

Introduction

This volume presents findings based on a unique data-base, the World Values Survey (WVS) and the European Values Surveys (EVS). These surveys provide data from almost 80, societies containing over 80 per cent of the world's population and covering the full range of variation, from societies with per capita incomes as low as \$300 per year, to societies with per capita incomes one hundred times that high; and from long-established democracies with market economies, to authoritarian states and ex-socialist states. These surveys make it possible to compare the values and beliefs of people throughout the world, and they reveal large and coherent cross-national differences in what people want out of life.

The World Values Surveys grew out of a study launched by the European Values Survey group (EVS), which carried out surveys in ten West European societies in 1981; the project evoked such widespread interest that it was replicated in 14 additional countries. Findings from these surveys suggested that predictable cultural changes were taking place. To monitor possible changes, a new wave of surveys was carried out in 1990-91, building on findings from the first wave, but this time designed to be carried out globally. Successive waves of surveys were carried out in 1995-96 and 1999-2001. In every case, we work with colleagues from the given society, and in most cases these surveys are supported by internal funding.

In the first three waves of surveys, the WVS covered most of the world's major cultural zones except for Africa and the Islamic region, where we were able to carry out only a few surveys in each region. In planning the fourth wave, the WVS association set a high priority on attaining substantially better coverage of these regions; and the 2000-2001 WVS includes eight African countries and ten predominantly Islamic societies (including three overlapping cases). As a result, we have an unprecedentedly broad range of Islamic societies, extending geographically from Morocco to Indonesia. Taking advantage of this rich source of insight, the present issue includes three articles analyzing Islamic worldviews. The findings demonstrate that a distinctive Islamic culture does exist. But, while Islamic publics reject some key aspects of Western society, they do not

reject democracy — quite the contrary, the democratic ideal is endorsed by solid majorities of the public throughout the Islamic world. We were also able to extend the survey to previously neglected countries such as Vietnam. For many countries, the 2000-2001 WVS was the first time that their society had been included in a cross-national survey (and in some cases, the World Values Survey was the first representative national survey *ever* carried out in that country). We are grateful to the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation, the Swedish Agency for International Development, and the U.S. National Science Foundation for making these surveys possible.

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For more information about the World Values Survey, see the WVS web sites <http://wvs.isr.umich.edu/> and <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.com>. The European surveys used here were gathered by the European Values Survey group (EVS). For detailed EVS findings, see Loek Halman, *The European Values Study: A Sourcebook Based on the 1999/2000 European Values Study Surveys*. Tilburg: EVS, 2001. For more information, see the EVS website, <http://evs.kub.nl>.

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