

# Christianity and (non) religion in Europe *research, remarks*

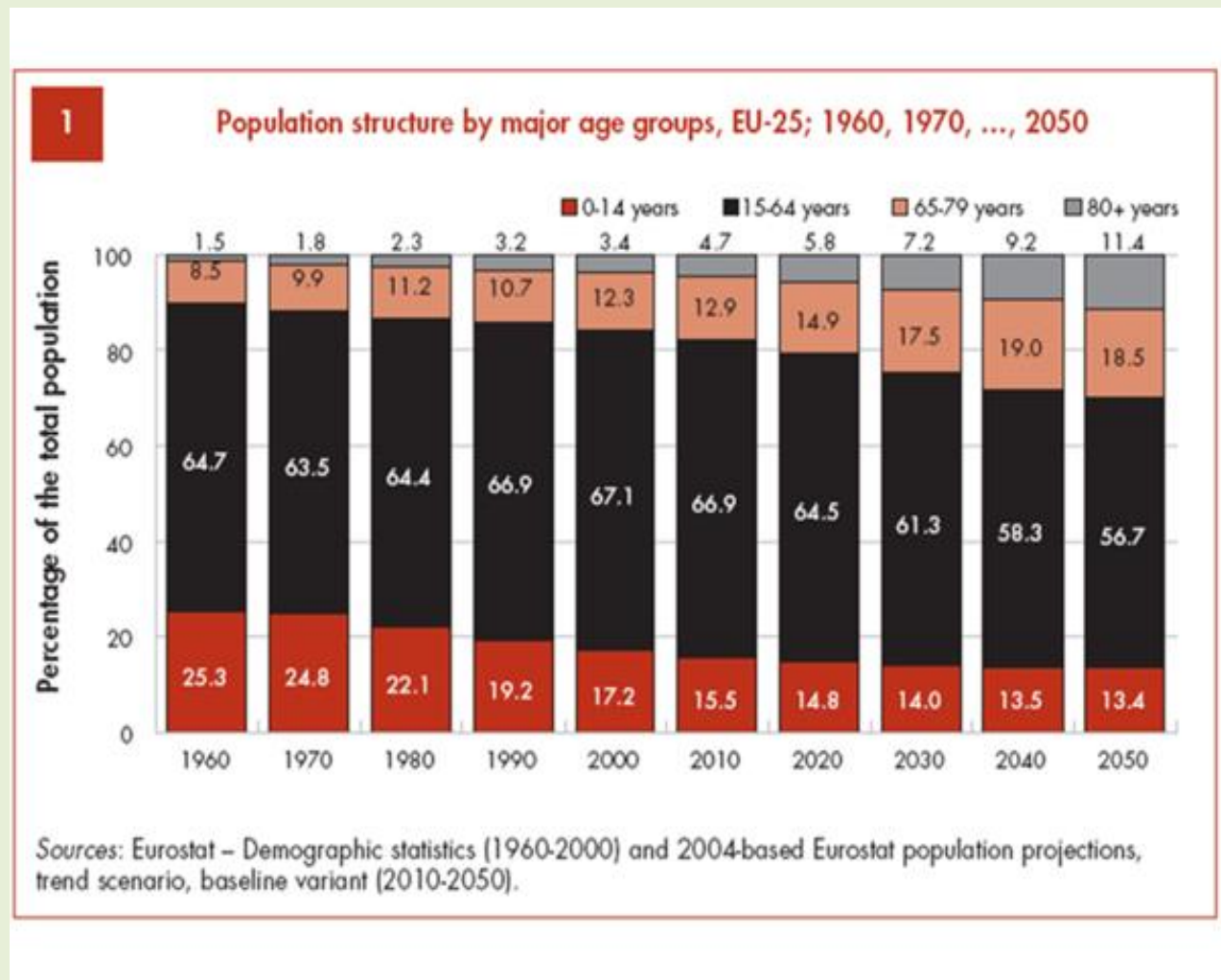
AEM Spring Conference  
Männedorf, 2 April 2019

# Content

1. *Demography and religion*
2. *SMR Society*
3. *Christianity in Europe, a closer look*
4. *Muslims in Europe*
5. *(Post)Disconnected and Bridges for the Message*

# 1. Demography and religion

## a) The Greying of Europe



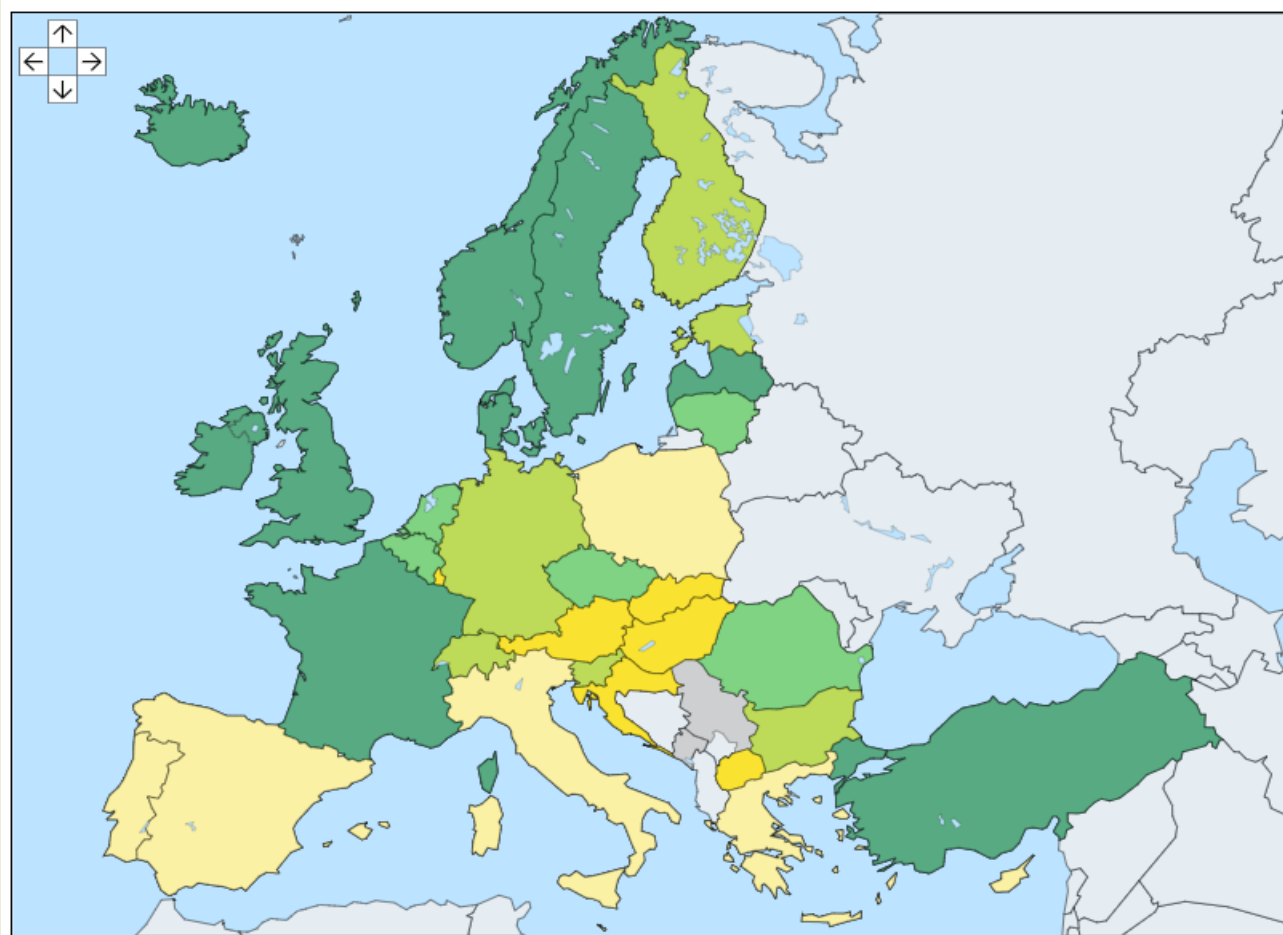
# 1. Demography and religion

## b) Negative natural growth, population decline

### Total fertility rate

number of children per woman

The mean number of children that would be born alive to a woman during her lifetime if ... [more](#)



