



ACTIVITY 1

UNDERSTANDING KEY CANADIAN CENSUS TERMINOLOGY

LEVEL:	Adult English as a Second Language (ESL)/ French as a Second Language (FSL) - beginner to intermediate
TIME REQUIRED:	30 to 45 minutes
THEME:	Understanding the Canadian Census of Population
LANGUAGE FOCUS:	Vocabulary development and oral/written language fluency

Lesson overview

This lesson introduces important terminology used in the Canadian Census of Population to people whose first language is not English or French. Through a vocabulary worksheet activity and class discussion, learners will develop a foundational understanding of census-related terms to help them engage confidently with census materials and processes.

Learning objectives:

By the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- Define key census-related terms.
- Differentiate between similar terms (e.g., household vs. dwelling).
- Use their new vocabulary in context related to Canadian census information.

Materials needed

- Printed copies of [Census vocabulary worksheet](#)
- A printed copy of the [Census vocabulary definitions \(teacher's copy\)](#)
- Dictionaries or access to phones for language support (optional)
- Whiteboard or flip chart for class discussion
- Pens and/or pencils

Lesson procedure:

1 Vocabulary worksheet (individual or in pairs) – 15 to 25 minutes

- Distribute the vocabulary worksheet containing a list of key census terms while briefly explaining the concept of the Canadian Census of Population to give students the necessary context for the vocabulary.
- Instruct learners to write their own definitions for each term without immediately consulting external sources, encouraging critical thinking and application of prior knowledge.
- As learners record their answers, allow use of phones or dictionaries as second language support if needed.
- Learners may work individually or in pairs to promote collaboration and peer learning.

2 Class discussion and comparison - 15 to 20 minutes

- Reconvene as a class and invite those who are willing to share their definitions.
- Write down common and differing definitions on the whiteboard or chart paper.
- Use the educator's terminology sheet to clarify official or widely accepted definitions, addressing any misconceptions.
- Encourage questions and examples from learners to deepen understanding.



Extensions and follow-up activities

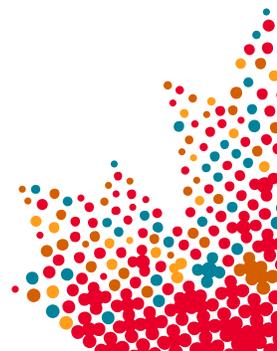
- Use census forms or sample questions to apply terminology in a practical context.
- Create flashcards or quizzes for reinforcement.
- Encourage learners to discuss how census data might be used in their communities.

Adaptations and differentiation:

- **To simplify:** Provide a word bank or sentence starters (e.g., “A dwelling is a place where...”) to support learners with limited vocabulary or literacy skills.
- **To increase difficulty:** Ask advanced learners to use each term in a full sentence or apply the terms by analyzing a sample census form in small groups.
- **For language support:** Encourage the use of bilingual dictionaries, translation apps, or peer collaboration to work through any language barriers.

Notes for educators

- Adapt the complexity of definitions based on learners’ English proficiency levels.
- Be sensitive to cultural differences regarding terms like “sex” when explaining some of the demographic vocabulary.
- Terms were drawn from The 2021 Census of Population Dictionary.





CENSUS VOCABULARY WORKSHEET

Fill in the definitions for the following words:

Census of Population	
Dwelling	
Household	
Non-permanent resident	
Immigrant	
Occupation	

CENSUS VOCABULARY WORKSHEET

Commuting duration	
Ethnic or cultural origin	
Marital status	
Sex at birth	
Population group	
Indigenous group	
Religion	

CENSUS VOCABULARY WORKSHEET

Resident	
Enumerator	
Census Day	

CENSUS VOCABULARY DEFINITIONS (TEACHER'S COPY)



* Note: terms were drawn from [The 2021 Census of Population Dictionary](#).

Census of Population	<p>The Census of Population is a survey conducted to enumerate (or count) the entire Canadian population based on a “usual place of residence,” that is, by the location where a person lives most of the time.</p> <p>Census enumeration involves listing all usual residents of a dwelling on Census Day.</p> <p>The Census of Population helps paint a statistical portrait of Canada’s diverse population and the places where we live by collecting demographic, social and economic information from households across Canada.</p>
Dwelling	<p>A dwelling is defined as a set of living quarters. In other words, the building where you live (e.g., the apartment building or house you live in).</p>
Household	<p>Household refers to a person or group of persons who occupy the same dwelling and do not have a usual place of residence elsewhere in Canada or abroad. For example, an apartment building it made up of many households, as each apartment is its own unique household. This includes family and/or friends living together. Typically, one census is completed per household.</p>
Non-permanent resident	<p>Non-permanent resident refers to a person from another country with a usual place of residence in Canada (i.e., someone who is currently living in Canada) and who has a work or study permit or who has claimed refugee status (asylum claimant).</p> <p>Family members living with work or study permit holders are also included, unless these family members are already Canadian citizens or landed immigrants or permanent residents.</p>

