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INTRODUCTION

- The current Wayne State University School of Medicine (WSUSOM) religious holiday policy has a limited number of pre-approved holidays guaranteed off, other holidays must be requested off.
- The current policy lacks specific guidelines to ensure equity across religious identities when granting an excused absence.

“Requesting for time away from clerkship and electives must be submitted in writing to the counselor as soon as possible upon knowing of the need for an excuse. The student’s counselor will work with the student to contact the Clerkship/Elective Director to request the time off if the request is considered appropriate”.¹

- Religion and spirituality can be protective against burnout within medical education.²
- **Purpose:** This project aims to assess student’s attitudes and experiences with the current religious holiday policy at WSUSOM and compare experiences across religious identities.

METHODS

- A 17 question Qualtrics survey was emailed out to the current WSUSOM students
- IRB approval was deemed not needed by Institutional Review Board
- Survey was divided into three sections: Demographics, Experiences with the Current Policy, Attitudes/Beliefs with Current Policy/Prospective New Policy
- Data was analyzed holistically and by religious identity to assess for variation amongst religious identities using chi-squared analysis.
- Surveys were excluded which did not progress past 36% progress on survey
 - 36% progress means only the demographics section was completed
- 171 surveys were included in our data analysis

RESULTS

EXPERIENCES WITH THE CURRENT POLICY

- Only 40.35% of students were aware of current policy
- 27% of students reported difficulties getting their religious holiday off, minority religions were overrepresented within this statistic; Muslims being the most impacted ($p < 0.01$). (Figure 1)

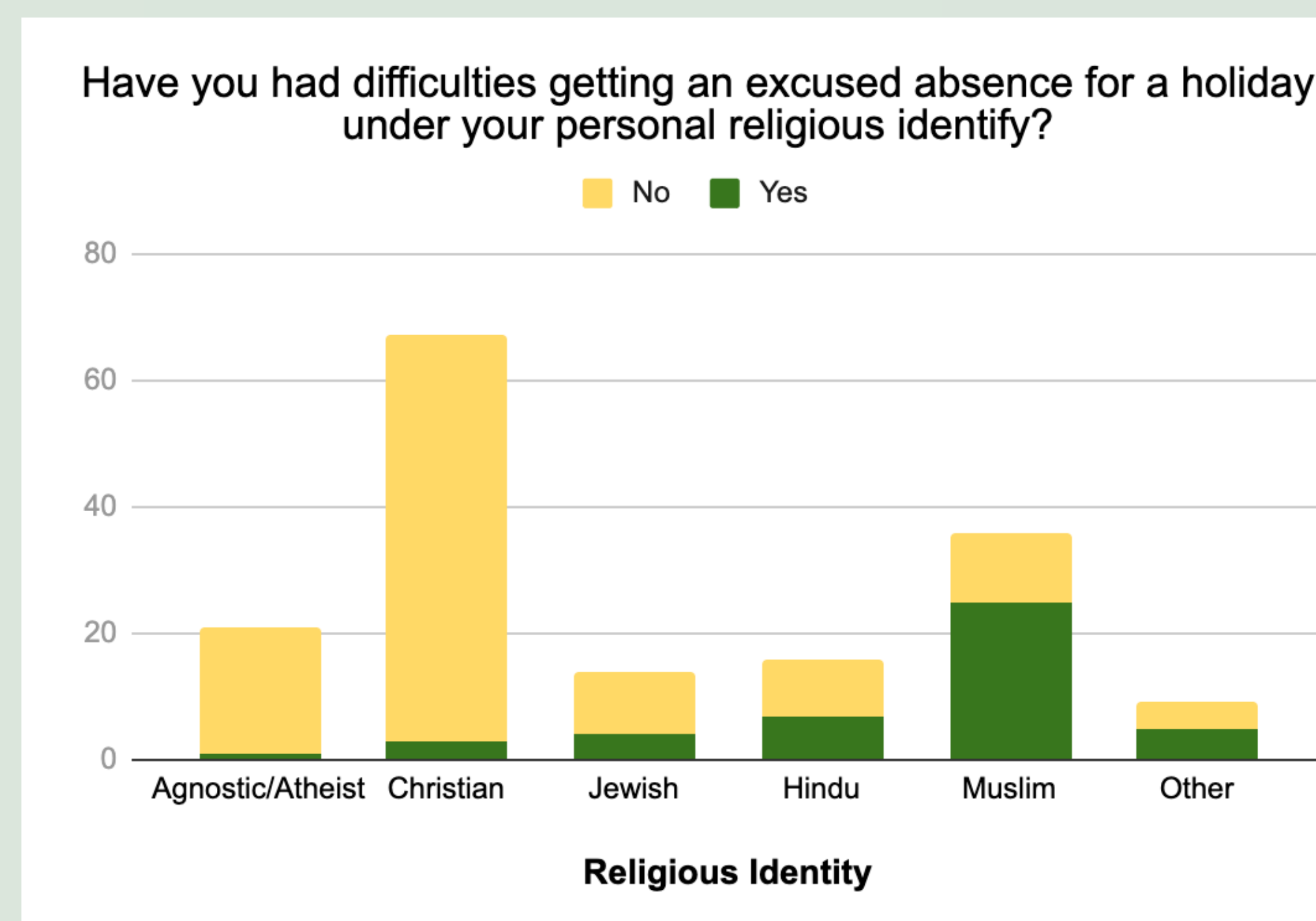


Figure 1: Experiencing Difficulties Receiving an Excused Absence for a Religious Holiday by Religious Identity

