

Lausanne International Researchers' Conference 2011

## Constructing European Secularity

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Preliminary results from the 2008 European Values Survey



## Nova Research Centre


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PRESENTATION LOAD

### 1. European Values Study

- The European Values Study is a large-scale, cross-national survey research program on basic human values. It provides insights into ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and values.
- First study conducted in 1980 in 12 major European countries
- Repeated in 1989, 1999 and 2008 providing a unique longitudinal study of changes in European values over the last 30 years.
- Most recent wave in 2008 wave surveyed 47 countries and regions in Europe.
- All the data is all in the public domain and can be consulted at: [www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu](http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu)




### 1. European Values Study cont'd

The complete 2008 EVS comprises of 140 questions. Our research has focussed on the responses to just five of these questions:

- Do you believe in God?
- How important is religion in your life?
- Are you religious, non-religious or atheist?
- How often do you attend religious services?
- How much confidence do you have in the church?

These allow us to calculate a 360° index of secularisation.



1. European Values Study cont'd

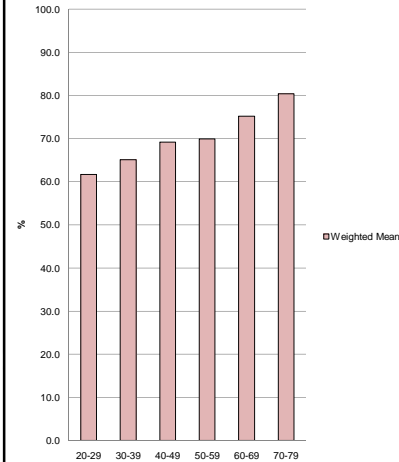
Rank	Country	NIS value
1	Czech R.	3.61
2	Germany	3.39
3	France	3.27
4	UK*	3.21
5	Belgium	3.16
6	Finland	3.16
7	Spain	3.05
8	Hungary	3.04
9	Netherlands	2.98
10	Denmark	2.93
11	Bulgaria	2.79
12	Albania	2.72
13	Russian Fed.	2.65
14	Croatia*	2.51
15	Ireland	2.30
16	Italy*	2.28
17	Portugal	2.26
18	Greece	2.13
19	Poland	2.03
20	Romania	1.84

**NOVA Index of Secularisation in Europe (NISE)**

Results from these five questions from the 2008 EVS were then used as the basis for what we have called "The Nova Index of Secularisation in Europe" (NISE) which in effect provides a "league table" of secularity for the countries surveyed.



Belief in God by country and age cohort

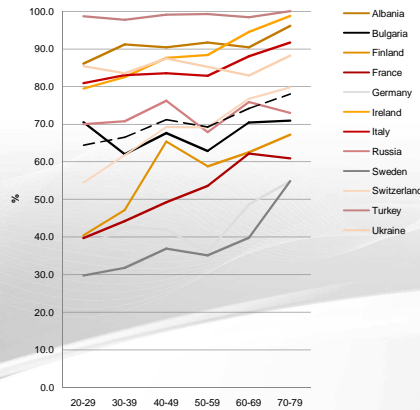


1. Do you believe in God?

- 69.7% of all adults
- 61.7% of 20-29 year olds
- Clear trend to increased belief in God with age
- Probability that someone will believe in God increases by approximately 3.7% for each decade of life.
- Countries with highest belief in God: Turkey 99%, Romania 95%, Poland 95% and Greece 91%.
- Note dip in belief in post-war generation in certain countries (see next).



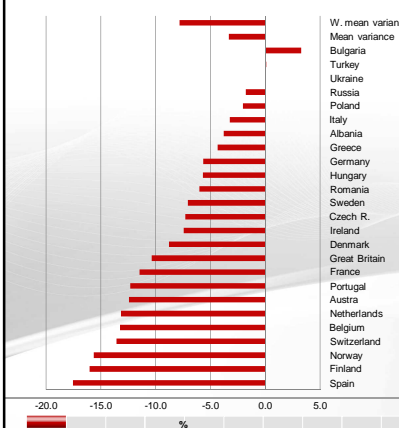
Belief in God by country and age cohort



Belief in God across at least these twelve countries shows intriguing generational nuances, where the 50-59 year old cohort is *less* likely to believe in God than the 40-49 year old cohort.



