



United in Faith?

A Representative Study on Christians and Muslims in Germany

Dominik Hirndorf

- › Two thirds of all Catholics and Muslims believe in life after death. In response to the questions on belief in God and in the devil, Muslims have the highest numbers at 95 and 65 percent respectively.
- › The majority of Christians of all denominations adhere to the Christian baptismal, wedding and funeral rituals. While half of Muslims fast on a regular basis for religious reasons, the proportion is considerably smaller among Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox Christians.
- › Muslims appear especially open to visiting churches and to the wearing of religious symbols in court.
- › In contrast, an interfaith marriage of their own daughter or a family member's conversion is viewed as far more critical by Muslims in Germany than by the Christian denominations.
- › One third of Muslims describe themselves as very religious. However, 44 percent of them are opposed to living according to strict Muslim rules.

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Faith

Religion still plays an important role in Germany. This has been proven in a representative survey by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung¹. Although people with no religious affiliation are now the largest group with a share of 34 percent, adherents of the two world religions, Christianity and Islam, still jointly comprise more than half of the people living in Germany. Around one quarter of the population is Roman Catholic and another quarter is Protestant. In addition, according to the survey, 5 percent of people living in Germany describe themselves as Orthodox Christians and 6 percent as Muslims. These four groups are considered separately in the following analysis.²

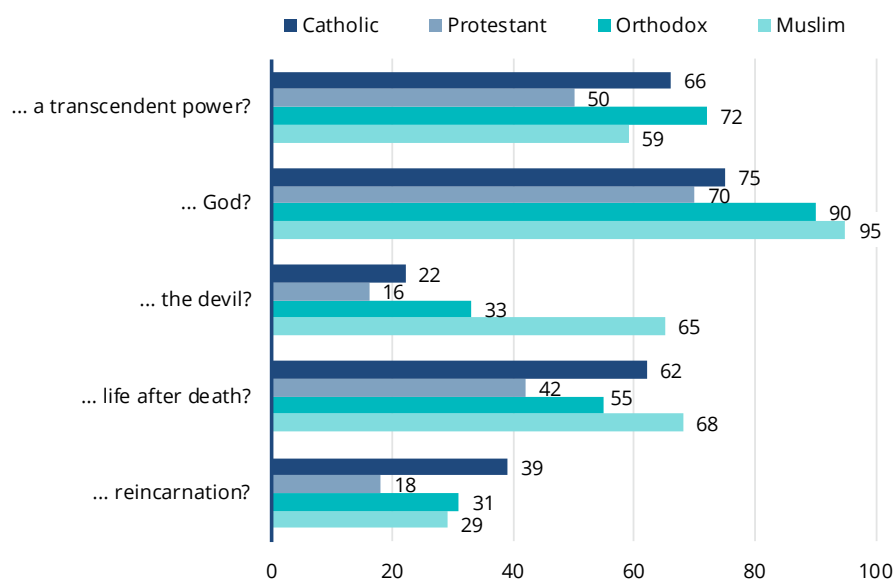
The majority of all three of the Christian denominations and of Muslims believe in a transcendent power, even if this power was not more precisely defined here. When respondents are asked about explicit belief in God, the proportions are higher in each of the four groups. The proportion of Protestants and Catholics who believe in God is 70 percent and 75 percent; while among of Orthodox Christians and Muslims, 90 percent and 95 percent respectively do.

Deeper differences between the religions initially appear in the question about belief in the devil. While most of the adherents of the Christian denominations do not believe in the existence of the devil (anymore), two thirds of Muslims find it credible that the devil exists.

Muslims have a strong belief in God and the devil.

Figure 1: Do You Believe in ...?

Here: "Yes"



Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., in percent.

