



# Beyond Multiculturalism vs. Assimilation

GALLUP  **WORLD Poll**

*by: Dalia Mogahed  
Senior Analyst and Executive Director for  
Gallup's Center for Muslim Studies*



# Executive Summary

## False Dichotomy

*New Gallup study challenges the idea that London Muslims must choose between Islam and Britain*

A new Gallup study comparing attitudes of Muslim residents of London with those of the British public overall provides a new perspective on the growing debate over multiculturalism vs. assimilation in the UK. Contrary to the typical zero-sum framing of the issue, the study indicates that, particularly for London's Muslims, strong identification with one's religion and one's nationality are not mutually exclusive. While most members of that group (69%) strongly identified with their faith, a majority (57%) also strongly identified with their country.

Nor should London Muslims' comparatively strong identification with their religion be taken as a sign of possible radicalization. London Muslims were as likely as the British public overall to condemn terrorist attacks on civilians and were slightly more likely than the general public (81% vs. 72%) to unequivocally find no moral justification for using violence for a "noble cause."

Also defying conventional wisdom, a high level of religiosity among London's Muslims did not translate into a desire to segregate themselves. London Muslims were actually *less* likely than the general public to say they would prefer to live in a neighborhood made up mostly of people who share their religious or ethnic background (25% vs. 35%). What's more, they were slightly less likely to say they would not want a Christian as a neighbor (8%) than the British public overall was to say the same about a Muslim neighbor (15%). Significantly, London Muslims were 10 times as likely to express positive views as negative views of Christians, while the public is roughly as likely to express positive as negative views of Muslims.

## Views of Integration

London Muslims generally agree with the British public about what it takes for minorities to integrate into society. Majorities of both groups agree mastering the national language, getting a better education, finding a job, participating in politics, volunteering to serve the public, and celebrating national holidays are necessary for successful integration. Regarding the celebration of national holidays and volunteering, Muslims were slightly more likely than the general public to agree that such activities are necessary to be part of British society.

The issue on which London Muslims most differed from the British public is more symbolic than substantive: the face veil. Only 13% of Muslims versus a little more than half (55%) of the British public overall said removing the veil is necessary for integration.

A more essential point of difference is evident in divergent opinions about the coexistence of cultures within British society: The majority of the British public (62%) asserts that minorities must be more flexible to blend in with the majority, whereas a majority of London Muslims (54%) believe the majority should do more to accommodate minorities' religious customs.

## Opportunity Cost

One set of findings emerging from the new data has significant implications for the British economy. Employed Muslims in London lag the British workforce overall in terms of perceived opportunities. Sixty-nine percent of London Muslims say they have the opportunity to do what they do best at work, vs. 78% of British workers overall. Similarly, 56% of London Muslims say someone at work encourages their development, vs. 64% of British workers overall. Most significantly, London Muslims were significantly less likely to report being treated with respect all day the day before the survey (68% vs. 90%).

The relative lag in perceived opportunity suggests possible "brain waste" among London's Muslims, a situation defined by the World Bank as one "where the skilled and the educated leave their home country, but then make little use of their skills and education in the host country." This type of waste can cost developed economies billions.

Though more research is required to further explore this issue, these results begin to chart a path for the future of Britain's diverse society. Our analysis suggests that policy-makers must look past zero-sum frameworks and constructed compromises between minority and majority groups, and instead approach the issue of integration as a process requiring additive effort by all, not trade-offs.



# Beyond Multiculturalism vs. Assimilation

*New Gallup study finds that London Muslims identify with both Islam and Britain*

As the sixth year of the U.S.-led war on terror rages on, it would appear that few constructs are more self-evident than the one dividing Islam and the West.

Muslim minorities in the West are often scrutinized through this paradoxical prism: On which side of the divide do they fall?

The signs don't look good—some say.

A recent Pew Global Attitudes Project poll found that given a choice of identifying themselves as first Muslim or as first British, the majority of British Muslims choose their faith, while the majority of British Christians choose their country.

Some have taken these results as witness to the danger of Britain's concept of "multiculturalism," and have advocated that Muslims be persuaded or forced to forsake their Islamic identity for a Western one.

New findings from a Gallup study of London Muslims and the general British public challenge the very legitimacy of such a trade-off, and offer a new way to reconcile citizenship and creed.

The study found that London Muslims are distinctly more religious than the general British public. Most London Muslims (88%) said religion is an important part of their lives versus only slightly more than a third (36%) of the general public, and more Muslims identified extremely or very strongly with their own religion than the average Briton did, by 69% to 30%.

