

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.

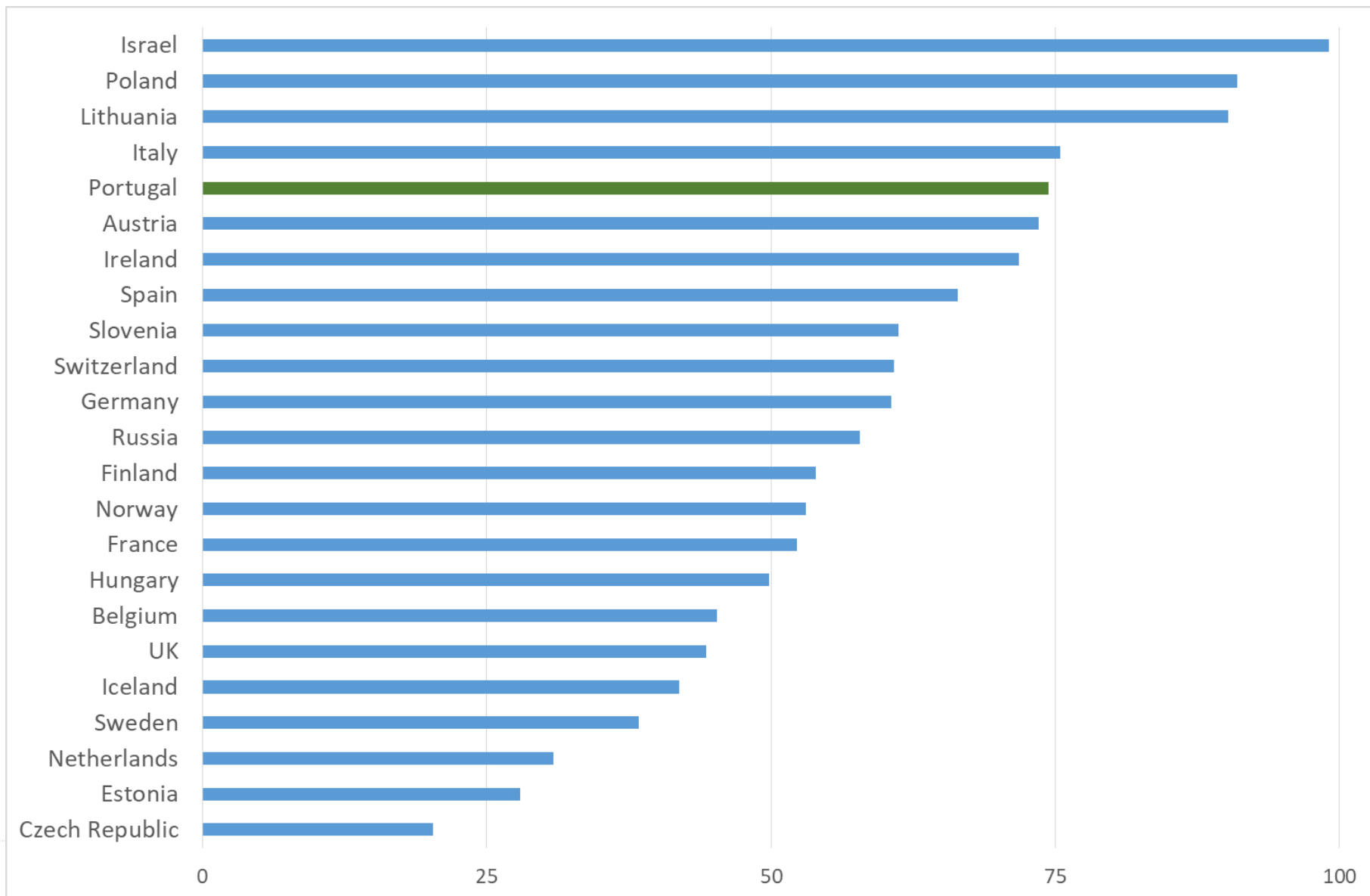
The national contact is:

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

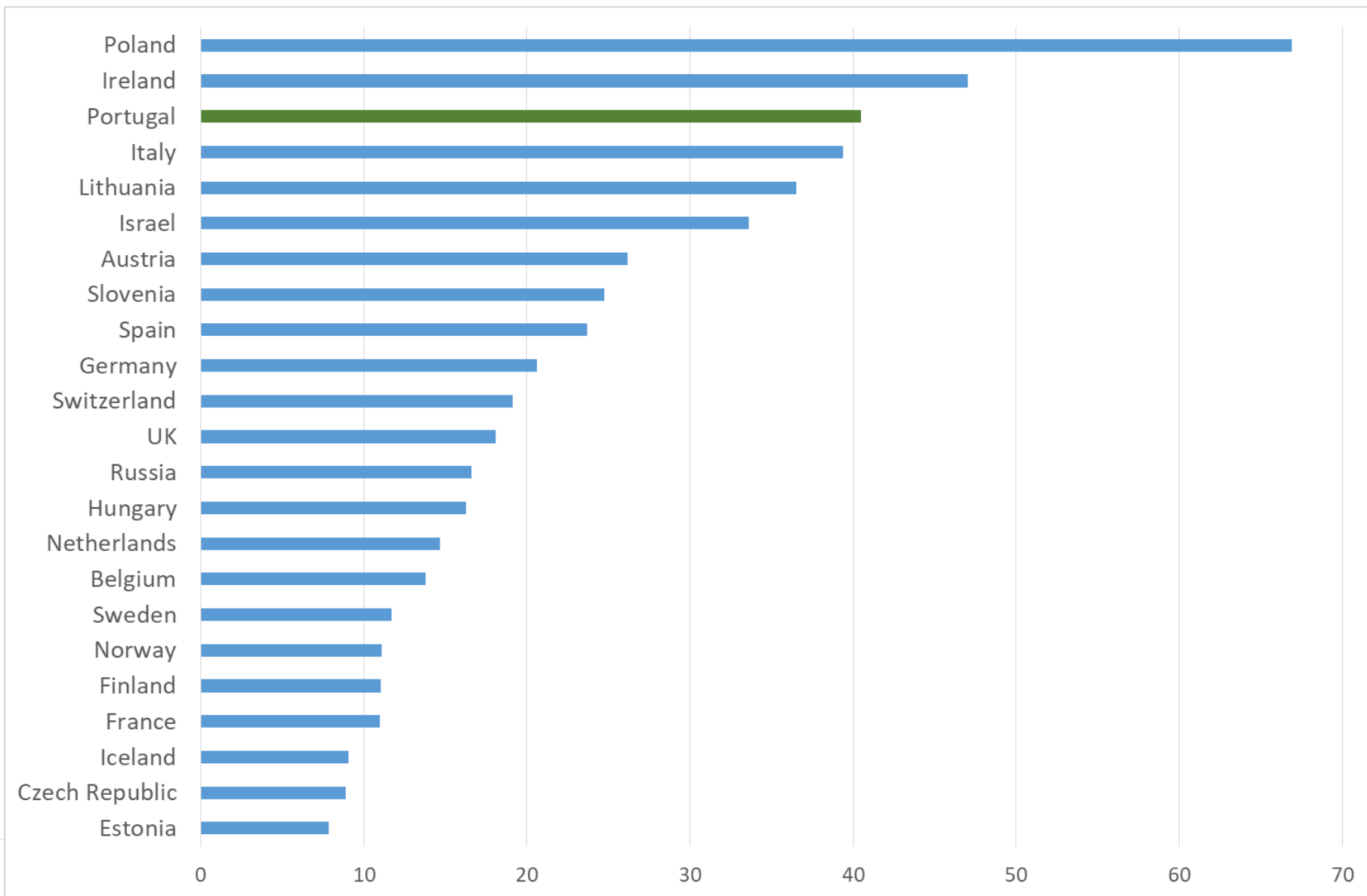
Instituto de Ciências Sociais,
Universidade de Lisboa



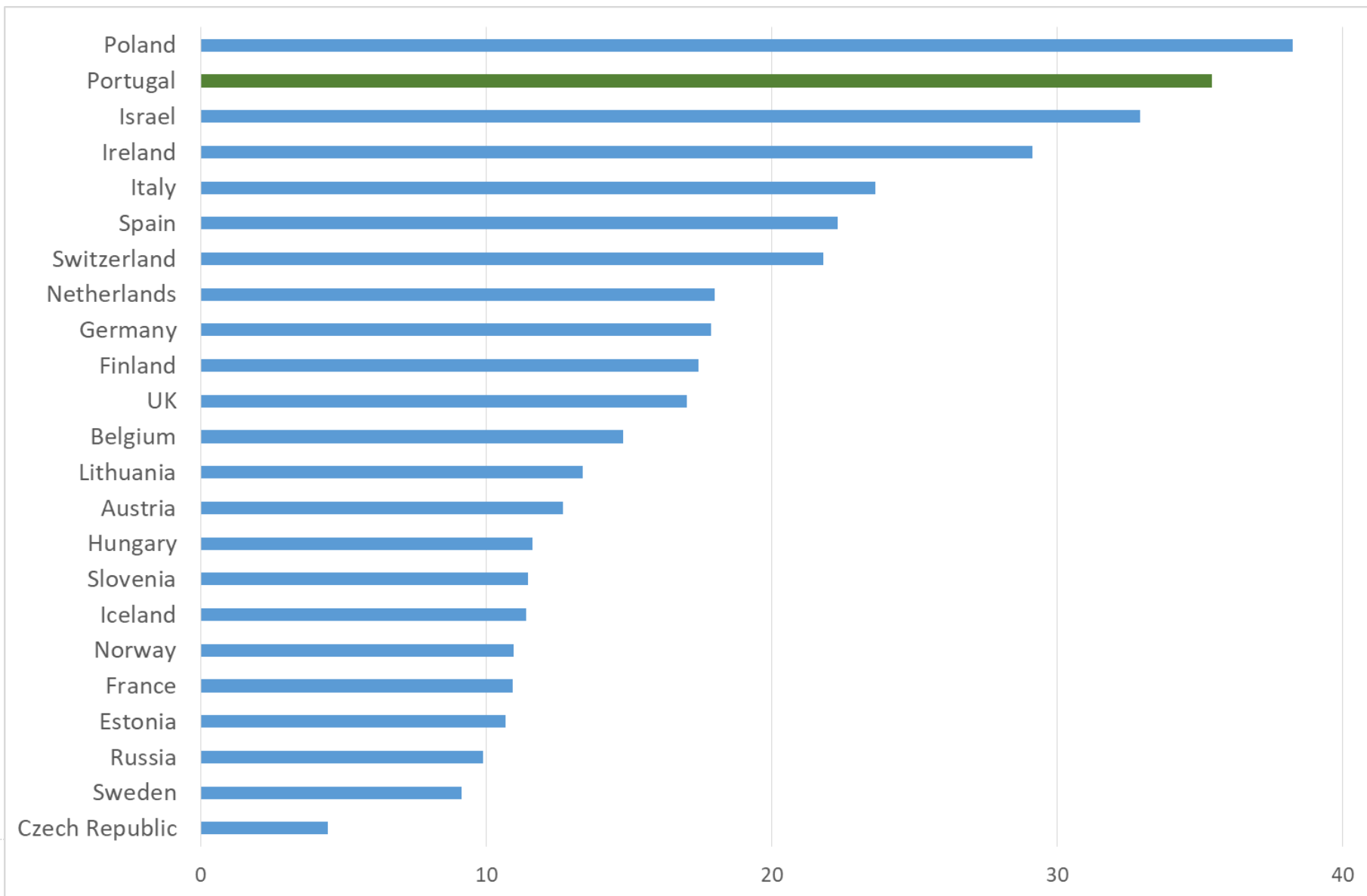
ESS 2016: Belongs to a particular religion (%)



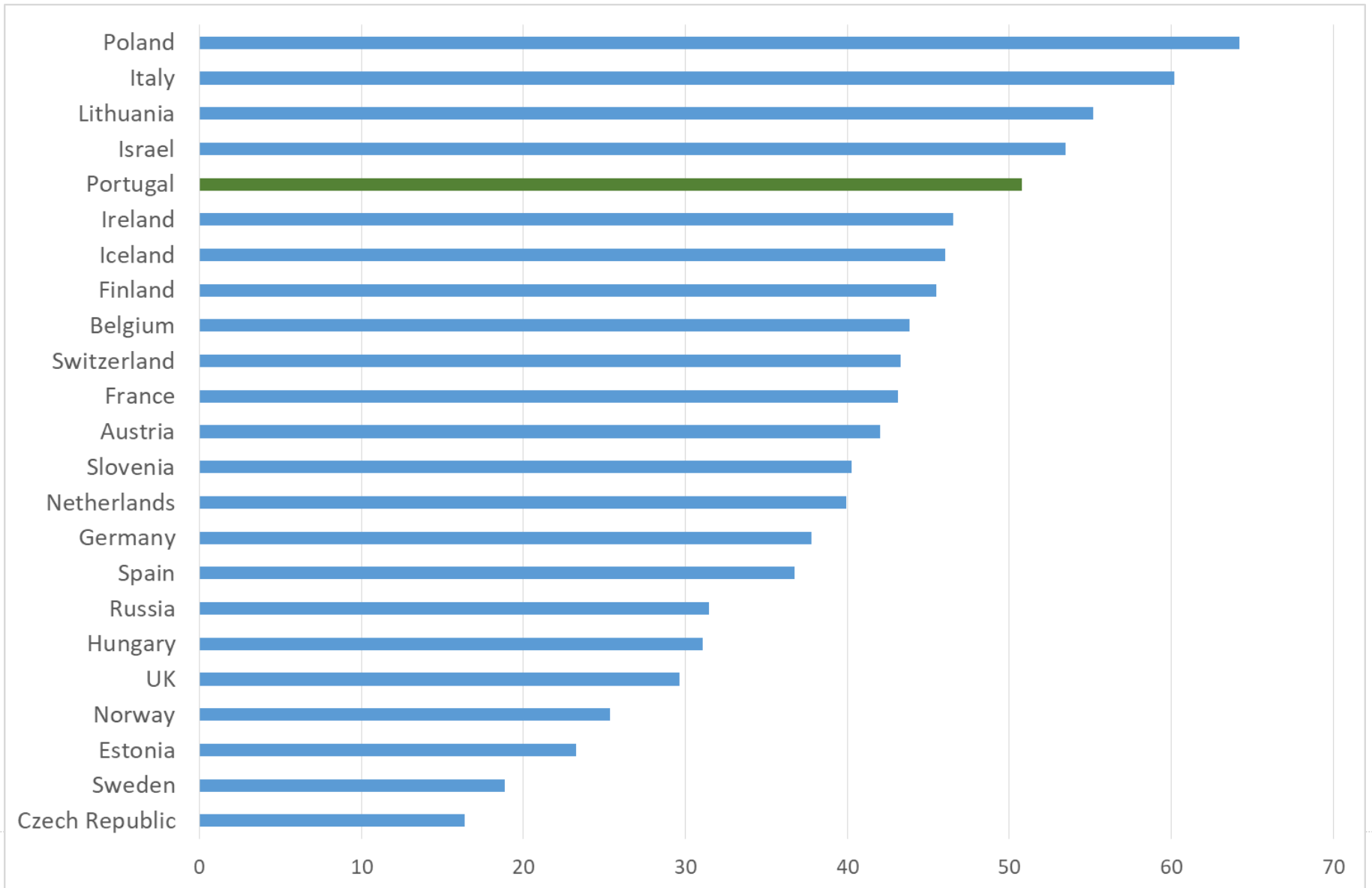
ESS 2016: Attends religious services at least monthly (%)



ESS 2016: Prays every day (%)



ESS 2016: Describes self as religious (%)

