



Faith Restored?

The Evolving Relationship Between Religion and Young Canadians

Karen Stiller and Ray Pennings
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cardus.ca

✕@cardusca

Head Office: 1 Balfour Drive, Hamilton, ON L9C 7A5

info@cardus.ca

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About the Authors



KAREN STILLER is a Canadian writer, editor, and coach with more than two decades of experience in faith-based communications, serving as senior editor of the magazine *Faith Today* and hosting its accompanying podcast.



RAY PENNINGS is the co-founder and executive vice president at Cardus. He is a respected public affairs pundit and author, focusing on the public dimensions of faith, especially as it informs the full range of social institutions.

About Cardus Spirited Citizenship

Spirited Citizenship conducts public opinion research into faith and the faithful in Canadian public life in partnership with the Angus Reid Institute. We aim to stimulate public conversation and raise public consciousness about the contribution of faith to Canada's social fabric.

About the Canadian Bible Society

The Canadian Bible Society (CBS) is all about the Bible, championing it as the voice of God revealing Jesus Christ, the living Word. CBS strives to get the Bible into people's hands when and where it's needed most, in the language they understand best, in a format they can use easily, with help to understand it for themselves. CBS is actively working to translate, publish, distribute, and help people engage in the Scriptures across Canada and around the world in partnership with the United Bible societies. Visit biblesociety.ca for more information.

The assistance of Erik Stiller in the statistical analysis of the data discussed in this report is greatly appreciated.

Key Points

- Many observers have noted an increase in religious practice among young adults in various parts of the world, including the United Kingdom and the United States. This report examines survey data to determine whether a similar religious revival among young people is occurring in Canada.
- Polling conducted over the past three years by the Angus Reid Institute in partnership with Cardus finds that young Canadians' relationship with faith falls largely in line with that of older generations. For example, when asked, "Do you believe that God or a higher power exists?" 59 percent of Canadians aged 18–34 responded "Yes, I definitely do believe," while across all ages, 63 percent selected one of the "yes" options.
- At the same time, surveys reveal some evidence of increasing openness to religion among young people. Data emerging from other studies in the UK and the US, while disputed, seem to show increasing interest in religion, including Christianity. In the UK, a study found that 18–24-year-olds are the most likely to believe there is "definitely a God/gods or higher power" and the most likely to pray regularly. In the US, a long decline in rates of religious practice among young people seems to have levelled off, though there is divergence according to sex: For the first time, men attend church more regularly than women.
- In one study in which Canada was included, young adults, while as a group largely uncommitted to religious practice, represented almost half of those who "are interested in learning more about the Bible and are frequently using the Bible and regularly attending church."
- Although survey evidence has so far failed to support anecdotal reports that Canadian young adults are increasingly demonstrating commitment to Christianity or other faiths, there are indications that declines in religious practice have slowed or halted in Canada, the UK, and the US, and that there is continuing or even increasing openness to faith within the younger generation.
- These findings and trends suggest that Canadian churches would do well to consider how to respond to this openness and prepare to welcome young people who may be seeking answers to questions concerning the challenges of life or the reality of the transcendent.

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Introduction

On August 20, 2025, Canadian author Carey Nieuwhof released episode 748 of *The Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast*, titled “Revival Series Pt. 4. Gen Z Men Converting—UK Church Revival Lessons for America.”¹ “I think atheism is gone pretty much, amongst young people,” said Alpha founder, author, and pastor Nicky Gumbel, in the opening moments of the episode. Gumbel said that in the United Kingdom, large numbers of young people are coming to the Christian faith, and to church. There was an air of anticipation and excitement in the conversation. The panelists speculated about whether this development in the UK would be replicated elsewhere—including Canada.

What’s Happening with Young People in Canada?

Cardus partnered with the Angus Reid Institute in March 2025 to conduct a survey of Canadian young adults (those aged 18–25), in order to understand what issues people in this age cohort consider to be their main challenges, how they view their future, what makes them feel encouraged and optimistic, and what role religion plays in their lives. This was a cross-border study that also surveyed American youth, along with other age cohorts.

The results offer insight into how important religion is to the lives of young people in Canada and what role spiritual practices, such as prayer and Bible reading, play in their lives.² These new data can help begin to answer the question of whether young people in Canada are identifying with faith in general, and Christianity in particular, in ways similar to how young people in other countries, especially the United Kingdom and the United States, are reported to be doing.

