

## **Jehovah's Witnesses in Kazakhstan: Preliminary Results of a Survey**

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**ABSTRACT:** Between June and September 2022, the author carried out an Internet survey among Kazakh Jehovah's Witnesses, collecting 1,571 valid responses. The results of the survey are presented here as a preliminary summary, leaving analyses and comments to further studies.

**KEYWORDS:** Jehovah's Witnesses, Jehovah's Witnesses in Kazakhstan, Surveys in Kazakhstan, Religion in Kazakhstan, Minority Religions in Kazakhstan.

### *Introduction*

The aim of this paper is to present the preliminary results of a survey conducted among Jehovah's Witnesses in Kazakhstan. The survey was conducted between June and September 2022. The method used was an online survey, where all adult Kazakh Jehovah's Witnesses from randomly selected congregations were invited to participate, and respondents were asked to fill out an online questionnaire. A total of 1,661 responses were reviewed. 1,570 questionnaires were accepted for processing and analysis.

### *Demographics*

The majority of the respondents are women (75%). This disparity might reflect the fact that, based on our experience, women appear markedly more willing than men to participate in online surveys in Kazakhstan.

	Frequency	%
Male	392	25.0
Female	1178	75.0
Total	1570	100.0

**Table 1.** Respondents by gender.

The ethnicity of respondents is as follows: every second respondent is a representative of the Russian nationality (50.6%), over a quarter are Kazakhs (28%). And every fifth respondent identified himself as a representative of another nationality (21.3%).

	Frequency	%
Kazakhs	440	28.0
Russians	795	50.6
Other nationalities	335	21.3

**Table 2.** Respondents by ethnicity/nationality.

The dominant language of communication among the respondent Jehovah's Witnesses is Russian. 77.1% of them speak in Russian at home and with family members. 11.5% of the respondents use Kazakh and Russian equally. Roughly every tenth respondent speaks in Kazakh at home. And less than 2% of the respondents use another language at home.

	Frequency	%
Kazakh	154	9.8
Russian	1210	77.1
Russian and Kazakh equally	180	11.5
Other	26	1.7

**Table 3.** Respondents by language spoken at home.

The vast majority of the respondent Jehovah's Witnesses live in urban areas (85.1%). The percentage of rural residents is 14.9%.

	Frequency	%
In a city	1336	85.1
In rural areas	234	14.9
Total	1570	100.0

**Table 4.** Respondents by residency.

If we compare the age structure of the respondent Jehovah’s Witnesses and the general population of Kazakhstan, we can see that the Witnesses exhibit a shift towards the older generations. This is most likely due to the ethnic structure of the community, or rather the predominance of Russians. In Kazakhstan, the Slavic ethnic groups have a much older age structure than the Kazakh and other non-Slavic groups.

	% of respondent Jehovah’s Witnesses	% of the general population of Kazakhstan
18–29	14.7	22.9
30–39	16.6	23.4
40–49	22.2	18.5
50–59	23.5	15.8
60+	23.0	19.5

**Table 4.** Respondents by age.

About half of the Witness respondents have at least a secondary vocational education. 18.6% have some college education.

	Frequency	%
Have no official education	19	1.3
Primary education	19	1.3
Secondary, incomplete secondary education	396	26.5
Technical and vocational education	712	47.7
Incomplete higher education	69	4.6
College education	276	18.5
Academic degree	1	0.1

**Table 5.** Respondents by education.

The organizational structure of the Witnesses, based on the responses, is as follows: 42.2% are “publishers” and 40.9% are “regular pioneers.” The proportion of “auxiliary pioneers” is 6.4%. Elders are 6.3%.

	Frequency	%
Publisher	655	42.2
Auxiliary pioneer and/or another type of part-time ministry	99	6.4
Regular pioneer or another type of full-time service	635	40.9
Special pioneer	18	1.2
Ministerial servant	47	3.0
Elder	98	6.3
Total	1552	100.0

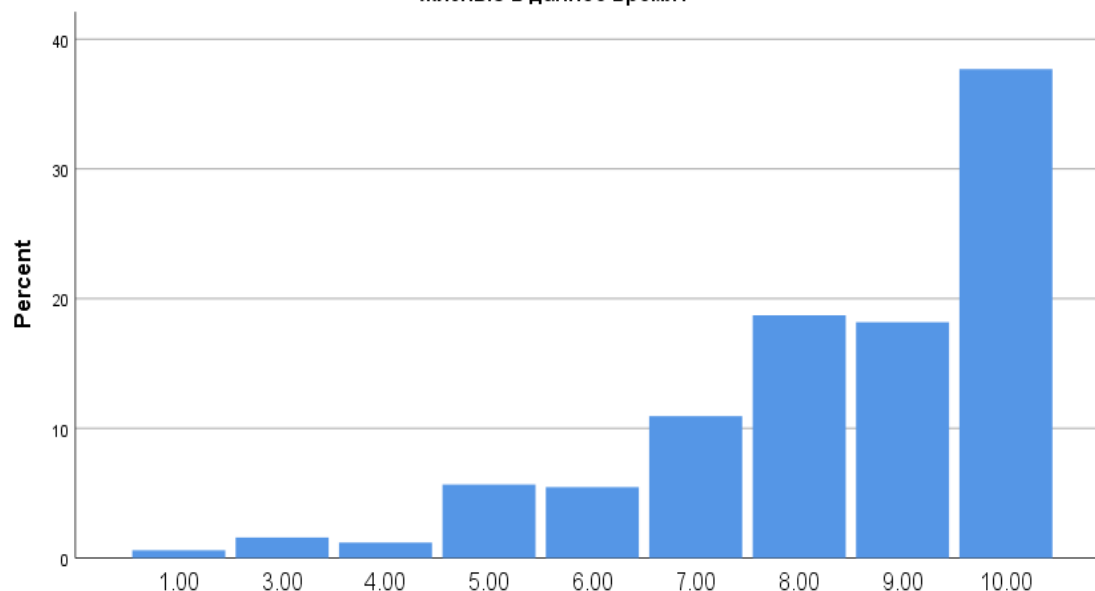
**Table 6.** Structure of the community based on the responses.

