

Census in Brief

Recent trends for the population aged 15 to 64 in Canada

Census of Population, 2016

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The following symbols are used in Statistics Canada publications:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| . | not available for any reference period |
| .. | not available for a specific reference period |
| ... | not applicable |
| 0 | true zero or a value rounded to zero |
| 0 ^s | value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded |
| ^p | preliminary |
| ^r | revised |
| x | suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the <i>Statistics Act</i> |
| ^E | use with caution |
| F | too unreliable to be published |
| * | significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$) |

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Highlights

- The number of Canadians aged 15 to 64 increased by almost half a million (+452,240) between 2011 and 2016 which represents the smallest increase in relative terms (+0.4%) posted since 1851.
- In 2016, the proportion of the population aged 15 to 64 in Canada was 66.5%, down from 68.5% in 2011.
- Among the G7 countries, Canada has the highest proportion of people aged 15 to 64, just ahead of the United States (66.3%). Japan has the lowest proportion (62.1%).
- Within the population aged 15 to 64, the proportion of people between 55 and 64 years (all baby boomers) reached a record high of 21.0% in 2016, or just over one in five people.
- The population aged 15 to 64 is proportionally higher in the Northwest Territories (71.0%), Yukon (70.6%) and Alberta (68.5%), and lower in the Atlantic provinces.

Introduction

The majority of people aged 15 to 64 are active in the labour market, and thereby contribute to Canada's economy and the well-being of its population. Changes in the size of the population aged 15 to 64, its demographic weight in the national population and its composition by age and sex are of particular interest to private companies and different levels of government, whose workforce comes from this age group. The labour force is one of the key factors, along with productivity, in Canada's gross domestic product and economic growth.

Recent trends for the population aged 15 to 64 in Canada

Lowest growth of the population aged 15 to 64 since 1851

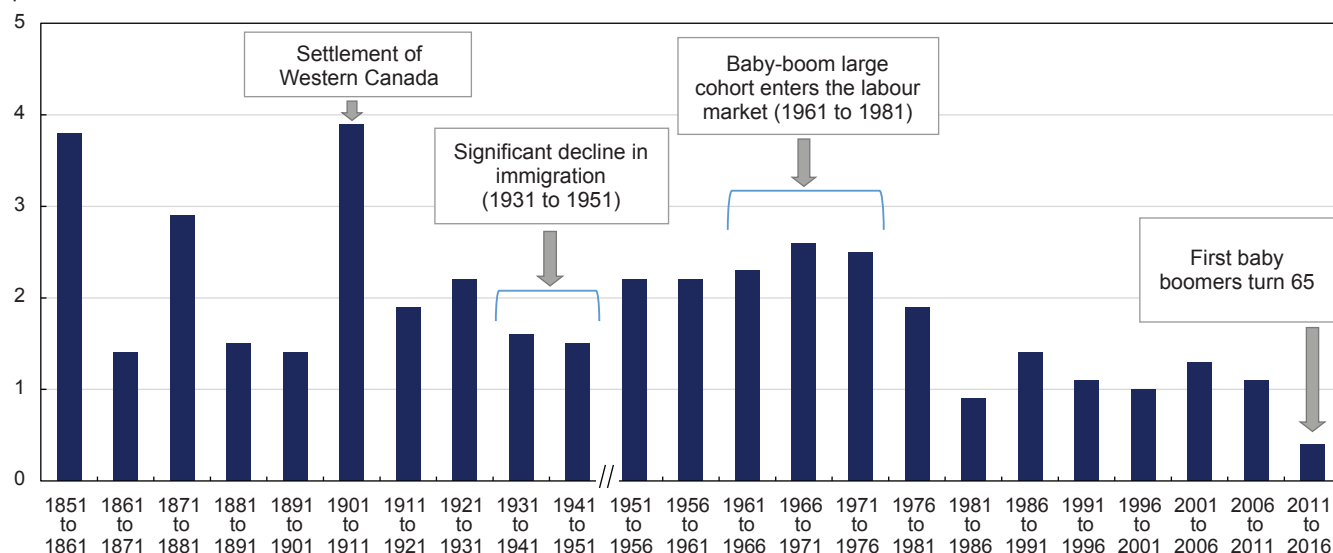
The annual growth rate of the population aged 15 to 64 sharply decreased between 2011 and 2016 (+0.4%), compared with the previous intercensal period (+1.1%) [Chart 1]. This is the lowest rate recorded between two censuses since 1851. This situation is related to the fact that the first wave of baby boomers reached age 65 in 2011.