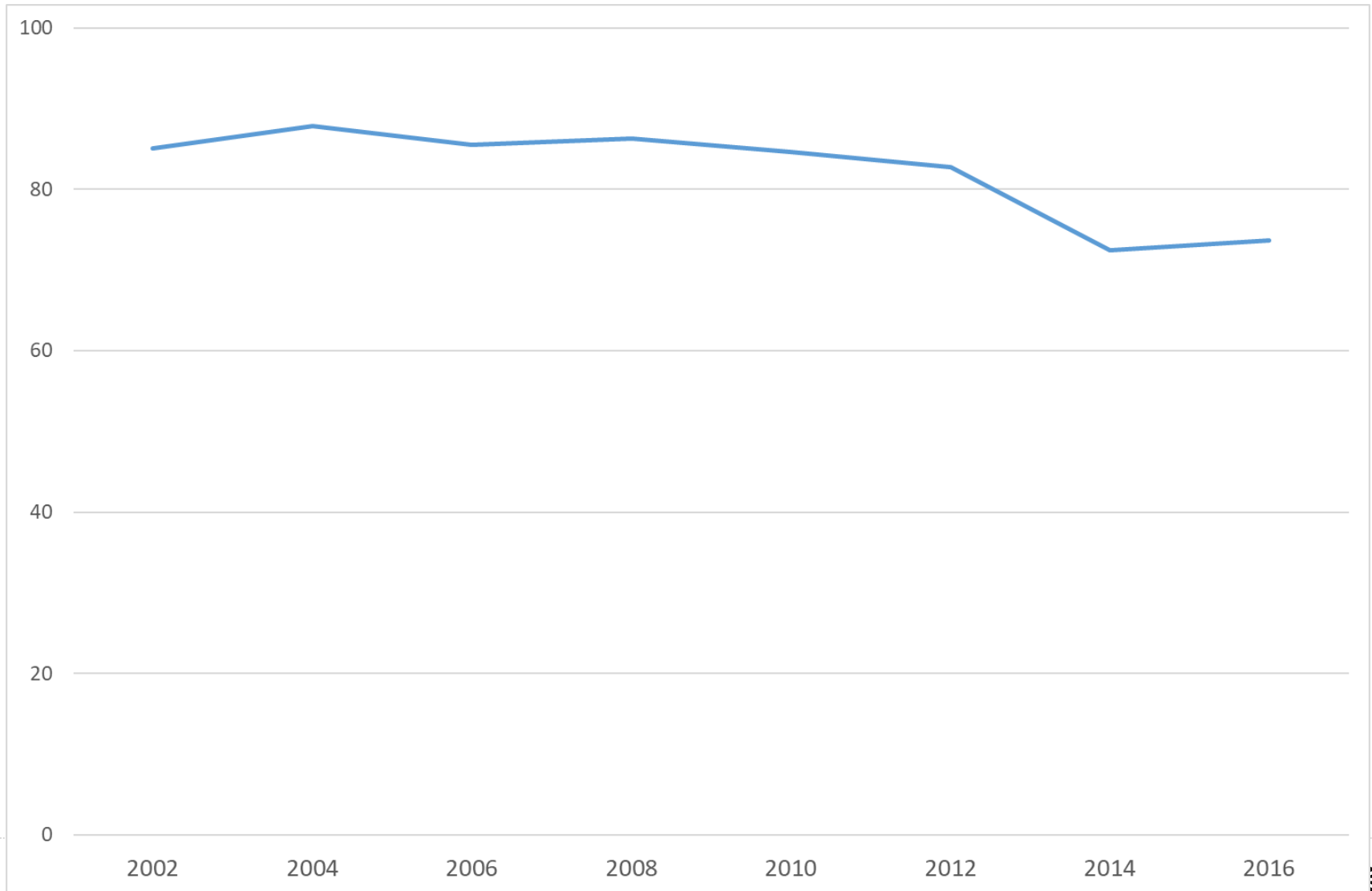


Trends in Portugal

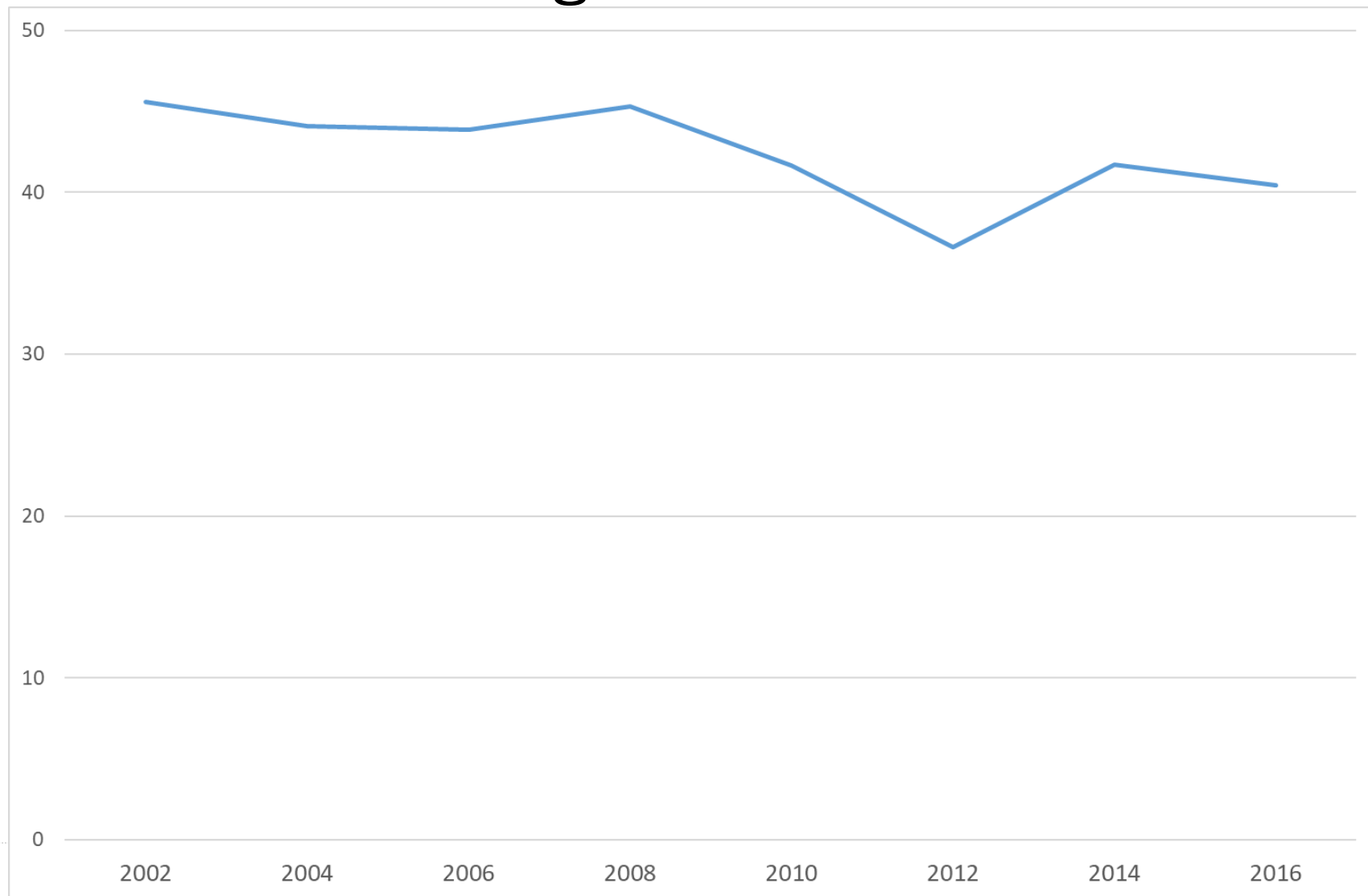
In aggregate, there have been slight declines in religious affiliation and attendance at religious services over the period covered by the European Social Survey (2002-2016).



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



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

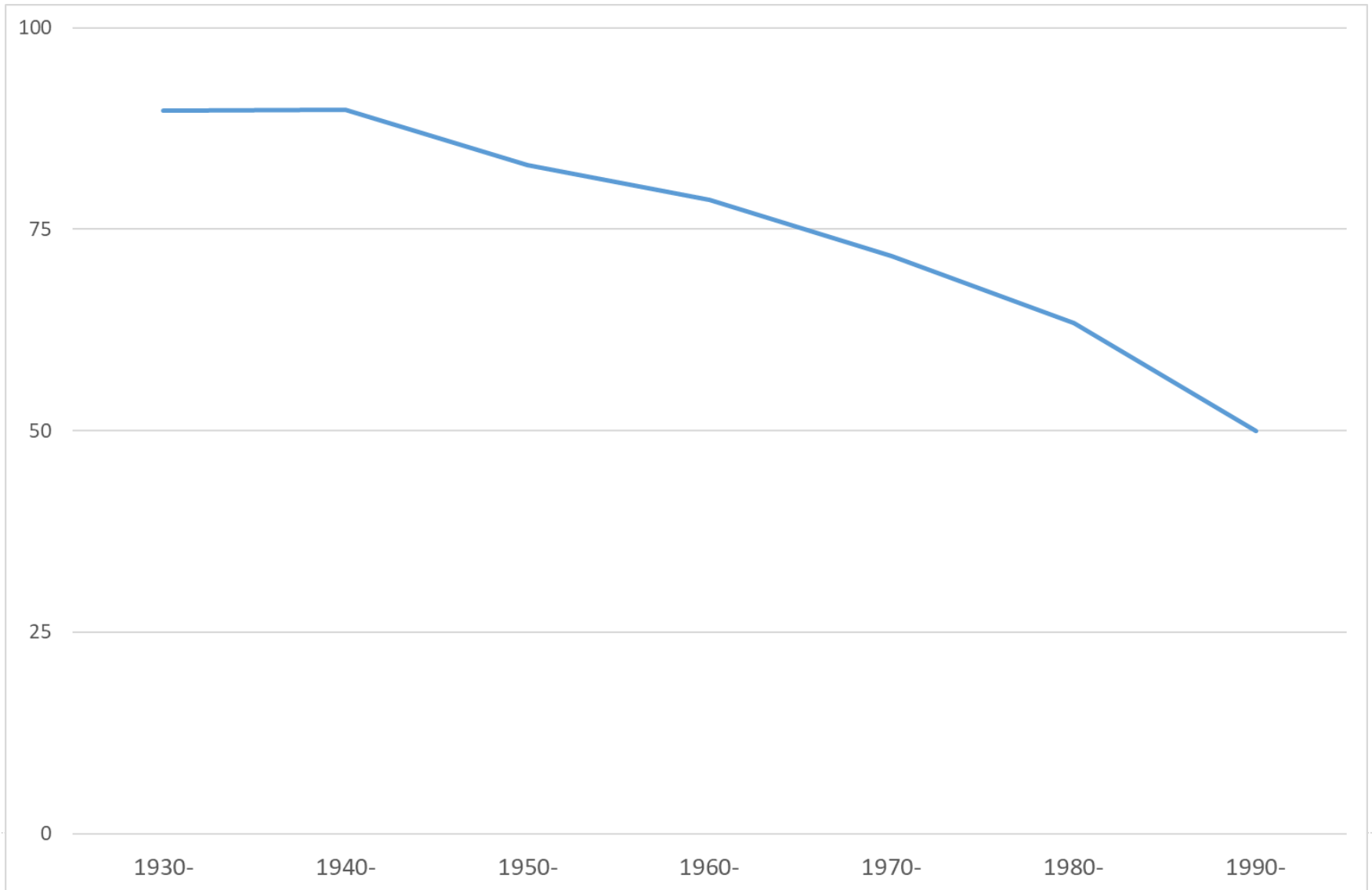


Trends in Portugal

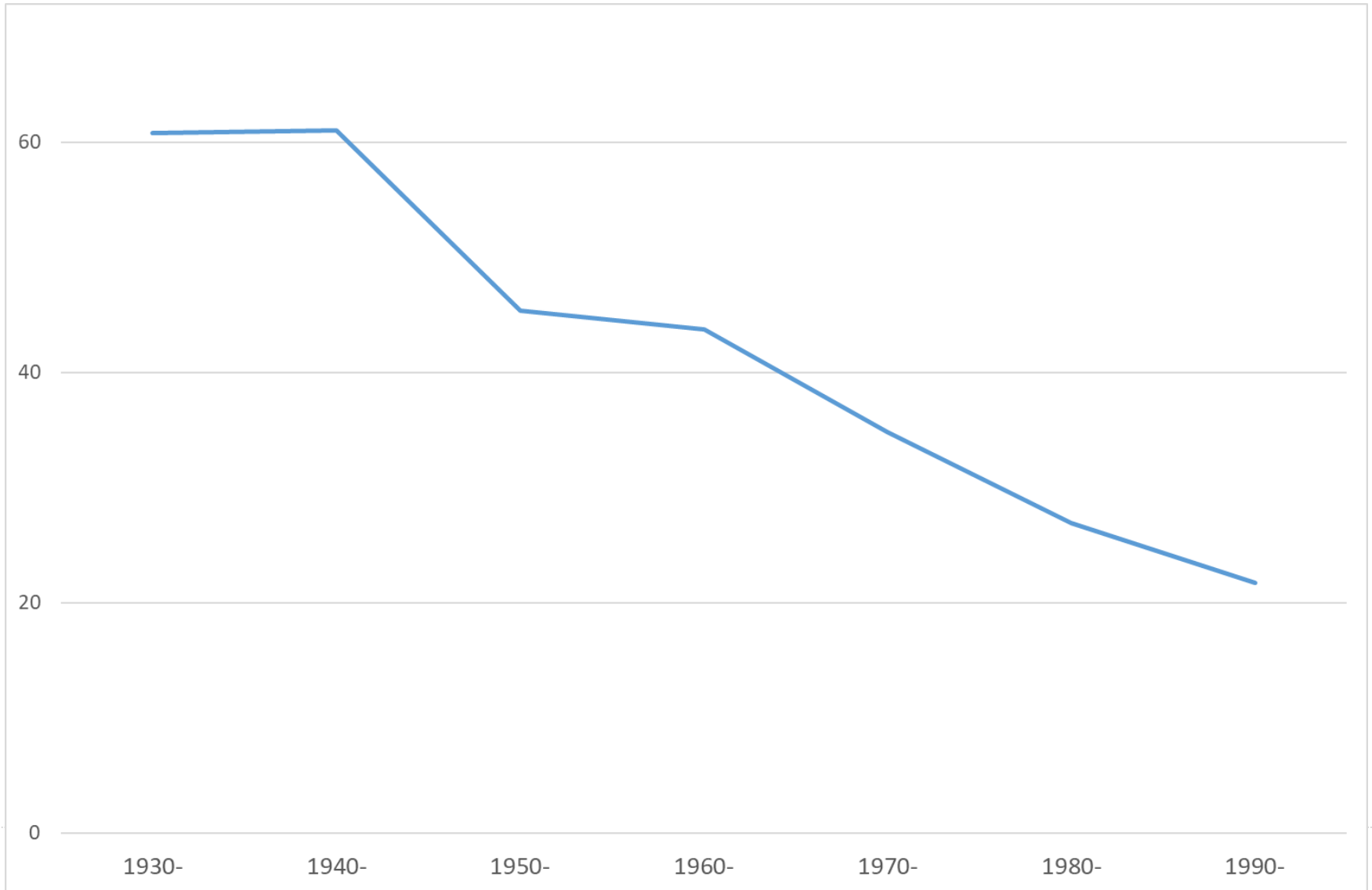
But the contrasts between generations are very pronounced, and if maintained would lead to substantial religious decline over the decades ahead.



