



Methodology of the *World Christian Database*

Adapted from Todd M. Johnson and Brian J. Grim, *The World's Religions in Figures: An Introduction to International Religious Demography* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013) and David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Trends* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2001).

The *World Christian Database* includes detailed information on 41,000 Christian denominations and on religions in every country of the world. Extensive data are available on 234 countries and 13,000 ethno-linguistic peoples, as well as on 5,000 cities and 3,000 provinces. This extraordinary database is an invaluable reference tool for professionals, scholars, students, agencies, health organizations, and news media. Information is readily available on religious activities, growth rates, religious literature, worker activity, and demographics. Additional data are included concerning population, health, education, languages, and communication. All this information makes the *WCD* an invaluable resource for anyone interested in Christian and religious demography and the history of Christianity. Thousands of sources are evaluated and reviewed on a weekly basis by a professional staff dedicated to expanding and updating the *WCD*, and the database is updated quarterly. There is no other resource completely focused on providing global statistics on World Christianity today.

The right to profess one's choice

This methodology takes as its starting-point the United Nations 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance." Since its promulgation, this group of phrases has been incorporated into the state constitutions of a large number of countries across the world. This fundamental right also includes the right to claim the religion of one's choice, and the right to be called a follower of that religion and to be enumerated as such. The section on religious freedom in the constitutions of very many nations uses the exact words of the Universal Declaration, and many countries instruct their census personnel to observe this principle. Public declaration must therefore be taken seriously when endeavoring to survey the extent of religious and non-religious affiliation around the world.

Religious demography

The origins of the field of religious demography lie in the church censuses conducted in most European societies. For many years and in many countries, churches produced the most complete censuses of the population. They achieved this largely by

recording baptisms and funerals. These data, however, were seen not as referring to specific religious communities, but rather to the larger homogenous societies. With the decline of national churches in Europe beginning in the nineteenth and continuing into the twentieth century, secular governments began tracking births and deaths, eventually replacing churches as the main bodies collecting detailed information on human populations. Although thousands of sources for international religious demography are available, ranging from censuses and demographic surveys to statistics collected and reported by religious groups themselves, little has been done by scholars in religion, sociology, or other disciplines to collect, collate, and analyze these data over the past decades.

Sources

Data for religious demography fall broadly under 13 headings:

1. Censuses in which a religious question is asked

In the twentieth century, approximately half the world's countries asked a question related to religion in their official national population censuses. Since 1990, however, this number has been declining as developing countries have dropped the question, deeming it too expensive (in many countries each question in a census costs well over 1 million U.S. dollars), uninteresting, or controversial. As a result, some countries that historically included a religion question have not included the question in their censuses since 1990. National censuses are the best starting point for the identification of religious adherents, because they generally cover the entire population.

2. Censuses in which an ethnicity or language question is asked

In the absence of a question on religion, another helpful piece of information from a census is ethnicity or language. This is especially true when a particular ethnic group can be equated with a particular religion. For example, over 99% of Somalis are Muslim, so the number of Somalis in, say, Sweden is an indication of a part of the Muslim community there. Similarly, a question that asks for country of birth can use useful. If the answer is "Nepal" there is a significant chance that the individual or community is Hindu. In each of these cases the assumption is made (if there is no further information) that the religion of the transplanted ethnic or linguistic community is the same as that in the home country.

3. Surveys and polls

In the absence of census data on religion, large-scale demographic surveys, such as the MEASURE (Monitoring and Evaluation to Assess and Use Results) Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), often include a question about the respondent's religious affiliation. In some instances, demographic surveys by groups such as UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) include a religious affiliation question. Demographic surveys, though less comprehensive than a national census, have several advantages over other types of general population surveys and polls. Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) are highly regarded by demographers and social scientists, and provide valuable nationally representative data on religion. Surveys can also be commissioned in light of a dearth of data on a particular subject and results can be used to search for correlations between different variables.

