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Anti-Muslim Sentiments Fairly Commonplace

Four in ten Americans admit feeling prejudice against Muslims

by Lydia Saad

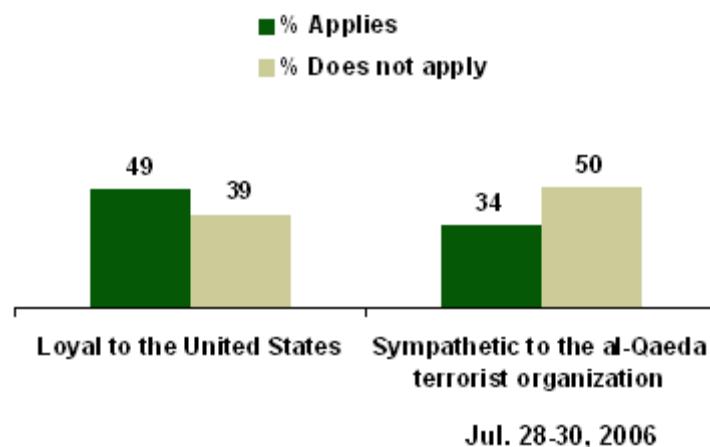
GALLUP NEWS SERVICE

PRINCETON, NJ -- Substantial minorities of Americans admit to having negative feelings or prejudices against people of the Muslim faith, and favor using heightened security measures with Muslims as a way to help prevent terrorism. Personally knowing someone who is Muslim -- which 41% of Americans say they do -- corresponds with more favorable attitudes on these questions. These are key findings of a July 28-30, 2006 *USA Today/Gallup Poll* focusing on U.S. attitudes toward Muslims living in the United States.

Americans' personal discomfort with Muslims is reflected in survey questions dealing with their reaction to being near Muslims in different situations. Nearly one quarter of Americans, 22%, say they would not like to have a Muslim as a neighbor. Slightly fewer, 18%, say they would feel nervous if they noticed a Muslim woman flying on the same airplane as themselves, while significantly more -- 31% -- say they would feel nervous if they noticed a Muslim man on their flight.

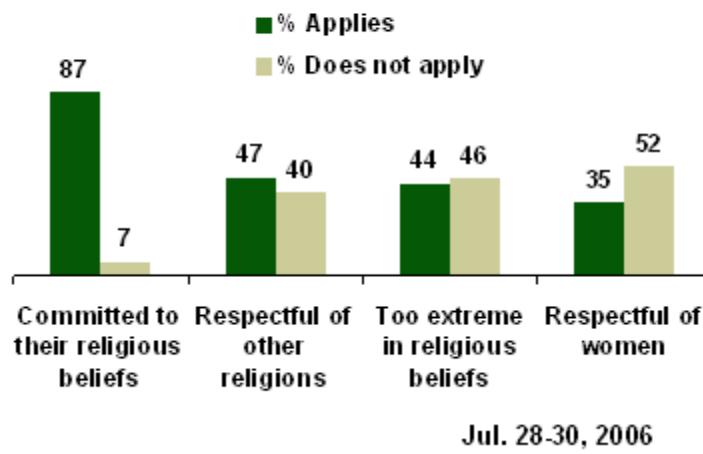
Americans tend to disagree with the notion that Muslims living in the United States are sympathetic to al-Qaeda; still, fewer than half believe U.S. Muslims are loyal to the United States.

Thinking specifically about Muslims, do you think each of the following applies -- or does not apply -- to Muslims living in the U.S.?

