

Economic and Social Reports

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Release date: August 23, 2023



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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/36280001202300800001-eng>

Abstract

This article uses data from the 2001 and 2021 censuses of population to examine population growth and changing demographics of racialized people. The study presents new data for 11 subgroups of the racialized population, their generational composition and changes in their share of people with a mixed racialized–White identity. Between 2001 and 2021, the overall number of racialized people in Canada increased 130%. While the arrival of new immigrants was the primary driver of this population’s growth, the second generation had the fastest growth rate. In 2021, most racialized second-generation Canadians lived in households that included first-generation members, ranging from 60% for the Japanese population to 94% for the West Asian population. The share of Canadians with a racialized and White background increased for most groups between 2001 and 2021, and the share was particularly high and increased the most among those in the third generation or more.

Keywords: racialized population, generational status, intergenerational co-residence

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Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Rubab Arim and Jarod Dobson for their advice and comments on an earlier version of this paper.

Introduction

In the past few decades, the number of racialized people¹ in Canada has increased at a much faster rate than the population as a whole (Samuel & Basavarajappa, 2006). Before 1981, racialized people accounted for less than 5% of the total population, largely because of place-of-origin restrictions in Canadian immigration policy. In the 1960s and 1970s, Canadian immigration policy was reformed to base admissions largely on human capital and labour-market criteria, regardless of national origin or ethnocultural group (Kelley & Trebilcock, 1998). After several decades of immigration under the reformed policy, there has been a large shift in the source countries of immigration inflows and, consequently, in the demographic composition of Canadian society. In addition, the Canadian-born children of non-European immigrants who arrived since the 1960s have come of age and their numbers have increased rapidly in recent decades. In 2021, one in four people in Canada (26.5%) were from the racialized population, twice the corresponding share (13.4%) in 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2003 and 2022a). Furthermore, the composition of the racialized population has changed as smaller groups increased their population share.

Racialized immigrants encounter barriers to adaptation, such as language proficiency, transferability of foreign credentials and acculturative stress. While their Canadian-born children do not directly encounter these barriers, their socioeconomic integration is strongly associated with the socioeconomic outcomes of their parents and discrimination in Canadian society (Reitz & Somerville, 2004). The second generation also bases their expectations on Canadian norms. This implies that their standards for perceived success in Canada are higher than those of their foreign-born parents. The socioeconomic outcomes of the second or third generations or more will indicate how racialized people are being integrated (Reitz & Somerville, 2004; Wu, Schimmele, & Hou, 2012). Most racialized people experience disadvantages in the labour market. Such disadvantages become smaller or disappear in the second generation or third generation or more for some groups, but persist for others (Banting & Thompson, 2021; Block, Galabuzi, & Tranjan, 2019; Chen & Hou, 2019).

While different generations of racialized people have different starting points and pathways in their socioeconomic integration, their economic well-being is closely connected across generations within families. The labour market outcomes of the first generation will determine the economic resources available for the development of their Canadian-born children's human capital. In later life, many immigrants live with their adult children out of financial necessity or because of cultural preferences (Hou & Ngo, 2021). Multigenerational households can benefit the members of each generation by pooling financial resources and reducing household expenses, passing on cultural traditions, and providing child and elder care (Johnson et al., 2019; Sadarangani & Jun, 2015). These living arrangements are also likely a factor in the large variation in poverty rates observed between groups (Banting & Thompson, 2021). Despite the importance of multigenerational households, previous studies have tended to examine each generation separately and have thus neglected the close connection across generations at the household level.

1. The concept of "racialized people" is based on the visible minority variable in the Canadian census (Statistics Canada, 2023). The *Employment Equity Act* defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour." The racialized population consists mainly of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese. Statistics Canada is currently reviewing the visible minority concept. For details see [Visible minority concept consultative engagement \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/92-629-x/2023001/article/00001-eng.htm).

In addition to differentiation by generational status, diversity among racialized people is amplified by the growing number of people with a mixed racialized–White identity—the children from unions between members of racialized and White population groups. Although these people are generally classified as racialized in Canada and the United States, they tend to grow up in families and neighbourhoods with a socioeconomic status closer to that of White people than that of racialized people (Alba, Beck, & Sahin, 2018). They are less likely than racialized people to feel uncomfortable or out of place and to perceive being discriminated against because of their race or ethnicity, and they often change their group identity over time (Alba & Reitz, 2021; Liebler & Hou, 2020). Furthermore, they are much more likely to find a White partner, and the children of these mixed unions further blur group boundaries (Hou et al., 2015). The mixing of racialized and White groups is a salient facet of social diversity in Canada and poses a challenge to the binary concepts of identity, yet little knowledge exists on its prevalence and trends and the differences across groups.

This study uses the 2001 and 2021 censuses of population to examine population growth and changing demographics among racialized people. The study disaggregates racialized people by population group, generational status and age group. The study also presents new data on the generational composition of the households of these population groups and the changes in the share of people with a racialized and White background. The results of this study provide insights on how the composition and characteristics of racialized people have been evolving. This is the first step towards gaining knowledge about the affecting factors and implications of economic inequality experienced by different racialized groups in different generations.

