


Article

# Forms of Non/Religiosity in Slovakia after 1989

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**Abstract:** This study analyses in detail the dynamics of the development of different types of worldviews (religious and particularly non-religious) in Slovakia. It is based on the results of four censuses along with the European Values Study (EVS) conducted in Slovakia in 1991, 1999, 2008, and 2017. The basic analytical tool is the typological method based on data from the EVS. The results show that in Slovakia, among the large number of possible theoretical types of worldviews, only five are empirically present in an analysable quantity, two of which concern people without religious affiliation. The results show that in this latter group, which has remained around 25% over the long term in Slovakia, the majority are rather indifferent to religion and only about one-fifth of them (4.5% of the total population in 2017) are people who can be considered atheists.

**Keywords:** non-religion; Slovakia; Catholicism; religiosity; typology; European Values Study

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, research on various forms of worldviews that are not clearly classifiable as traditional expressions of religion has become an important part of the sociology of religion. This includes research from various non-traditional understandings of religious worldviews/approaches to the world to agnostic or irreligious worldviews, such as invisible religion (Luckmann 1967), spirituality as a fundamentally different phenomenon from religion (Heelas and Woodhead 2005), non-religious expressions of religion (believing without belonging) (Davie 1990), absence of religion (Flory 2015), irreligion (Smrke 2017), or even atheism (Lipka 2019). It is particularly interesting to observe changes in religious beliefs and worldviews in Central European countries where, prior to 1990, the official ideological framework was a materialist worldview, and atheism was part of the official character of the state. While in Western Europe and the USA, in the context of continued secularization over the last three decades, there has been an increasing interest in research on 'nons' (non-religious people) (Burge 2021; Kosmin 2009), in post-communist countries the emphasis for more than two decades has been on the return of religion or various forms of religious revivalism (Kepel 1991; Michel 1993; Tomka 2001; Saggau 2018). In the last five years, and in the context of the historical experience of atheizing regimes, more attention has begun to be paid to the dynamics of quantitative changes in religious expression as well as to changes in the content of the beliefs of non-religious people and atheists (Molteni 2017).

Among the post-communist countries, Slovakia may be a unique case for a more detailed analysis: it has a confessional structure significantly different than the country with which it formed one state unit for seventy years, the Czech Republic (which currently has a majority non-confessional population), while at the same time it has a Catholic majority (Nešpor 2020), which makes it similar to Poland and Croatia. In the case of Slovakia, moreover, more attention has been paid to the return of religion, in terms of both the growth of the religious faithful and the growing influence of religion in the public sector after 1989 (Tížik 2011). But at the same time, some international comparative surveys, such as the Pew Research Centre (Lipka 2019), have identified a surprisingly high proportion



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of atheists in Slovak society. The substantially different results of different surveys and censuses call for a more detailed analysis of the overall worldview profile of Slovak society.

The 2021 census in Slovakia showed a significant increase in the number of people declaring that they have no religious affiliation compared to previous censuses. Together with a significant drop in people claiming affiliation to the largest churches, the results have sparked a lot of public debate on two key issues: Do these results show the secularization and de-religionization of a society that had been predominantly religious over the long term, or are they more a manifestation of the anticlerical attitude of some church members towards the relatively close intertwining of church and state as well as the allocation of public subsidies to churches? Is there an increase in the proportion of atheists in this majority Catholic society? These debates have been bogged down in several problems: defining who is a believer, how to measure belief, who should be considered an atheist, and how to treat those people without a religious affiliation who do not even claim to be atheists. However, the results of censuses cannot answer such questions (Majo 2013, 2020; Tížik 2014), and it is necessary to focus on analyses of other available surveys, especially those representative surveys of the Slovak population that have more comprehensively investigated the issues of the development of worldviews and religious structures in Slovak society.

Repetitive studies of this kind can trace the dynamics of the development of the religious structure of society and changes in the proportions of people who do not adhere to any religion. In spite of the fact that a large number of such surveys have been carried out in Slovakia since 1990, only two research programmes allow for a systematic analysis of this development—the EVS (European Values Study, which in some waves was also a part of the WVS (World Values Survey)) and the ISSP (International Social Survey Programme). It is not common to work with the results of different research programmes, even with several waves within one programme (Malnar and Ryan 2021), often because the data collection methodologies, the frequency of data collection, and the construction of indicators do not allow it. The EVS research programme has been implemented in Slovakia four times so far—in 1991, 1999, 2008, and 2017 (EVS 2021)—thus allowing us to capture the entire period of the transition of Slovak society from the regime of state socialism to the current liberal and pluralistic democracy. The second survey programme—the ISSP survey programmes—has been implemented with a specific focus on religiosity in Slovakia only three times so far: in 1998, 2008, and 2018. Majo did an analysis of all waves of the ISSP in Slovakia, focusing on the structure of the non-religious population, comparing it with the censuses from those years (before the 2021 census), and concluding that the censuses underestimated the group (Majo 2020, p. 151). However, in some questions measuring religiosity or non-religiosity, the two programmes use different indicators or construct the questions differently, which makes it difficult to compare them. Because the different research programs and the censuses (which measure religiosity one-dimensionally) differ methodologically, it is necessary to pay attention to the limitations of each data collection methodology and how it is analysed. Despite various academic critiques of the Western-centrism, Christian-centrism, and congregational-centrism of global research programs such as the EVS and WVS (Goodwin et al. 2020; Herzog 2020), these nevertheless provide the possibility of comparison with local surveys or national institution-coordinated censuses in terms of analysing traditional Christian forms of religious life.

