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New Poll Reveals Russia Split on Hijab Ban for Schools

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Sergei Uzakov / TASS

Russian society is split on whether Muslims headscarves should be banned in schools, a survey by state-run pollster VTsIOM has revealed.

Some 47 percent of Russians oppose banning the hijab in schools, while another 47 percent believe students and teachers should be forced to leave their headscarves at home. Six percent of respondents did not answer the question.

Young people aged between 18 to 24 years old were most likely to oppose a potential ban, with 73 percent saying that they were against the idea. Self-identified Orthodox Christians were more likely to support a hijab ban: 47 percent of Christians said that they agreed with an enforced secular dress code, compared with 30 percent of Muslims.

Related article: Hijab Ban in Remote Russian Village Turns Into National Stand-Off

The issue of religious clothing in schools in Russia's supposedly secular state education system has been catapulted into the media spotlight by an ongoing row in Russia's Mordovia region.

A ban on the hijab, enforced by one school in the small Tatar village of Belozerye, has become a national issue, pitting Russia's Education Ministry against Muslim-majority regions such as Chechnya.

"My three daughters wear headscarves at school and have great grades," Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov wrote on Instagram. "Does [Education Minister] Olga Vasilyeva demand that they take them off?"

Some 6.5 percent of Russians consider themselves to be Muslim, according to census data from 2012. Another 41 percent identify as Orthodox Christians, while 13 percent describe themselves as atheists.

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