

# Painting a Portrait of Canada:

## The 2021 Census of Population



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# FOREWORD

Once every five years, the Census of Population provides a detailed and comprehensive statistical portrait of Canada that is vital to our country. The census is the only data source that provides consistent statistics for both small geographic areas and small population groups across Canada.

The Census of Population is a cornerstone and an essential tool for understanding how Canada is changing over time. Census information is central to planning at all levels. Whether starting a business, monitoring a government program, planning transportation needs or choosing the location for a school, Canadians use census data every day to inform their decisions.

The 2016 Census offered excellent insight into our country, its geography and its people. For instance, while three in five Canadians live in Quebec and Ontario, Canadians are increasingly moving west. Also related to population, it is a story of urbanization: from the total count of 35,151,728 people, 12.5 million are residents of the three largest census metropolitan areas (i.e., Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver). When it comes to our vast land and its proximity to our neighbour, two-thirds of Canadians live within 100 kilometres of the southern border.

At Statistics Canada, the census is also central to the work that statisticians do. It is the foundation on which many important statistical programs are built.

The census process is ever changing. Statistics Canada has been a world leader in developing online enumeration and has taken important steps to determine how it can use administrative data—information already held by the government—to streamline and enhance the agency's work.

In 2017, Statistics Canada also launched an ambitious modernization initiative that involves using the latest technologies to leverage the power of statistics and reduce the burden placed on respondents to complete surveys. That work continues for the 2021 Census, as many of these new processes will be used to provide Canadians with more timely and responsive statistics.

Looking to the future, data users are asking for more information, delivered at an increasingly granular level. Statistics Canada is prepared to meet these needs while listening to and consulting broadly with organizations and individuals representing various government departments, the general public, communities, special interest groups, the private sector and academics to ensure that the agency remains attuned to the interests and needs of Canadians.

As technology changes, protecting the confidentiality of each respondent's personal information is—and will continue to be—of paramount importance to Statistics Canada. Each person's identity will be protected by anonymizing personal data, securely handling and storing data, and ensuring that statistical publications follow stringent confidentiality and security standards.

It is important for the agency not just to do good work, but also to be transparent about the way that work is done. Ultimately, the census relies on the willing support, cooperation and participation of each individual who goes online or sits down with a pen and paper to complete their census questionnaire. All Canadians benefit when everyone contributes.

The COVID-19 pandemic is now very much a reality for Canadians, disrupting life as we know it, and changing many things we had taken for granted. It has certainly created a number of issues for the 2021 Census of Population, as Statistics Canada was in the final stages of preparing for data collection when it struck the country in 2020. The Census Program adapted to the situation to ensure that the 2021 Census of Population is conducted throughout the country in the best possible way, using a safe and contactless approach. Census data will be even more crucial to policy and decision makers, as results are released for the various topics of the 2021 Census. Statistics Canada is proud of its ability to rethink and rework all of the key aspects of this country's largest peacetime activity—while ensuring at all times the safety of Canadians, including our employees.

I am pleased to share this look at the updated Census of Population with you, complete with its exciting content changes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anil Arora', with a small flourish at the end.

**Anil Arora**

Chief Statistician of Canada





# 1 INTRODUCTION

## THE CENSUS OF POPULATION AT THE HEART OF DECISION MAKING

This document outlines Statistics Canada’s planned approach for the 2021 Census of Population.

Statistics Canada recognizes that it is important not only to successfully conduct the census, but also to be transparent and informative about the way those efforts are accomplished. Statistics Canada is interested in speaking directly to Canadians ahead of the 2021 Census of Population. The audience for this document is any group or individual with an active interest in data disseminated from the Census Program, including governments at all levels, Indigenous leadership, businesses, associations, community organizations, universities and academics, and the general public.

As Canada’s national statistical agency, Statistics Canada gathers data and produces statistics to ensure that Canadians have timely access to relevant and high-quality statistical information on Canada’s changing society.

Through the Census of Population, Statistics Canada provides information on changes in the Canadian population and its demographic characteristics—information that is used to inform debate, for research and analysis, and in public and private decision making.

Statistics Canada is required by law to conduct a Census of Population every five years (key legislation is presented in Appendix A). By law, the agency must provide population and dwelling counts for communities of all sizes across Canada. These counts are essential for maintaining Canada’s equitable representation, as they are used to set electoral boundaries; estimate the demand for services in minority official languages; and calculate federal, provincial and territorial transfer payments.

Census information has many other important uses in the day-to-day lives of Canadians. Local governments use the census to develop programs and services, such as planning for schools and health services. Businesses analyze census data to make critical investment decisions, and social agencies depend on the census to understand the evolving needs of members of their communities.

Census data are also a key component of emergency preparedness and crisis management. For example, in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, crucial information on vulnerable populations—drawn from the high-quality results of the 2016 Census of Population—was provided to public health authorities and emergency services officials.

This document contains a number of statistical terms, many of which are explained or illustrated in the text. A glossary is also presented in Appendix B.

## HISTORY OF THE CENSUS

The Census of Population has provided valuable information to Canadians and decision makers for hundreds of years. The first census was conducted in New France under Jean Talon in 1666. The results showed a large population difference between the number of men and the number of women, highlighting the need for more women to immigrate to New France.

The proclamation of the *British North America Act, 1867* (now the *Constitution Act, 1867*) made it a constitutional requirement to take a census every 10 years. The next census, conducted in 1871, determined the appropriate representation in the new parliament. The census continues to play this key role under the *Fair Representation Act*.

After 1867, the *Constitution Act, 1907* and the *Constitution Act, 1930* were passed to further regulate certain transfers from the federal government to the Prairie provinces based on population counts from a census taken every five years.





Because of Canada's rapid growth after the Second World War and large population movements between provinces and into urban areas, it became necessary to obtain population information more frequently. In 1956, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics (now Statistics Canada) carried out the first nationwide quinquennial census.

Since 1971, the *Statistics Act* has made it a legal requirement for Statistics Canada to hold the Census of Population (and Census of Agriculture) every five years, in the years ending in 1 and 6. The act also outlines the mandatory requirements for completing and returning census questionnaires.

In 2017, amendments to the *Statistics Act* strengthened the agency's independence and reinforced Statistics Canada's role as the national statistical agency. Formalizing Statistics Canada's independence was an important milestone in ensuring that the statistics it produces are neutral, objective, accurate and reliable. For the outputs of a national statistical office to be credible, its national statisticians must operate—and be seen to operate—with a high level of professional independence from external authorities. The amendments to the act are in line with the United Nations Statistics Division and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Recommendation on Good Statistical Practice.

Under the revised *Statistics Act*, the minister responsible for the agency continues to have authority over what statistics are produced. The Chief Statistician has authority over the agency's methods, processes, analyses and dissemination. As a result, the census will follow the highest international standards and produce high-quality data on topics that are identified as relevant by the government, key stakeholders and data users. Census questions are reviewed by the Cabinet of Canada and approved by the Governor in Council, who issues an order in council, as required by the *Statistics Act*. The census questions are then published in the *Canada Gazette*.

## STATISTICS CANADA AS THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL OFFICE

The *Statistics Act* mandates the agency to “collect, compile, analyse, abstract and publish statistical information relating to the commercial, industrial, financial, social, economic and general activities and conditions of the people” of Canada, and to undertake the Census of Population and Census of Agriculture.

The *Statistics Act* provides for a robust centralized statistical agency in Canada, mandated to collect information on almost every subject. This strong power to collect and access information is counterbalanced by an ironclad guarantee of confidentiality—all employees of the agency are personally liable for protecting the confidentiality of all information collected under the act.

The need for internationally comparable information means that the census aims to comply with international standards set at global and regional levels. The United Nations reviews and sets census recommendations and principles every 10 years to ensure international consistency.

Statistics Canada has committed to providing non-disclosure information (information that does not allow any individual to be identified) from the census to the United Nations and other international bodies for comparison purposes.

## SHAPING GOVERNMENT POLICY

The Census of Population Program supplies statistical information, analysis and services that measure changes in Canada's population, its demographic characteristics and its conditions. It provides the Government of Canada with accurate population counts that are used as the basis for the Population Estimates Program, which in turn is used to determine transfer payments, such as the Canada Health Transfer, the Canada Social Transfer, the Health Reform Transfer, and Equalization and Territorial Formula Financing. All per capita measures in fiscal policies, arrangements and other economic analysis, as well as in program and service planning, are based on census information.

The Census of Population also helps define and establish federal electoral districts—and therefore, representation in the House of Commons—every 10 years, playing a critical role in the constitutional amending formula.

Statistics produced by the Census of Population range from the general demographic, social and economic conditions of the population to the socioeconomic conditions and well-being of specific population groups, such as lone-parent families; immigrants; seniors; language groups; and First Nations people, Métis and Inuit. The census also provides detailed information for small geographic areas that can be used to assess the effects of policy initiatives. As a result, the census serves as a foundation for other statistical surveys, as well as for population estimates and projections.

Census of Population data are important for all communities and are vital for planning purposes, such as developing services that support employment, education and health care. Data are used by governments, businesses, associations, Indigenous leadership, community organizations and many others to make informed decisions that affect all Canadians.

## Broad trends in Canadian society

As detailed above, census data is essential to informing policy on virtually all aspects of society. A number of themes are presently front and centre for Canadians, including—but not limited to—the ethnocultural and demographic makeup of Canada, gender diversity, the labour market, the rich linguistic plurality present in some areas of the country, and the status of Veterans.

Statistics Canada is measuring some of these topics closely through various (non-census) social and economic survey programs, as well as data published from the 2016 Census. For instance, data from the 2016 Census indicated that 22.3% of Canadians belong to a population group designated as a visible minority<sup>1</sup>. Through population projections from 2018, Statistics Canada projects this percentage will rise to between 29% and 32% by 2031. In terms of age, Canada’s population continues to get older: the latest population estimates from July 1, 2019 indicate that the country’s median population sits at 40.8 years, with the proportion of seniors (65 years and older) at 17.5%.

In addition, Statistics Canada is committed to looking at its products through a Gender-Based Analysis (GBA) Plus lens, with the establishment of a Centre for Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Statistics. There is also the expectation of increasingly disaggregated data. A data gap was present in the 2016 Census for the sex question as some Canadians

indicated that they could not identify themselves, given only two response options (i.e., male, female). Sex is a distinct concept from gender. This will be addressed in the 2021 Census with a revised question on sex at birth, and a new question on gender.

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*“...data from the 2016 Census indicated that 22.3% of Canadians belong to a population group designated as a visible minority. Through population projections from 2018, Statistics Canada projects this percentage will rise to between 29% and 32% by 2031.”*

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Next, while the Labour Force Survey is one of the largest and most successful survey programs in the world, some key labour market information is not currently captured in the monthly labour statistics program. In the 2021 Census, new questions on the reasons for working part time only and for not working the full year will provide information on the precarious work situation for groups such as low-income families, population groups, Indigenous peoples, immigrants, and Indigenous peoples, including the on-reserve First Nations population.

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1. Data on the population groups designated as “visible minorities” are required under the federal employment equity legislation for programs with the intended objective to promote equal opportunity for everyone. That said, Statistics Canada is aware of the concerns raised with regard to the use of the term “visible minority.” In collaboration with its *Advisory Committee on Ethnocultural and Immigration Statistics*, Statistics Canada is currently revisiting the concept of visible minorities and the relevance of its use for data dissemination and analytical purposes, particularly to better identify and understand inclusion and equity issues. Throughout the rest of this document, we use, without distinction, the term or notion of visible minorities, population groups or population groups designated as visible minorities.

Canada is a diverse country, linguistically, as evidenced from 2016 Census data. For example, 19.4% of the population speaks more than one language at home; nearly eight million Canadians have a mother tongue other than English or French. However, a gap has persisted for some time in providing accurate information on the number of children whose parents have the constitutional right to send them to an official language (i.e. English, French) minority school. Statistics Canada will meet this need: for the first time, the Census of Population will collect data on the children of minority language rights-holders, as per section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Statistics Canada has published reports pertaining to Veterans in recent years, including the “Life After Service Survey, 2019” which looked at Veterans’ health and well-being. A data gap currently exists, however, in providing an accurate number of Canadians who have previously served or are currently serving as members of the Canadian Armed Forces. Existing data sources are limited to decades-old historical census data and various, incomplete administrative data. The 2021 Census will represent a strong step forward in this respect.

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*“..for the first time, the Census of Population will collect data on the children of minority language rights-holders, as per section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.”*

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New data from the 2021 Census will further enhance Statistics Canada’s ability to accurately measure, and report on, these broad social trends. Later on in this document, Chapter 4 explores in detail the topics covered by the 2021 Census, including the new and modified content specific to the above-mentioned areas, alongside others. Statistics Canada is continually forward-looking in its orientation. This means having a heightened awareness of the environment in which the agency operates and keeping track of feedback and input from stakeholders, to address emerging data gaps and meet the evolving needs of Canadians.

## THE TIMING OF THE CENSUS

The Census of Population is conducted every five years. The requirement for a nationwide quinquennial census has been part of the *Statistics Act* since 1971 as Section 19 of the act stipulates that “a census of population of Canada shall be taken by Statistics Canada in the month of June in the year 1971, and every fifth year thereafter in a month to be fixed by the Governor in Council.” In recent cycles, the census has been conducted in May. Furthermore, under the *Constitution Act*, a decennial census is to be conducted every ten years in the year ending in “1” and the 2021 Census will take place in May.

The spring timing of the Census of Population is driven by the need to maximize the number of Canadians who are at home during enumeration and allows sufficient time to conduct follow-up activities before the summer holiday period.

## DETERMINING CENSUS CONTENT

Preparation for each cycle of the census requires several stages of engagement, as well as testing and evaluating data in order to recommend questionnaire content for the upcoming census. These steps include content consultations and discussions with stakeholders and census data users (see Chapter 2), content testing that includes the qualitative testing of proposed changes and new content, a quantitative test to evaluate content and respondent behaviour on a larger scale, and an evaluation of the test results guided by a content determination framework to propose the recommended census questions to Cabinet of Canada for approval.

Once Cabinet has approved the census questions, the Governor in Council reviews the questions and an order in council will “prescribe the questions to be asked under section 19 or 20” of the *Statistics Act*. Within 30 days of the signing of the order, the census content is published in the *Canada Gazette*.

When proposing content for the 2021 Census of Population questionnaire, Statistics Canada follows the Census Program’s [content determination framework](#), which balances information needs with other factors, such as data quality, response burden and costs. More information on this process is available in the [Final Report on 2016 Census Options: Proposed Content Determination Framework and Methodology Options](#).

## CENSUS TEST

Testing is a critical phase of preparation for Census Day.

The purpose of census testing is to verify that Statistics Canada is able to collect the high-quality data needed to fulfill the Census Program requirements. The 2019 Census Test validates respondent behaviour to ensure that questions and census materials are understood by all participants. Testing also determines whether the systems and processes that are used to help manage the complex challenges involved with conducting a census run smoothly.

Testing helps improve quality and efficiencies, minimizes risks related to the program’s ability to effectively respond to unexpected challenges, verifies or supports the credibility of the results produced, and ensures a meaningful understanding of the limitations of those results. Statistics Canada has world-class experts guiding its efforts, to ensure a scientific and rigorous evaluation process.

Testing activities for the Census Program are planned, implemented and evaluated in accordance with standards such as UNECE’s [Generic Statistical Business Process Model](#) and Statistics Canada’s [Quality Guidelines](#) and [Quality Assurance Framework](#)

## BEHAVIOUR TESTS

To improve the overall efficiency of census testing, Statistics Canada has moved from a dress rehearsal approach to testing that was traditionally used in census operations preparation. In recent cycles, the testing has focused more on specific aspects of the program, generally those that impact respondent behaviour or the behaviour of census collection staff.

### **Communication material qualitative test**

Statistics Canada conducts a series of cognitive interviews with census respondents. Participants are asked about their previous knowledge of the census, their views on the census communication process and their reactions to the communication materials (e.g., letters and envelopes) used during collection.

The objectives of the cognitive interview are to assess how well census messaging is understood and how it influences respondent behaviour with regard to questionnaire completion.

The communication material qualitative test took place in January 2018. Observations from the interviews were compiled, and new resulting materials were included in the 2019 Census Test.

