

Housing Statistics in Canada

Housing Experiences in Canada: West Asian people in 2016

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Release date: October 21, 2022

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Published by authority of the Minister responsible for Statistics Canada

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Housing Experiences in Canada: West Asian people in 2016

The Housing Experiences in Canada series of fact sheets highlights the diversity of housing situations experienced by different groups of people living across Canada.

This fact sheet focuses on West Asian people living in private dwellings. The statistics below are derived from the 2016 Census. For the purposes of this analysis, West Asian people were identified based on responses to the population group question on the census questionnaire, which is primarily used to identify racialized Canadians, defined as the visible minority population in the *Employment Equity Act*.¹ Because this fact sheet focuses on West Asian people in private dwellings, those living in collective dwellings are not included in the data.² More fact sheets are available on the [Housing Experiences in Canada series page](#).

The *National Housing Strategy Act* (2019) declared that “the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right affirmed in international law.” Adequate housing is understood in international law as housing that provides secure tenure; is affordable; is habitable; provides access to basic infrastructure; is located close to employment, services and amenities; is accessible for people of all abilities; and is culturally appropriate.

This fact sheet focuses on the experience of West Asian people living in private dwellings using the following indicators collected and produced by Statistics Canada: tenure status of the household, shelter costs, housing affordability and suitability, condition of the dwelling, core housing need, and household living arrangements.

While these indicators together do not perfectly measure adequate housing as defined in international law, they are nevertheless useful proxies for understanding the housing experiences of people living in Canada.

Tenure status of household



The tenure status of a household refers to whether the household owns or rents its private dwelling.³ Homeownership is an important aspect of Canadian society and can affect outcomes for many housing indicators. For this reason, owner and renter households are often considered separately in housing analyses. In many cases, researchers further examine whether households in owner-occupied dwellings have mortgages on their dwellings and whether renter households pay subsidized rent.

According to the 2016 Census, West Asian people were less likely than the total population to live in a private dwelling owned by a member of their household. Of the 264,305 West Asian people in Canada, 56.7% lived in a private dwelling owned by a member of their household, compared with 71.6% of the total population.

Highlights from the 2016 Census: West Asian population

Percentage of the population: 0.8%

Average age: 35 years

Median household income:^{1,2} \$51,600

Percentage living in poverty:³ 37.1%

Unemployment rate: 11.0%

Percentage in rural areas: 1.4%

Percentage who are immigrants: 79.1%

1. The visible minority status of the household for the 2016 estimate of median household income is determined by examining the characteristics of the first person on the questionnaire who pays housing costs.

2. For the 2016 Census, the reference period is the calendar year 2015 for all income variables.

3. Poverty status is based on the 2018 base market basket measure.

1. These responses are used to derive a visible minority status for each household member according to [Statistics Canada departmental standards](#)

2. A collective dwelling refers to a dwelling of a communal, institutional or commercial nature. Most of the population in Canada resides in private dwellings, but a small portion lives in collective dwellings such as shelters, campgrounds, hospitals, nursing or seniors' homes, jails, lodging or rooming houses, or hotels or motels.

3. A household is considered to own its dwelling if a member of the household owns it, even if it is not fully paid for (for example, if there is a mortgage or another claim on it). A household is considered to rent its dwelling if no member of the household owns it. A household is considered to rent its dwelling even if the dwelling is provided without cash rent or at a reduced rent, or if the dwelling is part of a cooperative.

The proportion of West Asian people living in rented dwellings (43.3%) was higher than that of the total population (26.6%), and West Asian people were more than twice as likely to live in subsidized rented dwellings (6.9%) than the total population (3.3%). Of the 114,530 West Asian people who lived in rented dwellings, 18,125 (6.9% of all West Asian people) lived in subsidized housing, and 96,395 (36.5%) lived in non-subsidized housing.

Of the 149,770 West Asian people who owned their home, or lived with someone who owned their home, 131,610 (49.8% of all West Asian people) lived in a dwelling with a mortgage, and the remaining 18,115 (6.9%) lived in a dwelling without a mortgage. West Asian people were less likely to live in an owner-occupied dwelling without a mortgage (6.9%) than the total population (23.3%).

