

Article

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by Anne Milan, H el ene Maheux and Tina Chui

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- ... not applicable
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- 0^s value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
- ^p preliminary
- ^r revised
- x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
- E use with caution
- F too unreliable to be published

A portrait of couples in mixed unions

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Introduction

As Canada's population continues to become more ethnoculturally diverse, there is greater opportunity for individuals to form conjugal relationships with someone from a different ethnocultural background. These mixed unions, either marital or common-law, can be measured in many ways. For example, mixed unions may refer to spouses or partners with differing sociodemographic or cultural characteristics such as age, education, religion or ethnic origin. In this study, a mixed union¹ is based on one of two criteria: either one member of a couple belongs to a visible minority group and the other does not, or the two spouses or partners belong to different visible minority groups.

Using data primarily from the 2006 Census of Population, this study examines the characteristics of mixed union couples in Canada (see "What you should know about this study" for concepts, definitions and details). The prevalence of mixed unions may vary for particular visible minority groups and according to factors such as immigration status, generation status and birthplace. Sociodemographic attributes such as age, sex, marital status and place of residence within Canada, as well as socio-economic characteristics including education, labour force participation and family income will be explored in order to see if they are associated with being in a mixed union. Possible implications of mixed unions include linguistic transfer

and trends related to children living in mixed families. Studying mixed unions is important not only because these relationships reflect another aspect of the diversity of families in Canada today, but also because of their potential impact in terms of social inclusion and identification

with one visible minority group or more, particularly for subsequent generations.

About 4% of all couples are mixed unions

According to the 2006 Census, 3.9% of the 7,482,800 couples in Canada

What you should know about this study

Visible minority status

Visible minority status is self-reported and refers to the visible minority group to which the respondent belongs. The *Employment Equity Act* defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour." Under this definition, regulations specify the following groups as visible minorities: Chinese, South Asians, Blacks, Arabs, West Asians, Filipinos, Southeast Asians, Latin Americans, Japanese, Koreans and other visible minority groups, like Pacific Islanders.

Mixed couples refer to common-law or marital relationships comprised of one spouse or partner who is a member of a visible minority group and the other who is not, as well as couples comprised of two different visible minority group members. Mixed couples include both opposite-sex and same-sex couples unless indicated otherwise.

Data used are primarily from the 2006 Census of Population, with comparisons to 2001 data where appropriate. Throughout the paper, both person-level and couple-level data are used.

Person-level data are used for characteristics of individuals in mixed unions, such as age, sex, educational level, immigrant status and mother tongue.

Couple-level data are more appropriate when analyzing characteristics of the union, for instance, whether it is a marriage or common-law relationship or if there are children present in the home.

Persons of multiple visible minority group status are individuals who reported belonging to more than one visible minority group by checking two or more mark-in circles on the census questionnaire, e.g., Black and South Asian.

were mixed unions. Mixed unions between one visible minority group member and one non-member or between persons belonging to two different visible groups accounted for 289,400 couples overall. In comparison, mixed unions represented 3.1% of all couples in 2001 and 2.6% in 1991. Between 2001 and 2006, mixed unions grew at a rapid pace (33%), more than five times the growth for all couples (6.0%). There are several reasons why the proportion of mixed unions may be increasing. For example, there could be more mixed unions as people meet, interact and form relationships in many different social, educational or work-related settings. The growth of mixed unions may also be due to an increasing number of people who belong to visible minority groups, resulting in greater potential for people to meet spouses or partners from outside their group.

Visible minority population increased more than threefold in 25 years

The increase in mixed unions in Canada may be at least partially attributed to the growth of the visible minority population. The 2006 Census counted 5.1 million persons who were members of visible minority groups, representing more than 16% of the population of Canada.² This figure is more than three times higher than in 1981, when the visible minority population accounted for 4.7% of Canada's total population. The changing face of Canada can be largely attributed to the greater proportion of immigrants coming from regions other than Europe. For example, 84% of immigrants who arrived in Canada in the five-year period between 2001 and 2006 were born in non-European countries, up from 68% of recent immigrants counted 25 years earlier.

Given that most of the Canadian population was not part of a visible minority in 2006 (84%), the majority of mixed unions were between persons who belonged to a visible

minority group paired with persons who were not a visible minority group member (247,600 or 3.3% of all couples in 2006), a growth of 31% since 2001. An additional 41,800 couples were comprised of members of two different visible minority groups, accounting for 0.6% of all couples, up almost 50% from five years earlier.

Japanese have highest proportion of out-group pairings

While nearly one-quarter (24%) of all couples comprised of at least one visible minority group member were mixed in 2006, the proportion varied according to the particular visible minority group. There are many reasons that could explain the variation in mixed unions among the visible minority groups, like the size of the group, which could affect the chance of its members finding a partner with the same background,

the group's immigration history as well as other characteristics. The share of couples who were mixed increased slightly for some visible minority groups from 2001 to 2006, while the ranking of the proportion of mixed couples by visible minority group membership remained unchanged for both census years.

Japanese had the highest proportion marrying or partnering outside of their visible minority group, as shown in the 2006 Census. Indeed, about three-quarters (75%) of the 29,700 couples where at least one person in the couple was Japanese involved pairings with a non-Japanese person. As was noted in earlier research,³ this high proportion may be at least partially due to the long duration of residence for many Japanese in Canada, as well as the low overall number of Japanese, which could increase interaction with persons outside of their group.