This annual growth rate was also lower than the rate observed over the five years period for people aged 65 and older (+4.0%) and children aged under 15 (+0.8%).

Chart 1

Annualized intercensal growth (percentage) of the population aged 15 to 64, Canada, 1851 to 2016

percent



Note: // denotes a break in the historical series, with the period between censuses changing from 10 years to 5 years.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1851 to 2016.

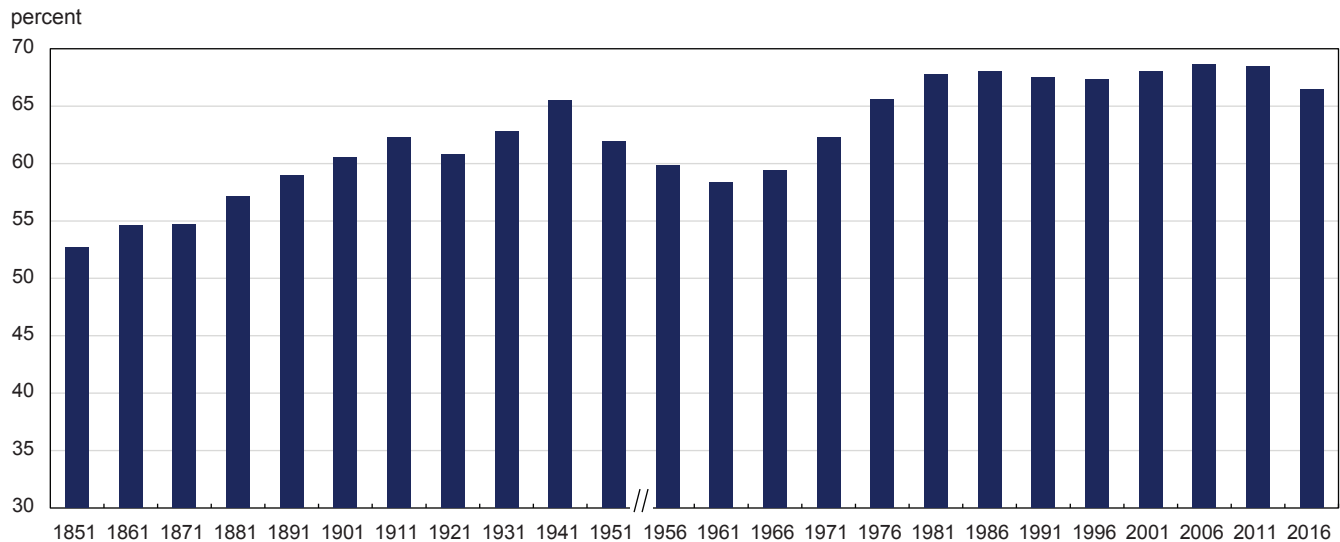
Decline in the share of people aged 15 to 64 within the Canadian population

The overall proportion of people aged 15 to 64 within the total population fell from 68.5% in 2011 to 66.5% in 2016 (Chart 2). It was also the lowest proportion recorded since 1976 (65.6%). However, it was well above proportion in 1961 (58.4%), a few years before the end of the baby boom (1946 to 1965), when the number of children aged 0 to 14 was particularly high in Canada.

