

Religion



Canada is a multi-cultural country and this is reflected in the diversity of religious practices. Seven out of every 10 Canadians affiliate themselves as either Roman Catholic or Protestant. For more than 100 years in Canada, Protestants outnumbered Catholics. In 1901, Protestant faiths accounted for well over one-half (56%) of the total population, compared with 42% for Roman Catholics. This change reflected immigration patterns at the time.

Prior to 1961, most European immigrants came from the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands. However, by 1971, for the first time since Confederation, Catholics outnumbered Protestants as the sources of immigration to Canada began to change. In 1971, Roman Catholics represented 46% of the population, and Protestants 44%.

The proportion of Protestant faiths in the population has been declining since it peaked at 56% in 1921. The proportion of Roman Catholics peaked in 1971. One reason for the recent growth among Roman Catholics was immigration. Of the 1.8 million immigrants who came to Canada between 1991 and 2001, Roman Catholics accounted for nearly one-quarter (23%) of this total, the highest proportion for any major religion among these recent arrivals. At the same time, the number of Canadians who reported religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism has increased substantially.

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