

5.1 RELIGION IN CZECHIA

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The importance of religion has been growing globally in recent decades and even in secularized Western Europe religious belief plays a significant role in public space, politics and the social and economic spheres of life (Nešpor 2004a, b). Religion has significant influence on society, it is a source of values and rules and an important legitimating tool (Hamplová 2000). Thus religion to a degree defines and separates the social and cultural borders of constituent societies (Huntington 1997, quoted in Nešpor 2004a, b). Czech society is distinguished by a high degree of secularization, which is usually linked to the atheistic propaganda of the communistic regime, but the roots of which need to be sought much earlier, particularly in the modernizing processes of the 19th century (Václavík 2010).

The goal of the specialized map is to evaluate spatial differences in the development of the religious structure of Czechia in the 20th and the early 21st centuries and to show the most significant trends in this period. In order to make older quality cartographic documents accessible to a wider readership we used the map of religious denominations from the Atlas of the Czechoslovak Republic (Atlas republiky Československé) published in 1935 to evaluate the inter-war period. The specialized map contains data from the 1930 census represented by isolines and proportional symbol map created using a combination of territorial and population principles. This method gives a map of squares placed in the centre of continuous territories with populations of 9, 12, 16 thousand and so on that have a similar religious structure (Boháč 1935). The map based on data from the most recent census also works with the level of municipalities. Using the isolines method to show the percentage of Roman-Catholics in the population makes it possible to compare changes between 1930 and 2011. The religious structure of the population is analysed for ORP¹ areas which – unlike the map of the 1930 situation (where there are no borders marked between religiously distinct territories) – allows recognition of the religious structure in actual territories.

The religious structure of the population can be evaluated on the basis of several data sources (for more information see Hamplová 2000), although each of these has some limitations. The census used to create the specialized map provides the number of believers determined but it is impossible to assess the degree to which people identify with the teachings of a particular Church and whether they are active members (Hamplová 2000). The declaration of religious faith in the census and actual religious belief are not one and the same (Heřmanová 2009), as repeated research in Czechia has confirmed. The measure of actual religious belief is less than the level of religion declared in the census but there are no apparent significant regional differences (Hůle 2005). Methods of identifying religious faith in the census have changed significantly since 1921.

¹ ORP – “Obec s rozšířenou působností”: Municipality with extended powers.

In the inter-war period religious confession was defined as affiliation to a Church (although it did not have to be validated by the state), other persons were classified as “without denomination”. In 1954 the question about religious affiliation was removed and it was restored only in the first post-revolutionary census (ČSÚ 2014). In these new censuses religious faith was not restricted to membership of a certain church or religious group. In addition, since 2001 the answer to this question is optional (failure to answer it was tolerated even in 1991, for more information see ČSÚ 2014) and 45% of the Czech population made use of this in 2011. Since this is a relatively high percentage of the population and it is not possible to identify the reason for choosing this option, the interpretation of the new census data is difficult. In the 2011 census there was also a new possibility to choose the option of believer – without affiliation to any church or religious society (previously it was possible not to put down any church but these persons were allocated to the “others” category) and 7% of the Czech population have done so.

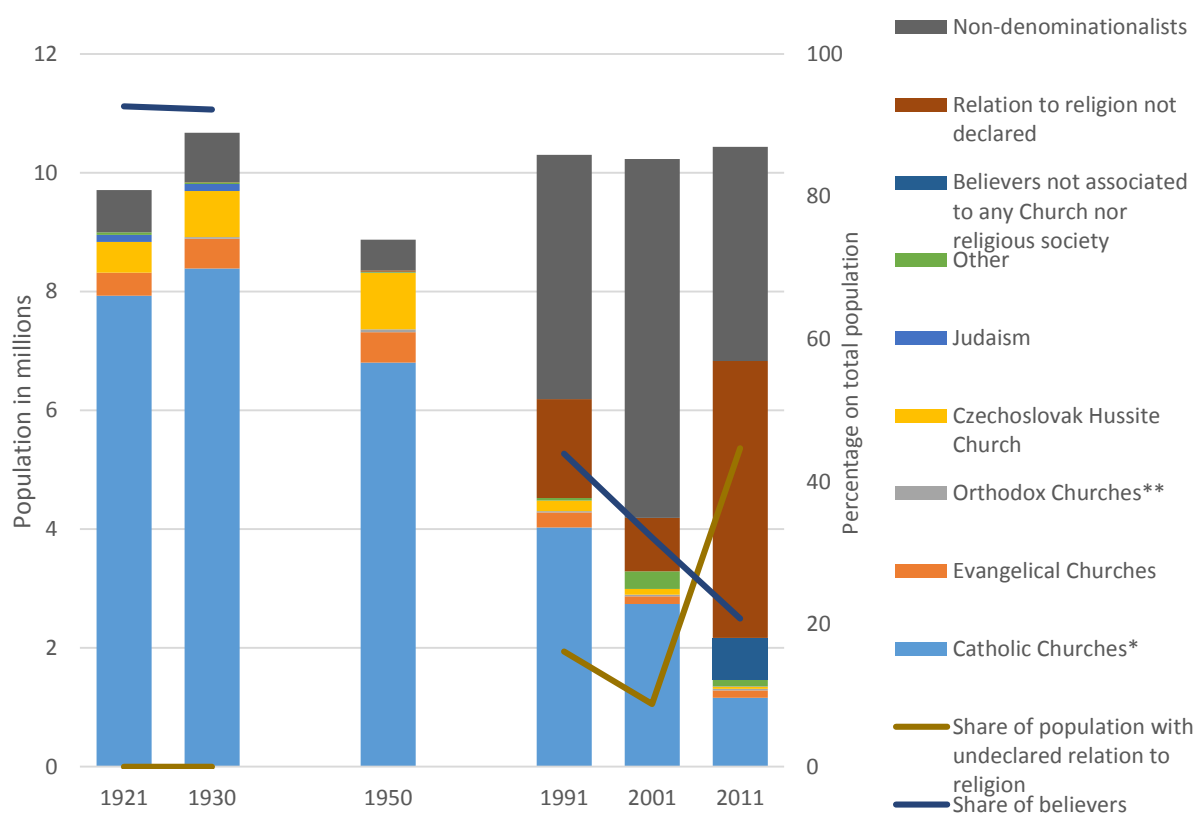


Figure 5.1.1: Structure of population according to religious affiliation in 1921–2011

