

# Western Europe: Religious Practice

In my [last post](#), we looked at how many people in the countries of Germany, Sweden, Netherlands, Spain, and Cyprus profess a God-focused worldview. Now let's consider some religious practices typically associated with an active faith. This worldwide survey did not ask many questions about religious practice, but the three questions asked highlight some interesting differences.

The three questions asked were:

1. Apart from weddings and funerals, about how often do you pray?
2. Do you have an active membership in a church or religious organization?
3. Apart from weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend religious services these days?

Let's look at the responses based on the country of the respondent, their religious preference, and their age (less than 30 or over 60). The "Pray" columns are those who pray daily or more often. The "Active" columns refer to those who say they have an active membership. The "Attend" columns are those who attend religious services once a month or more often.

**Table 1 Those Actively Participating in Religious Practices**

Country	Age	All (%)			Protestant {%}			Catholic (%)		
		Pray	Active	Attend	Pray	Active	Attend	Pray	Active	Attend
Germany	All	NA	14	20	NA	14	17	NA	27	35
	Under 30	NA	9	10	NA	13	7	NA	13	19
	Over 60	NA	18	25	NA	16	21	NA	31	48

Netherlands	All	19	11	17	65	46	64	31	18	30
	Under 30	9	6	11	42	42	77	20	5	21
	Over 60	26	16	24	70	48	67	38	22	39
Sweden	All	10	6	9	11	8	11	–	–	–
	Under 30	9	2	6	6	2	2	–	–	–
	Over 60	13	7	12	17	10	15	–	–	–
Spain	All	NA	7	20	–	–	–	NA	8	24
	Under 30	NA	3	6	–	–	–	NA	4	8
	Over 60	NA	14	41	–	–	–	NA	15	47
Cyprus	All	32	10	35	–	–	–	42	12	44
	Under 30	22	6	20	–	–	–	34	7	26
	Over 60	52	12	65	–	–	–	55	13	68

We see some widely varying results between countries and age groups, but none are very encouraging. How many say they pray daily or more often? In the Netherlands, almost 2 out of 3 Protestants and 1 out of 3 Catholics. The large number of Nones in the Netherlands drop the percentage for the country as a whole down to less than 1 out of 5. Sweden, on the other hand, has only about 1 out of 10 saying they pray regularly whether they are Protestant or otherwise. We will see how dismal this level is when we compare it to the United States later in this post.

Also, you can see that those under 30 are less likely to pray daily than older adults. However, the small number of adults of all ages praying daily is the dominant factor.

Being an active member of a church is a definite minority in all categories shown. Roughly one out of ten adults claim to be an active church member across all countries and age

groups. Once again, the relatively smaller number of young adults who claim to be active is overwhelmed by the small number across the board.

Those who attend church at least once a month reflect percentages almost equal with those who pray daily or more.

What does it look like when we consider those who combine all three of these characteristics as shown below?

**Table 2 Those Who Pray at Least Daily, Are Members, and Attend Monthly or More**

Country	Age	All (%)	Protestant (%)	Catholic (%)
Germany	All	9	7	19
	Under 30	3	1	7
	Over 60	13	10	25
Netherlands	All	8	39	10
	Under 30	4	35	5
	Over 60	12	43	12
Sweden	All	3	4	—
	Under 30	1	1	—
	Over 60	4	6	—
Spain	All	5	—	6
	Under 30	1	—	2
	Over 60	12	—	14
Cyprus	All	4	—	5
	Under 30	2	—	3
	Over 60	9	—	10

Note: For Germany and Spain this does not include “Pray at least daily”

Clearly none of these countries have a significant number of people who report a minimal amount of regular religious involvement. Only among Protestants in the Netherlands do we

see more than 1 in 10. The percent of Protestants in the Netherlands is small enough that only 8% of all people in that country report a minimal religious involvement.

Just looking at these three very simple practices, we see that the vast majority of people in all these countries do not actively practice their faith. And, those under the age of 30 are much less likely than their seniors to practice these characteristics.

Now let's compare the results for Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands with those from the United States as shown in table 3.

**Table 3 United States Results Compared to Germany, Sweden and Netherlands (GSN)**

Activity	Age	All (%)		Protestant (%)		Catholic (%)	
		U.S.	GSN	U.S.	GSN	U.S.	GSN
Pray daily	All	45	10	64	16	51	11
	Under 30	34	5	55	6	30	4
	Over 60	55	14	65	25	64	18
Active church member	All	35	11	54	17	40	23
	Under 30	26	6	40	10	34	11
	Over 60	42	15	58	22	48	27
Attend monthly or more	All	44	16	65	22	10	33
	Under 30	36	1	58	10	53	20
	Over 60	50	22	67	30	58	43
All three	All	26	4	45	9	27	4
	Under 30	15	1	32	3	14	1
	Over 60	35	6	48	13	41	6

As shown, the religious activities of Western Europeans lag significantly behind the level of activity practiced in the United States. When it comes to daily prayer, over 4 times as many Americans practice this activity across the general

population, the Protestant population and the Catholic population. Looking at only those under thirty, we find that over 7 times as many Americans practice daily prayer as do Western Europeans. This increase is not due to an increase in prayer among under 30's in the United States, but rather due to a significant drop in daily prayer among young adult, Western Europeans.

The table shows similar levels of differences between people in the United States and those in Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands. Consider the young adults who practice all three of these religious activities. The Americans practice these activities from 10 to 15 times as often as their Western European counterparts. Once again, these huge differences are not due to high levels of faithfulness among Americans. Americans claim only 15% of those under 30 practice all three activities. But rather by the lack of faithfulness among Western Europeans; where only 1% claim to practice all three.

This look at the data on three questions, which describe a very nominal degree of commitment to one's religious life, clearly shows that Western Europe has a very small remnant of active Christ followers. Without looking at this data, you probably would have agreed with the statement above. But now, you know how significant the problem really is. If they represent the rest of Western Europe, we see that the places where Protestantism was born and initially flourished have become places where Christian religious practice is relegated to a few and ignored by the many.

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# Western European Religious Makeup

This is the fifth of a series of posts reporting on our analysis of the survey data collected by the World Values Survey project. Surveys were conducted in 57 countries between 2010 and 2014. In all, over 85,000 people were interviewed for these surveys. The survey had fifteen questions directly concerning religious beliefs and practices. But it also had questions in a number of areas that related to how people applied their religious beliefs to cultural and political issues.

