



a PewResearchCenter project

1615 L Street, N.W., Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20036
Tel (202) 419-4350
Fax (202) 419-4399
www.pewglobal.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2009

The Global Middle Class

Views on Democracy, Religion, Values, and Life Satisfaction in Emerging Nations

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Andrew Kohut, President
Richard Wike, Associate Director
Erin Carriere-Kretschmer, Senior Researcher
Kathleen Holzwart, Research Analyst
(202) 419-4350
www.pewglobal.org



February 12, 2009

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Overview: The Global Middle Class: Views on Democracy, Religion, Values, and Life Satisfaction in Emerging Nations.....	1
About this Monograph	8
Chapter 1: Democracy	9
Chapter 2: Religion and Social Issues	17
Chapter 3: Environmental Issues	20
Chapter 4: Life Satisfaction	22
Methods	25



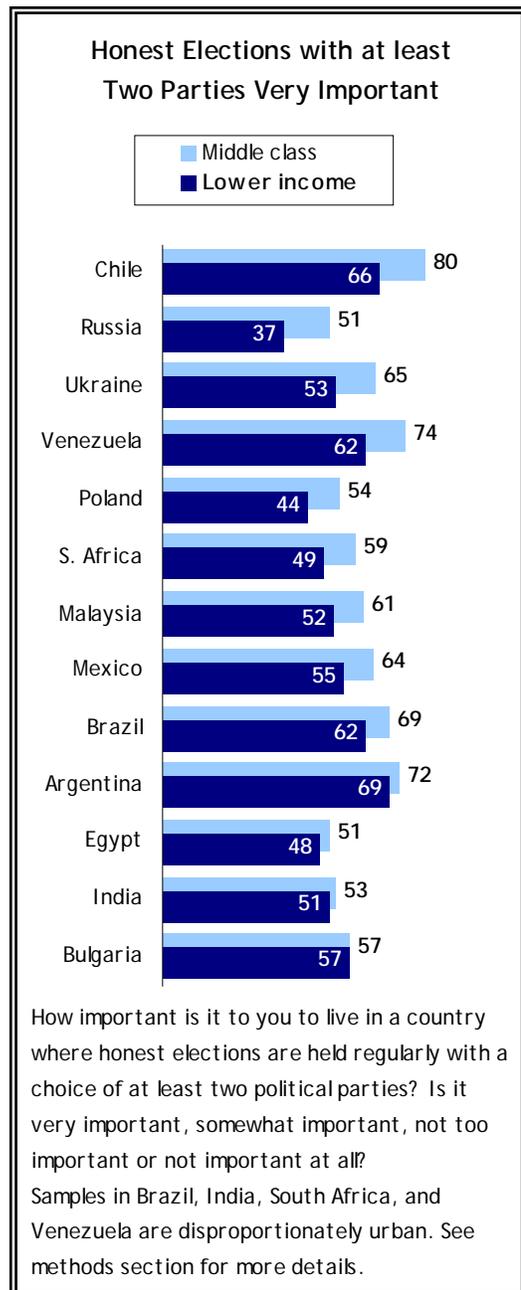
The Global Middle Class

Views on Democracy, Religion, Values, and Life Satisfaction in Emerging Nations

As economically developing countries grow prosperous, their middle classes understandably become more satisfied with their lives. But many of their basic values also appear to change. Over time, the values of the middle classes in emerging countries become more like those of the publics of advanced nations. This is the overall conclusion of a new analysis by the *Pew Research Center's Pew Global Attitudes Project*, conducted in partnership with the *Economist* magazine.¹

The study finds that in 13 middle-income nations from regions around the globe, people tend to hold different opinions about democracy and social issues once they reach a certain level of wealth. Compared with poorer people in emerging countries, members of the middle class assign more importance to democratic institutions and individual liberties, consider religion less central to their lives, hold more liberal social values, and express more concern about the environment.

For decades, social scientists have argued that development leads to changes in public attitudes and societal values. This study suggests that on a variety of issues, the “global middle class” – people in emerging nations whose household income can be considered at least “middle income” by international standards – differs from poorer citizens.²



¹Please see the *Economist's* discussion of this analysis at www.economist.com/specialreports/displaystory.cfm?story_id=13063322.

² Based on studies by the World Bank, we define the global middle class as people earning more than \$4,286 per year in standardized international dollars. For more on this study's methodology, see the methods section.

Democratic Values Especially Strong Among Middle Class

The analysis, which is based on the 2007 Pew Global Attitudes survey, finds further support for an old hypothesis: Economic well-being is linked with support for democracy. This does not mean that only the wealthy endorse democracy – on the contrary, support for democracy is solid in both rich and poor countries, and among both rich and poor respondents. However, it is especially strong among members of the global middle class.

For the last half century, social scientists have continually argued over whether economic development is linked to democracy. In the years following World War II, proponents of what came to be known as “modernization theory” contended that in societies throughout the world economic growth could lead to an embrace of democratic values and ultimately democratic governments.

In an influential 1959 article, the political sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset found that wealthier countries had a higher likelihood of sustaining democracy; writers, researchers, and policymakers have been debating his findings ever since. Many who have studied the work by Lipset and others have reached pessimistic conclusions about the prospects for democracy in developing nations.

In his widely read 2003 book, *The Future of Freedom*, Fareed Zakaria wrote about the world’s growing number of “illiberal democracies” – countries, often relatively poor countries, where elections take place, but individual rights, the rule of law, and other features of what he calls “constitutional liberalism” are absent. “[W]hen countries become democratic at low levels of development their democracy usually dies,” explains Zakaria. Journalist Robert Kaplan has argued that since the end of the Cold War, elections have been held in the Balkans, Africa, Central Asia and elsewhere in nations that were not ready for democracy. According to Kaplan and others, such premature elections often lead to widespread violence or authoritarianism.

Others are more optimistic. Larry Diamond, while acknowledging that economic growth helps democracies survive, has noted that “Over the past three decades, an unprecedented number of very poor countries have embraced democratic forms of government.” In *The Democracy Advantage*, Morton Halperin, Joseph Siegle, and Michael Weinstein make the case that much of the previous work on development and democratization has underestimated the resilience of democracy in lower-income countries.

Survey researchers working with data from the World Values Survey, the Afrobarometer, the Latinobarometer, the Latin American Public Opinion Project, and other sources have typically found broad international support – including support in poor nations – for many key features of democracy, such as individual rights and free and fair elections. Even though people

in many nations do not enjoy the benefits of democracy, people nearly everywhere tend to express support and desire for democracy. Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen says that democracy is now widely considered a “universal value,” writing that “While democracy is not yet universally practiced, nor indeed uniformly accepted, in the general climate of world opinion, democratic governance has now achieved the status of being taken to be generally right.”

The Pew Global Attitudes Project has consistently found widespread support for democracy across regions and countries, regardless of a nation’s wealth. Still, as this analysis shows, when compared with their poorer fellow citizens, members of the global middle class tend to express a somewhat more intense desire for democracy.

In the 13 nations included in this study, middle class respondents are often more likely to say it is very important to live in a country with key institutional features of democracy, such as fair multiparty elections and a fair judiciary. For example, in the 2007 poll eight-in-ten middle-class Chileans said living in a country with honest elections involving at least two political parties was very important to them, compared with about two-thirds (66%) of lower-income Chileans. In Hugo Chavez’s Venezuela, 74% of middle-class respondents said such elections are very important, compared with 62% among lower-income respondents, many of whom have formed the base of political support for Chavez throughout his controversial tenure.

The same pattern holds true in the former Soviet Union. Roughly half (51%) of middle-class Russians considered honest, competitive elections very important, while just 37% of those with lower incomes held this view. In Ukraine – where thousands took to the streets in 2004 to protest a national election widely seen as fraudulent – a 12-point gap separated the views of income groups on the importance of fair elections (middle class – 65% very important; lower income – 53%).

The global middle class is also more likely to emphasize the importance of the fundamental rights enshrined in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution: free speech, a free press, and freedom of religion. Among Indians, for example, 63% of middle class respondents said living in a country where you can say what you think and openly criticize the government is very important, compared with 52% of those with lower incomes.

On these questions about democracy, the gaps between the middle class and those with smaller incomes are not always large, but they are reasonably consistent – and sometimes they are quite pronounced. For instance, six-in-ten middle-class Poles rated a free press very important, compared with 42% of their lower-income compatriots. More than two-thirds (68%) among the South African middle class said a fair judicial system is very important, but only half (50%) of those with lower incomes agreed.