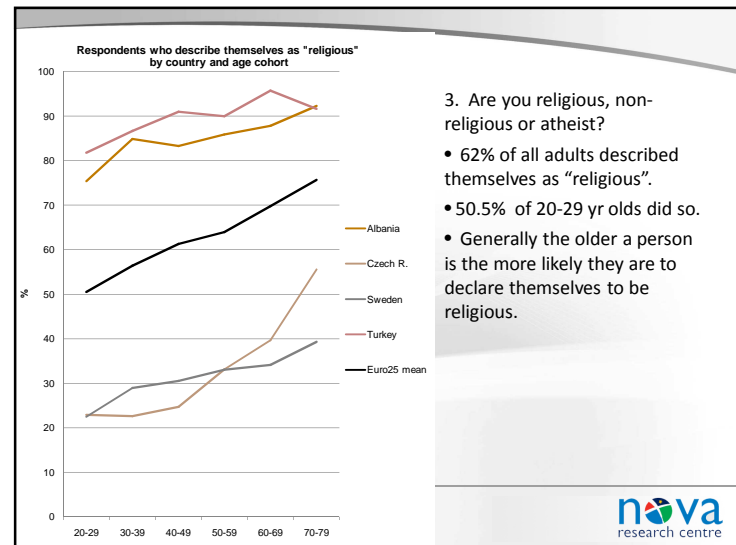
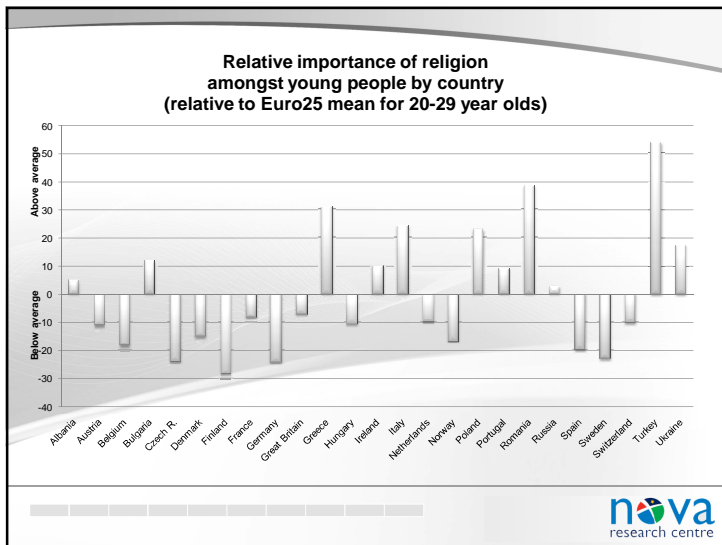
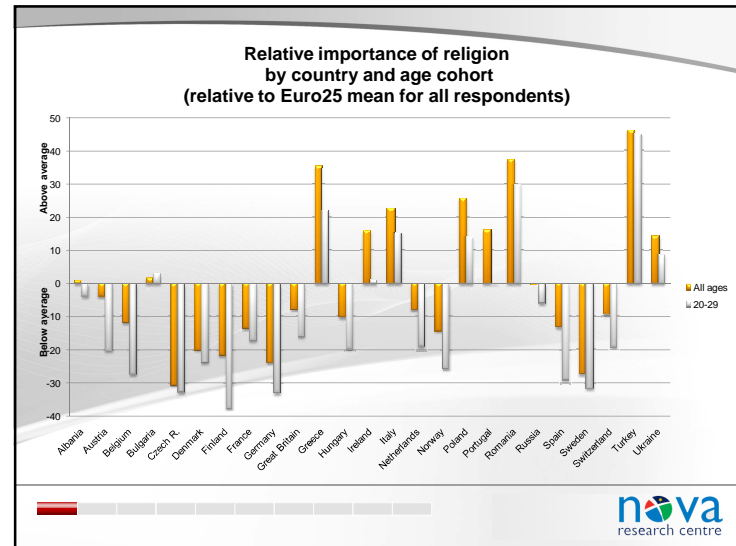
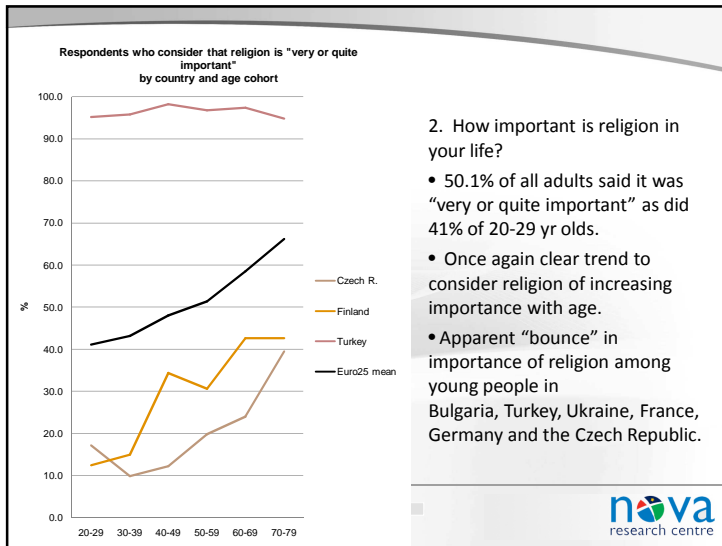
How different is the level of belief in God amongst young people (20-29) relative to the country average?

