

RELIGION

Károly Kocsis, Patrik Tátrai

Religion, which can be viewed as a system of religious consciousness and behaviour, is a cultural element of paramount importance in the composition of the population. Only 13.9% of the 8 billion people on Earth are not religious, while the rest are mainly Christians (29.8%), Muslims (24.6%), Hindus (14.3%), Buddhists (6.5%) and followers of Chinese folk religion (4.9%). The proportion of non-religious people varies significantly around the world due to secularisation. The proportion of people who have turned away from religion is particularly high in Europe and in East Asia (e.g. Japan, Vietnam, Korea and China). According to the Eurobarometer survey of 2019, the combined proportion of non-religious and atheist people in the EU reached 27%, with above average proportions being found in the central and northwestern parts of Europe (e.g. among the Czechs, Dutch, Swedes, French, British, Belgians and Germans). In contrast, the most religious and often Catholic and Orthodox populations of Europe live in the southwestern and southeastern countries. According to the above 2019 survey, the proportion of the population who clearly regard themselves as non-religious or atheist is below the European average through-

*Secularisation: a decline in the social role of religion and churches. It may manifest in a weakening of the religious faith of the population, a mass turning away from the Church, a decrease in participation in religious activities, a decline in the acceptance of religious beliefs, the transfer of past Church duties to other social organisations (laicisation), and the weakening of the organisation of the Church. A characteristic feature is the complete separation of the role of the Church and the state.*

out the Carpathian Basin (e.g. 1% in Romania, 11% in Slovakia and Croatia, and 16-20% in Austria, Slovenia and Hungary).

Religion and the Church were an integral part of Hungarian statehood and society until the mid-20th century. The Carpathian Basin has been the scene of rivalry between Rome and Byzantium, and western and eastern Christianity since the 9th century. In the last half-millennium it has been a place of the meeting and mixing of Catholicism, Protestantism, Ortho-

doxy and Judaism. Despite the conversion of the Hungarians in the 10th-11th century and its accession to the Latin Church of Rome, the Roman Catholic Church – in view of the extraordinary successes of the Reformation in Hungary in the 16th century – could not play an influential role in nation-building, as it did in the neighbouring nations of the Croats and Poles. Even so, once Hungary had become a part of the Habsburg Empire, the Roman Catholic Church was able to benefit from the counter-reformation of the 17th and 18th centuries. Indeed, it kept its privileged position until the end of the Kingdom of Hungary (1946), becoming closely intertwined with state institutions. In 1949, the official separation of the Hungarian state and churches took place, and this was followed by the atheist and anticlerical policies of the communist dictatorship (until 1989). Secularisation was curbed after the collapse of communism, with a revival of religious belief in certain rural areas.

Religion over the last century

In the aftermath of World War I and under the terms of the Treaty of Trianon (1920), Hungary lost 98% of its Orthodox population, 91.9% of its Greek Catholics, 63.9% of its Lutherans, 56.2% of its Roman Catholics and half of its adherents to Judaism. In the period between 1918 and 1924, large-scale migrations took place in consequence of the new national borders. Yet these did not significantly change the denominational structure

As in other countries in Europe, religious freedom was repeatedly violated in the interwar period, which saw restrictions on the human and civil rights of Jews. Then, under the ‘Second Jewish Law’ (1939), anyone who had at least one Jewish-born parent or two Jewish-born grandparents was defined as a Jew. Of the approximately 825 thousand (490 thousand on the present-day territory of Hungary) inhabitants treated as Jews (more than 80% of whom identified themselves as native Hungarian speakers), 435 thousand (180 thousand from the present-day territory) were deported to the death camps after the German occupation of 19 March 1944. At the end of 1945, there were estimated to be no more than 255 thousand Jews who had survived deportation and the other horrors of the Holocaust within the 1941–1944 borders (or 195 thousand on the present-day territory of Hungary). After 1938, Jews were disenfranchised in other areas of the Carpathian Basin too (Austria 1938, Slovakia 1940–1942, Croatia 1941). Except for those in Southern Transylvania, most of them were deported and killed.

After World War II and in the wake of the political and territorial changes between 1945 and 1948, forced migrations affecting hundreds of thousands of inhabitants altered the religious structure of the population. Owing to deportations and war losses among the Roman Catholic ethnic German and Hungarian population, the number of Roman Catholics in Transylvania decreased by nearly 100 thousand people between 1930 and 1948, and in Vojvodina by 180 thousand between 1931 and 1953. However, 230 thousand Reformed and Catholic Hungarians fled from the annexed (now Romanian, Slovakian, Serbian and Ukrainian) territories

