

Housing Statistics in Canada

Housing Experiences in Canada: Arab people in 2016

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Release date: September 7, 2022

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Published by authority of the Minister responsible for Statistics Canada

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Housing Experiences in Canada: Arab 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 Arab people living in private dwellings. The statistics below are derived from the 2016 Census. For the purposes of this analysis, Arab people were identified based on responses to the population group question on the census questionnaire, which are primarily used to identify racialized Canadians, defined as the visible minority population in the *Employment Equity Act*.¹ Because this fact sheet focuses on Arab 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 Arab 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.

Highlights from the 2016 Census: Arab population

Percentage of the population: 1.5%
Average age: 30 years
Median household income: ^{1,2} \$53,600
Percentage living in poverty: ³ 36.0%
Unemployment rate: 13.5%
Percentage living in rural areas: 1.3%
Percentage who are immigrants: 67.4%

1. 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 2015 calendar year for all income variables.
3. Poverty status is based on the 2018-base market basket measure.

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, Arab people were less likely than the total population to live in a private dwelling owned by a member of their household. Of the 523,235 Arab people in Canada in 2016, 47.9% lived in a private dwelling owned by a member of their household, compared with 71.6% of the total population.

1. These responses are used to derive a visible minority status for each household member according to the [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 Arab people living in rented dwellings (52.1%) was higher than that of the total population (26.6%), and Arab people were more likely to live in subsidized rented dwellings (7.9%) than the total population (3.3%). Of the 272,360 Arab people who lived in rented dwellings, 41,110 (7.9%) lived in subsidized housing and 231,250 (44.2%) lived in non-subsidized rental housing.

The 250,855 Arab people who owned their homes or lived with someone who owned their home can be further divided into the 205,525 (39.3%) who lived in a dwelling with a mortgage and the remaining 45,270 (8.7%) who lived in a dwelling without a mortgage. Arab people were less than half as likely to live in an owner-occupied dwelling without a mortgage (8.7%) than the total population (23.3%).

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

	Arab population		Total population	
	count	percent	count	percent
Total, tenure status	523,235	100.0	34,460,065	100.0
Owner	250,855	47.9	24,683,880	71.6
With a mortgage	205,525	39.3	16,670,675	48.4
Without a mortgage	45,270	8.7	8,013,205	23.3
Renter	272,360	52.1	9,164,150	26.6
Subsidized housing	41,110	7.9	1,135,275	3.3
Not subsidized housing	231,250	44.2	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 Arab households (\$1,200) was higher than the median shelter cost paid by all households (\$1,020) in 2016.⁴

Arab households in owner-occupied dwellings had higher median shelter costs than all households, and costs were similar for renters. The median shelter cost paid by Arab households in owner-occupied dwellings was \$1,680, compared with \$1,130 for all households. For Arab households in rented dwellings, the median shelter cost was \$950, compared with \$910 for all households.

The median shelter cost paid by households in owner-occupied dwellings is typically larger when there is a mortgage on the dwelling, because a mortgage can represent a large portion of monthly shelter costs. Arab households with a mortgage on their dwelling (\$1,880) paid more per month in median shelter costs than all households in owner-occupied dwellings with a mortgage (\$1,620). The same was true for Arab households in owner-occupied dwellings without a mortgage (\$660), where shelter costs were higher compared with all households without a mortgage (\$540).

The median shelter cost paid by renter households usually depends on the presence of a rent subsidy.⁵ Arab households in rented dwellings with a subsidy (\$592) had similar median monthly shelter costs as all households in rented dwellings with a subsidy (\$524). Median shelter costs for Arab households in rented dwellings without a subsidy (\$990) were also similar to the shelter costs for all households in rented dwellings without a subsidy (\$960).

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

5. The term "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 Arab and all households in private dwellings, Canada, 2016

	Arab households	All households
	median (dollars)	
Total, shelter costs¹	1,200	1,020
Owner	1,680	1,130
With a mortgage	1,880	1,620
Without a mortgage	660	540
Renter	950	910
Subsidized housing	592	524
Not subsidized housing	990	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, Arab people were nearly twice as likely to live in households that spent more than 30% of their total household income on shelter; 206,115 Arab people (39.8%) lived in households spending more than 30% of their total income on shelter, compared with 20.0% of the total population.