However, eroding the foundational assumptions of the Islam vs. the West thesis, the data show religious and national identities are not mutually exclusive. While the majority of London Muslims strongly identified with their faith, a majority also strongly identified with their country. Fifty-seven percent of London Muslims said they identified strongly with their country, while 48% of the general public said the same.

*How strongly do you identify with each of the following groups: Your Country*

	Public	London Muslims
Extremely strongly	18%	24%
Very strongly	30%	33%

Also defying conventional wisdom, a high level of Muslim religiosity did not translate into a desire to isolate. London Muslims were less likely than the general public to say they would prefer to live in a neighborhood made up mostly of people who share their religious or ethnic background (25% vs. 35%). And London Muslims were slightly less likely to say they would not want a Christian as a neighbor (8%) than the general public is to say the same about a Muslim neighbor (15%).

*If you could live in any neighborhood in this country, which comes closest to describing the one you would prefer?*

	Public	London Muslims
Mixed	58%	63%
Mostly share your background	35%	25%
Mostly do not share your background	3%	8%

London Muslims were also more likely to express positive opinions of Catholics and fundamentalist Christians (roughly 10 times as likely to hold positive vs. negative views). On the other hand, the public was essentially as likely to express positive opinions as negative opinions of Sunni Muslims.



	Positive	Negative
London Muslims: Fundamentalist Christian	44%	3%
London Muslims: Sunni Muslim	62%	1%
Public: Fundamentalist Christian	60%	7%
Public: Sunni Muslim	26%	19%
Muslim: Catholic	40%	4%

But how can one reconcile these results with other polls, such as the Pew study, that find that the majority of British Muslims choose their Muslim identity over their British identity? Is this not proof that British Muslims reject the West?

The answer to this question is at the heart of how religion and citizenship should be understood: Are they competing or complementary concepts?

In cases like these, it is important to put the data in context and ask how the respondent likely understood the question. The Pew study also found the majority of Muslims in Pakistan, Jordan, Egypt, and even Turkey consider themselves Muslims first rather than citizens of their country.

Significantly, the same poll found that Christian Americans—seldom accused of lacking national pride—were almost evenly split between those who said they were first Christian and those who said they were first citizens of the United States.

Clearly, expressing a religious primary identity does not necessarily mean rejecting one's country. The commonality among these communities is not a lack of patriotism, but a majority who considers religion important—and therefore at the heart of its identity.

**Radical Rejection**

But should this strong Muslim religiosity scare the West? Is this a sign of radicalization?

According to the data, the answer is no. In the United Kingdom, London Muslims were as likely as the general public to condemn terrorist attacks on civilians and were slightly more likely than the general public (81% vs. 72%) to find no moral justification for using violence for a “noble cause.”

*There are many acts some people may do in life. I will read out to you number of these acts I would like you to indicate to which extent it can be morally justified...*

	Violence for a Noble Cause Not Justified	Attacks That Target Civilians Not Justified
London Muslims	81%	88%
Public	72%	92%

While some sympathy for terrorist acts does exist in the Muslim world, after analyzing survey data representing more than 90% of the global Muslim population, Gallup found that despite widespread religiosity, and widespread anti-American sentiment, only a small minority sympathized with the attacks of 9/11.

Even more significant, there was no correlation between level of religiosity and extremism. Gallup went even further and actually asked both those who condoned and condemned extremist acts “Why do you say that?” The responses may be surprising. For example, in Indonesia, the largest Muslim majority country in the world, many of those who condemned terrorism cited humanitarian or religious justifications to support their response. For example, one woman in an Indonesian city said, “It was similar with a murder, an act forbidden in our religion.” Another said, “Killing one’s life is as sinful as killing the whole world,” paraphrasing verse 5:32 in the Quran.

On the other hand, not a single respondent in Indonesia who condoned the attacks of 9/11 cited the Quran for justification. Instead, this group’s responses were markedly secular and worldly. For example, one Indonesian respondent said, “The U.S. government is too controlling toward other countries, seems like colonizing.” Another said, “The U.S. has helped the Zionist country, Israel, to attack Palestine.”



While Muslims are critical of the West's perceived moral decay and breakdown of traditional values, this is neither the primary driver of extremist views nor the demanded change Muslims cite for better relations with the West. When asked what the West can do to improve relations with the Muslim world, the most frequent response was neither for Western societies to be less democratic nor less liberal, but instead for them to "stop thinking of Muslims as inferior and to respect Islam." This was followed in frequency with calls for changes in economic and political policies toward Muslim nations.