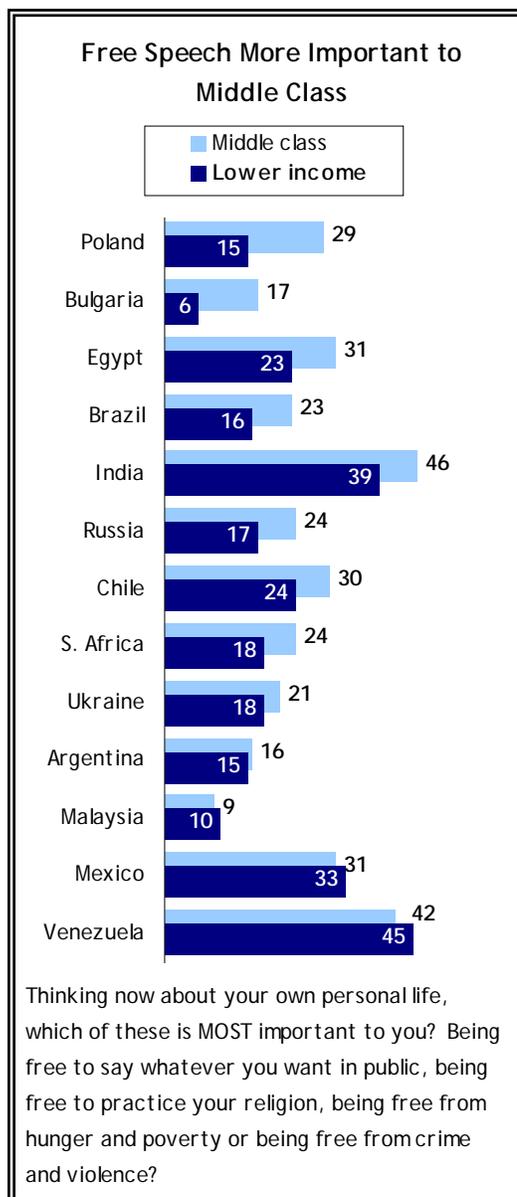
The middle class is also different when it comes to the role of freedom in their own lives. When asked to choose which is most important to them personally, free speech, freedom of religion, freedom from hunger and poverty, or freedom from crime and violence – essentially Franklin Roosevelt’s “four freedoms” – the global middle class was more likely than others to prioritize being able to speak freely in public. Lower-income respondents, on the other hand, were more likely to emphasize being free from hunger and poverty.

Many social scientists have observed that as societies grow increasingly wealthy, and as citizens’ basic needs are met, public values shift, with more importance attached over time to what University of Michigan political scientist Ronald Inglehart calls “self-expression” values, such as freedom of speech, tolerance, and trust.

In their 2005 book, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy*, Inglehart and Christian Welzel analyzed data from over 80 nations and elaborated a revised version of modernization theory that emphasizes the links among socioeconomic modernization, the development of self-expression values, and the growth of democracy. A society’s history and culture are important factors that can shape public attitudes, according to Inglehart and Welzel, but across cultures and traditions, the same general pattern holds true: as societies grow wealthier, their values shift, providing a more hospitable environment for democracy.

A Gap on Religion and Morality

While there is a gap between the global middle class and others on democracy issues, there is an even more consistent gap on issues tied to religion and morality. People in the global middle class are less likely to consider religion central to their own lives.

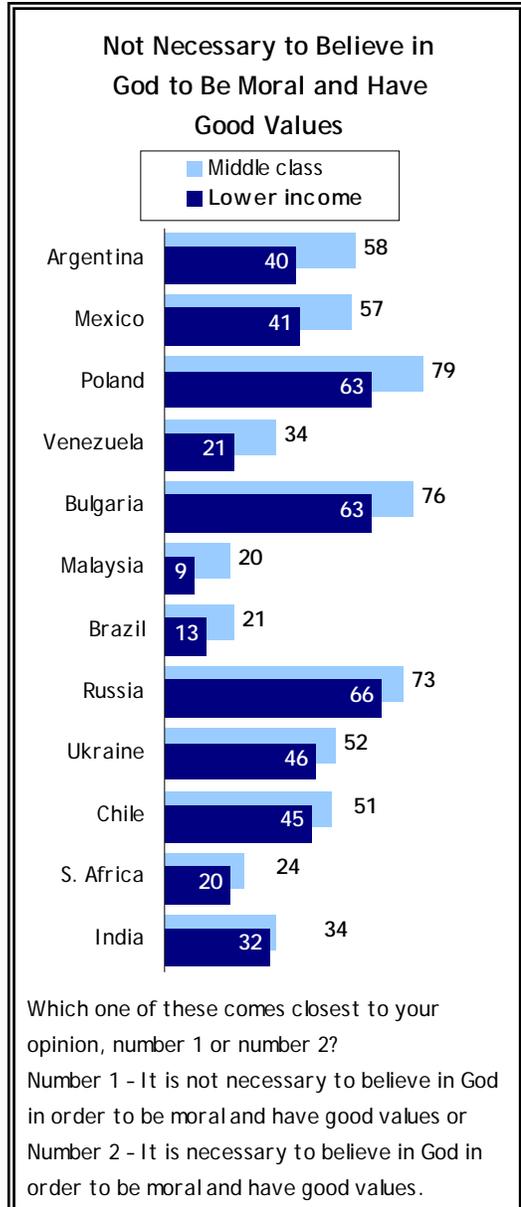


Previous Pew Global Attitudes research has shown a clear link between wealth and religiosity at the country level – as a country’s overall wealth increases, its level of religiosity generally declines. There are, however, some exceptions, most notably the United States, which is both wealthy and a religious nation.³ What this new analysis illustrates is that within countries, wealthier individuals are often less religious.

This pattern is true across a number of countries and a variety of faiths. One-third of the middle class in predominantly Catholic Mexico said religion is very important to them, while about half (48%) of poorer Mexicans express this opinion. Similar gaps exist in largely Hindu India (middle class – 60% very important; lower income – 72%). In Malaysia, which is majority Muslim but has significant Buddhist, Christian, and Hindu minorities, 60% of the middle class said religion is very important to them compared with 86% of those with lower incomes.

The global middle class is also less likely to believe faith is essential for morality. This pattern is especially strong in several of the predominantly Catholic nations in the analysis. Roughly six-in-ten (58%) middle-class Argentines, for example, said it is not necessary to believe in God to be moral and have good values, while just four-in-ten lower-income Argentines held this view. There are also double-digit gaps between the middle class and poorer respondents in the Latin American nations of Mexico and Venezuela, as well as in another largely Catholic nation, Poland.

Similar differences characterize views about homosexuality, especially in Eastern Europe. A clear majority (58%) of middle class Poles said homosexuality should be accepted by society, compared with just 41% of those with lower incomes. Half of middle-class Bulgarians



³ For example see “Unfavorable Views of Jews and Muslims on the Increase in Europe,” released September 17, 2008 and “World Publics Welcome Global Trade – But Not Immigration,” released October 4, 2007.

believe it should be accepted, while only one-in-three (34%) expressed this view among lower-income respondents.

The Environment - a Middle Class Priority

There is a less pronounced, but still notable, difference between the global middle class and others on environmental issues. Middle-class respondents in many countries are more likely to consider global warming a very serious problem; and they are more likely to say that pollution is a very big problem for their country.

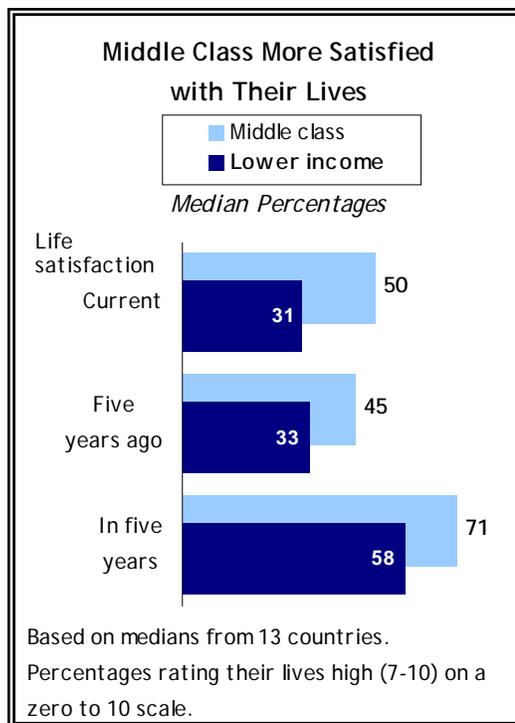
Among Ukrainians, for instance, 69% of those in the middle class say global warming is a very serious problem, compared with just 54% of lower-income Ukrainians. In India, Argentina, and Bulgaria – all countries where environmental concerns have surged in recent years – similar gaps are seen between middle class and less affluent respondents.

Life Satisfaction

Nearly everywhere, wealthy people tend to be more satisfied with their lives. Life satisfaction tends to be higher in wealthy countries; and in developing countries, it tends to be higher among wealthy people.⁴ So it is not too surprising that members of the global middle class tend to be more satisfied with their lives.

Still, the gap is often striking. When asked to place themselves on a “ladder of life,” where zero represents the worst possible life and 10 the best possible life, roughly half (49%) of the South African middle class rated their current life at least a seven, but only 24% of their poorer countrymen rated their lives as positively. Similarly, 52% of those in the Malaysian middle class placed themselves near the top rungs of the ladder (7-10), compared with just 30% of people earning less income.

