



# The change in values on homosexuality and abortion in Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia 1995–2020

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## Abstract

This study investigates the evolution of societal values regarding homosexuality and abortion in Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia from 1995 to 2020. Utilizing data from the World Values Survey, the research examines how these values have shifted in relation to religiosity and institutional changes. The findings reveal significant divergences among the three countries. Croatia and Serbia have experienced an increase in conservative attitudes towards sexuality, particularly influenced by rising religiosity and the impact of religious nationalism. Conversely, Slovenia has shown a liberalizing trend, with decreasing proportions of the population viewing homosexuality and abortion as unjustifiable. The study employs regression models to analyse the influence of religiosity, gender, age, and education on these values. The results indicate that while religiosity is a significant factor, national differences persist even after controlling for it. The paper concludes that historical trajectories and the interplay between formal and informal institutions play crucial roles in shaping values on sexuality. The study highlights the need for further research on the connection between institutional reforms, historical contexts, and value changes.

**Keywords** Institutional change · Sexual behaviours · Sexual norms · Southeast Europe · Values

## Introduction

Since the dissolution of former Yugoslavia and the formation of independent states in the 1990s, the region's norms and values concerning sexual and related social issues have changed in a conservative direction, and sexual non-normativity has become less accepted. This may be a part of a larger neo-conservative

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and religious wave that has influenced both policy and politics in many former socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe (see, e.g., Ramet, 2014; Sremac & Ganzevoort, 2015), but also in Western parts of Europe (Paternotte & Kuhar, 2018). Previous research has used the concept of ‘religious nationalism’ to explain this phenomenon (Sremac & Ganzevoort, 2015). The concept refers to a form of nationalism in which religion serves as a means to unite the nation. However, religious nationalism also justifies the exclusion of ‘the other’, in this case, homosexuals or people with behaviours not approved by the church. Thus, it moves sexuality – previously a concern for the private sphere – to the public sphere.

Former Yugoslavia is a unique case that can serve as a social science laboratory. While religious nationalism has shaped former Yugoslavian republics, they have not all undergone the same change in values on sexuality and abortion. For example, Slovenia has developed differently from Serbia and Croatia.

In this article, we aim to investigate the development of values on homosexuality and abortion in Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia. The three republics were all part of Yugoslavia up to the beginning of the 1990s, when they became independent states. As part of Yugoslavia, they served under the same national legislation, although they were partially independent and had their own laws on the republic level. However, even though the three republics were part of the same country, there were still huge differences at the time of Yugoslavia’s dissolution. Slovenia had emerged as the most developed and export-oriented region of socialist Yugoslavia. Slovenia’s advanced economy, free press allowing open political discourse in the 1980s, and avoidance of a protracted war during Yugoslavia’s dissolution positioned Slovenia for a smooth post-socialist transition (Lucev, 2020). Croatia’s political transformation in the 1990s was hindered by the War of Independence, which complicated state-building and delayed democratic reforms. Additionally, semi-authoritarian leadership and limited democratic traditions slowed its progress compared to other Central and Eastern European transitions (Knezovic, 2020). The dissolution of Yugoslavia took vastly different forms across its former republics. Serbia and Croatia experienced prolonged wars that impeded their democratic development and burdened their societies with conflict. In contrast, Slovenia achieved independence through a peaceful and brief 10-day conflict, aided by its advanced economy and relative stability. These distinct experiences highlight the significant disparities in political and social transitions within the former Yugoslav states. When they became independent states, formal intuitions and, as we will show, values on sexual and related social issues continued to develop along different trajectories.

To compare the changes in values on homosexuality and abortion, we will explore the following research questions:

- RQ1: To what extent have values on homosexuality and abortion changed in Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia?
- RQ2: To what extent has the development in these values coincided with the development of religiosity?

## Definitions: Norms, values, beliefs, and institutions

When defining values, sociologists distinguish between them and norms. For instance, Scott (2014) defines the two concepts as follows:

Values are conceptions of the preferred or the desirable together with the construction of standards to which the existing structures or behaviors can be compared and assessed. Norms specify how things should be done; they define legitimate means to pursue valued ends. (p. 64)

In this study, we follow Scott's definition, viewing *norms* as collective societal rules and standards for behaviour and *values* as beliefs about what is important and good and principles that guide and evaluate normative behaviours. Namely, norms are connected to behaviour (standards on how to behave), whereas values are broader principles that serve as a foundation for norms (beliefs about whether a behaviour is good or bad).

When it comes to institutions, we use Douglass North's (1990, 2005) division of formal (laws, rules, etc.) and informal (values, norms, etc.) institutions as constraints of human behaviour. Further, institutions are governed, bounded by, and dependent on the nation state (see, e.g., Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012; Olson, 1996). Thus, two neighbouring states can have similar factors in the institutional set-up, but the institutional outcome will still be different, depending on other institutional differences and on governance (i.e., how the institutional set-up is performed).

As Štulhofer & Sandfort (2005) point out, sexuality is anchored in social institutions such as religion, family and secular institutions (what we in this study call 'formal institutions'). These three pillars 'produce and/or reproduce ideologies and norms, which define social expectations' (p. 5). In South East Europe they all underwent profound change after 1989—the Church became a social and political force, families faced increasing economic and social hardship, and formal institutions underwent (often painful) institutional reform (see e.g. Štulhofer & Sandfort 2005, p. 6–10). In the next section we will look closer at the role of religion and nationalism.

## Changing Values on Sexuality: The Role of Religion and Nationalism

The surge of nationalism during the 1980s significantly contributed to the violent breakup of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s (Vladisavljevic, 2010). This nationalist sentiment persisted following the establishment of new, independent states, with each state striving to differentiate itself from the other post-Yugoslavian nations (Swimelar, 2019). The new states emphasized their own origin, religion, and culture by rejecting or denying the identities of 'others'. In this reinvention of nationalism, some new and some old values in culture, tradition, and religion were revived. Sremac and Ganzevoort (2015, p. 4) point out that even though the Western Balkan countries are secular by constitution, religion interferes with politics in many ways in the public discourse. Thus, the identities of the new states were formed by

the help of religious nationalism, which occurs as a collective identity marker in different levels of society. In religious nationalism, religion plays a role in creating and facilitating nationhood; accordingly, religion and nationalism mutually reinforce each other. According to Cvetkovska Ocokoljić and Cvetkovski (2010), religious nationalism is not a new concept or explicit to post-communist states. Instead, it tends to appear in nations that go through an identity transition.

