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Dissemination Geographies Relationship File, Reference Guide, Census year 2026

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Dissemination Geographies Relationship File, Reference Guide, Census year 2026

This reference guide is intended for users of the *2026 Dissemination Geographies Relationship File* (DGRF). This guide provides an overview of the file, the general methodology used to create it, and important technical information.

What's new?

- The census forward sortation areas (FSA^{OM}) will be added to the *2026 Dissemination Geographies Relationship File* on September 28, 2027.

1 About this guide

This reference guide does not provide details on specific software packages that are available for use with the *2026 DGRF*. Users are advised to contact the appropriate software vendor for information.

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2 Overview

The *2026 DGRF* contains information at the dissemination block (DB) level, based on 2026 Census geographic areas, along with higher level dissemination geographies unique identifiers (DGUIDs).

The *DGRF* released on November 18th, 2026 includes the relationships between the DB and higher geographic levels that are not dependent on the population and dwelling counts. A second version of the 2026 DGRF, including all levels of geographies except the census FSAs, will be released on February 10th, 2027. A final version of the 2026 DGRF will be released on September 28th, 2027, including all levels of geographies.

3 About this product

Purpose of the product

The *2026 DGRF* is a dataset at the DB level that contains the complete set of 2026 Census geographic areas. The purpose of this product is for it to be used with the *2026 Census Boundary Files to link geographic areas with higher geographic levels using the DGUIDs.*

Definitions and concepts

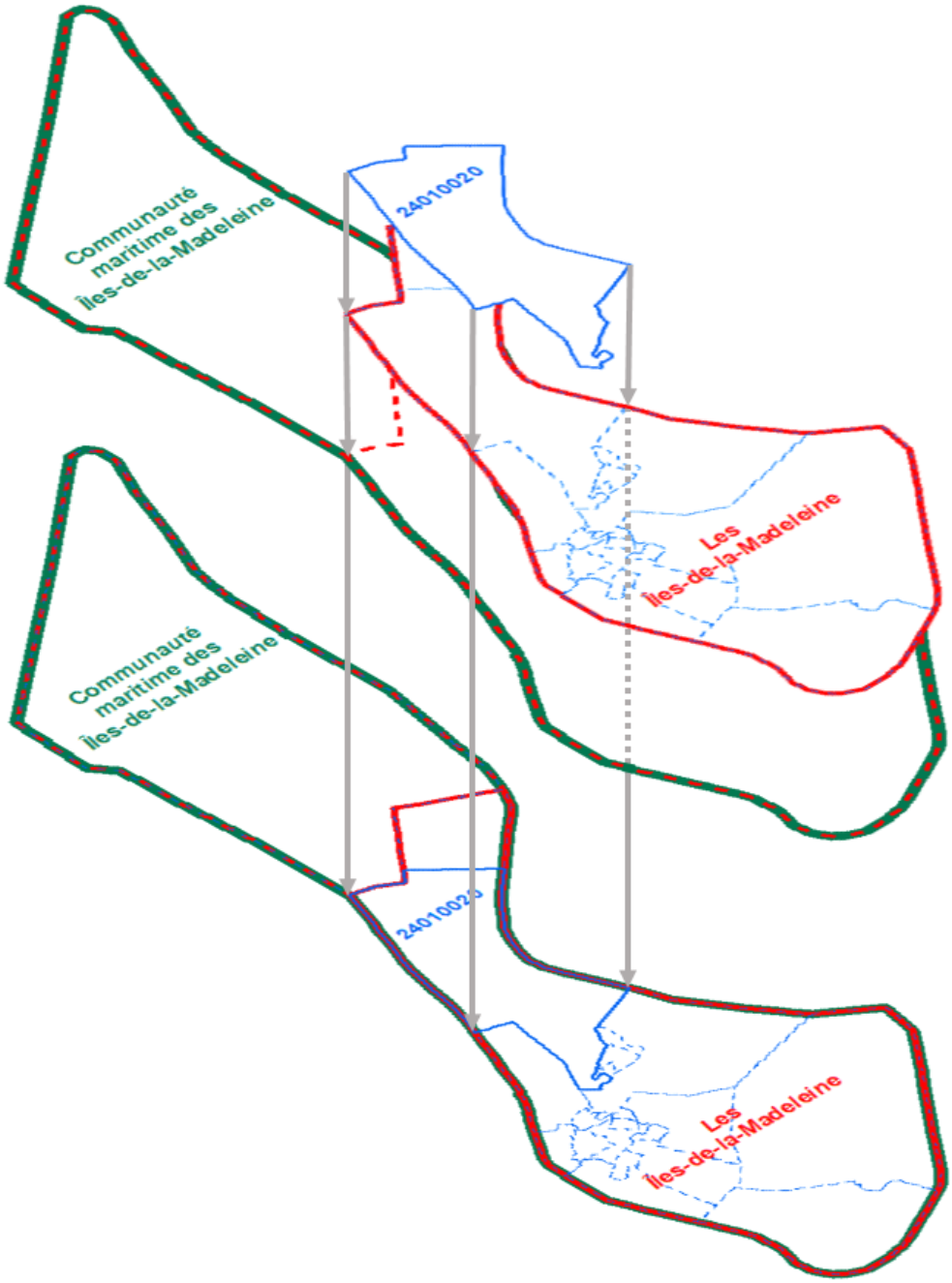
Geographic terms and concepts are briefly defined in the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2026*.

