Portuguese religion in European perspective: Evidence from very recent surveys

David Voas Department of Social Science University College London



The data

Two major surveys were released at the end of May 2018:

- the latest round of the European Social Survey
- "Being Christian in Western Europe" (carried out by the Pew Research Center in Washington, DC)



Summary

- Portugal is among the most religious countries on the continent, but there are early signs of decline.
- Conventionally Christian but also folk and alternative beliefs are widely held.
- National pride is high in Portugal, and national belonging is defined in ethnic rather than civic terms.
- Portugal is relatively low on Islamophobia but higher on anti-Semitism than other countries in Western Europe.



European Social Survey

The European Social Survey (ESS) is a cross-national survey that has been running since 2002. Every two years, face-to-face interviews are conducted with newly selected, cross-sectional samples.

The survey measures attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns in more than thirty countries.

ESS - Portugal

Portugal has participated in all eight rounds of the ESS, from 2002 through 2016. The Round 8 dataset was released on 30 May 2018.

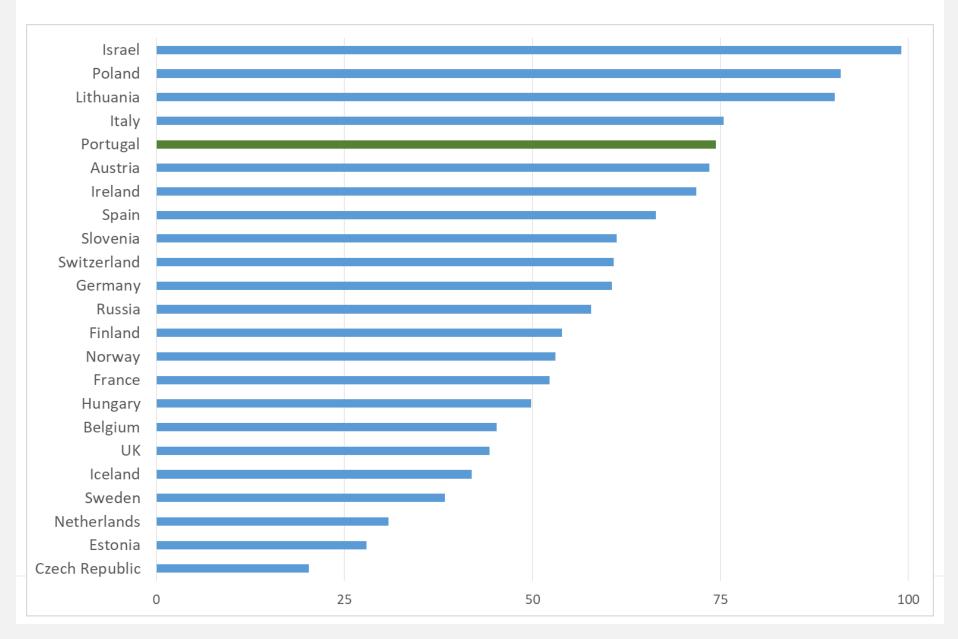
The national contact is:

Jorge Vala (jorge.vala@ics.ul.pt)

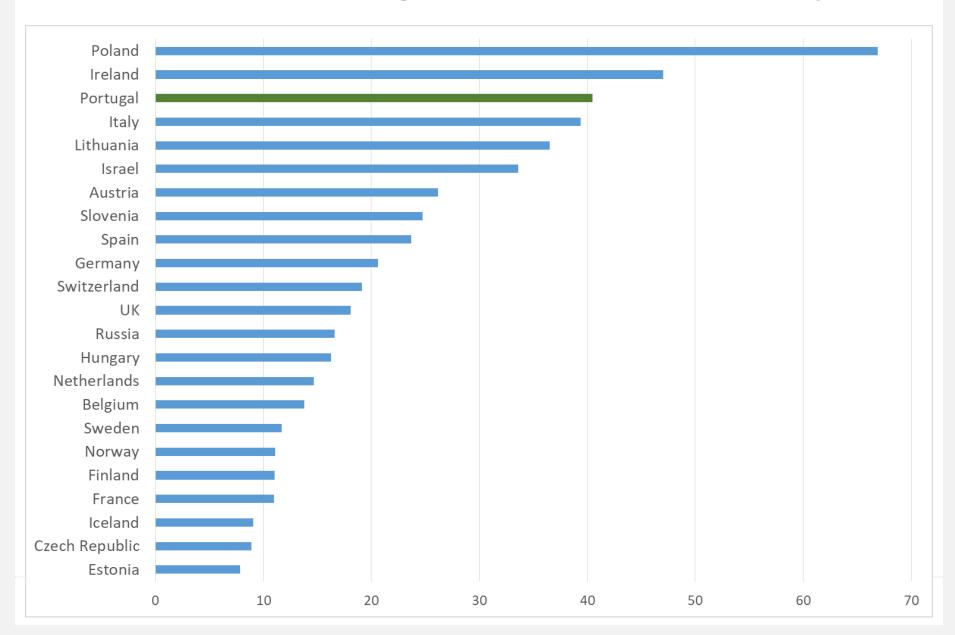
Instituto de Ciências Sociais, Universidade de Lisboa



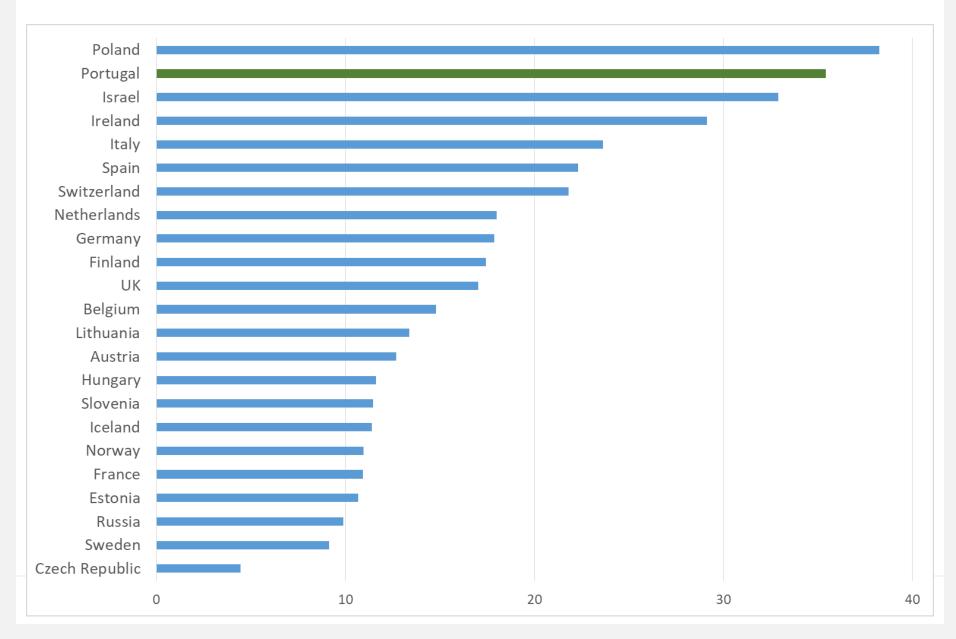
ESS 2016: Belongs to a particular religion (%)



