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Extremism Concerns Growing in West and Predominantly Muslim Countries

*Worries Especially Widespread in
Western Europe and the U.S.*

BY Jacob Poushter

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
ON THIS REPORT:**

Richard Wike, Director, Global Attitudes Research

Jacob Poushter, Senior Researcher

Russ Oates, Senior Communications Manager

202.419.4372

www.pewresearch.org

About This Report

This report analyzes concern about Islamic extremism among publics in 21 countries. It is based on 21,235 face-to-face and telephone interviews with adults 18 and older conducted from April 5 to May 21, 2015. For more details, see survey methodology and topline results.

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals:

Jacob Poushter, *Senior Researcher*

Richard Wike, *Director, Global Attitudes Research*

James Bell, *Vice President, Global Strategy*

Danielle Cuddington, *Research Assistant*

Kat Devlin, *Research Analyst*

David Kent, *Copy Editor*

Steve Schwarzer, *Research Methodologist*

Bethany Smith, *Administrative Coordinator*

Ben Wormald, *Associate Digital Producer*

Jill Carle, *Research Associate*

Claudia Deane, *Vice President, Research*

Michael Keegan, *Information Graphics Designer*

Bridget Parker, *Research Assistant*

Katie Simmons, *Associate Director, Research*

Bruce Stokes, *Director, Global Economic Attitudes*

Hani Zainulbhai, *Research Analyst*

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Extremism Concerns Growing in West and Predominantly Muslim Countries

Worries Especially Widespread in Western Europe and the U.S.

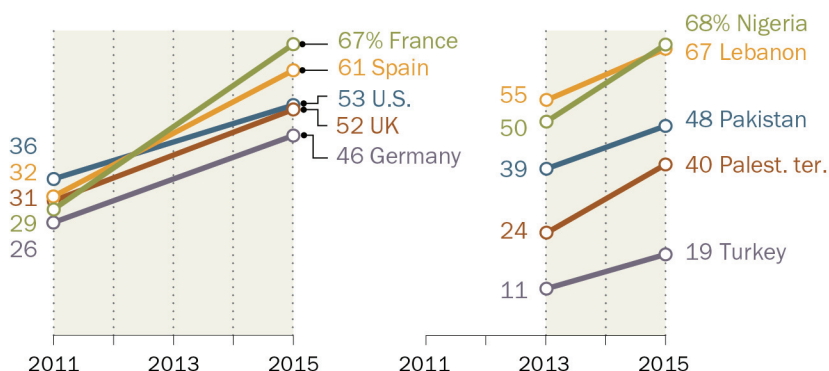
As the Islamic militant group ISIS continues to entrench itself in Syria and Iraq, and instigate terrorist attacks around the world, concerns about Islamic extremism are growing in the West and in countries with significant Muslim populations. Since 2011, the percentage saying they are *very* concerned about Islamic extremism in their country has increased 38 percentage points in France, 29 points in Spain, 21 points in the United Kingdom, 20 points in Germany and 17 points in the United States.

Concerns are also up significantly in Nigeria (+18), the Palestinian territories (+16), Lebanon (+12), Pakistan (+9) and Turkey (+8) since 2013, before ISIS became widely known.

Worries about extremism are higher across the Western countries surveyed than they are in the Muslim countries surveyed. Overall, a median of 52% across nine Western nations are very concerned about Islamic extremism. Across the 10 countries with Muslim populations of around half or more (including Middle Eastern, Asian and African nations), the median who are very concerned is 42%. Nevertheless, roughly half or more of people across all the countries surveyed say they are at least somewhat concerned about Islamic extremism in their country.

Concern about Islamic Extremism Rising in Many Western and Muslim Countries

Very concerned about Islamic extremism in our country



Note: Question was last asked in Western countries in 2011. In countries with significant Muslim populations, 2013 is used as a reference point because it was the last time the question was asked prior to ISIS becoming a widely known terrorist organization.

Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey. Q23.

