

Religions in Vienna in the Past, Present and Future

Key Findings from the WIREL Project

WIREL is a research project examining the role of religions in shaping the social and demographic structure of the population of Vienna.

Background of WIREL Research

WIREL researchers used unique datasets available for Vienna to reconstruct, analyse, and forecast the population of the city by religion. We studied different demographic and religious forces that have shaped Vienna's population composition throughout the past as well as the implications that such forces hold for the present and the future. In this context, WIREL examines the process of secularisation, investigates changes in the levels of religiosity, and reveals spatial patterns of religious diversity. This research is highly relevant for understanding dynamic religious, social, and demographic trends in Vienna and other European cities.

The role of religion is currently a topic of considerable public interest in Vienna as well as across Europe. Over the course of the last half-century, Vienna has witnessed rapidly changing religious composition accompanied by consistently increasing religious diversity. In a city where only one religion – Catholicism – was dominant, this soft revolution is gaining the attention of politicians, the media, and the general public. In this framework, scientists – whether they are religious scholars, cultural and political scientists, sociologists, geographers, or demographers – have a special role to play regarding the analysis of current trends and their implications.

There is a clear consensus that religion is a meaningful dimension of social and cultural diversity. Evidence on religious composition is important for urban governance, particularly for integration and social cohesion. Since 2001, religious affiliation is no longer surveyed by the Austrian census. Hence the various aspects of research conducted by WIREL facilitate the global assessment of both quantitative and qualitative aspects of religious diversity in Vienna.

The WIREL project has been conducted by researchers from the Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Global Human Capital (IIASA, VID/ÖAW, WU) at the Vienna Institute of Demography (Austrian Academy of Sciences) and at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) and was funded by WWTF (Vienna Science and Technology Fund).

We hope that the WIREL project sheds more light on the increasing religious diversity in Vienna. This short report summarises the research findings with the aim of making the trends, drivers, and socio-demographic consequences of the changing religious landscape of Vienna more accessible and understandable.

FIND OUT MORE

Visit the WIREL project website and get informed by downloading related scientific publications, presentations and data, or by exploring the changing religious landscape of Vienna and its spatial patterns with our interactive data visualisations.

www.wirel-project.at



Anne Goujon
Principal Investigator WIREL project

Vienna, in May 2015

CONTACT:

Anne Goujon
Vienna Institute of Demography
Wohllebengasse 12-14
1040 Vienna

Tel: +43. 1. 515 817 719

Email: Anne.Goujon@oeaw.ac.at

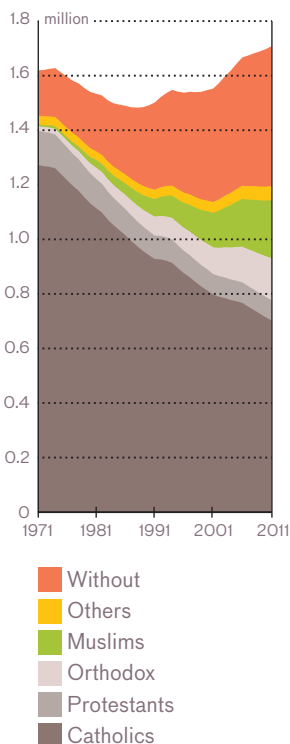
Key Findings – The Changing Religious Landscape of Vienna

Drivers of Religious Change

Responsible researchers: Anne Goujon & Ramon Bauer

The main changes in the religious composition of the population of Vienna are two-fold: First, the concurrent decrease of Catholics and increase of the unaffiliated and, second, increasing diversity driven by Muslims and Orthodox growth.

Increasing religious diversity in Vienna, 1971–2011



The religious composition of the population of Vienna has strongly diversified since the 1970s.

The reconstruction of a time series on the religious composition of the population of Vienna resulted in an illustration of how Vienna has evolved over a period of 40 years (1971 to 2011). Vienna developed from an ageing and shrinking city with a majority Catholic population (about 80%) to one of the fastest growing European capitals with a diversifying religious landscape and half the share of Catholics that it had in the early 1970s. This reconstruction was based on the decennial censuses that were conducted until 2001 and the detailed monitoring of religious mobility (i.e., changes in religious affiliation). Since religion was no longer surveyed by the Austrian census after 2001, it became necessary to estimate the religious composition for the 2002–2011 period based on population projections taking into account differentials in fertility, migration, and trends in secularisation.