[Open tool](#)

Data for 2016

Legend	Cases
1.34 to 1.39	7
1.39 to 1.53	7
1.53 to 1.6	7
1.6 to 1.69	7
1.69 to 2.11	9
Data not available	2

Minimum value: 1.34

Maximum value: 2.11

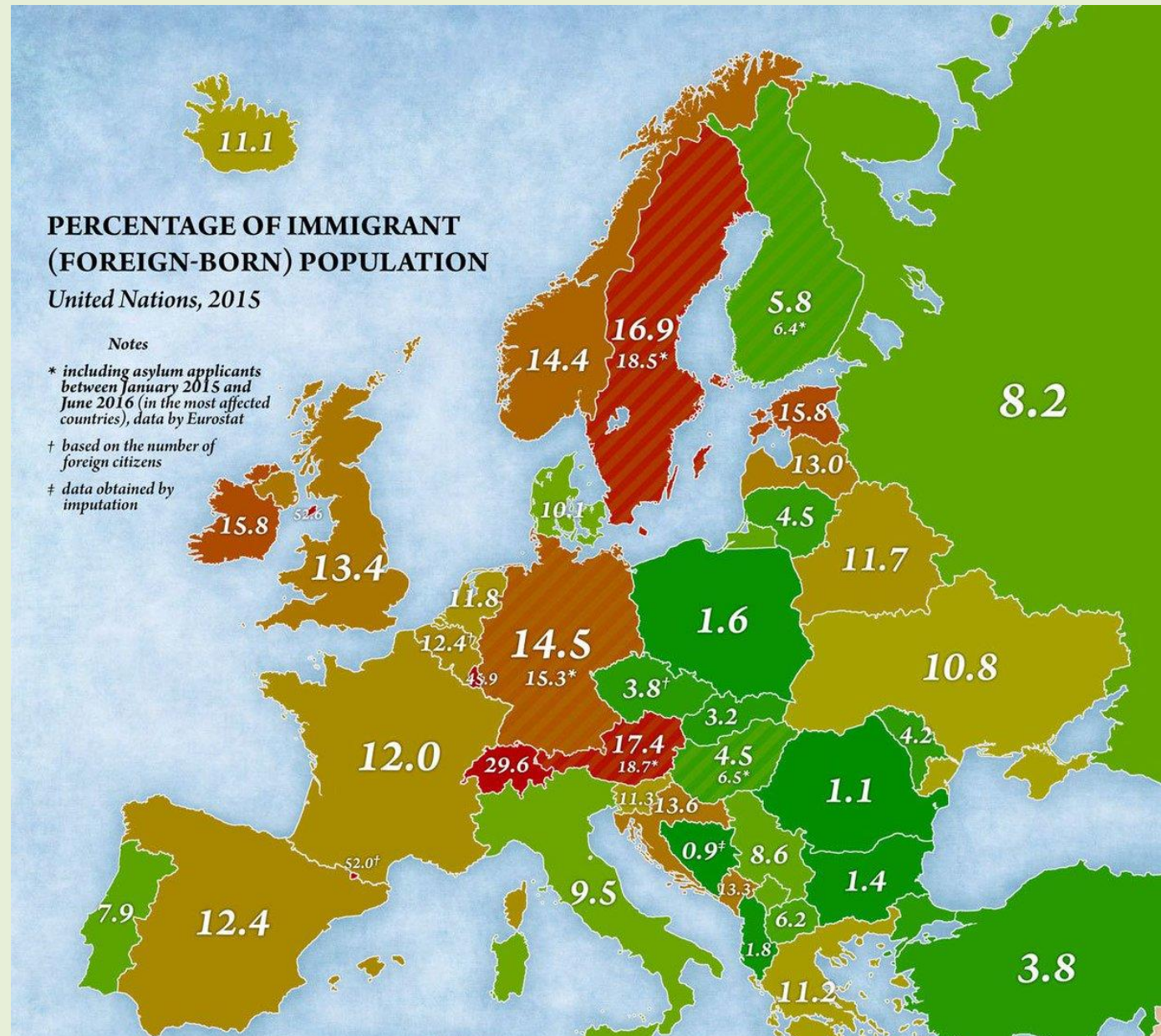
: = not available

b = break in time series

e = estimated

**c)**  
**Immigration –**  
**influx of**  
**religious**  
**populations**  
**(Christian,**  
**Muslim)**

immigrants  
(born in  
another  
country)  
in % of the  
population



# 1. Demography and religion

## d) Differential birth rates

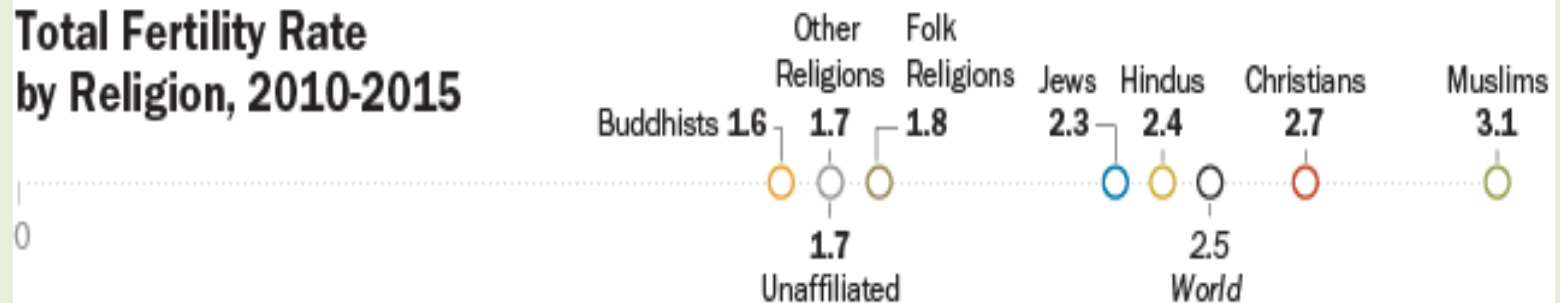
## e) Religion and birth rates – the moral/spiritual factors

Eric Kaufmann, *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth?* (2010)

Polston, *Low Fertility Regimes and Demographic and Societal Change* (2018)

## f) The unnatural growth of the unaffiliated

### Total Fertility Rate by Religion, 2010-2015



Source: The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050

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## Total Fertility Rates by Region and Religion, 2010-2015

*Number of children an average woman is expected to have in her lifetime*

	All Religions	Muslims	Christians	Unaffiliated
Sub-Saharan Africa	4.8	5.6	4.5	4.3
Middle East and North Africa	3.0	3.0	2.5	*
Latin America and the Caribbean	2.2	*	2.2	2.3
Asia-Pacific	2.1	2.6	2.3	1.6
North America	2.0	2.7	2.1	1.6
Europe	1.6	2.1	1.6	1.4
World	2.5	3.1	2.7	1.7

\*Insufficient data for reliable estimates.