Arab people in owner-occupied dwellings (33.8%) were more than twice as likely to live in unaffordable housing as the total population in owner-occupied dwellings (14.7%). A significant difference was also present for Arab people in renter households (45.4%), where the rate of unaffordable housing was higher than for the total population (34.5%).

For those living in owner-occupied dwellings, the rate of unaffordable housing differed depending on the presence of a mortgage. Arab people in households with a mortgage (38.9%) were more likely to be in unaffordable housing than the total population with a mortgage (19.6%). Arab people in owner-occupied dwellings without a mortgage (10.5%) were also more likely to be in unaffordable housing than the total population in owner-occupied dwellings without a mortgage (4.4%).

The rate of unaffordable housing was similar for Arab people in renter households with a subsidy (32.2% compared with 32.3% for the total population) and higher for those without a subsidy (47.8% compared with 34.8% for the total population).

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

	Arab population		Total population	
	count	percent	count	percent
Total, shelter-cost-to-income ratio¹	517,740	100.0	33,642,820	100.0
Spending more than 30% of income on shelter costs	206,115	39.8	6,742,050	20.0
Owner	84,660	33.8	3,605,535	14.7
With a mortgage	79,925	38.9	3,257,230	19.6
Without a mortgage	4,730	10.5	348,300	4.4
Renter	121,455	45.4	3,136,520	34.5
Subsidized housing	12,810	32.2	361,270	32.3
Not subsidized housing	108,645	47.8	2,775,245	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, Arab people were over three times more likely to live in unsuitable housing, meaning that there were not enough bedrooms in the dwelling to meet the needs of their household according to the National Occupancy Standard. In 2016, 150,970 Arab people (28.9%) lived in unsuitable housing, compared with 8.9% of the total population.

When individuals in owner-occupied dwellings are compared, Arab people (16.5%) were more than three times as likely to live in unsuitable housing as the total population (5.4%). A difference was also present among those in rented dwellings, where the share of Arab people living in rented dwellings that were unsuitable (40.2%) was more than double the share for the total population (17.8%).

When owner-occupied dwellings are differentiated by the presence of a mortgage, Arab people living in dwellings with (16.4%) and without (17.3%) a mortgage experienced unsuitable housing at higher rates than those in the total population. For the total population, 6.4% of individuals in owner-occupied dwellings with a mortgage lived in unsuitable housing; this was the case for 3.4% of individuals in owner-occupied dwellings without a mortgage.

Arab people in renter households with and without a subsidy also experienced higher rates of unsuitable housing than the total population. There was a 20.2 percentage point difference in the unsuitable housing rate of Arab people (39.4%) and the total population (19.2%) living in subsidized housing, and a 22.7 percentage point difference in the unsuitable housing rate of Arab people (40.3%) and the total population (17.6%) living in non-subsidized housing.

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

	Arab population		Total population	
	count	percent	count	percent
Total, housing suitability	523,235	100.0	34,460,065	100.0
Not suitable	150,970	28.9	3,081,315	8.9
Owner	41,500	16.5	1,335,345	5.4
With a mortgage	33,680	16.4	1,062,985	6.4
Without a mortgage	7,815	17.3	272,365	3.4
Renter	109,470	40.2	1,631,845	17.8
Subsidized housing	16,190	39.4	218,130	19.2
Not subsidized housing	93,280	40.3	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, Arab people (5.7%) were less likely to live in private dwellings that were in need of major repairs than the total population (6.7%).

Arab people in owner-occupied dwellings (4.7%) also lived in dwellings in need of major repairs at a lower rate than the total population in owner-occupied dwellings (5.5%). The same was true for Arab people in rented dwellings (6.5%), who were less likely to live in dwellings in need of major repairs than the total population (8.8%).

Arab people in owner-occupied dwellings with a mortgage (4.9%) were more likely to live in dwellings in need of major repairs than Arab people without a mortgage (4.0%). These rates were lower than for their counterparts in the total population.

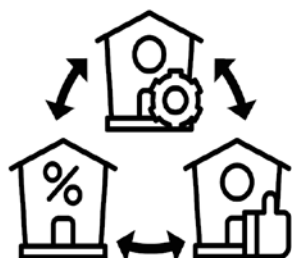
Among Arab people in renter households, 7.6% of those with a subsidy lived in dwellings in need of major repairs and 6.4% of those without a subsidy lived in dwellings in need of major repairs. Both proportions were lower than those of the total population in rented dwellings with (11.6%) and without (8.4%) a subsidy.