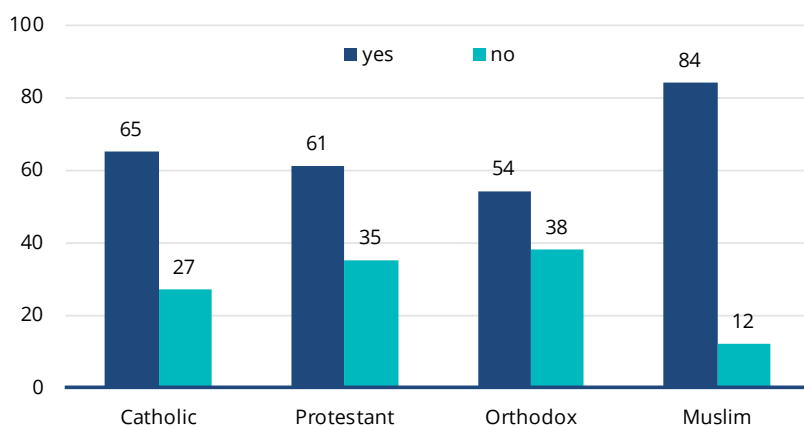
Muslims and Catholics are closest to each other on the question of life after death. Approximately two thirds of each group believe in life after death. It is notable that the majority of Protestants do not believe in life after death (only 42 percent do). Most Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox Christians and Muslims reject the idea of reincarnation; nonetheless, the high proportion of Catholics who believe in reincarnation (39 percent) is certainly surprising.

Around two thirds of Catholics and Muslims believe in life after death.

Rituals

Most adherents of all the denominations analysed would like to have a funeral conforming to religious rules after they die. Orthodox Christians are the least in favour (54 percent); two thirds of Catholics would like a religious funeral (Protestants 61 percent); and Muslims are by far the denomination in which the largest proportion want a funeral conforming to religious rules (84 percent).

Figure 2: Would You Like to Have a Christian Burial or, More Generally, a Funeral Conforming to Religious Rules?

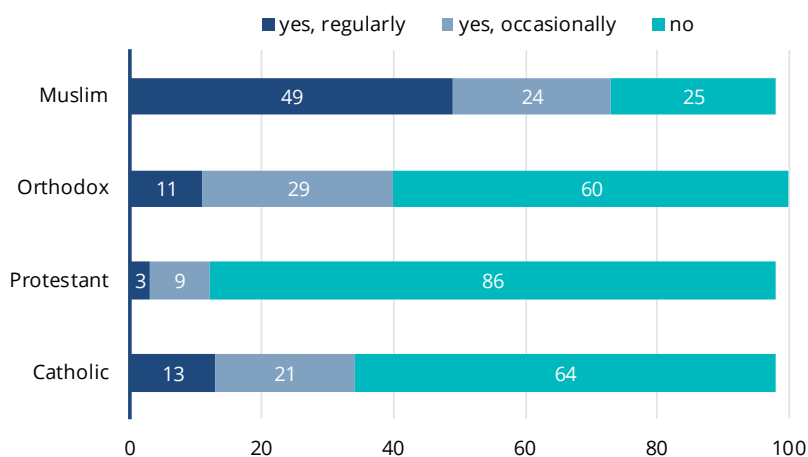


Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., in percent, "do not know (yet)"/"no response" omitted.

Almost half of the Muslim respondents fast regularly during Ramadan. An additional 24 percent do so at least occasionally. Among Catholics, 13 percent fast regularly during Lent and 21 percent do so occasionally. Protestant respondents fast far less frequently (3 percent regularly, 9 percent occasionally).

Half of Muslims fast during Ramadan for religious reasons.

Figure 3: Do You Fast for Religious Reasons During Lent or Ramadan?



Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., in percent, "no response" omitted.

