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Share of Religious Minorities

A Cross-Country Analysis
(1950-2015)



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Shamika Ravi
Abraham Jose
Apurv Kumar Mishra

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Share of Religious Minorities

A Cross-Country Analysis (1950-2015)

Dr. Shamika Ravi¹
Abraham Jose & Apurv Kumar Mishra²

I. INTRODUCTION – WHY THIS STUDY

The global economy is in a phase of churn and being closely watched and analyzed by economists and policymakers everywhere. There are, however, major demographic transitions that are also underway across countries - but mostly going unnoticed by analysts ranging from economy-watchers to democracy-watchers. These silent transformations have the power to reshape societies and states. Ironically, of the four megatrends whose cascading effects are bringing about these transformations - demography, technology, economy and climate change³ - the forecasts for demography are the most predictable. Shifting demographic trends are aggravating economic disparity within and between countries, straining governance and fuelling friction between states and people.

Political changes are mere symptoms of deeper structural changes that are happening in societies due to a variety of transformations, of which demographic evolution is an important component. The composition of populations in countries around the world is changing along several axes which are well-documented such as age, urbanization and migration levels. This paper focuses on the changes in religious composition of populations across countries around the world between 1950 and 2015 - an axis of demographic change that has been under-studied. For our analysis, we use the Religious Characteristics of States Dataset (RCS-Dem, 2017). The authors of the RCS-Dem Dataset note in their 2017 paper, *“Religious characteristics emerge as significant state-level variables and rival other factors conventionally thought to influence political processes and outcomes.”*⁴

In this paper we provide a detailed cross-country descriptive analysis of the status of minorities around the world measured in terms of their changing share in a country's population over 65 years between 1950 and 2015. For the

¹ Member, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM)

² Young Professional and Consultant, EAC-PM respectively

³ *Global Trends 2040: A More Contested World*, Publication of National Intelligence Council, March 2021, See: https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/GlobalTrends_2040.pdf

⁴ Davis Brown & Patrick James (2018). *The Religious Characteristics of States: Classic Themes and New Evidence for International Relations and Comparative Politics*. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 62(6), 1340-1376. See: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002717729882>

167 countries in our analysis, the average value for the share of the majority religious denomination in the baseline year of 1950 is 75 percent. The Mean of the distribution capturing the change in majority religious denomination between 1950 and 2015 is -21.9. This means that globally the share of the majority religious denomination has gone down by approximately 22 percent. In other words, on an average the world has become more heterogeneous in the period under study.

Our study finds that of the 40 countries that experienced the biggest changes, more than half are in Africa. Animism, as defined in the RCS-Dem Dataset, was the majority religious denomination in 24 countries in 1950. By 2015, it was no longer the majority in any of these countries. Of the 94 countries that reported being Christian majority in 1950, 77 saw a decrease in the share of the majority religious denomination. In the same period, 25 out of the 38 countries that reported being Muslim majority, saw an increase in the share of the majority religious denomination. 33 out of 35 OECD countries included in our analysis have witnessed a decline in the share of the majority religious denomination, of which 30 have seen a significant decline.

In keeping with the global trends of declining majority, India too has witnessed a reduction in the share of the majority religious denomination by 7.81 percent. This is particularly remarkable given the wider context within the South Asian neighborhood where the share of the majority religious denomination has increased and minority populations have shrunk alarmingly across countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Afghanistan. It is not surprising, therefore, that minority populations from across the neighborhood come to India during times of duress.

On the Indian subcontinent⁵, all the Muslim majority countries witnessed an increase in the share of the majority religious denomination except Maldives where the share of the majority group (Shafi'i Sunnis) declined by 1.47 percent. In Bangladesh, there was an 18 percent increase in the share of the majority religious group which is the largest such increase in the Indian subcontinent. Pakistan witnessed an increase of 3.75 percent in the share of the majority religious denomination (Hanafi Muslim) and a 10 percent increase in the share of total Muslim population despite the creation of Bangladesh in 1971.

Among non-Muslim majority countries, Myanmar, India and Nepal saw a decline in the share of the majority religious denomination. Myanmar witnessed the steepest decline of the majority religious group in the region with the share of Theravada Buddhist population declining by 10 percent in

⁵ SAARC plus Myanmar

the period under study. Of the three major religions in Nepal, the share of the majority Hindu population declined by 4 percent, the share of Buddhist population declined by 3 percent while the Muslim population increased by 2 percent.

Only Sri Lanka and Bhutan among non-Muslim majority countries have witnessed an increase in the share of the majority religious denomination between 1950 and 2015. In Sri Lanka, the share of the majority Theravada Buddhist population increased by 5 percent while the share of Hindu population (the next largest religious group) declined by 5 percent. In Bhutan, the majority Tibetan Buddhist population increased by almost 18 percent while the Hindu population declined from 23 percent to 11 percent in the same period.

In democracies, the change in political outcomes triggered by demographic changes is particularly acute on two accounts. Firstly, they redraw the contours of elections because demographic changes affect the provisioning of public goods. Politics, especially in a democracy, is not an exogenous variable but quite often an attempt to leverage these changes by projecting a solution to the insecurities generated by changing demographics or vouching to become a representative of the new demography.

By way of illustration, consider the increasing salience of demographic changes in the politics and policies of Europe. In the 35 OECD countries which were part of our study (25 of whom are in Europe), the share of the majority religious denomination has decreased by 29 percent between 1950 and 2015. This is notably higher than the global average of a 22 percent reduction in majority share. Such drastic societal changes over three generations will inevitably lead to a political response, as we have witnessed in the last cycle of elections across Europe.

Secondly, rapidly-changing religious demographics across countries is also fuelling vigorous political debates on the treatment of minorities and leading to emergence of shrill identity politics. Democracies run on the principle of majority and therefore need legal and institutional protection for minorities. The healthy tension between rule of numbers and rule of law creates the equilibrium for a democracy to survive and thrive in a society. Since majority-led coalitions get preference in governance, there will be something akin to a “market failure” if democracies depend on elections for protection of minorities. Therefore, democracies rely on a variety of tools for the protection of minorities such as legal definitions for who constitutes a minority, laws to secure their way of life, legal quotas and well-defined

immigration policies. Surprisingly, few countries have even defined “minority” within their population and India happens to be one of them. The modern architecture of minority protection within national and international law was built post World War II and is now over seven decades old. It is an opportune moment to take stock of the status of minorities across countries.

The year 1950 is important as a baseline year for two major reasons. Firstly, this was around the time that the international human rights framework under the aegis of the newly created United Nations began to take shape with minority rights and state responsibility for protection of minorities being mainstreamed in international law. Secondly, the seventy years period after World War II is considered a golden epoch in human history with the number of democratic countries increasing from 28 percent in 1950 to 63 percent in 2000⁶.

Finally, as an ancillary point, the epoch starting with the 1950s is also the period from which census data collection became more scientific, timely and of high quality⁷. For example, India conducted its first census post-independence in 1951 after setting up specialized and permanent institutions like the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, instead of the ad-hoc arrangements that used to be undertaken for earlier exercises⁸.

The change in religious composition of a population is a complex phenomenon because several factors contribute to it, such as migration, conversion, differences in fertility rates and variation in territorial boundaries as a result of political processes. ***We abstract away from the causes of this change and instead focus on the share of the minority population as a cumulative outcome measure of their well-being.***

Our hypothesis is that the change in the proportion of the minority population as a share of total population is a good proxy for the status of minorities in a country over time. A society which provides a congenial environment for the flourishing of minorities is more likely to witness an increase or stabilization in their numbers over a period of three generations. Conversely, a society which creates a hostile environment for minorities and/or denies them access to public goods and services is more likely to witness a decrease in their share of the overall total population. The nature and extent of change in the share of the minority population in a country is

⁶ Larry Diamond, *A Report Card on Democracy*, Hoover Digest (July 2000). See: <https://www.hoover.org/research/report-card-democracy>

⁷ Cleland, John, *Demographic Data Collection in Less Developed Countries 1946-1996*, Population Studies, vol. 50, no. 3, 1996, pp. 433–50. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2174641>. Accessed 1 Dec. 2023.

⁸ Census of India 1951 Volume VI, See: <https://dspace.gipe.ac.in/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10973/37914/GIPE-027526-Contents.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=n>

therefore a strong indicator of their relative wellbeing within a country. This simple yet practical approach of looking at the relative demographic trend of religious minorities, is a good place to start an objective conversation on the track record of different countries in creating a nurturing environment to ensure the success of their minorities.⁹

There are several examples of the use of demographic information to make conclusions about the cumulative impact of political and social institutions on the target population. For example, there is a long and well-established track record of the use of sex ratio as a sensitive indicator of the status of women in society in development economics. As a 2014 UNFPA Handbook titled *Guide on the Gender Analysis of Census Data* notes, “Analyses of census data may uncover sex ratio imbalances or unconventional population structures that are symptomatic of growing inequalities in a country, region or municipality.”¹⁰ In his landmark study, Amartya Sen estimated that 100 million women were “missing” and sex ratio is the important metric used to estimate this number¹¹. There is a rich and vast literature on this phenomenon that has evolved through careful scrutiny of sex ratios over time and geography. Unlike the gender studies which fundamentally depend on the variations and deviations of sex ratio from the “natural sex ratio” at birth to measure forms of discrimination, our analysis of the share of minority population cannot rely on a “natural” measure. We, therefore, scrutinize longitudinal trends within each country from 1950 onwards. We argue that the rate of change in the share of the minority population is a measure of the cumulative impact of supportive policies (or lack thereof) that affect these populations within a country.

Big decline in the relative proportion of the minority population could indicate sustained relative discrimination against these groups. Conversely, a big increase in the relative share of the minority population within a country indicates an overall supportive environment for minorities. The empirical results in this study make the limited but critical point that religious demographics have experienced substantial changes in most societies around the world between 1950-2015 and these changes are an important indicator of the overall policy environment affecting minorities within the countries.

⁹ Supra note 4

¹⁰ Methodological Guidelines for the Gender Analysis of National Population and Housing Census Data, UNFPA (2014). See: <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/141006-UNFPA-GenderManual2014-02-SCREEN.pdf>

¹¹ Klasen, S., & Wink, C. (2002). *A Turning Point in Gender Bias in Mortality? An Update on the Number of Missing Women*. *Population and Development Review*, 28(2), 285–312. See: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3092814>

II. RCS-DEM DATASET

The increasing salience of religion in helping individuals navigate the modern world and its consequent impact on social interactions and political processes has received limited and belated attention from academics for a variety of reasons beyond the scope of our discussion in this paper. However, one major reason that academic study on the relationship between religion and outcomes within and between states has been relatively neglected is the lack of credible, granular and timely datasets on religious demographics for countries around the world.

Getting data on religious demographics remains a sensitive issue in many countries. Only about one-third of the countries include questions on religious beliefs in their national census and in several countries like UK the question is voluntary¹². In the USA, the national census (which is mandatory for citizens) stopped asking questions about religion 1980 onwards after an injunction by the US Congress in 1976.¹³

This working paper uses demographic data from Religious Characteristics of States Dataset Project - Demographics v. 2.0 (RCS-Dem) published by Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA) in the year 2019. RCS-Dem has more extensive and consistent data points on religious demographics than other available sources. Notably, it records population numbers for 97 religious denominations from the early 1800s onwards (approximately 6.7 million data points).¹⁴

RCS-Dem has been prepared by two principal investigators - Dr. Davis Brown (Nonresident Fellow, Baylor University Institute for Studies of Religion) and Dr. Patrick James (Dornsife Dean's Professor of International Relations, University of Southern California). We rely on country-wise estimates of religious demographics for the years 1950 and 2015. The change in religious composition of the population between these two years forms the basis of our analysis.

There are several other datasets available on religion. Prominent among them include the following: World Religion Database (WRD), World

¹² *Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021* (November 2022), Office of National Statistics, See: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021>

¹³ Jeff Diamant and Rebecca Leppert (April 2023), *Why the U.S. census doesn't ask Americans about their religion*, Pew Research Center, See: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/04/12/why-the-us-census-doesnt-ask-americans-about-their-religion/>

¹⁴ Infra note 19

Religion Project (WRP), Pew Research Center's Religious Landscape Studies (specifically for USA), Global Religious Futures Project (Run by Pew Research project) and Atlas of Religion. Of the above-mentioned datasets, WRD and WRP are the two leading databases on religion. They were important sources in construction of the RCS-Dem Database, especially WRD.

However, RCS-Dem has four distinct advantages over the WRD and WRP to create a dataset that has unmatched richness in denominational and temporal coverage. These advantages are explained in a 2018 paper by the two creators of the dataset titled *The Religious Characteristics of States: Classic Themes and New Evidence for International Relations and Comparative Politics*¹⁵ and are briefly summarized below.

Firstly, RCS-Dem provides data points on an yearly basis as compared to WRP which provided data only in five-year installments and WRD which provides data for only seven years¹⁶ between 1900 and 2010. Secondly, neither the WRD nor the WRP capture every variable for every state. As a result, WRD's observations can populate only 37.7 percent of the Dataset covering all religious denominations for all countries and WRP incorrectly codes missing data as "zero" leading to impractical conclusions. Thirdly, in terms of historical depth WRD provides estimates for the states in the year 1900, but only for states that exist today with their present borders. Whereas, RCS-Dem using historical sources provides data that is older than 1900s for more than 130 countries that are or were independent. In certain cases, RCS provides data for countries that don't even exist today. Lastly, in terms of denominational breadth WRD provides data for 44 religious denominations and WRP provides for 31 religious denominations; whereas RCS-Dem provides data for 97 religious denominations. More-over, RCS-Dem details a taxonomy chart of the religious denominations also it introduces optional composite categories for user's benefit.

While constructing the dataset, the authors took the practical approach of strictly defining religious denomination and simultaneously reported on the non-religious segment to account for degree of secularization in a country. They do not collect information on the intensity of religious belief or the degree of participation of the adherents of a religious denomination in social activities associated with religion (for example, visiting places of worship on designated days). Twenty four sources (primary and secondary) were used to

¹⁵ Brown, D., & James, P. (2018). *The Religious Characteristics of States: Classic Themes and New Evidence for International Relations and Comparative Politics*. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 62(6), 1340-1376. See: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002717729882>

¹⁶ The years are as follows: 1900, 1910, 1950, 1970, 2000, 2005 and 2010

construct this dataset. Source citation is given at the granular level of denominations. The authors refer to multiple resources and use subjective yet logical methods while choosing the sources and to arrive at the estimates. Various extrapolations and interpolations techniques have been used by the authors to fill the gaps in the datasets.

Several academic studies on religion, status of religious minorities and minority rights have relied on data from RCS-Dem.¹⁷ Among the many, we highlight three research papers that have used the database to prove important results from a policy perspective. Nilay Saiya (Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore) & Stuti Manchanda (NTU, Singapore) in their paper (published in Journal of European Public Policy) titled *Do Burqa Bans Make Us Safer? Veil Prohibitions and Terrorism in Europe* show how even though the intended effect of burqa bans of incorporating Muslim women into French culture and increasing public safety; end up achieving the exact opposite by further isolating Muslim women from the public, increasing stigmatization of Muslims and increasing radicalization of Muslims. Seung-Whan Choi (Department of Political Science at the University of Illinois at Chicago) in his paper (published in Perspectives on Terrorism) titled *Does Restrictive Immigration Policy Reduce Terrorism in Western Democracies?* talks about how a total ban on immigration might not be the most optimal way to address the problem of terrorism in western democracies. Matthew Isaacs (Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, USA) in his paper (published in Comparative Political Studies) titled *Faith in Contention: Explaining the Salience of Religion in Ethnic Conflict* argues that competition among religious leaders acts like a precursor for most ethnic conflicts and determines the intensity and duration of that conflict.

