

Total vs. Census Population

When using Statistics Canada census data, keep in mind that **the total population indicated in the census is not the actual total population of an area** (or geography).

Like other data gathering tools, censuses are not perfect sources of information. When the census is conducted, there is room for error and for residences to not be accounted for. Missing data in census counts is called “undercoverage”.

To help cope with this issue, Census Canada estimates an “undercount” or “undercoverage” rate to assist estimating the *real* total population. Undercount rates are typically provided for each Census Metropolitan Area in the country.

The following formula should be used to calculate the total population:

$$P_T = \frac{P_C}{1 - u}$$

Where,

P_T = Total Population

P_C = Census Population

u = Undercount Rate

Toronto CMA Undercount Rates

2006: 4.94%

2001: 4.2%

So, if the population of Peel in Census 2006 was 1,159,405. We would calculate it as follows:

$$u = 4.94\% = 0.0494$$

$$P_T = \frac{1,159,405}{1 - 0.0494}$$

$$P_T = 1,219,656$$

The difference between the total and the Census Population is significant: over 60,000 people. More people than were reported in Caledon alone for 2006!

When planning for services, keep undercounts in mind!