CENSUS VOCABULARY DEFINITIONS (TEACHER'S COPY)

<p>Immigrant</p>	<p>Immigrant refers to a person who is, or who has ever been, a landed immigrant or permanent resident (i.e., if you were born and lived in another country and then moved to Canada). So, someone who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities.</p> <p>Immigrants who have obtained Canadian citizenship by naturalization are included in this group.</p>
<p>Occupation</p>	<p>Occupation refers to the kind of work performed in a job a job being all the tasks carried out by a particular worker to complete his or her duties. In other words, what type of job someone has, such as a teacher, plumber or civil engineer.</p>
<p>Commuting duration</p>	<p>Commuting duration refers to the length of time, in minutes, usually required by a person to travel to their place of work.</p>
<p>Ethnic or cultural origin</p>	<p>Ethnic or cultural origin refers to the ethnic or cultural origins of the person's ancestors. Ancestors may have Indigenous origins, or origins that refer to different countries, or other origins that may not refer to different countries. Ancestors refer to the people that a person has descended from (e.g., grandparents, great grandparents, etc.). For example, if your grandparents are from Greece, your ethnic or cultural origin would be Greek.</p>
<p>Marital status</p>	<p>Marital status refers to whether or not a person is living in a common-law union as well as the legal marital status of those who are not living in a common-law union. In other words, whether adults living together are married, common-law, separated, divorced, or widowed.</p>
<p>Sex at birth</p>	<p>Sex at birth refers to sex assigned at birth. Sex at birth is typically assigned based on a person's reproductive system and other physical characteristics.</p> <p>Sex at birth may also be understood as the sex recorded at a person's birth (for example, what was recorded on their birth certificate – male or female).</p>

CENSUS VOCABULARY DEFINITIONS (TEACHER'S COPY)

<p>Population group</p>	<p>Population group refers to whether the person reports being White, South Asian, First Nations, Métis or Inuk (Inuit), Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, Japanese and/or another population group. These specific groups are the mark in categories used in a question which collects data on the visible minority population for employment equity purposes.</p>
<p>Indigenous group</p>	<p>Indigenous group refers to whether the person is First Nations (North American Indian), Métis and/or Inuk (Inuit). A person may be included in more than one of these three specific groups. Aboriginal peoples of Canada (referred to here as Indigenous peoples) are defined in the <i>Constitution Act, 1982</i>, Section 35 (2) as including Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples.</p> <p>First Nations (North American Indian) includes Status and non-Status Indians.</p>
<p>Religion</p>	<p>Religion refers to the person's self-identification as having a connection or affiliation with any religious denomination, group, body, or other religiously defined community or system of belief. Religion is not limited to formal membership in a religious organization or group. For example, Roman Catholic, Muslim, United Church, Anglican, Hindu, Sikh, Baptist, Pentecostal, Buddhist, Jewish, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Greek Orthodox, etc.</p> <p>For infants or children, religion refers to the specific religious group or denomination in which they are being raised, if any. Persons without a religious connection or affiliation can self-identify as atheist, agnostic or humanist, or can provide another applicable response.</p>
<p>Resident</p>	<p>Resident refers to a person who lives in a dwelling in Canada on Census Day. This includes people who live in the dwelling most of the time, whether they are Canadian citizens, permanent residents, immigrants, or non-permanent residents. A resident may be part of a household and is counted in the census based on their usual place of residence (i.e., where they live most of the time).</p>

CENSUS VOCABULARY DEFINITIONS (TEACHER'S COPY)

Enumerator	Enumerator refers to a person hired by Statistics Canada to help carry out the Census of Population. Enumerators are responsible for visiting dwellings, delivering census materials, assisting residents with completing their census questionnaires, and ensuring that all households are accurately counted. Enumerators play an important role in helping collect information that reflects Canada's population and communities.
Census Day	Census Day refers to the reference day for the Census of Population. It is the reference point used to determine who is living in each dwelling and where they usually reside on that day. All census responses are based on the situation as it exists on Census Day, including who lives in the household, their age, and other demographic information. In Canada, Census Day typically falls in May and is set by Statistics Canada every five years. For the 2026 Census, Census Day is May 12, 2026.