

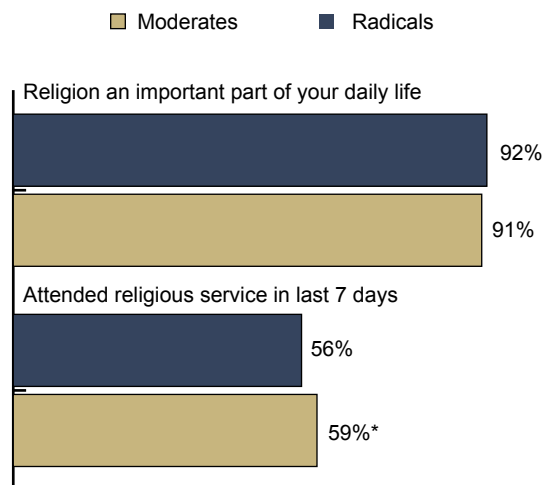


## What Makes a Muslim Radical?

by John L. Esposito, Professor of Religion and International Affairs, Georgetown University & Dalia Mogahed, Executive Director, The Gallup Center for Muslim Studies

Ask any foreign-policy expert how the West will know it is winning the war on terror, and the likely response will be, “When the Islamic world rejects radicalism.” But just who are Muslim radicals, and what fuels their fury? Every politician has a theory: Radicals are religious fundamentalists. They are poor. They are full of hopelessness and hate. But those theories are wrong.

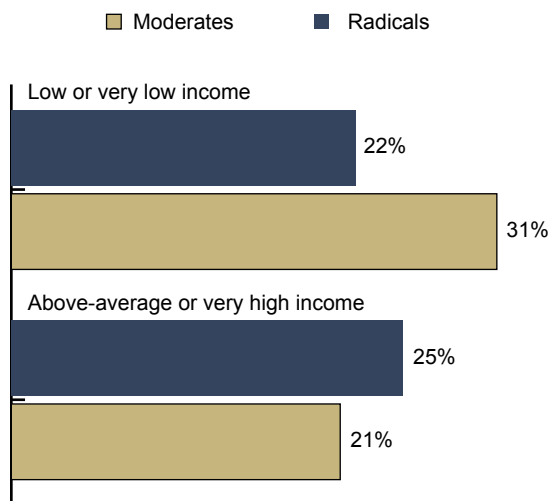
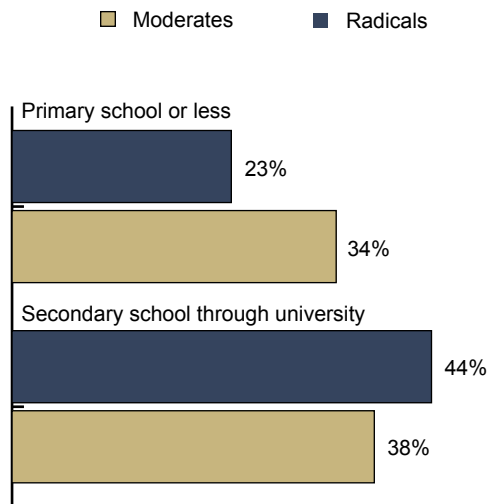
Based on a new Gallup World Poll of more than 9,000 interviews in nine Muslim countries, we find that Muslim radicals have more in common with their moderate brethren than is often assumed. If the West wants to reach the extremists, and empower the moderate Muslim majority, it must first recognize who it’s up against.



\*Difference is statistically insignificant given the +/- 3% margin of error

## Fundamentally Similar

Because terrorists often hijack Islamic precepts for their own ends, pundits and politicians in the West sometimes portray Islam as a religion of terrorism. They often charge that religious fervor triggers radical and violent views. But the data say otherwise: There is no significant difference in religiosity between moderates and radicals. In fact, radicals are no more likely to attend religious services regularly than are moderates.

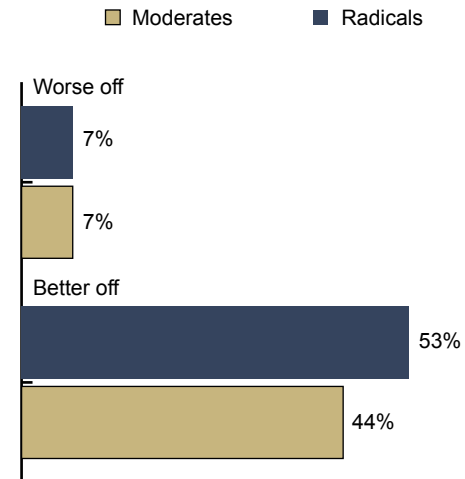


## The Radically Rich

It's no secret that many in the Muslim world suffer from crippling poverty and lack of education. But are radicals any poorer than their fellow Muslims? We

found the opposite: There is indeed a key difference between radicals and moderates when it comes to income and education, but it is the radicals who earn more and who stay in school longer.