- For those that were granted a holiday off, some had to complete additional assignments (16.19%) or used 1-2 wellness days (33.33%). (Figure 2)

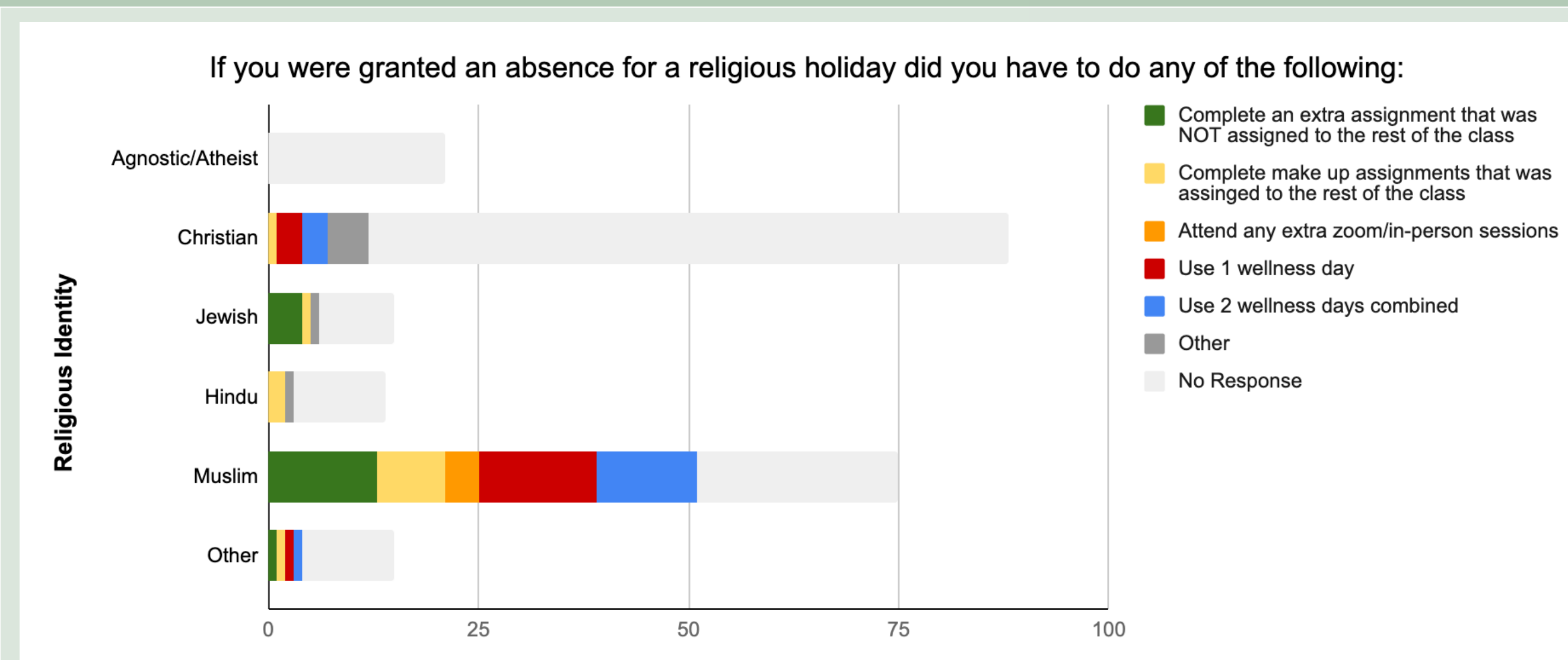


Figure 2: Additional Requirements to Receive Excused Absence for a Religious Holiday by Religious Identity

ATTITUDES/BELIEFS WITH CURRENT POLICY

- 29% of students somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that the current policy caused distress and majority of those being Muslim students ($p < 0.01$).
- 60% of students somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that the current policy needs to be revised and 80% somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that it is important that institutions support their religious identity.
- Muslim students were most likely to report experiencing distress with the policy ($p < 0.01$)
- 73% of students agreed the current policy needed to be revised

CONCLUSION

- The current religious holiday policy has not only caused difficulty for many students but has disproportionately impacted students from minority religions
- Students who identified as Muslim, followed by Hindu had faced the most difficulty getting a religious holiday approved

“The current policy says students are excused by default on university approved holidays. However, these holidays cater primarily to majority White and Christian students. Therefore, this policy is inherently discriminatory as it requires minority students to navigate additional bureaucracy to request time off.”

- This study exposed that the current Religious Holiday Policy at Wayne State University School of Medicine is not equitable for all religious identities and exposes the need for a new policy
- Future projects will focus on writing and implementing a new, more equitable, Religious Holiday Excused Absence Policy and evaluating its equity once implemented

LIMITATIONS

- Project relied on students to self report their experiences with/attitudes towards the current policy; therefore, we did not have objective data to analyze
- Unable to assess entire student body

REFERENCES

1. Wayne State School of Medicine. MD Handbook and Policies Academic Year 2022-23. Updated as of 10/11/2022.
2. Collier KM, James CA, Saint S, Howell J. The role of spirituality and religion in physician and trainee wellness. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*. 2021;36(10):3199-3201. doi:10.1007/s11606-021-06808-3