Relationships – spatial vs tabular

Relationships between lower and higher geography levels can be achieved either spatially or in a tabular fashion. Spatial relationships consist in superimposing layers of geographic data that cover the same area in order to study the relationship between them. Tabular relationships consist in establishing a connection between two layers using a key common to both.

In the context of the *2026 Census Boundary Files*, all the different levels of geographies have been integrated vertically, therefore spatial relationships are possible using GIS technology, either for analysis or mapping, as shown in the image below that presents an example of a spatial overlay between a dissemination area (DA), a census subdivision (CSD) and a census division (CD).

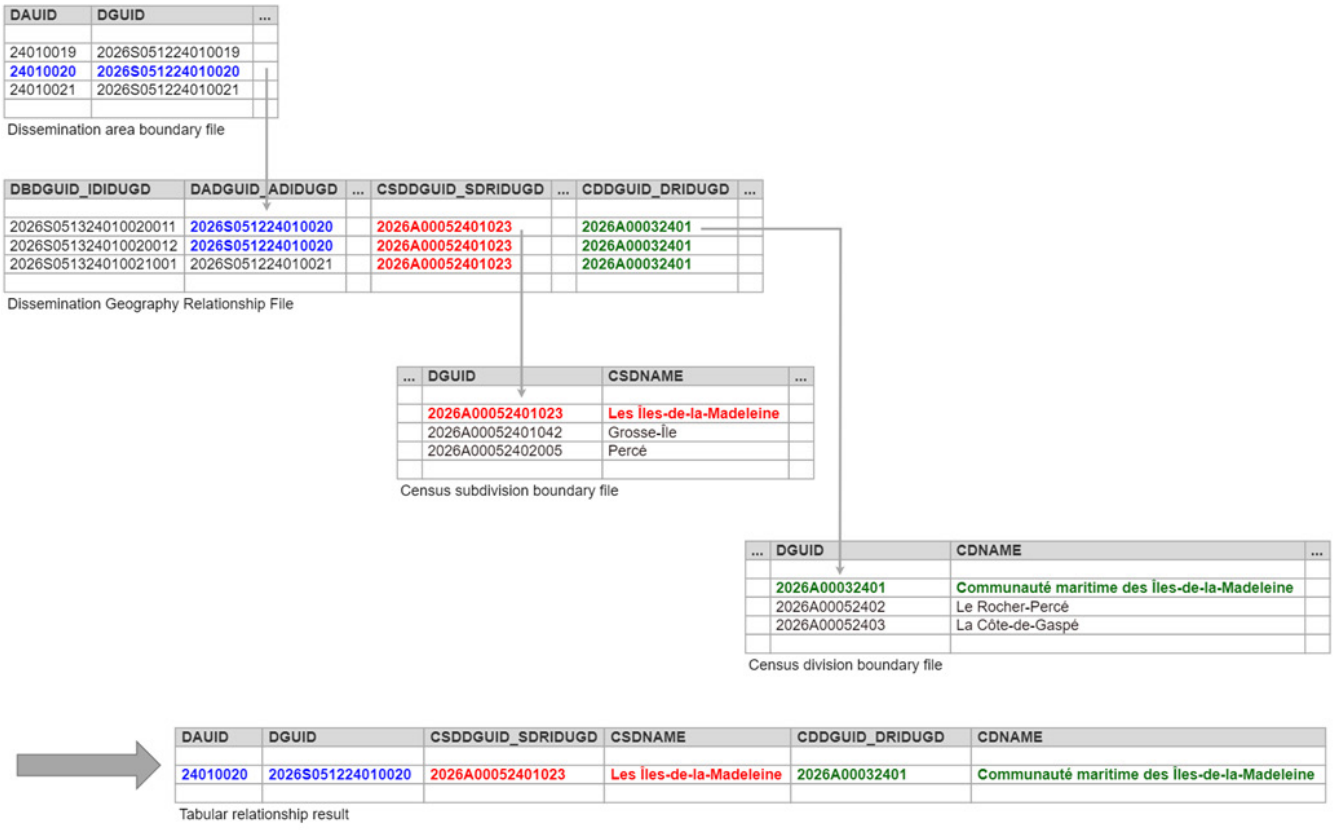
Figure 1
Example of a spatial relationship



