

Young people values, hopes and expectations.

Faith and religion: main conclusions

1. **The study highlights the presence of varied religious and moral attitudes among youth, influenced by regional differences. Spirituality often plays an important role in young people's lives, to the point that, once it is part of their lives, its presence increases or at least remains (83%) the same as it was five years ago, in very few cases it lessens (15%).**
 - Young believers' faith extends beyond religious practices like prayer and attendance at services, influencing their moral viewpoints as well. Depending on their beliefs, young people have different opinions on religious and social issues.
 - Believers tend to acknowledge the existence of sin more than atheists (79% vs 33%).
 - Faith in God and Catholic identification significantly influence support for certain moral values.
 - It is observed that most young people believe that conscience is the determinant of right and wrong (67%), and this belief increases among those who recognize the presence of faith in God or Catholic identification in their lives (71%).
 - However, this doesn't preclude contradictions, as observed in Spain, where many recognize the role of conscience in justice (42%), yet a significant number do not support the idea of conscientious objection (49%).
 - This paradox is also evident in Italy (70% favor self-awareness, while 52% oppose conscientious objection).
 - In addition, believers are generally more inclined to uphold viewpoints concerning the presence of God in the family (85% vs 29%) and support for religious values in a greater extent than atheists (70% vs 31%).
2. **On social issues, the religious perspective plays an important role, and believers tend to be more civic-minded.**
 - **Both believers and atheists generally consider war to be unjustifiable**, although around 25% believe that there may be justifiable reasons, a stance possibly influenced by current international conflicts like those in Ukraine and Israel-Gaza.
 - **Concerns about political corruption and environmental problems are common to both groups.**
 - However, opinions on issues such as pornography and surrogacy differ between atheists and believers.
 - **Atheists tend to support more liberal social issues, such as the legalization of prostitution or the practice of womb surrogacy, issues believers agree with to a lesser extent.**
 - The death penalty and the justification of war face higher rejection among Catholics compared to other religions and atheists.
3. **Young believers from various religions display notable similarities in social values.**

- A considerable agreement exists between Catholics and non-Catholics regarding the **effect of contraceptives on intimate relations** (39% and 38% respectively think they diminish the quality of the relationship) and **their shared opposition to the legalization of prostitution**, with 70% in both groups against it.
4. As explained above, young people's behaviour may be influenced by their country of origin. However, similarities allow for the classification of the eight countries into distinct groups:
- **Religious countries that show a strong religious identity. This group includes Kenya, the Philippines and Brazil.**
 - In these countries, religion is lived with intense devotion, although they do not share a predominant religion.
 - In the Philippines, Catholicism is the dominant religion (67%).
 - In Kenya, while Catholicism holds a significant presence (26%), a variety of other religions collectively account for a larger share (71%).
 - In Brazil, Evangelicalism leads as the primary religion (31%), with Catholicism following closely as the second most practiced faith (27%).
 - Kenya, the Philippines, and Brazil exhibit similar behavioral characteristics in terms of religion, social issues and attitudes toward moral law that are closer to Catholic doctrine and most religions.
 - In these three countries, a significant portion of the youth identifies as believers and consequently recognize that spirituality is present in their lives and even increases as the years go by (57% in all three cases).
 - In general, young people pray often, adhere strongly to the practices and beliefs of their religion, and participate frequently in religious rituals.
 - **Countries in the process of secularization with a still relevant presence of Christianity. In Spain and Italy, a smaller percentage of young people identify as believers** (35% and 42% respectively).
 - Despite this, believers in these countries seem to have a more deeply rooted faith. It is observed that they pray more frequently compared to countries with a higher proportion of believers.
 - In terms of confessions, the Catholic religion remains predominant in Italy and Spain (52% and 33% respectively). Both countries exhibit a notable Catholic minority, with 60% of individuals reporting attendance at Mass at least once a month and highlighting the significant importance of the Eucharist in their own lives (33%).
 - Additionally, among Catholics in Spain and Italy, there is a high percentage who trust in the interpretation of the Scriptures guided by the Magisterium of the Catholic Church (33% and 35% respectively).
 - As a trend, it can be said that in these countries the increasing process of secularization, well documented in previous studies and confirmed in this one, runs parallel to a minor but significant opposite trend: an increase in faith lived out of conviction, replacing a kind of "socio-cultural" religion lived out of mere tradition or custom. This latter trend is an original finding of this study.
 - **Countries in an intermediate position. Mexico, Argentina, occupy an intermediate position in terms of religious beliefs**, with trends that bring them closer to countries like Spain and Italy. Mexico stands out with 71% of believers, followed by Argentina with 51%. Despite these figures, Argentina and Mexico show less commitment in terms of

frequency of mass attendance (39% and 61% respectively), suggesting a less rigorous religious practice.

- **The United Kingdom stands out as a unique case.** The United Kingdom has 48% of its youth identifying as believers, a figure higher than in Spain and Italy, but lower than in Mexico and Argentina. 88% of young people in England report praying several times a week, and 68% attend Mass at least once a month. It exhibits distinctive characteristics, likely influenced by its Anglican heritage, with 15% of the population adhering to this faith.

