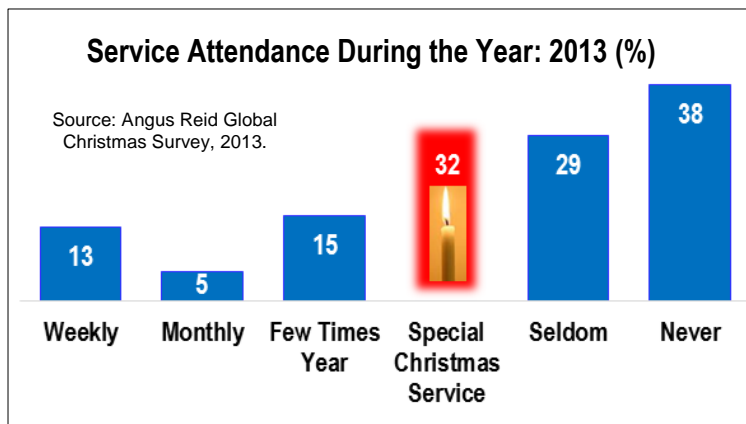


**Christmas 2014**

**A Research Note:  
The Christmas Onlys Revisited**

Last Christmas I offered a Project Canada Survey Release that focused on what I referred to as “the Christmas Onlys.” The data were drawn from a December 2013 Angus Reid Global on-line survey of 1,508 Canadians. In the release I noted that, “At Christmas time, 14% of Canadians who worship fairly regularly will find themselves sharing the pews with another 18% who normally are somewhere else – making for a total of 32%. Not a shabby market share for late December.” I wrote that the magnitude of Christmas service attendance was “both unexpected and remarkable.”

I pointed out that those 1 in 3 Canadians added up to more than 10 million people – a “total in our allegedly secular nation [that] easily exceeds the number of Canadians who earlier this year watched the Super Bowl, Grey Cup, or the final game of the Stanley cup final. And the number is only slightly below the number of people who say that, the day after Christmas, they plan to join the stampede to Boxing Day sales.”



**Well, I am happy to report that we have a new and interesting update on the Christmas Onlys, including a bit more information on them**

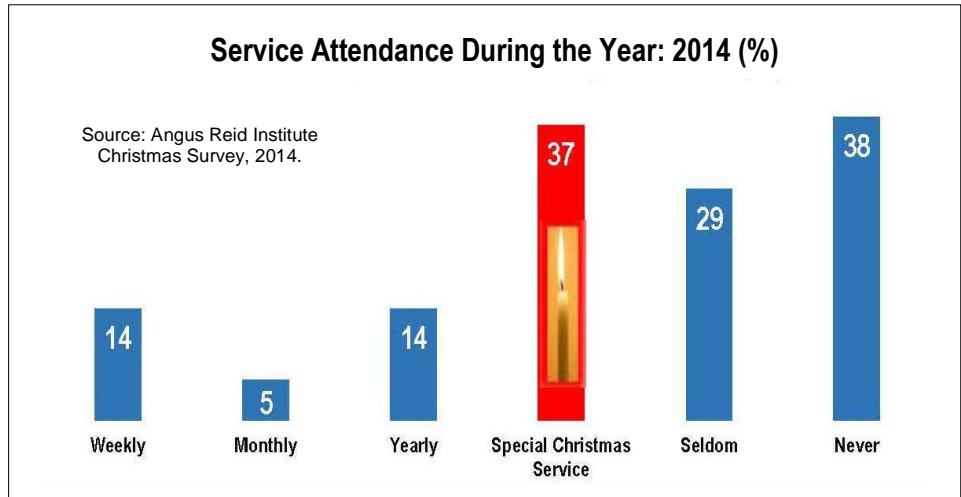
In mid-December, I teamed up with Angus Reid again through his recently founded Angus Reid Institute to carry a new Christmas survey. The survey was intended to complement last year’s survey. **The 2013 project** documented the fact that Canadians and people elsewhere continue to value the idea of “Christmas” immensely, regardless of whether or not they are personally religious committed. The primary reason? The opportunity to spend very special time with loved ones – family and friends.

So in **our 2014 survey**, we decided to delve more deeply into what it is about that special time together that makes Christmas such a valued time of the year.

As noted on these web pages, highlights of the findings and extensive data runs are available on the Angus Reid Institute website ([www.angusreid.org](http://www.angusreid.org)), “Christmas’ Importance.” An interpretive overview will be available shortly – Bibby and Reid, “*Christmas in Canada: Merry and Much More.*”

