Catalogue no. 92-156-G
ISBN 978-0-660-99112-2

Correspondence Files, Reference Guide, Census year 2026



Release date: November 18, 2026

Statistics Canada Statistique Canada

Canada

How to obtain more information

For information about this product or the wide range of services and data available from Statistics Canada, visit our website, www.statcan.gc.ca.

You can also contact us by

Email at infostats@statcan.gc.ca

Telephone, from Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at the following numbers:

- Statistical Information Service 1-800-263-1136
- National telecommunications device for the hearing impaired 1-800-363-7629
- Fax line 1-514-283-9350

Standards of service to the public

Statistics Canada is committed to serving its clients in a prompt, reliable and courteous manner. To this end, the Agency has developed standards of service which its employees observe in serving its clients. To obtain a copy of these service standards, please contact Statistics Canada toll-free at 1-800-263-1136. The service standards are also published on www.statcan.gc.ca under "Contact us" > "Standards of service to the public."

Note of appreciation

Canada owes the success of its statistical system to a long-standing partnership between Statistics Canada, the citizens of Canada, its businesses, governments and other institutions. Accurate and timely statistical information could not be produced without their continued co-operation and goodwill.

Published by authority of the Minister responsible for Statistics Canada

© His Majesty the King in Right of Canada, as represented by the Minister of Industry, 2026

Use of this publication is governed by the Statistics Canada Open Licence Agreement.

An HTML version is also available.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français.

Table of contents

1 About this guide **4**

2 Overview **4**

3 About this product **5**

Purpose of the product 5

Definitions and concepts 5

Relationship flag 5

Content 7

Dissemination Area Correspondence File 7

Dissemination Block Correspondence File 7

Dissemination Area and Land Area Correspondence File 8

General methodology 8

Limitations 8

Comparisons to other products or versions 8

Use with other products 8

Reference date 8

4 Technical specifications **9**

Record layouts and data descriptions 9

Attribute domain values 10

File specifications 10

Software formats 10

File extension and accented character information 10

Geographic representation 10

File naming convention 10

5 Data quality **11**

Lineage 11

Positional accuracy 11

Attribute accuracy 11

Logical consistency 11

Internal consistency 11

Consistency with other products 11

Completeness 11

Appendices **12**

Correspondence Files, Reference Guide, Census year 2026

This reference guide is intended for users of the *2026 Correspondence Files*. This guide provides an overview of the files, the general methodology used to create them, and important technical information.

1 About this guide

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

This data product is provided 'as-is,' and Statistics Canada makes no warranty, either express or implied, including but not limited to warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. In no event will Statistics Canada be liable for any direct, special, indirect, consequential or other damages, however caused.

2 Overview

The *2026 Correspondence Files* include three files:

- The "Dissemination Area Correspondence File" describes the relationship between the 2026 dissemination area (DA) and the 2021 DA.
- The "Dissemination Block Correspondence File" describes the relationship between the 2026 dissemination block (DB) and the 2021 DB.
- The "Dissemination Area and Land Area Correspondence File" describes the percentage of the 2026 DA's land area contained within the boundaries of the 2021 DA.

Each file contains a unique identifier (UID) and a dissemination geography unique identifier (DGUID) for the 2026 Census geographic area, as well as the corresponding UID and DGUID for the 2021 Census geographic area. In addition, a relationship flag is included which indicates the degree of correspondence between the geographic areas, facilitating a comparison between census years.

3 About this product

Purpose of the product

The *2026 Correspondence Files* provide users with tabular data that describes the correspondence between two vintages of geographic areas.

Definitions and concepts

Relationship flag

A relationship flag indicates the type of relationship that exists between sets of data. In the case of the correspondence files, it indicates the relationships between geographic areas from two Census years.

In the correspondence files, the possible relationship flags are:

1-one-to-one (1:1)

2-one-to-many (1:n)

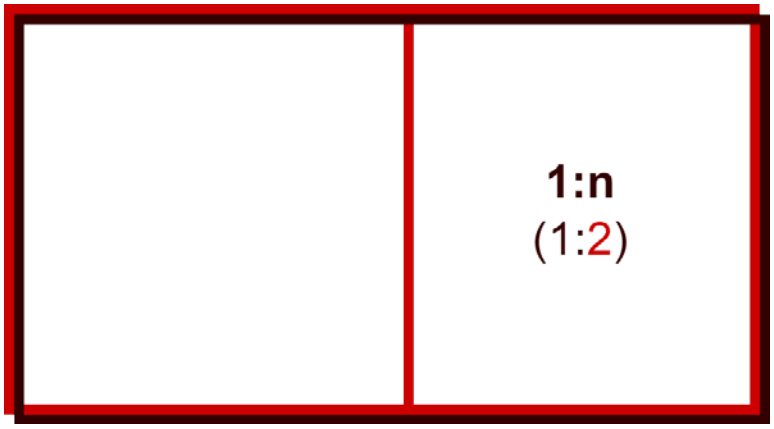
3-many-to-one (n:1)

4-many-to-many (n:n)

A one-to-one relationship indicates that no change has taken place.

