= Canada =

Canada (/ ?kæn?d? / ; French : [ka.na.da]) is a country in the northern half of North America . Its ten provinces and three territories extend from the Atlantic to the Pacific and northward into the Arctic Ocean , covering 9 @.@ 98 million square kilometres (3 @.@ 85 million square miles) , making it the world 's second @-@ largest country by total area and the fourth @-@ largest country by land area . Canada 's border with the United States is the world 's longest land border . Canada is sparsely populated , the majority of its land territory being dominated by forest and tundra and the Rocky Mountains ; about four @-@ fifths of the country 's population of 35 million people live near the southern border . The majority of Canada has a cold or severely cold winter climate , but southerly areas are warm in summer .

Canada has been inhabited for millennia by various Aboriginal peoples . Beginning in the 15th and 16th centuries , British and French claims were made on the area , with the colony of Canada first being established by the French in 1537 . As a consequence of various conflicts , the United Kingdom gained and lost territories within British North America until it was left , in the late 18th century , with what mostly geographically comprises Canada today . Pursuant to the British North America Act , on July 1 , 1867 , the colonies of Canada , New Brunswick , and Nova Scotia joined to form the semi @-@ autonomous federal Dominion of Canada . This began an accretion of provinces and territories to the mostly self @-@ governing Dominion to the present ten provinces and three territories forming modern Canada .

In 1931, Canada achieved near total independence from the United Kingdom with the Statute of Westminster 1931, and full sovereignty was attained when the Canada Act 1982 removed the last remaining ties of legal dependence on the Parliament of the United Kingdom. Canada is a federal parliamentary democracy and a constitutional monarchy, with Queen Elizabeth II being the head of state. The country is officially bilingual at the federal level. It is one of the world 's most ethnically diverse and multicultural nations, the product of large @-@ scale immigration from many other countries. Its advanced economy is the eleventh largest in the world, relying chiefly upon its abundant natural resources and well @-@ developed international trade networks. Canada 's long and complex relationship with the United States has had a significant impact on its economy and culture.

Canada is a developed country and has the tenth highest nominal per capita income globally as well as the ninth highest ranking in the Human Development Index . It ranks among the highest in international measurements of government transparency , civil liberties , quality of life , economic freedom , and education . Canada is a Commonwealth Realm member of the Commonwealth of Nations , a member of the Francophonie , and part of several major international and intergovernmental institutions or groupings including the United Nations , the North Atlantic Treaty Organization , the G8 , the Group of Ten , the G20 , the North American Free Trade Agreement and the Asia @-@ Pacific Economic Cooperation forum .

= = Etymology = =

While a variety of theories have been postulated for the etymological origins of Canada , the name is now accepted as coming from the St. Lawrence Iroquoian word kanata , meaning " village " or " settlement " . In 1535 , indigenous inhabitants of the present @-@ day Quebec City region used the word to direct French explorer Jacques Cartier to the village of Stadacona . Cartier later used the word Canada to refer not only to that particular village , but the entire area subject to Donnacona (the chief at Stadacona) ; by 1545 , European books and maps had begun referring to this small region along the St Lawrence River as Canada .

From the 16th to the early 18th century " Canada " referred to the part of New France that lay along the St. Lawrence River . In 1791 , the area became two British colonies called Upper Canada and Lower Canada collectively named The Canadas ; until their union as the British Province of Canada in 1841 . Upon Confederation in 1867 , Canada was adopted as the legal name for the new country , and the word Dominion was conferred as the country 's title . The transition away from the use of

Dominion was formally reflected in 1982 with the passage of the Canada Act , which refers only to Canada . Later that year , the national holiday was renamed from Dominion Day to Canada Day . The term Dominion is also used to distinguish the federal government from the provinces , though after the Second World War the term federal had replaced dominion .

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= = History = =
= = = Aboriginal peoples = = =
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Aboriginal peoples in present @-@ day Canada include the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, the latter being a mixed @-@ blood people who originated in the mid @-@ 17th @-@ century when First Nations and Inuit people married European settlers. The first inhabitants of North America migrated from Siberia by way of the Bering land bridge and arrived at least 15 @,@ 000 years ago, though increasing evidence suggests an even earlier arrival. The Paleo @-@ Indian archeological sites at Old Crow Flats and Bluefish Caves are two of the oldest sites of human habitation in Canada. The characteristics of Canadian Aboriginal societies included permanent settlements, agriculture, complex societal hierarchies, and trading networks. Some of these cultures had collapsed by the time European explorers arrived in the late 15th and early 16th centuries and have only been discovered through archeological investigations.

The aboriginal population at the time of the first European settlements is estimated to have been between 200 @,@ 000 and two million , with a figure of 500 @,@ 000 accepted by Canada 's Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples . As a consequence of contact with European diseases , Canada 's aboriginal peoples suffered from repeated outbreaks of newly introduced infectious diseases , such as influenza , measles , and smallpox (to which they had no natural immunity) , resulting in a forty to eighty percent population decrease in the centuries after the European arrival . Although not without conflict , European Canadians ' early interactions with First Nations and Inuit populations were relatively peaceful . The Crown and Aboriginal peoples began interactions during the European colonialization period , though , the Inuit , in general , had more limited interaction with European settlers . From the late 18th century , European Canadians encouraged Aboriginals to assimilate into their own culture . These attempts reached a climax in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with forced integration and relocations . A period of redress is underway , which started with the appointment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada by the Canadian government .

= = = European colonization = = =

The first known attempt at European colonization began when Norsemen settled briefly at L 'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland around 1000 AD . No further European exploration occurred until 1497 , when Italian seafarer John Cabot explored and claimed Canada 's Atlantic coast in the name of King Henry VII of England . Then Basque and Portuguese mariners established seasonal whaling and fishing outposts along the Atlantic coast in the early 16th century . In 1534 , French explorer Jacques Cartier explored the Saint Lawrence River , where , on July 24 , he planted a 10 @-@ metre (33 ft) cross bearing the words " Long Live the King of France " and took possession of the territory (known as the colony of Canada) in the name of King Francis I. In general the settlements appear to have been short @-@ lived , possibly due to the similarity of outputs producible in Scandinavia and northern Canada and the problems of navigating trade routes at that time .