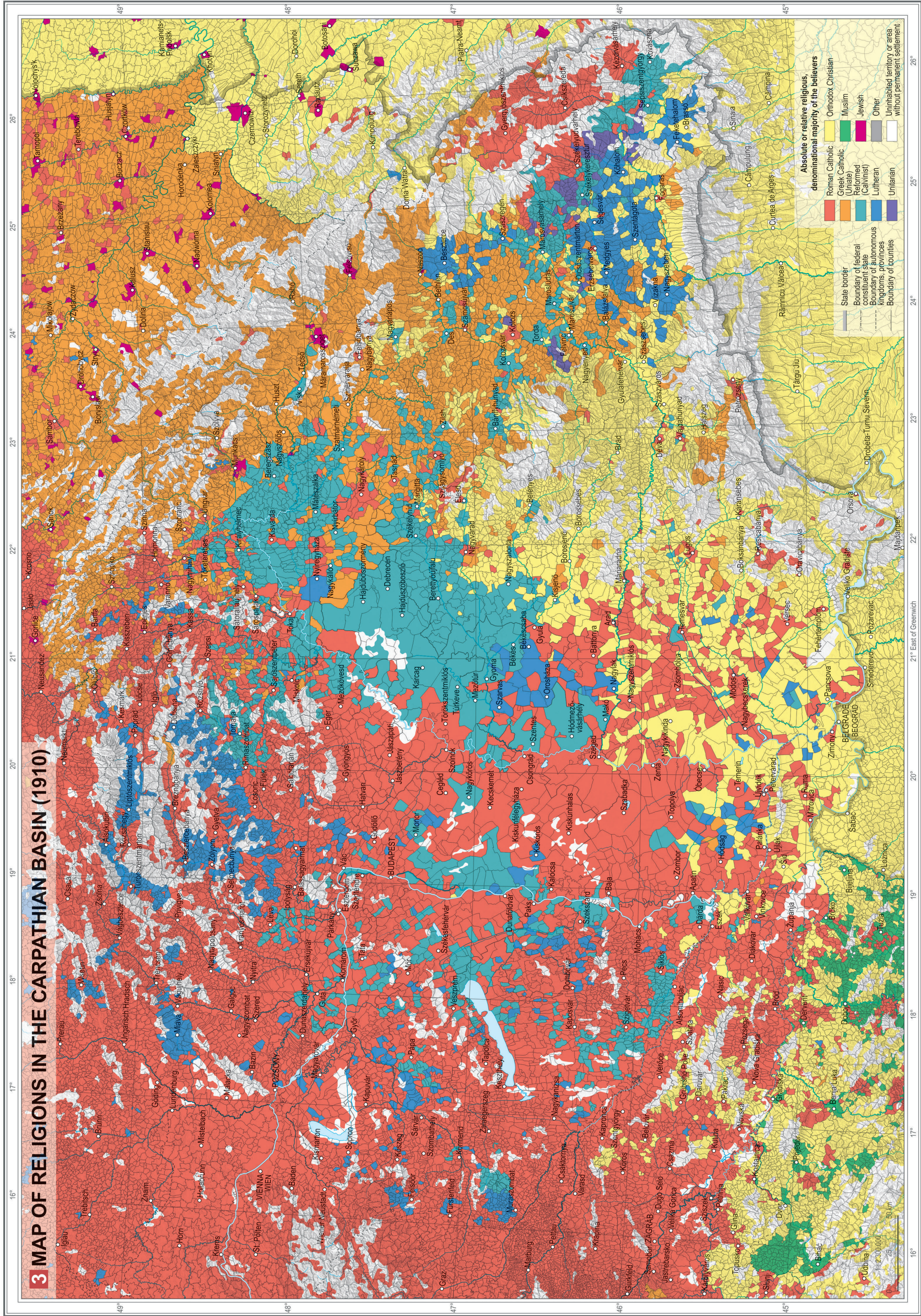
1 DEVELOPMENT OF THE RELIGIOUS STRUCTURE OF POPULATION IN THE CARPATHIAN BASIN (1910–2011)

Year	Total population	Population reporting their relationship to religion	Religious population	Roman Catholic	Greek Catholic	Lutheran	Reformed (Calvinist)	Unitarian	Orthodox	Jewish	Muslim	Other	Non-religious	Atheist	Population not reporting their relationship to religion
1910	20,449	20,449	20,447	10,595	2017	1335	2628	74	2843	929	—	26	2	—	—
1930	22,782	22,778	22,753	12,034	2190	1407	2782	68	3236	919	5	112	25	—	4
2001	29,487	27,962	25,203	13,120	902	836	2542	79	7054	18	47	605	2756	4	1525
2011	28,553	24,675	21,970	10,818	774	662	1972	64	6829	15	64	772	2550	155	3878
	Proportion (%)														
1910	100.0	100.0	100.0	51.8	9.9	6.5	12.8	0.4	13.9	4.5	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
1930	100.0	100.0	99.9	52.8	9.6	6.2	12.2	0.3	14.2	4.0	0.0	0.5	0.1	0.0	0.0
2001	100.0	94.8	85.5	44.5	3.1	2.8	8.6	0.3	23.9	0.1	0.2	2.1	9.3	0.0	5.2
2011	100.0	86.4	76.9	37.9	2.7	2.3	6.9	0.2	23.9	0.1	0.2	2.7	8.9	0.5	13.6

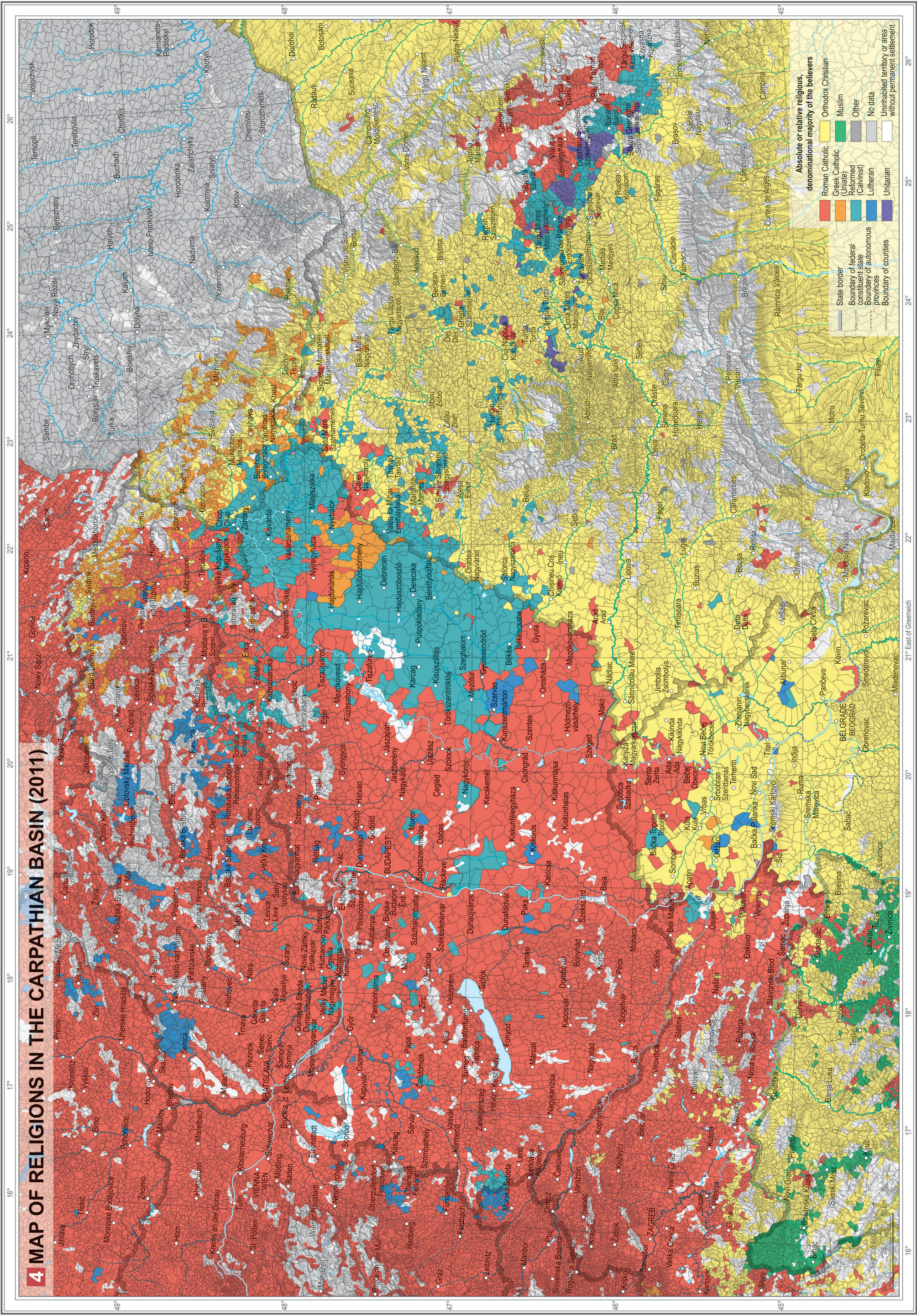
2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE RELIGIOUS STRUCTURE OF POPULATION ON THE PRESENT TERRITORY OF HUNGARY (1910–2011)