The first four blogs dealt with the North American countries, the United States and Mexico. With this post, I begin a series on the beliefs across the five European countries included in the survey process: Germany, Norway, Sweden, Spain and Cyprus.

As you probably know, Germany and Sweden were at the heart of the Protestant revolution, with the Netherlands following in their footsteps. Spain and Cyprus retained a much stronger connection to Roman Catholicism. Let's see how their self-declared religious affiliations line up today.

**Table 1 | Religious Denomination**

Country	Age	Catholic (%)	Protestant (%)	None (%)	Other (%)
Germany	All	29	33	31	6
	Under 30	29	34	30	7
	60 plus	33	38	28	1
Sweden	All	2	61	34	3
	Under 30	1	49	43	7
	60 plus	2	69	29	0

Netherlands	All	18	16	64	3
	Under 30	11	10	75	4
	60 plus	25	21	54	1
Spain	All	73	2	24	1
	Under 30	63	2	33	2
	60 plus	86	1	13	0
Cyprus	All	68	1	7	25
	Under 30	53	1	9	36
	60 plus	90	0	4	5

As shown the countries vary widely in their self-professed religious makeup. All of them, except Cyprus, have a significant percentage of Nones ranging from 24% in Spain to 64% in the Netherlands. Sweden, Netherlands and Spain have a significant increase in Nones among those under the age of 30 as we also observed in the United States and Mexico.

Apart from the Nones, each nation is somewhat unique in its distribution. Germany is almost equally split between Catholics, Protestants and Nones. Sweden has Protestants as a strong majority at the level of Protestants plus Catholics in Germany. The Netherlands has a strong majority of Nones with the remainder evenly split between Catholics and Protestants. Spain, of course, has a strong majority of Catholics and almost no Protestants. Cyprus also shows a strong majority of Catholics with a strong minority of Muslims among the younger generations.

As we will see in the following blogs, many of those who selected Protestant or Catholic denominations are not involved with the church in any significant way.

# Pluralism

In the [first blog](#) of this series on the religious preferences of the United States and Mexico, we looked at how many agreed with this statement, “The only acceptable religion is my religion.” Let’s look at how this question was answered in Western Europe.

Table 2   Agree or Strongly Agree: The Only Acceptable Religion is My Religion			
Country	Age	Catholic (%)	Protestant (%)
Germany	All	33	30
	Under 30	22	23
	60 plus	49	30
Sweden	All	16	8
	Under 30	0	4
	60 plus	30	12
Netherlands	All	10	25
	Under 30	19	36
	Under 60 plus	12	23
Spain	All	28	32
	Under 30	26	39
	60 plus	35	25
Cyprus	All	54	71
	Under 30	40	67
	60 plus	69	100

Note: Shaded areas did not have enough respondents to make the data useful

As shown, in Germany only about one in three Catholics and Protestants would say their religion is right and others are wrong. Those under thirty are much less likely to make that assertion. In any case, the vast majority of Germans take a



pluralistic view.

Swedes are much less likely than Germans to agree with this statement, with fewer than one in ten taking a non-pluralistic position. Protestants in the Netherlands are similar to Germans, but Catholics are significantly more pluralistic. Catholics in Spain are also similar to those in Germany.

Except for Cyprus, all the countries had the vast majority of those affiliated with a Christian church taking a pluralistic view.

It is interesting to note that on this question Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands combined were generally consistent with the United States. Mexico and Spain were also fairly consistent, with 49% of Mexicans and 32% of Spaniards taking a non-pluralistic view.

Clearly for Western Europeans, whether they claim to be Catholic or Protestant, most reject the teachings of the Bible in favor of a pluralistic doctrine. They change John 14:4 from “I am **the** way, the truth and the life” to “I am **a** way, **a** truth and **a** life.”

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## USA and Mexico: Cultural and Ethical Belief

The survey we are using asks an interesting question: Please tell me for each of the following actions whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between? This question is asked for fifteen different possible actions.

Let's begin by looking at four actions which can be roughly

grouped under the title “white collar crime.” The four actions are:

- Claiming government benefits to which you are not entitled
- Avoiding a fare on public transport
- Cheating on taxes if you have a chance
- Someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties

We can summarize the salient results as shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1   Accepting false benefits / avoiding fares is almost never justifiable									
Country	Age	All (%)		Protestant (%)		Catholic (%)		None (%)	
		False benefit	Avoid fare	False benefit	Avoid fare	False benefit	Avoid fare	False benefit	Avoid fare
Mexico	All	40	44	40	46	40	43	40	45
	Under 30	35	38	43	48	32	37	38	38
	Over 44	47	49	44	48	46	48	54	56
United States	All	74	64	81	71	71	62	68	57
	Under 30	60	45	68	54	62	41	54	41
	Over 44	81	74	85	77	77	73	79	70

Those who selected 1 or 2 against a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 was “never justifiable” and 10 was “always justifiable”

Table 2   Cheating on taxes / accepting a bribe is almost never justifiable									
Country	Age	All (%)		Protestant (%)		Catholic (%)		None (%)	
		Tax cheat	Accept bribe	Tax cheat	Accept bribe	Tax cheat	Accept bribe	Tax cheat	Accept bribe

Mexico	All	78	79	85	83	76	78	79	79
	Under 30	75	76	85	82	72	76	77	75
	Over 44	82	82	81	86	81	81	85	87
United States	All	80	83	88	90	80	84	74	75
	Under 30	69	66	76	76	77	70	63	60
	Over 44	86	90	91	94	83	88	81	85

Those who selected 1 or 2 against a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 was 'never justifiable' and 10 was 'always justifiable'

First of all, one would like to see numbers in every space exceeding 90% of the population who declared that white collar crime is almost never justifiable. But the truth is, you see very few results reported in the 90's and some of them are less than half (50%) of the population.

Notice that the biggest variations are on the first two questions: claiming Tax cheats and avoiding fares. In Mexico, less than 50% of the population in most of the categories believe these two behaviors are almost never justifiable. For Mexicans under the age of 30, those who believe these behaviors are almost never justified drops to about 35% of the population, or over 10% less than those 45 and older.

Those in the United States are almost twice as likely to believe these behaviors are almost never justified. Similar to Mexico, those who are under 30 are 15-20% less likely to agree that these behaviors are almost never justified. Interestingly, the percentage of Protestants who agree is over 10% higher than Catholics and Nones.