Data and measures

This study uses microdata from the Canadian 2001 Census of Population long-form questionnaire (20% of the population) and the 2021 Census long-form questionnaire (25% of the population). The census provides comprehensive sociodemographic information for a very large, nationally representative sample. Most relevant to the purpose of this study are the data on racialized people and immigrant generations.

Racialized groups are based on the population group question in the census and the derived visible minority variable (Statistics Canada, 2022b). The visible minority variable consists of 14 groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, Japanese, visible minority – n.i.e. (not included elsewhere) (write-in responses), multiple visible minorities, other (not a visible minority) and Aboriginal people.² In the visible minority variable, the South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Southeast Asian, Korean and Japanese categories consist of its single response and its combination with the White category or a write-in response (Statistics Canada, 2022b). The population group variable allows the identification of racialized people who also reported themselves as White. This study uses primarily the visible minority group variable, although the population group variable is used to identify individuals with a mixed racialized–White background.

2. This category is identified through a question on Indigenous people preceding the population group question. Respondents who identified as Indigenous (First Nations people, Métis or Inuit) were not required to answer the population group question (Statistics Canada, 2022b).

Generational status is derived from individuals' country of birth and their parents' country of birth. The variable consists of three categories: the first generation (people who were born outside Canada),³ the second generation (people who were born in Canada and had at least one parent born outside Canada), and the third generation or more (people who were born in Canada with two Canadian-born parents). While the information on parents' country of birth was collected for individuals of all ages in the 2021 Census, it was only collected for individuals aged 15 years or older in the 2001 Census. As a result, second and third or more generational status is not directly available for children younger than 15 years in the 2001 Census. To facilitate the trend analysis, this article derived second and third or more generational status for children younger than 15 in the 2001 Census by linking them with their parents if they lived with their parents in a census family or with the head of the economic family or household if they could not be linked to a parent in the census family.⁴

Because this article focuses on racialized groups, all tabulations excluded Indigenous people (i.e., Aboriginal people in the visible minority variable). Some tabulations included White people for comparison purposes. The analysis also excluded residents of collective dwellings and temporary foreign residents.

Results

Growth of the racialized population

Overall growth

Between 2001 and 2021, the racialized population in Canada increased from 3.85 million to 8.87 million people (Table 1, excluding non-permanent residents). This was a 130% increase, compared with a 1% increase for the White population. The growth rate ranged widely across subgroups of the racialized population. The largest increases were observed for the Arab (254%), West Asian (214%) and Filipino (207%) groups. The increases of the Japanese, Chinese, Southeast Asian, Korean and Black groups were lower than the increase estimated for the racialized population as a whole. Nevertheless, the increases of these latter subgroups were still high and ranged between 42% (Japanese) and 125% (Black).

The rates of population growth differed across generations. Overall, the second generation had a faster growth rate (156%) than the first generation (121%) and the third generation or more (128%). The generational pattern of growth also differed across subgroups. For the Arab, West Asian and Black groups, the second generation had the fastest rate of growth. For the South Asian, Chinese, Filipino, Latin American, Southeast Asian and Korean groups, the fastest rate of growth was in the third generation or more. The Japanese group was the only group in which the first generation had a higher growth rate than the second generation and the third generation or more.

3. The first-generation population is different from the landed immigrant population. The former also includes Canadian citizens who were born in a foreign country but with Canadian-born parents.

4. The head of the economic family is the reference person of the economic family, and the head of a household is the primary household maintainer. In the derived generational status variable for children younger than 15 years in the 2001 Census, 5.4% of children were foreign-born (first generation) and their generational status was based on their country of birth. The generational status of the remaining children was based on their parents' immigration status (77.8%), the economic reference person's immigration status (16.2%) and the household maintainer's immigration status (0.6%).

Table 1

Total population growth of racialized groups and growth by generational status, 2001 and 2021

| | Estimated population | | Population growth, 2001 to 2021 | | | | Contribution of population growth by generation | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|------------|---------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|---|------------|------------|
| | 2001 | 2021 | Total | First | Second | Third | First | Second | Third |
| | | | | generation | generation | generation | generation | generation | generation |
| | number | | | percent | | | percent | | |
| Racialized group | 3,854,600 | 8,870,600 | 130.1 | 120.5 | 156.0 | 127.8 | 64.3 | 31.5 | 4.1 |
| South Asian | 897,000 | 2,278,200 | 154.0 | 143.3 | 166.9 | 574.0 | 65.7 | 30.9 | 3.4 |
| Chinese | 1,004,900 | 1,606,600 | 59.9 | 48.5 | 90.8 | 122.1 | 60.8 | 33.8 | 5.5 |
| Black | 640,800 | 1,438,900 | 124.5 | 133.9 | 139.4 | 52.0 | 57.8 | 36.6 | 5.7 |
| Filipino | 301,600 | 926,100 | 207.1 | 209.2 | 188.7 | 480.6 | 74.7 | 22.7 | 2.6 |
| Latin American | 203,300 | 500,500 | 146.2 | 137.0 | 174.1 | 314.9 | 73.6 | 24.6 | 1.8 |
| Arab | 184,900 | 654,300 | 254.0 | 240.6 | 291.4 | 278.3 | 69.6 | 29.3 | 1.1 |
| Southeast Asian | 195,000 | 366,300 | 87.9 | 67.2 | 126.7 | 488.8 | 54.8 | 39.3 | 5.9 |
| West Asian | 105,100 | 330,200 | 214.1 | 185.1 | 415.7 | 212.6 | 75.4 | 24.4 | 0.3 |
| Korean | 88,200 | 189,200 | 114.6 | 105.3 | 151.8 | 169.3 | 74.1 | 23.7 | 2.2 |
| Japanese | 64,500 | 91,800 | 42.4 | 89.5 | 16.1 | 33.3 | 57.5 | 13.8 | 28.7 |
| Other groups ¹ | 169,400 | 488,400 | 188.4 | 117.1 | 285.4 | 572.6 | 39.7 | 49.1 | 11.2 |
| White population | 24,527,600 | 24,761,600 | 1.0 | -1.5 | -10.1 | 3.9 | -18.1 | -177.3 | 295.4 |