This classification provides a general overview of religious trends.

ATHEISTS AND/OR AGNOSTICS

In the demographic of young atheists, **there is a higher percentage of men (56%), and they are mainly located in Italy (61%) and Spain (54%).**

- Young atheists mostly defend their position from both a psychological and a moral point of view. They mostly consider that belief in God is simply a mental refuge, a means to make sense of phenomena that, they argue, even believers cannot fully comprehend; this justification is common among atheists, especially in Kenya and Brazil.
- From the moral point of view, atheists frequently challenge the idea that belief in God is synonymous with being a good person. Therefore, they argue that morality and goodness are not inherently tied to religious belief.
- Still based on the moral aspect as a justification for their position, especially in Italy and the UK, one of the main reasons for disbelief among atheists and agnostics is the mystery of suffering in the world. Although this is a mystery for both believers and non-believers, young atheists and agnostics see it as a strong justification for their lack of faith.
- Even if young people identify themselves as atheists or agnostics, in Kenya and Philippines tend to believe to a greater extent than in other countries in the afterlife (50% and 53% respectively) and the believers' understanding of suffering and death.
- In addition, in these two countries it's common for young atheists to engage in prayer during various life moments (78% in Kenya and 70% in the Philippines on average), including moments of happiness, gratitude and need. In the rest of the countries, atheists pray mostly in times of need, but to a lesser extent, being the less United Kingdom (35%), Spain (38%) and Italy (40%).

GOD BELIEVERS

In contrast to atheists, among believers there is a higher percentage of women (52%), especially in Kenya (93%), the Philippines (88%) and Brazil (81%).

- Believers in these three countries share very similar characteristics and tend to register the highest percentages of agreement and mention in different aspects related to religious values.

- **Common among young believers is the practice of prayer as a form of conversation with God (96%), often through dialogue and meditation, and using their own words and expressions.**
- Italy presents a unique case where young people predominantly prefer structured prayers prescribed by their religion over impromptu personal expressions.
- Regarding the Church, its perception varies among youth. Generally, most consider it an entity that contributes positively to society (76%), and do not see it as a political-temporal institution (25%), except in Italy.
- Among believers, **no clear differences are observed between Catholics and young people who identify with other religions. The only exceptions are found in the figure of the Virgin Mary and in the reading of the Bible.**
- The Virgin Mary holds a prominent place in the prayer practices of Catholics (39%), a reverence not typically shared by non-Catholic youths.
- Christian non-Catholic young people tend to prioritize detailed Bible reading more than Catholics (32% vs 24%), who are more inclined to recite established prayers of their faith.

CATHOLICS BELIEVERS

As among believers, there is a higher percentage of women among Catholic believers (52%).

- When specifically examining Catholics, the group consisting of the Philippines, Kenya, and Brazil diverges in terms of the number of Catholics. The Philippines leads with the highest number of young Catholics (67%), followed by Italy, Argentina, and Mexico. While Kenya and Brazil have many young believers, mainly of other religions, especially Evangelicalism. Therefore, together with the UK, they are the countries with the lowest presence of young Catholics.
- In referring to young Catholics, **there is a special emphasis on Roman Catholics, since Greek Catholics represent a very small percentage of the total number of young Catholics.**
- **Catholics as a whole recognize that God has revealed himself through his Son, Jesus Christ (73%), and agree on the importance of the Bible as a sacred book containing truths revealed by God (72%).**
- Moreover, they consider that everyone can read the Bible without the mediation of the Church, especially young Catholics in Kenya. In Italy and Spain, on the other hand, is where it is given more importance to the Catholic Church as an institution that helps and teaches how to interpret the Scriptures.
- **Young Catholics recognize the importance of the sacraments, such as Baptism (80%), Confirmation (80%), and Marriage (81%).** Regarding the latter, although due to their age young people are mainly unmarried, a majority express intentions to have sacramental marriages in the future.
- Confession is deemed essential, especially among young Catholics in Kenya and the Philippines.
- With regard to Mass attendance, many young Catholics defend their position that denies the correlation between going to Mass and being a good Christian. A significant number, including both those who regularly attend Mass and those who do not, share the belief that being a good Christian is not

necessarily contingent upon Mass attendance (69%). This argument stands out especially in Argentina, Mexico, Italy, and Spain.

- On the other hand, especially in the Philippines, among young people, attendance at the Eucharist is vitally important as an essential activity in their spiritual life. Despite varying opinions on the necessity of Mass attendance, almost all young Catholics know in detail what happens in the Mass, often thanks to explanations from their parents (63%).
- In countries such as Italy, Spain, and Argentina the figure of catechists prevails as experts who explain in detail what happens during Mass

In general terms, young Catholics in Argentina, Spain, and Italy tend to behave similarly in terms of their perception of Catholic doctrine.

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