

Muslims Positive About Globalization, Trade

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[Questionnaire/methodology \(PDF\)](#)

[Press Release \(PDF\)](#)

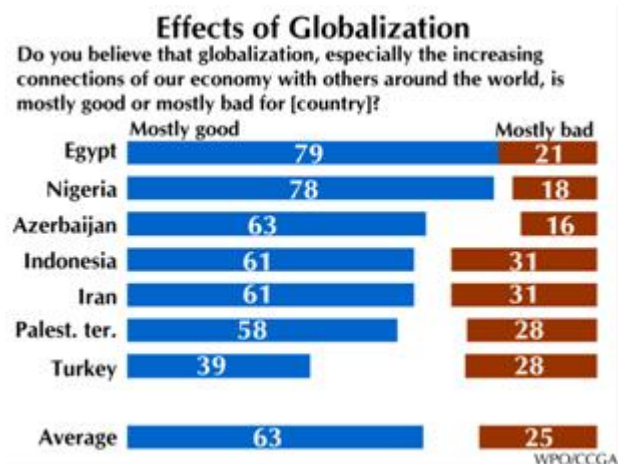
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Contrary to the common assumption that Muslims view globalization as a threat to their society, a new poll of Muslim countries finds that globalization is generally viewed positively. The poll was conducted by WorldPublicOpinion.org in six nations with predominantly Muslim populations in different regions of the world including Egypt, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iran, Indonesia, and the Palestinian Territories, plus the Muslim population of Nigeria.

Truck traffic at the Egyptian port of Nuweiba in a November 2007 photo. (Photo: Chris Yunker)

Asked about "globalization, especially the increasing connections of our economy with others around the world," majorities in six of the seven nations polled say that it is "mostly good" for their country. Approval is highest among Egyptians and Nigerian Muslims (79% and 78% saying mostly good, respectively). Sixty-three percent of Azerbaijanis, 61 percent of both Iranians and Indonesians, and 58 percent of Palestinians see globalization as mostly good. While support in Turkey does not reach a majority, a plurality still calls globalization mostly good (39% to 28%). On average across all seven publics, 63 percent say that globalization is good for their own countries. Only 25 percent think it is mostly bad.



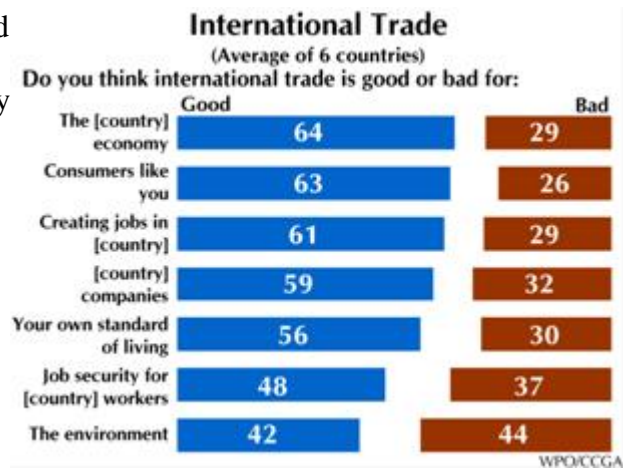
The poll of 5,216 respondents was conducted January 12 - February 23, 2008¹ by WorldPublicOpinion.org, a collaborative research project involving research centers from around the world and managed by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland. Not all questions were asked in every country. Margins of error range from +/- 3.2 to 4.1 percent.

The poll finds that most respondents also view international trade as good for their countries and themselves. At the same time, many are concerned about trade's effects on workers and the environment. However most express interest in addressing these effects, not through protectionism but through an international, cooperative effort integrating labor and environmental standards into agreements on international trade.

Steven Kull, director of WorldPublicOpinion.org comments, "These findings run counter to the widespread assumption that people in the Muslim world are anxious and hostile about the prospect of integration into the global economy."