### **Questionnaire content qualitative test**

The process of reviewing and testing questionnaires is instrumental to data quality, particularly response accuracy.

Statistics Canada's Policy on the Development of Questionnaires requires that all new and revised questionnaires be tested before they are used to collect data from the public. From April to November 2018, following the findings of content consultations and discussions, qualitative tests were conducted to provide insight into how respondents reacted to proposed changes to questionnaire content. In-depth one-on-one interviews were conducted to test and evaluate participants' understanding of the concepts, terminology, question sequencing and questionnaire format. They were also used to assess alternate wording. Interviewers also examined participants' thought processes as they answered questions to assess whether the questions were clear. Potential sources of response error were corrected.

In preparation for the 2021 Census of Population, over 550 interviews were conducted across the country to test both the electronic and paper formats of the short-form and long-form questionnaires in both official languages, including approximately 100 interviews with First Nations people, Métis and Inuit. New questions were introduced; existing questions were reworded; some questions were removed; and answer categories, instructions and question flows were adjusted. All topics included in the 2016 Census were modified in some way, and multiple versions of changes were tested.



## 2019 Census Test

The 2019 Census Test evaluated changes in questionnaires and collection and operating processes in preparation for the 2021 Census of Population.

In May and June 2019, census invitation letters and questionnaires were delivered to a sample of approximately 250,000 dwellings across the country. To ensure accurate results, participation in this test was mandatory under the *Statistics Act*.

The test consisted of two components: a content test and a field operations test.

- a) **Content test:** The content component of the 2019 Census Test involved a sample of 135,000 households. The purpose of this component was to evaluate the new and modified questions that were based on the results of the content consultations and discussions, the questionnaire content qualitative test, and the needs of policy makers and data users. It aimed to validate respondent behaviour with regard to question and instruction changes and ensure the questionnaire yields high-quality data.

After analyzing the results of the test and considering factors such as costs, operations, respondent relations and safeguards against quality loss, Statistics Canada submitted the final content of the 2021 Census of Population questionnaire to Cabinet for approval.

- b) **Field operations test:** The field operations component of the 2019 Census Test involved a sample of 115,000 households. The purpose of this component was to assess new and modified procedures and technologies for use in data collection. It aimed to validate the behaviour of field staff and respondents with regard to new procedures, systems and tools. This test also evaluated changes to the recruitment and training process for field staff; the delivery of invitation letters and census packages to households; the enumeration of collective dwellings (e.g., hospitals and seniors' residences); and the follow-up activities for other field operations, such as non-response follow-up.

## 2021 SYSTEMS TESTS

The census information systems infrastructure is complex. Its functioning depends on the proper operation of each component, as well as seamless communication between components. A series of tests is planned between September 2020 and January 2021 to ensure that all systems are operating as expected, including an end-to-end systems test, a volume test, a system readiness test (including adequacy of cybersecurity protection) and an operational readiness test.

## End-to-end test

An end-to-end test of all systems is conducted in the quality assurance environment one year before census collection to ensure all elements are operating as expected.

## Volume test

For the volume test, non-live systems tests are conducted using a large volume of data to determine or confirm system capacities. These are also known as load or stress tests.

## System readiness test

For the 2021 Census, the system readiness test verifies that systems are properly installed, secure, complete and fully operational.

## Operational readiness test

The operational readiness test is conducted to check all or a specific scope of operations, processes and procedures before the start of operations. Particular attention is given to contingency plans and escalation procedures.

## Success criteria for the census

The census supports decision makers across Canada by providing them with high-quality information that reflects the country on Census Day.

The 2016 Census of Population was the most successful census in Canada's history, with almost 9 in 10 respondents completing their questionnaire without assistance from Statistics Canada and an overall 98% collection response rate. The self-response rate of 88.8% made the 2016 Census among the most effective traditional censuses conducted in the world.

Each census cycle, Statistics Canada strives to improve all elements of the Census Program and build on successes of past censuses while recognizing that unique challenges can emerge. Therefore, the data collection operations of the Census of Population have been adapted to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (described later and referred to as a contactless census). It is expected that the quality of the census data will remain high.

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*“The 2016 Census of Population was the most successful census in Canada’s history, with almost 9 in 10 respondents completing their questionnaire without assistance from Statistics Canada and an overall 98% collection response rate.”*

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## KEY CENSUS DESIGN FEATURES FOR 2021

The 2021 Census is designed to be accessible and straightforward to complete online.

The census is designed to take the needs of respondents into account so that they are engaged and understand that their participation is important to ensure that their community is well represented in the census data.

Census advertising and communications are designed to promote the importance of the census and encourage all Canadian households to complete their questionnaire.

Initial contact with the majority of households is done through an invitation sent by mail encouraging respondents to complete the census questionnaire online. The invitation includes a unique secure access code and the census website address. Paper questionnaires are available upon request. Follow-up activities are planned to ensure full participation and high-quality results.

Online completion is easier for many individuals. Furthermore, members of the public have become more familiar with receiving services online from both the private sector and the government, so the agency anticipates increased use of online questionnaires.

Statistics Canada plans to provide a wide range of services to the public to encourage and support the completion of census questionnaires, including

- a country-wide advertising campaign in the weeks leading up to the census
- a dedicated [census website](#)
- a toll-free call centre with multiple languages and TTY services available
- alternate formats of the census questions, such as Braille
- the census questions available in immigrant and Indigenous languages
- outreach to community groups
- follow-up by census field staff, using a safe and contactless approach.

## ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Statistics Canada has a long tradition of using data from administrative sources in its statistical programs. The use of administrative data to replace questions on the census not only reduces collection costs and response burden, but is often more precise.

In some cases, using administrative sources may be the only feasible way to collect important statistical information. As with the 2016 Census, Statistics Canada will use existing administrative data sources, such as immigration records and personal income tax and benefit data, to reduce response burden and increase data quality.

## DATA PROTECTION AND PRIVACY

Statistics Canada places the highest priority on protecting the confidentiality and security of individual questionnaires. Stringent measures and procedures have been implemented to ensure that confidentiality is protected at all times. For example, census data are processed and stored on a highly restricted network and cannot be accessed by anyone who has not taken the oath of secrecy.

Only Statistics Canada employees with a need to know have access to personal and confidential information. These employees are able to collect, process and analyze completed questionnaires. All Statistics Canada employees must take an oath of secrecy under the *Statistics Act*, which remains in effect for life—even after their employment has ended. All Statistics Canada employees are subject to fines and/or imprisonment if they reveal identifiable information derived from the census.

Statistics Canada is bound by law to protect the identity of individuals in any data it publishes. Publications and electronic data releases are screened to ensure anonymity. Names, addresses and telephone numbers are not part of the census database used for dissemination, and private contractors do not have access to confidential data.



## 2 ENGAGEMENT WITH CANADIANS

As part of each census cycle, Statistics Canada leads comprehensive consultations and discussions on census content requirements and data dissemination strategies. The census, at its core, offers Canadians a robust, consultative dialogue in which the country's changing data needs are highlighted; the census then evolves accordingly to fill any identified data gaps. It is with this adaptive and collaborative approach that Statistics Canada stays on top of trends and new demands, reflecting a changing society.

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*“The census, at its core, offers Canadians a robust, consultative dialogue in which the country's changing data needs are highlighted; the census then evolves accordingly to fill any identified data gaps.”*

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Because of the variety of uses and the importance of census data in decision making, any changes made to census content are carefully analyzed and discussed with stakeholders to preserve data relevance, overall quality, coverage and comparability over time, as well as to ensure that legislative and policy requirements continue to be met.

After research, consultations and testing, the agency develops content for the census and submits the proposed questions to Cabinet. According to the *Statistics Act*, census questions must be prescribed by the Governor in Council through an order in council, and the approved questions must be published in the *Canada Gazette*. Typically, this approval occurs in the year preceding the census.

Consultations on dissemination activities and products help determine the best ways in which to share results with users to ensure census data are accessible and meet the needs of all data users.



## CONTENT CONSULTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

A formal content consultation is planned at the start of each census cycle. During this time, Statistics Canada invites data users, stakeholders and members of the public to provide feedback on what information they use and for what purpose, as well as what—if any—data gaps Statistics Canada should consider addressing in the next census cycle.



In preparation for the 2021 Census of Population, Statistics Canada consulted with census data users to

- assess their needs and identify data gaps
- understand how census data are used
- identify other data sources that could supplement or replace current census content.

Engagements were held from September 2017 to May 2018 and involved an online questionnaire available to all Canadians, to gather feedback, as well as face-to-face discussions with federal departments; other research and analysis organizations; and First Nations, Métis and Inuit stakeholders.

Over 10,000 census data users were invited by email to participate in these engagements and were encouraged to share the invitation with others in their network. Statistics Canada also reached out to the general public through its website, social media accounts and regional offices.

Over 2,800 respondents participated in the discussions—an unprecedented number that reflects a high level of interest in helping to shape the census as an important source of demographic and social information.

During these engagements, Statistics Canada heard from individuals and organizations in many sectors of Canadian society, including

- federal departments
- provincial and territorial ministries and organizations
- municipal governments
- First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities
- non-governmental organizations
- researchers and academics
- businesses
- the general public.



Given the large volume of engagements carried out during the intercensal period, it is not possible to provide an exhaustive list. However, some of the partners that Statistics Canada has worked alongside include the following: the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages for minority language rights-holders; Veterans Affairs Canada for Veteran and military service; the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation on housing; the Office of National Statistics, UNECE, on matters pertaining to gender; McGill University, the Jewish Community Foundation of Montreal and Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, related to ethnic or cultural origins. All of these efforts build towards an improved census. For more information, please consult the [2021 Census of Population Consultation Results: What we heard from Canadians](#).

In addition, to better understand the needs of Indigenous organizations and communities, the agency visited 30 locations across the country, held approximately 60 discussions and listened to over 400 people from local, provincial, territorial and national Indigenous organizations.

Statistics Canada recognizes the importance of building and maintaining strong relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. A key part of this effort is the Indigenous Liaison Advisor program. The Indigenous Liaison Advisors work to build partnerships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities and organizations based on respect and trust. The program was founded in the 1980s and today has evolved to be a national program with 11 advisors located across Canada.

The program's objective is to increase knowledge of, and access to, Statistics Canada data, products and services for First Nations people, Métis, and Inuit across Canada, and to promote participation in the Census and Statistics Canada surveys.

## CONTENT CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Part 1 of the content consultation questionnaire focused on census data users and collected feedback on

- small geographic areas and populations of interest
- the comparability of census data across Canada
- the comparability of results over time
- the timeliness of data availability
- the uses of census data in multivariate analysis
- the purposes for using census data
- possible alternate data sources.

Participants were asked whether they used census data for

- statutory or regulatory purposes
- resource allocation for programs and policies
- service delivery for programs
- planning, development, monitoring, evaluation and performance reports related to programs and policies
- research or other uses.

Participants who used data for statutory or regulatory purposes were also asked to identify the respective laws, statutes or regulations.

Part 2 of the content consultation questionnaire asked participants to

- report data gaps they noticed in the 2016 Census
- provide a brief description of why these gaps should be addressed in future census questionnaires
- suggest data sources.

## DATA NEEDS OF ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS

Data users identified a number of interests and specific needs:

**Small geographic areas and populations of interest:** Respondents from all user groups showed great interest in being able to access data for areas with small populations. Overall, about two-thirds of respondents reported that the lowest level of geography they or their organization used was census subdivision or lower.

**Comparability across Canada:** Overall, 82% of respondents believed it is important to be able to compare census data across Canada for at least one of their purposes. The most important topics to data users for comparing data across Canada were income (82%) and population groups (80%). Household composition (67%), mobility (72%) and activities of daily living (72%) ranked slightly lower.

**Continuity over time:** Overall, 93% of respondents felt it is important to be able to compare census data over time for at least some of their purposes. The most important topics for maintaining the census time series were income (92%) and population groups (91%), while topics such as household composition (81%) and activities of daily living (85%) ranked slightly lower.

**Frequency of data availability:** Virtually every organization and individual from all user groups agreed that census data should be available every five years. (A question on religion is included every 10 years.)

**Multivariate analysis:** Users cited the ability to perform multivariate analysis as critical to their use of census data, as it allows users to examine interrelationships across different census questions, such as age, education, income and immigrant status. This type of analysis is possible with the census because anonymized data are available for each individual and household.

While all types of users consult demographic, language, education, labour market activity and income data, there were notable differences among respondent groups. Federal, provincial and territorial government organizations typically used ethnocultural and Indigenous data more than other users. Municipal governments frequently used mobility, journey to work and housing data. Indigenous data users reported making broad use of all census content, with the exception of ethnocultural questions relating to ethnic origin, population groups and religion.

This feedback from data users led to proposed changes to the 2019 Census Test questionnaire. New content and revisions were tested for the following topics: sex and gender, language and minority language educational rights, Veterans, health, immigration and citizenship, ethnocultural diversity (ethnic origin, religion), Indigenous peoples, education, labour and commuting, and housing. See Chapter 4 for a description of testing results and the final 2021 Census content.

## DISSEMINATION CONSULTATIONS

With each census, Statistics Canada looks for ways to publish census results in a timely, relevant and accessible manner while maintaining high data-quality standards. A primary goal of the dissemination process is to maximize the user experience for Census of Population products and services.

User feedback helps Statistics Canada measure user satisfaction and gather suggestions for the 2021 Census of Population products, services and release strategy.

### Dissemination consultation process

From January to March 2019, Statistics Canada collected feedback from data users and interested parties across Canada who shared their views on various aspects of the 2016 Census of Population dissemination process. In January 2020, the agency also hosted face-to-face sessions with a range of data users, including businesses and non-governmental organizations.

Detailed feedback was obtained from nearly 1,000 participants on the following topics:

- approach for the release of census results
- data and geography products
- custom data services.



# 3 POPULATION— COUNTING ALL CANADIANS

## COUNTING EVERYONE

The goal of the census is to enumerate the entire population of Canada at a fixed point in time. Generally, two methods are used to do this: the de facto method, which enumerates people wherever they are on Census Day, and the de jure method, which enumerates people according to their usual place of residence.

The de jure method has been used in Canada since 1871. It is key for the census to fulfill its legislative requirements in support of the federal electoral system and transfer payments to provinces and territories.

Based on the de jure method, the census questionnaire typically includes questions and instructions to determine the person's sole or main residence. This location is then aggregated in all data products by geographic area. It is also used to identify people who live together in the same dwelling—an important aspect of census data.

## WHO IS INCLUDED IN THE CENSUS?

The Census of Population enumerates the entire Canadian population, which consists of Canadian citizens (by birth and naturalization), landed immigrants, and non-permanent residents and their families living with them in Canada. Non-permanent residents are people who hold a work or student permit or who have claimed refugee status (e.g., asylum seekers).

The census also counts Canadian citizens and landed immigrants who are temporarily outside the country on Census Day. This includes federal and provincial government employees working outside Canada, Canadian embassy staff posted to other countries, members of the Canadian Armed Forces stationed abroad, and all Canadian crew members of merchant vessels and their families. Because people outside the country are enumerated, the Census of Canada is considered a modified de jure census.

Foreign residents, such as representatives of a foreign government assigned to an embassy, high commission or other diplomatic mission in Canada, as well as residents of another country who are visiting Canada temporarily, are not covered by the census.

## EFFORTS FOR A THOROUGH CENSUS

Special efforts are made during each census cycle to enumerate all Canadians, including those who are less likely or able to complete a census questionnaire, and those who are difficult to contact. For the 2021 Census, some of the support mechanisms planned to assist respondents include

- options for completing the questionnaire (e.g., online, in paper format, with the assistance of a census employee)
- help features for most questions in the online questionnaires to provide further context and clarification
- online questionnaires that comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines to ensure accessibility for respondents using assistive technologies
- the availability of the 2021 Census questions in a number of languages other than English and French (11 immigrant and 13 Indigenous languages) and in alternate formats, including Braille, large print, audio and sign language videos
- a toll-free Census Help Line for respondents who have questions or require more information about the census
- access to staff who can provide assistance to people who speak a language other than English or French
- a TTY Census Help Line for respondents using a telecommunications device for deaf people to access help when completing their census questionnaire
- reference materials available through the [census website](#).

