

Driven to Disaffection: Religious Independents in Northern Ireland

Ian McAllister
Research School of Social Sciences
Australian National University

ian.mcallister@anu.edu.au

- Long term project on N Ireland society and politics using surveys conducted since 1968
- In collaboration with Bernadette Hayes, Lizanne Dowds
- Support from Institute of Governance, INCORE, ARK, Nuffield Foundation

Growth of secularization:

- In US, 14% secular in 2000
- In Netherlands, 60% in 1999
- In N Ireland, 14% in 2001 Census

Questions:

- Who are the religious independents?
- What explains their rejection of religion?
- What are the implications for N Ireland society?

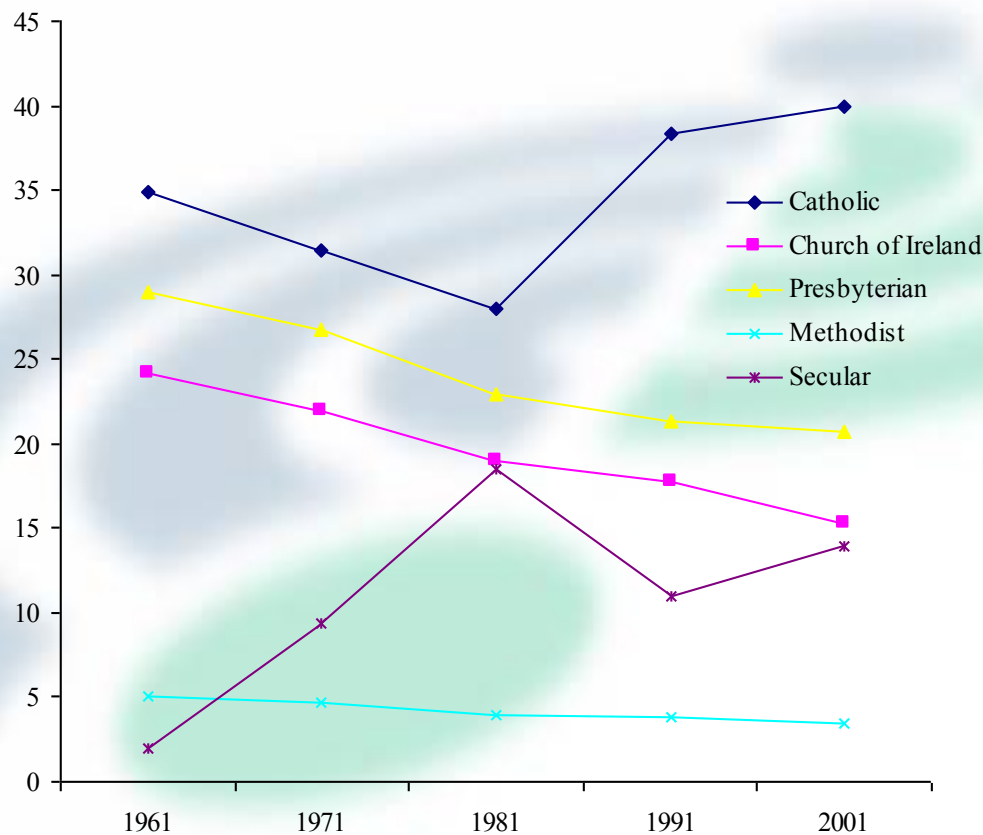
Explanations for Secularization:

- Demographic changes
- Socioeconomic change and modernization
- Disaffection from politics