In 2011, we estimate the share of the Christian population to be around 56%, i.e. 43% Catholics, 4% Protestants, and 9% Orthodox. Together with Islam, which represented some 11% of the Viennese population in 2011, the Orthodox Church has also grown significantly since the 1970s. However, in general religions are losing ground in Vienna as 30% of the population were estimated to have no religious affiliation, up from 10% in 1971.

Publication: Goujon, A. and R. Bauer (2015). Demographic forces shaping the religious landscape of Vienna, Chapter 9.3, Volume 4. In Brunn, S. D. (Ed), The Changing World Religion Map. Springer Netherlands. DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9376-6_113

In 2011 **1%** of the population 65 years and older and **19%** of children younger than 15 years were Muslims.

30% of the population were estimated to have no religious affiliation in 2011, up from 10% in 1971.

Drivers of Religious Change

Secularisation and migration are the key drivers of the changing religious composition

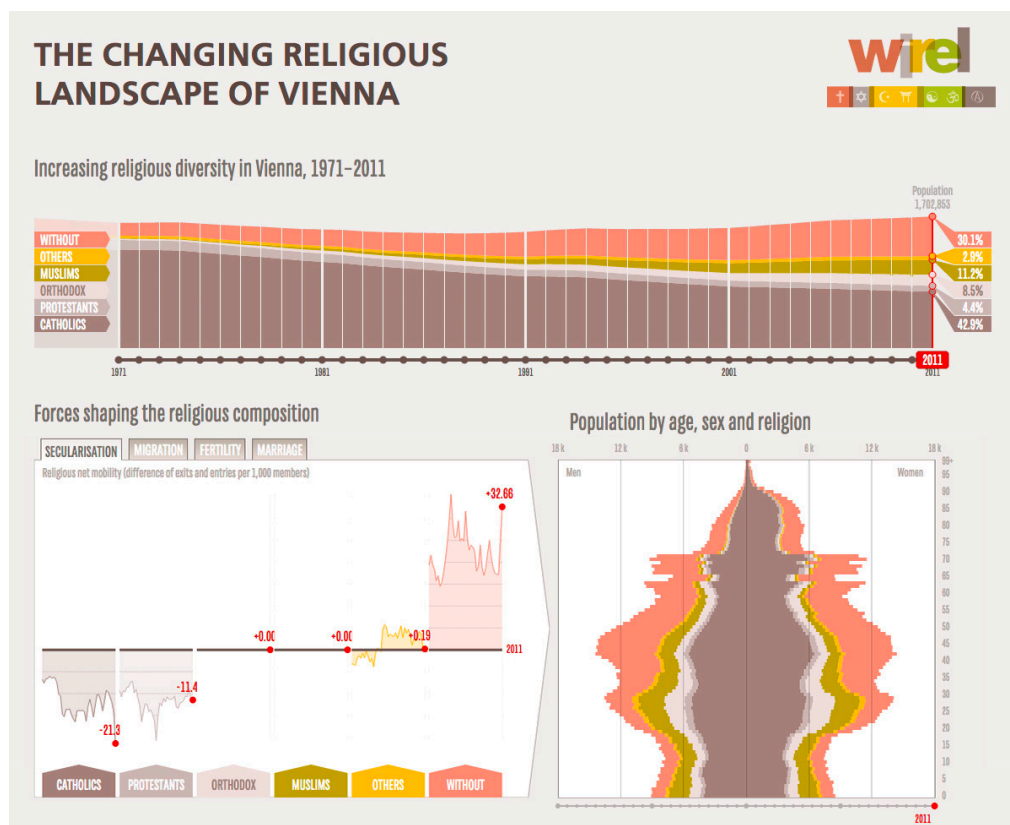
The reconstruction allowed us to identify two main drivers of increasing religious diversity in Vienna, secularisation and migration. Additional drivers that may play a role in determining the future religious landscape include fertility differentials, patterns of partnership formation, and the transmission of religion from parents to children.

Reconstructing the changing religious landscape of Vienna, 1971 – 2011

The WIREL online data visualisation enables the exploration of Vienna’s increasing religious diversity between 1971 and 2011 as well as the forces shaping religious composition.

Increasing religious diversity in Vienna 1971–2011

www.wirel-project.at/dataviz



Religiosity

Responsible researchers: Michaela Potančoková & Caroline Berghammer

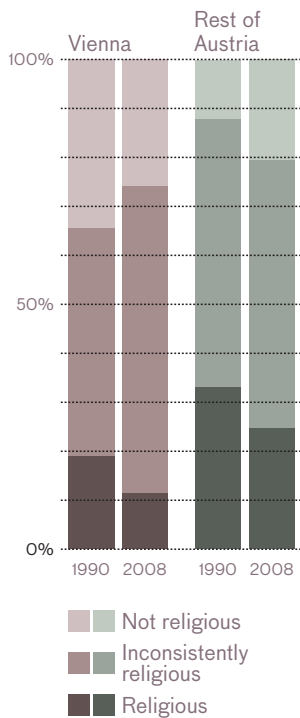
In the past, the Viennese population was clearly less religious than that in other Austrian provinces. At present, more people throughout Austria belong to the rather fuzzy group of the inconsistently religious.