¹⁷ See for example: Wade M Cole, Claudia Geist, *Conceiving of Contraception: World Society, Cultural Resistance, and Contraceptive Use, 1970–2012*, Social Forces, Volume 99, Issue 4, June 2021, Pages 1394–1431; Nilay Saiya & Stuti Manchanda (2020) *Do burqa bans make us safer? Veil prohibitions and terrorism in Europe*, Journal of European Public Policy, 27:12, 1781–1800; Choi, Seung-Whan, *Does Restrictive Immigration Policy Reduce Terrorism in Western Democracies?* Perspectives on Terrorism, vol. 12, no. 4, 2018; Isaacs, M. (2017) *Faith in Contention: Explaining the Salience of Religion in Ethnic Conflict*. Comparative Political Studies, 50(2), 200–231; Zhao, X., Fang, L. & Zhang, K. *How Foreign Institutional Shareholders' Religious Beliefs Affect Corporate Social Performance?* J Bus Ethics 178, 377–401 (2022); Cosgel, M. M., Langlois, R. N., & Miceli, T. J. (2020) *Identity, religion, and the state: The origin of theocracy*. Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization, 179, 608–622; Mishali-Ram, M., & Fox, J. (2022). *Is governmental and societal discrimination against Muslim minorities behind foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq?* Journal of Peace Research, 59(2), 122–135; Gutmann, J., Padovano, F., & Voigt, S. (2020). *Perception vs. experience: Explaining differences in corruption measures using microdata*. European Journal of Political Economy, 101925; Fox, Jonathan, Roger Finke, and Dane R. Mataic. 2021. *The Causes of Societal Discrimination against Religious Minorities in Christian-Majority Countries*, Religions 12, no. 8: 611; Vüllers, J. (2021) *Mobilization for peace: Analyzing religious peace activism*. Conflict Management and Peace Science, 38(4), 391–410; Cole, W. M. (2020) *Working to Protect Rights: Women's Civil Liberties in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Social Science Research, 102461

Conceptual Challenges - Definition of “Religious Minority”

There is no internationally accepted definition of a “minority” or “religious minority”. This makes cross-country comparisons difficult. As John Packer (first Director of the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, later Professor of International Conflict Resolution & Director, Human Rights Research & Education Centre, University of Ottawa) notes¹⁸:

“It has been correctly observed that international law supposes the existence of minorities both in general and specific types. However, while the existence of human beings and states are ‘axiomatic’ in international law, the existence of human groups is problematic. Conceptually, international law struggles with the definitions of actors beyond the ‘State’; indeed the problem of defining actors has always troubled political theory in general and international relations in particular...[While] the catalogue and content of individual human rights has become relatively clear, the specificity of protections for groups, particularly minorities, has remained largely uncertain. Paramount among this uncertainty has been the very definition of ‘the’ or ‘a minority’ to whom any rights may accrue.”

For example, Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) provides for religious rights. It was further elucidated in International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966 (ICCPR) and the 1981 UN General Assembly Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance based on Religion or Belief (1981 Declaration). None of these instruments however provide a definition of the term “religion”.

Similarly, international law instruments and scholars have been unable to reach a consensus on a comprehensive working definition of the term “minority”. UDHR, ICCPR, 1981 Declaration, 1992 UN Resolution and Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, Council of Europe’s 1995 Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities - none of these instruments define the term “minority”.

Therefore, there is no internationally accepted definition of the term “religious minority” and any attempts to define the term creates categorical disagreements which brings research on inter-country comparisons and

¹⁸ John Packer, *On the Definition of Minorities*, in *The Protection of Ethnic and Linguistic Minorities in Europe* 23, 24-27 (John Packer & Kristian Myntti eds., 1993)

objective conversation to a standstill. Instead, the task of recognising and defining which religious community is considered as a religious minority is left to the individual countries.

However, the existence of religious minorities is a question of fact, not law. Therefore, we have to make efforts to work around these conceptual challenges. In the absence of a uniformly accepted definition of religious minority, we have to reconfigure our analysis through the study of the change of the majority population in a country. Therefore, we restrict our attention to the study of changes in the proportion of the majority in the population, and based on that analysis we make inferences about demographic changes of religious minorities.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study captures the distribution of the rate of change in share of the majority religion for 167 countries from 1950 to 2015. We decided to focus on only those countries that had a majority religion (more than 50 percent share of the total population) for 1950. Since we want to study the demographic changes among the religious minority over the last 65 years; we decided to restrict our analysis to the definition of majority (and by extension minority) as defined in 1950. Countries for which the dataset did not label a majority religious denomination in 1950 were excluded from our analysis.

For the majority religious denomination as defined in 1950, we first note its share of the total population in 2015. Next, we look at the rate of change in share of population for the religious majority (as defined in 1950) from 1950 to 2015. This is the key metric based on which we do our main analysis and minor refinements. In other words, we study the distribution of the rate of change in the share of the majority religion in countries around the world by focusing on the following measure:

- Rate of Change in Share = $[(\text{Share of majority (as defined in 1950) in 2015} - \text{Share of majority in 1950}) / \text{Share of majority in 1950}] * 100$

We look at percentage change in the share of the majority population from 1950 to 2015 and make assessments about the quality of minority protection. *To clarify, we are not going into the composition of the minority population or the mechanics of demographic change i.e. the factors leading to either reduction or increase in share of majority religious denomination.*

Our main hypothesis is that a reducing majority i.e. a negative rate of change in the share of majority population (and tautologically an increase in the share of the minority population) from 1950-2015 means that we can safely conclude that there exists an overall congenial environment for increasing diversity in the country.

Finally, it is important to note that the "Rate of Change in Share" is a measure of the change in majority share, which is a number greater than 50 percent in the baseline year of 1950 (as a definition). In the 167 countries selected for analysis, the average value of the share of the majority religious denomination calculated in the baseline year of 1950 is 75.08 percent while the possible range is 50-100 percent by definition. The range for share of the majority religious denomination in the endline year of 2015 however is 0 to

100 percent. This is why the rate of change in share of the majority religious denomination is also reported to be negative for several countries.

Composite Categories: The RCS-Dem Dataset has introduced composite categories, such as Western Christian, Eastern Christian, East Asian Complex and Buddhist Complex. The purpose of this categorisation is to group those denominations which have some fundamental commonalities whose numbers may be cumulatively added to touch the majority threshold of 50 percent. These composite categories include the following¹⁹:

- *Western Christians:* Combined Catholic (less non-Latin-rite Catholic), Extended Protestant and Liminal Christian (less Other Liminal Christian), less double-affiliates
- *East Asian Complex:* Combined Shintoist, Confucianist, Taoist, Chinese Folk, less double affiliates.
- *Buddhist Complex:* Combined Buddhist, Buddhist Syncretic, Shintoist, Confucianist, Taoist; not including Chinese Folk Religionist
- *Liminal Categories:* This term designates groups of denominations of Christianity and Islam that identify as Christian and Muslim, respectively, but which depart significantly from the theology or canon of the other major branches.

A. Process of Assigning Majority ID in the RCS-Dem Dataset

In the RCS-Dem Dataset, the smallest factor greater than 50 percent is designated as the majority religious denomination in the dataset and labelled as Majority ID. The Majority ID could be assigned to three categories of denominations (see Table 2 in the Appendix):

1. *A subgroup of a religion which in itself crosses the 50 percent threshold.* For example, in the Czech Republic (1950), Latin-Rite Roman Catholics constituted 76.35 percent of the total population while the Christian population was 93.75 percent. Since the subgroup “Latin-Rite Roman Catholic” was big enough to cross the 50 percent threshold, it was assigned the Majority ID.
2. *A religion (including all its subgroups) crosses the 50 percent threshold.* For example, in Estonia (1950), “Christianity” was labeled as Majority

¹⁹ As defined in the Codebook of RCS-Dem 2.0, please see:

<https://www.thearda.com/ARDA/pdf/originalCodebooks/RCS%20Demographics%20v2.0%20Codebook.pdf>

ID²⁰. This is because its subgroups - Extended Protestants (31.8 percent) and Orthodox Christians (25.43 percent) were not enough to touch the majority threshold of 50 percent alone. But the next highest category “Christianity” - which includes these two subgroups and other denominations which are part of the same religious family - totalled to approximately 57 percent.

3. *A composite category invented by the creators of the RCS-Dem Dataset crosses the 50 percent threshold.* By way of illustration, for Palau in 1950 the dataset assigns Majority ID to a composite category called “Western Christians”. This composite category includes Catholics, Extended Protestants and Liminal Christian branches which individually constituted 20.23 percent, 35.64 percent and zero percent of the population of Palau in 1950. Their combined numbers were required to cross the majority threshold of 50 percent.

B. Note on the Diversity Being Measured in This Study

Minority is a composite category and within this label there are different rates of changes of various denominations. However, our paper is not focussed on how the composition of the minority group is changing within a country. Our intent is simply to make an assessment on whether an environment fosters/conducive to diversity - we are not getting into the composition of that diversity.

Therefore, in this study a change in Majority ID from one religion to another religion is treated equivalent to a change in Majority ID from one denomination within the same religion to another. Let us illustrate with the case studies of Lebanon and Saudi Arabia both of which are labeled as countries where the share of the majority population reduced between 1950 and 2015.

Lebanon was a Christian majority country in 1950 with “Eastern Christian” as the Majority ID, constituting 51.65 percent of the population. In 2015, Lebanon became a Muslim majority country with Majority ID being “Muslim” with approximately 61 percent of the population. The Eastern Christian population meanwhile came down to 31 percent by 2015.

Next, consider Saudi Arabia’s case which is also labeled as a country where the majority religious denomination has decreased its share because

²⁰ Unspecified Christians (zero percent), Catholics (0.12 percent), Extended Protestants (31.87 percent), Orthodox (25.43 percent), Other Liminal Categories (0 percent). Liminal Categories (0.01 percent)

the 1950 majority denomination (Hanbali sect with 58 percent of the population) was reduced to 35 percent in 2015. Therefore, the Majority ID shifted to the bigger denomination of “Sunni Muslims” which constituted 82 percent of the population in 2015.

This is even as Saudi Arabia remains a Muslim-majority country with muslims constituting 99.8 percent of the population in 1950 and 92 percent of the population in 2015. Thus, for the purposes of this study, even a shift in Majority ID from Hanafi to Sunni Muslims is a measure of diversity in a Muslim-majority country because our metric “rate of change of majority denomination” is indifferent to change in either denomination or religion.

C. Note on Legal Entity as the Unit of Analysis

It is also important to note that the number of countries has increased from around 102 to 195 in the period under study. The unit of our analysis is not a fixed geographical area but a legal entity recognized as a country in 2015 in the database, without regard to its political and administrative boundaries. If there is corresponding data available for this entity in 1950 (irrespective of whether it was recognized as a separate country or had different borders) it is included in our study.

Sometimes it is the change in borders and not direct government policy that explains demographic shifts. Increase in the share of minority population by addition of territories to a country is different from increase in minority population due to the government's protection of minorities by law and policy. However, the change in borders of a country is never random but always driven by political factors. Countries go through boundary changes for a variety of reasons and we look at the cumulative impact of these changes.

Even the authors of the RCS-Dem Dataset understood the challenge of making like-to-like demographic comparisons given the turbulent global politics and constantly changing borders or countries. Accordingly, the RCS-Dem Database also keeps “State” as the unit of its analysis instead of a fixed geographical area. The creators of RCS-Dem Dataset report demographic data for a given country “using its contemporaneous, not contemporary, borders...as they actually existed in the observed year.”²¹

²¹ Brown, D., & James, P. (2018). *The Religious Characteristics of States: Classic Themes and New Evidence for International Relations and Comparative Politics*. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 62(6), 1340-1376. See: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002717729882>

For example, Bangladesh did not exist as a separate country in 1950 but the corresponding demographic data for East Pakistan is available in the RCS-Dem Database and therefore Bangladesh forms a part of the study. Similarly, the boundary of India in 2015 is markedly different from 1950 and that accordingly reflects in the demographic data. However, the database does not have corresponding historical data for the present-day borders of the Federal Republic of Germany which did not exist as a separate country in 1950 but was formed in October 1990 after the unification of East Germany and West Germany. Therefore, the Federal Republic of Germany is excluded from our analysis.

IV. ANALYSIS AND SUMMARY

We begin our analysis by listing in Table 1 below all the religious denominations/groups in the RCS-Dem Database that had a majority in at least one country in the world in 1950 and 2015. Please note that the RCS-Dem Dataset defines a “majority” as the narrowest religious category that has more than 50 percent share of the population. There are a total of 37 religious denominations which have a majority in at least one country. This gives the reader a flavor of the diversity and granularity (and consequently the challenge) of inter-country comparisons on religious groups. Please note that we have classified the religious denomination according to major religion based on the tree structure for various religions as given in the RCS-Dem Codebook²².

Table 1: All Religious Denominations with Majority in at least One Country

S.No	Religion Denomination	Major Religion	S.No	Religion Denomination	Major Religion
1	Christian	Christian	19	Muslim	Muslim
2	Western Christian	Christian	20	Sunni Muslims	Muslim
4	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	21	Hanafi	Muslim
5	Protestant Extended	Christian	22	Maliki	Muslim
6	Protestants and Anglican	Christian	23	Shafii Sunnis	Muslim
7	Protestant	Christian	24	Hanbali	Muslim
8	Lutherans	Christian	25	Shia	Muslim
9	unspecified Reformed Protestants	Christian	26	Zaydis	Muslim
10	Presbyterial Reformed Protestants	Christian	27	Khariji Muslims	Muslim
11	Congregational Reformed Protestants	Christian	28	Hindus	Hindus
12	Adventist	Christian	29	Buddhists	Buddhist
13	Wesleyans	Christian	30	Theravada Buddhists	Buddhist
14	Anglicans	Christian	31	Mahayana Buddhists	Buddhist
15	Oriental Orthodox	Christian	32	Tibetan Buddhists	Buddhist
16	Eastern Orthodox	Christian	33	East Asian Religious Complex	East Asian Religion
17	Christian Syncretics	Christian	34	Chinese Folk Religionists	Chinese Folk
18	Jews	Jews	35	Animists	Animists
			36	Not Religious	Not Religious
			37	Unspecified Not Religious	Not Religious

²² Supra note 15

As we see from the table, there are sixteen different subcategories of Christianity that are a majority in at least one country. Similarly, there are eight subcategories of Islam and three denominations of Buddhism that constitute the majority population in at least one country.

A. Countries Excluded from Analysis

In our analysis, we exclude countries that did not have a majority religious denomination in the baseline year of 1950 and countries where the data was simply missing. There are 22 such countries in the database. These countries are listed in Table 3 of the Appendix. In the table, we have captured the status of their majority religion in the endline year of 2015 for the sake of completeness.

We discuss the countries excluded from analysis in this section. Depending on the reason for exclusion, these 22 countries may be divided into three distinct categories:

1. Countries where no religious denomination crossed the majority threshold in 1950 (baseline year) and 2015 (endline year)
2. Countries with missing data for 1950 (baseline year)
3. Countries with no majority in 1950 (baseline year) but a majority religious denomination in 2015 (endline year)

1. Countries Without a Religious Majority in both 1950 and 2015

There are some countries like Mauritius, Singapore and Nigeria where no religion has been able to cross the 50 percent majority threshold in 1950 (baseline year) and 2015 (endline year). However, this does not mean that they have not experienced changes in the religious composition of the population.

Mauritius

Mauritius, for example, has seen a steady Hindu population between 47-49 percent whereas there has been a slight reduction in Christian population from 1950 (35.82 percent to 30.19 percent) and a corresponding increase in Muslim population from about 15 percent to 18 percent.

Singapore

In Singapore, the three largest religious categories in 1950 were East Asian Religious Complex (36.99 percent), Buddhist Complex (33.89 percent)

and Muslims (18.59 percent). Whereas in 2015, Christianity rose to be the second largest religion with the top three categories being Buddhist Complex (30.92 percent), Christians (20.20 percent) and Muslims (14.64 percent).

Nigeria

Nigeria is another country where no religion crosses the majority threshold in the period under study but the country has witnessed a stunning rise of Christianity from 11.54 percent in 1950 to becoming the largest religious category at 48.85 percent. Numbers suggest that this has happened largely at the cost of Animism whose adherents have reduced ***from 43.72 percent in 1950 to 7.4 percent in 2015.***

2. Countries With Missing Data

The next category of countries excluded are those for which the RCS-Dem Dataset reports missing data in 1950 (baseline year) for a significant proportion of the population after conducting robustness and due diligence checks on the underlying data sources. As a result, no religious group was able to touch the majority threshold of 50 percent in 1950 (baseline year).

However, we can make rudimentary attempts to solve the puzzle of “Missing” entry by observing other analogous sources like the World Religion Project (WRP). We share the data points from the WRP database for the following three countries to make the case that the social reality in these countries may be more complicated and nuanced than the “Missing” label suggests.

South Korea

In South Korea, the Majority ID in 1950 was assigned as “Missing”. However, the dataset suggests that the demographic distribution was Buddhist Complex (27.88 percent), East Asian Religious Complex (12.56 percent) and Unknown (66.34 percent). In 2015 the majority ID was again assigned as “Missing” since the breakup was as follows: Unknown (40.37 percent), Christian (34.72 percent) and Buddhist Complex (22.73 percent).

Despite the missing data for a significant share of the population, it is noteworthy that the share of Christianity in the population increased from 5.61 percent in 1950 to 34.72 percent in 2015. Whereas the share of East Asian Religious Complex in the population decreased from 12.56 percent in 1950 to 0.24 percent in 2015.