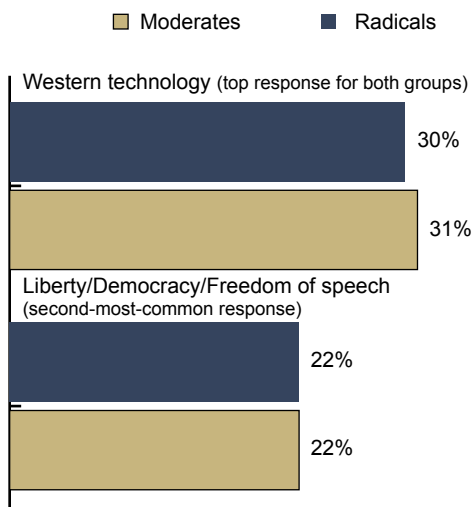
Where do you expect to be in the next five years?



## A Hopeful Future

Whenever a suicide bomber completes a deadly mission, the act is often attributed to hopelessness — the inability to find a job, earn a living, or support a family. But the politically radical are not more “hopeless” than the mainstream. More radicals expressed satisfaction with their financial situation and quality of life than their moderate counterparts, and a majority of them expected to be better off in the years to come.

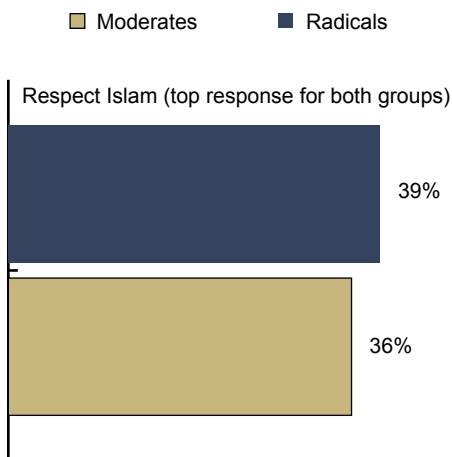
Most admired aspects about the West



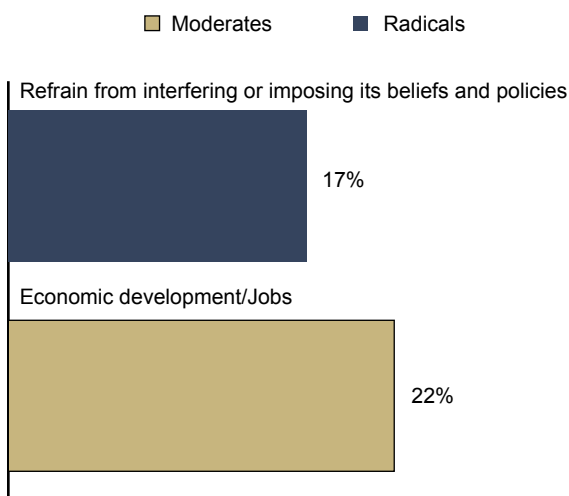
## Extreme Esteem

The war on terror is premised on a key question: Why do they hate us? The common answer from Washington is that Muslim radicals hate our way of life, our freedom, and our democracy. Not so. Both moderates and radicals in the Muslim world admire the West, in particular its technology, democratic system, and freedom of speech.

What can the West do to improve relations?



What else can the West do to improve relations?



## The Way Forward

What, then, separates a Muslim moderate from a Muslim radical? Although almost all Muslims believe the West should show more respect for Islam, radicals

are more likely to feel that the West threatens and attempts to control their way of life. Moderates, on the other hand, are more eager to build ties with the West through economic development. This divergence of responses offers policymakers a key opportunity to develop strategies to prevent the moderate mainstream from sliding away, and to check the persuasive power of those who would do us harm.

Note: Respondents who said 9/11 was unjustified (1 or 2 on a 5-point scale, where 1 is totally unjustified and 5 is completely justified) are classified as moderates. Respondents who said 9/11 was justified (4 or 5 on the same scale) are classified as radicals. The data for this poll were obtained during 2005-06 from Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. Approximately 1,000 in-home interviews were conducted in each country. The sampling mix of urban and rural areas is the statistical equivalent of surveying each nation's adult population, with a statistical sampling error rate of  $\pm 3$  percent.

\* John L. Esposito is professor of religion and international affairs and founding director of the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University's Walsh School of Foreign Service.

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Source: *Foreign Policy*, November 2006, [www.foreignpolicy.com](http://www.foreignpolicy.com)  
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