

# Religiousness of Finnish immigrants in Belgium



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## Abstract

*The purpose of this article is to investigate religiousness among Finns in Belgium. Today approximately 4500 Finns live in Belgium. The study deals with two themes: 1) what is characteristic of the religiousness of Finnish emigrants in Belgium? 2) What linkages exist between respondents' background and their religiousness? The research data is based on a survey. The questionnaire was sent to all members of the Finnish Association in Belgium. A total of 400 questionnaires were returned. The data is characterized by descriptive statistics and a few dimensions reduced by factor analysis. The differences between groups were investigated using Student's t-test and one-way ANOVA. The findings of the research show that new migrants appreciate Christian traditions. They do not interlink nationalism with religiousness although novice migrants stress national and ethical function of religion more than others. Gender*

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*and age differences were minor. Religiousness before migration explains best religious attitudes during migration.*

## Introduction

Finland has traditionally been a net emigration country. Many more people have emigrated from than immigrated to Finland. Korhonen (1989) characterized three phases in Finnish emigration. First, it is known from history that Finns moved in strength to central Sweden in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The second phase was a long period, during which Finns immigrated to North America (USA and Canada), a process that began in the 1860s and continued until the 1930s. The third emigration phase began in the mid-1950s, when hundreds of thousands of Finns immigrated to Sweden. For example, more than 80 000 Finns immigrated to Sweden in 1969. It is an enormous number – in contrast to the population of Finland at that time (about 4.6 million).

Migration patterns have changed. Furnham and Bochner (1989) stated that the biggest difference between the early days and contemporary cultural contact is that now travellers tend to fit into

roles that are increasingly specialized and they fit into specialized categories. In Western Europe, the reasons for leaving the native country are not the same today as they were before. Emigrants are well educated and they leave their homeland of their own accord. Political, social or economic reasons usually do not oblige them to move out. From the Finnish perspective, Belgium represents a novel, modern destination for emigrants. Finland joined the European Union in early 1995, after which a large number of Finns moved to Belgium, although not all of them were immigrants. There are many project workers who stay periodically in Belgium. Their families probably live in Finland and they shuttle between the two countries. It is very difficult to ascertain how many Finns actually live in Belgium, although the right number may vary between 4500-5000 persons.

The various reactions to migration of specific national groups are dependent partly on religious belief and partly on custom (Furnham and Bochner 1989). Finnish emigrants have traditionally set great value on the church for two reasons. First, emigrants have been more religious as a rule than

the average Finnish population. It is noteworthy that early emigrants especially were borne in the northern or eastern parts of Finland, where they were strongly influenced by Finnish revivalist movements (Korkiasaari 1989). Second, living under new circumstances and a new situation in life made people yearn for their homeland, their own language and traditions. Church and religiousness mattered more than solely faith in God; they were breaths from the homeland. Church was a place to meet Finns by birth and a place to speak Finnish. Accordingly, immigrants have used religion as a coping mechanism, at least indirectly. Religion has been used extensively in coping (Ai et al. 2003; Pargament 1997); however, few studies are available specifically addressing the issue of religious coping and migration.

The purpose of the present study was to investigate religiousness among new migrants. Religion is considered from the functional point of view, which fits fine into psychological as well as sociological research of religiousness (see Batson and Ventis 1982; Crapps 1986; Geels and Wikström 1993; Yinger 1971). The three (functional) religious orientations, intrinsic, extrinsic and quest orientation (Allport and Ross 1967; Batson and Ventis 1982; Hood et al. 1996), have functioned as an outline when the questionnaire was constructed. The subject of this research is Finns living in Belgium. Their religiousness, attitudes towards Christianity and the church are examined to ascertain whether emigrants today are still interested in religious questions.

The spiritual or religious needs they address were another field of interest.

In this article I deal with two themes, which can be expressed as follows:

1) What is characteristic of the religiousness of Finnish emigrants in Belgium? This was measured by asking respondents to evaluate statements concerning the status of God, Christianity and religious education in society and individual life.

2) What linkages exist between respondents' background and their religiousness? In this connection, four assumptions were made: a) Differences exist between women and men, because many investigations have vindicated gender differences in religiousness. b) Religiousness is related to age, since older respondents probably appreciate religion and church more than younger respondents. c) Marital status could presumably explain religiousness, since differences could be found between respondents living with or without a family. d) Integration into a new society is associated with religiousness. Those who have adapted well do not stress religion as highly as those who are less adapted to Belgian society.