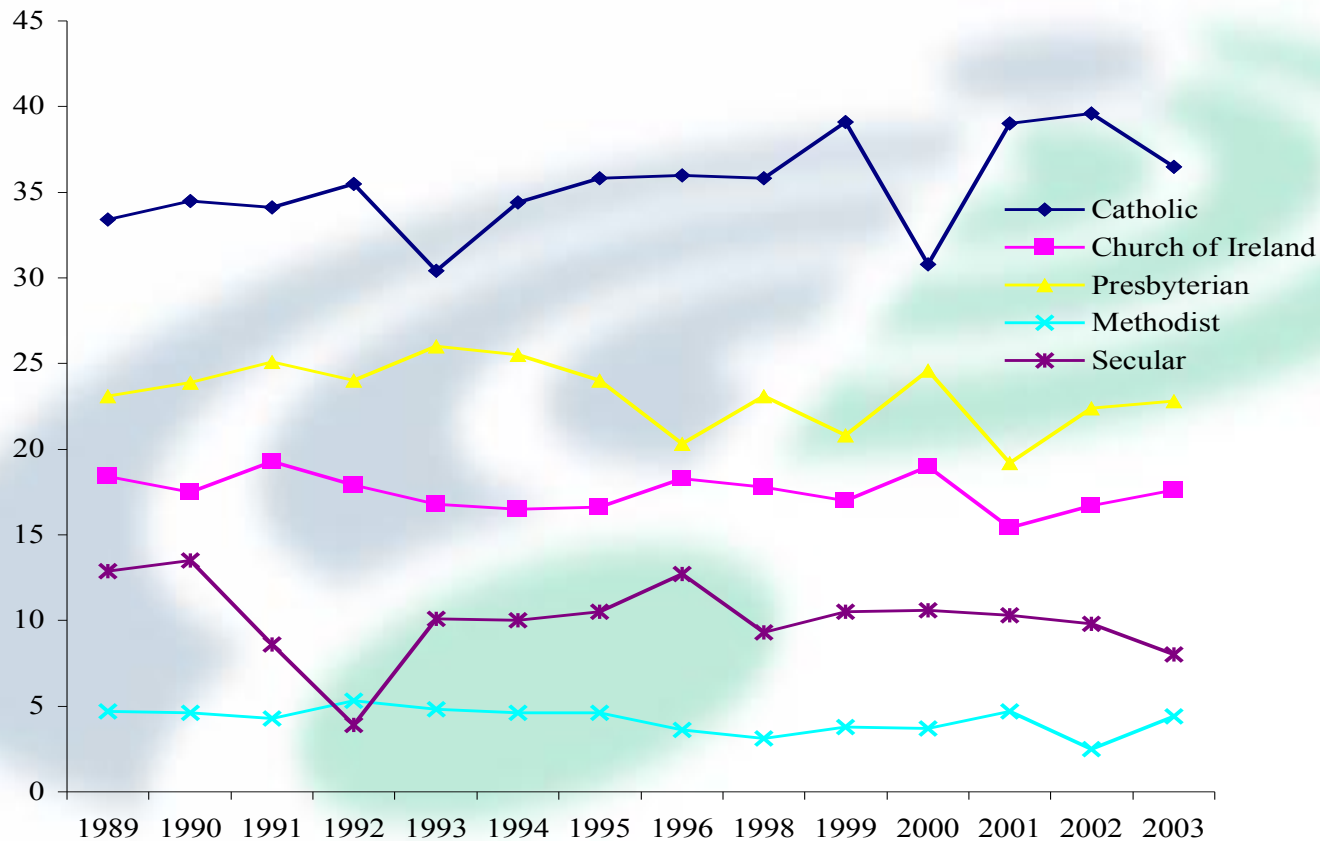
Data Sources:

- Pre-1989 surveys
- 1989-2003 NI Social Attitudes, Life and Times
- 1989-2003 pooled file

