

Article

The Causes of Societal Discrimination against Religious Minorities in Christian-Majority Countries

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Abstract: Using the Religion and State-Minorities and WVS datasets, this study examined the impact of religiosity in Christian-majority countries on societal religious discrimination (i.e., discrimination by non-state actors) against religious minorities. We found that increased levels of religious activity and commitment in a country lead to less discrimination against Muslim and Jewish religious minorities but more discrimination against Christian minorities. We offered two explanations for this complex relationship. First, when Christian-majority nations hold high levels of religiosity, other Abrahamic religions are potential allies in the fight against secularism. Second, in religiously active Christian-majority nations, the majority religion views Christian minorities (rather than Jews and Muslims) as an unwanted competitive threat because denomination switching is more common within the same religious tradition.



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Past research has established that discrimination against religious minorities often comes from non-state actors (Grim and Finke 2011; Fox 2020).¹ Yet, most cross-country studies have focused on the causes of discrimination by governments (e.g., Fox 2015, 2016; Finke and Martin 2014; Finke et al. 2017a; Tol and Akbaba 2014) or a combination of societal and government discrimination but only at the country-level (Grim and Finke 2011). These studies have failed to explore how the level of religiosity in the nation is related to societal religious discrimination (SRD) and how the predictors of SRD might vary by the religious minority being targeted. The few studies that link religiosity and discrimination tend to be survey-based studies that focus on narrow aspects of government-based discrimination such as restrictions on Muslims wearing head coverings in Western Europe (Helbling 2014) or focus on government-based discrimination and use religiosity as the dependent variable (Fox and Tabory 2008). The only study that used the minority-specific SRD variable used in this study as a dependent variable did not use religiosity as an independent variable (Fox 2020).

This study examines the impact of religiosity on SRD in Christian-majority countries against all religious minorities that meet a 0.2% population threshold in a country. We found that religiosity in a country leads to less discrimination against Muslim and Jewish religious minorities but more discrimination against Christian and other (not Christian, Muslim, or Jewish) minorities within Christian-majority countries. We argue that this complex relationship is based on two factors. First, in an age where secularism is challenging religion, the Christian majority views other Abrahamic religions as potential allies. Second, because denomination switching is more common within a religion than religion switching across world religions, Christian minorities (rather than Jews and Muslims) are an unwanted competitive threat and therefore are more likely to face discrimination in nations with high levels of religiosity.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, we examine the existing literature as it applies to the link between religiosity and SRD. Second, we examine the impact of religiosity on SRD in 56 Christian-majority countries against religious minorities using the Religion and State-Minorities Round 3 (RASM3) minority-specific dataset. Finally, we discuss the implications of our findings.

1. Religiosity as a Cause of Discrimination

Global SRD against religious minorities by a majority religious group is ever-present, yet the explanations are limited. We propose that both the level of religiosity in a nation and the relationship a religious minority holds with the Christian majority are important predictors of SRD against religious minorities. Religiosity refers to the feelings and actions of the nation's population that demonstrate a strong level of commitment to their religious group. The relationship a religious minority holds with the Christian majority will highlight both the shared and conflicting interests of the religious groups. To understand these complex relationships, we begin by exploring two overlapping avenues of influence: (1) ideology, identity, beliefs, doctrine, and theology and (2) power politics and elite interests.

1.1. Ideology, Identity, Beliefs, Doctrine, and Theology

Religions, especially monotheistic religions, usually incorporate exclusive truth claims, typically based on divine revelation. These monopolistic truth claims can accept no contradictions or challenges to that truth. This can motivate feelings of anger, animosity, resentment, enmity, and even fear toward members of other religions. As Stark (2003, p. 32) put it, "those who believe there is only One True God are offended by worship directed toward other Gods." He argued that the three major monotheistic faiths, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, are particularly intolerant of competing religions. Many of these religions' adherents see these faiths as the only path to salvation. Those who hold this belief see allowing nonbelievers to deny the "truth" as allowing them to be damned for eternity. From this perspective, using coercion to alter their beliefs can be perceived as benevolent (Stark 2001, 2003).

Variations on this argument are present across social science disciplines. Sociologists Grim and Finke (2011, p. 46) argued that "exclusive religious beliefs provide motives for promoting the 'one true faith.' To the extent that religious beliefs are taken seriously and the dominant religion is held as true, all new religions are heretical at best. Thus, established religions will view the new religions as both dangerous and wrong." From a comparative politics perspective, Jelen and Wilcox (1990, p. 69) argued that "religion is often thought to inhibit the development of the tolerance for unorthodox beliefs and practices . . . Religion is accused of inculcating ultimate values in its adherents—values which do not lend themselves to compromise or accommodation." Laustsen and Waever (2000, p. 719) who focused on international relations argued that "religion deals with the constitution of being as such. Hence, one cannot be pragmatic on concerns challenging this being." A large body of survey-based studies across this literature link religiosity to intolerance.²

The political psychology literature focuses on in-group, out-group, and identity dynamics to explain religiosity's link to intolerance. In essence, those who are more religious have stronger identities and are accordingly less tolerant of out-groups. However, these studies find mixed results, with some finding a connection between religiosity and intolerance or violence toward religious out-groups (Canetti et al. 2010; Ben-Nun Bloom et al. 2019; Karpov 2002) and others finding no connection (Eisenstein 2008). Some studies find that religiosity can have a differing impact under different circumstances. For example, Hoffman and Nugent (2015) found that in Lebanon communal prayer makes people who belong to combatant groups more likely to support arming political parties but makes people in noncombatant groups more likely to oppose militarization.

Religion and distinct doctrines are also clearly linked to multiple types of identities that have an impact on political and social behavior, particularly among national identities (Frieland 2001, pp. 129–30; Smith 1999, 2000). In addition, it is well established that dominant cultures often seek to protect their culture from outside influence (Gurr 1993, 2000; Horowitz 1985). This is especially applicable to discrimination against minorities who are seen as foreign or non-indigenous.

Tajfel and Turner (1982) classically argued that distinctive group identities triggering in-group favoritism is sufficient to cause conflict. McDermott (2009) argued that religious identity is used to stereotype others often as a heuristic shortcut³. The dynamics are used to explain the link between religious identity and a number of relevant factors, including conflict (Alexander 2017; Basedau et al. 2011, 2014; Kose and Ozcan 2016; Lai 2006; Neuberger et al. 2014; Pearce 2005), anti-immigrant sentiment (Ben-Nun Bloom et al. 2015; Bohman and Hjerm 2014), political compromise and tolerance (Cohen-Zada et al. 2016; Djupe and Calfino 2012; Eisenstein 2008; Milligan et al. 2014), religion–state arrangements (Driessen 2014a, 2014b), influences for specific political issues such as support for Turkish ascension to the European Union (De Vreese et al. 2009), and religious integration in Europe (Nelsen et al. 2011).

