%, $n=2$), Hispanic (1%, $n=1$), or multi-racial/multi-ethnic (3.1%, $n=3$). No Muslim speaking characters were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders/Māori People, Native American/Alaskan Native, or Aboriginal Australians. It is interesting to note that while the majority of Muslim speaking characters were MENA, only 37.5% ($n=51$) of all MENA characters sample wide ($n=136$) were Muslim. Clearly, these findings suggest that casting directors have a clear ethnic stereotype in mind when it comes to portraying what a follower of Islam looks like on screen.

Table 5
Percent and Number of Muslim Characters' Race/Ethnicity

Measure	White	Hispanic	Black	Asian	MENA	Multi	Total
% of Muslim Characters	2% ($n=2$)	1% ($n=1$)	13.3% ($n=13$)	28.6% ($n=28$)	52% ($n=51$)	3.1% ($n=3$)	100% ($n=98$)

No deviation for race/ethnicity of Muslim speaking characters emerged by year (see Table 6).¹⁸ However, there was a significant relationship by country.¹⁹ As shown in Table 6, US series were more likely to showcase MENA Muslims whereas the international series were more likely to showcase Asian and Black Muslims. Even though these patterns deviate by 5% or more, the results should be interpreted with caution given the sample cell sizes.

Table 6
Percent and Number of Muslim Characters Race/Ethnicity by Year

Race/Ethnicity	2018	2019	US	International
White	2.3% (n=2)	0	3.3% (n=2)	0
Hispanic	1.1% (n=1)	0	1.7% (n=1)	0
Black	12.6% (n=11)	18.2% (n=2)	6.7% (n=4)	23.7% (n=9)
Asian	32.2% (n=28)	0	3.3% (n=2)	68.4% (n=26)
MENA	49.4% (n=43)	72.7% (n=8)	81.7% (n=49)	5.3% (n=2)
Multi	2.3% (n=2)	9.1% (n=1)	3.3% (n=2)	2.6% (n=1)
Total	87	11	60	38

Apparent Age. Each character was coded into one of six apparent age groupings: young child (0-5 years), child (6-12 years), teen (13-20 years), young adult (21-39 years), middle aged (40-64 years), or elderly (65 years or more). Of the 98 Muslim characters coded, 0 were young children, 13.4% (n=13) were children (6-12 years), 10.3% (n=10) were teens, 48.5% (n=47) were young adults, 25.8% (n=25) were middle aged and 2.1% (n=2) were elderly. One Muslim speaking character was coded as “can’t tell” for age and thus was not included in this distribution.

Table 7
Percent and Number of Muslim Characters’ Apparent Age

Measure	0-5 yrs	6-12 yrs	13-20 yrs	21-39 yrs	40-64 yrs	65 yrs or more	Total
% of Muslim Characters	0	13.4% (n=13)	10.3% (n=10)	48.5% (n=47)	25.8% (n=25)	2.1% (n=2)	100% (n=97)

Note: One Muslim character was coded as “can’t tell” for age and thus the total number of Muslim speaking characters dropped to 97.

Apparent age was not related to year or country.²⁰ The breakdown of age by these grouping variables can be found in Table 8. As shown in the table, there were no Muslim children 0-5 years of age across the entire sample of 200 popular scripted series. Only 2 elderly speaking characters were coded as Muslim and none appeared on screen in the US sample or across 100 popular shows in 2019. Finally, the

highest percentage of Muslim speaking characters were young adults depicted in their twenties and thirties.

Table 8
Percent and Number of Muslim Characters' Apparent Age by Year

Age	2018	2019	US	International
0-5 years old	0	0	0	0
6-12 years old	14% (n=12)	9.1% (n=1)	15% (n=9)	10.8% (n=4)
13-20 years old	10.5% (n=9)	9.1% (n=1)	10% (n=6)	10.8% (n=4)
21-39 years old	46.5% (n=40)	63.6% (n=7)	46.7% (n=28)	51.4% (n=19)
40-64 years old	26.7% (n=23)	18.2% (n=2)	28.3% (n=17)	21.6% (n=8)
65 years or older	2.3% (n=2)	0	0	5.4% (n=2)
Total	86	11	60	37

LGBTQ & Disability. Sample wide, each character was coded for LGBTQ status (no, yes). Across the 98 Muslim speaking characters, only one was part of the LGBTQ community on screen. That character was a 21-to-39-year-old Asian lesbian who played a supporting role in the UK series, *Next of Kin*. No gay, bisexual or transgender Muslims were depicted on screen.

Focusing on disability, not one Muslim speaking character across the 200 scripted series was shown with a significant and persistent cognitive, communicative, and/or physical impediment. Clearly, the LGBTQ and disability communities were completely erased from stories with Muslim characters.

In total, the demographic and attributive qualities of Muslim speaking characters were antiquated on screen. The “typical” Muslim speaking character in popular global scripted series was male, a young adult in his 20s or 30s and MENA with no ties to the LGBTQ or disability communities. This narrow typecasting on screen unfortunately perpetuates other harmful and insidious tropes which are discussed next in the qualitative section of the report.

Qualitative Analyses

To examine the portrayal of Muslims in popular series, we conducted a qualitative analysis of the 98 Muslim characters who appeared across highly rated shows in 2018 and 2019. For each character, a series of questions were designed to tap attributes related to the depiction of Muslim characters—occupations, relationships, association with violence, cultural focus, and even the settings in which they were portrayed. This allowed us to understand the extent of stereotypes present in content.

Measures were evaluated by 20 research assistants, 14 of whom were Muslim and 6 who had a strong understanding of the Muslim community via exposure, education, and/or relationships. Judgments were verified by the lead author of this study.²¹ Characters were analyzed for each episode in which they appeared, and a final decision was rendered across all measures when characters were in more than one episode. As a result, every character is included in the analysis once for each series.²² Below, we share the major trends that emerged across the study. For each trend, we provide information on the percentage of characters shown with a specific attribute and offer insight into what the inclusion of these attributes may mean for the development of attitudes, perceptions, or beliefs about Muslims by audience members.

Muslims were Rendered “Foreign” Through Settings and Language

The first set of attributes explored was the location in which Muslim characters were depicted. Story setting may be one facet that creates or reinforces perceptions about Muslims to audiences. The three series with the largest proportion of Muslim characters (e.g., *Tom Clancy’s Jack Ryan*, *Our Girl*, *Next of Kin*) all featured storylines set in Muslim-dominated countries or areas. In *Tom Clancy’s Jack Ryan*, the titular character traveled to Yemen and France in pursuit of terrorists, while *Our Girl* followed a British military deployment in Nigeria, and *Next of Kin* moved between London and Pakistan alongside the show’s main character. As a result, a significant proportion of Muslim characters were shown in settings outside the U.S., U.K., Australia, or New Zealand. In this section, we explore the settings where Muslim characters appeared, as well as information that could be gleaned about these characters’ national origin and language.

