

MINARETS

Following Swiss Referendum, Britons Would Vote to Ban Minarets

People in the United States are divided on the idea, while Canadians tend to side with the proponents of a ban, but would not vote to enact it.

[LONDON – Dec. 21, 2009] – Last month, voters in Switzerland participated in a referendum which banned the construction of minarets in Swiss mosques. The minaret—a tower from which the call to prayer is sounded—is a distinctive architectural feature of Islamic mosques.

A new Angus Reid Public Opinion poll asked respondents in Britain, the United States and Canada to ponder a similar scenario occurring in their respective countries.

Attention to the Story

Most people in Britain (52%) have followed the Swiss referendum story, while fewer Canadians (43%) and Americans (32%) are aware of it.

Perceptions on the Ban

Respondents in the three countries were presented with the arguments that both sides used during last month's Swiss referendum. More than two-in-five Britons (44%) sided with the proponents of the ban, while less than three-in-ten (32%) agreed with the opponents of the ban.

In Canada, the group that sided with the proponents (37%) was slightly larger than the one that agreed with the opponents (32%).

In the United States, respondents were virtually even (30% sided with the proponents of the ban; 29% agreed with the opponents).

KEY FINDINGS

- **Vote in favour of banning minarets in their respective countries: Britons 37%, Canadians 27%, Americans 21%**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

From December 9 to December 12, 2009, Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 1,000 Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panellists, 1,004 American adults who are Springboard America panellists, and 2,002 British adults who are Springboard UK panellists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.1% for Canada and the United States, and 2.2 per cent for Great Britain. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure samples representative of the entire adult population of Canada, the US and Great Britain. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

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Referendum

More than a third of Britons (37%) would vote to ban minarets in their country, while one-in-four (25%) would vote against this proposal.

Americans are once again almost evenly divided (21% would vote in favour of a ban, 19% would vote against it).

In Canada, 35 per cent of respondents say they would vote against a ban, while 27 per cent would vote in favour of it.

The Swiss Campaign

As part of this online survey, respondents were shown the poster used by proponents of the ban in Switzerland. Almost half of Americans (46%) believe the depiction of the minaret as a missile was unfair, along with a majority of respondents in Britain (52%) and Canada (56%).

Analysis

Americans are split on the concept of a ban on minarets, despite a significantly high level of undecided voters. Canadians tend to agree with the proponents of the ban, but are reticent to vote in favour of it. Britons, who have been in closer contact with this story than their counterparts in the other two countries, clearly agree with the notion of a ban and would vote for it if a referendum took place.




The only issue where respondents in all three countries agree is in their criticism of the poster used by the proponents of the ban in Switzerland.

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Minarets

As you may know, voters in Switzerland participated in a referendum last month which banned the construction of minarets in Swiss mosques. The minaret—a tower from which the call to prayer is sounded—is a distinctive architectural feature of Islamic mosques. Have you followed this story in the media?




	CANADA 	UNITED STATES 	GREAT BRITAIN 
Yes, very closely	10%	5%	8%
Yes, moderately closely	16%	11%	22%
Yes, but not too closely	18%	16%	21%
No, I have not followed this story at all	57%	68%	48%

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Next, we'll describe both sides of the argument in the recent Swiss referendum. PROPONENTS of the ban claimed that the minaret had to be banned because it is a symbol that has been used historically to mark territory and the progression of Islamic law in foreign countries. OPPONENTS said they had no problem with the minaret, and said the ban would go against Switzerland's tradition of tolerance and serve the interests of extremist circles. Thinking about both sides of the argument, would you say you agree with the proponents of the ban or agree with the opponents of the ban?

	CANADA 	UNITED STATES 	GREAT BRITAIN 
Strongly agree with the proponents of the ban	19%	13%	23%
Moderately agree with the proponents of the ban	18%	17%	21%
Moderately agree with the opponents of the ban	20%	18%	19%
Strongly agree with the opponents of the ban	12%	11%	9%
None of these / Not sure	30%	41%	27%

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Minarets

To Canadians: Suppose a similar referendum took place in Canada. Would you vote in favour or against banning minarets in Canada?

To Americans: Suppose a similar referendum took place in the United States. Would you vote in favour or against banning minarets in the United States?

To Britons: Suppose a similar referendum took place in the UK. Would you vote in favour or against banning minarets in the UK?

	CANADA 	UNITED STATES 	GREAT BRITAIN 
In favour	27%	21%	37%
Against	35%	19%	25%
Would not vote	16%	29%	18%
Not sure	22%	32%	21%




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Minarets

Below is a poster that was used by proponents of the ban in the referendum. Would you say the depiction of the minaret as a missile is fair or unfair?



	CANADA 	UNITED STATES 	GREAT BRITAIN 
Fair	22%	20%	24%
Unfair	56%	46%	52%
Not sure	21%	33%	24%

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Angus Reid Public Opinion is the public affairs practice of Vision Critical—a global research and technology company specializing in custom online panels, private communities, and innovative online methods. Vision Critical is a leader in the use of the Internet and rich media technology to collect high-quality, in-depth insights for a wide array of clients. Dr. Angus Reid and the Angus Reid Public Opinion team are pioneers in online research methodologies, and have been conducting online surveys since 1995

Vision Critical is now one of the largest market research enterprises in the world. In addition to its five offices in Canada—located in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Toronto, and Montreal—the firm also has offices in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, London, Paris and Sydney. Its team of specialists provides solutions across every type and sector of research, and currently serves over 200 international clients.

Angus Reid Public Opinion polls are conducted using the Angus Reid Forum (www.angusreidforum.com), Springboard America (www.springboardamerica.com) and Springboard UK (www.springboarduk.com) online panels, which are carefully recruited to ensure representation across all demographic and psychographic segments of these populations. Panel members pass through rigorous screening and a double opt-in process ensuring highly motivated and responsive members. These premier online survey platforms present respondents with highly visual, interactive, and engaging surveys, ensuring that panel members provide thoughtful and reliable responses. Each survey is actively sampled and weighted to model that characteristics of the universe required and employs the latest in quality control techniques to ensure data validity.

Angus Reid, the only public opinion firm to exclusively use online methods to follow the views of the electorate during the 2008 federal campaign, offered the most accurate prediction of the results of Canada's 40th election.

<http://bit.ly/4zxf1S>

Since 2006, Angus Reid has covered eight provincial elections in Canada—more than any other pollster in the country—and the results have accurately predicted the outcome of each of these democratic processes.

More information on the way Angus Reid conducts public opinion research can be found at

<http://bit.ly/3z0u11>

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**For more information, please contact
our spokesperson listed in the footnote.**

Copies of this poll are available on our website:

<http://www.visioncritical.com/category/global-opinions-and-trends>

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