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Reference Guide

Visible Minority and Population Group Reference Guide



National Household Survey, 2011



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Standard symbols

The following symbols are used in Statistics Canada publications:

- . not available for any reference period
- .. not available for a specific reference period
- ... not applicable
- 0 true zero or a value rounded to zero
- 0^s value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
- P preliminary
- r revised
- X suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
- E use with caution
- F too unreliable to be published
- * significantly different from reference category (p < 0.05)

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Definitions and concepts

The 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) question on population group is used to produce two main variables: the Visible minority variable and the Population group variable.

The primary purpose of the population group question on the NHS is to derive counts for the visible minority population. [Visible minority](#) refers to the visible minority group to which the respondent belongs. The *Employment Equity Act* defines visible minorities as 'persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.' Categories in the Visible minority variable include South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, Japanese, Visible minority, n.i.e. ('n.i.e.' means 'not included elsewhere'), Multiple visible minorities, and Not a visible minority.

Information on the visible minority population is required under federal employment equity legislation for programs which promote equal opportunity for everyone. Federal employment equity programs are the responsibility of Human Resources and Social Development Canada and other government departments; however, the NHS provides benchmark data on each of the designated groups (women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities).

Data on Canada's visible minority population are used by governments, businesses, community groups, health care providers, researchers and a variety of organizations throughout the country to ensure equal opportunity for everyone. Data on the visible minority population can be used by employers to compare the characteristics of their workforce with the characteristics of the population who live in the same area.

The population group question is also used to produce the Population group variable. The Population group variable includes data on groups such as White, Chinese, South Asian, Black, etc., generally mirroring the response categories used in the population group question on the NHS questionnaire. It also includes a number of multiple response categories that are not included in the Visible minority variable. (More information on these response categories is included in the sections of this document entitled [Classifications](#) and [Questions](#).)

Classifications

As indicated above, the Visible minority variable provides data on the visible minority population as defined for federal employment equity purposes, whereas the Population group variable does not.

The Visible minority variable includes data for 13 derived groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, Japanese, Visible minority, n.i.e., Multiple visible minorities and Not a visible minority ('Not a visible minority' includes respondents who reported 'Yes' to the Aboriginal identity question as well as respondents who were not considered to be members of a visible minority group). There is also a subtotal provided for the 'Total visible minority population,' which aggregates counts for the first 12 groups.

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In contrast to the Visible minority variable, the Population group variable provides data which closely matches the responses provided by respondents on the NHS questionnaire. The Population group variable includes single response categories counting respondents who provided one population group, specifically: White, South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, Japanese and Visible minority, n.i.e. As well, the Population group variable includes multiple-response categories counting respondents who provided two or more population groups, specifically, the latter 11 groups in combination with White (for example, 'White and Chinese'), plus a category for Multiple visible minorities. The final category in the variable, 'Aboriginal self-reporting,' includes respondents who reported 'Yes' to Question 18 ('Is this person an Aboriginal person, that is, First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit)?'). Even though these respondents were not required to answer the Population group question (Question 19), their information was included in the Population group variable so that it would reflect the entire Canadian population.

In both the Visible minority and Population group variables, the category 'Visible minority, n.i.e.' includes respondents who reported a write-in response such as 'Guyanese,' 'West Indian,' 'Tibetan,' 'Polynesian,' 'Pacific Islander,' etc. The category 'Multiple visible minorities' includes respondents who reported more than one visible minority group by checking two or more mark-in circles, such as 'Black' and 'South Asian.'

While in the Population group variable data are included for multiple responses such as 'White and South Asian' and 'White and Black,' these multiple responses are counted differently in the Visible minority variable because of the need to derive the variable in accordance with employment equity requirements. In the Visible minority variable, persons who reported 'Chinese,' 'South Asian,' 'Black,' 'Filipino,' 'Southeast Asian,' 'Japanese,' or 'Korean,' in combination with 'White' or a write-in response are included in the visible minority count for the specific visible minority group reported. For example, respondents who checked 'Black' and 'White' are included in the 'Black' count. Respondents who checked 'Black' and wrote-in 'French' or 'Malaysian' are also included in the 'Black' count.

