# Faith and Wellness:

## THE WORLDWIDE CONNECTION BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY & WELLBEING

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# Executive Summary

At a time when millions of people worldwide are struggling with their mental health and wellbeing, Gallup explores ways spirituality can help address this mental health crisis. A growing body of medical and psychological research demonstrates that people with a stronger spiritual or faith commitment often have better health and wellbeing outcomes than those without such a devotion.

- **Gallup's review of existing literature and in-depth interviews with leaders in the field led to the development of a new framework. This framework identifies five key factors of spirituality that positively impact wellbeing: 1) positive coping and a sense of purpose in life; 2) faith-based social connections; 3) community and civic engagement; 4) structural stability; and 5) workplace support of holistic wellbeing.**

- **Worldwide, people with a greater commitment to spirituality or religion have better wellbeing in many respects.**

  - Gallup World Poll data finds religious people tend to score higher on wellbeing indexes measuring positive emotions, social life, community basics and optimism than non-religious people.

  - Globally, approximately 100 million more people who identify as religious have others they can turn to in times of need than would be the case if they were not religious.

  - Worldwide, those who say religion is important to them have significantly higher scores on Gallup's Civic Engagement Index than those who say religion is not important to them. The gaps are apparent across world regions: Globally, the difference is 4.8 points; in Northern America, the difference is 10.3 points. The Civic Engagement Index assesses people's inclination to volunteer their time and assistance to others.

  - Harvard researchers have found a link between religion or spirituality and a sense of purpose, estimating that individuals in the U.S. who frequently pray or meditate are 47% more likely to have a sense of mission and purpose in their life than those who do not.

- **Although not all research shows a meaningful relationship between spirituality and wellbeing, key studies have found links between greater spirituality and specific mental health outcomes.**

  - A systematic review of studies examining the spirituality-wellbeing link finds that people who are more religious or spiritual tend to have lower rates of depression, suicide and isolation.

- **Spirituality-wellbeing relationships vary by country, world region and a country's average income level.**

  - Gallup World Poll data indicates that many African and Asian nations show stronger spirituality-wellbeing links, while many European countries show a weaker relationship.

  - Wellbeing-religiosity relationships tend to be stronger in countries with higher proportions of religious people. For example, religious people residing in more religious countries score 8.4 points higher on Gallup's Positive Experience Index, which measures experience of positive emotions.

- **At a time when more is being discovered about a link between spirituality and improved wellbeing, in many parts of the world, people are becoming less religious.**

  - While rates of religiosity are stable in many poorer countries, they have declined in many economically advantaged nations, particularly in the Western world.

  - People are likely unaware of the role that spiritual life and practice can have on their mental and physical health. But other factors may play a part in people turning away from religion, including generational change, evolution of spiritual practices, religious polarization and hostility toward people who do not share one's spiritual or religious beliefs and practices.

- **Institutions — such as the workplace — can play a role in supporting spirituality. Leaders can consider this knowledge to enhance employee wellbeing.**

  - Some workplaces that emphasize employee wellbeing have incorporated spirituality into their employee resource programs and diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Others have partnered with outside organizations to provide non-denominational, faith-based employee spiritual and wellness programs. Both approaches have been credited with improving employee wellbeing.

  - A systematic review of 53 publications aimed to understand how religion and occupation interact within workplaces found that religious beliefs can help employees cope with stressful work situations, and employee wellbeing improved when employees were supported in expressing their beliefs.

# Introduction

An estimated **one in four people worldwide will have mental illness** at some point in their lives.[1] The World Health Organization estimates there was a 25% increase in mental health conditions like anxiety and depression in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic — a significant increase to the approximate one billion people already struggling with mental health disorders.[2] Anxiety and depression cost the world an estimated $1 trillion annually in lost worker productivity[3] in addition to lost family income and higher healthcare costs for families and societies. Concerningly, an estimated 70% of people worldwide with some form of mental illness do not receive treatment for it.[4]

> "Everyone's life touches someone with a mental health condition. The inextricable links between mental health and public health, human rights and socioeconomic development mean that transforming policy and practice in mental health can deliver real, substantive benefits for individuals, communities, and countries everywhere. Investment into mental health is an investment into a better life and future for all."[5]
>
> **DR. TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS**
>
> *WHO Director-General*

Beyond medically diagnosed mental illnesses, feelings of sadness, loneliness and isolation are threats to societies. Globally, experiences of negative emotions — such as sadness, worry, stress and anger — are at their highest level in more than a decade of measurement.[6] Relatedly, the U.S. Surgeon General released a report on the devastating effects of those emotions, such as an increased risk of heart disease, stroke and dementia, in addition to the usual mental health issues like depression and anxiety,[7] and the U.K. recently established a Minister of Loneliness.[8]

Amid this deepening mental health crisis, scholars, health professionals, employers and governments have paid greater attention to people's mental health and wellbeing. In recent decades, numerous academic studies have found a positive relationship between spirituality, religion or faith and favorable health and wellbeing outcomes. Specifically, spirituality has been linked to lower rates of depression, addiction and suicide.[9]

However, the mental health crisis coincides with a decline in religious belief and practice — the most common form of spirituality — in many countries.[10] This raises a possible paradox: At a time when researchers are learning more about how spirituality can be linked to better wellbeing, spiritual practices appear to be declining in many nations. The mental health crisis, which is intensifying from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and technology,[11] presents an opportunity to explore the possibility that spirituality, in various forms, could be a way to improve mental health and wellbeing worldwide.

> The Radiant Foundation partnered with Gallup to review published research on the relationship between spirituality and wellbeing; analyze existing Gallup data to further explore ways spirituality and wellbeing are connected throughout the world; and conduct a series of in-depth interviews with key experts and practitioners from some of the world's leading institutions whose work touches on the spirituality-wellbeing connection.[12]

The secondary data analysis reveals that **the spirituality-wellbeing link is clear, though it is complex and varies by country and world region**. Importantly, the link is more apparent for some measures of wellbeing than others.

The literature review and expert interviews also led to the development of a new framework to convey the link between spirituality and wellbeing. This framework focuses on the ways spirituality can improve wellbeing by:

- developing a sense of purpose and positive coping skills

- creating social connections

- increasing community and civic engagement

- fostering feelings of security and stability in individuals

- having institutions — particularly workplaces — support a holistic view of health and wellbeing that incorporates spirituality

This report recognizes that individual, institutional and societal factors build and support spirituality and wellbeing connections. The connections can be the result of bottom-up processes (with origins at the individual level) or top-down approaches (with origins at the societal or institutional level). These processes can lead to gains in wellbeing that benefit individuals, institutions and society.

**Societal**

Social norms; Improved health & wellbeing

**Institutional**

Media; Religious institutions; Educational institutions; Workplaces

**Individual**

Putting it into practice (regular meditation, church attendance, caring for others, etc.); Acceptance
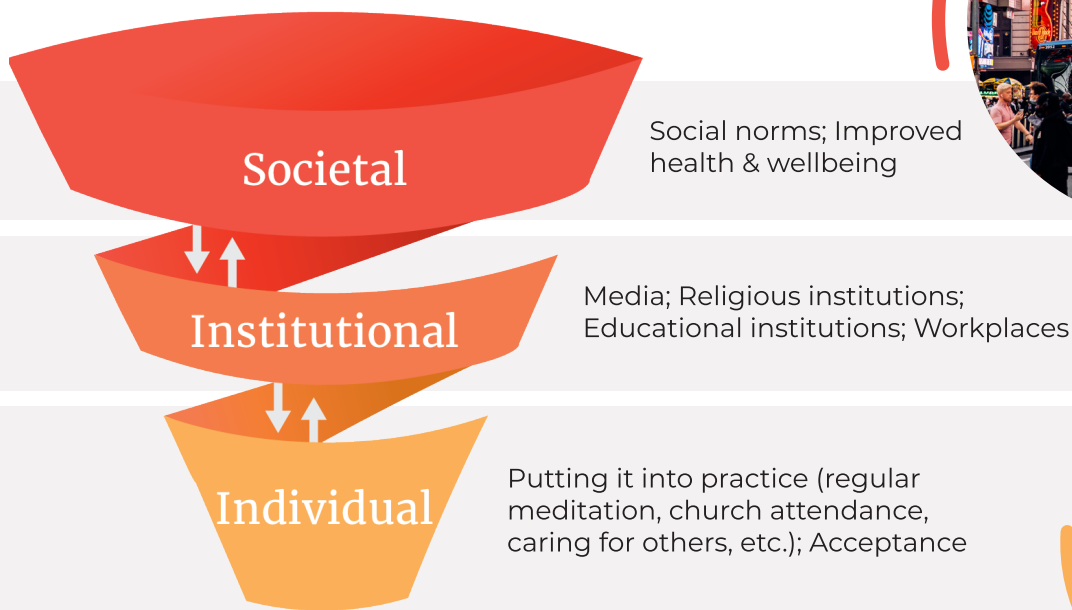
Regardless of the direction of the process, spirituality can be considered a new means of intervention that can complement and aid traditional medical and psychological interventions designed to improve mental health and wellbeing. The report concludes by addressing areas for further research and offers considerations for leaders about how they might incorporate spirituality into programs they oversee.

# Defining Language

## Religion or Spirituality?

Much of the research on wellbeing and spirituality to date has used measures of religious identification or religiosity (e.g., religious service attendance or perceived importance of religion) to identify spiritual people. Religion is perhaps a more concrete or easier-to-define term for respondents than spirituality.

But with religiosity declining in many countries, studies focusing only on religiosity may be missing respondents who receive some of the same benefits as religion through less formal means.[13] For example, a recent U.S. Gallup poll finds about half of Americans consider themselves religious, one-third are spiritual but not religious, and 18% say they are neither.[14] Further, the 2023 American Prayer Wrap survey reveals that 85% of U.S. adults connect with a higher power in some fashion, such as through prayer, meditation, mindfulness or recitations of affirmation.[15] Therefore, it is critical to move beyond a sole focus on religion and religious attendance and incorporate measures of spirituality into research efforts.

Leading scholars on spirituality and wellbeing, as well as practitioners trying to improve individual and employee wellbeing, offered their thoughts on definitional terms:

> "There's a lot of controversy about definitions today. The definition of spirituality has changed over time; it's grown beyond religion, although it used to describe the deeply religious person. Now, you can be nonreligious but spiritual; their spirituality is often now equated with a person's sense of meaning and purpose in life."
>
> **HAROLD G. KOENIG**
> *MD, Director, Duke University Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health; Professor of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences and Associate Professor of Medicine, Duke University Medical Center*

> "We use 'faith.' We are committed to supporting all people in feeling safe and comfortable in bringing their faith or non-faith beliefs into the workplace. And we all have a role to play in this journey. Using 'faith' as a designation is inclusive and encompasses all people's beliefs, even when faith is defined by non-faith."
>
> **SHELBY KAN**
> *Global Leader - Accenture Client Account HR*

> "I think of something that is larger than oneself which provides a source of meaning or purpose."
>
> **RICHARD DAVIDSON**, *Founder of the Center for Healthy Minds; Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry, University of Wisconsin-Madison*

> "Academics, for a long time, until 1997 — they would theorize on the distinct nature of spirituality, for instance: 'I think spirituality is peace and harmony,' or 'Spirituality for me is a deep sense of meaning.' That's not a bottom-up, empirically derived understanding of the difference between spirituality and religion. What we see is that spirituality is innate, and religion is environmentally transmitted. Our natural spiritual core can be shaped by the environmental embrace of religion; or our spiritual core can be shaped in other ways — by nature, service to fellow people and living beings, and ethical teachings. It is my view [that] based upon science, you can be spiritual and religious. You're spiritual because you were born spiritual."
>
> **LISA MILLER**, *Professor of Psychology and Education, Columbia University*

These responses suggest that "spirituality" or "faith" are more inclusive terms than "religion." One helpful way of conceiving of spirituality, regardless of the form it takes, is that it is grounded in a search for meaning, direction or purpose and has a sacred element to it.[16] This understanding of spirituality encompasses not just traditional religious practice in community settings but also individual activities, such as prayer or meditation, that draw one closer to a higher being.

In this report "religion" is used when describing past research that used items that specifically asked about religion and religious practice. Otherwise, the broader "spirituality" term will be used.

## Wellbeing

Wellbeing can be interpreted broadly to include a range of outcomes, experiences or practices that are related to physical, mental and emotional health. However, the ultimate goal in measuring wellbeing is to maximize positive outcomes and minimize negative ones so people can live the best life possible.

Researchers often look at wellbeing in defined areas. For example, Gallup studies five elements of wellbeing: career or purpose, social relationships, financial security, physical health and community attachment.[17] The Harvard Global Flourishing research also focuses on five largely overlapping domains: happiness and life satisfaction, mental and physical health, meaning and purpose, character and virtue, and close social relationships.[18]

Wellbeing can be an outcome in its own right, but it is also commonly used to predict tangible outcomes — such as good or adverse health events and good or adverse work or life outcomes — for individuals and larger populations like cities, countries and the world.

"When people talk about mental health, people are usually talking about mental illness. To flourish is really to live the good life, maximize one's potential and harness all of our innate faculties. It's very different than simply not being depressed or not being anxious. When I was a grad student, I was told to try to figure out what's wrong with [people]. Now, we try to figure out what's right with them. Training people on these strength-based skills will be a more powerful and enduring way to treat mental illness, which is only at the very beginning of serious scientific research."

**RICHARD DAVIDSON**
*Founder of the Center for Healthy Minds; Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry, University of Wisconsin-Madison*

"Religions are social institutions that are represented in physical as well as intangible infrastructure. There is also institutional support — in terms of the institutions that religions support, like educational and healthcare institutions — there are wellbeing elements to all of those."

**OLIVIA WILKINSON**
*Director of Research, Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities*

# State of Spirituality and Wellbeing

Wellbeing is influenced to a large extent by a person having good physical and mental health, access to basic resources like food, shelter and income, and having positive social relationships.[19] It isn't clear why spirituality would necessarily influence wellbeing beyond these basic human needs and outcomes; therefore, any meaningful statistical relationship between spirituality and wellbeing is notable.

A systematic review by Harold G. Koenig of Duke University concluded that religiosity and spirituality are positively related to optimism, self-esteem, hope, coping with adversity, and lower levels of depression, anxiety, suicidal tendencies and psychotic disorders.[20] **Religious involvement has also been found to be related to less substance abuse,[21] less crime[22] and greater wellbeing.[23]**

It is important to note that research has not shown universally positive results — sometimes, spirituality has been associated with poorer mental health outcomes. For example, people who believe negative events in their lives are the result of a higher power abandoning them or punishing them tend to have worse mental health outcomes.[24] Nevertheless, the preponderance of evidence suggests spirituality is more often linked with improved, rather than diminished, wellbeing.

> "The religion and health relationship is incredibly complex, one impacting the other over time. The relationship between religious involvement and health, particularly mental health, changes as one influences the other. For example, as people become more distressed or sick, they may turn to religion to cope, and as they become more religious their distress may lessen. However, when people become more distressed, they sometimes turn away from religion (engage in a spiritual struggle). As people become less stressed, though, they may sometimes turn away from religion because they don't need it anymore, or they may turn back to religion because their pain/illness is relieved and their spiritual struggles resolve. The fact that you can detect even a small difference in wellbeing between religious and nonreligious persons in a cross-sectional survey is actually pretty remarkable."
>
> **HAROLD G. KOENIG**, *MD, Director, Duke University Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health; Professor of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences and Associate Professor of Medicine, Duke University Medical Center*

According to an analysis of 2012-2022 Gallup World Poll data, the link between spirituality and various wellbeing outcomes differs broadly at the global level. The analysis relies on a measure of religiosity as a surrogate for spirituality — how important religion is in one's daily life — that dates to the survey's inception in 2006. By this measure, religious people had better mental and physical health ratings and outcomes on some items but not others. Globally, they tended to score better on Gallup's Positive Experience, Social Life, Community Basics and Optimism indexes than non-religious people.[25] However, religious people did not score better on current and future life evaluations and were worse on the Negative Experience and Personal Health indexes.