Over the next few years, the other large cohorts of baby boomers born in the 1950s and 1960s will be turning 65, and as a result, the proportion of the population aged 15 to 64 is expected to continue to decline. This proportion could be around 60.0% by 2031,¹ when the wave of youngest baby boomers will turn 65.

Chart 2

Proportion (percentage) of the population aged 15 to 64 within the total population, Canada, 1851 to 2016



Note: // denotes a break in the historical series, with the period between censuses changing from 10 years to 5 years.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1851 to 2016.

1. Statistics Canada, *Population Projections for Canada (2013 to 2063), Provinces and Territories (2013 to 2038)* (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-520-x/91-520-x2014001-eng.htm>). Catalogue no. 91-520. Medium-growth scenario (M1). Other scenarios available, but lead to slightly different results.

Highest proportion of the population aged 15 to 64 among the G7 countries

Despite the downward trend seen in recent years, the proportion of people aged 15 to 64 within the Canadian population in 2016 (66.5%) was still the highest among the G7 countries, just ahead of the United States (Chart 3).

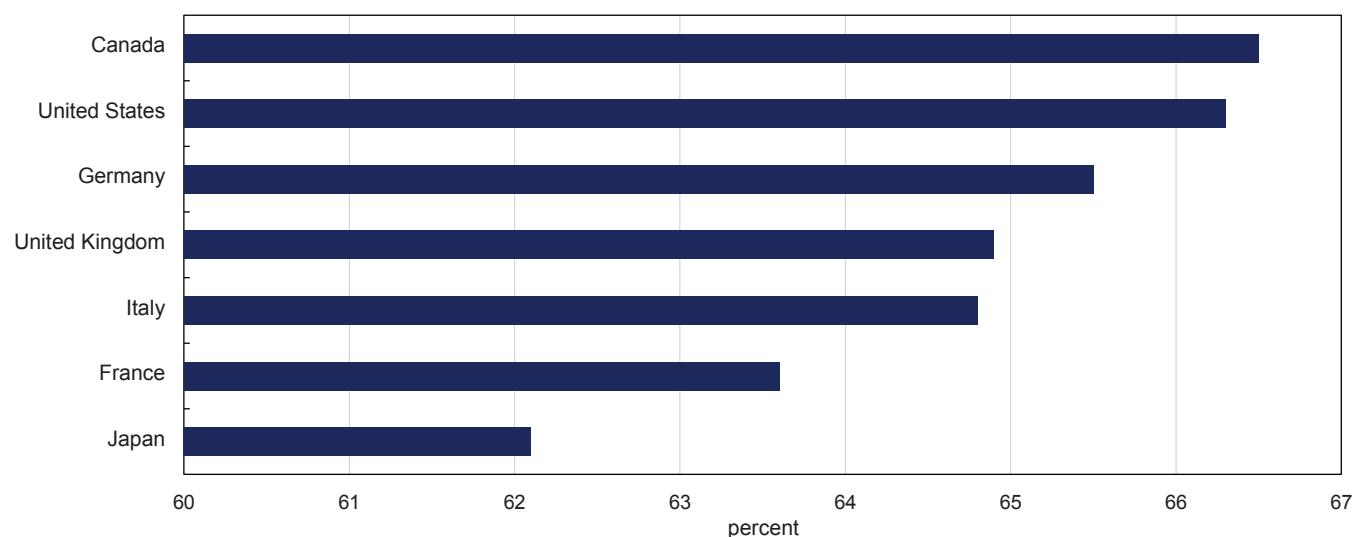
Two factors explain this situation. First, several generations of baby boomers born in the mid-to-late 1950s and early 1960s fall within this age group. Second, high immigration levels in recent years have boosted the numbers of the population aged 15 to 64.

As a result, Canada could continue to enjoy a “demographic dividend” for a few more years, compared with other industrialized countries. Such a dividend occurs in a country when the people likely to be active on the labour market still account for a large share of the population, which can promote economic growth because the demographic weight of children as well as seniors no longer in the labour market is lower than in other countries.

