

# THE POTENTIAL FOR A GLOBAL MESSAGE OF FRIENDSHIP

Shared values among people across faiths

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Prominent religious leaders from around the world released an appeal to Make Friends Across Religions on June 14, 2017. The initiators of the project, Havas Lemz and the the Elijah Interfaith Institute asked research agency Motivaction International the following research question:

## ***Is there a potential for a message of friendship across religions?***

To answer this question we use our Glocalities values-based study among 56,000 people across 24 countries.

In many research projects there is a profound focus on what makes people different and what stands out for specific subgroups. In this project we took a different approach. We did not focus on what separates us, but instead focused on what binds us together as humans across religious and non-religious groups.

In the analysis we approached the research question from 3 angles based on the available international data and research instruments:

- Firstly we looked at an area from our survey that measures openness to people with a different faith.
- Secondly we looked at the ranking of 'friendship' in an elaborate list of values cards.
- Thirdly we looked at relevant values statements from the survey that score highly and on which humanity is most united in order to put the results in a broader context.

The results of our analysis shows us that there is a lot of untapped potential for the message of friendship across religions, regardless of a religious/non-religious background.

## **About Glocalities**

The world is constantly changing. Technologies that grow exponentially and new media mean a continuously faster distribution of knowledge, ideas and products. The challenges for organizations are greater than ever. It is crucial to have the best understanding possible of current and future developments. A necessary condition for success in a time of rapid change is a refined understanding of trends and population segments.

For the second Glocalities study, the Amsterdam based research agency Motivaction International surveyed 56.409 respondents in 24 countries.

The survey was conducted in 15 languages between December 2015 and February 2016 and includes the following countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Russia, Spain, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom and the United States.

This study represents 62% of the world population and 80% of the world economy.

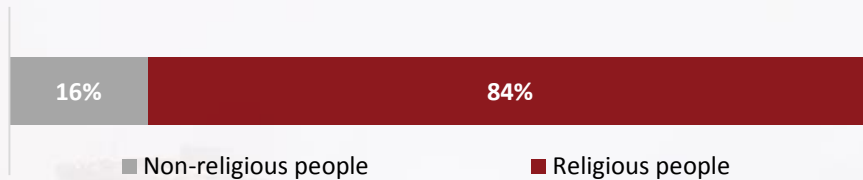
In the survey several research tools were incorporated such as values statements, archetypes and values cards which make it possible to obtain a 360-view of groups of people and a knowledge of what resonate with them. With unique knowledge of what drives people around the world, Motivaction International offers social intelligence and a fact-based navigation system in times of rapid globalization.



## A religious world

Before we go to our findings, it is relevant to highlight the importance of religion in our world today and in the future. The importance of religion is often underestimated; according to a global study from PEW Research Center 84% of the world population adheres to a religion. In addition, the percentage of non-religious people is expected to decrease from 16% to 13% between 2010 and 2050<sup>1</sup>. Religion in the 21st century is still of vital importance for people around the world. Religious leaders represent a vast majority of humanity and their leadership counts in shaping the worldviews, dreams, daily practice and aspirations of people.

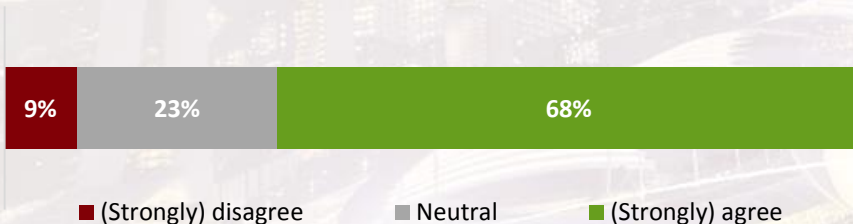
### 84% of the global population adheres to a religion:



Source: PEW Research Center, 2012

## Only a minority of people are not open to others with a different faith

The first way we analyzed the potential for a message of friendship across religions was by looking at the openness of people towards people with a different faith, based on the Glocalities study. A message of friendship across religions is unlikely to resonate if the majority of people would reject people with a different faith. This is not the case - in fact the opposite is true. 7 out of 10 people of every religion say that they are "always open to people with another religion of philosophy of life" and in essence take a positive stance towards people with a different faith. Only a minority (1 in 10 people) of religious people do not subscribe to this statement and sometimes are not open to people with other faiths.



