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Innovations in dissemination and communication throughout the census lifecycle

From Paper to Digital: Effective Marketing, Social Media, and Advertising Strategies for a Successful Census

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Summary

Statistics Canada conducted its 2021 census in the middle of the pandemic, resulting in a complete rethink of the communication plans that were already approved, and in place. Bold and innovative marketing, social media and advertising strategies were needed to cut through the media noise and appeal directly to Canadians. This included a dramatic shift to a digital-focused campaign that opened new opportunities to reach more people and save a few trees. The overall goal was to promote a safe census by increasing online response rates and self-response rates. This paper aims to highlight Statistics Canada's strategic approach based on outreach and partnerships, the various tactics used to amplify the message and reach various target audiences, from segmentation to influencers, social media takeovers, music playlists, and advertising. Strategies on how to provide marketing support during the dissemination of census data and plan census communications to reach easy and hard to enumerate groups are also shared.

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I. Introduction

1. Planning a census is already a complex task, but planning and executing a census during a pandemic presented an even greater challenge, especially when doing field enumeration. From one day to the next, all face-to-face communication and promotional activities were cancelled or replaced by virtual activities. Many households were in confinement and commuting was very limited. Therefore, the planned advertising campaign had to be completely revamped to focus on adaptable and agile uses of out-of-home and traditional media with a heavier focus on streaming and digital platforms. And amidst all the public service announcements, misinformation and disinformation campaigns about the pandemic, government measures and vaccination, we had to find innovative ways to stand out and promote a census in the already completely saturated information environment. This paper aims to highlight Statistics Canada's strategic approach to promote the census based on outreach and partnerships, and the various tactics used to amplify the message and reach various target audiences, from segmentation to influencers, social media takeovers, music playlists, and advertising.

A. Adapting to the pandemic environment

2. Compared to other industrialized countries, Canada's population density is very low, relatively concentrated in urban areas and close to the United States border. This creates a very particular set of challenges when conducting a census, especially in remote locations where there is very little or no internet connectivity and limited access. Historically, we enumerated many of these areas in person, with an enumerator going door-to-door to fill out the census questionnaire. Pandemic restrictions forced us to rethink how we operate and how we communicated with Canadians about the 2021 Census.
3. Statistics Canada quickly adapted its approach to the reality of COVID-19 to ensure that every Canadian had an opportunity to be heard and that the census was conducted in the best and safest way possible. It was decided that census employees would not visit institutional collective dwellings such as those housing residents who were vulnerable to COVID-19—hospitals, nursing homes and residences for senior citizens, as well as residential and long-term care facilities. To reassure Canadians about the safety measures put in place, the following key messaging and tactics were developed to promote the online response rate and the self-response rate among harder-to-enumerate audiences, support recruitment and increase the number and quality of candidates applying for census jobs (Statistics Canada hired close to 32,000 census employees across Canada in 2021):
 - i. Completing the census online is the best and safest way for Canadians to participate.
 - ii. Only if online, paper or phone collection is not an option for respondents, will we do in-person visits.
 - iii. Employees will follow Public Health Authorities' guidelines and will respect a no-contact protocol during in-person visits: wear safety equipment, observe physical distancing, use hand sanitizer and refrain from entering respondents' homes.

B. Engaging Canadians

4. The 2021 Census communications strategy was integrated, agile, targeted and aimed at creating buzz and appealing to emotions by focusing on the Canadian identity. Our goal was to evoke the feeling that completing the census is inherently Canadian, just like voting or any other civic duty. But how can the census be more closely associated with the Canadian identity? This was done in two ways: reflecting Canadian values in communications products and leveraging relationships with individuals and organizations that have long-established ties to the Canadian identity, such as historical references, music by Canadian artists, influencers and celebrities.
5. Several Canadian values were identified through research, such as: diversity, fairness, safety, health, and nature. Here, nature means both having respect for nature and valuing regional landscapes. For instance, Canadians often place importance on being from the West; or being Newfoundlanders; or being Maritimers. Incorporating all these values into communications products illustrated how the census fits into the Canadian experience.