If we refer to the closest analogous source - the World Religion Project (WRP) - they label 63.86 percent of the population as adherents of Animism in 1950 which decreases to 1.049 percent in 2010; whereas Christianity increases from 8.99 percent in 1950 to 28.59 percent in 2010 in their database.

Vietnam

Similarly, in Vietnam, the Majority ID in 1950 was assigned as “Missing” because the demographic distribution was as follows: Unknown (39.80 percent), Buddhist Complex (33.92 percent) and Indigenous Religionist (10.71 percent). In 2015, the Majority ID was again assigned as “Missing” because the demographic distribution was Unknown (51.10 percent), Not Religious (17.98 percent) and Buddhist Complex (10.75 percent).

On the other hand, the World Religion Project (WRP) makes very different assessments about the religious demographics of Vietnam. In its dataset, the percentage of Buddhists increased from 10.99 percent in 1955 to 49 percent in 2010 and the “Not Religious” percentage decreased from 70 percent in 1955 to 36.4 percent in 2010. This may be explained by the under-reporting of religious activity and affiliation during the Cold War.

USSR/Russian Federation

In 1950, USSR had the Majority ID as “Missing” and the demographic distribution was as follows: Christians (40.25 percent), Not religious (40.11 percent) and Muslims (10.90 percent). In 2015, the Russian Federation which was the successor state of USSR also had the Majority ID as “Missing” because the demographic distribution was Christians (48.20 percent), Unknown (30.97 percent) and Muslims (10.61 percent). The share of “Not Religious” in the population decreased from 40.11 percent from 1950 to 8.20 percent in 2015. Whereas the share of “Unknown” increased from 6.83 percent in 1950 to 30.97 percent in 2015.

The World Religion Project on the other hand reports that the percentage of Christians in USSR/Russian Federation increased from 34.11 percent (1950) to 74.23 percent (2010), thereby crossing the majority threshold. Further, the percentage of “Not Religious” decreased from 48.13 percent (1950) to 14.04 percent (2010).

Both Vietnam and USSR were communist countries and the dataset hides a more complex social reality. For example, in both these countries one notes a drastic decrease in the percentage of population labeled as “Not

Religious” after the end of the Cold War. This may suggest that there was an under-estimation and under-reporting of religious institutions and beliefs in these societies during the heyday of Communism.

On the contrary, the change in Majority ID in China from “Chinese Folk Religionists” in 1950 to “None” in 2015 may be explained by the Chinese Communist Party’s official policy of atheism and severe restrictions which discourage citizens from religious practices and academics from studying religion in contemporary China. As a result, large sections of the population may be reluctant to formally identify themselves with a religion and credible data may not be available due to restrictions imposed by the Chinese government on survey research²³.

Malaysia

Malaysia, which got its independence in 1957 from British rule is assigned a Majority ID of “Missing” for the year 1950. The RCS Dataset notes its demographic distribution as follows: Muslims (45.20 percent), Unknown (43.08 percent) and Hindu (8.70 percent). However, unlike South Korea, Vietnam and Russia, the Majority ID in 2015 was assigned to “Sunni Muslims” who accounted for approximately 56 percent of the population. The next two largest categories were Christians (9.29 percent) and Buddhist Complex (8.69 percent). The Hindu population declined to about 6.27 percent in 2015 from 8.7 percent in 1950.

3. Countries Without Religious Majority in 1950 but With a Religious Majority in 2015

The third category of countries that were excluded from our analysis are those which did not have a Majority ID in 1950 (baseline year) but by 2015 (endline year) one religious denomination increased its share to attain the Majority ID. In the three cases discussed below - Armenia, Kazakhstan and Mongolia (all of whom were under the control of the USSR during the Cold War) - this may be explained to a large extent by the widespread under-reporting of religious beliefs and state-supported suppression of religion in the Soviet sphere of influence.

Armenia

In 1950, the Majority ID was assigned as “None” since the demographic distribution was as follows: Christians (45.08 percent), Not Religious (44.33

²³ Measuring Religion in China (August 2023), Pew Research Center, See: <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/08/30/measuring-religion-in-china/>

percent) and Muslims (9.57 percent). In 2015, Christians constituted 95.69 percent of the population of which an overwhelming proportion was that of the Oriental Orthodox denomination (93.21 percent). On the other hand, the population defined as “Not Religious” was 3.23 percent. Therefore, we can observe a 108 percent rise in the Christian population between 1950 and 2015. On the other hand, the share of “Not Religious” decreased from 44.33 percent in 1950 to 3.23 percent in 2015.

Mongolia

Mongolia has historically been a Buddhist country. However, officially it saw a dramatic rise in its Buddhist population as per the RCS-Dem Dataset between 1950 and 2015. One reason could be the under-reporting and state suppression of religious beliefs during the Cold War when it was a one-party socialist state supported by the USSR. In 1950, the Majority ID was assigned as “None” because the demographic distribution was reported as follows: Not Religious (44.86 percent), Unknown (38.43 percent) and Buddhist Complex (7.71 percent). In 2015, the Majority ID was assigned as “Tibetan Buddhist” with 54.27 percent share of the population. The distribution of “Not Religious” (18.61 percent) and “Unknown” (18.43 percent) fell substantially from 1950. The rise in the Buddhist population from about 7 percent in 1950 to 54 percent in 2015 and corresponding decrease in the share of “Not Religious” from 44.86 percent in 1950 to 18.61 percent in 2015 and the share of “Unknown” from 38.43 percent in 1950 to 18.43 percent in 2015 provides circumstantial evidence for our intuition about the under-reporting of religious belief during one-party socialist rule.

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan presents a story similar to Mongolia about the suppression of religion and religious beliefs under Soviet rule. Even though it has been an Islamic country for several centuries, in 1950, the Majority ID was assigned as “None”. This is because as per the RCS-Dem dataset the demographic distribution in Kazakhstan in 1950 was: Not Religious (43.23 percent), Muslims (39.95 percent) and Christians (15.83 percent). However, in 2015, Hanafi Sunnis constituted 75.77 percent of the population and were accordingly assigned the Majority ID whereas the “Not Religious” population unsurprisingly fell from 43.23 percent to 2.11 percent after the Soviet influence disappeared. The Christian population meanwhile witnessed a modest growth as it rose from 15 to 21 percent.

Eritrea

In 1950, the majority ID was assigned as None, the demographic distribution was Muslims (49.88 percent), Indigenous Religionist (26.90 percent) and Christians (22.34 percent). In 2015, the majority ID was assigned as “Shafii Sunnis” since they constituted 50.42 percent of the population by themselves. The share of Christians increased from 22.34 percent in 1950 to 46.29 percent in 2015. Whereas the share of Indigenous Religionists decreased from 26.90 percent to 0.62 percent in 2015.

Guyana

Guyana is another country which had no majority religion in 1950 as per the RCS-Dem Dataset. The demographic distribution was as follows: Christians (49.50 percent), Hindu (31.99 percent) and Muslims (8.07 percent). By 2015, the Christian population increased its share to become almost 65 percent of the population with “Western Christian” composite category attaining the Majority ID with 50.4 percent share. The Hindu population on the other hand fell from about 32 percent to 23 percent in the period of 65 years.

B. Key Result – Changes in Minority Population for Selected Countries

The result of our main analysis is shown in Figure 1 which represents the change in majority religious denomination between 1950 and 2015 for the 167 selected countries. In Figure 1, the countries coded in green are those where the majority population has reduced and the countries coded in red are those where the majority population has increased in the period under study. The intensity of shading is indicative of the quantum of such change. The distribution of this change is also presented in Figure 2 through histogram and density plot. Table 4 in the Appendix reports the exact data for the 167 countries under analysis.

Figure 1 - Representation of Change in Majority Religious Denomination (1950-2015)

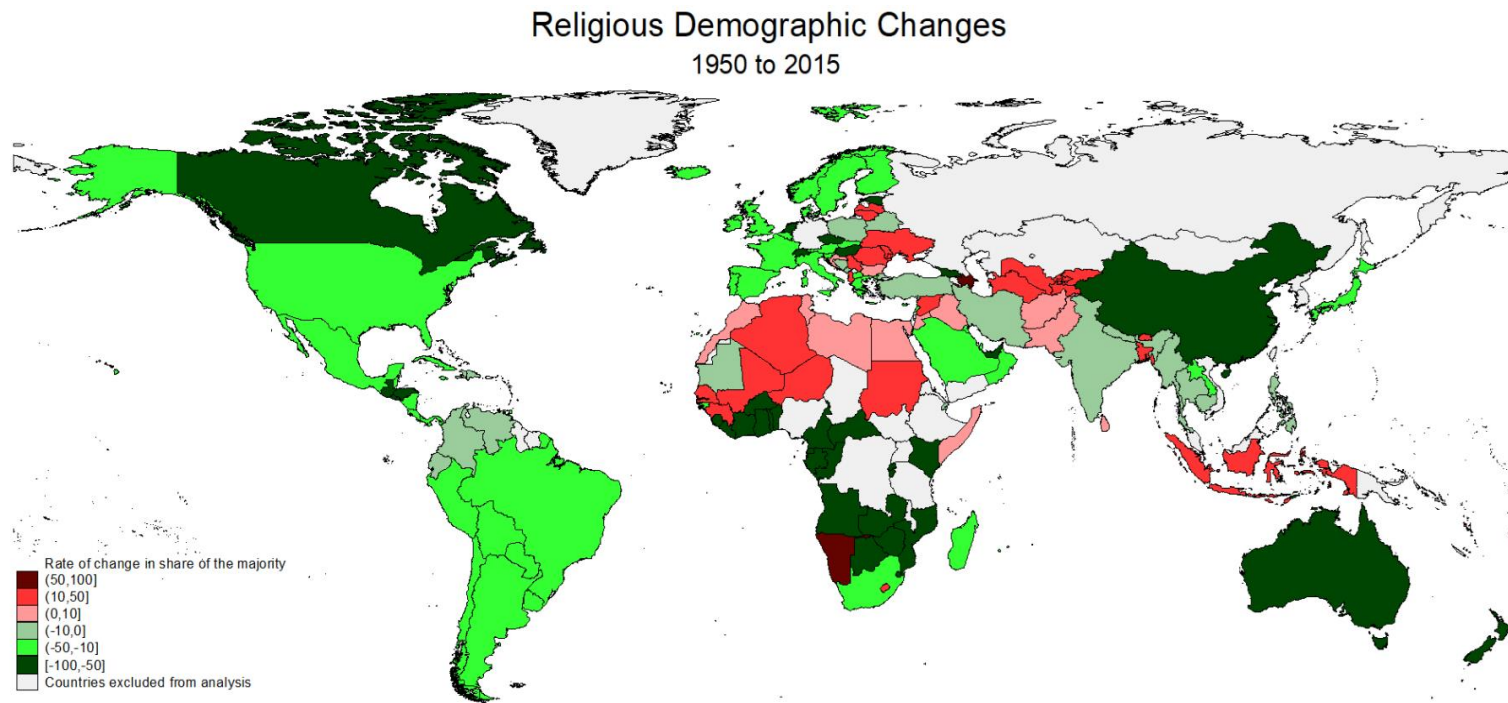
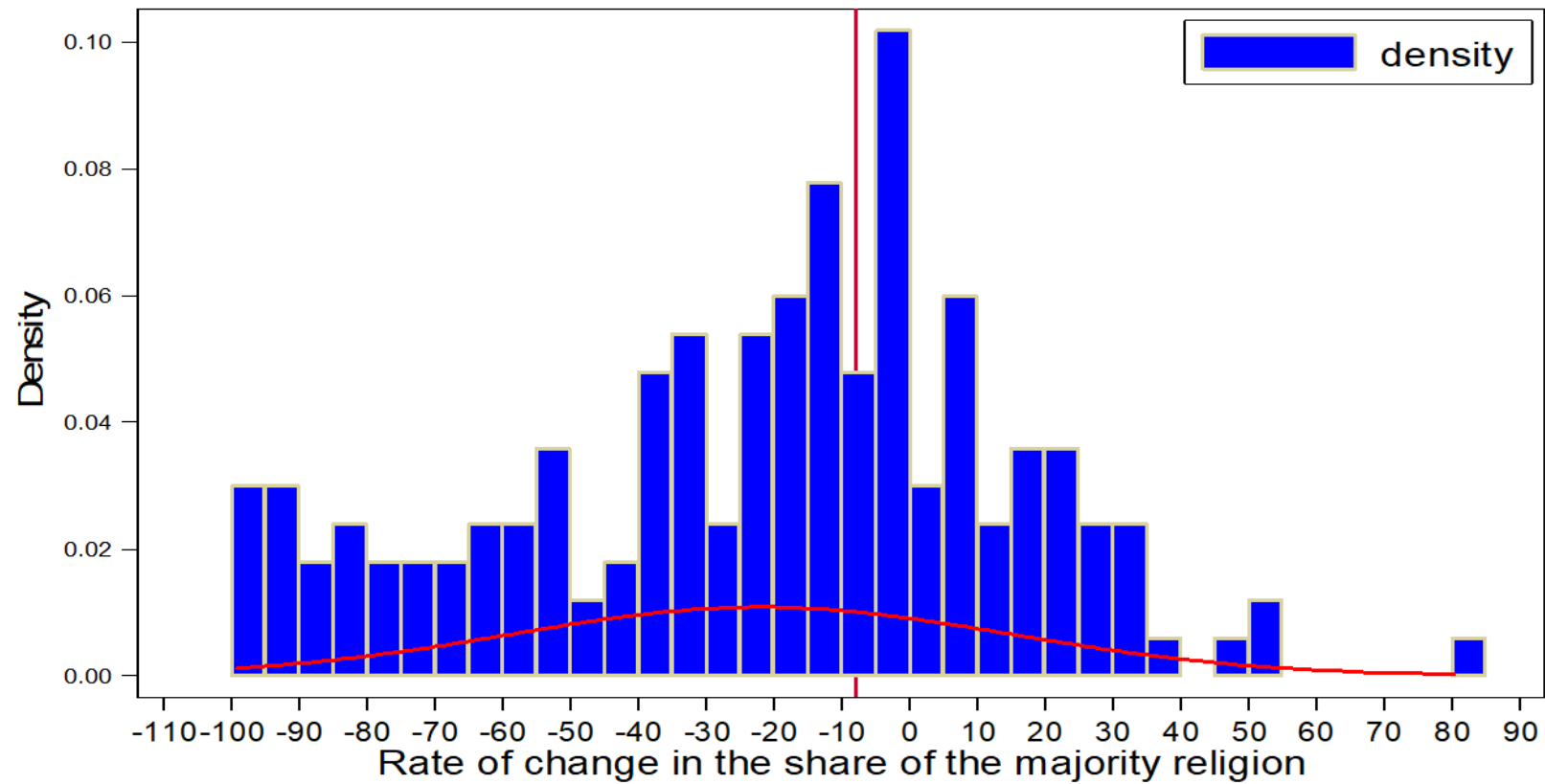


Figure 2 - Distribution of Change in Majority Religious Denomination (1950-2015)



Rate of change in the share of the religious majority (as defined in 1950) for the 167 countries:

Mean = -21.91 *Standard Deviation* = 36.81

The rate of change in the share of the religious majority in India is denoted by the vertical maroon line,
 $x = -7.820$

Preliminary Observations

For the 167 countries in our analysis, the average value for the share of the majority religious denomination in the baseline year of 1950 is 75 percent. The Mean of the distribution seen in Figure 2 is -21.9. This means that globally the share of the majority religious denomination has gone down by approximately 22 percent. In other words, the world has become more heterogeneous in the period under study. On every major continent, more countries have seen a decline in the share of the majority religious denomination than increase. Table 5 in the Appendix captures the frequency distribution of changes in religious majority across continents.

Looking at Figure 2, it can be seen that frequency distribution is dispersed over a wide range of values and not clustered around the Mean. This suggests that behind the global Mean of -21.9, the share of religious majority (and therefore religious minority) in countries around the world has seen a broad range of changes over the last 65 years. While the share of the majority religious denomination has remained stable in a few countries, most have witnessed a modest increase/decrease and a few have gone through drastic changes, to the extent that another religious denomination has become the majority.

The change in share of the majority religious denomination across 167 countries has a wide range from a 99 percent fall in share of the majority religious group (Liberia) to an increase by 80 percent in the share of the majority religious group (Namibia). The share of the majority population has decreased in 123 countries in our analysis while the majority religious group has increased its share in the population in 44 countries. To get a sense of how the data compares to a typical or 'normal' distribution, we overlay a density plot on top of the histogram (see Figure 2). The curve has a Standard Deviation of 36.81. It implies that the data is dispersed over a wide range and it is not tightly packed around the Mean.

