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**Rural and small town population is growing
in the 1990s**

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Rural and small town population is growing in the 1990s

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Abstract

Rural and small town Canada continues to grow. Rural and small town growth rates vary widely among the provinces. Much of the growth within rural and small town areas is in the small towns. Sub-provincial data show wide regional differences within each province. The population in larger urban centres is growing faster. Thus, the share of Canada's population living in rural and small town areas has declined to 22 percent in 1996. Newfoundland is the only province with over 50 percent of its population living in rural and small town areas.

Introduction

In recent decades, rural and small town Canada has lost population to larger urban centres as a result of technological development in primary sectors. This resulted in the substitution of machines for workers in agriculture, forestry and mining. In addition, jobs in the manufacturing and service sectors have tended to be in metro centres.

To date, there has been little information on the impact of boundary reclassifications for larger urban centres on the measurement of the shift of population from rural and small town areas to larger urban centres.

In this article, we look at the change the rural and small town population in two different ways:

1. we look, over time, at the rural and small town population according to the designation of boundaries for larger urban centres in use during each census. Thus, the change in the rural and small town population will be due to population growth or decline plus losses (or sometimes gains) due to the shift in boundaries of larger urban centres over time; and
2. we hold constant boundaries of larger urban centres between each census period to determine the growth rate of the rural and small town population (before losses, or gains, due to boundary changes are considered).

Methodology

For the purpose of this article, population is considered to be rural and small town (RST) if it is located outside Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA) and Census Agglomerations (CA). In this article, CMAs and CAs are designated as “larger urban centres” (LUC). As defined by Statistics Canada, a CMA consists of an urbanised core having a population of at least 100,000 (on the basis of the population counts from the previous census) plus its main labour market area from its sphere of influence. A CMA defines an urban area's sphere of influence based on the commuting patterns of its labour market. Each CMA consists of one or more census subdivisions (CSD), also known as an incorporated municipality, that lies either wholly or partly within the urbanised core plus CSDs with at least 50 percent of the employed labour force living in the CSD and working in the urbanised core plus CSDs with at least 25 percent of the employed labour force working in the CSD and living in the urbanised core. One example of a component CSD, is the City of Airdrie which is part of the Calgary CMA. Another example is the City of Dartmouth which is part of the Halifax CMA.

A CA defines a smaller urban area's sphere of influence based on the commuting patterns of its labour market. A CA consists of an urbanised core having a population of at least 10,000 (on the basis of the population counts from the previous census). Each CA includes one or more CSDs that meet the same criteria as those that apply to a CMA. One example of a component CSD is the Village of Lakefield, which is part of the Peterborough CA. Another example, is the Town of Cornwall, which is part of the Charlottetown CA.

In the Census of Population publications, “rural” refers to all areas within CSDs that contain population concentrations of less than 1,000 and have population densities of less than 400 per square kilometre, based on the previous census population counts. Thus, the “rural” population living in CSDs within the fringes of CMAs and CAs, which accounts for over a third of the total “rural” population, as published by the Census of Population, is included in the population of larger urban centres (i.e. within CMAs and CAs).

According to previous research into the dynamics of urban-rural growth, there is often an interruption of the trend toward urbanisation. One reason for this interruption is the cyclical pattern of growth rates that exist for rural non-farm populations that occur when urban areas are reclassified from rural to urban (Bollman and Biggs, 1992). Reclassification from rural to urban occurs when rapid population growth in rural areas adjacent to urban areas leads to urban boundary expansion; when rural fringe populations achieve urban density thresholds; and when rural communities achieve

urban population levels (Joseph and Keddie, 1991). When looking at population growth over time on the basis of the current census year boundaries, the effect of boundary changes on shifts in population between large urban centres (LUC) and rural and small town (RST) areas is not taken into account. By imposing the LUC vs. RST designation of one census on the data from the previous census, an estimate of population growth within unchanging geographical boundaries is obtained. Reclassification is almost always defining some rural and small town areas to be larger urban centres. Therefore, this method will yield a smaller estimate of the rural and small town population for the previous census year and a higher rural and small town population growth rate compared to measurements that do not adjust to previous designations of LUC and RST areas (Joseph and Keddie, 1991). By analysing LUC and RST population data using both current and constant census boundaries, it is possible to determine whether or not there is rural and small town population growth despite on-going boundary changes.

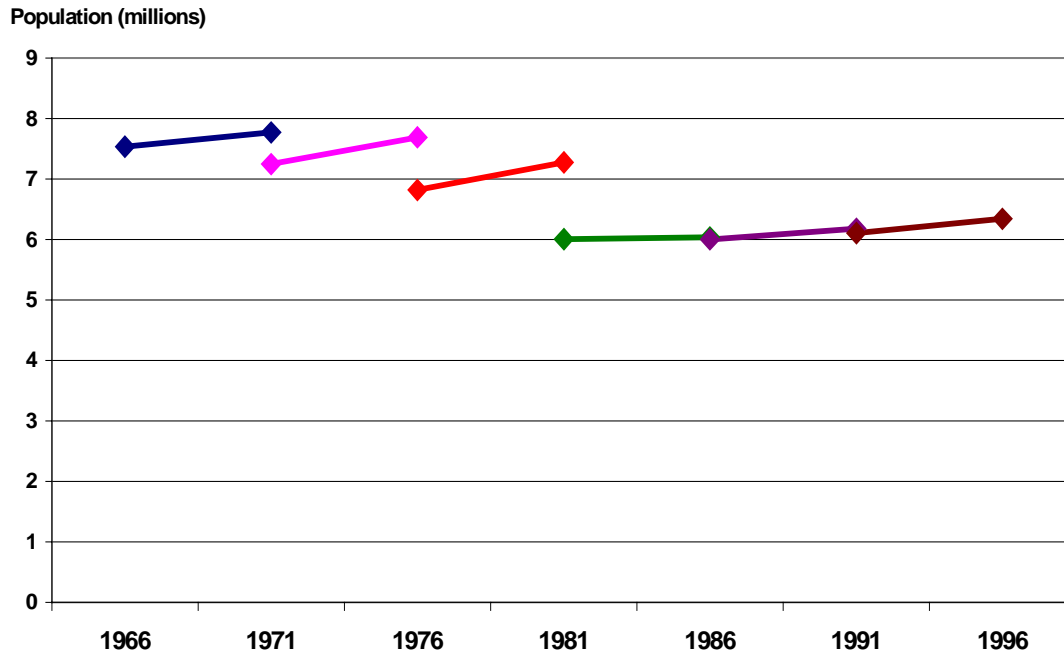
Definition of "Rural and Small Town" Canada

In this bulletin, "Rural and Small Town" (RST) Canada refers to the population living outside the commuting zones of larger urban centres - specifically, outside Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and Census of Agglomerations (CAs). A CMA has an urban core of 100,000 or over and includes all neighbouring municipalities where 50 percent or more of the work force commutes into the urban core. A CA has an urban core of 10,000 to 99,999 and includes all neighbouring municipalities where 50 percent or more of the work force commutes into the urban core. Thus, RST Canada represents the non-CMA and non-CA population. It includes all the residents outside the commuting zones of larger urban centres. Only a small share of these residents live on farms.

Rural and small town Canada continues to grow

Rural and small town areas experienced a growing population in each intercensal period from 1966 to 1996 at the Canada level (Figure 1). Some regions of Canada continued to lose rural and small town population or to remain the same while other regions gained rural and small town population during this period. Within constant boundaries at the Canada level, there was a 3 percent increase in the rural and small town population during 1986-1991 followed by a 4 percent increase in the rural and small town population during 1991-1996. Most of the growth in the rural and small town population in Canada occurred in Québec and Ontario in the East and British Columbia, Alberta and Manitoba in the West.

Figure 1 Rural and Small Town Population, Canada, 1966 to 1996



Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1966 to 1996.

Rural and small town refers to the population outside Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and outside Census Agglomerations (Cas).

How to read Figure 1

The Census of Population in 1976 counted 7.7 million people living in rural and small town Canada. The boundaries for Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and Census Agglomerations (CAs) were redrawn for the 1981 Census of Population. According to the 1981 boundaries, there were only 6.8 million people living in rural and small town Canada in 1976. The line segment joining 1976 and 1981 boundaries shows the change in rural and small town population according to the (constant) 1981 boundaries.

Similar boundary changes were made in each subsequent census. Each line segment has a positive slope indicating that, for Canada as a whole, the rural and small town population is growing. However, we end up with fewer rural and small town Canadians because of the classification of some municipalities into CMAs and CAs over time.

However, rural and small town Canada lost significant population due to metro reclassification over this period. There was a net transfer of 0.9 million persons from non-metro to metro in 1976 when the 1981 boundaries were applied in 1976 (Figure 1). Similarly, there was a net transfer of 1.3 million persons from non-metro to metro in 1981 when the 1986 boundaries were applied in 1981. There was a smaller net transfer of 32,000 persons from non-metro to metro in 1986 when the 1991 boundaries were

applied in 1986 and 71,000 in 1991 when the 1996 boundaries were applied in 1991. Most of the population transfer occurred in Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta and Quebec between 1976 and 1996 (Table 1). This reclassification caused a significant increase in the number of individuals living in CAs as many centres surpassed the CA boundary threshold over the 1976 to 1996 period.

Thus, if we use “current” boundaries (i.e. we do not adjust for boundary changes and we use the published data), Canada’s rural and small town population decreased by 18 percent over the 1976 to 1996 period. This can be seen in Figure 1 -- compare the 7.7 million rural and small town population in 1976, according to the 1976 definition, with the 6.3 million rural and small town population in 1996, according to the 1996 definition.

However, each line segment in Figure 1 is sloping upward. Thus, within constant boundaries, there was population growth in rural and small town Canada during each intercensal period from 1976 to 1996.

