



Muslims in Berlin, London, and Paris: Bridges and Gaps in Public Opinion

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

Events like the 2005 riots in France and the bombing in the London Underground that same year have raised concerns about attitudes of -- and attitudes toward -- Muslims living in Western Europe. The current study highlights important themes that represent dividing lines or common ground between Muslim residents of London, Paris, and Berlin and the general public in their home countries. It also establishes important differences and commonalities among the Muslim communities in these three cities.

Why were these three cities chosen? Immigration patterns have led Muslims to settle mostly in large urban areas. The three cities represent very different patterns of Muslim immigration to Europe: Parisian Muslims emigrated mainly from North Africa, London Muslims from South Asia, and those in Berlin chiefly from Turkey. Also, the prevailing policy environments in the three host countries affect Muslims in different ways -- e.g., French secularism versus British multiculturalism. The samples in Paris and London are representative of Muslims living in neighborhoods with at least 5% to 10% Muslim penetration; in Berlin, the sample is representative of Muslim residents throughout the city. The comparison study in each case is representative of the entire population of the host country.

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 like the 2005 bombings in London and riots in France. On the other hand, Europeans are accused of being increasingly hostile toward Muslim immigrants, as evidenced by the popularity of European anti-immigration parties and the growing number of legislative attempts to limit the use of religious symbols, including the Muslim face veil.





Poll results provide 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 they live in. What's more, strong majorities both of Muslims living in these three cities, and of the general populations in Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, would prefer to live in neighborhoods that are ethnically and religiously diverse.

Muslims Exhibit Strong Religious Identity and National Identity

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 daily 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 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).

These results contrast with how the general public in Germany, France, and the United Kingdom perceives Muslims' degree of loyalty to the countries they live in. 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 they live in: 73% in Paris, 74% in London, and 72% in Berlin.

Foundation Exists for Greater Understanding

More and better communication is needed between Muslims and non-Muslims in each of these countries. The first step is to cultivate a better understanding of how Muslims in Europe tend to reconcile their typically high degree of religiosity with their largely secular environments. In turn, Muslims themselves may

benefit from a greater understanding of Europeans' secular mindset. We found, for example, that Muslims' religious symbols were not necessarily singled out because they were Muslim, but simply because they were religious. In France, for example, 64% of the overall population felt removing the Muslim face veil was necessary for integration into society -- but 54% said the same about wearing large, visible Christian crosses.

The data also indicate there is enough common ground and willingness on both sides to improve the dialogue. Muslims are very likely -- often more likely than the general public -- to express confidence in democratic institutions and a desire to live in neighborhoods with mixed ethnic and religious backgrounds. The idea that it is important to include Muslim voices in the policy debates and political processes of these three countries is reflected not only in the opinions of Muslims themselves who live in them, but also in the majorities of the general populations (with the exception of Germany) who think Muslims should be more involved in politics.

Methodology

All surveys were designed and funded entirely by The Gallup Organization.

Muslim Populations in London, Paris, and Berlin

- Field periods
 - London: Nov. 29, 2006, to Jan. 18, 2007
 - Paris: Nov. 29 to Dec. 22, 2006.
 - Berlin: Jan. 5 to Feb. 26, 2007
- Probability sample in London and Paris neighborhoods where Muslim penetration was 5% to 10% or more
- All interviews in London and Paris were conducted in home, face-to-face.
- Random Digit Dialing was used in Berlin, dialing of first and family names with a high probability to lead to a Muslim household.
- Target: Total 15+ adult population
- 512 interviews in London, 502 in Paris, and 504 in Berlin
- Associated sampling error ± 5 percentage points for each survey

General Public

- Field periods
 - United Kingdom: Dec. 18, 2006, to Jan. 9, 2007
 - France: Dec. 18-29, 2006
 - Germany: Dec. 19, 2006 to Jan. 4, 2007
- Random Digit Dialing
- Phone interviews
- Target: Total 15+ adult population
- 1,204 interviews nationwide in the United Kingdom, 1,220 in France, and 1,221 in Germany
- Associated error ± 3 percentage points

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 Bronson Lee, at 202-715-3030 or worldpollcontact@gallup.com