

# Global SALT Index Partnership Brief

## Measuring What Actually Forms Disciples — Together

### Why This Matters

Across the global Church, we report unprecedented access to Christianity—Scripture availability, digital reach, training resources, and evangelistic activity. Yet few efforts measure whether these inputs are producing durable spiritual formation, obedience, and reproducible discipleship at the population level.

The SALT Index (Scripture Absorption and Life Transformation) was developed to address that gap by measuring outcomes, not outputs.

The 2025 U.S. General Population study revealed a clear pattern: belief remains widespread, but formation and multiplication outcomes are thin. Global leaders have asked an urgent question:

*Is this pattern uniquely American—or a warning signal for the global Church?*

The Global SALT Index initiative exists to answer that question with rigor, humility, and shared learning.

### What Is the SALT Index?

The SALT Index is a **research instrument**, not a program. It measures spiritual formation outcomes across five domains:

1. **Belief & Discernment** – core Christian convictions
2. **Practices & Discipleship** – lived faith behaviors
3. **Scripture Engagement** – frequency and absorption
4. **Life Transformation** – internal and observable change
5. **Community & Multiplication** – mentoring and disciple-making

It is designed for **population-level baselines**, **longitudinal tracking**, and **cross-cultural comparison**.

## What Makes This Different

Most widely cited studies measure:

- Religious identity
- Beliefs or attitudes
- Church participation

The SALT Index measures:

- **Scripture absorption (days/week)**
- **Observable life change**
- **Actual discipling behavior**

In short: it tests whether Christian activity is producing **formed and reproducing disciples**, not just exposure or affiliation.

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## What Partnership Looks Like

Partners participate by leading or supporting a **national or regional SALT Index study** using a shared global protocol.

Each partner:

- Owns their **country-level data and report**
- Contributes to a **global comparative dataset**
- Retains freedom to add **contextual (local) questions**
- Commits to a shared **core module** for comparability

This is **not** a ranking exercise.

It is a shared diagnostic for learning and stewardship.

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## What Partners Receive

- A **validated survey instrument** and translation framework
  - Sampling, weighting, and quality-control specifications
  - Data tables and visualization templates
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- A **national formation baseline report**
  - Inclusion in a **global synthesis** (optional)
  - Access to cross-national learning and comparison
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### **What This Enables**

For churches, networks, and funders, SALT data helps answer:

- Where is formation strong—and where is it thin?
- Is Scripture engagement reaching transformational levels?
- Are disciples actually reproducing?
- Are funding and strategy aligned with outcomes?

For global leaders, it enables:

- Early detection of formation erosion
  - Evidence-based discipleship strategy
  - Outcome-aligned funding decisions
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### **Who This Is For**

- National church networks
  - Global mission agencies
  - Lausanne-related initiatives
  - Foundations and major donors
  - Research institutions serving the Church
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### **Invitation**

We are inviting a limited number of global partners to participate in **Phase One replication studies** (2026–2027). Participation is collaborative, transparent, and non-competitive.

*If we do not measure formation, we cannot steward it.*

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**To explore partnership:**

- Request the Global Replication Protocol
- Review sample country reports
- Discuss feasibility, timing, and scope

Contact [Arniec@bttb.org](mailto:Arniec@bttb.org)

## Appendix D: Global Replication Protocol

SALT Index Cross-National Benchmark Study (Version 1.0)

Purpose

To replicate the SALT Index survey across countries and regions in a way that enables:

1. within-country baselines, and
2. cross-country comparability over time.

The protocol is designed to produce defensible population estimates of spiritual formation outcomes and to support longitudinal tracking (e.g., 2026–2030 waves).

### D.1 Core Principles

#### 1) Preserve a Common Core

Cross-national comparability depends on a stable set of items used everywhere. Do not change wording in the Core Module except as required for translation fidelity.

#### 2) Localize Only What Can Be Localized

Allow contextual items only in a Country Module that does not affect the Core Module's measurement properties.

#### 3) Measure Outcomes, Not Just Affiliation

SALT's comparative advantage is outcome-based formation measurement. Do not substitute identity-only instruments.

#### 4) Prioritize Cultural and Theological Neutrality

Items must measure formation constructs (Scripture engagement, obedience, reproduction) rather than Western institutional forms.

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### D.2 Study Design Overview

#### Recommended Design

- **Cross-sectional national survey** with optional longitudinal follow-up panel
- **Adult population 18+** (or legal adult age per country)
- **Target n = 2,000+ per country** for stable subgroup analysis (minimum n=1,200 if constrained)

- **Mode:** Mixed-mode preferred (online + mobile + face-to-face where needed)

## Output

- National baseline report (country-specific)
  - Cross-national comparative dashboard tables (global synthesis)
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## D.3 Sampling Requirements (Minimum Standards)

### Primary Sampling Goal

Produce a sample that approximates the **national adult population**.