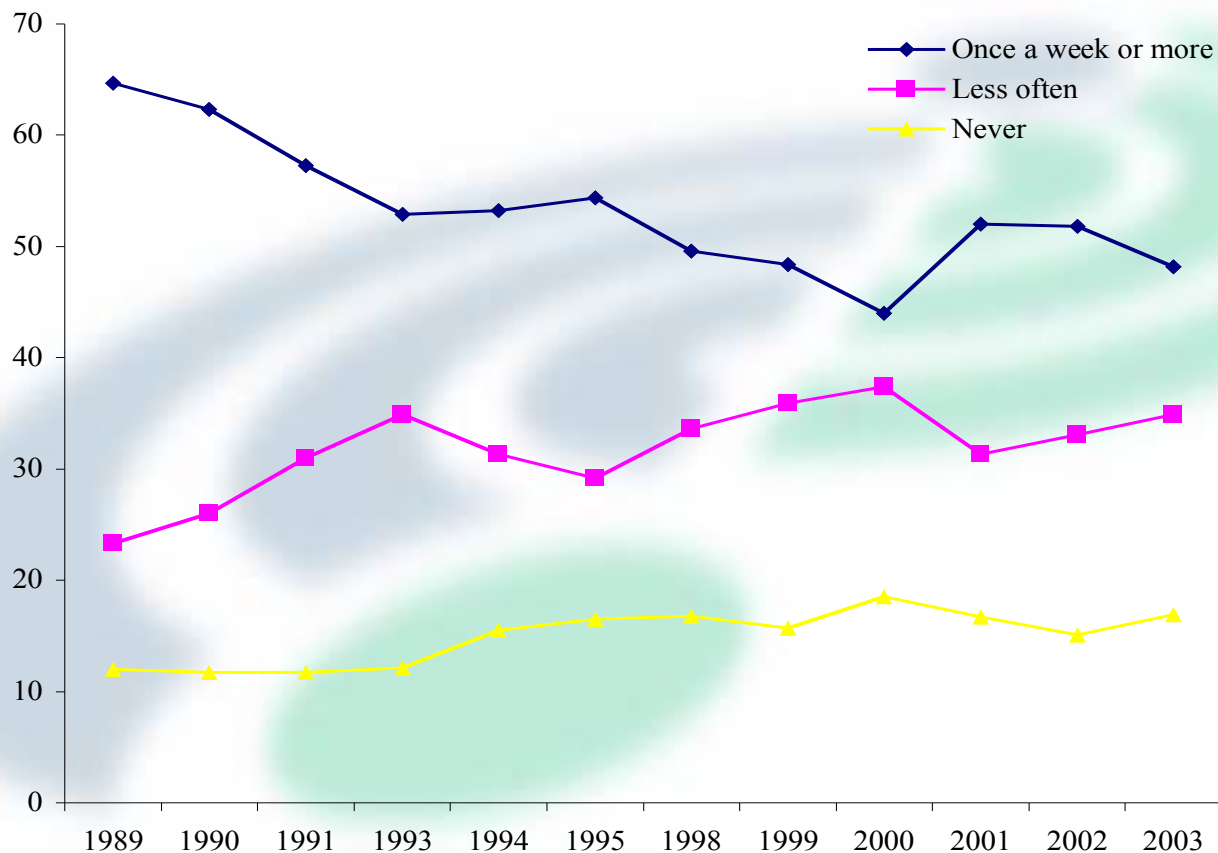
Religious Affiliation, 1961-2001 Censuses



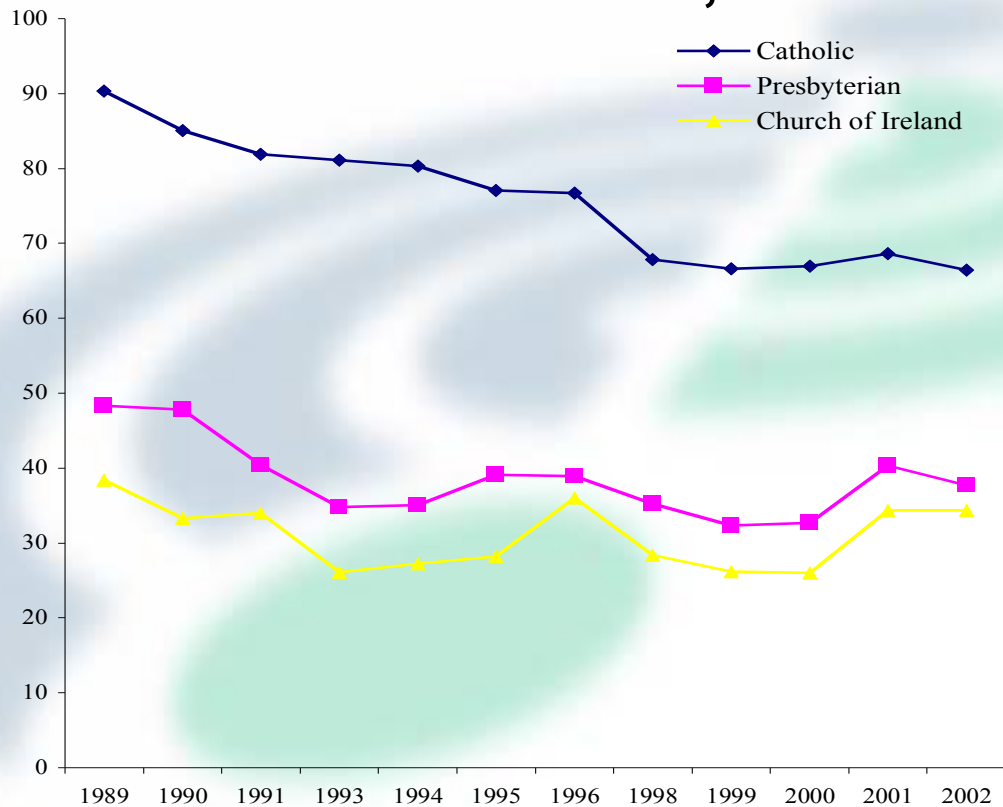
Religious Affiliation, 1989-2003 Surveys