Among the G7 countries, Japan has the lowest proportion of people aged 15 to 64 with 62.1%, but a record high proportion of people 65 years and older. Japan has also seen its population decline over the past few years, as a result of low fertility and low immigration levels.

Chart 3

Proportion of the population aged 15 to 64 within the total population of the G7 countries, 2016¹



1. The most recent year in this chart is 2014 for Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States, and 2013 for Japan and France.
Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016; for the other G7 countries: OECD, 2014, “Working age population” (indicator) (accessed on November 8, 2016); DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/d339918b-en>.

Record proportion of people between 55 and 64 years—all baby boomers—within the population aged 15 to 64

The proportion of Canadians between 55 and 64 years of age within the population aged 15 to 64 reached a record high of 21.0% in 2016, or just over one in five people. Individuals between the ages of 55 and 64 who are in the labour market are often close to retirement.

This record proportion observed in 2016 is linked to the fact that the largest baby-boom generations, born in the late 1950s and early 1960s, are currently within the population aged 55 to 64.

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By comparison, just after the baby boom in 1966, the share of 55- to 64-year-olds within the population aged 15 to 64 was only 12.5% in Canada, or one in eight people.

This proportion is expected to remain above 20% until about 2026,¹ then decline as the last baby boomers leave this age bracket. The baby boomers would be replaced by the smaller generation, often referred to as Generation X, born in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a period marked by a sharp drop in fertility rates in Canada.

People about to leave the labour market outnumber those about to join it

In 1966, for each person close to retirement (between 55 and 64 years of age), there were more than two people about to join the labour market (between 15 and 24 years). In 2016, for the second consecutive census, there were fewer people aged 15 to 24 (4.3 million) than people aged 55 to 64 (4.9 million).

This situation could lead to a number of challenges, particularly the renewal of the labour force, knowledge transfer, job retention, continuing education and labour productivity.

The highest proportions of people 15 to 64 years are in the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Alberta

The proportion of the population between 15 and 64 years of age varies across the country. In 2016, the highest proportions were in the Northwest Territories (71.0%), Yukon (70.6%) and Alberta (68.5%) [Table 1]. The economic activity in these three regions attracts many migrants, both from around the world and elsewhere in Canada, which boosts the population aged 15 to 64.

Table 1

Proportion of the population aged 15 to 64 within the total population, and proportion of the population aged 55 to 64 within the population aged 15 to 64, Canada, provinces and territories, 2016

Region	Proportion of the population aged 15 to 64 within the total population	Proportion of the population aged 55 to 64 within the population aged 15 to 64
	percent	
Canada	66.5	21.0
Newfoundland and Labrador	66.2	24.7
Prince Edward Island	64.7	23.8
Nova Scotia	65.6	24.2
New Brunswick	65.3	24.6
Quebec	65.4	22.5
Ontario	66.8	20.4
Manitoba	65.4	19.7
Saskatchewan	64.8	20.2
Alberta	68.5	18.0
British Columbia	66.9	21.8
Yukon	70.6	21.8
Northwest Territories	71.0	16.6
Nunavut	63.7	10.4

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

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By contrast, the lowest proportions of people aged 15 to 64 were in Nunavut (63.7%), Prince Edward Island (64.7%) and Saskatchewan (64.8%). The reasons for these proportions vary.

In Nunavut, this situation is caused by the fact that the population 0 to 14 years represents one-third (32.5%) of the population, due to a much higher fertility than elsewhere in the country as well as low immigration.

In Prince Edward Island, a relatively high proportion of children (15.9%) for a province with one of the highest proportions of seniors (19.4%) explains this situation. Fertility in Prince Edward Island is the highest in the Atlantic provinces.