Of the 98 Muslim characters shown in popular television series, 45.9% ($n=45$) lived in Muslim-dominated countries or areas. These characters appeared in Syria, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and parts of Nigeria. The characters who appeared in these locales were primarily linked to terrorist activities or other military conflicts. For example, the action in *Tom Clancy’s Jack Ryan* moved between Yemen, Syria, and Muslim neighborhoods in Paris in pursuit of a network of extremists, after the show opened on a bombing in Lebanon. The Muslim characters located in Nigeria were members of the Boko Haram militia. If not directly involved in perpetrating violence linked to faith-based beliefs by the stories, Muslim characters were in military roles or were family and friends of extremists. In other words, when Muslim characters were located in Muslim-dominated countries, they were somehow connected to terrorist activity.

The remaining 54.1% ($n=53$) of Muslim characters were shown in countries that were not Muslim-dominated (e.g., U.S., U.K., India, France, New Zealand). Of the characters in non-Muslim dominated countries 38 were part of a family unit or interacted with other Muslim characters in community. For example, Muslim characters in *Eastenders*, *Next of Kin*, and *The Connors* were part of nuclear families. The 15 remaining Muslim characters appeared in stories such as *New Amsterdam*, *Altered Carbon*, *Empire*, *McMafia*, *Russian Doll*, and *The Simpsons*, to name a few. In most cases, these characters were the lone Muslim in the episode examined, and often filled inconsequential roles.

Despite living in such places, however, only 13.3% ($n=13$) of all Muslim characters were native to non-Muslim dominated countries, while 2 were immigrants. Both appeared in *Next of Kin*, including the main character, Mona. It is still rare to see a story centered on a Muslim character from the U.S., U.K., Australia, or New Zealand.

Apart from the setting where characters appeared, language was also a way that stories stereotyped Muslim characters. Less than one-third (31.6%, $n=31$) of Muslim characters spoke English as their native language, compared to 63.3% ($n=62$) who were native speakers of another language, and 5.1% ($n=5$) whose portrayal was too brief to be evaluated for this measure. Of the 62 non-native English speakers, 51.6% ($n=32$) spoke accented English while the remaining 48.4% ($n=30$) of characters spoke only in non-English languages, such as Arabic, French, Urdu and Hausa (a Nigerian dialect).

Story settings and language use may communicate more to audiences than just where the action of a series takes place. By linking Muslim characters with international locations via the story setting and languages spoken, popular series may reinforce the idea that Muslims are not “local” to the U.S., U.K., Australia, or New Zealand. Moreover, these character attributes may further emphasize the “otherness” of Muslims. This could contribute to perceptions of Muslims as people whose culture and customs are more than simply distinct to their faith, but as people who belong in foreign places. Such depictions subtly emphasize Muslims as out-group rather than in-group members, which may facilitate prejudice or discrimination, in line with social identity theory.²²

Characters such as Dr. Dahlia Qadri (*Grey’s Anatomy*), James Greer (*Tom Clancy’s Jack Ryan*), Omar Zidan (*FBI*) or Ali Karim (*Shortland Street*) all countered these stereotypes of Muslims as “foreign.” These characters were born in the U.S., U.K., or New Zealand, were native English speakers, and worked in local hospitals or for the U.S. government. Presenting Muslim characters as co-workers, neighbors, and local citizens is an important way for media to showcase the reality that Muslims are community members rather than people who only live in other parts of the world.

Muslims Had Limited On Screen Occupational Opportunities

The next set of measures explored whether Muslim characters were shown with a job. Of the 98 Muslim characters identified across 200 series, 85 could be evaluated for holding a job. Of those, 51 (60%) were shown with an occupation. Male Muslim characters (78.4%, $n=40$) were more likely than female Muslim characters (21.6%, $n=11$) to be employed.

What was the nature of jobs held by Muslim characters? The highest percentage of Muslim characters (37.2%, $n=19$) were involved with criminal activities. Most of these individuals were part of militia groups, terrorist organizations, or used violence illegally. Three of the Muslim characters involved in criminal enterprises were women. One woman (Sahar) appeared in *NCIS*, where she led a terrorist cell.

In contrast to depictions of criminality, 15.7% ($n=8$) of Muslim characters worked in law enforcement as soliders, police officers, CIA/FBI officers, and as security guards. All of the Muslim characters with jobs in law enforcement were male. Characters like Samir Abboud (*Altered Carbon*) and Special Agent Omar Zidan (*FBI*) were shown leading investigations. In fact, Zidan was a well-dressed and compassionate lead officer on multiple cases, including one where young girls were radicalized by a terrorist group via the internet.

Other Muslim characters held occupations outside of the justice system. Roughly one-fifth (19.6%, $n=10$) of Muslim characters were shown with careers in healthcare, including a surgeon, doctors, residents and interns, nurses, and a paramedic. Notably, seven female Muslim characters held positions in healthcare—which accounted for the majority of healthcare jobs *and* the majority of jobs held by Muslim women.

The remaining Muslim characters worked in a variety of professions, including as imams at mosques or preachers (7.8%, $n=4$), in travel and logistics jobs (7.8%, $n=4$), financial services (3.9%, $n=2$), politics (2%,

$n=1$), media (2%, $n=1$), personal care (2%, $n=1$), and retail (2%, $n=1$). Most of these characters ($n=12$ of 14) were inconsequential to the plot, however, and there was clear bifurcation in the clout related to their positions. While there were two characters in high-level financial roles (*Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan*, *Designated Survivor*) or who worked for a foreign embassy (*Designated Survivor*), others filled low-clout jobs as taxi drivers (e.g., *Killing Eve*), a convenience store worker (*Russian Doll*), and one was a mortician (*Next of Kin*).

These findings reflect the limited nature of Muslim employment in popular episodic content. The nature of different series in the sample may have played a role in the occupations depicted. For instance, shows set in a hospital may be more likely to feature doctors than those set in an educational setting. Yet, it is clear that stereotypes about Muslims still play into the type of jobs these characters held on screen. Why might this matter? Depicting Muslim characters as either lawbreakers or in regulatory jobs (e.g., law enforcement, healthcare) constrains opportunities for viewers to see that Muslims work in a variety of occupational settings.