4. Scholarly monographs

Every year, scholars publish hundreds of monographs on particular religions or religions in particular countries or regions. Such monographs differ from other sources in that they attempt to provide an overall profile of religion in an area or country, bringing to light local quantitative data sources as well as qualitative information that provides layers of context and background.

5. Religion statistics in yearbooks and handbooks

Religious communities keep track of their members, using everything from simple lists to elaborate membership reports. The most detailed data collection and analysis is undertaken each year by some 43,000 Christian denominations and their 4.7 million constituent churches and congregations of believers. The latter invest over 1.1 billion USD annually for a massive, decentralized, and largely uncoordinated global census of Christians. In sum, they send out around 10 million printed questionnaires in 3,000 different languages, covering 180 major religious subjects reporting on 2,000 socio-religious variables. This collection of data provides a year-by-year snapshot of the progress or decline of Christianity's diverse movements, offering an enormous body of data from which researchers can track trends and make projections.¹ Statistics collected by religious communities often enable researchers to distinguish between two categories of religionists—practicing and non-practicing—based on whether or not they take part in the ongoing organized life of the religion.

6. Governmental statistical reports

Governments often collect statistics on religion beyond those collected in censuses, such as the *Statistical Book of Norway* (<http://www.ssb.no/en/yearbook/>) and the U.S. State Department's religious freedom reports.

7. Questionnaires and reports from collaborators

Researchers sometimes initiate queries related to religious demography that result in brief reports. Most of these are never published but are available in the headquarters or national study centers of many religious groups or denominations.

8. Field surveys and interviews

For the past fifty years, scholars have visited virtually every country in the world to conduct interviews with religionists. Most of these are never published but, once again, are available in private collections in many countries of the world.

9. Correspondence with national informants

Scholars and others who have extensive knowledge of a particular religious community can be a source of critical information on religious demographics. Correspondence with informants is often most helpful when trying to clear up discrepancies in existing data, such

¹ One attempt to organize a variety of source material for researchers is the website www.adherents.com, which offers thousands of figures for adherents of hundreds of religions. However, there is no attempt by its organizers to reconcile the numerous contradictions in the source material. Nonetheless, it offers an invaluable look at the amount of data researchers have at their disposal.

as when figures reported by government entities and those of religious communities disagree significantly; when no recent data have been collected, for example, as a result of ongoing political or economic instability; or when political or social pressures inhibit collection or publication of data on religions, especially minority religions.

10. Unpublished documentation

These documents are collected in the field and include reports, memoranda, facsimiles, photocopies, photographs, maps, statistical summaries, and historical documents.

11. Encyclopedias, dictionaries, and directories of religions

Numerous encyclopedias, dictionaries, and directories describing religions in different countries are available as secondary sources. Unlike yearbooks, these compilations are not normally the products of a single religious community or church.

12. Print and web-based contemporary descriptions of religions

There are numerous descriptions of religious communities around the world that are produced for a particular purpose (often a conference or meeting) that are circulated but never published. In more recent years, web sites related to religion have proliferated.

13. Dissertations and theses on religion

Unpublished theses and dissertations often contain tables, charts, and graphs on religious demographics, either from primary sources listed above or from original research done for the dissertation itself. These can be searched by subject and (in cases where they have been scanned) by key words. Often such searches can be performed via the Internet.

Affiliation

There are at least three different perspectives on what it means to be a Christian: professing Christians, affiliated Christians, and practicing Christians. Utilizing the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a foundation, “professing Christians” means all those who profess to be Christians in government censuses or public-opinion polls; that is, who declare or identify themselves as Christians, who say “I am a Christian” or “We are Christians” when asked the question “What is your religion?”

