
Instruction in the Minority Official Language Reference Guide

Census of Population, 2021



Release date: March 29, 2023

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Table of contents

Definitions and concepts	4
Questions	8
Classifications	10
Concepts over time	11
Collection and processing methods	11
Data quality	12
Variability due to sampling and total non-response	12
Non-response bias	12
Data quality indicators	12
Certification of final counts	14
Data quality for instruction in the minority official language	15
Comparability with other data sources	17

Definitions and concepts

The census collects a wealth of information on the languages and education of Canadians. For the first time, in 2021, five questions on language of instruction were asked on both the short- and long-form census questionnaires. The primary objective of this addition was to obtain the number of children eligible for instruction in the minority official language based on the criteria set out in [section 23](#) of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (hereafter “Charter”). More specifically, this section gives parents the right to have their children educated in the minority official language of the province or territory in which they reside (see the box “Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*”). “Minority official language” means English in Quebec and French in the rest of the country.

Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*

Minority language educational rights

Language of instruction

23. (1) Citizens of Canada

(a) whose first language learned and still understood is that of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province in which they reside, or

(b) who have received their primary school instruction in Canada in English or French and reside in a province where the language in which they received that instruction is the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province,

have the right to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in that language in that province.

Continuity of language of instruction

(2) Citizens of Canada of whom any child has received or is receiving primary or secondary school instruction in English or French in Canada, have the right to have all their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in the same language.

Application where numbers warrant

(3) The right of citizens of Canada under subsections (1) and (2) to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of a province;

(a) applies wherever in the province the number of children of citizens who have such a right is sufficient to warrant the provision to them out of public funds of minority language instruction; and

(b) includes, where the number of those children so warrants, the right to have them receive that instruction in minority language educational facilities provided out of public funds.

It is worth noting that, in accordance with section 59 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, paragraph 23(1)(a) of the Charter, the criterion involving the “first language learned and still understood” of a parent does not apply to Quebec. It can come into force only with authorization from the National Assembly or the Government of Quebec. To date, this authorization has not been granted. As a result, mother tongue is not considered as one of the admissibility criteria in Quebec.

Instruction in the Minority Official Language Reference Guide

The information collected through the new questions will be used in combination with other existing information from the census, such as first language learned and still understood (hereafter “mother tongue”), family relations between people living in the same household, and place of residence, to obtain the number of children who are eligible for instruction in the minority official language.

Criteria of eligibility

A child whose usual place of residence is in Canada outside Quebec on Census Day is considered eligible for instruction in the minority official language (i.e., French), if at least one of the following criteria is met:

1. At least one parent of the child has French as a mother tongue.
2. At least one parent of the child is attending or has attended a regular French program in a French-language school in Canada during their primary education.
3. The child is attending or has attended a regular French program in a French-language school in Canada during their primary or secondary education.
4. A brother or a sister of the child is attending or has attended a regular French program in a French-language school in Canada during their primary or secondary education.

A child whose usual place of residence is in Quebec is considered eligible for instruction in the minority official language (i.e., English), if at least one of the following criteria is met:

1. At least one parent of the child is attending or has attended an English-language school in Canada during their primary education.
2. The child is attending or has attended an English-language school in Canada during their primary or secondary education.
3. A brother or a sister of the child is attending or has attended an English-language school in Canada during their primary or secondary education.

Given the census methodology, it is challenging to produce the statistical information that meets all the requirements of the [section 23](#) of the Charter. As outlined in the [Minority language educational rights: Technical report on changes for the 2021 Census](#), these challenges were known at the time when the decision to use the census to enumerate the children eligible for instruction in the minority official language was made. The decision was based on several consultations with experts, which is also outlined in the technical report. It is worth noting that census data are of high quality and are the most comprehensive data in Canada on this subject.

Statistics Canada has operationalized the definition of children eligible for instruction in the minority official language¹ as follows:

1. Mother tongue

Parents who reported French only or French and another language as their mother tongue are both considered as having French as their mother tongue.

2. Education in the minority official language

“French immersion” programs are not considered “regular French” programs because they are second language programs offered in English-language schools.

1. The terminology used in the Census of Population, 2021 is “children eligible for instruction in the minority official language,” which is different from the term used in the technical report, i.e., “children of rights-holders,” in order to distinguish the statistical concepts operationalized in the census from the legal concepts established by [section 23](#) of the Charter and its jurisprudence.

Instruction in the Minority Official Language Reference Guide

A parent, child, brother or sister is considered to have been schooled in the minority official language in Canada during primary education if they reported at least one year of schooling in the minority official language in Canada at the primary level. Similarly, a child, brother or sister is considered to have been schooled in the minority official language in Canada during secondary education if they reported at least one year of schooling in the minority official language in Canada at the secondary level.

