

**Religious Diversity and Labour Market Attainment: Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, 1911-2011**  
Jason Dean and Maryam Dilmaghani

The examination of the earnings gap between genders and among racial and ethnic groups is a staple of modern labour economics. However, the diversity angle created by difference in religious affiliation has received much less scholarly attention, especially in Canada. The paucity of scholarship hardly allows for drawing definitive conclusions about the relative magnitude of wage differentials among Canadian religious groups and far less about its evolution overtime. The objective of this report is twofold. First, it draws a historical picture, of the labour market differences between Catholics and Protestants residing in the Atlantic provinces of Nova Scotia (NS) and New Brunswick (NB). Second, it informs about the current state of earnings and human capital differences among religious groups, tracking the changes. The descriptive statistics reported in this piece are based on data from the 1911 Census and the 2011 General Social Survey.

Focusing on a national sample drawn from the 1971 Canadian Census, Tomes (1983) examines human capital endowments and their labour market return, by religious affiliation. He reports that Protestants' earnings and their returns to schoolings exceed the national mean by 6% and 9% respectively. By contrast, the comparable figures for Catholics reveal disparities from the national mean of 7% and 5% respectively. Meng and Sentance (1984), conduct a similar investigation, using data from the 1973 Canadian National Mobility Study. They also report that Protestants are found to fare better than Catholics. Tomes (1985), using Census 1981, reports that there is no statistically significant difference between Catholics and Protestant in the mean wage. Dilmaghani (2011), using Ethnic Diversity Survey of 2002, finds that while Protestants earn 2% more than the base category of unaffiliated individuals, Catholics' wage is smaller than the mean wage of the unaffiliated by 4%, controlling for human capital and demographic variables. Although all these studies include location of the individuals as control

variables, none of them have estimated the earnings gaps and human capital returns by province.

There are reasons to believe that the magnitude of disparities in Catholic-Protestant earnings could differ substantially across Canadian regions. Initially established as part of *Nouvelle France*, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are home to religiously and linguistically diverse settlers. Significant changes in the religious composition of the population of these two provinces occurred in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, leading to the statistics reported for 1911. The changes in the region slowed down compared to the rest of the country, due to its smaller share of the newcomers to North America. The latest statistics (2011) show that the religious landscape in NB and NS differ from the national pattern in three regards. First, the rate of religious affiliation is higher in these two provinces compared to national figures. According to 2011 data, in NB and NS, 15.9% report being religiously unaffiliated against the 21.6% prevailing in the rest of the country. Second, the share of Protestants is substantially larger than national average as well as most other provinces. Third, the share of minority religions such as Judaism and Islam is much lower (only 1.8%) compared to the rest of Canada (8.8%). In the lines below, the historical events leading to the religious and economic distribution of 1911 are reviewed. The next section compares labour market attainment of Catholics and Protestants, in 1911 and 2011.

## **II. Historical Background of Religious Diversity in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia**

According to the 1911 Census, about 64% of the residents of NB and NS have been affiliated with different Protestant denominations while 35% were recorded as Roman Catholic (French or Irish descent). At that time, the Catholic-French migration to the provinces has been long halted, and replaced by immigrants from England, Scotland and Ireland. The vast majority of the immigrants to North America from Ireland in the post-famine era were Catholic. However, starting from mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, Protestants increasingly preferred Canada for its flourishing Orange Order that promoted the immigration of Protestants. As reported in Dean and Dilmaghani (2014), in 1901, Irish immigrants were about evenly split between Protestant and Roman Catholics, but, in 1911, just over 60 percent were Protestant.

The relationship between these two major religious groups in the region has been fraught with, at

times violent, hostilities. The most notable incidents are the great riots of 1847 and 1849, grappling Saint John and the neighboring town of Portland in vicious confrontations of Protestant Orangemen and Irish Catholics. Historical accounts suggest that the trigger of the hostilities between the two religious groups has been the increase in the number of Catholic immigrants, considered competing for Protestant jobs, rather than the native Catholics. Economic reasons have played a significant role in the onset of the hostilities. In the 1840s New Brunswick suffered from the worst sustained economic slowdown, recorded in the history of the Dominion. Starting in 1842, England began to shift toward a policy of free-trade in order to reduce its deficits. The new policy meant many merchants in New Brunswick feared the discontinuation of their timber trading privileges with England. According to See (1983), the decade would be marked by high unemployment, rising commodity prices, bankruptcies and legislative indebtedness. In addition to the economic depression, during the decade the region experienced considerable changes in immigrant patterns.

