

Secularization around the World

Tom W. Smith

Benjamin Schapiro

NORC at the University of Chicago

April, 2021

Report to the Templeton Religion Trust

Introduction

Secularization theory posits that as societies progress and modernize the role of religion inevitably diminishes. The main reason for the decline is the existential explanation that greater education in general and the rise in science in particular undermines the foundation of religion. A secondary reason for the decline is the utilitarian explanation that governments take over most of the social-welfare functions of many religions such education and care for the sick and needy. Secularization theory contends that the decline in religion will be cumulative with religious beliefs, behaviors, and belonging spiraling downward towards irrelevance and triviality.

This report examines how far secularization has advanced around the world. Unlike most studies of religion, it focuses on those at the secular or non-religious end of the spectrum. First, the report examines the size of the fully secular share of the population on 10 indicators of religious identifications, behaviors, and beliefs. For example, it looks at not identifying with a religion, never attending religious services, and not believing in God. Second, the rankings across the 10 indicators are combined to make an overall levels of secularism across countries. Third, reasons for the variation in secularism across countries are explored with particular focus on differences in the main religious tradition in each country. Finally, another method for assess the level of secularization is examined and compared to the 10-indicator method.

Data

The International Social Survey Program (ISSP)/Templeton Religion IV Study, 2018-2020 is used in this research. The ISSP/Templeton Religion IV study is a cross-national survey conducted in 48 countries. Each country fields a national probability sample of adults in their respective nation. Most ISSP member countries fund data collection from their own national sources, but for Religion IV, the Templeton Religion Trust supplied funding for surveys in an additional 15 countries in Africa and Asia. The 48 countries along with their 2-alpha ISO codes, which will be utilized in this report, are listed in Appendix 1. For more information see <https://www.gesis.org/en/issp/modules/issp-modules-by-topic/religion/2018> and <https://www.gesis.org/en/issp/modules/issp-modules-by-topic/religion/2018/2018-additional-14-countries>

A 10-Item Battery of Measures of Secularization

Table 1 shows those in the most secular position on religious identification – not belonging to or following a religion and feeling non-religious, Table 2 for those not attending religious services, having a religious object in the home, visiting a religious site, reading/listening to religious scripture (outside of religious services), and praying, and Table 3 for not believing in God, an afterlife, and religious miracles.

The first thing the 10 items in Tables 1-3 show is that secularization has not reached levels anywhere near an end stage when 100% of people in each country placed themselves in the least religious categories covered here. As summarized in the list below, for three of the indicators, feeling non-religious, not believing in God, and definitely not believing in an afterlife, in all countries less than 41-44% take the secularist position. For four of the measures, having no religion, never attending religious services, never praying, and definitely not believing in religious miracles, the most secular country is each is between 52-73%, but the secularist position is taken by half or more of the population in only a small minority of countries, 2-8 out of 48, depending on the measure. For three specific religious behaviors, having no religious object at home, never visiting a religious site, and not reading/listening to holy scripture (outside of religious services), the countries with the highest secularist level are at 83-92% and about half of countries (22-28) have 50%+ at the secularist end, depending on the measure. The higher level of secularism on these items result from two measures being simple Yes/No measures that do not capture more extreme secularism as the items with Never or Definitely Not responses do

and because these specific religious behaviors are not equally favored across various religions (as is discussed further below).

	Highest level in any country	Number of countries < 50%
Has no religion	67.7%	6
Feels very or extremely non-religious	41.3%	0
Never attend religious services	72.7%	8
No religious object at home	91.6%	27
Never visiting religious site	83.0%	22
No reading/listening to scripture	89.5%	28
Never praying	62.7%	7
Does not believe in God	43.5%	0
Definitely does not believe in an afterlife	42.6%	0
Definitely does not believe in religious miracles	51.9%	2

Second, the results show a large range in secularization across countries:

Has no religion	67.7% to 0.0%
Feels very or extremely non-religious	41.3% to 0.0%
Never attend religious services	72.7% to 0.0%
No religious object at home	91.6% to 3.1%
Never visiting religious site	83.0% to 4.9%
No reading/listening to scripture	89.5% to 5.0%
Never praying	62.7% to 0.3%
Does not believe in God	43.5% to 0.1%
Definitely does not believe in an afterlife	42.6% to 4.2%
Definitely does not believe in religious miracles	51.9% to 0.9%

As discussed above, the secularist position is taken by a maximum of 41%-92% in the highest countries. It falls to 0-5% in the lowest countries and other countries are all along the range between these highs and lows. Thus, cross-nationally there is an enormous range in the level of secularity and in many countries it remains quite small.

Third, the level of secularization in a country often varies notably across the 10 indicators. Tables 1-3 show that in 65% of the countries the range from its highest ranking on secularization to its lowest differs by 20+ positions. For example, 1) Denmark is second most secular on feeling non-religious, not having a religious object at home, and never praying, but in the middle ranking 22nd in not identifying with any religion, 2) Vietnam is the most secular country on never attending religious services and not believing in God, but towards the non-secular end in 28th position on praying, 3) Thailand is 47th on never visiting a holy site, but ranks 8th believing in God, and 4) Bulgaria ranks first on not believing in an afterlife and 2nd on not reading/listening to religious scripture, but towards the non-secular end in 31st position on both identifying with a religion and having a religious object at home.

These ranges are not inconsistencies, but reflections of the complexity of systems of belief and non-belief. The secularity-religiosity continuum is not a simple unidimensional construct, but varies across different components according to the tenants of particular religions, how secularism is manifested, and other societal conditions not directly related to either secularity or religion.