## Data and method

### Measures

The research data is based on a survey. Respondents' background factors were measured with several questions. Gender, age and membership in the religious community were asked, as well as mar-

ital status and family type. There were many questions concerning migration, in which people evaluated their earlier experiences of migration, willingness to move out of Finland, integration into Belgian society and duration of present immigration. The research instrument measuring religiousness, attitudes towards Christianity and religious education contained 19 items posed in 5-point Likert format (strongly disagree to strongly agree). Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .92 for the total 19-item scale.

An important issue for the investigation is whether the scales developed measure what they meant to measure; this is whether the scales have adequate validity. In the present study the emphasis in the development of the scales has been on the meaningfulness of the measures. Many statements have been used in earlier research and the questionnaire was tested before collecting the data so we can assume that the questionnaire measures what it is meant to measure.

### Data analysis

Descriptive statistics, i.e. percentage proportions, means and standard deviations helped to characterize the research data. Factor analysis was used to reduce the data to a few dimensions. Principal axis factoring was used with direct oblimin rotation (Harman 1967; Tabachnick and Fidell 1996). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure was used to test the adequacy of the sample; the result of the test was marvellous (.926). In

addition, Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated that the factor model was appropriate; the test value was 3630.0 ( $p = .0000$ ).

The linear association between two variables was measured with Pearson's correlation coefficient. The differences between groups were investigated using Student's t-test and one-way ANOVA. The ANOVA was complemented with Scheffe's test to examine all possible linear combinations of group means. Analysis of multiple regression, with seven predictors, was used to determine the best predictors of immigrants' religiosity (Pedhazur 1982). A stepwise method with the following criteria was used: a variable was entered into the model when the significance level of its F-value was less than .01 and the variable was removed when the significance level was greater than .10.

### Sample Characteristics

The survey was conducted in spring 2002. The questionnaire was sent to 897 members of the Finnish Association in Belgium (Belgian Suomi-Klubi). It is a non-profit organisation, whose objectives are to establish and promote contacts between Finns living in

Belgium, to facilitate their settling in Belgium and to maintain their connections with the Finnish way of life and culture. A total of 400 questionnaires were returned, of which 72.5% ( $N = 290$ ) of respondents were women and 27.5% ( $N = 110$ ) were men.

The percentage of omissions is relatively high because only 45 % returned the questionnaire. Two points of view explain the low return. First, families usually join the Finnish Association in Belgium, which means that people have returned only one questionnaire per family although they have received two or more. Second, native Belgian husbands or wives – who belong to the Association – have not participated in the research. This fact actually increases the reliability of results, since the target was to examine Finns in Belgium.

The mean age of the respondents was 42 ( $SD = 9.0$ ) years. The age-groups are listed in Table 1 above. It can be seen that very few young adult Finns (20-29 years of age) live in Belgium. The proportion of older people (60 years of age and over) is also low. Since 85% ( $N = 315$ ) of respondents lived a 6-year maximum in Belgium, I conclude that Finns do

not immigrate when very young to Belgium. Many employers require firm work experience and thus favour experienced workers, which explains the moderately late emigration.

About three-fourths of those who answered the survey were members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (76%,  $N = 297$ ). The second largest group comprised those who did not belong to any religious community (22%,  $N = 87$ ). A total of 1% ( $N = 4$ ) were members of the Russian Orthodox Church and the same proportion were Roman Catholics. The proportions differ from the situation in Finland, where 84.6% of the population belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Kirkon tilastollinen vuosikirja 2001), 1.1% to the Orthodox Church and 0.1% are Catholics, while 12.9% belong to no religious community. In this sample the Evangelical Lutheran Church is underrepresented and the Catholic Church, as well as those who are members of no religious community, are overrepresented.

Nearly two-thirds (65%,  $N = 258$ ) of Finns in Belgium were married and nearly the same proportion had children (61%,  $N = 244$ )<sup>1</sup>. Almost one-fifth (19%,  $N = 76$ ) were unmarried while 8% ( $N = 31$ ) cohabited without marriage and 30 respondents (7%) were divorced.

