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A Demographic Look at Evangelical Congregations

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Many students of religion have noted that institutional forms of religion are declining in Canada. Fewer and fewer Canadians regularly attend church, and many do not subscribe closely to denominational doctrinal or behavioural proscriptions (Bibby 1993). The largest Christian groups in Canada – Catholics (particularly in Québec), United Church of Canada, Anglicans, and others – have shown a precipitous decline in church attendance over the last 50 years. It's not just attendance that is declining, but affiliation with religious groups is also declining. Around 19% of Canadians claim no religious affiliation in 2004, and the numbers are higher for younger Canadians (Clark and Schellenberg 2006). So, how do we justify a study on evangelical congregations? Is institutional religiosity becoming a thing of the past in Canada? The answer is no, at least not for Evangelicals.

First, Evangelicals are not showing declining allegiance to their congregations. Furthermore, the number of evangelical affiliates in Canada is not declining over time. Bibby estimates that Canada is about 8% evangelical, a figure that has been stable since the 1871 census (Bibby 2006). Larger polls with more thorough denominational data estimate about 10% of Canadians affiliate with conservative Protestant denominations, and some even higher (see Hiemstra 2007; Reimer 2003). Bibby (2002a) also estimates weekly church attendance among conservative Protestants to be 58% in 2000 (compared with 21% nationally), a percentage that, if anything, has increased over time. Evangelical church attendees (those who attend monthly or more) are also more likely (59% in 2005) than other Christian church attendees to say they get a great deal of enjoyment from their religious group (Bibby 2006).

It is not just conservative Protestants that embrace institutional religion. In spite of declines, more Canadians are still involved in religious organizations than any other type of voluntary activity (Bibby 2006). The importance of congregations to a significant minority of Canadians justifies studying them.

Furthermore, things are looking good for the future of evangelical congregations, because they seem to hold on to their youth and mobile members (Bibby 2004). Bowen notes that there has been a rapid decline in church participation for mainline Protestants and Catholics, but not for conservative Protestants. In fact, Bowen expects conservative Protestants to become an "ever more dominant force" within Canadian Protestantism, because they are younger and more committed, and they have more people in the pews on any given Sunday than mainline Protestantism (Bowen 2004, p. 50). In other words, evangelical Protestantism is a uniquely congregational style of Canadian religion, and there is no indication that its institutional form is weakening over time.

Second, congregational participation correlates with a wide variety of pro-social outcomes. Bowen (2004) argues that religiously committed Christians – which he defines, in part, as those actively involved in a congregation – are more likely to volunteer time and give to charitable causes. Evangelical Protestants lead all other Christian groups in donating time and money. Hiemstra found that Evangelicals "volunteer and give to charitable causes, both religious and non-religious, at higher rates and higher levels than other Canadians" (2009, p. 1). Another positive outcome of institutional religion is personal well-being. "Compared to other Canadians…the very committed are more likely to say they are satisfied with life, happy, and confident they will carry out their plans" (2004, p. 99).

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Bowen's argument is that institutionally committed religiosity is qualitatively different from non-institutional forms, because the former involves higher levels of both private devotional behaviour and public action. The implication of Bowen's research is that Christian institutional forms of religiosity are good for Canada, and for Canadians themselves.

In this paper, we give a demographic overview of evangelical congregations in Canada. The median size of the 11,000 evangelical congregations in Canada is around 100 regular participants. The typical congregation is about 45 years old. We also examine the correlates of congregational size and age. There are many interracial and ethnic congregations among the evangelical denominations we studied. In the end, we give some reasons for the overall numerical success of evangelical congregations, which outnumber mainline Protestant and Catholic congregations, in spite of the fact that they have fewer affiliates. We speculate that the demographic characteristics of evangelical congregations partly explain their overall vitality.[1]

Evangelicalism, Congregations, and Denominations

Defining "evangelical" is necessary and has implications for researching evangelicalism in Canada. Depending on how one defines them, the number of Evangelicals in Canada can range from as low as 8% to as high as 16%. The two classic examples include Bibby's research, which defines Evangelicals as conservative Protestants who attend and participate with their denominations and congregations. The higher figure focuses on beliefs; the best example is Rawlyk's book *Is Jesus your Personal Saviour?* (1996) and includes "evangelical" Catholics and Protestants.

John G. Stackhouse, Jr., says there are two ways of defining "evangelical" (2007). The first defines "evangelical" based on British historian David Bebbington's "quadrilateral." Bebbington focuses on four criteria: crucicentrism (the centrality of Christ's salvific work on the cross), biblicism (an emphasis on the authority of the Bible), conversionism (a conversion experience), and activism (an active faith that includes evangelism and congregational participation). A second definition, according to Stackhouse, focuses on "evangelical" as an individual or institutional body with historical connections to eighteenth-century revivals. In the nineteenth century, this movement included Protestant denominations such as the Baptists, some Presbyterians, Anglicans, and much of the current United Church. Stackhouse includes one other criterion from the historian George Marsden, that being transdenominationalism, which highlights the co-operation of evangelical Protestants across denominational lines, especially as it relates to activism and evangelism (also see Stackhouse 1993).

For the purposes of this study we utilize a substantive definition that recognizes the denominational and congregational form of evangelical Protestantism. We acknowledge "evangelical" as a movement or subculture within Protestantism organized around a set of beliefs, practices and transdenominational relations (see Reimer 2003). Congregations are key organizing features for religion generally and for evangelical Protestants specifically. Congregations are evangelical if they are part of a conservative Protestant denomination. Those churches that are independent or part of (nondenominational) inter-congregational networks can be considered evangelical if they fit Bebbington's quadrilateral. If a congregation has a membership or affiliation with a transdenominational

[1] We are not suggesting, of course, that evangelical congregations on the whole are "healthy" or vigorous, although some clearly are. Our claim here is limited to the large number of evangelical congregations and their ability to hold the allegiance of the majority of Evangelicals.