C. Targeting audiences

6. We conducted a segmentation exercise in support of collection in partnership with our internal Methodology team. By combining demographics and response behaviour from the 2016 Census, we identified 88 regional groupings that we further regrouped into 12 audience segments. The audience segments were categorized as either easier or harder to enumerate (audiences that have historically either responded to the census later than desired or required intervention from an enumerator). We leveraged attitudinal and lifestyle data from Environics Analytics to have a better understanding of what motivates the 12 meta clusters to develop our messaging, visuals and targeted tactics.
7. This full segmentation was mainly used for marketing and outreach. Advertising used these 12 audience segments as a base for their target groups as well, which enabled similar messaging and enhanced impact. The easier to enumerate audiences were encompassed within the national general population campaign. It was the hard to enumerate audiences that were further refined for effective advertising. With the use of Environics data, three hard to enumerate target audiences for advertising were created based on their shared characteristics and social values. Personas were developed to help better understand and adapt messaging to the needs of these specific audiences.
 - i. **Younger Diverse Urbanites:** Guided by emotions and feelings, this group is enthusiastic about technology and believe it is the best tool for facing today's challenges.
 - ii. **Outer-city Residents:** Particularly interested in what is happening in one's neighbourhood, city, town or region, this audience feels more threatened by technological changes and show a tendency to mistrust advertising and reject consumer society.
 - iii. **Striving Renters:** This audience shows concern about their financial future, and some members tend to question authority and challenge societal rules and norms.

D. Building Partnerships

8. Statistics Canada employed a robust outreach and partnership model in 2021. This approach leveraged and amplified the partnership channels we created in 2016, as more than 1,700 community supporters asked to stay in touch with Statistics Canada during the intercensal period. These partners helped distribute messaging to the ultimate audience—the Canadian public—who then acted as advocates and trusted voices of the census brand. Each group was engaged as follows:
 - i. All were encouraged to share Statistics Canada social media content on their platforms.
 - ii. All were invited to leverage a few audience-specific products based on each partner’s area of focus: the Community Supporter Toolkit (General Population or Indigenous version), the Teacher’s Toolkit, the Adult Education Toolkit, and the Influencer’s Toolkit.
 - iii. Organizations and associations across the country were contacted by Census Communications outreach staff to seek their help in spreading census messaging and products in support of recruitment and collection.
 - iv. Focal points and federal departments were provided messaging and tools they could share via their own channels.
 - v. Influencers were provided with the tools available in the Influencer Toolkit. This was not a paid activity. We were seeking their support out of goodwill.
 - vi. We used a tiered partnership approach with federal government departments and agencies.
 - vii. Partnerships were leveraged to reach the general public and harder-to-enumerate audiences.

E. Improving our Census website (census.gc.ca)

9. The Census website was the single-entry point for the online census questionnaire and the online recruitment application. It contained an extensive selection of information for the public about census collection and census jobs, and multiple resources and tools for community supporters, educators, and influencers, including the Community Supporter Toolkit, the Teacher’s Toolkit, the Adult Education Toolkit, the Community Snapshot Toolkit, and the Influencer Toolkit. Also available on the website was social media content, comprehensive frequently asked questions, general information about the census, census jobs, security and privacy and the census questionnaire.
10. The website was fully compliant with accessibility standards and adapted to screen readers. Census questions and the reasons why it was conducted were also available in alternative formats such as sign language videos, braille, and audio.
11. Statistics Canada was dedicated to protecting Canadians from misinformation and disinformation about the 2021 Census -from false or fraudulent information to scam attempts. To help with this, we developed a page dedicated to informing Canadians of possible misinformation surrounding the census and updated it regularly as the situation developed.

