

Muslim-Western Tensions Persist

Common Concerns About Islamic Extremism

July 21, 2011

Muslim and Western publics continue to see relations between them as generally bad, with both sides holding negative stereotypes of the other. Many in the West see Muslims as fanatical and violent, while few say Muslims are tolerant or respectful of women. Meanwhile, Muslims in the Middle East and Asia generally see Westerners as selfish, immoral and greedy -- as well as violent and fanatical.

However, the latest Pew Global Attitudes survey finds somewhat of a thaw in the U.S. and Europe compared with five years ago. A greater percentage of Western publics now see relations between themselves and Muslims as generally good compared with 2006.

In contrast, Muslims in predominantly Muslim nations are as inclined to say relations are generally bad as they were five years ago. And, as in the past, Muslims express more unfavorable opinions about Christians than Americans or Europeans express about Muslims.

For the most part, Muslims and Westerners finger point about the causes of problems in their relations, and about which side holds the high ground on key issues. Muslims in the Middle East and elsewhere who say relations with the West are bad overwhelmingly blame the West. However, while Americans and Europeans tend to blame Muslims for bad relations, significant numbers believe Westerners are responsible.

One note of agreement between Westerners and Muslims is that both believe Muslim nations should be more economically prosperous than they are today. But they gauge the problem quite differently. Muslim publics have an aggrieved view of the West -- they blame Western policies for their own lack of prosperity. Across the Muslim publics surveyed, a median of 53% say U.S. and Western policies are one of the top two reasons why Muslim nations are not wealthier.

In contrast, few Americans or Western Europeans think the economic challenges facing Muslim countries are a result of Western policies. And although Westerners have become less likely over the last five years to say Islamic fundamentalism is a chief cause of economic problems in Muslim nations, they remain much more likely than Muslims to hold this view.

Why the Lack of Prosperity in Muslim Nations?

	Muslim publics %	Western publics %
U.S. & Western policies	53	14
Government corruption	49	54
Lack of democracy	42	50
Lack of education	36	36
Islamic fundamentalism	12	32

Median % naming each item most or second most responsible across seven Muslim publics (Palestinian territories, Indonesia, Lebanon, Pakistan, Egypt, Jordan and Turkey) and across six Western publics (U.S., Spain, Germany, France, Britain and Russia).

Asked only of those who say Muslim nations should be more economically prosperous than they are today.

In predominantly Muslim countries, figures are for Muslims only.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q41 & Q42.

Still, even on this issue there is some consensus. Both Muslims and Westerners believe corrupt governments and inadequate education in Muslim nations are at least partly responsible for the lack of prosperity. And perhaps reflecting the Arab Spring, in several Muslim and Western nations, people are more likely than they were five years ago to say the dearth of prosperity stems from a lack of democracy.

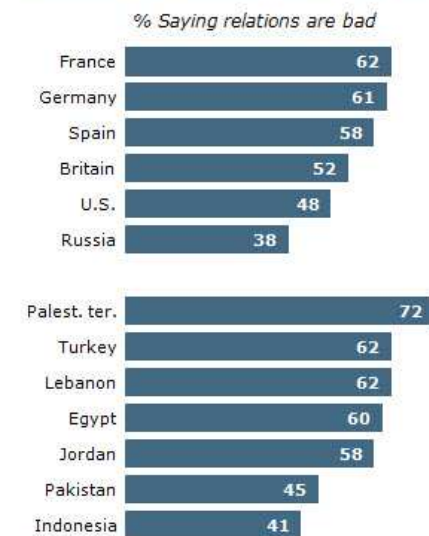
These are among the key findings from a survey by the Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project, conducted March 21 to May 15.¹ The survey updates a number of trend questions from a [2006 Pew Global Attitudes poll](#) that explored how Muslim and Western publics view one another. The current survey finds that five years later -- and nearly 10 years after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 -- tensions remain high, although there are also some shared concerns.

For instance, both Muslims and Westerners are concerned about Islamic extremism. More than two-thirds in Russia, Germany, Britain, the U.S. and France are worried about Islamic extremists in their country. Fully 77% of Israelis also hold this view.

But extremism is considered a threat in predominantly Muslim nations as well. More than seven-in-ten Palestinian and Lebanese Muslims are worried about Islamic extremists in their countries, as are most Muslims in Egypt, Pakistan and Turkey. For Muslims, the most common concern about extremism is that it is violent, although in both Egypt and the Palestinian territories the top fear is that extremism could divide the country.

How Muslims, Christians and Jews See Each Other

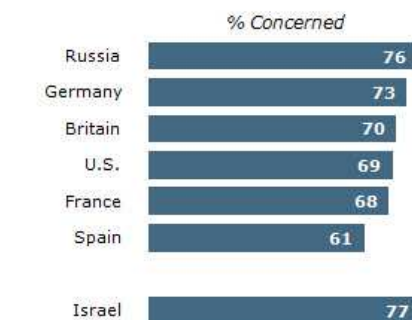
Most Say Relations Between Muslims and Westerners Are Poor



In predominantly Muslim countries, figures are for Muslims only.

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Widespread Concerns About Islamic Extremism



In four of the six largely Christian nations included in the study, most say they have a positive opinion of Muslims. The exceptions are Germany (45% favorable) and Spain (37%), although views toward Muslims have improved in both countries since 2006.

Also, solid majorities in Western countries have a favorable opinion of Jews. In Spain, 59% now hold this view, up 14 percentage points from 2006.

Muslim views toward Christians vary considerably across countries. In Lebanon, which has a large Christian population, nearly all Muslims (96%) express a positive view of Christians. Narrow majorities of Jordanian (57%), and Indonesian (52%) Muslims also give Christians a favorable rating, while in Egypt -- which has recently experienced violence between elements of its Muslim and Christian communities -- views are divided (48% favorable; 47% unfavorable).

