

Census in Brief

Municipalities in Canada with the largest and fastest-growing populations between 2011 and 2016

Census of Population, 2016

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- | | |
|----------------|--|
| . | 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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Municipalities in Canada with the largest and fastest-growing populations between 2011 and 2016

Highlights

Municipalities with at least 5,000 inhabitants

- In 2016, close to two in five Canadians (37%) lived in the 15 largest municipalities of the country, each representing at least 1% of the total Canadian population.
- In 2016, three municipalities were the home of more than 1 million people: Toronto (2.7 million), Montréal (1.7 million), and Calgary (1.2 million).
- Among municipalities located within census metropolitan areas (CMA), Warman (Saskatoon CMA), Cochrane (Calgary CMA), and Airdrie (Calgary CMA) showed growth rates of more than eight times higher than the national average, between 2011 and 2016.
- Many municipalities located on the north edge of the Montréal CMA also showed high rates of growth between 2011 and 2016, a sign of urban spread.
- Thirteen of the top-25 fastest-growing municipalities outside CMAs were located in census agglomerations, showing that urbanization is continuing in Canada.

Introduction

Municipalities in Canada (also called [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>)) are responsible for many of the direct services that are provided in the daily lives of Canadians: roads, public transportation and parking, water distribution, garbage and recycling collection, public safety and emergency preparedness, land development, including housing, parks and waterfronts, as well as sport and cultural facilities.

One of the important goals of the Census of Population is to provide municipal policy makers and administrators with reliable data at the local level to help them plan and decide on infrastructure and services needed for their municipality. Among the key factors to consider when planning services are the population size and growth rate of a community. This document highlights which of the municipalities in Canada in 2016 were the largest, as well as the municipalities that were the fastest-growing, between the 2011 and 2016 censuses.

Another report in the Census in Brief series entitled [Municipalities with population decreases between 2011 and 2016](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016002/98-200-x2016002-eng.cfm) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016002/98-200-x2016002-eng.cfm>) highlights those municipalities that experienced a population decrease over the last intercensal period. For trends at the national, provincial and territorial, and regional (census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations) levels, readers are encouraged to consult *The Daily* article entitled [Population size and growth in Canada: Key results from the 2016 Census](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/170208/dq170208a-eng.htm) (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/170208/dq170208a-eng.htm>).

Close to two in five Canadians live in the 15 largest municipalities

According to the 2016 Census geographic boundaries, there were 5,162 municipalities in Canada.

Of these, 24 had a population of at least 200,000 residents (Table 1). The 15 largest municipalities each had a population that represented more than 1% of the total Canadian population. Together, these 15 municipalities were the home of almost two in five Canadians (13.0 million people, or 37% of the total Canadian population).

In 2016, three municipalities were the home of more than 1 million inhabitants: Toronto, Montréal, and Calgary. The municipality of Toronto alone had a population of 2.7 million people in 2016, representing almost 8% of the Canadian population overall.

Municipalities in Canada with the largest and fastest-growing populations between 2011 and 2016

The majority of these very large municipalities are central municipalities of a [census metropolitan area](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/geo009-eng.cfm) (CMA) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/geo009-eng.cfm>). A central municipality is defined as the municipality that lends its name to the corresponding CMA or [census agglomeration](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/geo009-eng.cfm) (CA) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/geo009-eng.cfm>). All other municipalities within a CMA or a CA, except the central municipality, are called peripheral municipalities. For example, the second-largest municipality in Canada, Montréal, is the central municipality of the Montréal CMA. Other municipalities located within the Montréal CMA, such as Laval, are peripheral municipalities. Distinguishing central and peripheral municipalities is useful to assess some phenomena such as the urban spread.

A few of the largest municipalities in Canada are peripheral municipalities included in a CMA. An example is Mississauga, the sixth largest municipality in Canada and part of the Toronto CMA. Other large peripheral municipalities of at least 200,000 inhabitants in 2016 were Surrey and Burnaby (part of the Vancouver CMA), and Laval and Longueuil (part of the Montréal CMA), as well as Brampton, Markham, and Vaughan (part of the Toronto CMA).