Given that the EVS research covers the entire period that is also captured in the census results, the analyses in this study will rely specifically on the results of the four waves of the EVS that have been conducted in Slovakia so far.

## 2. Objectives and Hypotheses

The main aim of this study is to describe the state of, and dynamics of change in, the basic types of religiosity in contemporary Slovakia over a period of more than twenty-five years, and this study includes people without religion (which will be referred to as non-religiosity or atheism). An analysis of the limitations of different methods of measuring

worldviews or religiosity and a comparison of religiosity in different countries are part of this study. The analysis of different definitions of religiosity and their operationalizations for empirical investigation by different authors is part of the search for the optimal way of investigating worldview structures in Slovakia. The use of the typological method points to various existing problems in the common approach to measuring the degree or intensity of religiosity or non-religiosity. In such an understanding, non-/religiosity is assumed to be a phenomenon whose defining feature is either increasing or decreasing. The problem of measuring intensity arises when non-/religiosity is defined as a multidimensional phenomenon in which different dimensions of the phenomenon may change in different ways, and manifestations of decline in one dimension may not imply an automatic decline in the other dimensions. And the multidimensional understanding of non-/religiosity is a key goal of this study. For this reason, a typological method is used as a starting point for the analysis of religiosity (or non-religiosity), treating non-/religiosity as a structured phenomenon that manifests itself in different equivalent dimensions, where each type expresses a qualitatively different form of religiosity or non-religiosity. The comparison is based on comparable data from Slovakia collected in four waves of the EVS and is compared with the results of a one-dimensional, general survey of religious affiliation in the available censuses carried out in contemporary Slovakia.

The analysis tests two hypotheses:

1. The formation of a liberal-democratic Slovak society after 1989 is correlated with the growth of the proportion of those who became detached from traditional religious structures.
2. The historical experience with the materialist regime of the Communist Party government is related to the low proportion of atheists among the non-religious.

So, the aim is to find out what forms of non-religiosity exist in Slovakia and to what extent, in terms of a combination of subjective features and features of practices associated with traditional religious expressions and rituals. Non-religiosity is analysed as part of the investigation of the transformations of religiosity in Slovak society and as one of its forms.

### 3. Data and Method of Analysis: A Typology of Worldviews in the EVS

First, it is important to explain the basic definitions of religiosity and worldview and the limitations in existing ways of measuring them. Second, it is necessary to delineate some fundamental differences in the measurement of worldview affiliation in censuses and surveys. The results of the population censuses are most often used to monitor the dynamics of change in the religious structure of Slovak society, and since 1991, after forty years, they have again included a question on people's religious affiliation. In the case of surveys, the data are limited to the period after 1990, mainly due to the fundamentally different measurement methodology in the previous period, which does not allow for adequate comparison with the results from the EVS (or ISSP).

In the sociological and scientific study of religion, there are several definitions of what religion is. Pollack and Rosta even state that there is no one universally valid and universally accepted definition of religion in the study of religion or in sociology (Pollack and Rosta 2017, p. 34). Terminological ambiguity implies that the chosen definition of religiosity, as well as the absence of a definition, when attempting to use it in measurement, requires a concrete operationalization into specific indicators through which we can then determine the type or degree of religiosity or non-religiosity. Even analyses of processes of secularization (Berger 1996; Molteni 2017; Vido 2011) or investigations of religious change require having a clear definition of religiosity in advance.

Definitions of religiosity assume the multidimensionality of this phenomenon. McGuire (2002) recognizes beliefs, rituals, experiences, and community; Lipnicka and Peciakowski's (2021) model includes belief (declared faith), practices (religious rituals), religious self-identification (identification with an institutional religion), and spirituality (leading a spiritual life, caring for one's spiritual development). It is the distinction between religion and spirituality that is currently one of the important themes of sociological analy-

sis, and it is also a useful step in extending research towards non-religion and the umbrella concept of worldview. Müller and Pollack, reflecting on the development of religious life in a progressively secularizing and de-churching Europe, analytically distinguish churchliness, religiosity, and spirituality as the three dimensions of contemporary religious life (Müller and Pollack 2008). Their approach allows them to distinguish between church-related religiosity and its privatized form, as well as between conventional and alternative forms of religiosity. Similarly, Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead seek to make an essentialist distinction between religiosity and spirituality (Heelas and Woodhead 2005). A study by Grace Davie that has already become a classic, 'Believing without Belonging' (Davie 1990), has sparked not only theoretical debates about forms of contemporary religiosity, but also methodological explorations of it.

In attempting to comprehensively capture religiosity and its measurement, researchers are expected to proceed from problem definition to operationalization through indicators to subsequent measurement. However, when working with the results of a somewhat established research programme (such as the EVS, WVS, or ISSP), which already has pre-defined and determined indicators for the selected phenomena, it is only possible to move within these pre-defined boundaries when conducting the analysis. When comparing the different waves of the EVS conducted in Slovakia in 1991, 1998, 2008 and 2017 (EVS 2021), it is also necessary to take into account that not all indicators of a phenomenon, in this case religiosity, were used in all four investigations. The growth in the complexity of the questionnaire over time has led to a reduction in the number of indicators of religiosity. Thus, the researcher's options are limited by the list of already existing indicators and their exact form used in all of the years subjected to comparative analysis.

