

# Availability of Resources for Religious Practice in Canadian Public Libraries

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## Abstract

Since religious groups make up a significant percentage of the Canadian population and Canadian public libraries strive to provide access to all types of information, this study examines whether or not the amount of material applicable for religious practice in the Toronto and Vancouver public libraries is in proportion to the religious populations of both cities.

## Research Question

- Do the number of religious resources in Canadian public libraries sufficiently meet the needs of religious users?

## Methods

- Subject searches for “Christianity,” “Islam,” and “Sikhism” were performed in the online catalogues of Toronto Public Library and Vancouver Public Library.
- Those results which were labelled with terms that indicated their applicability for religious practice were counted and then compared to the corresponding religious populations of each city using data from Statistics Canada (2013a; 2013b).



Islam



Christianity



Sikhism

*Comparison of Religious Populations in Toronto and Vancouver with Resources Available for Religious Practice in Toronto Public Library and Vancouver Public Library (In Percentage)*

	Toronto	Vancouver
Percentage of Population that is Christian	54.1223	36.2340
Percentage of Public Library Resources for the Religious Practice of Christians	0.0107	0.0019
Percentage of Population that is Muslim	8.2433	2.2440
Percentage of Public Library Resources for the Religious Practice of Muslims	None clearly indicated	0.0003
Percentage of Population that is Sikh	0.79211	2.8490
Percentage of Public Library Resources for the Religious Practice of Sikhs	0.0004	0.0004

*Note.* Data for the religious population of Toronto from Statistics Canada (2013a) and for Vancouver from Statistics Canada (2013b). Data for religious resources in the Toronto Public Library from <http://www.tpl.ca/> and for the Vancouver Public Library from <http://www.vpl.ca/>.

## Findings

- Although the library collection policies of Toronto Public Library and Vancouver Public Library indicate that they embrace intellectual freedom and strive to supply resources which reflect the diversity of Canadians, the scarcity of material they provide for the religious practice of their users suggests that they are not fulfilling their mandates.
- While library materials should not necessarily correspond directly to population, this study has uncovered an issue that requires further investigation.

## Limitations

- It is possible that members of the religious populations examined in this study might disagree about which resources they deem applicable for religious practice.
- The scope of this preliminary study was narrow, therefore not all the potential variables between libraries, populations, and religions were addressed.

## Future Research

- Further research involving other Canadian public libraries is needed to corroborate the apparent dichotomy between their collection policies and the material they provide for the religious practice of their users.

## References

- Statistics Canada. (2013a). *Toronto, CDR, Ontario: 2011 national household survey (NHS) profile*. [data file]. (Catalogue No. 99-004-XWE). Retrieved from <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=3520&Data=Count&SearchText=toronto&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=35&A1=All&B1=All&Custom=&TABID=1>
- Statistics Canada. (2013b). *Vancouver, CY, British Columbia: 2011 national household survey (NHS) profile*. [data file]. (Catalogue No. 99-004-XWE). Retrieved from <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=5915022&Data=Count&SearchText=vancouver&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=59&A1=All&B1=All&Custom=&TABID=1>