Apart from an exclusion of ‘the other’, Sremac and Ganzevoort (2015) also identify ‘disciplining the body and sexuality’ as an element of religious nationalism. They connect the political transformation of the last decades in Central and Eastern Europe with the transformation of national public perception regarding sexuality, stating that ‘the public perception of both religion and sexual diversity has changed fundamentally and gained unpredicted public importance in a highly antagonistic way’ (p. 1). As religion is embraced to unite the nation, deviant sexual behaviour is perceived as a threat to national, cultural, and religious identity. Sexual minorities are seen as ‘the other’ that must be excluded.

Some cultural discourses view homosexuality as a Western conspiracy that threatens traditional national and religious values. In this view, religion is seen as a protector of morality and norms from Western influence. Swimelar (2019) agrees that nationalism and the idea of exclusivity play a major role in the lack of LGBT rights in former Yugoslavian republics, but she points out that there is a difference between Croatia and Serbia that derives from how the two countries have adopted Europeanization. In Croatia, national identity was constructed in convergence with European norms and identity (with a goal to enter the European Union) and to distinguish Croatia from a ‘Balkan’ identity. The LGBT community was framed primarily as a ‘threat to the family’. In Serbia, on the other hand, state and national identity was constructed in opposition to Europe, and homosexuality faced a stronger threat perception, framed primarily as a ‘threat to the nation’. Jovanović (2013) also describes the anti-Western discourse in Serbia and its influence on LGBT rights. Mainstream religion in Serbia regards the issues related to homosexuality to be ‘imposed from abroad (Western Europe and America)’ (p. 83). Highlighting discrimination of gays and lesbians is viewed as ‘promotion’ or ‘advertising’ of homosexuality and Westernization of Eastern Orthodox societies and cultures, thereby posing a threat to the nation. According to the discourse, the West has dubious moral standards. However, this discourse is not limited to the Serbian Orthodox Church; anti-Westernism is a widespread phenomenon in the Orthodox world today (Jovanović, 2013).

Whereas the Serbian Orthodox Church drives religious nationalism in Serbia, the Catholic Church fulfils that role in Croatia. Marinović Jerolimov and Jokić (2010) describe how the Catholic Church’s public role and importance significantly increased after the 1990s. The Catholic Church has proactively engaged in teaching and public discussions concerning individual, social, and legal aspects regarding sexual education, marriage, abortion, divorce, contraception, artificial fertilization, and homosexuals and their rights to marriage and adoption. Consequently, the Catholic Church has influenced values and attitudes toward sexuality, reproduction, and marriage. Marinović Jerolimov and Jokić’s (2010) survey on young people (15–29 years) in Croatia shows significantly greater levels of religiosity in 2004 than in the mid-1980s. All age groups in the survey reported highly negative attitudes

towards homosexuality. However, when it comes to attitudes towards marriage and reproduction, those aged 20–29 reported relatively liberal attitudes—not in line with the Catholic Church—whereas the younger age group (15–19 years) reported more conservative views. Štulhofer et al. (2010), highlights how religious upbringing and personal religiosity influence sexual literacy, behaviors, and risks, with findings suggesting a nuanced relationship between religiosity and sexual health outcomes. Religious individuals may have less knowledge about sexual and reproductive health due to restrictive family norms, which focus on morality rather than open discussions on sexuality.

In December 2013, Croatia held a referendum on the constitutional definition of marriage as a union between a man and a woman. The driver of this referendum was the civic initiative ‘In the Name of the Family’ (*U ime obitelji*), which opposes sexual and reproductive rights and insists on religious freedoms’ primacy. This initiative is a part of a broader religious-political movement that emerged in the past decade and is connected to international conservative organizations. It has a continuous involvement in policy making, which was demonstrated in the referendum. According to the initiative’s proponents, the traditional values of Croatian society must be protected by expressing the traditional, heteronormative definition of family. According to Petričević et al. (2017), by pushing for the referendum, the initiative’s proponents revealed not only that the Croatian society as socially conservative but also that it manifests a high level of intolerance and homophobia. The referendum effectively established the movement and its prominent figures as new political actors who have managed to secure significant political capital and power.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast to Serbia and Croatia, according to our pre-understanding, Slovenia did not undergo the same kind of religious nationalism to build the nation state. Instead the country approached Europe and adapted Europeanization, which led to the country entering the EU on 1 May 2004, together with nine other countries (Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Malta, and Slovakia). Religion has held a less dominant role in shaping public policy, and secular governance has fostered progressive attitudes toward LGBTQ+ rights, and abortion. Legal abortion dates back to its socialist era, while marriage equality was introduced in 2022, demonstrating Slovenia’s focus on personal freedoms and alignment with Western European values (Equaldex.com).

To conclude, the dissolution of Yugoslavia and construction of new states also lead to the construction of an exclusive religious nationalism, where the church is given a more comprehensive role than before. In this study, two outcomes of religious nationalism are of relevance – the exclusion of ‘the other’ in terms of sexuality (i.e., excluding homosexuals) and the disciplining of the body (i.e., stigmatizing abortion)—both of which signal high morality in the religious discourse. However, Slovenia’s development indicates that religion did not play the same role in all former Yugoslavian republics.

<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that in Croatia’s 2013 referendum, 66% of voters supported defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman, but the voter turnout was only 37%. The turnout was the lowest for a nation-wide election in the country’s 20 years as a democracy. The low turn-out may be as significant as the result of the referendum itself (openDemocracy, 2025).

## Theoretical Framework

To understand religious nationalism and its consequences on sexual norms, we use two different theoretical concepts. The first, to understand the development of religious nationalism, derives from “New Institutional Economics” and its perspectives on institutional change. The second theoretical concept, to understand sexual norms, derives from Gayle Rubin’s “Charmed Circle”.

We can understand the constraints on sexual and social behaviours in a particular country by using an institutional theoretical perspective. The institutional framework of formal and informal institutions is embedded in a human environment that consists of language, physical artefacts, and beliefs (see, e.g., North, 2005). Thus, institutions are defined as constraints; that is, formal and informal institutions are what constrains our behaviour.

Institutions derive from historical heritage and are encapsulated and coded information of past experiences; therefore, they are historically and contextually specific. According to North (1990, 2005), norms derive from human beliefs and belief systems. When institutions are embedded in our belief systems, they are difficult to change. However, there are cases where institutions have changed fairly rapidly. When it comes to Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia, changes have been rapid due to exogenous events. The dissolution of the nation state of Yugoslavia and the socialist system created new, independent states, but it also opened for other organisations, like the church, to gain influence over both politics and values. The religious nationalism that emerged from the dissolution of Yugoslavia, together with the political and economic transformation of the old socialist regime, created new values and, by extension, new norms and new informal institutions.