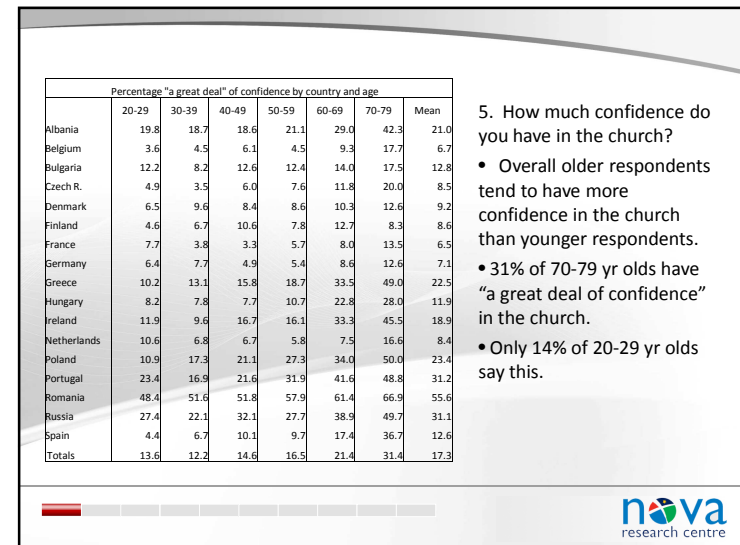
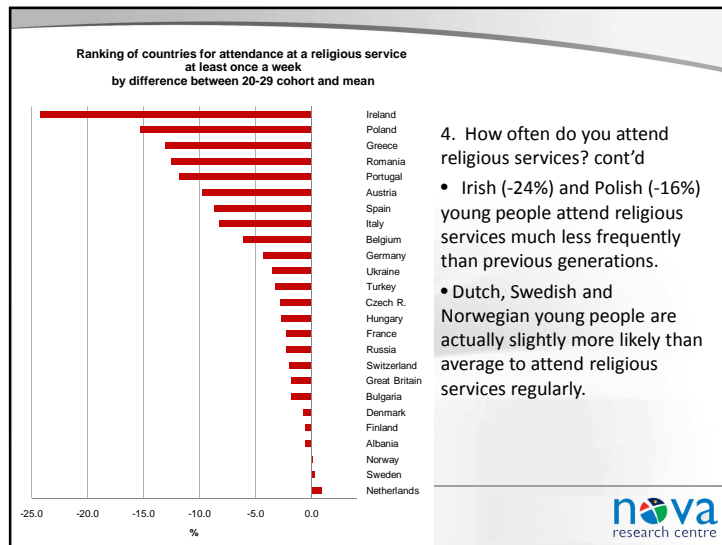
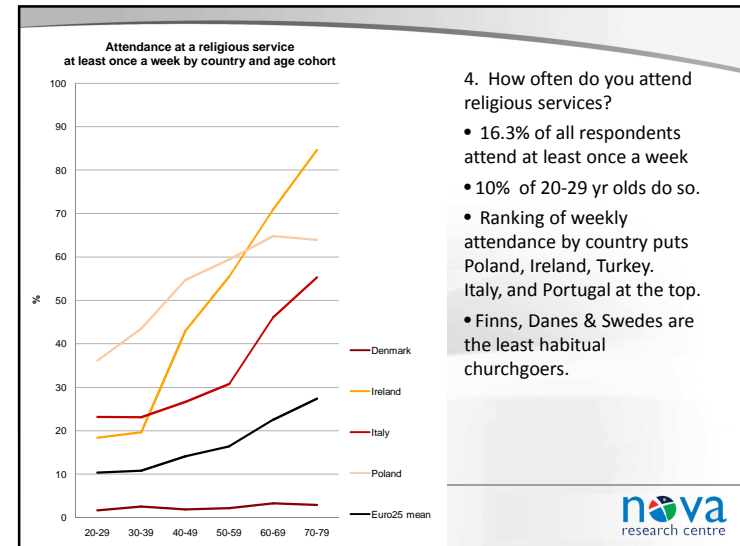
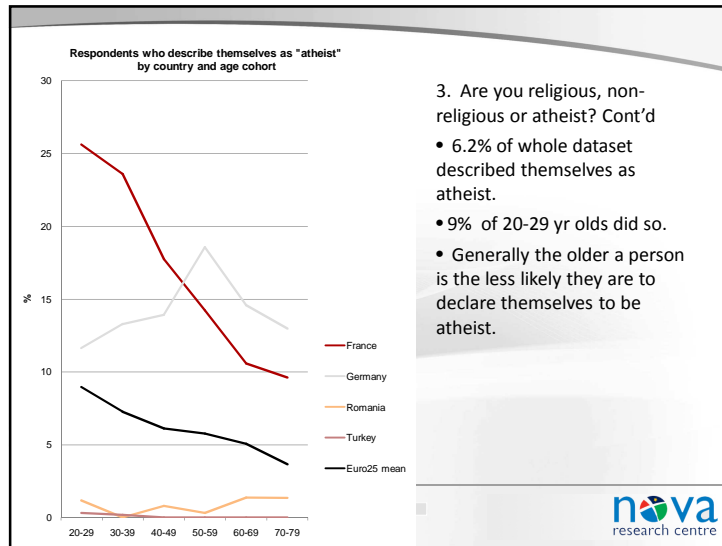


