

Trends and patterns of religious intermarriage in Austria (1971-2001): The role of secularization and demographic changes

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Introduction

Similar to other European countries, Austria is experiencing secularization characterized by an increase in the number of people without religious affiliation, a decline in church membership and a rise in religious pluralism. Meanwhile, the country has undergone demographic changes with a decline of fertility among Catholic population below replacement level and a substantial increase in the number of immigrants.

This raises an important question how these demographic and societal transformations shape personal preference and structural opportunity on partnership choice.

Research questions

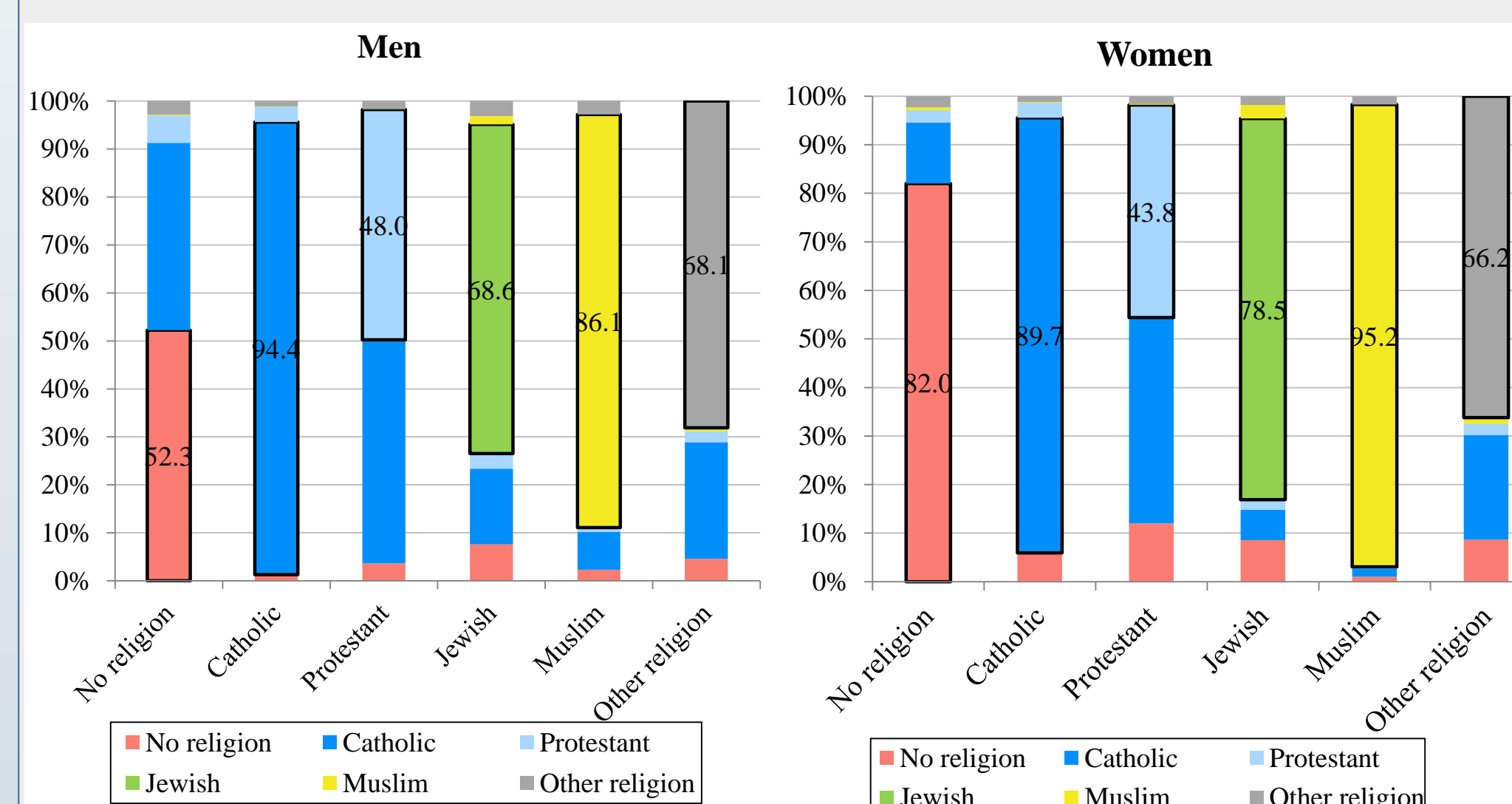
This study investigates trends and patterns of interreligious partnerships in Austria over the period 1971-2001. Specifically, we explore the following questions:

- How changing religious composition in region of residence influences interreligious partnership formation
- How individual characteristics in particular educational attainment and religious affiliation shape interreligious marriage patterns