In 1583, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, by the royal prerogative of Queen Elizabeth I, founded St. John 's, Newfoundland, as the first North American English colony. French explorer Samuel de Champlain arrived in 1603 and established the first permanent European settlements at Port Royal (in 1605) and Quebec City (in 1608). Among the colonists of New France, Canadiens extensively settled the Saint Lawrence River valley and Acadians settled the present @-@ day Maritimes, while fur traders and Catholic missionaries explored the Great Lakes, Hudson Bay, and the Mississippi

watershed to Louisiana. The Beaver Wars broke out in the mid @-@ 17th @-@ century over control of the North American fur trade.

The English established additional colonies in Cupids and Ferryland , Newfoundland , beginning in 1610 . The Thirteen Colonies to the south were founded soon after . A series of four wars erupted in colonial North America between 1689 and 1763 ; the later wars of the period constituted the North American theatre of the Seven Years 'War . Mainland Nova Scotia came under British rule with the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht and the 1763 Treaty of Paris ceded Canada and most of New France to Britain after the Seven Years 'War .

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 created the Province of Quebec out of New France , and annexed Cape Breton Island to Nova Scotia . St. John 's Island (now Prince Edward Island) became a separate colony in 1769 . To avert conflict in Quebec , the British parliament passed the Quebec Act of 1774 , expanding Quebec 's territory to the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley . It re @-@ established the French language , Catholic faith , and French civil law there . This angered many residents of the Thirteen Colonies , fuelling anti @-@ British sentiment in the years prior to the 1775 outbreak of the American Revolution .

The 1783 Treaty of Paris recognized American independence and ceded the newly added territories south (but not north) of the Great Lakes to the new United States. New Brunswick was split from Nova Scotia as part of a reorganization of Loyalist settlements in the Maritimes. To accommodate English @-@ speaking Loyalists in Quebec, the Constitutional Act of 1791 divided the province into French @-@ speaking Lower Canada (later Quebec) and English @-@ speaking Upper Canada (later Ontario), granting each its own elected legislative assembly.

The Canadas were the main front in the War of 1812 between the United States and Britain . Peace came in 1815; no boundaries were changed . Immigration now resumed at a higher level , with over 960 @,@ 000 arrivals from Britain 1815 @-@ 50 . New arrivals included Irish refugees escaping the Great Irish Famine as well as Gaelic @-@ speaking Scots displaced by the Highland Clearances . Infectious diseases killed between 25 and 33 per cent of Europeans who immigrated to Canada before 1891 .

The desire for responsible government resulted in the abortive Rebellions of 1837 . The Durham Report subsequently recommended responsible government and the assimilation of French Canadians into English culture . The Act of Union 1840 merged the Canadas into a united Province of Canada and responsible government was established for all provinces of British North America by 1849 . The signing of the Oregon Treaty by Britain and the United States in 1846 ended the Oregon boundary dispute , extending the border westward along the 49th parallel . This paved the way for British colonies on Vancouver Island (1849) and in British Columbia (1858).

= = = Confederation and expansion = = =

Following several constitutional conferences , the 1867 Constitution Act officially proclaimed Canadian Confederation on July 1 , 1867 , initially with four provinces : Ontario , Quebec , Nova Scotia , and New Brunswick . Canada assumed control of Rupert 's Land and the North @-@ Western Territory to form the Northwest Territories , where the Métis ' grievances ignited the Red River Rebellion and the creation of the province of Manitoba in July 1870 . British Columbia and Vancouver Island (which had been united in 1866) joined the confederation in 1871 , while Prince Edward Island joined in 1873 .

The Canadian parliament passed a bill introduced by the Conservative Cabinet that established a National Policy of tariffs to protect the nascent Canadian manufacturing industries . To open the West , parliament also approved sponsoring the construction of three transcontinental railways (including the Canadian Pacific Railway), opening the prairies to settlement with the Dominion Lands Act, and establishing the North @-@ West Mounted Police to assert its authority over this territory. In 1898, during the Klondike Gold Rush in the Northwest Territories, parliament created the Yukon Territory. The Cabinet of Liberal Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier fostered continental European immigrants settling the prairies and Alberta and Saskatchewan became provinces in 1905

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Because Britain still maintained control of Canada 's foreign affairs under the Confederation Act , its declaration of war in 1914 automatically brought Canada into World War I. Volunteers sent to the Western Front later became part of the Canadian Corps , which played a substantial role in the Battle of Vimy Ridge and other major engagements of the war . Out of approximately 625 @,@ 000 Canadians who served in World War I , some 60 @,@ 000 were killed and another 172 @,@ 000 were wounded . The Conscription Crisis of 1917 erupted when the Unionist Cabinet 's proposal to augment the military 's dwindling number of active members with conscription was met with vehement objections from French @-@ speaking Quebecers . The Military Service Act brought in compulsory military service , though , it , coupled with disputes over French language schools outside Quebec , deeply alienated Francophone Canadians and temporarily split the Liberal Party . In 1919 , Canada joined the League of Nations independently of Britain , and the 1931 Statute of Westminster affirmed Canada 's independence .

The Great Depression in Canada during the early 1930s saw an economic downturn , leading to hardship across the country . In response to the downturn , the Co @-@ operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) in Saskatchewan introduced many elements of a welfare state (as pioneered by Tommy Douglas) in the 1940s and 1950s . On the advice of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King , war with Germany was declared effective 10 September 1939 by King George VI , seven days after the United Kingdom . The delay underscored Canada 's independence .