Table 1
Tenure status of households for West Asian people and the total population in private dwellings, Canada, 2016

	West Asian population		Total population	
	count	percent	count	percent
Total, tenure status	264,305	100.0	34,460,065	100.0
Owner	149,770	56.7	24,683,880	71.6
With a mortgage	131,610	49.8	16,670,675	48.4
Without a mortgage	18,115	6.9	8,013,205	23.3
Renter	114,530	43.3	9,164,150	26.6
Subsidized housing	18,125	6.9	1,135,275	3.3
Not subsidized housing	96,395	36.5	8,028,875	23.3

Note: Figures may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

Source: 2016 Census of Population.

Shelter costs



Shelter costs refer to the monthly dwelling-related expenses paid by households, including mortgage or rent. For owner-occupied dwellings, shelter costs include, where applicable, mortgage payments, property taxes and condominium fees, along with the costs of electricity, heat, water and other municipal services. For renter households, shelter costs include, where applicable, rent and the costs of electricity, heat, water and other municipal services.

In Canada, the median shelter cost paid by West Asian households (\$1,510) was higher than the median shelter cost paid by all households (\$1,020) in 2016.⁴

West Asian households in owner-occupied and rented dwellings also had higher median shelter costs than all households in dwellings of the same tenure status. The median shelter cost paid by West Asian households in owner-occupied dwellings was \$2,100, compared with \$1,130 for all owner households. For West Asian households in rented dwellings, the median shelter cost was \$1,170, compared with \$910 for all renter households.

The median shelter cost paid by households in owner-occupied dwellings is typically larger when there is a mortgage, which can represent a large portion of monthly shelter costs. West Asian households with a mortgage on their dwelling (\$2,260) paid more per month in median shelter costs than all households in owner-occupied dwellings with a mortgage (\$1,620). Median shelter costs for West Asian households in owner-occupied dwellings without a mortgage (\$715) were also higher than those for all owner households without a mortgage (\$540).

The median shelter cost paid by renter households usually depends on the presence of a rent subsidy.⁵ West Asian households in rented dwellings with a subsidy (\$588) had similar median monthly shelter costs as all households in rented dwellings with a subsidy (\$524). Median shelter costs for West Asian households in rented dwellings without a subsidy (\$1,240) were higher than the shelter costs for all households in rented dwellings without a subsidy (\$960).

4. The term "West Asian households" refers to households where the first person listed on the questionnaire who pays the housing costs is West Asian.

5. "Rent subsidy" refers to whether a renter household lives in a dwelling that is subsidized. Subsidized housing includes rent geared to income, social housing, public housing, government-assisted housing, non-profit housing, rent supplements and housing allowances.

Table 2
Monthly shelter costs for West Asian and all households in private dwellings, Canada, 2016

	West Asian population		All households	
	median (dollars)			
Total, shelter costs¹	1,510		1,020	
Owner	2,100		1,130	
With a mortgage	2,260		1,620	
Without a mortgage	715		540	
Renter	1,170		910	
Subsidized housing	588		524	
Not subsidized housing	1,240		960	

1. Owner and renter households in non-farm, off-reserve private dwellings.

Source: 2016 Census of Population.

Housing affordability



Housing affordability is derived using the shelter-cost-to-income ratio, which refers to the proportion of average total income households spend on shelter costs. A household is said to have affordable housing if it spends less than 30% of its total income on shelter costs.⁶

According to the 2016 Census, West Asian people were more than twice as likely to live in households that spent more than 30% of their total household income on shelter. Among West Asian people, 137,445 (52.3%) lived in households that spent more than 30% of their total income on shelter, compared with 20.0% of the total population.

West Asian people in owner-occupied dwellings (50.0%) were more than three times as likely to live in unaffordable housing as the total population in owner-occupied dwellings (14.7%). West Asian people in rented dwellings (55.3%) also lived in unaffordable housing at a higher rate than the total renter population (34.5%).

For those living in owner-occupied dwellings, the rate of unaffordable housing differed depending on the presence of a mortgage. West Asian people in households with a mortgage (54.7%) were more likely to live in unaffordable housing than the total population with a mortgage (19.6%). The proportion of West Asian people in households without a mortgage living in unaffordable housing (15.7%) was also higher compared with that of the total population without a mortgage (4.4%).

The rate of unaffordable housing was higher for West Asian people in renter households with a subsidy (34.8%, compared with 32.3% for the total renter population with a subsidy) and without a subsidy (59.2%, compared with 34.8% for the total renter population without a subsidy).