Table 1 Out-group pairing by visible minority group, 2006

| | Couples | | |
|--|------------------|---------------------------|--|
| | Total number | Mixed union percentage | Same visible minority group percentage |
| | | | |
| Visible minority group | | | |
| All visible minority groups¹ | 1,214,400 | 23.8 | 76.2 |
| Japanese | 29,700 | 74.7 | 25.3 |
| Latin American | 85,200 | 47.0 | 53.0 |
| Black | 136,000 | 40.6 | 59.4 |
| Filipino | 107,400 | 33.1 | 66.9 |
| Southeast Asian | 58,100 | 31.1 | 68.9 |
| Arab/West Asian | 105,700 | 25.0 | 74.9 |
| Korean | 34,800 | 19.5 | 80.5 |
| Chinese | 321,700 | 17.4 | 82.6 |
| South Asian | 327,200 | 12.7 | 87.3 |
| Multiple groups or n.i.e. ² | 50,400 | 58.4 | 41.6 |

1. The number of couples by specific visible minority group does not sum to the total because if the two persons in a couple belong to two different visible minority groups, these couples are counted in each group.
2. Belonging to multiple visible minority groups means that respondents reported more than one visible minority group by checking two or more mark-in circles, e.g., Black and South Asian. Less common visible minority groups are reported in the visible minority n.i.e. (not included elsewhere) category. This category includes respondents who reported a write-in response such as Guyanese, West Indian, Kurd, Tibetan, Polynesian and Pacific Islander.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

Latin Americans (47%) and Blacks (41%) followed Japanese with the highest proportions of couples involving out-group pairings. About one-third of couples involving a Filipino (33%) were married or living common-law outside their visible minority group. The proportions of mixed unions among Southeast Asians (31%), Arabs or West Asians (25%) or Koreans (19%) ranked somewhat in the middle of all visible minority groups (Table 1).

The two largest visible minority populations in Canada had among the lowest proportions married or partnered outside their groups. In 2006, there were 1.3 million South Asians and 1.2 million Chinese living in Canada.⁴ However, because the South Asian population includes a higher number of children under the age of 15 compared to the Chinese population, when considering the adult population (those aged 15 and over) only, Chinese becomes the largest visible minority group. With more than 1 million Chinese in this age group, they also had one of the

lowest proportions of mixed unions outside their group (17%).

South Asians aged 15 and older comprised the second largest visible minority group and were the least likely to form couples outside their group. Only about one in eight couples (13%) involving a South Asian person also included a non-South Asian partner or spouse. Given the size of the Chinese and South Asian populations, there might be more opportunities to establish dynamic communities which would result in a greater likelihood to meet, interact and develop conjugal relationships with someone from the same visible minority group.

Although Chinese persons had a relatively low proportion that were married or living common-law outside their group, numerically there were more Chinese spouses or partners in mixed unions due to the sheer size of the Chinese population in Canada. In 2006, there were almost 56,000 Chinese paired with a non-visible minority or another visible minority group member, followed closely by

Blacks (55,200). In contrast, couples comprised of one Japanese person had the highest proportion of out-group marriage or partnership, but this accounted for only 22,200 Japanese due to the small size of this population group. The group with the lowest number of persons in mixed unions was Koreans (6,800) (Table 2).

Taken as a whole, men and women who belonged to visible minority groups and were in couples were equally likely to be in a mixed union couple. However, within the various minority groups, there were some differences. For example, Arab or West Asian, Black or South Asian men who were in couples had higher proportions of mixed unions compared to women from these groups. In 2006, there were more than twice as many Arab or West Asian married or partnered men who were paired outside their group (19%) as there were women (9%). Similarly, three in ten Black men in couples were in mixed unions as were two out of ten Black women. This supports research out of the United States that

Table 2 Persons in couples and in mixed unions by visible minority group, 2006

| Visible minority group | Persons | | | | |
|---|------------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|
| | Total number | In a couple | | In a mixed union | |
| | | number | percentage | number | percentage |
| All persons belonging to visible minority groups | 3,922,700 | 2,181,200 | 55.6 | 331,300 | 15.2 |
| Chinese | 1,005,600 | 587,500 | 58.4 | 56,000 | 9.5 |
| Black | 562,100 | 216,800 | 38.6 | 55,200 | 25.5 |
| South Asian | 957,600 | 612,800 | 64.0 | 41,500 | 6.8 |
| Latin American | 244,300 | 130,300 | 53.3 | 40,000 | 30.7 |
| Filipino | 320,900 | 179,200 | 55.9 | 35,600 | 19.8 |
| Arab/West Asian | 321,800 | 185,000 | 57.5 | 26,500 | 14.3 |
| Japanese | 66,400 | 37,200 | 56.0 | 22,200 | 59.7 |
| Southeast Asian | 184,600 | 98,200 | 53.2 | 18,100 | 18.4 |
| Korean | 114,600 | 62,800 | 54.8 | 6,800 | 10.8 |
| Multiple groups or n.i.e. ¹ | 144,700 | 71,400 | 49.3 | 29,400 | 41.3 |

1. Less common visible minority groups are reported in the visible minority N.I.E. (not included elsewhere) category. This category includes respondents who reported a write-in response such as Guyanese, West Indian, Kurd, Tibetan, Polynesian and Pacific Islander. Belonging to multiple visible minority groups means that respondents reported more than one visible minority group by checking two or more mark-in circles, e.g., Black and South Asian.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

has found that Black men were more frequently in mixed union couples than Black women.⁵