3. Child, parent, brother and sister

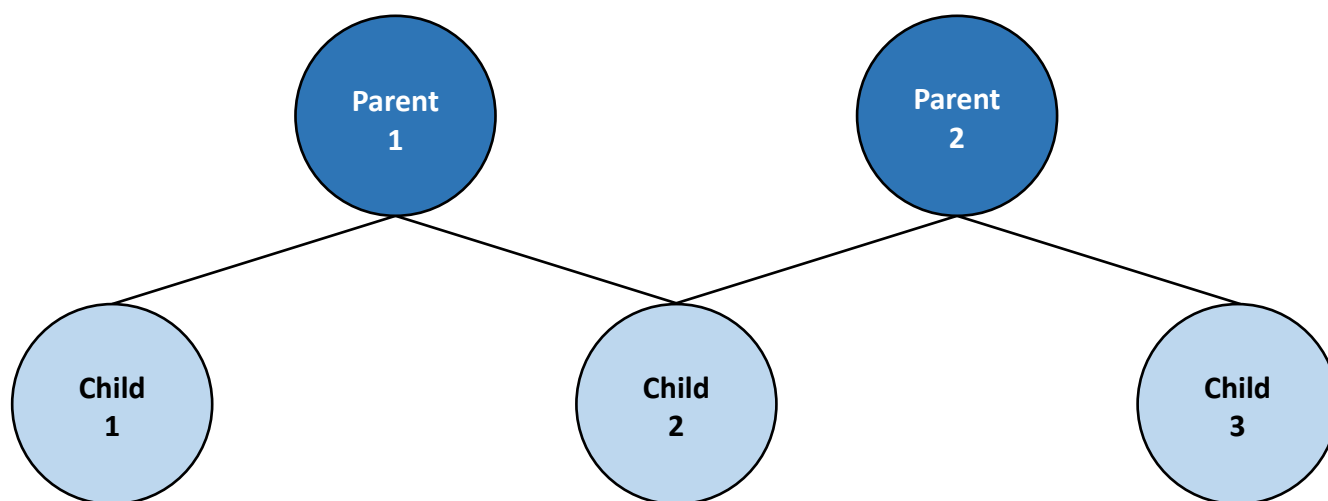
A “child”² is defined as an individual born in 2003 or later, i.e., younger than 18 years of age on December 31, 2020.

A “parent” is defined as the self-declared parent of a “child” on the census questionnaire. They may be a biological or adoptive parent. Furthermore, a step-parent or grandparent is not considered a “parent” for the purposes of enumerating children eligible for instruction in the minority official language.

A “brother” or “sister” of a “child” is defined as an individual who shares at least one “parent” in common. Whereas a “child” is limited to an individual aged younger than 18 on December 31, 2020, there is no age restriction on their “brother” or “sister.” In the absence of both parents in the household, individuals who are self-declared as “brothers” or “sisters” of the child on the census questionnaire are considered their “brothers” and “sisters.”³

Figure 1 below illustrates a family that includes step-siblings and step-parents. In this example, there are two individuals who are a couple, Parent 1 and Parent 2. Parent 1 is self-declared as a “parent” of Child 1 and Child 2, and Parent 2 is self-declared as a “parent” of Child 2 and Child 3. In this example, Parent 1 has not self-declared being a “parent” of Child 3, and Parent 2 has not self-declared being a “parent” of Child 1. It is important to highlight that while Child 2 has both of their “parents” within the same household, both Child 1 and Child 3 have only one “parent” present in the household. Considering the fact that all family members relevant to the eligibility criteria envisioned by [section 23](#) of the Charter, i.e., parents, brothers and sisters, may not live in the same household as the child on Census Day. In 2023, Statistics Canada will complete and disseminate additional complimentary studies to ascertain the scope of these limitations regarding children not living with one or both of their parents.

Figure 1
Example of family structure



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021.

2. As per the usual census definition, a “foster child” is not considered to be a member of a [census family](#). Specifically, a “foster child” does not have anyone identified as their “parent” on the questionnaire.
3. Given the design of the questionnaire, in the absence of parents in the household, to be able to declare an individual as a “brother” or “sister,” the “brother” or “sister” has to be Person 1 on the questionnaire. This is because the questionnaire collects only relationships with Person 1 and, in cases of children, with Person 2 also. For example, consider a scenario where two brothers aged 15 and 16 live with their uncle and aunt. However, if the uncle is Person 1 on the questionnaire, both brothers would appear as “nephews” of Person 1. As such, in the census data, these two brothers would not be considered as “brothers.”

Instruction in the Minority Official Language Reference Guide

As such, Child 2 is considered to be “brother” or “sister” of Child 1 and Child 3 because they have at least one parent in common. Child 1 and Child 3 are not considered “brothers” or “sisters.”