<sup>1</sup><http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/04/02/7-key-changes-in-the-global-religious-landscape/>

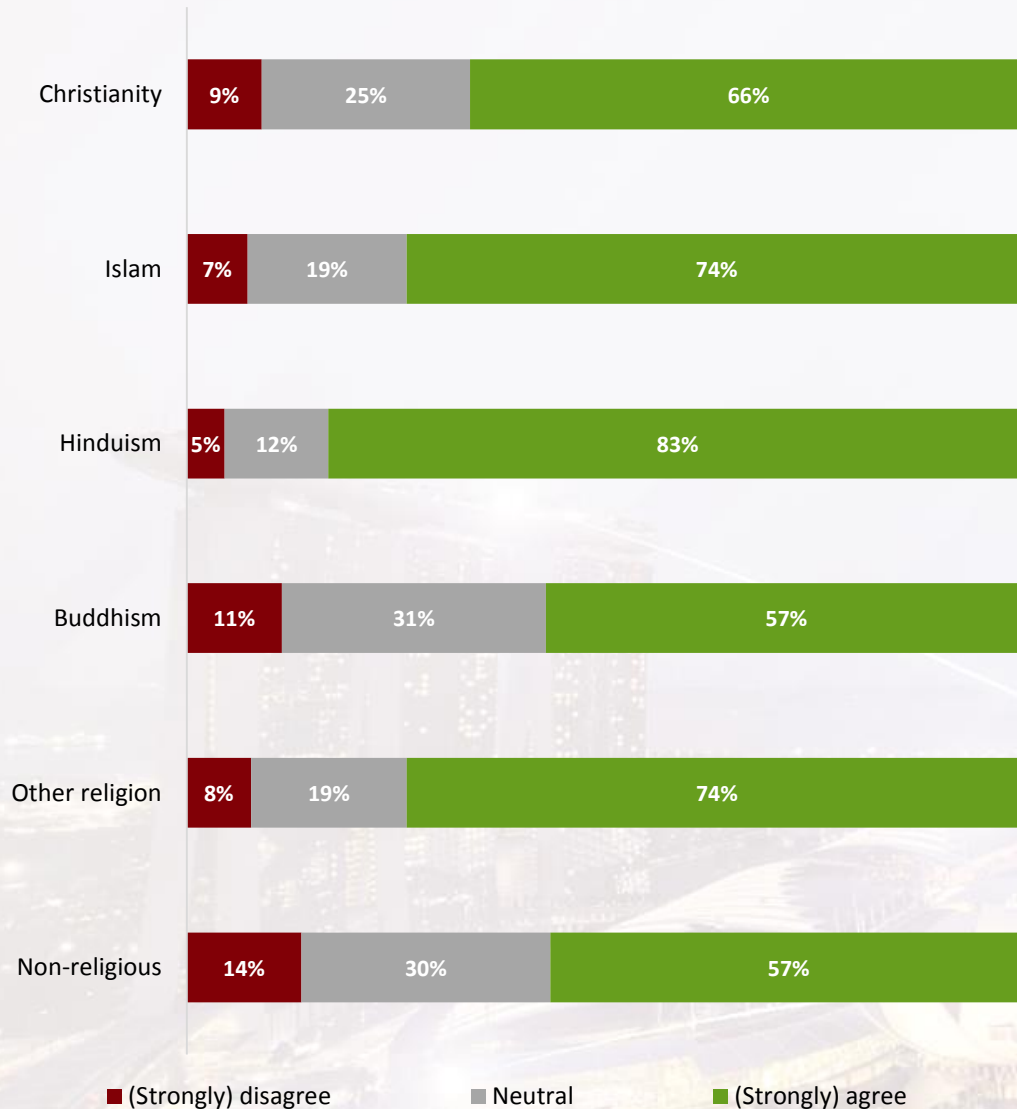
## Methodology

This study was conducted through the online research panels of SSI and GMI, two agencies that are specialized in international fieldwork. On average, the 24 countries that were surveyed have an internet penetration of 69%. Quotas were set beforehand and the datasets were weighted according to national census data. When we present international analysis each country has an equal weight in the data. The survey samples for 22 out of the 24 countries (except India and Indonesia) are representative of 18-65 year old's with respect to age, gender, region and education. In India and Indonesia, the results with respect to education are representative for the online population only, due to low internet penetration in these countries (and representative for the whole population with respect to age, gender and region). In Brazil, China, Mexico, Romania, South Africa South Korea and Turkey the educational quota (with respect to the low and middle educated) were combined due to the very low online presence of lower educated people in online research panels within these countries.

The analyses include a total of 55,070 people who were willing to state their religion. Of those people, 26,496 adhere to Christianity, 4,265 are Muslim, 2,210 adhere to Hinduism, 2,070 are Buddhist, 1,745 have another religion and 18,284 do not subscribe to any religion. Most Muslims in the Glocalities sample originate from Turkey and Indonesia, most Hindus from India and most Buddhists from other Asian countries. In the cases where we had too few respondents of a given faith for reliable analyses, we included them in the "Other religion" category. This category for example includes Sikhs, Jews, indigenous beliefs and other beliefs.

# The majority of people are open to others with a different faith

"I'm always open to people with another religion or philosophy of life"



## Large majorities across religions are open towards people with a different faith

When we look at the data more specifically it is clear that the majority of people among all religions say they are always open to people with a different faith. Hindu's are most open and Buddhists and non-religious people more neutrally vs. others. Christians and Muslims score in between, with Muslims answering more often about their openness to people with another religion or philosophy of life, similar to people from other religions.

The size of the minorities who are not always open to people with another religion or philosophy of life does not differ much between world religions (between 5 and 11%). Non-religious people (14%) are the least open towards people with another religion or philosophy of life. However within the non-religious group this is still a small minority compared to the 57% of non-religious people who agree with the statement.