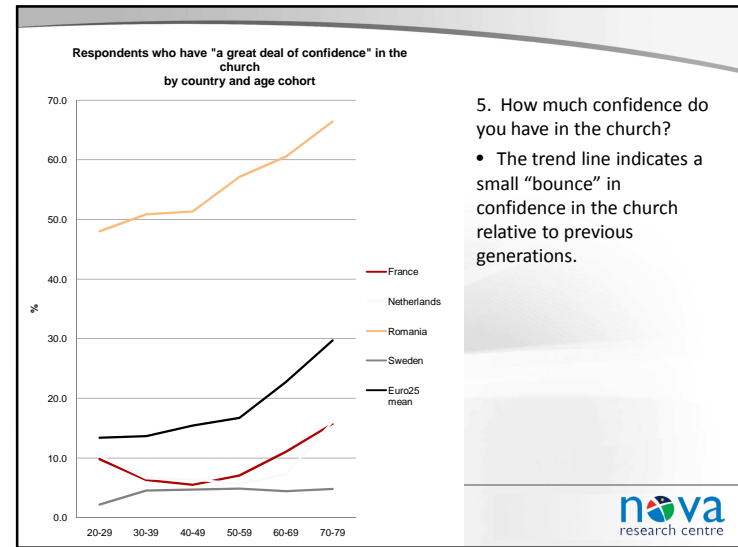
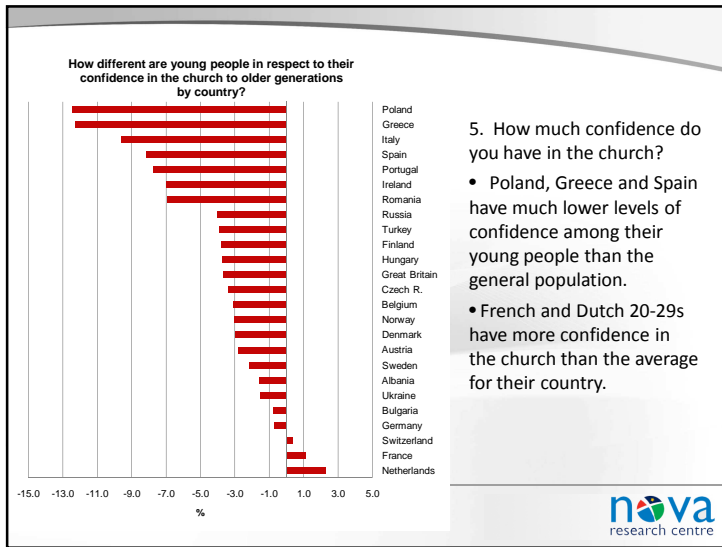
1. Do you believe in God?

- Greatest difference between young people is in Spain (18%), Finland (16%) and Belgium (13%).
- Bulgarian young people are more believing than population mean.









**3. Data summary and emerging themes**

European young people are more secularized than earlier generations. However:

- In only three countries, France, Germany and the Czech Republic does belief in God fall below 40% among 20-29 year olds.
- 50% of all Europeans and 41% of 20 year olds continue to believe that religion is "quite or very important" in their lives
- Albania** – the exceptional case?
- The 50-59 years old cohort is a **'lost generation'**.
- Successive generations, especially the 40-49 years old cohort represents a more **'open generation'**.

**4. Implications for missional engagement**

**a. Expose the public policy myths**

- 'Immigrants are as non-religious as indigenous Europeans!'
- 'Contemporary Europe is profoundly irreligious and secularised!'
- 'Public displays of Christian symbolism at Christmas and other festival periods offend Muslims and other religious adherents!'
- 'If only we could get the religious communities talking together we could all learn to get along in our secular societies!'

**4. Implications for missional engagement** contd

- b. Identify the generational windows
- c. Capitalise on the open windows
- d. Recognise the shift from ideological hostility to benign indifference

“The various modes of worship, which prevailed in the Roman world, were all considered by the people as equally true; by the philosopher, as equally false; and by the magistrate, as equally useful.”

(Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 1, Ch. 2, 1.)



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