



Poll no. 186

April 23, 2014

### **Global Poll: Does Religion Play a Positive Role ?**

**Dr. Nabil Kukali: around half of the Palestinians believe that religion plays a positive role in their lives.**

#### **Introduction**

This global poll on the role of religion has been conducted by WIN/Gallup International, which is made up of the (77) 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.



**Dr. Kukali**

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 cultural differences of their own countries and societies. These are carefully selected by the Association Board. With only one member agency per country, the State of Palestine is represented in this Association by the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion (PCPO), which has been founded in 1994 and is run since then by its founder and president Dr. Nabil Kukali, who once declared that “the membership of PCPO in WIN/Gallup International as the sole representative of the State of Palestine is a great achievement for the State of Palestine and an international recognition of our ability, efficiency and credibility to conduct as a Palestinian center global surveys and public opinion polls in any part of the world”.

## **Objective of the Survey**

The objective of this survey is to highlight how people globally perceive the role religion plays in their respective countries, irrespective of their nationality, geographical region, race, culture or belief, taking into consideration that religion has been always and is still a pivotal factor that impacts people's behavior and even global policies and has enormous leverage in the different economical, social and cultural aspects of our daily life.

## **Methodology**

A total of 66,806 persons were interviewed globally representing 77 % of the global population. In each of the (65) countries a national probability sample of around 1,000 men and women was interviewed either face to face (34 countries), via telephone (10 countries) or online (21 countries). The field work was conducted during the period from October 1<sup>st</sup> till December 9<sup>th</sup> 2013. In general, the margin of error for a survey of this kind is at the 95 % confidence level for 2780 is +/- 1.86 %. While for a small sample size of 300 it is +/- 5.66 %. The global average has been computed according to the share of the covered adult population of the surveyed countries.

## **Key Results of the Survey**

Responding to the question: "Does religion generally play a positive, negative or no role in your country?", over half of the respondents said they believe that *religion plays a positive role* in their country, with people in Western Europe recording significantly lower positive results than other regions. Hereunder the most eminent results:

- Over half (59%) of global respondents said that religion plays a positive role.
- 22% of respondents globally believe that religion plays a negative role in their country.
- Western Europe was significantly less net positive regionally (4%) than the rest of the world where overall net positivity is 37%.
- Education proved a significant factor globally with those educated to Masters or PhD level being significantly less net positive about the role religion is playing (20%) increasing to 57% net positive for those with no education.

- Globally Protestants and Muslims were the most net positive (60%) about the role of religion in their respective countries; Hindus were the least net positive (24%).

**Jean-Marc Leger, President of WIN/Gallup International, said:** “This survey has produced some fascinating results and not least on the religious outlook of countries. Over half of the world still believes that religion plays a positive role in their country. Having said that, it is interesting to note that Western Europe bucks this trend considerably, highlighting the complex role of religion within the region and the impact that a secular outlook has on a country. The correlation between education and people’s view on the role of religion in society also poses some interesting questions.”

In total there were nine countries whose net scores were negative when asked about religion, with six of those falling within Western Europe (Belgium, Denmark, France, Netherlands, Spain and Sweden). Of these, Denmark was the most net negative at -36%, followed by Belgium (-30%), France (-22%) and Spain (-22%). By contrast, the most net positive country in this region was Iceland (43%) followed by Portugal (39%), which may be due to these countries having one dominant religion. On a global scale, the most net negative country was Lebanon (-43%).

As to the continents, the most net positive region globally is Africa (65%) followed by the Americas (54%) and MENA (50%), and these high response rates may be due to the less secular nature of these regions. The most positive country globally was Indonesia, with 95% stating religion played a positive role, whilst, as a comparison, the USA and the UK are both net positive at 43% and 6% respectively.

Religion still holds great importance in the US with 62% of respondents saying religion plays a positive role in the country, culminating in net positivity of 43%. This shows that the majority of US respondents hold religion central to their values, something which is still reflected in the country’s politics - and something this poll would suggest is unlikely to change in the near future.