International Trade

Asked whether international trade is good or bad for their country's economy, majorities in five of six nations polled say that it is good. Similar to answers on globalization, on average 64 percent think international trade is good for their country's economy, while 29 percent say it is bad. However individual nations vary. While Turks only have a plurality positive about globalization, they have a strong majority (72%) positive about trade. While Egyptians and Nigerian Muslims are the most positive about globalization, they are the most skeptical about trade--a bare plurality of Nigerians give it a positive rating (51% to 46%) while Egyptians are evenly divided. The most enthusiastic public is that of Azerbaijan, where 85 percent are positive. Palestinians and Indonesians are also quite positive (70% and 60% say mostly good).



Majorities or pluralities in five of six nations see international trade as good for their countries' companies, Nigerian Muslims being the only exception (though the Nigerian population as a whole is positive). Eighty percent of Azerbaijanis, 70 percent of Turks, 67 percent of Palestinians, and 52 percent of Egyptians see their national companies as benefiting from international trade. Among Indonesians a 49-percent plurality agreed, with 39 percent seeing trade's effects as bad. Among Nigerian Muslims, though, 59 percent see trade as adversely affecting Nigerian companies, and only 37 percent think the effects are good. Overall, on average 59 percent see trade as beneficial to their respective countries' companies.

Majorities in every population polled think trade is good for consumers, on average 63 percent. On this Nigerian Muslims lead the way, with 77 percent positive, followed by Azerbaijanis (67%), Turks (62%), Indonesians (59%), Palestinians (57%), and Egyptians (54%). Those who see trade as hurting consumers were most numerous in Egypt (46%) and Indonesia (32%).

Most think international trade is also good for their own standard of living--on average 56 percent hold this view, with 30 percent saying their standard of living is hurt by trade. The exception is Egypt where 56 percent say it is bad for their standard of living. Elsewhere, Azerbaijanis, Palestinians, and Turks are the most positive, at 65, 62, and 61 percent respectively. Fifty-four percent of Nigerian Muslims and 51 percent of Indonesians agree.

The reservations expressed by Egyptians and Nigerian Muslims may be related to the economic conditions in their country, where economic booms in some sectors, often associated with greater trade, have been matched with growing inequality. In Egypt, where ambitious economic reforms launched in 2004 have contributed to growth rates of around 7 percent, poverty has nonetheless increased over the past three years.² In Nigeria, oil industry practices have been a focus of complaints and opposition for decades, on both economic and environmental grounds.³

Trade and Labor

Views of the effect of international trade on workers is more mixed. While trade is widely seen as positive for creating jobs, its effect on job security for workers produces more divided responses. On average, a 61-percent majority thinks international trade is good for creating jobs in their own countries (29% bad), while a 48-percent plurality think international trade is good for job security (37% bad).

Again Azerbaijanis and Turks are the most positive. Seventy-seven percent of Azerbaijanis see job creation, and 57 percent see job security, as benefiting from international trade--as did 66 and 62 percent of Turks, respectively. Among the Palestinians, 62 percent think international trade aids job creation, and 57 percent think it aids job security. In Indonesia, a 55-percent majority says trade helps to create jobs, but a lesser 47-percent plurality thinks trade helps job security. On both points 37 percent disagree.

Egyptians are negative by a margin of almost two to one about trade's impact on job creation and security: Sixty-four percent think that trade is bad for job creation and 65 percent think it is bad for job security.

Nigerian Muslims have divergent responses to the two questions. Seventy-two percent think trade is good for job creation, while 64 percent think it is bad for job security. These responses reflect the fact that international trade can indeed stimulate the creation of new jobs while also engendering rapid changes that undermine job security.

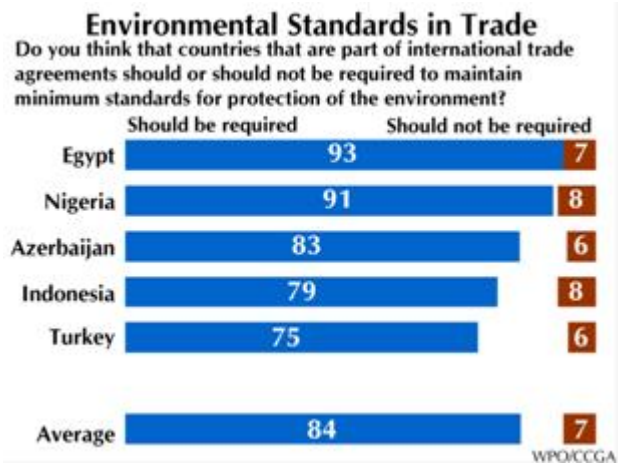
Trade and the Environment

Out of all the effects posed to respondents, international trade's effect on the environment elicited the most negative views from respondents. On average across the six populations opinion is divided, with 44 percent saying it has a bad effect and 42 percent saying it has a good effect on the environment.

