

Faith and Immigration: New Canadians rely on religious communities for material, spiritual support

New study shows immigrants are most likely to see a significant role for faith in the public square

July 9, 2018 – It is arguably one of the most challenging life transitions people can experience: leaving your home country for an unknown new land, working to establish yourself financially, socially and professionally, in many cases, without the support of pre-existing family networks.

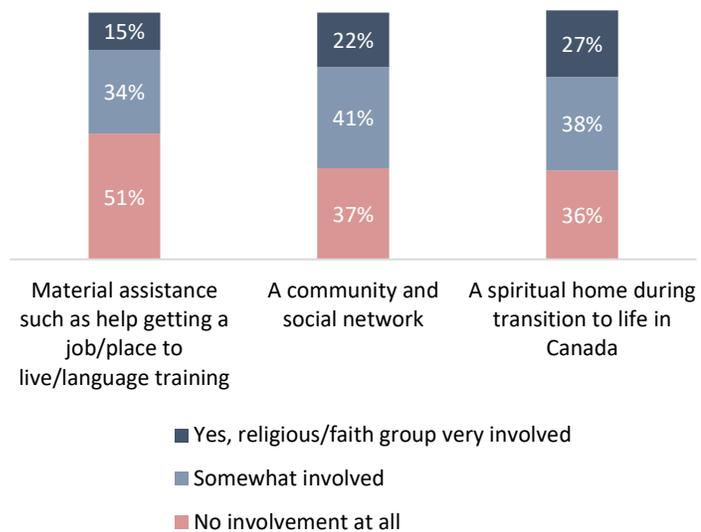
A comprehensive public opinion study of new Canadian – a partnership between the Angus Reid Institute and [Cardus](#) – suggests immigrants often seek and find help, both temporal and spiritual, from Canadian religious communities. These communities are evidently integral in new Canadians' journeys into their new lives in this country.

Half of Canadians who were born outside of Canada (49%) say they received material support from faith based communities in Canada, including help finding a job or learning a language.

Further, six-in-ten (63%) say they relied on these groups to form a community and network after they arrived in the country. Second-generation Canadians, those whose parents were born outside of Canada, also say their parents received significant support when they arrived from these communities.

This extensive study explores the role that faith has played in helping immigrants and second-generation Canadians establish themselves, and the impact that this has on discussions of policy and societal values going forward in Canada.

To what extent, if at all, was any religious or faith community involved in the following aspects of settling into life here in Canada? Among Immigrants



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from June 13 - 19 among a representative randomized sample of 1,509 Canadian adults who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

An additional online survey was conducted from June 15 – 22 among a sample of 494 Canadian adults who are members of [Ethnic Corner](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 4.4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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More Key Findings:

- Immigrants are twice as likely as “third-generation+” Canadians (those whose connection to Canada began with their grandparents or further back) to say that religion should have a significant influence on public life in Canada (20% to 10%) and half as likely to say there should be no influence (15% to 29%)
- Canadians of all persuasions are slightly more likely to share their faith and spiritual values with their mothers rather than their fathers. This is particularly true of immigrants – three-quarters (75%) share their faith with their mothers, compared to 56 per cent among third-generation+
- At least six-in-ten Canadians among each of these three groups say that having a religious based upbringing helps to shape positive characteristics for Canadians in society

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Faith-based communities provide support and comfort for new Canadians

It's a common sight in Canada's largest cities – large, self-contained portions of these sprawling metropolitan areas where ethnic groups congregate. These enclaves are an important part of the immigration experience for many newcomers. As Ryerson University's [Sandeep Agrawal states](#) “people find their footing in these neighbourhoods.”

One of the important services that these areas provide is religious accommodation. Newcomers are able to gain support and community immediately in many cases through a network of religious groups. Notably, sometimes the community they find support within is not even associated with [their own religion](#).