The survey is the third recent Cardus/Angus Reid Institute poll to ask questions about faith in the life of young adults in Canada. In 2022, the polling revealed that Canadians aged 18–34 were less likely than older Canadians to believe in a higher power (57 percent versus 67 percent).³ In 2024, the polling found that 39 percent of Canadians who identified as Christians and who were aged 18 to 34 were “religiously committed” (see sidebar), compared to 20 percent of Christians aged 55 and older.⁴

1 Nieuwhof, “Revival Series Pt. 4 / Gen Z Men Converting.” Complete citations are provided for all sources at the end of this report.

2 The Angus Reid Institute and Cardus conducted an online survey from March 12 to 21, 2025, of a randomized sample of 5,003 Canadian adults and 5,001 American adults who are members of the Angus Reid Forum. Both samples were weighted to be representative of adults in each respective country according to region, sex, age, household income, and education, based on Canadian and American census data. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of plus or minus 1 percentage point, nineteen times out of twenty. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for jointly by ARI and Cardus.

3 Pennings and Los, “The Shifting Landscape of Faith in Canada.”

4 Bennett, “Still Christian(?),” 14–15, fig. 7.

The Spectrum of Spirituality Index

The Spectrum of Spirituality was developed in 2017 by Cardus and the Angus Reid Institute to highlight the nuances of personal faith and public faith within religious affiliations and to recognize that a range of commitments and practices exists both within and between religious groups. Although there were some other publicly available data focused on individual religious beliefs and practices, relatively little attention had been given to how religious individuals and institutions influence the public square and how they are understood by others. The index was created to help understand religion in Canada along a spectrum of commitment, rather than a binary religious-secular divide. Drawing from previous social-science research on key indicators of spirituality, the Spectrum contains seven spiritual indicators that are split between personal and public religious practices and beliefs:

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

Higher scores in each indicator suggest a higher commitment to religion in everyday life, whereas lower scores suggest a lesser degree of religious practice, if any at all. Four groups emerge from the index, with each of the seven indicators weighted equally: Religiously Committed, Privately Faithful, Spiritually Uncertain, and Non-religious. These labels have been assigned according to the total composite score received on these indicators. To respondents who indicated they do not think or do not believe God or a higher power exists, an eighth question was asked about their feelings of personal faith or spirituality. Those who reported no feelings of faith or spirituality are given a negative score of 100 and almost always fall within the Non-religious category.

The most recent poll, conducted in March 2025, does not disclose a marked increase in religiosity among Canadians aged 18–34, compared to 2022. There is a relatively stable response pattern across age groups (18–34, 35–54, and 55-plus). For example, when asked, “Do you believe that God or a higher power exists?” 59 percent of Canadians aged 18–34 responded “Yes, I definitely do believe” or “Yes, I think so,” and 41 percent responded “No, I don’t think so” or “No, I definitely do not believe.”⁵ Meanwhile, across all ages, 63 percent selected one of the “yes” options and 37 percent selected one of the “no” options. Younger Canadians also hew closely to their elders in frequency of prayer. When asked “How often, if at all, do you pray to God or some higher power?” 19 percent of Canadians reported doing so “every day” (of those aged 18–34, it is 15 percent), and 36 percent reported “never” doing so (of those aged 18–34, it is 41 percent).

Canadians aged 18–34 report attending religious services (other than weddings or funerals) more frequently than other age groups do. Sixteen percent of young adults attend at least once a week (“every day,” “a few times a week,” or “once a week or so”), compared to 10 percent of those aged 35–54 and 12 percent of those 55 and older. The frequency of attendance was similar between male and female respondents in the youngest group: 17 percent of men and 15 percent of women attend once a week or more. As for the “never” attenders, 46 percent of respondents aged 18–34 fell into this group, as did 48 percent of those aged 35–54 and 43 percent of those aged 55-plus. So here again, younger Canadians largely fall in line with their elders.

Respondents were also asked about how frequently they “feel [they] experience God’s presence.” Forty-six percent of respondents said “Never,” and 15 percent said “Every day.” Of respondents aged 18–34, 51 percent said “Never,” and 10 percent said “Every day.”

The strongest divide by age group is in level of agreement with the statement, “It’s important for parents to teach their children religious beliefs.” Here, 51 percent of respondents overall said that they “strongly agree” or “moderately agree,” and 49 percent said that they “moderately disagree” or “strongly disagree.” In the youngest category, 43 percent selected an “agree” option and 57 percent a “disagree” option, while in the oldest category, 63 percent selected an “agree” option and 37 percent a “disagree” option.

