

Poll says most Muslims assimilated, moderate: Socially conservative, politically liberal

News in the [June 12, 2007](#) issue

Most Muslim Americans are largely assimilated in the culture, happy with their lives and embracing the American dream, according to a comprehensive study released by the Pew Research Center, which the center called the first of its kind.

Conducted between January and April, the Pew study used a nationwide sample of 1,050 Muslim American adults, two-thirds of whom were born outside the U.S. Announced May 22, the findings revealed a Muslim-American population that is religious, diverse, socially conservative and politically liberal.

Nearly eight in 10 U.S. Muslims say they are either “very happy” (24 percent) or “pretty happy” (54 percent) with their lives, according to the survey.

Among the most important findings:

- American Muslims are more moderate than Muslim minorities in Western Europe.
- They have annual incomes and education levels that are comparable with the general public.
- They believe that Muslims coming to the U.S. should try to adopt American customs rather than separating from the larger society.
- Like many other immigrant groups, they say hard work can lead to success in society.

On the basis of Pew surveys and Census Bureau data on nationalities, the U.S. Muslim population is estimated at 2.35 million, including children. Muslim organizations have claimed much higher numbers in the past, but the estimate of 2.35 million is believed compatible with previous Gallup poll analyses and the

National Opinion Research Center's General Social Survey results on Muslim numbers in the U.S.

Support for religious extremism was lower among U.S. Muslims than among those abroad, said Amaney Jamal, who teaches politics at Princeton University. Only 1 percent of Muslim Americans say suicide bombings against civilian targets are "often" justified to defend Islam, and only 5 percent expressed "even somewhat favorable" opinions of al-Qaeda.

"This is a group living as most Americans live . . . a group aspiring to assimilate," said Andy Kohut, president of the Pew Research Center. Still, Kohut said, there are "pockets of sympathy for extremism," especially among young Muslim Americans under age 30 and among African-American Muslims.

Only 40 percent of American Muslims said they believe that Arabs carried out the attacks of September 11, 2001, which is similar to numbers worldwide. Muslim Americans overwhelmingly oppose the war in Iraq.

Nevertheless, Farid Senzai, director of research for the nonprofit Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, said Muslim Americans have become part of the nation's fabric. In Europe, he said, many Muslim populations are "ghettoized"—separated culturally and economically from the majority populations—which creates gaps in education and income and can lead to unrest.

Kohut credits the United States with doing a better job of assimilating immigrants and said the religiosity of the U.S., a nation with a Christian majority, appeals to Muslims. "It's a more inviting atmosphere than secular Europe," said Kohut.