Table 1. Impact of CMA/CA boundary changes on non-CMA/CA population, 1971 to 1996

	Change to non-CMA/CA Population in					Total (’76 to ’96)	Total (’81 to ’96)	Total (’86 to ’96)
	1971	1976	1981	1986	1991			
	Due to boundary changes made in							
	1976	1981	1986	1991	1996			
Newfoundland	-50,319	-20,675	-25,618	13,082	8,489	-75,041	-24,722	-4,047
Prince Edward Island	-14,004	-17,843	-6,051	24	2,824	-35,050	-21,046	-3,203
Nova Scotia	-87,858	-32,282	20,920	-22,589	-2,692	-124,501	-36,643	-4,361
New Brunswick	-37,583	-83,694	-2,062	0	6,067	-117,272	-79,689	4,005
Quebec	-167,339	-89,507	-190,436	21,810	-26,373	-451,845	-284,506	-194,999
Ontario	-164,026	-271,658	-362,644	-29,791	-64,123	-892,242	-728,216	-456,558
Manitoba	-18,419	-37,397	-45,953	7,243	-7,353	-101,879	-83,460	-46,063
Saskatchewan	-51,680	-52,295	-50,932	-19,616	6,339	-168,184	-116,504	-64,209
Alberta	-7,507	-1,332	-307,228	-22,565	519	-338,113	-330,606	-329,274
British Columbia	75,062	-267,596	-298,603	20,486	5,511	-465,140	-540,202	-272,606
Canada	-523,673	-874,279	-1,268,607	-31,916	-70,792	-2,769,267	-2,245,594	-1,371,315

Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1976 to 1996.

Note: Population gain or loss due to boundary changes is calculated by subtracting population based on the following year’s census boundaries from the population based on the current year’s census boundaries. For example, the impact of the boundary change in 1976 on the rural and small town population is calculated by subtracting the 1976 population based on 1981 boundaries from the 1976 population based on 1976 boundaries.

Rural and small town growth is largely due to growth in small towns

Within rural and small town Canada, the population of small towns (with a population of 1,000 to 9,999) increased at a greater rate than the "rural" population (in centres less than 1,000 persons) (Table 2). Thus, part of the growth of the rural and small town population represents a continuation of the urbanisation process where the population is increasing in small urban centres.

Table 2. Within Rural and Small Town labour markets, the population growth was in "urban" centres of 1,000 to 9,999, Canada, 1991 - 1996

Type of areas within CSD	Type of labour market (groupings of CSDs)			
	Larger urban centres		Rural and small towns	Total
	CMA	CA	Non-CMA/CA	
Rural area, under 1,000 population				
percent change in population, 1991 to 1996	-2.7	-0.6	0.7	-0.1
Urban area, population of 1,000 or more				
percent change in population, 1991 to 1996	8.0	5.2	6.9	7.4

Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1991 and 1996.

Note: Canada excludes Yukon and Northwest Territories.

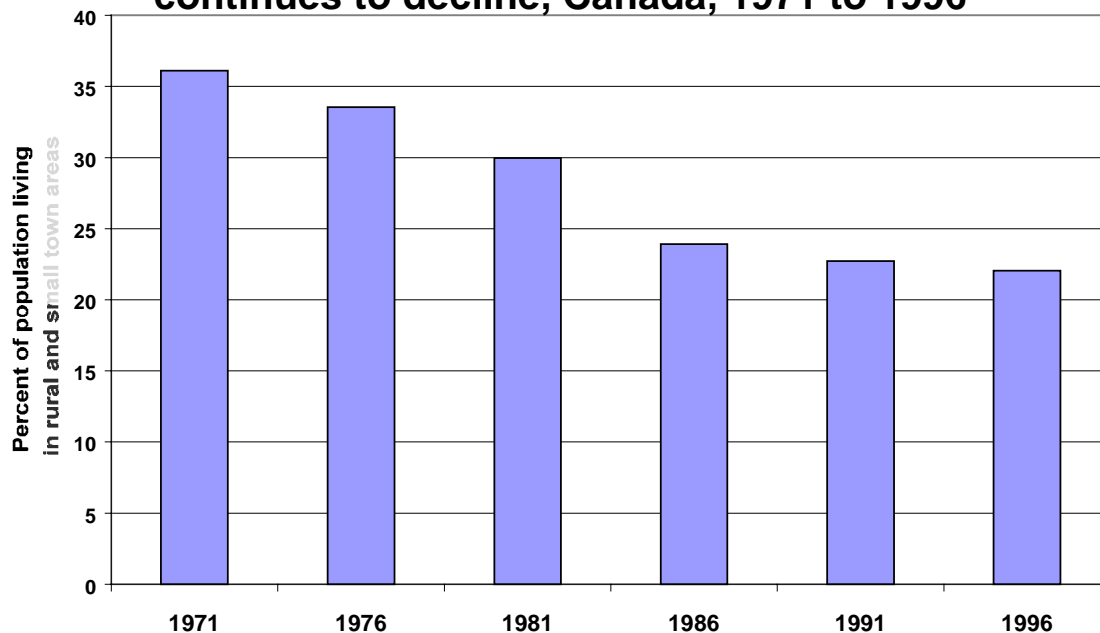
Note: These growth rates are calculated with "current" boundaries. Thus, for example, part of the "urban" growth in rural and small town areas is due to the declassification of some CAs between 1991 and 1996. For example, Weyburn, Saskatchewan is included in Saskatchewan's RST population in 1996, but not in 1991, which makes the "urban" component of the Saskatchewan RST population appear to be growing at a greater rate than if boundaries were held constant.

Rural and small town population share continued to decrease between 1991 and 1996

While the population in rural and small town Canada grew in every intercensal period since 1976 (Figure 1 and Table 4), the rural and small town share of the total population decreased in every intercensal period since 1976 (Figure 2). The province with the largest decrease in rural and small town population share between 1991 and 1996 was Ontario (-1 percentage points), followed by Nova Scotia (-0.9 percentage points), Québec (-0.3 percentage points) and Saskatchewan (-0.3 percentage points) (Table 3).

Saskatchewan lost rural and small town population share in every intercensal period since 1976, while Nova Scotia lost rural and small town population share in every intercensal period except 1981-1986. The province with the largest increase in rural and small town population share between 1991 and 1996 was Prince Edward Island (1.6 percentage points), followed by Alberta and New Brunswick (0.5 percentage points) (Table 3).

Figure 2. Share of population in rural and small town areas continues to decline, Canada, 1971 to 1996



Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1971 - 1996.
 Rural and small town refers to the population outside Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and Census Agglomerations (CAs).

Between 1976 and 1996, Canada's rural and small town population share declined 11 percentage points. British Columbia and Prince Edward Island had the largest loss in rural and small town share between 1976 and 1996 (-21 percentage points), followed by Saskatchewan (-20 percentage points) and Alberta (-16 percentage points). Québec and Nova Scotia had the smallest loss in share of rural and small town population between 1976 and 1996 (-6 percentage points).

The provinces that had the largest rural and small town population growth also had the smallest share of rural and small town population

While the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Québec had the highest rural and small town population growth between 1991 and 1996 (Table 4), they also had the lowest share of rural and small town population. Except for the province of Alberta in 1981, these provinces had the smallest share of the rural and small town population in every intercensal period between 1976 and 1996 (Table 3). It would seem that the rate of rural and small town population growth has been insufficient to overcome large movements to CMAs and CAs between 1976 and 1996.

Table 3. Ranking of provinces by share of population living in rural and small town areas

	1971		1976		1981		1986		1991		1996
P.E.I.	77	P.E.I.	67	NFDL.	60	NFDL.	55	NFDL.	55	NFDL.	56
NFDL.	75	NFDL.	64	Sask.	56	N.B.	49	N.B.	48	N.B.	48
Sask.	71	Sask.	63	P.E.I.	51	Sask.	48	P.E.I.	44	P.E.I.	46
N.B.	66	N.B.	61	N.B.	49	P.E.I.	45	Sask.	44	Sask.	43
N.S.	56	N.B.	45	Alberta	42	N.S.	43	N.S.	40	N.S.	39
Manitoba	45	Manitoba	43	N.S.	41	Manitoba	33	Manitoba	33	Manitoba	33
Alberta	43	Alberta	42	Manitoba	39	Alberta	27	Alberta	25	Alberta	26
CANADA	36	B.C.	37	CANADA	30	CANADA	24	Quebec	23	Quebec	22
B.C.	31	CANADA	34	B.C.	27	Quebec	23	CANADA	23	CANADA	22
Quebec	30	Quebec	28	Quebec	27	Ontario	16	Ontario	16	B.C.	15
Ontario	27	Ontario	25	Ontario	21	B.C.	16	B.C.	15	Ontario	15

Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1971 to 1996.

Note: Rural and small town refers to the population outside Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and outside Census Agglomeration (CAs).

Using constant boundaries, rural and small town population growth was greatest in British Columbia and Alberta

In the most recent intercensal period (1991 to 1996), the rural and small town population growth in British Columbia (13 percent), Alberta (8 percent), Ontario (5 percent) and Québec (4 percent) was equal to or higher than the Canada average (4 percent) (Table 4). Alberta is the only province to show significant rural and small town population growth in each of the four intercensal periods. While Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick gained rural and small town population, the other two Atlantic provinces of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia lost rural and small town population between 1991 and 1996. Saskatchewan lost significant rural and small town population in each of the last 3 intercensal periods.

Within constant boundaries, British Columbia gained rural and small town population in every intercensal period except 1981-1986, when there was a decrease in the rural and small town population. There were significant increases of 7 and 13 percent in the rural and small town population of British Columbia during the 1986-1991 and 1991-1996 intervals. A large increase in population living in small towns (1,000 to 9,999 population) was mainly responsible for this significant increase between 1991-1996 -- there was an increase in the RST rural (in centres less than 1,000) population (9 percent) and a much larger increase in the RST urban (in centres of 1,000 to 9,999) population (23 percent) during this period (Table 6).

Table 4. Ranking of provinces in terms of growth of population in rural and small town areas

1966 to 1971		1971 to 1976		1976 to 1981		1981 to 1986		1986 to 1991		1991 to 1996	
B.C.	16	B.C.	21	Alberta	22	Nova Scotia	3	Ontario	9	B.C.	13
Ontario	7	Alberta	11	B.C.	17	Alberta	3	B.C.	7	Alberta	8
Nova Scotia	5	P.E.I.	9	CANADA	7	N.B.	2	Alberta	3	Ontario	5
Newfoundland	4	N.B.	9	Quebec	6	P.E.I.	1	CANADA	3	Manitoba	4
CANADA	3	CANADA	6	N.B.	4	Ontario	1	Quebec	2	CANADA	4
Alberta	3	Nova Scotia	5	Ontario	3	CANADA	0	Manitoba	1	Quebec	3
N.B.	1	Ontario	5	Nova Scotia	2	Manitoba	0	Nova Scotia	0	P.E.I.	2
P.E.I.	1	Newfoundland	5	P.E.I.	2	Newfoundland	0	N.B.	0	N.B.	1
Quebec	0	Quebec	3	Saskatchewan	1	B.C.	0	P.E.I.	0	Nova Scotia	-1
Manitoba	-1	Manitoba	1	Newfoundland	0	Quebec	-1	Newfoundland	-3	Saskatchewan	-2
Saskatchewan	-7	Saskatchewan	-4	Manitoba	0	Saskatchewan	-1	Saskatchewan	-7	Newfoundland	-5

Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1971 to 1996.

