

## Ethnic/Cultural Origin

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### Description

The proportion of the population that reports origins from a given ethnic or cultural group. This indicator refers to the ethnic or cultural origins of a person's **ancestors**. The measurement of ethnicity is affected by the social environment and personal factors including awareness of family background, length of time since immigration and confusion with other concepts such as citizenship, nationality, language, or identity.<sup>1</sup>

### Specific Indicators

- Total Ethnic /Cultural Origin

### Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS)

- The Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS) establish requirements for the fundamental public health programs and services carried out by boards of health, which include assessment and surveillance, health promotion and policy development, disease and injury prevention, and health protection. The OPHS consist of one Foundational Standard and 13 Program Standards that articulate broad societal goals that result from the activities undertaken by boards of health and many others, including community partners, non-governmental organizations, and governmental bodies. These results have been expressed in terms of two levels of outcomes: societal outcomes and board of health outcomes. Societal outcomes entail changes in health status, organizations, systems, norms, policies, environments, and practices and result from the work of many sectors of society, including boards of health, for the improvement of the overall health of the population. Board of health outcomes are the results of endeavours by boards of health and often focus on changes in awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills, practices, environments, and policies. Boards of health are accountable for these outcomes. The standards also outline the requirements that boards of health must implement to achieve the stated results.

### Outcomes related to this indicator

- Societal Outcome (Foundational Standard): Population health needs are anticipated, identified, addressed, and evaluated.

### Assessment and/or Surveillance Requirements Related to this Indicator

- The board of health shall assess current health status, health behaviours, preventive health practices, health care utilization relevant to public health, and demographic indicators in accordance with the Population Health Assessment and Surveillance Protocol, 2008 (or as current) (Foundational Standard).

- The board of health shall use population health, determinants of health and health inequities information to assess the needs of the local population, including the identification of populations at risk, to determine those groups that would benefit most from public health programs and services (i.e., priority populations) (Foundational Standard).

### **Protocol Requirements Related to this Indicator**

- The board of health shall collect or access the following types of population health data and information: i) Socio-demographics including population counts by age, sex, education, employment, income, housing, language, immigration, culture, ability/disability, and cost of a nutritious food basket (Population Health Assessment and Surveillance Protocol 1.b.i.).
- The board of health shall analyze population health data and interpret the information to describe the distribution of health outcomes, preventive health practices, risk factors, determinants of health, and other relevant information to assess the overall health of its population (Population Health Assessment and Surveillance Protocol 2.b.).

**<http://www.ontario.ca/publichealthstandards>**

### **Corresponding Health Indicator from Statistics Canada and CIHI**

The Internet publication Health Indicators, produced jointly by Statistics Canada and the Canadian Institute for Health Information, provides over 80 indicators measuring the health of the Canadian population and the effectiveness of the health care system. Designed to provide comparable information at the health region and provincial/territorial levels, these data are produced from a wide range of the most recently available sources.

There is no corresponding health indicator for this core indicator.

### **Corresponding Indicators from Other Sources**

- Historical total ethnic origins may be available at:
  - <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/start>
  - Click on Ethnic diversity and immigration
  - Click on Ethnic groups and generations in Canada
  - Select Census Tables
  - Select table with geographic unit of interest, e.g. *Census Metropolitan Areas, Census Agglomerations and Census Subdivisions*. Data is available to the census sub-division level e.g. Catalogue number 94-580-X2006006.

**Data Sources (see Resources: [Data Sources](#))**

**Numerator & Denominator:** [Census of Population \[to 2011, 20% sample\], \[2016, 25% sample\] and National Household Survey \(NHS\) \[2011, voluntary\]](#)

**Original source:** Statistics Canada

**Distributed by:** Statistics Canada

**Suggested citation (see [Data Citation Notes](#)):**

**Survey Questions**

Survey & Question #	Question	Accompanying Instructions to the Interviewer
Question 17 from the Census/National Household Survey:	What were the ethnic or cultural origins of this person's ancestors?	<p>Instructions to interviewers in the 2011 NHS guide are:</p> <p>An ancestor is usually more distant than a grandparent.</p> <p>This question refers to the ethnic or cultural origin or origins of a person's ancestors. Other than Aboriginal persons, most people can trace their origins to their ancestors who first came to this continent. Ancestry should not be confused with citizenship or nationality.</p> <p>For all persons, report the specific ethnic or cultural group or groups to which their ancestors belonged, not the language they spoke. For example, report 'Haitian' rather than 'French', or 'Austrian' rather than 'German'.</p> <p>For persons of East Indian or South Asian origins, report a specific origin or origins. Do not report 'Indian'. For example, report 'East Indian from India', 'East Indian from Guyana', or indicate the specific group, such as 'Punjabi' or 'Tamil'.</p> <p>For persons with Aboriginal ancestors, report a specific origin or origins. For example, report 'Cree', 'Mi'kmaq', 'Ojibway', 'Métis', or 'North American Indian'. Do not report 'Indian'.</p>