**Table 1**

## Basic Relationship of Religiosity and Wellbeing Outcomes, Gallup World Poll Data, 2012–2022

Legend: Teal highlight indicates religiosity is related to improved wellbeing; red highlight indicates religiosity has a relationship to worse wellbeing; no color change indicates there is no effect of religiosity

| | Not religious | Religious |
|---|---|---|
| **RELIGIOUS PEOPLE TEND TO HAVE BETTER OUTCOMES (STATISTICALLY MEANINGFUL EFFECTS)** | | |
| **Positive Experience Index** (experienced enjoyment, smiled/laughed a lot, treated with respect, learned something, felt well-rested) | 65.0 | 69.0 |
| **Social Life Index** (satisfied with opportunity to meet people and make friends, have people you can call on if in trouble) | 73.7 | 77.6 |
| **Optimism Index** (rate life in five years highly, standard of living getting better, local economy getting better) | 48.4 | 49.4 |
| **Community Basics Index** (everyday life in a community, including environment, housing and infrastructure) | 55.6 | 59.7 |
| **NO MEANINGFUL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RELIGIOUS/NON-RELIGIOUS PEOPLE** | | |
| **Life evaluation: Thriving** (rate current life 7-10 on 0-10 scale; rate life in five years 8-10 on 0-10 scale) | 27.6 | 26.6 |
| **Life evaluation: Suffering** (rate current and future life 0-4 on 0-10 scale) | 13.6 | 13.3 |
| **Local Economic Confidence Index** (rating of current local economic conditions, local economy getting better) | 5.0 | 5.6 |
| **RELIGIOUS PEOPLE TEND TO HAVE WORSE OUTCOMES** | | |
| **Negative Experience Index** (experienced worry, sadness, anger, stress and physical pain a lot of the previous day) | 29.9 | 31.4 |
| **Personal Health Index** (do not have health problems, feel well-rested, did not experience physical pain, worry, sadness a lot of the previous day) | 68.6 | 66.9 |

Gallup World Poll data, 2012-2022

The differences in wellbeing between religious and non-religious people in the Positive Experience, Social Life and Community Basics indexes are substantial for wellbeing differences observed across population groups.

> Each one–point difference represents an effect for an estimated 40 million adults worldwide;[26] therefore, an estimated 160 million more adults have positive experiences than would be the case if those adults were not religious.

Spirituality-wellbeing relationships are often nuanced and complex. Wellbeing benefits tied to spirituality that may be weak or nonexistent in the analysis of population-level data may be apparent or stronger when analyzing individual-level data. For example, although the analysis of the 2012-2022 World Poll data indicates religious people collectively tend to score lower on the Personal Health Index, prior research by economist Angus Deaton found statistically meaningful relationships between religiosity and several individual health items, including the absence of physical pain (part of the Personal Health Index), being satisfied with one's health and having enough energy to get things done.[27]

Additionally, patterns seen at the population level may vary. **Wellbeing-religiosity relationships tend to be stronger in countries with higher and moderate proportions of religious people than in less religious countries.** In the most religious countries, there are significant — and usually larger — effects on seven of the nine wellbeing outcomes examined. The differences were largest on the Positive Experience and Social Life indexes, with each showing a roughly eight-point gap between the religious and non-religious. In less religious countries, there is only one positive, statistically meaningful relationship, and that is on the Community Basics Index. To some degree, this finding may reflect the fact that less religious — and often, wealthier — countries generally score higher on wellbeing, so there is less space for spirituality or religion to make a meaningful difference beyond the economic factors.

## Table 2

### Basic Relationship of Religiosity and Wellbeing Outcomes by Country Level of Religiosity, Gallup World Poll Data, 2012–2022

Legend: Teal highlight indicates religiosity is related to improved wellbeing; red highlight indicates religiosity has a relationship to worse wellbeing; no color change indicates there is no effect of religiosity

| | MORE RELIGIOUS COUNTRIES | | MODERATELY RELIGIOUS COUNTRIES | | LESS RELIGIOUS COUNTRIES | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Not religious | Religious | Not religious | Religious | Not religious | Religious |
| Positive Experience Index | 58.7 | 67.1 | 65.5 | 68.9 | 70.2 | 70.8 |
| Negative Experience Index | 33.9 | 33.6 | 31.8 | 33.3 | 24.2 | 27.3 |
| Social Life Index | 64.3 | 72.1 | 72.7 | 76.8 | 83.2 | 83.4 |
| Optimism Index | 46.3 | 50.2 | 48.6 | 49.7 | 50.0 | 48.5 |
| Community Basics Index | 49.5 | 54.4 | 52.3 | 57.1 | 64.3 | 67.0 |
| Personal Health Index | 63.5 | 65.3 | 67.5 | 65.8 | 74.3 | 69.4 |
| Life evaluation: Thriving | 14.4 | 15.3 | 26.2 | 25.8 | 40.9 | 37.5 |
| Life evaluation: Suffering | 20.2 | 17.1 | 13.6 | 13.5 | 7.7 | 9.5 |
| Local Economic Confidence Index | -8.3 | -.8.9 | 0.5 | 2.5 | 21.0 | 21.2 |

Gallup World Poll data, 2012-2022

Countries are divided into thirds based on the percentage who say religion is important. In the most religious countries, 90% or more say religion is important in their daily lives. In the moderately religious group, between 66% and 89% say religion is important, and 65% or less say religion is important in the less religious group.

The relationships between spirituality and wellbeing outcomes also differ across countries — some countries exhibit positive relationships with religiosity, while others have negative or no relationship. The map below depicts the relationship between religiosity and Positive Experience Index scores by country. These statistical analyses take into account the effect of religiosity and other respondent demographics and country-fixed effects (like GDP). Given the usual strong relationships between factors like country GDP, respondent age and wellbeing, any relationship between religiosity and wellbeing above and beyond these typical factors is noteworthy.

**At a broad level, religiosity seems to have at least a modest positive relationship with experiencing positive emotions (such as enjoyment and feeling respected) in nearly all countries.** The effects tend to be especially large in most African and many Asian countries, primarily those that are lower income. The relationships tend to be weaker or slightly negative in many European countries.

## Map 1

## Using Religious Importance to Predict Positive Experiences

● Strong positive   ● Positive   ● No effect   ● Negative   ● Strong negative
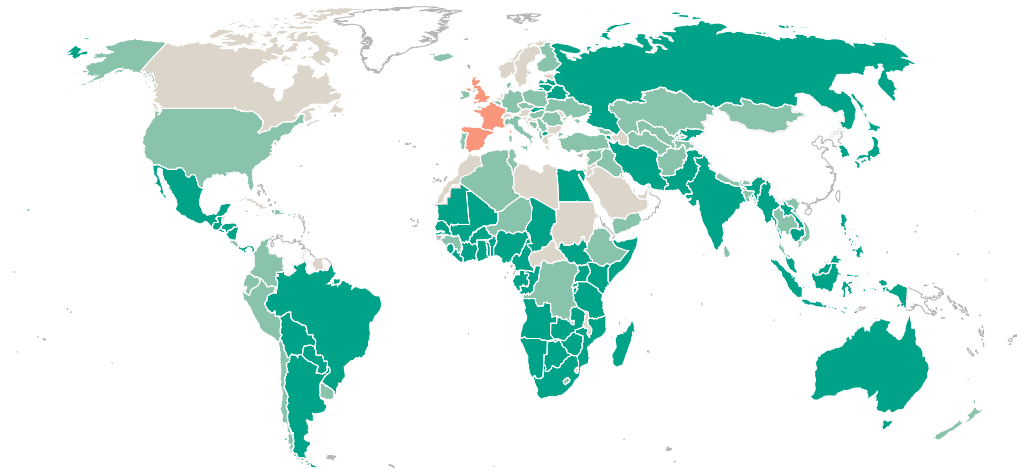


Gallup World Poll data, 2008-2021; GDP data from the World Bank 2008-2021

Note: The dependent variable is the Positive Experience Index. Independent variables are religious importance, respondent demographics (age, gender and marital status), and GDP fixed effects by year. The map colors correspond to t-statistic sizes for the coefficient estimates from the model. Countries that are grey have an effect that is not different from zero, while countries with shades of color have a statistically significant effect. The threshold used to determine significance is 0.05. Countries with no shading were not included in this survey.

The Physical Health Index shows a similar pattern, though the effects of religiosity are weaker. As with positive experiences, there is a strong positive link between religiosity and physical health in African and Asian countries. However, a larger number of countries show a negative relationship between religiosity and physical health than with positive experiences, in that those who say religion is important tend to have poorer health. This is the case in most European countries.

**Map 2**

## Using Religious Importance to Predict Personal Health

● Strong positive  ● Positive  ● No effect  ● Negative  ● Strong negative
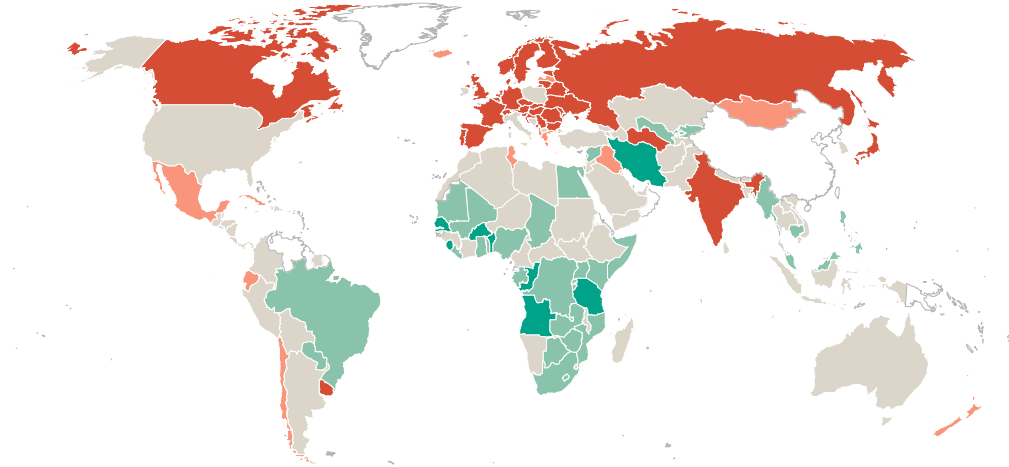


Gallup World Poll data, 2008-2021; GDP data from the World Bank 2008-2021

Note: The dependent variable is the Personal Health Index. Independent variables are religious importance, respondent demographics (age, gender and marital status), and GDP fixed effects by year. The map colors correspond to t-statistic sizes for the coefficient estimates from the model. Countries that are grey have an effect that is not different from zero, while countries with shades of color have a statistically significant effect. The threshold used to determine significance is 0.05. Countries with no shading were not included in this survey.

The same general pattern of relationships is seen in other measures of wellbeing, including current life evaluation, daily worry, daily sadness and reports of health problems. Being religious tends to be associated with better wellbeing outcomes in African countries, while in European countries, the relationships are negative or nonexistent.

**Trends in Spirituality**

Gallup World Poll data document a wide range of spirituality in countries throughout the world. A low of 15% of non-secular Japan residents said religion is an important part of their lives in 2022, the lowest of the 137 countries where the question was asked. In 43 countries, primarily in Africa and Asia, 90% or more of non-secular adults described religion as important.

Country wealth is a major differentiator of spirituality, with poorer countries (as measured by GDP) tending to have a more religious population than wealthier countries. **Over the past 15 years, religiosity has declined in high-income countries but remained relatively stable in less wealthy countries.**

**Chart 1**

## Relationship Between Gross Domestic Product and Religious Importance, Gallup World Poll Data

● Low-income countries ● Lower-middle-income countries
● Upper-middle-income countries ● High-income countries
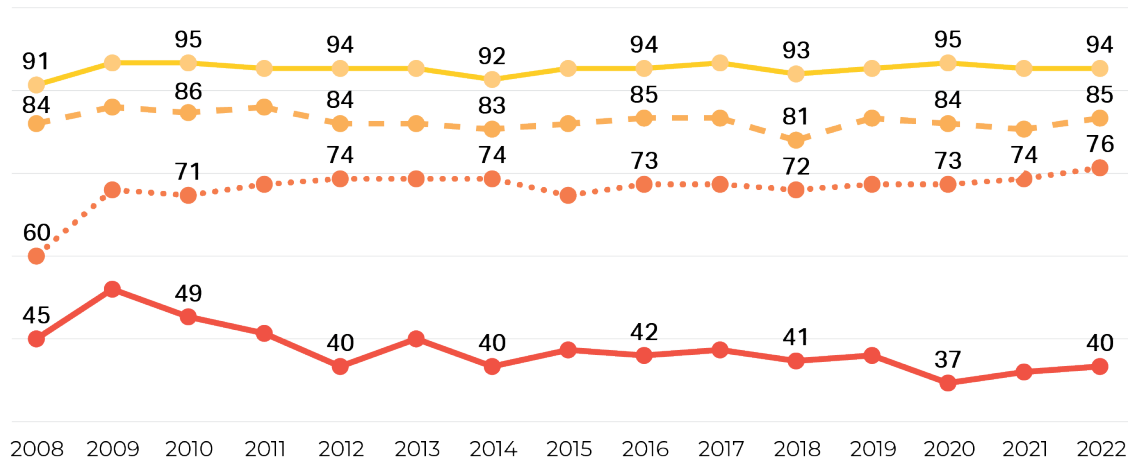


Gallup World Poll data, 2008-2022; income groups based on World Bank 2023 categories

In the U.S., adults today are less religious than Americans in the past by almost any measure. Specifically, fewer Americans identify as having a religious preference or identity,[28] say religion is important to them,[29] attend religious services on a regular basis,[30] or are formal members of a church, synagogue, temple or mosque.[31] Additionally, most U.S. adults perceive religion as becoming less rather than more influential in society.[32]

At the same time, research has found strong links between being religious and having a range of positive emotional and physical health outcomes at the individual level. Overall, more religious Americans score higher on Gallup's overall wellbeing index than less religious people, even after considering other demographic factors such as age, education, income, gender and race. This relationship holds across faith groups.[33]

Not only do spirituality-wellbeing linkages differ by country, so do trends in religious practice. A Pew Research Center report concluded that trends toward secularism occurring in the Western world are unlikely to occur in the non-Western world.[34]

Studies also find highly religious people are more likely to practice a range of healthy behaviors, including exercising regularly, eating healthy and refraining from smoking.[35] Notably, religious Americans are significantly less likely to say they have been diagnosed with depression in their lifetimes than people who are less religious.[36]

**Chart 2**

## Lifetime Diagnoses of Depression by Level of Religiosity, U.S. Adults

% Diagnosed with depression

| | |
|---|---|
| Highly religious | 15.6 |
| Moderately religious | 20.4 |
| Not religious | 18.7 |

Gallup-Healthways Well-being Index, 2008-2010 data

Statistics take into account the effects of age, gender, race and ethnicity, region and state, education, income, marital status and children.

**Spirituality and Wellbeing**

This review shows that most existing research looks at the link between religiosity and mental or emotional health, as religious affiliation is a common measure asked in surveys. But surveys that measure spirituality more broadly have also found relationships to wellbeing.

In 2021, Gallup introduced a new survey item, sponsored by the Wellbeing for Planet Earth Foundation, on its World Poll that touched more directly on spirituality. The item asked adults whether they "always, often, sometimes or never feel connected to a religion or a form of spirituality." **Worldwide, 52% of people said they "always" or "often" felt such a connection.** This measure showed a positive and meaningful effect on evaluative and experiential wellbeing[37] when included in a statistical model that controlled for other common predictors of wellbeing, such as age and income. The effects varied by world region but were statistically meaningful in all regions except Europe and Latin America.

