

ARI – Cardus/Faith in Canada 150

Polling Phase Three: Religion and Faith in Canada’s Public Square

Today’s survey looks at a number of different topics -- including life today, some public issues here in Canada, and people’s own faith and beliefs.

Overall – religion in the public square

Let's begin by considering the role of religious and faith communities in Canada today.

By “religious and faith communities” we are generally referring to a group of people who share a religious faith. This could be any religious tradition, such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, or any other shared faith. And the group could be members of a formal religious order (nuns, for example) or simply involved lay people, or a combination of the two.

A1. How would you describe the overall contribution religious and faith communities are making to Canada and Canadian society today?

- Very good
- More good than bad
- A mix of good and bad
- More bad than good
- Very bad

A2. What would you consider ideal when it comes to the overall participation and influence of religious and faith communities in Canadian public life today? In your view, should religious and faith communities have:

- A major influence on Canadian public life
- Some influence
- Not much
- No influence at all – religion doesn’t belong in public life

A3. Let’s think for a moment about some of the various social issues and challenges facing Canada today. This could be issues of medical ethics, for example, or how we approach challenges such as poverty and homelessness. To what extent do you think religious communities and faith groups are relevant to addressing these types of social issues and challenges today?

- More relevant than ever
- As relevant as ever

Becoming less relevant
 No longer relevant at all

A4. Overall, would you say the government of Canada generally shows too much respect or shows too little respect for religious communities and faith groups in Canada today?

Way too much respect
 Too much
 About right overall
 Too little
 Way too little respect

The landscape/world religions

["Split sample". All survey respondents will be asked about 4 of these groups, administered randomly. So, all 8 groups will be assessed by a sub-sample of 1,000 respondents.]

B1. Now, let's get a little more specific for a moment and think about some of the main values and beliefs related to faith and religion. We'll focus on four of the eight listed below, which the system will select at random.

Catholicism
 Protestantism
 Evangelical Christianity
 Judaism
 Islam
 Hinduism
 Sikhism
 [Always last:] Atheism

a) First, in your view, would you say the overall presence of each of these in Canadian public life is benefitting or damaging Canada and Canadian society?

Damaging
 No real impact
 Benefitting
 Don't know/Can't say

Group 1
Group 2
Group 3
Group 4

b) And, would you say the influence of each of these in Canada and Canadian public life is growing or shrinking?

Shrinking
Staying the same
Growing
Don't know/Can't say

Group 1
Group 2
Group 3
Group 4

c) Lastly, how much do you feel you yourself understand each of these religious beliefs and those who practise or share them?

Don't know anything
Understand very little
Understand the basics
Understand quite well
Understand very well

Group 1
Group 2
Group 3
Group 4

Intersections

C1. Historically, most of Canada's immigration was from European countries with a Christian religious tradition. Canada today has more people from different religious and faith traditions. In your view, all things considered, is this increasing religious diversity a good thing or a bad thing for Canada?

Good thing

Bad thing
 Mixed/Both
 Not sure/Can't say

C2. Increasing numbers of Canadians have no religious faith and describe themselves as atheist. All things considered, do you think that having a growing number of atheists is a good thing or a bad thing for Canada?

Good thing
 Bad thing
 Mixed/Both
 Not sure/Can't say

Freedom of religion

D1. The Canadian Charter of Rights recognizes "freedom of religion". Very briefly, this means there is no official national religion and people have the right to choose a religion – or no religion – and to practise it without government interference. In your view, does having "freedom of religion" make Canada a better or worse country?

Better
 Worse
 No real impact either way
 Can't say/No idea

D2. And would you say, generally speaking, that freedom of religion is becoming stronger or weaker here in Canada?

Becoming stronger
 Becoming weaker
 Staying about the same
 Not sure/can't say

Religious accommodation -- selected scenarios

Now let's consider some specific issues that sometimes receive discussion and debate here in Canada.