Meanwhile, very few Muslims in Pakistan (16%) or Turkey (6%) have a positive opinion of Christians.

Ratings for Jews are uniformly low in the predominantly Muslim nations surveyed -- in all seven of these nations, less than 10% have a positive opinion of Jews. Indeed, outside of Indonesia, less than 5% offer a positive opinion.

Among Israel's minority Muslim community, however, views are divided: 48% express a positive opinion of Jews, while 49% offer a negative opinion. In contrast, only 9% of Israeli Jews have a positive view of Muslims. Christians receive somewhat higher ratings among Israeli Muslims (67% favorable) than among Israeli Jews (51%).

Characteristics and Stereotypes

Muslims associate a number of negative traits with Westerners. Across the Muslim publics surveyed, the median percentages saying people in Western countries such as the U.S. and Europe are selfish, violent, greedy, immoral, arrogant and fanatical exceed 50%. By contrast, the median percentages of those who say that Westerners are respectful of women, honest, tolerant or generous range below 50%.

Since 2006, Indonesian Muslims have become more likely to associate positive traits with Westerners, but in Pakistan attitudes have moved in the opposite direction -- the percentage of Pakistani Muslims saying that Westerners are greedy, immoral, selfish and fanatical has increased by double-digits over the last five years.

Non-Muslims in Western Europe, the U.S. and Russia offer somewhat more positive assessments of Muslims than Muslims do of Westerners. Relatively few, for example, say Muslims are greedy or immoral. However, a median of 58% label Muslims as fanatical and a median of 50% believe Muslims are violent. And few think Muslims are respectful of women.

National vs. Religious Identity

Across the nations surveyed, Christians and Muslims differ in the degree to which religion defines their identity. Among most of the Muslim publics polled, Muslims tend to identify with their religion, rather than their nationality. This is particularly true in Pakistan, where 94% think of themselves primarily as Muslim instead of Pakistani.

Lebanon and the Palestinian territories are exceptions to this pattern, however -- more Muslims in both countries identify first with their nationality rather than with their religion. And many Muslims refuse to choose between nation and religion, volunteering that they identify with both.

Throughout Europe, most Christians think of themselves primarily in terms of their national identity. Fully 90% of French Christians take this view. The clear exception is the U.S., where Christians are divided: 46% primarily identify as American and 46% as Christian. Seven-in-ten white evangelical Christians in the U.S. identify first with their religion.

Both of the major religious communities in Israel identify primarily with their religion. Nearly six-in-ten (57%) Jews identify first as Jews, while among the country's Muslim community 77% think of themselves first as Muslims.

Opinions About September 11

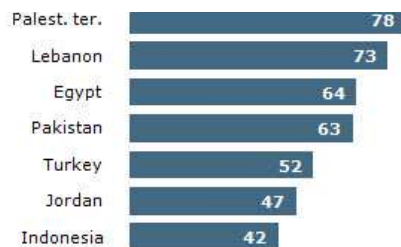
Nearly a decade after Sept. 11, 2001, skepticism about the events of that day persists among Muslim publics.

Ratings of Muslims, Christians, and Jews

	% Favorable		
	Muslims	Christians	Jews
U.S.	57	89	82
Britain	64	83	76
France	64	84	84
Germany	45	75	71
Spain	37	76	59
Russia	62	89	63
Israel	19	54	88
Turkey	72	6	4
Egypt	97	48	2
Jordan	96	57	2
Lebanon	92	96	3
Palest. ter.	82	--	4
Indonesia	97	52	9
Pakistan	95	16	2

In predominantly Muslim countries, figures are for Muslims only. Due to an administrative error, ratings of Christians in the Palestinian territories are not shown.

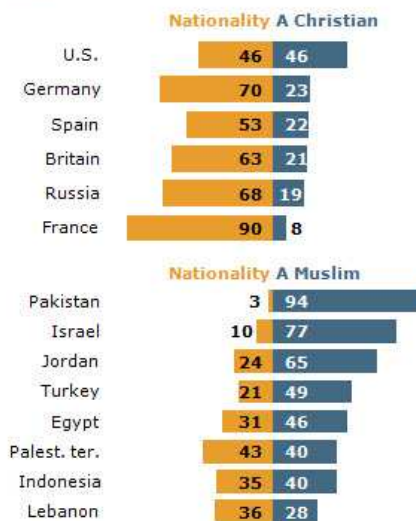
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In predominantly Muslim countries, figures are for Muslims only.

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What Do You Consider Yourself First?



Most Do Not Believe Arabs Carried Out 9/11 Attacks

Believe Don't believe DK

When asked whether they think groups of Arabs carried out the 9/11 attacks on the U.S., most Muslims in the nations surveyed say they do not believe this.

There is no Muslim public in which even 30% accept that Arabs conducted the attacks. Indeed, Muslims in Jordan, Egypt, and Turkey are less likely to accept this today than in 2006.

Read the [full report](#) including the survey methodology at pewglobal.org

	%	%	%
Lebanon	28	60	11
Israel	27	59	14
Jordan	22	64	14
Palest. ter.	22	68	10
Egypt	21	75	4
Indonesia	20	58	23
Pakistan	12	57	31
Turkey	9	73	18

Asked of Muslims only.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q95.



1. This report features findings from the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Spain, Russia, Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Indonesia, Lebanon, Pakistan, the Palestinian territories, and Turkey. In predominantly Muslim nations, results are shown for Muslim respondents only. These countries were included in the 23-nation spring 2011 Pew Global Attitudes survey. See www.pewglobal.org for more results from this survey.