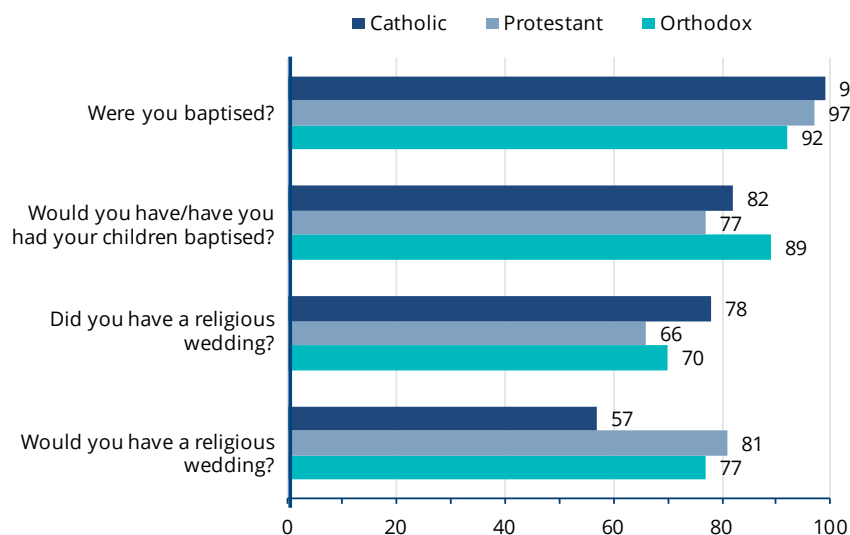
Adherents of the Christian denominations were also asked whether they are baptised and whether they also have their children baptised. Whereas 99 percent of Catholics are themselves baptised, only 82 percent pass on this ritual in the church tradition to their children. Among Protestants, the difference is as much as 20 percentage points (97 percent to 77 percent). In contrast, “only” 92 percent of Orthodox Christians are baptised, but 89 percent of them state that they have their children baptised.

The marriage ceremony is another religious ritual in the Christian church. More than two thirds of the married respondents in each of the denominations had a religious wedding (Protestants 66 percent, Catholics 78 percent, Orthodox 70 percent). It is notable that only 57 percent of unmarried Catholics would like to have a religious wedding, whereas 81 percent of Protestants would do so.

Most Christians of all denominations continue to observe the Christian baptismal, marriage and funeral rituals.

Figure 4: Whether or Not You Are a Member of a Christian Church:

Here: “Yes”



Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., in percent.

Tolerance

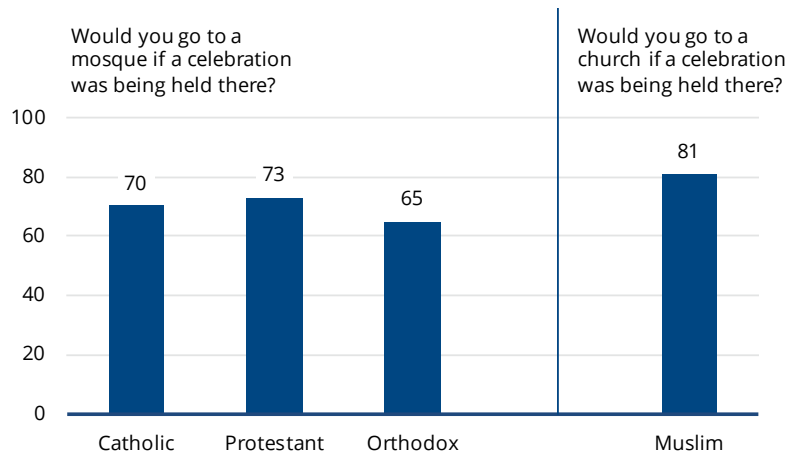
On the social level, Muslims are particularly open about accepting other religions. Thus, 81 percent of Muslims would go to a church if a celebration was being held there. In contrast, among Catholics (70 percent), Protestants (73 percent) and Orthodox Christians (65 percent), fewer respondents would go to a mosque if a celebration was to be held there.

In addition, respondents were asked their opinion on judges wearing religious symbols in court. The majority among the different denominational groups is not opposed to the wearing of either a kippah or a visible cross or headscarf. Orthodox Christians are the exception: most of them (56 percent) disapprove of a female Muslim judge wearing a headscarf. In the case of Muslims, it is certainly striking that the majority of them approve of the wearing of a visible cross and fewer of them are opposed to it than Catholics or Protestants (35 percent versus 40 and 42 percent respectively in the “I disapprove” response category).

Muslims are open to visiting churches and to the wearing of religious symbols in court.

Figure 5: Would You Go to a Mosque/Church if a Celebration Was Being Held there?

