

= Canadians =

Canadians (French : Canadiens) are the people who are identified with the country of Canada . This connection may be residential , legal , historical , or cultural . For most Canadians , several (or all) of these connections exist and are collectively the source of their being Canadian .

Canada is a bilingual and multicultural society home to people of many different ethnic , religious and national origins , with the majority of the population made up of Old World immigrants and their descendants . Following the initial period of French and then the much larger British colonization , different waves (or peaks) of immigration and settlement of non @-@ aboriginal peoples took place over the course of nearly two centuries and continue today . Elements of Aboriginal , French , British and more recent immigrant customs , languages and religions have combined to form the culture of Canada and thus a Canadian identity . Canada has also been strongly influenced by its linguistic , geographic and economic neighbour , the United States .

Canadian independence from Britain grew gradually over the course of many years since the formation of the Canadian Confederation in 1867 . World War I and World War II in particular gave rise to a desire among Canadians to have their country recognized as a fully @-@ fledged sovereign state with a distinct citizenship . Legislative independence was established with the passage of the Statute of Westminster 1931 , the Canadian Citizenship Act of 1946 took effect on January 1 , 1947 , and full sovereignty was achieved with the patriation of the constitution in 1982 . Canada 's nationality law closely mirrored that of the United Kingdom . Legislation since the mid 20th century represents Canadians ' commitment to multilateralism and socioeconomic development .

= = Population = =

As of 2010 , Canadians make up 0 @. @ 5 % of the world 's total population , having relied upon immigration for population growth and social development . Approximately 41 % of current Canadians are first- or second @-@ generation immigrants , and 20 percent of Canadian residents in the 2000s were not born in the country . Statistics Canada projects that , by 2031 , nearly one @-@ half of Canadians above the age of 15 will be foreign @-@ born or have one foreign @-@ born parent . Aboriginal peoples , according to the 2011 Canadian Census , numbered at 1 @ , @ 400 @ , @ 685 or 4 @. @ 3 % of the country 's 33 @ , @ 476 @ , @ 688 population .

= = = Immigration = = =

The French originally settled New France , in present @-@ day Quebec and Ontario ; and Acadia , in present @-@ day Nova Scotia and New Brunswick , during the early part of the 17th century . Approximately 100 Irish @-@ born families would settle the Saint Lawrence Valley by 1700 , assimilating into the Canadian population and culture . During the 18th and 19th century ; immigration westward (to the area known as Rupert 's Land) was carried out by " Voyageurs " ; French settlers working for the North West Company ; and by British settlers (English and Scottish) representing the Hudson 's Bay Company , coupled with independent entrepreneurial woodsmen called " Coureur des bois " . This arrival of newcomers led to the creation of the Métis , an ethnic group of mixed European and First Nations parentage .

The British conquest of New France was preceded by a small number of Germans and Swedes who settled alongside the Scottish in Port Royal , Nova Scotia , while some Irish immigrated to the Colony of Newfoundland . In the wake of the 1775 invasion of Canada by the newly formed Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War , approximately 60 @ , @ 000 United Empire Loyalists fled to British North America , a large portion of whom migrated to New Brunswick . After the War of 1812 , British (including British army regulars) , Scottish and Irish immigration was encouraged throughout Rupert 's Land , Upper Canada and Lower Canada .

Between 1815 and 1850 , some 800 @ , @ 000 immigrants came to the colonies of British North America , mainly from the British Isles as part of the great migration of Canada . These new arrivals

included some Gaelic @-@ speaking Highland Scots displaced by the Highland Clearances to Nova Scotia . The Irish Potato Famine of the 1840s significantly increased the pace of Irish immigration to Prince Edward Island and the Province of Canada , with over 35 @,@ 000 distressed individuals landing in Toronto in 1847 and 1848 . Beginning in the late 1850s , the immigration of Chinese into the Colony of Vancouver Island and Colony of British Columbia peaked with the onset of the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush . The Chinese Immigration Act of 1885 eventually placed a head tax on all Chinese immigrants , in hopes of discouraging Chinese immigration after completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway .

