
Religious Belief of the Czech Population in the 1921–2011 Censuses¹

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Abstract: The article is focused on the definitions of religious belief in the Czech Republic in the censuses from 1921 to 2011. General information about censuses and the method of publication of the results are mentioned. The results of the main groups sorted by religious belief and their changes compared to previous censuses are described by each census. The article uses the data called Demographical Handbook 2014² and census data from the Czech Statistical Office.

Keywords: census, religious belief, Czech Republic, methodology, Demographical Handbook

Abstrakt: Text se zaměřuje na definici náboženského vyznání v České republice ve sčítáních lidu od roku 1921 do 2011. Jsou zde popsány hlavní informace o jednotlivých sčítáních lidu a poté také metody publikace výsledků. Tento text zmiňuje výsledky podle hlavních skupin náboženského vyznání a porovnává je s předchozími sčítáními. Pro článek jsou využita data z Demografické příručky 2014 a také data ze sčítání lidu publikovaná Českým statistickým úřadem.

Klíčová slova: sčítání lidu, náboženské vyznání, Česká republika, metodika, Demografická příručka

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² “Demografická příručka 2014” [Czech Demographic Handbook 2014] (online), CSO [Czech Statistical Office], Praha: CSO 2015, retrieved 15. 1. 2016, available online at <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/demograficka-prirucka-2014>.

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In the beginning of the text we will mention important historical facts and factors, which affect the religious beliefs of the people in our state. Religious beliefs of the population have been studied in censuses since 1880. The data analyzed in this article will be from 1921 onwards, because those contain data from this area after the creation of Czechoslovakia. After the 1950 census, questions on religion were banned in official documents and renewed after the fall of Communism in the 1991 census. The government of the Czechoslovak Republic rejected any evidence of religious belief by the regulation from the 27th of July 1954 and ministers and presidents of central institutions were instructed “not to demand information about religious belief / or the fact that they have no religious belief from citizens in state offices or companies, and citizens also should not state the information about their religious belief in official documents, paper forms, and questionnaires and in new forms there should not be any question on religious belief.” Religious classes in schools were also very restricted.³

This was abolished by the government of the Czechoslovak Republic in regulation 649/1990. There was a change in the formulation of the question on religious belief, because before 1991, formal church membership was counted, and after 1991 the question asked about religious belief by the respondents’ own declaration. Despite that in 1991 census inhabitants weren’t willing to fill in the question on religious belief and they thought that it was an unacceptable breach of their privacy. In consequence, it was acceptable not to answer the question on religious belief and the value of this information decreased. Both traditional and new churches in the Czech Republic had the opportunity to gain believers after the revolution in 1989, but the traditional ones didn’t benefit from the situation; they had inner problems, for example the restitution of their property. Some people weren’t satisfied with institutionalized churches; they weren’t looking for a strictly defined religion and let themselves be influenced by many religious movements. After some time, stronger secularization trends emerged again, corroborated by the anti-Catholic attitudes of the Czech society and the atheist propaganda of the Communist regime in the past.⁴ The dwindling of the number of believers was also caused by the older generations dying – and these generations were traditionally members of churches more often than their children. The percentage of religious people started to decrease sharply in the generations born between 1942 and 1950 who grew up in the 1950s’. In the next generations the percentage of religious people didn’t change much and remained around one third of the population.⁵ Czech people could be divided into three groups according to their religious

³ “Sčítání lidu, domů a bytů 2011 – Pramenné dílo” [2011 Census of People, Houses and Apartments – A Source Material] (online), CSO [Czech Statistical Office], Praha: CSO 2013, retrieved 15. 1. 2016, available online at <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/scitani-lidu-domu-a-bytu-2011-pramenne-dilo-2011-op37nad790>, p. 3.

⁴ D. LUŽNÝ and M. NAVRÁTILOVÁ, “Náboženství a sekularizace v České republice” [Religion and Secularization in Czech Republic] (online), *Sociální studia* (4, 2001): p. 111–125, retrieved 31. 7. 2016, available online at <http://socstudia.fss.muni.cz/dokumenty/080319142015.pdf>.

⁵ D. HAMPLOVÁ, “Institucionalizované a neinstitucionalizované náboženství v českém poválečném vývoji” [Institutionalized and Non-Institutionalized Religion in Czech History After World War II], *Soudobé dějiny* (2–3, 2001): p. 294–311.

belief, but the distribution cannot be accurate for everyone: religionists (regular attendants of services, as well as those who merely formally claim a church affiliation), atheists (confirmed, as well as those who think of atheism only as unchurchedness) and a “category in between”.⁶ Hamplová has also dealt with this topic, for example in the book *Náboženství v české společnosti na prahu 3. tisíciletí*.⁷

Despite these facts, the census remains the only source of information about religious belief of the total population of the state, or more precisely of the half of the population who filled in the question in the last 2011 census. There are of course other, much more detailed sources of information about the religious belief of the Czech population, but censuses are the only ones that contain the data about the population overall. Among other sources, we can name the international surveys European Values Study, International Social Survey Programme, and European Social Survey, in which the Czech Republic also takes part and which contain detailed questions on religion.⁸ Then there are many surveys organized to contain detailed information only about the Czech Republic or combined with some neighborhood states, for example *Aufbruch, Detradicionalizace a individualizace náboženství* (Detradicionalization and individualization of religion), and many others, organized by various researchers and institutions.⁹ More information about the surveys could be found for example in Váně and Kreidl’s article.¹⁰

When we want information about members of the Roman Catholic Church, it is possible to find the data from the census of participants of religious services in selected years¹¹ and there are also data from the yearly evidence of the vicars, which are only partly available to the public.¹²

The aim of this text is to analyze religious belief in the censuses from 1921 to 2011. For each census, the formulation and definition of the question on religious belief, legislative arrangements and the main results according to religious groups are de-

⁶ O. NEŠPOROVÁ and Z. R. NEŠPOR, “Religion: An Unsolved Problem for the Modern Czech Nation”, *Sociologický časopis/Czech Sociological Review* 45 (6, 2009): p. 1215–1237.

