

SOCI 1593

Hooked on Religion

Religion in Canadian Society: A Look at the Statistics

Monday 25 January 2016

Review: Dimensions of Religion

- Beliefs
- Rituals
- Experience
- Community

Religion in Canadian Society

- Sociologists are interested in the characteristics of a population at a particular period in time and how those characteristics change over time.
- In the case of religion, sociologists try to measure particular characteristics of a population associated with religion. These characteristics can include different dimensions of religion.

Statistics on Religion in Canadian Society

- Surveys can be used to measure characteristics associated with religion.
- According to Dawson and Thiessen,
... sociologists have relied extensively on a few simple measures of people's behaviours and attitudes, such as their religious affiliation and identification, attendance at religious services, belief in God, and how important religion is to them (2014, p. 54).

Statistics on Religion in Canadian Society

- The use of survey questions to measure characteristics of religion must take into consideration that there are problems with self-reporting.
- People tend to over-estimate their religiosity because of social desirability bias.
- That is why it is good to include questions on several different dimensions of religion in a survey.

Collecting Survey Data on Religion

- The individuals selected to participate in a survey comprise the sample.
- The larger group which these individuals represent is referred to as a population.

Survey Data on Religion in Canada

- The population is the group of interest to the researcher.
- Populations might be virtually any size and may cover almost any geographical area.
- As sociologists, we have access to survey data on religious characteristics of the Canadian population as well as of the individual provinces and territories.

Statistics on Religion in Canadian Society

- A reliable source of information on people in Canadian society is Statistics Canada, an agency of the federal government.
- Statistics Canada collects data on religion through the national census and other smaller surveys.

Statistics on Religion in Canadian Society

National Census:

- A census is an official count of the population.
- In Canada the census takes place every five years.
- First one conducted in 1871 and last one in 2011.
- Questions on religious affiliation are only asked every ten years – the last time being in 2011.
- Data on religion in Canada in 2011 were collected via the National Household Survey (NHS)

Statistics on Religion in Canada, NHS 2011

- The population of Canada in 2011 was 33,476,688 people.
- About 66% of Canadians identified themselves as Christians.
- 23% as having no religion, (16% in 2001, 12% in 1991)
- 3.1% as Muslims, (2% in 2001)
- 1.5% as Hindus,
- 1.4% as Sikhs, and
- 0.98% as Jewish.

Changes in the Canadian Population

- The proportion of people who reported religious affiliations other than Christianity is growing, with 7.2% of the Canadian population identifying as Muslim, Hindu, Sikh or Buddhist in 2011 compared to 4.9% in 2001.
- By 2031, the number of Canadians with a non-Christian religion is expected to more than double to about 14% of the population.

Statistics on Religion in New Brunswick, NHS 2011

- The population of New Brunswick in 2011 was 751,171 people.
- About 82% of New Brunswickers identified themselves as Christians,
- 15% as having no religion, and
- 0.4% as Muslims.
- Amongst Christians in New Brunswick, 59% are Catholic, 12% are Baptist, 8% are Anglican and 7% belong to the United Church of Canada.