1. Other groups consist of "visible minority – n.i.e. and multiple visible minorities." N.i.e. = not included elsewhere.

Note: The population numbers are rounded to the nearest 100.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2001 and 2021.

Although racialized groups in the second generation and the third generation or more had comparatively higher growth rates, their population size in 2001 was small that their contribution to the total growth of the racialized population was far less than the contribution of the first generation (Table 1). For the racialized population as a whole, about two-thirds (64%) of the overall growth was attributable to increases in the first generation, one-third (32%) to the second generation, and a small amount (4%) to the third generation or more. The largest contribution of the first-generation growth was from the West Asian, Filipino, Korean and Latin American groups (accounting for between 74% and 75% of total growth), and the smallest (under 60%) was from the Southeast Asian, Japanese and Black groups. In contrast, for the White population, growth came entirely from the third generation or more as its first and second generations declined.

These differential growth rates altered the generational composition of the racialized population and its subgroups. For the entire racialized population, the share of those in the first generation decreased from 70% in 2001 to 67% in 2021, while the share of those in the second generation increased from 26% to 29%, and the share of those in the third generation or more remained small at 4% (Table 2). Similar changes were observed for most subgroups except for the Black, Filipino and Japanese groups. Among the Black group, the share of the third generation or more decreased considerably. Among the Filipino and Japanese groups, the share of the first generation increased, and the share of the second generation decreased.

Table 2
Generational composition of racialized groups, 2001 and 2021

| | 2001 | | | | 2021 | | | |
|---------------------------|-------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| | Total | First generation | Second generation | Third generation or more | Total | First generation | Second generation | Third generation or more |
| | | | | percent | | | | |
| Racialized group | 100 | 69.5 | 26.3 | 4.2 | 100 | 66.6 | 29.3 | 4.2 |
| South Asian | 100 | 70.6 | 28.5 | 0.9 | 100 | 67.6 | 30.0 | 2.4 |
| Chinese | 100 | 75.1 | 22.3 | 2.7 | 100 | 69.7 | 26.6 | 3.7 |
| Black | 100 | 53.7 | 32.7 | 13.6 | 100 | 56.0 | 34.8 | 9.2 |
| Filipino | 100 | 73.9 | 25.0 | 1.1 | 100 | 74.5 | 23.5 | 2.1 |
| Latin American | 100 | 78.5 | 20.6 | 0.8 | 100 | 75.6 | 23.0 | 1.4 |
| Arab | 100 | 73.5 | 25.6 | 1.0 | 100 | 70.7 | 28.3 | 1.1 |
| Southeast Asian | 100 | 71.7 | 27.3 | 1.1 | 100 | 63.8 | 32.9 | 3.3 |
| West Asian | 100 | 87.2 | 12.5 | 0.3 | 100 | 79.1 | 20.6 | 0.3 |
| Korean | 100 | 80.6 | 17.9 | 1.5 | 100 | 77.1 | 21.0 | 1.9 |
| Japanese | 100 | 27.2 | 36.3 | 36.5 | 100 | 36.2 | 29.6 | 34.2 |
| Other groups ¹ | 100 | 63.9 | 32.4 | 3.7 | 100 | 48.1 | 43.3 | 8.6 |
| White population | 100 | 11.4 | 16.8 | 71.8 | 100 | 11.2 | 15.0 | 73.9 |

1. Other groups consist of "visible minority – n.i.e. and multiple visible minorities." N.i.e. = not included elsewhere.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2001 and 2021.

The differences in growth across different groups resulted in changes in their relative share of the racialized population (Table 3). While the Chinese group was the largest group in 2001, accounting for 26% of the racialized population, its share decreased to 18% in 2021. The South Asian group grew to be the largest group in 2021, accounting for 26% of racialized people, up from 23% in 2001. The Black group remained the third-largest racialized group in 2021 even though its share of racialized people decreased slightly from 17% to 16%. The relative shares of the Filipino, Arab, West Asian and Latin American groups also increased, but the shares of the Southeast Asian and Japanese groups decreased.

