



CPRN Policy Brief

Canadian Policy Research Networks

Number 10

October 2006

Diversity: Canada's Strength

Canada is one of the world's most diverse nations – a fact that represents enormous advantages in terms of potential for a richly creative and innovative society. Our success in accommodating that diversity makes us a model for others. Still, many challenges lie ahead.

Nearly one in five Canadians in 2017 will be immigrants (up from 18% in 2001) – matching peak immigration in the twentieth century. A similar proportion will be racially visible (up from 13% in 2001).

The Aboriginal population will rise at double the rate of the overall population. In 2017, 4% of the population of Canada will be Aboriginal.

	Base Population, 2001	Proportion of Population, 2001	Projected Population, 2017*	Projected Proportion of Population, 2017*
Immigrant	5,655,900	18.5%	7,682,500	22.2%
Racially Visible	4,037,500	13.4%	7,116,200	20.6%
Aboriginal	1,066,500	3.4%	1,427,900	4.1%

* Based on medium projection scenario

Source: *Population Projections of Visible Minority Groups, Canada, Provinces and Regions, 2001-2017*, and *Projections of the Aboriginal Populations, Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2001-2017*, Statistics Canada, 2005.

One in four Canadians in 2017 will have a mother tongue other than English or French. Ten percent of the population will follow a non-Christian religion – twice the proportion in 2001.

Canada will experience significant changes as it's racially visible and ethnocultural diversity increases. These population shifts will affect some Canadian regions and cities more than others.

Consider that by 2017:

Racially Visible Population

- 97% of Canada's racially visible population will live in Ontario, Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia
- the proportion of racially visible people in British Columbia will be 31% and 29% in Ontario
- 95% of Canada's racially visible population will live in Canada's census metropolitan areas

Aboriginal Population

- 1 in 25 people will be Aboriginal
- the median age of the Aboriginal population will be 27.8 years compared to 35.5 for the racially visible population and 43.3 years for the rest of Canada
- the Aboriginal population is projected to grow at twice the annual rate of the rest of the population

Racially Visible Population (continued)

- 75% of Canada’s racially visible population will live in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver; the majority of the population of Toronto and Vancouver will be racially visible
- Chinese, South Asians and Blacks will continue to make up the majority of the racially visible population

Aboriginal Population (continued)

- 25% of children in Saskatchewan and Manitoba will be Aboriginal
- of Aboriginal peoples, the Inuit population will grow the fastest
- the proportion of Aboriginal people living on reserve will increase from 33% (2001) to 40%

How Will Canada Make Diversity Work?

“The challenge in Canada’s increasingly pluralistic society is to find new and democratic practices to manage conflict over legitimate value differences” (Jenson and Papillon, 2001).

Canada’s “diversity model” depends on citizens recognizing the legitimacy of value positions different from their own. CPRN’s research suggests that Canadians accommodate diversity by compromising between sets of competing values. These competing values are arrayed along one of four dimensions:

Uniformity	Heterogeneity
Individual rights	Group rights
Symmetry	Asymmetry
Economic freedom	Economic security

The majority of Canadians situate themselves somewhere in the middle of each of these dimensions.

In today’s democracies compromise is the key to resolving conflicts arising from cultural, social and economic diversity. To make democracy work, everyone needs to be included in the process. All citizens must have access to the institutions within which choices among legitimate alternatives are made, and they must have the capacity to make these choices.

Conclusion

Canada needs to foster an inclusive political culture that supports citizen participation and provides access to decision-making. This approach depends on a continuing commitment to “equality within a democratic framework.” “The Canadian experience suggests that the **inclusion and participation** of all citizens in the social, economic, cultural and political life of the community is the necessary starting point for the successful management of diversity” (Jenson and Papillon, 2001).

Further Reading

Visit the Diversity Gateway – Population Projections for 2017 at www.cprn.org/en/diversity-2017.cfm

See Jane Jenson and Martin Papillon, *The Canadian Diversity Model: A Repertoire in Search of a Framework*, November 2001.



Interested in discussing this work or collaborating in research in this or a related area?

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