Table 1
Population, municipalities (census subdivisions) in Canada with at least 200,000 inhabitants, 2016

Rank	Municipality name	Province	CMA in which the municipality is located	Population	
				number	percentage of the Canadian population
1	Toronto	Ontario	Toronto	2,731,571	7.8
2	Montréal	Quebec	Montréal	1,704,694	4.8
3	Calgary	Alberta	Calgary	1,239,220	3.5
4	Ottawa	Ontario	Ottawa–Gatineau	934,243	2.7
5	Edmonton	Alberta	Edmonton	932,546	2.7
6	Mississauga	Ontario	Toronto	721,599	2.1
7	Winnipeg	Manitoba	Winnipeg	705,244	2.0
8	Vancouver	British Columbia	Vancouver	631,486	1.8
9	Brampton	Ontario	Toronto	593,638	1.7
10	Hamilton	Ontario	Hamilton	536,917	1.5
11	Québec	Quebec	Québec	531,902	1.5
12	Surrey	British Columbia	Vancouver	517,887	1.5
13	Laval	Quebec	Montréal	422,993	1.2
14	Halifax	Nova Scotia	Halifax	403,131	1.1
15	London	Ontario	London	383,822	1.1
16	Markham	Ontario	Toronto	328,966	0.9
17	Vaughan	Ontario	Toronto	306,233	0.9
18	Gatineau	Quebec	Ottawa–Gatineau	276,245	0.8
19	Saskatoon	Saskatchewan	Saskatoon	246,376	0.7
20	Longueuil	Quebec	Montréal	239,700	0.7
21	Kitchener	Ontario	Kitchener– Cambridge–Waterloo	233,222	0.7
22	Burnaby	British Columbia	Vancouver	232,755	0.7
23	Windsor	Ontario	Windsor	217,188	0.6
24	Regina	Saskatchewan	Regina	215,106	0.6

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

Municipalities in Canada with the largest and fastest-growing populations between 2011 and 2016

The urban spread continues: peripheral municipalities of census metropolitan areas show higher population growth¹

Population growth between 2011 and 2016 was higher among peripheral municipalities (+6.9%) of CMAs, compared with central municipalities (+5.8%) (Table 2). This confirms the popular belief as well as previous findings that the urban spread phenomenon is occurring and/or is continuing in many of the CMAs in the country. For many decades, peripheral municipalities have been growing at a higher rate than central municipalities, in Canada and elsewhere.

Table 2
Population and growth, central and peripheral municipalities (census subdivisions) included in census metropolitan areas, 2011 and 2016

Region	Municipalities	Population		Growth from 2011 to 2016
		2011	2016	
		number		percent
Central municipalities	39	13,732,600	14,522,240	5.8
Peripheral municipalities ¹	450	9,750,275	10,420,233	6.9
Total ¹	489	23,482,875	24,942,473	6.2

1. Incompletely enumerated Indian reserves and Indian settlements in 2011 and 2016 were excluded from this table.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2011 and 2016.

Thirty-one municipalities of at least 5,000 inhabitants located within CMAs showed a rate of population growth that is at least three times the national average of 5.0%. All of these were peripheral municipalities (Table 3). Only municipalities with at least 5,000 inhabitants were included in this analysis to avoid interpreting rates of population growth that are based on small populations.

The fastest-growing municipality was Warman (+55.1%), a peripheral municipality located to the north within the Saskatoon CMA. The next three fastest-growing municipalities within CMAs were located in the Calgary CMA: Cochrane (+47.1%), Airdrie (+42.3%), and Chestermere (+34.2%).

Of the 31 fastest-growing municipalities in Canada, 13 were in Quebec and indicate signs of urban spread. Eight were located in the CMA of Montréal, with seven close to the edge of the CMA: Saint-Colomban (+22.5%), Mirabel (+20.4%), Saint-Lin–Laurentides (+19.0%), Carignan (+18.8%), Les Coteaux (+17.5%), Saint-Zotique (+17.1%), and Saint-Philippe (+15.0). The other municipality was Sainte-Marthe-sur-le-Lac (+15.2%).

