

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION IN CZECHIA AND SLOVAKIA: COMPARISON AND REGIONAL DIFFERENTIATION

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Religious affiliation in Czechia and Slovakia: Comparison and regional differentiation

The dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993 also led to a different development of religiosity¹ in Czechia and Slovakia in the last 30 years, which, however, continued to take into account the historical conditions of the last centuries. The current state of the religious structure of the population of Czechia and Slovakia is the result of the influence of several common (both states in the EU, open borders in the Schengen area, etc.), but also different factors (different role in the relationship between the church and the state, different number of migrants from abroad, migration from Slovakia to Czechia, etc.). The paper aims to analyse the development of religiosity of the population in both states over the last 30 years and to explain the causes of regional differentiation in Czechia and Slovakia. By comparing the results of the 1991 and 2021 censuses, we have identified not only spatial disparities at the national and regional level but also the driving forces that had the greatest impact on them. Secularization tendencies on the one hand and interest in new religiosity or alternative spirituality can be observed in both countries, but in the case of Czechia it is a more pronounced acceleration.

Key words: religiosity, comparison, regional differentiation, secularization, homogeneity, Czechia, Slovakia

INTRODUCTION

Religion continues to determine the development of society as well as space at various hierarchical levels, despite the continuing trends of secularization in European states, including Czechia and Slovakia. In the last decade, secular tendencies have increasingly begun to manifest themselves in Europe and also in Czechia. Postsecularism is characterised by an increase in religious manifestations in public space, the intermingling of secular and sacral aspects, and also by the increasing pluralization of religious manifestations, often in a non-institutional form (Havlíček and Klingorová et al. 2020). According to Huntington (1997), religious diversity has an impact on defining the sociocultural frameworks of individual societies. According to Nešpor (2004), religiosity plays an important role in public space, politics, social and economic spheres of life.

Despite the geographical proximity of Czechia and Slovakia, there are significant differences in the religiosity of the population as well as its perception in these countries. The aim of this paper is to analyse and compare the development of re-

¹ We use the term “religiosity” in this paper in line with the meaning of “religious affiliation”, although we are aware of the somewhat broader meaning of “religiosity”.

gional differentiation of religiosity in Czechia and Slovakia since the division of Czechoslovakia. In order to understand the contemporary character of religiosity in both countries, we provide an overview of historically relevant events. We link quantitative data on religiosity to a reflection on the causes and driving forces that influenced it. Three research questions arise in the context of the problem addressed in the paper: Does the religiosity of Czechia and Slovakia show a different development in the last 30 years? Is Slovakia characterized by a much higher religious homogeneity than Czechia? What are the main causes and driving forces of the different development of religiosity in Czechia and Slovakia?

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION IN CZECHIA AND SLOVAKIA UNTIL 1991

The existing religious structure in Czechia and Slovakia is the outcome of the geographical positioning of these states in Central Europe and numerous historical factors.

Religious practices in both states began to develop in the 9th century with the influence of Western missionaries. Their activities were followed by the mission of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, which laid the foundations for the literature and culture of almost the entire Slavic world (Ivanič and Hetényi 2021).

The Reformation had a significant impact on the religious structure of the population in Czechia. Its initial phase was associated with the teachings of Jan Hus, who was excommunicated and burned for his criticism of the Church. Society was religiously divided into Catholics and Utraquists, between whom there were frequent riots.

After Luther's era and the Reformation in Europe, the territory of the Czech lands increasingly came under the influence of Protestant movements and churches, which were also linked to the regional secular power (the Peace of Augsburg of 1555 "cuius regio, eius religio"). In this period, the proportion of Catholics in Czechia fell to less than half of the believing population; on the contrary, the majority of believers identified with Hus's reformist ideas. Religious disagreements in Czechia, like in other areas of Europe, continued and reached a pan-European conflict (1618 – 1648). The result for Czechia, especially after the defeat of Protestant forces at the Battle of Bílá Hora (White Mountain) in 1620, was a violent recatholicization supported by the Habsburg court. Protestant religions became illegal, leading to massive emigration of non-Catholics (Havlíček 2006). Religious orientation in Czechia is characterised by frequent fluctuations and overall heterogeneity, which persists to this day. Unlike other European countries, Czechia has not developed a strong religious tradition (Havlíček and Hupková 2008). The Hussite epoch, together with the period after the Battle of Bílá Hora (White Mountain), can be regarded as the initial stage that led to the current religious situation in Czechia.

The Roman Catholic Church, which supported the ethnically unjust Habsburg monarchy until its dissolution, became a target of anti-Catholic activities after the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918. The previously dominant Roman Catholic Church lost its position, with no other church taking its place (Nešpor 2020). In response to the creation of the new state, a rival "state" church, known as the Church of Czechoslovakia (since 1971, the name has been supplemented with "Hussite"), was established. Its aim was to become a mass religion modelled on the Church of England and to build on the Hussite Reformation movement of the 15th

century. Despite an initial sharp increase in the number of its adherents, it did not fulfil its mission (Daněk and Štěpánek 1992). The highest number of Czechoslovak Hussite Church followers (over 10%) was recorded in the 1950 census. According to the 2021 census, the proportion of believers was only 0.2% of the Czech population. In 1921, nearly 93% of the population residing in the Czech part of Czechoslovakia claimed religious faith. However, this same year, a new element emerged - atheism (the non-religious population), which more than 7% of the population identified with in that year. In the 1950 census, over 90% of the population professed religious faith, and although the proportion remained stable, the importance of the Catholic Church declined after World War II ended. It was a period when predominantly Catholic Germans were displaced. Starting in 1948, the totalitarian communist regime persecuted church leaders, shut all monasteries, and transferred church welfare facilities into state ownership. These actions continued until the communist dictatorship fell in 1989. The state exercised extensive control over the churches, with the communist regime portraying religion as socially outdated. As a result, the number of religious persons in Czechia decreased to less than 44.0% in 1991 (compared to 93.9% in 1950), and at the same time, the non-religious population increased from 7.8% in 1950 to 39.9% in 1991. The largest number of believers (39% of the total population) adhered to the Roman Catholic Church, while 16.2% of the population did not express any opinion on the question of faith. The regional polarisation of religiosity in Czechia remained evident in 2021. Higher proportions of believers were found in the south and east, especially along the border with Slovakia. On the contrary, low shares of religiosity were found in the north and west of Czechia, which was mainly due to the displacement of Czech Germans (almost 3 million people) and also to the strong level of industrialization in the Ústecký and the Moravskoslezský regions (Havlíček 2005).

