

Religion for the Common Good

Canada and the United States in 2025

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About Cardus Spirited Citizenship

Cardus Spirited Citizenship studies the ways in which Canadians work together to strengthen our shared social fabric. In particular we study charitable giving in Canada, city structures and networks, and creative ways to measure in dollar terms what faith communities contribute to their surrounding neighbourhoods.

Key Points

- In partnership with the Angus Reid Institute, Cardus fielded a survey on religiosity with 10,000 respondents in March 2025: 5,000 nationally representative respondents from Canada and 5,000 nationally representative respondents from the US. The survey included Cardus's and ARI's Spectrum of Spirituality, which provides a nuanced lens for understanding religious belief and practice.
- Our findings confirm previous research, which has shown the US population is more religious than Canada. For example, 58 percent of Americans, compared with 36 percent of Canadians, "moderately agree" or "strongly agree" that religion is very important in their day-to-day lives.
- Canadians who are religious appear to be shaped by a historical and cultural awareness of religious diversity, whereas for Americans, religion tends to enjoy broader cultural affirmation.
- These divides appear to be narrowing: Younger generations in both countries, especially among Christians, display increasingly similar religious profiles compared to their older counterparts.
- The US and Canada share the world's longest border but also have interconnected economic, linguistic, political, and cultural landscapes. When at its best, religion in North America can serve as a generative force for personal and social good.

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Introduction

Religious views can—and often do—shape our individual and collective imagination for social flourishing. To understand the religious identities, practices, and perspectives of Canadians and Americans, Cardus (in partnership with the Angus Reid Institute) fielded a survey in March 2025 that spanned both sides of the forty-ninth parallel. The survey engaged a total of 10,000 individuals, composed of 5,000 nationally representative respondents in Canada and 5,000 nationally representative respondents in the US. This representativeness means that we can draw conclusions that can be generalized to the populations of both the US and Canada as a whole, thereby offering a reliable basis for cross-national comparison and discussion.

The findings of this survey are being released in multiple and country-specific reports,[1] but our present discussion—a comparison of Canadian and American views of religion—takes place within a context of significant upheaval. We are experiencing a real-time rethinking of the relationship between the two countries, headlined by political and economic arrangements that are being renegotiated. We are also influenced by strong and relentless social, cultural, and religious winds that are blowing, both within our countries and across our borders. This paper is not intended to account for all factors shaping North American public affairs and cultural climates but offers instead a discussion of key findings that invite a fresh articulation of the foundational beliefs shaping our individual and collective notions of social flourishing.

Reading the Map

The year 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, which led to the founding of the United States of America. It also marks the 159th anniversary of the proclamation of the British North America Act, passed by the British Parliament in 1867, that united three colonies into one federation. The approximate 10:1 population ratio between the US and Canada in 1867 (the US had approximately 35 million citizens, while Canada had about 3.3 million) is relatively similar to the almost 9:1 ratio today (347 million in the US, 41 million in Canada). Although geography has given us the world's longest international border, a north-south flow of waterways and interconnected transportation systems have kept the US-Canada trading relationship among the largest in the world.[2] And while the Canadian French factor adds complexity that cannot be discounted, the functional reality of English as a *lingua franca* in North America results in a shared media ecosystem, an overlapping cultural market, and the natural spread of ideas.

1 These include ARI, "Are the Kids Alright?"; ARI, "Religion in Canada and the United States"; ARI, "Changing Views"; and ARI, "Strong Links?" The detailed methodology, survey results, and tables are available with these forthcoming reports on the Angus Reid Institute website at https://angusreid.org/. Unless otherwise noted, all data in this report come from this dataset.

2 "US-Canada Trade Relations," Congress.gov. Complete citations are provided for all sources at the end of this report.

In terms of the religious landscape, Christianity has been the dominant religious presence throughout the past 250 years of North American history. Even today, 63 percent of North Americans check a "Christian" box in answer to the survey question, "What is your religion?" while the religiously unaffiliated make up around 30 percent of the population. All other religious groups together account for about 7 percent of the population.[3] Although both nations have a plurality of faiths, and neither has an official state religion, Christianity not only played a historical role in the founding of each country but also remains the largest faith among North Americans who identify as having a religion.

Reading the map of North American religion reveals deep continuities and shared currents. The intertwined histories, languages, and cultural landscapes of the US and Canada have created a cultural and spiritual ecosystem in which religious ideas travel easily, even as each nation expresses them through its own social and political contours. The US and Canada are shaped by a common inheritance and a geography that channels not only commerce but also conviction.

