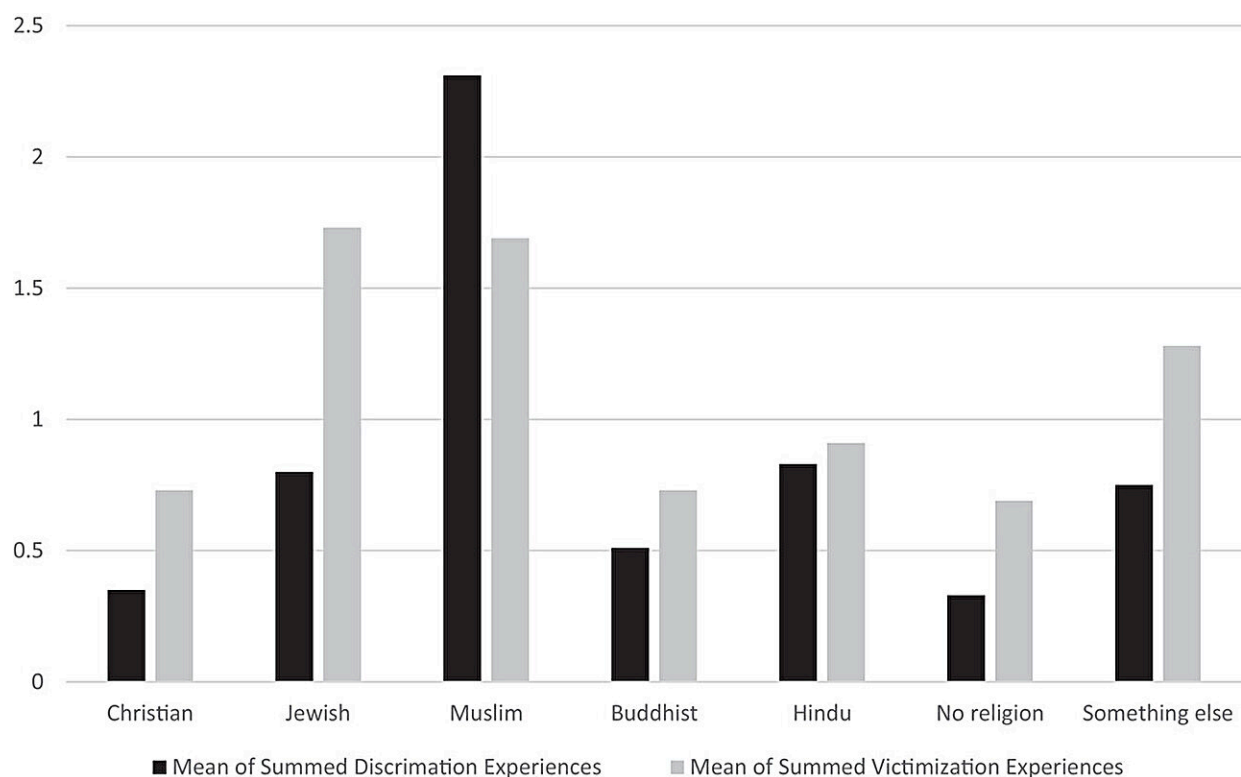


Study finds peer religious discrimination harms mental health more than exclusionary organizational policies

September 21 2023, by Amy McCaig



Means for summed religious discrimination and victimization experiences by religious tradition. Credit: *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (2023). DOI: 10.1111/jssr.12871

Religious discrimination from one's peers has a far greater impact on an

individual's mental health than exclusionary organizational policies, according to a new study from Rice University's Boniuk Institute for the Study and Advancement of Religious Tolerance.

"The Association between Religious Discrimination and Health: Disaggregating by Types of Discrimination Experiences, Religious Tradition, and Forms of Health" will appear in an upcoming edition of the [Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion](#).

Elaine Howard Ecklund, director of the Boniuk Institute, the Herbert S. Autrey Chair in Social Sciences and one of the study's authors, said that previous research has illustrated how religious discrimination is linked to poorer health. However, she and her fellow authors wanted to learn how it affects religious majority vs. [minority groups](#), how it harms mental versus [physical health](#) and whether specific types of discrimination have different health impacts.

Using [survey data](#) from a probability sample of U.S. adults with a variety of different discrimination experiences, the researchers found certain types of discrimination affected [mental health](#) more severely than others.

"We found that experiences with more interpersonal forms of [religious discrimination](#)—such as being verbally or physically assaulted—have [negative consequences](#) for both an individuals' physical and mental well-being," Ecklund said.

"On the other hand, experiences with more organizational forms of discrimination, such as being denied employment or refused services at a business, negatively impacts an individual's mental well-being but is less clearly connected to their physical well-being."

The researchers said these findings were true across all the different religious groups they examined, including Christians, Jews, Muslims and

atheists. There were not significant differences in health impacts from group to group. In addition, discriminatory practices of any kind were more harmful to mental than physical health.

Christopher Scheitle, associate professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at West Virginia University, is the study's lead author. Jacqui Frost, assistant professor of sociology at Purdue University, is a co-author.

More information: Christopher P. Scheitle et al, The Association between Religious Discrimination and Health: Disaggregating by Types of Discrimination Experiences, Religious Tradition, and Forms of Health, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (2023). [DOI: 10.1111/jssr.12871](https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12871)

Provided by Rice University

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