Source: ČSÚ, 1924, 1934, 1958, 1991, 2001, 2011

Note: In the censuses of 1961, 1970 and 1980 religious affiliation was not recorded. In 2011 the category “non-denominationalist” included people who declared they were atheists but did not fill out whether they are believers or not (a total of 1058 persons).

* In 1921 and 2001: Roman-Catholic Church

** In 2001: Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands

The long-term trend in Czechia is a reduction in the proportion of believers in the population (see Figure 5.1.1; Havlíček 2005). While in the inter-war period more than 90%

of the population were believers, the current 10% of the population are a minority (see also Havlíček 2008). In 1930 almost 80% of inhabitants reported their affiliation to the Roman-Catholic Church and the second most popular Church was the newly established Czechoslovak Hussite Church (7.3%). Almost 8% of population said they had no religion. The high percentage of people saying they belonged to the Roman-Catholic Church was fairly evenly distributed across the country. Central and north-eastern Bohemia had a lower proportion of Roman Catholics and a higher concentration of people declaring their affiliation to the Czechoslovak Hussite Church. This Church also had followers in big cities in the regions of Liberec and Hradec Králové. There was a higher percentage of Protestants in the area of Český Těšín where ethnic Poles predominated, and also in the western part of Czechia. Inhabitants without religious affiliation were more common in industrial regions of the Czech lands and in big cities.

After the 1989 revolution both the numbers and the percentage of believers declined (see Figure 5.1.1). In 2011 less than one third of people from 1991 listed themselves as believers. While in the first decade (1991–2001) the proportion of the population with no religious affiliation grew in proportion to the decrease in the percentage of believers, in 2011 many more people opted not to answer the question and thus the proportion of non-believers dropped again. The decline in the percentage of believers was a result of the decline in the significance of the most numerous churches. On the other hand, many churches are attracting new followers, for instance the Greek-Catholic Church, Church of Brethren or the Church Christian Communities (ČSÚ 2014).

Thus in 2011 21% of Czechia's population declared themselves to be believers, which was 38% of those who answered the question. According to the census there are 11% of Roman Catholics in Czechia and 7% of people chose the new alternative of declaring themselves to be believers without any church affiliation. In spatial terms, the growth in the percentage of believers can be noticed from the northwest to the southeast of Czech territory. This trend is apparent even in case of the dominant religion – the Roman-Catholic Church. The second largest church in Czechia – the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren – traditionally draws its followers mostly from the regions of Moravian Wallachia and Polabí. The spatial distribution of the Czechoslovak Hussite Church did not change and people affiliated to it are concentrated in big cities and in the regions of Liberec and Hradec Králové. The highest proportions of people with no religious denomination can be found in ORPs of the Ústí nad Labem region (see Table 5.1.1).

ORP with the highest percentage of believers			
ORP	Region	Percentage of believers in population declaring their religion	Percentage of believers in population of Czechia
Valašské klobouky	Zlínský	89.93	57.59
Kravaře	Moravskoslezský	89.15	53.11
Jablunkov	Moravskoslezský	86.72	57.23
Uherský Brod	Zlínský	78.83	52.92
Hlučín	Moravskoslezský	75.63	42.49
Luhačovice	Zlínský	75.52	44.81
Veselí nad Moravou	Jihomoravský	75.45	46.87

Velké Meziříčí	Vysočina	71.90	42.18
Třinec	Moravskoslezský	71.70	42.84
Nové Město na Moravě	Vysočina	68.98	41.19
ORP with the highest percentage of non-believers			
ORP	Region	Percentage of non-believers in population declaring their religion	Percentage of non-believers in population of Czechia
Litvínov	Ústecký	84.44	45.15
Bílina	Ústecký	84.22	45.10
Most	Ústecký	83.81	45.38
Děčín	Ústecký	83.24	46.02
Rakovník	Středočeský	82.72	47.10
Louny	Ústecký	82.45	45.42
Česká Lípa	Liberecký	82.22	43.78
Chomutov	Ústecký	81.90	44.97
Nýřany	Plzeňský	81.86	44.34
Ústí nad Labem	Ústecký	81.43	44.25
ORP with the highest percentage of people who did not declare their religion			
ORP	Region	The percentage of people who did not answer the question on their religion	
Votice	Středočeský	53.01	
Nepomuk	Plzeňský	52.24	
Strakonice	Jihočeský	52.22	
Pacov	Vysočina	52.20	
Horážd'ovice	Plzeňský	51.60	
Vodňany	Jihočeský	51.59	
Blatná	Jihočeský	51.58	
Podbořany	Ústecký	51.43	
Sedlčany	Středočeský	51.10	
Milevsko	Jihočeský	50.94	

Table 5.1.1: ORP with the highest values of given shares**Source:** ČSÚ, 2011**References:**

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