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What It Takes to Truly Be ‘One of Us’

In U.S., Canada, Europe, Australia and Japan, publics say language matters more to national identity than birthplace

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What It Takes to Truly Be ‘One of Us’

In U.S., Canada, Europe, Australia and Japan, publics say language matters more to national identity than birthplace

The tide of [people moving across the world](#), be they immigrants or refugees, has sparked concern in [Australia](#), [Europe](#) and the [United States](#). In particular, the ethnic, linguistic and cultural background of migrants has triggered intense debates over the benefits and the costs of growing [diversity](#) and the risk of open borders to national identity. Unease over the cultural, economic and security ramifications of immigration helped to fuel the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom, encourage the idea of a wall along the U.S.-Mexican border and broaden support for right-wing populist parties in France, Germany and the Netherlands.

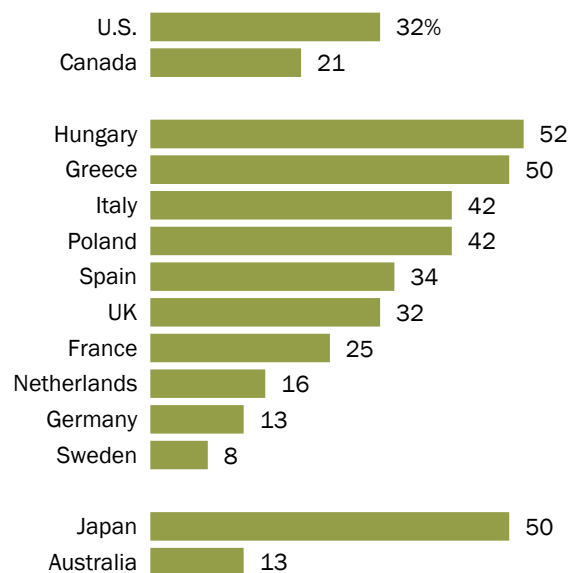
Debates over what it means to be a “true” American, Australian, German or other nationality have often highlighted the importance of a person being born in a particular country. But contrary to such rhetoric, a Pew Research Center survey finds that people generally place a relatively low premium on a person’s birthplace. Only 13% of Australians, 21% of Canadians, 32% of Americans and a median of 33% of Europeans believe that it is *very* important for a person to be born in their country in order to be considered a true national.

There are some exceptions – Hungary (52%), Greece (50%) and Japan (50%) – where about half the public considers birthplace to be very important. But in other nations – Germany (13%), Australia (13%) and Sweden (8%) – very few people make a strong connection between the locale of one’s birth and national identity.

These are the findings from a cross-national poll by Pew Research Center, conducted in 14 countries among 14,514 respondents from April 4 to May 29, 2016.

Relatively few say national identity is strongly tied to birthplace

Having been born in our country is very important for being truly (survey country nationality)



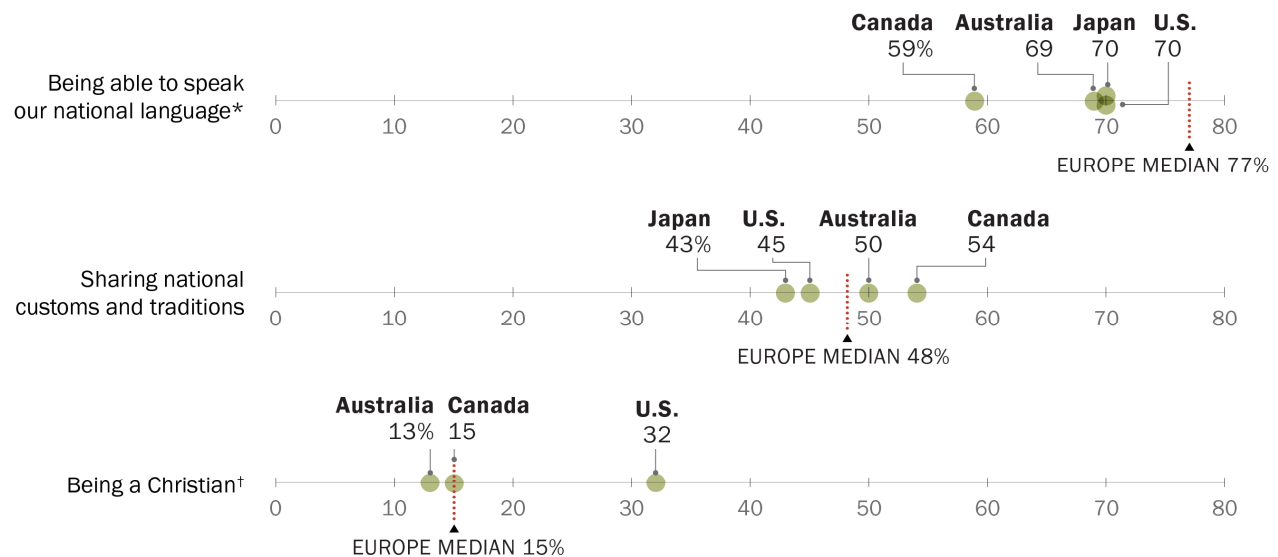
Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q85a.

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While many in the countries surveyed are open to those born elsewhere being part of “the nation,” acceptance comes with certain requisites. Majorities in every country surveyed say it is very important to speak the dominant language to be considered truly a national of that land. This includes a median of 77% in Europe and majorities in Japan (70%), the U.S. (70%), Australia (69%) and Canada (59%).

Wide agreement that language is at the core of national identity

___ is very important for being truly (survey country nationality)



* In Canada, national language asked as “either English or French.”

† In Italy, Poland and Spain asked “Catholic.” Not asked in Japan.

Note: European median based on 10 countries.

Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q85b-d.

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In addition, sharing national customs and traditions is very important to many people’s sense of “who is us”. Just over half the public in Canada (54%) and roughly half the public across Australia (50%) and Europe (a median of 48%) links adoption of local culture to national identity. Somewhat fewer than half of Americans (45%) and Japanese (43%) make that connection.

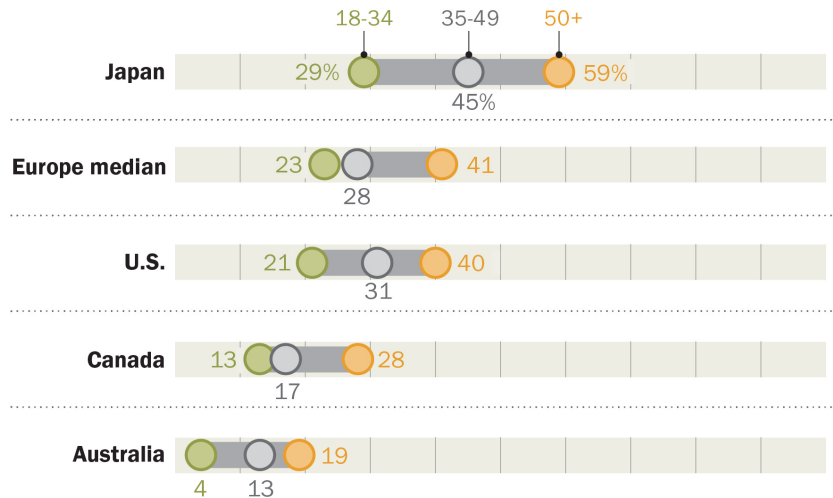
The survey also asked about the link between religious affiliation and national identity. About a third (32%) of people in the U.S. believe it is very important to be Christian to be considered truly American. This contrasts with 54% of Greeks who say this, but only 7% of Swedes.

Young, old see national identity differently

Across the countries surveyed, there are significant differences in how the youngest and oldest generations view national identity. In the U.S., people ages 50 and older (40%) are more likely than those ages 18 to 34 (21%) to say it is very important that a person be born in the country to be considered truly American. In Japan, the generational divide is even more pronounced: Older Japanese are more likely than their younger counterparts to link national identity to birthplace by a 59% to 29% margin. Generational differences, though generally more modest, are also evident in Australia and Canada (15 percentage points each), and across most European countries surveyed.

Old more likely than young to say birthplace is very important to national identity

Having been born in our country is very important for being truly (survey country nationality)



Note: European median based on 10 countries.

Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q85a.

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The generations differ even more sharply over the importance of national customs and traditions. In the U.S., people ages 50 and older (55%) are far more likely than those ages 18 to 34 (28%) to say sharing such cultural elements is very important to being truly American. There is a similar 20-percentage-point generation gap in Canada, Australia and Japan. In Europe, a median of 37% of 18- to 34-year-olds believe this aspect of national identity is very important, compared with 56% of those ages 50 and older.

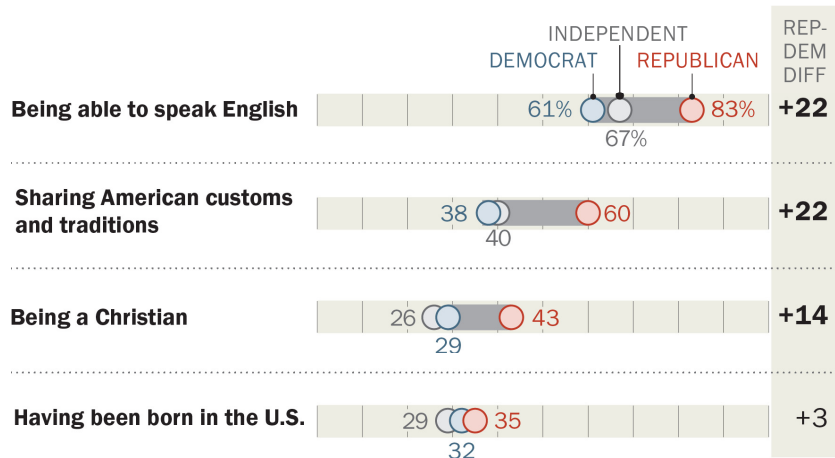
Partisan views on national identity in the U.S., Australia, Canada, Europe

In many countries, the debate over national identity is a partisan one.

In the U.S., more than eight-in-ten Republicans (83%) say language proficiency is a very important requisite for being truly American. Fewer independents (67%) share that strong belief and even fewer Democrats (61%) agree. Among Republicans, 60% say that for a person to be considered a true American it is very important that he or she share U.S. culture. Only 40% of independents and 38% of Democrats agree that this is very important to being truly American.

In U.S., Republicans take tougher stand on what it takes to be a true American

___ is very important for being truly American



Note: Statistically significant differences in **bold**.

Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q85a-d.

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A clear partisan split in the U.S. also exists on the importance of being Christian. More than four-in-ten Republicans (43%) say it is a very important part of being an American. Fewer Democrats (29%) and independents (26%) share this view.

Notably, there is not much partisan difference about the link between the land of one's birth and U.S. national identity. Roughly a third of Republicans (35%) and Democrats (32%) say being born in the U.S. is very important. Slightly fewer independents (29%) hold that view.

Views of what constitutes national identity also divide publics along party lines in some European countries. In the UK, 73% of those who have a favorable opinion of the right-wing UK Independence Party (UKIP) say adhering to British culture is very important to being British. Just 44% of those who have an unfavorable view of UKIP agree. In France, sharing French customs and traditions is tied to national identity for those who have a favorable view of the right-wing, populist National Front (FN) (65% say it is very important). Just 39% of those who hold an unfavorable opinion of the FN strongly link culture to being truly French. There is a similar 24-

percentage-point difference on the importance of Swedish customs and traditions between sympathizers with the right-wing, populist Swedish Democrats and those who see them unfavorably. And in Germany there exists a 22-point gap on the importance of culture between those who favor the Alternative for Germany party and those who don't.

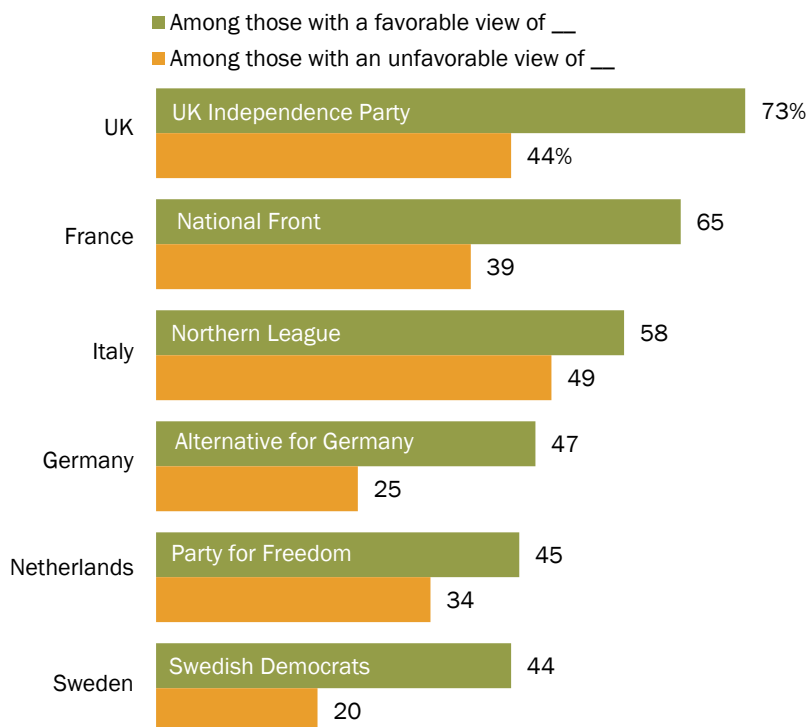
In Australia, roughly eight-in-ten (79%) supporters of the center-right Liberal Party and about seven-in-ten (68%) backers of the center-left Labor Party say it is very important to speak English to be considered Australian. Only a third of the left-leaning environmentally oriented Greens agree. There is even greater partisan disparity on

the importance of customs and tradition. More than six-in-ten Liberal Party followers (63%) believe that adherence to Australian customs and traditions is very important to national identity. Just over four-in-ten Labor Party supporters concur (44%). And even fewer Greens agree (15%).

In Canada, while majorities across all major parties say it is very important to speak either French or English, this sentiment is held most strongly by those supporting the center-right Conservative Party of Canada (68%), followed by those backing the center-left Liberal Party (59%) and those supporting the social-democratic New Democratic Party (53%). More than six-in-ten Conservatives (63%) believe that a person must share Canadian customs and traditions to be truly Canadian. Fully 57% of Liberals agree, but only 46% of New Democrats share this view. Relatively few Canadians aligned with any of these major parties think it is very important to national identity to be Christian or to be born in Canada.

Europeans favoring right-wing, populist parties more likely to see culture as very important to identity

Sharing our national customs and traditions is very important for being truly (survey country nationality)



Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q85d.

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CORRECTION (April 2017): The topline accompanying this report has been updated to reflect a revised weight for the Netherlands data, which corrects the percentages for two regions. The changes due to this adjustment are very minor and do not materially change the analysis of the report. For a summary of changes, see [here](#). For updated demographic figures for the Netherlands, please contact info@pewresearch.org.

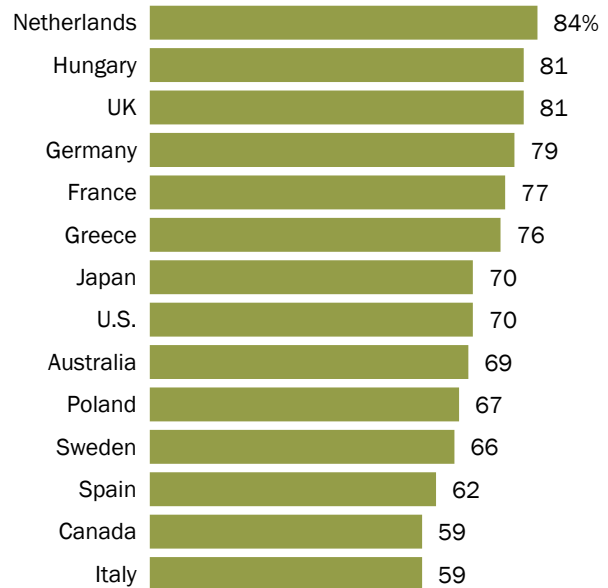
1. Language: The cornerstone of national identity

Of the national identity attributes included in the Pew Research Center survey, language far and away is seen as the most critical to national identity. Majorities in each of the 14 countries polled say it is *very* important to speak the native language to be considered a true member of the nation.

