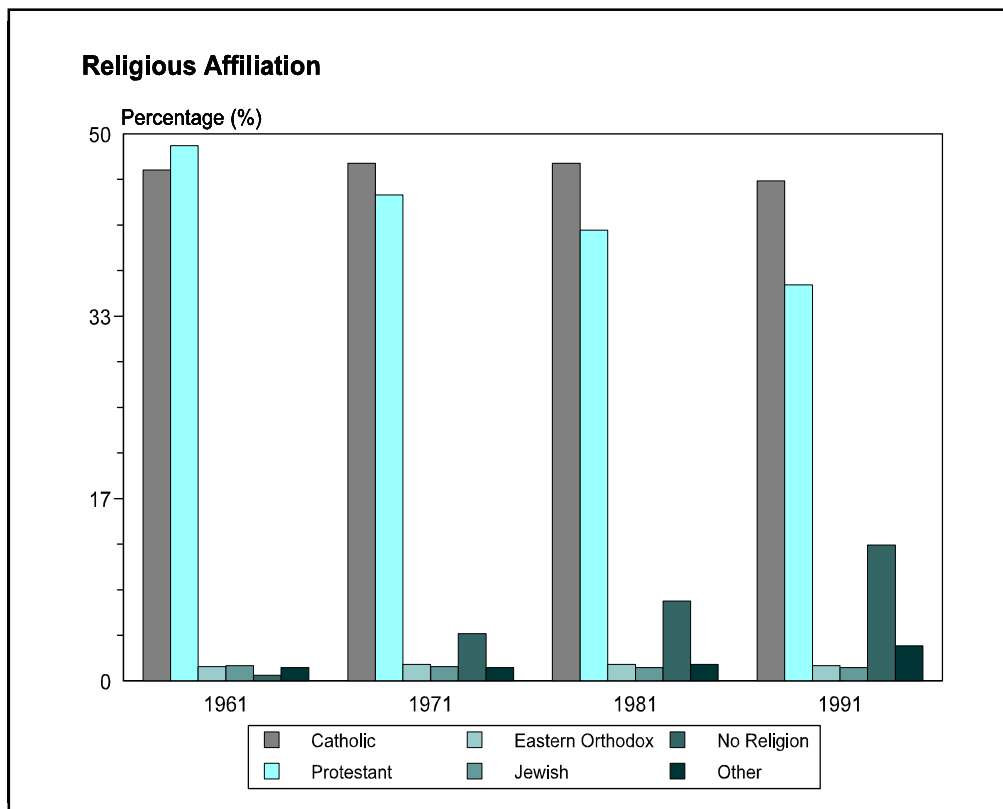


# RELIGION

## Recent Trends



- Catholic remains the largest religious group in Canada: as a whole, Catholic represents 46% of the Canadian population, down slightly from 47% in 1981. (1991 Census)
- The Protestant denominations made up the second-largest religious group in 1991, accounting for 36% of the population, down from 41% in 1981. Most of the decline occurred within five of the six largest Protestant denominations, countered by an increase of 29% in the Pentecostal denomination. (1991 Census)
- Church attendance is much lower than affiliation. In 1994, 86% of all Canadians reported a religion, with 40% attending church regularly, that is, at least once a month. (1994 General Social Survey)

- The percentage of individuals without a religion is growing: only 7.3% of the population indicated “no religion” in 1981; by 1991 the proportion of the population reporting no religion had risen to 13%. (1991 Census)
- Affiliation to the Buddhist, Hindu, Moslem, and Sikh religions is growing significantly. (1991 Census)

## Historical Availability of Census Data

Religion	Census Years				
	Variable Not Available in 1996 But Available in Previous Years				
	1971	1976	1981	1986	1991
Religion*	X		X		X

\* Variables indicated with an asterisk are direct variables. All others are derived.

## 1991 Census Question

<p><b>RELIGION</b></p> <p>17. What is this person's religion?</p> <p><i>Indicate a specific denomination or religion even if this person is not currently a practising member of that group.</i></p> <p><i>For example, Roman Catholic, Ukrainian Catholic, United Church, Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist, Pentecostal, Greek Orthodox, Jewish, Mennonite, Jehovah's Witnesses, Salvation Army, Islam, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh</i></p>	<p>19.</p> <p>Specify one denomination or religion only</p> <p>01 <input type="text"/></p> <p>02 <input type="radio"/> No religion</p>
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# Major Social Policy Issues for the 21st Century

**I**ncreasing religious diversity. Although the majority of Canadians reported a Christian affiliation in the last census, other religious affiliations and those reporting no religious affiliation represent a growing proportion of the population. How Canadian schools, hospitals, health clinics and workplaces adapt to new religious practices (for example, religious holidays and dietary requirements) will be a point of social change.

**D**elivery of social services. As the government restructures social services and funding to many communities, people may become more dependent on religious organizations for aid. In the past, churches have provided many social services, including the operation of soup kitchens and “nearly new” shops, as well as providing help for the homeless, the sick and the poor. In the future, will religious organizations have the membership and resources to continue their role in this regard?

## Why This Information Is Collected

*There was no question on religion in the 1996 Census. A question on religious affiliation has traditionally been included only on the decennial census, since a need for this information at five-year intervals has not been demonstrated. However, these data are used to support formulation, evaluation, and administration of a number of federal programs. They are used by community and religious groups as well.*

## Major Data Users

- *federal agencies and departments*
- *provincial and territorial governments*
- *municipalities*
- *religious organizations*
- *community organizations*
- *academics*

# Points for Discussion



**Need for data.** A question on religion has been included in the Canadian census since 1871. Until recently, the *Newfoundland Schools Act* used census data to plan for the provision of religious-based education in the province. Although, other provinces provide funding to religious schools, municipal enumerations are frequently used to budget for education allocations. In the light of these changes, is there still a need to measure religion every 10 years in the census?



**List of examples shown in the question.** The religion question has traditionally included check boxes or examples of religious groups. These examples are listed in the order of incidence in the population according to data from the previous decennial census. If this method is followed for the 2001 Census, the examples would be as follows: Roman Catholic, United Church, Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Pentecostal, Jewish, Islam, Greek Orthodox, Mennonite, Jehovah's Witnesses, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Ukrainian Catholic, Salvation Army, and Church of Latter Day Saints. Should Statistics Canada follow this procedure for 2001?



**The only answer circle provided is for "No religion".** The answer circle "No religion" was provided as an option in order to encourage people with no religious affiliation to respond to the question instead of leaving it blank. This saves both time and money processing the census data. Should this be continued in future censuses?



**Coding of religious groups.** In 1991, over 90 different religious groups were coded under the seven main headings: Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Jewish, Eastern Non-Christian, Para-religious groups, and "No Religious Affiliation". Should the current classification system be maintained? Should more subgroups be provided for the major non-Christian religions?



**Other data sources.** Is the census the best vehicle for measuring religious characteristics? The need for data on religion is changing. For example, a question on the pattern of a family's religious practices over a generation might be more relevant now. Can the data for such questions be accessed through alternative data sources at Statistics Canada, such as the General Social Survey?