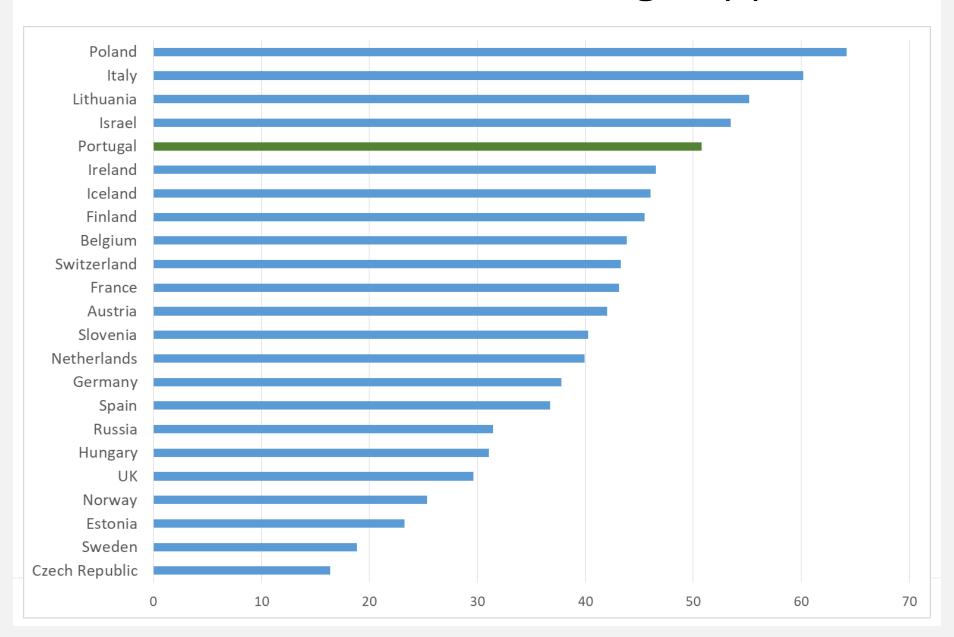
ESS 2016: Attends religious services at least monthly (%)



ESS 2016: Prays every day (%)



ESS 2016: Describes self as religious (%)

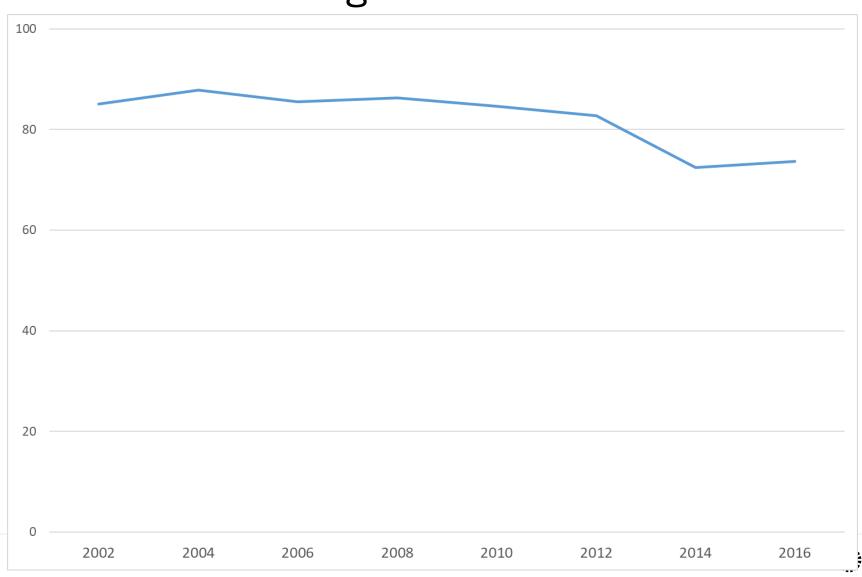


Trends in Portugal

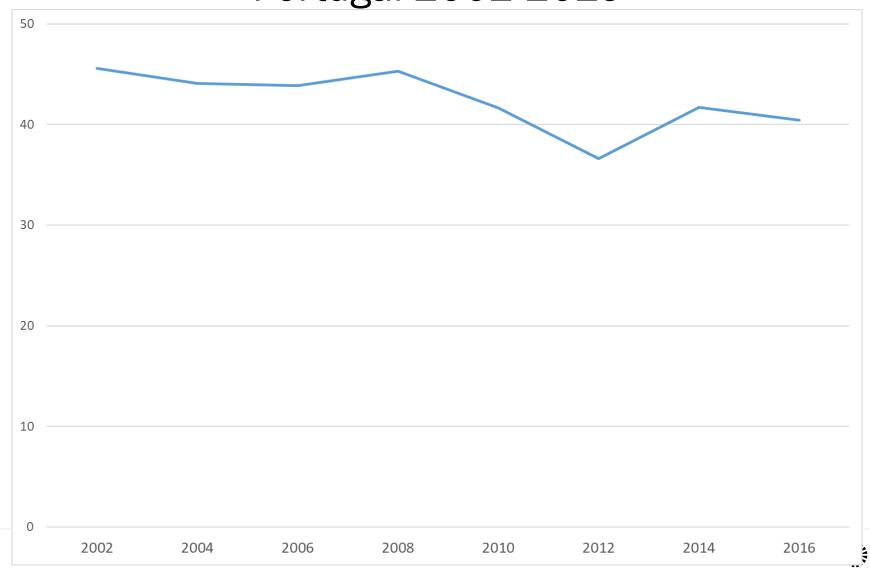
In aggregate, there are been slight declines in religious affiliation and attendance at religious services over the period covered by the European Social Survey (2002-2016).