Measuring Religiosity

In the social sciences, the term "religiosity" typically describes a multi-dimensional phenomenon that includes what people believe, what they experience, how they practice, and how their moral or ethical commitments are lived out.[4] Religion can take an intrinsic form, in which religious belief is internalized and guides one's life. It can also take an extrinsic form, in which religious pursuits are undertaken for social, cultural, and community benefit.[5] Private practices, such as personal prayer or the reading of a sacred text, are often categorized as non-organizational religiosity, in that they represent the devotional and inward-facing aspects of faith. By contrast, organizational religiosity refers to forms of participation such as attending services, engaging in rituals, and belonging to faith communities, which make up the social dimension of religious life. Studies consistently find that religious engagement is associated with stronger self-regulation, higher levels of gratitude and psychological well-being, and lower rates of anxiety, depression, substance misuse, and premature mortality.[6] Importantly, the communal dimension of faith is frequently shown to be the most reliable predictor of health and well-being outcomes, likely because it combines spiritual purpose with a sense of belonging and mutual care.[7]

Taken together, these individual and collective expressions of faith demonstrate that religiosity encompasses belief, behaviour, and belonging. In 2017, Cardus and the Angus Reid Institute introduced a "Spectrum of Spirituality" metric, which sought to move beyond simple identity

3 Pew Research Center, "Religion in North America." In our survey, 60 percent of Americans and 53 percent of Canadians checked the "Christian" box, and 19 percent of Americans and 23 percent of Canadians indicated "no religion."

4 Glock and Stark, *Religion and Society in Tension*.

5 Allport and Ross, "Personal Religious Orientation and Prejudice."

6 Koenig et al., *Handbook of Religion and Health*; VanderWeele, "Religious Service Attendance and Health;" Li et al., "Religious Service Attendance and Mortality Among Women."

7 VanderWeele, "Religious Service Attendance and Health."

questions (e.g., "Check the box below that best describes your religion") or frequency of a single religious behaviour (e.g., "How often do you attend religious services?").[8] The Spectrum of Spirituality is an index based on seven data points reflecting the multi-dimensional nature of religiosity:

1. Belief in God or a higher power
2. Belief in life after death
3. How important it is for a parent to teach their children about religious beliefs
4. How often, if at all, a person feels they experience God's presence
5. How often, if at all, a person prays to God or a higher power
6. How often, if at all, a person reads the Bible, Quran, or other sacred text
7. How often, if at all, a person attends religious services (other than weddings or funerals)

Four groups emerge from the index: Religiously Committed, Privately Faithful, Spiritually Uncertain, and Non-Believers. These labels are assigned according to the respondent's composite score on the seven indicators, with each of the indicators weighted equally.

This survey is the first to apply the Spectrum on both sides of the US-Canada border comparatively, and to do so with large and nationally representative samples for each country. Again, this means that the results can reasonably be generalized to the broader populations of each country.

Key Findings

How Religious Are We?

Previous research has shown that the US population is more religious than that of many other western countries, including Canada.[9] Our survey reconfirms this, with 58 percent of Americans moderately or strongly agreeing that religion is very important in their day-to-day lives, compared with 36 percent of Canadians.[10]

This is likewise evident when comparing respondents' composite scores on the Spectrum of Spirituality. Among Americans, 37 percent were Religiously Committed and 27 percent were Privately Faithful, compared with 18 and 19 percent of Canadians, respectively. These proportions are essentially reversed for the Spiritually Uncertain and Non-Believers, with more Canadians than Americans falling into these categories (44 and 19 percent of Canadians, versus 27 and 10 percent of Americans).[11]

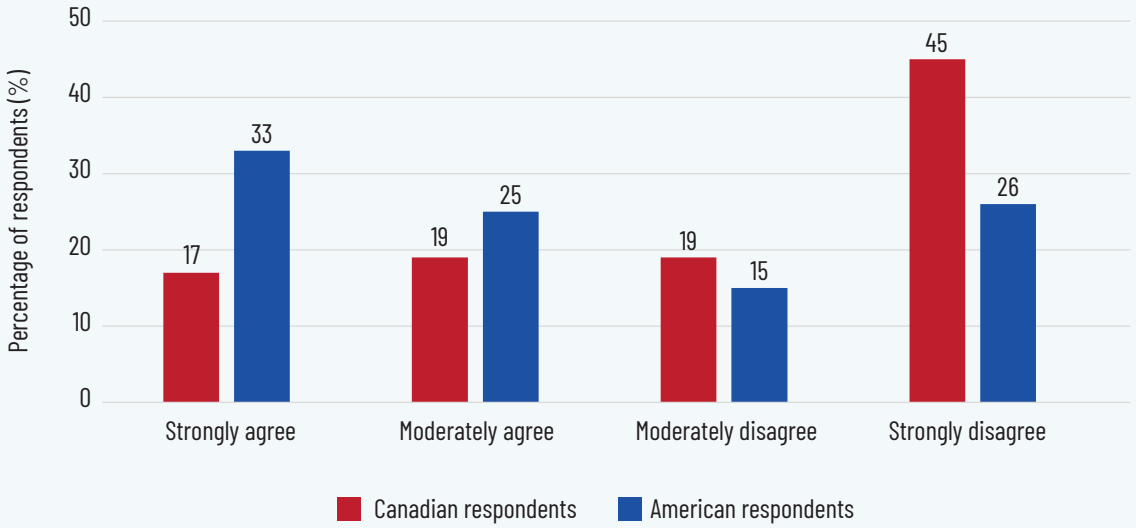
8 Pennings and Los, "The Shifting Landscape of Faith in Canada;" ARI, "A Spectrum of Spirituality."