⁷ D. HAMPLOVÁ, *Náboženství v české společnosti na prahu 3. tisíciletí* [Religion in Czech Society on the Verge of the Third Millennium], Praha: Karolinum 2013, 152 p.

⁸ “About the European Social Survey” (online), *ESS* 2016, retrieved 8. 8. 2016, available online at <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org>; “About European Values Study” (online), *EVS* 2016, accessed 6. 8. 2016, available online at <http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/page/about-evs.html>; “General information” (online), *ISSP* 2016, retrieved 8. 8. 2016, available online at <http://www.issp.org>.

⁹ D. LUŽNÝ and Z. R. NEŠPOR, *Sociologie náboženství* [*Sociology of Religion*], Praha: Portál 2007, 232 p.

¹⁰ J. VÁNĚ and M. KREIDL, “Přehled výzkumů mapujících religiozitu v ČR po r. 1989” [A Survey of Researches on Czech Religiosity after 1989], *SDAinfo* (3–4, 2001): p. 1–5.

¹¹ “Úkony duchovní správy v ČR” [Pastoral administration in the Czech Republic] (online), Plenární sněm Katolické církve v ČR [Plenary Assembly of Roman Catholic Church in the Czech Republic] 2002, retrieved 1. 8. 2016, available online at <http://snem.cirkev.cz/index0156.html?menu=156>.

¹² R. TICHÝ, “Lidé, skupiny a praktiky v české katolické církvi 1997–2005” [People, Groups and Practices of the Czech Catholic Church 1997–2005] (online), *Pražské sociálně vědní studie*, 2008, retrieved 4. 8. 2016, available online at http://publication.fsv.cuni.cz/attachments/284_015%20-%20Tichy.pdf.

scribed. The last part then compares the data from the censuses and analyzes the differences between the groups based on religious belief. In the whole text, we analyze only data for the area of the Czech Republic, including the period of 1921–1991, when the country was a part of Czechoslovakia.

1921 Census

The last census in our state before the First World War was in 1910. After the war, the State Statistical Office was founded and was made responsible of organizing a census. According to tradition, the census should have taken place in 1920, but that was not possible because the preparations were not complete and the borders were not yet precisely defined – so the census was held on the 15th of February 1921. Its execution was in accordance with the 256/1920 act.¹³ It was processed for the present inhabitants (defined by their mere presence in the country on the date of census) and the results were published in the Czechoslovak Statistics edition (7 vol.).¹⁴ The formulation of the question on the religious belief was the same as in the censuses in the former Austria-Hungary monarchy. The question was formulated in the manual to the census sheet: “The information about the respondent’s religious belief or whether the respondent has no religion is to be written here. Catholics and Protestants should state the church they belong to and members of other churches should write the answer in the same way; for example the Czechoslovak Church, Old Catholic Church etc. Persons with no religion are only those who are not members of any church”.¹⁵ Adventists also weren’t considered as Christian church.

The publication of the results was interesting, because there was no difference between churches that were recognized by state and those that were not, so a church not recognized by the state with a higher number of believers would have its name stated in the publication.¹⁶ To the date of the census, 92.8% of inhabitants declared themselves to belong to a church; it was 90.1% in the Czech part of the country, 98.2% in the Moravian part and 98.6% in the Silesian part.

In Table 1, we can see the numbers of inhabitants who declared themselves members of some churches, the percentage of them in the population and the difference between sexes. It is possible to see high percentages of Roman Catholic Church members (80.3% of men and 83.5% of women). The Czechoslovak Church, which was

¹³ “Statistika, od historie po současnost” [Statistics: From History to Today] (online), CSO [Czech Statistical Office], Praha: CSO 2006, retrieved 28. 1. 2016, available online at https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/historie_statistiky.

¹⁴ “Sčítání lidu, domů a bytů 2011...”, <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/scitani-lidu-domu-a-bytu-2011-pramenne-dilo-2011-op37nad790>.

¹⁵ *Náboženské vyznání obyvatelstva podle výsledků sčítání lidu v letech 1921–1991* [Religious Affiliation of the Population According to the 1921–1999 Census], Praha: CSO 1995, p. 9.

¹⁶ *Náboženské vyznání obyvatelstva podle výsledků sčítání lidu v letech 1921–1991* [Religious Affiliation of the Population According to the 1921–1999 Census], Praha: CSO 1995, p. 9.

founded only two years before the census,¹⁷ already had a high number of members; for both sexes, it was more than 5% of the population. The percentage of unidentified religious belief was minimal for both sexes; 1 564 inhabitants in total. The number of people without a religion was also small (compared to censuses 1991 and after); in this census it was 8.6% of men and 5.9% of women; in this group, the percentage was higher among men and it remained like that in the next censuses.