Regional Variations in Religion in Canada

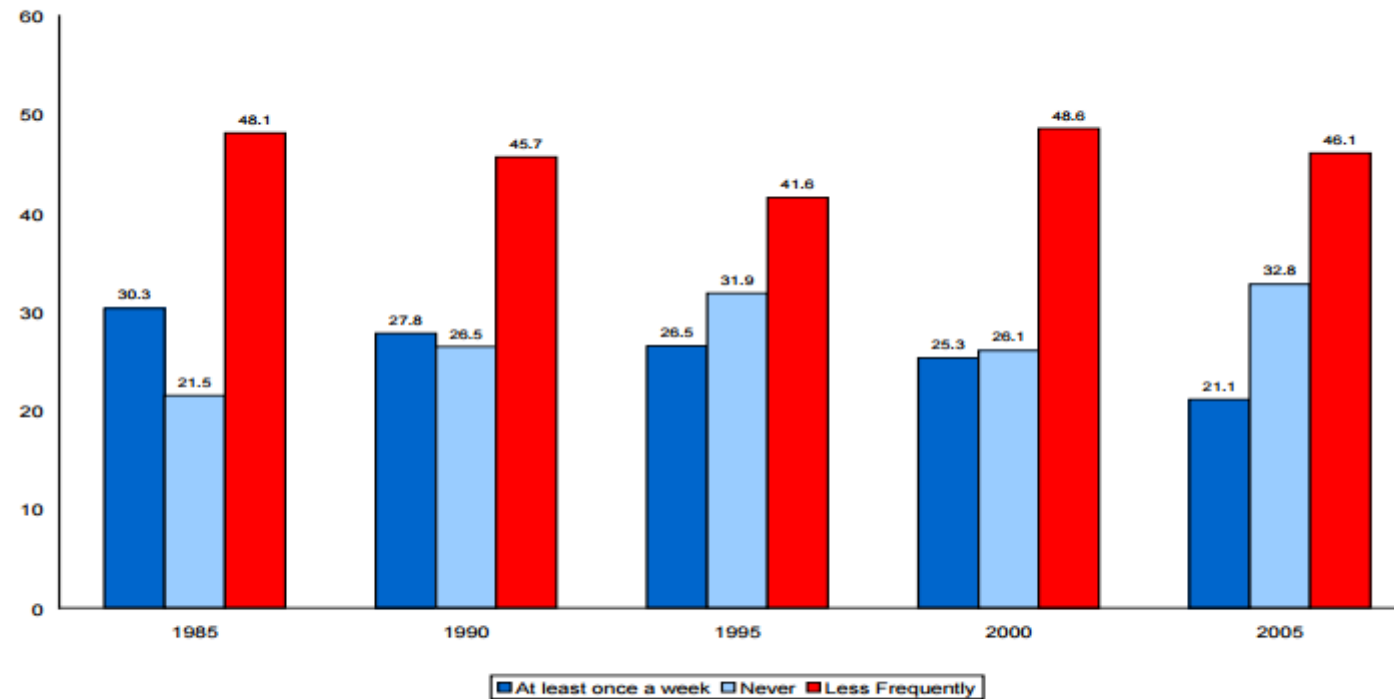
- People living in Atlantic Canada are more likely to indicate that they are religious than are people living on the West Coast.
- Ontario is home to the largest proportions of Muslims and Hindus in the Canadian population.
- Nearly half of the Canadian Sikh population resides in British Columbia.

Statistics on Religion in Canada

- The General Social Survey (GSS) is another way that data on religion is collected in Canada. It is conducted every year, but on different topics. The same topics are surveyed every five years in order to look at trends.
- The sample for the GSS is about 25,000 people aged 15 years and older. Statistics from this sample are used to describe characteristics of the Canadian population.

Canadian Trends in Religion: GSS 1985-2005

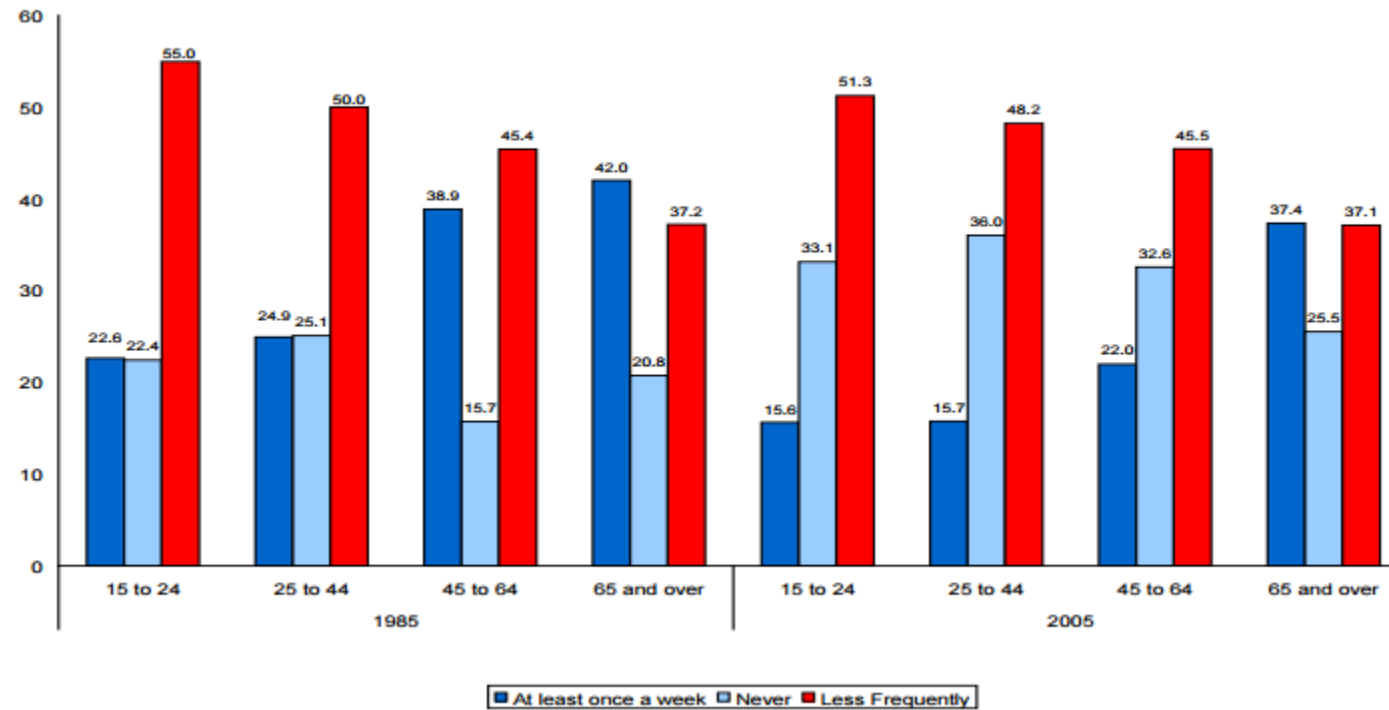
Chart 1 Frequency of religious attendance, 1985 to 2005



