



Opinion Poll
SOCIETY
Religion

DOES RELIGION PLAY A POSITIVE ROLE?

A global poll by WIN/Gallup International has revealed that over half of respondents believe that religion plays a positive role in their country, with people in Western Europe recording significantly lower positive results than other regions.

Zurich, Switzerland, Apr 18, 2014

Highlights

- Over half (**59%**) of global respondents said that religion plays a positive role.
- **22%** of respondents globally believe that religion plays a negative role in their country.
- Western Europe was significantly less net positive regionally (**4%**) than the rest of the world where overall net positivity is **37%**.
- Education proved a significant factor globally with those educated to Masters or PhD level being significantly less net positive about the role religion is playing (**20%**) increasing to **57%** net positive for those with no education.
- Globally Protestants and Muslims were the most net positive (**60%**) about the role of religion in their respective countries; Hindus were the least net positive (**24%**).

The Global Perspective:

In the run up to the Easter period, WIN/Gallup International has released findings that show just over half (59%) of the 66,806 people polled feel that religion plays a positive role in their country. This, however, is not a sentiment reflected across all the regions, with Western Europe showing a low net positivity (the net score is the total positive percentage less the total negative percentage) at only 4% - a figure that is significantly less than the global average (37%). When compared to other regions, there is a notable step to Eastern Europe at 33%, followed by Asia at 37%. This lower positivity in Western Europe may be attributed to the secular nature of the region in comparison to other parts of the world.

Jean-Marc Leger, President of WIN/Gallup International, said: *"This survey has produced some fascinating results and not least on the religious outlook of countries. Over half of the world still believes that religion plays a positive role in their country. Having said that, it is interesting to note that Western Europe bucks this trend considerably, highlighting the complex role of religion within the region and the impact that a secular outlook has on a country. The correlation between education and people's view on the role of religion in society also poses some interesting questions."*

In total there were nine countries whose net scores were negative when asked about religion, with six of those falling within Western Europe (Belgium, Denmark, France, Netherlands, Spain and Sweden). Of these, Denmark was the most net negative at -36%, followed by Belgium (-30%), France (-22%) and Spain (-22%). By contrast, the most net positive country in this region was Iceland (43%) followed by Portugal (39%), which may be due to these countries having one dominant religion. On a global scale, the most net negative country was Lebanon (-43%).

While Western Europe may have come in significantly less positive than the other regions polled, there is generally a positive belief in the role of religion elsewhere in the world. The most net positive region globally is Africa (65%) followed by the Americas (54%) and MENA (50%), and these high response rates may be due to the less secular nature of these regions. The most positive country globally was Indonesia, with 95% stating religion played a positive role, whilst, as a comparison, the USA and the UK are both net positive at 43% and 6% respectively.



Religion still holds great importance in the US with 62% of respondents saying religion plays a positive role in the country, culminating in net positivity of 43%. This shows that the majority of US respondents hold religion central to their values, something which is still reflected in the country's politics - and something this poll would suggest is unlikely to change in the near future.

A G7 Comparison:

An analysis of the responses of G7 countries shows vast differences in opinion on the topic of religion. The spread of 43% net positive in the US as compared to the French -22% net score is striking. Other interesting data include Japan's very low 9% response rate to religion playing a negative role and Germany's 0% response rate in the "I don't know" category.

Does religion generally play a positive, negative or no role in your country?							
	Canada	France	Germany	USA	Italy	Japan	UK
Total positive	45%	20%	40%	62%	52%	32%	35%
Total negative	22%	42%	25%	19%	25%	9%	29%
No Role	26%	31%	36%	11%	18%	15%	24%
I don't know	8%	7%	0%	8%	5%	44%	12%
Net Score	23%	-22%	15%	43%	27%	23%	6%

The Impact of Education:

The data also shows a clear correlation between the level of education people have received and their perceived positivity about the role of religion in their country. The results would suggest that those who have been educated to Masters or PhD level have 20% lower net positivity compared to those who have had less education. The results also showed that net positivity increased gradually to an average of 57% for those who have no education at all. The table below highlights this staggered increase:

Does religion generally play a positive, negative or no role in your country?					
	No education	Primary school	Secondary school	University	Masters, PHD, etc
Total positive	70%	68%	62%	56%	52%
Total negative	13%	15%	17%	26%	32%
No Role	11%	12%	14%	14%	13%
I don't know	6%	5%	7%	4%	4%
Net Score	57%	53%	45%	30%	20%

How Do Religious Beliefs Affect Results?

