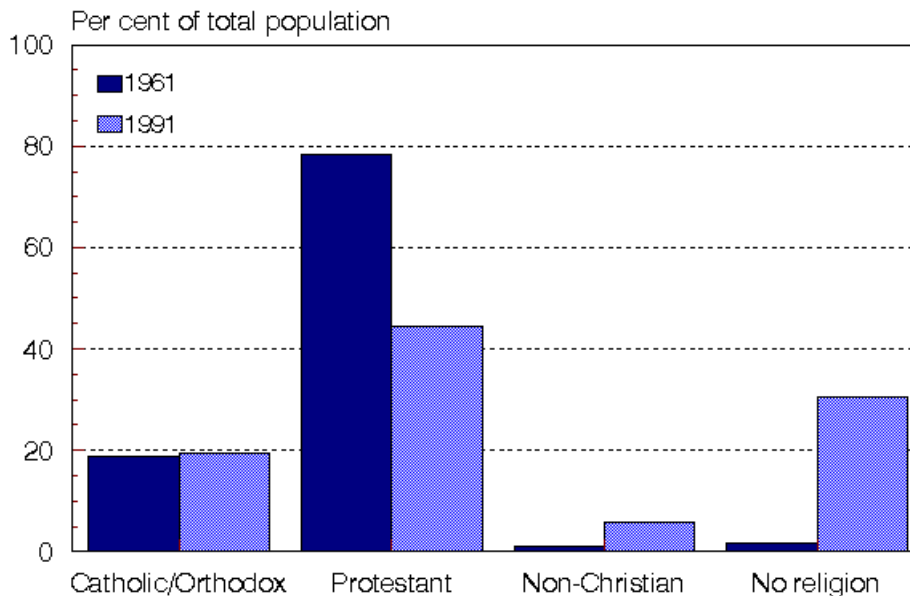


Issue 27: Religion

Produced by: Labour and Social Statistics Section

- British Columbians are less likely to have a religious affiliation¹ than other Canadians. 1991 Census data indicate that 30 per cent of the residents of this province have no religious affiliation, a 28 percentage point increase relative to 1961.
- The number of Canadians professing no religious connection also grew during the last thirty years, but much less dramatically, rising from 0.5 to 12.5 per cent.
- The increase in the number of non-religious individuals in British Columbia seems to be associated with a relative decline in Protestant churches, which accounted for 79 per cent of the population in 1961, but only 45 per cent in 1991. The other religious groups maintained steady or slightly increasing population shares over the same period.

Three in ten British Columbians do not have any religious affiliation

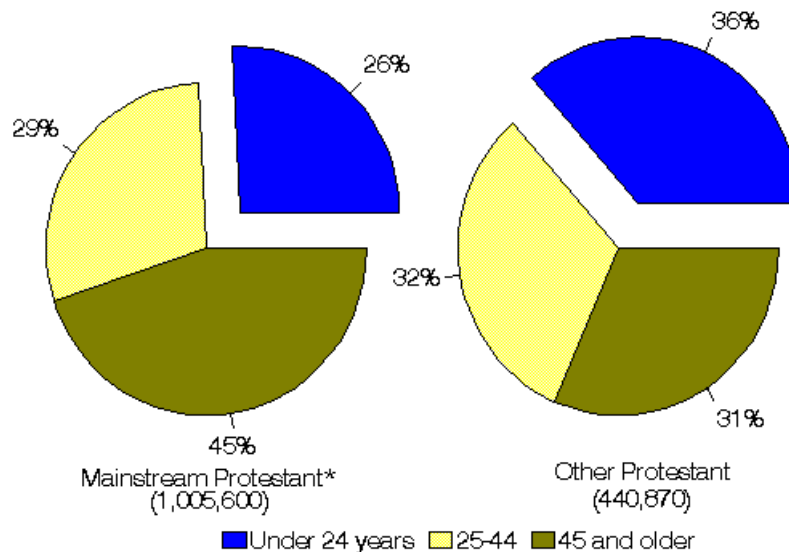


- The decline in Protestant churches has mainly been in traditional "mainstream" denominations such as the Anglican, Presbyterian and United churches, whose number of adherents fell from 961,506 to 813,320 between 1961 and 1991.