In the 1830s, New Brunswick consisted primarily of the descendants of Loyalists and pre-Revolutionary War New England settlers, affiliated with Protestantism. The only significant non-Protestants were the Acadians, who resided on the northern and eastern shores. At the time, the majority of the Irish newcomers came from the Protestant north. Gradually, however, the more skilled and economically affluent Protestant Irish immigrants were replaced by the less skilled and impoverished Catholics from Ireland's southern and western regions. The number of Irish Catholics immigrating to New Brunswick greatly increased with the famine of 1845-48. With such trends, in the 1850s, more than one-third of the residents of Saint John and Portland were born in Ireland, and Roman Catholics (Irish or Acadian) became as large as any single Protestant denomination in the region.

Historians believe that the religious hostilities between Catholics and Protestants, in Saint John and Portland, are best described by the *nativist-response* paradigm of John Higham positing that nativism is the “intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign connections”. From this perspective, the local response to incoming Irish Catholic immigrants extended to the native Catholics of

the region. Protestants, in order to discourage further Catholic settlements, organized in groups affiliated with the Orange Order. The depths of discontentment can be inferred by an excerpt below, from the *Loyalist and Conservative Advocate*, published on 13 August 1847, and cited by See (1983):

*“The necessity for Protestant organization in this Province, arose not more from the many murderous attacks committed upon quiet and unoffending Protestants, by Catholic ruffians, than from the dreary prospect which the future presented. The facts were these: several thousands of immigrants were annually landing upon our shores; they were nearly all Catholics, nearly all ignorant and bigotted, nearly all paupers, many of them depraved. What have we to expect but murder, rapine, and anarchy? Let us ask, then, should not Protestants unite? Should they not organize?”*

Against this 19<sup>th</sup> century background, a socioeconomic divide emerged and continued between the two religious groups, whose traces can be found in data from Census 1911. From the history reviewed in the above, one can expect that Catholic immigrants from Ireland faced a period of sustained economic hardship, that extended to the native Catholics of the region. In the lines below, descriptive statistics about labour market and human capital attainment of the two groups are reviewed, a hundred years apart. Strikingly, while the 1911 data shows a non-negligible wage-gap in favor of the Protestants, data from 2011 suggests that the pattern is reversed.

### **III. Review of Statistics**

Table 1 reports descriptive statistics of main demographic indicators. In both 1911 and 2011, Protestants tend to be slightly older, compared to Catholics. The 2011 data shows that the unaffiliated group is significantly younger than the sample average. In 1911, about 28% of the Catholics have been francophones while the share is slightly higher in 2011 (33%). In both years, a very small portion of Protestants identified as francophone. The share of the Catholics who lived with their employer is 16% higher than the sample average, while Protestants have been 8% less likely to live with the employer. Table 2 reports human capital variables of religious groups for the years 1911 and 2011. As the Left Panel shows, the likelihood of being able to read or write has been measurably lower for Catholics to Protestants. The Right Panel shows that in 2011, Catholics have higher educational attainment, measured by years of schooling and the percentage of them who holds a university degree, when they are compared to the unaffiliated. The Catholics’ educational attainment is only slightly lower than the Protestants, 2011.

It is of note that for all religious groups except the heterogeneous cluster labeled “Other” the educational attainment is in favor of females.

Table 3 reports mean wages for 1911 (monthly) and 2011 (hourly) in Canadian dollar. The Left Panel of Table 3 shows that Protestants of the region (male and female combined) earned 4.8% lower than the Canadian average while the Catholics wage is found to be 16% lower than the recorded mean national monthly wage. When Catholics and Protestants are directly compared, one finds that Catholics earn 12% less than Protestants. In 2011, however, Catholics of the region (male and female combined) are the highest earning religious group. Moreover, Catholic males of the region have an hourly wage that is slightly higher than the mean hourly wage at the national level. In 2011, the highest mean gender wage-gap in the region belongs to the group “Other” narrowly followed by Catholics. The respondents affiliated with United Church score the lowest mean gender wage-gap in the region, according to the 2011 data. Overall, these statistics suggest that the earnings differential in favor of Protestants that could be inferred from the historical accounts of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and was found in the 1911 data, has completely faded in 2011. There is even evidence for the reversal of ranking. In 2011, Catholic males in NB and NS out-earn Protestants males by a non-negligible margin.

### References

- Dean, J., M. & Dilmaghani (2014). “Economic Integration of Pre-WWI Immigrants from the British Isles in the Canadian Labour Market”, *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, DOI: 10.1007/s12134-014-0399-4
- Dilmaghani, M. (2011). “Religiosity, human capital return and earnings in Canada”. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 39(1/2): 55-80.
- Higham, J. (2002). *Strangers in the land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*. Rutgers University Press.
- Meng, R., & J. Sentance (1984). “Religion and the determination of earnings: further results”. *Canadian Journal of Economics*, 17(3): 481-488.
- See, S. W. (1983). “The Orange Order and Social Violence in Mid-Nineteenth Century Saint John”. *Acadiensis*, 13(1): 68-92.
- Tomes, N. (1983). “Religion and the rate of return on human capital: evidence from Canada”. *Canadian Journal of Economics*, 16(1): 122-138.
- Tomes, N. (1985). “Religion and the earnings function”. *American Economic Review*, 75(2): 245-250.