Overall, across the 13 nations, the median percentage rating their current life in the range of seven to 10 is 50% among the global middle class and just 31% among poorer respondents.



⁴ For more on the relationship between a country’s wealth and its level of life satisfaction, see “A Rising Tide Lifts Mood in the Developing World,” released July 24, 2007.

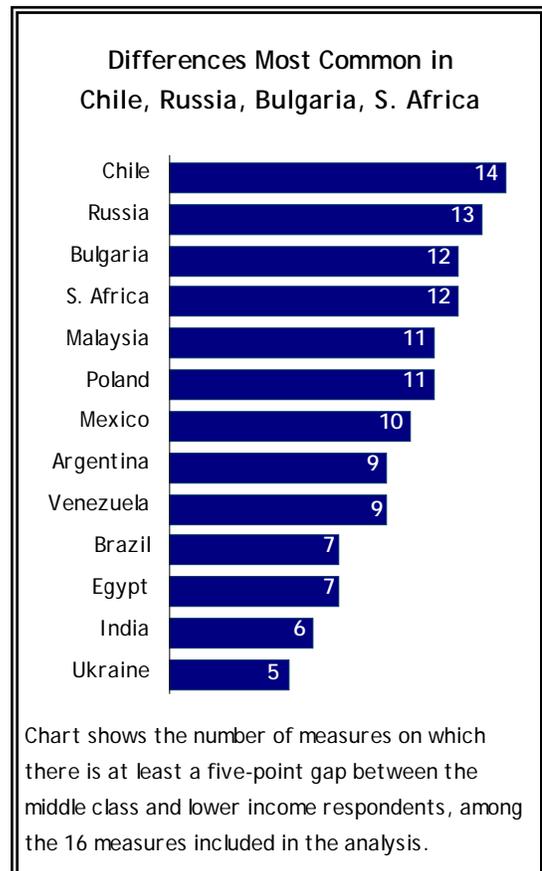
When asked where their lives were five years ago, middle-class respondents again were more positive. Across the 13 nations, the median percentage of middle-class respondents saying their life five years ago rated at least a seven was 45%, compared with 33% of the less affluent. In some countries, the gaps were quite large – for instance, 73% of middle-class Mexicans said their lives five years earlier had rated a seven or higher, while just 57% felt this way among poorer respondents.

The middle class is also more likely to think their lives will warrant a high rating in the future. Overall, the 13-country median percentage among the middle class saying their lives would rate a 7-10 in the future was 71%; in contrast, 58% of less wealthy respondents felt this way. In Bulgaria, a 34-percentage-point gap was recorded on this question – 56% of those in the middle class said their lives would merit a 7-10 in five years, while only 22% of poorer Bulgarians said their lives would be near the top of the ladder.

Where the Income Gap is Largest

The survey found interesting differences between the global middle class and others in all of the 13 countries in this study, but these gaps were especially consistent in a few places. Notable differences were particularly common in Chile, Russia, Bulgaria, and South Africa. Looking at the 16 measures analyzed, on 14 of those middle class Chileans differed from lower income Chileans by at least five percentage points. Differences were only slightly less common in Russia (13), Bulgaria (12), and South Africa (12).

Considerably fewer differences were seen in Egypt (7), Brazil (7), India (6), and Ukraine (5) – four of the five poorest countries in the analysis.



About this Monograph

This monograph contains new analyses of data from the 2007 Pew Global Attitudes survey. Additional analyses of this and other surveys, as well as more information about the Pew Global Attitudes Project are available at www.pewglobal.org.

The first section of this monograph examines differences between the global middle class and lower income respondents on views about democracy. The second section looks at the gap between the middle class and others on religious and social issues. Section three explores this same gap on environmental issues. The fourth section investigates how the global middle class and less affluent respondents rate their own lives. The methods section provides details about the process used to define the global middle class.

1. Democracy

The 2007 Pew Global Attitudes survey found that people who have achieved middle class income status are generally more inclined to embrace key democratic principles than those who are less well-off. In many countries surveyed, more middle-income than lower-income earners considered honest multiparty elections, a fair judicial system, a free press, free speech, and freedom of religion very important.

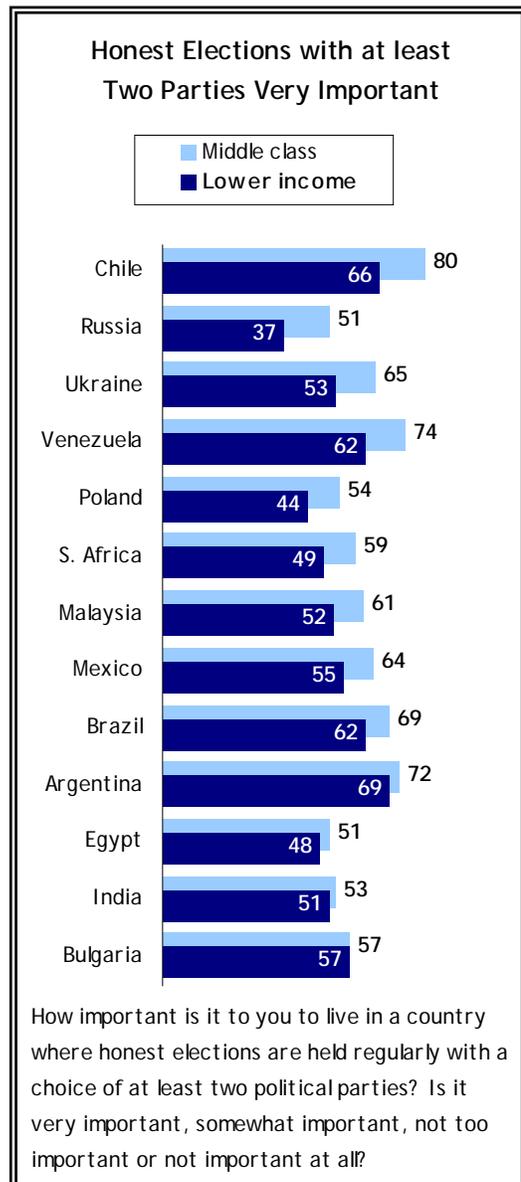
Honest Elections

In nine of the 13 countries included in this analysis, members of the middle class were notably more likely than those who earned less to say that living in a country where honest elections are held regularly with a choice of at least two political parties is very important.⁵ The differences between income groups in these nine countries ranged from seven to 14 percentage points.

Middle-income earners in Chile and Russia are most likely to differ from the less wealthy in their respective countries. Eight-in-ten middle-class Chileans considered honest elections very important while about two-thirds (66%) of less wealthy Chileans held the same view. In Russia, about half of the middle class (51%) considered honest elections very important, while 37% of less well-off Russians felt the same.

The poll found similar differences among the middle class and the less wealthy in Ukraine and Venezuela (12 percentage points each).

Smaller differences were found between middle-income and lower-income earners in Poland (10 percentage points), South Africa (10 points), Mexico (nine points), Malaysia (nine points) and



⁵ Throughout this monograph, we consider the gap between middle and lower income respondents as notable if there is at least a five-point difference between the two groups.

Brazil (seven points).

Income does not appear to be related to views of honest multiparty elections in India, the most populous democracy in the world. Roughly half of those with a middle-class income (53%) as well as about half of those who are less well-off (51%) say that it is very important to live in a country in which honest multiparty elections take place.

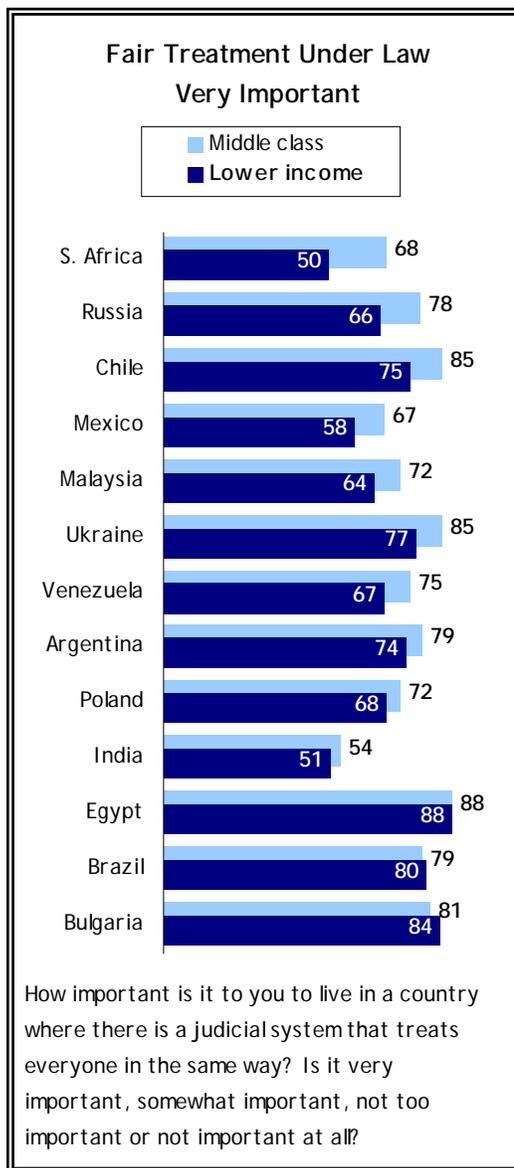
Judicial System

Large majorities across income groups in most of these 13 countries favored a fair judicial system, though in eight of the 13 publics, the middle class was even more inclined than the less wealthy to consider equal judicial treatment very important.

