

Muslims and non-Muslims in Canada and the United States: Nine Years after 9-11

A Survey by the Canadian Race Relations Foundation and the Association for Canadian Studies

September 10, 2010

Tomorrow is the ninth anniversary of the September 11th attacks on the world trade centre. Apart from the persistent security concerns that emerged in the aftermath of the attacks, one of the major preoccupations was the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims within countries like the United States and Canada and the relationships between the West and countries with large Muslim populations. In the United States this year's 9-11 commemorations will likely be overshadowed by controversies over the construction of an Islamic Centre near the site of ground zero and the threat by a marginal Florida pastor to publicly burn the Koran which has unfortunately captured international media interest. Although the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims is the object of ongoing attention, these recent controversies have perhaps made the relationship appear even more problematic.

While Canada has not known such high profile controversies, the recent arrests of a number of Muslims accused of planning attacks on Canadian institutions has also contributed to moving the relationship to the centre of media attention.

To look at how wide the gap is perceived to be in the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims, the International Association for the Study of Canada (a division of the Association for Canadian Studies) and the Canadian Race Relations Foundation commissioned the firms Leger Marketing in Canada and Caravan in the United States to ask several questions around immigration, integration and diversity which included the following: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree that "Muslims share our values". In Canada the question gains relevance as Governments have made the theme of shared values an important part of the message around diversity. The surveys were conducted via the web during the week of September 6th, 2010 with 1700 respondents in Canada and 1000 in the United States. The margin of error for an equivalent sample in a phone survey would respectively be 2.3 points and 3.5 points 19 times out of 20.

As observed below there are strong similarities in Canada and the United States in responses to the question of whether Muslims share our values. In each country some three in ten respondents agree. Disagreement is slightly greater in Canada with approximately 55% that don't think "Muslims share our values" compared to 50.3% in the United States. More Americans than Canadians say that they do not know or prefer not to respond.

Muslims share our values	Canada	United States
Strongly agree	7,9%	7,6%
Somewhat agree	24,4%	22,2%
Somewhat disagree	24,6%	19,5%
Strongly disagree	30,9%	31,8%
I don't know/ I prefer not to answer	12,2%	18,9%

As observed below on the basis of age cohort in both countries younger respondents are less likely to agree with the statement than older ones and in the United States majority affirmation emerges in the 45-54 cohort versus its appearance in the 35-44 cohort in Canada.

Muslims share our values (Combined Strongly agree and somewhat agree)	18-24 years of age	25-34 years of age	35-44 years of age	45-54 years of age	55-64 years of age	65 and over
Canada	43.5%	44.6%	54.0%	57.4%	59.9%	70%
United States	45.7%	41.8%	47.8%	52.7%	56.3%	66.1%

Immigrant Status

On the basis of immigrant status only amongst the foreign-born in the United States do we not find the majority that does not think Muslims share our values. It should be noted that the US foreign-born include a higher share of non-respondents.

Muslims share our values	Born in Canada	Born outside Canada	Born in the USA	Born Outside the USA
Strongly agree	7,4%	10,6%	7,7%	6,8%
Somewhat agree	24,8%	22,9%	22,3%	20,5%
Somewhat disagree	24,7%	25,2%	19,4%	20,5%
Strongly disagree	32,0%	27,2%	32,4%	23,3%
I don't know/I prefer not to answer	11,0%	14,0%	18,1%	28,8%

Language and Race

In Canada it is by far the francophones that disagree “Muslims share our values” with nearly three-quarters expressing this view. It is English Canadian respondents (those whose main language is English) that are most likely to agree that “Muslims share our values” at 38%.

Muslims share our values	French	English	Other
Strongly agree	1,9%	9,5%	10,1%
Somewhat agree	15,5%	28,4%	22,1%
Somewhat disagree	29,0%	22,1%	27,0%
Strongly disagree	45,0%	27,6%	25,3%
I don't know/I prefer not to answer	8,6%	12,5%	15,5%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

In the United States, there is a gap between white and black/African American respondents with the former more likely to disagree that Muslims share our values and the latter one of the few groups surveyed where more agree than disagree.

Muslims share our values	White	Black or African-American
Strongly agree	7,4%	10,3%
Somewhat agree	20,6%	34,6%
Somewhat disagree	19,3%	16,7%
Strongly disagree	35,3%	12,8%
I don't know/I prefer not to answer	17,4%	25,6%
Total	100,0%	100,0%

Regional Differences

Quebecers are most likely to disagree that “Muslims share our values” and British Columbians least likely to feel that way (though again that province has a higher rate of non-respondents).

Muslims share our values	QC	ON	AB	BC
Strongly agree	3,0%	8,2%	7,4%	9,2%
Somewhat agree	16,0%	26,7%	25,0%	31,6%
Somewhat disagree	28,1%	26,1%	22,7%	18,4%
Strongly disagree	44,3%	28,4%	35,2%	17,1%
I don't know/I prefer not to answer	8,6%	10,5%	9,7%	23,7%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

On a regional basis in the United States, the gaps are not substantial with perhaps the exception of the Midwest where a higher share of persons did not respond.

Muslims share our values USA	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
Strongly agree	11,2%	7,2%	5,2%	8,1%
Somewhat agree	22,0%	24,4%	19,7%	23,6%
Somewhat disagree	18,2%	15,6%	22,2%	20,8%
Strongly disagree	32,2%	29,6%	33,2%	31,7%
I don't know/I prefer not to answer	16,4%	23,2%	19,7%	15,8%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Nearly 55% of Americans agree that prejudice towards Muslims is a societal problem

While most Americans disagree that Muslims share their values, the majority also (54.3%) believe that “prejudice towards Muslims is a serious societal problem”

	Prejudice towards Muslims is a serious problem in our society	Total
Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements?	Strongly agree	21,3%
	Somewhat agree	33,0%
	Somewhat disagree	19,8%
	Strongly disagree	14,8%
	Don't know/Prefer not to answer	11,2%