In contrast, in accordance with employment equity definitions, persons who reported 'Latin American' and 'White,' 'Arab' and 'White,' or 'West Asian' and 'White' have been excluded from the visible minority population. Likewise, persons who reported 'Latin American,' 'Arab' or 'West Asian' and who provided a European write-in response such as 'French' have been excluded from the visible minority population as well. These persons are included in the 'Not a visible minority' category. However, persons who reported 'Latin American,' 'Arab' or 'West Asian' and a non-European write-in response are included in the visible minority population. For example, respondents who checked 'Latin American' and wrote in 'Peruvian' are included in the 'Latin American' count. Respondents who reported 'Arab' and wrote in 'Lebanese' are included in the 'Arab' count. Respondents who reported 'West Asian' and wrote in 'Afghan' were included in the 'West Asian' count.

Questions

Most 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) respondents received the [2011 National Household Survey Form N1 questionnaire](#), while respondents living on Indian reserves, in Indian settlements and in other remote areas received the [2011 National Household Survey Form N2 questionnaire](#). On both questionnaires, data on population group and visible minority population were collected in Questions 19.

To assist respondents whose first language was neither English nor French, NHS questions were translated into 31 other languages, including 11 Aboriginal languages.

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In both versions of the questionnaire, response categories in the population group question included 11 mark-in circles and one write-in space. Respondents were asked 'Is this person:' and were instructed to mark more than one of the following response categories, or to specify another group, if applicable:

White

South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.)

Chinese

Black

Filipino

Latin American

Arab

Southeast Asian (e.g., Vietnamese, Cambodian, Malaysian, Laotian, etc.)

West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Afghan, etc.)

Korean

Japanese

Other – Specify

A note on the NHS questionnaire informed respondents that 'This information is collected in accordance with the *Employment Equity Act* and its Regulations and Guidelines to support programs that promote equal opportunity for everyone to share in the social, cultural and economic life of Canada.' In addition, the [National Household Survey \(NHS\) guide: short version](#) provided the following instructions:

Population group should not be confused with citizenship or nationality.

For persons who belong to more than one population group:

- mark all the circles that apply
- do not report 'bi-racial' or 'mixed' in the box provided.

The mark-in response categories listed in the 2011 NHS population group question, with the exception of 'White,' were based on the visible minority groups identified by the *Employment Equity Technical Reference Papers*, published by Employment and Immigration Canada in 1987, and used for federal employment equity programs. The visible minority groups identified by these papers included: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Japanese, Korean and other visible minority groups, such as Pacific Islanders. Data on other visible minority groups, including Pacific Islanders, are collected in the 'Other – Specify' area of the 2011 NHS population group question. After 'White,' population groups were listed on the 2011 NHS questionnaire in order of the frequency (largest number) of visible minority counts derived from the 2006 Census.

Three of the population groups included on the 2011 NHS questionnaire were followed by examples in parentheses. Examples were provided for only a few of the population groups to serve as guidelines and to help respondents who may be more familiar with one term instead of another (e.g., East Indian instead of South Asian, Vietnamese instead of Southeast Asian, Iranian instead of West Asian).

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Persons who reported 'Yes' to Question 18 (Aboriginal peoples) were not asked the population group question. Aboriginal peoples are included in a separate response category called 'Aboriginal self-reporting' in the Population group variable. They are included in the 'Not a visible minority' category in the Visible minority variable, along with persons reporting other selected groups such as 'White.'

Data and other products

Data for the 2011 National Household Survey Visible minority variable were released on May 8, 2013, as part of an integrated release with other ethnocultural and Aboriginal variables.

The products published using 2011 NHS visible minority population data include:

- [Data products](#)
 - NHS Profile
 - NHS Data Tables
- [Analytical products](#)
- [Reference products](#)

For more information on and access to 2011 NHS data, please refer to the [2011 National Household Survey \(NHS\)](#) website.

Data quality

The National Household Survey (NHS) underwent a thorough data quality assessment similar to what was done for the 2011 Census of population and past censuses. It consisted of an assessment of various data quality indicators (such as response rate), and an evaluation of the overall results, in comparison with other data sources such as census of population data.