Table 1: Selected groups of religious belief, 1921 census

Religious belief	Total	Men	Women	Total (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Roman Catholic	8 201 464	3 854 014	4 347 450	82.0	80.3	83.5
Church of Czech Brethren	231 199	111 960	119 239	2.3	2.3	2.3
Orthodox	9 221	6 030	3 191	0.1	0.1	0.1
Czechoslovak	523 232	258 286	264 946	5.2	5.4	5.1
Unidentified	1 564	910	654	0.0	0.0	0.0
No religion	716 515	410 414	306 101	7.2	8.6	5.9
Total population	10 005 734	4 801 623	5 204 111	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: CSO, Demographical Handbook 2014 (Demografická příručka 2014), custom calculations

Notice: Only selected groups of religious beliefs are in the table; the sum is not 100%

1930 Census

The second Czechoslovak census was supposed to take place (according to the 256/1920 act) in 1925, but because of economic reasons and the example of other states where censuses took place every 10 years, the census was postponed. According to the 47/1927 act, the census took place on the 1st of December 1930.¹⁸ The results were published in the Czechoslovak Statistics edition (8 vol.) and the information about flats was processed in a detached volume.¹⁹ In this census, religious belief was stated in the census sheet based on the church (recognized or not recognized by state) a person belonged to. In case a person wasn't the member of any church, the person was marked "without religion". When converting to another church, it was necessary to inform the district office.²⁰ Catholics were also asked to write whether they were Roman, Greek or Armenian Catholics. Protestants had to write which church they belonged to, for example the Church of Czech Brethren etc. Members of oth-

¹⁷ *Náboženské vyznání obyvatelstva podle výsledků sčítání lidu v letech 1921–1991* [Religious Affiliation of the Population According to the 1921–1999 Census], Praha: CSO 1995, p. 10.

¹⁸ "Statistika, od historie po současnost", https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/historie_statistiky.

¹⁹ "Sčítání lidu, domů a bytů 2011...", <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/scitani-lidu-domu-a-bytu-2011-pramenne-dilo-2011-op37nad790>.

²⁰ *Náboženské vyznání obyvatelstva podle výsledků sčítání lidu v letech 1921–1991* [Religious Affiliation of the Population According to the 1921–1999 Census], Praha: CSO 1995, p. 44.

er churches answered in the same way, for example members of the Czechoslovak, Orthodox, Old Catholic Church etc.²¹

In the 1930 census, 9,840 thousand of people declared themselves members of some church; this is 92.0% percent of the population. Table 2 shows the number of members in selected religious groups and their percentage in the total population. If we compare these values to those in 1921, the highest absolute gains belong to the Czechoslovak Church (256 440 inhabitants) and the Roman Catholic Church (176 615 inhabitants) and the structure of the population according to religious belief has also changed. The absolute increase in members of the Czechoslovak Church also translated into the increase of the percentage of the total number of inhabitants; in the 1930 census, 7.4% of men and 7.2% of women stated this church. In comparison, the Roman Catholic Church registered a gain of members in absolute numbers, but its percentage of the total number of inhabitants decreased (the share was in this case 76.6% of men and 80.3% of women). Categories “no religion” and “unidentified” were linked together, so we can’t recognize precisely to which of these groups inhabitants belonged, but this category had 9.5% of men and 6.3% of women.

Table 2: Selected groups of religious belief, 1930 census

Religious belief	Total	Men	Women	Total (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Roman Catholic	8 378 079	3 963 583	4 414 496	78.5	76.6	80.3
Church of Czech Brethren	290 994	141 305	149 689	2.7	2.7	2.7
Orthodox	24 488	14 347	10 141	0.2	0.3	0.2
Czechoslovak	779 672	382 835	396 837	7.3	7.4	7.2
Unidentified and no religion	834 144	490 078	344 066	7.8	9.5	6.3
Total population	10 674 386	5 174 074	5 500 312	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: CSO, Demographic Handbook 2014 (Demografická příručka 2014), custom calculations

Notice: Only selected groups of religious beliefs are in the table; the sum is not 100%

1950 Census

The plans for the next census were to organize one in 1940, but this was postponed. There were only partial censuses in 1946 and 1947 and a census took place on the 1st of January 1950.²² Similarly to the previous ones, this census was governed by the 47/1927 act, but also by government regulation 224/1949 about a census in 1950 and

²¹ Š. MORÁVKOVÁ, “Metodologie zjišťování náboženského vyznání při sčítání lidu, domů a bytů 2001” [Methodology of Religious Affiliation Investigation in the 2001 General Census] (online), *Demografie* (2, 2004): p. 116–120 retrieved 21. 1. 2016, available online at <https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/20563243/180304q2.pdf/5a9cbb0b-237e-429f-8173-288b31be5707?version=1.0>.

