

## GALLUP NEWS SERVICE

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# Public Critical of European Newspapers Showing Mohammed Cartoon

**But says controversy reflects Muslims' intolerance**

by David W. Moore

PRINCETON, NJ -- A solid majority of Americans believe the European newspapers that printed the cartoon of Mohammed acted "irresponsibly," according to the latest CNN/*USA Today*/Gallup poll. But an equally large majority also believes that the controversy is less about Western nations' lack of respect for Islam than about Muslims' intolerance of different viewpoints. And a majority of Americans also believe the U.S. news media have an obligation to print controversial items even if they offend some people's religious views.

The poll, conducted Feb. 9-12, finds 56% of Americans saying they have been following this issue either "very" closely (21%) or "somewhat" closely (35%). Forty-three percent have not been following the issue closely, including 18% who have not been following it all.

*As you may know, several newspapers in Europe recently printed cartoons showing Mohammed, the founder of Islam, in ways that offended the religious views of many Muslims. How closely have you been following the news about this -- very closely, somewhat closely, not too closely, or not at all?*

	<b>Very closely</b>	<b>Somewhat closely</b>	<b>Not too closely</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
2006 Feb 9-12	21%	35	25	18	1

When asked if the European newspapers that printed the cartoons acted responsibly or not, 61% said they did not act responsibly, while only 29% said they did.

*Do you think the European newspapers that printed those cartoons acted responsibly or irresponsibly?*

	<b>Responsibly</b>	<b>Irresponsibly</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Overall	29	61	10
Follow very closely	44	52	4
Follow somewhat closely	35	59	5
Not follow closely	18	67	15

Americans' views appear to be affected by how closely they have been following the news about the issue. The less attention paid, the more likely people are to think the European newspapers were irresponsible. People who have followed it most closely are almost evenly divided in their assessment, with 44% saying the press was responsible and 52% saying it was not. But 67% of people not following the issue closely say the press acted irresponsibly, while just 18% take the opposite position.

Though Americans may be critical of the European newspapers, they are more likely to blame Muslims' intolerance for the controversy (61%) than they are to blame Western nations' lack of respect (21%).

Overall, do you think this controversy is due more to -- [ROTATED: Western nations' lack of respect for the Islamic religion, (or due more to) Muslims' intolerance of different points of view]?

	<b>Western nations' lack of respect for Islam</b>	<b>Muslims' intolerance of different viewpoints</b>	<b>BOTH (vol.)</b>	<b>NEITHER (vol.)</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
	%	%	%	%	%
Overall	21	61	6	2	9
Follow very closely	16	73	6	4	2
Follow somewhat closely	20	69	5	2	5
Not follow closely (vol.) = Volunteered response	25	49	8	2	15

Americans who are paying the most attention to the issue are also the most likely to blame Muslim intolerance (73%) for the controversy, while people who are paying the least attention are least likely to blame the Muslims (49%).

As a general principle, a majority of Americans, 57%, say the U.S. news media have an obligation to show controversial items that are newsworthy, even if they may offend the religious views of some people. Thirty-three percent disagree.

Which comes closer to your view -- [ROTATED: the U.S. news media have an obligation to show controversial items that are newsworthy even if they may offend the religious views of some people, (or) the U.S. news media have an obligation to avoid offending the religious views of some people even if that prevents them from showing controversial items that are newsworthy]?

	<b>Obligation to show controversial items</b>	<b>Obligation to avoid offending religious views of some people</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
	%	%	%
Overall	57	33	10
Some college or more	67	26	7
High school or less	43	43	14
Attend church weekly	52	38	11
Attend nearly weekly/Monthly	57	35	8
Attend less often/Not at all	63	28	9
Republicans	68	24	8
Independents	51	35	13
Democrats	55	38	7

There are no significant differences among people by how closely they have been following the cartoon issue, but there are significant differences by education. People with a high school education or less are evenly divided as to the press' obligation on such matters, while those with at least some college education are in favor of showing the controversial items by 67% to 26%.

Church attendance is less strongly correlated with the issue, but there is an 11-point difference on showing the controversial items between weekly churchgoers (52%) and the infrequent churchgoers (63%).

The partisan gap is also modest, with 68% of Republicans, but just 55% of Democrats, wanting the press to show controversial items that could offend religious people.

### **Survey Methods**

Results are based on telephone interviews with 1,000 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted Feb. 9-12, 2006. For results based on the total sample of national adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is  $\pm 3$  percentage points.

For results based on the 492 national adults in the Form A half-sample and 508 national adults in the Form B half-sample, the maximum margins of sampling error are  $\pm 5$  percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.