Of course a minority of around 10% can seriously oppose the worldviews and ambitions of people who are open to people from other faiths. This analysis however shows that the large majority of people is in essence open minded towards people with another faith. Being open to a message of friendship across religions starts with accepting people regardless of their faith or philosophy of life.

Source: Glocalities (2016)

The second angle we took in assessing the potential for a message of friendship was to look at the appeal of friendship as a universal human value that religious leaders can relate to.

In the global Glocalities survey we measured the concept of friendship by using value cards. The Glocalities value cards are visual representations of a multitude of fundamental human values based on the values inventories from the work of social psychologist Milton Rokeach<sup>1</sup> and cross-cultural researcher Shalom Schwartz<sup>2</sup>. Glocalities uses a set of 48 values that are universal and relevant for practical research applications. Each values card that we included in the survey shows a picture and the name of the value and has been validated qualitatively among people from various cultural backgrounds.

In the survey we randomly presented a selection of 12 values cards to each respondent and asked them to select the 4 most appealing values cards. This question was asked 4 times to the respondent, so all 48 cards were presented to each respondent.

Of all 48 value cards "friendship" scored as the second most appealing value of people across the world and only "health" had a higher score. Across people from all religions friendship scores high in the rankings (see next page). Among all religions and among non-religious people, from the 48 values cards presented, at least 41 cards scored lower in rank than the friendship card.

## Ranking: Top 5 value cards out of 48:



**1. Health (71)%**



**2. Friendship (60)%**



**3. Freedom (58%)**



**4. Caring (58)%**



**5. Wisdom (57)%**

Source: Glocalities (2016)

This result tells us that friendship is a strongly appealing quality for people across the globe that religious leaders can relate to and use for inducing change. Affirming friendship as a main universal value for bringing people together in times of division is likely to invoke positive feelings among the majority of people that are open to people with a different faith, regardless of their religious/non-religious background.

<sup>1</sup> Rokeach, Milton (1973). *The Nature of Human Values*. New York: The Free Press.