It was interesting to determine from what areas Finns have immigrated to Belgium. A minority of respondents (19%,  $N = 77$ ) immigrated to Belgium from another country than Finland, while most emigrated from Finland (81%,  $N = 323$ ), but this does not imply the

|                   | Women |      | Men |      | Total |     |
|-------------------|-------|------|-----|------|-------|-----|
|                   | N     | %    | N   | %    | N     | %   |
| 20-29 years       | 14    | 5    | 2   | 2    | 16    | 4   |
| 30-39 years       | 119   | 41   | 40  | 36   | 159   | 40  |
| 40-49 years       | 93    | 32   | 42  | 38   | 135   | 34  |
| 50-59 years       | 53    | 18   | 22  | 20   | 75    | 18  |
| 60-69 years       | 7     | 2    | 4   | 4    | 11    | 3   |
| 70 years and over | 4     | 1    | -   | -    | 4     | 1   |
| Total             | 290   | 72.5 | 110 | 27.5 | 400   | 100 |

Table 1. Gender and age-groups.

|   | Strongly disagree | Moderately disagree | Neutral | Moderately agree | Strongly agree | Mean | SD  |
|---|-------------------|---------------------|---------|------------------|----------------|------|-----|
| s 67 It is also important to know other than my own religious tradition   | 1                 | 2                   | 4       | 37               | 56             | 4.5  | 0.7 |
| s 69 The meaning of Christian festivals (e.g. Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, All Saints' day) should be taught to children and youth | 1                 | 2                   | 6       | 38               | 53             | 4.4  | 0.8 |
| s 68 Tolerance increases when one is acquainted with religions other than his or her own  | 2                 | 5                   | 8       | 36               | 49             | 4.3  | 0.9 |
| s 76 I have nothing against it if my children's world-view takes a Christian form   | 2                 | 1                   | 21      | 30               | 46             | 4.2  | 0.9 |
| s 66 It is important to become acquainted with the content of Christian faith   | 2                 | 3                   | 11      | 40               | 44             | 4.2  | 0.9 |
| s 71 Religion and cultural knowledge go hand-in-hand with each other  | 2                 | 5                   | 7       | 45               | 41             | 4.2  | 0.9 |
| s 75 Christian faith teaches responsibility for my neighbour  | 3                 | 5                   | 16      | 45               | 30             | 3.9  | 1.0 |
| s 70 Religious education is socially necessary  | 6                 | 10                  | 25      | 34               | 25             | 3.6  | 1.1 |
| s 79 Christian faith tutors in truthfulness   | 8                 | 9                   | 24      | 36               | 23             | 3.6  | 1.2 |
| s 73 Christianity helps to create lasting values  | 4                 | 12                  | 23      | 44               | 17             | 3.6  | 1.0 |
| s 63 I hope that my children would learn to believe in God  | 9                 | 7                   | 32      | 24               | 27             | 3.5  | 1.2 |
| s 62 It is important to bring up children in a Christian way  | 9                 | 14                  | 17      | 36               | 24             | 3.5  | 1.3 |
| s 65 Evening prayer should be taught to children  | 13                | 10                  | 25      | 23               | 28             | 3.4  | 1.3 |
| s 77 It is important that an adolescent attends confirmation class  | 11                | 13                  | 26      | 27               | 23             | 3.4  | 1.3 |
| s 64 Religion helps an adolescent to cope with troublesome situations in life   | 8                 | 12                  | 28      | 39               | 13             | 3.4  | 1.1 |
| s 74 Christian upbringing goes hand-in-hand with the Finnish way of life  | 15                | 19                  | 31      | 22               | 13             | 3.0  | 1.2 |
| s 72 Everybody should adopt Christian ethics  | 19                | 22                  | 26      | 23               | 10             | 2.8  | 1.3 |
| s 80 It is possible to understand European culture only from the Christian point of view  | 21                | 24                  | 24      | 24               | 7              | 2.7  | 1.2 |
| s 78 Religion should support national identity  | 25                | 19                  | 32      | 17               | 7              | 2.6  | 1.2 |

Table 2.  
Respondents' conceptions of Christianity, position of religion and religious education; percentages, mean and SD

absence of international experiences and contacts. For example, 30% (N = 118) have lived abroad once before immigrating to Belgium, while 35% (N = 140) lived abroad twice or more.

## Results

### *Characteristics of religiousness*

To examine the characteristics of religiousness among respondents, participants were asked questions relating to religious education, position of Christianity – and religiousness overall – in society, culture and their personal lives. The percentage values, means and standard deviations of all statements are presented in Table 2 below.

Finns living in Belgium valued most a general knowledge of all religions, not only their own (statement 67). Statements dealing with Christian festivals (s 69) and tolerance (s 68) also attained high means among the respondents. The results suggested that people highly appreciate the Christian worldview and the contents of Christian faith: the means are relatively high in statements *I have nothing against it if my children's worldview takes a Christian form* (s 76) and *It is important to become acquainted with the content of Christian faith* (s 66). Religion and the cultural knowledge also go hand-in-hand with each other (s 71).

