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## **2026 Census Content Fact Sheets**

### **Content changes for the 2026 Census of Population: Languages and language of instruction**

**2026 Census of Population**

Release date: July 4, 2025

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# Content changes for the 2026 Census of Population: Languages and language of instruction

## Introduction

The next Census of Population will take place in May 2026. To maintain the relevance of the census, Statistics Canada evaluates and reviews the questionnaire content in preparation for each census cycle. This includes several stages of consultative engagement, as well as testing and data evaluation, to recommend questionnaire content for the census.

Approximately 222,000 households from communities across the country were selected to participate in the 2024 Census Test. The test helped to determine whether new or modified questions under consideration could be easily understood and answered by Canadians. Testing census content ensures that high-quality data will be available from the 2026 Census of Population to support a wide variety of programs and services in communities across the country.

A series of fact sheets provides an overview of the content changes for the 2026 Census of Population because the census process is always evolving to reflect changes in the Canadian population and its demographic characteristics.

This fact sheet offers a summary of content changes for the 2026 Census specific to the following topics: languages and language of instruction. The tested changes for each topic are explained below, along with the resulting approach for 2026.



## Languages and language of instruction

Changes evaluated in the 2024 Census Test	Resulting approach for the 2026 Census of Population
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The phrase “can this person speak” was replaced by “does this person know” for the question on knowledge of non-official languages in the English questionnaire.</li> <li>• A note on the inclusion of sign languages was added to both the English and French questionnaires to make the question on knowledge of non-official languages more inclusive.</li> <li>• Minor modifications were made to the wording of the questions on language of instruction:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The words “in Canada” were added to the end of the question on reporting years of instruction in French-language schools to remind respondents that questions on the language of instruction relate only to schooling in Canada.</li> <li>○ The word “French” was inserted between “including” and “immersion” in “including immersion” for the questions on schooling in English-language schools.</li> <li>○ Modifications to the logic of the questionnaire were made based on the age of respondents.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The question on knowledge of non-official languages has been updated to include the wording “does this person know” in the English version and the note on sign languages in the English and French versions. These changes make the question more inclusive for sign language users without compromising the comparability of results for other languages.</li> <li>• The words “in Canada” are now included at the end of the question on reporting years of instruction in French schools to help create consistency in the questions on language of instruction and to more accurately reflect the concept that needs to be captured. In addition, the census test results demonstrate an improvement to data quality for the targeted population without other effects.</li> <li>• The word “French” will not be added to “including immersion” in the questionnaire, as the change had unexpected effects that compromised data quality.</li> <li>• The logic of the electronic questionnaire now allows the questions on language of instruction to be bypassed for children younger than 3 years and identifies whether respondents may have reported too many years of primary schooling for young children.</li> </ul>

### Why are these questions asked?

Language questions are used to provide a profile of the linguistic diversity of Canada’s population. This information is used to estimate the need for services in English and French and to better understand the current state and the evolution of Canada’s various language groups, including official languages, Indigenous languages and other non-official languages.

The questions on language of instruction are used to collect information in accordance with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* to support minority language education programs in English and French in Canada.



## **Current trends and data gaps for this topic**

Building on the improvements introduced during the 2021 Census cycle and informed by content consultations and the content determination process, Statistics Canada aimed to implement minimal adjustments for the 2026 Census. The focus was on making targeted improvements to data quality while maintaining the comparability of the collected language data.