

Census Discovery Transcripts

Module 1 Transcript

Welcome to our video series on the Canadian census. You are watching module 1: introduction. In this module, you will learn what type of data is collected for the Census of Population in Canada and how this data is collected. You will also learn to differentiate between census data products.

The Census of Population is conducted by Statistics Canada. Statistics Canada is the major bureau within the Government of Canada that collects data about the population of Canada, but they also collect a lot of other data.

For example, some other data that Statistics Canada collects that isn't part of the census is labor force data. That is how we know about unemployment numbers that came up very quickly at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. That data is from the Labor Force Survey, which is another example of a dataset produced by Statistics Canada.

The Census of Population is a statistical portrait of Canada, and Canadians on one specific day, taken every five years. The most recent happened in 2021, and the one before that in 2016. Each housing unit or their household in Canada is asked to fill out the census that collects various characteristics such as demographic, social and economic characteristics.

This slide gives you an idea of the kind of questionnaire sets for the Census. In May 2021, 100% of the households in Canada received the short form questionnaire, and what it asked for was your address, the date of birth of every individual living in the household, the gender or sex of every individual, the relationship of you to the other members in your household, knowledge of official languages, the language you speak at home, as well as other languages spoken regularly, and your mother tongue.

The long form census, however, goes to 25% of the population, or 1 in 4 households receives the long form questionnaire. The long form asks the same questions as the short form, but also asks more detailed questions about education, housing, immigration, income, labor, how you get to work, knowledge of different kinds of languages, mobility, and more.

Once all of the data is compiled, it takes about a year for them to do all the number-crunching and to start delivering this information into different census data products.

And this is the data that the government uses to make policy. It's what researchers in academia use to figure out patterns in the Canadian population for research purposes. And it's what students like you use to learn and prepare research for your assignments.

The census data itself is private, so when you fill out that form and questionnaire immediately that information becomes confidential. That is, your data is protected by two acts, the Privacy Act and the Statistics Act. This means that the information about you cannot be traced down to an individual level, and it will not be made available to the public. All of that detailed information about yourself, and all those details about the individuals in your household are not released.

Instead, Statistics Canada aggregates that information together into geographical units and distributes that back out to people for research purposes. This is to ensure that we still have access to the information that we need to do research purposes or to make policy decisions, but it also conserves the privacy of the individuals.

After the government takes the data and aggregates it together, they distribute out these aggregations as free resources to the public. This information is made available in a variety of formats, including data products like what we're going to interact with today and reference materials that provide information to help you use the data set. And then there are also geographic information or data visualization tools. In addition, there is also a second level of more private resources that are made available to researchers; for example, if a researcher were to do an in-depth study, they could apply to Statistics Canada for more secure private data and they may give it to her if it meets their criteria. The data that this person might receive as a researcher will have all of the identifying information about the individuals stripped from it, but the researcher can actually access the raw numbers. So, there are different checks and balances in place to make sure that the privacy of Canadians is kept, even if someone wants gain access to data at the individual level.

When you get data from Statistics Canada, it is divided up into different levels of geography. At the largest and perhaps most obvious level, we have the Canadian provinces and territories. But you can also get data at the regional municipality level which in "census language" is called the "census division". For example, a Regional Municipality of Peel or the Durham region is at the census division. The municipalities, like Toronto, Mississauga, Markham, and Vaughan, are at the census subdivision level. And if you combine all those urban areas together, you get the census metropolitan areas, which are roughly equivalent to what we generally think of as metropolitan areas. For example, combining the city of Toronto with Peel and York gives us the census metropolitan area of Toronto.

You can also get something called census tracts and that's what we're going to be working with today. Census tracts are quite small, and they are relatively stable areas. They don't change much over time, and they usually have a population of less than 10,000 people. Census tracts are usually what you are looking for when someone says they are looking at census information at the neighborhood level.

Even smaller than a census tract is something called the dissemination area. There are about 3 or 4 dissemination areas in a census tract. And then there's another level of geography, which is called the Federal electoral district. It corresponds with the electoral district boundaries within federal elections. There are many other levels of geography as well, but today we are just focusing on the census geography.