More than 50% of Vienna's population is inconsistently religious

The study on religious intensity looks beyond sheer affiliation statistics at the importance of religious faith and practice in the life of people in Austria and particularly in Vienna. The analysis is based on diverse opinion surveys conducted since the mid-1980s. The share of religious persons (who practice their faith and for whom faith is important in their daily lives) has been declining in Vienna as well as in Austria as a whole. More than half of Vienna's population was found to be inconsistently religious: they attend religious services irregularly (primarily on religious holidays), seldom pray, and faith is not important in their lives.

37% was the share of the population in Vienna that never prays in 2008, while it was **21%** in other federal states of Austria.

Religiosity in Vienna and rest of Austria



Younger generations are less religious than older ones across all religions

Muslims are the most religious group in Vienna across all generations. The weaker religiosity of young people is likely to result in weaker religious socialisation of future generations which could lead to further secularisation. Interestingly, to some extent the unaffiliated must also be considered as a religious group. A substantial share (around 25%) of those with no religious affiliation still believe and practice (even if not in an intensive way) without belonging.

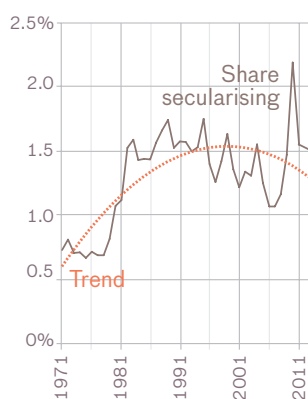
Publication: Potančoková, M. and C. Berghammer (2014). Urban faith: religious change in Vienna and Austria from 1986 to 2013. In: Pokorný, L. und G. Hödl (Hg.). Religion in Austria. Volume 2. Wien, Praesens.

Secularisation

Responsible researchers: Desirée Krivanek & Caroline Berghammer

The share of Catholics in Vienna who were secularising increased until the late 1990s, but the trend indicates a decline.

The secularisation trend of Catholics in Vienna, 1971–2013



Members of the Catholic Church in Vienna are leaving at all ages

Secularisation – i.e. the religious mobility of Catholic Church members to the group of unaffiliated – is the main driver of Vienna’s shifting religious landscape. Applying a mixed methods approach (qualitative interviews and quantitative survey data), we analysed the process and triggers through which Catholics have decided to leave the Church.

Rather than a single event, leaving the church needs to be understood as a process that occurs over the life course. Low religiosity is the primary catalyst for leaving the church while other factors such as sexual abuse scandals can be viewed as triggers. The probability of leaving the church remains high over the adult life course in Vienna, a result contradicting most of the international analysis which has attested that the peak age of secularisation was the entrance into adulthood.

10% was the probability of leaving the Catholic Church within 4 years if you did not attend church during the period 2008–2012.

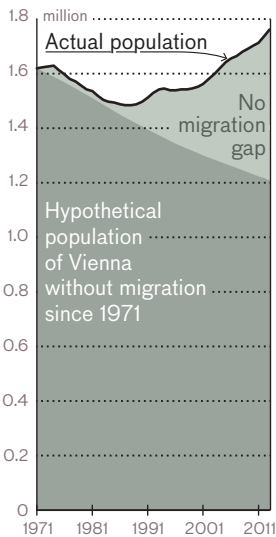
Publication: Krivanek, D. (2013). “Denn vor Gott sind alle Menschen gleich” (Römer 2, 11) – Eine Religionssoziologische Studie über die steigende Anzahl der Kirchenaustritte (Master Thesis). Department of Sociology, University of Vienna.
 Forthcoming: Berghammer, C., D. Krivanek and U. Zartler. Leaving the Catholic Church in Austria: a mixed-methods study.

Migration by Religion

Responsible researchers: Anne Goujon & Ramon Bauer

Instead of 1.8 million, Vienna would have less than 1.2 million inhabitants in 2013 if no migration had taken place since 1971.