The range in secularity on particular measures is often explained by variations in particular religious practices. The display of religious objects in the home illustrates this. Israel is less secular on not having a religious object in homes (ranking 44th) than it ranks on any other measure (10th-33rd). This is of course explained by the common practice of having a mezuzah containing scripture from the Torah on the door posts of Jewish homes and presence of the Hanukkah menorahs and other Judaica in households. Across European countries, predominately Protestant countries are much less likely to have a religious object at home (ranking 1-14, average 5.3), than mainly Catholic countries with the display of crucifixes and statues of the Virgin Mary (ranking 8-40, average 23.6) or mostly Eastern Orthodox countries with their icons (ranking 31-42, average 35.3).¹

This variation is also illustrated by the item in Table 3 on definitely not believing in the supernatural powers of deceased ancestors. Looking at the seven countries with 50%+ rejecting this belief shows that it consists of two very different groups, four countries that generally tend to be more secular overall - Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and France and three countries that overall score low on secularism - Jordan, Malawi, and Kenya, but which mostly follow religions that do not believe that ancestors have supernatural powers. Because of this very mixed pattern, this belief is not used as one of the 10 general indicators of secularism.

In addition, identifying with a religion is sometimes not just an indicator of religiousness, but also a national identifier. For example, in the Nordic nations of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden being Lutheran is often seen as part of being Danish, Norwegian, or Swedish. In each country their ranking on having a religious identification was notably less secular than their overall secularity ranking (by 19 positions in Denmark, six positions in Norway, and 11 positions in Sweden). As a colleague remarked, "To be Norwegian is to be Lutheran. It is part of being Norwegian. Believing in Lutheran dogma and attending church are entirely separate matters." Similarly, in Russia most identify as Russian Orthodox and Russians rank as less secular on belonging than they do on their overall level of secularization (by five positions).

Table 4 takes the 10 indicators of secularism in Tables 1-3 and calculates the average rank across all measures. The average rankings could have ranged from exactly 1 to 48 if one country had ranked first on all measures and another country had been last on all. There was of course no such perfect alignment and the overall average rankings range from 5.9 to 44.4. In many cases the average rankings are very close across countries (including a tie at 16.5 of Austria and Iceland) and there is little meaningful difference across adjoining countries. Equal weight is given to each of the measures. If alternative methods are applied such as by adding or subtracting measures or by giving equal weight to the three categories of indicators (religious identification, religious behaviors, and religious beliefs) rather than to the individual measures, the overall rankings change in various ways, but still show substantially the same results.

Table 5 shows how the rankings of secularism vary by the main religion in each country. There are 31 mostly Christian countries (in green) and their level of secularism varies from the most secular country overall, the Czech Republic, all the way down to the next to the lowest on secularism, Nigeria. Among the six mostly Islamic countries (in blue), all are in the lower half of the secularism rankings ranging from 33rd for Algeria to Indonesia with the lowest overall level of secularism. For the six mostly Buddhist countries (in purple) secularism ranges from Vietnam in 7th place down to Cambodia in 44th position. The only mostly Hindu country, Nepal, (in red) is near the bottom of the secularism scale in 45th position. The only mostly Jewish country, Israel, (in gray) is in the middle ranking 23rd. The remaining three countries

¹ Here and elsewhere in this report countries are classified according to their largest religious group and predominate religious tradition. Another report will examine differences across the religious identification of individuals.

(in yellow) represent different cases of countries with a mixed or complex religious profile. Singapore has been described by the Pew Research Center as the most religiously diverse country in the world. Our study found that about a quarter were Christian, a quarter Buddhist, and with about 6-14% Muslim, Hindu, or following Chinese religions. Overall, it ranks slightly towards the less secular end in 31st position. In Taiwan most follow some Chinese religion, including various Chinese folk religions, Taoism, and Confucianism (for those that count it as a religion). It ranks 32nd. Korea has a plurality (48%) with no religious identity with many of this group following Confucianism (but not listing it as a religious identity), about a third Christian, and a fifth Buddhist. It is in 9th position.

Among the 31 mostly Christian countries there are several factors that help to explain the huge variation in the level of secularism. The first and most important is region. There are 20 European Christian nations and they dominate the top of the secularism scale falling between rankings 1 and 27. With the exception of New Zealand which ranks 10, the remaining nine mostly Christian countries all rank at or lower than the midpoint on secularism. In South America, Chile is 24th and Suriname is 34th. In North America, the US ranks 28th. In Africa, countries range from 29th in Malawi, to 30th in South Africa, 35th in Ghana, 39th in Kenya, and 47th in Nigeria. In Asia, Georgia ranks 40th and the Philippines is 44th. It is likely that the greater and earlier extent of modernization in Europe (Smith, 2009) coupled with the more extensive nature of the social-welfare system in most of the European countries have spurred secularization in that region. A second factor influencing the level of secularization is differences across the branches of Christianity. Table 6 indicates whether mostly Christian countries were Largely Catholic, Largely Protestant, Largely Orthodox, or a Catholic-Protestant mix (i.e. with more than a third of Christians following the smaller of the two branches). There were no countries with a notable mixture of the Orthodox with either Catholics and/or Protestants. Each of the branches of Christianity show a wide range of secularism, mostly Catholic countries from the Czech Republic ranked 1st down to the Philippines in 44th place; mostly Protestant countries from Sweden ranked 2nd to Nigeria in 47th position; and the mostly Orthodox from Russia in 20th position to Georgia ranked 40th. Among Christian countries in Europe some differentiation does emerge with mostly Protestant countries with an average rank of 7.8, mixed Catholic-Protestant averaging 12, mostly Catholic countries with an average rank of 14.9, and mostly Orthodox countries averaging 20.5 (or 27 if Georgia was counted as part of Europe).

