

Study: Changes in the socioeconomic situation of Canada's Black population

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The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of taking into account the uneven impact this situation has had on Canadians from different population groups, such as the Black population. To do this, disaggregated data must be collected and published to better identify and understand the unique experiences within and between the different population groups in Canada.

Statistics Canada's [Centre for Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Statistics](#) was created to support the development of evidence-based policies and programs by monitoring changes and reporting on gender, diversity and inclusion issues. Recently published analyses of the repercussions of COVID-19 shed light on the differences in the economic impacts and perceptions of personal safety among ethnocultural groups.

In the context of the United Nations' International Decade for People of African Descent, three studies have been published that provide an overview of the characteristics of Canada's Black population and the issues faced by this population. In February 2019, the infographic "[Canada's Black population: Growing in number and diversity](#)" and the booklet entitled "[Diversity of the Black Population in Canada: An overview](#)" described the demographic growth and diversity of Canada's Black population. A second booklet, "[Canada's Black population: Education, labour and resilience](#)," and an analytical study entitled "[Education and labour market integration of Black youth in Canada](#)," published in February 2020, provided a glimpse of some of the key socioeconomic characteristics of Black communities in Canada.

This new study provides more disaggregated statistics on the socioeconomic outcomes of the Black population by generation status (and immigrant status), sex and country of origin, and is intended to illustrate and contribute to the relevance of disaggregation in understanding these populations and the diversity of their situation.

The study, entitled "[Changes in the socioeconomic situation of Canada's Black population, 2001 to 2016](#)," presents a wide range of disaggregated information and socioeconomic data on the Black population, showing the differences that exist compared with the rest of the working-age population, by sex, generation and place of origin, from 2001 to 2016.

Although the study sheds light on some of the issues faced by the Black population, including low-income status, it also shows the broad diversity of the socioeconomic situations and conditions of this population. The study draws on the wealth of Census of Population data, which are used to disaggregate the information on Black populations at a fine level of detail for a wide range of characteristics.

More than half of Black immigrants were admitted as immigrants sponsored by family members or as refugees

In Canada, the Black working-age population is young, diverse and growing. In 2016, the Black population aged 25 to 59 numbered just over 550,000, and more than 7 in 10 were born abroad.

According to the results of this study, Black immigrants who were aged 25 to 59 at the time of admission and who were admitted to Canada since 1980 differ from other immigrants in terms of the share who were sponsored by family members or who were refugees (more than 60%). Most other immigrants who were admitted since 1980 and who were aged 25 to 59 when they came to Canada were admitted through the economic immigration program.

In the 2016 Census, most immigrants born in the Caribbean had been admitted to Canada through the family reunification program, primarily to reunite with a spouse or common-law partner who was already living in Canada. In addition, a higher proportion of men than women immigrated to Canada through this program (nearly 60% versus 45%).



Among the African-born Black immigrant population, 40% were admitted as refugees. The admission programs of these immigrants have become more diverse in recent years, with an increase in economic immigration from several African countries. Most immigrants born in countries such as Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire or Senegal were admitted through the economic immigration program.

More than a quarter of Black women are lone parents

Lone parenthood is associated with the economic vulnerability of families, particularly for children living in these families. This study showed that lone parenthood among women was more prevalent among Black populations than among the rest of the population.

In the 2016 Census, 27% of Black women aged 25 to 59 were lone parents, compared with less than 10% of other women. This situation was more prevalent among female immigrants than among Canadian-born Black women.

More than one-third of second-generation Black women have a university degree

Education is generally associated with better labour market results, whether in terms of labour market access or wages.

Among women, despite an increase since 2001, the proportion of Black women aged 25 to 59 who had a university degree was lower than the proportion for the rest of the population, except among women who were born in Canada to at least one foreign-born parent (second generation), where the differences were small.

The proportion of men with a university degree was similar in the Black population and in the rest of the population. However, it was lower among both immigrants and the Canadian-born population. This obvious contradiction is mainly because of the greater demographic weight of the immigrant population within the Black population. Given that immigrant men—both Black and non-Black—are more educated than Canadian-born men, this higher demographic weight tends to increase the overall level of education among the Black population.