The initial stages of the formation of religiosity in Slovakia were identical to those in Czechia. The religious structure of the population was naturally homogeneous at this stage and remained so until the 16th century. Catholics were in the majority, and only in the far eastern and north-eastern regions did Ruthenians declare themselves Orthodox (Matlovič 2001). In addition to the previously discussed religions, Judaism was documented as early as the 9th century (Kusendová Mnd ajo 2015) and was prevalent in suburban areas such as Bratislava, Trnava and Nitra.

The Reformation had a significant impact on the religious structure, which was spread in Slovakia mainly by the German inhabitants of Slovak towns (where they formed the majority at that time), with lively connections to the German lands (Čornej at al. 1995 and Ira 1996). The spread of the Reformation was positively influenced by the Battle of Mohács (1526), in which, in addition to the King, several church dignitaries were killed. The chaos that followed the battle created the right conditions for the search for new spiritual values, which the Reformation offered in the form of the Lutheran Church. In parallel with Luther's Reformation, Calvinism (Kusendová and Majo 2015) also spread in the country, especially among the Hungarian population in the south of Slovakia. The spread of the Reformation in Slovakia was also attributed to the application of the principle "cuius regio, eius religio", which meant that by changing the confession of the feudal owners, the faith of their subjects was also changed (Očovský 1993). According to Kováč, ed. (1996), the Lutheran Church dominated the adult population in the Nitra, Turiec, Liptov and Orava counties in 1613. Due to the influence of the intense Counter-Reformation, supported by the Catholic Habsburgs, the Catholic Church

returned to the position of the dominant church already at the end of the 17th century. The Protestant community faced persecution until the issuance of the Toleration Patent in 1781. Despite the Counter-Reformation, the numbers of Protestants remained significant in the foothill areas of central Slovakia (Očovský 1995), as well as in the Myjavská pahorkatina hills, regions Horný Liptov, Dolná Orava, Gemer and Novohrad. Similarly, the Hungarian population along the southern border retained Calvinist beliefs.

The Counter-Reformation in Eastern Slovakia and Subcarpathian Rus was partly associated with the emergence of the Uniate (Greek Catholic) Church. The majority of Orthodox believers later joined it. In the first half of the 18th century, Orthodoxy thus disappeared from the religious scene in Eastern Slovakia (Matlovič 2001).

The first census in the modern history of Hungary (1869) made it possible to determine the exact spatial distribution of religions in Slovakia. It shows the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church, which had its followers throughout Slovakia. It was particularly dominant in Western and Northern Slovakia. The second largest church was the Lutheran Church. Its followers were concentrated in the regions of Myjava, Turiec, Liptov, Gemer and Spiš. The regional character was marked by the distribution of the Greek Catholic Church, which was tied to the east of Slovakia. The Reformed Christians, whose location was tied to the Slovak-Hungarian border area and also had a regional character. The religious mosaic in Slovakia is completed by Judaism, localised in the urban environment in the east and west of the country. In 1869, Orthodox Christians and other unspecified members of Christian and non-Christian denominations were also present in small numbers on the our territory of Slovakia (Kusendová and Majo 2015). At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, there was a revival of Orthodoxy thanks to re-emigrants from North America and Russia, to which many Greek Catholics converted over time.

The establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918 led to a change in the religious structure brought about by the migration of Protestants like the Czechoslovak Church, Czech Brethren Evangelicals and atheists from the Czech lands to Slovakia. This situation changed after 1939, during the period of the “Slovak state”, when, on the contrary, the Czechs left.

The socialist era of 1948 – 1989 had a detrimental effect on the religiosity of Slovakia, similar to that of Czechia. The totalitarian system perceived the church as its primary ideological opponent and sought to eliminate its influence in every way possible (Ambrósio et al. 2019). Besides shutting down monasteries, arresting and imprisoning clerics, the activities of the Greek Catholic Church were terminated (1950 – 1968) and its followers were forced to convert into Orthodoxy. The totalitarian state’s relationship with the Church is further demonstrated by the removal of religious issues from the census. Only after the political and social transformations of November 1989, was it included in the censuses. In 1991, 72.8% of the population of Slovakia identified with a religious denomination, 9.8% of the population identified as non-denominational, and for 17.4% of the population, their religious affiliation was undetermined. The high proportion of this population was due to the nature of the census in a specific period with significant uncertainty in the declaration of religious affiliation (Majo 2013 and Matlovič et al. 2015), as well as the fact that there was no obligation to declare a religious affiliation (Očovský 1993). The largest segment of the population (60.4%) identified as Roman Catholic in 1991. While the proportion decreased from 76.2% in 1950, Tížik’s (2006) analy-

sis supports the view that in spite of socialism, Catholicism has become an integral component of the Slovak national identity. The Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, the second-largest denomination, comprised 6.2% of the population. This indicates that both socialism and secularization had a substantial effect on the number of followers of this denomination (Kusendová and Majo 2015). The share of believers from other denominations was less than 5.0%. The northern districts of regions Kysuce, Orava, Zamagurie and Šariš showed the highest level of religiosity, with the district of Námestovo reaching a value of 93.1% of believers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The fundamental statistical information used in this study has been derived from the 1991 and 2021 Census of Population, Housing and Dwellings from the Czech Statistical Office (SLDB 1991 and 2021) and the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (SODB 2021), in addition to the Slovak Social Data Archive database (SASD 2011002 2017). The administrative districts of municipalities with extended competence (ORP), including 206 territorial units defined by Decree No. 388/2002 Coll. (Česko 2002), and 79 districts in the Slovak Republic defined by Act No. 221/1996 Coll. (Slovensko 1996) were selected as the elementary territorial units. In the individual maps, the interval scales that enable direct comparison between the two countries were carefully selected based on the maximum and minimum values retrieved for both Czechia and Slovakia. The maps illustrating the total number of believers utilize the cartogram method, with the data normalized by the population size of each territorial unit. In addition to the maps, an area-localised cartogram is included, illustrating the exact number of believers. Believers were defined as residents who self-identified as such in the census and then formally affiliated themselves with a church registered with the state. Maps illustrating the changes in the absolute number of believers were created for the time period spanning from 1991 to 2021. The index of absolute percentage change in the number of believers (I_A) was computed using the following formula