**Alternative Data Sources**

**Numerator & Denominator:** Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS)

**Original source:** Statistics Canada

**Distributed by:** Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC)

**Suggested citation (see [Data Citation Notes](#)):**

Canadian Community Health Survey [Years], Statistics Canada, Share File, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

**Survey Questions**

Survey & Question #	Question	Response Options	Accompanying Instructions to the Interviewer
Canadian Community Health Survey SDC_Q4A	To which ethnic or cultural groups did ^YOUR2 ancestors belong? (For example: French, Scottish, Chinese, East Indian)	The questionnaire provides 20 selections with an “other” category which can be completed to describe the additional group	Mark all that apply. An ancestor is usually more distant than a grandparent. If "Canadian" is the only response, probe. If the respondent hesitates, do not suggest Canadian. If the respondent answers "Eskimo", enter "20".

**Analysis Check List**

- None

**Method of Calculation**

Individuals may provide a single response (one ancestral origin) or multiple responses (multiple ancestral origins). Multiple responses (a respondent may provide more than one ancestral origin) if totalled, will exceed the total number of respondents. Data at the CSD or CT level is available for download for total responses only. Data above the CSD level provides total, single, and multiple responses (e.g Catalogue Number 97-562-XCB2006006 or Catalogue Number 99-010-X2011028). The following formula may be changed to reflect those who identified only one ethnic source or include those who also identified more than one ethnic source (multiple responses) in the numerator. (see Indicator Comments)

**Total Responses on Ethnic Origin**

The number of people who identified an ancestry from a given ethnic/cultural group divided by the total non-institutional population. This calculation includes those who identified a single ancestry and multiple ancestries (i.e. total ancestry).

$$\frac{\text{Total number of people with identified ancestry from a given ethnic/cultural group}}{\text{Total non – institutional population}} \times 100$$

### Basic Categories

- Data is included for more than 200 ethnic groups reported by people living in Canada. In general, data for a group is published if the count is about 500 or higher.
- Geographic areas: census division, census sub-division, census tract, census agglomerations and census metropolitan areas.

### Indicator Comments

- It is important to note that ethnic origin responses are a reflection of each respondent's perception of their ethnic ancestry, and, consequently, the measurement of ethnicity is affected by changes in the social environment in which the question is asked and changes in the respondent's understanding or views about the topic. Awareness of family background or length of time since immigration can affect responses to the ethnic origin question as well.<sup>1</sup>

This means that two respondents with the same ethnic ancestry could have different response patterns and thus could be counted as having different ethnic origins. For example, a respondent could report 'East Indian' as an ethnic origin while another respondent, with a similar ancestral background, could report 'Punjabi' or 'South Asian' instead. Therefore, ethnic origin data can be fluid. Nevertheless, ethnic origin data in the NHS are a reflection of the respondent's perception of his or her ethnic ancestry at the time of collection. Users who wish to obtain broader response estimates may wish to combine data for one or more ethnic origins together or use estimates for ethnic categories (e.g., 'South Asian origins').<sup>1</sup> Some respondents may choose to provide very specific ethnic origins in the census, while others may choose to give more general responses. This means that two respondents with the same ethnic ancestry could have different response patterns and thus could be counted as having different ethnic origins.

- It's been argued that the construct of ethnic origin may be confused with ethnic identity. This particularly may be as it applies to "Canadian" as an ethnic origin which may be subject to social pressures.<sup>2</sup>
- Data are published which show single, multiple and total response counts for each ethnic group.
  - Single ethnic response: Occurs when a respondent provides one ethnic origin only. For example, in 2006, 741,045 people stated that their only ethnic origin was Italian [Catalogue Number 97-562-XCB2006006]. Since 1981, when respondents were first permitted to report more than one ethnic origin in the census, a distinction has been made between single and multiple responses.
  - Multiple ethnic response: Occurs when a respondent provides two or more ethnic origins. For example, 704,285 people in 2006 gave a response which included Italian and one or more other ethnic origins. As a result of increasing intermarriage between persons of different ethnic backgrounds, an increasing proportion of the population of Canada report two or more ethnic origins.
  - Total responses: They are the sum of single and multiple responses for each

ethnic origin. Total response counts indicate the number of persons who reported a specified ethnic origin, either as their only origin or in addition to one or more other ethnic groups. For example, 1,445,330 persons reported at least some Italian ancestry in 2006.

