

## Canada across the religious spectrum: A portrait of the nation's inter-faith perspectives during Holy Week

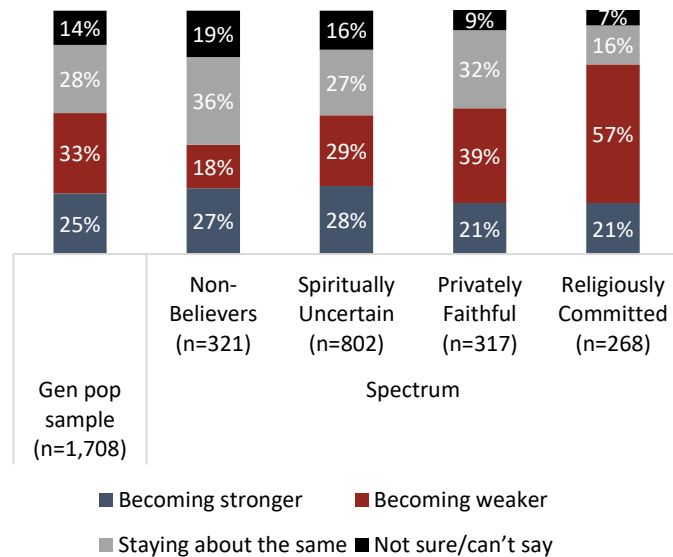
*Seven-in-ten say freedom of conscience makes Canada better; many worried that freedom is weakening*

**April 18, 2022** – For the first time since 2019, Canadians across the religious spectrum are celebrating the opportunity to give thanks and pray in person without public health restrictions during the April “Holy Week”. While this period generally refers to the period of time between Palm Sunday and Easter in the Christian tradition, for millions in Canada, the meaning is broadened by the observance of Passover for Jews, the middle of the period of Ramadan for Muslims, the celebration of Vaisakhi for Sikhs, and the recent conclusion of Navratri among Hindus.

Against this backdrop, the non-profit Angus Reid Institute, in partnership with [Cardus](#), offers a comprehensive and first-of-its-kind look at the faith journeys of Canadians not just among majority religious communities, but across the religious spectrum. This data explores not only the connection and conviction of Canadians of faith among more traditionally prevalent demographics – Catholic, Mainline Protestant, and Evangelical communities – but also among Canadians who identify as Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh. What do these communities of faith have in common? How are they different?

For those raised in the Evangelical Christian and Muslim faith, a more formal religious commitment defines religiosity. Three-quarters of Evangelicals (74%) and 46 per cent of Muslims are categorized by the Angus Reid Institute as Religiously Committed, which is based on a propensity toward attendance of worship, active prayer, and a deep belief in God. Those raised in the Sikh or Hindu faiths tend more toward the Privately Faithful

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



### **METHODOLOGY:**

The Angus Reid Institute conducted two online surveys among adults who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#).

The first survey was conducted from Jan. 21 – Feb. 3, 2022 in partnership with Cardus, among a group of 1,290 Canadians from the four largest non-Christian faith groups – Muslim, Sikh, Hindu and Jewish. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

An additional survey, representative of the general population, was conducted from April 5 – 7, 2022. This survey sample was 1,708 and included an oversample of 100 additional Evangelical Protestants. 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.

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

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– those who do not necessarily gather as formally and frequently, but nonetheless profess a strong personal connection to their religion.

Evangelicals and Muslims are also both most enthusiastic about the positive impact that faith-based communities have on Canadian society, with at least 55 per cent of each saying that this influence is “more good than bad”. This, compared to three-in-ten Roman Catholics (29%), 33 per cent of Hindus and just 12 per cent of the non-religious who agree.

Faith groups in Canada face a varied landscape of perceptions from both the non-religious and from those observing other belief systems. For example, Atheists are overwhelmingly critical of the influence of Evangelical Christians on society but are largely positive about the perceived impacts of Sikhs and Hindus. Canada’s largest religious group – Roman Catholics – are more likely to perceive Evangelical Christians, Muslims and Sikhs as doing more harm than benefit to the social fabric of the country but view other faiths positively.

The cultural mosaic in Canada is ever-shifting, and the faith-based pieces of that broader whole are no different. These data find first generation Canadians much more likely to profess religiosity. This, as those born in Canada continue to shift further into areligious identities.

Despite that shift, being raised in a religious tradition is common in Canada. Seven-in-ten (72%) say they grew up with religious teachings, including just over half (54%) of those who currently profess no religious affiliation.

### More Key Findings:

- Canada’s religious core continues to be found in the Prairie provinces. In Alberta (24%), Saskatchewan (25%), and Manitoba (25%), one-quarter of residents are categorized as Religiously Committed on the Spectrum of Spirituality. Quebec residents are most likely to eschew religion, whether more personal or overtly formal.
- Two-in-five Roman Catholics (39%), Sikhs (39%), and Muslims (38%) say that they feel society makes room for their faith, rather than shuts them out. That said, Muslims are second most likely among faith groups to say that they feel shut out (26%), though in far lesser numbers than among Evangelical Christians (56%).
- One-third (36%) of Canadians pray at least once or twice a month, including nearly all (86%) of Evangelical Christians and three-quarters (72%) of Muslims. Frequent prayer is common among Hindus (57%) and Sikhs (62%), but less so for Roman Catholics (41%), Protestants (34%) and Jewish Canadians (32%).

### About ARI

*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.*

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## About Cardus

**Cardus** is a non-partisan think tank dedicated to clarifying and strengthening, through research and dialogue, the ways in which society's institutions can work together for the common good.

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## About the Spectrum of Spirituality

### Introduction

In recent years, the Angus Reid Institute, in partnership with Cardus, has conducted a number of survey research projects focusing on [faith and religiosity](#) in Canada. This latest study is the widest ranging yet, expanding beyond the broader (still predominantly Christian) majority of the Canadian religious population to include a parallel inter-faith perspective involving a survey of almost 1,300 Canadians from other major religious traditions – specifically, the Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, and Jewish faiths. These four groups together comprise approximately eight per cent of the population – or nearly three million Canadians – and rising. As [Statistics Canada](#) data indicates, the proportion of the population in Canada identifying as Christian has dropped over the past two decades, while non-religious and other-religious groups have grown.

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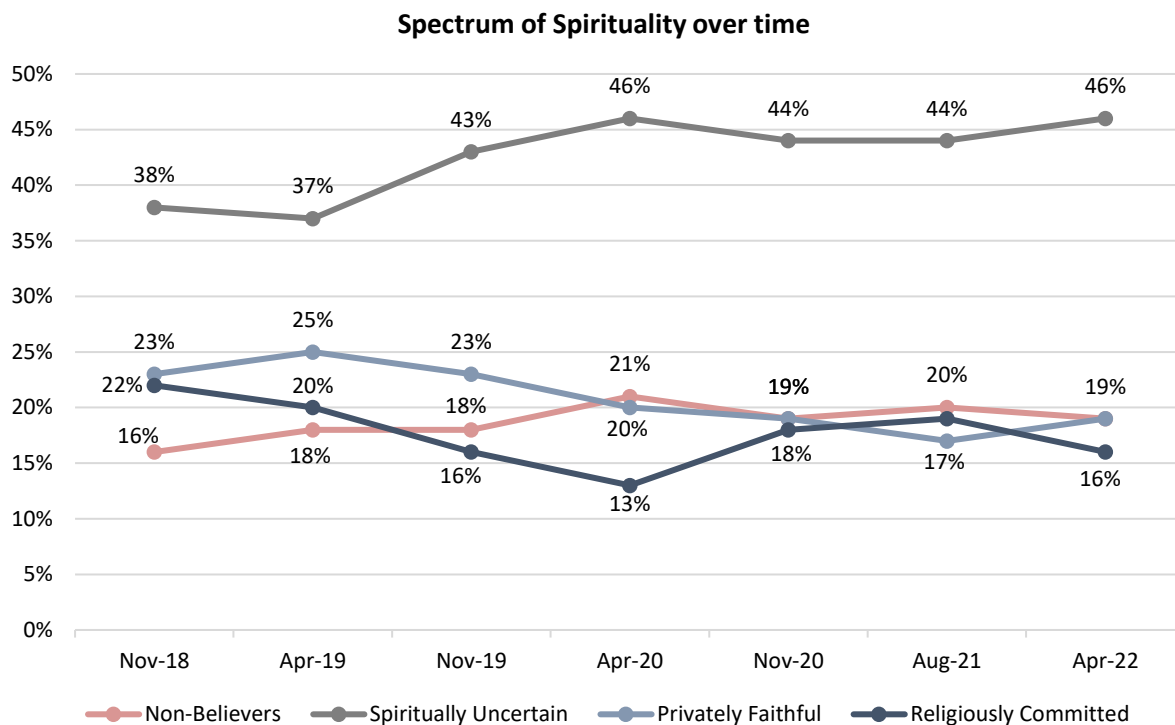
**Part One: Measuring the spirituality of Canadians**