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People in Israel (37% very concerned) and Russia (23%) are less concerned about extremism than those in many of the other countries surveyed. But this has not always been the case in Russia, where great concern about extremism is down 12 percentage points since 2011 and 29 points since 2005, when the survey was fielded just months after 334 hostages died in a school in Beslan that was taken over by Chechen rebels.

In European countries, older people, women, and those on the right of the ideological spectrum are more concerned about Islamic extremism than the young, men and those on the left.

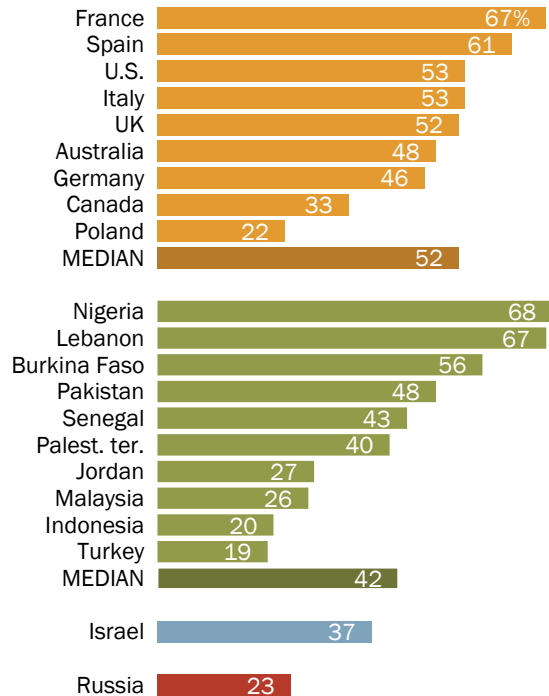
In the U.S., these demographic differences also extend to political party and religion. Republicans and Americans who say religion is important are more likely to be concerned about Islamic extremism than are Democrats and independents, and those who say religion is not important to their daily lives.

Additionally, general concern about extremism in these countries is closely associated with worries about the international reach of ISIS. In 20 of the 21 the countries surveyed, people who are very concerned about the ISIS threat in Iraq and Syria are significantly more worried about the extremist threat in general. (*For more on global views of ISIS as an international concern, [see here](#)*).

These are among the main findings of a new Pew Research Center survey, conducted in 21 nations among 21,235 respondents from April 5 to May 21, 2015.

Western Nations More Worried about Extremism than Countries with Significant Muslim Populations

Very concerned about Islamic extremism in our country



Question wording: "How concerned, if at all, are you about Islamic extremism in our country these days? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned about Islamic extremism in our country these days?"

Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey. Q23.

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Concerns about Extremism High in France and Spain

Across the countries surveyed, worries about extremism have risen the most in France. In the wake of the Charlie Hebdo massacre, two-thirds in France say they are very concerned about Islamic extremism in their country. This is up from 29% in 2011, the last time this question was asked there.

Concern is also high in Spain, where 61% are very worried about the extremist threat.

Roughly half in the U.S. (53%), Italy (53%) and UK (52%) are very apprehensive about extremism in their countries. Among Americans and Brits, this represents around a 20-percentage-point increase in concern since 2011. Meanwhile, 46% of Germans are very concerned, up 20 points from 2011.

Australians, though a world away from the Islamic State's territory, have also experienced a terrorist attack in the past year, when a hostage standoff in Sydney ended in the death of three people, including the gunman. Roughly half in Australia (48%) are very concerned about Islamic extremism in their country.

Only a third of Canadians are very worried about the extremist threat in Canada, despite the 2014 attack at the Canadian National War Memorial in Ottawa.

In Russia, just 23% are very concerned about extremism. This is down 12 points since 2011 and 29 points from 2005. Similarly, in Poland, only 22% are very concerned about the threat of Islamic extremism.

Concern about Extremism Rising in West, but Falling in Russia

Very concerned about Islamic extremism in our country

	2005	2006	2011	2015	11-15 Change
	%	%	%	%	
France	32	30	29	67	+38
Spain	43	35	32	61	+29
UK	34	42	31	52	+21
Germany	35	40	26	46	+20
U.S.	31	38	36	53	+17
Italy	--	--	--	53	--
Australia	--	--	--	48	--
Canada	22	--	--	33	--
Poland	7	--	--	22	--
Russia	52	40	35	23	-12

Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey. Q23.