The religion associated with the majority group in a country plays an important role in countries which have seen extreme changes. If we focus on the 20 countries which have seen the maximum increase in the share of the majority religious group between 1950 and 2015, all of these are countries where Christianity or Islam based denominations were the majority religious group. On the other hand, if we focus on the 20 countries that have seen the maximum decline in the share of the majority religious group, only 3 of them had Christianity or Islam based denominations as the majority religious group. Animism was the majority religion in 16 of these countries.

The right-most outlier observations Figure 2 correspond to Namibia and Palau - countries with maximum increase in the share of majority religious denomination. In Namibia, it took the combination of Catholics, Protestants and Liminal Christian religious groups (collectively known in the dataset as the complex category called “Western Christianity”) to touch the majority of 50 percent in 1950. However, in 2015, this category of “Western Christianity” increased its share to 91 percent - an 80 percent increase in the share of the majority religious denomination. Just the Protestant population in 2015 was enough to cross the majority threshold in Namibia.

Similarly, in Palau the majority group label shifted from “Western Christian” in 1950 to “Latin-Rite Roman Catholics” in 2015. In Fiji the majority group was “Christian” in 1950 whereas by 2015 “Western Christian” subgroup was enough to reach the majority threshold of 50 percent.

On the other hand, if we look at the extreme observations on the left-hand side of Figure 2, they correspond to Liberia, Kenya and Equatorial Guinea - countries which have seen the maximum reduction in the share of the majority religious denomination. In Liberia the majority religious denomination (Animism) decreased from 72.54 percent in 1950 to 0.58 percent in 2015 - a fall of 99.2 percent.

Global Trends

The cases of Liberia and Namibia discussed above are outliers. Most of the countries have experienced changes within the range of 20 percent increase/decrease in the share of their majority religious group during the period under study. 73 countries fall within this range. As we have noted earlier, in 123 out of 167 countries under study the share of the majority religious group decreased while its share increased in only 44 countries around the world (see Table 5 on Continent-wise analysis in the Appendix). We have also noted that on every continent there are more cases of countries witnessing a decrease in the majority religious denomination than countries where the share of the majority group has increased. However, Africa needs special mention. The biggest changes in religious demography, measured as the change in majority share, have happened in African countries. 21 out of 40 such countries are located in Africa.

Fate of Religions

If one compares the contrasting destinies of major religions in the dataset (Table 6 on Religion-wise analysis in the Appendix), Animism emerges

as a clear loser. In 1950, it had a majority status in 24 countries (almost all of them in Africa). Animism did not just lose its share in the overall population but it is no longer a majority population in any of these 24 countries. Instead, various religious denominations of Christianity and Islam have become the majority religious group in these countries.

77 out of the 94 countries that reported being Christian majority have witnessed a decrease in the share of the majority religious group since 1950 while the majority religious group has increased its share in only 17 of these countries. On the other hand, 25 out of the 38 countries that reported being Muslim majority in 1950 have seen an increase in share of the majority religious group while their share of the population has declined in only 13 countries. Table 6 in the Appendix captures the frequency distribution of changes in major religions around the world from 1950 to 2015.

Performance of India

The solid vertical line in the histogram (see Figure 2) represents India. As evident, India has seen a reduction of 7.8 percent in the share of the majority religious group (Hindu) which lies within 1 Standard Deviation of the Mean (-21.91).

C. Refinements

Refinement C1: Countries with Population over 20 Million

Next, we look at a subset of Table 4 and observe the changes in religious categories of 45 “Major Countries” (defined as countries whose population in 2015 is more than 20 million). The demographic changes in these 45 Major Countries is captured in Table 8 of the Appendix. The corresponding Figure 3 and 4 are given below to show a graphical representation of this distribution. Refinement C1 acts as a robustness check to confirm that the findings in the section above on 167 countries is not just driven by the drastic swings in demographic composition seen in the smaller countries.

At the outset, we did the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test (K.S. Test) to check for the similarity in the two distributions and confirm whether the Major Countries follow the global trends. We can infer from the K.S. Test that the trends for Major Countries conform to the trends we noted in the universal set of 167 countries.

Figure 3 – Representation of Change in Majority Religious Denomination in Major Countries (1950-2015)

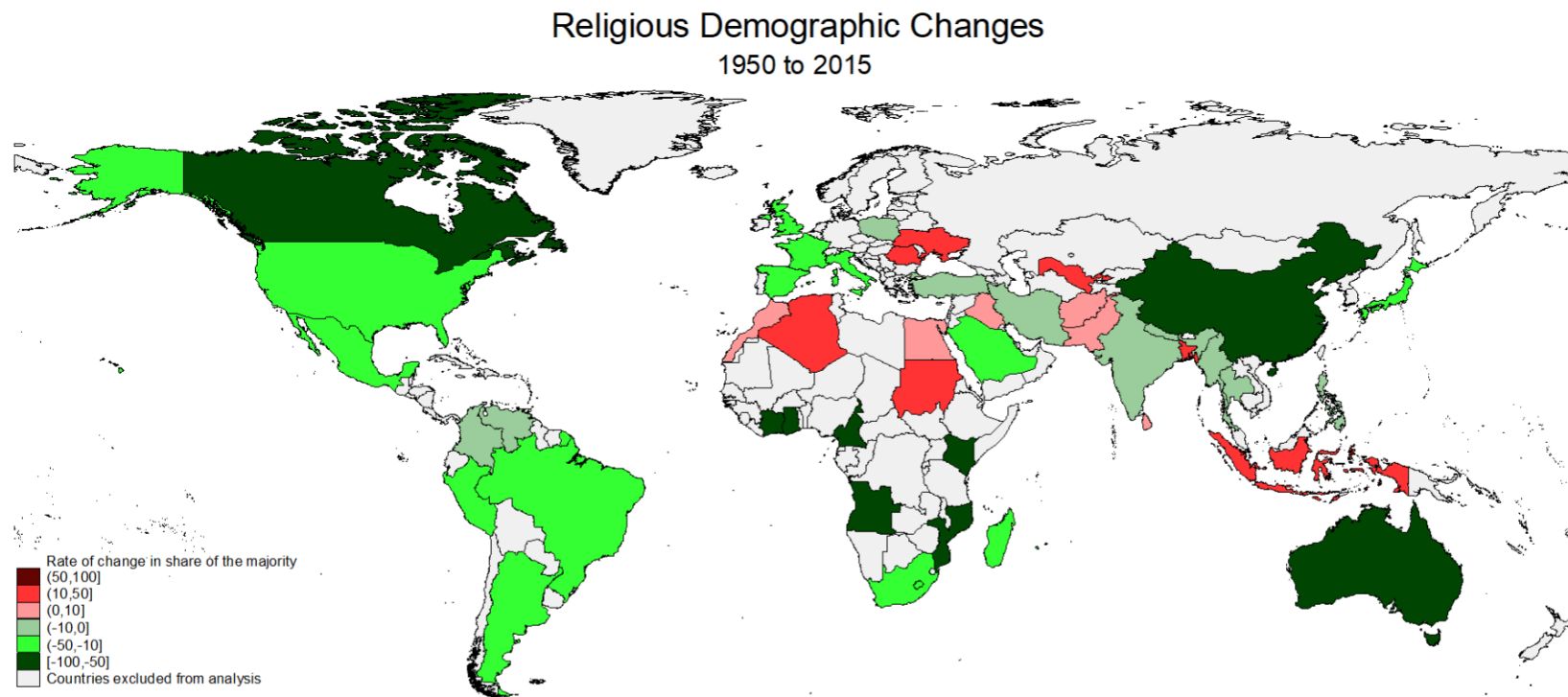
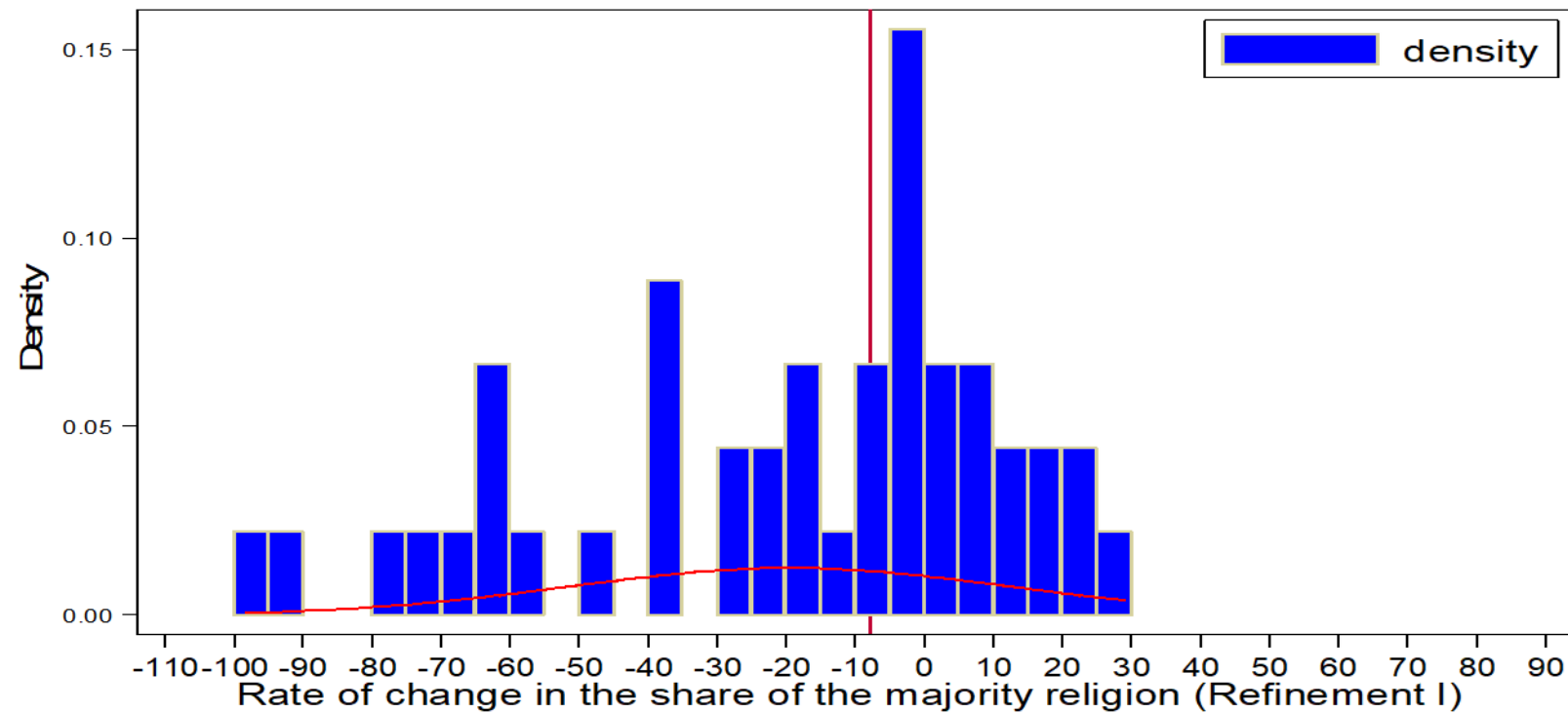


Figure 4 – Distribution of Major Countries by Change in Majority Religious Denomination (1950-2015)



Rate of change in the share of the religious majority (as defined in 1950) for all the countries with population more than 20 Million in 2015: *Mean* = -19.52 *Standard Deviation* = 31.91
 The rate of change in the share of the religious majority in India is denoted by the vertical maroon line $x = -7.820$

Of the 45 Major Countries, the share of the majority population has decreased in 32 countries between 1950 and 2015 while the religious majority has increased its share in the population in 13 countries. Looking at Figure 4, it can be seen that like Figure 2 for the entire set of 167 countries, frequency distribution for the 45 Major Countries is dispersed over a wide range of values and not clustered around the Mean. However, unlike the 167 countries analyzed in the previous section, no country has seen an increase in the share of the majority religious denomination by more than 30 percent.

To get a sense of how the data compares to a typical or 'normal' distribution, we overlay a curve on top of the histogram. The numbers tell us that the curve has a Standard Deviation of 31.91 percent and a Mean (average) of -19.52 percent. Moreover, the fact that the Mean is -19.52 implies that the share of the majority religion in these 45 countries has reduced by approximately 19 percent from 1950 to 2015. This number is very close to the global average 22 percent reduction in the majority population across all 167 countries.

The change in the composition of religious majority (and therefore the minority population) across 45 countries has a range from a -98.1 percent fall in share of the majority religious group Kenya to an increase by 29.01 percent in the share of the majority religious group for Sudan. This suggests that the share of religious majority in Major Countries have seen a broad range of changes over the last 65 years - remaining stable in some countries, modest increasing/decreasing of their share in the population for certain nations and drastic changes in certain other cases to the extent that another religious denomination has become the majority.

Most of the countries have experienced changes within the range of 20 percent increase/decrease in the share of their majority religious group. 24 countries (53 percent of the total) fall within this range.

In Table 8, 21 out of the 32 countries where the share of the majority religious group decreased are Christian-majority countries. 10 out of 13 countries which saw an increase in the share of the majority religious group between 1950 and 2015 are Muslim majority countries.

The maroon vertical line in the histogram (see Figure 4) represents India. As evident, India has seen a reduction of 7.8 percent in the share of the majority religious group (Hindu) which lies within 1 Standard Deviation of the Mean (-19.52 percent).

Refinement C2: Countries with Stable Proportions (+/- 1 percent change)

Next, we make special note of 10 countries out of a total of 167 countries which did not experience any substantial change in the religious demography between 1950 and 2015. In other words, their majority religious denomination's rate of change in proportion was between 1 percent increase/decrease. These countries are reported in Table 9 of the Appendix and this is a subset of Table 4 which relates to our main analysis.

**Figure 5 - Representation of Countries with Stable Proportions i.e. change within 1 percent
(1950-2015)**

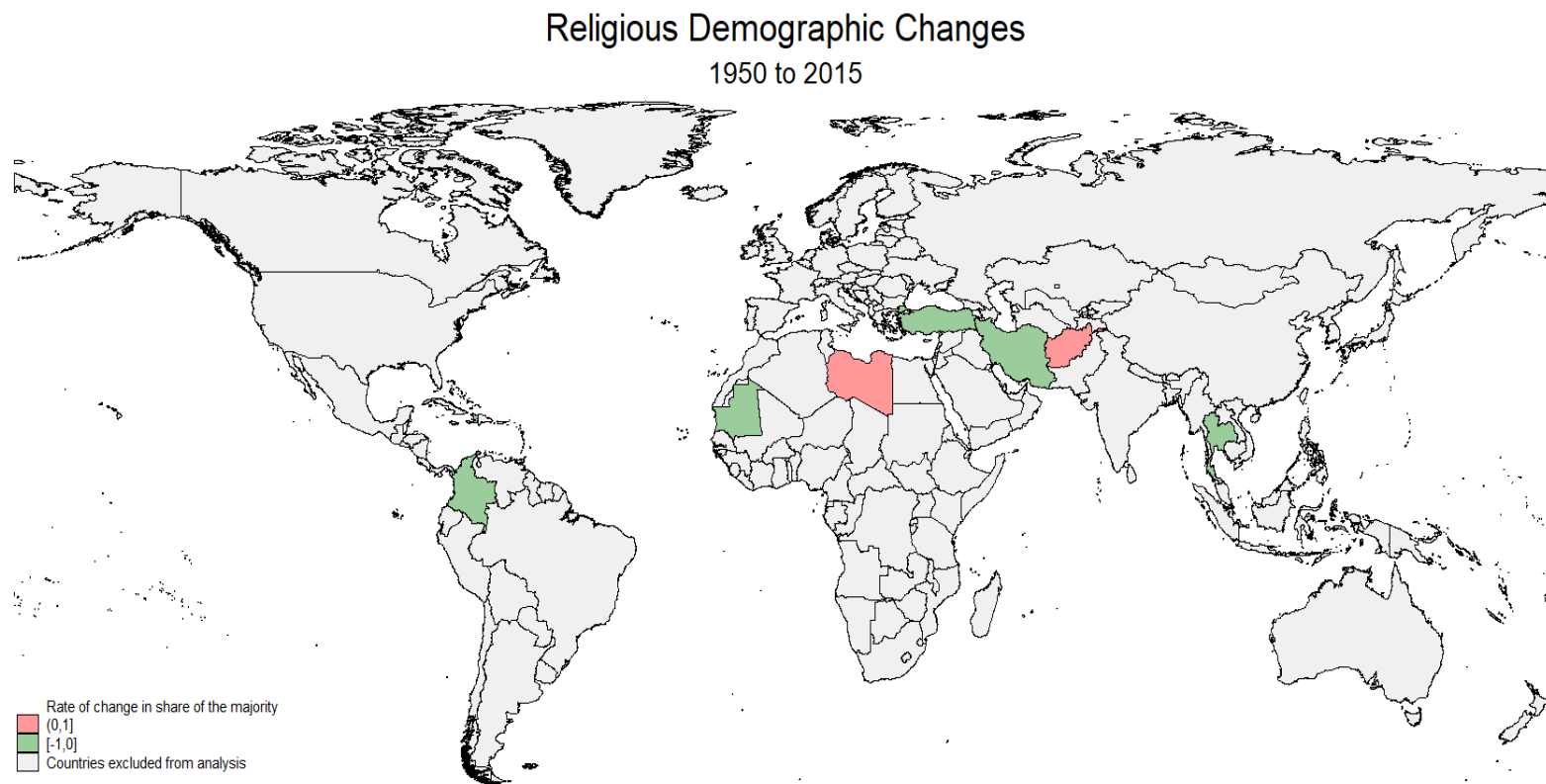


Figure 5 read with Table 9 in the Appendix suggests that these countries are not clustered geographically and range from small countries like Haiti (population 9 million) and Sao Tome & Principe (population 200,000) to bigger countries like Iran, Thailand, Colombia and Turkey. This is an interesting list of countries where the religious demography remained constant between 1950 and 2015 while the world witnessed an average 22 percent change. It is a remarkable phenomenon and requires further analysis.