Roughly eight-in-ten or more Dutch, British, Hungarians and Germans believe the ability to converse in their country's language is very important to nationality. Canadians and Italians are the least likely to link language and national identity. Nevertheless, roughly six-in-ten in Canada and Italy still make that strong connection.

Language seen as most important requisite of national identity

Being able to speak our national language is very important for being truly (survey country nationality)



Note: In Canada asked "either English or French."

Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q85b.

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In U.S., many say speaking English is important for being ‘truly American’

In the United States, about [half](#) of all immigrants were proficient in English as of 2014. Most Americans consider such language facility to be an important attribute of U.S. nationality. Fully 70% of the public says that to be truly American it is very important to be able to speak English, and an additional 22% believe proficiency is somewhat important. Just 8% assert that English is not very or not at all important.

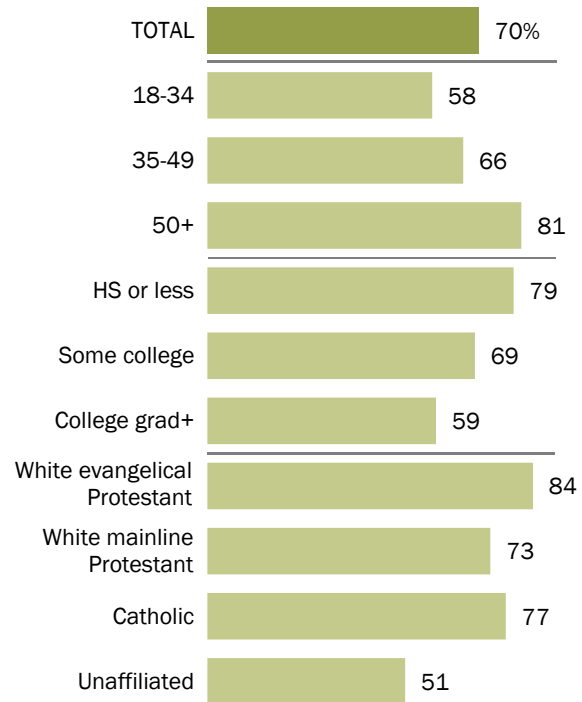
U.S. generations differ on whether English proficiency matters to being an American. Among people ages 50 and older, 81% say such language ability is very important. Only 58% of those ages 18 to 34 place an equal premium on speaking English.

Americans with a high school education or less (79%) are more likely than those who have graduated college (59%) to voice the view that speaking English is very important to being a true American. Similarly, white evangelical Protestants (84%) are much more likely than people who are religiously unaffiliated (51%) to strongly hold such views.

There are virtually no racial or ethnic differences on the importance of speaking English to be truly American: Roughly seven-in-ten whites (71%), blacks (71%) and Hispanics (70%) agree it is very important.

In U.S., differences by age, education and religion on importance of language

Being able to speak English is very important for being truly American



Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q85b.

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Europeans see language as a strong requisite of national identity

The European Union has 24 official languages and a number of other regional and minority languages among its 28 member states. Majorities in all of 10 European nations surveyed say it is very important to be able to converse in the local tongue, ranging from 84% of the Dutch to 59% of Italians.

Although majorities agree on the link between language and national identity, older Europeans and those on the political right often feel more strongly about the importance of native language facility.

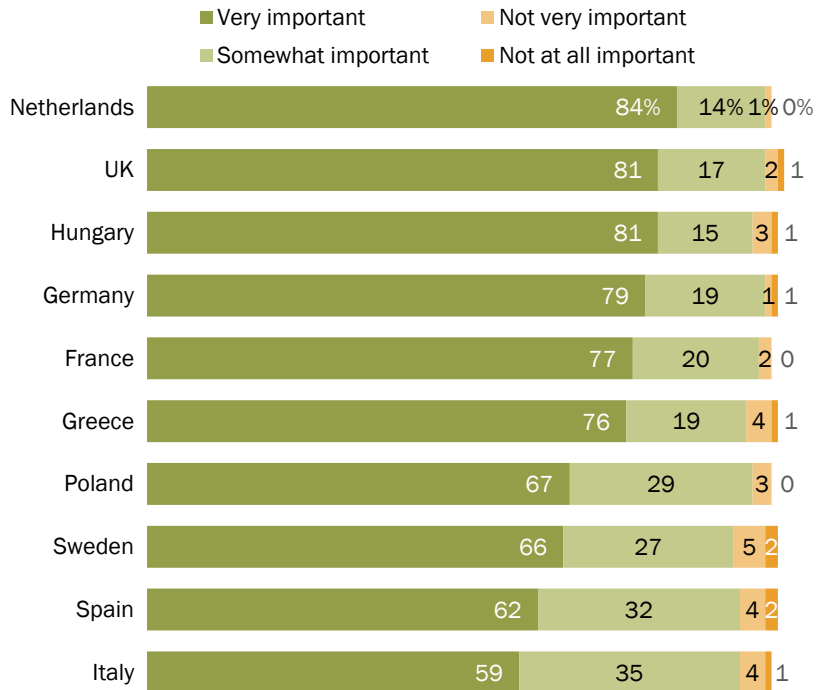
For example, in France those on the right end of the political spectrum are 22 percentage points more likely

than those on the left to say that language is very important to being truly French. In Sweden, the partisan divide is 20 points and in the UK it is 19 points.

In some European countries, the ability to speak the official language is more important to people ages 50 and older than to those ages 18 to 34. In Sweden, for instance, the oldest generation is 23 percentage points more likely than the youngest generation to say language is very important to being Swedish. Generational splits are also found in the UK (18 points), Spain (17 points), Greece (13 points) and the Netherlands (11 points).

Ability to speak the national language viewed as very important across Europe

Being able to speak our national language is ___ for being truly (survey country nationality)



Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q85b.

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Language and national identity in Australia, Canada and Japan

In Australia, roughly two-thirds (69%) of the public believes it is very important to speak English to be a true Australian. A majority of all age groups hold this view, but older Australians (78%) are much more likely to voice this view than younger ones (59%).

English and French both have federal status in Canada, meaning all government services and federal legislation are bilingual. English is the mother tongue of 57% of Canadians, French that of 21% of the [population](#). The survey asked Canadians about the importance of being able to speak either English or French. Overall, 59% across both groups say speaking one of the official languages is very important to being a true Canadian. Although a majority, this is a smaller share of the population than in the other countries surveyed (except Italy, where 59% also hold this view).

Language is also important to the Japanese sense of national identity. Seven-in-ten say it is very important to speak Japanese. This includes roughly three-quarters (77%) of older Japanese and a majority (57%) of younger ones. Language facility is considerably more important to Japanese women (77%) than to men (62%).

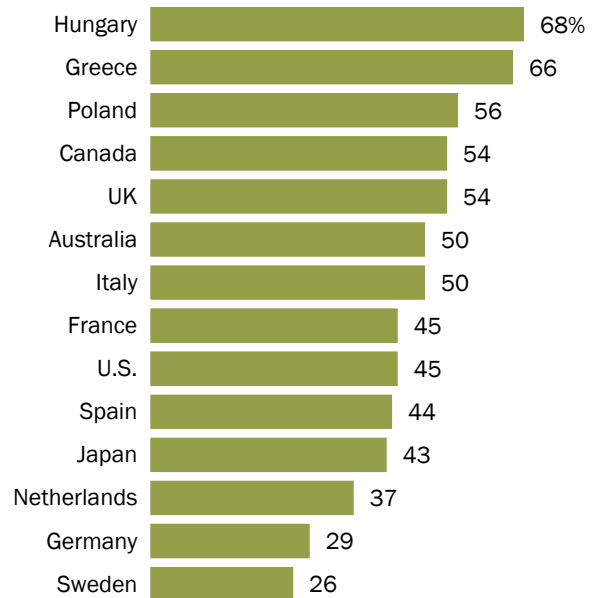
2. Wide disparity on the importance of national customs and traditions

National customs and traditions – the holidays people celebrate, the foods they eat, the clothes they wear and the folk tales they tell their children – have long been associated with national identity. But their importance in the public’s sense of nationality varies widely across countries.