Looking at Statistics Canada's table, we can see that there are many different tables that are available to you. We can see that there are general Census of Population data tables on the StatsCan website, and these are often very useful. While we are not going to be working with these tables today, because there is census profile data that is more structured and a bit easier to use, knowing that data exists here may help you find data that is not in the census profile table but may be here in the Census of Population data tables.

Another resource you may find helpful is the Data and Statistics Research Guide, which you can find our York's library website under our Research Guides. You can use this guide for finding a variety of data,

and we have a section on the census which is a good place to start for understanding different census data products and for helping you find census data.

And finally, we have the census profile tables, which is the data that we'll be working with today. What makes the Census Profile particularly useful is that it organizes the census data in a way that you can search. For example, you can look up a census tract number, and you can get a lot of the variables from the census.

From here, after selecting a geographic area, you'll be able to see that the census includes many data variables about immigration, language, ethnicity, housing, employment, education, age, demographics of the population, and more. This data is what we'll be navigating today in our module. Next, we'll start on a step-by-step process to determine your census tract based on an intersection.

Module 2

Welcome back to our video series on the Canadian census. You are watching module 2: finding census tract data. In this module, you will learn to locate your census tract number and to find data for your census tract area. Let's start a demonstration on how to find your census tract number. One thing to note when we're looking for a census tract number is that your chosen intersection might have two or three census tracts, not just one. So, you might need to just choose one of the census tracts that you think best represents your intersection.

For this demonstration, our example intersection will be the Steeles Avenue and Keele Street Intersection in Toronto.

To start, we're going to go to the York U Library website. From here, we can access the library's research guides just below the main search bar. You'll see our guides are organized by subject. Let's click on the 'Finding Types of Information' section, and then we'll select the "Data & Statistics" guide. While in this guide, we can scroll down slightly to see the Quick Links section on the left side of the page. Today, we'll be using Scholars Geoportal, as this database can be used to determine the census tract history or intersection on the map.

We'll start in Scholars Geoportal by switching the default selection of "data" to "place or address" because we are interested in a specific area--York University. We are using the Steeles Avenue and Keele Street Intersection in Toronto in this example. We'll type in "Steeles Ave and Keele St, Toronto" and then click Zoom to see that intersection on the map.

Now, we can click to switch back to the "Data" button. We can click the "Find Data" button and then search for "Census tract" to find what we're looking for.

We get many different kinds of census tracts over a range of time, but we want the most recent one. So we'll scroll to find the cartographic boundary file from the 2021 census, the most recent census with published data. We'll click 'Add' and this now takes us to several options of levels of geography like the census metropolitan area, census division, and more. We mentioned these levels of geography earlier in this module. For this example, we want the census tract, so we'll click 'Add.'

Now, we have our census tract data added to the map. We can see the census tract number in red, also called the CTU ID (the census tract unique ID). We can also click on the area to get a pop-up with the CTU ID, along with a lot of other data for this area. The CTUID code contains the Census Metropolitan Area Code for Toronto, 535, and the census tract code 0311.06.

We can also see that there are 2 census tracts at this intersection. For the north part of Steeles and Keele, the CTU ID is 5350311.08, however for the south part it is 5350311.06. These CTU IDs for your intersection are important to write down. While we could choose either the north or south CTU ID, let's select just one for demonstration purposes—in this case, the south CTU ID.

For the second part of this demo, we'll be learning how to find census tract data. Let's take the census tract ID we just found and look it up in the 2021 census profile.

Notice on this page, that you can get census information by searching for a place, postal code, or geographic code. In our example, our census tract ID from Scholars GeoPortal is a geographic code, so we'll put our ID number there and click Search. Now, we have the entire Census Profile for our given

census tract, which here is the area around York University. The total population of the census tract is indicated in the table.

There are several things to first introduce about this table. All the characteristics are listed in the left-hand column and there are a lot of them! We have to scroll for a while to see all the data. We can also filter them by topic, such as Education, Housing, and more. Another important thing to note is that we can see the data in both Counts and Rates. Counts, like what we see are the default, but Rates, or percentages, are more useful for comparisons.

Another variable to look out for is Education – you'll notice that it says “Highest certificate, diploma, or degree,...for the population in private households – 25% sample”. When the variable says 25% sample, that means that this question was only on the long survey form, and so not every household was asked this question on their census questionnaire.