9 Evans et al., "Spirituality and Religion"; Ipsos, "Global Religion 2023."

10 ARI, "Religion in Canada and the United States," 6.

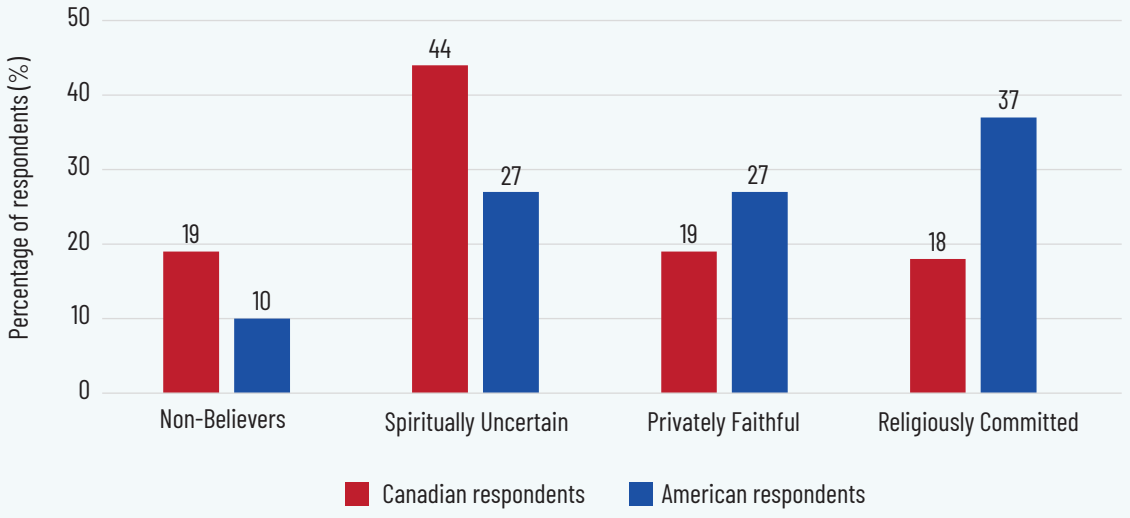
11 ARI, "Religion in Canada and the United States," 7.

Figure 1. Religion is very important to my day-to-day life.



Note: Some categories do not total to 100 due to rounding.
Source: The detailed methodology, survey results, tables, and forthcoming reports from a new cross-border study, "Religion in Canada and the United States: A Cross-Border Comparison of Faith," will be available on the Angus Reid Institute website at https://angusreid.org/. Unless otherwise noted, all data in this report come from this dataset.

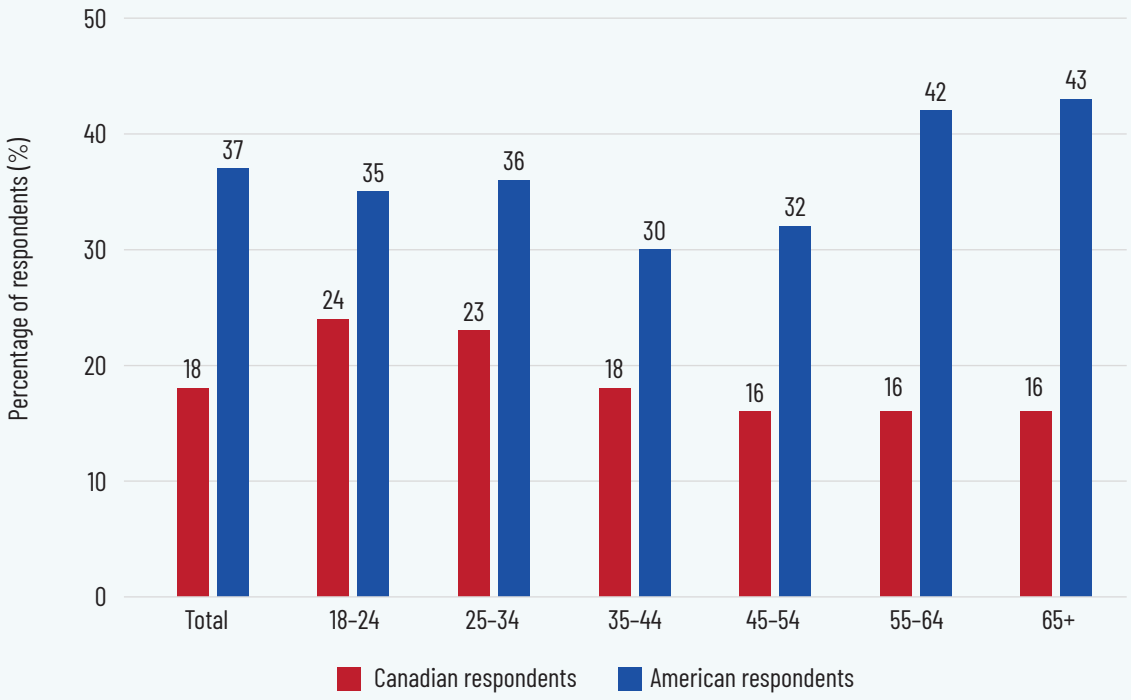
Figure 2. Spectrum of Spirituality, 2025



