Canada’s population has reached 35 million, according to 2016 data. That’s ten times bigger than it was just after Confederation when there were 3.5 million Canadians.

**CANADA’S CENSUS**

The new population figures were revealed in a census report. A census is an official count of the population. Statistics Canada, a government agency, conducts a census every five years. It sends a questionnaire to every household in Canada. By law, residents must fill it out.

The census asks the age and gender of everyone in the home. As well, it asks how they are related and which official language they speak. One in four households gets a “long-form” census. It asks extra questions about income, health, education and background. The first results, beginning with population data, were released February 8.

**THE FIRST CANADIAN CENSUS**

Canada’s first census took place in New France in 1666.

At that time, New France was just a fur trading post. French King Louis XIV wanted to convert it into a successful colony. So, he appointed a manager, Jean Talon, to oversee the project.

Before Mr. Talon could take action, he needed to take stock. He visited every household to collect data. He asked for the name, age, occupation and marital status of each colonist.

This census showed that there were 3215 colonists living in three main settlements. The largest, Quebec, had 2100 residents. Montreal and Trois-Rivières shared the rest.

The data also indicated that men outnumbered women two to one. That meant that if the colony were to expand, unmarried men needed wives. So the king sponsored the passage of 900 single women and rewarded young married men who had big families.

The census tallied the colony’s resources, too. It identified what industries and infrastructure were needed. Mills and factories were then built, while free farmland attracted new immigrants.

Mr. Talon’s efforts paid off. The 1671 census reported 700 new births that year, and a more diversified economy.
grew by five percent over the last five years. But the growth wasn’t evenly distributed. Alberta (11.6 percent) and Nunavut (12.6 percent) grew by more than double that rate.

Another finding? For the first time since joining Confederation, the three Prairie provinces topped the growth chart. The Atlantic provinces, by comparison, grew at a snail’s pace. Prince Edward Island grew the most in this region – 1.9 percent. New Brunswick didn’t grow at all. Its population decreased by 0.5 percent.

“From East to West, population growth gets stronger [as] we’ve seen for the last few censuses,” says Karen Mihorean of Statistics Canada. “In Atlantic Canada, people [are] leaving for other parts of the country.”

**BOOM!**

Of all the provinces and territories, Ontario has the most people. Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver remain Canada’s biggest cities. Together they have 12.5 million people – more than one in three Canadians. Calgary, however, replaced Ottawa-Gatineau as the fourth-largest city. Edmonton, too, may soon overtake the capital region.

The five fastest-growing cities are in the west. They are fueled largely by the oil industry. Calgary, which has 1.4 million people, leads at 14.6 percent. It has almost doubled in size in 15 years. Edmonton, Saskatoon, Regina and Lethbridge grew by double-digits, too.

**CITY OR COUNTRY?**

The census also showed that almost 29 million Canadians live in cities or towns. Only six million live in a rural area. That’s a big shift since Confederation.

“Canada was a rural country 150 years ago. Now [most of] the population lives in metropolitan areas,” notes Statistics Canada demographer Laurent Martel.

**WHY NUMBERS MATTER**

Census data is important. City, provincial, and federal governments rely on it to decide where to build new schools, hockey rinks and hospitals. It helps them plan bus routes and roads, and how to distribute social funding. Businesses and urban planners also use the data before building new stores, offices and homes.

“Things don’t appear by magic. Decision makers want information to make decisions, and we provide it,” says Marc Hamel of the census program.

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**POPULATION GROWTH FACTORS**

Three main factors affect population numbers in Canada. The first is people moving from one province to another. The second is natural growth: the difference between births and deaths. Nunavut, for instance, has the top population growth rate. There, the average woman has 2.9 children.

Most Canadian families, however, average just 1.6 children. That means nearly half as many people are being born than are dying. This makes the third factor, immigration, key to population growth in Canada.

The 2016 census showed a 1.7 million population increase since 2011. Two-thirds of this growth was due to immigration. Demographers say that in fifty years, immigration will account for basically all of Canada’s population growth.

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**TO BE CONTINUED**

The population report is the first of seven census reports. The rest will be out in the months ahead.

Mr. Hamel says the census is like a family portrait. It shows who we are and how we’re changing. What else will it tell us about our “family?” ★

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**DEFINITIONS**

**DEMOGRAFER**: someone who studies populations

**METROPOLITAN**: belonging to or typical of big cities
Answer the following in complete sentences:

1. Explain what the term **census** means.

2. Which federal government department is responsible for the census?

3. How often is a census conducted in Canada?

4. What information are residents asked to provide?

5. When and where was the first census conducted in Canada?

6. What was the population of Canada in 1871?

7. What was the population of Canada in 2016?

8. Which regions of Canada have grown the most in recent years?

9. Which region has grown the least in recent years?

10. Where did most Canadians live in 1867?

11. Where do most Canadians live now?
BETWEEN THE LINES

An inference is a conclusion drawn from evidence. A plausible inference is supported by evidence in the article and is consistent with known facts outside of the article.

What inference(s) can you draw from the fact that 83 percent of Canadians live in large towns or cities?

JUST TALK ABOUT IT

1. As you see it, what is the importance of population data? Explain.
2. For what reasons might population decline be a problem for a region or country? For what reasons might it be an advantage? Explain.
3. What reasons can you suggest to explain why just 17 percent of Canadians lived in rural areas in 2016? Explain.

ONLINE

Note: The links below are listed at www.lesplan.com/en/links for easy access.

1. Explore the historical data on the Statistics Canada website at http://www.statcan.gc.ca/
2. Read a CBC article about the 2016 census and explore additional links at http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/grenier-2016-census-population-1.3970314
3. Listen to a CBC broadcast about the coming wave of senior citizens at http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2676323240/
5. See if your hometown grew or shrank over the past five years at http://www.cbc.ca/news2/interactives/canadian-census/
**ACROSS**

4. the most populous province
6. Canada’s population is over 35 _____
7. the first census was conducted in New _____
8. _____ Canada is in charge of the census
12. the population of New _____ is dropping
13. fastest growing province

**DOWN**

1. largest city in Canada
2. fourth largest city in Canada
3. to come to a new country to live
5. Canada’s census takes place every _____ years
9. person who carried out the first census
10. an official count of the population
11. far away from large towns or cities
MAP ASSIGNMENT

35 MILLION AND COUNTING
– The First 2016 Census Results Are Released

Complete this map assignment to better understand the article 35 Million and Counting.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Obtain the required resources and read all the instructions before starting.
2. Colour your map after all labelling is completed.
3. Print in pencil only first, then go over the printing in black ink.
4. Work carefully and neatly.

Resources Required: pencil, black pen, pencil crayons, ruler, eraser and an atlas.

Part A Locate and label the following provinces in CAPITAL letters and shade each as indicated:
   Nova Scotia (pink)   New Brunswick (red)
   Prince Edward Island (yellow)

Part B Locate and label the capital city of each province and underline each city name.

Part C Locate and label the following in CAPITAL letters and shade each as indicated:
   Quebec (green)   United States (orange)

Part D Locate and label the following islands:
   Cape Breton Island   Magdalen Islands
   Anticosti Island

Part E Locate and label the Gaspé Peninsula.

Part F Locate and label the following cities in New Brunswick:
   Moncton   St. John
   Miramichi   Edmundston

Part G Locate and label the following and shade all ocean water dark blue:
   Bay of Fundy   Northumberland Strait
   Gulf of St. Lawrence   Chaleur Bay
   Atlantic Ocean

Part H Locate and label the following and shade all rivers light blue:
   St. John River   Miramichi River

Part I Complete your map with a frame, title and compass. ★