

Chapter 2: Commitment to Christianity and Islam

Large majorities in every country surveyed express belief in the core tenets of Christianity or Islam. For example, roughly three-in-four or more people express absolutely certain belief in the existence of God. In eight countries, at least nine-in-ten people express this view. By way of comparison, 71% of adults in the United States, arguably the most religious country in the industrialized world, say they are absolutely convinced of God's existence. The only sub-Saharan African nations where fewer than eight-in-ten believe in God with absolute certainty are Botswana (74%), Chad, Mozambique and Uganda (77% in each).

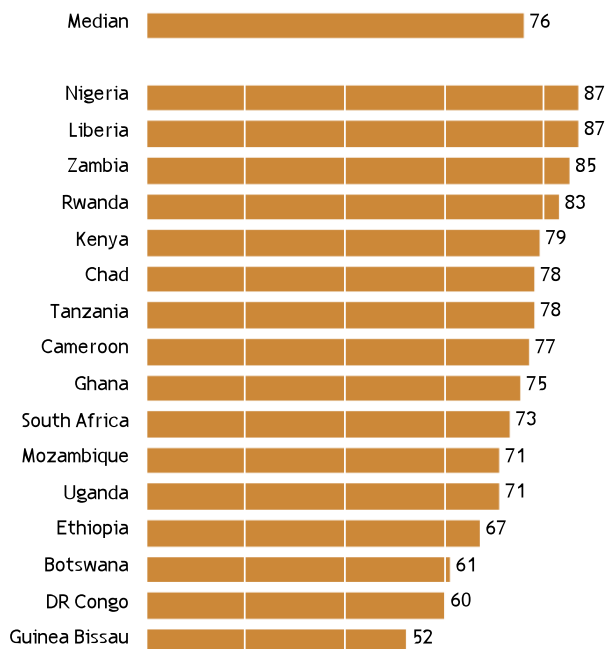
The survey finds that nearly everyone in the countries surveyed who professes belief in God adopts a monotheistic rather than a polytheistic view, with very few people saying they believe in more than one God.

In keeping with the teachings of both Christianity and Islam, more than eight-in-ten people in nearly every country surveyed say they believe in heaven. Respondents in Mali, Senegal, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Ghana and Kenya are all nearly unanimous on this question, with 97% or more of the populations of these countries expressing belief in heaven. Belief in hell tends to be somewhat less common, though in every country surveyed upwards of six-in-ten people say they believe hell exists.

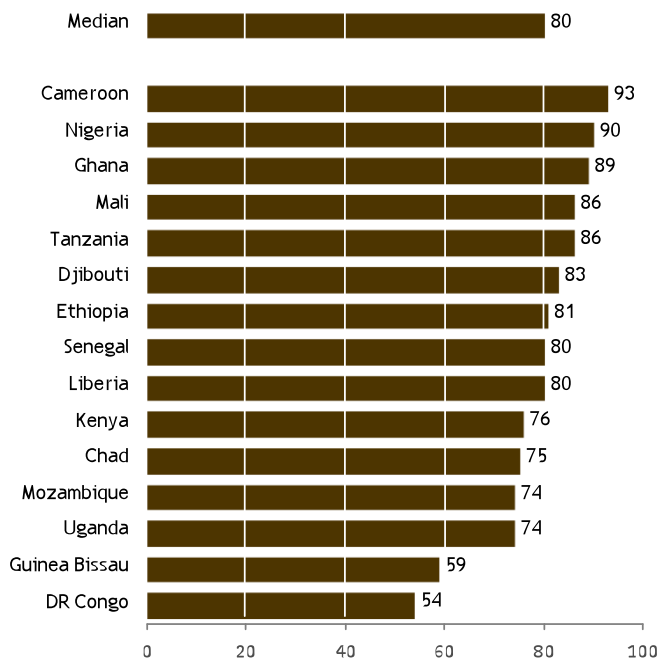
In addition, large numbers of Christians – including at least half in every country surveyed and nearly nine-in-ten people in Nigeria and Liberia – say they believe the Bible is the word of God and should be taken literally, word for word. Most Muslims adopt a similar view of the Koran, including roughly nine-in-ten or more Muslims in Nigeria, Cameroon and Ghana.