The poll also asked, “How often, if at all, do you read the Bible, Qur’an, or other sacred text?” (there were no further questions in the poll concerning the Bible specifically). Fifty-six percent of respondents said “Never.” The percentage of “never” readers is relatively stable across age groups, accounting for 54 percent of those aged 18–34, 58 percent of those aged 35–54, and 57 percent of those aged 55-plus. Eleven percent of those aged 18–34 reported that they do such reading “a few times a week” or “every day,” compared with 9 percent of those aged 35–54, the same percentage for those 55-plus, and again 9 percent of respondents overall.

It is interesting to note that since 2017, when Cardus and ARI began tracking these data, the percentage of respondents who report that they read a sacred text at least once a week has remained relatively stable, at 10–14 percent, with the 18–34 age group reporting at a few points

5 In 2017, the response to the same question regarding belief in God was 67 percent to 33 percent for the overall sample, and 62 percent to 38 percent for those aged 18–34. Angus Reid, “A Spectrum of Spirituality,” Tables and Methodology, Q28/29.

higher (12–17 percent). The percentage of respondents who report that they attend religious services at least once a week has declined slightly, from 15 percent in 2017 to 12 percent in 2025, although the percentage of respondents in the 18–34 age group who do so has remained steady during this period, at 16 percent.⁶

Americans and Canadians diverge when it comes to reading the Bible, Qur’an, or other sacred texts. Fifty-six percent of Canadians report that they “never” read them, compared with 31 percent of Americans. Of Canadians aged 18–34, 15 percent of men and the same percentage of women report that they read them at least once a week, compared with 37 percent of men and 27 percent of Americans in this age group.

Thirty-two percent of “religiously committed” Canadians report daily reading of sacred texts and 69 percent at least weekly, compared with 63 percent of “religiously committed” Americans who read daily and 90 percent who read at least weekly.

Religious Nones

Canadian scholar Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme has studied the rise of the “religious nones” in Canada.⁷ Her research, based on a 2019 survey, showed that this group—those who say they have no religious faith—“are one of the fastest growing demographics in Canada, especially among young adults aged 18–35.”⁸

Of particular relevance to this paper is Wilkins-Laflamme’s conclusion that there was a marked absence of “declared desire to be more involved with a religious group sometime in the future from young adult religious nones.” Only 5 percent signalled this type of interest in the survey conducted by her team in 2019.⁹ In other words, young people who said they have no religious faith were unlikely to attend church anytime soon. Based on her data and other studies she referenced, Wilkins-Laflamme concluded that what religious groups have to offer might not have an impact on nones, especially “cradle nones,” who were raised with little or no religious faith.¹⁰

Wilkins-Laflamme argued that most people are “now socialized to value their own autonomy, freedom, mobility and choice amid a cornucopia of options before them, with religion only being one among many.” These factors, considered in the context of late modernity that includes “detraditionalization, expressive individualism and pluralism of choice,” lead her to conclude that

6 This is based on a review of fourteen surveys conducted between April 2017 and March 2025. We analyzed the demographic breakdowns of six of them, and while one survey was an outlier, these trends were generally consistent.

7 Religious nones are people who report no religious affiliation. Cardus’s Spectrum of Spirituality Index allows for a more nuanced view of religious nones as people who report no formal affiliation but might still hold spiritual beliefs.

8 Wilkins-Laflamme, “And Then There Were None,” 358.

9 Wilkins-Laflamme, “And Then There Were None,” 375.

10 Wilkins-Laflamme, “And Then There Were None,” 375.

significant social change would be required before church attendance would become attractive to Canadian “nones.”¹¹

This conclusion seems to be at odds with what other observers—again, mostly anecdotal thus far in Canada—are positing: that the very autonomy of choice that young adults are feeling may be leading them to explore Christianity as one of these available choices. We explore this hypothesis in the next section.

Is Religion an Option for a Stressed Younger Generation?

If crises in meaning, mental health, and longing for community lead young people to explore faith and attend church, Canadian youth would seem to be likely candidates for a faith journey.

The Angus Reid/Cardus poll conducted in 2025 asked respondents about their current challenges and their views about the future. On the matter of finances, young respondents are least likely, compared to the other age groups, to say they are satisfied with their financial situation (at 46 percent). Eighty percent of them are “pessimistic” (“moderately” or “very”) about the future of global stability. Seventy-four percent say that they are pessimistic about the “future of the next generation.” More than half (54 percent) say they are “dissatisfied” (“somewhat” or “very”) about “the way things have been going” in Canada, and 56 percent are pessimistic about “the future of Canada.”