**The Spectrum of Spirituality over time**

Since 2017, ARI and Cardus have measured Canadians' faith and spirituality using an index of questions related to this topic and their attitudes, beliefs, and activities. The result is the Spectrum of Spirituality, which identifies four groups along a continuum of faith and religiosity: Non-Believers, Spiritually Uncertain, Privately Faithful and Religiously Committed. For an in-depth look at what defines each group, [visit our release here](#) and view methodology notes at the end of this release.

One-in-five Canadians (19%) are classified as Non-Believers. For four-in-five, however, there is some openness to God or spirituality. The largest group of Canadians are the Spiritually Uncertain, representing almost half of the population (46%). One-third (35%) fall into the higher ends of the Spectrum, including 16 per cent who are Religiously Committed, and 19 per cent who are Privately Faithful.

There have been subtle shifts along the Spectrum of Spirituality in the half decade that ARI and Cardus have tracked the index. More Canadians fall into the Spiritually Uncertain category now than earlier years of the Spectrum, while the Religiously Committed category has shrunk from highs seen in 2018.



**Quebecers lean away from faith, Prairie residents more committed**

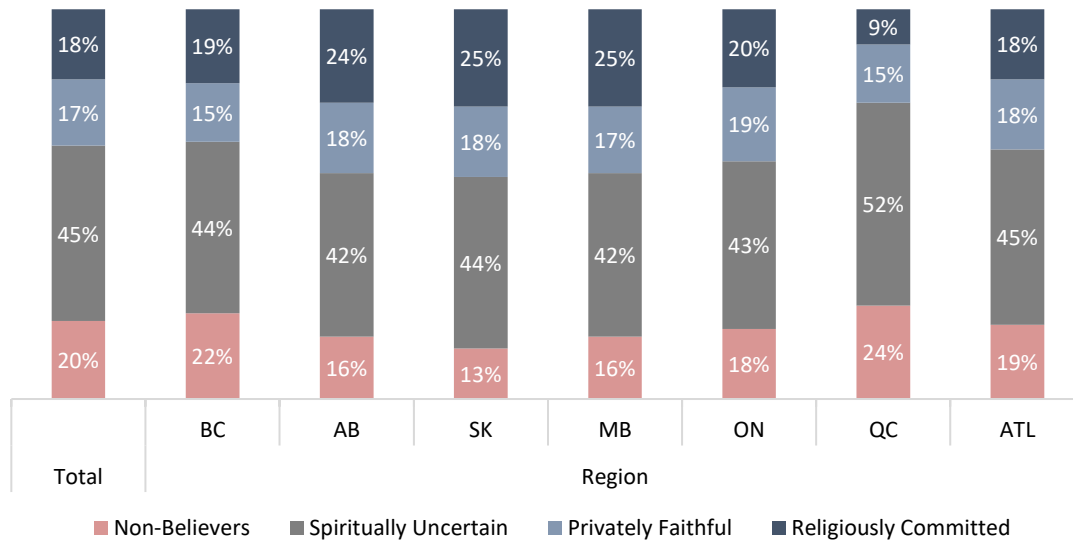
Spirituality varies across the country. Quebecers are the least likely of any province to be either Privately Faithful or Religiously Committed at one-quarter (24%). In the Prairies, at least one-quarter in each Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan instead fall into the Religiously Committed category:

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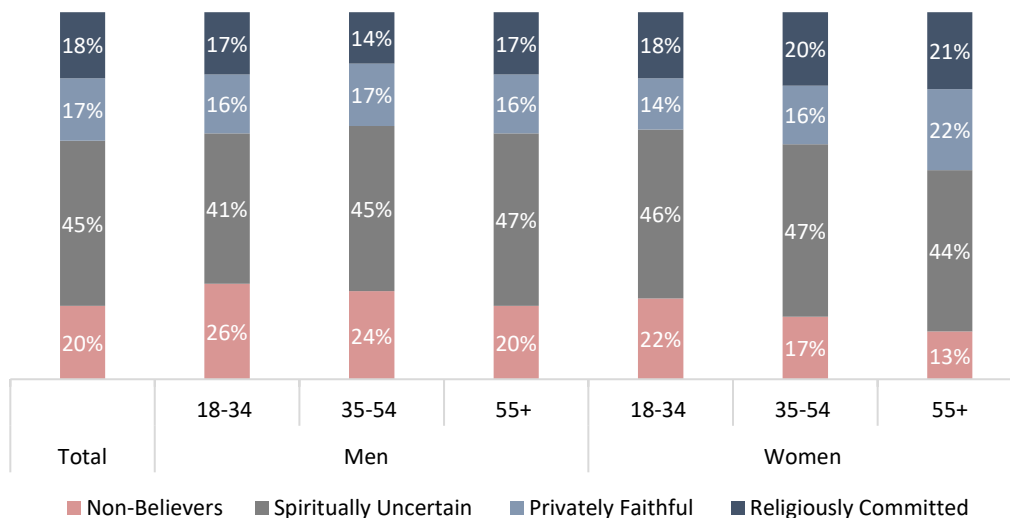
**Spectrum of Spirituality by region - 2021/22 average**



**Age and gender**

Younger Canadians are more likely than their older counterparts to be Non-Believers. One-quarter of men (26%) and one-in-five women (22%) aged 18- to 34-years-old fall into that category. Women over the age of 55 are the most likely of any group to be more religious, and the least likely to be in the Non-Believer category:

**Spectrum of Spirituality by age-gender - 2021/22 average**



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There are no significant differences in the Spectrum across education ([see detailed tables](#)). Individuals from higher income households are slightly more likely to be in the Non-Believer category and slightly less likely to be in the Privately Faithful category than those with lower levels of wealth ([see detailed tables](#)).