In different survey programmes (EVS/WVS, ISSP) with already available data sets, there are a number of religiosity indicators. These basic indicators can be used for two types of basic analyses:

1. Distinguishing the form of non-/religiosity based on the subject's (respondent's) relationship to two aspects of religion:
  - (a) Subjective dimensions of religiosity—subjective beliefs and convictions;
  - (b) Objective (objectifying) dimensions of religiosity—the outward manifestations of religiosity that express the relationship and concrete form of group attachment and group self-identification (belonging).
2. The distinction between types of religiosity can also be based on the type's relationship to the historically dominant religion (in Europe, to Christianity as generally understood). However, this approach mainly analyses the degree of approximation to the traditional pattern of religiosity. On the basis of relations to traditionally defined Christianity, the following can be traced:
  - (a) The degree to which the dominant form of religiosity is traditionally expressed;
  - (b) Secularized and indifferent forms of religiosity or nonbelief from Christianity;
  - (c) Heterodox or alternative forms of religiosity (belief in non-traditional concepts of the historically largest Christian churches).

In a religiously and worldview pluralistic context, where we can include Central Europe both historically and in the present, the first approach is more neutral and better avoids the problem of hierarchization and a certain normativity. It should be noted, however, that even with this approach to the indicators used in the EVS, what will be measured is a rather narrowly understood traditional religiosity of the Catholic type, or of the type of traditional popular churches of Western Christianity (Herzog 2020). Some sociologists describe several of the indicators used in the EVS as being canonically defined obligations, and therefore they are also the best indicators for measuring adherence to Catholicism (Dargent and Liogier 2009, p. 14), which is the dominant religion in France but also in Slovakia and other countries of Central Europe.

All basic indicators of religiosity used in the EVS can be divided into subjective or objectified dimensions of religiosity (Tížik 2009, 2019). However, of the wide range of

indicators used in all four waves, only a few can be used to assess the dynamics of change in religiosity or worldviews, namely those that were used in all four waves and whose wording did not change in meaning.

However, the most common approach in comparative survey research—measuring the degree or intensity of religiosity in the countries being compared—has several risks. Measuring the intensity of religiosity—that is, emphasizing the principle of quantity as a differentiating factor—contains tempting assumptions; for example, if a respondent indicates a higher frequency of religious practice, provides a longer list of beliefs, or lists a greater number of indicators of religiosity, then this is taken to reflect a higher degree of religiosity. But even in international comparisons, this approach is highly problematic for a number of reasons. Already when we compare Christian traditions, which is also the starting point of EVS surveys, different practices and degrees of religious commitment are not taken into account, such as in the case of dogmatic doctrine, and especially in the case of participation in religious services (the problematic nature of this indicator is pointed out, for example, by Vávra (2009)). While, in the Catholic tradition, it is customary to express one's religiosity by regular attendance at religious services, and the Church expects this from the faithful (and organizes the celebration of Mass on a daily basis, thus allowing for such a requirement to be fulfilled), in other Christian traditions this is not part of the basic religious duties, nor does the organization of religious life require daily attendance at religious services. This is also evident in international comparisons of countries with different denominational traditions. Orthodoxy, for example, does not consider regular attendance at religious services to be such a binding expression; similarly, in Protestantism there are a number of branches that organize relatively free and open prayer meetings instead of religious services, or other forms of ceremonies with a minimum degree of commitment and less frequency. In many churches (and not only Protestant churches), services are held at most once a week, or on major religious holidays, so that their believers cannot even attend services more frequently.

Similarly, different Christian traditions place different emphases and different interpretations on the basic elements of the doctrines of God, Heaven or Hell, and sin. While it is true that the above indicators of religiosity are generally typical of all major monotheistic traditions, they reflect the form of relationship to traditional teachings and the functioning of the Christian tradition rather than the intensity of religiosity. Thus, the very choice of indicators suggests a certain way of defining religiosity, albeit not always explicitly expressed, which the form of the measurement tool—whether it uses a quantitative or a qualitative approach—may amplify.

This problem of defining religiosity was already reflected by the classical sociologist Georg Simmel, who distinguished between, on the one hand, the objectivity of religious facts (realized especially in Catholicism) and, on the other hand, the inner religious life of the subject, especially in the context of the strong Protestant tradition. Simmel sensitively and systematically emphasizes the subjective side of religiosity when he also speaks of a tradition of piety or pure faith that needs no support in any dogmas and is the basis of the religious life of a whole group of people (Simmel 1997). Erika Kadlecová drew attention to a similar problem by stressing the differences between churches, for example, by the emphasis they put on different aspects of religious life: 'What is a condition of belonging to a church community for one may not be an unconditional sign of belonging to a Christian community for another. Here, however, the possibility of reduction to the universally accepted is offered' (Kadlecová 1967, p. 13).

When working with EVS results, the measure of religious intensity is still the most widely used in Slovakia, and not only in academic research. However, it should be added that very different stimuli are used to measure it, several even focusing only on subjective manifestations of religiosity (Bunčák 2001; Esmer 2003; Halman and Arts 2010; Krivý 2001; Molteni and Biolcati 2018; Podolinská et al. 2013; Norris and Inglehart 2010; Váně and Štípková 2013).

An international analysis of EVS data has also been done by Coutinho, who critically assessed the relevance of different indicators given the diversity of religious traditions in Europe (including Islam) and proposed to measure the intensity of religiosity based on a combination of three dimensions: ideological (belief in a personal God, life after death, heaven, hell, and sin), ritualistic (attendance at religious services and frequency of prayer), and ethical implications (tolerance of homosexuality, abortion and euthanasia, and casual sex outside marriage) (Coutinho 2016).

In listing these examples of measuring the intensity of religiosity, it should be added that, in many cases, studies are not done on the basis of comparisons of change over time, but on the analysis of data from a single wave of the EVS or another survey. Indeed, combining international comparison and development over time strains the consistency of the chosen definitions and indicators of the phenomena under study, makes it impossible to include indicators that were not used in all the years compared, and requires much more sensitive interpretations of the results.