As shown in Table 2, the answers for tax cheating and accepting bribes are more oriented toward the belief they are almost never justified. The responses from Mexico are

consistent in that about three quarters of the population believes they are almost never justified. In the United States, we see some variation. First, those under thirty are from 15 to 25% less likely to state they are almost never justified. We also see that Protestants are 15% more likely than are Nones (those with no religious affiliation) to say that these actions are almost never justified. But even with these differences all categories are 60% and above.

Why do we see that those under thirty are less likely to say these forms of white collar crime are almost never justified? In fact, we also see that in the case of claiming Tax cheats over 50% of young, Mexican adults selected a number between 5 and 10, meaning they thought that the action was almost always or at least more often than not justifiable. We can't tell from the data the reason for this difference based on age. In this case it could be the well known "It can't happen to me" attitude held by many young adults; i.e., "I will never be caught." Or it could be that benefiting from the public dime may seem more attractive to young adults than to older adults who are more likely to be contributing most of that "public dime" through their taxes.

Perhaps the most interesting result is the difference between the answers from Mexico on claiming Tax cheats vs. cheating on taxes. As shown, only 40% of Mexican respondents said that claiming Tax cheats was almost never justified, while 78% said that cheating on taxes was almost never justified. This result is very odd because both situations have the same root effect: taking money from the government. I suspect the huge difference is a result of how the government deals with these two transgressions. Perhaps those who claim Tax cheats are almost never caught or receive a light punishment, while those who cheat on their taxes are often prosecuted and punished.

In summary, a significant number of people in both countries believe that these illegal behaviors may be justifiable in many situations AND those under the age of 30 are more likely

than their elders to hold a situational ethics view toward these illegal behaviors. It would be interesting to know how many of these respondents have actually done these illegal actions, but they were not asked the question.

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## United States and Mexico: Religious Practice

In my [prior post](#), we looked at how many people in Mexico and the United States profess a God-focused worldview. Now let's consider some religious practices typically associated with an active faith. This worldwide survey did not ask many questions about religious practice, but the three that it did ask unveil some interesting differences.

The three questions asked were:

1. Apart from weddings and funerals, about how often do you pray?
2. Do you have an active membership in a church or religious organization?
3. Apart from weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend religious services these days?

Let's look at the responses based on the country of the respondent, their religious preference, and their age (less than 30 or over 60). The "Pray" columns are those who pray daily or more often. The "Active" columns refer to those who say they have an active membership. The "Attend" columns are those who attend religious services once a month or more often.

### **Table 1: Those Actively Participating in Religious Practices**

Country	Age	All (%)			Protestant (%)			Catholic (%)		
		Pray	Active	Attend	Pray	Active	Attend	Pray	Active	Attend
Mexico	All	60	38	62	72	60	81	64	40	69
	Under 30	48	33	55	66	61	74	53	35	63
	Over 60	78	46	79	88	56	88	81	49	84
United States	All	46	35	44	64	54	65	52	40	54
	Under 30	34	25	36	55	40	58	30	34	53
	Over 60	55	42	50	65	58	67	64	48	58

How many say they pray daily or more often? Overall 60% of Mexicans and only about 45% of people from the United States said they prayed that often. But of those under the age of 30, the numbers were only 48% for Mexico and 34% for the United States. In both locations, those over 60 were over 50% more likely to have an active prayer life than those under 30. In both countries, Protestants were more likely to say they prayed at least once a day than Catholics. Almost nine out of ten Protestants from Mexico over the age of 60 pray at least once a day. At the other end of the spectrum, only three out of ten Catholics from the United States pray at least once a day.

Active memberships are fairly close in number between Mexico and the United States. But like prayer, those from Mexico are more likely to profess an active membership. Typically, those over 60 are at least 50% more likely to be active members. Interestingly, Mexican Protestants are essentially the same percentage (60%) regardless of age.

As with prayer, regular church attendance is much more common in Mexico among both Protestants and Catholics. Looking at all respondents, we see 62% of Mexicans versus only 44% of those from the United States attend church at least monthly. Although not as pronounced as for prayer frequency, we see

that those under 30 are less likely to attend regularly than those over 60.

What does it look like when we consider those who combine all three of these characteristics as shown below?

**Table 2: Those Who Pray At Least Daily, Are Members, and Attend Monthly or More**

Country	Age	All (%)	Protestant (%)	Catholic (%)
Mexico	All	23	44	24
	Under 30	17	39	18
	Over 60	37	50	30
United States	All	26	45	27
	Under 30	15	32	14
	Over 60	35	48	41

Very interestingly, when we combine these three, the significant difference between Mexico and the United States on the individual questions disappears for both Protestants and Catholics. Apparently, about one quarter of people are serious enough about their religion to pray and to attend regularly regardless of whether they reside in Mexico or the United States.

However, the difference between those under the age of 30 and older ages remains for the combination. For Catholics, those over 60 are at least twice as likely to do all three as those under 30. For Protestants, they are about 50% more likely if they are over 60 than those who are under 30. So in both countries, emerging adults are less likely (i.e., only about 15% of the group) to pray, belong and attend.

Just looking at these three very simple practices, we see that the vast majority of people in both countries do not actively practice their faith. And, those under the age of 30 are much less likely than their seniors to practice these characteristics.

# Even America's Largest Denomination Is Bleeding Members: Is It Too Late?

*Further erosion of membership within America's largest denomination, Southern Baptist, shows a larger trend of churches losing [bleeding] members. Byron Barlowe believes the answer may not be more programs, even evangelism programs.*

Many wonder about the state of the Christian Church in the U.S. How is it doing? Is it holding steady or shrinking? [At Probe, we are constantly monitoring](#) this vital question, doing raw-data-level cultural research.

We got another indication recently that the Evangelicals in America are on their way down like Catholics and Mainline Protestants have been for years. At this rate, the Church may drop into relative obscurity—or at least become a small subculture. Read on despite your denominational (or churchless) background because American culture is morphing under all our feet. The ripple effects are only beginning.