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organization such as The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, it can be considered evangelical. Last, a congregation may be evangelical if it identifies as evangelical.[2] The congregations in this study are all evangelical by three, if not all four, definitional criteria.

While there is some debate over the role of denominations, they have not disappeared and continue to be an important feature of religion (Wuthnow 1988; Miller 1997; Roozen and Nieman 2005). Bruce Guenther (2008b) argues that historians have not studied Canadian denominations in great detail and that evangelical Protestant denominations, specifically, are understudied compared with those in the United States.

Central to denominational life is the local congregation. James F. Hopewell offers the following definition: "A congregation is a group that possesses a special name and recognized members who assemble regularly to celebrate a more universally practiced worship but who communicate with each other sufficiently to develop intrinsic patterns of conduct, outlook, and story" (1987, pp. 12–13). The cultural dynamics of congregations are expressed in a narrative form that gives meaning and order to parishioners. The cultural aspects of congregations are important sociological factors that continue to shape their study. Mark Chaves argues that the cultural production of congregations is by far the most important contribution to society, even more so than political or social action (2004).

R. Stephen Warner has argued for the study of congregations as significant case studies for understanding religious life. His study of Evangelicals and liberals in California illustrated well his congregational principle of church organization, which allows researchers to see variation between and within denominations precisely because of the voluntary nature of religion (1988). Warner continues to advocate for the centrality of congregations, arguing that religious life is de facto congregational (1993; 1994).

For Warner (1994), the local congregation is the central organization for religious life because it the primary place for social and religious interaction. Denominations are typically staffed by religious professionals and perform work for the organization at the national or regional level. Congregations, on the other hand, are local, voluntary communities, concerned with worship, religious education, mission, stewardship, and fellowship (pp. 63–67).

The local quality of congregations also raises our attention to their ecological nature. Nancy Ammerman demonstrates how congregations are shaped by and respond to local issues (1997). However, congregations adapt in a wide variety of ways depending on the congregational culture. What Ammerman's work points to is the potential of congregational culture as a resource for engaging the needs of people within its social network. The value of her research is the link between ecological changes and the culture of congregations whereby culture represents a variety of material resources or tools available for the congregation.

[2] Of course, not all congregations that identify as evangelicals are evangelical based on our definition. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, for example, is understood as a mainline Protestant denomination. We refer to "evangelical" as it has been used since the nineteenth century.

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Data

In the Canadian Evangelical Churches Study (CECS), we interviewed the lead pastors of 478 evangelical congregations by phone in 2009. We also performed phone interviews with 100 youth/children's pastors in these same congregations. Prior to the phone interviews, we conducted face-to-face interviews with 50 other lead pastors in major regions across Canada (Maritimes, Toronto area, Calgary area and Vancouver area). This paper will focus on data from the 478 lead pastor interviews (that is, with the senior pastor or sole pastor). The response rate for these interviews was roughly 40%. For more information about the response rate and representativeness, see the Appendix.

The congregations were from five major evangelical denominations in Canada – Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC), the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), the Mennonite Brethren (MB), the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA), and the four Baptist Conventions: the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches (CABC), the Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Québec (CBOQ), the Canadian Baptists of Western Canada (CBWC), and the French Baptist Union / Union d'Églises Baptistes Françaises au Canada (French). These are the largest denominations in the Pentecostal, Reformed, Mennonite, Holiness, and Baptist traditions respectively within Canadian evangelicalism. These denominations represent about 3,100 congregations, or about one-third of all the evangelical congregations in Canada. They are evangelical in the sense that they are all conservative Protestant denominations, but they are also all members of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Finally, nearly three in four (72.6%) CECS pastors stated that the term "evangelical" describes their congregation very well, and nearly all the rest said "somewhat well" (24.7%).[3] Of course, the data we gathered do not represent all of the over 100 conservative Protestant denominations,[4] not to mention the independent congregations. However, we compare our data with other data sources, giving us more confidence in our findings.

The data in our study rely upon pastors telling us about their congregations. Research in the United States involving key informant interviews, particularly key informants in leadership positions such as clergy, were found to be very accurate on directly observable features of the congregations and its people. This includes congregational size and programs, and the distribution of participants by age, sex, and race. McPherson and Rotolo (1995) report that key informant estimates are as good as asking the people themselves, in these specific areas. Other areas, like clergy estimates of parishioner income and education show some mixed results (Schwadel and Dougherty, 2010). In comparison, key informants are less likely to accurately report the goals or beliefs (attitudes) of people in the congregation (Chaves 2004). For this reason, we ask about directly observable features of the congregations and congregants, and use broad categories to increase reporting accuracy.

The first task was to estimate the number of evangelical congregations. Our interviews with pastors do not provide these data, but there are two sources that give good estimates: denominational statistics collected by Outreach Canada and the charitable status data collected by the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA), which are publicly available. The difficulty with the latter dataset is extracting the evangelical churches out from all the other non-profits based on limited information (the name, claimed function, etc.). This monumental task was completed by

[3] The CRC (43.5%) were much less likely to identify their congregations as "evangelical" than were the other denominations. It is unclear whether this meant that they do not identify themselves as evangelical, or if the pastor thought the congregation is not very evangelical/evangelistic.
[4] Based on data from Bruce Guenther, who categorized Outreach Canada data. My thanks to Bruce for making his data available.

