

# Attitudes towards Jews and Muslims: Comparing Canada with the United States and Europe

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A spring 2008 survey (March-April) by the Pew Research Center's Pew Global Attitudes Project finds 46% of the Spanish rating Jews unfavorably. More than a third of Russians (34%) and Poles (36%) echo this view. Somewhat fewer, but still significant numbers of the Germans (25%) and French (20%) interviewed also express negative opinions of Jews. Great Britain stands out as the only European country included in the survey where there has not been a substantial increase in anti-Semitic attitudes. Just 9% of the British rate Jews unfavorably, which is largely unchanged from recent years. And relatively small percentages in both Australia (11%) and the United States (7%) continue to view Jews unfavorably. Similar questions put to Canadians by the firm Leger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies between June 12<sup>th</sup> and June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008. The national survey of 1 500 Canadians reveals that the population is somewhat closer to the US, Britain, Australia and France when it comes to the extent to which it expresses favorable opinions of Jews. But Canadians differ in two areas when it comes to opinion about Jews. On the one hand they have a higher percentage of those saying they have a very favorable opinion of Jews (26%) than any other country surveyed with the exception of the United States (41%). They also have a slightly higher percentage saying that they are unfavorable (13%) than do the US, Britain and Australia but lower than France-a country where nearly everyone seems to express an opinion.

Table 1

**Would you say that you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the following groups ?**

Leger Marketing for Canada (June 12-18<sup>th</sup>, 2008) and for the United States and European countries Pew Research End of March through mid-April 2008

Opinion of Jews	TOTAL FAVORABLE	Very Favorable	Somewhat Favorable	TOTAL UNFAVORABLE	Somewhat Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable	DNK/Refusal
<b>Canada</b>	73	26	47	13	9	4	14
<b>(English Canada)</b>	77	32	45	7	6	1	16
<b>(French Canada)</b>	62	14	48	27	20	7	12
<b>US</b>	76	41	36	7	5	2	17
<b>Britain</b>	73	16	57	9	6	3	19
<b>Australia</b>	73	16	57	11	8	3	16
<b>France</b>	79	14	65	20	14	6	1
<b>Germany</b>	64	8	56	25	21	4	11
<b>Spain</b>	37	2	35	46	28	18	18
<b>Poland</b>	50	4	46	36	25	11	14
<b>Russia</b>	47	11	36	34	22	12	20

Pew observes that opinions about Muslims in almost all of these countries are considerably more negative than are views of Jews. Fully half of Spanish (52%) and German respondents (50%) rate Muslims unfavorably. Opinions about Muslims are somewhat less negative in Poland (46%) and considerably less negative in France (38%). About one-in-four in Britain and the United States (23% each) also voice unfavorable views of Muslims. When it comes to opinion about Muslims Canadians find themselves in between the Brits and Americans and the Germans, Poles and Spanish. In effect we are somewhat closer to the views expressed by the French population when it comes to Muslims.

Table 2

**Would you say that you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the following groups ?**

Leger Marketing for Canada (June 12-18<sup>th</sup>, 2008) and for the United States and European countries Pew Research End of March through mid-April 2008

Opinion of Muslims	TOTAL FAVOR-ABLE	Very Favor-able	Some-what Favor-able	TOTAL UNFAVOR-ABLE	Some-what Unfavor-able	Very Unfavor-able	DNK/Refusal
<b>Canada</b>	50	14	36	36	25	11	14
<b>(English Canada)</b>	50	16	34	33	25	8	17
<b>(French Canada)</b>	43	11	32	49	31	18	8
<b>US</b>	56	20	36	23	13	10	21
<b>Britain</b>	63	12	51	23	15	8	16
<b>Australia</b>	60	7	53	29	21	8	12
<b>France</b>	62	8	54	38	26	12	1
<b>Germany</b>	40	4	36	48	38	10	12
<b>Spain</b>	33	1	32	52	31	21	16
<b>Poland</b>	35	3	32	46	34	12	19
<b>Russia</b>	56	15	41	32	21	11	12

Similar to the Pew Research, the Leger Marketing survey conducted for the Association for Canadian Studies in June 2008 also reveals that "...overall there is a clear relationship between anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim attitudes: publics that view Jews unfavorably also tend to see Muslims in a negative light." In the ACS-Leger Marketing survey some 72% of Canadian respondents expressing a favorable opinion of Jews also have a favorable opinion of Muslims. Seventy percent of those who have an unfavorable opinion of Jews held an unfavourable opinion of Muslims. Conversely all respondents with a very favorable opinion of Muslims have a very favorable opinion of Jews.