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Older and Conservative Europeans Worried about Islamic Threat

Across all the European countries surveyed, as well as in Australia, Canada and Russia, older people are more concerned than younger generations about the threat of Islamic extremism. For example, a majority of Germans ages 50 and older are very concerned about extremism in their country (56%), while only 22% of those ages 18-29 concur. Large age gaps are also found in the UK (older are +31 points higher), Australia (+27), Canada (+26), Spain (+23) and France (+20).

Age, Gender and Ideological Divides in Concern about Extremism

Very concerned about Islamic extremism in our country

	Total	By age:			Oldest-youngest diff	By gender:			By ideology:			Right-left diff
		18-29	30-49	50+		Male	Female	Diff	Left	Moderate	Right	
	%	%	%	%		%	%		%	%	%	
Germany	46	22	39	56	+34	42	50	+8	33	48	55	+22
UK	52	33	49	64	+31	51	52	+1	37	53	56	+19
Spain	61	47	55	70	+23	54	67	+13	52	65	61	+9
France	67	54	63	74	+20	62	71	+9	52	68	73	+21
Italy	53	49	48	58	+9	46	59	+13	48	61	52	+4
Poland	22	18	18	27	+9	21	23	+2	30	21	22	-8
Australia	48	31	46	58	+27	45	52	+7	—	—	—	—
Canada	33	18	27	44	+26	30	36	+6	—	—	—	—
Russia	23	16	18	32	+16	24	23	-1	—	—	—	—

Note: **Bolded** figures represent statistically significant differences.

Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey. Q23.

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Women are more concerned than men about Islamic extremism in many of the Western countries surveyed. Two-thirds of Spanish women are very concerned about the extremist threat, while only 54% of men say the same. A similar gap appears in Italy (women are +13 points higher), and significant differences by gender are also found in France (+9), Germany (+8), Australia (+7) and Canada (+6).

Additionally, in four of the six European countries surveyed, those on the ideological right are more worried about the Islamic threat in their country compared with the left. In Germany, 55% of those who describe themselves as on the right of the ideological scale say they are very concerned about Islamic extremism in their country, while only a third on the left agree. Significant right-left gaps also appear in France (those on right are +21 higher), the UK (+19) and Spain (+9).

Republicans and Older People in U.S. Highly Concerned about Extremism

In the U.S., women, older Americans, Republicans and those who say religion is important in their lives are the most likely to be very concerned about Islamic extremism.

For instance, 58% of American women are very worried about the extremist threat in the U.S., while only 49% of men agree.

Nearly two-thirds of Americans ages 50 and older (65%) see Islamic extremism as a major threat, but only 27% of those ages 18 to 29 concur.

Republicans (71%) are far more likely to judge extremism as a grave threat, compared with about half of independents (49%) and a smaller share of Democrats (45%).

Additionally, 58% of Americans who say religion is very or somewhat important in their lives are very concerned about Islamic extremism, while only 38% among those who say religion is less important agree.

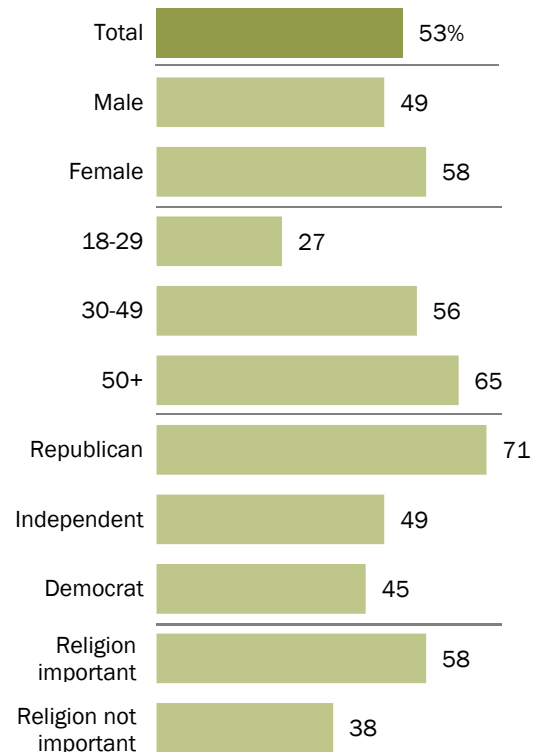
Nigerians and Lebanese Most Concerned about Extremism

Among the countries surveyed with significant Muslim populations, Nigerians (68%) and Lebanese (67%) are the most concerned about Islamic extremism in their country.