Loneliness in this generation is an issue, with 49 percent of 18–24-year-old Canadians indicating that they are “often lonely,” more than any other age group of respondents. It is possible that the dissatisfaction indicated by these statistics is an inducement to participation in social associations, including religious organizations. This might be at least part of the explanation for some observers’ claim that young people’s interest in, for example, the Christian faith seems to be increasing.¹²

In the United States, considerable attention is being paid to anecdotal evidence of the resurgence of interest in religion. Lauren Jackson, a religion writer for the *New York Times*, remarks that “the country seems to be revisiting the role of religion,” citing a Pew Research Center’s Religious Landscape Study. Secularization is on pause, says Jackson, describing this change as “a major generational shift.”¹³ Religion scholar Christian Smith offers an explanation: “While traditional religion has declined in the United States, it has not been replaced by sheer secularism. Religious obsolescence in the US has not meant the disappearance of the sacred, spiritual, magical, enchanted or divine. . . . They remain alive and well. The sacred and ecstatic have migrated to new locations.” Secularization theory—the view that modernity and the advance of science naturally lead to decreasing religious belief and practice—is not “flat wrong . . . but it is part blind and untenably overachieving.” Smith’s conclusion is that secularization “happens” but

11 Wilkins-Laflamme, “And Then There Were None,” 375.

12 Marriott, “Full-Fat Faith.”

13 Jackson, “Americans Haven’t Found a Satisfying Alternative to Religion.”

“so do a lot of other processes” and religion needs to be understood in a manner that includes processes “outside the structures of traditional religion.”¹⁴

While Smith thinks that the decline in church attendance will someday level off, this does not mean a revival is on its way. He offers a sobering conclusion to observers who believe that traditional religion will revive and grow, arguing that decline is likely to continue. “The best guess about what the coming decades might look like for traditional religion,” he writes, “is what recent decades have actually looked like, only more so.” Still, he cautions, it is important to remember that “history is full of surprises.”¹⁵

Surprises Outside of Canada

As one of the world’s largest religious traditions, Christianity could be a reasonable choice for young people confronting the plethora of spiritual options that Smith points out is now widely available. There is evidence that Christian churches are in fact benefiting from increased interest among young adults. “Churches are packed with young people,” said Nicky Gumbel on the podcast mentioned in the introduction. “We’ve seen it anecdotally.” Gumbel then referred to a recent study in the United Kingdom called “The Quiet Revival,” suggesting that it provided “statistical backup” for these anecdotal observations. This report, which will be discussed in more detail below, examined church attendance from 2018 to 2024, concluding that there has been an increase, particularly among younger people (more among men than among women, but an increase for both) and among ethnic minorities. This growth is not just in England, reported Gumbel. “We’ve been in a lot of places recently. We’ve been in Japan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Prague, Germany. . . . But everywhere we’ve seen, and that’s just in the last few months, everywhere we go, we see that there is evidence of a new interest.”¹⁶

Gumbel is not alone in his belief that young adults are increasingly embracing the Christian faith and attending church. Other commentators in the UK and US offer perceptions of increased interest among younger adults in faith in general, including growing numbers who report having experienced God and who are attending Christian churches. A new global survey helps to fill in some details about what is happening with young people and faith around the world.

The Patmos World Bible Attitudes Survey

The British and Foreign Bible Society, along with the United Bible Societies, partnered with Gallup to conduct a global survey of 91,000 people in eighty-five countries with a combined population of 3.8 billion, to understand the role that faith in general, and the Bible in particular, plays in their lives. The Patmos World Bible Attitudes Survey was “the first global research project to categorise and analyse people’s attitudes and beliefs about the Bible within specific cultural,

14 Smith, *Why Religion Went Obsolete*, 368.

15 Smith, *Why Religion Went Obsolete*, 368.

16 Nieuwhof, “Revival Series Pt. 4.”

economic and religious contexts.”¹⁷ The resulting report challenges the prevailing assumption that religion is irreversibly declining and secularism rising around the world and offers insight into the phenomenon of growing attraction to faith among the newest generation of adults. “The data challenges many prevailing narratives about the decline of religion globally. In five of the seven global contexts we studied, the majority of people still consider religion an important part of their daily lives,” said Patmos project lead Richard Powney.¹⁸ Overall, the study found that 81 percent of respondents believe in God or a higher power, and that 69 percent say that religion is an important part of their daily lives.¹⁹