E1. As far as you're concerned, do you personally think the following should be: welcome; discouraged but tolerated; or prohibited?

a) A woman visiting a government office in a "niqab" -- a veil worn by some Muslim women when they are out in public, covering all of the face except for the eyes.

b) A local community council meeting starting with a non-denominational prayer to God for good guidance.

Welcome

Discouraged but tolerated

Prohibited

E2. In Canada, organized religions qualify for special tax consideration. For example, religious buildings (such as a Church or temple or mosque) don't pay property taxes, and people's donations to their religion are tax deductible as charitable donations. Would you say this:

Is a reasonable policy -- Keep it in place

Is not reasonable -- time to get rid of it

E3. There has also been some debate in the field of health care, specifically concerning physician-assisted dying which, as you probably know, is now legal in Canada, within guidelines.

Suppose a nursing home for the elderly built and managed by a specific faith community does not allow medically assisted death at its facility on moral and ethical grounds. Setting aside your own views on assisted dying for a moment, do you think this nursing home should:

[Rotate]

Be able to say no on moral grounds and patients who want a doctor-assisted death would be moved to another facility

Be required by law to allow these procedures at their facilities

E5. A Catholic priest has a religious duty and is legally entitled to not disclose what is told to them during confession -- similar to the legal privilege of confidentiality between psychiatrists and their patients. In your view, should Catholic confession maintain this status, or not?

Maintain

No, time to get rid of it

E6. Looking at these issues overall and the extent to which Canada accommodates different faith practises and religious minorities today – Overall, would you say Canada:

Does too much to accommodate

Doesn't do enough/should do more

Strikes the right balance

The religious/spirituality spectrum

Now let's turn to a few questions about your own personal religious faith and beliefs. As always, there are no right or wrong answers.

F1. Do you believe that God or a higher power exists?

Yes, I definitely do believe

Yes, I think so

No, I don't think so

No, I definitely do not believe

F2. How often, if at all, do you:

a) Pray to God or some higher power

b) Attend religious services (other than weddings or funerals)

c) Feel you experience God's presence

Never

Only rarely

A few times a year
Once or twice a month
Once a week or so
A few times a week
Everyday

[Ask those who answered latter two "No" responses at QF1:]

F3. You have indicated that you do not believe that God or a higher power exists -- or that you don't think so. Just to confirm, how would you describe yourself when it comes to the whole area of personal faith or spirituality? Would you say:

You do not have any feelings of faith or spirituality
Have some/at some times
You do have feelings of faith or spirituality in your life

F4. Which one of the following best describes your religion?

Roman Catholic
United Church
Anglican
Lutheran
Presbyterian
Baptist
Pentecostal
Other evangelical Christian
Other Christian
Muslim
Hindu
Jewish
Sikh
Buddhist
No religious identity
Other (Specify: _____)

F5. Some people say Canadians variously (1) embrace faith and religion, (2) reject faith and religion, or (3) are somewhere in between the two extremes.
Where would you tend to locate yourself?

I am inclined to embrace my faith and/or religion
 I am inclined to reject any faith and/or religion
 I am somewhere in between

Your own religious community and personal faith

[QG1 a – c series to be asked of everyone except those indicating “no religious identity” at QF4]

G1. Let’s focus for a moment on your own specific religious or faith community – that is, the specific tradition or group that you, yourself, belong to or identify with.

a) What kind of role does your own faith community have in Canada today? Does it have a:

Major role
 Some role
 Not much
 No role at all
 Don’t know/can’t say

b) To what extent *should* it have a role in Canadian public life? Should it have a:

Major role
 Some role
 Not much
 No role in public life
 Don’t know/Can’t say

c) And would you say your faith community's influence in Canadian public life is becoming stronger or weaker?

Stronger
 Weaker
 Staying about the same
 Don’t know/Can’t say

[QG2 a – c series to be asked of everyone except those indicating “no feelings of faith or spirituality” at QF3.]

