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Opinion Analysis

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Office of Research

Western Europe: Publics Credit U.S. for Relief to Haiti

Britons, French, Germans, Italians, and Spaniards say the United States has done more than other countries to assist Haiti following the devastating January earthquake. Though relief efforts in Haiti have not themselves directly impacted opinion of the United States, the belief that the United States generally assists disaster-stricken countries does positively affect U.S. image.

Awareness of Haiti relief efforts is high in Europe: majorities of Britons (66%), French (92%), Germans (85%), Italians (85%), and Spaniards (70%) have heard at least a fair amount about the earthquake and relief effort in Haiti.

U.S. Credited For Relief Effort

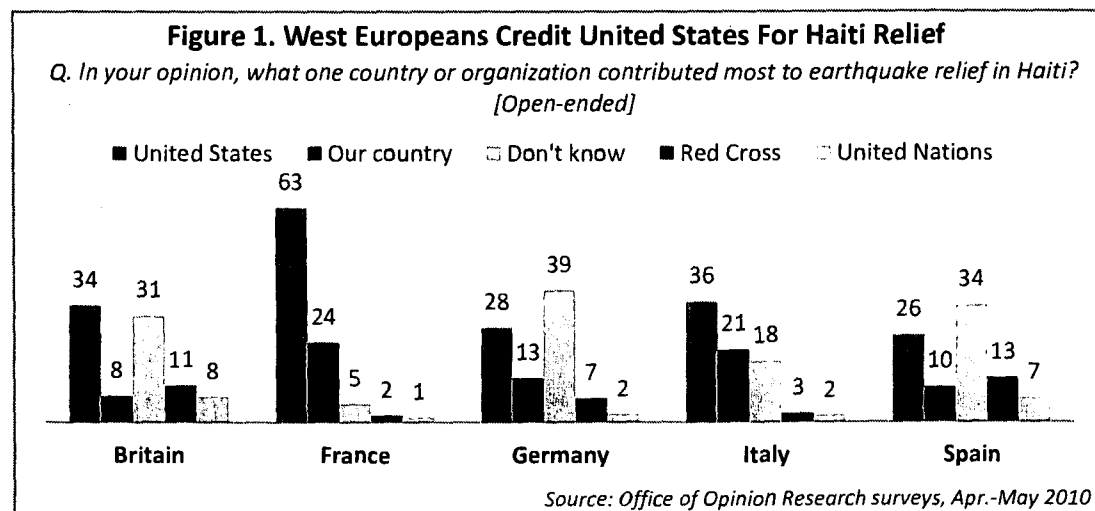
Though certain West European media, particularly in France and in Italy, were initially critical of the U.S. relief effort, editorials in leading media gave way to mostly positive commentary.¹ Public opinion among those who have heard about the Haiti earthquake reflects this more positive take. West Europeans with a definite opinion volunteer the United States as contributing the most to earthquake relief in Haiti, though a third or more in Britain, Spain, and Germany are unsure (Figure 1).

Few in these five countries say their own country contributed the most to earthquake relief. In France, where early editorials were most critical of the U.S., only a quarter say that their country has done the most to aid Haitian relief (Box, next page).

Among those who followed events in Haiti, majorities believe that the United States has done a good job in continuing to help Haitians after the earthquake. Western European publics also give their own countries and the Red Cross high marks for responding (see Appendix Table).

Haiti Aid Has Not Boosted U.S. Image

West Europeans remain generally positive toward the U.S. (Figure 2, next page), but their overall impressions are not significantly influenced by U.S. assistance to Haiti.



1. See Media Analysis, "Europe: 'Pointless' Quarreling Won't Rebuild Haiti," January 22, 2010.

Methodological Note: This report is based on surveys commissioned by the Office of Opinion Research. Between April 19 and May 5, 2010, reputable firms interviewed 1,000 adults in each country (Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain). See page 3 for further details. M-70-10

This publication summarizes and interprets recent polling data that does not reflect the views of the U.S. Government.

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While specific instances of Haiti relief may not move the needle of U.S. image in Western Europe, a broader perception that the United States provides disaster relief in general *is* a factor in more favorable views. Majorities in Great Britain (77%), Italy (79%), Germany (86%), and France (72%) and half of Spaniards (52%) think the United States aids in disaster relief around the world. West Europeans who perceive the U.S. as generous with its disaster aid are more likely to have a positive view of the U.S.