### **Muslims, Evangelicals express most formal religious commitment**

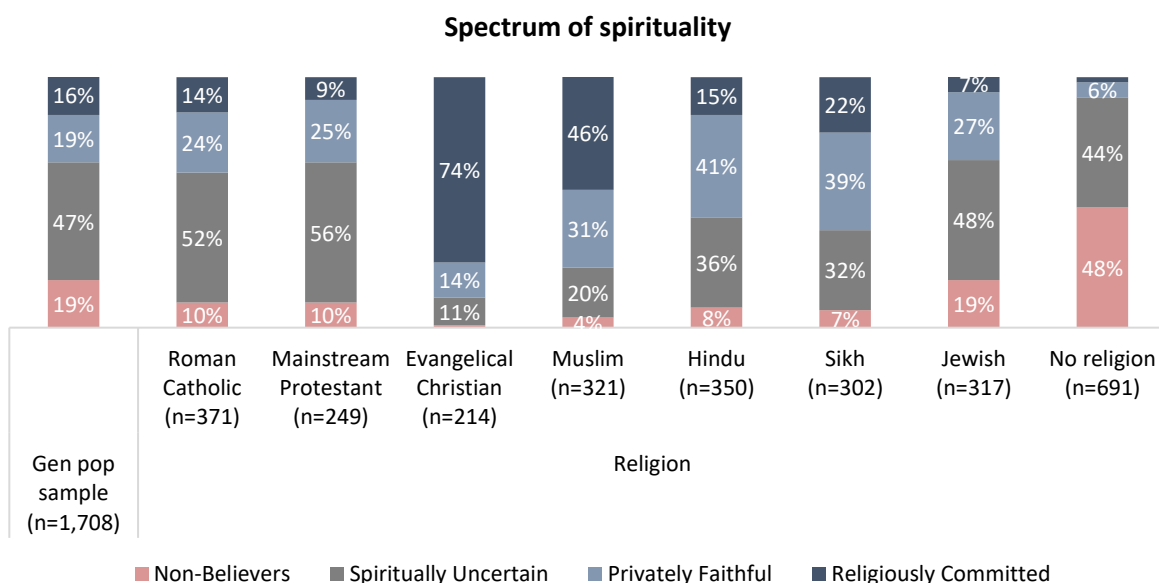
There is variance in the Spectrum across religious affiliation as well. Nearly all of those who report no religious affiliation – i.e. atheists and agnostics, one-in-four Canadians – are in the Non-Believer (48%) and Spiritually Uncertain (44%) groups.

More than half of those who identify as Roman Catholics (52%) and Mainstream Protestants (56%) fall into the Spiritually Uncertain category. However, they are half as likely to be Non-Believers (10% each) as the general population sample (19%).

Those who identify as Evangelical Christians are much more likely to be on the higher end of the index – three-quarters (74%) are Religiously Committed.

Approaching half (46%) of those who identify as Muslim fall into the Religiously Committed category, while another three-in-ten (31%) land in the Privately Faithful.

Pluralities of those who identify as Hindu (41%) and Sikh (39%) are also Privately Faithful. However, it should be noted that both the introduction to and day-to-day worship of those faiths (in the case of Sikhs, especially among those who identify as such but may not be baptized) could be described as less prescribed or place-based than others measured by the Spectrum.



### **Worship and prayer**

Attending church, praying to God or a higher power and feeling God’s presence are among the elements incorporated into the Spectrum. Self-identified followers of each religion vary in the likelihood of regularly participating in those activities or experiencing that sensation. Some of that variance is due to the tenets of each individual religion.

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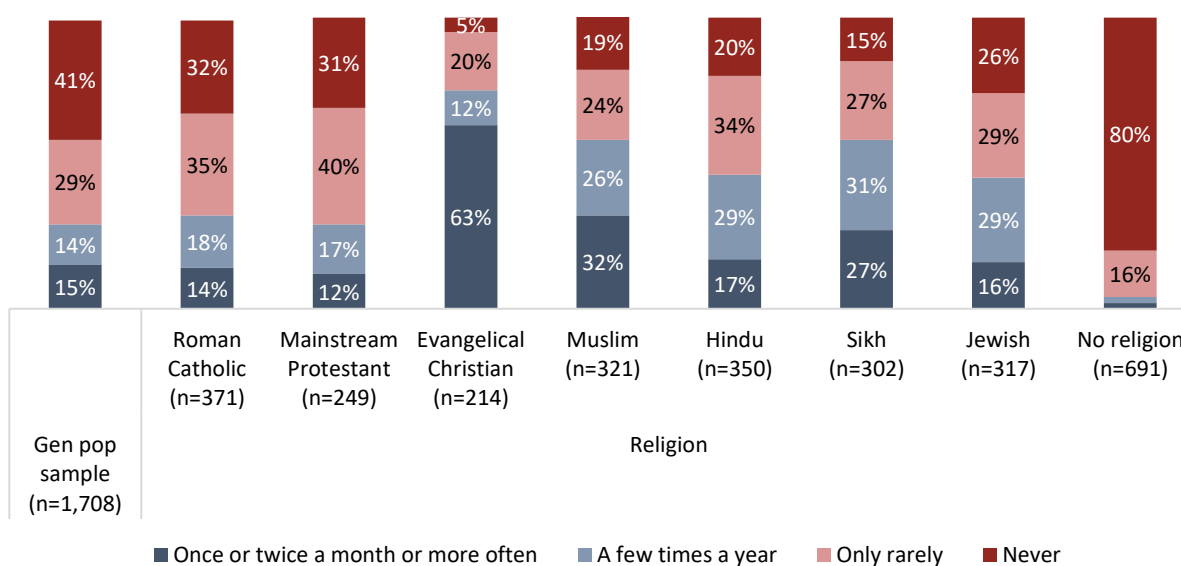
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More than three-in-five (63%) of those who identify as Evangelical Christians attend church regularly, the most of any of the major religious groups in the survey. One-third (32%) of those who identify as Muslim also regularly visit the mosque. More than one-quarter (27%) of those who identify as Sikhs say they are at their gurdwara more than once a month.

For other groups, attending a place of worship is a less frequent activity. More than two-thirds of those who identify as Roman Catholics (67%) and Mainstream Protestants (71%) say they attend church rarely or never. A majority of Canadians who identify as Hindu (54%) and Jewish (55%) say the same of going to temple, though many within these faiths have a shrine within their home.

**How often, if at all, do you:  
Attend religious services (other than weddings or funerals)?**



Evangelical Christians are also the most likely group to report praying often. More than four-in-five (86%) who identify as Evangelical say they do it once or twice a month or more. Prayer is also a regular activity for Canadians who identify as Muslim, Hindu or Sikh.

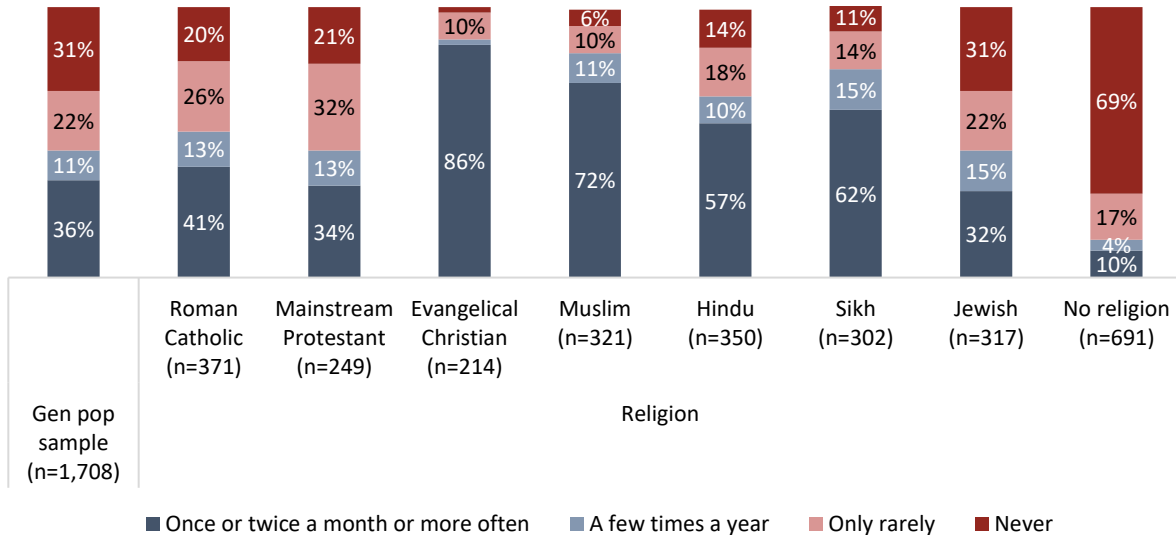
For those who identify as Roman Catholic, Mainstream Protestant or Jewish, regular prayer is not as common. Still, pluralities of those groups say they pray frequently:

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**How often, if at all, do you:  
Pray to God or some higher power?**



Those who identify as Evangelical Christian, too, are the most likely to report regularly feeling God's presence. Approaching three-quarters (73%) say they experience God's presence monthly or more. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of those who identify as Muslim say feeling God's presence is a regular experience, the only other religious group in the survey who report this at a majority level.

