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Canadian Jewish Fertility in Comparative Perspective (2001–2021)

Abstract

This analysis focuses on two factors leading to changes in Canada's religious composition—religious differences in fertility and immigration to Canada. I provide updated estimates for Jewish fertility in Canada and its subpopulations, including the first fertility estimates for secular Jews in Canada, those reporting Jewish ethnic origins but no religion. Secular Jews have much lower fertility than those reporting Jewish religion. I then examine how Jewish fertility compares to other religious groups in Canada. Between 2001 and 2021, Jewish fertility remained rather stable, while all other groups experienced considerable decline. Last, I examine how fertility varies within religious groups for those who are born in Canada, those who immigrate to Canada as children, and those who immigrate as adults. I find that for all religions (except those with no religion or "other religions"), the foreign-born who immigrated after age fifteen have, on average, higher fertility than native-born people of the same religion. This work provides important insights into the changing religious landscape in Canada and how Canadian Jews are remaining a stable but small subpopulation in a rapidly changing country.

Résumé

Cette analyse porte sur deux facteurs expliquant l'évolution de la composition religieuse du Canada : les différences religieuses en matière de fécondité et l'immigration. Je présente des estimations récentes de la fécondité des personnes juives au Canada et de ses sous-populations, incluant les premières estimations pour les Juives laïques, c'est-à-dire celles qui se déclarent d'origine ethnique juive mais sans appartenance religieuse. La fécondité des Juives laïques est nettement inférieure à celle des personnes se déclarant de religion juive. J'examine ensuite comment la fécondité des Juives se compare à celle des autres groupes religieux au Canada. Entre 2001 et 2021, la fécondité des Juives est demeurée relativement stable, tandis que tous les autres groupes ont connu un déclin considérable. Enfin, j'analyse comment la fécondité change au sein de groupes religieux considérant les personnes nées au Canada, celles qui ont immigré au Canada durant leur enfance et celles qui ont immigré à l'âge adulte. Je constate que, pour toutes les religions (à l'exception des personnes sans religion ou appartenant à d'»autres religions»), les personnes nées à l'étranger et ayant immigré après l'âge de quinze ans ont, en moyenne, une fécondité plus élevée que les personnes nées au Canada et appartenant à la même religion. Cet ouvrage apporte un éclairage important sur l'évolution du paysage religieux au Canada et sur la façon dont la population juive canadienne demeure une sous-population stable mais restreinte dans un pays en pleine mutation.

The religious composition of Canada has shifted tremendously over time. In Canada's first census of population in 1871, most Canadians were Protestant (56 percent), a large minority were Catholic (43 percent), and there were small populations of Jews (0.03 percent), Mormons (0.02 percent), "Pagans" (0.05 percent) and those with unspecified religion (0.7 percent).[1] In contrast, the most recent census conducted in 2021 showed that 53 percent of Canadians reported a Christian religion, 35 percent reported no religious affiliation, and smaller religious groups comprise a larger share of the total than in previous censuses: Muslims (4.9 percent), Hindus (2.3 percent), Sikhs (2.1 percent) and Jews (0.9 percent).[2]

Changes in religious composition can occur through three mechanisms. First, religious groups often differ in their fertility rates leading to different rates of growth. These religious differences in fertility may occur because of groups' different socioeconomic and demographic factors which in turn affect fertility. Religion can also have a direct effect on fertility behaviour through values or norms that affect the timing of marriage, use of birth control, or frequency of sexual intercourse.[3] A second mechanism that can lead to growth or decline in religious groups is group switching. This has been shown to be a quantitatively important factor in some religious groups and contexts, but this is less well studied in Canada, where shifts in religion or toward religious non-affiliation are not based on high-quality data.[4] Third, immigration can change the religious composition of society. Canada is a country with high levels of immigration, and the religious composition of Canada's immigrants is distinct from the religious composition of native-born Canadians. Recent migrants are much more likely than native-born Canadians to be Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, or Buddhist, leading to an increase in the size of these groups.[5]

This analysis focuses on two factors leading to changes in Canada's religious composition—religious differences in fertility and immigration to Canada. The article makes three key contributions. First, I present updated trends for Jewish fertility in Canada for the period 2001 to 2021, providing estimates for Canadian Jews and its subpopulations, including the first fertility estimates for secular Jews. This analysis of Canadian Jewish fertility uses census data that captures both the religion and ethnic origins of respondents, allowing us to examine not just those reporting Jewish religion, but the broader Jewish ethnic group in Canada. Second, I compare Canadian Jewish fertility trends to those of other religious groups in Canada. Last, I examine variation within religious groups, for those born in Canada, those who migrated to Canada as children, and those who migrated as adults, shedding light on patterns of fertility acculturation. This work provides insights into the sources of Canada's changing religious landscape.