However, not all those who profess to be Christians are affiliated to organized churches and denominations. Therefore, “affiliated Christians” are those known to the churches or known to the clergy (usually by names and addresses) and claimed in their statistics, i.e., those enrolled on the churches’ books or records, with totals that can be substantiated. This usually means all known baptized Christians and their children, and other adherents; it is sometimes termed the total Christian community (because affiliated Christians are those who are not primarily individual Christians but who primarily belong to the corporate community of Christ), or inclusive membership (because affiliated Christians are church members). This definition of “Christians” is what the churches usually mean by the term (and thus the *WCD*), and statistics of such affiliated Christians are what the churches themselves collect and publish. In all countries, it may be assumed with confidence that the churches know better than the state how many Christians are affiliated to them. This therefore indicates a second measure of the total Christians that is quite

independent of the first (government census figures of professing Christians).

A third definition of membership relates to those who actually practice their religion, i.e. *practicing Christians* who may also be termed active Christians, attending Christians, or committed Christians. Practicing Christians are defined here as those who participate in the ongoing institutional and organized life and pattern of the churches. Using the broadest definition, this covers all affiliated church members who attend church services of public worship a minimum of once a year all who fulfill the minimum annual obligation of their church, which may be reception of communion at Easter and/or on other occasions annually. Using a more rigorous definition, this category can be subdivided into monthly attenders (those who attend church at least once a month) or weekly attenders (those who attend regularly every Sunday). Many churches keep such statistics of practice, and in addition many secular polling organizations provide data on church attendance.

For example, in the Church of Scotland, “active communicants” are defined as persons who communicate (receive communion) at least once a year. In 1939 this was 76.8% of all communicants on the rolls, 56.7% in 1943, 72.0% in 1946, and 71.3% in 1959. In the Coptic Orthodox Church (Egypt), a “practicing Copt” is one who receives communion at least once every 40 days. Sometimes there is a financial connotation as well; some denominations count as practicing adult members only those who contribute each year to local or central church funds. Certain denominations publish detailed definitions: the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States explains, “A ‘participating’ member is one who exercises a continuing interest in one or more of the following ways: attendance, giving, activity, spiritual concern for the fellowship of the congregation regardless of the place of residence.”

Children

All churches would agree that the influence and example of parents are the most powerful of all influences. The family is by far the most important instrumentality through which individuals acquire personal, cultural, and social self-identification. In consequence, children of church members are more likely to remain members than those whose parents are not church members. Children of ardent and practicing Christians usually are, to the extent that their years permit, ardent and practicing Christians. However, many churches do not enumerate children under 15 years. One reason is that it has been widely noted that most conversion crises occur in the 13–20 age group in Christian families or in majority Christian contexts. On this view, therefore, children who have not yet reached 15 cannot reasonably be expected to be practicing and believing Christians. The *World Christian Database* takes the opposite view: children and infants also can properly be called Christians, and can actively and regularly (to the extent of their ability) practice the Christian faith. Consequently, where Christian denominations do not count children in their membership rolls, their membership is reported in our adult category. A total community figure is calculated (in the absence of any additional information from the denomination) by adding in the average number of children reported in United Nations statistics for the given country. Thus, the total community figures are comparable from one denomination to the next whether or not they count children in their membership.

Choice of best data available

Religious demography must attempt to be comprehensive. In certain countries where no hard statistical data or reliable surveys are available, researchers have to rely on the informed estimates of experts in the area and subject. Researchers make no detailed attempt at a critique of each nation's censuses and polls or each church's statistical operations. After examining what is available, researchers then select the best data available until such time as better data come into existence. In addition, there are a number of areas of religious life where it is impossible to obtain accurate statistics, usually because of state opposition to particular tradition(s). Thus it will probably never be possible to get exact numbers of atheists in Indonesia or Baha'i in Iran. Where such information is necessary, reasonable and somewhat conservative estimates are made.

Reconciling discrepancies in survey data

There are post-survey strategies that help general population surveys better reflect the actual composition of a particular country. For instance, if in a survey of 1,000 people, 60% were women and 40% were men, but we know that women and men are each 50% of the country's total population based on a recent census, then each woman's response on the general population survey would be weighted down by a factor of 500/600 and each man's response would be weighted up by a factor of 500/400. Such adjustments are called weighting.