## INFORMING THE POPULATION ABOUT THE CENSUS

A successful collection operation employs effective messaging and a range of approaches to support and engage all households. Statistics Canada communicates proactively with Canadians to convey the importance and value of participating in the census.

For the 2021 Census, communication activities aim to increase

- awareness of the 2021 Census of Population
- self-response through online collection
- increased participation for groups that have traditionally been more difficult to enumerate
- awareness of the fact that Statistics Canada is committed to protecting the personal information of all Canadians
- understanding of the value of census data for communities and individuals.



## REACHING HARD-TO-ENUMERATE GROUPS

The agency has identified specific population groups that may find census participation challenging, or those who are hesitant to complete their questionnaire online. These groups include the following:

**Canadians who speak neither English nor French:** This may include recent immigrants and non-permanent residents.

**Canadians who are uncomfortable with the online questionnaire:** Some Canadians are apprehensive about using the Internet for self-enumeration.

**Single-person households:** In 2016, people who lived alone were more likely to prefer using paper questionnaires. Young people (particularly young single men) were less likely to participate.

**Vulnerable people:** For some persons (e.g., older persons living alone, people with health concerns and persons living in unsafe neighbourhoods), communicating with a stranger (census employee) can be a concern.

**Mobile populations:** People who are relocating to a new address or students who are moving away to study or work may be missed more easily in the initial collection stages of the census.

Communication activities that minimize in-person contact and respect the guidelines set out by public health authorities have been developed to help reach each of these groups to ensure greater awareness of and participation in the census to obtain a more complete census count.

In its communications strategy, the agency has designed broad messages intended to communicate the census message to all Canadians. Furthermore, targeted messages have been developed to ensure that harder-to-enumerate people are informed of the importance of the census.





## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Statistics Canada relies on many groups and individuals to carry out its programs. Ongoing discussions are held and advice is provided by partners, such as the Canadian Statistics Advisory Council and professional advisory committees, as well as through bilateral relationships with federal departments and the Federal–Provincial–Territorial Consultative Council on Statistical Policy.

The agency also relies on community supporters to ensure that census information reaches all Canadians. Working with organizations and individuals that have a trusted voice in their communities plays a critical role in achieving this goal. These include the following:

### **Indigenous communities**

Regional discussions with Indigenous peoples for the 2021 Census were coordinated, organized and conducted by Statistics Canada’s Indigenous Liaison Program. The goal of this national program—led by 11 advisors across Canada—is to build partnerships with Indigenous organizations, municipalities, and provincial and territorial governments. These partnerships are important not only for increasing awareness and facilitating access to Statistics Canada’s data products, but also for helping Statistics Canada meet the information needs of Indigenous peoples.

As part of the Indigenous Statistical Capacity Development Initiative, Statistics Canada also engages with national Indigenous organizations and provides statistical capacity building based on the needs of Indigenous peoples. This initiative builds on existing data; provides technical support services to First Nations, Métis and Inuit organizations and communities; and works with new and existing partners to determine how strong and sustainable statistical and research capacities can be cultivated together.

The agency also regularly seeks feedback on its products related to Indigenous communities to ensure they continue to reflect and be relevant to First Nations people, Métis and Inuit. The Indigenous Liaison Program maintains an electronic network of approximately 6,000 contacts, including chiefs and council members, band managers, funding services officers, and Indigenous service providers.

## COMMUNICATING THE CENSUS

For each census cycle, the agency assesses its communication activities to ensure that the best tools available are being used to engage with Canadians. The lessons learned from this assessment are then applied to the next census cycle.

Communicating with the public and key stakeholders is an ongoing priority for the agency. For the census, the agency uses specific tools to promote awareness and understanding of the census.

### Census website

The [census website](#) is used to provide a centralized platform for respondents to complete their questionnaires online and for the agency to communicate important information about the census, including on data privacy and security.

### Canada.ca website

Statistics Canada works closely with several federal departments and central agencies to actively promote the census on the Canada.ca website. For example, a carousel image was added to the [main jobs page](#) to promote census jobs, and a banner leading to the census website is featured on the [Canada.ca home page](#) to promote census collection.

### Social media

Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, blogs) is used to foster engagement, cooperation and information-sharing with the public during all phases of the census.

### Media relations

Traditional and new media coverage helps promote the census among Canadians. Furthermore, statistical announcements and other releases are scheduled to keep the media and general public informed of census activities. A media relations team responds to media inquiries and monitors media coverage across the country throughout the census.

### Advertising

An advertising campaign is designed to inform Canadians of the importance, relevance and security of the information collected during the 2021 Census. Television, radio, print, out-of-home advertising, and digital and social media are used before and during the census to encourage households to complete their questionnaires. Targeted messages are also used to encourage specific, harder-to-enumerate groups to complete their census questionnaires.

## Outreach, public relations and events

Outreach activities engage key stakeholders at the community level and support partnerships to promote census job opportunities and reach populations that are harder to enumerate.

Public relations activities involve engagement with federal departments and agencies. All departments and agencies are asked to include census banners on their websites, follow Statistics Canada on social media and send internal messages to their employees. Selected resources and programs of federal partners are leveraged for both recruitment and collection awareness. Partners who have physical offices in Canada are provided with print or digital communications products to display to the public, as well as reference materials for their staff. Statistics Canada distributes census messages through program platforms run by other departments and provides other departments with materials for distribution at events they are attending. Events can include appearances at local cultural events, job fairs, ceremonies and speaking engagements at conferences.

## First Nations, Métis and Inuit strategy

To improve engagement levels among Indigenous peoples, Statistics Canada has developed strategic plans, used internal and external partnerships, and created customized support materials. The purpose of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit strategy is to increase awareness among Indigenous peoples about job opportunities within their communities; increase the number of Indigenous applicants for census jobs; support the collection of data in First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities; and provide support materials that encourage participation while respecting cultural diversity.


## Toolkits

The **Teacher's Kit** and **Adult Education Kit** are used in schools and adult literacy programs to promote and increase awareness of the census.

The **Community Supporter Toolkit** is used by community-based organizations, associations and municipalities across Canada to increase awareness of census job opportunities and the benefits of completing the census questionnaire.

The **Small Business Hub** is used by entrepreneurs and small business owners to understand how online census data products can help them make informed business decisions.

The **Community Snapshot Toolkit** is used to build community portraits using census data. The portraits tell the story of a particular geographic area in Canada through a statistical lens by providing a customized infographic for a given community. In 2021, a toolkit is also planned to provide customized content for First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities.

A black and gold pen lies diagonally across the upper right portion of the page. To its left, two green-outlined squares are visible, each containing a large blue checkmark. The background is a light, textured surface.

# 4 TOPICS COVERED BY THE 2021 CENSUS

For the 2021 Census, income information will once again be obtained from personal income tax and benefit data files provided by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), and admission category and applicant type information will be obtained from administrative files provided by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). In 2021, for the first time, immigrant status and year of immigration will also be obtained from administrative files provided by IRCC.

Statistics Canada will continue to use existing administrative data sources to reduce response burden and increase data quality.

## ENUMERATING USUAL RESIDENTS OF PRIVATE DWELLINGS

The majority of Canada's population resides in private dwellings. For residents of private dwellings, census data are collected primarily by having one adult member of the household respond on behalf of the entire household through self-enumeration using an online form.

The census is the primary source of exhaustive demographic data in Canada. In 2021, the census questionnaire will collect the following information:

- address
- names of usual residents
- date of birth, age
- sex at birth, gender
- relationships of household members (including marital or common-law status)
- knowledge of official languages
- languages spoken regularly at home and language spoken most often at home
- first language learned at home in childhood
- minority official language educational rights
- Veteran and military service
- activities of daily living

- place of birth of person/parents
- citizenship (Canadian citizenship, other citizenship)
- non-official languages
- ethnic or cultural origins
- First Nations, Métis or Inuk (Inuit)
- population groups
- Status Indian
- First Nation or Indian Band
- membership in a Métis organization or Settlement
- enrolment under an Inuit land claims agreement
- religion
- mobility (one year and five year)
- education
- labour market activities
- place of work and commuting
- expenditures (child care, child and spousal support)
- housing.

## Short-form and long-form questionnaire

Most census data are collected using the [short-form](#) or [long-form](#) questionnaires. In 2021, a sample of 25% of Canadian households will receive a long-form questionnaire.

### Short-form questionnaire (forms 2A, 3A, 2C)

**Form 2A:** This is the short-form questionnaire that is used to enumerate all usual residents of all private dwellings.

**Form 3A:** This is the short-form questionnaire for individuals (similar to Form 2A), which is used to enumerate one person. It is delivered to usual residents in private dwellings who wish to be enumerated separately from other members of the household (e.g., roomers, lodgers, boarders). It is also used to enumerate residents in some collective dwellings.

**Form 2C:** This is the short-form questionnaire for people living abroad (similar to Form 2A), which is used to enumerate residents who are temporarily overseas at the time of the census. For 2021, this includes Canadian government employees (federal and provincial) and their families, and members of the Canadian Armed Forces and their families.

## **Long-form questionnaire (forms 2A-L, 2A-R)**

The long-form questionnaire complements the short-form questionnaire and is designed to provide more detailed information on people in Canada according to their demographic, social and economic characteristics.

**Form 2A-L:** This questionnaire is the most commonly used long-form questionnaire.

**Form 2A-R:** This questionnaire is similar to Form 2A-L, but is used in northern, remote and reserve areas only. It contains the census long-form questionnaire questions with examples adapted for remote regions and First Nations communities, as well as two additional questions on band housing. For 2021, there is a new question on band housing fees.

## **Online versus paper questionnaires**

There has been greater use of the online census questionnaire since its introduction in 2001. In 2016, only forms 2A and 2A-L were available online. An online census questionnaire was submitted for 68.3% of private dwellings in 2016. For the 2021 Census, forms 2A, 2A-L and 2A-R will be available online. It is expected that more households will submit their census forms online in 2021 in comparison with previous censuses.

The content of the online questionnaire is virtually identical to that of the paper questionnaire, but the online questionnaires have additional features that improve data quality and reduce response burden. The online census questionnaires prefill fields using information provided by the respondent (e.g., names of household members). This reduces the likelihood of one member's answers being recorded for another person. Automated skip patterns alleviate response burden by skipping questions that are not applicable (more skips have been added for 2021). The long-form questionnaire also has a "stop and finish later" feature that allows respondents to save their questionnaire and return to complete it later. A password is used to retrieve the saved questionnaire.

Online questionnaires also have better response rates for individual questions and higher data quality because respondents are prompted when invalid data are entered or if data are missing. The online forms also have help information available for respondents who want additional information on a census question.



## 2021 CENSUS QUESTIONNAIRE CONTENT

### New content

The 2021 Census includes new content to address emerging trends and issues. The new question topics are listed below.

- gender
- minority official language educational rights
- Veteran and military service
- membership within a Métis organization or Settlement
- enrolment under an Inuit land claims agreement
- multiple modes of transportation
- main reason respondent did not work whole year
- main reason respondent worked mostly part time
- shelter costs—band housing (Form 2A-R only)

### Other changes

In addition to new content, revisions were made to some returning content from 2016 (and 2011, in the case of religion) to improve relevance and data quality, as well as to address content issues that surfaced during the 2016 Census.

Some 2016 content is no longer required for the 2021 Census. In 2017, the federal government amended the *Statistics Act* (Bill C-36) to render census records public 92 years after collection. This eliminated a 2016 question that asked respondents for permission to send their data to Library and Archives Canada. The 2016 Census also included content on farm operators that is no longer required by the Census of Agriculture.

## 2021 CENSUS QUESTIONNAIRE DETAILS

# 1

### Address and names of usual residents

The goal of the census is to enumerate the entire population of Canada at a fixed point in time. The census questionnaire includes questions and instructions to determine the person's sole or main residence. This location is then used in all data products by geographic area. It is also used to identify people who live together in the same dwelling—an important aspect of census data.

### RETURNING CONTENT FROM 2016

#### Address

The address fields on the 2021 Census paper questionnaire will be slightly different from those on the 2016 Census questionnaire. The email address field has been removed from the paper questionnaire, although it remains on the online questionnaire.

The email address field was removed from the paper questionnaire because the paper questionnaire data captured in 2016 showed unacceptable error rates in optical character recognition. There is no real way to correct these errors other than by using universal manual data capture, which is cost prohibitive.

The space freed up by removing the email question was used to lengthen the civic number and suffix field and the apartment field.

Results of the 2019 Census Test indicated that the changes tested well.

#### Coverage (usual residents)

It is extremely important to minimize coverage errors (both undercoverage and overcoverage) in the census. The coverage section of the census questionnaire is designed to help Canadians correctly enumerate themselves during self-response. It starts by asking the respondent to enter the number of people staying at that address on Census Day and to list them by providing their first and last names.

Next, a few questions are used to clarify any ambiguous situations (e.g., individuals who are staying at the address temporarily, residents of another country who are visiting or government representatives of another country). There is also a question on whether the respondent left out anyone because they were not sure if that person should be included. In the online questionnaire, follow-up questions are then used to help the respondent determine whether the person in doubt should be included. These follow-up questions ask about the situation of the person (e.g., a student, a child in joint custody, a person who has one or more other residences). The decision whether to include the person is based on the situation of the person and the answers provided to the follow-up questions.

## NEW COVERAGE CONTENT

To test further improvements to the coverage section in the online questionnaire, four changes were tested during the 2019 Census Test.

The first change is that when a respondent goes back into the questionnaire and changes their answer to reduce the household size, an open-ended question asking for the reason will now be asked. This change will allow for the characteristics of the people dropped to be evaluated and for a follow-up to be conducted with these households to help reduce undercoverage.

The second change is for when a respondent indicates that at least one person listed is a resident of another country visiting Canada. A new subquestion will be asked to clarify whether that person is in-scope for the census (e.g., holder of a work or study permit). In past census cycles, these persons were all deemed out-of-scope unless clarification was obtained through a follow-up. Results from the census test show that this question helps the respondent determine who to include and reduces the number of necessary follow-ups.

The third change is a new question asking whether a respondent has listed someone they are not sure should be included (in addition to the existing question asking whether they did not list someone because they were unsure). The goal is to use this new question and subsequent subquestions to properly determine the in-scope status of people already listed and to reduce overcoverage. According to the results of the census test, this additional question will help reduce overcoverage.

The fourth change is to the order of the categories for the situation of the person. This question is triggered only when a respondent indicates that they are unsure about including or excluding a person. The list of categories was updated according to the frequencies observed in the last census. It now starts with the most common categories. Additionally, a new category of “foster child” was added, as it was one of the most frequent write-ins in the “other—specify” category in the last census. This change reduces the number of instances where respondents select “other—specify.” Results of the census test showed a decrease in these cases, which in turn decreased the number of necessary follow-ups.

Following the analysis of the census test results, a recommendation was made to adopt all four changes for the coverage section of the 2021 Census online questionnaire.

# 2

## Demographic concepts

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Demography content is essential to enumerate the population and provide population counts that form the base of the Demographic Estimates Program. The census counts and demographic estimates are used to calculate federal–provincial fiscal transfers and are required by more than 30 acts and 25 statutes and regulations. Demography content on the questionnaire includes questions on sex at birth, gender and family status. These data are essential for gender-based analyses and to determine the living arrangements of Canadians, as well as their family size and composition. This information can be used to determine societal changes in family structure. For example, the census is the only national source of data on foster children. The census demographic and family status data are vital to the national statistical infrastructure, as they are used as a benchmark in other Statistics Canada surveys (e.g., the Labour Force Survey [LFS]) and by other survey organizations.

### NEW DEMOGRAPHY CONTENT

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In June 2017, Bill C-16 was passed by parliament, adding gender expression and identity as protected grounds to the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and the *Criminal Code*. In 2018, the federal budget allocated funds for the creation of the Centre for Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Statistics, placing an emphasis on the need for data on the non-binary and transgender population.

In the 2016 Census and in other Statistics Canada surveys, some Canadians expressed dissatisfaction with the question on sex, which gave people only two response options: male and female.

As a result, Statistics Canada released a revised sex at birth variable and a new gender variable and classification in April 2018 to better reflect how Canadians describe themselves and address information gaps on Canada's transgender population (including the non-binary population) while maintaining the same high quality standards and historical comparability of the data.

The revised sex at birth variable and the new gender variable are consistent with the Government of Canada's direction to modernize sex and gender information practices.