For Hungarians (68%) and Greeks (66%), customs and traditions are very important to being considered a true Hungarian or Greek. Australians and Italians (both 50%) see them as of middling importance. But they are relatively unimportant for Germans (29%) and Swedes (26%).

Culture especially important to national identity for Hungarians, Greeks

Sharing our national customs and traditions is very important for being truly (survey country nationality)



Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q85d.

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Cultural Americanism

Among Americans, the prevailing view is that culture plays a role in defining national identity. More than four-in-ten (45%) believe that for a person to be considered truly American, it is very important that he or she share American customs and traditions. Another 39% say such identification with U.S. culture is at least somewhat important. Only 15% voice the view that this embrace of cultural Americanism is not very or not at all important.

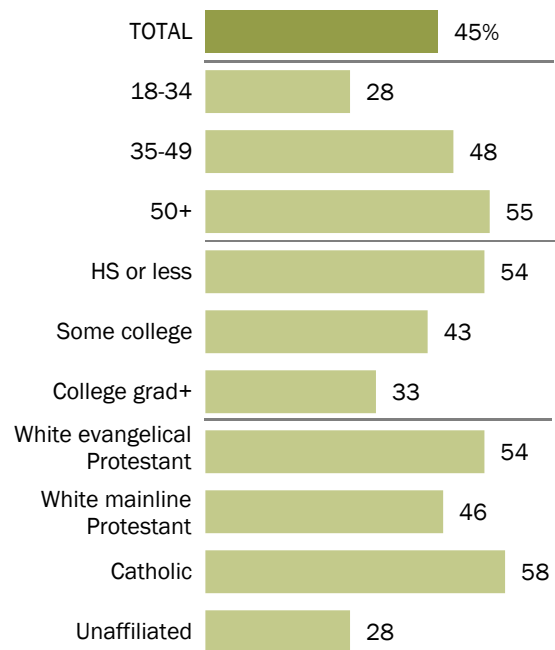
Notably, there is a significant generation gap when it comes to the importance of customs and traditions. A majority of people ages 50 and older say it is very important to have an affinity for American culture to be considered truly American. Just 28% of people ages 18 to 34 agree.

Education matters in a person's view of cultural identity. More than half (54%) of people with a high school education or less believe that to be truly American it is very important that one share U.S. customs and traditions. Just 33% of those with a college degree or more share this view.

Similarly, Catholics (58%), white evangelical Protestants (54%) and white mainline Protestants (46%) are more likely than those who are unaffiliated (28%) to believe that adherence to U.S. culture is very important to being an American.

In U.S., large differences by age, education, religion in public views of tradition and nationality

Sharing American customs and traditions is very important for being truly American



Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q85d.

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In Europe: The cultural roots of nationality

Most Europeans believe that adhering to native customs and traditions is at least somewhat important in defining national identity. But there is less intensity to such sentiment than there is about speaking the national language.

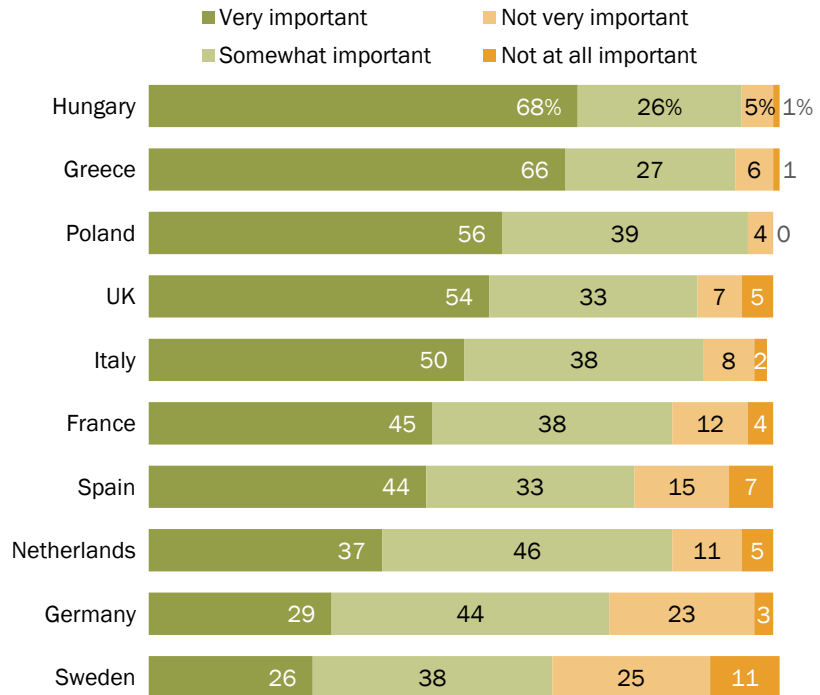
In only five of the countries surveyed do half or more say sharing customs and traditions is *very* important. In Sweden (36%) and Germany (26%), roughly a quarter or more actually believe that such cultural affinity is either not very important or not important at all.

In some countries, there is also an ideological divide over the relationship between culture and nationality, with those on the right significantly more likely than those on the left to link the two. In the UK, for instance, this right-left split is 30 percentage points. In France the gap is 29 points and in Poland it is 21 points.

Europeans of different generations also tend to disagree on the importance of customs and traditions to national identity. Those ages 50 and older are more likely than those ages 18 to 34 to say adhering to native culture is very important, especially in the UK (a 24-percentage-point generation gap), France (23 points) and Greece (21 points).

Europeans differ on importance of customs and traditions to national identity

Sharing our national customs and traditions is ___ for being truly (survey country nationality)



Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q85d.

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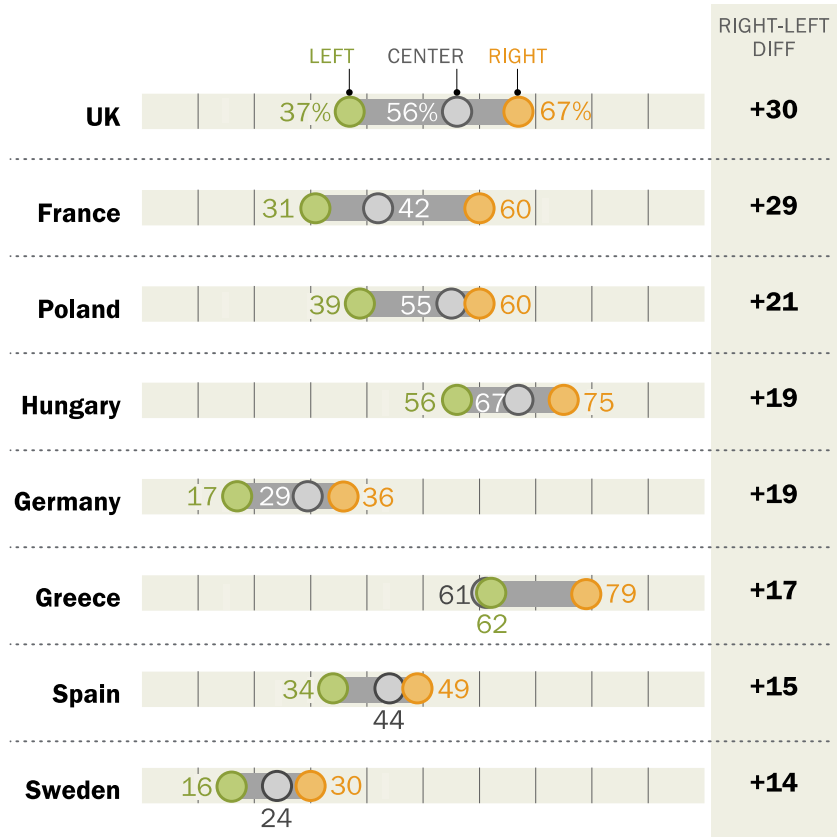
Educational background also matters in a person's views of the link between culture and national identity. Europeans with a secondary education or less are generally more likely than those with more than a secondary education to believe that customs and tradition are very important to nationality. This educational differential is 20 points in France and Spain and 19 points in the UK.