Impact of migration on the population size of Vienna, 1971–2013



International migration is the main driver of population change in Vienna and affects both population size and composition

The second most important factor besides secularisation for the changing religious composition of Vienna has been internal and international migration and particularly the immigration of people with diverse religious backgrounds. This has resulted in a dynamic change of the size and composition of the population. Regarding size, the population of Vienna would be at least half a million people smaller than it is today if there had been no migration from or to the city after 1971.

The influx of international immigrants to Vienna as guest workers or following large scale political turmoil and transitions – e.g. the breakup of the former Yugoslavia and the fall of the Iron Curtain – has contributed to an increase in the weight of minority religious groups such as the Christian Orthodox and Muslims.

In the more recent period, the share of migrants from the European Union to Vienna has increased dramatically and hence also the share of Catholics, Protestants, and unaffiliated in the immigrant population.

34% was the share of Catholics among international immigrants in 2013.

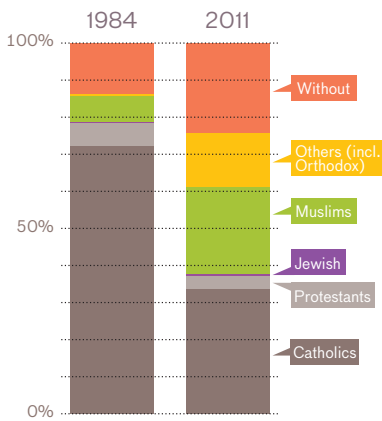
19% was the share of Muslim immigrants in 2013.

Fertility and Partnership

Responsible researchers: Tomáš Sobotka & Kryštof Zeman

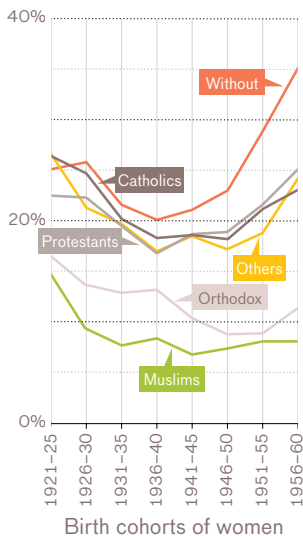
Increasing diversity in the cradle. Women who give birth today are much more religiously diverse than women in the 1980s.

Share of births in Vienna by religion of mother



Childlessness is less frequent among Muslim and Orthodox women than among women with other or no religious denomination.

Share of childless women (birth cohorts) by religion



Decreasing fertility level among higher-fertility groups.

Differential fertility and the changing religious affiliation of women of childbearing ages have been driving the shift towards an increasingly diverse religious structure of newly born children in Vienna. Between 1984 and 2011 the share of the mothers of newly born kids with Catholic affiliation fell from 72% to 33%. At the same time, the share of mothers with Muslim and no affiliation rose with each representing nearly a quarter of mothers in 2011.

In 2010, Muslim women and a small community of Jewish women were the only groups with above-replacement period total fertility rates (TFR) at 2.2 to 2.3 children per woman. Despite having the highest fertility, Muslim women experienced continuous fertility decline since the early 1990s. Women with other religious affiliations (mostly Christian Orthodox, but also Buddhists, Hindu, and other denominations) also saw their period total fertility decline from close to 2.0 in the early 1990s to 1.3 in 2010. In contrast, women without religious affiliation (long having by far the lowest fertility rates) saw their period TFR rise from an extreme low level below 1.0 in the late 1990s to 1.3 in 2010.

25 years was the mean age at first birth of Muslim women in 2011.

31 years was the mean age at first birth of Protestant women in 2011.

Persistent differences in age at first birth and childlessness

Women in all religious categories show a clear tendency towards delayed parenthood. However, those with Muslim, Jewish, and other (mostly Orthodox Christian) affiliations retain earlier timing of first birth compared to other women.

The increase in childlessness among women born in Vienna has been very uneven with respect to religious affiliation. Muslim and Christian Orthodox women retained relatively low childlessness around 10%, whereas among the unaffiliated childlessness increased to very high levels, with over one third never having a child.

Fertility and Partnership

Education matters as well

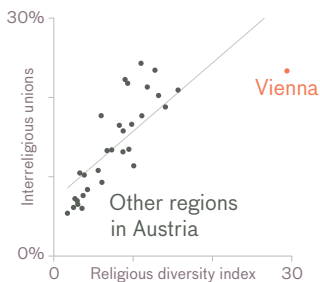
For women within each religious affiliation, a clear education pattern emerges with lowest-educated women having the highest fertility. This pattern is most pronounced among Muslim women: their high fertility in the past was by and large explained by their lower education level. In contrast, Muslim women with secondary and tertiary education display fertility rates that are closer to non-Muslim women with similar education levels.