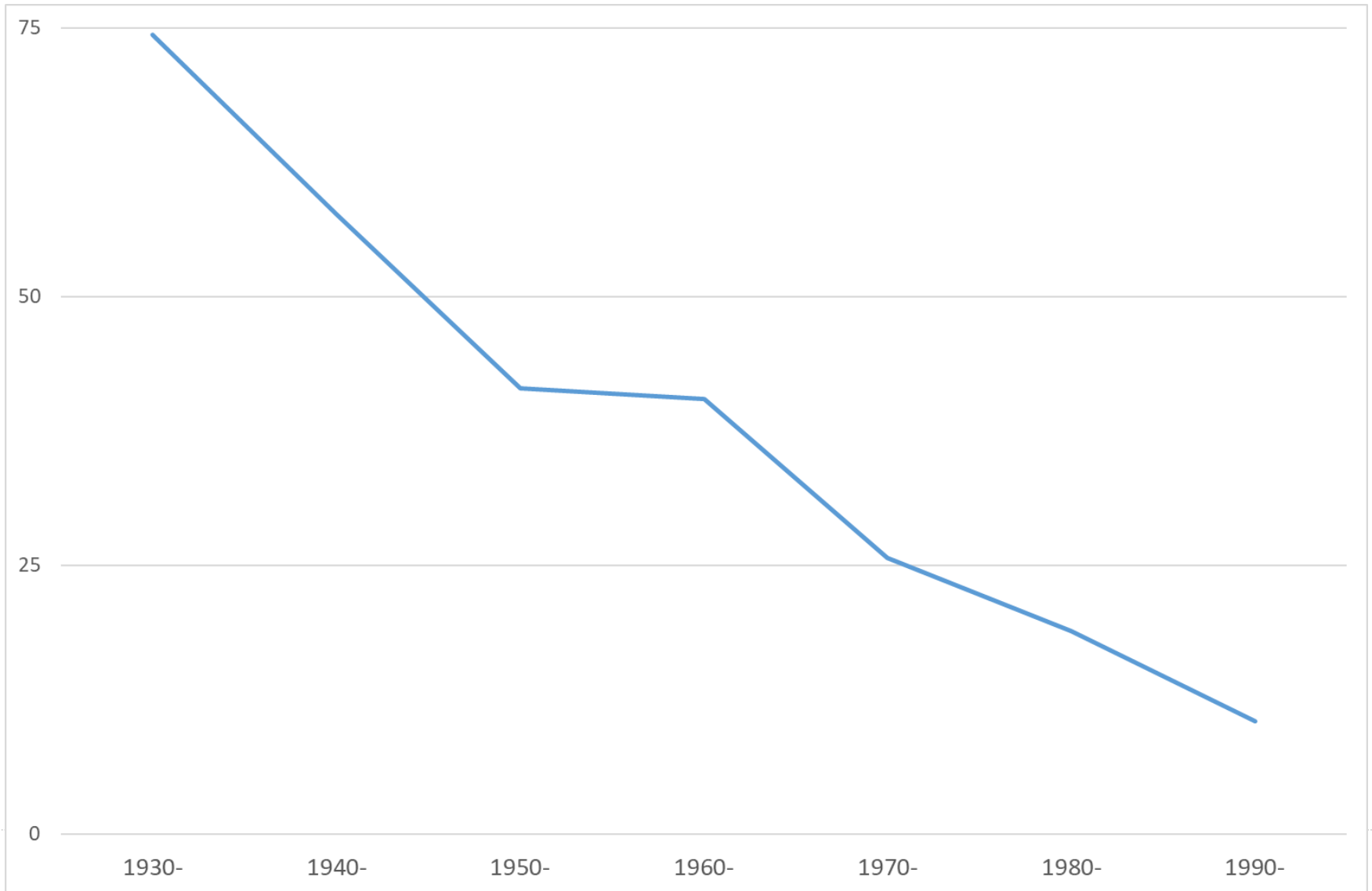
Religious belonging, by decade of birth (Portugal, 2016)



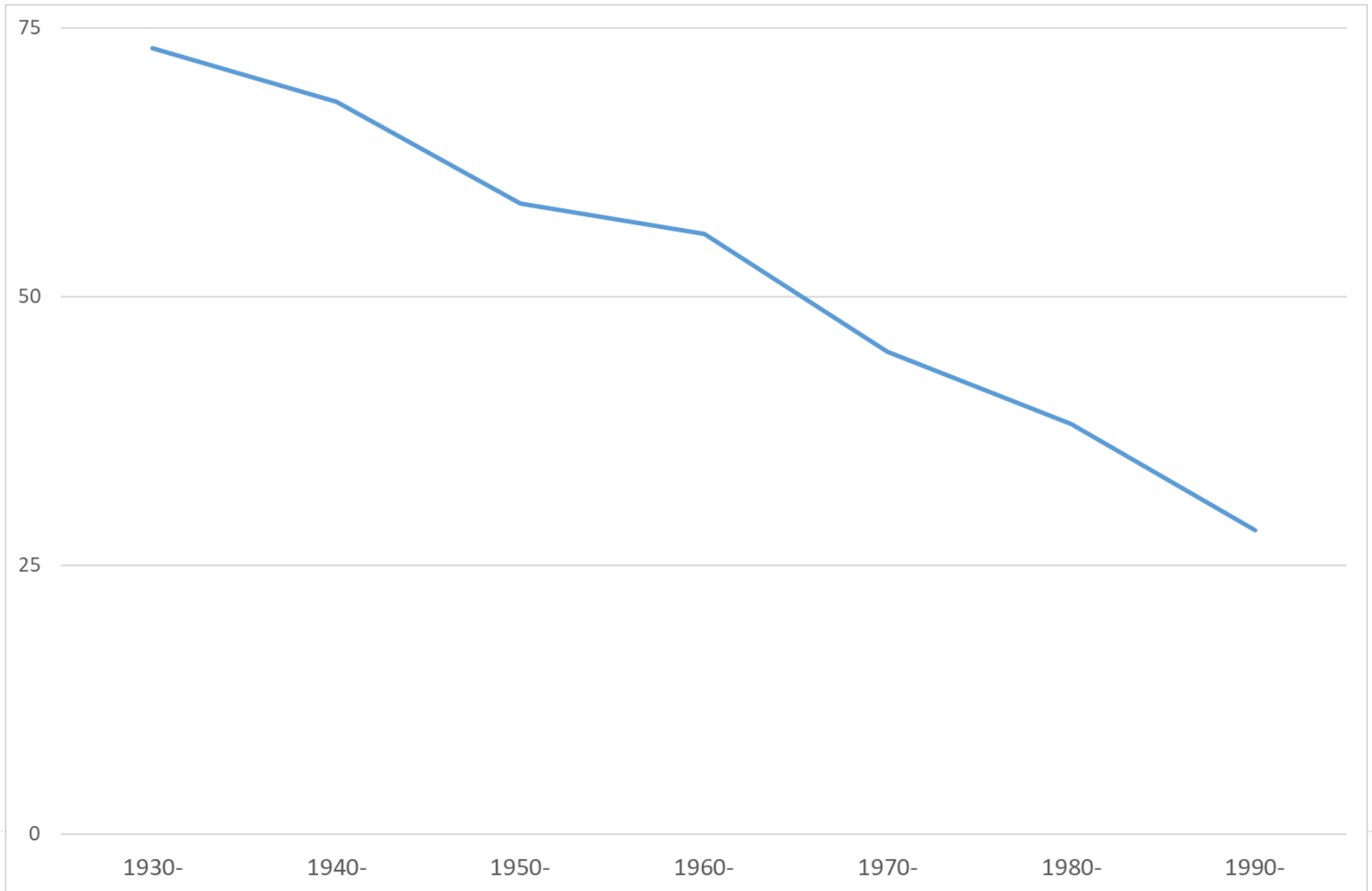
Attends at least monthly, by decade of birth (Portugal, 2016)



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

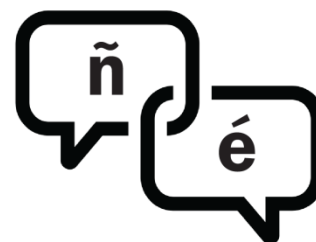
More than
24,000 people
age 18 or older
interviewed
by telephone
in 15 countries



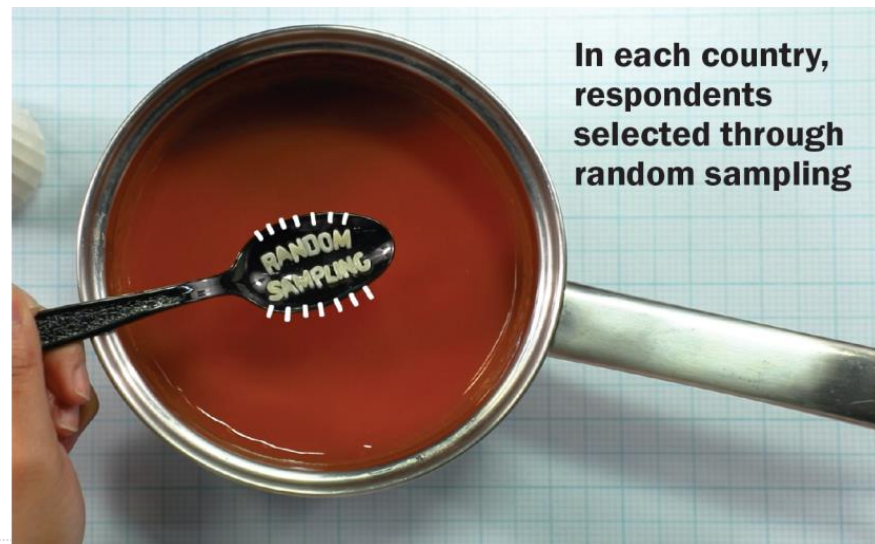
Average length
of the interview
was **20 minutes**



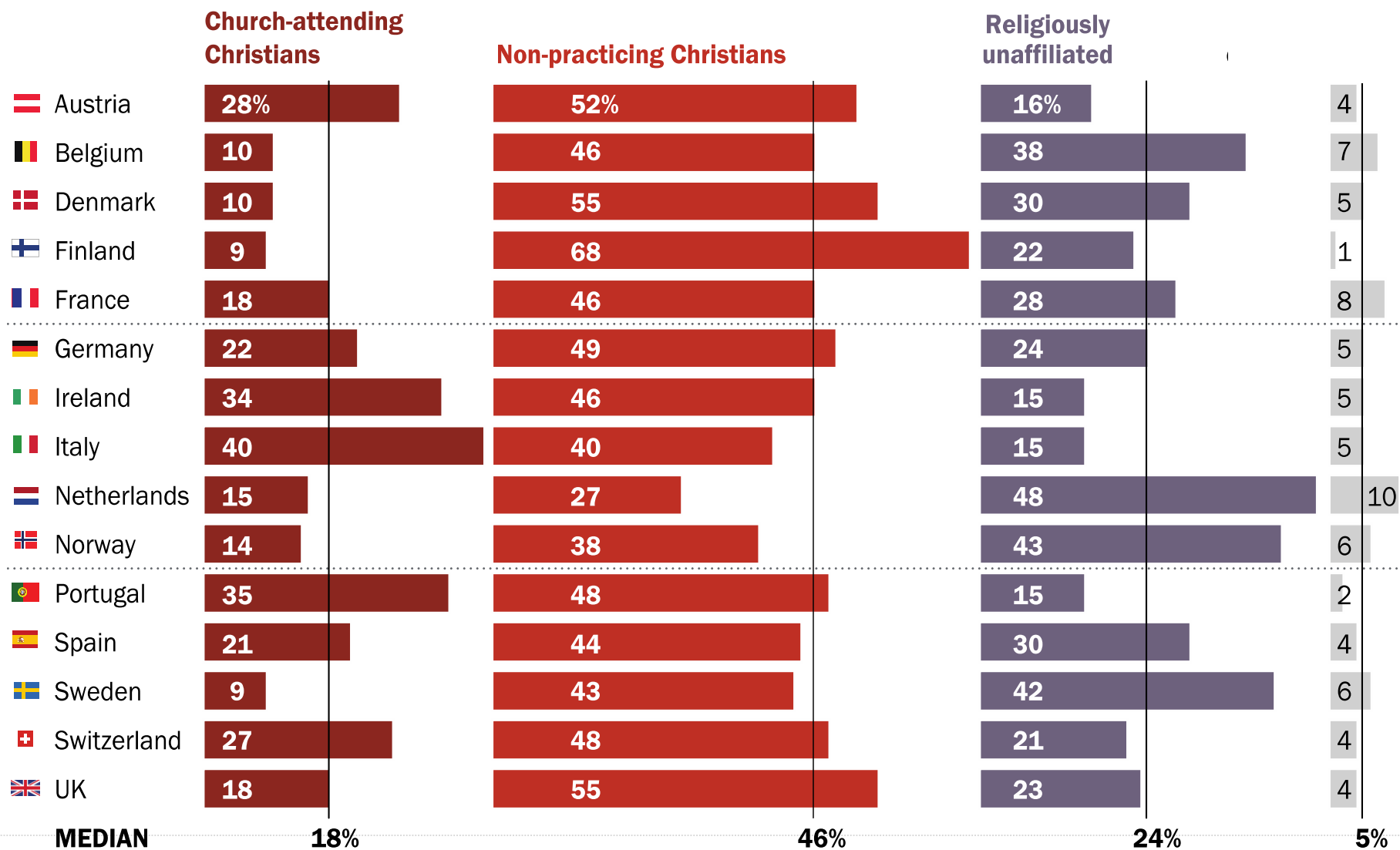
Interviews conducted on mobile and
landline telephones from April to
August 2017 in 12 languages



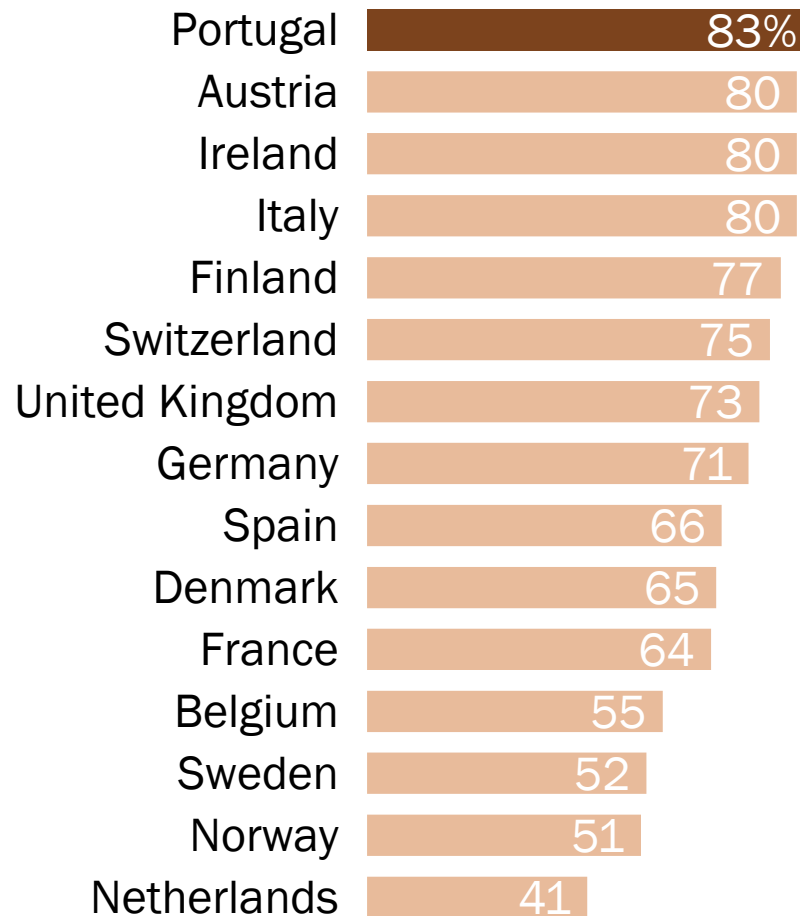
In each country,
respondents
selected through
random sampling