Church Attendance, 1989-2003



Weekly Church Attendance Main Denominations, 1989-2003



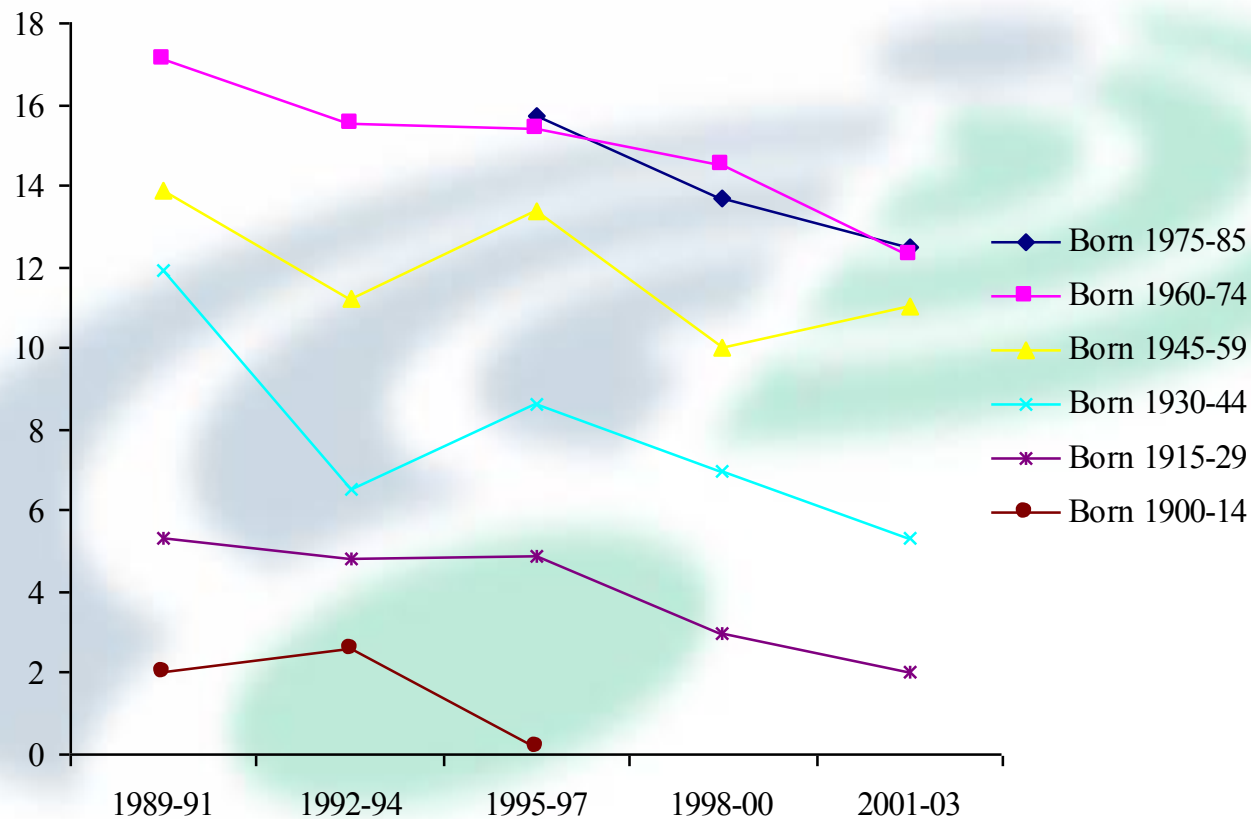
Church Attendance, Smaller Protestant Denominations

	Once week or more	Less often	Never	Total	(N)
Methodist	39	41	20	100	(710)
Baptist	70	22	8	100	(235)
Free Presbyterian	66	25	9	100	(223)
Brethren	82	10	8	100	(110)

Demographic Explanations

- Changes in family formation
 - religion inherited from family
 - delayed marriage and child-rearing
 - new cohorts replace older ones
- Lifecycle
 - population replacement

