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For The People & The Press

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Among Wealthy Nations ...

U.S. STANDS ALONE IN ITS EMBRACE OF RELIGION

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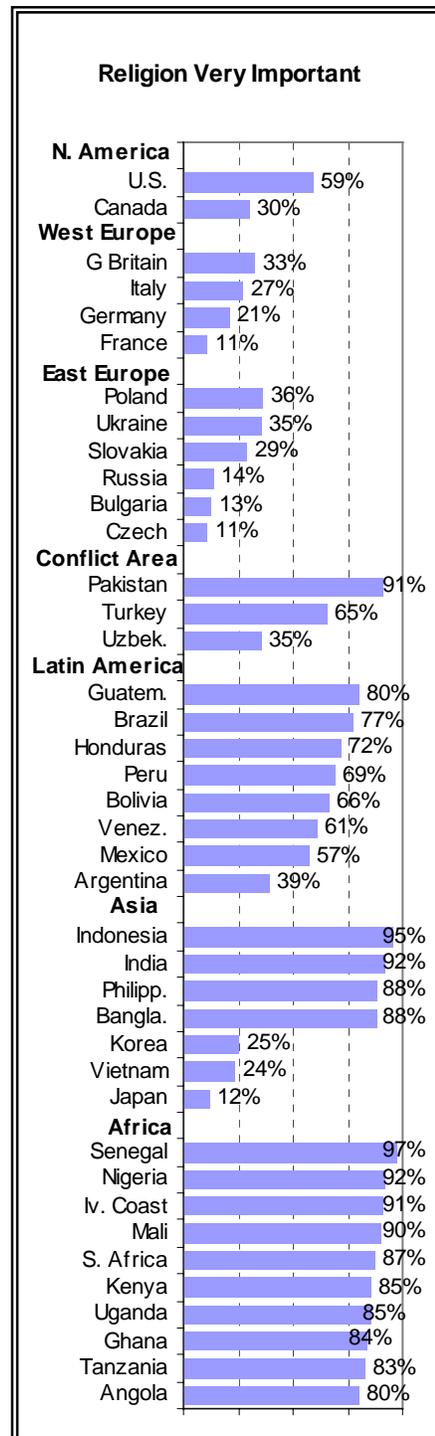
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Among Wealthy Nations ...
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Religion is much more important to Americans than to people living in other wealthy nations. Six-in-ten (59%) people in the U.S. say religion plays a *very* important role in their lives. This is roughly twice the percentage of self-avowed religious people in Canada (30%), and an even higher proportion when compared with Japan and Western Europe. Americans' views are closer to people in developing nations than to the publics of developed nations.

The 44-nation survey of the *Pew Global Attitudes Project* shows stark global regional divides over the personal importance of religion.¹ In Africa, no fewer than eight-in-ten in any country see religion as very important personally. Majorities in every Latin American country also subscribe to that view, with the exception of Argentina. More than nine-in-ten respondents in the predominantly Muslim nations of Indonesia, Pakistan, Mali and Senegal rate religion as personally very important. In Turkey and Uzbekistan, however, people are more divided over religion's importance.

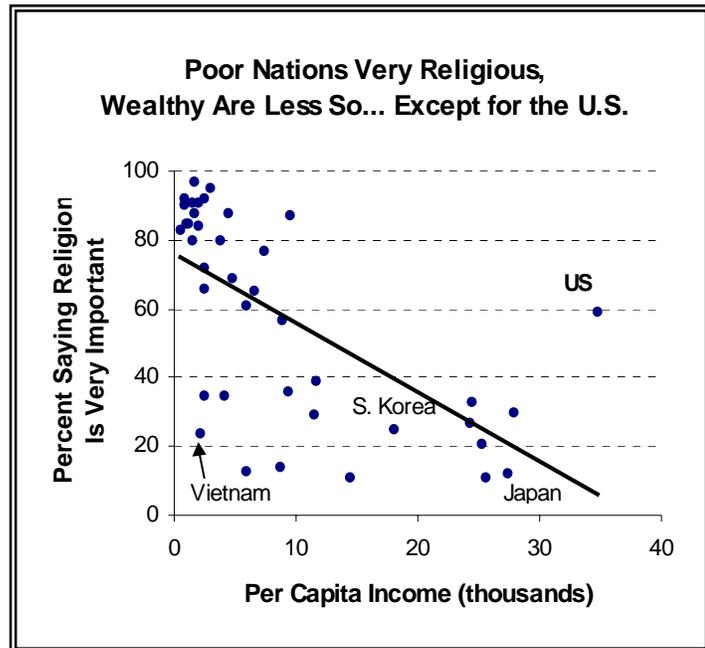
Secularism is particularly prevalent throughout Europe. Even in heavily Catholic Italy fewer than three-in-ten (27%) people say religion is very important personally, a lack of intensity in belief that is consistent with opinion in other Western European nations. Attitudes are comparable in former Soviet bloc countries. In the Czech Republic, fully 71% say religion has little or no importance in their lives – more than any nation surveyed – while barely one-in-ten (11%) say it is very important. And in Poland, the birthplace of the Pope and



¹ Question wording: How important is religion in your life—very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?

where the Catholic Church played a pivotal role during the communist era, just 36% say religion is very important.

The Global Attitudes study correlated views on religion with annual per capita income and found that wealthier nations tend to place less importance on religion – with the exception of the United States. This is seen most clearly in Asia, where publics in the two wealthiest nations surveyed – Japan and South Korea – are far less likely to cite religion as personally important than those in poorer nations of the region. The lone exception is Vietnam, however, where just 24% of the public view religion as very important. (Questions on the personal importance of religion were not permitted in China, and were deemed too sensitive to ask in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon.)



This poll is part of the *Pew Global Attitudes Project*. The project's first major report, "What the World Thinks in 2002," focusing on how people view their lives, their countries and the world, was released Dec. 4, 2002 and is available online at www.people-press.org.

"The Pew Global Attitudes Project," is a series of worldwide public-opinion surveys that will measure the impact of globalization, modernization, rapid technological and cultural change and the Sept. 11 terrorist events on the values and attitudes of more than 38,000 people in 44 countries worldwide. It will be conducted and released over the course of two years.

The Project is chaired by former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright. Andrew Kohut, director of The Pew Research Center For The People & The Press, is the project director. An international advisory board - consisting of regional experts, academics, activists, and business and government leaders and chaired by Sec. Albright - provides guidance in shaping the surveys. Team members include Bruce Stokes, a columnist at the National Journal; Mary McIntosh, vice-president of Princeton Survey Research Associates; and Elizabeth Mueller Gross and Nicole Speulda, of the Pew Research Center. The Global Attitudes Project is funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, with a supplemental grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.