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(16B) EXPLANATORY NOTES ON RELIGIOUS DATA BOXES USED IN THE ANTHOLOGY

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The religious data boxes that appear in Section 1 in the previous article, in Section 2 above the regional survey articles, and in Section 4 at the beginning of the national survey articles of Christianity in African nations of the Anthology of African Christianity Project, are derived from the *World Christian Database (WCD)*.¹ The *WCD* includes detailed information on 41,000 Christian denominations and religions in every country of the world. Extensive data are available on 234 countries and 13,000 ethno-linguistic peoples, as well as on 5,000 cities and 3,000 provinces. Thousands of sources are evaluated and reviewed on a weekly basis by a professional staff dedicated to expanding and updating the *WCD*, and the database is updated quarterly.

The methodology undergirding the *WCD* takes as its starting point the United Nations 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18: ‘Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.’² Since its promulgation, this group of phrases has been incorporated into the state constitutions of a large number of countries across the world. This fundamental right also includes the right to claim the religion of one’s choice, and the right to be called a follower of that religion and to be enumerated as such.

Data Sources

Three major sources of religious demographic data are censuses, surveys and polls, and data from religious communities. National censuses are the best starting point for the identification of religious adherents, because they generally cover the entire population. In the absence of a question on religion, another helpful piece of information from a census is ethnicity or language. This is especially true when a particular ethnic group can be equated with a particular religion. For example, over 99% of Somalis are Muslim, so the number of Somalis in, for example, Sweden is an indication of a part of the Muslim community there. Similarly, a question that asks for the country of birth can use useful. If the answer is ‘Nepal’, there is a significant chance that the individual or community is Hindu. In each of these cases, the assumption is made (if there is no further information) that the religion of the transplanted ethnic or linguistic community is the same as that in the home country.

In the absence of census data on religion, large-scale demographic surveys, such as the MEASURE (Monitoring and Evaluation to Assess and Use Results) Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), often include a question about the respondent’s religious affiliation. In some instances, demographic surveys by groups such as UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund) include a question on religious affiliation. Demographic surveys, though less comprehensive than a national census, have several advantages over other types of general population surveys and polls. Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) are highly regarded by demographers and social scientists, and provide valuable nationally representative data on religion. Surveys can also be commissioned in the light of a dearth of data on a particular subject and results can be used to search for correlations between different variables.

¹ Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, eds. *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston, Brill, accessed January 2016), www.worldchristiandatabase.org.

² The full text of the UN resolution can be found in Paul M. Taylor, *Freedom of Religion: UN and European Human Rights Law and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 368–72.

Religious communities also keep track of their members, using everything from simple lists to elaborate membership reports. The most detailed data collection and analysis is undertaken each year by some 43,000 Christian denominations and their 4.7 million constituent churches and congregations of believers. The latter invest over US\$1.1 billion annually for a massive, decentralized and largely unco-ordinated global census of Christians. In sum, they send out around 10 million printed questionnaires in 3,000 different languages, covering 180 major religious subjects reporting on 2,000 socio-religious variables. This collection of data provides a year-by-year snapshot of the progress or decline of Christianity's diverse movements, offering an enormous body of data from which researchers can track trends and make projections.³

Affiliated Christians

The data presented in the tables used in this Anthology (mainly at the beginning of articles in Section 2 and in Section 4) are of 'affiliated Christians'. 'Affiliated Christians' are those known to the churches or known to the clergy (usually by names and addresses) and claimed in their statistics, i.e. those enrolled on the churches' books or records, with totals that can be substantiated. This usually means all known baptized Christians and their children, and other adherents; it is sometimes termed the total Christian community (because affiliated Christians are those who are not primarily individual Christians but who primarily belong to the corporate community of Christ), or inclusive membership (because affiliated Christians are church members). This definition of 'Christians' is what the churches usually mean by the term (and thus does the *WCD*), and statistics of such affiliated Christians are what the churches themselves collect and publish. In all countries, it may be assumed with confidence that the churches know better than the state how many Christians are affiliated to them.

All columns of absolute numbers in tables always add up exactly to the totals and sub-totals shown. However, as with all large statistical tables, a column of percentages might not always add up to exactly the total or sub-total indicated, due to rounding. Although in most cases, component percentages do in fact add up exactly to their respective totals, in a small number of cases this is not so because of the rounding feature. In addition, figures for sub-categories within Christianity might not add up to the total sum of that tradition because of the omission of certain categories from the analysis.

Evangelicals and Pentecostals/Charismatics

Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism (and Charismatics) are movements within all streams of global Christianity; that is, they cut across the other major Christian traditions (Catholics, Orthodox, Independents, Protestants). Counting Evangelicals and Pentecostals takes into consideration denominational affiliation, self-identification and theology. The results of counting these groups are directly related to denominational membership figures. Strictly speaking, denominational affiliation means official membership on a church roll.

More information about the methodology behind religious demographic data can be found in Todd M. Johnson and Brian J. Grim, *The World's Religions in Figures: An Introduction to International Religious Demography* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

³ One attempt to organize a variety of source material for researchers is the website www.adherents.com, which offers thousands of figures for adherents of hundreds of religions. However, there is no attempt by its organizers to reconcile the numerous contradictions in the source material. Nonetheless, it offers an invaluable look at the amount of data researchers have at their disposal.