Year	Total population	Population reporting their relationship to religion	Roman Catholic	Greek Catholic	Lutheran	Reformed (Calvinist)	Unitarian	Orthodox	Jewish	Other	Non-religious	Atheist	Population not reporting their relationship to religion
	Number												
1910	7,612,114	7,612,114	4,774,485	165,389	484,221	1,632,588	5,101	61,012	471,370	17,948	—	—	—
1920	7,986,875	7,986,875	5,102,466	175,653	496,799	1,670,990	6,225	50,917	473,329	10,496	—	—	—
1930	8,685,109	8,685,109	5,631,246	201,092	533,746	1,813,144	7,300	39,839	444,552	14,190	1,959	—	303
1941	9,316,074	9,316,074	6,119,600	233,659	557,310	1,934,851	8,465	38,318	400,978	22,893	3,841	—	1,674
1949	9,204,799	9,190,990	6,240,399	248,356	482,157	2,014,718	9,449	36,015	133,861	26,035	12,287	—	1,522
2001	10,198,315	7,610,613	5,289,521	268,935	304,705	1,622,796	12,000	15,298	12,871	84,487	1,483,369	—	1,104,333
2011	9,937,628	5,432,375	3,691,389	179,176	215,093	1,153,454	6,820	13,710	10,965	161,768	1,659,023	147,386	2,698,844
	Proportion (%)												
1910	100.0	100.0	62.7	2.2	6.4	21.4	0.1	0.8	6.2	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
1920	100.0	100.0	63.9	2.2	6.2	20.9	0.1	0.6	5.9	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
1930	100.0	100.0	64.8	2.3	6.1	20.9	0.1	0.5	5.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
1941	100.0	100.0	65.7	2.5	6.0	20.8	0.1	0.4	4.3	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
1949	100.0	99.8	67.8	2.7	5.2	21.9	0.1	0.4	1.5	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.0
2001	100.0	74.6	51.9	2.6	3.0	15.9	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.8	14.5	0.0	10.8
2011	100.0	54.7	37.1	1.8	2.2	11.6	0.1	0.1	0.1	1.7	16.7	1.5	27.2

3 MAP OF RELIGIONS IN THE CARPATHIAN BASIN (1910)







to the present-day territory of Hungary between 1944 and 1948. The vast majority of the (mainly Calvinist) Hungarian refugees and Hungarian agrarian colonists from the Alföld were settled in areas that had been emptied by the emigration of Catholic and Lutheran Germans and Slovaks. The exodus of Jewish survivors of the war continued with their emigration to Palestine (Israel), causing the number of Jews in Hungary to decline from 195 thousand to 134 thousand between late 1945 and 1949. In addition to the Holocaust, similar waves of emigration resulted in the Jewish population share declining from 3.5% to 1.7% in present-day Transylvania, from 5.1% to 1.5% in Hungary, from 14.1% to 3.1% in Zakarpattia, and from 4.1% to 0.2% in Slovakia between 1930 and 1948/51.

The significance of the migrations described above was nearly matched by the effects of offensives on the Rusyn and Romanian Greek Catholic churches between 1946 and 1950. The aim was to achieve national (Ukrainian, Romanian) and religious (Orthodox) 'unity'. The offensives sought the elimination of the Greek Catholic churches, which, around 1950, had 1.2 million followers in Transylvania, 450 thousand in Zakarpattia and 225 thousand in Slovakia. Their followers were declared Orthodox. Forced conversions and the mass settlement of Orthodox Russians and Ukrainians in Zakarpattia and of Orthodox Serbs in Vojvodina created Orthodox majorities in these areas by 1950.

After the waves of colonisation ended, the proportion of people identifying themselves as non-religious or as atheists increased, reflecting the atheistic policies of the communists who had seized power. The spatial religious structure did not change substantially in the decades of communist rule. Internal migration and communist urbanisation policies did, however, result in the loss of Calvinist or Lutheran majorities in several formerly predominantly Protestant towns.

In the former communist countries of Europe, the collapse of the Soviet economic and military alliance system was coupled with the fundamental political, economic and social changes of the period 1989–1991. These changes transformed the church-state relationship. A religious revival strengthened small free church-

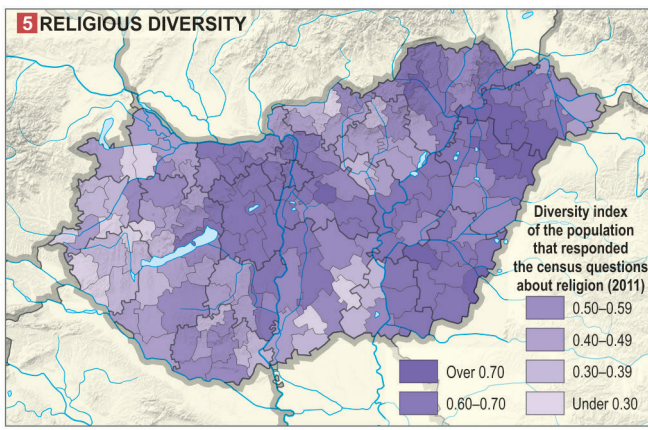
es and other minor religious groups, resulting in growing religious pluralism. The emergence of Buddhism and Islam reflected the arrival of legal immigrants mainly to Budapest, adding a spot of colour to the diversity described above.

### Current spatial structure of religions

The diversity of religions on the present-day territory of Hungary can be explained by historical factors (e.g. the Reformation and counter-reformation), by migration and ethnic differences dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries. Religious diversity is greatest in the northeastern and central parts of Hungary and in the southern Tiszántúl region. In the most Catholic areas (e.g. western Transdanubia, Northern Hungary, Jászság and Kiskunság) it is much more modest.

