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NOP Poll of British Muslims

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 ANTHONY WELLS

Channel 4 has commissioned a NOP poll of British Muslims for Dispatches. Some of the results are in a pdf [here](#), other questions are included. The Channel 4 website has all the questions [here](#), but with results that differ slightly in places - possibly because they haven't yet been weighted. Either way, the differences between the two sets of figures are trivial.

The pattern that emerges from the survey is familiar from other surveys of Muslim opinion in the last year or so. There is no universal, monolithic Muslim opinion - there is as much variety as among non-Muslims. While a small minority of Muslims sympathise with extremism and Islamist terror, the vast majority do not.

Asked how important religion was to them 78% of British Muslims said very important, but 48% of them also said they never attended a mosque, with another 6% saying they only attended for special occasions. The actual religious observance of Muslims doesn't seem to match with how important they say religion is to them (in some ways this is comparable to Christianity in Britain - in the census around 70% of people self-identified as Christians, but many of them say they don't believe in a god and only a fraction attend church aside from for weddings and funerals).

61% of British Muslims said they thought of Britain as "my country". There was support for some degree of integration - 94% of respondents disagreed that Muslims should live separately from non-Muslims but at the same time, given the choice 36% would prefer to have fellow Muslims as neighbours. Asked if they would prefer to live under Sharia law or British law, 30% said Sharia while 54% preferred British law. I mentioned in my comments on an [earlier ICM poll](#) Sharia law does not necessarily equate to the hand-chopping, adulterer-stoning version in the tabloid press, Western countries like Canada have in the past allowed the use of Sharia law under limited circumstances for things like inheritance law, so it was then impossible to tell exactly what people were

supporting. In contrast NOP specifically stated in their poll "Sharia law, as practiced in such countries as Saudi Arabia and Iran" - perhaps explaining why the proportion of British Muslims supporting it was 10 percentage points lower than in ICM's poll.

28% of British Muslims agreed that they dreamt of Britain one day becoming an Islamic state. Again, it's worth putting this in proportion - I am sure many evangelical Christians would dream of the day when the whole world would embrace Christianity.

Asked about attitudes towards free speech, there was little support for freedom of speech if it would offend religious sensibilities. 78% of Muslims thought that the publishers of the Danish cartoons of the Prophet Muhammed should be prosecuted, 68% thought those who insulted Islam should be prosecuted and 62% of people disagree that freedom of speech should be allowed even if it insults and offends religious groups. This is one of those areas where it would be useful to have parallel polling of non-Muslims - we know from [past polls](#) that the general public think that things like the cartoons should be able to be published, but then, non-Muslims are not the ones offended by them. Perhaps the closest parallel of something that Christian groups thought was offensive and wanted banned was Jerry Springer the Opera - in that context [a poll](#) of the general public suggested that only 17% of people thought that programmes that might offend religious sensibilities should not be shown at all.

Back to the Muslim poll, NOP also asked if British Muslims thought that religious leaders who supported terrorism should be removed - 68% agreed, with 22% disagreeing. Cross-referencing these results, NOP characterised 9% of the Muslims they surveyed as "hardcore Islamists" - people who thought that it was perfectly okay to speak in support of terrorism, but thought people should be prosecuted for insulting Islam. This small minority tallies with NOP's other questions on terrorism - 9% of respondents said it was acceptable for religious or political groups to use violence, 13% of people said they understand why young British Muslims might become suicide bombers (though again, this needs to be put in context. [Parallel polls](#) of Muslims and non-Muslims have shown that there are a small minority of non-Muslims who think terrorist attacks on civilians can be justified).

NOP also gave respondents a list of people and asked them if they respected them or not. The most respected figure amongst British Muslims (out of those in the survey) was the Queen (69% respected her highly, or a fair amount), followed by Sir Iqbal Sacranie (48%) and then, perhaps surprisingly, Tony Blair (44%), narrowly ahead of George Galloway on (40%). More worryingly 19% say they respect Osama bin Laden (6% say they highly respect him), 17% respect Saddam Hussein and 16% respect Abu Hamza.

NOP also found a tendency for British Muslims to believe some, well, strange things. 45% thought that 9/11 was a conspiracy between the USA and Israel. 36% thought that Princess Diana was murdered to stop her marrying a Muslim. More seriously, only 29% thought that the holocaust occurred, 2% denied it happened entirely, 17% think it was exaggerated (which is the stance proposed by most of today's holocaust deniers), 24% said they had "no opinion" and 23% didn't know what the holocaust was. Again though, putting this in context, non-Muslims think odd things too - an [ICM poll in 2004](#) found 14% of people in the UK thought that the scale of the holocaust had been exaggerated, 27% of the general public told [NOP in 2003](#) that Princess Diana had been murdered (a poll commissioned, unsurprisingly, for the Sunday Express). I can't find a British poll on whether 9/11 was a US conspiracy, but I have little doubt that a substantial minority would say it was. Yes, a minority of Muslims believe bizarre things, but then a minority of non-Muslims do too!



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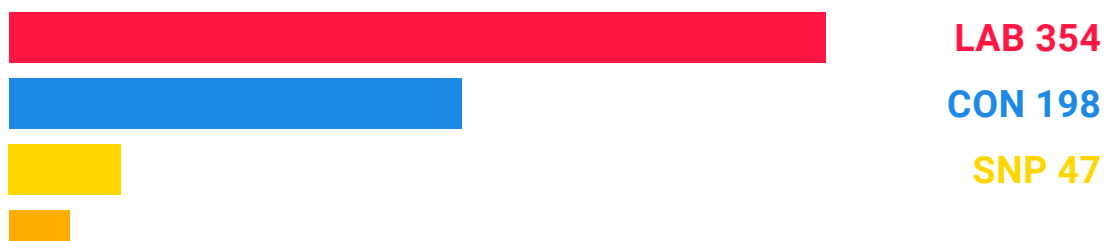
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