

Introduction

This guide contains information of use to both teachers and students. The first page is specific to the teacher. However, the following pages with background information on the Census of Population and the Census of Agriculture, as well as the section on census vocabulary, will be helpful to students as well as to teachers.

Objectives

1. To introduce students and teachers to the latest census information on Canada and its people.
2. To increase awareness about census information as a valuable tool for student research projects.

Resources for census material

Census information can be obtained free of charge in libraries located across Canada. Selected libraries receive Statistics Canada's full range of products in a variety of media while others carry a selection of publications. You can also get census information from bookstores selling Government of Canada publications. Or you can visit the Statistics Canada Web site (www.statcan.ca).

Enrichment Suggestions

In addition to the enrichment exercises in the activity you can also suggest your own. Some ideas:

1. Hold essay contests. Students could write about social or economic changes in the community, region, or country by consulting census publications at libraries or by searching the Statistics Canada Web site. They could also write about the importance of the census to the community or important trends revealed by the 1996 Census. Winning entries could be printed in the school newspaper.
2. Create posters, cartoons or collages using the same themes or others.
3. Produce an exhibit. Create library or lobby displays showing historical population changes that have taken place in your community, county or province. A combination of photographs, other graphics and written information can create an effective presentation.
4. Have special presentations. Census data are being put to many uses in your community and province. Invite people from your community who use this information to talk to your class. Possible sources include a regional planning office, a chamber of commerce, the school board planning department, a market research firm, a library, or your local Statistics Canada office.

The Census of Canada

The Census of Population

Every five years Statistics Canada takes a census of population. The last census was on May 14, 1996; the next one will be in 2001. The census provides a comprehensive collection of facts about people in Canada. For example, people are asked questions about their age, sex, marital status, education, employment, income, ethnic origin, language, and other subjects. The need for this kind of information increases as our society becomes more complex.

Census History

Census taking is not a new idea. During the third and fourth centuries B.C. Babylonians, Chinese, and Egyptians were enumerating their populations to collect taxes and to fight foreign wars. The Romans were avid census takers and regularly held censuses to inform themselves about areas in their far-reaching empire.

However, in contrast to early censuses, later censuses became more than just a way to levy taxes or to muster men for fighting. They were seen as an inquiry into the social and economic state of the nation.

Intendant Jean Talon is generally regarded to have been the first in the world to put into practice this concept of the modern census. Sent by Louis XIV to administer the colony of New France, Talon recognized the importance of having reliable information on which to organize the colony and further its development. This first census in 1666 enumerated 3,215 inhabitants and collected information on age, sex, marital status, locality, and occupation. A supplementary inquiry in 1667 covered area of land under cultivation and the numbers of cattle and sheep.

No fewer than 36 censuses were conducted during the French regime. Each one brought a few new questions including the production of various crops, the number of public buildings, churches, grist mills and sawmills, and the number of firearms and swords.

The first census under the British regime was taken in 1765 and contained much the same information as the censuses in the latter part of the French regime. As time progressed, new topics appeared such as race, ethnicity, religion, and place of birth.

During the 1800s separate censuses of different complexities were held at various times in the Atlantic colonies, Upper and Lower Canada, and in Manitoba. Eventually, with 1867 and Confederation, the British North America Act called for a Census of Canada to provide an official count of the population to determine the number of members in the House of Commons. The first national census was to be taken in 1871 with additional ones to be taken every 10 years thereafter.

In 1956, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics began taking censuses once every five years to provide up-to-date information on the nation's rapidly changing population. This mid-decade census was made mandatory in the *Statistics Act* of 1971.

How is the census taken?

A few days before the last Census Day on May 14, 1996, every household in Canada (almost 11 million) received a census questionnaire. To deliver these forms, Statistics Canada hired and trained about 39,000 temporary employees called census representatives. Each census representative was responsible for all the households in his or her particular enumeration area.

In the southern, more populated parts of the country, census representatives began delivering census forms about a week before Census Day. In these areas, each household is asked to complete its own questionnaire. This self-enumeration method reduces the possibility of a census representative misunderstanding a response or recording it incorrectly. It also avoids any embarrassment people may feel when asked personal questions at their front door. The forms were to be completed on May 14th and mailed back as soon as possible.

While most households received a short questionnaire, a sample of one household in five received a longer questionnaire. The short one asks basic questions such as age, sex, and marital status. The longer version asks these questions plus more detailed ones on subjects such as education, income, and employment. Enumerating one household in five will produce statistics on these subjects that are accurate for the entire population. Some of the advantages of sampling include lessening the burden on respondents as well as reducing collection and processing costs.