Based on the results of this exercise, the NHS estimates for the Population group variable and the visible minority population derived from the variable at the national level are consistent with, or similar to, estimates and trends from other data sources such as 2006 and 2001 Census results.

Survey process

Quality indicators were calculated and assessed at each of the key steps of the survey. During the collection and processing of the data, the quality and consistency of the responses provided were assessed as were the non-response rates. The quality of the imputed responses was assessed after the completion of the control and imputation steps.

Certification of final estimates

Once data processing and imputation were completed, the data were weighted to represent the total Canadian population. These weighted data (the final estimates) were then certified to determine if they were coherent and reliable in comparison to other independent data sources. This is the final stage of data validation. The main highlights of this assessment are presented below.

Non-response bias

Non-response bias is a potential source of error for all surveys including the NHS. This issue arises when the characteristics of those who choose to participate in a survey are different than those who refuse. Statistics Canada adapted its collection and estimation procedures in order to mitigate, to the extent possible, the effect of non-response bias. (For more details please refer to the [National Household Survey User Guide](#), Catalogue no. 99-001-X.)

Several data sources were used to evaluate the NHS estimates for population group such as: the 2001 and 2006 censuses, population projections based on microsimulation, 2011 Census results for mother tongue (since a relationship exists between language and population group), the Longitudinal Immigrant Database (IMDB) and administrative data pertaining to permanent residents and non-permanent residents from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (since a relationship exists between immigration characteristics and population group).

It is impossible to definitively determine how much the NHS may be affected by non-response bias. However, based on information from other data sources, evidence of non-response bias does exist for certain populations and for certain geographic areas.

For example, on the basis of the estimates and trends from the sources mentioned above, evidence suggests that the Filipino population group is overestimated at the national level. On the other hand, the Arab population group is suggested to be underestimated in the 2011 NHS.

Generally, the risk of error increases for lower levels of geography and for smaller populations. At the same time, the data sources used to evaluate these results are also less reliable making it difficult to certify these smaller counts.

For more information on NHS non-response bias and mitigation strategies employed by Statistics Canada, please refer to the [National Household Survey User Guide](#), Catalogue no. 99-001-X.

Data quality indicators

Of all the quality indicators used for the evaluation, two are presented: the global non-response rate and the imputation rate by question.

- The global non-response rate combines the non-response at the household level and the non-response at the question level. It is provided for geographic areas. The global non-response rate is the key criterion that determines whether or not the NHS results will be released for a given geographic area. Information on the global non-response rate is available in the [National Household Survey User Guide](#), Catalogue no. 99-001-X.
- The imputation rate is the proportion of respondents who did not answer a given question or whose response is deemed invalid and for which a value was imputed. Imputation can improve data quality by reducing the gaps caused by non-response.

The imputation rates for the NHS Population group variable are similar to those of the 2006 Census (see Table 1). The NHS imputation rate at the national level for population group is 3.9% while the imputation rate for this variable for the 2006 Census was 2.9%.

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Table 1 Imputation rates in the National Household Survey for Population group, Canada, provinces and territories

Provinces and territories	Population group
	%
Canada	3.9
Newfoundland and Labrador	4.2
Prince Edward Island	4.2
Nova Scotia	3.4
New Brunswick	3.5
Quebec	3.6
Ontario	4.2
Manitoba	3.7
Saskatchewan	3.5
Alberta	3.8
British Columbia	3.8
Yukon	4.4
Northwest Territories	3.3
Nunavut	4.9

Comparability with other data sources

The National Household Survey (NHS) is currently Statistics Canada's primary source of data on population group and the visible minority population. Prior to 2011, the Census of Population collected information on these concepts. Other household surveys (e.g., the General Social Survey) also collect data on the population group and visible minority population.

Many factors affect comparisons of population group and visible minority population data across these sources. Amongst other factors, comparability is affected by differences in survey target populations, reference period, sampling and collection methods; question wording, questionnaire format, examples and instructions; approaches to data processing; the social and political climate at the time of data collection. For additional information, please see the [National Household Survey User Guide](#), Catalogue no. 99-001-X.