

DARWIN SURVEY SHOWS INTERNATIONAL CONSENSUS ON ACCEPTANCE OF EVOLUTION

London, 30 June 2009 A British Council survey into awareness of Charles Darwin and attitudes towards evolution has found that there is a broad international consensus of acceptance towards his theory of evolution.

The British Council, the UK's international body for cultural relations, announced the results of its global survey at the World Conference of Science Journalists (WCSJ) in London on Tuesday 30 June, 2009, as part of its international programme Darwin Now, to mark the publication of Charles Darwin's groundbreaking work *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* on 24 November, 1859.

The research, conducted by Ipsos MORI, surveyed over ten thousand adults across ten countries worldwide included Argentina, China, Egypt, India, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Great Britain and the USA.

The results show that the majority of adults surveyed have heard of Charles Darwin and know at least a little about his theory of evolution with the highest levels in Great Britain (71%), the USA (71%), Mexico (68%), Argentina (65%), China (54%) and Russia (53%) whilst 62 percent of adults surveyed in Egypt and 73 percent in South Africa said they had never heard of Charles Darwin or his theory of evolution. Overall, the majority (70%) of adults surveyed across the 10 countries have at least heard of the British naturalist.

In all countries surveyed more people showed some agreement than disagreement that 'it is possible to believe in a God and still hold the view that life on Earth, including human life, evolved over time as a result of natural selection'. Adults in India showed the highest level of agreement (85%) from all the countries, followed by Mexico (65%), Argentina (62%), South Africa (54%), Great Britain (54%), Russia (54%), USA (53%), Spain (46%), Egypt (45%), and China (39%).

In six out of ten countries including Argentina (57%), China (72%), Great Britain (62%), India (77%), Mexico (65%) and Spain (61%), the majority of people who had heard of Charles Darwin and know something about his theory of

evolution agreed with the opinion that 'enough scientific evidence exists to support Charles Darwin's theory of evolution', compared to an overall average across all the countries surveyed of 56 percent.

Less than half of those surveyed in Russia (48%), South Africa (42%), USA (41%), and Egypt (25%), who know something about Charles Darwin and his theory of evolution, agreed with the opinion that enough scientific evidence exists to support this theory.

The results also show that people polled in the USA, South Africa and India are the most likely to believe that life on Earth, including human life, was created by a God and has always existed in its current form (all at 43%).

The majority of adults in China (67%), Mexico (42%), Argentina (37%), Great Britain (38%), Spain (38%) and Russia (32%) believe that life on Earth, including human life, evolved over time as a result of natural selection, in which no God played a part. Fifty percent of adults in Egypt believed that life on Earth, including human life, evolved over time in a process guided by a God.

Dr Fern Elsdon-Baker, Head of the British Council Darwin Now programme, said: 'The international Darwin survey has thrown up some very interesting results, especially as it includes data from countries not previously covered before. The most encouraging aspect of the survey shows that whilst there are diverse views on Darwin's theory of evolution, there appears to be a broad acceptance that science and faith do not have to be in conflict. Whilst the results show that there is some way to go in communicating the evidence of evolutionary theory to wider audiences, it is evident that there is clear space for dialogue on this sometimes complex area of debate.'

A separate survey has been made available by the British Council, for completion by the general public in each of these countries. This can be found by visiting: www.zoomerang.com/Survey/survey.zgi?p=WEB229CD3MTHT5. Over the coming months, this survey will create the largest data set ever gathered on the public's understanding of evolutionary theory.

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For more information and to request a copy of the survey, please contact, Tony Stephenson, Adam Michael, or Benjamyn Tan on +44 (0) 20 7457 2020 or email darwinnow@collegehill.com

Notes to Editors

About Darwin Now

Darwin Now is the British Council's contribution to the international celebration of the 200 year anniversary of Darwin's birth (on the 12th February) and the 150 year anniversary of the publication of '*On the Origin of Species*' (on the 24th November). Through this international programme of activity the British Council is seeking to engage new audiences, to make Darwin's theory of evolution relevant to their lives, and to encourage involvement and debate. Darwin Now will look at the impact of Darwin's ideas and their impact on contemporary biology, medicine and society. It comprises a year long programme of activity including outreach work and exhibitions in schools and further education colleges, a mobile exhibition, interactive website with and supporting workshops. The campaign is expected to run in up to 50 countries worldwide, including the regions of Europe, North Africa, East Asia, America and Latin America.

In the UK, highlights include the British Science Association, Festival of Science in September, and a youth summit involving 60 students from around the world, which will be held at the Natural History Museum in July. The programme culminates in three-day international Darwin's Living Legacy Conference on Science on Society, which will be in partnership with the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Alexandria, Egypt, between 14-16 November, 2009. For more information, please go to <http://www.britishcouncil.org/darwin>.

The survey in Great Britain was conducted by Ipsos between 3rd April and 9th April 2009. 973 interviews were completed amongst a nationally representative quota sample of adults aged 18 and over on an omnibus survey. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in the respondent's home. Results have been weighted to the known population.

The research was co-ordinated by Ipsos MORI in Great Britain and fieldwork carried out on our preferred suppliers Omnibus surveys in each of the other countries. Where applicable, samples have been weighted to the known population.

COUNTRY	Field start	Field end	Sample
USA	02-04-09	06-04-09	Adults 18+
Spain	14-04-09	24-04-09	Adults 18+
South Africa	17-04-09	08-05-09	Adults 18+
Russia	10-04-09	20-04-09	Adults 18+
Mexico	09-04-09	24-04-09	Adults 18-64
India	10-04-09	24-04-09	Adults 18-64
Egypt	03-04-09	24-04-09	Adults 18+
China	10-04-09	24-04-09	Adults 18-64
Argentina	09-04-09	24-04-09	Adults 18-64

About British Council

The British Council, which is celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2009, works in more than 100 countries worldwide to build engagement and trust for the UK through the exchange of knowledge and ideas between people. During 2008, the British Council reached over 128 million people worldwide through a range of cultural programmes involving the arts, education, science, sport and governance. For more information, please go to www.britishcouncil.org.



About MORI

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