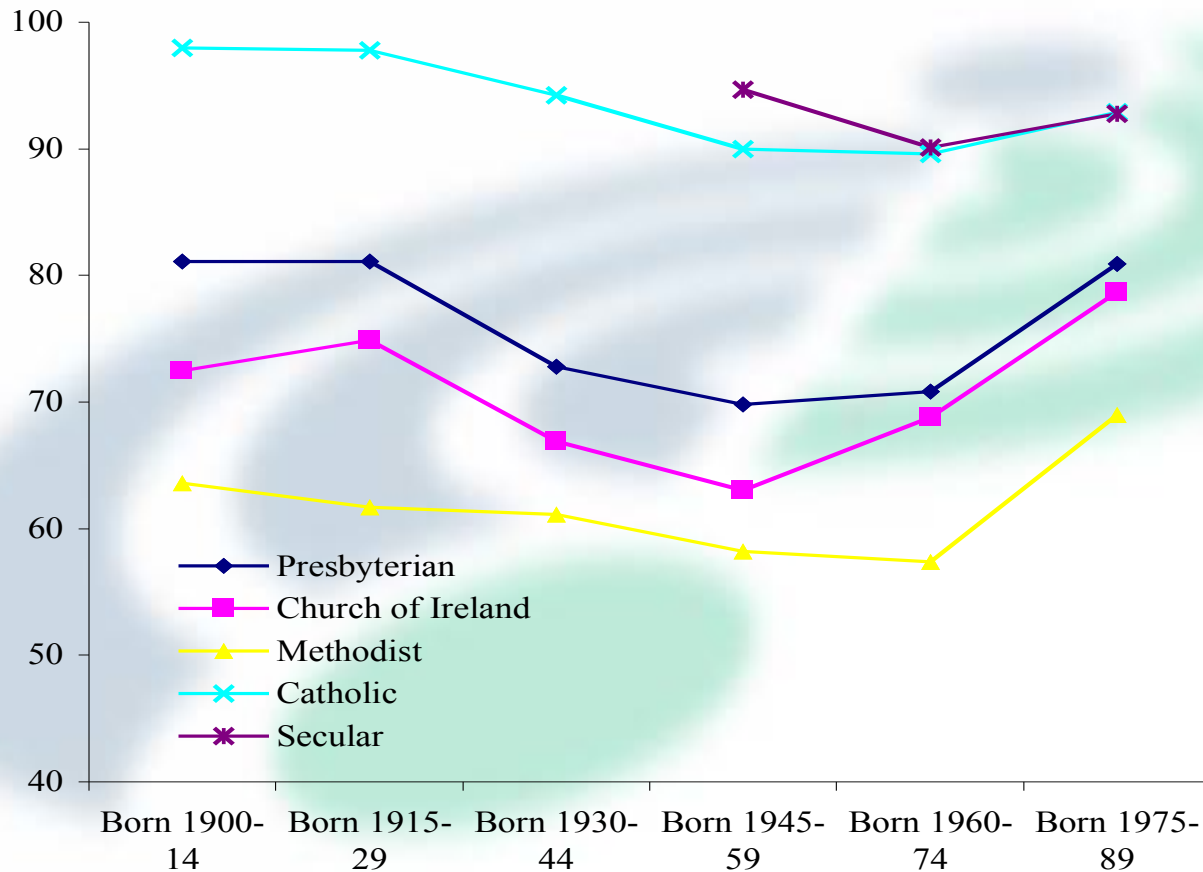
Cohorts and Secularization



Inheritance of Religion

(Current religion)	(Family religion)								
	Cath	Presby	C of I	Meth	Baptist	F Pres	Breth	Other	None
Catholic	92	*	1	*	*	1	1	3	1
Prot denominations									
Presbyterian	*	74	8	7	9	6	15	5	1
Church of Ireland	*	5	69	6	5	2	5	3	*
Methodist	0	2	2	60	4	0	2	1	1
Baptist	0	1	1	1	59	1	10	1	1
Free Presbyterian	0	2	1	1	2	75	1	*	1
Brethren	0	*	*	*	2	0	45	*	1
Other Christian	1	6	6	9	7	7	11	72	3
None	7	10	12	16	12	8	10	15	91
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(N)	(6,795)	(4,865)	(3,883)	(829)	(193)	(109)	(158)	(703)	(344)

Transmission of Religion by Cohort



Socioeconomic Change and Modernization

- Greater affluence, wider life experiences
- Scientific progress
- Move from public to private sphere
- Education best indicator

