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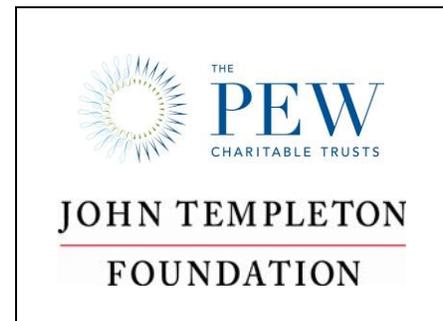
April 15, 2010

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Sub-Saharan Africans Deeply Committed to Christianity and Islam New Pew-Templeton Survey of 19 African Nations Finds Signs of Tolerance and Tensions Between the Faiths

Washington, D.C. — The vast majority of people in many sub-Saharan African nations are deeply committed to one or the other of the world’s two largest religions, Christianity and Islam, and yet many continue to practice elements of traditional African religions. Most people support democracy and say it is a good thing that people from other religions are able to practice their faith freely. At the same time, many also favor making the Bible or sharia law the official law of the land. And while many Muslims and Christians describe members of the other faith as tolerant and honest, there are clear signs of tensions and divisions between the faiths.

These are some of the key findings of a new survey released by the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life. “Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa” is based on a major public opinion poll exploring religion and society in the region. It is funded by a generous grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the John Templeton Foundation as part of the Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project, which aims to increase people’s knowledge of religion around the world.



The survey is based on more than 25,000 face-to-face interviews conducted in more than 60 languages or dialects in 19 countries. The countries were selected to represent different geographical areas and reflect different colonial histories, linguistic backgrounds and religious compositions. In total, the nations surveyed contain three-quarters of the population of sub-Saharan Africa.

While 90% or more of the respondents in most of the countries surveyed identify as Christian or Muslim, many people retain beliefs that are characteristic of traditional African religions, such as belief in the protective powers of sacrifices to spirits and ancestors. Many keep sacred objects such as animal skins and skulls in their homes and consult traditional religious healers when someone in their household is sick.

The report finds that on several measures Christians and Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa hold favorable views of each other, and in most countries relatively few see evidence of widespread anti-Muslim or anti-Christian hostility in their country. But Muslims and Christians also acknowledge that they know relatively little about each other’s faith. And substantial numbers of African Christians (nearly 40% or more in a dozen nations) say they consider Muslims to be violent, while Muslims are more positive in their assessment of Christians.

Additional findings from the survey include:

- Sub-Saharan Africans generally rank crime, corruption and unemployment as bigger problems than religious conflict. However, substantial numbers of people (including nearly six-in-ten Nigerians and Rwandans) say religious conflict is a very big problem in their country.
- The degree of concern about religious conflict varies from country to country but tracks closely with the degree of concern about ethnic conflict in many countries, suggesting that they are often related.
- Many Africans are concerned about religious extremism, including within their own faith in some countries. Indeed, many Muslims say they are more concerned about Muslim extremism than about Christian extremism, while Christians in Ghana, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia say they are more concerned about Christian extremism than about Muslim extremism.
- In most countries, at least half of Muslims say that women should not have the right to decide whether to wear a veil, saying instead that the decision should be up to society as a whole.
- Religion in sub-Saharan Africa often involves intense, personal encounters with God, divine healings and other experiences often associated within the Christian community with Pentecostalism. But many of these beliefs and practices are common among African Christians who are not affiliated with Pentecostal churches.
- Majorities in almost every country say that Western music, movies and television have harmed morality in their nation. Yet majorities in most countries also say they personally like Western entertainment.
- In comparison with people in many other regions of the world, sub-Saharan Africans are highly optimistic that their lives will change for the better.

The 19 countries represented in the survey are: Botswana, Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

The report, including a summary of findings and an interactive Web component, is available [online](#).

The Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life conducts surveys, demographic analyses and other social science research on important aspects of religion and public life in the U.S. and around the world. As part of the Washington-based Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan, nonadvocacy organization, the Pew Forum does not take positions on any of the issues it covers or on policy debates.

The Pew Charitable Trusts is driven by the power of knowledge to solve today's most challenging problems. Pew applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public and stimulate civic life.

The John Templeton Foundation serves as a philanthropic catalyst for research and discoveries relating to the Big Questions of human purpose and ultimate reality. The Foundation supports work at the world's top universities in such fields as theoretical physics, cosmology, evolutionary biology, cognitive science, and social science relating to love, forgiveness, creativity, purpose, and the nature and origin of religious belief. It also seeks to stimulate new thinking about freedom and free enterprise, character development, and exceptional cognitive talent and genius.