

**GOD AND OTHER MYSTERIES:
A LOOK INTO THE RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL BELIEFS
OF CANADIANS**

A Reader's Digest Sponsored Study Conducted by Ipsos-Reid



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Toronto, ONTARIO – According to a recent study conducted by Ipsos-Reid on behalf of Reader's Digest of Canada on the religious and spiritual beliefs of Canadians, Canada is fundamentally a nation that believes in God. In fact, eight in ten (78%) Canadians say they believe in God. Two-thirds (64%) *definitely believe in God*, while a further 14% say they *sometimes believe in God, but at other times don't*. Just one in ten (10%) Canadians indicate they *do not believe in God*, while 12% say they are *unsure or don't know* believe in God.

Based on the results of the study, the following can be said of Canadians overall and their religious and spiritual beliefs:

- 78% of Canadians definitely (64%) or partially (14%) believe in God;
- 66% of Canadians identify themselves as Christian;
- 23% of Canadians attend religious services 'once a week or so'; 45% of Canadians indicate that they pray on a daily basis;
- One in four (27%) Canadians indicate that their personal belief in God has *increased* over the years, while 13% say their level of belief in God has *declined*;
- 61% of Canadians say they *believe* in 'angels', and 26% of this group has had personal experience with 'angels';

- 43% believe in ‘out of body experiences’; 29% in ‘past-life regression’; 27% in ‘channelling or the ability to communicate with the dead’; and 18% in ‘witchcraft and spells’;
- Four in ten (38%) Canadians think ‘the world would be a better place if everyone shared my beliefs in spiritual matters’.

Looking specifically at the views of Canadians who believe in God, partially believe in God or are unsure in their belief (excluding those who explicitly state they ‘do not believe in God’):

- 77% say God is an *impersonal spiritual force*, while 17% view God as a *person*;
- 75% indicate ‘God is an ever-present force in my life’;
- 78% *agree* that ‘God is the one who created you, but left you with free will’;
- 81% feel that their ‘faith gives my life more meaning’;
- 61% say the religious texts of their faith should be understood as ‘allegories or myths to guide human behaviour’, while 44% say that their religious texts ‘should be taken literally’.
- One in ten (13%) believes that ‘God punishes through illness such as AIDS, misfortune or natural disasters such as floods or earthquakes’.

For more in-depth information on Canadian’s religious and spiritual beliefs, please read on.

These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid poll conducted on behalf of Reader’s Digest between June 3rd and June 5th, 2003. The poll is based on a randomly selected sample of 1,006 adult Canadians. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out



of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult Canadian population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to the 2001 Census data.

Two-Thirds (64%) of Canadians Claim a Definite Belief in God, While One in Ten (10%) State They Do Not Believe

Two-thirds (64%) of Canadians indicate that they *definitely believe in God*, while a further one in eight (14%) say they *sometimes believe in God, but at other times don't*. One in ten (11%) say they are *not sure if they believe in God* and 2% say they *don't know*. Within Canada, one in ten (10%) explicitly say they *do not believe in God*.

- Residents of Saskatchewan / Manitoba (69%), Atlantic Canada (69%) and Ontario (68%) led the country in the number who say they *definitely believe in God*, followed by their counterparts in Alberta (62%), British Columbia (59%) and Quebec (57%). In fact, residents of British Columbia (20%) and Quebec (13%) are more likely to say they *don't believe in God* than are residents of Ontario (7%), Saskatchewan / Manitoba (4%) or Atlantic Canada (4%).
- Older (71%) and middle aged (64%) Canadians are statistically more likely to say they *definitely believe in God* than are young adult Canadians (55%).
- Women (70%) are more significantly more likely than are men (57%) to *definitely believe in God*, while men (14%) are significantly more likely than women (6%) to indicate they *don't believe in God*.



- Canadians with less than a high school diploma (74%) are statistically more likely than those with a high school diploma (62%) or with a university degree (60%) to say they *definitely believe*, while university graduates (13%) are significantly more likely than are those with a high school diploma (7%) or less education (6%) to indicate they *don't believe in God*.
- Canadians from lower income households (70%) are statistically more likely than are their counterparts in upper (61%) or middle (60%) income households to say they *definitely believe in God*.
- Christians (70%) are more likely than are non-Christians / those who do not identify with a particular religion (50%) to indicate they *definitely believe in God*.
- Almost all (97%) of those who say they attend religious services weekly and 94% of those who pray daily say they *definitely believe in God*.

One in Four (27%) Say Personal Belief in God Has Increased, While 13% Say Their Belief Has Decreased

One in four (27%) Canadians indicate that their belief in God has *increased* over the years, while about half that number (13%) say their belief has *decreased* over the years. Six in ten (60%) indicate that their level of belief in God has *stayed the same* over the years.

- Three in ten (31%) Ontario residents say that their belief in God has *increased* over the years, compared to 23% of Quebecers and 20% of British Columbians. Meanwhile, one-quarter (22%) of Quebecers, significantly more than in any other region of the country, say that their belief in God has declined over the years.