The population of Canada has consistently risen , doubling approximately every 40 years , since the establishment of the Canadian Confederation in 1867 . From the mid- to late 19th century , Canada had a policy of assisting immigrants from Europe , including an estimated 100 @,@ 000 unwanted " Home Children " from Britain . Block settlement communities were established throughout western Canada between the late 19th and early 20th centuries . Some were planned and others were spontaneously created by the settlers themselves . Canada was now receiving a large number of European immigrants , predominantly Italians , Germans , Scandinavians , Dutch , Poles , and Ukrainians . Legislative restrictions on immigration (such as the Continuous journey regulation and Chinese Immigration Act) that had favoured British and other European immigrants were amended in the 1960s , opening the doors to immigrants from all parts of the world . While the 1950s had still seen high levels of immigration by Europeans , by the 1970s , immigrants were increasingly Chinese , Indian , Vietnamese , Jamaican and Haitian . During the late 1960s and early 1970s , Canada received many American Vietnam War draft dissenters . Throughout the late 1980s and 1990s , Canada 's growing Pacific trade brought with it a large influx of South Asians , who tended to settle in British Columbia . Immigrants of all backgrounds tend to settle in the major urban centres . The Canadian public as @-@ well as the major political parties support immigration .

The majority of illegal immigrants come from the southern provinces of the People 's Republic of China , with Asia as a whole , Eastern Europe , Caribbean , Africa and the Middle East all contributing to the illegal population . Estimates of numbers of illegal immigrants range between 35 @,@ 000 and 120 @,@ 000 . A 2008 report by the Auditor General of Canada Sheila Fraser stated that Canada has lost track of approximately 41 @,@ 000 illegal immigrants whose visas have expired .

= = = Citizenship and diaspora = = =

Canadian citizenship is typically obtained by birth in Canada or by birth or adoption abroad when at least one biological parent or adoptive parent is a Canadian citizen who was born in Canada or naturalized in Canada (and did not receive citizenship by being born outside of Canada to a Canadian citizen) . It can also be granted to a permanent resident who lives in Canada for three out of four years and meets specific requirements . Canada established its own nationality law in 1946 with the enactment of the Canadian Citizenship Act which took effect on January 1 , 1947 . The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act , was passed by the Parliament of Canada in 2001 as Bill C @-@ 11 , which replaced the Immigration Act of 1976 as the primary federal legislation regulating immigration . Prior to the conferring of legal status on Canadian citizenship , Canada 's naturalization laws consisted of a multitude of Acts beginning with the Immigration Act of 1910 .

According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada , there are three main classifications for immigrants : Family class (persons closely related to Canadian residents) , Economic class (admitted on the basis of a point system that accounts for age , health and labour @-@ market skills required for cost effectively inducting the immigrants into Canada 's labour market) and Refugee class (those seeking protection by applying to remain in the country by way of the Canadian immigration and refugee law) . In 2008 , there were 65 @,@ 567 immigrants in the family class , 21 @,@ 860 refugees , and 149 @,@ 072 economic immigrants amongst the 247 @,@ 243 total immigrants to the country . Canada resettles over one in 10 of the world 's refugees and has one of the highest per @-@ capita immigration rates in the world .

As of a 2010 report by the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada , there were 2 @.@ 8 million

Canadian citizens abroad . This represents about 8 % of the total Canadian population . Of those living abroad , the United States , Hong Kong , the United Kingdom , Taiwan , China , Lebanon , United Arab Emirates and Australia have the largest Canadian diaspora . Canadians in the United States constitute the greatest single expatriate community at over 1 million in 2009 , representing 35 % of all Canadians abroad . Under current Canadian law , Canada does not restrict dual citizenship but Passport Canada encourages its citizens to travel abroad on their Canadian passport , so they can access Canadian consular services .

== Ethnic ancestry ==

Canada has 34 ethnic groups with at least 100 000 members each , of which 11 have over 1 million people and numerous others are represented in smaller amounts . According to the 2006 census , the largest self reported ethnic origin is " Canadian " (32 %) , followed by English (21 %) , French (15 %) , Scottish (15 %) , Irish (13 %) , German (10 %) , Italian (4 %) , Chinese (4 %) , North American Indian (4 %) , Ukrainian (3 %) , and Dutch (Netherlands) (3 %) . In the 2006 census , over five million Canadians identified themselves as a member of a visible minority . Together , they make up 16 % of the total population : most numerous among these are South Asian (4 %) , Black (2 %) , and Filipino (1 %) . Aboriginal peoples are not considered a visible minority under the Employment Equity Act , and this is the definition that Statistics Canada also uses .