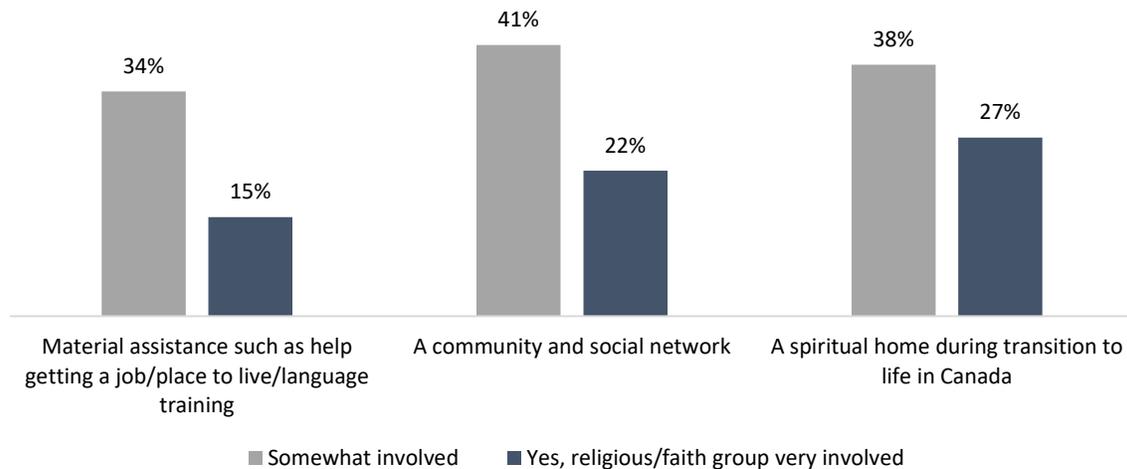
In order to explore this and other elements of faith in the lives of new Canadians, the Angus Reid Institute employed a special sample of those who have immigrated themselves (Immigrants), and those whose parents have immigrated (Second-Generation), with ties to the three largest regional sources of immigration to Canada, as well as elsewhere in the world. See [comprehensive tables](#) for full details on nation of origin, sample sizes, and a host of other interesting demographic information. These groups are compared throughout this report with the rest of Canadians, whose lineage in Canada goes back to their grandparents of further. They are referred to as Third-Generation+.

Asked what role these types of communities played in their settling into Canadian life, half of immigrants say they were given material assistance – for example, help getting a job, finding a place to live, or language training. An even greater number among this first-generation group say they were offered a community and social network, as well as spiritual comfort when they arrived and connected with their religious community.

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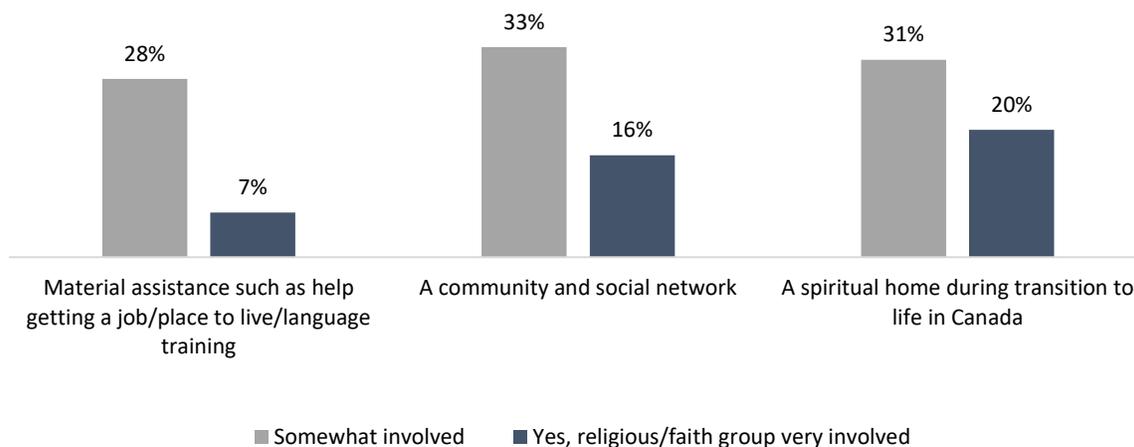
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**To what extent, if at all, was any religious or faith community involved in the following aspects of settling into life here in Canada?
Among Immigrants**



Similarly high levels of involvement are noted among second-generation Canadians – the children of those born outside Canada – when they consider their parents’ experiences. Roughly half (49%) again note that the faith community was an important component of their parents’ social network and their spiritual home.