- Women (32% versus 21% of men) are significantly more likely to say their belief has *increased*, while men (16% versus 10% of women) are significantly more likely to say their belief has *decreased* over the years.
- Young adult (17%) and older (14%) Canadians are significantly more likely to say their belief has *decreased* over the years than are their middle-aged (9%) counterparts.
- Canadian Christians who are not from the three largest Christian denominations in Canada¹ (Roman Catholic/Anglican/United Church of Canada) (38%) are significantly more likely than are their Catholic (26%) or United Church (20%) counterparts to indicate that their belief in God had *increased* over the years. Meanwhile, Catholics (17%) are more likely than are their Anglican (7%) or Other Christian (6%) counterparts to indicate their belief in God has *decreased* over the years.
- Examining religious activity, a majority (55%) of those who attend *weekly* services indicate their belief in God has *increased* over the years. This compares to just 22% of those who attend services on a *monthly/occasional* basis and just 13% of those who *rarely/never* attend religious services. Of those who *rarely/never* attend, one in five (21%) indicate their personal belief in God has *decreased* over the years, compared to just 2% of those who attend services *weekly*.
- Almost half (47%) of those who pray daily say their personal belief has *increased*, compared to just 8% of those who rarely, never or only when moved pray. This latter group (21%) is more significantly more likely than are those in the former (5%) to indicate their belief has *decreased* over the years.

¹ This group will be referred to as ‘Other Christians’ for the remainder of this report

Of those who say their belief in God has changed over the years (39% of Canadians), one in three (34%) indicate that a ‘personal or family illness’ *increased* their belief in God, while 7% say that this event resulted in a *decrease* in their level of belief. ‘Having children’ *increased* the belief in God of one in three (32%) of this sub-group, while this event *decreased* belief for 1%. ‘Natural disasters and wars’ caused an *increase* in belief for 23% and a *decrease* for 6%, while ‘falling in love’ *increased* their belief in God of 21% and a *decrease* in belief for 1%.

- Women are significantly more likely to say that a ‘personal or family illness’ (44% versus 23% of men) or ‘having children’ (38% versus 25% of men) *increased* their personal belief in God. Men are significantly more likely than women to indicate that these events had *no effect* on their level of belief (‘illness’ 70% versus 46%; ‘children’ 64% versus 52%).
- Middle-aged (41%) and older (34%) respondents are more likely to say that ‘having children’ had *increased* their belief in God, than are younger (19%) respondents.

Three in four Canadians (excluding those who state they ‘do not believe in God’) indicate that ‘God is an ever-present force in my life’ (75%) and is ‘there to be called upon in times of crisis’ (73%).

- Older (80%) and middle-aged (77%) Canadians are significantly more likely than younger adults (69%) to say that ‘God is an ever-present force in my life’.
- Canadians without a high school diploma (83%) are significantly more likely to say that ‘God is an ever-present force in my life’ than are university graduates (72%).
- Nine in ten (91%) Canadians, who *definitely* believe in God, say that ‘God is an ever-present force in my life’. This compares to Canadians who *sometimes* believe in God (54%) and those who are *unsure* (18%). As for the view that ‘God is there to be called upon in

times of crisis', 81% of Canadians who *definitely* believe in God feel this way, compared to 69% of those who *sometimes* believe and just 37% of those who are *unsure* in their belief of God.

- Christians (79%) are more significantly more likely than are non-Christians and others who do not identify with a particular religion (67%) to say that 'God is an ever-present force in my life'.
- Those who say their belief in God has *increased* over the years (94%) are significantly more likely than are those who's belief in God has *stayed the same* (74%) or *decreased* (36%) to feel that 'God is ever-present in their life', while this pattern also holds true for the view that 'God is there on to be called upon in times of crisis' (*increased* belief 84%; *same* belief 72%, *decreased* belief 55%). Those who say their level of belief in God has *decreased* are significantly more likely to *disagree* that 'God is an ever-present force in my life' (62% versus 6% of those who's belief in God has *increased*) as well as to believe that 'God is there to be called upon in times of crisis' (45% versus 16% of those who's belief in God has *increased*).
- Canadians who attend religious services weekly (96%) or who pray daily (94%) are significantly more likely to say that 'God is an ever-present force in my life'. This is also true for the view that 'God is there to be called upon in times of crisis' (weekly services 85%; daily prayer 84%).

Two-Thirds (66%) of Canadians Identify Themselves as Christian, With Catholics (37%) the Largest Denomination

Two-thirds (66%) of Canadians identify themselves as Christian, while one in five (18%) say they do not identify themselves with any religion.

One in four (37%) Canadians identify themselves as Roman Catholic, while the next largest groups are Anglicans (9%) and members of the United Church of Canada (8%). Other Christian denominations mentioned include unspecified Protestant (4%), Baptists (4%), Presbyterian (3%), while one percent each describe themselves as Lutheran (1%) or Pentecostal (1%). Less than one percent says they are Orthodox or Mennonite.

As for non-Christians, one percent each identifies themselves as Jewish (1%), Muslim (1%) or Buddhist (1%). Less than one percent identifies themselves as Hindu. Other religions are mentioned by 7%, while 6% say they ‘don’t know’.

Majority Say God is Loving (54%), Impersonal Spiritual Force (77%)

As for what ‘God’ is, three in four (77%) Canadians (excluding those who state they ‘do not believe in God’) say that God is an *impersonal spiritual force*, while just under one-fifth (17%) holds the view that God is a *person*.

- Residents of Quebec (85%) are significantly more likely than Canadians in any other region to believe that God is an *impersonal spiritual force*.
- This viewpoint is also more likely to be held by Canadians 18 to 54 years of age (81%) than by those 55 or older (70%).
- Canadians without a high school diploma (29%) are significantly more likely than are those with a high school diploma (15%), post-secondary education or some university (16%) or a university degree (12%) to say that God is a *person*.
- This view is also more likely to be held by those in lower income households (26%), compared to those from middle (15%) or upper (11%) income households.