### Preferred Sampling Approaches (in priority order)

#### 1. Probability-based (gold standard):

- Stratified multi-stage cluster sampling
- Random digit dialing (RDD) where feasible
- National household sampling frames

#### 2. Hybrid probability + panel weighting:

- Online panels adjusted using rigorous post-stratification
- Strong for middle-income contexts with high internet penetration

#### 3. Non-probability panels (allowed with constraints):

- Only if paired with:
  - careful quota controls, and
  - robust weighting to national benchmarks, and
  - transparency on limitations

### Required Stratification Variables (minimum)

- Age
- Gender
- Region (subnational)
- Urban/rural (or proxy)

- Education
- Ethnicity / language group where applicable

### **Oversampling Guidance (optional)**

Oversample minority groups or underrepresented regions when:

- religious composition varies sharply by region, or
- internet access is unequal, or
- minority faith traditions require adequate n for inference

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## **D.4 Weighting and Benchmarking**

### **Weighting Targets**

Weight the final dataset to national benchmarks drawn from:

- National statistics office census/ACS equivalent
- UN demographic data (when national unavailable)
- DHS/MICS (for relevant variables)
- Trusted regional demographic sources

### **Required Weight Variables**

- Age × Gender
- Region
- Urban/rural
- Education
- (Optional) Ethnicity / language group

### **Weighting Method**

- Iterative proportional fitting (raking)
- Report design effect (DEFF) where possible
- Publish weighted and unweighted top-lines in appendix

## **D.5 Instrument Structure**

### **Module A: Core SALT Module (Required Everywhere)**

A stable set of items capturing five domains:

1. Belief & Discernment
2. Practices & Discipleship
3. Scripture Engagement / Absorption (days/week)
4. Life Transformation (internal and observable)
5. Community & Multiplication (mentoring/discipling behavior)

**Rule:** Do not remove core items. Do not re-order core items unless a mode requires it.

### **Module B: Country Module (Optional)**

Up to 10–15 localized items on:

- local church participation forms
- local Scripture access modes (audio, mobile, oral)
- barriers to engagement (language, literacy, persecution risk)
- local discipleship practices (house fellowships, mentor networks)

**Rule:** These items must be clearly labeled “Country Module” and excluded from cross-national indices.

### **Module C: Contextual Risk Module (Optional)**

If desired: AI-religion items, misinformation exposure, syncretism risk, etc.  
Keep separate from formation scoring.

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## **D.6 Translation and Cultural Adaptation**

### **Translation Process (Required)**

Use TRAPD (best practice):

- **Translation** (2 independent translators)
- **Review** (bilingual panel)
- **Adjudication** (final wording decisions)

- Pretest (cognitive interviews)
- Documentation (translation notes)

### **Cognitive Interviewing (Minimum n=12 per language)**

Test:

- comprehension
- recall burden
- culturally loaded terms
- sensitivity / safety concerns

### **Key Terms Requiring Standardization**

Do not allow uncontrolled drift on these constructs:

- “Bible / Scripture” (ensure locally understood equivalent)
- “Follower of Jesus” (avoid denominational labels)
- “Mentor / disciple” (use locally meaningful phrasing)
- “Church / fellowship / Christian community”
- “God’s standards” (ensure not interpreted as national/tribal morality)

## **D.7 Adaptation for Oral and Low-Literacy Contexts**

Where literacy is low or Scripture engagement is primarily oral:

### **Required Adjustments**

- Replace “read” with “read or listen” consistently
- Include audio Scripture platforms where common
- Use interviewer administration if necessary
- Use short response scales with visual aids

### **Measurement Rule**

The engagement metric remains **days/week** of any Scripture exposure:

- reading

- listening (audio)
  - group oral engagement (structured Scripture sessions)
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## **D.8 Ethical and Safety Protocols**

### **Core Ethics Requirements**

- Informed consent (written or verbal)
- Anonymity where risk exists
- Secure data handling (encryption at rest + in transit)
- Local IRB/ethics board review when feasible

### **High-Risk Countries (Persecution Contexts)**

- Avoid collecting denominational affiliation if unsafe
  - Remove location granularity below “region”
  - Do not record names or phone numbers unless absolutely required for panel follow-up
  - Use indirect questioning for sensitive topics if needed
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## **D.9 Quality Controls**

### **Minimum QC Measures**

- Attention checks (mode-appropriate)
- Speeding checks
- Straight-lining checks (matrix items)
- Interviewer back-checks (face-to-face/phone)
- Item nonresponse monitoring

### **Exclusion Rules (Pre-Registered)**

Document thresholds before fielding:

- completion time cutoffs

- invalid response patterns
  - inconsistent responses to core screening items
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## D.10 Scoring and Classification (Cross-National)

### Scoring Approach

- Maintain the same domain scoring rules across countries
- Produce:
  - Domain scores (Belief, Practice, Scripture, Transformation, Community)
  - Total SALT Index score
- Maintain a stable transformational Scripture threshold: **4+ days/week**

### Staging (Optional)

If using spiritual stage categories:

- Non–Christ follower
- Notional Christ follower
- Non-discipling Christ follower
- Discipling Christ follower

**Rule:** Ensure “discipling” is defined behaviorally (reported action), not aspirational.

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## D.11 Reporting Standards

Each country report must include:

1. **Sample description** (n, mode, field dates)
  2. **Weighting targets and method**
  3. **Topline outcomes table** (core measures)
  4. **Belief–practice–outcome funnel**
  5. **Scripture engagement distribution (days/week)**
  6. **Multiplication measures** (discipling rates)
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7. **Limitations section** (mode, nonresponse, sensitivity risks)
8. **Appendix with unweighted vs weighted comparisons**

### **Cross-National Synthesis Report Must Include**

- A common table for each core metric across all countries
  - Comparable subgroup cuts where feasible (age, gender, urban/rural)
  - Context notes explaining country modules and local constraints
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### **D.12 Recommended Timeline (Per Country)**

1. Partner onboarding + ethics review: 2–6 weeks
  2. Translation + cognitive testing: 3–6 weeks
  3. Fielding: 2–4 weeks (mode dependent)
  4. Weighting + QC: 2–3 weeks
  5. Reporting + dissemination: 3–6 weeks
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### **D.13 Minimal Replication Package (What Partners Need)**

Provide each partner:

- Core questionnaire (locked)
  - Translation glossary
  - TRAPD worksheet template
  - Sampling + weighting specification sheet
  - QC rules + exclusions policy
  - Reporting templates (tables/figures)
  - Data dictionary + coding scheme
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#### **D.14 Success Criteria (Replication Readiness Checklist)**

A country study is “globally comparable” if it meets:

- Core module unchanged (except translation)
- TRAPD completed and documented
- Weighting to national benchmarks completed
- Scripture engagement measured in days/week
- Discipling measured behaviorally
- QC checks applied and documented
- Limitations transparently reported



# Global SALT Index — Funder Brief

## Why Outcome-Based Measurement Is Now a Stewardship Issue

### The Stewardship Problem We Can No Longer Ignore

For decades, Christian ministries have reported success primarily through **activity-based indicators**: attendance, decisions, reach, content distribution. These measures are easy to report and compare—but they do not answer the question funders ultimately care about:

### **Are lives actually being formed—and are disciples being reproduced?**

The absence of outcome-based measurement has created a structural blind spot. Funding decisions have often been made without credible evidence of long-term formation impact at the population level.

The **SALT Index (Scripture Absorption and Life Transformation)** exists to close that gap.

### What the 2025 U.S. Baseline Revealed

The first nationally representative SALT Index study (U.S., 2025) produced a sobering insight for funders:

- Christian belief remains widespread
- Scripture access is historically high
- Reported activity is abundant

Yet formation outcomes are thin and uneven, and disciple-making is rare at scale.

This does not indicate bad intent or failed ministries.

It indicates that the system has been optimized for the wrong signals.

### Why This Matters to Funders Specifically

Funders shape ministry behavior—often unintentionally—through the metrics they reward.

When funding is tied primarily to:

- scale,
- reach,
- or visibility,

organizations rationally optimize for those outcomes.

When formation outcomes are **not measured**, they are:

- harder to justify in budgets,
- slower to scale,
- easier to defer.

Over time, this creates a widening gap between **reported success** and **actual discipleship fruit**.

### **What the SALT Index Does Differently**

The SALT Index is not a program, platform, or content strategy.

It is an **outcome-measurement framework** designed for stewardship.

It measures:

- Scripture engagement (days per week, not self-description)
- Internal and observable life transformation
- Actual discipling and mentoring behavior (not intention)
- Community and reproduction dynamics

It allows funders to ask:

- *Are we funding exposure—or formation?*
- *Are disciples being reproduced—or only reported?*
- *Are today's gains sustainable five or ten years from now?*

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### **Why a Global Replication Matters**

The U.S. findings raise a critical question for global funders:

*Is this pattern unique to the U.S.—or an early warning for other contexts still experiencing growth?*

Global replication allows funders to:

- Establish **national baselines** before erosion becomes visible
- Identify where formation is strong and protect it
- Detect early formation gaps while they are still correctable

- Compare outcomes across regions without ranking or shaming

This is **preventive stewardship**, not post-hoc diagnosis.

### **What Funder Participation Looks Like**

Funders may participate by:

- Supporting national or regional SALT Index studies
- Requiring or encouraging outcome-based measurement among grantees
- Using SALT data as a **complement** (not replacement) to existing reports
- Funding longitudinal follow-ups to track formation over time

Participation does **not** require public attribution or ranking.

### **What Funders Receive**

- A **credible formation baseline** at population level
- Clear visibility into belief–practice–outcome alignment
- A common language for discussing discipleship impact
- Better signal for long-term return on mission investment
- Early-warning indicators of formation risk

### **A Stewardship Framing**

The SALT Index does not accuse ministries of failure.

It asks whether **our measurement systems have been sufficient** for what we say matters most.

*If formation is the goal, formation must be measured.*

*If formation is not measured, it will not be funded.*

## **Invitation (Funder-Appropriate)**

We are inviting a limited number of aligned funders to explore **outcome-based formation measurement** as a shared stewardship commitment.

This is not about control.

It is about clarity.

Not about accountability theater.

But about **faithful investment aligned with enduring fruit.**

*(Private briefings, sample data, and replication details available upon request.)*