In Nigeria, which recently completed a changeover in power to the new president Muhammadu Buhari and is dealing with the Boko Haram terrorist group, which [recently pledged to ally itself with ISIS](#), concerns are up 18 percentage points since 2013. Nigerian Christians (73%) are somewhat more likely than Muslims (63%) to be very concerned about extremists.

In U.S., Republicans More Concerned about Extremism

Very concerned about Islamic extremism in the U.S.



Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey. Q23.

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Concern about Extremism Rising in Middle East and Asia

Very concerned about Islamic extremism in country

	2006	2008*	2009*	2010*	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	13-15 Change
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Nigeria	--	--	--	47	--	--	50	54	68	+18
Palest. ter.	--	--	25	--	33	--	24	31	40	+16
Lebanon	--	45	51	50	52	53	55	67	67	+12
Pakistan	50	54	52	37	41	34	39	39	48	+9
Turkey	18	22	19	20	26	10	11	19	19	+8
Malaysia	--	--	--	--	--	--	23	19	26	+3
Jordan	33	30	20	19	25	23	26	29	27	+1
Indonesia	16	26	22	22	19	--	19	10	20	+1
Senegal	--	--	--	--	--	--	60	26	43	-17
Burkina Faso	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	56	--
Israel	--	--	--	--	35	--	--	43	37	--

* In 2008, 2009 and 2010, this question asked about the rise of Islamic extremism.

Note: 2013 is used as a reference point instead of 2014 because it was the last time the question was asked prior to ISIS becoming a widely known terrorist organization.

Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey. Q23.

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In Lebanon, concerns about extremism have risen 12 points since 2013. Lebanese Christians (70%) as well as Shia (66%) and Sunni Muslims (60%) are very concerned about the threat.

Four-in-ten Palestinians are very worried about the extremist threat, up 16 points since 2013. Israelis are about as worried (37%), though concerns about the extremist threat have gone down slightly in the last year (-6 points). Only about a quarter of Jordanians (27%) share this concern.

Concerns about Islamic extremism are somewhat more muted in Turkey (19%). Yet it borders Syria and Iraq and has experienced terrorist incidents in Istanbul in the past year, which might help explain the 8-point rise in fears about the threat since 2013.

Nearly half of Pakistanis (48%) are very worried about the extremist threat, up 9 points in two years. This follows an attack on a school in Peshawar in December 2014 by the Tehrik-i-Taliban that left 132 schoolchildren dead.

In Africa, a majority of those in Burkina Faso (56%) are very worried about extremism, and this worry is shared by Christians and Muslims alike. In Senegal, the share of people who are very

concerned fluctuated from 60% in 2013, when there was an imminent threat from extremists in [neighboring Mali](#), to 26% in 2014, before Islamic State established itself in the area, back to 43% in 2015, when violence from extremist groups such as Boko Haram increased across the region.

In Southeast Asia, few in Malaysia (26%) and Indonesia (20%) are very worried about the terrorist threat, though more Malaysian Muslims (30%) are very concerned than Buddhist Malays (18%).

In general, there are few variations on concern about extremism by age and gender within these countries.

Fears of ISIS Associated with General Concerns about Extremism

In every country polled but one, [fears about the Islamic State](#) are tied to worries about Islamic extremism in general.

For example, when asked a separate question about international worries over the Islamic militant group in Iraq and Syria, among those Spaniards who are very concerned about ISIS, 73% are very concerned about Islamic extremism in their country, while only 17% who are less concerned about ISIS agree (a 56 percentage point difference). In Lebanon, it is a 55 point difference (76% vs. 21%).