Belongs to a particular religion (%), Portugal 2002-2016



Attends religious services at least monthly (%), Portugal 2002-2016

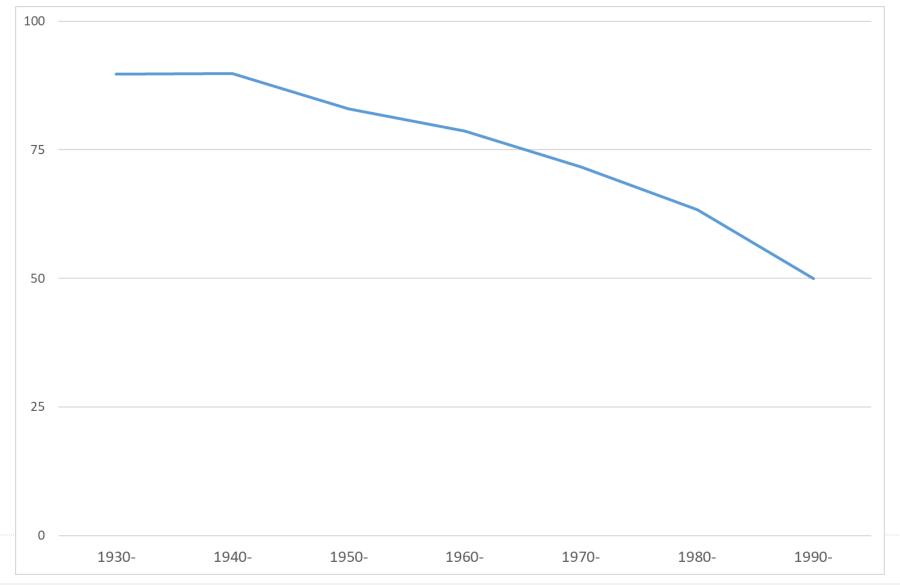


Trends in Portugal

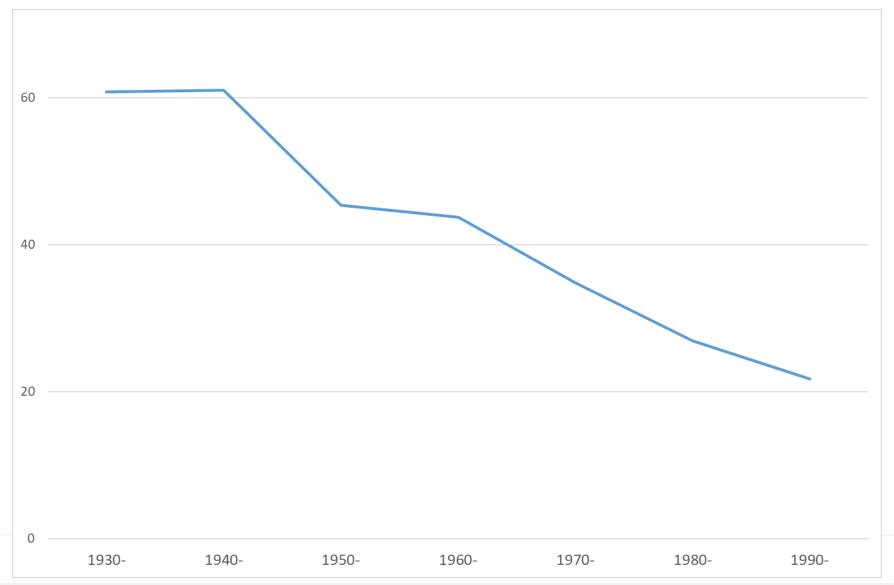
But the contrasts between generations are very pronounced, and if maintained would lead to substantial religious decline over the decades ahead.



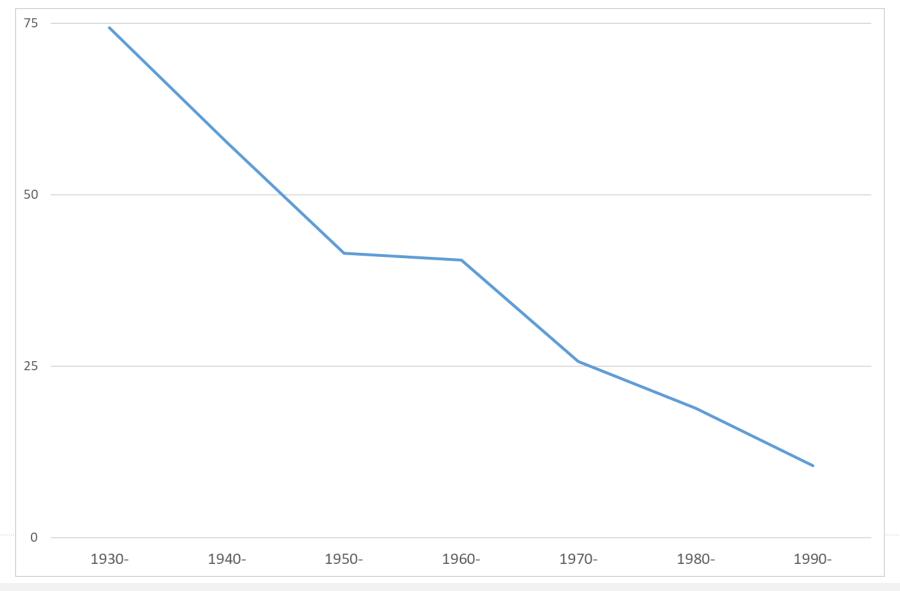
Religious belonging, by decade of birth (Portugal, 2016)



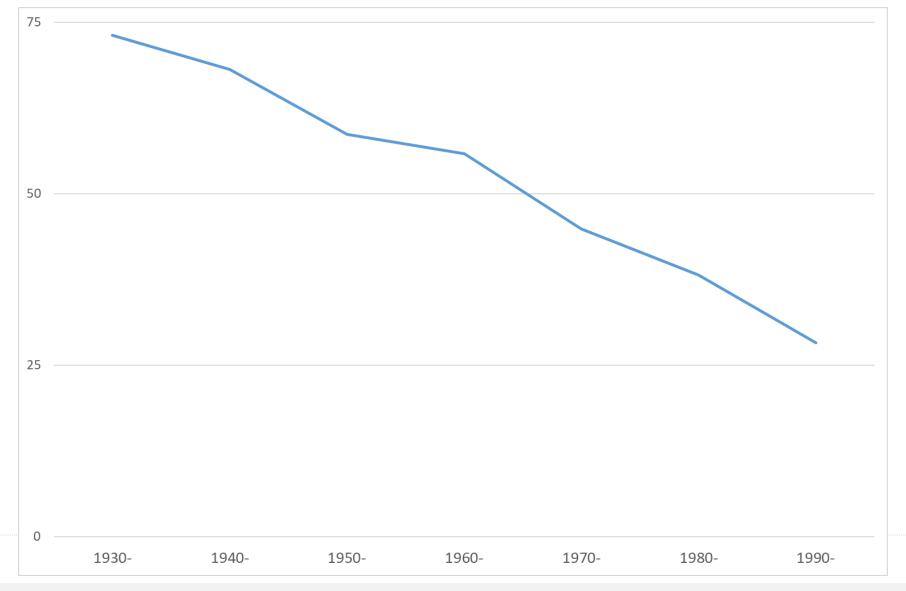
Attends at least monthly, by decade of birth (Portugal, 2016)



Prays every day, by decade of birth (Portugal, 2016)



Describes self as religious, by decade of birth (Portugal, 2016)



Age or cohort effects?

Two possible explanations:

People become more religious as they get older Each generation is less religious than the one before

The evidence from other countries strongly suggests that the second explanation is correct.

Religious decline occurs when more religious older generations are replaced in the population by less religious younger generations.



Being Christian in Western Europe Pew Research Center (29 May 2018)

About the Pew Research Center:

- Independent, nonprofit 'fact tank' that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping the world.
- Conducts
 - public opinion polling,
 - · demographic research,
 - content analysis,
 - other data-driven social science research.