The first Canadian Army units arrived in Britain in December 1939 . In all , over a million Canadians served in the armed forces during World War II and approximately 42 @,@ 000 were killed and another 55 @,@ 000 were wounded . Canadian troops played important roles in many key battles of the war , including the failed 1942 Dieppe Raid , the Allied invasion of Italy , the Normandy landings , the Battle of Normandy , and the Battle of the Scheldt in 1944 . Canada provided asylum for the Dutch monarchy while that country was occupied and is credited by the Netherlands for major contributions to its liberation from Nazi Germany . The Canadian economy boomed during the war as its industries manufactured military materiel for Canada , Britain , China , and the Soviet Union . Despite another Conscription Crisis in Quebec in 1944 , Canada finished the war with a large army and strong economy .

= = = Modern times = = =

The financial crisis of the great depression had led the Dominion of Newfoundland to relinquish responsible government in 1934 and become a crown colony ruled by a British governor. After two bitter referendums, Newfoundlanders voted to join Canada in 1949 as a province.

Canada 's post @-@ war economic growth , combined with the policies of successive Liberal governments , led to the emergence of a new Canadian identity , marked by the adoption of the current Maple Leaf Flag in 1965 , the implementation of official bilingualism (English and French) in 1969 , and the institution of official multiculturalism in 1971 . Socially democratic programs were also instituted , such as Medicare , the Canada Pension Plan , and Canada Student Loans , though provincial governments , particularly Quebec and Alberta , opposed many of these as incursions into their jurisdictions . Finally , another series of constitutional conferences resulted in the 1982 patriation of Canada 's constitution from the United Kingdom , concurrent with the creation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms . In 1999 , Nunavut became Canada 's third territory after a series of negotiations with the federal government .

At the same time, Quebec underwent profound social and economic changes through the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, giving birth to a modern nationalist movement. The radical Front de libération du Québec (FLQ) ignited the October Crisis with a series of bombings and kidnappings in 1970 and the sovereignist Parti Québécois was elected in 1976, organizing an unsuccessful referendum on sovereignty @-@ association in 1980. Attempts to accommodate Quebec nationalism constitutionally through the Meech Lake Accord failed in 1990. This led to the formation

of the Bloc Québécois in Quebec and the invigoration of the Reform Party of Canada in the West . A second referendum followed in 1995 , in which sovereignty was rejected by a slimmer margin of 50 @.@ 6 to 49 @.@ 4 percent . In 1997 , the Supreme Court ruled that unilateral secession by a province would be unconstitutional and the Clarity Act was passed by parliament , outlining the terms of a negotiated departure from Confederation .

In addition to the issues of Quebec sovereignty, a number of crises shook Canadian society in the late 1980s and early 1990s. These included the explosion of Air India Flight 182 in 1985, the largest mass murder in Canadian history; the École Polytechnique massacre in 1989, a university shooting targeting female students; and the Oka Crisis of 1990, the first of a number of violent confrontations between the government and Aboriginal groups. Canada also joined the Gulf War in 1990 as part of a US @-@ led coalition force and was active in several peacekeeping missions in the 1990s, including the UNPROFOR mission in the former Yugoslavia.

Canada sent troops to Afghanistan in 2001, but declined to join the US @-@ led invasion of Iraq in 2003. In 2009, Canada 's economy suffered in the worldwide Great Recession, but it has since largely rebounded. In 2011, Canadian forces participated in the NATO @-@ led intervention into the Libyan civil war, and also became involved in battling the Islamic State insurgency in Iraq in the mid @-@ 2010s.

= = Geography and climate = =

Canada occupies much of the continent of North America , sharing land borders with the contiguous United States to the south , and the US state of Alaska to the northwest . Canada stretches from the Atlantic Ocean in the east to the Pacific Ocean in the west ; to the north lies the Arctic Ocean . Greenland is to the northeast . By total area (including its waters) , Canada is the second @-@ largest country in the world , after Russia . By land area alone , however , Canada ranks fourth , the difference being due to it having the worlds largest proportion of fresh water lakes .

Since 1925, Canada has claimed the portion of the Arctic between 60 ° and 141 ° W longitude, but this claim is not universally recognized. Canada is home to the world 's northernmost settlement, Canadian Forces Station Alert, on the northern tip of Ellesmere Island? latitude 82 @.@ 5 ° N? which lies 817 kilometres (508 mi) from the North Pole. Much of the Canadian Arctic is covered by ice and permafrost. Canada has the longest coastline in the world, with a total length of 243 @,@ 042 kilometres (151 @,@ 019 mi); additionally, its border with the United States is the world 's longest land border, stretching 8 @,@ 891 kilometres (5 @,@ 525 mi).

Since the end of the last glacial period , Canada has consisted of eight distinct forest regions , including extensive boreal forest on the Canadian Shield . Canada has over 2 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 lakes (563 greater than 100 km2 (39 sq mi)) , more than any other country , containing much of the world 's fresh water . There are also fresh @-@ water glaciers in the Canadian Rockies and the Coast Mountains .

Canada is geologically active , having many earthquakes and potentially active volcanoes , notably Mount Meager , Mount Garibaldi , Mount Cayley , and the Mount Edziza volcanic complex . The volcanic eruption of the Tseax Cone in 1775 was among Canada 's worst natural disasters , killing 2 @,@ 000 Nisga 'a people and destroying their village in the Nass River valley of northern British Columbia . The eruption produced a 22 @.@ 5 @-@ kilometre (14 @.@ 0 mi) lava flow , and , according to Nisga 'a legend , blocked the flow of the Nass River . Canada 's population density , at 3 @.@ 3 inhabitants per square kilometre (8 @.@ 5 / sq mi) , is among the lowest in the world . The most densely populated part of the country is the Quebec City ? Windsor Corridor , situated in Southern Quebec and Southern Ontario along the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River .

Average winter and summer high temperatures across Canada vary from region to region . Winters can be harsh in many parts of the country , particularly in the interior and Prairie provinces , which experience a continental climate , where daily average temperatures are near ? 15 $^{\circ}$ C (5 $^{\circ}$ F) , but can drop below ? 40 $^{\circ}$ C (? 40 $^{\circ}$ F) with severe wind chills . In noncoastal regions , snow can cover the ground for almost six months of the year , while in parts of the north snow can persist year @-@

round . Coastal British Columbia has a temperate climate , with a mild and rainy winter . On the east and west coasts , average high temperatures are generally in the low 20s $^{\circ}$ C (70s $^{\circ}$ F) , while between the coasts , the average summer high temperature ranges from 25 to 30 $^{\circ}$ C (77 to 86 $^{\circ}$ F) , with temperatures in some interior locations occasionally exceeding 40 $^{\circ}$ C (104 $^{\circ}$ F) .

