

End of Year 2016

Global Report on Religion

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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.

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Opinion Research Committee of WIN/Gallup International: They will be happy to provide comments and explanations required by the media.

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Religion prevails in the world

- 62% of people in the world define themselves as religious; the figure in Pakistan is 93%.
- 74% of people globally believe we have a soul and 71% believe in God; while 56% believe in heaven, 54% in life after death and 49% in hell. In Pakistan, 98% believe in God; while 97% each believe in life after death; believe we have a soul and believe in heaven and hell.
- There is a connection between religiosity, beliefs and socio-demographic characteristics - such as age, income and education level. In general, as education and income levels grow higher, religiosity levels tend to diminish. On the other hand, the expression of different beliefs is higher among young people.
- The most religious countries are Thailand (98%) and Nigeria (97%), followed by Kosovo, India, Ghana, Papua New Guinea and Ivory Coast (all of them with 94%). China is the least religious country, where almost 7 out of 10 people are atheists, more than double than any other country, and 23% consider themselves non-religious people.
- As for the different beliefs that were analyzed: God, soul, life after death, hell and heaven; the most believing countries are Bangladesh, Indonesia, Ghana, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea.

Religion in the world

A new survey by WIN/Gallup International explores religious beliefs of over 66.000 people in 68 countries across the world. The results show that 6 out of 10 people in the world (62%) consider themselves to be religious, while less than a quarter (25%) think of themselves as non-religious and 9% consider themselves atheists.

It has been found that levels of religiosity diminish as income and education levels of the interviewees increase. While 66% of people with low income affirm to be religious, this percentage drops to 50% among people with high income. The same trend is verified in relation to education levels: 83% of people with lower education level are religious against 49% of higher level.

Most religious and least religious countries

Thailand is the most religious country, with almost its entire population (98%) declaring to be religious. Next to Thailand, the countries that stand out as most religious are Nigeria (97%), Kosovo, India, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Papua New Guinea (all of them with 94%), Fiji (92%), Armenia (92%) and Philippines (90%).

On the opposite end, China is the least religious country, with 7 out of 10 people claiming to be atheists (67%) -over twice the percentage found in any other country- and a further of 23% of Chinese defining themselves as non-religious. Only 9% are religious.

Following China among the least religious countries we find Sweden, Czech Republic and United Kingdom with 7 out of 10 people who said to be atheist or non-religious (18% and 55% in Sweden, 25% and 47% in Czech Republic, 11% and 58% in the United Kingdom).

Religious beliefs: God, Soul, heaven, hell and life after death

The majority of people worldwide believe in the soul (74%) and in God (71%), while nearly half of them believe in heaven (56%), life after death (54%) and hell (49%).

The analysis of religious beliefs by different socio-demographic strata shows interesting results. It reveals that all beliefs diminish as the interviewee's age rises: 74% of young people between 18 and 24 years old believe in God, while this percentage drops to 67% in those aged 65 and older. Believing in life after death goes from 60% in the youngest strata to 45% in the oldest; the belief in soul goes from 78% to 68%; the belief in hell goes from 57% to 35%; while the belief in heaven drops from 64% in the youngest and 46% in the oldest.

Those without education express more beliefs than those who reached higher levels of education and those who have less available income express more beliefs than those with higher income.

Beliefs by country

Bangladesh and Indonesia are the most believing countries, where almost their entire populations claim to believe in God, in life after death, in the soul, in heaven and in hell. These countries are followed by Ghana and Pakistan, where each of the religious beliefs surpass 95%.

On the other hand, China is the least believing country, where religious beliefs reach values inferior to 20%. China is followed by Czech Republic, Japan, Belgium, Sweden and Denmark as countries with lower belief levels.

Finally, it is important to highlight that the belief in God obtains 100% mentions in: Indonesia, Ghana, Nigeria, Kosovo and Azerbaijan.

Vilma Scarpino, interim President of WIN/Gallup International Association, said: "The survey confirmed that religion is a relevant aspect in the lives of individuals at a worldwide level, even though the history of each country and the levels of education have a considerable influence on the perception of these values. The figures related to spiritual beliefs – around three quarters of the world population interviewed believe in the soul and in God – show us how important it is for the majority of world population to have a faith and to rely on it. Women and young people show higher percentages for the spiritual aspects – God, life after death, soul, hell and heaven".

Q5a. Independently of whether you go to a place of worship or not, would you say you are...

