



The Diversity of the Black Populations in Canada, 2021

A Sociodemographic
Portrait



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The Diversity of the Black Populations in Canada, 2021: a Sociodemographic Portrait

by **Natalie Domey** and **Natalka Patsiurko**

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Introduction

The Diversity of the Black Populations in Canada, 2021: A Sociodemographic Portrait is the first of a portrait series that Statistics Canada developed to support the initiatives under [Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy](#)¹, which seeks to address racism and discrimination faced by racialized groups and Indigenous Peoples. This analytical paper aligns with the [Disaggregated Data Action Plan](#), a whole-of-government approach led by Statistics Canada, to enhance data collection, analysis and dissemination pertaining to diverse populations in Canada.

The focus of this portrait is the analysis of the sociodemographic, linguistic, ethnocultural and religious diversity of the Black populations in Canada. An intersectional perspective is used to explore the interactions between multiple diversity measures. Gaining insights into the diversity of these growing populations is an important step toward understanding their unique characteristics and experiences. In so doing, this analytical paper acknowledges the key tenets of the [United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent \(2015-2024\)](#) – recognition, justice and development.

Black Peoples² have a long history in Canada. According to the [United Nations Human Rights Council Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent \(2017\)](#), “[p]eople of African descent have lived in Canada since the beginning of transatlantic settlement.” The sociodemographic and economic portrait of Black Peoples in today’s Canada demonstrates a legacy of resilience. The history of the Black populations in Canada includes being subject to the transatlantic slave trade, displacement, segregation, racism and discrimination, characterized by reinforced hierarchy, subjugation and intergenerational oppression (United Nations Human Rights Council Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, 2017). This history contributes to existing inequalities that affect Black communities’ present-day experiences and reinforces monolithic views of Black peoples (Hier and Bolaria, 2006; Henry and Tator, 2009; Maynard, 2017).

The Black populations in Canada face distinct challenges regarding access to health and housing (Gupta and Aitken, 2022; Hwee and Bougie, 2021; Randle, Hu and Thurston, 2021; Tjepkema, Christidis, Olaniyan and Hwee, 2023); education and economic outcomes (Milan and Gagnon, 2020; Statistics Canada, 2020; Statistics Canada, 2021; Statistics Canada, 2022b; Statistics Canada, 2022d; Turcotte, 2019; Turcotte, 2020; Wall and Wood, 2023); representation in leadership and senior positions (Statistics Canada, 2022f); and overall experiences of inequality, victimization and discrimination (Cotter, 2022a; Cotter, 2022b; Statistics Canada, 2022e).

With this understanding, the analysis highlights the changing sociodemographic situation of the Black populations in Canada over the last 25 years, up until the 2021 Census, and shows the extent to which the Black populations differ from other racialized groups and the non-racialized populations (excluding Indigenous populations).

When examining immigration patterns, places of birth and generation status among the Black populations in Canada, trends for three diasporic communities³ become evident. These communities have ancestral ties to three main countries, continents or regions: Canada, Africa, and the Caribbean. Black peoples born in these different regions are often distinct from each other. Focusing on these three groups, the analysis investigates their diversity according to countries of birth, geographic distribution in Canada, sociodemographic characteristics, mother tongues, ethnocultural composition and religious affiliation. Understanding the differences between these groups can inform targeted programs and policies geared toward Black populations.

Historical context

People of African descent have lived in what is now Canada for more than 400 years. The earliest known Black person to have come to Canada was Mathieu Da Costa in 1604. He served as a navigator and interpreter for French explorers Pierre Du Gua De Monts and Samuel de Champlain, providing an invaluable link with the Mi'kmaq people encountered by the Europeans.

The first recorded enslaved African to live in Canada (i.e., New France) was Olivier LeJeune in 1628. LeJeune was taken from Africa as a young child and eventually given the last name of the priest who purchased him. In May 1689, attempting to address labour shortages in New France, King Louis XIV of France authorized colonists to enslave Pawnee Native Americans and Africans.

Throughout the 1700s most people of African descent in what is now Canada were in Nova Scotia, enslaved by early settlers. In 1750, approximately 400 enslaved and 17 free Black people lived in Halifax, Nova Scotia. During the Seven Years' War between Britain and France in 1760, the *Articles of Capitulation*, which ceded New France to Britain, stipulated that Blacks and Pawnees would remain enslaved. Amid an expanding system of slavery, by 1767, the free Black population in Nova Scotia (which included present-day New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island) increased to 104 people.

During the American War of Independence (1775 to 1783), freedom was offered to enslaved Africans in America in return for their support of the British war efforts. The people who accepted this offer became known as the Black Loyalists. During the War of 1812 following another offer by the British, approximately 2,400 Black people from the United States accepted to serve behind British lines or support British war efforts. By 1834 Black Loyalists and Black Refugees had established the majority of Nova Scotia's known 52 historic Black communities. These communities were underpinned by African Baptist churches – with the African United Baptist Association being established in 1854 – and societies such as the African Friendly Society and the African Abolition Society.

Throughout the 1800s, largely via the Underground Railroad (a network of secret routes and safe houses used by enslaved Africans to escape to Canada and free American states), approximately 30,000 Black people came to Canada, establishing historic Black communities predominantly in southwestern Ontario. Another Black community in Oro Township was established by Black veterans granted land in exchange for their service to the British Empire during the War of 1812. The Coloured Corps in which they fought was inaugurated in Upper Canada (Ontario) and comprised free and enslaved Black men. The *Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade* received royal assent in 1807 and became law throughout the British Empire. But it was still another 26 years before enslavement in most British colonies (including Canada) was abolished with the *Slavery Abolition Act* in 1833.

Through the latter half of the 19th century increased immigration by Black peoples to western Canada led to what would eventually become historic Black communities, such as Salt Spring Island, Amber Valley and Hogan's Alley.

Despite enslavement, continued segregation throughout the 1900s and other inequities, Black communities in Canada have persevered and remained resilient, preserving their rich cultures and histories over time. Their contributions have been essential to the shaping of early Canada and the fabric of Canadian society today.

While some Black people in Canada can trace their lineage on the land to pre-Confederation times, others have family origin stories in Canada within the last 60 years, or have immigrated more recently. This history underpins the sociodemographic diversity of present-day Black populations and contributes to their multiplicity of backgrounds and experiences.

Sources: Government of Canada, 2024; Government of Nova Scotia, 2024.

Population of interest

For this portrait, the Black populations were defined and measured through the population group question in the Census of Population. Since the 1996 Census, “Black” has been one of the population groups listed on the census questionnaire, based on the *Employment Equity Act* and its Regulations. Respondents can choose to mark one or more population group, or specify another group. Except for respondents who reported belonging to both “Black” and “White” groups, multiple responses are excluded from this analysis.

For more information on the population group question and its derivation, refer to the Statistics Canada web page – [Visible Minority and Population Group Reference Guide, Census of Population, 2021](#).

This question collects information in accordance with the *Employment Equity Act* and its Regulations and Guidelines to support programs that promote equal opportunity for everyone to share in the social, cultural and economic life of Canada.

25 Is this person:

Mark “X” more than one circle or specify, if applicable.

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

Other group – specify:

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Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population 2A-L questionnaire.

Executive summary

Using Census of Population data (1996 to 2021) and data from the 2011 National Household Survey, this paper finds that the Black populations in Canada are more diverse in 2021 than in previous years. Three main countries, continents, or regions to which the Black populations have ancestral ties – Canada, Africa, and the Caribbean – are highlighted in the analysis. The Canadian-born, African-born and Caribbean-born Black populations in Canada each have different sociodemographic characteristics, linguistic profiles, ethnic origins and places of residence.

- The Black populations have more than doubled in size since 1996, reaching 1.5 million people and representing 4.3% of the total population and 16.1% of the total racialized populations in Canada in 2021. This group is projected to become the second-largest racialized group by 2041.
- Four in 10 Black people (41.0%) were born in Canada, with Black people representing the largest share (35.8%) of all racialized individuals in the third generation or more in Canada.
- In 2021, one-half (50.9%) of Black people in Canada were immigrants. The largest share of Black Caribbean immigrants (42.5%) migrated to Canada from 1960 to 1990, while over half (54.8%) of Black immigrants from Africa came to Canada more recently (from 2011 to 2021).
- In 2016, the African-born Black populations surpassed the Caribbean-born Black populations to become the second-largest group based on place of birth. Together, the Canadian-born and African-born Black populations represented almost three-quarters (73.6%) of the total Black populations in Canada in 2021.
- In 2021, the Black populations in Canada were born in over 180 different countries. Jamaica and Haiti were the top countries of birth for the Caribbean-born Black populations, while Nigeria, Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo were the most common for the African-born Black populations.
- Nearly all Black people in Canada (97.8%) resided in urban areas in 2021. Black communities in Canada were more geographically dispersed in 2021, with the proportion of the Black populations residing in Ontario and Quebec decreasing from 85.0% to 77.0% since 1996. In contrast, the percentage of the Black populations residing in Canada’s Prairie provinces more than doubled, from 7.0% in 1996 to 16.0% in 2021.
- Almost 6 in 10 Black people in Nova Scotia (59.5%) were in the third generation or more in 2021.

- The Black populations are among the youngest in Canada, with children and youth (aged 0 to 25 years) making up 41.9% of this group. In total, 647,940 Black children and youth accounted for 19.4% of all racialized children and youth, and 6.4% of all children and youth in Canada. Overall, nearly three-quarters (72.8%) of the total Black populations were younger than 45, compared with just over half (54.9%) of the total population in Canada.
- From 1960 to 1990, women outnumbered men among Black Caribbean immigrants coming to Canada. Since 1990, women have also outnumbered men among Black African immigrants. These trends contributed to increased gender parity among the total Black populations (51.3% women and 48.7% men) in 2021.
- In 2021, 3,725 Black people were transgender and 1,610 were non-binary. The Black transgender and non-binary populations represented 0.4% of the total Black populations in Canada, and 4.3% of the total transgender and non-binary populations in Canada.
- The Black populations reported the largest number of mother tongues (approximately 250) among all racialized groups in Canada, with the African-born Black populations having the most diverse mother-tongue profile among the Black populations by place of birth.
- The Black populations reported approximately 371 different ethnic or cultural origins in 2021. This was the largest number of ethnic or cultural origins reported among all racialized groups.
- Among the Black populations, 9,465 people reported having North American Indigenous ethnic or cultural origins in 2021, and just over 100,000 people could be identified as possibly descending from historic Black communities.
- In 2021, the Black populations had the highest religious affiliation (81.8%) – particularly with a Christian denomination or Christian-related tradition – compared with the total population (65.2%), other racialized groups (73.2%) and the non-racialized populations (62.6%).
- Among Black Peoples, African-born individuals had the highest religious affiliation (93.8%). Religious affiliation has been decreasing across all the major religions reported by the Black populations in 2021, except for Islam. African-born individuals made up the largest proportion and number (110,115) of Black Muslims in Canada.

The evolution of the Black populations in Canada

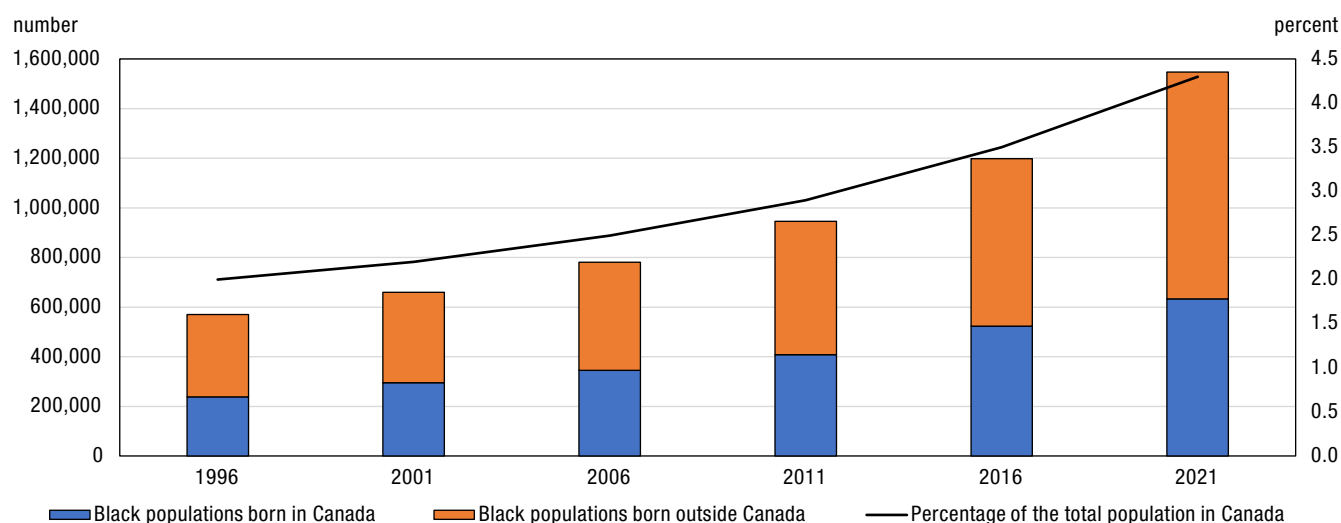
The Black populations in Canada have more than doubled since 1996

In 2021, the Black populations reached 1,547,870 people,⁴ representing 4.3% of the total population in Canada. The Black populations have grown 2.7 times since 1996, making them the third largest racialized group in Canada, after the South Asian and Chinese populations, and constituting 16.1% of the total racialized populations in Canada.

According to recent population projections, the Black populations could reach over 3 million people in 2041, making them the second largest racialized group in Canada after the South Asian populations (Statistics Canada, 2022a).⁵

While the size of the Canadian-born Black populations has grown by 165.8% from 1996 to 2021 (from 238,430 to 633,785 people), the growth of the Black populations born outside Canada was slightly higher, at 175.6% (from 331,730 to 914,085 people) (Chart 1).

Chart 1
Growth of the Black populations in Canada, 1996 to 2021



Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2016 and 2021; and National Household Survey, 2011.

The Black populations have a long historical presence in Canada

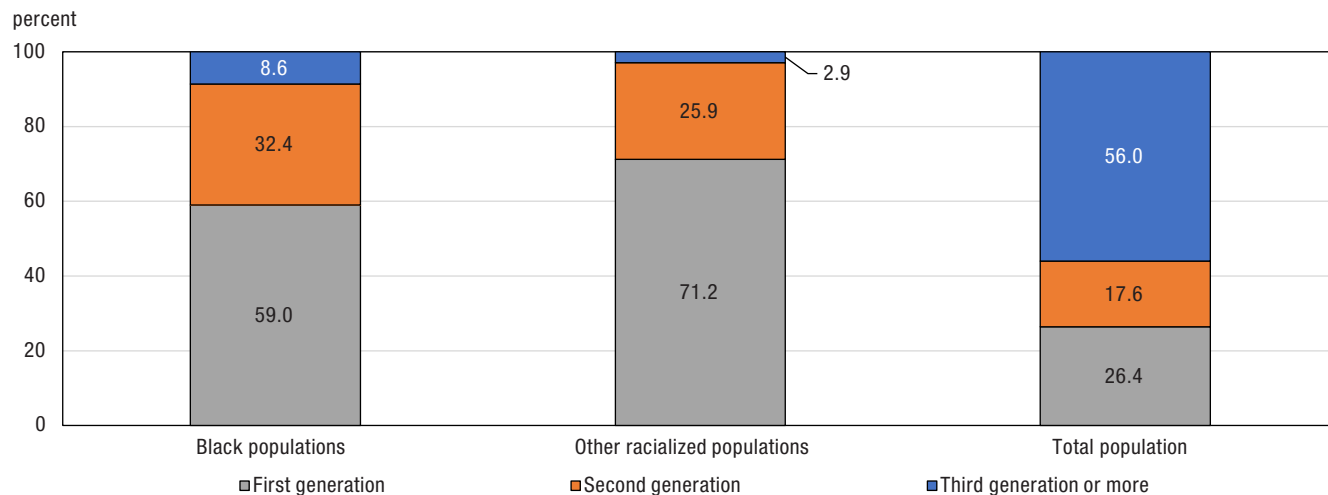
In 2021, over 4 in 10 persons among the Black populations were born in Canada (41.0%), a higher proportion than that of Canadian-born individuals among other racialized groups combined (28.8%). This can be attributed to the long-standing presence of historic Black communities and their descendants in Canada, as well as the substantial migration of people of African descent from various countries to Canada over the last 60 years (see [Table A.1](#) for comparisons of the key sociodemographic characteristics of Black and other populations).

Before the 1960s, most of the Black populations in Canada were born in the country and their families had lived in Canada for generations (Winks, 2021 [1971]; Mensah, 2010). Migration from the Caribbean in the 1960s and from Africa in the 1990s led to an increase in the immigrant Black populations in Canada. Over time, this also increased the size of the Canadian-born Black populations, as descendants of these immigrants were born in Canada (Milan and Tran, 2004; Madibbo, 2007; Creese, 2019; Statistics Canada, 2019; Houle, 2020; Hou, Schimmele and Stick, 2023).

The unique history of the Black populations in Canada is evident in their generational composition, that is, whether people are first generation (born outside Canada), second generation (born in Canada with at least one parent born outside Canada), or third generation or more (born in Canada with all parents born in Canada). The first-generation Black populations, or people born outside Canada (59.0%), were the largest generational group among the Black populations in 2021, followed by the second generation (32.4%) and the third generation or more (8.6%) (Chart 2).

In Canada, 132,770 Black people were of the third generation or more. Notably, the Black populations accounted for the largest share (35.8%) of all racialized people of the third generation or more in 2021.

Chart 2
Generational composition of the Black populations, other racialized populations and total population in Canada, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Immigration and the diversity of the Black populations

Apart from the descendants of historic Black communities in Canada, the current composition of the Black populations has been shaped by successive flows of Black immigrants to Canada starting in the 1960s, a trend that continues to this day. Immigrants – people who are, or who have ever been, landed immigrants or permanent residents in Canada – made up just over half (50.9%, or 787,600 people) of the Black populations in 2021, a proportion smaller than that among all the other racialized populations combined (see [Table A.1](#)).

The first major group of Black immigrants was those born in the Caribbean. Among the total Black immigrant populations residing in Canada at the time of the 2021 Census, over one-third (37.9%, or 298,375 people) were immigrants from the Caribbean. Most of this group (42.5%) immigrated to Canada from 1960 to 1990. Slightly more than one-third (34.4%) immigrated from the Caribbean from 1991 to 2010, and close to one-quarter (23.3%) came from 2011 to 2021.

