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New Findings: American Public's Perception of Islam, U.S. Policy on Syria Refugees, and Troops to Fight ISIS

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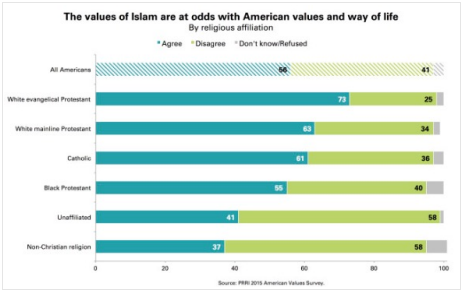
New Findings: American Public's Perception of Islam, U.S. Policy on Syria Refugees, and Troops to Fight ISIS

[0] November 30, 2015

compiled by JULIE POUCHER HARBIN, EDITOR, ISLAMiCommentary on NOVEMBER 30, 2015:

On November 17, 2015 the nonpartisan Public Religion Research Institute released the 2015 American Values Survey – conducted between September 11, 2015 and October 4, 2015. (conducted before the November 13, 2015 ISIS attacks in Paris) It measured "public opinion about the economy, racial discrimination, the criminal justice system, trust in public institutions, perception of the Tea Party, the relationship between religious affiliation and political attitudes, views of immigrants, and how demographic changes impact the cultural landscape in the country."

The survey found that "Americans' perceptions of Islam have turned more negative over the past few years," with a majority (56%) of Americans agreeing that "the values of Islam are at odds with American values and way of life," and roughly four in ten (41%) disagreeing. In 2011, according to a PRRI survey, Americans were "divided in their views of Islam" — 47% agreed and 48% disagreed.



On November 23, 2015 — after the Paris attacks — Bloomberg Politics released the results of a new wide-ranging national poll conducted Nov. 15-17, 2015, which included a subset of questions related to ISIS and immigration.

Interviews conducted Nov. 16-17, 2015 found that 64% of Americans think that Islam is an "inherently peaceful religion, but there are some who twist its teachings to justify violent acts." Among Republicans 61% believe this —perhaps surprising numbers considering the ramp-up in Islamophobic rhetoric in the 2016 presidential campaigns — and among Democrats 76%. Only 28% of Americans believe that "Islam is an inherently violent religion, which leads its followers to violent acts." That number was 32% for Republicans, and 17% for Democrats. Eight percent of Americans were not sure.

When it comes to the Islamic faith, which of the following is closer to your view? **(Rotate options.)**

All n=628 ± 3.9% pts.	Reps n=230 ± 6.5% pts.	Dems n=245 ± 6.3% pts.	
28	32	17	Islam is an inherently violent religion, which leads its followers to violent acts
64	61	76	Islam is an inherently peaceful religion, but there are some who twist its teachings to justify violence
8	8	7	Not sure

Regarding U.S. policy toward Syrian refugees, Bloomberg found that "most Americans (53%) want the U.S. to stop letting in Syrian refugees amid fears of terrorist infiltrations after the Paris attacks, siding with Republican presidential candidates, governors, and lawmakers who want to freeze the Obama administration's resettlement program." Sixty-nine percent of Republicans and 36% of Democrats said the U.S. shouldn't accept any Syrian refugees into the U.S. Eleven percent of Republicans and nine percent of Democrats said the U.S. should "resettle only Christian refugees from Syria." Only 12% of Republicans, but nearly half of Democrats (46%) said the best approach was to "proceed with the plan to resettle 10,000 refugees *without* religious screening.

Which of the following do you think is the best approach for the U.S. to take with refugees fleeing the civil war in Syria? **(Read list. Do not rotate.)**

All n=628 ± 3.9% pts.	Reps n=230 ± 6.5% pts.	Dems n=245 ± 6.3% pts.	
28	12	46	Proceed with the plan to resettle 10,000 refugees without religious screening
11	11	9	Resettle only Christian refugees from Syria
53	69	36	Do not accept any Syrian refugees into the U.S.
8	7	9	Not sure

Bloomberg also reported that Americans were, according to the poll, divided on "whether to send U.S. troops to Iraq and Syria to fight the Islamic State," (44% for sending troops and 45% against) and "whether the U.S. government is doing enough to protect the homeland from a comparable attack."

Turning now to the conflict involving ISIS, the Islamic State. Do you think the U.S. should or should not send American troops to Iraq or Syria to fight the Islamic State?

All n=628 ± 3.9% pts.	Reps n=230 ± 6.5% pts.	Dems n=245 ± 6.3% pts.	
44	64	31	Should send
45	27	59	Should not send
11	9	11	Not sure

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Sixty-four percent of Republicans and 31% of Democrats said the U.S. "should send American troops to Iraq or Syria to fight the Islamic State," with 9% and 11% respectively "not sure."

Are you mostly confident or mostly not confident the U.S. has done enough to protect the homeland against an attack similar to what happened in Paris?

All n=628 ± 3.9% pts.	Reps n=230 ± 6.5% pts.	Dems n=245 ± 6.3% pts.	
48	32	62	Mostly confident
46	63	34	Mostly not confident
6	6	4	Not sure

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