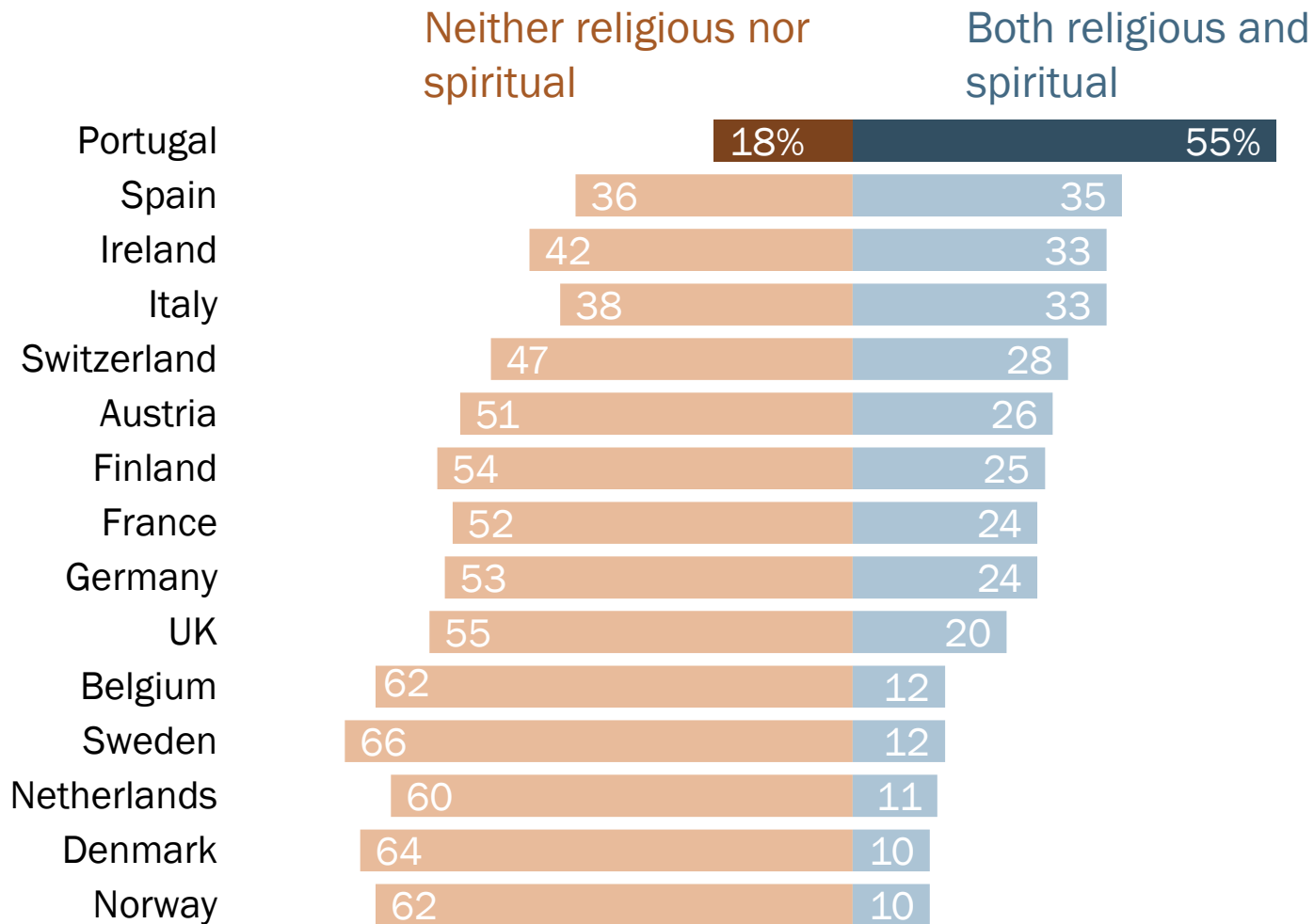
Non-practising Christians are the largest group in most countries



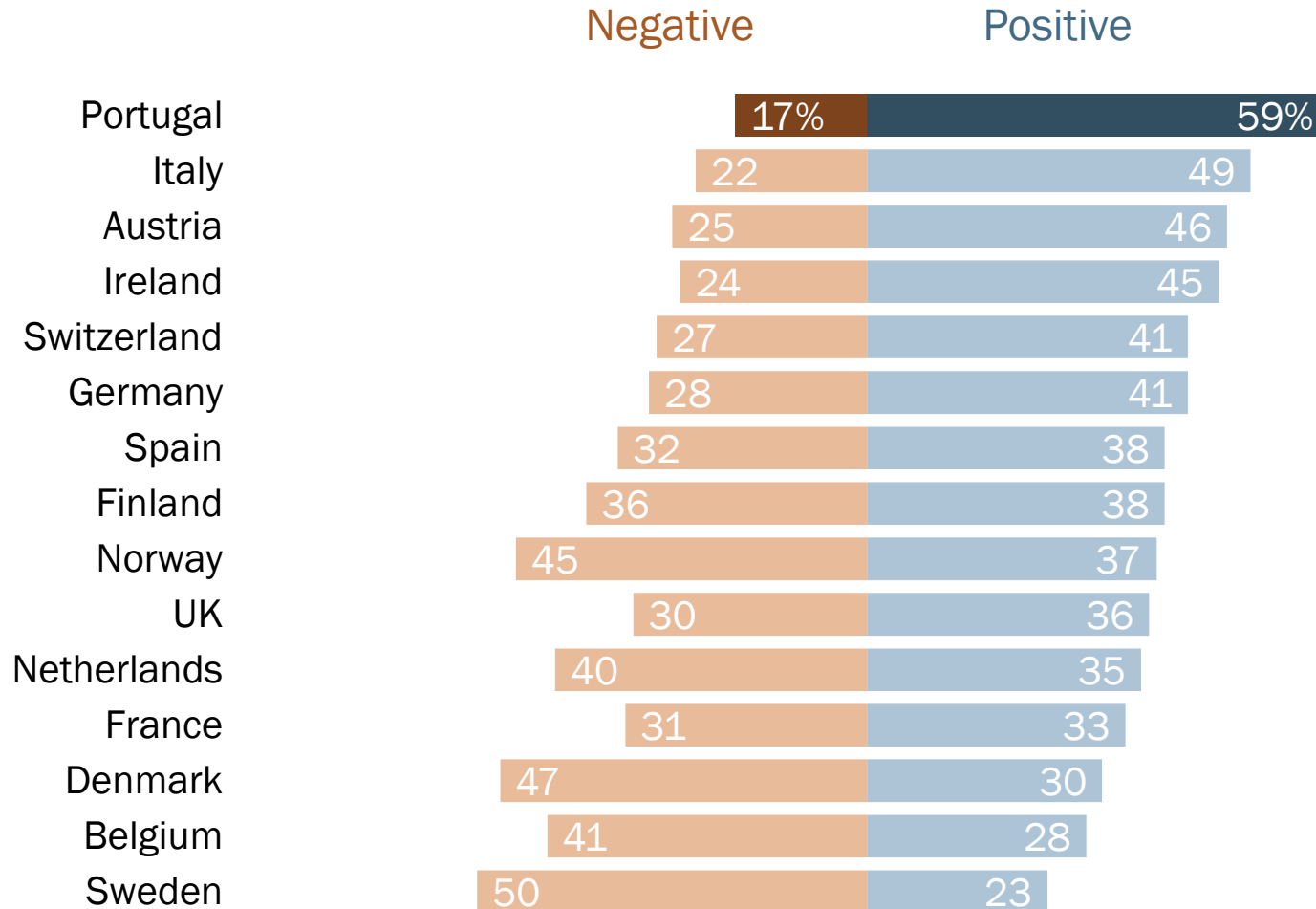
Most adults say that they are Christian (with Portugal in the lead)



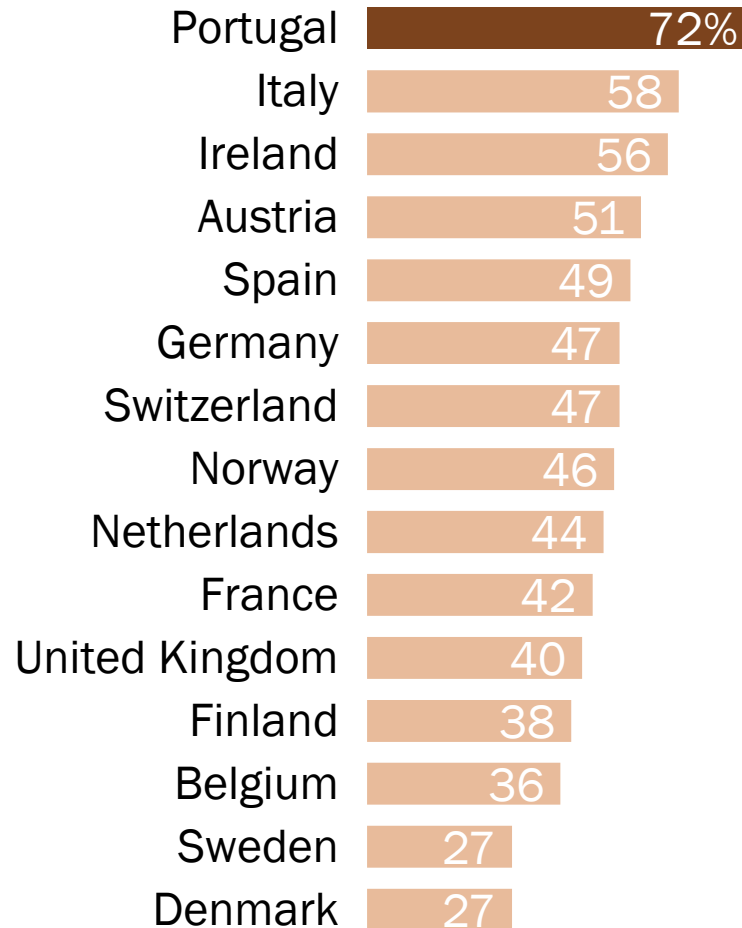
The majority of people in Portugal say that they are both religious and spiritual



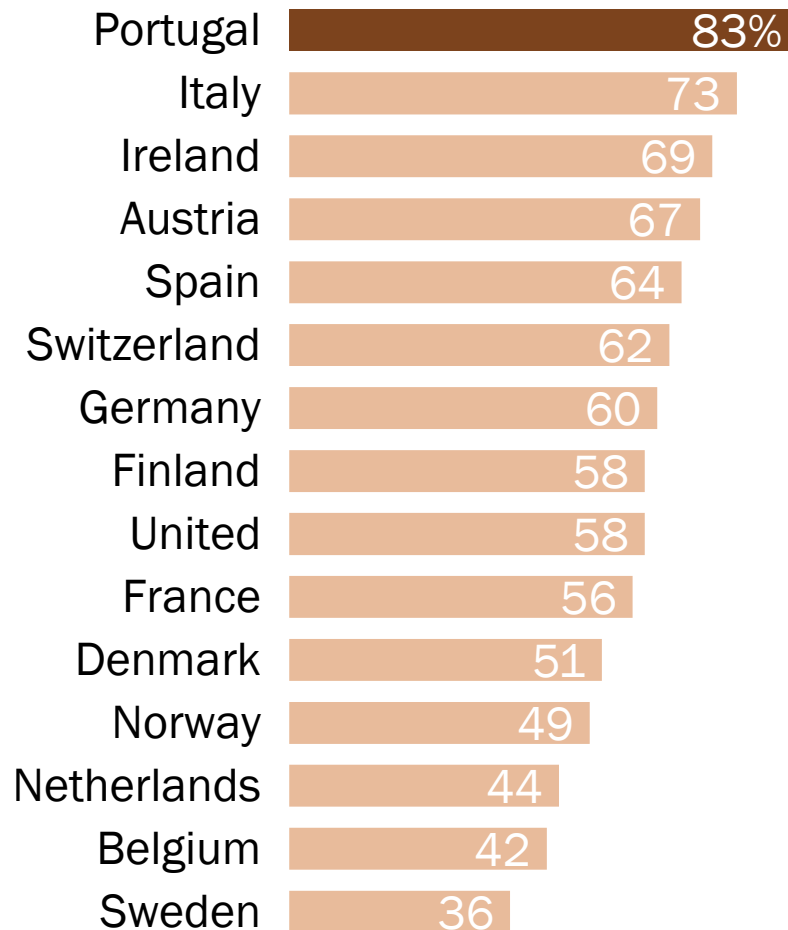
The majority of people in Portugal have a positive view of religion (compared to a third in France and a quarter in Sweden)



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)



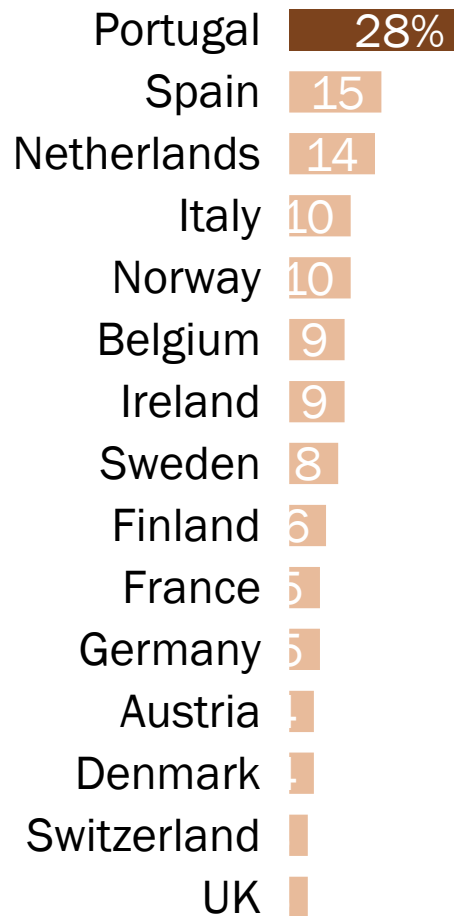
And belief in God with absolute certainty is much more common in Portugal than elsewhere in Europe



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

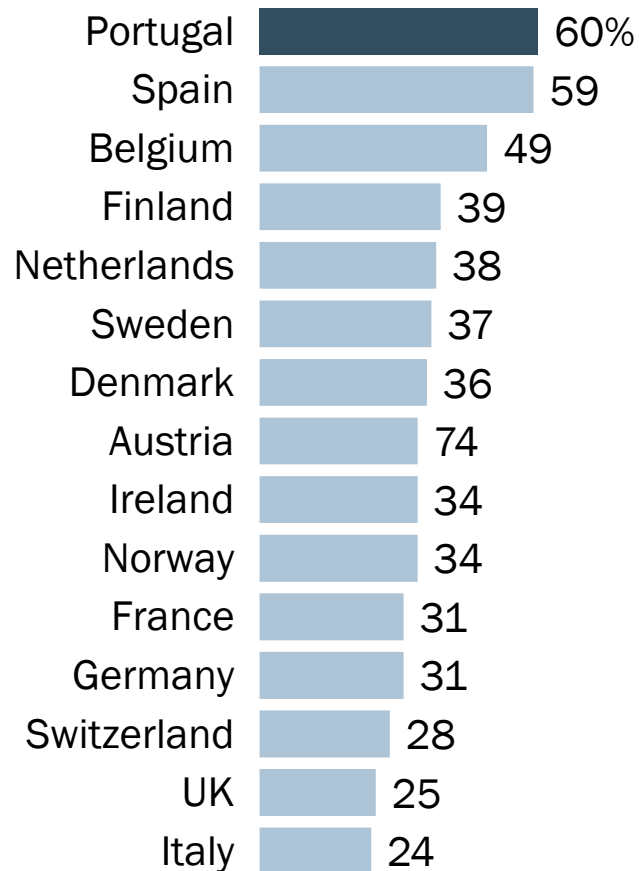


In Portugal, more than a quarter of adults say that God communicates with them daily