Understanding trends in fertility among Canadian Jews is imperative for the Jewish community and its institutions. If fertility in the Jewish community is declining rap-

idly like it has in the rest of Canada (now at 1.26 births per woman), this would imply rapid population decline. If Canadian Jewish fertility is high, close to replacement level of 2.1, this implies a steady population. Anything lower than replacement level of 2.1 implies smaller cohorts of births, population aging, and slow decline without Jewish immigration adding to the population.

Religious Differences in Fertility in Canada

Fertility in Canada has fallen from about seven births per woman for those born in the mid-nineteenth century to 1.26 births per woman today.[6] Catholics had substantially higher fertility than did Protestants in nineteenth-century Canada and well into the twentieth century. In Canada, this difference had disappeared by the beginning of the twenty-first century.[7]

Historically, the vast majority of Canadians fell into either the Protestant or Catholic category, leaving a small "other" category for all other religious traditions.[8] As Canada became more ethnically and religiously diverse, fertility research included a broader range of ethnic and religious groups. The first comparative estimate for Canadian Jewish fertility, based on 1971 census data, found that Jews had 2.02 children on average, lower than British (2.41), French (2.67), German (2.25), Italian (2.24), Native Indian (4.21), Dutch (2.83), Polish (2.05) and Ukrainian (2.19) ethnic groups.[9] More recent estimates put Canadian Jewish fertility *above* the national average. Alain Bélanger's research from the 2001 census reports that Jewish fertility in Canada was 1.8 births per woman compared to the country's average of 1.54.[10] There was huge variation across religious groups, with Muslims and Hindus reporting the highest fertility at 2.41 and 2.00 children per woman, respectively. Protestants and Catholics were alike, around the national average (around 1.57), and Buddhist, Orthodox Christians, and women with no religion had the lowest fertility rates (1.34, 1.35, and 1.41 children per woman, respectively).[11]

There has not been a comprehensive study of religious differences in fertility for the last two decades. Robert Brym reports a total fertility rate (TFR) of 1.8 for Jews in Canada from a 2021 census custom tabulation.[12] However, it is unknown how this figure compares with that of other religious groups and whether there was any change in Jewish fertility in the interval between Bélanger's 2001 and Brym's 2021 estimate.

As far as variation in fertility within Canada's Jewish community is concerned, Charles Shahar estimates that in 2001 Montreal had the highest fertility of any large Jewish community in Canada at 2.27 births per woman, significantly higher than that in Toronto (1.93) and Vancouver (1.40).[13] Moreover, we know that ultra-Orthodox Jews have more children than do other subgroups of the Jewish community: 4.85 children per woman in 2001.[14] No subgroup analysis on the Jewish community in

Canada has been done since these studies were published. Hence the novelty of this paper. In addition, I will provide the first estimates of fertility among subgroups of Canadian Jews, including the first fertility estimates for secular Jews, that is, ethnic Jews who report no religion. While it is well known that those reporting no religion have lower fertility than those with religious affiliation, it is unknown to what extent secular Jews' fertility will be more similar to Jews reporting Jewish religion or more similar to non-Jewish secular Canadians.[15]

Immigrant Fertility in Canada

Understanding immigration is key to understanding population growth and change in Canada. In fact, in the first quarter of 2025, Canada had negative natural increase—more deaths than births—and *all* of Canada's population growth was fueled by immigration.[16] High immigration over many years means that Canada's proportion of immigrants is highest among G7 countries, reaching 23 percent in 2021.[17] Because immigrants have a different religious composition than native-born Canadians, it is important to examine immigrant fertility by religion to see how Canada's religious configuration is changing.

The gap between the fertility of immigrants and native-born, and the direction of the gap, are shaped by a range of economic, sociocultural and ideational factors from both the country of origin and the country of destination. In Canada, immigrants have tended to have higher fertility than the native-born population.[18] The difference in fertility between immigrants and native-born Canadians was 0.35 more children per woman for the period 1996–2001, 0.09 for 2011, and 0.11 for 2021.[19] Thus, immigrants have higher fertility than native-born Canadians, but the gap has narrowed over time.