Here: "Yes"

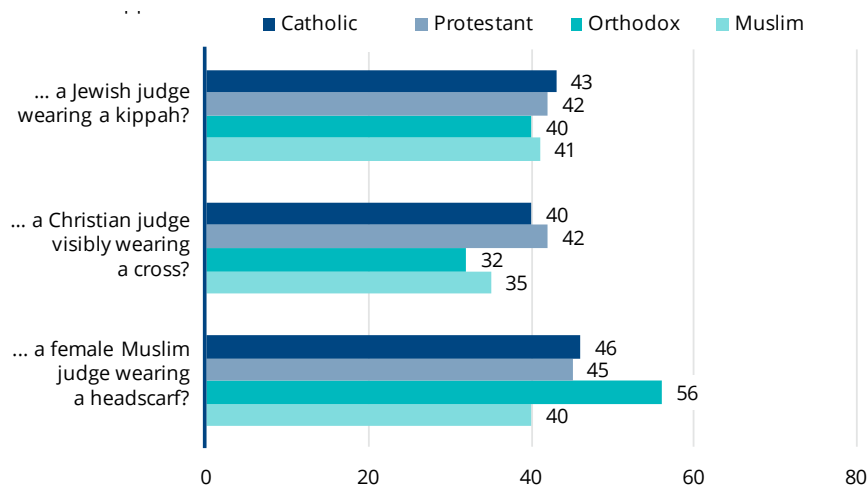


Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., in percent.

Figure 6: Judges and Religious Symbols

What Is Your View of ...

Here: "I disapprove"

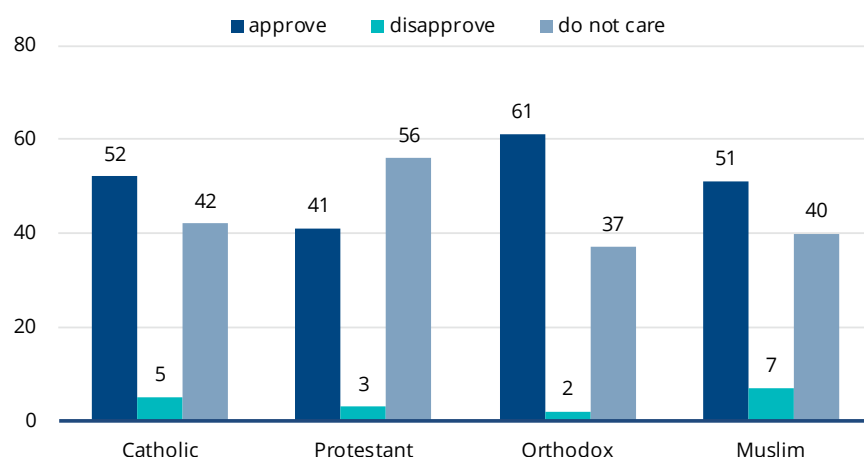


Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., in percent.

In general, all the denominational groups are in favour of contact with people of other faiths or say that denomination plays a less important role. Among Catholics (94 percent), Protestants (97 percent), Orthodox Christians (98 percent) and Muslims (91 percent), there is a large majority for both these response categories ("I approve" and "I do not care") in each case. Only a small fraction disapproves of someone from the immediate family having contact with people of other faiths. However, a difference between the societal and family levels already begins to emerge here: especially among the Muslims. Compared to other denominations, they have the largest proportion of respondents who do not approve of contact with people of other faiths (7 percent).

Christians and Muslims are strongly in favour of contact with people of other faiths.

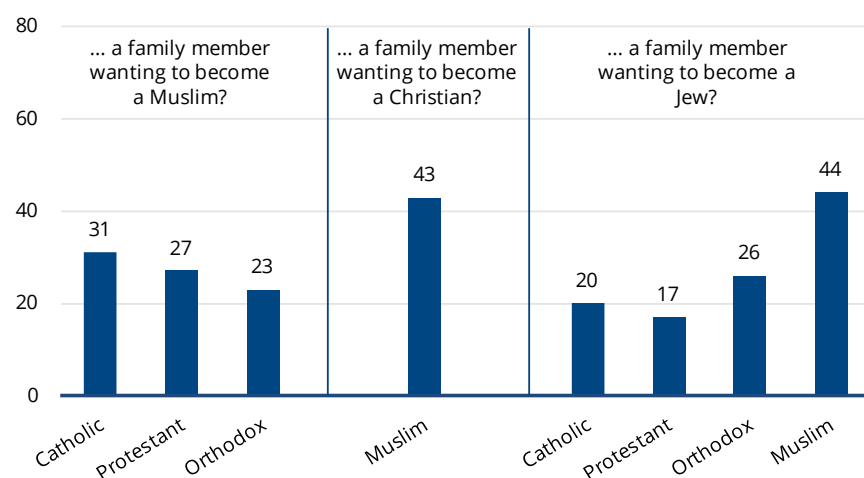
Figure 7: What Is Your View of Someone from Your Immediate Family Having Contact With People of Other Faiths?



Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., in percent, "no response" omitted.

The question on how they would react to a family member possibly converting also shows this tendency to have a somewhat more critical attitude towards other faiths within the family circle, as compared to the Christian denominations. The proportion of Muslims in Germany that would disapprove of a family member becoming a Christian is 43 percent. The proportion of respondents who would take a critical view of a family member converting to Islam is 31 percent of Catholics, 27 percent of Protestants and 23 percent of Orthodox Christians. The differences are even more marked with regard to a family member converting to Judaism. Such a step would be met with disapproval by 44 percent of Muslims, whereas the Christian denominations would be less opposed to it (Catholics: 20 percent, Protestants: 17 percent, Orthodox Christians: 26 percent).

Figure 8: Family Members Wishing to Convert: How Would You React to ...
Here: "I would disapprove"

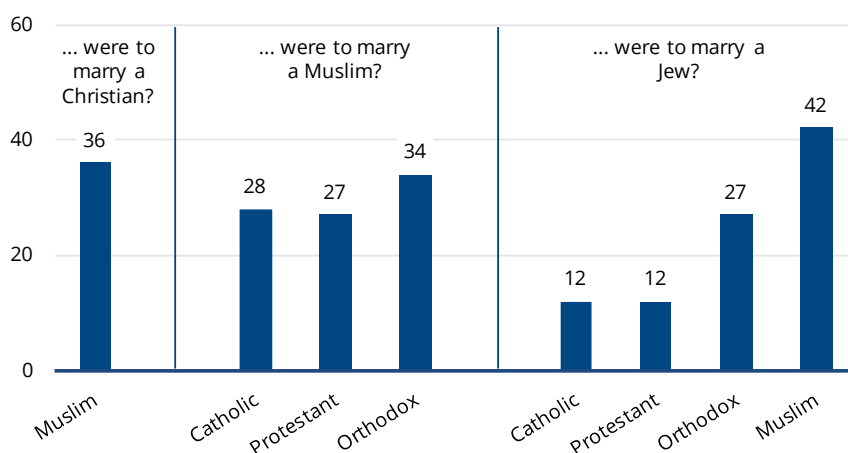


Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., in percent.

Similar results emerge when respondents are asked about their own daughter marrying somebody of another faith. Among Muslims, 36 percent would disapprove of their daughter marrying a Christian. At 34 percent, a similar number of Orthodox Christians respond the same to the corresponding question about their daughter marrying a Muslim. A smaller proportion of Catholics (28 percent) and Protestants (27 percent) would see this as a problem.

Differences between Christians and Muslims again become clear regarding Judaism. Here, 42 percent of Muslims would disapprove of their daughter marrying a Jew, whereas this would meet with opposition in only 12 percent of Catholics and Protestants and 27 percent of Orthodox Christians.

Figure 9: Imagine You Have a Daughter: How Would You React if Your Daughter ...
Here: "I would disapprove"



Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., in percent.

Among Christians, a Jewish son-in-law is viewed less critically than a Muslim son-in-law. As compared to the Christian denominations, there is, in general, greater opposition among Muslims. However, this does not become clear in the social context – Muslims appear even more open than Christians here – but only when members of their immediate family are involved. The numbers of opponents of a family member's interfaith marriage or conversion are conspicuously high among Muslims.