Sex at birth and gender are distinct concepts, but they are interrelated. Sex at birth refers to physical attributes, while gender is a multidimensional concept that has psychological, social and behavioural aspects. Gender is a reflection of how individuals describe themselves at the time of the survey (e.g., as a man, woman or non-binary), and it can change over time.

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## TESTING RESULTS

The 2019 Census Test involved a two-step approach with the goal of measuring the transgender and non-binary population in Canada. Two questions were tested: “What was this person’s sex at birth?” and “What is this person’s gender?” The sex at birth question included two response categories: male and female. The gender question included three response categories: male, female and please specify (an open-ended category that allowed respondents to indicate the gender they identify as). The two questions were asked one after the other. This will allow Statistics Canada to address the data gap on the transgender and non-binary population while maintaining some continuity of the time series.

The questions tested well and provided plausible, consistent results. The results of the 2019 Census Test were compared with results from a national survey conducted by Statistics Canada in which the two-question approach was also implemented. The results were also compared with other data sources, including scientific studies and results from other countries.

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## DEMOGRAPHY CONTENT RETURNING FROM 2016

In an effort to simplify the question on the relationship to Person 1, the references to same-sex and opposite-sex relationships were removed from the answer categories. No information will be lost and the census will continue to produce statistics on same-sex and different-sex couples. Testing showed that this will not affect the historical comparability of the number of same-sex and different-sex couples.

# 3

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## Language

The three language questions (knowledge of official languages, languages spoken at home, mother tongue) provide information to better understand the current status and evolution of Canada’s various language groups (including official languages, Indigenous languages and immigrant languages). This information is critical for many data users, such as governments (federal, provincial, territorial, municipal), organizations that represent official language minority communities and school boards, that need to fulfill a large number of data needs, for example, to estimate the need for services in English and French or to support legislation (e.g., parts IV and VII of the *Official Languages Act*, paragraph 23(1)a of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* or Quebec’s *Charte de la langue française*).

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## LANGUAGE CONTENT RETURNING FROM 2016

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The questions on knowledge of official languages and mother tongue from 2016 will return in 2021 with no revisions.

### **Languages spoken at home**

The 2016 language content will return with minor changes to the question on languages spoken at home to reduce response burden and improve data quality. In 2016, respondents were asked what languages they spoke most often at home, followed by a question on the other languages spoken on a regular basis at home. The vast majority of individuals speak only one language at home, but all respondents had to answer both questions. To alleviate response burden and increase data quality regarding multiple responses for these individuals in 2021, the order of the questions will be reversed—the first question will ask about all languages spoken regularly at home and the question on the language spoken most often at home will be asked only to respondents who report speaking more than one language regularly at home. This change does not affect the concepts measured. The same change has been made to the question on languages used at work. This change tested well in the 2019 Census Test.

### **Mother tongue**

In addition to these changes, two alternative versions of the question on the language first learned at home in childhood and still understood were also tested following recommendations made in the report on minority language rights-holders tabled in parliament in 2017 by the Standing Committee on Official Languages. The report suggests that the current census question on the language first learned at home in childhood and still understood underestimates official language minorities because the question does not mention that multiple responses are allowed. The two test versions of the question included a note on the conditions under which respondents should provide more than one language. In both cases, the 2019 Census Test revealed an increase in multiple responses for official language minorities, mostly at the expense of minority language single responses. Overall, the test did not show a statistically significant increase in the total number of people with English in Quebec or French outside Quebec as their first language learned at home in childhood and still understood, compared with the 2016 version of the question. For this reason, and given that comparability would be affected with no clear improvement in data quality, the 2016 question will be returning in 2021.



# 4

## Minority language educational rights

### USER NEED FOR NEW CONTENT

For the first time, the Census of Population will collect in 2021 data on rights-holders' children as per section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* establishes the rights of citizens of Canada to have their children educated in their first official language. The 2017 report from the Standing Committee on Official Languages on issues related to identifying minority language rights-holders highlighted the importance of having accurate information on rights-holders to ensure the vitality of official language minority communities. The issue of estimating the number of children whose parents have the constitutional right to send them to an official language minority school is important because this right to an education in one's first official language is conditional upon numbers warranting it.

Statistics Canada has conducted extensive qualitative and quantitative testing in collaboration with its expert Advisory Committee on Language Statistics to determine how to best measure the number of children of minority language rights-holders in Canada in a way that provides information for minority rights-holders to exercise their right to an education in the minority language.

Five new questions related to language of instruction were tested to complement the information obtained from the question on the first language learned at home in childhood and still understood. Two different placements of the questions were tested: within the same section as the language questions on the short form (knowledge of official languages, languages spoken at home and mother tongue) and immediately before the education questions on the long form.

*Statistics Canada has developed a robust three-pronged strategy that will form a strong data ecosystem on minority rights-holders in Canada. This strategy includes the integration of data on rights-holders from the 2021 Census with information on parents' intentions from the 2021 postcensal survey and information on annual school enrolment from provinces and territories.*

## TESTING RESULTS

Qualitative testing showed that the first versions of the questions were not always well understood by respondents, in particular with regard to type of instruction and program differences between provinces and territories. Following qualitative testing, questions were improved, in collaboration with members of Statistics Canada's Advisory Committee on Language Statistics, to ensure they were measuring what was intended. Quantitative testing in 2019 showed that, regardless of where the questions were placed on the questionnaire, they yielded similar estimates, which indicates that respondents had a consistent understanding across different test panels. However, when these questions were grouped with education questions, the new questions on minority language rights-holders had an impact on the education questions.

The five new questions on minority language rights-holders that were added to the 2021 Census, along with the existing question on mother tongue will generate high-quality data on the population of children of rights-holders.

In addition, Statistics Canada has developed a robust three-pronged strategy that will form a strong data ecosystem on minority rights-holders in Canada. This strategy includes the integration of data on rights-holders from the 2021 Census with information on parents' intentions from the 2021 postcensal survey and information on annual school enrolment from provinces and territories.

Statistics Canada will use its methods to produce the three sets of numbers necessary for decision making on rights-holders as defined by the courts. This includes the maximum number of children eligible at the municipal level, the minimum number of children of rights-holders, including those currently registered in a minority school, and the estimated number and proportion of children whose parents intend to exercise their right to have them attend a minority language school.

# 5

## Veteran and military service

### USER NEED FOR NEW CONTENT

The federal government spends over \$4 billion annually in payments to Veterans, their families and other program recipients. Yet, in Canada, there is no comprehensive data source available that provides a complete listing of Veterans to ensure that these funds are targeted to those who are eligible. The historical records that are available consist of census records from 1951, 1961, 1971, as well as a variety of incomplete administrative data. To fill this data gap, a question on Veteran and military service was included on the questionnaire to enumerate the total number of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Veterans living in Canada. The Census questionnaire is the best tool to reach all Veterans and military personnel, as it enumerates residents of collective dwellings, including military bases, as well as hospitals and seniors' residences, where Veterans may reside. The questionnaire is also used to enumerate residents who are residing overseas temporarily at the time of the census, including CAF members and their families. Having highly reliable information on Veterans will provide meaningful insight into a broad number of policy, program and evaluation issues that affect the Veteran population. Statistics Canada and Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) will work together after the 2021 Census to keep this information up to date.

### TESTING RESULTS

The question on Veteran and military service tested well. Results from the 2019 Census Test were compared with external sources. The proportion of respondents who reported being Veterans was within the range of what was estimated by VAC using a data modelling approach based on 1971 Census data and administrative data, the proportions of male and female CAF Veterans, and their average age.

# 6

## Income

As was done for the 2016 Census, Statistics Canada will inform 2021 Census respondents that their earnings and income information will be retrieved from personal income tax and benefits files provided by the CRA. This use of administrative data provides better-quality, detailed information for small communities and populations and reduces program costs and response burden on Canadians. The census income and earnings data are used to develop and monitor the use and impact of income support programs. Businesses use income data in combination with other sociodemographic statistics to locate stores and develop new products and services. Private-sector and public-sector researchers use earnings information to study labour markets and industry patterns. These data provide income and earnings information on subpopulations (e.g., low-income families) and particularly vulnerable groups (e.g., Indigenous peoples, population groups and immigrants) at low levels of geography, as well as on the on-reserve First Nations population.

The income content for the 2021 Census will be similar to that of the 2016 Census.

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## Language

The question on knowledge of non-official languages complements the information on the linguistic diversity of Canadians by providing information on knowledge of languages other than French or English. This question—along with others—is used to track the acquisition of Indigenous languages as a second language or to estimate the acquisition of a second language other than an official language by the population. This question is a key indicator for federal, provincial and territorial programs that support the preservation and revitalization of Indigenous languages. The proposed question on knowledge of non-official languages remains unchanged from 2016.

The question about languages used at work provides important information on the use of languages outside the home, particularly in regions where many language groups coexist. This information fulfills a number of data needs, including supporting legislation (e.g., Quebec’s *Charte de la langue française* and Part V of the federal government’s *Official Languages Act*). Furthermore, federal, provincial and territorial governments use this information to analyze the business-related use of non-official languages in a global economy. These data are also used by researchers, analysts and all levels of government to monitor and analyze the socioeconomic integration of immigrants in Canada.

### Languages used at work

The language content of the 2016 Census questionnaire will be returning with only minor changes to the questions on languages used at work (similar to the change made to the question on languages spoken at home) to reduce response burden. In 2016, respondents were asked to report what language they use most often at work, followed by a question on the other languages they use on a regular basis at work. The majority of workers use only one language at work, but all respondents have to answer both questions. To reduce response burden in 2021, the order of the questions was reversed. First, the question on languages used at work on a regular basis is asked, then the question on language used most often at work is asked only to those who reported using more than one language. As was the case for languages spoken at home, this change does not impact the census concepts. This change tested well in the 2019 Census Test.

# 8

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## Activities of daily living

### USER NEED

Difficulties with activities of daily living and disability information are used to develop legislation, policies and programs. This information is also referred to when reporting to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and supports the federal *Employment Equity Act*. It will also be used to monitor the new *Accessible Canada Act*.

Non-governmental organizations rely on this information to provide support to caregivers, carry out advocacy work and set priorities. This question remains essential for conducting a follow-up survey of persons with disabilities because it is the only data source available for this purpose.

This content is returning from 2016 with a minor change to the instructional text.

# 9

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## Immigration and citizenship

Along with the information on a person's place of birth, the place of birth of their parents (used to derive generation status), Canadian citizenship status and other countries of citizenship, the census also measures variables related to immigrant status, year of immigration and immigrant admission category (e.g., economic immigrant, refugee, sponsored family). As in 2016, Statistics Canada will collect admission category and applicant type information from administrative files provided by IRCC.

In 2021, for the first time, immigrant status and year of immigration will be obtained from administrative files provided by IRCC. Information on immigration and citizenship is required by IRCC, as well as by provincial and territorial immigration departments, to develop and monitor immigration policies and programs. It is used in support of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, the *Citizenship Act*, the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*. These data provide vital information to help understand the living conditions and socioeconomic outcomes of immigrants and their children in Canada.

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## CHANGES TO RETURNING CONTENT

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### Citizenship

The 2016 citizenship question will be changed to a two-part question in 2021 to improve data quality. The 2021 version collects the same information as the 2016 version, but asks the question in two parts to clarify the two main concepts measured: Canadian citizenship status and other countries of citizenship. The format of the 2016 question—select all that apply—encouraged more single responses and may not have been clear for some respondents. The results of the 2019 Census Test indicate improved overall data quality for the updated citizenship question, particularly for key measures such as Canadian citizenship status, which is essential for deriving immigrant status and multiple citizenships.

### Place of birth of parents

The question on the place of birth of parents is used to determine the country in which each of the respondent's parents was born. The main purpose of this question is to derive the generation status of the respondent and establish whether the person is in the first, second, or third generation or more. Generation status provides information on the diversity of Canada's population and makes it possible to study how the children of immigrants (second generation) are integrating into Canadian society.

The 2021 version of this question will no longer include the terms “father” and “mother” to make the question more inclusive of different family types and reduce response burden. In addition, the recommendations for the 2020 Censuses of Population and Housing from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe indicate that the term “parent” should refer to the legal parent rather than the biological parent. The results of the 2019 Census Test indicate that the change to the question produces similar results for key measures such as generation status.

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## 10 Ethnocultural diversity

The ethnocultural diversity content of the census consists of questions on ethnic or cultural origins, population groups, and religion. These questions reflect the longstanding and widespread demand for information about the origins and diversity of Canada's population, as well as the need to provide information on the population designated as visible minorities, in support of the *Employment Equity Act*. Furthermore, the data are used to inform federal multiculturalism programs and policies and support the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* and the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. This information is also used by various community organizations, such as religious denominations and cultural associations.



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## ETHNOCULTURAL DIVERSITY CONTENT RETURNING FROM 2016 AND 2011

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Some changes were made to the content returning for the 2021 Census.

### **Ethnic origin**

Ethnic origin is a complex topic with changes in responses over time because of changes in how respondents perceive their background. Various factors can influence responses over time, such as a respondent's knowledge of their family history.

In previous censuses, respondents were provided with examples to help them answer the ethnic or cultural origins question. A long-established methodology, based on the most frequently reported ethnic and cultural groups of the past census, was used to choose which examples would appear on the questionnaire. Statistics Canada released a technical report in July 2019<sup>2</sup> that demonstrated—in detail—the resulting bias associated with examples on the ethnic origin question, particularly for those of Jewish and Canadian origin. The approach for 2021 is to **not** provide a preselected list of examples of ethnic or cultural origins within the question. It is anticipated that 76% of respondents will complete the census online, so the question will provide a direct link to a comprehensive list of examples of origins to which respondents can quickly refer. The link will also appear on the paper questionnaire.

The results of the 2019 Census Test are in line with what was shown in Statistics Canada's technical report—examples in the question itself have a significant prompt effect regardless of whether they are presented in a list beside the question or within an explanation. This was generally the case for origins tested as examples, including Canadian and Jewish.

The 2021 version that was tested without examples in the question, but with an extensive list of examples in a linked list along with an explanation of types of responses, yielded more varied and diverse responses and did not introduce the bias that was found in the versions with examples listed in the question itself.

### **Religion**

In the census, religion refers to a person's self-identification as having a connection or affiliation with a religious denomination, group, body, sect, or other religiously defined community or system of belief. Religion is not limited to formal membership in a religious organization or group.

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2. Statistics Canada. 2019. "[Technical report on changes in response related to the census ethnic origin question: Focus on Jewish origins, 2016 Census integrated with the 2011 National Household Survey.](#)" Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 89-657-X.

Data on religious affiliation help measure the diversity in Canada. They are used by organizations, such as religious congregations, government departments, school boards, researchers and non-profit organizations, to assist in activities, such as planning infrastructure (e.g., religious buildings or schools) and programs for ethnoreligious clients.

The approach for 2021 is to continue to include the same examples on the questionnaire that were used in 2011, as well as to provide a link to a more comprehensive list of examples of denominations and religions to which respondents can quickly refer.

Providing examples of denominations and religions within the question helps by prompting respondents for a certain level of detail in their responses. Without this prompt, responses such as Christian would increase at the expense of responses of various denominations of Christianity (e.g., Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant). This would affect historical comparability for many denominations and make the data less useful to key stakeholders, such as separate school boards and the denominations themselves.

Meanwhile, providing a link to a more comprehensive list of examples of denominations and religions was shown in the 2019 Census Test to prompt respondents to report more detailed responses for both Christian and non-Christian religions, particularly those not included in the list of examples included in the questionnaire. Lastly, because people typically report only one religion, examples will not prompt them to report one religion at the expense of another (unlike with ethnic origin).

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## 11 Population groups

The primary purpose of the population group question is to derive counts for the visible minority population. The term “visible minority” refers to whether a person is designated as belonging to the visible minority population, as defined by the *Employment Equity Act*. Data on Canada’s population groups are used by governments, businesses, community groups, health care providers, researchers and a variety of organizations throughout the country to ensure equal opportunities for everyone. The data can also be used by employers to compare the characteristics of their workforce with the characteristics of the population living in the same area.

The wording of the 2021 version of this question will be the same as the 2016 version. This will allow for the visible minority population to be derived in accordance with the *Employment Equity Act* and, as a result, maintain data quality and historical comparability.