**Chart 3**

## Relationship Between Spiritual/Religious Connection and Wellbeing by Region

Bar height indicates the size of the effect when using a statistical model to relate the spiritual/religious connection item to a measure of wellbeing. Higher bars indicate larger effects.
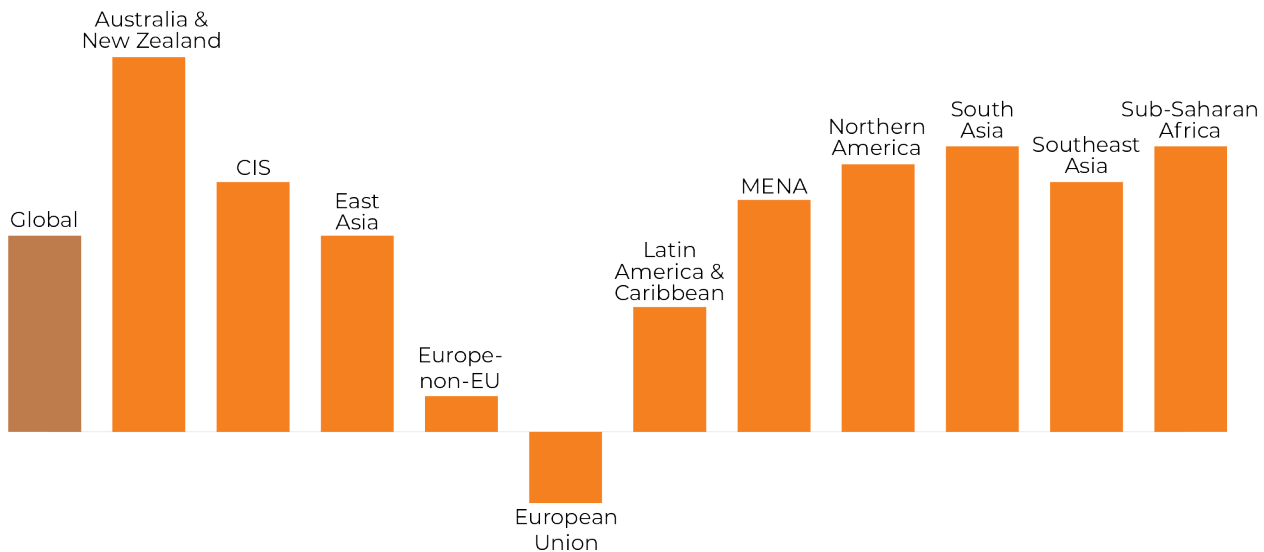


Additionally, a Gallup Panel™ analysis of U.S. data collected over a three-year period (2009-2011) found an index of non-religious spirituality (measured in year one — 2009) was an important predictor of future scores on Gallup's five elements of wellbeing (measured in year two — 2010). Those wellbeing elements, in turn, were strong predictors of both future positive emotions and future life evaluation ratings (measured in year three — 2011) for the same individuals. The Spirituality Index measured in year one still had a meaningful and direct relationship to life evaluation ratings in year three when taking into account the influence of the five wellbeing areas, but it did not maintain a direct relationship with positive emotions in year three.[38]

# A New Framework for Understanding the Spirituality–Wellbeing Connection

**Positive purpose and coping in life**

**Faith-based social connections**

**Community and civic engagement**

**Structural stability**

**Workplace support of holistic wellbeing**

To better understand the spirituality-wellbeing linkage, Gallup reviewed existing academic literature on the topic to develop a new framework for understanding why the relationship exists and how it could be used to improve wellbeing. This new framework focuses on five aspects of spirituality that can positively affect mental health and wellbeing:

| Positive coping and purpose in life | Faith-based social connections | Community and civic engagement | Structural stability | Workplace support of holistic wellbeing |
|---|---|---|---|---|

"Faith affects everything — work, relationships, family life, happiness, your physical health, longevity, and perhaps even the afterlife, if there is one."

**HAROLD G. KOENIG**, *MD, Director, Duke University Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health; Professor of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences and Associate Professor of Medicine, Duke University Medical Center*

# Positive Coping and Purpose in Life

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, spirituality and religion — which it views as overlapping but distinct practices — can benefit mental health in a number of ways,[39] namely, "religion and spirituality can help a person tolerate stress by generating peace, purpose[40] and forgiveness." A sense of purpose and positive coping skills[41] are crucial to one's overall wellbeing.

## Positive Coping

A 2020 *CBS News* survey found that more U.S. adults turned to religion or spirituality when they were anxious, stressed or in need of comfort than any other source.[42] A Gallup survey from the same year found 58% of Americans said they pray "often," 17% "sometimes" and 9% "hardly ever, or only in times of crisis." The level of prayer was similar to or higher than it was in 1990, which is notable given declines in religious service attendance and religious importance over the same period.[43]

Doug Oman, professor of public health at the University of California, Berkeley, claims that "religious and spiritual traditions give you access to different methods of coping that have distinctive benefits."[44] Religion orients people toward a worldview that helps them understand and work through times of suffering.[45]

Harold G. Koenig has identified numerous studies showing that religion/spirituality was helpful in patients coping with a variety of physical diseases, mental health conditions, natural disasters and other forms of trauma.[46] In most studies he reviewed, religion/spirituality was associated with lower rates of depression and less suicide or fewer suicide attempts. Religion/spirituality was especially strongly related to lower rates of substance abuse.

A meta-analysis of studies that relate religious coping to psychological adjustment to stress found that positive forms of religious coping were related to positive psychological outcomes. However, negative religious coping (such as believing God is being unfair or has abandoned you in difficult times) was related to *worse* psychological outcomes.[47]

"This decline in spiritual life has brought a spike in the diseases of despair, they go hand in hand. A strong spiritual core reduces the risk of completed suicide and the concomitant diseases of despair. When spiritual life is shared, you're at an 82% decreased relative risk for completed suicide, 80% decreased risk of addiction and a 75% decreased risk of depression. The real pandemic of Gen Z is suicide. If this was a pill, who wouldn't take that?"

**LISA MILLER**
*Professor of Psychology and Education, Columbia University*

"It goes without question that there's this fundamental point that, when everything else has fallen away, no one else is coming to help you. All the things you've put in place to protect yourself have disappeared, you can pray to God. You can ask God to calm you, give you peace, protect you."

**OLIVIA WILKINSON**
*Director of Research, Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities*

The research on the effects of prayer on mental health is mixed, with some finding prayer is associated with higher anxiety levels and others finding it leads to lessened anxiety.[48] It appears to be more beneficial for those who see God as a collaborator or partner than for those who are angry at God or who relinquish responsibility to God. Those viewing God as a partner have better mental and physical health outcomes than those who do not.

A longitudinal study of adolescents found that those who prayed and attended religious services frequently as teens mostly had better health outcomes as young adults than those who never prayed or attended. While young people who prayed frequently tended to have a greater number of physical health problems, they had greater positive emotions, lower levels of drug use and fewer sexually transmitted infections.[49] However, secular meditation has also been found to be related to stress reduction, less anxiety and more positive moods among those who practice it.[50]

Thus, positive coping in the form of prayer or other means is an individual-level process that can benefit society more generally through its (usually) beneficial effects on mental health and wellbeing.

### Sense of Purpose

People with a strong sense of purpose find meaning and reason in their existence and how it fits into the broader world. A sense of purpose is a strong predictor of mental and physical wellbeing.[51] Harvard researchers have found a link between religion or spirituality and a sense of purpose, estimating that individuals who frequently pray or meditate are 47% more likely to have a sense of mission and purpose in their life than those who do not.[52]

A sense of purpose often involves trying to find a higher calling in life and a way to make a positive impact on others' lives, the larger community and the world. Purpose is often found through spirituality or religion, but it also can be found in other aspects of life, including one's work. Gallup has found that "career" (formerly known as "purpose") wellbeing is often one of the strongest predictors of behaviors that improve wellbeing and positive mental and physical health outcomes.[53]

**Carolyn Chen, professor of ethnic studies at the University of California, Berkeley,** suggests the workplace is filling the void religion used to fill in finding purpose, especially among young adults:

> "Good workplaces — workplaces that do it successfully, give their employees a sense of meaning — it gives them a sense of purpose and belonging toward a larger goal, being able to change something in the world. That's what religions do as well. Companies have hijacked a lot of religious language, practices, teachings. They create that same kind of experience."

A sense of purpose often has its origins in an individual's search for meaning, but institutions like houses of worship,[54] wellness centers and workplaces can assist individuals in their search for purpose in their lives.

# Faith-Based Social Connections

The second theme in understanding the positive effects of spirituality on mental health and wellbeing is social connection. Religiosity or spirituality has been found to inspire stronger social connections in a variety of studies. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), religion offers individuals a sense of community and structure. Chaeyoon Lim and Robert Putnam have found that 33% of individuals who attended a religious service weekly reported having close friendships through their house of worship and had high levels of life satisfaction; conversely, life satisfaction dropped to 19% among individuals who regularly attended religious services but did not have close networks with others in their house of worship. These effects were consistent across religious faiths.

A study of U.K. residents found that more frequent religious service attendance was associated with better wellbeing for Christian and Muslim respondents. However, respondents' rating of religious importance was not found to be linked to improved wellbeing, underscoring the key role social connections can have in enhancing wellbeing through spirituality.[55]

Beyond religious service attendance, a commitment to faith and spirituality can help bring people with shared beliefs, or even different beliefs, together. Companies such as Accenture have established employee resource groups that bring employees with shared backgrounds or beliefs together, which also creates social connections that may not have existed otherwise.

"Connection is the social networking, that's one of the main factors that gets cited again and again."

**OLIVIA WILKINSON**
*Director of Research, Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities*

As previously discussed, Gallup World Poll data has shown that people worldwide for whom religion is important scored higher on the Social Life Index than those who said religion was not important. Both religious and non-religious people generally scored high on both items that make up the index — being satisfied with having opportunities to meet and interact with people and having friends or relatives they could count on if they were in trouble. However, religious people had meaningfully higher scores on both items. Worldwide, an estimated 200 million additional religious people are satisfied with opportunities to meet people than would be if those people were not religious. Similarly, roughly 100 million more people have others they can turn to in times of need than would if they were not religious.

**Chart 4**

Gallup World Poll Social Life Index Items,
Religious vs. Not Religious People

■ Religious ■ Not religious

Satisfied with opportunities to meet people and make friends
- Religious: 76.1
- Not religious: 70.8

Have friends/relatives you can count on to help you if you were in trouble
- Religious: 79.1
- Not religious: 76.5
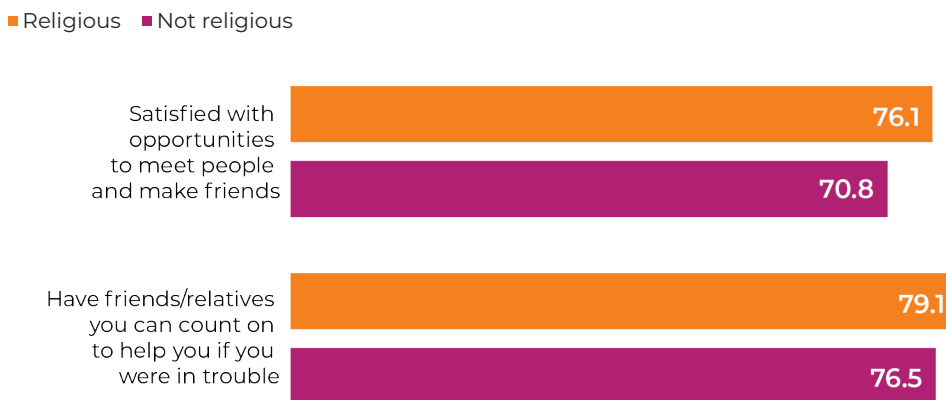
Gallup World Poll data, 2012-2022

Scholars who explore mortality and spirituality assert that social relationships that stem from religious communities can offer support and encouragement through challenging times.[56] A study of 81 participants with severe mental illnesses found that religious support and enduring faith positively impacted recovery; religious support was the mediating factor for participants struggling with their mental health recovery.[57] Another study of African Americans 55 years of age or older found that social support from houses of worship helped with depressive symptoms and psychological distress.[58]

Social connections involve individual, institutional and societal processes. Individuals seek opportunities to connect with each other, something institutions like places of worship, workplaces, social clubs and community organizations provide. Those institutions serve other societal functions (related to the economy and public service) but also create social networking opportunities for individuals.

# Community and Civic Engagement

Many faiths teach the importance of looking beyond oneself and being part of a larger community, both in terms of connecting with neighbors and serving others to benefit the community. Such behavior includes caring for those around you, particularly those in need. Robert Putnam found that individuals who have "church friends" demonstrate more altruistic behaviors.[59] And a 2022 Fetzer Institute study illustrated that spirituality influences a person's civic engagement.[60] Working with others in the community can also create a sense of purpose, which is central to wellbeing.

Gallup's World Poll data demonstrate that those who say religion is important to them have significantly higher scores on Gallup's Civic Engagement Index (35.8) — which assesses people's inclination to volunteer their time and assistance to others — than those who are not religious (31.0).[61] The gaps are apparent across world regions, especially in Northern America, where the difference is 10.3 points.

## Chart 5

**Gallup World Poll Civic Engagement Index,
Religious vs. Not Religious People**

• Civic Engagement Index: Religious   • Civic Engagement Index: Not religious   — Difference

| Region | Not religious | Difference | Religious |
|---|---|---|---|
| Global | 31 | 4.8 | 35.8 |
| Northern America | 48.5 | 10.3 | 58.8 |
| East Asia & Pacific | 35.2 | 7.6 | 42.8 |
| Latin America & Caribbean | 30.9 | 5.4 | 36.3 |
| South Asia | 29.7 | 4.9 | 34.6 |
| Europe & Central Asia | 30.9 | 4.7 | 35.6 |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 28.8 | 4.5 | 33.3 |
| Middle East & North Africa | 31.4 | 1.7 | 33.1 |
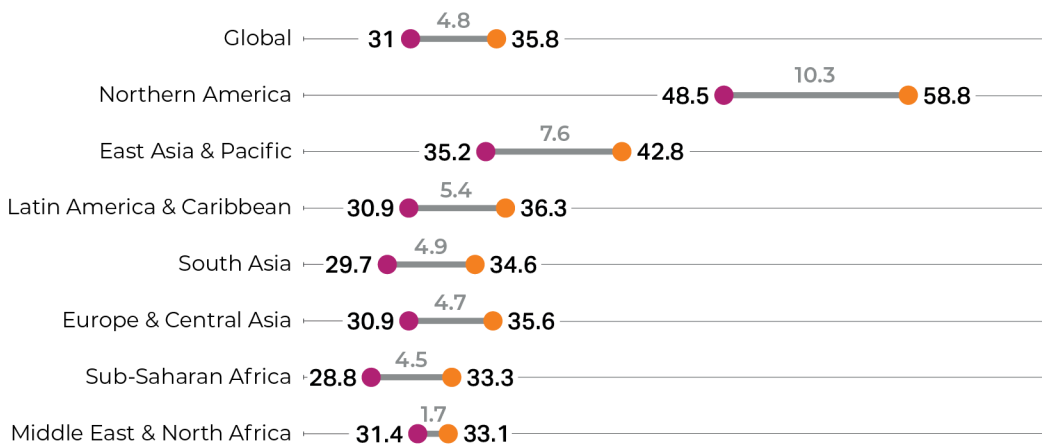
Gallup World Poll data, 2012-2022; regional groupings defined by the World Bank

A Harvard Human Flourishing Program study found that people who attended a religious service weekly during their childhood were 29% more likely to volunteer in their community, and individuals who frequently pray or meditate were 38% more likely to volunteer.[62] Similarly, a Pew Research Center study found that 38% of actively religious Americans felt they can have a major impact on their communities, compared with 27% among those who did not identify with a religious group.[63] These studies indicate how individual actions like prayer can promote other individual actions, like community service, that not only can improve a person's wellbeing but also work to the benefit of society.

These findings are not limited to the U.S. Swedish youth who identify as religious are more likely to be civically engaged.[64] Similarly, a study of approximately 8,500 adolescents in Hong Kong found that perceived importance of religion and spirituality predicts civic engagement.[65]

Empirical studies measuring the effects of religiously inspired civic engagement are in their early stages, but the literature to date points to faith-based community involvement positively contributing to mental health. According to a 2019 Pew report, active participants in religious groups around the world are happier and have higher levels of civic engagement, such as volunteering and with charity groups, sports clubs or labor unions, than individuals who do not have a religious identification or are inactive in their religious group.[66] Several studies have found a link between volunteering or membership in a voluntary association and measures of mental health, including depression and distress, especially among older adults.[67]

For the most part, these studies indicate that caring for others generates positive emotions, which in turn increases one's mental health and wellbeing.[68] Civic engagement starts with an individual's motivation to make a difference in their community, and their involvement in civic activities helps societies by improving conditions for others. Thus, this is largely a bottom-up process, but societies and institutions have a role by providing opportunities for citizens to get involved and supporting them in their efforts.

# Structural Stability

Spirituality, especially in the form of religion, can provide individuals with a sense of structure and support. Emile Durkheim argued that, in addition to giving meaning and purpose to life, religion also creates societal stability by offering a common set of beliefs and — through the practice of communal worship — fostering social bonds.[69]

This structure and stability help people know where to turn when confronted by challenging circumstances. The *2020 Religious Freedom Index Report*, conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic and after the George Floyd murder sparked widespread protests, found that 78% of Americans said religion was important in providing stability during times of social unrest, and 70% said it was important to providing stability for themselves.[70] According to Harold G. Koenig, "religion is available to anyone at any time, regardless of financial, social, physical, or mental circumstances."[71]

"As you develop your support network and as you are making active efforts to support others — it comes back to you, that's the way the world is structured. If you're caring for others in a non-selfish way, an unconditional way, it provides stability in your own life. It just automatically happens."

**HAROLD G. KOENIG**
*MD, Director, Duke University Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health; Professor of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences and Associate Professor of Medicine, Duke University Medical Center*

A systematic review of 21 studies concluded that 13 found religiosity and spirituality contribute to a stronger sense of control amid challenges.[72] Moreover, "religion has a therapeutic effect on mental health by granting individuals valuable coping skills *that are accessible*."[73]

"If we could take spiritual social support and make that the new normal, that would be tremendous. The language of science has been powerful in showing a strong spiritual core of the whole person has broad and pervasive impact, including wellbeing, health and functioning."