Gayle Rubin (1984/2002) used the concept of the ‘Charmed Circle’ as a theoretical framework to examine societal norms and attitudes towards sexuality. The concept elucidates how certain sexual behaviours are privileged while others are marginalized and how societal norms of sexuality are structured. It has been influential in discussions about sexual freedom, diversity, and the social regulation of sexual practices. In her analysis, Rubin distinguishes between socially acceptable, ‘charmed’ sexual practices and those deemed taboo or stigmatized. Her charmed circle characterizes a hierarchy of different types of sex. Based on the involvement of factors such as marriage, reproduction, and sexual orientation, some of these types are seen as ‘good, normal, natural, blessed’ and others as ‘bad, abnormal, unnatural, damned’. The ‘good’ types (inner circle) are heterosexual, married, monogamous, procreative, non-commercial, in pairs, in a relationship, same generation, in private, no pornography, bodies only, vanilla. The ‘bad’ types (outer circle) are homosexual, unmarried, promiscuous, non-procreative, commercial, alone or in groups, casual, cross-generational, in public, pornography, with manufactured objects, sadomasochistic.

Rubin’s taxonomy has been criticized for insufficient attention to, for example, intersectionality and for assuming a white Western perspective (see, e.g., Hoad, 2011; Schueller, 2005). However, we find Rubin’s taxonomy useful to unveil the existence of sexual hierarchies that serve to regulate sexual activity. The charmed circle enables us to examine how distinctions and boundaries between good and bad

sexual behaviours are negotiated and policed differently. Further, social, religious, geographical, and legislative settings are of major importance for what is included within the charmed circle's layers and where the limits are placed. Thus, the national state and the changes within formal and informal institutions matter.

Every culture produces its own sexual scripts that dictate with whom, where, when, and how we can have sex (Gagnon & Simon, 1973). The biological component of sexuality re-naturalizes sexual scripts when sexual behaviours are considered so 'natural' that they do not require any kind of reflection. What is 'natural' is considered normal and moral. However, morals are created in a social context. Sex itself is amoral – a phenomenon beyond morality (Simon & Gagnon, 2003). Only society gives it certain meanings and considers some of its acts as 'natural' and 'normal' while others are deemed 'abnormal' and 'unnatural' (Jawor, 2015). Historically, the only moral function of sex was reproduction. Sexual behaviour that was not connected with reproduction, like homosexuality, sex outside of marriage, or promiscuity was seen as immoral. In a neo-conservative ideological setting, the idea of natural and biological moral sexuality has gained a renewed interest.

To summarise our theoretical framework, sexual behaviours are valued in a hierarchical way. However, this hierarchical order can change. What was unacceptable earlier is nowadays acceptable. What was unjustifiable before, is justifiable today. Importantly, formal institutions (e.g., laws) and informal institutions (e.g., norms) influence how behaviours are valued, i.e. where in the hierarchy of the 'Charmed Circle' they will be placed. For example, if homosexuality is banned and considered as a disease by the state, values on homosexuality will follow. Further, formal and informal institutions coincide and form a national institutional framework. This institutional framework may change due to endogenous and exogenous factors. When it comes to Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia, exogenous factors like war, the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and the formation of independent states have influenced institutional change.

## Formal Institutional Change and Differences

In former Yugoslavia, male homosexual acts (i.e., anal intercourse) were illegal (Zbirka zakona FNRJ, 1951). Historically, laws primarily targeted male same-sex activity, often criminalizing anal intercourse, while female same-sex relationships were left legally undefined due to a lack of recognition. In former Yugoslavia, heterosexual anal intercourse was not explicitly banned, though societal norms influenced its perception. Bisexuality was also overlooked, as laws focused on specific acts rather than identities (Banovic & Kovacevic, 2022).

During the first half of the 1970s, the power over penal legislation was decentralized from the Federal Republic to the six republics and two provinces. A new Penal Code that decriminalized homosexual intercourse was passed in 1976 and came into force in 1977 in Croatia and Slovenia except Serbia. However, although same-sex sexual intercourse remained illegal in the rest of Serbia (including the Province of Kosovo), it was legalized in 1977 in Vojvodina, which was an independent province of Serbia. In 1990, Vojvodina was reincorporated into the legal system of Serbia,

and male homosexuality once again became a criminal offence. Same-sex activity was finally officially decriminalized in Serbia (as well as Vojvodina) in 1994, and homosexuality was removed from official classification of diseases in 1997, when Serbia introduced the diagnostic code system ICD-10 (Equaldex.com). In October 2006, Serbia adopted a new constitution via referendum, with 97.31% voting in favor and a 54.91% turnout. It defined marriage strictly as between a man and a woman, banning same-sex marriage. Serbia also denies legal recognition and adoption rights to same-sex couples. Additionally, the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet was established as the official script, reinforcing national identity (Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, 2006; Porodichni zakon, 2015).

In Croatia, although same-sex sexual activity has been legal since 1977, the status of same-sex relationships was first formally recognized in 2003 under a law dealing with unregistered cohabitations (Ljudska prava LGBT osoba u kontekstu evropskih integracija, 2015). As a result of the referendum in 2013 (previously described), Croatia's current constitution defines marriage solely as a union between a woman and man (Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, 2014). This effectively prohibited same-sex marriage. However, since the introduction of the Law on Same-Sex Life Partnership in 2020 (Zakon o zivotnom partnerstvu istog spola, 2020), same-sex couples have had equal rights to heterosexual couples in almost all aspects. In 2022, a final court ruling allowed same-sex couples to adopt jointly. Same-sex couples in Croatia can also apply for stepchild adoption and foster care (Obiteljski zakon, 2023). Croatian law bans all discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

As part of former Yugoslavia, Slovenia had also legalized same-sex sexual activity in 1977. In addition, Slovenia has recognized same-sex partnerships since 2017 (Zakon o spremembah Družinskega zakonika, 2023). The law provided same-sex partners with all the legal rights of marriage, except for joint adoption. Slovenia was the first country of former Yugoslavia to legalize same-sex marriage. A bill to legalize same-sex marriage was approved by Parliament on March 2015, but it was rejected in a referendum in December 2015. However, in June 2022, the Constitutional Court decided that the outcome of the referendum was inconsistent with the constitution. It also decided that the regulation of the possibility of joint adoption of a child, which was specified only for married spouses, was inconsistent with the constitution. Thereafter, the Family Code was amended to stipulate that a marriage is a union of two persons and no longer only a union of a man and a woman. Thus, based on the decision of the Constitutional Court, from 2023, same-sex partners can enter into a marriage and jointly adopt a child (Zakon o spremembah Družinskega zakonika, 2023).

