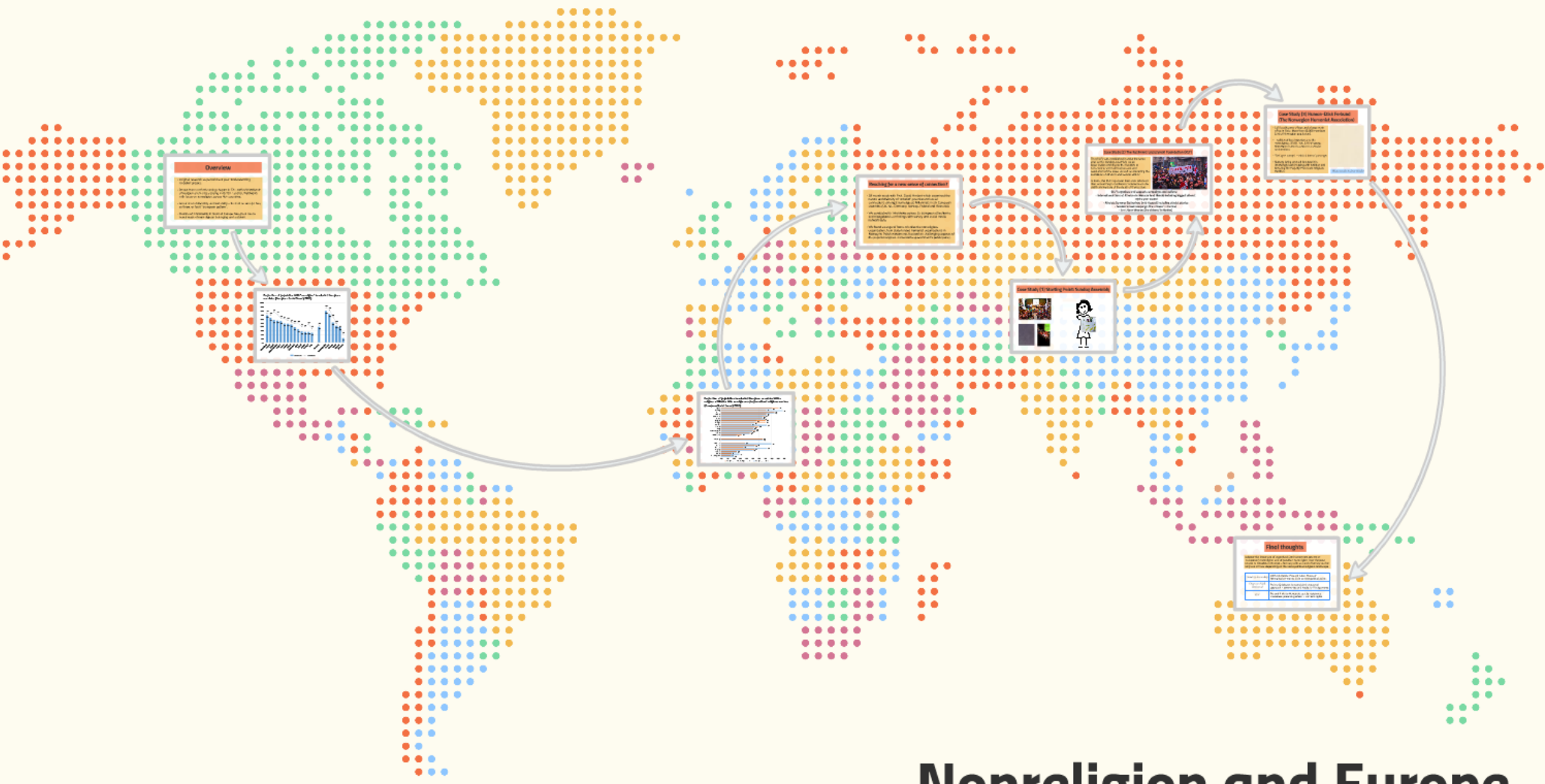




Nonreligion and Europe

Professor Stephen Bullivant and Dr Josh Bullock