Differences of over 50 percentage points are especially common in Western nations, including 54 points in the U.S., UK and Italy.

Concern about ISIS Tracks with Concern about Extremism

<i>Very concerned about Islamic extremism in ...</i>	<i>Among those who are ___ about ISIS</i>	
	Very concerned	Less concerned*
	%	%
Spain	73	17
Lebanon	76	21
U.S.	70	16
UK	70	16
Italy	69	15
Australia	64	13
France	81	30
Canada	51	8
Senegal	71	27
Israel	61	18
Russia	58	15
Poland	51	10
Palest. ter.	57	18
Burkina Faso	78	42
Germany	55	23
Malaysia	48	20
Turkey	35	9
Nigeria	85	62
Indonesia	25	11
Pakistan	55	45

* Less concerned are those who say "somewhat," "not too" or "not at all" concerned about ISIS.

Note: Only countries with statistically significant differences shown.

Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey. Q23.

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Methodology

About the Pew Research Center's Spring 2015 Global Attitudes Survey

Results for the survey are based on telephone and face-to-face interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. The results are based on national samples, unless otherwise noted. More details about our international survey methodology and country-specific sample designs are available on our [website](#).

For more detailed information on survey methods for this report, see here:

http://www.pewglobal.org/international-survey-methodology/?year_select=2015

For more general information on international survey research, see here:

<http://www.pewresearch.org/methodology/international-survey-research/>

Topline Results

Pew Research Center
Spring 2015 survey
July 16, 2015 Release

Methodological notes:

- Survey results are based on national samples. For further details on sample designs, see Methodology section and our [international survey methods database](#).
- Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%. The topline “total” columns show 100%, because they are based on unrounded numbers.
- Since 2007, the Pew Research Center has used an automated process to generate toplines for its Global Attitudes surveys. As a result, numbers may differ slightly from those published prior to 2007.
- Spring, 2011 survey in Pakistan was fielded before the death of Osama bin Laden (April 10 – April 26), while the Late Spring, 2011 survey was conducted afterwards (May 8 – May 15).
- For some countries, trends for certain years are omitted due to differences in sample design or population coverage. Omitted trends often reflect less representative samples than more recent surveys in the same countries. Trends that are omitted include:
 - Nigeria prior to 2010
- Not all questions included in the Spring 2015 survey are presented in this topline. Omitted questions have either been previously released or will be released in future reports.

		Q23. How concerned, if at all, are you about Islamic extremism in our country these days? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned or not at all concerned about Islamic extremism in our country these days?					
		Very concerned	Somewhat concerned	Not too concerned	Not at all concerned	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2015	53	26	13	7	1	100
	Spring, 2011	36	33	18	10	2	100
	Spring, 2006	38	34	16	8	4	100
	Spring, 2005	31	39	19	9	3	100
Canada	Spring, 2015	33	31	23	11	1	100
	Spring, 2005	22	34	27	14	3	100
France	Spring, 2015	67	22	4	7	0	100
	Spring, 2011	29	39	19	13	0	100
	Spring, 2006	30	46	15	8	0	100
	Spring, 2005	32	41	18	8	0	100
Germany	Spring, 2015	46	38	11	5	0	100
	Spring, 2011	26	47	17	11	0	100
	Spring, 2006	40	42	11	6	1	100
	Spring, 2005	35	43	14	7	1	100
Italy	Spring, 2015	53	33	12	3	0	100
Poland	Spring, 2015	22	48	18	6	6	100
	Spring, 2005	7	30	26	23	15	100
Spain	Spring, 2015	61	28	8	3	0	100
	Spring, 2011	32	29	25	12	1	100
	Spring, 2006	35	31	22	10	2	100
	Spring, 2005	43	34	15	7	1	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2015	52	30	12	5	1	100
	Spring, 2011	31	39	20	8	2	100
	Spring, 2006	42	35	17	5	1	100
	Spring, 2005	34	36	22	6	2	100
Russia	Spring, 2015	23	43	22	8	4	100
	Spring, 2014	26	32	21	12	8	100
	Spring, 2011	35	41	14	6	4	100
	Spring, 2010	45	34	12	6	3	100
	Spring, 2006	40	34	13	9	4	100
	Spring, 2005	52	32	9	4	3	100
Turkey	Spring, 2015	19	37	23	11	9	100
	Spring, 2014	19	31	17	20	14	100
	Spring, 2013	11	26	29	21	12	100
	Spring, 2012	10	22	22	31	14	100
	Spring, 2011	26	26	14	23	12	100
	Spring, 2010	20	23	9	36	13	100
	Spring, 2009	19	28	11	28	14	100
	Spring, 2008	22	19	12	33	13	100
	Spring, 2006	18	28	18	21	15	100
Jordan	Spring, 2015	27	43	23	6	1	100
	Spring, 2014	29	33	20	16	2	100
	Spring, 2013	26	28	27	18	2	100
	Spring, 2012	23	26	30	21	1	100
	Spring, 2011	25	23	25	26	1	100
	Spring, 2010	19	25	35	20	1	100
	Spring, 2009	20	24	26	30	1	100
	Spring, 2008	30	31	25	14	1	100
Lebanon	Spring, 2015	33	36	22	8	1	100
	Spring, 2015	67	27	5	1	0	100
	Spring, 2014	67	25	5	3	0	100
	Spring, 2013	55	26	11	8	0	100
	Spring, 2012	53	28	11	8	0	100
	Spring, 2011	52	26	14	6	2	100
	Spring, 2010	50	30	12	8	0	100
	Spring, 2009	51	28	17	4	1	100
	Spring, 2008	45	33	17	4	0	100

