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# Chapter 53

## Religiosity in Slovakia After the Social Change in 1989

René Matlovič, Viera Vlčková, and Kvetoslava Matlovičová

### 53.1 Introduction

The Slovak Republic is a relatively young country in Central Europe, which was established on 1 January 1993 after the peaceful division of Czechoslovakia. The development of religiosity and religion in Slovakia is closely related to the country's changing geopolitical, social and cultural context. Socio-political and economic changes that began in 1989 created a new situation for religious development. This fact was reflected in increased interests of geographers and other social scientists about religiosity from various perspectives (see Matlovič 2011). In our contribution we outline the religious situation in contemporary Slovak society. We will also briefly evaluate religious developments of the population in the last two decades and their spatial differentiation in the self-governing regions (SGR).<sup>1</sup> The final section includes results from a survey of university students about their religiosity and attitudes toward contemporary religion.

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<sup>1</sup>There are eight self-governing regions in Slovakia: Bratislava, Trnava, Trenčín, Nitra, Žilina, Banská Bystrica, Prešov and Košice.

R. Matlovič (✉) • K. Matlovičová  
Department of Geography and Applied Geoinformatics, Faculty of Humanities  
and Natural Sciences, University of Prešov, Ul. 17. Novembra 1, 080 01 Prešov, Slovakia  
e-mail: [rene.matlovic@unipo.sk](mailto:rene.matlovic@unipo.sk); [kveta.matlovicova@gmail.com](mailto:kveta.matlovicova@gmail.com)

V. Vlčková  
Department of Public Administration and Regional Development,  
Faculty of National Economy, University of Economics in Bratislava,  
Dolnozemska cesta 1, 852 35 Bratislava, Slovakia  
e-mail: [viera.vlckova@euba.sk](mailto:viera.vlckova@euba.sk)

noted that previous views about religion among university students in Bratislava were studied by M. Kováč and T. Krúpova (1993).

### 53.4 The Development of Religiosity and the Religious Structure of the Population of Slovakia After 1989

Based on data the aforementioned censuses and sociological surveys, it is possible to follow the development of religiosity and religious structure of the population of Slovakia after 1989. M. Tížik (2010) applied a more detailed overview of the results of the religiosity examination using various sociological surveys (Table 53.1). They were ISSP (International Social Survey Programme), CPS (Citizenship and Participation in Slovakia), EVS (European Values Study), PCE (Political Culture in the Central Europe), WVS (World Values Survey) and the ESS (European Social Survey).<sup>5</sup>

The overview (see Table 53.1) shows that the religiosity rate in the last two decades is oscillating between 71.6 and 86.8 %. Due to the different kind of methodologies

**Table 53.1** The religiosity rate in Slovakia, 1990–2011 according to censuses and sociological surveys

Survey	Year	Religiosity rate (%)
WVS	1990	79.2
EVS	1991	71.6
Census	1991	72.8
ISSP	1992	86.2
ISSP	1996	79.4
ISSP	1998	83.5
WVS	1998	86.8
EVS	1999	76.8
PCE	2000	71.9
Census	2001	84.1
ISSP	2004	82.1
ESS	2004	74.4
ISSP	2005	85.5
ESS	2006	75.4
EVS	2008	75.3
ISSP	2008	80.0
ESS	2008	72.9
CPS	2008	72.7
ISSP	2009	77.2
Census	2011	76.0

Data source: Tížik (2010), [www.infostat.sk/vdc/pdf/DDP68.pdf](http://www.infostat.sk/vdc/pdf/DDP68.pdf)

<sup>5</sup>For more information about these surveys can be found on the Slovak Archive of Social Data ([www.sasd.sav.sk](http://www.sasd.sav.sk)).

**Table 53.2** Religious structure of the Slovakia population, 1991–2011

Church and religious community	Number of confessors (1991)	Number of confessors (2001)	Number of confessors (2011)
Roman Catholic Church	3,187,383	3,708,120	3,347,277
Greek Catholic Church	178,733	219,831	206,871
Old Catholic Church	882	1,733	1,687
Orthodox Church	34,376	50,363	49,133
Lutheran Church in Slovakia	326,397	372,858	316,250
Reformed Christian Church/Calvinists	82,545	109,735	98,797
Evangelical Methodist Church	4,359	7,347	10,328
Baptist Union	2,465	3,562	3,486
Brethren Church	1,861	3,217	3,396
Seventh-day Adventist Church	1,721	3,429	2,915
Apostolic Church in Slovakia	1,116	3,905	5,831
Catholic corps in Slovakia	700	6,519	7,720
Czechoslovak Hussite Church	625	1,696	1,782
Religious Society of Jehovah's Witnesses	10,501	20,603	17,222
Central Union of Jewish Religious Communities	912	2,310	1,999
Baha'i community	—	—	1,065
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	91	58	972
New Apostolic Church	188	22	166
Other Churches	6,094	6,214	23,340
Undetected	917,835	160,598	571,437
Non-believers	515,551	697,308	725,362
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,274,335</b>	<b>5,379,455</b>	<b>5,397,036</b>

Data source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, <http://portal.statistics.sk/files/tab-15.pdf>, 1.5.2012

of the surveys, from these data is not possible to formulate firm conclusions about the trends of religiosity in Slovakia.

