

## Thinking about our Future #11 - United Church of Canada People Compared with Canada's Population

*This is the eleventh of a series of background information about trends in our community and beyond that the FSA Planning Committee hopes will help people to think about our future as a congregation. A FSA Planning the Future day is being planned for Saturday May 13<sup>th</sup> – please mark your calendar.*

# Statistics Canada

## Immigration and Diversity: Population Projections for Canada and its Regions, 2011 to 2036

by the Demosim team

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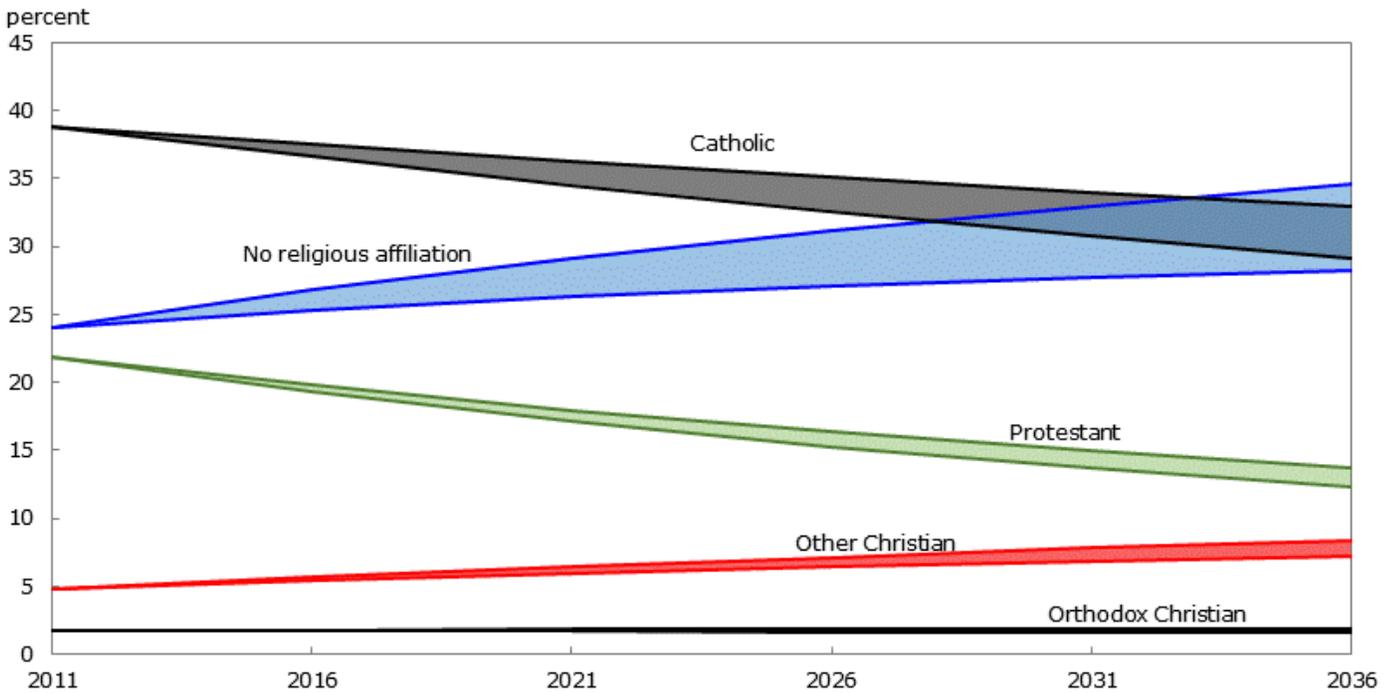
<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-551-x/91-551-x2017001-eng.htm>

### Religions [Note51](#)

The religious profile of the country's population has undergone some profound changes in recent decades. In the 1981 Census, approximately 90% of Canadians self-identified as Christians. Thirty years later, in 2011, this proportion had decreased to 67%. During this period, the proportion of people with no religious affiliation rose from 7% to 24% and the proportion of people who reported a non-Christian religion increased from 3% to 9%. **While the trend toward disaffiliation among Christians—and Protestants in particular—has been a factor in the increase of the unaffiliated population, immigration from countries with diverse traditions will have played a large part in the increased proportion of people with a non-Christian religion.**