# 12

## First Nations people, Métis and Inuit

These questions can be used to identify Indigenous populations—Indigenous group, Registered or Treaty Indian status, membership in a First Nation or Indian band, membership within a Métis organization or Settlement, and enrolment under an Inuit land claims agreement.

These data can be used to support the programs and policies of First Nations, Métis and Inuit governments and organizations. These data are also used by federal and provincial governments to support evidence-based decision making that benefits First Nations people, Métis and Inuit under land claim and self-government agreements, accords, acts, and treaties. Lastly, these data are used to understand the socioeconomic outcomes of First Nations people, Métis and Inuit.

The 2021 Census includes two new questions for Métis and Inuit to address information gaps. These new questions strengthen the suite of census questions for Indigenous peoples, provide additional detail for the Inuit and Métis populations, and will support emerging policies and programs.

### NEW CONTENT

#### Membership within a Métis organization or Settlement

##### USER NEED FOR NEW CONTENT

The 2016 Census did not distinguish between Métis who are citizens or members of a Métis government, Settlement or organization and those who are not. Stakeholder engagement identified this as a valuable addition to the census, particularly in the context of a rapidly growing Métis population and an evolving Métis legal landscape. To address this issue, a new question on membership within a Métis organization or Settlement has been added to the 2021 Census questionnaire. With this new question, it will be possible to differentiate between citizens of Métis governments that have signed the *Canada–Métis Nation Accord* and Métis individuals outside these entities. Signatories of the *Canada–Métis Nation Accord* have funding agreements with several federal government departments.

## TESTING RESULTS

There were minimal differences between the two tested versions of the question on respondents who are citizens of Métis governments that have signed the *Canada–Métis Nation Accord*. The version selected for the census received a broader range of write-in Métis organization data, had lower non-response rates and showed fewer signs of misinterpretation. This version also received fewer inconsistent responses (e.g., names of countries or out-of-scope organizations).

In response to feedback concerning the increased response burden imposed by additional questions for Indigenous populations, only respondents who identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit will be asked this question on the 2021 Census online questionnaire.

### Enrolment under an Inuit land claims agreement

#### USER NEED FOR NEW CONTENT

The 2016 Census did not collect information on whether respondents were enrolled under—or beneficiaries of—an Inuit land claims agreement. Canada has obligations to Inuit under land claims agreements and data are needed to support evidence-based decision making by both Canadian and Inuit governments and organizations. To address this gap, a new question on enrolment under Inuit land claims agreements has been added.

## TESTING RESULTS

There were no significant differences observed between the two versions tested, and non-response was low. Because the test was not conducted in Inuit Nunangat, the analysis of the results was limited to a small number of respondents who reported being Inuit land claims agreement beneficiaries.

In response to feedback concerning the increased response burden imposed by additional questions for Indigenous populations, only respondents who identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit will be asked this question on the 2021 Census online questionnaire.

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## INDIGENOUS CONTENT RETURNING FROM 2016

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The 2016 Census question on Indigenous (Aboriginal) group asked “Is this person an Aboriginal person, that is, First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit)?” Regional discussions—which included discussions with Indigenous organizations and communities, as well as with national Indigenous organizations—found that Indigenous peoples generally prefer to use a distinctions-based approach (i.e., First Nations, Métis, Inuit) rather than a collective term, such as “Aboriginal” or “Indigenous.” A distinctions-based approach is also consistent with the new fiscal relationship model: nation to nation, government to government and crown to Inuit.

For the Indigenous group question, weighted distributions of responses at the national level were similar between the three versions tested: using the collective term “Aboriginal,” using the collective term “Indigenous,” and using no collective term. Furthermore, estimate differences by province were generally not statistically significant.

# 13

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## Mobility (one year and five year)

Mobility data help to understand the internal mobility of Canadians. These data are used to plan postsecondary enrolment and identify areas of growth and decline for infrastructure planning. The questions on this topic are essential determinants of the intercensal population estimates used in the *Federal–Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act*, as required by Finance Canada. Furthermore, these questions are required by Statistics Canada to assess the overall quality of the census counts and estimate the number of people who were not counted.

There were no revisions made to 2021 Census content returning from 2016.

# 14

## Education

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The education questions provide information on the education (e.g., high school, postsecondary), field and location of study, and recent school attendance of residents of Canada.

This information—coupled with other information, such as labour market status, income and ethnocultural variables—is widely used by federal departments (e.g., Employment and Social Development Canada [ESDC], IRCC, Indigenous Services Canada [ISC]), provincial and territorial governments, school boards, educational institutions, and researchers for labour market analysis and education planning. At the federal level, education data are used by ESDC for policy and program development around skills development and the labour market and for programs such as the Canada Student Loans Program. Education data are fundamental for studies on key groups of policy interest, such as immigrants, First Nations people, Métis, Inuit, population groups and official language minorities. For example, ESDC and IRCC use education data to assess the labour market outcomes of immigrants, especially those with a postsecondary education. Information on major fields of study can be used to help understand the supply of skills in particular areas of the Canadian labour market and the occupations of people with different fields of study. Data on location of study allow for an analysis of the integration of immigrants with foreign credentials into the Canadian labour market.

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### EDUCATION CONTENT RETURNING FROM 2016

The 2021 education content will be similar to the 2016 content. The main change made was an improvement to the school attendance question to increase data quality and reduce response burden. This was achieved by splitting the question into two parts (with the second part answered only by those who had attended school recently) and by modifying the wording to further clarify the reference period. This will help improve data quality, especially among older Canadians.

In addition, modifications were made to the instructional text for the questions on educational credentials to make it clear that foreign credentials should also be reported. In the instructional text for the high school question on the French questionnaire, the examples of high school equivalency certificates were improved. Furthermore, changes to the online questionnaire allowed for respondents to provide more detailed responses to the major field of study question. This will increase data quality for this variable.



# 15

## Labour market information

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The labour questions are used to determine the labour market status of Canadians. They provide information on whether Canadians are employed, unemployed or not in the labour force. Employment information, along with other census content, is used to assess the economic conditions of communities and vulnerable populations such as youth, Indigenous peoples, population groups, immigrants and official language minorities. Detailed industry and occupation data for small geographic areas—available only through the census—are required to assess changing skill needs and shortages, which is a key priority for all levels of government. At the federal level, labour information supports programs and policies related to the Employment Equity Regulations and Employment Insurance Regulations. Industry and occupation data obtained through the census are used to update Statistics Canada classifications (North American Industry Classification System and National Occupation Classification) and are vital to the relevance of the information produced by Statistics Canada through its survey programs. The questions on employment activities provide information on labour market participants, particularly whether they work full time or part time; whether they work full year or only part of the year; and whether they are employees, self-employed or unpaid family workers.

The 2021 Census will contain two new labour questions.

### NEW LABOUR CONTENT

Canada's labour market is changing. The extent to which this is affecting individual Canadians and the broader society and economy is not well understood. To better capture labour market trends and their impact on employment quality and labour market attachment—such as underemployment and involuntary part-time work, especially among vulnerable populations—new questions will be added to the 2021 Census questionnaire, including reasons for working part time only and reasons for not working full year. These questions will provide information on precarious work for subpopulations—such as low-income families and particularly vulnerable groups, such as Indigenous peoples, population groups and immigrants—at low levels of geography, as well as for the on-reserve First Nations population.

According to the results of the 2019 Census Test, the two new questions performed well and produced good-quality data.

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## LABOUR CONTENT RETURNING FROM 2016

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Two important revisions to labour questions returning from 2016 were made for the 2021 Census. The first was to the question on class of worker to harmonize it with the LFS question. The second change was to the question on the number of weeks worked during the previous year to clarify that it includes paid vacation.

Minor changes were also made to other labour questions to update examples and instructions, such as adding the term “digital” and streamlining the text.

Results from the 2019 Census Test yielded the expected results—the results of the revised class of worker question were more comparable to the LFS than to the 2016 version of the question, and the proportion of respondents who reported working full year (49 to 52 weeks) increased significantly in the revised version of the question compared with the 2016 version, indicating that fewer respondents included paid vacation when answering the 2016 version of the question.

According to the results of the 2019 Census Test, the minor revisions made to the content did not negatively impact the results.

# 16

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## Commuting

Commuting data support numerous federal, provincial and municipal programs related to infrastructure and public transportation and are used to measure Canada’s sustainable development and environmental goals related to commuting. The census is the only national source of data on commuting, including data on mode of commuting, distance to work, time leaving for work and commuting time.

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## NEW CONTENT

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### Multiple modes of transportation

Previous censuses collected only respondents’ main mode of commuting. Many stakeholders, including municipalities and transit associations, stated that many commuters use more than one mode of transportation to get to work, on a daily or regular basis (e.g., walk and bus, car and bike, car and bus). To fill this gap, the 2021 Census questionnaire includes a new question on multiple modes of transportation. The 2016 question about main mode of transportation will remain to retain comparability.

According to the results of the 2019 Census Test, the new question performed well and produced good-quality data. The data collected for main mode of commuting also remained comparable with previous census data. This indicates that the new question on multiple modes of transportation that preceded it did not negatively impact the results.

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## COMMUTING CONTENT RETURNING FROM 2016

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In 2021, only people who are employed during the census reference week will be asked the questions on commuting. People recently in the labour force but not currently employed will now be excluded. This change will reduce response burden for a population for which the census did not disseminate commuting data.

There are also slight wording changes to some returning questions on commuting (working from home, address information, number of people sharing a ride to work, time leaving for work, commute duration). For example, the question on vehicle occupancy was revised to clarify that only workers should be counted in the number of car passengers. The wording makes it clear that respondents should exclude any non-workers in the car.

According to the results of the 2019 Census Test, these revisions improved data quality. The minor wording changes were evaluated and indicated that comparability with previous cycles remained.

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## 17

### Expenditures

The questions on child care expenditures and child or spousal support payments have been included on census questionnaires since 2011 and support the production of low-income statistics based on the Market Basket Measure (MBM). The Government of Canada announced its Poverty Reduction Strategy in August 2018 and made the MBM Canada's official measure of poverty. Having these questions on the census enables MBM statistics to be calculated in great geographic detail every five years.

The expenditures content of the 2021 Census will be similar to the 2016 content.

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## 18

### Housing

The housing questions provide information on the housing stock in Canada. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) is a key user of this information. CMHC supports activities related to the *National Housing Act* and other housing-related programs. The Government of Canada, in collaboration with CMHC and as part of the National Housing Strategy, makes significant investments to address housing needs in Canada. It has earmarked more than \$55 billion over 10 years to build stronger communities and help Canadians across the country access safe, affordable homes. IRCC uses this information to assess immigrant communities' integration into Canada and housing affordability for immigrant families.

Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) uses census housing data to gain insights into housing needs and trends over time, assess the effectiveness of its programs; project future housing demands; assess the cost implications of housing problems now and into the future; and inform overall planning, accountability and monitoring activities. The housing questions are one of the four components of the Community Well-Being index, a critical indicator tool devised by ISC to monitor well-being trends in First Nations, Inuit and non-Indigenous communities. Measuring shelter costs and affordability for all housing on reserves and in northern communities is of particular importance.

Housing information is also used in conjunction with Ontario's *Housing Services Act, 2011* and New Brunswick's *Community Planning Act* (section 77). Governments use this information to measure levels of crowding in dwellings and develop housing programs. Information on the age of dwellings and the need for repairs is used by municipalities to develop neighbourhood improvement programs. These data—in conjunction with data on other census topics such as Indigenous peoples and income—are used to establish affordable, suitable and adequate housing targets and evaluate housing needs. The information on housing and shelter costs is also used for urban and regional planning, for housing strategies, and for outreach and emergency shelter programs. Data obtained from these are also used to derive shelter costs to calculate the shelter cost component of the MBM thresholds.

The housing content of the 2021 Census will include new and revised content returning from 2016.

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## NEW HOUSING CONTENT

### **Shelter costs—band housing (Form 2A-R)**

Form 2A-R is used in northern, remote and reserve areas only. It contains the census questionnaire content with examples adapted for remote regions and First Nations communities. In 2016, there was an additional question on band housing. For the 2021 Census, the 2A-R questionnaire will include a new question on user or occupancy fees on reserves.

For 2016, complete shelter costs were collected only for owner and renter households. Regular use or occupancy fees that are equivalent to rent (for renters) or mortgage payments and property taxes (for owners) were not collected for those living in band housing. Housing affordability research could not be conducted for on-reserve populations and households. However, the enhancements made to the 2A-R questionnaire for 2021 will make it possible for this research to be conducted moving forward.

Through discussions held with ISC, CMHC and Indigenous Liaison Advisors, Statistics Canada identified the need for this data gap to be addressed. The question was developed and refined through qualitative testing, which showed that respondents understood the question well.

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## HOUSING CONTENT RETURNING FROM 2016

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For the 2021 Census paper questionnaire, the question on household maintainers—which identifies who in the household pays the rent or mortgage, taxes, electricity, etc.—will be moved from the household-level section to the person-level section, with a slight wording change, to match the layout of the online questionnaire.

According to the results of the 2019 Census Test, moving this question to the person-level section of the questionnaire results in more complete responses, including more frequent reporting of more than one individual in the household contributing to expenditures. This reflects a better understanding of the question.

The rest of the housing content of the 2021 Census is the same as the 2016 content.

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## NEW CONTENT TESTED BUT NOT INCLUDED IN THE 2021 CENSUS

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### **Self-reported health**

Statistics Canada tested a question on health status that asked “In general, would you say this person’s health is excellent/very good/good/fair/poor?” The 2019 Census Test applied these questions in a context that allowed a respondent to report on their perception of the health of others in the household.

Self-reported health is highly correlated with a person’s actual health and can be used as a predictor of morbidity, mortality and service needs. Including this question on the census questionnaire could have provided information about vulnerable subpopulations—such as Indigenous peoples, immigrants, youth and the elderly—at detailed levels of geography. It is generally challenging for surveys to profile the health of subpopulations at detailed levels of geography.

As part of the census dissemination plan, the planned objective was to use the census health question as an official indicator to inform various stakeholders and partners on the health status of various subpopulations for different levels of geography.

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## 2019 CENSUS TEST RESULTS

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The test results for the general health question were compared with those of the 2018 Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) and the 2016/2017 Canadian Health Measures Survey (CHMS). The 2019 Census Test distributions of the general health question were comparable to those of the CCHS and CHMS when the health response categories were split into two dichotomous groups (i.e., excellent/very good/good and fair/poor). These are the groupings typically used for analysis and modelling.

While the health status question worked well as a dichotomous variable and addressed stakeholder needs, it was shown to have an impact on the subsequent activities of daily living (ADL) content. The health question was asked before the ADL questions on the 2019 Census Test, resulting in more respondents reporting an activity limitation, thereby increasing the number of people in-scope for the postcensal Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD). Because the CSD survey frame is built using a group of people with different characteristics compared with its previous cycle, the 2022 CSD may not be comparable with the 2017 CSD. Statistics Canada conducted analyses on how to mitigate the potential effects on the CSD. Although there were options available to reduce the impact on historical comparability, it was not possible to estimate the degree to which the impact would be mitigated by any of these options, nor could comparability be guaranteed.

ESDC has an existing legislative mandate by which the comparability of the ADL questions is critical, whereas there is currently no legislative requirement for a general health question. Because of the significant impact on the performance of the ADL questions, as well as the need for comparable data for the CSD, a health status question was not proposed for the 2021 Census.

### Education

New questions on a respondent's most recent credential and the associated field of study, location of study and year of completion, and digital skills learned during the completion of their most recent credential were tested. An expanded list of educational credentials, including college bachelor's degrees and college graduate or postgraduate certificates, was also tested, as were changes to the terminology used for other educational credentials.

There were data quality concerns for the questions with the expanded list of educational credentials. For example, qualitative and quantitative tests both indicated that many respondents were unfamiliar with college bachelor's degrees and college postgraduate certificates. This resulted in response errors, with university bachelor's degrees and college certificates or diplomas (other than college postgraduate certificates) being commonly reported in these categories.



The new questions on most recent credential did not perform well in the quantitative test. Response rates were low for these questions on the paper questionnaire and there was evidence of response error on both the online and paper questionnaires. For example, the proportion of respondents with credentials more recent than their highest credential did not align with the information from other data sources. The data for the new questions on year of completion and digital skills were consistent with other variables, but adding the question to the census as tested would have required the question on most recent credential to be included as well.