Nearly seven-in-ten (68%) middle-class South Africans said it is very important to live in a country where there is a judicial system that treats everyone in the same way; only half (50%) of less wealthy South Africans expressed the same view.

Less pronounced, but still substantial, income group differences were found in Russia and Chile. Nearly eight-in-ten (78%) middle-income Russians felt fair treatment under the law is very important while 66% of low-income earners agreed. In Chile, 85% of the middle class embraced the need for an impartial judicial system while 75% of the less-wealthy agreed.

Solid income-group differences were found elsewhere in South America (Mexico, Venezuela, Argentina), Eastern Europe (Ukraine) and Asia (Malaysia).



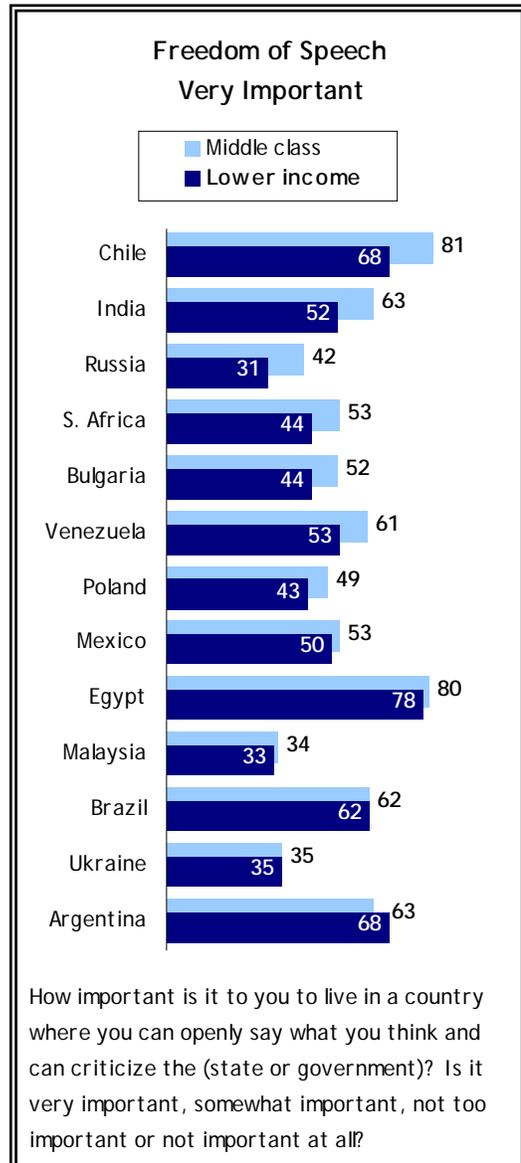
Free Speech

Individual liberties generally mattered more to middle-income households than to those with more limited financial resources. In seven of the 13 countries surveyed, more middle- than lower-income earners said living in a country where you can openly say what you think and can criticize the government is very important.

The gap in views between income groups was greatest in Chile (13 percentage points), India (11 points) and Russia (11 points).

Just over six-in-ten (63%) in India's middle class expressed strong support for freedom of speech, while 52% did among the less wealthy. In Russia, about four-in-ten (42%) in the middle-income category embraced freedom of speech, while only 31% of the less well-off expressed the same view.

In two publics, a majority of middle-income earners embraced freedom of speech while less than a majority did among the less well-off. Just over half of middle-income earners (53%) in South Africa said freedom of speech is very important while under half (44%) of less-wealthy South Africans offered the same view. Similarly, 52% of Bulgaria's middle class favored freedom of speech, while 44% of the less financially fortunate offered the same view.



Freedom of the Press

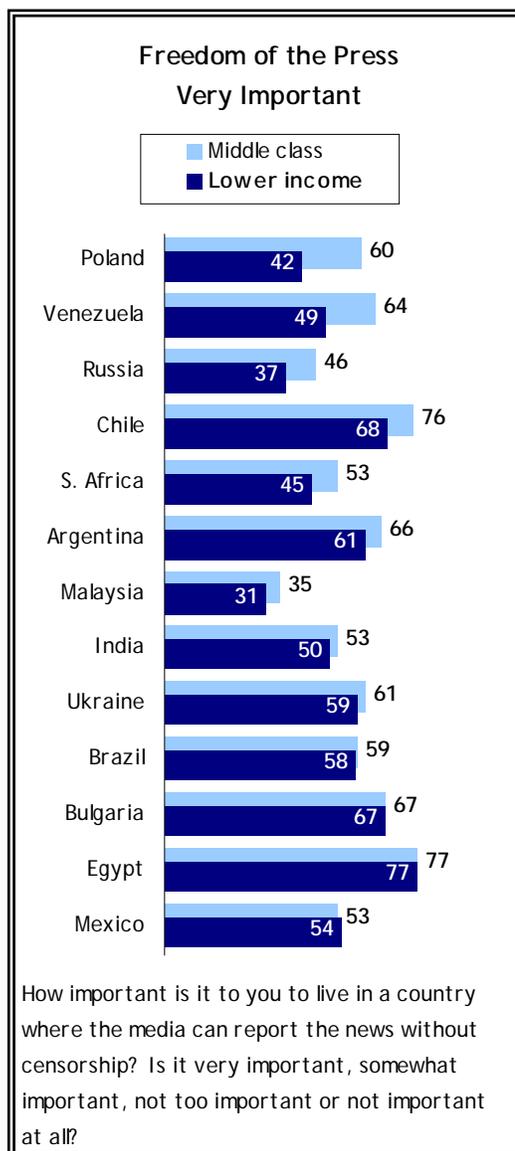
In eight of the 13 countries, freedom of the press was rated as very important by at least half of both the middle-class and the less well-off. Gaps in views between income groups were still found among many of the countries surveyed.

In several instances, the gaps represent a fundamental difference of views. For example, a solid majority (60%) of middle-income Poles rated living in a country where the media can report the news without censorship as very important, but fewer than half (42%) of lower-income Poles held the same view.

Similarly, 64% of middle-class Venezuelans said freedom of the press is very important, while roughly half (49%) of less well-off Venezuelans expressed this view.

Smaller gaps in views between income groups were found in Russia (nine percentage points), Chile (eight points), South Africa (eight points) and Argentina (five points).

Large majorities among both income groups in Egypt and Bulgaria considered freedom of the press very important. On the other hand, few among either the middle class or the less wealthy in Malaysia said that freedom of the press is very important.



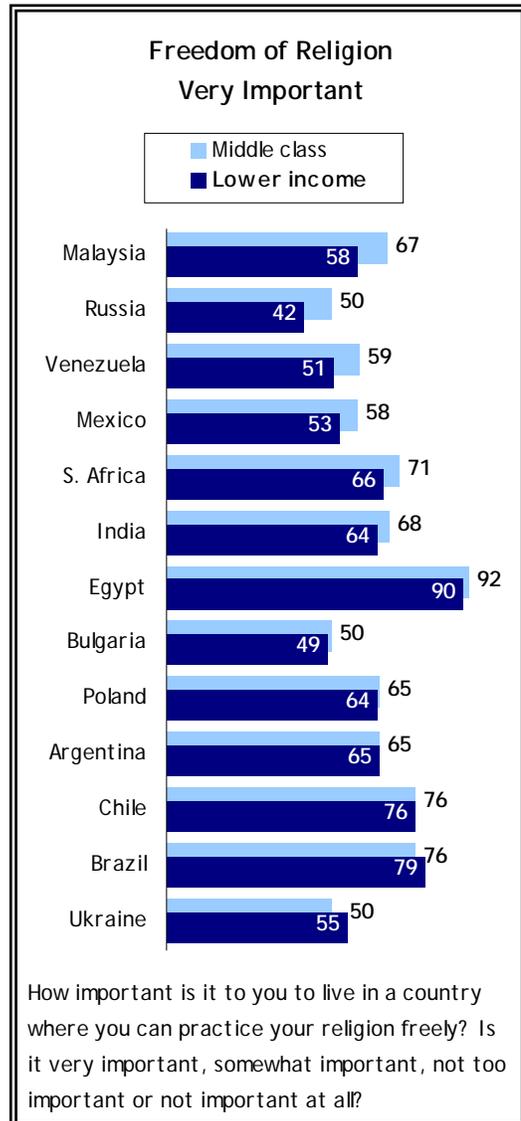
Freedom of Religion

Both the relatively well-off and the less well-off generally embrace the principle of freedom of religion. Half or more among 11 of the 13 publics considered it very important to live in a country where you can practice your religion freely. Gaps between income groups were found in five countries, though they are somewhat smaller than the gaps on other questions regarding democratic principles and individual liberties.