Most View Sacred Texts as Literal Word of God

% of Christians saying the Bible is the literal word of God



% of Muslims saying the Koran is the literal word of God



Q54-57. Which comes closer to your view?
 The Koran/Bible is the word of God, OR The
 Koran/Bible is a book written by men and is not
 the word of God. And would you say that the
 Koran/Bible is to be taken literally, word for
 word, OR Not everything in the Koran/Bible
 should be taken literally, word for word.

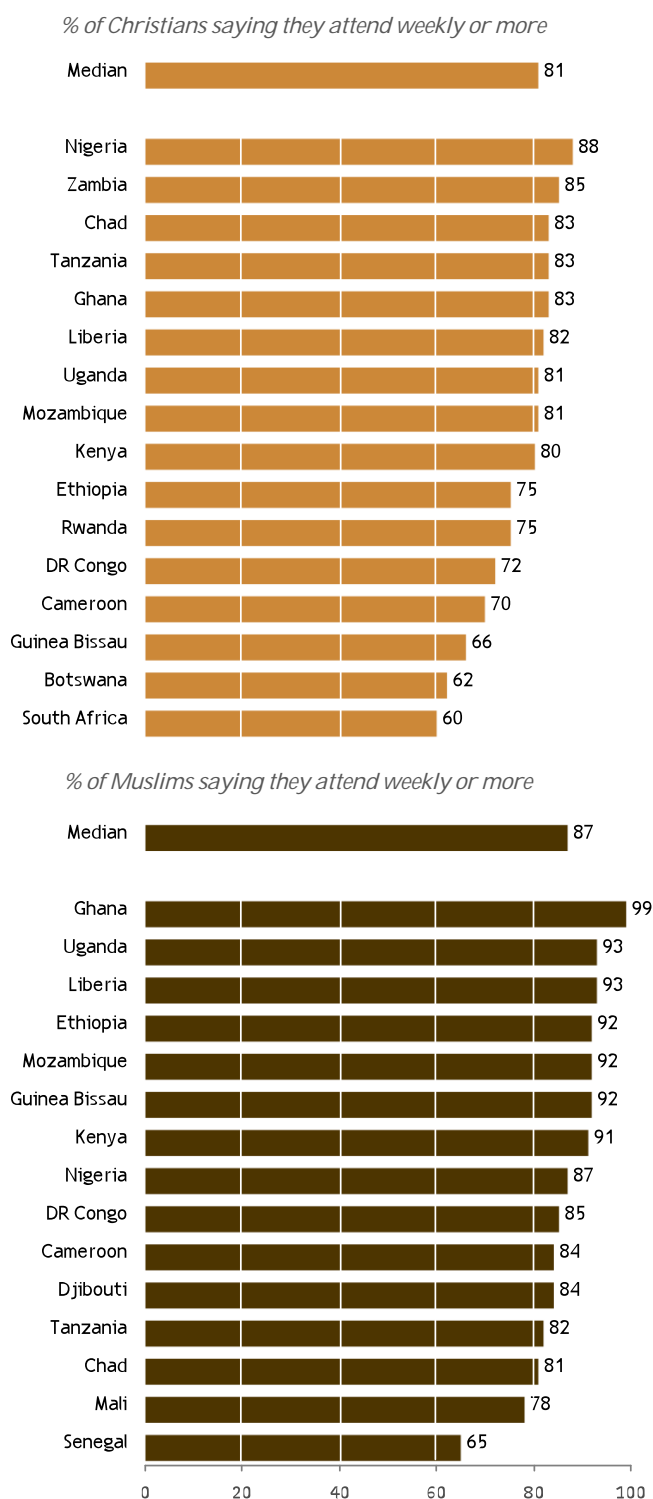
Committed in Practice

More than three-quarters of the population in nearly every country surveyed says that religion is *very important* in their lives. By comparison, 57% of adults in the United States say this. Both Christians and Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa place a great deal of importance on religion, although in most countries where comparisons are possible, a higher percentage of Muslims than Christians say religion is very important to them.

