News Item, 25/06/2013, Gütersloh: The beacons of high religiosity lie outside Europe

The Religion Monitor of the Bertelsmann Stiftung reveals: Widespread approval for the separation of church and state / Decline in religiosity from generation to generation

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Ansprechpartner

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Stephan Vopel

The largest numbers of people claiming to be "very", "fairly", or "moderately" religious are found in Turkey (82 %), Brazil (74 %), India (70 %), and the USA (67 %). The lowest numbers are found in Sweden (28 %) and Israel (31 %). Germany ranks in midfield with an overall score of 57 % (26 % in eastern Germany and 64 % in western Germany). These findings emerge from the international data collected by the 2013 Religion Monitor of the Bertelsmann Stiftung, which is based on interviews with 14,000 people in 13 selected countries. Fewer than half the respondents in Europe stated that religion was an important aspect of their lives.

Knowledge about other religions becomes especially important against the background of the vast differences in the significance of religion in people's lives. "In a globalised world in which people from different backgrounds, cultures, and faiths interact, we have to learn to live with one another," says Liz Mohn, the deputy chairman of the Bertelsmann Stiftung board of directors. This is facilitated, she continued, by encounters and exchanges in which people can develop respect and trust for one another.

Only a small number of respondents in all the countries is in favour of leading religious figures exerting an influence on politics. The highest approval rate was recorded in the USA (28 %) and the lowest in Spain (13 %). The approval rate in Germany is 21 %. Analogous responses were given to the statement that only politicians who believe in God are suitable for public office: 25 % agreed with this statement in the USA and 8 % in Spain (Germany: 10 %). At the same time, 32 % of the Christians in the USA believe that only politicians who believe in God are suitable for holding public office. Members of Evangelical Free Churches in the USA lead the field here with a 42 % agreement rate.

High approval for democracy as a form of government was found in all the countries studied for the Religion Monitor. This approval cuts across all religions: agreement with democracy as a good form of government ranges from 79 % in Great Britain to 95 % in Sweden. The agreement rate in Germany is 85 %, while 82 % of Turkish respondents are in favour of democracy.

Averaging the figures for all the countries, the survey found that 88 % of Christians, 81 % of Muslims, 84 % of Jews, and 84% of the undenominational said that democracy is a good form of government. In Turkey, Spain, and France, non-religious respondents were slightly more favourable than religious respondents towards democracy: 86 % of non-religious and 79 % of religious respondents in France said that democracy is a good form of government (Turkey: 85 % religious compared to 67 % non-religious respondents; Spain: 85 % religious compared to 78 % non-religious respondents).

Most of the countries in the survey exhibit a declining trend in religiosity among the younger generation. The abandonment of traditions by succeeding generations is most clearly visible in Spain despite this country's high degree of religious socialisation. While 85 % of respondents aged over 45 claim to be moderately to very religious, the figure drops to only 58% among those under 29 years.

The Religion Monitor

The 2013 Religion Monitor is provided by the Bertelsmann Stiftung as an instrument that sheds light on interactions between religion, values, and cohesion in society. Experts from different fields participated in this international project. Approximately 100 questions were given to 14,000 people from 13 different countries and their responses analysed for the Religion Monitor, one of the core aims of which is to provide scientific findings as a basis for promoting interfaith understanding and dialogue between religion and society.

Downloads

- An International Comparison of Religious Beliefs (1.1 MB)
- Chart: Importance of Religion (72 KB)
- Chart: Politics and Religion (73 KB)
- Chart: Religiosity by Age Groups (66 KB)

Links

- Religion Monitor