Note: Rural and small town refers to the population outside Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and outside Census Agglomerations (CAs).

Note: Population change is calculated within constant "Rural and Small Town" (non-CMA/CA) boundaries.

Alberta's rural and small town population grew in every intercensal period since 1976 (Table 4). In Alberta, the greatest increase took place between 1976 and 1981 (22 percent). There was a 3 percent increase in the rural and small town population during 1986-1991 and an 8 percent increase during 1991-1996. As in British Columbia, there was an increase in the rural and small town rural population (7 percent) and a larger increase in the rural and small town urban (centres of 1,000 to 9,999) population (10 percent) during the 1991-1996 period (Table 6).

When looked at sub-provincially, (*census divisions* made up of counties, regional municipalities, regional districts and numbered divisions) (1), both British Columbia and Alberta had very high rural and small town population growth between 1991 and 1996. In British Columbia, 80 percent of the census divisions had between 5 and 30 percent rural and small town population growth (Table 5). The heaviest population growth took place in the vicinity of the larger metropolitan centres, on lower Vancouver Island,

outside of Vancouver, in south central and central British Columbia, and in the Okanagan valley. There was a considerable decline in the rural and small town population in the vicinity of the Williams Lake and Quesnel C.A.'s (Map). In Alberta, 63 percent of the census divisions had between 5 and 30 percent rural and small town population growth (Table 5). The heaviest population growth took place around the Calgary CMA.

How to read the map

*This map only considers the rural and small town (RST) population in a census division (CD). The shading in each CD indicates the size of the change in the RST population component only. In a few cases, the RST population increased between 1991 and 1996, but the CMA/CA population in the same CD decreased more, leaving a net decrease in the overall population. Two examples are Saskatchewan census division number 12 and Gloucester County in New Brunswick where the larger urban centre (North Battleford and Bathurst, respectively) in the census division declined by more than the RST population increased. For a map of the change in the total population within each census division, refer to page 12 of **A National Overview: Population and Dwelling Counts** (Ottawa: Statistics Canada Cat. No. 93-357). Thus, we present here the change in only the RST population within each CD.*

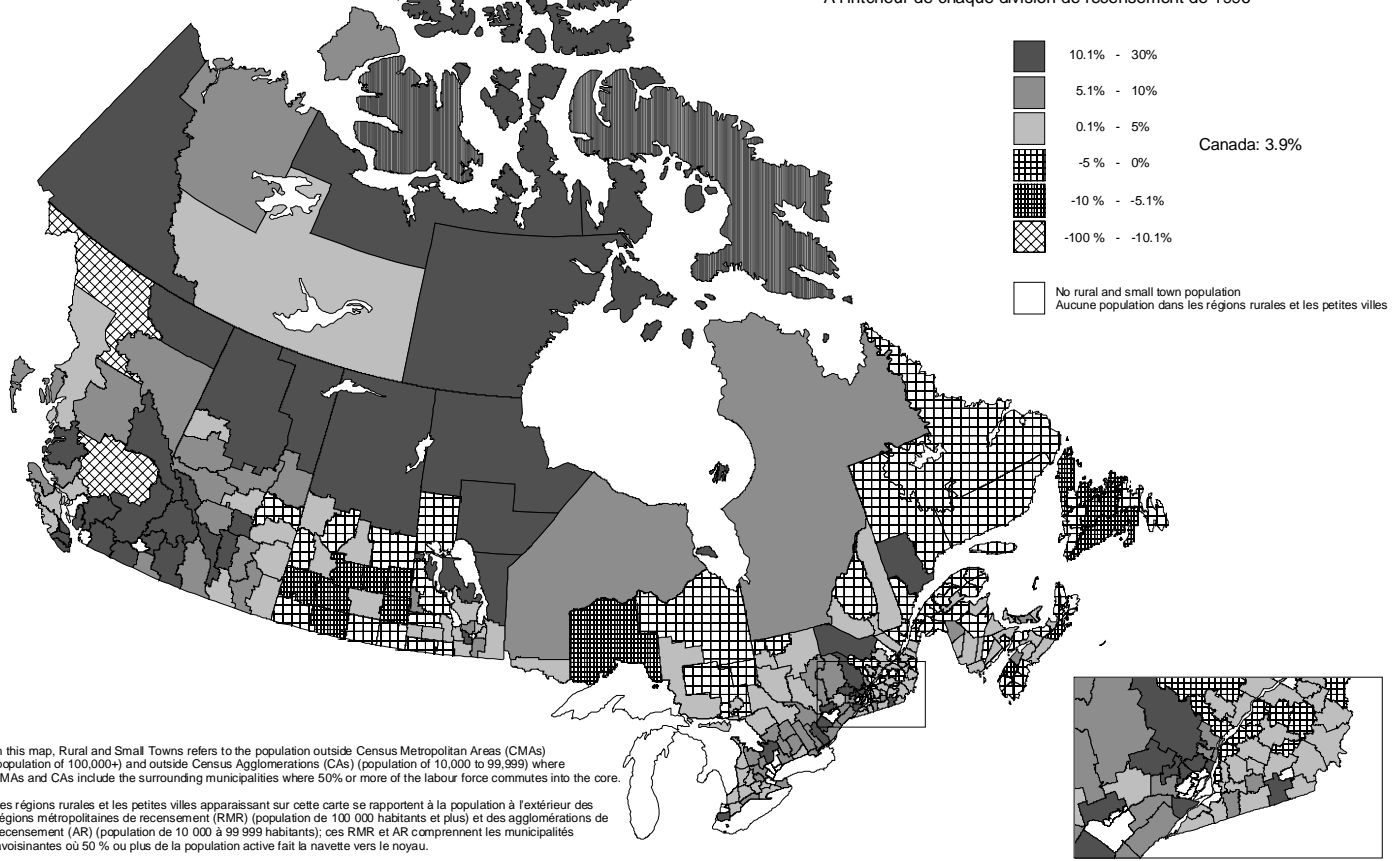
How to Read this Map:
 The map shading indicates the change in the Rural and Small Town component of the population in each Census Division. It does not indicate the change in the total population in each Census Division.

Comment lire cette carte :
 Les parties ombrées indiquent la variation de la population dans les régions rurales et les petites villes à l'intérieur de chaque division de recensement. Elles ne montrent pas la variation de la population totale dans chaque division de recensement.

CANADA

Rural and Small Town Population* Change, 1991 to 1996
 Within each 1996 Census Division

Variation de la Population dans les Régions Rurales et les Petites Villes*, 1991 à 1996
 À l'intérieur de chaque division de recensement de 1996



* In this map, Rural and Small Towns refers to the population outside Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) (population of 100,000+) and outside Census Agglomerations (CAs) (population of 10,000 to 99,999) where CMAs and CAs include the surrounding municipalities where 50% or more of the labour force commutes into the core.

* Les régions rurales et les petites villes apparaissant sur cette carte se rapportent à la population à l'extérieur des régions métropolitaines de recensement (RMR) (population de 100 000 habitants et plus) et des agglomérations de recensement (AR) (population de 10 000 à 99 999 habitants); ces RMR et AR comprennent les municipalités avoisinantes où 50 % ou plus de la population active fait la navette vers le noyau.

Using constant boundaries, rural and small town growth was modest in Ontario and Québec

The RST population in Ontario increased in each intercensal period from 1976 to 1996 (Table 4). There was a 9 percent increase in rural and small town population in the 1986-1991 interval and a smaller increase of 5 percent during the 1991-1996 interval. As in British Columbia and Alberta, an increase in the small town population contributed to the increase in the population growth between 1991-1996. While there was a small decrease in the rural (centres less than 1,000) population (-2 percent), there was an increase of 5 percent in the small town (centres of 1,000 to 9,999) population during this period (Table 6).

Within constant boundaries, Québec gained rural and small town population in every intercensal period except 1981-1986, when there was a decrease in the rural and small town population (Table 4). There was a small increase of 2 percent in the rural and small town population in Québec during the 1986-1991 interval and a larger increase of 4 percent during the 1991-1996 interval. There was a small increase of 1 percent in the population living in small towns (1,000 to 9,999 population) and a similar increase of 2 percent in the RST rural population (in centres less than 1,000 persons) during this period (Table 6).

Table 5. British Columbia and Alberta had the highest share of census divisions (1) reporting large increase in their rural and small town population, 1991 to 1996

Percentage change in rural and small town (non-metro) population within the census division, 1991 to 1996

	-10.1 to -40	-5.1 to -10	-0.1 to -5	0.1 to 5	5.1 to 10	10.1 to 30	Total (3)
	number of census divisions						
Newfoundland	0	5	5	0	0	0	10
P.E.I.	0	0	0	2	1	0	3
N.S.	0	2	10	4	1	0	17
N.B.	0	0	5	8	1	0	14
Québec	1	0	32	34	8	11	86
Ontario	0	1	3	16	19	4	43
Manitoba	0	0	6	9	3	4	22
Saskatchewan	0	6	7	4	0	1	18
Alberta	0	0	1	6	7	5	19
B.C.	2	0	0	3	6	14	25
Canada (2)	3	14	69	86	46	39	257
	percent distribution of census divisions						
Newfoundland	0.0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
P.E.I.	0.0	0.0	0.0	66.7	33.3	0.0	100.0
N.S.	0.0	11.8	58.8	23.5	5.9	0.0	100.0
N.B.	0.0	0.0	35.7	57.1	7.1	0.0	100.0
Québec	1.2	0.0	37.2	39.5	9.3	12.8	100.0
Ontario	0.0	2.3	7.0	37.2	44.2	9.3	100.0
Manitoba	0.0	0.0	27.3	40.9	13.6	18.2	100.0
Saskatchewan	0.0	33.3	38.9	22.2	0.0	5.6	100.0
Alberta	0.0	0.0	5.3	31.6	36.8	26.3	100.0
B.C.	8.0	0.0	0.0	12.0	24.0	56.0	100.0
Canada (2)	1.2	5.4	26.8	33.5	17.9	15.2	100.0

Source: Statistics Canada. Censuses of Population 1991 and 1996

(1) Census division is the general term applied to areas established by provincial law which are intermediate geographic areas between the municipality and the province. Census divisions represent counties, regional districts and regional municipalities. In Newfoundland, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, provincial law does not provide for these administrative geographic regions. Therefore, census divisions have been created by Statistics Canada in co-operation with these provinces for the dissemination of statistical data.

