

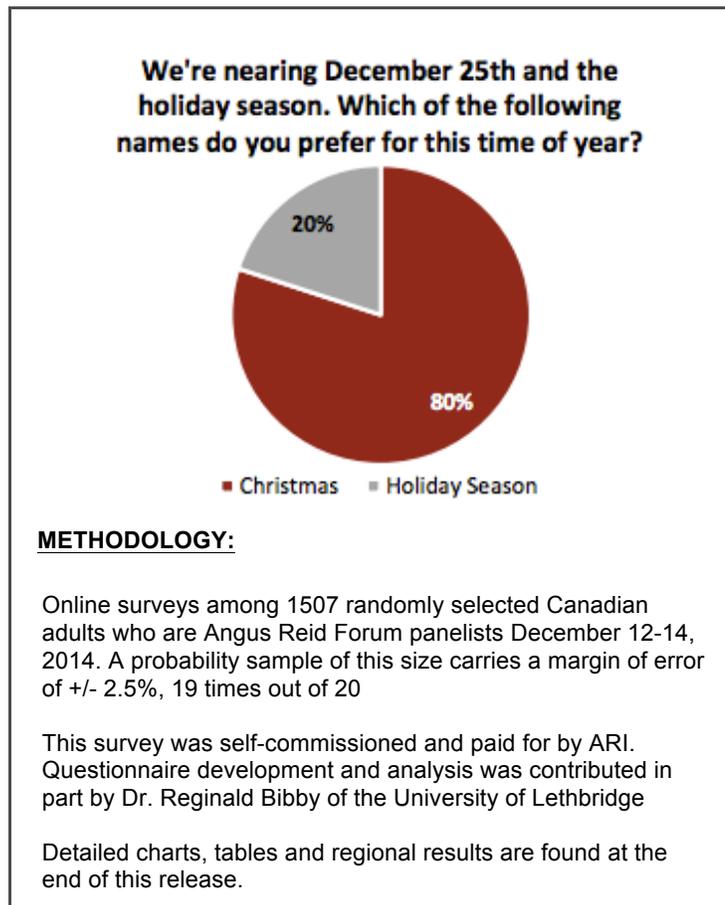
For majority of Canadians, Christmas' importance lies in time with family, a break from everyday life and time for reflection

A significant number – more than half – say the religious aspect of Christmas still comes first

December 22, 2014 – As Canadians prepare to join loved ones over the Christmas season, they do so as residents of a multid denominational and multicultural country. Their opinions in regards to the significance, meaning and celebration of December 25th, however, show much common ground.

An online survey of more than 1500 Canadian adults conducted by the Angus Reid Institute and the University of Lethbridge shows:

- The vast majority of respondents (80%) prefer to call this time of year “Christmas” rather than the “Holiday Season”.
- Nearly all respondents (94%) regardless of their religious or cultural background, say spending time with friends and family is what makes Christmas special.
- A significant number (54%) say it's the religious aspect and “celebrating the birth of Christ” that makes Christmas special.
- Three-quarters (76%) of Canadians say Christmas' best quality is in the way it provides a breather from everyday life.



Key Findings:

Four-in-five respondents (80%) prefer to refer to the time of year as “Christmas” rather than the “Holiday Season,” for reasons that variously seem to reflect family, culture, and religion. For example, two-in-five (37%) say they will be attending a “Christmas” service this year, and according to an [Angus Reid survey](#) last year, will be saying grace at Christmas dinner. That said, three-in-five will be doing neither. “Christmas” clearly means different things to different people.