Table 3
Unaffordable housing for West Asian people and the total population in private dwellings, Canada, 2016

	West Asian population		Total population	
	count	percent	count	percent
Total, shelter-cost-to-income ratio¹	262,820	100.0	100.0	100.0
Spending more than 30% of income on shelter costs	137,445	52.3	20.0	20.0
Owner	74,675	50.0	14.7	14.7
With a mortgage	71,830	54.7	19.6	19.6
Without a mortgage	2,845	15.7	4.4	4.4
Renter	62,770	55.3	34.5	34.5
Subsidized housing	6,280	34.8	32.3	32.3
Not subsidized housing	56,485	59.2	34.8	34.8

1. All persons in owner and renter households with household total income greater than zero in non-farm, off-reserve private dwellings.

Source: 2016 Census of Population.

6. In 1986, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the provinces agreed to use the 30% threshold to measure affordability for the purposes of defining need for social housing. This agreement was reached during the development of federal and provincial social housing programs. Research on housing affordability in the territories often uses the same threshold.

Housing suitability



Housing suitability refers to whether a private household is living in suitable accommodations according to the National Occupancy Standard (NOS), that is, whether the dwelling has enough bedrooms for the size and composition of the household. The indicator assesses the required number of bedrooms for a household based on the age and sex of household members, and the relationships between them.

According to the 2016 Census, West Asian people were more than three times as likely as the total population to live in unsuitable housing; 73,115 West Asian people (27.7%) lived in unsuitable housing, compared with 8.9% of the total population. This means that there were not enough bedrooms in the dwelling to meet the needs of the household, according to the NOS.

West Asian people in owner-occupied dwellings (18.0%) were also more than three times as likely to live in unsuitable housing as the total population in owner-occupied dwellings (5.4%). A significant difference was also seen in rented dwellings—the share of West Asian people living in unsuitable dwellings (40.3%) was over two times higher than that of the total population (17.8%).

When owner-occupied dwellings are differentiated by the presence of a mortgage, West Asian people living in dwellings with a mortgage (18.4%) experienced unsuitable housing at a higher rate than the total population in dwellings with a mortgage (6.4%). This difference was similarly pronounced among people in owner-occupied dwellings without a mortgage; the rate of unsuitable housing for West Asian people was 15.2%, compared with 3.4% for the total population.

West Asian people in renter households with and without a subsidy experienced higher rates of unsuitable housing than the total population. There was a 16 percentage point difference between the unsuitable housing rates of West Asian people (35.2%) and the total population (19.2%) living in subsidized housing and a 23.7 percentage point difference between the unsuitable housing rates of West Asian people (41.3%) and the total population (17.6%) living in non-subsidized housing.

Table 4
Housing suitability for West Asian people and the total population in private dwellings, Canada, 2016

	West Asian population		Total population	
	count	percent	count	percent
Total, housing suitability	264,305	100.0	34,460,065	100.0
Not suitable	73,115	27.7	3,081,315	8.9
Owner	26,915	18.0	1,335,345	5.4
With a mortgage	24,160	18.4	1,062,985	6.4
Without a mortgage	2,745	15.2	272,365	3.4
Renter	46,200	40.3	1,631,845	17.8
Subsidized housing	6,375	35.2	218,130	19.2
Not subsidized housing	39,825	41.3	1,413,720	17.6

Source: 2016 Census of Population.

Condition of dwelling



Data on condition of dwelling are used to provide some insight into whether housing is habitable. Dwellings are classified into three groups by condition: needing regular maintenance only, needing minor repairs and needing major repairs. Dwellings in need of major repairs are considered to be inadequate housing. Examples of dwellings in need of major repairs include homes with defective plumbing or electrical wiring, and housing needing structural repairs to walls, floors, or ceilings.

According to the 2016 Census, West Asian people (6.1%) lived in private dwellings that were in need of major repairs at a similar rate as the total population (6.7%).

West Asian people in owner-occupied dwellings (5.0%) lived in dwellings in need of major repairs at a similar rate as the total population in owner-occupied dwellings (5.5%). A difference could be seen among those in renter households—West Asian people (7.5%) were less likely to live in dwellings in need of major repairs than the total population (8.8%).

West Asian people in owner-occupied dwellings with (5.1%) and without (4.5%) a mortgage lived in dwellings in need of major repairs at a similar rate as the total population in dwellings with (5.7%) and without (4.9%) a mortgage.