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Rick Hiemstra and his team at the CRCE. Based on Hiemstra's estimates, there are roughly 11,000 evangelical churches in Canada, only slightly higher than Outreach Canada's estimates (Hiemstra 2010). The number of congregations remained stable (or up slightly) over the past 5 years (Hiemstra 2010). Even though Evangelicals make up only about 10% of the Canadian population, they account for about one-third of the roughly 30,000 congregations in Canada.[5] There are so many evangelical congregations partly because Evangelicals attend church at much higher rates than other Christian groups. As noted above, Evangelicals also volunteer time and give money to their congregations at rates that are much higher than the national average. This allows Evangelicals to have many viable small congregations.

Congregational Size

In table 1 below, we compare the median size of congregations in our CECS data with data directly from the denominations. Most of the denominations gather yearly statistics from their congregations, including the average weekly attendance for each congregation. Of course, the denominational data are not perfect, since some churches do not report their statistics to the denomination. We suspect that the smaller congregations are slightly less likely to report, but we think that most denominations come up with fairly realistic estimates on average attendance based on estimates from previous years.[6] With our lower than expected response rate for the CECS, we were concerned that we may have missed smaller congregations and ethnic congregations. However, it appears that the data are quite close to denominational statistics (see the Appendix), except for the Baptists, which have a high percentage of very small (often rural) churches.

Table 1 presents the number of congregations in each denomination, and the median and average attendance for each congregation in each denomination. The median represents the midpoint in the data and gives a more accurate picture of the actual size of the typical congregation.[7] The mathematical average (mean) is easily skewed by very large churches in the sample, which make the average too large. According to the denominational data, the median church has 89.2 regular participants (typical weekly attendance, including adults and children).[8] The Baptist and Pentecostal congregations tend to be smaller, partly because they are more likely to be rural congregations. Those denominations with more churches in Western Canada tend to have larger congregations, with the CRC congregations being the largest on average.

[5] Bibby estimates there are about 30,000 congregations in Canada (2006, p. 194). Based on data from the *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*, Bibby estimates there are 9800 evangelical congregations, more congregations than either Catholics or mainline Protestants (2004). Brownlee et al. (2005) estimate that there are 31,000 religious organizations in Canada, which are either congregations or families of congregations (denominations). They claim that the CRA data capture 94% of all religious organizations (it is unclear how they derived this figure).

[6] For CABC, for example, there were 210 of 524 churches that claimed no average weekly attendance (120 didn't report at all, some failed to report that line, and 6 closed down during the year and so reported zero). However, most denominations have more complete information. Of 427 C&MA churches, 115 did not report in 2008, but previous years' estimates were substituted for nearly all of them.

[7] To understand the median, consider this example: if a denomination had 99 congregations, and we lined up the congregations from smallest to largest, the median would be the size of the 50th church. In other words, half the churches would be smaller and half larger than the median.

[8] In comparison, Posterski and Barker (1993) estimated that over half of Protestant congregations have less than 75 average attendees, a figure that would include mainline Protestant congregations (it is not clear how they derived this figure).

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In comparison, the larger median and averages for the CECS data seem to suggest that the sample under-represents smaller congregations. However, the two data sources can be reconciled. Since we think the denominational estimates are a bit low, we think the best estimate of the median size of congregations in these denominations is about 100. See the appendix for more information.

Table 1. Congregational size, comparing denominational data with the CECS sample

	Denominational Data			CECS Data		
Denom.	Number of Churches	Median Attendance	Average Attendance	Number of Churches	Median Attendance	Average Attendance
PAOC	1,102	75.0	148.0	96	84.0	181.5
CRC	251	197.5	229.3	108	225.0	253.3
MB	246	130.0	230.0	87	150.0	276.5
C&MA	427	116.0	211.3	97	140.0	213.1
CABC	524	48.0[a]	76.1[a]	35	75	114.4
CBOQ	354	55.5	91.3	23	90	117.0
CWBC	165	100.0	140.0	26	95	132.8
French[c]	30	45.5	73.3	5[b]	80[b]	74.0[b]
Total	**3,099**	**89.2**	**150.0**	**478**	**135.0**	**210.2**

[a] 226 churches who reported 0 weekly attendance were removed.
[b] This sample has too few churches for accurate estimates.
[c] French Baptist.

Research on US congregations by Mark Chaves (2004) of Duke University found that the average conservative Protestant congregation has 75 regular participants (counting adults and children), but the average conservative Protestant goes to a church of 230 regular participants.[9] The difference is important, and undoubtedly applies to Evangelicals in Canada. Since the average congregational size data are skewed by large congregations, the average attendee goes to a church that is much larger than the typical congregation. Thus, there is a perception that the average congregation is much larger than it actually is. For reasons given above, there are a disproportionate number of evangelical congregations in the United States as well. (Non African-American) conservative Protestants make up roughly 25% of the US population but account for 56% of the churches (based on Chaves' data).

Congregational size affects demographics and participation in a variety of ways. In table 2, we divided the churches into quarters, and present the data for roughly the smallest 25% of the churches and the largest 25%. Obviously, bigger congregations have much bigger incomes, but their attendees are also more highly educated and richer, on average. Likely related to the fact that larger congregations are much more likely to be urban (as opposed to rural)

[9] Using the hyper-network sampling method, Chaves asked a random sample of Americans which church they attended, then proceeded to interview the pastor of the churches. The random sample allowed him to find the size of the church that the average American attended was much larger than the average church (2004). Chaves does not give the figures for conservative Protestant churches, which I retrieved from his data (the National Congregations Study of 1998).