Depending on the answers provided by the family members to the mother tongue and language of instruction questions, the eligibility for instruction in the minority official language for the three children within this family may be different. Consider the following four scenarios:

Scenario 1: The family lives in Alberta. Suppose Parent 1 attended a regular French program in a French-language school during primary education for at least one year in Canada, while Parent 2 does not have French as their mother tongue and did not attend a regular French program in a French-language school during primary education for at least one year in Canada. In such a scenario, only children of Parent 1, i.e., Child 1 and Child 2, would be considered eligible for instruction in French.

Scenario 2: The family lives in Quebec. Suppose Child 2, who is 21 years old on December 31, 2020, has completed two years in an English-language secondary school in Canada. As such, assuming they are younger than 18 years on December 31, 2020, both Child 1 and Child 3 (who both have a parent in common with Child 2) would be considered as children eligible for instruction in English since their “brother” Child 2, has been educated in English for at least one year in Canada.

Scenario 3: The family lives in Quebec. The ages of Child 1, Child 2 and Child 3 are 7, 21 and 16 years on December 31, 2020, respectively. Suppose only Child 1 attended an English-language primary school for at least one year in Canada, while Parent 1 and Parent 2 did not attend an English-language school in Canada for at least one year at the primary level. In such a scenario, even though Child 2 is a “brother” of Child 1, Child 2 is not a “child” given that they do not meet the age requirement of being a “child.” Child 3 is not a “sister” of Child 1, since they do not have at least one parent in common. As a result, there is only one “child” (Child 1) who is considered eligible for instruction in the minority official language because this child had been instructed in the minority official language in Canada.

Scenario 4: The family lives in New Brunswick. Suppose Parent 2 has French as their mother tongue, while Parent 1 does not have French as their mother tongue and did not attend a regular French program in a French-language school during primary education for at least one year in Canada. Neither Child 1, nor Child 2, nor Child 3 has been instructed in French—all of them are younger than 18 years old on December 31, 2020. In this scenario, only Child 2 and Child 3 would be considered children eligible for instruction in French because their “parent” has French as their mother tongue.

Careful consideration must be given to understanding these family-related concepts for the purpose of enumerating children eligible for instruction in the minority official language, because they may differ from the usual census concepts relating to families and households for which information is available in [Families, Households and Marital Status Reference Guide, Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-500-X. The reader may also find it useful to refer to the appendix of the aforementioned reference guide since it relates to “Considerations for examining families and living arrangements with the Census of Population.”

4. Citizenship

For determining eligibility for instruction in the minority official language, eligibility criteria specified above are applied without considering the citizenship of the parent(s). It is worth noting that the [text of section 23](#) of the Charter refers to the “Citizens of Canada.” A question on citizenship is asked on the long-form questionnaire, which is completed by households in 25% of private dwellings (as opposed to the mother tongue and language of instruction questions, asked to 100% of the population). Supplementary tables using the 25% census sample will account for parents’ Canadian citizenship when applying the eligibility criteria. Titles of these supplementary tables will specify that citizenship is accounted for, to avoid confusion with the other census products, which do not account for parent citizenship. For more information on the concept of citizenship in the census, please refer to [Place of Birth, Generation Status, Citizenship and Immigration Reference Guide, Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-500-X.

Instruction in the Minority Official Language Reference Guide

List of concepts and variables

The following concepts and variables, as defined in the [Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-301-X, have been created with language of instruction data collected during the census on May 11, 2021:

- [Eligibility for instruction in the minority official language](#)
 - Eligibility for instruction in the minority official language by detailed eligibility criteria
 - Eligibility for instruction in the minority official language by single and multiple eligibility criteria
- [Primary or secondary schooling in the minority official language in Canada](#)
 - Type of French program attended in Canada
 - Type of French program attended in Canada and level of instruction
 - Primary or secondary schooling in an English-language school in Canada
- [Number of years of primary or secondary schooling in the minority official language in Canada](#)
 - Number of years of primary schooling in a regular French program in a French-language school in Canada
 - Number of years of secondary schooling in a regular French program in a French-language school in Canada
 - Total number of years of primary or secondary schooling in a regular French program in a French-language school in Canada
 - Number of years of primary schooling in an English-language school in Canada
 - Number of years of secondary schooling in an English-language school in Canada
 - Total number of years of primary or secondary schooling in an English-language school in Canada.

Questions

For the 2021 Census, the [2A](#) short-form questionnaire was used to enumerate all usual residents of 75% of private dwellings. The [2A-L](#) long-form questionnaire, which also includes the questions from the 2A short-form questionnaire, was used to enumerate a 25% sample of private households in Canada. For private households in First Nations communities, Métis settlements, Inuit regions and other remote areas, the [2A-R](#) questionnaire was used to enumerate 100% of the population.

