

A guide grid for 1851 to 1931.

Province or territory	Census district (no. and name)	Sub-district or division	Page no.	Reference (LAC reel, item or image)
Place, street or lot (as written)	Date enumerated (as written)	Date viewed	Website or archive	Checked against the original image? (Y / N)

Line	Dwelling / family no.	Name	Relationship to head	Sex	Marital status	Age (and date of birth, where asked)	Place of birth	Parents' birthplaces (where asked)	Year of immigration, naturalisation	Origin or nationality (as written)	Religion	Occupation	Notes
1													
2													
3													
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5													
6													
7													
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10													
11													
12													
13													
14													

Columns change from census to census, so follow the printed headings and leave a column blank if it was not asked. Transcribe origin, nationality, religion and birthplace exactly as written, even where the wording is now outdated.

Put your own additions in [square brackets] and unclear words as [?]. The next page lists the census years, dates and what to look for.

Check the printed headings on every page.

Census days as listed in published Canadian census tables. Check the printed headings on every page, because questions differ by year.

Year	Census day	Where it was taken	What to look for
1851-52	12 Jan 1852	Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia	Colonial returns, taken before Confederation. Catalogues may file them under 1851 or 1852, so check both.
1861	14 Jan 1861	As 1851-52, plus Prince Edward Island	Colonial returns, taken before Confederation.
1871	2 Apr 1871	Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia	First census after Confederation, and the start of the ten-yearly series that runs to 1971.
1881	4 Apr 1881	Adds British Columbia, Manitoba, PEI and the North-West Territories	The country now stretches west. Check the district name against a map of the time.
1891	6 Apr 1891	As 1881	Compare the household with 1881 and 1901 to follow families through moves.
1901	31 Mar 1901	Adds the Yukon	Use it to bridge from 1891 to 1911, and read the origin and immigration columns carefully.
1906	24 Jun 1906	Prairie census: Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan	Prairie provinces counted every five years, so it fills the gap between the ten-yearly returns.
1911	1 Jun 1911	Adds Alberta and Saskatchewan to the main census	Has several questions about occupation and unemployment.
1916	1 Jun 1916	Prairie census: Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan	Useful for tracing families through the First World War years.
1921	1 Jun 1921	Ten-yearly census, all provinces and territories	Asked for parents' birthplaces, as the 1931 census did.
1926	1 Jun 1926	Prairie census: Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan	Last Prairie census in this series.
1931	1 Jun 1931	Ten-yearly census, all provinces and territories	Released 1 June 2023 after the 92-year rule. Only the population schedule (Form 1) survives. Asks relationship, birthplaces of the person and parents, years of immigration and naturalisation, nationality, racial origin, language, religion, literacy and occupation.

Where to search: Library and Archives Canada (free census search and images), FamilySearch (free account), Ancestry and MyHeritage. Census returns are held by Statistics Canada for 92 years before release.