When examining immigrant fertility, it is important to consider age at migration. That is because immigrants who immigrate as children are likely to adopt the social norms of the country of destination and have similar fertility to native-born individuals, while those who arrive as adults tend to have fertility norms closer to those of their country of origin. Research based on 1991–2006 data finds that women who migrated before age six have similar fertility as native-born Canadians, but those who migrated after age fifteen have higher fertility than those who migrate as children and the native-born.[20] More recent research finds that people who migrated to Canada before age fifteen had even lower fertility than native-born Canadians. Specifically, in 2011, those who migrated to Canada as children (1.5 generation Canadians) had 1.46 children per woman compared to 1.60 for the native-born, and in 2021, they had 1.25 children per woman, compared to 1.31 for the native-born.[21]

The effect of immigration on Canadian Jewish fertility depends on whether Jewish immigrants have higher or lower fertility than do native-born Jewish Canadi-

ans. In recent decades, Jewish immigration has been largely from the former Soviet Union, Israel, and the United States, and secondarily from South Africa, France, and Argentina.[22] Jews from the former Soviet Union in particular had low fertility, certainly below the replacement level during the last several decades—one possible factor contributing to the downward pressure on Canadian Jewish fertility.[23] (The replacement level is the TFR needed to keep the population size stable over time without migration: approximately 2.1 children per woman.) By comparison, Jewish immigrants from Israel come from a higher fertility context, which could increase the overall fertility rate of Jewish immigrants to Canada.[24] It is unclear how Jewish immigration to Canada from other countries shapes fertility dynamics in Canada and no previous research has examined the fertility of foreign-born Jews.

The process of acclimation to fertility norms may differ for different religious and ethnic groups because of variation in gender and family norms for different immigrant groups. For example, Muslim women have more traditional labour force participation patterns than do other religious and ethnic immigrant groups in Canada, suggesting that they may acclimate more slowly to fertility norms here.[25] This article is the first to examine variation in fertility by age at immigration for different religious groups in Canada, highlighting potential variation in the adoption of Canadian family norms.

Data and Analysis

My analysis uses the long-form Canadian census micro-files from 2001 and 2021 and the National Household Survey 2011. The long-form Canadian census is based on a 25 percent sample in 2021 and a 20 percent sample in 2001. The National Household Survey collected comparable data in 2011, but because it was a voluntary survey rather than a mandatory census, it had a lower weighted response rate (77.2 percent) than in the prior census (93.8 percent).[26]

These data are ideal for reconstructing fertility rates because they are drawn from large nationally representative samples and provide detailed information on individuals' religion, ethnicity, country of birth, and age at immigration. Information on relationships within households and census families allows the linkage of children to their mothers and the calculation of fertility rates by maternal age and characteristics.

I use the "Own Infant Method" to estimate fertility rates by religion and nativity. This TFR reconstruction procedure allows me to calculate age-specific and total fertility in the period prior to a census or survey and has been widely used in estimating fertility rates by immigrant and ethnic groups.[27] The "Own Infant Method" links infants (ages 0–1) with mothers (ages 15–49) via the census family, defined by the census as a couple with or without children or a single parent with children. In same-sex fami-

lies with two mothers, I avoid double counting the children 0–1 in the census family by assigning infants to the younger mother. After linking infants to their mothers in the census family, I estimate age-specific fertility rates using the weighted number of matched children ages 0–1 divided by the weighted number of women ages 15–49 by single-year age group. I then use the age-specific fertility rates to calculate the total fertility rates for each census (see the relevant equations in the Appendix). Population weights are applied across all analyses.

First, I present TFRs for the Jewish population in Canada in 2001, 2011, and 2021 (Table 1). I report fertility first for Canadians who report Jewish religion. Second, I report fertility for the population of Canadian Jews that Shahar refers to as the "standard definition" of Canadian Jews, namely those who identify with Judaism plus those who report no religion but do report Jewish ethnic origins.[28] I divide this category into three components:

a) Individuals who say they are Jewish by religion and ethnicity.
b) Those who say they are Jewish by religion but do not report Jewish ethnic origins.
c) Those say identify with no religion but report Jewish ethnic origin, either as the only ethnic origin or along with other(s).

The question on ethnic origins asks for each person in the household, "What were the ethnic or cultural origins of this person's ancestors? Ancestors may have Indigenous origins, or origins that refer to different countries, or other origins that may not refer to different countries." Excluded from my analysis of Canadian Jews are people who report Jewish ethnic origins and a religion other than Judaism.