Two-thirds of middle-income Malaysians said that freedom of religion is very important, while 58% of lower-income Malaysians expressed the same view. Similarly, better-off Venezuelans (59%) are somewhat more likely than their less fortunate counterparts (51%) to embrace freedom of religion.

In Russia, half of the middle class considered the freedom to practice their religion very important, while only 42% of the less affluent held the same view.

More limited differences were found in South Africa (five percentage points) and Mexico (five points).



Freedom of Speech vs. Freedom from Hunger and Poverty

When asked to identify which of four alternatives was personally *most* important to them – being free to say what they want in public, being free to practice their religion, being free from hunger and poverty, or being free from crime and violence – respondents tended to put concerns about hunger and poverty at the top of the list. However, there were important differences between income groups – most notably, middle-class respondents were generally more likely to prioritize free speech than were their lower-income counterparts.

Overall, freedom from hunger and poverty was identified as most important by at least a plurality of respondents in eight of the 13 countries. The freedom to say what you want in public was named in three nations, while freedom from crime and violence was the top choice in two countries. In no country was being free to practice your religion selected as the top priority.

Even among the middle class, being free of hunger and poverty tended to

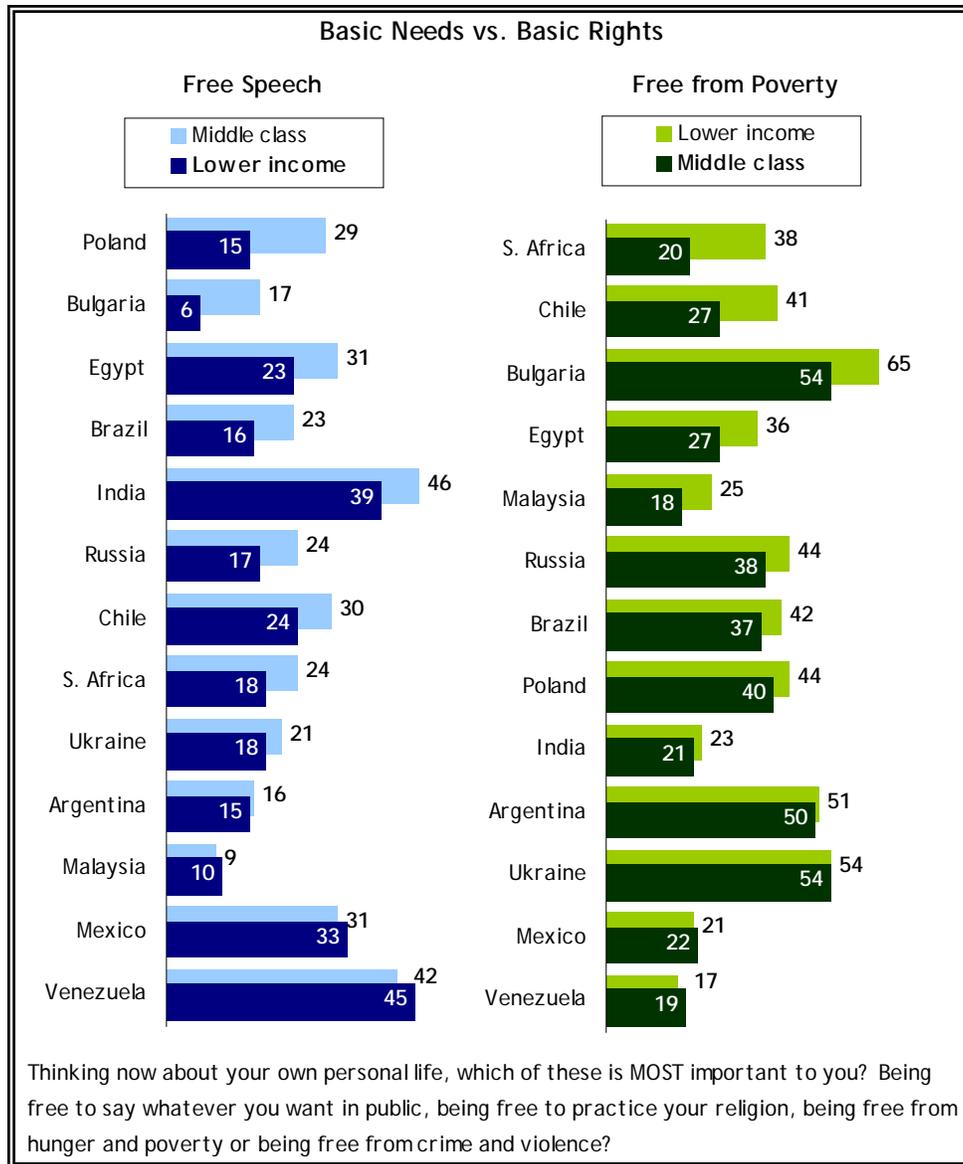
be a greater concern than free speech. However, there were some clear gaps between income groups regarding free expression and freedom from hunger and poverty. Middle-class respondents often assign a higher priority to free speech than do those in the lower income group.

For example, middle class Poles were roughly twice as likely as the less affluent to classify free speech as being most important to them (29% vs. 15%). Few Bulgarians selected free speech, but it was more common among members of the middle class (17%) than among the lower-income group (6%).

Elsewhere, wealthier Egyptians were more likely to choose free speech than were less affluent citizens (31% vs. 23%). Differences of views between members of the middle- and lower-income groups were also found in Brazil, Russia, India, Chile, and South Africa.

	Being free to speak publicly	Being free to practice religion	Being free from hunger & poverty	Being free from crime & violence	DK
	%	%	%	%	%
Argentina	19	3	45	32	0
Brazil	18	8	40	34	0
Chile	26	6	36	32	1
Mexico	33	15	22	29	1
Venezuela	44	7	18	31	0
Bulgaria	11	1	59	28	1
Poland	21	12	44	21	1
Russia	19	6	42	30	3
Ukraine	18	5	52	24	1
Egypt	26	25	34	15	1
Malaysia	10	24	23	44	0
India	41	22	22	14	1
S. Africa	20	19	29	32	0

Percent in each country that name freedom or condition as most important to them of the four tested. The freedom or condition that was selected by the largest percentage in each country is in bold.
Data are for full samples in each country.



Consistently, lower-income respondents were more likely than their wealthier fellow citizens to prioritize avoiding hunger and poverty. Roughly four-in-ten (38%) lower-income South Africans considered being free from hunger and poverty most important, compared with only 20% of middle-income respondents.

About four-in-ten (41%) among less affluent Chileans chose living without hunger and poverty, while just 27% of better-off Chileans concurred. Notable gaps were also found in Bulgaria, Egypt, Malaysia, Russia, and Brazil.

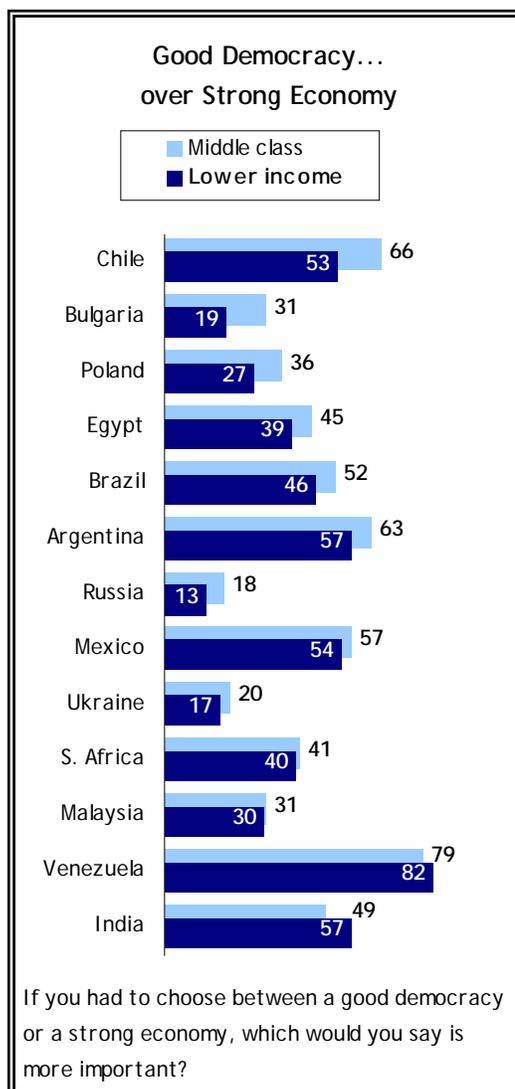
Democracy vs. Strong Economy

When confronted with a choice between a good democracy and a strong economy, members of the middle classes in many developing countries were more likely than the less affluent to favor a good democracy.