Researchers began by grouping the world’s countries into seven clusters according to various socio-economic characteristics, then surveyed a representative sample of adults across a range of each cluster’s countries. In the study’s Cluster 5 countries, where Canada is situated, 62 percent of respondents say that they definitely or probably believe in God or a higher power, markedly lower than the world percentage. Forty percent indicate that religion is an important part of their daily life, less than half the global average.²⁰ “Religion still matters around the world,” said Rhiannon McAleer of the Bible Society in the United Kingdom. “We’ve suspected for a long time the West is a bit of an outlier.”²¹ The results for Cluster 5, including Canada, seem to support this observation.

The Cluster 5 countries are defined in the study as characterized by “a secular context with low interest in learning more about the Bible and a declining Christian population.” There are twenty-four countries in the group, including the US, the UK, and Canada. Countries in this cluster “have the highest percentage of individuals who identify themselves as secular.”²² Cluster 5 countries are described as “economically developed, historically Christian and located in Europe, Northern America and Australasia, where Christian identity is declining.”²³

In analyzing the survey results, the Patmos researchers identified “segments” of respondents who could be grouped together based on their attitudes toward faith in general and the Bible in particular. As the list below shows, in Cluster 5, young adults demonstrated greater interest in learning about the Bible than older age groups. Respondents in the 18–34 age range were 26 percent of the cluster’s total respondents; they were thus heavily overrepresented in the segment of respondents who indicated openness to engaging more actively with the Bible and with churches. The following is a breakdown of the respective percentages of 18–34-year-olds as a proportion of each of the eight segments assembled by the study:

17 British and Foreign Bible Society, *Patmos World Bible Attitudes Survey*, 2.

18 United Bible Societies, “Landmark Gallup Survey Finds Faith the Norm.”

19 Patmos Initiative, “Key Insights.”

20 *Patmos World Bible Attitudes Survey*, 61.

21 Quoted in Plake, “Unpacking Global Bible Engagement.”

22 *Patmos World Bible Attitudes Survey*, 5.

23 *Patmos World Bible Attitudes Survey*, 61.

- 21 percent of the segment of respondents who “are positive and committed to the Bible. They see it as relevant to their lives and wider society. The Bible impacts their everyday decisions and how they respond to challenging times in life.”²⁴
- 14 percent of those who “are inactive in church attendance and their use of the Bible. However, they are open to the Bible. They view the Bible as a source of comfort in challenging times.”²⁵
- 14 percent of those who “hardly ever [use] the Bible, and . . . are indifferent about its personal relevance for them. However, much of the segment appears to see a role for the Bible’s values, with 60 percent agreeing that the Bible is a useful guide for learning right from wrong.”²⁶
- 23 percent of those who “identify as Christian and have knowledge of the story of the Bible, but . . . are personally disengaged from religion, church and the Bible. They do not see the relevance of the Bible for their lives, and of all the Christian-majority segments, they are the least open to learning more about the Bible.”²⁷
- 25 percent of those who do “not offer a strong positive or negative opinion about the Bible; they seem indifferent towards it. They are not engaged with the Bible or church but don’t mind the presence of the Bible in society.”²⁸
- 21 percent of those in the segment identified as “Closed–Sceptical”: “The Bible is personally irrelevant to this segment, and they have little to no interest in learning more about it.”²⁹
- 25 percent of those who have “the most pronounced negative attitude towards the Bible. They do not think the Bible has any relevance to society or themselves.”³⁰
- 48 percent of people who “are interested in learning more about the Bible and are frequently using the Bible and regularly attending church.” Only 9 percent of the total survey respondents fell into this segment, known as “Active Unsure,” but young adults were the largest group in the segment by a large margin.³¹

The Patmos project reports that, globally, Christians aged 18–24 are using the Bible more frequently than any other age group, with 50 percent reporting using the Bible on a weekly basis.

24 *Patmos World Bible Attitudes Survey*, 63.

25 *Patmos World Bible Attitudes Survey*, 65.

26 *Patmos World Bible Attitudes Survey*, 66.

27 *Patmos World Bible Attitudes Survey*, 67.

28 *Patmos World Bible Attitudes Survey*, 68.

29 *Patmos World Bible Attitudes Survey*, 69.

30 *Patmos World Bible Attitudes Survey*, 70.

31 *Patmos World Bible Attitudes Survey*, 64. Results for the other age ranges were 29 percent for 25–55 and 22 percent for 55-plus.

