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Reference Guide

Religion Reference Guide



National Household Survey, 2011

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The following symbols are used in Statistics Canada publications:

- . not available for any reference period
- .. not available for a specific reference period
- ... not applicable
- 0 true zero or a value rounded to zero
- 0^s value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
- p preliminary
- r revised
- x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
- E use with caution
- F too unreliable to be published
- * significantly different from reference category (p < 0.05)

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Definitions and concepts

In the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS), religion refers to the person's self-identification as having a connection or affiliation with any religious denomination, group, body, sect, cult or other religiously defined community or system of belief. Religion is not limited to formal membership in a religious organization or group.

In the NHS, a person who has no religious affiliation can either choose to mark the circle for 'No religion' or to specify other responses, such as 'Atheist' (does not believe in the existence of God) or 'Agnostic' (believes nothing can be known about the existence of God).

Data on religious affiliation contribute to the measurement of diversity in Canada. It is used by organizations such as religious congregations, government departments, school boards, researchers and non-profit organizations to assist in activities such as planning infrastructures like religious buildings, schools or programs to ethnoreligious clients.

Classifications

Data from the religion question in the National Household Survey (NHS) are used to derive summary and detailed variables which provide a religious portrait of the population living in Canada. Tables accessible from the ['Data and other products'](#) section of this document show the specific Religion variables used in data products for the 2011 NHS. The detailed religion classification in the 2011 NHS is also available in the [National Household Survey Dictionary](#), Catalogue no. 99-000-X.

The 2011 NHS includes data for more than 90 religions reported by people living in Canada.

Questions

Most respondents of the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) received the [2011 National Household Survey Form N1 questionnaire](#), while respondents living on Indian reserves, in Indian settlements and in other remote areas received the [2011 National Household Survey Form N2 questionnaire](#). On both questionnaires, data on religion were collected in Questions 22.

The religion question asks respondents to indicate a specific denomination or religion even if the person is not currently a practising member of that group. The following 13 religion examples are provided in the N1 questionnaire: Roman Catholic, United Church, Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Muslim, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh and Greek Orthodox.

The N2 questionnaire has the following examples: Roman Catholic, Anglican, United Church, Pentecostal, Traditional (Aboriginal) Spirituality, Longhouse, Baptist, Lutheran, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, Presbyterian, Moravian and Evangelical Missionary Church.

Two lines are provided for a write-in response and a circle marked 'No religion' is directly below as a checkbox. The NHS guide instructs respondents to report the denomination or religion in which children will be raised.

Religion Reference Guide

Please refer to the [2011 NHS questionnaire](#), the [National Household Survey User Guide](#), Catalogue no. 99-001-X and the [National Household Survey Dictionary](#), Catalogue no. 99-000-X, entries for [Religion](#) for more information on the wording and format of the 2011 NHS religion question and the instructions which were provided to respondents for this question.

Data and other products

Data for the 2011 National Household Survey religion variables are released on May 8, 2013, as part of an integrated release with other ethnocultural and Aboriginal variables.

The products published using 2011 NHS religion data include:

- [Data products](#)
 - NHS Profile
 - NHS Data Tables
- [Analytical products](#)
- [Reference products](#)

For more information on and access to 2011 NHS data, please refer to the [2011 National Household Survey \(NHS\)](#) website.

Data quality

The National Household Survey (NHS) underwent a thorough data quality assessment similar to what was done for the 2011 Census of population and past censuses. It consisted of an assessment of various data quality indicators (such as response rate), and an evaluation of the overall results, in comparison with other data sources such as census of population data.

Based on the results of this exercise, the NHS estimates for the religion variable at the national level are consistent with, or similar to, estimates and trends from other data sources, in particular the 2001 Census data on religion.

Survey process

Quality indicators were calculated and assessed at each of the key steps of the survey. During the collection and processing of the data, the quality and consistency of the responses provided were assessed as were the non-response rates. The quality of the imputed responses was assessed after the completion of the control and imputation steps.

Certification of final estimates

Once data processing and imputation were completed, the data were weighted to represent the total Canadian population. These weighted data (the final estimates) were then certified to determine if they were coherent and reliable in comparison to other independent data sources. This is the final stage of data validation. The main highlights of this assessment are presented below.

Non-response bias

Non-response bias is a potential source of error for all surveys including the NHS. This issue arises when the characteristics of those who choose to participate in a survey are different than those who refuse. Statistics Canada adapted its collection and estimation procedures in order to mitigate, to the extent possible, the effect of non-response bias. (For more details please refer to the [National Household Survey User Guide](#), Catalogue no. 99-001-X.)

Several data sources were used to evaluate the NHS estimates for religion such as: the 2001 Census of Population, the General Social Survey and population projections based on microsimulation.

It is impossible to definitively determine how much the NHS may be affected by non-response bias. However, based on information from other data sources, evidence of non-response bias does exist for certain population groups and for certain geographic areas. Since there is association of religion and other ethnocultural characteristics, users should take into consideration the quality indicators of the ethnocultural variables when interpreting the data on religion.

Generally, the risk of error increases for lower levels of geography and for smaller populations. At the same time, the data sources used to evaluate these results are also less reliable making it difficult to certify these smaller counts.

For more information on NHS non-response bias and mitigation strategies employed by Statistics Canada, please refer to the [National Household Survey User Guide](#), Catalogue no. 99-001-X.

Data quality indicators

Of all the quality indicators used for the evaluation, two are presented: the global non-response rate and the imputation rate by question.

- The global non-response rate combines the non-response at the household level and the non-response at the question level. It is provided for geographic areas. The global non-response rate is the key criterion that determines whether or not the NHS results will be released for a given geographic area. Information on the global non-response rate is available in the [National Household Survey User Guide](#), Catalogue no. 99-001-X.
- The imputation rate is the proportion of respondents who did not answer a given question or whose response is deemed invalid and for which a value was imputed. Imputation improves data quality by reducing the gaps caused by non-response.

The imputation rates for the NHS religion variable are similar to those of the 2001 Census (see Table 1). At the national level, religion has an imputation rate of 4.4% compared with the 2001 Census imputation rate for religion of 3.2%.

Table 1 Imputation rates in the National Household Survey for Religion, Canada, provinces and territories

Provinces and territories	Religion
	%
Canada	4.4
Newfoundland and Labrador	4.5
Prince Edward Island	4.3
Nova Scotia	4.2
New Brunswick	3.9
Quebec	3.6
Ontario	4.8
Manitoba	4.7
Saskatchewan	4.4
Alberta	4.7
British Columbia	4.7
Yukon	5.4
Northwest Territories	3.1
Nunavut	4.4

Comparability with other data sources

The National Household Survey (NHS) is currently Statistics Canada's primary source of data on religion. Prior to 2011, the Census of Population collected information on religion. In addition, the General Social Survey collects data on the religious affiliation and participation of the population.

Many factors affect comparisons of religion data across these sources. Amongst other factors, comparability is affected by differences in survey target populations, reference period, sampling and collection methods; question wording, questionnaire format, examples and instructions; approaches to data processing; the social and political climate at the time of data collection. For additional information, please see the [National Household Survey User Guide](#), Catalogue no. 99-001-X.