**LISA MILLER**
*Professor of Psychology and Education, Columbia University*

Structural stability has its origins primarily in societal and institutional forces, but individuals can play a role by seeking out the support and stability societal bonds and institutions provide, so this element primarily operates as a top-down process.

# Workplace Support of Holistic Wellbeing

Considering the significant proportion of time working life consumes, a recent report by the U.S. Surgeon General emphasizes the importance of workplaces focusing on employee wellbeing, especially given the effect work can have on people's mental health.[74]

Given the religion/spirituality-wellbeing link, it is worth considering how workplaces might incorporate elements of spirituality into employee wellbeing programs.

> "The workplace is often the first place where new or even distruptive concepts are worked out in practical terms resulting in various company policy positions. Think back over the decades (and still) how companies had to respond to "new" employee demands, such as race, women's roles and equal pay, gender orientation, family-friendly policies, and approaches to DE&I. One of the newer "hot topics" that employers are wrestling with is how to respond to the faith at work movement, where employees of all traditions are increasingly wanting to bring their whole self to work, including their spiritual identity."
>
> **DAVID W. MILLER**
> *Ph.D., Director, Princeton University*
> *Faith & Work Initiative*

> "Companies are increasingly caring about the whole person. I would do interviews with HR folks, they would say, 'I nurture the souls of employees,' and 'I want our employees to bring their whole selves to work.' There are social events, clubs, concerts, meditation, mindfulness, yoga, executive coaching, having inspirational speakers. When I was there, those HR professionals — they really did care, they thought very holistically about their employees."
>
> **CAROLYN CHEN**, *Professor of Ethnic Studies, University of California, Berkeley*

> "[When I was CEO], I eventually noticed that many in the office had something on their desk or on their person that tells you what their religion is; but, I wasn't sure it was appropriate to think or ask about religion until I was exposed to the work of David Miller and his program at Princeton University about Faith and Work. I came to learn that Faith can be a powerful connector among people in the workplace and fit well with our other efforts to focus not just on individual but Organizational health as well."
>
> **CRAIG E. PHILIP**, *Former CEO of Ingram Barge*

**David W. Miller, Ph.D., identifies four common workplace responses to spirituality, which are often driven by the chief human relations officer and the company's general counsel.**

1. Faith-avoiding — essentially anti-faith at work

2. Faith-tolerating — puts up with faith but no formal position or embrace

3. Faith-based — privileges one tradition

4. Faith-friendly — embraces the phenomenon, all traditions/worldviews treated equally, and sees the individual and organizational benefits

A systematic review of 53 publications aimed to understand how religion and occupation interact within workplaces found that religious beliefs can help employees cope with stressful work situations, and employee wellbeing improved when employees were supported in expressing their beliefs.[75] Conversely, conflict between religious and work identities can negatively impact an employee's wellbeing.[76] A recent profile of KT Bank, a German company, showed the company overcame potential conflicts between certain Islamic teachings and typical financial business practices and goals by cultivating ambiguity in company statements so they were not inconsistent with a variety of faiths. The bank also created a dedicated space for employees to practice their faith.[77]

A review of studies examining spirituality in the workplace in European for-profit companies found that spirituality often instills and reinforces some of the same values companies promote. These include integrity, trust, reflection on mistakes and constructive criticism of faults, empathy and concern for colleagues, respect and fair dealings with coworkers and customers, and minimizing hurtful and stressful outcomes.[78]

The ability of religiosity/spirituality in the workplace to positively affect wellbeing is contingent upon psychological safety. This sense of safety can be fostered by organizational activities that promote discussion of beliefs.[79]

"If you do interfaith right in a corporation — you can teach people how to hold opposing views in tension but still treat each other with respect. If I sit in a space where my views are honored, but don't need to take on someone else's views, that's good for me, it's good for the world."

**SUMREEN AHMAD**
*Global Change Management Lead, Accenture*

A recent *Wall Street Journal* article details how recognizing religion in the workplace is an emerging topic for diversity, equity and inclusion conversations and programs.[80] Some companies are approving the creation of faith-based employee resource groups.

> "You have a demographic of workers who are coming to seek that belonging. How can you deny these parts of what make people who they are? We're creating those faith communities in the workplace because it is where people are seeking belief and meaning and purpose."
>
> **SUMREEN AHMAD**, *Global Change Management Lead, Accenture*

> "As people, we have so many dimensions to ourselves. When we come to work, we want to be able to bring our whole selves. We're people with belief systems, spirituality, personal stories, racial and ethnic heritages, gender and gender identity. All of these things make up who we are. Sometimes, our identities have an impact on who we are at work and what accommodations we need. We see higher engagement and, ultimately, performance when we can have open conversations about our faith and when we are open to learning from each other. In the same way, we want to understand each other through our strengths, we want to see and respect each other's identity."
>
> **SHELBY KAN**, *Global Leader – Accenture Client Account HR, Accenture*

Faith practice in the workplace has origins in institutional processes, but it aims to improve the health and wellbeing of individual employees, which benefits the company in terms of productivity and their contribution to society beyond providing basic goods or services. Gallup research has found that 75% of company medical costs accrue due to preventable medical conditions; employees who have lower wellbeing cost companies an additional $20 million of lost opportunity per every 10,000 workers, and employee burnout costs companies $322 billion worldwide in lost productivity and turnover.[81]

Brian Grim founded the Religious Freedom and Business Foundation to educate the global business community on the ways workplaces and the economy can benefit when all people — from the most religious to the unreligious — have religious freedom. The foundation has worked with a number of global companies, including Google, American Express, Netflix, Apple, SalesForce, PayPal and Ford.

> "Accommodating faith and belief in the workplace impacts recruitment, retention, and revenue. Retention happens when you feel valued, and not just tolerated. That changes a job into a vocation. That significantly boosts recruitment because people place a premium on working at a place where they are valued. It definitely boosts revenue because when you have better retention, that's revenue. When you have better relationships, that's revenue. When you can recruit top talent, that's revenue."
>
> **BRIAN GRIM**, *Ph.D., Founding President of the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation*

# Spotlight on Spirituality and Wellbeing at the Country Level

To demonstrate the alignment of global Gallup World Poll data with the new framework for understanding the spirituality-wellbeing connection, a closer look was taken at select countries with a large population size from different regions and economic situations, each with distinct religious majorities and varying levels of religiosity. **These countries are representative of higher (Indonesia and Ethiopia), moderate (India and Brazil) and low (Denmark and Japan) religiosity nations.**

Questions were selected that align with the positive coping and purpose, social connections and community engagement aspects of the framework, and then the responses of religious groups were compared to those of non-religious groups within these countries. The World Poll does not have items that map well with the structural stability and workplace focus on holistic wellbeing aspects of the framework.

Most of these countries show better scores for religious than non-religious people on one or more items, with the exception of Denmark.

## Positive Coping and Purpose in Life

**Observation:**

Generally, religious individuals reported significantly higher levels of enjoyment in four of the six countries, with the largest difference in Indonesia.

**Question:**

"Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday?
How about enjoyment?"

Legend: **Teal highlight** indicates religiosity is significantly related to improved wellbeing; **red highlight** indicates religiosity has a significant relationship to worse wellbeing; no color change indicates there is no effect of religiosity

| | | Country | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Indonesia | Ethiopia | India | Brazil | Denmark | Japan |
| % Yes | Not Religious | 69 | 58 | 67 | 68 | 89 | 67 |
| | Religious | 84 | 65 | 65 | 74 | 90 | 76 |
| | Difference | 15 | 7 | -2 | 6 | 1 | 9 |

Source: Gallup World Poll data 2012-2022

# Faith-Based Social Connections

**Observation:**

Religious individuals in three of the six countries were more confident about having someone they can rely on in times of trouble, with the strongest boost seen in Indonesia. There was no significant difference in the other three countries.

**Question:**

"If you were in trouble, do you have relatives or friends you can count on to help you whenever you need them, or not?"

Legend: Teal highlight indicates religiosity is significantly related to improved wellbeing; red highlight indicates religiosity has a significant relationship to worse wellbeing; no color change indicates there is no effect of religiosity

| | | Country | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Indonesia | Ethiopia | India | Brazil | Denmark | Japan |
| % Yes | Not Religious | 63 | 68 | 55 | 87 | 95 | 89 |
| | Religious | 81 | 70 | 59 | 88 | 95 | 91 |
| | Difference | 18 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3 |

Source: Gallup World Poll data 2012-2022

# Community and Civic Engagement

**Observation:**

Religious individuals in five of the six countries were significantly more likely to report assisting a stranger.

**Question:**

"Have you done any of the following in the past month? How about helping a stranger or someone you didn't know who needed help?"

Legend: Teal highlight indicates religiosity is significantly related to improved wellbeing; red highlight indicates religiosity has a significant relationship to worse wellbeing; no color change indicates there is no effect of religiosity

| | | Country | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Indonesia | Ethiopia | India | Brazil | Denmark | Japan |
| % Yes | Not Religious | 42 | 38 | 40 | 49 | 54 | 20 |
| | Religious | 52 | 48 | 48 | 54 | 56 | 24 |
| | Difference | 10 | 10 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 4 |

Source: Gallup World Poll data 2012-2022

# The Paradox

Research — much of it conducted in the U.S. — often shows a connection between spirituality and better emotional health and wellbeing. Yet, religion and spirituality are declining in the U.S. and many other parts of the world. **The paradox: Why are people turning away from a practice that can provide positive benefits to their lives?** Several factors may be at play.

## Lack of Awareness

One simple explanation for the paradox is that people are unaware of the mental and physical health benefits of living a spiritual life. If they were, it is possible that more — rather than fewer — people would turn to religion or spirituality. This explanation suggests there is a breakdown in the communication loop between scientists who discover the information, the media and religious organizations who report and promote it, medical practitioners treating patients, and the general public in learning about and considering it.

**Individual, institutional and societal factors help explain this lack of awareness.** Individual and societal factors can include a loss of confidence in religious institutions[82] that turns people away from hearing of the potential benefits of living a spiritual life. But institutions may be mostly responsible for the communication breakdown.

- Educational institutions are providing much of the research, but they may be coming up short in making those findings known to the broader public through media outreach.

- Religious institutions also have a part to play in making findings known and promoting faith as a way to positively impact people's lives and improve society. The 2022 HarrisX Global Faith and Media Study found that 84% of respondents say faith and religious groups need to provide the media with relevant spokespeople with lived experience.[83]

- The news media could be more willing to report on the research. They also have an obligation to understand and accurately describe the research if they do report on it.

- Political institutions, including those ruled by liberal leaders and parties, may shy away from talking about the possible benefits of spirituality. In contrast, conservative leaders may take too heavy-handed of an approach, including by favoring one set of religious beliefs over another, and craft a message that is not wholly accurate or unlikely to be received by a broad audience.

In addition to a simple lack of awareness, other factors may explain the disconnect between growing appreciation of the effects of spirituality on wellbeing and the decline in spirituality in many nations, including "othering," religious polarization, generational influences and the evolution of religion.

## Othering

Religious othering is a possible contributor to the paradox. **To the extent people see spiritual or religious people or groups as "others," they may be hostile toward them or organized religion more generally.** Othering can be harmful to wellbeing because those who are part of marginalized religions often experience cultural conflicts that lead to a greater likelihood of depression.[84]

Othering is rooted in the philosophical thought, advanced by G. W. F. Hegel, that an individual cannot know themselves *solely* through introspective thought because we do not live in isolation; rather, human experiences are always relative to others and the relationships people maintain.[85] A key aspect of othering and social identification is the identification of oneself *in comparison* with the other. This comparison creates in-groups and out-groups based on identifiable characteristics that are shared or absent.[86] This can occur in everyday interactions with members of different groups, as well as through media reporting on groups' activities.

In the context of religiosity, religious othering is defined as "those attitudes, assumptions and positions that connect religious phenomena with individual and collective identity formation in ways that are dismissive, belittling and dehumanizing." That is, religious othering can be understood as a form of social exclusion.

The marginalization of religion has institutional factors as well as individual factors. How media portray spiritual people or members of religious groups may create (or can exacerbate existing) ill feelings that individuals may hold toward those people and groups. For example, the 2022 HarrisX Global Faith and Media Study found 61% of respondents said media perpetuates stereotypes against spiritual people, rather than protecting against them.[87] Additionally, 78% of respondents said religious stereotypes should get at least as much attention as racial and gender stereotypes.[88]

"If your outlook is jaundiced, you can say religion is bad and deviant. Deviance is defined by society. Religion can be defined as deviant. Those who are not part of our own religion we consider the 'deviant other.' We believe that our way is the correct way."

**FRANK NEWPORT**
*Senior Scientist, Gallup*

"This political divide creates a lot of misunderstandings and can transfer over to religion as well — when people make religious judgments about one another, it can lead to the exclusion of other people."

**HAROLD G. KOENIG**
*MD, Director, Duke University Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health; Professor of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences and Associate Professor of Medicine, Duke University Medical Center*

Religious groups and individuals — particularly from the dominant religious group in a society — who are hostile to other religious groups may promote a cultural context that is harmful to the wellbeing of those outside the group. Resentment toward the dominant group may also tune people out to their messages, both those that are harmful (out-group animosity) but also that are helpful (serving others).

## Religious Polarization

The notion of othering leads to religious polarization. Robert Putnam and David Campbell, authors of *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*, assert that one of the biggest shifts in American religion has been toward polarization.[89]

**Religious polarization can be an outcome of religious diversity, defined as "a social phenomenon in which two or more clearly defined religions exist simultaneously within a religion or society."[90]** Religious diversity can have different effects on society: It can be destructive to fostering shared social norms and health, or it can encourage differing religious groups to form more cohesion, resulting in greater societal health outcomes.[91]

When religious polarization occurs, it leads to a lack of shared norms and to religions being perceived as a force for conflict rather than a force for the common good. Those phenomena create obstacles to people seeing the possible benefits of a spiritual and religious life.

"We need our spiritual awareness to know one another as fellow souls on earth and see one another more deeply than our ideologies."

**LISA MILLER**
*Professor of Psychology and Education, Columbia University*

Yun Lu and Xiaozhao Yang used data from the World Values Survey (comprised of over 67,000 respondents from 51 countries) and found that religious polarization had harmful effects on individual health, mostly in less democratic countries. In countries with a large number of smaller religious groups (known as religious fractionalization), there was a positive correlation with health, and the health benefits were greater in democratic countries.[92]

The Templeton Religion Trust believes that religious pluralism can be achieved through promoting freedom of religion and belief, increasing religious literacy and expressing key character virtues like humility, empathy and patience. To advance those goals, they argue for a need to understand the limitations people feel are inhibiting them from reaching "a supportive cultural context of respectful engagement, relationship and reciprocity — even amidst stark differences in theologies, values and lifestyles."[93]

Related to religious polarization and othering is the tying of religious identities to political extremes. This sentiment was a common theme among expert stakeholders.

> "I do talk to some people working in the humanitarian/development/peace sector who think religion is a net negative for the world. But I don't think it's the main sentiment. It seems like there's lots of politics of it. The dynamics of who is involved, how to navigate the landscape, the histories, the baggage."
>
> **OLIVIA WILKINSON**, *Director of Research, Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities*

Institutions, including the media and political parties, may be just as responsible for religious polarization as the individuals who hold extreme views. For example, by overemphasizing conflict involving religious groups, the media draws increasing attention to the issue. Extremist religious groups and individuals who purport to represent religious institutions may also be responsible for polarization by promoting conflict with other groups and persecuting non-believers.

"I think a big part of it has to do with the rise of the religious right — the association of religion with an extreme kind of politics."

**CAROLYN CHEN**
*Professor of Ethnic Studies, University of California, Berkeley*

## Generational Influences

**Younger Americans are less religious[94] but more likely to embrace diversity, equity and inclusion.** Many young adults do not view religion positively[95] — especially the significant proportion who do not claim any religious affiliation — and, therefore, may not be open to hearing its possible benefits. Including religion and spirituality in DEI programs in the workplace may help open more people up to gaining a greater respect for faith and finding increased spirituality through traditional religious means or other ways.

