

Reading Comprehension

“The Census”

What is a Census?

The word “census” comes from the Latin word *censere*, meaning “to assess.”

Canada’s census is a nationwide survey held every five years. It collects

demographic information on every man, woman and child.

Census data offers a snapshot of Canada’s population. By comparing one census to the next, analysts can see how Canada is changing.

How it Works

Every Canadian household received a census package around May 3. One adult per home must fill in the questionnaire about all the people who live in the house.

Most households get the short-form census. It asks 10 basic questions about age, sex, marital status, relationship to others in the household, and language. One in four homes also gets the long-form census with more than 60 questions. It collects details about the residents’ role in their community. It also asks about cultural background, spoken languages, family relationships, and childcare. It covers schooling, employment, income, ability, housing, and transportation.

Many questions stay the same from census to census. That way, researchers can compare data across several decades. However, each census some new questions are added as well.

The completed forms go back to Statistics Canada. All this data is sorted and **cross-referenced**. Analysts then extract useful statistics, such as the number of school-aged children in Regina in 2020.

Why a Census?

Census information is needed for planning and decision-making. We all use public services such as schools, hospitals, fire/police protection, and roads. Census data is used to decide where these services are needed most.

The healthcare industry uses the data to forecast needs and costs. Using past census data, Statistics Canada has found that the proportion of Canadians aged 65 and over will triple between 1976 and 2051. The proportion of seniors over 80 is growing especially fast. That's important information to know for planning.

"One reason health care costs are going up is that the population most needy of health care is [aging too]," said one researcher.

More Uses

Census information also helps set transfer payments to provinces. That's money the provinces use to fund health care and other social services.

Businesses, media, industry, and universities use this information, too. It helps in everything from research to choosing locations for stores or offices.

It's the law

Every household must complete the survey. Those who refuse risk a fine or even jail time. Some say the government shouldn't be asking personal questions. They worry about how the information will be used. However, confidentiality is protected by law. Census databases never attach a name or address to a file, so no one can be identified. As well, the data asked for must be clearly in the public interest and not available from other sources.

Our Census

Canada's first census was conducted in 1871. Today, our census covers more than 9.2 million square kilometres and reaches over 15 million households. Census questions have been translated into 20 ethnic languages and 11 Indigenous languages but answers must be given in English or French.

Questions

1. Explain what the term **census** means. What is a census? (2 marks)
2. How often is a census conducted in Canada? What is the purpose of collecting this information? (2 marks)
3. Which federal government department is responsible for the census? (1 mark)
4. What information was sent to all Canadian households in early May? (1 mark)
5. How many households were surveyed? (1 mark)
6. Describe how the population census will be conducted. (2 marks)
7. What is the **long-form census**? Explain. (2 marks)
8. List at least three examples of what census results are used for. (3 marks)
9. Why is it important for the government to know that the proportion of the population aged 65 and over will triple between 1976 and 2051? (2 marks)

10. Why may some people object to completing the census? Explain (2 marks)

11. What inferences can you draw from the fact that the census questions have been translated online into 31 other languages – 20 ethnic languages and 11 Indigenous languages? Give reasons to support your ideas. (5 marks)

12. Respond to the following question in paragraph form. **Data collected by the census is very valuable.** Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Give reasons to support your response. (10 marks)