Second, I compare Jewish fertility with the fertility of other religious groups listed in the census question on religion. It asks for each person in the household, "What is this person's religion?" with instructions to "Indicate a specific denomination or religion even if this person is not currently a practicing member of that group. For example, Roman Catholic, United Church, Anglican, Muslim, Baptist, Hindu, Pentecostal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Sikh, Buddhist, Jewish, Greek Orthodox, etc. Specify one denomination or religion only or No religion." Religion is coded as follows: Catholic, Christians other than Catholic, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jewish, no religion, and other religions. The group of "other religions" includes a variety of groups that vary by year, but in three census years analyzed, this group comprises less than 1 percent of the Canadian population.[29] For the nine religions specified, I estimate the total fertility rate for the year prior to the data in 2001, 2011, and 2021 (Table 2).

The next part of the analysis puts religious differences in TFR in perspective by examining how immigrant fertility differs from native-born fertility within religious groups. For women of each religious group, I estimate the TFR for three subgroups: native-born Canadians; first-generation immigrants who are foreign-born and immigrated to Canada at age sixteen or older; and 1.5 generation immigrants who immigrated at or before age fifteen. Examining how fertility norms differ for those who are new to Canada versus those who grow up here is important for understanding likely future population change given Canada's changing immigration policy.

To put the estimates for fertility by religion in context, I present descriptive statistics on the size of different religious groups in Canada. Table 3 presents the number of people in each religious group, the percentage of the Canadian population that they comprise, the number of women in childbearing ages of that religion and the number of births in each religious group. Table 4 also illustrates the demographic context by showing the number of women in childbearing years for each religious and immigrant group, highlighting in this way the size of the population experiencing each fertility rate.

I note four caveats. First, the estimated total fertility rates refer to the year prior to the census date, not the calendar year. The census occurs in mid-May of each census year, so the estimate of infants ages 0–1 in this study counts the births between mid-May of the year prior to the census year and mid-May of the census year.

Second, the analysis does not include infants who were born in the year before the census but died before the census date. Because infant mortality rates are very low in Canada at 5.2, 4.9, and 4.3 per 1,000 births in 2001, 2011, and 2021, respectively, the estimates of TFR with the "Own Infant Method" are little affected by this omission.[30]

Third, the small number of infants (3 percent) that could not be matched to their mothers introduces some measurement error. Unmatched children include those living in two-father and single-father families, households with grandparents but without a parent, and foster homes. Unmatched children cannot be included in TFR calculations because we do not know the mother's age, religion, or immigration status. However, the low rate of unmatched children is not likely to bias TFR estimates.

Finally, too few Jewish respondents report their denomination to allow me to report denominational differences in the TFR.

Results

Table 1 presents TFRs for Jewish Canadian women by census year. The TFR is a measure of fertility in a given year. It expresses the average number of children a woman

would have if she experienced the sum of age-specific fertility rates observed in that period. The TFR does not refer to particular birth cohort, but rather a population's fertility at a point in time.

Table 1
Total Fertility Rates for Canadian Jews, 2001, 2011, and 2021

	2001	2011	2021
Canadians Reporting Jewish Religion	1.81	1.97	1.80
All Canadian Jews (standard Jewish definition)	1.78	1.85	1.59
Jewish religion and Jewish ethnic origins	1.96	2.12	1.77
Jewish religion, but Jewish ethnic origins not reported	1.32	1.73	1.83
No religion, Jewish ethnic origins	1.50	1.30	0.76

Note: TFRs refer to the one-year period prior to the census, e.g., mid-May 2000 to mid-May 2001.

The TFR for Canadian women who report Jewish religion was 1.81 in 2001, 1.97 in 2011, and 1.80 in 2021. This is relatively high and stable fertility.

For a broader group of Canadian Jewish women, including women who identify with Judaism as well as those with Jewish ethnicity, the TFR is slightly lower: 1.78 in 2001, 1.85 in 2011, and 1.59 in 2021. The last three rows of Table 1 display data for the three subgroups of this broader group. Jewish women who identify with Judaism *and* Jewish ethnicity have relatively high TFRs: 1.96, 2.12, and 1.77 for 2001, 2011, and 2021, respectively. Those who report Jewish religion but not Jewish ethnic origins have an increasing fertility trend, from 1.32 in 2001, to 1.73 in 2011 to 1.83 in 2021. The Jewish women with the lowest TFRs are those who identify with no religion but do identify as Jews ethnically: 1.50, 1.30, and 0.76 for the respective census years. The last figure is extraordinarily low.