This overview of the multiple ways of measuring religiosity, whether by measuring its intensity or a combination of intensity and types of religiosity, indicates the different ambitions of analysts, as well as showing the very diverse definitions of religiosity and the ways they are operationalized in the form of indicators.

An alternative to problematic measures of intensity may be the use of the typological method in distinguishing between different qualitatively distinct forms of religiosity. This methodological approach, relying on Max Weber's classical understanding of ideal types (Weber 1949), allows one to avoid the logic of one-dimensional hierarchies that implicitly contain normative assumptions. The typological method makes it possible to create more logically consistent and unambiguously mutually exclusive types of phenomena, wherein each is a specific form of some more general phenomenon, in this case worldview as a broader category containing both religiosity and non-religious forms of life. The use of the concept of worldview as an umbrella, encompassing both religious and non-religious worldviews, has been part of the sociological tradition since its beginnings. In the sociological tradition, however, one can draw on the work of Max Weber, who, despite being considered one of the founders of the sociology of religion (Weber 1966), used the more general umbrella term of worldview in his analysis of the modern world, within which he also considered religion (Weber 1949). The use of the umbrella term worldview has persisted to the present day, and not only in the German-speaking world; it has also been carried over into the Anglophone world, for example through the work of one of the key figures in the sociology of religion, Thomas Luckmann, who included invisible religion under the term worldview, as a form of life that is not explicitly religious (Luckmann 1967).

In his definition of ideal types, Max Weber (1949) emphasized that they are not a representation of reality, but are a mental construct that allows reality to be better understood, especially in explaining historical changes. Weber, however, showed that the point of ideal types is not to generate hypotheses; rather, the ideal-typical concept is meant to provide direction in the generation of hypotheses and a means of expression for the representation of reality. The method of ideal types also became inspirational due to Weber's ambition to avoid normative judgements, that is, value judgements, in his analysis. Drawing on this perspective, and anchored also in the tradition of Max Weber, some authors have chosen the method of ideal types not for the sake of classification or description, but mainly for the sake of the most appropriate interpretation and understanding through the ideal type, which is supposed to be an alternative to pure knowledge of facts that speak for themselves (Thériault 2013, p. 37).

When creating types from existing quantitative data already collected, an important question is which indicators will be chosen and why. If the starting point for defining religiosity will be to identify it as two-dimensional with both objective and subjective dimensions, then it is necessary to decide which indicators used in the EVS best and most generally represent these dimensions, and determine how to work with them.

From the previously presented overview of religiosity indicators in the EVS program (EVS 2021), the following are selected for the purpose of constructing worldview types along the two basic dimensions (also taking into account some of the formulation variations over the four waves observed):

1. Expressing a relationship to a group:
  - (a) Affiliation to a church—yes/no ('Do you belong to a religious denomination?');
  - (b) Attendance at religious services—more than once a week/once a week/once a month/only on specific holy days/once a year/less often/never ('Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days?');
2. Expressing the subjective dimension of religiosity:
  - (a) Self-declaration—a religious person/not a religious person/a convinced atheist ('Independently of whether you go to church or not, would you say you are ...');
  - (b) Belief in God—yes/no ('Which, if any, of the following do you believe in?').

These four indicators, each of which has multiple response options, can, in various combinations, on the basis of the respondents' answers (excluding those who could not answer or did not answer), form twelve basic theoretical worldview types (Table 3). Compared to the results of the census, it can analyse the group of non-religious people in more detail and, for example, identify those who declare themselves to be atheists. Combining different indicators, such a typology can distinguish different types of non-religious people or even atheists, not only on the basis of self-definition, but also on the basis of other types of actions and beliefs. The types thus constructed allow for bridging possible denominational differences between different national societies (Tížik 2019), as well as avoiding problems of generalization when respondents have very low saturation of churches or denominations.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

In the long term, Slovakia can be considered a predominantly Catholic country with several historically important Christian minorities, especially Lutherans (Majo 2011, 2015; Podolinská et al. 2019; Tížik 2012). However, during the time of state socialism, a separate and numerically significant group of people emerged who did not subscribe to any denomination (Tížik 2015, 2019). It was after the fall of the Communist Party government in Czechoslovakia, and thus also in the territory of present-day Slovakia, that this group changed in number and content of beliefs in various ways. As can be seen from Table 1, after an initial slight increase in the proportion of those who subscribed to a religion (to all traditional Christian churches in Slovakia) between 1991 and 2001, this was later followed by a decline in this proportion, accompanied by an increase in the proportion of those who do not subscribe to any religion, which in 2021 reached a level of almost 25% of the Slovak population (Tížik 2022). It can be seen that after the largest worldview group—Roman Catholics—people with no religion became the second largest already in 2001, accounting for a larger share than all Protestant groups and other denominations in total. Currently, people with no religion already make up a quarter of the Slovak population.

However, these data tell us only about one dimension of broadly defined religiosity—about the subjective expression of a relationship to one of the recognized churches in Slovakia, about the expression of belonging to some other religious group, or to a group of people with no religious affiliation. However, analytical questions remain: What are the real forms of religiosity for those who adhere to a religion? Who are, actually, those who do not declare themselves as part of any religion and describe themselves as non-believers or non-religious?