Finally, in Saskatchewan, a relatively high proportion of seniors (15.5%) and the highest proportion of children (19.6%) of all the provinces have led to this situation. For the past 20 years, Saskatchewan has had the highest fertility of all the Canadian provinces, i.e., more than 1.9 children per woman on average.

High concentration of people aged 15 to 64 in census metropolitan areas

In many provinces, a distinction could be made between census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and non-census metropolitan areas.

In 2016, the proportion of people aged 15 to 64 was higher in CMAs (67.8%) than in non-CMAs (63.4%). This is because CMAs, with their educational institutions and stronger economic activity, tend to attract immigrants or migrants, who are generally in their twenties or thirties.

More than 70% of the people in the Calgary CMA are aged 15 to 64

Although CMAs together have a higher proportion of people aged 15 to 64 than other regions, there are still major differences from one CMA to the next.

The Calgary CMA ranked first, with more than 7 out of 10 people (70.2%) aged 15 to 64, which can be explained in part by the economic vitality of the CMA and the province of Alberta (Chart 4).

Five of the six CMAs with over one million residents were also among the 10 CMAs with the highest proportion of people aged 15 to 64: Calgary (70.2%), Vancouver (69.6%), Edmonton (69.3%), Toronto (68.9%) and Ottawa–Gatineau (67.8%). Only the Montréal CMA was lower in this ranking (16th).

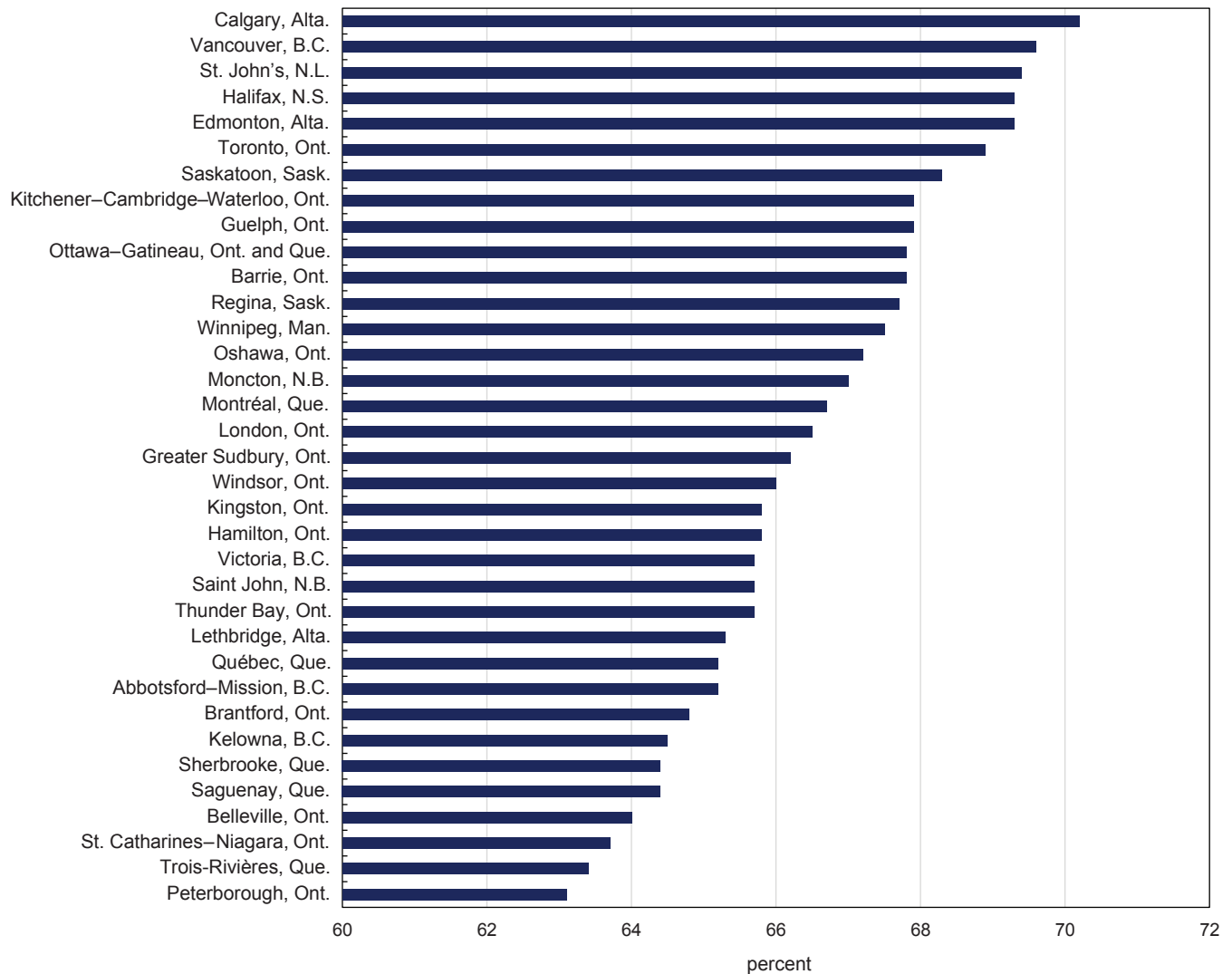
The Halifax, St. John's and Saskatoon CMAs also stood out for their high proportion of people between 15 and 64 years of age. These CMAs, which are major training and economic centres thanks to their geographic location, attract not only immigrants, but also a high number of migrants from other areas of their respective provinces.