The new questions on language of instruction were added based on the qualitative and quantitative tests conducted in 2018 and 2019, respectively. The results from these tests are summarized in [Minority language educational rights: Technical report on changes for the 2021 Census](#).

Right before the series of questions on language of instruction were asked, the questionnaire included the following preamble:

“The following questions collect information in accordance with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* to support education programs in English and French in Canada.”

To minimize response burden, only questions on the language of instruction in the minority official language were asked. In other words, respondents living in Quebec were asked if they went to English-language schools during primary or secondary education in Canada, while in the rest of the country, respondents were asked if they did their schooling in French during primary and secondary education in Canada. The electronic questionnaire did not ask Question 12, but automatically brought the respondent to the appropriate questions based on the geography (Quebec or outside Quebec). On the paper questionnaire, Question 12 was used to identify dwellings in Quebec, and its wording was the following:

Instruction in the Minority Official Language Reference Guide

12. Is this dwelling located in Quebec?

Households that responded “No” were prompted to answer Question 13 for each person identified on the questionnaire.

13. Did this person do any of their **primary or secondary schooling in French** in Canada (including immersion)?

Individuals for whom “Yes (previously or currently attending)” was reported were prompted to answer Question 14:

14. In which type of program was this schooling in French done?

- A **regular French program** in a **French-language school**
- A **French immersion program** in an English-language school
- Both types of programs
- Other program — specify:

Individuals for whom either “A **regular French program** in a **French-language school**,” “Both types of programs,” or “Other program — specify” was reported were asked Question 15:

15. For how many years did this person attend a **regular French program** in a **French-language school**?

- Number of years in **primary** schooling (including kindergarten and middle school)
- Number of years in **secondary** schooling

Households that responded “Yes” to Question 12 were prompted to answer Question 16 for each person within the household:

16. Did this person do any of their **primary or secondary schooling in an English-language school** in Canada (including immersion)?

Individuals for whom “Yes (previously or currently attending)” was reported were further asked Question 17:

17. For how many years did this person do their **schooling in an English-language school** in Canada (including immersion)?

- Number of years in **primary** schooling (including kindergarten)
- Number of years in **secondary** schooling

For mother tongue (Question 10), please refer to [Languages Reference Guide, Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-500-X.

For citizenship questions, please refer to [Place of Birth, Generation Status, Citizenship and Immigration Reference Guide, Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-500-X.

For questions about family, please refer to [Families, Households and Marital Status Reference Guide, Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-500-X.

To assist people whose first language is neither English nor French, the census questions were translated into 25 other languages, including 13 Indigenous languages. Respondents could obtain the census questions in any of these [other languages and alternative formats](#) by calling the Census Help Line. However, the census questionnaire was printed only in English and French and had to be completed in either English or French.

More information on the wording and format of the 2021 Census language of instruction questions and the instructions that were provided to respondents for those questions can be found in the 2021 Census long-form and short-form questionnaires Form [2A-L](#) and Form [2A](#), and the [Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-301-X.

Classifications

There are two principal classifications related to language of instruction data.

Eligibility for instruction in the minority official language

1. Children eligible for instruction in the minority official language
2. Children not eligible for instruction in the minority official language

Eligibility for instruction in the minority official language by detailed eligibility criteria

1. A parent with French mother tongue (Residents outside Quebec)
2. A parent attended a regular French program in a French-language school at the primary level in Canada (Residents outside Quebec)
3. The child attended a regular French program in a French-language school at the primary or secondary level in Canada (Residents outside Quebec)
4. A brother or sister attended a regular French program in a French-language school at the primary or secondary level in Canada (Residents outside Quebec)
5. The child and a brother or sister attended a French-language school (Residents outside Quebec)
6. A parent and the child attended a French-language school (Residents outside Quebec)
7. A parent and a brother or sister attended a French-language school (Residents outside Quebec)
8. A parent, the child, and a brother or sister attended a French-language school (Residents outside Quebec)
9. A parent with French mother tongue and a parent attended a French-language school (Residents outside Quebec)
10. A parent with French mother tongue and the child attended a French-language school (Residents outside Quebec)
11. A parent with French mother tongue and a brother or sister attended a French-language school (Residents outside Quebec)
12. A parent with French mother tongue, and the child and a brother or sister attended a French-language school (Residents outside Quebec)
13. A parent with French mother tongue, and a parent and the child attended a French-language school (Residents outside Quebec)
14. A parent with French mother tongue, and a parent and a brother or sister attended a French-language school (Residents outside Quebec)
15. A parent with French mother tongue, and a parent, the child, and a brother or sister attended a French-language school (Residents outside Quebec)
16. A parent attended an English-language primary school in Canada (Residents of Quebec)
17. The child attended an English-language primary or secondary school in Canada (Residents of Quebec)
18. A brother or sister attended an English-language primary or secondary school in Canada (Residents of Quebec)
19. The child and a brother or sister attended an English-language school (Residents of Quebec)

Instruction in the Minority Official Language Reference Guide

20. A parent and the child attended an English-language school (Residents of Quebec)
21. A parent and a brother or sister attended an English-language school (Residents of Quebec)
22. A parent, the child, and a brother or sister attended an English-language school (Residents of Quebec)
23. Children not eligible for instruction in the minority official language

Please consult the [Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-301-X, for more information on the classifications for each definition.