The legalization of abortion in 1952 in Yugoslavia was an attempt by the communist leadership to address the issue of illegal abortions performed in inadequate hygienic conditions, aiming to reduce the associated morbidity and mortality rates. Another motive was ideological, tied to women's emancipation, including reproductive rights. The law gradually became more liberalized between the 1950s and 1970s, ultimately allowing access to abortion upon a woman's request during the first twelve weeks of pregnancy. Yugoslavia was one of the few countries worldwide to include reproductive rights in its federal constitution in 1974 (Drezgic, 2016).

In Croatia, abortion has been legal since 1978, when it was part of Yugoslavia. Induced abortion can be performed until the end of the 10th gestation week (Gladoić Håkansson et al., 2021). For individuals under 16 years old and for those completely lacking legal capacity, written consent from parents or guardians is required. Abortion after the 10th week is allowed for medical reasons, anticipated severe foetal abnormalities, or pregnancies resulting from a crime such as rape or incest.

The Serbian constitution grants constitutional right to women to autonomously decide on childbirth, and abortion is regulated by the Law on Termination of Pregnancy (Zakon o prekidu trudnoće, 2005). Abortion in Serbia can only be performed upon the request of a pregnant woman. For individuals under 16 years old and for those completely lacking legal capacity, written consent from parents or guardians is required. The termination can be performed up to the completion of the 10th week of pregnancy. Abortion after the 10th week is allowed for medical reasons, anticipated severe foetal abnormalities, or pregnancies resulting from a crime such as rape or incest.

Similarly, in Slovenia, abortion is allowed upon the request of the pregnant woman up to the 10th week of pregnancy. After the 10th week, abortion requests must be approved by a commission for the artificial termination of pregnancy. There is no age restriction for abortion in Slovenia, and minors do not need parental consent (Zakon o zdravstvenih ukrepih pri uresničevanju pravice do svobodnega odločanja o rojstvu otrok, 1977).

Conscientious objection to abortion refers to the right of healthcare professionals to refuse to perform an abortion based on moral, ethics or religious objections. In Croatia, under the influence of religious organizations and the Catholic Church, in the early 2000s, the free abortion law was questioned. At the beginning of 2003, the Croatian government drafted a proposal to amend the Healthcare Act in relation to access to abortion, allowing healthcare professionals the right to 'conscientious objection' (Gladoić Håkansson et al., 2021; Kodeks medicinske etike, 2016a; Zakon o ljecnistvu, 2008). Consequently, physicians, nurses, and dentists can refuse medical procedures on ethical or religious grounds, provided they maintain professional standards and do not endanger the patient's health or life. The decision must be promptly communicated to the patient and the relevant authorities. To ensure medical professionals uphold the standards when exercising this right, conscientious objection is regulated by professional codes in the Code of Medical Ethics (Cesar, 2017; Gladoić Håkansson et al., 2021; Kodeks medicinske etike, 2016a).

The Serbian healthcare law allows healthcare workers to decline providing healthcare if the service contradicts their conscience, beliefs, or international medical ethics. They are required to officially document this objection in the patient's medical records and notify their superior, as outlined in the law. Healthcare institutions (including private practices) are obligated to respect their employees' right to conscientious objection and ensure that the patient receives alternative care. However, conscientious objection is not applicable in situations involving emergency care (Čolaković, 2021; Kodeks medicinske etike, 2016b). According to official data from the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, an independent state authority tasked with preventing discrimination, there is no information about physicians invoking conscientious objection (Javni servis.net, 2022). Specifically, there is no

record of any woman being denied her right to autonomous control over her body (Porodnicni zakon, 2015).

The Slovenian constitution permits the right to conscientious objection under specified legal circumstances, ensuring it does not compromise the rights and freedoms of others (Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, 2001). This right is expressly outlined in constitutional provisions in the Slovenian legal system (Čolaković, 2021). Moreover, the Health Services Act and the Medical Services Act detail the right of healthcare professionals and physicians, respectively, to conscientiously object to certain medical procedures. These laws mandate timely communication of objections to relevant parties, such as healthcare institutions and patients, with provisions to ensure patients' continued access to healthcare services, especially in emergency situations (Čolaković, 2021).

## Materials and Methods

### Dataset

We used quantitative data from the World Values Survey (WVS) wave 3 (1995–1997) (Inglehart et al., 2014) and wave 7 (2017–2020) (Haerpfer et al., 2022). The WVS contains questions on certain issues and people's attitudes and values towards them. The integrity of data collection within WVS is upheld through standardized procedures and guidelines. The primary method of data collection involves face-to-face interviews conducted at the residences of respondents. These surveys are executed by professional organizations, which ensure strict adherence to structured questionnaires and ethical standards. Each participating country designates a Principal Investigator (PI) who is responsible for supervising the survey implementation in accordance with established protocols.

In instances of non-response, countries employing a full probability sampling design are prohibited from using replacements. Principal Investigators are advised to plan for multiple call-backs, contingent upon available funding. Conversely, in countries utilizing quota sampling methods, every effort should be made to conduct interviews with the initial contact. WVS-data is clustered by country. This means that responses from individuals within the same country are grouped together, reflecting the cultural, social, and economic contexts specific to each country. This clustering allows researchers to analyse and compare cultural values across different countries and regions (World Values Survey, 2020).

WVS is conducted as recurrent so-called "waves". This means that there is a new wave approximately every fifth year. One problem with the longitudinal dimension of WVS is that all countries do not participate in every wave. When it comes to this study, it was only wave 3 and wave 7 all our three investigated countries participated in. In the waves in between, Croatia did not participate, and Slovenia did not participate in wave 4. However, we do not find this a problem. Investigating the values in a country 1995–1997 and comparing them with the state 2017–2020 demonstrate a long term change over 25 years even if we do not have information of what happened in between.

## Modelling

We explored attitudes towards homosexuality and abortion by investigating one specific question in WVS, namely: “Please tell me for each of the following statements whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between, using this card.” The answer alternatives range from ‘*never justifiable*’ (1) to ‘*always justifiable*’ (10).<sup>2</sup> In this study we investigated two statements from this question: a) homosexuality, b) abortion.

A theoretical point of departure in the study was that a person’s values are influenced by national institutions, which (as we pointed out in our theoretical description) put constraints on human behaviour. As previously mentioned, institutions are governed and bounded by the nation state (see, e.g., Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012; Olson, 1996). Since institutions are collective and include all inhabitants in a nation, we used the nation state as a proxy of the national institutional setting. Moreover, we described how both formal and informal institutions are influenced by religion, so we decided to investigate how religiosity has changed in the three countries. The WVS includes the question ‘Are you religious?’ The answer alternatives are 1 = *a religious person*, 2 = *not a religious person*, and 3 = *a convinced atheist*. We constructed this variable into a binary variable: 1 = religious and 0 = not religious. Aside from religiosity, factors like age and gender also influence people’s values, so we included them as control variables in the models.

