

11.2 Minorities in Canada

Canada has a large planned intake for voluntary migrants, and continues its historical openness to refugees. The country has a highly diverse population and was the pioneer of multicultural policies in the early 1970s. Today, immigration and multiculturalism remain important themes of public debate. This brief country summary – like those that follow it – was part of the book text in the third edition of The Age of Migration.

Canada is second only to Australia in its share of foreign-born population: 18.4 per cent of a total population of 29.6 million in 2001. About three-quarters of immigrants who came in the 1990s are concentrated in the three largest metropolitan areas, Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. With 44 per cent foreign born, Toronto is the world's most diverse city, with Vancouver close behind at 38 per cent. (This compares with 40 per cent in Miami and 31 per cent in Sydney.) Before 1961, 91 per cent of immigrants came from Europe. By contrast, from 1991-2001, 58 per cent of new immigrants came from Asia (including the Middle East), 11 per cent from the Caribbean and Latin America, and 8 per cent from Africa, but only 20 per cent from Europe and 3 per cent from the USA.

Canada has people of more than 200 different backgrounds. The 2001 Census asked all Canadians to state their 'ethnic origins'. No less than 11.3 million (38 per cent) reported 'multiple origins', reflecting high rates of ethnic mixing and intermarriage. Many people simply saw themselves as Canadian.

Top 10 ethnic origins, 2001 Census, millions

Canadian	11.7	German	2.7
English	6.0	Italian	1.3
French	4.7	Chinese	1.1
Scottish	4.2	Ukrainian	1.1
Irish	3.8	North American Indian	1.0

Note: Each of these ethnic origins may be reported alone or in combination with others.

Canada uses the term 'visible minorities' to refer to 'persons other than Aboriginals, who are none-Caucasian in race and non-white in colour'. In the 2001

Census, 4 million people (13 per cent of the population) identified themselves as belong to visible minorities (compared with only 5 per cent in 1981). There were about 1 million each of Chinese and South Asians and 662 000 Blacks. Other officially-designated visible minorities, including Filipinos, Arabs, Latin Americans, Southeast Asians, Koreans and Japanese, totalled 1.2 million persons. Official monitoring of visible minorities reflects increasing concern about racism and discrimination against Aboriginal people and other non-whites.

Canadian history has been shaped by a struggle for dominance between the British and French. 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.

Since the 1980s, public opinion on multiculturalism has become more ambivalent. 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 2017 one fifth of the population is projected to be visible minority members.

References

- Breton, R., Isajiw, W.W., Kalbach, W.E. and Reitz, J.G. (1990) *Ethnic Identity and Equality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press).
- Canadian Heritage (2007) *Annual Report on the Operation of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act 2005-6* (Quebec: Multiculturalism National Office).
<http://www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/>.
- OECD (1994) *Trends in International Migration: Annual Report 1993* (Paris: OECD), 215.
- OECD (2006) *International Migration Outlook: Annual Report 2006* (Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), 264.
- Statistics Canada (2003) 'Update on cultural diversity' in Canada, S. (ed.) *Canadian Social Trends*, (Ottawa: Statistics Canada).
- Statistics Canada (2007) *Immigration and Citizenship: Highlight Tables, 2001 Census*. (Ottawa: Statistics Canada)
<http://www.census2006.ca/english/census01/>, accessed 3 August, 2007.
- Stasiulis, D. K. (1988) 'The symbolic mosaic reaffirmed: multiculturalism policy', in K. A. Graham (ed.), *How Ottawa Spends, 1988/89* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press).
- Stasiulis, D. and Jhappan, R. (1995) 'The fractious politics of a settler society: Canada' in Stasiulis, D. and Yuval-Davis, N. (eds.) *Unsettling Settler Societies*, (London: Sage)