F. Leveraging influencers

12. To create buzz, Statistics Canada reached out to influencers through personalized emails and via their social media channels and appealed to their goodwill (no monetary compensation was offered). This strategy mirrored our outreach to community supporters. Essentially, we developed a small influencer toolkit, which included short persuasive messaging asking each influencer to post information about the census and its importance to Canadians. Rather than selecting a small group, the communications team reached out to a large list of potential supporters with the understanding many would not be interested. Because there was no monetary compensation, even if only a few influencers participated, there would still be a significant impact. We focused on the influencers who were popular with hard-to-enumerate audiences, where possible, as well as on the general population. Each influencer was vetted using a social monitoring platform (Meltwater) as well as through online research. We made sure their interests aligned with those of the census (science, data), which improved our success rate. We also used personal connections, where possible, to help increase the chance of participation and meaningful interactions. We invited the influencers to mention the census on their social media channels to help spread the word with their networks and followers.
13. An Influencer Toolkit was developed with a minimalist architecture, featuring a clear call to action, keeping the audience in mind. Its use was more significant than we had anticipated, as we saw the imagery widely used by media outlets and in articles, in addition to our outreach to organizations throughout Canada. It demonstrated that Canadians identify with more polished and artistic imagery, just like the one in the feeds of the influencers they follow. Following increased outreach efforts to targeted audiences, communities, and influencers to support the 2021 Census, we were able to measure pick-up and engagement on social media by these groups through social monitoring and validate that our efforts were successful.
14. In total, more than 1,600 stakeholders, key partners, community supporters and 200 influencers engaged with or amplified the 2021 Census content on social media. This included the Federal Government, Indigenous communities and leadership, local governments, academia and the education sector, non-governmental organizations, businesses, astronauts, musicians, national sports organizations, the Prime Minister, and Olympians. We identified who amplified our content and used these lists to leverage their continued engagement during the census dissemination phase. If they engaged once, they would be more likely to do so again in the future.

G. Trying out new ideas

15. To create buzz and excitement about the census, we tried various innovative tactics that were offered when interacting with stakeholders and supporters. Most of these tactics were hosted on the census website and used as promotional tactics on social media and in email campaigns.
 - i. The **Census Playlists** featured 11 different facets of Canadian culture and were made available on Spotify and YouTube. The idea was to encourage Canadians to listen to the playlists while they were completing their census questionnaires. These music lists received a lot of attention across Canada - on social media, from news outlets, radio stations and everyday Canadians. They even received international

support from other countries conducting their censuses, for example Germany. This tactic really spoke to Canadians. The execution was done well by one of our students who was very selective in the song choices that were added, and created playlists that were engaging and compelling.

- ii. **The Census Contest** (My Census Story) engaged high school and post-secondary students and allowed them to share if they had used census data in their lives or school and asked them what they would say to convince Canadians to participate in the census.
- iii. The **Census As a Time Capsule video** and blog posts explored census history and engaged those interested in using census data to explore their genealogy.
- iv. A series of engaging **explainer videos** answering Canadians' questions about the census were developed.
- v. The **Census Game** challenged Canadians to test how well they knew census data.
- vi. The **Google Feature**: we were not successful in having a google doodle, but we were able to compromise with being featured on the front page with a clear call to action and a link to the census website.