According to the census test results, these questions were not proposed for the 2021 Census. Data on bachelor's degrees and postgraduate certificates from public Canadian colleges and information on most recent credential can be obtained from the Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform.

## **Labour**

A new question on the main reason for not looking for paid work was tested. This question was not proposed for the 2021 Census for two main reasons: a similar question is asked in the monthly LFS, and the benefit of including it on the census was not deemed to be greater than the associated response burden.

A new question on the main reason for working (for those aged 60 and older) was also tested. This question was not proposed for the 2021 Census because it appears to have a seasonal component. Because a similar version of this question was recently added to the LFS and because the LFS is collected monthly, the LFS results will be more interpretable.

## **Place where commute starts**

A new question was tested to capture a supplementary address for commute to work. This was for individuals whose commute does not start from their principal residence and gives them the opportunity to identify another location. However, the new supplementary address question did not work as intended.

Nearly half of the addresses provided were the same as the individual's place of work address, which had already been reported in a previous question. This reflects a general misunderstanding of the new question.



# 5 DATA COLLECTION

The Census of Population is the largest and most high-profile activity undertaken by Statistics Canada. Because it involves a count of the country's population as a whole and informs decisions that impact the well-being of Canadians, the census always draws active public interest and intense media attention.

Because of the importance of the census, Statistics Canada's collection procedures are designed to enable respondents to complete their census questionnaires quickly and easily while ensuring that high-data quality are obtained.

## INVITING HOUSEHOLDS TO COMPLETE A CENSUS QUESTIONNAIRE

Statistics Canada uses a wave methodology throughout the collection period to remind the majority of Canadians to complete their census questionnaires. Other collection methods target specific populations.

The first wave takes place during the first week of collection when an invitation letter is sent out to most dwellings across the country. This first letter provides instructions on how to complete the questionnaire online with a secure access code, the date by which the questionnaire should be completed, as well as the census website address and toll-free Census Help Line number for support.

During the second week of collection, a reminder is sent to households that have not yet completed their questionnaire. This letter also provides instructions on how to complete the questionnaire, as well as the census website address and toll-free Census Help Line number for support.

By the third week of collection, households that have not yet completed a questionnaire will receive a final notice informing them that a Statistics Canada representative will be contacting their household or contacting them by phone to complete the questionnaire.

Statistics Canada subsequently conducts follow-up activities with non-responding households to complete their questionnaires. An emphasis will be placed on telephone follow-ups, with any in-person follow-ups conducted only if absolutely necessary, with appropriate safety precautions.

While it remains Statistics Canada's preference for Canadians to complete their census questionnaire online, respondents can request a paper questionnaire at any time during collection.

In rare cases, people refuse to complete their census questionnaire. Because completing a census questionnaire is required by law, refusal cases may be referred to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada (PPSC) at the end of collection. Once a case is referred to the PPSC, the decision to lay charges and the overall case management rest exclusively with the PPSC.

In 2018, the provision regarding the penalty of imprisonment for refusing to provide information or impeding access to information was removed from the *Statistics Act*. This reflects the general consensus in Canada that imprisonment for not completing mandatory surveys—including the census—is disproportionate to the offence. The fine for failure to respond to census questions can be up to \$500.

## RECRUITING STAFF

Hiring trustworthy people is key to the success of the agency.

Statistics Canada recruits employees for the census under the provisions of the *Statistics Act* and the *Public Service Employment Act*. To be eligible for census employment, candidates must apply online, pass an application screening process and reference check, and have a Government of Canada security reliability assessment conducted.

In addition, all employees are sworn to secrecy when they are hired. This oath remains in effect for life, even after employment has ended.

## Enumeration of private dwellings

The starting point for census collection is the dwelling. Most private dwellings receive a bilingual invitation letter by mail that includes a secure access code to allow them to complete their census questionnaire online. For a smaller portion of dwellings, census employees drop off a package that includes an invitation letter with a secure access code.

For most private dwellings, respondents are asked to complete the questionnaire for themselves and all members of the household. Private dwelling refers to a separate set of living quarters with a private entrance from outside the building or from a common hall, lobby, vestibule or stairway inside the building.



## Remote, northern and reserve communities

In past censuses, remote, northern and reserve communities were enumerated using a traditional canvasser approach to data collection, where a Statistics Canada employee would administer the questionnaire in the dwelling of the respondent between February and March. Sometimes this would be done using employees dispatched to the community from southern parts of Canada. This approach will change in 2021 as a result of changes made to protect public health in these communities because the Census of Population will be conducted during a period when there is unlikely to be a vaccine for COVID-19 available. Statistics Canada will work closely with communities affected and provincial/territorial authorities to implement this new approach.

In these areas, self-response will be permitted for the first time in 2021. The approach to collection in remote, northern and reserve communities will involve the distribution of e-questionnaire invitations or paper questionnaires by Statistics Canada enumerators hired locally and following a protocol that avoids entry into the dwelling.

Furthermore, to facilitate these changes, enumeration in these communities will no longer take place in February and March, but instead will coincide with the core operations of the census between April and July. However, the new period of enumeration will be chosen carefully, taking into account that traditional hunting, fishing, trapping and other activities may take place in the later months.

## **Collective dwellings**

Collective dwellings are dwellings of a commercial, institutional or communal nature. These are the usual residence of many Canadians. Examples include lodging or rooming houses, hotels, motels, tourist establishments, nursing homes, hospitals, staff residences, military bases, work camps, correctional or custodial facilities, and group homes.

Statistics Canada takes a practical and contactless approach to enumerating people living in collective dwellings, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, no enumerator will be permitted to visit or enter most collective dwellings, especially those housing residents who are vulnerable to COVID-19, such as seniors' residences, hospitals and correctional institutions. All contact will be done by phone with the administrator of the collective dwelling, who will provide them with the key information required on each resident.

## **Follow-up with non-respondents**

In 2021, Statistics Canada will introduce new protocols to ensure the safety of Canadians in the nation's fight against COVID-19. All attempts will be made to get Canadians to respond to the census without the involvement of a Statistics Canada employee. Follow-ups with households that do not respond will still be required, but these will be done primarily by telephone. The enumerator will have increased access to the phone numbers of respondents so that as much follow-up as possible can be done over the phone. A Statistics Canada employee will be sent in person to a dwelling for non-response follow-up only when absolutely necessary, and a new no-contact protocol will be followed.

Under this protocol, no interviews will be conducted inside the respondent's dwelling. Statistics Canada will be conducting a contactless census, meaning that these interviews will instead be physically distanced and may involve the use of personal protective equipment for the safety of both the respondents and employees.

## **People living abroad**

Canadian officials who are working outside Canada (e.g., working overseas in embassies or for the government) are included in the census count. This includes federal and provincial government employees and their families, as well as members of the Canadian Armed Forces and their families.

Statistics Canada coordinates the enumeration activities of these groups with designated representatives from departments and agencies across the country.

## **Alternate languages and formats**

For the 2021 Census of Population, the questionnaires are available in English and French. However, reference material—including the questions and explanations of why they are asked—is available in a number of other languages, including Indigenous languages. Respondents can obtain a copy of these materials by visiting the census website or calling the Census Help Line.

The questionnaire is available in large print, and reference material (including the census questions and explanations) is available in braille, and audio and video formats.

The large-print version of the short-form and long-form questionnaires is printed on legal-sized paper in a large font size and has space to enumerate two individuals rather than five (for the long-form questionnaire).

Respondents who need assistance to complete the questionnaire—such as people who are blind, have vision loss, have reading difficulties, are deaf or have hearing loss—can contact the Census Help Line by phone or teletype machine.

## **VERIFICATION INITIATIVES**

Statistics Canada takes a number of important steps to ensure that the census results will be of very high quality. The following activities are undertaken before and during the census collection period to increase quality and accuracy:

### **Failed edit follow-up**

This step helps resolve cases of missing and incomplete responses on the census short-form questionnaire. Respondents are contacted by phone to collect the missing information or fix inconsistencies.

### **Apartment occupancy verification**

Apartment occupancy verification is used to determine whether non-responding units in an apartment building were occupied on Census Day. In preparation for this operation, tracing may be required to collect the contact information of managers or superintendents of large apartment buildings.

### **Dwelling occupancy verification**

Dwelling occupancy verification is used to identify dwellings that are unoccupied as close to Census Day as possible. This helps improve the accuracy of the census count.



## Dwelling Classification Survey

Following census collection, a survey is conducted on a sample of dwellings classified as either unoccupied or non-response by census employees during field follow-up operations. This step confirms the occupancy status of these dwellings to ensure the census data are of high quality.

## EASING RESPONSE BURDEN

### Supporting online collection

Online collection of the Census of Population aligns with the Government of Canada strategy that calls for a digital-first approach to government services.

Since its introduction in 2001, the online census questionnaire has only increased in popularity. In 2016, 68.3% of private occupied dwellings completed the census online, up from 53.9% in 2011 and 18.3% in 2006. In 2021, the objective is to further increase that percentage.

Online questionnaires provide cost savings and data quality gains over paper questionnaires. The quality of the data obtained from online questionnaires is also higher because there are prompts for respondents when invalid data are entered or when responses to questions are missing. In the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic, responding online is the best way to stay home and stay safe while fulfilling your census obligation. Whenever follow-up activities are required, Statistics Canada will be using practises aligned with a contactless census.

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The online census questionnaire prefills fields based on information provided by the respondent at the start of the questionnaire (e.g., names of household members). This reduces the likelihood of one member's answers being recorded under another person's name. Automated skips alleviate response burden by skipping questions that are not applicable. The online questionnaires also contain additional information about the census questions to help respondents who require more information. The online long-form questionnaire allows respondents to exit the questionnaire and return to complete it later.

Completing the questionnaire online is an easy, secure and convenient option that can be used anywhere, anytime. The latest technologies are used to ensure that Statistics Canada's strict security and confidentiality requirements are met. The online census questionnaire does not require preregistration or involve lengthy download processes.

## **Designing a device-friendly census**

In 2016, the Government of Canada adopted a mobile-friendly approach for all websites to prepare for the increase in mobile users in Canada. The 2016 Census online questionnaires were scalable, i.e., they were designed to be adapted according to the type of device used by the respondent.

In 2016, among households that completed an online questionnaire, 79.6% used a personal computer, 12.9% used a tablet and 7.5% used a smartphone to submit their census questionnaire online. In 2021, the trend toward mobile device use is expected to grow, and developers have designed online forms using the same device-friendly principles.

## **Leveraging administrative data**

Statistics Canada uses administrative data (data provided to other government organizations and made available to Statistics Canada under strict rules of confidentiality) to supplement its statistical programs. For example, in the 2016 Census, income data for all respondents was provided by the Canada Revenue Agency instead of including income questions on the long-form questionnaire.

Information obtained from administrative sources is often more accurate than information collected through survey responses, as using administrative data reduces some reporting errors. In addition, some administrative data sources are used to validate and certify census results.

The use of administrative data reduces collection costs and response burden. By increasingly using administrative data, Canadians are spared from supplying the same information they have already provided to another government department or agency.



Statistics Canada is committed to ensuring that high-quality information on Canadian communities from coast to coast to coast is easily accessible, available in a range of media formats and published as quickly as possible.

To achieve this, the millions of census questionnaires received electronically and by mail undergo a series of carefully designed and monitored processing steps. Statistical design, quality assurance and validation underpin every stage of data collection, processing and analysis.

## RECEIPT AND REGISTRATION

Canada Post completes the initial registration of returned paper questionnaires by scanning the barcodes on the see-through portion of the return envelope. Canada Post employees do not have access to questionnaire answers. This important step ensures that census employees can follow up with non-responding households in a timely fashion.

Sealed questionnaires are sent to Statistics Canada's Data Operations Centre (DOC), where registration is completed.

Questionnaires submitted online by respondents or completed over the phone with the help of a Census Help Line operator are registered automatically in the processing system.

## PREPARATION OF PAPER QUESTIONNAIRES

Paper questionnaires are removed from their envelopes by Statistics Canada employees and prepared for scanning.

**Cutting:** Questionnaire booklets are separated into single sheets and placed into batches to be scanned.

**Transcription:** Damaged questionnaires that do not meet the scanning requirements are transcribed onto a new questionnaire of the same type, then scanned.

**Scanning:** Questionnaires are converted to digital images using high-speed scanners.

## DATA CAPTURE

**Automated data capture:** Optical mark recognition and optical character recognition technologies are used to extract respondent data.

Manual keying is used when the automated recognition system detects inconsistencies in the responses. For example, inconsistencies might arise if the person's handwriting is difficult to decipher.

**Quality assurance:** The agency conducts rigorous quality control of paper questionnaires to meet pre-set quality targets:

- For data captured during the automated process, the agency has set a 1% probability that a field's value will be randomly selected for quality assurance. In this case, answers are manually inputted and, if there is a discrepancy when compared with the automated results, the questionnaire is sent to a second keyer for further verification.
- For data that are manually inputted, the agency has set a 10% probability that the value will be selected randomly to be sent to a second keyer if there is a discrepancy between the first keyer results and the value captured by the automated recognition system.

**Verification of data capture:** If the automated data capture technology identifies inconsistencies in the data, the responses are sent to a census employee to make verifications or corrections. Any differences are sent to an arbitrator who makes the final decision to ensure high-quality capture.

**Check out:** Once the paper questionnaires have been processed, they are checked out of the system. Check-out is a quality assurance process that ensures that the images and captured data are of sufficient quality for the paper questionnaires to no longer require manual keying.

## EDITS

An interactive process of automated and manual edits is performed to ensure that potential problems and inconsistencies are identified and resolved as paper questionnaires are captured and online questionnaires are received. Automated completion editing involves checking for completeness and consistency.

**Blank and minimum content:** A questionnaire identified as having no information or not enough questions answered is returned to collection for non-response follow-up by census employees.

**Coverage edits:** The number of usual residents in each household (or collective dwelling) is determined and the type of collective dwelling is confirmed or reclassified.

## FAILED EDIT FOLLOW-UP

This processing stage identifies short-form questionnaire questions that require further coverage or content clarification. The coverage verification ensures that potential inconsistencies on who is included in a household are addressed. When necessary, operators in regional call centres contact households to ensure the appropriate people are enumerated and obtain missing information. The data are then sent back to the DOC and reintegrated into the system for further processing (e.g., coding).

## CODING

During the coding process, written responses are converted to numerical codes before they are tabulated. Written responses are assigned a numerical code using Statistics Canada reference files, code sets and standard classifications. The first stages of coding are automated. For the automated match process, reference files are built using actual responses from past censuses and are updated with new codes for the current census. Specially trained coders and experts resolve cases that cannot be coded automatically.

In 2016, over 67.8 million write-in answers were coded. Of these, approximately 87% were coded automatically.

## DATA LOADING

Once the data have successfully undergone all of the processing steps at the DOC, they are loaded into the response database. Data are loaded in three phases:

- after capture
- after the edits and automated coding
- after manual coding.

## EDIT AND IMPUTATION

The data collected in any survey or census inevitably contain omissions or inconsistencies. These errors could be the result of respondents missing a question or could be generated during processing. The final editing process detects errors, and the imputation process corrects them.

In the edit and imputation phase, invalid or missing responses are adjusted and data are corrected. Statistics Canada's imputation methods are consistent with internationally recognized statistical standards for large-scale imputation applications, such as a census.

As part of Statistics Canada's research, the agency is exploring the greater use of administrative data in its imputation processes.



## ACCESSING CENSUS RECORDS

Access to historical census records has been a matter of public discussion for decades and has generated considerable interest from genealogists, historians and archivists.

In 2005, following extensive engagement with Canadians, the Government of Canada amended the *Statistics Act* to eliminate ambiguities relating to the confidentiality of past census records, while also providing for the release of future census records.

The *Statistics Act* was amended to allow for the release of historical census records from 1911 to 2001. In addition, information obtained from each census after 2021 is to be released to Library and Archives Canada (LAC) 92 years after it was collected (e.g., census records from 2001 will be released in 2093).

For the 2006, 2011 and 2016 censuses, Canadians could choose whether their census records would be released publicly after 92 years. The person who completed the census questionnaire was asked to consult with all household members who were included in the questionnaire before answering the consent question.



