

Study finds civic engagement is higher among mosquegoers

by [Lauren Markoe](#) in the [April 5, 2011](#) issue

Research by a political science professor shows that affiliation with a mosque increases Muslims' civic engagement. "The more religious American Muslims happen to be, the more they participate in American politics," said Karam Dana, who teaches at Tufts University.

Dana and colleague Matt A. Barreto in 2008 completed the largest-ever survey of American Muslims, asking them, among other questions, whether Islam and the American political system are compatible.

Of those Muslims who do not regularly go to a mosque, 77 percent replied yes to the question of compatibility, Dana said. Among those who are regularly involved in a mosque, that figure rose to 95 percent.

These findings appear to contradict assumptions underpinning the hearings that Rep. Peter King (R., N.Y.) convened in mid-March as chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, Dana said.

Dana noted that King in 2004 stated that the vast majority of American mosques were controlled by Islamic extremists and amounted to "an enemy living amongst us," and that King in 2007 bemoaned the number of mosques in the nation because they bred "homegrown" terrorists.

Like other religious institutions in the United States, mosques have actually helped members assimilate into society and support democracy, he said.

"Decades

of scholarship on religious institutions, be they churches or synagogues, have shown that they foster participation in the political system," said Dana. "We believe that mosques are no different." —RNS