### *Social wellbeing*

Jehovah's Witness respondents are characterized by a high level of satisfaction with their lives. On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is completely unsatisfied and 10 is completely satisfied, about 40% gave the highest rating. The average rating was 8.38

The question asked was, "Considering all aspects, rate on the scale below how satisfied you are with your life overall currently?" Table 7 shows the answers.

Учитывая все обстоятельства, оцените по шкале ниже, насколько Вы удовлетворены в целом своей жизнью в данное время?



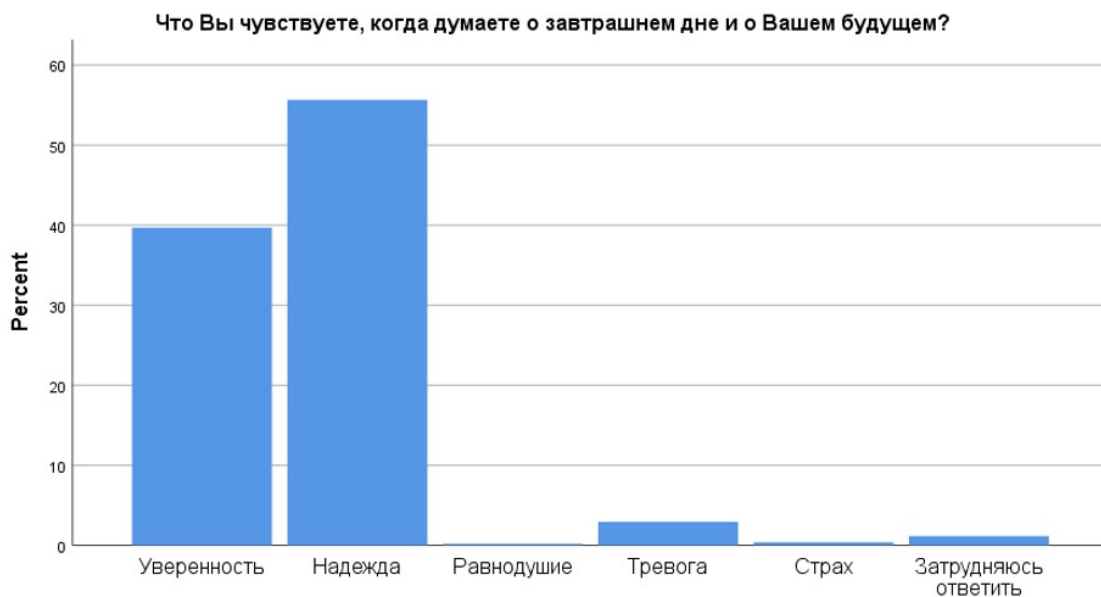
**Table 7.** Life satisfaction among the Jehovah's Witnesses according to the survey.

Most Witness respondents (55.7%) feel hope when they think about the future. 40% of those surveyed look to the future with confidence. Only slightly more than 3% of respondents report negative feelings about the future.

Confidence	39.7
Hope	55.7
Indifference	0.2
Anxiety	2.9
Fear	0.4
Not sure	1.2

**Table 8.** Expectations about the future among respondents.

The question was, “How do you feel when you think about tomorrow and about your future?” and the distribution of the answers is also illustrated in Table 9.



**Table 9.** Distributions of feelings about the future (from left to right: confidence, hope, indifference, anxiety, fear, and answers “not sure”).

What are the primary concerns of Jehovah’s Witnesses? The survey showed that Witnesses are most concerned about their families’ and their own health (61.5%). Spiritual growth (47.1%) and safety (42.5%) were the next most pressing concerns for the respondents. At the bottom of the top five concerns are their children’s and their own future, as well as environmental issues (31.6% and 28.8%, respectively). The respondent Witnesses are less concerned about

employment, the political situation in the country, and education of their children.