While roughly two-thirds (66%) of middle-class Chileans favored a good democracy over a strong economy, only 53% of the less prosperous held the same view. Similarly, 63% of better-off Argentines opted for democracy, compared with 57% of their less well-off compatriots.

In Eastern Europe, overall, fewer chose democracy over economic growth, though the middle classes were still generally more likely than others to do so. Roughly one-third of the middle classes in Poland (36%) and Bulgaria (31%), and 18% in Russia, picked democracy over the economy, while fewer did so among those with lower incomes in each of the three nations (27% in Poland, 19% in Bulgaria, 13% in Russia).

In India, the pattern is reversed: middle class respondents are less likely than those in the lower income group to favor a good democracy over strong economy. A solid majority (57%) of less wealthy Indians chose a good democracy, while just 49% of the middle class took this view.



2. Religion and Social Issues

Across countries and regions, the middle class is more likely to embrace more secular and more tolerant principles. Among the 13 countries in this study, religion was generally less important in the personal lives of middle class respondents, and they were less likely to say that believing in God is a prerequisite for a moral life. In addition, the middle classes were more inclined to believe that homosexuality should be accepted by society.

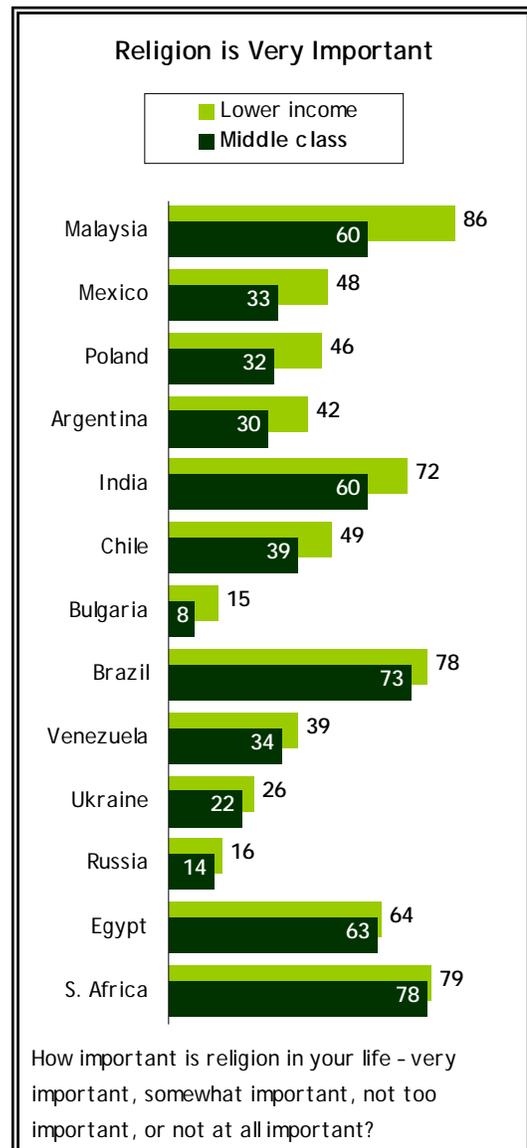
Importance of Religion in Your Life

In nine of 13 countries, religion is more central to the lives of lower-income citizens. In some cases, the differences between income groups were quite large. For instance, 86% of lower income Malaysians said religion is very important in their life while 60% of the middle-class expressed the same view.

While smaller, the differences among income groups in Mexico and Poland were still substantial. Nearly half of lower-income Mexicans (48%) and Poles (46%) said religion is very important in their lives while only about one-third among the middle class in both countries agreed (Mexico 33%, Poland 32%).

Solid income-group differences also were found in Argentina (12 percentage points), India (12 points), Chile (10 points), and Bulgaria (7 points).

Most people across the income spectrum in Egypt and South Africa indicated that religion is very important to them. Roughly eight-in-ten South Africans stated that religion is very important to them, while just over six-in-ten in Egypt expressed this view. By contrast, few among either income group in Ukraine and Russia considered religion very important.



Faith and Morality

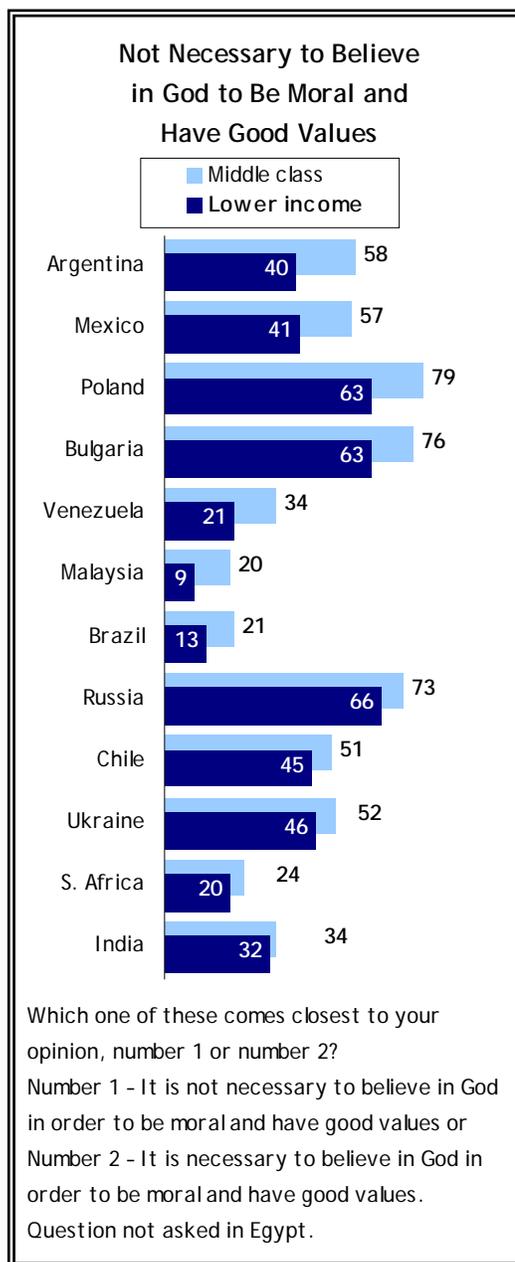
In almost all of the countries in the analysis, the middle class was more likely than the less-wealthy to say that it is not necessary to believe in God to be moral and have good values. In more than half of the dozen countries in which the question was asked, the differences between the income classes were more than ten percentage points.

In Argentina and Mexico, nearly six-in-ten among the middle class believed it is not necessary to believe in God to be moral, while only about four-in-ten of the less well-off embraced the same view. In Venezuela, few among either class embraced the secular notion that morality is not tied to faith; still, members of the middle class were more likely to hold this view.

In Poland, a country where the vast majority of the population is Catholic, nearly eight-in-ten (79%) among the middle class said a belief in God is not necessary to have good values; 63% among poorer Poles felt the same.

To the contrary in Bulgaria – another former communist country – most among both groups expressed the view that morality is not tied to religious belief, though the wealthier were more likely to express this view than the less well-off.

Few among either income group in South Africa or India embraced the idea that it is not necessary to believe in God to be moral. Roughly one-third in both income groups in India held this view while less than one-quarter from both groups did so in South Africa.



Should Homosexuality be Accepted?

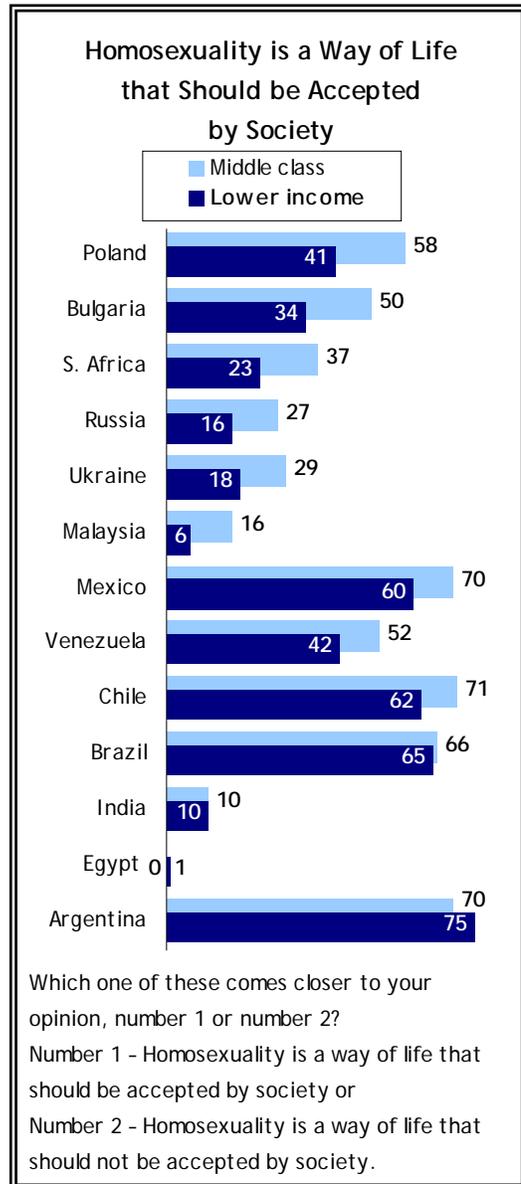
Tolerance of homosexuality varies widely across the 13 countries, still the middle class is generally more accepting than those with less income.