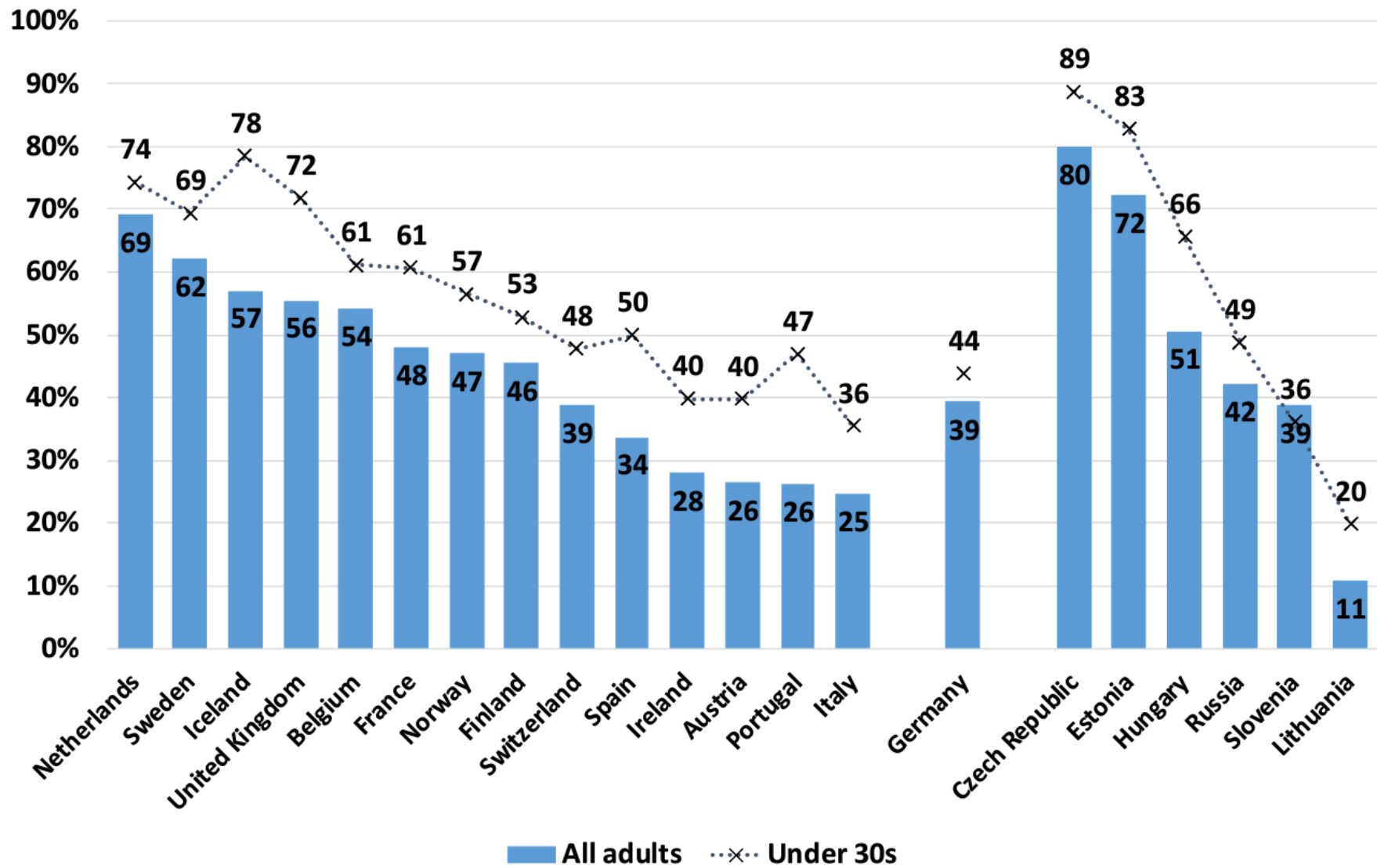
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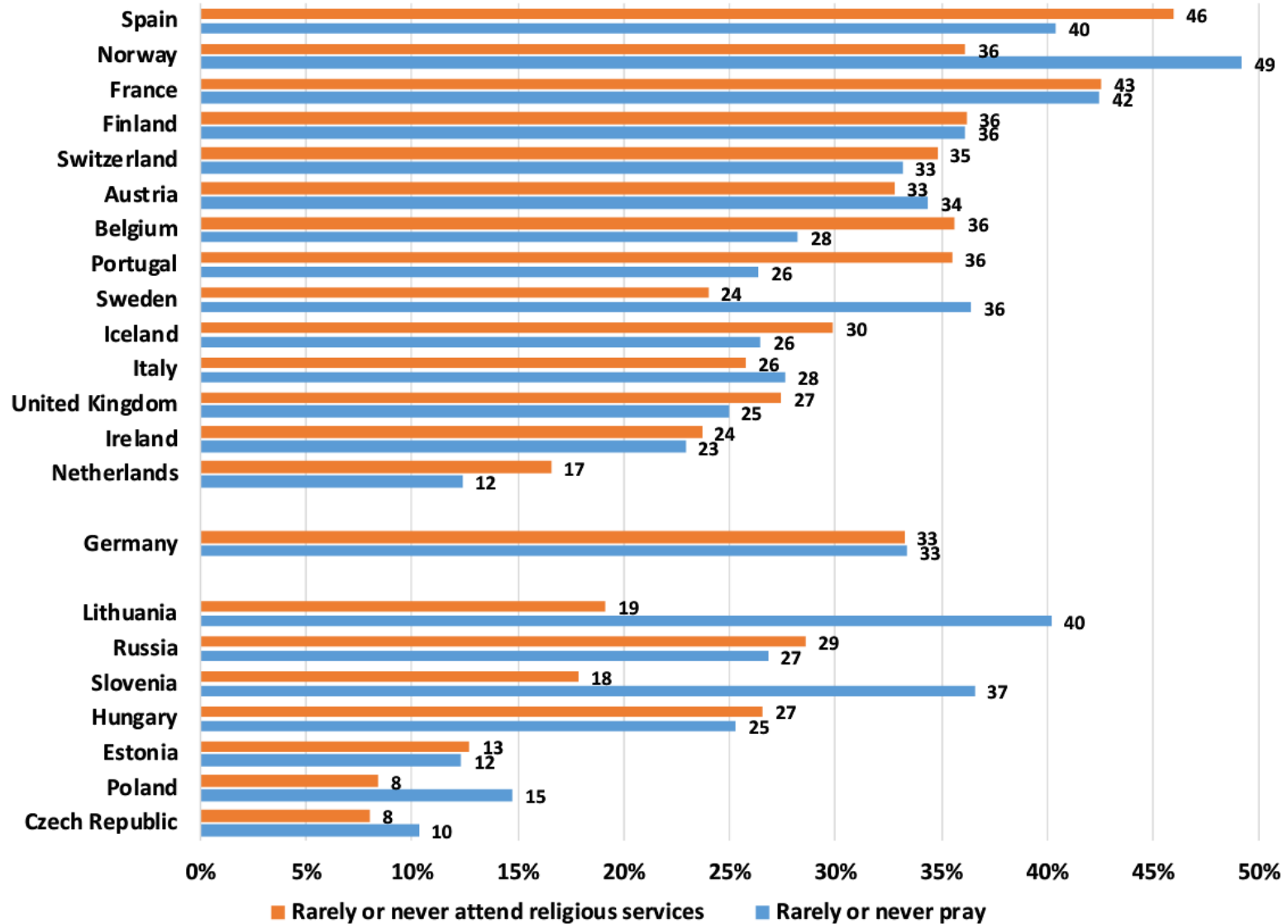
Overview

