
Appendix D. Historical Comparability of Journey to Work Data

A. Conceptual Changes

Journey to work data are generally comparable from 1971, 1981, 1991 and 1996. However, there have been some changes between censuses.

1. Changes to the Place of Work Question

The place of work question has been included in almost every census since 1971 in almost the same format. Nonetheless, some changes have been made over the years.

In 1991, a write-in box for postal code responses was added. Three changes were implemented in 1996. The “No fixed workplace address” response category was made explicit. The “County” write-in box was removed after investigation indicated that most persons did not respond and many of those who did respond confused “county” with “country” and wrote “Canada” as a response. Clearer instructions, with an example of a complete civic address response, were included to assist respondents in providing a complete workplace address.

2. No Fixed Workplace Address

The “No fixed workplace address” category did not exist in 1971. Persons who had no usual place of work address, and who did not report to a headquarters or depot, were instructed to write the address where they most often worked in the job described. Persons having no fixed workplace address were included with persons who worked at a usual place or in the “Not stated” category. In 1971, the “Not stated” category accounted for 9.2% of respondents, many of whom worked in construction or primary industries – industries which typically account for much of the “No fixed workplace” category.

In 1981 and 1991, persons who had no fixed workplace address, and who did not report to a headquarters or depot, were instructed to write “no usual place of work” in the address write-in boxes. These instructions did not appear on the questionnaire but were included in the Census Guide. In 1996, a “No fixed workplace address” response category was explicitly added to the place of work question, thereby reducing response burden.

B. Processing Changes

The changes over censuses associated with each of the stages in collection and processing have not significantly affected the comparability of journey to work data. However, there have been some processing changes of which data users should be aware.

1. Workplace Coding

In 1996, workplace locations were coded to representative points. Persons working in large urban centres within the coverage of Street Network Files are coded to the **block-face or street intersection representative point**. Persons working in small urban centres which are not covered by Street Network Files are coded to an **enumeration area representative point**. Persons working in rural areas or small urban centres which are not covered by Street Network Files were assigned an **enumeration area representative point** when it was not possible to code to the enumeration area representative point. The workplace location data are available at

the census tract (CT) and higher levels of standard census geography (e.g., census subdivisions [CSDs] and census metropolitan areas [CMAs]). Data can also be disseminated for non-standard geographic areas like traffic zones, planning areas, etc.

In previous censuses, workplace location data were first coded to the census subdivision and then coded to the census tract in separate coding operations. Census tract data were coded for all census-tracted areas in 1971 and 1981. From the 1991 Census, census tract workplace location data were produced only within the province of Ontario. In 1971 and 1991, census tract workplace location data were coded from a subsample of respondents residing in prescribed areas.

2. Edit and Imputation (E&I)

A significant change occurred in the edit and imputation of 1981 data. Prior to 1981, non-response to the place of work question was reported as “Not stated”. However, in 1981, the “Not stated” category was dropped and non-responses to the place of work question were changed to a specific response through imputation. Imputation was performed on both the place of work status and workplace location (census subdivision level) variables. However, census tract data were not imputed. Since the 1991 Census, location data have been imputed for all missing workplace geographies.

3. Calculation of Commuting Distance

Commuting distance was calculated in 1971, to the nearest half mile, between the residential enumeration area representative point and the workplace census tract representative point. Values of 251 miles or more were all stored as 251 miles. In 1996, the distance was calculated in kilometres, to the nearest 0.1 km, between the residential enumeration area representative point and the workplace location representative point.

C. Changes in Geographic Framework

Comparability of workplace location data between censuses is affected by conceptual changes in geography (such as definitions of rural, urban, farm, non-farm and census metropolitan areas) and changes in census subdivision (CSD), census division (CD), census metropolitan area (CMA), census agglomeration (CA) and census tract (CT) boundaries. Because of the large number of geographic areas and possible boundary changes between censuses, data users are encouraged to exercise caution when comparing workplace location data between censuses.