Being Christian in Western Europe Pew Research Center (29 May 2018)

Particular thanks to:

Neha Sahgal, Associate Director of Research Alan Cooperman, Director of Religion Research Anna Schiller, Communications Manager

www.pewresearch.org

But note ...

Interpretations of the findings are my own and should not be attributed to the Pew Research Center.

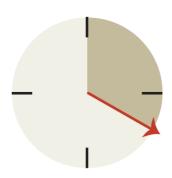


About the Pew survey

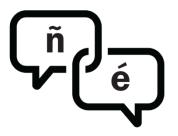
More than 24,000 people age 18 or older interviewed by telephone in 15 countries



Average length of the interview was 20 minutes

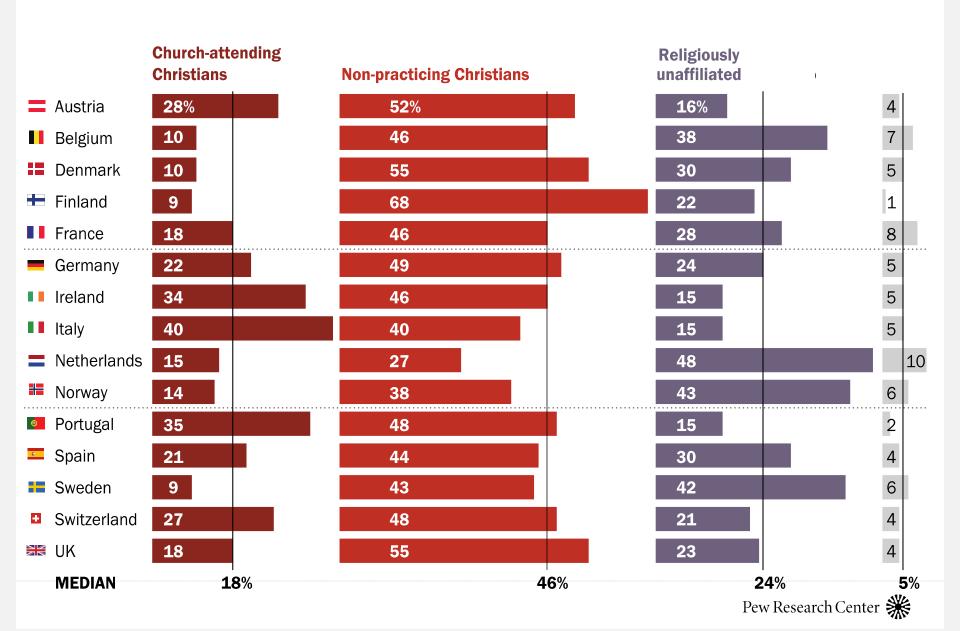


Interviews conducted on mobile and landline telephones from April to August 2017 in 12 languages

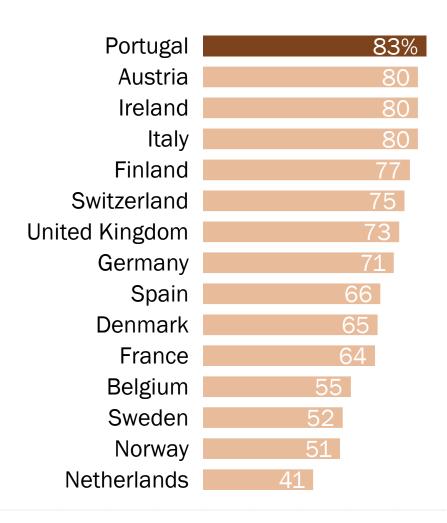




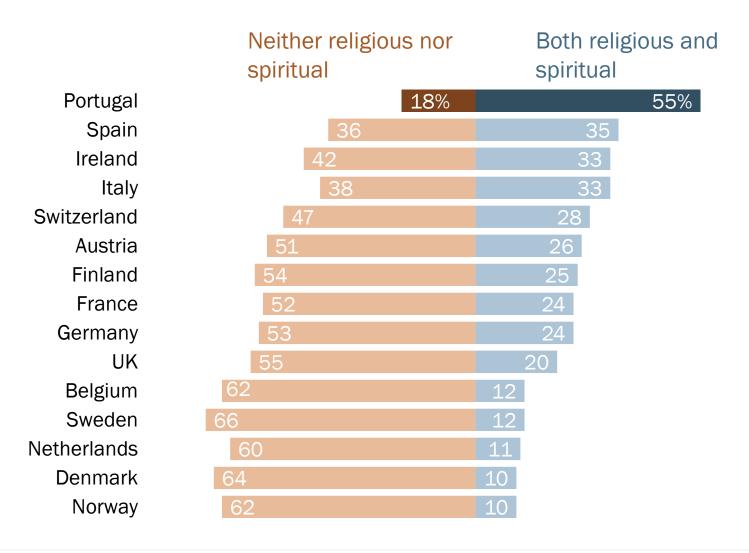
Non-practising Christians are the largest group in most countries



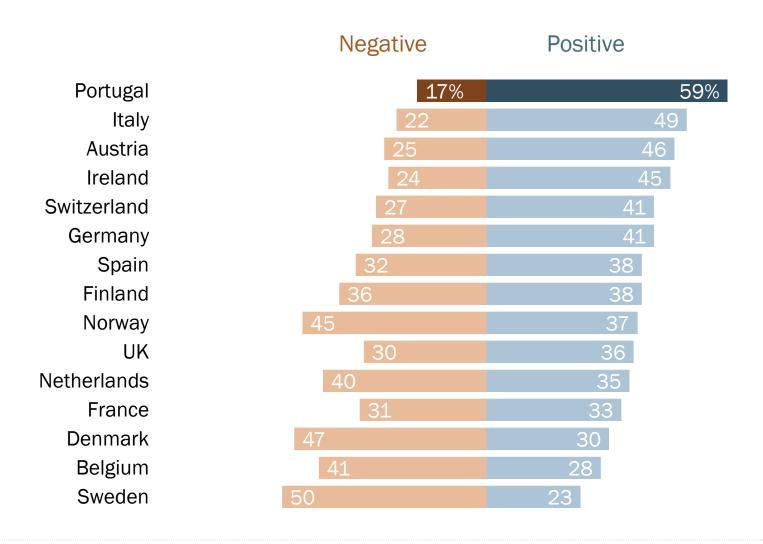
Most adults say that they are Christian (with Portugal in the lead)



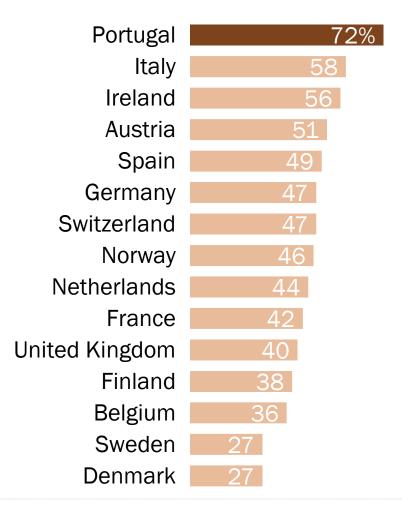
The majority of people in Portugal say that they are both religious and spiritual