For example, Jawed Karim (Co-Founder, YouTube), Ilhan Omar (U.S. Representative), Rahman Khan (Engineer, Architect), and Dalilah Muhammad (Olympic Gold Medalist) serve as a counterweight to portrayals that focused on violence and lawbreaking. Moreover, the limited portrayals in highly rated series may contribute to stereotyping about this community that can impact real-world perceptions of career fit for Muslim employees. Instead, storytelling can be influenced by real world figures and depict Muslim characters as contributing, vital members of the workforce across a variety of sectors. Portrayals that normalize Muslims as holding professions across a multitude of industries make an important contribution to the media landscape.

Violent Villains: Muslims Were Still Terrorizing on Screen

Muslims, both on and off screen, continue to be tied to narratives that perpetuate violence, terrorism, and extreme ideologies. Similar to our previous report, we examined the relationship between Muslim characters and a variety of different measures related to violence and aggression.

Popular series still placed an emphasis on violence and aggression. Of the 98 Muslim characters in the sample, 30.6% ($n=30$) perpetrated violent actions against another character. These individuals primarily used firearms (43.3%, $n=13$), though characters were also shown with bombs or vests with explosive devices (36.7%, $n=11$) and used natural means (e.g., punching, kicking; 26.7%, $n=8$) to attack and physically harm others. Half of the violent perpetrators were primary or secondary characters, which reflects 38.5% ($n=15$ of 39) of all primary and secondary Muslim characters. This is on par with findings on Muslims as aggressors in popular films (39%). More than three-quarters (76.7%) of the Muslim perpetrators of violence were the antagonists of the plot ($n=23$), either as the villain (23.3%, $n=7$), or supportive of the adversary (53.3%, $n=16$). Examples of Muslim aggression occurred in *Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan*, *Our Girl*, *Next of Kin*, *FBI*, and *NCIS*.

Although they perpetrated violence, nearly 40% of Muslims were also targets of violence (38.8%, $n=38$). More than half of these victims (52.6%, $n=20$) were the story's antagonists or affiliated with villains. Unsurprisingly, for 57.9% ($n=22$) of the Muslim characters, the violence they experienced was framed as 'justified' in the unfolding narrative. Moreover, all 22 of the characters victimized by justified violence were targeted by U.S. or international government officials. These two contextual factors—justified violence committed by “attractive” perpetrators (e.g., the ‘good guys’)—may be a dangerous combination for viewers. Research shows that depictions of justified violence carried out by attractive

perpetrators may facilitate learning of aggression among viewers.²⁴ As such, popular series may be creating scenarios that legitimate violence against Muslims both on- and off-screen.

Framing violence against Muslims as justified was related to the *unjustified* nature of aggression committed by Muslims. The acts of violence committed by Muslim characters were motivated by religious beliefs (63.3%, $n=19$), and/or political (13.3%, $n=4$) or personal gain (13.3%, $n=4$). Additionally, 33.7% ($n=33$) of all Muslim characters were shown to be members or affiliated with terrorist or extremist groups, though not all were shown using violence. Unjustified violence may produce stronger fear reactions among audience members.²⁵ Showing violence committed by Muslim characters as unprovoked or undeserved may contribute to perceptions that this community is to be feared.

Some Muslim characters committed retaliatory violence (23.3%, $n=7$) for acts committed in the past or in response to aggression by others. These portrayals may further the perception that Muslims are antagonistic or villainous. Such a rationale provides little opportunity for viewers to identify or empathize with Muslim characters, which may be important ways to reduce negative attitudes toward members of this community.

With the considerable amount of violence perpetrated and experienced by Muslims, it is not a shock that the consequences of aggression were also present. Of all Muslim characters shown across the sample, 12.2% ($n=12$) died during the first three episodes evaluated. All died by violent means, primarily because they were shot or died in explosions, and one character perished after her actions on behalf of a terrorist cell resulted in her own poisoning.

Violence was a particular hallmark of male Muslim characters, who were typically characterized as posing a persistent threat to others. Notably, and as described elsewhere in this paper, Muslim men presented a security risk at a national level, and were shown as a source of danger to individuals, particularly women, both Muslims and non-Muslims. Attempted sexual assault, unwanted advances, and child marriage featured across more than one series. These stories serve as an update to tropes identified by Jack Shaheen— that of “evil” Arabs whose villainous ways endanger women.²⁶

Reinforcing these notions of safety threats were the depictions of groups of Muslim men that appeared in more than one series. These groups were generally armed, often with machine guns, and were ready or eager to engage in violence. Even solo Muslim men were shown with weapons. This trend spanned men affiliated with extremist groups *and* men who were part of law enforcement organizations (e.g., James Greer, *Tom Clancy’s Jack Ryan*; Special Agent Omar Zidan, *FBI*; Rab, *Our Girl*). Given that guns and other weapons may cognitively prime aggressive behavior, linking weapons to the depiction of Muslims may have negative consequences for audiences.²⁷

By presenting Muslims as villains, including as victims of justified violence, real-world aggression against this community, especially from government entities, can become sanctioned. The implications for Muslims around the world are significant. In 2020, the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights reported that 126 instances of hate crimes in the U.S. were motivated by Anti-Muslim ideology or sentiment.²⁸ When depictions of violence against Muslims are portrayed as just and reasonable, viewers may learn or reinforce that aggression toward Muslims is legitimate or even patriotic, affecting the lives and homes of Muslims across the globe.

Muslims Were Shown with Cultural Artifacts & Religious Identifiers

In the media environments evaluated in this report, many audience members will be unfamiliar with the cultural and religious practices inherent to the Islamic faith and the Muslim community. Additionally, given the diversity of the Muslim experience and practice of this religion, there may be a variety of ways to depict Islamic traditions. Despite the array of storytelling opportunities available to content creators, the findings from this study revealed that Muslims were consistently shown as a monolith on screen. Below, we discuss the various religious indicators that appeared across content and that speak to how Muslim characters were identified and shown in relation to faith.

Table 9
Percentage of Muslim Characters With Specific References to Faith and Culture

Cues Related to Faith	% of Muslim Characters
Verbal References	49% (<i>n</i> =48)
Non-Verbal References	23.5% (<i>n</i> =23)
Clothing	52% (<i>n</i> =51)
Total Characters	98

Verbal & Non-Verbal References to Faith. Viewers may learn to identify Muslims on screen through verbal and non-verbal references related to their religious identity. Nearly half of Muslim characters (49%, *n*=48) made some form of verbal reference that was indicative of their faith. The most common Arabic phrase used was ‘Salaam’ or ‘As-Salaam-Alaikum’ (*Peace be Upon You*), spoken by 39.6% of characters (*n*=19). In a few instances, this phrase was the only cue present to indicate that a character was Muslim. For instance, in *Empire*, radio host Math greeted others with the statement and distinguished himself as the only Latino-identified Muslim in the sample. Other examples included statements such as the Takbir (e.g., ‘Allahu Akbar’) or comments about observing religious statues. Samir (*Altered Carbon*) and Rab (*Our Girl*) both referenced abstaining from drinking alcohol, despite outside pressures. In *Eastenders*, Mariam expressed pride in her choices, saying, “[I am] an angel who has never stepped foot in a pub before.”