<b>Main present concerns</b>	
Health (your own and your family's)	61.5%
My spiritual growth	47.1%
Safety (my personal and my family's)	42.5%
My future and my children's future	31.6%
Environmental issues	28.8%
Relationships with people you love	27.4%
COVID-19 situation	11.4%
Living conditions	10.3%
Getting rid of a bad habit	10.1%
Questions of faith	9.6%
Financial wellbeing	9.6%
Employment	7.8%
Political situation in my country	7.3%
Children's education	5.0%
Other	4.6%
I don't have any concerns	9.6%
Not sure	4.9%

**Table 10.** “What is your main concern in this moment?”

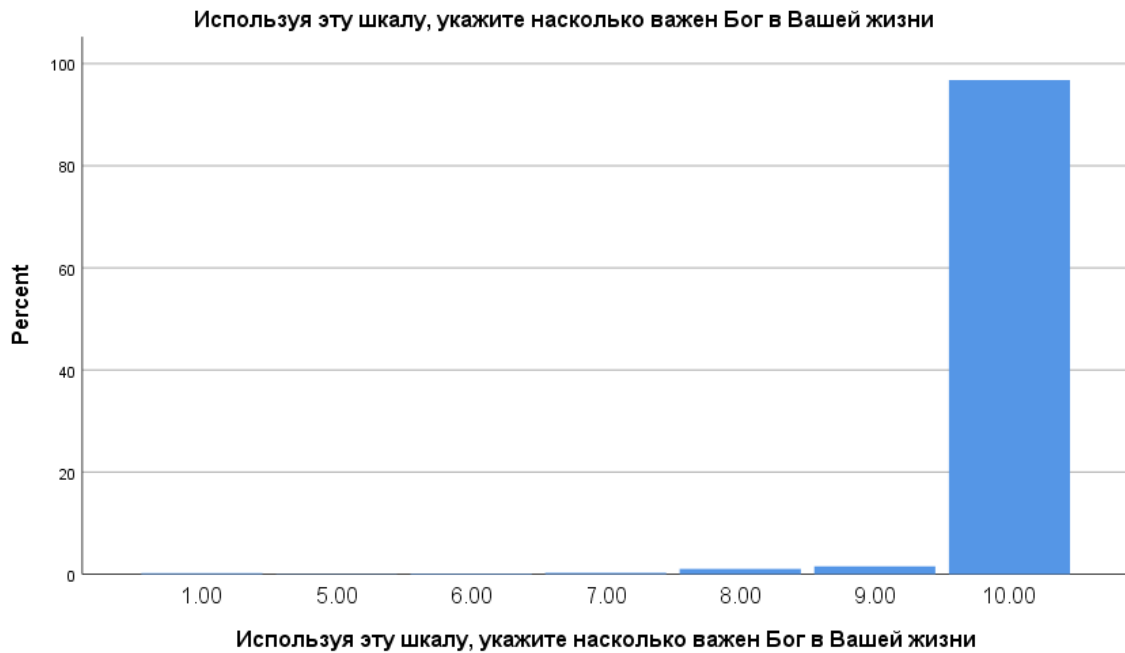
### *The Importance of Religion*

96% of those surveyed reported that God is very important in their lives.

The question was, “Using this scale, indicate how important God is in your life?” Table 11 shows the answers.

The survey also showed that the respondent Jehovah's Witnesses are very positive about the impact of their religion on various aspects of their lives. For example, when asked about changes in their lives after joining the Jehovah's Witnesses, most respondents reported improvements in both life in general and its certain aspects.

Respondents noted the greatest improvement in their relationships with family members (61.1% described them as “significantly improved”). Improvements in the quality of leisure activities were also reported by 60.7% of respondents. Emotional and mental health was described as “improved” by 58.6% of those who answered the questionnaire.



**Table 11.** “How important is God in your life?”

Answer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Relationship with family members (parents, spouses, children)	12.0	5.1	2.1	4.5	11.5	61.1	3.8
2. Relationship with friends	11.2	6.0	4.7	13.7	9.6	49.3	5.5
3. Relationship with colleagues / classmates	11.6	4.0	3.7	21.0	12.4	36.2	11.1
4. Your financial situation	18.8	3.3	1.8	23.5	21.3	25.4	5.9
5. Living conditions	21.6	2.8	1.4	26.9	16.5	26.0	4.8
6. Your health	16.9	4.0	5.4	22.7	16.3	28.9	5.8
7. Your emotional and mental health	10.4	3.7	1.4	5.2	17.5	58.6	3.2
8. Quality of leisure	9.4	3.4	0.6	5.2	17.4	60.7	3.4
9. Your hope for the future	9.4	3.8	0.5	7.9	76.8	1.6	
10. Your life in general	9.3	3.5	0.4	0.7	10.7	73.4	2.0

**Table 12.** Answers to the question “Please assess how the following aspects of your life have changed since you became a Jehovah’s Witness?”

Answer 1: Did not change / Answer 2: Worsened significantly / Answer 3: Worsened slightly / Answer 4: Neutral answer / Answer 5: Improved slightly / Answer 6: Improved significantly / Answer 7: Not sure, does not apply to me.