$$I_A = 100 * \left(\frac{P_2 - P_1}{P_1} \right)$$

where P_1 represents the number of believers in 1991, while P_2 represents the number of believers in 2021. A negative value was assigned to the change of the index I_A if the number of believers in 2021 was lower than that in 1991, and conversely, the change of the index I_A reached positive values when the number of believers increased at the end of the period. Cartographic representation was achieved through the use of the qualification choropleth map method. A cartodiagram was used to provide information on the absolute value of the increase or decrease, which was particularly important for interpreting extreme values. The maps displaying changes in the relative number of people without religious affiliation were based on the number of individuals who selected 'no religion' in the census classification. To calculate the index of the relative number of people without religion (I_R) as a percentage between 1991 and 2021, the formula as follows was employed:

$$I_R = 100 * \left(\frac{P_2}{C_2} - \frac{P_1}{C_1} \right)$$

where, P_1 represents the number of people without religious affiliation in 1991 while C_1 represents the total population in that year. P_2 represents the number of people without religious affiliation in 2021 while C_2 represents the total population in that year. When the I_R change index became negative, the proportion of people without religious affiliation decreased in 2021 compared to that in 1991. For positive values, we can observe an increase in the relative representation of people without religious affiliation in 2021 compared to that in 1991. The qualification choropleth map method was selected for the cartographic representation. To illustrate the regional structure of the religious scene, maps were used to display the religious homogeneity of the most significant religious traditions. According to the relation between them, the homogeneity index (H) was utilized

$$H = 100 * \sqrt{\frac{h_1^2 + h_2^2 + \dots + h_n^2}{h^2}},$$

where, h_i is the number of members of a particular religious group, n is the total number of religious groups and h is the total number of church members. The index indicates the diversity of the religious makeup of a population. The lower its value, the more diverse it is. Conversely, the higher the value, the more concentrated the population is in one religious tradition. To create the cartographic representation, the qualifying cartogram method was used again.

DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION IN CZECHIA AND SLOVAKIA (1991 – 2021)

The state policy towards churches during the communist rule between 1948 and 1989, along with historical predispositions, significantly influenced the religious structure of the population in Czechia and Slovakia even after this period, which is also evident from the identification of spatial and temporal changes in the basic indicators of religiosity in the period 1991 – 2021.

Regarding the share of believers, a declining trend was observed in Czechia (Fig. 1) until 2011 (from 43.9% to 20.8%) and a slight increase to 22.2% in 2021. In these two periods, the category of believers includes people who believe but do not belong to an organised church, the so-called non-institutionalised believers. The share of non-institutionalized believers during this period led to the slight increase in the total share of believers in Czechia in 2021.

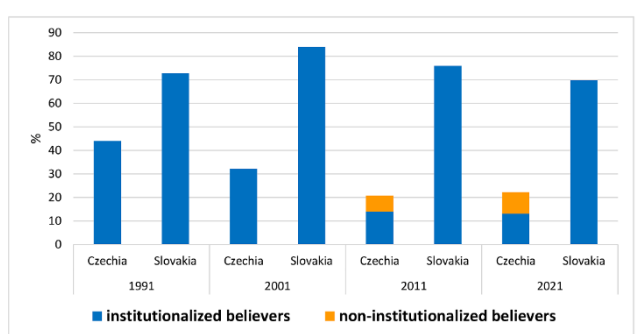


Fig. 1. Believers in Czechia and Slovakia (1991 – 2021)

In Slovakia, the share of believers increased by more than 10 percentage points (pp) to 84.1% in the period 1991 – 2001 and then fell to 69.7% in 2021.

The difference in the degree of religiosity between the two countries is also evident in their spatial representation. While Slovakia has an above-average degree of religiosity, Czechia has long had one of the lowest degrees of religiosity in the world (22% of the population were religious in 2021). However, this low rate of religiosity is not evenly distributed across Czechia (Fig. 2). For several decades, there has been a significant polarisation from the northwest (low religiosity) to the southeast (above-average religiosity) of Czechia (Havlíček et al. 2017). The lowest levels (less than 4%) were recorded in ORP Litvínov and ORP Děčín, while the highest values (over 50%) were recorded in ORP Valašské Klobouky, Jablunkov and Kravaře. The significant reasons for this differentiation are the displacement of Czech Germans mainly from north-west Bohemia and the high level of industrialisation and urbanisation in north Bohemia. Regions with high religiosity exhibit a relatively stable rural population (East Moravia) and a high age index (Vysočina region). Despite the recatholicization after the Battle of Bílá Hora (White Mountain), Eastern Silesia, from Opava to Jablunkov, continues to show an above-average degree of religiosity, with a relatively large Protestant minority. The increasing number of registered religious groups, which has risen by over 50% from 1991 to the current 44, could affect the number of believers in the future. This number is steadily increasing and indicates the very heterogeneous religiosity of the Czech population.

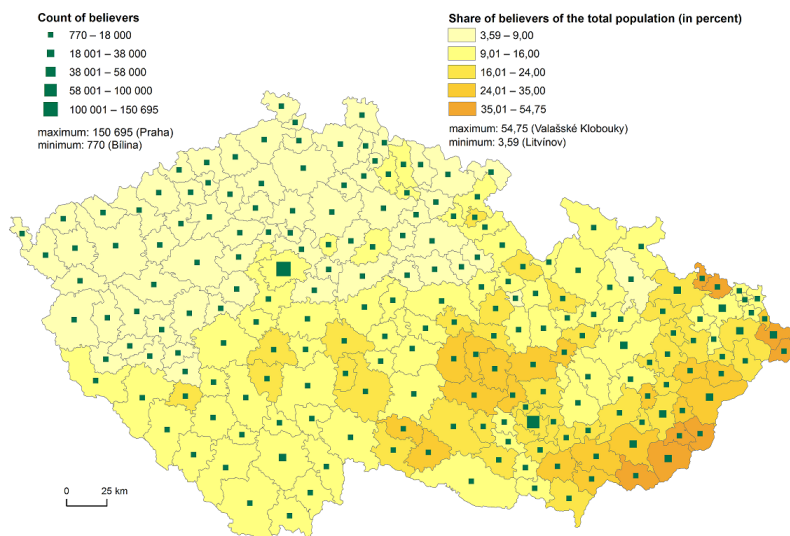


Fig. 2. Believers in Czechia in 2021

According to Bunčák (2001), despite systematic measures to suppress religiosity, Slovakia, along with Poland, Croatia and Romania, was one of the countries that maintained a high level and positive attitude towards religion in the context of the transitioning post-communist countries. In 2021, 69.7% of the Slovak population belonged to a religious denomination. The Roman Catholic Church remains