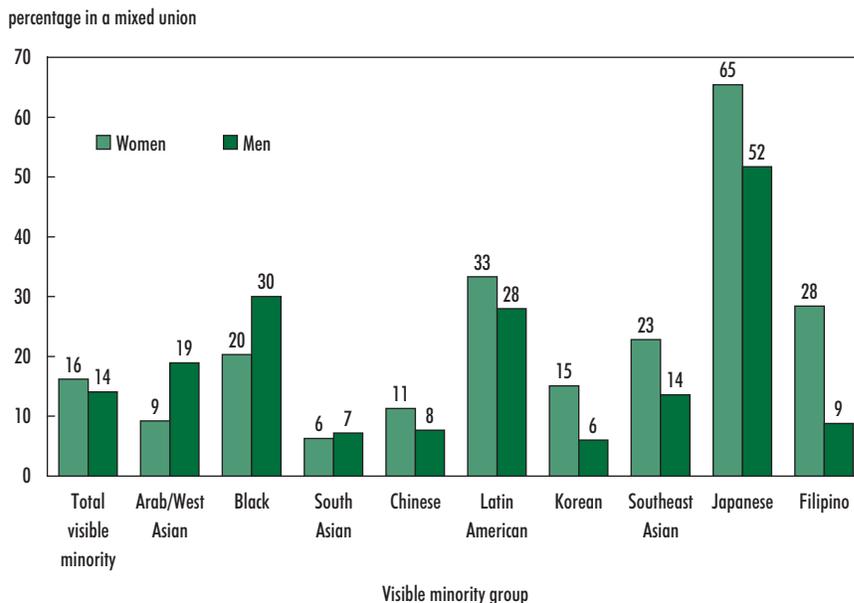
Filipino, Korean, Southeast Asian, Japanese, Chinese or Latin American women in couples accounted for a higher proportion of spouses or partners in mixed unions than did men from these visible minority groups. There were more than three times as many married or partnered Filipino women in mixed unions (28%) as there were Filipino men (9%). For Japanese, nearly two-thirds of Japanese women in couples were in mixed unions while this was the case for over one-half (52%) of men from this visible minority group (Chart 1).

Mixed unions higher for Canadian-born than foreign-born visible minority groups

Since people tend to migrate as adults, they may have already formed unions by the time they immigrate to Canada. Individuals born in Canada, on the other hand, would be more likely to form unions in this country. As such, Canadian-born visible minorities in couples had a higher proportion in mixed unions than their foreign-born counterparts. In 2006, among Canadian-born visible minorities in couples, 56% had a partner or spouse who was either a non-visible minority or was a member of a different visible minority group compared to 12% for those who were foreign-born (Table 3).

The proportion of visible minorities in couples that were mixed was higher for the Canadian-born compared to the foreign-born for each visible minority group, but there was some variation across groups. More than two-thirds of married or partnered Canadian-born Japanese were in mixed unions (69%), while this was the case for one-half (50%) of all Japanese in couples who were born outside the country. In fact, 48% of Japanese who were born in Japan and were in couples had formed an out-group conjugal union. In contrast, over one-half (54%) of Chinese in couples who were born in Canada were in mixed

Chart 1 Higher proportion of Arab or West Asian, Black and South Asian men in couples were in mixed unions compared to women from these groups



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

Table 3 Persons in mixed unions by place of birth and visible minority group, 2006

| Visible minority group | Persons in a mixed union | | |
|--|--------------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| | Total | Born in Canada | Born outside Canada |
| | percentage | | |
| All visible minority groups | 15.2 | 55.6 | 12.1 |
| Japanese | 59.7 | 68.8 | 50.0 |
| Latin American | 30.7 | 56.1 | 29.8 |
| Black | 25.5 | 63.0 | 18.1 |
| Filipino | 19.8 | 63.5 | 18.0 |
| Southeast Asian | 18.4 | 58.5 | 17.2 |
| Arab/West Asian | 14.3 | 40.5 | 13.1 |
| Korean | 10.8 | 62.6 | 9.2 |
| Chinese | 9.5 | 53.7 | 6.2 |
| South Asian | 6.8 | 34.7 | 5.5 |
| Multiple groups or n.i.e. ¹ | 41.3 | 76.0 | 37.3 |

1. Belonging to multiple visible minority groups means that respondents reported more than one visible minority group by checking two or more mark-in circles, e.g., Black and South Asian. Less common visible minority groups are reported in the category called visible minority n.i.e. (not included elsewhere). This category includes respondents who reported a write-in response such as Guyanese, West Indian, Kurd, Tibetan, Polynesian and Pacific Islander.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

unions in 2006, whereas this was true for 6% of Chinese born outside the country. Among married or partnered Chinese who were born in China, only 3% were in mixed unions. Similarly, about one-third of Canadian-born South Asians in couples were in mixed unions, while 3% of South Asians born in South Asia were in mixed unions. Among Canadian-born Blacks in couples, 63% were in mixed unions while this was true for 17% of Blacks in couples born in the Caribbean and Bermuda, and 13% of African-born Blacks (Table 3).

Generational status and mixed unions

Generation status refers to the number of generations that individuals and their families have been in Canada and affects the degree to which these persons participate in mixed unions.⁶ Since individuals whose history in Canada could be traced back at least three generations made up the majority of the total population, the share of mixed unions decreased with each subsequent generation, that is, 7.5% of first-generation immigrants were in mixed unions, falling to 5.3% for the second generation and to 1.9% for the third or higher generation. At first glance, these results differ from a study of Asian couples in the United States and Canada which found that mixed unions were more likely among the second (or higher) generation,⁷ as well as a study conducted in the Netherlands which found a higher likelihood of out-group marriage among the second generation.⁸ It should be noted, however, that the decrease in the proportion of persons in mixed couples by generation status for the total population in couples is a function of the majority of this group not belonging to a visible minority group. When only the married or partnered visible minority population is considered, the proportion of persons in mixed unions increases from 12% for the first generation (meaning persons born outside of Canada) to over one-