Other adjustments made to general population surveys may require taking into account that are meant to be representative of only adult populations. Therefore their results require adjustments, particularly if some religious groups have more children than others in the same country. This requires either a complete roster of members of each household or some other way to estimate of the number of children living in the household with the adults. When a complete roster is unavailable, most estimates of religious affiliation of children assume that they have the same religion as their one of their parents (usually assumed by demographers to be the religion of the mother). Differences in fertility rates between religious groups are particularly useful in estimating religious differentials among children. This is because demographic projections carry forward children born to women. It may introduce some bias to the degree that the father's religion is more likely to be the religion of the children than the mother.

Example: Coptic Church in Egypt

At times the results from government censuses and information from religious communities can be strikingly different. For example, in Egypt, where the vast majority of the population is Muslim, government censuses taken every 10 years have shown consistently for the past 100 years that a declining share of the population declare themselves as or profess to be Christians. In the most recent census, some 5% identified as Christian. However, church estimates point to a percentage figure three times larger (15%). This discrepancy may be due to overestimates by the churches or attributed, at least in part, to social pressure on some Christians to record themselves as Muslims. Further, according to news reports, some Egyptian Christians have complained that they are listed on official identity cards as Muslims. It also might be that church reports include Egyptian

Christians working as expatriates outside of Egypt, while the census does not, or that the churches simply overestimate their numbers.

Such a lack of clarity is compounded by media reports and even Egyptian government announcements repeatedly claiming that Christians make up 10% or more of the country's approximately 80 million people, despite the fact that the census repeatedly reports only 5%. The highest share of Christians found in an Egyptian census was in 1927 (8.3%). Figures for Egyptian Christians declined in each subsequent census, with Christians making up 5.7% of the Egyptian population in 1996. The report from the most recent census, conducted in 2006, does not, however, provide data on religious affiliation, but a sample of the 2006 census data is available through the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, International (IPUMS). The sample the same Christian share (about 5%) as the latest Egyptian Demographic and Health Survey, with a sample size of 16,527 women ages 15 to 49.

Of course, as noted by Pew Forum demographer Conrad Hackett, "it is possible that Christians in Egypt have been undercounted in censuses and demographic surveys."² According to the Pew Forum's analysis of *Global Restrictions on Religion*,³ Egypt has very high government restrictions on religion as well as high social hostilities involving religion. Hackett goes on to observe that "these factors may lead some Christians, particularly converts from Islam, to be cautious about revealing their identity." Regardless of the actual number, it is very likely that Christians are declining as a proportion of Egypt's population, even if their absolute numbers are not falling. On the one hand, Christian fertility in Egypt has been lower than Muslim fertility. On the other, is possible that Christians have left the country, though a 2012 study by the Pew Forum on the religious affiliation of migrants around the world has not found evidence of an especially large Egyptian Christian diaspora.⁴

Totals and rounding

All columns of absolute numbers in tables always add up exactly to the totals and subtotals shown. However, as with all large statistical tables, a column of percentages may not always add up to exactly the total or subtotal indicated, due to rounding. Although in most cases throughout this survey component percentages in fact add up exactly to their respective totals, in a small number of cases this is not so because of the rounding feature. As an example, a total may be: 0.13%+0.13%+0.13%=0.39%; when each is rounded to only one place of decimals, the figures become 0.1%+0.1%+0.1%=0.4%, which introduces a small discrepancy.

Dates of statistics

² Pew Research Center, "Ask the Expert," May 11, 2011, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1770/ask-the-expert-pew-research-center#christians-egypt>.

³ Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life Project, *Global Restrictions on Religion*, December 17, 2009, <http://www.pewforum.org/Government/Global-Restrictions-on-Religion.aspx>.

⁴ See Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life Project, "Faith on the Move: The Religious Affiliation of International Migrants," March 8, 2012, <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/03/08/religious-migration-exec/>.

