



Muslims in Europe: Basis for Greater Understanding Already Exists

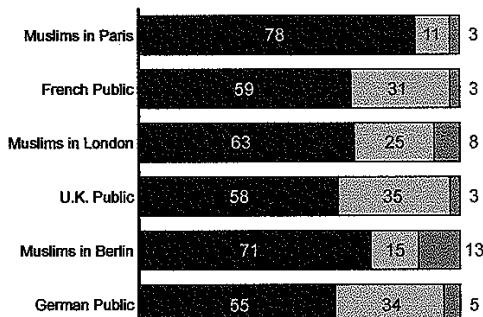
by Zsolt Nyiri, Ph.D., Regional Research Director for Europe, Gallup World Poll

Gallup's recent surveys of Muslims in London, Paris, and Berlin point to the need for greater understanding among Europe's Muslim residents and the broader societies in which they live. But these surveys also offer plenty of evidence that the foundation for that understanding is already in place.

Perhaps most importantly, the results reflect a desire among both Muslims and the general publics of the countries studied to improve mutual understanding of ethnic and religious differences. For example, majorities of all groups interviewed expressed a preference for living in a neighborhood with mixed ethnic and religious backgrounds, rather than one in which most people shared their own background.

If you could live in any neighborhood in this country, which comes closest to describing the one you would prefer: 1) A neighborhood made up of a mix of people, those who share your ethnic and religious background and others who do not; 2) a neighborhood mostly made up of people who share your ethnic and religious background; or 3) a neighborhood mostly made up of people who do not share your ethnic and religious background?

- % Made up of a mix of people, those who share your ethnic and religious background and others who do not
- ▨ % Mostly made up of people who share your ethnic and religious background
- ▩ % Mostly made up of people who do not share your ethnic and religious background



November 2006 - February 2007





Perhaps the first step toward greater understanding is to dispel common misperceptions on both sides. The European public should recognize, for example, that isolated terrorist attacks do not imply that most Muslims advocate or tolerate the use of violence. Asked to rate the moral acceptability of using violence in the name of a noble cause on a 5-point scale, the proportion of Muslims in London who chose a low rating of 1 or 2 was 81%, compared with 72% of the British public overall. In France, the corresponding numbers were 77% of Parisian Muslims vs. 79% of the French public. In Germany, they were 94% of Muslims in Berlin vs. 75% of the German public. In other words, Muslims in the capital city were less likely than the overall public to approve of such violence in Germany and the United Kingdom, while the percentages were similar in France.

Moreover, the data fail to support fears that Muslims do not respect democratic institutions. In fact, Muslim respondents in each city are likely -- in some cases more likely than the general public -- to express confidence in the country's democratic institutions. About two-thirds of Muslims in London (64%) say they have confidence in the British government, for example, compared with just 36% of the British public overall. Parisian Muslims are as likely as the French public to express confidence in the French government, 40% vs. 36%, respectively. The question was not asked in Germany.

In turn, Muslims themselves may benefit from a greater understanding of Europeans' secular mindset. Parisian Muslims, for example, should acknowledge the possibility that the highly secular French public does not disapprove of displaying Muslim religious symbols in public because they are Muslim, but simply because they are religious. In France, 64% of the overall population felt removing the Muslim face veil was necessary to integrate members into society -- but 54% said the same about wearing large, visible Christian crosses.

Finally, majorities of Muslims in all three cities (69% in London, 66% in Paris, 87% in Berlin) feel Muslims should be more involved in the politics of their country than they are today. This sentiment is reflected in varying degrees in the broader populations: a clear majority of Britons (63%) agree, as do about half of French respondents (51%). Only in Germany does the percentage agreeing represent a minority (29%).