According to the census of 2011, 40.6% of the 28.5 inhabitants of the *Carpathian Basin* identified as Catholic (37.9% Roman Catholic, 2.7% Greek Catholic), 9.4% as Protestant (of which 6.9% as Calvinist), 23.9% as Orthodox and 3.1% as followers of other religions. More than 2.7 million people (9.4%) considered themselves *non-religious or atheist*, while 3.9 million (13.6%) did not wish to report a religious affiliation. In the case of Hungary, these latter indices are particularly high: 18.2% and 27.2%. According to the census of 2011, the proportion of the population belonging to a religion or denomination is significantly lower in Hungary (54.6%) than in the neighbouring regions and countries: Zakarpattia 98.1%, Pannonian Croatia 94.5%, Transylvania 93.9%, Vojvodina 92.2% and Slovakia 76.0%.

A large-scale degree of secularisation is especially common among young people, and in terms of spatiality, in Budapest and in the other Hungarian and Slovak major cities (e.g. Bratislava, Košice and Banská Bystrica), in the former heavy industrial centres and in the Protestant majority areas of the central Tiszántúl region. Only 30-40% of the population declared a religious affiliation in these latter regions, which had once been predominantly Calvinist and Lutheran. These are the areas in the Alföld where



poorer peasants became susceptible to socialist ideas as early as the first half of the 20th century, where (besides the industrial areas) the Hungarian Communist Party achieved particular success in 1945, and where the Protestant churches were the least able to counter secularisation.

Since the mid-20th century, the spatial structure of religion has changed significantly only in the cities and towns. In the predominantly Catholic countries (Hungary, Slovakia and Croatia) Catholic dominance remains intact, while in those with Orthodox majorities (Romania, Serbia and Ukraine) Orthodox dominance is similarly unbroken.

Almost half of religious believers in the Carpathian Basin (37.9% of the total population, or 10.8 million people) are *Roman Catholics*; they form the majority in Pannonian Croatia, Austrian Burgenland, Slovakia, Slovenian Prekmurje and Hungary. Their population share is particularly high in Croatia, northwestern Slovakia and the northeastern half of Székely Land, in the western-southwestern part of Transdanubia, in Bácska, in the southeastern areas of Kiskunság, in Jászság and in certain regions of Northern Hungary. According to the census of 2011, most Roman Catholics live in the following cities (given in thousands): Zagreb (656), Budapest (501), Bratislava (214), Košice (108), Osijek (91), Pécs (62), Szeged (61), Győr (58). Since the collapse of communism, historical sites of pilgrimage have attracted ever larger crowds, reflecting the growing importance of religious tourism. In the Carpathian Basin, the most important Roman Catholic pilgrimage sites are found at Levoča, Staré Hory,

### 6 RELIGIOUS STRUCTURE OF POPULATION IN THE REGIONS OF THE CARPATHIAN BASIN (2011)

Region	Total population	Population reporting their relationship to religion	Religious population	Roman Catholic	Greek Catholic	Lutheran	Reformed (Calvinist)	Unitarian	Orthodox	Jewish	Muslim	Other	Non-religious	Atheist	Population not reporting their relationship to religion
Number															
Hungary	9,937,628	7,238,784	5,432,375	3,691,389	179,176	215,093	1,153,454	6,820	13,710	10,965	5,579	156,189	1,659,023	147,386	2,698,844
Slovakia	5,397,036	4,825,599	4,100,237	3,347,277	206,871	316,250	98,797	—	49,133	1,999	—	79,910	725,362	—	571,437
Zakarpattia	1,259,570	1,247,570	1,235,570	58,000	228,000	3,000	100,000	—	810,000	—	—	38,570	12,000	—	12,000
Transylvania	6,789,250	6,394,745	6,374,985	632,948	142,862	30,711	598,167	57,485	4,464,058	1,178	3,416	444,160	12,452	7,308	394,505
Vojvodina	1,931,809	1,806,864	1,780,958	321,691	15,000	47,378	16,651	—	1,357,137	254	14,206	8,641	25,906	—	124,945
Pannonian Croatia	2,872,954	2,807,843	2,714,096	2,496,170	4,535	2,420	3,437	—	133,232	423	35,060	38,819	93,747	—	65,111
Prekmurje	80,550	71,050	66,050	52,000	—	11,690	210	—	120	—	180	1,850	5,000	—	9,500
Burgenland	284,581	282,381	265,381	219,000	—	35,000	1,600	—	2,000	—	6,000	1,781	17,000	—	2,200
Carpathian Basin	28,553,378	24,674,836	21,969,652	10,818,475	774,444	661,752	1,972,106	64,305	6,829,390	14,819	64,441	769,920	2,550,490	154,694	3,878,542
Proportion (%)															
Hungary	100.0	72.8	54.7	37.1	1.8	2.2	11.6	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	1.6	16.7	1.5	27.2
Slovakia	100.0	89.4	76.0	62.0	3.8	5.9	1.8	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.0	1.5	13.4	0.0	10.6
Zakarpattia	100.0	99.0	98.1	4.6	17.9	0.2	7.9	0.0	64.3	0.0	0.0	3.1	1.0	0.0	1.0
Transylvania	100.0	94.2	93.9	9.3	2.1	0.5	8.8	0.8	65.8	0.0	0.1	6.5	0.2	0.1	5.8
Vojvodina	100.0	93.5	92.2	16.7	0.8	2.5	0.9	0.0	70.3	0.0	0.7	0.4	1.3	0.0	6.5
Pannonian Croatia	100.0	97.7	94.5	86.9	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0	4.6	0.0	1.2	1.4	3.3	0.0	2.3
Prekmurje	100.0	88.2	82.0	64.6	0.0	14.5	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.2	2.3	6.2	0.0	11.8
Burgenland	100.0	99.2	93.3	77.0	0.0	12.3	0.6	0.0	0.7	0.0	2.1	0.6	6.0	0.0	0.8
Carpathian Basin	100.0	86.4	76.9	37.9	2.7	2.3	6.9	0.2	23.9	0.1	0.2	2.7	8.9	0.5	13.6





1 The majority of religious Hungarians are Roman Catholic

Šaštín and Marianka in Slovakia; at Mátraverebély, Máriabesnyő, Máriaremete, Máriagyűd, Andocs and Csátka in Hungary; at Marija Bistrica and Aljmaš in Panonian Croatia; at Šumuleu/Csiksomlyó 2 and Radna in Transylvania and the Partium; and at Doroslovo/Doroszló in Vojvodina.