There are some special characteristics of Christianity that Finns living in Belgium did not esteem very highly. The least esteemed is in the statement dealing with the

association between religiousness and national identity (s 78). Respondents did not believe that Christianity is the only point of view by which to understand European culture (s 80) and did not believe that Christian ethics has a special character (s 72). It is not indispensable to everybody.

What dimensions could be determined from the statements? Respondents' ratings were analysed using factor analysis to determine the main dimensions. Factor analysis revealed three very clear dimensions. All statements loading in the first factor pertained in some way to religious education, religious learning and religious traditions. The point made in all statements took on an individual aspect: values, dogmas and traditions of Christianity should be adopted personally. Therefore, a suitable name chosen for the first factor was the educational function of religion. A sum variable

(SV 1) was made with an identical name. The greatest loadings (> .30) and the communalities of each variable are shown below.

The second factor consists of four variables dealing with the content of Christian faith and cultural knowledge. Cultural and societal functions connect the variables in this factor. The strongest loading in the second factor was in statement 66, which concerns the content of Christian faith. Statement 67 emphasizes the importance of religious all-round education. The basic principle in the second factor is that it is important for someone to know his/her own religion, but it is not enough, since it is also necessary to be aware of other traditions and religions. The name of the second factor is the cultural function of religion.

A sum variable (SV 2) was made. Three variables with strongest loadings were accounted for. Diffuse statement 75 had

|   | F 1. | F 2.  | F 3. | h <sup>2</sup> |
|---|------|-------|------|----------------|
| s 63 I hope that my children would learn to believe in God  | .89  |       |      | .79            |
| s 65 Evening prayer should be taught to children  | .86  |       |      | .62            |
| s 62 It is important to bring up children in a Christian way  | .74  |       |      | .71            |
| s 64 Religion helps an adolescent to cope with troublesome situations in life   | .68  |       |      | .57            |
| s 77 It is important that an adolescent attends confirmation class  | .66  |       |      | .62            |
| s 69 The meaning of Christian festivals (e.g. Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, All Saints' day) should be taught to children and youth | .49  | (.36) |      | .51            |
| s 76 I have nothing against it if my children's world-view takes a Christian form   | .34  |       |      | .35            |

1. Factor: Educational function of religion.

|   | F 1.  | F 2. | F 3.  | h <sup>2</sup> |
|---|-------|------|-------|----------------|
| s 66 It is important to become acquainted with the content of Christian faith |       | .69  |       | .51            |
| s 67 It is also important to know other than my own religious traditions      |       | .62  |       | .38            |
| s 71 Religion and cultural knowledge go hand-in-hand with each other          |       | .57  |       | .34            |
| s 75 Christian faith teaches responsibility for my neighbour                  | (.30) | .35  | (.30) | .55            |

## 2. Factor: Cultural function of religion

|  | F 1. | F 2.  | F 3. | h <sup>2</sup> |
|--|------|-------|------|----------------|
| s 72 Everybody should adopt Christian ethics                             |      |       | .71  | .51            |
| s 74 Christian upbringing goes hand-in-hand with the Finnish way of life |      |       | .69  | .68            |
| s 73 Christianity helps to create lasting values                         |      | (.32) | .63  | .61            |
| s 70 Religious education is socially necessary                           |      |       | .43  | .56            |
| s 78 Religion should support national identity                           |      |       | .41  | .39            |
| s 79 Christian faith tutors in truthfulness                              |      |       | .37  | .47            |

## 3. Factor: National and ethical function of religion

|  | M   | SD  | $\alpha$ |
|--|-----|-----|----------|
| SV 2 Cultural function of religion           | 4.3 | .66 | .70      |
| SV 1 Educational function of religion        | 3.7 | .90 | .90      |
| SV 3 National and ethic function of religion | 3.1 | .92 | .82      |

Table 3. Functions of religion; mean, SD and  $\alpha$ -coefficient (N = 399)

problematic accessory loadings for both the first and third factors and was excluded.

The third factor includes variables with two characteristics. First, an emphasis on Christian ethics is placed and second, an alliance between national identity and reli-

gion. I gave the name national and ethical function of religion to the third factor and sum variable (SV 3) as well.