It is important, in changing situations, to know the exact date (year, perhaps also month and sometimes day) to which particular statistics apply. This methodology compares government statistics of religion with statistics from religious communities themselves; but in doing so, it must be remembered that a government census (or a public-opinion poll) is almost always taken on a single, known day; whereas, by contrast, religious statistics are compiled over a lengthy period that may amount to 3, 4, 5, 6 or even 7 years from the local grass-roots counting of heads to final compilation of totals by a large denomination or church. Denominational totals published in 2010 therefore probably refer to the situation in 2002, 2001 or even 2000.

Dynamics of change in religious populations

The question of how and why the number of religious adherents changes over time is critical to the study of international religious demography. It is more complex than simply “counting heads” via births and deaths—a well-established area in quantitative sociological studies—but in addition involves the multifaceted areas of religious conversion and migration. The migration of religious people is only in the past few years become a more researched area of demographic study, and issues surrounding religious conversion continue to be under-represented in the field. Data on religion from a wide range of sources—including from the religious communities themselves, as well as governments and scholars—must be employed to understand the total scope of religious affiliation. Given data on a particular religion from two separate points in time, the question can be raised, “What are the dynamics by which the number of adherents changes over time?” The dynamics of change in religious affiliation can be reduced to three sets of empirical population data that together enable enumeration of the increase or decrease in adherents over time. To measure overall change, these three sets can be defined as follows: (1) births minus deaths; (2) converts to minus converts from; and (3) immigrants minus emigrants.⁵ The first variable in each of these three sets (births, converts to, immigrants) measures increase, whereas the second (deaths, converts from, emigrants) measures decrease. All future (and current) projections of religious affiliation, within any subset of the global population (normally a country or region), will account for these dynamics, and the changes themselves are dependent on these dynamics.

Births

The primary mechanism of global religious demographic change is (live) births. Children are almost always counted as having the religion of their parents (as is the law in Norway, for example). In simple terms, if populations that are predominantly Muslim, for example, have more children on average than those that are predominantly Christian or Hindu, then over time (all other things being equal) Muslims will become an increasingly larger percentage of that population. This means that the relative size of a religious population has a close statistical relationship to birthrates.

Deaths

⁵ On a global scale, immigrants and emigrants are the same; that is, when one immigrates *to* a host country, he is also emigrating *from* a home country. In essence, the difference here is zero.

Even as births increase their memberships, religious communities experience constant loss through the deaths of members. Though this often includes tragic, unanticipated deaths of younger members, it most frequently affects the elderly members. Thus, changes in health care and technology can positively impact religious communities if members live longer.

Births minus deaths/total fertility rate

The change over time in any given population is most simply expressed as the number of births into the community minus the number of deaths out of it. Many religious communities around the world experience little else in the dynamics of their growth or decline. Detailed projections rely on a number of estimated measures, including life expectancy, population age structures, and the total fertility rate. This means that any attempt to understand the dynamics of religious affiliation must be based firmly on demographic projections of births and deaths.

Converts to

It is a common observation that individuals (or even whole villages or communities) change allegiance from one religion to another (or to no religion at all). Unfortunately, one of the problems in studying conversion is the paucity of information on it. Reliable data on conversions are hard to obtain for a number of reasons. Although some national censuses ask people about their religion, they do not directly ask whether people have converted to their present faith. A few cross-national surveys do contain questions about religious switching, but even in those surveys it is difficult to assess whether more people leave a religion than enter it. In some countries, legal and social consequences make conversion difficult, and survey respondents might be reluctant to speak honestly about the topic. In particular, Hinduism is for many Hindus (as is Islam for many Muslims) not just a religion but also an ethnic or cultural identity that does not depend on whether a person actively practices the faith. Thus even non-practicing or secular Hindus may still consider themselves, and be viewed by their neighbors, as Hindus.

Converts from

Conversion to a new religion, as mentioned above, also involves conversion from a previous one. Thus, a convert to Islam is, at the same time, a convert from another religion. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the most converts from Christianity were and continue to be found largely among those in the Western world who have decided to be agnostics or atheists.

Converts to minus converts from

The net conversion rate in a population is calculated by subtracting the number of converts from the number of converts to. Conversion to and conversion from will likely continue to play a role in changing religious demographics in the future.