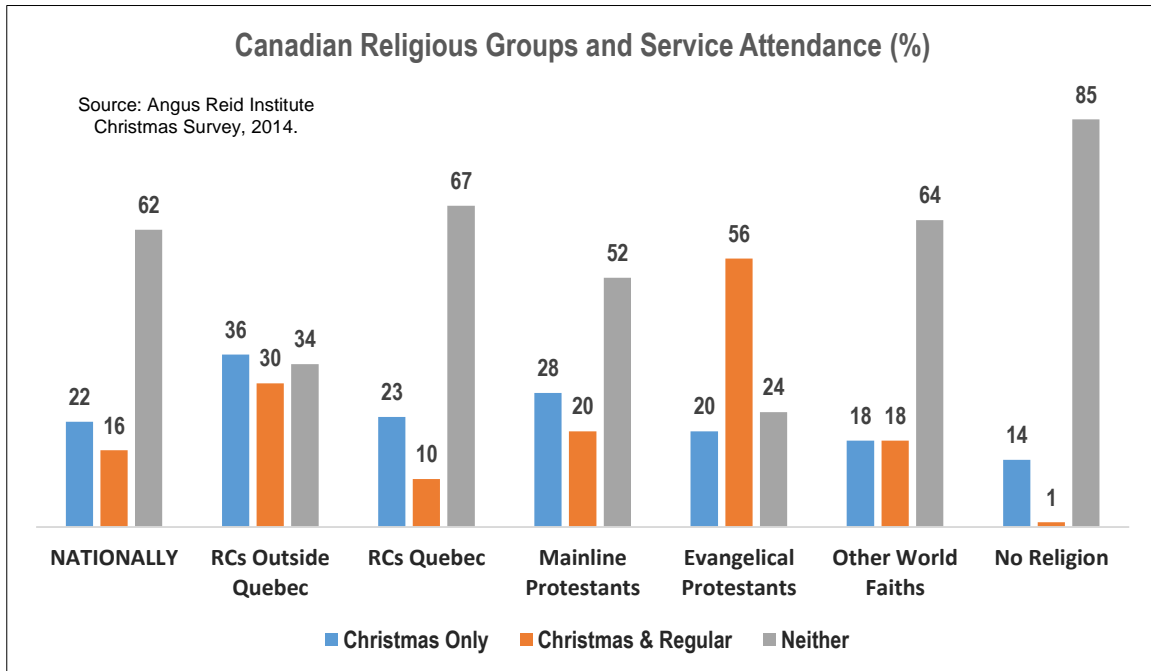
**But here I want to focus briefly on new findings for “the Christmas Only” specifically.**

- For starters, the figures for 2014 – as would be expected – are very similar to a year ago. In 2013, 18% of monthly-plus attenders were going to be joined by another 14% of less frequent attenders, resulting in a Christmas service total of some 32%.
- This year, a similar 18% of regulars will be joined by an even higher – 19% of less frequent attenders, bring the Christmas service total to around 37%.



If anything, the size of the “Christmas Only” pool is growing, not decreasing.


The Christmas jump in attendance continues to be greatest for Roman Catholics and Mainline Protestants.



The demographic patterns remain essentially the same as in 2013.

- Christmas Onlys outnumber regular attenders in British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic region, and make up about the same proportion as regular worshippers in the three Prairie provinces.
- They are just as likely to be male as female.
- They are equally spread among age cohorts: as noted a year ago, many younger Canadians have not abandoned religious groups.

**Characteristics: Christmas Only Attenders**



	<b>Christmas Total</b>	<b>Xmas Only</b>	<b>Xmas &amp; Regular</b>
<b>CANADA</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>16</b>
British Columbia	30	18	12
Alberta	44	21	23
Sask & Manitoba	48	24	24
Ontario	45	26	19
Quebec	24	17	7
Atlantic	47	27	20
Male	37	22	15
Female	39	22	17
18-34	36	21	15
35-54	36	23	13
55+	42	22	20

Source: Angus Reid Institute Christmas Survey, 2014.


The new Christmas survey has found that, in addition to the predictable features of Christmas – family and friends, fun and faith, Canadians acknowledge that it is also a time that is characterized by considerable personal reflection about where life is and where it is going. Put succinctly, *Christmas is a time of national reflection.*

It is worth noting that the “Christmas onlys” are among the many people who are giving considerable thought to the past, the present, and the future. Their attending Christmas services may be part of their reflections and eventual decisions about life now and in the future.

**Extent to Which People Are Reflecting on Certain Issues**

*% Indicating “A Great Deal” or “Quite A Bit”*

	<b>All Canadians</b>	<b>Xmas Only</b>	<b>Xmas &amp; Regular</b>	<b>Non-Attenders</b>
Things that are bringing you joy	73%	83	84	66
Things that bringing you strain	28	33	34	25
Where you life is now	55	62	66	50
Things you might want to do differently	43	51	48	39
The role that faith or lack of faith plays in your life	34	45	84	17



Source: Angus Reid Institute Christmas Survey, 2014.

My conclusion is the same as last year, only stated more emphatically and with a bit more information to back things up. This is hardly a time for leaders to respond by chastising people for packing worship places only once a year.

In sharp contrast to such debilitating morbidity, the presence of the much-maligned “Christmas crowd” should serve as a reminder of the existence of remarkable opportunity and need – and the urgency for life-giving responses on the part of the nation’s religious groups.

