

## TREATMENT OF MUSLIMS IN CANADA

### Treatment of Muslims in Canada relative to other countries

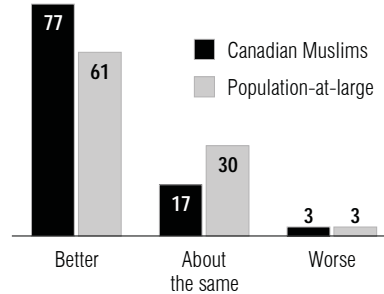
**Most Canadians feel Muslims are treated better in Canada than in other Western countries. An even higher proportion of Muslim-Canadians say the same.**

Some commentators on Canadian multiculturalism argue that, while Canada is not alone in its multicultural policies, it is unique in the extent to which multiculturalism has become part of the national identity. Many Canadians take pride in the idea that Canada offers newcomers – and minority groups in general – an especially open, fair and welcoming atmosphere. Others argue that discrimination is more widespread than most Canadians care to realize – and that rhetoric about diversity and multiculturalism rings hollow when viewed against above-average poverty rates among immigrants and even visible minorities born in Canada.

In the case of Muslims, most Canadians (61%) believe that Canada offers better treatment than other Western countries. Although Canadian Muslims express concern about discrimination and underemployment, a large majority (77%) agree that Muslims are better treated in Canada than they are in other Western countries.

Very small proportions in both groups (3% each) believe Muslims are worse off in Canada than in the United States or Western Europe. Those who do not see Muslims as better off in Canada tend, rather, to believe that Muslims experience the same treatment in Canada as in other Western countries; three in ten Canadians overall (30%) and 17 percent of Canadian Muslims say this.

Treatment of Muslims in Canada vs. in other western countries  
December 2006



Q.M10/FC33

Do you think that the way that Muslims are treated in Canada is better, worse or about the same as they are treated in other western countries?

In the population-at-large, men (65%) are more likely than women (56%) to say that Muslims are treated better in Canada, while women are more likely to say that Muslims fare about the same in Canada as elsewhere.

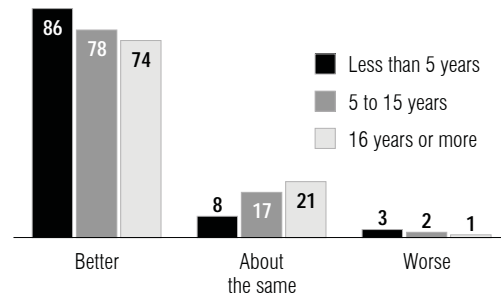
Quebecers are more likely than average to believe that Muslims are better treated in Canada; seven in ten Quebecers (69%) as compared to six in ten (58%) in the rest of Canada say that Muslims are better off in Canada than in other Western countries. Canadians in the Prairie provinces (53%) and in the Atlantic provinces (55%) are the least likely to say that Muslims are treated better in Canada than elsewhere in the West, and most likely to say that they do not know (9% each). The Prairies and Atlantic Canada have the lowest concentrations of Muslims in the country.

A surprising finding among Muslim-Canadians is that experience with discrimination does not appear to influence how Muslims feel they are treated in Canada relative to other countries. Among those who report no experiences of discrimination in the last two years, eight in ten (78%) believe Muslims are better off in Canada than elsewhere. Among those who have experienced discrimination in the last two years, however, three-quarters (74%) still believe they are better off in Canada than elsewhere in the West.

Foreign-born Muslims who have lived in Canada longer are more likely to say that treatment of Muslims in Canada is probably on par with other Western countries; those who have immigrated more recently are more likely to believe that they fare better in Canada than they would elsewhere.

### Treatment of Muslims in Canada vs. in other western countries

Canadian Muslims By years in Canada  
December 2006



Q.M10  
Do you think that the way that Muslims are treated in Canada is better, worse or about the same as they are treated in other western countries?

