

# Update on cultural diversity

This article is adapted from *Canada's ethnocultural portrait: The changing mosaic*, published as part of the January 21, 2003 data release on immigration and ethnocultural background from the 2001 Census. The data release is available from the Statistics Canada Web site at: [www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/analytic/companion/etoimm/contents.cfm?](http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/analytic/companion/etoimm/contents.cfm?)



Canada has become increasingly multiethnic and multicultural. Immigration over the past 100 years has shaped the country and each new wave of immigrants has added to the nation's ethnic and cultural diversity.

In recent years, immigration has become an increasingly important component of population growth in Canada. In 2001, 5.4 million people, or 18% of the total population, reported that they were born outside the country, the highest level in 70 years. Canada is second to Australia (22%) in the percentage of its foreign-born population. In contrast, only 11% of the population in the United States was born outside the country in 2000.

**Visible minorities**

“Visible minority” refers to groups identified under the *Employment Equity Act* as “persons, other than Aboriginals, who are non-Caucasian in race and non-white in colour.” The 2001 and 1996 Censuses identified visible minorities using the following question with instructions for people belonging to more than one group to mark all circles that apply. Prior to 1996, data on visible minorities were derived from other census questions, such as ethnic origin, birthplace, language and religion.

<p><b>19</b> Is this person:</p> <p>Mark “⊗” more than one or specify, if applicable.</p>          <p><i>This information is collected to support programs that promote equal opportunity for everyone to share in the social, cultural and economic life of Canada.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> White</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Chinese</li> <li><input type="radio"/> South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.)</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Black</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Filipino</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Latin American</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Southeast Asian (e.g., Cambodian, Indonesian, Laotian, Vietnamese, etc.)</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Arab</li> <li><input type="radio"/> West Asian (e.g., Afghan, Iranian, etc.)</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Japanese</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Korean</li> <li>Other – Specify</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 15px; margin-top: 5px;"></div>
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**Ethnic origin**

“Ethnic origin” refers to the ethnic or cultural group(s) to which the respondent’s ancestors belong. The comparability of ethnic origin data from

the 1996 and 2001 Censuses with previous censuses is affected by changes in the format and examples provided on the questionnaire. The change in format to an open-ended question in 1996 and the presence of examples such as “Canadian,” which were not included in previous censuses, likely affect response patterns.

In addition, the measurement of ethnicity is affected by changes in the respondent’s understanding or views about the topic. Awareness of family background or length of time since immigration can affect response to the ethnic origin question, as can confusion with other concepts such as citizenship, nationality, language or cultural identity. Ethnic origin response patterns may be influenced by both social and personal considerations, which in turn can have an impact on the comparability of data between censuses.

The 2001 Census ethnic origin question was:

<p><i>While most people in Canada view themselves as Canadians, information on their ancestral origins has been collected since 1901 Census to capture the changing composition of Canada’s diverse population. Therefore, this question refers to the <b>origins of the person’s ancestors</b>.</i></p>          <p><b>17</b> To which ethnic or cultural group(s) did this person’s <b>ancestors</b> belong?</p> <p><i>For example, Canadian, French, English, Chinese, Italian, German, Scottish, Irish, Cree, Micmac, Métis, Inuit (Eskimo), East Indian, Ukrainian, Dutch, Polish, Portuguese, Filipino, Jewish, Greek, Jamaican, Vietnamese, Lebanese, Chilean, Somali, etc.</i></p>	<p>Specify as many groups as applicable</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 15px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 15px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 15px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 15px;"></div>
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**Immigrants come increasingly from Asia**

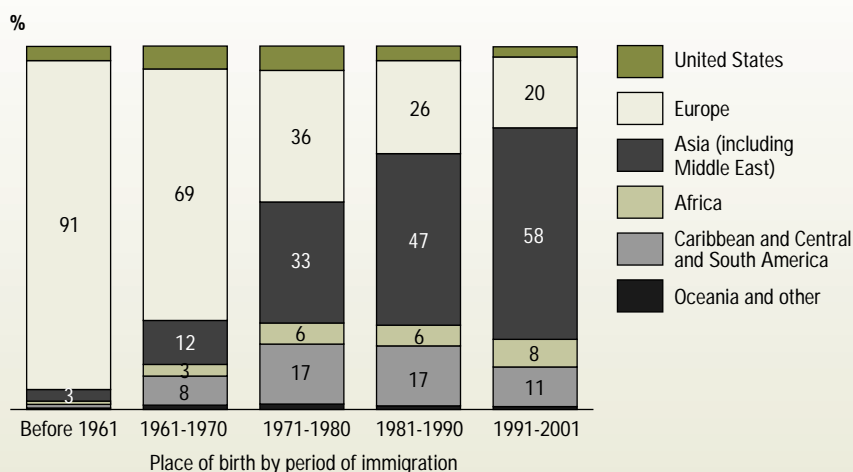
For the first 60 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, European nations such as the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands, as well as the United States, were the primary sources of immigrants to Canada. Today, immigrants are most likely to come from