LAC is responsible for making census records available. This is consistent with Statistics Canada's commitment to providing open and accessible data. Researchers, historians and genealogists require this information to conduct research and help Canadians better understand their past.

Census records up to and including the 1916 Census are available either online or as microfilm copies through LAC. The 1921 Census records have also been released to the public (through [www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca) by LAC).

## PRESERVING CENSUS RECORDS

Statistics Canada, in consultation with LAC, determines the best means for preserving census records.

A microfilm copy of the census questionnaires from 1921 to 2001 is held by Statistics Canada.

The 2006, 2011 and 2016 censuses and the 2011 National Household Survey (which replaced the census long-form questionnaire in 2011) were not microfilmed. Paper questionnaires were converted to digital images, and an archival data file containing all responses (including those submitted online) was created. The original paper questionnaires were shredded and destroyed.

For 2021, in line with government security guidelines, the original paper questionnaires for the Census of Population will be shredded once data processing is completed.



# 7 DATA QUALITY

The census is designed to provide timely, high-quality information on Canadian communities from coast to coast to coast. It provides a statistical portrait of Canada that is timely and relevant, and it gives Canadians direct access to a vast repository of information they can draw upon to better understand their communities. Statistics Canada is confident that its census data are of high quality and provide an accurate portrait of the resident population in Canada.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE

Quality assurance takes place throughout the census process. It starts before the data are collected and ends after they are released.

Statistics Canada draws widely on expertise from within the agency to ensure the data are of high quality. Various specialists provide expert advice on what content to collect, the coding of written responses, edit and imputation rules, and the certification of data outputs. They also support field operations, processing activities, dissemination, and data evaluation and analysis. They consult with stakeholders and provide professional advice and assistance to data users on how to properly use the census data.

## RELIABILITY OF CENSUS DATA

Following the collection of information from both the online and paper questionnaires, the information provided by respondents is processed and quality assured.

Data quality assessment is an evaluation of the overall quality of census data. The results of this assessment are used to inform users of the reliability of the data, make improvements for the next census and adjust census data. Two coverage studies—the reverse record check and the Census Overcoverage Study—are used to produce official population estimates. These steps ensure that all Canadians are included in the census, and only once.

## IDENTIFYING TYPES OF ERROR

No matter how well a census is designed, the data collected will inevitably contain omissions and errors. Errors can occur at virtually any stage of the census process, from material preparation to the creation of the dwelling list, and from data collection to processing. Census data users should be aware of the types of errors that can occur so that they can assess the usefulness of the data for their own purposes.

### Coverage errors

Coverage errors occur when dwellings or individuals are missed, incorrectly enumerated or counted more than once. Statistics Canada measures coverage errors by using sample surveys and carefully analyzing census records.

Statistics Canada takes several steps to improve coverage, including

- updating its mail-out lists
- improving training for census staff on coverage-related concepts
- making methodological changes to encourage online completion—a more reliable form of collection
- allowing respondents to identify who should and should not be included on their census questionnaire as part of the household.

All operations—particularly data collection procedures—are designed to ensure accurate coverage.

### Non-response errors

Non-response errors occur when some or all information about individuals, households or dwellings is not provided. This can happen when household members are away throughout the census collection period or—in rare instances—when the head of household refuses to complete the questionnaire. However, what happens more frequently is that questionnaires are returned by mail or submitted online, but responses to certain questions are missing.

For the short-form questionnaire, an analysis is performed to detect significant cases of partial non-response, and follow-up interviews are attempted to obtain the missing information. However, despite these efforts, a small number of responses will be still missing at the end of the collection stage.

Missing responses are corrected during processing by imputation—a process by which a missing response is replaced with the corresponding response from a similar record.

For the long-form questionnaire, weighting is used for complete non-response. Weighting is when responding households are assigned a weight to represent a number of other similar households, resulting in the long-form sample representing the entire Canadian population in the final results. Missing responses are also corrected during processing by imputation to provide substitute values.

Imputation and weighting are common and statistically sound approaches used to ensure that the final results are representative of the entire population.

## MEASURING DATA QUALITY

### Coverage studies

After data collection is completed, the agency conducts data quality studies to assess the impact of errors and understand how and where errors occur.

The census defines the population to be enumerated, as well as the rules by which the population will be counted. Coverage error occurs in the application of these definitions and rules.

The main sources of coverage errors are when a dwelling is omitted, which results in that dwelling's residents not being counted, and when a respondent does not include all people who should be included or excludes people who should not be excluded as part of the household.

The counts usually produced from a census slightly undercount the population. This is called net undercoverage, which indicates the extent to which the number of enumerations included in the census data is lower than the actual population. Both undercoverage and overcoverage may produce a bias in official counts and estimates because the characteristics of people who are not included may differ from the characteristics of people who are included, and the characteristics of duplicates may differ from the characteristics of people who are included only once.

Statistics Canada conducts three studies to measure coverage errors:

**Dwelling Classification Survey (DCS):** One type of census coverage error is the misclassification of dwelling occupancy. This can occur during census operations when an occupied dwelling is incorrectly classified as unoccupied, or when an unoccupied dwelling is incorrectly classified as occupied. This misclassification can affect any dwelling for which a census questionnaire is not received. The purpose of the DCS is to study this type of classification error on a sample basis and provide estimates of occupied dwellings for which no questionnaire was received. The survey results are used to make adjustments to the information in the census database.

**Reverse Record Check (RRC):** Another type of coverage error is undercoverage (i.e., people not included in the census count), which occurs when the list of people in a household on the census questionnaire is incomplete or when an entire household is missing. The RRC is a sample study that identifies and provides estimates of people missed by the census and not included in the census counts. Undercoverage estimates are not used to adjust the released census counts, but are an input to the demographic population estimates. These estimates are updated and released regularly between censuses.

**Census Overcoverage Study (COS):** A third type of coverage error is overcoverage (i.e., people counted more than once in the census). This occurs when two questionnaires are received from the same household or when one person appears in two households and, as a result, on two questionnaires. The COS identifies pairs of people in the census database who are likely to be the same person and determines—on a sample basis—which of these pairs are duplicates. An estimate of the number of people counted more than once is then produced. Overcoverage estimates are not used to adjust the released census counts, but are an input to the demographic population estimates. When combined with the results from the RRC, the COS results provide an estimate of net coverage error in the census data.

## CERTIFICATION

Certification consists of several activities that rigorously assess the quality of the census data at specific levels of geography to ensure that the quality standards for public release are met. This evaluation includes the certification of population and dwelling counts and variables related to dwelling and population characteristics.

During certification a number of data quality measures are used, including response rates, edit failure rates, and a comparison of data before and after imputation. Tabulations for the census are produced and compared with corresponding data from past censuses, other surveys and administrative sources. Detailed cross-tabulations are also checked for consistency and accuracy.

External experts may also be consulted to support certification activities for specific census variables.

Depending on the certification results, census data can be

- released unconditionally, meaning that the data are of suitable quality
- released conditionally or with restrictions, meaning that the data will be released with a special note alerting users to possible limitations, or the data may be specially processed (e.g., by combining reporting categories to address quality or confidentiality concerns)
- suppressed for quality reasons.

## FORMAL REVIEWS

When Statistics Canada releases population and dwelling counts from the census, data users sometimes question the validity of the counts for a particular geographic area, such as a municipality or submunicipal area.

For the 2021 Census of Population, as in past census cycles, Statistics Canada will conduct a formal review for each official request received.

In cases where no significant error in the population and dwelling counts is detected, Statistics Canada will confirm the published census counts with a written explanation.

In the rare cases where errors in the population and dwelling counts are confirmed, Statistics Canada shares its research results and the revised counts. It also notifies the province or territory in question—and any municipalities or other places affected—of the revised counts.





## 8 DISSEMINATION— SHARING OF CENSUS RESULTS

The goal of the Census of Population dissemination process is to ensure that census and related geography products and services meet the needs of data users. Statistics Canada strives to publish census results in a timely and user-friendly manner, and to provide most of its data free of charge. Custom products and services required to address very specific data needs are available for a fee.

Information disseminated from the Census of Population includes analytical, data, reference and geography products. Data visualization products further help users understand key census results.

Data and analysis cover a diverse range of topics, such as population and dwelling counts, counts by age and sex, families, households, marital status, language, housing, type of dwelling, income, immigration, ethnocultural diversity, religion, education, labour, journey to work, language of work, and mobility and migration.

### DISSEMINATION PRINCIPLES

The Census of Population products and services are designed to

- satisfy policy and market analysis data needs
- be easy for novice users to use and understand
- provide both a historical and geographic perspective
- present data by topic
- offer data at different levels of geography to better meet users' needs.

Census products and services are evaluated after each census. For the 2021 Census, Statistics Canada held consultations and discussions with key stakeholders and data users to ensure that its products remain useful and relevant.

The agency publishes a release schedule to let Canadians know when census results will be available to ensure equal access to the data. These release dates are announced online through *The Daily*, Statistics Canada's official release publication.

Ongoing modernization initiatives at Statistics Canada will continue to build on past initiatives to improve output flexibility, timeliness and accessibility. Feedback gathered from users through discussions and consultations held by the agency will guide future dissemination practices and tools.

For the 2021 Census, Statistics Canada will

- tailor its products and release strategy to meet the specific needs of different users (e.g., governments, academics, the public)
- produce as many products as possible at low levels of geography (see the [Standard Geographical Classification hierarchy](#) from 2016)
- create interfaces for users to easily filter results to focus on specific populations.

## DATA PRODUCTS TO DESCRIBE THE POPULATION

The story of Canada, as seen through the Census of Population, is told on Statistics Canada's website in words, data tables, infographics and videos. Analytical products are designed for the digital world and used to interpret key census findings. Furthermore, Statistics Canada publications, such as *Insights on Canadian Society*, use census data to provide further analysis in the months following release.

Online products allow data users to generate portraits of their communities. These products and services are designed to present a wide range of census information, including population and dwelling counts, and data by variable and topic. Please see the following two infographics from the 2016 Census to describe the population: [Portrait of households and families in Canada](#) and [Population trends by age and sex, 2016 Census of Population](#).

Over the years, community profiles have been the most frequently consulted census product. They provide a statistical overview of large and small geographic areas based on a number of detailed variables.

Data tables present a portrait of Canada based on different census topics. Some tables allow users to perform simple rank and sort functions and include percentage distributions and percentage change from previous censuses so that users can compare census years and different geographic areas. Furthermore, mapping applications help users understand data at different levels of geography.

More advanced users require access to anonymized census files to perform their work. For the research community, including researchers within all levels of government, Statistics Canada has established Research Data Centres to provide researchers with access to census microdata for advanced analysis in a secure university setting. The centres are staffed by Statistics Canada employees who oversee the use of the data files. They are operated under the provisions of the *Statistics Act* in accordance with all applicable confidentiality rules and are accessible only to researchers working on approved projects who have been sworn in as deemed employees under the *Statistics Act*.

## DATA SUPPRESSION

Published census data undergo a variety of automated and manual processes to determine whether the data should be suppressed to ensure that the identity and characteristics of respondents are not disclosed (referred to as confidentiality).

Confidentiality refers to the assurance that Statistics Canada will not disclose any information that could identify respondents. Confidentiality rules are applied to all data that are released or published to prevent the publication or disclosure of any confidential information. If necessary, data are suppressed to prevent the direct or residual disclosure of identifiable data. The agency does not publish census characteristics of geographic areas with a population below a certain threshold.

## REFERENCE PRODUCTS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE DATA

Reference materials are designed to help users understand and make the most of census data. They provide background information and context to support data use. Every effort is made to simplify the text and add explanations to technical text to make the information easy to access and interpret.

The [Guide to the Census of Population, 2016](#) provides an overview of the census content determination process, as well as of data collection, processing, quality assessment and dissemination. A similar guide will be published for the 2021 Census of Population by spring 2022.

The Census Dictionary contains detailed definitions of Census of Population concepts, variables and geographic terms, as well as historical information. Data users can refer to the Census Dictionary to better understand the data and how to compare variables between census years.

Reference guides provide information for users to use, apply and interpret data effectively for specific census variables. Each guide contains definitions and explanations of specific census concepts, as well as notes on data quality and historical comparability. Additional information is included for specific variables to help users better understand the concepts and questions used in each census.



Technical reports allow users to understand the conceptual framework and definitions used to gather the data, how the data were collected and processed, the methodology used to produce the estimates, the products used to disseminate the information, and the relevant data quality aspects.

Statistics Canada's census products are designed so that information is available at varying levels of detail for different levels of geography. Standard products are designed to make the census data easier for all Canadians to access and understand, subject to the overriding requirement to protect statistical confidentiality.

## **TIMING OF DATA RELEASES**

Statistics Canada makes every effort to release census data as quickly as possible to present a statistical portrait of Canada that is timely and relevant. It gives Canadians direct access to a vast repository of information they can draw upon to better understand their communities.

During the 2016 data release cycle, all major census releases were completed within 18 months of Census Day (May 10, 2016). However, the agency continued to release additional products over the following two to three years.

## **NEW REQUIREMENTS FOR 2021**

For the 2021 Census, the agency has identified new and enhanced requirements for greater flexibility in data outputs in terms of

- content and access
- greater comparability between and consistency in products (e.g., consistent set of geographic units in tables, use of the same variables)
- a need for more timely data releases.

The majority of the 2021 Census results will be available through a single access point on the Statistics Canada website. Expanded functionality is now available for standard products, which allows users to filter, select and customize the content and layout of the tables.



## 9 CONFIDENTIALITY, PRIVACY AND DIGITAL SECURITY

The government has an obligation to ensure that any personal information provided by the public for statistical purposes is kept strictly confidential, in accordance with the *Statistics Act*.

### CONFIDENTIALITY PRINCIPLES

Statistics Canada is bound by law to protect the identity of individuals at every step of the statistical process, including in all published data. Statistics Canada will never release identifiers, such as names, addresses or email addresses, either alone or in combination with any other information from the census questionnaire. These identifiers will never be given or sold to any individual or organization, or added to any mailing list.

In Canada, great care is taken to ensure that the information collected in the census is in the public interest, cannot be obtained effectively from other sources and can be collected efficiently enough to meet information requirements.

All information provided is securely held and used for statistical purposes only.

Statistics Canada places the highest priority on maintaining the confidentiality of information on individual questionnaires. The following stringent procedures have been implemented to ensure that confidentiality is maintained at all times:

- All Statistics Canada employees are sworn to secrecy when they are hired, and this continues even after their employment ends. Employees remain under oath whether they are working from Statistics Canada buildings or other secure locations such as their private residence.
- Only Statistics Canada employees with a need to know have access to personal and confidential information. All of these employees go through a justification and approval process. These employees are able to collect, process and analyze completed questionnaires, but can only access the data they are working on.



- Private contractors never have access to confidential data.
- Access to Statistics Canada buildings is controlled through a combination of physical measures and access procedures.
- Census data are processed and stored on a highly restricted internal network and cannot be accessed by anyone who has not taken the oath of secrecy.
- All work-related information and documents are secured according to Statistics Canada Security Classification Standards, whether employees are working from Statistics Canada buildings or other secure locations such as their private residence.
- Data releases are screened to ensure anonymity.
- Names, addresses and telephone numbers are not stored in the census database used for dissemination.

## STATISTICAL CONFIDENTIALITY

Statistics Canada takes the following measures to prevent the release of statistical information that identifies the characteristics of an individual person, household or group of people:

- All counts in census tabulations are randomly rounded. This process transforms raw counts into randomly rounded counts, which reduces the possibility of identifying individuals in the tabulations.
- Data are simplified or grouped (e.g., information is provided for aggregated age groups).
- Data for geographic areas with populations below a specified threshold are suppressed.

Statistics Canada consults with users to balance the need for more information with its requirement to protect confidentiality.

The *Statistics Act* prohibits the use of census data for non-statistical purposes.



## SECURITY OF FIELD STAFF

Statistics Canada requires that census employees hold an enhanced reliability clearance. Candidates for census employment authorize Statistics Canada to conduct security checks, including a fingerprint-based criminal record check (completed by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police on behalf of Statistics Canada) and a credit check for certain positions. Fingerprints and information required for the credit check are collected by trained Statistics Canada employees during the selection process.

In addition, census employees are sworn to secrecy under the *Statistics Act*. This oath remains in effect throughout their term of employment and for life after that term of employment ends.

