Europeans greatly overestimate Muslim population, poll shows

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Members of the public in European states including France, Belgium, Germany and the UK greatly overestimate their country's Muslim population and the rate at which it is growing.

An Ipsos Mori survey that measured the gap between public perception and reality in 40 countries in 2016 found French respondents were by far the most likely to overstate their country's current and projected Muslim population.

The average French estimate was that 31% of the population was Muslim – almost one in three residents. According to Pew Research, France's Muslim population actually stood at 7.5% in 2010, or one in 13 people.

French respondents were also widest of the mark when it came to the projected Muslim population in 2020. The average prediction was that Muslims would make up 40% of the French population in four years' time, almost five times the 8.3% Pew Research projection.

The French were not the only ones to hold such misconceptions: Italian, German and Belgian respondents all guessed that more than a fifth of the resident population was Muslim, while in reality the figure ranges from 3.7% in Italy to 7% in Belgium. All three countries also greatly overstated the expected proportion of Muslim residents in 2020.

British respondents put the current Muslim population at 15%, three times the 2010 figure, while they overestimated the projected 2020 population by an even greater margin (22%versus an actual projection of 6%).

In the US the average estimate was Muslims accounted for one in six people, whereas Pew put the actual figure at one in 100, while the future projection was even further off the mark.

Australian respondents' average estimate was that 12.5% of the country was Muslim, where the true figure is 2.4%. Their future projection of 21% was far off the actual projection of 3%.

The survey also explored how well people were able to gauge national attitudes to abortion, homosexuality and sex before marriage, by asking respondents what proportion of the population personally considered them morally unacceptable.

The Dutch were furthest from the correct answer on all three questions: respondents expected personal objections to abortion to run at 37%, when in reality just 8% find abortion morally unacceptable.

And while just 5% of Dutch people personally believe that sex before marriage or homosexuality are morally unacceptable, respondents expected that 34% and 36% of people respectively thought that way.

Conversely, Indonesian respondents thought the proportion of those opposed to homosexuality would be 79%, whereas the actual figure is 93%.

Elsewhere the survey asked respondents to put a figure on the percentage of people in their country who considered themselves happy. In every country for which data was available, respondents vastly underestimated self-reported happiness.

Canadians were closest, although even they were pretty wide of the mark: respondents guessed that 60% of their compatriots would say they were happy. In fact, 87% identified as such.

South Koreans hugely underestimated the rate of national happiness, estimating that just 24% of people would say they were happy, a far cry from the 90% of people who said they were "happy" or "rather happy" in a 2010 survey.

The survey, which was conducted in the run-up to the US election, also asked people who they believed would win. Respondents in all but three countries expected Hilary Clinton to win.

Those who plumped for Donald Trump were Russia (where half of respondents said he would win, compared with 29% who thought Clinton would be the victor), Serbia (42% Trump, 29% Clinton) and China (32% Trump, 28% Clinton). The remaining respondents said they didn't know who would win the election.

Methodology: Ipsos Mori conducted 27,250 interviews between 22 September and 6 November 2016 in 40 countries: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Britain, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Montenegro, the Netherlands,

Norway, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, the US and Vietnam. Data is weighted to match the profile of the population. The "actual" answer for each question is taken from a variety of verified sources for each question and country. However, it was not possible to provide results for every country for every question, due to data being unavailable. A full list of sources/links can be found [here](#).

Link:
https://www.theguardian.com/society/datablog/2016/dec/13/europeans-massively-overestimate-muslim-population-poll-shows