Education and Religious Attachments

	Cath	Presby	C of I	Meth	Baptist	F Pres	Breth	Other	None
<i>Education</i>									
Degree	10	9	8	9	11	5	9	10	16
Postsecondary	16	18	17	20	18	12	18	20	22
Secondary	26	29	26	31	30	23	26	33	29
None	48	44	49	40	41	60	47	37	33
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(N)	(7,487)	(4,799)	(3,630)	(850)	(268)	(255)	(121)	(1,372)	(2,074)

Disavowing the Family Religion

	Brought up as Catholic, now secular		Brought up as Protestant, now secular	
	Est	(SE)	Est	(SE)
Gender	.67*	(.11)	.36*	(.06)
Age	-.03*	(.00)	-.03*	(.00)
Education (no qualifications)				
Degree	.71*	(.16)	.48*	(.10)
Postsecondary	.38*	(.15)	.15	(.09)
Secondary	.13	(.14)	.05	(.08)
Marital status (single)				
Married	.17	(.13)	-.09	(.08)
Divorced/separated	.96*	(.17)	.58*	(.10)
Widowed	.05	(.31)	-.10	(.16)
Economic status (non labour force)				
In paid work	-.10	(.11)	.14	(.07)
Unemployed	.30	(.17)	.45*	(.12)
Constant	-2.22			
Nagelkerke R squared	.07		.07	
(N)	(6,687)		(10,661)	

Political Values and Beliefs

- Increasing alignment between religion and politics
- Motivating people to disavow a religion

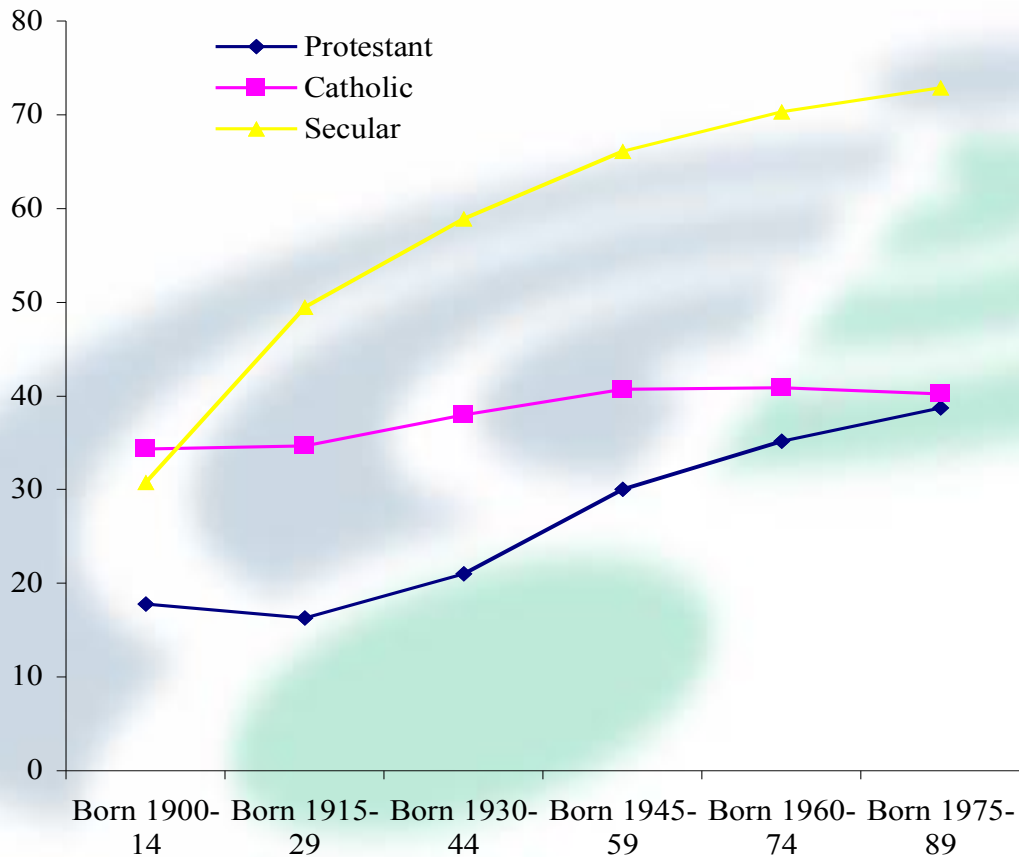
National Identity and Religion

	Cath	Presby	C of I	Meth	Baptist	F Pres	Breth	Other	None
<i>Political identity</i>									
Unionist	1	77	73	72	73	87	62	52	27
Nationalist	60	*	1	*	*	1	1	2	7
Neither	39	23	26	28	27	12	37	46	66
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(N)	(7,109)	(4,554)	(3,446)	(791)	(253)	(246)	(113)	(1,288)	(2,001)

