Methodology of International Religious Demography

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November 21–26, 2013
Baltimore, MD
Three unique features

- International
- Interdisciplinary
- Chronological
Religion

- Self-identification
- Tracking affiliation, not beliefs, attitudes, or practices
- World religion: size, history, global spread
How many religions? Which ones?

Indigenous religions
Judaism
Christianity
Islam
Hinduism
Buddhism
East Asian religions

Christianity
Confucianism
Hinduism
Buddhism
Yoruba religion
Judaism
Daoism
Atheism

Christianity
Islam
Unaffiliated
Hinduism
Buddhism
Folk religion
Judaism
Other religions

Christianity
Islam
Hinduism
Agnosticism
Buddhism
Chinese folk-religion
Ethnoreligions
Atheism
New religions
Sikhism
Judaism
Spiritism
Confucianism
Daoism
Baha’i
Jainism
Shinto
Zoroastrianism
Double-affiliation

- Religious categories are not mutually exclusive
- Multiple religious belonging
Non-affiliation

- IRD includes religionists and non-religionists
Major sources

- Censuses
- Surveys & polls
- Data collected from religious communities
Census: Religion

Scotland, 2011

Ireland, 2011

Britain, 2011
Census: Ethnicity

USA, 2010
Limitations of censuses

- Honest response
- Who is counted?
- Selecting responses from a set list
- Ethnicity & religion assumptions

 BE HONEST TO GODLESS IN THE CENSUS
 IF YOU'RE NOT RELIGIOUS, SAY SO

 BE HONEST IN THE CENSUS
 NO RELIGION? NOT ROMAN CATHOLIC? SAY SO.
Surveys & polls

- Demographic surveys
- General population surveys

V185. Do you belong to a religion or religious denomination? If yes, which one? (Code answer due to list below. Code 0, if respondent answers to have no denomination!)

No: do not belong to a denomination 0
Yes:  
Roman Catholic 1
Protestant 2
Orthodox (Russian/Greek/etc.) 3
Jew 4
Muslim 5
Hindu 6
Buddhist 7
Other (write in): __________ 8

(NOTE: If your own society does not fit into this coding system, please devise an alternative, following this as closely as possible; for example, in Islamic countries, ask about Sunni, Shia, etc. Send a list of the categories used here along with your data.)

World Values Survey, 2005
Limitations of surveys & polls

- Small sample size
- Non-response
- Response bias

Mean number of children by religiosity, World Values Survey

World Values Survey, 2005–08
Data from religious communities

- Births, deaths, baptisms, personnel, finance, etc.
Limitations of data from religious communities

- Definition of “membership”
- Risk of inflation
Asking the question

- One-step census approach vs. two-step survey approach
One-step approach
2001 Bulgarian census

16. Вероизповедание*
   1. Источноправославно
   2. Католическо
   3. Протестантско
   4. Мюсюлманско сунитско
   5. Мюсюлманско шиитско
   6. Друго .................................................................
   99. Не се самоопределя

[One Step – choose one] Faith:
   1. Orthodox
   2. Catholic
   3. Protestant
   4. Sunni Muslim
   5. Shi’a Muslim
   6. Other __________
   99. None given
Two-step approach
1999 Bulgaria European Values Survey

Step 1
Do you have a religious affiliation?

A Yes → go to question 23
B No → go to question 24a

Step 2 – if Yes – Show Card 23

23 Which one?
Orthodox 1
Muslim 2
Catholic 3
Protestant 4
Other _______ 5
Results
Different methods yield different results

Bulgaria: Census vs Survey

- Orthodox
- Not stated; Not applicable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Census 2001</th>
<th>EVS 1999</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated; Not applicable</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further complication

2011 Bulgarian census results

Bulgaria: Census vs Survey

- **Orthodox**:
  - Census 2001: 83
  - EVS 1999: 59
  - Census 2011 pct of answered: 76

- **Not stated; Not applicable; Not stated**:
  - Census 2001: 4
  - EVS 1999: 27
  - Census 2011 pct of answered: 7
Dynamics of religious change

- Births and deaths
- Converts to and converts from
- Immigration and emigration
Case study
Number of Coptic Christians in Egypt

- Census: Christians are declining over past 100 years
  - Latest census: 5% Christian

- Church estimates: Consistently 15%

- Issues to consider
  - Church overestimation?
  - Social pressure on Christians?
  - Reporting of ex-pats?
  - Egypt’s high governmental restrictions on religion
  - Egypt’s high social hostilities involving religion

- WRD: 10% Christian (8.1 million; 7.5 million are Orthodox)