Forthcoming publications: Sobotka, T. and K. Zeman. Population and fertility reversals in a high-immigration, low-fertility setting: The case of Vienna.

Zeman, K. and T. Sobotka. Exploring fertility differentials by religious affiliation in Vienna.

In Vienna, religious diversity is higher than in other Austrian NUTS3 regions. Outside of Vienna people are less likely to enter a mixed religious union.

Religious diversity and interreligious unions in Austrian regions (2001)



Interreligious unions have an impact on fertility behaviour and children's religious affiliation

Responsible researchers: Raya Mutarak & Maria Rita Testa

Interreligious partnerships increased steadily in Austria from 11.2% in 1971 to 16.7% in 2001. This trend went hand in hand with growing religious diversity which created more opportunities for members of different religious groups to meet and partner.

The spread of interreligious partnerships bolstered the size of the non-religious group in the Austrian population – children of interreligious unions are more likely to have no religious affiliation than children of endogamous unions. Moreover, the spread of interreligious unions had a negative effect on fertility because partners with different religions have a smaller family size on average than religiously endogamous unions (1.62 vs. 2.07 children in the whole period considered, 1981-2001).

Forthcoming publications: Mutarak, R. and M. R. Testa. Trends and patterns of inter-religious partnerships in Austria (1971-2001): The role of secularization and demographic changes. Yearbook of International Demography.

25% was the share of interreligious unions in Vienna in 2001— compared to **18%** in 1971.

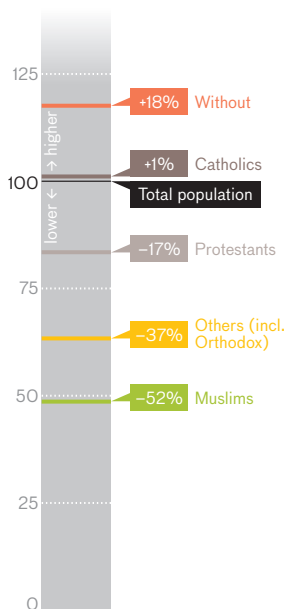
1.62 was the overall mean number of children in interreligious unions in Austria— compared to **2.07** in religiously endogamous unions during the period 1981–2001.

Mortality

Responsible researchers: Johannes Klotz and Richard Gisser

Viennese with religious affiliation are less likely to commit suicide than those who are not affiliated.

Likelihood to commit suicide by religion (relative to total population)



based on standardised mortality rates

Mortality differs by religion

By relating the death register counts in 1999-2003 to the 2001 Census population, it was possible to examine mortality differentials by religious affiliations. The data suggest that there are significant differentials in life expectancy by religion in Vienna.

Muslims have the lowest mortality risk. However, this finding has to be interpreted with caution. Migrants are a selective group – since by definition they have the ability to migrate, they tend to be healthier than both the origin and destination populations (“healthy migrant effect”). Moreover, many migrants tend to return to their country of origin at older ages, so to say disappearing from the statistics without registering death (“salmon bias effect”).

The low mortality of Protestants compared to Catholics is mostly due to their higher educational levels. The higher mortality of Roman Catholics compared to other religious groups can be observed in all age groups. Looking at causes of death, the highest suicide rate was found among the Viennese with no religious affiliation.

Forthcoming publication: Klotz, J., and R. Gisser (2017). Mortality differentials by religious denomination in Vienna 1981–2002. Yearbook of International Religious Demography 2017.

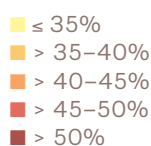
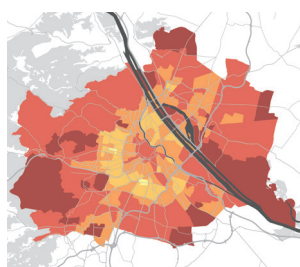
2 years was the difference in life expectancy at birth between Protestants and Catholics at the turn of the millennium.

Geography of Diversity

Responsible researchers: Ramon Bauer, Markus Springer & Guy J. Abel

By 2011, Catholics account for less than 50% in most of Vienna's neighbourhoods.

Estimated share of Catholics in 2011



Trends in residential patterns by religion and ethnicity show a tendency towards more mixed neighbourhoods.

Residential patterns since 1971 show a clear trend towards more residential mixing of the majority population (Catholics for religion and Austrians for ethnicity) and different minority groups. These developments can be observed for both religion and ethnicity. Although the religious and ethnic composition of Vienna's population has changed substantially during the last four decades, there are no significant residential concentrations of particular minorities in Vienna that could be labelled "ghettos"—neither by religion nor ethnicity.