> "You start to see a generational change in the 1960s, and you're also seeing a generational story as well as a regional story. It maps almost perfectly onto our politics. A lot of the story is that."
>
> **CAROLYN CHEN**, *Professor of Ethnic Studies, University of California, Berkeley*

> "Forty years ago, in likely a well-intentioned attempt to be inclusive, we threw out all religion from the public square. And we actually became radically exclusive; exclusive of the many vibrant faith traditions to the harm of our society in two ways. First, we became spiritually non-conversant as a society, to the point where many people do not even know how to have a deeply interested discussion in one another's spiritual life. We have lost a fluid language for spiritual life; we even seem confused on the difference between spirituality (which is innate) and religion (which is environmentally transmitted). Equally tragic, we lost our great American voice of spiritual pluralism. Society now has growth around embracing diversity. We now have DEI on race, gender and orientation. It's time now to embrace spiritual diversity and inclusivity."
>
> **LISA MILLER**, *Professor of Psychology and Education, Columbia University*

> "Young people are born with spiritual needs, which rapidly increase during adolescence and young adulthood. Many young people today, however, don't know how to meet those needs. Without guidance from family, a church community, or the educational system, they often try to meet those needs in the wrong places — alcohol, drugs, sex, money, etc., and end up losing themselves."
>
> **HAROLD G. KOENIG**, *MD, Director, Duke University Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health; Professor of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences and Associate Professor of Medicine, Duke University Medical Center*

## Evolution of Religion

Another reason people may not see a religion/spirituality and health link is that religion as we know it may be changing.

Prior to the 1980s, religion was not as closely intertwined with politics in the U.S. as it is now.[96] At the same time, many Americans may be moving beyond Christian religions — exploring non-traditional religions or non-religious spiritual practices they learn about from others in an increasingly diverse and global society, or through easier-to-access information made possible by technology. This evolution may allow people to receive some of the benefits religion offers through non-religious means.

Pew Research data also finds fewer people in Western European countries actively practicing their faith, but nevertheless retaining a belief in God or a higher power.[97]

> "I think about it in terms of belief, behavior, belonging. Beliefs are not changing as much as you might think, neither are behaviors numbers. Belonging is what's changing, hence the shift away from a regular religious gathering."
>
> **WENDY CADGE**, *Professor of the Humanistic Social Sciences, Brandeis University*

**Religion is embedded in culture, but just as religion influences culture, culture — in the form of emerging societal norms and beliefs — also has an influence on faith teachings and practice.** This is seen as religions either lead change or adapt to — or struggle to adapt to — changing societal views about gender roles and acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

> "Religions are not static; they're integrated with culture. We need to always look at how religion is intertwined with other things. In the U.S., it's obvious how religious reasoning and arguments are used and abused by various sources."
>
> **OLIVIA WILKINSON**, *Director of Research, Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities*

> "Traditional forms of spirituality and religion are declining, but there are new delivery systems being built. We're interested in the religious/spiritual delivery systems of the future. I think it's dangerous to say that religion needs to stay the way it is to deliver positive mental health outcomes. We don't understand these new delivery systems just yet."
>
> **WENDY CADGE**, *Professor of the Humanistic Social Sciences, Brandeis University*

# Unanswered Questions

Though the religion/spirituality-wellbeing link is well-established, areas remain where further exploration is needed.

## Quantifying the Benefits

- To what extent **can the benefits of religion be quantified** through statistical modeling such that researchers can estimate how much of an improvement in wellbeing outcomes people can expect for religious vs. non-religious people?

- Such modeling would also answer the question of **how powerful spirituality is as an instrument to improve wellbeing compared with other behaviors and practices**, such as exercise, healthy diet, education and increased social interactions.

- **Are people who are more deeply spiritual, stronger in their faith or more likely to practice it better off** than people who are spiritual or faithful but for whom it is a less central part of their lives?

## Dissecting the Relationship

**A better understanding of why the link exists would help improve wellbeing in society.**

- **Is it spirituality per se or the things that spirituality offers that drive the relationship?** Spirituality and religious practice provide social connections and friendship rather than loneliness. They encourage positive coping rather than hopelessness and despair. They promote purpose and community attachment rather than aimlessness and isolation.

- Is religion and spirituality a necessary part of improving wellbeing, or **can the same benefits be achieved by establishing greater social connections, learning positive coping skills, developing a sense of purpose and being involved in the community outside of spiritual or religious structures?**

## Monitoring Changes as Religion and Spirituality Evolve

- **How can researchers measure emerging forms of spiritual practice** and move beyond a focus on religious service attendance as the primary measure of spirituality?

- As religion and spirituality evolve, moving away from formal religious services in larger community settings to unstructured, smaller group or individualistic settings, **how do those changing beliefs and practices alter the spirituality-wellbeing connection?**

- **Are countries that are becoming less religious over time seeing declines in wellbeing compared with countries whose faith commitment is stable or increasing?**

- As we contemplate the documented links between spirituality and wellbeing during a time of declining religiosity in many parts of the world, **how much would education about the positive effects of religion and spirituality on mental health strengthen people's confidence in faith communities and organizations?**

- Would knowledge of the spirituality-wellbeing link encourage non-religious people to see religion in a more positive light (for example, by reducing othering)?

- What would be the best format to provide this education?

## Incorporating Spirituality Into the Workplace

- As diversity, equity and inclusion programs become more common in business settings and work activities become a more central part of people's lives, **how would business leaders, managers and individual contributors feel about incorporating spirituality or religion into those programs?**

- **What barriers do business leaders see in promoting spiritual practice in the workplace?**

- How do business leaders, managers and individual contributors feel about allowing greater expression of religious beliefs in the workplace or setting up employee resource groups to bring like-minded people together? **Do they see spirituality in the workplace as more beneficial or harmful to workplace culture?**

- Would employers encourage interaction between different religious faith groups at work?

- Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, what business outcomes might benefit most from incorporating faith into the workplace?

# Considerations for Leaders

Signs of a global mental health crisis are causing leaders in the public and private sectors to examine how they can improve the wellbeing of citizens and employees. Much of this work is being done in workplaces, but healthcare providers, political leaders, educational leaders and the news media may also find these practices to be useful models and worthy of attention or implementation. For example, the U.K. government's loneliness program is calling on workplaces to be proactive in addressing employee loneliness and offering guidance on how they can do so.[98] And many workplaces today are serving functions that used to be filled by houses of worship, civic organizations and affiliation groups, including **providing programs and activities aimed at improving employee wellbeing and health**.

The impetus for leveraging spirituality to improve wellbeing can result from a top-down or a bottom-up approach. Institutions can support individual actions (what people care about) to realize (societal) wellbeing gains. Some institutions may provide direct services or care for an individual's health and wellbeing (e.g., hospitals, treatment centers, schools) that can sometimes have a spiritual connection or religious affiliation. Other institutions, such as workplaces, may not exist to support wellbeing but can do so by offering programs or opportunities that do (coverage for health services, wellness programs).

Regardless of the approach taken, improved employee wellbeing can benefit employees and the companies where they work. Gallup has documented the potential costs poor mental health can have on business outcomes: Employees with poor mental health have an estimated four times the number of unplanned absences as employees with better mental health, costing the economy more than $40 billion in lost productivity.[99]

**Taking a holistic approach to health**, including a person's mental health and wellbeing as well as their physical health, can lead to better outcomes for individuals and organizations. Accenture is one company that has been focused on improving employee wellbeing by taking a holistic approach, including an openness to discussion of faith in the workplace.

> "You have to be bold; you have to take risks but do so responsibly — be willing to push the envelope. Don't be afraid to address topics that are controversial or uncomfortable while making sure you've created the right environment for psychological safety and a strategy to deal with conflict that may arise. The most important thing is to be bold — it can feel really uncomfortable, but the absence of conversations about faith can mean people aren't bringing their whole selves to work, and you can't be healthy and perform at your best if you're holding back or hiding important aspects of your identity."
>
> **SHELBY KAN**, *Global Leader – Accenture Client Account HR, Accenture*

Further, as companies consider ways to make their workplaces more inclusive, they can consider **including religious tolerance and expression in diversity, equity and inclusion programs** along with race, ethnicity, gender and ability. Diversity Council Australia has emphasized this approach and developed a set of guidelines employers can use.[100]

One way employees can encourage spiritual expression and acceptance is to **create employee resource groups (ERGs) based on shared religious faiths or interfaith groups**. Such groups would provide connection and community in the workplace. The U.S. Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing stresses the importance of fostering positive social relationships in the workplace as a way to promote worker wellbeing.[101]

> "A tangible and easily implemented way that companies become faith- and belief-friendly is by having, as part of their diversity initiatives, employee resource groups (ERGs) that are faith/belief-based (or interfaith with faith/belief sub chapters), including atheists groups if there's interest. But this seldom works as a top-down initiative. However, if the C-Suite communicates that if there is employee interest, they will support such an initiative, then in company after company, I've seen that the result is that a groundswell of employees emerges, and they embrace the opportunity. The result is that they don't just bring their whole 'self' to work, but their whole 'soul.'"
>
> **BRIAN GRIM**, *Founding President of the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation*

Business leaders who incorporate faith practice into their workplace culture stress the importance of having ground rules around operating such groups.

> "At Accenture, we have eight different faiths in our interfaith community participating in interfaith dialogue. If my starting point is honoring human dignity, you have to respect the individual. I'm not here to convert you to my faith; these are the parts of myself that allow me to be my best. Respect for the individual is at the core. Despite our differences, we're stronger, and we're stronger when we can do that for each other."
>
> **SUMREEN AHMAD**, *Global Change Management Lead, Accenture*

> "We're most interested in scaling wellbeing. In order to do that, it's important to be skillful in how it's presented and taught. We think it taps into spiritual qualities, it's not necessary to explicitly talk about them. They will emerge naturally in the course of wellbeing training."
>
> **RICHARD DAVIDSON**, *Founder of the Center for Healthy Minds; Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry, University of Wisconsin-Madison*

Beyond workplace DEI initiatives, community leaders can explore other programs and opportunities to put spirituality-wellbeing research into practice.

At Ingram Barge, former CEO Craig Philip helped lead an industry effort to partner with Seamen's Church Institute to provide training for the industry's mariners. Seamen's Church Institute insisted on including a ministry component as part of its services. While Philip acknowledges that many industry leaders were reluctant to embrace the ministry aspect of the program, the Seamen's Church Institute insisted ministry actually proved to be a crucial aspect of the services they provided.

> "Everyone eventually got very comfortable with the concept of ministry and 'chaplain,' and of course many were familiar with chaplains in a military setting. It can have a religious and Christian connotation, but over time, our people really embraced it."

Philip stressed the use of an external organization and the holistic services the chaplains provided as keys to the program's success.

> "Having a ministry that is a step removed from the company was also important, much like the services provided by EAP providers. There was a value to having access to this miraculous group that built their capacities with us and around us. They were non-denominational despite their roots in the Episcopal Church."
>
> "The chaplains were, of course, there in times of crisis and need but would also be involved in company and personal celebrations — they would do vessel christenings, baptisms, weddings, retirements. It opened my mind; we were so grateful that we had this alternative that was not Ingram people. It added something very valuable that complemented all of the other 'company' resources."

Many workplace faith-based programs have their origins in the United States. However, such programs are beginning to be implemented in other parts of the world, and those programs may evolve when they are instituted in other countries.

> "There are common characteristics for many global companies. Generally, if they are going to include religion as part of their diversity initiatives, they will evaluate whether or not this makes sense for everywhere they work. For example, when U.S.-based SalesForce set up their interfaith ERG, Faithforce, they opened [it] to everywhere in the world. And today, their largest chapter is in India. Indeed, when these U.S.-based companies expand, it [their faith initiatives] may take off even bigger outside of the U.S. However, in some global companies, like Ernst Young (EY), their London branch has faith-based ERGs, while EY in the U.S. is just now bringing that in."
>
> **BRIAN GRIM**, *Founding President of the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation*

A UNICEF program[102] suggests that faith-based programs can be beneficial to wellbeing, including peer-to-peer parent and marriage counseling; rituals of rite and passage; community faith events; household visits; faith programs for women and youth; social services (education, health, protection); faith and secular media; faith associations/councils; establishing ministries of religion/culture; high-level leadership; and mass national faith events. Opposition to relying on faith-based organizations to provide services can be an obstacle, although one that can be overcome.[103]

> "Take the science as a road map and use it for institutional transformation. I work with The United States Army, as well as [The Department of Health and Human Services] — [they promote] collaboration between universally trained chaplains or faith-based [leaders] and community mental health."
>
> **LISA MILLER**, *Professor of Psychology and Education, Columbia University*

> "How are you building a toolbox for groups to reach across the divide? The money needs to flow to the people and organizations at the front lines that can make a change. … You fund projects which have to include practitioners and researchers. It's very hard for the two groups to talk with one another. You need to create requirements for projects to include both."
>
> **WENDY CADGE**
> *Professor of the Humanistic Social Sciences, Brandeis University*

# Report Summary

## SPIRITUALITY IS A TOOL FOR WELLBEING

- Globally, spiritual people demonstrate better wellbeing in many respects.

- Spiritual practice bolsters facets of wellbeing through positive coping skills, social connections, promoting structural stability and community engagement.

- Key studies have found links between greater spirituality and lower rates of depression, suicide, addiction and isolation.

- Spirituality-wellbeing relationships vary by country, world region and a country's average income level.

**Lack of awareness of the positive spirituality-wellbeing connection, othering, religious polarization, generational influences and the evolution of religion are some of the reasons why people might be turning away from spiritual practices that can provide positive benefits to their lives.**

## INSTITUTIONS — SUCH AS THE WORKPLACE — CAN PROMOTE SPIRITUALITY AS A TOOL FOR WELLBEING

- Faith can be harnessed to support holistic wellbeing among community members and employees.

- Workplaces are incorporating expressions of faith within employee resource groups (ERGs) to enhance diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives.
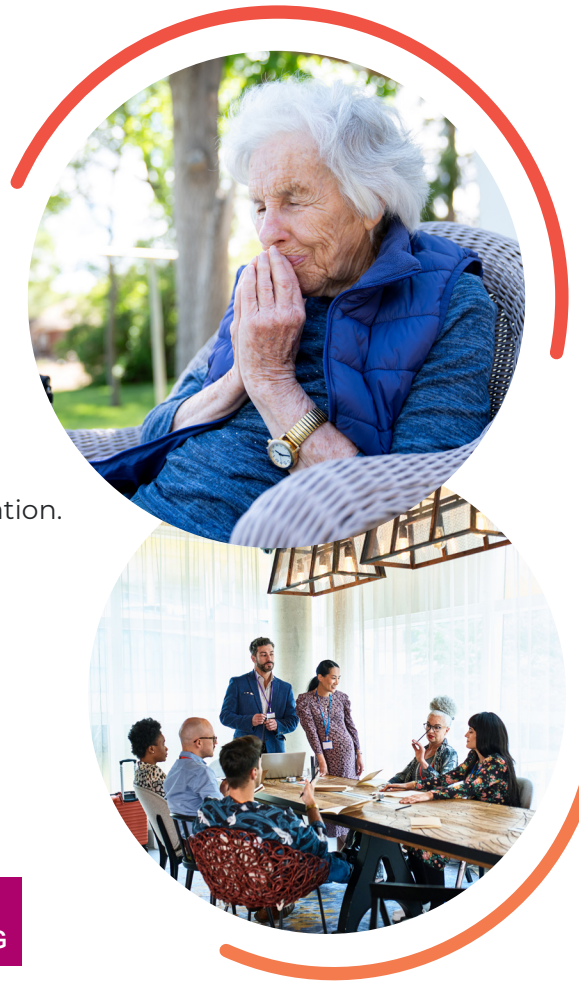
# Conclusion

Mental health struggles touch people in every nation, and with more needing help every day, it is critical to consider all possible approaches. This includes thinking about how to incorporate spirituality into the list of tools that can be used given the documented relationships between spirituality and improved wellbeing and mental health outcomes.

Doing so requires overcoming challenges, including declining religiosity in many nations and reluctance to bring faith and faith-based solutions into areas of society where they typically have not been seen, such as government programs and workplaces.

It is possible some of that resistance could be lessened with greater awareness about the potential benefits to wellbeing that spirituality can bring. To the extent workplaces, governments, houses of worship and hospitals find success incorporating faith into wellbeing and mental health programs, those successes can be shared.

Resistance could also be lessened if spirituality and religious practice are reframed. Rather than a prescribed set of rules to follow, spirituality and religion can be promoted as tools to improve mental health and wellbeing in the same way a healthy diet, regular exercise and community involvement can. Spirituality may not just be a way to find meaning in life or ensure a good place in the afterlife; it may also be a means to maximize the life one can live while on earth.

**GALLUP®** | **RADIANT** FOUNDATION

**About Gallup**

Gallup delivers forward-thinking research, analytics and advice to help leaders solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 80 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of the world's constituents, employees and customers than any other organization. Gallup consultants help private and public sector organizations boost organic growth through measurement tools, strategic advice and education. Gallup's professionals deliver services at client organizations through the web and in more than 30 offices around the world.