Some references, however, were problematic. Five Muslim primary and secondary characters used expressions of Islam that were linked to violence or extremism. One notable example occurred in *Our Girl*. Cala, a child soldier for Boko Haram stated, “Allah says the best fighters are those who fight at the front.”

Non-verbal cues were also indicative of how Muslim characters practiced or expressed their faith. Twenty-three characters (23.5%) were identified as Muslim through non-verbal depictions, though for the 39 primary and secondary characters, engaging in religious behaviors was rare. Shows such as *Next of Kin* and *Tom Clancy’s Jack Ryan* showed the most diversity of non-verbal cues, including cooking or eating traditional food, praying in a mosque or at a funeral, and reading the Quran.

Religious Artifacts & Clothing. Expressions of Islam were also shown through tangible artifacts and clothing. Only 11 characters (11.2%, 5 secondary and 6 tertiary characters) were presented with artifacts affiliated with their Muslim identity. This is a numerical decrease from our previous study, in which 17 primary and secondary characters were shown with Islam-specific religious artifacts. The 2 most common artifacts presented were prayer beads, or tasbeeh (*n*=5) and a prayer mat, or Jaan Namaz (*n*=3). Additionally, a flag with Arabic scripture and an Islamic proverb appeared at a Boko Haram terrorist base in Nigeria (*Our Girl*), that translated to La ilaha Illallahu, or “there’s no God, but God.”

Turning to clothing, more than half of Muslim characters (52%, $n=51$) were shown wearing attire related to or affiliated with Islam. This was a decrease from the 76.5% of Muslim characters in film who wore clothing affiliated with their faith.²⁹ Twenty-four of the Muslim characters in series shown in faith-based attire were women and 22 distinctly wore hijabs, including in non-Muslim dominated settings (*The Conners*, *The Walking Dead*). Men's attire was more diverse, including kurtas, topis, ghutras, and thobes.

The findings in this section reflect the cues used to characterize Muslims on screen. While some explicit cues were observed (e.g., hijabs, prayer beads, prayer mat), others were subtle mentions about observing religious statues or the use of phrases such as 'As-Salaam-Alaikum.' These findings contrast with those from popular film, where characters were typecast, tokenized, and othered through clothing, language, and the presence of religious symbols. For viewers with limited knowledge of Islamic faith and traditions, these cues may offer only brief chances to learn more about faith or glean an understanding of how Muslim characters may navigate their faith.

Muslim Women Were Fearful and Endangered

As mentioned in the quantitative section, differences in the prevalence of male and female Muslim characters were noted across the sample. There were also critical deviations in portrayals by gender. In this section, we describe trends related to the depiction of Muslim female characters.

The thirty Muslim girls and women in the sample appeared across 16 series, with nearly half (43.3%, $n=13$) shown in just two shows (*Next of Kin*, *Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan*). Yet there was a consistent theme in the way Muslim girls and women were characterized: they experienced fear and peril, typically at the hands of men.

Storylines featuring fearful Muslim female characters occurred in *Bodyguard*, *Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan*, *Our Girl*, *Next of Kin*, and *Designated Survivor*. These women experienced both emotional distress as well as physical danger. Muslim girls and women were shown to be fearful, upset, or anxious about a variety of circumstances. To illustrate, in *Next of Kin*, Rahana and Mrs. Shirani were concerned about the kidnapping and murder of Dr. Kareem Shirani (their brother and husband, respectively). In *Grey's Anatomy*, even though the depiction was lent a comedic light, Dr. Dahlia Qadri was anxious about how a menial task (watching a dog) would detract from her training.

Physical peril was also common for Muslim women who faced direct threats and actual violence. This included *Bodyguard*, where Nadia was shown in a vest rigged with explosives, as was Grace in *Our Girl*, and an unnamed French-Arab woman in *Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan*. *This is Us* portrayed Dr. Asmaan holding a clinic in the midst of a war zone. Mona Harcourt was shot by government agents in *Next of Kin* even though she had not committed a crime.

Dangers to Muslim women also included the threat of sexual violence. *Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan* depicted the attempted rape of Hanin Ali and showed a teenage Sara cowering at the advances of the same man. In *Designated Survivor*, the momentary appearance of Jamila Al-Mufti, the 14-year-old wife of the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, served as a plot point to discuss child marriage both in Saudi Arabia and the U.S. Jamila was not the only child bride in the sample. Hanin Ali and her husband Mousa bin Suleiman shared the story of his "proposal"-- a recounting of how Hanin's father offered her to Suleiman for money at age 16 but Suleiman determined to marry Hanin instead. Apart from direct portrayals, *Our Girl* included dialogue about the vulnerability of girls in Nigeria, including discussions of girls who had been kidnapped, raped, and become pregnant by militants in Boko Haram.

The trend of showcasing Muslim women in peril was connected to a one shown less often, but equally important to note. The Muslim women in both dangerous and safer circumstances were depicted as reactive, passive, deferent, and subject to the whims and decisions of others. In other words, these girls and women were shown as less in control of their own futures or choices, or in ways that emphasized youth or a lack of maturity. In some cases this was due to fear, while in others this reflected personality traits of the character. In *Grey's Anatomy*, Dr. Dahlia Qadri avoided discussing issues related to male genitalia, despite being a qualified medical professional reviewing a patient's symptoms. The depiction of the Muslim family in *The Connors* focused more on Samir and Kazim, male family members, than Fatima, a wife and mother. These trivial examples were matched by depictions of Hanin Ali in *Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan* or Mrs. Shirani in *Next of Kin*, women who deferred to husbands or required the aid of their children for decision-making. Most of the Muslim women depicted were shown primarily in relationships with their husbands and families, and few had close female friendships.

The difference in how Muslim women were characterized appeared most starkly when contrasted with how non-Muslim women were shown. Non-Muslim women asserted their authority (e.g., *Designated Survivor*), navigated romantic relationships by stating their explicit desires and needs (e.g., *Grey's Anatomy*), and had friendships and relationships with both the opposite and same sex, co-workers, or others outside of their immediate families. While they also faced physical danger, non-Muslim women were even part of their own rescue rather than reliant upon others.