The other 5 municipalities in Quebec were located in the north and east of the CMA of Québec: Sainte-Brigitte-de-Laval (+29.0%), Sainte-Catherine-de-la-Jacques-Cartier (+21.9%), Shannon (+18.6%), Stoneham-et-Tewkesbury (+17.6%), and Boischatel (+17.4%).

Readers can consult two sets of detailed [thematic maps](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/geo/map-carte/ref/thematic-thematiques/pd-pl/thematic-thematiques-eng.cfm) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/geo/map-carte/ref/thematic-thematiques/pd-pl/thematic-thematiques-eng.cfm>) showing population growth rates between 2011 and 2016: the first set shows the growth of municipalities located in each province and territory and the second set shows the growth in the 35 CMAs by [census tract](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/geo013-eng.cfm) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/geo013-eng.cfm>).

1. Incompletely enumerated Indian reserves and Indian settlements in 2011 and 2016 were excluded from the analysis for the remainder of this document.

Municipalities in Canada with the largest and fastest-growing populations between 2011 and 2016

Table 3

Population and growth, municipalities (census subdivisions) of at least 5,000 inhabitants¹ located in census metropolitan areas showing a rate of population growth of 15% or higher, 2011 and 2016

Rank	Municipality name	Province	CMA in which the municipality is located	Population		
				2011	2016	Growth from 2011 to 2016
				number		percent
1	Warman	Saskatchewan	Saskatoon	7,104	11,020	55.1
2	Cochrane	Alberta	Calgary	17,580	25,853	47.1
3	Airdrie	Alberta	Calgary	43,271	61,581	42.3
4	Chestermere	Alberta	Calgary	14,824	19,887	34.2
5	Beaumont	Alberta	Edmonton	13,284	17,396	31.0
6	Milton	Ontario	Toronto	84,362	110,128	30.5
7	Spruce Grove	Alberta	Edmonton	26,171	34,066	30.2
8	Tsinstikeptum 9	British Columbia	Kelowna	5,872	7,612	29.6
9	Sainte-Brigitte-de-Laval	Quebec	Québec	5,696	7,348	29.0
10	Fort Saskatchewan	Alberta	Edmonton	19,051	24,149	26.8
11	Bradford West Gwillimbury	Ontario	Toronto	28,077	35,325	25.8
12	Martensville	Saskatchewan	Saskatoon	7,716	9,645	25.0
13	Greater Vancouver A	British Columbia	Vancouver	12,988	16,133	24.2
14	Leduc	Alberta	Edmonton	24,304	29,993	23.4
15	King	Ontario	Toronto	19,899	24,512	23.2
16	Saint-Colomban	Quebec	Montréal	13,080	16,019	22.5
17	Sainte-Catherine-de-la-Jacques-Cartier	Quebec	Québec	6,319	7,706	21.9
18	Ritchot	Manitoba	Winnipeg	5,478	6,679	21.9
19	Whitchurch-Stouffville	Ontario	Toronto	37,628	45,837	21.8
20	Langford	British Columbia	Victoria	29,228	35,342	20.9
21	Paradise	Newfoundland and Labrador	St. John's	17,695	21,389	20.9
22	Mirabel	Quebec	Montréal	41,957	50,513	20.4
23	Saint-Lin-Laurentides	Quebec	Montréal	17,463	20,786	19.0
24	Carignan	Quebec	Montréal	7,966	9,462	18.8
25	Shannon	Quebec	Québec	5,086	6,031	18.6
26	Stoneham-et-Tewkesbury	Quebec	Québec	7,106	8,359	17.6
27	Les Coteaux	Quebec	Montréal	4,568	5,368	17.5
28	Boischatel	Quebec	Québec	6,465	7,587	17.4
29	Saint-Zotique	Quebec	Montréal	6,773	7,934	17.1
30	Sainte-Marthe-sur-le-Lac	Quebec	Montréal	15,689	18,074	15.2
31	Saint-Philippe	Quebec	Montréal	5,495	6,320	15.0

1. Only municipalities with at least 5,000 inhabitants (either in 2011, 2016 or both years) were included in this table to avoid interpreting rates of population growth that are based on small populations.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2011 and 2016.