the most subscribed denomination, with 55.8% of the population, although subscription has declined compared to 1991. In comparison to 1991, the districts with the highest proportion of believers formed an increasingly continuous region (Fig. 3) that spanned across Northern Slovakia, from the Bytča district in west to the Snina district in the eastern border, excluding Liptovský Mikuláš and Poprad districts. Traditionally, the eastern part of Slovakia has been the most religious region of the nation. However, we have observed a reduction in the number of believers in the districts in the western part of Slovakia. The lowest share of believers was confirmed in all five districts of Bratislava as well as in the districts of Rožňava (52.4%) and Revúca (52.6%).

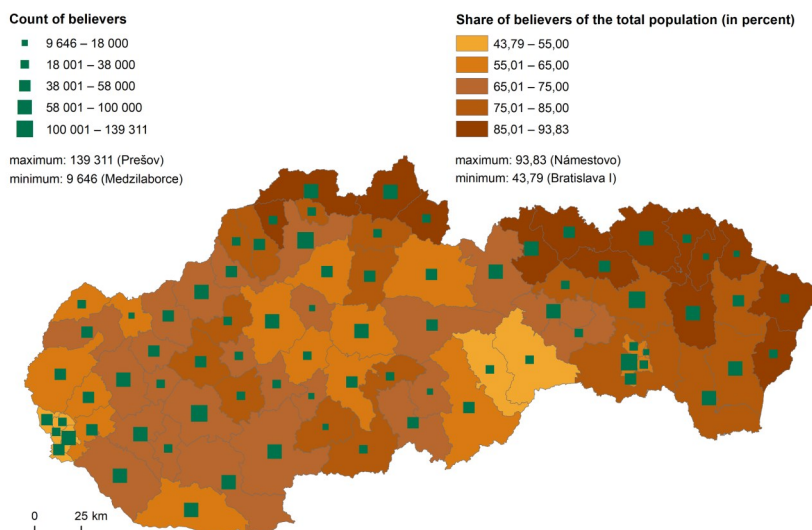


Fig. 3. Believers in Slovakia in 2021

In 2023, there are 18 registered churches and religious communities in Slovakia (on 1 September 1991 there were 15). Religious life in Slovakia is influenced by many religious orders and congregations, most of which belong to registered churches and religious societies. In 2020, according to the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, there were 47 women's (including 4 Greek Catholic) and 28 men's (including 2 Greek Catholic) religious communities registered in Slovakia (Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic 2023). Apart from those, it is also necessary to mention the state-recognised but unregistered churches and religious communities, which also have an impact on the religiosity of the population.

The development of believers between 1991 and 2021 displays significant diversity and dynamism, as indicated by the index of change in the absolute number of believers. According to Fig. 4, there were no ORPs in Czechia that experienced an increase in the number of believers during the period under review. In the period following the division of Czechoslovakia, all 206 ORPs in the country experienced a decline in the number of believers, with varying degrees of intensity. These findings confirm the ongoing trend of secularisation in Czech society, as well as the growing divide in religiosity between the secular north-west and the sacral south-

east of the country. Additionally, areas with displaced Czech Germans saw above-average decreases in believers, while non-settled interior and border areas with Slovakia experienced below-average decreases in religiosity. For example, the ORPs of Jablunkov, Valašské Klobouky, and Uherský Brod demonstrated the lowest decrease, with a value of 40%. Specific regions are the suburban areas in the hinterland of Prague and Brno, where the young and partly religious population has moved to counteract the ongoing secularisation of the suburban landscape. A particularly unique area is the capital city of Prague. This is mainly due to the immigration of mostly religious foreigners (Havlíček and Klingorová 2018), which has resulted in a low decline in the number of believers. This makes it a good model example of the onset of post-secular tendencies in Czechia (Havlíček and Klingorová et al. 2020). The last decade has seen a discernible shift towards a post-secular trend, which is characterised by the rise of non-institutionalised believers. The increase in the number of believers can be largely attributed to migration to large cities and their hinterland (Havlíček et al. 2017).

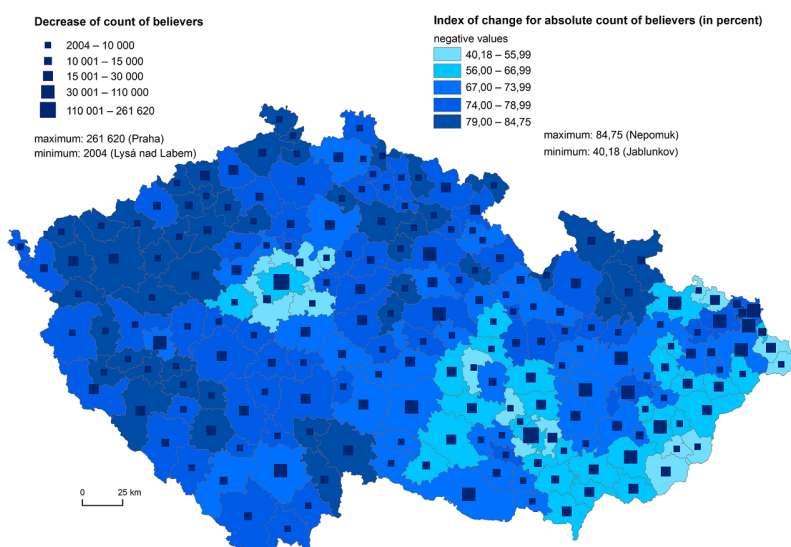


Fig. 4. Change of believers in Czechia (1991 – 2021)