(2) Does not include the Yukon or Northwest Territories. Data is based on constant 1996 boundaries.

(3) Total census divisions with some rural and small town (non-metro) population in 1996.

Table 6. Within rural and small town markets, the population growth was in "urban" centres of 1,000 or more, 1991 - 1996

Rural and small town Canada (non-CMA/CA)		
	Rural (under 1,000)	Small town (1,000 to 9,999)
	*** percent change in population, 1991 to 1996 ***	
Newfoundland	-9	13
Prince Edward Island	8	2
Nova Scotia	-1	-3
New Brunswick	2	7
Quebec	2	1
Ontario	-2	5
Manitoba	-2	14
Saskatchewan	-2	3
Alberta	7	10
British Columbia	9	23
Canada	1	7

Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1991 and 1996.

Note: Canada excludes the Yukon and Northwest Territories.

When looked at sub-provincially, both Québec and Ontario had significant RST population growth between 1991 and 1996 (Table 5). Québec, however, had more areas in the province where the RST population declined during the same period. While 62 percent of the census divisions in Québec had between 0.1 and 30 percent rural and small town population growth, 38 percent of the subdivisions had a decline in rural and small town population of between -0.1 and -40 percent. In Ontario, 91 percent of the census divisions had between 0.1 and 30 percent rural and small town population growth. As in the western provinces, the heaviest non-metro growth in both Ontario and Québec took place in the vicinity of metropolitan centres. In Québec, a significant number of census divisions in the Gaspé and a smaller number of census divisions between Montreal and Québec City had small declines in rural and small town population between 1991 and 1996. In Ontario, there was a significant decline in the rural and small town population outside of Thunder Bay and smaller declines in rural and small town population outside of Sudbury and Timmins during this period (Map).

Rural and small town population is in decline in Newfoundland and Saskatchewan

Newfoundland and Saskatchewan continued to lose rural and small town population during the 1980s and the early 1990s (Table 4). Newfoundland's rural and small town population declined during every intercensal interval since 1981. In Newfoundland, there was a -3 percent decline in the rural and small town population during 1986-1991 and a -5 percent decline during 1991-1996.

As in Newfoundland, Saskatchewan's rural and small town population declined during every intercensal interval since 1981. In Saskatchewan, there was a -7 percent decline in the rural and small town population during 1986-1991 and a -2 percent decrease during 1991-1996. In each province, the continued decrease in the rural and small town population can be attributed to out migration to larger urban centres within the province and migration to other provinces.

When looked at sub-provincially, both Newfoundland and Saskatchewan had a significant decline in rural and small town population between 1991 and 1996. In Newfoundland, 100 percent of the census divisions had between -0.1 and -10 percent population decline, while in Saskatchewan, 72 percent of the census divisions had between -0.1 and -10 percent population decline (Table 5). The greatest decline in rural and small town population took place in eastern and central Saskatchewan. There was modest growth in the rural and small town population in the vicinity of the Regina and Saskatoon as well as around Yorkton.

Rural and small town population is holding steady in four provinces

The remaining four provinces show essentially a static RST population over the twenty-year period from 1976 to 1996 (Table 4).

Prince Edward Island's rural and small town population increased slightly in every census period since 1976. The rural and small town population of Nova Scotia increased by a small amount during the 1980s but decreased slightly between 1991 and 1996. The rural and small town population in New Brunswick grew by 1 percent during the 1991-1996 interval, partially due to a 5 percent increase in the population in villages and small towns and a smaller 2.5 percent increase in rural areas.

Although Manitoba showed a slight increase in its rural and small town population in each intercensal period from 1976 to 1996, the population growth rates were less than 1 percent from 1976 to 1991 and 4 percent in the 1991 to 1996 period. As in New Brunswick, the recent increase was due to an increase in the small town population (Table 6). Between 1991 and 1996, there was a 2 percent decrease in the RST rural (in

centres under 1,000) population and a 14 percent increase in the RST small town population. Sub-provincially, 73 percent of the census divisions in Manitoba had between 0.1 and 30 percent rural and small town population growth and 27 percent of the census divisions had between -0.1 and -5 percent rural and small town population decline (Table 5). The heaviest rural and small town population growth occurred in the vicinity of Winnipeg and Portage la Prairie as well as on the western edge of the province.

To summarise

At the national level, Canada's rural and small town population grew. Generally, the rural and small town population grew in retirement-destination communities and on the edge of the commuting zones of larger urban centres. Major retirement-destination growth appeared north of Montreal in the Laurentians, north of Toronto in the Muskokas and in the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia. All major cities in Canada seemed to be influencing growth of the rural and small town population at the edge of their commuting zone – some rural and small town residents were commuting long distances. This was apparent everywhere in southern Ontario, in the lower Fraser Valley and around Calgary and Winnipeg.

However, the rural and small town population was declining in some provinces and regions. The rural and small town population was declining in every region of Newfoundland. Most of the agricultural areas in Saskatchewan were declining – the exceptions were areas with oil and gas extraction and areas with long distance commuting to larger urban centres. The rural and small town areas in the Gaspé region of Quebec continued to decline.

Although there was an overall increase in the number of people, the share of Canada's population living in rural and small town areas was declining. The two main reasons are:

- The population of larger urban centres was growing faster.
- Over time, some rural and small town areas were reclassified into the commuting zone of larger urban centres.

Thus, Canada's rural and small town population now represents only 22 percent of the total population.

However, the rural and small town population represented a significant share of the population in six provinces. Newfoundland was the only province with more than 50 percent of its population living in rural and small town areas. Each of the other Atlantic provinces plus Saskatchewan and Manitoba had over one-third of their population residing in rural and small town areas.

This paper presents a broad summary of rural and small town population trends. Within each province and within each sub-provincial region, there was a wide diversity of patterns of population growth and decline. Small towns such as St. Brieux, Saskatchewan or Winkler, Manitoba or St. Clement and Coaticook in Quebec were examples of growth in places where many neighbouring places were declining.

Notes

(1) Census division is the general term applied to areas established by provincial law which are intermediate geographic areas between the municipality (census subdivision) and the province level. Census divisions represent counties, regional districts, regional municipalities and other types of provincially legislated areas. In Newfoundland, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, provincial law does not provide for these administrative geographic areas. Therefore, Statistics Canada, in co-operation with these provinces, has created these census divisions for the dissemination of statistical data.

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Appendix Table 1. Population Change in CMA, CA and RST Areas, 1966 - 1996, Canada and Provinces

Province Area classification	1966	1971	1966-1971	1971	1971	1976	1971-1976	1971-1976
	71 boundaries	71 boundaries	constant boundaries	71 boundaries	76 boundaries	76 boundaries	current boundaries	constant boundaries
Newfoundland								
CMA	117,533	131,814	12.2	131,814	131,814	143,390	8.8	8.8
CA	0	0	0.0	0	50,319	56,937	n.a.	13.2
RST	375,863	390,290	3.8	390,290	339,971	357,398	-8.4	5.1
Total	493,396	522,104	5.8	522,104	522,104	557,725	6.8	6.8
Prince Edward Island								
CMA	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
CA	22,934	25,253	10.1	25,253	39,257	38,982	54.4	-0.7
RST	85,601	86,388	0.9	86,388	72,384	79,247	-8.3	9.5
Total	108,535	111,641	2.9	111,641	111,641	118,229	5.9	5.9
Nova Scotia								
CMA	209,901	222,637	6.1	222,637	250,581	267,991	20.4	6.9
CA	125,749	125,188	-0.4	125,188	185,102	188,106	50.3	1.6
RST	420,389	441,135	4.9	441,135	353,277	372,474	-15.6	5.4
Total	756,039	788,960	4.4	788,960	788,960	828,571	5.0	5.0
New Brunswick								
CMA	104,195	106,744	2.4	106,744	106,744	112,974	5.8	5.8
CA	99,633	109,100	9.5	109,100	146,683	148,133	35.8	1.0
RST	412,960	418,713	1.4	418,713	381,130	416,143	-0.6	9.2
Total	616,788	634,557	2.9	634,557	634,557	677,250	6.7	6.7
Quebec								
CMA	3,271,241	3,506,643	7.2	3,506,643	3,502,670	3,645,233	4.0	4.1
CA	667,491	684,368	2.5	684,368	855,680	872,994	27.6	2.0
RST	1,842,113	1,836,753	-0.3	1,836,753	1,669,414	1,716,218	-6.6	2.8
Total	5,780,845	6,027,764	4.3	6,027,764	6,027,764	6,234,445	3.4	3.4
Ontario								
CMA	4,360,223	4,912,367	12.7	4,912,367	4,998,210	5,357,336	9.1	7.2
CA	630,121	680,682	8.0	680,682	758,865	856,551	25.8	12.9
RST	1,970,526	2,110,057	7.1	2,110,057	1,946,031	2,050,578	-2.8	5.4
Total	6,960,870	7,703,106	10.7	7,703,106	7,703,106	8,264,465	7.3	7.3
Manitoba								
CMA	508,759	540,262	6.2	540,262	549,808	578,271	7.0	5.2
CA	0	0	0.0	0	8,873	8,152	n.a.	-8.1
RST	454,307	447,985	-1.4	447,985	429,566	435,083	-2.9	1.3
Total	963,066	988,247	2.6	988,247	988,247	1,021,506	3.4	3.4
Saskatchewan								
CMA	248,332	267,183	7.6	267,183	267,183	284,941	6.6	6.6
CA	0	0	0.0	0	51,680	53,107	n.a.	2.8
RST	707,012	659,059	-6.8	659,059	607,379	583,276	-11.5	-4.0
Total	955,344	926,242	-3.0	926,242	926,242	921,324	-0.5	-0.5
Alberta								
CMA	755,945	899,021	18.9	899,021	899,357	1,024,145	13.9	13.9
CA	27,720	28,773	3.8	28,773	35,944	43,618	51.6	21.3
RST	679,538	700,080	3.0	700,080	692,573	770,274	10.0	11.2
Total	1,463,203	1,627,874	11.3	1,627,874	1,627,874	1,838,037	12.9	12.9
British Columbia								
CMA	1,108,353	1,278,152	15.3	1,278,152	1,278,152	1,384,598	8.3	8.3
CA	182,090	228,437	25.5	228,437	153,375	172,357	-24.5	12.4
RST	583,231	678,032	16.3	678,032	753,094	909,653	34.2	20.8
Total	1,873,674	2,184,621	16.6	2,184,621	2,184,621	2,466,608	12.9	12.9
Canada								
CMA	10,684,482	11,864,823	11.0	11,864,823	11,984,519	12,798,879	7.9	6.8
CA	1,755,738	1,881,801	7.2	1,881,801	2,285,778	2,438,937	29.6	6.7
RST	7,531,540	7,768,492	3.1	7,768,492	7,244,819	7,690,344	-1.0	6.1
Total	19,971,760	21,515,116	7.7	21,515,116	21,515,116	22,928,160	6.6	6.6