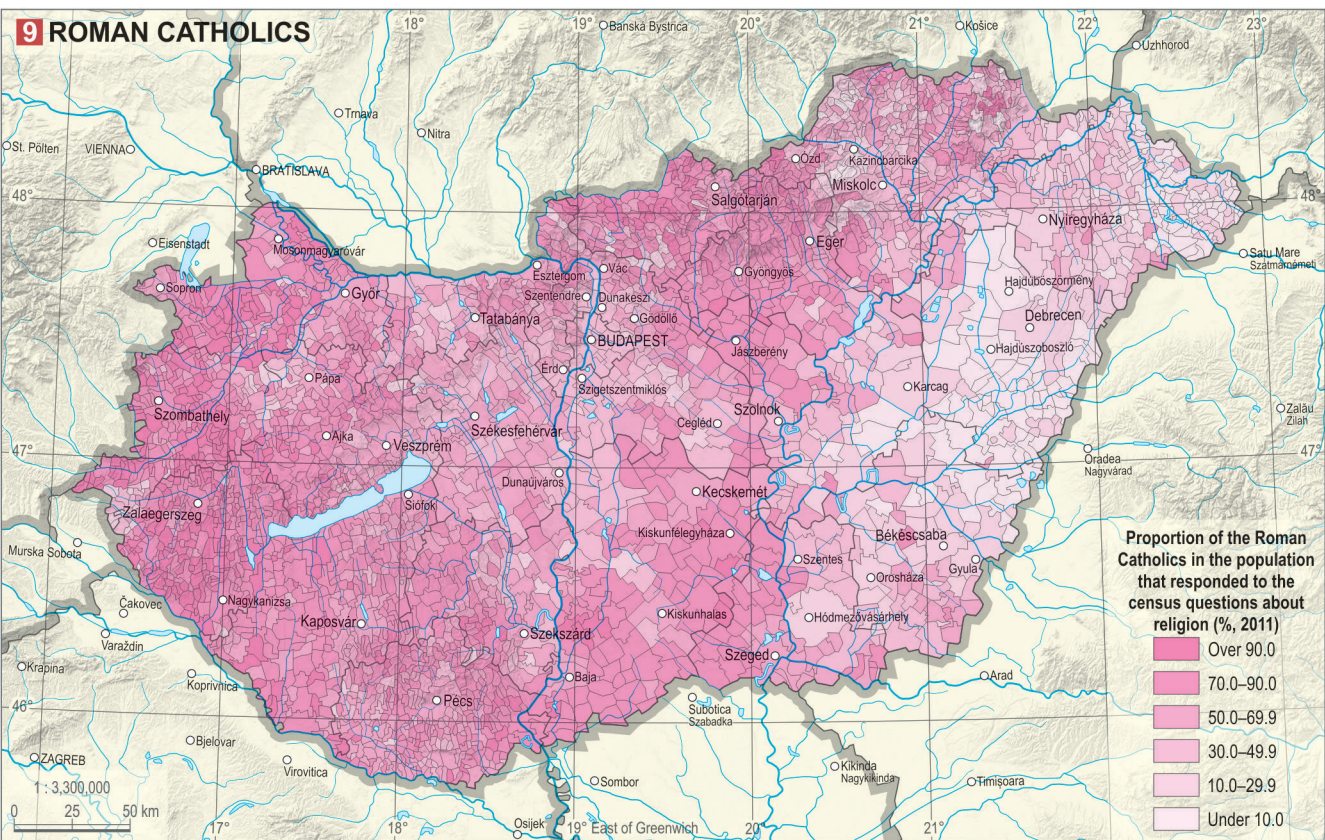
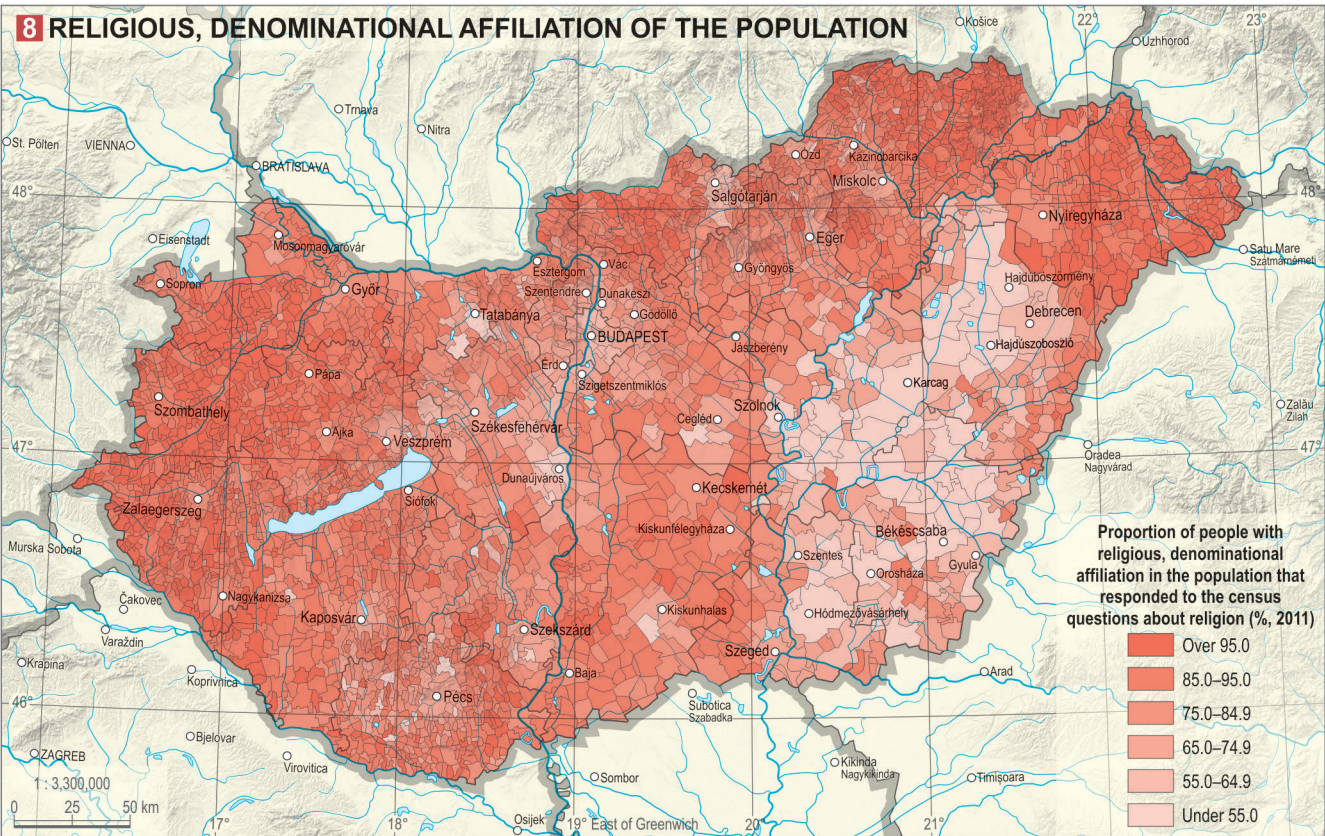
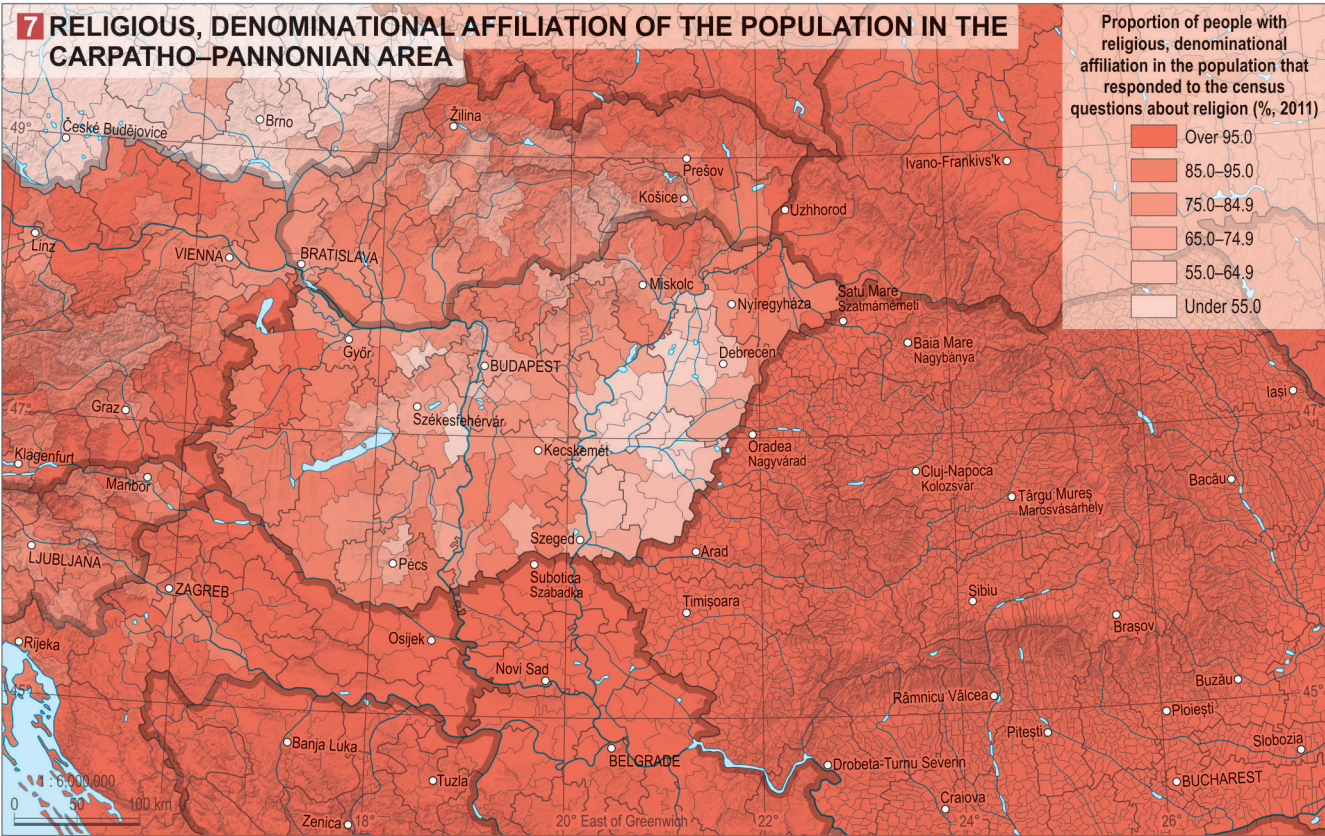
2 Šumuleu (Csiksomlyó) Pilgrimage has become a major Christian event for all Hungarians