²² “Statistika, od historie po současnost”, https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/historie_statistiky.

registers connected to it. A census of agricultural, industrial and trading companies was conducted on the same day, so this event was called “the national census 1950”.²³ This census was the last one processing all present inhabitants. The results were classified, published in limited amount of copies, and released between 1957 and 1958 in a small edition (4 vol.) named Census of Inhabitants and Houses and Apartments in the Czechoslovak Republic on the 1st of March 1950; the data was made public in 1962.²⁴ In this census, religious belief was defined in the same way as in the previous census – as the membership in a church or a religious community. If a person wasn’t a member of any church or religious community, “no religion” should be stated in the census sheet. As in the previous census, it wasn’t possible to change religious belief only by stating it in the census sheet. It was also recommended to Catholics to write a specific church of which they were members, the same with Protestants; religious belief of the members of other churches and religious communities, for example Czechoslovak, Orthodox, Old Catholic etc. should be mentioned in the same way.²⁵

To the date of the census 8,353 thousand of people declared themselves as members of churches or religious communities – nearly 94% of total inhabitants. The information about absolute and relative data is presented in Table 3. While comparing the data from 1950 to the results of the previous census in 1930, it is very important to take into account the fact that as a consequence of the Second World War and the expulsion of Germans, the total number of population declined by nearly 1.8 million. This decrease is reflected in the reduction of absolute numbers and also percentages of the members of some churches, above all of the Roman Catholic and German Protestant Church, and the Israeli belief. For the Roman Catholic Church, the reason for the decline of this percentage could be, to a certain extent, a transfer of believers to other churches, but this church still had the biggest share of the total population; that is 75.1% of men and 77.5% of women. On the contrary, other churches, mainly the Czechoslovak and Church of Czech Brethren registered a stable rise of the number of believers and also the rise of percentage of total population in the period 1921–1950; for the Czechoslovak Church the percentage rose to 10.6% of men and 10.7% of women. The percentage of members of the Church of Czech Brethren increased to 4.5% of men and 4.6% of women. Categories “no religion” and “unidentified” were again divided in this census; in the case of people of an unidentified religious belief, there was a small increase of the percentage in comparison to the 1921 census, but it still did not go over 0.3%. People without religion registered a small decrease of the percentage compared to 1921; in 1950 7.1% of men and 4.7% of women declared themselves as “without religion”.

²³ *Náboženské vyznání obyvatelstva podle výsledků sčítání lidu v letech 1921–1991* [Religious Affiliation of the Population According to the 1921–1999 Census], Praha: CSO 1995, p. 78.

²⁴ “Sčítání lidu, domů a bytů 2011...” <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/scitani-lidu-domu-a-bytu-2011-pramenne-dilo-2011-op37nad790>.

²⁵ *Náboženské vyznání obyvatelstva podle výsledků sčítání lidu v letech 1921–1991* [Religious Affiliation of the Population According to the 1921–1999 Census], Praha: CSO 1995, p. 78.

Table 3: Selected groups of religious belief, 1950 census

Religious belief	Total	Men	Women	Total (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Roman Catholic	6 792 046	3 248 882	3 543 164	76.4	75.1	77.5
Church of Czech Brethren	401 729	193 329	208 400	4.5	4.5	4.6
Orthodox	50 365	25 359	25 006	0.6	0.6	0.6
Czechoslovak	946 813	458 371	488 442	10.6	10.6	10.7
Unidentified	22 889	12 764	10 125	0.3	0.3	0.2
No religion	519 962	305 886	214 076	5.8	7.1	4.7
Total population	8 896 133	4 325 641	4 570 492	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: CSO, Demographical Handbook 2014 (Demografická příručka 2014), custom calculations

Notice: Only selected groups of religious beliefs are in the table; the sum is not 100%

1991 Census

The last Czechoslovak census was organized on the 3rd of March 1991 and processed all permanent residents in the area by the date of census. 1,172 publications containing the results were released (including 848 for the territory of the Czech Republic), a really important publication being *Pramenné dílo*.²⁶ The publication *Inhabitants of the Czech Republic According to Religious Belief* (*Obyvatelstvo ČR podle náboženského vyznání*) was focused on religion and included an analysis of the information about the distribution of inhabitants according to religious belief; it also compared the results with the available data from 1950. This publication was issued in 1992. The census was regulated by the 21/1971 act about the unified system of socioeconomic information and some additional government regulations.²⁷ The question on religious belief was again included in the census after 40 years. The government of the Czechoslovak Republic had to issue the 649/1990 regulation to cancel the still valid 1410/1954 regulation about the cancellation of the evidence of religious belief. Nevertheless, because of the big publicity of this issue and the contextual negative opinion of some inhabitants, this question was often left unfilled. Religious belief was defined as participation in the religious life of some church (religious community) or a relationship to it. Every person could freely decide his or her own religious belief or write “no religion”.²⁸

More than 4.5 million of inhabitants declared themselves as members of some church in 1991 census; this was nearly 44% of the state population. Another nearly 4.1 million of inhabitants specified that they had no religion and nearly 1.7 million of inhabitants didn't fill in this question. Srb and Andrlé²⁹ write that in this census,

²⁶ “Statistika, od historie po současnost”, https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/historie_statistiky.

²⁷ “Historie sčítání” [A History of Census] (online), CSO [Czech Statistical Office], Praha: CSO 2015, retrieved 29. 1. 2016, available online at https://www.czso.cz/csu/sldb/historie_scitani.

²⁸ *Náboženské vyznání obyvatelstva podle výsledků sčítání lidu v letech 1921–1991* [Religious Affiliation of the Population According to the 1921–1999 Census], Praha: CSO 1995, p. 128.