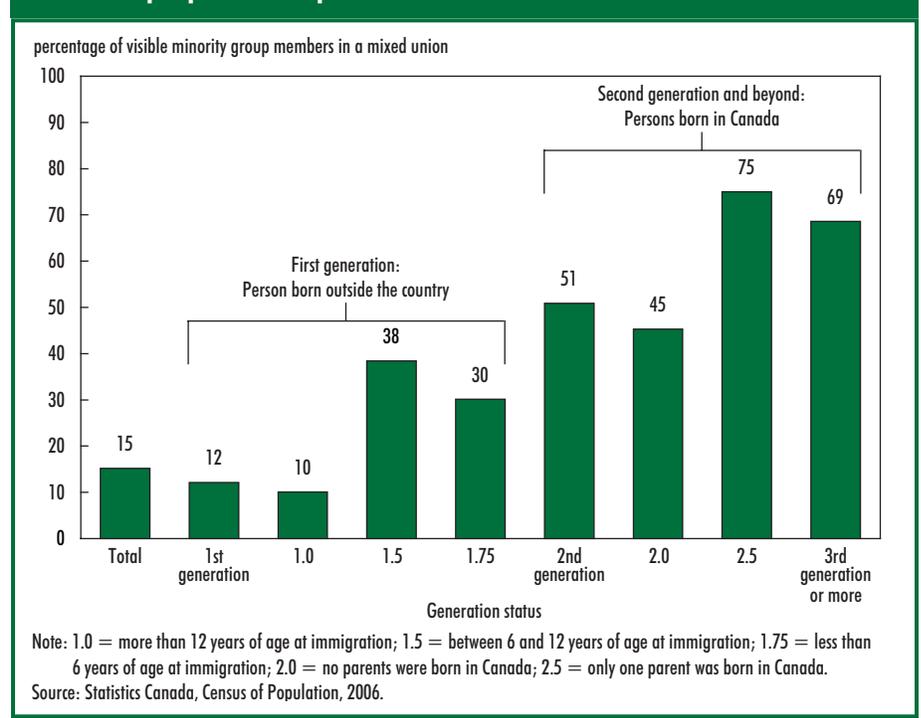
half (51%) for the second generation (meaning these are persons born in Canada but with at least one parent born outside Canada). Finally for persons who are third generation or higher (meaning they, as well as both parents, were born in Canada), more than two-thirds (69%) of persons who belonged to a visible minority group and were in couples in 2006 were part of a mixed union. Consequently, a longer duration of residence in Canada does seem to be associated with a higher proportion of being in a mixed union (Chart 2).

For persons belonging to specific visible minority groups, the overall trend was to have a higher proportion of persons in couples that were mixed for the second and higher generations compared to the first generation. For example, among first-generation Chinese, 6.2% of persons in couples in 2006 were in mixed unions, rising to over one-half (51%) for second-generation Chinese, and to two-thirds for persons in the third or higher generation (67%). Roughly one-half of first- and second-generation Japanese

who were in couples were in mixed unions, increasing dramatically to 88% for individuals who were third generation or higher.

Since the census does not collect information on timing of union formation, it is not possible to determine whether these mixed unions began prior to entry into Canada for immigrants or subsequent to their arrival. However, age at immigration can provide an approximation as to whether foreign-born visible minorities immigrated to Canada while they were still children. Consequently, individuals who spent more of their childhood and adolescence in Canada may be more likely to form out-group conjugal relationships. Combining generation status and age at immigration shows a general trend for immigrants who entered Canada at 12 years of age or younger. These individuals had a higher percentage who were in mixed unions compared to those who arrived when they were 12 years of age or older. When the birthplace of the parents of persons born in

Chart 2 Longer history in Canada was associated with higher proportion of persons in mixed unions



Canada was considered, there was a higher percentage of persons in mixed unions when only one parent was born in Canada (75%) compared to when neither parent was born here (45%). This overall upward trend could reflect greater interaction and integration with other groups the longer one spends in Canada.

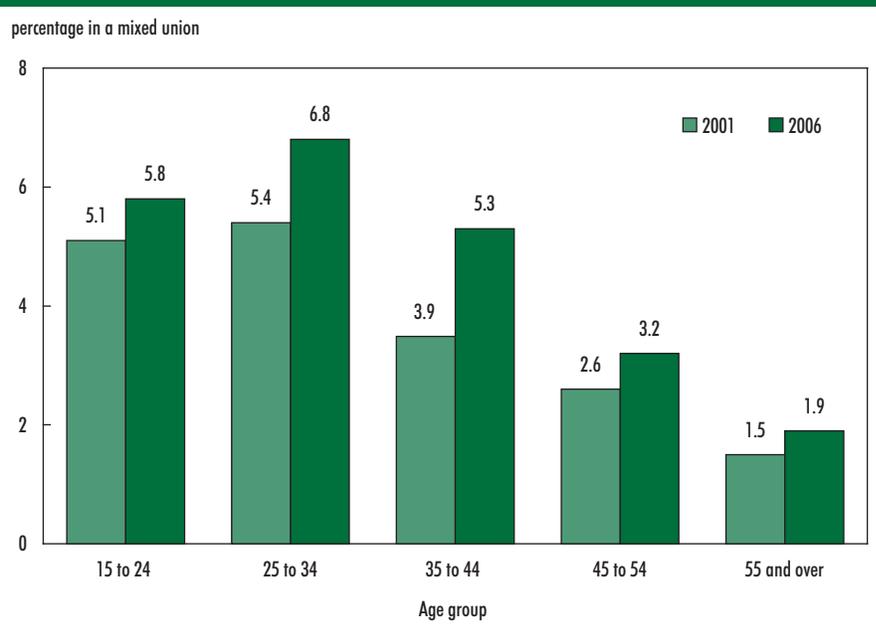
Persons in couples that are mixed unions are young and highly educated

Relationship formation is often associated with young adulthood and, in fact, among spouses and partners in 2006, the highest proportion of individuals in mixed unions occurred among 25- to 34-year-olds (6.8%), followed by individuals aged 15 to 24 years (5.8%). In the 55 and older category, only 1.9% of couples were in mixed unions. While the proportion of adults in mixed unions fell after age 34, all age groups showed an increase compared to 2001 (Chart 3).

When the distribution of married or partnered persons in mixed unions is compared with that of their counterparts in non-mixed unions, the largest percentage of mixed union spouses or partners was in the 35- to 44-year-old age group. Conversely, 35% of spouses or partners who were not in mixed unions were 55 years or older (Chart 4).