While these differences in ranking may well reflect the greater or less resilience of the various branches of Christianity to the forces of secularization, there is a third factor that complicates this interpretation. With the fall of Communism across much of the former Soviet bloc, there was a resurgence of religion in most former Communist states (Smith, 2009). A measure about changes in belief about God captures one aspect of the rebound on religion after the fall of Communism. It asks "Which best describes your beliefs about God? 1. I don't believe in God now and I never have, 2. I don't believe in God now, but I used to. 3. I believe in God now, but I didn't used to, or 4. I believe in God now and I always have." To measure a net shift in believing in God, the percent that lost faith in God (#2) is subtracted from the percent that became believers (#3). A negative score indicates a net increase in disbelief over time and a positive score a net increase in belief over time.

As Table 7 shows, changes ranged from -17.1 percentage points in Iceland to +19.5 percentage points in Russia. Overall 17 countries showed declines and 31 countries had gains in belief in God. Many of the net gains were small, less than 3 points in 13 countries. Most, but not all, ex-Communist states had net gains: Russia + 19.5, Lithuania +16.2 Mongolia +14.0, Georgia +5.0, Bulgaria +4.6, Slovakia +4.4, Hungary +4.3, Croatia +1.1, the Czech Republic -4.3, and Slovenia -11.4. Among the ex-Communist states, the three mostly Orthodox countries gains averaged +9.7 points and for the six mostly Catholic countries gains averaged +1.7. There were no mostly Protestant ex-Communist states. This suggests that the lower secularism in Orthodox countries (averaging 27th position) at least partly resulted from post-Communist religious rebounding. For mostly Catholic countries in Europe, as noted above, ex-Communist states average a net gain of +1.7 compared to mostly Catholic non-Communist states that

had net losses of -16.8 in Spain, -12.1 in Austria, -9.9 in France, and -9.4 in Italy for an average decline of -12.1. This suggests that the overall less secularism in mostly Catholic countries in Europe with an average ranking of 14.9 compared to mostly Protestant countries averaging a rank of 7.8 was in part due to the post-Communist rebound of religion in some mostly Catholic countries.

Among the six mostly Muslim countries all were in the less secular half of countries in positions 33rd-48th. The two East Asian countries, Malaysia (43rd place) and Indonesia (48th place) were the least secular. Indonesia, Malaysia, and Tunisia showed small variation across the rankings of their most and least secular measures (ranges of 12-14 positions), Jordan had a fairly high range of 24 positions, and Algeria had an extraordinary range from 3rd on never visiting a religious site to 48th on not having a religious in the home. Having a religious object in the home varied greatly across Islamic countries. It ranked as the least secular measure in Algeria and Malaysia, the most secular item in Jordan, Tunisia, and Turkey, and was intermediate in Jordan.

The six mostly Buddhist countries showed a large range in secularism from Vietnam ranking 7th, to Japan 19th, Mongolia, 25th, Thailand 38th, Sri Lanka 42nd, and Cambodia 46th. In Vietnam Buddhists at 22.1% dominate those with a religion, but 63.9% have no religious identity. Its high secularism reflects both the continued discouragement of religious in the still Communist state as well as Chinese and East Asian non- or quasi-religious belief systems higher whose adherents show levels of secularism on many measures. In Japan, 32.1% are Buddhist, but 63.7% have no religious identification. While many Japanese believe in and follow some of the main precepts of Shintoism, few name it as their religion. The remaining countries have a clear majority identifying as Buddhist and only Mongolia has an appreciable share of those without a religion (25.0%). The level of non-members in Mongolia reflects both the past suppression of religion under Communism and some following indigenous shamanism without mentioning it as their religion.

Another Way to Measure Secularization

Table 8 examines an alternative way of measuring secularization. The 10 items utilized above all involve people reporting their own identifications, behaviors, and beliefs. In this second approach people are asked whether they think religion has been in decline as secularization theory predicts. The two measures ask if they agree or disagree that in their country “religion represents the past and not the future” and if “religion is just as relevant to life today as it was in the past.” The secular assessments are to agree with the first item and disagree with the second. Thus the items should be negatively related and in Table 8 this is taken into account by reporting agreement with religion representing the past and disagreement about the continuing relevance of religion. The two items worked as expected in most countries. 34 countries had usually substantial negative associations between the two variables, but in 10 countries there were statistically significant positive associations (and in another four countries positive, but not statistically significant relationships). The 14 countries with unexpected positive associations were not distinctive in their dominant religion or national languages, but there was some regional pattern. Of the 21 European countries, 20 had negative associations with Bulgaria the only exception. Sub-Saharan Africa on the other hand leaned in the other direction with four of the five having mostly small positive associations. It is possible that the items work well in Europe because the secularization framework (i.e. a general understanding that religion is in decline or, in some ex-Communist states, has rebounded) is familiar in these societies. In about half of the non-European countries the items do not perform as intended. This is likely because people are applying different, particularistic interpretations to the two measures. Because of the inconsistency across countries, it is not useful to make a scale out of the two measures.