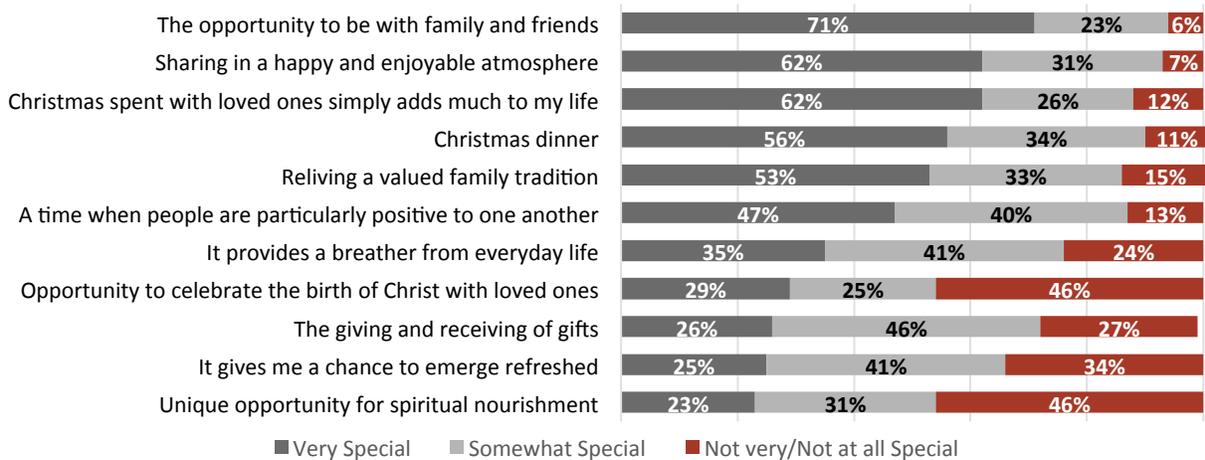
MEDIA CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Senior Vice President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dr. Reginald Bibby, University of Lethbridge: 403-381-0151 bibby@uleth.ca

In contrast to their different takes on the meaning of Christmas, Canadians are virtually unanimous (94%) in saying that what makes Christmas so special is the opportunity to be with family and friends – with that opportunity valued pervasively by people of all ages (three-quarters, 71 per cent, describe it as a “very special”) led slightly by those who are older.

Gifts and Christmas dinner have both been historically enshrined as key features of the season. One-in-four (26%) single out the giving and receiving of gifts as a feature that makes things “very special,” compared to more than half (56%) who say the same about that much-anticipated meal together.

What do you personally find makes these gatherings so special?

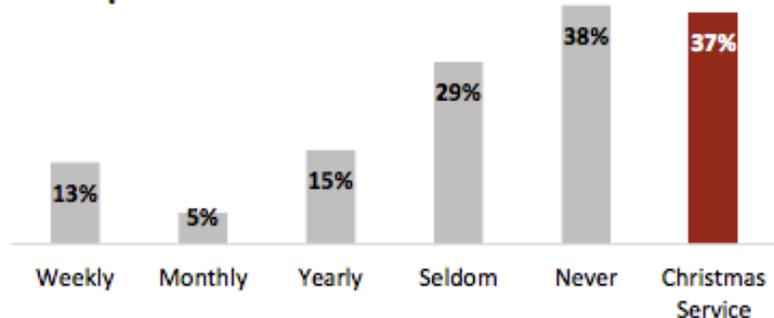


Religion and Spirituality:

With respect to the religious and spiritual facets of Christmas, roughly half of Canadians say that having the opportunity to celebrate the birth of Christ and/or receive spiritual nourishment with loved ones makes Christmas time “very special” (29% and 23% respectively) or “somewhat special” (25% and 31% respectively).

A significant number of Canadians – two-in-five (37%) say they will attend a Christmas service. That is twice as many as those who say they normally attend monthly or more (18%). A rough calculation against population statistics indicates this could be as many as many as 10 million people in church on the 25th.

How often do you attend religious services? Do you expect to attend a special Christmas service in December?