**About Radiant**

The Radiant Foundation's mission is to cultivate a more personal, positive place for faith in modern society. We're working to shift culture and change lives by:

- fostering a more accurate, diverse representation of faith in news and entertainment
- helping people develop a meaningful, personal relationship with God
- healing divisions, promoting understanding and inspiring meaningful exchanges about spirituality

# Appendix

## Experts Who Participated in In-Depth Interviews

### SUMREEN AHMAD

*Global Change Management Lead, Accenture*

Leads the North America Interfaith and Muslim Employee Resource Group and Michigan Women's Employee Resource Group

### WENDY CADGE, PH.D.

*Professor of the Humanistic Social Sciences, Brandeis University*

An expert on religion in the contemporary United States and how it is related to healthcare

### CAROLYN CHEN, PH.D.

*Professor of Ethnic Studies, University of California, Berkeley*

An expert on religion and work in modern life

### RICHARD DAVIDSON, PH.D.

*Founder of the Center for Healthy Minds; Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry; Center for Healthy Minds; University of Wisconsin – Madison*

An expert on meditation of religion and religious coping on health outcomes

### BRIAN GRIM, PH.D.

*Founding President of the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation*

Grim leads a corporate diversity initiative program, Dare to Overcome, and his work centers around "building" religious freedom for all

### SHELBY KAN

*Global Leader – Accenture Client Account HR, Accenture*

Accenture Interfaith Employee Resource Group leader

### DAVID W. MILLER, PH.D.

*Director, Princeton University Faith & Work Initiative*

An expert on religion in the workplace. Miller advises corporate CEOs and executives on ethics and value-based leadership

### HAROLD G. KOENIG, M.D., M.H.SC.

*Director, Duke University Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health; Professor of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences and Associate Professor of Medicine, Duke University Medical Center*

A leading scholar in the field who has contributed foundational work to advancing work on religion and wellbeing; author of the *Handbook of Religion and Health*; his input was sought to link religion and public health

### LISA MILLER, PH.D.

*Professor of Psychology and Education, Columbia University*

An expert on religion, social connection and community and civic engagement

### FRANK NEWPORT, PH.D.

*Gallup Senior Scientist*

An author and expert on public opinion regarding religion; has co-written multiple research articles on religion and wellbeing

### CRAIG E. PHILIP, PH.D.

*Research Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Vanderbilt University*

The former, and now retired CEO of Ingram Barge; while CEO of Ingram, Philip incorporated spiritual wellness into their workplace and implemented a chaplains program focused on barge crews

Additionally, Philip chaired the Seaman's Institute, a workplace ministry for seafarers who arrive at U.S. ports

### OLIVIA WILKINSON, PH.D.

*Director of Research, Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities*

Wilkinson, author of *Secular and Religious Dynamics in Humanitarian Response*, focuses her research on secular and religious influences in humanitarian action

# Definitions of Terms

## World Poll Analysis and Variables

**1** World Poll

Gallup's World Poll has continually surveyed residents in more than 150 countries and areas from 2006 to 2023+, representing more than 98% of the world's adult population, using randomly selected, nationally representative samples. Gallup typically surveys 1,000 individuals in each country or area, using a standard set of core questions that has been translated into the major languages of the respective country. In some regions, supplemental questions are asked in addition to core questions.

Face-to-face interviews are approximately one hour, while telephone interviews are about 30 minutes. In many countries, the survey is conducted once per year, and fieldwork is generally completed in two to four weeks. The Country Dataset Details document displays each country's sample size, month/year of the data collection, mode of interviewing, languages employed, design effect, margin of error and details about sample coverage.

**2** Variables/Measurement Dictionary

### Religion/Spirituality Measure

The Gallup World Poll asks a specific question about the importance of religion in daily life, which focuses on the role/and perception of religion specifically.

• "Is religion an important part of your daily life? *Yes/No"

Since the data is captured using a yes-no format, it does not directly capture the concept of faith or belief in God. However, we have also taken into consideration the question of religion and made adjustments by excluding individuals who identify as secular but still consider religion to play a role in their lives. This approach helps ensure that we are capturing the specific construct of religion as intended by the question and aligning it with research objectives.

## Countries Based on More, Moderate, Less Religiosity

### More Religious Countries (90% or more say religion is important in their daily life)

Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Botswana, Burkina, Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestinian Territories, Philippines, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, Tunisia, Uganda, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe

### Moderate Religious Countries (Between 66% to 89% say religion is important in their daily life)

Angola, Armenia, Belize, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Cambodia, Colombia, Republic of the Congo, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Gabon, Georgia, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, India, Iran, Côte d'Ivoire, Jamaica, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malta , Mauritius, Moldova, Nagorno-Karabakh Region, Namibia, Nicaragua, North Macedonia, Northern Cyprus, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Romania, South Africa, Sudan, Suriname, Syria, Tajikistan, Togo, Trinidad & Tobago, Türkiye, Turkmenistan and Venezuela

### Less Religious Countries (65% or less say religion is important in their daily life)

Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong (S.A.R. of China), Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan (Province of China), Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Uzbekistan and Vietnam

## Wellbeing Indexes

Gallup indexes span multiple political, social and economic topics that make up the interconnected components of the Gallup Macroeconomic Path: macroeconomics, a behavioral economic model for the wellbeing of societies. The indexes break down according to the elements of the path.

Each index is scaled from 0 to 100, and all indexes listed below the score of 100 represent a positive wellbeing outcome — except for the Negative Experience Index and the suffering measure.

Specifically, to measure wellbeing globally, Gallup partnered with Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman and University of Illinois psychology professor Ed Diener. These two academics have been influential in conceiving contemporary views of wellbeing. Hedonic psychology, as defined by Kahneman, Diener and University of Michigan psychology professor Norbert Schwarz, "is the study of what makes experiences and life pleasant or unpleasant. It is concerned with feelings of pleasure and pain, of interest and boredom, of joy and sorrow, and of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. It is also concerned with the whole range of circumstances, from the biological to the societal, that occasion suffering and enjoyment."[104]

Kahneman makes note of the distinction between "experienced wellbeing" and "evaluative wellbeing." As described by Kahneman, experienced wellbeing is concerned with momentary affective states and the way people feel about experiences in real-time, while evaluative wellbeing is the way they remember their experiences after they are over. Evaluative wellbeing may include individual assessments of life domains, such as standard of living, housing, job, marriage and personal health. On the other hand, experienced wellbeing seeks to bypass the effects of judgment and memory and capture feelings and emotions as close to the subject's immediate experience as possible. The Life Evaluation Index is rooted in the "remembering self," while the Positive Experience, Negative Experience and Daily Experience indexes are based on the "experiencing self."

Across countries, measures of wellbeing correlate highly with income, education level and reported disease conditions. Individuals who are "thriving" have fewer disease conditions, fewer sick days, higher incomes, are more highly educated and have better work environments. People in countries with a higher percentage of thriving respondents also report that the area where they live is a good place to live for people of different ethnicities, races and cultures. In comparison to thriving respondents, "struggling" respondents are much more likely to worry about money on a daily basis, and "suffering" respondents are less likely to have basic necessities like food and shelter.

## Civic Engagement Index

The Civic Engagement Index assesses respondents' inclination to volunteer their time and assistance to others. It is designed to measure a respondent's commitment to the community where they live. This index is scored 0 to 100, where 100 is the highest possible civic engagement score.

### INDEX QUESTIONS

- Have you done any of the following in the past month? How about donated money to a charity?

- Have you done any of the following in the past month? How about volunteered your time to an organization?

- Have you done any of the following in the past month? How about helped a stranger or someone you didn't know who needed help?

## Local Economic Confidence Index

Gallup's Local Economic Confidence Index is based on the combined responses to two questions asking respondents, first, to rate economic conditions in their city today, and second, whether they think economic conditions in their city as a whole are getting better or getting worse. The index has a theoretical maximum value of +100 and a theoretical minimum value of -100. Values above zero indicate that a respondent has a more positive than a negative view of the economy, values below zero indicate net-negative views, and zero indicates that positive and negative views are equal.

### INDEX QUESTIONS

- Right now, do you think that economic conditions in the city or area where you live, as a whole, are getting better or getting worse?

- How would you rate your economic conditions in this city today — as excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

## Positive Experience Index

The Positive Experience Index is a measure of respondents' experienced wellbeing on the day before the survey. Questions provide a real-time measure of respondents' positive experiences. This index is scored 0 to 100, where the 100 is highest possible positive experience score.

### INDEX QUESTIONS

- Did you feel well-rested yesterday?

- Were you treated with respect all day yesterday?

- Did you smile or laugh a lot yesterday?

- Did you learn or do something interesting yesterday?

- Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday? How about enjoyment?

## Negative Experience Index

The Negative Experience Index is a measure of respondents' experienced wellbeing on the day before the survey. The index provides a real-time measure of respondents' negative experiences. This index is scored 0 to 100, where 100 is the highest possible negative experience score. This is one of two indexes where a higher score equates to lower wellbeing.

### INDEX QUESTIONS

- Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday? How about physical pain?
- Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday? How about worry?
- Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday? How about sadness?
- Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday? How about stress?
- Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday? How about anger?

## Personal Health Index

The Personal Health Index measures perceptions of one's own health. Attempts to assess the state of a country's overall health usually involve the accumulation of health-related statistics, such as life expectancy, infant mortality and disease infection rates. Additionally, many government studies in individual countries collect health data via surveys from their own residents. Less numerous are survey projects that collect consistent health-related data from respondents across several countries, and in most cases, those multinational efforts focus on Western countries.

The Gallup World Poll has now measured self-reported personal health using the same questions and representative sample frames in more than 150 countries and areas. The objective of the Personal Health Index is to produce an overview of respondents' perceptions of their own health status. The questions listed below are recoded so that each answer shows a positive health experience. This index is scored 0 to 100, where 100 is the highest possible personal health score.

### INDEX QUESTIONS

- Do you have any health problems that prevent you from doing any of the things people your age normally can do?
- Now, please think about yesterday, from the morning until the end of the day. Think about where you were, what you were doing, who you were with, and how you felt. Did you feel well-rested yesterday?
- Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday? How about physical pain?
- Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday? How about worry?
- Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday? How about sadness?

## Social Life Index

The Social Life Index assesses a respondent's social support structure and opportunities to make friends in the city or area where they live. This index is scored 0 to 100, where 100 is the highest possible social life score.

### INDEX QUESTIONS

- If you were in trouble, do you have relatives or friends you can count on to help you whenever you need them, or not?

- In the city or area where you live, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the opportunities to meet people and make friends?

## Life Evaluation Index

The Life Evaluation Index measures respondents' perceptions of where they stand now and in the future. Building on the earlier work by Hadley Cantril and the Cantril Self-Anchoring Striving Scale, Gallup measures life satisfaction by asking respondents to place the status of their lives on a "ladder" scale with steps numbered from zero to 10, where zero indicates the worst possible life and 10 the best possible life. Individuals who rate their current lives a "7" or higher AND their future lives an "8" or higher are "thriving." Individuals are "suffering" if they report their current AND future lives as a "4" and lower. All other individuals are "struggling."

### INDEX QUESTIONS

- Please imagine a ladder, with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?

- Please imagine a ladder, with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. Just your best guess, on which step do you think you will stand in the future, say about five years from now?

## Optimism Index

The Optimism Index measures respondents' positive attitudes about the future. Specifically, respondents are asked whether certain aspects of their life are getting better or getting worse. Countries with higher Optimism Index scores report more confidence in national institutions and better youth development. Individual factors such as financial life and personal health are also related to optimism. As would be expected, the percentage of the population who rate their lives poorly enough to be considered suffering has a strong negative relationship with the Optimism Index. This index is scored 0 to 100, where 100 is the highest possible optimism score.

### INDEX QUESTIONS

- Right now, do you feel your standard of living is getting better or getting worse?

- Right now, do you think that economic conditions in the city or area where you live, as a whole, are getting better or getting worse?

- Please imagine a ladder, with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. Just your best guess, on which step do you think you will stand in the future, say about five years from now?

## Community Basics Index

The Community Basics Index evaluates everyday life in a community, including environment, housing and infrastructure. Because of the functional nature of the items that make up the index, it is practical to view it as a driver of more abstract constructs, such as overall satisfaction with life in a community, the likelihood of one recommending their community as a place to live, or the likelihood of one leaving the community. This approach is apparent in the relationships the index has with other Gallup World Poll indexes, such as the Community Attachment Index. This index is scored 0 to 100, where 100 is the highest possible community basics score.

### INDEX QUESTIONS

- In the city or area where you live, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the public transportation systems?

- In the city or area where you live, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the roads and highways?

- In the city or area where you live, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the quality of air?

- In the city or area where you live, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the quality of water?

- In the city or area where you live, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the availability of good affordable housing?

- In the city or area where you live, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the educational system or the schools?

- In the city or area where you live, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the availability of quality healthcare?

## Statistical Results of Relating Religious Importance to the Positive Experience Index by Country

Colors reflect whether a coefficient is statistically significant ($p < .05$) and its strength, as determined by its t-statistic quintile: lighter shades for the lower quintile and darker shades for the upper quintile.

| COUNTRY | ESTIMATE | SE | N | UPPER BOUND | LOWER BOUND |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mauritania | 15.90835018 | 1.271200088 | 13981 | 18.39990235 | 13.41679801 |
| Mexico | 5.705844074 | 0.466000234 | 13455 | 6.619204531 | 4.792483616 |
| Burkina Faso | 10.4402129 | 0.88978361 | 12924 | 12.18418877 | 8.696237022 |
| Malaysia | 9.717304796 | 0.863014637 | 11928 | 11.40881348 | 8.025796107 |
| Zambia | 14.16481743 | 1.271827611 | 12973 | 16.65759955 | 11.67203532 |
| Mali | 12.4450411 | 1.120415147 | 14035 | 14.64105479 | 10.24902741 |
| Benin | 9.130810118 | 0.831046389 | 10841 | 10.75966104 | 7.501959196 |
| Honduras | 6.703614953 | 0.610915869 | 12044 | 7.901010057 | 5.506219849 |
| South Korea | 6.168763807 | 0.571614633 | 12892 | 7.289128488 | 5.048399125 |
| Japan | 5.810573619 | 0.544425414 | 14697 | 6.877647431 | 4.743499808 |
| Côte d'Ivoire | 10.22800313 | 0.976421024 | 9832 | 12.14178834 | 8.314217927 |
| Tanzania | 13.06903264 | 1.255461811 | 13953 | 15.52973779 | 10.60832749 |
| Brazil | 6.220570153 | 0.601844974 | 15718 | 7.400186303 | 5.040954004 |
| South Africa | 6.400119795 | 0.625208204 | 14525 | 7.625527874 | 5.174711715 |
| Senegal | 14.20798024 | 1.395816459 | 13945 | 16.9437805 | 11.47217998 |
| Gabon | 9.793192459 | 0.967883587 | 10740 | 11.69024429 | 7.89614063 |
| Zimbabwe | 9.078592109 | 0.917213759 | 13875 | 10.87633108 | 7.280853143 |
| India | 3.296306937 | 0.336325705 | 54868 | 3.955505318 | 2.637108555 |
| Cambodia | 5.924782101 | 0.616401152 | 14494 | 7.132928359 | 4.716635842 |
| Republic of the Congo | 8.737205326 | 0.914028699 | 11641 | 10.52870158 | 6.945709076 |
| Panama | 5.224553919 | 0.555343843 | 12386 | 6.313027851 | 4.136079986 |
| Singapore | 4.436837776 | 0.480381673 | 13400 | 5.378385856 | 3.495289696 |
| Bolivia | 5.921296064 | 0.646700644 | 13514 | 7.188829327 | 4.653762802 |
| Philippines | 6.647231811 | 0.73183789 | 16055 | 8.081634076 | 5.212829546 |
| Iran | 6.919203038 | 0.770533682 | 11035 | 8.429449054 | 5.408957021 |
| Namibia | 8.736450181 | 0.973277824 | 6862 | 10.64407472 | 6.828825645 |
| Pakistan | 7.573427225 | 0.852191301 | 18221 | 9.243722175 | 5.903132276 |
| Kenya | 9.046788378 | 1.018738969 | 15092 | 11.04351676 | 7.050059998 |
| Ghana | 7.987110432 | 0.918718086 | 13850 | 9.78779788 | 6.186422984 |
| Togo | 7.766627589 | 0.904761122 | 8872 | 9.539959388 | 5.99329579 |
| Russia | 3.114338325 | 0.364364098 | 30298 | 3.828491957 | 2.400184693 |