**Table 1.** Population in Slovakia by main confessions in censuses 1900–2021 (in %).

Church/Year of Census	1900	1910	1921	1930	1950	1991	2001	2011	2021
Roman Catholic Church	68.3	69.5	70.9	71.6	76.2	60.4	68.9	62.0	55.8
Greek Catholic Church	7.1	6.8	6.5	6.4	6.6	3.4	4.1	3.8	4
Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession (Lutherans)	14.1	13.5	12.8	12	12.9	6.2	6.9	5.9	5.3
Reformed Church (Calvinist)	5.5	5.4	4.8	4.4	3.2	1.6	2	1.8	1.6
Jews	5.1	4.8	4.5	4.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Other	0	0.1	0.3	0	0	1.3	2.1	1.4	3
Without confession	0	0	0.2	1.5	0.9	9.7	13	13.4	23.8
Not specified	0	0	0	0	0	17.4	3	10.6	6.5

While the census results show a fairly dynamic quantitative growth of the non-religious group, when another type of measure of religiosity is used, such as what [Majo \(2020\)](#) illustrated on the results of ISSP surveys, it appears that the growth of this group is not as rapid, but rather that previous censuses have failed to capture all those who do not declare a religious affiliation. Comparing the census and the EVS shows just this kind of problem. In [Table 2](#), it can be seen that, with the exception of Roman Catholics in 1999 (as the largest denomination), the results of the two types of measurement do not differ significantly.

**Table 2.** Proportion of those affiliated to a church in Slovakia in EVS surveys (in %).

	1991	1999	2008	2017
Roman Catholic Church	58.1	59	62.5	56.3
Evangelical Church of Augsburg Confession (Lutherans)	7.2	9.2	5.2	7.5
Reformed Church (Calvinists)	0	1.8	1.5	1.9
Greek Catholic Church	3.3	4.9	4.1	3.3
Orthodox Church	0.7	0.9	0.5	0.5
Other	1.6	1	1.4	1.2
Not affiliated with any church	29.1	23.2	24.7	29.2
Don't know, no answer	0	0	0.1	0.1
Total	100	100	100	100

EVS results have several specificities that need to be taken into account when interpreting them. As can be seen from [Table 2](#), between 1991 and 2017 the share of Catholics in the whole population in Slovakia did not change significantly according to EVS results. While for the dominant Catholic denomination the EVS surveys show similar results to the censuses, for the smaller denominations the EVS samples systematically overestimate their share in the population. Similarly, non-religious people are longitudinally and systematically over-represented in EVS measures compared to the censuses, which may also be related to the different and highly individualized survey method. Until 2011, censuses collected data in a less individualized way (i.e., collective and family-based completion) and include data for children, for whom parents completed responses (often also for adult children, if they formally lived in the same household) ([Tížik 2014](#)). EVS surveys, similar to other representative surveys such as the ISSP, have long and systematically shown a much higher proportion of non-religious people in the Slovak population than the results of previous censuses. From this perspective, the results of the 2021 census, which was conducted entirely electronically (i.e., it was more individualized) and with a more precise methodology than in past cases, are not surprising, and suggest that, for the largest world-view groups, more accurate measurements can be made just by a more thorough analysis



of EVS surveys. The results also suggest that, although the rate of non-religious people began to decline after 1991, it later returned to its original level. A similar trend in the rise of religiosity and the subsequent decline of those affiliated with the Catholic Church is suggested by the census results, which differ substantially, particularly in the measurement of people with no religion. However, these baseline data on the proportions affiliated with churches or people with no religion pose a more fundamental question: What is the shape of their religiosity or non-religiosity? Indeed, the differences in the different measures suggest the possible different meanings that these questions may have for respondents when asked in different contexts and by different methods.

As we saw in Tables 1 and 2, the data on the non-religious population over the long term vary in relation to the method of measurement. However, the EVS survey, which shows a relatively stable and large group of people with no religion, allows for a combination with other measured characteristics to give a better idea of who these people actually are and what the shape of their non-religiosity is, if the religiosity of those who affiliate with a religious group is anything to go by. All of the previously mentioned data on the number of people affiliated or not affiliated to a church are important for understanding the possibility of creating types of religiosity.

In terms of the four dimensions of religiosity (mentioned above) that were selected from EVS surveys as distinguishing criteria in the creation of types, the first two express rather objective aspects, the second two rather subjective expressions of religiosity. Combining all of the theoretical possibilities produces twelve theoretical worldview types, not all of which actually exist empirically. Table 3 shows the saturation of all theoretical worldview types (religiosity/non-religiosity) in the 2017 wave of the EVS.

**Table 3.** Saturation of theoretical types of non/religiosity.

Type	Affiliation with a Church	Attendance at Religious Services	Self-Declaration of Belief/Non-Belief/Atheism	Belief in God	EVS 2017 (in %)
1. churchgoer believer	yes	at least 1× a week	believer	yes	25.3
2. occasional churchgoer believer	yes	1× per month, holidays	believer	yes	20.7
3. not practicing believer	yes	1× per year, less, never	believer	yes	15.2
4. religiously ritualistic non-believer	yes	at least 1× weekly	non-believer	no	0
5. formal religious non-believer	yes	once a month, holidays	non-believer	no	0
6. declarative confessional non-believer	yes	once a year, less and never	non-believer	no	2.5
7. non-confessional religious believer	no	at least 1× weekly	believer	yes	0
8. religiously secularized believer	no	once a month, holidays	believer	yes	0
9. non-church believer	no	once a year and less	believer	yes	1.8
10. church-ritually secularized non-believer	no	once a month, holidays	non-believer	no	0
11. religiously indifferent	no	once a year, less or never	non-believer	no	14
12. atheist	no	less than once a year or never	atheist	no	4.5
Total of all respondents					84.1

The results show that in Slovakia seven types are actually saturated by particular respondents, but only five types are saturated in a quantity that allows for any generalizations to be made. Types No. 6 and No. 9 are saturated to such a low degree that it does not allow further statistical analysis. We can also see that, in 2017, almost 16% of respondents could not be assigned to any group because they did not know or did not want to respond to some of the stimuli. Figure 1 shows how the saturation of these five types in the Slovak population evolved in the different waves of the EVS. One can see a relatively high increase in the type that is occupationally labelled as atheist (not only on the basis of self-declaration, but also on the basis of other traits), although this is still a small group within the whole population. At the same time, one can also see an increase in the proportion of the religiously indifferent group in the last decade. However, the representation of atheists in such a typology is significantly lower compared to other research, such as that of the Pew Research Center from the same period, which finds up to 15% coverage of atheists in the Slovak population (Lipka 2019). Moreover, placing the results in a longitudinal trend shows that a typology based on the EVS results points to more likely proportions of different types of worldviews (including atheists) in Slovakia.