Note: Some categories do not total to 100 due to rounding.
Source: The detailed methodology, survey results, tables, and forthcoming reports from a new cross-border study, "Religion in Canada and the United States: A Cross-Border Comparison of Faith," will be available on the Angus Reid Institute website at https://angusreid.org/. Unless otherwise noted, all data in this report come from this dataset.

A more careful look, however, shows that the religiosity gap between older respondents in the two countries is greater than the gap between younger respondents. A higher percentage of American Boomers (around 42 percent) are Religiously Committed than Millennials (around 31 percent) or Gen Z (around 35 percent), while the Canadian numbers are much more consistent, ranging from 16 to 24 percent in each of these age groups. It should be noted that older respondents in Canada have the lowest number of Religiously Committed, whereas the 18-to-34-year-old group is 23.5 percent.[12] For both countries, this means that an uptick in religiosity is evident among the youngest age group, a finding that is consistent with other research.[13]

Figure 3. "Religiously Committed" Respondents, by Age, 2025



Source: The detailed methodology, survey results, tables, and forthcoming reports from a new cross-border study, "Religion in Canada and the United States: A Cross-Border Comparison of Faith," will be available on the Angus Reid Institute website at https://angusreid.org/. Unless otherwise noted, all data in this report come from this dataset.

But there is more to the story. It is not only the prevalence but also the character of religion that seems to have developed differently in Canada than in the US. This includes the areas of religious behaviour, belonging, and beliefs. We unpack these differences in the remainder of this section, followed by an analysis of our data in light of religiosity trends for both countries.

12 ARI, "Religion in Canada and the United States," 8.

13 Barna, "New Research: Belief in Jesus Rises, Fueled by Younger Adults."

Behaviour

As might be expected given the above findings for the Spectrum of Spirituality, more Americans than Canadians actively practice their faith. For example, the religious attendance patterns that emerged in our survey findings reflect an approximate 2:1 ratio, with 27 percent of Americans reporting that they attend a religious service at least weekly, and 13 percent of Canadians reporting the same. Seventy-two percent of Canadians "never" or "only rarely" attend a worship service, compared to 56 percent of Americans.

However, when looking at the seven components that compose the Spectrum of Spirituality, there is remarkable similarity in the two countries in the religious behaviours of those who are Religiously Committed. They pray, attend services, read a sacred text, and believe it is important for parents to teach their children religious beliefs, in proportionately similar numbers. They also seem to be engaged in social events, charity work (e.g., food banks), and children's activities at higher rates than the broader sample.

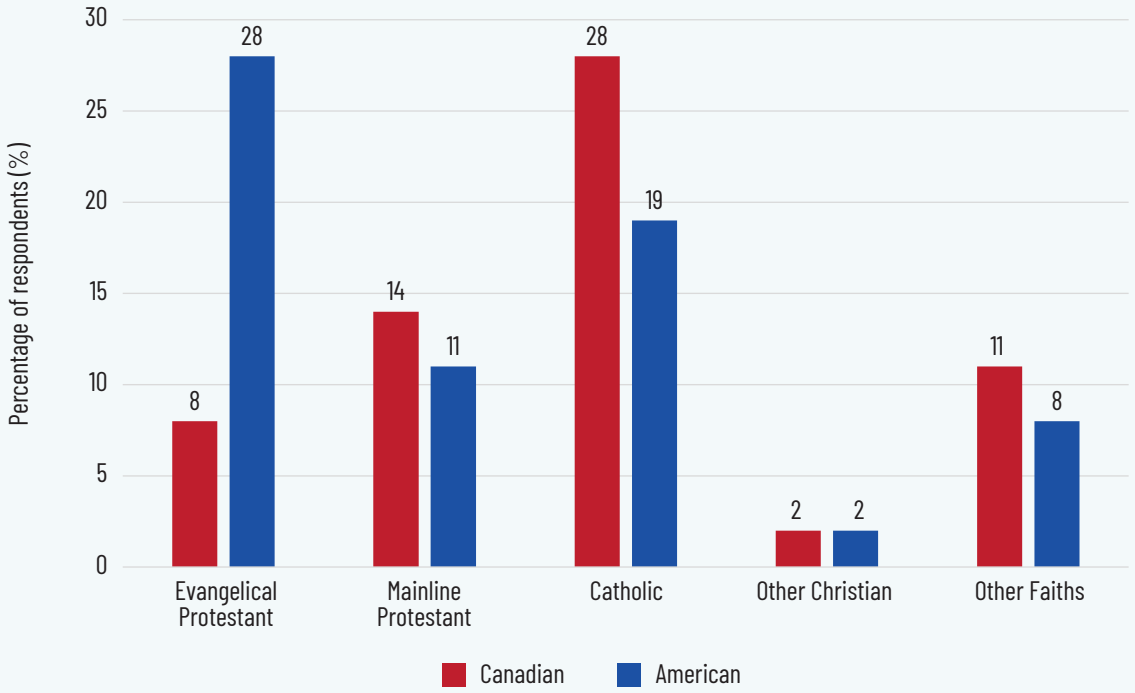
There do seem to be differences when it comes to the Religiously Committed group's engagement with broader community, with Canadians seeming to be more active and Americans less active. For example, 55 percent of the Religiously Committed in Canada reported volunteering for a community group or cause (that number falls to 40 percent for the overall Canadian sample). On the American side, 51 percent of the Religiously Committed report volunteering for a community group or cause (the overall American sample is 39 percent). When it comes to donating money to a charitable cause: 82 percent of the Canadian Religiously Committed do so (compared to 66 percent of the overall Canadian sample), while 71 percent of the American Religiously Committed report doing so (compared to 58 percent of the overall American sample). The Canadian Religiously Committed are also more likely (on a proportionate basis) than American Religiously Committed to "help out someone in need (e.g. elderly, disabled, broke)," "socialize with your neighbours (beyond a quick hello)," or "participate in a neighbourhood or community project (a clean-up or community gardening)."

