

**NHS in Brief**

# Obtaining Canadian citizenship



**National Household Survey (NHS), 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 <sup>s</sup> | 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 <i>Statistics Act</i>                                   |
| E              | use with caution   |
| F              | too unreliable to be published   |
| *              | significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )   |

## Obtaining Canadian citizenship

### Box: National Household Survey

This is the first release of data from the National Household Survey (NHS). Roughly 4.5 million households across Canada were selected for the NHS, representing about one-third of all households.

This *NHS in Brief* article, together with the article [Generation status: Canadian-born children of immigrants](#), Catalogue no. 99-010-X2011003, complements the analytical document [Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity in Canada](#), Catalogue no. 99-010-X2011001.

Further information on the National Household Survey can be found in the [National Household Survey User Guide](#), Catalogue no. 99-001-X. Specific information on the quality and comparability of NHS data on immigration and ethnocultural diversity can be found in the series of [reference guides](#) for these topics.

## Introduction

Citizenship refers to the legal citizenship status of a person. Canadian citizenship can be obtained by birth or by naturalization.

Naturalization is the process through which immigrants acquire Canadian citizenship. Landed immigrants who have met certain criteria are eligible for Canadian citizenship by naturalization. The criteria for acquiring citizenship generally include a residency requirement, knowledge of English or French and basic knowledge of Canada.

For many immigrants, becoming a Canadian citizen is the final step of the immigration process. Immigrants affirm their allegiance to Canada, the country in which they have settled. At the same time, naturalized citizens have rights, such as the right to vote and to hold public office that are not available to non-citizens.

The 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) showed that slightly over three-quarters (78.3%) of the total population in Canada were Canadian citizens by birth, another 15.8% were Canadian by naturalization and the rest, 6.0%, did not have Canadian citizenship.

## Most eligible immigrants had acquired citizenship

Most eligible immigrants had obtained Canadian citizenship, but the proportion varied considerably by period of immigration and country of birth.

In 2011, about 6,042,200 foreign-born people in Canada were eligible to acquire citizenship. Of these, just over 5,175,100, or 85.6%, reported that they had acquired Canadian citizenship.

This naturalization rate in Canada was higher than in other major immigrant-receiving countries. For example, in Australia,<sup>1</sup> 74.0% of the country's foreign-born population were naturalized in 2011. In the United States,<sup>2</sup> the naturalization rate among foreign-born population was 43.7% in 2010.

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2011.

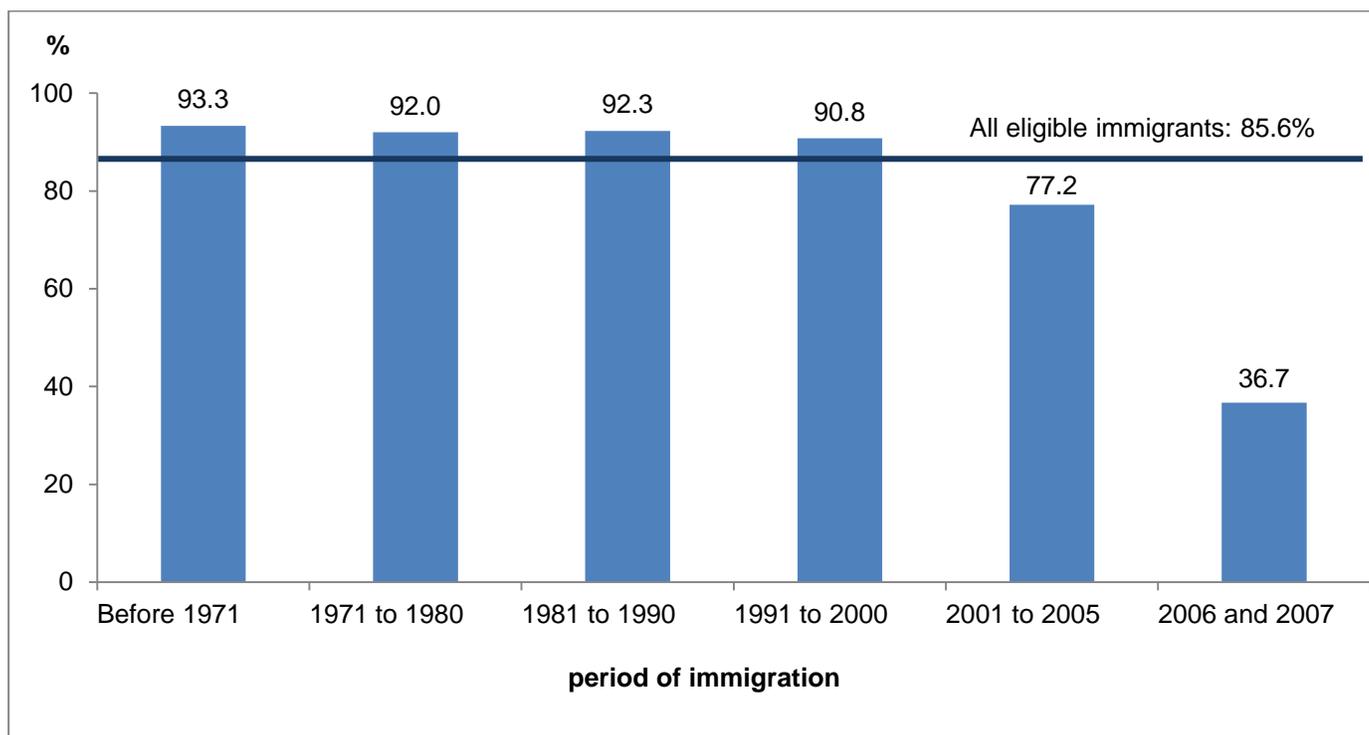
2. U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010.