Figure 5 presents the changes in the number of believers between 1991 and 2021 in Slovakia. It indicates that the absolute number of believers has increased in 25 districts. These districts are categorised into two compact bands. The first and larger one extends from the Horné Považie region through the Tatry Mountains, Zamagurie, Šariš, Spiš to the Košice region and the Dolný Zemplín region. The second region is formed by 6 districts in the west of Slovakia, which form a compact area from the Malacky district to the Dunajská Streda district, with the exception of 3 districts (Bratislava I – III). The most significant positive changes in Slovakia were observed in the districts of Senec (51.3%), Kežmarok (33.3%), Sabinov (29.9%) and Námestovo (28.5%). Negative values of the index of change between 1991 and 2021 can be observed in most districts in Western and Central Slovakia (with the exceptions mentioned above) and in the north-east. Most districts in Bra-

islava and Košice also showed negative values of the index. In the districts with the most negative trend, the change correlates with the fact of a significant increase in the number of persons without religious affiliation. The increase or decrease in the number of believers also showed a parallel development with the change index. The main factor influencing the maximum increase in Senec (19,521 believers) was the fact that the district belongs to Bratislava's dominant suburban zones. In the period between 1991 and 2021, the population of this district grew by more than 132%.

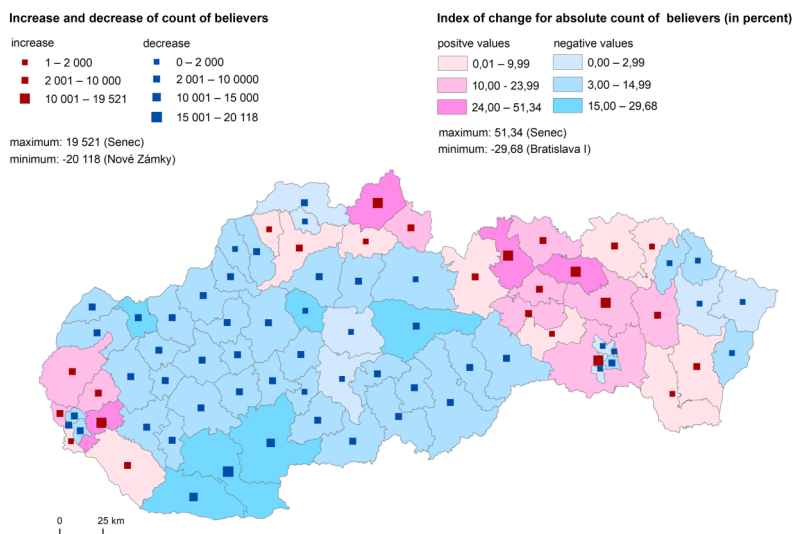


Fig. 5. Change of believers in Slovakia (1991 – 2021)

People without religious affiliation constitute a significant category in the religious structure of the population. In Czechia, their share increased by almost 20 pp. in 2001 compared to 1991 (Fig. 6). Subsequently, it dropped significantly to 34.5% (2011) and increased again to 47.8% in 2021. The lower share of persons without religious affiliation in 2011 was probably influenced by the fact that the question about religion was optional in that year and almost 45% of persons did not answer this question (Havlíček et al. 2017). The development in Slovakia was slightly different. The share of persons without religious affiliation increased continuously over the study period from 9.8% to 23.8% in 2021, with the increase being more pronounced between 2011 and 2021.

In the overall assessment of the religious structure of the population, it is necessary to mention the population from the not specified group, as these are persons who do not belong to any particular religion or who did not state any other religious affiliation. In this group in Czechia we observe first a decrease from 16.2% to 8.8% between 1991 and 2001, then a significant increase to 44.7% in 2011 due to the voluntary nature of answering this question in the census, followed by a slight decrease to 30.1% in 2021 (Fig. 6). In Slovakia, between 1991 and 2001, there was a significant decrease in the “not specified” group, where the population reduced almost sixfold, as many individuals in this group joined a specific denomi-

nation. The high proportion of persons in the 'not specified' category (17.4%) in 1991 was probably influenced by the previous period, which resulted in uncertainty about declaring a religion (Majo 2013). Since 2001, there has been a gradual increase in this category to 10.6% (2011) followed by a decline to 6.5% (2021). The spatial assessment reveals a considerably higher proportion of the population without religious affiliation in the north and north-west regions of Czechia, where, for example, in the ORP Litvínov it reached 61% in 2021. The primary reasons for the high share of the population without religious affiliation are attributed mainly to the processes of enlightenment, industrialisation and urbanisation, as well as to the displacement of the German population in the past. On the other hand, moving towards the east, there is a gradual reduction in the proportion of the population without religious affiliation, reaching its lowest values in the area of Southern Moravia, where it reached 11% in the ORP Valašské Klobouky in 2021. Urban districts in Slovakia have a predominance of population without religious affiliation (Matlovič 2002), with the highest proportion in Bratislava V (44.5%), which has an above-average proportion of working-age population (more than 65%). In the other districts of Bratislava, more than 40% of the population had no religious affiliation. Almost half of the districts in Slovakia had a share of more than 25% in this category. Districts in Central Slovakia with a higher rate of industrialisation, increased population influx and a historical presence of the Protestant faith, particularly in 1950, have a high proportion of people without religious affiliation. Another area included districts in the south of Slovakia, in the Gemer region, with an equally high proportion of Protestant population in the past. Traditional religious districts in the north of Slovakia had the smallest proportions of people without religious affiliation, with a minimum in the district of Námestovo (4.4%).

