

U.N. Continues to get Positive, though Lower, Ratings With World Public

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NGOs get Top Ratings of All Global Actors

[Questionnaire/Methodology](#)

Despite a relatively poor year for the United Nations, publics in most countries continue to view the U.N. as having a positive influence in the world, according to a new BBC World Service poll of 32 nations. However, ratings are a bit lower than they were a year ago. Nongovernmental organizations received the highest ratings of all global actors.

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.

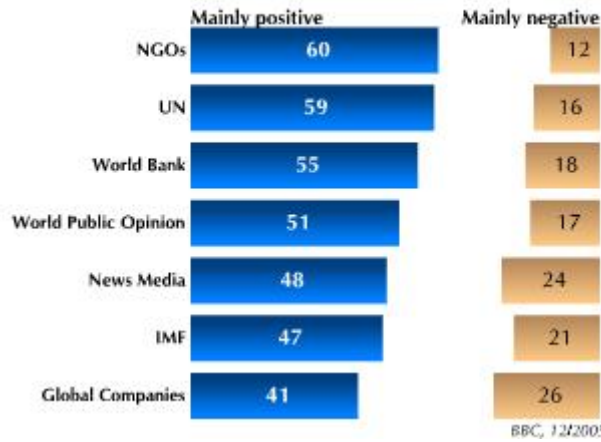
In 30 of the 32 countries polled, a majority (23 countries) or a plurality (7) rated the United Nations as having a positive influence. On average 59 percent rated the United Nations as having a positive influence, while just 16 percent rated it as having a negative influence.

However, among the 19 countries that were polled in fall 2004 and again in the current poll, the percentage giving the U.N. a positive rating is down an average of 10 points. (See below for more details).

Steven Kull, director of PIPA comments, "Given that the United Nations has been under the cloud of corruption investigations, has failed to achieve any significant breakthroughs in Iran or Darfur, and has been largely missing in action in Iraq, it is surprising that the U.N.'s rating have not slipped more. Apparently the United Nations is widely seen as a benign influence at the same time that more people have reservations about its performance."

Of all the global players examined in the poll, NGOs ("Non-governmental organizations such as environmental and social advocacy groups") got the highest grades with an average of 60 percent rating them as having a positive influence on the world, just 12 percent negative. NGOs were rated positively across all 32 countries polled, in 25 by a majority.

Evaluating the Global Players



As is discussed in a separate [WPO article](#), the World Bank received the highest rating among global economic actors. On average 55 percent gave it a positive rating. 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. The lowest ratings among global economic actors, and of all global actors polled on, were for global companies. On average just 41 percent gave them a positive rating and 26 percent a negative rating.

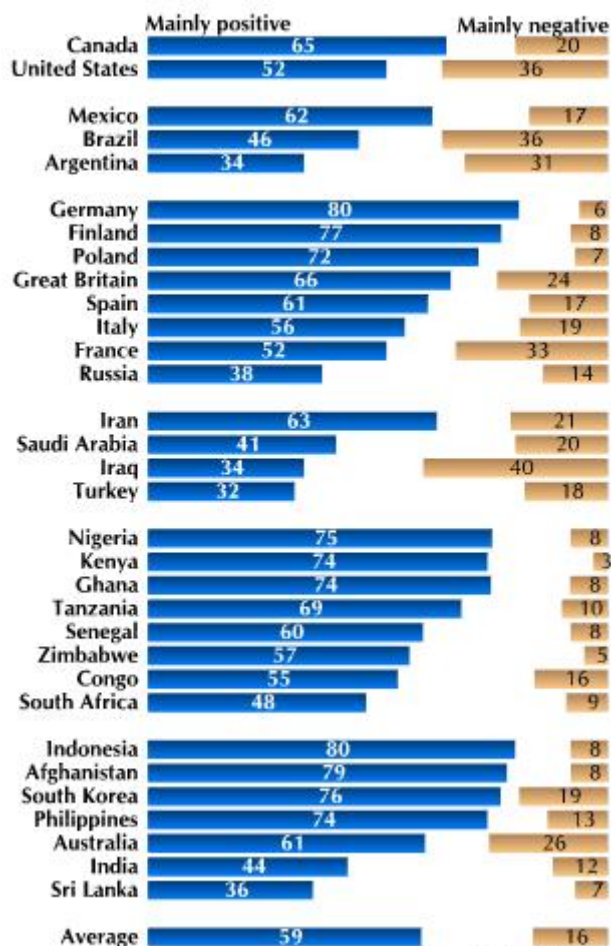
A growing factor in world affairs is world public opinion. The influence of world public opinion was rated positively in every single country—a distinction only shared by NGOs—in 15 countries by a majority, and 17 by a plurality. On average, 51 percent saw public opinion as positive and only 17 percent as negative. An unusually large 32 percent did not provide an assessment.