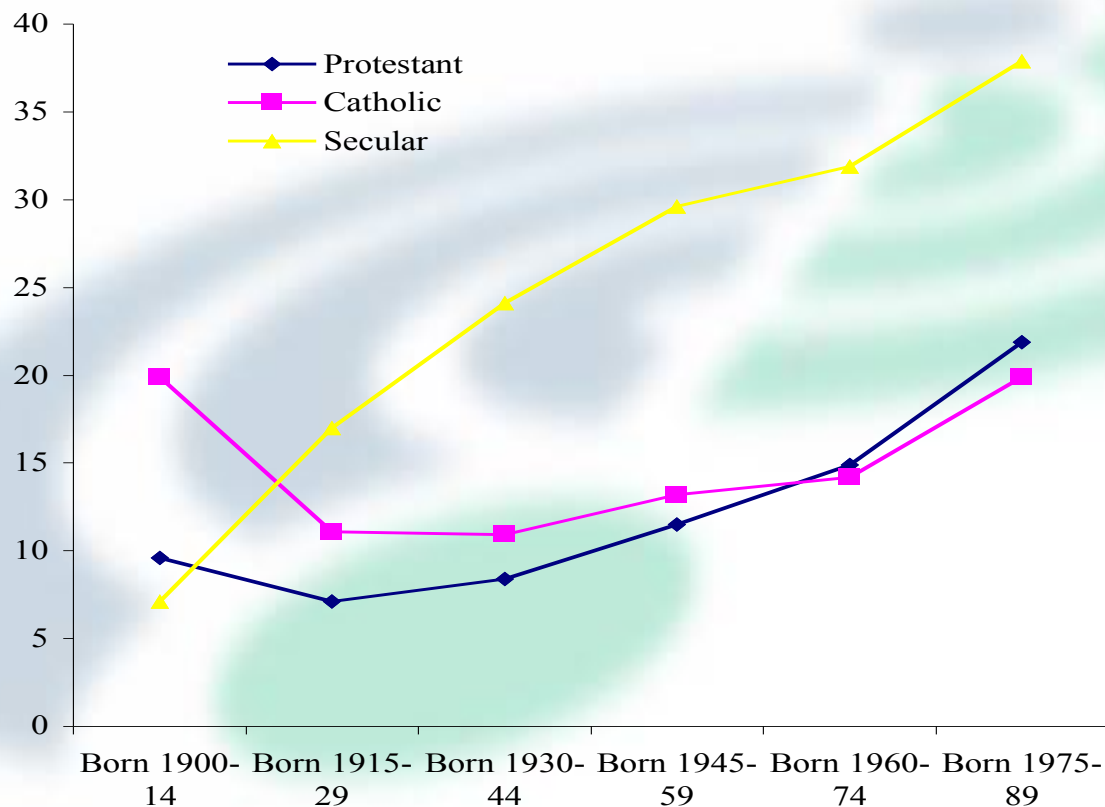
Partisanship and Religion

	Cath	Presby	C of I	Meth	Baptist	F Pres	Breth	Other	None
<i>Partisanship</i>									
Ulster Unionist	1	47	48	44	44	10	26	25	15
Democratic Unionist	*	21	17	16	26	72	32	21	8
Alliance	5	6	8	10	7	*	5	8	11
SDLP	49	1	1	1	2	*	2	4	8
Sinn Fein	16	*	*	0	0	0	0	*	3
Other	13	13	13	15	12	10	9	20	21
None	16	12	13	14	9	7	26	22	34
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(N)	(6,524)	(4,194)	(3,142)	(744)	(234)	(255)	(106)	(1,184)	(1,828)

Rejection of National Identity, Cohort Effects



No partisanship, Cohort Effects



How do we explain secularization?

- Support for demographic change
 - turnover of age cohorts
 - parental transmission of religion
- Little support for modernization
- Strong support for disaffection from politics

Implications

- A reduced political role for religion?
- No, because....
 - religion ethnic marker
 - apolitical behaviour of religious independents

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