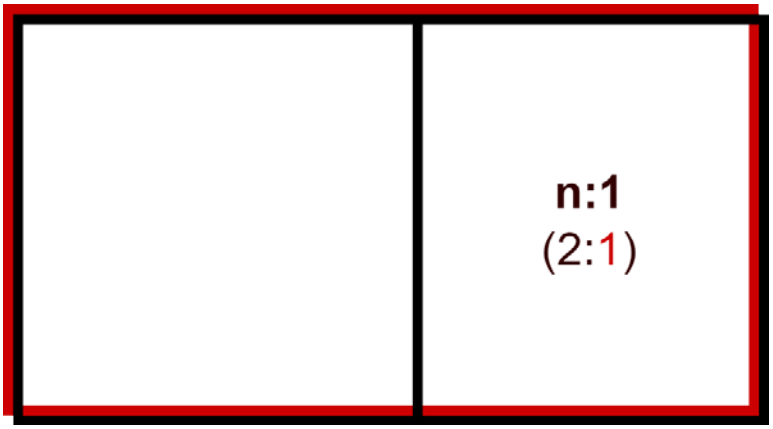
A one-to-many relationship indicates that arcs have been removed and one 2026 block has been created from multiple 2021 blocks.

Figure 3.1
Example of a one-to-many relationship with 2026 boundary in black and 2021 boundary in red



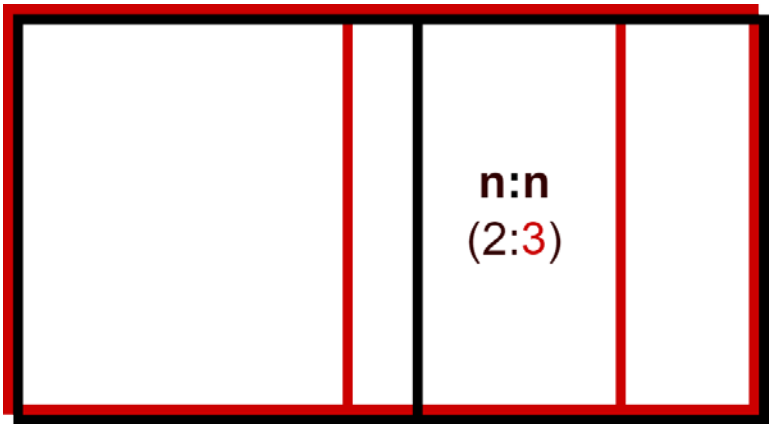
A many-to-one relationship indicates that arcs have been added to the base and multiple 2026 blocks have been created from one 2021 block. An example scenario would be if a new road was built.

Figure 3.2
Example of a many-to-one relationship with 2026 boundary in black and 2021 boundary in red



Finally, a many-to-many relationship indicates that multiple new 2026 blocks have been created from parts of numerous 2021 blocks. An example would be three 2021 blocks that have become two blocks in 2026.

Figure 3.3
Example of a many-to-many relationship with 2026 boundary in black and 2021 boundary in red



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

Content

Dissemination Area Correspondence File

The "Dissemination Area Correspondence File" describes the relationship between the 2026 and the 2021 DAs, at the DB level. The file contains the UID and DGUID of the 2026 DAs, the 2021 DAs and the 2026 DBs, as well as a relationship flag.

The following series of tables provide statistical information explaining the changes to the DAs between the 2021 and 2026 censuses.

The following table contains detailed counts for all 2026 DAs.

Table 3.1
Relationship type, 2026 dissemination area to 2021 dissemination area

Relationship type	Count	Percent
one 2026 dissemination area = one 2021 dissemination area	54,672	91.72
one 2026 dissemination area = many 2021 dissemination areas	3	0.01
many 2026 dissemination areas = one 2021 dissemination area	1,974	3.31
many 2026 dissemination areas = many 2021 dissemination areas	2,958	4.96

Note: Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

The following table contains detailed counts for 2026 DAs inside census tracts (CTs).