Table 1: Total by demographics

		A religious person	Not a religious person	A convinced atheist	Do not know / no response
Total		62%	25%	9%	5%
Gender	Male	58%	27%	10%	4%
	Female	65%	23%	7%	5%
Age	18 – 24	62%	24%	8%	5%
	25 – 34	62%	25%	9%	4%
	35 – 44	62%	25%	9%	4%
	45 – 54	60%	26%	9%	5%
	55 – 64	60%	26%	9%	4%
	65+	62%	25%	9%	4%
Income	Low (Bottom quintile/20%)	66%	23%	6%	4%
	Medium low (Second quintile/20%)	66%	23%	7%	4%
	Medium (Third quintile/20%)	62%	26%	8%	4%
	Medium high (Fourth quintile/20%)	55%	28%	13%	4%
	High (Top quintile/20%)	50%	31%	14%	4%
	Refused/Don't know/no answer	64%	22%	5%	8%
Education	No education/only basic education	83%	11%	3%	3%
	Completed primary	73%	18%	5%	4%
	Completed secondary school	62%	25%	8%	5%
	Completed High level education (University)	56%	29%	11%	4%
	Completed Higher level of education (Masters, PHD, etc.)	49%	32%	14%	4%
	Refused/Don't know/no answer	47%	28%	9%	17%
Religion	Roman Catholic	78%	17%	1%	3%
	Russian or Eastern Orthodox	74%	19%	1%	5%
	Protestant	69%	26%	2%	3%
	Other Christian	80%	15%	1%	3%
	Hindu	91%	6%	2%	1%
	Muslim	78%	17%	1%	3%
	Jewish	45%	47%	6%	3%
	Buddhist	88%	8%	2%	1%
	Other	44%	44%	5%	7%
	Atheist/agnostic	3%	49%	45%	2%

Q5a. Independently of whether you go to a place of worship or not, would you say you are...

Table 2: Results by country

Country	A religious person	Not a religious person	A convinced atheist	Do not know / no response
ALBANIA	56%	30%	9%	5%
ARGENTINA	78%	16%	4%	2%
ARMENIA	92%	4%	2%	1%
AUSTRALIA	31%	50%	13%	7%
AUSTRIA	41%	43%	10%	6%
AZERBAIJAN	35%	64%	0%	0%
BANGLADESH	80%	19%	0%	1%
BELGIUM	28%	43%	21%	8%
BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA	75%	21%	1%	2%
BRAZIL	82%	15%	2%	1%
BULGARIA	51%	36%	3%	11%
CANADA	37%	47%	10%	6%
CHINA	9%	23%	67%	1%
COLOMBIA	84%	11%	3%	2%
CZECH REPUBLIC	24%	47%	25%	3%
DENMARK	32%	47%	14%	7%
DR CONGO	80%	9%	8%	4%
ECUADOR	78%	16%	2%	4%
ESTONIA	28%	50%	10%	12%
FIJI	92%	6%	2%	0%
FINLAND	39%	47%	8%	7%
FRANCE	45%	29%	21%	5%
GERMANY	34%	46%	14%	6%
GHANA	94%	1%	0%	5%
GREECE	73%	15%	7%	5%
HONG KONG	33%	33%	30%	3%
ICELAND	46%	32%	17%	5%
INDIA	94%	3%	2%	1%
INDONESIA	58%	30%	0%	12%
IRAN	77%	16%	4%	3%
IRAQ	64%	34%	0%	2%
IRELAND	40%	47%	9%	4%
ISRAEL	39%	50%	8%	3%
ITALY	69%	18%	8%	5%
IVORY COAST	94%	6%	0%	
JAPAN	13%	31%	29%	26%
KOSOVO	94%	3%		3%
LATVIA	37%	43%	9%	10%
LEBANON	71%	26%	2%	1%
LITHUANIA	47%	34%	6%	12%

MACEDONIA	84%	10%	1%	5%
MEXICO	61%	28%	8%	2%
MONGOLIA	71%	21%	8%	%
NIGERIA	97%	2%	0%	1%
NORWAY	30%	50%	12%	8%
PAKISTAN	93%	5%	1%	1%
PALESTINIAN TERR.	61%	34%	1%	4%
PANAMA	84%	10%	3%	3%
PAPUA NEW GUINEA	94%	5%	0%	1%
PARAGUAY	87%	7%	2%	4%
PERU	72%	20%	3%	6%
PHILIPPINES	90%	9%	0%	1%
POLAND	82%	9%	1%	8%
PORTUGAL	59%	29%	9%	3%
ROMANIA	89%	6%	3%	2%
RUSSIA	61%	23%	7%	9%
SERBIA	75%	17%	4%	4%
SLOVENIA	41%	25%	28%	6%
SOUTH AFRICA	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SOUTH KOREA	35%	37%	23%	5%
SPAIN	37%	41%	16%	6%
SWEDEN	22%	55%	18%	5%
THAILAND	98%	1%	1%	0%
TURKEY	74%	12%	6%	8%
UK	27%	58%	11%	3%
UKRAINE	53%	36%	6%	4%
USA	56%	32%	7%	4%
VIETNAM	33%	57%	6%	4%

Q5b. Which, if any, do you believe in? Do you believe in...

Table 3: Totals by demographics

(% of people who believe in...)

