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Christianity 2015: Religious Diversity and Personal Contact

This two-page report is the thirty-first in an annual series in the *IBMR* that lays out in summary form an annual update of significant religious statistics. The series began three years after the publication of the first edition of David Barrett's *World Christian Encyclopedia* (WCE; Oxford Univ. Press, 1982). The WCE itself was expanded into a second edition in 2001 (Oxford Univ. Press) and accompanied by an analytic volume, *World Christian Trends* (WCT; William Carey Library, 2001). In 2003 the *World Christian Database* (WCD; later published by Brill) was launched, updating most of the statistics in the WCE and WCT. The *Atlas of Global Christianity* (Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2009) was based on these data and was featured throughout 2010. *The World's Religions in Figures*, by Todd Johnson and Brian Grim (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), covers the methodology of counting religionists around the world. In mid-2014 Brian Grim, Todd Johnson, Vegard Skirbekk, and Gina Zurlo produced the first of a series of annuals titled *Yearbook of International Religious Demography* (Brill).

Redesign

This year we have redesigned the annual statistical table, deleting many previous categories and adding some new ones. Categories cut include rural dwellers, nonliterate, church attenders, councils of churches, and several evangelism variables. Notably, the "Great Commission Christians" concept has been retired. This category, introduced in the early 1990s, was used by many agencies to express ecumenism in mission. While tracking Christians within each tradition who are active in mission and evangelism is valid, we have not found a way to corroborate these particular estimates with surveys and poll data. We break down the Independent Christian category into six subcategories by region (lines 29–34). In every case, global figures are derived by adding together data on 234 countries.

Religious Diversity

A new category this year is Religious Diversity (line 8), a composite measure of how diverse the religious makeup of individual countries is. This measure is adapted from the field of economics (market share studies). The least possible diversity is represented by 0 and the most by 1. The world as a whole is considerably more diverse in 2015 than it was in 1900, but diversity is now on a slight decline. While many countries in the Western world are becoming more diverse through secularization and immigration, others are becoming less diverse. In 2015 the most diverse countries are South Korea at 0.82 and China at 0.81, while the world as a whole (all countries' individual contributions) is at 0.45. The least diverse country is Afghanistan at 0.00 (99.8 percent Muslim). See *The World's Religions in Figures*, chapter 3, for method and details.

Post-Christendom

Another new measure is the percentage of Christians who live in countries that are 80 percent or more Christian (line 25). In 1900

This report was prepared by Todd M. Johnson, Gina A. Zurlo, Albert W. Hickman, and Peter F. Crossing at the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts. Footnotes for the "Status of Global Christianity, 2015" table can be found at www.globalchristianity.org.

it was 95.0 percent, by 1970 it had fallen to 76.0 percent, and by 2015 it had further declined to 52.4 percent. This phenomenon is related to religious diversity; most majority-Christian countries are becoming less Christian through secularization and immigration.

Personal Contact

Christians make up one-third of the world's population (line 22). It therefore might be expected that a significant number of non-Christians would have some kind of personal contact (line 50) with a Christian. This is not the case, however, since Christians are not evenly distributed globally. Some countries have large Christian majorities, while in others Christians constitute small minorities. Within a country, or even a city, adherents of different religions can be isolated from each other in many ways, including geographically, ethnically, socially, and economically.

In order to estimate the number of non-Christians who have personal contact with a Christian, a formula has been developed and applied to each ethnolinguistic people group (see "Methodological Notes" in the *Atlas of Global Christianity*; also posted in the footnotes online). Thus, for every non-Christian population in the world, there is an indication of Christian presence and contact. Summing weighted values for each country, region, and continent produces a global total. Although these numbers are estimates, they offer a preliminary assessment of a critical shortfall. Overall, Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims have relatively little contact with Christians. In each case, more than 86 percent of these religionists globally do not personally know a Christian (or, as line 50 reports, only 14 percent of all non-Christians know a Christian).

2050

Since 2025 is now only ten years away, we have expanded the table to include estimates for 2050. The United Nations Population Division projects population figures for every country of the world from 1950 to 2100, allowing us to base our projections for religion on their population figures. While these projections should be treated with caution, they do point to some important trends. Of particular interest: by 2050, world population (line 1) will cross the 9 billion mark, and Christians (line 23) will number 3.3 billion, or 36 percent (line 22). Note that this percentage is now on the rise after falling for nearly a century. This can be explained partly by the fact that the growth of Christianity in the Global South is now outpacing losses in the Global North. Pentecostals (line 38) will likely exceed 1 billion. Finally, the unevangelized (line 67) will rise to 2.6 billion, or 27.3 percent (line 68) of the world's population.