This age cohort of Christians also reports the highest level of confidence in talking about the Bible, finding passages relevant to specific situations, and speaking with others about the Bible and its message.³²

The United Kingdom, A Quiet Revival?

The recent “Quiet Revival” survey in the UK concluded that young adults’ interest in Christianity is on the rise. The results “really surprised us,” said Rhiannon McAleer of the Bible Society in the United Kingdom. “We had a radical increase in the number of under 35s, particularly 18–24-year-olds, saying they go to church regularly. And outside of churchgoers, we see a real warming among younger age groups, especially to the Bible. We see that they are the age group most likely to say they are interested in exploring the Bible, . . . [and that] it’s a positive thing for Christians to talk about their faith with non-Christians.”³³ In 2018, only 4 percent of 18–24-year-olds reported attending church monthly. In 2024, that number had increased to 16 percent.³⁴ The most dramatic growth in church attendance reported in *The Quiet Revival* was among young adults, particularly young men.

The survey did not focus exclusively on Christian practice but sought to assess more general religious engagement as well. Key findings from the survey include the following:

- “Over a fifth of men aged 18–24 (21%) now say they are attending church each month, far higher than their female peers at 12%—though in both cases this is a substantial rise in comparison to 2018.”³⁵ This finding is the reverse of the long-standing statistical indication that more women than men attend church.
- “18–24-year-olds are the most likely to believe there is ‘definitely a God/gods or higher power,’ at 33%, and also the most likely to pray regularly, with 23% saying they pray at least daily (compared to 17% of the [whole] population), and a total of 37% saying they pray at least monthly (compared to 30% of the [whole] population).”³⁶
- Fifty-one percent of 18–24-year-olds have engaged with a spiritual practice over the past six months, compared with 42 percent of those in the older generations.³⁷
- Thirty-seven percent of 18–24-year-olds report curiosity to learn more about the Bible.³⁸

The authors of *The Quiet Revival* state, “We found that the Church is in a period of rapid growth, driven by young adults and in particular young men.”³⁹ The report offers theories for

32 Patmos Initiative, “Key Insights.”

33 Quoted in Plake, “Unpacking Global Bible Engagement.”

34 McAleer and Barward-Symmons, *The Quiet Revival*, 6.

35 McAleer and Barward-Symmons, *The Quiet Revival*, 16.

36 McAleer and Barward-Symmons, *The Quiet Revival*, 19.

37 McAleer and Barward-Symmons, *The Quiet Revival*, 8.

38 McAleer and Barward-Symmons, *The Quiet Revival*, 8.

39 McAleer and Barward-Symmons, *The Quiet Revival*, 5.

why this increase is occurring. “With much of the population struggling with mental health, loneliness and a loss of meaning in life, in particular young people, church appears to be offering an answer,” the study’s authors observe. “We found that churchgoers are more likely than non-churchgoers to report higher life satisfaction and a greater feeling of connection to their community. . . . They are also less likely to report frequently feeling anxious or depressed—particularly young women.”⁴⁰

The Quiet Revival suggests that young adults may be open to faith due to a cultural acceptance of Christianity that earlier generations did not experience. “Christianity no longer feels bizarre, nonsensical or embarrassing, as evidenced by the fact that 18–24-year-olds are second only to over-65s in agreeing that they would be ‘happy to be seen reading a Bible in public’ (at 32%, with 33% disagreeing).”⁴¹

The importance of a search for meaning and belonging is another hypothesis proposed by the report’s authors. “With the normalisation of Christianity in culture, and the confidence and comfort of Christian friends to share their own faith experience, a large number of young adults now appear to be looking towards the Church as a space for finding healing and community as well as a deeper sense of meaning in their life.”⁴²

Many church leaders and observers in the UK have welcomed *The Quiet Revival* as statistical proof of previous anecdotal evidence that youth are attending church in surprisingly large numbers. Other commentators have pushed back against the statistics and questioned the survey’s results. Andy Bannister, a Christian scholar and evangelist based in the UK, argues that “perhaps the strongest reason for scepticism is that the Bible Society’s results conflict with virtually every other reliable source on religious trends in the UK. For decades, data have shown declining church attendance, and most of those trendlines do not show a sudden reversal in the late 2010s or early 2020s.”⁴³ “Encouraging hints exist,” he concludes, “but the evidence is weak and inconsistent. At best, it may signal modest growth in small groups, not a broad revival. Future surveys will show whether this is a real shift or a statistical blip.” The Bible Society published a “Frequently Asked Questions” page on its website in response to the critique of the report, stating that while “no survey data set is a perfect mirror to the world,” it stands by the results and believes them to be reliable and accurate.⁴⁴

