Religion as something ‘eminently social’ (as described by Émile Durkheim) finds its expression in the distribution of people within each of the four groups. A consistent colour scheme is used throughout all the maps giving every region an individual shade and every country a unique colour within this shade.

Christianity is the largest group with 2.2 billion followers and is also the most spread large religion. While numbers in the wealthy world are in constant decline, this group remains strong and stable in regions such as Africa and South America. Islam, with 1.6 billion followers, forms the largest religious group in about 57 countries concentrated in Northern Africa and Asia (including the Middle East), where the majority of Muslims live. The third largest group related to religion are the approximately 1 billion ‘unbelievers’ or irreligious people. It is a very diverse group (as much as it is the hardest to quantify), ranging from agnostics to atheists. The geographical distribution reflects the long history of irrigation in China over a long period of time, still outnumbering the growing numbers in the wealthier parts of the world, such as Europe and North America.

The third largest religious group, and fourth largest group in this feature, is Hinduism with one billion followers. It is, geographically, the most concentrated group, forming the largest religion in India and being generally strong in South Asia.

British water protection seemed to be improving until recent findings under the spotlight, after recent findings suggested only 17 per cent are in either good or high health.

Nevertheless, O’Neill highlights that most other European countries are still performing much better when it comes to river health, with an average of 53 per cent of water bodies across the continent graded either good or high. ‘The EA doesn’t actually know if things have got worse, but what it has done is make a significant improvement to its monitoring system, which means it now has a much better idea of the health of rivers.’ After considerable investment, rivers in England are the healthiest for 20 years, claimed an EA spokesperson. It pointed out that for the individual tests done on the water bodies, 74 per cent were graded either good or high. EU legislation means the assessment criteria has just got even tougher.

However, much of the difference can be explained by a tightening of rules across the whole continent. ‘It’s more than likely there hasn’t been an actual change compared to last year in the rivers, it’s more that monitoring systems are now more sophisticated,’ explains Rose O’Neill, water policy manager for WWF. ‘The EA doesn’t actually know if things have got worse, but what it has done is make a significant improvement to its monitoring system, which means it now has a much better idea of the health of rivers.’ After considerable investment, rivers in England are the healthiest for 20 years, claimed an EA spokesperson. It pointed out that for the individual tests done on the water bodies, 74 per cent were graded either good or high. EU legislation means the assessment criteria has just got even tougher.

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