Counting Pentecostals and Martyrs

This past year we published the following articles related to counting Pentecostals (line 38) and martyrs (line 24):

Johnson, Todd M. "Counting Pentecostals Worldwide." *Pneuma* 36 (2014): 265–88.

Johnson, Todd M., and Gina A. Zurlo. "Christian Martyrdom as a Pervasive Phenomenon." *Modern Society and Social Science* 51, no. 6 (2014): 679–85.

Status of Global Christianity, 2015, in the Context of 1900–2050

	1900	1970	2000	Annual trend (%)	mid-2015	2025	2050
GLOBAL POPULATION							
1. Total population	1,619,625,000	3,691,173,000	6,127,700,000	1.12	7,324,782,000	8,083,413,000	9,550,945,000
2. Adult population (over 15)	1,073,646,000	2,304,100,000	4,280,900,000	1.59	5,420,681,000	6,101,720,000	7,516,484,000
3. Adults, % literate	27.6	63.8	76.7	0.37	81.1	84.3	88.0
GLOBAL CITIES							
4. Cities over 1 million (megacities)	20	144	361	2.21	501	616	880
5. Urban population (%)	14.4	36.7	46.7	1.05	54.6	58.2	67.3
6. Urban poor	100 million	650 million	1,400 million	3.09	2,210 million	3,000 million	6,400 million
7. Slum dwellers	20 million	260 million	700 million	3.36	1,150 million	1,600 million	3,700 million
GLOBAL RELIGION							
8. Religious diversity (0–1, 1=most diverse)	0.27	0.43	0.45	-0.06	0.45	0.45	0.44
9. Religionists	1,616,370,000	2,983,012,000	5,330,961,000	1.32	6,493,515,000	7,249,030,000	8,738,368,000
10. Christians (total, all kinds)	558,131,000	1,230,548,000	1,988,399,000	1.32	2,419,221,000	2,727,172,000	3,437,236,000
11. Muslims	199,818,000	571,205,000	1,288,489,000	1.88	1,703,146,000	2,010,408,000	2,678,227,000
12. Hindus	202,973,000	464,184,000	815,787,000	1.26	984,532,000	1,066,463,000	1,183,629,000
13. Buddhists	126,956,000	234,909,000	452,185,000	0.94	520,002,000	564,760,000	575,769,000
14. Chinese folk-religionists	379,974,000	227,577,000	431,396,000	0.34	453,868,000	453,325,000	410,498,000
15. Ethnoreligionists	117,437,000	168,630,000	217,832,000	1.19	260,240,000	265,317,000	274,972,000
16. New Religionists	5,986,000	39,382,000	62,017,000	0.32	65,057,000	64,168,000	60,368,000
17. Sikhs	2,962,000	10,678,000	20,418,000	1.41	25,208,000	29,217,000	34,375,000
18. Jews	12,292,000	13,500,000	13,745,000	0.37	14,532,000	15,000,000	15,500,000
19. Nonreligionists	3,255,000	708,161,000	796,739,000	0.28	831,267,000	834,382,000	812,576,000
20. Agnostics	3,029,000	543,004,000	659,900,000	0.34	694,823,000	704,143,000	686,853,000
21. Atheists	226,000	165,156,000	136,839,000	-0.02	136,444,000	130,239,000	125,723,000
GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY							
22. Total Christians, % of world	34.5	33.3	32.4	0.19	33.4	33.7	36.0
23. Affiliated Christians (church members)	521,683,000	1,119,481,000	1,889,261,000	1.35	2,309,108,000	2,610,161,000	3,310,498,000
24. Christian martyrs per year (10-year average)	34,400	377,000	160,000	-3.76	90,000	100,000	100,000
25. Christians, % living in countries ≥80% Christian	95.0	76.0	60.3	-0.91	52.6	52.4	48.0
MAJOR CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS							
26. Roman Catholics	266,566,000	664,938,000	1,047,224,000	1.13	1,239,267,000	1,343,831,000	1,632,823,000
27. Protestants (including Anglicans)	133,606,000	255,017,000	426,808,000	1.62	543,397,000	626,591,000	883,616,000
28. Independents	8,859,000	96,381,000	301,490,000	2.21	418,564,000	510,691,000	694,472,000
29. African Independents	40,000	17,569,000	76,319,000	2.38	108,636,000	135,341,000	191,259,000
30. Asian Independents	1,906,000	16,494,000	94,270,000	2.99	146,586,000	188,757,000	289,728,000
31. European Independents	185,000	8,299,000	17,680,000	1.90	23,444,000	27,647,000	34,062,000
32. Latin American Independents	33,000	9,452,000	32,744,000	1.97	43,843,000	52,428,000	66,876,000
33. Northern American Independents	6,672,000	44,022,000	79,524,000	1.18	94,821,000	105,074,000	110,803,000