Religiosity

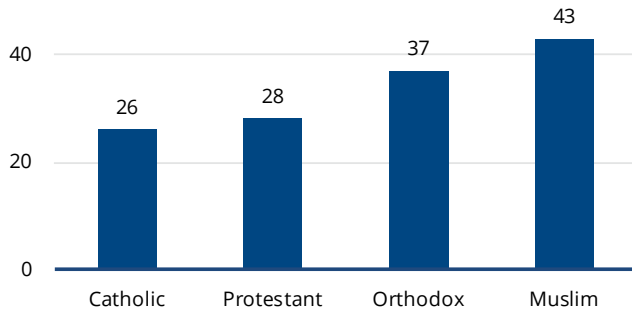
Muslims are quite opposed to living by strict religious rules as concerns their own religion. The proportion of Muslims who disapprove of others living according to strict rules based on religious beliefs is 43 percent. When broken down into the three world religions, the surprising result is that Muslims especially disapprove of living according to strict Muslim rules (44 percent), as well as living by strict Jewish rules (41 percent) and strict Christian rules (39 percent). The Christian denominations take a more critical view of living by strict Muslim rules than of living by strict Jewish or Christian rules. Orthodox Christians stand out here somewhat. In this group, 37 percent disapprove of living by strict religious rules in general and by strict Muslim rules in particular.

Muslims take a more critical view of a family member's interfaith marriage and conversion than Christians.

Nearly one in two Muslims disapproves of living according to strict Muslim rules.

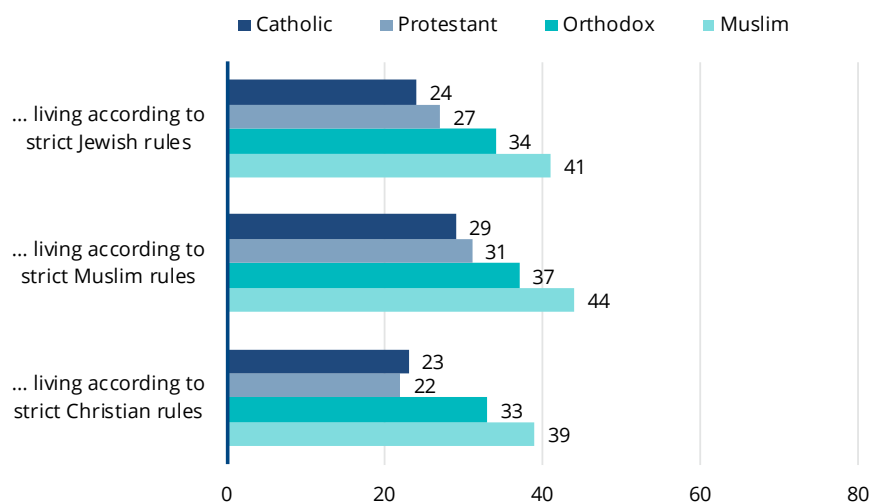
Figure 10: There Are Many People Who Live According to Strict Religious Rules. What Is Your View of this Way of Life in General?

Here: "(tend to) disapprove"



Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., in percent.

Figure 11: "I Disapprove" of People ...



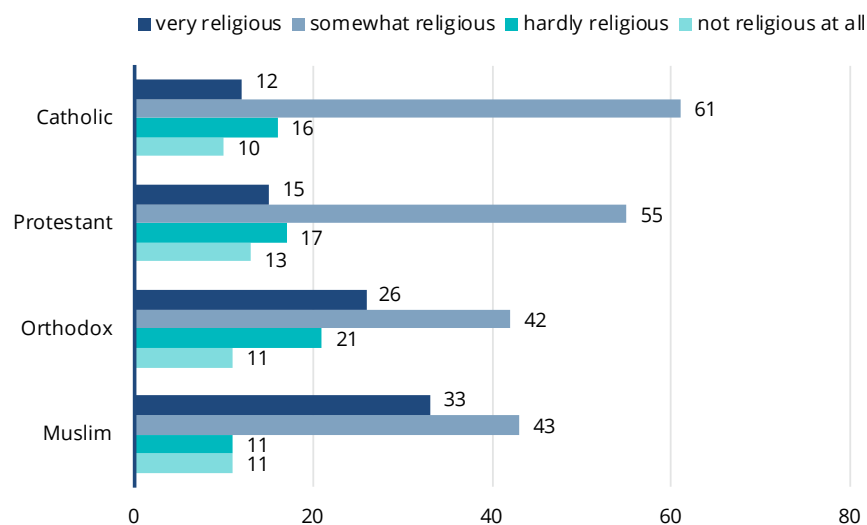
Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., in percent.