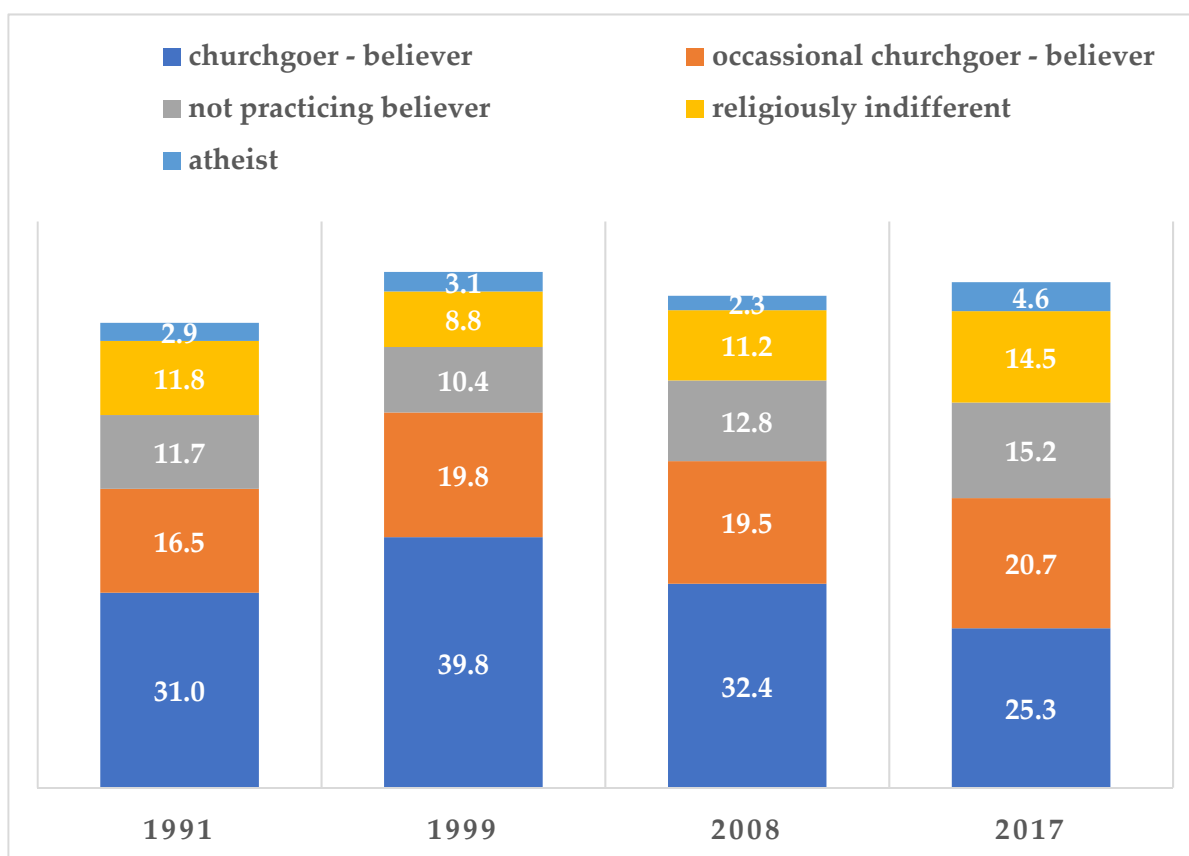


Figure 1. Saturation of the five basic types of worldview in 1991–2017 (in %).

It is evident from the presented data that, in terms of the order and dominance of individual types, no major changes have taken place in Slovakia in more than a quarter of a century. The churchgoer believer type of religiosity remains consistently dominant, but it seems to be showing a significant decline after a significant increase until 1999 (up to almost 40% of respondents). By 2017, this group had gradually shrunk to 25% of the total population. But there was a very slight increase in the group of occasional churchgoer believers and not practicing believers. After a decline in the proportion of the religiously indifferent in 1999, there was a resurgence, and by 2017 they were a larger proportion of those surveyed than in 1991. In Slovakia, the proportion of atheists has also increased, but

even after the increase, the proportion is so small that this group cannot be analysed in detail in a way that allows conclusions to be made that can be generalized in any meaningful way. These conclusions are also in line with the simpler, one-dimensional measurement of religiosity in censuses, which only looks at affiliation to a church or a religion among a country's population.