Agreeing that religion represents the past and not the future ranges from 68.5% in Nepal down to 7.1% in Taiwan. Disagreeing that religion is still as relevant as in the past falls from 72.9% in Germany down to

7.1% in Indonesia. The secular position is endorsed by a majority in just three countries on the first measure and nine countries on the second measure. The ranking of countries on whether religion is still relevant lines up well with the overall secularization rankings in Table 4. It of course does not exactly match the overall rankings, but none of the 10-items that made up the overall ranking came close to exactly matching the overall scale either. And as on almost all the other 10 measures, there are some more notable deviations, such a Vietnam which ranked seventh on overall secularism, in 40th place on disagreeing that religion is still relevant. The religion is the past has greater differences with the overall secularism scale, especially with Nepal ranking 45th overall and 1st on agreeing that religion is the past and the Philippines ranking 44th overall and 2nd on this measure.

Summary

While secularization theory predicts the decline of religion and its replacement with a secular worldview, the world is far from that endpoint. On religious identification the secularist positions are endorsed by a majority of people in only a few countries and the largest level of secularism was 68% having no religion identification in one country. On religious beliefs no countries had a majority not belief in God or not believing in an afterlife and the most secular countries were at 43-44%. On the two key religious behaviors, attending religious services and praying, the secularist responses of never attending services peaked at 73% and was followed by majorities in only eight countries and never praying had a high of 63% and reached a majority in only seven countries. On other religious behaviors (having no religious object at home, never visiting a religious site, and not reading or listening to holy scripture) the secularist positions reached as high as 83-92% and represented a majority in about half of the countries (22-28 countries). This was largely because no religion encourages all of these activities.

Across countries the range in secularism is very large. From the high point of secularism on each measure, it ranges to less than 1% on having no religious identity, feeling very or extremely non-religious, never attending religious services, never praying, not believing in God, and definitely not believing in religious miracles. On the others measures the low points are at 3-5%. The high-to-low ranges are from points for feeling very or extremely non-religious to 88.5 points on not having a religious object at home.

The 10 measures of religious identification, religious behaviors, and religious beliefs shows complex patterns across countries with most countries having much higher secularism rankings on some items and much lower placements on others. These differences do not represent inconsistencies, but instead reveal the complexity of religious belief systems. The reasons for some of the variation include differences in the use of religious objects in the home across religions, in belief in the supernatural powers of deceased ancestors, and the comingling of national identity with religious identity. Additional factors also contribute to the variation.

The overall rankings on secularism on the 10-item scale which is based on the average rankings of each measure produces a useful and valid placement of countries along the secularity-religiosity continuum. The scaling of countries would vary somewhat if other measures and/or other averaging procedures were used. However, the overall location of countries in the ranking remains approximately similar regardless of how measures are combined. Additionally, many countries are close to other countries in their average rankings and the relative position of countries are close approximations rather than being definitive orderings.

Asking about whether “religion represents the past and not the future” and if “religion is just as relevant to life today as it was in the past” works well in most countries, but not well enough in other countries to make a reliable cross-national scale. Like the 10-items used in the overall ranking of countries, these two measures do show that the secularist position is only endorsed by a majority in three countries with

the highest level at 69% on the first item and a majority in nine countries with a top score of 73% on the second.

Overall, the level of secularization has been limited so far. None of the countries are close to an all secularist endpoint where religion has diminished to irrelevancy. It is much higher in some countries than in others and much greater on some measures than on others. Some proponents of secularization theory say however that it is just a matter of time and that countries will shift along the secularity-religiousness continuum towards secularism. But others argue that all religious change does not add up to being secularization. A number of countries have seen a rise in what Davie (1990) called “belief without behavior” and others have witnessed the rise in the spiritual, but not religious share of the population. To the advocates of secularization theory these trends are waystations on the road to secularism, to secularization-theory skeptics these changes represent religious transformations and not expanding secularism (Smith and Schapiro, 2021). In the few countries where these particular religious changes have been examined, there is evidence that support either interpretation. In most countries there is little or no empirical evidence on these changes and/or no examination of whether such changes represent secularization or transformation.

Table 1: Religious Identity

	Religion=		Very+Extremely	
	None		Non-religious	
1	CZ	67.7	JP	41.3
2	VN	63.9	DE	38.2
3	JP	63.7	CH	36.9
4	FR	52.5	UK	35.3
5	UK	52.0	DK	33.9
6	NZ	50.5	SE	33.5
7	KR	48.2	FI	33.2
8	SK	34.7	FR	32.7
9	CH	34.5	NZ	32.5
10	DE	33.0	IL	32.4
11	SL	32.5	NO	30.7
12	FI	31.7	RU	27.7
13	SE	30.0	CL	27.4
14	ES	30.0	AT	27.1
15	AT	26.5	KR	25.5
16	NO	26.3	VN	24.5
17	MN	25.0	CZ	24.4
18	HU	24.6	ES	23.7
19	ZA	24.5	HU	23.5
20	IS	22.3	IS	22.7
21	US	22.0	SL	21.5
22	DK	22.0	IT	18.7
23	CL	21.6	SK	17.5
24	SG	20.2	LT	17.2
25	RU	18.0	BG	16.7
26	IT	14.2	HR	16.2
27	TW	13.8	US	14.0
28	LT	13.3	TH	11.5
29	SR	13.2	MN	11.3
30	HR	12.1	SG	9.4
31	BG	10.0	ZA	9.4
32	IL	3.0	TN	8.7
33	GH	2.9	DZ	7.9
34	MY	2.4	TW	6.7
35	KE	1.8	TR	6.4
36	MW	1.3	SR	4.6
37	TR	1.3	KE	3.1
38	GE	1.0	NG	3.0
39	JO	0.3	MW	2.7
40	PH	0.3	JO	2.0
41	TN*	0.3	PH	1.9
42	KH	0.2	GH	1.5
43	ID	0.1	MY	1.2
44	LK	0.1	LK	1.1
45	TH	0.1	GE	1.1

46	NG	0.0	ID	0.9
47	DZ	0.0	NP	0.4
48	NP	0.0	KH	0.1

Table 1 (continued)

Question Wordings:

The following item is a background variable on the ISSP surveys. In line with ISSP guidelines, countries adapt it to fit their culture. This is the version used in the United States.