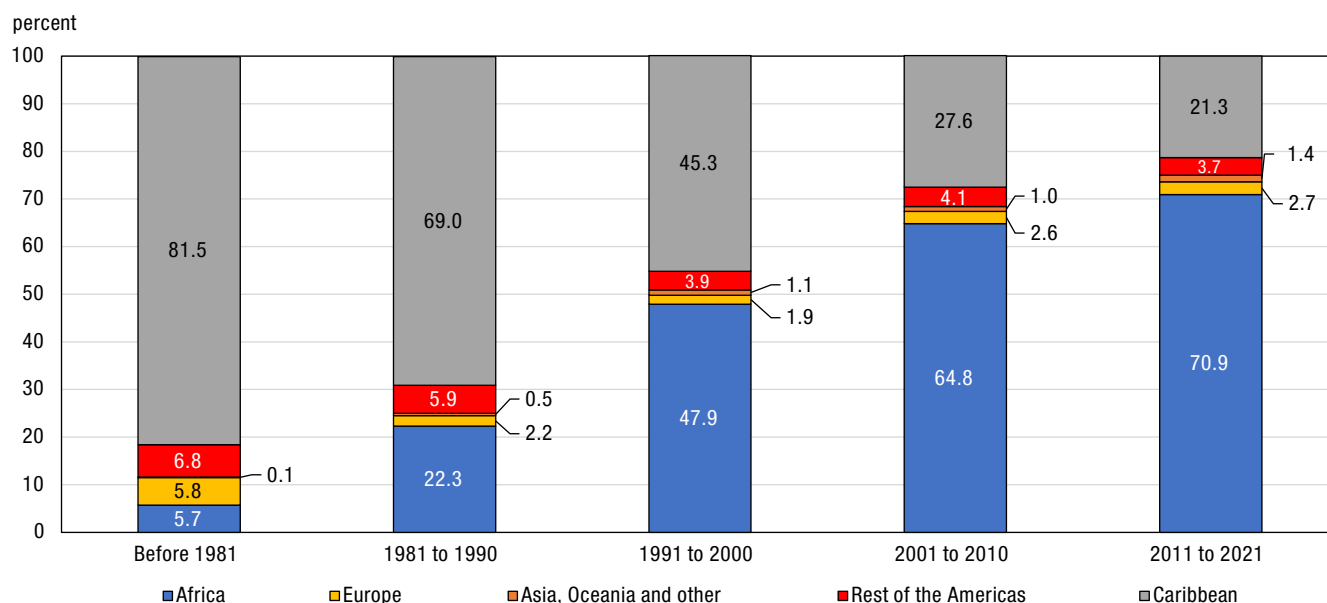
The second major immigrant group was those born in Africa. In 2021, Africa was the primary region of birth among all Black immigrants residing in Canada (53.8%). More than 9 in 10 African-born immigrants (95.1%) in 2021 came to Canada from 1991 to 2021, with over half (54.8%) immigrating from 2011 to 2021. A recent study showed that in 2021, Africa was the second most common place of birth for all recent immigrants to Canada, not just Black immigrants. About 15.6% of all recent immigrants came from Africa, second only to Asia and the Middle East (62.0%) (Statistics Canada, 2022d).

Finally, immigration of Black populations from the rest of the world – North America excluding Canada, South America, Europe, Asia, Oceania and other regions – was proportionally smaller than that of other immigrant groups. Some 65,360 people, or 8.3% of the total Black immigrant populations, were immigrants from these regions, most of whom (71.9%) immigrated to Canada from 1991 to 2001.

Immigration flows have shifted from the Caribbean to Africa since the 1990s

Changing immigration patterns to Canada have given way to an increase in Black immigrants from Africa since the 1990s. In 2021, Caribbean immigrants represented 81.5% of all Black immigrants who arrived in Canada before 1981. However, their share declined to 21.3% of immigrants who came from 2011 to 2021 (Chart 3). Conversely, the share of Black immigrants from Africa increased from 5.7% to 70.9% during the same periods. The flows of Black immigrants from all other regions decreased from 12.7% among those who immigrated before 1981 to 7.8% of those who came from 2011 to 2021.

Chart 3
Immigrant Black populations residing in Canada, by period of immigration and place of birth, 2021



Note: In the 2021 Census of Population, data on the year of immigration are available for immigrants who were admitted to Canada on or before May 11, 2021.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Nearly 7% of the Black populations were non-permanent residents

In addition to immigrants, the census enumerates “non-immigrants” (Canadian citizens by birth) and “non-permanent residents” (NPRs). NPRs are people from another country with a usual place of residence in Canada who have a work or study permit or who have claimed refugee status (asylum claimants).

Among the Black populations, 108,985 NPRs were living in Canada at the time of the 2021 Census. The proportion of NPRs among the total Black populations (7.0%) was similar to the proportion of NPRs for all the other racialized groups combined (8.2%), but higher than that for the non-racialized populations (0.6%).

Black NPRs (11.8%) were the second-largest group (along with Chinese NPRs) among all NPRs in Canada, after South Asian NPRs (31.7%) (Tuey and Bastien, 2023). Over two-thirds (68.8%) of Black NPRs were born in Africa, and 20.2% were born in the Caribbean.

Diversity of the Black populations by place of birth

The Canadian-born populations and African-born populations are the two largest groups by place of birth among the Black populations

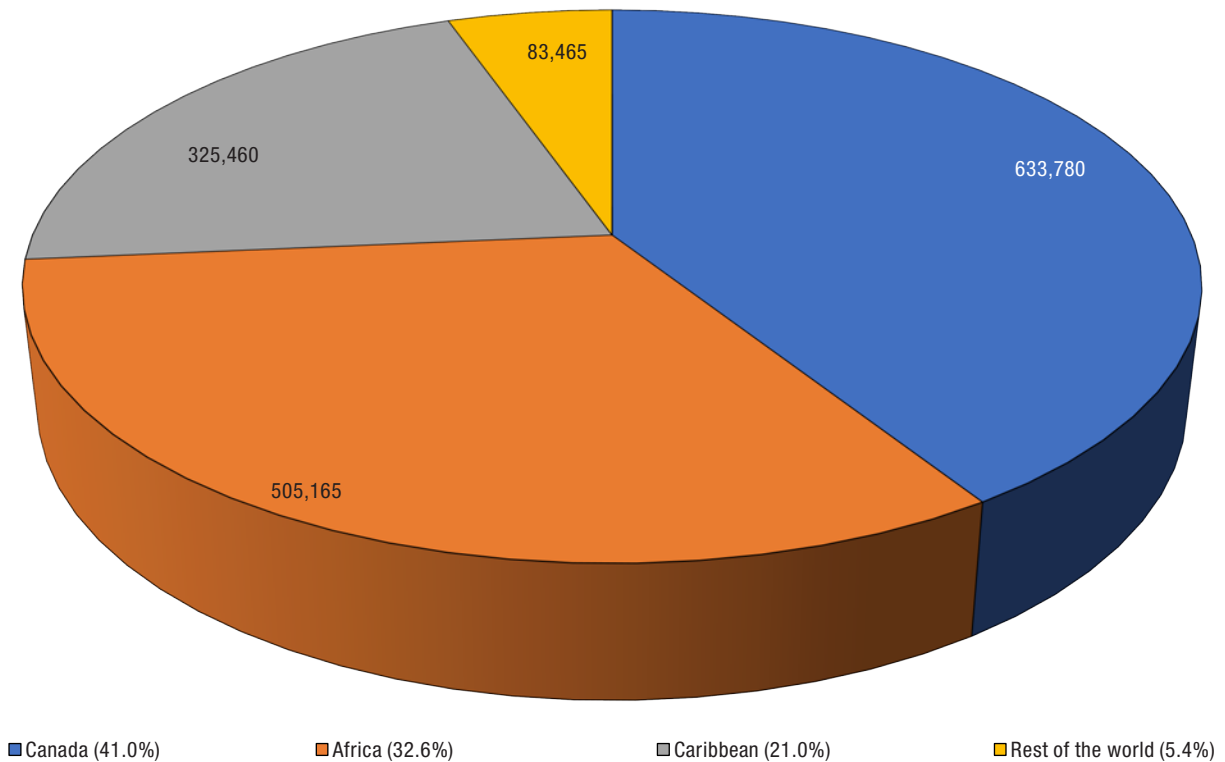
Based on settlement and immigration trends over time, three main groups by region or country of birth can be identified among the total Black populations residing in Canada in 2021: Canadian-born Black populations, Caribbean-born Black populations and African-born Black populations.

Two of these groups – the Canadian-born and the African-born Black populations – were the largest components of the total Black populations in Canada, with over 500,000 people each (Chart 4). The two groups together included over 1.1 million people and represented almost three-quarters (73.6%) of the total Black populations in Canada in 2021.

The third group, the Caribbean-born Black populations, made up over one-fifth (21.0%) of the total Black populations in 2021.

Chart 4
Size and proportion of the Black populations in Canada by place of birth, 2021

number



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

The share of the Canadian-born among the Black populations has remained stable over time, while that of the African-born has increased

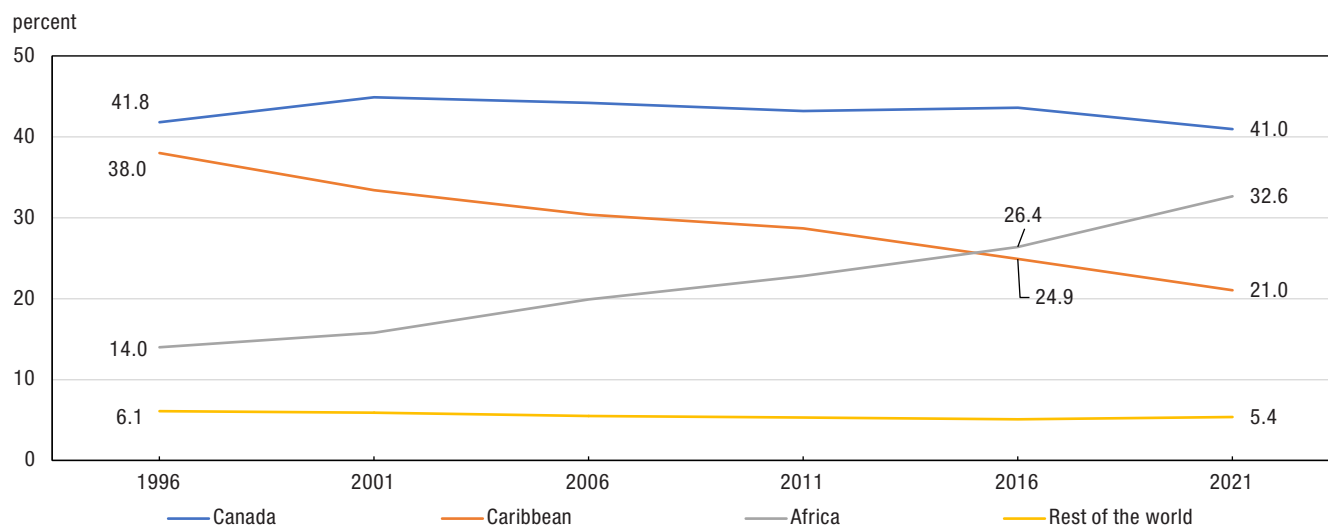
Places of birth among the various Black populations in Canada have changed over time, influenced by several factors, such as changing immigration policies and international events. Census data from 1996 to 2021 show how regions of birth have changed in recent decades.

The Canadian-born Black populations have remained relatively stable over the years, representing approximately 4 in 10 individuals since the 1996 Census (Chart 5). However, growth rates for these populations varied between provinces and territories from 1996 to 2021, likely depending on interprovincial migration, inflows of new immigrants and other factors.

The major change in terms of places of birth among the total Black populations has been the decline in the share of Caribbean-born individuals and the increase in the share of African-born individuals. The Caribbean-born Black populations declined from 38.0% of the total Black populations in 1996 to 21.0% in 2021. In contrast, the African-born Black populations have increased from 14.0% of the total Black populations in 1996 to 32.6% in 2021.

The African-born Black populations surpassed their Caribbean-born counterparts for the first time in 2016, becoming the second-largest group by place of birth among the Black populations in Canada, and further increased their share of the Black populations by 6.2% in 2021.

Chart 5
Distribution of the Black populations in Canada by place of birth, 1996 to 2021



Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2016 and 2021; and National Household Survey, 2011.

The African-born Black populations also became the fastest-growing segment (+531.5%) among the total Black populations from 1996 to 2021, while their Caribbean-born counterparts increased the least (+50.1%) during the same period. The African-born Black populations also increased the most (+59.8%) from 2016 to 2021.

The Black populations report the most places of birth among all racialized groups in Canada

In 2021, Black people in Canada were born in approximately 182 different countries, accounting for over three-quarters of the estimated 230 places of birth reported by the total population in Canada. In comparison, the other racialized groups reported, on average, 104 countries of birth (ranging from 49 for the Japanese populations to 166 for the South Asian populations).

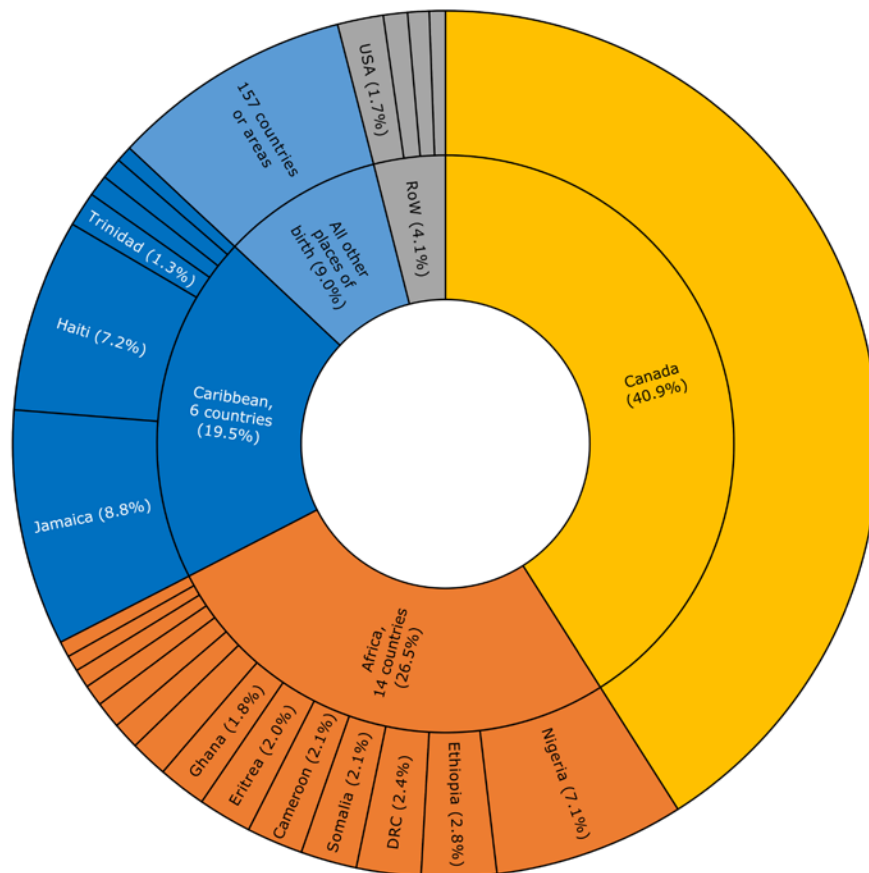
The dynamics among the top 25 places of birth for the Black populations in Canada between the 1996 and 2021 censuses further demonstrates how the countries of birth shifted from the Caribbean to Africa. Caribbean countries among the top 25 places of birth represented over one-third (37.4%) of the Black populations in 1996, decreasing to less than one-fifth (19.5%) in 2021. By contrast, African countries among the top 25 places of birth represented 12.0% of the Black populations in 1996, and over one-quarter (26.5%) in 2021.

Jamaica (8.8%) and Haiti (7.2%) were the main countries of birth among the Caribbean-born Black populations in 2021, followed by Trinidad and Tobago (1.3%) (Chart 6). Jamaica and Haiti accounted for 16.0% of the total Black populations in 2021 and have been the leading countries of birth among the Black populations in Canada since 1996.

Among the African-born Black populations, Nigeria (7.1%), Ethiopia (2.8%) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2.4%) were the major countries of birth in 2021, followed by Cameroon, Somalia, Eritrea and Ghana. Collectively, these seven countries were the birthplaces of 20.4% of the Black populations in Canada.

From 1996 to 2021, the Black populations from four African countries – Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Zimbabwe – increased the most in size among the Black populations in Canada. The largest increase was observed in migration from Cameroon, which moved from the 26th most common country of birth among the Black populations in 1996 to the 7th most common in 2021 (see [Table A.2](#)). The largest declines in country-of-origin representation occurred among the Black populations from Grenada, Barbados, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago, primarily representing the Caribbean region.

Chart 6
Distribution of the Black populations in Canada by the top 25 places of birth, 2021



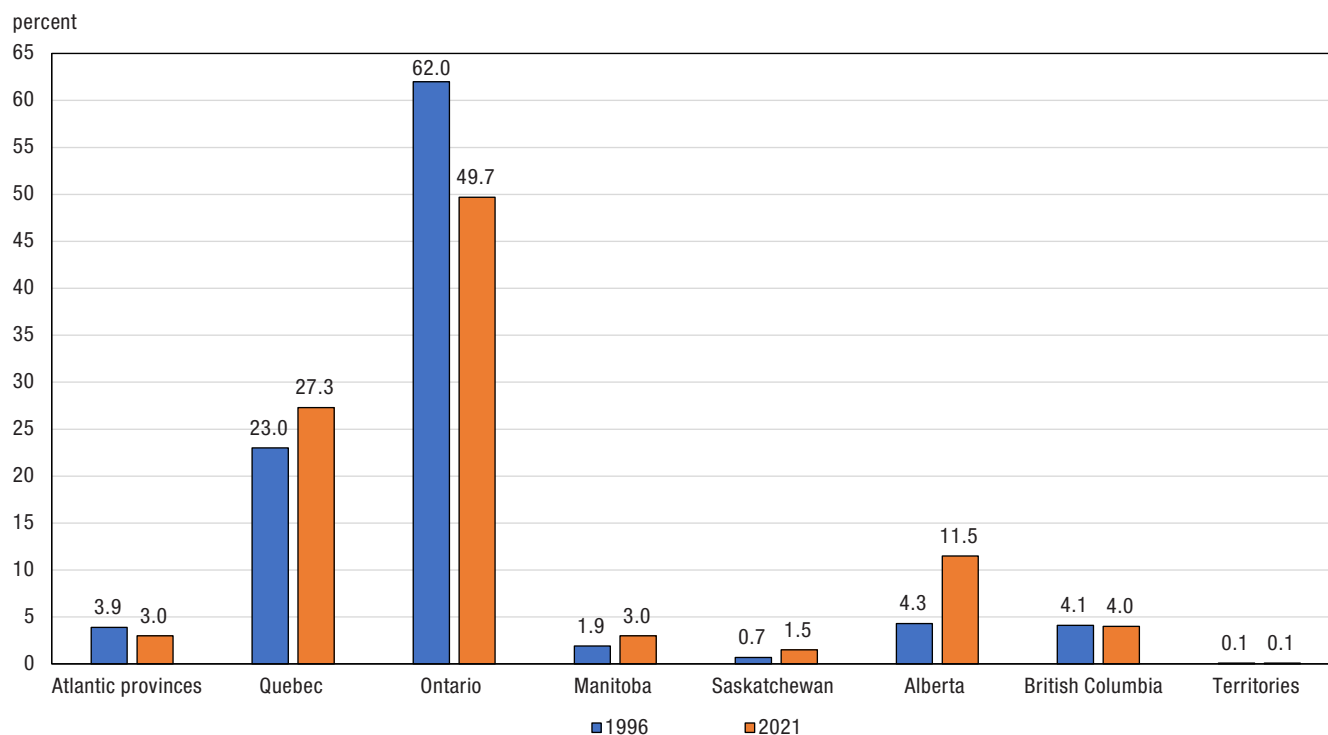
Note: RoW = rest of the world; Trinidad = Trinidad and Tobago; USA = United States of America; and DRC = Democratic Republic of the Congo. See Table A.2 for the top 25 places of birth among the Black populations in Canada and the percentage of this population group born there.
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Geographic diversity of the Black populations

Over three-quarters of the Black populations in Canada reside in Ontario and Quebec

In 2021, almost half of the total Black populations in Canada lived in Ontario (768,740 people) and over one-quarter lived in Quebec (422,405 persons). Additionally, nearly one-sixth of the Black populations in Canada lived in the Prairie provinces, predominantly in Alberta (177,945 people), followed by Manitoba (46,485 people), and Saskatchewan (22,575 people) (Chart 7). The Black populations in British Columbia numbered 61,755 people, and the Atlantic provinces had Black populations of 45,780 people. Most of the Black individuals in this region lived in Nova Scotia (1.8%, or 28,220 people), followed by New Brunswick (0.8%, or 12,155 people), Newfoundland and Labrador (0.2%, or 3,590 people), and Prince Edward Island (0.1%, or 1,815 people).