The change in group composition also differed by generational status (Table 3). The share of the South Asian group increased in all three generations, particularly in the third generation or more. In comparison, the share of the Chinese group decreased in all three generations, particularly in the first generation. The share of the Black group changed little in the first and second generations but decreased considerably in the third generation or more. In 2001, the Black group accounted for 54% of racialized people in the third generation or more, but this share dropped to 36% in 2021. In all three generations, the share of the racialized population increased in Filipino, Latin American and Arab groups.

Table 3

Group composition of the racialized population by generational status, 2001 and 2021

| | 2001 | | | | 2021 | | | |
|---------------------------|-------|------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|-------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| | Total | First generation | Second generation | Third generation or more percent | Total | First generation | Second generation | Third generation or more |
| Racialized population | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| South Asian | 23.3 | 23.6 | 25.2 | 5.0 | 25.7 | 26.1 | 26.3 | 14.8 |
| Chinese | 26.1 | 28.2 | 22.1 | 16.5 | 18.1 | 19.0 | 16.5 | 16.1 |
| Black | 16.6 | 12.9 | 20.6 | 53.7 | 16.2 | 13.6 | 19.3 | 35.8 |
| Filipino | 7.8 | 8.3 | 7.4 | 2.0 | 10.4 | 11.7 | 8.4 | 5.2 |
| Latin American | 5.3 | 6.0 | 4.1 | 1.1 | 5.6 | 6.4 | 4.4 | 1.9 |
| Arab | 4.8 | 5.1 | 4.7 | 1.1 | 7.4 | 7.8 | 7.1 | 1.9 |
| Southeast Asian | 5.1 | 5.2 | 5.2 | 1.3 | 4.1 | 4.0 | 4.6 | 3.3 |
| West Asian | 2.7 | 3.4 | 1.3 | 0.2 | 3.7 | 4.4 | 2.6 | 0.2 |
| Korean | 2.3 | 2.7 | 1.6 | 0.8 | 2.1 | 2.5 | 1.5 | 1.0 |
| Japanese | 1.7 | 0.7 | 2.3 | 14.5 | 1.0 | 0.6 | 1.0 | 8.5 |
| Other groups ¹ | 4.4 | 4.0 | 5.4 | 3.8 | 5.5 | 4.0 | 8.2 | 11.3 |

1. Other groups consist of "visible minority – n.i.e. and multiple visible minorities." N.i.e. = not included elsewhere.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2001 and 2021.

Population growth by age group

The overall population growth pattern observed above does not reveal different dynamics by age groups. The growth rates for children (aged 0 to 14 years), youth (aged 15 to 24 years), working-age adults (aged 25 to 64 years) and seniors (aged 65 years and older) have different implications. For example, a large increase in the number of children and youth from racialized groups would increase demand for educational institutions and child care services in areas where these groups are concentrated. Fast growth in the number of working-age individuals would lead to the rapid increase of racialized people in the labour force. A large increase in the number of seniors from racialized groups, particularly among the first generation, would increase the need for culturally and linguistically sensitive senior care services.

For all generations of racialized groups combined, seniors had the fastest growth, followed by working-age individuals, while children and youth had similarly lower growth rates (Table 4). This pattern applied to racialized people as a whole and to most subgroups. The growth rate of the senior population was particularly high for the Latin American and West Asian groups, as there were about six times more seniors in these groups in 2021 than in 2001. In the Arab, South Asian, Filipino, Korean and Southeast Asian groups, the size of the senior population more than quadrupled.

The high rate of overall growth in the senior population was driven by the first generation (Table 4). Among the first generation, the senior population grew 286%, compared with 67% for children, 56% for youth and 117% for working-age adults. The growth in the population size of first-generation seniors was particularly high for the Latin American and West Asian groups (a six-fold increase each).

Different from the pattern observed for the first generation, the working-age population grew the most among the second generation, followed by the youth population. The increase in the working-age population was particularly large for the Southeast Asian, West Asian and Latin American groups. In 2021, the working-age second-generation population was mostly Canadian-born children of immigrants who arrived in the late 1970s and 1980s.

The population growth rate by age groups among the third generation or more varied greatly among racialized groups. The population size was small for most groups, so even a small increase in the absolute population size led to a large growth rate.

Table 4
Population growth between 2001 and 2021 by age group and generational status