Middle-class publics in two Eastern European countries were particularly inclined toward accepting homosexuality as a lifestyle. Nearly six-in-ten (58%) in the Polish middle class expressed a belief that homosexuality should be accepted by society, while 41% of the less well-off agreed. Half of the Bulgarian middle class said that it should be accepted, while one-third (34%) of the less affluent concurred.

Income-group differences also were found in South Africa (14-percentage-point gap), Ukraine (11 points), Russia (11 points) and Malaysia (10 points). However, in these countries, few among either group said society should accept homosexuality.

Income-group differences were slightly smaller in Mexico (10 points) and Chile (9 points), and in these nations large majorities across income groups embraced a tolerant attitude toward homosexuality.

There was virtually no difference of opinion in Brazil, where tolerance of homosexuality is high. In Argentina, at least seven-in-ten are tolerant of homosexuality, and lower-income respondents are slightly more tolerant. There also was shared opinion between lower and middle income groups in both India and Egypt, where tolerance for homosexuality is very low.



3. Environmental Issues

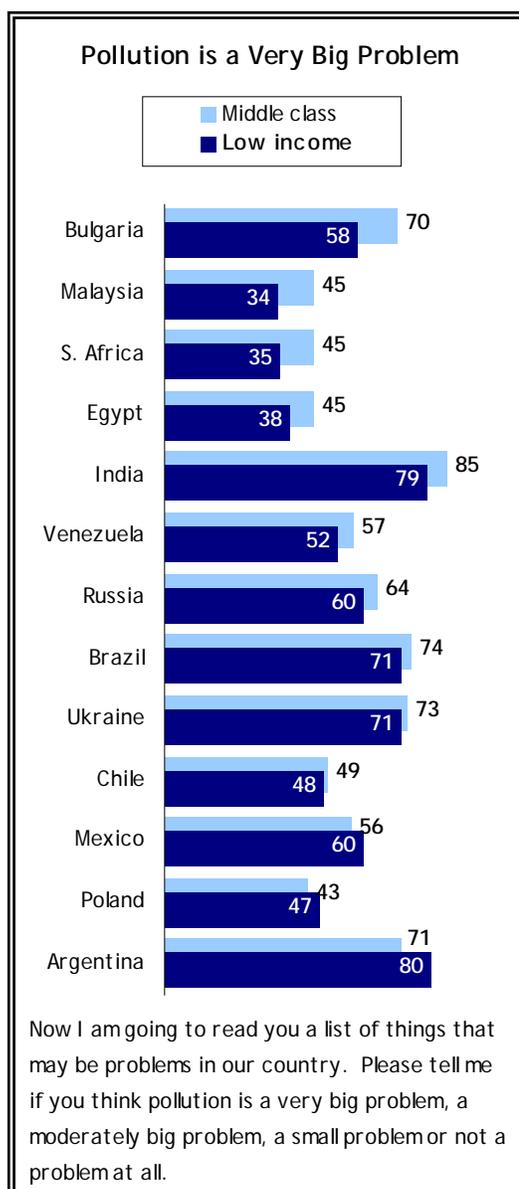
Various studies have shown that as individuals are lifted out of poverty, concern about issues outside of day-to-day survival – such as environmental protection – increase. The 2007 Pew Global Attitudes survey found that, in several countries, the middle class reported greater concern about global warming and was more likely to identify pollution as a top national problem.

Pollution a Big Problem

Anxiety about pollution was widespread among many of the publics included in this analysis, and was especially common among the middle class. In six of the 13 countries, the middle class was more likely to describe pollution in their country as a very big problem.

Middle class Bulgarians, Malaysians and South Africans were most likely to differ from the less wealthy in their countries. Seven-in-ten middle-income Bulgarians (70%) said that pollution was a very big problem in their country, compared with 58% of those earning less income. About 45% of middle income Malaysians and South Africans expressed concern for pollution in their country, while just over one-third of their lower-income counterparts professed the same opinion (34% Malaysia; 35% South Africa).

A less substantial gap was found between middle- and low-income Egyptians (seven percentage points). While large proportions of Indians and Venezuelans across all income groups described pollution as a very big problem, slight gaps were found between members of the middle- and lower-income groups.



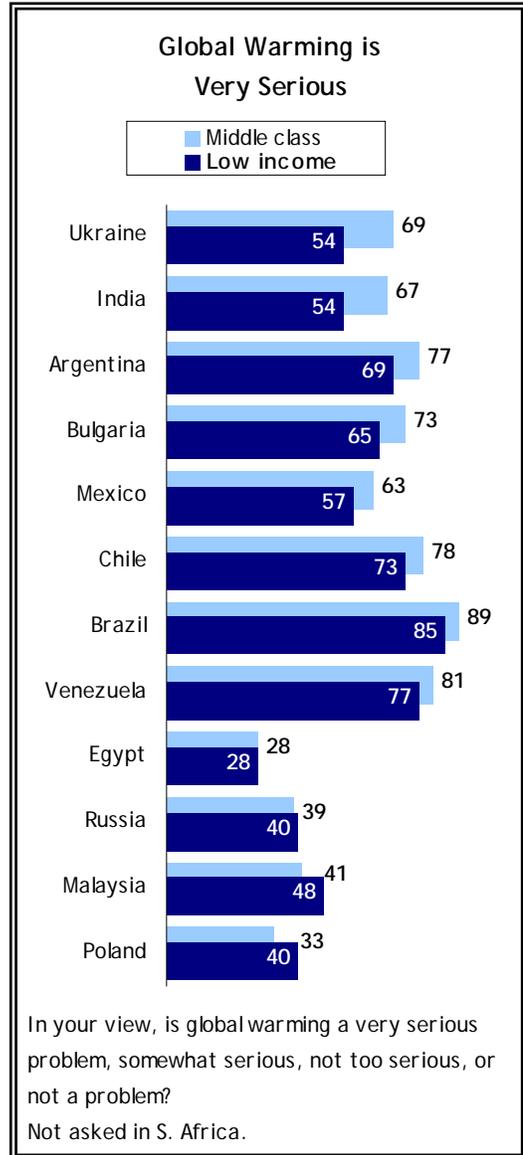
Global Warming a Serious Problem

The Pew Global Attitudes analysis found a widespread consensus over the dangers of global warming, but concern about climate change is especially acute among the middle class. In six of the 12 countries in this analysis where the question was asked, more middle- than lower-income respondents said global warming was a very serious problem.

While in general few differences were found between the views of middle- and lower-income Ukrainians, opinions varied greatly on the issue of global warming. Nearly seven-in-ten middle class Ukrainians (69%) described global warming as a very serious problem, compared with just over half (54%) of the less well-off. Similarly, middle-income Indians were substantially more likely to view rising global temperatures as a big problem (13 percentage points).

Most Latin American publics voiced considerable worry over climate change, but middle-class respondents expressed even greater concern than those with lower incomes in Argentina (an eight percentage point gap), Mexico (six points) and Chile (five points).

In Malaysia and Poland, the pattern was reversed: the less well-off in these countries were more likely to profess worry over this environmental issue than were better-off respondents.



4. Life Satisfaction

Overall, the Pew Global Attitudes analysis of middle-income countries found a linkage between economic prosperity and life satisfaction. To gauge life satisfaction, respondents were asked to place themselves on a “ladder of life,” where zero represents the worst possible life and 10 the best possible life. Middle-class respondents consistently gave more positive ratings to their current, past and future lives.

