
MEDIA MISSES THE STORY, CHURCHGOERS SAY

65% OF REGULAR CHURCH ATTENDERS SAY THE MEDIA DOES A POOR JOB OF COVERING FAITH AND RELIGION

SIX IN TEN (60%) CANADIANS SAY RELIGION IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THEIR LIFE



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This Canada-wide poll was conducted by telephone between May 12th and May 17th, 1998 among a representative cross-section of 1,516 adult Canadians.

The data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's age composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to the 1996 Census data.

With a national sample of 1,516, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results are within ± 2.5 percentage points of what they would have been had the entire adult Canadian population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within the various sub-groupings of the survey population.

We refer to weekly "churchgoers" throughout this press release. This phrase covers Christians as well as Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and all others who attend religious services weekly. We use this term generically because over 95% of all Canadians who attend religious services weekly identify themselves as Christians.

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The *Faith and the Media* conference at Carlton University School of Journalism to be held June 7-9, 1998 prompted this first-ever probe of the public's views on the media's coverage of faith in Canada.

Missing the Story

Two thirds (65%) of weekly churchgoers feel "the media does a poor job of covering faith and religion and that this area does not get the kind of media coverage it should". Further, 55% of weekly churchgoers feel faith and religious issues receive less coverage than they should, while just 12% feel the same about business news and analysis.

Six in ten Canadians (60%) say religion is an important part of their lives and 22% attend religious services once a week or more.

These are some of the findings of a National Angus Reid Poll conducted by telephone between May 12th and 17th, 1998 among a representative cross-section of 1,516 adult Canadians. With a sample of this size, one can say with 95% certainty that the results are within ± 2.5 percentage points of what they would have been had the entire adult Canadian population been polled.

THE SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

65% of Weekly Churchgoers feel the Media does a Poor Job of Covering Faith

Two thirds (65%) of Canadians who attend religious services weekly say “the media does a poor job of covering faith and religion and that it does not get the kind of media coverage it deserves”. This view declines with decreased frequency of church attendance. Among those who attend services once a month or so, 46% feel the media does a poor job, as do 34% of occasional churchgoers and one quarter (24%) of those who never attend.

- Women (45%) are more likely than men (35%) to feel the media does a poor job of covering faith and religion. Those from Quebec (62%) and British Columbia (59%) are more likely to feel the media does a good job of reporting on faith.

Faith and Women’s Issues most likely to be seen as receiving Too Little Coverage

One third (36%) of all Canadians (and 55% of weekly churchgoers) feel that faith and religious issues receive less media coverage than they should. An identical number of all Canadians (36%) feel women’s issues obtain less coverage than they should. One quarter (27%) believe gay and lesbian rights issues get too little coverage, while just 15% say business news and analysis receives less coverage than it should.

- Women are more likely to feel faith and religious issues (41%), women’s issues (43%) and, to a lesser extent, gay and lesbian rights issues (31%) receive too little media attention. Conversely, women are also somewhat less likely (12%) to believe that business news and analysis obtains too little coverage.
- British Columbians are somewhat less likely to feel faith and religious issues receive too little coverage (29%), while Quebecers (34%) are more likely to report that gay and lesbian rights issues are covered less than they should.
- People age 55+ are less likely to feel there is inadequate coverage of women’s issues (29%) and gay and lesbian rights (19%).

Majority of Canadians Report Religion is an Important Part of their Lives

Six in ten Canadians (60%) consider religion to be an important part of their lives, with most of these (62%) saying it provides a great deal or quite a bit of guidance in their day-to-day lives. Seven in ten (71%) Canadians attend religious services at least once a year, with one in five (22%) attending once a week or more and an additional 18% at least once a month.

- Women (68%), those age 55+ (70%) and those without a high school diploma (68%) are more likely to report religion is an important part of their lives. British Columbians (42%) and Quebecers (55%), meanwhile, are less likely to report religion is important to them.
- Weekly churchgoers are more likely to be Atlantic Canadians (35%), age 55+ (34%), women (29%) and have less than a complete high school education (29%). Quebecers (15%) and British Columbians (17%) are least likely to attend religious services weekly.

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