Customs, traditions and national identity in Australia, Canada and Japan

Half of Australians believe it is very important to share national customs and traditions in order to be truly Australian. Older Australians (60%) are more likely than younger ones (40%) to see customs and traditions as strongly linked to national identity. People who place themselves on the right of the ideological spectrum (61%) are also more likely than those on the left (35%) to place great importance on culture as a marker of nationality. And Australians with a high school education or less (54%) are more likely than those with more than a high school degree (45%) to strongly link culture and national identity.

Those on right more likely than those on left to say traditions are very important to national identity

Sharing our national customs and traditions is very important for being truly (survey country nationality)



Note: Only statistically significant differences shown.

Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q85d.

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In Canada, 54% believe that adherence to their country's cultural norms is very important to being Canadian. Generations differ on this issue, however. Roughly six-in-ten people ages 50 and older (61%) say adherence to traditions is very important to national identity. Only about four-in-ten of those ages 18 to 34 (41%) agree. There is also an ideological divide in Canada over the cultural

roots of national identity: 65% of those on the right of political spectrum say these roots are very important, compared with just 37% of those who place themselves on the left. Notably, there are no differences between French and English speakers on this issue.

More than four-in-ten Japanese (43%) say following local customs and traditions is very important to national identity. Older generations (50%) in Japan are more likely than younger people (30%) to strongly link adherence to local customs and traditions with nationality. And Japanese with a high school education or less (47%) are more likely than those with more than a high school education (36%) to say culture is very important to national identity.

3. Birthright nationality

In contrast to the strongly nativist rhetoric prevalent in many of the political debates over immigration, publics do not always make a strong link between national identity and a person's birthplace. A median of 32% across the 14 countries surveyed say it is very important to have been born in my country to be considered truly one of us.

Born in the USA

In 2015, **13.9%** of the U.S. population was foreign born. This proportion has increased from 4.7% in 1970. An additional 11.9% of those living in the U.S. are second-generation immigrants. So roughly a quarter of the public are immigrants or the sons and daughters of immigrants.

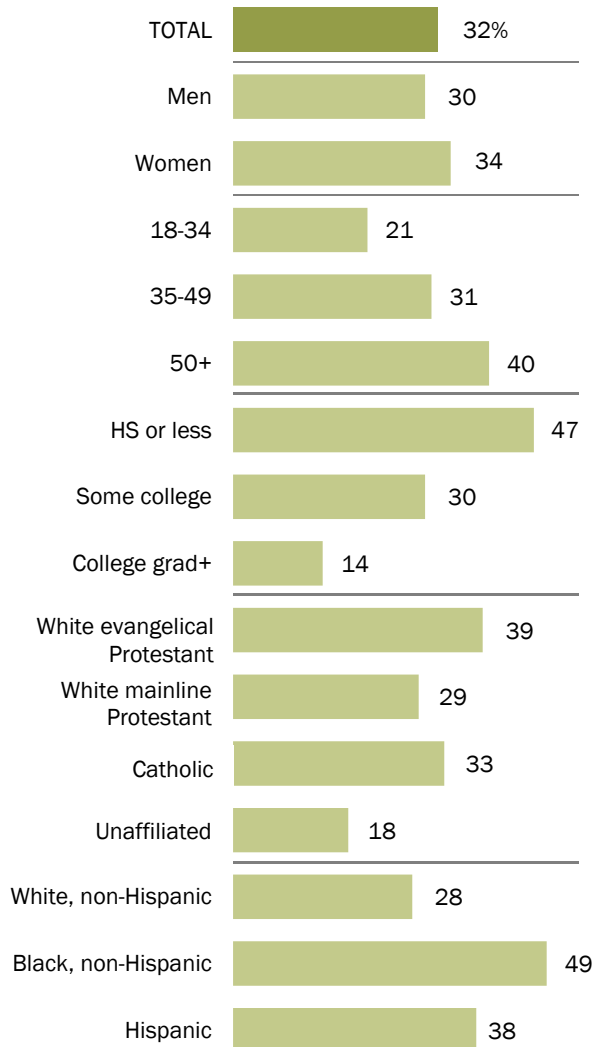
Against this backdrop, only about a third (32%) of people in the U.S. believe that to be truly American it is *very* important to have been born in the United States. Nearly a quarter (23%) say it is somewhat important, while a fifth (21%) think it is not important at all.

Nearly half (47%) of people in the U.S. with a high school education or less say that to be American one must be born in the country. Only 14% of the public with a college degree or more shares that opinion.

Roughly half of non-Hispanic blacks (49%), compared with 38% of Hispanics and 28% of whites, believe it is very important to be born in the U.S. to be truly American.

In U.S. being native born most important to older, less educated Americans

Having been born in the U.S. is very important for being truly American



Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q85a.

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In Europe, relatively few subscribe to idea of birthright nationality

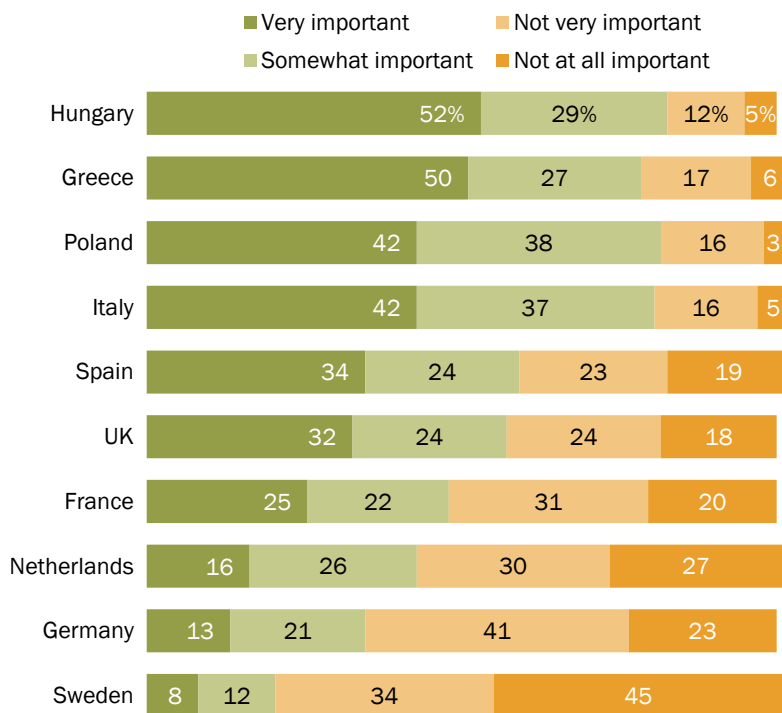
No European country accords legal citizenship based simply on the fact that a person was born on the territory of a state.

The European countries where the public makes the strongest link between national identity and place of birth are Hungary (52% say place of birth is *very* important), Greece (50%), Poland (42%) and Italy (42%). Notably, in the Netherlands (16%), Germany (13%) and Sweden (8%), fewer than one-in-five believe birthplace is a very important component of national identity.

In some nations, ideology plays a major role in such views. People on the right are much more likely than those on the left to say place of birth is very important in Greece (31 percentage points), the UK (24 points) and Italy (23 points).

Hungarians and Greeks most likely to say birthplace is very important to national identity

Having been born in our country is ___ for being truly (survey country nationality)



Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q85a.

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Education also affects public views on the relationship between being native born and national identity. In eight of the 10 EU countries polled, people with a secondary education or less are more likely than those with more education to believe it is very important to be native born in order to be considered a true national of that society. This educational differential is 24 percentage points in the UK, 23 points in Spain and 19 points in Poland.

Birthplace relatively unimportant to Australians, Canadians, but very important to Japanese

Despite recent public [debate](#) about limiting immigration, just 13% of Australians say a person's place of birth is very important to national identity – perhaps reflecting an acknowledgement that roughly one-in-four Australians (27.7%) were in fact born overseas. Nearly seven-in-ten Australians voice the view that where a person is born is *not* very important or not important at all. While such sentiment is overwhelming, differences of degree still surface among Australians by age, political affiliation and education. Roughly two-in-ten (19%) of those ages 50 and older place a strong premium on where a person is born, compared with only 4% of those ages 18 to 34. Ideologically, 22% of Australians on the right say place of birth is very important to nationality, but only 6% on the left agree. And with regard to educational level, 18% of those with a high school education or less link birthplace with national identity, while 9% with more than a high school degree share that view.