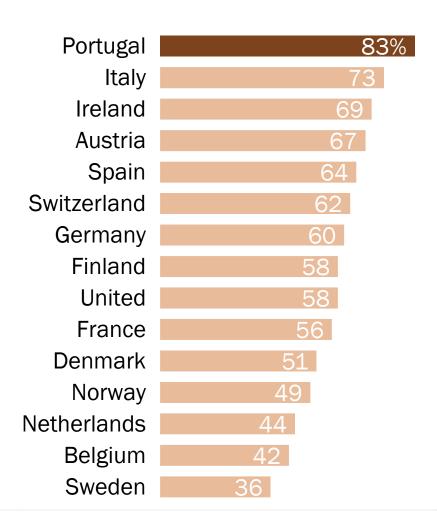
The majority of people in Portugal have a positive view of religion (compared to a third in France and a quarter in Sweden)



Seven-in-ten in Portugal say that religion is very or somewhat important in their lives (the opposite of Denmark and Sweden)



A large majority in Portugal believe in God (even more than in Italy and Ireland)



And belief in God with absolute certainty is much more common in Portugal than elsewhere in Europe

Portugal 44% Italy 26 Spain Ireland **Finland** Norway Denmark Netherlands 15 Sweden 14 Austria 13 Belgium United 12 France 11 Switzerland 111 Germany 10

In Portugal, more than a third of adults pray daily (six times more than in the UK)

Portugal 37% Spain Italy **Netherlands** Ireland Finland 18 Norway 18 Belgium 11 France 11 Sweden 11 Denmark 10 Germany 9 Austria 8 Switzerland 8 UK 5

In Portugal, more than a quarter of adults say that God communicates with them daily

Portugal 28%

Spain 15

Netherlands 14

Italy 10

Norway 10

Belgium 9

Ireland 9

Sweden 8

Finland 5

France 5

Germany 5

Austria |

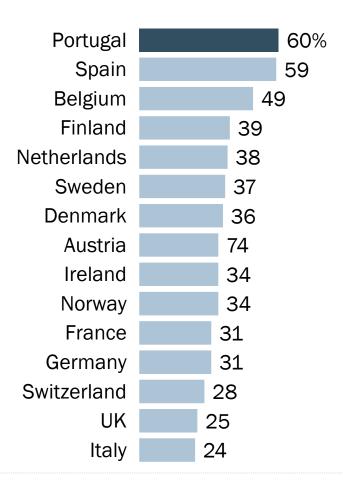
Denmark |

Switzerland

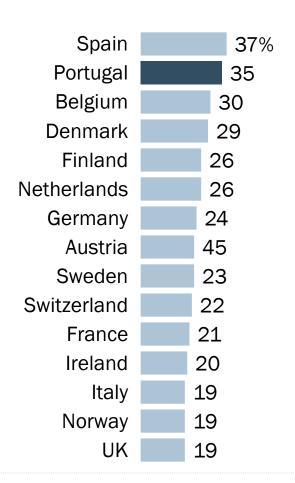
UK |

Belief in fate and astrology

Believes in fate

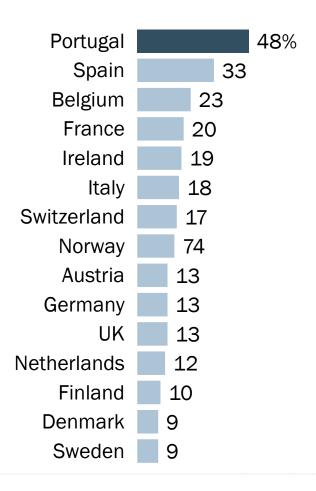


Believes in astrology

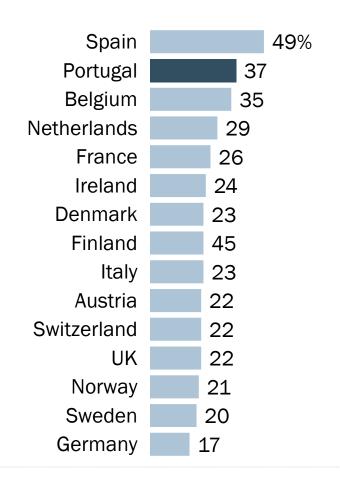


Folk beliefs

Believes in the 'evil eye'