## **Role of Religion in the G7**

An analysis of the responses of G7 countries shows vast differences in opinion on the topic of religion. The spread of 43% net positive in the US as compared to the French -22% net score is striking. The following table illustrates these differences:

<b>Does religion generally play a positive, negative or no role in your country?</b>							
	<b>Canada</b>	<b>France</b>	<b>Germany</b>	<b>USA</b>	<b>Italy</b>	<b>Japan</b>	<b>UK</b>
<b>Total positive</b>	45%	20%	40%	62%	52%	32%	35%
<b>Total negative</b>	22%	42%	25%	19%	25%	9%	29%
<b>No Role</b>	26%	31%	36%	11%	18%	15%	24%
<b>I don't know</b>	8%	7%	0%	8%	5%	44%	12%
<b>Net Score</b>	23%	-22%	15%	43%	27%	23%	6%

## **The impact of education?**

The data also shows a clear correlation between the level of education people have received and their perceived positivity about the role of religion in their country. The results would suggest that those who have been educated to Masters or PhD level have 20% lower net positivity compared to those who have had less education. The results also showed that net positivity increased gradually to an average of 57% for those who have no education at all. The table below highlights this staggered increase:

<b>Does religion generally play a positive, negative or no role in your country?</b>					
	<b>No education</b>	<b>Primary school</b>	<b>Secondary school</b>	<b>University</b>	<b>Masters, PHD, etc</b>
<b>Total positive</b>	70%	68%	62%	56%	52%
<b>Total negative</b>	13%	15%	17%	26%	32%
<b>No Role</b>	11%	12%	14%	14%	13%
<b>I don't know</b>	6%	5%	7%	4%	4%
<b>Net Score</b>	57%	53%	45%	30%	20%

## **How do different religious beliefs affect the results?**

When analyzing the data by religion, a marked difference can be seen across the various religious groups in terms of their positivity towards the role of religion in their country. Globally, net positivity was 37%, however, of the major religious groups Muslims and

Protestants both came in above the global figure at net positive 60% while Hindus were the least net positive at 24%.

The overall results broken down by religion can be seen here:

<b>Does religion generally play a positive, negative or no role in your country?</b>							
	<b>Catholic</b>	<b>Russian or Eastern Orthodox</b>	<b>Protestant</b>	<b>Other Christian</b>	<b>Hindu</b>	<b>Muslim</b>	<b>Jewish</b>
<b>Total positive</b>	70%	62%	72%	69%	55%	76%	58%
<b>Total negative</b>	14%	15%	12%	16%	31%	16%	23%
<b>No Role</b>	12%	19%	13%	11%	11%	5%	14%
<b>I don't know</b>	4%	5%	3%	4%	2%	3%	5%
<b>Net Score</b>	56%	47%	60%	53%	24%	60%	35%

### **Results of a Special Survey in Palestine**

Dr. Nabil Kukali addressed in a special survey on this topic a question probing the criteria of religiosity among the Palestinians. The wording of this question was:” **Up to which extent you feel that each of the following religious items or rules is personally significant for you, using a scale from zero to (10), where zero means “not significant at all” and (10) means “very significant” ?.**

The average results were as follows:

1. Prayer on time: 8.9
2. Taraweeh and night prayers: 8.2
3. Umra (minor pilgrimage to Mecca): 7.5
4. Charity: 8.1
5. The women’s veil: 8.4
6. The women’s niqab (face cover): 5.0
7. Men’s beard and short dress: 2.5

### **Level of Religiosity**

Responding to the question:”**How would you describe yourself from the religious aspect ?**”, (5.0 %) said “very religious” (religious activist), (44.0 %) “somewhat religious”, (41.0 %) “fairly religious”, (5.4 %) “somehow not religious”, (3.2 %) “absolutely not religious” and (1.4 %) said “I don’t know”.

### **A joint survey**

### **Role of Religion**

In regard to the question:” **Does religion generally play a positive, negative or no role in our country Palestine**”?, (19.9 %) said “a positive role”, (33.2 %) “somewhat a positive role”, (19.1 %) “somehow a negative role”, (4.7 %) “a negative role”, (12.4 %) “has no role” and (10.7 %) said “I don’t know”.

### **Comment of Dr. Nabil Kukali on this global survey**

Dr. Nabil Kukali, one of the most eminent pollsters in Palestine and with his renowned polling and research center (PCPO) also one of the contributors to this global survey commented on the results saying “that the Palestinian people with a net score of positivity reaching (49 %) are generally considered as religious and that still a high rate of the Palestinian public believes that religion can play a significant role in the daily life”. Dr. Kukali added that “a considerable rate of Palestinians are inclined not to mix religion with other issues. They have learned from a set of experiences that are engendered from practices of certain political-religious parties”. “The non-democratic practices of these religiously oriented parties”, Dr. Kukali added “have disappointed many people, not only in Palestine, but all over the Arab world.”