H. Optimizing social media

1. Using appealing visual content

16. Social media played a crucial role in supporting the promotion of the 2021 Census and helping the agency to exceed its 80 per cent online completion rate goal. In fact, the promotion of the 2021 Census was the initiative that generated the most engagement with Canadians in the history of Statistics Canada's digital communications. Statistics Canada is present on 6 different platforms: X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Reddit. All social media tactics combined, 10 per cent of Census website visits during collection were generated by social media. Facebook was our top social media platform generating traffic to the census website (94 per cent collection) / (71 per cent recruitment), and Twitter was our top social media platform generating the most mentions of the 2021 Census (74 per cent collection) / (66 per cent recruitment). Over 12.5 million engagements, such as likes, shares, comments, and link clicks, took place from April 2021 to February 2022 on our census-related social media publications.
17. To generate a spike in reach and engagement during the collection period, we decided to step outside of the usual "government" repertoire and tone and decided to use fun and engaging tactics that we had not had a chance to try before. This helped us expand our organic reach through existing and new audiences. It got Canadians to engage in the census conversation and, ultimately, drove them to complete their 2021 Census questionnaire. As the first step, we started creating memes (a humorous image, video, piece of text, etc., with a potential to go viral), used more GIFs (video snippets of a movie, show, etc. that usually loop for a few seconds), made references to pop culture events, and hosted question and answer sessions on social media to answer the questions that Canadians may have had about completing their questionnaire.
18. Pop culture references were used to help messaging stand out and be memorable during the 2021 Census. The creativity and strong correlation between the pop culture references and the census led high popularity of many posts. One of the challenges encountered was to

make sure our references were equally relevant in English and in French, when the social media environment is often predominately in English. Our posts linking to pop culture references performed the best on our Facebook and Instagram pages. Social media posts with custom memes generated higher impressions and engagement across all platforms while GIFs performed the best on Twitter and LinkedIn. The use of memes helped to quickly capture the attention of Canadians by delivering the message in a few words on an image. Using GIFs allowed us to express an emotional response and thus connect and communicate with Canadians. The use of visuals of animals in our posts/memes also proved to help drive engagement.

2. Leveraging platform functionalities

19. We also started leveraging a lot more platform functionalities during our 2021 Census campaign, given that we had to find different ways to talk about the same subject again and again. Using some of these diverse tactics kept the content “fresh” and varied. Adding fun and interactive elements increases opportunities for users to engage and share our content resulting in a wider reach of more Canadians.
 - i. **Stories:** The use of different features offered within a platform, such as through a “story” type post (such as polls, a Q&A box, quizzes, a countdown clock, clickable hashtags, fun stickers, GIFs and more) were leveraged throughout the various phases of the 2021 Census collection and promotion to increase levels of engagement. Stories are now only available on Facebook and Instagram, but the functionality was also available on LinkedIn and Twitter during 2021 Census collection. On a platform like Instagram, stories were also an ideal place to drive users to click on links to our website (as clickable links aren’t available in newsfeed posts on Instagram). Stories typically last 10 seconds on the screen and remain accessible for 24 hours only. We created some highlight buttons on our Instagram home page so stories could remain accessible for more than 24 hours.
 - ii. **Story stickers:** We created four custom stickers for the 2021 Census (still images and animated GIFs) which were used in Instagram and Facebook stories. They were developed by our in-house graphic designers.
 - iii. **Frame and Custom hashtag:** The team also created custom “I completed my census” frames for Facebook profile pictures and we worked with Twitter to have a branded census Canadian leaf emoji added at the end of our campaign hashtag (this was a paid element).
 - iv. **Polls:** They worked especially well on LinkedIn, as well as drove great engagement on Twitter and Instagram stories.
 - v. **Q&A:** A census Question and Answer (Q&A) session was held through all the agency’s official social media accounts on the Census Day (May 11, 2021) to allow Canadians to ask any question they may have had related to census. A total of 580 user questions were answered in a single day, mostly on Facebook, Reddit, and Twitter. From May to August 2021, approximately 21,000 comments were received and reviewed under our census related publications and over 5,000 user questions were answered on social media during census collection (May-Aug. 2021).

3. Collaborating with major social media players

20. Statistics Canada's social media team met with the representatives of all major social media platforms: Twitter, META (Facebook/Instagram), LinkedIn, Reddit, Google/YouTube, TikTok to discuss potential tactics for organic collaboration. It also helped get their buy-in by explaining how vital the information collected through the census would be for Canadians from all walks of life. Our contacts provided tips and tricks on newly available features and how to leverage them for the maximum impact. They also offered organic tactics (e.g., Facebook notifications / TikTok Discover banner) and confirmed their support and appropriate governance to help combat misinformation campaigns that may have arisen on their platforms.
21. As an example of collaboration that resulted from these meetings, the social media team worked with Facebook to create a newsfeed and search prompt notification for the census. The newsfeed notification was presented to all Canadian Facebook users (May 9-11), prompting them to complete their census. The search notification was autogenerated once users searched census related key words in the platform's search bar (May 9 to August 31). Both notifications were a huge success, generating over 1.1 million clicks to our census website from the newsfeed prompt and over 14 thousand clicks from the search prompt. Twitter also featured a "prompt" on its platform when users searched for "census".