By contrast, the Peterborough (63.1%), Trois-Rivières (63.4%) and St. Catharines–Niagara (63.7%) CMAs had the lowest proportions of people aged 15 to 64. They also all had higher proportions of seniors.

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Chart 4

Proportion of the population aged 15 to 64 within the total population of census metropolitan areas (CMAs), Canada, 2016



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

High proportions of people aged 15 to 64 in certain municipalities linked to tourism or the energy sector

Among municipalities ([census subdivisions](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/geo012-eng.cfm)) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/geo012-eng.cfm>) with a population of 5,000 or more, the proportion of people aged 15 to 64 often fluctuates considerably, mainly due to geographic location and economic situation.

Table 2 presents the 10 municipalities that had the highest and lowest proportions of people aged 15 to 64 in 2016. More than four out of five residents in the municipalities of Banff (80.8%) and Whistler (80.4%), and more than three out of four in Wood Buffalo (77.4%) were between the ages of 15 and 64. These municipalities are known for attracting workers in the leisure, hotel, and oil production industries.

By contrast, the lowest proportions of people aged 15 to 64 were observed in the municipalities of Qualicum Beach (41.7%), Osoyoos (48.2%) and Parksville (48.4%). All three also had high proportions of people aged 65 and older (52.1%, 42.9% and 42.4%, respectively).

Table 2
Highest and lowest proportions of the population aged 15 to 64 within the total population in municipalities (CSDs) with a population of 5,000 or more, Canada, 2016

Highest proportions	
Municipality	Percent
Banff, Alta.	80.8
Whistler, B.C.	80.4
Wood Buffalo, Alta.	77.4
Greater Vancouver A, B.C.	75.6
Yellowknife, N.W.T.	74.3
Vancouver, B.C.	73.4
Labrador City, N.L.	73.3
New Westminster, B.C.	72.3
Canmore, Alta.	72.2
Iqaluit, Nvt.	72.1
Lowest proportions	
Municipality	Percent
Cowichan Valley C, B.C.	54.3
Asbestos, Que.	54.3
Nanaimo G, B.C.	53.7
Côte-Saint-Luc, Que.	53.3
Creston, B.C.	52.2
Elliot Lake, Ont.	51.8
Sidney, B.C.	49.0
Parksville, B.C.	48.4
Osoyoos, B.C.	48.2
Qualicum Beach, B.C.	41.7

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

Data sources, methods and definitions

Data sources

The data in this analysis are from the 2016 Census of Population. Further information on the census can be found in the [Guide to the Census of Population, 2016](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/98-304/index-eng.cfm) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/98-304/index-eng.cfm>), Catalogue no. 98-304-X.