There were instances when storytelling deviated from this view of Muslim females. Hanin Ali (*Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan*) and her daughters fled from her husband and were pursued by Suleiman's henchmen, leaving her son behind. Upon being questioned by her daughter, Hanin specifically mentioned that she was taught to drive, then navigated to the Syrian border in her escape. Nadia (*Bodyguard*) played into the stereotype of the oppressed Muslim woman to deflect suspicion. Later in the series, her true work as the mastermind of various attacks, including her work as an engineer to design and create explosives, was revealed. Other Muslim women led terrorist cells, committed crimes, and were responsible for inflicting injury and death. Although the Muslim women shown in *FBI* and *NCIS* failed to conform to the repressive stereotype, they instead perpetuated a view that if Muslim women are assertive or in leadership roles, they must be engaged in nefarious activity.

The way that Muslim females were portrayed— with respect to physical danger and in contrast to their non-Muslim counterparts— reflects limiting and outdated stereotypes about Muslim girls and women. These tropes reinforce ideas about the repression of Muslim girls and women, despite the reality that Muslim women have a variety of different personalities and professions and the capacity to lead their own lives. For audiences, such a view of Muslim girls and women may perpetuate prejudices about this religious community, and support a perspective of Islam as a faith that places little value on women.

Lack of Series Regulars & Focus on Dramatic Programming Stifled Nuanced Portrayals

Although there were 39 primary or secondary Muslim characters across the series evaluated, only 12 Muslim characters held series regular roles (see Table 10). These roles, though few, offered the greatest opportunity to showcase diversity within the Muslim community. As displayed in the table below, series regulars appeared in 5 programs across the sample. Compared to the full sample, Muslim series regulars were less likely to be women, and more likely to be Middle Eastern/North African and Asian.

Table 10
List of Muslim Series Regulars

Series Regular	Series Title	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Age	Violence
James Greer	<i>Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan</i>	Male	Black	40-64 years	Y
Hanin Ali	<i>Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan</i>	Female	Middle Eastern/North African	21-39 years	Y
Mousa bin Suleiman	<i>Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan</i>	Male	Middle Eastern/North African	21-39 years	Y
Ali Karim	<i>Shortland Street</i>	Male	Multiracial/Multiethnic	21-39 years	N
Mona Harcourt	<i>Next of Kin</i>	Female	Asian	21-39 years	Y
Mrs. Shirani	<i>Next of Kin</i>	Female	Asian	40-64 years	N
Danish Shirani	<i>Next of Kin</i>	Male	Asian	13-20 years	Y
Omar Zidan	<i>FBI</i>	Male	Middle Eastern/North African	21-39 years	Y
Nadia	<i>Bodyguard</i>	Female	Asian	21-39 years	Y

Note: Due to popularity across years and countries, some series with Muslim characters ($n=3$) appeared more than once in the sample. Only 9 unique series regulars are included in the table, accounting for the 12 identified in the full sample. The violence column refers to whether the character was a perpetrator and/or target of a threat or actual aggression.

Series regular roles can offer content creators and actors the opportunity for greater character development and nuance related to faith. In the content evaluated, characters such as Mona Harcourt (*Next of Kin*) and James Greer (*Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan*) were shown exploring their faith even as they navigated family and work responsibilities. Mona invited her family to go to the mosque for prayer, while James was shown holding a Quran and prayer beads while he revisited his relationship with Islam. Series regulars who were *not* Muslim also offered opportunities for nuanced portrayals. Because these characters interacted with a variety of other individuals, often in community settings, this created pathways to showcase authentic Muslim representation. For example, in *Eastenders*, Linda was a series regular character. Her friendship with Mariam developed during the episodes examined. Mariam was shown helping Linda's husband and as a sign of good faith, making food for him. This relationship exemplifies one way that non-Muslim characters can be part of normalizing Muslim members of society.

Another consideration surrounding portrayals of Muslims in popular storytelling was genre. Sixty-five percent of the 200 series ($n=130$) examined were dramas and 35% ($n=70$) were comedies. Of the 26 series featuring Muslim characters, however, only 11.5% ($n=3$) were comedies while 88.5% ($n=23$) were dramas. Program genre inadvertently played a role in the nature of storylines focused on Muslim characters. Dramatic programming in this sample included procedurals, medical dramas, and other formulaic storytelling. This facilitated a propensity to show Muslims as either policed (e.g., under surveillance by or interacting with authorities) or policing others (e.g., in law enforcement, military or similar jobs) due to the structure and focus of the series.

While it is important to ensure that Muslim characters do not slide into buffoonery or clownishness in comedic contexts, the near-absence of humorous series featuring Muslims suggests that members of this community are shown experiencing little joy or levity. Comedic programming that featured Muslims

included one adult animation series (*The Simpsons*), one sitcom (*The Conners*), and one single-camera comedy (*Russian Doll*). Integrating Muslim characters into comedic series is one way to expand the types of portrayals of Muslims in media.

Recurring and series regular roles provide storytellers with an opportunity to show intimate, deep, and compelling portraits of a character. For Muslims, popular series too often defaulted to developing characters and their faith by putting violence at the center. In the future, content creators can look to series regular roles and other genres as offering a chance to tell new, authentic, and unrealized stories about Muslim characters. By doing so, they may be able to shift audience perceptions about Muslims off screen as well.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the prevalence and portrayal of Muslim characters in popular television series from four countries in 2018 and 2019. Across the quantitative and qualitative analyses, a few major trends emerged. Below, we overview these major trends and provide solutions for change.

Few Muslim Characters Appeared in Popular Series

Less than 2% of all speaking characters across 200 popular television series were Muslim. The number but not the percentage of Muslim characters varied by year— more Muslim characters appeared in shows from 2018 than from 2019. However, there were no differences by country. Across the U.S., U.K., Australia, and New Zealand only 98 Muslim speaking characters held a speaking or named role on screen. Popular series were similar to top-grossing films with regard to the absence of Muslim characters, as just 1.6% of speaking characters in top movies from 2017 to 2019 were Muslim. From these results it is clear that though 1.9 billion people worldwide belong to this faith-based community, the entertainment landscape is one in which Muslim characters are rendered absent to audiences.

In some cases Muslim characters are not only *nearly* invisible, they are *actually* missing. Muslim characters appeared in just 26 series out of 200, meaning that 174 series were completely devoid of Muslim characters. This is once again similar to top-grossing films, as 181 top movies from 2017 to 2019 were missing Muslim characters. These mirror image trends again point to a similarity across international markets when it comes to a disregard for Muslim characters.

