

**Title:** Religious mobility of immigrants in Canada

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**Extended abstract**

Over the most recent decades, Canada experienced rapid changes in the religious composition of its population. For instance, between 2001 and 2011, the main Christian religions of the country, namely the Catholic and Protestant denominations, saw their respective shares continue to decline while the population reporting having no religion or belonging to religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism or Islam increased rapidly, even if they still represent small shares of the population (Statistics Canada, 2013). Recent debates around the place of religion in the public domain and in institutions show how the changes occurring in the religious landscape of Canada can raise issues related to social cohesion, to relations between the majority and minorities and to policy planning.

Large parts of the changes occurring in Canada's religious composition can be related to international migration. In the 1990s, international migration surpassed natural increase as the main component of growth (Statistics Canada 2008) and the projections released in 2010 by Statistics Canada (Statistics Canada 2010) show that it is not likely to reverse, at least not in the short or medium term. Of the 33 million Canadians living in private households in 2011, 11% were immigrants who had landed since 1991, meaning that without immigration the population would have been lower by close to 3.7 million people –

this itself an underestimation given that it excludes the children of these recent immigrants. As recent immigration to Canada originates mostly from non-European countries, its religious composition differs greatly from that of the native population. Are these immigrants to Canada likely to change their religion after arriving? We know that religious mobility also contributes to changes in the religious composition of the population (Goujon et al, 2012, Caron Malenfant et al. 2010), but we do not know to what extent this is also the case for immigrants. The religion of migrants is generally assumed to be fixed, but could it be that some migrants switch religion over the course of their life, thus either accelerating or decelerating the changes described above? The question has importance given that the foreign-born population, which represented more than 20% of the Canadian population in 2011, could see its share increase and reach between 25% and 28% by 2031 (Caron Malenfant et al. 2010).

This paper aims to analyze religious mobility among the immigrant population of Canada. More precisely, three research questions are tackled: What is the magnitude of religious mobility among the immigrant population to Canada? What are the socioeconomic characteristics associated with religious mobility among this population? How does their religious mobility compare to that of the Canadian-born population?

The paper will use as its main religious concept the self-reported affiliation with a religious group, which differs from religious practice or religiosity. Accordingly, transfers between religions are analyzed in terms of changes in self-reported affiliation. In this paper, religious mobility will refer to transfers between the following religious categories:

- Catholics
- Protestants
- Orthodox Christians
- Other Christians
- Muslim
- Jewish
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Sikh
- Other religions
- No religion

The analysis will be conducted in two distinct parts. In the first part, we will use a cohort analysis of the immigrant and non-immigrant populations using the 1981, 1991 and 2001 long-form censuses of Canada as well as the National Household Survey (NHS), which replaced the long-form census in 2011. More precisely, we propose to take the number of persons of a given age group in a given religion for a given year, say 1981, and then compare it to the number of persons aged 10 years more in the same religion 10 years later, after having adjusted for the effect of emigration, mortality and changes in net undercoverage between censuses (or between census and NHS). The difference between the counts thus obtained will be assumed to come from individual changes in self-reported religious affiliation. This method will be applied separately to selected cohorts of

immigrants covered by at least two censuses (for instance the immigrants admitted between 1991 and 2000, covered both in 2001 and 2011) and for non-immigrants. This method does not allow one to obtain a full matrix of changes between religions (i.e. religion of origin crosstabulated with religion of destination). However, by allowing for estimates of net gains or losses of people via religious mobility over 10 years periods, it will serve to propose answers to our questions about the magnitude of the phenomenon among immigrants after their arrival to Canada as well as the difference between religious mobility of immigrants and non-immigrants.

In the second part, we propose to use the 2002 Ethnic diversity survey (EDS) database, which includes questions about the religion of the respondents, the religion of their parents when the respondents were aged less than 15 years old, as well as various questions about the origins and ethno-demographic characteristics of respondents. With this data source, it is not possible to know when the respondents changed their religion, nor if they changed once or more than once over the course of their life. However, it allows for an analysis of the variables associated with lifetime religious mobility (as opposed to 10 year mobility), or in other words with the changes between the religion of the respondent's parents and the current religion of the respondent. Descriptive and multivariate analyses will be conducted with this database in order to answer our question related to the characteristics associated with religious mobility among immigrants in Canada.

The historical view that will emerge from this paper will help us better understand the changes that have occurred recently in Canada, and thus, help us better foresee what could happen in the future. The data sources that we propose to use have been underutilized for the study of the demographic impact of religious mobility in Canada, not only for the immigrant but also for the native populations. Through the comparison of both populations, this paper will shed new light on the phenomenon of religious mobility.

## References

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