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Losing our religion? Two thirds of people still claim to be religious

- 63% of people polled say they are religious
- China is the least religious country with twice the amount of convinced atheists than any other nation (61%) followed by Hong Kong (34%), Japan (31%), Czech Republic (30%), and Spain (20%).
- Thailand is the most religious country globally (94%), followed by Armenia (93%), Bangladesh (93%), Georgia (93%), and Morocco (93%).

New research this Easter shows that worldwide six out of ten (63%) citizens say they are religious, while one in five (22%) say they are not and one in ten (11%) consider themselves convinced atheists. In Africa and the Middle East more than 8 out of 10 people (86% and 82% respectively) portray themselves as religious while 7 out of 10 say so in Eastern Europe and America (71% and 66% respectively) and 6 out of 10 (62%) in Asia, say they are.

WIN/Gallup International, the world's leading association in market research and polling, has today published its latest data exploring the religious beliefs of 63,898 people from 65 countries across the globe.

Western Europe and Oceania are where opinions are most polarized between those who think of themselves as religious or not with around 4 out of 10 respondents (43% who say they are religious and 37% who say they are not in W. Europe and 44% versus 37% respectively in Oceania) choosing one of these two options. It is also, in these two regions and in Asia where the largest number of atheists are found - slightly over 1 out of 10 in each region (Western Europe: 14%; Asia 14%; Oceania 12%).

The Most Religious

The research discovered that the most religious regions are Africa and MENA (Middle East and North Africa) where 86% and 82% respectively of the people consider themselves to be religious. Meanwhile the most religious of the countries surveyed is Thailand with 94% saying that they are religious and just 2% describing themselves as either not religious or convinced atheists. Thailand is



followed by Armenia (93%), Bangladesh (93%), Georgia (93%), Morocco (93%), Fiji (92%) and South Africa (91%). Just 30% of the citizens of the UK however consider themselves as religious and 70% of Russians and 56% of Americans describe themselves in the same way.

Least Religious

Western Europe (51%) and Oceania (49%) are the only regions where approximately half of the population are either not religious or convinced atheist. The least religious country was found to be China where 61% of people claim to be convinced atheists, approximately twice as many as any other country and 29% say that they are not religious compared to just 7% who are religious. The number of people claiming to be atheists was next highest in Hong Kong and Japan following China with 34% and 31% respectively claiming to be so. The Swedish prove to be the least religious in the Western World with 78% saying they are either not religious or convinced atheists.

In Israel, 65% of those asked said that they are either not religious or convinced atheists compared to just 30% who say that they are religious. Meanwhile in the Palestinian Territories (West Bank and Gaza) the population is considerably more religious with 75% saying that they are religious compared to 18% who say that they are not religious.

Global demographics of religion

The relationship between gender, age, income, education and people's religiosity reveals interesting trends. Younger people (those under 34) tend to be more religious (about 66% as against about 60% for the other age groups). Those without what is considered an educationⁱ are the most religious (80%) but religious people are a majority in all educational levels.

Income appears to exert a greater influence – among those with a medium high and high income, where less than 50% say they are religious, against 70% of those with low, medium low and medium income. Likewise, the number of convinced atheists is as high as 22% and 25% among people with medium high and high income but only 6% and 5% among people with low and medium low income.

Jean-Marc Leger, President of WIN/Gallup International Association, said:

“Religion continues to dominate our everyday lives and we see that the total number of people who consider themselves to be religious is actually relatively high. Furthermore, with the trend of an



increasingly religious youth globally, we can assume that the number of people who consider themselves religious will only continue to increase.”

-ENDS-

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

Methodology:

The question “Irrespective of whether you attend a place of worship or not would you say you are: a. a religious Person, b. not a religious person, c. a convinced atheist, d. do not know/no response.” Was asked as part of the WIN/Gallup International End of Year Survey.

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

Sample Size and Mode of Field Work:

A total of 63,898 persons were interviewed globally. In each country a representative sample of around 1000 men and women was interviewed either face to face (31 countries; n=33862), via telephone (12 countries; n=9784) or online (22 countries; n=20356). Details are attached. The field work was conducted during September 2014 - December 2014. The margin of error for the survey is between 2.14 and 4.45 +3-5% at 95% confidence level.



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 75 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.

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ⁱ Education: Highest level attained. No education refers to those who state their education level as having no education/only basic education