Just before this post was written, the Southern Baptist Convention was gathering to address topics like the ongoing decline in America's largest Protestant denomination. Top of the agenda: despite adding around 500 new congregations, it is bleeding membership and baptisms which indicate a declaration of faith (Baptists call it "believer's baptism" as opposed to other branches of Christianity which baptize infants). According to Christianity Today, the SBC just "reported its



largest annual decline in more than 130 years—a loss of 236,467 members.”[\[1\]](#)

The negative numbers just keep coming. “The denomination is down to its ‘lowest baptisms since 1946; lowest membership since 1990; lowest worship attendance since 1996,’ [according](#) to historical analysis from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. ‘The true bad news is that when you put last year in the context of all previous years, it indicates the SBC is in the midst of a decline that shows no signs of either slowing down or turning around,’ [said](#) Chuck Kelly, the seminary’s president.”[\[2\]](#)

The Southern Baptists are not alone and not the first Christians to see such a disheartening trend. Churchgoers are voting with their feet in alarming numbers. Are they, in part, being pulled away by unbelievers who want nothing to do with church? Probe has researched deeply the “[rise of the Nones](#),” referring to the fast-growing segment of the nation who do not affiliate with Christianity on surveys. They mark “None” when it comes to which faith they claim. These politically and ethically “moderate” or “liberal” folks are not atheistic or hostile to religion. They simply don’t think about it. And as someone quipped, the opposite of good is not evil, it’s indifference.

It seems that some of the former believers among the Nones are likely represented by the two of five Americans who believe that “when it comes to what happens in the country today, ‘people of faith’ (42%) and ‘religion’ (46%) are part of the problem.”[\[3\]](#) More likely, the general malaise regarding eternal destiny or religion of the non-affiliated Nones has infected tepid churchgoers in a silent, insidious way. The spirit of the age whispers, “Meh, go to church? Not relevant. No one believes that stuff anymore. At least I don’t have to go to church to believe it.”

Yet, efforts to make the faith culturally relevant have often

fallen flat. Christian talk show host Janet Mefferd wonders what's gone wrong with Southern Baptist churches in this regard. She wryly asks, Wasn't the infusion of more cultural conversation, increased societal sensitivity led by Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission Russell Moore supposed to plug the leak, staunch the flow of members out of Southern Baptist churches? Weren't closed-door conversations with gay rights leaders designed to open the church doors to those who feel marginalized? Formal denominational statements on Earth care and animal rights were supposed to turn things around, says the conservative and Baptist-friendly Mefferd. "What happened? I don't know. But more evangelism and less conversation would be in order."

Mefferd echoes Southern Baptist strategists and leaders. "It's clear that evangelism and discipleship are waning," Thom Rainer, president and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources, an SBC affiliate which produces the [Annual Church Profile] report being discussed. "I don't believe it is due to the lack of opportunities, though. Instead, there is a lack of engagement."

Yes, evangelism and discipleship are central to the Great Commission and are undeniably tiptop biblical values, commands really. However, we no longer live in a milieu where agreed-upon notions of sin and evil exist-or even that such truth claims could possibly be valid for all. Simply launching new evangelism campaigns and standard discipling programs doesn't seem to work anymore. Massive work on the worldview level, including apologetics to challenge underlying misinformation and beliefs, coupled with winsome and culturally engaged and convinced Christians are vital to even getting the gospel a hearing. My work on campus tells me that you must establish absolute truth before any claim to Christ's offer is anything other than "he said, she said, just what grandma believed."

So maybe the issue isn't membership rolls and baptisms, though these are helpful measures. Forget church growth programs with

the lowest-common-denominator appeal using culture-copycatted branding. Joyful and hopeful Christ-followers with studied answers to common objections will make an eternity of a difference. We see this happening now.

Pollster-turned-activist George Barna and his namesake Barna Group “collaborated on the 2014 book *Churchless* to further examine the nation’s unchurched community.” Co-author and Barna Group President David Kinnaman commented on the phenomenon that a growing number of Americans don’t attend church but used to do so. “This fact should motivate church leaders and attenders to examine how to make appropriate changes—not for the sake of enhancing attendance numbers but to address the lack of life transformation that would attract more people to remain an active part.”<sup>{4}</sup>

Pastors and laymen alike, perhaps the studies by The Barna Group and others are right: it’s time to dispense with programs that speak only to us, stop relying on “professional Christians,” and become the informed, sacrificial, calling-driven, supernaturally joyous ones the Lord Jesus saved us to be. Now that’s relevant! Build that and they may just come back.

## Notes

1. Smietana, Bob, “As Church Plants Grow, Southern Baptists Disappear”, *Christianity Today*, accessed 6-13-2017, [www.christianitytoday.com/news/2015/june/southern-baptist-decline-baptism-church-plant-sbc.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2015/june/southern-baptist-decline-baptism-church-plant-sbc.html)
2. Kate Shellnutt, “Hundreds of New Churches Not Enough to Satisfy Southern Baptists”, *Christianity Today*, accessed 6-13-2017, [www.christianitytoday.com/news/2017/june/southern-baptist-convention-churches-baptisms-sbc-acp.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2017/june/southern-baptist-convention-churches-baptisms-sbc-acp.html)
3. Stone, Roxanne, Editor-in-Chief, “Who’s (Still) in Church”, *BarnaTrends 2017: What’s New and What’s Next at the Intersection of Faith and Culture*, 150.

# U.S. and Mexico: Biblical Worldview Lite or God-focused Worldview

A biblical worldview is a common topic in my book, *Cultural Captives*, and in some my other recent [postings](#). What does this multi-national survey tell us about worldviews in Mexico as compared to the United States?

First of all, the surveys given do not have as complete a set of spiritual worldview questions as other surveys we have analyzed. For this discussion, we look at the answers to the following questions to constitute a God-focused worldview but not necessarily a full biblical worldview.

Question	Response
How important is religion in your life?	Very
How important is God in your life?	Very
Independently of whether you attend religious services or not, would you say you are a religious person?	Yes
Do you believe in God?	Yes
Do you believe in hell?	Yes

For purposes of this discussion, we will say a person who answer the questions above as shown has a God-focused Worldview (or GFW).

The only acceptable religion is my religion?	Yes
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If they also state their religion is the only acceptable religion, we will call them “GFW Plus.”

The table below summarizes the status of a God-focused worldview in both cultures.

**Table 1 God-focused Worldview**

Country	Age	Catholic (%)		Protestant (%)		Atheist, Agnostic, None (%)	
		GFW	GFW Plus	GFW	GFW Plus	GFW	GFW Plus
Mexico	All	35	16	38	19	13	6
	Under 30	26	9	25	7	10	2
	60 plus	42	26	38	25	22	22
United States	All	27	6	51	22	10	3
	Under 30	8	5	44	28	6	2
	60 plus	37	5	5	12	8	2

Let’s begin by looking at Catholics since they are the dominant religious group in Mexico. Only a minority of Catholics of any age profess to having a God-focused worldview. In both countries, there is a significant difference between those under 30 and those 60 and over: 26% vs. 42% in Mexico and 8% vs. 37% in the United States. The percentage of Catholic emerging adults with a GFW in Mexico is small (26%) but completely dwarfs the United States percentage (8%).