Table 3.2
Relationship type, 2026 dissemination area to 2021 dissemination area – group 1

Relationship type	Count	Percent
one 2026 dissemination area = one 2021 dissemination area	38,381	92.51
one 2026 dissemination area = many 2021 dissemination areas	2	0.00
many 2026 dissemination areas = one 2021 dissemination area	1,754	4.23
many 2026 dissemination areas = many 2021 dissemination areas	1,351	3.26

Note: Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

The following table contains detailed counts for 2026 DAs outside CTs.

Table 3.3
Relationship type, 2026 dissemination area to 2021 dissemination area – group 2

Relationship type	Count	Percent
one 2026 dissemination area = one 2021 dissemination area	16,291	89.91
one 2026 dissemination area = many 2021 dissemination areas	1	0.01
many 2026 dissemination areas = one 2021 dissemination area	220	1.21
many 2026 dissemination areas = many 2021 dissemination areas	1,607	8.87

Note: Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Dissemination Block Correspondence File

The "Dissemination Block Correspondence File" describes the relationship between the 2026 and the 2021 DBs. The file contains the UID and DGUID of the 2026 DBs and the 2021 DBs, as well as a relationship flag.

The following table contains detailed counts for all 2026 DBs.

Table 3.4
Relationship type, 2026 dissemination block to 2021 dissemination block

Relationship type	Count	Percent
one 2026 dissemination block = one 2021 dissemination block	441,932	86.90
one 2026 dissemination block = many 2021 dissemination blocks	12,388	2.44
many 2026 dissemination blocks = one 2021 dissemination block	39,164	7.70
many 2026 dissemination blocks = many 2021 dissemination blocks	15,058	2.96

Note: Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Dissemination Area and Land Area Correspondence File

The “Dissemination Area and Land Area Correspondence File” describes the relationship between the 2026 and the 2021 DAs. The file contains the UID and DGUID of the 2026 DAs and the 2021 DAs, a relationship flag, and percentage of land area. The percentage of land area attribute describes the percentage of the 2026 DA land area within the boundaries of the 2021 DA.

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 Correspondence Files* reside on Statistics Canada’s Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI), which was derived directly from data stored in the NGD environment.

2021 and 2026 attribute information, such as UIDs, DGUIDs and land area, were extracted from SDI, and percentages were calculated using the basic block, which is the lowest level of geography.

Limitations

Not applicable

Comparisons to other products or versions

Not applicable

Use with other products

The *2026 Correspondence Files* can be used to link 2026 data with the corresponding 2021 areas. The UIDs and DGUIDs can be used as a link to previous census geography products, such as *GeoSuite*, to retrieve higher geographic level data, census population and dwelling counts, or other attributes included in these products.

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 Correspondence Files* is January 1, 2026.

4 Technical specifications

Record layouts and data descriptions

The following tables identify and briefly describe the selected attributes comprising the content of the *2026 Correspondence Files.*

Table 4.1
Record layout — Dissemination area correspondence file

Attribute name	Data type	Description
DAUID2026_ADIDU2026	Character (8)	Uniquely identifies a dissemination area (composed of the two-digit province/territory code, the two-digit census division code, and the four-digit dissemination area code), 2026 Census.
DAUID2021_ADIDU2021	Character (8)	Uniquely identifies a dissemination area (composed of the two-digit province/territory code, the two-digit census division code, and the four-digit dissemination area code), 2021 Census.
DBUID2026_IDIDU2026	Character (11)	Uniquely identifies a dissemination block (composed of the two-digit province/territory code, the two-digit census division code, the four-digit dissemination area code, and the three-digit dissemination block code), 2026 Census.
DARELFLAG_ADINDREL	Character (1)	Relationship flag indicating if the 2026 dissemination area is equal to the 2021 dissemination area or has a one-to-many relationship, a many-to-one relationship or a many-to-many relationship.
		1 – one 2026 dissemination area was one 2021 dissemination area
		2 – one 2026 dissemination area was many 2021 dissemination areas
		3 – many 2026 dissemination areas were one 2021 dissemination area
		4 – many 2026 dissemination areas were many 2021 dissemination areas
DADGUID2026_ADIDUGD2026	Character (21)	Dissemination Geography Unique Identifier for 2026 Dissemination Area.[1]
DADGUID2021_ADIDUGD2021	Character (21)	Dissemination Geography Unique Identifier for 2021 Dissemination Area.[1]
DBDGUID2026_IDIDUGD2026	Character (21)	Dissemination Geography Unique Identifier for 2026 Dissemination Block.[1]