When we dig deeper into the data, denominational differences seem to underly these observations. The higher rates among the Canadian Religiously Committed seem to be primarily driven by Mainline Protestants and Evangelicals. In contrast, in the US, Mainline Protestants resemble the larger sample when it comes to volunteering and donating money, whereas Evangelicals fall below the larger sample in both behaviours.

Belonging

One measure of religious belonging is a person's identification with a particular religious denomination or group. Our survey found clear differences in the proportion of religious affiliations in the US and Canada. On the American side, when asked to identify their religion, 28 percent checked Evangelical Protestant, 19 percent Catholic, 11 percent Mainline Protestant, 2 percent other Christian, and 8 percent Other Faiths. In Canada, 28 percent checked Catholic, 14 percent Mainline Protestant, 8 percent Evangelical, 2 percent Other Christian, and 11 percent Other Faiths.

Figure 4. Religious Affiliation of Respondents, 2025



Note: Other response options not included in results.
Source: The detailed methodology, survey results, tables, and forthcoming reports from a new cross-border study, "Religion in Canada and the United States: A Cross-Border Comparison of Faith," will be available on the Angus Reid Institute website at https://angusreid.org/. Unless otherwise noted, all data in this report come from this dataset.

It is interesting to note that while the proportion of Religiously Committed who are Evangelical is relatively consistent between countries (74 percent in the US, 71 percent in Canada), there is a greater gap among Catholics (36 percent in the US, 19 percent in Canada) and Mainline Protestants (29 percent in the US, 17 percent in Canada).

Some differences emerge when the Religiously Committed were asked about their relationship to their country and their optimism about the future of their country. For example, Canadians are more likely than Americans to agree that "the values and ideals I care about most are losing ground." And when it comes to loving their country and what it stands for,[14] Religiously Committed Americans are substantially more enthusiastic than the overall American sample (at 82 and 68 percent, respectively), while Canadian Religiously Committed are less enthusiastic than Canadians overall (at 70 and 77 percent, respectively). Similarly, when it comes to whether they are optimistic about the future of their country, 62 percent of Americans who are Religiously Committed are optimistic (compared to 47 percent of the overall American sample) while only 43 percent of Canadians are optimistic (compared to 47 percent of the overall Canadian sample).

14 Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement "I love (Canada/the United States) and what it stands for."

In light of these findings, it is not surprising that Canadians are more reticent about being public about their faith than their American counterparts are. Sixty-nine percent of American respondents moderately or strongly agreed with the statement, "I'm public about my religion and faith and don't mind other people knowing I'm a believer," whereas 56 percent of Canadians responded similarly.

Belief

Because our survey engaged nationally representative samples, our questions about belief were general in nature. The questions did not examine specific doctrinal points of particular religions, so we cannot gauge the degree to which respondents endorse a given religion's propositions (in other words, we cannot assess whether or to what degree they are believers of a particular religion, or not). However, a few of the survey's questions provide a broad view of the extent to which belief patterns vary between countries.