Concepts over time

This is the first time that questions on the language of instruction were asked on the census. Moreover, it is also the first time that census data will provide the number of children who are eligible for instruction in the minority official language using more than one criterion. Historically, three data sources have been used to partially estimate this population.

First, the mother tongue of parents in the census has been used historically to enumerate children eligible for instruction in the minority official language. This provided partial enumeration of children eligible for instruction in the minority official language, given that language of instruction questions were not asked before 2021. Also, the mother tongue criterion does not apply in Quebec.

The [Elementary-Secondary Education Survey \(ESES\)](#) provides data annually on children who are currently enrolled in elementary and secondary schools. In addition to aggregated information on age, sex and grade, this data source includes information on the type of language program (regular second language programs, French immersion programs and first official language programs for linguistic minorities). Information from this data source differs from the census because it provides the number of current registrations to minority official language programs, while the census provides the number of children eligible for such programs.

The [Survey on the Vitality of Official-Language Minorities \(SVOLM\)](#), conducted in 2006 to fill data gaps on the official language minority population, is another rich source of information, including an estimate of the number of children eligible for instruction in the official language minority among children whose parents were part of the official language minority population outside Quebec. The SVOLM collected demographic, linguistic and sociocultural information about the respondent and in some cases the child (if the parent belonging to the official language minority was the person who completed the questionnaire).

In May 2022, the collection of the second iteration of the SVOLM ([Survey on the Official Language Minority Population \(SOLMP\)](#)) was launched. The data collected from this survey include a sample of children eligible for instruction in the minority official language. The survey asks questions on several topics related to the official language minority population, including language of instruction, reasons why parents chose or did not choose minority official language instruction programs and intentions to register children in these programs.

The Census, [Elementary-Secondary Education Survey \(ESES\)](#) and [Survey on the Official Language Minority Population \(SOLMP\)](#), together, provide a set of data sources on the number of children eligible for instruction in the minority official language, the number of children actually enrolled in a minority official language education program at the elementary and secondary levels, and the number of children not enrolled, but whose parents intend to enroll them. For more information on this data ecosystem, refer to the document: [Children eligible for instruction in the minority official language, a data ecosystem](#).

Collection and processing methods

The COVID-19 pandemic emerged in Canada in early 2020 and affected all steps of the 2021 Census process, from data collection to dissemination. Please refer to the [Guide to the Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-304-X, for more detailed information on this topic.

For general information on the overall content, collection, design, processing and data quality for the 2021 Census of Population, please see the [Guide to the Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-304-X.

Data quality

The 2021 Census of Population underwent a thorough data quality assessment. The different certification activities conducted to evaluate the quality of the 2021 Census data are described in [Chapter 9](#) of the *Guide to the Census of Population, 2021*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-304-X.

The data quality assessment was conducted in addition to the regular verifications and quality checks completed at key stages of the census. For example, throughout data collection and processing, the accuracy of specific steps such as data capture and coding was measured, the consistency of the responses provided was checked, and the non-response rates for each question were analyzed. As well, the quality of imputed responses was assessed during data editing and imputation.

During the data quality assessment, a number of data quality indicators were produced and used to evaluate the quality of the data. These indicators are briefly described below. Finally, resulting census counts were compared with other data sources and certified for final release.

The main highlights of this assessment of the data pertaining to Instruction in the Minority Official language are presented below.

Variability due to sampling and total non-response

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

This sampling approach and total non-response introduce variability into the estimates that needs to be accounted for. This variability also depends on the population size and the variability of the characteristics being measured. Furthermore, the precision of estimates may vary considerably depending on the domain or geography of interest, in particular because of the variation in response rates. For more information on variability due to sampling and total non-response in long-form census questionnaire estimates, please refer to the [Guide to the Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-304-X.

Non-response bias

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

In general, the risk of non-response bias increases as the response rate declines. For the 2021 long-form census questionnaire, Statistics Canada adapted its collection and estimation procedures to mitigate the effect of non-response bias to the extent possible. For more information on these mitigation strategies, please refer to the [Guide to the Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-304-X.

Data quality indicators

A number of quality indicators were produced and analyzed during the 2021 Census of Population data quality assessment. Four indicators are available to data users for long-form content: the total non-response (TNR) rate; the confidence interval; as well as the non-response rate and the imputation rate per question.