34. Oceanian Independents	22,000	544,000	956,000	1.72	1,234,000	1,443,000	1,744,000
35. Orthodox	115,855,000	144,067,000	256,628,000	0.66	283,185,000	288,898,000	293,987,000
36. Unaffiliated Christians	36,448,000	111,066,000	99,139,000	0.70	110,113,000	117,012,000	126,738,000
MOVEMENTS WITHIN GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY							
37. Evangelicals	80,912,000	105,958,000	239,565,000	2.13	328,582,000	400,076,000	581,134,000
38. Pentecostals/Charismatics	981,000	62,674,000	460,529,000	2.26	643,661,000	795,734,000	1,091,314,000
GLOBAL CHRISTIAN DISTRIBUTION							
39. Africa (5 regions)	8,736,000	114,785,000	359,245,000	2.78	541,816,000	704,003,000	1,207,833,000
40. Asia (4 regions)	20,774,000	91,585,000	271,420,000	2.19	375,905,000	464,797,000	598,589,000
41. Europe (including Russia; 4 regions)	368,254,000	467,266,000	546,448,000	0.16	559,900,000	546,065,000	501,488,000
42. Latin America (3 regions)	60,027,000	262,919,000	481,355,000	1.20	575,464,000	628,336,000	702,896,000
43. Northern America (1 region)	59,570,000	168,472,000	209,585,000	0.67	231,499,000	239,501,000	266,038,000
44. Oceania (4 regions)	4,323,000	14,463,000	21,178,000	1.08	24,892,000	27,459,000	33,654,000
CHURCH ORGANIZATION							
45. Denominations	1,600	18,800	34,200	1.85	45,000	55,000	70,000
46. Congregations	400,000	1,416,000	3,400,000	1.59	4,309,000	7,500,000	9,000,000
CHRISTIAN MISSION							
47. National workers (citizens)	2,100,000	4,600,000	10,900,000	0.64	12,000,000	14,000,000	17,000,000
48. Foreign missionaries	62,000	240,000	420,000	-0.32	400,000	550,000	700,000
49. Foreign-mission sending agencies	600	2,200	4,000	1.63	5,100	6,000	7,500
50. Non-Christians who know a Christian (%)	4.3	10.5	13.6	0.24	14.1	14.8	15.4
URBAN MISSION							
51. Global urban population	232,695,000	1,353,274,000	2,864,278,000	2.18	3,957,725,000	4,702,865,000	6,432,512,000
52. Christian urban population	159,600,000	660,800,000	1,223,415,000	1.64	1,560,439,000	1,800,195,000	2,028,925,000
53. Megacities under 50% Christian	5	65	226	1.53	284	357	450
54. New non-Christian urban dwellers per day	5,200	51,100	129,000	0.25	134,000	137,000	164,000
CHRISTIAN FINANCE (in US\$, per year)							
55. Personal income of church members	270 billion	4,100 billion	17,000 billion	3.69	42,000 billion	60,000 billion	150,000 billion
56. Giving to Christian causes	8 billion	70 billion	300 billion	3.75	700 billion	990 billion	2,400 billion
57. Churches' income	7 billion	50 billion	120 billion	3.73	280 billion	400 billion	990 billion
58. Parachurch and institutional income	1 billion	20 billion	180 billion	3.76	420 billion	590 billion	1,420 billion
59. Ecclesiastical crime	300,000	5,000,000	18 billion	4.01	50 billion	100 billion	690 billion
60. Income of global foreign missions	200 million	3 billion	17 billion	3.79	45 billion	60 billion	150 billion
CHRISTIAN MEDIA							
61. Books (titles) about Christianity	300,000	1,800,000	4,800,000	3.63	8,200,000	11,800,000	14,500,000
62. Christian periodicals (titles)	3,500	23,000	35,000	4.32	66,000	100,000	120,000
63. Bibles printed per year	5,452,600	25,000,000	53,700,000	2.91	82,600,000	110,000,000	135,000,000
64. Scriptures (including selections) printed per year	20 million	281 million	4,600 million	1.07	5,060 million	6,000 million	9,200 million
65. Bible density (copies in place)	108 million	443 million	1,400 million	1.98	1,880 million	2,280 million	3,700 million
66. Users of radio/TV/Internet	0	750 million	1,830 million	1.08	2,150 million	2,430 million	2,870 million
WORLD EVANGELIZATION							
67. Unevangelized population	880,122,000	1,650,559,000	1,833,442,000	0.99	2,124,216,000	2,314,510,000	2,608,900,000
68. Unevangelized as % of world population	54.3	44.7	29.9	-0.13	29.3	28.6	27.3
69. World evangelization plans since 30 c.e.	250	510	1,500	2.89	2,300	3,000	4,000