Municipalities in Canada with the largest and fastest-growing populations between 2011 and 2016

Municipalities located close to a census metropolitan area or a census agglomeration also show high rates of population growth

Of the 5,127 municipalities in Canada, 4,638 (90%) were located outside CMAs and were home to just over 10 million people (29% of the population) (Table 4).

Table 4
Number of municipalities (census subdivisions), population size and growth, by census metropolitan influenced zones, 2011 and 2016

Region	Municipalities ¹	Population ¹		Growth from 2011 to 2016
		2011	2016	
		number		percent
Census metropolitan areas (CMA)	489	23,482,875	24,942,473	6.2
Census agglomerations (CA)	470	4,150,979	4,287,834	3.3
Metropolitan influenced zones ²	4,168	5,841,373	5,905,417	1.1
Located close to a CMA or CA	763	1,925,924	1,993,705	3.5
Located farther away from a CMA or CA	3,405	3,915,449	3,911,712	-0.1
Total	5,127	33,475,227 [†]	35,135,724	5.0

[†] Population size in 2011 and population growth between 2011 and 2016 are reported using 2011 counts, adjusted with revisions, if applicable.

1. Incompletely enumerated Indian reserves and Indian settlements in 2011 and 2016 were excluded from this table.

2. The categories in this table are based on Statistics Canada's Statistical Area Classification of Metropolitan Influenced Zone. Census subdivisions (CSDs) "located close to a CMA or CA" refers to CSDs classified as a Strong MIZ and CSDs "located farther away from a CMA or CA" refers to CSDs classified as Moderate, Weak, Not, or Territory.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2011 and 2016.

Between 2011 and 2016, the next-highest rates of population growth after municipalities located within CMAs (+6.2%) were observed in municipalities within CAs (+3.3%) and located close to a CMA or CA² (+3.5%).

Rapid population growth among municipalities located close to a CMA or CA is another indication that urbanization continues in Canada. These municipalities are often included among CMAs or CAs in later censuses, as the commuting flows to the CMA or CA increase over time. Such was the case with Saint-Lin-Laurentides, which was located close the CMA of Montréal and Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, which was a CA in the 2011 Census. Both are part of the Montréal CMA in the 2016 Census.

Municipalities located further away from a CMA or CA showed much lower rates of population growth between 2011 and 2016, at -0.1%.

2. This document uses the concept of [census metropolitan influenced zone \(MIZ\)](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/geo010-eng.cfm) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/geo010-eng.cfm>), which geographically differentiates municipalities located outside of CMAs and CAs, as a proxy for distance from a CMA or CA. Municipalities (census subdivisions) that are not components of any CMA or CA are assigned to one of five MIZ categories (strong, moderate, weak, no metropolitan influenced zones, and territories outside CAs) based on the percentage of resident employed labour force that commute to work in the core(s) of any CMA or CA. Generally, progress through the categories from 'strong' to 'no' influence is correlated with distance from a CMA or CA. For the purpose of this document, all municipalities (CSDs) assigned to the 'strong' MIZ category are defined as municipalities 'located close to a CMA or CA' and all CSDs assigned to the 'moderate', 'weak', 'no', and 'territories' MIZ categories are defined as municipalities 'located farther away from a CMA or CA.'

Municipalities in Canada with the largest and fastest-growing populations between 2011 and 2016

Thirteen of the top-25 fastest-growing municipalities outside census metropolitan areas are located in census agglomerations

Thirteen of the 25 fastest-growing municipalities of at least 5,000 inhabitants that are outside of CMAs were located in CAs (Table 5).