²⁹ V. SRB and A. ANDRLE, “Náboženské vyznání obyvatelstva České republiky ke 3. březnu 1991” [Religious Affiliation of Czech Republic Inhabitants in 3. 3. 1991] (online), *Demografie* (3, 1994):

inhabitants in the age of 40–49 and younger (generations 1941–1950 and younger) didn't answer the question more frequently (it is a considerable turning point in the percentage of unidentified answers by age in comparison to the older inhabitants). They explain it by the fact that these generations were exposed to a systematic influence of antireligious propaganda. As Kučera³⁰ mentions, we can expect that only a small amount of people were afraid to state their religious belief. But on the other hand, a huge amount of people declared in this census that they were believers, even if it could be more a manifestation that they were baptized (not that they had a strong relationship to the church). Another group could consider being religious a “modern trend” when it wasn't prohibited to declare it, or they could declare themselves as religious “out of spite” when they couldn't do so in the previous 40 years. There was of course the biggest part of believers who considered themselves to be religious as a declaration of real faith and participation of the religious life of the church, but most of them didn't attend church services regularly.

42.3% of men and 37.7% of women were without religion as we can see in Table 4; it is a huge increase compared to 1950 (but we can't correctly compare these two censuses because of the different definitions). There was also an increase of the percentage of people who didn't fill in the answer compared to 1950; it was 17.0% of men and 15.4% of women. Christian churches (mostly Roman Catholic, Church of Czech Brethren and Czechoslovak Hussite Church) had a decisive majority in the overall number of believers. There was a huge decline in the percentage of members of the Roman Catholic Church compared to 1950; 36.4% of men and 41.5% of women stated they were members in 1991. The Czechoslovak Church also noted a decrease of members; 1.4% of men and 2.0% of women wrote themselves as members of this church in 1991.

Table 4: Selected groups of religious belief, 1991 census

Religious belief	Total	Men	Women	Total (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Roman Catholic	4 021 385	1 819 482	2 201 903	39.0	36.4	41.5
Church of Czech Brethren	203 996	89 297	114 699	2.0	1.8	2.2
Orthodox	19 354	8 275	11 079	0.2	0.2	0.2
Czechoslovak	178 036	70 759	107 277	1.7	1.4	2.0
Unidentified	1 665 617	850 426	815 191	16.2	17.0	15.4
No religion	4 112 864	2 116 547	1 996 317	40.0	42.3	37.7
Total population	10 302 215	4 999 935	5 302 280	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: CSO, Demographical Handbook 2014 (Demografická příručka 2014), custom calculations

Notice: Only selected groups of religious beliefs are in the table; the sum is not 100%

p. 181–188, retrieved 28. 1. 2016, available online at <https://docs.google.com/folderview?pli=1&id=0Bwo5H2vnLAXYR1JRNjZCY3ZoZXc>.

³⁰ M. KUČERA, “K interpretaci výsledků sčítání 1991 o náboženském vyznání” [Towards an Interpretation of the Results of the 1991 Census Related to Religious Belief] (online). *Demografie* 46 (3, 1994): p. 189–191, retrieved 29. 1. 2016, available online at <https://docs.google.com/folderview?pli=1&id=0Bwo5H2vnLAXYR1JRNjZCY3ZoZXc>.

2001 Census

The decisive moment of the 2001 census was midnight between 28th February and 1st March. The evaluation of the data was complicated by different types of census sheets and a big number of inhabitants who were away from their permanent address on the date of the census (nearly 750 thousands of people). The results were processed by place of permanent residence.³¹ Many outputs were released (available printed or online), among them the very important *Pramenné dílo*.³² This census had, for the first time from 1930, its own act concerning its execution – it was the Act of Census of Population, Houses and Apartments in 2001 158/1999, while the design of census sheets was modified by the 354/2000 regulation.³³ Religious belief was (just like nationality) among the questions which should be filled according to one's own decision, with a possibility of not answering at all. In the explanatory text, a list of churches recognized by the Czech state was included to serve as an informational aid, but it was also possible to write different religious communities or faiths. This census was accompanied by a negative media campaign both before and in the process; the public was made aware of the potential misuse of the data and could decide to boycott the census. Nevertheless, census papers were collected for a majority of the population in the end; only around 1% were unidentified.³⁴

The International Recommendations for the 2000 censuses of population and housing in the ECE region proposed 3 approaches to the question on religious belief: 1) formal (official) churchmanship in a specific church or religious community, 2) attendance to religious services of the church or religious community, 3) faith or religious belief. The Czech Republic chose the third one of these possibilities – the most liberal approach. The reason was tradition and comparability of the data with previous censuses. The question on religious belief offered two possibilities, first one was the text “no religion” and the second one “believer, write to which church or religious community you belong in the most precise way possible”. There were no restrictions on the formulation of a particular church in the field.³⁵

There was a big decrease of the percentage of believers in this census in comparison to 1991; however, the situation could be explained by a unique atmosphere in society after the fall of Communism and because of that, it is possible that the results

³¹ “Náboženská víra obyvatel podle výsledků sčítání lidu” [Religious Beliefs of the Population According to the Census] (online), *CSO [Czech Statistical Office]*, Praha: CSO 2014, retrieved 22. 1. 2016, available online at <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/nabozenska-vira-obyvatel-podle-vysledku-scitani-lidu-2011-61wegp46fl>.

³² “Historie sčítání lidu. Statistika a my” [A History of Census: Statistics and Us] (online), *CSO [Czech Statistical Office]*, Praha: CSO 2011, retrieved 28. 1. 2016, n. 2, p. 17–21, available online at <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/statistika-my-c-22011-rtqoo02vcb>.