The real difference between those who condone terrorist acts and all others who condemn them is about politics, not religion or culture.

This theme pervades the Islamic world's views of the West: Muslims' negative views fall along political, not cultural or religious lines. While many in the Muslim world tend to have unfavorable rather than favorable opinions the United States and Great Britain, they tend to have neutral to favorable opinions of France, Germany, and especially Canada.

Despite intense political anger at some Western powers, Muslims do not reject Western values wholesale. Citizens of countries from Saudi Arabia to Morocco, from Indonesia to Pakistan, express admiration for Western technology and democratic values such as freedom of the press and government accountability.

#### **Voting, Veils, Values: What Does Integration Mean?**

The debate surrounding Islam's compatibility with democratic values often extends to the discourse on Muslim integration into Western societies. Do Muslims trust democracy? Which aspects of Western society are compatible with Muslim values and which are not? How do Muslims and the public define what it takes to integrate, and what is the best way forward toward greater community cohesion?

London Muslims were often more likely than the general public to express confidence in UK institutions, such as the national government (64% vs. 36%), the judicial system (67% vs. 55%), honesty of elections (73% vs. 60%), and even their local police (78% vs. 69%).

*In your country, do you have confidence in each of the following or not?*

	London Muslims	Public
Local Police*	78%	69%
Honesty of Elections	73%	60%
Judicial System	67%	55%
National Government	64%	36%

\*In your community, do you have confidence in each of the following or not?

The general public and London Muslims share a great deal of common ground in how they define what it takes for minorities to integrate. Majorities of both groups agree mastering the national language, getting a better education, finding a job, participating in politics, volunteering to serve the public, and celebrating national holidays are necessary for integration. In some cases, as with the celebration of national holidays and volunteering, slightly more Muslims than the general public say this is necessary to be part of British society.

A majority of both groups also agree that toning down one's religiosity and removing the headscarf are not necessary to integrate.

The issue on which London Muslims and the public disagreed most is the face veil. Only 13% of Muslims versus a little more than half (55%) of the general public said removing the face veil is necessary for integration. This issue not only marks the biggest difference between London Muslims and the general public, but the least amount of agreement within the public itself among the issues we tested.

*The issue on which  
London Muslims and  
the public disagreed most  
is the face veil.*



*Many people are discussing the issue of 'integration' of ethnic and religious minorities into society in this country. What does 'integration' mean to you? To answer this, I will ask you a series of actions and you tell me if you think it is necessary or not necessary for minorities to do these things in order to integrate into society in this country.*

	London Muslims	Public
Mastering language	79%	89%
Get better education	82%	84%
Finding a job	75%	78%
Participating in politics	66%	67%
Celebrating national holidays	74%	65%
Volunteering to serve public	70%	63%
Removing face veil	13%	55%
Removing headscarf	6%	21%
Toning down level of religious observance	18%	22%

Perceived social morals is another area of striking difference between London Muslims and the British public. While all agree that honor killings and crimes of passion are morally wrong, there is striking difference in the perceived morality of sex outside of marriage, homosexual acts, abortion, suicide, viewing pornography, and having an affair. There was more agreement about the morality of the death penalty (31% vs. 43%), with fewer London Muslims agreeing it is morally acceptable.

*Media content analysis partially explains the public's relatively common unfavorable views of Muslims.*

*Next, I'm going to read you a list, for each item on the list, please tell me whether you personally believe that it is morally acceptable or morally wrong.*

	London Muslims	Public
Sex outside of marriage	11%	82%
Homosexual acts	4%	66%
Abortion	10%	58%
Death penalty	31%	43%
Suicide	4%	38%
Viewing porn	4%	29%
Having an affair	5%	18%
Crimes of passion	3%	2%
Honor killing	3%	1%

London Muslims consider Muslims loyal to the United Kingdom (74%) and respectful of other religions (82%). However, significantly lower percentages of the general public agree. Only 45% of the general public said Muslims living in the United Kingdom are loyal to the nation, and 55% said Muslims are respectful of other religions.

London Muslims are 10 times as likely to express positive views of Christians as negative views and a majority expresses strong identification with the country, so their claim to respectfulness and loyalty is not surprising. What is more surprising is the relatively low favorable perception the general public shared of them.

These differences in perception are reflected in who London Muslims and the general public believe should do more to accommodate the other: The majority of the general public (62%) asserts that minorities must be more flexible to blend in with the majority, whereas a majority of London Muslims (54%) believe the majority should do more to accommodate minorities' religious customs.

