

The AMSSA Info Sheet series has been created to inform and support our members and community partners. The Info Sheets cover a wide range of topics and highlight important facts and trends from across Canada and BC. Our goal is to assist organizations in navigating the rapidly changing landscape of the BC settlement sector.*

Diversity and Inclusion

This edition explores different aspects of diversity and social inclusion in Canada, resources for businesses and organisations, and the legislation that recognizes and protects the changing demographics of the Canadian society. You can find additional information by clicking the links at the bottom of these pages and on AMSSA's Specialized Resource Page, on our web site.

Diversity and Social Inclusion

Diversity includes notions of age, class, culture, disability, ethnicity, family, sex, language, place of origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, and other characteristics that vary among people and groups within society.

Diversity in Canada refers to the "presence and persistence of diverse racial and ethnic minorities who define themselves as different and who wish to remain so."¹ Acknowledging and valuing diversity is vital to the fight against prejudice and discrimination. Inclusion refers to a climate in which diverse groups of people can live together and interact, while retaining an authentic core to their identity.

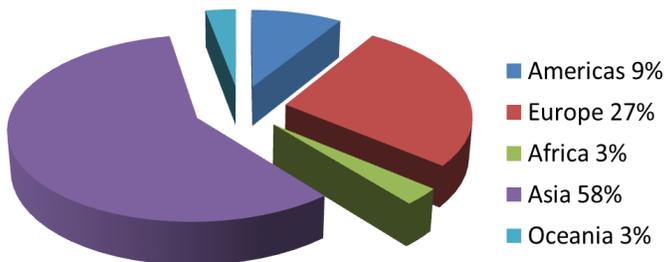
Demographics

According to the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS)², Canada has a foreign-born population of about 6,775,800 people. They represent 20.6% of the total population, the highest proportion among the G8 countries. Asia, including the Middle East, was Canada's largest source of immigrants during the past five years.

The majority of the foreign-born population lives in four provinces: Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec and Alberta.

In BC, out of a total of 4,324,455 respondents to the 2011 NHS, 71% were born in Canada and 29% were born outside Canada. Those who were born outside Canada and who currently reside in British Columbia, identified a total of 236 places of birth, as follows:

Immigrants to BC, by place of birth, 2011



Cultural Diversity

A recent report³ released by the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP) showed a growth of enclave neighbourhoods, places that have become identified with particular ethnocultural groups, in Canada's major metropolitan areas (Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver) where two-thirds of the 4.64 million immigrants arriving in Canada between 1980 and 2011 reside.

The principal findings of the IRPP report⁴ are that minority enclaves are places of cultural diversity rather than cultural isolation and that certain visible minority groups are more prone to reside in enclaves than others.

Vancouver has the same ratio of visible minority residents as Toronto, 45%, and much higher than Montreal, with a ratio of just over 20%, according to the same RPP report.

The compositions of the visible minority populations in the three cities are also quite different. In Montreal the two largest groups are Black and Arab, and the only other groups that account for at least 2% of the overall population are Latin American and South Asian. In Metropolitan Toronto, the South Asian group represents 15% of the metropolitan population. Metropolitan Vancouver is in many ways the opposite of Montreal, with nearly 30% of its population associated with just two visible minority groups: those of Chinese and South Asian identity. The largest groups in Montreal (Black and Arab) are hardly present in Vancouver.

Linguistic Diversity

Language diversity is at the core of Canadian pluralism. In 2011, according to census data⁵, English was the language spoken most often at home for 65% of the population. French came next at 21%, while the allophone category (having a mother tongue other than English, French and or an Aboriginal language) was 11%.

The NHS data showed that a majority of Canada's foreign born population (74.5%) was able to conduct a conversation in more than one language, compared to 36.6% of the total population.

In British Columbia, 81% of the population speaks English at home, 1% French, and 16% a non-official language. With respect to other languages, Chinese was the third most common mother tongue, followed by Tagalog, a language of the Philippines, Spanish, and Punjabi, a language most widely spoken in the Indian Subcontinent.

¹ Dewing, M. 'Canadian Multiculturalism', Parliamentary Information and Research Service, Social affairs Division, September, 2009. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/nu7xmjc>

² NHS Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity in, Canada, 2011. Statistics Canada. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ny53yql>

³ Hiebert, D., Institute for Research on Public Policy, August 2015. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/oqp5zhu>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ NHS Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity in, Canada, 2011. Statistics Canada. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ny53yql>

Indigenous Diversity

First Peoples of Canada, also called Aboriginal people, have diverse languages, traditions, and histories. The Canadian Constitution Act⁶ recognizes three distinct groups of Aboriginal people: First Nations, Inuit and Métis. In 2011, over 1,800,000 people in Canada, or 4.3 percent of the total population, identified themselves as Aboriginal⁷.