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congregations,[10] they are slightly more likely to have a higher percentage of unconverted participants. However, the smaller churches have the edge in terms of the percentage of the regular participating adults who actively volunteer and give faithfully to the congregation.[11]

Table 2. Correlates of congregational size

Congregational attribute	Small congregation (<75; N=112)	Large congregation (≥250; N=127)
Total congregational income (median)	$80,842	$500,000
Percentage of adults who have 4-year university degree or more	26.2%	36.9%
Percentage of families that are rich (>$100,000/year)	5.8%	20.2%
Percentage of women who volunteer	55.2%	52.4%
Percentage of men who volunteer	46.0%	39.9%
Percentage of adults who give faithfully	73.3%	62.9%
Percentage urban	51.8%	89.8%
Percentage unconverted	6.7%	9.8%

Congregational Age

In table 3, we look at the age of the congregations. The average evangelical congregation in Canada is about 45 years old according to the CECS data. However, the age varies significantly by region and denomination. Regarding region, churches in Atlantic Canada are the oldest, and the Québec and B.C. evangelical congregations are the youngest. Forty-three of the 45 congregations that began before 1901 (in our data) are Baptist, and are mostly from Ontario and the Maritimes. On average, congregations were founded in 1925 in Atlantic Canada and 1974 in B.C., with an overall average of 1962. The oldest congregation began in 1763, while three congregations started in 2008. The average Baptist congregation is over 100 years old, while the average MB congregation – the denomination with the youngest congregations on average – is only 30 years old.

[10] Urban and rural congregations were distinguished based on the area codes given in the denominational data. Note that churches in small towns are given an urban designation based on area codes, just like those that exist in big cities. New Brunswick area codes have been urbanized (see Hiemstra 2010), so the New Brunswick churches were coded urban and rural based on addresses and recommendations by a local academic and Baptist minister (since the majority of the churches were Baptist).

[11] Somewhat surprisingly, the age of the congregation is not related to its size. I predicted that older congregations would be smaller because they tend to be rural and have elderly participants, but this prediction did not fit the data.

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Table 3. Age of congregations

Denomination	Number of churches	Median founding year
Baptist	87	1901
C&MA	92	1975.5
CRC	108	1957
MB	87	1980
PAOC	94	1961
Total	468	1962.5

Once again dividing the churches into quartiles based on congregational age, we present data in table 4 for the oldest and youngest 25% of the churches. Older churches have older participants on average, who are less educated and somewhat less wealthy.[12] Like smaller churches, older churches have slightly higher rates of giving. Younger congregations are more likely to be urban, and their participants are more likely to be immigrants, Asians, and small group attendees.

Table 4. Correlates of the age of the congregation

Congregational attribute	Old Churches (founded before 1947) N=119	Young Churches (founded after 1987) N=121
Percentage aged 18–29	11.0%	20.4%
Percentage of adults who have 4-year university degree or more	26.7%	43.8%
Percentage of families that are rich (>$100,000/year)	10.5%	14.5%
Percentage of adults who give faithfully	70.2%	66.7%
Percentage urban	58.8%	86.8%
Percentage recent immigrants (came to Canada in the last 5 years)	3.4%	10.3%
Percentage Asian	3.6%	14.1%
Percentage of adults who participate in a small group	33.0%	43.9%

Possible explanations for higher levels of commitment in smaller, older congregations include a combination of demographics and generational effects. Younger affiliates are more likely to leave small, older (often rural) congregations and move to urban centres or other regions for economic/lifestyle reasons. This leaves a remnant of older affiliates with strong commitment to the congregation, demonstrated over a long period. We are not suggesting that younger Evangelicals are less religiously committed overall, but many students of modern religion would agree that younger cohorts lack some of the loyalty, perseverance, and sense of duty characteristic of older cohorts (e.g., Bibby 2006). Thus, they have less commitment to any one congregation. Add to this the fact that older, smaller congregations lack programs for children, modern worship music, and often have an older pastor that may not relate as well to the younger generation. The older, small church does not attract casual attendees because it does not appeal to those who are "shopping" for a church home. Another possible reason is related

[12] The perception that the urban, old churches are wealthy, often true of Protestant congregations in the United States, does not appear to be true of Canadian evangelical congregations. Older urban congregations do not have higher total congregational incomes than younger urban congregations.

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to the basic principles of organizational growth. As organizations grow, so do the diversity and commitment of its members/affiliates (Blau 1970). Since it's easier for "free-riders" to hide in big churches than in small ones (Finke 1994; Iannaccone 1992), it is more difficult for larger churches to maintain an ethos of high commitment among the majority. However, this all should be understood within the larger point that evangelical congregations do well at holding the allegiance of both the young and the old. Note that the differences in giving/participation levels between older/small congregations and younger/large congregations are relatively small (tables 2 and 4).

Congregational Demographics

The demographics of regular participants in congregations have drawn considerable interest in the US, particularly in the area of race, where it is often said that "Sunday morning remains the most racially segregated time in America" (eg. Emerson and Smith 2000). There has also been considerable interest in class and age differences (eg. Reimer 2007). In Canada, research on the demographics in congregations have focused on new immigrant populations (eg. Wilkinson 2006). The demographics of congregants are important not only to researchers, but to church leaders as well, who are concerned about reaching racial/ethnic minorities, or encouraging commitment among the younger generations. Demographics of congregants also influence a wide variety of congregational activities. Age often affects the worship style or programs of a church, just as the education and income of attendees influence a congregation's budget, or the credentials of the pastor they wish to hire.

In table 5, we look at the demographic makeup of the regular participants in evangelical congregations based on denomination. Where possible, we compare it with American evangelical congregations from Chaves' 1998 data (final column). Regarding the age of the participants, there are as many people under 18 as there are over 65 in the churches, lending support to Bibby's (2006) and Bowen's (2004) contention that Evangelicals do well at promoting youth participation.[13] Baptists, particularly Maritime Baptists, are older than the participants in other denominations. Regression analysis (not shown) demonstrates that the strongest predictor of having a disproportionately large number of older participants (≥65 years) in a congregation is the year the church was founded. Older churches on average have older attendees and pastors.