For a complete list see : Canadian ethnic groups

== Culture ==

Canada 's culture is a product of its ethnicities , languages , religions , political and legal system (s) . Canada has been shaped by waves of migration that have combined to form a unique blend of art , cuisine , literature , humour and music . Today , Canada has a diverse makeup of nationalities and constitutional protection for policies that promote multiculturalism rather than cultural assimilation . In Quebec , cultural identity is strong , and many French speaking commentators speak of a Quebec culture distinct from English Canadian culture . However , as a whole , Canada is a cultural mosaic : a collection of several regional , aboriginal , and ethnic subcultures .

Canadian government policies such as official bilingualism ; publicly funded health care ; higher and more progressive taxation ; outlawing capital punishment ; strong efforts to eliminate poverty ; strict gun control ; leniency in regard to drug use , and , most recently , legalizing same sex marriage are social indicators of Canada 's political and cultural values . American media and entertainment are popular , if not dominant , in English Canada ; conversely , many Canadian cultural products and entertainers are successful in the United States and worldwide . The Government of Canada has also influenced culture with programs , laws and institutions . It has created Crown corporations to promote Canadian culture through media and has also tried to protect Canadian culture by setting legal minimums on Canadian content .

Canadian culture has historically been influenced by Aboriginal , French and British cultures and traditions . Most of Canada 's territory was inhabited and developed later than other European colonies in the Americas , with the result that themes and symbols of pioneers , trappers , and traders were important in the early development of the Canadian identity . First Nations played a critical part in the development of European colonies in Canada , particularly for their role in assisting exploration of the continent during the North American fur trade . The British conquest of New France in the mid 1700s brought a large Francophone population under British Imperial rule , creating a need for compromise and accommodation . The new British rulers left alone much of the religious , political , and social culture of the French speaking habitants , guaranteeing through the Quebec Act of 1774 the right of the Canadiens to practise the Catholic faith and to use French civil law (now Quebec law) .

The Constitution Act of 1867 was designed to meet the growing calls of Canadians for autonomy

from British rule , while avoiding the overly strong decentralization that contributed to the Civil War in the United States . The compromises made by the Fathers of Confederation set Canadians on a path to bilingualism , and this in turn contributed to an acceptance of diversity .

The Canadian Forces and overall civilian participation in the First World War and Second World War helped to foster Canadian nationalism , however in 1917 and 1944 conscription crisis ' highlighted the considerable rift along ethnic lines between Anglophones and Francophones . As a result of the First and Second World Wars , the Government of Canada became more assertive and less deferential to British authority . With the gradual loosening of political ties to the United Kingdom and the modernization of Canadian immigration policies , 20th @-@ century immigrants with African , Caribbean and Asian nationalities have added to the Canadian identity and its culture . The multiple @-@ origins immigration pattern continues today with the arrival of large numbers of immigrants from non @-@ British or non @-@ French backgrounds .

Multiculturalism in Canada was adopted as the official policy of the government during the premiership of Pierre Elliot Trudeau in the 1970s and 1980s . The Canadian government has often been described as the instigator of multicultural ideology because of its public emphasis on the social importance of immigration . Multiculturalism is administered by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and reflected in the law through the Canadian Multiculturalism Act and section 27 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms .

= = = Religion = = =

Canada as a nation is religiously diverse , encompassing a wide range of groups , beliefs and customs . The preamble to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms references " God " , and the monarch carries the title of " Defender of the Faith " . However Canada has no official religion , and support for religious pluralism (Freedom of religion in Canada) is an important part of Canada 's political culture . With the role of Christianity in decline , having once been central and integral to Canadian culture and daily life ; commentators have suggested that Canada has come to enter a post @-@ Christian period in a secular state , with irreligion in Canada on the rise . The majority of Canadians consider religion to be unimportant in their daily lives , but still believe in God . The practice of religion is now generally considered a private matter throughout society and within the state .