Grzymala-Busse (2012) argued that religious identities are particularly powerful in this respect because they are unlike most other types of identity in three respects. First, they “make transnational claims across enormous populations: they are probably the largest unit to which individuals claim loyalty” (Grzymala-Busse 2012, p. 423). Second, religion can encompass all elements of one’s life. Third, it is more resistant to modern processes that can undermine other identities. As religious identities are strengthened through practice and view of importance, so too is the possibility for heightened levels of discrimination and conflict between groups.⁴

All of this suggests that religion can sharpen group boundaries and heighten group identities that result in majority religions discriminating against religious minorities. Thus, our first hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *All other things being equal, SRD will be higher in countries with more religious populations.*

1.2. Power Politics and Elite Interests

A second explanation is that the “power politics” impetus for religious discrimination is based on the rational choice approach. Gill (2008) focused on why governments might discriminate against religious minorities arguing that religious institutions and politicians follow their rational interests. Majority religious institutions tend to seek religious hegemony. That is, they seek to use their own societal influences as well as their government to maintain a religious monopoly. While their motivations likely include ideology, they also include institutional motivations. Religious monopolies provide more congregants, more funds, and more influence. In addition, they can involve government enforcement of religious precepts. Thus, monopolies strengthen religious institutions and the power of those who control them.

Accordingly, Gill (2008, p. 45) argued that “hegemonic religions will prefer high levels of government regulation . . . of minority religions.” In fact, most who address the topic argue that religious monopolies are not possible without repressing religious minorities including alternate institutions of the majority religion (Casanova 2009; Froese 2004, p. 36; Gill 2005, p. 13; 2008, p. 43; Grim and Finke 2011, p. 70; Stark and Bainbridge 1985, p. 508; Stark and Finke 2000, p. 199; Stark and Iannaccone 1994, p. 232).

Gill (2008) argued that politicians can benefit from this monopolistic arrangement. In return for government support, religious institutions and clergy convey legitimacy upon the government which makes governing less expensive because governments considered widely legitimate require fewer resources to maintain power. More specifically, legitimacy reduces costs for repressing dissent. Religion can also increase the populations’ morality,

which can reduce law enforcement costs. In addition, religious institutions often provide social goods that the government might otherwise need to provide such as charity and welfare. All of this makes supporting religion a worthwhile investment.

There are additional reasons governments might want to repress minority religions. Religion is often the basis for opposition and political mobilization (Wald et al. 2005). Supporting formal organizations, as well as social and political movements, religion often has the capacity to mobilize popular support and social action, actions that can openly challenge the state and the religious majority (Finke 2013). For this reason, governments, especially autocratic governments, seek to repress any religion outside of their control (Sarkissian 2015).

While this body of theory focuses on why governments discriminate, it is applicable to SRD for several reasons. First, in most countries, religious institutions are societal institutions and have significant influence on their congregations. There is no shortage of anecdotes of clergy across religions instigating negative societal acts toward minority religions. In Sri Lanka, for example, Buddhist priests instigated deadly riots against Tamil Hindus that initiated the country's violent civil war (Little 1994) and more recently instigated violence against Christians who they see as seeking to convert Buddhists.⁵

Similarly, in Greece, Greek Orthodox clergy and institutions regularly engage in activities that can be considered SRD against religious minorities. Priests often verbally and physically harass proselytizers. For example, many Orthodox bishops distribute lists of minority religious practices that they consider "sacrilegious" and harmful to Orthodox worshipers and often ask their congregants to avoid members of groups such as Evangelical Protestants, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and the Bahai. The Church actively obstructs permit requests by non-Orthodox groups to open houses of prayer. Arrest and prosecution for operating illegal houses of worship are common in Greece. The Church publicly opposes initiatives to allow the cremation of the dead, which is central to burial rituals for several religions. The Orthodox Church in Cyprus similarly blocks cremation facilities⁶, and similar anti-religious-minority activities by Orthodox priests and institutions occur in other Orthodox-majority countries.⁷ While the motivations for these acts certainly include theological motivations, they also include the desire to maintain a religious monopoly.

While these two potential religious causes, ideology and power dynamics, of discrimination are not mutually exclusive, they have different implications for which religions are more likely to be subject to discrimination. Religious ideologies target those religions considered most theologically objectionable, while religious power politics target minorities that demographically or politically challenge religious monopolies. Both of these motivations for targeting are more likely in states more closely associated with a single religion. This suggests the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *SRD will be higher in countries that more strongly support a single religion.*

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *SRD will be higher as the size of the religious minority increases.*

It is also likely that the motives for discriminating against other religions vary depending on the religious majority group within a country. Conversely, under some conditions, religious majority groups will tolerate minority groups even if they meet the above conditions for expected causes of discrimination. Below we review two of these motives for Christian-majority countries and argue that the pattern for discrimination and tolerance varies depending on each minority group within the country.

2. Tolerance for Some and Discrimination for Others in Christian-Majority Countries

Not all minority religious groups, despite their classification as minorities, are treated as equal within the same country. Fox (2020) demonstrated that both societal and government-based discrimination directed at each minority group is dependent on factors beyond status as a minority. Building on our above arguments, we demonstrate that under some condi-

tions, religious minorities are accepted at best and tolerated at worst, while other minority groups experience heightened levels of SRD under the same conditions.

We focus on social and political factors that explain under what circumstances religiosity and religious demographics might lead to increased tolerance of some religious minorities in Christian-majority countries⁸, while the same circumstances lead to increased discrimination for others. These can be separated into two factors, largely mirroring the importance of ideology and power dynamics as both explanations of tolerance and SRD.

2.1. Tolerance and Discrimination by Ideology in Christian-Majority Countries

Appleby (2000), Abu-Nimer (2001), and Gopin (2000, 2002) argued that religious belief systems can support both violence and intolerance, on one hand, and peace and tolerance on the other. They focused on how specific theologies can be used to support peace and tolerance as opposed to violence and intolerance. This potential for both is evident in the two Christian churches often holding formal ties with the state: the Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

Although the Catholic Church has a long history of close ties with the state, and intolerance of competing religions that is often based on theological justifications, the Church has served as an advocate for religious freedoms over the past century.⁹ Rather than challenging the temporal authority of the state, the theological teachings of the Catholic Church have increasingly challenged states over human dignity and human rights, with papal encyclicals increasing reliance on “human rights language in social encyclicals” (Hehir 2010, p. 116). Pope John XXIII’s (1963) *Pacem In Terris* encyclical (Peace on Earth), for example, emphasized dignity and equality for all and encouraged Catholics to “assist non-Christians and non-Catholics in political and social aspects.”

Recent scholarship has highlighted the consequences of these documents, demonstrating that the Church’s social teachings were influential in Christian Democratic parties that arose in the late 1940s across Europe (Philpott 2001; Nelsen and Guth 2015). Others argue that the influence of the Catholic Church’s social teachings has been global (Appleby 2000). European survey-based studies have also found that religious Christians are more supportive of the religious rights of minorities than are secular Christians (Carol et al. 2015), are less likely to oppose head coverings (Helbling 2014; van der Noll et al. 2018), and that religious Europeans are less negative toward Muslim immigrants than non-religious Europeans (Bohman and Hjerm 2014). This body of work suggests that theological teachings can increase a Christian majority’s tolerance toward religious minority groups.