Methods

Random rounding and percentage distributions: To ensure the confidentiality of responses collected for the 2016 Census, a random rounding process is used to alter the values reported in individual cells. As a result, when these data are summed or grouped, the total value may not match the sum of the individual values, since the total and subtotals are independently rounded. Similarly, percentage distributions, which are calculated on rounded data, may not necessarily add up to 100%.

Because of random rounding, counts and percentages may vary slightly between different census products, such as the analytical documents, highlight tables and data tables.

Definitions

Please refer to the [Dictionary, Census of Population, 2016](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/index-eng.cfm) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/index-eng.cfm>), Catalogue no. 98-301-X, for additional information on the census variables.

Additional information

Additional analysis on age and sex can be found in [The Daily](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/170503/dq170503a-eng.htm) (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/170503/dq170503a-eng.htm>) of May 3, 2017, and in the Census in Brief article entitled [A portrait of the population aged 85 and older in 2016 in Canada](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016004/98-200-x2016004-eng.cfm) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016004/98-200-x2016004-eng.cfm>), Catalogue no. 98-200-X2016004.

Additional information allowing for a more detailed examination of Canada can be found in the [Highlight tables](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/hltfst/td-tl/index-eng.cfm) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/hltfst/td-tl/index-eng.cfm>), Catalogue no. 98-402-X2016002; the [Data tables](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/dt-td/Lp-eng.cfm?LANG=E&APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GID=0&GK=0&GRP=1&PID=0&PRID=10&PTYPE=109445&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=2016&THEME=115&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF=) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/dt-td/Lp-eng.cfm?LANG=E&APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GID=0&GK=0&GRP=1&PID=0&PRID=10&PTYPE=109445&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=2016&THEME=115&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF=>), Catalogue nos. 98-400-X2016001 to 98-400-X2016008; the [Census Profile](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>), Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001; and the [Focus on Geography Series](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Index-eng.cfm) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Index-eng.cfm>), Catalogue no. 98-404-X2016001.

A [historical age pyramid](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/pyramid/pyramid.cfm?type=1&geo1=01) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/pyramid/pyramid.cfm?type=1&geo1=01>) shows the evolution of the age structure of the Canadian population from 1851 to 2036. A [comparison age pyramid](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/pyramid/pyramid.cfm?type=2&geo1=01&geo2=01) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/pyramid/pyramid.cfm?type=2&geo1=01&geo2=01>) allows users to compare the age structure of two different geographical entities for Canada, the provinces and the territories, for either the 2016 Census or the 2011 Census.

[Thematic maps](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/geo/map-carte/ref/thematic-thematiques/as/thematic-thematiques-eng.cfm) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/geo/map-carte/ref/thematic-thematiques/as/thematic-thematiques-eng.cfm>) for this topic are also available for various levels of geography.

A video providing a historical perspective of aging in Canada is available from the [Video centre](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/video/index-eng.cfm) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/video/index-eng.cfm>).

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An infographic entitled *Population Trends by Age and Sex, 2016 Census of Population* (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2017016-eng.htm>) also illustrates some key findings on age and sex trends.

For details on the concepts, definitions and variables used in the 2016 Census of Population, please consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2016* (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/index-eng.cfm>), Catalogue no. 98-301-X.

In addition to response rates and other data quality information, the *Guide to the Census of Population, 2016* (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/98-304/index-eng.cfm>), Catalogue no. 98-304-X, provides an overview of the various phases of the census, including content determination, sampling design, collection, data processing, data quality assessment, confidentiality guidelines and dissemination.

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