³³ “Demografická příručka 2014”, <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/demograficka-prirucka-2014>.

³⁴ “Historie sčítání”, https://www.czso.cz/csu/sldb/historie_scitani.

³⁵ MORÁVKOVÁ, “Metodologie zjišťování náboženského vyznání...”, p. 116–120.

from 2001 are more precise.³⁶ In 2001 3.3 million of inhabitants declared themselves believers; one third of the total population (in 1991 43.9% of inhabitants declared themselves as believers). On the other hand, there were more than 6 million people without religion in 2001, which means nearly three fifths of the whole population (62.2% of men and 56.0% of women), whereas in 1991 only 39.9% of the population were without religion. The rest of the population (because of the possibility of not answering the question) is in the unidentified category (9.2% of men and 8.5% of women); you can find the data in table 5. The unidentified category constitutes 901 thousand inhabitants; nearly one tenth of the whole population. There was a decrease in this category compared to 1991; at that time it constituted 16.2% of inhabitants.

The Roman Catholic Church still held a dominant position, although in comparison to the previous census, there was a further decrease of the percentage of its members in the total number of inhabitants – 23.8% of men and 29.7% of women declared themselves as members of this church in 2001 census. In a majority of other churches there is also a decline, but for the Orthodox Church, the percentage of believers rose a little, to 0.2% of men and 0.3% of women. An increase of members can be seen for churches registered after 1989 (for example Jehovah's Witnesses who registered one of the highest increases: from 14 575 members in 1991 to 23 162 in 2001, which makes an increase of 58.9%, but there were some even greater increases).

Table 5: Selected groups of religious belief, 2001 census

Religious belief	Total	Men	Women	Total (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Roman Catholic	2 740 780	1 184 162	1 556 618	26.8	23.8	29.7
Church of Czech Brethren	117 212	49 137	68 075	1.2	1.0	1.3
Orthodox	22 968	10 019	12 949	0.2	0.2	0.3
Czechoslovak	99 103	37 717	61 386	1.0	0.8	1.2
Unidentified	901 981	457 841	444 140	8.8	9.2	8.5
No religion	6 039 991	3 099 810	2 940 181	59.0	62.2	56.0
Total population	10 230 060	4 982 071	5 247 989	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: CSO, Demographical Handbook 2014 (Demografická příručka 2014), custom calculations

Notice: Only selected groups of religious beliefs are in the table; the sum is not 100%

2011 Census

The 2011 census had its decisive moment at midnight from 25th to 26th March 2011. Actual residency was taken into account for the first time, meaning the place where people usually stay in their everyday lives. The census sheet could also be filled online

³⁶ "Náboženské vyznání obyvatelstva České republiky" [Religious Affiliation of the Czech Republic Population] (online), a press release, CSO [Czech Statistical Office], Praha: CSO 2004, retrieved 21. 1. 2016, available online at https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/nabozenske_vyznani_obyvatelstva_ceske_republiky_23_12_04.

and the results of the census are available both online and printed in a large number of publications.³⁷ Similarly to the previous census, this one also had both a specific act and a regulation, 279/2010. Within the frame of the § 6 296/2009 act, which specified the contents of the census the information about religion and nationality were specified as voluntary and this was also noted in the census sheet. In the case of the religious belief question, it became clear that with rising age the willingness to answer the question also increases. The region also had some influence: the respondents from the Zlín region answered most often.

The fact that everyone was supposed write the answer according to his/her own decision was included in the explanatory text and there was a possibility to declare oneself to be a “believer not in a church”, while the fields “no religion” and “believer, in a church” remained. More than 705 thousand of inhabitants used this new possibility; it was 6.2% of men and 7.3% of women. This number of inhabitants could be the confirmation of the shift of participants of traditional churches towards alternative faiths and religions.

There was also a shift in the number of registered churches and religious communities which could be stated in the census paper. 11 new churches got registered between 2001 and 2011, so by the date of census the inhabitants could choose from 32 registered churches.³⁸

This census was regulated not only the acts of the Czech Republic, but also international recommendations, specifically the World Programme of Population, Houses and Apartments Censuses Around 2010 resolution. Following this resolution, the document Recommendation of the European Statistician Conference to the Population, Houses and Apartments Censuses Around 2010 specified the key topics. The Czech Republic followed these recommendations and prescriptions of the European Union, with the intention to be in agreement with these documents, but it was also important to have some continuity and a long-term comparability of results; therefore, traditional questions, which weren't obligatory according to the prescriptions of the European Union, were also included in the census.³⁹

More than 2,168 thousand of people declared themselves religious, constituting only a fifth of the inhabitants of the Czech Republic. Nearly 1.5 million of people also noted a specific church or religious belief in the census sheet. People who wrote “Catholic”, “Protestant” or “Christian” are also included in this number; this kind of answers amounted for nearly 92 thousand, while a further 53 thousand answers could

³⁷ “Demografická příručka 2014”, <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/demograficka-prirucka-2014>.

³⁸ “Data registrace církví a náboženských společností a svazů církví a náboženských společností” [Registration Dates of Churches, Parishes, and Religious Communities] (online), *Ministerstvo kultury České Republiky* [Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic], Praha: MKČR 2016, retrieved 20. 1. 2016, available online at <http://www.mkcr.cz/cz/cirkve-a-abozenske-spolecnosti/registrace-a-evidence/data-registrace-cirkvi-a-nabozenskych-spolecnosti-a-svazu-cirkvi-a-nabozenskych-spolecnosti-11263/>.