- Those who *definitely believe in God* (20%) are significantly more likely to believe that God is *person* than are those who say they *sometimes believe in God* (10%) or are *unsure* (4%).
- Canadians whose belief in God has *increased* over the years (26%) are significantly more likely to believe that God is a *person* than are those whose level of belief has *stayed the same* (14%) or *decreased* (7%) over the years.
- Other Christians (25%) are significantly more likely than are Catholics (15%) or Anglicans (10%) to believe that God is a *person*.
- This view is also more likely to be held by those who attend religious services *weekly* (29% versus 9% of those who *never/rarely* attend) and by those who pray *daily* (25% versus 7% of those who pray *rarely/never/when moved*).

Further, excluding those who ‘do not believe’, God is viewed is primarily *loving* (54%) compared to *righteous* (22%). One in five (18%) say that God is both *loving and righteous*, while 3% believe that God is *neither*.

- Residents of Quebec (39%) are more likely than those in any other region to believe that God is *righteous*, while they are the least likely to believe that God is *loving* (41%).
- Women (58% versus 49% of men) are significantly more likely to say that God is *loving* or is both *loving and righteous* (21% versus 14% of men), while men are significantly more likely to say that God is *righteous* (28% versus 16% of women).
- Those without a high school diploma (35%) are significantly more likely than are their counterparts with a high school diploma (19%), post-secondary education or some university (21%) or a university degree (19%) to say that God is *righteous*.

- Canadians who's belief in God has *increased* (58%) or has *stayed the same* (54%) over the years is significantly more likely to believe that God is *loving* than those whose belief has *decreased* (36%), whereas those whose belief in God has *decreased* (36%) is more likely say God is *righteous*, compared to those who's belief has *stayed the same* (25%) or *increased* (12%).
- Canadians who attend religious services *weekly* (58%) or *monthly/occasionally* (56%) are significantly more likely than those who *never/rarely* attend services (47%) to view God as *loving*. Those who *rarely/never* attend services (27%) or who attend *monthly/occasionally* (25%) are significantly more likely than are those who attend *weekly* (11%) to view God as *righteous*.

Examining other positions regarding the role God plays in the world, nine in ten (87%) Canadians (excluding those who state they 'do not believe in God') indicate that 'God is present in all of nature', while three in four (76%) feel that 'God is present in every human being'.

- Women (89%) are significantly more likely than are men (84%) to say that 'God is present in all of nature'.
- British Columbians (32%) are more likely to disagree that 'God is present in every human being' than are residents of Ontario (22%), Quebec (19%), Atlantic Canada (19%), or Alberta (13%).
- Canadians from lower income households (95%) are significantly more likely to believe that 'God is present in all of nature' than are those in upper (87%) or middle (84%) income households. Residents of lower income households (82%) are also more likely than those in middle-income households (74%) to feel that 'God is present in every human being'.

- Canadians whose belief in God has *increase* (96%) are significantly more likely to feel that ‘God is present in all of nature’ than are those whose level of belief has *stayed the same* (87%) or *declined* (71%). This pattern also holds for the belief that ‘God is present in every human being’ with those whose level of belief in God has *increased* (87%) being significantly more likely to believe this to be the case than those whose belief has *stayed the same* (76%) or *declined* (54%).
- Catholics (84%) are significantly more likely to believe that ‘God is present in every human being’ than are Other Christians (75%) or members of the United Church of Canada (71%).
- Canadians who attend religious services *weekly* (96%) are more likely to hold the view that ‘God is present in all of nature’ than are those who attend services *monthly/occasionally* (91%) or those who attend services *rarely/never* (75%). As for the view that ‘God is present in every human being’, Canadians who attend services *occasionally/monthly* (82%) or *weekly* (81%) are significantly more likely to believe this to be the case than those who *rarely/never* (64%) attend religious services.
- Canadians who pray *daily* (95%) or *occasionally* (94%) are more likely to say that ‘God is present in all of nature’ than are those who pray *rarely/never/only when moved* (70%). This pattern also holds true regarding the view that ‘God is present in all human beings’. Those who pray *daily* (87%) or *occasionally* (82%) are more likely to believe that this is true than are those who pray *rarely/ never/only when moved* to (56%).

As for God’s control over human destiny, eight in ten (78%) Canadian (excluding those who state they ‘do not believe in God’) feel that ‘God is the one who created you, but left you with free will’.



- Quebecers (37%) are significantly more likely than are those in any other region to disagree with this proposition.
- Canadians without a high school diploma (85%) are more likely than are university graduates (74%) to feel that this is the case.
- Those in lower income households (85%) are more likely than are residents of upper (78%) or middle-income households (75%) to hold this position.
- Canadians whose belief in God has *increased* (90%) is significantly more likely to believe this to be the case than those whose belief in God has *decreased* (50%). In fact, those whose belief in God has *decreased* (50%) are significantly more likely to *disagree* with this position than are those whose beliefs have *stayed the same* (20%) or *increased* (9%).
- Canadians who attend religious services weekly (91%) are significantly more likely to agree with this proposition than are those who attend *monthly/occasionally* (81%) or those who *rarely/never* attend services (64%). This is also true of those who pray *daily* (88%) or *occasionally* (85%) compared to those who pray *rarely/never/ only when moved* (57%).