Belief in fate and astrology

Believes in fate

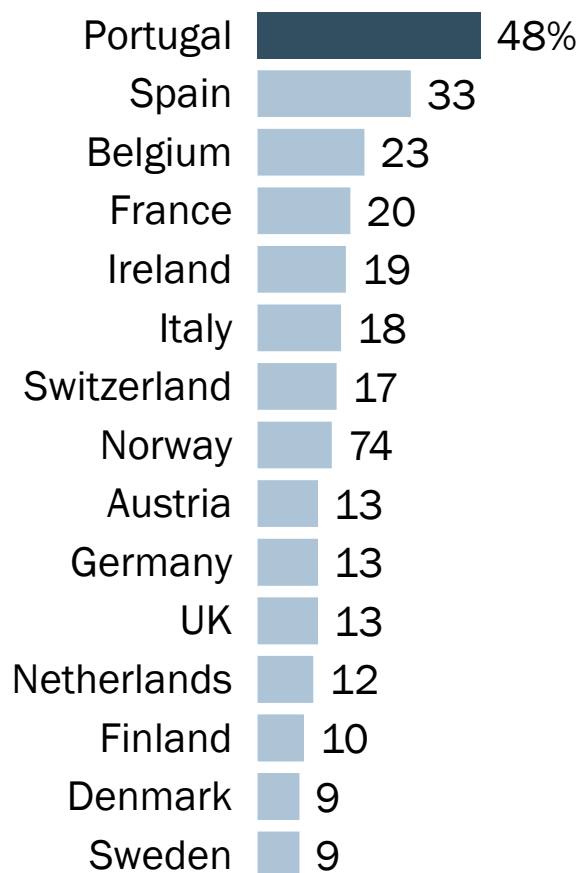


Believes in astrology

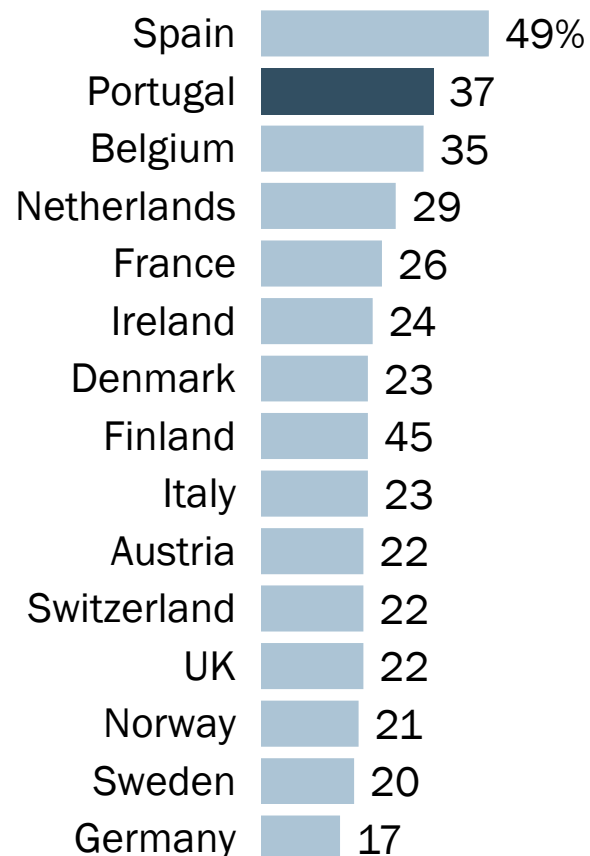


Folk beliefs

Believes in the 'evil eye'

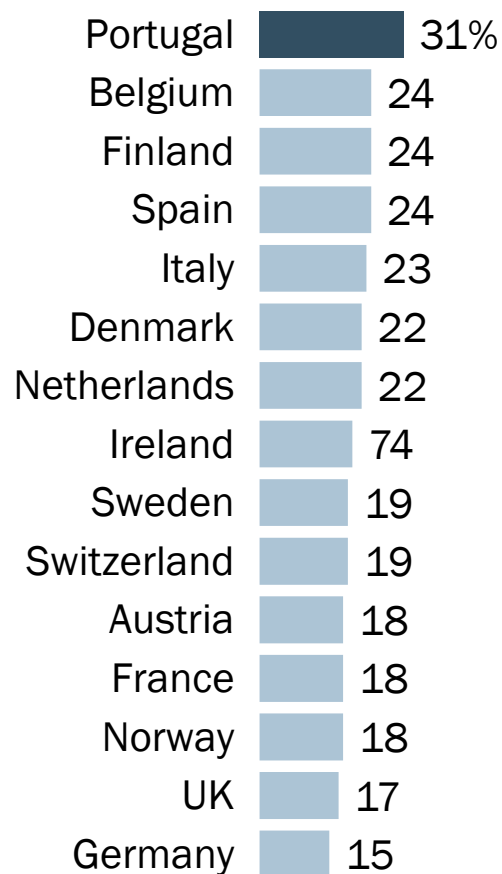


Believes in spiritual energy in physical things

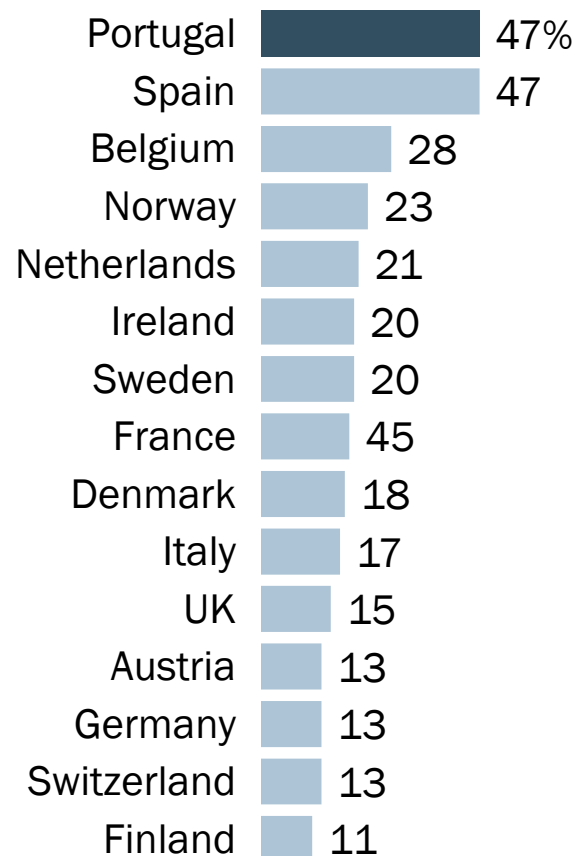


Eastern beliefs and New Age practices

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.

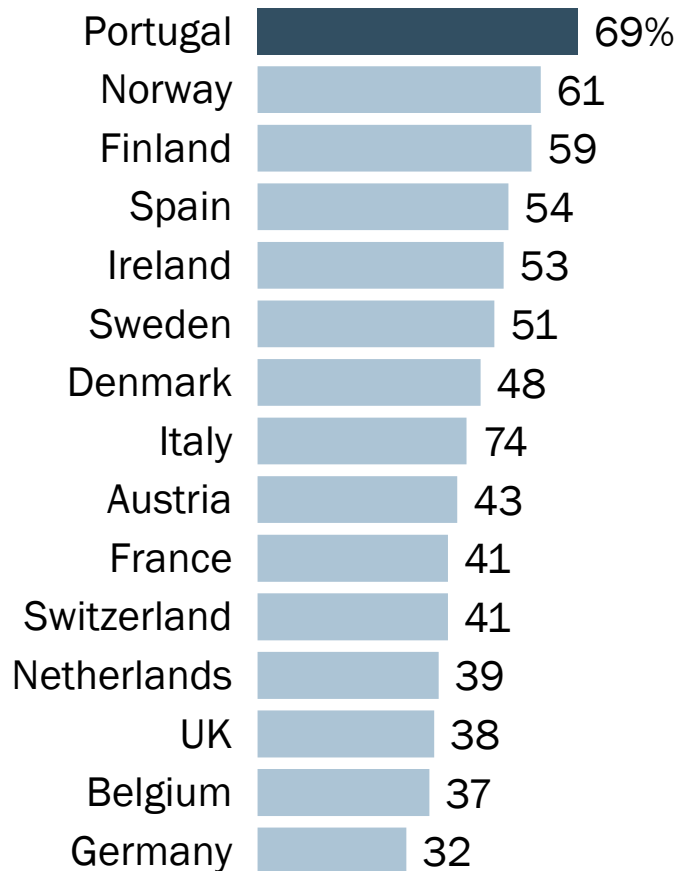


Being Christian in Western Europe

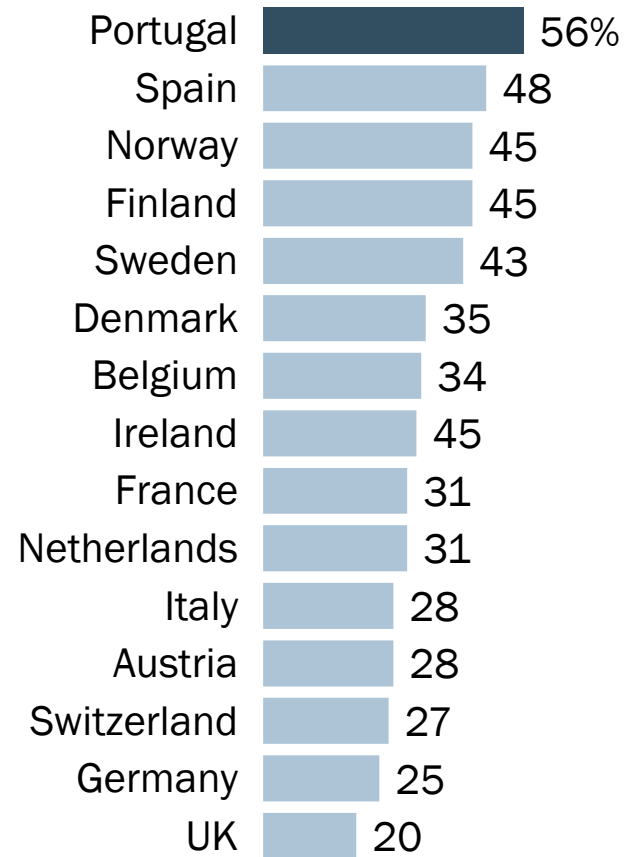
NATIONALISM

National and European pride are common, but Portugal leads

National pride



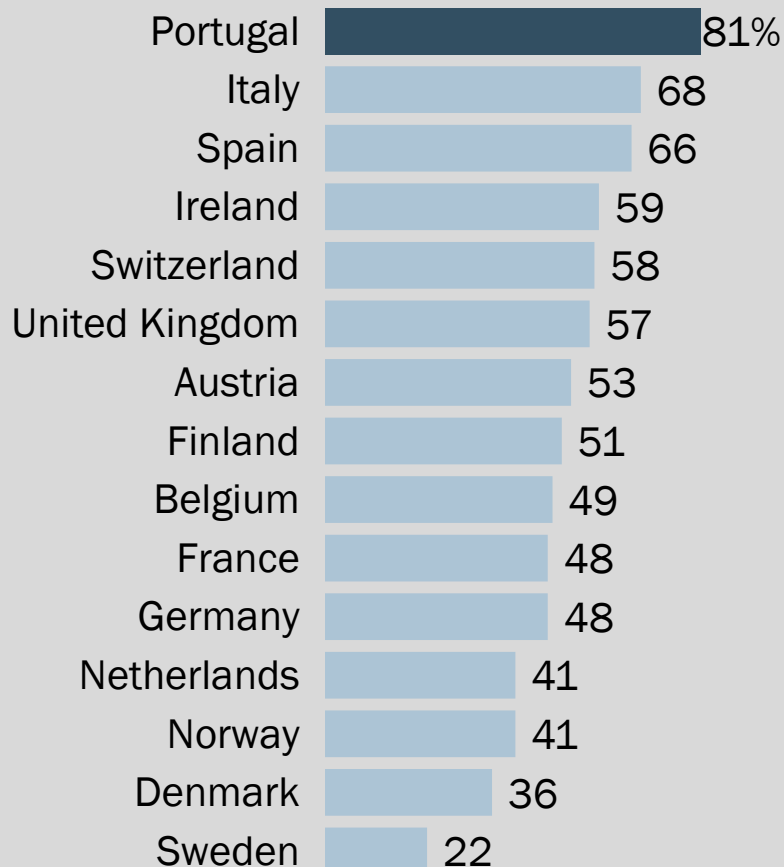
European pride



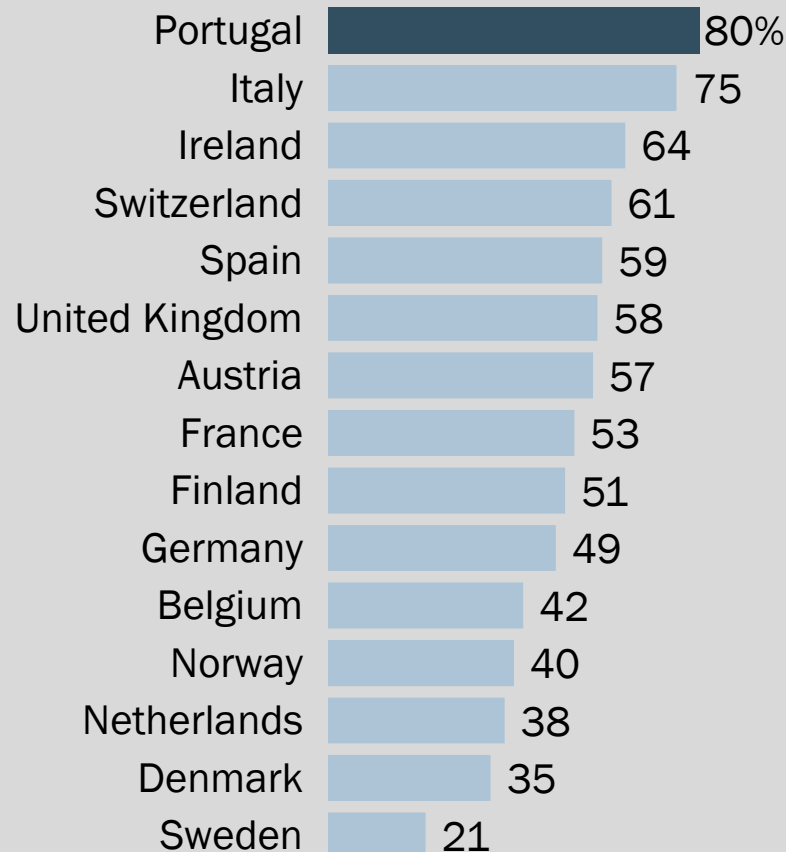
Nativist views of national identity

% 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



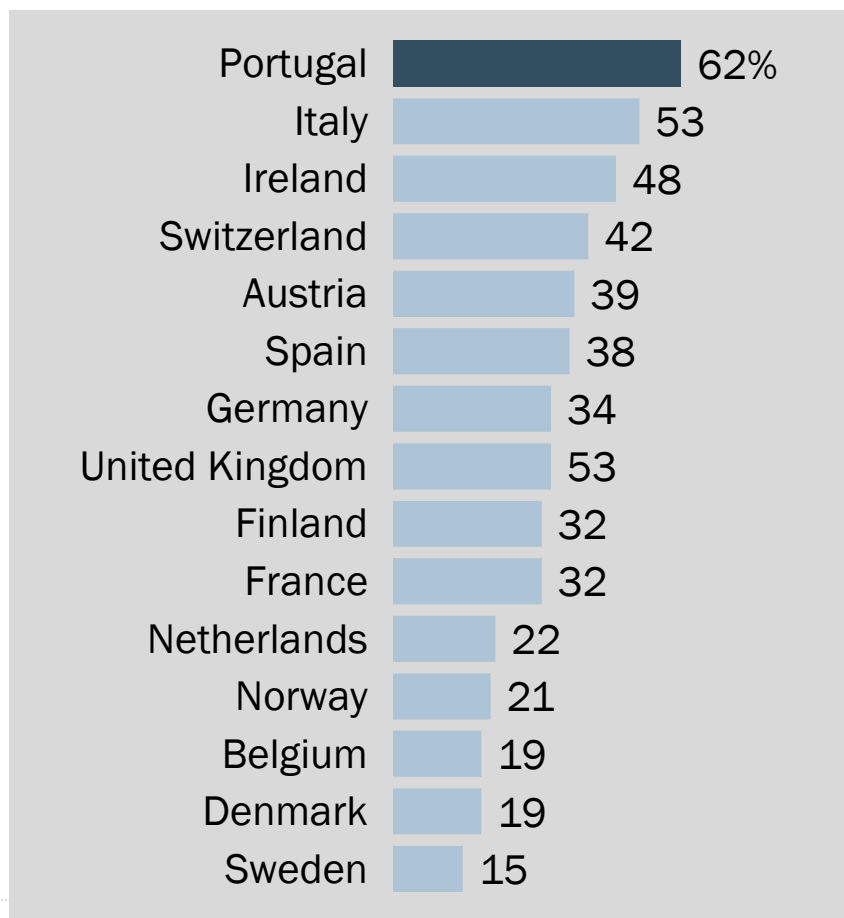
Important to have family background in the country