³⁹ “Sčítání lidu, domů a bytů 2011...”, <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/scitani-lidu-domu-a-bytu-2011-pramenne-dilo-2011-op37nad790>.

not be classified, so they were put in the category “other”.⁴⁰ In comparison with 2001 there was an increase in missing answers; in this census 45.2% of men and 44.2% of women didn't write any answer. The increase in unidentified answers might be the reason for the decrease of the percentage of inhabitants who declared themselves without religion; 36.0% of men and 33.1% of women stated they were “without religion,” as we can see in Table 6. The increase in missing answers also partly resulted in the decline of members of some churches. There was an increase of member numbers (among the traditional churches) in the Greek Catholic Church (of 29%), the Church of Czech Brethren (of 9%) and the Old Catholic Church in the Czech Republic (of 8%). Some growth was registered also by the International Society for Krishna, but in absolute numbers, it wasn't an important increase. There were more members of the Orthodox Church in this census compared to 2001 (in 2001 it was 0.2% of total inhabitants and in 2011 0.3%); the reason may be a newly registered Russian Orthodox Church, jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Moscow and all of Russia in the Czech Republic.⁴¹

The Roman Catholic Church registered a further decrease in the percentage of believers, as 1,082 thousand of inhabitants declared themselves members of this church; 9.2% of men and 11.5% of women. Similar trend could be observed in the Church of Czech Brethren, which had 51 thousand members in the 2011 census; 0.4% of men and 0.6% of women. The third traditional Church – Czechoslovak – was named by 40 thousand inhabitants and similarly to the previous churches, there was a decline to approximately one fourth of the size in 1991.

Table 6: Selected groups of religious belief, 2011 census

Religious belief	Total	Men	Women	Total (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Believers not in church	705 368	316 694	388 674	6.8	6.2	7.3
Roman Catholic	1 082 463	467 493	614 970	10.4	9.2	11.5
Church of Czech Brethren	51 858	22 214	29 644	0.5	0.4	0.6
Orthodox	26 350	12 636	13 714	0.3	0.3	0.3
Czechoslovak	39 229	15 150	24 079	0.4	0.3	0.5
Unidentified	4 662 455	2 310 094	2 352 361	44.7	45.2	44.2
No religion	3 604 095	1 838 898	1 765 197	34.5	36.0	33.1
Total population	10 436 560	5 109 766	5 326 794	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: CSO, Demographical Handbook 2014 (Demografická příručka 2014), custom calculations

Notice 1: Only selected groups of religious beliefs are in the table; the sum is not 100%

Notice 2: There is newly also the Russian Orthodox Church, jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia in the Czech Republic in the Orthodox category, registered on the 26th of May 2007 (MKCR, 2016)

⁴⁰ “Demografická příručka 2014”, <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/demograficka-prirucka-2014>.

⁴¹ “Data registrace církví a náboženských společností...”, <http://www.mkcr.cz/cz/cirkve-a-abozenske-spolecnosti/registrace-a-evidence/data-registrace-cirkvi-a-nabozenskych-spolecnosti-a-svazu-cirkvi-a-nabozenskych-spolecnosti-11263/>.

Conclusion

This article focuses on the summary of the findings about religious belief in censuses from 1921 to 2011. There were some changes in the definition of religious belief (as well as the omission of the question in the censuses in 1961, 1970 and 1980) and the definition of who is an inhabitant has also changed. An outline of these changes can be seen in the table 7.

Table 7: Definition of religious belief and inhabitant in censuses from 1921 to 2011

Year of census	Definition of inhabitant	Definition of religious belief
1921	present	member of church
1930	present	according to register
1950	present	according to register
1991	permanent residents	own declaration of religious belief
2001	permanent residents	own declaration of religious belief
2011	actual residents	own declaration of religious belief

Source: CSO, 2014b, CSO, 2013, Morávková, 2004, custom form

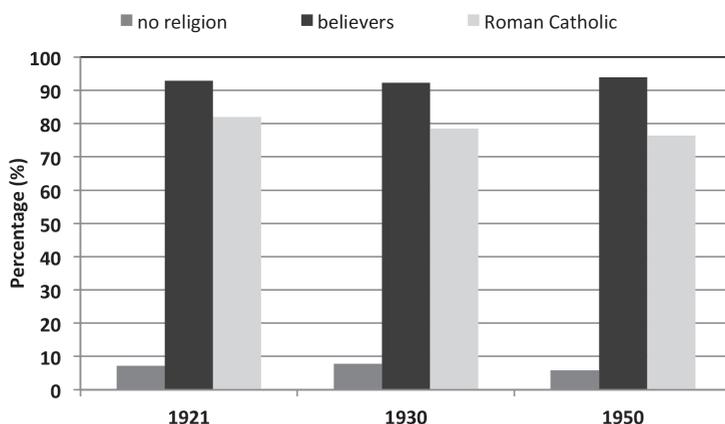
There were many changes in the results of the question on religious belief in censuses between 1921 and 2011; the most impressive one being a huge decline in believers. As we can see in Table 7, the definition of religious belief (and inhabitants) changed between 1950 and 1991, so we have to take the censuses between these years into account separately. As Kučera mentions,⁴² there is the change in the definition of religious belief in the census, but also 40 years of changes in the life of people; in 1991, only 43% of the people who lived in the time of the 1950 census were alive. In 2011 there was also a change in the definition of religious belief (and a new option in the form of “a believer without a church affiliation”), so this census is also separate from the others. Results of the censuses between 1921 and 1950 aren’t very different; there is only a slight decrease in the Roman Catholic category, as we can see in picture 1 (the graph shows the percentage of each group in the total population in the selected year).