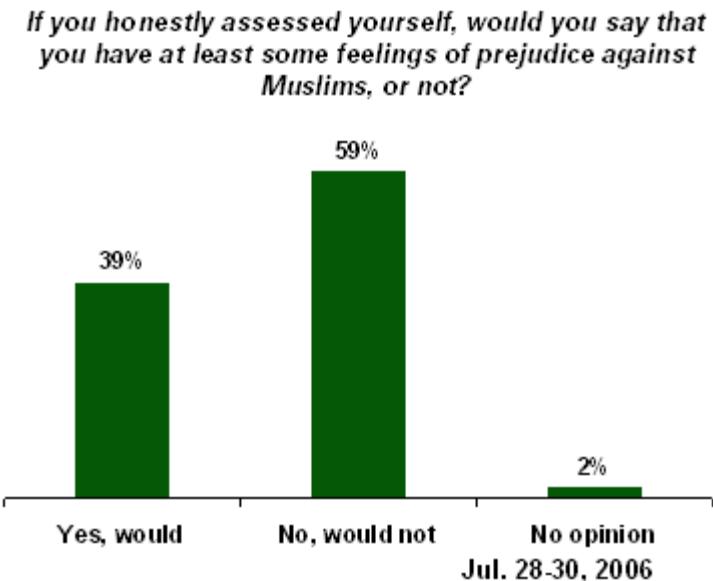


Muslims are widely perceived to be committed to their religious beliefs, but this is not necessarily a positive assessment. While 47% believe Muslims are respectful of other religions, nearly as many (40%) disagree. Also, 44% say Muslims are too extreme in their religious beliefs and a slight majority (52%) say Muslims are not respectful of women.

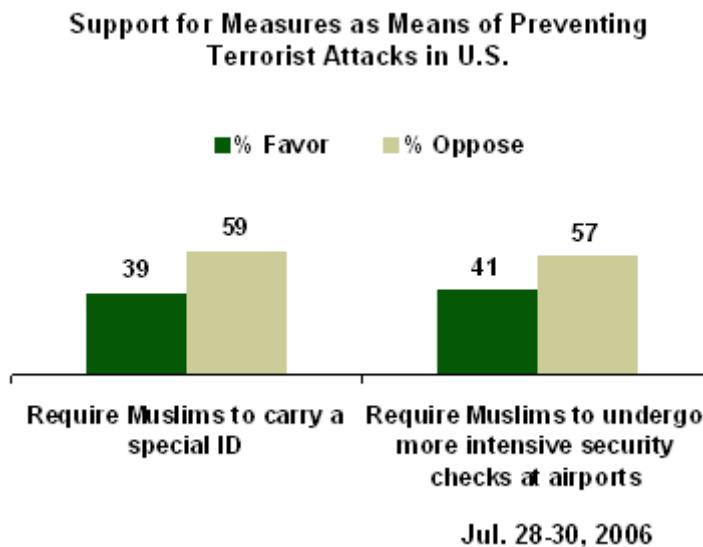
Thinking specifically about Muslims, do you think each of the following applies -- or does not apply -- to Muslims living in the U.S.?



All of this adds up to a significant number of Americans being willing to admit they harbor at least some feelings of prejudice against Muslims. Nearly four in ten Americans (39%) say they do feel some prejudice while 59% say they don't.



The array of concerns about Muslims' loyalty to the United States and religious extremism may also help to explain why about 4 in 10 Americans favor more rigorous security measures for Muslims than those used for other U.S. citizens. This includes requiring Muslims -- including those who are U.S. citizens -- to carry a special ID, and requiring them to undergo special, more intensive, security checks before boarding airplanes in the United States.



Contact Bridges Fear

Considerable differences are seen in attitudes about Muslims according to whether one is personally acquainted with a Muslim. For instance, only 10% of those who say they personally know someone who is Muslim say they would not want a Muslim as a neighbor. This compares with 31% of those who are not acquainted with a Muslim -- representing a 21-point gap in views between the two groups. Other large gaps are seen in attitudes toward special security measures targeted at Muslims, and fear of sharing an airplane flight with Muslim men.

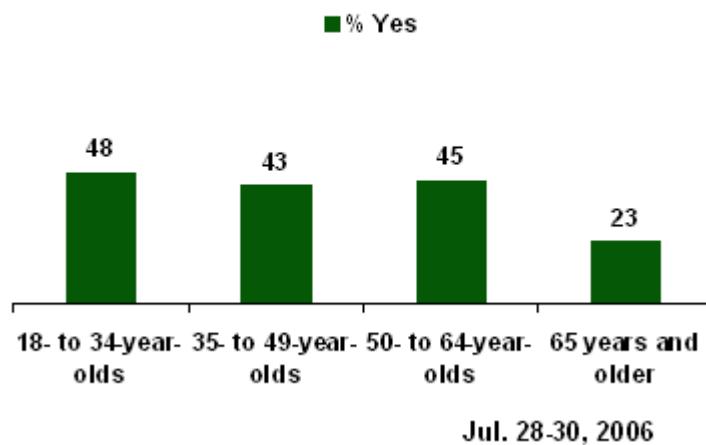
Attitudes Toward Muslims According to Personal Acquaintance with Muslims

