

EUROPEANS

UNDERVALUE

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

The Pew Research Center recently released a survey of democratic rights in 34 countries. Countries represented in the survey were drawn from Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, the Asia-Pacific region, Europe, Canada, and the United States.

Respondents were asked how important certain democratic values were to them, and how satisfied they were with the state of affairs on several variables. The following nine categories were chosen: Fair Judiciary; Gender Equality; Free Religion; Regular Elections; Free Speech; Free Media; Free Internet; Free Civil Society; and Free Opposition Parties.

The data reported the “% who say it is very important to have ____ in their country.”

The median score (the score where half the numbers are higher and half are lower) on Free Religion, as compared to the median score on the other eight categories, was relatively high for all parts of the world except for Europe. In other words, outside Europe, Free Religion garnered a relatively high percentage.

The median score for Europe was 57%. That was the lowest median score across the board. In other words, the other eight categories were seen as more important to Europeans.

“In over half the countries surveyed,” the report said, “those who say religion is very important in their lives are more likely to believe religious freedom is very important.” This makes sense, but it also means that those who are not themselves religious are not likely to support this foundational human right.

The survey confirms the de-Christianization of Europe. Regrettably, secular societies are, by and large, more inclined to value individual autonomy and devalue freedom of religion. Those who are religious are not only in a minority, they live in countries where their religious rights are comparatively tenuous.

Six nations stand out for their very high support for gender equality and their very low support for freedom of religion: Canada, Sweden, France, Netherlands, Spain, and Australia.

For those who value freedom of religion, matters were better in the United States. Of the nine categories, the top three were Fair Judiciary (93%), Gender Equality (91%) and Free Religion (86%).

The role that freedom of religion plays in the life of a free country is no longer understood by many in the West. It should be the focus of history textbooks and is deserving of a national conversation on how to preserve our freedoms. Instead, we are more interested in promoting the freedom of middle school kids to “transition” from one sex to the other.