In the territories, 1,060 Black people lived in the Northwest Territories, 565 lived in Nunavut, and 560 lived in Yukon.

Chart 7**Distribution of the Black populations by region, province or territory of residence, Canada, 1996 and 2021**

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1996 and 2021.

The Black populations in Canada are more geographically dispersed in 2021

The proportion of the Black populations residing in Ontario and Quebec decreased by 8 percentage points (from 85.0% to 77.0%) from 1996 to 2021, but these remained the two most common provinces of residence among the Black populations. In comparison, these two provinces were home to 61.5% of the total population in Canada.

The percentage of the Black populations residing in the Prairie provinces has more than doubled since 1996, increasing from 7.0% to 16.0%. This was largely because the share of Black residents nearly tripled in Alberta during this period.

The share of the Black populations in the Atlantic provinces has decreased by almost 1.0% since 1996, while the proportion of the Black communities residing in British Columbia (4.0%) and the territories (0.1%) remained stable from 1996 to 2021 (Chart 7).

The Black communities in Nova Scotia are the most historically rooted among the Black populations in Canada

While many Black communities across the provinces and territories may be more recently established in terms of generation status, 59.5% of Black people in Nova Scotia are of the third generation or more (Chart 8). This highlights the long-standing existence of historic Black communities in this province dating to the 18th century.

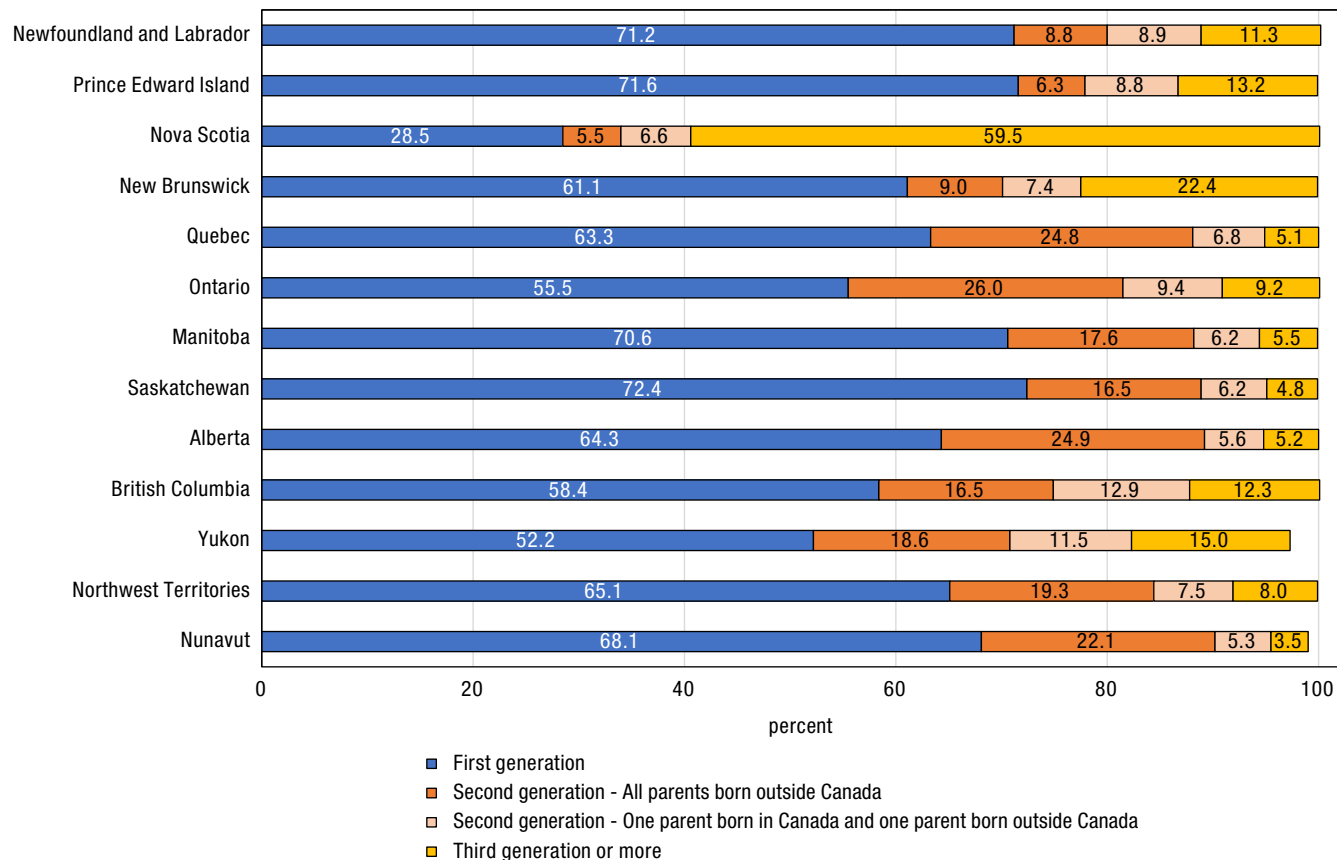
The next largest proportions of Black populations of the third generation or more can be found in New Brunswick, Yukon and Prince Edward Island. Similar to Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island also have historic Black communities dating back to the 1700s (Whitfield, 2017), hence the high rates of Black people in the third generation or more in these provinces.

Apart from Nova Scotia, first-generation communities (that is, those born outside Canada) made up a vast majority of the Black populations provincially and territorially in 2021. First-generation communities accounted for more

than two-thirds of the Black populations in Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba, and Nunavut, and more than half of the Black populations in all the other provinces and territories (except Nova Scotia). The largest numbers of first-generation Black individuals were in the provinces of Ontario (426,465 people), Quebec (267,370 people) and Alberta (114,350 people), which is expected given that these three provinces have the largest Black populations.

Less than one-third of the Black populations in most Canadian provinces and territories were second-generation individuals.

Chart 8
Provincial and territorial distribution of the Black populations by generation status, Canada, 2021



Note: To ensure confidentiality, the values, including totals, are randomly rounded either up or down to a multiple of '5' or '10'. To understand these data, you must be aware that each individual value is rounded. As a result, when these data are summed or grouped, the total value may not match the individual values since totals and sub-totals are independently rounded. Similarly, percentages, which are calculated on rounded data, may not necessarily add up to 100%.
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

The largest numbers of Canadian-born Black people were in Ontario (342,275 people), Quebec (155,035 people) and Alberta (63,595 people), while the largest proportions of Canadian-born Black people were in Nova Scotia (71.6%), Yukon (47.3%) and Ontario (44.5%).

African-born individuals represent over half of the total Black populations in the Prairies

African-born Black individuals made up over half of the total Black populations in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Alberta (Chart 9). These individuals were largely born in western and eastern Africa.

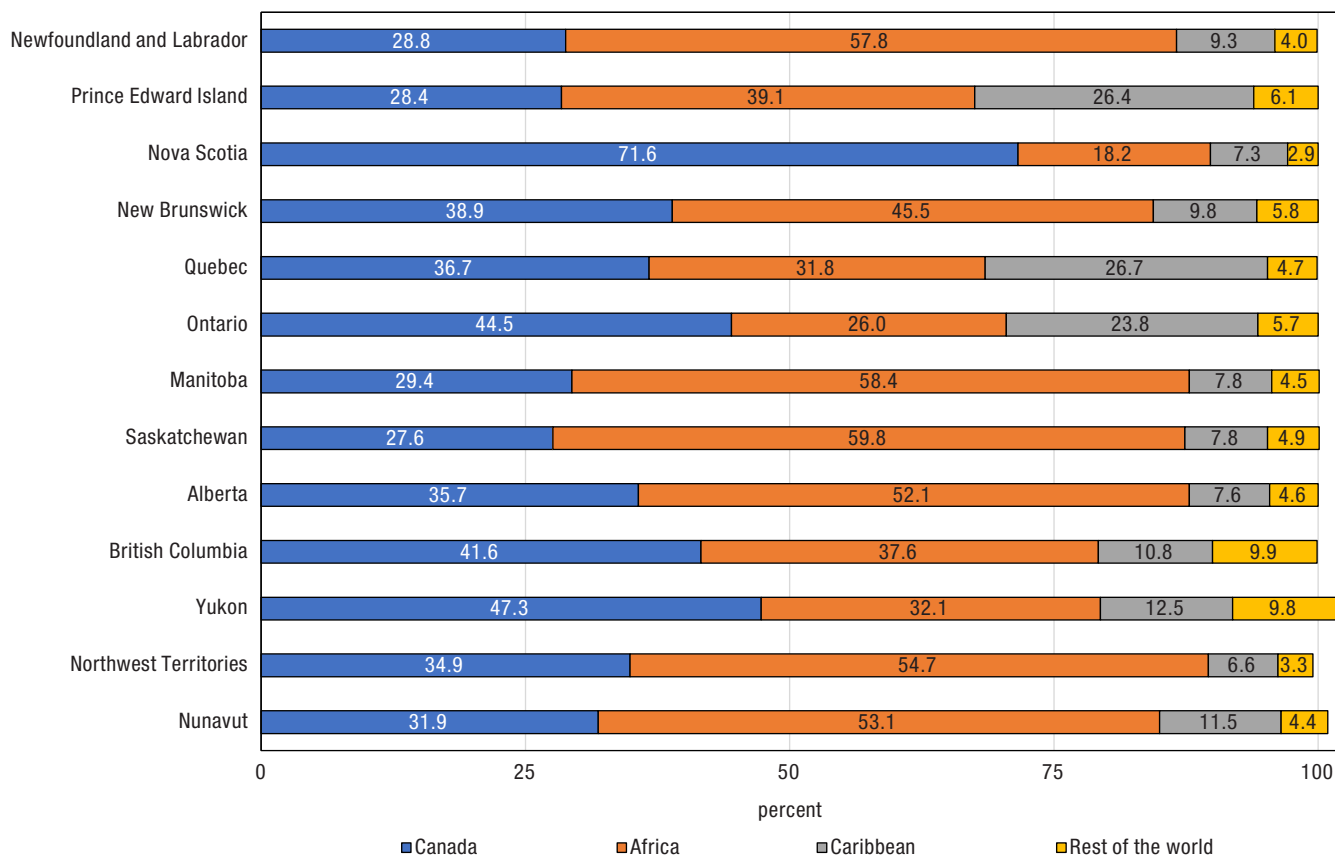
West African immigrants primarily from Nigeria made up at least one-quarter of the total Black populations in Saskatchewan (31.1%), Newfoundland and Labrador (30.6%), and Manitoba (28.6%).⁶ East African immigrants

primarily from Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia made up at least one-quarter of the total Black populations in the Northwest Territories (30.7%) and Alberta (27.3%).⁷

Caribbean-born Black individuals accounted for approximately one-quarter of the Black populations in Quebec, Prince Edward Island and Ontario in 2021 (Chart 9).⁸

Chart 9

Provincial and territorial distribution of the Black populations by place of birth, Canada, 2021



Note: To ensure confidentiality, the values, including totals, are randomly rounded either up or down to a multiple of '5' or '10'. To understand these data, you must be aware that each individual value is rounded. As a result, when these data are summed or grouped, the total value may not match the individual values since totals and sub-totals are independently rounded. Similarly, percentages, which are calculated on rounded data, may not necessarily add up to 100%.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

The largest Caribbean-born Black populations were in Ontario (182,760 people), Quebec (112,890 people), Alberta (13,485 people) and British Columbia (6,675 people) – the four provinces with the largest Black populations. These four provinces combined were home to 97.0% of the total Caribbean-born Black populations in Canada.

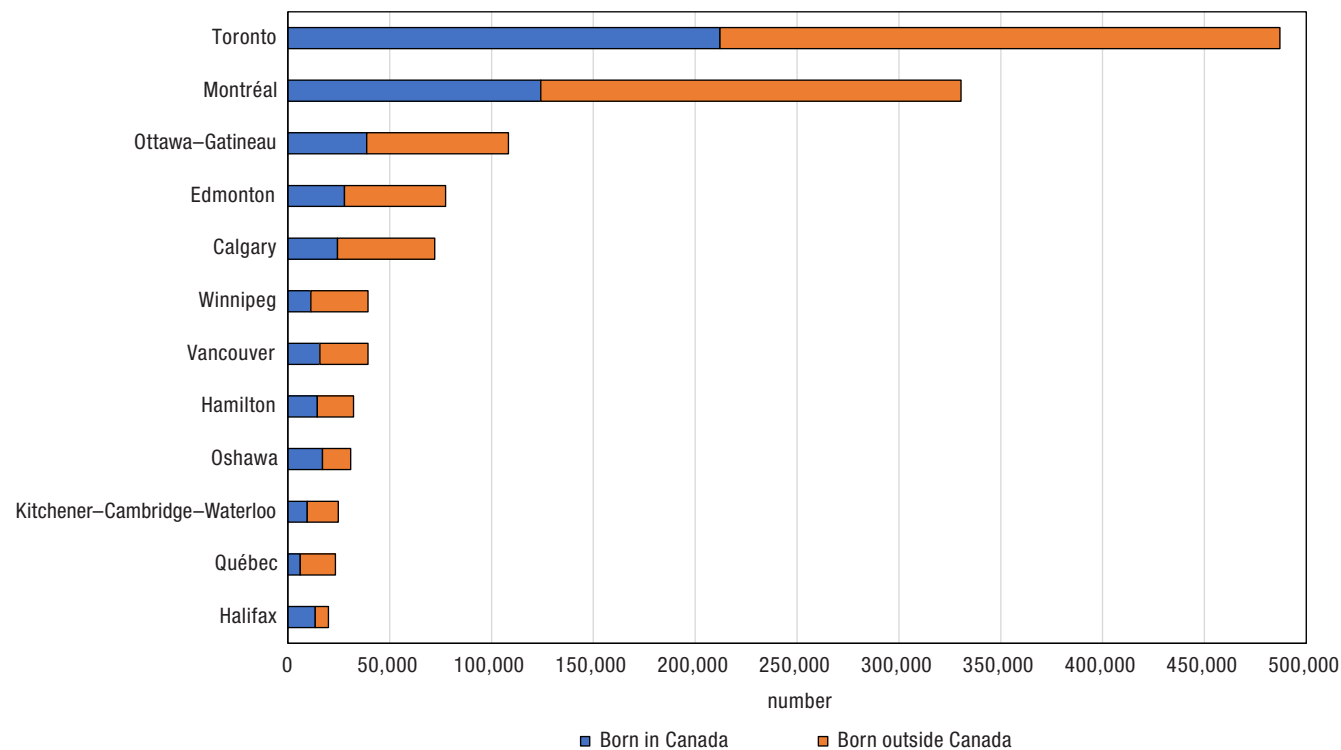
Black people born outside Canada, Africa or the Caribbean (e.g., the rest of the world) constituted less than 1/10 of the Black populations in any Canadian province or territory.

The Black populations in Canada overwhelmingly reside in urban areas

For the purposes of this paper, an urban area is a census subdivision (CSD) that is a component of a census metropolitan area (CMA) or a census agglomeration (CA). A rural area is a census metropolitan influenced zone (MIZ).⁹

Of the total Black populations in Canada, 97.8% (1,513,945 people) lived in urban areas and 2.2% (33,920 people) resided in rural areas in 2021.

Chart 10
Most populous census metropolitan areas among the Black populations, Canada, 2021



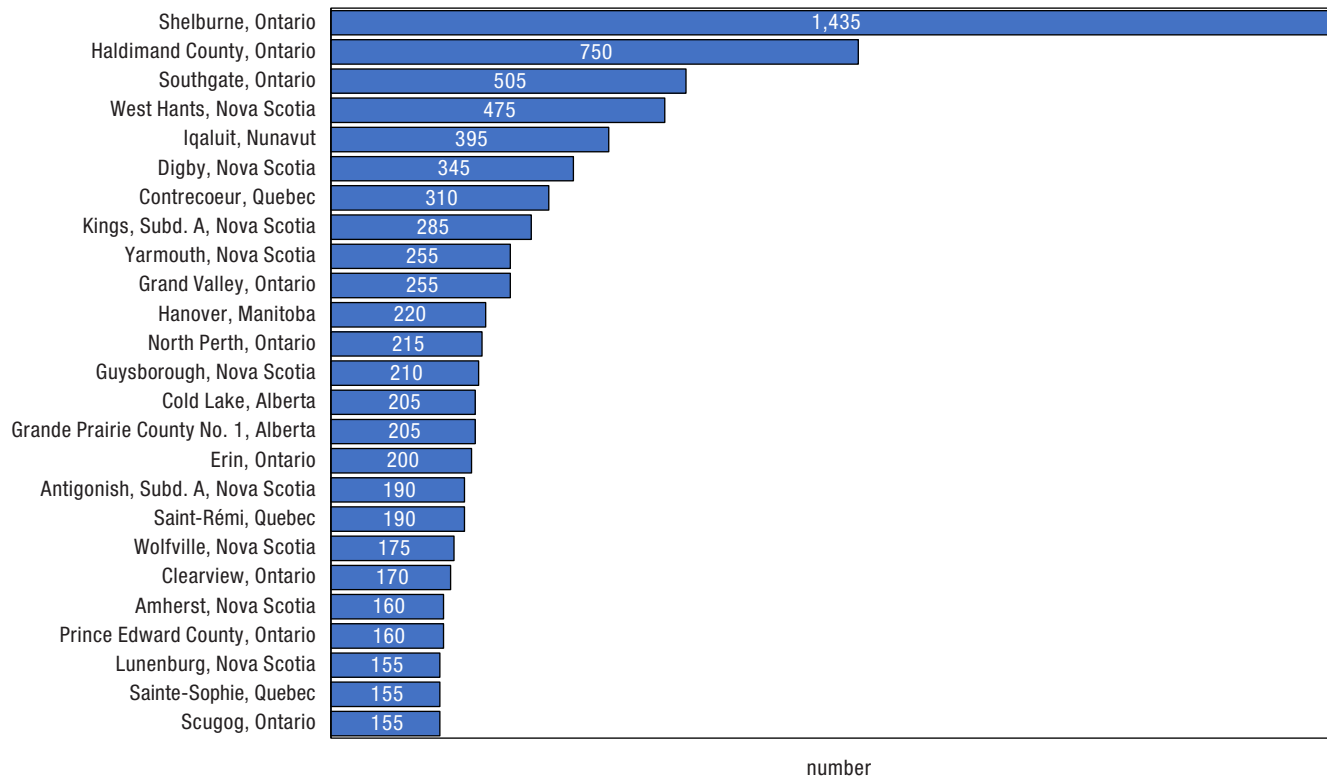
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

In 2021, the three most populous CMAs with the largest Black populations were Toronto, Montréal and Ottawa–Gatineau (Chart 10). This was the same in the 2016 Census.

In alignment with the increase in the share of the Black populations in Canada residing in the Prairie provinces since 1996 – particularly in Alberta – Edmonton, Calgary and Winnipeg have risen among the ranking of the CMAs with the largest Black populations.

The presence of historic Black communities is a strong indicator of large rural Black populations

Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were home to the sixth- and eighth-largest Black populations in Canada, respectively. However, these two provinces had the fourth- and seventh-largest rural Black populations, respectively. Moreover, except for Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, the Atlantic provinces had the largest proportions of Black populations residing in rural areas. This can largely be attributed to the majority of historic Black communities in Canada residing in rural areas of the Atlantic provinces. Early Black Loyalists were allotted land and established communities in rural and remote areas that were often “infertile and unsuitable” (Head and Clairmont, 1989). This has led to the remote location of many historic Black communities today.