Survey Methods

Surveys of Muslims in London, Paris, and Berlin were all conducted between November 2006 and February 2007. In London and Paris, probability samples were used in neighborhoods where Muslim penetration was 5% to 10% or more. All interviews in London and Paris were conducted face-to-face in respondents' homes. In Berlin, random digit dialing was used with a sample that used first names and family names to increase the probability of reaching a Muslim household. Sample sizes were 512 in London, 502 in Paris, and 504 in Berlin. The maximum margin of sampling error is ± 5 percentage points for each survey.

General public surveys were all conducted between December 2006 and January 2007, using random digit dialing in each country to reach representative samples of adult population aged 15 and older. Sample sizes were 1,204 in the United Kingdom, 1,220 in France, and 1,221 in Germany. The maximum margin of sampling error is ± 3 percentage points for each survey. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

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European Muslims Show No Conflict Between Religious and National Identities

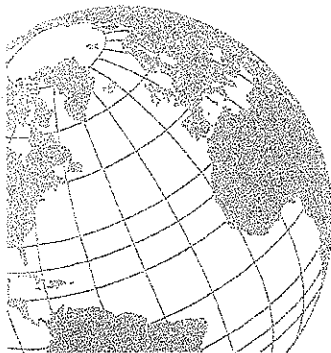
Surveys in London, Paris, and Berlin indicate resident Muslims at least as likely as general public to identify with country

by Zsolt Nyiri, Ph.D., Regional Research Director for Europe, Gallup World Poll

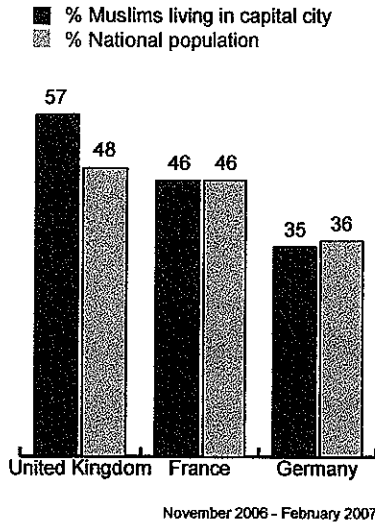
There are two extreme viewpoints on the issue of Muslim integration into Europe. On the one hand, Muslims are accused of resisting peaceful integration into European society, as evidenced by events such as the bombing in London and the riots in France in 2005. On the other hand, Europeans are accused of being increasingly hostile toward Muslims and other immigrants, as evidenced by the popularity of European anti-immigration parties or the growing number of legislative attempts to limit the use of religious symbols, including the veil worn by Muslim women.

Poll results provide very limited support for either of these extreme positions. Rather, our data reveal that, while religion remains an important part of their identity, Muslim residents of London, Paris, and Berlin also identify strongly with the country in which they live. In all three cities, strong majorities of Muslims -- 68% in Paris, 85% in Berlin, and 88% in London -- say religion is an important part of their lives. These figures stand in stark contrast to those found among the general population: only 23% of French, 36% of British, and 41% of German respondents overall consider religion to be an important part of their lives.

However, the idea that their higher religiosity implies a weaker sense of national identity is simply false. In London and Paris, when Muslims were not forced to choose between religious and national identity, they tended to associate themselves with both. In fact, in none of the three countries were Muslim residents significantly less likely than the populations at large to say they identify strongly with their country. (In the United Kingdom, they were actually somewhat more likely to do so.)



How strongly do you identify with each of the following groups?... Your country? (Percentage saying "extremely strongly" or "very strongly")



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These results contrast with how the general public in Germany, France, and the United Kingdom perceive Muslims' degree of loyalty to the countries in which they live. When asked directly whether they think Muslims living in their countries are loyal to the country, between 35% and 45% of the Germans, French, and Britons overall responded affirmatively. However, the overwhelming majority of Muslim residents themselves in all three cities studied maintained that Muslims are loyal to the countries in which they live: 73% in Paris, 74% in London, and 72% in Berlin.

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The Gallup World Poll is the largest available source of global public opinion data, providing access to the voices of citizens in more than 130 countries and areas. For more information, contact Poppy MacDonald, 202-715-3080, or poppy_macdonald@gallup.com