In 2011, more than **80%** of the population of Vienna lived in religious or ethnic mixed neighbourhoods.

Residential mixing is key to social and cultural integration of minorities

Residential mixing increases the potential for social contacts between groups, which in turn is key for social and cultural integration of religious and ethnic minorities. The absolute number and percentage of Vienna's population living in religiously and ethnically diverse neighbourhoods has been steadily increasing over time. Currently, residential areas with a high degree of mixing are located primarily in the more densely populated inner districts of Vienna, while neighbourhoods with an over-representation of majority groups can be mainly found in less densely populated outer districts.

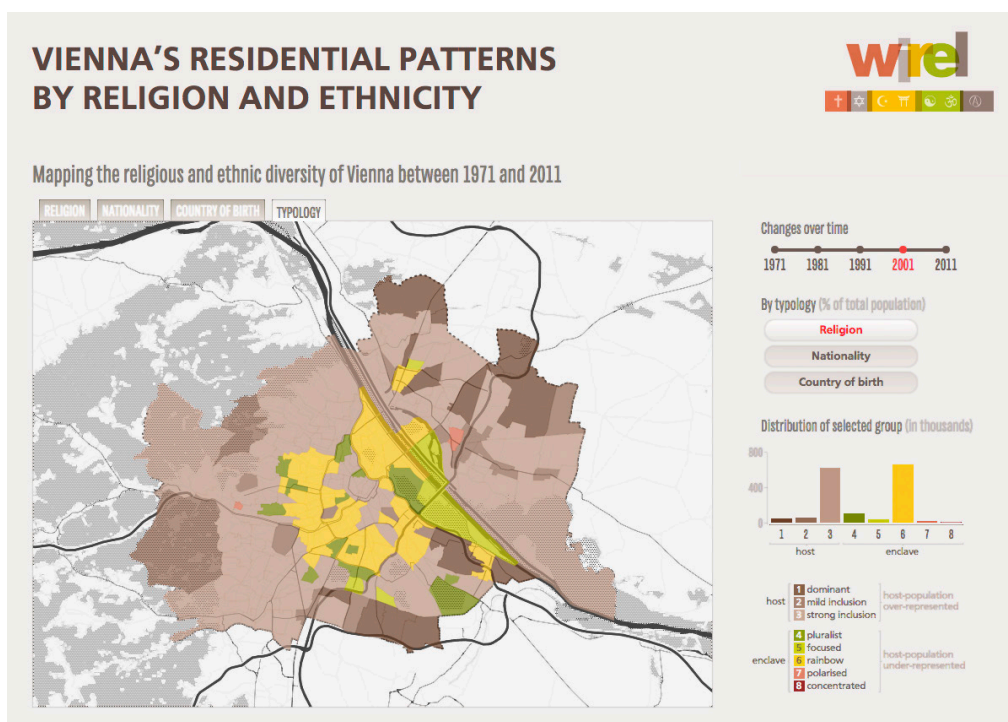
Publication: Springer, M., and R. Bauer. 2014. Residential Patterns by Religion and Ethnicity in Vienna. In Brian J. Grim, Todd M. Johnson, Vegard Skirbekk and Gina A. Zurlo (Ed.), Yearbook of International Religious Demography. Brill.

Geography of Diversity

Mapping the religious and ethnic diversity of Vienna between 1971 and 2011

A WIREL online data visualisation illustrates Vienna’s changing residential patterns by religion and ethnicity between 1971 and 2011. The interactive online maps feature estimates of the small-scale distribution of Vienna’s residential population by religion in 2011. Since religion was not surveyed after 2001, the WIREL estimates can be seen as one of the attempts to approximate current residential patterns by religion in Vienna.

WIREL interactive online maps
 Mapping the religious and ethnic diversity of Vienna, 1971–2011
www.wirel-project.at/maps

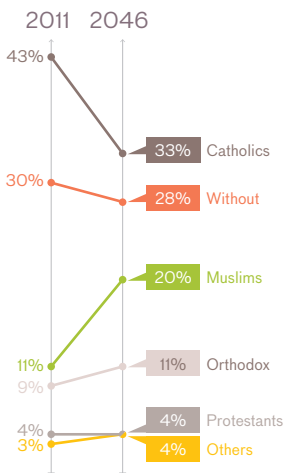


The Future: Population Projections by Age, Sex, and Religion until 2046

Responsible researchers: Marcin Stonawski, Anne Goujon & Ramon Bauer

The difference in the shares of the three largest groups (Catholics, Without Religion and Muslims) will diminish over the course of one generation.