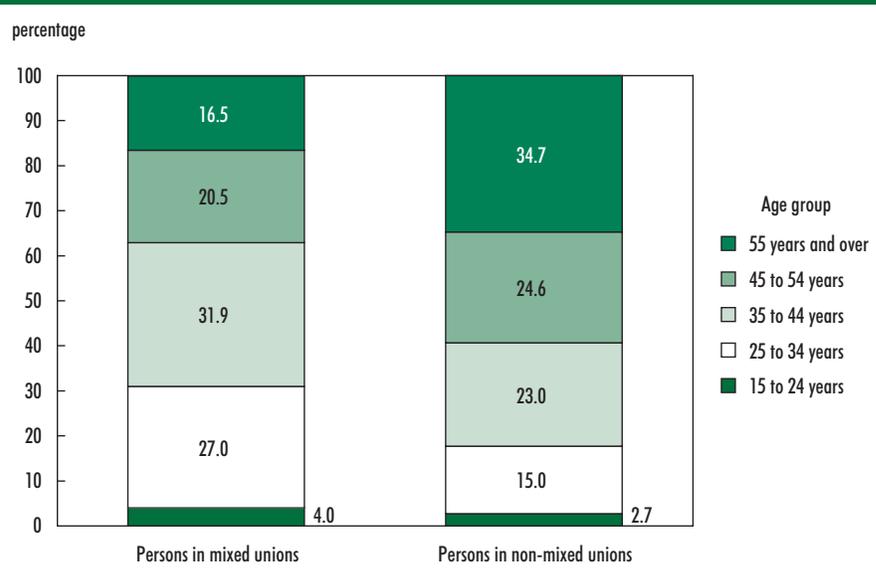
Being in a mixed union was also associated with other socio-economic characteristics like education. Only 1.8% of persons in couples with less than a high school education were in a mixed union, whereas this was the case for 4.8% of individuals with postsecondary education. In fact, among persons in couples who had a university degree, 6.4% were in mixed unions. Given that many visible minority group members are recent immigrants—who are generally more highly educated than the Canadian-born population—this could also be related to the tendency for persons in mixed unions to have higher levels of education. In addition, the university-educated population is, on

Chart 3 Young adults have highest proportion of mixed unions



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2001 and 2006.

Chart 4 Persons in mixed unions are younger compared to those in non-mixed unions



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

average, younger than the population overall, which would contribute to the association between higher education and being in a mixed union (Table 4).

Consequently, more than one in three (35%) persons in couples that were mixed unions had a university degree in 2006 as did one in five (21%) persons in non-mixed couples. Other studies also found that out-group marriage is more likely for individuals with higher education levels (Chart 5).⁹

The labour force status of persons in mixed union couples is related to these higher education levels. A higher percentage of spouses or partners in mixed unions were employed (77%) compared to their counterparts in non-mixed couples (67%). Additionally, 19% of persons in mixed couples did not participate in the labour market compared with 30% of persons in non-mixed couples. Higher education and labour market participation rates were also linked to higher incomes for mixed union couples. Data from the 2006 Census show that the median census family income was nearly \$5,000 higher for couples in mixed unions (\$74,670) than for non-mixed couples (\$69,830).¹⁰ The lowest median income was for couples who belonged to the same visible minority group (\$53,710) and the highest was for couples in which one spouse or partner belonged to a visible minority group and the other did not (\$76,150). When neither member of the couple belonged to a visible minority group, the median census family income was \$72,070 (Table 5).

Mixed unions more predominant for common-law couples than for legally married couples

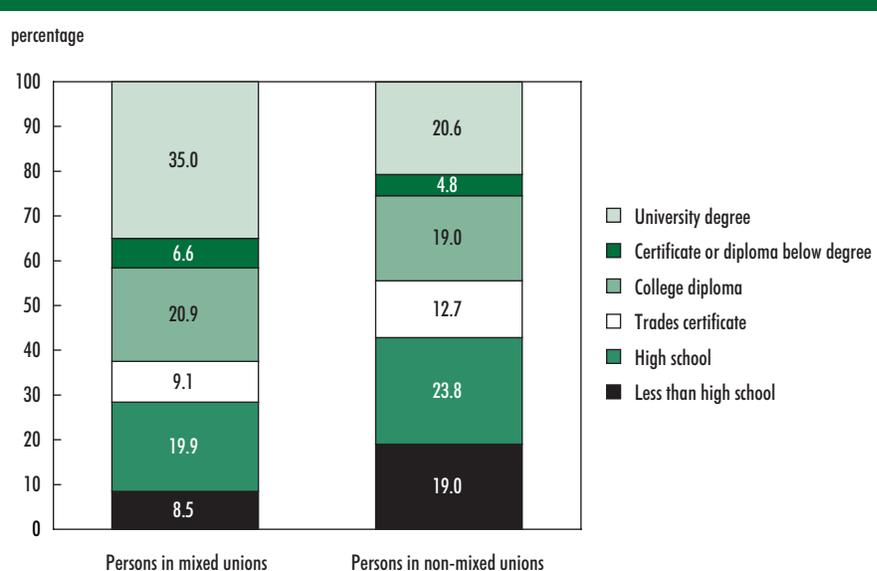
A higher proportion of couples living in a common-law arrangement than legally married couples were in mixed unions. About 4.9% of common-law couples were in mixed unions while this was true for 3.6% of couples in legal marriages. Recent research from the United States on Blacks in mixed unions also found that such

Table 4 Persons in couples that were mixed unions by highest level of education, 2006

| Persons in a mixed union | |
|--|------------|
| Highest level of education | percentage |
| Total | 3.9 |
| Less than high school | 1.8 |
| High school graduate | 3.2 |
| Post-secondary education | 4.8 |
| Trades certificate | 2.8 |
| College diploma | 4.2 |
| Certificate or diploma below university degree | 5.2 |
| University degree | 6.4 |

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

Chart 5 Persons in mixed unions have much higher levels of education than those in non-mixed unions



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

relationships were more likely to be common-law unions than marriages.¹¹ In Canada, mixed couples comprised of one Black person had the highest proportion of unions that were common-law (32%). In contrast, mixed couples comprised of either Japanese or South Asian persons were least likely to be common-law. Nearly

one-quarter of all mixed unions in 2006 were common-law relationships compared to less than one-fifth of non-mixed couples.

