Census of Population Reference Guide

Visible Minority and Population Group Reference Guide

Census of Population, 2016

Release date: October 25, 2017

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Standard table symbols

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 *Statistics Act*
E   use with caution
F   too unreliable to be published
*   significantly different from reference category (p < 0.05)

Table of Contents

Definitions and concepts

The 2016 Census of Population question on population group is used to produce two main variables: the visible minority (http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/pop127-eng.cfm) variable and the population group (http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/pop111-eng.cfm) variable.

The primary purpose of the population group question on the census is to derive counts for the visible minority population. Visible minority refers to whether a person belongs to a visible minority group as defined by the *Employment Equity Act* and, if so, the visible minority group to which the person belongs. The *Employment Equity Act* defines visible minorities as 'persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.' Categories in the visible minority variable include South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, Japanese, Visible minority, n.i.e. ('n.i.e.' means 'not included elsewhere'), Multiple visible minorities and Not a visible minority.

Information on the visible minority population is required under federal employment equity legislation for programs which promote equal opportunity for everyone. Federal employment equity programs are the responsibility of Employment and Social Development Canada and other government departments; however, the Census of Population provides benchmark data on each of the designated groups (women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities).

Data on Canada's visible minority population are used by governments, businesses, community groups, health care providers, researchers and a variety of organizations throughout the country to ensure equal opportunity for everyone. Data on the visible minority population can be used by employers to compare the characteristics of their workforce with the characteristics of the population who live in the same area.

The population group question is also used to produce the population group variable. The population group variable includes data on groups such as White, Chinese, South Asian, Black, etc., generally mirroring the response categories used in the population group question on the Census of Population questionnaire. It also includes a number of multiple-response categories that are not included in the visible minority variable. (More information on these response categories is included in the sections of this document entitled Classifications and Questions.)

Classifications

As indicated above, the visible minority variable provides data on the visible minority population as defined for federal employment equity purposes, whereas the population group variable does not.

The visible minority variable includes data for 13 derived groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, Japanese, Visible minority, n.i.e., Multiple visible minorities and Not a visible minority ('Not a visible minority' includes respondents who reported 'Yes' to the Aboriginal identity question as well as respondents who were not considered to be members of a visible minority group). There is also a subtotal provided for the 'Total visible minority population,' which aggregates counts for the first 12 groups.

In contrast to the visible minority variable, the population group variable provides data which closely matches the responses provided by respondents on the census questionnaire. The population group variable includes single response categories counting respondents who provided one population group, specifically: White, South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, Japanese and Visible minority, n.i.e. As well, the population group variable includes multiple-response categories counting respondents who provided two or more population groups, specifically, the latter 11 groups in combination with White (for example, 'White and Chinese'), plus a category for Multiple visible minorities. The final category in the variable 'Aboriginal peoples' includes respondents who reported 'Yes' to Question 18 ('Is this person an Aboriginal person, that is, First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit)?'). Even though these respondents were not required to answer the population group question (Question 19), their information was included in the population group variable so that it would reflect the entire Canadian population.

In both the visible minority and population group variables, the category 'Visible minority, n.i.e.' includes respondents who reported a write-in response such as 'Guyanese,' 'West Indian,' 'Tibetan,' 'Polynesian,' 'Pacific Islander.' The category 'Multiple visible minorities' includes respondents who reported more than one visible minority group by checking two or more mark-in circles, such as 'Black' and 'South Asian.'

While in the population group variable data are included for multiple responses such as 'White and South Asian' and 'White and Black,' these multiple responses are counted differently in the visible minority variable because of the need to derive the variable in accordance with employment equity requirements. In the visible minority variable, persons who reported 'South Asian,' 'Chinese,' 'Black,' 'Filipino,' 'Southeast Asian,' 'Korean,' or 'Japanese,' in combination with 'White' or a write-in response are included in the visible minority count for the specific visible minority group reported. For example, respondents who checked 'Black' and 'White' are included in the 'Black' count. Respondents who checked 'Black' and wrote in 'French' or 'Malaysian' are also included in the 'Black' count.