In the United States, a Different Story

The Pew Research Center’s Religious Landscape Study, conducted in the United States in 2007, 2014, and most recently in 2023–24, shows that the decline in numbers of self-identifying Christians that it has traced for nearly twenty years has slowed. The survey reported that most American adults have spiritual beliefs: 86 percent believe people have a soul or spirit, 83 percent

40 McAleer and Barward-Symmons, *The Quiet Revival*, 8.

41 McAleer and Barward-Symmons, *The Quiet Revival*, 20.

42 McAleer and Barward-Symmons, *The Quiet Revival*, 21.

43 Bannister, “The ‘Quiet Revival.’”

44 Bible Society, “The Quiet Revival FAQs.”

believe in God or a universal spirit, 79 percent believe there is something spiritual beyond the natural world, and 70 percent believe in an afterlife.⁴⁵

Percentages for the youngest generation polled come in lower than all the older generations in this survey, with 18–24-year-olds less likely than adults 74 and older to say that they are Christian (46 percent of young people, versus 80 percent of the senior cohort), engage in daily prayer (27 percent, versus 58 percent), and attend religious services monthly (25 percent, versus 49 percent). The younger the age group, the higher the likelihood of being religiously unaffiliated, ranging from 43 percent for 18–24-year-olds to 13 percent for those 74-plus.⁴⁶

The researchers point out that although the youngest Americans surveyed are less religious than the oldest, on some measures they are no less religious than the cohort just above them (24–34-year-olds). “Americans born in 2000 through 2006 . . . are just as likely as those born in the 1990s . . . to identify as Christians, to say religion is very important in their lives, and to report that they attend religious services at least monthly.”⁴⁷

As the decline of Christianity slows and perhaps levels off in the United States, members of the younger generation are still leaving behind the faith of their upbringing (often Christianity), and more women are doing so than their male counterparts. According to a 2024 survey by the Survey Center on American Life, young women are the most likely demographic to stop attending church or other religious institutions, in contrast with previous generations, in which men were more likely. “Fifty-four percent of Gen Z adults who left their formative religion are women, 46 percent are men,” the study found. Thirty-nine percent of young adults identify as religiously unaffiliated, compared to 34 percent of men in the same age group.⁴⁸

The most recent research from the Public Religion Research Institute’s 2024 Census of American Religion also provides a conservative answer to the question of whether youth are bringing revival and growth to American churches. In 2013, that survey found that 32 percent of Americans aged 18–29 identified as religiously unaffiliated. In 2024, the percentage had increased to 38 percent, which the institute attributed to the increase of young women leaving religion. In 2013, 29 percent of young women were religious “nones,” while in 2024 that number had risen to 40 percent. Young men’s adherence to religion barely changed, with 35 percent reporting no affiliation in 2013 and 36 percent doing so in 2024.⁴⁹

The growing difference between women’s and men’s rates of religious adherence has become one of the most discussed stories in the field of American religion. “In a First Among Christians, Young Men Are More Religious Than Young Women” was the headline of a recent *New York Times* article. “For the first time in modern American history,” it reported, “young men are now

45 Smith et al., “Decline of Christianity.”

46 Smith et al., “Decline of Christianity.”

47 Smith et al., “Decline of Christianity.”

48 Cox and Hammond, “Young Women Are Leaving Church.” For this survey, the youngest cohort was adults aged 18–29, which the study called “Gen Z.”

49 Deckman, “The Complicated Truth.”

more religious than their female peers. They attend services more often and are more likely to identify as religious.”⁵⁰

As this phenomenon gains attention, theories are emerging about why, in places such as the United Kingdom and the United States, young men might be less likely to leave church than in the past, and why some evidence suggests that there is an influx of young men into active participation in Christian churches. One prominent explanation is that as young men move to the right politically, Christianity becomes a more attractive option for them.