Table 2 compares Jewish fertility with that of other religious groups. In 2021, Jews and Muslims have the highest fertility in Canada (1.80 and 1.81, respectively). However, in 2001, Jewish fertility (1.81) was considerably lower than that of Muslims (2.34), Sikhs (1.88), and Hindus (1.85), with all other religions having quite a bit lower fertility than Jews. Between 2001 and 2021, Jewish fertility remained rather stable, while all other groups experienced considerable decline. Muslim fertility fell from 2.34 in 2001 to 1.81 in 2011, now at par with Jewish fertility. In 2021, the TFR of Sikhs and Hindus was very low, at 1.30 for Sikhs and 1.22 for Hindus. Christians (other than Catholics) have stable fertility, between 1.55 and 1.76, and Catholics have slightly lower fertility than non-Catholic Christians, between 1.39 and 1.62. The groups with the lowest fertility in Canada are those with no religion (1.22), other religions (1.07), and Buddhists (0.95).

We cannot rely only on TFRs to understand how religious differences in fertility are shaping population change in Canada. We also need to know the size of different subpopulations of women in their reproductive years because this is the population experiencing births. When a population has a large and rapidly growing number of women in reproductive ages, even if the fertility rate is around replacement level or lower, the population will still grow because a large number of women are having children. On the other hand, if the number of women at reproductive ages is shrinking, then even if the fertility rate remains stable, the number of births will decline. This is called population momentum.

Table 2
Total Fertility Rates by Religion, Canada, 2001, 2011, and 2021

	2001	2011	2021
Jewish	1.81	1.97	1.80
Muslim	2.34	2.37	1.81
Christians other than Catholic	1.55	1.76	1.58
Catholic	1.45	1.62	1.39
Sikh	1.88	1.59	1.30
Hindu	1.85	1.45	1.23
No religion	1.32	1.47	1.22
Other religions	1.46	1.71	1.07
Buddhist	1.24	1.26	0.95
All of Canada	**1.49**	**1.63**	**1.35**

Notes: Results are sorted with Jews first, and then from highest to lowest fertility in 2021.
TFRs refer to the one-year period prior to the census, e.g., mid-May 2000 to mid-May 2001.

Table 3 presents relevant demographic data on different religious groups in Canada sorted from the most populous in 2021 to the least populous. These data put the changing religious makeup of Canada in perspective. The first row of Table 3 shows those reporting no religion. More than one-third of Canadians reported no religion in the 2021 census, up from only 16 percent in 2001. This group is not only rapidly increasing in size; it is also more prevalent among younger people. In 2021, those with no religion represented 34.6 percent of all Canadians, but 39.2 percent of women in childbearing ages. Due to rapid population growth, and despite lower fertility, this group had more than 127,000 births in 2021, making up 38 percent of all births in 2021, more than any other group. Next are Catholics and non-Catholic Christians. The Catholic population declined over the period of analysis, from about thirteen million in 2001 to under eleven million in 2021. It also declined from 44 percent to 30 percent of the population. Non-Catholic Christians also declined from ten million in 2001 to 8.5 million in 2021. Again, because of low fertility and aging populations, the share of childbearing age women in this group has declined as have the number of births to Catholic and Christian women.

Table 3
Demographics on Religious Groups in Canada, 2011, 2011, and 2021

	Number of people			**% of the Canadian population**			**Number of women in childbearing ages (15-49)**			**% of all women ages 15-49 in Canada**			**Number of births**			**% of births**
	2001	2011	2021	2001	2011	2021	2001	2011	2021	2001	2011	2021	2001	2011	2021	2021
No religion	4,900,090	7,850,610	12,577,475	16.5%	23.9%	34.6%	1,304,905	2,039,845	3,185,860	16.9%	25.7%	39.2%	51,190	90,425	127,375	38.4%
Catholic	12,936,910	12,810,705	10,880,360	43.7%	39.0%	30.0%	3,423,315	3,034,510	2,105,595	44.2%	38.3%	25.9%	130,760	128,175	78,050	23.6%
Christians, not Catholic	9,914,920	9,292,040	8,492,970	33.5%	28.3%	23.4%	2,494,830	2,073,605	1,643,670	32.2%	26.2%	20.2%	99,465	94,270	70,880	21.4%
Muslim	575,280	1,053,945	1,775,715	1.9%	3.2%	4.9%	158,500	291,450	479,495	2.1%	3.7%	5.9%	11,500	21,645	26,265	7.9%
Hindu	297,200	497,965	828,195	1.0%	1.5%	2.3%	85,505	139,520	235,000	1.1%	1.8%	2.9%	5,080	6,350	10,485	3.2%
Sikh	278,415	454,960	771,790	0.9%	1.4%	2.1%	75,440	120,205	222,905	1.0%	1.5%	2.7%	4,795	6,410	8,995	2.7%
Buddhist	300,345	366,830	356,975	1.0%	1.1%	1.0%	91,670	106,070	89,440	1.2%	1.3%	1.1%	3,165	3,710	2,565	0.8%
Jewish	329,995	329,495	335,295	1.1%	1.0%	0.9%	75,300	68,810	66,625	1.0%	0.9%	0.8%	3,490	3,690	3,555	1.1%
Other religions	105,880	195,770	309,705	0.4%	0.6%	0.9%	34,590	56,460	95,355	0.5%	0.7%	1.2%	1,445	2,800	3,190	1.0%
TOTAL	29,639,030	32,852,325	36,328,475	100%	100%	100%	7,744,050	7,930,470	8,123,945	100%	100%	100%	310,890	357,475	331,360	100%

