

Muslims say respect is key to better relations

by [Adelle M. Banks](#) in the [December 28, 2010](#) issue

About half of Muslims surveyed worldwide believe that the West does not respect them, according to a new Gallup report, and many say not desecrating the Qur'an and portraying more "accurate" Muslim movie characters could improve a strained relationship.

The findings are part of a report, "Measuring the State of Muslim-West Relations," released December 1 at Gallup's Washington headquarters. The study drew on interviews with more than 100,000 in more than 55 countries between March 2008 and May 2010.

"We also found that this concept of respect . . . now includes perceptions of fairness in policies, not just culturally sensitive language," said Dalia Mogahed, executive director of the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies. Fifty-four percent of Muslims said being treated fairly in policies that directly affect them would be a very meaningful demonstration of respect.

Mogahed said the "policies" were not defined in the new report, but past Gallup studies have found that respondents were particularly concerned about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Nearly three-quarters of Muslims polled said increased respect for the Qur'an and other religious symbols would be helpful. About half want to see Muslims portrayed more accurately by Hollywood.

Researchers found people across the globe—from the United States to sub-Saharan

Africa—believe that the tensions between Muslim countries and the West are mostly avoidable.

In most of the countries surveyed, people said greater interaction between Muslims and the West is a benefit rather than a threat. In the U.S., 76 percent of individuals saw such interaction as beneficial, compared to 63 percent of Iranians.

Gallup

researchers classified individuals as being "ready" or "not ready" for Muslim-Western engagement on the basis of their attitudes about commitment to such relations, as well as perceptions of respect and of future conflict.

Researchers said religion plays a key role in readiness. "For 'Not Ready' individuals, irrespective of whether they live in majority-Muslim or Western societies, religion is the factor most likely to be cited as being at the root of Muslim-Western tensions," the report stated in its executive summary.

The report

detected a religious paradox between the two sides: people in majority-Muslim societies who were considered "ready" and those in the West who were "not ready" were both more likely to have attended religious services in the past week. —RNS