Asian countries. This is partly the result of changes in government policies in the 1960s, when national origin was removed as criteria for entry, and partly the result of changes in the international movement of migrants.

In 2001, about 1.8 million people living in Canada were immigrants who arrived during the previous

10 years. Of these, 58% were born in Asia (including the Middle East); 20% in Europe; 11% in the Caribbean, Central and South America; 8% in Africa; and 3% in the United States. In comparison, people born in Asia represented 47% of immigrants who arrived during the 1980s, 33% of those who arrived during the 1970s

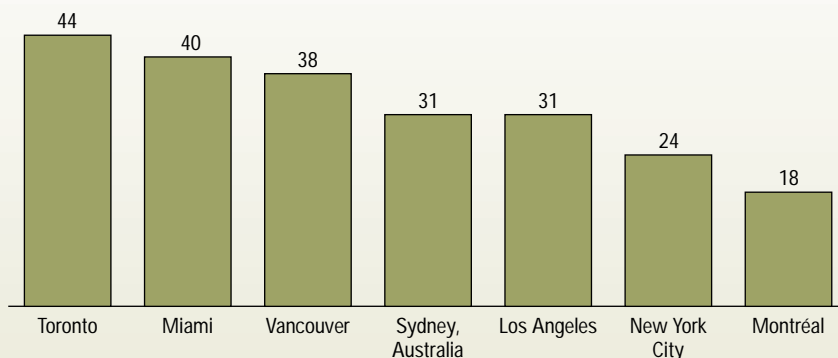
Immigrants come increasingly from Asia and the Middle East



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2001.

Toronto has proportionally more foreign-born residents than other multicultural cities

% foreign-born



Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2001, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001, and U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

and just 3% of individuals who came to Canada before 1961. Of the immigrants arriving in the 1990s, the People's Republic of China was the leading source country, followed by India, the Philippines and Hong Kong.

**Immigrants attracted to Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver**

Over the past 30 years, recent immigrants have been increasingly drawn to settle in Canada's three largest

urban areas. For example, according to the 2001 Census, about three in five immigrants (58%) who entered Canada in the 1970s settled in the census metropolitan areas (CMAs) of Toronto, Vancouver and Montréal. Among immigrants who arrived in the 1990s, however, nearly three-quarters (73%) lived in these three CMAs. In contrast to immigrants, just over one-third of Canada's total population lived in these urban centres

in 2001. Consequently, immigrants accounted for an increasingly larger proportion of the population in these areas. In 2001, more than 2 million people in the Toronto CMA were foreign-born, representing 44% of the total population of this area. This proportion surpassed those of cities around the world known for their cultural diversity such as New York, Miami, Sydney (Australia) and Los Angeles.

Toronto attracted the largest share of new immigrants who arrived in Canada during the 1990s (43%), followed by Vancouver (18%) and Montréal (12%). Only 6% of new immigrants settled in areas outside census metropolitan areas.

Most immigrants arriving in the 1990s were of working age. About 46% were 25 to 44 years old, while 17% were aged 45 to 64. About 310,000 of new immigrants (17%) were children between the ages of 5 and 16. In Toronto and Vancouver, nearly 1 in 5 (17%) school-age children had immigrated within the past 10 years, as did about 7% in Montréal. About half of school-age children in Toronto who arrived in the 1990s spoke a language other than English or French most often at home in 2001, compared with 61% in Vancouver and 43% in Montréal. This may place special demands on school systems in Canada's largest cities.

**Allophone immigrants increasing**

In the past 30 years there has been a dramatic change in the linguistic composition of immigrants entering Canada, a reflection of changing source countries. Increasing proportions of immigrants were allophones — individuals whose mother tongue is other than English or French. According to the 2001 Census, over three-quarters (79%) of immigrants who came in the 1990s were allophones, up from one-half (49%) of those who arrived in the 1970s. In Montréal, 74% of immigrants entering

in the 1990s were allophones; in Toronto the proportion was 79%, and in Vancouver, 88%.