Tolerance, however, is not always the case. For example, the teachings of the Christian Orthodox churches on the tolerance and freedom of other religions remain more clouded and less consistent (McGuckin 2010). Frequently organized around one country and culture, they often hold to a “cultural canonical territory” that is resistant to the intrusion of other religions. Indeed, intra-Christian challenges are often faced with as much resistance, or more, than the challenges of other world religions (Ferrari 2010). Formal theological statements on the toleration and freedoms of other religions are largely lacking. Although the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America did make strong pronouncements at their 1980 Clergy–Laity Congress supporting freedom of religious expression that is free of government interference, formal support and theological justifications for such freedoms have been lacking in countries where the Orthodox Church holds an alliance with the state (Witte 2010).¹⁰ This leads to our fourth hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4 (H4). *SRD will be higher in countries holding a Christian Orthodox majority.*

2.2. Tolerance and Discrimination by Power Politics

We posit that power politics should cause different relationships between religiosity and SRD depending on the majority and minority religious groups in conflict. Power politics is to a great extent about *perceived* threats and *perceived* allies. It can also involve

crosscutting influences and motivations. In Christian-majority countries, we argue that two crosscutting dynamics and motivations are in play, both involving perceived threats.

First, the secularism of the state and the culture can be perceived as a threat against all religions. In more religious societies, minority religions can be seen as potential allies because religious and secular groups are competing to influence politics and society. For example, disputes over abortion and the role of women in society can unite disparate religions in their opposition to secular groups. Given this, it is possible for a majority Christian group to view religious minorities, such as Jews and Muslims, as potential allies in this secular–religious competition. Tolerance can be a matter of convenience when forming an alliance against secularism.

Second, and closely related to the ideological argument above, [Stark and Finke \(2000\)](#) argued that religions with interrelated theological traditions are in direct competition with each other for adherents. Under these circumstances, SRD might be directed at religious minorities with a similar though competing theological tradition, rather than those of another world religion. While there is some switching across religions, most “switchers” change denominations within the same world religion ([Stark and Finke 2000](#), p. 114). Accordingly, in a Christian-majority country, the most likely “poachers” of the majority religion are other Christian denominations. Retaining membership is a core interest of any religion. We posit that this motivation would outweigh the motivation to seek allies in the struggle against secularism and will result in higher levels of discrimination against Christian minorities in Christian-majority countries.

This results in two additional hypotheses:

Hypothesis 5 (H5). *Higher levels of religiosity in a nation will result in less SRD against religious minorities viewed as potential allies.*

However, our second prediction offers important qualifications.

Hypothesis 6 (H6). *When religious minorities are not viewed as potential allies or are viewed as unwanted competitors, increased religiosity in the nation will result in increased SRD against the minority religions.*

3. Measuring SRD of Religious Minorities

In recent years, the availability of data and measurements of SRD of religious minorities has been nascent. The release of the ARDA’s International Religious Freedom Data in 2005 introduced an important measure of discrimination, the social regulation of religion index ([Grim and Finke 2006, 2007, 2011](#)), offering an assessment of a country’s summation of attitudes toward religious minorities. While important, this measure failed to include behavioral evidence of discrimination and excluded the discrimination of individual religious minority groups ([Fox et al. 2018](#)).

The Religion and State Dataset Round 3 (RAS3) rectified these limitations through additional sources of evidence, a more comprehensive index with behavioral discrimination, and measurement for 771 religious minorities across 183 countries ([Fox 2020; Fox et al. 2018](#)). This revised dataset and new measures are the basis for our assessment of the causes of SRD against religious minorities. The RAS data are based on coder evaluation of multiple sources including academic, media, NGO, and government sources. For a full discussion of the RAS3 dataset including collection methodology, sources and variable construction, and reliability and validity analyses, see [Fox \(2011, 2020\)](#) and [Fox et al. \(2018\)](#). This includes a discussion of why the variables are the unweighted sum of their components as well as comparisons to weighted indexes. It also includes inter-coder reliability tests and comparisons to other datasets. For a general discussion of how results for analyses of specific religious minorities differ from those using the country-level of analysis, see [Fox \(2016, 2020; Fox and Akbaba 2011\)](#).

We use several other cross-national datasets to provide measures for our independent variables. Importantly, we also use multiple waves of the World Values Survey (Inglehart et al. 2014) matched to the nation-years from the RAS3. The combined datasets include 1008 country-year-religious-minority-group observations for our analytical models. This includes 344 Christian minority years (225 in Christian-majority countries), 217 (138) Muslim minority years, and 120 (120) Jewish minority years. The remaining 357 (188) minority years include a wide range of religious minorities: Alevi, Animists, Bahai, Chinese religions, Hindus, Hoa Hoa, Jains, Jehovah's Witnesses¹¹, Mormons, Scientologists, Sikhs, and Zoroastrians as there are too few cases for any of these minorities for them to be treated separately. Accordingly, this study combines them into the "other" category. See Table A1 in the Appendix A for a full list of the countries, years, and religious minority groups included in our analysis. The majority religion of a country was determined from both the population size of each respective religious tradition and their political and social influence within a country. Thus, there are some instances where a majority religion is not a population majority, but because it controls the government, it is in effect a structural majority.

3.1. Dependent Variable

Our dependent variable is from RAS3's Societal and Minorities Modules. It includes twenty-seven items measuring SRD against minority religions in a nation (Fox et al. 2018). The variable was collected independently for each minority group within a nation which was at least 0.2% of a country's population as well as a sampling of smaller Christian, Muslim, and Jewish minorities; thus many small religions are not included. Items of discrimination include the prevention of religious minorities from practicing their faith but also include instances of vandalism, attacks, and economic discrimination. All items in this index were coded using a three-category scale ranging from 0 when there are "no reported incidents of this type . . ." to 2 when the discriminatory action is substantial. Although this index has the potential range from 0 to 54, no religious minority group in our analytical sample had a score higher than 47. Moreover, the average SRD score of events experienced by a religious minority group is 3.6. Appendix A provides an overview of the SRD scores for each minority group in each country-year from our sample.

3.2. Independent Variables

Country conditions of the reasons for SRD of religious minorities are assessed through a number of measures, including religious characteristics, country governance, and country demographics.

3.2.1. Religious Ideology and Identity

The religious ideology and identity of each country are derived through the matching of the World Values Survey, Waves 2–6 (Inglehart et al. 2014). The World Values Survey consists of survey data from a sample of individuals within each country. Countries from the RAS3 are matched with the WVS for each year of both datasets. For instance, Germany matched in 1997, 2006, and 2013. For each matched country, we calculated the aggregate country level of religiosity from two separate survey items in the WVS:

Religious Attendance is included in each wave of the WVS as a seven-point ordinal scale assessing how often an individual respondent attends a worship service. From this measure, we calculated the percent of the population for each country that attends a religious service at least once a month.

Religious Importance: As with our measure of religious attendance, each wave of the WVS contained an ordinal measure, this time, four points, addressing how important religion is to each individual. This measure was aggregated as a percent of the population for each country that views religion as at least somewhat important.

These variables test h1, h5, and h6.

3.2.2. Power Politics

As discussed above, the relationship of power politics is also a necessary consideration, which we assess through the measures of the majority group, size of the minority group, and government favoritism of religions within a country.

Majority Religion and Minority Percentage account for the religious groups within a country. Three measures are utilized throughout our models. The first two address whether the majority religion is Christian Orthodox (testing h4) or Muslim (for tests that include non-Christian-majority countries) within a country. The final religiosity measure accounts for the size of the minority religious group as a percent of the total population. This directly tests h3.¹² Since our models test the level of SRD for each minority group separately, the relationships look specifically at the size of a minority group and its subsequent experienced discrimination.

