

## **Minorities in Canada**

*Canada has a large planned intake for voluntary migrants, and has historically been open to refugees. The country has a highly diverse population and was the pioneer of multicultural policies in the early 1970s. Recent policy shifts have limited family migration, while emphasising intakes of highly-skilled workers. Temporary labour migration has also grown. Today, immigration and multiculturalism remain important themes of public debate. This brief country summary – like most of those that follow it – was part of the book text in the third edition of The Age of Migration. It has been updated for the fifth edition website.*

Canada is second only to Australia in its share of the foreign-born: the 2011 National Household Survey\* showed a foreign-born population of 6.8 million – 20.6 per cent of Canada's total population of 33.5 million. This compares with a foreign-share of 19.8 per cent in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2013b), (Galloway, 2013). Over 90 per cent of the immigrants who arrived since the early 1990s have settled in metropolitan areas, with the three largest metropolitan centres of Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal hosting over 60 per cent of those who arrived between 2006 and 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2013b). In 2006, with 45.7 per cent foreign born, Toronto was considered the most diverse city in the developed world, with Vancouver close behind at 39.6 per cent. (This compared with 37 per cent in Miami and 32 per cent in Sydney.). These figures had risen slightly by 2011 to reach 46 per cent in Toronto and 40 per cent in Vancouver. Toronto held 37.4 per cent of Canada's total foreign born population, and Vancouver 13.5 per cent (Statistics Canada 2013c). The 2011 Census also found that 1.4 million people (4.3 per cent of the total Canadian population) reported an Aboriginal or indigenous identity (Statistics Canada, 2013a).

In 2011 nineteen per cent of residents of Canada considered themselves to be 'members of a visible minority'. (Canada uses the term 'visible minorities' to refer to 'persons other than Aboriginals, who are non-Caucasian in race and non-white in colour'). This compares with less than 5 per cent in 1981. The largest visible minority groups are South Asians, Chinese and Blacks, followed by Filipinos, Latin Americans and Arabs (Statistics Canada, 2013b). Visible minorities are highly concentrated (96 per cent) in large metropolitan areas (Galloway, 2013). Canada has certainly moved away from its white European origins, becoming one of the world's most diverse

societies. Before 1961, 91 per cent of immigrants came from Europe. By contrast, the 2011 census results revealed that most recent immigrants to Canada were born in Asia, while the share from Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America was also increasing (Galloway, 2013). Visible minorities accounted for 78 per cent of immigrants who arrived between 2006 and 2011, compared with 12.4 per cent of immigrants who arrived before 1971 (Statistics Canada, 2013b).

Canada has people of more than 200 different backgrounds. The 2011 Census asked all Canadians to state their ‘ethnic origins’. The results revealed that 42 per cent of the population reported more than one ethnic group, reflecting high rates of ethnic mixing and intermarriage. Over ten million people (32 per cent of the total population) reported Canadian ethnic origin, with six out of ten (5.8 million) of the people who so reported seeing themselves as just Canadian.

**Top 10 ethnic origins, 2011 Census, millions**

Canadian	10.6	German	3.2
English	6.5	Italian	1.5
French	5.1	Chinese	1.5
Scottish	4.7	North American Indian	1.4
Irish	4.5	Ukrainian	1.3

*Source:* Statistics Canada, *Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity in Canada, National Household Survey, 2011*; Statistics Canada, NHS Data table, Ethnic Origin, Canada.

*Notes:* Each of these ethnic origins may be reported alone or in combination with others. The other ethnic origins which surpassed the one million mark were East Indian, Dutch and Polish.

Growing diversity is also shown by the increasing importance of non-Christian beliefs in Canada. Although two-thirds of the population reported that they were affiliated to a Christian religion, 2.4 million people (7 per cent of the population) were Muslims (3.2 per cent of the total population), Hindus (1.5 per cent), Sikh (1.4 per cent, Buddhist (1.1 per cent) and Jewish (1 per cent) {Statistics Canada, 2013 #834}.

Canadian history has been shaped by a struggle for dominance between British and French settlers. After 1945, separatist movements in French-speaking Quebec

made language and culture into crucial areas of struggle. This led to devolution of power to the provinces and to a policy of bilingualism and two official languages. A referendum on independence for Quebec was defeated in 1995, mainly because of fears by First Nation (Aboriginal) people and immigrants that they would be marginalized in a Francophone state. Conflicts on land rights and the social position of First Nation peoples play an important role in public life. The land claims of the Inuit people were settled through the establishment of Nunavut, which gave the Inuit control of one-fifth of Canada's landmass in the Arctic region.

Canada has been a pioneer of multicultural policies. In 1971, multiculturalism was proclaimed an official policy and a Minister of State for Multiculturalism was appointed. There were two main objectives: maintaining ethnic languages and cultures and combating racism. In 1982, equality rights and multiculturalism were enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Employment Equity Act of 1986 required all federally regulated employers to monitor their workforces, to address disadvantages faced by women, visible minorities, native people and the disabled. The Multiculturalism Act of 1988 proclaimed multiculturalism as a central feature of Canadian heritage and identity.

Since the 1980s, public opinion on multiculturalism has become more ambivalent. However, recent evidence points to high levels of support for both immigration and multiculturalism amongst the Canadian population. In 1993 the Federal Government merged multicultural affairs into a new department called Heritage Canada. The new emphasis was on Canadian citizenship and on living together in multiethnic cities. Nonetheless, it is still an official aim 'to preserve and enhance the multicultural backgrounds of Canadians'. Priorities include anti-racism and institutional change to break down barriers to the participation of diverse populations. This is not surprising, in view of the fact that all future population growth is expected to come through immigration, and that by 2031 between 29 per cent and 32 per cent of the population (11.4 million and 14.4 million) is projected to be visible minority members. The size of the foreign-born population in Canada is projected to rise to between 25 per cent and 28 per cent (9.8-12.5 million) by 2031.

\* Note: In 2011 the mandatory long form census was replaced by the voluntary National Household Survey (NHS). Several commentators have questioned or advised caution regarding the precision and comparability of the 2011 NHS data in relation to 2006 census data (Chase and Grant, 2013).

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