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Canada Census Journey to Electronic Data Collection: The future of paper self-response in Canada

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- A historic look at Statistics Canada's transition from paper to electronic data collection; and,
- Overview of 2021 Collection
- 2026 and beyond





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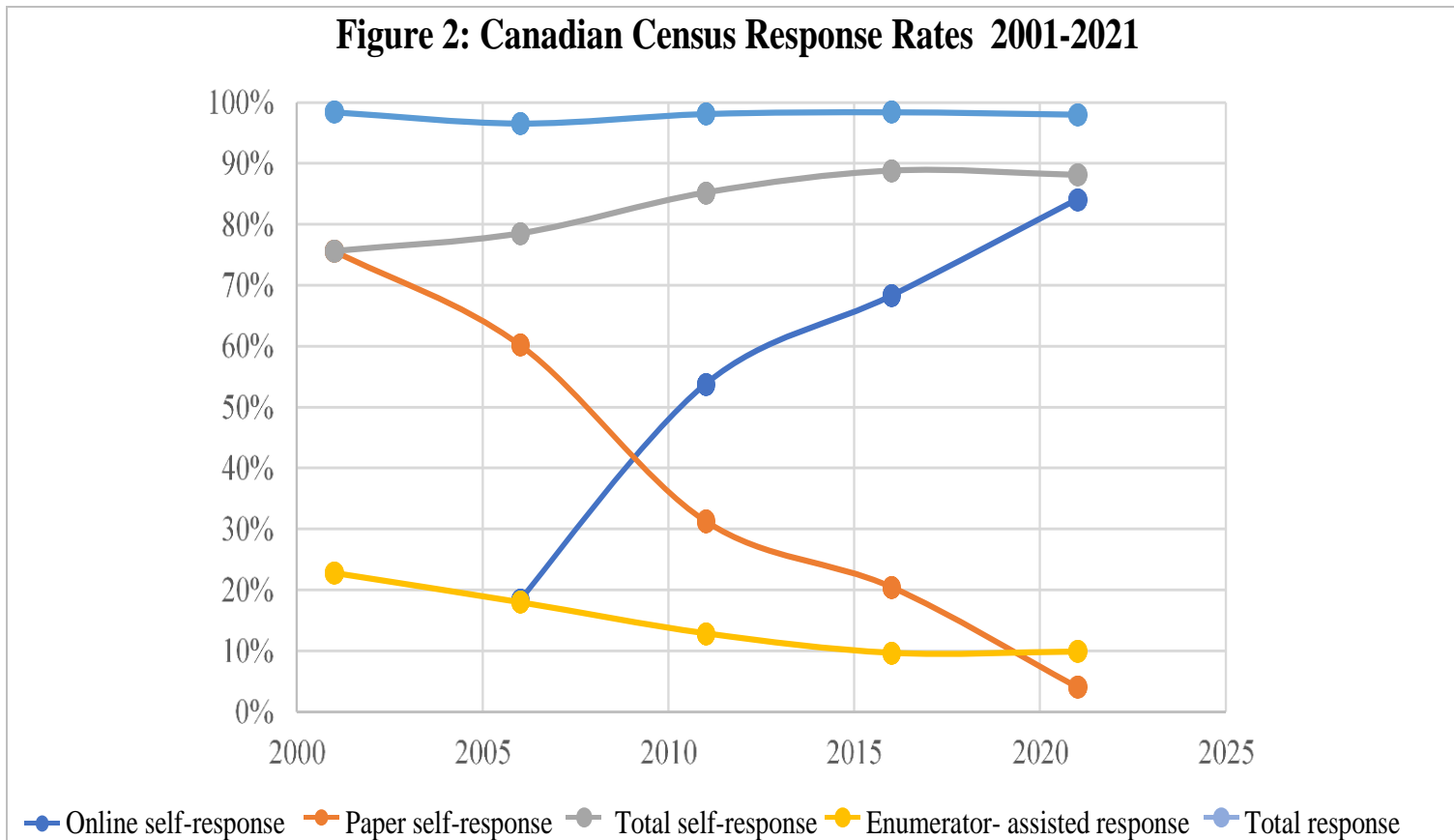
Transition to electronic data collection

