

# Survey: Muslim Americans Have Moderate Views

(RNS) Almost half the nation's estimated 2.8 million Muslims fault their leaders for not speaking out against Islamic extremists, but a vast majority are far more satisfied than Americans overall with the way things are going in this country, according to a major survey of U.S. Muslims released Tuesday (Aug. 30).

The Pew Research Center report, the most comprehensive survey since 2007, shows no evidence of rising support for Islamic extremism among Muslim Americans, although 52 percent say government anti-terrorism policies single out Muslims for increased surveillance.

Nearly half of U.S. Muslims say their leaders here have not done enough to challenge extremists.

"I think we should all do more," says Hassan Jaber, executive director of Dearborn, Mich.-based ACCESS, the largest nonprofit Arab-American human services organization.

The survey shows that American Muslims have more moderate views than their brethren around the globe, yet 7 percent say suicide bombings are sometimes justified (unchanged since 2007) and 21 percent say there is a great deal or fair amount of support for extremism in their communities.

By contrast, four in 10 Americans believe there is a fair amount of support for extremism among U.S. Muslims, and nearly one in five (24 percent) think Muslim support for extremism is increasing.

"They (U.S. Muslims) are mainstream and moderate in attitude," says Andrew Kohut, president of the Pew Research Center. "Most Muslims want to adopt American customs, many of their close friends are not Muslims and they rate their economic situation pretty positively. They think like Americans."

Despite 55 percent saying that being a Muslim in the U.S. is more difficult since 9/11, Muslims are far more positive about the state of the nation (56 percent) than Americans as a whole (23 percent).

Four years ago, there was more agreement on the state of the U.S.: 38 percent for Muslims and 32 percent for the general population.

Muslims are split on the government's sincerity in fighting terrorism, but far less than when they were last surveyed in 2007. "We do see a public more approving of this president (Obama) than President Bush by a yawning gap," Kohut says.

"I don't think anyone questioned the motives (of the Bush administration) but many people questioned the tactics," says Daisy Khan, executive director of the American Society for Muslim Advancement, a New York-based nonprofit. "Going to war (in Iraq) increased the divide even more."

The poll found that most Muslim Americans continue to identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party and overwhelmingly support President Obama.

(Haya El Nasser writes for USA Today.)