It is often assumed that Evangelicals are less educated and poorer than non-Evangelicals, an impression likely gained from dated studies in the United States. However, recent data in Canada do not support this contention. Bibby's Project Canada 2005 data demonstrate that Evangelicals have average levels of education and income. Furthermore, regular church attendees, including evangelical attendees, have higher levels of education than non-attendees.[14] In our data, roughly one-third of participants have a university/college degree or more. PAOC participants are slightly less likely to have a university/college degree, and Baptists and Pentecostals have lower incomes on average. Regression analysis (not shown) indicates that higher educated participants (percentage with college/university degrees) are more plentiful in urban, large, and old congregations.

[13] Bibby's 2005 data show that Evangelicals have a lower average age (44.7) than mainline Protestants (52.1) and Catholics inside (49.8) and outside (47.3) Québec.
[14] Based on Bibby's 2005 data, 38.5% of Evangelicals have completed an undergrad degree, compared with the 38.9% national average. For income, 15.1% of evangelicals make >$100,000/year, compared with 20.2% in the national population. Neither difference approaches statistical significance.

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Table 5. Demographics of congregations

Attribute	Average percentage of regular participants/attendees						
	Baptists	C&MA	CRC	MB	PAOC	Can. Evang.	US Evang.[a]
<18 years	17.8%	23.8%	22.8%	23.0%	20.8%	21.6%	NR
18–29 years	13.1%	16.4%	13.8%	16.4%	14.9%	14.9%	NR
30–64 years	40.4%	46.0%	42.2%	45.3%	47.5%	44.3%	NR
≥65 years	32.1%	15.2%	21.0%	16.0%	17.7%	20.3%	NR
Female	60.5%	56.4%	54.2%	55.0%	56.6%	56.4%	57.4%
High school or less	51.1%	48.2%	52.2%	42.0%	57.4%	50.1%	NR
4-year university degree or more	33.4%	36.9%	34.5%	41.0%	28.6%	34.7%	29.2%
Grad degree or more	7.8%	8.7%	7.2%	8.3%	7.6%	7.9%	NR
<$25,000 family income	19.4%	15.7%	8.7%	12.7%	21.2%	15.4%	NR
>$100,000 family income	8.1%	14.9%	18.3%	15.2%	10.8%	13.5%	NR
Recent immigrant (came to Canada in last 5 years)	5.3%	9.8%	3.1%	5.2%	5.5%	5.8%	NR

NR = not reported.

[a] Source: Chaves (1998).

The CECS study asked pastors to estimate the ethnic/racial composition of their congregations as well. Regarding the percentage of recent immigrants in table 5, C&MA has the largest immigrant population, while the CRC is the least diverse of the five denominations. Churches in Atlantic Canada report that only 3% of the congregants are immigrants, compared with 13% in Québec. Obviously, ethnic diversity is related to the number of congregations that are in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, which hold roughly two-thirds (63%) of Canada's immigrant population (Trovato 2009).

One important source of social change for denominations and congregations is migration. Not only has Canada changed with new immigration patterns beginning in the 1970s, so too have congregations. Increasingly, immigrants are arriving in greater numbers from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. For example, while many Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs are arriving, so too are Christians from these regions (Bramadat and Seljak 2008). Evangelicalism has become far more culturally diverse in the past thirty years with far-ranging implications (Wilkinson 2006; Guenther 2008a). The study of new immigrant congregations has exploded with numerous studies that have focused on the establishment of new immigrant congregations (Warner and Wittner 1998), cultural adaptations (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000), and transnational networks (Wilkinson 2000; Ebaugh and Saltzman 2002).

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In the top five rows of table 6, the first number is the number of ethnic churches in our data and the second number (in parentheses) is the average percentage in the churches. We define ethnic congregations as those where more than 80% of the congregation belongs to one ethnic grouping. So, for the C&MA, for example, 22.2% of people in the churches were Asian (according to pastor reports) and there are 16 C&MA Asian churches in our sample. Baptists have the largest Black/African contingent. Some 20 African churches are part of the CABC. These are historic Black churches from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The PAOC has a large number of Aboriginal/First Nations congregations. It claims 90 First Nations congregations on its website, along with 39 Spanish, 18 Korean and 14 Chinese churches, among others (out of 1,100 congregations total). The C&MA is the most ethnically diverse overall in our data, and it claims 7 First Nations, 89 Chinese, 20 Vietnamese, 15 Filipino, and 12 Korean congregations, among others (out of 427 congregations total). In total, there are 31 ethnic congregations (6.5%) in our sample.[15]

Table 6. Racial composition of congregations

	Number of Congregations with Predominant Racial Group (Percentage of Denomination's Regular Participants/Attendees)						
Racial group	Baptists	C&MA	CRC	MB	PAOC	Canadian Evang.	US Evang[b]
Asian[a]	0 (2.8%)	16 (22.2%)	1 (2.7%)	3 (8.4%)	1 (4.3%)	21 (8.0%)	1.9%
Latin American[a]	1 (1.8%)	1 (2.7%)	0 (0.4%)	0 (1.8%)	0 (1.4%)	2 (1.6%)	5.0%
African/Black[a]	4 (7.9%)	0 (2.9%)	0 (1.7%)	0 (1.8%)	1 (5.4%)	5 (3.9%)	16.0%
Aboriginal[a]	0 (1.6%)	1 (3.7%)	0 (0.5%)	0 (1.4%)	2 (6.7%)	3 (2.8%)	NR
White[a]	70 (86.0%)	51 (67.1%)	99 (93.3%)	67 (85.9%)	65 (80.1%)	352 (82.6%)	75.2%
Multiracial (no race >80%)	16	26	8	16	26	92	NR
Total number of churches	90	97	108	87	96	478	1,234

NR= not reported.