Views vary considerably on this issue between nations. Majorities in three nations see trade's environmental effects as negative--most strongly among Egyptians (63%), Nigerian Muslims (58%), and Indonesians (56%). In two other nations majorities take a positive view--Turkey (58%) and the Palestinian Territories (53%). In Azerbaijan, a 42-percent plurality see trade's environmental effects as good while 33 percent see them as bad.

Environmental and Labor Standards in Trade Agreements

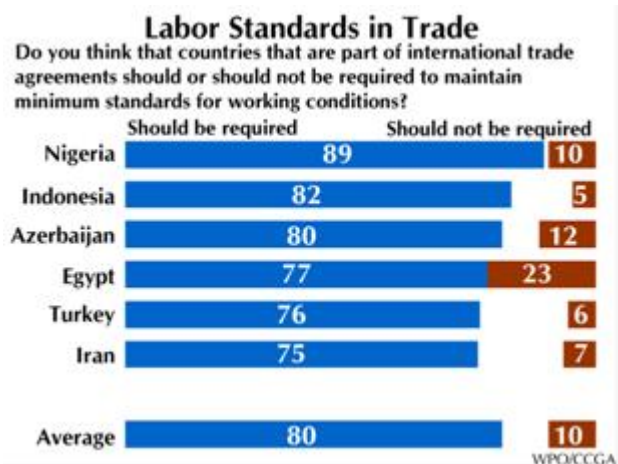
Some propose requiring minimum environmental standards in trade agreements as a way to mitigate the potentially negative impact of trade on the environment. They argue that this would subvert the potential for companies to seek out countries with the lowest environmental standards and for countries to compete by lowering their standards. Critics say, however, that including environmental standards in trade agreements can hurt developing countries' competitive edge by raising costs and discouraging investment. The leaders of many developing countries oppose requiring such standards.



Even though the predominantly Muslim countries in this poll are considered developing countries, the data show that very large majorities in all five countries polled support incorporating environmental standards into trade agreements. On average 84 percent approve, with no country having less than three in four in support.

Interestingly, the highest majorities come from the two populations that express the most doubts about international trade in general, and the highest level of concern about the impact of trade on the environment. Ninety-three percent of Egyptians and 91 percent of Nigerian Muslims say that trade agreements should include "minimum standards for protection of the environment." Eighty-three percent of Azerbaijanis, 79 percent of Indonesians, and 75 percent of Turks agree.

A concern that runs parallel to international trade's effect on the environment is its effect on labor standards. Here again there is concern that, in an attempt to cut labor costs, multinational companies will seek out--and developing countries will provide--a labor market with low levels of



protections for workers. Thus it has been proposed that international trade agreements include labor standards that would require signatory agreements to comply with international labor standards, such as prohibiting child labor and allowing workers to form labor unions. As in the case of environmental standards, critics say that adding labor protections to trade agreements would hurt developing countries by raising costs and discouraging investment.

Although most of the six nations polled are considered to have low-cost labor markets, all publics overwhelmingly support including labor standards in trade agreements. On average 8 in 10 support them, as do at least three in four within each nation. The highest levels of support come from Nigerian Muslims at 89 percent, followed by Indonesians (82%), Azerbaijanis (80%), Egyptians (77%), and Turks (76%).

¹ Fielding in the Palestinian Territories was conducted Oct 8-15, 2006. Fielding in Iran was conducted Oct 31-Dec 6, 2006.

² David J. Lynch, "Egypt's economy soars; so does misery," USA Today, May 14, 2008, http://www.usatoday.com/money/world/2008-05-14-egypt-economy_N.htm

³ Economist, "Another deadline goes up in flames: Continued gas flaring harms both the environment and the economy," April 3, 2008, http://www.economist.com/world/mideast-africa/displaystory.cfm?story_id=10979890.