Chart 11**Rural census subdivisions with the largest Black populations, Canada, 2021**

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

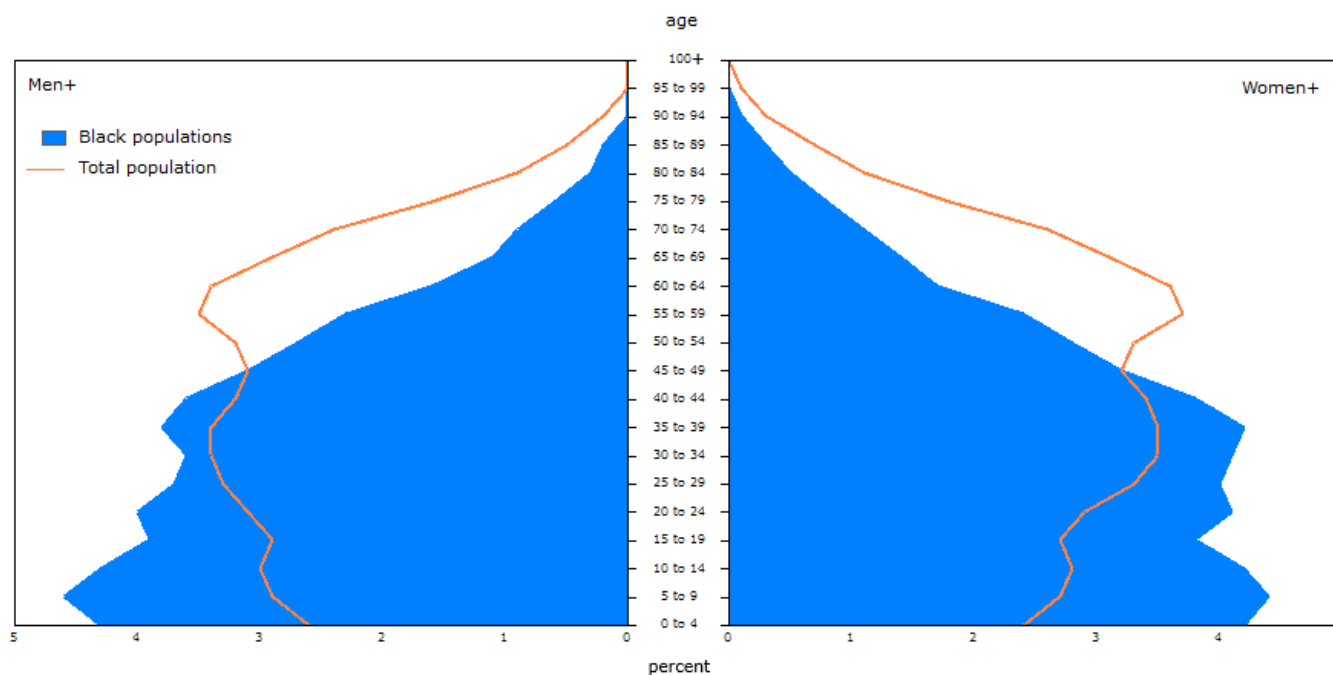
Of the 5,161 CSDs in Canada, 4,154 can be classified as rural. In 2021, Black populations resided in 675 rural CSDs across Canada. Much like the overall Black populations in Canada, Quebec (173), Ontario (154), Alberta (86) and British Columbia (70) have the greatest number of rural CSDs with Black populations. In contrast to the overall Black populations, Quebec had a greater number of rural CSDs with Black populations than Ontario, despite Ontario being the province with the largest number of Black individuals. This suggests that Black populations in Ontario were more urban-based than those in Quebec. Nova Scotia (42), Manitoba (40), New Brunswick (39) and Saskatchewan (30) followed with a mid-range number of rural CSDs with Black populations.

Sociodemographic diversity of the Black populations

The Black populations are among the youngest populations in Canada

In 2021, the Black populations were notably young, with a median age of 30.2 years, compared with 41.2 years for the total population in Canada. Nearly three-quarters (72.8%) of the Black populations were younger than 45, while over half of the total population in Canada (54.9%) were in that age group (Chart 12).

Chart 12
Age pyramid for the Black populations and the total population, Canada, 2021



Note: In the 2021 Census, the concept of gender, which includes categories “men”, “women”, and “non-binary persons”, was introduced. For confidentiality purposes, cases in the category “non-binary persons” were randomly distributed into the other two gender categories and are denoted by the “+” symbol, resulting in the categories of “men+” and “women+”. The category “men+” includes men, boys and some non-binary persons, while the category “women+” includes women, girls and some non-binary persons.
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Just over one-half (50.7%) of the Black populations were of working age (25 to 64 years old), while children and youth younger than 25 made up slightly over two-fifths (41.9%) of this population group. In comparison, children and youth comprised slightly less than 3 in 10 (28.0%) of the total population in Canada and one-third (33.2%) of other racialized groups (see [Table A.1](#)).

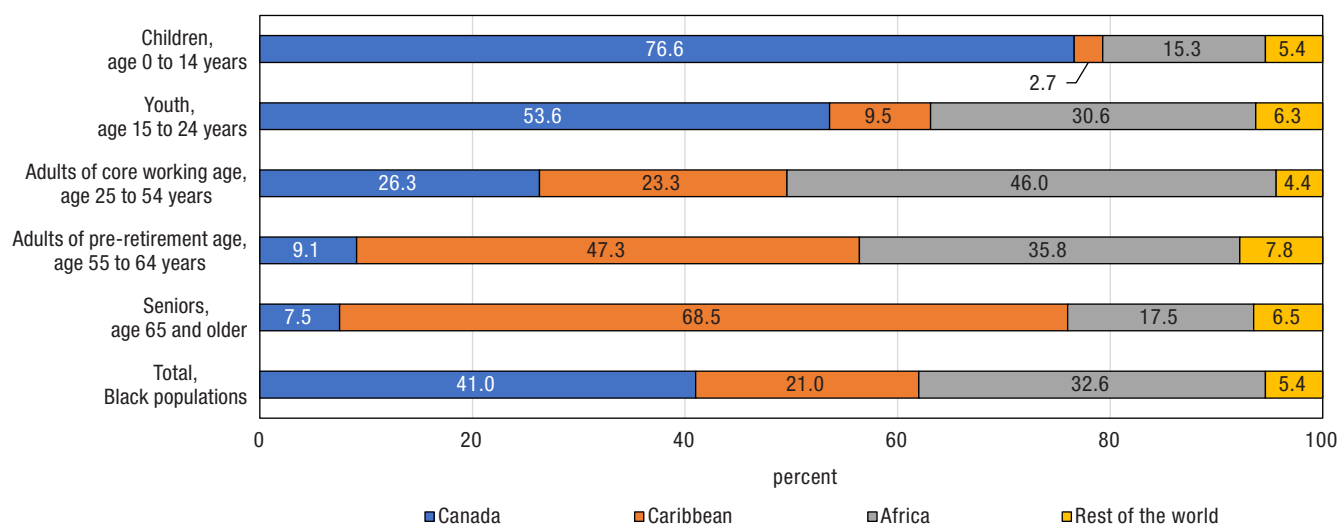
In total, 647,940 Black children and youth accounted for 19.4% of all racialized children and youth, and 6.4% of all children and youth in Canada. The Black populations were the second-largest group among the 3.3 million racialized children and youth in Canada, following the South Asian populations. Children (aged 0 to 14 years) were the majority (62.3%) among the Black populations younger than 25.

The Black populations born in Canada were younger than the Black populations born abroad. In 2021, the median age of Black people born in Canada was 15.5 years, while the median age of Black people born outside Canada was 40.4 years. By place of birth, Black people born in the Caribbean were the oldest (median age 51.2 years), while Black people born in Africa were in the middle of the age distribution (median age 36.0 years) (see [Table A.3](#)).

Over three-quarters of Black children were born in Canada, while almost 7 in 10 Black seniors were born in the Caribbean

Analysis by age underscores differences between the Canadian-born Black populations and the Black populations from different immigration flows. Black children were more likely to be born in Canada, Black people of core working age (25 to 54 years) were more equally distributed by place of birth, and the majority of Black seniors were born outside Canada.

For example, over three-quarters (76.6%) of Black children aged 14 years and younger and just over half (53.6%) of Black youth aged 15 to 24 years were born in Canada (Chart 13). By contrast, close to 7 in 10 Black seniors (65 years and older) were born in the Caribbean (68.5%) and a smaller proportion (17.5%) in Africa. Most people of core working age were born in Africa, followed by Canada and the Caribbean.

Chart 13**Distribution of the Black populations in Canada by age group and place of birth, 2021**

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Among all age groups in the Black populations, seniors had the highest share of women (56.5%), a difference of 13 percentage points compared with men (43.5%) in the same age group.¹⁰ This can be explained by the higher life expectancy of women and the women-led immigration from the Caribbean (Houle, 2020). The three Caribbean countries of birth with the highest proportion of women among the Black populations in Canada were Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (62.4%), Saint Lucia (61.4%), and Dominica (60.4%).¹¹

Nearly 8 in 10 Canadian-born Black people are in the second generation, and half of them are children

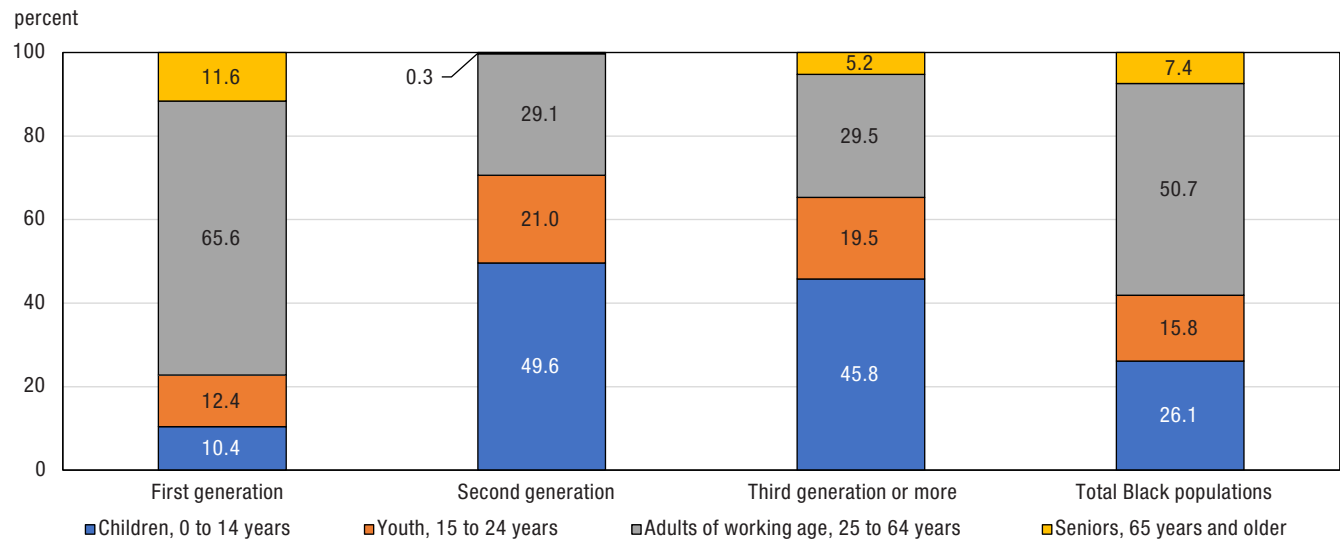
As the largest group among the Black populations in Canada by place of birth, the Canadian-born populations consisted mostly of the descendants of Caribbean immigrants who came to Canada from 1960 to 1990, and the children of African immigrants who came to Canada from 1990 to 2021.

Close to 8 in 10 Canadian-born Black people were in the second generation (79.0%), with at least one of their parents born outside Canada. The two largest groups among second-generation Black individuals were those with all parents born in Africa (172,210) and those with all parents born in the Caribbean (152,620), accounting for nearly two-thirds (64.8%) of the second-generation Black populations in Canada. Another one-fifth (21.0%) were in the third generation or more, with all parents born in Canada.

The influence of immigration flows from different time periods is demonstrated in the age composition of generational groups among the Black populations in Canada. While people of working age represented two-thirds of the first-generation Black populations (65.6%), similar shares of the second-generation Black populations (70.6%) and the third generation or more Black populations (65.3%) were represented by children and youth (Chart 14).

Children (aged 0 to 14 years) were the largest age group among the second generation and the third generation or more Black populations, accounting for close to half (49.6%) of the second generation. Conversely, people of working age (65.6%) and seniors (11.6%) were most represented among first-generation Black populations and least represented among second-generation Black populations.

Chart 14
Composition of the Black populations by generation status and age group, Canada, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Differences in the gender composition of Black populations have narrowed since the 1990s

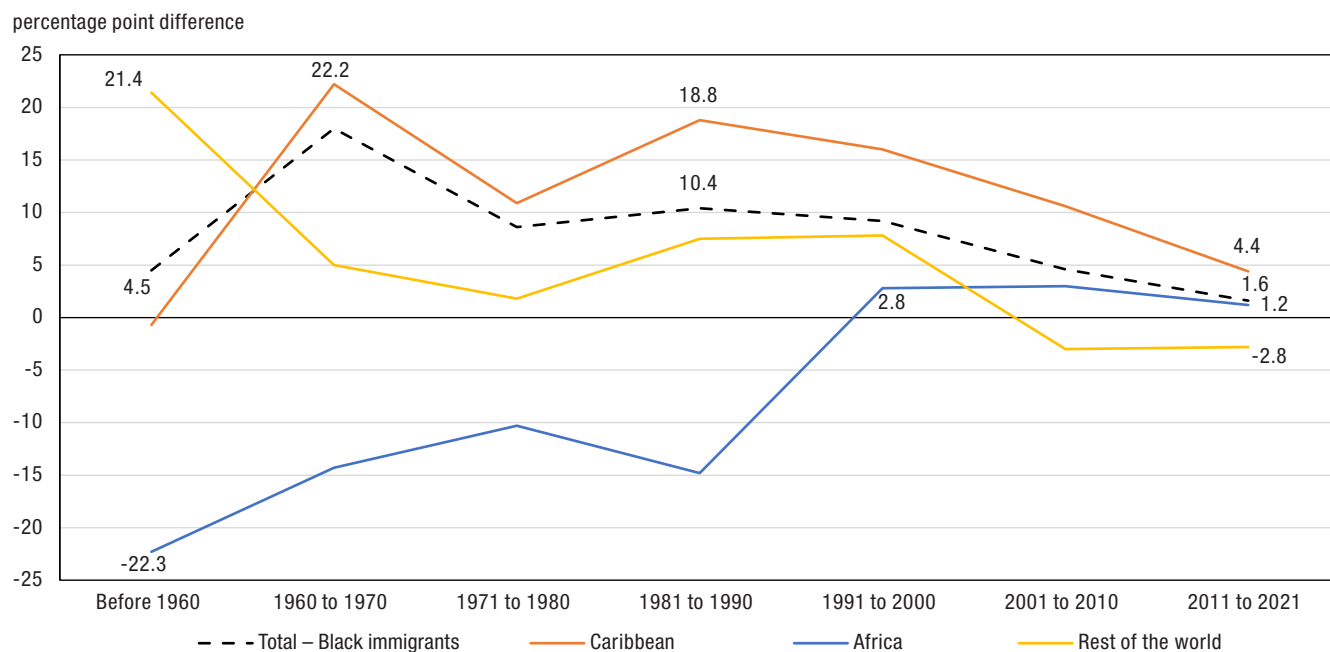
While women and men were more equally represented among the Canadian-born Black populations, the gender composition of the total Black populations in Canada from 1996 to 2021 was influenced by immigration.

Among Black immigrants, women have outnumbered men since the 1960s (Chart 15). Women made up 52.7% and men represented 47.3% of Black immigrants who came to Canada from 1960 to 1990. This was mostly because of women-led immigration from the Caribbean. However, the proportion of women among Black immigrants in Canada from the Caribbean has declined since 1991, and the gender composition of this group has begun to approach parity.

For example, the difference between women (59.4%) and men (40.6%) among Black immigrants who came from the Caribbean to Canada from 1981 to 1990 was 18.8 percentage points (Chart 15). This difference declined to 4.4 percentage points for those who immigrated from 2011 to 2021 (52.2% women and 47.8% men).

Men outnumbered women among Black African immigrants in Canada prior to 1990. Since the 1990s, Black African immigrant women have become slightly more numerous than Black African immigrant men, and the gender composition of this group approached parity. For example, women outnumbered men by 2.8 percentage points among those who immigrated to Canada during the period from 1991 to 2000, and by 1.2 percentage points for those who immigrated to Canada more recently, from 2011 to 2021 (50.6% women and 49.4% men).

For all immigrant groups among the Black populations in Canada, the gender distribution came closest to parity for those who immigrated from 2011 to 2021, with women representing 50.8% of recent Black immigrants.

Chart 15**Differences in gender representation among Black immigrants residing in Canada in 2021, by place of birth and period of immigration**

Notes: Each point in this chart is the difference between the proportion of women and men among immigrants in a given period. For example, among Black immigrants from the Caribbean who arrived from 1960 to 1970, 61.1% were women and 38.9% were men, resulting in a 22.2 percentage point difference.

In the 2021 Census of Population, data on the year of immigration are available for immigrants who were admitted to Canada on or before May 11, 2021.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

With immigrant Black populations moving toward gender parity, the gender distribution of the total Black populations in Canada was more equal in 2021 than in previous years, with the proportion of women (51.3%) slightly higher than the proportion of men (48.7%).

Gender ratios are consistent among the cisgender and transgender populations

The introduction of the gender question and the specification of “at birth” in the sex question in the 2021 Census allows for the cisgender, transgender, and non-binary populations in Canada to be counted. The term “transgender” refers to persons whose gender does not correspond to their sex at birth, while the term “non-binary” refers to persons who are not exclusively men or women, for example, those who are agender, gender fluid, queer or Two-Spirit.

In 2021, 3,725 Black people were transgender and 1,610 were non-binary. Of the transgender individuals, 1,815 were Black transgender men and 1,920 were Black transgender women, maintaining a similar ratio as seen among the cisgender Black populations. The Black transgender and non-binary populations represented 0.4% of the total Black populations in Canada in 2021, and 4.3% of the total transgender and non-binary populations in Canada. The total transgender and non-binary populations in Canada represented 0.3% of the total population in Canada.

Linguistic diversity of the Black populations

Almost three-quarters of the Black populations report English or French as their only mother tongue

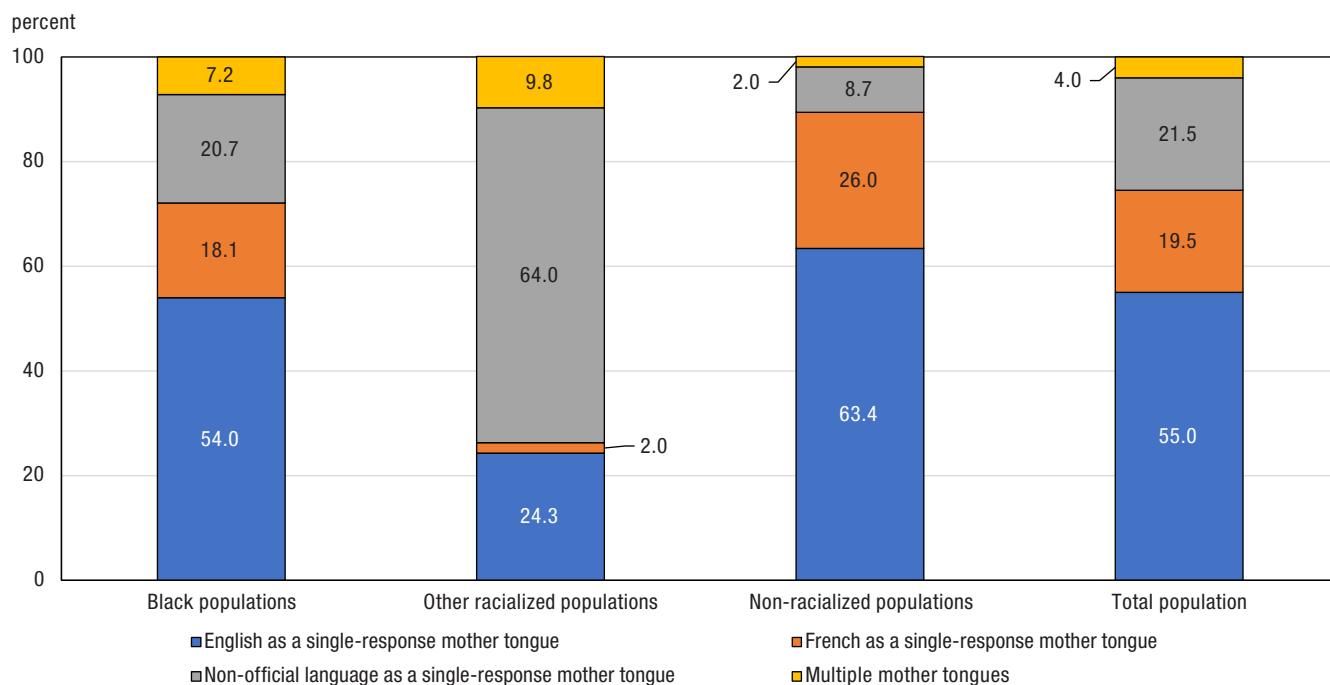
Another aspect of diversity is linguistic diversity, where mother tongue – the first language learned in childhood and still understood – is an important indicator. The Canadian-born Black populations and Black immigrants have diverse historical experiences that impact their language practices, including their mother tongues.