Appendix Table 1. Population Change in CMA, CA and RST Areas, 1966 - 1996, Canada and Provinces (continued)

Province	Area classification	1976	1976	1981	1976-1981	1976-1981	1981	1981	1986	1981-1986	1981-1986
		76 boundaries	81 boundaries	81 boundaries	current boundaries	constant boundaries	81 boundaries	86 boundaries	86 boundaries	current boundaries	constant boundaries
Newfoundland											
	CMA	143,390	145,400	154,820	8.0	6.5	154,820	154,835	161,901	4.6	4.6
	CA	56,937	75,602	74,457	30.8	-1.5	74,457	100,060	94,624	27.1	-5.4
	RST	357,398	336,723	338,404	-5.3	0.5	338,404	312,786	311,824	-7.9	-0.3
	Total	557,725	557,725	567,681	1.8	1.8	567,681	567,681	568,349	0.1	0.1
Prince Edward Island											
	CMA	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
	CA	38,982	56,825	59,949	53.8	5.5	59,949	66,000	69,482	15.9	5.3
	RST	79,247	61,404	62,557	-21.1	1.9	62,557	56,506	57,168	-8.6	1.2
	Total	118,229	118,229	122,506	3.6	3.6	122,506	122,506	126,650	3.4	3.4
Nova Scotia											
	CMA	267,991	267,991	277,727	3.6	3.6	277,727	277,727	295,990	6.6	6.6
	CA	188,106	220,388	222,920	18.5	1.1	222,920	202,000	199,723	-10.4	-1.1
	RST	372,474	340,192	346,795	-6.9	1.9	346,795	367,715	377,462	8.8	2.7
	Total	828,571	828,571	847,442	2.3	2.3	847,442	847,442	873,175	3.0	3.0
New Brunswick											
	CMA	112,974	112,974	114,048	1.0	1.0	114,048	121,012	121,265	6.3	0.2
	CA	148,133	231,827	238,117	60.7	2.7	238,117	233,215	240,228	0.9	3.0
	RST	416,143	332,449	344,238	-17.3	3.5	344,238	342,176	347,942	1.1	1.7
	Total	677,250	677,250	696,403	2.8	2.8	696,403	696,403	709,435	1.9	1.9
Quebec											
	CMA	3,645,233	3,751,326	3,821,628	4.8	1.9	3,821,628	4,041,354	4,142,154	8.4	2.5
	CA	872,994	856,408	894,691	2.5	4.5	894,691	865,401	868,718	-2.9	0.4
	RST	1,716,218	1,626,711	1,722,084	0.3	5.9	1,722,084	1,531,648	1,521,588	-11.6	-0.7
	Total	6,234,445	6,234,445	6,438,403	3.3	3.3	6,438,403	6,438,403	6,532,460	1.5	1.5
Ontario											
	CMA	5,357,336	5,357,336	5,635,892	5.2	5.2	5,635,892	5,896,478	6,328,626	12.3	7.3
	CA	856,551	1,128,209	1,156,916	35.1	2.5	1,156,916	1,258,974	1,289,659	11.5	2.4
	RST	2,050,578	1,778,920	1,832,299	-10.6	3.0	1,832,299	1,469,655	1,483,410	-19.0	0.9
	Total	8,264,465	8,264,465	8,625,107	4.4	4.4	8,625,107	8,625,107	9,101,695	5.5	5.5
Manitoba											
	CMA	578,271	578,217	584,842	1.1	1.1	584,842	592,061	625,304	6.9	5.6
	CA	8,152	45,603	42,922	426.5	-5.9	42,922	81,656	83,891	95.4	2.7
	RST	435,083	397,686	398,477	-8.4	0.2	398,477	352,524	353,820	-11.2	0.4
	Total	1,021,506	1,021,506	1,026,241	0.5	0.5	1,026,241	1,026,241	1,063,015	3.6	3.6
Saskatchewan											
	CMA	284,941	284,984	318,523	11.8	11.8	318,523	348,284	387,186	21.6	11.2
	CA	53,107	105,359	111,667	110.3	6.0	111,667	132,838	140,083	25.4	5.5
	RST	583,276	530,981	538,123	-7.7	1.3	538,123	487,191	482,351	-10.4	-1.0
	Total	921,324	921,324	968,313	5.1	5.1	968,313	968,313	1,009,620	4.3	4.3
Alberta											
	CMA	1,024,145	1,027,667	1,249,800	22.0	21.6	1,249,800	1,366,848	1,456,791	16.6	6.6
	CA	43,618	41,428	49,645	13.8	19.8	49,645	239,825	262,137	428.0	9.3
	RST	770,274	768,942	938,279	21.8	22.0	938,279	631,051	646,897	-31.1	2.5
	Total	1,838,037	1,838,037	2,237,724	21.7	21.7	2,237,724	2,237,724	2,365,825	5.7	5.7
British Columbia											
	CMA	1,384,598	1,384,598	1,501,664	8.5	8.5	1,501,664	1,509,633	1,636,276	9.0	8.4
	CA	172,357	439,953	491,369	185.1	11.7	491,369	782,003	795,873	62.0	1.8
	RST	909,653	642,057	751,434	-17.4	17.0	751,434	452,831	451,216	-40.0	-0.4
	Total	2,466,608	2,466,608	2,744,467	11.3	11.3	2,744,467	2,744,467	2,883,365	5.1	5.1
Canada											
	CMA	12,798,879	12,910,493	13,658,944	6.7	5.8	13,658,944	14,308,232	15,155,493	11.0	5.9
	CA	2,438,937	3,201,602	3,342,653	37.1	4.4	3,342,653	3,961,972	4,044,418	21.0	2.1
	RST	7,690,344	6,816,065	7,272,690	-5.4	6.7	7,272,690	6,004,083	6,033,678	-17.0	0.5
	Total	22,928,160	22,928,160	24,274,287	5.9	5.9	24,274,287	24,274,287	25,233,589	4.0	4.0

Appendix Table 1. Population Change in CMA, CA and RST Areas, 1966 - 1996, Canada and Provinces (concluded)