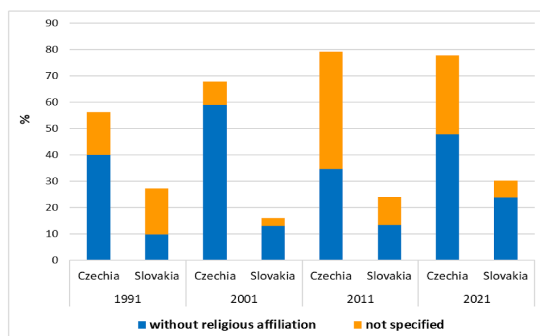


Fig. 6. People without religious affiliation in Czechia and Slovakia (1991 – 2021)

An increase in the number of people without religious affiliation was recorded in almost all 206 microregions (ORP) of Czechia when assessing the index of change in the relative number of people without religious affiliation between 1991 and 2021 (Fig. 7). Exceptions were 8 ORP, such as Plzeň, Kladno and others. Although the increase was not uniform, and showed considerable regional differentiation, there were no clear spatial patterns. The low increase or decrease of the population without a religious affiliation was typical mainly for the north and north-west of Bohemia. These micro-regions had a relatively high percentage of such population even in 1991, such as ORP Kladno (-0.4%), Pilsen (-2.6%) and Bílina

(-1%). The situation was different in the regions of South Bohemia, Vysočina and Moravia, where many micro-regions showed an increase in the population without a religious affiliation that was several times higher, such as Moravský Krumlov with a value of more than 21%. It was somewhat surprising that the population without religious affiliation increased more than average in the regions of Vysočina and South and East Moravia. The probable reason behind this increase could be the continuing secularization of society exhibited even in areas known for traditional religious beliefs, reflecting the general secularization trends of Czech society.

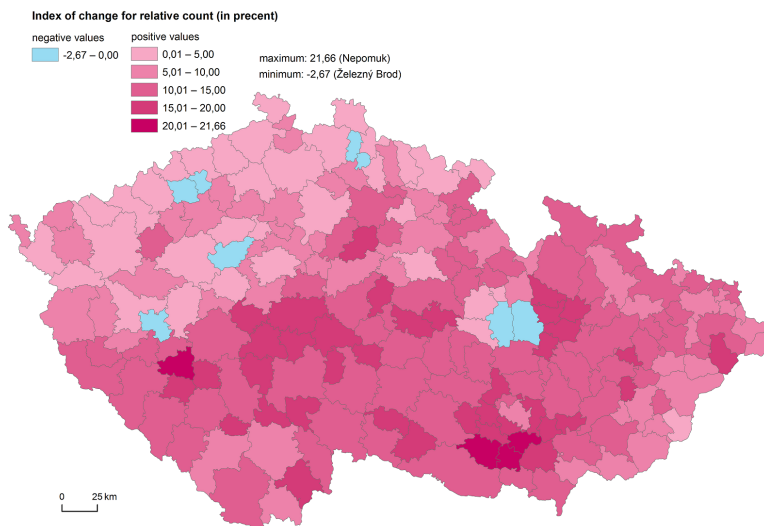


Fig. 7. Change of people without religious affiliation in Czechia (1991 – 2021)

In Slovakia, the index of change in the relative number of people without religious affiliation shows only positive values with the highest increase of 27% in the Senec district, mostly due to the suburbanization processes (Fig. 8). Other districts with a more significant increase are Bratislava I to III. The districts with the lowest index of change in the relative number of persons without religious affiliation are located in the north and north-east of Slovakia, with the lowest value in the district of Stará Ľubovňa (3%).

The homogeneity index is a useful tool for presenting the selected regional structure of the religious scene (Havlíček et al. 2009). Fig. 9 shows the distribution of believers in individual churches in the micro-regional structure of the ORP of Czechia in 2021, where the Catholic tradition continues to dominate in all ORPs of Czechia. The higher the concentration of believers in a given area in only one religious group, the higher the homogeneity index and vice versa. The homogeneity index displays a significant polarisation. It indicates low values with a minimum of 38% in the ORP of Třinec, located in the north-west of Bohemia and eastern Silesia. Low religiosity values are found in the north and north-west of Bohemia and also in Eastern Silesia, with a minimum in the ORP of Třinec (38%). Although East Silesia shows a high level of religiosity, it also shows a high level of religious heterogeneity due to the strong tradition of Protestant churches, especially the Sile-

sian Evangelical Church. Due to migration to the capital, Prague is also very heterogeneous, as well as the area to the north and west of Prague. This region is characterised by a very low level of religiosity, so any larger religious community is significant and increases heterogeneity. In contrast, the regions between southern Bohemia and a significant part of Moravia show above-average homogeneity, which is characteristic of areas with a high proportion of Roman Catholic believers (especially the area from ORP Břeclav in the south to Valašské Klobouky in the north).

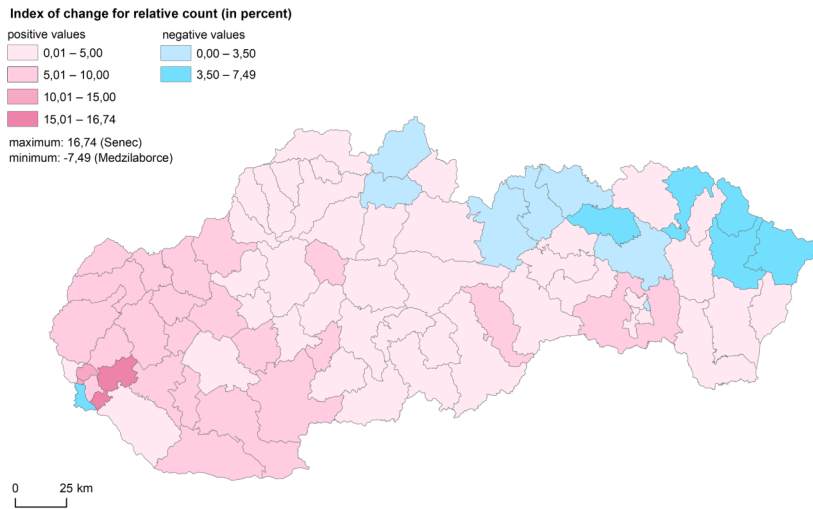


Fig. 8. Change of people without religious affiliation in Slovakia (1991 – 2021)

