
Who Are the Nones in Finland?

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Résumé

The rise of the ‘nones’ – people with ‘no religion’ – has been one of the key narratives in European religiosity in recent years. Finland is no exception. However, ‘nones’ are not a majority or a homogeneous group and their rise may need contextual explanations. By looking at the recent survey data, combined with other material, this paper examines the ‘nones’ in Finland. Here ‘none’ refers primarily to self-identification. Who are those people who tick the box ‘nonreligious’ when asked about their identity? What other identifications they have? What is their social, political and demographic profile? The data shows that, while ‘nones’ constitute a complex identification (for instance, many consider themselves Lutheran and are members of the Lutheran Church), age, gender and living area are the main factors separating ‘nones’ from others. Finnish ‘nones’ are predominantly young men living in urban areas, but generational aspect is the most significant one. Other factors, such as education, income and family relations are less significant. One potential explanation for the current situation will be offered. It will be argued that specific national history of Finland helps us to make sense of why older generations still identify with Christianity and Lutheranism. The younger generations have not internalized the same story about Christian Finland threatened by its (atheist) eastern neighbour. In other words, in the minds of the millennials, religiosity is not associated with what it is to be a Finn.

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