Half (49%) of those who identify as Sikh and two-in-five (41%) of those who identify as Hindu say feeling God's presence happens to them once a month or more. For other groups, that sensation is less commonly felt:

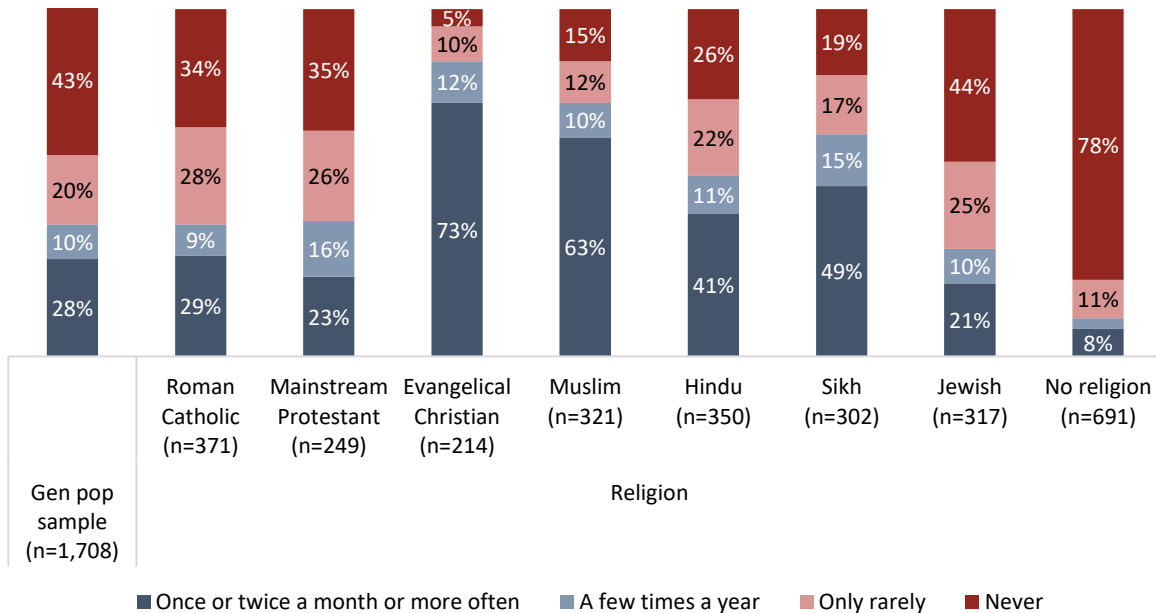
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**How often, if at all, do you:  
Feel you experience God's presence?**



**The certainty, or uncertainty, of a higher power**

Canadians are more likely than not to believe in God or a higher power. One-third (34%) definitely believe in God or a higher power, while three-in-ten (31%) thinks a higher power exists but are less certain.

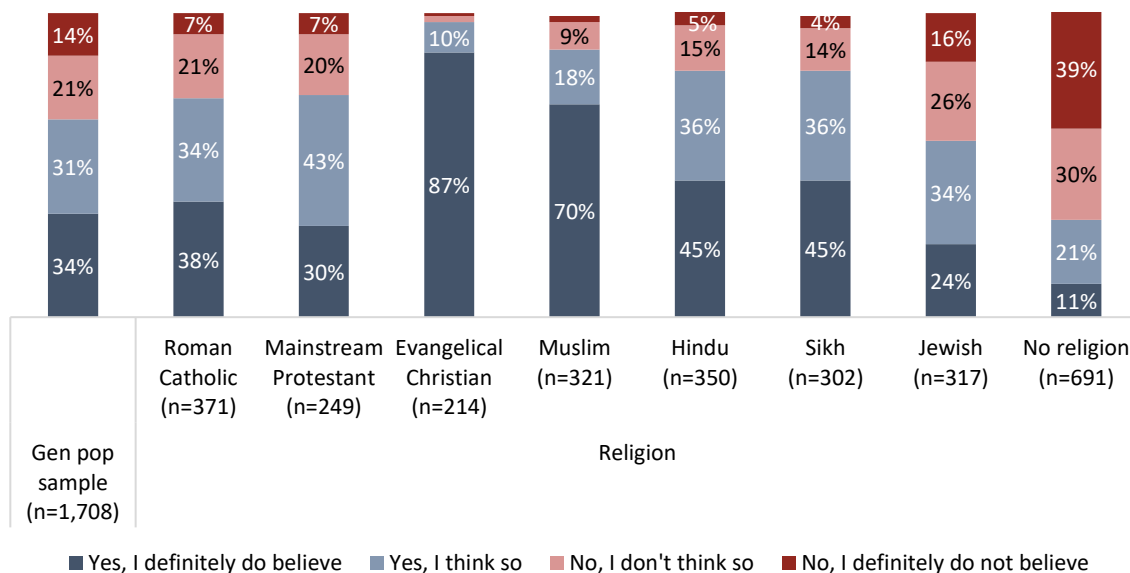
More than one-third (35%) of Canadians don't believe or doubt in God or a higher power, a substantial minority that includes many who self-describe as belonging to some of the major religious traditions:

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**Do you believe:  
That God or a higher power exists?**



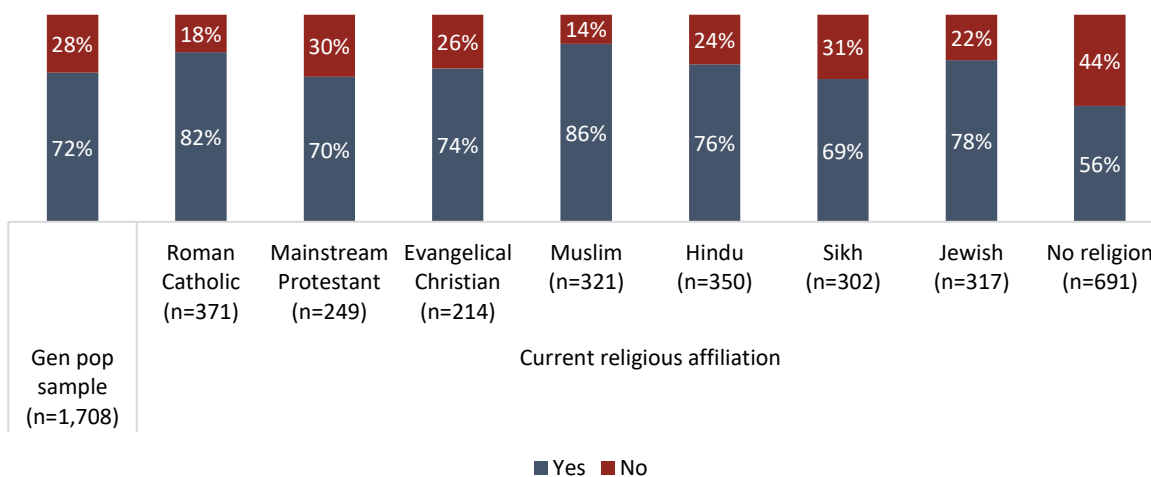
**Part Two: The faith journey**

**Seven-in-ten were raised in a religious tradition**

A significant majority (72%) of Canadians say they had a religious upbringing, including more than half (56%) of those who now identify as having no religion.