The absence of Muslims on screen may have negative consequences for viewers. Omitting this large, global community from storytelling communicates to viewers in the U.S., U.K., Australia, and New Zealand— as well as those who view the entertainment exports from these countries— that Muslims do not exist or do not matter. In reality, Muslims are not only part of the international audience, but reside and consume entertainment in each of the countries whose programming was studied. Refusing to include Muslims in storytelling sends a message to this community that their stories are not entertaining or not worth telling.

Muslim Characters fit a Narrow Prototype in Popular Series

The few Muslims who did appear in popular storytelling embodied a limited profile. More than two-thirds (69.4%) of Muslim characters were male, and roughly half (52%) were Middle Eastern/North African (MENA). These findings reflected the trends identified in popular films. Compared to top movies, however, in top series, there was a greater proportion of Asian Muslim characters. Gains for Black Muslim characters in series were small, and one Hispanic/Latino Muslim character was noted. The

increased diversity in representation of Muslim characters in top series was a welcome change from film. However, the similar emphasis on MENA Muslim characters in popular series reinforces an ethnic stereotype about Muslims that may have real-world ramifications for individuals from this identity group. The nature of portrayals on screen may foster assumptions about the religious or political beliefs of those who identify as MENA and may even influence how people from this background are treated.

In addition to gender and race/ethnicity, other indicators reflected a lack of variability in how Muslim characters were presented on screen. Only 1 Muslim character was part of the LGBTQ community, and no Muslim characters were shown with a disability. Moreover, nearly half of Muslims were young adults (21-39 years old), while there were only 2 elderly characters and no Muslim children age 0 to 5. This narrow bandwidth of opportunities is problematic in two ways.

One, it presents Muslims as a homogenous group, a denial of the reality that Muslims include people across the age span, those living with disabilities, and even those who identify as LGBTQ. Second, it limits the roles and work available to Muslims who hope to portray their faith on screen. The lack of older Muslim characters means that actors from this identity group may not find work across the life span, creating a barrier to sustainable careers, ongoing employment and even ability to access U.S. health insurance.

From the qualitative analysis, it was also clear that Muslims characters were generally portrayed as “foreign,” in line with longstanding stereotypes present in entertainment.³⁰ Muslims were depicted as residents of countries outside the U.S., U.K., Australia, or New Zealand. The immigrant or visitor status of Muslims who did appear in these countries was also emphasized through language or direct reference. These findings were, again, similar to those found in top films from the same countries. The overall impression across both film and series was that Muslims are from or live in “other” places. This offers little opportunity for viewers to see Muslims reflected in their communities and as neighbors and co-workers on screen.

Muslim Narratives Still Centered on Terrorism & Extremism

Across the qualitative analysis, there were several elements observed that point to a prevailing narrative in popular television series when it comes to Muslim characters. That focus was undeniably on terrorism and extremism. Muslim characters were most likely to have jobs as criminals (37.2%) and almost one-third (30.6%) of Muslims were shown as perpetrators of violence. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that popular series not only presented individual Muslim characters as linked to terrorism, but that storytellers actively created and disseminated entire storylines focused on terrorist activities.

The majority of Muslim characters in the sample appeared across three series in particular: *Tom Clancy’s Jack Ryan*, *Our Girl*, and *Next of Kin*. The storylines in these programs all centered around issues of extremism or terrorism. These series told the story of a CIA analyst who uncovered a terrorist cell and the process of investigating the activities of the major players. Another centered on a British military unit training Nigerian forces to fight Boko Haram militants and rescue kidnapped girls. The final series revolved around the disruption experienced by a Pakistani family living in London when their lives intersected with the activities of a terrorist group in Pakistan. In other words, whether told from the perspectives of U.S. or U.K. law enforcement or when centered on Muslim characters, storylines were still linked inextricably to extremism.

As we noted in our prior study on film, the continual emphasis on violence and extremism can have profound negative consequences for Muslims. The justified violence against Muslims and the

presentation of this community as antagonistic to the West may serve to sanction real-world aggression towards Muslims. Evidence suggests that these factors may facilitate both learning of aggression as well as desensitization among viewers.³¹ Indeed, Muslims on screen were also likely to be shown as victims of violence. When Muslim characters died, they perished violently. Whether at a national level or in terms of interpersonal interactions, the continual representation of Muslims as violent and dangerous is one that can have devastating outcomes for individual Muslims both in the U.S., U.K., Australia, and New Zealand, and to those living around the globe.

Opportunities for Counterstereotyping Exist but Must be Developed

There were chances for Muslim characters in popular series to counter stereotypes about this community— and there were moments when positive depictions appeared on screen. In terms of professions, roughly 20% of Muslim characters worked in healthcare and Muslim women were most likely to hold jobs in this sector. Muslim characters embraced tenets of the faith, making verbal references to their beliefs, praying, wearing clothing that demonstrated their community identity, and adhering to religious statutes. These portrayals offered viewers the opportunity to see Muslim characters beyond limiting and negative stereotypes and normalized Muslims as coworkers and neighbors.

Depictions of series regulars also offered viewers a window into more nuanced portrayals of Muslims. These characters had more time on screen and their stories encompassed both immediate problems as well as deeper personal issues related to family and faith. While most of these stories still had some connection to violence, layering in other details related to the individual character's inner life was an important step in creating opportunities for audience members to identify and connect with Muslims on screen. Research demonstrates that in the absence of direct contact, media depictions of characters from marginalized or stigmatized groups may increase positive attitudes toward the group.³² Portrayals of Muslims that connect viewers to the daily lives and concerns of this community may be a critical way to increase positive perceptions of this identity group.

Solutions for Change

The findings above as well as those in our previous investigation into popular film make it clear that more work is needed to increase the prevalence of Muslim representation on screen while limiting stigmatizing and stereotypical portrayals. Creating long-lasting change is neither quick nor easy, but content creators have access to resources and tools that can provide assistance. Below, we enumerate some of the ways that the entertainment industry can begin to take steps to create more positive portrayals of Muslim characters.

The first and most obvious solution is to *tell stories about Muslim characters*. Centering stories on Muslim characters will require changes both on screen as well as behind the camera. Across the sample in this study, it was clear that few if any writers were Muslim. Working with Muslim creatives to develop and bring stories about Muslims to the screen is essential to increasing authentic portrayals. More recent examples, *Ramy*, *Ms. Marvel*, and *We Are Lady Parts*, are evidence that this strategy can be effective and create popular and critically acclaimed entertainment.