Changes in shares by religion, 2011–2046



The future religious landscape of Vienna will be even more diverse.

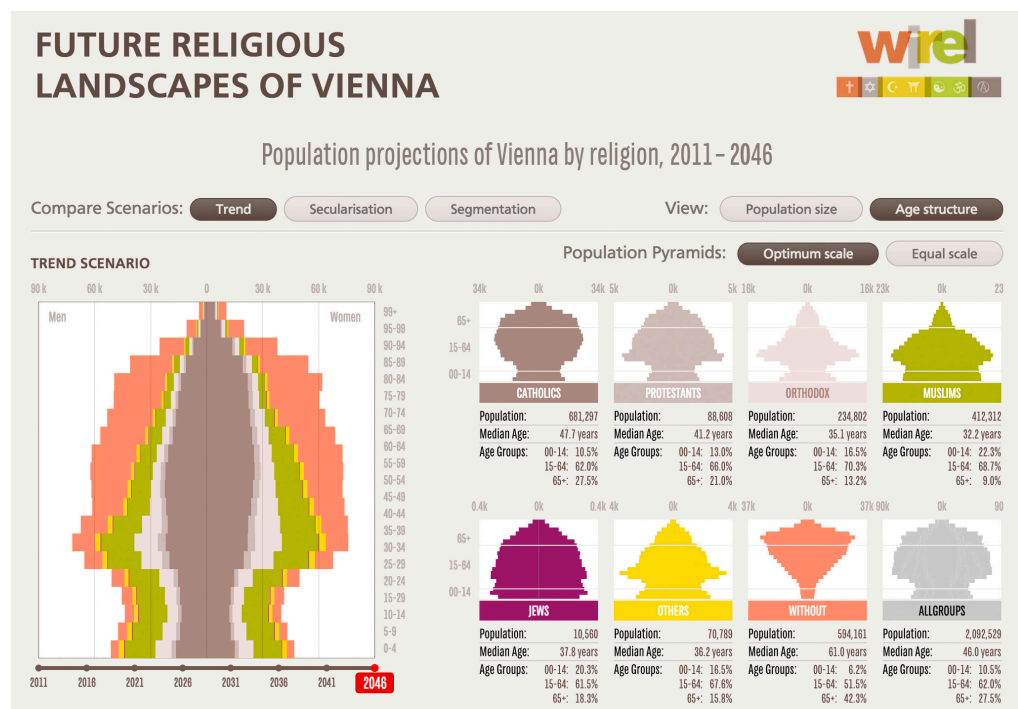
In addition to the analysis of past and current trends, the WIREL project aimed to gain insights into the future of the population size and religious composition of Vienna through 2046. We developed a trend (main) scenario based on demographic differentials by religion, which is in line with the population projections produced by Statistics Austria regarding fertility, mortality, and migration assumptions of the total population. Additionally, we elaborated on assumptions about future secularisation rates as well as rates of transmission from mothers to new-born children.

32.2 years will be the median age of the Muslim population in 2046, compared to **47.7 years** for Catholics (according to the WIREL trend scenario).

According to the WIREL trend scenario, Vienna would consist of 2.1 million inhabitants in 2046, an increase of almost 20% compared to 2011. Catholicism would still be the religious affiliation with the most members but their share would shrink to one third of the total population. The unaffiliated would be the second largest group with a declining share, which is consistent with already observed declining rates of secularisation. The next largest groups would be Muslims with 20% followed by Orthodox Christians with 11%.

Population projections of Vienna by religion, 2011–2046

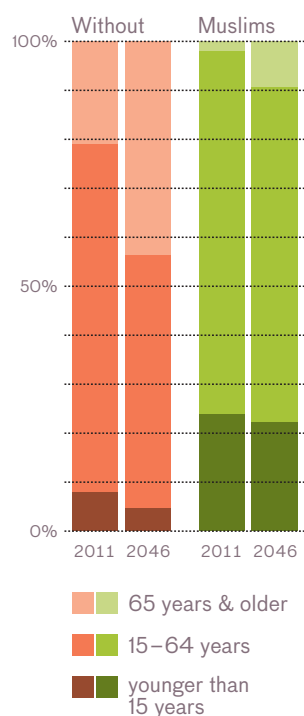
www.wirel-project.at/futures



The Future: Population Projections by Age, Sex, and Religion until 2046

Those without religion are the oldest group in 2011 and will be even more so by 2046. Muslims are the youngest today and will still be the youngest in the near future (according to the WIREL trend scenario).