**Thinking about the experiences of your parents.
To what extent, if at all, was any religious or faith community involved in aspects of their settling into life in Canada?
Among Second-Generation Canadians**



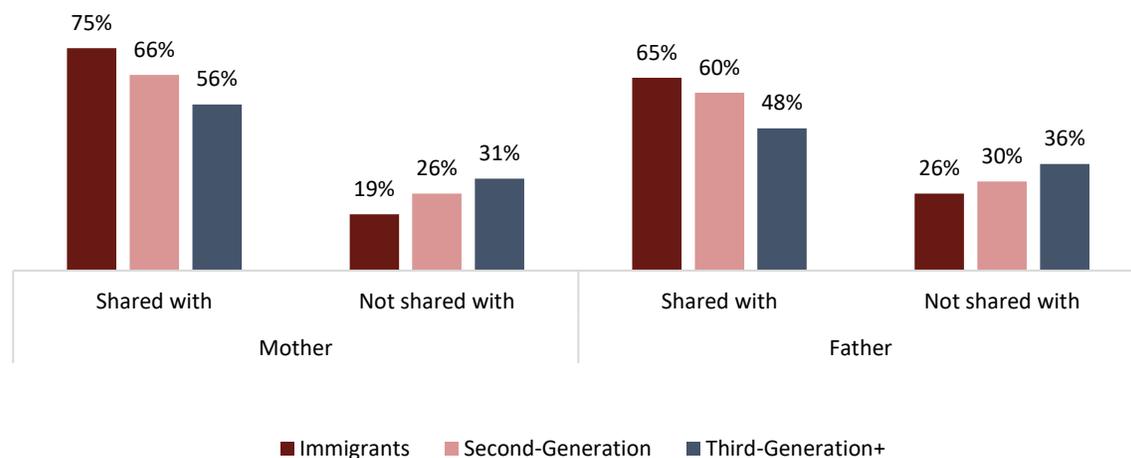
While the role of faith in public life being continually debated, it is important to note just how vital these communities can be for newcomers looking for common ground and allies.

The importance of religion in personal relationships

In Canadian society, faith often acts as a connecting line between generations. While some people may find spirituality on their own personal journeys, family is nonetheless, a key indicator of ones likelihood of leading a faith-based life. This is particularly true among those born outside Canada.

Three-quarters among this group say they share faith and values with their mothers (75%), while slightly fewer say the same of their fathers (65%). This parental connection is less strong among those who have been established here longer, but still holds for a majority of the population:

And thinking about your own overall spiritual faith and values -- whatever they may be, to what extent, if at all, would you say those are shared with your parents?



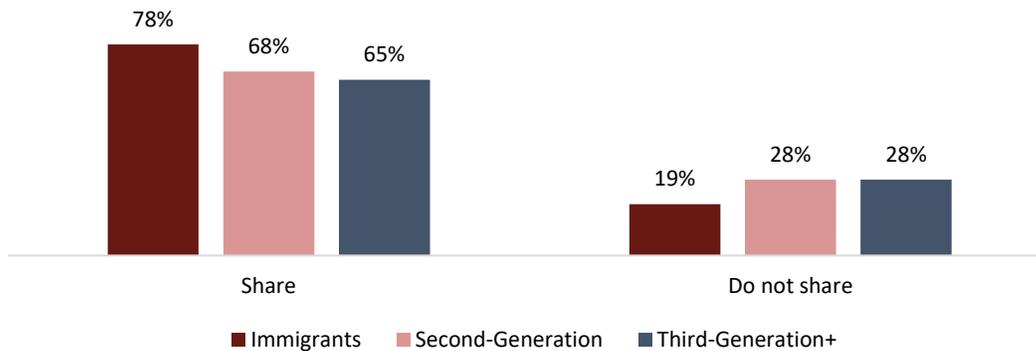
The same faith-based relationship is very common among spouses in Canada. Roughly two-thirds of second-generation and third-generation+ Canadians say they share the same spiritual faith and values with their significant other – this jumps to four-in-five (78%) among immigrants Canadians.

[Related: Most see marriage as a more 'genuine' commitment than common-law](#)

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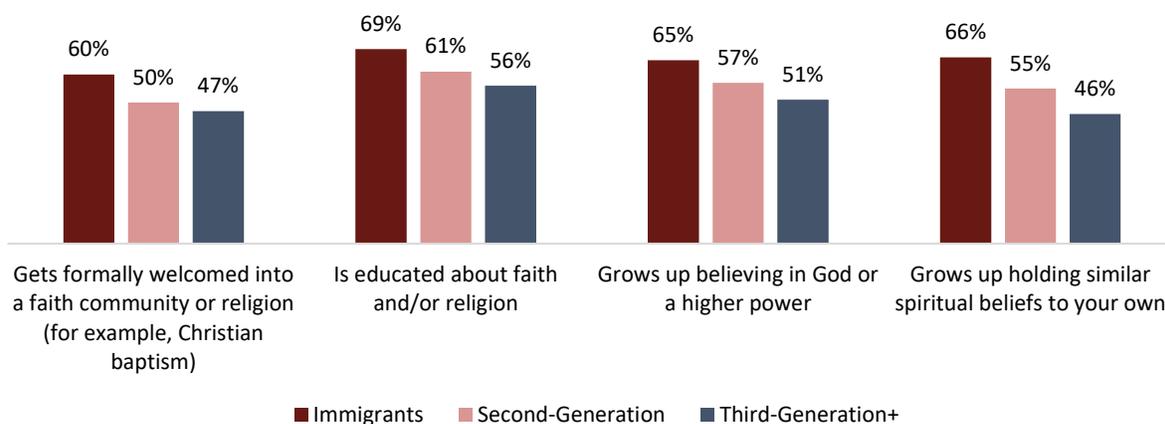
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**To what extent, does your spouse share your spiritual faith and values
(whatever those may be)?**