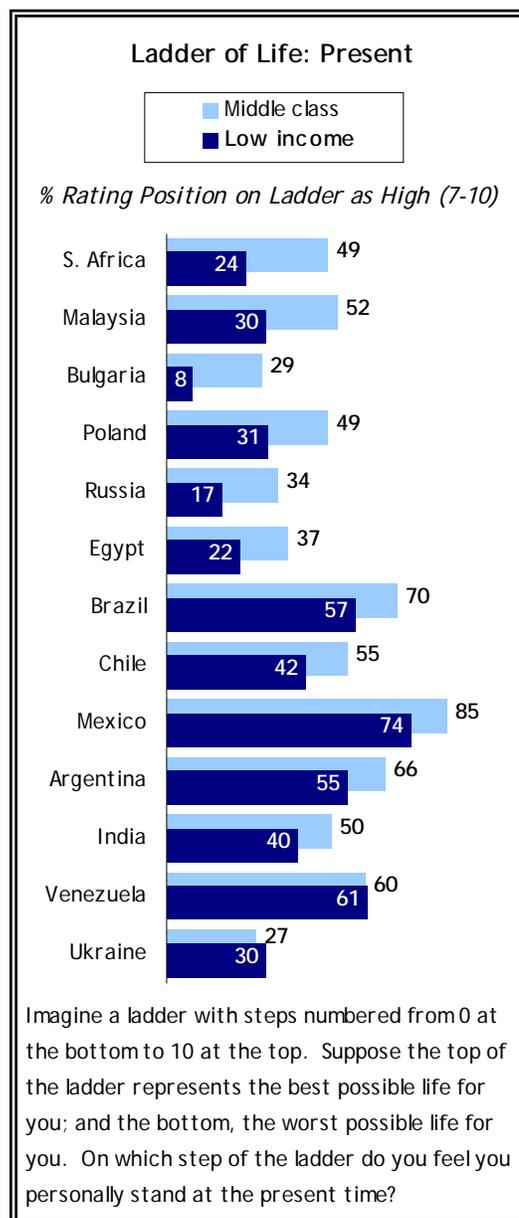
Rating Current Life

In 11 of the 13 countries included in the analysis, the middle class was more likely to give their current life a “high” rating (7-10). Differences in the level of personal contentment between members of the middle- and lower-income brackets were the greatest in South Africa (25 percentage points) and Malaysia (22 points). Similar differences were evident in parts of Eastern Europe, specifically in Bulgaria (21 points), Poland (18 points) and Russia (17 points).

In Egypt, more than one-third of the middle class (37%) described their current lives positively, but many fewer among lower-income Egyptians (22%) agreed.

In the four Latin American countries included in the analysis, middle-class respondents were more likely to give high ratings to their current life than were the less wealthy. In particular, middle-income earners in Brazil and Chile reported higher levels of personal satisfaction (13-percentage-point gaps). Solid differences were also evident in Mexico and Argentina (11 points gaps).

Income had no effect upon levels of satisfaction in Venezuela and Ukraine. Roughly six-in-ten Venezuelans and three-in-ten Ukrainians from both income categories rated their lives positively.



Rating Their Lives in the Past

Memories of their lives five years ago generated greater feelings of satisfaction for the middle class than for those in the lower-income category. In nine of the 13 countries, more middle- than lower-income respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with their lives five years ago.

Majorities across income groups in Mexico reported high levels of satisfaction with their lives in the past, although middle-class respondents were much more likely to do so (16 percentage point gap). Similar income group differences were found in South Africa, Egypt, and Chile.

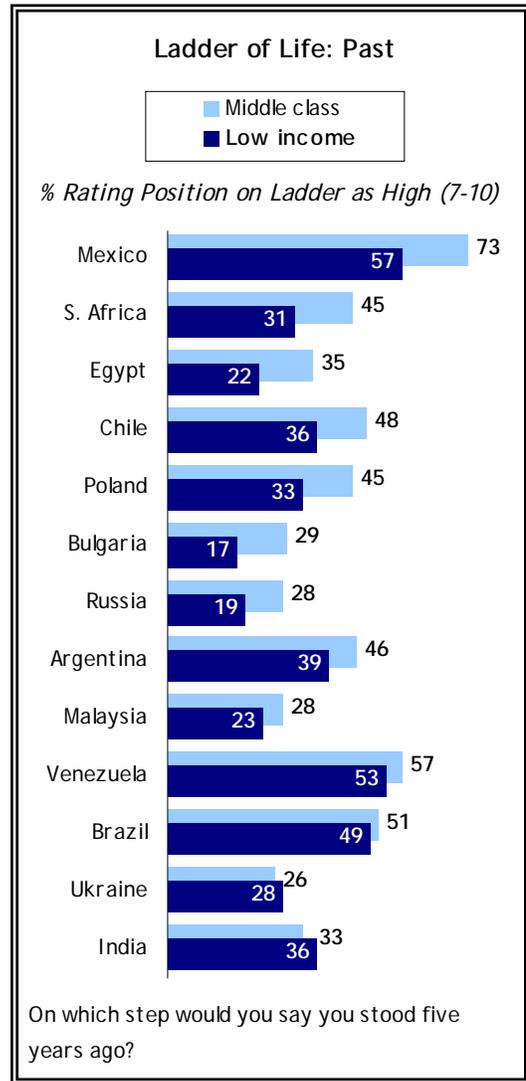
Regardless of income, fewer than half in the Eastern European countries of Poland, Bulgaria and Russia said their lives of five years ago rated a 7-10 on the scale, but middle-class earners still rated their lives higher than the less-affluent.

Less substantial gaps between members of the middle class and the less well-off were also evident in Argentina (seven percentage points) and Malaysia (five percentage points).

Rating Their Lives in the Future

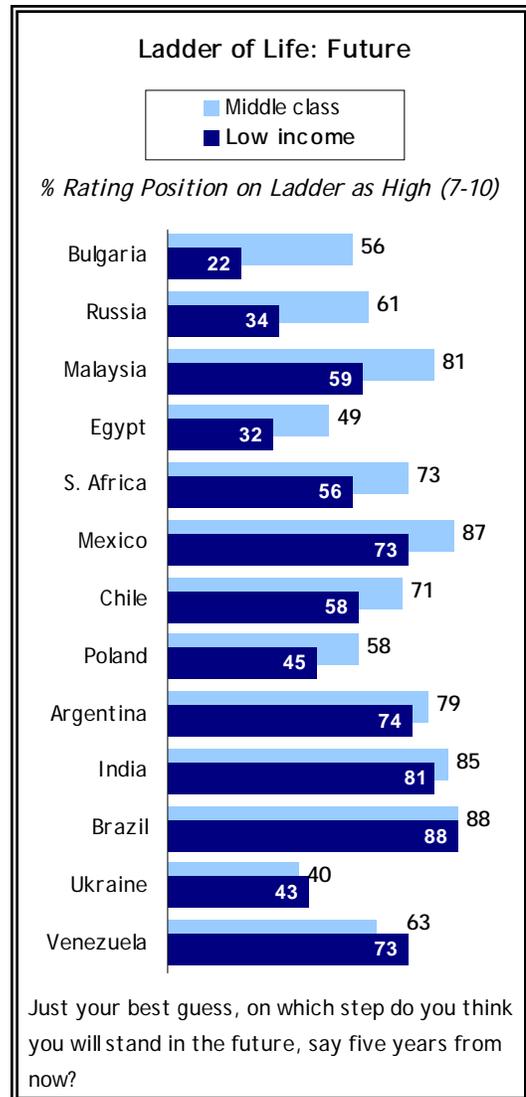
While both income groups in most countries looked optimistically at the next five years, the middle class typically saw a brighter future. Middle-income respondents in nine of the 13 countries included in this analysis were more likely to predict higher levels of personal contentment in five years than were lower-income respondents.

Middle- and lower-income Bulgarians exhibited the greatest gap in expected future personal satisfaction among the countries analyzed (34 percentage points). Elsewhere in Eastern Europe, upwards of six-in-ten middle-class Russians (61%) envisioned a high quality of life in five years, but considerably fewer of those with lower incomes (34%) had the same opinion. A less substantial income gap was found between the income groups in Poland (13 points).



Solid differences between middle- and lower-income respondents were apparent in Malaysia (22 points), Egypt and South Africa (17 point gaps).

Optimism for the next five years ran high across income categories in several of the Latin American countries included in this analysis. However, substantial gaps were found between members of the middle- and lower-income categories in both Mexico (14 points) and Chile (13 points). In Argentina, a less pronounced gap of only five percentage points was found between the middle- and lower-income earners. However, while majorities in both income categories in Venezuela predicted better lives, optimism for the future was actually more common among poorer Venezuelans.



Methods

This analysis defined the global middle class as people earning \$4,286 or more per year in PPP units – standardized international dollars. This threshold was based on a definition of the global middle class put forth by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank in 2007.⁶

The 2007 report defined the “global middle class” as people earning between \$4,000-\$17,000 per capita in 2005 PPP dollars. This range of \$4,000-\$17,000 was adjusted to account for the fact that it related to income for 2005 yet was used to categorize income for 2007. The adjustment involved accounting for GDP growth per capita.

Pew Global Attitudes income data are self-reported, categorical, household-level data in the national currency of the country in which the respondents were surveyed. The income data were adjusted to account for household size and converted into standardized international dollars (PPP units).

Respondents were then organized into two groups: those whose incomes met or exceeded the middle class income threshold – \$4,286 (PPP) – and those whose incomes did not (lower income).

⁶ International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank. 2007. *Global Economic Prospects: Managing the Next Wave of Globalization*.