Adding the question regarding pluralism (GFW Plus), only about 16% of Mexican Catholics answer all the questions as indicated above. There is a wide discrepancy based on age, with only 9% of those under 30 and over 26% of those over 60 professing a GFW Plus view. In the United States, we see a much different story, with only about 5% of self-identified Catholics

professing to hold a GFW Plus view across all age groups.

We see a similar set of distributions for those who self-identify as an atheist, agnostic or none (AAN). In both countries, only a small percentage of AAN people hold to this abbreviated God-focused worldview.

Protestants in Mexico have a similar distribution of GFW and GFW Plus adherents, as do the Catholics. In the United States, the picture is significantly different between Catholics and Protestants. First, almost twice as many Protestants hold to a GFW view as do Catholics. Similarly, for a GFW Plus view, three to four times as many Protestants as Catholics hold that view (about 20% to 5%).

One odd result is that 29% of Protestant, emerging adults profess to hold a GFW Plus view, while only 12% of Protestants age 60 and above hold to that view. Although we cannot know for sure, this result may be an artifact of the question "The only acceptable religion is my religion?" Perhaps the older adults interpreted "my religion" to be my denomination and certainly other Christian denominations could be acceptable. Those below age 45 interpreted "my religion" to be Christianity, and other religions were other major world faiths. This interpretation is plausible because the emerging adults have grown up in a society where they know people of other religions at work and at school, much more so than their elders.

In summary, most self-identified Christians in both countries do not hold to a God-focused worldview. Among that minority, Catholics in Mexico are much more likely than Catholics in the United States to hold such a worldview, while the inverse is true among Protestants. In all instances except one, emerging adults are significantly less likely to hold a GFW or GFW Plus view than are older adults.

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# World Values Survey: U.S. and Mexico Religious Makeup

This is the first of a series of posts reporting on our analysis of the survey data collected by the World Values Survey project. Surveys were conducted in 57 countries between 2010 and 2014. In all, over 85,000 people were interviewed for these surveys. The survey had fifteen questions directly concerning religious beliefs and practices. But it also had questions in a number of areas that related to how people applied their religious beliefs to cultural and political issues.

I will begin by considering the beliefs and practice of two neighboring countries, Mexico and the United States. The surveys taken in these two countries do not allow us to distinguish between different types of Protestants. There is also no distinction between atheists, agnostics and “nothing at all”; they only have one choice, “None.” In the table below, the data for Catholics, Protestants, and Nones is presented for each country, for all ages, for those under 30 and for those 60 and older.

**Table 1: Religious Denomination**

Country	Age	Catholic (%)	Protestant (%)	None (%)
Mexico	All	70	10	18
	Under 30	64	11	23
	60+	82	8	9
United States	All	22	41	34
	Under 30	20	32	43
	60+	26	50	22

As shown, Catholicism is dominant in Mexico, accounting for 70% of the population with the Nones edging out Protestants across all age groups for a weak second place. But we also see significant differences based on age. For those under 30, the percentage of Catholics drops to 64% while the percentage of Nones grows to 23%. For those over 60, we see the opposite, with Catholics garnering 82% while the Nones drop down to only 9%.

In the United States, Protestants make up the largest percentage of the total population with 41%. For those 60 and over, that group increases to 50% of the population. Consistent with our posts on other surveys, the under 30 group is very different, showing 32% Protestant and 43% Nones.

Over 60% of the Nones in Mexico state that “God is very important to me,” indicating that they are theistic Nones. In the United States, less than 30% of the Nones would be considered theistic.

## Pluralism

One of the questions in the surveys asks if they agree with the following statement: “The only acceptable religion is my religion.” The responses among Protestants and Catholics are as shown in the table below.

**Table 2: Agree or Strongly Agree: The only acceptable religion is my religion**

Country	Age	Catholic (%)	Protestant (%)
Mexico	All	45	43
	Under 30	34	37
	60+	65	63



United States	All	17	29
	Under 30	22	39
	60+	11	15

A much higher percentage of Mexican Christians (but still less than 50%) as compared to American Christians believe that their religion is the only acceptable one. In Mexico, we see that older adults are much more likely to believe this than are those under 30. Also, there is almost no difference between Protestants and Catholics.

In the United States, we see a very different picture. First the percentage of people across the board professing a non-pluralistic position is much smaller than in Mexico. Protestants are significantly more likely than Catholics to take this position. Interestingly, those under the age of 30 are much more likely to take this position than those over the age of 60. If you take into account the number of people who profess Christianity across the two age groups, you find the number of individuals are about the same. But also, we can speculate that Americans under the age of 30 who choose to be affiliated with a Christian denomination rather than the Nones are more likely to do so because they believe that religion is correct. In other words, many emerging adults with a pluralistic view are choosing to identify themselves as Nones. Just over 80% of Nones under the age of 30 take a pluralistic position.

Although there are significant differences between the views in Mexico and those in the United States, they both show that an increasing percentage of the populations (particularly the emerging adult population) are choosing to identify as Nones rather than as Catholics or Protestants.

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# Trends in American Religious Beliefs: An Update

*Steve Cable examines the newest data reflecting Americans' religious beliefs. It's not encouraging.*

## Are Nones Still Increasing Toward a Majority?

One dismaying trend in my book, *Cultural Captives*, was the significant growth of people indicating their religion was atheist, agnostic, or nothing at all, referred to collectively as **the nones**. In 2008, the percentage of emerging adults (18- to 29-year-olds) who self-identified as **nones** was one fourth of the population, a tremendous increase almost two and a half times higher than recorded in 1990.

Now, let's look at some updated data on emerging adults. In 2014, the General Social Survey<sup>[1]</sup> showed the percentage of **nones** was now up to **one third** of the population. The Pew Religious Landscape<sup>[2]</sup> survey of over 35,000 Americans tallied **35% identifying as nones**.

When we consider everyone who does not identify as either Protestant or Catholic (i.e., adding in other religions such as Islam and Hinduism), the **percentage of emerging adults who do not identify as Christians increases to 43% of the population** in both surveys.

If this growth continues at the rate it has been on since 1990, we will see **over half** of American emerging adults who do not self-identify as Christians by 2020. Becoming, at least numerically, a post-Christian culture.