Note: The category less frequently includes: at least once a month, a few times a year and at least once a year
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey.

Canadian Trends in Religion: GSS 1985-2005

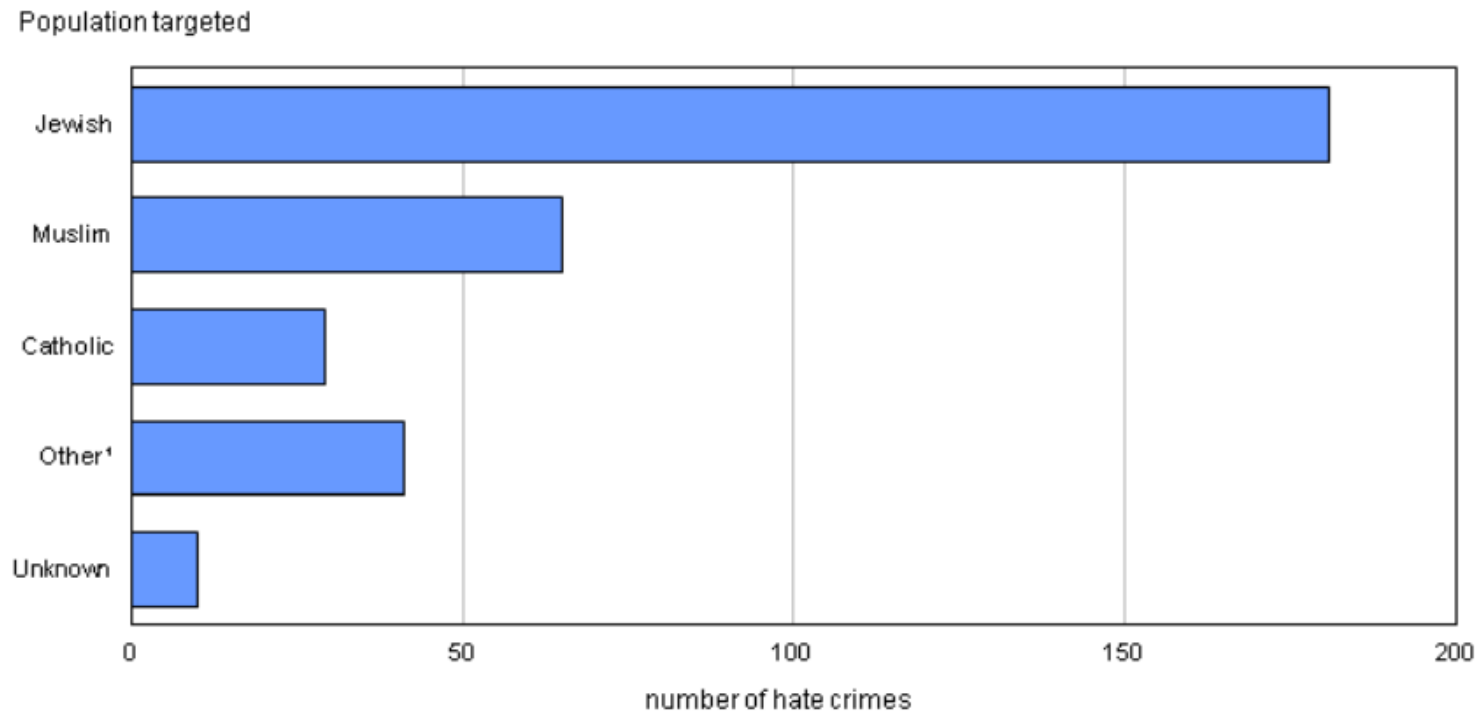
Chart 2 Frequency of religious attendance, by age, 1985 to 2005



Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey.

Canadian Trends in Religion: Hate Crimes

Number of police-reported hate crimes motivated by religion, Canada, 2013



1. Includes motivations based upon religions not otherwise stated including non-Catholic Christian denominations as well as Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, etc.

Note: Information in this chart reflects data reported by police services covering 99% of the population of Canada.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.