Nonetheless, the result for Muslims is particularly surprising. Why is such a critical view taken of living according to strict religious rules of one's own religion? The question about one's own religiosity may provide a clue. Respondents were asked about their own religiosity twice at different points in the survey.

In the first instance, 33 percent of Muslims respond that they are very religious, while 43 percent are somewhat religious and only 11 percent each are hardly or not at all religious. Far fewer Catholics (12 percent) and Protestants (15 percent) describe themselves as very religious. In both groups, the majority categorises themselves as somewhat religious.

As compared to Christians, more Muslims describe themselves as very religious.

Figure 12: How Religious Are You?

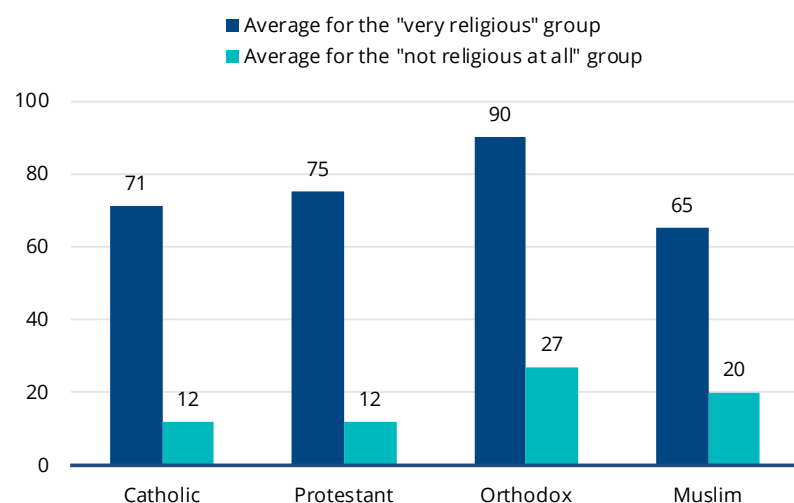


Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., in percent, "no response" omitted.

At another point in the survey, respondents are asked to rate their religiosity on a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 means not religious at all and 100 means very religious. The significant differences between the average ratings of the denominations are striking. The Orthodox Christians who categorised themselves verbally as very religious beforehand consider themselves, on average, at 90 on the 100-point scale, whereas the very religious Muslims rank themselves at 65. This is the lowest figure among the very religious believers of all the denominations. Conversely, at 20, the average rating of the Muslims who categorise themselves as not religious at all is higher than the rating of Catholics and Protestants who are not religious at all (12). At 27, Orthodox Christians have the highest figure here.

Very religious Muslims rate themselves astonishingly low on a point scale on religiosity.

Figure 13: How Religious Are You on a Scale of 0-100? '0' Means That You Are Not Religious At All and '100' Means That You Consider Yourself Very Religious.



Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

The differences in the perception of one's own religiosity and opposition toward strict adherence to religious rules among Muslims are both striking results. Apart from possible interview effects, a series of socio-cultural factors presumably play a role. It is conceivable, for example, that categorising oneself as a religious Muslim is part of self-classification as a matter of identity, which is, however, not directly linked to religiosity in the sense of observing rules. This is consistent with the results of a study by the University of Münster (Pollack et al. 2016).³ For people of Turkish descent living in Germany as part of the second or third generation, the cited study finds a divergence between declining active religious practice (prayer, mosque attendance) and the self-assessment as very religious. Consequently, the responses could be interpreted not so much as reflecting lived religiosity in practice as rather "a demonstrative affirmation of one's own cultural origin" (Pollack et al. 2016: 12). Unequivocal identification with faith therefore does not allow us to draw any conclusion on the following of its precepts, which undoubtedly plays a role in the rating of one's own religiosity on a point scale.