In contrast, in accordance with employment equity definitions, persons who reported 'Latin American' and 'White,' 'Arab' and 'White,' or 'West Asian' and 'White' have been excluded from the visible minority population. Likewise, persons who reported 'Latin American,' 'Arab' or 'West Asian' and who provided a European write-in response such as 'French' have been excluded from the visible minority population as well. These persons are included in the 'Not a visible minority' category. However, persons who reported 'Latin American,' 'Arab' or 'West Asian' and a non-European write-in response are included in the visible minority population. For example, respondents who checked 'Latin American' and wrote in 'Peruvian' are included in the 'Latin American' count. Respondents who reported 'Arab' and wrote in 'Lebanese' are included in the 'Arab' count. Respondents who reported 'West Asian' and wrote in 'Afghan' are included in the 'West Asian' count.

Questions

The 2016 Census of Population data on the visible minority population and population group were obtained from Question 19 on the 2016 Census of Population 2A-L questionnaire (http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3Instr. pl?Function=getInstrumentList&Item_Id=295122&UL=1V&) or the 2016 Census of Population 2A-R questionnaire (http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3Instr.pl?Function=getInstrumentList&Item_Id=295299&UL=1V&).
The 2A-L questionnaire was used to enumerate a 25% sample of all private households in Canada, except for private households on Indian reserves, Indian settlements and other remote areas, which all received the 2A-R questionnaire.

To assist respondents whose first language was neither English nor French, census questions were translated into 22 other languages, including 11 Aboriginal languages.

In both versions of the questionnaire, response categories in the population group question included 11 mark-in circles and one write-in space. Respondents were asked 'Is this person:' and were instructed to mark more than one of the following response categories, or to specify another group, if applicable:

> White
> South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.)
> Chinese
> Black
> Filipino
> Latin American
> Arab
> Southeast Asian (e.g., Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai, etc.)
> West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Afghan, etc.)
> Korean
> Japanese
> Other - specify

A note on the census questionnaire informed respondents that 'This question collects information in accordance with the *Employment Equity Act* and its Regulations and Guidelines to support programs that promote equal opportunity for everyone to share in the social, cultural and economic life of Canada.' In addition, the *2016 Census of Population Long-form Guide* (http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb-bmdi/document/3901_D18_T1_V1-eng.htm) provided the following instructions:

> Mark or specify more than one answer, if applicable, from the list provided.

> Population group should not be confused with citizenship or nationality.

> For persons who belong to more than one population group:

>> • mark all categories that apply

>> • do not report "bi-racial" or "mixed" in the "Other - specify" box provided.

The mark-in response categories listed in the 2016 Census population group question, with the exception of 'White,' were based on the visible minority groups identified by the *Employment Equity Technical Reference Papers*, published by Employment and Immigration Canada in 1987, and used for federal employment equity programs. The visible minority groups identified by these papers included: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Japanese, Korean and other visible minority groups, such as Pacific Islanders. Data on other visible minority groups, including Pacific Islanders, are collected in the 'Other - specify' area of the 2016 Census population group question. After 'White,' population groups were listed on the 2016 Census questionnaire in order of the frequency (largest number) of visible minority counts derived from the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS).

Three of the population groups included on the 2016 Census questionnaire were followed by examples in parentheses. Examples were provided for only a few of the population groups to serve as guidelines and to help respondents who may be more familiar with one term instead of another (e.g., East Indian instead of South Asian, Vietnamese instead of Southeast Asian, Iranian instead of West Asian).

Persons who reported 'Yes' to Question 18 (Aboriginal group) were not asked the population group question. Aboriginal peoples are included in a separate response category called 'Aboriginal peoples' in the population group variable. They are included in the 'Not a visible minority' category in the visible minority variable, along with persons reporting other selected groups such as 'White.'

Data quality

The 2016 long-form census questionnaire underwent a thorough data quality assessment, similar to what was done for the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) and past censuses. A number of data quality indicators (briefly described below) were produced and used to evaluate the quality of the data.

The data quality assessment was done in addition to the regular quality checks completed at key stages of the survey. For example, during data collection and processing, the consistency of the responses provided was checked and the non-response rates for each question were analysed. As well, the quality of imputed responses was examined as part of the data editing and imputation steps. Finally, long-form census questionnaire estimates were compared with other data sources, and certified for final release.

