



NEW REPORT: Religious people are happier, healthier, and better educated

A new report published today on [IZA World of Labor](#) finds that moderate religiosity regulates individual risky health behavior and reduces individuals' vulnerability to life events, from job layoff and economic hardship to countrywide economic reforms

Transition and post-transition economies in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) exhibit distinct patterns of religiosity. While some countries experience a revival of religiosity, others are prone to secularization. The economist Olga Popova of the Institute for East and Southeast European Studies looks at the latest research investigating the relationship between religiosity and people's economic behavior and attitudes. A number of studies provide evidence that people with moderate religious beliefs are healthier, more productive, better educated, and seem better protected from adverse individual and countrywide events. These differences imply that religious and non-religious people demand and support different governmental economic policies.

Popova cites a recent study covering a number of transition economies, including Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia, which finds a positive correlation between life satisfaction and religious services attendance. Similarly, a Hungarian study found that the effect of income on life satisfaction is lower for religious people compared to non-religious people.

Another important consequence of religiosity is related to human capital. Researchers have found that praying, participating in religious services, and self-assessed religiosity are associated with better educational outcomes and favorable health-related behavior. For instance, one study shows that self-reported importance of religion results in healthier lifestyles for adults and adolescents by reducing tobacco, drugs, and excessive alcohol consumption. Another study suggests that religiosity is associated with more years of schooling and lower dropout rates from school.

Furthermore, a number of studies document that religiosity has a smoothing effect by reducing an individual's vulnerability to both negative and positive shocks. Findings even suggest that religiosity protects individuals against the stressful effects of economic reforms. Popova suggests that implications for policy making can be derived from these findings. For instance, religious people are likely to demand less governmental social support in terms of unemployment and other benefits. Due to psychological protection and lower vulnerability to stressful events, religious people are also more likely to support and speed up the reform implementation process in transition countries.

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Notes for editors:

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The site offers relevant and succinct information on topics including diversity, migration, minimum wage, youth unemployment, employment protection, development, education, gender balance, labor mobility and flexibility among others.

Established in 1998, the Institute of Labor Economics (www.iza.org) is an independent economic research institute focused on the analysis of global labour markets. Based in Bonn, it operates an international network of about 1,300 economists and researchers spanning more than 45 countries.