Note: Sorted by percent of Canadian population in 2021.

Muslims have experienced rapid population growth in Canada, from 575,000 in 2001 to 1.8 million in 2021. They form a very young population, so even though they represent 4.9 percent of all Canadians, they are 5.9 percent of women of childbearing age. Because of relatively high fertility, high immigration, and a young population, the number of births to Muslim women have more than doubled from 11,500 in 2001 to 26,265 in 2021, now 7.9 percent of all births. The next two religions by size of population are Hindus and Sikhs, both of which have experienced similar population change in Canada. Both groups made up about 1 percent of Canada's population in 2001 and in 2021 increased their share to just over 2 percent. Both populations are relatively young and include many new immigrants, leading to a doubling of births to Hindu and Sikh women in Canada between 2001 and 2021.

The population of Jews by religion and Buddhists have remained stable and represent about the same proportion of the total population in 2001 and 2021. Because the Jewish population is relatively old, Jews are underrepresented in women of childbearing ages. The number of births to Jewish women has remained relatively stable: 3,490 in 2001 and 3,555 in 2021, or 1.1 percent of all births.

Since almost all of Canada's population growth is a result of immigration, it is important to examine the fertility of immigrants and compare it to people of the same religion who are born in Canada. This comparison can show us change in the weight of these subgroups and the degree to which different groups adapt to Canadian fertility norms. Here I examine differences in fertility within religious groups, examining those who are born in Canada, those who migrated to Canada as a child (< 16), and those who migrated at age sixteen or older. This analysis is especially useful in the Canadian context, as some religious groups have been migrating here in large numbers over the last couple of decades. For this part of the analysis, I will start with the Jewish population and then examine others for comparison.

Figure 1 charts the total fertility rate for native-born and immigrant Canadian Jews. Native-born Canadian Jewish fertility is stable (1.76 in 2001, 1.84 in 2011, and 1.77 in 2021). Jews who move to Canada as children have fertility rates that are not much different from the native-born, which is common among other ethnic groups. It is the foreign-born who immigrate as adults who generally experience higher fertility, a pattern visible among foreign-born Jews who moved to Canada after age sixteen. In 2001, their TFR was 2.41; in 2011, 2.87; and in 2021, 2.16. Foreign-born Jews who move to Canada as adults are the only subgroup with a TFR higher than replacement level (about 2.1).

Figure 1
Jewish Total Fertility Rate by Nativity and Age at Immigration to Canada, 2001, 2011, and 2021