Being raised in a religious tradition is more common for those who identify as Muslim (86%) or Roman Catholic (82%) than other religious groups:

**Were you raised in a religious tradition?**

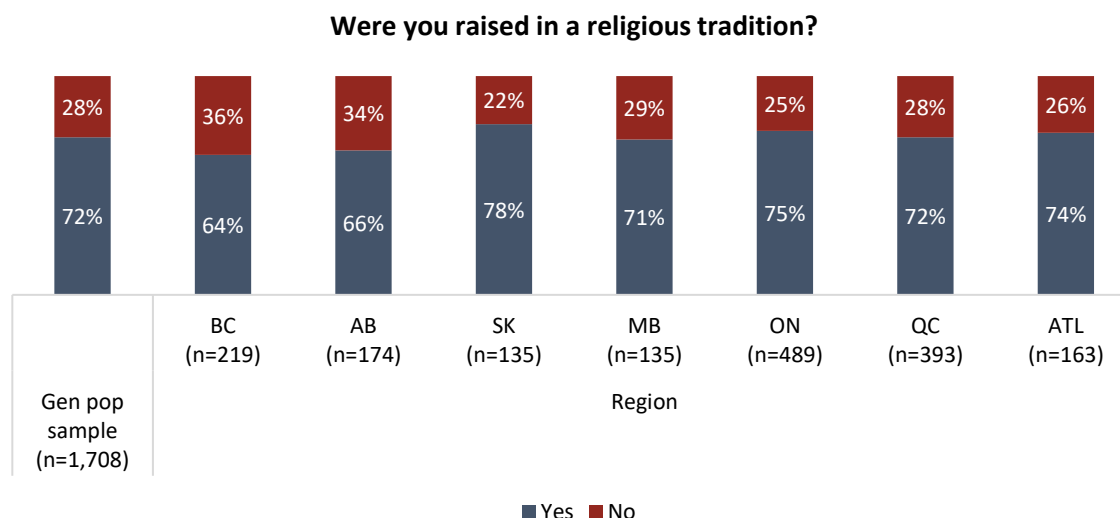


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Despite being the least likely to observe any formal religious practices, Quebecers did not necessarily begin their lives in non-religious circumstances. Indeed, seven-in-ten (72%) say that they were raised in a religious tradition, the vast majority being raised in the Roman Catholic tradition. Saskatchewan residents are most likely to say that a religious upbringing was a part of their childhood, at a rate of four-in-five (78%):



**Involvement in formal observances and activities is varied by faith group**

Of course, what exactly the religious upbringing entails will vary depending on the tradition. The inter-faith survey illustrates the more formal customs involved with being raised in the Muslim and Jewish with lower participation in formal instruction and ceremony among Canadians raised as Hindu or Sikh.

Did your being raised in a religious tradition involve...? (Percent who select 'weekly or more often' shown)							
	Religion raised in						
	Roman Catholic (n=526)	Mainstream Protestant (n=282)	Evangelical Christian (n=172)	Muslim (n=258)	Hindu (n=254)	Sikh (n=201)	Jewish (n=229)
Instruction in the religion's teachings (by a leader or well-versed adult)	63%	61%	81%	58%	15%	23%	69%
Your family participating in ceremonies for religious holidays	42%	29%	42%	38%	14%	20%	42%
Your family participating in religious events (such as group prayer)	25%	19%	50%	42%	16%	20%	28%

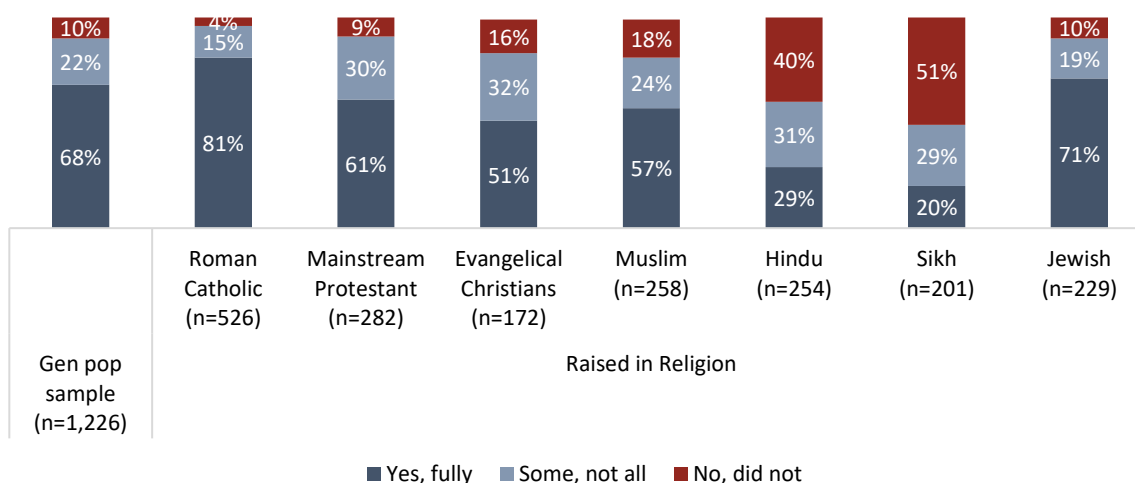
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Most, seven-in-ten (68%), who were raised in a religious tradition experienced a formal entry process – baptism, confirmation, circumcision, aqiqah, mundan, amrit sanskar, etc. However, the likelihood of experiencing the full process varies across religions. Those raised as Sikh are the most likely to say they had no formal entry process into their religion at half (51%). Two-in-five of those who were raised as Hindu say the same.

**And did your being raised in a religious tradition involve going through that religion’s formal entry process?  
(Among those raised in that religious tradition)**



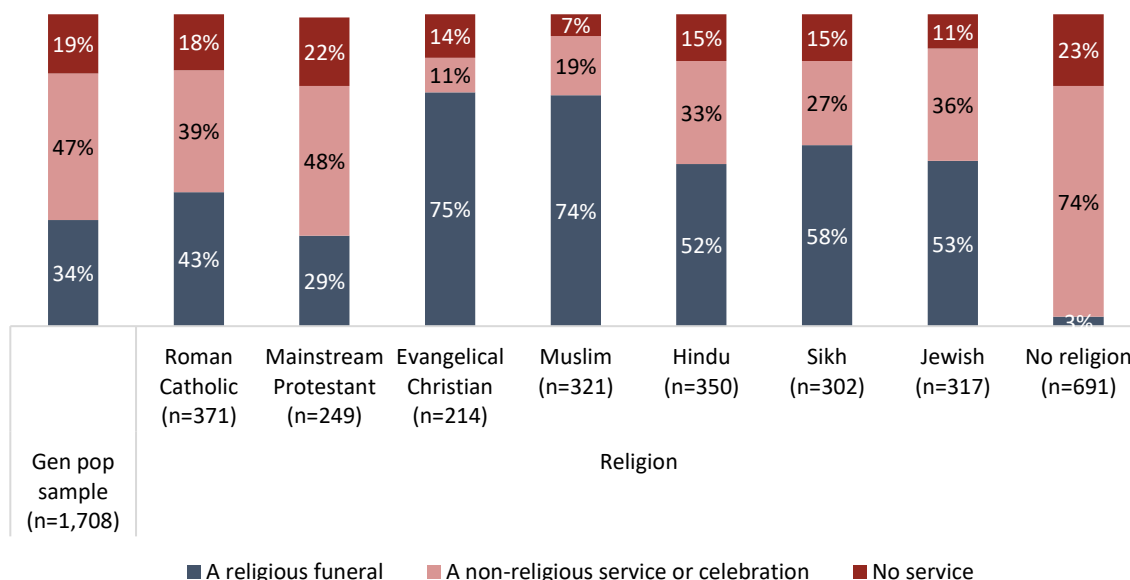
The desire for a religious funeral is not consistent across the major religious groups. Three-quarters of self-identified Evangelical Christians (75%) and Muslims (74%) say they would like one at the end of their life. More than half of those who identify as Hindu (52%), Sikh (58%) and Jewish (53%) say the same. Meanwhile, self-identified Roman Catholics are only slightly more likely to want a religious funeral (43%) as a non-religious service (39%). Only three-in-ten (29%) of mainstream Protestants would like a religious ceremony at the end of their life, fewer than those who want a non-religious celebration (48%).