At the same time, the proportion of immigrants arriving with an English mother tongue has decreased from 45% of individuals who arrived in the 1970s to 18% of those who came in the 1990s. The proportion arriving with French mother tongue has remained stable over the past 30 years at around 4% to 5%.

### Many immigrants speak languages other than English or French at home

With a growing percentage of allophones entering the country, the proportion of immigrants who speak a language other than English or French at home is on the rise. In 2001, 61% of the immigrants who came in the 1990s used a non-official language at home, up from 1991, when 56% of those who arrived in the previous decade did so.

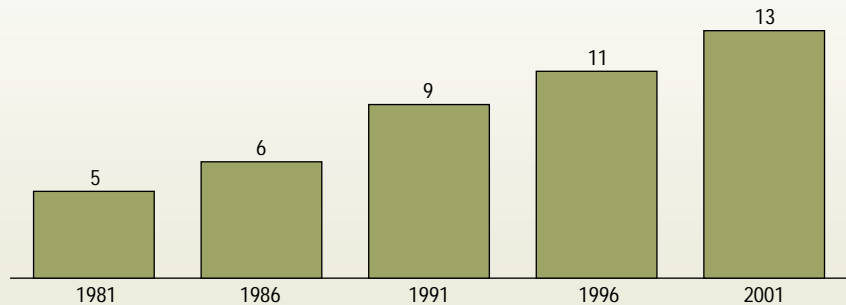
However, most newcomers reported being able to have a conversation in English and/or French. In 2001, three-quarters of immigrants who arrived in the past 10 years were able to speak English, 4% reported abilities in French, while 11% could carry on a conversation in both official languages. Only 1 in 10 of those who came in the 1990s had no knowledge of either official language.

Knowledge of one of the official languages is beneficial to immigrants in the labour market. Yet many allophone immigrants (about 24%) worked using a non-official language.<sup>1</sup> Since most allophone immigrants settle in Toronto, Vancouver or Montréal, a significant proportion of those who live there use their mother tongue at work. In Vancouver, 36% of

1. Used a non-official language at work most often or on a regular basis.

## CST Visible minority populations have grown steadily over the past 20 years

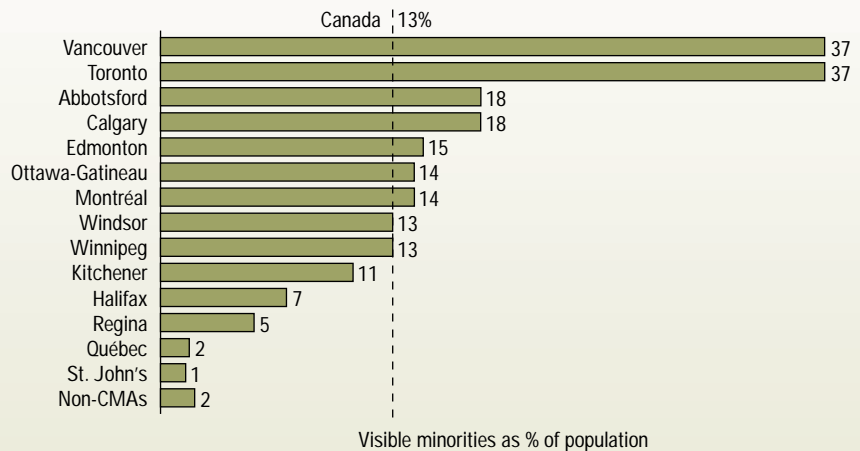
% visible minorities



Sources: Statistics Canada, Censuses of Population, 1981-2001.

## CST Nearly 4 in 10 residents in Vancouver and Toronto belong to a visible minority group

Selected census metropolitan areas (CMAs)



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2001.

allophone immigrants used a language other than English or French at work, compared with 25% in Toronto and 21% in Montréal.

### Visible minority population grows

The growth in the foreign-born population and the shift from European to Asian immigrants have contributed to dramatic growth in the visible minority population over the last two decades. In 2001, 13% of Canada's population — 4.0 million people —

identified themselves as members of a visible minority group, up from 5% (1.1 million) in 1981. About 7 in 10 individuals who identified themselves as visible minorities were immigrants. However, some visible minority groups such as Japanese and Blacks have long histories in this country, and were more likely to be Canadian-born.