When asked what the driving force behind their belief is, one in four (24%) Canadians (excluding those who state they ‘do not believe in God’) indicate that it is the ‘teachings of their faith or spiritual practice’, while an equal number (24%) say it is ‘just faith or their belief in God’. Just over one in ten (14%) indicate that it is ‘direct experience’, while one in ten (9%) say ‘intuition’. Other mentions include ‘friends/family’ (5%), ‘how I were raised’ (5%), ‘information in books or the media’ (2%), and ‘life experiences or events’ (2%).

- Older (30%) Canadians are significantly more likely than are young adults (21%) to say the driving force behind their belief is the ‘teachings of their faith or spiritual practise’. This is also the case with citing ‘direct experience’ (older 18%; young adults 10%).
- Women (28%) are significantly more likely to say the driving force behind their faith is ‘just faith or belief in God’ than are men (20%).
- Those with a high school diploma (30%) are significantly more likely than are those without a diploma (18%) or with post-secondary education or some university (21%) to say the driving force behind their belief is the ‘teachings of faith or spiritual practice’.
- Respondents from households with income of under \$60,000 (27%) are more likely than those with household incomes of \$60,000 or more (19%) to say the main force behind their personal belief in God is ‘just faith or belief in God’.

Faith in God Gives Life More Meaning According to Eight in Ten (81%)

According to eight in ten (81%) Canadians (excluding those who state they ‘do not believe in God’), ‘my faith gives my life more meaning’, while three in four say that ‘my faith makes my life more interesting’ (75%) or gives them a ‘sense of protection’ (75%). Meanwhile, just one in ten (13%) *agree* with the view that ‘my faith makes my life more frightening’.

- Older respondents (85%) are significantly more likely than are young adult respondents (75%) to say that their ‘faith gives my life more meaning’, while those in the older group (82%) are significantly more likely to *agree* with the view that their ‘faith makes my life more interesting’ than either their middle-aged (74%) or younger (70%) counterparts. Meanwhile, older and middle-aged (77% each) respondents are more likely to *agree* that ‘my faith gives me a sense of protection’ than do young adult respondents (68%).

- Women are significantly more likely than men to *agree* with the views that their faith ‘makes my life more meaning’ (women 86%; men 75%); ‘makes my life more interesting’ (women 79%; men 70%); and ‘gives me a sense of protection’ (women 80%; men 68%).
- Respondents without a high school diploma (84%) are significantly more likely to agree that their faith gives them ‘a sense of protection’ than either those with post-secondary education or some university (72%) or a university degree (70%).
- Other Christians (86%) are the most likely to *agree* that ‘my faith gives me a sense of protection’.
- Those who attend weekly services and those who pray daily are significantly more likely to *agree* with the views that their faith ‘gives my life more meaning’ (*weekly* services 97%; *daily* prayer 95%); ‘makes my life more interesting’ (*weekly* services 95%; *daily* prayer 92%); and ‘gives me a sense of protection’ (*weekly* services 93%; *daily* prayer 90%).

One in Ten (13%) Believes God Punishes Through Illness, Misfortune or Natural Disasters

One in ten (13%) Canadians (excluding those who state they ‘do not believe in God’) feel that ‘God punishes through illness such as AIDS, misfortune or natural disasters such as floods or earthquakes’. However, seven in ten (71%) *strongly disagree* that this is the case, with a further 14% who *somewhat disagree*.

- One in four (23%) in Saskatchewan/Manitoba *agree* with this viewpoint, which is significantly higher than the numbers in Ontario (12%), Quebec (11%) and British Columbia (8%).

- Middle-aged (15%) respondents are more likely to hold this position than are their older (9%) counterparts.
- Respondents without a high school diploma (31%) are significantly more likely to *agree* with this view than are those with a high school diploma (15%), post-secondary education or some university (9%) or a university degree (8%).
- Those in lower income households (22%) are significantly more likely than those in middle (12%) or upper (8%) income households to *agree* with this position.
- Canadians who attend religious services *weekly* (18%) or *monthly/occasionally* (14%) are significantly more likely to hold this view than are those who *rarely/never* attend religious services (7%).
- There are no statistical differences on this position between religious groups.

So Where Do We Go From Here? Canadians Views on the Afterlife

One-quarter (26%) of Canadians overall indicate that they believe in *an afterlife, but not specifically a Heaven or a Hell*, with just slightly less (21%) who believe you go to *Heaven or Hell* after you die. One in ten (8%) say that they *believe in a Heaven but not a Hell*. Seven percent believe you are *ultimately reincarnated*. One in ten (11%) believe that you *simply cease to exist*. One in four (27%) Canadians say they *don't know what happens after you die*.

- Quebecers (36%) are statistically more likely to say they believe in *an afterlife, but not necessarily a Heaven or Hell* than are those in Atlantic Canada (24%), Ontario (24%), British Columbia (21%) and Alberta (20%). Belief in *a Heaven and a Hell* is highest among those in Saskatchewan/Manitoba (28%) and Ontario (27%), while it is lowest among those in

British Columbia (17%) and Quebec (10%). British Columbians (38%) are the most likely to say they *don't know what happens when you die*.