## Quality of life for Muslim women

**Most Canadian Muslims feel that quality of life for Muslim women is better in Canada than it is in most Muslim countries.**

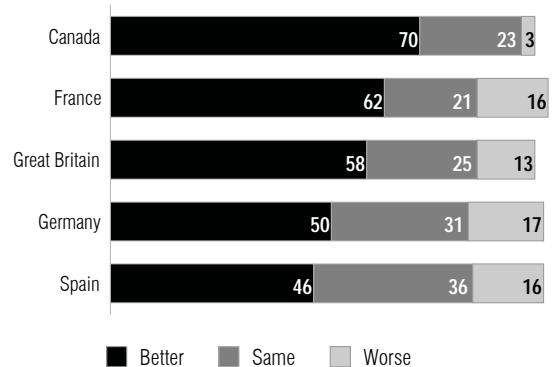
Seven in ten Canadian Muslims (70%) feel that quality of life for Muslim women is better in Canada than in most Muslim countries. A quarter of Canadian Muslims (23%) feel that Muslim women enjoy roughly the same quality of life in Canada as in the Muslim world. Only a very small proportion (3%) feel that Muslim women are worse off in Canada than they would be in a Muslim country.

Notably, there is no gender difference on this question: among both Muslim men (71%) and Muslim women (70%) in Canada, seven in ten each believe Muslim women are better off in Canada.

Perhaps not surprisingly, among foreign-born Muslims, the sense that Muslim women are better off in Canada increases with time in Canada. Three-quarters (76%) of those who have lived in Canada for 16 years or more believe Muslim women have a higher quality of life in Canada, as compared to 63 percent of those who have lived in Canada for less than five years. It is likely that those who have lived in Canada for a shorter time experience more challenges associated with migration and settlement, and even to feel greater nostalgia for the (possibly Muslim-majority) country from which they have immigrated. Those who have lived in Canada longer likely feel more settled, and are better able to assess the benefits of life in Canada free of the upheaval of migration.

Among Canadian Muslims who state that their primary identity is Canadian, as opposed to Muslim, fully nine in ten (90%) believe that the quality of life

Quality of life for Muslim women in Canada/Europe compared to most Muslim countries  
Muslim residents Canada and Europe 2006



Q.M14/Pew

Overall, do you think that the quality of life for Muslim women in Canada is better, worse, or about the same as the quality of life for women in most Muslim countries?

for Muslim women is better in Canada than in most Muslim countries. The proportion among those who identify themselves as primarily Muslim is smaller, but still a majority: 64 percent.

International comparisons show Canadian Muslims to be markedly more satisfied than European Muslims with the quality of life Muslim women enjoy in Canada. The proportions of Muslims in Great Britain, France, Germany and Spain who believe that Muslim women enjoy a higher quality of life in Europe than in Islamic countries ranges from the mid-40s to the low-60s. In all four countries, more than one Muslim in ten feels that Muslim women are better off in Islamic countries than in European countries.<sup>3</sup>

3 Throughout this section, international data from the Pew Research Center, 2006.

## Hostility toward Muslims among Canadians

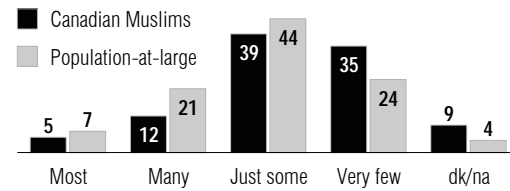
**Most Canadians believe that public hostility toward Muslims is limited to a minority of citizens. Notably, Muslims are even less likely than other Canadians to feel that the public-at-large is hostile toward adherents of their faith.**

As debates about terrorism and religious extremism linked to Islam have proliferated in the last several years, there has been evidence of an anti-Muslim “backlash” in several Western countries, in the form of vandalized mosques and scattered violence. In Canada, such criminal acts have been rare and, unlike in some European countries, no political party in Canada gives official voice to anti-Muslim (or anti-immigrant) sentiment. FOCUS CANADA data show that most Canadians – and an even higher proportion of Canadian Muslims – see hostility toward Muslims as a marginal attitude in Canadian society.

Most Canadians estimate that hostility toward Muslims is limited to “just some” (44%) or “very few” (24%) of their fellow citizens. Still, three in ten Canadians believe that “many” (21%) or even “most” (7%) of their compatriots are hostile toward Muslims. Among Muslim-Canadians, the sense of general societal hostility to members of their faith is more rare: only one about one in six Muslims in Canada believes that “most” (5%) or “many” (12%) Canadians are hostile to adherents of Islam; more than seven in ten Muslims say it is “just some” or “very few.”