Table 3 shows the means of SVs among all respondents. Judging from the means, Finns living in Belgium agree that religion is

an important element in society and culture (SV 2). The mean is higher than 'moderately agree' in the scale. Belgium is a much more multicultural society than Finland. Evidently Finns in Belgium have easily seen how significant it is to understand other cultures and people, their world-views and values. It is remarkable to note how adults appreciate the function of religion in society and cultures, as against adolescents who do not (yet). A group of 15-year-old Finnish ninth-graders (N = 4000) were examined and only 42% believed that religion helps to understand different cultures. Less than one-fourth (24%) believed that religious education can help to understand arts and literature (Rusama 2002).

The respondents emphasized religious education and religious traditions (SV 1) to a certain degree. The mean is nearer the level of approving than of a neutral attitude. The multitude of families with children (61%, N = 244 of all respondents) explains this result. Evening prayer, Christian festivals and overall Christian upbringing also currently have meaning.

Finns in Belgium do not stress the national and ethical function of religion (SV 3) very highly and do not prioritize Christian ethics. Christian faith as a source of national identity does not play a major role in peoples' minds.

We will now move on to the second research question, i.e. what linkages are there between respondents' background factors and their religiousness. Four assumptions concerning sex, age, marital status and integration were made. The possible differences are explained next.

### Gender differences

Respondents were divided into subgroups according to gender, age, marital status, family size, adaptation to Belgian society, readiness to emigrate from Finland and attitude towards the Christian faith. Potential differences between women and men were calculated using Student's t-test.

No statistically significant differences were found, in fact women's and men's ratings were very similar, which is contrary to our assumption. The lack of divergence in the first sum variable (SV 1) was especially surprising (women's mean 3.7, men's 3.6). Studies undertaken in Finland have illustrated that women regard religious education much more positively than men, and women's own experiences of religious education are more positive than men's experiences (Kallioniemi 2000). The results of many studies suggest that there are gender differences in religiousness: women pray more than men and are more regular communicants than men (Lotti 1983), religion also helps women more than men to cope with difficult situations in life (Pargament 1997). In addition, there are qualitative differences between women and men: women stress more the emotional aspects in their concept of God, while men like to know what God is like and want to describe the characteristics of God (Räsänen 2002).

The absence of gender differences in the present study can be explained by congruent situations in life: both women (69%) and men (82%) were employed. However, many scholars have pointed out that in many cases gender dif-

ferences in religiousness are consequences of the fact that women do not work outside the home as much as men do (e.g. Hamberg (1992) refers to certain results that hold this view).

### Differences between age groups

Secondly was supposed that judging the statements is related to age. Correlations between age and SVs were calculated using the Pearson correlation coefficient and revealed no significant correlations between the variables.

The respondents were divided into six subgroups based on Christianity and age. Those who belong to the Lutheran, Catholic or Orthodox Churches were categorized as Christians and those who belonged to no religious community were categorized as non-Christians. Figure 1 gives the results.

Christians of various ages evaluated SV 1 and SV 3 alike, but in these SVs all three groups of Christians differed significantly from the groups of non-Chris-

tian respondents<sup>2</sup>. All six groups evaluated SV 2 as very high. No significant differences between groups were found in this SV. Two conclusions can be drawn. First, it is clearly evident that more than age, membership or non-membership in church influences the judgment of SVs. Second, judgments of Christians of varying ages are more coherent than those of non-Christians of various ages. The youngest non-Christians do not put a high premium on religious education (SV 1) or national-ethical function of religion (SV 3).

### Marital status and family

When marital status was compared with SVs no statistically significant differences were found. Instead, the number of children and SVs were interrelated with each other. These results are shown in Table 4.

The developmental line is slightly inconsistent in SV 1. The group of childless respondents contrast statistically almost sig-

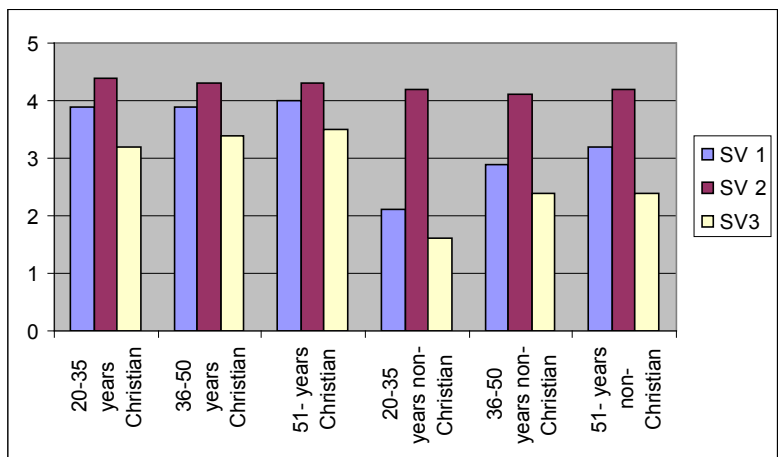


Figure 1. Means of sum variables (SVs) among Christians and non-Christians of varying ages