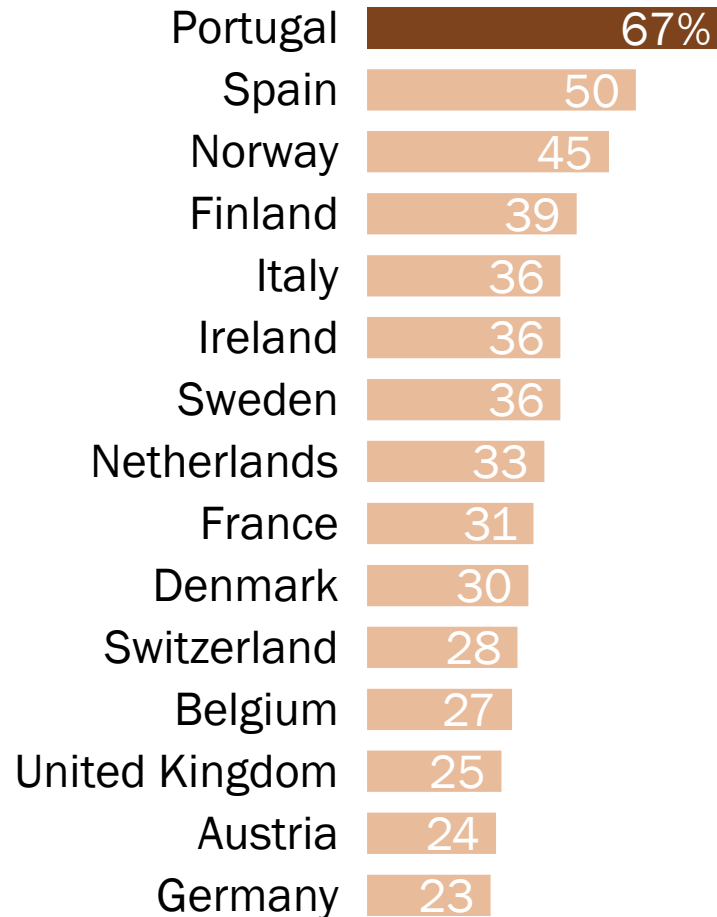
Nativist views of national identity

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

Important to be a Christian

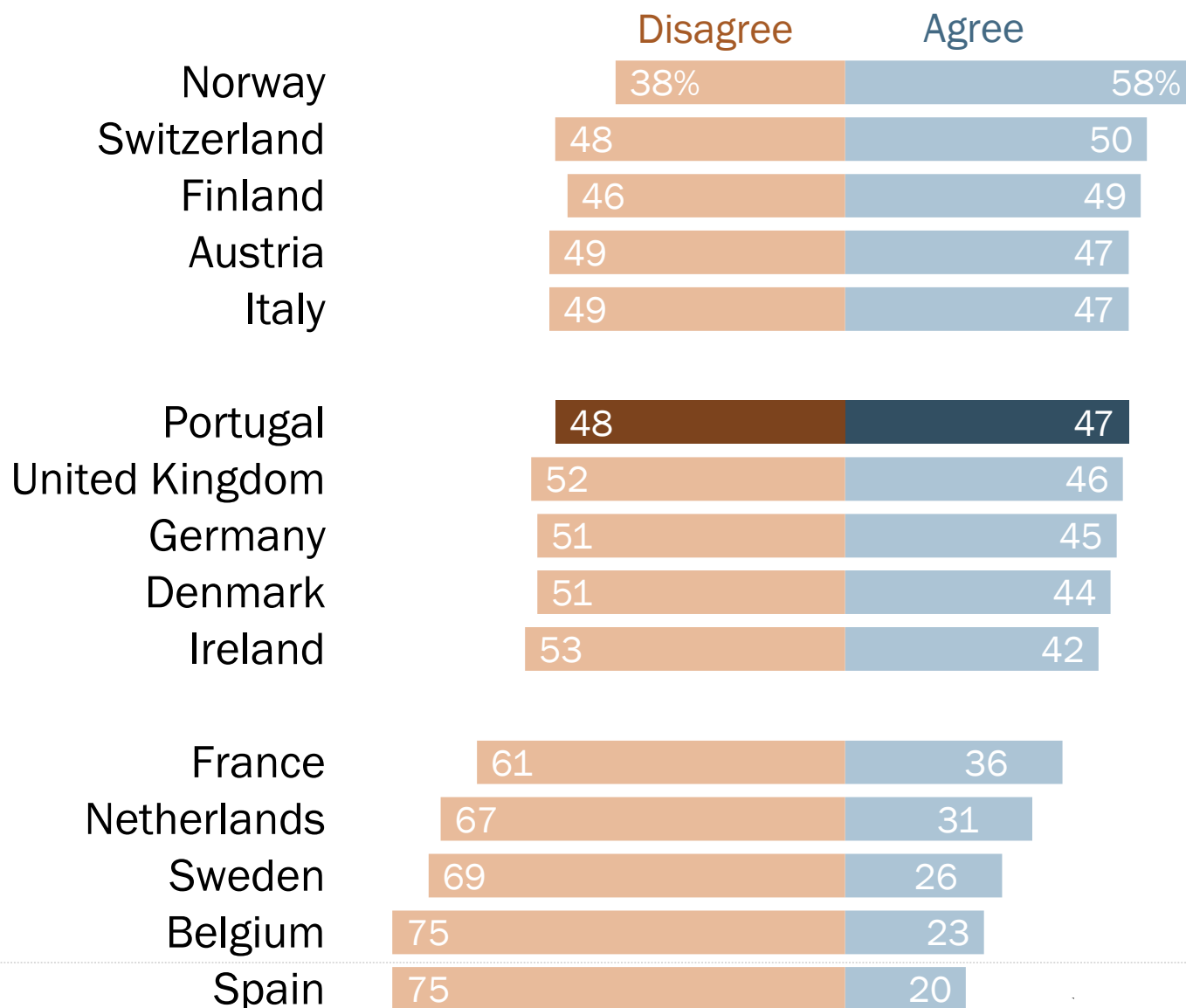


In Portugal, two thirds of Christians say that they are very proud to be Christian (twice the median)



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.

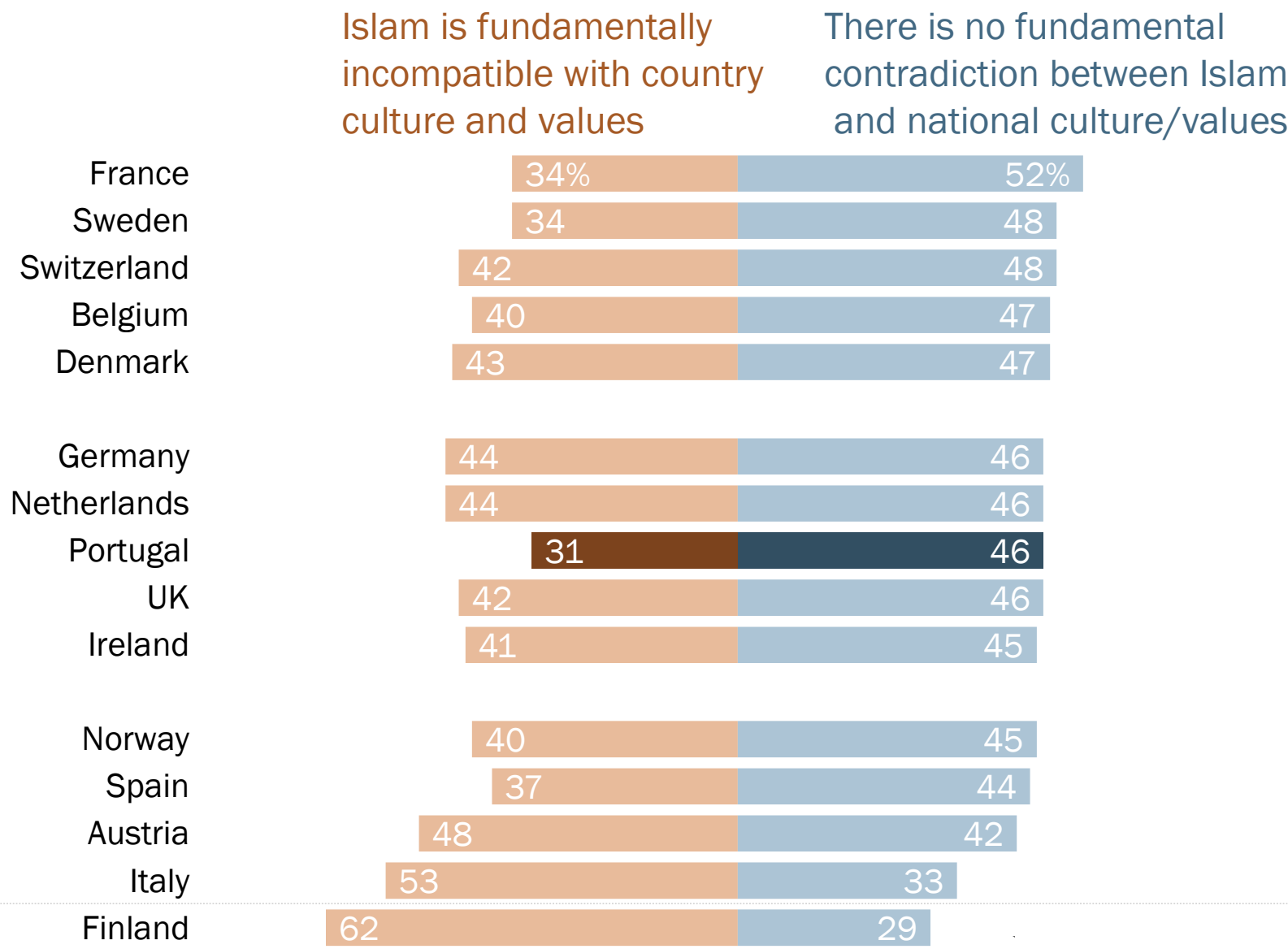
The dominant conception of national belonging is ethnic rather than civic.