In Canada, where [20.0%](#) of the population is made up of immigrants, about two-in-ten say it is very important (21%) that a person be born in Canada to be considered truly Canadian. Roughly twice as many older Canadians (28%) as younger ones (13%) say a person must be born in the country to be a true national. People who place themselves on the right (24%) of the political spectrum are slightly more likely than those on the left (16%) to link national identity and place of birth. And Canadians with a secondary education or less (33%) are more likely than those with more than a secondary education (12%) to say that being born in Canada is a very important to being truly Canadian.

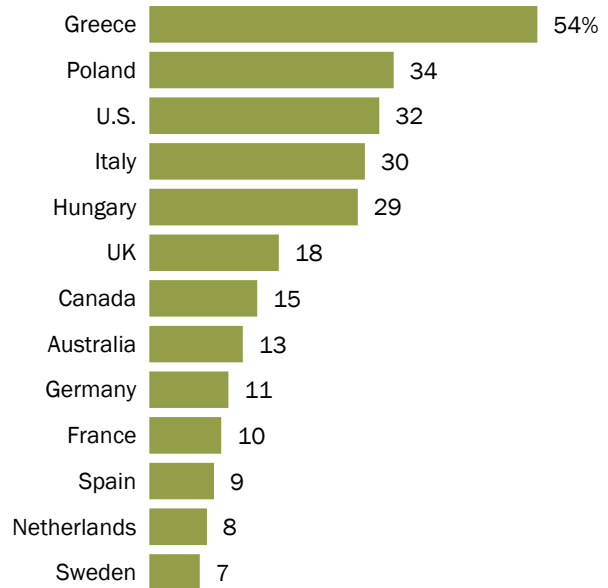
For half of Japanese, being native born is *very* important to being considered Japanese. There is a generation gap in the intensity of such sentiment: 59% of Japanese ages 50 and older accord a strong importance to being born in Japan, compared with 29% of Japanese ages 18 to 34. Education also plays a role in such views: 55% of those with a secondary education or less say birthright nationality is very important, while only 40% of those with more than a secondary education agree.

4. Faith: Few strong links to national identity

In all countries except Japan, the survey asked respondents whether being Christian or Catholic (reflecting religious traditions in the countries polled) was important to national identity. Across the 13 countries where the question was asked, a median of just 15% say it is *very* important to be Christian in order to be a true national. Only in Greece do more than half (54%) hold this view, while in Sweden fewer than one-in-ten (7%) make a strong connection between nationality and Christianity.

Relatively few say religion essential to national identity

Being a Christian is very important for being truly (survey country nationality)*



* In Italy, Poland and Spain, asked "Catholic." Question not asked in Japan.

Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q85c.

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Religion and the sense of being ‘truly American’

In 2014, Christians accounted for **70.6%** of the U.S. population. Non-Christians and those unaffiliated with any religion totaled 28.7%.

About a third (32%) of Americans say it is *very* important for a person to be a Christian in order to be considered truly American.

Roughly three-in-ten (31%) contend that one’s religion is not at all important.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the link between religion and nationality is of greatest consequence to those for whom religion plays a very important role in daily life. Among this group, 51% say it is very important to be Christian in order to be truly American. For those respondents who say religion for them is only somewhat important, not too important or not important at all, just 11% say Christian identity is very important to being American.

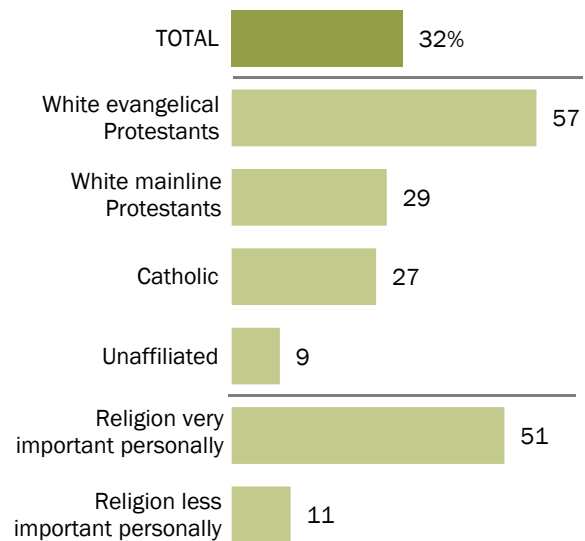
There is also a denominational divide on the relationship between Christianity and nationality. A majority (57%) of white evangelical Protestants say it is *very* important to be Christian to be a true American. Just 29% of white mainline Protestants and 27% of Catholics agree. Only 9% of people who are unaffiliated with an organized religion say it is very important for a person to be Christian in order to be truly American.

Generations are divided on this question, with those 50 and older placing far greater importance on being a Christian (44% say it is very important) than Americans under 35 (18%).

Men and women slightly differ on religion’s importance in American identity. More than a third (36%) of women say it is very important for a person to be a Christian; roughly a quarter (27%) of men concur.

Most white evangelical Protestants say it is very important to be Christian to be truly American

Being a Christian is very important for being truly American



Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q85c.

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Views on Christianity and nationality also differ along educational lines. People with a high school education or less (44%) are more than twice as likely as people with at least a college degree (19%) to voice the view that it is very important that one is Christian in order to be American.

Religion and national identity in Europe, Canada and Australia

There are widely disparate views on the importance of religion to national identity in Europe. In Greece, 54% believe it is very important to be Christian to be considered a true national. In contrast, in two countries – Spain (57%) and Sweden (57%) – majorities actually say religion is *not at all* important to national identity.

Views of the importance of religion to nationality often divide along generational lines. People ages 50 and older are significantly more likely than those ages 18 to 34 to say that being Christian is very important to national identity. This generation gap is largest in Greece: 65% of older Greeks say it is very important but only 39% of younger Greeks agree. The differential is 18 percentage points in the UK, 16 points in Germany and 15 points in Hungary.

People on the right of the ideological spectrum are more likely to view religion as very important to nationality. This right-left divide is particularly prominent in Greece (26 points) and Poland (21 points). The ideological left is quite secular in Germany (just 5% say religion is very important to nationality) and Spain (6%). By comparison, a greater share of people on the left in Greece (40%), Hungary (26%), Italy (24%) and Poland (21%) say being Christian is very important to be truly Greek, Hungarian, Italian or Polish.

Older people more likely to see link between Christianity and nationality

Being a Christian is very important for being truly (survey country nationality)*

	18-34	35-49	50+	Oldest - youngest gap
	%	%	%	
Greece	39	49	65	+26
UK	7	12	26	+19
Canada	6	8	25	+19
Germany	0	10	16	+16
Hungary	20	28	35	+15
Italy	26	19	40	+14
Australia	8	6	20	+12
Netherlands	2	4	13	+11
Poland	29	33	39	+10
Sweden	2	5	10	+8
Spain	7	6	13	+6
France	10	6	12	+2

* In Italy, Poland and Spain, asked "Catholic."

Note: Statistically significant differences in **bold**.

Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q85c.

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Only 13% of Australians believe that it is very important for a person to be a Christian in order to be truly Australian. Roughly half (48%) think it is not important at all. Australians who put

themselves on the right of the political spectrum (19%) are nearly five times as likely as those on the left (4%) to place great importance on religious belief as a qualification for being a true Australian. In addition, older Australians (20%) are more than twice as likely as the younger generation (8%) to link Christianity with national identity. Less educated Australians (19%) are also more likely than those with more education (9%) to make this connection.

Only 15% of Canadians think being Christian is very important to national identity. People ages 50 and older (25%) are roughly four times as likely as Canadians ages 18 to 34 (6%) to think that being Canadian is dependent upon being a Christian. Similarly, about four times as many people on the right (21%) as on the left (5%) think being Christian is very important to being Canadian. And Canadians with a secondary education or less (22%) are twice as likely as those with more than a secondary education (10%) to link religion with national identity.