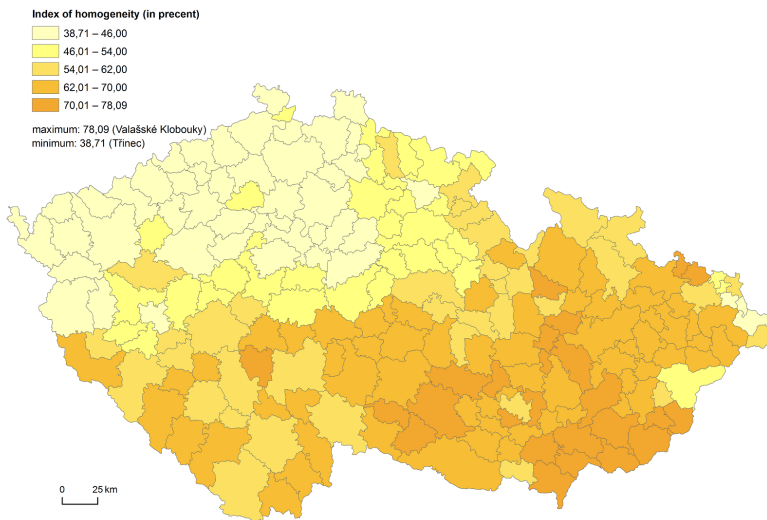


Fig. 9. Religious homogeneity in Czechia (2021)

Slovakia and its society display strong homogeneity in terms of religion, with homogeneity decreasing from west to east (Fig. 10) in parallel with the position of the Roman Catholic Church.

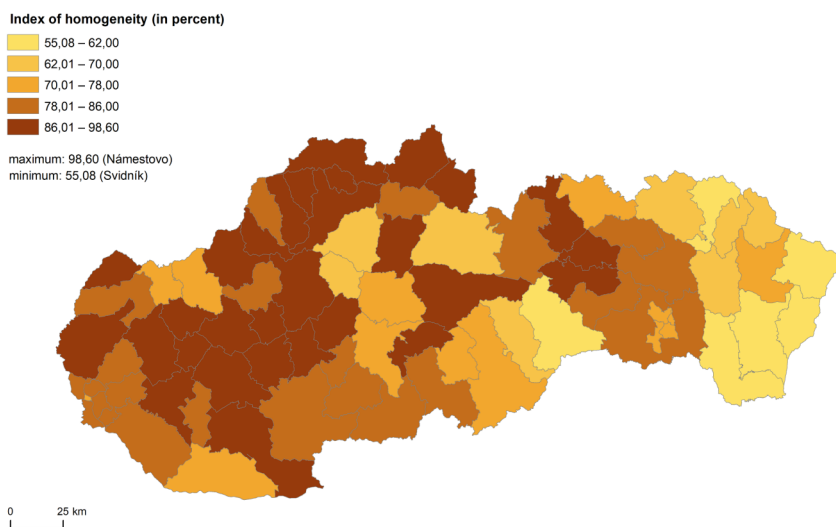


Fig. 10. Religious homogeneity in Slovakia (2021)

The western part of the country, particularly its central part, achieves the highest level of homogeneity (86.0 to 98.6%), with historically strong centres of Catholicism such as the cities of Trnava and Nitra. The districts with a large evangelical community, Myjava and Nové Mesto nad Váhom, and Komárno with a population belonging to the Reformed Church, which is linked to the high share of Hungarian ethnicity, are exceptions to the high homogeneity rate. From the central part of Western Slovakia, a compact belt with the highest values of homogeneity runs northwards. This belt includes the regions of Kysuce and Orava, where the homogeneity index reaches the highest values in Slovakia. These regions are known for their strong Catholic tradition and often-conservative behaviour. Here, the homogeneity index reaches its highest value in the Námestovo district (98.6%). The eastern regions show a decrease in religiously homogeneous areas and highest homogeneity intervals are rather sporadic. The historically rooted evangelical community in the northern part of Central Slovakia and the significant evangelical and reformed communities in the southern part influence this situation.

In Eastern Slovakia, the homogeneity index was observed to have the lowest values, a phenomenon not present in other parts of Slovakia. These territories are where all significant Slovak religions converge. While the Roman Catholic Church has a strong presence here, the Eastern Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches (e.g. in the Sobrance district) as well as the Lutheran and Reformed Churches (in the Rožňava district) or the Lutheran, Greek Catholic and Orthodox Churches (in the Svidník district) are also strongly represented.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Religiosity was one of the main cultural differences between the Czechs and Slovaks, who were the core nations in the common state. The Czechs were consistently among the least religious nations in Europe (Hnízdo 1995 and Knippenberg 2005), while the Slovaks were traditionally highly religious.

This paper compares the number of believers' development in Czechia and Slovakia over the last 30 years since the division of Czechoslovakia. The results show a sharp decline in the number of believers in Czechia between 1991 and 2021. In Slovakia, the decline in religiosity has been more moderate and slower than in Czechia. Our research indicates that Slovakia is gradually following the Western European trend of reducing religiosity. In Czechia, the number of institutionalised believers has decreased; however, the number of people who identify with a religious belief but no longer with a specific church has increased (Havlíček et al. 2017).

In this context, we look at the share of people without religious affiliation. This category includes people who are not affiliated to any church or religious group. According to the study of Přidalová et al. (2015), the number of residents in Czechia who do not identify themselves with any religion and those who chose not to answer the question increased between 1991 and 2021. Similarly, according to Matlovič (2001), a significant rise in the population without religious affiliation and those who did not answer the question can be observed in Slovakia in 1991 compared to the findings in 1950. The change was primarily related to the atheistic policies of the communist regimes between 1948 and 1989, but the general secularisation trends in Europe (Knippenberg 2005) and the reluctance of the population to answer this question (Kvasničková 2003) also had some influence. As noted by Majo (2013), in the following census of 2001, nearly 3% of people declined to state their faith, which is a significant decrease from previous counts. Additionally, approximately 13% of the population identified as having no religious affiliation. According to the latest census in 2021, the processes of secularisation of society are indicated by the increase in the population without religious affiliation to 23.8%. Additionally, 6.5% of people declined to state their faith. In Czechia, the proportion of people without religious affiliation ranges from 39.9% (1991) to 47.8% (2021), confirming the trend towards secularisation of the population. In 2021, there was a slight decrease in the share of people without religious affiliation, which corresponds to the possible beginning of the post-secularisation of Czech society (Havlíček and Klingorová et al. 2020).