| | Aged younger than 15 years | Aged 15 to 24 years | Aged 25 to 64 years | Aged 65 years and older |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| | percent | | | |
| All generations | | | | |
| Racialized population | 99 | 96 | 136 | 268 |
| South Asian | 110 | 113 | 164 | 352 |
| Chinese | 31 | 17 | 62 | 166 |
| Black | 102 | 106 | 131 | 254 |
| Filipino | 153 | 223 | 211 | 334 |
| Latin American | 59 | 73 | 178 | 570 |
| Arab | 241 | 240 | 251 | 424 |
| Southeast Asian | 30 | 56 | 105 | 316 |
| West Asian | 159 | 102 | 240 | 624 |
| Korean | 66 | 40 | 132 | 387 |
| Japanese | 47 | 34 | 38 | 59 |
| Other groups ¹ | 198 | 173 | 167 | 394 |
| White population | -19 | -22 | -3 | 66 |
| First generation | | | | |
| Racialized population | 67 | 56 | 117 | 286 |
| South Asian | 74 | 60 | 140 | 353 |
| Chinese | -27 | -21 | 46 | 169 |
| Black | 176 | 101 | 117 | 310 |
| Filipino | 141 | 274 | 192 | 338 |
| Latin American | 10 | 24 | 153 | 578 |
| Arab | 246 | 192 | 234 | 441 |
| Southeast Asian | 35 | -32 | 68 | 317 |
| West Asian | 25 | 29 | 230 | 628 |
| Korean | -26 | 25 | 122 | 397 |
| Japanese | 210 | 119 | 63 | 214 |
| Other groups ¹ | 73 | 48 | 102 | 390 |
| White population | 0 | -7 | -18 | 37 |
| Second generation | | | | |
| Racialized population | 104 | 145 | 440 | -1 |
| South Asian | 106 | 164 | 590 | 139 |
| Chinese | 48 | 66 | 243 | 49 |
| Black | 102 | 103 | 353 | -31 |
| Filipino | 142 | 144 | 718 | -60 |
| Latin American | 73 | 236 | 1206 | ... |
| Arab | 238 | 336 | 622 | 41 |
| Southeast Asian | 14 | 230 | 2325 | ... |
| West Asian | 292 | 1131 | 1321 | ... |
| Korean | 147 | 68 | 348 | ... |
| Japanese | 91 | 29 | 9 | -31 |
| Other groups ¹ | 176 | 258 | 1043 | 193 |
| White population | -9 | -33 | -5 | -10 |
| Third generation or more | | | | |
| Racialized population | 153 | 194 | 65 | 179 |
| South Asian | 611 | 606 | 460 | 541 |
| Chinese | 112 | 177 | 103 | 263 |
| Black | 50 | 136 | 24 | 67 |
| Filipino | 503 | 828 | 234 | 70 |
| Latin American | 342 | 492 | 228 | ... |
| Arab | 300 | 862 | 145 | ... |
| Southeast Asian | 458 | 507 | 616 | ... |
| West Asian | 210 | ... | ... | ... |
| Korean | 316 | 176 | -2 | ... |
| Japanese | 0 | 17 | 29 | 919 |
| Other groups ¹ | 599 | 714 | 357 | ... |
| White population | -21 | -21 | 0 | 118 |

... not applicable

1. Other groups consist of "visible minority – n.i.e. and multiple visible minorities." N.i.e. = not included elsewhere.

Note: Where data are not applicable, the estimated population was smaller than 100 in one of the two years.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2001 and 2021.

High prevalence of intergenerational co-residence among racialized people

Different generations are often directly connected by living in the same family. As such, the economic well-being of one generation, particularly among immigrants, will directly affect the economic well-being of family members in other generations. This section examines the patterns in the generational composition of families among population groups. For each population group, Table 5 details five types of family compositions: first generation only, second generation only, third generation or more only, first generation and more, and second generation and more.⁵ The results show some salient patterns.

For all racialized groups, the majority of people lived in a family that contained at least one first-generation person. The share of racialized people living in a family that was first generation only or a combination of the first generation and more ranged from 57% (Japanese group) to 99% (West Asian group) in 2021. These shares were slightly smaller than or similar to the corresponding shares in 2001 (except for the Black and Japanese groups). In comparison, about 20% of White people lived in a family with at least one member who was a first-generation Canadian in 2021. This was similar to the share in 2001 (21%).

Among the first generation, the share of those living in a family with at least one person from the second generation and more ranged from 34% for the Korean group to 61% for the Japanese group in 2021. This share decreased between 2001 and 2021 for the Black, Filipino and Latin American groups but increased for other racialized groups (Table 5). Families with members from the first generation and more include immigrant parents and their Canadian-born children and immigrant youth with their Canadian-born siblings.

Among the second generation, the majority of racialized people lived in a family with at least one first-generation member, which ranged from 60% for the Japanese group to 94% for the West Asian group in 2021. However, the corresponding shares were even higher in 2001 (except for the Japanese group), as the shares of the second generation living in families that were second-generation-only or third-generation-or-more only increased between 2001 and 2021 (Table 5). This suggests that increased numbers of second-generation racialized people entered adulthood and started their own families from 2001 to 2021.

Among racialized groups with a relatively large population in the third generation or more, third-generation-or-more South Asian, Chinese and Filipino people were more likely to live in families with second-generation members (57% to 65%) than in families with only third-generation-or-more members. This pattern was reversed for third-generation-or-more Black and Japanese groups, both of which had an older age structure than other third-generation-or-more racialized groups.⁶

5. The family unit is the economic family—a group of people who live in the same dwelling and are related to each other by blood, marriage, common law, adoption or fostering.

6. In 2021, 35% of the third-generation-or-more Black group and 66% of the third-generation-or-more Japanese group were aged 25 years or older, compared with 11% to 30% of the Filipino, South Asian and Chinese groups.