Don't

	Know a Muslim	know a Muslim Difference
Favor special ID for Muslims	24	50 -26
Would not want Muslim as a neighbor	10	31 -21
Favor special security checks at airports for Muslims	30	49 -19
Nervous if Muslim man were on same flight	20	38 -18
Muslims not loyal to the U.S.	30	45 -15
Muslims too extreme in religious beliefs	36	50 -14
Have some feelings of prejudice against Muslims	32	45 -13
Muslims sympathetic to al-Qaeda	29	38 -9
Muslims not respectful of other religions	35	44 -9
Nervous if Muslim woman on same flight	15	20 -5
Muslims not committed to religious beliefs	6	7 -1
Muslims not respectful of women	52	52 0

People under the age of 65 are much more likely than those 65 and older to report that they are acquainted with a Muslim.

Personally Know Someone Who is Muslim, by Age



As a result, seniors tend to be more negative in their attitudes about Muslims and more supportive of tighter security restrictions on them. Those aged 18 to 34 years tend to be the most pro-Muslim in their attitudes. However, difference in personal contact with Muslims does not explain these age differences entirely. Some strong generational differences exist -- particularly between those aged 18 to 34 years and those 65 and older -- that go beyond whether or not one knows a Muslim.

In addition to age, politics is also a factor in attitudes toward Muslims, with Republicans ascribing more negative political and religious qualities to Muslims, and being more opposed to having Muslim as neighbors than are Democrats and independents.

Survey Methods

These results are based on telephone interviews with a randomly selected national sample of 1,007 adults, aged 18

and older, conducted July 28-30, 2006. For results based on this sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum error attributable to sampling and other random effects is ± 3 percentage points. 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.

For results based on the 507 national adults in the Form A half-sample and 500 national adults in the Form B sample, the maximum margins of sampling error are ± 5 percentage points.

12. Next, I'm going to read a list of various groups of people. If I read the name of a group that you would NOT like to have as neighbors, please say so. How about -- [RANDOM ORDER]?

	Would not like (sorted by "would not like")	Would like/ would be		
		as neighbor	okay/ wouldn't bother	No opinion
	%	%	%	
Drug addicts	92	8	*	
Heavy drinkers	72	26	2	
Homosexuals	27	71	2	
Arabs	24	72	3	
Muslims	22	75	4	
Immigrants or foreign workers	19	76	5	
Hindus	14	80	5	
Jews	4	94	2	

* Less than 0.5%

13. Now thinking specifically about Muslims, do you think each of the following applies -- or does not apply -- to Muslims living in the U.S.? How about they are -- [RANDOM ORDER]?

2006 Jul 28-30 (sorted by "applies")	Does not apply		
	Applies	No opinion	%
	%	%	%
Committed to their religious beliefs	87	7	7
Loyal to the United States	49	39	12
Respectful of other religions	47	40	13
Too extreme in their religious beliefs	44	46	10
Respectful of women	35	52	13
Sympathetic to the al-Qaeda terrorist organization	34	50	16

14. Suppose you were flying on an airplane and you noticed that a Muslim man was taking the same flight as you. Would this make you more nervous about flying, or would it not make any difference to you?

BASED ON 507 NATIONAL ADULTS IN FORM A

Yes,	No, not make any difference	No opinion
%	%	%

2006 Jul 28-30	31	66
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15. Suppose you were flying on an airplane and you noticed that a Muslim woman was taking the same flight as you. Would this make you more nervous about flying, or would it not make any difference to you?

BASED ON 500 NATIONAL ADULTS IN FORM B

	Yes, more nervous	No, not make any difference	No opinion
	%	%	%
2006 Jul 28-30	18	82	1

16. Please tell me if you would favor or oppose each of the following as a means of preventing terrorist attacks in the United States. How about -- [ITEMS ROTATED]?

A. Requiring Muslims, including those who are U.S. citizens, to carry a special ID

	No Favor Oppose opinion		
	%	%	%
2006 Jul 28-30	39	59	2

B. Requiring Muslims, including those who are U.S. citizens, to undergo special, more intensive security checks before boarding airplanes in the U.S.

	No Favor Oppose opinion		
	%	%	%
2006 Jul 28-30	41	57	2

17. If you honestly assessed yourself, would you say that you have at least some feelings of prejudice against Muslims, or not?

	Yes, would	No, would not	No opinion
	%	%	%
2006 Jul 28-30	39	59	2

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