| COUNTRY | ESTIMATE | SE | N | UPPER BOUND | LOWER BOUND |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| South Sudan | 20.16943152 | 2.378854575 | 1949 | 24.83198649 | 15.50687656 |
| El Salvador | 5.274395071 | 0.637532377 | 13046 | 6.523958531 | 4.024831611 |
| Belarus | 5.177353545 | 0.630352953 | 11194 | 6.412845332 | 3.941861758 |
| Uganda | 10.08200658 | 1.228295901 | 13909 | 12.48946654 | 7.674546612 |
| Laos | 8.782202281 | 1.07102484 | 6996 | 10.88141097 | 6.682993594 |
| Mozambique | 10.09387832 | 1.232064696 | 6723 | 12.50872512 | 7.679031513 |
| Rwanda | 9.390950818 | 1.149262718 | 10946 | 11.64350575 | 7.13839589 |
| Chad | 8.917391084 | 1.115634432 | 11994 | 11.10403457 | 6.730747598 |
| Lithuania | 4.919971327 | 0.620422065 | 12398 | 6.135998576 | 3.703944079 |
| Angola | 11.57555069 | 1.490748125 | 3813 | 14.49741702 | 8.653684363 |
| Cameroon | 7.624880832 | 0.997722174 | 13965 | 9.580416294 | 5.66934537 |
| Guatemala | 5.296303876 | 0.707238908 | 11271 | 6.682492136 | 3.910115616 |
| Myanmar | 7.675612795 | 1.031397716 | 10797 | 9.697152319 | 5.654073271 |
| Kosovo | 4.873695309 | 0.658700684 | 13897 | 6.16474865 | 3.582641967 |
| Sierra Leone | 11.1269843 | 1.508552978 | 11098 | 14.08374813 | 8.170220458 |
| Argentina | 3.159550205 | 0.433858717 | 13452 | 4.009913291 | 2.30918712 |
| Australia | 3.706432015 | 0.514946538 | 11810 | 4.715727229 | 2.6971368 |
| Latvia | 4.204084229 | 0.585010046 | 11607 | 5.350703918 | 3.05746454 |
| Armenia | 3.880340736 | 0.54219957 | 12885 | 4.943051893 | 2.817629579 |
| Egypt | 10.80290534 | 1.52691714 | 15783 | 13.79566293 | 7.81014774 |
| North Macedonia | 4.13348361 | 0.606031024 | 13048 | 5.321304417 | 2.945662803 |
| Nigeria | 6.805148308 | 0.998583301 | 16895 | 8.762371579 | 4.847925037 |
| Botswana | 6.42478639 | 0.951673128 | 10705 | 8.290065721 | 4.55950706 |
| Liberia | 8.135223244 | 1.205993486 | 9792 | 10.49897048 | 5.771476011 |
| Madagascar | 6.138889866 | 0.913609109 | 9903 | 7.92956372 | 4.348216012 |
| Burundi | 11.70805903 | 1.748345711 | 4977 | 15.13481663 | 8.281301441 |
| Slovakia | 3.542043694 | 0.536795747 | 11599 | 4.594163359 | 2.48992403 |
| Indonesia | 9.384165656 | 1.425462963 | 15501 | 12.17807306 | 6.590258249 |
| Somalia | 17.52032812 | 2.684573554 | 3184 | 22.78209228 | 12.25856395 |
| Paraguay | 3.63157923 | 0.558745071 | 13887 | 4.72671957 | 2.53643889 |

| COUNTRY | ESTIMATE | SE | N | UPPER BOUND | LOWER BOUND |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nicaragua | 3.863771573 | 0.603664631 | 13364 | 5.04695425 | 2.680588896 |
| Kyrgyzstan | 3.382742298 | 0.538772573 | 13961 | 4.438736541 | 2.326748056 |
| Bosnia Herzegovina | 3.757142515 | 0.601471325 | 12720 | 4.936026313 | 2.578258717 |
| Peru | 3.629375538 | 0.586841629 | 13542 | 4.779585131 | 2.479165945 |
| Dominican Republic | 4.148557596 | 0.67413968 | 13250 | 5.469871369 | 2.827243823 |
| Nepal | 5.549100928 | 0.902422163 | 15121 | 7.317848368 | 3.780353488 |
| Hong Kong (S.A.R. of China) | 3.807735702 | 0.624412234 | 10110 | 5.03158368 | 2.583887724 |
| Lesotho | 12.18787981 | 2.003411495 | 3923 | 16.11456634 | 8.261193281 |
| Thailand | 5.049517336 | 0.863219001 | 15996 | 6.741426578 | 3.357608094 |
| Georgia | 3.631106244 | 0.62211773 | 13955 | 4.850456995 | 2.411755493 |
| Iceland | 3.975480502 | 0.68196724 | 4894 | 5.312136294 | 2.638824711 |
| Colombia | 3.435652115 | 0.5929847 | 13522 | 4.597902128 | 2.273402103 |
| Tunisia | 5.634511785 | 0.976172153 | 14007 | 7.547809206 | 3.721214365 |
| Costa Rica | 2.99332221 | 0.51923296 | 13149 | 4.011018811 | 1.975625608 |
| Italy | 2.886620807 | 0.502551499 | 13710 | 3.871621746 | 1.901619869 |
| Mongolia | 2.712119717 | 0.485462236 | 12945 | 3.663625701 | 1.760613734 |
| Democratic Republic of the Congo | 7.713604896 | 1.381272482 | 7917 | 10.42089896 | 5.006310832 |
| Kazakhstan | 2.829886539 | 0.51483219 | 13350 | 3.838957631 | 1.820815447 |
| Algeria | 11.64849124 | 2.154868569 | 3010 | 15.87203363 | 7.42494884 |
| Albania | 2.830073407 | 0.524567727 | 12755 | 3.858226153 | 1.801920662 |
| Uzbekistan | 2.189883293 | 0.41489904 | 13919 | 3.003085412 | 1.376681174 |
| Syria | 4.494191762 | 0.870585982 | 7065 | 6.200540286 | 2.787843238 |
| Poland | 2.553951227 | 0.496733628 | 13370 | 3.527549138 | 1.580353317 |
| Lebanon | 3.373385728 | 0.667246884 | 15848 | 4.68118962 | 2.065581835 |
| New Zealand | 2.38508655 | 0.476429958 | 11795 | 3.318889267 | 1.451283833 |
| Uruguay | 2.133933015 | 0.432536029 | 13015 | 2.981703632 | 1.286162398 |
| Ireland | 2.052772282 | 0.423486755 | 13171 | 2.882806321 | 1.222738243 |
| United States | 2.526209854 | 0.522491698 | 10331 | 3.550293583 | 1.502126126 |
| Bhutan | 23.70168547 | 5.115366472 | 1000 | 33.72780375 | 13.67556718 |
| Portugal | 2.09560758 | 0.4690948 | 13600 | 3.015033387 | 1.176181772 |
| Chile | 2.078198929 | 0.466078312 | 13444 | 2.991712421 | 1.164685438 |
| Romania | 2.669248052 | 0.603309905 | 12877 | 3.851735465 | 1.486760638 |
| Malta | 2.658201508 | 0.61631317 | 12021 | 3.866175321 | 1.450227694 |

| COUNTRY | ESTIMATE | SE | N | UPPER BOUND | LOWER BOUND |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ecuador | 2.449957765 | 0.570254741 | 13596 | 3.567657058 | 1.332258472 |
| Vietnam | 2.937043913 | 0.691193242 | 7797 | 4.291782668 | 1.582305158 |
| Iraq | 3.01130092 | 0.710738004 | 15745 | 4.404347409 | 1.618254431 |
| Montenegro | 2.249842223 | 0.537452633 | 11819 | 3.303249383 | 1.196435063 |
| Hungary | 2.251070441 | 0.544125099 | 12528 | 3.317555635 | 1.184585248 |
| Niger | 7.079917739 | 1.727495046 | 11896 | 10.46580803 | 3.694027449 |
| Trinidad and Tobago | 6.593035361 | 1.627964636 | 1938 | 9.783846048 | 3.402224675 |
| Guinea | 5.199299388 | 1.303483701 | 11067 | 7.754127441 | 2.644471335 |
| Ethiopia | 7.367129028 | 1.893235334 | 11215 | 11.07787028 | 3.656387773 |
| Türkiye | 2.379353907 | 0.656435919 | 14605 | 3.665968308 | 1.092739505 |
| Puerto Rico | 11.60313817 | 3.369777021 | 454 | 18.20790113 | 4.998375211 |
| Tajikistan | 2.568944345 | 0.757138273 | 9850 | 4.05293536 | 1.084953331 |
| Mauritius | 3.146749955 | 0.959964548 | 7969 | 5.028280469 | 1.265219441 |
| Finland | 1.622098362 | 0.505519355 | 12668 | 2.612916297 | 0.631280426 |
| Bangladesh | 4.819614146 | 1.515404423 | 16057 | 7.789806815 | 1.849421476 |
| Palestine | 4.050935516 | 1.301328664 | 13992 | 6.601539697 | 1.500331336 |
| Ukraine | 1.659102325 | 0.537985993 | 13416 | 2.713554872 | 0.604649779 |
| Serbia | 1.611910161 | 0.529317249 | 12745 | 2.649371968 | 0.574448353 |
| Afghanistan | 5.198494461 | 1.709539934 | 14100 | 8.549192733 | 1.84779619 |
| Czech Republic | 1.967943322 | 0.660036405 | 10489 | 3.261614677 | 0.674271968 |
| Israel | 1.266522484 | 0.481876361 | 14002 | 2.211000152 | 0.322044815 |
| Belgium | 1.217329683 | 0.489021613 | 12560 | 2.175812045 | 0.258847321 |
| Denmark | 1.290096416 | 0.523194946 | 13286 | 2.31555851 | 0.264634322 |
| Sri Lanka | 3.958091616 | 1.641288595 | 13457 | 7.175017262 | 0.741165969 |
| Yemen | 4.47554144 | 1.87800044 | 11988 | 8.156422301 | 0.794660578 |
| Kuwait | 4.645518555 | 1.964035688 | 3924 | 8.495028503 | 0.796008608 |
| Germany | 0.919021799 | 0.406617435 | 16697 | 1.715991971 | 0.122051628 |
| Haiti | 2.599500129 | 1.248239919 | 4711 | 5.046050369 | 0.152949888 |
| Turkmenistan | 1.218342426 | 0.593011375 | 10042 | 2.380644721 | 0.05604013 |
| Moldova | 1.125573948 | 0.597402037 | 13779 | 2.296481941 | -0.045334044 |
| Comoros | 4.162783425 | 2.284828311 | 7932 | 8.641046914 | -0.315480064 |
| Bahrain | 3.619228311 | 2.026967377 | 5064 | 7.59208437 | -0.353627749 |
| Malawi | 3.347100451 | 2.052101118 | 10932 | 7.369218642 | -0.675017739 |

| COUNTRY | ESTIMATE | SE | N | UPPER BOUND | LOWER BOUND |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Morocco | 3.601412823 | 2.252531294 | 3990 | 8.016374159 | -0.813548514 |
| Norway | 0.838411302 | 0.594049333 | 9740 | 2.002747995 | -0.32592539 |
| Qatar | 3.340091564 | 2.449222858 | 2999 | 8.140568365 | -1.460385237 |
| Gambia | 3.995586307 | 3.267064619 | 3115 | 10.39903296 | -2.407860345 |
| Bulgaria | 0.577017461 | 0.53398647 | 12678 | 1.623630942 | -0.46959602 |
| Eswatini | 2.835957845 | 2.76438475 | 2986 | 8.254151955 | -2.582236265 |
| Croatia | 0.576846642 | 0.596263093 | 12459 | 1.745522304 | -0.59182902 |
| Suriname | 2.616309154 | 2.87350307 | 482 | 8.248375171 | -3.015756864 |
| Libya | 2.141658421 | 2.355491836 | 3043 | 6.758422419 | -2.475105577 |
| Saudi Arabia | 2.127950895 | 2.439308768 | 3168 | 6.90899608 | -2.65309429 |
| Jamaica | 1.226481801 | 1.445881575 | 3239 | 4.060409689 | -1.607446086 |
| Estonia | 0.54103994 | 0.654813388 | 11267 | 1.824474181 | -0.742394301 |
| Canada | 0.393842115 | 0.486603048 | 10495 | 1.347584088 | -0.559899859 |
| Azerbaijan | 0.396396691 | 0.613066524 | 11843 | 1.598007079 | -0.805213696 |
| Belize | 1.623678644 | 2.59001575 | 463 | 6.700109513 | -3.452752226 |
| Central African Republic | 1.375915741 | 2.63671778 | 3983 | 6.543882589 | -3.792051107 |
| Sudan | 0.783547632 | 1.547333115 | 6442 | 3.816320537 | -2.249225273 |
| Jordan | 2.323230844 | 6.66154786 | 1000 | 15.37986465 | -10.73340296 |
| Greece | -0.018161861 | 0.533361216 | 12911 | 1.027226122 | -1.063549845 |
| Cuba | -0.073820983 | 2.082090683 | 978 | 4.007076756 | -4.154718721 |
| United Arab Emirates | -0.476591834 | 1.701397218 | 3068 | 2.858146714 | -3.811330381 |
| Netherlands | -0.189684715 | 0.4591411 | 12040 | 0.71023184 | -1.08960127 |
| Sweden | -0.29382131 | 0.533796375 | 13051 | 0.752419584 | -1.340062204 |
| Slovenia | -0.288966847 | 0.502716188 | 12215 | 0.696356883 | -1.274290576 |
| Austria | -0.283531889 | 0.439722783 | 13604 | 0.578324765 | -1.145388543 |
| Cyprus | -0.661317865 | 0.556455466 | 11415 | 0.429334848 | -1.751970578 |
| Switzerland | -0.81270299 | 0.50177772 | 9308 | 0.17078134 | -1.796187321 |
| Spain | -1.378938893 | 0.460827228 | 13773 | -0.475717526 | -2.282160261 |
| United Kingdom | -1.405738944 | 0.452432955 | 14648 | -0.518970352 | -2.292507536 |
| France | -1.525194289 | 0.477144753 | 13292 | -0.589990574 | -2.460398005 |
| Luxembourg | -2.352646904 | 0.536807157 | 9703 | -1.300504876 | -3.404788931 |

## Statistical Results of Model Relating Religious Importance to the Physical Health Index by Country

Colors reflect whether a coefficient is statistically significant (p < .05) and its strength, as determined by its t-statistic quintile: lighter shades for the lower quintile and darker shades for the upper quintile.