In terms of the current evaluation of religious homogeneity, Slovakia demonstrates greater religious homogeneity. The values for the Czech index peak in ranges that are similar to or slightly above the average values of the Slovak index. In the case of Czechia, the predicted trend of decreasing religious homogeneity index due to factors such as increasing religious pluralism and migration, as noted by Havlíček et al. (2017), is confirmed. As Majo (2011 and 2013) has declared a correlation between the intensity of secularization with Lutheranism, we anticipate an increase in the values of the homogeneity index for Slovakia.

The driving forces behind the observed state of religiosity are the European trend of secularization, which has also affected Slovak society, and the postsecularization that started manifesting itself in Czechia in the last decade. By 2021, the share of believers in Czechia had stabilised, but the share of non-institutional be-

lievers had increased significantly and the pluralisation of the religious society had continued. The delay in religious development in Slovakia, in comparison with Czechia, can be attributed to the differences in their historical background, experiences with a prevalent church denomination, the larger industrialization rate of Czechia (Havlíček 2005), the rural nature of Slovakia, which has the second lowest urbanization rate in the EU (Brzica et al. 2006), and the more conservative society in Slovakia. Thus, in the rural environment of Slovakia, faith and its public display maintain a relatively strong character and are an integral part of local identity. This is particularly evident in rural Catholicism, which acts as a fundamental unifying and differentiating factor in Catholic regions, as Podolinská (2007) notes. However, secularisation is only one of the driving forces. In Slovakia, other factors may include improvements in living standards, changes in social values, etc. (e. g. Tomka 2000).

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NÁBOŽENSKÁ PRÍSLUŠNOSŤ V ČESKU A NA SLOVENSKU: KOMPARÁCIA A REGIONÁLNA DIFERENCIÁCIA

Napriek spoločnému štátnemu zväzku Čechov a Slovákov sa územie Česka a Slovenska vyznačovalo rozdielnou mierou religiozity, podmienenou nielen polohou v stredoeurópskom priestore, ale aj viacerými historickými faktami. Zatiaľ čo Česi patrili stabilne k národom s najnižšou mierou religiozity v Európe, Slováci boli tradične veľmi religiózni. V komparácii religiozity oboch krajín sledujeme znaky odlišného vývoja aj za posledných 30 rokov.

Vo vývoji veriacich, hlásiacich sa k cirkvi, resp. k náboženskej spoločnosti, pozorujeme v Česku výrazne klesajúci trend zo 43,9 % (rok 1991) na 20,8 % (rok 2021) a mierny nárast v roku 2021 na 22,2 %. V priestorovom rozložení je zrejmy málo religiózny severozápad (menej ako 4 % veriacich) prechádzajúci v religióznejší juhovýchod Česka (do 55 %). Na situácii sa odrazili historické udalosti, ako napr. vysídlenie českých Nemcov, vysoká miera industrializácie a urbanizácie v severných Čechách alebo naopak vyšší podiel vidieckeho obyvateľstva na Morave či vysoký index veku na Vysočine. Významným znakom religiozity v Česku sa však stáva popri sekularizácii nastupujúci proces postsekularizácie, ktorý dokladuje nárast obyvateľstva hlásiaceho sa k náboženskej viere, ale bez príslušnosti ku konkrétnej cirkvi (9,1 % v roku 2021). V prípade Slovenska sledujeme oveľa miernejší pokles religiozity, ktorý je navyše časovo oneskorený v porovnaní s Českom. Zatiaľ čo v roku 1991 bol podiel veriacich 72,8 %, v roku 2021 nastal pokles na 69,7 %. Dôvodom sú aj tu postupné prejavy sekularizácie. V priestorovom hodnotení sa najvyššou mierou religiozity vyznačujú okresy severného a východného Slovenska (maximum 93,9 %).

Vývojové odlišnosti môžeme pozorovať v skupine osôb bez vyznania. Predstavujú obyvateľstvo, ktoré sa nehlási k žiadnej cirkvi či náboženskej skupine. V Česku tvoria dlhodobo veľmi silnú skupinu, pričom ich podiel v roku 1991 dosiahol 39,9 % a v roku 2021 to bolo už 47,8 %. V porovnaní rokov 2011 a 2021 však zaznamenávame v niektorých mikroregiónoch mierny pokles podielu tejto kategórie, čo môže súvisieť s nástupom postsekularizmu. Naopak na Slovensku od roku 2001 zaznamenávame v tejto kategórii kontinuálny rast, ktorý súvisí s postupnou sekularizáciou slovenskej spoločnosti. Z hľadiska geografického rozšírenia dominujú na strednom a juhozápadnom Slovensku, v urbanizovaných a industrializovaných regiónoch a v oblastiach s heterogénnejšou konfesijnou štruktúrou obyvateľstva, najmä s vyšším podielom protestantov v minulosti.

Z hľadiska náboženskej homogenity je Slovensko homogénnejšie ako Česko. Miera náboženskej homogenity klesá na Slovensku od západu na východ. Maximálne hodnoty dosahuje v regiónoch Kysuce a Orava (98,6 % v okrese Námestovo), pričom ide o regióny so silnou katolíckou tradíciou a často konzervatívnym správaním. Najnižšie hodnoty sa viažu na východné Slovensko (55,1 %), kde sa stretávajú všetky relevantné religie Slovenska. Ukazovateľ náboženskej homogenity v Česku má značne nižšie maximálne hodnoty (78,1 %), ktoré klesajú z východnej časti na sever a severozápad a miestami dosahujú menej ako 39 %.

Ako hybné sily zisteného stavu religiozity môžeme v oboch štátoch identifikovať všeobecný trend sekularizácie prejavujúci sa poklesom počtu veriacich, nárastom počtu osôb

bez vyznania a nárastom počtu konfesii. V Česku v ostatnom období registrujeme postupné postsekularizačné prejavy, keďže sa stabilizoval podiel veriacich a podiel neinštitucionálnych veriacich dokonca vzrástol. Oneskorenie religiózneho vývoja na Slovensku oproti Česku súviselo s odlišným historickým vývojom krajín pred rokom 1918 a negatívnymi historickými skúsenosťami s doteraz väčšinovou cirkevnou denomináciou, vyššou mierou industrializácie Česka a naopak skôr vidieckym charakterom Slovenska, ako aj konzervatívnejším charakterom slovenskej spoločnosti.



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