Because of the smaller number of people living in northern areas or on Indian reserves, the one-in-five sampling ratio would not accurately reflect all people within the group. In these areas everyone is interviewed using the long form.

When all the forms were returned, the responses were entered into a computer. The wealth of data produced can then be sorted and cross-referenced. We can find out, for example, the number of school-aged children in Edmonton or the number of people employed in the forest industry in New Brunswick.

The Census of Agriculture

Agriculture has always been an important part of our economy and as such worthy of census-taking. Jean Talon's census of 1667 tells us that the colony had 11,448 arpents of land (3,915 hectares) under cultivation; 3,107 cattle; and 85 sheep.

As mentioned under **Census History**, the British North America Act of 1867 called for a Census of Canada to be taken in 1871 and every 10 years thereafter. However, the expansion of western Canada at the turn of the century created a demand for agricultural information at more regular intervals. A mid-decade agricultural census was first held in Manitoba in 1896 and then extended in 1906 to Alberta and Saskatchewan. In 1956 and the establishment of a 5-year Census of Population, the Census of Agriculture became national.

On May 14, 1996, everyone who ran an agricultural operation completed a Census of Agriculture questionnaire. The Census of Agriculture gives us facts about the country's farming and food production. Governments and private groups make use of agricultural statistics to develop or evaluate agricultural policies and programs. They also use the data to make production or marketing decisions. For example, information on the quantity of produce and livestock grown helps forecast shortages or surpluses. Also, information about farm energy usage helps energy companies prepare for fuel and electricity requirements.

Who uses census data?

Census information is used by governments, businesses and industries, social organizations, and countless other agencies and individuals. For instance:

The **federal government** uses population counts from censuses taken in years ending in "1" to determine the boundaries of federal electoral districts (FEDs). In our system of government, one member of Parliament is elected for each FED; therefore, the population of FEDs must be approximately equal. The figures from the 1991 Census resulted in the creation of 6 new FEDs, increasing the number of representatives in the House of Commons from 295 to 301.

Governments of all levels use census data to decide policies on economic and social programs. In fact, census data are related to more than 80 federal-provincial laws including federal transfer payments, old age security, official languages, and war veterans' allowances. At the local level, municipalities use census data to assess the need for community programs and services, such as transportation, police, or youth services.

Businesses and industries use census data to analyse markets for their goods and services, plan their need for employees, or select new retail or manufacturing sites.

The **health care industry** uses census data to forecast health care needs and costs, and select sites for hospitals, seniors homes, and clinics.

The **labour sector**. The census measures the number, location and skills of Canadian workers and provides information on their age, education, income, sex, marital status and ethnic origin. Much use can be made of this information including helping planners decide what employment or training programs to develop.

Social service agencies use census data to assess many social needs such as day-care or subsidized housing.

The **education sector** uses information on level of schooling achieved for planning postsecondary and adult education programs. School boards use population figures by age group and ethnic origin to project school enrolments or to plan special programs.

The **agricultural sector**. Agricultural programs operated by both government and private industry are determined using census data.

The **media** use data on economic activity, income, housing, education, language, immigration, ethnic origin, and family composition as background for articles.

More than a civic responsibility?

It is vital that decision makers have accurate statistics when making policies that will shape our country's future. For this reason, answering census questions is more than a civic responsibility—it is required by law. The *Statistics Act* states this requirement and details the penalties for not filling in a census form.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Concerns among the public have been growing about disclosing personal information (privacy) and feeling sure that the information is protected (confidentiality).

First of all, great care is taken when deciding on questions. The information must be clearly in the public interest and unable to be obtained from other sources. When deciding questions for the 1996 Census, Statistics Canada consulted with over 990 organizations across the country. The questions then had to be approved by Cabinet.

No one has to submit a census form to a census-taker they know. Alternative arrangements can be made.

Although names and addresses are required on the census form, this is only to ensure that no household is missed or counted twice. Names and addresses are not entered into the census database. This database combines information from all the census questionnaires and outputs it in the form of statistics.

Under the *Statistics Act*, all personal census information must be kept confidential. Only Statistics Canada employees who have a need to examine individual forms have access to the completed questionnaires. Penalties for employees who release personal census information are laid down in the *Statistics Act*. No one else, not other government departments, the courts, or the RCMP can have access to personal census information.