What is your religious preference? Is it Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, some other religion, or no religion?

Would you describe yourself as...

1. Extremely religious
2. Very religious
3. Somewhat religious
4. Neither religious nor non-religious
5. Somewhat non-religious
6. Very non-religious
7. Extremely non-religious

*Tunisia did not ask this item in a standard way. This level is an estimate based on related items asked in Tunisia.

Table 2: Religious Behaviors

	Attend Services		Relig. Object	Visit Holy Site		Read Scripture		Pray		
	Never	No		Never	No	No	Never			
1	VN	72.7	SE	91.6	MW	83.0	JP	89.5	CZ	62.7
2	CZ	61.5	DK	89.5	DE	80.0	BG	86.3	DK	56.8
3	NZ	57.6	UK	84.8	DZ	74.8	CZ	81.6	SE	56.2
4	FR	57.5	MW	83.5	JP	72.3	HU	81.4	FR	53.1
5	UK	57.4	NO	82.0	RU	71.9	ES	81.3	NO	51.2
6	ES	51.5	NZ	81.2	SK	67.2	AT	81.0	KR	51.2
7	KR	50.8	FI	80.9	AT	64.0	SE	79.8	UK	50.3
8	SE	50.1	HU	78.0	UK	63.4	IS	79.1	NZ	44.9
9	HU	44.4	CZ	75.9	NO	62.7	LT	77.5	HU	43.4
10	IL	44.4	DE	75.6	NZ	62.1	SL	75.7	ES	43.4
11	DK	44.0	CH	75.6	DK	61.4	DK	75.6	DE	40.8
12	CL	43.0	KR	75.2	SE	60.4	CH	74.2	SL	40.7
13	RU	42.1	TN	74.4	US	60.3	KR	73.2	RU	39.8
14	CH	40.6	IS	73.5	SL	60.2	SK	73.2	CH	37.0
15	NO	40.2	VN	71.1	CZ	60.2	TW	72.6	FI	36.7
16	DZ	38.4	FR	68.8	KR	59.5	RU	72.4	AT	36.0
17	IS	38.4	LT	68.3	TN	58.1	NO	71.9	SK	35.7
18	SK	35.4	KE	68.3	FR	55.8	UK	69.2	IL	35.5
19	SL	35.0	TR	67.3	VN	53.6	DE	69.1	IS	33.4
20	TW	34.9	ZA	65.8	HU	53.5	VN	68.8	BG	30.6
21	FI	33.1	GH	65.2	CH	51.5	HR	67.8	LT	30.3
22	DE	32.8	JP	60.1	ES	50.5	FI	67.4	TN	27.3
23	JO	32.1	US	58.9	IS	48.8	IT	66.9	MN	26.8
24	AT	31.4	SL	58.5	CL	47.0	NZ	64.6	DZ	23.4
25	BG	31.2	ES	55.0	KE	44.9	FR	59.1	CL	23.1
26	US	29.3	SR	54.2	LT	42.3	GE	58.2	HR	21.7
27	IT	26.3	CL	52.0	GH	42.3	SG	52.2	IT	20.6
28	SG	24.2	KH	46.4	TR	41.6	CL	50.7	VN	20.5
29	JP	21.0	AT	45.4	BG	41.4	TH	47.1	SG	17.4
30	MN	20.9	SG	44.6	FI	40.9	IL	43.6	TW	16.8
31	HR	20.5	BG	42.8	JO	40.2	US	42.5	TH	15.0
32	ZA	19.7	SK	42.3	HR	39.2	SR	37.6	US	14.5
33	LT	17.0	RU	37.3	IL	39.0	ZA	37.2	JP	13.7
34	SR	16.7	ID	35.7	IT	39.0	MN	37.0	GE	10.3
35	GE	14.2	PH	32.7	ZA	37.1	NP	30.2	ZA	8.3
36	TR	12.5	IT	30.9	MY	36.4	TR	30.0	SR	7.0
37	MY	8.4	TW	29.2	SG	30.1	PH	29.4	TR	6.5
38	GH	6.4	NG	27.0	TW	29.1	LK	27.8	JO	5.2
39	KE	4.5	MN	25.6	SR	24.6	KH	27.4	MY	4.2
40	MW	3.0	HR	24.0	MN	24.4	MY	25.7	MW	3.7
41	ID	2.9	JO	19.7	GE	20.5	MW	23.1	NP	2.5
42	LK	1.8	GE	18.7	PH	19.4	GH	20.9	LK	1.9
43	TH	1.2	NP	16.3	ID	19.3	TN	14.0	GH	1.6
44	PH	1.1	IL	13.6	KH	19.2	DZ	13.6	NG	1.1
45	NP	1.1	TH	12.5	NG	18.0	KE	9.6	KE	1.0
46	KH	0.4	MY	8.6	LK	9.9	NG	8.2	PH	0.5
47	NG	0.0	LK	4.9	TH	9.6	JO	5.4	KH	0.4
48	--*	---	DZ	3.1	NP	4.9	ID	5.0	ID	0.3

Table 2 (continued)

Question Wordings:

The following item is a background variable on the ISSP surveys. In line with ISSP guidelines, countries adapt it to fit their culture. This is the version used in the United States.