= = Government and politics = =

Canada has a parliamentary system within the context of a constitutional monarchy, the monarchy of Canada being the foundation of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The sovereign is Queen Elizabeth II, who is also monarch of 15 other Commonwealth countries and each of Canada 's 10 provinces. As such, the Queen 's representative, the Governor General of Canada (at present David Johnston), carries out most of the federal royal duties in Canada.

The direct participation of the royal and viceroyal figures in areas of governance is limited . In practice , their use of the executive powers is directed by the Cabinet , a committee of ministers of the Crown responsible to the elected House of Commons and chosen and headed by the Prime Minister of Canada (at present Justin Trudeau) , the head of government . The governor general or monarch may , though , in certain crisis situations exercise their power without ministerial advice . To ensure the stability of government , the governor general will usually appoint as prime minister the person who is the current leader of the political party that can obtain the confidence of a plurality in the House of Commons . The Prime Minister 's Office (PMO) is thus one of the most powerful institutions in government , initiating most legislation for parliamentary approval and selecting for appointment by the Crown , besides the aforementioned , the governor general , lieutenant governors , senators , federal court judges , and heads of Crown corporations and government agencies . The leader of the party with the second @-@ most seats usually becomes the Leader of Her Majesty 's Loyal Opposition and is part of an adversarial parliamentary system intended to keep the government in check .

Each of the 338 members of parliament in the House of Commons is elected by simple plurality in an electoral district or riding . General elections must be called by the governor general , either on the advice of the prime minister , within four years of the previous election , or if the government loses a confidence vote in the House . The 105 members of the Senate , whose seats are apportioned on a regional basis , serve until age 75 . Five parties had representatives elected to the federal parliament in the 2015 election : the Liberal Party of Canada , the Conservative Party of Canada (governing party and soon to be Official Opposition) , the New Democratic Party , the Bloc Québécois , and the Green Party of Canada . The list of historical parties with elected representation is substantial .

Canada 's federal structure divides government responsibilities between the federal government and the ten provinces . Provincial legislatures are unicameral and operate in parliamentary fashion similar to the House of Commons . Canada 's three territories also have legislatures , but these are not sovereign and have fewer constitutional responsibilities than the provinces . The territorial legislatures also differ structurally from their provincial counterparts .

The Bank of Canada is the central bank of the country . In addition , the Minister of Finance and Minister of Industry utilize the Statistics Canada agency for financial planning and economic policy development . The Bank of Canada is the sole authority authorized to issue currency in the form of Canadian bank notes . The bank does not issue Canadian coins ; they are issued by the Royal Canadian Mint .

= = = Law = = =

The Constitution of Canada is the supreme law of the country, and consists of written text and unwritten conventions. The Constitution Act, 1867 (known as the British North America Act prior to 1982), affirmed governance based on parliamentary precedent and divided powers between the federal and provincial governments. The Statute of Westminster 1931 granted full autonomy and the Constitution Act, 1982, ended all legislative ties to the UK, as well as adding a constitutional

amending formula and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Charter guarantees basic rights and freedoms that usually cannot be over @-@ ridden by any government? though a notwithstanding clause allows the federal parliament and provincial legislatures to override certain sections of the Charter for a period of five years.

The Indian Act , various treaties and case laws were established to mediate relations between Europeans and native peoples . Most notably , a series of eleven treaties known as the Numbered Treaties were signed between Aboriginals in Canada and the reigning Monarch of Canada between 1871 and 1921 . These treaties are agreements with the Canadian Crown @-@ in @-@ Council , administered by Canadian Aboriginal law , and overseen by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development . The role of the treaties and the rights they support were reaffirmed by Section Thirty @-@ five of the Constitution Act , 1982 . These rights may include provision of services , such as health care , and exemption from taxation . The legal and policy framework within which Canada and First Nations operate was further formalized in 2005 , through the First Nations ? Federal Crown Political Accord .

Canada 's judiciary plays an important role in interpreting laws and has the power to strike down Acts of Parliament that violate the constitution . The Supreme Court of Canada is the highest court and final arbiter and has been led since 2000 by the Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin (the first female Chief Justice) . Its nine members are appointed by the governor general on the advice of the prime minister and minister of justice . All judges at the superior and appellate levels are appointed after consultation with nongovernmental legal bodies . The federal Cabinet also appoints justices to superior courts in the provincial and territorial jurisdictions .

Common law prevails everywhere except in Quebec , where civil law predominates . Criminal law is solely a federal responsibility and is uniform throughout Canada . Law enforcement , including criminal courts , is officially a provincial responsibility , conducted by provincial and municipal police forces . However , in most rural areas and some urban areas , policing responsibilities are contracted to the federal Royal Canadian Mounted Police .

= = = Foreign relations and military = = =

Canada is recognized as a middle power for its role in international affairs with a tendency to pursue multilateral solutions. Canada 's foreign policy based on international peacekeeping and security is carried out through coalitions and international organizations, and through the work of numerous federal institutions. Canada 's peacekeeping role during the 20th century has played a major role in its global image. The strategy of the Canadian government 's foreign aid policy reflects an emphasis to meet the Millennium Development Goals, while also providing assistance in response to foreign humanitarian crises.

Canada was a founding member of the United Nations and has membership in the World Trade Organization , the G20 and the Organisation for Economic Co @-@ operation and Development (OECD). Canada is also a member of various other international and regional organizations and forums for economic and cultural affairs. Canada acceded to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1976. Canada joined the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1990 and hosted the OAS General Assembly in 2000 and the 3rd Summit of the Americas in 2001. Canada seeks to expand its ties to Pacific Rim economies through membership in the Asia @-@ Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC).