Since the collapse of communism, the Greek Catholic Church, which again operates legally in Ukraine and Romania, has been able to lure back from the Orthodox Church only 774 thousand of its 2.5 million believers prior to 1950. Greek Catholics partly of Rusyn or Romanian origin can be found mostly in Zakarpattia (226 thousand), in the mostly mountainous and remote Rusyn areas of Eastern Slovakia (207 thousand), in northern Transylvania (143 thousand), and in the border areas of Hajdú and Szabolcs and the inner Cserhát region in Hungary (179 thousand) VI. 4. 10. Their most important pilgrimage sites are Máriapócs and Nicula (Transylvania).



3 Majority of religious Hungarians east of the River Tisza are Calvinists

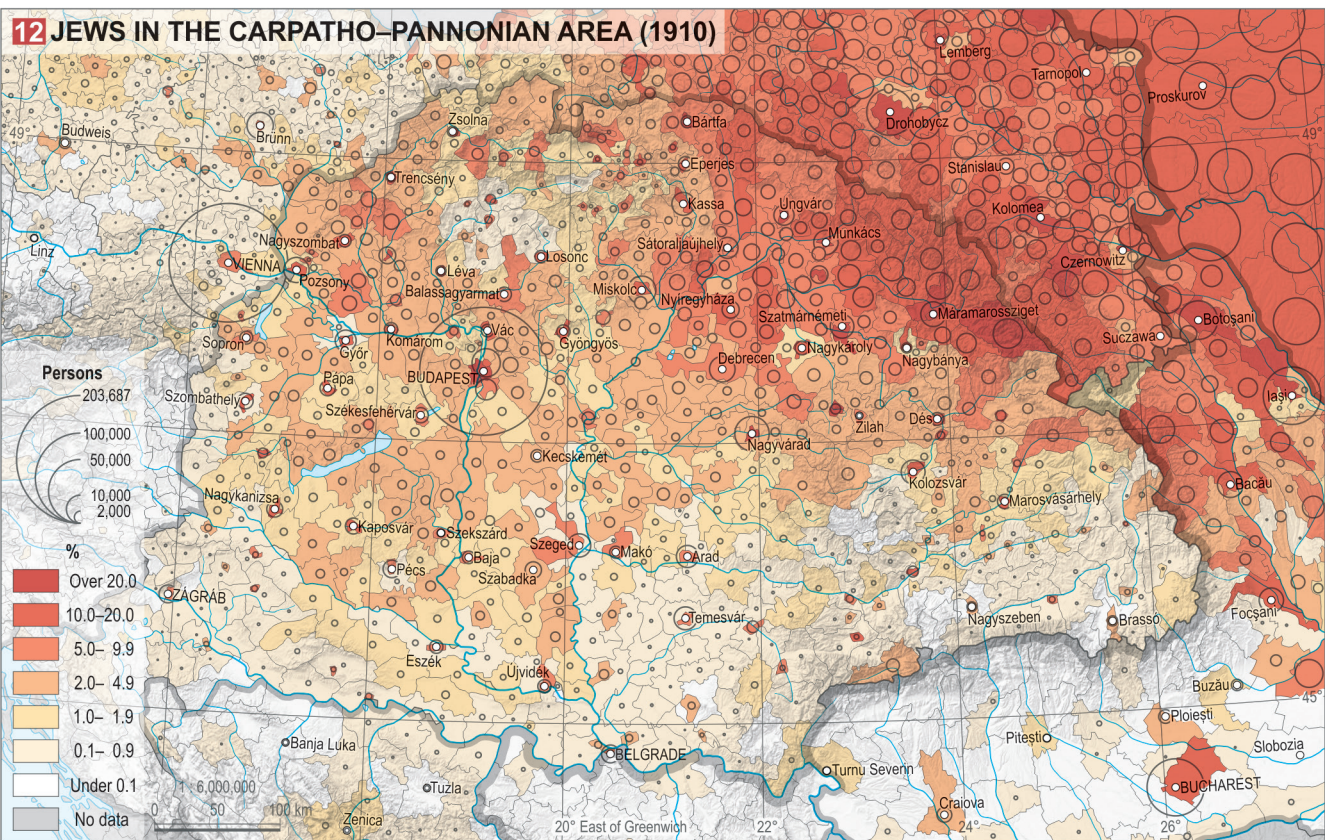
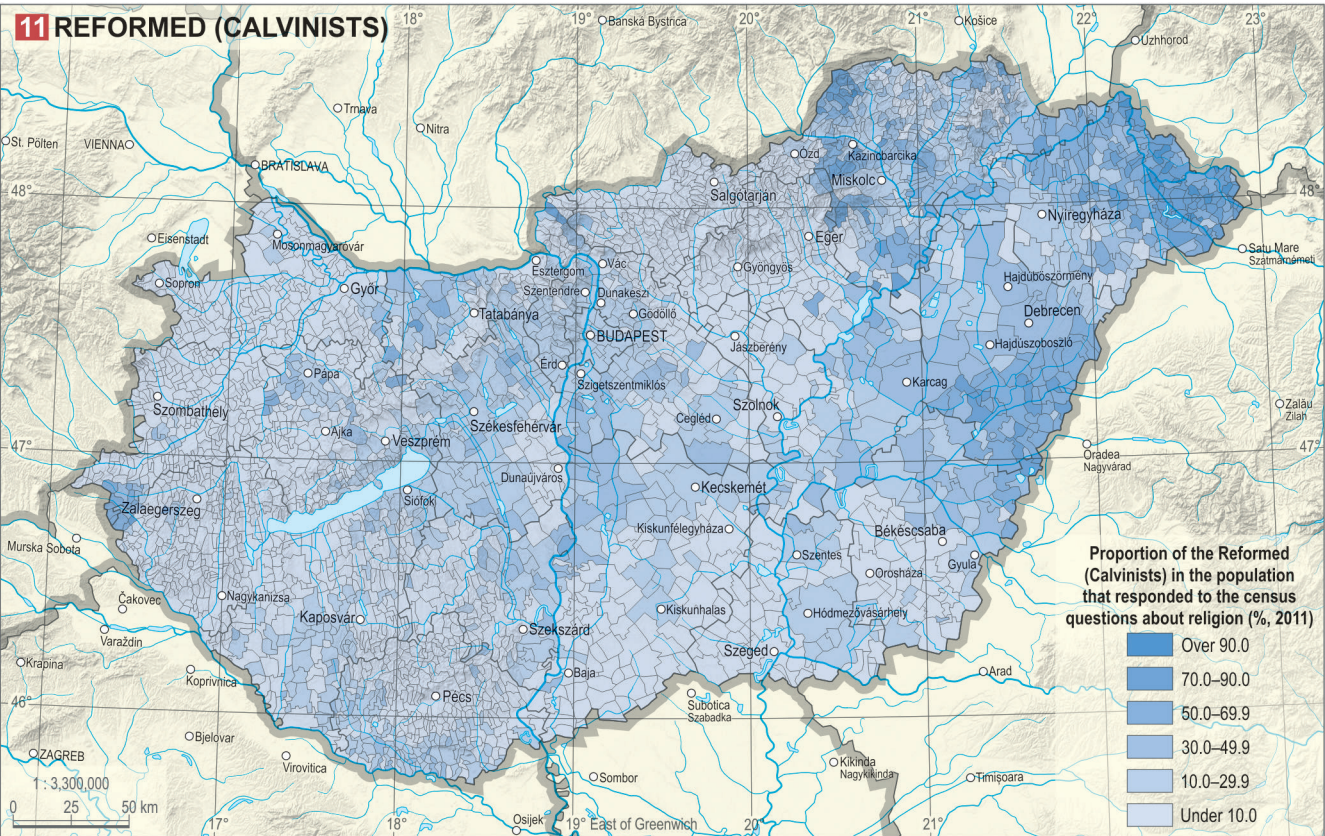
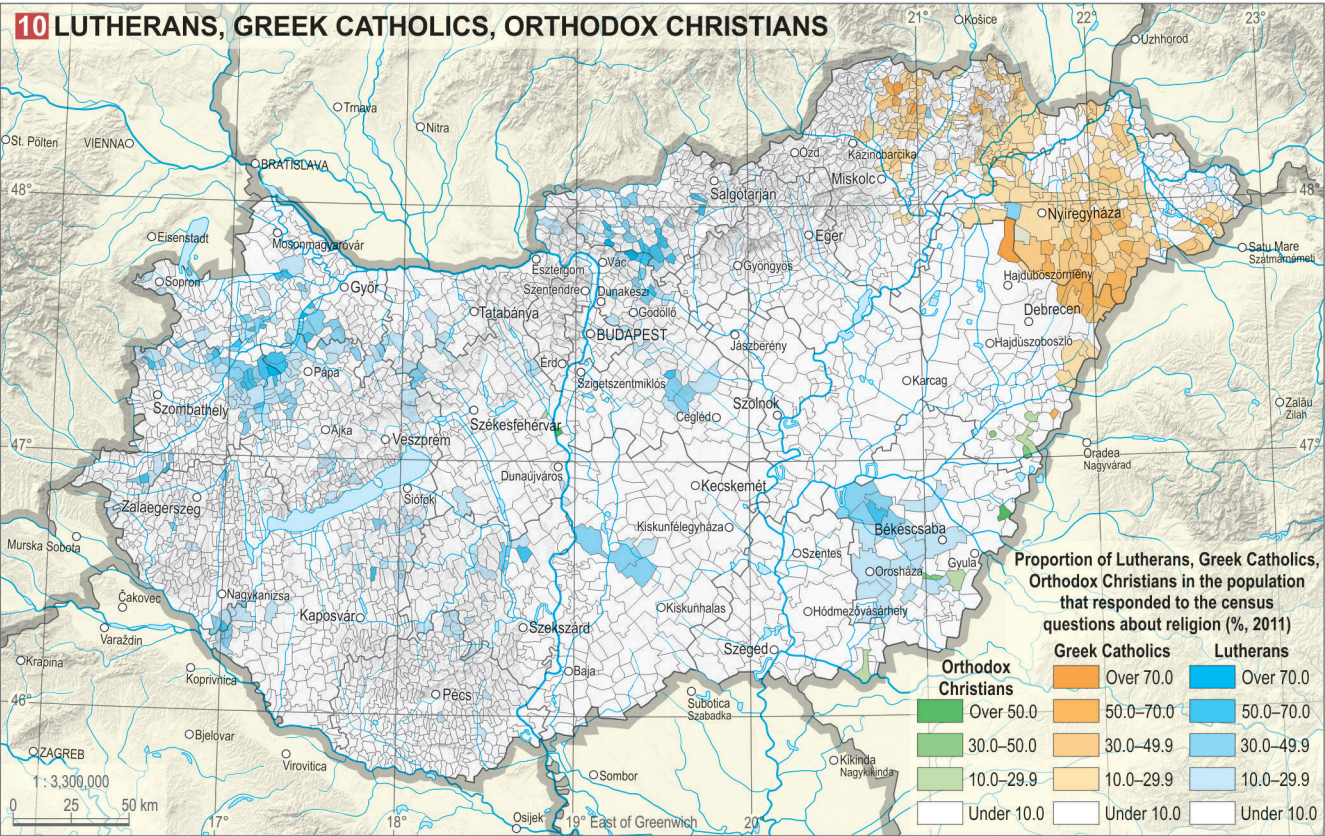
The most powerful Protestant Church in the Carpathian Basin is the Reformed (Calvinist) Church, with its 2 million adherents representing 6.9% of the total population. In the Carpathian Basin, 58% of Calvinists live in Hungary, 30% in Transylvania, 5% in Slovakia and 4% in Zakarpattia. This is the dominant denomination among Hungarians living east of the Tisza–Fehér-Körös line VI. 4. 11 3. Nearly two-thirds of Hungarians in Zakarpattia, a half in Transylvania,