Besides the descriptive statistical analysis, we constructed regression models (listed below) for the two variables we investigated. We used the descriptive statistical analysis (with chi-squared tests) to answer RQ1 and the regression model to answer RQ2. The variables are explained and defined in Table 1. For wave 3 and wave 7, we ran the models 1–4. Because of lack of data on the educational level for Croatia in wave 3, we could only run regressions including education on data for wave 7. In this case, we ran the models 5–6.

- (1)  $\text{just\_hom}_{\text{wave}3} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{country}_{\text{wave}3} + \beta_2 \text{rel}_{\text{wave}3} + \beta_3 \text{sex}_{\text{wave}3} + \beta_4 \text{age}_{\text{wave}3}$
- (2)  $\text{just\_hom}_{\text{wave}7} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{country}_{\text{wave}7} + \beta_2 \text{rel}_{\text{wave}7} + \beta_3 \text{sex}_{\text{wave}7} + \beta_4 \text{age}_{\text{wave}7}$
- (3)  $\text{just\_abo}_{\text{wave}3} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{country}_{\text{wave}3} + \beta_2 \text{rel}_{\text{wave}3} + \beta_3 \text{sex}_{\text{wave}3} + \beta_4 \text{age}_{\text{wave}3}$
- (4)  $\text{just\_abo}_{\text{wave}7} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{country}_{\text{wave}7} + \beta_2 \text{rel}_{\text{wave}7} + \beta_3 \text{sex}_{\text{wave}7} + \beta_4 \text{age}_{\text{wave}7}$
- (5)  $\text{just\_hom}_{\text{wave}7} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{country}_{\text{wave}7} + \beta_2 \text{rel}_{\text{wave}7} + \beta_3 \text{sex}_{\text{wave}7} + \beta_4 \text{age}_{\text{wave}7} + \beta_5 \text{edu}_{\text{wave}7}$
- (6)  $\text{just\_abo}_{\text{wave}7} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{country}_{\text{wave}7} + \beta_2 \text{rel}_{\text{wave}7} + \beta_3 \text{sex}_{\text{wave}7} + \beta_4 \text{age}_{\text{wave}7} + \beta_5 \text{edu}_{\text{wave}7}$

To estimate the models, we ran ordered logit regressions with robust standard errors for separate year spans (i.e., wave 3 and wave 7). We also ran estimations including education as a control variable (model 3 and 4) – in total, six different estimations. Using robust standard errors in ordered logit regressions helps

<sup>2</sup> Descriptives and descriptive statistics can be found in appendix 1–2.

**Table 1** Variables in the regression analysis

| Variable name          | Function                           | Definition   |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| just_homo <sub>y</sub> | Dependent, category, ordinal scale | Homosexuality<br>ordinal scale from<br>Never justifiable = 1<br>to Always justifiable = 10<br>y = wave 3 (1995–1999) or wave 7 (2017–2020) |
| just_abo <sub>y</sub>  | Dependent, category, ordinal scale | Abortion<br>ordinal scale from<br>Never justifiable = 1<br>to Always justifiable = 10<br>y = wave 3 (1995–1999) or wave 7 (2017–2020)      |
| country <sub>y</sub>   | Explanatory, category              | Slo = Slovenia (baseline)<br>Cro = Croatia<br>Srb = Serbia<br>y = wave 3 (1995–1999) or wave 7 (2017–2020)                                 |
| rel <sub>y</sub>       | Explanatory, binary                | Are you religious?<br>1 = yes, religious person<br>0 = no, not religious person or atheist<br>y = wave 3 (1995–1999) or wave 7 (2017–2020) |
| sex <sub>y</sub>       | Control variable, binary           | 0 = male<br>1 = female<br>y = wave 3 (1995–1999) or wave 7 (2017–2020)   |
| age <sub>y</sub>       | Control variable, continuous       | Age 18–82  |
| edu <sub>wave7</sub>   | Control variable, category         | 1 = Primary (baseline)<br>2 = Secondary<br>3 = Tertiary  |

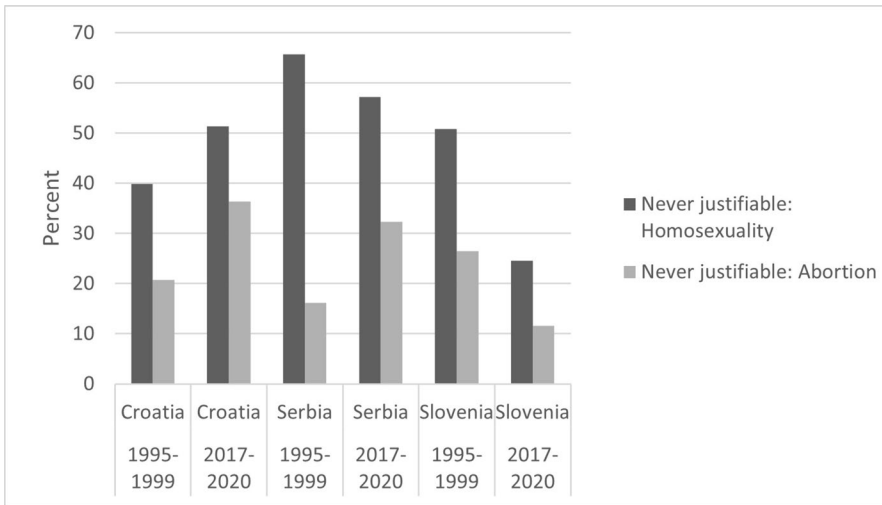
to account for clustering effects by adjusting the standard errors to be consistent even in the presence of within-cluster correlations and heteroscedasticity. As a robustness check we also ran the regressions in a Generalized Structural Equation Modeling (GSEM).

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics

Figure 1 shows how the values on homosexuality and abortion have changed in the three countries between the two periods, from wave 3 (1995–1999) to wave 7 (2017–2020). In Croatia, the proportion of people claiming that homosexuality and abortion can never be justified has increased significantly over the twenty-year period.<sup>3</sup> In Serbia, the proportion of respondents stating that homosexuality was non-justifiable was high already in the

<sup>3</sup> For the values (shares) and significant tests, see Appendix 2.