¹ Census figures do not measure church membership or indicate the degree of affiliation with any religious body. They simply indicate the religious group to which individuals would belong if they were practicing members of their group.

- Other Protestant churches doubled in size from 316,928 to 633,140 over the same period. The fastest-growing denominations in this group were the Methodist (1,231%), Christian and Missionary Alliance (324%) and Pentecostal (253%) churches.
- In addition to losing people, the mainstream Protestant churches are aging. While 32 per cent of British Columbians are 45 or older, individuals in this age group make up 45 per cent of the adherents to these churches.
- In contrast, some of the non-traditional protestant denominations have fairly young congregations. For example, only one in four individuals in the Pentecostal church is over the age of 45, and 41 per cent of those affiliated with that church are under 25, whereas 34 per cent of the province's population is under 25.
- Although large numbers of young people have left the mainstream Protestant churches during the last thirty years, some are choosing to support less traditional Protestant denominations rather than joining the growing ranks of non- religious individuals.
- About five per cent of British Columbians are affiliated with eastern non-Christian religions such as Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism and Hinduism. While immigrants and non-permanent residents make up two-thirds of those who are associated with these religions, one in three are from the non-immigrant population.

Non-traditional protestant churches have younger congregations than the mainstream churches



* Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, United

Growth in Religious Organizations between 1961 and 1991

	1961	1971	1981	1991	% Increase 1961-1991
Grew faster than the population:					
No Religious Affiliation	27,477 *	287,115	568,170	990,325	3,504.2
Eastern Non-Christian	7,893	7,080	78,635	159,960	1,926.6
Methodist	740	1,860	6,340	9,850	1,231.1
Buddhist	5,021	6,130	11,190	36,430	625.6
Other Christian/Protestant	63,003 *	55,995	138,575	329,420	422.9
Christian & Missionary Alliance	3,512	5,610	7,975	14,900	324.3
Pentecostal	19,998	35,225	55,095	70,620	253.1
Mormon	6,116	12,670	16,740	17,945	193.4
Churches of Christ, Disciples	715	1,370	1,115	2,050	186.7
Reformed	6,816	11,460	14,785	18,875	176.9
Jehovah's Witnesses	14,583	42,315	31,515	33,665	130.9
Jewish	7,816	9,715	14,680	16,565	111.9
Unitarian	2,426	4,755	3,960	5,115	110.8
Roman Catholic	285,184	408,330	526,355	595,315	108.7
Catholic	291,795	419,640	538,435	603,070	106.7
Total Population	1,629,082	2,184,595	2,713,615	3,247,480	99.3
Grew slower than the population:					
Mennonite & Hutterite	19,932	26,595	30,995	39,150	96.4
Baptist	49,481	64,835	81,850	84,090	69.9
Adventist	6,320	7,190	9,015	10,250	62.2
Eastern Orthodox	15,667	20,525	24,640	23,540	50.3
Salvation Army	7,229	11,885	12,270	10,120	40.0
Church of the Nazarene	1,466	1,885	1,610	1,860	26.9
Ukranian (Greek) Catholic	6,611	11,310	11,940	7,525	13.8
Protestant	1,278,434	1,440,520	1,484,930	1,446,460	13.1
Brethren in Christ	2,162	2,920	2,525	2,435	12.6
Lutheran	100,393	120,335	122,395	108,190	7.8
Anglican	367,096	386,670	374,055	328,580	(10.5)
United Church of Canada	504,317	537,565	548,360	420,755	(16.6)
Presbyterian	90,093	100,940	89,810	63,985	(29.0)
Plymouth Brethren	3,030	1,720	1,960	2,075	(31.5)
Doukhobor	9,006	6,720	5,065	3,725	(58.6)
Confucian	2,872	950	630	125	(95.6)
Para-religions	n.a.	n.a.	4,125	7,560	n.a.
Other, not elsewhere classified	n.a.	n.a.	1,260	2,340	n.a.

Source: 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991 Census of Canada

* Estimate

Note: Prior to 1981, some eastern, non-Christian religions may be included in the "other protestant" group.