Some distinguished scholars have suggested that a large percentage of “**nones**” are actually Christians who just have an aversion to identifying with a particular religious tradition. Using the GSS from 2014, we can probe this assertion using three investigative avenues:

How many of the “**nones**” in this survey say they actually attend a church at least once a month? The answer: less than 7% of them.

How many of these “**nones**” say they believe in a God, believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God, and believe that there is life after death? The answer: about 12% of them.

3. How many of these “**nones**” attend a church *and* have the three beliefs listed above? The answer: about one out of every one hundred emerging adults not identifying as a practicing Christian.

What about the “nothing at all” respondents, who are not atheists or agnostics? Perhaps, they simply do not want to identify with a specific Christian tradition. Since the majority of **nones** fall into this “nothing at all” category, if all the positive answers to the three questions above were given by “nothing at alls,” their percentages would still be very small.

Clearly, the vast majority of **nones** and “nothing at alls” have broken away from organized religion and basic Christian doctrine. Most are not, as some scholars suggest, young believers keeping their identity options open.

American has long been non-evangelical in thinking, but is now becoming post-Christian as well.

## **Role of Pluralism and Born-Agains in Our**

# Emerging Adult Population

Pluralists believe there are many ways to eternal life, e.g. Christianity and Islam. Our 2010 book, *Cultural Captives*, looked at pluralism among American emerging adults (18 – 29), finding nearly 90% of non-evangelicals and 70% of evangelicals were pluralists. So, the vast majority of young Americans believed in multiple ways to heaven.

Is that position changing in this decade? We analyzed two newer survey, Portraits of American Life Survey 2012<sup>{3}</sup> and Faith Matters 2011<sup>{4}</sup>. In the first, if a person disagreed strongly with the following, we categorized them as not pluralistic:

1. It doesn't much matter what I believe so long as I am a good person.
2. The founder of Islam, Muhammad, was the holy prophet of God.

In the second, if a person agreed strongly that "one religion is true and others are not," they are not pluralistic.

For non-evangelical, emerging adults, the number of pluralists grew to 92%. For evangelicals, the number grew to 76%. For those over thirty the number of evangelical pluralists drops to two out of three; still a disturbing majority of those called to evangelize their fellow citizens.

Under the threat of death, Peter told the Jewish leaders, "This Jesus . . . has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."<sup>{5}</sup>

God sent His Son because there was no other way to provide redemption. Many evangelicals seem to think this great sacrifice is one of many ways to reconciliation. But Jesus said, "**No one** comes to the Father except through me."<sup>{6}</sup>

Not only are Protestants more pluralistic, at the same time there are fewer Protestants. From 1976 to 2008, emerging adults identifying as born-again Protestants only dropped from 28% to 25% of the population. Today only 20% are born-again Protestants while 43% are non-Christian.

Protestants who do not consider themselves to be born-again have dropped further, from around one quarter in 1990 down to around 14% now.

We are heading to a day when over half of emerging adults will be non-Christians and less than one fourth will identify as Protestants. And, the majority of those Protestants will take a pluralistic view, ignoring the call to evangelize—a major change in the religious make up of our country.

## **Biblical Worldview Beliefs Considered from A Newer Survey**

In our book, *Cultural Captives*, we reported that about one in three evangelical emerging adults and about one in ten non-evangelical emerging adults held a biblical worldview.

Today, we consider a newer survey of over 2,600 people called Faith Matters 2011.[\[7\]](#)

The questions used to define a biblical worldview were on: 1) belief in God, 2) belief in life after death, 3) the path to salvation, 4) inspiration of the Bible, 5) the existence of hell, and 6) how to determine right and wrong.

Let's begin by looking at how many have a biblical worldview on all of the questions above except for the correct path to salvation. About half of evangelical emerging adults (those 18 – 29) take a biblical view versus about 15% of non-evangelicals.

Adding the question about the path to salvation moves evangelical emerging adults from 50% down to about 5%. The

question causing this massive reduction is: “Some people believe that the path to salvation comes through our actions or deeds and others believe that the path to salvation lies in our beliefs or faith. Which comes closer to your views?” The vast majority of evangelicals responding were unwilling to say that salvation is by faith alone even though the Bible clearly states this is the case. Many of them responded with both, even though it was not one of the options given.

However, the reason may not be that evangelicals feel that they need to do some good works to become acceptable for heaven. Instead, they want to leave room for a pluralistic view that surmises that others, not really knowing of Jesus’ sacrifice, may get by on their righteous activities. Supporting this premise, the Faith Matters survey shows that about 80% of evangelicals believe that there are more ways to heaven other than faith in Jesus Christ.

Another survey the 2012 Portraits in American Life Survey (PALS){8} also included questions similar to the biblical worldview questions above but did not ask how one obtained eternal life. About one in three evangelical{9} believers under the age of 30 professed a biblical worldview on those questions.

These new surveys clearly demonstrate a biblical worldview is not rebounding among emerging adults

## **How Confident are Americans in Those Running Organized Religion?**

What do the people of America feel about organized religion? Have those feelings changed since 1976? We can explore these questions using data from the General Social Survey (GSS) which asked this question across the decades from 1976 up to 2014:

As far as the people running organized religion are concerned,

would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?

Not surprisingly, the surveys show our confidence in these religious leaders has degraded over time. Let's begin by looking at how these results play out for different age groups.

Across all age groups, the number with "a great deal of confidence" in the leaders of organized religion dropped significantly from 1976 to 2014. The greatest drop from 30% down to 15% was among emerging adults at the time of the survey.

At the same time, those having "hardly any confidence" grew significantly. Both emerging adults and those 45 and over increased the number taking this negative position by about 35% since 1976. For emerging adults, this was an increase from 20% in 1976 to 27% in 2014.

Now let's look at how these results play out across different faith communities, specifically Protestants who claim to be born again, Mainline Protestants, Catholics, Other Religions and Nones (i.e. atheists, agnostics and nothing at all).

Once again consider those who said they had "a great deal of confidence" in the leaders of organized religion. All Christian groups show a significant downward trend in their confidence in faith leaders. Not surprisingly, the Nones fell by well over 60%, probably reflecting the general negative trend. If the mainstream population has problems with their religious leaders, the AAN's are more than happy to jump on the bandwagon, expressing disdain toward those leaders. Mainline Protestants experienced the largest drop among any Christian religious group, dropping almost half from 32% down to 18% across the period.