Immigrants

Equally important at the international level is how the movement of people across national borders impacts religious affiliation. Once religious communities are established through immigration they often grow vigorously (for a time) via high birth rates.

Emigrants

In a reversal of nineteenth-century European colonization of Africa, Asia, and parts of the Americas, the late twentieth century witnessed waves of emigration of people from these regions to the Western world. The impact on religious affiliation is significant.

Immigrants minus emigrants

In the twenty-first century, international migration continues to have a significant impact on the religious composition of individual countries. One can try to anticipate the way in which expected immigration and emigration trends will affect a country's population over time. One profound change to be expected is the increase of religious pluralism in most every country of the world. Increasing religious pluralism is not always welcomed and can be seen as a political, cultural, national, or religious threat.

The six dynamics discussed above determine changes in religious demographics. Gains are the result of three positive dynamics: births, conversions to, and immigration. Losses are the result of three negative dynamics: deaths, conversions from, and emigration. The net change in religious demographics is the result of gains minus losses. The balance of dynamics can be reflected in any proportions (for example, mainly births for gains, mainly conversions from for losses) but can also be represented by pairing the gains and losses by type: births vs. deaths, converts to vs. converts from, and immigrants vs. emigrants. In each case, the net change (either positive or negative) will be the difference between the two. This means that any attempt to understand religious affiliation in the past, present, or future must be firmly based on demographic dynamics. A proper awareness of these dynamics and their significance is thus vital both for undertaking and for interpreting studies of the future of religion.

Measuring growth rates

The rates of growth, increase, decrease or decline of membership in many congregations can readily be measured from their annually reported statistics. This has been done by obtaining the statistics for 2 different years, where possible 5 years apart (to minimize the effects of roll-cleaning and other annual irregularities), usually 2000–2005 and 2005–2010, and working out the average annual growth rate as a percentage. Great care must be taken in such computations to ensure that the statistics used are measuring exactly the same entity (especially geographically) for each of the 2 years concerned. Growth, as percent increase or decrease per year, must be measured by dividing any annual increase by the identical category of total. Thus a church, for example, in a particular country with 500,000 total adherents (including children) in 2005 which grows to 600,000 total adherents (including children) in 2010 shows an increase of $600,000 - 500,000 = 100,000$, which divided by 5 = 20,000 a year, which divided by the mean membership of 550,000 gives an increase rate of 3.64% per year. In practice, the methodology follows a more accurate method by using the 1970 and 1995 figures for each denomination to arrive at exponential annual rates.

There are several different ways of measuring the growth of a religious body. Firstly, one can measure either adults only, or total community including children. Secondly, the

growth rate of a church or religious grouping can be measured over a single day, or a month, a year, a decade, or 50 years—and all will yield differing results. This survey is concerned primarily to measure long-term rates. A growth rate measured for a specific religious body over a 2- or 3-year period may not be sustained throughout the decade, which explains differences in rates for the same church obtained at different times.

Projecting religious populations

The starting point of future studies is natural growth of the total population of the country or region of interest, utilizing demographic projections as a baseline. Three major areas beyond natural growth were then utilized to improve the projections. First, birth and death rates vary among religious communities within a particular country. Second, increasing numbers of people are likely to change their religious affiliations in the future. Third, immigration and emigration trends will impact a country's population over time. The highest quality projections for religious communities are built on cohort-component projections—ones that use differential rates for each religion: age-specific fertility rates by religion, age structure in 5-year age-and-sex cohorts by religion, migration rates by religion, and mortality by religion.

Unfortunately, this kind of detail is not yet available for many countries (half of censuses do not ask a question about religion). Fortunately, the process of filling in missing data using demographic and smaller scale general population surveys is underway, and as these data become available through the Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project, researchers will have access to these data through the *World Religion Database*, where they will be archived in full, with summary results available at the Pew Forum's website. In the meantime, projections cannot solely rely on the cohort-component method. Instead, they use a hybrid projection method. First, the 2015 religious composition of each country is established as the baseline. Then, utilizing the United Nations medium variant cohort-component projections of populations for five-year periods up to 2050,⁶ future religious shares are modestly adjusted from the 2015 baseline. Adjustments are based on analysis of past differential growth rates of religious groups, factoring in historical patterns of religious switching and possible future attenuation of past trends. Finally, these projections take into account how immigrants might alter the future religious composition of country populations.