Canada and the United States share the world 's longest undefended border , co @-@ operate on military campaigns and exercises , and are each other 's largest trading partner . Canada nevertheless has an independent foreign policy , most notably maintaining full relations with Cuba since , and declining to officially participate in the 2003 invasion of Iraq . Canada also maintains historic ties to the United Kingdom and France and to other former British and French colonies through Canada 's membership in the Commonwealth of Nations and the Francophonie . Canada is noted for having a positive relationship with the Netherlands , owing , in part , to its contribution to the Dutch liberation during World War II .

Canada 's strong attachment to the British Empire and Commonwealth led to major participation in

British military efforts in the Second Boer War , World War I and World War II . Since then , Canada has been an advocate for multilateralism , making efforts to resolve global issues in collaboration with other nations . During the Cold War , Canada was a major contributor to UN forces in the Korean War and founded the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) in co @-@ operation with the United States to defend against potential aerial attacks from the Soviet Union .

During the Suez Crisis of 1956, future Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson eased tensions by proposing the inception of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force, for which he was awarded the 1957 Nobel Peace Prize. As this was the first UN peacekeeping mission, Pearson is often credited as the inventor of the concept. Canada has since served in over 50 peacekeeping missions, including every UN peacekeeping effort until 1989, and has since maintained forces in international missions in Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, and elsewhere; Canada has sometimes faced controversy over its involvement in foreign countries, notably in the 1993 Somalia Affair.

In 2001, Canada deployed troops to Afghanistan as part of the US stabilization force and the UN @-@ authorized, NATO @-@ led International Security Assistance Force. In February 2007, Canada, Italy, the United Kingdom, Norway, and Russia announced their joint commitment to a \$1 @.@ 5 @-@ billion project to help develop vaccines for developing nations, and called on other countries to join them. In August 2007, Canada 's territorial claims in the Arctic were challenged after a Russian underwater expedition to the North Pole; Canada has considered that area to be sovereign territory since 1925.

Canada currently employs a professional , volunteer military force of 92 @,@ 000 active personnel and approximately 51 @,@ 000 reserve personnel . The unified Canadian Forces (CF) comprise the Canadian Army , Royal Canadian Navy , and Royal Canadian Air Force . In 2013 , Canada 's military expenditure totalled approximately C \$ 19 billion , or around 1 % of the country 's GDP .

= = = Provinces and territories = = =

Canada is a federation composed of ten provinces and three territories . In turn , these may be grouped into four main regions : Western Canada , Central Canada , Atlantic Canada , and Northern Canada (Eastern Canada refers to Central Canada and Atlantic Canada together) . Provinces have more autonomy than territories , having responsibility for social programs such as health care , education , and welfare . Together , the provinces collect more revenue than the federal government , an almost unique structure among federations in the world . Using its spending powers , the federal government can initiate national policies in provincial areas , such as the Canada Health Act ; the provinces can opt out of these , but rarely do so in practice . Equalization payments are made by the federal government to ensure that reasonably uniform standards of services and taxation are kept between the richer and poorer provinces .

= = Economy = =

Canada is the world 's eleventh @-@ largest economy as of 2015, with a nominal GDP of approximately US \$ 1 @.@ 79 trillion. It is a member of the Organisation for Economic Co @-@ operation and Development (OECD) and the Group of Eight (G8), and is one of the world 's top ten trading nations, with a highly globalized economy. Canada is a mixed economy, ranking above the US and most western European nations on the Heritage Foundation 's index of economic freedom, and experiencing a relatively low level of income disparity. The country 's average household disposable income per capita is over US \$ 23 @,@ 900, higher than the OECD average. Furthermore, the Toronto Stock Exchange is the seventh largest stock exchange in the world by market capitalization, listing over 1 @,@ 500 companies with a combined market capitalization of over US \$ 2 trillion as of 2015.

In 2014 , Canada 's exports totalled over C \$ 528 billion , while its imported goods were worth over \$ 523 billion , of which approximately \$ 349 billion originated from the United States , \$ 49 billion from the European Union , and \$ 35 billion from China . The country 's 2014 trade surplus totalled C \$ 5 @.@ 1 billion , compared with a C \$ 46 @.@ 9 billion surplus in 2008 .

Since the early 20th century , the growth of Canada 's manufacturing , mining , and service sectors has transformed the nation from a largely rural economy to an urbanized , industrial one . Like many other developed nations , the Canadian economy is dominated by the service industry , which employs about three @-@ quarters of the country 's workforce . However , Canada is unusual among developed countries in the importance of its primary sector , in which the forestry and petroleum industries are two of the most prominent components .

Canada is one of the few developed nations that are net exporters of energy . Atlantic Canada possesses vast offshore deposits of natural gas , and Alberta also hosts large oil and gas resources . The vastness of the Athabasca oil sands and other assets results in Canada having a 13 % share of global oil reserves , comprising the world 's third @-@ largest share after Venezuela and Saudi Arabia . Canada is additionally one of the world 's largest suppliers of agricultural products ; the Canadian Prairies are one of the most important global producers of wheat , canola , and other grains . Canada 's Ministry of Natural Resources provides statistics regarding its major exports ; the country is a leading exporter of zinc , uranium , gold , nickel , aluminum , steel , iron ore , coking coal and lead . Many towns in northern Canada , where agriculture is difficult , are sustainable because of nearby mines or sources of timber . Canada also has a sizeable manufacturing sector centred in southern Ontario and Quebec , with automobiles and aeronautics representing particularly important industries .

Canada 's economic integration with the United States has increased significantly since World War II . The Automotive Products Trade Agreement of 1965 opened Canada 's borders to trade in the automobile manufacturing industry . In the 1970s , concerns over energy self @-@ sufficiency and foreign ownership in the manufacturing sectors prompted Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau 's Liberal government to enact the National Energy Program (NEP) and the Foreign Investment Review Agency (FIRA) . In the 1980s , Prime Minister Brian Mulroney 's Progressive Conservatives abolished the NEP and changed the name of FIRA to Investment Canada , to encourage foreign investment . The Canada ? United States Free Trade Agreement (FTA) of 1988 eliminated tariffs between the two countries , while the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) expanded the free @-@ trade zone to include Mexico in 1994 . In the mid @-@ 1990s , Jean Chrétien 's Liberal government began to post annual budgetary surpluses , and steadily paid down the national debt .