The 2011 Canadian census reported that 67 @.@ 3 % of Canadians identify as being Christians ; of this number , Catholics make up the largest group , accounting for 38 @.@ 7 percent 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 %) . About 23 @.@ 9 % of Canadians declare no religious affiliation , including agnostics , atheists , humanists , and other groups . The remaining are affiliated with non @-@ Christian religions , the largest of which is Islam (3 @.@ 2 %) , followed by Hinduism (1 @.@ 5 %) , Sikhism (1 @.@ 4 %) , Buddhism (1 @.@ 1 %) , and Judaism (1 @.@ 0 %) .

Before the arrival of European colonists and explorers , First Nations followed a wide array of mostly animistic religions . During the colonial period , the French settled along the shores of the Saint Lawrence River , specifically Latin Rite Roman Catholics , including a number of Jesuits dedicated to converting Aborigines ; an effort that eventually proved successful . The first large Protestant communities were formed in the Maritimes after the British conquest of New France , followed by American Protestant settlers displaced by the American Revolution . The late nineteenth century saw the beginning of a substantive shift in Canadian immigration patterns . Large numbers of Irish and Southern Europeans immigrants were creating new Roman Catholic communities in English Canada . The settlement of the west brought significant Eastern Orthodox immigrants from Eastern Europe and Mormon and Pentecostal immigrants from the United States .

The earliest documentation of Jewish presence in Canada occurs in the 1754 British Army records from the French and Indian War . In 1760 , General Jeffrey Amherst , 1st Baron Amherst attacked and won Montreal for the British . In his regiment there were several Jews , including four among his officer corps , most notably Lieutenant Aaron Hart who is considered the father of Canadian Jewry .

The Islamic , Jains , Sikh , Hindu and Buddhist communities , although small , are as old as the nation itself . The 1871 Canadian Census (first " Canadian " national census) indicated thirteen Muslims among the populace , with approximately 5000 Sikh by 1908 . The first Canadian mosque was constructed in Edmonton , in 1938 , when there were approximately 700 Muslims in Canada . Buddhism first arrived in Canada when Japanese immigrated during the late 19th century . The first Japanese Buddhist temple in Canada was built in Vancouver in 1905 . The influx of immigrants in the late 20th century , with Sri Lankan , Japanese , Indian and Southeast Asian customs , has contributed to the recent expansion of the Jain , Sikh , Hindu and Buddhist communities .

= = = Languages = = =

A multitude of languages are used by 35 million Canadians , with English and French (the official languages) being the mother tongues of approximately 60 % and 20 % of Canadians respectively . In 2011 , 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) . Less than one percent of Canadians (just over 250 @, @ 000 individuals) can speak an aboriginal language . About half this number (129 @, @ 865) reported using an aboriginal language on a daily basis . Additionally , Canadians speak several sign languages ; it is unknown the number of speakers of the most spoken languages , ASL and LSQ , nor of Maritime Sign Language or of Plains Sign Talk . There are only 47 speakers of the Inuit language Inuiuuuk .

English and French are recognized by the Constitution of Canada as official languages . Thus all federal government laws are enacted in both English and French with government services available in both languages . Two of Canada 's territories give official status to indigenous languages . In Nunavut , Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun are official languages alongside the national languages of English and French , and Inuktitut is a common vehicular language in territorial government . In the Northwest Territories , the Official Languages Act declares that there are eleven different languages : Chipewyan , Cree , English , French , Gwich ? in , Inuinnaqtun , Inuktitut , Inuvialuktun , North Slavey , South Slavey and T??ch? . Multicultural media are widely accessible across the country and offer specialty television channels , newspapers and other publications in many minority languages .

In Canada , as elsewhere in the world of European colonies , the frontier of European exploration and settlement tended to be a linguistically diverse and fluid place , as cultures using different languages met and interacted . The need for a common means of communication between the indigenous inhabitants and new arrivals for the purposes of trade , and (in some cases) intermarriage , led to the development of Mixed languages . Languages like Michif , Chinook Jargon and Bungi creole tended to be highly localized and were often spoken by only a small number of individuals who were frequently capable of speaking another language . Reaching across Canada , the United States and into Mexico existed Plains Sign Talk which functioned originally as a trade language used to communicate internationally and across linguistic borders .