#### **Opportunity Cost**

Media content analysis partially explains the public's relatively common unfavorable views of Muslims. According to Media Tenor data from December 2006 to January 2007, Islam is covered in UK TV news more than any other





religion, but it is also almost 10 times more often negative than positive coverage.

While Muslims make up roughly 3% of the total population, according to the Crown Prosecution Service's (CPS) Racist Incident Monitoring Annual Report

- In 2003 to 2004 (covering the period 1 April 2003-31 March 2004), the perceived religion of the victim in 22 of the 44 cases of "religiously aggravated crime" reported to the director was Islam.
- In 2004 to 2005, the following year, the CPS reported a higher percentage of Muslim victims of "religiously aggravated" crimes. The perceived or actual religion of the victim in 23 of the 34 cases reported, or 67% of all cases, was Islam.

London Muslims were twice as likely as the general public to say they have experienced racial or religious discrimination in the past year (28% vs. 14%). They were also significantly less likely to say they were treated with respect all day the day before the survey (68% vs. 90%).

*But could anti-Muslim sentiment be hurting society as a whole?*

One possible way to think about this question is in terms of human potential utilization, that is, the degree to which each member of society is fully able and willing to fully use his or her potential to produce and contribute. The theory is that society as a whole benefits the more all its members are fully able to contribute to their potential.

One possible way to quantify this idea is through a theoretical framework that defines human potential utilization based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. For the sake of analysis, we define human potential utilization as consisting of three basic components: Basic Needs, Opportunity, and Mission. The higher each is for a specific population, the theory suggests, the greater the human potential utilization of this group, and thus the more "good" for society as a whole in terms of return on human capital.

**Basic Needs:** These are needs that all people require before their human potential can be fully realized: Health and safety. We measure these using two questions:

- Health: *Do you have any health problems that prevent you from doing any of the things people your age normally can do?*
- Safety: *Do you feel safe walking alone at night in your community?*

**Opportunity:** This measures the environmental conduciveness to fully developing one's potential: Respect, having an opportunity to do what one excels at, and being encouraged to develop. We measure these using these questions:

- Development: *Is there someone at work who encourages your development, or not?\**
- Do Best: *In your work, do you have an opportunity to do what you do best every day?\**
- Respect: *Were you treated with respect all day yesterday?*

**Mission:** This measures one's internal drive to fully use his or her potential: Learning, pride in accomplishments, and sense of purpose. We measure these using these questions:

- Purpose: *Do you feel your life has an important purpose?*
- Pride: *Were you proud of something you did yesterday?*
- Learning: *Did you learn or do something interesting yesterday?*





	London Muslims	Public
Feel safe	68%	62%
No health problems	87%	78%
Treated with respect	68%	90%
Opportunity to do best*	69%	78%
Encourage development*	56%	64%
Learn	55%	49%
Pride	60%	58%
Life has purpose	96%	79%

\*Question only asked of employed respondents

London Muslims and the general public are similar in their perceived level of health and safety, with London Muslims slightly more likely to believe they have no health problems.

London Muslims are even slightly higher than the general public in mission, with 96% of London Muslims vs. 79% of the general public affirming purpose in their life, and roughly equal expressions of learning and pride. In other words, London Muslims have the ability as well as the drive to contribute.

However, London Muslims tend to lag the general public in opportunity, with 68% vs. 90% reporting being treated with respect, 69% vs. 78% saying they have the opportunity to do what they do best, and 56% vs. 64% saying someone encourages their development.

The relative lag in opportunity coupled with the high sense of ability and purpose could translate into frustration and social unrest. It also suggests a waste of potential.

A similar concept of human potential utilization is that of "brain waste" defined by the World Bank as the situation "where the skilled and the educated leave their home country, but then make little use of their skills and education in the host country." This type of waste can cost developed economies billions.

For example, in 2002, a University of Toronto study found skilled immigrants driving cabs or flipping burgers are costing the Canadian economy up to \$15 billion<sup>1</sup>.

London Muslims' relative lag in human potential utilization likely results from complex set of factors, including, but not exclusive to, discrimination.

However, a greater focus on those factors that the general public and Muslims agree are necessary for integration, including better education, jobs, and greater societal and political involvement, is likely to reap benefits not only for the Muslim community, but for society as a whole.

#### **Citizen Involvement: Toward a Strategy for Greater Cohesion**

Both the general public and the London Muslim community are likely to benefit through greater community cohesion, yet they are at an impasse as to who must give up more for the other.