When analysing the data by religion, a marked difference can be seen across the various religious groups in terms of their positivity towards the role of religion in their country. Globally, net positivity was 37%, however, of the major religious groups Muslims and Protestants both came in above the global figure at net positive 60% while Hindus were the least net positive at 24%. It is of note that a large proportion of Hindus surveyed are located in India where in fact net positivity is 19%.



The overall results broken down by religion can be seen here:

Does religion generally play a positive, negative or no role in your country?							
	Catholic	Russian or Eastern Orthodox	Protestant	Other Christian	Hindu	Muslim	Jewish
Total positive	70%	62%	72%	69%	55%	76%	58%
Total negative	14%	15%	12%	16%	31%	16%	23%
No Role	12%	19%	13%	11%	11%	5%	14%
I don't know	4%	5%	3%	4%	2%	3%	5%
Net Score	56%	47%	60%	53%	24%	60%	35%

Does religion generally play a positive, negative or no role in your country? (Continued)				
	Buddhist	Other	Atheist	Apostolic
Total positive	58%	43%	40%	75%
Total negative	21%	32%	31%	4%
No role	17%	17%	25%	16%
I don't know	4%	7%	5%	5%
Net Score	37%	11%	9%	71%

NOTES FOR EDITORS

Net Score

Net score refers to the total percentage of respondents who believe religion plays a positive role in their country minus those who believe it plays a negative one.

Methodology

The End of Year Survey is an annual tradition initiated by and designed under the chairmanship of Dr. George Gallup in 1977. It has been conducted every year since then. This year it was carried out by Members of WIN/Gallup International in 65 countries around the world.

Sample Size and Mode of Field Work

A total of 66,806 persons were interviewed globally representing 77% of the global population. In each of the 65 countries a national probability sample of around 1,000 men and women was interviewed either face to face (34 countries), via telephone (10 countries); or online (21 countries). The field work was conducted between October 1st and December 9th 2013. In general, the margin of error for survey of this kind is at the 95% confidence level for 2780 is +/- 1.86%. While for a sample size of 300 it is +/- 5.66%

The global average has been computed according to the share of the covered adult population of the surveyed countries.



About the WIN/Gallup International Survey

WIN/Gallup International is the leading association in market research and polling and is made up of the 77 largest independent market research and polling firms in their respective countries with combined revenue of over €500 million and covering 95% of the world's market.

For more than 60 years WIN/Gallup International Members have demonstrated their expert ability to conduct multi-country surveys on a comparable basis and deliver the highest quality. Their Members are leading national institutes with a profound local knowledge of research methods and techniques, statistical sources, customs and culture differences of its own country and carefully selected by the Association Board. With only one Member agency per country, Members work together on a daily basis to share knowledge, new research techniques and tools, as well as to provide the most appropriate solutions to international research projects and service our clients to the best of our abilities.

The accumulated expertise of the Association is formidable - they have internationally renowned experts in public opinion, Third World issues, advertising, and media research as well as in commercial fields such as IT/telecommunications, healthcare, retail, economics, corporate research and so on. Members are at the leading edge of technical and methodological developments, which have impacted on not only the research industry but also the whole commercial world.

Disclaimer: *Disclaimer: WIN/Gallup International or its members are not related to Gallup Inc., headquartered in Washington D.C which is no longer a member of WIN/Gallup International Association. WIN/Gallup International Association does not accept responsibility for opinion polling other than its own. We require that our surveys be credited fully as WIN/ Gallup International (not Gallup or Gallup Poll). For further details see website: www.wingia.com*