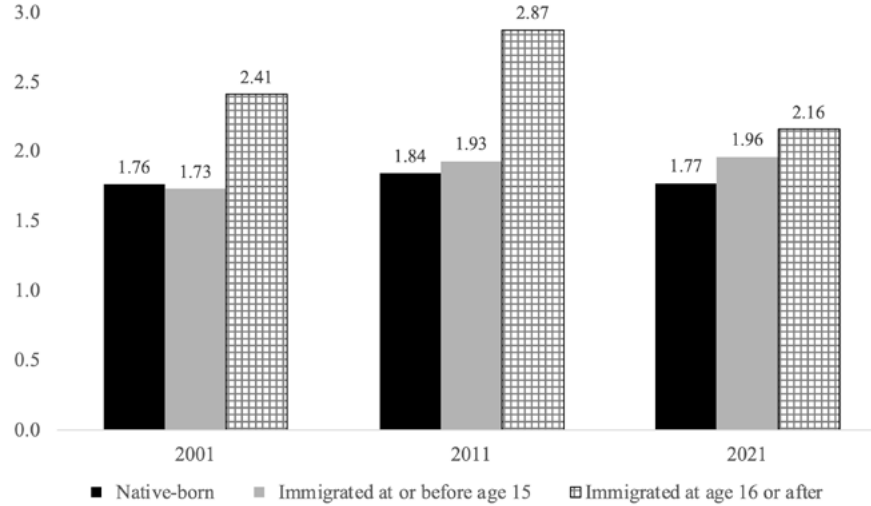

Table 4 shows a similar pattern for other religious groups. For all religions (except those with no religion or "other religions"), the foreign-born who immigrated after age fifteen have, on average, higher fertility rates than native-born people of the same religion. The largest differential between native-born and foreign-born is for Muslims, with a gap of 1.03 in 2021. Immigrants generally increase the TFR of each religious group if they move here as adults. However, the TFR of those who move to Canada as children have similar fertility rates as the native-born of their religion (Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, non-Catholic Christians and Jews. In some groups (Muslims and Catholics), those who immigrate as children have even lower fertility than do native-born people of that religion.

Table 4
Total Fertility Rates and Numbers of Women by Religion and Age at Immigration, 2001, 2011, and 2021

	TFR				Number women in childbearing ages		
	2001	**2011**	**2021**		**2001**	**2011**	**2021**
Jewish							
Native-born	1.76	1.84	1.77		53,880	49,810	50,530
Immigrated ≤ age 15	1.73	1.93	1.96		7,910	7,110	6,270
Foreign-born, immigrated at 16 or above	2.41	2.87	2.16		12,645	10,750	8,295
Muslim							
Native-born	1.88	2.14	1.45		17,165	40,460	95,950
Immigrated ≤ age 15	1.72	1.57	1.46		26,030	55,655	93,370

Foreign-born, immigrated at 16 or above	2.66	2.83	2.48		108,115	183,390	254,445
Christians other than Catholic							
Native-born	1.53	1.74	1.50		2,110,045	1,630,190	1,139,825
Immigrated ≤ age 15	1.49	1.61	1.51		124,055	129,845	131,150
Foreign-born, immigrated at 16 or above	1.92	1.99	1.99		241,845	280,585	312,170
Catholic							
Native-born	1.42	1.63	1.36		2,949,680	2,546,590	1,636,925
Immigrated ≤ age 15	1.32	1.47	1.21		160,555	148,520	126,765
Foreign-born, immigrated at 16 or above	1.82	1.79	1.72		292,105	295,235	288,415
Sikh							
Native-born	1.74	1.43	1.28		16,085	32,400	56,500
Immigrated ≤ age 15	1.92	1.47	1.16		9,970	14,130	15,735
Foreign-born, immigrated at 16 or above	2.32	2.03	1.79		48,480	71,340	100,215
Hindu							
Native-born	1.06	1.59	1.13		11,415	24,535	42,095
Immigrated ≤ age 15	1.37	1.27	1.24		12,755	22,960	27,580
Foreign-born, immigrated at 16 or above	2.35	1.82	1.65		59,140	87,270	126,070
No religion							
Native-born	1.30	1.48	1.26		1,019,975	1,628,535	2,583,995
Immigrated ≤ age 15	1.13	1.21	1.01		78,855	122,675	163,685
Foreign-born, immigrated at 16 or above	1.45	1.55	1.23		187,750	248,270	326,170
Other Religions							
Native-born	1.44	1.83	1.05		25,750	45,900	77,125
Immigrated ≤ age 15	1.22	0.81	0.90		2,260	3,090	4,405
Foreign-born, immigrated at 16 or above	1.60	1.06	1.74		6,105	6,710	11,240
Buddhist							
Native-born	0.65	1.33	0.92		13,355	27,100	26,825
Immigrated ≤ age 15	1.27	1.32	0.91		16,995	19,050	15,665
Foreign-born, immigrated at 16 or above	1.43	1.35	1.26		57,335	55,685	40,165

Note: TFRs refer to the one-year period prior to the census, e.g., mid-May 2000 to mid-May 2001.

It is important to note that Table 4 shows that only two subgroups have above replacement fertility. One is foreign-born Jews who migrated as adults (TFR 2.16) and the other is foreign-born Muslims who migrated as adults (TFR 2.48). It might seem as if these two groups are growing at a similar rate, but the fertility rates are experienced by populations of vastly different size. In 2021, there were 8,295 foreign-born Jews and 254,445 Muslims in this subgroup. So even though these groups of foreign-born have relatively high fertility, the number of women having those children is small scale for Jews and much larger for Muslims.