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**When you come to the end of your life, would you wish to have...**



**Will immigration sustain Canada’s religious communities?**

The proportion of Canadians who report no religious affiliation has been growing. In the 2001 Census, 17 per cent of Canadians said so. That number has climbed to 26 per cent in 2019 data from Statistics Canada. [Some expect that trend to continue.](#)

Indeed, one-in-ten respondents (13%) say they grew up in a religious tradition but left it. That is offset, on the other hand, by one-in-five (18%) who say they did not grow up with religious teachings but found religion later in life ([see detailed tables](#)).

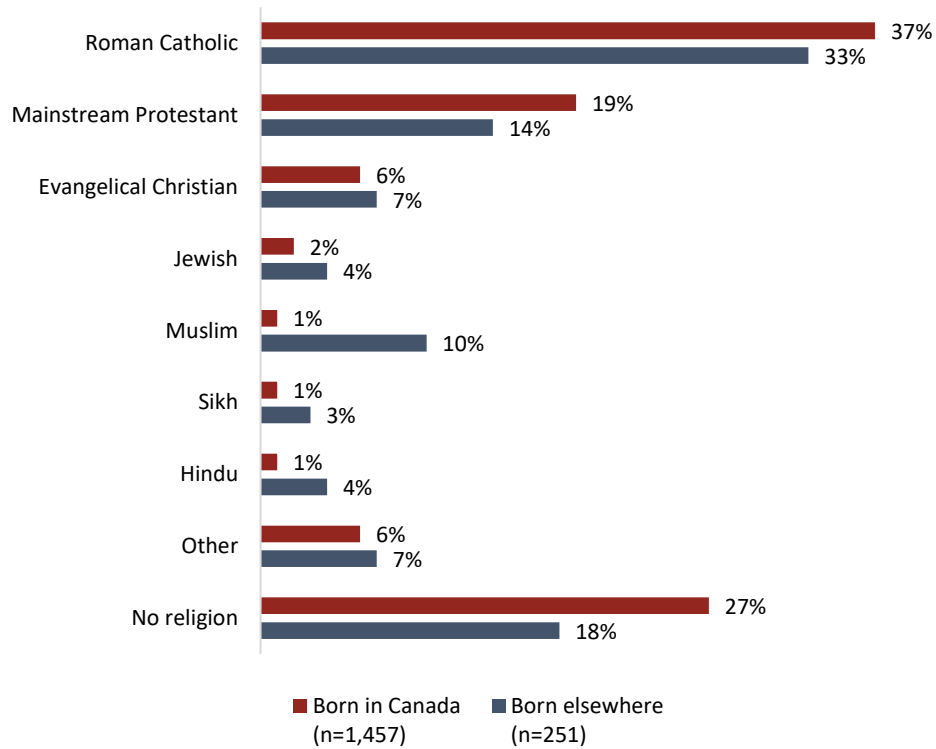
As well, the decline of religiosity in Canada could be affected by another trend: [increasing immigration](#). Canada welcomes immigrants from countries much more religious than itself. Indeed, Canadians born elsewhere are less likely to report no religious affiliation than those born in this country (18% vs. 27%):

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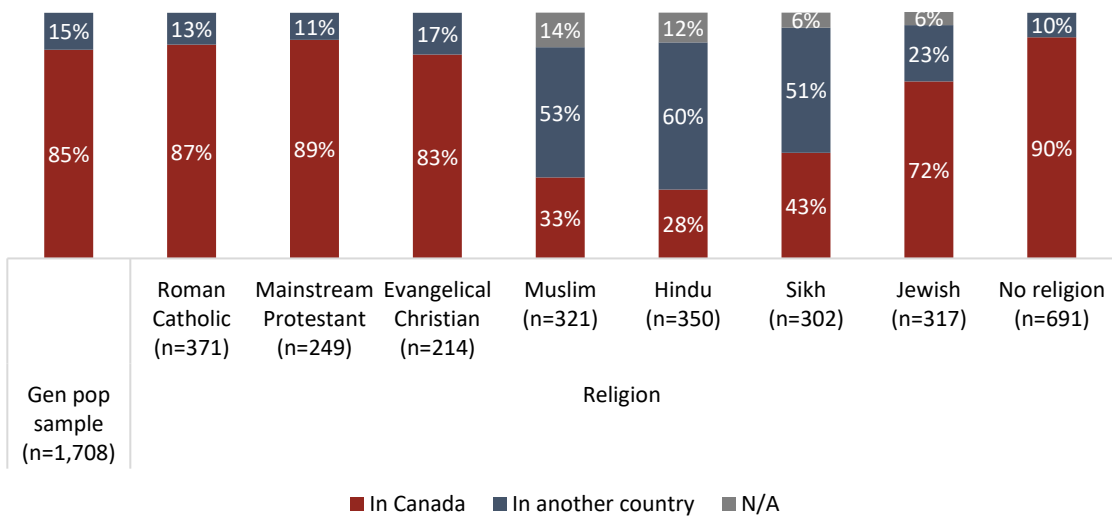
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**Which one of the following best describes your religion?**



The composition of religion in Canada will also likely change with increased immigration. Notably, at least half of those who identify as Muslim, Hindu or Sikh were born outside of Canada:

**Place of birth**



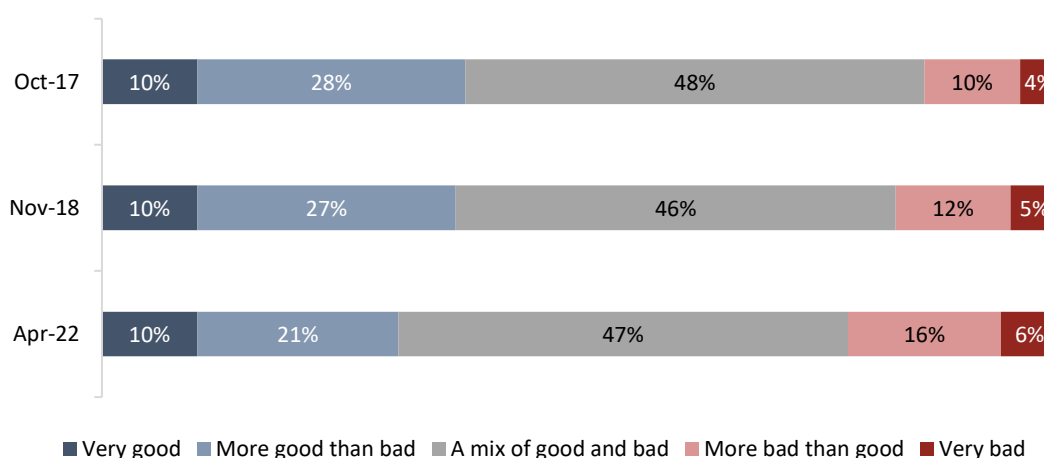
**Part Three: Faith in the public square**

**Contributions of faith groups**

Overall, Canadians are more likely to believe religious and faith communities are making more positive contributions than negative ones. Three-in-ten (31%) say the good outweigh the bad, while one-in-five (22%) say the opposite. Still, the largest group of Canadians (47%) say religion contributes good and bad to society in equal amounts.