With the formation of the Government of Canada, the **First Nations'** system of governance was changed into "bands", communities with an elected council and an elected chief. There are 198 First Nations bands in BC, and 617 in Canada⁸. Today in BC there are 32 First Nations languages⁹.

There are more than 59,440 **Inuit**¹⁰ in northern Canada. The icon of the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, the Inukshuk, is an Inuit symbol that is a signpost to hunters and it also has a ceremonial function as an introduction to new cultures¹¹.

In the 1600s, French and Scottish men migrated to Canada for fur trade and some of them had children with First Nations women; their children were called **Métis**. The infinity symbol on the Métis flag symbolizes the joining of two cultures¹². An estimated 18,485 Métis people live in Metro Vancouver¹³.

Diversity and the Law

Laws in Canada protect individuals' rights to be active and to be included in all aspects of Canadian society.

In 1971, the Government implemented the Multiculturalism Policy of Canada to recognize and support the changing demographic of the population and to assist ethno-cultural minority communities to conduct activities with a view to overcoming any discriminatory barrier and, in particular, discrimination based on race or national or ethnic origin. This policy later became law in 1988, known as the Canadian Multiculturalism Act¹⁴.

Diversity is also protected in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Section 15 of the Charter states that "every individual is to be considered equal regardless of religion, race, national or ethnic origin, colour, sex, age or physical or mental disability."¹⁵ In 2005, Canada became the fourth country in the world to legalize same-sex marriage, enhancing the rights of gay and lesbian couples. In the Province of BC, the Human Rights Code provides a wider protection from discrimination. Those protected under the Charter and the Multiculturalism Act are included, as well as protection based on sexual orientation, family status and political belief.¹⁶

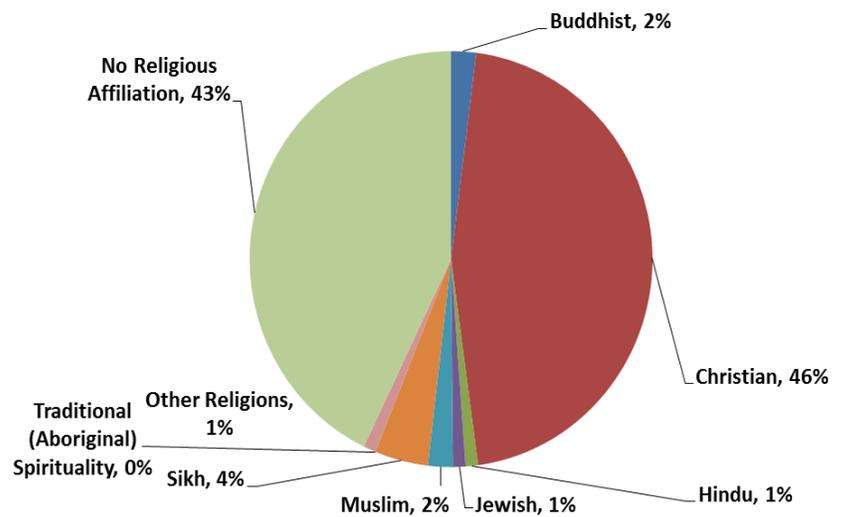
Religious Diversity

The "Fundamental Freedoms" section of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms states that everyone has the fundamental freedom of "conscious and religion"¹⁷.

Canadians are free to have their own beliefs and opinions, to practice religion or refrain, and to communicate these religious beliefs and affiliations using different forms of media. Additionally, the actions of private individuals are largely governed by the Canadian human rights codes that prohibit discrimination in a variety of personal characteristics, including religion.¹⁸

The 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) indicated that religious affiliation across BC has declined by 8% in 2011, from 35% in 2001.

Religious Affiliations in BC, 2011



⁶ Canadian Constitution Act, 1982, 'Rights of the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada'. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/o9tch4z>

⁷ NHS Aboriginal Population Profile, Canada, 2011. Statistics Canada. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1eGXCHT>

⁸ City of Vancouver 'First Peoples: A Guide for Newcomers', 2014. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/qh233ka>

⁹ UBC, First Nations Languages program, 'BC's Unique Linguistic Heritage'. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/qxmldm9>

¹⁰ NHS Aboriginal Population Profile, Canada, 2011. Statistics Canada. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1eGXCHT>

¹¹ About Inuit, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, February 2010. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ovmxcq8>

¹² Métis Culture, 'An Overview of Métis Culture'. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/qgbmzso>

¹³ NHS Aboriginal Population Profile, Canada, 2011. Statistics Canada. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1eGXCHT>

¹⁴ <http://tinyurl.com/pvz4ma3>

¹⁵ <http://tinyurl.com/oat3dcl>

¹⁶ <http://tinyurl.com/3nvgdqx>

¹⁷ Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Section 2. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/p5jiajq>

¹⁸ Canadian Human Rights Act, 1985. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/p4c826o>

To see previous editions of AMSSA's 'Migration Matters' Info Sheet Series, visit

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