The global financial crisis of 2008 caused a major recession, which led to a significant rise in unemployment in Canada. By October 2009, Canada 's national unemployment rate had reached 8 @.@ 6 percent, with provincial unemployment rates varying from a low of 5 @.@ 8 percent in Manitoba to a high of 17 percent in Newfoundland and Labrador . Between October 2008 and October 2010, the Canadian labour market lost 162 @,@ 000 full @-@ time jobs and a total of 224 @,@ 000 permanent jobs. Canada 's federal debt was estimated to total \$ 566 @.@ 7 billion for the fiscal year 2010 ? 11, up from \$ 463 @.@ 7 billion in 2008 ? 09. In addition, Canada 's net foreign debt rose by \$41 billion to \$194 billion in the first quarter of 2010. However, Canada 's regulated banking sector (comparatively conservative among G8 nations), the federal government 's pre-@-@ crisis budgetary surpluses, and its long @-@ term policies of lowering the national debt, resulted in a less severe recession compared to other G8 nations. As of 2015, the Canadian economy has largely stabilized and has seen a modest return to growth, although the country remains troubled by volatile oil prices, sensitivity to the Eurozone crisis and higher @-@ than @-@ normal unemployment rates. The federal government and many Canadian industries have also started to expand trade with emerging Asian markets, in an attempt to diversify exports; Asia is now Canada 's second @-@ largest export market after the United States . Widely debated oil pipeline proposals, in particular, are hoped to increase exports of Canadian oil reserves to China.

= = = Science and technology = = =

In 2012, Canada spent approximately C \$ 31 @.@ 3 billion on domestic research and development, of which around \$ 7 billion was provided by the federal and provincial governments. As of 2015, the country has produced thirteen Nobel laureates in physics, chemistry, and medicine

, and was ranked fourth worldwide for scientific research quality in a major 2012 survey of international scientists. It is furthermore home to the headquarters of a number of global technology firms. Canada has one of the highest levels of Internet access in the world, with over 33 million users, equivalent to around 94 percent of its total 2014 population.

The Canadian Space Agency operates a highly active space program , conducting deep @-@ space , planetary , and aviation research , and developing rockets and satellites . Canada was the third country to launch a satellite into space after the USSR and the United States , with the 1962 Alouette 1 launch . In 1984 , Marc Garneau became Canada 's first male astronaut . Canada is a participant in the International Space Station (ISS) , and is a pioneer in space robotics , having constructed the Canadarm , Canadarm2 and Dextre robotic manipulators for the ISS and NASA 's Space Shuttle . Since the 1960s , Canada 's aerospace industry has designed and built numerous marques of satellite , including Radarsat @-@ 1 and 2 , ISIS and MOST . Canada has also produced one of the world 's most successful and widely used sounding rockets , the Black Brant ; over 1 @,@ 000 Black Brants have been launched since the rocket 's introduction in 1961 .

= = Demographics = =

The 2011 Canadian census counted a total population of 33 @,@ 476 @,@ 688, an increase of around 5 @.@ 9 percent over the 2006 figure. By December 2012, Statistics Canada reported a population of over 35 million, signifying the fastest growth rate of any G8 nation. Between 1990 and 2008, the population increased by 5 @.@ 6 million, equivalent to 20 @.@ 4 percent overall growth. The main drivers of population growth are immigration and, to a lesser extent, natural growth. Canada has one of the highest per @-@ capita immigration rates in the world, driven mainly by economic policy and, to a lesser extent family reunification. The Canadian public as @-@ well as the major political parties support the current level of immigration. In 2010, a record 280 @,@ 636 people immigrated to Canada. The Canadian government anticipated between 280 @,@ 000 and 305 @,@ 000 new permanent residents in 2016, a similar number of immigrants as in recent years. New immigrants settle mostly in major urban areas such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Canada also accepts large numbers of refugees, accounting for over 10 percent of annual global refugee resettlements.

About four @-@ fifths of the population lives within 150 kilometres ($93~\rm mi$) of the contiguous United States border . Approximately 50 percent of Canadians live in urban areas concentrated along the Quebec City ? Windsor Corridor , with an additional 30 percent living along the British Columbia Lower Mainland , and the Calgary ? Edmonton Corridor in Alberta . Canada spans latitudinally from the 83rd parallel north to the 41st parallel north , and approximately 95 % of the population is found below the 55th parallel north . In common with many other developed countries , Canada is experiencing a demographic shift towards an older population , with more retirees and fewer people of working age . In 2006 , the average age was 39 @.@ 5 years ; by 2011 , it had risen to approximately 39 @.@ 9 years . As of 2013 , the average life expectancy for Canadians is 81 years . The majority of Canadians ($69~\rm @.@~9~\%$) live in family households , 26 @.@ 8 % report living alone , and those living with unrelated persons reported at 3 @.@ 7 % . The average size of a household in 2006 was 2 @.@ 5 people .

= = = Education = = =

According to a 2012 report by the Organisation for Economic Co @-@ operation and Development (OECD), Canada is the most educated country in the world; the country ranks first worldwide in the number of adults having tertiary education, with 51 percent of Canadian adults having attained at least an undergraduate college or university degree. Canada spends about 5 @.@ 3 % of its GDP on education. The country invests heavily in tertiary education (more than 20 000 USD per student). As of 2014, 89 percent of adults aged 25 to 64 have earned the equivalent of a high @-@ school degree, compared to an OECD average of 75 percent.