| COUNTRY | ESTIMATE | SE | N | UPPER BOUND | LOWER BOUND |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Senegal | 8.123052276 | 1.404056445 | 13945 | 10.87500291 | 5.371101644 |
| Tanzania | 6.254480057 | 1.16218206 | 13953 | 8.532356894 | 3.976603219 |
| Republic of the Congo | 4.883811896 | 0.925478313 | 11641 | 6.697749391 | 3.069874402 |
| Burkina Faso | 4.293607769 | 0.845862232 | 12924 | 5.951497743 | 2.635717795 |
| Gambia | 20.08930885 | 4.073216881 | 3115 | 28.07281393 | 12.10580376 |
| Benin | 3.857964884 | 0.835730414 | 10841 | 5.495996494 | 2.219933273 |
| Sierra Leone | 6.807379146 | 1.499598991 | 11098 | 9.746593168 | 3.868165124 |
| Angola | 6.25941014 | 1.396184364 | 3813 | 8.995931494 | 3.522888785 |
| Iran | 3.467698334 | 0.797172782 | 11035 | 5.030156986 | 1.905239682 |
| Kenya | 3.971713402 | 0.921001522 | 15092 | 5.776876386 | 2.166550419 |
| Chad | 4.335549858 | 1.05852166 | 11994 | 6.410252313 | 2.260847404 |
| Botswana | 3.732349334 | 0.912833673 | 10705 | 5.521503334 | 1.943195334 |
| Nigeria | 3.706923463 | 0.942664096 | 16895 | 5.55454509 | 1.859301835 |
| Lesotho | 8.311250186 | 2.122626451 | 3923 | 12.47159803 | 4.150902342 |
| Zimbabwe | 3.297531605 | 0.853576519 | 13875 | 4.970541582 | 1.624521628 |
| Togo | 3.293013927 | 0.856382961 | 8872 | 4.971524531 | 1.614503323 |
| Syria | 3.359238643 | 0.879158006 | 7065 | 5.082388334 | 1.636088952 |
| Somalia | 11.07649971 | 2.904590741 | 3184 | 16.76949756 | 5.383501855 |
| Cambodia | 2.634980936 | 0.705574678 | 14494 | 4.017907305 | 1.252054567 |
| Ghana | 3.427339085 | 0.923534478 | 13850 | 5.237466662 | 1.617211509 |
| Egypt | 6.005459955 | 1.648720309 | 15783 | 9.236951762 | 2.773968149 |
| Burundi | 5.57286915 | 1.546151924 | 4977 | 8.603326921 | 2.542411378 |
| Rwanda | 3.808150535 | 1.07579449 | 10946 | 5.916707737 | 1.699593334 |
| Philippines | 2.849610285 | 0.87319531 | 16055 | 4.561073094 | 1.138147477 |
| Democratic Republic of the Congo | 4.085502127 | 1.27845592 | 7917 | 6.591275731 | 1.579728523 |
| Myanmar | 3.243598505 | 1.063534978 | 10797 | 5.328127061 | 1.15906995 |
| Mali | 3.34596036 | 1.101249448 | 14035 | 5.504409277 | 1.187511442 |
| Brazil | 1.881557886 | 0.675359763 | 15718 | 3.205263022 | 0.55785275 |
| Uganda | 3.317444623 | 1.207534979 | 13909 | 5.684213182 | 0.950676064 |
| Kyrgyzstan | 1.32365728 | 0.512038336 | 13961 | 2.32725242 | 0.320062141 |

| COUNTRY | ESTIMATE | SE | N | UPPER BOUND | LOWER BOUND |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Malaysia | 2.085114652 | 0.830074749 | 11928 | 3.712061159 | 0.458168144 |
| Liberia | 3.020744748 | 1.203857683 | 9792 | 5.380305806 | 0.66118369 |
| Mauritania | 2.958671291 | 1.242521502 | 13981 | 5.394013434 | 0.523329147 |
| Lebanon | 1.521000064 | 0.648163448 | 15848 | 2.791400422 | 0.250599705 |
| South Africa | 1.378200646 | 0.601120249 | 14525 | 2.556396334 | 0.200004959 |
| Zambia | 2.789160724 | 1.239064569 | 12973 | 5.217727279 | 0.360594169 |
| Qatar | 5.427267214 | 2.458603506 | 2999 | 10.24613009 | 0.608404343 |
| Paraguay | 1.360171308 | 0.64677887 | 13887 | 2.627857892 | 0.092484723 |
| Uzbekistan | 0.90324865 | 0.437831843 | 13919 | 1.761399062 | 0.045098238 |
| Mozambique | 2.519369904 | 1.240354855 | 6723 | 4.95046542 | 0.088274389 |
| Gabon | 1.921923603 | 0.956179309 | 10740 | 3.796035049 | 0.047812156 |
| Pakistan | 1.714490701 | 0.888367831 | 18221 | 3.45569165 | -0.026710247 |
| Panama | 1.198451107 | 0.635594966 | 12386 | 2.444217239 | -0.047315025 |
| Morocco | 3.793364708 | 2.225384635 | 3990 | 8.155118593 | -0.568389177 |
| Kuwait | 3.44046563 | 2.067850532 | 3924 | 7.493452672 | -0.612521412 |
| Madagascar | 1.487464157 | 0.901549168 | 9903 | 3.254500526 | -0.279572212 |
| Algeria | 3.163700039 | 1.920889307 | 3010 | 6.92864308 | -0.601243002 |
| Bahrain | 3.199917756 | 1.958320113 | 5064 | 7.038225177 | -0.638389665 |
| Afghanistan | 2.595383247 | 1.625298863 | 14100 | 5.780969018 | -0.590202524 |
| Côte d'Ivoire | 1.556076654 | 0.995484595 | 9832 | 3.507226461 | -0.395073153 |
| Singapore | 0.606958571 | 0.388524722 | 13400 | 1.368467026 | -0.154549885 |
| Namibia | 1.41671197 | 0.922639998 | 6862 | 3.225086366 | -0.391662427 |
| Mauritius | 1.446154977 | 1.013433028 | 7969 | 3.432483712 | -0.540173759 |
| Bolivia | 1.025318468 | 0.719380689 | 13514 | 2.435304618 | -0.384667681 |
| Comoros | 3.006323585 | 2.220195153 | 7932 | 7.357906085 | -1.345258915 |
| Saudi Arabia | 2.836356882 | 2.102019912 | 3168 | 6.95631591 | -1.283602145 |
| Central African Republic | 3.694914241 | 2.751475634 | 3983 | 9.087806483 | -1.697978001 |
| Tajikistan | 0.884407831 | 0.678091977 | 9850 | 2.213468106 | -0.444652445 |
| South Sudan | 2.859692836 | 2.217182751 | 1949 | 7.205371027 | -1.485985355 |
| Nicaragua | 0.865617381 | 0.69777827 | 13364 | 2.23326279 | -0.502028028 |
| Libya | 3.054489096 | 2.46941793 | 3043 | 7.894548239 | -1.785570047 |

| COUNTRY | ESTIMATE | SE | N | UPPER BOUND | LOWER BOUND |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Guatemala | 1.049640903 | 0.864536208 | 11271 | 2.744131871 | -0.644850064 |
| Haiti | 1.346780316 | 1.173003302 | 4711 | 3.645866787 | -0.952306155 |
| Sudan | 1.68880601 | 1.476659433 | 6442 | 4.583058498 | -1.205446478 |
| Türkiye | 0.737355452 | 0.64620916 | 14605 | 2.003925405 | -0.529214502 |
| Eswatini | 3.355644225 | 2.966143252 | 2986 | 9.169284998 | -2.457996549 |
| El Salvador | 0.795200552 | 0.750604041 | 13046 | 2.266384472 | -0.675983369 |
| Malta | 0.631780281 | 0.6145144 | 12021 | 1.836228504 | -0.572667943 |
| Thailand | 0.815068593 | 0.813294543 | 15996 | 2.409125897 | -0.77898871 |
| Kosovo | 0.561929315 | 0.593104365 | 13897 | 1.72441387 | -0.600555239 |
| Laos | 0.970326457 | 1.178535084 | 6996 | 3.280255222 | -1.339602308 |
| Ethiopia | 1.147415805 | 1.522433349 | 11215 | 4.131385168 | -1.836553558 |
| Indonesia | 1.201782646 | 1.616966853 | 15501 | 4.371037679 | -1.967472387 |
| Suriname | 2.139941213 | 3.122687229 | 482 | 8.260408183 | -3.980525756 |
| Honduras | 0.460563473 | 0.71325183 | 12044 | 1.85853706 | -0.937410115 |
| Malawi | 1.261775236 | 2.093813629 | 10932 | 5.36564995 | -2.842099478 |
| North Macedonia | 0.321821377 | 0.565305489 | 13048 | 1.429820136 | -0.786177382 |
| United Arab Emirates | 0.627126801 | 1.717173643 | 3068 | 3.992787141 | -2.738533538 |
| Yemen | 0.600575322 | 1.791174934 | 11988 | 4.111278193 | -2.910127548 |
| Niger | 0.460349039 | 1.762377286 | 11896 | 3.91460852 | -2.993910442 |
| Nepal | 0.179781834 | 0.914334692 | 15121 | 1.971877831 | -1.612314163 |
| Belize | 0.206062021 | 2.626683308 | 463 | 5.354361305 | -4.942237264 |
| Jordan | 0.375030611 | 6.880675445 | 1000 | 13.86115448 | -13.11109326 |
| Costa Rica | 0.033805535 | 0.633195186 | 13149 | 1.274868098 | -1.207257029 |
| Sri Lanka | 0.086271586 | 1.780257597 | 13457 | 3.575576476 | -3.403033304 |
| Cameroon | -0.04043894 | 0.988960827 | 13965 | 1.897924281 | -1.978802161 |
| Puerto Rico | -0.35161145 | 3.694863084 | 454 | 6.890320194 | -7.593543094 |
| Ireland | -0.058214168 | 0.429806448 | 13171 | 0.78420647 | -0.900634807 |
| Trinidad and Tobago | -0.343751668 | 1.797987962 | 1938 | 3.180304737 | -3.867808074 |
| Dominican Republic | -0.177711278 | 0.760902542 | 13250 | 1.313657705 | -1.669080262 |
| Colombia | -0.194996857 | 0.704322541 | 13522 | 1.185475323 | -1.575469038 |
| Palestine | -0.402519829 | 1.281324479 | 13992 | 2.108876151 | -2.913915809 |

| COUNTRY | ESTIMATE | SE | N | UPPER BOUND | LOWER BOUND |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kazakhstan | -0.140960598 | 0.44827894 | 13350 | 0.737666126 | -1.019587321 |
| Guinea | -0.788349793 | 1.364307499 | 11067 | 1.885692906 | -3.462392491 |
| South Korea | -0.303039776 | 0.473166218 | 12892 | 0.624366012 | -1.230445564 |
| Georgia | -0.511034381 | 0.629924376 | 13955 | 0.723617397 | -1.745686158 |
| Italy | -0.395927796 | 0.479164589 | 13710 | 0.543234798 | -1.33509039 |
| Vietnam | -0.550527635 | 0.595666873 | 7797 | 0.616979436 | -1.718034706 |
| Bangladesh | -1.574572299 | 1.58145358 | 16057 | 1.525076718 | -4.674221315 |
| Poland | -0.495297011 | 0.492396994 | 13370 | 0.469801097 | -1.46039512 |
| Bosnia Herzegovina | -0.636278846 | 0.576161697 | 12720 | 0.492998081 | -1.765555772 |
| Argentina | -0.630644932 | 0.510900003 | 13452 | 0.370719073 | -1.632008938 |
| Australia | -0.658537323 | 0.532395903 | 11810 | 0.384958647 | -1.702033293 |
| Armenia | -0.793970233 | 0.608310146 | 12885 | 0.398317652 | -1.986258119 |
| Jamaica | -1.880616281 | 1.437752596 | 3239 | 0.937378807 | -4.698611369 |
| Bhutan | -7.127498144 | 4.688160107 | 1000 | 2.061295665 | -16.31629195 |
| Peru | -1.11593612 | 0.665041616 | 13542 | 0.187545447 | -2.419417687 |
| Azerbaijan | -0.878235208 | 0.510369518 | 11843 | 0.122089048 | -1.878559464 |
| United States | -1.076808961 | 0.585398075 | 10331 | 0.070571266 | -2.224189189 |
| Tunisia | -2.134001726 | 0.918052149 | 14007 | -0.334619514 | -3.933383938 |
| Mongolia | -1.025728908 | 0.43977229 | 12945 | -0.163775219 | -1.887682598 |
| Israel | -1.10237442 | 0.443656666 | 14002 | -0.232807354 | -1.971941485 |
| Mexico | -1.278043351 | 0.490477808 | 13455 | -0.316706846 | -2.239379855 |
| Iraq | -1.987438359 | 0.731409774 | 15745 | -0.553875202 | -3.421001515 |
| Iceland | -2.313740203 | 0.819609456 | 4894 | -0.707305669 | -3.920174737 |
| Cuba | -5.566249151 | 1.922365676 | 978 | -1.798412425 | -9.334085877 |
| Ecuador | -2.177140884 | 0.671464508 | 13596 | -0.861070448 | -3.493211319 |
| Albania | -1.833606442 | 0.53433384 | 12755 | -0.786312114 | -2.880900769 |
| New Zealand | -1.967593177 | 0.50249957 | 11795 | -0.982694019 | -2.952492334 |
| Greece | -2.061461609 | 0.516304987 | 12911 | -1.049503834 | -3.073419384 |
| Chile | -2.126889681 | 0.530623554 | 13444 | -1.086867514 | -3.166911847 |
| Latvia | -2.304807907 | 0.538176463 | 11607 | -1.249982041 | -3.359633774 |
| Portugal | -2.241637345 | 0.505607975 | 13600 | -1.250645715 | -3.232628975 |
| Germany | -1.825835323 | 0.410174711 | 16697 | -1.02189289 | -2.629777757 |
| Uruguay | -2.285952328 | 0.499964728 | 13015 | -1.306021462 | -3.265883194 |

| COUNTRY | ESTIMATE | SE | N | UPPER BOUND | LOWER BOUND |
|---------|----------|-----|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Canada | -2.535540369 | 0.551969809 | 10495 | -1.453679544 | -3.617401194 |
| Switzerland | -2.531900807 | 0.520571029 | 9308 | -1.511581589 | -3.552220025 |
| Moldova | -2.864800575 | 0.565407423 | 13779 | -1.756602025 | -3.972999125 |
| Denmark | -3.120959313 | 0.608595423 | 13286 | -1.928112284 | -4.313806342 |
| Japan | -2.476556761 | 0.461088643 | 13970 | -1.572823021 | -3.380290502 |
| Croatia | -2.855805741 | 0.52955609 | 12459 | -1.817875804 | -3.893735677 |
| Lithuania | -2.885076158 | 0.529484401 | 12398 | -1.847286732 | -3.922865583 |
| India | -1.766223977 | 0.315698596 | 61160 | -1.14745473 | -2.384993225 |
| Austria | -2.483143789 | 0.426177048 | 13604 | -1.647836775 | -3.318450803 |
| Hong Kong (S.A.R. of China) | -3.423691597 | 0.557385224 | 10110 | -2.331216559 | -4.516166636 |
| Norway | -4.275541359 | 0.689527707 | 9740 | -2.924067053 | -5.627015665 |
| Cyprus | -3.575178792 | 0.572167857 | 11415 | -2.453729791 | -4.696627792 |
| Netherlands | -3.453102694 | 0.538616711 | 12040 | -2.397413941 | -4.508791448 |
| United Kingdom | -3.166739979 | 0.465662543 | 14648 | -2.254041395 | -4.079438562 |
| Romania | -4.503734439 | 0.660688005 | 12877 | -3.20878595 | -5.798682928 |
| Serbia | -3.450906254 | 0.5061728 | 12745 | -2.458807566 | -4.443004942 |
| France | -3.346533734 | 0.488801441 | 13292 | -2.388482909 | -4.304584559 |
| Slovakia | -3.670863869 | 0.519118133 | 11599 | -2.653392327 | -4.68833541 |
| Montenegro | -3.512703937 | 0.490947431 | 11819 | -2.550446973 | -4.474960901 |
| Belgium | -3.835912472 | 0.530345865 | 12560 | -2.796434576 | -4.875390367 |
| Spain | -3.473217545 | 0.474717695 | 13773 | -2.542770862 | -4.403664228 |
| Sweden | -4.335435096 | 0.582918585 | 13051 | -3.192914669 | -5.477955523 |
| Estonia | -4.968302167 | 0.647254434 | 11267 | -3.699683477 | -6.236920858 |
| Russia | -2.641893073 | 0.327458753 | 30298 | -2.000073917 | -3.28371223 |
| Luxembourg | -4.272771362 | 0.518022165 | 9703 | -3.257447918 | -5.288094806 |
| Ukraine | -4.142877424 | 0.493611193 | 13416 | -3.175399486 | -5.110355362 |
| Bulgaria | -4.368903344 | 0.506970301 | 12678 | -3.375241555 | -5.362565134 |
| Czech Republic | -5.148561854 | 0.595072868 | 10489 | -3.982219032 | -6.314904676 |
| Finland | -4.556017047 | 0.523581596 | 12668 | -3.529797119 | -5.582236975 |
| Hungary | -5.144117163 | 0.536485408 | 12528 | -4.092605763 | -6.195628562 |
| Belarus | -5.011696165 | 0.520351882 | 12244 | -3.991806476 | -6.031585854 |
| Slovenia | -4.820924035 | 0.494418396 | 12215 | -3.851863979 | -5.789984091 |
| Turkmenistan | -6.812142407 | 0.544019331 | 10042 | -5.745864517 | -7.878420296 |

## Statistical Results of Model Relating Spiritual Connection to Wellbeing

| | Coefficient | Confidence interval of coefficient |
|---|---|---|
| **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPIRITUAL/RELIGIOUS CONNECTION AND WELLBEING, GLOBALLY AND BY REGION** | | |
| **Global** | 0.11** | (0.07, 0.14) |
| **Australia & New Zealand** | 0.21* | (0.05, 0.36) |
| **CIS** | 0.14*** | (0.07, 0.21) |
| **East Asia** | 0.11* | (0.02, 0.20) |
| **Europe-non-EU** | 0.02 | (-0.06, 0.09) |
| **European Union** | -0.04 | (-0.08, 0.01) |
| **Latin America & Caribbean** | 0.07 | (-0.01, 0.16) |
| **Middle East/North Africa** | 0.13*** | (0.06, 0.20) |
| **Northern America** | 0.15* | (0.01, 0.28) |
| **South Asia** | 0.16*** | (0.09, 0.22) |
| **Southeast Asia** | 0.14*** | (0.07, 0.21) |
| **Sub-Saharan Africa** | 0.16*** | (0.11, 0.22) |

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

# Endnotes

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