		God	Life after death	People have a soul	Hell	Heaven
Total		71%	54%	74%	49%	56%
Gender	Male	69%	51%	70%	47%	54%
	Female	74%	57%	79%	52%	60%^x
Age	18 – 24	74%	60%	78%	57%	64%
	25 – 34	74%	60%	78%	56%	63%
	35 – 44	72%	55%	76%	52%	59%
	45 – 54	70%	52%	73%	46%	54%
	55 – 64	68%	48%	70%	41%	49%
	65+	67%	45%	68%	35%	46%
Income	Low (Bottom quintile/20%)	75%	58%	78%	54%	63%
	Medium low (Second quintile/20%)	76%	58%	77%	54%	61%
	Medium (Third quintile/20%)	73%	56%	76%	51%	58%
	Medium high (Fourth quintile/20%)	66%	50%	69%	45%	51%
	High (Top quintile/20%)	61%	45%	67%	38%	44%
	Refused/Don't know/no answer	72%	54%	76%	48%	56%
Education	No education/only basic education	91%	73%	86%	77%	84%
	Completed primary	81%	62%	79%	59%	68%
	Completed secondary school	74%	56%	75%	52%	59%
	Completed High level education (University)	67%	49%	72%	43%	51%
	Completed Higher level of education (Masters, PHD, etc.)	56%	42%	70%	29%	37%
	Refused/Don't know/no answer	59%	46%	67%	40%	51%

Q5b. Which, if any, do you believe in? Do you believe in...

Table 4: Results by Country

(% of people who believe in...)

Country	God	Life after death	People have a soul	Hell	Heaven
ALBANIA	80%	40%	57%	40%	42%
ARGENTINA	91%	63%	84%	57%	75%
ARMENIA	93%	41%	72%	41%	44%
AUSTRALIA	46%	42%	63%	31%	42%
AUSTRIA	50%	39%	72%	13%	29%
AZERBAIJAN	100%	82%	81%	83%	84%
BANGLADESH	99%	99%	99%	98%	97%
BELGIUM	29%	24%	50%	9%	16%
BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA	87%	58%	82%	70%	71%
BRAZIL	98%	65%	90%	68%	76%
BULGARIA	58%	29%	60%	23%	25%
CANADA	55%	45%	69%	28%	40%
CHINA	16%	11%	18%	12%	14%
COLOMBIA	97%	55%	86%	55%	80%
CZECH REPUBLIC	26%	20%	31%	11%	12%
DENMARK	36%	23%	57%	6%	20%
DR CONGO	95%	80%	89%	69%	90%
ECUADOR	95%	70%	85%	66%	85%
ESTONIA	29%	28%	71%	13%	18%
FIJI	98%	90%	93%	93%	96%
FINLAND	43%	34%	61%	17%	31%
FRANCE	43%	30%	58%	19%	24%
GERMANY	45%	31%	68%	12%	28%
GHANA	100%	97%	96%	97%	97%
GREECE	75%	42%	80%	32%	39%
HONG KONG	49%	43%	64%	38%	40%
ICELAND	44%	40%	65%	6%	26%
INDIA	97%	48%	82%	59%	68%
INDONESIA	100%	94%	99%	99%	99%
IRAN	98%	92%	92%	89%	90%
IRELAND	59%	46%	66%	27%	44%
ISRAEL	75%	48%	79%	43%	50%
ITALY	76%	52%	65%	44%	48%
IVORY COAST	99%	75%	93%	86%	91%
JAPAN	29%	23%	35%	12%	19%
KOSOVO	100%	70%	95%	85%	88%
LATVIA	57%	38%	79%	22%	23%
LEBANON	98%	72%	90%	75%	83%
LITHUANIA	54%	35%	65%	21%	27%

MACEDONIA	88%	50%	82%	53%	54%
MEXICO	86%	57%	83%	50%	56%
MONGOLIA	53%	36%	70%	40%	41%
NIGERIA	100%	69%	95%	95%	99%
NORWAY	36%	32%	63%	16%	30%
PAKISTAN	98%	97%	97%	97%	97%
PALESTINIAN TERR.	98%	86%	90%	92%	96%
PANAMA	99%	87%	95%	79%	94%
PAPUA NEW GUINEA	98%	96%	95%	90%	97%
PARAGUAY	93%	75%	84%	81%	86%
PERU	92%	65%	85%	65%	76%
PHILIPPINES	99%	82%	94%	85%	94%
POLAND	85%	62%	72%	56%	62%
PORTUGAL	60%	36%	63%	15%	30%
ROMANIA	94%	44%	83%	42%	61%
RUSSIA	65%	40%	63%	41%	43%
SERBIA	79%	41%	72%	39%	42%
SLOVENIA	34%	33%	65%	15%	21%
SOUTH AFRICA	91%	72%	92%	60%	84%
SOUTH KOREA	38%	33%	42%	29%	30%
SPAIN	50%	38%	60%	19%	31%
SWEDEN	22%	29%	61%	9%	18%
THAILAND	52%	61%	70%	85%	85%
TURKEY	95%	78%	91%	88%	88%
UK	39%	31%	57%	21%	32%
UKRAINE	65%	42%	86%	34%	36%
USA	74%	61%	77%	53%	65%
VIETNAM	46%	55%	64%	52%	43%

Source: WIN/Gallup International Survey 2017. These questions were asked in 68 countries as part of the WIN/Gallup International End of Year Survey.

Data from 68 countries has been averaged to offer global averages. Each country has been given equal weight, rather than weighting the data relative to the size of each country.

Note: Totals may not add to 100 because of rounding.