For example, in response to the question, "Do you believe that God or a higher power exists?" 81 percent of Americans (and 96 percent of the Religiously Committed) said yes, whereas 65 percent of Canadians (and 100 percent of Religiously Committed) said yes. When it comes to believing in life after death, 77 percent of Americans (97 percent of Religiously Committed) and 51 percent of Canadians (97 percent of Religiously Committed) said they believe. Finally, in response to the statement, "All of the great religions of the world are equally good and true," 49 percent of Americans (45 percent of those Religiously Committed) agreed, while 41 percent of Canadians (40 percent of Religiously Committed) agreed. These findings are consistent with previous surveys.[15]

Societal Trends

Our findings can be examined in relation to societal trends in religiosity for both countries. The recent Patmos Initiative, which surveyed the religious attitudes and beliefs of 90,000 people in eighty-five countries (particularly about their general understanding of the Bible), reveals differing perspectives for Canada and the US.[16] It places Canada alongside countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and the Netherlands as "post-Christian" countries, highlighting a shift towards individualized spirituality, a decline in formal religious affiliation, and relatively low engagement with the Bible. Conversely, the US is categorized as a "Bible-engaged" country (along with Brazil, Nigeria, and the Philippines), in which there is a greater respect for the authority of the Bible. Our findings align with these observations: 30 percent of American respondents reported "reading the Bible, Quran, or other sacred text" at least once a week, compared to only 13 percent of Canadians.

When it comes to examining trends among youth, sociologist Christian Smith, in *Why Religion Went Obsolete: The Demise of Traditional Faith in America*,[17] describes the decline in formal

15 Bennet, "Still Christian(?)"; "State of Theology," Ligonier/Lifeway.

16 British and Foreign Bible Society and Gallup, "The Patmos World Bible Attitudes Survey."

17 Smith, *Why Religion Went Obsolete*.

religious identification as a failure of effective pedagogy in transmitting religion from one generation to the next. He documents cultural and technological shifts that have resulted in an "obsolescence" for traditional institutional religion, but he emphasizes that what is taking religion's place is not secularism but a different sort of sacred or spiritual identity.[18] As a result, many young people now practice "moral therapeutic deism," which prioritizes feelings over belief, downplays religious doctrine and the transcendent, and portrays a supportive God who watches over the world from a distance and wants us to be comfortable, friendly, and fair.[19] Similarly, Barna's Open Generation study found the Gen Z generation around the world (including in the US and Canada) to be spiritually curious and demonstrating a strong moral concern for justice, yet often unanchored in specific beliefs or practice.[20] This contrasts, however, with how religion is more effectively passed on intergenerationally within immigrant communities.[21]

While our survey did not directly gauge the transmission of formal religion from one generation to the next, we sought to gauge how respondents understood themselves in comparison to their parents and children. Although not a proxy for religious values, voting behaviour is one way to compare the values of one generation with another. Our survey asked, "We understand that voting is private and you may not know for certain, but typically, do you believe you vote the same way as your parents?" and then asked the same question relative to their children.[22] Asking about a specific behaviour, which most would consider reflects personal values, may provide a sense of shifting attitudes and intergenerational trends. We found that 55 percent of Americans thought that they vote the same way as their parents, and 32 percent thought they vote the same way as their children. The Canadian results were 41 percent for parents and 24 percent for children. In both countries, Religiously Committed respondents were more likely to say that they voted similarly to their parents (+9 percent in the US, +11 percent in Canada) and to their children (+7 percent in the US, +7 percent in Canada). This suggests that religious commitment may be correlated with a greater perception of values transmission from one generation to the next, though further research is needed to gauge this more fully.

Finally, regarding societal trends, our survey found a relationship between religion and the growing political divides in both countries. We asked respondents whether they felt that the major political party they had not voted for was a threat to the country's well-being.[23] In Canada, 72 percent of respondents who voted for a party other than Conservative agreed that the Conservative Party was a threat, with the intensity of that feeling highest among the Non-Believers (at 79 percent, compared with the Spiritually Uncertain at 72 percent, Privately Faithful at 65 percent, and Religiously Committed at 66 percent). A similar, although less

18 Smith, "Why Religion Went Obsolete: Not by Secularization Alone."

19 "National Study of Youth and Religion," National Study of Youth and Religion.

20 Barna Group, *The Open Generation*.

21 Statistics Canada, *Religiosity in Canada and Its Evolution from 1985 to 2019.*

22 Respondents were able to select "n/a" if they did not have living parents and/or children. The results discussed here are for respondents who had living parents and children.

23 Respondents were asked which political party they voted for, either Conservative or Liberal (for Canadians) or Republican or Democrat (Americans). They were then asked this question of the party for which they did not vote. Respondents who indicated that they voted for neither of the two major parties were then asked this question about both parties.

intense, pattern was noted among non-Liberal voters, with 62 percent of respondents who did not vote Liberal agreeing that the Liberal Party was a threat (with the Non-Believers at 53 percent, Spiritually Uncertain at 57 percent, Privately Faithful at 63 percent, and Religiously Committed at 77 percent). The rates among American respondents were similar, with 75 percent of non-Republican voters viewing the Republican Party as a threat (Non-Believers at 87 percent, Spiritually Uncertain at 78 percent, Privately Faithful at 71 percent, and Religiously Committed at 70 percent) while 68 percent of non-Democrats see the Democratic Party as a threat (Non-Believers at 57 percent, Spiritually Uncertain at 60 percent, Privately Faithful at 69 percent, and Religiously Committed at 72 percent). These data give evidence of polarization on both sides of the Spectrum of Spirituality, which suggests that religious difference appears to mirror the partisan rifts widening in public life across North America.