Consider the trajectory of Iran and Thailand on this list compared to their neighbors Iraq and Myanmar with whom they share long borders and common religion respectively. This provides an opportunity for a natural and real-time experiment on changes in religious demography. The divergent fates of these two sets of countries which started with a similar share of the majority religious group in 1950 must be studied further. Thailand has maintained its proportion of Theravada Buddhist population around 69 percent between 1950 and 2015. Meanwhile, its Buddhist neighbour Myanmar witnessed around 10 percent decline of its Theravada Buddhist population.

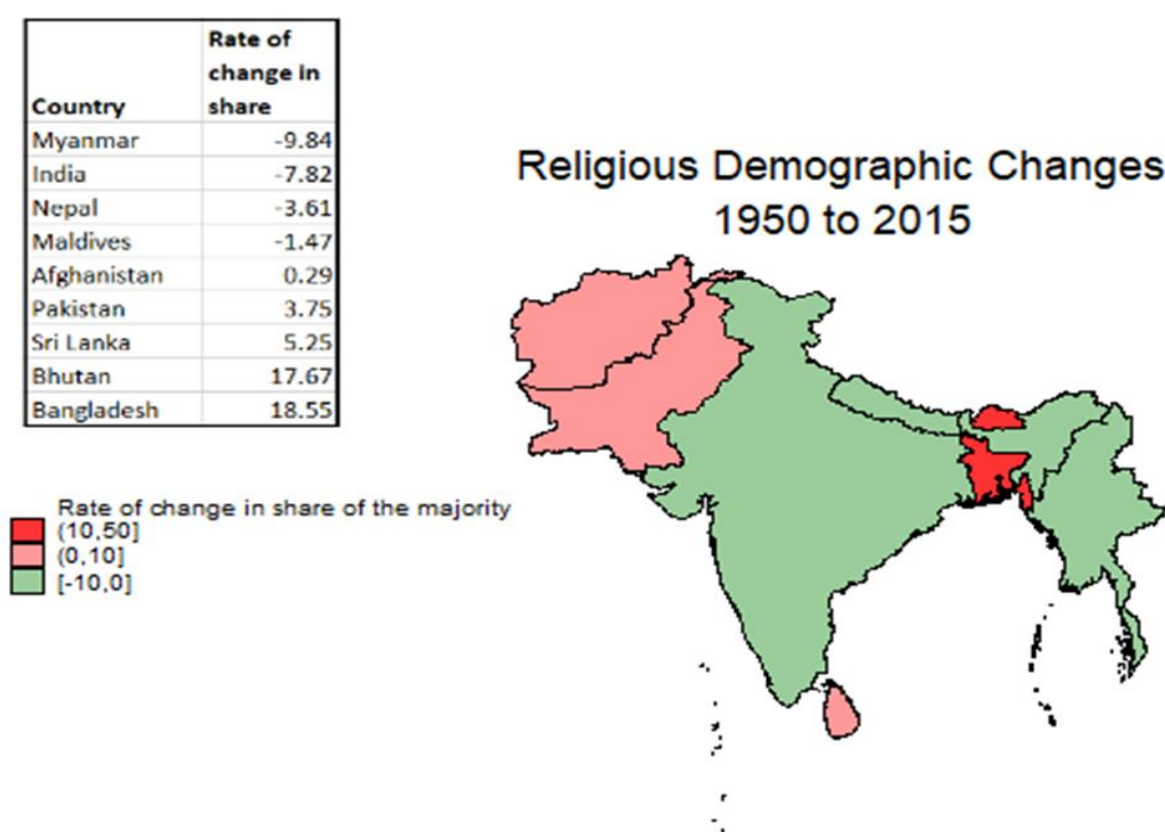
Again, Iran with a negligible change in the share of its Shia religious majority presents a striking contrast to its Shia neighbor Iraq where there was an increase of the majority religious denomination from 55 to 60 percent. In Saudi Arabia, Iran's Sunni rival in the region, the Hanbali sect of Sunni Islam had a majority in 1950 with 58 percent share in the population. By 2015, their share in the population reduced to 35 percent and the broader religious category of "Sunni Muslim" was labeled as the Majority ID.

Refinement C3: SAARC+1 Countries

The Indian subcontinent comprises one-fifth of the global population and merits separate analysis given its geopolitical significance and the importance of its performance in the fulfillment of UN's Sustainable Development Goals. The Indian subcontinent offers an interesting case of a natural, real-time experiment on the relationship between religion and society since it is a contiguous geography with a shared history as part of a single political unit, most recently under British rule. However, in the 20th century this geography was partitioned into smaller political units, mostly along religious and ethnic lines. These political units have experienced divergent fates since independence and this is reflected in the wide range of changes in the religious demography of these countries.

Table 10 in the Appendix is a subset of Table 4 and shows the rate of change in proportion in majority religion for 8 countries²⁴ that are members of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) along with Myanmar. Figure 6 below is a visual representation of the changes in the religious demography of these countries between 1950-2015.

Figure 6: Representation of Change in Majority Religious Denomination for SAARC+1 Countries (1950-2015)



The share of the majority religious denomination has decreased in 4 countries while its share has increased in 5 countries. All the Muslim majority countries witnessed an increase in the share of the majority religious denomination except Maldives where the share of the majority group (Shafi'i Sunnis) declined by 1.47 percent. Among the five non-Muslim majority countries, Myanmar, India and Nepal saw a decline in the share of the majority religious denomination while Sri Lanka and Bhutan saw their share increase.

²⁴ The members of SAARC are India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives

The range of the rate change in the share of the majority religion for this region spans from -9.84 percent for Myanmar (where the share of Theravada Buddhist population fell from 79 to 71 percent) to 18.55 percent for Bangladesh (where the Hanafi Muslim witnessed an extraordinary rise from 74 to 88 percent of the population).

We are interested in noting the composition of demographic changes in these countries because of their geographical proximity to India. Therefore, any significant fluctuation in their population has a spillover effect on the polity and policies of India. In the following paragraphs we observe the composition of demographic change in each country, in the descending order of the change in the share of the majority religious denomination. India is discussed at the end of this section.

Bangladesh

The abnormal change in Bangladesh deserves a closer scrutiny. In 1950, Muslims constituted 76 percent of the population in what was then East Pakistan and is today Bangladesh. Hindus were the second largest share of the population at 23 percent. The next two largest groups were Buddhists and Christians who constituted 0.66 percent and 0.17 percent respectively. In 2015, the Hindu population in Bangladesh declined to 8 percent - a 66 percent *decrease* in a world where minorities on average *increased* by 22 percent globally. This helps us understand the scale of demographic shock that the Hindu population in Bangladesh was subjected to over the 65 year period from 1950-2015. Interestingly, the fate of other minorities in Bangladesh was markedly different. The Buddhist population remained stable at 0.63 percent while the share of Christian population tripled to 0.53 percent.

Bhutan

Interestingly, the majority population of Tibetan Buddhists in Bhutan increased by almost 18 percent between 1950 and 2015 - an observation often underreported in popular discourse. In 1950 Buddhists constituted 72 percent of the total population in Bhutan, almost all of whom were Tibetan Buddhists. The second largest share of the population was Hindus at 23 percent while Animism was the next largest group at approximately 5 percent. In 2015, the Hindu population in Bhutan declined by 50 percent to constitute just 11 percent of Bhutan's demography while the share of Buddhism increased to 84 percent. One possible reason for this uncommon decline in Hindu population

could be the forced eviction of Nepali Hindus from Bhutan during 1990s which was documented in several media reports²⁵.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is another country where the share of the majority Buddhist population increased by 5 percent in the period under study. In 1950, Buddhists comprised 64 percent of the population, almost all of whom were Theravada Buddhists. The second largest share of the population was Hindus at 20 percent. The next two largest groups were Christians and Muslims who constituted approximately 9 percent and 7 percent respectively. By 2015, the share of Buddhist population had increased to 67 percent while the share of Hindu population declined to around 15 percent - a stark decline of 28 percent. Interestingly, the share of Muslim population (10 percent) overtook the Christian population (8 percent) by 2015 to constitute the third largest category.

Pakistan

In our analysis, Pakistan reports an increase of 3.75 percent in the share of the majority religious denomination (Hanafi Muslims) whose share increased from 77 to 80 percent. However, the share of total Muslim population in Pakistan increased by 10 percent between 1950 and 2015 according to the RCS-Dem Dataset, from 84 percent to 93 percent, despite the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. This was driven in part by almost a doubling of the share of Shia population (from 6 to 9 percent) and tripling of the share of Ahmadiyya population (1 to 3 percent).

The demographic shocks inflicted upon the Hindu population in Pakistan is evidenced by a decline in their share - from constituting 13 percent in 1950 to just 2 percent in 2015. This is a monstrous 80 percent *decrease* over a 65-year period where minorities on average *increased* by 22 percent globally. Intriguingly, the share of Christians in Pakistan almost doubled from 1 to 2 percent in the same period.

Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, the share of Muslim population increased from 99.4 percent in 1950 to 99.7 percent in 2015, leaving no room for any meaningful

²⁵See for example: Sanjoy Hazarika (June 1993), Nepalese Refugees Say Bhutan Forced Them Out, The New York Times, See: <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/06/06/world/nepalese-refugees-say-bhutan-forced-them-out.html>; John Ward Anderson and Molly Moore (April 1994), 'Ethnic Cleansing' Charges Echo In Himalyan Bhutan, The Washington Post, See: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1994/04/04/ethnic-cleansing-charges-echo-in-himalayan-bhutan/f3fecdb2-03fe-44b4-ac1c-d2d1157b7ff7/>

analysis. The Sunni population increased from 88.7 percent to 89 percent while the Shias remained stable at 10.7 percent.

Maldives

Maldives was the only Muslim-majority country which witnessed a slight decline in the share of the majority group (Shafi'i Sunnis) by 1.47 percent to reduce from 99.8 percent in 1950 to 98.4 percent in 2015. Meanwhile, the Buddhist, Christian and Hindu population saw a slight increase.

Nepal

Nepal witnessed an approximately 4 percent decrease in the share of its majority Hindu population (from 84 percent in 1950 to 81 percent in 2015). Buddhists, who constituted 11 percent of the population in 1950 also witnessed a 25 percent decrease and their share was reduced to 8 percent in 2015. On the other hand, the share of Muslim population increased from 2.6 percent to 4.6 percent - a jump of 75 percent. In 1950, the share of Christian population in Nepal was approximately zero. By 2015, it had grown to almost two percent of the total population.

Myanmar

The share of the Buddhist population in Myanmar declined by 10 percent from 84 percent in 1950 to 75 percent in 2015. In the same period, the share of Christian population almost doubled (from 4 percent to 8 percent) and the share of Indigenous Religions (such as Animism and Shamanism) witnessed a 25 percent increase (from 7 percent to 9 percent).

India

Finally, in India the share of the majority Hindu population decreased by 7.82 percent between 1950 and 2015 (from 84.68 percent to 78.06 percent). The share of Muslim population in 1950 was 9.84 percent and increased to 14.09 percent in 2015 - a 43.15 percent increase in their share. The share of Christian population rose from 2.24 percent to 2.36 percent - an increase of 5.38 percent between 1950 and 2015. The share of Sikh population increased from 1.74 percent in 1950 to 1.85 percent in 2015 - a 6.58 percent rise in their share. Even the share of the Buddhist population witnessed a noticeable increase from 0.05 percent in 1950 to 0.81 percent.

On the other hand, the share of Jains in the population of India decreased from 0.45 percent in 1950 to 0.36 percent in 2015. The share of the Parsi population in India witnessed a stark 85 percent decline, reducing from 0.03 percent share in 1950 to 0.004 percent in 2015.

Refinement C4: OECD Countries

In this section we look at changes in the religious demography of the 38 member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), a group of democracies and market economies that are considered as high-income/developed countries. As per the Department of State of the USA²⁶, OECD members account for three-fifths of global GDP, three-quarters of international trade, over 90 percent of global official development assistance, half of the world's energy consumption and 18 percent of the world's population. However, the median age of the population in OECD countries is 40 years, compared to the global median age of 30 years²⁷.

Of the 38 member countries, we have analyzed 35 countries with a majority religious denomination in 1950. All except two (Turkey and Japan) of these 35 countries are Christian majority. 33 out of 35 countries in our analysis have witnessed a decrease in the share of the majority religious denomination, of which 30 have witnessed a significant decline. We represent these changes on a map in Figure 6 below. Table 11 in the Appendix shows the change in majority religious denomination in these 35 countries.

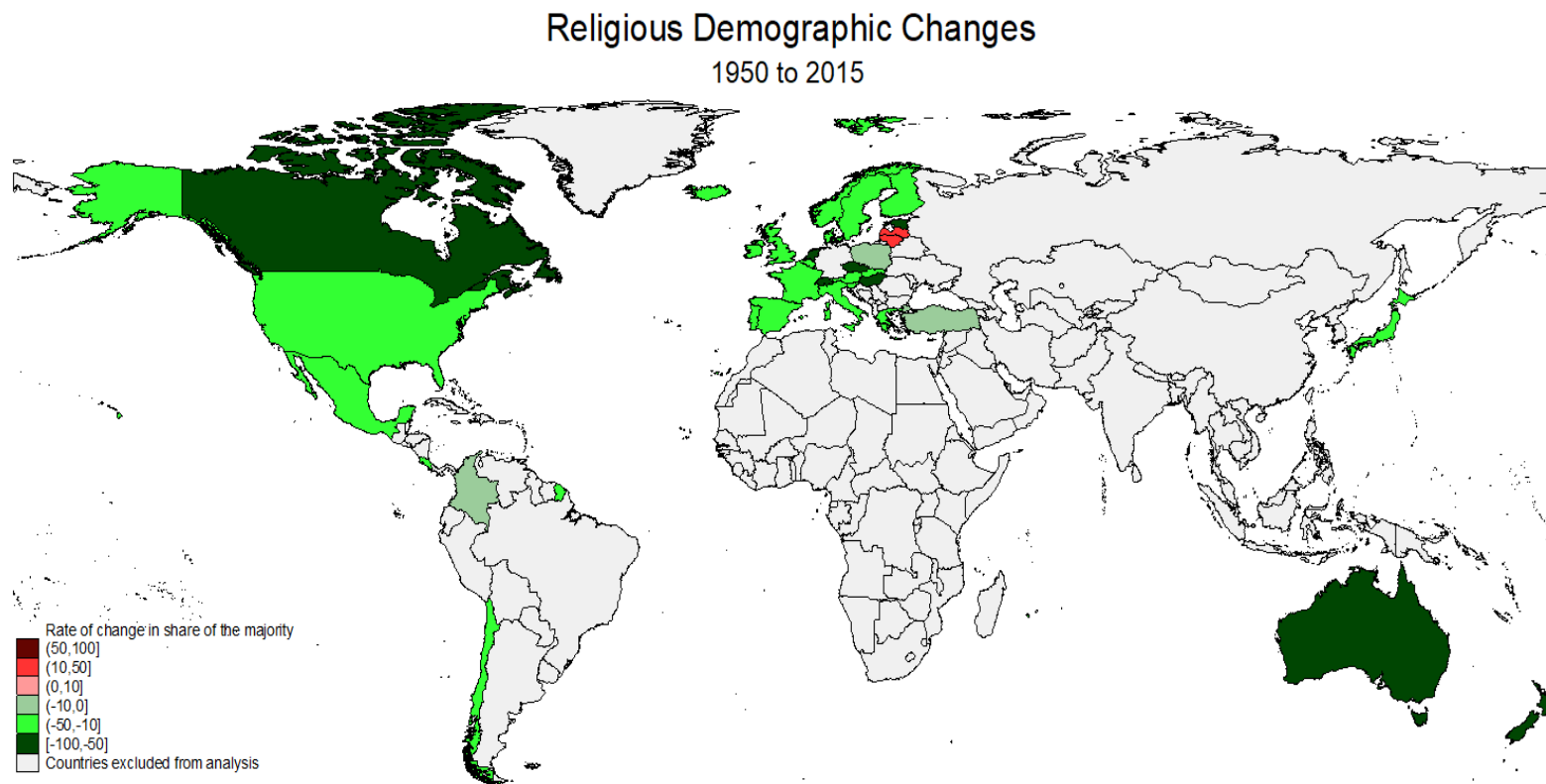
The countries in Table 11 have been rank-ordered according to the rate of change in share of the majority religion, starting with the Czech Republic which has seen the decline in share of its majority religious denomination (Latin-Rite Roman Catholic) by 95 percent. The table ends with Latvia which has witnessed an increase in the share of its majority religious denomination (Christian) by 28 percent.