What questions are asked?

Years before each census is taken, many groups and experts discuss what questions are needed. Federal and provincial governments, businesses, universities, social action groups, and town planners all make suggestions based on their needs for information. The questions for the 1996 Census were being developed even before the results of the 1991 Census were complete. Likewise, planning for the 2001 Census is already well underway.

Many of the questions remain the same from census to census. This way we can track trends over the years, such as the growth or decline in the population in various areas of the country. However, as appropriate, new questions are asked and some are deleted. For example, in 1996 a new question was introduced on unpaid work in the household. Similarly, in 1991 the housing question on principal type of heating equipment was dropped.

Census Vocabulary

census	The word census comes from the Latin <i>censere</i> —to appraise. By collecting information from every person in Canada, the census can tell us about a wide variety of social and economic topics important to the country. These include age, sex, marital status, education, ethnic origin, language, labour force activities, agricultural activities, immigration, migration, and others. A Census of Population and a Census of Agriculture are held concurrently once every five years. The most recent Census of Canada took place on May 14, 1996 and the next one will occur in 2001.
census data	information produced from the census
Census of Agriculture	an enumeration of every farm, ranch or other agricultural operation with sales of agricultural products during the year prior to the census. Held every five years in conjunction with the Census of Population, the Census of Agriculture asks questions about land use, crops, livestock, agricultural labour, farm income, and land management practices.
Census of Population	an enumeration of every household and person in the country once every five years on a particular day. A short form, which is distributed to 80% of the population, asks basic questions such as date of birth, sex, family relationship, marital and common-law status, and mother tongue. A longer form, which is distributed to 20% of the population, asks more detailed questions on language, citizenship and immigration, ethnic origin, education, labour market activities, income, unpaid work, and dwellings. The 20% sample obtains information that is statistically accurate for the country as a whole while lowering the cost of the census and the burden on respondents.
census metropolitan area (CMA)	a very large urban area (known as the urban core) together with adjacent urban and rural areas that are economically and socially related to the urban core. The urban core has a population of 100,000 or more. The census has identified 25 CMAs across Canada.
complete count	the census goal—to obtain information from everyone who is a resident of Canada
confidentiality	The <i>Statistics Act</i> requires that all personal census information be kept confidential. Data are released only after responses have been combined in a database to produce statistics.
enumeration	In the census, most Canadians are enumerated by self-enumeration. In this case, census representatives visit each dwelling and drop off the questionnaire. Respondents then complete the questionnaire in the privacy of their own homes. In remote areas census representatives enumerate householders by conducting personal interviews—a method known as canvasser enumeration or personal interview.
farm operator	person(s) responsible for the day-to-day decisions made in the farming operation
household	a family or a group of unrelated persons living in a dwelling

House of Commons	the elected house of Parliament. Each member of the House of Commons is elected from one of Canada's federal electoral districts (FEDs or ridings). The most recent changes, which were determined by information from the 1991 Census of Population, called for the creation of an additional 6 FEDS, increasing the number of Canada's elected officials in the House of Commons from 295 to 301.
immigration	the act of entering a foreign country as a permanent resident
multicultural	having a number of distinct cultures existing side by side in the same country
off-farm work	the number of days farm operators worked away from the farming operation at paid agricultural and non-agricultural work
overcount	those people who were counted more than once (e.g., people away from home who were counted at a hotel/motel as well as at their regular residence).
population	the total number of people living in a given area
place of birth	the country in which a person was born, according to present boundaries
privacy	refers to concern about disclosing personal information on the census form. Providing personal information to anyone does involve some loss of privacy. But in virtually any country in the world, it is recognized that the public benefits of accurate census data far outweigh this minimal loss of privacy, especially when the personal information is kept strictly confidential and is used only to produce statistics.
questionnaire	a document containing a series of questions. It is used to ensure that information is collected in a standardized manner and is usually designed so that the answers can be tabulated quickly.
sample	part of something that can be used to represent the whole. For the census, a sample of one in five households in populated areas are asked additional questions. The combined characteristics of these households are representative of the entire population.
survey	a study made by gathering information in the form of statistics. Although the census is often referred to as Canada's largest survey, the terms <i>census</i> and <i>survey</i> really mean different things. In a census, a wide variety of information is gathered from the entire population. In a survey, information on a narrower topic is gathered from a smaller sample within the population.
undercount (noun)	the estimated number of persons who were <i>not</i> counted in the census.