

Islam in Czech Republic

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Who are Czech Muslims?

2011 Census:

- **3,385** indicated **Islam** as their religious affiliation
- **1,142** mentioned The Headquarters of the Muslim Communities in the Czech Republic (**UMO**) as their „church“

Estimate of the Czech Interior Ministry:

- **11,235** Muslims live in Czech Republic (about 0,1% of the total population)

Who are Czech Muslims?

Muslims in Czech Republic:

- **Ethnic Czech converts** (cca 400, very active)
- **Czech citizens of foreign origin**
arrived mainly during the Communist era from Syria, Libya, Yemen, Iraq, Sudan and other then Socialist oriented countries to study in the former Czechoslovakia
- **Foreigners who live in Czech Republic on the basis of permanent or temporal residency permits**
came mainly after 1989 from Arab countries (Egypt, Syria, Iraq); the Balkans (Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia) or other countries (Chechnya, Turkey, Afghanistan, etc.)

Muslim community: very fragmented, mostly well educated and economically successful

Islamic organizations

Most of them: registered as cultural or social organizations, they are not granted any public funding.

- **The Headquarters of the Muslim Communities in the Czech Republic (UMO)**
 - only one registered as church but no special rights (right to public funding or running religious schools)
 - **The Islamic Foundation in Prague** (established in 1989)
 - **The Islamic Foundation in Brno** (established in 1994)
 - **Muslim Union of Students and Youth** (Founded in 1991 manages prayer rooms in student dormitories)
 - **Smaller communities and associations mainly in Prague** (Mozaiky) **or Brno** (Libertas Independent Agency)
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Mosques and prayer houses

Since 1989: many mosque building projects, most of them rejected by local authorities who 'responded to the will' of local inhabitants.

- **Mosques: Brno and Prague** (the only one with a professional imam)
- **Islamic centres: Teplice, Hradec Králové**
- **Prayer rooms:** Alfirdaus Language School in **Brno**, 5 houses of prayer in **Prague**, one in **Plzeň** and other in spa cities of **Karlovy Vary, Kolová, Dubí and Darkov**

Media attention

In the past:

Muslims considered a **peaceful community** or not mentioned at all

Recently:

increasing emphasis on the “**violent nature**” of Muslims and Islamic teaching, predominant context of “**clash of cultures**”

Negative media content:

- Muslims as **monolithic, static block**
- **Incompatibility** of Islam with **Christianity**
- Islam as dangerous ideology which **legitimizes the violence**
- Muslims as **fundamentalists** and fanatics
- Islam as a religion which suppresses the **rights of women**
- **Sham marriages** of Muslims with Czech women to get the citizenship
- Accusations of accounting frauds

Media attention

Positive media content:

- **Defensive activities of Muslims themselves**

- Condemning and **distancing themselves from** the crimes against humanity committed by **Muslims abroad**
- Introducing **educational projects** aimed at eliminating the prejudices towards Muslims (e.g. Muslims in the eyes of Czech students)
- **Calling for tolerance** and peaceful cohabitation (HateFree Project)
- Presenting **personal stories** of Czech Muslims as ordinary people

Demonstrative case I

Islam as malignant ideology:

2014, president Milos Zeman:

Islam is „theocratic and **totalitarian ideology**”.

Islam is “**against civilization**”.

“Islamic ideology rather than religious fundamentalists was behind violent actions” abroad.

“Moderate Muslim is a contradiction in terms”.

Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka (Social Democrats, CSSD) said Czech President **Zeman should not be uselessly demonized** over his statements on Islam .



Demonstrative case II

Islam as a threat to human rights, freedoms and secular democratic state as such:

The anti-Islam initiative „**We Reject islam in Czech republic**“, which has more than **118,000 supporters** on Facebook declares:

“This is a platform opposing past and current atrocities of islam, platform highlighting possible solutions to **preserve our western freedom of choice** currently under attack from [...] **creeping stealth jihad and concessions to sharia law.**”

“Our opinions represent the **mainstream of the Czech population** on **immigration, integration and islamization** issues.”

In January 2015 the group staged a **protest in Prague**, attended by about 600 people. On the 1st of May the members took a part in a **march in Brno**, organized by the multiple extremist groups.



Demonstrative case III

Islam as security, cultural and political threat:

2015, Tomio Okamura, who heads the Czech opposition Dawn of Direct Democracy movement, declared:

“Islam does not belong to Czech republic”

“according to current demographic curve, in a few decades **Europe will be Islamic** and there will be **no turning point** ” from Islam, which is “no longer a religion but **military and political ideology**”.

He warned against shopping in Muslim shops and stated that “**every bought kebab is just another step to burqas**” .

His statement was perceived as absurd and became subject of several jokes.



Demonstrative case III

Your wife by number of kebabs you eat per year

0-5

5-10

10-20

20-30

30-50

more than 50



Demonstrative case IV

Czech Muslims distancing themselves from the crimes committed by Muslims abroad:

After the attacks in Paris, some of the Czech Muslims decided to hold a variation on a global campaign **#Not in my Name**.