The level of *religious legislation* of each country may also have an impact on the presence of SRD within a country, testing h2. We assess legislation through the RAS3 composite measure of religious support, where high scores indicate higher levels of support for religion. This index includes diverse topics ranging between “legislation of religious law as state law, financial support for religion, religious education, and the comingling of religious and political positions” (Fox 2008, p. 53). Also included in our models is a measure of *polity*. The Polity score measures democracy on a scale of −10 (most autocratic) to 10 (most democratic) (Jagers and Gurr 1995).

3.2.3. Country Demographics and Development

Our models also control for the demographics and development of the country through a measure of the total population within a country as well as the GDP in U.S. dollars. We calculated the log of each value. Table 1 provides an overview of the variables as well as their respective scaling and descriptions.

Table 1. Summary statistics and descriptions.

Variable	Obs	Mean	Min	Max	Description
Societal Discrimination	1048	3.604	0	47	Level of societal discrimination within a country
Religious Ideology and Identity					
Religious Importance	1057	0.684	0.036	0.999	Aggregated proportion of the country that identifies religion at least somewhat important
Religious Attendance	1033	0.424	0.008	0.9562	Aggregated proportion of the country that attends worship services at least monthly
Power Politics					
Majority Orthodox	1068	0.141	0	1	Whether a country has Orthodox Christian as the majority religion
Majority Islam	1068	0.208	0	1	Whether a country has Islam as the majority religion
Minority Group Percent	1068	4.044	0.01	60.266	Percent of the religious population represented by the minority religious group
Religious Legislation	1051	10.725	0	46	Level of religious support by the state
Controls					
Log GDP	1045	8.441	5.46	11.352	Log of GDP in current U.S. dollars
Log Total Population	1062	17.184	13.324	21.055	Log of Total Population
Polity Score	1036	5.2	−10	10	Measure of the state’s regime authority from Autocracies (−10) to Democracies (10)

3.3. Analytical Methods

SRD of religious groups is a score addressing the level and severity of minority-group treatment. The potential scores of SRD of religious groups range from 0 to 47. However, the scores for SRD are overdispersed, meaning the majority of the scores are low and we have a variance that is larger than the mean. Thus, linear regression is not appropriate.

We utilize negative binomial regression models to find the probability of a score for each minority group within a country. This allows for a more accurate estimate of values and fit with the observed scores (Long 1997).

The analysis of SRD of religious minority groups occurs in steps. The first step provides a general assessment of the relationships our independent variables have with SRD for all religious minority groups. In other words, Table 2 presents the results without addressing how different minority groups may be treated. These are presented for all countries (Models 1 and 2), as well as only Christian-majority countries (Models 3 and 4)¹³. Yet, not all religious traditions are treated the same, and the patterns and relationships for why SRD occurs may be vastly different. Thus, in Table 3, we present the results corresponding with Christian-majority countries separated by the social treatment of specific minority groups. The four groupings include Muslim (Models 5 and 6), Jewish (Models 7 and 8), Christian (Models 9 and 10), and other minorities (Models 11 and 12). During our analyses, we also identified curvilinear relationships between religious importance (Models 5 and 11) and the percent of the religious minority group within the country (Models 7 and 8) and the level of SRD within a country. These offer greater insight into the role religious ideology and identity play in the relationship with SRD. Table 1 provides an overview of each variable from these models.

Table 2. Negative binomial regression predicting the relationship between societal discrimination of religious minority groups and country characteristics—all religious minority groups.

	All Countries and All Minority Religious Groups				Christian-Majority Countries and All Minority Religious Groups			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.
Religious Ideology and Identity								
Religious Importance	−0.46	0.32			−1.17 **	0.44		
Religious Attendance			−0.62	0.34			−1.58 ***	0.50
Power Politics								
Majority Orthodox	1.62 ***	0.21	1.49 ***	0.22	1.65 ***	0.24	1.26 ***	0.26
Majority Islam	1.11 ***	0.24	1.02 ***	0.23				
Minority Group Percent	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	−0.03	0.02	−0.02	0.02
Religious Legislation	0.04 **	0.01	0.04 **	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.02	0.02
Controls								
Log GDP	0.14 *	0.06	0.16 *	0.06	0.25 **	0.09	0.19 ***	0.10
Log Total Population	0.27 ***	0.05	0.26 ***	0.05	0.28 ***	0.07	0.32 ***	0.07
Polity Score	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	−0.05	0.01	−0.05 *	0.02
Constant	−5.44 ***	1.05	−5.52 ***	1.05	−5.47 ***	1.33	−5.69	1.30
Observations	1008		984		649		648	

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 3. Negative binomial regression predicting the relationship between societal discrimination of religious minority groups and country characteristics—by religious minority group in Christian-majority countries.

	Muslim-Minority Groups				Jewish-Minority Groups			
	Model 5		Model 6		Model 7		Model 8	
	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.
Religious Ideology and Identity								
Religious Importance	−10.84 ***	3.13			−1.39 ***	0.38		
Rel. Import. Squared	7.56 **	2.55						
Religious Attendance			−2.21 **	0.64			−1.30 **	0.46

Table 3. Cont.

	Muslim-Minority Groups				Jewish-Minority Groups			
	Model 5		Model 6		Model 7		Model 8	
	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.
Power Politics								
Majority Orthodox	1.13 **	0.34	0.25	0.36	0.45 *	0.19	−0.19	0.21
Minority Group Percent	0.04 *	0.02	0.05 **	0.02	1.68 **	0.49	1.50 **	0.53
Min. Group Pct. Squared					−0.61 *	0.25	−0.56 *	0.26
Religious Legislation	−0.01	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.05 *	0.02	0.06 *	0.02
Controls								
Log GDP	0.47 ***	0.11	0.30 **	0.11	0.02	0.08	0.04	0.08
Log Total Population	0.25 ***	0.07	0.29 ***	0.08	0.35 ***	0.06	0.37 ***	0.06
Polity Score	0.02	0.04	0.02	0.04	−0.00	0.02	−0.00	0.02
Constant	−4.90 **	1.61	−6.75 ***	1.52	−4.30 ***	1.11	−4.99 ***	1.11
Observations	133		133		115		115	

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

4. Results and Discussion

As discussed above, the advent of new data collections allows for a new analysis where we can identify the predictors of SRD for each religious minority. We begin our analysis by reviewing models that include all religious minorities for all nations and models including all religious minorities in Christian-majority countries (Table 2). However, the more interesting and more complete story emerges when we run the same models for specific religious minorities. As predicted, there are clear differences across the models for the religious minorities (Table 3).

4.1. Assessing Patterns for All Religious Minority Groups

Table 2 offers models for predicting SRD of all religious minority groups for all countries (Models 1 and 2) and all religious minority groups for Christian-majority countries (Models 3 and 4). The two religiosity measures, religious importance and religious attendance, are negative and significant for Models 3 and 4. Increases in religiosity were associated with decreases in SRD for all minority groups in the Christian-majority countries but not for the models including all nations (Model 1 and 2). Of great importance generally, and for the results presented later, the religious demographics of a country are also important. Christian-Orthodox- and Muslim-majority countries are significantly more likely to have higher SRD scores than if a country is neither. This finding for Orthodox Christians is consistent across most of our models.

