

1891 Census of Canada Database User Guide 2.0 – February 5, 2011

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Database:

The 1891 Census of Canada database contains records for approximately 433,440 individuals. The database has three sample levels: a core 5% page-based sample of all individuals enumerated; a 10% sample of urban centres including Montréal, Toronto and Halifax and the central and western provinces; and 100% of all dwellings with 31 or more individuals. The database also contains 100% of select areas in Ontario, including the districts of Perth and Middlesex. Figure 1.0 describes the number of records in each portion of the database.

Sample Size	Region	Number of Records
5%	New Brunswick	16070
	Nova Scotia	21863
	Ontario	94739
	Prince Edward Island	5288
	Quebec	59958
10%	British Columbia	9831
	Halifax, Nova Scotia	6112
	Manitoba	14202
	Montreal, including sub-districts in Hochelaga and Jacques Cartier	26646
	Toronto, including sub-districts in York	16481
	Unorganized Territories	5829
100%	Alnwick, Northumberland	1321
	Echo River, Algoma	499
	Garden River, Algoma	606
	Group Quarters	50165
	Goulais Bay, Algoma	239
	Guelph, Wellington	13000
	London, including sub-districts in Westminster	47279
	Otonabee, Peterborough	3652
	Perth	46312
	The Sault, Algoma	2412

Figure 1.0: Number of Records in Database Samples

All of the fields on the census manuscript have been digitized with the addition of a field for the language in which each record was written. Additionally, several fields have been coded into standard, hierarchical numeric coding schemes.

The sampling strategy for the database is page-based, starting with the first new dwelling on a page and ending with the last inhabitant of the last new dwelling to start on the page. This ensures that we are capturing complete households.

Process:

The 1891 Canadian Census Project used five major stages to construct the database. Each stage is discussed briefly below:

During indexing, the first stage, two indexers separately recorded geographic, group quarter and page ordering information for each microfilm reel. The files produced by this process were compared against each other, and discrepancies were checked against the microfilm.

Data Entry then used the files created during indexing to randomly select pages for the sample. Data entry of the 1891 Canadian Census was designed to digitally recreate the records available on microfilm. No interpretation was done at this stage; spelling mistakes were recorded, and where necessary, Data Entry operators made detailed notes to identify any uncertainties.

The third stage, Checking and Correcting, involved comparing the database created during Data Entry against the microfilm. This process ensured the highest level of accuracy and precision in recording the records as a second individual attempted to decipher difficult handwriting, caught typos and ensured that the file had a complete set of notes for later processing.

The fourth stage involved cleaning the data. This step addressed enumerator errors that could have resulted in misinterpretation of the data, such as cases wherein enumerators put responses in the wrong fields.

The fifth stage, coding, added several fields to the database. These fields used hierarchical numerical codes to represent responses provided in other fields, such as birthplace, religion and occupation.

See Field Descriptions for more information.

Source:

The 1891 Canadian Census was taken by the Department of Agriculture in April 1891. It aimed to collect information for every permanent resident of Canada. Enumerators recorded information for each individual at their permanent residence, in the de jure style.

The enumeration began in April 1891, and while in most areas of the country it was completed within a couple of days, it continued for weeks and even months in parts of the country that were difficult to access. The enumerator entered information about people and dwellings which were checked and, if necessary, corrected by a district commissioner. The commissioner then forwarded the sheets Ottawa for tabulation and, in some cases, further modification. The sheets were microfilmed from 1938-1940, and then destroyed. The microfilm reels survive as part of the collection of the National Archives of Canada (NAC reference number to catalogued collection: HA742 P8323 1987).

The first schedule, "Schedule No. 1: Nominal Return of the Living," is the only one that remains extant. It asks questions about individuals covering basic personal information such as name, age, marital status, birthplace, religion and occupation, as well as questions about literacy and health status and more detailed occupation information such as if the individual is an employer or if he/she is a wage-earner. There are also questions about dwellings that provide construction material, number of rooms and floors, as well total number of dwellings under construction, uninhabited and inhabited.

[Descriptions of data fields and codes appendices have been removed from this document.]