The visible minority population is growing nearly six times faster than the total population. Between 1991 and 2001, the total population of

Canada increased by 10% while the visible minority population grew by 58%.

Like the foreign-born population, Canada's visible minorities are clustered in the largest urban areas. About 37% of the population in Toronto and Vancouver and 14% in Montréal are visible minorities. In contrast, only 2% of the population outside Canada's CMAs belonged to a visible minority group.

Visible minorities made up even larger proportions of the population of some municipalities. They represented more than half the population of Richmond, British Columbia (59%) and Markham, Ontario (55%) and nearly half of the cities of Vancouver and Burnaby, British Columbia (49% each).

### **Chinese are the largest visible minority group**

Chinese, South Asians and Blacks accounted for two-thirds of the visible minority population of Canada. Chinese was the largest group, surpassing one million in 2001 and representing 3.5% of the total population and 26% of the visible minority population. Between 1996 and 2001, the number of Chinese Canadians increased by 20%.

South Asians, the second largest visible minority group — numbering 917,000 in 2001 — grew by 37% between 1996 and 2001. This group accounted for 3.1% of the total and 23% of the visible minority population in 2001. That same year, the census enumerated 662,000 Blacks, the third largest visible minority group, up by 15% since 1996. They represented 2.2% of the total and 17% of the visible minority population.

Other visible minority groups in 2001 included Filipinos (8% of the visible minority population), Arabs and West Asians (8%), Latin Americans (5%), Southeast Asians (5%), Koreans (3%) and Japanese (2%). In total these groups numbered about 1.2 million, representing about one-third of all visible minorities in Canada.

### **More people report they are "Canadian"**

More than 200 different ethnic origins were reported in the 2001 Census. Ethnic origin refers to the ethnic or cultural group to which an individual's ancestors belonged. The changing sources of immigrants to Canada and the increasing intermarriage among ethnic groups have resulted in a broader range of ethnic origins and a growing number of people reporting multiple ethnic ancestries.

In 2001, the most frequently reported ethnic origin was Canadian, either alone or in combination with other origins. It was reported by 11.7 million people, or 39% of the population.<sup>2</sup> English (6.0 million), French (4.7 million), Scottish (4.2 million), Irish (3.8 million), German (2.7 million), Italian (1.3 million), Chinese (1.1 million), Ukrainian (1.1 million) and North American Indian (1.0 million) rounded out the top 10 ethnic origins in Canada.

### **More people report multiple ethnic ancestries**

A growing number of people report multiple ethnic ancestries, probably because of intermarriage. In 2001, 11.3 million or 38% of the population reported multiple ethnic origins, up from 10.2 million, or 36%, in 1996 and 7.0 million in 1986.

People with European background, whose ancestors have lived in Canada for several generations, were most likely to report multiple origins, especially Irish, Scottish, English, French and Scandinavian groups. Those with more recent histories in Canada, such as Polynesians, Indonesians and Paraguayans, also were more likely to report multiple origins because they originated from multicultural countries. In contrast, recent arrivals to Canada such as Koreans, Afghans and Eritreans tended to report single ethnic origins.

### **Summary**

At the time of the 2001 census, immigrants represented the highest proportion of the population in 70 years and immigration accounted for more than two-thirds of the population growth in that year. The shifts in the countries of origin of recent immigrants have contributed to Canada's increasing cultural diversity. While immigrants entering Canada in the 1960s were predominantly European, today's immigrants are more likely to be Asian.

Today's immigrants are concentrated overwhelmingly in Canada's three largest urban areas: Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver. These centres, with their sizable populations of foreign-born individuals, have also seen large increases in their visible minority populations.

An important goal of Canada's immigration policy is to assist in the country's economic performance. Immigrants have contributed to Canada's population and labour force growth, diversified the ethnic and linguistic composition of the country and have contributed valuable human resources to the economy. With increasing economic globalization, Canada's growing cultural diversity may be to its advantage in the international marketplace.

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2. Changes to the ethnic origin question in the 1996 and 2001 Censuses resulted in an increase in the number of people reporting "Canadian" as part of their ethnic heritage in both 1996 and 2001. "Canadian" was included as an example on the questionnaire in both censuses. In 2001, about 6.7 million people reported Canadian as their only ethnic origin. An additional 5 million reported Canadian along with other origins.