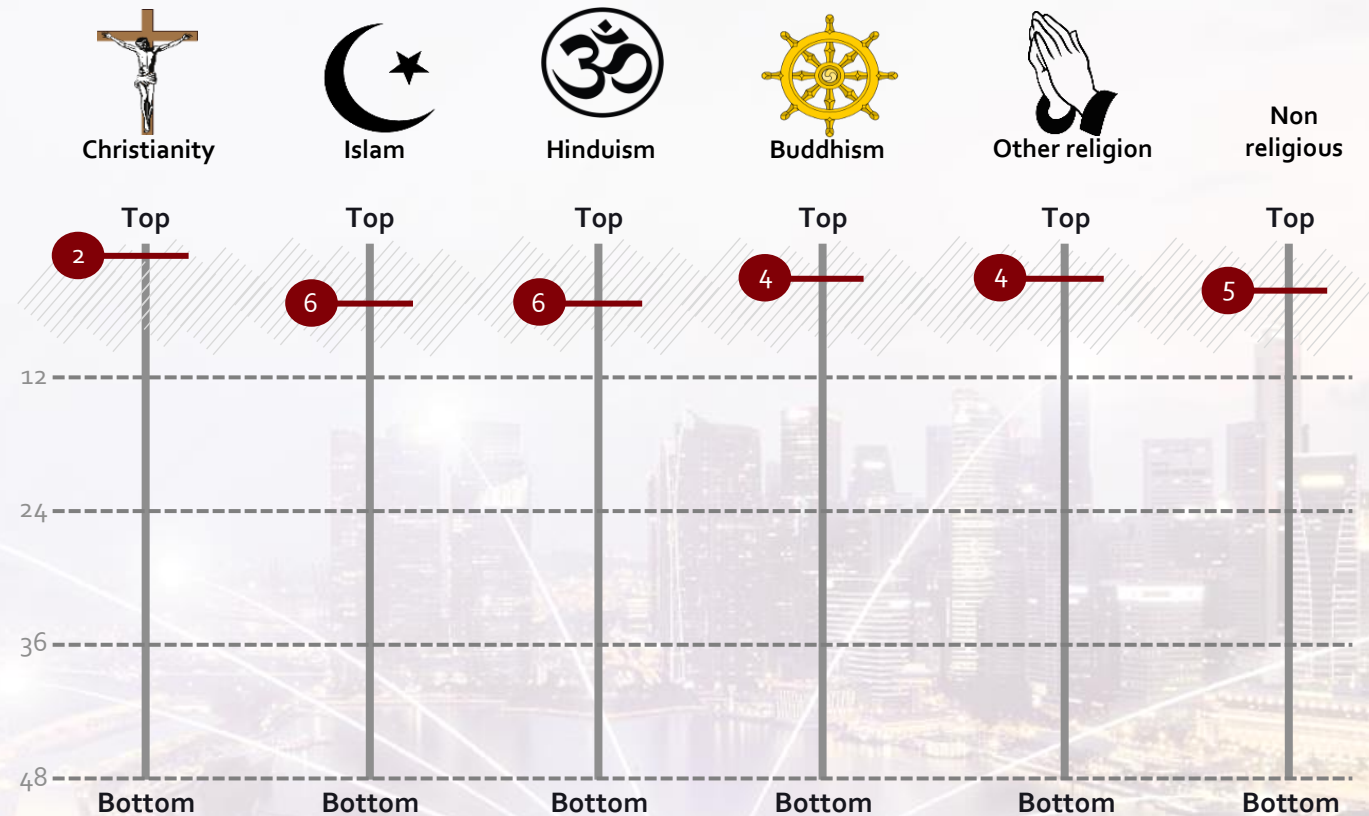
<sup>2</sup> Schwartz, S. H. (1992). Universals in the content and structure of values: Theory and empirical tests in 20 countries. In M. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 25) (pp. 1–65). New York: Academic Press.