Province	Area Classification	1986	1986	1991	1986-1991	1986-1991	1991	1991	1996	1991-1996	1991-1996
		86 boundaries	91 boundaries	91 boundaries	current boundaries	constant boundaries	91 boundaries	96 boundaries	96 boundaries	current boundaries	constant boundaries
Newfoundland											
	CMA	161,901	161,901	171,859	6.2	6.2	171,859	171,848	174,051	1.3	1.3
	CA	94,624	81,542	81,520	-13.8	0.0	81,520	73,041	70,817	-13.1	-3.0
	RST	311,824	324,906	315,096	1.0	-3.0	315,096	323,585	306,924	-2.6	-5.1
	Total	568,349	568,349	568,475	0.0	0.0	568,475	568,474	551,792	-2.9	-2.9
Prince Edward Island											
	CMA	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
	CA	69,482	69,458	72,709	4.6	4.7	72,709	69,885	73,225	0.7	4.8
	RST	57,168	57,192	57,056	-0.2	-0.2	57,056	59,880	61,332	7.5	2.4
	Total	126,650	126,650	129,765	2.5	2.5	129,765	129,765	134,557	3.7	3.7
Nova Scotia											
	CMA	295,990	295,922	320,501	8.3	8.3	320,501	320,501	332,518	3.7	3.7
	CA	199,723	222,380	222,859	11.6	0.2	222,859	225,551	225,096	1.0	-0.2
	RST	377,462	354,873	356,582	-5.5	0.5	356,582	353,890	351,668	-1.4	-0.6
	Total	873,175	873,175	899,942	3.1	3.1	899,942	899,942	909,282	1.0	1.0
New Brunswick											
	CMA	121,265	121,265	124,981	3.1	3.1	124,981	125,838	125,705	0.6	-0.1
	CA	240,228	240,228	251,525	4.7	4.7	251,525	244,601	254,444	1.2	4.0
	RST	347,942	347,942	347,394	-0.2	-0.2	347,394	353,461	357,984	3.0	1.3
	Total	709,435	709,435	723,900	2.0	2.0	723,900	723,900	738,133	2.0	2.0
Quebec											
	CMA	4,142,154	4,142,154	4,436,174	7.1	7.1	4,436,174	4,519,426	4,693,265	5.8	3.8
	CA	868,718	846,908	891,301	2.6	5.2	891,301	834,420	849,795	-4.7	1.8
	RST	1,521,588	1,543,398	1,568,490	3.1	1.6	1,568,490	1,542,117	1,595,735	1.7	3.5
	Total	6,532,460	6,532,460	6,895,965	5.6	5.6	6,895,965	6,895,963	7,138,795	3.5	3.5
Ontario											
	CMA	6,328,626	6,333,439	7,073,420	11.8	11.7	7,073,420	7,100,762	7,639,013	8.0	7.6
	CA	1,289,659	1,314,637	1,422,183	10.3	8.2	1,422,183	1,458,964	1,518,422	6.8	4.1
	RST	1,483,410	1,453,619	1,589,282	7.1	9.3	1,589,282	1,525,159	1,596,138	0.4	4.7
	Total	9,101,695	9,101,695	10,084,885	10.8	10.8	10,084,885	10,084,885	10,753,573	6.6	6.6
Manitoba											
	CMA	625,304	625,304	652,354	4.3	4.3	652,354	660,450	667,209	2.3	1.0
	CA	83,891	76,648	76,614	-8.7	0.0	76,614	75,868	75,351	-1.6	-0.7
	RST	353,820	361,063	362,977	2.6	0.5	362,977	355,624	371,338	2.3	4.4
	Total	1,063,015	1,063,015	1,091,945	2.7	2.7	1,091,945	1,091,942	1,113,898	2.0	2.0
Saskatchewan											
	CMA	387,186	387,186	401,715	3.8	3.8	401,715	402,641	412,708	2.7	2.5
	CA	140,083	159,699	156,397	11.6	-2.1	156,397	149,135	148,964	-4.8	-0.1
	RST	482,351	462,735	430,813	-10.7	-6.9	430,813	437,152	428,565	-0.5	-2.0
	Total	1,009,620	1,009,620	988,925	-2.0	-2.0	988,925	988,928	990,237	0.1	0.1
Alberta											
	CMA	1,456,791	1,445,479	1,593,957	9.4	10.3	1,593,957	1,595,165	1,684,225	5.7	5.6
	CA	262,137	296,014	307,625	17.4	3.9	307,625	305,901	318,127	3.4	4.0
	RST	646,897	624,332	643,968	-0.5	3.1	643,968	644,487	694,474	7.8	7.8
	Total	2,365,825	2,365,825	2,545,550	7.6	7.6	2,545,550	2,545,553	2,696,826	5.9	5.9
British Columbia											
	CMA	1,636,276	1,635,954	1,890,399	15.5	15.6	1,890,399	1,890,487	2,135,952	13.0	13.0
	CA	795,873	775,709	886,017	11.3	14.2	886,017	880,418	1,011,885	14.2	14.9
	RST	451,216	471,702	505,645	12.1	7.2	505,645	511,156	576,663	14.0	12.8
	Total	2,883,365	2,883,365	3,282,061	13.8	13.8	3,282,061	3,282,061	3,724,500	13.5	13.5
Canada											
	CMA	15,155,493	15,148,604	16,665,360	10.0	10.0	16,665,360	16,787,118	17,864,646	7.2	6.4
	CA	4,044,418	4,083,223	4,368,750	8.0	7.0	4,368,750	4,317,784	4,546,126	4.1	5.3
	RST	6,033,678	6,001,762	6,177,303	2.4	2.9	6,177,303	6,106,511	6,340,821	2.6	3.8
	Total	25,233,589	25,233,589	27,211,413	7.8	7.8	27,211,413	27,211,413	28,751,593	5.7	5.7

Source: Statistics Canada. Censuses of Population, 1971 to 1996.

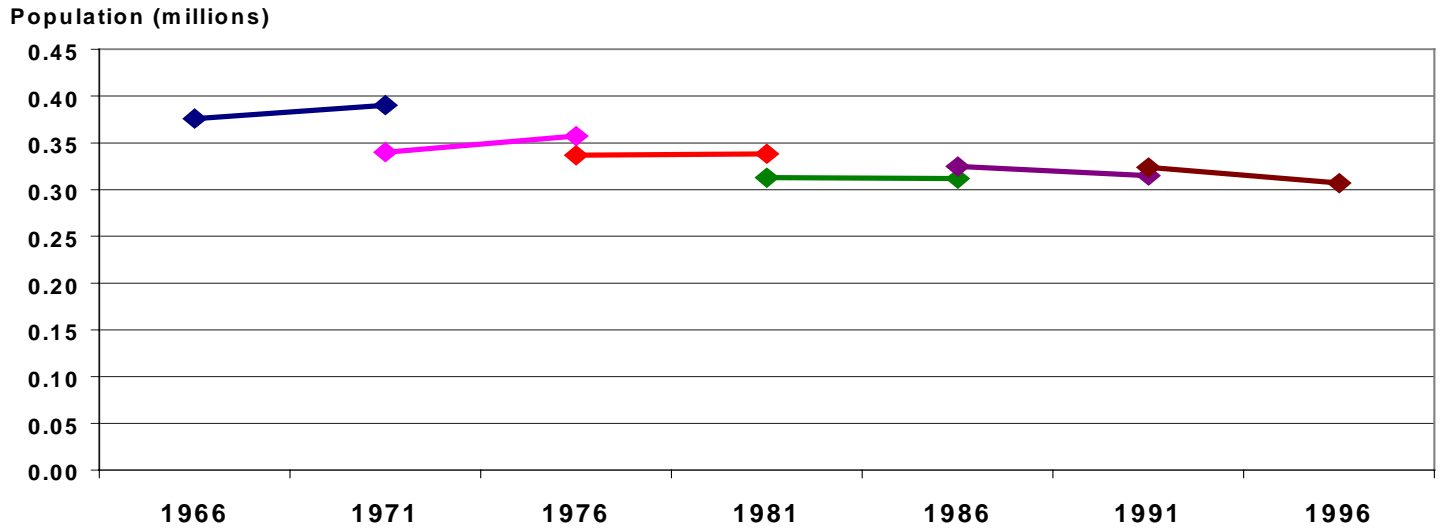
Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) have an urban core of 100,000 or more people and includes all neighbouring municipalities where 50 percent or more of the workforce commutes to the urban core.

Census Agglomerations (CAs) have an urban core of 10,000 to 99,999 people and includes all neighbouring municipalities where 50 percent or more of the workforce commutes to the urban core.

Rural and Small Town (RST) areas refer to the non-CMA and the non-CA population.

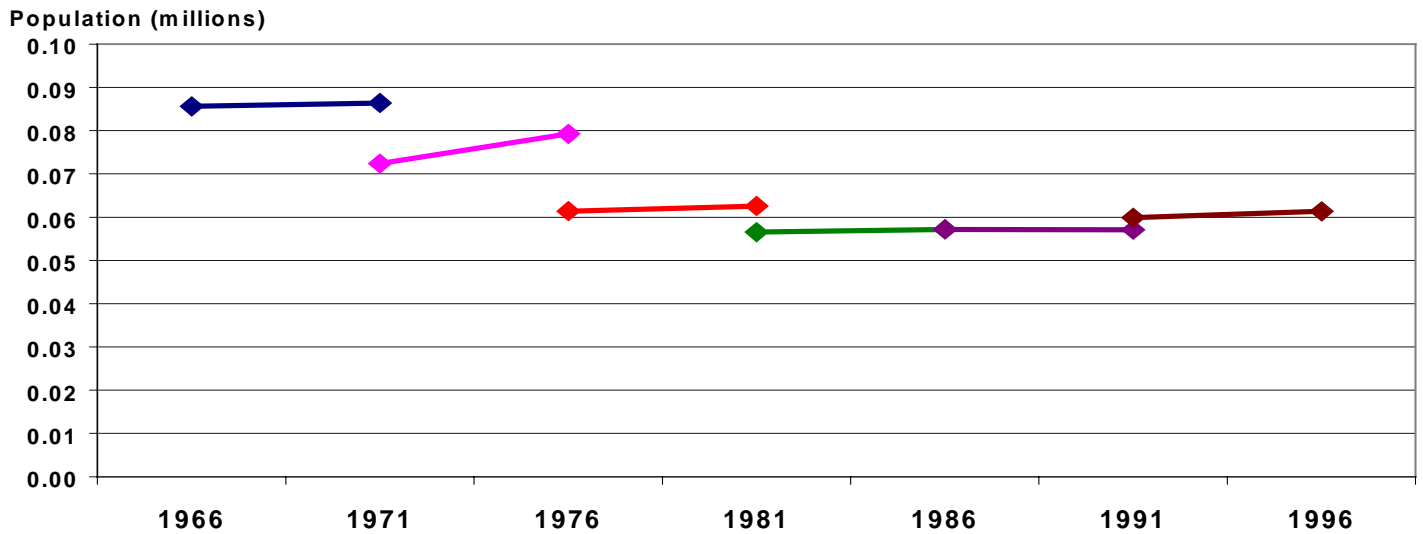
It is the population outside the commuting zone of larger urban centres.

Rural and Small Town Population, Newfoundland, 1966 to 1996



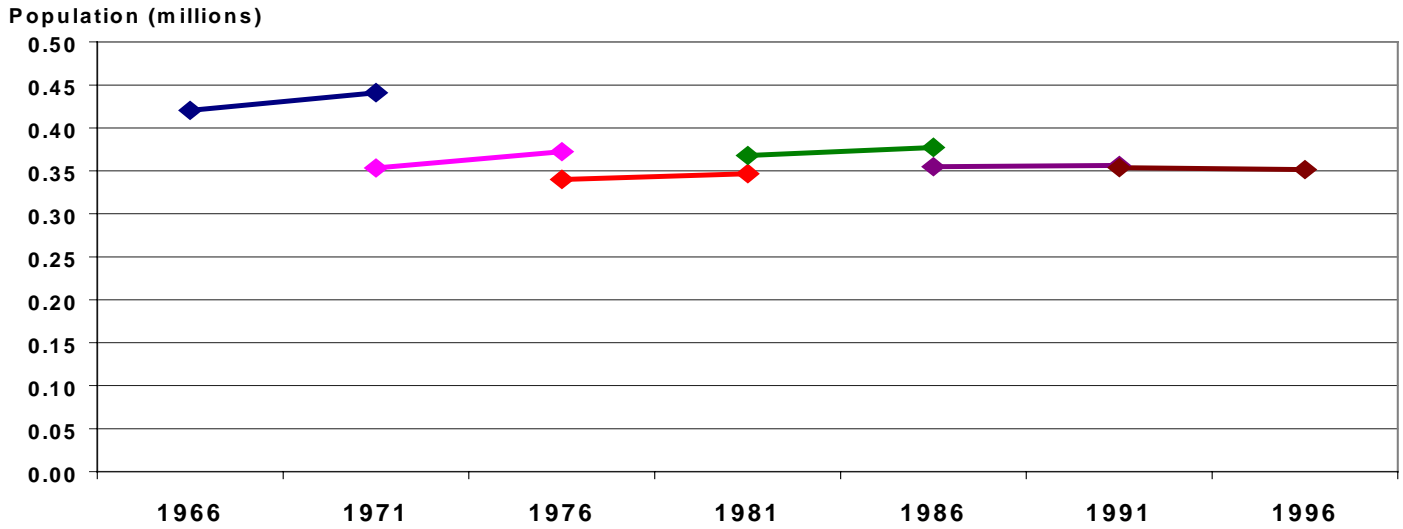
Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1966 to 1996.
Rural and small town refers to the population outside Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and outside Census Agglomerations (Cas).