Ethno-linguistic people groups

A problem for social science research is the lack of available survey and polling data in non-Western countries. While the United States and many European countries have a long history of engaging in this kind of research, many—often more underdeveloped—countries can be difficult to access and/or speak languages difficult for Western researchers. The

⁶ Data are from United Nations, *World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision* (Blue Ridge Summit, PA: United Nations Publications, 2013). Note that if as a religious population is near 100% of a country's population, then the United Nations cohort data is applicable to the whole religious population. The challenge is estimating any variation from this in minority populations. If birth or death rates vary dramatically from the majority religious community, then the future share of that minority population can be very different from its present share.

WCD's method directly addresses this methodological challenge through its additional taxonomy of the world's ethnic groups, which are paired with religious statistics.

A "peoples" taxonomy must take into account both ethnicity and language. The approach taken in "Ethnosphere" in Part 8 of the *World Christian Encyclopedia* was to match ethnic codes with language codes, which produced over 13,700 distinct ethnolinguistic peoples.⁷ Not all combinations of ethnicity and language are possible, but nevertheless every person in the world can be categorized as belonging to an (mutually exclusive) ethnolinguistic people. For example, there are ethnic Kazaks who speak Kazak as their mother tongue and ethnic Kazaks who speak Russian as their mother tongue. These are two separate ethnolinguistic peoples.

The work of determining the religious break of ethnolinguistic peoples was begun in the 1970s in Africa, where many Christian churches reported the ethnic breakdown of their congregations. Utilizing data gathered by religions and in government censuses, estimates of religious affiliation for all peoples was completed in the mid-1990s and published in *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 2nd edition. These data continue to be updated and published in the *World Christian Database* and *World Religion Database*.

Each distinct ethno-linguistic group in a country is assigned varying shares of the 18 categories of religion. For example, the Japanese in Japan are reported as 56% Mahayana Buddhist, 23% various New religionist, 10% agnostic, 3% atheist, 2% Shinto, and 1% Christian. Each group is traced throughout the world with the assumption that whatever their religious breakdown is in their home country will be the same abroad.⁸ This allows researchers to locate Christian people in predominantly non-Christian countries. For example, the *WCD* reports that Pakistan—a majority-Muslim country—is also home to over 2 million Christians. While Christians are found among Muslim-majority people groups (for example, Punjabi at 4% Christian), they are also present in the country as ex-pats, such as French (76% Christian) and British (84% Christian).

⁷ The construction of the taxonomy is explained in more detail in David B. Barrett, Todd M. Johnson, Christopher Guidry, and Peter Crossing, *World Christian Trends, AD 30–AD 2200: Interpreting the Annual Christian Megacensus* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library Publication, 2003), part 18, "Ethnolinguistics." The ethnic or culture codes are outlined in David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson, eds., *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*, vol 2: *Religions, Peoples, Languages, Cities, Topics*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), table 8-1. The languages are listed in *WCE*, Part 9 "Linguametrics" and are derived from David Dalby, David Barrett, and Michael Mann, *The Linguasphere Register of the World's Languages and Speech Communities*, 2 vols (Carmarthenshire, Wales: Linguasphere Press, 1999). All are available online at www.worldchristiandatabase.org.

⁸ There is a limitation with this initial assumption (unless otherwise determined), especially in terms of religiously persecuted people. For example, many of the people groups who have left the Middle East (majority-Muslim countries) are more Christian. For example, Iraqis in Iraq are 98% Muslim (essentially 0% Christian), whereas in the United States, where many refugees have fled to, Iraqis are 82% Muslim (and 16% Christian).