Broad age groups in 2011 and 2046 (trend scenario)



Two alternative development paths of the future religious composition of Vienna

Two additional narrative-driven scenarios were developed to show alternative futures, which do not necessarily follow the observed trends. These rather extreme scenarios differ from the main scenario with respect to migration flows and societal development. The WIREL segmentation scenario depicts a future for Vienna in which the population would grow without growing together. Policy measures would allow unrestricted immigration and, at the same time, would drop existing integration measures. Such a scenario would mean more immigrants from outside the EU and, because minorities would lack social and cultural inclusion, also less convergence in religious mobility and demographic behaviour. Following this narrative, the population of Vienna would grow to be 2.3 million in 2046 and the share of Catholics would decline to 31%, while Muslims would increase to 12% and unaffiliated would decline to 25%.

2030 would be the year when the non-affiliated would outnumber the Catholics assuming that secularisation intensifies and migration declines (according to the WIREL secularisation scenario).

Another alternative future narrative is illustrated by the WIREL secularisation scenario, which would lead to a rather Eurocentric and even more secular Vienna. The narrative implies that policy would restrict immigration so that the influx of international migrants will be limited to EU citizens only. With respect to religious mobility we assume a continued trend of strong secularisation accompanied by a fast demographic convergence to low levels of fertility for all religions. According to this scenario, in 2046 the population of Vienna will have shrunk by more than 100.000 people and the share of Catholics and Muslims will have declined to 36% and 9% respectively, while those who are unaffiliated would become the strongest group with 40%.

Forthcoming publication: Stonawski, M., A. Goujon and R. Bauer. The religious composition of Vienna in 2046.

WIREL Research in the European Context

The changes in the religious composition of the city of Vienna in the last 40 years echo what has happened in other European cities, particularly the two main trends: increased secularisation and diversification. There are several reasons why this should be further studied, particularly in a comparative perspective. Cities and particularly large ones are spaces where religious pluralism reigns. There the trends of religious exogamy, secularisation, but also fundamentalism tend to be amplified. This message was underscored throughout the presentations of international experts who came to Vienna for the WIREL Conference on Religion in Vienna: Urban trends in a European Context (November 20–21, 2014)

First of all, Vegard Skirbekk (Norwegian Institute of Public Health) pointed out that **religion is central to the future of the world** as it affects population size, ecology, fiscal sustainability, culture, and health. A broader framework is needed to understand complex patterns of religious demographic change globally.

Diversity poses several challenges:

at the geographical level with particular small-scale **segregation** patterns (Gemma Catney, University of Liverpool), but also in terms of the coexistence of different groups as international immigrants tend to be more religious than existing communities. Such **integration** challenges are highly dependent on the country and region of origin (Amparo González Ferrer, The

Spanish National Research Council; Sarah Carol, Berlin Social Science Centre) as well as the place of destination. In the case of the latter, policies regarding **religious freedom** can play an important role in integrating religiously diverse and newly arrived immigrants (Sarah Carol). In terms of potential areas of **religious friction**, in his keynote Eric Kaufmann (University of London) noted that increased religious diversity is more likely to translate into mounting opposition between fundamentalist and liberal religious practitioners rather than between religions.

Other questions relate to the future of the unaffiliated population, particularly those who believe without belonging. It is not known yet if the share of unaffiliated would increase or plateau and decline, as **divergent patterns in secularisation** emerge from the study of different European countries (Miloslav Bahna, Slovak Academy of Sciences). The spiritual needs of large segments of the urban population are currently unmet, leaving room for **new styles of religious practice** (Tuomas Martikainen, Åbo Akademi University; and Eric Kaufmann).

WIREL CONFERENCE 2014:
Religions in Vienna – Urban trends in a European context

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WIREL project leader

Anne Goujon (VID and IIASA)

WIREL project team

Guy J. Abel (VID)

Ramon Bauer (VID and Department of Geography, University of Vienna)

Caroline Berghammer (VID and Department of Sociology, University of Vienna)

Matthew Cantele (VID until end of 2014 and IIASA)

Katrin Fliegenschnee (VID until end of 2012)

Richard Gisser (VID)

Lisa Janisch (VID)

Desiree Krivanek (VID)

Raya Muttarak (VID and IIASA)

Michaela Potančoková (VID and IIASA)

Vegard Skirbekk (IIASA until end of 2014)

Tomáš Sobotka (VID)

Markus Springer (VID and IIASA)

Marcin Stonawski (IIASA)

Maria Rita Testa (VID)

Kryštof Zeman (VID)

Edited by Anne Goujon and Ramon Bauer

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