**Table 1. Demographic Statistics in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick**

	2011 GSS <sup>1</sup>				1911 Census <sup>2</sup>			
	Age	Speaks French at home (%)	Married (%)	Children	Age	Speaks French at home (%)	Married (%)	Live with Employer (%)
<b>Irreligious</b>	37.7	7.6	45	1.2	43.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Catholic</b>	42.6	33	56	1.4	30.9	28.3	38.5	5.8
<b>United Church</b>	44.6	0.7	56.9	1.6	-	-	-	-
<b>Other Protestant</b>	43.3	3	64.9	1.6	32.6	0.1	45.8	4.6
<b>Other<sup>3</sup></b>	42.1	3.3	61.1	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>National Sample</b>	41.5	22.2	53.6	1.4	32.0	10.3	43.2	5.0

Notes

1. The reported statistics for year 2011 are extracted from General Social Survey, Wave 2011, conducted by Statistics Canada. The sample is limited to labour market participants.

2. The reported statistics for 1911 are based on a 5 percent digitized sample compiled by the Canadian Century Research Infrastructure (CCRI). The cells denoted by “Other Protestant” include all Protestant denominations, for year 1911. The sample is limited to labour market participants.

3. The group “Other” includes all remaining religions such as Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Christian Orthodox.

**Table 2. Educational Attainment in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick**

	2011 GSS <sup>1</sup>			1911 Census <sup>2</sup>	
	Years	Bachelor <sup>5</sup> (%)	Graduate <sup>5</sup> (%)	Can Read (%)	Can Write (%)
<b>Irreligious</b>	<b>13.33</b>	<b>19.5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Female	13.68	20.4	7.2	0.0	0.0
Male	13.13	19	8.5	100.0	100.0
<b>Catholic</b>	<b>13.52</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>87.7</b>	<b>87.0</b>
Female	13.87	21.5	6.1	95.1	94.4
Male	13.18	18.1	4.7	85.8	85.2
<b>United Church</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>27.9</b>	<b>5.4</b>	-	-
Female	14.51	36.1	3.7	-	-
Male	13.42	18.5	7.4	-	-
<b>Other Protestant<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>13.7</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>96.9</b>	<b>96.6</b>
Female	13.81	20.8	4.2	98.4	98.3
Male	13.6	15.7	7.5	96.5	96.2
<b>Other<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>14.74</b>	<b>37.9</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>91.7</b>	<b>91.7</b>
Female	13.76	29.7	0	100.0	100.0
Male	15.36	43.1	13.6	87.5	87.5
<b>National Sample</b>	<b>13.86</b>	<b>20.7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>93.6</b>	<b>93.1</b>
Female	14.02	23.4	7.3	97.2	96.9
Male	13.72	18.6	8.5	92.7	92.2

## Notes:

1. The reported statistics for year 2011 are extracted from General Social Survey, Wave 2011, conducted by Statistics Canada. The sample is limited to labour market participants.

2. The reported statistics for 1911 are based on a 5 percent digitized sample compiled by the Canadian Century Research Infrastructure (CCRI). The sample is limited to labour market participants.

3. The cells denoted by "Other Protestant" include all Protestant denominations, for year 1911.

4. The group "Other" includes all remaining religions such as Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Christian Orthodox.

5. The columns Bachelor and Graduate report the percentage of respondents whose highest credential is a bachelor or graduate degree respectively.

**Table 3. Labour Earnings in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick**

	2011 GSS <sup>1</sup>			1911 Census <sup>2</sup>		
	Mean <i>Hourly</i> Wage in Canadian Dollars			Mean <i>Monthly</i> Wage in Canadian Dollars		
	All	Male	Female	All	Male	Female
Irreligious	22.97	24.68	20.04	42.5	42.5	-
Catholic	25.05	28.14	21.95	37.0	45.6	22.8
United Church	22.08	22.11	22.06	-	-	-
Other Protestant	24.01	26.18	21.32	42.0	50.9	25.2
Other <sup>3</sup>	21.89	25.60	17.57	36.0	52.7	14.7
National Sample	26.11	27.86	23.94	44.1	49.0	24.3

**Notes**

1. The reported statistics for year 2011 are extracted from General Social Survey, Wave 2011, conducted by Statistics Canada. The sample is limited to labour market participants.
2. The reported statistics for 1911 are based on a 5 percent digitized sample compiled by the Canadian Century Research Infrastructure (CCRI). The cells denoted by "Other Protestant" include all Protestant denominations, for year 1911. The sample is limited to labour market participants.
3. The group "Other" includes all remaining religions such as Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Christian Orthodox.