Data

- 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001 Population Census (10% sample)
- Obtained via IPUMS International
- Include only men and women currently in a partnership and living with a spouse/partner
- Sample of 708,286 couples, 14.5% are unions between men and women of different religious affiliations

Figure 1: Interreligious unions by religion



- Religious homogamy is the most common partnership pattern
- Interreligious unions commonly involve a partnership with a partner with no religion or Catholic background
- Catholic and Protestant women intermarry more than men while the opposite is true for Jewish and Muslim women

Logistic regression estimating probability of being in interreligious union

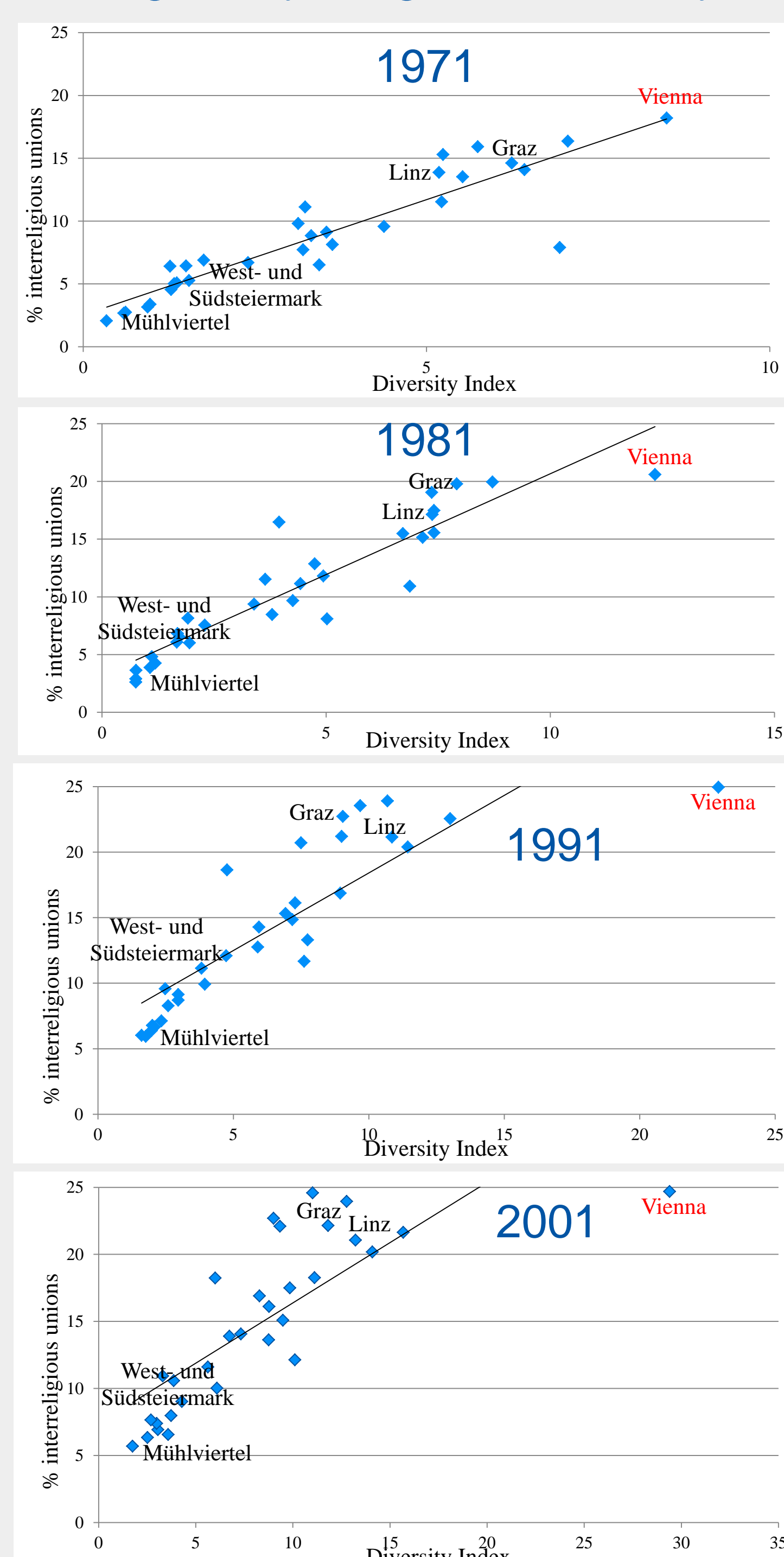
Outcome variable

Interreligious partnership – marriage or cohabitation between members of different religious affiliations