For descendants of historic Black populations in Canada, because of the legacies of the transatlantic slave trade, English has been the primary mother tongue and the language of communication for generations, with many speaking regional dialects, such as African Nova Scotian English (Poplack and Tagliamonte, 2008).

In turn, most African- or Caribbean-born Black people in Canada come from countries where English or French are official or established languages because of their colonial past.¹² Immigration patterns, legacies of the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism created a unique linguistic profile of the Black populations where they were more likely to report English or French, Canada’s official languages, as their mother tongue.

For example, 7 in 10 people among the Black populations (72.1%) reported English or French as their mother tongue, and one-fifth (20.7%) reported a non-official language as their mother tongue in 2021 (Chart 16). This contrasts with other racialized groups, where the proportion of people who reported one of Canada’s official languages as their mother tongue was nearly three times lower (26.3%).

Chart 16
Distribution of the Black populations, other racialized populations, the non-racialized populations and the total population reporting English, French and non-official languages as single mother tongues and multiple mother tongues, Canada, 2021



Note: Respondents could report one or several mother tongues.
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Although respondents could report multiple responses to the mother tongue question on the Census of Population, the vast majority of the Black populations in Canada (92.8%) reported one mother tongue. Black people were twice as likely (54.0%) as other racialized individuals (24.3%) to report English as their only mother tongue, and nine times more likely to report French as their only mother tongue. Notably, the distribution of mother tongues spoken by the Black populations was closer to that of the total population in Canada.

The Black populations were more likely than other racialized groups to report one of Canada’s official languages as their mother tongue even when the place of birth was considered. For instance, Black people born outside Canada (59.0%) were over four times more likely to report English or French as their mother tongue than their counterparts in other racialized groups (12.8%).

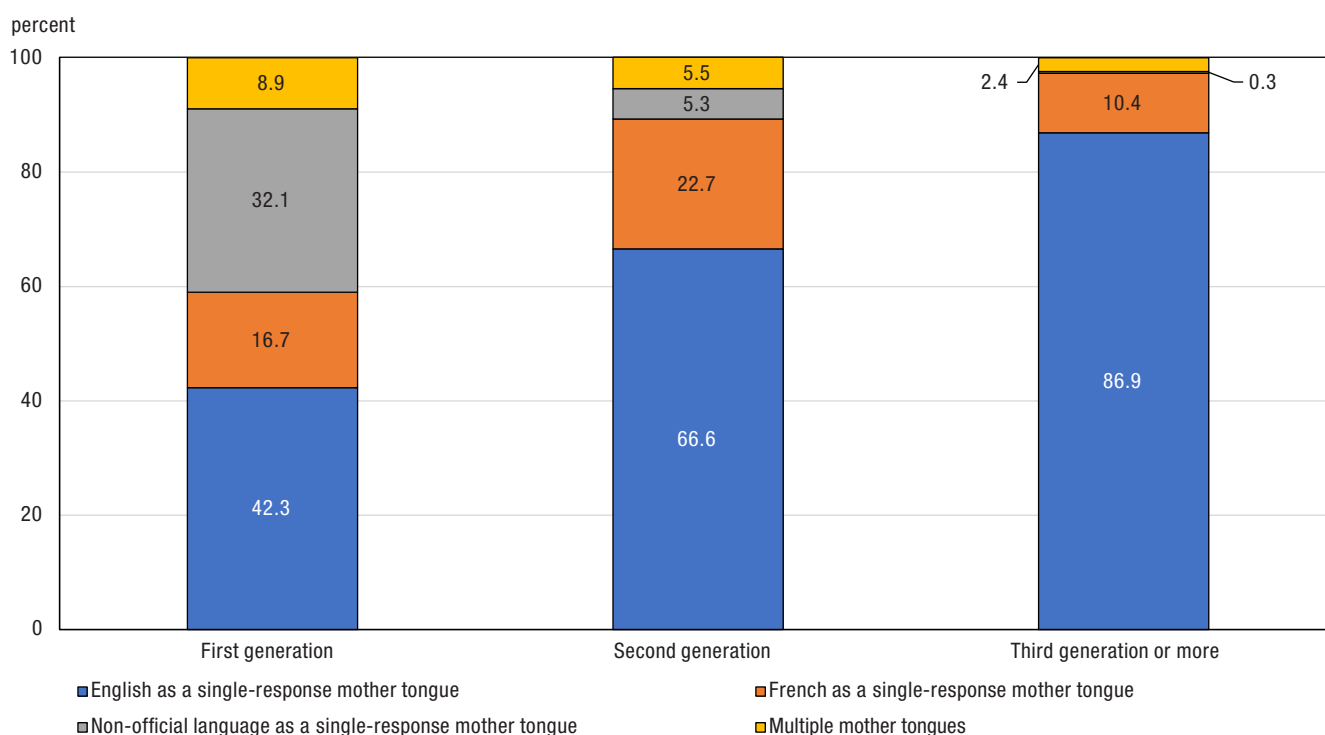
The diversity of mother tongues decreases with each established generation

Further differences emerge in the mother tongues of the Black populations by generation status. The general trend observed across the generation status groups is that with each established generation, the reporting of official languages as a mother tongue increased and the reporting of non-official languages as a mother tongue decreased (Chart 17).

For instance, English as a mother tongue more than doubled between the first generation and the third generation or more Black populations in Canada, while non-official language mother tongues declined more than one hundred-fold between the same generation status groups. Interestingly, French as a mother tongue was reported most frequently among the second-generation Black populations (22.7%), rather than the first-generation Black populations (16.7%).

Chart 17

Distribution of the Black populations reporting English, French and non-official languages as single mother tongues and multiple mother tongues, by generation status, Canada, 2021



Note: Respondents could report one or several mother tongues.

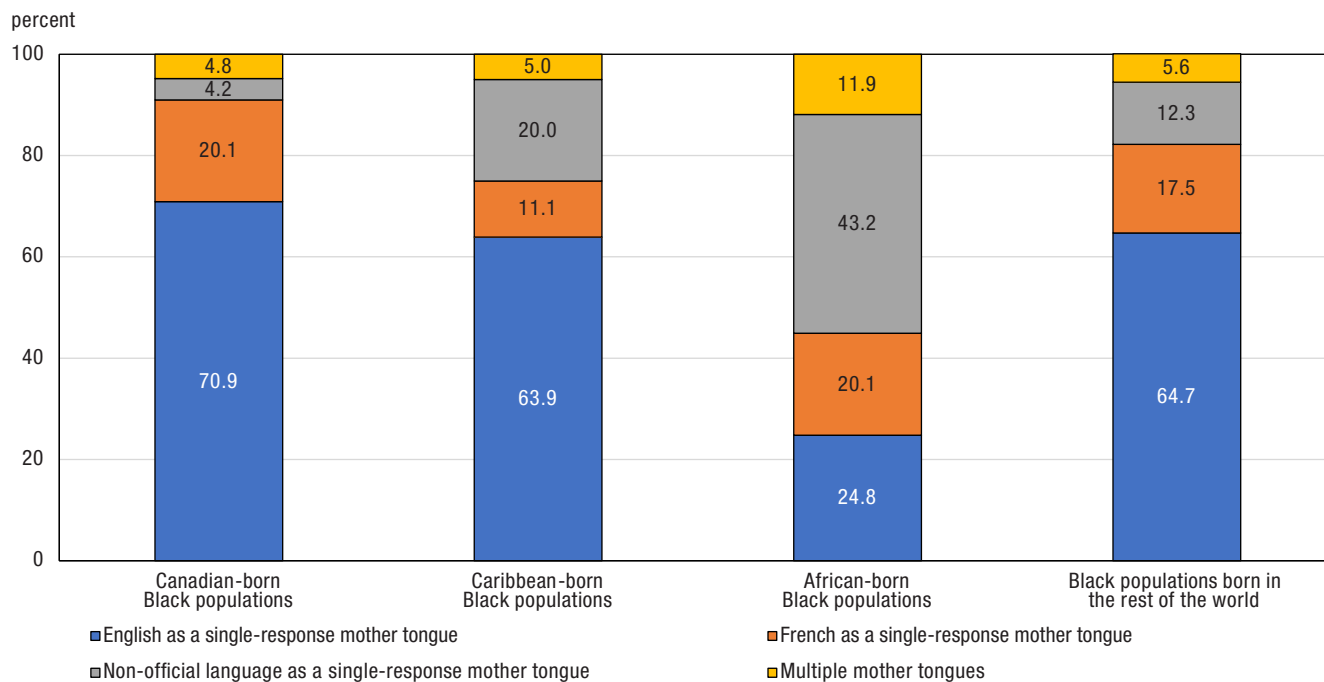
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

The Black populations report the largest number of mother tongues among all racialized groups

The Black populations in Canada reported over 250 mother tongues in 2021. This was more than half the total number of mother tongues reported by the total Canadian population (470), and more than any other racialized group.

The diversity of mother tongues is mainly attributable to the African-born Black populations (Chart 18). One-quarter (24.8%) of African-born Black people in Canada reported English as their only mother tongue, compared with 70.9% in the Canadian-born Black populations. English was also the primary mother tongue reported by Black people in Canada born in the rest of the world (64.7%) and by Caribbean-born Black populations (63.9%).

Chart 18
Distribution of the Black populations reporting English, French and non-official languages as single mother tongues and multiple mother tongues, by place of birth, Canada, 2021



Note: Respondents could report one or several mother tongues.
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Interestingly, the same proportion of the African- and Canadian-born Black populations (20.1%) declared French as a single-response mother tongue, contributing to a higher proportion of the total Black populations in Canada with French as a mother tongue, compared with other racialized groups. In contrast, the Caribbean-born Black populations (11.1%) were nearly half as likely to report French as their mother tongue.

The African-born Black populations were also notable for reporting the highest shares of non-official language mother tongues (43.2%) and multiple mother tongues (11.9%) among all Black populations in Canada. Multiple mother tongues most often reported by this group consisted of English and one or more non-official languages.

African languages are the most prevalent among non-official language mother tongues

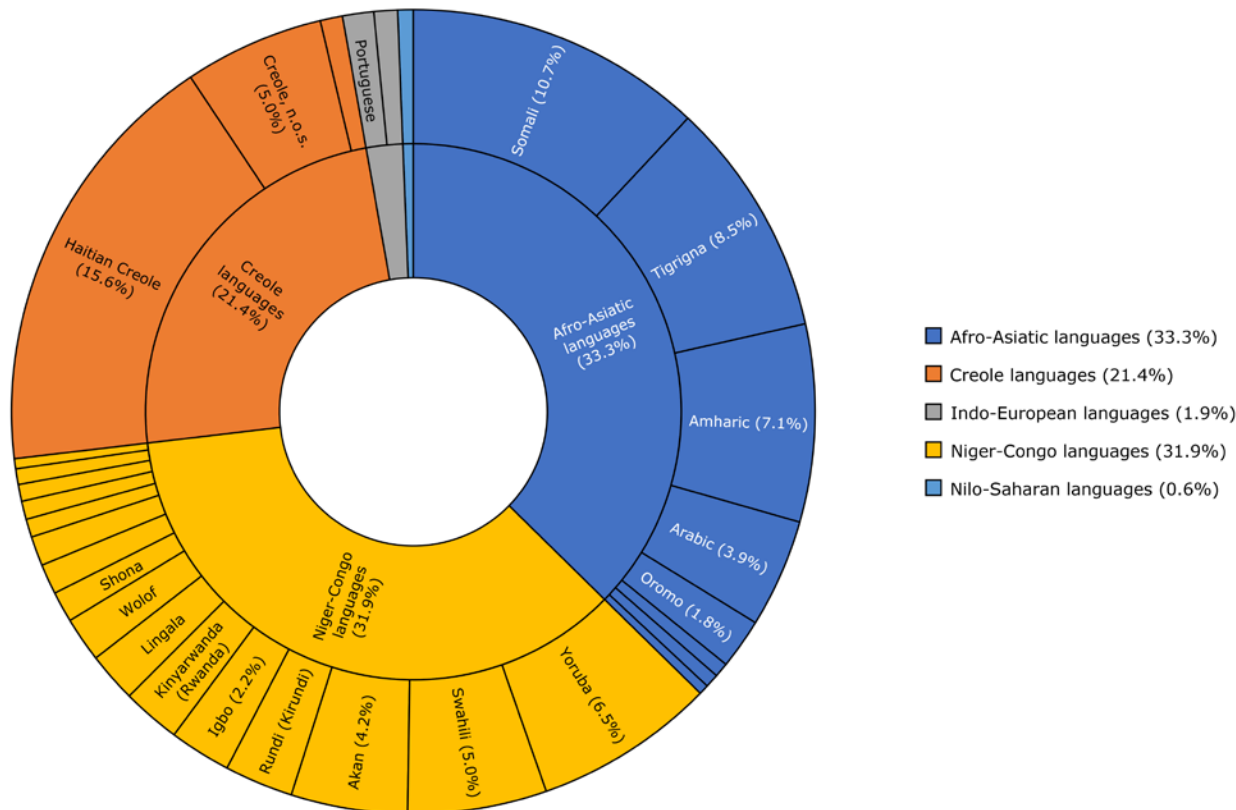
The linguistic diversity of the Black populations in Canada is reflected in the number of non-official languages reported as mother tongues, primarily among the Caribbean- and African-born Black populations.¹³

African languages were the most prevalent among non-official languages reported as a mother tongue by the Black populations in Canada in 2021. They accounted for two-thirds (65.8%) of the overall responses among the 30 most frequently reported non-official language mother tongues (Chart 19).

Among the Afro-Asiatic or Niger-Congo language groups, the most frequent mother tongues reported were: Somali (44,935 responses), Tigrigna (35,725 responses), Amharic (29,795 responses), Yoruba (27,350 responses), Swahili (20,995 responses), Akan (Twi) (17,600 responses), Arabic (16,385 responses) and Rundi (Kirundi) (10,395 responses).¹⁴ The only Nilo-Saharan language represented among the top 30 non-official language mother tongues reported was Dinka (2,360 responses).

Chart 19

Top 30 non-official language mother tongues reported by the Black populations in Canada (single and multiple responses), 2021



Notes: N.o.s. = not otherwise specified, and n.i.e. = not included elsewhere.

This chart represents the total number of responses (single or multiple) reported for a given mother tongue and the percentage of responses that a given mother tongue or a language group received out of the total responses for all non-official language mother tongues.

The 30 most common non-official language mother tongues are represented and total percentages do not add up to 100%.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Corresponding to the decrease in migration flows from the Caribbean to Canada in recent decades, Creole languages represented just over one-fifth (21.4%) of the non-official language mother tongues reported by the Black populations in 2021. As Black people born in Jamaica mostly reported English as their mother tongue, the most frequent non-official languages reported by the Caribbean-born Black populations were Haitian Creole (65,715 responses); “Creole, n.o.s.” (not otherwise specified) (21,145 responses);¹⁵ and Morisyen (3,370 responses).

The only Indo-European languages among the top 30 mother tongues reported by the Black populations were Portuguese and Spanish, two other colonial languages apart from English and French.

The 30 most frequently reported non-official languages accounted for 89.1% of the total responses to the mother tongue question among the Black populations. Approximately 224 other non-official languages were reported as mother tongues by a small number of Black people in Canada, with each language receiving up to 1,500 responses.

Ethnocultural diversity of the Black populations

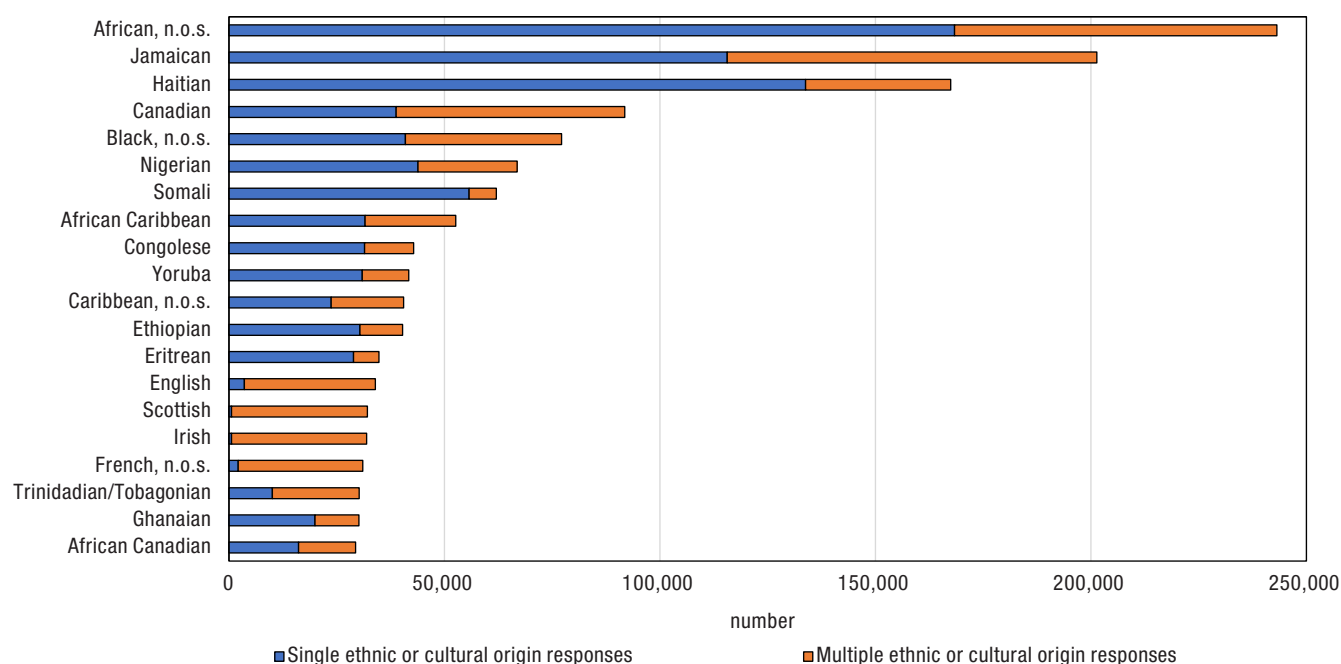
The Black populations reported the largest number of ethnic or cultural origins among all racialized groups in 2021

Another way to analyze the diversity of the Black populations is to examine their ethnic or cultural origins,¹⁶ referring to the ethnic or cultural origins of respondents’ ancestors. An ancestor is usually more distant than a grandparent.