The **total non-response (TNR) rate** is the primary quality indicator that accompanies each disseminated 2021 Census of Population product, and is calculated for each geographic area. It measures total non-response at the dwelling level. Non-response is said to be total when no questionnaire is returned from a dwelling or when a returned questionnaire does not meet the minimum content. More information on the TNR rate is available in [Chapter 9](#) of the *Guide to the Census of Population, 2021*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-304-X.

The **confidence interval** was selected as a variance-based quality indicator to accompany the 2021 Census of Population long-form estimates because it helps users easily make a statistical inference. This indicator provides a measure of the accuracy of the long-form estimates. Using a science-based approach, research and simulations were done to ensure that confidence intervals are constructed using adequate statistical methods for the Census of Population data and areas of interest.

A confidence interval is associated with a confidence level, generally set at 95%. A 95% confidence interval is an interval constructed around the estimate so that, if the process that generated the sample were repeated many times, the value of the interest parameter in the population would be contained in 95% of these intervals. The confidence interval consists of a lower bound and an upper bound. These two bounds accompany the long-form estimates in most data tables.

Further details on the different methods used to construct confidence intervals and their assumptions are provided in the [Sampling and Weighting Technical Report, Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-306-X.

The **non-response rate per question** is a measure of missing information due to non-response to a question. It measures only the non-response that is resolved through imputation during data processing (as opposed to weighting when a sample is used). For the long-form questionnaire, the non-response rate per question includes only partial non-response to the question, except for First Nations communities, Métis settlements, Inuit regions and other remote areas where both partial and total non-response are taken into account. Partial non-response is when answers to certain questions are not provided for a respondent household.

The non-response rate per question for a question on the long-form questionnaire is defined as the sum of the weights of in-scope units in the population of interest who did not respond to the question divided by the sum of the weights of in-scope units in the population of interest. Here “units” refers to the statistical units for which data are collected or derived (e.g., persons or households, depending on whether the question is about a person-level characteristic or a household-level characteristic). A unit is considered to be in scope for a given question if the question is applicable to that unit and the unit belongs to the population of interest related to the question.

The **imputation rate per question** measures the extent to which responses to a given question were imputed. Imputation is used to replace missing data in the event of non-response or when a response is found to be invalid (e.g., multiple answers are provided when a single answer is expected). Imputation is conducted to eliminate data gaps and to reduce bias introduced by non-response. Imputation is generally done by identifying persons or households in the same geographical area with similar characteristics to the incomplete record and copying their values to fill in the missing or invalid responses.

The imputation rate for a question on the long-form questionnaire is defined as the sum of the weights of in-scope units in the population of interest for which the response to the question was imputed divided by the sum of the weights of in-scope units in the population of interest (see the definition of “units” provided in the above section on the non-response rate per question).

For long-form content, imputation for most areas is done to resolve partial non-response—not total non-response, which instead is treated by weighting. However, in First Nations communities, Métis settlements, Inuit regions and other remote areas, whole household imputation (WHI) is used to resolve total non-response. It first imputes the occupancy status of non-respondent dwellings and further imputes all the data for those dwellings resolved as occupied in the first step. WHI is included in the imputation rate per question, including the use of administrative data to impute non-responding households in areas with low response rates; see [Appendix 1.7](#) of the *Guide to the Census of Population, 2021*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-304-X. As with the non-response rate, a unit is

considered to be in scope if the question is applicable to that unit and the unit belongs to the population of interest related to the question.

The non-response and imputation rates per question can be interpreted as the proportion of in-scope units in the population of interest for which information was not reported or was imputed, respectively. The long-form rates are weighted to reflect the fact that the long-form questionnaire is only distributed to a sample of the population, so in this case, the proportion is estimated.

The non-response and imputation rates for a question are often similar, but some differences can be observed for a given question because of additional data processing steps that may have been required. These rates were regularly checked during data assessment, and a detailed analysis was done if there was a difference between the two rates for a question, to ensure the appropriateness of the processing steps taken and the quality of the data. A difference between the non-response rate and the imputation rate for a question can generally be explained by one of the following two factors:

- Some responses were considered invalid or inconsistent during the edit stage and imputation was needed, which is why the imputation rate is higher than the non-response rate for a question.
- Some non-responses were resolved in a straightforward manner early during data processing because a single resolution was possible based on the answers provided to other questions, making imputation unnecessary. This may explain why the non-response rate is higher than the imputation rate for a question.

The [2021 Census Data Quality Guidelines](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-26-0006, provides all the information required to understand and interpret the data quality indicators for the 2021 Census, along with guidelines to enable their proper usage. Data quality indicators are provided so that users are informed about the quality of the statistical information and can determine the relevance and the limitations of the data relative to their needs. In general, the quality of the 2021 Census of Population data is very good, but in some cases, data have to be used with caution. It is strongly recommended that users consult all available data quality indicators to get a better sense of the quality of the data products they are interested in.