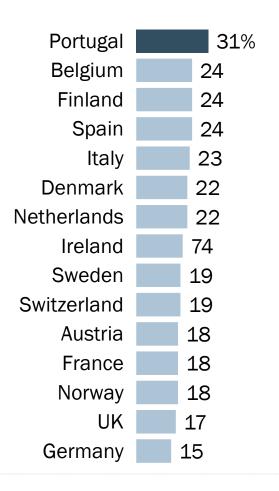


Believes in spiritual energy in physical things

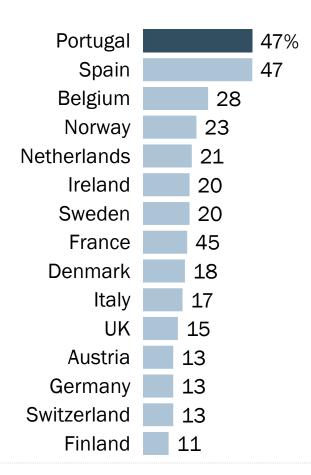


Eastern beliefs and New Age practices

Believes in reincarnation



Practises meditation



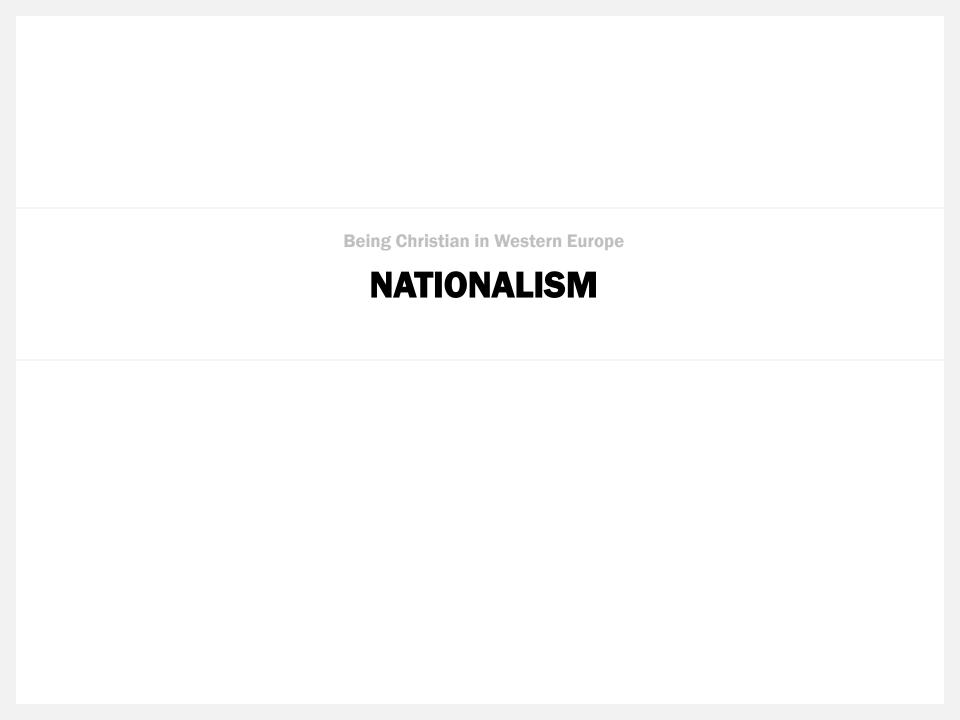
In summary

Levels of religious and spiritual belief and practice are high in Portugal.

Conventionally Christian but also folk and alternative beliefs are widely held.

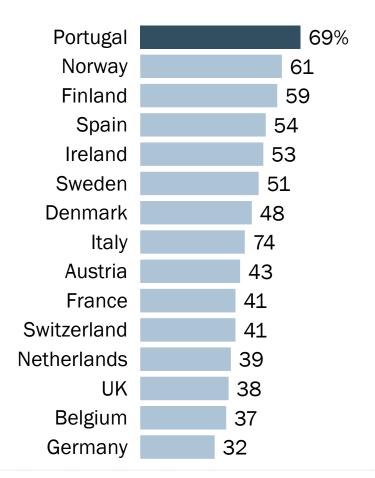
There is a high regard for the place of religion, both personally and socially.



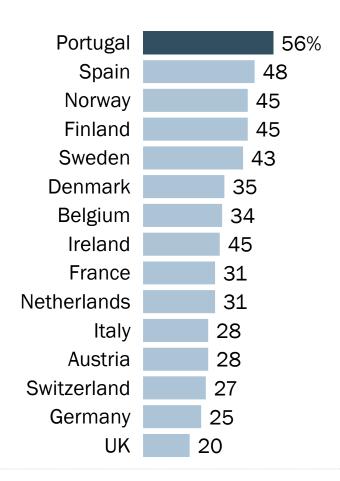


National and European pride are common, but Portugal leads

National pride



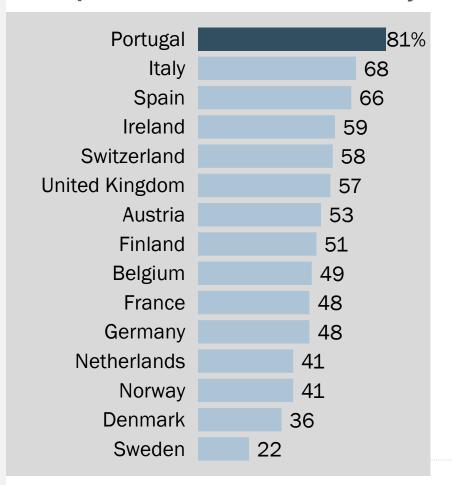
European pride



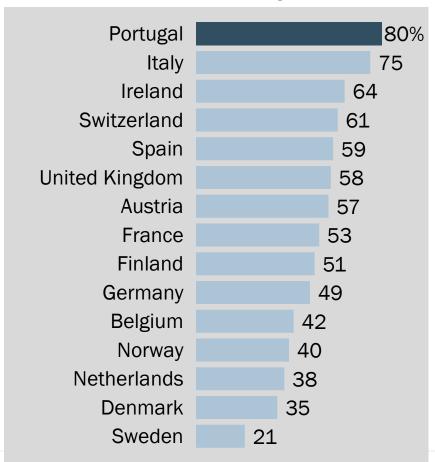
Nativist views of national identity

% who say being born in the country/having ancestry in the country is important to truly be a national of the country

Important to be born in the country



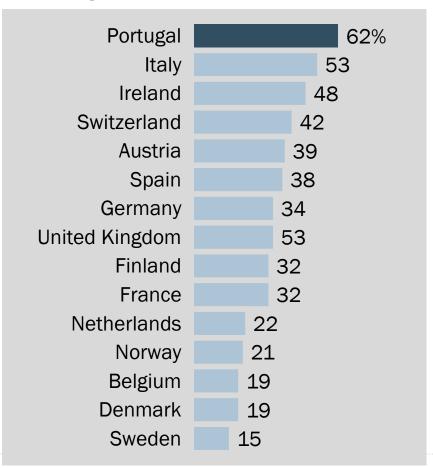
Important to have family background in the country



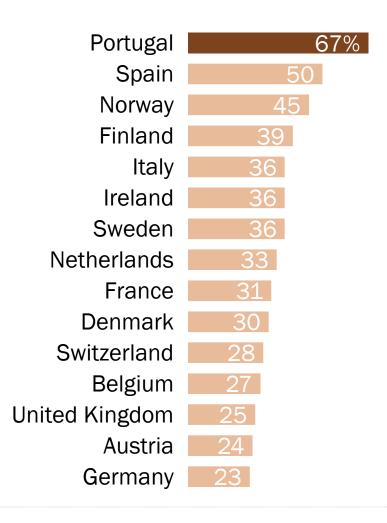
Nativist views of national identity

% who say being a Christian is important to truly be a national of the country

Important to be a Christian

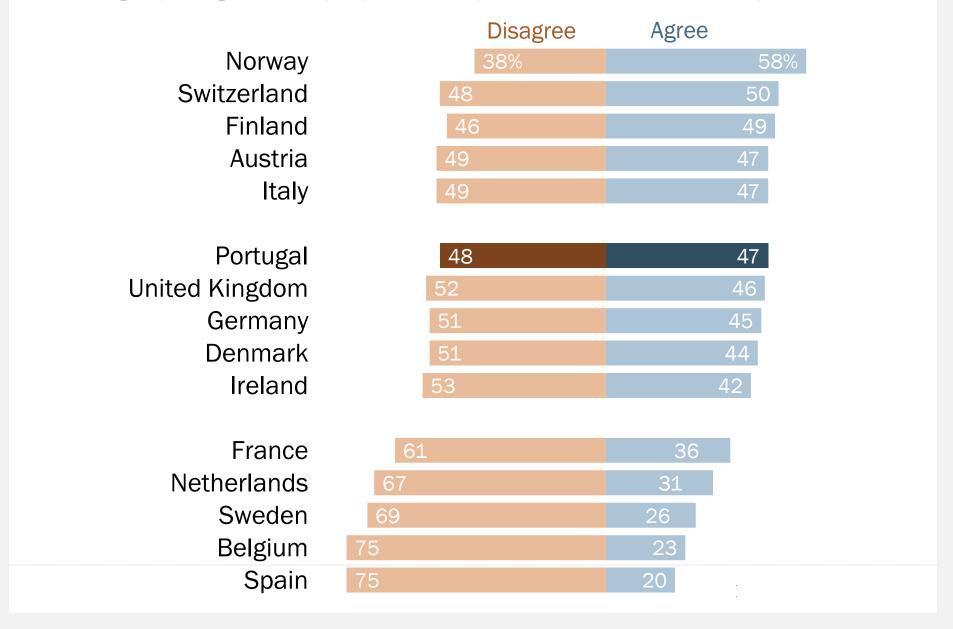


In Portugal, two thirds of Christians say that they are very proud to be Christian (twice the median)