5. Views of national identity by country

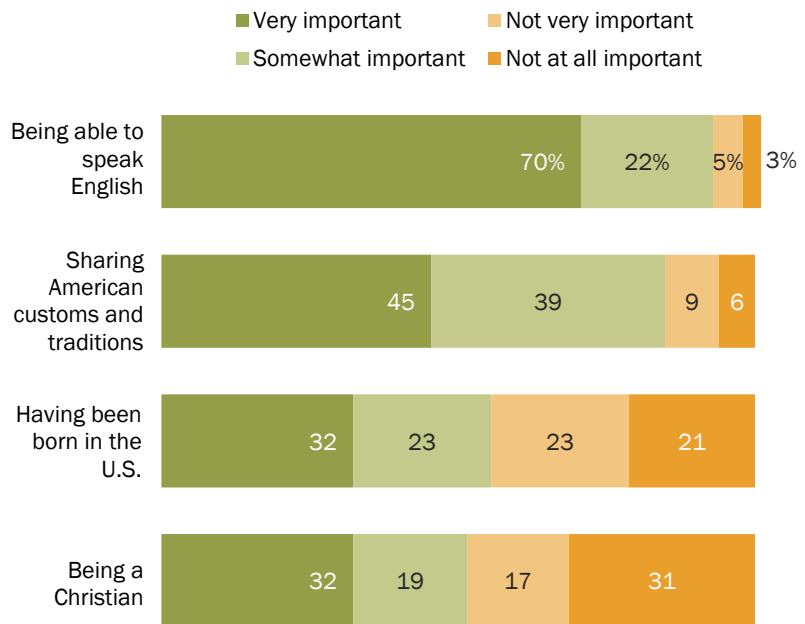
What does it take to be ‘truly American’?

Roughly nine-in-ten in the U.S. (92%) voice the view that to be truly American it is very or somewhat important that a person speak English, with 70% saying it is very important.

More than eight-in-ten think a person’s American-ness depends on whether she or he shares U.S. customs and traditions. In addition, a majority of the public believes that to be truly American a person has to be born in the United States. And the public is divided over whether one has to be Christian in order to be considered American, with roughly a third saying it is very important and another third saying it is not at all important.

U.S. public: To be ‘truly American,’ speak English and share customs and traditions

Some people say that the following things are important for being truly American. Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is?



Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q85a-d.

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In Europe, language, culture are central to national identity

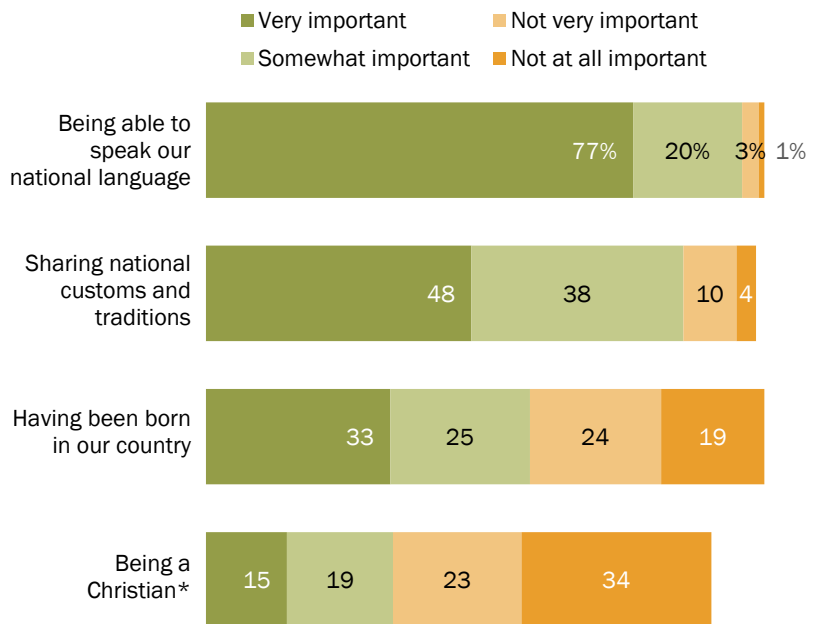
European opinions vary widely about the key components of national identity, but publics agree that language is fundamental. Across the 10 EU countries surveyed, a median of 97% think that being able to speak the national language is very or somewhat important.

There is also a strong cultural component to national identity for Europeans. A median of 86% believe sharing national customs and traditions is at least somewhat important, with 48% saying this is *very* important. But the intensity of such sentiment differs between countries. While 68% in Hungary and 66% in Greece say national customs and traditions are *very* important, fewer than four-in-ten in the Netherlands (37%), and roughly three-in-ten or less in Germany (29%) and Sweden (26%) agree.

Fewer Europeans say the land of one's birth matters to national identity. A median of 58% say it is important for someone to be born in their country to be truly considered a national of that land; a third think this is *very* important.

In Europe, language seen as crucial to national identity

Some people say that the following things are important for being truly (survey country nationality). Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is?



*In France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Netherlands, Sweden and the UK asked "Christian"; in Italy, Poland and Spain asked "Catholic."

Note: Percentages are medians based on 10 European countries.
Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q85a-d.

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Religion is generally seen as even less central to national identity. However, it is an essential factor to many in Greece, where 54% say it is very important to be Christian to be considered truly Greek.

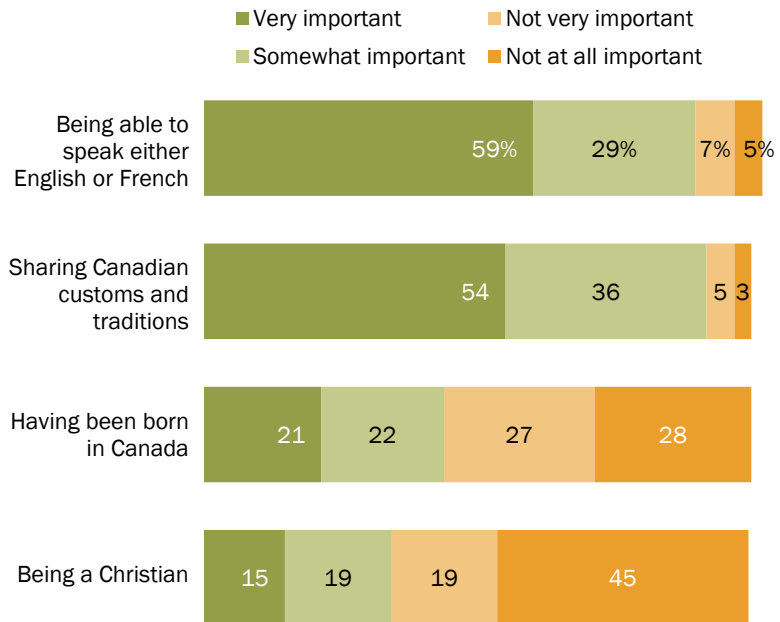
What it means to be Canadian

On questions of national identity, nearly nine-in-ten Canadians think it is either very (59%) or somewhat important (29%) to speak either English or French to be truly Canadian. A similar proportion believes it is either very (54%) or somewhat important (36%) to share Canadian customs and traditions in order to be truly Canadian. Fewer voice the view that it is important to be native-born or Christian.

French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians are generally in agreement about whether language is very important for being a true Canadian. Roughly six-in-ten of those interviewed in French (63%) and English (58%) say speaking either French or English is very important to being truly Canadian.

Language and customs seen as crucial to Canadian identity

Some people say that the following things are important for being truly Canadian. Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is?



Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q85a-d.