The Mean of this distribution is -28.97 percent i.e. on average, the share of the majority religious denomination in OECD countries has decreased by 29 percent. This is notably higher than the global average of a 22 percent reduction across all 167 countries. The Standard Deviation of this distribution is 24.61 which is again substantially lower than the global average of 36.81. This is an indication that the values are clustered together around the Mean i.e. the story of decline in majority religious denomination is consistent across all OECD countries.

²⁶ See OECD description on the U.S. Department of State website: <https://www.state.gov/the-organization-for-economic-co-operation-and-development-oecd/>

²⁷ OECD (August 2019), *Working better with age*, OECDiLibrary, See: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/d56a2fbc-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/d56a2fbc-en#>

Figure 6: Representation of Change in Majority Religious Denomination for OECD Countries (1950-2015)



V. CONCLUSION

This is a descriptive study on the status of minorities as proxied by change in their proportion of the population of a country. We are agnostic to the underlying causes of such demographic change and simply focus on the share of the minority population as a cumulative measure of their well-being. A decrease in the share of the majority population and a consequent increase in the share of minorities suggests that the net result of all policy actions, political decisions and societal processes is to provide a conducive environment for increasing diversity in society.

Religious demographics have experienced substantial changes in most societies around the world over the last 65 years (equivalent to three generations) and these changes are an important indicator of the overall policy environment affecting minorities within the countries. Our analysis shows that the world has become more heterogeneous in the previous six decades. In 1950, the starting point for our study, the share of the majority population in a society was 75 percent. The share of majority religion in countries around the world has reduced by 22 percent from 1950 to 2015.

However, this aggregate figure masks a wide range of changes in individual countries from a 99 percent fall in share of the majority religious group (Liberia) to an increase by 80 percent in the share of the majority religious group (Namibia). 123 countries experienced a decrease in share of the majority religious group while its share increased in 44 countries. These trends were also repeated in the 45 Major Countries with a population of more than 20 million in our study.

While in every continent, more countries witnessed a decrease in the share of the majority religious group than an increase, Africa was subject to the most extreme swings: 21 out of the 40 countries which have witnessed extreme changes are in the continent. Further, the 35 high-income OECD countries in our study witnessed a 29 percent decrease in the share of the majority religious denomination which is notably higher than the 22 percent reduction globally. In this context, the list of 10 countries which experienced minimal change (within 1 percent increase/decrease) in demographic composition stands out in stark contrast.

As reiterated earlier in this paper, the actual reasons for the change in the religious demography of a country is a multivariate phenomenon in a complex system and the depth of analysis required to pinpoint the exact variable responsible for change in religious demography is beyond the scope

of this paper. Therefore, it is possible that demographic shifts happen despite/because of the nature of the social environment in a particular country. Accordingly, we make no claims about any causal links between a specific state action and demographic shifts. What we do observe, however, is the final outcome measured in the form of changes in demographic shares of majority (minority) religions over 65 years within each country.

India's performance is consistent with the larger global trends since the demographic changes are within 1 Standard Deviation of the global average. Within the immediate neighborhood of South Asia, India has witnessed the biggest decline in the majority population (7.82%) only next to Myanmar which has witnessed a 10 percent decline in its majority population over 65 years. The share of minorities as a composite group has increased significantly. In particular, India has witnessed an increase in the shares of Muslim, Christian, Buddhist and Sikh populations and a decline in the shares of Jain and Parsi populations.

Contrary to the noise in several quarters,²⁸ careful analysis of the data shows that minorities are not just protected but indeed thriving in India. This is particularly remarkable given the wider context within the South Asian neighborhood where the share of the majority religious denomination has increased and minority populations have shrunk alarmingly across countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Afghanistan.

India's performance suggests that there is a conducive environment to foster diversity in the society. It is not possible to promote better life outcomes for the disadvantaged sections of society without providing a nurturing environment and societal support through a bottom-up approach. By way of illustration, India is one of the few countries which has a legal definition of minorities and provides constitutionally protected rights for them. The outcomes of these progressive policies and inclusive institutions are reflected in the growing number of minority populations within India.

²⁸ Simran Jeet Singh and Gunshika Kaur (December 2023), *Why India Is Targeting Sikhs At Home and Around the World*, Time. See: <https://time.com/6342873/india-sikhs-persecution/> ; Samanth Subramanian (February 2020), *How Hindu supremacists are tearing India apart*, The Guardian, See: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/20/hindu-supremacists-nationalism-tearing-india-apart-modi-bjp-rss-jnu-attacks> ; The Wire Staff (September 2023), *UN Special Rapporteur Says 'India Risks Becoming One of the Main Generators of Atrocities'*, The Wire, See: <https://thewire.in/communalism/un-expert-says-india-risks-becoming-one-of-the-main-generators-of-instability-atrocities>

It is not surprising, therefore, that minority populations from across the neighborhood come to India²⁹ during times of duress. India has been a nourishing environment for the Tibetan Buddhists who had to escape from China and have found a comfortable home in India in the last six decades³⁰. Similarly, Matuas who took refuge in India due to religious persecution in Bangladesh have been assimilated into Indian society. India also hosts a significant population of refugees from Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Myanmar and Afghanistan. Given its plural, liberal and democratic nature, India has continued its civilizational tradition of harboring persecuted populations from several countries over the last six decades.

²⁹ Zo Tum Hmung and John Indergaard (June 2023), *Time is Running Out for India's Balancing Act on the Myanmar Border*, United States Institute of Peace, See: <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/06/time-running-out-indias-balancing-act-myanmar-border> ; Vidhi Doshi (October 2017), *After nearly six decades of exile, some Tibetans in India are slowly letting go of the past*, The Washington Post, See: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/after-nearly-six-decades-of-exile-some-tibetans-in-india-are-slowly-letting-go-of-the-past/2017/10/07/c00325b0-a2da-11e7-b573-8ec86cdfe1ed_story.html; FP Explainers (March 2024), *Matuas in Bengal hail CAA implementation: Who are they? How will they gain from the law?* Firstpost, See: <https://www.firstpost.com/explainers/matuas-west-bengal-caa-implementation-bjp-lok-sabha-elections-13747996.html>

³⁰ TNN (September 2002), *Free schooling for Tibetans to continue*, The Times of India, See: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/free-schooling-for-tibetans-to-continue/articleshow/22398892.cms>

APPENDIX

Table 2 - Data to Explain the Construction of the Majority ID

	Country	Czech Republic	Country	Estonia	Country	Palau
S.No	Majority ID in 1950	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Majority ID in 1950	Christian	Majority ID in 1950	Western Christian
1	Religionists (vice non-religionists)	93.84	Religionists (vice non-religionists)	58.01	Religionists (vice non-religionists)	100.00
2	Christians	93.75	Christians	57.44	Christians	65.19
3	Western Christians	92.99	Not Religious	40.87	Western Christians	55.88
4	Catholics	87.39	Western Christians	31.96	Extended Protestants	35.64
5	Roman Catholics	76.72	Extended Protestants	31.87	Protestants and Anglicans	35.64
6	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	76.35	Protestants and Pentecostals	31.87	Protestants and Pentecostals	35.64
7	Other Catholics	10.67	Protestants and Anglicans	31.79	Protestants	35.64
8	Extended Protestants	5.91	Protestants	31.79	Unspecified Protestants	22.64
9	Protestants and Pentecostals	5.90	Unspecified Not Religious	31.79	Christian Syncretics	21.37
10	Protestants and Anglicans	5.86	Lutherans	30.58	Catholics	20.24
11	Protestants	5.86	Eastern Christians	25.48	Roman Catholics	20.24
12	Not Religious	5.84	Orthodox	25.43	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	20.24
13	Unspecified Not Religious	4.87	Eastern Orthodox	25.43	Indigenous Religionists (Ethnoreligionists)	13.44
14	Multidenominational Protestants	4.52	Atheist	9.08	Unspecified Indigenous Religionists	13.44
15	Atheist	0.97	Unknown	1.12	Other Protestants	12.03
16	Lutherans	0.97	Baptists	0.88	Unspecified Christians	9.31
17	Eastern Christians	0.74	Jews	0.33	Adventists	0.97

	Country	Czech Republic	Country	Estonia	Country	Palau
S.No	Majority ID in 1950	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Majority ID in 1950	Christian	Majority ID in 1950	Western Christian
18	Non-Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	0.37	Wesleyans	0.21	Eastern Christians	0.00
19	Orthodox	0.37	Muslims	0.18	Non-Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	0.00
20	Eastern Orthodox	0.37	Sunni Muslims	0.16	Other Catholics	0.00
21	Unknown	0.32	Hanafi Sunnis	0.16	Lutherans	0.00
22	Reformed Protestants	0.11	Catholics	0.13	Reformed Protestants	0.00
23	Adventists	0.09	Roman Catholics	0.13	Unspecified Reformed Protestants	0.00
24	Jews	0.09	Quasi-Protestants	0.08	Presbyterial Reformed Protestants	0.00
25	Anabaptists, Brethen, and Pietists	0.06	Pentecostals	0.08	Congregational Reformed Protestants	0.00
26	Congregational Reformed Protestants	0.06	Anabaptists, Brethen, and Pietists	0.08	Anabaptists, Brethen, and Pietists	0.00
27	Liminal Christians	0.06	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	0.07	Baptists	0.00
28	Non-Trinitarian Christians	0.06	Non-Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	0.05	Wesleyans	0.00
29	Presbyterial Reformed Protestants	0.05	Reformed Protestants	0.04	Multi Denominational Protestants	0.00
30	Quasi-Protestants	0.05	Presbyterial Reformed Protestants	0.04	Quasi-Protestants	0.00
31	Pentecostals	0.05	New Age Religionists	0.03	Anglicans	0.00
32	Jehovah's Witnesses	0.04	Shiites	0.02	Pentecostals	0.00
33	Other Protestants	0.04	Unspecified Shiites	0.02	Orthodox	0.00
34	Wesleyans	0.03	Buddhists	0.02	Unspecified Orthodox	0.00
35	Baptists	0.03	Unspecified Buddhists	0.02	Oriental Orthodox	0.00

	Country	Czech Republic	Country	Estonia	Country	Palau
S.No	Majority ID in 1950	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Majority ID in 1950	Christian	Majority ID in 1950	Western Christian
36	Other Non-Liminal Christians	0.02	Buddhist Complex	0.02	Eastern Orthodox	0.00
37	Unitarians	0.01	Liminal Christians	0.01	Other Non-Liminal Christians	0.00
38	Bahais	0.00	Non-Trinitarian Christians	0.01	Liminal Christians	0.00
39	Anglicans	0.00	Jehovah's Witnesses	0.01	Unspecified Liminal Christians	0.00
40	Unspecified Liminal Christians	0.00	Bahais	0.01	Extra-Canonical Christians	0.00

Table 3: List of Countries Dropped from the Analysis

S.No	Country	Year	Majority Denomination ID	Religious Denomination	Major religion	Continent
1	Armenia	1950	None	None	None	Asia
	Armenia	2015	1610	Oriental Orthodox	Christian	
2	Chad	1950	None	None	None	Africa
	Chad	2015	3000	Muslim	Muslim	
3	Eritrea	1950	None	None	None	Africa
	Eritrea	2015	3130	Shafii Sunnis	Muslim	
4	Ethiopia	1950	None	None	None	Africa
	Ethiopia	2015	1000	Christian	Christian	
5	Guyana	1950	None	None	None	South America
	Guyana	2015	1100	Western Christian	Christian	
6	Kazakhstan	1950	None	None	None	Asia
	Kazakhstan	2015	3110	Hanafi	Muslim	
7	Malaysia	1950	-	-	-	Asia
	Malaysia	2015	3100	Sunni Muslims	Muslim	
8	Mauritius	1950	None	None	None	Africa
	Mauritius	2015	None	None	None	
9	Malawi	1950	None	None	None	Africa
	Malawi	2015	1100	Western Christian	Christian	
10	Mongolia	1950	None	None	None	Asia
	Mongolia	2015	6300	Tibetan Buddhists	Buddhist	
11	Nigeria	1950	None	None	None	Africa
	Nigeria	2015	None	None	None	
12	Papua New Guinea	1950	None	None	None	Oceania
	Papua New Guinea	2015	1100	Western Christian	Christian	
13	North Korea	1950	None	None	None	Asia
	North Korea	2015	9001	unspecified Not Religious	Not Religious	
14	South Korea	1950	-	-	-	Asia
	South Korea	2015	-	-	-	
15	USSR	1950	None	None	None	Europe
	Russia	2015	-	-	-	
16	Singapore	1950	None	None	None	Asia
	Singapore	2015	None	None	None	
17	Solomon Islands	1950	None	None	None	Oceania
	Solomon Islands	2015	1300	Protestant Extended	Christian	

S.No	Country	Year	Majority Denomination ID	Religious Denomination	Major religion	Continent
18	South Sudan	1950	-	-	-	Africa
	South Sudan	2015	1100	Western Christian	Christian	
19	Suriname	1950	None	None	None	South America
	Suriname	2015	None	None	None	
20	Tanzania	1950	None	None	None	Africa
	Tanzania	2015	1000	Christian	Christian	
21	Uganda	1950	None	None	None	Africa
	Uganda	2015	1100	Western Christian	Christian	
22	Vietnam	1950	-	-	-	Asia
	Vietnam	2015	-	-	-	

Code	Label	Definition
None	None	It is known with certainty that none of the categories qualify for majority status
-	Missing	When there was insufficient certainty as to which denomination had a majority

Table 4: Rate of Change in Share of Majority Religion in Selected Countries (1950-2015)

This table is the main focus of our analysis. It records the rate of change in share of the majority religion (as defined in 1950) for all the selected countries. Countries where the share of the majority religious denomination has decreased between 1950 and 2015 are highlighted in green while countries where their share in the population has increased are highlighted in red. The intensity of shading indicates the quantum of such change in a country. This is as per the coloring scheme used in Figure 1 of this paper.

The countries have been rank-ordered according to the rate of change in share of the majority religion, starting with Liberia which has seen the maximum decline in share of its majority religious denomination (Animists) and accordingly has the lowest value of -99.2 percent. The table ends with Namibia which has witnessed the largest increase in the share of its majority religious denomination (Western Christian), an increase of 80.36 percent. In countries where the Majority ID is “Missing” or “None” in 2015, the top two religious denominations as per the RCS-Dem Dataset have been reported³¹.

Sl. No	Country	Religious Denomination (1950)	Major Religion	Majority Share (1950)	Majority Share (2015)	Rate of Change in Share (2015 - 1950)	Religious Denomination (2015)/ Top 2 in case of “None” or “Missing”	Continent
1	Liberia	Animists	Animists	72.54	0.58	-99.20	Missing (Unknown: 44.31 percent, Christians: 41.25 percent)	Africa
2	Kenya	Animists	Animists	56.60	1.04	-98.16	Protestant Extended	Africa
3	Equatorial Guinea	Animists	Animists	62.53	1.55	-97.52	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Africa
4	Rwanda	Animists	Animists	55.01	2.62	-95.23	Western Christian	Africa
5	Czech Republic	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	76.35	3.65	-95.22	Missing (Unknown: 69.76 percent, Not Religious: 24.27 percent)	Europe
6	Gabon	Animists	Animists	51.41	3.08	-94.02	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Africa

³¹ In the RCS-Dem Dataset, the Majority ID for Canada and South Africa was incorrectly assigned by the dataset creators. We have brought this to the notice of the creators who acknowledged the problem. We have correctly re-assigned the Majority ID for these two countries while doing our analysis.