An additional eight municipalities were located close to a CMA or a CA, including the three fastest-growing municipalities. Blackfalds, Alberta, was ranked first with a rate of growth of 48.1% between 2011 and 2016, which was almost 10 times the national rate. Blackfalds is located close to the CA of Red Deer.

Only 4 of the 25 fastest-growing municipalities of over 5,000 inhabitants were located farther away from a CMA or a CA, including the capital of Nunavut, Iqaluit (+15.5%), and two municipalities located in alpine resorts in British Columbia: Whistler (+20.7%) and Fernie (+18.0%).

Table 5

Population and growth, top-25 fastest-growing municipalities of at least 5,000 inhabitants¹ located outside census metropolitan areas, Canada, 2011 and 2016

Rank	Municipality name	Province	CMA-CA name/ MIZ type	Population		
				2011 number	2016 number	Growth from 2011 to 2016 percent
1	Blackfalds	Alberta	Strong	6,300	9,328	48.1
2	Shelburne	Ontario	Strong	5,846	8,126	39.0
3	Contrecoeur	Quebec	Strong	6,252	7,887	26.2
4	Bonnyville No. 87	Alberta	Moderate	11,191	13,575	21.3
5	Whistler	British Columbia	Moderate	9,824	11,854	20.7
6	Lloydminster (Part)	Saskatchewan	CA of Lloydminster	9,772	11,765	20.4
7	Sylvan Lake	Alberta	CA of Sylvan Lake	12,362	14,816	19.9
8	Saint-Apollinaire	Quebec	Strong	5,102	6,110	19.8
9	Bromont	Quebec	CA of Granby	7,649	9,041	18.2
10	Fernie	British Columbia	Weak	4,448	5,249	18.0
11	Winkler	Manitoba	CA of Winkler	10,670	12,591	18.0
12	Wasaga Beach	Ontario	CA of Wasaga Beach	17,537	20,675	17.9
13	Okotoks	Alberta	CA of Okotoks	24,511	28,881	17.8
14	Sainte-Sophie	Quebec	Strong	13,375	15,690	17.3
15	Steinbach	Manitoba	CA of Steinbach	13,524	15,829	17.0
16	La Broquerie	Manitoba	Strong	5,198	6,076	16.9
17	Iqaluit	Nunavut	Territory	6,699	7,740	15.5
18	Saint-Paul	Quebec	CA of Joliette	5,122	5,891	15.0
19	Donnacona	Quebec	Strong	6,283	7,200	14.6
20	Essa	Ontario	Strong	18,505	21,083	13.9
21	Canmore	Alberta	CA of Canmore	12,288	13,992	13.9
22	Squamish	British Columbia	CA of Squamish	17,158	19,512	13.7
23	Grande Prairie	Alberta	CA of Grande Prairie	55,655	63,166	13.5
24	Collingwood	Ontario	CA of Collingwood	19,241	21,793	13.3
25	Stratford	Prince Edward Island	CA of Charlottetown	8,574	9,706	13.2

1. Only municipalities with at least 5,000 inhabitants (either in 2011, 2016 or both years) were included in this table to avoid interpreting rates of population growth that are based on small populations.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2011 and 2016.

Municipalities in Canada with the largest and fastest-growing populations between 2011 and 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

The rate of population growth reported in this document is computed as the difference in population size between two censuses, divided by the population of the earlier census, expressed as percentage change.

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 information on population and dwelling counts can be found in the [Highlight tables](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/hltfst/pd-pl/index-eng.cfm) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/hltfst/pd-pl/index-eng.cfm>), Catalogue no. 98-402-X2016001; 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.

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

There are also two videos 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>). They present an historical overview of the population of Canada and its largest metropolitan areas.

An infographic entitled [Population Growth in Canada, 2016 Census of Population](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2017005-eng.htm) (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2017005-eng.htm>) also illustrates some key findings, including population growth between 2011 and 2016 for Canada, provinces and territories and the six largest census metropolitan areas (CMAs) in the country.

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) (<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) (<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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