## Obtaining Canadian citizenship

Among the provinces, Ontario had the largest eligible immigrant population and the highest proportion of immigrants who had obtained Canadian citizenship (87.0%). Ontario was followed by Quebec (85.1%) and British Columbia (84.3%). The Atlantic provinces had the lowest proportion (78.5%).

The longer immigrants reside in Canada, the more likely they are to become Canadian citizens ([Figure 1](#)). Among the foreign-born population who immigrated prior to 1971, 93.3% reported that they had become a Canadian citizen. In contrast, slightly over three-quarters (77.2%) of immigrants who came between 2001 and 2005 had acquired citizenship. Just under two-fifths (36.7%) of the newly eligible immigrants, who arrived between 2006 and 2007, had become a Canadian citizen by 2011.

**Figure 1 Percentage of immigrants who are Canadian citizens, by period of immigration, Canada, 2011**



**Note:** Landed immigrants or permanent residents are generally required to reside in Canada for a minimum of three years before they are eligible for Canadian citizenship.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, 2011.

The largest eligible immigrant populations were born in the United Kingdom, India, China, the Philippines, Italy, the United States, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Viet Nam, Poland and Germany. However, their rate of naturalization varied widely, from 95.9% for immigrants born in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to 70.9% for immigrants born in the United States.

### Multiple citizenships

Since 1977, Canada has recognized multiple citizenships, that is, Canadian citizens have the right to hold citizenship of more than one country. Immigrants who have obtained Canadian citizenship through naturalization also have the right to retain their previous nationality. However, multiple citizenships are not allowed or recognized by all countries. In these cases, immigrants have to choose between a Canadian citizenship or their previous citizenship.

In 2011, a small proportion of the population (2.9%), or about 944,700 individuals, had multiple citizenships. Most (79.5%) of them were immigrants.

Among naturalized Canadian citizens, 14.3% had other citizenship(s). The United Kingdom (11.9%), the United States (7.2%) and Poland (5.2%) were their most frequently reported other countries of citizenship.

Among Canadian citizens by birth, 0.7% (about 190,100 individuals) had multiple citizenships. Their most frequently reported other countries of citizenship were: the United States (20.3%), the United Kingdom (12.9%) and France (9.6%).

### Additional information

Additional information on immigration and citizenship can be found in the [NHS Data Tables](#), Catalogue nos. 99-010-X2011026 through 99-010-X2011034, the [NHS Profile](#), Catalogue no. 99-010-X, as well as in the [NHS Focus on Geography Series](#), Catalogue no. 99-010-X2011005.

For details on the concepts, definitions, universes, variables and geographic terms used in the 2011 National Household Survey, please consult the [National Household Survey Dictionary](#), Catalogue no. 99-000-X. For detailed explanations on concepts and for information on data quality, please refer to the reference guides on the [2011 National Household Survey \(NHS\)](#) website.

### Note to readers

**Random rounding and percentage distributions:** To ensure the confidentiality of responses collected for the 2011 National Household Survey while maintaining the quality of the results, a random rounding process is used to alter the values reported in individual cells. As a result, when these data are summed or grouped, the total value may not match the sum of the individual values, since the total and subtotals are independently rounded. Similarly, percentage distributions, which are calculated on rounded data, may not necessarily add up to 100%.

Due to random rounding, estimates and percentages may vary slightly between different 2011 National Household Survey products, such as the analytical documents and various data tables.

**Comparability between estimates from the 2006 Census long form and the 2011 National Household Survey estimates:** When comparing estimates from the 2006 Census long form and estimates from the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) users should take into account the fact that the two sources represent different populations. The target population for the 2006 Census long form includes usual residents in collective dwellings and persons living abroad whereas the target population for the NHS excludes them. Moreover, the NHS estimates are derived from a voluntary survey and are therefore subject to potentially higher non-response error than those derived from the 2006 Census long form.

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