The news media received muted approval, getting positive ratings from a 48 percent plurality and negative ratings from 24 percent. Twenty-six rated it positively (16 a majority, 10 a plurality). Five countries rated it negatively (3 a plurality, 2 a majority). Canada was divided.

Variations in Ratings of Global Players

The United Nations

Evaluations of the UN



BBC, 12/2005 Europeans and Asians are especially positive about the United Nations. The only exceptions were Argentina, which was divided, and Iraq, which had a 40 percent plurality saying the U.N. has a negative influence while 34 percent thought it has a positive influence. Interestingly, 63 percent of Iranians view the U.N. as having a positive influence in the world, suggesting they might see the U.N. as an honest broker in Iran's current dispute with Germany, France, Britain and the United States over its nuclear program.

As mentioned, there has been a distinct drop in ratings of the U.N. (on average 10 points). In some countries the drops have been sharp—France dropped from 73 percent viewing it positively to 52 percent; South Africa from 73 percent to 48 percent; Great Britain from 76 percent to 66 percent; and the United States from 59 percent to 52 percent. But no countries slipped into a predominantly negative view. The one country to go up substantially was Mexico—rising from 41 percent to 62 percent positive.

Positive views of the United Nations rise with education and income. Younger people are more enthusiastic than older people. Christians are more positive than Muslims, but a majority of Muslims are still positive (Christians 62%, Muslims 56%).

NGOs

Europeans and North Americans are especially positive—Britain 70 percent, United States 64 percent, France 80 percent. The only countries to be at all lukewarm were Mexico (39% positive, 23% negative), India, Sri Lanka and Saudi Arabia, where majorities did not take a position. Positive views go up with education and income.

World Public Opinion

Interestingly, of the five countries with the strongest majorities that saw world public opinion positively, none were countries with traditional, long-standing democratic governments. These five were Poland (68%), Iran (68%), Indonesia (66%), South Korea (64%) and Nigeria (64%). On the other hand, the countries with the slimmest pluralities positive about world public opinion were the United States (46%) and Australia (48%).

By a substantial margin, Americans have the largest percentage giving a negative rating of world public opinion—39 percent. This may be a reaction to polls revealing negative attitudes toward the United States over the last few years.

There was no difference between Muslims and Christians in their positive majority views of world public opinion. Positive views rise a bit with more education and income, but negative views rise slightly as well.

The News Media

The media was most appreciated in mid-level developing countries—some with, and some without, long free-press traditions. In Indonesia an overwhelming 78 percent saw the media as positive, as did 75 percent in Nigeria, 67 percent in the Philippines, 65 percent in Brazil and 63 percent in Kenya.

No country was more negative about the news media than the United States. Sixty-four percent of Americans felt the media was a negative influence; only 28 percent saw it as positive. English-speaking countries were generally negative, with Australia having a majority (59%), and Britain a plurality (48%) who saw the news media this way. Canada was divided, 44 percent negative and 41 percent positive. France leaned slightly negative (43% to 39%).

Overall, the major industrial countries of the G7 were almost 24 points more negative than was the 32-country average—43 percent to 24 percent. Those with higher education or income were slightly inclined to be more negative about the media than the poorer and less educated. Younger were slightly more positive than older.