Based on population and housing census result in 1991, 2001 and 2011, it is possible to identify several basic trends in the religiosity development of the Slovak population (Tables 53.2 and 53.3):

- (A) A decrease in the number and proportion of people who did not express their religious orientation in 1991–2001 and re-growth in 2001–2011. While in 1991, there were 917,865 who did not answer the questions about religiosity and confessional affiliation in the census; this amounted to 17.40 % of the total

**Table 53.3** Main religious groups in Slovakia, 1991–2011

Church and religious community	Percent of confes-sors (1991) (%)	Percent of confes-sors (2001) (%)	Percent of confessors (2011) (%)
Roman Catholics	60.4	68.9	62.0
Greek Catholics	3.4	4.1	3.8
Orthodoxes	0.7	0.9	0.9
Lutherans	6.2	6.9	5.9
Calvinists	1.6	2.0	1.8
Others	0.5	1.2	1.6
Undetected	17.4	3.0	10.6
Non-believers	9.8	13.0	13.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Data source: <http://portal.statistics.sk/files/tab-15.pdf>, 1.5.2012

number of population while in 2001 it was only 160,598 inhabitants or 2.98 % of the Slovak population, but in 2011 it was 571,437 inhabitants or 10.6 % of the total population. It is shown that just after the social changes in 1989, in the first census in 1991 people were reluctant to comment on the issue of religion (perhaps for fear of the communist regime return, which had persecuted religious people). In 2001, those concerns had disappeared. From the growth in the number of people who did not express their religious orientation in 2011, it is possible to relate those numbers to the negative impact of conflicts in state institutions regarding the organization of the census as well as increasing public sensitivity to privacy issues supported by wide media coverage of this topic.

- (B) The increase in the number and proportion of the religious people of the total number of population in Slovakia in 1991–2001 and a subsequent decrease from 2001 to 2011. In 1991, 3.8 million registered as religious people (72.8 %), in 2001 it was 4.5 million (84.1 % of the total number of inhabitants) and in 2011 it was 4.1 million (76.0 %). The number was less because of growing number of people expressing no religious preference. It is of interest that the decrease in the absolute number of religious members was recorded in all traditional and larger churches.
- (C) A slight increase in the number and proportion of people without religion of the total number of population in Slovakia. In 1991, 515,551 (9.77 %) were identified without religion, in 2001 it was 697,308 people (12.96 % of the total number of population) and in 2011, 725,362 (13.4 % of the total number of population).

We can gain also another picture through the analysis of “pure” confessional structure of the population, that is, when we exclude people without religion and those undetected in the census. Only this approach allows us to identify real changes in the proportions between the individual religions in the last decade. We can identify declines in the two most significant and traditional religions (Table 53.4).

The proportion of the Roman Catholics in the total number of believers was decreased from 82.98 % in 1991 to 82.01 % in 2001 and 81.64 % in 2011, that is, by 1.34 % decline from 1991 to 2001. A smaller decrease was noticed in Lutheran



**Table 53.4** Confessional structure of the religious people in Slovakia, 1991–2011

Church and religious community	Percent of confessors (1991) (%)	Percent of confessors (2001) (%)	Percent of confessors (2011) (%)
Roman Catholics	82.98	82.01	81.64
Greek Catholics	4.65	4.86	5.05
Orthodox	0.89	1.11	1.20
Lutherans	8.50	8.25	7.71
Calvinists	2.15	2.43	2.41
Other Churches	0.82	1.34	2.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Data source: <http://portal.statistics.sk/files/tab-15.pdf>

Church (from 8.5 to 7.71 %), that is, by 0.79 % in the two decades. At first, the position of Reformed Christians/Calvinists improved (from 2.15 to 2.43 %), by 0.28 %, but in 2001–2011 it was slightly weaker (from 2.43 to 2.41 %). On the other hand, the position in the confessional structure of the population of Slovakia was stronger in the Greek Catholics (an increase of 0.4 %), Orthodox (0.31 %) and members of other smaller churches and religious communities (by 1.18 %) (see Table 53.4). These results outline the confirmation of the trend of increased experimentation and the formation of new religious traditions, observations mentioned by R. Stark and W. S. Bainbridge (1987). It is also clearly demonstrated by increases in the number of numbers of other churches, which do not have their foundation in the historical traditions of Christianity. These processes in Slovakia have been closely examined by M. Tížik (2006).