Regional differences in fertility rates for other religious groups are discussed in Chapter 2.

Source: The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050

## **g) Missiological remarks**

- 1. The Greying of Churches and Mission.*
- 2. Foster values of family, parenthood, children, education*
- 3. Retention of natural growth (our demographic 'advantage')*
- 4. Migration and the changing face of the European Church*
- 5. Migration and Muslim and other religious communities*
- 6. Higher percentage of children growing up in religious environment*



# *1. SMR Society*

## **Secularising and Multireligious Society**

Secular trends continue

Religious trends continue

*Renewal in existing Churches*

*Immigration, new forms of Christianity*

*Immigration, more young people grow up in religious families*

*Return of religion in the public sphere*

*Not a return to the former days*

*Christianity is a minority among others*

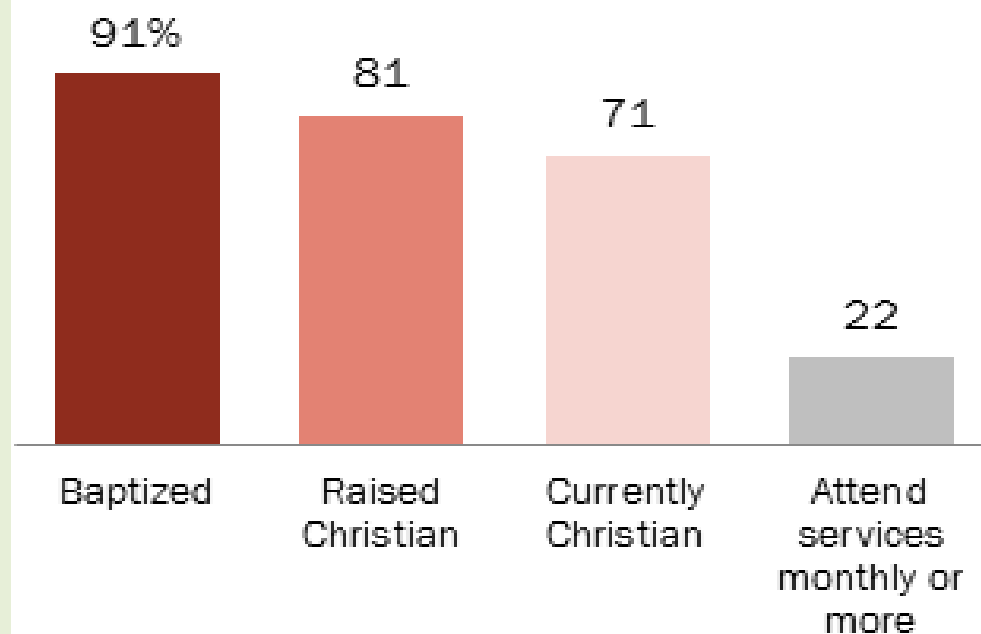
### 3. Christianity in Europe, a closer look

#### b) Majorities identify as Christian.

Over 50% non practicing 'Christians'

**Most Western Europeans continue to identify as Christians, though few regularly attend church**

*Across 15 countries, median % ...*



Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.

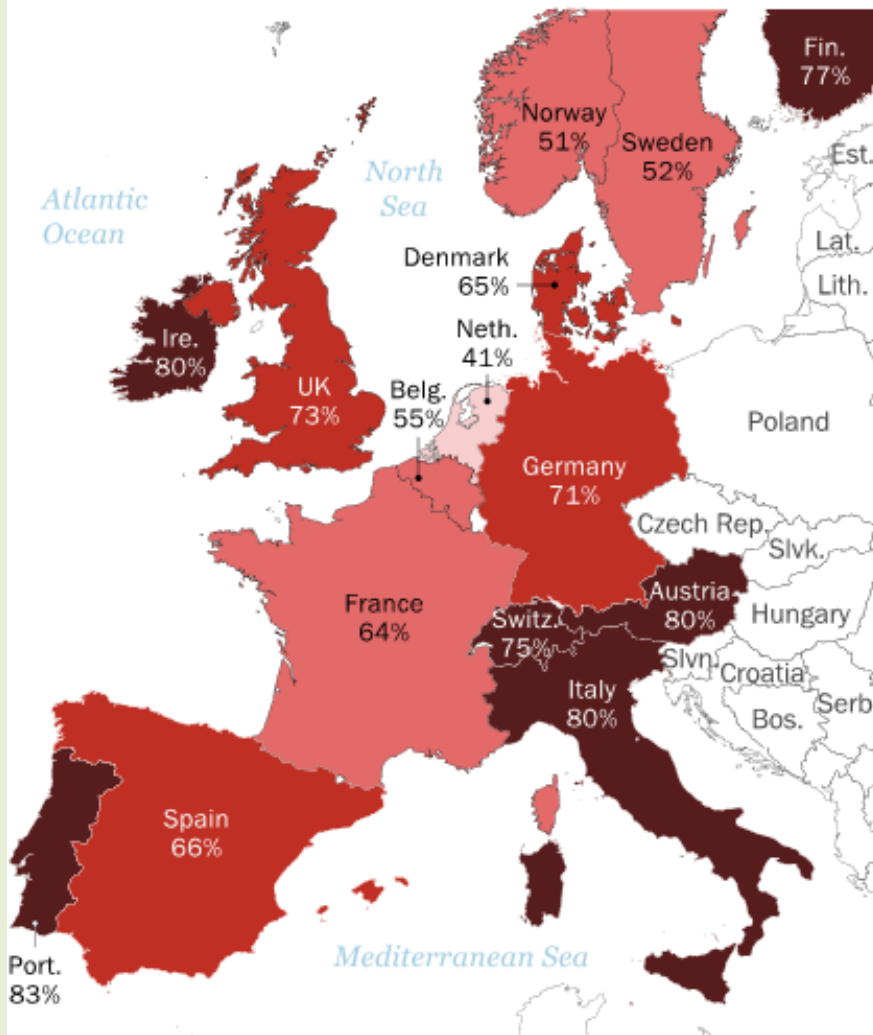
"Being Christian in Western Europe"

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## Majorities across Western Europe identify as Christian

% who say they are Christian

0-49% 50-64% 65-74% 75%+ Non-surveyed country



Note: Respondents were asked "What is your present religion, if any? Are you Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, atheist, agnostic, something else or nothing in particular?"

Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.