- Women (29%) are significantly more likely than are men (23%) to say they believe in *an afterlife, but not specifically in a Heaven or Hell*, while men (15%) are significantly more likely than women (7%) to believe that you *simply cease to exist after you die*.
- Canadians in upper (14%) and middle (12%) income households are significantly more likely than are their counterparts in lower income households (7%) to believe that you *simply cease to exist after you die*.
- Catholics (36%) are significantly more likely to say they believe in *an afterlife, but not necessarily a Heaven or Hell* than do members of the United Church of Canada (24%) or Other Christians (12%). Other Christians (52%) are the most likely to indicate they believe that after you die, you *go to heaven or to hell*.
- Canadians who attend religious services weekly (47%) are statistically more likely to believe that after you die you *go to heaven or to hell*, than are those who *monthly/occasionally* attend services (20%) or *rarely/never* attend (4%). Those who *rarely/never* attend (20%) and those who pray *rarely/never /only when moved* (19%) are significantly more likely to believe that you *simply cease to exist when you die*.

Most (61%) Agree Their Religious Texts To Be Understood as Allegories or Myths, While Four in Ten (44%) Say Texts to be Taken Literally

When asked about religious texts, most (61%) Canadians (excluding those who state they 'do not believe in God') *agree* that 'the religious texts of my faith are to be understood as allegories or myths to guide human behaviour'.

- This view is strongest (72%) among self-identified Roman Catholics and compares to the views of Protestants (56%) and non-Christian (54%).
- Regionally, Quebecers (69%) are significantly more likely than are those in Alberta (54%) and British Columbia (53%) to *agree* with this position.
- University graduates (69%) and those with post-secondary education or some university (65%) are significantly more likely to *agree* that the ‘texts of my faith should be understood as myths and allegories’ than do Canadians with (53%) and without (52%) a high school diploma.
- Canadians who *monthly/occasionally* (68%) or *rarely/never* (63%) attend religious services and those who pray *occasionally* (68%) or *rarely/never/when moved* (66%) are significantly more likely to *agree* with this view of the religious texts of their faith, than are those who attend services *weekly* (49%) or pray *daily* (55%).

However, on the same subject, four in ten (44%) Canadians (excluding those who state they ‘do not believe in God’) *agree* that ‘the religious texts of my faith are to be taken literally’.

- Other Christians (58%) are the most likely to *agree* with the view that their religious texts are to be taken literally. This compares to the views of Catholics (45%), Anglicans (39%), members of the United Church (38%) and non-Christians / those who do not identify with a particular religion (38%).
- Half of the respondents in Saskatchewan / Manitoba (54%), Atlantic Canada (49%) and Ontario (48%) *agree* that their religious texts are to be taken literally, compared to the views of Quebecers (41%), and those in Alberta (38%) and British Columbia (30%).

- Older (50%) believers are significantly more likely than younger adult believers (40%) to say that the ‘texts of my faith are to be taken literally’.
- Respondents without a high school diploma (71%) are more likely than those with a diploma (50%), with post-secondary education or some university (42%) or with a university degree (28%) to say that their religious texts should be taken literally.
- The view that their texts should be taken literally is also more likely to be held by those in lower income households (51%) than by those in upper income households (40%).
- Canadians who say they *definitely believe in God* (49%) are more likely to say their religious texts ‘should be taken literally’ than those who believe in God only *sometimes* (39%) or are *unsure* (23%). This is also true of those who indicate that their belief in God has *increased* (54%) over time, compared to the views of those who’s belief has remained *the same* (42%) or *decreased* (31%).
- Those who attend religious services *weekly* (59%) and those who pray *daily* (54%) are significantly more likely to *agree* that the ‘texts of my faith should be interpreted literally’.

Three in ten (31%) Canadians (excluding those who state they ‘do not believe in God’) say that the texts of their religion ‘were written so long ago that they’re no longer relevant’.

- Catholics (40%) are the most likely to *agree* with the view that their religious texts were ‘written so long ago that they are no longer relevant’.
- Residents of Quebec (45%) are more likely than those in any other region to *agree* with the view that the ‘religious texts of my faith were written so long ago that they are no longer relevant’.

- Those without a high school diploma (42%) are more likely than are university graduates (30%) or those with post-secondary education or some university (25%) to say that the ‘texts of my faith were written so long ago that they are no longer relevant’.
- While not surprisingly, those who *rarely/never* attend services (43%) and those who pray *rarely/never/only when moved* to (49%) are significantly more likely to say that their religious texts were written so long ago that they are irrelevant today.

Four in ten (41%) Canadians (excluding those who state they ‘do not believe in God’) *agree* with the view that the ‘religious texts of my faith were created by man to control society’.

- Catholics (49%), Anglicans (43%), members of the United Church (38%) and non-Christians (39%) are more likely than Other Christians (27%) to *agree* with this proposition.
- Quebec respondents (59%) are the most likely to hold this viewpoint.
- Men (45%) are significantly more likely than women (38%) to express this view.
- Those who *rarely/never* (52%) or *monthly/occasionally* (45%) attend religious services and those who pray *rarely/never/only when moved* to (56%) are significantly more likely to *agree* this position.

Just One in Four (23%) Canadians Attend Weekly Religious Services, However Almost Half (45%) Say they Pray on a Daily Basis

One in four (23%) Canadians overall say they attend religious services *once a week or so*, while an additional one in ten (9%) say they attend *once a month or so*. One-third (34%) indicates they attend religious services *on occasion*, while an equal proportion say they *never, or almost never*, attend religious services (33%).