[a] Number of congregations where ≥81% of regular participants/attendees belong to group.

[b] Source: Chaves (1998).

Note: Racial groupings do not sum to 100% because of rounding and other races not included.

[15] Overall, these numbers may suggest that the CECS has too few ethnic congregations. For example, C&MA has 89 Chinese, 20 Vietnamese and 12 Korean, or 28% Asian congregations. We sampled 16 Asian (17%) congregations. PAOC claims 90 Aboriginal congregations (8%) and we sampled 2 (2%). The MBs indicate that they have 16 Chinese congregations and 4 other Asian congregations (8%), whereas we sampled 3 (3.5%). However, it could also mean that denominations use looser definitions for ethnic congregations than the 80% cut-off we used. Furthermore, we found many multiracial congregations based on pastor reports, some of which may be considered ethnic congregations based on different definitions.

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There has been much research south of the border on multiracial churches, partly because several researchers consider them an important means toward racial reconciliation. Yancey (2003; see also DeYoung et al. 2004; Emerson and Smith 2000) defines a multiracial church "as a church in which no one racial group makes up more than 80% of the attendees of at least one of the major worship services." By this measure, 8% of American churches are multiracial. Emerson and Woo (2006) state that 4.5% of evangelical US congregations are multiracial. Emerson suggests that "the more successful a faith tradition is in terms of relative size [compared with other US traditions] the less successful it will be in having racially mixed congregations" (39), because people will have a greater choice of congregations and thus are more likely to choose to attend a congregation where the majority are people that are (ethnically/racially) like them.

If we accept Emerson and Woo's theory, we would expect to find more multiracial congregations in Canada because there are fewer evangelical congregations to choose from. Furthermore, Emerson and Woo also found that Asians and Hispanics were much more likely to be in multiracial congregations. The long history of denominational and congregational racial divisions (Niebuhr 1929) between Black and White churches in the United States does not exist to the same degree in Canada. We found that 92 of the 478 congregations or 19.2% of the sample are multiracial congregations according to pastor estimates (13.2% if we exclude the 80th percentile). The PAOC and the C&MA lead in this area, with 26 multiracial congregations each in our data. Not surprisingly, multiracial congregations are five times more likely to be urban than rural and are very rare in the Atlantic region.[16]

Conclusions

In the past, Bibby has chided churches for failing to offer the kind of religious "products" that people are looking for (1993; 1995; 2004). In his view, there is plenty of interest in the sacred in Canada but the (Christian) churches have failed to provide the focus on God and care for the self and society that people seek. Churches also have problems with promotion and distribution, particularly because they fail to target those who affiliate with their denomination but no longer attend church (1993). In other words, the reason institutional religion is failing in Canada is not primarily because people lack interest in church, but because churches are not interested enough in ministering to people outside their walls.[17] In *Restless Churches* (2004), however, he sees some renewed interest in organized religion as he found increasing attendance rates after the year 2000. Throughout his three decades of polling, Bibby has praised Evangelicals, who have maintained vital churches partly because they do a good job of holding on to their youth and mobile members. Yet his praise is qualified because, by his measures, they are not growing past 8% of the Canadian population, and much of evangelical church growth is not due to new converts but rather due to the "circulation of the saints" (Bibby and Brinkerhoff 1973; Bibby 1983; 1994). Yet even here, Bibby has wondered if his "circulation" thesis – where most newcomers to evangelical churches in Calgary are Evangelicals from other evangelical churches – is really a sign of ineffective churches (1993), since it indicates that evangelical churches do a good job of holding on to mobile affiliates. So why have Evangelicals managed

[16] This finding is based on logistic regression analysis, used for dependent variables with two possible outcomes (e.g., multiracial or not multiracial).
[17] This assumption that there is a religious renaissance in Canada, where there is increased participation in institutional religion and openness to future participation among inactive affiliates is challenged by Thiessen and Dawson (2008).

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to maintain a strong form of institutional religiosity even while other Christian groups are losing members and churches? We think there are several reasons, in addition to holding on to their youth and mobile members as Bibby notes. This list is by no means exhaustive.

First, Evangelicals maintain a vibrant subculture that is bigger than any one church or denomination. The subculture is vibrant partly because it is distinctive. Christian Smith's distinctive subcultural theory (1998) is a more adequate theory of evangelical vitality than Kelley's classic (1972) "strictness theory," where he argues that strict churches are strong. Evangelicals have beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours that are different from, and sometimes in tension with, the broader Canadian society. Evangelicals know that they can lose this distinctiveness – for example, their view that the Bible is the final authority, that Jesus is the only way to God, and that premarital sex is always wrong – because of the eroding influences of secular society. This distinctiveness encourages church participation because it is easy to bond with like-minded Evangelicals and it provides a safe place to train and protect their youth. Second, their high view of Scripture means that they take biblical commands seriously. The Bible instructs Christians to "not give up meeting together" (Hebrews 10:25, NIV). Third, Evangelicals grow by having slightly larger families and because of a strong ethos of evangelism.[18] For long-term sustainability, religious groups can gain affiliates by having children (fertility) and keeping them devoted, and/or through conversions (evangelism). Evangelicals have historically had slightly larger families than other religious groups,[19] so they have a growth edge because of higher fertility rates. In addition, the emphasis on "making disciples" embraced by most Evangelicals in Canada not only adds to their numbers, but churches are invigorated by the enthusiastic newly converted participants. Fourth, many evangelical churches do not shy away from using technology and contemporary media within the church during worship and outside the church for promotion. Of the congregations in our study, 74% have websites. 76% said they "always" show PowerPoint or video in the worship service, and all but 3% do so "sometimes." The point is that evangelical churches present themselves as more relevant and seeker-friendly when they embrace the new technologies to communicate their message.