Majorities in every country say they attend religious services at least once a week, and in most countries more than three-in-four people report attending worship services weekly or more. Worship attendance is high among Christians and Muslims alike, although in countries where comparisons are possible, it is generally somewhat higher among Muslims than among Christians.

Q40, 41. Christians were asked: *Aside from weddings and funerals how often do you attend religious services - more than once a week, once a week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, seldom, or never.* Muslims were asked: *On average, how often do you attend the mosque or Islamic Center for salah and Jum'ah Prayer? More than once a week, once a week for Jum'ah prayer, once or twice a month, a few times a year especially for the Eid, seldom, or never.*

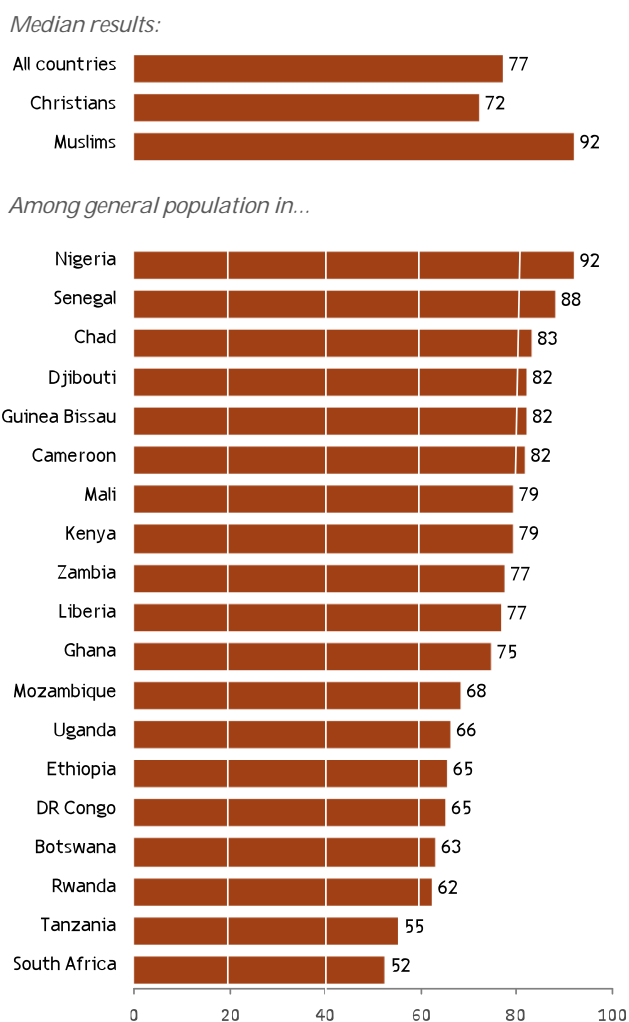
Most Attend Religious Services Regularly



Most people (more than two-thirds in most countries) say they pray every day. Daily prayer tends to be especially common both in the predominantly Muslim countries surveyed (Djibouti, Mali and Senegal), and in three of the four countries where there is a roughly even mix of Christians and Muslims (Chad, Guinea Bissau and Nigeria). And in most countries, a higher percentage of Muslims than Christians say they pray every day, although daily prayer is more the norm than the exception among both groups. Majorities of Muslims in most countries say they pray all five salah every day. (See glossary for more information on salah.) In most countries where comparisons are possible, more Christians than Muslims say they receive answers to their prayers.