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

Table 4.2
Record layout — Dissemination block correspondence file

Attribute name	Data type	Description
DBUID2026_IDIDU2026	Character (11)	Uniquely identifies a dissemination block (composed of the two-digit province/territory code, the two-digit census division code, the four-digit dissemination area code, and the three-digit dissemination block code), 2026 Census.
DBUID2021_IDIDU2021	Character (11)	Uniquely identifies a dissemination block (composed of the two-digit province/territory code, the ywo-digit census division code, the four-digit dissemination area code, and the three-digit dissemination block code), 2021 Census.
DBRELFLAG_IDINDREL	Character (1)	Relationship flag indicating if the 2026 dissemination block is equal to the 2021 dissemination block or has a one-to-many relationship, a many-to-one relationship or a many-to-many relationship.
		1 – one 2026 dissemination block was one 2021 dissemination block
		2 – one 2026 dissemination block was many 2021 dissemination blocks
		3 – many 2026 dissemination blocks were one 2021 dissemination block
		4 – many 2026 dissemination blocks were many 2021 dissemination blocks.
DBDGUID2026_IDIDUGD2026	Character (21)	Dissemination Geography Unique Identifier for 2026 Dissemination Block.[1]
DBDGUID2021_IDIDUGD2021	Character (21)	Dissemination Geography Unique Identifier for 2021 Dissemination Block.[1]

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

Table 4.3
Record layout — Dissemination area and land area correspondence file

Attribute name	Data type	Description
DAUID2026_ADIDU2026	Character (8)	Uniquely identifies a dissemination area (composed of the two-digit province/territory code, the two-digit census division code, and the four-digit dissemination area code), 2026 Census.
DAUID2021_ADIDU2021	Character (8)	Uniquely identifies a dissemination area (composed of the two-digit province/territory code, the two-digit census division code, and the four-digit dissemination area code), 2021 Census.
DARELFLAG_ADINDREL	Character (1)	Relationship flag indicating if the 2026 dissemination area is equal to the 2021 dissemination area or has a one-to-many relationship, a many-to-one relationship or a many-to-many relationship.
		1 – one 2026 dissemination area was one 2021 dissemination area
		2 – one 2026 dissemination area was many 2021 dissemination areas
		3 – many 2026 dissemination areas were one 2021 dissemination area
		4 – many 2026 dissemination areas were many 2021 dissemination areas
DAAREAPRCNT_ADPRCNTSUP	Number (6.2)	Percentage of the 2026 dissemination area's land area within the extent of the 2021 dissemination area
DADGUID2026_ADIDUGD2026	Character (21)	Dissemination Geography Unique Identifier for 2026 Dissemination Area.[1]
DADGUID2021_ADIDUGD2021	Character (21)	Dissemination Geography Unique Identifier for 2021 Dissemination Area.[1]

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 largest 2026 correspondence file is approximately 45 megabytes in comma separated value format (.csv).

Software formats

The *2026 Correspondence Files* are 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 Correspondence Files* follow a file naming convention. The file names include the Census year, catalogue number, English geographic area acronym, French geographic area acronym and file format.

The *2026 Correspondence Files* are named as follows:

- 2026_92-156-X_DB_ID.csv
- 2026_92-156-X_DA_AD.csv
- 2026_92-156-X_DAland_ADsup.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 files.

All data in the *2026 Correspondence Files* 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 (such as UIDs).

The UIDs and DGUIDs contained within the *2026 Correspondence Files* were verified against the data in the SDI and found to accurately reflect them.

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 previous and the current censuses for geographic areas.

Internal consistency

Consistency between the data at the various geographic levels was verified. These included checks to ensure all the 2026 DBs or 2026 DAs are included in the *2026 Correspondence Files*. Furthermore, all 2026 DA land area is equal to 100% of their 2021 DA components (totals may not add to 100 due to rounding).

Consistency with other products

The UIDs and DGUIDs used in the *2026 Correspondence Files* 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 Correspondence Files* contain the complete set of 508,542 DBs and 59,607 DAs.

Appendices

See Figure 1.1, "Hierarchy of geographic areas for dissemination, 2026 Census," from the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2026*.

See Table 1.1, "Geographic areas by province and territory, 2026 Census," from the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2026* (available February 10, 2027*).*