How often do you attend religious services?

USE CATEGORIES AS PROBES IF NECESSARY.

NEVER, LESS THAN ONCE A YEAR, ABOUT ONCE OR TWICE A YEAR, SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR, ABOUT ONCE A MONTH, 2-3 TIMES A MONTH, NEARLY EVERY WEEK, EVERY WEEK SEVERAL TIMES A WEEK

For religious reasons do you have in your home a shrine, altar, or a religious object on display such as [an icon, menorah, or crucifix]? Countries modify this list to mention examples of religious objects in their culture.

Yes No

How often do you visit a holy place for religious reasons such as going to a shrine, temple, church, or mosque? Please do not count attending regular religious services at your usual place of worship, if you have one. Would you say...

Never, Less than once a year, About once or twice a year, Several times a year, or About once a month or more?

During the last 12 months, have you read or listened to the reading of any holy scripture such as the Bible, Buddhist sutra, Koran, Sruti, Torah, or other religious scripture, not counting any reading that happened during a worship service?

Yes No

Now thinking about the present... About how often do you pray?

Never 2. Less than once a year 3. About once or twice a year 4. Several times a year 5. About once a month 6. 2-3 times a month 7. Nearly every week 8. Every week 9. Several times a week

*Tunisia data missing

Table 3: Religious Beliefs

	God		Afterlife		Religious Miracles		Powers of Ancestors	
	Don't Believe		Definitely Not		Definitely Not		Definitely Not	
1	VN	43.5	BG	42.6	SE	51.9	JO	72.3
2	CZ	34.2	VN	42.4	DK	51.3	MW	70.2
3	SE	29.3	CZ	38.4	NO	49.4	DK	58.6
4	FR	27.2	DK	35.1	ES	46.0	NO	56.1
5	DK	26.5	SL	33.3	BG	44.9	KE	52.9
6	UK	26.1	ES	32.9	CZ	44.9	SE	52.6
7	NO	26.1	NO	32.7	VN	39.3	FR	50.5
8	TH	24.2	HU	32.7	FR	38.6	ES	49.4
9	HU	21.6	SE	31.6	UK	37.8	UK	48.1
10	DE	21.3	DE	29.8	IS	36.9	DE	48.1
11	KR	20.5	FR	29.8	FI	36.1	MY	47.1
12	IS	19.6	NP	27.9	HU	34.6	BG	46.0
13	AT	19.3	SK	26.4	MW	32.2	FI	44.2
14	FI	19.2	UK	24.9	NZ	31.2	HR	42.6
15	NZ	18.7	AT	24.6	KR	31.0	CZ	42.2
16	SK	18.4	KR	24.1	SK	30.6	HU	40.6
17	SL	18.3	IL	23.9	JP	27.7	TN	40.4
18	MN	18.1	DZ	22.0	IL	26.2	SL	40.3
19	ES	17.0	FI	21.7	CH	25.5	GH	40.2
20	CH	14.6	MN	21.6	HR	25.0	LK	39.8
21	BG	13.2	RU	20.9	MN	24.8	IS	39.3
22	JP	10.9	IS	20.4	RUS	22.0	NZ	36.9
23	IL	10.7	HR	20.3	LT	21.6	SK	34.6
24	HR	10.5	LT	20.0	SL	21.1	SR	33.7
25	LK	9.9	NZ	18.7	DE	20.8	AT	33.5
26	RU	8.8	CL	18.2	AT	20.0	IL	33.4
27	TW	7.9	IT	17.3	IT	19.3	IT	33.4
28	SG	7.6	CH	17.2	KE	17.3	TR	33.1
29	IT	7.5	GH	16.6	PH	16.9	SG	32.8
30	LT	7.4	SR	16.1	CL	16.2	KR	32.7
31	ZA	4.8	ZA	14.1	LK	15.2	CH	32.4
32	US	4.6	SG	13.7	ZA	14.9	US	32.4
33	CL	4.4	LK	13.7	GH	14.0	PH	32.3
34	SR	4.2	KH	13.3	SR	13.1	CL	29.4
35	GH	2.2	GE	12.6	SG	12.2	ID	27.4
36	JO	1.9	MW	11.8	TR	10.2	RU	24.8
37	MY	1.8	JP	11.7	KH	9.9	DZ	24.6
38	TR	1.7	TN	9.2	US	9.7	LT	23.5
39	GE	1.2	US	8.7	NP	8.6	VN	22.2
40	PH	0.8	TH	8.3	TH	8.5	ZA	22.1
41	DZ	0.7	NG	7.8	TW	6.7	GE	18.8
42	KH	0.7	MY	7.7	GE	6.3	NG	17.7
43	NP	0.5	KE	7.1	MY	5.3	MN	17.0
44	KE	0.4	TW	6.8	NG	3.8	JP	13.1
45	NG	0.4	PH	6.6	DZ	3.0	NP	11.8
46	ID	0.3	TR	5.9	JO	1.5	KH	10.4
47	TN	0.3	JO	5.7	ID	1.3	TH	9.6
48	MW	0.1	ID	4.2	TN	0.9	TW	6.9

Table 3 (continued)

Question Wordings:

Please indicate which statement below comes closest to expressing what you believe about God.