Despite a great deal of agreement as to what integration requires, polarizing issues such as the face veil seem to reduce this common ground's possible traction.

A similar impasse exists in America's diverse workplace, where race relations often create both opportunity and complexity for companies and are often treated as a trade-off between accommodation and compromise.

However, there is evidence to suggest that diversity can be a measurable asset for organizations, but not by focusing on diversity itself, or "accommodating" minorities and/or greater flexibility of minorities, with all its trade-offs between racial groups. The focus instead should be engaging employees in general, that is, increasing all employees' sense of ownership and passion for their work<sup>2</sup>.

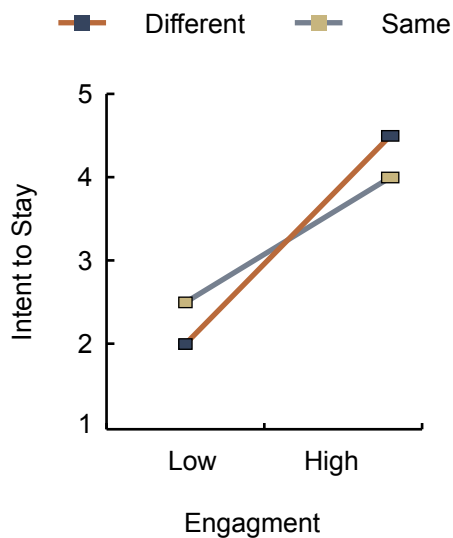
<sup>1</sup> Immigrant 'brain waste' weakening economy, says professor Canadian employers need to understand challenges of new global workforce March 18, 2002 <http://www.news.utoronto.ca/bin2/020318a.asp>

<sup>2</sup> For more information on employee engagement, please see "First, Break All the Rules" by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman.





For example, one study<sup>3</sup> found that while people in different race manager-employee dyads were more likely to want to leave the company than those in same-race dyads at lower engagement levels, the exact opposite was true at higher levels of engagement. People in different race manager-employee dyads were actually more likely to want to stay in the company than those in same-race dyads when employees were highly engaged.



Could lessons from the corporate world be reapplied to communities?

Preliminary results suggest the answer is yes. Though this topic will require a great deal more research, our study found that greater citizen “involvement” does correlate with respondents placing a greater value on diversity, and potentially relates to expressing a greater propensity toward community cohesion.

This analysis defined citizen involvement as affirming at least three of the following four questions:

*Have you done any of the following in the past month?*

- A. Donated money to an organization
- B. Volunteered your time to an organization
- C. Helped a stranger or someone you didn't know who needed help
- D. Voiced your opinion to a public official

By this definition, 22% of the public and 27% of London Muslims are “involved.”

Involved citizens are more likely than non-involved citizens to see ethnic minorities as a source of enrichment to the cultural life of the United Kingdom (Public; 75% vs. 67%-London Muslim; 81% vs. 71%). They are also directionally, though not significantly, more likely to favor mixed neighborhoods (Public; 62% vs. 56% London Muslim; 67% vs. 61%).

**People from minority groups enrich the cultural life in the UK**

Muslim not involved	71%
Muslim involved	81%
Public not involved	67%
Public involved	75%

Though more research is required to further explore this issue, these results begin to chart a path for the future of Britain's diverse society. Our analysis suggests that policy-makers must look past zero-sum frameworks and constructed compromises between minority and majority groups, and instead approach the issue of community cohesion as a process requiring additive effort by all, not trade-offs.

*Involved citizens are more likely than non-involved citizens to see ethnic minorities as a source of enrichment to the cultural life of the United Kingdom*

<sup>3</sup> “Race Effects on the Employee Engagement-Turnover Intention Relationship” James R. Jones- University of Nebraska at Omaha and James K. Harter- The Gallup Organization. Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies, 2005, Vol. 11, No. 2



## Methodology

All surveys were designed and funded entirely by The Gallup Organization

### London Muslims

- Field period for this data: 29 November 2006 to 18 January 2007
- Probability sample in neighborhoods where Muslim penetration was 5% or more
- All interviews conducted in home, face-to-face
- Target: total 15+ adult population
- 500 interviews in London
- Associated sampling error +/- 5 percentage points

### UK General Public

- Field period for this data: 18 December 2006 to 9 January 2007
- Random Digit Dialing
- Phone interviews
- Target: Total 15+ adult population
- 1,200 interviews nation wide
- Associated error +/- 3 percentage points