Along these lines, storytellers should aim to *deepen the richness of portrayals for supporting Muslim characters*. Muslims *can* be portrayed in ways that are more flexible and less rigid— a few examples of this occurred across the series analyzed in this study. Series creators and writers should continue to create opportunities to showcase that Muslim faith is only a part of a character's entire identity. For

creatives looking to bring Muslim characters to the screen in existing stories, and who do not have the capacity to bring on full-time writers, working with community consultants is a viable and important part of doing so. In film, Walt Disney Studios employed this strategy for *Aladdin* with success. Working with consultants shaped the film's wardrobe and costuming decisions, the casting process, and even dialogue and song lyrics.

This solution is most advantageous when creative consultants are brought into the process early on in development, and when they are knowledgeable about the creative constraints surrounding storytelling. Moreover, bringing someone to the table who has a deep understanding of the Muslim community, creative processes, and the potential effects portrayals might have is the best path toward nuanced portrayals. One example of such a consultant is one of this study's authors, Al-Baab Khan. Her ability to see where depictions of Muslim characters may facilitate identification or drive negative perceptions would be a clear benefit to storytellers developing Muslim portrayals.

Along these lines, it is past time for portrayals to avoid tropes related to terrorism and extremism. Supporting Muslim characters in films and series can do more than serve as an antagonist to Western ideals. Creating stories that allow Muslim characters to participate in positive ways is essential to expanding how audiences think about Muslims. This will also give actors the chance to portray a wider variety of roles and expand career opportunities.

Another strategy that targets numerical representation of Muslim characters is to *cast Muslims in ways that emphasize their participation in broader society*. Few stories are set in a vacuum, and most main characters interact with members of the public in a variety of ways— as teachers, local government officials or bureaucrats, business owners, fellow travelers, etc. While these roles may not be central to the plot, they allow content creators to incorporate Muslim characters into stories across different situations. This is a crucial tactic to achieve greater prevalence of Muslim characters in storytelling, and to expand opportunities for Muslim actors looking to grow their experience and resume. For this strategy to be effective, creators must identify situations in which they might otherwise write a non-Muslim character into the role. This may occur due to story setting, occupation, or other factors. Then, creators should determine whether a Muslim character could appear instead, and whether any changes might need to be made to provide an authentic portrait. This solution will help to increase the number of Muslim characters as well as convey to audiences the reality that Muslims exist in many communities and settings.

Across these solutions there is one common factor: hiring. Muslim actors, writers, directors, producers, and executives must be part of the creative process in both film and television. The marginalization of Muslims on screen is clearly linked to a lack of Muslims behind the camera and in decision-making roles. While there are qualified and available Muslim creatives who exist and are ready to step into production immediately, it is also essential to invest in the next generation of storytellers. Film festivals (e.g., Sundance, Toronto, Tribeca), lab programs, and film schools are places that can spotlight these creatives and develop their unique voices. Grant-based programs through national film and television entities (e.g., BFI, Screen Australia, New Zealand Film Commission) or philanthropy will also provide needed resources for Muslim creatives to hone their talent. Apart from the independent space, agents and managers should focus on signing Muslim talent and promoting their work.

Finally, studio inclusion policies and practices must look beyond race/ethnicity to ensure that the Muslim community is represented on screen. One way to think about this faith-based community is to consider how other stories about religious groups are depicted on screen. For example, the proliferation

of Christmas or “holiday” fare suggests that consumers are eager to watch stories focusing on religious celebrations, particularly when these are romantic comedies or family-focused tales. Stories centering on Muslim characters and unique holiday celebrations are a way for studio executives to level the playing field and create programming that emphasizes the joy and celebration found in this community.

Limitations

As with any research study, there are a few limitations associated with this report. First, the study sample includes a focus on content from 2018 and 2019. This was an intentional choice made to facilitate comparisons to popular films from the same time period. It is possible that more recently released content may provide a different perspective on Muslim characters. The Annenberg Inclusion Initiative intends to continue to measure the prevalence and portrayal of Muslim characters in popular films and series from more recent years (2020-2022). Given the consistency in the findings across film and television, and over time based on work from other scholars, we anticipate that differences will be slight.

A second limitation is related to popularity. Shows that were the most popular across 2018 and 2019 were included both in the U.S. and international samples. To create a sample that cut across these international territories, we were forced to limit the series included. Choosing programs that were less popular or below our cutoff might have resulted in somewhat different findings. Additionally, our goal with the sample was to balance broadcast and SVOD content released in the years. Due to measurement of SVOD audiences, some information was only available in particular territories or select years. Including additional SVOD programs or focusing only on broadcast content may also influence some of the findings.

Despite these limitations, the results of this study provide further evidence that for Muslims, the entertainment landscape remains one that privileges two primary narratives about their community. The first renders Muslims invisible on screen and depicts a world devoid of Muslims. The second presents Muslims as aggressive, dangerous, and threatening. In short, Muslims are either erased or are shown as extremists. Storytellers across the globe have the opportunity to pivot away from these outdated, negative, and harmful tropes to tell stories that reflect the reality of the Muslims around the world— stories that embrace the array of experiences, identities, and emotions of this vast and diverse community.

Footnotes

1. Daniller, A. (2021). Majorities of Americans See at Least Some Discrimination against Black, Hispanic and Asian People in the U.S. Pew Research Center. Retrieved on July 1st, 2022 from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/03/18/majorities-of-americans-see-at-least-some-discrimination-against-black-hispanic-and-asian-people-in-the-u-s/>.

2. Jones, S. H. & Unsworth, A. (n.d.). The Dinner Table Prejudice: Islamophobia in Contemporary Britain. University of Birmingham. Retrieved on July 1st, 2022 from <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/documents/college-artslaw/ptr/90172-univ73-islamophobia-in-the-uk-report-final.pdf>.

3. To determine the sample of programming included in the study, a list of top-rated series was obtained from Nielsen (U.S. sample) and Mediametrie (International sample). The parameters included original primetime, fictional programming and excluding films, sketch comedy, children's series, and miniseries with fewer than 6 episodes airing during the sample time frame. Average audience ratings for all episodes airing in the sample year were obtained from each ratings agency for adults (US: age 18-49; UK: age 16-44; AU: 18-49; NZ: 18-39; 25-49). In the US, popular SVOD programs were included with linear (broadcast, cable, premium cable) series. Internationally, SVOD rankings were only available in 2019 for UK series. Metrics were not directly comparable to audience ratings for broadcast series. Thus, in 2019, the six SVOD series eligible for inclusion were evaluated. The 2018 UK sample includes 23 broadcast programs while the 2019 UK sample includes 20 broadcast and 3 SVOD series. In New Zealand, there were some differences in popularity by age group in 2018. Due to other sample parameters (e.g., number of episodes aired in the sample year, in 2018 all unique series popular with each age group (18-39, 25-49) were included. Additionally, series in the U.S. and internationally were popular in both 2018 and 2019; these repeat series were included if they were above the sample cutoff. Some series ($n=5$) were popular in the U.S. and International samples. These series were included in each sample, and thus some information, including Muslim characters duplicates across samples.