a sixth in Hungary and a tenth in Slovakia claim to be Reformed. In the second half of the 20th century, the Calvinist Church was least able to keep its believers in the Central Tiszántúl region. The highest numbers of Calvinists (the figures are given in thousands) were found in Budapest (147), Debrecen (52), Târgu

Mureș/Marosvásárhely (36), Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár (32), Oradea/Nagyvárad (27) and Miskolc (25).

The number of Lutherans halved to 662 thousand – due to the departure of Lutheran Germans and secularisation. In 2011, 48% of Lutherans lived in Slovakia and 32% in Hungary. The Lutheran settlements and



areas are mainly located in peripheral areas of Central Slovakia, in the White Carpathians, in the vicinity of Oberwart in Burgenland, in the northern part of Prekmurje, in the vicinity of Pápa, in Békés County, along the border of Nógrád and Pest counties in Hungary, and in the Slovak language islands of the Vojvodina

region VI. 4. 4. VI. 4. 10. Lutherans are most numerous (the figures are given in thousands) in Budapest (30), Bratislava (22), Banská Bystrica (9), Martin (9), Nyíregyháza (8) and Békéscsaba (8). The main base of the Unitarians (64 thousands), is to be found among the Transylvanian Székelys, with



4 The Orthodox Church is the main denomination in the southeastern half of the Carpathian Basin

local Unitarian majorities in the vicinity of Odorheiu Secuiesc/Székelyudvarhely and south of Turda/Torda. Unitarians live in the greatest number in Odorheiu Secuiesc/Székelyudvarhely, Budapest, Târgu Mureș/Marosvásárhely and Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár.

During the last half century, the Orthodox churches doubled the number of their adherents (to more than 6.8 million in 2011), thereby increasing their population share in the Carpathian Basin from 14% to 24%. This was a consequence of the incorporation of the majority of Greek Catholics and the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Orthodox believers from beyond the Carpathians and from the Balkans (Romanians, Serbs, Ukrainians and Russians) in the second half of the 20th century. As a result, 76% of religious believers in Vojvodina, 70% in Transylvania and 66% in Zakarpattia are now Orthodox 4. At the same time, Orthodoxy has been on the decline in the predominantly Catholic countries of the region (mainly due to assimilation and emigration: e.g. in Croatia during the war of 1991–1995). The most populous Orthodox communities can be found in the following cities (the figures are given in thousands): Timișoara (239), Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár (213), Brașov (205), Novi Sad (181), Sibiu (117), Oradea/Nagyvárad (110) and Arad (109).



5 Jewish people made up almost a quarter of the population of Budapest in the early 20th century. Synagogue on Dohány Street

In the northeastern areas of the Carpathian Basin, between 1910 and 2011 the number of Jews, whose population share had been particularly high a century ago VI. 4. 12. 5, decreased from 929 thousand to 15 thousand (11 thousand in Hungary or, based on cultural identity, between 64 thousand and 120 thousand) due to the Holocaust, emigration and finally the gradual loss of religious identity. Two-thirds of them live in Budapest, while the others mainly live in Bratislava, Košice, Szeged, Debrecen and Miskolc.

Free churches and other minor religious groups have emerged in the Carpathian Basin since the second half of the 19th century. Their growth reflects disturbances in the religious activities of the historical churches, foreign missionary activities, and church renewal movements (e.g. Pentecostalists, Baptists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Adventists and the Faith Church).



