

Protestants, Catholics See More Similarities Than Differences

A majority of Protestants and Catholics in the U.S. see more similarities than differences between their traditions, according to a recent Pew Research Center survey.

The polling in western Europe yielded more ambiguous results. While a majority of Protestants in all the surveyed nations affirmed more similarities than differences between the traditions, only in five nations did a majority of Catholics do so.

Pew conducted separate surveys in the U.S. and western Europe, with some minor variations, but all respondents were asked: “When you think of Catholics and Protestants today, are they religiously more similar than they are different, or are they religiously more different than they are similar?”

In the U.S., 57 percent of Protestants and 65 percent of Catholics said the two Christian traditions had more commonality than divergence.

By comparison, out of the European countries survey, a median (the middle point in a data set) of 58 percent of Protestants and 50 percent of Catholics held this view.

Germany had the highest number Protestants (78 percent) who affirm that their tradition is more similar to Catholicism than it is different.

While Denmark had the lowest affirmation at 53 percent, a majority in every nation surveyed said there was more similarity than difference between the traditions.

This was not the case among Catholics in Western Europe, where only five of the 12 nations surveyed had a majority affirming Protestants and Catholics were more similar than different.

Netherlands had the highest number affirming this view (67 percent), and Portugal had the lowest (40 percent).

“The theological differences that split Western Christianity in the 1500s have diminished to a degree that might have shocked Christians in past centuries,” Pew commented. “And while the Reformation led to more than a century of devastating wars and persecution in Europe, both Protestants and Catholics across the continent now overwhelmingly express willingness to accept each other as neighbors and even as family members.”

The full U.S. survey report is available [here](#). The full European survey report is available [here](#).