

Many Reasons to Participate in Census

The first census in North America was conducted in 1666 by the Intendant of New France, Jean Talon. Going door to door, he recorded the names, ages, genders, and occupations of members of the population. This was the beginning of the national census that would eventually serve as a great contributor to our social development and to advancement in Canadian society.

Of course, there have been changes to the census over the years to reflect the changing Canadian landscape and to collect as much evidence as possible about the population. As the government looks to improve the lives of its citizens, the census helps to identify key socioeconomic trends in Canadian society. This, in turn, provides the government with vital information it can use to make decisions on national needs to be addressed.

The process of gathering information and the information gathered from this year's census will be different for certain reasons. For one, this census will be the first ever conducted during a global pandemic! Secondly, the census for the first time includes questions about gender; respondents will be asked about their sex at birth and their gender at the time of completion.

Another aspect should be pointed out: census results paint a portrait for linguistic minorities in every region. After each census, we can determine whether Official Language Minority Communities (OLMCs) have grown or shrunk. This sets the stage for decisions made for/about them. Those who follow the census results have observed that some areas are experiencing growth in their OLMC populations, while some areas are exhibiting a decline. The results from the census will guide decisions about the language of provision for certain government services. New to this census will be the enumeration of those throughout Canada who are eligible to attend a minority language school. This will provide a more accurate portrayal of who has this right and enable governments to better serve their OLMC populations by ensuring adequate educational facilities exist.

Finally, this year's census will be very important because every 10 years, Canada's electoral boundaries must be reviewed and reconsidered. Under the [Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act](#), the boundaries of electoral ridings in each province must be readjusted to reflect population growth/loss. The 2011 census registered a Canadian population of 34.4 million, of which 7.9 million were in Quebec. Our current estimated population has grown to more than 37.7 million, about 8.57 million in Quebec. The large increase in both the national and provincial populations may require changes to electoral districts or the creation of new ones. The government body mandated to carry out this task will have to bear three criteria in mind. It must:

- “respect communities of interest or identity”;
- “respect historical patterns of previous electoral boundaries”; and

- “maintain a manageable geographic size for districts in sparsely populated, rural or northern regions of the province.”

So there are many reasons – beyond the simple fact that it is also required by law --to make sure you complete your census!