After the reintroduction of the question on religious belief in 1991, the first decline of believers was toward the category of non-believers (even more visible in 2001), while later a big percentage of population didn’t answer the question at all (in 2011 44.7% of inhabitants were unidentified). The development of population according to religious belief can be seen in the picture 8. As we can see, in 2011 there were even more people who didn’t fill the question than who declared themselves non-believers.

We can see the data from 1991, 2001 and 2011 censuses in more detail analyzed in Tables 8 and 9. There was a decline in believers in all age groups between the analyzed years; in 2011 this is even more visible in older age groups (this is also true when we add together the believers not in a church and believers in a church in 2011). When we

⁴² Kučera, “K interpretaci výsledků sčítání...”, <https://docs.google.com/folderview?pli=1&id=0Bwo5H2vnLAXYR1JRNjZCY3oZXC>.

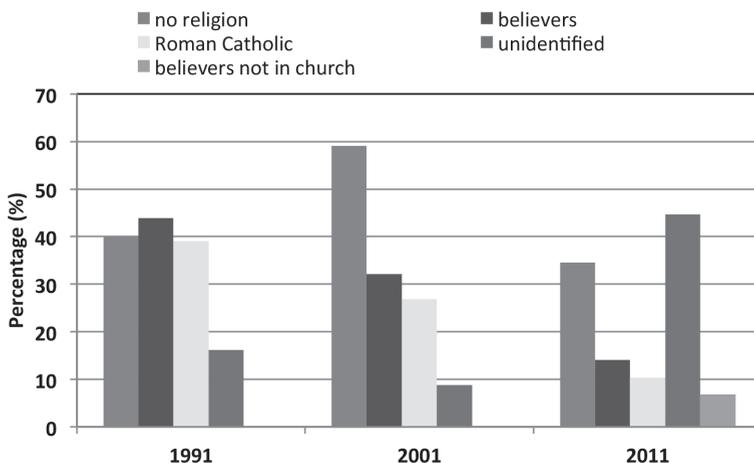
Picture 1: Percentage of total inhabitants without religion, believers and members of the Roman Catholic Church, censuses 1921–1950, Czech Republic



Source: CSO, Demographical Handbook 2014 (Demografická příručka 2014), custom calculations

Notice: In 1930, the categories “unidentified” and “no religion” were together in one category; these people are in the “no religion” category in this chart

Picture 2: Percentage of inhabitants without religion, believers, unidentified and members of the Roman Catholic church, censuses 1991–2011, Czech Republic



Source: CSO, Demographical Handbook 2014 (Demografická příručka 2014), custom calculations

Note: Actual residents were taken in account in 2011, so the results are not comparable to the previous censuses. In 2011 there was an option to declare oneself as a believer without church affiliation, so there is a new category. Believers in this year in the picture are people, who declared themselves as believers of some church.

look at the group of believers not in a church, the distribution is (with the exception of the age of 15–19) nearly the same in the whole adult population. The distribution of believers in a church increases with age, and the ratio of older and younger age groups is nearly the same in 2001 and 2011, but on a different level.

Table 8: Change of the proportion of believers in age groups between the 1991, 2001 and 2011 censuses (% of total inhabitants in the selected age group)

Age group	1991	2001	2011	
			Believers in church	Believers not in church
15–19	33,6	20,1	10,0	5,2
20–29	31,7	20,5	9,8	7,0
30–39	32,7	22,1	10,3	7,4
40–49	49,1	26,1	11,2	7,5
50–59	67,0	41,0	12,7	7,5
60–69	68,9	61,9	20,0	8,2
70–79	73,3	64,6	31,3	7,9
80+	75,3	67,9	32,6	7,2

Source: CSO, 1995 and CSO Pramenné dílo census 2001 and 2011

Notice: In 2011 believers were divided into two groups – believers in a church and believers not in a church

When we focus on the years 2001 and 2011, there could be a difference because of a change of the definition of inhabitants (permanent residents and actual residents), but the difference in census results on the state level is marginal. The difference between the share of unidentified in 2001 and 2011 is high. There could be a shift from believers in 2001 to unidentified in 2011, but also from people who wrote “no religion” in 2001 to unidentified in 2011, which is even more visible.

Table 9: Change of the proportion of unidentified and without religion in age groups between 2001 and 2011 censuses (% of total inhabitants in selected age group)

Age group	Unifentified		No religion	
	2001	2011	2001	2011
15–19	8,2	45,0	71,8	39,9
20–29	8,7	43,1	70,8	40,0
30–39	9,1	43,9	68,8	38,4
40–49	9,0	44,3	64,9	37,0
50–59	9,1	44,4	50,0	35,4
60–69	6,7	44,6	31,4	27,2
70–79	5,6	41,9	29,9	19,0
80+	6,9	40,6	25,2	19,6

Source: CSO, 1995 and CSO Pramenné dílo census 2001 and 2011

When we see the willingness to fill in the information about the religious belief in the census, there is still the question of what percentage of inhabitants will answer it in the 2021 census – if it remains there, despite the increased emphasis on protection of personal data.

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