One other measure for “power politics”, the level of religious legislation, was both a positive and significant predictor of increased discrimination when all countries were included (Models 1 and 2). When only the Christian-majority countries were included in Models 3 and 4, however, the coefficients for religious legislation were insignificant. The size of the minority group held a weak and insignificant relationship in all four models. As we demonstrate below, however, the predictors of SRD differ sharply based on the religious minority that is a target of discrimination in Christian-majority countries.

Although not the focus of our study, many of our remaining demographics and development measures were also significant predictors when we looked at all religious minorities. As the population and the per capita GDP within a country increase, so too does the expected score for SRD. We suspect that larger countries allow for greater potential sources for SRD, but we did not anticipate the GDP finding. As we show with later results, however, the relationship between GDP and level of SRD does not hold for most religious minorities. Finally, the polity score (countries that are more democratic) was insignificant in all countries, all minorities (Models 1 and 2) but featured a significant, negative relationship when assessing Christian-majority countries for all religious minorities (Model 4). On its

own, this may suggest that democratic Christian-majority countries may be better at regulating SRD directed at religious minorities; however, as we look at the relationship between polity and specific minority groups, it may instead be a function of democracies in Christian-majority countries protecting other Christian groups.

In short, Table 2 finds that when we include all religious minorities in Christian-majority countries, increased religiosity is associated with reduced discrimination, but an Orthodox majority, higher GDP, and higher population totals are associated with increased discrimination. These findings, however, mask important differences across religious minorities. We proposed that the relationship SRD holds with the country's level of religiosity and the size of the minority religious group will vary depending on the minority religion. Below we review these relationships for specific religious minorities.

4.2. Assessing Patterns for Specific Minority Religious Groups

The models presented in Table 3 test our predictions by replicating the models of Table 2 for Muslim minorities, Jewish minorities, Christian minorities, and other minorities in Christian-majority countries. When separating our religious minority groups, the number of non-Christian-majority countries is too low to provide reliable assessments of the treatment of specific minority groups thus requiring this analytical subset. However, as we noted above, the development of future international survey collections can offer additional cases of non-Christian-majority countries.

As we proposed, when looking at Christian-majority countries, the relationship between the religiosity of the population and the level of SRD varies sharply, even reversing direction, depending on the religious minority. In Christian-majority countries, the country characteristics related to SRD and treatment of Jewish and Muslim minorities are similar, while treatment of Christian groups differs (see Table 3). For Jewish and Muslim minorities, a country's level of religiosity, as measured by religious importance and religious attendance, is negatively associated with SRD. Interestingly, however, as the percentage of Jewish and Muslim minorities increases, so too does the expected SRD score. In other words, when Jewish and Muslims hold a greater percentage of the religious population within a Christian country, they are more likely to experience SRD.

The relationships for Muslim and Jewish minorities are not always linear, however. In fact, we found that religious importance for Muslim minorities is a negative curvilinear relationship, where a distinct negative relationship is present when a country views religion as at least somewhat important at 0 to 50 percent. However, beyond 50 percent of a country viewing religion as at least somewhat important, the negative relationship tapers, resulting in almost no difference between 50 and 100%. This is demonstrated explicitly in Figure 1, a visual representation of the curvilinear relationship between religious importance and the level of SRD.

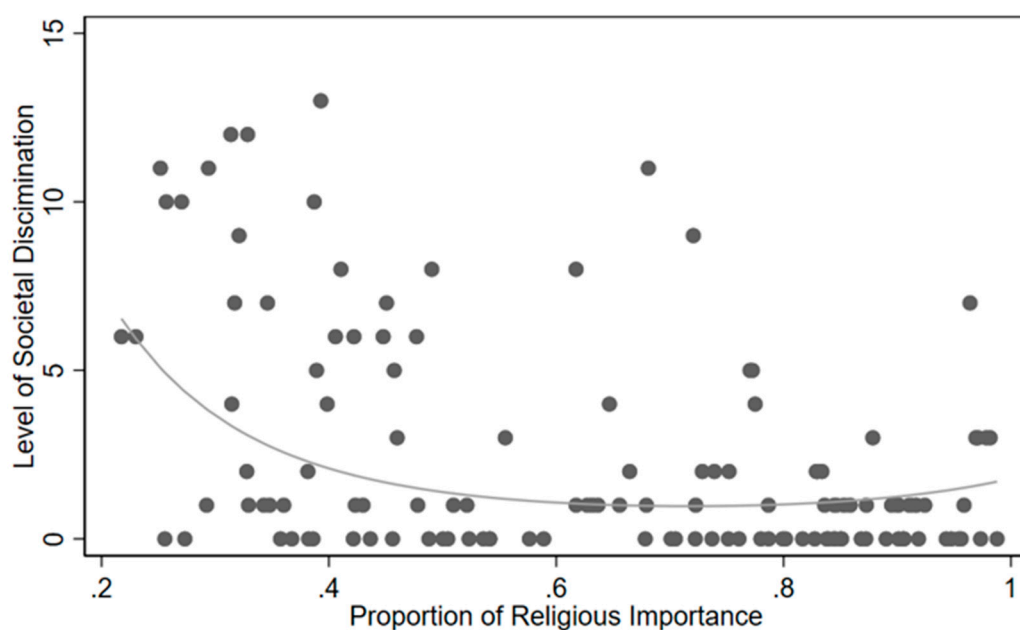


Figure 1. The Relationship between Religions Importance and the level of Societal Discrimination of Muslim Minorities in Christian Majority Countries.

Likewise, there is a curvilinear relationship between the percent of Jewish minorities within a country. However, this relationship is positive before tapering. As the percent of Jewish minorities increases from about 0.01 to 1 (a majority of all cases including Jewish minorities), the expected level of SRD is also expected to increase. Yet, after about one percent of the population, increases in the percent of Jewish minorities are no longer as important and the relationship tapers off. Figure 2 presents this relationship.

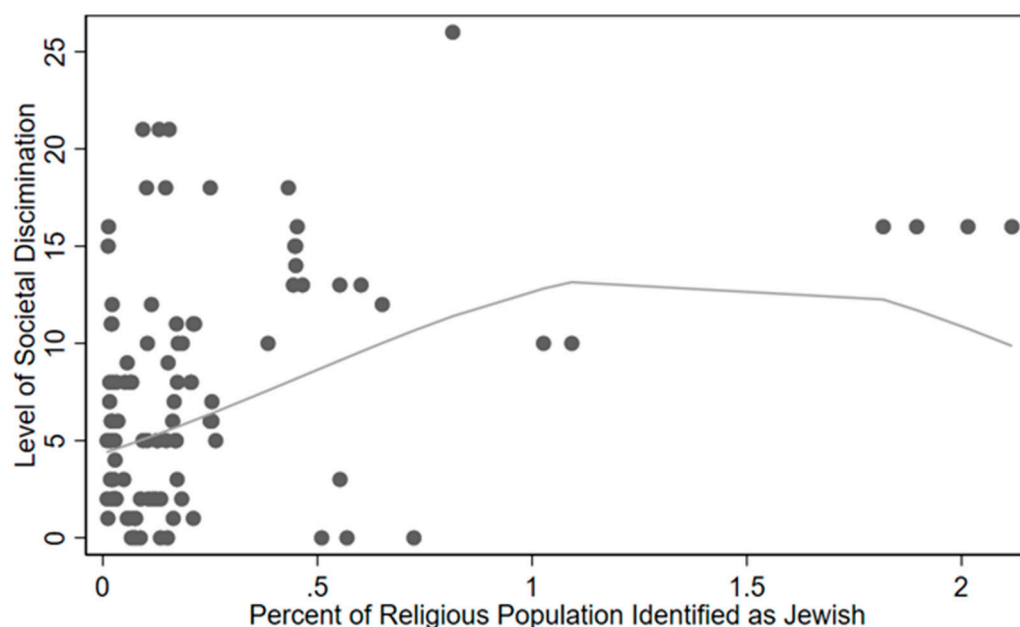


Figure 2. The Relationship between Minority Group Size and the level of Societal Discrimination of Jewish Minorities in Christian Majority Countries.