4. Monitoring the social environment

22. In anticipation of 2021 Census collection, Statistics Canada put together a Social Trends Monitoring and Reporting team to help support the social media team in managing the increase in online enquiries expected, as well as to help inform our communications and field operations in real time during collection. The team used robust social monitoring and reporting tools (such as Meltwater), in addition to the agency's existing tools (Hootsuite, Agility, Cision) to gather insights and sentiment on what Canadians were saying about the census on social media and in traditional media (news, TV, radio), answer user questions online, and support crisis communications management by identifying potential online issues as they develop, in near real-time.
23. This helped better inform operations, quickly adjust, and tailor our digital communication strategies in real-time, as well as detect any technical or field issues, and correct misinformation campaigns for a better census user experience for all Canadians. The monitoring function also enabled us to quickly measure the success of our engagement tactics, such as the increased pick-up in social media amplifications or the number of mentions of our agency after a wave of outreach emails to key stakeholders were sent out. Overall, this approach improved the effectiveness of our marketing, outreach, and engagement strategies by enabling the creation of more targeted products and services and near real-time adjustments to our communication strategies.

I. Connecting through advertising

24. As mentioned previously, we were in full planning mode when the pandemic hit, so we had to regroup and determine how to connect with Canadians in a meaningful way during uncertain times. To achieve this, we made sure that our advertising strategy met these four criteria: Timing, Targeting, Motivating and Being Agile.

25. **Timing:** We aligned with the wave methodology of field operations (the phased approach of contacting Canadians – invitation letter, reminder letters, census employee follow-up) to help support field activities. One of the key unifying factors was being consistent with the messaging to Canadians across all channels. We used a phased approach to engage, inform, and remind with slight modifications to messaging and visuals for each phase, while maintaining a consistent and cohesive approach. In doing so, helping validate the legitimacy of the census letters arriving in the mail, reminding Canadians to check their mail, and helping mitigate scepticism towards census staff during follow-up procedures. Advertising timelines and phases were also adapted based on the target audience to facilitate a strategic and impactful approach.
26. **Targeting:** We created custom visuals and messaging for our target audiences (general population, hard-to-count audiences, Indigenous and northern communities), using insights from detailed segmentation to determine their characteristics (media and attitudinal/lifestyle habits). To help effectively reach ethnic communities, a total of 9 languages (Arabic, Chinese (Simplified), Chinese (Traditional), Italian, Korean, Persian, Punjabi, Spanish, and Urdu) were selected based on language data and market availabilities. We also had ads in two dialects of Inuktitut to help effectively reach the Inuit population. As a complement to the general population advertising campaign, targeted advertising was developed for three harder-to-enumerate population groups, as detailed in Section C – Targeting Audiences.
27. **Motivating:** We focused on promoting the benefits to the individual and their community when they participate in the census. Using a tagline that spoke directly to Canadians at an individual level, giving them a sense of ownership and impactful participation – Your census. Your community. Your future. The focus was on upbeat, bright, and positive visuals that were inclusive and represented the diversity of the Canadian population and landscape. Ensuring the deployment of a campaign that was clear, concise, and relatable with tangible examples of the benefits of the census. Our goal was to surround Canadians with multi-touch points to drive a sense of urgency for completing the census in a timely manner.
- i. **The feeling:** Instill a strong sense of duty among Canadians across the country. The campaign delivered a strong and powerful message to Canadians via uplifting visuals, sounds, and messaging to paint an accurate picture of how important the census is to the future development of communities across Canada.
 - ii. **The look:** Vibrant, modern, and inclusive to ensure Canada’s diversity is proudly and accurately represented. The modern animation coupled with vibrant colour palettes and cohesive branding instilled a sense of urgency and action to complete the census.
 - iii. **The message:** Unique messaging for target audiences ensured Canadians related to what they saw and heard and understood the need to complete the census immediately and online.

