



Global Views on Relations Between Islam and the West

NORTH AMERICA BACKGROUNDER

United States: Twice as many Americans believe that Muslim and Western cultures can find common ground than say that violent conflict is inevitable. A large majority (64%) feels the two cultures can find areas of agreement while just 31 percent believe that violence is inevitable. Nearly half (49%) of Americans believe the tensions between Islam and the West result from conflicts about political power and interests, yet a significant number (38%) also say that these tensions arise from “differences in religion and culture.” Asked whether fundamental differences or the intolerance of minorities was the main cause of current tensions between Islam and the West, nearly three-quarters (73%) of Americans blame intolerant minorities, whether on both sides (54%), Muslim (12%) or Western (7%). Only 17 percent say that “fundamental differences” between the two are responsible.

Canada: More than seven in ten Canadians believe common ground can be found between Muslim and Western cultures. Seventy-three percent say that common ground can be found, while just 16 percent believe that violent conflict is inevitable. A significant majority (56%) of Canadians sees “conflicts about political power and interests” as the source of tensions between Islam and the West, while fewer than three in ten (29%) believe they arise from religious and cultural differences. Three in four Canadians (74%) also see intolerant minorities as a primary reason for tensions between Islam and the West compared to just 19 percent who blame cultural differences. Fifty-five percent of Canadians fault intolerant minorities on both sides, far more than those who specifically cite a Muslim (12%) or Western (7%) minority.

For more information on this poll, please see the Questionnaire/Methodology:
http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/jan07/BBC_USRole_Jan07_quaire.pdf