ARISTOTLE NOTES

The State of Canadian Society

The Changing Religious Landscape Across Canadian Provinces



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Why the social religious composition of Canada matters:

Religion is an important part of society. No matter what people believe, religion shapes individual identities and beliefs. On a national level, it affects culture, politics, and laws. It also influences daily habits, such as food and clothing choices.

In communities, religion affects how people treat one another and shapes how society functions. In Canada, religious groups from many faiths are active across the provinces.

Canada's religious makeup is changing. Table 1 shows that fewer Canadians identify as Christian, while other religions are growing more quickly. More people are also choosing not to adhere to any religion. Christianity remains the largest religion in Canada, at 53.3 percent of the population, but this varies by region. Newfoundland and Labrador has the highest percentage of Christians at 82.4 percent, while British Columbia has the lowest at 34.3 percent.

Major non-Christian religions like Islam (4.9%), Hinduism (2.3%), and Sikhism (2.1%) are mostly found in larger provinces such as Ontario, Quebec, Alberta, and British Columbia, and their presence in Canada is linked to immigration. A significant number of Canadians, 34.6 percent, report having no religion, and, in British Columbia, this number is even higher at 52.1 percent. These numbers show that religious affiliation varies widely by province, with some areas still mostly Christian and others moving away from Christianity.

The data show major generational changes in religious affiliation in Canada from 1991 to 2021 (see Table 2). Christianity declined significantly in all age groups, especially for people under 25, where it went from 80.6 percent to 44.2 percent. For adults aged 25 to 64, the percentage of those identifying as Christian fell from 83.7 percent to 51.2 percent. At the same time, more Canadians reported having no religion: Among those under 25, those claiming no religion rose from 15 percent to 40.9 percent, and among adults aged 25 to 64, from 12.3 percent to 36.6 percent. Non-Christian religions like Islam, Hinduism, and Sikhism also grew in all age groups, a trend that is linked to higher immigration levels. The largest increases were among younger Canadians. The Muslim population under 25 increased from 1 percent to 7 percent, and the Hindu population from less than 1 percent to nearly 3 percent.

TABLE 1

Religious distribution among population in Canada and provinces

	Buddhist	Christian	Hindu	Jewish	Muslim	Sikh	Traditional (North American Indigenous) spirituality	Other religions and spiritual traditions	No religion and secular perspectives	Total population count
Canada	**1.0%**	**53.3%**	**2.3%**	**0.9%**	**4.9%**	**2.1%**	**0.2%**	**0.6%**	**34.6%**	**36,328,480**
Newfoundland and Labrador	0.1%	82.4%	0.2%	0.0%	0.8%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%	16.0%	**502,105**
Prince Edward Island	0.5%	67.6%	0.8%	0.1%	1.1%	0.8%	0.0%	0.5%	28.5%	**150,475**
Nova Scotia	0.3%	58.2%	0.9%	0.2%	1.5%	0.5%	0.1%	0.6%	37.6%	**955,855**
New Brunswick	0.1%	67.5%	0.4%	0.1%	1.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.5%	29.7%	**759,190**
Quebec	0.6%	64.8%	0.6%	1.0%	5.1%	0.3%	0.0%	0.3%	27.3%	**8,308,470**
Ontario	1.2%	52.1%	4.1%	1.4%	6.7%	2.1%	0.1%	0.6%	31.6%	**14,031,750**
Manitoba	0.6%	54.2%	1.4%	0.9%	2.0%	2.7%	0.8%	0.7%	36.7%	**1,307,190**
Saskatchewan	0.4%	56.3%	1.3%	0.1%	2.3%	0.8%	1.5%	0.7%	36.6%	**1,103,200**
Alberta	1.0%	48.1%	1.9%	0.3%	4.8%	2.5%	0.5%	0.8%	40.1%	**4,177,720**
British Columbia	1.7%	34.3%	1.7%	0.5%	2.6%	5.9%	0.2%	1.0%	52.1%	**4,915,935**
Yukon	0.7%	35.0%	0.7%	0.2%	0.5%	1.0%	0.8%	1.5%	59.7%	**39,580**
Northwest Territories	0.6%	55.2%	0.5%	0.1%	1.8%	0.3%	0.8%	0.9%	39.8%	**40,370**
Nunavut	0.1%	73.5%	0.2%	0.1%	0.4%	0.0%	0.5%	0.4%	24.9%	**36,605**

Source: Statistics Canada, 2023.

TABLE 2

Percentage of the total population affiliated with a religion, by age group, Canada, 1991 and 2021

Religion	Age group					
	Less than 25		25 to 64 years		65 years and over	
	Year		Year		Year	
	1991	2021	1991	2021	1991	2021
Buddhist	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	1.1%	0.5%	1.1%
Christian	80.6%	44.2%	83.7%	51.2%	90.7%	73.7%
Hindu	0.7%	2.6%	0.6%	2.5%	0.2%	1.2%
Jewish	1.0%	0.9%	1.1%	0.8%	2.0%	1.3%
Muslim	1.2%	7.3%	0.9%	4.7%	0.3%	1.7%
Sikh	0.7%	2.7%	0.5%	2.1%	0.3%	1.3%
Other religions and spiritual traditions	0.2%	0.8%	0.3%	1.0%	0.1%	0.6%
No religion and secular perspectives	15.0%	40.9%	12.3%	36.6%	5.9%	19.1%
Total population count	**9,522,130**	**10,173,615**	**14,539,595**	**19,568,265**	**2,932,325**	**6,586,600**

Source: Statistics Canada, 2023.

From 2001 to 2021, religious affiliation in Canada changed significantly. The percentage of Christians fell from 77 percent to 53 percent, while the share of people with secular views or no religion rose from 17 percent to 35 percent (see Table 3). Other religions also grew, rising from 6 percent to 12 percent. These changes show that Canada is becoming more religiously diverse and that a growing number of people prefer secular identities. Overall, the data show a move away from traditional Christian affiliation.

TABLE 3

Share of the population with a Christian religion from 2001–2021

	2001	2011	2021
Christian	77%	67%	53%
No religion and secular perspectives	17%	24%	35%
Other religions	6%	9%	12%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2022.

References

"The Canadian Census: A Rich Portrait of the Country's Religious and Ethnocultural Diversity," Statistics Canada, October 26, 2022, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221026/dq221026b-eng.htm.

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