Any suspected breach of the confidentiality of census information is a serious matter that would be investigated immediately and thoroughly, and would be subject to the full force of the *Statistics Act*.

### Security of outsourced services

Statistics Canada relies on private contractors to provide equipment, printing and other services. However, these contractors never have access to confidential data.

## DIGITAL SECURITY

Statistics Canada takes every precaution to protect information. The latest technologies are used to ensure that Statistics Canada's strict security and confidentiality requirements are met.

Respondents are sent a secure access code by mail. Once respondents have obtained their code, they can use it to access their online questionnaire.

Encryption technologies ensure that the information passing between respondents' computers and the agency's web server is secure.



Census data are processed and stored on a high-security internal network. Powerful firewalls, intrusion detection systems and stringent access control procedures limit access to computer systems and databases. These systems have never been breached.

Census employees can access census data only from secure Statistics Canada locations.

## PRESERVING CENSUS INFORMATION

Statistics Canada is working with Library and Archives Canada (LAC) to determine the best way to preserve census records so that the information can be released in 92 years.

LAC holds an extensive collection of census records from 1666 to 1926.

According to the *Statistics Act*, census data collected from 1910 to 2005, and those collected in or after 2021, will be transferred to LAC to be released to the public 92 years after the censuses were taken.

The 1926 Census of the Prairie Provinces was transferred from Statistics Canada to LAC on June 1, 2018.

While not all census records can be searched through the LAC website, records from the 1926 Census and previous censuses can be browsed free of charge at [www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca). Users can also conduct searches based on various fields, including surname and given name.

Statistics Canada has microfilm copies of the census questionnaires from 1921 to 2001. The original paper questionnaires were shredded and destroyed.

The 2006, 2011 and 2016 censuses and the 2011 National Household Survey, which replaced the long-form census in 2011, were not microfilmed. Instead, Statistics Canada retained an archival data file containing all responses, including those submitted online. The original paper questionnaires were shredded and destroyed.

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*Statistics Canada takes every precaution to protect information. The latest technologies are used to ensure that Statistics Canada's strict security and confidentiality requirements are met.*

*Respondents are sent a secure access code by mail. Once respondents have obtained their code, they can use it to access their online questionnaire.*

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# 10 COSTS AND BENEFITS

## INTRODUCTION

A census of population is fundamental to any country's statistical infrastructure. In Canada, the census is currently the only data source that provides high-quality population and dwelling counts based on common standards and at low levels of geography, as well as consistent and comparable information on various population groups.

## COSTS

Statistics Canada spreads its census-related costs over a seven-year period that includes time to revise the questionnaire, plan and prepare for operations, collect responses, analyze the data, and distribute the results. Many factors, including questionnaire length, sample size, number of questionnaires mailed, collection methodology and the extent of non-response follow-up, can affect the overall cost. As a result, the final cost of the census is not known until two years after Census Day.

Statistics Canada is always improving the efficiency of the Census Program. For example, for the past three census cycles, Statistics Canada reduced the average cost per dwelling. For the 2016 Census, the cost per dwelling was \$47.53, compared with \$49.46 in 2011 and \$50.74 in 2006 (in 2017/2018 constant dollars).

Because of high participation levels—and a strong online response in particular—Statistics Canada had fewer cases that required a follow-up during the 2016 Census compared with earlier censuses. This translated into savings for Canadian taxpayers. From its approved budget of \$715 million for the 2016 Census, Statistics Canada was able to return \$65.2 million (in 2017/2018 constant dollars) to the Government of Canada.

## BENEFITS

High-quality census data allow governments, businesses and community leaders to make informed decisions with confidence and better allocate resources.

**Representation in parliament:** The federal government uses population counts from years ending in 1, e.g., 2001 and 2011) to redefine the boundaries of federal electoral districts. These data are required under the *Constitution Act, 1867* to determine representation in the House of Commons.

**Services planning:** Communities use census information on population growth and mobility to plan services such as schools, daycares, and police and fire services. Town planners, social welfare workers and government agencies use census information on families. Transportation planners for provincial, territorial, regional and municipal governments use census information to analyze traffic flows, assess existing transportation services, and plan for changes to these services and to road networks. Government departments use age trends to estimate future demand for benefits and programs.

**Private-sector businesses:** Canadian businesses use census data for market research and to target their investments. Businesses use the data to determine new locations for factories, stores and offices based on the population size and distribution in different areas. Life insurance companies base their premiums tables on census age data. Household and farm equipment manufacturers use census data to determine the best market locations for their products.

**Official languages:** The federal government uses data on first official language spoken by the population, within the scope of the *Official Languages Act*, to estimate demand for services in the minority official language (English in Quebec and French in provinces and territories other than Quebec and New Brunswick).


**Resource allocation:** Population estimates are derived from census population counts adjusted for coverage errors. These estimates are used to calculate transfer payments from the federal government to the provinces and territories, and from the provincial and territorial governments to municipalities. In 2018/2019, the Government of Canada allocated roughly \$75.4 billion to provincial and territorial governments through its major transfer programs (Canada Health Transfer, Canada Social Transfer, Equalization and Territorial Formula Financing) and direct targeted support.

**Policy making and monitoring:** Governments at all levels rely on census data to develop programs. For example, census data on place of work and commuting are used by Transport Canada to develop and plan policies. Census data help identify specific groups and communities, such as recent immigrants, youth and older workers who may benefit from labour market programs. Data are also used to profile occupations in local labour markets. The Government of Ontario uses labour market information from the census to support its economic development initiatives, such as the Canada–Ontario Labour Market Development Agreement annual plan, the Employment Ontario policy framework and the Ontario Job Futures occupational profiles.

**Academic research:** Population and sociodemographic statistics are used to understand social conditions and examine the impact of past policies. Statistics Canada’s network of research data centres provides researchers with access to microdata each year.

**Family history:** People with an interest in their family history, as well as genealogists and historians, use census records to research family or social history. Census records up to and including the 1926 Census are available online through [www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca) and as microfilm copies through LAC.





# APPENDIX A— LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

## LIST OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS

1. **The Constitution of Canada** (and its amendments) requires that the Census of Population be conducted to determine the population of Canada and the required number of members of the House of Commons.

2. **The Statistics Act**

According to the *Statistics Act*, Statistics Canada is required to conduct a Census of Population and Census of Agriculture every five years, in the years ending in 1 and 6. The relevant provisions of the *Statistics Act* are as follows:

Subsection 19 (1):

“A census of population of Canada shall be taken by Statistics Canada in the month of June in the year 1971, and every fifth year thereafter in a month to be fixed by the Governor in Council.

Section 20:

“A census of agriculture of Canada shall be taken by Statistics Canada

- (c) in the year 1971 and in every tenth year thereafter; and
- (d) in the year 1976 and in every tenth year thereafter, unless the Governor in Council otherwise directs in respect of any such year.”

Subsection 21 (1):

“The Governor in Council shall, by order, prescribe the questions to be asked in any census taken by Statistics Canada under section 19 or 20.”

Subsection 21 (2):

“Every order made under subsection (1) shall be published in the *Canada Gazette* not later than thirty days after it is made.”



## **Mandatory requirement to respond**

Just as Statistics Canada is required by law to conduct a census, respondents are required by law to complete their census questionnaires.

This requirement is set out in subsections 7 (1), 8 (1) and 23 (1) of the *Statistics Act*, which reads as follows:

### **Rules, instructions and requests for information**

- 7 (1) The Chief Statistician may prescribe the rules, instructions and, subject to subsection 21(1), requests for information that he or she considers necessary for conducting the work and business of Statistics Canada, the collecting, compiling and publishing of statistics and other information and the taking of any census authorized by this Act.

### **Mandatory or voluntary requests for information**

- 8 (1) The Chief Statistician shall determine whether a request for information is mandatory or voluntary, with the exception of the census of population and census of agriculture, both of which are mandatory.

### **Request for information by any method**

- 23 (1) The requests for information prescribed under section 7 may be made by any method authorized by the Chief Statistician.

### **Duty to provide information**

- (2) A person to whom a mandatory request for information is made shall provide the information to Statistics Canada, properly certified as accurate, not later than the time prescribed by the Chief Statistician and indicated to the person or not later than the extended time that may be allowed in the discretion of the Chief Statistician.

### **False or unlawful information**

The requirement to complete a census questionnaire is supported by the penalty provisions of subsection 31 of the act, which was amended in 2017 to remove imprisonment as a penalty. This subsection is as follows:

Subsection 31:

“Every person is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine of not more than \$500 who, without lawful excuse,

- (e) refuses or neglects, following a request for information under this Act,
  - (i) to provide any requested information to the best of their knowledge and belief, or
  - (ii) to provide any requested information when and as required under this Act; or
- (f) knowingly gives false or misleading information or practises any other deception under this Act.”

### **3. Relevant Government of Canada consolidated acts (external links)**

- [\*Access to Information Act\*](#)
- [\*Corporations Returns Act\*](#)
- [\*Financial Administration Act\*](#)
- [\*Federal Real Property and Federal Immovables Act\*](#)
- [\*Official Languages Act\*](#)
- [\*Privacy Act\*](#)
- [\*Public Service Employment Act\*](#)
- [\*Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act\*](#)
- [\*Federal–Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act\*](#)

### **4. Relevant Government of Canada consolidated regulations (external links)**

- [\*Access to Information Act, Regulations made under the\*](#)
- [\*Corporations Returns Regulations\*](#)
- [\*Federal Real Property Regulations\*](#)
- [\*Financial Administration Act, Regulations made under the\*](#)
- [\*Official Languages \(Communications with and Services to the Public\) Regulations\*](#)
- [\*Privacy Act, Regulations made under the\*](#)
- [\*Public Service Employment Act, Regulations made under the\*](#)



## APPENDIX B— GLOSSARY

**Note:** For definitions of 2016 Census content, readers can refer to the [2016 Census Dictionary](#). The 2021 Census Dictionary, which contains updated definitions, will be released in fall 2021.

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**Canada Gazette:** The *Canada Gazette* is the official newspaper of the Government of Canada. The newspaper publishes information on new statutes, new and proposed regulations, administrative board decisions, and public notices.

**Canadian Statistics Advisory Council:** The Canadian Statistics Advisory Council advises the Chief Statistician and the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development on matters concerning the overall quality of the national statistical system, including the relevance, accuracy, accessibility and timeliness of its data. The council publishes an annual report on a wide range of issues relevant to the national statistical system, including emerging issues, challenges and suggestions on how to overcome them. Council members play an important role in helping modernize Statistics Canada in a transparent manner to ensure it continues to meet the needs of Canadians for high-quality, timely and relevant statistics.

**Census Day:** The day of the census provides a specific point of reference for the respondent on which to base their answer. The timing of the Census of Population is driven by the need to maximize the number of Canadians who are home during enumeration. The mid-May date allows collection procedures to run smoothly, which reduces costs. In addition, the date allows more time for follow-up before summer holidays begin.

**Census of Agriculture:** The Census of Agriculture is collected every five years at the same time as the Census of Population. It provides a statistical portrait of Canada's agriculture industry and its farm operators and families.

**Census of Population:** A census of population is the total process of collecting, compiling, evaluating, analyzing and publishing demographic, economic and social data on all people in a country or part of a country at a specified time.

**Census test:** In preparation for the Census of Population and Census of Agriculture, Statistics Canada conducts census tests to evaluate the census questionnaire's new and modified questions, as well as the agency's collection procedures and tools.

**Confidentiality:** Confidentiality refers to the assurance that Statistics Canada will not disclose any information that could identify respondents. Various confidentiality rules are applied to all data that are released or published to prevent the publication or disclosure of any information deemed confidential. If necessary, data are suppressed to prevent the direct or residual disclosure of identifiable information. Consequently, data on geographic areas with a population below a certain threshold are not published.

Statistics Canada places the highest priority on maintaining the confidentiality of individual questionnaires. Stringent instructions and procedures ensure that confidentiality is maintained at all times. For example, census data are processed and stored on a highly restricted internal network and cannot be accessed by anyone who has not taken the oath of secrecy.

**Data quality assessment:** Data quality assessments evaluate the overall quality of the census data. The assessment results are used to inform users of the reliability of the data, make improvements for the next census, adjust census data for non-response and—for two coverage studies (reverse record check and Census Overcoverage Study)—produce official population estimates. Quality assessment activities take place throughout the census process, beginning before data collection and ending after the results are released to the public.

**Governor in Council:** Governor in Council appointments are made by the Governor General, on the advice of the Queen's Privy Council of Canada (Cabinet). The responsibilities of Governor in Council appointees range from making quasi-judicial decisions and providing advice and recommendations on socioeconomic development issues to managing Crown corporations.

**Imputation:** The imputation process is used to assign replacement values for missing, invalid or inconsistent data that have failed edits.

**Multivariate analysis:** Multivariate analysis allows users to examine interrelationships across different census questions, such as age, education, income and immigrant status.

**National Household Survey:** In 2011, information previously collected by the mandatory census long-form questionnaire was collected as part of the voluntary National Household Survey. In 2016, the Government of Canada reinstated the long-form questionnaire.

**Population count:** The Census of Population aims to produce population counts for the total population of Canada. This target population consists of Canadian citizens by birth or by naturalization, landed immigrants and permanent residents, and—since 1991—non-permanent residents and their family members living with them in Canada. Non-permanent residents are people who hold a work or study permit, or who are asylum seekers. All people in these categories are included in the population count provided they have a usual place of residence in Canada. The census counts people according to their usual place of residence, which refers to the dwelling in which a person usually lives (the dwelling they call home). The total population also includes certain Canadian citizens, landed immigrants and permanent residents living outside the country; government employees working outside Canada; embassy staff posted to other countries; members of the Canadian Armed Forces stationed outside Canada; and Canadian crew members of merchant vessels and their families. Together, these persons are referred to as “persons living outside Canada.” Foreign residents are excluded from census data (e.g., residents of another country visiting Canada temporarily, government representatives of another country posted in Canada and members of the armed forces of another country stationed in Canada).

**Population Estimates Program:** This program provides monthly, quarterly and annual demographic estimates by age and sex for Canada, its provinces and territories, and many subprovincial levels of geography. This program meets several legislative requirements, including the *Fiscal Arrangements Act* and the *Fair Representation Act*. Finance Canada uses these annual estimates to compute approximately \$80 billion in transfer payments to the provinces and territories each year. These estimates are also used by many other partners, including provincial and territorial statistical agencies to compute social and economic indicators (e.g., labour, income, education, health, justice and well-being). They are also used in Statistics Canada social surveys (e.g., the mission-critical Labour Force Survey) for weighting purposes, and they serve as the base population for other programs, such as the demographic projections.

**Privacy Act:** The *Privacy Act* extends existing Canadian laws that protect the privacy of individuals with respect to personal information about themselves held by a government institution and that provide individuals with a right of access to that information.

**Research Data Centre:** The centres provide researchers with access—in a secure university setting—to microdata from population and household surveys, administrative data holdings, and linked data. The centres are staffed by Statistics Canada employees. They are operated under the provisions of the [\*Statistics Act\*](#) in accordance with all applicable confidentiality rules and are accessible only to researchers working on approved projects who have been sworn in as deemed employees under the *Statistics Act*.

**Statistics Act:** The *Statistics Act* mandates Statistics Canada to “collect, compile, analyse, abstract and publish information relating to the commercial, industrial, financial, social, economic, and general activities and conditions of the people of Canada.” To balance Statistics Canada’s extensive powers to collect information, the act establishes the legal requirement for the agency to protect the confidentiality of respondents to Statistics Canada surveys. The legislation makes a formal commitment to respondents that the information they provide will never be released to anyone in a way that will identify them without their authorization.



# ACRONYMS

Acronym	Description
ADL	Activities of daily living
CAF	Canadian Armed Forces
CCHS	Canadian Community Health Survey
CMHC	Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
COS	Census Overcoverage Study
CRA	Canada Revenue Agency
CSD	Canadian Survey on Disability
DCS	Dwelling Classification Survey
DOC	Data Operations Centre
ESDC	Employment and Social Development Canada
IRCC	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
ISC	Indigenous Services Canada
LAC	Library and Archives Canada
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MBM	Market Basket Measure
PPSC	Public Prosecution Service of Canada
RRC	Reverse Record Check
TTY	Teletype machine
VAC	Veterans Affairs Canada