**Fig. 1** The proportion of respondents in Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia who answered “never justified” about homosexuality and abortion 1995–1997 and 2017–2020. *Source:* Own calculations from WVS

mid-1990s, and there is a minor (but still significant) decrease during the twenty years. When it comes to abortion, there is a significant increase in the proportion of respondents finding abortion non-justifiable. In contrast, when it comes to Slovenia, the proportion of respondents finding homosexuality and abortion non-justifiable *decreased* over the 25 year period. Interestingly enough, in the mid-1990s, the proportion of ‘non-justifiers’ was higher in Slovenia than in the other two countries, except for homosexuality in Serbia. For each country, all changes between the years are significant according to the chi-squared tests (reported in Appendix 2).

To explore the impact of religion on the change in values, we investigated the coinciding change in religiosity. In both Croatia and Serbia, the proportion of respondents claiming they are religious has increased considerably. In Slovenia, on the other hand, there is no significant change in religiosity between the two periods.<sup>4</sup>

The descriptive statistics and the chi-squared test answer the first research question: There are significant changes in values within the three countries. In Croatia, the proportion of non-justifiers increases in both variables. In Serbia, the proportion of non-justifiers increases abortion, but decreases when it comes to homosexuality. In Slovenia, the proportion of non-justifiers *decreases* in both variables.

Thus, the descriptive statistics give significant results on how values on homosexuality and abortion have changed, but they do not indicate why the ‘non-justifiers’ increase in Croatia and Serbia while decreasing in Slovenia. To get a fuller picture of what might make a person a ‘non-justifier’, we investigated this value in a constructed regression model.

<sup>4</sup> Measured with Pearson’s chi-squared test, the difference between the years does not differ from 0. See Appendix 2.

## Regression Model Analysis

In Table 2, we present the results of models 1–6, estimated by ordered logit regressions with robust standard errors. Here, the estimated b-parameters are the estimated point values.

The coefficients represent the change in the log-odds of being in a higher category of the dependent variable (finding the behaviour justifiable) for a one-unit increase in the predictor variable, holding other variables constant. As the estimations show, most parameter values are significant and the Wald chi<sup>2</sup>-test is very high, with a *p*-value of 0.0000. The results in Model 1–4 demonstrate that in wave 3 (1995–1999), there were no significant differences between Slovenia and Croatia when it came to finding homosexuality or abortion justifiable/non-justifiable. Serbia, on the contrary, demonstrates a lower likelihood for finding homosexuality or abortion justifiable. This changed 20 years later. In wave 7, people living in both Croatia and Serbia had lower log-odds of being ‘justifiers’ than people living in Slovenia.

Importantly, the difference between countries persisted after we controlled for *religiosity*, *gender*, and *age*. *Religiosity* increased in both Croatia and Serbia but not in Slovenia (see Appendix 2). The relationship between religion and the dependent variables is negative: the log-odds of being a ‘justifier’ decreases if stepping from ‘non-religious’ to ‘religious’. When it comes to the variable *gender* it is negative for both homosexuality and abortion. This means that women had higher log-odds than men to be ‘justifiers’, which goes for both variables. In Model 1–4, age is significant in all four models. That is, the log-odds of being a ‘justifier’ decreased with age. The older you become, the more likely you take a step down the ‘justifiable ladder’.

In model 5 and 6 we controlled for *education*. Data for this variable is not available in the WVS for Croatia in wave 3. However, it is available in wave 7, so we could only run the estimations for this wave. Therefore, we were not able to compare the two waves, but we still found some interesting results. Adding education to the regression estimation for wave 7 shows three interesting results: (1) The parameters for Croatia and Serbia exhibit minimal variations, maintaining the same conclusions as models 2 and 4. That is, the log-odds of stepping down the ‘justifiable ladder’ increase if living in Croatia and Serbia compared to people living in Slovenia, and it hardly changes when adding education into the estimation. (2) The higher the education level, the higher the log-odds of stepping up the ‘justifiable ladder’, but this relationship applies regardless of nationality. (3) When education is added, age becomes nonsignificant when it comes to finding abortion non-justifiable.

When we ran the GSEM, the results were identical.

## Discussion

This article explores the development of values on homosexuality and abortion in Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia. We used data from the World Values Survey for Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia from two waves, wave 3 (1995–1999) and wave 7 (2017–2020). We employed the empirical data to investigate to what extent values