For information about data quality for the census subdivision of Wood Buffalo, the data collection methodology and the use of administrative data sources, please refer to Appendix 1.4 (http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/98-304/app-ann1-4-eng.cfm) of the *Guide to the Census of Population, 2016*, Catalogue no. 98-304-X.

The main highlights of this assessment for the visible minority and population group data are presented below.

Variability due to sampling and total non-response

The objective of the long-form census questionnaire is to produce estimates on various topics for a wide variety of geographies, ranging from very large areas (such as provinces and census metropolitan areas) to very small areas (such as neighbourhoods and municipalities), and for various subpopulations (such as Aboriginal peoples and immigrants) that are generally referred to as 'domains of interest.' In order to reduce response burden, the long-form census questionnaire is administered to a random sample of households.

This sampling approach and the total non-response introduce variability in the estimates that needs to be accounted for. This variability also depends on the population size and the variability of the characteristics being measured. Furthermore, the precision of estimates may vary appreciably depending on the domain or geography of interest, in particular because of the variation in response rates. For more information on the variability due to sampling and total non-response in long-form census questionnaire estimates, please refer to 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.

Non-response bias

Non-response bias is a potential source of error for all surveys, including the long-form census questionnaire. Non-response bias arises when the characteristics of those who participate in a survey are different from those who do not.

In general, the risk of non-response bias increases as the response rate declines. For the 2016 long-form census questionnaire, Statistics Canada adapted its collection and estimation procedures in order to mitigate, to the extent possible, the effect of non-response bias. For more information on these mitigation strategies, please refer to 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.

Data quality indicators

A number of quality indicators were produced and analysed during the data quality assessment of the long-form census questionnaire. Three of these are presented to users: the global non-response rate (GNR), the standard error, and the imputation rate by question.

The GNR combines non-response at the household level (or total non-response) and non-response at the question level (partial non-response). It is calculated and presented for each geographic area. The GNR is the key criterion that determines whether or not the long-form census questionnaire results are released for a given geographic area—data are suppressed for geographic areas with a GNR equal to or greater than 50%. More information on the GNR is available in 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.

The standard error is a measure of the precision of an estimate with respect to sampling and total non-response variability. A small standard error corresponds to a precise estimate. Standard errors are made available to users for certain long-form census questionnaire estimate, except in cases where confidentiality would be compromised. The standard error can be used to derive other indicators of precision such as the coefficient of variation. It can also be used for most types of population parameters of interest (e.g., a count, a proportion or an average) and, using an adequate methodology, to derive margins of errors or confidence intervals for a given confidence level or to perform statistical inference (hypothesis testing). For more information on the long-form census questionnaire standard error and its interpretability and use, please refer to 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.

The imputation rate by question, excluding global non-response, is a measurement of quality specific to each question in the long-form census questionnaire. It measures the proportion of respondents ('respondents' being defined as those for whom a fully- or partially-completed questionnaire was returned) who did not answer the question, or whose response was invalid and for which a valid value was assigned. Imputation eliminates gaps in the data and, when done appropriately, reduces bias introduced by non-response. This is done by identifying persons or households that have characteristics similar to the incomplete record and by copying their values to fill in the missing or erroneous responses. The imputation rates for the population group question are presented in Table 1.

Certification of final estimates

Once data processing, editing and imputation were completed, the data were weighted in order for estimates to represent the total Canadian population living in private dwellings. Certification of the final weighted estimates was the last step in the validation process leading to recommendation for release of the data for each geography and domain of interest. Based on the analysis of data quality indicators and the comparison of the long-form census questionnaire estimates with other data sources, the recommendation is for unconditional release, conditional release or non-release for quality reasons. In the case of conditional release or non-release, appropriate notes and warnings are included in this guide. Several data sources were used to evaluate the long-form census questionnaire estimates. However, since the risk of error often increases for lower levels of geography and for smaller populations, and the data sources used to evaluate these results are less reliable (or not available) at these lower levels, it can be difficult to certify the estimates at these levels.

Long-form census questionnaire estimates are also subject to confidentiality rules that ensure non-disclosure of individual respondent identity and characteristics. For more information on confidentiality rules, please refer to 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.