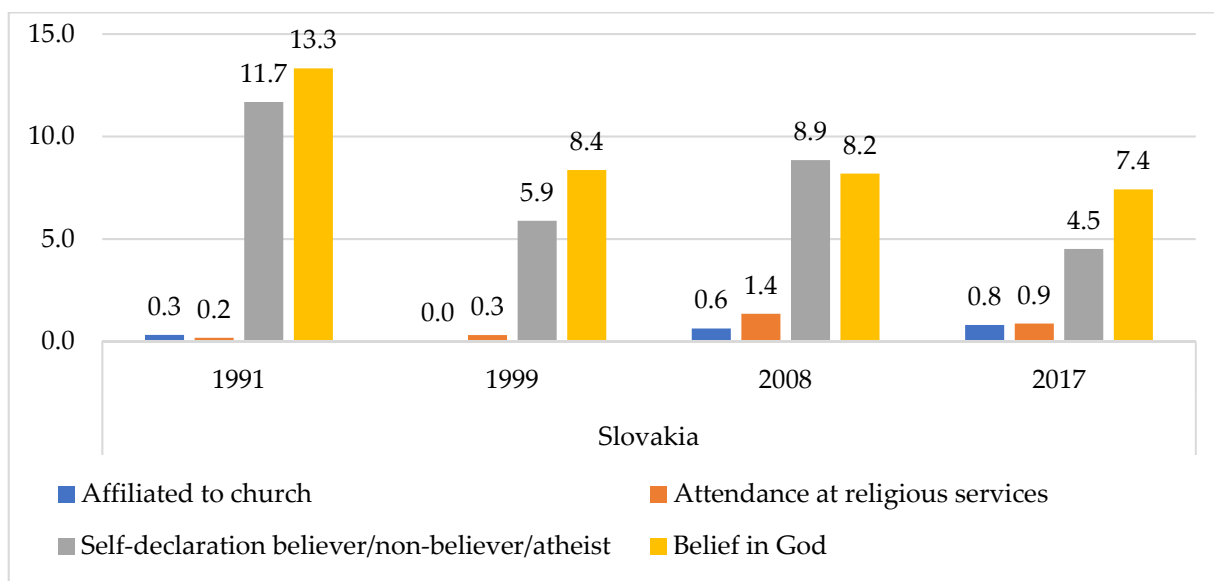
Although the typological method can fairly accurately identify distinct worldview types, a comparison of the number of those who did not subscribe to a religion in the EVS and those who are classifiable as a type of non-religious person shows that this is a fairly large group. For a variety of reasons, about 10% of the respondents declaring themselves to be non-religious are not categorizable into one of the basic worldview types in the long term. It is therefore necessary to examine such respondents in more detail.

The question remains as to whether it is possible to make discrete types out of such respondents who do not fit into any of the constructed types. Can we construct a new type if we do not have information on all the objective or subjective manifestations of religiosity or worldview of such respondents? Although this is a relatively large group of respondents, it is very difficult to attribute any worldview characteristics to them if they themselves refused to declare them. This group as a whole can be abstractly termed worldview privatists, because they do not answer questions about their religion and beliefs.

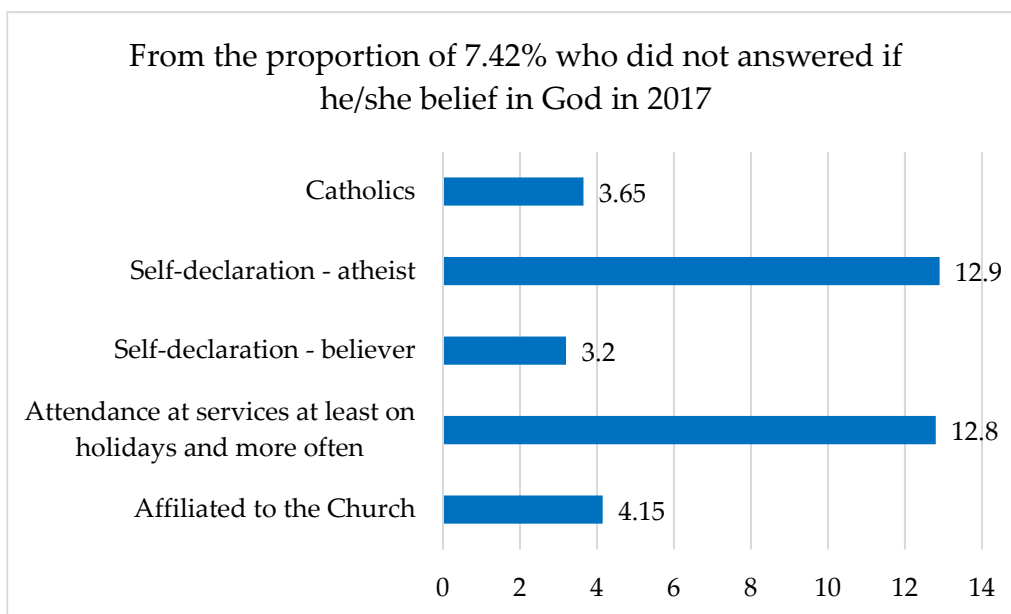
On the other hand, the question may be one of identifying those who consider themselves to be non-religious but avoided some questions or answered inconsistently, such that they were categorized as neither religiously indifferent nor atheists. The question about religious affiliation was answered by almost all respondents in all waves; in no year did the number of those who did not know or refused to answer reach even 1%. Those who did not affiliate, other than the basic types of religiously indifferent (No. 11) and atheist (No. 12), with the exception of 2008, about 3% of respondents reported belonging to a church.

Apparently, throughout the period under investigation, it was a problem for a large group of respondents to answer some questions related to religious life. These can be described as worldview privatists. As can be seen from the previous data, and as Figure 2 shows, respondents had no difficulty in answering questions about their religious affiliation or how often they attend religious services; they had difficulty in expressing the content of their beliefs and in self-defining themselves. The biggest problem for such respondents is the question about belief in God. The question, which was formulated in a very traditional (Christian or monotheistic) sense of the word was difficult to answer for the highest proportion of respondents not classified into particular worldview types. While the proportion of such respondents has steadily declined, this still remains a problem for over 7% of respondents. The second biggest difficulty for respondents was answering the question of who they actually consider themselves to be—whether a believer, a non-believer, or an atheist. In the case of this question as well, the proportion of such respondents is decreasing, which means that the proportion of those who do not have a clear self-concept in terms of worldview is also decreasing. Both of these stimuli reflect the subjective dimension of religiosity.