Table 5
Family generational composition of population groups by generational status, 2001 and 2021

| | 2001 | | | | 2021 | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| | Total | First generation | Second generation | Third generation or more | Total | First generation | Second generation | Third generation or more |
| | percent | | | | | | | |
| South Asian | | | | | | | | |
| First generation only | 32.1 | 45.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 30.4 | 45.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Second generation only | 0.8 | 0.0 | 2.7 | 0.0 | 1.5 | 0.0 | 4.9 | 0.0 |
| Third generation or more only | 0.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 39.3 | 0.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 21.9 |
| First generation and more | 65.8 | 54.6 | 95.2 | 17.7 | 64.6 | 55.1 | 89.5 | 20.9 |
| Second generation and more | 1.0 | 0.0 | 2.1 | 43.0 | 3.1 | 0.0 | 5.6 | 57.2 |
| Chinese | | | | | | | | |
| First generation only | 47.3 | 63.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 40.1 | 57.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Second generation only | 1.5 | 0.0 | 6.7 | 0.0 | 2.9 | 0.0 | 10.7 | 0.0 |
| Third generation or more only | 1.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 36.6 | 1.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 26.0 |
| First generation and more | 47.5 | 37.1 | 87.1 | 9.7 | 51.3 | 42.5 | 79.7 | 13.2 |
| Second generation and more | 2.8 | 0.0 | 6.3 | 53.7 | 4.8 | 0.0 | 9.5 | 60.8 |
| Black | | | | | | | | |
| First generation only | 23.9 | 44.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 26.8 | 47.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Second generation only | 1.8 | 0.0 | 5.6 | 0.0 | 3.7 | 0.0 | 10.7 | 0.0 |
| Third generation or more only | 9.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 69.5 | 4.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 47.9 |
| First generation and more | 59.1 | 55.5 | 86.8 | 6.4 | 57.6 | 52.2 | 77.7 | 15.1 |
| Second generation and more | 5.8 | 0.0 | 7.6 | 24.1 | 7.5 | 0.0 | 11.6 | 37.0 |
| Filipino | | | | | | | | |
| First generation only | 35.9 | 48.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 39.5 | 53.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Second generation only | 0.7 | 0.0 | 2.7 | 0.0 | 1.2 | 0.0 | 5.2 | 0.0 |
| Third generation or more only | 0.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 35.6 | 0.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 14.1 |
| First generation and more | 61.9 | 51.5 | 94.5 | 20.7 | 55.9 | 47.0 | 87.1 | 20.9 |
| Second generation and more | 1.2 | 0.0 | 2.8 | 43.7 | 3.2 | 0.0 | 7.7 | 65.0 |
| Latin American | | | | | | | | |
| First generation only | 36.5 | 46.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 36.3 | 48.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Second generation only | 0.5 | 0.0 | 2.4 | 0.0 | 1.9 | 0.0 | 8.1 | 0.0 |
| Third generation or more only | 0.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 54.5 | 0.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 29.3 |
| First generation and more | 61.8 | 53.5 | 95.3 | 19.4 | 58.6 | 52.0 | 81.9 | 29.9 |
| Second generation and more | 0.7 | 0.0 | 2.3 | 26.1 | 2.9 | 0.0 | 10.0 | 40.8 |
| Arab | | | | | | | | |
| First generation only | 39.3 | 53.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 35.1 | 49.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Second generation only | 0.8 | 0.0 | 3.1 | 0.0 | 1.4 | 0.0 | 4.9 | 0.0 |
| Third generation or more only | 0.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 42.0 | 0.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 24.8 |
| First generation and more | 58.1 | 46.6 | 93.1 | 12.8 | 61.4 | 50.4 | 90.7 | 19.3 |
| Second generation and more | 1.4 | 0.0 | 3.7 | 45.2 | 1.8 | 0.0 | 4.4 | 55.9 |
| Southeast Asian | | | | | | | | |
| First generation only | 31.1 | 43.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 27.3 | 42.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Second generation only | 0.4 | 0.0 | 1.4 | 0.0 | 3.0 | 0.0 | 9.1 | 0.0 |
| Third generation or more only | 0.6 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 56.7 | 0.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 23.3 |
| First generation and more | 67.3 | 56.6 | 97.1 | 18.4 | 64.1 | 57.2 | 81.7 | 22.0 |
| Second generation and more | 0.7 | 0.0 | 1.5 | 24.9 | 4.9 | 0.0 | 9.3 | 54.7 |
| West Asian | | | | | | | | |
| First generation only | 61.5 | 70.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 47.7 | 60.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Second generation only | 0.2 | 0.0 | 1.9 | 0.0 | 0.7 | 0.0 | 3.3 | 0.0 |
| Third generation or more only | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 46.3 | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 36.3 |
| First generation and more | 37.9 | 29.5 | 97.0 | 19.1 | 51.0 | 39.8 | 94.2 | 29.7 |
| Second generation and more | 0.2 | 0.0 | 1.1 | 34.6 | 0.6 | 0.0 | 2.5 | 34.0 |
| Korean | | | | | | | | |
| First generation only | 57.9 | 71.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 51.3 | 66.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Second generation only | 1.1 | 0.0 | 6.4 | 0.0 | 1.7 | 0.0 | 7.9 | 0.0 |
| Third generation or more only | 0.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 60.3 | 0.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 17.1 |
| First generation and more | 38.9 | 28.2 | 89.7 | 12.1 | 43.7 | 33.5 | 84.0 | 16.1 |
| Second generation and more | 1.1 | 0.0 | 3.9 | 27.7 | 3.0 | 0.0 | 8.1 | 66.8 |
| Japanese | | | | | | | | |
| First generation only | 12.0 | 44.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 14.2 | 39.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Second generation only | 11.9 | 0.0 | 32.8 | 0.0 | 5.7 | 0.0 | 19.2 | 0.0 |
| Third generation or more only | 21.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 58.4 | 21.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 62.1 |
| First generation and more | 35.3 | 55.9 | 45.8 | 9.5 | 43.1 | 60.8 | 60.0 | 9.7 |
| Second generation and more | 19.5 | 0.0 | 21.4 | 32.1 | 15.8 | 0.0 | 20.8 | 28.2 |
| White | | | | | | | | |
| First generation only | 5.6 | 49.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 5.5 | 49.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Second generation only | 4.3 | 0.0 | 25.6 | 0.0 | 3.5 | 0.0 | 23.3 | 0.0 |
| Third generation or more only | 58.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 81.3 | 60.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 81.4 |
| First generation and more | 14.9 | 50.9 | 37.0 | 4.0 | 14.8 | 50.7 | 35.8 | 5.1 |
| Second generation and more | 16.9 | 0.0 | 37.4 | 14.8 | 16.1 | 0.0 | 40.9 | 13.5 |