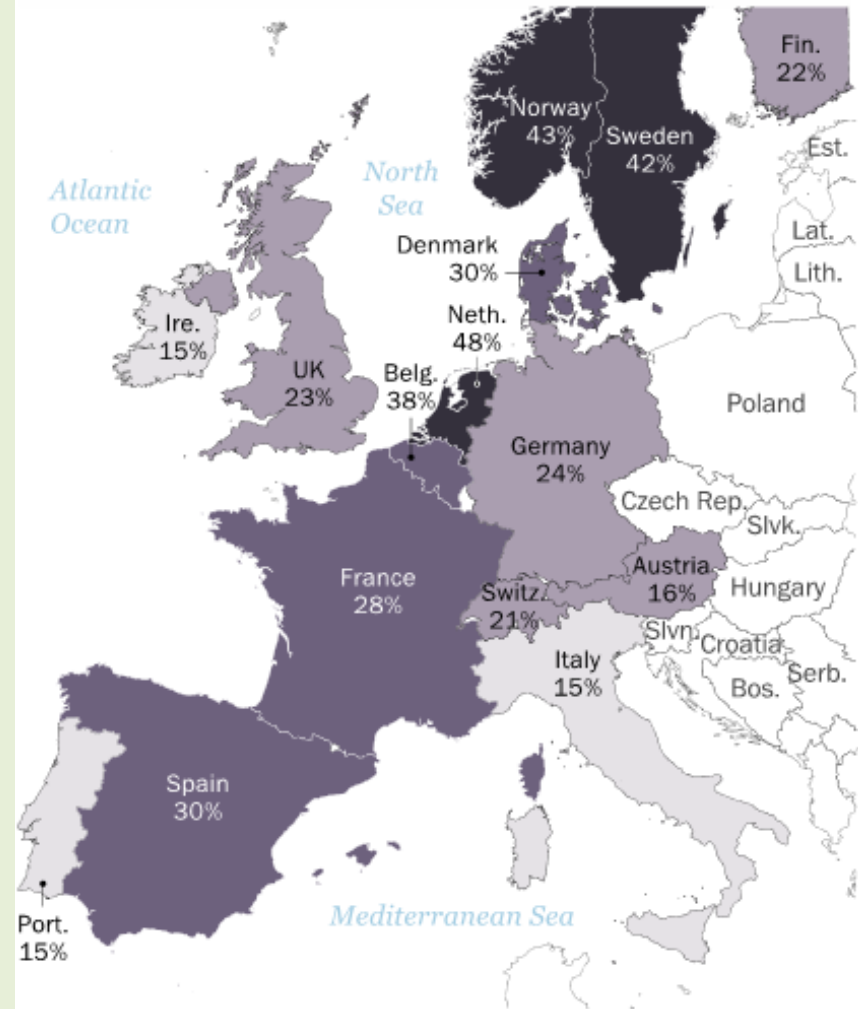
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## Share of 'nones' in Western Europe ranges from 15% in Ireland, Italy and Portugal to 48% in the Netherlands

% who say they are atheist, agnostic or have no particular religion

0-15% 16-25% 26-39% 40%+ Non-surveyed country



Note: Respondents were asked "What is your present religion, if any? Are you Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, atheist, agnostic, something else or nothing in particular?"

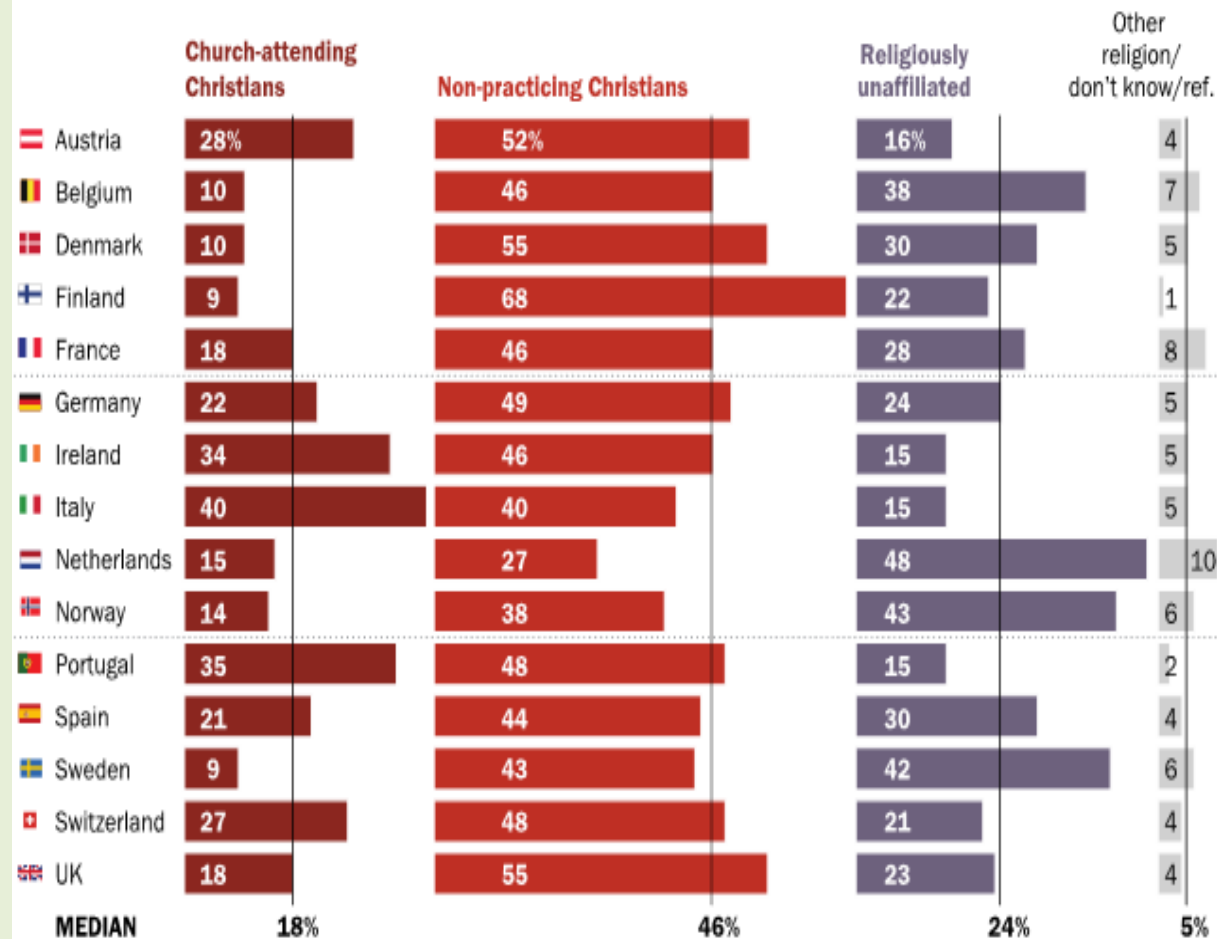
Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.

"Being Christian in Western Europe"

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## In most Western European countries, non-practicing Christians are largest group

% who are ...



Note: Church-attending Christians are defined as those who say they attend church at least monthly. Non-practicing Christians are defined as those who attend less often. Other religion/don't know/ref. are mostly Muslim respondents. General population surveys in Western Europe may not fully capture the size of minority populations, such as Muslims. Therefore, these figures may differ from previously published demographic estimates. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.

"Being Christian in Western Europe"

## Christian identity in Europe remains a religious, social and cultural marker

Across 15 countries, median % who ...

	General population	Church-attending Christians	Non-practicing Christians	Religiously unaffiliated
<b>Religious beliefs</b>				
Believe in God as described in the Bible	27%	64%	24%	1%
Believe in other higher power or spiritual force	38	32	51	28
<b>Religion in society/politics</b>				
Say government should support religious values and beliefs	36%	58%	35%	14%
Agree churches and other religious organizations play an important role in helping poor and needy	62	78	62	48
<b>Immigration/religious minorities</b>				
Say immigrants from the Middle East are not honest	26%	26%	29%	18%
Say immigration should be reduced	38	40	37	28
Say Islam is fundamentally incompatible with their national culture and values	42	49	45	32
Are not willing to accept Jews in their family	17	14	19	7
Are not willing to accept Muslims in their family	24	29	30	11
<b>Nationalism/national identity</b>				
Completely/mostly agree "our people are not perfect, but our culture is superior to others"	45%	54%	48%	25%
Say it is very/somewhat important to have ____ family background to be truly ____ (e.g., German family background to be truly German)	53	72	52	42
<b>Social issues</b>				
Favor legal abortion in all/some cases	81%	52%	85%	87%
Favor legal gay marriage	75	58	80	87
<b>Are raising children as Christian</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>9%</b>

Note: Church-attending Christians are defined as those who say they attend church at least monthly. Non-practicing Christians are defined as those who attend less often.

Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.

"Being Christian in Western Europe"

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### *3. Christianity in Europe, a closer look*

#### **b) More or less committed 'Christians'**

Other parameters needed to obtain a more refined picture

The Pew Research have combined four measures of religious observance

- ✓ Attendance of Church services
- ✓ Prayer
- ✓ Belief in God
- ✓ Salience, importance of religion in one's life

Differentiate between three levels of religious commitment

- ✓ Low
- ✓ Moderate
- ✓ High

# Fewer than a quarter of people in most Western European countries show high levels of religious commitment

*% who have \_\_\_\_\_ levels of religious commitment, according to a four-item index*

	Low	Moderate	High
Portugal	30%	33%	37%
Italy	36	37	27
Ireland	41	34	24
Spain	55	24	21
Netherlands	64	19	18
Norway	61	22	17
Austria	49	38	14
Finland	62	26	13
France	58	29	12
Germany	53	36	12
Switzerland	52	37	12
United Kingdom	58	31	11
Belgium	68	22	10
Sweden	75	15	10
Denmark	69	23	8
<b>MEDIAN</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>13</b>

Note: The index is created by combining four individual measures of religious observance: self-assessment of religion's importance in one's life, religious attendance, prayer, and belief in God.

Respondents were assigned a score of 1 on each of the four measures on which they exhibit a high level of religious observance, a score of 0 on each of the measures on which they exhibit a medium level of religious observance, and a score of minus 1 on each



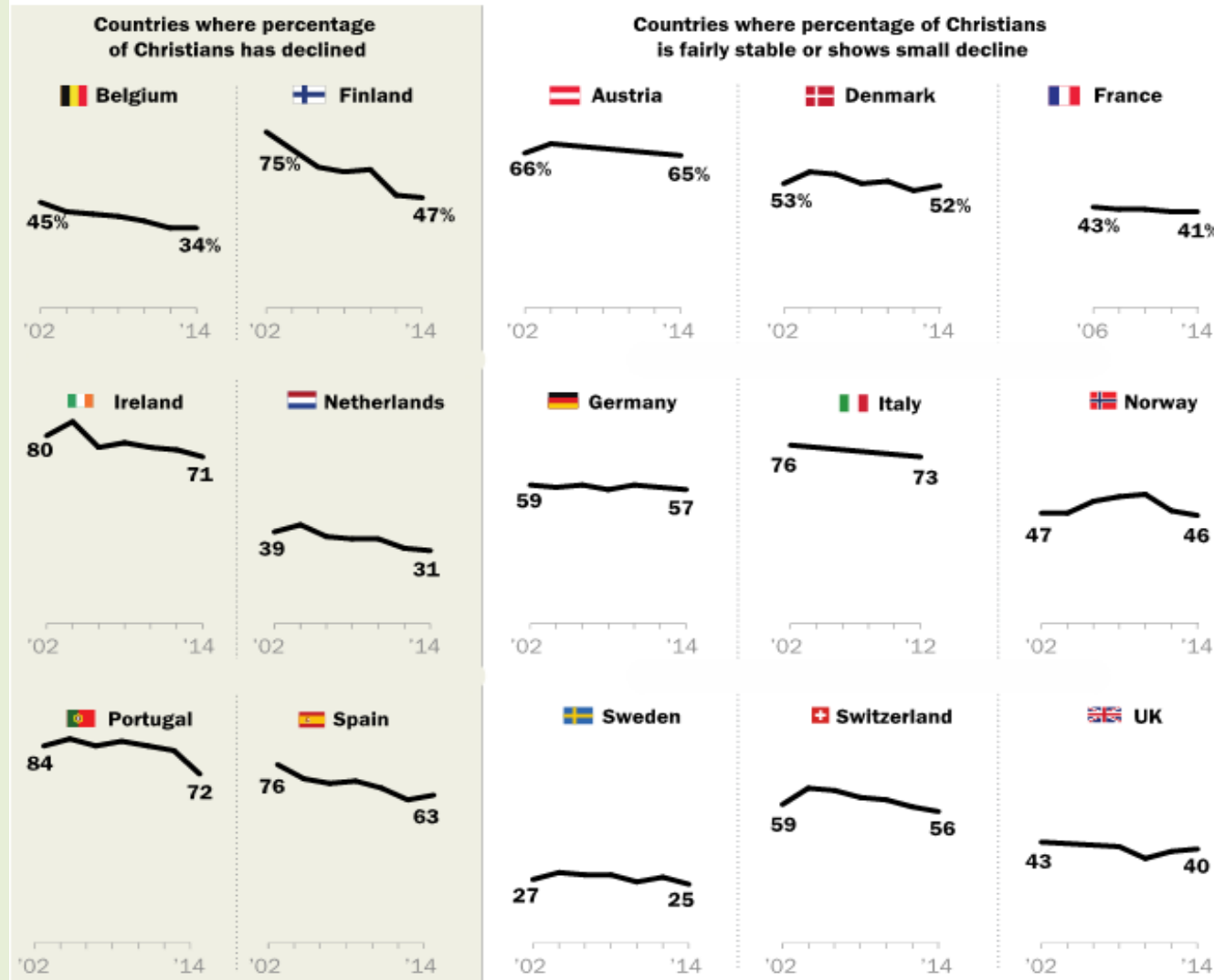
## c) Different trajectories

Rapid decline  
Slow decline or  
stability

Secularisation  
behind or yet  
more to come?

### In several Western European countries, recent declines in Christian identity

% who say they belong to a Christian denomination



Note: 2016 European Social Survey data were not final at the time of this report's publication. Data on religious denomination are not available for 2014 in Italy.

Source: European Social Survey (ESS).  
"Being Christian in Western Europe"

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e)  
‘Secular West’  
v. ‘religious  
Centre and  
East’

## Large drops in Christian affiliation in Belgium, Norway, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden

% who were/are ...