Despite the fact that respondents did not answer these basic questions about their own worldview, it is nevertheless possible to describe in some detail the religious expressions of those who make up this group of respondents. Their reluctance to publicly express their worldview, particularly on the question about belief in God, did not prevent them from expressing themselves about other dimensions of their relationship with religion, as can be demonstrated in the 2017 results. The results show (Figure 3) that the most reluctant to answer such a question were among those who consider themselves atheists and those who attend church only on holidays or a little more often. It can also be seen that Catholics, those who consider themselves religious, and those who affiliate with a church, had difficulty answering such a question, but the numbers are relatively small.



**Figure 2.** Overview of indicators of religiosity for which no answers were gathered from respondents (%).



**Figure 3.** Basic characteristics of those who did not answer the question about belief in God in 2017 (%).

The results from Figure 3 allow us to formulate the hypothesis that the reluctance to express one’s form of belief in God may be related to the so-called social desirability in Slovak society. Social desirability (Lavrakas 2008; Vávra 2009) is the effect that the respondent tends to answer in a way that he or she believes is socially desirable, instead of giving an answer that, although true, may represent a socially condemned attitude. It can be seen that in Slovakia, a predominantly Catholic country that still has a strong preponderance of people proclaiming a religion, those who consider themselves to be atheists in particular, and paradoxically those who do not go to church regularly but at least on holidays or a little more often than that, have difficulty expressing their worldview.

## 5. Conclusions

The results of this analysis, aimed at identifying the different forms of worldviews, development of its proportion in population, and the prevalence of non-religious people in Slovakia after 1989, can be summarized by testing two hypotheses. First, the hypothesis that the formation of a liberal-democratic Slovak society after 1989 is correlated with the growth of the proportion of those who became detached from traditional religious structures was not confirmed. The possibilities of combining the results of censuses with the results of representative surveys such as the EVS collected over a period of almost three decades by different methods makes it possible to correct the weaknesses of each measurement. Despite the fact that the censuses provide complete data on the entire population of the Slovak Republic, it turns out that the methodology used before 2021 did not allow for adequately capturing the entire group of people without religion. Some of them did not answer these questions, while others, probably under the influence of social pressure (social desirability), were affiliated with one of the churches. Following the dynamics of the EVS results shows that the group of people with no religion is basically stable and growing slightly, with small fluctuations between 1991 and 2008, and constitutes about a quarter of the Slovak population. In this respect, the apparent growth of this group in the 2021 census was due to a methodological procedure rather than a fundamental change in the worldview structure of society.

The second hypothesis, that the historical experience under the materialist regime of the Communist Party government is related to the low proportion of atheists among the non-religious, was partially confirmed. The results of the analysis of worldview types from the longitudinal EVS project show that, among the non-religious, there is a slight long-term increase in its two basic types—the religiously indifferent (who make up most of the non-religious) as well as the atheists. The group of respondents who show privatist tendencies and refuse to talk about the subjective aspects of their worldview are to a greater extent precisely from among people declaring themselves atheists and among those who attend religious services on holidays or more often. This leads to the conclusion that, in a predominantly Catholic and religious society with strong patterns of constituents adopting socially desirable positions, respondents are more likely to self-identify as religiously indifferent or to not publicly present their personal worldview and opinions when they deviate from religion. At the same time, however, with the weakening of religiosity's former strength in society, we can see a growing openness among respondents to self-declaring as atheists, when this group as a distinct type already constitutes almost 5% of Slovak society.

The analysis also showed the possibilities of using the typological method and in a such way that the results show a more detailed analysis of the basic worldview types in Slovak society, based on an analysis of EVS results collected in four waves between 1991 and 2017. The results show that the construct of worldview types can bridge the differences between different denominations in religiously plural societies, and they draw attention to the analysis of internally and logically consistent worldview types. These results also show that type expresses a more nuanced and also more logically consistent expression of religiosity than simply inferring religiosity from subscription to a particular denomination. For example, it can be seen that, while among those who subscribe to a Catholic denomination, there are those who declare that they do not believe in God (thus confirming the intrinsic plurality of expressions of members of the Catholic Church); when typology is used, this kind of inconsistency is eliminated, and non-standard and expected expressions are indicative of a different kind (type) of religiosity, rather than intensely expressed (inferior or deficient) Catholicism. Among other advantages, the typological method is logically more compact and allows for bridging theological differences in interpretations of the basic doctrines of this or that religion, and for showing similar types of adherents or practitioners of different denominations within one nation-state. At the same time, the use of typology in religiously plural societies prevents the exclusion of adherents of small churches or religious groups from analyses, and in international comparisons of types of worldviews, even non-religious ones, it allows comparable groups to be compared in both subjective

and objectified manifestations. It can then observe from much more robust comparisons whether what was confirmed in the case of the comparison of Slovak and Czech religiosity holds true: that it is not the affiliation to a church but the affiliation to a national society with its specific traditions and patterns that is more influential in shaping the particular form of an individual's worldview (Tížik 2019).

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**Data Availability Statement:** The data presented in this study are openly available in EVS Trend File 1981–2017. GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA7503 Data file Version 2.0.0, doi:10.4232/1.13736.

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