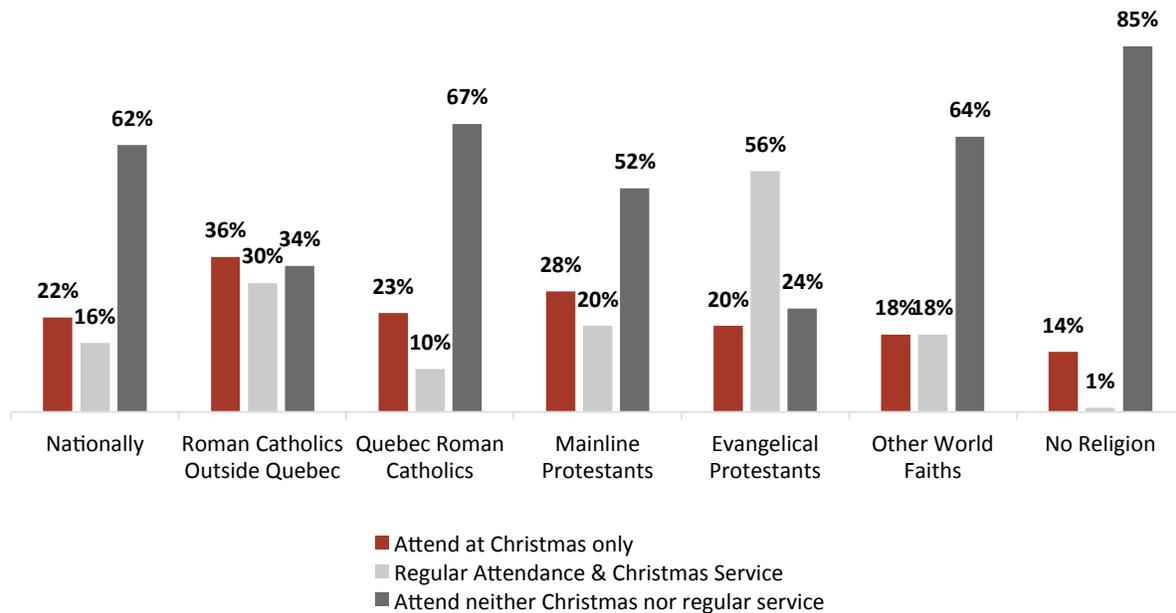


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Most may only be showing up once a year or so – particularly in the case of Quebec Catholics, Catholics elsewhere, and Mainline Protestants. But their presence suggests a “latent faith” does exist in Canada.

Religious Identity and Religious Service Attendance



An “Important Breather” and Time for Reflection:

In spite of the known stresses that come with this time of year, three-in-four Canadians say Christmastime with family and friends is special in providing “a breather from everyday life.”

Other findings:

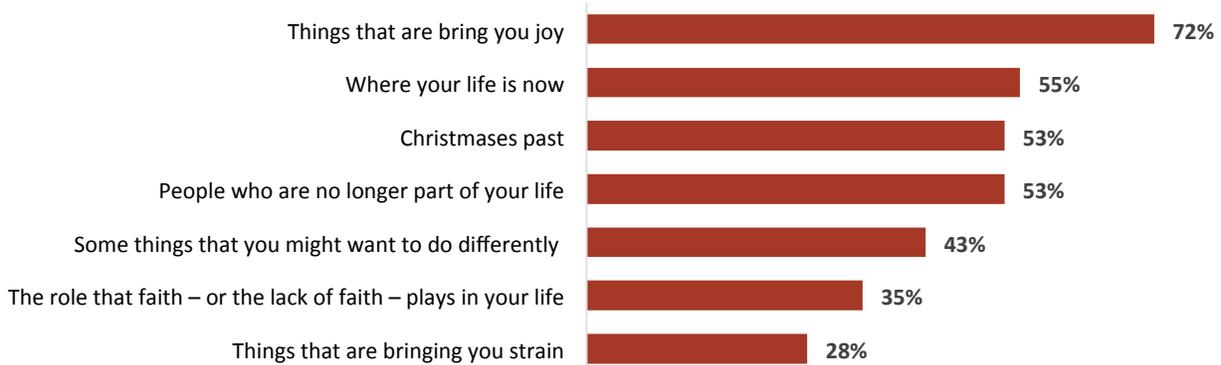
- Over fifty per cent (53%) say they expect they will be thinking about Christmases past, including people who are no longer in their lives. For many, life “this year” will be very different, in many cases because faces of beloved family members and friends will not be there.
- Things that are bringing them joy will be on the minds of more than seventy per cent (72%), while close to thirty per cent (28%) will also be dealing with sources of strain. Young people are more likely to be anxious: 40 per cent of people under 35 year of age. That’s twice as many as those 55+ focusing on strain (18%).
- Some 55 per cent anticipate they will be thinking about where their lives are now, with about 40 per cent pondering things they might want to do differently. Lots of people – led by younger adults – are pondering significant changes.

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- Just over one-in-three say that the season will have them reflecting on the role “that faith – or the lack of faith” – plays in their lives, further evidence of the changing place that religion and spirituality often have in people’s lives.