The creative messaging:

- a. Your input makes a difference – help plan for the future. By filling out your census, you’ll help shape your community.
- b. Census data will help plan for the development of programs and services that support employment, schools, public transit, hospitals, and more.
- c. To complete the census is to be Canadian and to contribute to something greater than oneself.

- d. The census is coming.
 - e. Completing the census online is quick, easy, and secure.
 - f. Confidentiality is protected.
 - g. Completing the census benefits you and your community.
 - h. Participation is important and mandatory.
 - i. **Tagline:** Your census. Your community. Your future
2. **The media mix:** Leverage high reach on and offline channels to increase awareness and ensure a surge in participation through multiple touchpoints, with digital focus. The messaging and media mix were tailored and optimized for each target audience.
28. **Begin agile:** We adjusted tactics to reach a population that was less mobile and more difficult to reach than ever before. The final media mix included a strategic use of both traditional (TV, Radio, Out-of-home, and Print) and digital media (including social media). To accommodate the increase in digital consumption during the pandemic, many digital tactics were leveraged and expanded. Search Engine Marketing became especially important and proved to be very efficient and cost-effective, driving nearly 80 per cent of the digital ad traffic to the census website and 2M clicks on the online questionnaire. Due to the pandemic, there were a variety of traditional tactics that had to be adjusted to the new reality. One prime example was the use of Out-of-home (OOH). We shifted to more digital OOH with a focus on high traffic areas and essential services to ensure we could reach Canadians in the limited time they were outside their home. We also adjusted the timing of OOH digital ads to only run during curfew hours in some provinces (Quebec, for example). Furthermore, we mobilized our static OOH ads bringing them to the people buy using posters on the outside of busses to reach Canadians who were less mobile. During the last phase of the campaign, we also used an agile layer where ads (digital OOH, web banners, online audio, and social media) were delivered to specific regions of the country with lower response rates and hard to enumerate audiences. This was based on near real-time response rate data observed through a Statistics Canada owned collection mapping tool.

J. Overall results

29. Census operations and communications efforts and tactics brought 15M unique visitors to our website, resulting in a response rate of 98.1 per cent and a national record online completion rate of 84.63 per cent. The advertising campaign drew 514M impressions and 70M video views, exceeding benchmarks. Print ads circulation was over 10.8M and the static and digital out-of-home campaign generated over 494 million impressions. Reach of all paid, earned, and owned media activities set new benchmarks for the Agency. In total 34 federal departments supported census and generated 5.5M visits to the census website. Our various email campaigns reached close to 85,000 contacts. The 2021 Census communications campaign was a success.

K. Census Dissemination

30. Based on the success of our communications campaign for census collection, we decided to use a similar approach during the dissemination phase. We used a similar tagline “Your

census, your stories: Canada's portrait" and focused on 4 main objectives: Humanizing the data through storytelling and visuals; communicating data to Canadians in meaningful ways; fostering partnerships with key stakeholders and influencers engaged during census collection, and demonstrating the value of quality data, including disaggregated data and how it impacts all of us.