The 2006 Census marked the first time data were collected on both same-sex married and common-law couples.¹² Although same-sex couples account for only a small

Table 5 Census family median income by mixed union status, 2006

| | Median income |
|--|---------------|
| | dollars |
| Total couples | 70,000 |
| Mixed unions | 74,670 |
| Spouses or partners belong to different visible minority groups | 66,080 |
| One spouse or partner belongs to a visible minority group and the other does not | 76,150 |
| Non-mixed unions | 69,830 |
| Both spouses or partners belong to the same visible minority group | 53,710 |
| Neither spouse or partner belongs to a visible minority group | 72,070 |

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

number of overall couples,¹³ a higher proportion of same-sex couples were in mixed unions in 2006 compared to opposite-sex couples. Almost one in ten (9.8%) same-sex couples were in mixed unions compared to less than one in twenty (3.8%) opposite-sex couples. There currently may be a higher proportion of same-sex than opposite-sex mixed couples for two reasons: same-sex couples overall were more likely to be common-law than opposite-sex couples, and couples living common-law had a greater tendency to be in mixed unions compared to married couples. In fact, 10% of same-sex common-law relationships in 2006 were mixed couples, while this was the case for 8.4% of same-sex married couples. The corresponding figures for opposite-sex couples were 4.7% and 3.6%, respectively. Given the recent legalization of same-sex marriage, this pattern could possibly change in the future once more same-sex couples have the opportunity to marry.¹⁴

Most couples in mixed unions in largest CMAs

The proportion of couples in mixed unions in 2006 was higher in three provinces than in the country as a whole. In British Columbia, 5.9% of couples were mixed unions, while the corresponding figure was 4.6% in

Ontario followed by 4.2% in Alberta. This is largely the result of the high number of couples in mixed unions living in the CMAs of these provinces. Of the 11 CMAs with proportions of couples in mixed unions that were higher than the national average, all but two (Montréal and Winnipeg) were located in these three provinces.¹⁵

As a proportion of all couples, mixed unions can be viewed as an urban phenomenon, particularly in certain CMAs. Overall, 5.1% of couples who lived in CMAs in 2006 were in mixed unions. In contrast, among couples who lived outside a CMA, 1.4% were in a mixed union. However, when the percentage of mixed unions as a proportion of the visible minority population is examined, a different pattern emerges (see An alternative look at mixed unions and urban areas). The CMAs with the highest proportions of couples in mixed unions in 2006 were Vancouver (8.5%) and Toronto (7.1%). Calgary had the third highest proportion of couples in mixed unions (6.1%) (Table 6). While Vancouver and Toronto have long had large visible minority populations, Calgary had the fourth highest proportion of visible minorities aged 15 and older in 2006 (21%) after Toronto (41%), Vancouver (40%) and Abbotsford (21%).¹⁶ CMAs with the lowest proportions of mixed couples, like Saguenay

(0.6%) and St. John's (0.9%), were also characterized by both low levels of immigration and a small visible minority population (Table 6).

Within CMAs, a higher proportion of couples in mixed unions were found in the central municipality than in the peripheral municipalities.¹⁷ While 3.9% of all couples were in mixed unions in 2006, 5.5% of couples in the central municipality of CMAs were mixed compared to 4.7% in the surrounding municipalities. It could be that living in the central municipality offers amenities that are attractive to individuals who possess some of the other characteristics that are associated with being in a mixed union. For example, 2006 Census data showed a higher proportion of persons aged 20 to 34 and a higher proportion of same-sex couples were living in central municipalities.¹⁸

Language of persons in mixed couples

Mixed unions are important to study not only because they represent another aspect of diversity in and of themselves, but also because of the implications for their participants in other areas. One example of the impact of mixed unions is that there may be some degree of linguistic transfer for persons in these types of couples. According to the 2006 Census, a higher proportion of allophones¹⁹ in mixed unions with a non-official mother tongue reported using an official language at home compared to those in non-mixed unions. Close to 8 in 10 allophones in mixed unions spoke English or French most often in the home in 2006, while this was the case for less than 4 in 10 allophones in non-mixed unions. In contrast, only 17% of allophones in mixed unions used a non-official language at home as did 57% of their counterparts in non-mixed unions (Chart 6).

Children in mixed union families

Although census data cannot determine if the children in the family were from the current relationship,

