

World Bank Receives Good Marks in World Poll

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Global Companies Less Positive, But More Popular In South Than North

[Questionnaire/Methodology](#)

As leaders of the global economy convene in Davos, a new BBC poll of 32 nations finds that despite the widespread criticism it has received, the World Bank is widely viewed as having a positive influence in the world and was viewed most positively among a list of global economic actors, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and global companies. On average, 55 percent rated the World Bank as having a positive influence in the world, while just 18 percent rated it as having a negative influence. Among the 32 countries polled, in 30 a majority (17 countries) or a plurality (13) rated the World Bank as positive. In only one country—



Argentina—did a plurality (47%) say it is having a negative influence.

Photo: Taroudant Province New Primary school, Morocco, funded by the World Bank; Julio Etchart/World Bank

The poll of 37,572 people was conducted for the BBC World Service by the international polling firm GlobeScan together with the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland. The 32-nation fieldwork was coordinated by GlobeScan and completed between October 2005 and January 2006.

Global companies received the lowest positive ratings (average of 41%) compared to all other global players, and the highest negative ratings (26%). In only six countries did a majority rate global companies as having a positive influence, though in another 16 a plurality did. Eight countries, predominantly developed countries of the global North, rated them negatively—seven by pluralities and one by a majority. Countries of the global South had the most positive views of

global companies, particularly in Asia and



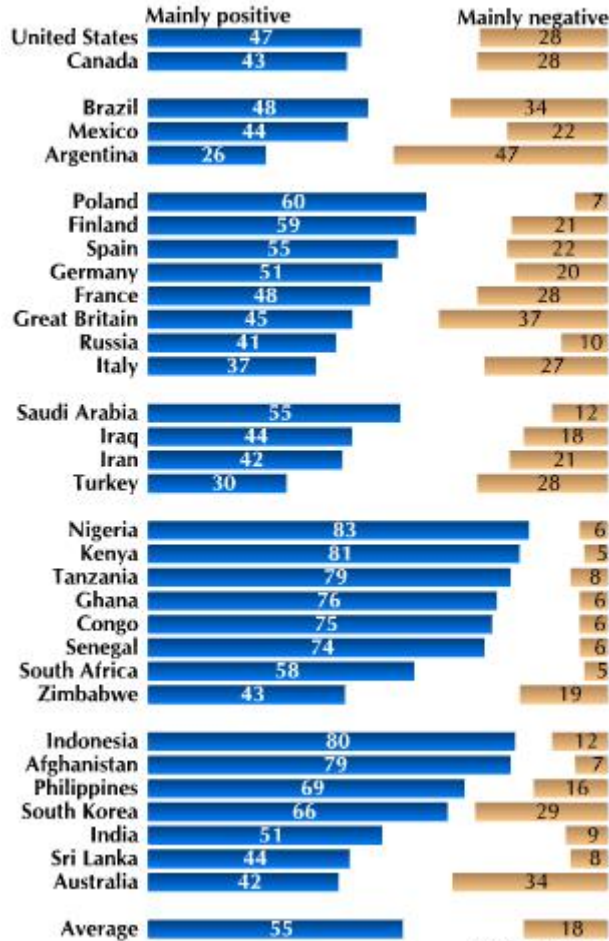
Africa.

The IMF is not as well regarded as the World Bank, but still, on average a plurality of 47 percent see it as having a positive influence and just 21 percent see it as having a negative influence. In 29 countries, a majority (13 countries) or a plurality (16) views it positively. The only two countries in which a majority views it negatively are Argentina (60%) and Brazil (57%), which have recently paid off their loans from the Fund so as to free themselves from its influence. A plurality of 49 percent is also negative in Turkey, which has taken significant loans from the IMF.

Steven Kull, director of PIPA, comments: “The widespread belief that the World Bank and even the IMF are having a positive influence in the world does not necessarily contradict the criticism they have received. The global public clearly sees it as positive that there are international institutions that seek to address the problems of poverty and economic instability, and on balance see them as doing more good than harm. At the same time, many see them as falling short of these goals and disproportionately serving the needs of the wealthy states—enough to drive many out on the street to demand that these institutions better fulfill their purpose and potential.”

Countries that have been recipients of World Bank loans are particularly positive about its influence. Africans are especially enthusiastic—Kenya (81% rated it positively), Tanzania (79%) and Democratic Republic of the Congo (75%). Afghanistan was also quite positive (79%) as were Asians generally, especially Indonesia (80%). People in developed countries in Europe and North America are more lukewarm but still lean to the positive. The British are among the most tepid with 45 percent positive and 37 percent negative, as are the Americans—47 percent positive, 28 percent negative. Globally, younger people are considerably more enthusiastic than older people.

Evaluations of the World Bank



BBC, 12/2005

In regard to the IMF, the Africans are also the most enthusiastic—especially Kenya (73%), Nigeria (67%) and Senegal (67%). Asians are fairly positive, but the developed countries are quite muted in their support. The largest donor—the US—has just 37 percent expressing positive views, with 26 percent expressing negative views. The only two countries in which a majority views it negatively are Argentina (60%) and Brazil (57%), which have recently paid off their loans from the IMF so as to free themselves from its influence. A plurality of 49 percent is negative in Turkey as well. Positive views rise a bit with education (but not income) and decline with age.

The most negative ratings of global companies come from European countries and the most positive from developing countries. A slight majority in Italy (51%) and pluralities in Britain (47%) and France (44%) said global companies are having a negative influence. Australians also leaned negative (49%). Negative pluralities were found in Argentina (40%) and Mexico (33%), but interestingly Brazil had a majority (60%) expressing positive views.

Positive views of global companies are most often found in Asia (South Korea 61%, Philippines 60%, Indonesia 53%, India 41%) and Africa (Nigeria 67%, Senegal 51%, Tanzania 50%).

Though the headquarters of many global companies are in the US, negative views are higher than the global average—38 percent of Americans view global companies negatively as compared to 26 percent globally. However, a plurality of 44 percent sees them positively—close to the global average of 41 percent.

Muslims worldwide are just as positive as Christians. Some predominantly Muslim countries are some of the most positive, especially Nigeria (67%) and Afghanistan (49%). In Iran, a plurality of 49 percent sees global companies as playing a positive role. The only Muslim country to lean negative was Turkey, with 27 percent negative and 21 percent positive (the rest not taking a position).

It is intriguing that negative views of global companies rise with more income as well as with more education; however, positive views remain a plurality in all categories. Young people are more positive than older people.