In 2021, the Black populations in Canada reported around 371 different ethnic or cultural origins (single and multiple responses). Furthermore, over 25.0% of Black people in Canada (396,960) reported more than one ethnic origin in 2021. This ethnocultural diversity may be attributed to an increase in Black immigrants to Canada since 2016, increased societal conversation and awareness about ethnicity and diversity (e.g., the Black Lives Matter movement) (Statistics Canada, 2022h); and ethnic mobility, including evolving conceptions of self and ethnic labels (Boyd, 2015).

Chart 20

Ethnic or cultural origins (single and multiple responses) most often reported by the Black populations, Canada, 2021



Notes: N.o.s. = not otherwise specified.
 The sum of the ethnic or cultural origins is greater than the total population because a person can report more than one ethnic or cultural origin in the census questionnaire.
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

The 10 most frequently reported ethnic or cultural origins among the Black populations in Canada were African, Jamaican, Haitian, Canadian, Black, Nigerian, Somali, African Caribbean, Congolese and Yoruba (Chart 20). A relationship can be seen between the most frequently reported ethnic or cultural origins and the top countries of birth (other than Canada) among Black people in Canada, with Jamaica, Haiti, Nigeria and Somalia again topping the list. Among the top 13 most frequently reported ethnic or cultural origins among the Black populations in Canada, single responses exceeded multiple responses, except for the response of “Canadian”.

Insights on the Black-Indigenous populations using ethnic or cultural origins

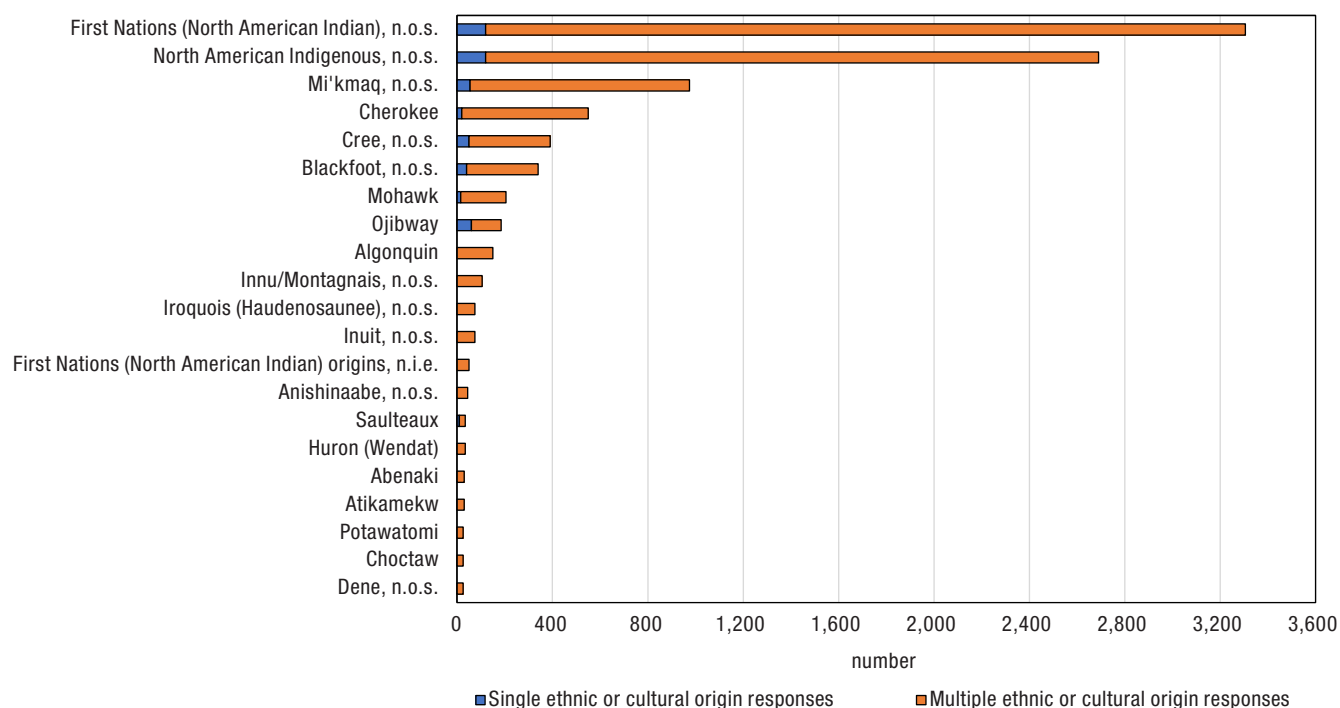
Presently, if respondents report being First Nations, Métis or Inuk on the census questionnaire, they do not have the opportunity to self-identify on the population group question.¹⁷ The population group question in the census refers to whether a person reports being White, South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, Japanese and/or another population group. As a result, respondents cannot report both Indigenous and Black identity using the Indigenous group and population group questions on the census. However, some insight can be gained into the Black-Indigenous populations by considering individuals who identified as Black on the population group question and who also reported “North American Indigenous” ethnic or cultural origins on the ethnic or cultural origins question, a separate census question.

Among respondents who (1) selected “Black” or an applicable write-in response on the population group question in the census, (2) reported “North American Indigenous” ethnic or cultural origins, and (3) have a place of birth of Canada or the United States of America, 29 different “North American Indigenous” ethnic or cultural origins were reported.

In 2021, 9,465 responses (single and multiple) of “North American Indigenous” ethnic or cultural origins were reported by Black individuals who were born in Canada or the United States of America. Of these responses (representing 0.4% of the total ethnic or cultural origin responses among the Black populations in Canada), 5.3% were single responses (the sole ethnicity or cultural origin of a person) and 94.5% were multiple responses (representing one of many ethnic or cultural origins of a person). The high incidence of multiple responses among Black people reporting “North American Indigenous” ethnic or cultural origins can be attributed to the fact that Black people are of African descent and likely also reported other diasporic ethnic or cultural origins associated with the “Black” population group.

Chart 21

Most reported (single and multiple responses) “North American Indigenous” ethnic or cultural origins among the Black populations born in Canada or the United States of America, Canada, 2021



Note: N.o.s. = not otherwise specified and n.i.e. = not included elsewhere.
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Of the total responses (single and multiple) of “North American Indigenous” ethnic or cultural origins reported by Black individuals, 93.3% (8,835) were reported by Canadian-born individuals, and 6.3% (600) were reported by American-born individuals.

Counting descendants of historic Black communities through ethnic or cultural origins

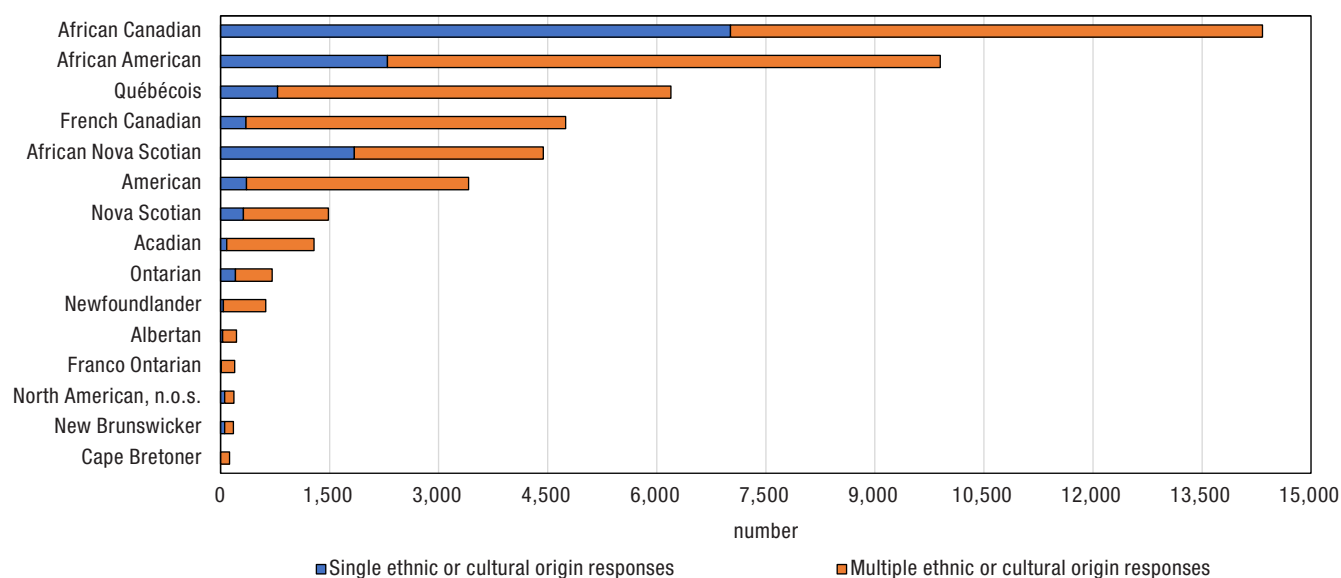
Much like for the Black-Indigenous populations, there is presently no precise method for counting the descendants of historic Black communities¹⁸ in Canada using the Census of Population. This is partly because of the multiplicity of ways individuals can identify and describe themselves when reporting their ethnic or cultural origins over time and can also be impacted by changes in census-taking methods and questionnaire wording between census cycles. However, certain reported North American ethnic or cultural origins,¹⁹ when combined with a generation status classification of “second generation – with one parent born in Canada and one parent born outside Canada” or “third generation or more”, can be an indicator of being a descendant of a historic Black community.

In 2021, 104,565 people (single and multiple responses) could be identified as possibly descending from a historic Black community based on the census. This includes respondents who (1) selected “Black” or provided an applicable write-in response on the population group question in the census, (2) reported North American ethnic or cultural origins, and (3) can be classified as “second generation – with one parent born in Canada and one parent born outside Canada” or “third generation or more”.

The Black populations with North American origins that were in the second generation with one parent born in Canada and one parent born outside Canada or third generation or more represented 6.8% of the Black populations in Canada and 0.3% of Canada’s total population. Of this group, 57,605 were Black people in the third generation or more, while an additional 46,945 were Black people in the second generation with one parent born in Canada and one parent born outside Canada.

For these Black populations with North American origins, ethnic or cultural origin responses were largely attributable to the broader categories of “Canadian” (56,070 responses), “African Canadian” (14,335 responses), “African American” (9,900 responses), “French Canadian” (4,745 responses) and “American” (3,405 responses), with two notable exceptions – the Black “Québécois” and the “African Nova Scotian” communities (Chart 22). “Québécois” (6,200 responses) and “African Nova Scotian” (4,435 responses) were the fourth- and sixth-largest categories, respectively, among North American ethnic or cultural origins for the Black populations that were in the second generation with one parent born in Canada and one parent born outside Canada or third generation or more.

Chart 22
Most reported (single and multiple responses) North American ethnic or cultural origins (excluding “Canadian”) among the Black populations in the “second generation – one parent born in Canada and one parent born outside Canada” and “third generation or more”, Canada, 2021



Notes: N.o.s. = not otherwise specified.
 Among the Black populations in the second generation with one parent born in Canada and one parent born outside Canada or third generation or more, other distinctive North American ethnic or cultural origins reported included “British Columbian”; “Gaspesian”; “United Empire Loyalist”; “Manitoban”; “Prince Edward Islander”; “Saskatchewanian”; “Pennsylvania Dutch”; and “Other North American origins, not included elsewhere”. These ethnic or cultural origins represented a small number (455 single and multiple responses) of the Black populations of the second generation with one parent born in Canada and one parent born outside Canada and the third generation or more with North American origins.
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Fewer than 4,000 responses of African Nova Scotian ethnic or cultural origins were reported among the Black populations in the third generation or more in 2021. Notably, almost 60.0% of the Black populations in Nova Scotia (16,795 people) were in the third generation or more. This perhaps reflects the subjective nature of identity reporting and the complexities of diaspora and double diaspora communities²⁰. While some Black individuals in the third generation or more residing in Nova Scotia may have reported an ethnic or cultural origin response of “African Nova Scotian”, others may have reported responses of “African”, “African Canadian”, “African American”, “Canadian”, or even Indigenous ethnic or cultural origins.

Unlike the overall ethnic or cultural origin responses for the Black populations in Canada, where slightly over one-quarter of people reported more than one ethnic or cultural origin in 2021, the majority of Black people with North American origins in the third generation or more (57.3%, or 33,030 people) reported more than one ethnic or cultural origin, as did those in the second generation with one parent born in Canada and one parent born outside Canada (80.0%, or 37,515 people).

Religious diversity of the Black populations

Religion has long served as a pillar among peoples of African descent in Canada and around the world. Among historic Black communities in Canada, the church has served as a cornerstone of community and family life (Este and Thomas Bernard, 2019). For Black people descended from more recently settled groups, or born outside Canada, places of worship (e.g., churches, mosques, synagogues, temples) may also serve as sacred community spaces.

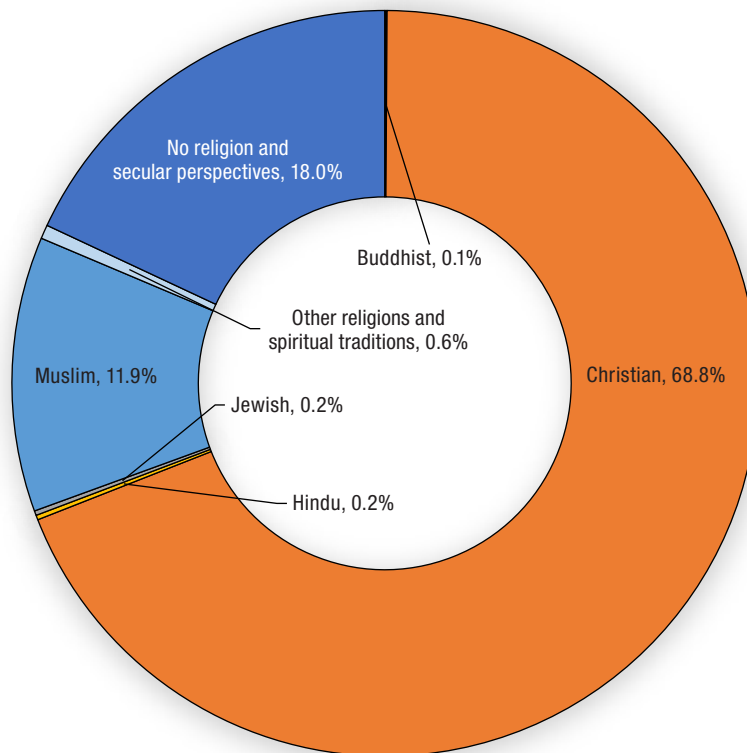
Regardless of the religious affiliation, it is important to recognize the role the transatlantic slave trade, imperialism²¹, and colonialism²² have played in the religiosity, religious affiliation and religious expression of peoples of African descent (Gomez, 2013). External interventions in Africa and among peoples of African descent almost always included religious conversion and the stifling and suppression of traditional belief systems as part of the process of subjugation (Gomez, 2013). Exceptions do exist, such as in east Africa, where Orthodox Christianity was introduced in Ethiopia in the 4th century AD and remains prevalent present-day (Pew Research Center, 2017).

Just over 8 in 10 Black people in Canada report a religious affiliation

Based on the 2021 Census, the Black populations had the highest religious affiliation (81.8%) – particularly with Christianity – compared with the total population (65.2%), other racialized groups (73.2%) and with the non-racialized populations (62.6%).

Religion refers to a person’s self-identified connection to or affiliation with any religious denomination, group, body, or other religiously defined community or system of belief. Religion is not limited to formal membership in a religious organization or group (Statistics Canada, 2022g). Religious affiliation excludes those who report “no religion and secular perspectives”.^{23,24}

Chart 23
Religious affiliation among the Black populations, Canada, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Correspondingly, the Black populations reported the lowest rate of “no religion and secular perspectives”, with less than one-fifth (18.0%) doing so (Chart 23), compared with over one-quarter (26.7%) of other racialized groups and more than one-third (37.3%) of the non-racialized populations reporting secularist views.

Table 1
Religious affiliation with Christianity among populations, Canada, 2021

Denomination or tradition	Black populations	Other racialized populations	Non-racialized populations	Total population
	percent			
Christian, n.o.s.	25.9	7.4	6.6	7.6
Anabaptist	0.0 [§]	0.1	0.6	0.4
Anglican	2.6	0.3	3.8	3.1
Baptist	3.0	0.7	1.3	1.2
Catholic	18.1	18.8	34.5	29.9
Christian Orthodox	2.9	0.7	2.1	1.7
Jehovah's Witness	1.0	0.3	0.4	0.4
Latter Day Saints	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.2
Lutheran	0.2	0.1	1.2	0.9
Methodist and Wesleyan (Holiness)	0.4	0.1	0.3	0.3
Pentecostal and other Charismatic	8.0	0.7	0.8	1.1
Presbyterian	0.5	0.5	1.0	0.8
Reformed	0.0 [§]	0.0 [§]	0.3	0.2
United Church	0.5	0.3	4.6	3.3
Other Christian and Christian-related traditions	5.6	1.4	2.1	2.1

[§] value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded

Note: N.o.s. = not otherwise specified.

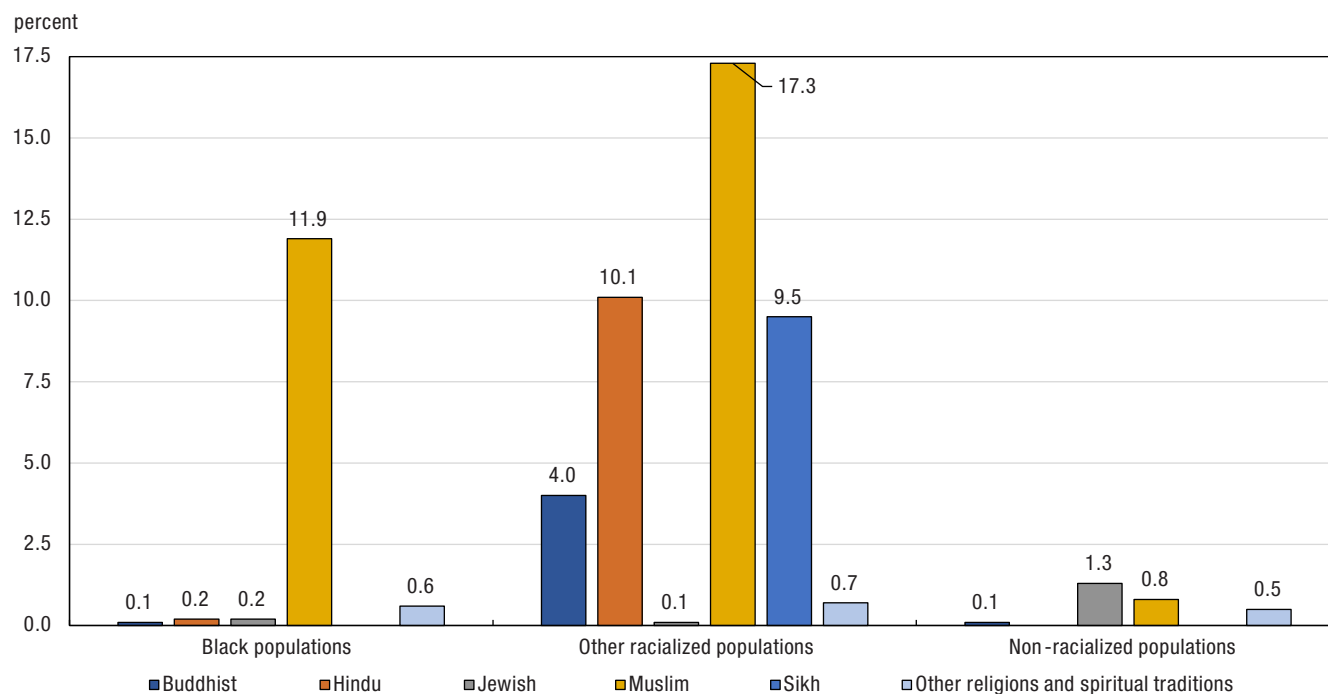
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

More than two-thirds (68.8%) of the Black populations in Canada reported being affiliated with a Christian denomination or “other Christian and Christian-related traditions” in 2021 (Table 1), compared with just over half (59.9%) of the non-racialized populations and almost one-third (31.5%) of other racialized populations.