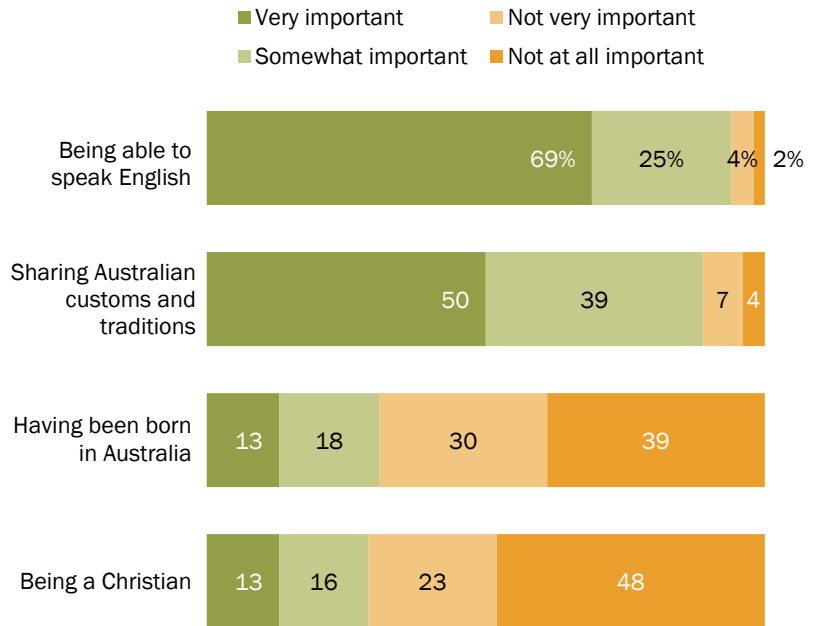
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Australians link language and culture to national identity

More than nine-in-ten Australians (94%) say speaking English is at least somewhat important to being truly Australian. A similar proportion says the same about sharing customs and traditions. Relatively few Australians think being born in Australia (31%) or being a Christian (29%) is very or even somewhat important to being a true Australian.

Australians say ability to speak English is important to national identity

Some people say that the following things are important for being truly Australian. Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is?



Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q85a-d.

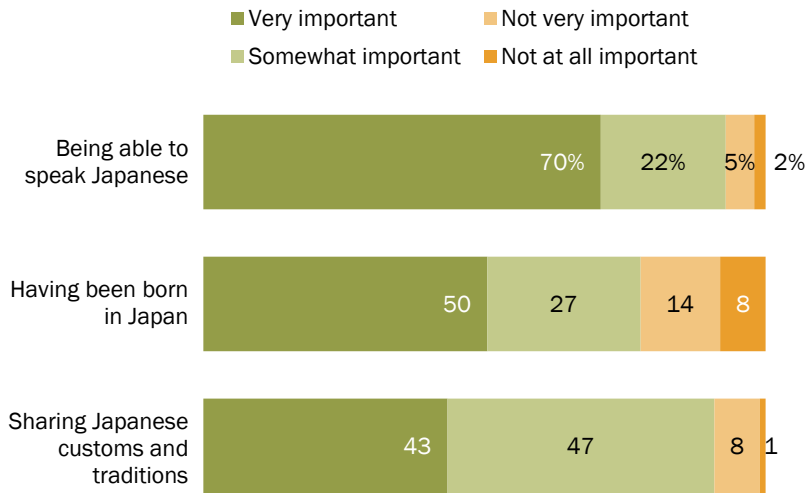
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Speaking Japanese seen as particularly important to being Japanese

About nine-in-ten Japanese (92%) believe it is very or somewhat important for a person to be able to speak Japanese to be considered truly Japanese. A similar proportion says the same about sharing Japanese customs and traditions. Meanwhile, roughly three-quarters of Japanese (77%) voice the view that it is very or somewhat important to be born in Japan to be truly Japanese. (The question about the link between nationality and religious affiliation was not asked in Japan.)

Japanese believe that to be Japanese, people should speak Japanese, be born in Japan and share customs

Some people say that the following things are important for being truly Japanese. Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is?



Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q85a-b, d.

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Methodology

About the Pew Research Center's Spring 2016 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 and TNS BMRB. The results are based on national samples, unless otherwise noted. More details about our international survey methodology and country-specific sample designs are [available here](#).

Detailed information on survey methods for this report

General information on international survey research

Topline Questionnaire

**Pew Research Center
Spring 2016 Survey
February 1, 2017 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.
- Not all questions included in the Spring 2016 survey are presented in this topline. Omitted questions have either been previously released or will be released in future reports.
- Throughout this topline, data from the Netherlands in 2016 have been updated to reflect a revised weight, which corrects the percentages for two regions.

		Q85a. Some people say that the following things are important for being truly (SURVEY COUNTRY NATIONALITY). Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is? a. to have been born in (survey country)					
		Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important	DK / Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2016	32	23	23	21	1	100
Canada	Spring, 2016	21	22	27	28	1	100
France	Spring, 2016	25	22	31	20	1	100
Germany	Spring, 2016	13	21	41	23	1	100
Greece	Spring, 2016	50	27	17	6	0	100
Hungary	Spring, 2016	52	29	12	5	1	100
Italy	Spring, 2016	42	37	16	5	1	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2016	17	26	29	27	1	100
Poland	Spring, 2016	42	38	16	3	1	100
Spain	Spring, 2016	34	24	23	19	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2016	8	12	34	45	1	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2016	32	24	24	18	1	100
Australia	Spring, 2016	13	18	30	39	0	100
Japan	Spring, 2016	50	27	14	8	1	100

		Q85b. Some people say that the following things are important for being truly (SURVEY COUNTRY NATIONALITY). Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is? b. to be able to speak (NATIONAL LANGUAGE)					
		Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important	DK / Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2016	70	22	5	3	0	100
Canada	Spring, 2016	59	29	7	5	0	100
France	Spring, 2016	77	20	2	0	1	100
Germany	Spring, 2016	79	19	1	1	0	100
Greece	Spring, 2016	76	19	4	1	0	100
Hungary	Spring, 2016	81	15	3	1	1	100
Italy	Spring, 2016	59	35	4	1	0	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2016	84	15	1	0	0	100
Poland	Spring, 2016	67	29	3	0	0	100
Spain	Spring, 2016	62	32	4	2	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2016	66	27	5	2	0	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2016	81	17	2	1	0	100
Australia	Spring, 2016	69	25	4	2	0	100
Japan	Spring, 2016	70	22	5	2	1	100

In the U.S., UK and Australia asked 'English'; in Canada asked 'either English or French'; in France asked 'French'; in Germany asked 'German'; in Greece asked 'Greek'; in Hungary asked 'Hungarian'; in Italy asked 'Italian'; in the Netherlands asked 'Dutch'; in Poland asked 'Polish'; in Spain asked 'Spanish'; in Sweden asked 'Swedish'; in Japan asked 'Japanese.'

		Q85c. Some people say that the following things are important for being truly (SURVEY COUNTRY NATIONALITY). Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is? c. to be a (DOMINANT DENOMINATION)					
		Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important	DK / Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2016	32	19	17	31	1	100
Canada	Spring, 2016	15	19	19	45	2	100
France	Spring, 2016	10	13	30	45	2	100
Germany	Spring, 2016	11	19	38	30	1	100
Greece	Spring, 2016	54	24	13	9	0	100
Hungary	Spring, 2016	29	37	22	11	1	100
Italy	Spring, 2016	30	36	20	11	2	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2016	8	17	24	50	1	100
Poland	Spring, 2016	34	37	19	9	1	100
Spain	Spring, 2016	9	10	21	57	2	100
Sweden	Spring, 2016	7	10	27	57	0	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2016	18	19	24	38	1	100
Australia	Spring, 2016	13	16	23	48	1	100

In the U.S., Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Netherlands, Sweden, the UK and Australia asked 'Christian'; in Italy, Poland and Spain asked 'Catholic.'

		Q85d. Some people say that the following things are important for being truly (SURVEY COUNTRY NATIONALITY). Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is? d. to share (NATIONALITY) customs and traditions					
		Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important	DK / Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2016	45	39	9	6	1	100
Canada	Spring, 2016	54	36	5	3	2	100
France	Spring, 2016	45	38	12	4	1	100
Germany	Spring, 2016	29	44	23	3	1	100
Greece	Spring, 2016	66	27	6	1	0	100
Hungary	Spring, 2016	68	26	5	1	0	100
Italy	Spring, 2016	50	38	8	2	1	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2016	38	45	11	5	0	100
Poland	Spring, 2016	56	39	4	0	1	100
Spain	Spring, 2016	44	33	15	7	2	100
Sweden	Spring, 2016	26	38	25	11	0	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2016	54	33	7	5	1	100
Australia	Spring, 2016	50	39	7	4	1	100
Japan	Spring, 2016	43	47	8	1	0	100