The perception of widespread societal hostility to Muslims is less common in Canada than in key European countries – both among Muslims and the population-at-large. Canadians (both Muslim and non-Muslim) are less likely than citizens of Great

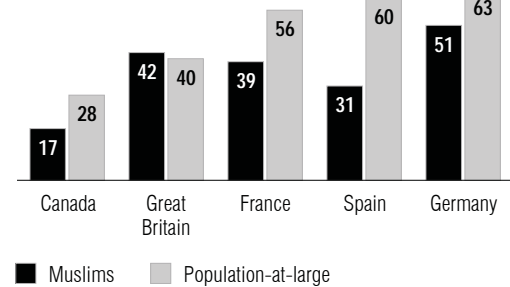
### Estimate of number of Canadians hostile to Muslims 2006



Q.M11/FC34

In your opinion, how many Canadians do you think are hostile toward Muslims? Would you say most, many, just some or very few?

### Think many/most Canadians/Europeans are hostile to Muslims 2006



Q.M11/FC34/Pew

In your opinion, how many Canadians do you think are hostile toward Muslims? Would you say most, many, just some or very few?

Britain, France, Germany or Spain (both Muslim and non-Muslim) to estimate that “many” or “most” of their fellow citizens are hostile to followers of Islam.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Citizens of the four European countries named were asked how many *Europeans* they thought were hostile to Muslims. Canadians were asked how many *Canadians* they thought were hostile to Muslims.

In general, those who believe that hostility to Muslims is widespread are the most likely to express a negative impression of Islam. In other words, those most likely to see hostility to Muslims in the society around them are likely to share that hostility to some degree. Among Canadians who have a generally positive view of Islam, only about one in five (19%) believe that most or many Canadians are hostile to Muslims. Among those who have a negative view of Islam, the proportion who see most or many Canadians as hostile to Muslims is twice as high: 40 percent.

### Muslim experience of discrimination

#### Three in ten Canadian Muslims report an experience of discrimination in the last two years.

In the wake of the September 11 attacks, there were reports of physical and verbal attacks on Muslims (and people of colour wrongly perceived to be Muslim) in both Canada and the United States. Some of these attacks, related to a major news item, were heavily publicized. Other, less sensational instances of discrimination against Muslim-Canadians receive less attention.

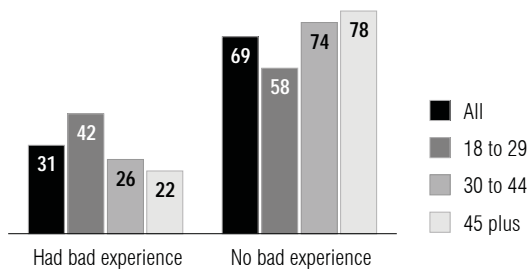
Thirty-one percent of Muslim-Canadians say that in the last two years, they have had a negative experience due to their race, ethnicity or religion. Sixty-nine percent say they have had no such experience.

Women (34%) are marginally more likely than men (28%) to report discrimination, a difference that may in part be explained by some Muslim women wearing head scarves that could attract the attention of those inclined toward discriminatory remarks.

Young Muslims are markedly more likely than older Muslims to say they have had a negative experience related to race, ethnicity or religion in the last two years. Four in ten Canadian Muslims between the ages of 18 and 29 (42%) report experiences of discrimination, the proportion among those aged 45 and older is about half that (22%).

#### Have had recent bad experience due to race/ethnicity/religion in past two years

Canadian Muslims By age December 2006



Q.M12

In the last two years, have you personally had a bad experience due to your race, ethnicity, or religion, or hasn't this happened to you?

Quebec Muslims (36%) are more likely than those living in Ontario (28%) to report discrimination, while those in the West (32%)<sup>5</sup> are about average.

Compared to Muslims in Western European countries, Canadian Muslims are slightly more likely to report experiences of discrimination in the last two years. While French Muslims are more likely (37%) than Canadian Muslims to report discrimination, Muslims in Great Britain (28%) are as likely, and those in Spain (25%) and Germany (19%) are less likely to report experiences of discrimination. Even so, Canadian Muslims are less likely than Muslims in most European countries to believe that most or many of their compatriots are hostile to Muslims. Combined, these findings suggest that, while Cana-

dian Muslims may have negative experiences related to their race, ethnicity or religion, they are more likely to see these as isolated incidents and not as symptoms of widespread social hostility.

Canadians at large are aware that Muslims face discrimination in Canada. As noted in the Contact with and Impressions of Minority Groups section of this report, three-quarters of Canadians (76%) believe that Muslims are discriminated against at least sometimes in this country; Muslims are seen as being the group most frequently discriminated against. Still, most Canadians, including Muslim-Canadians, believe that hostility toward Muslims is limited to a small minority of the general population.

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5 Small sample size (n=85).