Certification of final counts

Once data editing and imputation were completed, the data were weighted to ensure that estimates represent the total Canadian population living in private dwellings. Certification of the final weighted estimates was the last step in the validation process, which led to the recommendation to release the data for each level of geography and domain of interest. Based on the analysis of the data quality indicators and the comparison of long-form census questionnaire estimates with other data sources, the recommendation is for unconditional release, conditional release, or non-release (for quality reasons on rare occasions). For conditional release or non-release, appropriate notes and warnings are included in the products and provided to users. Moreover, other data sources were used to evaluate the long-form census questionnaire estimates. However, since the risk of error often increases for lower levels of geography and for smaller populations, and the data sources used to evaluate these counts are less reliable or not available at these lower levels, it can be difficult to certify the counts at these levels.

Long-form census questionnaire estimates are also subject to confidentiality rules that ensure non-disclosure of respondent identity and characteristics. For more information on privacy and confidentiality, please refer to [Chapter 1](#) of the *Guide to the Census of Population, 2021*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-304-X. For information on how Statistics Canada balances the protection of confidentiality and the need for disaggregated census data, with specific attention to new 2021 Census content, please refer to [Balancing the Protection of Confidentiality with the Needs for Disaggregated Census Data, Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-26-0005.

For more information on data processing and the calculation of estimates and their level of precision, please refer to the [Sampling and Weighting Technical Report, Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-306-X.

Data quality for instruction in the minority official language

Tables 1, 2 and 3 below present both the non-response and imputation rates for the questions on language of instruction for Canada and for each province and territory.

Table 1 presents the non-response and imputation rates for primary or secondary schooling in the minority official language. This concept was asked about in two questions: residents of the territories and provinces, aside from Quebec, were asked whether someone in the household had primary or secondary schooling in French in Canada (Question 13), and residents of Quebec were asked whether someone in the household had primary or secondary schooling in an English-language school in Canada (Question 16).

Table 2 presents the non-response and imputation rates for the type of program of schooling in French (Question 14). This question was asked only to residents of the territories and provinces, aside from Quebec, who reported primary or secondary schooling in French in Canada.

Table 3 presents the non-response and imputation rates for number of years of primary and secondary schooling in the minority official language. This question was also asked in two parts: residents of the territories and provinces, aside from Quebec, who reported primary or secondary schooling in a regular French program in a French-language school in Canada were asked about the number of years of primary and secondary schooling in French (Question 15). Residents of Quebec who reported primary or secondary schooling in an English-language school in Canada were asked about the number of years of primary and secondary schooling in English (Question 17).

The non-response and imputation rates per question at lower levels of geography are also available in 2021 Census data tables presenting data quality indicators.

For more information on how questions were worded and who they were asked to, see the section above on [questions](#).

Table 1
Non-response rate and imputation rate for primary or secondary schooling in the minority official language (Question 13 for residents outside of Quebec and Question 16 for residents of Quebec), Canada, provinces and territories, Census of Population, 2021

Geography	Primary or secondary schooling in the minority official language— non-response rate	Primary or secondary schooling in the minority official language— imputation rate
	percent	
Canada outside Quebec	5.1	5.0
Newfoundland and Labrador	5.1	5.1
Prince Edward Island	5.3	5.2
Nova Scotia	4.8	4.7
New Brunswick	5.9	5.7
Ontario	4.3	4.3
Manitoba	6.7	6.6
Saskatchewan	7.5	7.4
Alberta	5.6	5.5
British Columbia	5.5	5.5
Yukon	8.6	8.5
Northwest Territories	11.1	11.0
Nunavut	25.0	24.5
Quebec	5.4	5.4

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Instruction in the Minority Official Language Reference Guide

Table 2

Non-response rate and imputation rate for the type of program of schooling in French (Question 14¹), Canada outside Quebec, provinces outside Quebec and territories, Census of Population, 2021

Geography	Type of program of schooling in French—non-response rate	Type of program of schooling in French—imputation rate
	percent	
Canada outside Quebec	4.5	7.0
Newfoundland and Labrador	4.5	6.4
Prince Edward Island	2.8	3.6
Nova Scotia	3.9	5.2
New Brunswick	5.4	5.8
Ontario	3.9	6.5
Manitoba	5.2	6.8
Saskatchewan	6.4	8.7
Alberta	5.8	8.3
British Columbia	5.3	9.4
Yukon	5.5	7.1
Northwest Territories	6.9	7.9
Nunavut	30.0	31.4

1. This question was only asked to residents of Canada outside of Quebec.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Table 3

Non-response rate and imputation rate for the number of years of primary and secondary schooling in the minority official language (Question 15 for residents outside of Quebec and Question 17 for residents of Quebec), Canada, provinces and territories, Census of Population, 2021