- There is no statistical difference among respondents of the different Christian denominations as to attendance at religious services.
- Respondents in Atlantic Canada (31%) and Ontario (28%) are more likely than are those in Alberta (17%) or Quebec (15%) to say they attend services *weekly*. Meanwhile, half (50%) of British Columbians, more than in any other region of the country, indicate that they *rarely or never* attend religious services.
- Older (32% versus 19% of middle-aged and 18% of young adult) respondents as well as women (28% versus 17% of men) are significantly more likely to attend *weekly* religious services. Young adults (38%) and middle aged (36%) Canadians are significantly more likely to say they *rarely or never* attend services compared to the attendance of older (24%) Canadians, while men (40% versus 25% of women) are also significantly more likely to say they *never or rarely* attend religious services.
- Canadians who indicate that they *definitely believe in God* (35%) and those who indicate that their belief has *increase* over the years (47%) are significantly more likely to attend religious services on a *weekly* basis. Canadians who indicate that their belief has *decreased* over the years (54%) are significantly more likely to say that they *rarely or never* attend services.

As for private prayer, just under half (45%) say they pray on a *daily* basis with a further one-quarter (26%) who indicates that they pray *occasionally*. One in five (19%) say that they *rarely* (10%) or *never* (9%) pray. One in ten (8%) say they pray *only when moved by need or gratitude*.

- Older (60% versus 42% of middle aged and 32% of younger) Canadians and women (53% versus 36% of men) are significantly more likely to say that they pray on a *daily* basis, while middle aged (30%) Canadians are more likely than are older (20%) Canadians to say

they pray *occasionally*. Young adult (12% versus 6% of older) Canadians and men (12% versus 6% of women) are significantly more likely to say they *never* pray.

- Respondents from lower income households (57%) are significantly more likely than are those in middle (44%) or upper (38%) income households to say they pray on a *daily* basis, whereas those from upper income households (10%) are more likely than those in lower income households (5%) to indicate they only pray *when moved by need or gratitude*.
- Other Christians (53%), Catholics (49%), Anglicans (46%) and non-Christians / those who do not identify with a particular religion (45%) are significantly more likely than are members of the United Church (28%) to say they pray on a *daily* basis.
- Canadians who say that their belief in God has *increased* (72%) are more likely than those who say their belief has remained *the same* (37%) or *decreased* (20%) to indicate that they pray on a *daily* basis, while those who indicate that their belief has *declined* over the years (20%) are more likely than those who's level of belief in God has remained *unchanged* (12%) or *increased* (3%) to say they *rarely* pray.
- As may be expected, those who attend services on a *weekly* basis are also more likely to say they pray *daily* (81%), while those who only attend religious services *monthly/occasionally* are the most likely to say they pray *occasionally* (36%) and those who *rarely/never* attend services are more likely to indicate that they *never* (22%) pray or only pray *when moved to by need or gratitude* (16%).

***Majority of Canadians Say They Believe in Angels (61%),
Synchronicity (59%) and Destiny (55%)***

In addition to belief in God, Canadians were asked about belief in various paranormal phenomena. A majority of Canadians overall indicate that they *believe* in ‘angels’ (61%), however just four in ten (37%) say they believe in ‘ghosts’.

- Women (69%) are significantly more likely to say they *believe* in ‘angels’ than do men (53%).
- Younger adults (50%) are more likely to express a belief in ‘ghosts’ than do their middle aged (40%) and older (21%) counterparts.
- University graduates (54%) are the least likely to express a belief in ‘angels’.
- Canadians from lower income households (69%) are significantly more likely than those in upper income households (57%) to say they *believe* in ‘angels’.
- Other Christians (76%) and Catholics (66%) are more likely than are members of the United Church (54%) to express a belief in ‘angels’.
- Canadians who say they *definitely believe in God* (79%) are significantly more likely to say they *believe* in ‘angels’, while those who say their personal belief in God has *increased* over the years (83%) are also significantly more likely to indicate they *believe* in ‘angels’.
- Canadians who attend religious services *weekly* (84%) and who pray *daily* (84%) are significantly more likely to express a belief in ‘angels’.

As for paranormal phenomena that people use to explain incidents in their lives or to predict what will happen to them in the future, a majority (59%) say that they *believe* in ‘synchronicity or meaningful coincidences’ and just as many (55%), express a belief in ‘destiny or karma’. Four in ten (38%) say they *believe* in ‘other’s ability to tell the future’,

while three in ten (29%) *believe* in ‘astrology and horoscopes’. ‘Predictive systems, such as Tarot cards or the I-Ching’ are believed in by one in five (20%) Canadians.

- In general, younger and middle aged Canadians are more likely to express belief in these phenomena than are their older counterparts.
- As well, in general, women are significantly more likely than men to indicate a belief in these paranormal phenomena.
- Canadians who *occasionally/monthly* or *rarely/never* attend religious services are, in general, more likely than those who attend services *weekly* to express a belief in these paranormal phenomena.
- Those in lower income households are more likely to express a belief in ‘astrology and horoscopes’ (38%) and ‘predictive systems such as tarot cards or the I-Ching’ (27%) than are those in upper income households (‘astrology/horoscopes’ 25%; ‘predictive systems’ 18%).

Looking at other paranormal phenomena, just under half of Canadians say they have at least some belief in ‘personal auras’ (45%) and in ‘out of body experiences’ (43%), while approximately three in ten have some belief in ‘past life regression or the ability to recall a past life’ (29%) and in ‘channelling or the ability to communicate with the dead’ (27%).