For Christian minorities in a Christian-majority country, the relationships are flipped. Christian minority groups, which are not designated as part of the religious majority and often seek to convert members of the majority religion, have a greater likelihood of experiencing SRD when a country's level of religiosity is high. Each increase in the proportion of the population that reports attending worship service at least once per month is significantly associated with a 2.84 score increase in the level of SRD for Christian minorities. As the proportion of the population that views religion as important increases, so too does the level of SRD directed at Christian minorities. Similarly, each increase in importance is associated with a 2.58 score increase in the level of SRD.

For the other minorities, Models 11 and 12, the religious groups are so disparate that we caution against drawing any firm conclusions. Unlike the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian minorities that are all linked to a common world religion, the other minorities include a wide range of religious groups with no common ancestry or shared beliefs. The results suggest that religious importance is negative and significantly related to SRD of other minority groups, though the relationship is curvilinear, and that attendance is not significantly related. Yet, because the groups are so varied, we refrain from generalizing these findings.

The alternating signs between group size and SRD are likely due to a combination of factors. All things being equal, SRD will go up as a group's size increases due to increased opportunity. Many manifestations of SRD are spontaneous and occur against targets of opportunity. As populations increase, so will the number of such targets. Christian groups are the exception in Christian-majority states because long-established minorities in a country, such as Catholics in many Protestant- and Orthodox-majority countries, will experience less SRD than the newer Christian denominations, such as U.S. Protestant sects in many European countries. These more recent and highly evangelical arrivals are the more frequent targets of SRD.

Finally, consistent with our models for all religious minorities in Table 2, population size is positive and highly significant for all religious minorities and our measure for Orthodox-majority nations significantly increases SRD in six of our eight models for Christian-majority countries. The log of GDP, however, is insignificant for all religious minorities, except Muslim minorities. We suspect that this finding is the result of many of the more prosperous Western nations perceiving Muslims as a security threat. Polity, however, is only a negative and significant predictor of SRD against Christian minorities. This result appears to be driven by a small number of countries, as most Western democracies have little or no SRD against Christian minorities.¹⁴

Our key finding for Christian-majority countries (Table 3) is that while country characteristics matter when predicting the level of SRD directed at religious minorities, it is important to realize that the treatment varies by the specific religious minority group. This variation is especially striking for our findings on religiosity. For Jewish and Muslim minority groups, the level of religiosity is negatively associated, but the size of the group is positively associated. As proposed, however, religiosity is positively associated with SRD against Christian minority groups. We cautiously note that other minority groups experience a melding of these patterns. We discuss these patterns further and offer greater explanations for why competition matters for explaining SRD but in seemingly different ways depending on the religious tradition.

Of course, not all cases fit the mold exactly. The most glaring exceptions tend to occur in relatively religious countries. For example, Venezuela has high religiosity (attendance 47.6% to 49.3%, religious importance 85.0% to 86.8%), but there is no SRD recorded against any religious minority. In the U.S. (attendance 44.0% to 56.6%, religious importance 68% to 83%), Jews experience high levels of SRD (16). Muslims experienced relatively low levels in 1999 (2), but this spiked after the 2001 terror attacks (9 to 11). Other minorities in the U.S. experienced low levels or no SRD (years 1995, 1999, 2006, and 2011).

5. Conclusions

The causes of SRD in Christian-majority countries against religious minorities are complex and differ across types of religious minorities. The dynamics for Jewish and Muslim minorities are remarkably similar. For both minorities, increased religiosity in a country results in a decrease in levels of SRD. We argue here that this is because secularism is increasingly seen as a significant challenge to Christianity among religious Christians. As a result, they see religious Jews and Muslims as potential allies in this struggle against secularism. Moreover, because these minorities often appeal to a distinct segment of the population, they pose less of a competitive threat to those in the majority religion. As we discuss in our theory section, this likely combines with a growing philosophical tolerance in some strains of Christianity toward at least some religious minorities.

In contrast, Christian minorities experience more SRD in more religious countries. We argue that the Christian minorities are a competitive threat. In the case of Christian minorities, they are a threat because they are more likely to successfully poach members from the Christian majority.

Our findings offer partial support for our remaining hypotheses. As expected, the measure for Orthodox-majority countries was associated with significantly higher rates of SRD in ten of our twelve models. Unlike the Catholic Church, where a centralized hierarchy has increasingly stressed the importance of global religious freedoms, Orthodox Churches frequently stress the importance of their tie to a single culture or nation. The findings for the minority group's size, however, were less consistent and more complex. For Muslim and Jewish minorities, discrimination significantly increased as the size of the minority increased. Yet, the relationship was non-linear for Jewish minorities and was insignificant for Christian minorities. Finally, despite being highly significant when including all nations and all minority religions (Model 1), supportive religious legislation was not a significant predictor in any of our models for Christian-majority nations.

These findings offer important insights into the sources of SRD and the varying relationships between religiosity and tolerance, as well as noteworthy implications on the extent to which secularism is influencing politics and society. [Taylor \(2007\)](#) argued that the mere presence of a secular option, a modern development, has had wide-ranging implications for the nature of religiosity. [Fox \(2015, 2019\)](#) argued that one of these implications is that secular and religious political actors compete to influence the nature of society and politics. This study provided empirical evidence for these assertions. We contend that the evidence suggests that this competition is sufficiently significant that religious Christians are seeking allies in the struggle against secularism from religious Jews and Muslims. Despite Christian teachings holding exclusive truth claims that are in conflict with those held by Jews and Muslims, SRD against Jews and Muslims declines as religious importance and involvement increase in Christian-majority countries. [Appleby \(2000\)](#) aptly described this struggle between tolerance and intolerance of other religions as the "ambivalence of the sacred."

If the religious are discriminating less, this implies secular actors are likely the source of many acts of intolerance toward Jewish and Muslim minorities. This implication aligns with research on the populist radical right (PRR) parties in Europe and on government discrimination against religious minorities. Despite some of the PRR parties claiming to defend their nation's Christian identity, they are more likely to garner support from the secular rather than the religious ([Arzheimer and Carter 2009](#); [Montgomery and Winter 2015](#); [Huber and Yendell 2019](#)). Montgomery and Winter explained that "[a]s religiosity increases, the odds of voting for a PRR party instead of a mainstream right party decline." Likewise, [Fox \(2020\)](#) demonstrated that a good portion of government-based discrimination against Jews and Muslims in Western democracies is motivated by secular ideologies. These findings, combined with the evidence presented here, suggest the same may be true for SRD. All of this contributes a new and evolving relationship between religion, secularism, and intolerance.