	Raised Christian	Currently Christian	Change		Raised Christian	Currently Christian	Change
<i>Christian share has declined</i>				<i>Christian share relatively stable</i>			
<b>Belgium</b>	83%	55%	<b>-28</b>	<b>Lithuania</b>	95%	93%	-2
<b>Norway</b>	79	51	<b>-28</b>	<b>Croatia</b>	92	91	-1
<b>Netherlands</b>	67	41	<b>-26</b>	<b>Bosnia</b>	44	44	0
<b>Spain</b>	92	66	<b>-26</b>	<b>Moldova</b>	98	98	0
<b>Sweden</b>	74	52	<b>-22</b>	<b>Romania</b>	98	98	0
<b>Denmark</b>	80	65	<b>-15</b>	<b>Estonia</b>	50	51	+1
<b>France</b>	75	64	<b>-11</b>	<b>Hungary</b>	75	76	+1
<b>Portugal</b>	94	83	<b>-11</b>	<b>Serbia</b>	92	93	+1
<b>Slovakia</b>	84	73	<b>-11</b>	<b>Bulgaria</b>	78	80	+2
<b>Czech Rep.</b>	34	26	<b>-8</b>	<b>Georgia</b>	87	90	+3
<b>Finland</b>	85	77	<b>-8</b>	<b>Latvia</b>	73	77	+4
<b>Germany</b>	79	71	<b>-8</b>	<i>Christian share has increased</i>			
<b>Ireland</b>	88	80	<b>-8</b>	<b>Armenia</b>	95	97	<b>+2</b>
<b>Italy</b>	88	80	<b>-8</b>	<b>Russia</b>	65	73	<b>+8</b>
<b>Austria</b>	86	80	<b>-6</b>	<b>Belarus</b>	83	94	<b>+11</b>
<b>Switzerland</b>	81	75	<b>-6</b>	<b>Ukraine</b>	81	93	<b>+12</b>
<b>UK</b>	79	73	<b>-6</b>				
<b>Poland</b>	96	92	<b>-4</b>				
<b>Greece</b>	96	93	<b>-3</b>				

Note: Orange labels are Central and Eastern European countries. Blue labels are Western European countries. Significantly significant changes are highlighted in **bold**.

Source: Surveys conducted 2015-2017 in 34 countries. See Methodology for details.

"Eastern and Western Europeans Differ on Importance of Religion, Views of Minorities, and Key Social Issues"

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## *4. Muslims in Europe*

### **a) Problem: who counts as a Muslim?**

Official criteria based on ethnic, national background, not on practice or membership or disaffiliation (secularisation)

Figures of 'Muslim' communities imprecise, often oversized

Nobody knows. In France, figures vary from 3.2 to 6 million

### **b) Muslim population growth**

Largely due to immigration

Higher birth rates than 'old stock Europeans', among first generation.

All-over Muslim birth-rate in Europe dropped below 1.9

Concentration in W.-Europe, most secularized countries

In 2030 Brussels will be majority Muslim.

## Muslim Percent of Population in Western European Countries, 2010 and 2050

*Sorted by difference between projection scenarios WITH EXPECTED migration and WITH NO NEW migration*

	% MUSLIM IN 2010	% MUSLIM IN 2050 WITH EXPECTED MIGRATION	% MUSLIM IN 2050 WITH NO NEW MIGRATION	DIFFERENCE IN 2050 WITH/ WITHOUT MIGRATION
<b>Sweden</b>	4.6%	12.4%	6.8%	+ 5.6
<b>Norway</b>	3.7	8.9	5.2	+ 3.8
<b>Spain</b>	2.1	7.5	4.1	+ 3.4
<b>United Kingdom</b>	4.8	11.3	8.3	+ 3.0
<b>Italy</b>	3.7	9.5	7.2	+ 2.2
<b>Finland</b>	0.8	3.4	1.4	+ 2.0
<b>Belgium</b>	5.9	11.8	9.9	+ 1.9
<b>Denmark</b>	4.1	8.5	6.7	+ 1.9
<b>France</b>	7.5	10.9	9.0	+ 1.8
<b>Ireland</b>	1.1	3.0	1.2	+ 1.8
<b>Greece</b>	5.3	7.8	6.1	+ 1.6
<b>Netherlands</b>	6.0	9.4	8.1	+ 1.3
<b>Portugal</b>	0.3	1.3	0.3	+ 1.0
<b>Austria</b>	5.4	8.9	8.1	+ 0.8
<b>Germany</b>	5.8	10.0	9.4	+ 0.6
<b>Switzerland</b>	4.9	7.6	7.4	+ 0.3
<b>Luxembourg</b>	2.3	2.3	2.3	+ 0.0

Note: EU member countries before 2004 enlargement, plus Norway and Switzerland, otherwise known as EU 15+2.

Source: The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050

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### **c) Other factors influencing growth rate**

Retention rate

Reaction of 'European' population. Anti-immigration and anti-Islam movements. Slowdown of immigration?

Social upward mobility among European populations often , lead to lower birth rates, cultural adaptation, and religious disaffiliation. How about Muslims?

### **d) Switching to Islam and from Islam to Christianity or other**

At present: secularization among Muslims

Conversions to Christianity – difficult to get figures

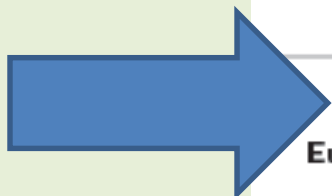
Conversions to Islam – less, and most often related to marriage

Pew Report, Projections for 2010-2050 in Europe:

9.3 million new Christians, 1.5 million new Muslims

## Projected Cumulative Change, by Region, Due to Religious Switching, 2010-2050

REGION	RELIGION	SWITCHING IN	SWITCHING OUT	NET CHANGE
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>	Muslims	9,260,000	6,350,000	<b>2,920,000</b>
	Unaffiliated	6,330,000	5,180,000	<b>1,150,000</b>
	Folk Religions	280,000	1,660,000	<b>-1,370,000</b>
	Christians	11,670,000	14,420,000	<b>-2,750,000</b>
<b>Asia-Pacific</b>	Unaffiliated	9,860,000	5,550,000	<b>4,320,000</b>
	Muslims	1,520,000	570,000	<b>950,000</b>
	Folk Religions	430,000	590,000	<b>-150,000</b>
	Christians	4,460,000	6,880,000	<b>-2,420,000</b>
<b>Europe</b>	Unaffiliated	34,440,000	10,560,000	<b>23,880,000</b>
	Muslims	1,580,000	1,640,000	<b>-60,000</b>
	Christians	9,320,000	33,140,000	<b>-23,820,000</b>
<b>Latin America-Caribbean</b>	Unaffiliated	13,530,000	7,850,000	<b>5,680,000</b>
	Folk Religions	4,290,000	600,000	<b>3,680,000</b>
	Christians	7,810,000	17,170,000	<b>-9,360,000</b>
<b>North America</b>	Unaffiliated	32,920,000	6,460,000	<b>26,470,000</b>
	Other Religions	2,890,000	760,000	<b>2,140,000</b>
	Folk Religions	450,000	< 10,000	<b>450,000</b>
	Jews	310,000	630,000	<b>-310,000</b>
	Buddhists	540,000	940,000	<b>-400,000</b>
	Muslims	270,000	850,000	<b>-580,000</b>
	Christians	6,790,000	34,500,000	<b>-27,700,000</b>



## **e) Muslims in secular and ‘Christian’ European cultures**

### *One type of trends*

Islam in Europe – (cultural) segregation, traditional religion

Political agenda – sharia for Muslims, or for all?

Radical violent Islam – a minority. Not reduce it to socio-economic factors, it also attracts ‘integrated’ Muslims.

### *Other type of trends*

Nilüfer Göle, *The Daily Lives of Muslims: Islam and Public Confrontation in Contemporary Europe* (2017)

European Islam, accepting European values (of Christian origin)

‘*One Law for All*’ movement (marriage law and women’s rights)

European interpretation of *halal*

Secularisation of Muslims

### *Reaction of governments*

*Court cases ECHR: religious freedom, sharia, ‘insulting Islam’*



## e) Missiological remarks

- *Welcome 'the stranger in our midst'*

Let them be part of the ongoing 'European experience',  
and contribute to the cultural development of our society

- *Defend and reinforce values and (Christian) roots of our culture*

- *Get to know Muslims and their communities*

- *Dialogue, collaboration*

Muslims have same problems as we in SMR Society

- *Communicate the Gospel to Muslims in their European context*

Receptivity bound up with level of integration in society

- *Double border crossing, religious and historical-cultural*

Becoming European, the historical opposite of Islam

- *The problem of integration*

European and culturally adapted churches (cf. Rick Kronk)

## *5. Young adults and religion*

### **a) Some recent studies**

*Young Adults (16-29) and Religion in Western Europe (ESS, 2018)*

No religious affiliation ('nones')

91% in the Czech Republic / 80% in Estonia / 75% in Sweden

1% in Israel / 17% in Poland / 25% in Lithuania.