- Original research as part of the 3 year 'Understanding Unbelief' project.
- Draws from our forthcoming chapter in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Europe* (using EVS 2017 and UU fieldwork) with focus on nonreligion across 40+ countries.
- Great deal of diversity and variability – there is no one (or two, or three, or four) “European pattern”.
- Decline of Christianity in much of Europe has given rise to novel ways of nonreligious belonging and activism.

Proportion of population with 'no religion' in selected European countries (European Social Survey 2016)



Proportion of population in selected European countries with a religious affiliation who rarely/never pray or attend religious services (European Social Survey 2016)



Reaching for a new sense of connection?

- 18-month study with Prof. David Herbert which examined the nature and diversity of 'unbelief', practice and social connections amongst nonreligious Millennials in six European countries (UK, NL, Germany, Norway, Poland and Romania)
- We conducted 67 interviews across 25 European cities/towns and triangulated our findings with survey and social media network data.
- We found a range of forms of collective nonreligious organisation, from state-funded humanist organisations in Norway to Polish movements focused on challenging aspects of the populist religious conservative government's public policy.

Case Study (1) Starting Point: Sunday Assembly



Case Study (2) The Kazimierz Lyszczyński Foundation (KLF)

The (KLF) was established in 2013 the same year as the Sunday Assembly 'as an organization working for the freedom of conscience, word and expression and secularism of the state, as well as promoting the worldview of atheism and secular ethics'.

In 2019, the KLF organised their sixth edition of their annual Days of Atheism conference on the 330th anniversary of the death of their patron.



(KLF) organises and supports campaigns and actions:

- **International Days of Atheism in Warsaw (end March) including biggest atheist of the year award**
- **Atheists Summer Gatherings (mid-August) including atheist picnics**
 - **Secular School campaign (the citizens' initiative)**
 - **Let's Save Women (the citizens' initiative)**

Case Study (3) Human-Etisk Forbund (The Norwegian Humanist Association)

- 120 local/county offices and a large main office in Oslo. More than 90,000 members (2% of Norwegian population).
- Tradition of less importance to the nonreligious (EVS). Yet, 20% of young Norwegian humanists opt for a secular confirmation.
- "Refugee camps" – ethical rites of passage.
- Norway being unusual because it is interestingly both keeping with tradition and breaking the majority Protestant religious tradition.



(Photo credit Aubrey Wade)

Final thoughts

Substantive instances of organised (and sometimes protest or 'resistance') nonreligion and of 'positive' nonreligion' over the past couple of decades in Europe – but vary with as much diversity as the religious climate depending on the socio-political-religious landscape.

<i>Sunday Assembly</i>	UK/Netherlands: Post-Christian. Focus on belonging/community. Little to none political action.
<i>Human-Etisk Forbund</i>	Politics & debates (circumcision) structured approach > ceremonies and rituals for life big events
<i>KLF</i>	Poland: (links to Humanist) secular resistance movement, protecting atheist + women's rights.



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