- Regionally, residents of Quebec are the most likely to express a belief in the ability to ‘channel or communicate with the dead’ (41%) are is significantly more likely (35%) than those in Ontario (27%) or Alberta (21%) to express a belief in ‘past-life regression’.
- In general, younger and middle aged Canadians are more likely to express belief in these phenomena than are their older counterparts.

- As well, in general, women are significantly more likely than men to indicate a belief in these paranormal phenomena.
- Canadians in lower (39%) and middle (33%) income households are significantly more likely to say they *believe* in ‘past-life regression’ than do those in upper income households (20%). This is also the case regarding ‘channelling or communicating with the dead’ where those in lower (34%) and middle (31%) income households are more likely to express a belief than are their counterparts in upper income households (21%).
- Catholics (35%) are significantly more likely to indicate a belief in ‘channelling or the ability to communicate with the dead’.
- Canadians who only attend religious services *rarely/never* (34%) or *monthly/occasionally* (31%) attend religious services are significantly more likely to say they believe in ‘past-life regression’ than are those who attend services *weekly* (17%).

And finally just 18% say they believe in ‘witchcraft and spells’.

- Younger (26%) and middle aged (20%) Canadians are significantly more likely to say they have some belief in ‘witchcraft and spells’ than do older (10%) Canadians.
- Those from lower income households (25%) are more likely than their counterparts in upper income households (17%) to indicate a belief in ‘witchcraft and spells’.
- Non-Christians / those who do not identify with a particular religion (25%) are more likely than are either Catholics (17%) or members of the United Church of Canada (7%) to express a belief in ‘witchcraft and spells’.

- Canadians who *never or rarely* attend religious services (25%) are significantly more likely than others to believe in ‘witchcraft and spells’.

As a general note, those Canadians who say they *do not believe in God* are also the least likely to express a belief in any of the paranormal phenomena discussed.

But Is Belief Based on Experiences or Just Faith?

When asked what the driving forces are behind their personal belief in these paranormal phenomena, the top response is ‘personal experience’ (23%), followed by the ‘teaching of their faith or spiritual practice’ (11%), ‘just faith’ (8%), ‘information in books or the media’ (8%), ‘intuition’ (6%), ‘life experience or events’ (4%), ‘friends or family’ (3%), ‘how I was raised’ (1%), while one-fifth (20%) indicate they ‘don’t know’.

- One in three respondents in British Columbia (32%) and in Saskatchewan/Manitoba (32%) cite ‘direct experience’ as the main force behind their belief in paranormal phenomena. This compares to the views of Albertans (19%) and Quebecers (16%). Quebecers (14%) are significantly more likely to cite ‘just faith’ than are those in Ontario (6%), British Columbia (5%) or Alberta (5%).
- Women (27%) are more likely than are men (18%) to say that their belief in paranormal phenomena is based on ‘direct experience’.
- Members of the United Church of Canada (35%) are more likely to cite ‘direct experience’ as the force behind their belief in paranormal phenomena than are Catholics (20%) or Other Christians (16%), while Other Christians (23%) are the most likely to cite the ‘teachings of my faith or spiritual practise’ as the main force behind their belief.

To delve further into Canadians personal belief in various paranormal phenomena, those who expressed some level of belief or are unsure (excluding those who explicitly say they ‘do not believe’) in a particular phenomenon were then asked if they had any personal experience with that particular paranormal phenomenon.

- Of Canadians who say they have some belief or are unsure about ‘angels’, one-quarter (26%) indicates that they have had a personal experience with ‘angels’.
- Three in ten (29%) Canadians who say they have some belief or are unsure about ‘ghosts’ has had some personal experience to back up this view.
- Half (51%) of those who have some belief in or are unsure about ‘synchronicity or meaningful coincidences’ say they have experienced it.
- Four in ten (37%) of those who have some belief in or are unsure about ‘destiny or karma’ say they have had such experiences.
- As for ‘other’s ability to tell the future’, one-third (35%) of those with some level of belief or are unsure have had personal experience with this ability.
- Close to half (46%) of Canadians who have some belief in or are unsure about ‘astrology or horoscopes’ say they have had personal experiences.
- Three in ten (30%) of those with some belief in or are unsure regarding ‘predictive systems such as tarot cards or the I-Ching’ say they have had personal experience.
- Of Canadians with some level of belief in or are unsure about ‘personal auras’, one in four (24%) indicate a having a personal experience.



- One-fifth (19%) of those who express some belief in or are unsure about ‘out of body experiences’ have had some personal experience with this phenomenon.
- One in six (17%) Canadians with a level of belief in or are unsure about ‘channelling or communicating with the dead’, indicate having personal experience with this phenomenon.
- Just 13% of those who express some level of belief in or are unsure about ‘past-life regression’ say they have had personal experience.
- Just one in ten (12%) of those who express some belief in or are unsure about ‘witchcraft and spells’ say they have had personal experience with this phenomenon.

Has Level of Belief in Paranormal Phenomena Changed and How Has Life Experiences Effected Belief in Such Phenomena?

One in five (22%) Canadians indicate that their belief in paranormal phenomena has *increased* over the years, while one in ten (11%) indicate that their belief in such phenomena has *decreased*. Two-thirds (66%) say that their level of belief has remained unchanged over the years.

- Younger adult (27%) and middle aged (23%) Canadians are more likely to say that their belief in paranormal phenomena has *increased* over the years, than are their older (16%) counterparts.
- Comparing the views of this question with the result of the similar question regarding belief in God, it is interesting that those who indicated that their belief in God has *increased* over the years (35%) are significantly more likely than those whose belief in God



has *decreased* (21%) or remained *the same* (17%) to indicate that their belief in paranormal phenomena has *increased* over the years.