31. We used an audience-based approach for each census release to meet user needs with stories and data that resonate. We engaged with seven target audiences: federal government, Indigenous community and leadership, local and provincial governments, education sector, non-governmental organizations, businesses, and the public. Various tactics were used for each target audience, based on their needs and most effective ways to reach them. This included direct outreach, emails, group engagement, events, conferences, webinars, social media campaigns, media and influencers engagement, collaborations and partnerships, marketing articles, and education resources.
32. We also created various communications products and visuals to present the information in different formats, such as videos, infographics, custom images, and sign language videos. A series of events, called Data Story, were organized with the Chief Statistician and selected panelists across Canada to present the census results with a regional lens. Press conferences with media availability, technical briefings and stakeholder briefings were also organized for each release.
33. Census playlists were updated to promote specific releases (e.g., age, language) and the team also updated the Influencer and Community supporter toolkits, the Education toolkits, the Census game, and created a Business Hub with useful census data for small and medium size businesses.
34. Finally, we implemented a census partnership strategy and reached out to 50,000 contacts through email campaigns and worked with 34 federal departments and agencies to promote census data. Our organic social media campaign reached 12.4 million social media impressions and 311 thousand social media engagements. For the first time, we implemented an advertising campaign for Census Dissemination and our paid advertising on social media reached 91 million impressions and 193 thousand advertisement clicks. We also developed nine lifestyle articles and one radio segment with a marketing firm, which got picked up by 331 publications in Canada with a total reach of 22 million.

L. Planning for 2026

35. Communications planning for the 2026 Census started immediately after the 2021 Census with a detailed review and analysis of metrics, results and lessons learned. The Communications team, in collaboration with their colleagues from Methodology, also conducted behaviour tests to assess the census collection wave methodology and products used (letters, advertising messaging and visuals) to adapt and create even more effective products for 2026.
36. Following the extremely high volume of correspondence received in 2021 (70,000 compared to 15,000 in 2016) and one million unanswered calls due to the lack of resources and unprecedented volumes, the Census Program decided to allocate funds towards the development of a chatbot. The chatbot is designed to automatically answer frequently asked questions and reduce the burden on the Respondent Relations team and the Census Help Line by reducing the response times. The tool was developed internally in collaboration with Statistics Canada data scientists and information technology experts.

37. A census test was conducted from May to June 2024 to evaluate new and modified census questions, collection procedures, and tools in preparation for the 2026 Census. Many communications products were developed to support the test, including a web module to host the online census questionnaire and the online recruitment application, general information about the census test and frequently asked questions. A low-key social media and outreach campaign was developed to inform Canadians about the test. Since the test was conducted with selected households only and the main goal was to assess the wave material and field operations, marketing and promotional communications were scaled down.
38. In parallel, the Census Communications team started working with the Federal Government's advertising agency to conduct a thorough analysis of the Canadian media landscape and start planning the 2026 Census advertising campaign. The segmentation analysis has also started in collaboration with a data analytics and marketing firm - Environics Analytics - based on 2021 Census demographics and response rates, along with psychographic and media landscape data. Results from this analysis and the 2024 Census Test will enable us to target audiences during the 2026 Census and develop meaningful and efficient strategies.
39. Successful tactics from 2021 will be reused, especially those that performed well on social media or during the advertising campaign and brought the most traffic to the website. Brainstorming sessions are taking place between Statistics Canada's Census Communications division and their colleagues from different communications teams to discuss new and innovative tactics for the next census, based on current environment and new regulations. Since 2021, the federal government has put in place many measures and directives which, for example, no longer allow us to use Tik Tok or run paid advertising on Facebook and Instagram, which were among the most successful platforms. We can say with certainty that despite the additional challenges we will face between now and 2026, our strategy will be innovative, agile and certainly even more focused on community support and organic and digital tactics.

II. Conclusion

40. When major events occur and completely disrupt the public and media environment in which we operate, the key to a successful communications campaign lies in robust, innovative, and agile tactics based on quality data. Thinking outside of the box and leveraging partnerships, influencers and community supporters contributes to spreading the message far and wide, at low cost, reaching even the harder-to-enumerate population groups. We cannot stress enough how important it is to plan your communications strategy carefully, using all the information at your disposal, whether it is data and results from the previous census, a detailed analysis of the media environment, or a segmentation exercise that will give you a clear picture of the habits and lifestyle of your key audiences. Planning as much as possible while being agile enables you to adapt and react to any situation.