Melissa Deckman of the Public Religion Research Institute writes that her organization’s research found that

men who attend church (46 percent) are just as likely as older male churchgoers (48 percent) to be classified as Christian nationalists—those who believe that American government and identity should be closely aligned with a conservative form of Christianity. In contrast, only 18 percent of Gen Z men who don’t attend church share these views about the relationship between church and state. Our findings echo recent research by political scientists Paul Djupe and Brooklyn Walker, who show that young Christian men are trending more reactionary and theologically conservative than both older Christian men and Christian women.⁵¹

Anecdotes Still Looking for Evidence in Canada and Beyond

In 2022, Father Liborio Amaral, pastor of St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Brampton, Ontario, was interviewed by Global News for a story about religion in Canada. His church is an outlier in the news story, which details the decrease in church attendance and reported adherence to faith in Canada. Fr. Amaral says that attendance at his church is increasing, and this is primarily due to increased involvement by young people. “Normally now, when you see a line-up of people going to confession, they’re younger people—in their teens or early 20s. Within the last 10 years or so, something is happening and the youth are realizing that they need God. I think it’s about the shallowness and emptiness in sometimes what people think will bring them joy—the job, the career, the house, the car. So they’re looking at the spiritual part of their life,” he said.⁵² Fr. Amaral’s observations are shared by other church leaders across the country, who likewise observe that more young people are attending their congregations and are open to faith.

However, as indicated by the March 2025 polling by the Angus Reid Institute in partnership with Cardus, measurable proof has not yet caught up with the anecdotal evidence of young people’s possible newfound interest in faith and church. But, after decades of pessimism about the future of organized religion in Canada, commentators now seem to be seeing reasons for optimism concerning its continuing relevance.

50 Graham, “In a First Among Christians.”

51 Deckman, “The Complicated Truth.” In this report, “Gen Z” is the term applied to the 18–29 age group.

52 Stewart, “Gone by 2040.”

Conclusion

Religion has not gone away, and within some age groups and areas of the world it is growing. There is anecdotal evidence—and in some cases, actual data—to show that people aged 18–34 are open to Christianity and other faith traditions, and that they are actively exploring these through activities such as reading Scripture and attending church.

The conclusion of *The Quiet Revival*, that Gen Z youth are attending church in significant numbers in the UK, has been critiqued by some commentators. Regardless of that debate and its outcome, there is a new level of public conversation taking place about perceptions of Christianity's relevance for youth today.

The conversation appears to be global. The findings of the Patmos World Bible Attitudes Survey reveal that the church is strong and growing in some parts of the world. Even in Cluster 5, which is the most secular group of countries and includes Canada, 18–34-year-olds make up 48 percent of the people who say they “are interested in learning more about the Bible and are frequently using the Bible and regularly attending church.”⁵³

There are important dimensions to these questions that require further research. Tied to learning about the Bible are questions about trust in institutions and the understanding that young people bring when it comes to the authority of the Bible. What questions are the younger generations asking that are leading them to explore or seriously consider the Bible as a source of truth for their lives? Are the crises in meaning, mental health challenges, and longing for community (loneliness), among other problems, critical for youth in Canada? If yes, where are they finding answers to help them address these challenges? To best help young people today, church leaders need answers to the questions posed here.

How do young people perceive the Bible in comparison to other sacred texts such as the Qur'an, the Vedas, the Sutras, and others? This question is particularly relevant to church leaders working in multicultural and interfaith contexts.

Research provides insights that help answer important questions and inform behaviour. It can also raise new questions, as this study does. Nonetheless, this paper offers Canadian churches reason to believe there is some level of openness among young people to the Christian faith and church attendance, even if the complete picture of how wide-ranging and deep that interest is remains lacking. The conversations happening in the United Kingdom and United States about young adults' church involvement can be instructive for Canadian churches hoping to see their own version of a “quiet revival” among young people.

For now, curiosity might be the most helpful posture. Here are just a few of the questions that churches could consider:

- Are Canadian churches ready for an influx of young attendees, if such an influx occurs?
- What barriers might there be to attendance in specific congregations, and how can they lower those barriers?

53 *Patmos World Bible Attitudes Survey*, 64.

- How will churches listen and respond to the needs of young Canadian adults who might attend?
- Will young men in Canada outnumber young women in church attendance, and what will that mean for both the broader church and specific congregations?
- What unhelpful assumptions do churches make about young people and faith?
- How can churches remain open, expectant, and realistic about a possible surge of interest in faith and church among young people?

Canadian young people have entered adulthood in a time of economic uncertainty, global and national political tensions, mental health crisis, and loneliness. They spent formative years living through the restrictions of a global pandemic, which affected educational and social contexts and opportunities. This generation is also in a moment in which their cohort appears to be increasingly perceiving Christianity as a possible life choice. They have not given up on belief in the transcendent, and that belief might just yet lead them to church.

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