- Other Christians (32%) are significantly more likely to say that their belief in paranormal phenomena has *increased*, compared to Catholics (21%), Anglicans (18%), members of the United Church of Canada (15%), and non-Christians/ do not identify with any particular religion (24%).

Of those Canadians who indicated an increase in belief in paranormal phenomena over the years, 35% say that ‘personal or family illness’ was a factor in *increasing* their belief. ‘Falling in love’ (24%), and ‘having children’ (23%) are cited by approximately one in four, while 16% view ‘natural disasters and wars’ as *increasing* their belief in paranormal phenomena. For each of these events a very small number indicate that the event *decreased* their belief in paranormal phenomena (‘personal/family illness’ 2%; ‘falling in love’ 3%; ‘having children’ 1%; ‘natural disaster or wars’ 2%).

Of Canadians who indicated that their belief in paranormal phenomena has *decreased*, the events asked about appear to have had approximately the same effect to *increase* or *decrease* belief in paranormal phenomena: ‘personal or family illness’ (*increased* belief 10%; *decreased* belief 9%); ‘falling in love’ (*increased* belief 7%; *decreased* belief 10%); ‘having children’ (*increased* belief 14%; *decreased* belief 7%); ‘natural disasters or wars’ (*increase* belief 7%; *decreased* belief 6%).

One in Three (35%) Canadians Say Belief in Paranormal Phenomena Makes Their Life More Interesting

Of Canadians who express at least some level of belief in at least one of the paranormal phenomena (95% of Canadians), one in three (35%) indicate that ‘my belief in paranormal phenomena makes my life more interesting’, while one in four (23%) say their belief gives

‘my life more meaning’ and one in five (21%) indicate that it gives ‘me a sense of protection’. One in ten (12%) say their belief in paranormal phenomena makes ‘my life more frightening’.

- Younger (43%) and middle-aged (36%) Canadians are significantly more likely to say that their belief in paranormal phenomena makes ‘my life more interesting’ than do their older (24%) counterparts. As for making their life ‘more meaningful’, younger (29%) are more likely than are older (18%) Canadians to *agree* with this position. Younger (18%) Canadians are also significantly more likely to *agree* that their belief in paranormal phenomena ‘makes my life more frightening’ than either their middle-aged (11%) or older (7%) counterparts.
- Respondents without (30%) and with (27%) a high school diploma are significantly more likely than either those with post-secondary education or some university (18%) or a university degree (16%) to indicate that their belief in paranormal phenomena gives them a ‘sense of protection’, while those without a high school diploma (21%) are also more likely than university graduates (10%) and those with post-secondary education or some university (9%) to say that their belief ‘makes my life more frightening’.
- Those who indicate their personal belief in paranormal phenomena has *increased* over the years, are significantly more likely than those who’s level of belief has remained *the same* or *declined* to indicate they *agree* with each of the positions put forward.

Four in Ten (38%) Canadians Think World Would be a Better Place if Everyone Shared Their Beliefs in Spiritual Matters

And finally, four in ten (38%) Canadians think that ‘the world would be a better place if everyone shared my beliefs in spiritual matters’. This compares to close to six in ten (58%)

who say that *no* the world would not be a better place if everyone shared their spiritual beliefs.

- The view that the world would be a better place if everyone shared their beliefs is as likely to be held by Christian (38%) Canadians as by Canadians who are non-Christians/ do not identify with any particular religion (36%).
- However, Other Christians (46%) and Catholics (40%) are significantly more likely to agree with this viewpoint than are members of the United Church (28%). In fact, United Church members (70%) are significantly more likely than are Catholics (58%) or Other Christians (47%) to disagree.
- Residents of Saskatchewan/Manitoba (44%) and Ontario (41%) are significantly more likely than are those in Alberta (28%) to agree with this viewpoint.
- Older (43%) and middle-aged (40%) Canadians are significantly more likely than are younger (30%) adults to say this would be the case.
- Women (41%) are more likely than men (35%) to hold this position.
- Half (52%) of Canadians without a high school diploma agree with this proposition. This level is significantly more than amongst those with a high school diploma (38%), a post-secondary education or some university (35%), or among university graduates (34%).
- Canadians in lower income households (47%) are significantly more likely than those in middle (37%) or upper (34%) income households to agree with this viewpoint.
- Half (48%) of those who say they '*definitely believe in God*' agree that the world would be a better place if everyone shared their spiritual beliefs. This compares to the views of those who say they '*sometimes*' believe in God (25%), are '*unsure*' (17%) and those who state they '*do not believe in God*' (19%).
- Canadians whose belief in God has *increased* (57%) are significantly more likely than are those whose belief has remained *the same* (33%) or *decreased* (23%) to agree with this viewpoint, whereas three-quarters (75%) of those whose belief in God had *declined*

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disagree with this position. This level is significantly higher than among those who's belief in God has remained *the same* (63%) or *increased* (40%).

- Two-thirds (67%) of those who attend religious services and a majority of those who pray *daily* (55%) express agreement with this position. In comparison, just three in ten of those who attend services *monthly/occasionally* (32%) or *rarely/ never* attend services (27%) agree with this viewpoint, while just one in three (35%) of Canadians who pray *occasionally* and one in five (22%) of those who say they pray *rarely/never/only when moved* to agree with this position.

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