4. As with most Annenberg Inclusion Initiative studies, there were two units of analysis. The first was program level. The second was the speaking or named character. Living beings that spoke one or more words discernibly or were named on screen were included in the analysis. These speaking characters constituted a single line of data. When more than one character spoke at the same time and individual identities could not be determined, these entities were recorded as a group. This occurred one time throughout the sample and was excluded from analysis.

Additionally, a second line of data was created for characters when they experienced a demographic change (e.g., type, age, sex, race/ethnicity). For instance, characters might be shown as children and then later in the program the same individual might be depicted as an adult.

Every series was evaluated by three research assistants to identify speaking characters and examine demographic indicators. Research assistants were trained by team leadership to utilize the methods and procedures of the study and completed training diagnostics to ensure consistent application of unitizing and variable rules. Reliability was calculated per episode for each series evaluated. After reliability was calculated, a member of the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative staff reviewed coding decisions and worked with students to adjudicate discrepancies. Once senior team members had determined final judgments for each episode, a composite file was created for series-level decisions.

Measures evaluated in this investigation have been described in previous Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, and interested readers should refer to our annual report on top-grossing films for definitions of those variables. Mean, median, and modal reliabilities for each variable examined and for unitizing are available upon request.

After the first group of coders established the initial set of characters and demographic information for each episode, a second team of coders watched each episode to determine whether any Muslim characters were present. This second team included research assistants who were Muslim or had strong familiarity via education,

experience, or relationships with the Muslim faith. Two students evaluated each series, and any discrepancies between judgments were discussed with the first author (Khan). For a few series, the first author watched all the episodes. When no Muslim characters were present, the series was not reviewed by another coder.

5. Pew Research Center (January, 2011). The Future of the Global Muslim Population. Retrieved from: <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2011/01/27/the-future-of-the-global-muslim-population/>

6. The chi-square analysis for *Muslim speaking character* (no, yes) by *year* (2018, 2019) was significant, $X^2(1, 8,885)=59.23, p<.01, phi=-.08$. However, the differences across year did not vary by 5% or greater.

7. After removing three shows with the highest number of Muslim characters, the *Muslim speaking character* (no, yes) by *year* (2018, 2019) chi-square was still significant, $X^2(1, 8,722)=6.61, p<.05, phi=-.03$. Similar to the previous analysis, the difference between column percentages failed to differ by 5% or more.

8. The chi-square analysis was not significant for *Muslim character* (no, yes) by *country* (US, international): $X^2(1, 8,885)=1.27, p=.26, phi=-.01$.

9. The analysis of programs that feature *Muslim characters* (no, yes) by *year* (2018, 2019) was marginally significant, $X^2(1, 200)=2.83, p<.10, phi=-.12$.

10. The non significant chi-square for programs that feature *Muslim characters* (no, yes) by *country* (US, international) was $X^2(1, 200)=.025, p=.875, phi=.01$.

11. Series regulars were determined in multiple ways. First, Variety Insight was consulted to see if this information was listed. For the remaining shows, we examined whether the “main cast” was listed on the website of the distributor (i.e., Netflix, Amazon Prime) or anywhere in the show’s on screen credits. Several shows ($n=23$) did not have information available on any of these platforms. For these series, we included all characters who appeared in each of the first three episodes. Finally and where there were still shows with gaps ($n=1$), we reached out to production companies or studios to inquire about who they perceived were the main characters driving the storylines. Sample wide, only one show was an anthology series where the studio indicated there were no series regulars in the program.

12. The chi-square analysis was not significant for *character role* (main, supporting, inconsequential) by *year* (2018, 2019): $X^2(2, 98)=1.80, p=.41, V^*=.135$.

13. *Character role* (main, supporting, inconsequential) by *country* (US, international) was statistically significant, $X^2(2, 98)=11.09, p<.01, V^*=.34$.

14. The chi-square analysis for *Muslim character* (no, yes) by *gender* (male, female) was statistically significant, $X^2(1, 8,854)=4.88, p<.05, phi=-.02$.

15. For Muslim characters only, the analysis between *gender* (male, female) and *year* (2018, 2019) was not statistically significant, $X^2(1, 98)=1.285, p=.26, phi=.115$.

16. For Muslim characters only, the analysis between *gender* (male, female) and *country* (US, international) was not statistically significant, $X^2(1, 98)=.54, p=.46, phi=.07$.

17. The measure of race/ethnicity used in this sample mirrors that used in other Annenberg Inclusion Initiative studies. Given that two territories (Australia, New Zealand) have indigenous populations, it was important to ensure that the variable levels would allow for coding of these groups. Maori characters were included in the sample as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander characters. Aboriginal Australian characters were coded as Multiracial/Multiethnic in line with the original conception of this variable level (e.g., “other”).

18. The relationship between Muslim characters' *race/ethnicity* (White, Hispanic, Black, Asian, MENA. multi-racial/multi-cultural) and *year* (2018, 2019) was not significant ($X^2(5, 98)=6.64, p=.25, V^*=.26$)
19. The association between Muslim characters' *race/ethnicity* (White, Hispanic, Black, Asian, MENA. multi-racial/multi-cultural) and *country* (US, international) was significant: $X^2(5, 98)=67.61, p<.01, V^*=.83$.
20. The relationship between Muslim characters' *apparent age* (0-5 years, 6-12 years, 13-19 years, 20-39 years, 40-64 years, 65 or more years) and *year* (2018, 2019) as well as *country* (US, international) was not significant: $X^2(4, 97)=1.31, p=.86, V^*=.12$; $X^2(4, 97)=4.06, p=.40, V^*=.205$ respectively.
21. Al-Baab Khan is a Project Specialist at the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. Khan led the research on Muslim representation in top grossing films and applied the same methodology for this study. See Khan, A., Pieper, K., Smith, S. L., Choueiti, M., Yao, K., & Tofan, A. (2021). *Missing & Maligned: The Reality of Muslims in Popular Global Movies*. Los Angeles, CA. Retrieved on June 30th, 2022 from <https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-muslim-rep-global-film-2021-06-09.pdf>.
22. Muslim characters that appeared in more than one episode were given a 'series level' data line that captured the highest level decisions across the three episodes for the qualitative variables. This allowed characters to be evaluated only once per series in which they appeared.
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