When it comes to the next generation, Canadians have differing opinions about what they would like to see from their children. Notably, being educated about faith and religion is at least ‘somewhat’ important to more than half of the population, regardless of whether or not they have immigrated to this country. The same can be said of Canadians’ desire to see their children grow up believing in God or a higher power. Half of those whose parents and grandparents were born in Canada (51%) say this has some importance to them, while it is evidently more important to those born outside the country (65%) and second-generation (57%) Canadians, whose parents were immigrants.

**Suppose you were about to become a new parent.
How important would it be to you that that child of yours:
(Very/Somewhat Important)**



The most dramatic difference in terms of creating a religious foundation for children is among immigrants and their third-generation+ compatriots. On each of the values canvassed, including whether or not they view as important that their child hold similar beliefs to their own as adults, those born outside Canada are significantly more likely, at least 14 percentage points on all measures, to say that each is ‘very’ important to them. See below for a summary of those results:

Suppose you were about to become a new parent. How important would it be to you that that child of yours...			
	Segment		
	Immigrants	Second Gen.	Third Gen.+
Is formally welcomed into a faith community or religion (for example, Christian baptism)			
Very important	36%	26%	22%
Quite important	24%	24%	25%
Not that important	20%	27%	22%
Not important at all	20%	24%	31%
Is educated about faith and/or religion			
Very important	38%	26%	21%
Quite important	31%	36%	34%
Not that important	20%	24%	24%
Not important at all	11%	15%	20%

Suppose you were about to become a new parent. How important would it be to you that that child of yours...			
	Segment		
	Immigrants	Second Gen.	Third Gen.+
Grows up believing in God or a higher power			
Very important	40%	29%	23%
Quite important	25%	28%	28%
Not that important	20%	24%	25%
Not important at all	15%	19%	24%
Grows up holding similar spiritual beliefs to your own			
Very important	36%	21%	16%
Quite important	30%	34%	30%
Not that important	21%	32%	31%
Not important at all	13%	13%	23%

The Public Square

What is the ideal role of religion in public life?

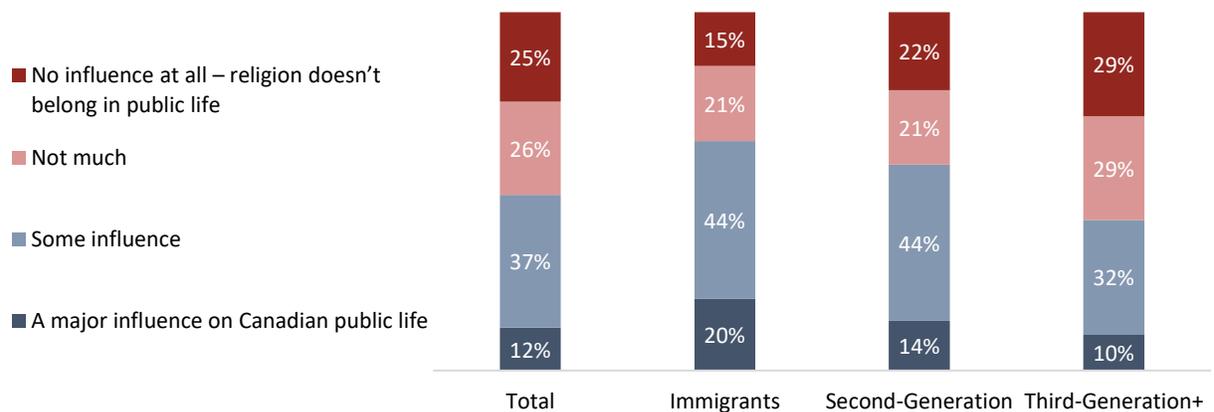
The place of religion in society continues to be a source of debate in public policy. Look no further than the recent summer jobs attestation requirement to see the divide in public opinion. An Angus Reid Institute [study](#) found half of Canadians thought the policy was fair, while half said it was unfair.