| Sum variable                                   | no children |     | one child |     | two children |     | three or more |     | F-and p-values |
|--|-------------|-----|-----------|-----|--------------|-----|---------------|-----|----------------|
|  | M           | SD  | M         | SD  | M            | SD  | M             | SD  |                |
| SV 1 Educational function of religion          | 3.5         | .91 | 4.0       | .79 | 3.6          | .90 | 3.9           | .93 | 5.47 ***       |
| SV 2 Cultural function of religion             | 4.2         | .69 | 4.3       | .60 | 4.3          | .63 | 4.4           | .71 | 1.51 n.s.      |
| SV 3 National and ethical function of religion | 3.0         | .89 | 3.1       | .83 | 3.1          | .98 | 3.4           | .89 | 3.85 **        |

Table 4. Family size and sum variables (SVs); mean, SD, F- and p-values (Note \* $p \leq .05$  \*\* $p \leq .01$  \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ )

nificantly with those who have one child, while families with one child and two children also contrasted equally<sup>3</sup>. It was assumed that the educational function of religion increases together with family size. Childless people understandably do not set great store by educational questions, but the decrease in the group of families with two children is incoherent.

There were no significant differences in SV 2 but childless respondents and those who lived in a large family (3 or more children) contrasted almost significantly in SV 3. Religion's national and ethical function is more important in large families. People with religious and traditional values appreciate family and children more than childless people. Religion influences the family and vice versa (McIntosh and Spilka 1995).

### *Integration into Belgian society*

It was assumed that integration into new society correlates with the three functions of religion. Maybe those who adapted well do not stress religion as high as those who are less adapted to Belgian society. I will consider this from four perspectives.

The first point of view covers previous experiences of migration. The research material was divided into three subcategories: 35% (N = 140) of respondents moved the first time abroad when they immigrated to Belgium, while 30% (N = 118) moved the second time abroad, i.e. they had lived abroad once before Belgium. The rest were experienced emigrants, in other words they had lived abroad two times or more before immigrating to Belgium. The differ-

ences between subcategories were tested by ANOVA and Scheffe's test. Table 5 illustrates the results.

A significant difference is apparent between groups 'No' and 'Two times or more' (Scheffe = -.34\*\*) in SV 3. Novices value more religion's national and ethical aspects than those who are experienced immigrants. The result indicates that religion can play an important role in a novice immigrant's life but it weakens along with the gain in experience, possibly because yearning for the homeland may abate when international experience strengthens.

The second point of view concerns the willingness to move out. The respondents formed two categories in the variable 'Readiness to move out of Finland': hesitant and willing migrants. We can suggest that if leaving the homeland has been difficult, it may hinder integration and further reverberate to religiousness. Christian faith can be a link to the homeland. Religion would also function as a coping mechanism. The differences between groups were calculated using Student's t-test.

The educational function of religion (SV 1) and cultural function (SV 2) were evaluated exactly the same way in both groups. There was a significant difference in SV

| Sum variable                                   | No  |     | Once |     | Two times or more |     | F-and p-values |
|--|-----|-----|------|-----|-------------------|-----|----------------|
|  | M   | SD  | M    | SD  | M                 | SD  |                |
| SV 1 Educational function of religion          | 3.7 | .83 | 3.7  | .94 | 3.6               | .95 | .91 n.s.       |
| SV 2 Cultural function of religion             | 4.3 | .68 | 4.4  | .60 | 4.3               | .68 | .72 n.s.       |
| SV 3 National and ethical function of religion | 3.3 | .80 | 3.1  | .97 | 2.9               | .95 | 4.88**         |

Table 5. Sum variables (SVs) and the variable "Have you lived abroad before immigrating to Belgium?" (Note \* $p \leq .05$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ )



3 ( $t = 2.04^*$ ). Those who hesitated to immigrate to Belgium (mean = 3.3) emphasized more the national and ethical values than those who were willing to immigrate (mean = 3.0).

