

Poll: Canadians prefer private spirituality: Church attendance declining

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Canadians shun houses of worship and formal religious exercise in favor of private spiritual practice such as prayer, meditation or reading religious books, a new federal study suggests.

The Statistics Canada survey, based on data collected in 2002 and 2004, shows that while only one-third of adult Canadians attend religious services at least monthly, more than half engage in religious activities of their own at least once a month.

The study—titled “Who’s Religious?”—seems to confirm what many observers have noted for years: most Canadians prefer private spirituality to formal religious expression.

The report found that the percentage of Canadians who have not attended religious services in the past year rose to 25 percent in 2004, up from 21 percent in 2000. Canadians aged 15 and older were surveyed.

“Most striking,” the report notes, “was the proportion of Canadians who infrequently or never attend services, yet regularly engage in personal religious practices.

“Of those who infrequently attended religious services over the year prior to the survey, 37 percent said they engaged in religious practices on their own on a weekly basis. And of those who had not attended any religious services over the previous year, 27 percent said they engaged in weekly religious practices on their own.” – *Religion News Service*