

## In God We Canadians Trust?

To Mark Easter 2012, ACS-Leger looks at what and whom Canadians believe when it comes to religion

Jack Jedwab

Executive Director – Association for Canadian Studies, April 2012

This weekend many Christians will celebrate Easter and Sunday is typically the most well-attended service of the year for Christian churches. Easter season marks the death of Jesus Christ by [crucifixion](#) which is commemorated on Good Friday and his resurrection where he paid the penalty for sin, thus securing eternal life in Christ for those who believe in him. In an effort to assess the state of religious belief on the part of Canadians, the Association for Canadian Studies commissioned the firm Leger Marketing to ask Canadians a series of questions in this regard and also asked whether they trust individuals that are religious.

Some 1522 Canadians were surveyed over the week of March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012 with a margin of error of 2.9% points 19 times out of 20.

The survey reveals that a majority of the population do not consider religion an important aspect of their lives. Some 42% agreed that religion was an important part of their lives with women and seniors more likely to attribute importance to religion. While they may not consider religion an important part of their lives, some two in three Canadians agree that God exists, some three-quarters agree that good deeds are rewarded and 63% agree that there is life after death. Younger Canadians appear far less convinced about the existence of God than does the oldest cohort. Women are more likely than men to believe there is life after death and that good deeds are rewarded.

B1	Total	A man	A woman	18- 24	25- 34	35- 44	45- 54	55- 64	65 +
<b>TOTAL agree</b>									
<b>Total pondéré :</b>	1522	735	787	179	247	297	307	226	267
<b>Total absolu :</b>	1522	813	709	115	206	313	392	223	273
<b>Religion is an important</b>	42%	37%	46%	30%	38%	43%	38%	42%	56%

part of my life										
God exists	67%	64%	71%	56%	63%	71%	66%	65%	79%	
Good Deeds are rewarded	76%	71%	81%	77%	72%	76%	77%	77%	79%	
Bad Deeds are punished	63%	58%	67%	72%	65%	61%	60%	63%	58%	
A higher power governs the world	58%	54%	62%	52%	55%	60%	54%	55%	69%	
There is life after death	63%	58%	68%	60%	61%	64%	61%	62%	70%	

Residents of the Prairies are far more likely than other Canadians to agree that religion is an important part of their life, that God exists and that a higher power governs. Quebecers are less likely to agree that religion plays an important of their lives yet not as far apart on other issues with the one exception their lesser inclination to agree that a high power governs. Hence they may believe there is a God but he is not in the process of governing.

B1	Total	French	English	Other	Maritimes	QC	ON	MB/SK	AB	BC
<b>Q501</b>										
<b>TOTAL agree</b>										
Total pondéré :	1522	332	877	297		113 362	587	100	156	203
Total absolu :	1522	428	954	132		102 408	606	128	126	152
Religion is an important part of	42%	33%	44%	43%		47% 33%	45%	54%	43%	37%

my life										
God exists	67%	64%	68%	69%	70%	62%	70%	79%	67%	62%
Good Deeds are rewarded	76%	77%	77%	75%	82%	78%	76%	82%	75%	70%
Bad Deeds are punished	63%	54%	64%	68%	70%	56%	66%	65%	60%	60%
A higher power governs the world	58%	45%	60%	67%	62%	46%	62%	73%	66%	52%
There is life after death	63%	62%	65%	57%	60%	60%	65%	69%	67%	59%

When it comes to income the wealthiest Canadians are the least likely to agree on all the survey dimensions of religiosity.

	Total	-40K	40-59K	60-79K	80-99K	100K +
<b>TOTAL agree</b>						
Total pondéré :	1522	431	277	172	174	218
Total absolu :	1522	399	282	190	171	246
Religion is an important part of my life	42%	45%	44%	39%	37%	33%
God exists	67%	69%	72%	68%	64%	63%
Good Deeds are rewarded	76%	76%	82%	78%	80%	69%
Bad Deeds are punished	63%	63%	65%	66%	64%	55%
A higher power governs the world	58%	62%	61%	59%	56%	48%

## Trust in Believers and Non-Believers

While most Canadians believe in the existence of God they are divided over the degree to which they trust clergy/religious leaders and there is an important gap between younger and older Canadians in their degree of trust. Moreover Canadians are slightly more likely to trust people that are not religious than people that are religious. The 18-24 group is considerably more inclined to trust people that are not religious than they do religious leaders.

B1	A	A	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
<b>Q410</b>									
<b>TOTAL trusted</b>									
People that are religious	67%	63%	70%	66%	66%	64%	66%	67%	72%
People that are not religious/Atheists	73%	71%	75%	79%	72%	77%	71%	68%	73%
Clergy/Religious Leaders	48%	46%	51%	39%	47%	43%	47%	50%	62%

It is Quebec where by far religious leaders command the least trust in contrast to the Prairies and Atlantic provinces where trust is highest.

B1	Total	French	English	Other	Maritimes	QC	ON	MB/SK	AB	BC	
<b>Q410</b>											
<b>TOTAL trusted</b>											
Total pondéré :	1522	332	877	297		113	362	587	100	156	203
Total absolu :	1522	428	954	132		102	408	606	128	126	152
People that are religious	67%	67%	68%	64%		77%	69%	62%	71%	66%	69%
People that are not religious/Atheists	73%	71%	76%	67%		76%	70%	73%	67%	75%	79%
Clergy/Religious Leaders	48%	28%	58%	45%		65%	27%	52%	65%	53%	54%

It is worth noting that even amongst those who strongly affirm the existence of God there is a fair degree of scepticism when it comes to trusting clergy/religious leaders.

	<b>God exists</b>			
<b>Clergy/Religious Leaders</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
<b>Trusted a lot</b>	18.4%	5.5%	4.0%	5.0%
<b>Somewhat trusted</b>	45.3%	44.1%	31.6%	17.4%
<b>Trusted a little</b>	25.9%	35.3%	42.7%	33.1%
<b>Not trusted at all</b>	10.4%	15.0%	21.7%	44.6%

That said those who consider religion as important in their lives are far more inclined to affirm God's existence (see table below) and far more likely to agree that good deeds will be rewarded (see final table).

	<b>Religion is an important part of my life</b>			
<b>God exists</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	95.7%	56.4%	22.2%	6.9%
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	3.3%	41.2%	52.0%	18.3%
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	.7%	2.1%	23.6%	30.2%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	.3%	.3%	2.2%	44.6%

	<b>Religion is an important part of my life</b>			
<b>Good deeds are rewarded</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	58.0%	26.9%	17.6%	12.9%
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	36.4%	56.3%	59.6%	48.0%
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	4.9%	13.8%	17.6%	21.5%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	.7%	3.1%	5.1%	17.7%