Rural and Small Town Population, Prince Edward Island, 1966 to 1996



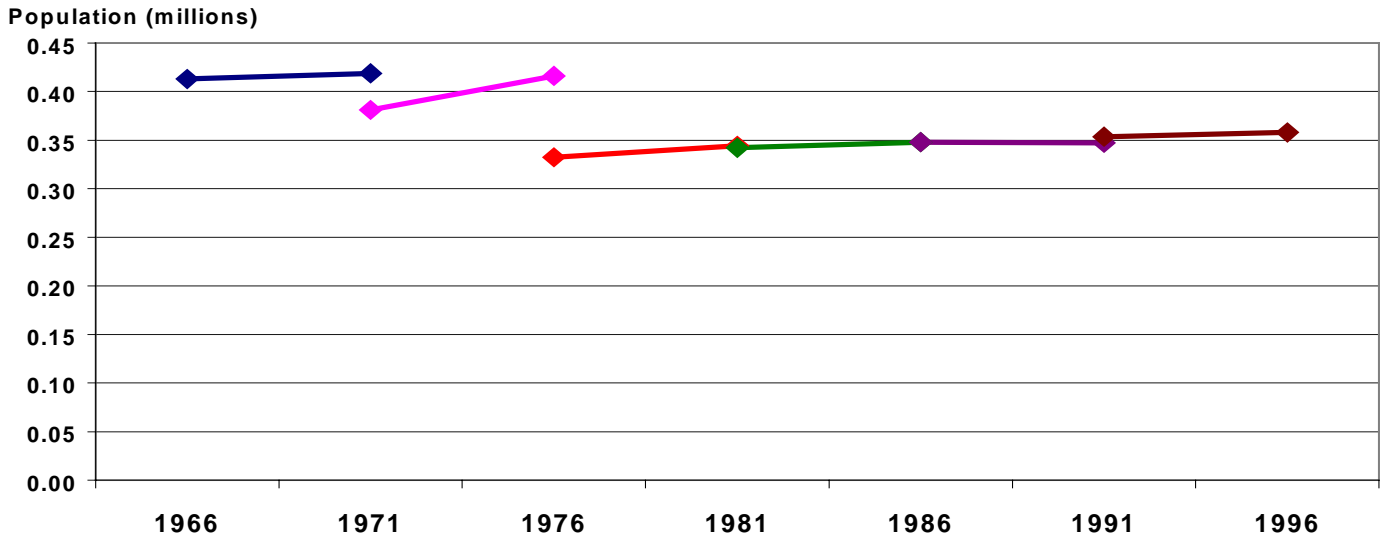
Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1966 to 1996.
Rural and small town refers to the population outside Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and outside Census Agglomeration (Cas).

Rural and Small Town Population, Nova Scotia, 1966 to 1996



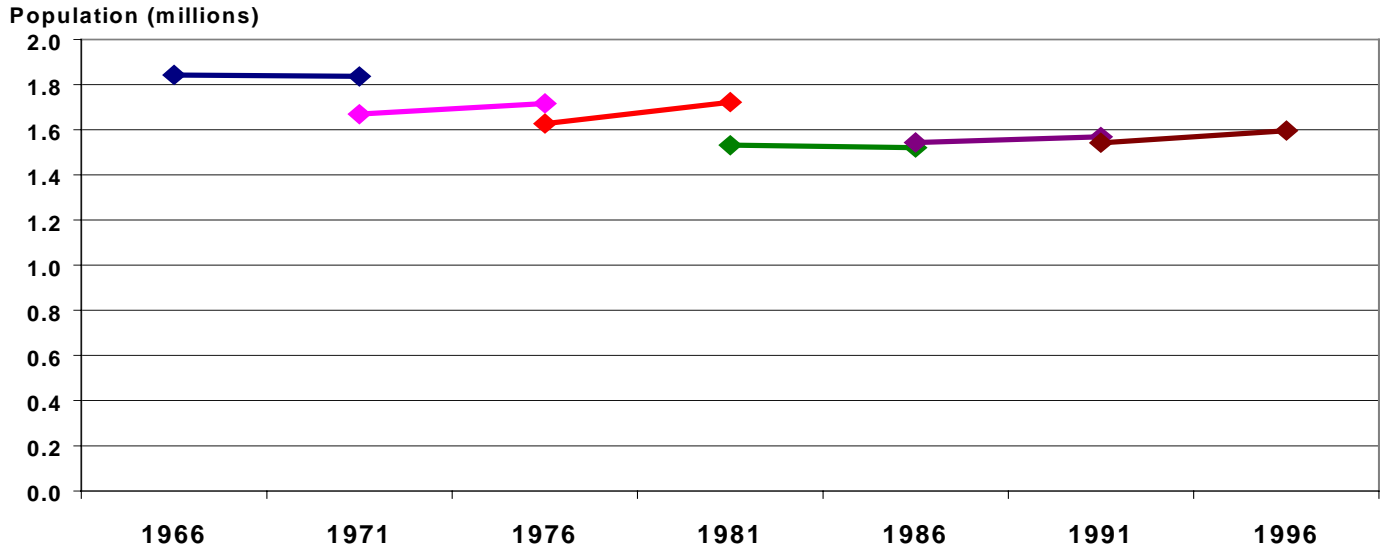
Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1966 to 1996.
Rural and small town refers to the population outside Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and outside Census Agglomerations (Cas).

Rural and Small Town Population, New Brunswick, 1966 to 1996



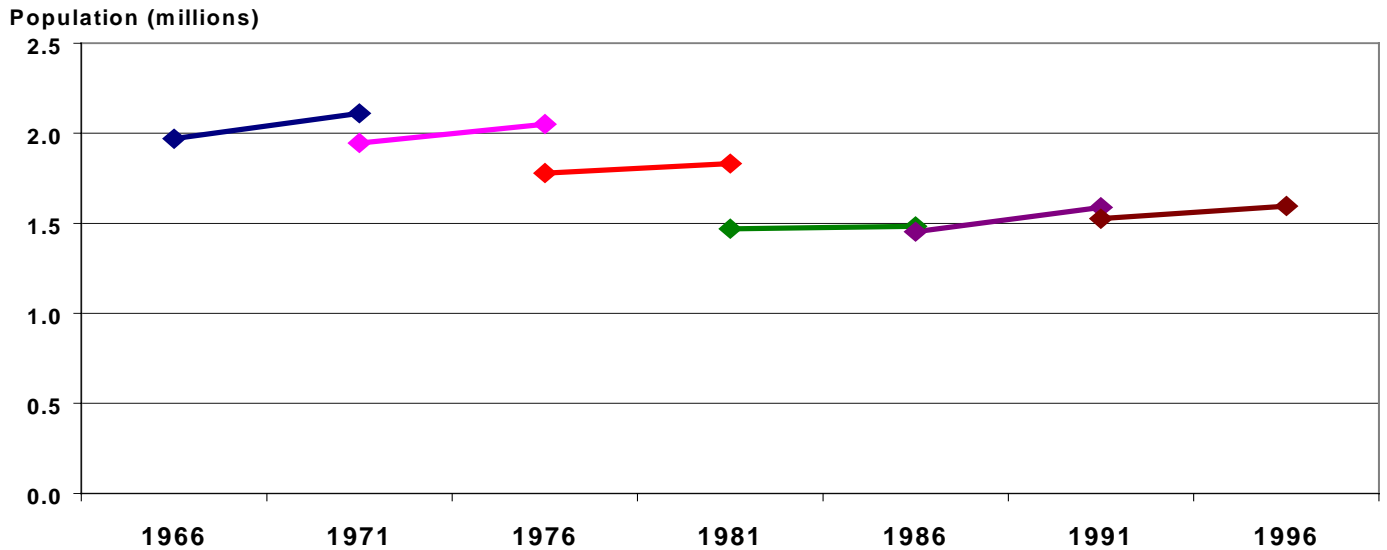
Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1966 to 1996.
Rural and small town refers to the population outside Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and outside Census Agglomerations (Cas).

Rural and Small Town Population, Quebec, 1966 to 1996



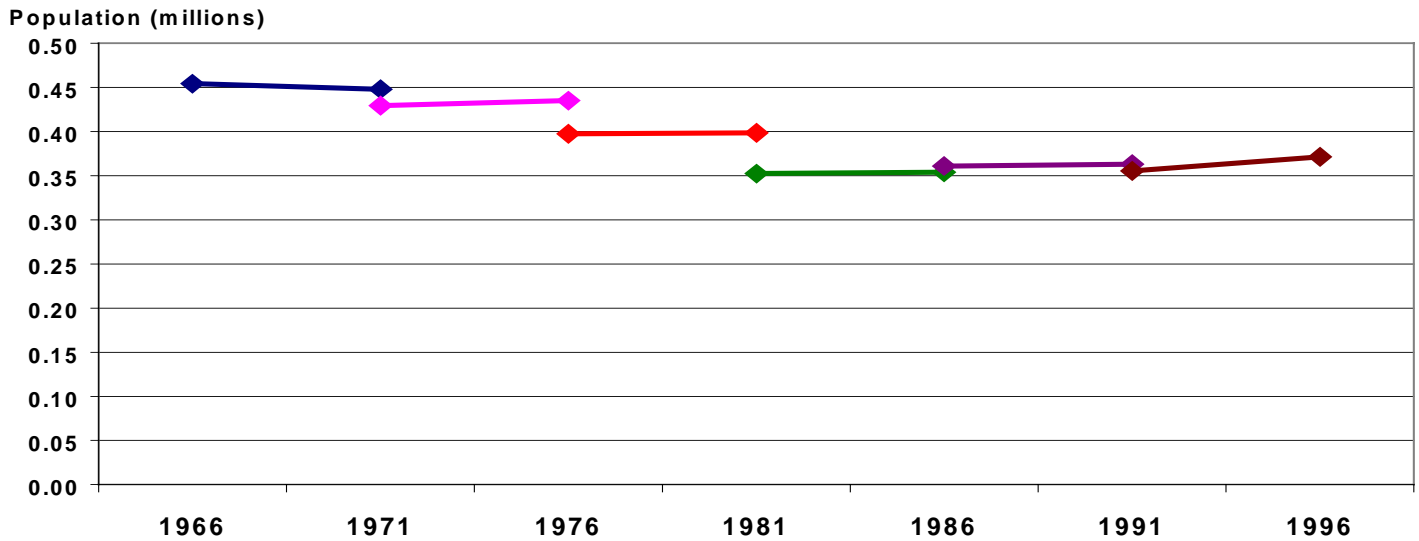
Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1966 to 1996.
 Rural and Small town refers to the population outside Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and outside Census Agglomerations (Cas).