Do we see a similar uptick across all religions in the percentage of respondents having "hardly any confidence" in

the leaders of organized religion? Actually, we do not. We had significant decreases among born-again Protestants and those of other non-Christian religions. At the same time, we saw increases among Mainline Protestants and Catholics and a very significant increase among the AAN's.

The trends shown here leads one to ask, Can religion have a positive impact on our society when four out of five people do not express a great deal of confidence in its leaders? Make it a point to contribute to our society by promoting a positive view of the religious leaders in your church and denomination.

## **The Hispanic Religious Landscape**

Since 1980, our Hispanic population has grown from 6.5% to 17.4%, almost tripling their percentage of our total population.

Many assume the Hispanic population would be primarily Catholic from the 1980's to today. Looking at General Social Surveys from 1976 through 2014, we can see what the actual situation is. Not surprisingly, in 1976 approximately 80% of Hispanics in American self-identified as Catholics. But, the 1980's saw a downward trend in this number, so that through the 1990's up until 2006, approximately 68% of Hispanics identified as Catholics. From 2006 to 2014, this percentage has dropped significantly down to about 55%.

At the same time, the percentage of Hispanics identifying as "nones," i.e., one having no religious affiliation, has grown from about 6% in the 1990's to 16% in 2014 (and to a high of 22% for emerging adult, Hispanics) according to GSS data.

The median age of Hispanics in America is much lower than that of other ethnicities. Many Hispanics in American are emerging adults between the ages of 18 and 29. How do their beliefs stack up? The GSS data shows that about 45% of Hispanic emerging adults indicate a Catholic affiliation while the Pew



survey shows only 35%. Both surveys show that significantly less than half of emerging adult Hispanics are Catholic. So have they become mainline, evangelical, “nones” or some Eastern religion?

Both surveys show a significant increase in the percentage of Hispanic “nones” for emerging adults compared to those over 30. As with other ethnic groups, Hispanic emerging adults are much more likely to select a religious affiliation of “none” than are older adults. According to extensive data in the Pew Research survey, among emerging adults, the 31% of Hispanics who identify as “nones” is coming very close to surpassing the 35% who identify as Catholic.

A majority of Hispanics still identify as Catholics. How closely are they associated with their local Catholic church through regular attendance? Among emerging adult Hispanics affiliated with a Catholic church, about two out of three state that they attend church once a month or less. So, the vast majority are not frequent attenders, but are still more likely to attend than their white counterparts. Among emerging adult whites affiliated with a Catholic church, about four out of five state that they attend church once a month or less.

Soon more Hispanics will be “nones,” evangelicals and mainline Protestants than are Catholic, portending dramatic shifts in the worldview of American Hispanics.

The religious makeup of young Americans is changing dramatically in the early part of this century. We need to proclaim the good news of Christ to our emerging generation.

## Notes

1. General Social Survey 2014, National Opinion Research Center, 2014, The data were downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, [www.TheARDA.com](http://www.TheARDA.com), and were collected by Tom W. Smith.
2. Pew Research Center, May 12, 2015, “America’s Changing

Religious Landscape”, page 11, source: 2014 Pew Religious Landscape Study.

3. Emerson, Michael O., and David Sikkink. *Portraits of American Life Study*, 2nd Wave 2012.

4. Data downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, [www.TheARDA.com](http://www.TheARDA.com), and were collected on behalf of Harvard University and the University of Notre Dame, principal investigators: Robert Putnam, Thomas Sander, and David E. Campbell.

5. Acts 4:11-12.

6. John 14:6.

7. Data downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, [www.TheARDA.com](http://www.TheARDA.com), and were collected on behalf of Harvard University and the University of Notre Dame, principal investigators: Robert Putnam, Thomas Sander, and David E. Campbell.

8. Emerson, Michael O., and David Sikkink. *Portraits of American Life Study*, 2nd Wave, 2012.

9. Evangelical includes those who associate with a Historically Black Protestant Church as well as those who associate with an evangelical church.

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## Muslim Beliefs on Sexuality

Islamic teaching on sexual issues varies significantly from a Christian biblical position in several areas. But, as we have seen in other areas, the beliefs of average Muslims do not necessarily follow the teachings of Islam.

[Over the last several months](#), we have been looking at the religious beliefs and practices as expressed by a worldwide, Muslim population in an extensive Pew Research Center

survey<sup>[1]</sup> taken in 2012. We have compared those beliefs and practices with those of Americans toward the Christian faith as documented in several recent surveys.

Now, I would like to turn our attention to some cultural beliefs and behaviors. In particular, we will begin by looking at beliefs concerning sexual behavior. Once again the survey data on Muslims will be divided into five regions: North Africa, Middle East, Eastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Russia, and Turkey), the 'Stans (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan), and South Asia.

For this evaluation, we will use questions asked in the Pew survey. The questions are worded, "I personally believe that \_\_\_\_\_ is morally acceptable, morally wrong, or it is not a moral issue." The five topics considered (as they are worded in the survey) are:

1. Sex between people who are not married
2. Homosexual behavior
3. Having an abortion
4. Polygamy (having more than one wife)
5. Divorce

A person following the Qur'an and the Hadith would say that the first two items above are morally wrong while the last two items would be considered morally acceptable with some constraints. The question about abortion is not directly addressed in the Qur'an or Hadith. The way in which Muslims actually responded is shown in the table below.

**Table 1: Muslims Believing a Behavior is Morally Wrong**

	North Africa	Middle East	Eastern Europe	'Stans	South Asia
Sex outside marriage & Homosexuality	84.7%	88.7%	68.9%	77.2%	84.1%
Abortion	73.2%	64.4%	72.0%	52.6%	83.6%

All of the above	67.5%	66.9%	56.5%	44.3%	77.3%
Polygamy	25.2%	30.1%	73.0%	57.7%	39.8%
Divorce	17.0%	34.2%	20.2%	30.4%	27.8%
All behaviors	7.2%	13.6%	11.6%	13.5%	13.9%

As shown, they are fairly consistent on fornication and homosexuality, with strong majorities stating that they are both morally wrong. However, Eastern European Muslims appear to have been influenced by the culture around them, falling about 16 percentage points lower than the average for other areas in the world.

On the question of abortion, we find a greater variation across geographic areas. Those Muslims in South Asia are most united in their views, with well over 80% of them saying that abortion is morally wrong. In contrast, the Muslims of the 'Stans are about evenly split with just over half saying it is morally wrong. The Middle East is not as strong as one might expect, with about two out of three people agreeing that abortion is morally wrong.