1. I don't believe in God 2. I don't know whether there is a God and I don't believe there is any way to find out 3. I don't believe in a personal God, but I do believe in a Higher Power of some kind 4. I find myself believing in God some of the time, but not at others 5. While I have doubts, I feel that I do believe in God, or 6. I know God really exists and I have no doubts about it?

Do you believe in...

a. Life after death?

1. Yes, definitely 2. Yes, probably 3. No, probably not, or 4. No, definitely not?

d. Religious miracles?

1. Yes, definitely 2. Yes, probably 3. No, probably not, or 4. No, definitely not?

e. The supernatural powers of deceased ancestors?

1. Yes, definitely 2. Yes, probably 3. No, probably not, or 4. No, definitely not?

Table 4: Overall Rank on 10 Items

Rank	Country	Average Rankings
1	Czech Republic	5.9
2	Sweden	7.3
3	Denmark	7.5
4	United Kingdom	7.9
5	Norway	9.5
6	France	10.2
7	Vietnam	11.1
8	Hungary	11.6
9	Korea, South	11.8
10	New Zealand	12.0
11	Germany	12.1
12	Spain	12.9
13	Switzerland	15.1
14	Slovenia	15.7
15	Finland	15.8
16	Slovakia	16.3
17	Austria	16.5
18	Iceland	16.5
19	Japan	16.9
20	Russia	18.6
21	Bulgaria	19.0
22	Lithuania	21.6
23	Israel	23.5
24	Chile	24.1
25	Mongolia	27.1
26	Croatia	27.3
27	Italy	27.8
28	United States	28.2
29	Malawi	29.8
30	South Africa	29.9
31	Singapore	30.0
32	Taiwan	31.3
33	Algeria	31.9
34	Suriname	33.0
35	Ghana	34.3
36	Tunisia	34.4
37	Turkey	34.8
38	Thailand	35.6
39	Kenya	35.9
40	Georgia	37.7
41	Jordan	38.8
42	Sri Lanka	39.2
43	Malaysia	39.7
44	Philippines	39.9
45	Nepal	40.1
46	Cambodia	40.7
47	Nigeria	43.4
48	Indonesia	44.4

Table 5: Overall Rank on 10 Items with Highlights by Major Religion

Rank	Country	Average Rankings	Religion
1	Czech Republic	5.9	Christian
2	Sweden	7.3	Muslim
3	Denmark	7.5	Buddhist
4	United Kingdom	7.9	Hindu
5	Norway	9.5	Jewish
6	France	10.2	Other, Mixed
7	Vietnam	11.1	
8	Hungary	11.6	
9	Korea, South	11.8	
10	New Zealand	12.0	
11	Germany	12.1	
12	Spain	12.9	
13	Switzerland	15.1	
14	Slovenia	15.7	
15	Finland	15.8	
16	Slovakia	16.3	
17	Austria	16.5	
18	Iceland	16.5	
19	Japan	16.9	
20	Russia	18.6	
21	Bulgaria	19.0	
22	Lithuania	21.6	
23	Israel	23.5	
24	Chile	24.1	
25	Mongolia	27.1	
26	Croatia	27.3	
27	Italy	27.8	
28	United States	28.2	
29	Malawi	29.8	
30	South Africa	29.9	
31	Singapore	30.0	
32	Taiwan	31.3	
33	Algeria	31.9	
34	Suriname	33.0	
35	Ghana	34.3	
36	Tunisia	34.4	
37	Turkey	34.8	
38	Thailand	35.6	
39	Kenya	35.9	
40	Georgia	37.7	
41	Jordan	38.8	
42	Sri Lanka	39.2	
43	Malaysia	39.7	
44	Philippines	39.9	
45	Nepal	40.1	
46	Cambodia	40.7	
47	Nigeria	43.4	
48	Indonesia	44.4	

Table 6: Overall Rank on 10 Items with Branches of Christianity Highlighted

Rank	Country	Average Rankings	
1	Czech Republic	5.9	Largely Catholic
2	Sweden	7.3	Catholic-Protestant Mix
3	Denmark	7.5	Largely Protestant
4	United Kingdom	7.9	Largely Orthodox
5	Norway	9.5	
6	France	10.2	
7	Vietnam	11.1	
8	Hungary	11.6	
9	Korea, South	11.8	
10	New Zealand	12.0	
11	Germany	12.1	
12	Spain	12.9	
13	Switzerland	15.1	
14	Slovenia	15.7	
15	Finland	15.8	
16	Slovakia	16.3	
17	Austria	16.5	
18	Iceland	16.5	
19	Japan	16.9	
20	Russia	18.6	
21	Bulgaria	19.0	
22	Lithuania	21.6	
23	Israel	23.5	
24	Chile	24.1	
25	Mongolia	27.1	
26	Croatia	27.3	
27	Italy	27.8	
28	United States	28.2	
29	Malawi	29.8	
30	South Africa	29.9	
31	Singapore	30.0	
32	Taiwan	31.3	
33	Algeria	31.9	
34	Suriname	33.0	
35	Ghana	34.3	
36	Tunisia	34.4	
37	Turkey	34.8	
38	Thailand	35.6	
39	Kenya	35.9	
40	Georgia	37.7	
41	Jordan	38.8	
42	Sri Lanka	39.2	
43	Malaysia	39.7	
44	Philippines	39.9	
45	Nepal	40.1	
46	Cambodia	40.7	
47	Nigeria	43.4	
48	Indonesia	44.4	

Table 7: Net Changes in Belief in God during One's Life
 Gains – Losses in Belief in God