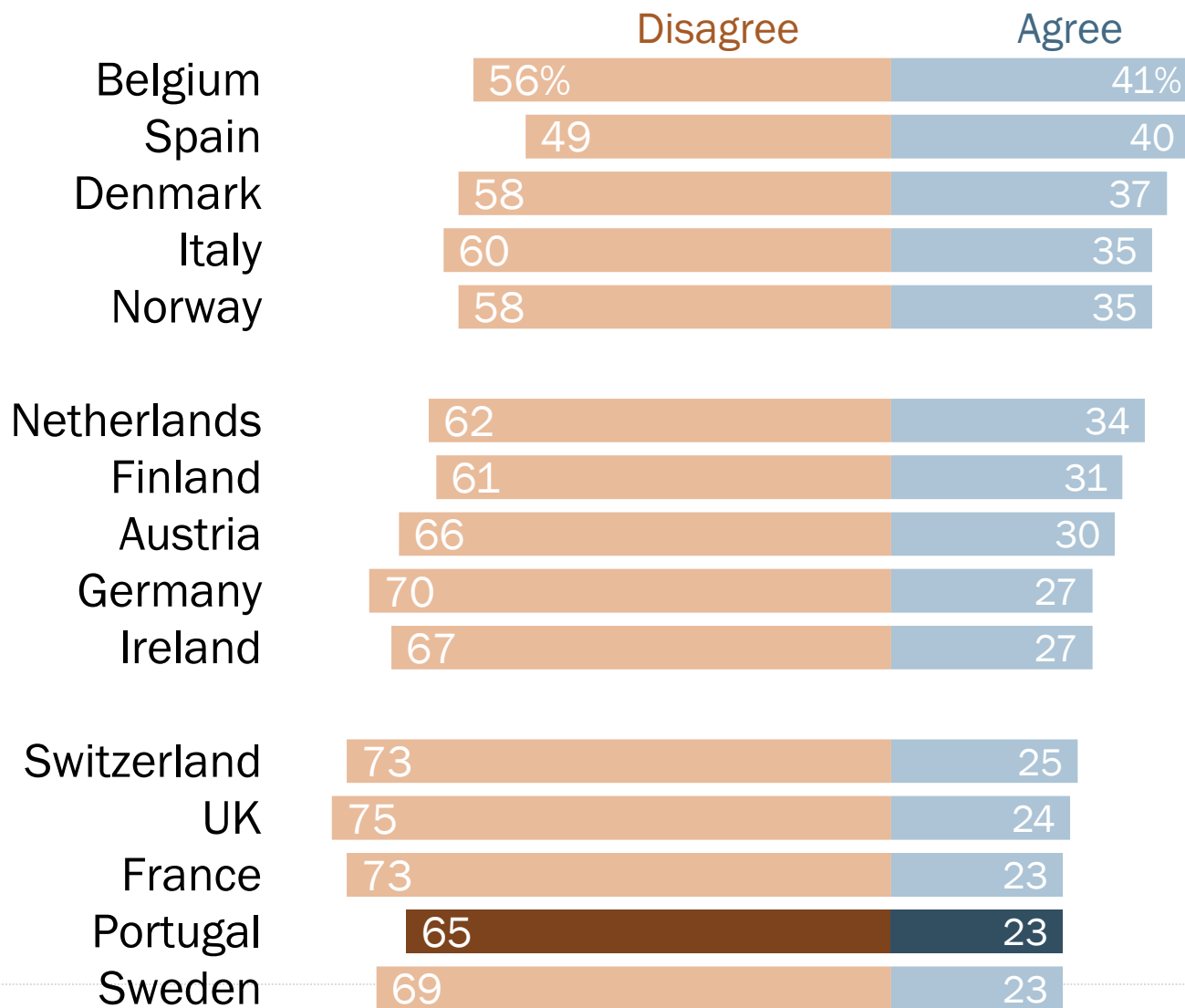
Being Christian in Western Europe

ATTITUDES TOWARD RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

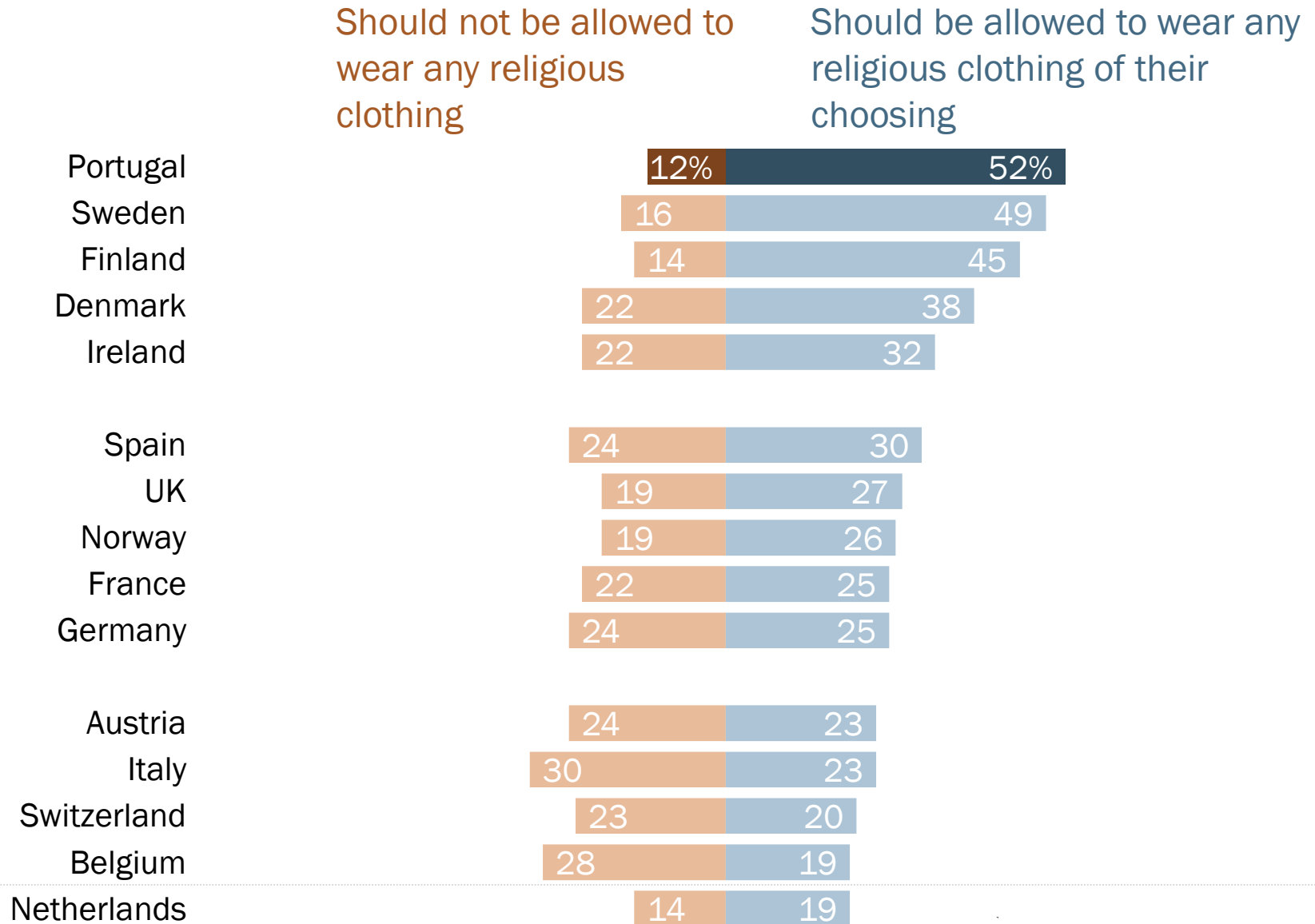
Europe divided over whether Islam is compatible with national culture/values



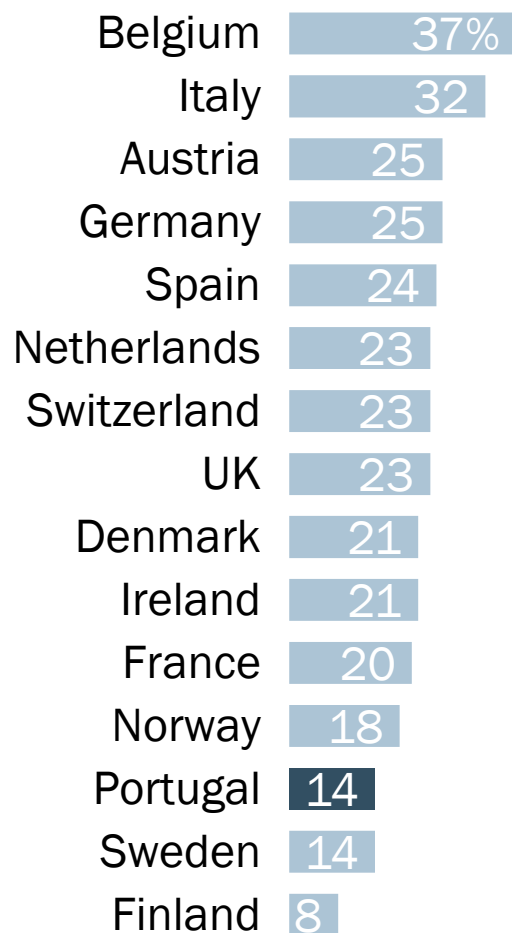
Most disagree:
“In their hearts, Muslims want to impose their religious law on everyone else in [COUNTRY]”



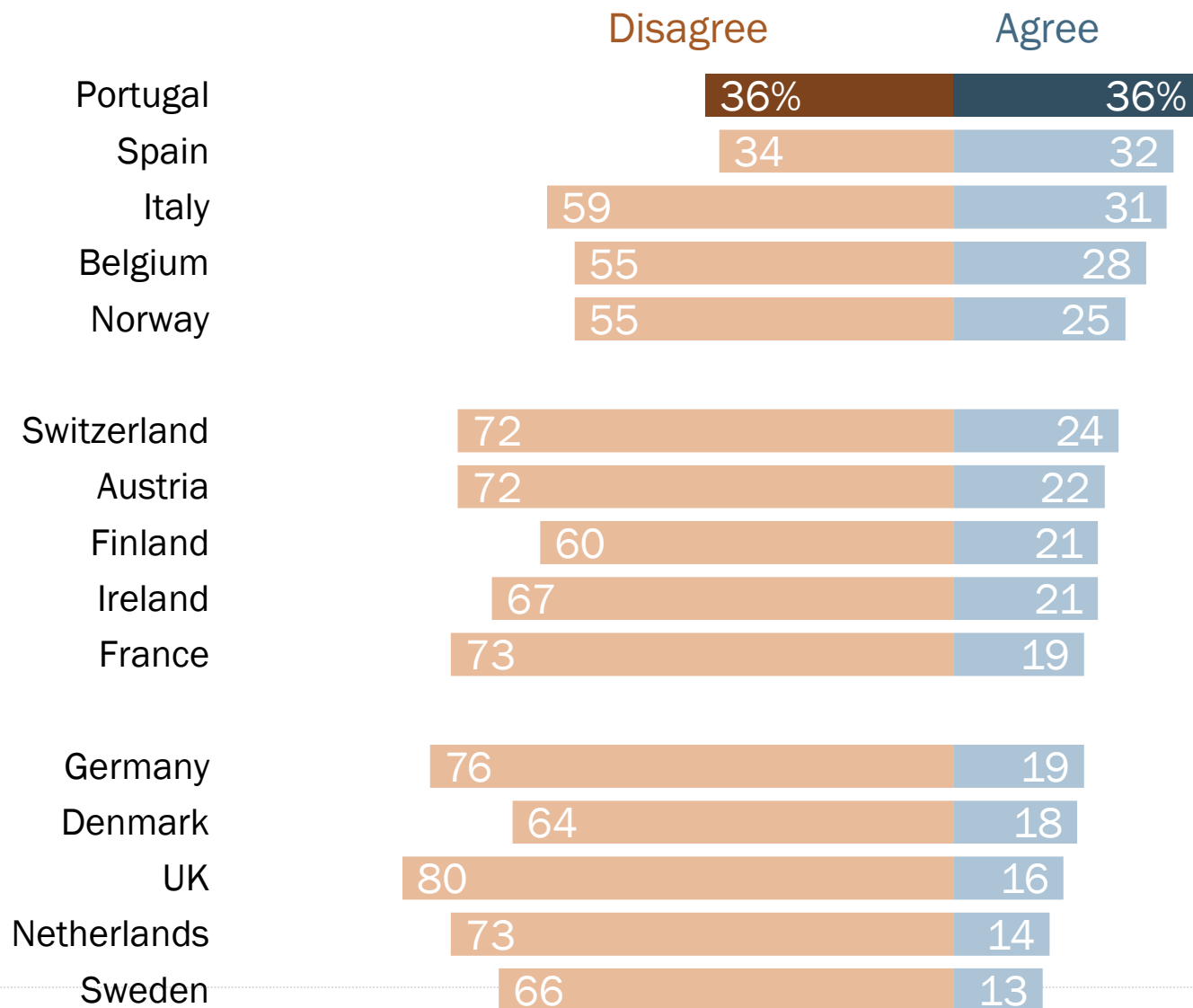
Most Western Europeans favour restricting Muslim clothing, especially clothing that covers a woman's face – Portugal is an exception



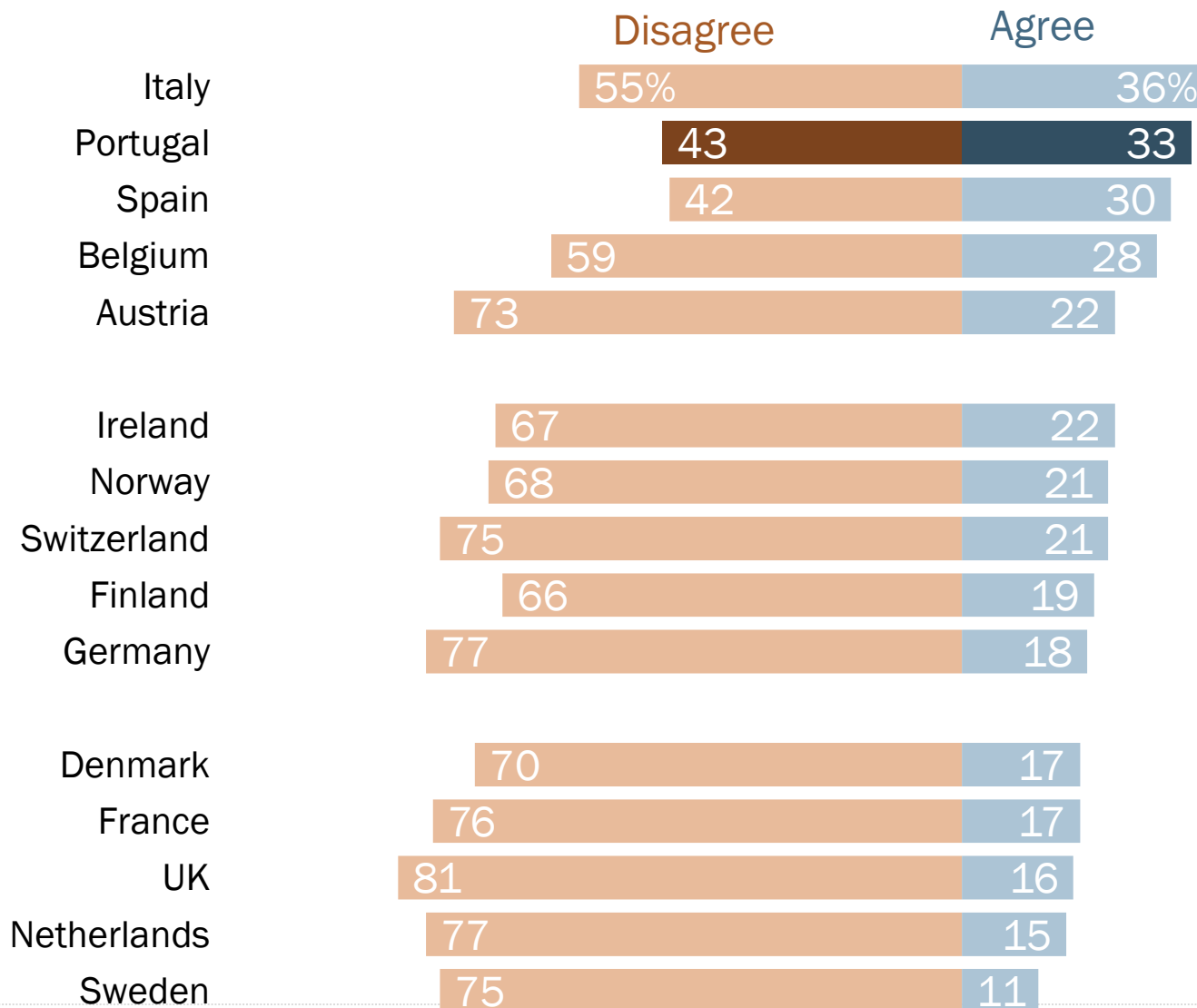
% of non-Muslim adults who agree with the statement, “Due to the number of Muslims here, I feel like a stranger in my own country”



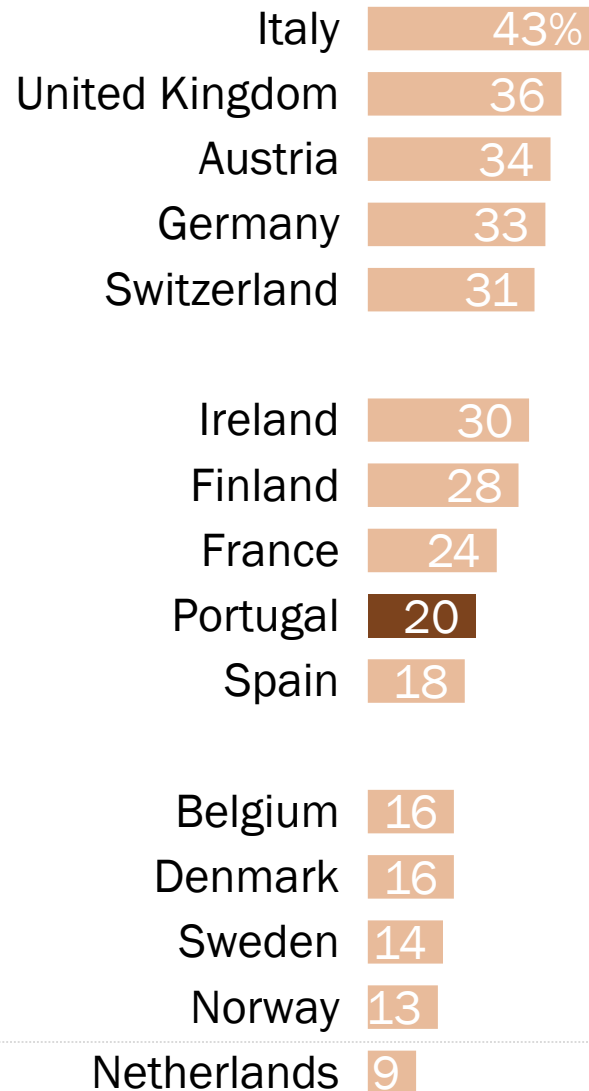
**Most disagree (except in Portugal):
“Jews always pursue their own interests and
not the interest of the country they live in”**



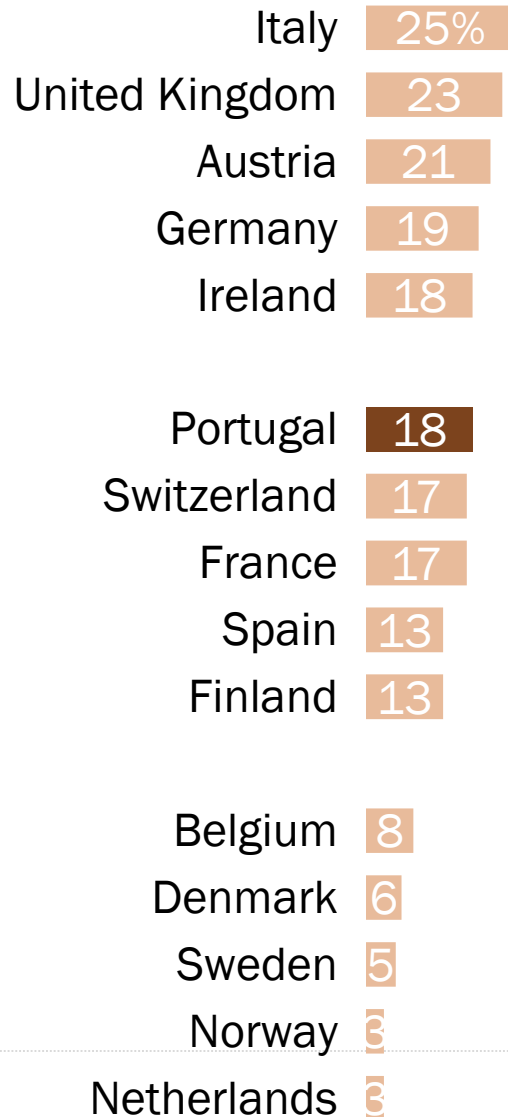
Most disagree:
“Jews always overstate how much they have suffered”