Table 6 Percentage of couples in mixed unions by census metropolitan area, 2006

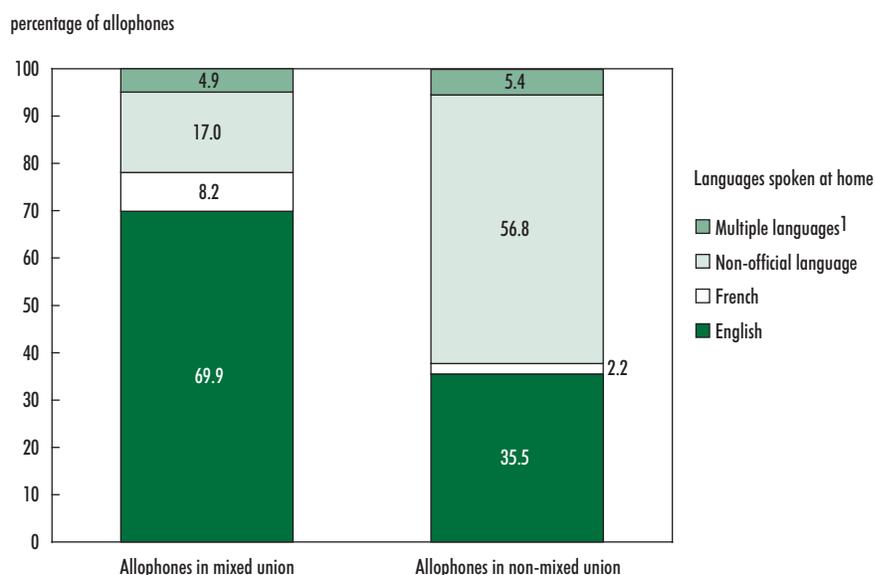
| Couples in mixed unions | | Couples in mixed unions | |
|--------------------------|------------|--------------------------|------------|
| Census metropolitan area | percentage | Census metropolitan area | percentage |
| Vancouver | 8.5 | Halifax | 3.3 |
| Toronto | 7.1 | Kelowna | 3.2 |
| Calgary | 6.1 | Regina | 2.6 |
| Victoria | 5.9 | Saskatoon | 2.6 |
| Oshawa | 5.4 | St. Catharines-Niagara | 2.6 |
| Ottawa-Gatineau | 5.4 | Kingston | 2.5 |
| Edmonton | 4.6 | Brantford | 2.2 |
| Montréal | 4.4 | Thunder Bay | 2.1 |
| Winnipeg | 4.2 | Saint John | 1.8 |
| Guelph | 4.2 | Sherbrooke | 1.7 |
| Abbotsford | 4.0 | Québec | 1.5 |
| Canada | 3.9 | Peterborough | 1.4 |
| Hamilton | 3.9 | Greater Sudbury | 1.3 |
| Kitchener | 3.9 | Trois-Rivières | 1.3 |
| Barrie | 3.8 | Moncton | 1.3 |
| Windsor | 3.7 | St. John's | 0.9 |
| London | 3.4 | Saguenay | 0.6 |

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

mixed couples had a higher proportion of having children at home, largely because individuals in mixed couples were generally younger than other couples. In 2006, 58% of the 289,400 mixed union couples had at least one child present in the home compared with 54% of all non-mixed unions. Furthermore, about 1 in 10 mixed union couples had at least one child under age 2 and none older than 5 years of age in the home compared to 5.6% of non-mixed couples.

A total of 293,600 children in 2006 lived in two-parent census families that had parents in mixed union relationships.²⁰ Among these children, two-thirds (66%) reported visible minority status while one-third did not belong to a visible minority group. Of the children who reported a visible minority status, the most common mixed union family (137,700 children) was when the child and one parent belonged to the same visible minority group and the other parent was not a visible minority.

Chart 6 Allophones in mixed unions reported using an official language at home more than allophones in non-mixed unions



1. Multiple languages refers to individuals who reported English and/or French and non-official language(s).

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

Table 7 Children in two-parent families by visible minority status, 2006

| | Children in two-parent families | |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------|
| | number | percentage |
| Visible minority status | | |
| Total children | 6,971,750 | 100.0 |
| Child does not belong to visible minority group | 5,567,900 | 79.9 |
| Child and parents do not belong to visible minority group | 5,459,400 | 78.3 |
| Child and one parent do not belong to visible minority group, one parent in visible minority group | 97,300 | 1.4 |
| Child does not belong to visible minority group, parents in visible minority group | 11,200 | 0.2 |
| Child belongs to visible minority group | 1,403,900 | 20.1 |
| Child and parents in same visible minority group | 1,171,500 | 16.8 |
| Child in visible minority group different from at least one parent | 232,400 | 3.3 |
| Child and one parent in same visible minority group, one parent non-visible minority | 137,700 | 2.0 |
| Child and one parent in same visible minority group, one parent different visible minority | 29,200 | 0.4 |
| Child belongs to visible minority group, both parents non-visible minority | 27,700 | 0.4 |
| Child and parents each in different visible minority groups | 18,100 | 0.3 |
| Parents in same visible minority group, child in different visible minority | 9,800 | 0.1 |
| Child and one parent different visible minority, other parent non-visible minority | 9,800 | 0.1 |

Note: These figures refer to children aged 0 to 24 present in the home of two-parent census families by visible minority status of children and visible minority status of parents.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

There were also about 18,100 children in mixed union families where the child as well as each parent reported a different visible minority group, and an additional 9,800 children who belonged to a different visible group than one parent while the other parent did not have visible minority status (Table 7). Many of these children, 97% and 48%, respectively, reported a less common visible minority group or they simply reported as members of multiple visible minority groups.²¹

Mixed unions may create a culturally diverse environment within the family. Cultural practices within the family can impact the children.²² As the proportion of mixed unions increases in Canada, the implications may extend beyond the couples to the children's sense of identity.

Summary

According to census data, the number of couples in mixed unions has been on the rise in Canada since at least the early 1990s, at least partially due to the growth in the visible minority population. Based on the 2006 Census, Japanese were most likely to form a relationship outside their group, while this was least likely for South Asians. Within-group differences were also apparent as a higher proportion of Filipino, Korean, Southeast Asian, Japanese, Chinese and Latin American women in couples were in mixed unions compared to men from these groups, while married or partnered men who were Arab or West Asian, Black or South Asian represented a higher share of mixed unions than their female counterparts.

Compared to persons in couples who were not in mixed unions, persons in mixed unions were younger, did better socio-economically and were more likely to live in large CMAs. For the visible minority population, there were more spouses or partners in mixed unions who were Canadian-born compared to those who were foreign-born, and the proportion increased with generation status.