Scripture reading, although less common than attending worship services or engaging in private prayer, is also practiced quite frequently by majorities or sizable minorities, regardless of religious tradition. Clear majorities in seven of the countries surveyed say they read scriptures at least once a week, as do more than four-in-ten people in nine additional countries. In addition, large majorities of Christians and Muslims in all the countries surveyed say they read religious pamphlets, magazines, newspapers and books, and in most countries large numbers also say they listen to religious radio or watch religious television programs. Ethiopia is the only country where fewer than half of Christians and Muslims say they listen to or watch religious programs.

Most People Pray At Least Once a Day *% saying they pray at least once a day*



Q64. People practice their religion in different ways. Outside of attending religious services, do you pray several times a day, once a day, a few times a week, once a week, a few times a month, seldom, or never?

In every country with a significant Christian population except South Africa, majorities of Christians say they fast during holy times such as Lent. This includes more than eight-in-ten Christians in Chad, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Ghana. In a majority of countries, roughly equal numbers of Protestants and Catholics say they fast during Lent.

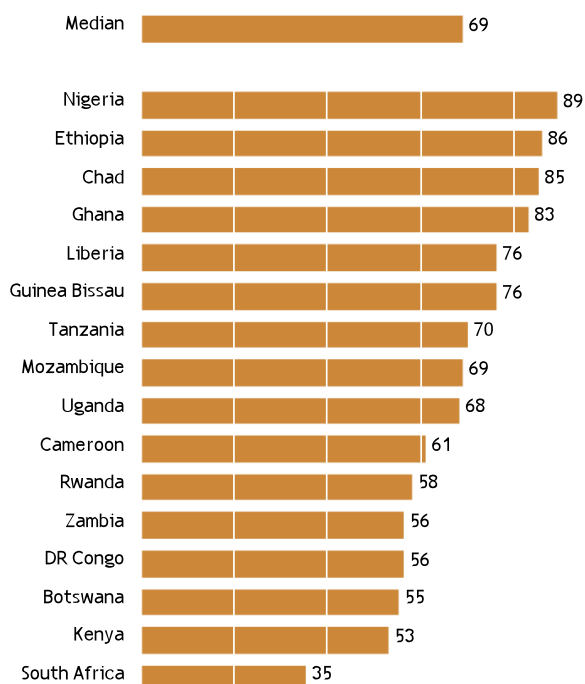
Fasting during Ramadan is even more common among Muslims than is the observance of Lent among Christians. More than nine-in-ten Muslims in Cameroon, Chad, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Tanzania report that they abstain from eating during daylight hours in the month of Ramadan. There are no countries with a significant Muslim population where this figure is below 69%.

Tithing, or giving a portion of one's income to the church, is practiced by majorities of Christians in nearly every country surveyed. Similarly, majorities of Muslims in every nation surveyed say they give a portion of their wealth to charity (zakat). More than seven-in-ten Muslims in every country surveyed also say it is very important to them to one day make the hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca. (See the glossary for more information on tithing, zakat and the hajj.)

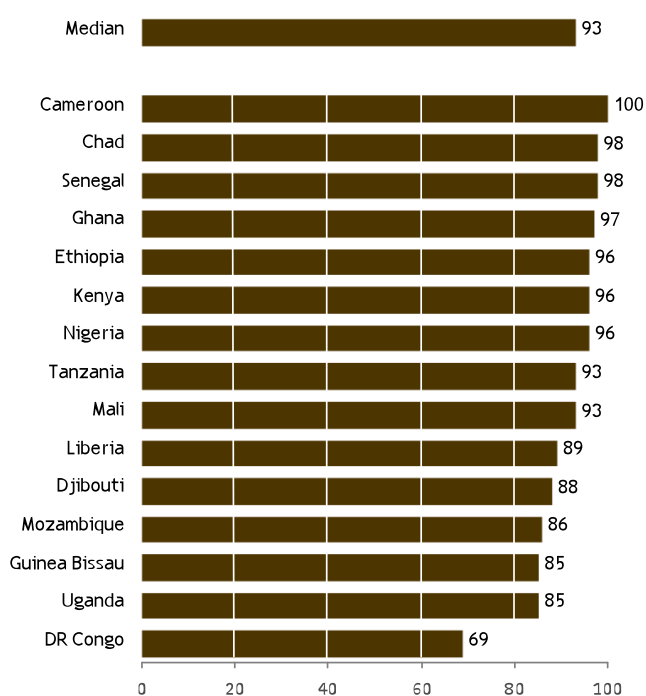
Q68k/m. And do you... (ASK IF MUSLIM) fast, that is avoid eating during the daytime, during the holy month of Ramadan? (ASK IF CHRISTIAN) fast, that is avoid eating for certain periods during holy times like Lent?