The last time ARI and Cardus asked this question was in 2018. Last summer, ground-penetrating radar confirmed there were hundreds of unmarked graves at former residential school sites across the country, many of which were [run by the Catholic Church](#). In the intervening four years, and with those tragic histories brought into the spotlight, Canadians opinions on the contribution of religious and faith communities to society have shifted to the negative:

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



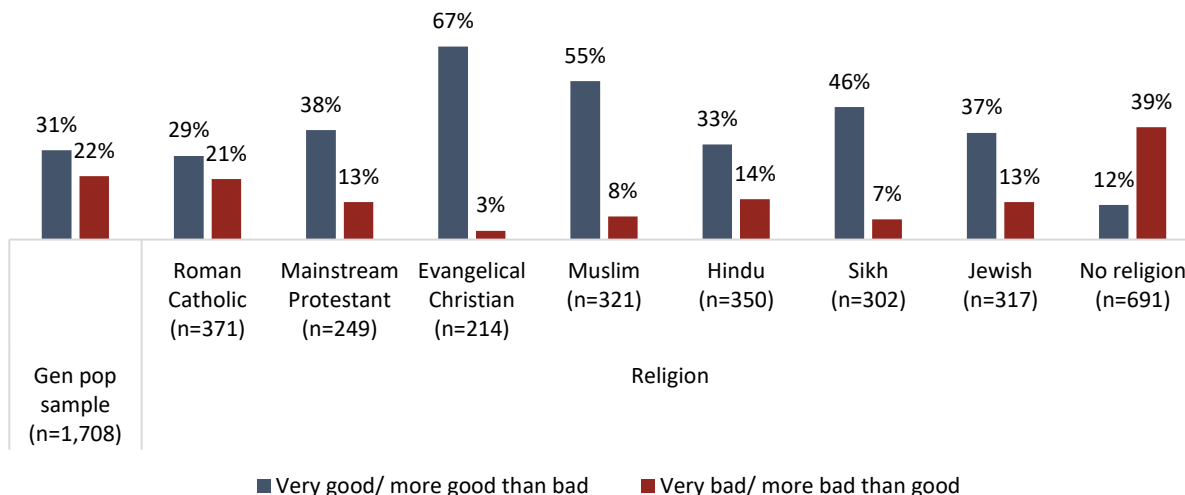
While those among major religious groups are more likely to believe religion makes positive contributions to Canadian society than negative ones, there is a significant difference in the proportion in each group who say faith communities have been beneficial. This ranges from two-thirds (67%) of those who identify as Evangelical Christian to three-in-ten (29%) of those who identify as Roman Catholic:

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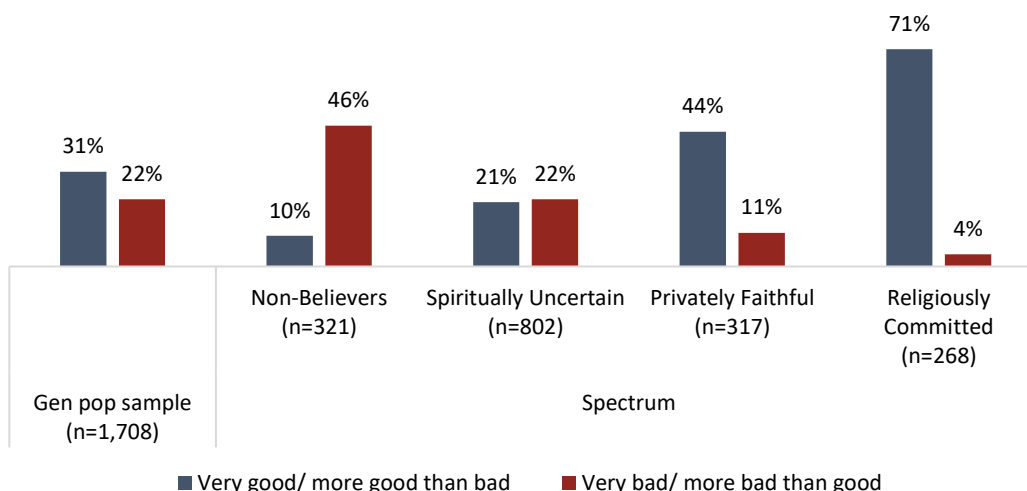
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**How would you describe the overall contribution religious and faith communities are making to Canada and Canadian society today?**



For those who fall under the Religiously Committed category of the Spectrum of Spirituality, a large majority (71%) believe faith communities have had a net positive effect on Canadian society. That belief is not as pervasive among the Privately Faithful but is still much more common than those who say instead religion has had a detrimental effect on Canada. The Spiritually Uncertain have equal numbers on both sides:

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



**Canadians diverge on which faiths are benefiting or harming Canadian society**

Respondents – regardless of their own personal religion – were each asked to assess four specific religions as to whether or not their presence in public life is benefitting or damaging to Canadian society.

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For three religions – Catholicism, Evangelical Christianity and Islam – Canadians are more likely to believe their presence is damaging than benefitting. For others, positive assessments outweigh negative ones.

Appraisals vary depending on the respondents' own religion. However, only Evangelical Christianity is seen as more damaging than benefitting by every other self-identified religious group.

For those who report no religious affiliation, only the presence of Hinduism, Sikhism and Judaism are more likely to be seen as positive than negative for Canada.

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? (Net benefitting minus damaging shown)									
	Gen pop sample (1,708)	Religion							
		Roman Catholic	Mainstr. Protest.	Evangel. Christ.	Muslim	Hindu	Sikh	Jewish	No religion
Catholicism	-5%	22%	1%	7%	3%	-14%	2%	-15%	-47%
Protestantism	9%	6%	32%	55%	15%	-10%	1%	10%	-15%
Evangelical Christianity	-16%	-15%	-10%	68%	-5%	-16%	-2%	-46%	-46%
Islam	-11%	-19%	-2%	-24%	44%	-32%	-8%	11%	-13%
Hinduism	9%	8%	9%	8%	12%	37%	18%	34%	6%
Sikhism	6%	-2%	11%	-1%	35%	16%	74%	39%	3%
Judaism	14%	13%	26%	35%	27%	10%	19%	58%	3%
Atheism	7%	2%	-1%	-43%	-9%	15%	19%	17%	32%

### **Are personal religious values and faith accepted or shunned in Canada?**

Canadians are more likely than not to believe society is accommodating, or at least not actively discouraging, of religious values. Three-in-ten (31%) believe Canadian society makes room for their personal faith, while 38 per cent say society has no impact on it one way or the other.

One-in-five (22%) instead feel push back against their personal beliefs. That group includes more than half (56%) of self-identified Evangelical Christians, the largest proportion among the major religious groups. One-quarter (26%) of Muslims also feel their values and faith are shut out by Canadian society,

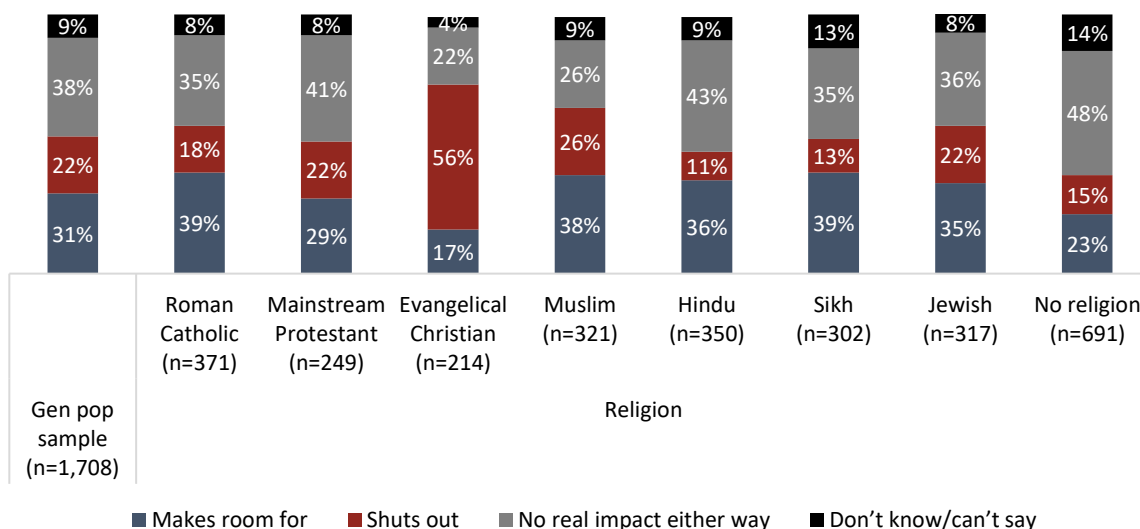
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but as many (26%) feel their beliefs neither welcomed or discouraged and more (38%) instead say society is accommodating:

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



**Vast majority, even among the non-religious, say freedom of conscience makes Canada better**

Freedom of conscience and religion was formally enshrined in Canada in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982, but the history of religious freedom dates back to before the founding of the country. The 1763 Treaty of Paris – which ended the Seven Years’ War fought between Britain and France on several continents including North America – recognized the right of the people of Quebec to practice the Roman Catholic religion.

A vast majority (69%) of Canadians believe that long-standing tradition makes the country better. Few (7%) would say it makes the country worse, while one-in-five (18%) believe freedom of conscience and religion has no impact on Canada either way.

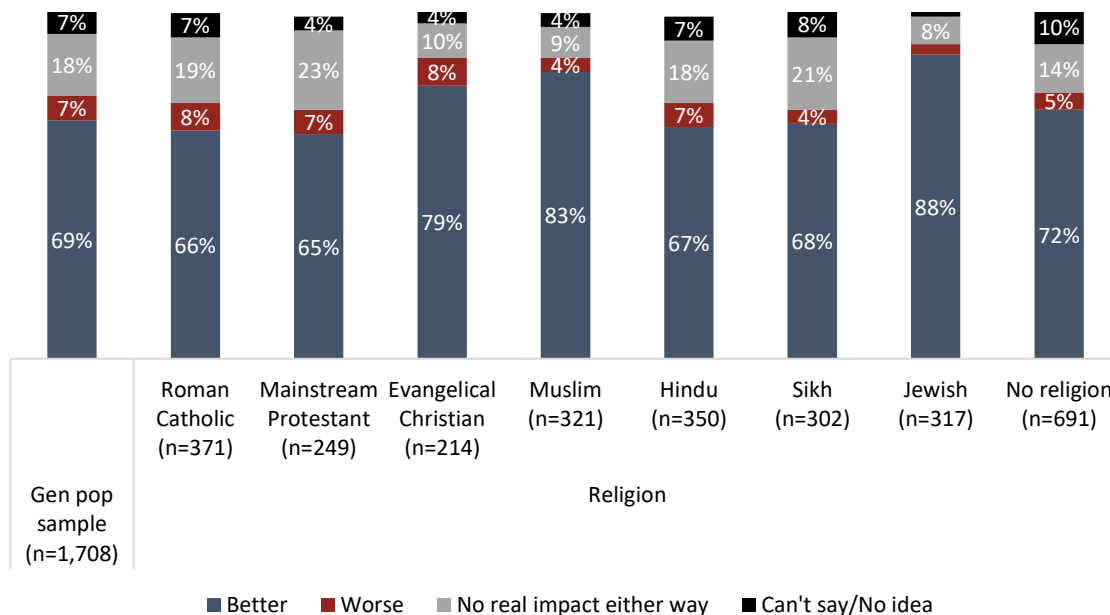
Though majorities of all the religious groups surveyed believe religious freedom makes Canada a better country, the size of the majority varies. Nearly all (88%) of self-identified Jewish Canadians say it makes the country better, and they’re joined by four-in-five of those who identify as Evangelical Christian (79%) and Muslim (83%). For other religious groups, that proportion falls to a smaller, but still significant, majority of two-thirds:

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**In your view, does having “freedom of conscience and religion” make Canada a better or worse country?**



As to whether or not freedom of conscience and religion is becoming stronger or weaker, or staying the same, Canadians are split. The largest group, one-third (33%) believe that freedom is deteriorating in the country, but nearly as many (28%) say it has remained consistent. One-quarter (25%) believe freedom of religion and conscience is becoming stronger.

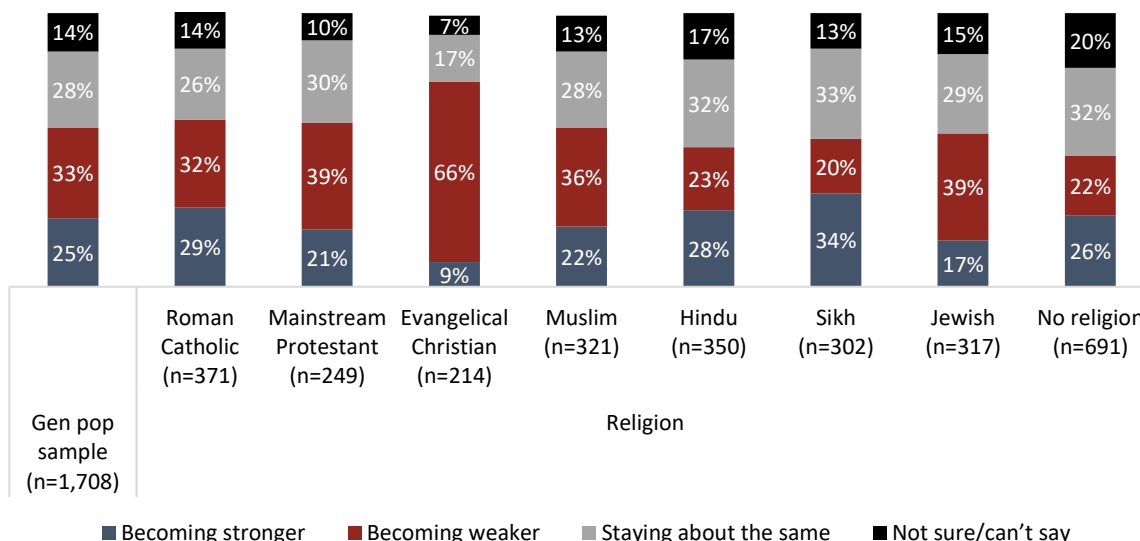
Self-identified Sikhs, at one-in-three (34%), are the most likely to believe it is becoming stronger. For other self-identified religious groups, more believe it's becoming weaker than the opposite. Evangelical Christians are the most likely to see their right to free belief eroded – two-thirds (66%) believe that's the case. Notably, [Evangelical churches filed constitutional challenges](#) against public health restrictions which prevented religious gatherings at times during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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



**About the Spectrum of Spirituality**

ARI researchers created this composite index based on the responses to several questions about faith and experience with God or a higher power. The following factors were measured in the data analysis:

- Belief in God or a higher power
- Belief in life after death
- How often, if at all, a person prays to God or a higher power
- How often a person attends religious services
- How often a person reads the Bible or other sacred text
- How often a person feels they experience God's presence
- How important it is to a person that their child to be educated about faith and involved in a faith-based community

ARI researchers used respondents' answers to these questions to create a continuum of faith, with those providing more answers indicating belief near the high end, and those with fewer answers suggesting a degree of personal faith near the low end. This creates four distinct groups: Non-Believers, Spiritually Uncertain, Privately Faithful and Religiously Committed.

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

**For detailed results for the inter-faith survey, [click here](#).**

**For detailed results for inter-faith respondents on what religious tradition they were raised in, [click here](#).**

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