As regards attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in Europe, Pew analysts observe that the percentages are all higher than obtained in comparable Pew surveys taken in recent years. In a number of countries, the increase has been especially notable between 2006 and 2008.

Pew concludes that “Ethnocentric attitudes are on the rise in Europe. Growing numbers of people in several major European countries say they have an unfavorable opinion of Jews, and opinions of Muslims, which were already substantially more negative, have also grown increasingly so compared with several years ago.” Is Europe losing the campaign against hate? In reacting to the Pew Results, *Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe observed that:*“Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in Europe have increased, are increasing and ought to be diminished (Strasbourg, 18.09.2008), That is the conclusion which I draw from the survey published yesterday by the Pew Research Center. Data from some European countries is particularly worrying, with almost half the population having negative opinions about Muslims and Jews.

He suggests that two aspects of the findings are particularly important. “First, the increase in intolerance is felt across Europe. When it comes to hatred of people who are different, there is no East-West divide. The second conclusion is that “...the same people hate both Jews and Muslims. Some well-meaning people are obsessed with conflicts between religions. However the real conflict is between bigots and the rest of us.”

Canada has also witnessed a change in opinion of Jews and Muslims. The change however is reflected more by a reduction of those saying that they are very favorable when asked to express the extent they have a favorable opinion of the two groups (on the basis of submitting the same question asked by Pew Research) The survey reveals some slippage across the country in support for various dimensions of diversity. As to favorable opinions of Jews and Muslims respectively the numbers have dropped. The decline however is more a function of the increase in those refusing to express an opinion on the matter.

Table 3  
Opinion of Muslims in Canada Leger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies, August 2007 and June 2008

Opinion of Muslims	All Canadians		French		English		Other	
	June 2008	August 2007	June 2008	August 2007	June 2008	August 2007	June 2008	August 2007
<b>TOTAL FAVORABLE</b>	50%	61%	43%	53%	50%	65%	57%	60%
<b>Very Favorable</b>	14%	18%	11%	9%	16%	20%	10%	24%
<b>Somewhat Favorable</b>	36%	43%	32%	44%	34%	45%	48%	36%
<b>TOTAL UNFAVORABLE</b>	36%	27%	49%	42%	33%	22%	31%	23%
<b>somewhat Unfavorable</b>	25%	18%	31%	26%	25%	16%	20%	15%
<b>Very Unfavorable</b>	11%	9%	18%	15%	8%	6%	11%	8%
<b>DNK/Refusal</b>	14%	12%	8%	5%	17%	13%	12%	17%

Table 4

Opinion of Jews in Canada Leger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies, August 2007 and June 2008

	Opinion of Jews							
	All Canadians		French		English		Other	
	June 2008	August 2007	June 2008	August 2007	June 2008	August 2007	June 2008	August 2007
<b>TOTAL FAVORABLE</b>	73%	78%	62%	72%	77%	84%	71%	67%
<b>Very Favorable</b>	26%	30%	14%	11%	32%	39%	20%	24%
<b>Somewhat Favorable</b>	47%	48%	48%	60%	45%	45%	51%	43%
<b>TOTAL UNFAVORABLE</b>	13%	12%	26%	23%	7%	7%	16%	16%
<b>somewhat Unfavorable</b>	9%	8%	20%	15%	6%	4%	6%	12%
<b>Very Unfavorable</b>	4%	4%	7%	8%	1%	2%	10%	4%
<b>DNK/Refusal</b>	14%	10%	12%	5%	16%	9%	13%	17%

#### Concluding Observation

It is worth noting that over the period 2007 and 2008 public discussion about Religious minorities was the object of much attention with the Bouchard Taylor Commission in Quebec. Although it is difficult to establish a causal-link between the public hearings and shifts in public opinion on such matters it can be argued that any changes were a function of the shape and substance of the debate over that period. Since public discussion of diversity issues was not confined to Quebec it is interesting to contrast shifts in opinion in the rest of the country over that same period. In 2007 ACS commissioned Leger Marketing to conduct to national surveys on issues of accommodation of cultural difference (in August and October) and conducted another such national survey (June 12-18<sup>th</sup>, 2008) on similar issues.