Discussion

Is Canadian Jewish fertility high or low? And what do recent fertility trends imply for Canadian Jewish institutions? Canadian Jewish fertility is below replacement level, at 1.8 compared to replacement level of 2.1 births per woman. Moreover, it is lower than the TFR of Israel which has been stable around three births per woman and was most recently 2.84 in 2023.[31] That said, Canadian Jewish fertility is very high compared to the overall Canadian fertility rate. In fact, Canadian Jews had on average almost half a birth more per woman than the overall Canadian population in 2021 (1.80 for Jews versus 1.35 for all of Canada in 2021). Moreover, this article finds that Canadian Jews have relatively high fertility compared to other religious groups; only Muslims have a comparable TFR. Another important fact is that the fertility rate for Canadian Jews is stable, compared with all other groups except non-Catholic Christians, which have seen fertility decline over this period. All other groups have witnessed fertility decline while Canadian Jewish fertility is stable.

What are the implications of a relatively high and stable fertility rate for the future of the Jewish community in Canada? The community of Canadian Jews is likely to grow slowly, as it has for the last several decades. Therefore, services for children and youth will have steady demand, as will the needs of young families.

To understand more about the needs of Canadian Jews, we should look at the differential fertility of the subpopulation. When we look beyond those who identify with Judaism, at those reporting Jewish ethnicity but no religion, we see that this subgroup has much lower fertility than those reporting Jewish religion. Jews expressing no religious identification have experienced rapid fertility decline to an exceedingly low level. The latter not only has the lowest fertility of any subgroup in the Jewish community; they have much lower fertility compared with the broader pool of Canadians who report no religious affiliation. In contrast, those reporting Jewish religion have much higher fertility; as they represent the Canadian Jewish majority, they keep the population's TFR relatively high. More research should be done on the subgroup of ethnic Jews reporting no religion. They may in fact be a stable subgroup. Or it could be that people report no religious affiliation as young adults,

but after they start families, they may be more likely to engage in religious practice as a way of socializing their children. Those without children may not have the same motivation for religious involvement and therefore are more likely to declare "no religion" in the census questionnaire.

Because immigration is the main driver of population growth in Canada, it is important to examine fertility adaptation of migrants from different religious groups to see how immigration shapes fertility rates here in Canada. This analysis is the first to estimate fertility within religious groups for those who are born in Canada, as well as those who are born abroad and migrated as children versus adults. Estimates for fertility by religion, alongside patterns of growth by religion together show how the religious composition of Canada is shifting through both immigration and fertility differentials.

By examining fertility in tandem with immigration history, we see that Jewish immigrants to Canada have more children than do native-born Canadians. Women who migrate to Canada at age sixteen or later have significantly more children than do native-born Canadian Jews. The gap is quite large between these groups. Moreover, those who came to Canada as children have similar fertility to native-born Canadians. This means that Jewish immigration to Canada bolsters the overall Canadian Jewish fertility rate.

This pattern is also found for all other religious groups in Canada with the exception of those with no religion. Those who migrate to Canada at ages sixteen and above have significantly higher fertility than those born in the country, or those who migrate to Canada as children.

Despite the fact that Jewish immigrants bolster the Canadian Jewish fertility rate, the number of Jewish immigrants is small relative to the comparable number for other religious groups. Thus, in 2021, 8,295 Jewish women immigrated to Canada at ages sixteen and above compared to 254,000 Muslims, 312,000 Christians, 288,000 Catholics, 100,000 Sikhs, 126,000 Hindus, and 326,000 with no religion. Such immigration increases the TFR for Jews, but the absolute level of growth is small in comparison with growth for other religions.

Why is Jewish fertility high in Canada relative to the fertility of other religious groups? Traditionally, scholars have answered this question by assessing two competing explanations. One is that religious differences in fertility are due to different economic and sociodemographic factors. Jews in Canada, for instance, are extremely highly educated and have high labour force participation, especially in professional fields.[32] These factors may influence Jewish fertility rates. The second explanation is that religions differ in their fertility rates due to the influence of the religious leaders

or values on ideal family size, timing of marriage, use of birth control, or coital frequency.[33] This remains an important question for future research to address.

A second question for the Canadian Jewish community is what will happen to Canadian Jewish fertility in the future. We may see an uptick in Canadian Jewish fertility because the community has rallied since October 7, 2023, due to the rise of antisemitism and a communal turn inward. These shifts may lead to an increase in Jews seeking out Jewish partners. Enrolments in Jewish schools and memberships in synagogues have increased. These developments may lead to a decrease in the intermarriage rate. However, these remain to be seen, and this demographer will not be making any forecasts.

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Appendix

Equation 1: $ASFR_{i,year} = \frac{birth_{i,year}}{female\ population_{i,year}} (15 \leq i \leq 49)$

Equation 2: $TFR_{year} = \sum ASFR_{i,year}\ (15 \leq i \leq 49)$

1

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