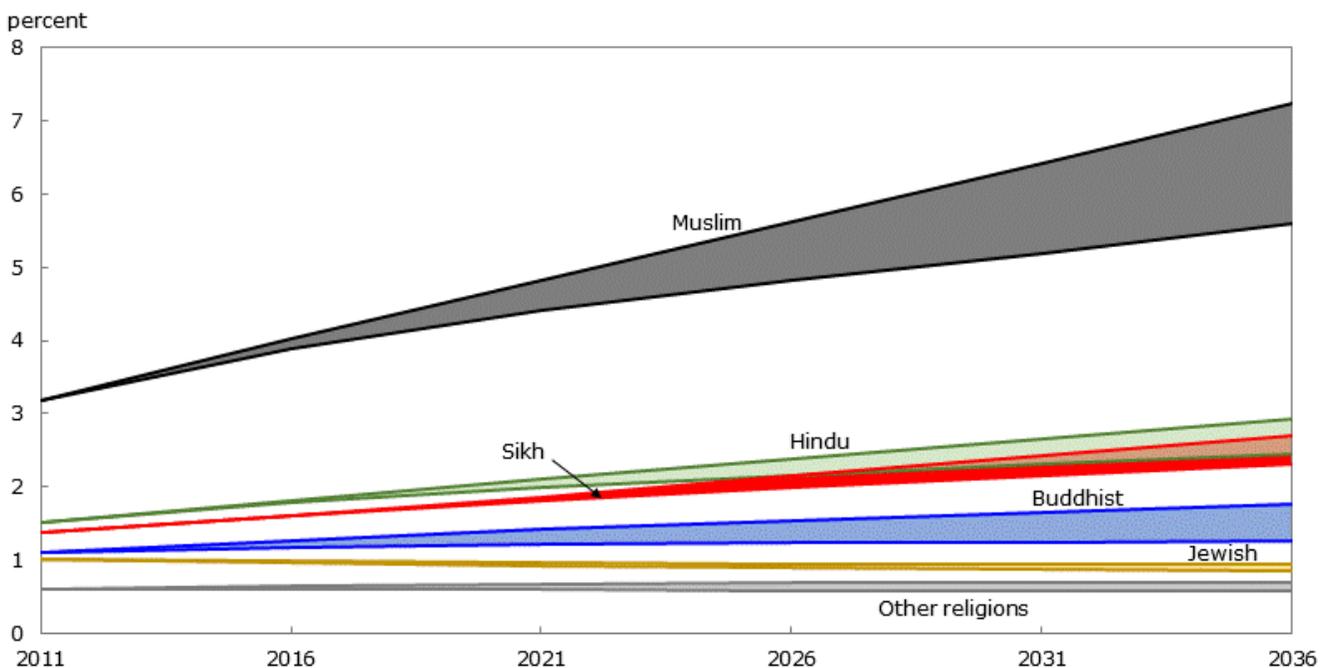
According to the scenarios developed for these projections, these trends should continue until 2036 (Figures [17a](#) and [17b](#)). At that time, the proportion of Christians in the population would have continued to decline to between 52% and 56%. Protestants, who were in the majority until the mid-20th century, would then compose less than 14% of the population. Catholicism would remain the religion with the largest number of followers (between 12.2 million and 14.4 million), compared with 13.3 million in 2011. However, Catholics would account for only 29.2% to 32.8% of the population (compare with 38.8% in 2011).

**Figure 17a**  
**Population of religious groups (no religious affiliation, Catholic, Protestant, Christian Orthodox and other Christian) as a percentage of the population, Canada, 2011 (estimated) and 2036 (projected according to seven scenarios)**



**Note:** The shaded surface indicates the interval between the minimum and maximum values projected in all the scenarios considered.  
**Sources:** Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey (adjusted) and Demosim 2017.

**Figure 17b**  
**Population of religious groups (Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and other religions) as a percentage of the population, Canada, 2011 (estimated) and 2036 (projected according to seven scenarios)**



**Note:** The shaded surface indicates the interval between the minimum and maximum values projected in all the scenarios considered.  
**Sources:** Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey (adjusted) and Demosim 2017.