People are split over whether their culture is superior to others

% who agree/disagree, "Our people are not perfect but our culture is superior to others"

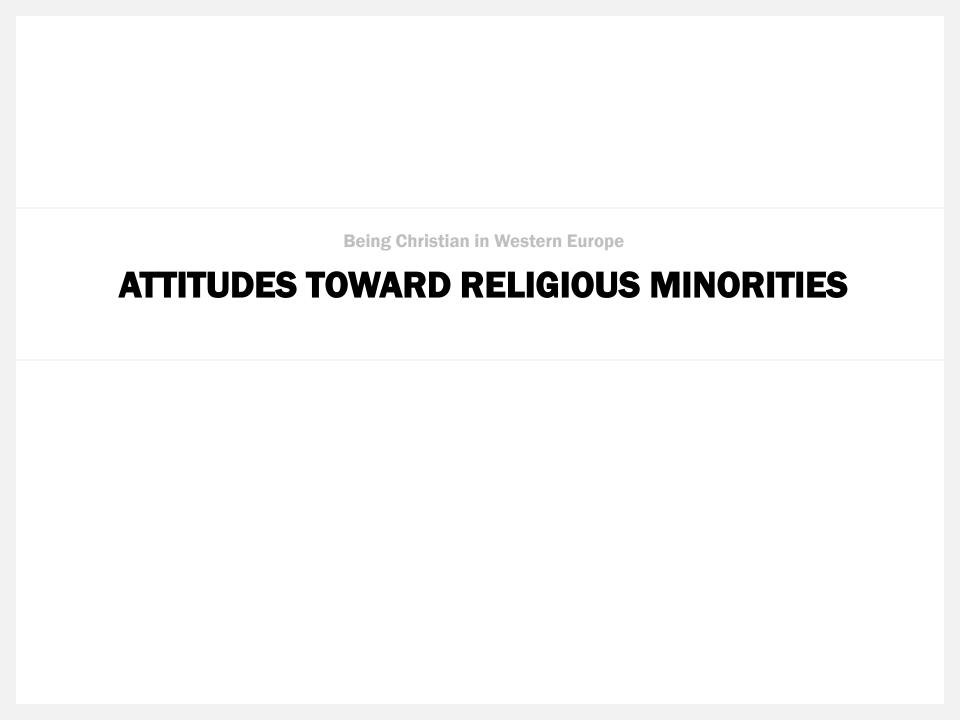


In summary

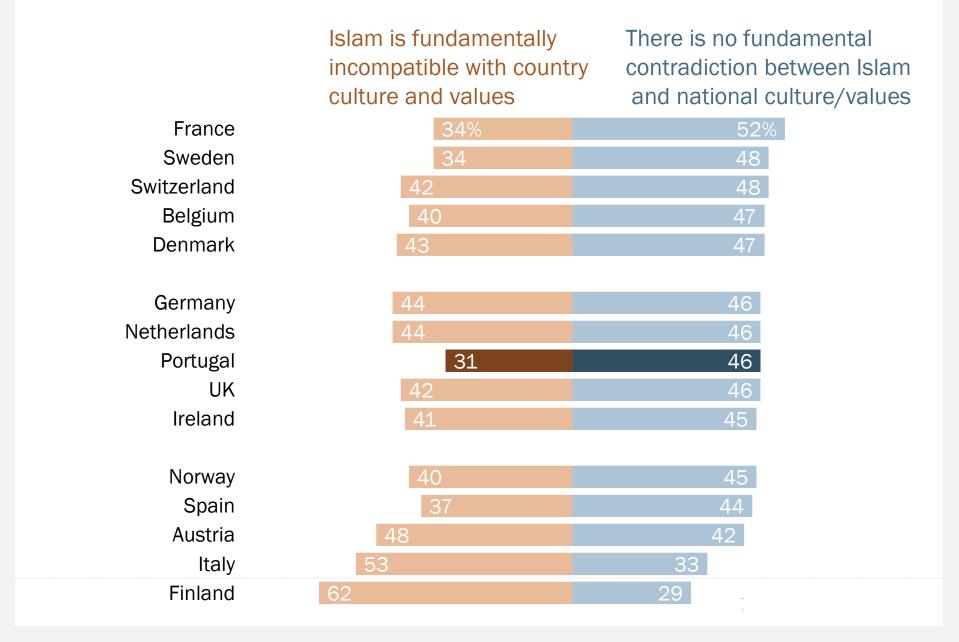
National and religious pride are high in Portugal.

The dominant conception of national belonging is ethnic rather than civic.





Europe divided over whether Islam is compatible with national culture/values

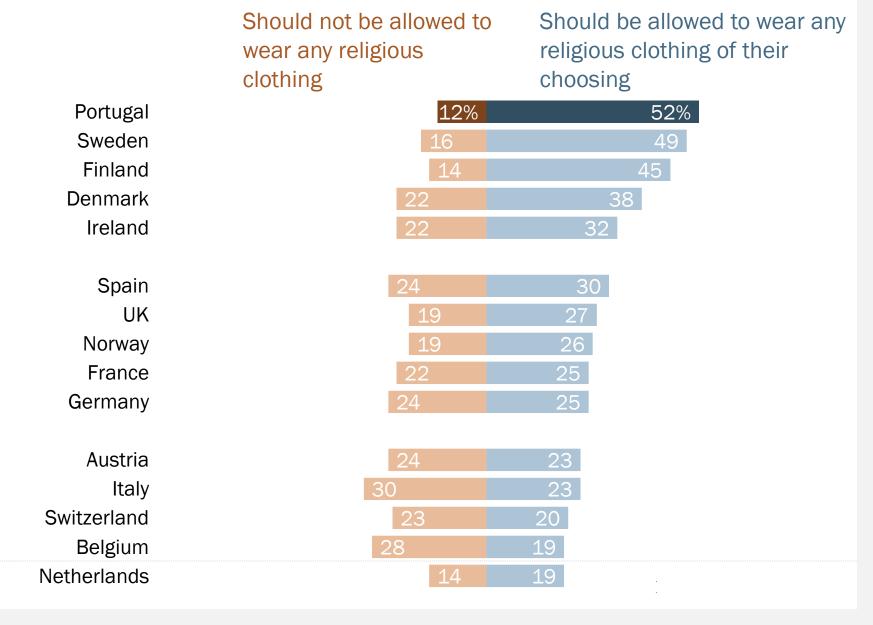


Most disagree:

"In their hearts, Muslims want to impose their religious law on everyone else in [COUNTRY]"

	Disagree	Agree
Belgium	56%	41%
Spain	49	40
Denmark	58	37
Italy	60	35
Norway	58	35
Netherlands	62	34
Finland	61	31
Austria	66	30
Germany	70	27
Ireland	67	27
Switzerland	73	25
UK	75	24
France	73	23
Portugal	65	23
Sweden	69	23

Most Western Europeans favour restricting Muslim clothing, especially clothing that covers a woman's face – Portugal is an exception



% of non-Muslim adults who agree with the statement, "Due to the number of Muslims here, I feel like a stranger in my own country"

Belgium 37% Italy Austria Germany Spain Netherlands Switzerland UK Denmark Ireland France Norway 18 Portugal 14 Sweden 14 Finland 8

Most disagree (except in Portugal): "Jews always pursue their own interests and not the interest of the country they live in"

	Disagree	Agree
Portugal	36%	36%
Spain	34	32
Italy	59	31
Belgium	55	28
Norway	55	25
Switzerland	72	24
Austria	72	22
Finland	60	21
Ireland	67	21
France	73	19
Germany	76	19
Denmark	64	18
UK	80	16
Netherlands	73	14
Sweden	66	13

Most disagree: "Jews always overstate how much they have suffered"

	Disagree	Agree
Italy	55%	36%
Portugal	43	33
Spain	42	30
Belgium	59	28
Austria	73	22
Ireland	67	22
Norway	68	21
Switzerland	75	21
Finland	66	19
Germany	77	18
Denmark	70	17
France	76	17
UK	81	16
Netherlands	77	15
Sweden	75	11

Substantial minorities say they would NOT be willing to accept Muslims in their family

Italy **United Kingdom** 36 Austria 34 Germany 33 Switzerland 31 Ireland 30 Finland France Portugal 20 Spain 18 Belgium 16 Denmark 16 Sweden 14 Norway 13

Netherlands 9

Fewer people say they would NOT be willing to accept Jews in their family

Italy 25%

United Kingdom 23

Austria 21

Germany 19

Ireland 18

Portugal 18

Switzerland 17

France

17

Spain 13

Finland 13

Belgium 8

Denmark 6

Sweden 5

Norway 🔋

Netherlands §

Portuguese are less likely than most Europeans to know someone who is Muslim or Jewish

Know a Muslim

France 79% Belgium 73 Netherlands 72 Sweden 71 UK 71 Norway 69 Denmark 68 Germany 74 Switzerland 66 Austria 62

60

59

52

35

31

Spain

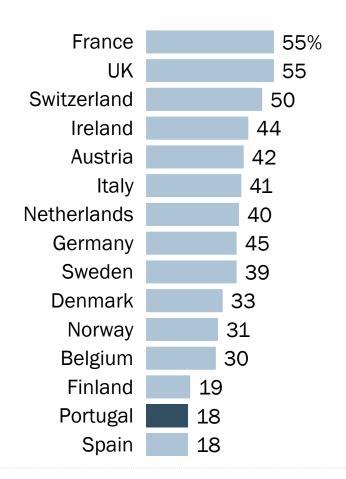
Ireland

Finland

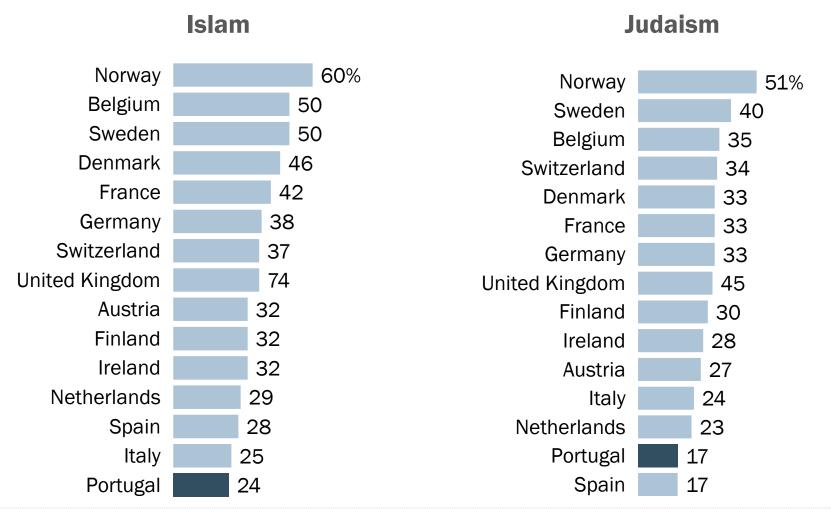
Portugal

Italy

Know a Jew



Fewer people know some or a great deal about Islam and Judaism



More people see immigrants from Eastern Europe than Middle East as hardworking

% who say immigrants from ____ are hardworking

Immigrants from Eastern Europe Immigrants from Middle East 82% Norway Switzerland 65% Netherlands 78 France 61 **United Kingdom** 77 **United Kingdom** 61 Ireland 75 Germany 58 Belgium 74 Sweden 57 Germany 74 Ireland 53 Sweden 74 Austria 51 Switzerland 74 Italy 45 France 73 Spain 45 **Finland** Austria 70 41 Denmark **Netherlands** 41 70 Norway 39 **Finland** 65 Belgium 38 Portugal 57 Denmark 35 55 Italy

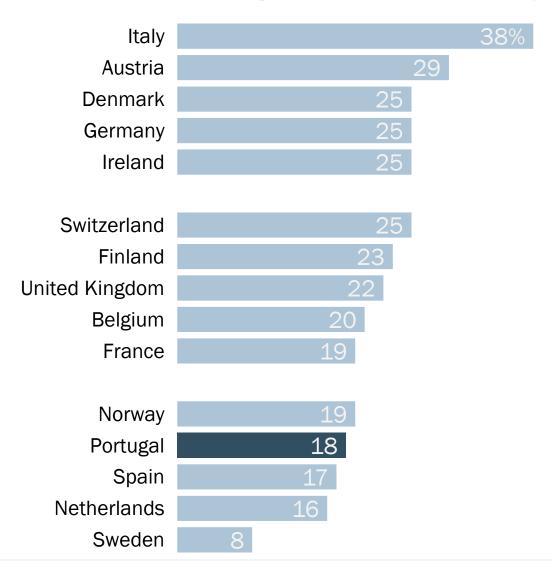
52

Spain

34

Portugal

Share in each country who score higher than 5 on the 10-point index of nationalism, anti-immigration and anti-minority views



Attitudes to Muslims and Jews

Portugal is relatively low on Islamophobia – but higher on anti-Semitism than other countries in Western Europe.

Knowledge of other religions and contact with Muslims and Jews is low.



Thank you!