G2. And now let's focus for a moment on your own personal faith and spirituality -- aside from your faith community and religious traditions, and just focusing on the personal.

a) Overall, would you say your own personal faith and spirituality is increasing or decreasing in depth and intensity?

More intense/increasing

Less intense/decreasing

Staying about the same

b) Thinking ahead to future generations – say, to your own grandchildren (or people that age), do you think that generation will have stronger or weaker personal faith and spirituality than your own generation?

Will be stronger

Will be weaker

About the same

Don't know/can't say

c) Overall, do you feel Canadian society today tends to make room for or shuts out your own personal values and faith?

Makes room for

Shuts out

No real impact either way

Don't know/can't say

Focus on the faithful and political involvement

H1. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

[Randomize statements]

I'm prepared to stand up for what I believe in, even if it's an unpopular view

It seems like the values I care about are losing ground – and it's time more people did something about that

Disagree strongly
 Disagree moderately
 Agree moderately
 Agree strongly

H2. Turning to day-to-day life for a minute, are you yourself involved in any of the following?
 [RANDOMIZE]

Volunteer for a community/non-profit organization(s)
 Follow current issues and events in the news
 Involved in politics and elections (party member/worked on a campaign)
 Write letters to elected representatives or the news media
 Protest on public issues – demonstration/petition/boycott

No, not at all
 Not really
 A bit/Occasionally
 Yes, fairly often
 Yes, very involved

H3a. Are you on social media (Facebook/Instagram/Twitter etc)?

Yes, frequently
 Yes, I'm a lighter user
 No, not on social media

[If yes, on social media, ask:]

H3b. Do you do any of the following on social media?

Follow politicians/public figures
 Like political posts that you agree with
 Argue or debate with people and views you disagree with

No, do not
 Rarely
 Sometimes
 Yes, often

H4. Thinking about past elections, which of the following best describes your own personal voting habits?

I vote in every election (federal, provincial, and municipal)

I vote in most elections (three of the last four elections)

I vote in some elections (two of the last four elections)

I rarely vote (one of the last four elections)

I never vote

H5. There has been some discussion about different religious groups and faith communities getting together in more organized inter-faith umbrella organizations to promote and advance common causes they believe in -- such as maintaining tax status for religious institutions, taking a united position on medical ethics issues, or working on supporting refugees and immigrants, that sort of thing. Very generally, do you think that kind of inter-faith co-operation sounds like a good or a bad idea?

Very good idea – would have a positive impact

Good idea

Mixed/depends

Bad idea

Very bad idea – would have a negative impact

Other Attitudes/Angles

Just a few more questions to finish up the survey.

I1. How important is this whole issue to you – the role and influence of religious communities and faith groups in public life in Canada today?

Very important – you care a lot about this issue

Fairly important

Not very important

Not important at all – you don't care about it at all

12. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

[Randomize statements]

I'm public about my religion and faith and don't mind other people knowing I'm a believer

My personal faith is a very central and fundamental part of who I am

Reducing the presence of religion in our public life is a sign of progress in our society

Generally speaking, I feel a bit uncomfortable around people who are religiously devout

The Canadian government respects my own religious tradition or faith community

Religious and faith communities strengthen Canadian values such as equality and human rights

Having a religious or faith-focused upbringing helps shape good citizenship characteristics

All of the great religions of the world are equally good and true

Disagree strongly

Disagree moderately

Agree moderately

Agree strongly

13. One other issue concerns Canada's indigenous peoples and their relationship with Canadian Christian churches. There is some painful history here – most notably, the federal government's residential school system, in place for over 100 years (ending in the 1990's), which was largely run by Christian churches.

Looking ahead to the future now, what are your overall expectations for the future relationship between the Christian churches and Indigenous people in Canada – do you think it will improve or get worse?

Improve

Get worse

Stay the same

Really can't say/Don't know