Geography	Number of years of primary and secondary schooling in the minority official language—non-response rate	Number of years of primary and secondary schooling in the minority official language—imputation rate
	percent	
Canada outside Quebec	8.0	9.4
Newfoundland and Labrador	14.8	17.8
Prince Edward Island	6.0	8.0
Nova Scotia	7.4	9.0
New Brunswick	6.6	7.6
Ontario	7.0	8.3
Manitoba	9.3	10.8
Saskatchewan	12.3	14.7
Alberta	11.5	13.2
British Columbia	12.5	14.3
Yukon	7.9	9.5
Northwest Territories	8.8	10.4
Nunavut	33.3	35.1
Quebec	6.3	9.4

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Two types of imputation are reflected in the imputation rate: TNR, and question-level imputation as a result of non-response and invalid responses. For residents outside the province of Quebec, the 2021 Census imputation rate for primary or secondary schooling in French is 5.0% (Table 1), for which TNR accounted for 52.7%. Among the

provinces, the imputation rate for the question on primary or secondary schooling in French ranges from 4.3% in Ontario to 7.4% in Saskatchewan (Table 1). For residents of Quebec, the imputation rate for primary or secondary schooling in an English-language school is 5.4%. The range of imputation rates for schooling in the minority official language is near to that of the language question that precedes it. For example, the imputation rate for Question 10 on mother tongue ranges from 4.1% in Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador to 6.9% in Saskatchewan ([Table 4, Languages Reference Guide, Census of Population, 2021, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-500-X](#)).

For Question 14 on the type of program of schooling in French, the imputation rate for Canada outside Quebec is 7.0%. Among the provinces, it ranges from 3.6% in Prince Edward Island to 9.4% in British Columbia (Table 2).

The imputation rate for the number of years of primary and secondary schooling in the minority official language is 9.4% for Canada outside Quebec, as well as for Quebec (Table 3). The imputation rate for this question ranges from 7.6% in New Brunswick to 17.8% in Newfoundland and Labrador (Table 3).

Similar to the questions on language (questions 8, 9 and 10), Nunavut recorded the highest imputation rates for the questions on language of instruction (questions 13 through 17) among the provinces and territories, with 24.5% for the question on primary or secondary schooling in French (Table 1), 31.4% for the question on the type of program of schooling in French (Table 2), and 35.1% for the question on the number of years of primary and secondary schooling in French (Table 3). In the territories, as well as in First Nations communities, Métis Settlements, Inuit regions and other remote areas in the provinces, COVID-19 presented challenges for conducting the Census of Population. Some challenges, such as travel restrictions and unavailability of local staff, affected in-person enumeration.

Similar to the questions on language, the questions on language of instruction have high imputation rates in collective dwellings—a result of the challenge of collecting data for this population. For example, the non-response rate in collective dwellings in Canada outside Quebec for the question on primary or secondary schooling in French is 91.0%, compared with 1.0% for the population living in private households and overseas. The overall non-response rate for this question is 5.1% for Canada outside Quebec (Table 1). The non-response from collective dwellings and TNR represent 80.4% of the overall non-response to this question, whereas collective dwellings and TNR represent 4.3% of the overall population.

In past census cycles, Statistics Canada used various approaches to enumerate people living in collective dwellings, including direct enumeration and administrative records. Before the 2021 Census of Population, data pertaining to collective dwellings and their residents were collected by census employees. Because of the pandemic, collection procedures for the 2021 Census were redesigned to ensure the safety of respondents and census employees and to limit contact. Census employees did not visit any institutional collective dwellings, such as hospitals, nursing homes and residences for senior citizens, or any long-term care facilities. Administrators of institutional collective dwellings answered a series of questions about their facility and provided census information on their usual residents using the [2021 Census: Collective Dwellings](#) electronic questionnaire. Because of this, it is recommended that these questions be analyzed for private dwellings only.

Comparability with other data sources

The census disseminates a wealth of information on the languages and education of Canadians. For the first time, Statistics Canada disseminated data on language of instruction from the 2021 Census. In addition to this, Statistics Canada has published data on language of instruction collected by the 2006 postcensal [Survey on the Vitality of Official-Language Minorities \(SVOLM\)](#) and by the [Elementary-Secondary Education Survey \(ESES\)](#). In 2024, data on language of instruction will also be released from the postcensal [Survey on the Official Language Minority Population \(SOLMP\)](#). Other sources on language of instruction also exist, such as provincial and territorial administrative education data.

Many factors affect comparisons of data on language of instruction across these sources. Among other factors, comparability is affected by differences in target populations, reference periods, sampling and collection methods, question wording, questionnaire format, examples and instructions, approaches to data processing, and the social and political climate at the time of data collection.