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2001 and 2021.

Rising share of people with a mixed racialized–White identity

Across racialized groups, the Japanese and Black groups tended to have a higher share of people with a mixed racialized–White background than other groups (Table 6).⁷ About 40% of the Japanese group and 11% of the Black group reported having a White and a racialized identity in 2021, compared with 3% of the South Asian group and 6% of the Chinese group. These group differences reflect, to a large extent, differences in generational composition: the Japanese and Black groups had higher shares of people in the second generation and more than other groups, and the share of people with a mixed racialized–White identity increased with the generations for all groups.

Very few first-generation Canadians (2% or less) had a mixed racialized–White identity. One exception was the first-generation Japanese group, among whom 11% reported having a racialized and White identity in 2021.

The share of people with a racialized and White family background were higher for the second generation than for the first, but there was a large variation across groups (Table 6). In 2021, the second generation of the South Asian and Chinese groups had the lowest shares of people with a racialized and White identity, at 6% and 10%, respectively. The shares were 15% for the Black and Southeast Asian groups, 18% for the Filipino and Korean groups, and 51% for the Japanese group. All third-generation-or-more groups had a high share of members with a racialized and White identity, ranging from 44% among the South Asian group to 68% among the Korean group.

Between 2001 and 2021, the share of people with a racialized and White family background increased for most groups (no change for the Black group), and this increase occurred mostly in the second generation and the third generation or more. The increase was particularly large in the third generation or more. For instance, the Black group increased from 39% in 2001 to 48% in 2021 and the Chinese group increased from 54% to 63%. The third-generation-or-more South Asian group had the lowest share and the smallest increase, rising from 43% to 44%.

7. The Latin American, Arab and West Asian groups are excluded in this section because individuals who identified as White and Latin American, White and Arab, and White and West Asian are coded as White in the visible minority group variable in the census (Statistics Canada, 2022b).

Table 6

Mixed racialized–White identity of population groups by generational status, 2001 and 2021

| | 2001 | | | | 2021 | | | |
|---------------------------|---------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| | Total | First generation | Second generation | Third generation or more | Total | First generation | Second generation | Third generation or more |
| | percent | | | | | | | |
| South Asian | | | | | | | | |
| South Asian only | 97.7 | 99.5 | 94.6 | 57.4 | 96.8 | 99.3 | 94.4 | 56.1 |
| South Asian and White | 2.3 | 0.5 | 5.4 | 42.6 | 3.2 | 0.7 | 5.6 | 43.9 |
| Chinese | | | | | | | | |
| Chinese only | 96.1 | 99.4 | 91.0 | 46.3 | 94.4 | 99.3 | 89.7 | 37.5 |
| Chinese and White | 3.9 | 0.6 | 9.0 | 53.7 | 5.6 | 0.7 | 10.3 | 62.5 |
| Black | | | | | | | | |
| Black only | 89.3 | 98.0 | 86.8 | 61.5 | 89.3 | 98.2 | 85.1 | 51.7 |
| Black and White | 10.7 | 2.1 | 13.2 | 38.5 | 10.7 | 1.8 | 14.9 | 48.3 |
| Filipino | | | | | | | | |
| Filipino only | 95.2 | 99.4 | 84.6 | 48.6 | 93.9 | 99.4 | 81.8 | 36.6 |
| Filipino and White | 4.8 | 0.6 | 15.4 | 51.4 | 6.1 | 0.7 | 18.2 | 63.4 |
| Southeast Asian | | | | | | | | |
| Southeast Asian only | 96.4 | 98.9 | 91.7 | 53.0 | 91.7 | 98.2 | 84.7 | 36.9 |
| Southeast Asian and White | 3.6 | 1.1 | 8.3 | 47.0 | 8.3 | 1.8 | 15.3 | 63.1 |
| Korean | | | | | | | | |
| Korean only | 97.4 | 99.5 | 90.1 | 69.5 | 93.8 | 98.6 | 81.8 | 32.2 |
| Korean and White | 2.6 | 0.5 | 10.0 | 30.5 | 6.2 | 1.4 | 18.2 | 67.8 |
| Japanese | | | | | | | | |
| Japanese only | 73.1 | 95.3 | 76.3 | 53.4 | 60.1 | 89.3 | 49.3 | 38.5 |
| Japanese and White | 26.9 | 4.8 | 23.7 | 46.6 | 39.9 | 10.7 | 50.7 | 61.5 |

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2001 and 2021.