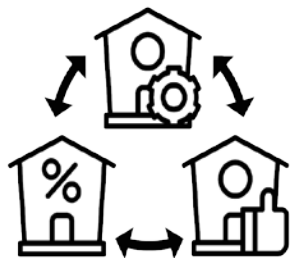
Among West Asian people in renter households, 11.3% of those with a subsidy and 6.7% of those without a subsidy lived in dwellings in need of major repairs. The rate for West Asian people in rented dwellings without a subsidy was lower than that for the total population without a subsidy (8.4%).

Table 5
Condition of dwelling for West Asian people and the total population in private dwellings, Canada, 2016

	West Asian population		Total population	
	count	percent	count	percent
Total, dwelling condition	264,305	100.0	34,460,065	100.0
Dwelling in need of major repairs	16,030	6.1	2,298,760	6.7
Owner	7,500	5.0	1,351,740	5.5
With a mortgage	6,680	5.1	956,105	5.7
Without a mortgage	820	4.5	395,640	4.9
Renter	8,535	7.5	807,125	8.8
Subsidized housing	2,050	11.3	131,670	11.6
Not subsidized housing	6,485	6.7	675,460	8.4

Source: 2016 Census of Population.

Core housing need



Core housing need touches on several elements of the right to adequate housing. It considers whether the affordability, suitability, and condition of dwelling needs of the household are being met and if not, whether affordable rental housing is available that meets all these needs. A household is said to be in core housing need if its dwelling falls below at least one of the affordability, suitability, or condition of dwelling standards, and it would have to spend 30% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable (meets all three housing standards).

According to the 2016 Census, West Asian people (30.8%) were nearly three times as likely to live in households in core housing need as the total population (10.6%).

West Asian people in rented dwellings (47.2%) were in core housing need at a higher rate than the total population in rented dwellings (25.3%). The proportion of West Asian people in owner-occupied dwellings (18.9%) in core housing need was over three times higher than that of the total population in owner-occupied dwellings (5.4%).

The incidence of core housing need varied for renters depending on whether there was a rent subsidy. West Asian people in renter households with (48.6%) and without (46.9%) a subsidy were more likely to be in core housing need than the total population with (39.9%) and without (23.2%) a subsidy.

The incidence of core housing need was higher for West Asian people in owner-occupied dwellings with and without a mortgage than for their counterparts in the total population. Among West Asian people in owner-occupied dwellings with a mortgage, 19.6% were in core housing need, compared with 6.0% of the total population. For those without a mortgage, there was a 10.3 percentage point difference between the core housing need rates of West Asian people (14.7%) and the total population (4.3%).

Table 6
Core housing need status for West Asian people and the total population in private dwellings, Canada, 2016

	West Asian population		Total population	
	count	percent	count	percent
Total, core housing need¹	231,885	100.0	32,803,125	100.0
In core housing need	71,325	30.8	3,492,080	10.6
Owner	25,560	18.9	1,307,620	5.4
With a mortgage	22,995	19.6	971,150	6.0
Without a mortgage	2,565	14.7	336,470	4.3
Renter	45,765	47.2	2,184,455	25.3
Subsidized housing	8,370	48.6	433,190	39.9
Not subsidized housing	37,390	46.9	1,751,265	23.2

1. Only persons in private, non-farm, non-reserve and owner- or renter-households with incomes greater than zero and shelter-cost-to-income ratios less than 100% are assessed for 'core housing need.'

Source: 2016 Census of Population.

Housing experiences of West Asian men and women

In 1995, the Government of Canada committed to using Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) to advance gender equality in Canada, as part of the ratification of the United Nations' [Beijing Platform for Action](#).

Gender equality is enshrined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which is part of the Constitution of Canada. Gender equality means that diverse groups of women, men and gender-diverse people are able to participate fully in all spheres of Canadian life, contributing to an inclusive and democratic society.

GBA Plus is an analytical process used to assess how diverse groups of women, men and gender-diverse people may experience policies, programs and initiatives. The "Plus" in GBA Plus is not just about differences between people on the basis of gender. We all have multiple characteristics that intersect and contribute to who we are. GBA Plus considers many other identity factors, such as race, ethnicity, immigrant status, religion, age and presence of a mental or physical disability, and how the interaction between these factors influences the way we experience government policies and initiatives.