An alternative look at mixed unions and urban areas

The proportion of spouses or partners in mixed unions is highest in the largest CMAs when the total population in couples is used as the denominator. However, if the denominator is based on the visible minority population in couples, then the results indicate that some CMAs with relatively small visible minority populations actually have fairly large proportions of individuals who are married or partnered outside their group. For example, the Quebec CMAs of Saguenay, Trois-Rivières and Québec, as well as Moncton and Saint John in New Brunswick, and Thunder Bay and Barrie in Ontario, all have relatively small visible minority populations. Due to the small size of these groups, this accounts for the high proportion (40% or greater) of the married or partnered visible minority population who formed unions outside their groups. When viewed from this perspective, the three CMAs with the lowest proportions of persons belonging to visible minority groups who were in couples that were mixed Vancouver (12.2%), Toronto (10.9%) and Abbotsford (9.8%).

There were proportionally more couples in common-law relationships in mixed unions than couples who were legally married, and a higher proportion of same-sex couples were in mixed unions than couples who were in opposite-sex couples.

More couples with at least one child present in the home were mixed compared to couples who did not have children, reflecting the fact that mixed union couples were generally younger and more likely to be at their life-cycle stage of having young children. In addition to the number of children whose parents were in mixed unions, the concept of mixed families, like those comprised of a child belonging to a visible minority but not the parents, further broadens the implications of ethno-cultural identity.

The impact of mixed unions could be far-reaching in changing the dynamic and nature of Canada's ethnocultural diversity in future generations. These consequences may impact the language transfer that takes place within mixed union households, as well as the experiences of children in mixed families and the way in which children of mixed unions report their ethnocultural origins and identify with visible minority groups.



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1. See also Milan, A. and Hamm, B. (2004). Mixed unions. *Canadian Social Trends*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 11-008-XWE.
2. For more information, see Chui, T., Tran, K. and Maheux, H. (2008). *Canada's Ethnocultural Mosaic, 2006 Census*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 97-562-X.
3. Milan and Hamm. (2004).
4. These figures include all ages.

5. Batson, C. D., Qian, Z. and Lichter, D. T. (2006). Interracial and intraracial patterns of mate selection among America's diverse Black populations. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 68: 658-672.
6. **First generation:** Persons born outside Canada. For the most part, these are people who are now, or have ever been, landed immigrants in Canada. Also included in the first generation are a small number of people born outside Canada to parents who are Canadian citizens by birth. In addition, the first generation includes people who are non-permanent residents. **Second generation:** Persons born inside Canada with at least one parent born outside Canada. This includes: (a) persons born in Canada with both parents born outside Canada and (b) persons born in Canada with one parent born in Canada and one parent born outside Canada (these persons may also have grandparents born inside or outside Canada). **Third generation or more:** Persons born inside Canada with both parents born inside Canada (these persons may also have grandparents born inside or outside Canada). Definition from Chui, T., Tran, K. and Maheux, H. (2008). *Canada's Ethnocultural Mosaic, 2006 Census*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 97-562-X.
7. Lee, S. M. and Boyd, M. (2008). Marrying out: Comparing the marital and social integration of Asians in the U.S. and Canada. *Social Science Research*. 37: 311-329.
8. Kalmijn, M. and van Tubergen, F. (2006). Ethnic intermarriage in the Netherlands: Confirmations and refutations of accepted insights. *European Journal of Population*. 22: 371-397.
9. Kalmijn, M. and van Tubergen, F. (2006). Ethnic intermarriage in the Netherlands: Confirmations and refutations of accepted insights. *European Journal of Population*. 22: 371-397. Aaron Gullickson. (2006). Education and Black-White interracial marriage. *Demography*. 43, 4: 673-689.
10. Income data from the census relate to the calendar year prior to the census year. For the 2006 Census, the income data refer to 2005.
11. Batson, Qian and Lichter. (2006).
12. The first time information was collected on same-sex common-law couples was in the 2001 Census.
13. Of the 7.5 million married and common-law couples in 2006, 45,300 were same-sex couples.
14. Bill C-38, the *Civil Marriage Act*, adopted on July 20, 2005, legalized same-sex marriage. Some provinces and territories had already legalized same-sex marriage, beginning with Ontario in June 2003.
15. Although the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA spans both the provinces of Quebec and Ontario, approximately three-quarters of the population is located on the Ontario side.
16. Labour Force Activity (8), Visible Minority Groups (14), Immigrant Status and Period of Immigration (9A), Age Groups (9) and Sex (3) for the Population 15 Years and Over of Canada, Provinces, Territories, Census Metropolitan Areas and Census Agglomerations, 1996 to 2006 Censuses - 20% Sample Data. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 97-562-X2006013.
17. It is important to distinguish between census metropolitan areas and municipalities (census subdivisions). A CMA usually consists of many municipalities, one of which, called the central municipality, is the census subdivision for which the CMA is named.
18. Martel, L. and Caron Malenfant, É. (2007). *Portrait of the Canadian Population in 2006, by Age and Sex, 2006 Census*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 97-551-X. Milan, A., Vézina, M. and Wells, C. (2007). *Family Portrait: Continuity and Change in Canadian Families and Households in 2006, 2006 Census*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 97-553-X.
19. An allophone is a person whose mother tongue is other than English or French.
20. Of the 7 million children under age 25 living with two parents, roughly 340,800 children, or 4.9%, lived in a mixed family situation where at least one family member, either the parent(s) or child, belonged to a visible minority group and at least one family member did not, or at least one family member belonged to a visible minority group that was different from the other family members.
21. Less common visible minority groups are reported in the category called visible minority n.i.e. (also known as 'not included elsewhere'). This category includes respondents who reported a write-in response such as Guyanese, West Indian, Kurd, Tibetan, Polynesian and Pacific Islander. Belonging to multiple visible minority groups means that respondents reported more than one visible minority group by checking two or more mark-in circles, e.g., Black and South Asian.
22. For example, see Turcotte, M. (2006). Passing on the ancestral language. *Canadian Social Trends*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 11-008-XWE.