1	IS	-17.1
2	FI	-17.0
3	ES	-16.8
4	NO	-16.3
5	CH	-16.1
6	DK	-15.5
7	UK	-15.0
8	DE	-13.5
9	At	-12.1
10	SL	-11.4
11	SE	-10.8
12	FR	- 9.9
13	IT	- 9.4
14	NZ	- 8.8
15	CZ	- 4.5
16	JP	- 3.7
17	CL	- 3.2
18	DZ	+ 0.5
19	KR	+ 0.5
20	NP	+ 0.7
21	ID	+ 0.7
22	TN	+ 1.0
23	HR	+ 1.1
24	US	+ 1.2
25	JO	+ 1.2
26	TR	+ 1.4
27	PH	+ 1.5
28	MY	+ 2.1
29	LK	+ 2.6
30	ZA	+ 2.7
31	TH	+ 3.1
32	KH	+ 3.2
33	VN	+ 3.8
34	MW	+ 4.0
35	NG	+ 4.3
36	HU	+ 4.3
37	SK	+ 4.4
38	BG	+ 4.6
39	GE	+ 5.0
40	SR	+ 5.1
41	SG	+ 5.2
42	IL	+ 5.3
43	KE	+ 5.7
44	GH	+ 6.3
45	TW	+ 7.3
46	MO	+14.0
47	LT	+16.2
48	RU	+19.5

Table 7 (continued)

Question Wording:

Which best describes your beliefs about God?

1. I don't believe in God now and I never have 2. I don't believe in God now, but I used to 3. I believe in God now, but I didn't used to, or 4. I believe in God now and I always have.

Table 8: Views on Religion's Contemporary Relevance

	Religion is Past		Religion Still Relevant	
	Agree+Strongly Agree		Disagree+Strongly Disagree	
1	NP	68.5	DE	72.9
2	PH	55.8	AT	69.7
3	AT	50.5	DK	66.6
4	DK	49.4	FI	64.4
5	SK	48.1	ES	64.3
6	CL	47.8	IS	61.5
7	ZA	44.4	SE	61.0
8	CZ	43.3	CH	59.7
9	SL	41.4	NO	53.6
10	UK	40.3	CZ	49.4
11	NO	40.3	FR	45.6
12	SE	40.1	SL	45.1
13	FR	39.9	UK	44.4
14	HU	39.7	CL	42.7
15	MN	39.4	HU	42.3
16	FI	39.3	IT	38.9
17	CH	38.3	JP	37.7
18	IS	38.2	NZ	36.4
19	KH	37.1	BG	36.1
20	ES	36.7	US	34.6
21	TR	36.5	IL	33.4
22	JP	36.2	TW	32.7
23	IL	34.1	TN	29.9
24	DE	34.0	JO	29.7
25	SR	33.5	SK	29.2
26	IT	32.9	HR	28.2
27	NG	30.8	DZ	27.7
28	MW	29.9	GE	26.2
29	LK	29.5	NP	25.0
30	NZ	29.3	MW	24.3
31	LT	27.9	SR	23.4
32	KR	27.6	MN	23.0
33	DZ	27.5	GH	22.7
34	HR	26.1	LT	22.3
35	TH	25.6	RU	22.2
36	GH	25.1	KE	20.5
37	RU	23.3	NG	20.1
38	VN	21.4	KH	19.7
39	MY	21.1	ZA	18.8
40	BG	20.6	VN	17.7
41	TN	19.8	TR	16.1
42	US	18.9	TH	14.4
43	KE	18.4	SG	14.0
44	GE	15.6	MY	11.5
45	ID	15.2	LK	10.0
46	SG	14.8	PH	9.2
47	JO	10.6	KR	8.7
48	TW	7.1	ID	7.1

Table 8 (continued)

Question Wordings:

Do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

- a. In [COUNTRY], religion represents the past and not the future.
1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Disagree, or 5. Strongly disagree?
- b. In [COUNTRY], religion is just as relevant to life today as it was in the past.
1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Disagree, or 5. Strongly disagree?

References

- Davie, Grace, "Believing without Belonging: Is This the Future of Religion in Britain?" Social Compass, 37 (1990), 455-469
- Smith, Tom W., "Religious Change around the World," GSS Cross-national Report No. 30. Chicago: NORC, 2009.
- Smith, Tom W. and Schapiro, Benjamin, "Religion and Spirituality in the United States, 1998-2018," NORC report, 2021.

Appendix 1: ISO 3166-1 Alpha-2 Codes for Countries

AT	Austria	LK	Sri Lanka
BG	Bulgaria	LT	Lithuania
CH	Switzerland	MN	Mongolia
CL	Chile	MW	Malawi
CZ	Czech Republic	MY	Malaysia
DE	Germany	NG	Nigeria
DK	Denmark	NO	Norway
DZ	Algeria	NP	Nepal
ES	Spain	NZ	New Zealand
FI	Finland	PH	Philippines
FR	France	RU	Russia
GE	Georgia	SE	Sweden
GH	Ghana	SG	Singapore
HR	Croatia	SK	Slovakia
HU	Hungary	SL	Slovenia
ID	Indonesia	SR	Suriname
IL	Israel	TH	Thailand
IS	Iceland	TN	Tunisia
IT	Italy	TR	Turkey
JO	Jordan	TW	Taiwan
JP	Japan	UK	United Kingdom
KE	Kenya	US	United States
KH	Cambodia	VN	Vietnam
KR	Korea, South	ZA	South Africa