

Ipsos Global @dvisory: Supreme Being(s), The Afterlife And Evolution

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Belief in Supreme Being(s) and Afterlife Accepted By Half (51%) of Citizens in 23 Country Survey, But Only 28% Are "Creationists"

A poll conducted by global research company Ipsos for Reuters News finds that one half (51%) of global citizens definitely believe in a "divine entity" compared to 18% who don't and 17% who just aren't sure.

Similarly, half (51%) believe in some kind of afterlife while the remaining half believe they will either just "cease to exist" (23%) or simply "don't know" (26%) about a hereafter. Lastly, the survey revealed that four in 10 (41%) believe in human evolution compared to 28% who believe in creationism and 31% of the global population who is unsure what to believe.

The findings are from a survey conducted in 23 countries among 18,829 adults (see list and methodology below).

To believe or not to believe?

Half of global citizens (51%) surveyed believe there is some form of "divine entity": either a "God or Supreme Being" or "many Gods or Supreme Beings" (6%). This compares with two in ten (18%) who "don't believe in God/Gods/Supreme Being/Beings" and another three in ten (30%) who are "undecided" of which 17% say "sometimes I believe, but sometimes I don't" and another 13% say "I'm not sure if I believe".

* Definitive belief in a God or Supreme Being is highest in Indonesia (93%) and Turkey (91%) followed by Brazil (84%), South Africa (83%) and Mexico (78%). Those most likely to believe in "many Gods or Supreme Beings" live in India (24%), China (14%) and Russia (10%).

* Those who say they do not believe in God or Supreme Being(s) are most likely to live in France (39%) followed by Sweden (37%), Belgium (36%), Great Britain (34%), Japan (33%) and Germany (31%).

* Those most likely to lack a definite response are from Japan (54%) of which 34% believe sometimes and 20% are unsure; China (52%) of which 32% sometimes believe and 20% are unsure; and South Korea (50%) of which 32% sometimes believe and 18% are unsure.

The Sweet Hereafter or Not?

Just over half of global citizens (51%) say they believe in some form of afterlife: one quarter (23%) believe in an afterlife "but not specifically in a heaven or hell", two in ten (19%) believe "you go to heaven or hell", another 7% believe "ultimately reincarnated" and 2% believe in "heaven but not hell".

Alternatively, one quarter (23%) say "you simply cease to exist" whereas another quarter (26%) say they "don't know what happens".

* Those from Mexico (40%) are most likely to believe in an afterlife but not heaven or hell, followed by those from Russia (34%), Brazil (32%), India (29%), Canada (28%) and Argentina (27%).

* Indonesians are most likely to believe in going on to heaven or hell (62%), followed by those in South Africa (52%), Turkey (52%), United States (41%) and Brazil (28%). Of those who believe in heaven but not hell, those in the United States (4%) rank highest.

* Of those who believe "you are ultimately reincarnated", Hungary (13%) is at the top followed by citizens from Brazil (12%), Mexico (11%), Japan (10%), Argentina (9%) and Australia (9%).

* One quarter (26%) say they "don't know what happens" and are most likely from Sweden (41%) followed by Germany (37%), Japan (37%), Russia (36%) and China (34%).

* One quarter (23%) say "you simply cease to exist" led by those in South Korea (40%) and Spain (40%) followed by France (39%), Japan (37%) and Belgium (35%).

Seven Days or Millions of Years?

Much debate has focused on whether humans were the products of either a spiritual force creation or the force of nature by way of a gradual evolution.

* Four in ten (41%) identify as "evolutionist's" and believe that human beings were in fact created over a long period of time of evolution growing into fully formed human beings they are today from lower species such as apes. Those most

likely to believe in this are from Sweden (68%), Germany (65%), China (64%), Belgium (61%) and Japan (60%).

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* Three in ten (28%) global citizens refer to themselves as "creationists" and believe that human beings were in fact created by a spiritual force such as the God they believe in and do not believe that the origin of man came from evolving from other species such as apes" led by those from Saudi Arabia (75%), Turkey (60%), Indonesia (57%), South Africa (56%) and Brazil (47%).

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* Almost one third (31%) of the global population indicate they "simply don't know what to believe and sometimes agree or disagree with theories and ideas put forward by both creationists and evolutionists". Those from Russia (40%) are most likely to be unsure followed by those from Italy (39%), Argentina (38%), Poland (37%), Spain (37%) and France (36%).

The survey was conducted in 23 countries via the Ipsos Online Panel system. The countries reporting herein are Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the United States of America.

Respondents in Saudi Arabia only answered the third question about evolution. An international sample of 18,531 adults aged 18-64 in the US and Canada, and age 16-64 in all other countries, were interviewed between September 7, 2010 and September 23, 2010. Approximately 1000+ individuals participated on a country by country basis with the exception of Argentina, Indonesia, Mexico, Poland, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Russia and Turkey, where each have a sample 500+.

Weighting was then employed to balance demographics and ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to the most recent country Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe.

A survey with an unweighted probability sample of this size and a 100% response rate would have an estimated margin of error of +/-3.1 percentage points for a sample of 1,000 and an estimated margin of error of +/- 4.5 percentage points for a sample of 500 19 times out of 20 per country of what the results would have been had the entire population of the specifically aged adults in that country been polled.

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