Moreover, the results could also be a consequence of the demarcation of Islamist groupings. If respondents associate living according to strict Muslim rules with jurisprudence guided by an Islamist interpretation of the Sharia or have themselves had experience with the violence of extremist groups in their own family, a rejection of strict Muslim rules and (excessively) profound religiosity appears plausible. This area of tension will certainly be the object of further studies over the coming years.

Conclusion

Overall, Muslims and Christians, especially Catholics, exhibit many similarities. They believe in God and in life after death. In addition, the majority continues to observe religious traditions like baptism, religious marriage and funeral rituals, and fasting. Christians and Muslims largely accept other religions and are in favour of contact with people of other faiths. In contrast, the conversion of a family member or the interfaith marriage of one's own daughter meets with somewhat greater opposition. Muslims take a more critical view of such a step than the adherents of the Christian denominations. It is notable that although Muslims often categorise themselves as very religious, they tend to disapprove of living according to strict Muslim or religious rules and are cautious about how they rate their own religiosity.

Muslims and Christians have similarities, people without religious affiliation differ considerably.

As a final concluding remark, it should be noted that matters concerning religion play no role or only a very minor one for fully one third of the German population. People who do not belong to any denomination are hardly religious and largely refrain from taking part in religious rituals. Only around one fifth believe in God or in life after death, and just one quarter of those without religious affiliation consider baptising their children or having a religious wedding. Consequently, matters concerning religion are also largely irrelevant in relation to contact with others or the marriage of one's own daughter. Three quarters of those who have no religious affiliation do not care whether their son-in-law identifies as Christian or Jewish. Nonetheless, around 23 percent would disapprove if their son-in-law was a Muslim. At the same time, however, two thirds respond that they do not care if their daughter marries a member of an Islamic religious community. Given their numbers and their significantly different attitudes, the religiously unaffiliated are shaping society more and more.

References

- P** Pollack, Detlef/Müller, Olaf/Rosta, Gergely/Dieler, Anna, 2016: Integration und Religion aus der Sicht von Türkeistämmigen in Deutschland: repräsentative Erhebung von TNS Emnid im Auftrag des Exzellenzclusters „Religion und Politik“ der Universität Münster.

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- 1 From 15 October 2018 to 28 February 2019, a total of 3,003 telephone interviews were conducted by USUMA. Using a random sample, 1,001 Germans without a migrant background, 1,001 Germans with a migrant background and 1,001 foreigners were interviewed. Using the dual-frame approach, 44 percent of the interviews were conducted via mobile phone. The sample is representative for the population resident in Germany aged 18 and older. A survey had previously been carried out in 2015 using the same sample design. Further information on the methodological procedure is documented there. Cf. Sabine Pokorny, 2016, Was uns prägt. Was uns eint.
 - 2 The Orthodox Christian group includes all the currents in the Orthodox Church. The group as a whole is referred to below as "Orthodox", just as the term "Protestant" is used for all Protestant currents (not including unaffiliated evangelical or "free" churches [Freikirchen]). Like in the case of Orthodox Christians, the number of respondents from each of the Islamic denominations is not sufficient to analyse them separately. The most frequently mentioned currents are Sunnis (64 percent), Shias (7 percent) and Alevis (6 percent), whereby 8 percent do not categorise themselves as part of any denomination and 12 percent do not respond to the question. As a result, all Islamic denominations are grouped together as "Muslims". The analysis is thus based on a sample comprising 708 Catholics, 579 Protestants, 270 Orthodox Christians and 495 Muslims.
 - 3 The survey was carried out by the TNS Emnid public opinion research institute on behalf of the "Religion and Politics" Cluster of Excellence at the University of Münster. TNS Emnid interviewed 1,201 people of Turkish descent aged 16 and older throughout Germany on the topics of integration, religiosity and acceptance by mainstream German society. The interviews were conducted by telephone from November 2015 to February 2016, partly in German and partly in Turkish.

Imprint

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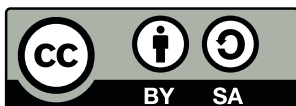
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