

Extended abstract

Historical Reconstruction of the Forces Shaping the Religious Composition of the Population of Vienna from 1951 to 2001

Anne Goujon and Richard Gisser

Introduction

Austria was in the past—as it still remains today—predominantly Roman Catholic, though several religious minorities, in particular Protestant and Jewish communities, have existed there for a number of centuries. Since 1970, the homogeneity in terms of the domination in the population of one religious group, *the Roman Catholic Church* in the case of Austria, has been slowly fading away through two main forces: progressing secularization and immigration of people belonging to other religions (Goujon *et al.* 2007).

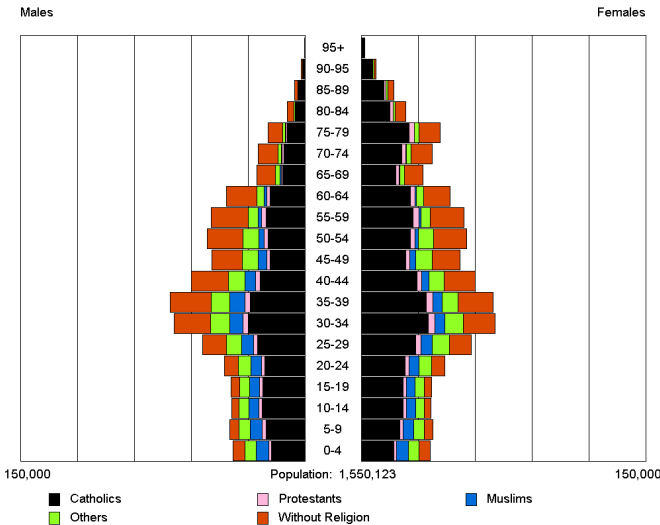
Overall, the relative sizes of secular and religious populations belong to the most important social characteristics of any society. In the wake of religious change, family behaviour, including marriage and childbearing, is likely to be altered. European demographic trends, including that of low fertility and progressively later childbearing are also likely to be affected when there is a growth of distinct religious groups with high fertility and with low rates of conversion and secularization. The changing religious distribution of the population can also have wider social and political ramifications, affecting the level of social cohesion, voting preferences, and potentially leading to an increase in segregation of specific minorities at a level of urban districts (Boroohah 2004, Lehrer 2005, Morgan *et al.* 2002).

Objectives and Research Questions

To study and analyse retrospectively the changes in the past religious composition of the population in the city of Vienna using six population censuses (that took place in 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001), reconstructing and analysing different parameters *i.e. internal and international migration, secularization and transmission of religion from parents to children, fertility, and mortality* that led to the religious distribution for 2001, represented in figure 1¹. The analysis will permit to identify the respective roles of the demographic factors in fuelling the observed change in religious composition in the city of Vienna making use of the huge amount of available data to reconstruct the demographic flows between 1951 and 2001.

¹ The 2001 census was the last one since the Austrian Statistical Institute will base its next population estimates for 2011 on a registration system, furthermore they will not include religious denominations.

Figure 1. Age pyramid of the 2001 population of the city of Vienna according to five religious categories (Source: 2001 Census)



Data Sources and Methodology

Most datasets on religion are based on surveys, and very few contain detailed information for the whole population, which make the Austrian and Vienna Census-based datasets unique. The analysis will be based on the data from six censuses available from Statistics Austria for the city of Vienna (also at district and partly sub-district level) and for the rest of the country (for comparison), from 1951 to 2001. We will rely on the 10 % detailed census data available at the Minnesota Population Center in the IPUMS dataset (Integrated Public Use Microdata Series) from 1971 to 2001, for more detailed tabulations, for instance on the transmission of religion from parents to children, and on the migration streams between Vienna and the rest of Austria. The analysis will be done for 7 main categories: Roman Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Orthodox, other religion, and without religion.

- The analysis and reconstruction of the process of secularization in Vienna will be based on the data on exit from and entrance to the different denominations as tabulated by the city administration and the relevant churches and transferred to Statistics Austria, existing since the 1950s, by age and sex². After 1988, the information is available yearly for each religion but only in terms of total population entering and exiting. The analysis will look at the cohorts of Viennese born since the 1950s and reconstruct their religious history at the aggregate level.
- Reconstruction of the migrant composition by religion based on the data on fertility and mortality by religion in the past as well as the secularization among the religious groups, which would allow us to reconstruct the migration data by religious affiliation as ‘residual’ for the period 1951-2001, and to check it against migration data by country of birth, as well as on the distribution of mother’s religious affiliation and country of origin among live-born

² An example using total numbers is given by Gisser, 1985.

children. Migration is not always available, except for question on residence five years prior to censuses 1971, 1981, and 1991.

- The analysis on the fertility will use the time series of individual birth data, obtained from Statistics Austria within the framework of the *Geburtenbarometer* project (<http://www.oeaw.ac.at/vid/barometer>), and specified by mother's education and country of birth, to reconstruct fertility trends and differentials by religious affiliation of the mother in Vienna and in Austria, since 1984.
- Reconstruction of mortality (life tables) by religious denominations based on census data.

Impact and discussion

The reconstruction work of the forces shaping the religious composition of the population of Vienna from 1951 to 2001 is part of a larger project funded by the Vienna Science and Technology Fund on "Past, present and future religious prospects in Vienna 1950-2050" (2011-2013). It will be followed by an analysis of the present forces, including the identification of potential religious and/or socioeconomic segregation at the district and sub-district scale level, and changes in the levels of intensity both at the qualitative and quantitative level. All the analysis will fuel projections of the population of Vienna to 2050 by religion. The multi-scale approach which is developed under this project aims at a better understanding of religious change in the city of Vienna in order to provide a scientifically based analysis of the factors that are shaping the city such as immigration and secularization. Those particular two factors that have an impact on religious change have been very present in the public debate in Austria. The work that will be undertaken under this proposal will provide data, facts and sound evidence on the factors that are shaping and will continue to shape the religious landscape of the city of Vienna. The aim is not to fuel a heated debate on the benefits of the rise or decline of specific religions, but to provide results with scientific basis that can be used by decision-makers and other stakeholders including general public to grasp the changes that are occurring and the potential consequences for the city and its administrative districts, also in relation to the rest of Austria. A vast amount of data, which have remained little used until recently, have been collected by the population censuses, vital statistics, church authorities, and many social surveys during the last decades. Our aim is to explore these data, link the databases, integrate them with broader evidence on demographic factors affecting religious change and provide a sound and scientifically informed portrait of religious transformations of the population of Vienna, with a view on the future to the middle of the century.

References:

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