The employment rate is lower for Black men than for the rest of the male population

Although level of education is an important factor in Canadians' success, labour market participation and annual wages are important indicators of the socioeconomic well-being of working-age adults and their family members.

In the 2016 Census, the employment rate of Black men aged 25 to 59 was 78%, compared with 83% for other men—a difference of 5 percentage points. The employment rate for Black men was lower than that for other men in the four censuses examined, for both immigrants and Canadian-born men.

Conversely, the employment rate for Black women was comparable overall to that of other women. For example, the employment rate among Black immigrant women was 70% in 2016, the same as that of other immigrant women.

Moreover, the unemployment rate among Black populations was higher than that of their counterparts in the rest of the population in the four censuses examined, regardless of sex or generation. The unemployment rate of Black populations varied little from generation to generation.

The median annual wage for Black men is lower than that for other men

Along with employment, wages are an indicator of economic integration into the Canadian labour market and, as such, contribute directly to the socioeconomic well-being of workers and their families.

In 2015, with an annual median value of \$41,000, the wage of Black men aged 25 to 59 was \$15,000 lower than that of other men (\$56,000). While the gap between Black men and the rest of the male population was smaller among immigrants, it was much greater among the Canadian-born population. For example, in 2015, second-generation Black men had the lowest median wage for men, at \$40,000, which was \$22,000 less than that of other second-generation men.

These gaps in annual median wage shrink, but do not disappear, after accounting for certain characteristics, such as age, census family status, level of education, place of residence, language spoken most often at home, and age at admission for immigrants.

The wages of Black women were more comparable with the wages of other women. The results of the study indicate that the annual median wage of Black immigrant women aged 25 to 59 was at the same level as the wage of other immigrant women in the four censuses. In 2015, Black immigrant women had an annual median wage of \$35,900, compared with \$35,500 for other immigrant women. The overrepresentation of Black immigrant women in the health care and social assistance sector partly explains this situation since, among immigrant women, the average wage for nurses is higher than the average wage in other occupations.

One-quarter of Black children are living in a family in poverty

Children are one of the populations at highest risk of suffering the consequences of socioeconomic conditions experienced by adults in the labour market.

In the 2016 Census, according to the market basket measure of low income, 27% of Black children younger than age 15 were living in a family in poverty. This proportion was half as high among other children (14%).

Black children from all families (immigrants, second generation, third generation or higher) were likely to be affected. For example, the poverty rate was 24% among children born in second-generation families and 27% among those from immigrant families.

Black individuals and families are often overrepresented in vulnerable populations, a risk factor noted in the current context of COVID-19. Another factor associated with the risk of transmission of the virus is Black immigrant women working in front-line positions (e.g., as nurses and orderlies) in the health care sector.

Note to readers

This release summarizes the findings of an article published today on the socioeconomic conditions of the Black population in Canada and its evolution between 2001 and 2016. The study is based on data from the 2001, 2006 and 2016 censuses, and from the 2011 National Household Survey.

Immigrants are individuals who have been admitted to Canada as permanent residents. Second-generation individuals are those who were born in Canada to at least one foreign-born parent. Third-generation individuals are those whose parents were both born in Canada.

The market basket measure of low income refers to a measure of low income based on the cost of a specific basket of goods and services that represent a basic standard of living in terms of shelter, food, clothing, transportation and other expenses for a reference family of two adults and two children.

This article follows up on a portrait published in February 2019 and a booklet and article published in February 2020 that highlighted the diversity of the Black population. These publications were part of a series of documents published for the United Nations' International Decade for People of African Descent.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers [3901](#) and [5178](#).

The study, "[Changes in the socioeconomic situation of Canada's Black population, 2001 to 2016](#)," is now available as part of the *Ethnicity, Language and Immigration Thematic Series* ([89-657-X](#)).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).