Polygamy, seen as acceptable in the Qur'an with a man allowed to have up to four wives, is seen quite differently in different geographic areas. In North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, the majority of Muslims **do not** consider it to be morally wrong. In contrast, in Eastern Europe and the 'Stans, a strong majority of Muslims consider it **to be** morally wrong. Of course most of the Muslims in Eastern Europe and the 'Stans grew up in the Soviet Union or Soviet bloc countries where polygamy was presumably illegal.

Finally, we see that most Muslims across all geographic locations do not believe that divorce is morally wrong.

If we consider that the Christian Bible teaches us that all of these actions are morally wrong (with some exceptions for divorce), we realize (looking at the bottom row of the table) that nine out of ten Muslims do not agree with that

perspective.

Looking at data on similar topics from residents of the United States, we find the following:

**Table 2: American Christians Believing a Behavior is Not Right**

	All	Born Again Christian	All Others	Source
Sex before marriage & Homosexual relations	16.9%	32.8%	7.0%	GSS 2014 <sup>{2}</sup>
Abortion	44.9%	62.0%	34.5%	GSS 2014
All of the above	13.2%	25.6%	5.4%	
Homosexual relations	23.3%	41.7%	13.4%	Baylor 2010 <sup>{3}</sup>
Divorce with children	29.2%	47.1%	19.4%	Baylor 2010

Comparing the two tables and focusing on the Born Again Christian column, we observe that worldwide Muslims are much more likely to see sex outside of marriage and homosexual relations as morally wrong. On abortion, born again Christians have a similar response as Muslims. But born again Christians are more likely to oppose divorce when children are involved than Muslims.

On the whole, it appears that Muslims are more likely to agree with the teachings of the Qur'an than born again, American Christians are to agree with the teachings of the Bible. However, Muslims do not agree with the full set of biblical stances on sexual issues.

## Notes

1. The World's Muslims Data Set, 2012, Pew Research Center – Religion & Public Life. The Pew Research Center bears no responsibility for the analyses or interpretations of the data

presented here. The data were downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, [www.TheARDA.com](http://www.TheARDA.com), and were collected by James Bell, Director of International Survey Research.

2. General Social Survey 2014 conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC). The data were downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, [www.TheARDA.com](http://www.TheARDA.com), and were collected by Tom W. Smith of the NORC.

3. Baylor University. 2010. The Baylor Religion Survey, Wave III. Waco, TX: Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion. The data were downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, [www.TheARDA.com](http://www.TheARDA.com), and were collected by Kevin D. Dougherty, Paul Froese, Andrew L. Whitehead, Jerry Z. Park, Mitchell J. Neubert.

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## Basic Religious Beliefs of Worldwide Muslims – Part 2

More Cultural Research from Steve Cable

As we will see below, most Muslims do not believe and understand the religion of Islam but they self-identify as Muslims. Earlier I reported on [the stated religious beliefs of worldwide Muslims](#) using a set of survey questions which could be considered to reflect a Qur'anic worldview. We saw that across the Eastern hemisphere less than 25% of professed Muslims held to a Qur'anic worldview. The percentage was much less in Eastern European countries (12%) and in the 'Stans (5%).

In this post, we will look at a less stringent criterion than a full Qur'anic worldview to see the differences in viewpoint

across different geographic regions and different levels of educational achievement.

Once again, we are using a 2012 Pew Research Center survey of Muslims involving more than 30,000 face-to-face interviews in 26 countries across North Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. In looking at the data, we will consider educational achievement and geographic regions: North Africa, Middle East, Eastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Russia, and Turkey), the 'Stans (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan), and South Asia.

For this evaluation, we will use the following three questions.

- 1. I believe in one God, **Allah**, and his prophet Muhammad.*
- 2. I believe Islam is the **one, true faith** leading to eternal life in heaven.*
- 3. I **know a great deal about the Muslim religion** and its practices.*

The data looks like this:

	North Africa	Middle East	Europe	The 'Stans	South Asia	Total
Allah plus True Faith	85.8%	89.5%	57.0%	63.3%	88.0%	78.3%
Add Knowledge	45.7%	47.7%	24.3%	20.4%	43.2%	38.0%

As you can see, Muslims in Eastern Europe and the 'Stans are much less likely to believe that Islam is the one true faith, with only about six out of ten versus almost nine out of ten for the other geographic regions. When we add in those who believe they know a great deal about their religion, the

number drops to around two out of ten as compared to about five out of ten for the other geographic regions.

Let this sink in a minute. Two out of three Muslims worldwide<sup>{1}</sup> do not believe that Islam is the one, true faith and that they know a great deal about it. Even in the Middle East and North Africa, less than 50% fall into this category of I

believe and I know what I believe. If you don't know a great deal about your religion, for most it must mean that your religious beliefs are not very important to you. After all, you are not even sure what they are. Note that this does not mean that your religious culture is not important to you.

Now let's consider the impact of education on the beliefs held in Eastern Europe and the 'Stans. In these two geographic regions, we see a significant difference based on the level of education completed.

	Eastern Europe			The 'Stans		
	Limited Education <sup>{2}</sup>	High School and Beyond	All	Limited Education	High School and Beyond	All
Allah plus True Faith	65.4%	44.9%	57.0%	75.9%	48.8%	63.3%
Add Knowledge	30.1%	19.8%	24.3%	30.3%	16.2%	20.4%

Those with only a limited education are 50% more likely than those with at least a high school diploma to indicate a belief in Islam as the one true faith and know a great deal about their religion. Thus in these two regions, people with at least a high school education are very unlikely to have a basic belief in Islam and know what Islam teaches. One would suspect that the high school education is at least somewhat



secular in nature (following the example set when under the Soviet Union) and thus does not promote the teachings of Islam.

In conclusion, the survey data is very clear. Most people who self-identify as Muslims do not fully understand the teachings of Islam and believe that it is the one true faith leading to eternal life.

## Notes

1. Even though the survey only covers the Eastern Hemisphere, we can relate the data to Muslims worldwide since over 98% of the Muslims in the world live in the Eastern Hemisphere.

2. Middle school education or less.

Acknowledgement: The World's Muslims Data Set, 2012, Pew Research Center – Religion & Public Life. The Pew Research Center bears no responsibility for the analyses or interpretations of the data presented here. The data were downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, [www.TheARDA.com](http://www.TheARDA.com), and were collected by James Bell, Director of International Survey Research, Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life.

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