Related to their evangelistic ethos, the evangelical denominations we studied plant new churches as a key part of their evangelistic strategy. Evangelical denominations encourage established churches to start another congregation and fund the start of new churches. This has obvious ramifications for the success of their religious institutions. Sixth, they invest resources in locating and training new entrepreneurial leaders and church planters. Since a minority of congregations account for the majority of growth in a denomination, new, innovative churches with strong leadership are central to any growing denomination. Just the fact that Evangelicals have available young leaders is a real advantage. While all the denominations we talked to are concerned about pastor shortages in the future, they are doing very well in this area compared with mainline Protestants and Catholics. Bibby estimates that there are more evangelical ministers and ministerial staff in Canada than Catholic and mainline Protestant ministerial personnel combined (2004).

[18] While Canadian Evangelicals have a fertility rate that is smaller than the 2.1 children required to maintain a population, they can still grow because of immigration.

[19] According to Bibby's 2005 data, evangelicals average 2.0 children per respondent compared with the national average of 1.76. While Stats Canada's fertility rate is closer to 1.5, the data still suggest that evangelicals have slightly higher fertility rates. In 1975, they also had a slight edge, with 2.4 children in average compared with 2.2 nationally. Research in the United States has shown that as much as 80% of evangelical church growth vis-à-vis mainline decline has been related to fertility (Hout et al. 2001).

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Seventh, Evangelicals are attracting new immigrants and claim to be working hard to incorporate them within their denominations/churches.[20] Of the 1.8 million immigrants who came to Canada between 1991 and 2001, 23% identified as Roman Catholic, 10.7% Protestant, 6.3% Orthodox, and 5.3% other Christian (Statistics Canada 2003). Beyer estimates that 17% of Evangelicals are immigrants with 70% of the evangelical immigrant population arriving after 1970 (2008, p. 440). Lastly, the small size of the average church has some advantages. Smaller congregations allow for more institutional diversity within a geographic area, a positive for consumer-minded Canadians. If you do not like the sermons, worship, or theological emphases at one church, there is probably another evangelical church within driving distance (maybe even within the same denomination). Several researchers in the United States have noted that diversifying religious options increases the market share of a religious group in the area, because they can appeal to different people of different age, race, or economic status (e.g., Stark and Finke 2000; Scheitle and Dougherty 2008).

In sum, Canada has many, albeit small, evangelical congregations. In this paper, we have presented some basic demographics, and have argued that these demographics help explain the proportionately large number of evangelical congregations in Canada. Evangelicals continue to embrace their congregations and start new ones. Evangelical institutional religiosity will continue to be vibrant for the foreseeable future.

[20] For example, the PAOC reported that nearly all new congregations started in the 1990s were new immigrant congregations. See Wilkinson, *The Spirit Said Go* (2006).

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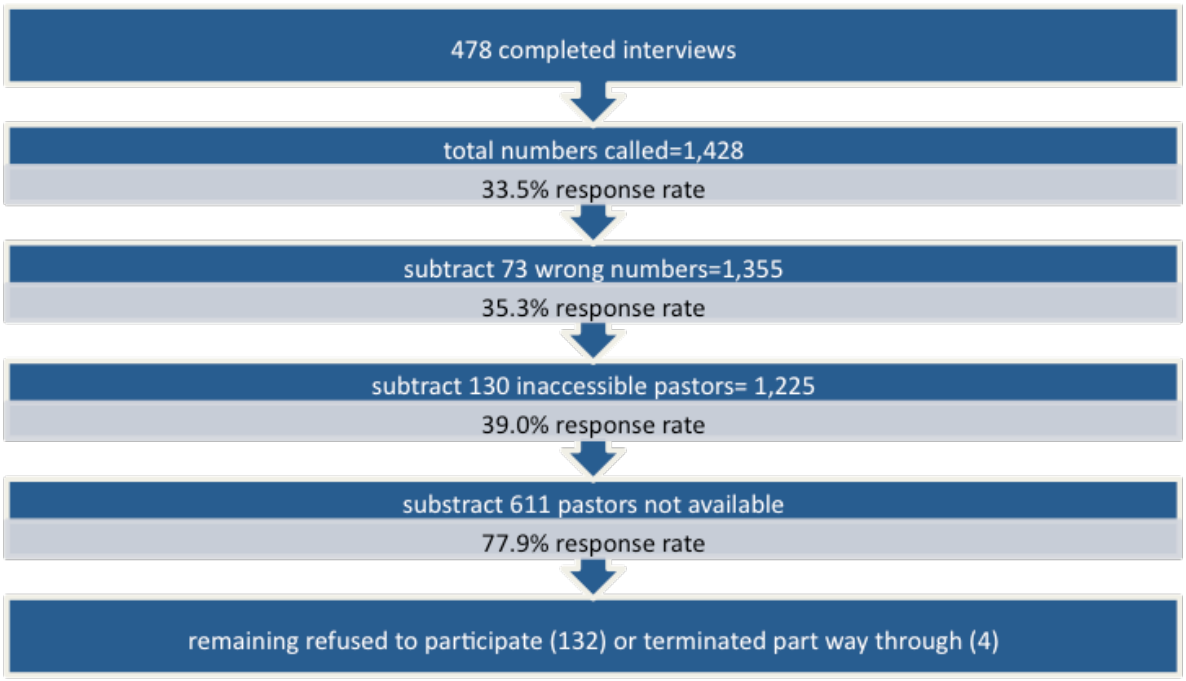
Appendix. Response Rates and Representativeness

Our 40% response rate raises questions about representativeness. While it is not what we hoped, people inside the phone polling industry tell us that a 40% response rate is a very good response rate for phone polls. Table A1 gives the response rate breakdown.