- Implementation of multi-mode data collection
 - Paper questionnaire administered by an interviewer (PAPI) – used since first Canadian Census of Population (1871)
 - Paper questionnaire self-administered (PASI) – 1971 Census
 - Computer-assisted self-interview (CASI) – 2006 Census



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Transition from PQ to EQ Self-Response

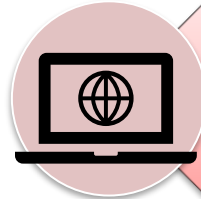


- 2006 - EQ option offered on paper questionnaires
- 2011 – 75% of dwellings received an invitation letter – No PQ
- 2021 - all Canadian households received an invitation letter – No PQ
- As a result, the self-response rate increased over time and reached 88.1% in 2021.

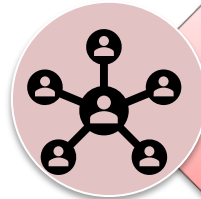


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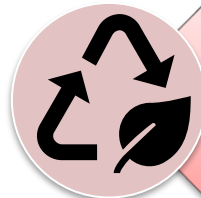
Vision for 2026 and beyond



Leverage previous investments in technology



Seize opportunities to make the program more user-centric



Reduce our environmental footprint



Earn and maintain citizen trust with very high levels of service and burden management



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Can we eliminate paper self-response?

- Paper self-response fell to 4.1% of all responses in 2021, from 20.5% five years earlier
 - Who is using paper self-response?
 - What issues exist, if we phase-out paper self-response?
 - When might this occur? What cycle?
- Explored these questions, during recent qualitative testing



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Spring/Summer 2022 Qualitative testing

- Main reasons for completing a paper form?
- Reaction to the wave material without any mention to the PQ option:
 - How would you feel?
 - What would you do ?
 - How would you complete the Census?



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Motivation for using paper self-response:

- Many do not have access to the Internet
 - A few have fears on safety, scams, and that their information will be made public
- Many do not have or use the computer
 - Some do not understand how to use it, and it may be very stressful for them
- Some respondents just prefer using the PQ for other reasons
 - They are more comfortable with paper (“Old-school”)
 - It seems more formal / official to have a Census in-hand
 - Some have a computer, but do not want to use it



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Dear resident:

This letter provides instructions for completing your household's 2021 Census questionnaire. **Please complete it by May 11, 2021.**

Census information is important for you and your community and is used to plan services that support employment, schools, public transportation and hospitals. Please note that completion of the census questionnaire is required by law.

Complete it online at www.census.gc.ca. Enter the 16-digit secure access code indicated above and follow the instructions. It's quick and easy.

If you have questions, please visit our website at www.census.gc.ca or contact us at 1-855-340-2021. Respondents with access to TTY (a telecommunications device for people who are deaf) should call 1-833-830-3109.

By law, your responses will be kept confidential.

Thank you for your co-operation.

(Chief Statistician's signature)

← How to get a
paper
questionnaire
mentioned here
in 2021

We also got reactions on the possible removal of instructions on how to access a paper questionnaire:

- Some would try to do it online
- Some would call our toll-free number
- Some would wait till we contacted them

Clear message from qualitative study:

- *“Census is mandatory, I want to participate, provide me with information on all options to respond”*



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What if we eliminated paper self-response?

- Strong negative reactions to the idea of completely eliminating the PQ option.
 - Some respondents have found it to be **discriminatory**
 - Against the older population, remote areas, and those who cannot pay for computer / Internet charges



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What to test ?

- **Option 1:** Keep offering the PQ option explicitly in the 2026 letters (no test required for this)
- **Option 2:** Test removing the mention of PQ option from all letters (as tested qualitatively in 2022)
 - Or other intermediate options such as removing the PQ option from wave 1, but to offer it in subsequent waves



Instead, use BT4 to explore ways to **increase** self-response (namely EQ response) via wave methodology improvements.

Natural EQ increase will also reduce paper from 4% in 2021 to an ****estimated**** 2.3% in 2026



Risk of:

- Confusion/Frustration
- Decrease and delays in self-response
- Increase of NRFU workload



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Questions?

Thank you