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

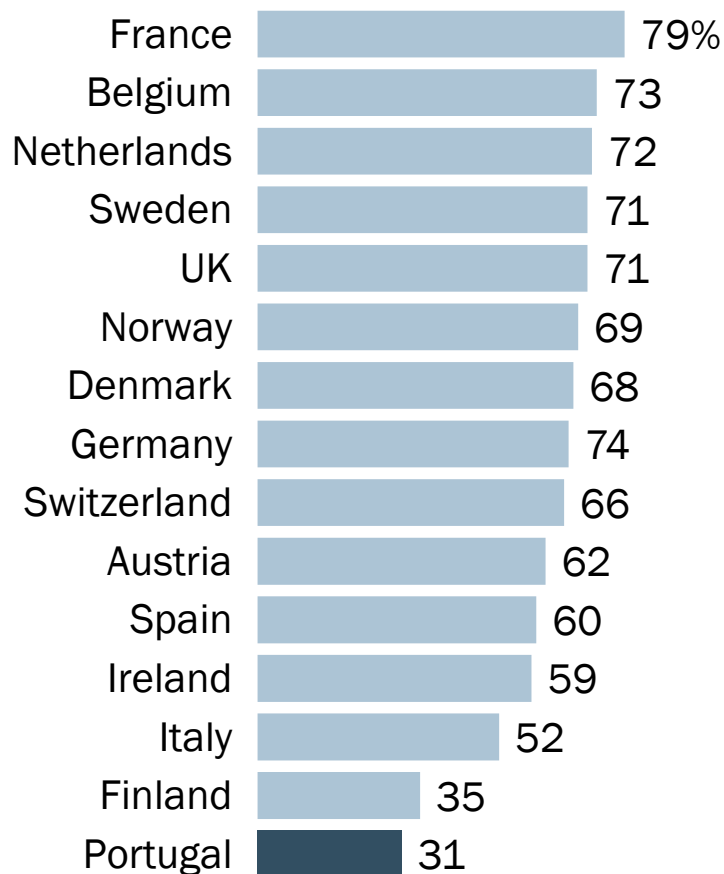


Fewer people say they would NOT be willing to accept Jews in their family

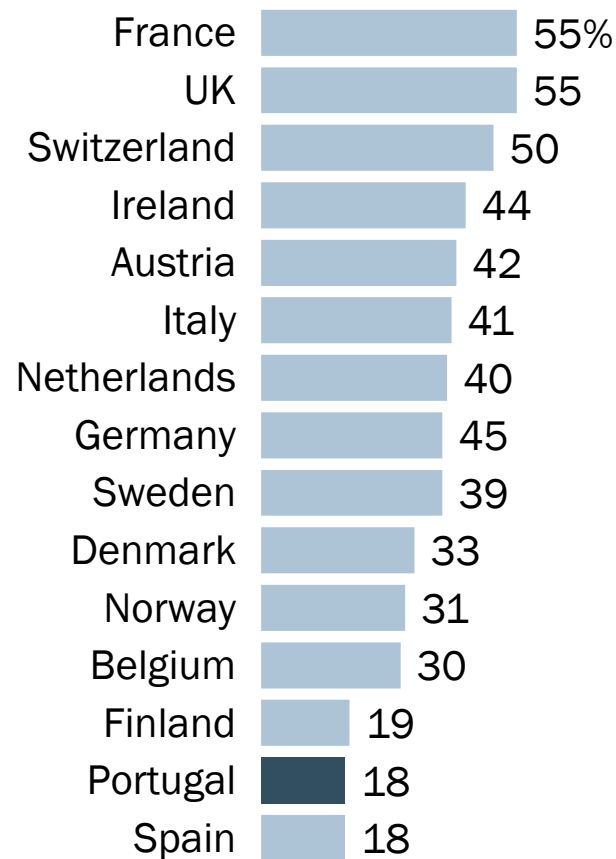


Portuguese are less likely than most Europeans to know someone who is Muslim or Jewish

Know a Muslim

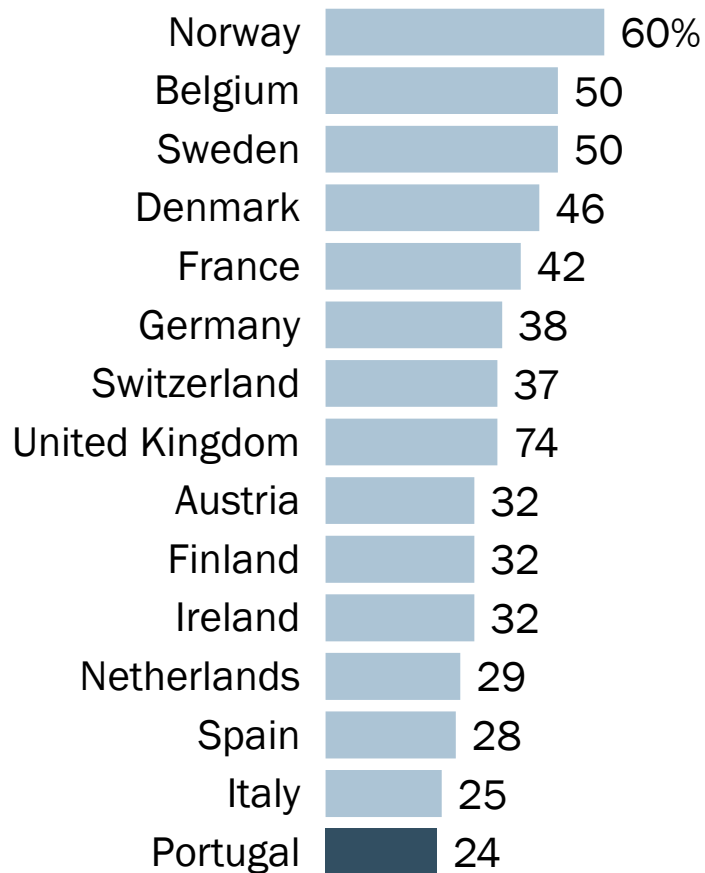


Know a Jew

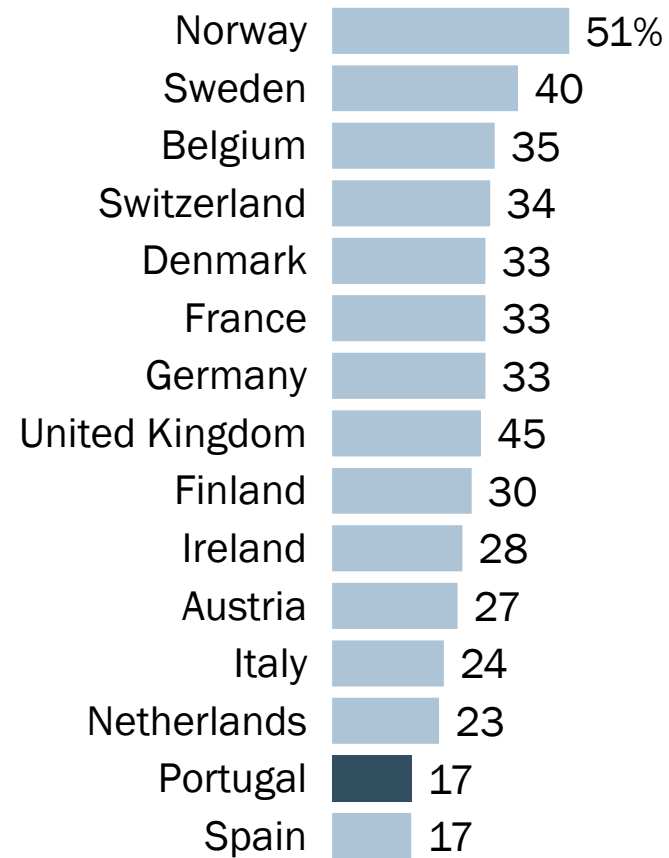


Fewer people know some or a great deal about Islam and Judaism

Islam



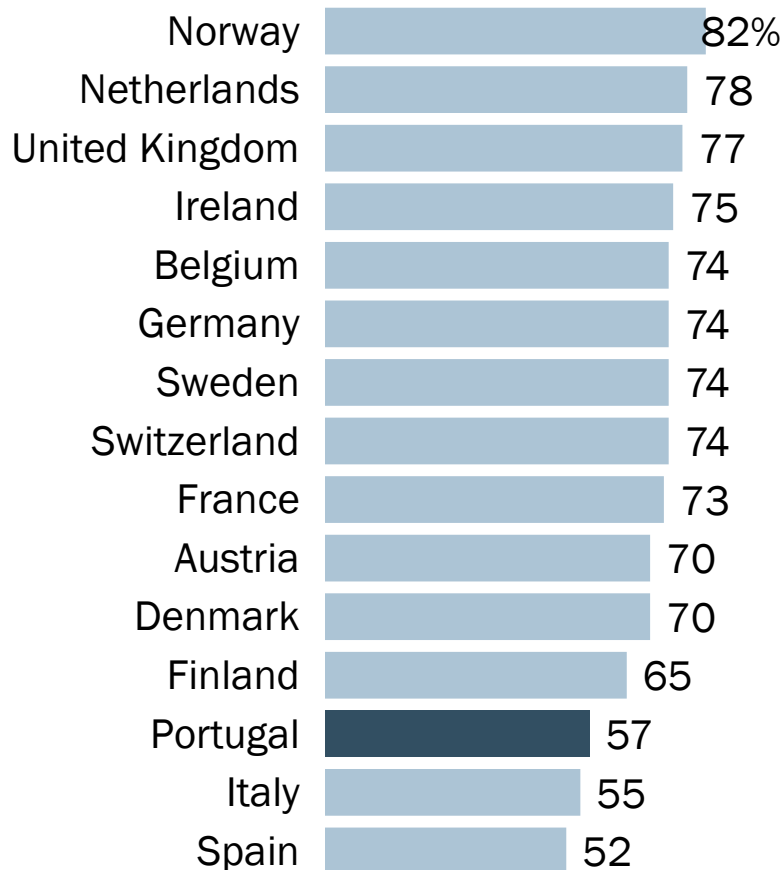
Judaism



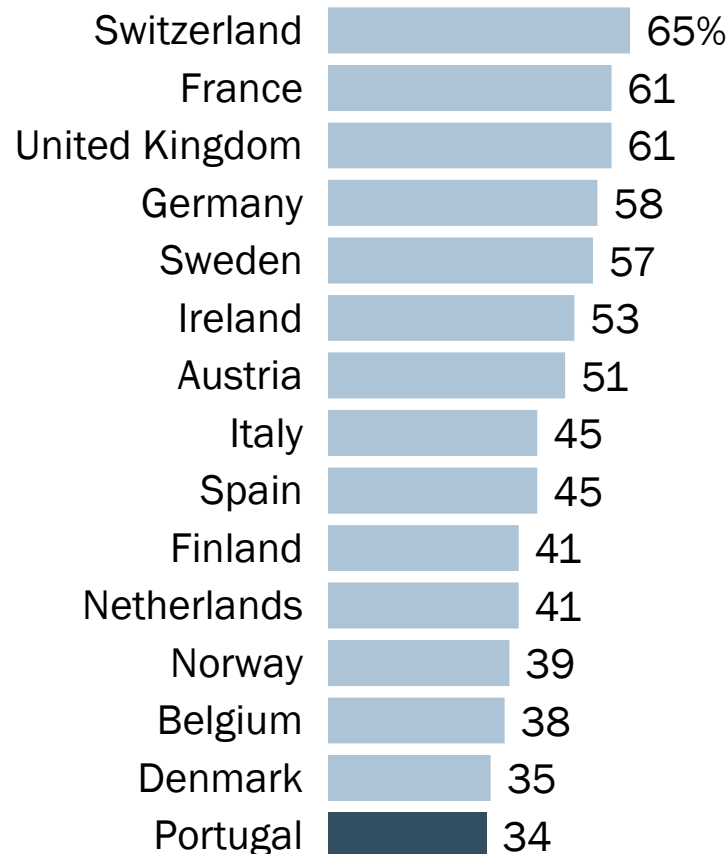
More people see immigrants from Eastern Europe than Middle East as hardworking

% who say immigrants from ____ are hardworking

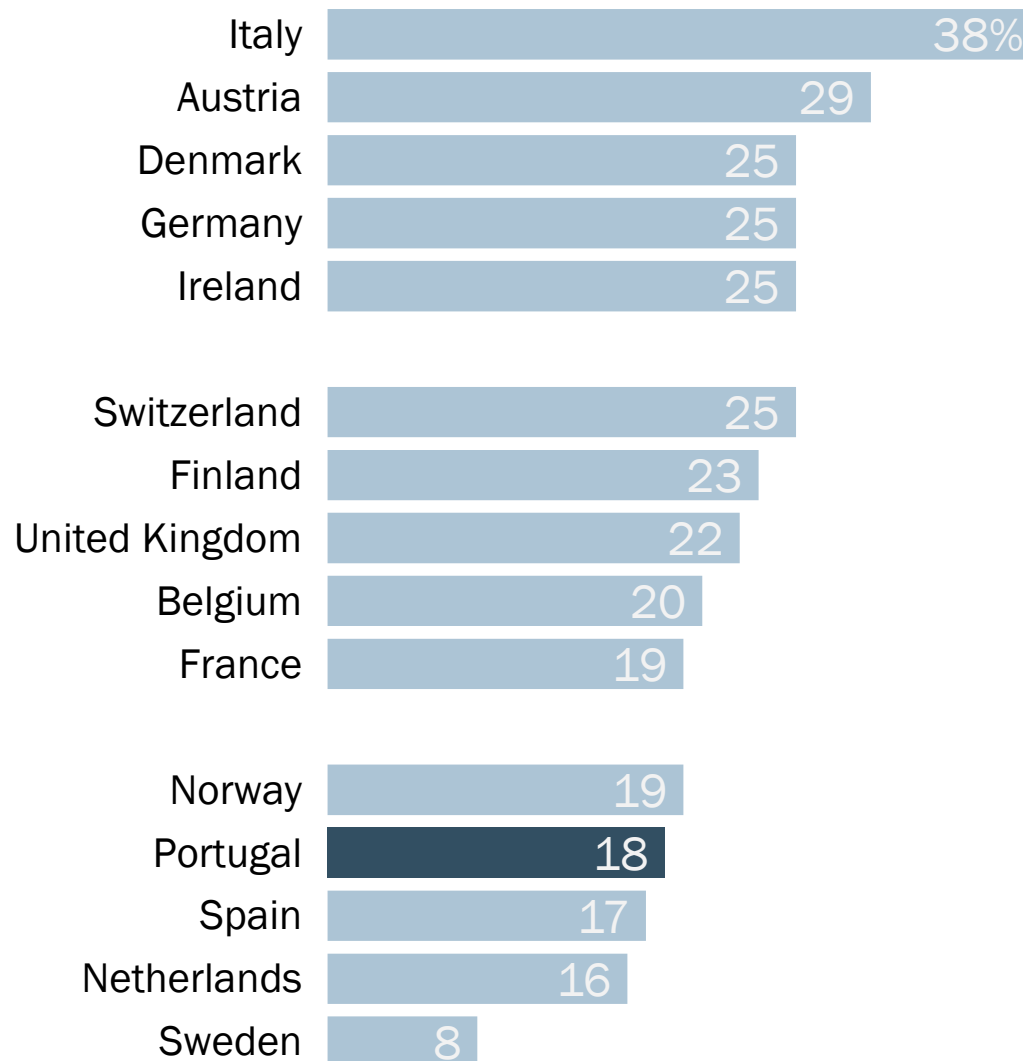
Immigrants from Eastern Europe



Immigrants from Middle East



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!