Since the adoption of section 23 of the Constitution Act, 1982, education in both English and

French has been available in most places across Canada . Canadian provinces and territories are responsible for education provision . The mandatory school age ranges between 5 ? 7 to 16 ? 18 years , contributing to an adult literacy rate of 99 percent . In 2002 , 43 percent of Canadians aged 25 to 64 possessed a post @-@ secondary education ; for those aged 25 to 34 , the rate of post @-@ secondary education reached 51 percent . The Programme for International Student Assessment indicates that Canadian students perform well above the OECD average , particularly in mathematics , science , and reading .

= = = Ethnicity = = =

According to the 2006 census, the country's largest self @-@ reported ethnic origin is Canadian (accounting for 32 % of the population), followed by English (21 %), French (15 @.@ 8 %), Scottish (15 @.@ 1 %), Irish (13 @.@ 9 %), German (10 @.@ 2 %), Italian (4 @.@ 6 %), Chinese (4 @.@ 3 %), First Nations (4 @.@ 0 %), Ukrainian (3 @.@ 9 %), and Dutch (3 @.@ 3 %). There are 600 recognized First Nations governments or bands, encompassing a total of 1 @,@ 172 @,@ 790 people. Canada 's aboriginal population is growing at almost twice the national rate, and four percent of Canada's population claimed aboriginal identity in 2006. Another 16 @.@ 2 percent of the population belonged to a non @-@ aboriginal visible minority. In 2006, the largest visible minority groups were South Asian (4 @.@ 0 %), Chinese (3 @.@ 9 %) and Black (2 @.@ 5 %) . Between 2001 and 2006 , the visible minority population rose by 27 @.@ 2 percent. In 1961, less than two percent of Canada 's population (about 300 @,@ 000 people) were members of visible minority groups. By 2007, almost one in five (19 @.@ 8 %) were foreign @-@ born, with nearly 60 percent of new immigrants coming from Asia (including the Middle East) . The leading sources of immigrants to Canada were China, the Philippines and India. According to Statistics Canada, visible minority groups could account for a third of the Canadian population by 2031.

= = = Religion = = =

Canada is religiously diverse , encompassing a wide range of beliefs and customs . Canada has no official church , and the government is officially committed to religious pluralism . Freedom of religion in Canada is a constitutionally protected right , allowing individuals to assemble and worship without limitation or interference . The practice of religion is now generally considered a private matter throughout society and the state . With Christianity in decline after having once been central and integral to Canadian culture and daily life , Canada has become a post @-@ Christian , secular state . The majority of Canadians consider religion to be unimportant in their daily lives , but still believe in God . According to the 2011 census , 67 @.@ 3 % of Canadians identify as Christian ; of these , Roman Catholics make up the largest group , accounting for 38 @.@ 7 % of the population . The largest Protestant denomination is the United Church of Canada (accounting for 6 @.@ 1 % of Canadians) , followed by Anglicans (5 @.@ 0 %) , and Baptists (1 @.@ 9 %) . Secularization has been growing since the 1960s . In 2011 , 23 @.@ 9 % declared no religious affiliation , compared to 16 @.@ 5 % in 2001 . The remaining 8 @.@ 8 % are affiliated with non @-@ Christian religions , the largest of which are Islam (3 @.@ 2 %) and Hinduism (1 @.@ 5 %) .

= = = Languages = = =

A multitude of languages are used by Canadians , with English and French (the official languages) being the mother tongues of approximately 60 % and 20 % of Canadians respectively . Nearly 6 @.@ 8 million Canadians listed a non @-@ official language as their mother tongue . Some of the most common non @-@ official first languages include Chinese (mainly Cantonese; 1 @,@ 072 @,@ 555 first @-@ language speakers), Punjabi (430 @,@ 705), Spanish (410 @,@ 670), German (409 @,@ 200), and Italian (407 @,@ 490). Canada 's federal government practices official bilingualism, which is applied by the Commissioner of Official Languages in consonance with

Section 16 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Federal Official Languages Act . English and French have equal status in federal courts , parliament , and in all federal institutions . Citizens have the right , where there is sufficient demand , to receive federal government services in either English or French and official @-@ language minorities are guaranteed their own schools in all provinces and territories .

The 1977 Charter of the French Language established French as the official language of Quebec . Although more than 85 percent of French @-@ speaking Canadians live in Quebec , there are substantial Francophone populations in New Brunswick , Alberta , and Manitoba ; Ontario has the largest French @-@ speaking population outside Quebec . New Brunswick , the only officially bilingual province , has a French @-@ speaking Acadian minority constituting 33 percent of the population . There are also clusters of Acadians in southwestern Nova Scotia , on Cape Breton Island , and through central and western Prince Edward Island .

Other provinces have no official languages as such , but French is used as a language of instruction , in courts , and for other government services , in addition to English . Manitoba , Ontario , and Quebec allow for both English and French to be spoken in the provincial legislatures , and laws are enacted in both languages . In Ontario , French has some legal status , but is not fully co @-@ official . There are 11 Aboriginal language groups , composed of more than 65 distinct dialects . Of these , only the Cree , Inuktitut and Ojibway languages have a large enough population of fluent speakers to be considered viable to survive in the long term . Several aboriginal languages have official status in the Northwest Territories . Inuktitut is the majority language in Nunavut , and is one of three official languages in the territory .

= = Culture = =

Canada 's culture draws influences from its broad range of constituent nationalities , and policies that promote a " just society " are constitutionally protected . Canada has placed emphasis on equality and inclusiveness for all its people . Multiculturalism is often cited as one of Canada 's significant accomplishments , and a key distinguishing element of Canadian identity . In Quebec , cultural identity is strong , and many commentators speak of a culture of Quebec that is distinct from English Canadian culture . However , as a whole , Canada is in theory a cultural mosaic ? a collection of several regional , aboriginal , and ethnic subcultures .

Canada 's approach to governance emphasizing multiculturalism , which is based on selective immigration , social integration , and suppression of far right politics , has wide public support . Government policies such as publicly funded health care , higher taxation to redistribute wealth , the outlawing of capital punishment , strong efforts to eliminate poverty , strict gun control , and the legalization of same @-@ sex marriage are further social indicators of Canada 's political and cultural values . Canadians also identify with the countries institutions of health care , peacekeeping , the National park system and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms .

Historically , Canada has been influenced by British , French , and aboriginal cultures and traditions . Through their language , art and music , aboriginal peoples continue to influence the Canadian identity . During the 20th @-@ century Canadians with African , Caribbean and Asian nationalities have added to the Canadian identity and its culture . Canadian humour is an integral part of the Canadian Identity and is reflected in its folklore , literature , music , art and media . The primary characteristics of Canadian humour are irony , parody , and satire . Many Canadian comedians have archived international success in the American TV and film industries and are amongst the most recognized in the world .

Canada has a well @-@ developed media sector , but its cultural output ; particularly in English films , television shows , and magazines , is often overshadowed by imports from the United States . As a result , the preservation of a distinctly Canadian culture is supported by federal government programs , laws , and institutions such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) , the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) , and the Canadian Radio @-@ television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) .

= = = Symbols = = =

Canada 's national symbols are influenced by natural , historical , and Aboriginal sources . The use of the maple leaf as a Canadian symbol dates to the early 18th century . The maple leaf is depicted on Canada 's current and previous flags , and on the Arms of Canada . The Arms of Canada is closely modelled after the royal coat of arms of the United Kingdom with French and distinctive Canadian elements replacing or added to those derived from the British version . The Great Seal of Canada is a governmental seal used for purposes of state , being set on letters patent , proclamations and commissions , for representatives of the Queen and for the appointment of cabinet ministers , lieutenant governors , senators , and judges . Other prominent symbols include the beaver , Canada goose , common loon , the Crown , the Royal Canadian Mounted Police , and more recently , the totem pole and Inuksuk . Canadian coins feature many of these symbols : the loon on the \$ 1 coin , the Arms of Canada on the 50 ¢ piece , the beaver on the nickel . The penny , removed from circulation in 2013 , featured the maple leaf . The Queen 's image appears on \$ 20 bank notes , and on the obverse of all current Canadian coins .

= = = Literature = = =

Canadian literature is often divided into French- and English @-@ language literatures , which are rooted in the literary traditions of France and Britain , respectively . There are four major themes that can be found within historical Canadian literature ; nature , frontier life , Canada 's position within the world , all three of which tie into the garrison mentality . By the 1990s , Canadian literature was viewed as some of the world 's best . Canada 's ethnic and cultural diversity are reflected in its literature , with many of its most prominent modern writers focusing on ethnic life . Arguably , the best @-@ known living Canadian writer internationally (especially since the deaths of Robertson Davies and Mordecai Richler) is Margaret Atwood , a prolific novelist , poet , and literary critic . Numerous other Canadian authors have accumulated international literary awards ; including Nobel Laureate Alice Munro , who has been called the best living writer of short stories in English ; and Booker Prize recipient Michael Ondaatje , who is perhaps best known for the novel The English Patient , which was adapted as a film of the same name that won the Academy Award for Best Picture .

= = = Visual arts = = =

Canadian visual art has been dominated by figures such as Tom Thomson? the country 's most famous painter? and by the Group of Seven. Thomson 's career painting Canadian landscapes spanned a decade up to his death in 1917 at age 39. The Group were painters with a nationalistic and idealistic focus, who first exhibited their distinctive works in May 1920. Though referred to as having seven members, five artists? Lawren Harris, A. Y. Jackson, Arthur Lismer, J. E. H. MacDonald, and Frederick Varley? were responsible for articulating the Group 's ideas. They were joined briefly by Frank Johnston, and by commercial artist Franklin Carmichael. A. J. Casson became part of the Group in 1926. Associated with the Group was another prominent Canadian artist, Emily Carr, known for her landscapes and portrayals of the indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast. Since the 1950s, works of Inuit art have been given as gifts to foreign dignitaries by the Canadian government.

= = = Music = = =

The Canadian music industry is the sixth largest in the world producing internationally renowned composers, musicians and ensembles. Music broadcasting in the country is regulated by the CRTC. The Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences presents Canada 's music industry awards, the Juno Awards, which were first awarded in 1970. The Canadian Music Hall of Fame established in 1976 honours Canadian musicians for their lifetime achievements. Patriotic music in

Canada dates back over 200 years as a distinct category from British patriotism, preceding the first legal steps to independence by over 50 years. The earliest, The Bold Canadian, was written in 1812. The national anthem of Canada, "O Canada", was originally commissioned by the Lieutenant Governor of Quebec, the Honourable Théodore Robitaille, for the 1880 St. Jean @-@ Baptiste Day ceremony, and was officially adopted in 1980. Calixa Lavallée wrote the music, which was a setting of a patriotic poem composed by the poet and judge Sir Adolphe @-@ Basile Routhier. The text was originally only in French, before it was translated to English in 1906.

= = = Sport = = =

The roots of organized sports in Canada date back to the 1770s . Canada 's official national sports are ice hockey and lacrosse . Seven of Canada 's eight largest metropolitan areas ? Toronto , Montreal , Vancouver , Ottawa , Calgary , Edmonton and Winnipeg ? have franchises in the National Hockey League (NHL) while Quebec City had the Quebec Nordiques until they relocated to Colorado in 1995 . Canada does have one Major League Baseball team , the Toronto Blue Jays , one professional basketball team , the Toronto Raptors , three Major League Soccer teams and four National Lacrosse League teams . Canada has participated in almost every Olympic Games since its Olympic debut in 1900 , and has hosted several high @-@ profile international sporting events , including the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal , the 1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary , the 1994 Basketball World Championship , the 2007 FIFA U @-@ 20 World Cup , the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver and Whistler , British Columbia and the 2015 FIFA Women 's World Cup . Other popular spectator sports in Canada include curling and Canadian football ; the latter is played professionally in the Canadian Football League (CFL) . Golf , tennis , baseball , skiing , cricket , volleyball , rugby union , Australian Rules Football , soccer and basketball are widely played at youth and amateur levels , but professional leagues and franchises are not widespread .