Users can obtain similar results as above but in tabular fashion using the attribute tables of the *2026 Census Boundary Files*, along with the *DGRF*. Each boundary file level includes a DGUID that can be used to link to the *DGRF*. For example, the DGUID from the "DA Boundary Files" can be linked to the *DGRF* using the DADGUID_ ADIDUGD attribute. Additional linkages to the "CSD and CD boundary files" will then be possible using the CSDDGUID_SDRIDUGD and the CDDGUID_DRIDUGD attributes in the *DGRF* along with the corresponding DGUID in the "CSD and CD Boundary Files".

The image below presents an example of linking a given DA to its corresponding CSD and CD using the *DGRF*:

Figure 2
Example of a tabular relationship



Content

The *2026 DGRF* contains all the DGUIDs for the 2026 Census geographic areas. It is a DB level dataset that also includes information for the following:

First release: November 18th, 2026

- Province and territory
- Census division (CD)
- Federal electoral district (FED) (2023 Representation Order)
- Census subdivision (CSD)
- Economic region (ER)
- Census agricultural region (CAR)
- Census consolidated subdivision (CCS)
- Dissemination area (DA)
- Aggregate dissemination area (ADA)

Second release: February 10th, 2027

- All of first release
- Designated place (DPL)
- Census metropolitan area and census agglomeration (CMA/CA)
- Census tract (CT)
- Population centre (POPCTR)

Third release: September 28th, 2027

- All of second release
- Census forward sortation area (FSA)

General methodology

The National Geographic Database (NGD) is a joint Statistics Canada-Elections Canada initiative to develop and maintain a spatial database which serves the needs of both organizations. The focus of the NGD is the continual improvement of quality and currency of spatial coverage using updates from provinces, territories and local sources.

The source files used for the creation of the *2026 DGRF* reside on Statistics Canada's Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI), which was derived directly from data stored in the NGD environment.

In creating the *2026 DGRF*, all DBs were extracted from the SDI along with DGUIDs for the higher level geographic areas in which DBs are located.

Limitations

Not applicable

Comparison to other products or versions

The *2026 DGRF* is compatible with the suite of 2026 Census geography products. The *2026 DGRF* is similar but not necessarily consistent with the DGRF released for the 2021 Census.

Use with other products

The 2026 Census geographic areas in the *2026 DGRF* can be linked to other 2026 Census geography products, such as the *2026 Census Boundary Files*, using the DGUIDs.

Reference date

The geographic reference date is a date determined by Statistics Canada to finalize the geographic framework for which census data are collected, tabulated and reported. The reference date for the 2026 Census geographic areas is January 1, 2026.

