

2006 Population

Though Canada is the second largest land mass in the world, it is one of the least populated countries. According to the 2006 Census, it had a population of 31.6 million and a population density of 3.5 persons per square kilometre. Most Canadians live in urban areas, mainly within 200 kilometres of the United States, Ontario and Quebec, the two largest provinces with, respectively, 12.2 million and 7.5 million people comprised about 62% of the nation's population. British Columbia and Alberta were next in size with 4.1 million and 3.3 million people, respectively. The four Atlantic provinces—Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick—and the two Prairie provinces—Manitoba and Saskatchewan—had a relatively small share (7.2% and 6.7%, respectively) of the nation's population. Only 0.3% lived in the three territories—Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut—which make up 40% of the Canadian land mass.

In 2006, more than 80% of the total population lived in an urban centre of 10 000 or more, and about one-third (34%) lived in just three census metropolitan areas (CMAs): Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver. These three CMAs had the highest population densities, at 866, 854 and 735 persons per square kilometre, respectively.

Between 2001 and 2006, Canada's population increased by 5.4%. Roughly two-thirds of population growth during this period came from net international migration (immigrants minus emigrants), while the remaining one-third came from natural increase (births minus deaths). Alberta and Ontario were the only two provinces which experienced population growth above the national average, at a rate of 10.6% and 6.6%, respectively. The three territories all had a population growth above the national average as well. The three Maritime provinces (Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick) had the smallest population growth (less than 1.0%), while Newfoundland and Labrador, and Saskatchewan experienced population declines, at a rate of 1.5% and 1.1%, respectively.

Care should be exercised in comparing the Northwest Territories 2006 Census population counts with counts from the 2001 Census. In 2001, the net undercount for the Northwest Territories was estimated at 8.11%, substantially higher than the national level of 2.99%, and almost doubles its 1996 level. The increase in the population between 2001 and 2006 is likely overstated due to improvements in coverage of the Northwest Territories in 2006.

The text was adapted from Statistics Canada, Portrait of the Canadian Population in 2006, 2006 Census (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-550/index-eng.cfm>), Catalogue number 97-550-XWE2006001. Statistics Canada information is used with the permission of Statistics Canada. Information on the availability of the wide range of data from Statistics Canada can be obtained

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