Another example is the question of public funding of faith-based schools. On this, just three-in-ten Canadians said [funding should be on par with public schools](#), but six-in-ten said faith-based schools should receive at least some taxpayer dollars.

These examples illustrate some of the divisions that exist in Canada today about the role and significance of faith in the public square. Further excavation finds further differences in opinion when the views of those born outside Canada are specifically analyzed.

Asked what they consider to be the ideal role for faith communities and religious influence in public life, two-thirds of immigrants (64%) say there is a place for at least some influence. Similar responses are found among the second-generation group, while this response drops substantially among those whose grandparents were born in the country. Those born outside the country are also twice as likely as third-generation+ Canadians (20% to 10%) to say that religion should be a major influence. They are similarly, half as likely to say it shouldn't have any influence (15% to 29%):

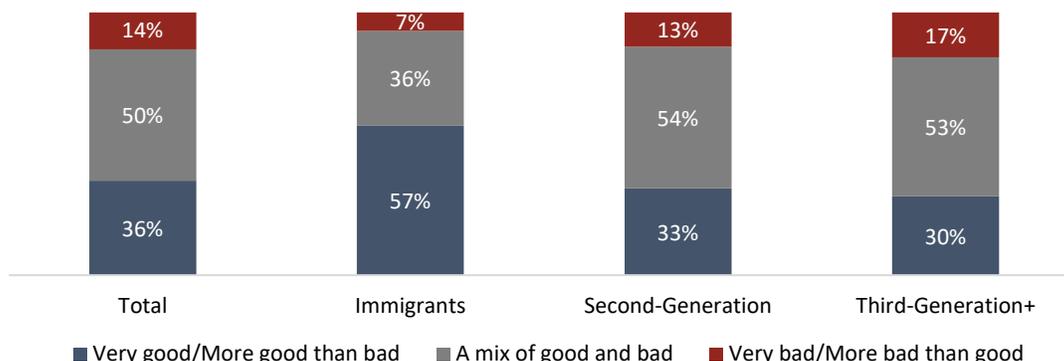
What would you consider ideal when it comes to the overall participation and influence of religious and faith communities in Canadian public life today?



Canadians assess impact of faith in society

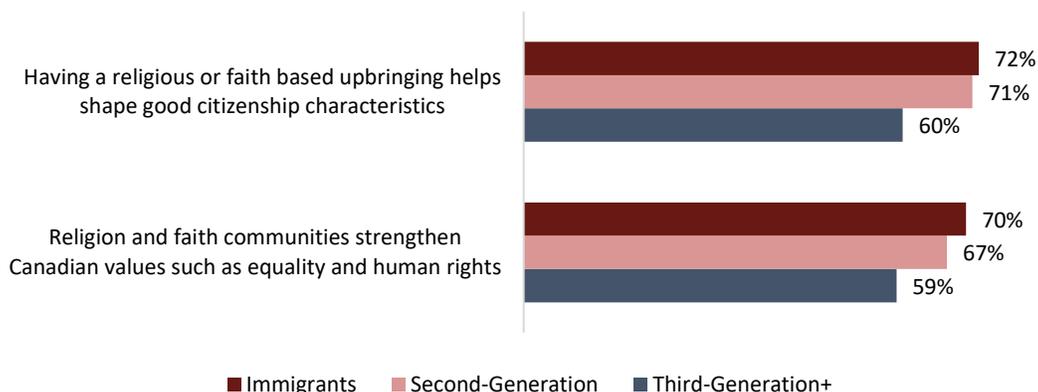
Much of this desire for more influence on public policy is rooted in the stronger perception among immigrants that religious and faith communities play a positive role in society. Consider that 57 per cent of those born outside Canada say that religion plays a more positive than negative role, while only one-in-three (33%) second-generation Canadians agree. Third-generation+ Canadians are also twice as likely to say that religion is doing more harm than good in Canadian society compared to immigrants:

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



One of the most positive elements of influence that Canadians perceive from faith-based groups in society is the impact that they have on equality and human rights. There is a widespread perception that faith communities help to strengthen these values. Further, at least six-in-ten from each group also say that having faith involved in ones upbringing helps to create and strengthen good citizenship characteristics:

Percentage of Canadians who Agree with each statement:



*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 foundation 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.*

For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here.](#)

For detailed results by generation (1st, 2nd, 3rd+) [click here.](#)

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