4 Technical specifications

Record layout and data descriptions

Table 4.1
Record layout - Dissemination Geographies Relationship File

Attribute name	Data type	Description	Release
PRDGUID_PRIDUGD	Character (21)	Dissemination geography unique identifier for 2026 province and territory.[1]	November 2026
CDDGUID_DRIDUGD	Character (21)	Dissemination geography unique identifier for 2026 census division.[1]	November 2026
FEDDGUID_CEFIDUGD	Character (21)	Dissemination geography unique identifier for 2023 federal electoral district.[1]	November 2026
CSDDGUID_SDRIDUGD	Character (21)	Dissemination geography unique identifier for 2026 census subdivision.[1]	November 2026
ERDGUID_REIDUGD	Character (21)	Dissemination geography unique identifier for 2026 economic region.[1]	November 2026
CARDGUID_RARIDUGD	Character (21)	Dissemination geography unique identifier for 2026 census agricultural region.[1]	November 2026
CCSDGUID_SRUIDUGD	Character (21)	Dissemination geography unique identifier for 2026 census consolidated subdivision.[1]	November 2026
DADGUID_ADIDUGD	Character (21)	Dissemination geography unique identifier for 2026 dissemination area.[1]	November 2026
DBDGUID_IDIDUGD	Character (21)	Dissemination geography unique identifier for 2026 dissemination block.[1]	November 2026
ADADGUID_ADAIDUGD	Character (21)	Dissemination geography unique identifier for 2026 aggregate dissemination area.[1]	November 2026
DPLDGUID_LDIDUGD	Character (21)	Dissemination geography unique identifier for 2026 designated place.[1]	February 2027
CMAPDGUID_RMRPIDUGD	Character (21)	Dissemination geography unique identifier for 2026 census metropolitan area or census agglomeration part.[1]	February 2027
CMADGUID_RMRIDUGD	Character (21)	Dissemination geography unique identifier for 2026 census metropolitan area or census agglomeration.[1]	February 2027
CTDGUID_SRIDUGD	Character (21)	Dissemination geography unique identifier for 2026 census tract.[1]	February 2027
POPCTRPDGUID_CTRPOPPIDUGD	Character (21)	Dissemination geography unique identifier for 2026 population center part.[1]	February 2027
POPCTRDGUID_CTRPOPIDUGD	Character (21)	Dissemination geography unique identifier for 2026 population center.[1]	February 2027
CFSADGUID_RTACIDUGD	Character (21)	Dissemination geography unique identifier for 2026 census forward sortation area.[1]	September 2027

1 For further information please refer to the "Dissemination geography unique identifier (DGUID)" definition from the Dictionary, Census of Population, 2026.

Attribute domain values

Not applicable

File specifications

The *2026 DGRF*'s size is approximately 100 MB in comma separated value format (.csv).

Software formats

The 2026 DGRF is available for download from the Statistics Canada website in comma separated value format (.csv).

File extension and accented character information

The comma separated value format files are compressed (file extension .zip).

The *2026 Correspondence Files* do not contain accented characters.

Geographic representation

Not applicable

File naming convention

The *2026 DGRF* follows a naming convention. The file name includes the Census year, catalogue number and file format.

The *2026 DGRF* is named as follows:

- 2026_98260004.csv

5 Data quality

Data quality elements provide information on the fitness-for-use of a dataset by describing why, when and how the data are created, and how accurate the data are. The elements include an overview describing the purpose and usage, as well as specific quality elements reporting on lineage, positional accuracy, attribute accuracy, logical consistency and completeness. This information is provided to users for all data products disseminated for the census.

Lineage

Lineage describes the history of the data, including descriptions of the source material from which the data were derived and the methods of derivation. It also contains the dates of the source material, and all transformations involved in producing the final file.

All the data in the *2026 DGRF* were originally extracted from Statistics Canada's SDI.

Positional accuracy

Not applicable

Attribute accuracy

Attribute accuracy refers to the accuracy of the quantitative and qualitative information attached to each feature.

The DGUIDs contained within the *2026 DGRF*, along with the relationships between all geographic areas, were verified against the data in the SDI and found to accurately reflect them. The Figure 1.1, "Hierarchy of geographic areas for dissemination, 2026 Census," illustrates the relationships between all geographic areas.

Logical consistency

Logical consistency describes the dependability of relationships encoded in the data structure of the digital data.

Statistics Canada's SDI keeps track of the correspondence between the DBs and all higher geographic levels for dissemination.

Internal consistency

Consistency between the data at the various geographic levels was verified. Verification procedures included checks to ensure all the 2026 DBs are included in the *DGRF*. Furthermore, all geographic areas in the *DGRF* have been verified to ensure that they have a valid DGUID for the 2026 Census.

Consistency with other products

The DGUIDs used in the *2026 DGRF* are the same as those used in other geography products and represent the same geographic areas.

Completeness

Completeness refers to the degree to which geographic features, their attributes and their relationships are included or omitted in a dataset. It also includes information on selection criteria, definitions used and other relevant rules.

The *2026 DGRF* contains a DGUID for each geographic area. It also contains the appropriate number of geographic areas for each geographic level. Refer to Table 1.1, "Geographic areas by province and territory, 2026 Census," from the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2026.* These numbers were verified within the *2026 DGRF*.