Table A1. Response rates flowchart



The 73 "wrong numbers" (fax numbers, disconnected, etc.) and the 130 "inaccessible pastors" can be subtracted from the total response rate because these had no possibility of a successful completion. We attempted to resolve wrong numbers by searching the internet for an alternate number, and this effort resulted in some correct numbers. Regarding the "inaccessible pastor" category, our requirement was that we interview a lead pastor who had been at the church for 6 months or more; 104 congregations did not meet this criterion. The remainder of this category (26 out of 130) were unable to complete the interview either due to language limitations (15 interviews could not be completed in English or French) or long term illness of the pastor (11). Of the numbers called that were possible to complete, there were many where the pastor was never available. We suspect that some of these numbers were bad numbers (because there was never an answer), but this was not tracked. So, we can conservatively say that the response rate is somewhere around 40% for the pastor interview. A minority of the eligible phone numbers had a minimum of 8 callbacks, with the majority of the sample receiving up to 23 callbacks. When we discovered that we would not reach our quota with the present sample, we added more churches and that group only received up to 8 calls. Only 4 pastors terminated the interview partway through.

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In light of the large number of unavailable respondents, our main concern for the representativeness of our data was that we would miss some smaller churches (and to a less extent, ethnic churches), since churches without administrative help or part-time/volunteer pastors would be less likely to be available. The two sources of data that give some indication of the quality of the data – denominational data and CRA data – are mentioned above. Hiemstra's CRA data involved matching each church from the CRA data with denominational lists, resulting in 4,646 congregations (see Hiemstra 2009).

We should be clear that both sets of data have their problems. First, denominational data vary in quality. Many churches do not send annual reports to their denomination, a few churches will close or move before data are updated, and so forth. Note that the denominational data in table 1 suggest that our data under-represent small congregations. While this may be true, it is not true to the extent indicated, because of problems with the denominational data. In fact, we were able to fully reconcile the data.

First, since we sampled roughly 100 congregations from each denomination, we have roughly equal numbers of congregations from denominations with larger congregations, such as the CRC, as we have from small-congregation denominations such as the Baptists. In reality, there are many more Baptist congregations in Canada (about 1,070) than CRC congregations (about 250). If each of the five denominations had equal number of churches, we would expect an average attendance of 181.9 and median of 115.4 based on denominational counts, which is closer to, but still a bit smaller than, the CECS congregational sizes.

Second, we think the denominational counts are probably too low. We think this because we are able to match the average attendance of most churches in the CECS sample with those in the denominational data (we were not able to match all because sometimes denominational attendance data were missing). Note that the CABC and BCOQ estimates in the CECS seem much too high compared with denominational data, so we matched churches for these conventions. For the 45 CABC and CBOQ congregations that we were able to match, the denomination reported an average attendance of 100.5 and a median of 75.0. The pastors of these same congregations told us that their average attendance was 120.6 with a median of 90.0. Similarly, for the 71 MB churches we were able to match, the denomination reported an average of 206.8 with a median of 140. The MB pastors told us their average attendance was 235 with a median of 170. This means that they pastor estimates were about 20% higher than the denominational figures. This makes our data look fairly good, but which is correct? Well, we suspect in most congregations, it's the pastor that reports the statistics to the conference, and if he/she does not, then a staff member would be drawing from the same data the pastor would use. We think our data are closer to accurate, since we know they're based on up-to-date information, recognizing that pastors may give slightly optimistic attendance counts (note that we asked pastors to consult their official documents when reporting the attendance of the previous year, although only 15% did). If the denominational data are 20% too low, the denominational median would be 107 and the average 180. Applied to our sample of 100 from each denomination, we would get 138.5 as a median and 218.3 as an average, which is nearly identical to what we found. Still, we think we were somewhat more likely to miss small congregations, and that is why our estimate for the median size of congregations in these five denominations is about 100 instead of 107.

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One reason we still think the CECS sample under-represents small churches is based on how they compare with the CRA data. Of course, the CRA data are not perfect either, even if we have more confidence in them. It will miss churches that do not claim separate charitable status, and there will likely be some churches that were not included in the evangelical fold because of the obscurity of the information available, and because Hiemstra could not match them with current denominational lists. Nonetheless, they provide a foil to at least check the issue of size. In table A2, we compare the average and median income of congregations based on the CRA data and our data, both reported for the year 2008.

Table A2. Congregational incomes, CRA and CECS data

	2008 CRA Data			CECS Data		
Denom.	Number of Churches	Average Income	Median Income	Number of Churches	Average Income	Median Income
PAOC	825	$305,000	$130,000	94	$247,602	$125,563
CRC	170	$361,000	$312,000	103	$292,274	$240,000
MB	161	$434,000	$233,000	85	$440,268	$240,000
C&MA	308	$504,000	$219,000	93	$399,815	$254,000
CABC	407	$101,000	$56,000	32	$215,560	$122,500
CBOQ	290	$190,000	$110,000	24	$191,100	$120,549
CWBC	104	$307,000	$179,000	24	$381,231	$188,000
French[b]	N/A	N/A	N/A	5	—[a]	—[a]
Total	4,646	$292,898	$143,389	460	$323,749	$204,245

N/A = not available.

[a] Sample too small for accurate estimates.

[b] French Baptist.

The table shows that the CRA and CECS data match very well across denominations, giving us much more confidence in the representativeness of our data. The CABC data again suggest that the CECS data missed some of the smaller congregations, but the other Baptist regions are very close. Finally, the CRA data suggest that congregations in the denominations we chose are somewhat larger than the median for all denominations.

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