For more information on data processing and the calculation of the estimates and their level of precision, please refer to the *Sampling and Weighting Technical Report, Census of Population, 2016* (http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/98-306/index-eng.cfm), Catalogue no. 98-306-X.

Comparability

Historical comparability

Counts of the visible minority population in Canada were first produced using 1981 Census data. Data on the visible minority population in 1981, 1986 and 1991 were derived primarily from responses to the ethnic origin question, in conjunction with responses to the place of birth and mother tongue questions.

Since the 1996 Census, the population group question has been used to measure the visible minority population more directly. Over time, there have been differences in the question wording, format, examples and instructions for the population group question used in the census. The historical comparability of visible minority data has been affected by these factors, as well as by changes in data processing and the social environment at the time of the census.

While the wording of the population group question ('Is this person:') has remained consistent since 1996, there have been two separate mark-in circles for 'Arab' and 'West Asian' since 2001. The 1996 Census used a combined category, 'Arab/West Asian.' Furthermore, for each census, the population groups are re-ranked based on their frequencies (from the highest to the lowest) from the previous census. For example, the mark-in circle for 'Arab' was moved above 'Southeast Asian' on the 2011 questionnaire based on frequencies observed in the 2006 Census. Finally, the examples for 'Black' and 'Arab' were removed in 2001, and the examples associated with

some population groups were updated in various censuses. For example, 'Malaysian' was replaced by 'Thai' in the examples associated with the Southeast Asian category in 2016.

Some changes in data processing were applied for various censuses. In 2001, persons with the write-in responses of 'Mixed' and 'Bi-racial' who did not also have a mark-in box response were included in the category 'Visible minority, n.i.e.' In 2006, these write-in responses were coded to multiple mark-in groups. As a result of this change in processing, estimates for specific visible minority groups increased in 2006, as did the count for the category 'Multiple visible minority.' In contrast, estimates for the category 'Visible minority, n.i.e.' decreased.

The 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) employed a different methodology than was used for the 2016 Census, the 2006 Census and prior censuses. These differences can affect comparability between 2016 Census estimates and 2011 National Household Survey estimates for the visible minority and population group variables. For more information on the comparability between the 2016 Census and the 2011 National Household Survey, please refer to 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. In particular, there is evidence that 2011 NHS estimates for Filipino and Southeast Asian were overestimated.

Comparability with other data sources

The 2016 Census is currently Statistics Canada's primary source of data on population groups and the visible minority population. In 2011, the National Household Survey collected information on these concepts, while, prior to 2011, previous censuses of population collected this information. Other household surveys (e.g., the General Social Survey) also collect data on population groups and the visible minority population. Statistics Canada has also produced projections, under specific scenarios, of the visible minority population in Canada —for example, *Immigration and Diversity: Population Projections for Canada and its Regions, 2011 to 2036* (http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-551-x/91-551-x2017001-eng.htm), Catalogue no. 91-551-X.

Many factors affect comparisons of population group data and visible minority population data across these sources. Among other factors, comparability is affected by:

- differences in survey target populations, reference periods, sampling and collection methods
- question wording, questionnaire format, examples and instructions
- approaches to data processing
- the social and political climate at the time of data collection.

For additional information, please see 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.

Data quality notes

The imputation rates for the population group question in the 2016 Census are shown in Table 1. The 2016 Census imputation rate for population groups at the national level is 2.0%, compared with 3.9% in the 2011 National Household Survey and 2.9% in the 2006 Census. At the provincial level, the imputation rate ranges from 1.7% in Ontario and Yukon to 4.3% in Nunavut.

Table 1
Imputation rates in the 2016 Census of Population for the population group question, Canada, provinces and territories

Province or territory	Imputation rate (%)
Canada	**2.0**
Newfoundland and Labrador	3.7
Prince Edward Island	2.9
Nova Scotia	2.1
New Brunswick	2.2
Quebec	2.2
Ontario	1.7
Manitoba	2.0
Saskatchewan	2.2
Alberta	2.0
British Columbia	1.8
Yukon	1.7
Northwest Territories	3.6
Nunavut	4.3

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.