% Indicating They Anticipate They Will Be Reflecting “A Great Deal” or “Quite a Bit”



*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research organization established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

*Alberta’s Destination University, the **University of Lethbridge** is one of Canada’s most influential research universities, and is committed to providing students with an unparalleled university experience. The U of L is recognized on the national stage as one of Canada’s top-three undergraduate institutions (2014 Macleans University Rankings).*

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We're nearing December 25th and the holiday Season. Which of the following names do you prefer for this time of year?

	Total (1507)	Region					
		BC (196)	AB (162)	SK/MB (100)	ON (564)	PQ (370)	ATL (114)
Christmas	80%	88%	89%	88%	87%	54%	93%
Holiday Season	20%	12%	11%	12%	13%	46%	7%

We're nearing December 25th and the holiday Season. Which of the following names do you prefer for this time of year?

	Total (1507)	Gender		Age		
		Men (753)	Women (754)	18 – 34 (389)	35 – 54 (565)	55+ (553)
Christmas	80%	77%	82%	76%	80%	82%
Holiday Season	20%	23%	18%	24%	20%	18%

Do you expect to attend a special Christmas service in December?

	Total (1507)	Region					
		BC (196)	AB (162)	SK/MB (100)	ON (564)	PQ (370)	ATL (114)
Yes	37%	30%	41%	46%	44%	24%	46%
No	63%	70%	59%	54%	56%	76%	54%

Do you expect to attend a special Christmas service in December?

	Total (1507)	Gender		Age		
		Men (753)	Women (754)	18 – 34 (389)	35 – 54 (565)	55+ (553)
Yes	37%	36%	38%	34%	35%	42%
No	63%	64%	62%	66%	65%	58%

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Do you expect to attend a special Christmas service in December?								
	Total (1507)	Religion						
		Roman Catholic (442)	Protestant (339)	Evangelical (76*)	Other Religion (187)	Atheist (122)	Agnostic (107)	No religious identity (234)
Yes	37%	49%	50%	73%*	32%	14%	7%	15%
No	63%	51%	50%	27%*	68%	86%	93%	85%

*Sample sizes too small for stable percentaging.

Most Canadians report that spending Christmas/the holiday season with family and friends makes it an important time of the year. What do you personally find makes these gatherings so special?			
	Very Special	Somewhat Special	Not very/Not at all Special
The opportunity to be with family and friends	71%	23%	6%
Sharing in a happy and enjoyable atmosphere	62%	31%	7%
Christmas spent with loved ones simply adds much to my life	62%	26%	12%
Christmas dinner	56%	34%	11%
Reliving a valued family tradition	53%	33%	15%
A unique time when people are particularly positive to one another	47%	40%	13%
It provides a breather from everyday life	35%	41%	24%
Offers the opportunity to celebrate the birth of Christ with loved ones	29%	25%	46%
The giving and receiving of gifts	26%	46%	27%
It gives me a chance to emerge refreshed	25%	41%	34%
Provides a unique opportunity for spiritual nourishment	23%	31%	46%

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To what extent do you expect that, during Christmas/holiday seasons like this one, you yourself will reflect on ...				
	A great deal	Quite a bit	Some	Little or none
Christmases past	23%	30%	32%	15%
People who are no longer part of your life	26%	27%	31%	15%
Things that are bringing you joy	36%	37%	21%	6%
Things that are bringing you strain	9%	20%	36%	36%
Where your life is now	23%	33%	32%	13%
Some things you might want to do differently	15%	28%	40%	17%
The role that faith - or the lack of faith - plays in your life	17%	17%	27%	39%

To what extent do you expect that, during Christmas/holiday seasons like this one, you yourself will reflect on ...						
A great deal/Quite a lot Summary						
	Total (1507)	Gender		Age		
		Men (753)	Women (754)	18 – 34 (389)	35 – 54 (565)	55+ (553)
Christmases past	53%	50%	55%	46%	54%	58%
People who are no longer part of your life	53%	48%	57%	44%	53%	61%
Things that are bringing you joy	72%	68%	76%	74%	71%	73%
Things that are bringing you strain	28%	25%	32%	40%	29%	18%
Where your life is now	55%	53%	58%	61%	54%	51%
Some things you might want to do differently	43%	41%	44%	51%	45%	33%
The role that faith - or the lack of faith - plays in your life	35%	33%	36%	30%	34%	39%

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