Discussion

Understanding the Differences

Although many features of religion are shared in Canada and the US, the differences in our survey results may reflect broader differences in the two national contexts. To understand these differences, we can turn to Seymour Martin Lipset's *Continental Divide*, which (though not without debate) has become the default framework for many Canadian discussions of the differences between the US and Canada.[24] Lipset argues that the US was founded through a revolution, which fostered a political culture wary of the state and focused on individual rights. Canada was shaped by a "counter-revolution," with a history of resisting overtures and military efforts to integrate Canada into the American project. The *Quebec Act* of 1774, which granted religious freedom to French Catholics and upheld French civil law, reinforced the enduring view of Canada as a "peace treaty" between French Catholics and English Protestants—two groups with fraught yet cooperative relations with Indigenous peoples—while Loyalist refugees who rejected the American Revolution later became a key political force in shaping Canada.

While these eighteenth-century events gradually faded from collective memory by the time of Canada's Confederation, the context of the American Civil War and the expansion of the US through the purchase of Louisiana (1803) and Alaska (1867) contributed to the Confederation movement in Canada. Georges-Étienne Cartier urged political compromises to achieve Confederation, warning, "We must either unite or be absorbed. The American Republic is pushing its boundaries; if we remain divided and weak, the end is plain enough."[25] Lipset suggests that the essential difference between the two countries is metaphorically captured in the constitutional phrases "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (from the American Constitution) and "peace, order, and good government" (from the *British North America Act*). Certainly, the founders of each country differed from one another in how they understood these phrases, but it can be argued that the American creed originates in a Protestant, republican

24 Lipset, *Continental Divide*.

25 "Confederation Debates," University of Victoria.

natural-rights tradition (mediated through the Enlightenment), while the Canadian creed is rooted more in Anglican and Catholic communitarianism (developed through British parliamentary constitutionalism).

The American emphasis on individual liberty and the moral responsibility of the citizen likely serves to encourage public expressions of faith as a legitimate—and even expected—part of civic identity. Religious freedom in the American founding was framed not as the privatization of belief but as the protection of an individual's right to exercise and proclaim it. In contrast, Canada's communitarian heritage, grounded in ideals of peace, order, and compromise between different groups, tends to frame religion as a private matter that should not disrupt social harmony. Thus, Americans may exhibit higher levels of religiosity and greater willingness to share faith publicly because they see it as an extension of personal conviction and civic duty, whereas Canadians may be more inclined to reticence because they view overt expressions of belief as potentially divisive in a pluralistic social fabric. At the same time, it should be noted that there is regional variation within the countries. Canada and the US each have regions that are more religious (such as the Prairies and Atlantic Canada, and the southern states in the US) and others that are less religious (such as British Columbia and Quebec, and the Northeast and Pacific Northwest in the US). Most of our measures reflect these trends, which suggests the existence of within-country differences that can be as large as those between countries.

Finally, Religiously Committed Americans consistently report somewhat higher levels of life satisfaction as compared with the overall American sample, while Religiously Committed Canadians report somewhat lower levels. The Religiously Committed were asked about their life satisfaction in regard to personal finances (+6 percent in the US, -4 percent in Canada); relationships with close family and friends (+4 percent in the US, -1 percent in Canada); the way things are going in this country (+10 percent in the US, -6 percent in Canada); how welcome you feel as part of the community you live in (+7 percent in the US, -2 percent in Canada), and your overall quality of life (+10 percent in the US, -4 percent in Canada).[26] This divergence in life satisfaction between Americans and Canadians who are Religiously Committed is fascinating, and it raises questions about the experiences of people of faith as workers, community members, and citizens. While further research is needed to determine the reasons for this finding, one possible explanation is the overall numerical difference between the two countries of those who identify as religious: Americans who are religious are in the majority (with those who are Religiously Committed or Privately Faithful comprising 64 percent of the US sample), whereas religious Canadians are in the minority (37 percent of the Canadian sample). Conversely, the Spiritually Uncertain and Non-Believers in the US are a minority (at 37 percent) whereas they comprise a majority in Canada (at 63 percent).