### 53.5 Spatial Differentiation of Religiosity and the Confessional Structure of the Population in Slovakia in 2011

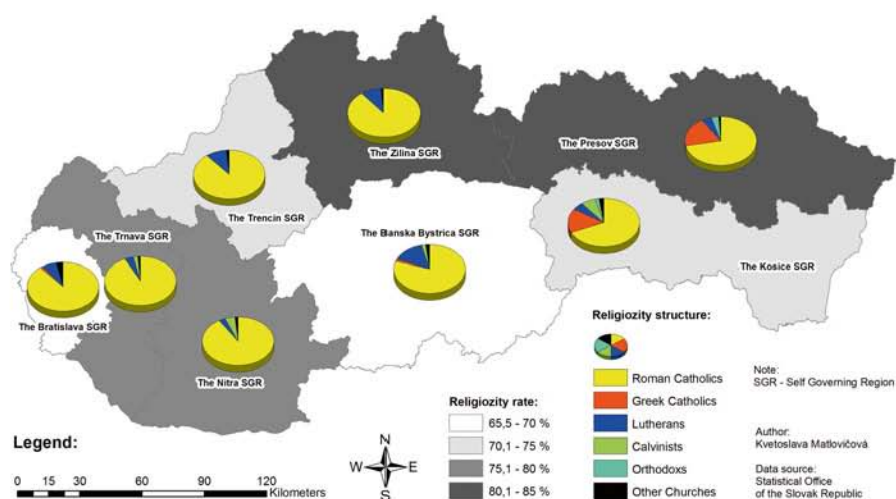
Religiosity is spatially differentiated in Slovakia (Table 53.5, Fig. 53.1). The highest level of religiosity is in the northern part of Slovakia, in the Prešov (84.9 %) and the Žilina self-governing region (80.5 %). The lowest level of religiosity is in the Bratislava (65.5 %) and the Banská Bystrica self-governing region (69.7 %).

In terms of spatial variations among various religions, in recent years there have been no significant changes. The Roman Catholic Church dominates all Slovak regions. The most significant dominance is in the Trnava (90.7 % of all religious people), Nitra (88.8 %) and the Žilina (87.1 %) self-governing region. The lowest percentage of Roman Catholics is in the Kosice (69.6 %) and Prešov (72.4 %) self-governing region. In these two regions of the eastern Slovakia, there is a significant number of the Greek Catholics and Orthodox. In the Košice self-governing region we find the Reformed Christians/Calvinists. Lutherans have a significant representation in the Banská Bystrica, Žilina and Trenčín self-governing region.

**Table 53.5** Religiosity rate and confessional structure of the religious people in Slovakia, 2011

Region	Religiosity rate (%)	Roman Catholics (%)	Greek Catholics (%)	Lutherans (%)	Calvinists (%)	Orthodox (%)	Others (%)
Bratislava	65.5	85.9	1.2	7.8	0.7	0.6	3.8
Trnava	77.3	90.7	0.3	4.8	2.5	0.2	1.5
Trenčín	73.8	86.8	0.3	11.0	0.1	0.1	1.7
Nitra	79.3	88.8	0.3	3.5	5.4	0.1	1.9
Žilina	80.5	87.1	0.4	11.1	0.1	0.1	1.2
Banská Bystrica	69.7	78.7	1.2	15.2	2.3	0.3	2.3
Prešov	84.9	72.4	16.6	5.4	0.1	4.3	1.2
Košice	73.7	69.6	12.9	5.0	7.5	2.3	2.7

Data source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic



**Fig. 53.1** Religiosity rate and confessional structure of religious people in Slovakia in 2011 (Map by Kvetoslava Matlovičová with data from the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic)

Reformed Christians live in the southern parts of Slovakia, especially in the Nitra, Trnava, Banská Bystrica and the Košice self-governing region. Most of them belong to the Hungarian minority.

From the administrative point of view, the main centers of the Roman Catholic Church are in two archdioceses – Bratislava and Košice. Other centres include these dioceses – Trnava (historical archdiocese), Nitra, Žilina, Banská Bystrica, the Spiš and Rožňava. The main center of the Lutheran Church is in Bratislava and in the districts of Zvolen (western) and Prešov (eastern). The main center of the Greek Catholic Church is located in Prešov and centers of other eparchies (dioceses of the Greek Church) are in Košice and Bratislava. The main centre of the Reformed Christian Church is Komárno and the Orthodox Church is Prešov.