



Census 91 Fast Facts

Issue 16: Ethnic Origin

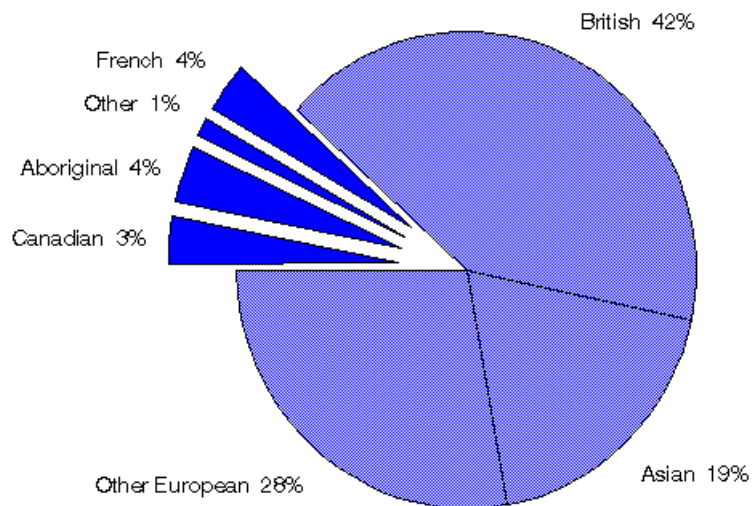
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Ethnic origin, as defined in the 1991 Census, refers to the ethnic or cultural group(s) to which an individual's ancestors belonged; it pertains to the ancestral roots or origins of the population and not to place of birth, citizenship or nationality.

According to the newly released 1991 Census, 1,952,855 British Columbians belong to a single ethnic origin and 1,294,650 British Columbians belong to more than one ethnic origin (multiple origins). These represented 60 per cent and 40 per cent of the B.C. population respectively.

Of those who reported a single origin, 41.6 per cent are British, 3.5 per cent French, 27.6 per cent other European, 19 per cent Asian, 3.8 per cent Aboriginal, 1.5 per cent other origins, and just over 3 per cent of the population reported Canadian as their ethnic origin. Of those who reported multiple origins, the majority reported British as one of their origins.

Ethnic Origins, B.C.
Single Origin Only - 1991 Census



While British has been, and still is, the major ethnic origin of the B.C. population, relative to 1986 there were more British Columbians reporting one of the Asian origins as their ethnic origin in the 1991 Census. The number of British Columbians who belonged to a single Asian origin has increased from 233,130 in 1986 to 370,835 in 1991. This also represented an increase in the share from 8.2 per cent of the provincial population in 1986 to 11.4 per cent in 1991.

This shift in the ethnic mosaic of British Columbians is primarily due to the recent change in the source countries of B.C. immigrants. Currently, most immigrants to B.C. come from Asia, in particular Hong Kong, China, Philippines, East India, and Taiwan. While the proportion of the immigrant population in the overall B.C. population has been relatively constant in the last two decades, the proportion of ethnic Chinese has increased from 3.9 per cent in 1986, to 5.6 per cent in 1991. After British, Chinese has become the second largest ethnic group in B.C. Also, a comparison of the top two ethnic groups in B.C. indicates that the Chinese ethnic population tends to be younger than the British ethnic population as a result of relative younger Asian immigrants.

Ethnic Chinese were relatively more concentrated in the Vancouver Census Metropolitan Area. While Chinese accounted for 5.6 per cent of the B.C. population, this group accounted for 10.6 per cent of the people living in the Vancouver Census Metropolitan Area. People reporting a single British ethnic origin accounted for 23.1 per cent of the population in the Vancouver CMA, and 34.6 per cent in the Victoria CMA.

More British Columbians reported Canadian as their ethnic origin in the 1991 Census than in the 1986 Census. In the 1986 Census, 14,640 persons (or 0.5 per cent of the B.C. population) reported Canadian as their ethnic origin, whereas in the 1991 Census, 60,320 persons (or 1.9 per cent) did so. This may be one of the factors that contributed to the decline in the number of persons reporting British as a single ethnic origin in the 1991 Census. Compared to the 1986 Census, there were 58,605 fewer persons who reported a single ethnic origin of British in the 1991 Census.

The proportion of the population who belonged to an Aboriginal ethnic group has also increased from 4.5 per cent in 1986 to 5.2 per cent in 1991. In 1986, there were 61,125 Aboriginals in the single ethnicity group, and 67,985 Aboriginals in the multiple ethnicity group. In 1991, there were 74,420 Aboriginals in the single ethnicity group and 94,615 Aboriginals in the multiple ethnicity group.

The 1986 to 1991 increase of 21.8 per cent in the single Aboriginal ethnic group and 39.2 per cent in the multiple Aboriginal ethnic groups may be overstated as a result of two factors. The first is that there were more incompletely enumerated Indian reserves in the 1986 Census than in the 1991 Census. This would have created a relatively higher number of unenumerated Aboriginals in the 1986 Census, especially for those in the single ethnic response category. Secondly, just as more British Columbians identified themselves as being Canadians in the 1991 Census, it may be likely for more British Columbians to acknowledge their Aboriginal ancestry. Hence the 1986 Census count of the single and multiple origin Aboriginal population may be artificially low.

Top 10 Single Response Ethnic Origins for B.C., 1991 vs. 1986 Census

Rank	Response - 1991 Census			Response - 1986 Census		
		Number	%		Number	%
1	British	812,470	25.0	British	871,075	30.6
2	Chinese	181,185	5.6	German	148,280	5.2
3	German	156,635	4.8	Chinese	112,605	4.0
4	East Indian	89,265	2.7	French	68,965	2.4
5	Aboriginal	74,420	2.3	Dutch	62,945	2.2
6	French	68,795	2.1	Aboriginal	61,125	2.1
7	Dutch	66,525	2.0	East Indian	60,045	2.1
8	Canadian	60,320	1.9	Ukranian	48,195	1.7
9	Ukranian	52,760	1.6	Italian	46,755	1.6
10	Italian	49,265	1.5	Norwegian	20,065	0.7
	Total Single	1,952,855	60.1	Total Single	1,759,810	61.8
	Total Population	3,247,505	100.0	Total Pop.	2,849,585	100.0

Source: 1986, 1991 Census of Canada