Rural and Small Town Population, Ontario, 1966 to 1996



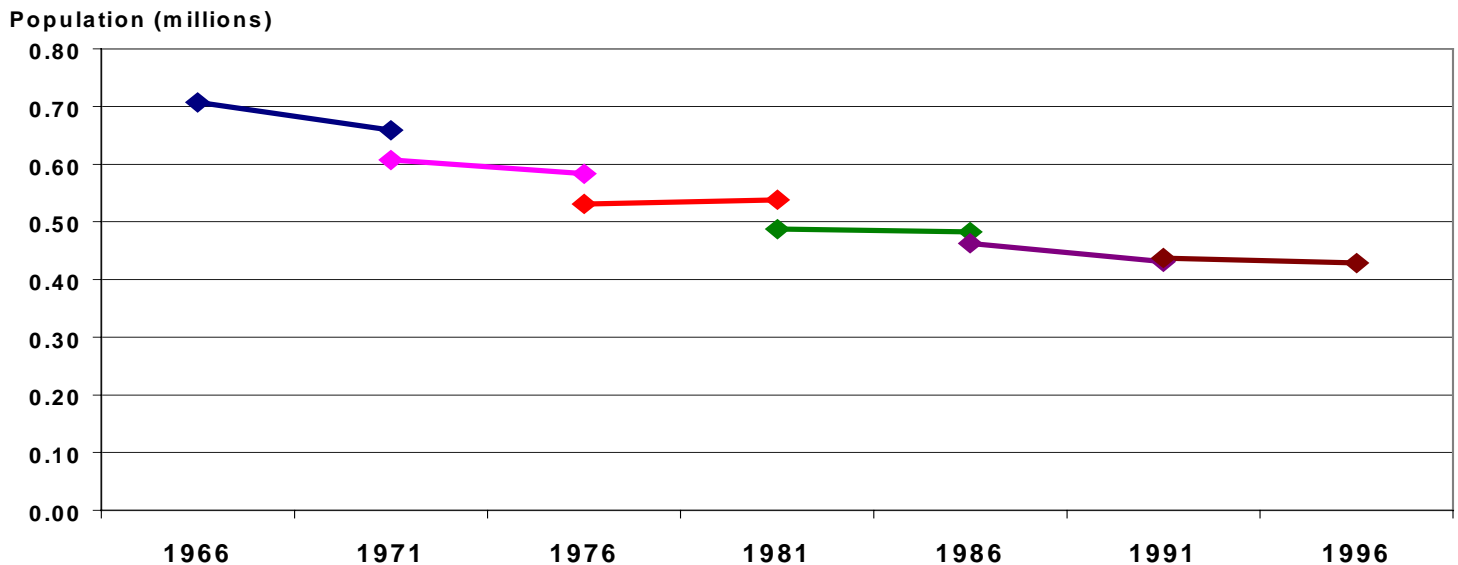
Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1966 to 1996.
 Rural and small town refers to the population outside Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and outside Census Agglomerations (Cas).

Rural and Small Town Population, Manitoba, 1966 to 1996



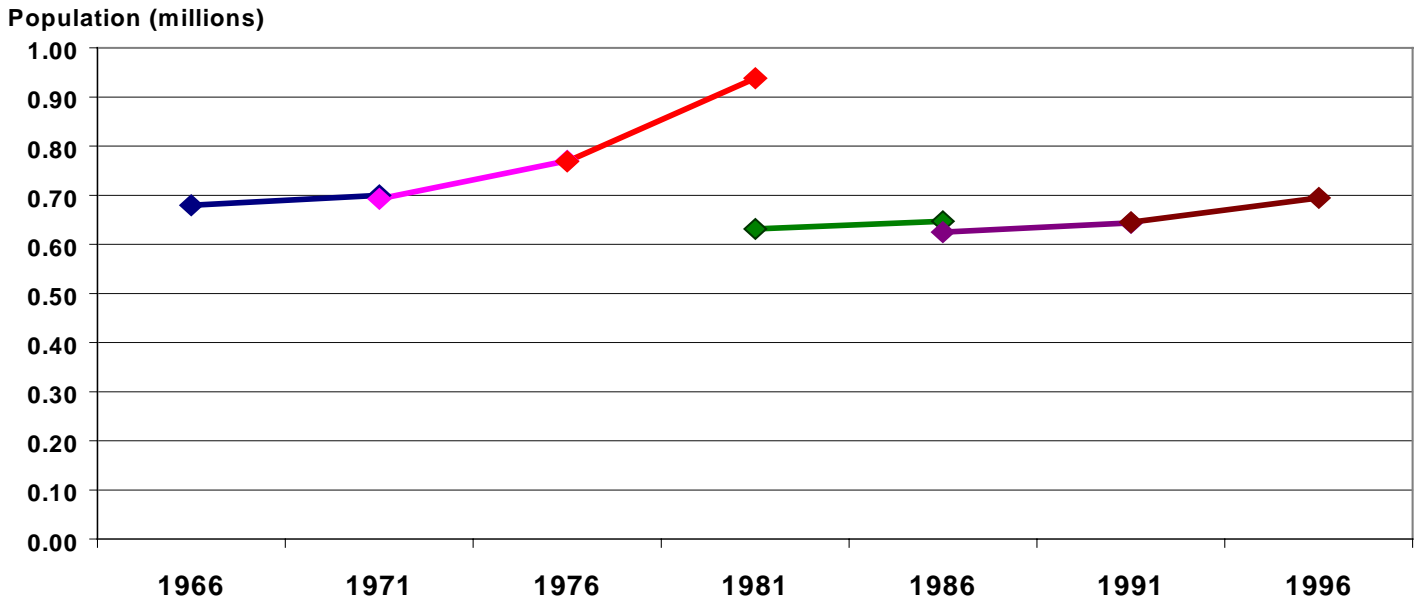
Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1966 to 1996.
Rural and small town refers to the population outside Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and outside Census Agglomerations (Cas).

Rural and Small Town Population, Saskatchewan, 1966 to 1996



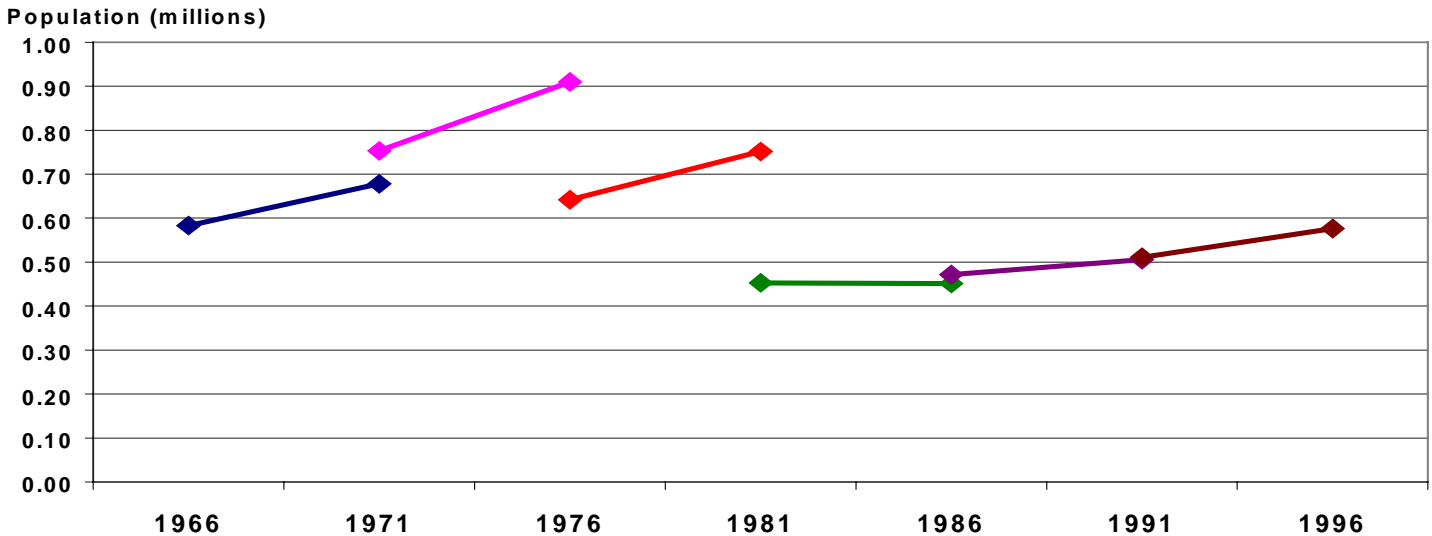
Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1966 to 1996.
Rural and small town refers to the population outside Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and outside Census Agglomerations (Cas).

Rural and Small Town Population, Alberta, 1966 to 1996



Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1966 to 1996.
 Rural and small town refers to the population outside Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and outside Census Agglomerations (Cas).

Rural and Small Town Population, British Columbia, 1966 to 1996



Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1966 to 1996.
 Rural and small town refers to the population outside Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and outside Census Agglomerations (Cas).



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