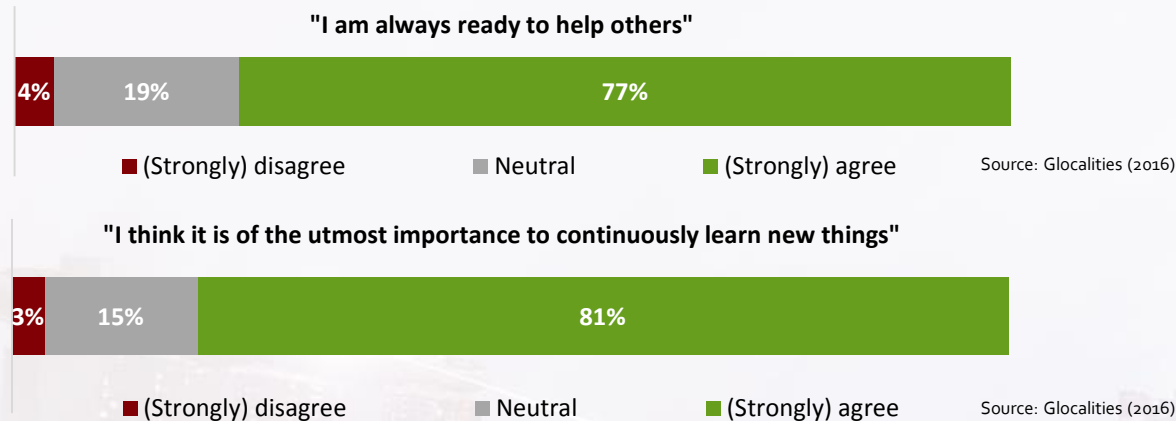
## Friendship is not just globally appealing – it is important across each faith and non-religious people

When we break down the scores from a global level to an individual religion level, we can see that friendship scored consistently highly among all faiths and the non-religious. At least 41 out of 48 value cards have *lower* ranking scores than friendship – a powerful statistic which unites all faiths.



Source: Glocalities (2016)

The third way we assessed the potential for a message of friendship was to look deeply into the international survey data to learn more about which values resonate universally and put the findings in a broader perspective. For this we searched for values statements that score highly and on which humanity is most united across faiths, based on a set of 115 statements. While searching for high-scoring values we corrected for culturally specific response styles that occur in international surveys regardless of the statements contents. Furthermore, for finding the high scoring values on which humanity is most united, we looked at the standard deviation in order to be able to select the statements that present the lowest rate of division among people.



This fundamental exercise resulted in two key insights. Two vital human capacities emerged on top, that shed more light on the potential and context for a message of friendship. Both insights apply to people of all religions and to non-religious people:

1. A vital driver that unites the majority of humanity is that we want to help others. Humans in essence are social beings. 77% of people globally agree with the statement "I am always ready to help others". In other words, people care about other people. Empathy is a key psychological capability of humans that is the foundation of cooperation and brotherhood. An appeal for friendship by leaders across the globe relates to a vital human capacity for caring and empathy.
2. Curiosity is a key human driver. 81% of people agree with the statement "I think it is of the utmost importance to continuously learn new things". People are less divided on this statement. Humans are able to live and thrive in the most diverse and harsh circumstances. People are intrinsically interested in broadening their scope, overcome fears and learning about the world. This has brought us language, technology, science and advanced societies. It is no coincidence that we are called Homo Sapiens Sapiens: we are blessed with intelligence. With an appeal for friendship across religions religious leaders challenge people to get out of their comfort zone, learn about others and make friends.

## Conclusion: A vast potential for friendship

Religious leaders represent a huge majority of people. Based on the analysis of global survey data we conclude that there is a clear potential for a message of friendship across religions from the world's religious leaders:

- The majority of people (religious and non religious) are open towards people with another religion or philosophy of life.
- A call for friendship appeals to one of the most highly cherished values among people from all religions and among non-religious people globally.
- A call for friendship across religions resonates with the universal human capacities for empathy and learning and challenges people to overcome fear and division.

## Research Director Martijn Lampert:

*"Today's unique call of religious leaders for friendship across faiths demonstrates that it is possible to overcome division by building upon shared values in challenging times. The vast majority of people crave for a better world, want to learn and contribute."*

*Responsible leadership of a wider range of leaders is vital to guide and channel this largely untapped potential for the greater good. As an empathic and learning species humanity is naturally inclined to reckon the value of friendship and cooperation with others in improving the quality of life."*





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*Majority of humanity say  
we are not alone in the  
universe*

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*Increasing knowledge and  
activating Millennials for  
making poverty history*

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