**Table 2** Results from the regression analysis of models 1–4 for wave 3 (1995–1999) and wave 7 (2017–2020)

|            | Model 1:<br>just_homo<br>1995 | Model 2:<br>just_homo<br>2020 | Model 3:<br>just_abo<br>1995 | Model 4:<br>just_abo<br>2020 | Model 5:<br>just_homo<br>2020 | Model 6:<br>just_abo<br>2020 |
|------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Slo (base) | 0.000<br>(.)                  | 0.000<br>(.)                  | 0.000<br>(.)                 | 0.000<br>(.)                 | 0.000<br>(.)                  | 0.000<br>(.)                 |
| Cro        | 0.218*<br>(0.09)              | -1.060***<br>(0.08)           | -0.106<br>(0.09)             | -1.123***<br>(0.08)          | -1.091***<br>(0.08)           | -1.158***<br>(0.08)          |
| Srb        | -1.010***<br>(0.09)           | -1.579***<br>(0.07)           | -0.399***<br>(0.08)          | -1.334***<br>(0.07)          | -1.636***<br>(0.07)           | -1.364***<br>(0.07)          |
| rel        | -0.778***<br>(0.07)           | -0.910***<br>(0.07)           | -1.053***<br>(0.07)          | -0.993***<br>(0.06)          | -0.858***<br>(0.07)           | -0.956***<br>(0.06)          |
| Sex        | 0.401***<br>(0.07)            | 0.549***<br>(0.06)            | 0.268***<br>(0.06)           | 0.294***<br>(0.05)           | 0.564***<br>(0.06)            | 0.317***<br>(0.05)           |
| Age        | -0.037***<br>(0.00)           | -0.025***<br>(0.00)           | -0.023***<br>(0.00)          | -0.006***<br>(0.00)          | -0.020***<br>(0.00)           | -0.001<br>(0.00)             |
| 1.edu      |                               |                               |                              |                              | 0.000<br>(.)                  | 0.000<br>(.)                 |
| 2.edu      |                               |                               |                              |                              | 0.536***<br>(0.10)            | 0.552***<br>(0.09)           |
| 3.edu      |                               |                               |                              |                              | 1.038***<br>(0.11)            | 0.907***<br>(0.09)           |
| /          |                               |                               |                              |                              |                               |                              |
| cut1       | -2.119***<br>(0.14)           | -2.777***<br>(0.12)           | -3.223***<br>(0.13)          | -2.864***<br>(0.11)          | -1.912***<br>(0.16)           | -2.029***<br>(0.14)          |
| cut2       | -1.838***<br>(0.14)           | -2.539***<br>(0.12)           | -2.961***<br>(0.13)          | -2.648***<br>(0.11)          | -1.672***<br>(0.16)           | -1.809***<br>(0.14)          |
| cut3       | -1.592***<br>(0.13)           | -2.349***<br>(0.12)           | -2.673***<br>(0.13)          | -2.372***<br>(0.11)          | -1.479***<br>(0.16)           | -1.526***<br>(0.14)          |
| cut4       | -1.384***<br>(0.14)           | -2.196***<br>(0.12)           | -2.414***<br>(0.13)          | -2.164***<br>(0.11)          | -1.322***<br>(0.16)           | -1.315***<br>(0.14)          |
| cut5       | -0.899***<br>(0.13)           | -1.509***<br>(0.11)           | -1.780***<br>(0.12)          | -1.307***<br>(0.11)          | -0.617***<br>(0.16)           | -0.448**<br>(0.14)           |
| cut6       | -0.474***<br>(0.13)           | -1.307***<br>(0.11)           | -1.246***<br>(0.12)          | -1.001***<br>(0.11)          | -0.412**<br>(0.16)            | -0.138<br>(0.14)             |
| cut7       | -0.244<br>(0.13)              | -1.085***<br>(0.11)           | -0.814***<br>(0.12)          | -0.657***<br>(0.11)          | -0.183<br>(0.16)              | 0.209<br>(0.14)              |
| cut8       | 0.187<br>(0.14)               | -0.785***<br>(0.11)           | -0.171<br>(0.12)             | -0.164<br>(0.11)             | 0.125<br>(0.16)               | 0.709***<br>(0.14)           |
| cut9       | 0.625***<br>(0.14)            | -0.533***<br>(0.11)           | 0.291*<br>(0.12)             | 0.155<br>(0.11)              | 0.380*<br>(0.16)              | 1.032***<br>(0.15)           |
| Wald_chi2  | 560.6                         | 851.4                         | 462.8                        | 704.1                        | 940.5                         | 778.0                        |
| N          | 3090                          | 4519                          | 3090                         | 4519                         | 4494                          | 4494                         |

Source: Own calculations from WVS-data

Stars denote the significance of the coefficients to be different from zero: \* for  $p < .05$ , \*\* for  $p < .01$ , and \*\*\* for  $p < .001$

on homosexuality and abortion developed differently in Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia (RQ1); and to what extent the development in these values coincided with the development of religiosity (RQ2). In this section we will discuss how (and if) the changes in values reflect the formal institutional context in the form of laws and regulations.

### **Does Changes in Values Follow and Change in Legislation?**

When it comes to legal differences between the three republics, their legal regulations on homosexuality differ greatly. The most conservative laws are currently found in Serbia. Today, homosexuality is no longer a criminal act or classified as a disease, but the rights of homosexuals are seriously limited in Serbia. Same-sex couples lack legal recognition, and they are not allowed to marry or to adopt children. This is consistent with Serbia's historically conservative approach to homosexuality. For example, when the Penal Code was changed in the rest of Yugoslavia in the 1970s and homosexual intercourse was decriminalized, Serbia did not follow.

Regarding the causality between values and legislation, it is impossible to answer what comes first—values or laws. However, Rubin's (1984/2002) charmed circle indicates that legislative and religious settings are of major importance for what is considered as 'good' or 'bad' sexuality. Furthermore, the concept of 'sexual scripts' emphasizes society's role in considering some acts as 'natural' and normal while deeming others 'abnormal' and 'unnatural' (Gagnon & Simon, 1973; Simon & Gagnon, 2003). Both Croatia and Slovenia had referendums on same-sex marriage and the results of the referendums were the same, but the outcomes differed: Slovenia's Constitutional Court later annulled the referendum, citing discrimination, whereas Croatia's government upheld the outcome, maintaining the constitutional ban. Croatia's constitution currently stipulates that a marriage is between a man and a woman, whereas Slovenia's Family Code defines marriage as a union between two persons. Serbia embedded provisions on same-sex marriage within its 2006 constitution, alongside other legal and political matters. The referendum passed with a large majority, effectively banning same-sex marriage at the constitutional level. The difference between Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia may be attributed to the idea of the 'natural', biological, and 'morally' justifiable sex.

Religious nationalism (Sremac & Ganzevoort, 2015) emphasizes conservative values but also justifies the exclusion of 'the other'. There are reasons to believe that religious nationalism has been more prominent in Croatia than in Slovenia. Further, although same-sex couples still have limited rights in Serbia, the legislation has changed over the past 30 years. For example, same-sex activity was decriminalized in 1994, and the classification of homosexuality as a disease was removed in 1997. This legislative change correlates with a decrease in the share of non-justifiers in Serbia between 1995–1999 and 2017–2020.

Abortion is legal in all three countries. What differs is the conscientious objection clause, but how the difference is expressed in praxis is difficult to say. As Gladoić Håkansson et al. (2021) point out, the praxis of the conscientious objection clause has consequences and limits women's access to abortion care. It reinforces a moralizing view of reproduction, where women's decisions regarding abortion are a collective

concern, causing stigma and involuntary social alienation. The praxis and outcomes of the conscientious objection clause are an example of how laws interplay with values and, in turn, move morality and acceptance.

## Limitations

As with any study, this one has several limitations. Measuring values quantitatively through a questionnaire raises several concerns: what exactly is it that the respondent is answering, and how do they interpret the questions? Further, in this study, we only use one question (finding certain behaviours justifiable) as a proxy for values. Employing a diverse set of questions would improve the possibility to gauge societal attitudes towards homosexuality and abortion. Additionally, there are questions regarding the quality of the data, such as how it was collected and the presence of missing values. In this study, we used data from the World Values Survey (WVS), a trusted and widely used dataset for quantitatively measuring values.

A significant limitation is the absence of a method to link variations in values to differences in legislation. In our regressions, we use 'nation' as a proxy for the institutional framework, which is inherently imprecise and vague. In future research, it is essential to develop methods within the institutional theoretical framework that can connect formal and informal institutional development.

## Conclusion

The results suggest that the proportion of people finding abortion non-justifiable has increased in Croatia and Serbia but decreased in Slovenia. When it comes to homosexuality, the proportion of non-justifiers has decreased in Serbia, but the decrease was from a high level. In Slovenia, the proportion of homosexuality non-justifiers has also decreased, but it has increased in Croatia. Accordingly, the values on homosexuality in Croatia and Serbia converge, but the two countries diverge from Slovenia (i.e., the value-gap increases). The chi-squared tests show that all these changes are significantly separated from zero. Thus, they did not happen by chance.