The data presented here highlight differences in housing experiences for West Asian men and women. Compared with West Asian men, West Asian women were more likely to live in unsuitable housing.

Table 7
Housing indicators for West Asian men and women, Canada, 2016

	West Asian men	West Asian women
	percent	
In an owner-occupied dwelling	56.4	56.9
In household spending 30% or more of income on shelter costs ¹	51.9	52.7
In unsuitable housing	26.9	28.4
In dwelling requiring major repairs	6.0	6.2
In core housing need ²	30.3	31.2

1. All persons in owner and renter households with household total income greater than zero in non-farm, off-reserve private dwellings.

2. Only persons in private, non-farm, non-reserve and owner- or renter-households with incomes greater than zero and shelter-cost-to-income ratios less than 100% are assessed for 'core housing need.'

Source: 2016 Census of Population.

More information on GBA+ can be found at the Government of Canada's [Status of Women](#) web page.

More information on the housing experiences of other subpopulations, broken down by age and gender groups, immigrant status, population groups designated as visible minorities, Indigenous populations and other groups can be found in the additional fact sheets on the [Housing Experiences in Canada issue page](#). Additional data products that focus more on an intersectional GBA+ analysis of housing experiences will also be released through the [Housing Experiences in Canada issue page](#) as they become available.

Household living arrangements



Household living arrangements refer to whether a person lives with another person or people, and, if so, whether they are related to that person or those people. Households can be further differentiated based on whether they are census family households or non-census-family households. Census family households contain at least one census family.⁷ Non-census-family households are either one person living alone or a group of two or more people who live together but do not constitute a census family (for example, roommates).

According to the 2016 Census, 80.5% of West Asian people lived as part of a one-census-family household. This was similar to the rate for the total population (79.6%). West Asian people in one-census-family households were more likely to live in a couple family with children (58.3%) than to live in one without children (12.4%). For the total population, 45.7% of individuals lived in a one-census-family household with children and 22.5% lived in one without children. West Asian people (9.8%) were less likely to live in a one-parent-family household than the total population (11.3%).

Living in a non-census-family household was less common for West Asian people (10.8%) than it was for the total population (15.4%). This is because a small proportion (7.3%) of West Asian people lived alone. By comparison, 11.5% of the total population in private households in Canada lived alone.

Table 8
Household living arrangements for West Asian people and the total population in private dwellings, Canada, 2016

	West Asian population		Total population	
	count	percent	count	percent
Total, household type	264,305	100.0	34,460,065	100.0
One-census-family household ¹	212,690	80.5	27,414,900	79.6
Couple family without children	32,790	12.4	7,761,355	22.5
Couple family with children	154,105	58.3	15,754,465	45.7
One parent family	25,790	9.8	3,899,085	11.3
Multiple-census-family household ¹	23,155	8.8	1,746,110	5.1
Non-census-family household	28,460	10.8	5,299,050	15.4
One-person household	19,175	7.3	3,967,770	11.5
Two- or more person household	9,285	3.5	1,331,280	3.9

1. One-census-family households and multiple-census-family households may include additional persons that do not belong to a census family.

Note: Figures may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

Source: 2016 Census of Population.

7. A census family is defined as a married couple and the children, if any, of either or both spouses; a couple living common law and the children, if any, of either or both partners; or a single parent of any marital status with at least one child living in the same dwelling and that child or those children. All members of a particular census family live in the same dwelling. A couple may be of opposite or same sex. Children may be children by birth, marriage, common-law union or adoption regardless of their age or marital status as long as they live in the dwelling and do not have their own married spouse, common-law partner or child living in the dwelling. Grandchildren living with their grandparent(s) but with no parents present also constitute a census family.

About the data

The estimates presented in this fact sheet are from the 2016 Census of Population. For detailed information on any of the indicators in this fact sheet, please refer to the [Census of Population](#) main page.

The Census of Population data on housing is collected on the long-form questionnaire which draws its sample from a frame of private dwellings across Canada. Since the survey sample is drawn from private households, individuals living in the following forms of housing are not included in the data:

- official representatives of foreign countries living in Canada, and their families
- members of religious and other communal colonies
- members of the Canadian Armed Forces living on military bases
- people living in seniors' residences
- people living full time in institutions (e.g., inmates of penal institutions, and chronic care patients living in hospitals and nursing homes)
- people living in other types of collective dwellings (e.g., shelters, campgrounds and hotels).