Fasting During Lent and Ramadan

% of Christians who fast during Lent



% of Muslims who fast during Ramadan



Substantial numbers of Christians and Muslims in all the countries surveyed say it is their duty to convert others to their faith. And the actions of both Muslims and Christians indicate a strong desire to pass their religious values on to their children. For example, a majority of Christian and Muslim parents in nearly all the countries surveyed say they pray or read scriptures with their children, and solid majorities also say they send their children to religious education programs.

Intense Religious Experiences

The survey shows that the practice of religion in sub-Saharan Africa often involves intense, personal encounters with God, spirits and miraculous events. For instance, in every country surveyed, roughly three-in-ten people or more say they have experienced or witnessed the divine healing of an illness or injury. This includes at least half of respondents in Ghana, Botswana, Rwanda, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Nigeria, Kenya and Zambia. The survey also shows that in nine countries, more than four-in-ten people say they have seen the devil or evil spirits being driven out of a person. This is most common in Ethiopia, where two-thirds say they have witnessed such exorcisms. These experiences are more common among Christians than among Muslims.

Both Christians and Muslims believe they are living in a time that will undergo momentous religious events. For example, at least half of Christians in every country with large enough samples of Christians to analyze believe that Jesus will return to earth during their lifetime, including nearly seven-in-ten Christians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (69%).

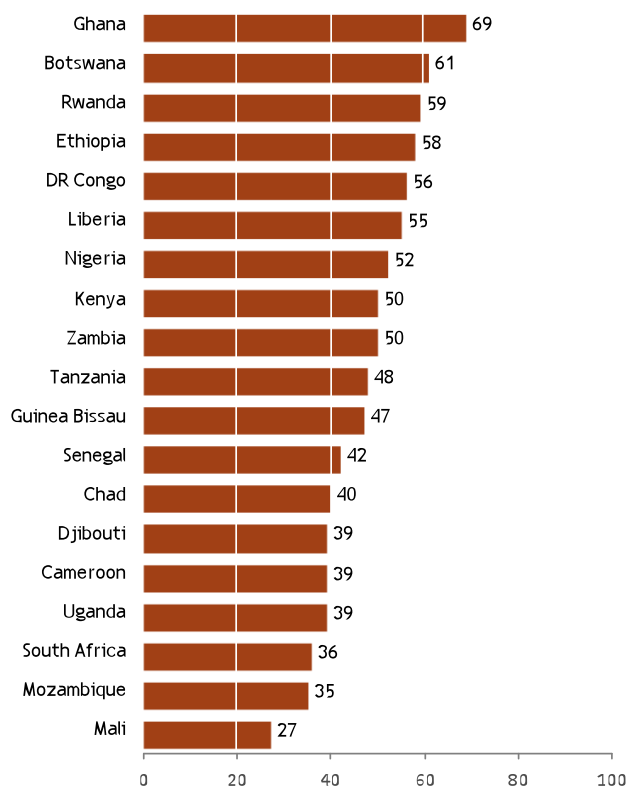
Divine Healing

% who have witnessed or experienced a divine healing of an illness or injury

Median results:



Among general population in...



