

19 Nation Poll on Global Issues

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World Public Opinion Says World Not Going in Right Direction; Linked to Widespread Negative Views of US Influence

[Questionnaire](#)

A majority of people in the world do not feel the world is going in the right direction, a view strongly linked to the view--held by a majority--that the United States is not having a positive influence in the world. A majority views globalization positively, but majorities--especially in rich countries--say that the rich are not playing fair in trade negotiations with poor countries. In most countries the UN is well trusted.

These are some of the findings from a new poll of 18,797 people from 19 countries around the world conducted by the international polling firm Globescan (formerly Environics International) and analyzed in conjunction with the Program on International Policy Attitudes of the University of Maryland. The polls were conducted November 2003 through February 2004 in Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, France Germany, Great Britain, India, Indonesia, Italy, Mexico, Nigeria, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Turkey, Uruguay, and the United States.

Asked about the general direction of the world, 60% of overall respondents said that the world is not going in the right direction, with the largest majorities being in Europe including Italy (79%), Germany (78%), and France (78%). Americans leaned to a negative view, but moderately so, with 45% saying the world is going in the right direction and 50% disagreeing. The only countries that showed a majority saying the world is going in the right direction were China (77%) and India (51%). Worldwide, those who live in higher GDP countries were more negative, but still clear majorities were negative in Latin America and Africa.

Views of the United States

Overall, only 37% said that the US is having a positive influence in the world, while 55% disagreed. These negative views of the influence of the US are closely linked to negative views of the direction of the world. Among those who think the US is having a negative influence, 70% say the world is going in the wrong direction, while those who think the US is having a positive influence are evenly divided about the direction of the world. When a multivariate regression analysis was performed, views of the US were the most powerful predictor of how things are going in the world, with those seeing the US having a negative influence being more than twice as likely to have negative views of how the world is going.

Twelve of the 19 countries had predominantly negative views of America's influence, which were particularly widespread in Germany (82%), France (74%), Argentina (72%), Russia (72%), and Turkey (69%). The only countries to express majority positive views were India (69%),

Nigeria (56%), Brazil (52%), and South Africa (51%). Those with higher levels of education were more negative than those with low levels, as were those with very high levels of income as compared to those with very low levels.

Views of Europe

In general, views of Europe were more favorable than for the US, but were still only lukewarm. Overall, a plurality of 49% said that Europe has a positive influence in the world, and 40% disagreed. Similar to the world norm, 48% of Americans had a positive view of Europe and 41% a negative view. However, overall views of Europe and the US are not polarized--those who have a positive view of Europe are actually more likely to have a positive view of the US and vice versa.

Relations Between Rich and Poor Countries

A clear majority of world public opinion (56%) does not think that rich countries are playing fair in trade negotiations with poor countries. Interestingly, this is most widely felt in rich countries such as Italy (77%), France (76%), and Spain (75%), while, overall, low GDP countries are divided on this question. A modest majority worldwide (52%) says that poor countries do not benefit as much as rich countries from free trade. Here again, this view is held by strong majorities among high GDP countries, while a plurality of people in low GDP countries say that they do benefit as much.

An overwhelming worldwide consensus (84%) agrees that rich countries have a moral responsibility to help poor countries develop, with majorities in most countries feeling this way strongly. Publics in rich countries agree as much as in poor countries.

But perhaps more important, an overwhelming majority (74%), with no countries dissenting, also believes that it is in rich countries' own economic self-interest to actively help poor countries develop. Interestingly, agreement is higher in high GDP countries (85%) than in low GDP countries (71%). Agreement also rises with education and is higher among Christians (76%) than Muslims (59%).

Globalization

Globalization is mostly seen as positive by the world public, with support being especially high in poorer countries. Overall, 55% said that economic globalization is positive for them and their family, while only 25% said it is negative and 20% are unsure. However, support is soft, with only one in ten saying globalization is "very positive" for them and their families.

In fourteen of the 19 countries, a majority expresses positive views, with 10 countries being 60% positive or more, especially India (73%), Brazil (72%), South Africa (71%), and Nigeria (70%). Americans were also quite positive, with 65% expressing a positive view. No country had a majority with a negative view and France was the sole country to have a plurality negative view (45%). Russia, Turkey, Uruguay, and Argentina were divided.

Those who view globalization positively are more apt to see the world as moving in a positive direction, but even among those who see the world moving in the wrong direction a plurality (49%) sees globalization as positive. Within countries, support for globalization rises with education and income, and is higher among younger people.

Opening Rich Country Markets to Poor Countries

Consistent with their strong support for helping poor countries, in most rich countries the majority favors opening their markets to food and clothing products from poor countries, even when the prospect of significant job losses is spelled out--with the American public being the clear exception.

Majorities in Spain (72%), Great Britain (59%), Germany (58%) and Canada (51%) say they are ready to open their markets. Publics are divided in France (47% in favor 43% opposed) and Italy (43% and 47% opposed)--two countries that are very protective of their agricultural heritage. The lowest level of support was found in the US where only 35% favored opening their market, with 60% opposed. Polling by the Program on International Policy Attitudes and other organizations reveals that Americans support for opening their markets when there is a threat to jobs is contingent on greater government programs to help threatened workers.

Support for opening markets rises with education and is higher among those with higher income within each country. Muslims are also more supportive (66%) than Christians (53%). Young people are more supportive than older people.

Trust in the United Nations

A majority worldwide (59%) said they trust the United Nations to "operate in the best interests" of their society. The only type of institution to receive a higher rating was "non-governmental organizations such as environmental and social advocacy groups," which were trusted by 65%. Institutions receiving lower levels of trust were national governments (53%), large domestic companies (52%), press and media (50%), trade and labor unions (48%), and global companies (42%).

Positive views of the UN were especially strong in Mexico (88%), Spain (78%) and Canada (77%), with Americans at 64%. The only countries to express a majority negative view in the UN were Argentina (57%) and Turkey (52%).

Trust in the UN is also positively correlated with confidence that the world is going in the right direction, as well as positive views of globalization and even of the influence of the US. Thus it appears that confidence in the UN is not polarized with confidence in the US, though trust in the UN is substantially higher. Trust in the UN was also positively correlated with education, and was higher among Christians (61%), than Muslims (49%).

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