

Religious switching and mental disorders in young adulthood: evidence from Finnish population register data

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Background and aim

- Few studies on religious switching and mental health of young adults
- Young adulthood: movement away from religion and mental health problems are common
- First study to analyse interrelation between religious switching and sickness absence due to mental disorders
- Population register data with detailed ICD codes

Data and methods

- Follow-up study on entire population born in Finland in 1984–1996 (N=794,476)
- Each person observed from age 20 in 2004–2018
- Cox proportional hazards, w/o and with controls, w/o and with sibling-fixed effects
- Association between religious switching and first-time sickness allowance receipt from mental disorders (F chapter)
- Presented as hazard ratios for mental health related SA receipt

Results

Total population, with control variables

Religion age 20	New religion		
	Lutheran	Non-affil.	Other
Lutheran	1	1.41	2.16
Non-affiliated	1.49	1.59	1.85
Other religion	2.14	1.64	1.31

Results

...by time since switching

	No switch	Year of switch	1 year after	2+ yrs after
Lutheran	1			
...to Non-affiliated		1.48	1.45	1.37
...to Other religion		2.33	2.15	2.12
Non-affiliated	1.59			
...to Lutheran		1.42	1.84	1.39
...to Other religion		1.86	2.02	1.79
Other religion	1.31			
...to Lutheran		(0.63)	3.01	2.38
...to Non-affiliated		1.98	2.13	1.36

Conclusion

- Religious switching matters (over time), direction matters
- Particularly *from* Lutheran and *from* Other religion
- *Being* and *becoming* non-affiliated related to poor mental health
- Not simply because families differ
- Who becomes unaffiliated?
- Other contexts than Finland

THANKS!