Sl. No	Country	Religious Denomination (1950)	Major Religion	Majority Share (1950)	Majority Share (2015)	Rate of Change in Share (2015 - 1950)	Religious Denomination (2015)/ Top 2 in case of "None" or "Missing"	Continent
7	Georgia	Not Religious	Not Religious	59.54	3.77	-93.67	Eastern Orthodox	Asia
8	Congo, Rep. of	Animists	Animists	73.98	4.70	-93.64	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Africa
9	Burundi	Animists	Animists	64.66	4.90	-92.43	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Africa
10	Angola	Animists	Animists	50.56	4.44	-91.22	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Africa
11	Burkina Faso	Animists	Animists	76.17	7.82	-89.74	Maliki	Africa
12	East Timor	Animists	Animists	79.79	9.39	-88.23	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Asia
13	Zambia	Animists	Animists	72.32	10.35	-85.69	Western Christian	Africa
14	Central African Republic	Animists	Animists	69.36	10.92	-84.25	Western Christian	Africa
15	Swaziland	Animists	Animists	57.84	9.74	-83.16	Christian Syncretics	Africa
16	Sierra Leone	Animists	Animists	63.27	11.33	-82.10	Maliki	Africa
17	Zimbabwe	Animists	Animists	77.45	14.06	-81.85	Western Christian	Africa
18	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Anglicans	Christian	55.22	12.83	-76.77	Protestant	North America
19	United Arab Emirates	Maliki	Muslim	75.48	17.73	-76.51	Sunni Muslims	Asia
20	Ghana	Animists	Animists	62.22	15.46	-75.15	Western Christian	Africa
21	Benin	Animists	Animists	80.40	22.28	-72.28	None (Christians: 42.72; Western Christians: 37.63)	Africa
22	Barbados	Anglicans	Christian	56.26	15.86	-71.82	Protestant Extended	North America
23	Côte d'Ivoire	Animists	Animists	66.62	19.56	-70.64	None (Muslims: 41.66; Sunni Muslims; 41.45)	Africa

Sl. No	Country	Religious Denomination (1950)	Major Religion	Majority Share (1950)	Majority Share (2015)	Rate of Change in Share (2015 - 1950)	Religious Denomination (2015)/ Top 2 in case of "None" or "Missing"	Continent
24	New Zealand	Protestant Extended	Christian	76.52	23.17	-69.72	None (Christians: 43.99; Not Religious: 40.36)	Oceania
25	Canada	Protestants and Anglicans	Christian	50.27	17.38	-65.42	Western Christian	North America
26	Botswana	Animists	Animists	77.41	27.02	-65.10	None (Christians: 32.51; Western Christians: 31.64)	Africa
27	Mozambique	Animists	Animists	74.38	28.10	-62.22	Western Christian	Africa
28	Cameroon	Animists	Animists	50.86	19.29	-62.06	Missing (Christians: 47.04; Western Christians: 47.02)	Africa
29	Australia	Protestant Extended	Christian	72.15	28.12	-61.03	Western Christian	Oceania
30	Samoa	Congregational Reformed Protestants	Christian	56.10	21.88	-61.00	Protestant Extended	Oceania
31	China	Chinese Folk Religionists	Chinese Folk	51.50	21.01	-59.21	None (Not religious: 38.78; Unspecified Not Religious: 31.70)	Asia
32	Togo	Animists	Animists	78.50	32.86	-58.14	None (Christians: 47.89; Western Christians: 43.52)	Africa
33	El Salvador	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	93.70	40.38	-56.90	Western Christian	North America
34	Switzerland	Presbyterial Reformed Protestants	Christian	56.30	25.15	-55.33	Western Christian	Europe
35	Hungary	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	67.73	31.26	-53.85	Missing (Christians: 48.06; Western Christians: 44.35)	Europe

Sl. No	Country	Religious Denomination (1950)	Major Religion	Majority Share (1950)	Majority Share (2015)	Rate of Change in Share (2015 - 1950)	Religious Denomination (2015)/ Top 2 in case of "None" or "Missing"	Continent
36	Honduras	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	92.60	43.60	-52.92	Western Christian	North America
37	Netherlands	Western Christian	Christian	80.86	38.23	-52.72	Not Religious	Europe
38	Guatemala	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	96.86	45.84	-52.67	Christian	North America
39	Dominica	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	91.98	44.45	-51.67	Western Christian	North America
40	Estonia	Christian	Christian	57.44	28.62	-50.17	unspecified Not Religious	Europe
41	Jamaica	Protestant	Christian	50.04	26.52	-46.99	Protestant Extended	North America
42	United States	Protestant Extended	Christian	53.20	28.83	-45.80	Western Christian	North America
43	Grenada	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	61.57	35.66	-42.09	Protestant	North America
44	Nicaragua	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	92.34	54.51	-40.97	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	North America
45	Belize	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	60.37	35.68	-40.89	Western Christian	North America
46	Lebanon	Eastern Christians	Christian	51.65	31.13	-39.72	Muslim	Asia
47	Saudi Arabia	Hanbali	Muslim	58.27	35.23	-39.54	Sunni Muslims	Asia
48	Saint Lucia	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	86.11	52.18	-39.40	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	North America
49	Guinea-Bissau	Animists	Animists	68.03	41.59	-38.87	None (Muslims: 44.74; Indigenous Religionists: 41.59)	Africa
50	Chile	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	84.96	52.70	-37.97	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	South America
51	France	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	91.23	57.69	-36.76	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Europe
52	South Africa*	Protestant Extended	Christian	50.54	32.03	-36.62	Christian	Africa

Sl. No	Country	Religious Denomination (1950)	Major Religion	Majority Share (1950)	Majority Share (2015)	Rate of Change in Share (2015 - 1950)	Religious Denomination (2015)/ Top 2 in case of "None" or "Missing"	Continent
53	Brazil	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	87.77	56.58	-35.54	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	South America
54	Sweden	Lutherans	Christian	83.92	54.55	-35.00	Lutherans	Europe
55	Costa Rica	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	94.51	61.53	-34.89	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	North America
56	Oman	Khariji Muslims	Muslim	74.89	49.84	-33.44	Muslim	Asia
57	Tonga	Wesleyans	Christian	77.65	51.76	-33.34	Wesleyans	Oceania
58	Bahrain	Muslim	Muslim	96.12	64.11	-33.30	Muslim	Asia
59	Belgium	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	96.38	64.53	-33.05	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Europe
60	Cuba	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	75.26	50.54	-32.85	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	North America
61	Austria	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	88.72	60.22	-32.12	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Europe
62	Luxembourg	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	94.14	65.27	-30.67	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Europe
63	Tuvalu	Congregational Reformed Protestants	Christian	82.38	57.83	-29.81	Congregational Reformed Protestants	Oceania
64	Uruguay	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	61.03	43.78	-28.27	Western Christian	South America
65	United Kingdom	Anglicans	Christian	52.36	39.11	-25.29	Western Christian	Europe
66	Spain	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	92.81	69.39	-25.23	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Europe
67	Finland	Lutherans	Christian	94.06	71.05	-24.46	Lutherans	Europe
68	Qatar	Hanbali	Muslim	95.28	72.09	-24.34	Hanbali	Asia
69	Madagascar	Animists	Animists	51.10	39.11	-23.45	Western Christian	Africa
70	Liechtenstein	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	96.22	74.29	-22.79	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Europe

Sl. No	Country	Religious Denomination (1950)	Major Religion	Majority Share (1950)	Majority Share (2015)	Rate of Change in Share (2015 - 1950)	Religious Denomination (2015)/ Top 2 in case of "None" or "Missing"	Continent
71	Panama	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	85.16	65.82	-22.70	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	North America
72	Federated States of Micronesia	Protestant	Christian	51.56	40.44	-21.56	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Oceania
73	Norway	Lutherans	Christian	96.24	75.60	-21.44	Lutherans	Europe
74	Argentina	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	90.08	70.78	-21.43	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	South America
75	Iceland	Lutherans	Christian	97.40	77.67	-20.26	Lutherans	Europe
76	Saint Kitts and Nevis	Protestant	Christian	54.85	44.21	-19.40	Protestant Extended	North America
77	Italy	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	95.86	78.16	-18.46	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Europe
78	Slovenia	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	94.05	76.90	-18.24	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Europe
79	Peru	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	93.89	77.00	-17.99	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	South America
80	Cyprus	Eastern Orthodox	Christian	79.41	65.14	-17.97	Eastern Orthodox	Europe
81	Japan	Mahayana Buddhists	Buddhist	68.25	56.29	-17.52	Mahayana Buddhists	Asia
82	Portugal	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	95.99	79.59	-17.09	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Europe
83	Denmark	Lutherans	Christian	94.47	78.97	-16.41	Lutherans	Europe
84	Andorra	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	89.35	75.08	-15.98	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Europe
85	Kuwait	Sunni Muslims	Muslim	80.81	68.51	-15.21	Sunni Muslims	Asia
86	Paraguay	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	95.59	81.53	-14.71	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	South America
87	Cape Verde	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	98.24	83.82	-14.68	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Africa
88	Greece	Eastern Orthodox	Christian	94.16	80.38	-14.63	Eastern Orthodox	Europe

Sl. No	Country	Religious Denomination (1950)	Major Religion	Majority Share (1950)	Majority Share (2015)	Rate of Change in Share (2015 - 1950)	Religious Denomination (2015)/ Top 2 in case of "None" or "Missing"	Continent
89	Slovakia	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	69.10	59.26	-14.24	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Europe
90	Seychelles	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	90.78	78.15	-13.91	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Africa
91	Mexico	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	93.84	81.20	-13.47	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	North America
92	Ireland	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	94.43	82.06	-13.10	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Europe
93	Monaco	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	93.40	81.20	-13.06	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Europe
94	Laos	Theravada Buddhists	Buddhist	54.39	47.68	-12.33	Buddhists	Asia
95	Trinidad and Tobago	Western Christian	Christian	70.44	62.10	-11.83	Western Christian	North America
96	Macedonia	Eastern Orthodox	Christian	64.55	57.38	-11.10	Eastern Orthodox	Europe
97	Bolivia	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	82.54	73.42	-11.04	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	South America
98	Antigua and Barbuda	Protestant Extended	Christian	75.19	67.05	-10.82	Protestant Extended	North America
99	Myanmar	Theravada Buddhists	Buddhist	78.53	70.80	-9.84	Theravada Buddhists	Asia
100	Ecuador	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	94.41	85.61	-9.32	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	South America
101	San Marino	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	97.03	88.04	-9.26	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Europe
102	Dominican Republic	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	88.17	81.19	-7.92	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	North America
103	India	Hindus	Hindus	84.68	78.06	-7.82	Hindus	Asia
104	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Christian	Christian	50.67	47.23	-6.78	None (Muslims: 48.95, Christians: 47.23)	Europe
105	Montenegro	Eastern Orthodox	Christian	76.19	72.09	-5.38	Eastern Orthodox	Europe

Sl. No	Country	Religious Denomina-tion (1950)	Major Religion	Majority Share (1950)	Majority Share (2015)	Rate of Change in Share (2015 - 1950)	Religious Denomination (2015)/ Top 2 in case of "None" or "Missing"	Continent
106	Poland	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	90.36	85.54	-5.32	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Europe
107	Malta	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	96.15	92.59	-3.70	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Europe
108	Nepal	Hindus	Hindus	84.30	81.26	-3.61	Hindus	Asia
109	Philippines	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	83.13	80.13	-3.61	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Asia
110	Belarus	Eastern Orthodox	Christian	51.85	50.29	-3.01	Eastern Orthodox	Europe
111	Venezuela	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	83.13	80.95	-2.62	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	South America
112	Cambodia	Theravada Buddhists	Buddhist	82.84	81.28	-1.88	Theravada Buddhists	Asia
113	Brunei	Shafii Sunnis	Muslim	58.61	57.56	-1.78	Shafii Sunnis	Asia
114	Maldives	Shafii Sunnis	Muslim	99.83	98.36	-1.47	Shafii Sunnis	Asia
115	Djibouti	Sunni Muslims	Muslim	95.73	94.62	-1.16	Sunni Muslims	Africa
116	Iran	Shia	Muslim	89.45	88.79	-0.74	Shia	Asia
117	Thailand	Theravada Buddhists	Buddhist	69.43	68.97	-0.66	Theravada Buddhists	Asia
118	Turkey	Hanafi	Muslim	84.21	83.74	-0.55	Hanafi	Asia
119	Colombia	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	88.43	87.96	-0.53	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	South America
120	Mauritania	Maliki	Muslim	99.39	99.10	-0.30	Maliki	Africa
121	Comoros	Shafii Sunnis	Muslim	98.63	98.34	-0.29	Shafii Sunnis	Africa
122	São Tomé and Príncipe	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	66.67	66.54	-0.19	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Africa
123	Haiti	Christian Syncretics	Christian	50.00	50.00	0.00	Christian Syncretics	North America
124	Afghanistan	Hanafi	Muslim	88.75	89.01	0.29	Hanafi	Asia
125	Libya	Sunni Muslims	Muslim	90.72	91.19	0.52	Sunni Muslims	Africa
126	Egypt	Sunni Muslims	Muslim	91.78	94.67	3.15	Sunni Muslims	Africa

Sl. No	Country	Religious Denomination (1950)	Major Religion	Majority Share (1950)	Majority Share (2015)	Rate of Change in Share (2015 - 1950)	Religious Denomination (2015)/ Top 2 in case of "None" or "Missing"	Continent
127	Bahamas	Protestant Extended	Christian	70.34	72.56	3.16	Protestant Extended	North America
128	Pakistan	Hanafi	Muslim	77.45	80.36	3.75	Hanafi	Asia
129	Croatia	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	80.40	84.43	5.02	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Europe
130	Sri Lanka	Theravada Buddhists	Buddhist	64.28	67.65	5.25	Theravada Buddhists	Asia
131	Jordan	Sunni Muslims	Muslim	86.62	91.85	6.04	Shafii Sunnis	Asia
132	Gambia	Maliki	Muslim	82.46	87.84	6.51	Maliki	Africa
133	Morocco	Maliki	Muslim	92.74	99.13	6.89	Maliki	Africa
134	Somalia	Shafii Sunnis	Muslim	66.58	71.94	8.05	Shafii Sunnis	Africa
135	Kiribati	Western Christian	Christian	89.14	97.02	8.84	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Oceania
136	Iraq	Shia	Muslim	55.54	60.47	8.88	Shia	Asia
137	Tunisia	Maliki	Muslim	89.23	97.24	8.97	Maliki	Africa
138	Bulgaria	Eastern Orthodox	Christian	70.89	77.91	9.90	Eastern Orthodox	Europe
139	Algeria	Maliki	Muslim	88.39	97.36	10.14	Maliki	Africa
140	Ukraine	Eastern Orthodox	Christian	60.30	68.93	14.31	Eastern Orthodox	Europe
141	Tajikistan	Hanafi	Muslim	76.01	87.04	14.52	Hanafi	Asia
142	Syria	Sunni Muslims	Muslim	69.06	79.25	14.75	Sunni Muslims	Asia
143	Uzbekistan	Hanafi	Muslim	81.71	94.26	15.36	Hanafi	Asia
144	Nauru	Western Christian	Christian	51.80	59.94	15.71	Western Christian	Oceania
145	Bhutan	Tibetan Buddhists	Buddhist	71.44	84.07	17.67	Tibetan Buddhists	Asia
146	Lithuania	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	65.22	76.83	17.80	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Europe
147	Senegal	Maliki	Muslim	75.12	89.02	18.51	Maliki	Africa
148	Bangladesh	Hanafi	Muslim	74.24	88.02	18.55	Hanafi	Asia
149	Serbia	Christian	Christian	78.40	94.39	20.39	Eastern Orthodox	Europe