		Q23. How concerned, if at all, are you about Islamic extremism in our country these days? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned or not at all concerned about Islamic extremism in our country these days?					
		Very concerned	Somewhat concerned	Not too concerned	Not at all concerned	DK/Refused	Total
Palest. ter.	Spring, 2015	40	34	14	9	2	100
	Spring, 2014	31	34	16	15	4	100
	Spring, 2013	24	40	21	12	4	100
	Spring, 2011	33	46	15	6	1	100
	Spring, 2009	25	28	15	30	3	100
Israel	Spring, 2015	37	41	17	4	1	100
	Spring, 2014	43	41	7	7	1	100
	Spring, 2011	35	42	11	9	2	100
Australia	Spring, 2015	48	28	16	7	0	100
Indonesia	Spring, 2015	20	32	25	13	10	100
	Spring, 2014	10	29	30	25	6	100
	Spring, 2013	19	29	29	19	5	100
	Spring, 2011	19	23	30	21	7	100
	Spring, 2010	22	37	25	12	4	100
	Spring, 2009	22	39	30	8	2	100
	Spring, 2008	26	34	26	10	5	100
	Spring, 2006	16	27	37	17	3	100
Malaysia	Spring, 2015	26	46	18	4	7	100
	Spring, 2014	19	44	18	6	12	100
	Spring, 2013	23	39	16	6	16	100
Pakistan	Spring, 2015	48	34	7	2	8	100
	Spring, 2014	39	27	8	6	19	100
	Spring, 2013	39	28	11	7	15	100
	Spring, 2012	34	24	15	15	12	100
	Late Spring, 2011	41	22	8	8	21	100
	Spring, 2011	39	24	7	9	20	100
	Spring, 2010	37	28	8	9	16	100
	Spring, 2009	52	27	5	5	11	100
	Spring, 2008	54	18	6	6	16	100
	Spring, 2006	50	24	4	4	18	100
Burkina Faso	Spring, 2015	56	20	12	8	4	100
Nigeria	Spring, 2015	68	19	6	3	5	100
	Spring, 2014	54	18	8	13	6	100
	Spring, 2013	50	20	11	10	9	100
	Spring, 2010	47	29	12	11	2	100
Senegal	Spring, 2015	43	25	12	14	6	100
	Spring, 2014	26	20	19	28	7	100
	Spring, 2013	60	15	7	11	6	100

In 2010, 2009 and 2008, this question asked about the rise of Islamic extremism.