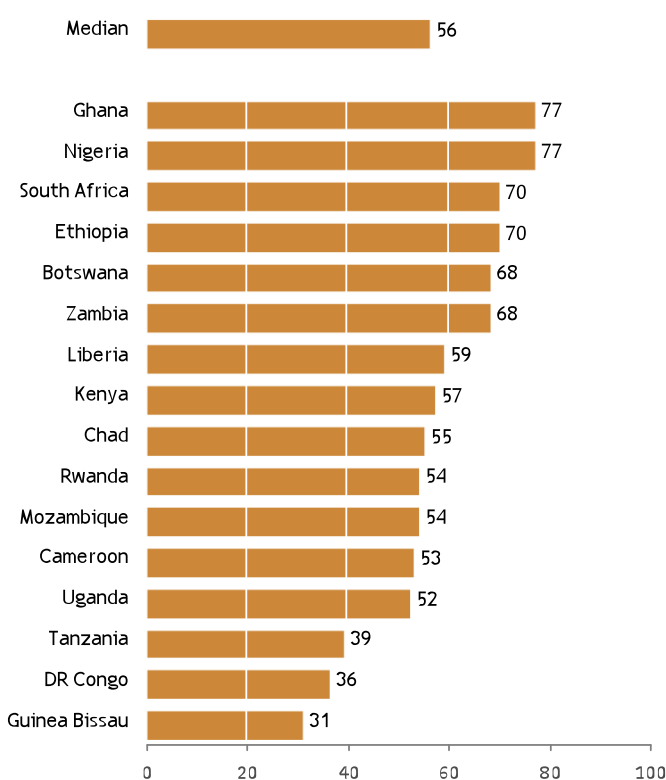
Q67a. Have you ever experienced or witnessed a divine healing of an illness or injury?

And at least half of Muslims in 10 of the 15 countries with large enough Muslim populations to analyze say they believe that the caliphate, the golden era of Islamic rule, will be re-established in their lifetime; this belief is most common among respondents in Mozambique (69%). And in 12 of these 15 countries, roughly six-in-ten or more Muslims believe in the return of the Mahdi, the guided one who will initiate the final period before the day of resurrection and judgment, though the survey did not ask respondents whether they expect this to occur during their lifetime. (See the glossary for more details on the caliphate and the Mahdi.)

In the Christian community, miraculous events and intense, personal encounters with God are often associated with the Pentecostal movement, which emphasizes the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit in the believer's daily life. Among the practices associated with this movement are speaking in tongues, receiving direct revelations from God and giving or interpreting prophecies. But the survey shows that many of these phenomena are prevalent even among African Christians who are *not* affiliated with Pentecostal churches. In all the countries surveyed, for example, majorities or substantial minorities (about a third or more) of Christians who are not affiliated with Pentecostal churches say they have experienced or witnessed a divine healing. Many non-Pentecostal Christians also say they have seen the devil or an evil spirit being driven out of a person. And in most countries, speaking or praying in tongues is practiced at least several times a year by roughly 20% or more of those belonging to Christian denominations outside of Pentecostalism.

Belief in the Prosperity Gospel Is Widespread Among Christians

% of Christians who believe God will grant wealth and good health to those who have enough faith



Q59e. Now I'm going to read you two statements. Please tell me whether the FIRST statement or the SECOND statement comes closer to your own views — even if neither is exactly right. 1- God will grant wealth and good health to all believers who have enough faith OR 2 — God doesn't always give wealth and good health even to believers who have deep faith.

The Pentecostal movement is also closely associated with what is often called the prosperity gospel, which teaches that health and wealth are promised to those who have sufficient faith. And, indeed, more than half of Christians in all but three countries express the belief that God will grant wealth and health to believers who have enough faith; the exceptions are the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea Bissau and Tanzania, where roughly one-third of Christians believe in the prosperity gospel. These findings underscore the fact that the impact of Pentecostalism extends well beyond the growth of Pentecostal churches. (For background on Pentecostalism worldwide, see the Pew Forum's 2006 report "Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals.")