Independent variables

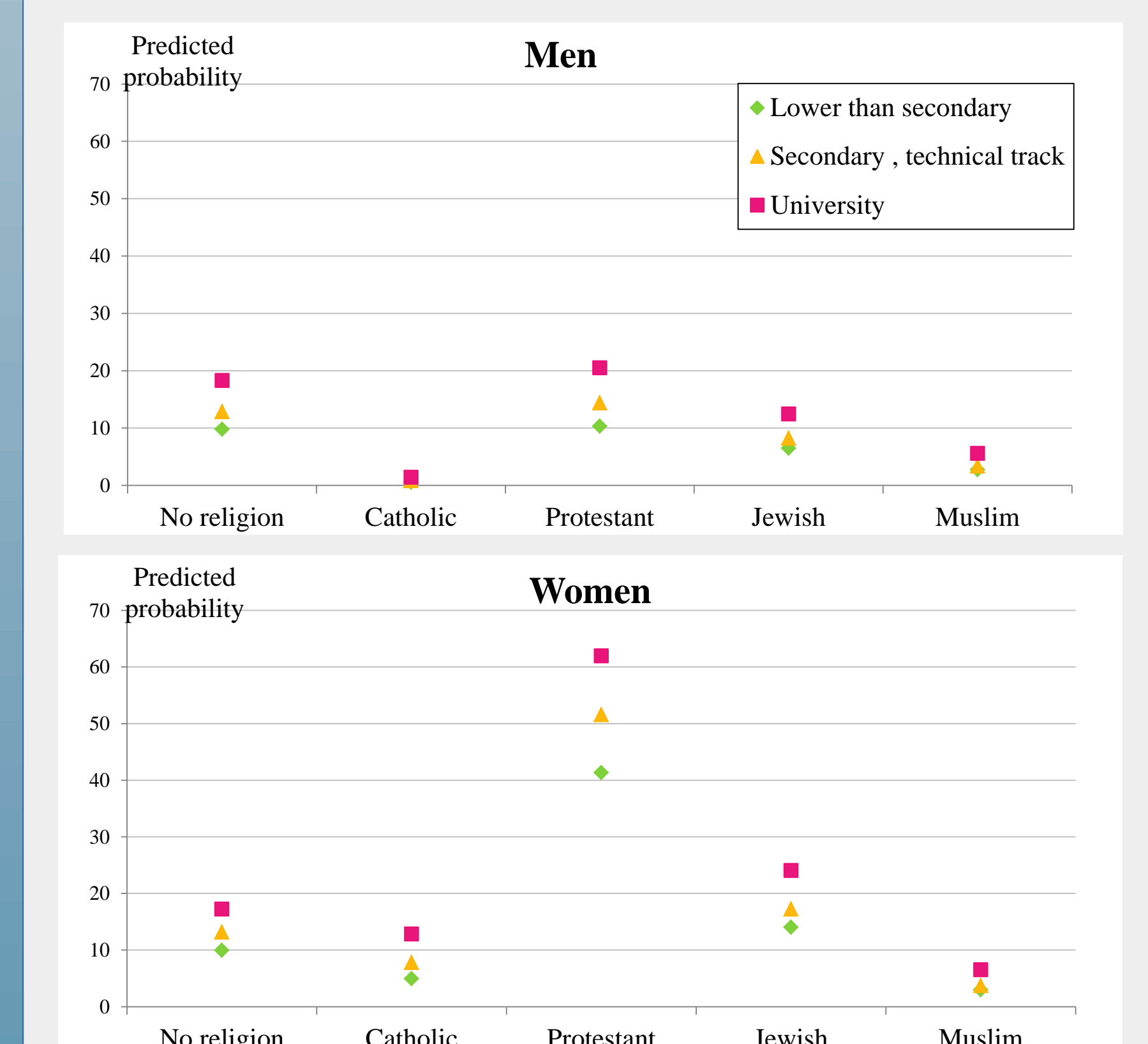
- Individual characteristics
 - Age
 - Education
 - Employment status
 - Religious affiliation
- Regional characteristics
 - Religious diversity index
 - Regional dummies

Figure 2: Percentage of interreligious unions in each region by religious diversity index



- Both religious diversity and rates of interreligious unions increased over time
- Positive relationships between rates of interreligious unions and religious diversity

Figure 3: Predicted probability of being in interreligious union by religious affiliation and education



- Probability of intermarriage increases with education
- Religious differences in intermarriage patterns remain significant

Conclusion

- Religious intermarriage had increased over time partly due to the rise in religious diversity in most regions
- An increase in the number of individuals with higher education may result in higher rates of intermarriage but this differs by religious affiliation