Our estimated regression models show that religiosity influences the odds of a person being a non-justifier, i.e. a religious person has higher odds of being a non-justifier. Thus, increased religiosity in Croatia and Serbia may be one explanation for the increased share of non-justifiers. However, this is far from the full explanation. After controlling for religiosity, we still found national differences between Croatia/Serbia and Slovenia.

While 'religious nationalism' serves as a means to unite the nation, it also justifies the exclusion of 'the other' (Sremac & Ganzevoort, 2015). As the three countries took different paths to become independent states, not least through having different experiences of war during the 1990s, they may have had different needs to claim uniqueness and exclusivity. Therefore, some of the answers to why the three nations differ in values on homosexuality and abortion may lay in the

recent historical trajectories. To understand changing values of sexuality, future research has to investigate the connection between institutional reform, historical trajectories and values. We also need more research on how values and formal institutions merge into praxis.

## Appendix 1

See Table 3.

**Table 3** Description of the sample

| Variable  | Obs. | Mean    | Std. Dev. | Min. | Max. |
|-----------|------|---------|-----------|------|------|
| just_homo | 7621 | 3.6146  | 3.2537    | 1    | 10   |
| just_abo  | 7621 | 5.0297  | 3.1776    | 1    | 10   |
| Year      | 7621 | 0.5945  | 0.4910    | 0    | 1    |
| entry     |      |         |           |      |      |
| Slo       | 7621 | 0.2501  | 0.4331    | 0    | 1    |
| Cro       | 7621 | 0.3136  | 0.4640    | 0    | 1    |
| Srb       | 7621 | 0.4362  | 0.4960    | 0    | 1    |
| rel       | 7621 | 0.7221  | 0.4480    | 0    | 1    |
| edu       |      |         |           |      |      |
| Lower     | 4506 | 0.1440  | 0.3512    | 0    | 1    |
| Middle    | 4506 | 0.5226  | 0.4996    | 0    | 1    |
| Upper     | 4506 | 0.3333  | 0.4715    | 0    | 1    |
| Age       | 7609 | 46.1663 | 17.0228   | 18   | 82   |
| Sex       | 7621 | 0.5386  | 0.4985    | 0    | 1    |

## Appendix 2

See Table 4.

**Table 4** Chi-squared test for value changes between waves

|                       |   |                   |        |
|-----------------------|---|-------------------|--------|
| <b>Homosexuality</b>  |   |                   |        |
| <b>Slovenia</b>       | 1995–99                                     | 2017–20           | Total  |
| Sometimes/always just | 49.19                                       | 75.38             | 62.67  |
| Never just            | 50.81                                       | 24.62             | 37.33  |
| Total                 | 100.00                                      | 100.00            | 100.00 |
|                       | <i>Pearson's chi-squared (1) = 139.3533</i> | <i>Pr = 0.000</i> |        |
| <b>Croatia</b>        | 1995–99                                     | 2017–20           | Total  |
| Sometimes/always just | 60.07                                       | 48.65             | 53.85  |
| Never just            | 39.93                                       | 51.35             | 46.15  |
| Total                 | 100.00                                      | 100.00            | 100.00 |
|                       | <i>Pearson's chi-squared (1) = 30.9631</i>  | <i>Pr = 0.000</i> |        |
| <b>Serbia</b>         | 1995–99                                     | 2017–20           | Total  |
| Sometimes/always just | 34.27                                       | 42.80             | 40.04  |
| Never just            | 65.73                                       | 57.20             | 59.96  |
| Total                 | 100.00                                      | 100.00            | 100.00 |
|                       | <i>Pearson's chi-squared (1) = 21.9046</i>  | <i>Pr = 0.000</i> |        |
| <b>Abortion</b>       |   |                   |        |
| <b>Slovenia</b>       | 1995–99                                     | 2017–20           | Total  |
| Sometimes/always just | 73.56                                       | 88.46             | 81.23  |
| Never just            | 26.44                                       | 11.54             | 18.77  |
| Total                 | 100.00                                      | 100.00            | 100.00 |
|                       | <i>Pearson's chi-squared (1) = 69.1148</i>  | <i>Pr = 0.000</i> |        |
| <b>Croatia</b>        | 1995–99                                     | 2017–20           | Total  |
| Sometimes/always just | 79.30                                       | 63.63             | 70.76  |
| Never just            | 20.70                                       | 36.37             | 29.24  |
| Total                 | 100.00                                      | 100.00            | 100.00 |
|                       | <i>Pearson's chi-squared (1) = 69.9450</i>  | <i>Pr = 0.000</i> |        |
| <b>Serbia</b>         | 1995–99                                     | 2017–20           | Total  |
| Sometimes/always just | 83.80                                       | 67.71             | 72.91  |
| Never just            | 16.20                                       | 32.29             | 27.09  |
| Total                 | 100.00                                      | 100.00            | 100.00 |
|                       | <i>Pearson's chi-squared (1) = 94.7558</i>  | <i>Pr = 0.000</i> |        |
| <b>Religious</b>      |   |                   |        |
| <b>Slovenia</b>       | 1995–99                                     | 2017–20           | Total  |
| Not religious         | 30.88                                       | 32.99             | 31.97  |
| Yes, religious        | 69.12                                       | 67.01             | 68.03  |
| Total                 | 100.00                                      | 100.00            | 100.00 |
|                       | <i>Pearson's chi-squared (1) = 0.9774</i>   | <i>Pr = 0.323</i> |        |
| <b>Croatia</b>        | 1995–99                                     | 2017–20           | Total  |
| Not religious         | 29.39                                       | 17.76             | 23.05  |
| Yes, religious        | 70.61                                       | 82.24             | 76.95  |
| Total                 | 100.00                                      | 100.00            | 100.00 |
|                       | <i>Pearson's chi-squared (1) = 44.9414</i>  | <i>Pr = 0.000</i> |        |

**Table 4** (continued)

| Serbia                                      | 1995–99 | 2017–20           | Total  |
|---|---------|-------------------|--------|
| Not religious                               | 41.10   | 23.17             | 28.96  |
| Yes, religious                              | 58.90   | 76.83             | 71.04  |
| Total                                       | 100.00  | 100.00            | 100.00 |
| <i>Pearson's chi-squared (1) = 113.0395</i> |         | <i>Pr = 0.000</i> |        |

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## Declarations

**Conflict of interest** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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