The third point of view is integration, as in the question 'How have you integrated into Belgium?' There were three categories in the scale: 1 = moderately, 2 = quite well, 3 = excellently. A total of 15% ( $N = 59$ ) of the respondents integrated moderately, while most

integrated quite well (48%,  $N = 191$ ) and the rest adapted excellently (37%,  $N = 147$ ). No statistically significant differences were found. The judgments were similar in all groups. The assumption proved to be wrong in this case.

Time can be an essential variable when estimating integration under new circumstances. I will now examine the possible connection between the time spent living in Belgium and the SVs. Figure 2 presents the result.

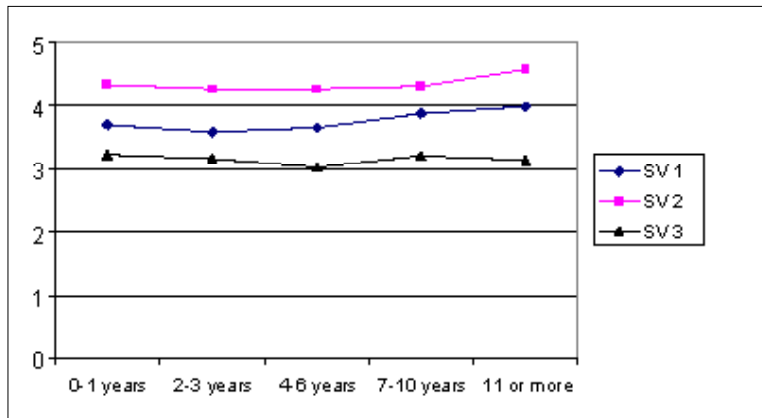


Figure 2. Time spent living in Belgium and sum variables (SVs)

Analysis of variance revealed no significant differences between groups, although the diagram above describes several interesting and consistent trends. It is natural that interest in educational questions and upbringing rises with age (middle line). Newly immigrated probably have no children and matters of parenting are distant. The top line, cultural function of religion, keeps relatively stable. The greatest expectations were directed towards the SV 3 (lowest line). It was assumed that the decrease would have been drastic instead of very low and slowly decreasing.

### Predictors of religiousness

Finally, I asked what in fact best explains and predicts the changes in SVs and used analysis of linear regression to derive answers. The predictors were sex, age, family size, readiness to emigrate from

| SV 1. Educational function of religion          |                |      |     |      |         |         |
|---|----------------|------|-----|------|---------|---------|
|   | R <sup>2</sup> | B    | SE  | β    | t-value | p-value |
| Attitude towards Christian faith                | .37            | .80  | .07 | .49  | 11.85   | .000    |
| Churchgoing in Finland before emigration        | .43            | .30  | .06 | .28  | 6.66    | .000    |
| SV 2. Cultural function of religion             |                |      |     |      |         |         |
|   | R <sup>2</sup> | B    | SE  | β    | t-value | p-value |
| Attitude towards Christian faith                | .03            | .22  | .06 | .18  | 3.59    | .000    |
| Family size                                     | .04            | .21  | .03 | .11  | 2.30    | .020    |
| Sex   | .05            | .15  | .07 | .10  | 2.07    | .040    |
| SV 3. National and ethical function of religion |                |      |     |      |         |         |
|   | R <sup>2</sup> | B    | SE  | β    | t-value | p-value |
| Attitude towards Christian faith                | .29            | .78  | .08 | .47  | 10.48   | .000    |
| Churchgoing in Finland before emigration        | .32            | .17  | .05 | .15  | 3.35    | .001    |
| Readiness to emigrate from Finland              | .33            | -.24 | .09 | -.11 | -2.59   | .010    |
| Family size                                     | .34            | .09  | .04 | .10  | 2.52    | .012    |

TABLE 6. Multiple regression and sum variables

Finland, integration into Belgian society, churchgoing in Finland before emigration (this was assumed to measure religiousness in the long run) and attitude towards Christian faith (1 = negative, 2 = neutral or 3 = positive). Three-part table 6 illustrates the statistics in three SVs.

The biggest interest is directed towards the meaningful term in regression analysis, squared R ( $R^2$ ). It indicates the proportion of variance of the dependent variable accounted for by independent variables (Pedhazur 1982). I report here only statistically significant predictors.