This study also has important methodological implications. It demonstrates that when examining the causes of discrimination, looking at global country-level scores hides important dynamics and realities. That religiosity increases discrimination against some minorities but decreases it against others is a finding that would not be possible without minority-specific data. These implications, both methodological and theoretical, require a broader research agenda that examines many of our basic assumptions on the complex and evolving relationship between secularism, religion, politics, and society.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Appendix of Countries, Years, Religiosity, and Societal Discrimination by Religious Minority Category.

Country	Year	Religious Importance	Religious Attendance	Societal Discrimination by Religious Minority Category								
				Muslim	Jewish	Christian One	Christian Two	Christian Three	Other One	Other Two	Other Three	Other Four
Argentina	1991	0.64	0.36	1	12	0	0		0			
	1995	0.68	0.43	1	13	0	0		0			
	1999	0.72	0.42	1	13	0	1		0			
	2006	0.63	0.36	1	13	0	0		0			
	2013	0.52	0.33	1	14	0	3		0			
Armenia	1997	0.62	0.29	1	6	1	21	13	4			
	2011	0.90	0.35	1	5	1	21	13	4			
Australia	1995	0.48	0.25	6	15				0	0		
	2005			10	15				0	0		
	2012			7	16				0	0		
Belarus	1990	0.28	0.06									
	1996	0.51	0.14	1	10	0	6					
	2011	0.48	0.22	1	10	0	6					
Brazil	1991	0.86	0.5	1	8	0			6	0		
	1997	0.90	0.75	1	8	0			6	0		
	2006	0.91	0.66	1	9	0			7	0		
	2014	0.90	0.67	1	8	0			10	0		
Bulgaria	1997	0.41	0.16	6	5	0	17					
	2006	0.49	0.15	8	7	0	16					
Canada	2000	0.65	0.38	4	10	0			0	0	0	0
	2006	0.62	0.35	8	10	0			0	0	0	0
Chile	1990	0.78	0.46	0	2	0			0	0		
	1996	0.74	0.45	0	2	0			0	0		
	2000	0.8	0.45	0	2	0			0	0		
	2006	0.70	0.4	0	2	0			0	0		
	2012	0.59	0.37	0	5	0			0	0		

Table A1. Cont.

Country	Year	Religious Importance	Religious Attendance	Societal Discrimination by Religious Minority Category								
				Muslim	Jewish	Christian One	Christian Two	Christian Three	Other One	Other Two	Other Three	Other Four
Colombia	1997	0.92	0.66	1	2	0			0	0		
	1998	0.84	0.66	1	3	0			0	0		
	2005		0.64	1	5	0			0	0		
	2012	0.85	0.64	1	2	0			0	0		
Croatia	1996	0.56	0.36	3	7	32	4	0				
Greek Cyprus	2006	0.77	0.28	5	2							
	2011	0.78	0.32	4	5							
Czech Republic	1991	0.22	0.11	6	15							
	1995	0.23	0.14	6	16							
Dominican Rep.	1996	0.82	0.54			1						
Ecuador	2013	0.88	0.69	3		0			0	0		
El Salvador	1999	0.95	0.69	0		0			0	0	0	0
Estonia	1996	0.27	0.09	0	2							
	2011	0.26	0.08	0	0							
Finland	1996	0.45	0.11	6	3	0						
	2005	0.45	0.14	7	6	0						
France	2006	0.41	0.11	8	26	0	0		0	0		
Georgia	1996	0.83	0.27	2	1	7	10		22			
	2009	0.96	0.39	7	1	8	13		22			
Georgia	2014	0.97	0.44	3	1	7	10		22			
Germany	1997	0.27	0.17	10	21	0			15			
	2006	0.33	0.18	12	21	0			15			
	2013	0.31	0.16	12	21	0			15			
Ghana	2007	0.97	0.89	0					0			
	2012	0.99	0.84	0					0			
Guatemala	2004	0.95	0.88	0	0				3			

Table A1. Cont.

Country	Year	Religious Importance	Religious Attendance	Societal Discrimination by Religious Minority Category								
				Muslim	Jewish	Christian One	Christian Two	Christian Three	Other One	Other Two	Other Three	Other Four
Hungary	1998	0.42	0.17	0	11	0	0					
	2009	0.37	0.13	0	12	0	0					
Italy	2005	0.75	0.54	2	3	0	0		0			
Latvia	1996	0.36	0.16	0	0				0			
Lithuania	1997	0.52	0.31	0	5	0	0					
Macedonia	1998	0.63	0.18	1	0	0	0	0				
	2001	0.77	0.33	5	0	0	0	0				
Mexico	1990	0.7	0.62	0	0	13			0	4		
	1996	0.79	0.65	0	0	13			0	4		
	2000	0.87	0.73	0	0	13			0	4		
	2005	0.85	0.64	1	1	14			0	6		
	2012	0.84	0.62	0	1	13			0	4		
Moldova	1996	0.66	0.23	2	6	11	0					
	2002	0.74	0.29	2	5	13	0					
	2006	0.73	0.26	2	5	14	0					
Netherlands	2006	0.32	0.18	9	10	0			0	1		
	2012	0.25	0.16	11	10	0			0	1		
New Zealand	1998	0.38	0.22	0	0				0	0	0	
	2004	0.34	0.20	1	3				0	0	0	
	2011	0.36	0.19	1	1				0	0	1	
Norway	1996	0.38	0.12	2	2	0			0			
	2007	0.33	0.11	2	3	0			0			
Peru	1996	0.82	0.62	0	1	0			0	0	0	
	2001	0.84	0.71	0	2	0			0	0	0	
	2006	0.76	0.63	0	0	0			0	0	0	
	2012	0.80	0.59	0	0	0			0	0	0	
Philippines	1996	0.98	0.90	3					0	0		
	2001	0.97	0.80	3					0	0		
	2012	0.98	0.85	3					0	0		

Table A1. Cont.

Country	Year	Religious Importance	Religious Attendance	Societal Discrimination by Religious Minority Category								
				Muslim	Jewish	Christian One	Christian Two	Christian Three	Other One	Other Two	Other Three	Other Four
Poland	1997	0.83	0.73	0	11	0	0	0	0			
	2005	0.85	0.74	0	11	1	0	0	0			
	2012	0.79	0.67	1	12	0	0	0	0			
Romania	1998	0.75	0.40	0	8	9	5					
	2005	0.89	0.46	0	8	10	7					
	2012	0.85	0.45	0	8	11	7					
Russia	1990	0.31	0.06	4	18	4	17	10	0	0	0	
	1995	0.40	0.08	4	18	4	17	10	0	0	0	
	2006	0.46	0.12	5	18	4	18	10	0	0	0	
	2011	0.42	0.13	6	18	4	17	10	0	0	0	
Rwanda	2007	0.96	0.96	0					0			
	2012	0.72	0.78	0					0			
Serbia (Yugoslavia)	1996	0.54	0.15	0	4	1	5	0				
	2001	0.68	0.20	0	5	1	5	0				
	2006	0.66	0.26	1	5	1	5	0				
Slovak Republic	1998	0.54	0.46	0	6	0	0	0				
Slovenia	1995	0.43	0.33	1	1	0	0					
	2005	0.42	0.28	1	1	0	0					
	2011	0.33	0.22	1	1	0	0					
South Africa	1990	0.84		0	5				4	0	0	0
	1996	0.90	0.71	0	5				4	0	0	0
	2001	0.92	0.72	1	5				4	0	0	0
	2006	0.91	0.70	1	7				4	0	0	0
	2013	0.84	0.68	1	6				4	0	0	1
Spain	1990	0.50	0.38	0	2	0						
	1995	0.58	0.37	0	2	0						
	2000	0.50	0.36	0	2	0						
	2007	0.39	0.22	5	4	0						
	2011	0.32	0.19	7	5	0						