Summary

Between 2001 and 2021, the number of racialized people in Canada increased 130%, in contrast with a small increase of White people. This has added to the diversity of the Canadian population. Although the populations of all racialized groups grew, there were considerable differences in the growth rates. The increase was fastest for the Arab, West Asian and Filipino groups. While the growth rate was comparatively slower for the Japanese, Chinese, Southeast Asian, Korean and Black groups, it was nonetheless substantial. Each of these groups has a different history of immigration to Canada, different levels of immigration since 2001, and different levels of fertility (Provencher et al., 2018; Statistics Canada, 2022a), which are the main factors that account for the differences in their growth rates.

In 2021, most racialized people were first-generation Canadians, though the proportion ranged from one-third to over three-quarters, depending on the group. The high proportion of first-generation racialized people reflects the high levels of immigration from non-European countries since the 1990s. The shorter history of immigration from non-European countries means that racialized people have generally not been in Canada long enough to have a strong presence in the second or third generations or more. As a point of contrast, nearly three-quarters of the White population was in the third generation or more in 2021, a consequence of a long history of European migration to Canada.

The arrival of new immigrants was the primary driver of growth of the racialized population between 2001 and 2021, accounting for about two-thirds of the increase. The role of immigration in population growth was even stronger for groups with shorter histories in Canada. However, this pattern of growth has gradually changed as the first waves of immigrants from non-European countries have become rooted in the Canadian populace. Between 2001 and 2021, the fastest rate of population growth was in the second generation. This growth was attributable to first-generation Canadians having children in Canada. About one-third of the growth of the racialized population was from increases in the second generation, i.e., the post-migration fertility of the first generation. Consequently, the generational composition of the racialized population has steadily become Canadian-born.

Population growth was fast for racialized people of all ages, and this was broadly consistent across groups. In most groups, population growth was particularly fast for the working-age (25 to 64 years) and senior (65 years and older) populations, despite some variation. However, these age-specific rates of growth varied by generational status. In the first generation, the senior population nearly quadrupled between 2001 and 2021, while the working-age population doubled. The large increase in the population of immigrant seniors was a result of increased immigration levels since the 1990s. Many immigrants who arrived in the 1990s entered senior ages in the late 2010s.⁸ In the second generation, the senior population changed little, but the working-age population grew five times in size. The increase of the working-age population occurred with the children of immigrants who were born in Canada in the 1980s and 1990s coming of age.

Given the large presence of the first generation, many racialized people live in households composed of family members in the first and second generations or more. Most of those from the second generation lived in families that contain first-generation members, ranging from 60% for the Japanese group to 94% for the West Asian group in 2021. The high prevalence of intergenerational co-residence suggests that the economic well-being of the second generation is closely associated with the labour market outcomes of the first generation. Between 2001 and 2021, the shares of the second-generation members living with first-generation members decreased for most racialized groups, suggesting that second-generation members entered adulthood and started their own families in much larger numbers in 2021 than in 2001.

The share of Canadians with a mixed racialized–White identity increased for most groups between 2001 and 2021, and the share was particularly high and increased the most among those from the third generation or more. Group differences in the shares of people with a racialized and White identity reflect differences in intermarriage among their immigrant parents. For example, South Asian and Chinese immigrants had relatively lower rates of intermarriage. These groups had relatively large populations in Canada and tended to reside in a few major metropolitan areas where co-ethnic people were concentrated, factors that are associated with a lower prevalence of intermarriage (Qian & Lichter, 2007). Intermarriage is lower for people who have access to marriage markets with a large number of co-ethnic people (Hou et al., 2015). The implication is that the replenishment of co-ethnic people through high levels of immigration is associated with a lower share of people in a group with a racialized and White identity.

The racialized population has become progressively rooted in Canada, contributing to diversification. The history of large-scale migration from non-European countries to Canada is relatively short, but a growing number of racialized people are now Canadian born. The prevalence of people with a racialized and White identity has also increased. In addition, the child population (aged 0 to 14 years) of racialized groups grew fast while declining among White people. In 2021, about 34% of children were from a racialized group (an increase from 17% in 2001), most of whom were Canadian born. With these trends,

8. The median age of new immigrants at landing was 27 years in the 1980s, 29 years in the 1990s and 2000s, and 30 years in the 2010s. The share of immigrants aged 25 to 54 years at landing was 44% in the 1980s, 53% in the 1990s, 57% in the 2000s and 61% in the 2010s.

it is important to further examine the implication of rising diversity in the labour market and broader society.

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