They created a series of photographs to let others know that terrorists do not act on their behalf. It was made of twenty-five portraits of twenty eight adults and five children

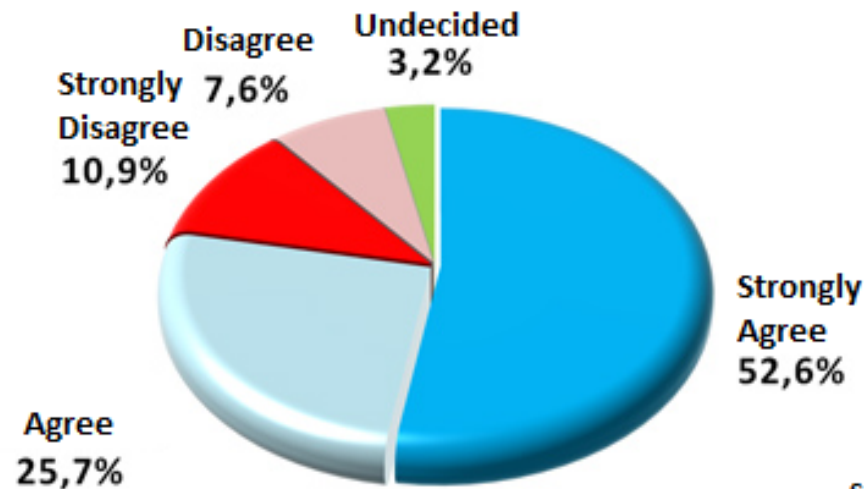


Public opinion

SANEP public opinion research (2015):

Czech public opinion on Muslims is largely formed by the media content which connects Muslims with fundamentalism and terrorism. **73%** of respondents perceive the **threat of the extremist Muslims** on the Czech territory as **real**. Half of respondents is concerned about foreigners practicing their religious customs:

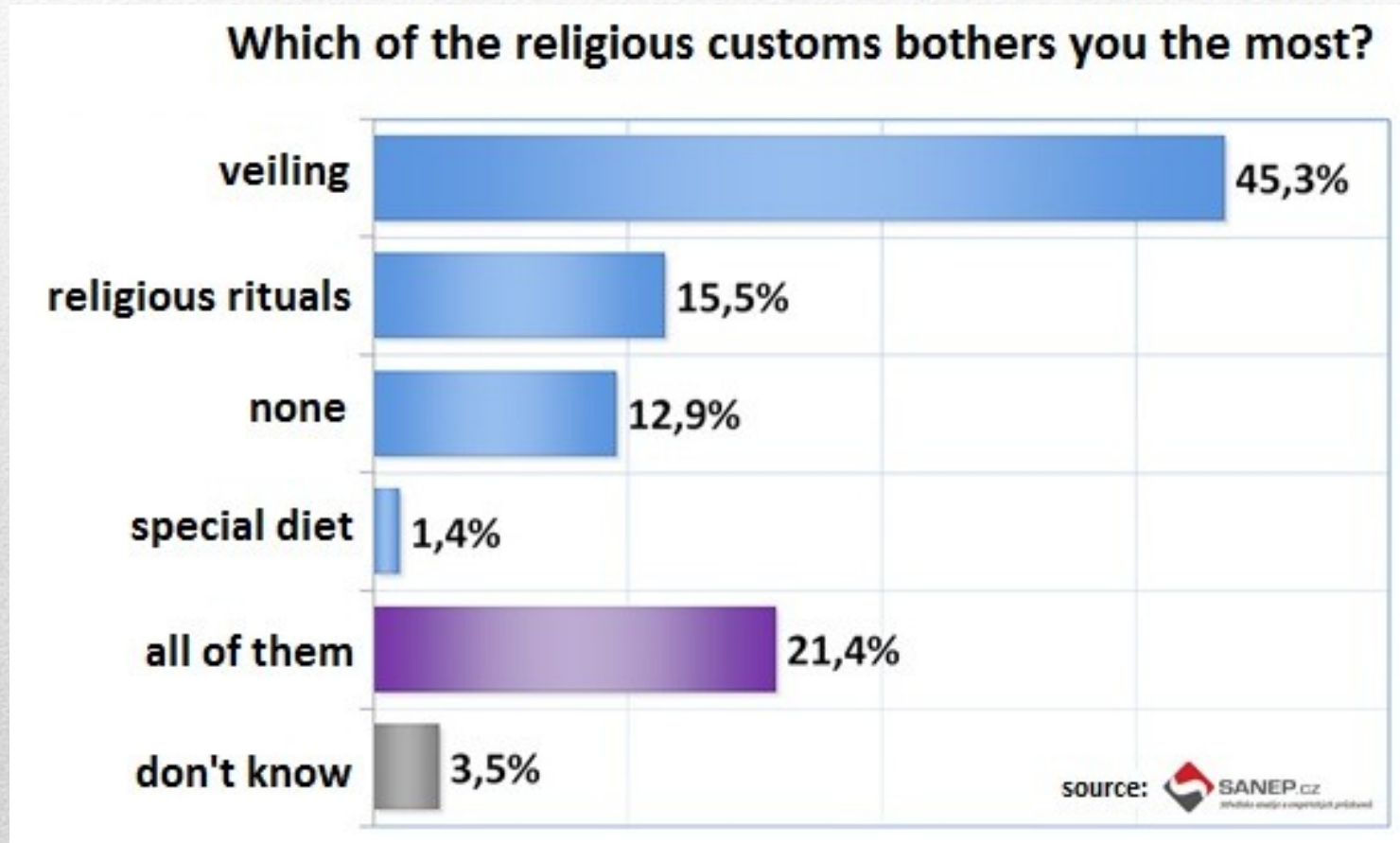
Are you concerned about foreigners in CR who are practicing their customs (veiling the face, special diet, religious rituals)?



Source:  SANEP.cz
institute for public opinion research

Public opinion

SANEP public opinion research (2015):



**Thank you for
your attention!**