Table A1. *Cont.*

Country	Year	Religious Importance	Religious Attendance	Societal Discrimination by Religious Minority Category								
				Muslim	Jewish	Christian One	Christian Two	Christian Three	Other One	Other Two	Other Three	Other Four
Sweden	1996	0.29	0.11	1	8	0	0	0	0			
	1999	0.35	0.09	1	8	0	0	0	0			
	2006	0.29	0.08	11	11	0	0	0	0			
	2011	0.26	0.09	10	11	0	0	0	0			
Switzerland	1996	0.44	0.28	0	6	0			0	0		
	2007	0.46	0.25	3	7	0			0	0		
Tanzania	2001	0.87	0.86	1					1			
Trinidad & Tobago	2006	0.90	0.60	0					0	0	0	0
	2010	0.91	0.58	0					0	0	0	0
UK	2005	0.39	0.22	13	13	3	0		0	1	1	
USA	1995	0.83	0.57	2	16	1	0		0	0	0	0
	1999	0.83	0.61	2	16	1	0		0	0	0	0
	2006	0.72	0.46	9	16	1	0		0	0	1	0
	2011	0.68	0.44	11	16	1	0		0	0	1	0
Uganda	2001	0.94	0.89	0					1	0		
Ukraine	2006	0.54	0.21	0	8	1	6	0				
	2011	0.63	0.25	1	9	1	6	0				
Uruguay	1996	0.49	0.23	0	0	0	0		0	0		
	2006	0.46	0.19	0	3	0	0		0	0		
	2011	0.39	0.18	0	0	0	0		0	0		
Venezuela	1996	0.85	0.49	0	0	0	0		0	0		
	2000	0.87	0.48	0	0	0	0		0	0		
Zambia	2007	0.92	0.81	0		0			0	0		
Zimbabwe	2001	0.92	0.80	1		1			1	0		
	2012	0.96	0.86	1		1			1	0		

Notes

- 1 This research was supported by the Israel Science Foundation (Grant 23/14), the German–Israeli Foundation (Grant 1291-119.4/2015), and the John Templeton Foundation. Any opinions expressed in this study are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the supporters of this research.
- 2 For a survey of this literature, see Wald and Calhoun-Brown (2011, pp. 350–57) and Eisenstein (2008).
- 3 See also Westfall and Russell (2019).
- 4 For a review of the research on the relationship religion holds with grievances, violence, terrorism, and civil wars, see Deitch (2020), Fox et al. (2019), Mishali-Ram and Fox (2021), and Zellman and Fox (2020).
- 5 *Christian Today*, “Buddhist Extremists Attack Christian-Run Children’s Home in Sri Lanka”, by Daniel Blake, 14 August 2006; *Christian Solidarity Worldwide*, “Sri Lanka: Religious Freedom in the Post-Conflict Situation”, 1.1.10, available online: <http://dynamic.csw.org.uk/article.asp?t=report&id=123&search> (accessed on 1 February 2020); *Reuters*, “Anti-Christian Feeling Rises in Buddhist Sri Lanka”, by Lindsay Beck, 4 February 2004; *OneWorld*, “Sri Lankan Buddhists Target Christians for Monk’s Death”, 23 December 2003.
- 6 *The Hurriyet Daily News*, “Church Responsible for Bias in Greece Says Report”, 15 September 2009; *In Cyprus*, “Church Sticks to its Guns on Cremation”, by Elias Hazou 2013, available online: <http://www.incyprus.eu/cyprus-news/church-sticks-to-its-guns-on-cremation/>; *Cyprus Today*, “Cyprus Considered the Law on Cremation”, 9 June 2013, available online: <http://en.cyplive.com/ru/news/na-kipre-rassmatrivayut-zakon-o-kremacii.html?selcat=1> (accessed on 1 February 2020).
- 7 *The Christian Science Monitor*, “Gay Rights Could be Major Hurdle for Moldova’s EU Bid”, by Kit Gillet, 29 November 2013; <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2013/1129/Gay-rights-could-be-major-hurdle-for-Moldova-s-EU-bid>, *Radio Free Europe*, *Radio Liberty*; “Gloves Come Off In Moldova’s Church-State Battle”, By Mircea Ticudean, 3 July 2013; available online: <http://www.rferl.org/content/moldova-orthodox-church-eu/25035131.html> (accessed on 1 February 2020).
- 8 Our emphasis on Christian-majority countries is both out of necessity and convenience. The data used for analyses are unfortunately limited in observations outside of Christian-majority countries. We discuss below that our analytical sample becomes too limited if we were to replicate our models from Christian-majority countries to other religious majority countries with an assessment of religiosity. As future international survey collections, such as the World Values Survey Wave 7 are released, our sample can include additional countries never surveyed by the WVS and with a religious majority outside of Christianity, such as the United Arab Emirates (Islam) and Mongolia (Buddhism).
- 9 At the 26th Annual International Law and Religion Symposium (8 October 2019), the director for the International Center for Law and Religious Studies at Brigham Young University, Brett Scharffs, described the Catholic Church as the most powerful institution advocating for religious freedom.
- 10 For a more general discussion on the topic of religious freedom, see Fox (2021).
- 11 The RASM dataset categorizes Jehovah’s Witnesses and several other groups as cults which places them in a different category as other religious minorities. As all 17 country-years for Jehovah’s Witnesses are within Christian-majority countries and discrimination against them is high, it is unlikely that including them in the Christian category would change this study’s results for Christian minorities.
- 12 Population variables were taken from the Religious Characteristics of States (RCS) dataset (Brown and James 2018).
- 13 Although an assessment of other religious majority countries would be beneficial to our argument, there are substantially fewer non-Christian-majority countries in our sample than there are Christian-majority countries. We did, however, run additional models accounting for alternative variations and patterns. These include Muslim-majority countries, West/non-West countries, and developed/non-developed countries. Further, country governance such as the presence of an independent judiciary as well as free and open elections are routinely shown to reduce levels of state restrictions on religious minorities (Finke et al. 2017b; Finke and Mataci 2021; Mataci and Finke 2019). We included these measures in additional tests finding no significant relationship with SRD across all of our models.
- 14 Christian minorities experience significant discrimination in Mexico and three of the Orthodox-majority countries, Bulgaria, Romania, and Moldova. In Moldova and Bulgaria, the discrimination is primarily against U.S. Protestant denominations that are making inroads into these countries but not Catholics. In Romania, it is against these groups as well as the Greek Catholic Church, which has been targeted for significant harassment by Romanian Orthodox priests (Fox 2020).

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