**The number of unaffiliated people would continue to increase and could represent between 28.2% and 34.6% of all Canadians in 2036.** Insofar as the unaffiliated population is underrepresented among immigrants, the trend toward religious disaffiliation, among Protestants and Catholics born in Canada in particular, would be the main driver of this increase. By 2036, the unaffiliated population could be larger than the population of Catholic followers. Based on these projections, only a slowing of the trend toward disaffiliation (as suggested in the alternative religious mobility scenario using the trends from 1991 to 2001) would put Catholics ahead.

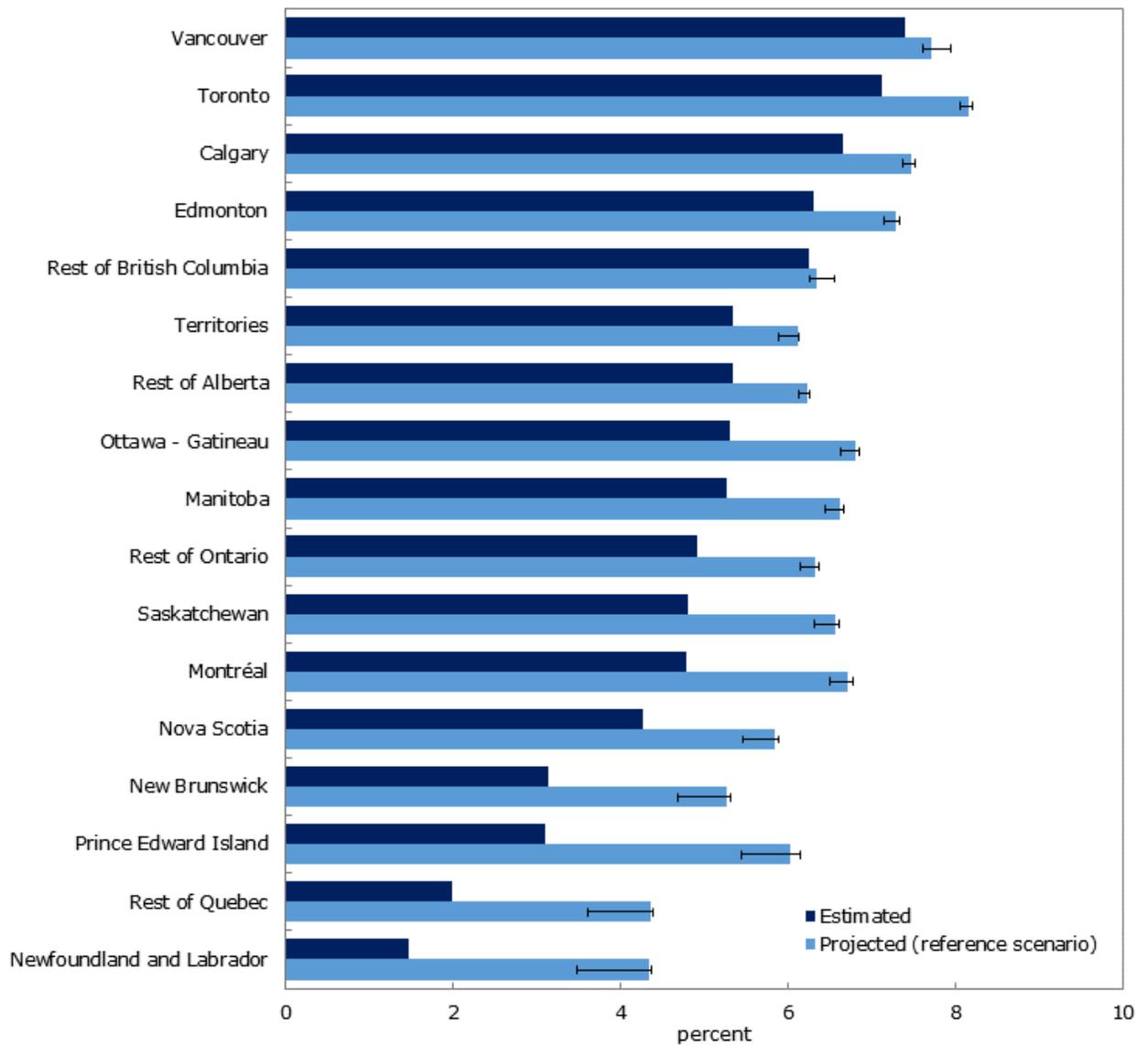
**However, non-Christian religions would see the most rapid increase, their population doubling in almost all the scenarios selected from 2011 to 2036.** Non-Christian religions combined would comprise between 13% and 16% of Canadians in 2036. Among them, the Muslim, Hindu and Sikh faiths, overrepresented among immigrants compared with their weight in the total population, would see a quicker increase in the number of their followers, although they would still represent only a modest share of the total Canadian population. Moreover, the population of Christians other than Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox Christians, which is also overrepresented among immigrants, could more than double. [Note 52](#)