Sl. No	Country	Religious Denomination (1950)	Major Religion	Majority Share (1950)	Majority Share (2015)	Rate of Change in Share (2015 - 1950)	Religious Denomination (2015)/ Top 2 in case of "None" or "Missing"	Continent
150	Romania	Eastern Orthodox	Christian	65.30	78.78	20.65	Eastern Orthodox	Europe
151	Turkmenistan	Hanafi	Muslim	77.19	94.52	22.46	Hanafi	Asia
152	Indonesia	Shafii Sunnis	Muslim	64.36	79.09	22.89	Shafii Sunnis	Asia
153	Marshall Islands	Christian	Christian	72.31	89.55	23.85	Protestant Extended	Oceania
154	Albania	Hanafi	Muslim	52.63	65.42	24.30	Hanafi	Europe
155	Niger	Maliki	Muslim	64.69	81.22	25.55	Maliki	Africa
156	Guinea	Maliki	Muslim	61.45	77.64	26.36	Maliki	Africa
157	Latvia	Christian	Christian	57.83	73.98	27.94	Western Christian	Europe
158	Sudan	Maliki	Muslim	70.01	90.32	29.01	Maliki	Africa
159	Vanuatu	Protestant Extended	Christian	55.48	72.16	30.08	Protestant Extended	Oceania
160	Mali	Maliki	Muslim	64.65	85.01	31.50	Maliki	Africa
161	Kyrgyzstan	Hanafi	Muslim	62.64	82.79	32.17	Hanafi	Asia
162	Fiji	Christian	Christian	52.20	69.12	32.42	Western Christian	Oceania
163	Moldova	Eastern Orthodox	Christian	69.88	95.00	35.95	Eastern Orthodox	Europe
164	Lesotho	Western Christian	Christian	61.14	88.91	45.42	Western Christian	Africa
165	Azerbaijan	Muslim	Muslim	62.27	95.59	53.53	Muslim	Asia
166	Palau	Western Christian	Christian	55.88	86.45	54.72	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Oceania
167	Namibia	Western Christian	Christian	50.63	91.32	80.36	Protestant	Africa

Table 5: Frequency Distribution of Changes across Continents (1950-2015)

Continent	Number of Countries with Reducing Majority (2015)	Number of Countries with Increasing Majority (2015)
Africa	30	14
Asia	22	14
Europe	33	9
North America	22	1
Oceania	6	6
South America	10	0
Grand Total	123	44

Table 6: Frequency Distribution of Changes in Major Religions (1950-2015)

Major Religion in 1950 (number of countries)	Number of Countries with Reduced Majority Share in 2015	Number of Countries with Increased Majority Share in 2015
Animists (24)	24	0
Buddhist (7)	5	2
Chinese Folk (1)	1	0
Christian (94)	77	17
Hindus (2)	2	0
Muslim (38)	13	25
Not Religious (1)	1	0
Grand Total (167)	123	44

Table 7: Frequency Table of Changes in Religious Majority (1950-2015)

Range of Rate of Change in Share of the Majority Religious Denomination	Number of Countries
(-100) – (-50)	40
(-50) – (-20)	35
(-20) – (-10)	23
(-10) – (0)	25
(0) – (10)	15
(10) – (20)	10
(20) – (50)	16
(50) – (100)	3

Table 8: Countries With Population Above 20 Million

This table is the focus of the refinement I of this paper. It records the rate of change in share of the majority religion (as defined in 1950) for all the countries that have a population more than 20 million in 2015. Countries where the share of the majority religious denomination has decreased between 1950 and 2015 are highlighted in green while countries where their share in the population has increased are highlighted in red. The intensity of shading indicates the quantum of such change in a country. This is as per the coloring scheme used in Figure 1 of this paper.

The countries have been rank-ordered according to the rate of change in share of the majority religion, starting with Kenya which has seen the maximum decline in share of its majority religious denomination (Animists) and accordingly has the lowest value of -98.16 percent. The table ends with Sudan which has witnessed the largest increase in the share of its majority religious denomination (Maliki), an increase of 29.01 percent. In countries where the Majority ID is “Missing” or “None” in 2015, the top two religious denominations as per the RCS Dataset have been reported³².

Sl No.	Country (Population in Million, 2015)	Religious Denomination (1950)	Majority Religion Share (1950)	Majority Religion Share (2015)	Rate of change in share	Religious denomination (2015)/ Top 2 in case of None or Missing	Major Religion (1950)	Continent
1	Kenya (46.9)	Animists	56.60	1.04	-98.16	Protestant Extended	Animists	Africa
2	Angola (22.8)	Animists	50.56	4.44	-91.22	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Animists	Africa
3	Ghana (26.7)	Animists	62.22	15.46	-75.15	Western Christian	Animists	Africa
4	Côte d’Ivoire (21.5)	Animists	66.62	19.56	-70.64	None (Muslims: 41.66 percent; Sunni Muslims: 41.45 percent)	Animists	Africa
5	Canada (35.9)	Protestants and Anglicans	50.27	17.38	-65.42	Western Christian	Christian	North America
6	Mozambique (27.1)	Animists	74.38	28.10	-62.22	Western Christian	Animists	Africa
7	Cameroon (23.4)	Animists	50.86	19.29	-62.06	Missing (Christians: 47.04 percent;	Animists	Africa

³²In the RCS Dataset, the Majority ID for Canada and South Africa was incorrectly assigned by the dataset creators. We have brought this to the notice of the creators who acknowledged the problem. We have correctly re-assigned the Majority ID for these two countries while doing our analysis.

SI No.	Country (Population in Million, 2015)	Religious Denomination (1950)	Majority Religion Share (1950)	Majority Religion Share (2015)	Rate of change in share	Religious denomination (2015)/ Top 2 in case of None or Missing	Major Religion (1950)	Continent
						Western Christians :47.02 percent)		
8	Australia (23.2)	Protestant Extended	72.15	28.12	-61.03	Western Christian	Christian	Oceania
9	China (1410)	Chinese Folk Religionists	51.50	21.01	-59.21	None (Not religious: 38.78 percent; Unspecified Not Religious: 31.70 percent)	Chinese Folk	Asia
10	United States (322)	Protestant Extended	53.20	28.83	-45.80	Western Christian	Christian	North America
11	Saudi Arabia (30.5)	Hanbali	58.27	35.23	-39.54	Sunni Muslims	Muslim	Asia
12	France (64.6)	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	91.23	57.69	-36.76	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	Europe
13	South Africa (52.8)	Protestant Extended	50.54	32.03	-36.62	Christian	Christian	Africa
14	Brazil (208)	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	87.77	56.58	-35.54	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	South America
15	United Kingdom (64)	Anglicans	52.36	39.11	-25.29	Western Christian	Christian	Europe
16	Spain (46)	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	92.81	69.39	-25.23	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	Europe
17	Madagascar (24.3)	Animists	51.10	39.11	-23.45	Western Christian	Animists	Africa
18	Argentina (43.4)	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	90.08	70.78	-21.43	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	South America
19	Italy (61)	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	95.86	78.16	-18.46	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	Europe
20	Peru (31.4)	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	93.89	77.00	-17.99	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	South America
21	Japan (127)	Mahayana Buddhists	68.25	56.29	-17.52	Mahayana Buddhists	Buddhist	Asia
22	Mexico (127)	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	93.84	81.20	-13.47	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	North America
23	Myanmar (54.3)	Theravada Buddhists	78.53	70.80	-9.84	Theravada Buddhists	Buddhist	Asia
24	India (1290)	Hindus	84.68	78.06	-7.82	Hindus	Hindus	Asia

SI No.	Country (Population in Million, 2015)	Religious Denomination (1950)	Majority Religion Share (1950)	Majority Religion Share (2015)	Rate of change in share	Religious denomination (2015)/ Top 2 in case of None or Missing	Major Religion (1950)	Continent
25	Poland (38.2)	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	90.36	85.54	-5.32	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	Europe
26	Nepal (28.8)	Hindus	84.30	81.26	-3.61	Hindus	Hindus	Asia
27	Philippines (103)	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	83.13	80.13	-3.61	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	Asia
28	Venezuela (31.1)	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	83.13	80.95	-2.62	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	South America
29	Iran (79.9)	Shia	89.45	88.79	-0.74	Shia	Muslim	Asia
30	Thailand (69.3)	Theravada Buddhists	69.43	68.97	-0.66	Theravada Buddhists	Buddhist	Asia
31	Turkey (77.2)	Hanafi	84.21	83.74	-0.55	Hanafi	Muslim	Asia
32	Colombia (48.2)	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	88.43	87.96	-0.53	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	South America
33	Afghanistan (32.8)	Hanafi	88.75	89.01	0.29	Hanafi	Muslim	Asia
34	Egypt (84.7)	Sunni Muslims	91.78	94.67	3.15	Sunni Muslims	Muslim	Africa
35	Pakistan (187)	Hanafi	77.45	80.36	3.75	Hanafi	Muslim	Asia
36	Sri Lanka (22)	Theravada Buddhists	64.28	67.65	5.25	Theravada Buddhists	Buddhist	Asia
37	Morocco (35.1)	Maliki	92.74	99.13	6.89	Maliki	Muslim	Africa
38	Iraq (36.7)	Shia	55.54	60.47	8.88	Shia	Muslim	Asia
39	Algeria (40.5)	Maliki	88.39	97.36	10.14	Maliki	Muslim	Africa
40	Ukraine (43.9)	Eastern Orthodox	60.30	68.93	14.31	Eastern Orthodox	Christian	Europe
41	Uzbekistan (29.5)	Hanafi	81.71	94.26	15.36	Hanafi	Muslim	Asia
42	Bangladesh (163)	Hanafi	74.24	88.02	18.55	Hanafi	Muslim	Asia
43	Romania (21.6)	Eastern Orthodox	65.30	78.78	20.65	Eastern Orthodox	Christian	Europe
44	Indonesia (255)	Shafii Sunnis	64.36	79.09	22.89	Shafii Sunnis	Muslim	Asia
45	Sudan (26.9)	Maliki	70.01	90.32	29.01	Maliki	Muslim	Africa

Table 9: Countries With Stable Proportions

This table is the focus of refinement II of this paper. It records the rate of change in share of the majority religion (as defined in 1950) for all the countries that have seen minimal (+/-1 percent) shift in the rate of change in share of the religious majority. Countries where the share of the majority religious denomination has decreased between 1950 and 2015 are highlighted in green while countries where their share in the population has increased are highlighted in red. The intensity of shading indicates the quantum of such change in a country. This is as per the coloring scheme used in Figure 1 of this paper.

The countries have been rank-ordered according to the rate of change in share of the majority religion, starting with Iran which has seen the decline in share of its majority religious denomination (Shia) and accordingly has the lowest value of -0.74 percent. The table ends with Libya which has witnessed the increase in the share of its majority religious denomination (Sunni Muslim), an increase of 0.52 percent.

Sl. No	Country	Religious denomination (1950)	Major Religion (1950)	Majority Religion Share (1950)	Majority Religion Share (2015)	Rate of change in share	Religious denomination (2015)	Continent
1	Iran	Shia	Muslim	89.45	88.79	-0.74	Shia	Asia
2	Thailand	Theravada Buddhists	Buddhist	69.43	68.97	-0.66	Theravada Buddhists	Asia
3	Turkey	Hanafi	Muslim	84.21	83.74	-0.55	Hanafi	Asia
4	Colombia	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	88.43	87.96	-0.53	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	South America
5	Mauritania	Maliki	Muslim	99.39	99.10	-0.30	Maliki	Africa
6	Comoros	Shafii Sunnis	Muslim	98.63	98.34	-0.29	Shafii Sunnis	Africa
7	São Tomé and Príncipe	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian	66.67	66.54	-0.19	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Africa
8	Haiti	Christian Syncretics	Christian	50.00	50.00	0.00	Christian Syncretics	North America
9	Afghanistan	Hanafi	Muslim	88.75	89.01	0.29	Hanafi	Asia
10	Libya	Sunni Muslims	Muslim	90.72	91.19	0.52	Sunni Muslims	Africa

Table 10: SAARC+1 Countries

This table is the focus of refinement III of this paper. It records the rate of change in share of the majority religion (as defined in 1950) for all the SAARC countries. Countries where the share of the majority religious denomination has decreased between 1950 and 2015 are highlighted in green while countries where their share in the population has increased are highlighted in red. The intensity of shading indicates the quantum of such change in a country. This is as per the coloring scheme used in Figure 1 of this paper.

The countries have been rank-ordered according to the rate of change in share of the majority religion, starting with Myanmar which has seen the decline in share of its majority religious denomination (Theravada Buddhist) and accordingly has the lowest value of -9.84 percent. The table ends with Bangladesh which has witnessed the increase in the share of its majority religious denomination (Hanafi Muslim), an increase of 18.55 percent.

Sl. No.	Country	Religious denomination (1950)	Major Religion (1950)	Majority Religion Share (1950)	Majority Religion Share (2015)	Rate of change in share	Religious denomination (2015)
1	Myanmar	Theravada Buddhists	Buddhist	78.53	70.80	-9.84	Theravada Buddhists
2	India	Hindus	Hindus	84.68	78.06	-7.82	Hindus
3	Nepal	Hindus	Hindus	84.30	81.26	-3.61	Hindus
4	Maldives	Shafii Sunnis	Muslim	99.83	98.36	-1.47	Shafii Sunnis
5	Afghanistan	Hanafi	Muslim	88.75	89.01	0.29	Hanafi
6	Pakistan	Hanafi	Muslim	77.45	80.36	3.75	Hanafi
7	Sri Lanka	Theravada Buddhists	Buddhist	64.28	67.65	5.25	Theravada Buddhists
8	Bhutan	Tibetan Buddhists	Buddhist	71.44	84.07	17.67	Tibetan Buddhists
9	Bangladesh	Hanafi	Muslim	74.24	88.02	18.55	Hanafi

Table 11: OECD Countries

In this table we look at OECD countries which are a subset of Table 3. Of the 38 member countries, we have analyzed 34 countries with a majority religious denomination in 1950. Countries where the share of the majority religious denomination has decreased between 1950 and 2015 are highlighted in green while countries where their share in the population has increased are highlighted in red. The intensity of shading indicates the quantum of such change in a country. This is as per the coloring scheme used in Figure 1 of this paper.

Sl. No	Country	Religion Denomination (1950)	Majority share (1950)	Majority share (2015)	Rate Change in Share (2015 - 1950)	Religion Denomination (2015)/ Top 2 in case of none or missing	Major Religion (1950)
1	Czech Republic	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	76.35	3.65	-95.22	Missing (unknown: 69.76%; Not Religious: 24.27%)	Christian
2	New Zealand	Protestant Extended	76.52	23.17	-69.72	None (Christians: 43.99%; Not Religious: 40.36%)	Christian
3	Canada	Protestants and Anglicans	50.27	17.38	-65.42	Western Christian	Christian
4	Australia	Protestant Extended	72.15	28.12	-61.03	Western Christian	Christian
5	Switzerland	Presbyterial Reformed Protestants	56.30	25.15	-55.33	Western Christian	Christian
6	Hungary	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	67.73	31.26	-53.85	Missing (Christians: 48.06%; Western Christians: 44.35%)	Christian
7	Netherlands	Western Christian	80.86	38.23	-52.72	Not Religious	Christian
8	Estonia	Christian	57.44	28.62	-50.17	unspecified Not Religious	Christian
9	United States	Protestant Extended	53.20	28.83	-45.80	Western Christian	Christian
10	Chile	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	84.96	52.70	-37.97	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian
11	France	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	91.23	57.69	-36.76	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian
12	Sweden	Lutherans	83.92	54.55	-35.00	Lutherans	Christian
13	Costa Rica	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	94.51	61.53	-34.89	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian
14	Belgium	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	96.38	64.53	-33.05	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian

Sl. No	Country	Religion Denomination (1950)	Majority share (1950)	Majority share (2015)	Rate Change in Share (2015 - 1950)	Religion Denomination (2015)/ Top 2 in case of none or missing	Major Religion (1950)
15	Austria	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	88.72	60.22	-32.12	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian
16	Luxembourg	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	94.14	65.27	-30.67	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian
17	United Kingdom	Anglicans	52.36	39.11	-25.29	Western Christian	Christian
18	Spain	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	92.81	69.39	-25.23	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian
19	Finland	Lutherans	94.06	71.05	-24.46	Lutherans	Christian
20	Norway	Lutherans	96.24	75.60	-21.44	Lutherans	Christian
21	Iceland	Lutherans	97.40	77.67	-20.26	Lutherans	Christian
22	Italy	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	95.86	78.16	-18.46	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian
23	Slovenia	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	94.05	76.90	-18.24	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian
24	Japan	Mahayana Buddhists	68.25	56.29	-17.52	Mahayana Buddhists	Buddhist
25	Portugal	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	95.99	79.59	-17.09	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian
26	Denmark	Lutherans	94.47	78.97	-16.41	Lutherans	Christian
27	Greece	Eastern Orthodox	94.16	80.38	-14.63	Eastern Orthodox	Christian
28	Slovakia	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	69.10	59.26	-14.24	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian
29	Mexico	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	93.84	81.20	-13.47	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian
30	Ireland	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	94.43	82.06	-13.10	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian
31	Poland	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	90.36	85.54	-5.32	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian
32	Turkey	Hanafi	84.21	83.74	-0.55	Hanafi	Muslim
33	Colombia	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	88.43	87.96	-0.53	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian
34	Lithuania	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	65.22	76.83	17.80	Latin-Rite Roman Catholics	Christian
35	Latvia	Christian	57.83	73.98	27.94	Western Christian	Christian