70% in the UK / 64% in France

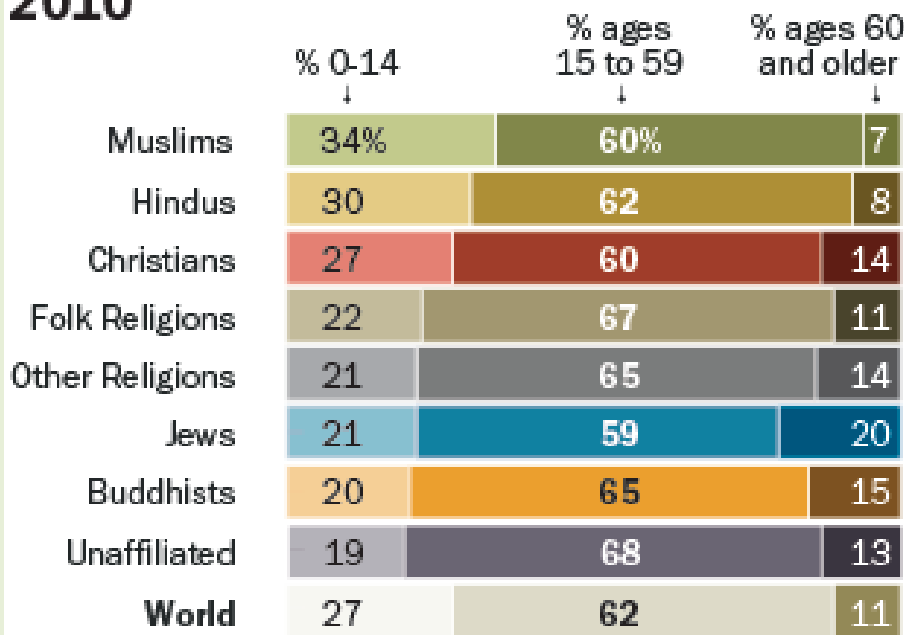
France: 26% religious, 2% Protestants, 10% Muslims

UK: 21% religious, 7% Anglicans, 6% Muslims.

*Young generation and religion (French study, 2016)*

- a) Young people are relatively more religious than older people
- b) More in large urban areas
- c) More boys than girls

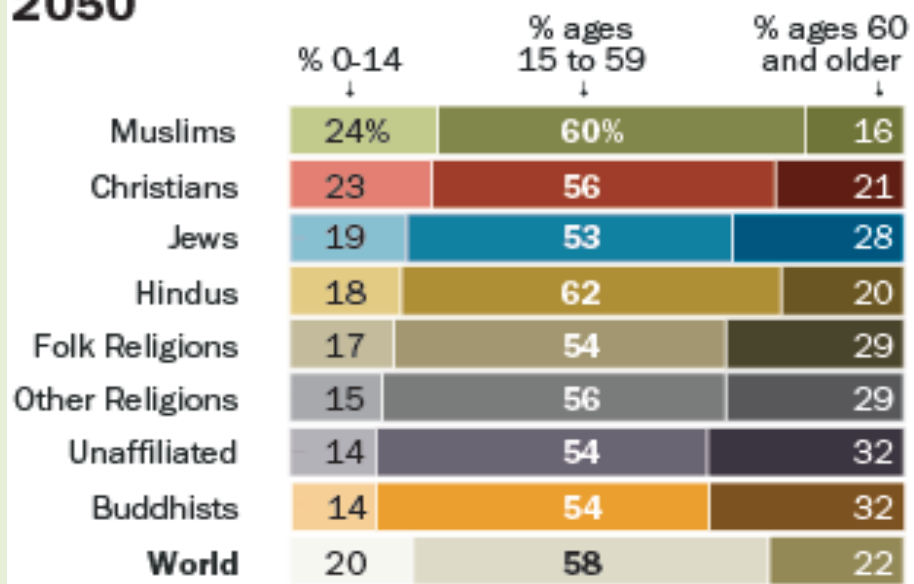
# Age Distribution of Religious Groups, 2010



Source: The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

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# Age Distribution of Religious Groups, 2050



Source: The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

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## 5. *(Post)Disconnected and Bridges for the Message*

### a) **Disconnected – other terms, different ideas**

*Unaffiliated*

*Unchurched*

What about disconnected Muslims, Jews...?

*Non religious*

Are they totally 'post-religious'?

*Secularised*

In Europe: secularised Christianity – still 'Christian' in some ways

*Nonverts*

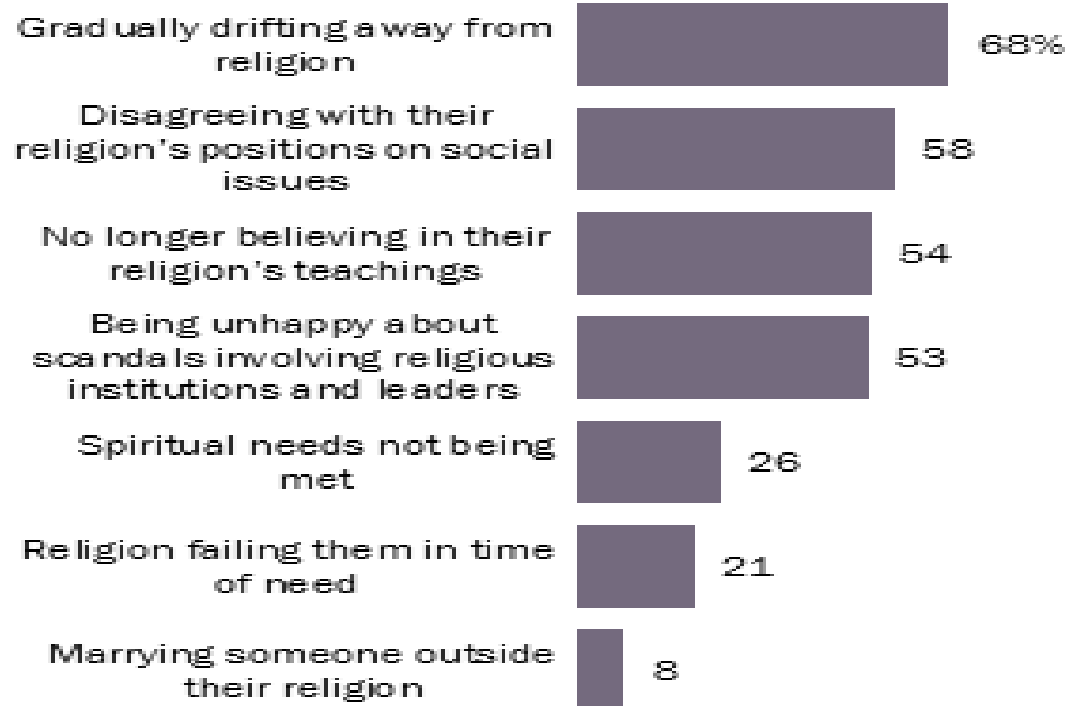
Some have indeed deliberately changed, 'conversion' stories

Others, well lets look at what research found...