**Immigration, combined with the trend toward disaffiliation, would thus contribute to the development of a more religiously diverse Canada in 2036.** This diversity can be measured through the Pew Research Center's Religious Diversity Index, which was adapted to the Canadian data for this projection exercise ([Box 5](#)). This index has a value of 0 when the entire population is part of the same group (lack of diversity) and a value of 10 when the population can be broken down evenly among the religious groups that compose it (maximum diversity). The index is used to compare religious diversity over time and from one region to another. The results are presented in [Figure 18](#).

### ***Religious Diversity Index***

The Religious Diversity Index used for these projections is an adaptation, geared to the situation in Canada, of the index used by the Pew Research Center in an article entitled *Global Religious Diversity: Half of the Most Religiously Diverse Countries are in Asia-Pacific Region* (Pew Research Center 2014), which was itself based on the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (Johnson and Grim 2013). In this report, the religious groups selected for calculating the index are Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jewish, other religion and unaffiliated. For more information on the methodology used to calculate the Religious Diversity Index, please see the Pew Research Center article (2014).

**Figure 18**  
**Religious Diversity Index by place of residence, Canada, 2011 (estimated)**  
**and 2036 (projected according to seven scenarios)**



**Notes:** This figure presents the Religious Diversity Index for 17 regions in Canada. The index is on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 refers to a complete lack of religious diversity (i.e., the entire population would have the same religion) and 10 indicates maximum religious diversity (i.e., the population would be divided evenly among all the religious groups considered). The  $\text{—|—}$  symbol indicates the interval between the minimum and maximum values projected by all the scenarios considered.

**Sources:** Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey (adjusted) and Demosim 2017.

The results in [Figure 18](#) show that, based on the scenarios used in these projections, there would be greater religious diversity in all regions by 2036. This increase would stem from two primary factors that act together in most regions: an increase in the proportion of the population that did not report a religion and an increase in the proportion of the population that belongs to a non-Christian religion. **While the first factor has more to do with the changes within the Canadian-born population and the second more to do with immigration, the two of them together lead to a decline in the proportion of the population that is Christian.**

Religious diversification would be more pronounced in the regions that were the most homogeneous from a religious point of view in 2011, mainly the regions in eastern Canada (Quebec and Atlantic), where the vast majority of the population was Christian. In these regions, religious diversification of the population stems in large part from disaffiliation, and to a lesser extent, from an increase in the proportion of non-Christian religions. Despite this diversification, Quebec and Atlantic Canada would still have the lowest levels of religious diversity in Canada in 2036.

The situation would be different in the regions that were already more religiously diverse in 2011, particularly the Vancouver, Toronto, Calgary and Edmonton CMAs (all of which had a large proportion of immigrants in their populations in 2011). These regions would continue to become more diversified, particularly due to the rise in the proportion of persons reporting a non-Christian religion. At the end of the projection period, these four CMAs would remain the most religiously diverse.

The rest of British Columbia—in other words the entire province outside Vancouver—is an exception in that the Religious Diversity Index would remain relatively stable (very slight increase) by 2036. In 2011, this region had the highest proportions of people who reported having no religion in the country (47%). The proportion of individuals with a non-Christian religion would be up, as would people who reported having no religion. As the population with no religion becomes the majority, the increase in its weight would become a homogenizing factor, thus running counter to the increase in the proportion of non-Christian people.

**Bold added.**