High religious affiliation among the Black populations in Canada persists over time

While the Black populations in 2021 grew by almost two-thirds of their size in 2011 (63.7%), the proportion of the Black populations reporting a religious affiliation decreased by 5 percentage points (from 86.8% to 81.8%). The proportion of the Black populations with “no religion and secular perspectives” increased from 13.3% to 18.0%. This decrease in religious affiliation was seen across all the major religious groups reported by the Black populations in 2021, except for Islam. Affiliation with this religion rose by 2.3 percentage points from 2011 to 2021. Despite its general decrease from 2011 to 2021 among the Black populations, the rate of religious affiliation remained high.

In 2021, 11.9% of Black people in Canada reported a religious affiliation with Islam – the second largest religion of affiliation among this population group. This was followed by Black people affiliated with “other religions and spiritual traditions” (0.6%), the Black Hindu and Black Jewish populations (0.2% each), and the Black Buddhist populations (0.1%) (Chart 24).

Chart 24**Major religions (excluding Christian) reported by the Black populations, other racialized populations, and the non-racialized populations, Canada, 2021**

Note: "Traditional (North American Indigenous) spirituality" represented a small number of responses (less than 0.1%) among each of these populations.

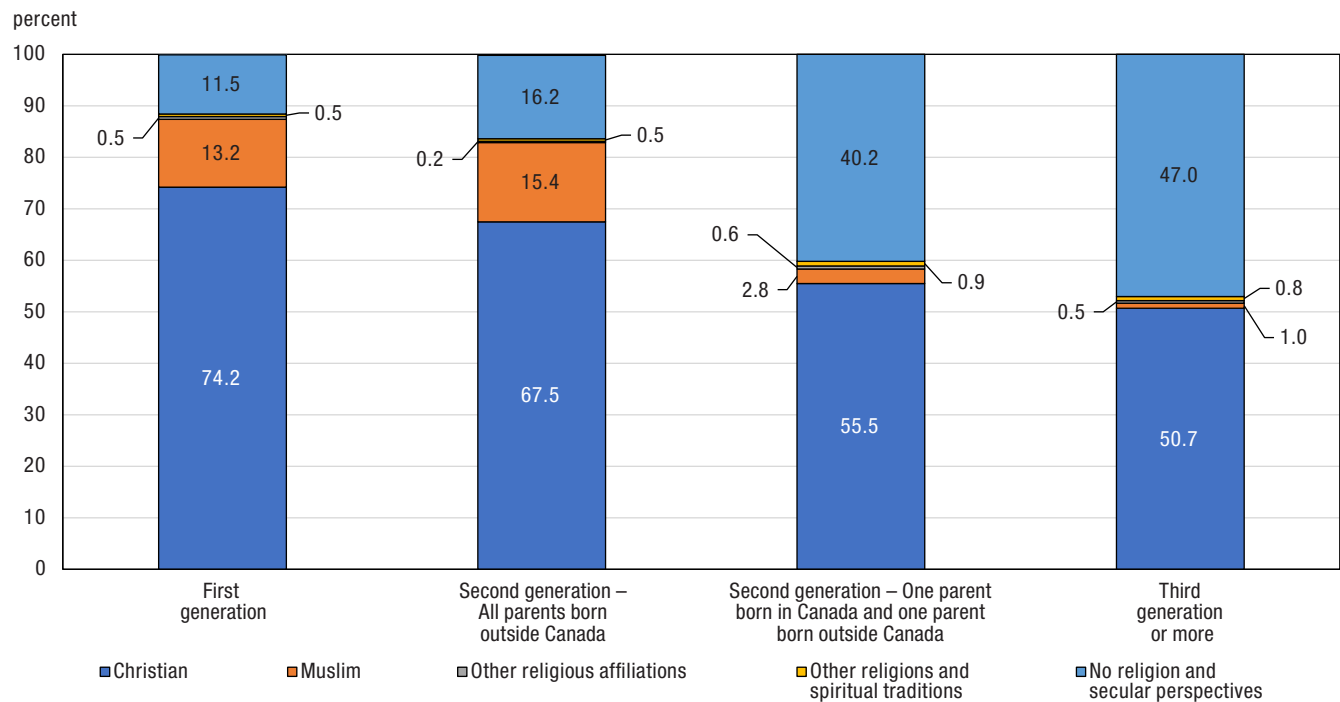
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Compared with other racialized groups and the non-racialized populations in 2021, the Black populations had the second-largest proportion of people who identify as Muslim and Hindu. This was also the case in 2011, with 9.6% of the Black populations identifying as Muslim and 0.3% identifying as Hindu.

Among the Black populations, religious affiliation decreases with each established generation in Canada

Religious affiliation among the Black populations in Canada decreased with each successive generation, while secularism increased. First-generation Black people (those born outside Canada) had the highest religious affiliation among the Black populations (88.5%), followed by second-generation Black people with all parents born outside of Canada (83.8%), second-generation Black people with one parent born in Canada and one parent born outside Canada (59.8%), and the Black populations in the third generation or more (53.0%) (Chart 25). Those with "no religion and secular perspectives" were highest among the Black populations in the third generation or more (47.0%), and lowest among the first-generation Black populations (11.5%).

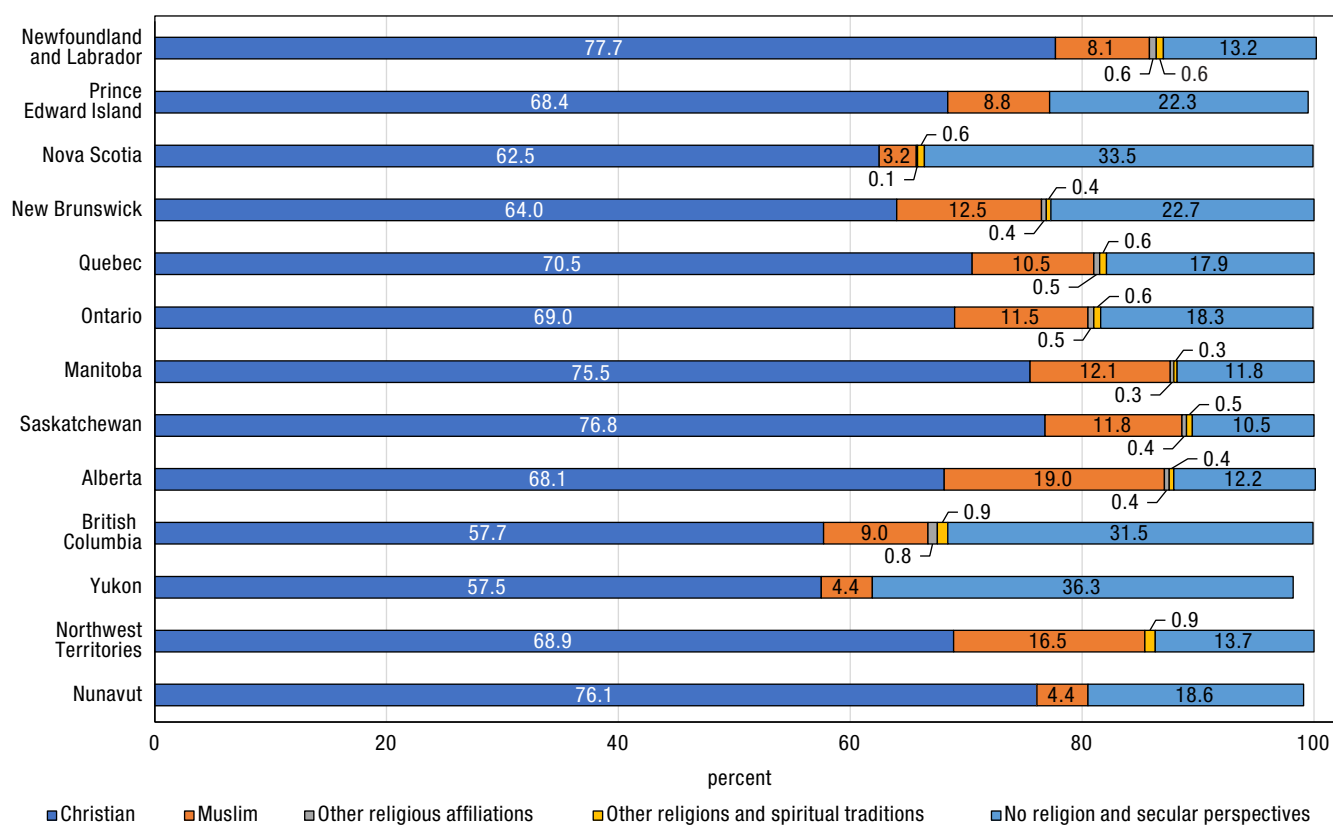
Chart 25
Major religions reported by the Black populations, by generation status, Canada, 2021



Notes: The other religious affiliations category is used in this analysis as an aggregate for Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Sikhism, and “Traditional (North American Indigenous) spirituality”. While other religious affiliations and “other religions and spiritual traditions” are represented across almost all the generation status groups among the Black populations, their proportions are relatively small in comparison to affiliations with Christianity, Islam and secularism.
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

While religious affiliation with Christianity and Islam was markedly higher than with other major religions among the Black populations in Canada (regardless of generation status), these affiliations were particularly notable among first-generation Black peoples and second-generation Black peoples with all parents born outside Canada.

The highest religious affiliation was seen among Black communities in the Prairies, while the greatest numbers of Black individuals reporting a religious affiliation were found in Ontario (628,040 people), Quebec (346,700 people), and Alberta (156,310 people) – the three provinces with the largest Black populations. In the Prairies, the majority of Black people were immigrants, with over half of the Black populations in Saskatchewan (59.8%), Manitoba (58.4%) and Alberta (52.1%) born in Africa. This can explain the high religious affiliation among Black communities in the Prairies, as first-generation Black individuals (or Black immigrants) reported the highest religious affiliation (Chart 25). The Black populations in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta reported religious affiliations of 89.5%, 88.2% and 87.8%, respectively (Chart 26).

Chart 26**Major religions reported by the Black populations, by province or territory of residence, Canada, 2021**

Note: To ensure confidentiality, the values, including totals, are randomly rounded either up or down to a multiple of '5' or '10'. To understand these data, you must be aware that each individual value is rounded. As a result, when these data are summed or grouped, the total value may not match the individual values since totals and sub-totals are independently rounded. Similarly, percentages, which are calculated on rounded data, may not necessarily add up to 100%.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Those with “no religion and secular perspectives” among the Black populations were highest in Yukon (36.3%), Nova Scotia (33.5%) and British Columbia (31.5%). This aligns with the total populations in Yukon and British Columbia, where a majority of people reported having secularist views – almost three in five people in British Columbia (59.7%) and over one-half of people in Yukon (52.1%) (Statistics Canada, 2022h). Notably, the Black populations in Yukon, Nova Scotia and British Columbia had some of the largest proportions of Canadian-born individuals compared with the Black populations in other provinces and territories.

Across all the Canadian provinces and territories, religious affiliation did not fall below 62.0% among Black communities, and secularist views did not exceed 37.0% (Chart 26).

Black women and Black seniors have the highest religious affiliation in Canada across all the groups explored in this analysis

Black women (83.9%) were more likely than Black men (80.0%) to report a religious affiliation. This was the case across all the major religions in Canada except for Islam, where 12.4% of Black men and 11.4% of Black women reported an affiliation. Differences in affiliation based on gender were minor across all the major religion groups. A slightly larger difference was noted among Black individuals with “no religion and secular perspectives”. While 16.1% of Black women reported secular perspectives in 2021, 20.0% of Black men reported the same.

In general, women reported higher religious affiliation than men overall in 2021. Specifically, women reported higher affiliation with Christianity and “other religions and spiritual traditions” among the total population, as well as among other racialized populations, and the non-racialized populations. Among the Black populations men reported equal affiliation with “other religions and spiritual traditions”. Men also reported higher (or equal) religious

affiliation across all other major religions (except Buddhism among the total population and other racialized populations) and the category of “no religion and secular perspectives”.

When analyzing the Black populations across three key age groups – children and youth (aged 0 to 24 years), adults (aged 25 to 64 years), and seniors (aged 65 years and older) – Black seniors had the highest religious affiliation (89.1%), followed by Black adults (82.4%), and Black children and youth (80.3%).

African-born individuals have the highest religious affiliation among Black populations in Canada

Among Black populations in Canada, religious affiliation was highest among African-born individuals, followed by Caribbean-born individuals, and individuals born in the rest of the world, and was lowest among Canadian-born individuals; with secularist views being the inverse (Table 2).

Table 2
Major religions among the Black populations, by place of birth, Canada, 2021

	Place of birth							
	Canada		Africa		Caribbean		Rest of the world	
	percent	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent	number
Religious affiliation	72.6	459,850	93.8	473,760	82.8	269,455	79.0	65,905
Buddhist	0.1	385	0.0 ^s	205	0.0 ^s	140	0.1	120
Christian	61.6	390,215	71.1	359,025	81.6	265,445	64.9	54,125
Hindu	0.1	630	0.5	2,360	0.1	245	0.6	540
Jewish	0.3	1,620	0.1	350	0.1	375	0.3	275
Muslim	9.9	62,590	21.8	110,115	0.2	790	12.2	10,180
Sikh	0.0 ^s	55	0.0 ^s	25	0.0 ^s	20	0.1	70
Traditional (North American Indigenous) spirituality	0.0 ^s	50	0.0 ^s	50	0.0	0	0.0 ^s	10
Other religions and spiritual traditions	0.7	4,310	0.3	1,640	0.7	2,435	0.7	590
No religion and secular perspectives	27.4	173,930	6.2	31,405	17.2	56,005	21.0	17,560

0 true zero or a value rounded to zero

0^s value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Of the two most frequently reported religious affiliations among the Black populations – Christianity and Islam – the largest proportion of Christians was among Black people born in the Caribbean, while the largest number of Christians was among those born in Canada. The largest proportion and number of Black Muslims in Canada were among African-born individuals.

Conclusion

There is no single Black population in Canada, but rather many diverse Black populations. Black populations in Canada differ in terms of their histories, ethnocultural origins, places of birth, mother tongues, and religious affiliations. The sociodemographic analysis presented in this paper suggests that the composition of the Black populations in Canada has been influenced by two main processes: (1) the pre-Confederation transatlantic settlement of Black peoples in Canada, hence the presence of historic Black communities characterized by many generations residing on this land, and (2) migration flows to Canada from the Caribbean and Africa, starting in the 1960s.

The result of these processes is the emergence of three main groups among the Black populations. The first group consists of the Black populations born in Canada – descendants of historic Black communities and second-generation Black Canadians (i.e., the descendants of contemporary Black immigrants). The second group includes Caribbean-born individuals who were largely the catalysts of Black immigration to Canada from the 1960s to the 1990s. The third group comprises African-born individuals, reflecting more recent immigration flows. All three of these groups have contributed to a sociodemographic diversification of the Black populations over the last 25 years. Beyond the three groups primarily explored in this analysis, Black people from other parts of the world and other diaspora communities also comprise the Black populations in Canada.

The sociodemographic evolution of the Black populations has resulted in increased geographic, linguistic, ethnocultural and religious diversity, largely driven by the African-born Black populations. These changes have distinguished the Black population beyond one race-based, geographically homogeneous group with singular outcomes.

The main conclusion of this paper is that, rather than conceptualizing the Black populations in Canada as a monolithic entity, they should be disaggregated and considered as multiple communities and cultural groups, each with its diverse and distinct characteristics. To fully understand the diversity of the Black populations in Canada, various ethnocultural concepts are needed.

Data gaps concerning the Black populations in Canada remain. Some examples include data on Black 2SLGBTQ+ individuals, Black-Indigenous populations or descendants of historic Black communities (looking at the fifth generation or more), to name a few. This portrait provides the sociodemographic, linguistic, ethnocultural and religious data context needed to better understand the experiences and socioeconomic outcomes of the Black populations. With time, new insights are likely to emerge regarding the ways in which the Black populations in Canada are thought about and conceptualized, and how data on these diverse populations are collected and analyzed.

Notes

1. This analytical paper was funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage, Government of Canada.
2. The terms “Black Peoples” and “Black people” will be used in this analysis. “Black Peoples” is a collective name that refers to all the Black populations in Canada, notably the four groups predominantly explored in our analysis: (1) Canadian-born individuals descending from historic Black communities, (2) Canadian-born individuals who are the descendants of contemporary Black immigrants, (3) Caribbean-born individuals and (4) African-born individuals. The term “Black people” refers to individuals.

The terms “Black Peoples” and “Black populations” are used interchangeably throughout this analysis. This paper pluralizes the “Black” population group (e.g., Black populations, Black communities) in recognition of the plurality of the ethnicities, nationalities and geographic groups that the race-based concept of “Black” encompasses.

This paper uses the term “Black” to define its population of interest in alignment with the census questionnaire, based on the *Employment Equity Act* and its Regulations. Acknowledging that identity can be fluid and socially constructed, respondents who reported being “Black”, “Black” and “White” or reported an applicable write-in response associated with the “Black” category may not self-identify as Black in everyday life.

3. Diaspora refers to populations who share a cultural and regional origin that have been exiled, displaced or scattered across regions that are not their geographic place of origin (traditional homeland). Diasporas come about through immigration and forced movements of people (Simms, 1993).
4. To ensure confidentiality, the values, including totals, are randomly rounded either up or down to a multiple of ‘5’ or ‘10’. To understand these data, you must be aware that each individual value is rounded. As a result, when these data are summed or grouped, the total value may not match the individual values since totals and sub-totals are independently rounded. Similarly, percentages, which are calculated on rounded data, may not necessarily add up to 100%.
5. The racialized populations referenced in this paper include the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese. Black populations are excluded when referencing “other racialized populations” in this paper. For more information on the definition and measurement of racialized populations, see [Note to Readers](#).
6. The leading west African country of birth for Black individuals residing in these provinces was Nigeria, with Nigerian-born individuals constituting 25.9% of the Black populations in Saskatchewan (5,855 people), 24.4% in Newfoundland and Labrador (875 people), and 24.0% in Manitoba (11,155 people).
7. The leading east African countries of birth for Black individuals residing in the Northwest Territories (based on the proportion of Black individuals residing in the territory who were born in each country) were Zimbabwe (8.0%), Somalia (5.7%), Ethiopia (4.7%), Kenya (4.7%) and Uganda (4.2%). The leading east African countries of birth for Black individuals residing in Alberta, and their respective share of the Black populations in the province, were Ethiopia (8.2%, or 14,620 people), Eritrea (5.4%, or 9,655 people) and Somalia (4.8%, or 8,510 people).
8. The leading Caribbean country of birth for Black individuals residing in Quebec was Haiti, accounting for 22.8% of the Black populations in the province (96,255 people). The most common Caribbean countries of birth for Black individuals residing in Prince Edward Island, and their respective share of the Black populations in the province, were Jamaica (12.4%, or 225 people) and the Bahamas (11.6%, or 210 people). The leading Caribbean country of birth for Black individuals residing in Ontario was Jamaica, accounting for 14.9% of the Black populations in the province (114,450 people).
9. The MIZ classification categorizes all CSDs in provinces and territories that are outside CMAs and CAs. CSDs within provinces that are outside CMAs and CAs are assigned to one of four categories according to the degree of influence (strong, moderate, weak or no influence) that the CMAs or CAs have on them. CSDs within the territories that are outside CAs are assigned to a separate category.