When SV 1 was the dependent variable, two variables explained the variation in it. The model is adequate because the F-value (152.35) is significant at the .001 level. Attitude towards the Christian faith is the best predictor; it explains 37% of the SVs variance. The variable '*Church-going in Finland before emigration*' increases  $R^2$  from .37 to .43, which means that it explains 6% of the variation in SV 1.

Secondly, SV 2 was considered as the dependent variable. The model was favourable ( $F = 7.40$ ,  $p = .000$ ), but the predictors did not explain very reliably the variance in SV 2, when only 5% of the variance was explained. The lack of strong predictors emphasizes the position of cultural function of religion, which nearly all respondents respected highly.

About 29% of the variance in national and ethical function of religion (SV 3) was accounted for by the variable *Attitude towards Christian faith*. The second best predictor was *Churchgoing in Fin-*

*land before emigration*. But as can be seen from the table, its effect is minor, as is the impact of *readiness to emigrate from Finland* and *family size*, both of which explain only 1% of the variance.

## Conclusions

In the present study religiousness among a novel group of immigrants was investigated. The results show that some aspects of religiousness are important to the members of this group. The respondents emphasized the general knowledge of Christianity and other religions and appreciate religious education and upbringing. Christian traditions, e.g. Christian festivals, are important as well. Finns living in Belgium do not interlink either ethics or nationalism with religiousness, due to their generally high level of education and increased social status.

The associations between respondents' background factors and religiousness were investigated. There were four assumptions, not all of which proved to be true. Gender differences were not found, and attitudes towards religiousness did not change with age, with one exception: attitudes among non-Christians changed from moderately negative to neutral with age, although the changes were not significant. The means of the SVs were not assorted by marital status, in contrast to our expectations. Attitudes towards religion and Christianity were more positive in families with children than in families without children. Based on this sample, it is difficult to determine if family life and children shape these attitudes

or if those who want a family are more conventional and traditional as such.

From the perspective of our subject, the most important assumption deals with integration. The hypothesis was partially supported by the research data. Novice migrants and those who have hesitated to leave their homeland stress the national and ethical function of religion more than others.

The results failed to support the assumption that integration and time are associated with religiousness. Regardless of the degree of integration (moderately-quite well-excellently), the means of the SVs were the same. Religion helps people to cope in situations of distress (Ai et al. 2003; Ellison 1991; Pargament 1997). Although this survey did not focus on real distress (war, refugee matters etc.), some similar results were obtained. Judging from the attitudes of novice and hesitant emigrants, religion can help in a new situation in life because it offers something familiar, breaths from home.

Suojanen and Suojanen (2000) indicated four important points in immigrants' religiousness. First, regardless of new circumstances and the new environment the meaning of religion can remain when it is compared with the meaning of religion in the homeland. Second, the meaning of some components of religiousness can change; e.g. the ritual or social components of religiousness can become more expressive by reason of their exposure to a new religious environment. Third, the meaning of a person's own religion, in its entirety, can become more important. Fourth, ecumenical or

syncretistic characteristics can be absorbed in religiousness.

In this research, Suojanen's first point is evident. Attitudes towards religious matters did not change along with time spent living abroad. Attitude towards Christian faith best predicted the judging of SVs. Previous religiousness, in other words churchgoing in Finland, explained present religiousness. The effects of five other predictors were minor.

What has changed from early migration? Contemporary emigrants are not national; they are international and their religiousness is similar. In the past religiousness filled emigrants' yearning for their homeland; today it helps them better understand their place in a multicultural society.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Of course it is not necessary to be married to have children. In this data the connection between marriage and children was clear.

All but 11% (N = 43) of those who had children were married.

<sup>2</sup> Tested with Scheffe's test, all differences were  $p \leq .001$ , except group 1/group 6  $p = .050$ , group 2/group 6  $p = .008$  and group 3/group 6  $p = .011$ .

<sup>3</sup> Scheffe's test revealed differences between groups: no children and one child ( $-0.41$ ,  $p = .02$ ), one child and two children ( $.39$ ,  $p = .03$ ).

## Gäster från Emigrantregistret i Karlstad

Emigrantregistret i Karlstad besökte Migrationsinstitutet 6.9.2005 anförda av registrets föreståndare Erik Gustavson (t.v. på bilden). Kunskap och erfarenhet utbyttes och behovet av framtida samarbete låg under luppen.



Migrationsinstitutets forskare Maria Pikkarainen berättade om forskningsprojektet "Internationell mobilitet, efterfrågan på arbetskraft och invandringens inverkan på utbildningsutbudet i Finland" (Foto: Jouni Korkiasaari)