- Ethnic origins may change with generation status. For example, someone with a longer ancestry who was born in Canada may be more likely to identify Canadian ethnic origins than someone with less ancestry in Canada. Cross-tabulations of ethnic origins and generation is available at some geographies (e.g. Catalogue Number 99-010-X2011028)
- Data from 1981 to 2006 Census data were collected using the long form census, which was distributed to a 20% sample of all Canadians, but was mandatory to complete. The National Household Survey is distributed to a 1/3 sample of all Canadians, but is voluntary to complete. For more information, refer to the [Census of Canada and the National Household Survey](#) document housed on the [Core Indicators Resources](#) page.
- Question wording, format, examples, instructions and data processing have changed over time and so may impact comparisons over time. The examples provided changed slightly between censuses and the presence of examples such as “Canadian”, which has been included since 1996, may also affect response patterns.
  - Since 2006, the wording of this question has been *What were the ethnic or cultural origins of this person’s ancestors?*. In 2001, 1996, and 1991, the question was *To which ethnic or cultural group(s) did this person's ancestors belong?*. The preamble to the question was also modified slightly for 2006 and a definition of ‘ancestor’ was placed directly on the questionnaire. Previously, the definition of ancestor had been included only in the Census Guide.
  - The format since the 1996 census is an open-ended question with four write-in spaces. Prior to 1996, however, the census ethnic origin question usually included a list of mark-in responses. The 1991 Census question included 15 mark-in categories and two write-in spaces.
  - Examples are based on the most frequent examples in the previous census and additional examples to include recently arrived groups who may not be as numerous. Examples also include Canada’s Aboriginal peoples. Terms which tended to be confusing to some respondents in 1991 were replaced with more specific groups in 1996. For instance, “North American Indian” was replaced by “Cree” and “Micmac”, and “Black” was replaced by “Haitian” and “Jamaican” which were the most frequent write-in responses provided by the Black population in 1991.
  - Since 1981, changes in question format and examples may have particularly affected comparability of data for “Black” and “North American Indian”. In 1981, “Black” was not listed on the census questionnaire though respondents could specify Black ethnic origin in the write-in box. The mark-in response “Black” was added to the 1986 Census questionnaire and included again in 1991. In 1996, “Black” was replaced by the examples “Haitian” and “Jamaican” in the ethnic origin question. “Black” was, however, listed as a separate mark-in category in the population group question in 1996. In the 1981 Census, respondents with Aboriginal origins were to mark in status or registered Indian, non-status Indian, Métis, or Inuit. In 1986 and 1991, Aboriginal respondents were asked to indicate North American Indian, Métis, or Inuit by checking the

appropriate mark-in circles. In 1996, “Métis” and “Inuit” again appeared in the ethnic origin question, while “North American Indian” was replaced by the examples “Cree” and “Micmac”.

### Definitions

Ethnic origin refers to the ethnic or cultural origins of the respondent's ancestors. An ancestor is someone from whom a person is descended and is usually more distant than a grandparent. Other than Aboriginal persons, most people can trace their origins to their ancestors who first came to this continent. A person may have only a single ethnic origin, or may have multiple ethnicities.<sup>1</sup>

Ethnic origin refers to a person's 'roots' and should not be confused with citizenship, nationality, language or place of birth. For example, a person who has Canadian citizenship, speaks Panjabi (Punjabi) and was born in the United States may report Guyanese ethnic origin<sup>1</sup>.

### Cross-References to Other Sections

- None

### References

1. Statistics Canada. 2011. Ethnic Origin Reference Guide, National Household Survey, 2011. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-010-XWE2011006. Ottawa. Version updated May 2013. Ottawa. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/ref/guides/99-010-x/99-010-x2011006-eng.cfm> (January 18, 2017).
2. Statistics Canada. 2011. 2011 Census Content Consultation Report. Chapter 5 Ethnocultural and religious characteristics. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/92-137-x/2008001/ch/5200722-eng.htm> (January 18, 2017).
3. Mikkonen, J., & Raphael, D. (2010). Social Determinants of Health: The Canadian Facts. Toronto: York University School of Health Policy and Management. Available from: [http://www.thecanadianfacts.org/The\\_Canadian\\_Facts.pdf](http://www.thecanadianfacts.org/The_Canadian_Facts.pdf) (January 18, 2017).

### Summary of Changes

Section	Change	Rationale
Description	<p>Changed from</p> <p><i>The percentage of the population that reports belonging to a given ethnic or cultural group</i></p> <p>To</p> <p><i>The proportion of the population that reports origins from a given</i></p>	The original description was respondent centric rather than on the respondents origins..

	<i>ethnic or cultural group.</i>	
Data sources(s)	Added reference to 2016 Census and onwards and NHS in 2011	Change back to mandatory long-form Census
Survey questions	Added reference to the NHS and added details	Update reference and add more detail on the context of the question
Indicator comments	Considerable fleshing out of the details of historical changes in this measure and addition of relevance in a public health context	A lot of the detail on changes was vague and required reader to look in a variety of sources for more information.
Indicator comments	Added reference to import of ethnic origin from WHO document	Supports use of this measure as one indicator of ethnicity.
References	Updated current Urls	Links obtain file not found page

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