## b) Why disconnect?

### Most Western Europeans who stopped identifying with a religion 'gradually drifted away,' among other reasons

*Among those who were raised in a religion but now identify as unaffiliated, median % of people who cite \_\_\_\_\_ as an important reason why they left religion*



Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.

"Being Christian in Western Europe"

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### **c) Post-disconnected**

People without any religious background (post-secularised).

*No negative experience with the Church to react against*

*No memory of religious practice*

*No religious worldview*

Secularist discourse is 'normal'

Greatest obstacle for considering Christian faith

Need of a preliminary conversion

*Religiously illiterate*

No understanding of Christian / religious language

Not without prejudice. Influence of what others say

Easily believe anything about 'religious' people

*The 'long arm of (Christianised) culture'*

Part of a society shaped by Christian ideas, norms and values

This impacts their thinking and acting, even unconsciously

# Building bridges for the Message

## *Secularised, secularism*

Living and thinking without taking into account a divine or transcendent reality

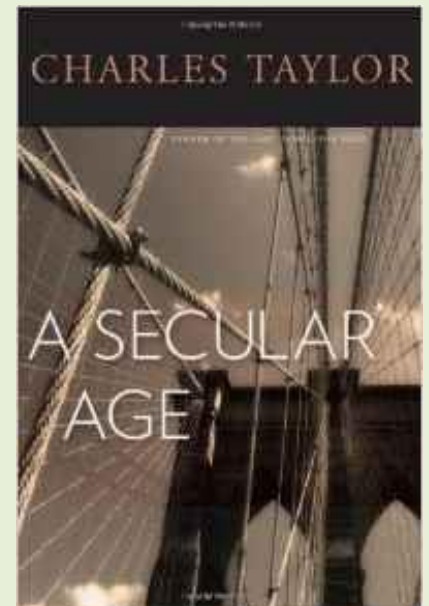
## *Apologetic response*

Showing the plausibility of believing in God

## *Find bridges in the world of the other*

Charles Taylor (A Secular Age):

*Secular belief is a shutting out, the door is barred against further discovery. In the secular waste land people will explore beyond the boundaries: new and old forms of spirituality*





*Believing without belonging*

‘Christian’ or ‘religious’ beliefs disconnected from Church

*Behaving without belonging*

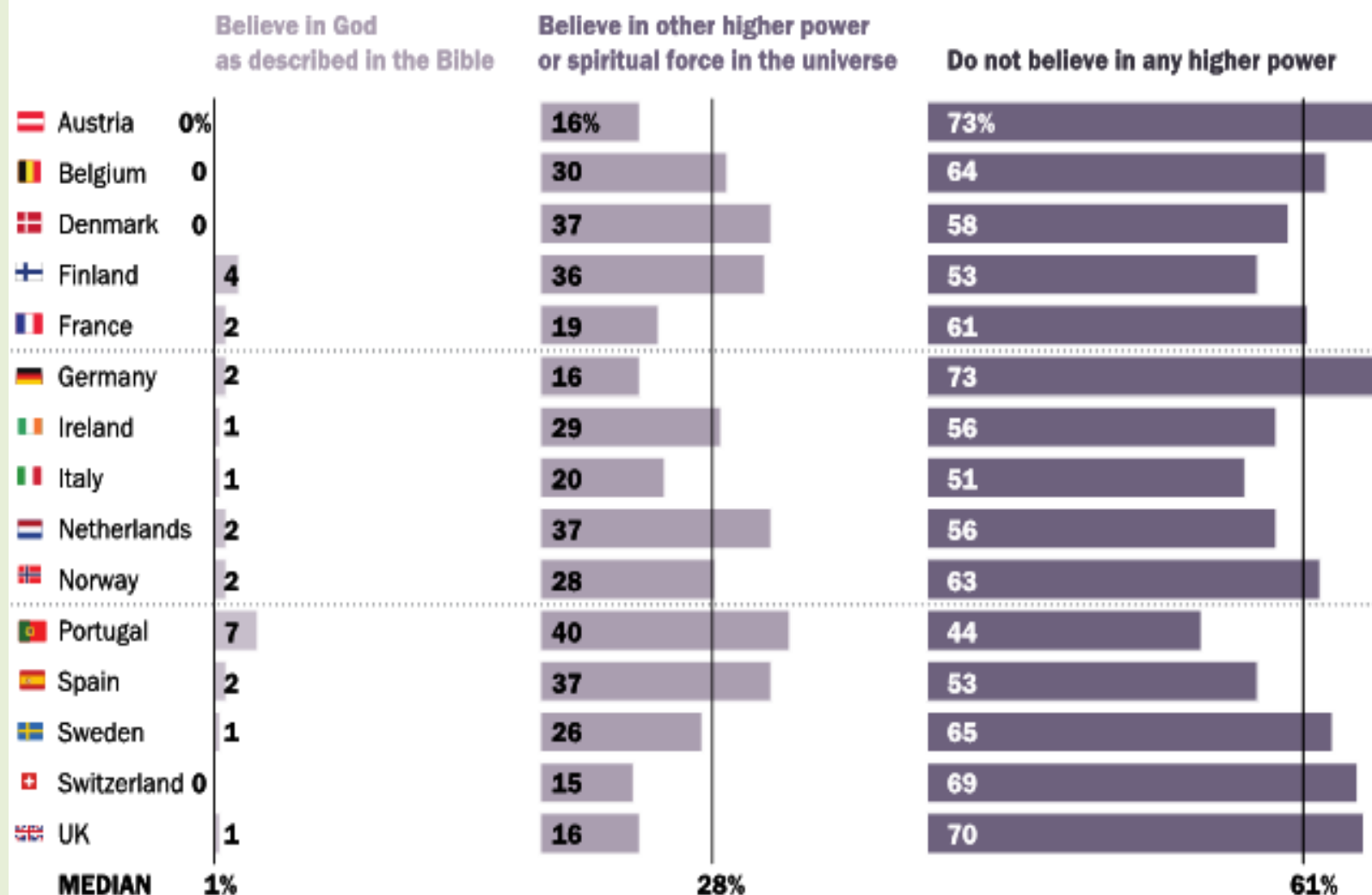
Idem, ‘Christian’ or ‘religious’ norms, values, practices

*Vicarious religion*

The Church functions on behalf of others, of society

# Roughly three-in-ten unaffiliated people report believing in some higher power

% of religiously unaffiliated adults who ...



Note: Other/both/neither/depends/don't know/refused responses are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.

"Being Christian in Western Europe"

## The 'unquiet frontiers of secularity'

*Our age is very far from settling into a comfortable unbelief. Many moderns are uncomfortable with death, giving up of everything.*

Woody Allan: *I continue making films in order not to think about death*

Another: *'I no longer believe in God but I miss him'*

## **Existential experiences**

- a) Finitude (death) – What is the sense of our existence if one day it will be all over?
- b) Failure – Where does our sense of shame and/or guilt come from? What about our (bad) conscience?
- b) Good things in human existence – How to explain beauty, happiness, force, resilience, peace, love, progress, community, freedom, liberation, justice?
- c) Insight in reality, human wisdom – While this takes the effort of study and reflection, this is often experienced as being 'given'
- d) Evil and suffering – If life is just a struggle for survival, why can't we accept suffering from fellow-humans and from natural disasters?
- e) Experiences of the divine (Gods presence in the desert