10. In the 2021 Census, the concept of gender, which includes categories “men”, “women”, and “non-binary persons”, was introduced. For confidentiality purposes, cases in the category “non-binary persons” were randomly distributed into the other two gender categories and are denoted by the “+” symbol, resulting in the categories of “men+” and “women+”. The category “men+” includes men, boys and some non-binary persons, while the category “women+” includes women, girls and some non-binary persons. This paper uses the terms “men” to refer to the “men+” category, and “women” to refer to the “women+” category. For more details on the concept of gender, see [Note to Readers](#).
11. Please note that only countries with Black populations of 1,000 and more persons in Canada are considered in this analysis for robustness of estimates. The other Caribbean countries or territories with a high proportion of women in Canada were British Virgin Islands, Curaçao, Turks and Caicos Islands and Guadeloupe.
12. For example, among the top 20 African and Caribbean countries of birth of the Black populations in Canada, 11 countries have English as one (or the only) official or established language, 4 have French and 3 (Cameroon, Burundi and Rwanda) have both. Two of these countries – Ethiopia and Somalia – do not have English or French among their official languages (Ethnologue, 2023).
13. Regional languages from the Caribbean are primarily Creole variants, such as Jamaican or Haitian Creole. African countries tend to be more linguistically diverse, home to a variety of native African languages from three main language groups: Afro-Asiatic, Niger-Congo and Nilo-Saharan. It is common for over 60 or 70 languages (or sometimes over 200 languages) to be spoken within one African country (Ethnologue, 2023), while some colonial or creole languages, such as Portuguese, Spanish or Afrikaans, are a small part of the continent’s linguistic profile. Black people from African countries are more likely to be multilingual.
14. The top 30 non-official languages reported as a single or multiple response to the mother tongue question for the Black populations in Canada also included the Afro-Asiatic languages Bilen, Hausa and Harari and the Niger-Congo languages Kinyarwanda (Rwanda), Shona, Fulah, Niger-Congo languages, n.i.e., Edo, Éwé, Bamanankan, Ganda and Wojenaka.
15. Most responses indicating “Creole, n.o.s.” as a mother tongue came from people born in Haiti (68.3% of responses), followed by Canada (12.8%), and Jamaica (9.1%). The remaining responses came from people born in nearly 30 countries of the Caribbean, Africa and other regions.
16. Responses to the ethnic or cultural origins question on the Census of Population reflect respondents’ perceptions of their ancestry, and these perceptions can be influenced over time by factors such as their understanding of the concept, their knowledge of their genealogy, the structure of the ethnic or cultural origins question on different census cycle questionnaires, and contemporary social environments. Thus, data on ethnic or cultural origins can be fluid (Statistics Canada, 2022c).
17. A positive response to Question 24, “Is this person First Nations, Métis or Inuk (Inuit)?” on the 2021 Census of Population results in skipping the population group question. As a result, some Black-Indigenous people may not be counted in the Black populations.
18. These distinct population groups, also called Indigenous Black populations in various parts of Canada, are descendants of free or enslaved Black planters from pre-Confederation or early Canada, Black Loyalists, Black Refugees, and Maroons, among others (African Nova Scotian Strategy Advisory Council, 2022). Not to be confused with the “Black-Indigenous” populations explored earlier in this paper, in this instance, descendants of historic Black communities are being explored separately from the Black-Indigenous populations, as these two identities are not the same despite their intertwined history and the possibility of belonging to both groups.
19. This paper uses the visible minority category of “Black” to establish the counts of the Black populations in Canada and conduct analysis, which includes people who reported being “Black”, people who reported being “Black” and “White”, and people who reported two or more responses associated with being “Black” and “White”. In the case of multi-racial individuals, some reported North American origins could be attributed to their “White” ancestry rather than their “Black” ancestry.
20. Diaspora refers to populations who share a cultural and regional origin that have been exiled, displaced or scattered across regions that are not their geographic place of origin (traditional homeland). Diasporas come about through immigration and forced movements of people (Simms, 1993). Double diaspora occurs when there is a compound displacement.

21. This paper refers to imperialism as the intentional act or advocacy of augmenting or maintaining political control (directly or indirectly), by one state over another inhabited territory, through intervention that results in the unequal treatment of these inhabitants relative to the citizens of the intervening state. This expands beyond invasion and can include ideological and non-physical exertions of political control, such as economic, cultural, moral and exploratory control, to self-interested ends (Wright, 1967).
22. This paper refers to colonialism as the overt exploitation of, and exertion of control and domination over, a group of people by another group of people who differ ethnoculturally through settlement. It is characterized by the extermination, and/or segregation, and/or assimilation of Indigenous inhabitants by colonial authorities (Horvath, 1972).
23. Respondents with “no religion and secular perspectives” are those who select the “No religion” option or entered other responses, such as “Atheist” (does not believe in the existence of God) or “Agnostic” (believes nothing can be known about the existence of God) in the “Specify one denomination or religion only” box on the Census of Population (Statistics Canada, 2022g).
24. Religious affiliation differs from religiosity or religious practice. The religion question in the census asks respondents to indicate a specific denomination or religion even if this person is not currently a practicing member of that group.

Note to readers

Data sources

This analysis was conducted using data from the Census of Population (1996 to 2021), and the 2011 National Household Survey. Data on the population groups and other sociodemographic variables are collected through the long-form census questionnaire, and refers to persons in private households in occupied private dwellings. In 2021, a sample of 25% of Canadian households received a long-form questionnaire.

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

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

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

Methods

This paper provides descriptive and comparative analysis of the linguistic, ethnocultural, religious and sociodemographic diversity of the Black populations in Canada.

Definitions

Black populations: Since 1996, Statistics Canada has used the population group question in the census to measure the racialized populations through the visible minority concept in accordance with the *Employment Equity Act*. This paper uses the category of “Black” in the visible minority variable to establish the counts of the Black populations in Canada and to conduct analysis. The “Black” category includes people who reported “Black” and “Black” and “White”. In the 2021 Census, 89.8% of the category “Black” was single-response answers and 10.2% was multiple-response answers associated with the categories “Black” and “White”. For more information about the derivation of the “Black” and other racialized populations categories, please consult the [Visible Minority and Population Group Reference Guide, Census of Population, 2021](#).

Apart from people who were classified as belonging to the Black populations according to existing standards, a further 58,000 people reported being Black and another racialized group, and about 39,000 people reported being Black and two or more other racialized groups. In total, over 98,000 more people could be classified as Black if all those who provided a mark-in or write-in response associated with the “Black” category were considered. The size of the Black populations in Canada would increase from approximately 1.5 million to 1.6 million people. However, individuals who reported being “Black” and another racialized group (e.g., “Chinese”, “South Asian”) are classified under the “multiple visible minority” category. Using this category, the unique characteristics and experiences of individuals belonging to two or more racialized groups can be analyzed separately.

Canadian-born Black populations: This category refers to Black people born in Canada. They are also Canadian citizens by birth.

Canadian citizen by birth: This category refers to people who acquired Canadian citizenship at birth under the provisions of Canadian law.

Canadian citizen by naturalization: This category refers to people who were not Canadian citizens at birth but acquired citizenship under the provisions of Canadian law. They are immigrants to Canada who acquired Canadian citizenship through the citizenship application process.

Cisgender: This term refers to people whose gender corresponds with their sex assigned at birth.

Ethnic or cultural origin: A person's ethnic or cultural origin refers to the ethnic or cultural origins of a person's ancestors. Ancestors may have Indigenous origins, origins that refer to different countries or other origins that may not refer to different countries. Often referred to as a person's ancestral "roots", ethnic or cultural origins should not be confused with citizenship, nationality, language or place of birth.

Generation status: A person's generation status refers to whether the person or the person's parents were born in Canada.

- The term "first generation" includes people who were born outside Canada. These are mostly people who are now, or once were, immigrants to Canada.
- The term "second generation" includes people who were born in Canada and had at least one parent born outside Canada. For the most part, these are the children of immigrants.
- The term "third generation or more" includes people who were born in Canada and whose parents were also born in Canada.

Gender: Gender refers to an individual's personal and social identity as a man, woman or non-binary person (a person who is not exclusively a man or a woman) and includes the following concepts:

- gender identity, which refers to the gender that a person feels internally and individually
- gender expression, which refers to the way a person presents their gender, regardless of their gender identity, through body language, aesthetic choices or accessories (e.g., clothes, hairstyle and makeup) that may have traditionally been associated with a specific gender.

A person's gender may differ from their sex at birth, and from what is indicated on their current identification or legal documents such as their birth certificate, passport or driver's licence. A person's gender may change over time. Some people may not identify with a specific gender.

The sex variable in census years before 2021 and the two-category gender variable in the 2021 Census are combined in this analysis to make historical comparisons. Although sex and gender refer to two different concepts, the introduction of gender in 2021 is not expected to have a significant impact on data analysis and historical comparability, given the small size of the transgender and non-binary populations. For additional information on changes of concepts over time, please consult the [Age, Sex at Birth and Gender Reference Guide, Census of Population, 2021](#).

Given that the non-binary population is small, data aggregation to a two-category gender variable is sometimes necessary to protect the confidentiality of responses. In these cases, individuals in the category "non-binary persons" are distributed into the other two gender categories. Unless otherwise indicated, the category "men" includes men, boys and some non-binary people, while the category "women" includes women, girls and some non-binary people.

Immigrant: An immigrant is a person who is, or has been, a landed immigrant or permanent resident. Such a person has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Immigrants who have obtained Canadian citizenship by naturalization are included in this group.

Immigrant status: A person's immigrant status refers to whether the person is a non-immigrant, an immigrant or a non-permanent resident.

Non-binary: This term refers to a person who is not exclusively a man or a woman, for example, who is agender, fluid, queer or Two-Spirit.

Non-immigrant: This term refers to a person who is a Canadian citizen by birth. Non-immigrants include Canadian citizens who were born in Canada, and Canadian citizens born abroad.

Non-permanent resident: A non-permanent resident is a person from another country with a usual place of residence in Canada who has a work or study permit or who has claimed refugee status (asylum claimant). Family members living with work or study permit holders are also included unless these family members are already Canadian citizens or landed immigrants or permanent residents.

Place of birth: Place of birth refers to the name of the geographic location where the person was born. The geographic location is specified according to geographic boundaries current at the time of data collection, not the geographic boundaries at the time of birth.

In the 2021 Census of Population, the geographic location refers to the name of the province, territory or country in which the person was born. It refers to a province or territory if the person was born in Canada. It refers to a country or area of interest if the person was born outside Canada.

Racialized populations: The concept of racialized populations is measured with the “visible minority” variable. This information has been collected by Statistics Canada since the 1996 Census of Population to implement the *Employment Equity Act*. The term “visible minority” refers to whether a person belongs to one of the visible minority groups defined by the *Employment Equity Act*. The act defines visible minorities as “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.” The visible minority variable categories that constitute racialized populations are: “South Asian”, “Chinese”, “Black”, “Filipino”, “Latin American”, “Arab”, “Southeast Asian”, “West Asian”, “Korean”, “Japanese”, “Multiple visible minorities”, and “Visible minority, not included elsewhere”. The non-racialized populations in this paper are measured with the category “not a visible minority” of the same variable. In this analysis, the racialized populations exclude Indigenous respondents. For more information about the derivation of the racialized populations, consult the [Visible Minority and Population Group Reference Guide, Census of Population, 2021](#).

Religion: Religion refers to a person’s self-identified connection to or affiliation with any religious denomination, group, body, or other religiously defined community or system of belief. Religion is not limited to formal membership in a religious organization or group.

For infants or children, religion refers to the specific religious group or denomination, if any, in which they are being raised.

Rural area: A rural area refers to a census metropolitan influenced zone (MIZ). The MIZ categorizes all census subdivisions (CSDs) outside census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and census agglomerations (CAs). CSDs outside CMAs and CAs in provinces are assigned one of four categories according to the degree of influence (strong, moderate, weak or no influence) the CMAs or CAs have on them. CSDs outside CAs in the territories are assigned to a separate category.

Transgender: This term refers to a person whose gender does not correspond to their sex assigned at birth. It includes transgender (trans) men and women. Non-binary people are excluded.

Urban area: An urban area refers to a CSD that is a component of a CMA or a CA.

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Appendix

Table A.1

Key sociodemographic characteristics of the Black populations in Canada compared with the other racialized populations, the non-racialized populations and total population, 2021

	Black populations		Other racialized populations	Non-racialized populations	Total population
	number	percent			
Age					
Children and youth, age 0 to 24	647,940	41.9	33.2	24.5	28.0
Adults of working age, 25 to 64	784,910	50.7	56.4	53.6	53.9
Seniors, age 65 and older	115,015	7.4	10.4	21.9	18.1
Median age	30.2	...	34.8	45.6	41.2
Gender					
Women+	793,765	51.3	51.1	50.4	50.6
Men+	754,100	48.7	48.9	49.6	49.4
Place of birth					
Born in Canada	633,780	41.0	28.8	88.3	73.6
Born outside Canada	914,085	59.0	71.2	11.7	26.4
Caribbean	325,460	21.0	1.1	0.1	1.2
Africa	505,165	32.6	3.6	0.6	2.6
Other	83,460	5.4	66.4	11.0	22.6
Generation status					
First generation	914,085	59.0	71.2	11.7	26.4
Second generation	501,010	32.4	25.9	14.9	17.6
Third generation or more	132,770	8.6	2.9	73.4	56.0
Immigrant status					
Non-immigrants	651,275	42.1	30.0	89.1	74.4
Non-permanent residents	108,985	7.0	8.2	0.6	2.6
Immigrants	787,605	50.9	61.9	10.3	23.0
Immigrated in 1990 or before	165,685	10.7	11.2	5.6	6.8
Immigrated from 1991 to 2010	294,865	19.1	29.5	3.0	9.5
Immigrated from 2011 to 2021	327,055	21.1	21.2	1.6	6.8
Canadian citizenship status					
Canadian citizens	1,187,475	76.7	73.1	97.4	91.2
By birth	651,275	42.1	30.0	89.1	74.4
By naturalization	536,190	34.6	43.1	8.3	16.8
Not Canadian citizens	360,395	23.3	26.9	2.6	8.8
Total Black populations	1,547,870	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

... not applicable

Note: In the 2021 Census, the concept of gender, which includes categories "men", "women", and "non-binary persons", was introduced. For confidentiality purposes, cases in the category "non-binary persons" were randomly distributed into the other two gender categories and are denoted by the "+" symbol, resulting in the categories of "men+" and "women+". The category "men+" includes men, boys and some non-binary persons, while the category "women+" includes women, girls and some non-binary persons.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Table A.2
Top 25 countries of birth for the Black populations in Canada in 2021, compared to 1996

Country	Country, continent or region	Rank in 2021	Rank in 1996	Number of people, 2021	Number of people, 1996	Percentage in 2021	Percentage in 1996
Top 25 countries, 2021	...	...	...	1,409,020	542,040	91.0	95.0
Canada	Canada	1	1	633,780	238,430	40.9	41.8
Jamaica	Caribbean	2	2	136,505	104,640	8.8	18.4
Haiti	Caribbean	3	3	110,915	50,395	7.2	8.8
Nigeria	Africa	4	14	109,245	4,910	7.1	0.9
Ethiopia	Africa	5	8	43,205	13,175	2.8	2.3
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Africa	6	16	37,875	4,145	2.4	0.7
Cameroon	Africa	7	26	33,200	950	2.1	0.2
Somalia	Africa	8	5	32,280	20,650	2.1	3.6
Eritrea	Africa	9	15	31,500	4,540	2.0	0.8
Ghana	Africa	10	7	28,420	13,470	1.8	2.4
United States of America	Rest of the Americas	11	12	27,060	6,970	1.7	1.2
Côte d'Ivoire	Africa	12	28	21,700	830	1.4	0.1
Trinidad and Tobago	Caribbean	13	4	20,595	23,860	1.3	4.2
Kenya	Africa	14	20	14,955	1,950	1.0	0.3
Burundi	Africa	15	25	14,850	1,035	1.0	0.2
Guyana	Rest of the Americas	16	6	14,150	13,650	0.9	2.4
United Kingdom	Europe	17	10	12,835	8,120	0.8	1.4
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Caribbean	18	13	12,785	6,195	0.8	1.1
Senegal	Africa	19	33	12,535	670	0.8	0.1
Barbados	Caribbean	20	9	12,240	12,805	0.8	2.3
Sudan	Africa	21	24	10,510	1,470	0.7	0.3
Zimbabwe	Africa	22	35	9,890	590	0.6	0.1
Rwanda	Africa	23	27	9,590	870	0.6	0.1
France	Europe	24	31	9,220	725	0.6	0.1
Grenada	Caribbean	25	11	9,180	6,995	0.6	1.2
Other countries	...	...	...	138,850	28,125	9.0	5.0
Total Black populations	...	...	...	1,547,870	570,165	100.0	100.0

... not applicable

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1996 and 2021.

Table A.3
Key sociodemographic characteristics of the Black populations, by place of birth, 2021

	Born in Canada, total	Born in Canada, second generation	Born in Canada, third generation or more	Born outside Canada, total	Born in the Caribbean	Born in Africa	Born in the rest of the world
	number						
Size of the population	633,785	501,015	132,770	914,085	325,460	505,165	83,465
	percent						
Age statistics							
Mean age	19.4	18.3	23.2	40.8	50.5	35.9	33.1
Age, 25% of the group or below	6.8	6.5	7.8	26.6	37.2	24.0	14.4
Median age, 50% of the group or below	15.5	15.2	16.8	40.4	51.2	36.0	29.2
Age, 75% of the group or below	28.0	27.2	32.4	54.4	64.5	46.8	51.6
Age, 90% of the group or below	42.0	39.6	56.0	67.0	75.5	57.2	63.6
Age group							
Children and youth, 0 to 24 years	69.4	70.5	65.2	22.7	10.5	27.0	44.7
Adults of working age, 25 to 64 years	29.2	29.1	29.5	65.6	65.3	69.0	46.3
Seniors, 65 years and older	1.4	0.3	5.2	11.6	24.2	4.0	9.0
Gender							
Women+	50.0	50.2	49.6	52.1	55.7	50.2	49.8
Men+	50.0	49.8	50.4	47.9	44.3	49.8	50.2
Generation status							
First generation	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Second generation	79.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Third generation or more	21.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Immigrant status							
Non-immigrants	100.0	100.0	100.0	1.9	1.6	1.3	7.4
Non-permanent residents	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.9	6.8	14.9	14.3
Immigrants	0.0 ^s	0.0 ^s	0.0	86.2	91.7	83.9	78.3
Immigrated in 1990 or before	0.0 ^s	0.0 ^s	0.0	18.1	38.9	4.1	22.0
Immigrated from 1991 to 2010	0.0 ^s	0.0 ^s	0.0	32.3	31.4	33.8	25.7
Immigrated from 2011 to 2021	0.0 ^s	0.0 ^s	0.0	35.8	21.4	45.9	30.6
Canadian citizenship status							
Canadian citizens	100.0	100.0	100.0	60.6	74.1	52.0	59.6
By birth	100.0	100.0	100.0	1.9	1.6	1.3	7.4
By naturalization	0.0 ^s	0.0 ^s	0.0	58.6	72.6	50.8	52.2
Not Canadian citizens	0.0 ^s	0.0 ^s	0.0	39.4	25.9	48.0	40.4
Total, percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

0 true zero or a value rounded to zero

0^s value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded

Note: In the 2021 Census, the concept of gender, which includes categories "men", "women", and "non-binary persons", was introduced. For confidentiality purposes, cases in the category "non-binary persons" were randomly distributed into the other two gender categories and are denoted by the "+" symbol, resulting in the categories of "men+" and "women+". The category "men+" includes men, boys and some non-binary persons, while the category "women+" includes women, girls and some non-binary persons.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.