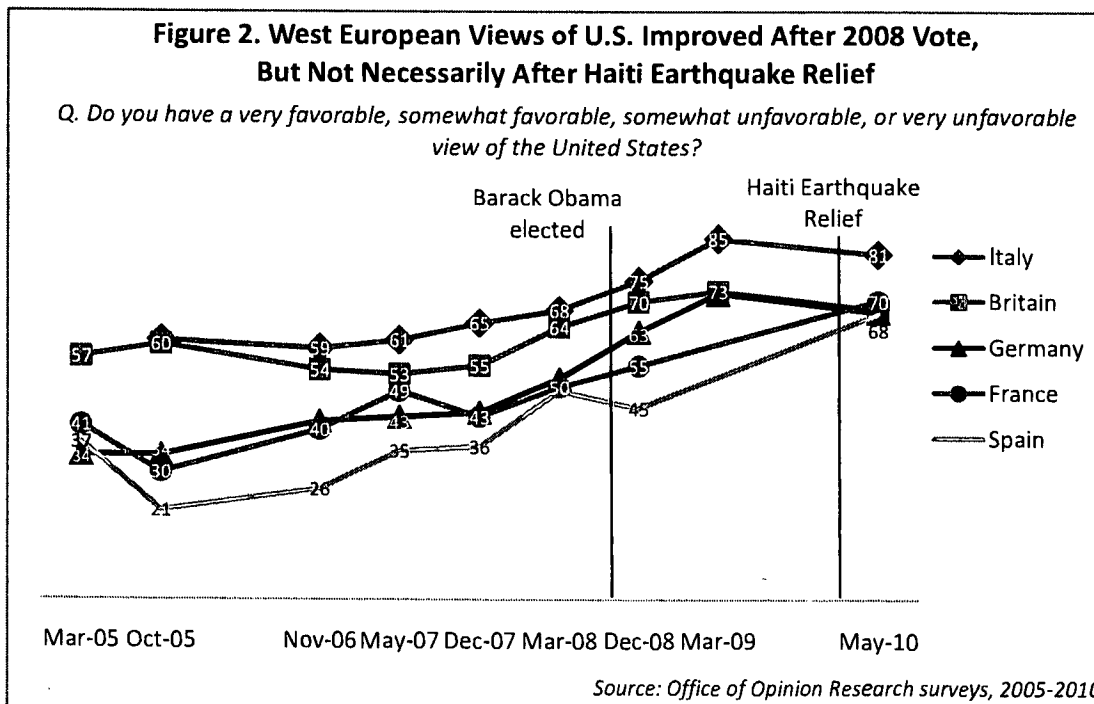
European Publics Satisfied with Their Own Country's Level of Aid

Among those aware of the Haiti earthquake, most are satisfied with their country's contributions to the earthquake relief effort in Haiti, but would be open to some additional financial assistance for the reconstruction effort. When asked if their government should contribute more money to Haiti, majorities in France (80%), Spain (74%), and Italy (60%) and half of Britons (53%) agree.

French Generous With Help for Haiti, Praise for U.S.

The French stand out in Europe in terms of being concerned and willing to help their former colony. An overwhelming majority (92%) have heard or read about the earthquake and the relief effort, including 65 percent who have heard a great deal. Large majorities also show a willingness to give more assistance funds and take in refugees. A majority (63%) recognizes the United States as the prime contributor to the relief effort and 80 percent say Washington has done a good job.

Helping refugees by allowing them to immigrate is much more controversial. Seven-in-ten French (72%) and Spanish (73%) say they would be willing to accept refugees, while majorities in Britain (63%) and Italy (71%) are *unwilling* to accept refugees.



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How This Poll Was Conducted

This report is based on data from nationally representative telephone surveys conducted in Britain (n=1,002) April 21-26; France (n=1,002) April 19-23; Germany (n=1,000) April 23-May3; Italy (n=1,000) April 22-27; and Spain (n=1,000) April 26-May5 among adults age 18 and over. Local survey organizations carried out nationwide fieldwork. Questions were written by the Office of Opinion Research. The vernacular translations were prepared by the local firms and checked by the Office of Opinion Research. The margin of error for each country is approximately +/-4% for the overall sample.

Additional information on the methodology of the surveys may be obtained from the analysts.

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