Finding Common Ground

Like many surveys of religion in both countries, our survey found that the majority of those who identify as religious in North America are Christians. As mentioned earlier, this is perhaps

26 Data are referencing the Religiously Committed minus the general average. The question asked respondents to "Please indicate your own overall satisfaction with each of the following" and proceeded to list the various dimensions that follow here.

unsurprising given that Christianity has been the dominant religious presence for five centuries of North American history. Our findings also show that the Religiously Committed in the US and Canada have more in common with each other in terms of belief, behaviour, and belonging than they do with their fellow citizens who fall elsewhere on the Spectrum of Spirituality. If we put these two findings together, we see that an interwoven tapestry of Christian faith and community spans both sides of the border. Church life in the US and Canada (through North American affiliations, joint clergy development, and continuing education structures) strengthens this reality, as likely does the shared English language and transborder commerce for devotional resources. Moreover, when one considers that a foundational article of the Christian faith is a belief in "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church"—a phrase from the Nicene Creed, which is affirmed by Catholic, Orthodox, and many Protestant churches—the impulse toward a unity that transcends national borders is part of Christianity's DNA.

But the number of current adherents alone isn't a full measurement of the impact of Christianity. Its influence can be seen in many dimensions of life, as it is a core part of the civilizational story within which North American history occurred. For example, each country's legal systems are based on Judeo-Christian principles of justice, human dignity, and moral accountability, as are their educational institutions, charitable traditions, and civic ideals. North America's earliest schools and universities were founded by Christian churches seeking to cultivate both intellectual and moral formation. Likewise, the nonprofit and social-service sectors continue to reflect a Christian legacy of compassion and care for the vulnerable. Even public holidays, cultural norms surrounding family and community life, and shared ethical assumptions about truth-telling, fairness, and human dignity bear the imprint of Christian moral reasoning. In this sense, Christianity's influence extends well beyond formal religious adherence. It has provided a moral vocabulary and a social architecture that continue to shape the imagination of both nations. This is true even if individuals or institutions identifying as Christian do not always live up to these ideals or, worse, invoke Christianity to justify self-interest or cause harm—which betrays the moral vision at the heart of Christianity and erodes public trust in Christianity's genuine social and ethical contributions.

Along those lines, there is contemporary debate occurring within the broader public and within various religious communities about whether religion's influence in our countries should be celebrated, critiqued, reinterpreted, or condemned. It is a helpful thought exercise to imagine what might be lost if the role of religion diminishes. One metric to consider is the tangible benefit that religion provides to our economies and communities. A Gallup study estimates a $1.2 trillion contribution by religion to the US economy,[27] while Cardus's Halo Project in Canada has measured significant socioeconomic benefits of religion at both a local and national level.[28]

For the individual, as mentioned previously, the benefits of religious practice are myriad. The recently released Global Flourishing Study (GFS)—a longitudinal project encompassing over 200,000 respondents in 22 countries[29]—measured six dimensions of human flourishing

27 Religious Freedom and Business Foundation, "The Socio-economic Impact of Religion in the US."

28 Grim and Grim, "The Hidden Economy"; Wood Daly, "How Religious Tax Exemptions Benefit All Canadians."

29 VanderWeele et al., "The Global Flourishing Study."

(happiness and life satisfaction, physical and mental health, meaning and purpose, character and virtue, close social relationships, and financial and material stability). The GFS found that religious participation tends to be positively associated with higher flourishing scores, even after controlling for income, employment, and demographics.[30] In fact, the difference in flourishing between those who attend religious services weekly and those who never attend is among the largest associations observed in the study. The GFS data also suggest that identifying as "religious" or "spiritual" in general is correlated with slightly higher individual flourishing, though these associations are smaller than those for concrete religious behaviours such as service attendance. Surely, when individuals experience greater meaning, health, and connection, those personal gains ripple outward to enrich the communities and societies of which they are a part.

Conclusion

This report does not provide an exhaustive treatment of all the factors shaping religion in North America. Rather, it highlights several key findings from survey data about how faith manifests similarly and differently in the US and Canada, in the recognition that religious belief often informs how people envision social flourishing within their national contexts.

The Spectrum of Spirituality Index provides a more nuanced lens than the traditional, single measure of religious service attendance often used for comparing religiosity across the two countries. While the broad pattern in our 2025 data still holds—that Americans are roughly twice as likely to be religious as Canadians are—the nature of that religiosity differs. Among Canadians, those who are religious appear to be shaped by a historical and cultural awareness of religious diversity, whereas in the US, religion tends to enjoy broader cultural affirmation. Yet this divide appears to be narrowing: Younger generations in both countries, especially those who are Christians, display increasingly similar religious profiles compared to their older counterparts. This raises the question of what the religious future of each country will look like and how that future will in turn define religion in North America writ large.

When at its best, religion in North America can serve as a generative force for personal and social good. Religious observance and practice tend to shape lives of compassion, generosity, and service that weave stronger bonds within communities. Religious institutions can often offer coherence and purpose amid societal fragmentation, foster belonging that counters isolation and despair, and motivate citizens to work for the common good. For these reasons, in this time of flux across North America, we can imagine afresh how faith can be a vital force for promoting human flourishing.

30 Chen et al., "Global Study Aims to Uncover How Humans Flourish."

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