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

	Arab population		Total population	
	count	percent	count	percent
Total, dwelling condition	523,235	100.0	34,460,065	100.0
Dwelling in need of major repairs	29,705	5.7	2,298,760	6.7
Owner	11,875	4.7	1,351,740	5.5
With a mortgage	10,050	4.9	956,105	5.7
Without a mortgage	1,825	4.0	395,640	4.9
Renter	17,820	6.5	807,125	8.8
Subsidized housing	3,135	7.6	131,670	11.6
Not subsidized housing	14,685	6.4	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 their dwelling falls below at least one of the affordability, suitability, or condition of dwelling standards, and would have to spend 30% or more of their 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, Arab people (24.7%) were more than twice as likely to live in households in core housing need as the total population (10.6%).

Arab people in owner-occupied dwellings (14.6%) were in core housing need at a rate nearly three times higher than the total population in owner-occupied dwellings (5.4%). The proportion of Arab people in rented dwellings in core housing need was 35.4%, which was higher than the 25.3% of the total population in rented dwellings in core housing need.

The incidence of core housing need was higher for Arab people in owner-occupied dwellings both with and without a mortgage than their counterparts in the total population. Among Arab people in owner-occupied dwellings with a mortgage, 15.3% were in core housing need, compared with 6.0% of the total population. The core housing need rate for Arab people in owner-occupied dwellings without a mortgage was 11.2%, compared with 4.3% for the total population.

Similarly, the incidence of core housing need varied for renters, depending on whether there was a rent subsidy. Arab people in renter households without a subsidy (34.4%) were more likely to live in core housing need than the total population without a subsidy (23.2%).

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

	Arab population		Total population	
	count	percent	count	percent
Total, core housing need¹	468,300	100.0	32,803,125	100.0
In core housing need	115,610	24.7	3,492,080	10.6
Owner	35,035	14.6	1,307,620	5.4
With a mortgage	30,080	15.3	971,150	6.0
Without a mortgage	4,950	11.2	336,470	4.3
Renter	80,570	35.4	2,184,455	25.3
Subsidized housing	14,445	40.4	433,190	39.9
Not subsidized housing	66,125	34.4	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 Arab men and women

In 1995, the Government of Canada committed to using 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 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+ 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+ 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+ considers many other identity factors such as race, ethnicity, immigrant status, religion, age, 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 below highlight differences in housing experiences for Arab men and women. Compared with Arab men, Arab women were more likely to live in unsuitable housing and be in core housing need.

Table 7
Housing indicators for Arab men and women, Canada, 2016

	Arab men	Arab women
	percent	
In an owner-occupied dwelling	47.7	48.2
In household spending 30% or more of income on shelter costs ¹	39.8	39.9
In unsuitable housing	27.6	30.2
In dwelling requiring major repairs	5.7	5.7
In core housing need ²	23.8	25.7

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, 85.9% of Arab people lived as part of a one-census-family household. This was above the rate for the total population (79.6%). Arab people in one-census-family households were more likely to live in a couple family with children (69.6%) than without children (7.4%). This was also true for the total population, where 45.7% of individuals lived in a one-census-family household with children and 22.5% lived in households without children. Arab people (8.8%) 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 Arab people (9.3%) than the total population (15.4%). This is because a small proportion of Arab people lived alone (5.9%). By comparison, 11.5% of the total population in private households in Canada lived alone.

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

	Arab population		Total population	
	count	percent	count	percent
Total, household type	523,235	100.0	34,460,065	100.0
One-census-family household ¹	449,330	85.9	27,414,900	79.6
Couple family without children	38,930	7.4	7,761,355	22.5
Couple family with children	364,380	69.6	15,754,465	45.7
One parent family	46,020	8.8	3,899,085	11.3
Multiple-census-family household ¹	25,055	4.8	1,746,110	5.1
Non-census-family household	48,850	9.3	5,299,050	15.4
One-person household	30,810	5.9	3,967,770	11.5
Two- or more person household	18,045	3.4	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).