Geography

The Standard Geographical Classification (2006 SGC) is Statistics Canada's official classification for the geographical areas in Canada. It was developed to facilitate the analysis of statistical data using a uniform geographical area definition. It produces a range of geographical areas that are useful for analysis, convenient for data collection and compilation on this basis. It is intended primarily for the classification of statistical units such as locations.

Two criteria were used in the selection of the geographical areas for the Standard Geographical Classification:

(1)   Easily recognized by the respondents who are asked to report geographical detail because they routinely conduct business with administrative units such as a municipality, regional municipality or province; and

(2)   Useful geographical areas for the purpose of statistics.

The Standard Geographical Classification identifies three types of geographical areas:

(1)   Provinces and territories (13 in total)

(2)   Census divisions (288 in total)

(3)   Census subdivisions (5,418 in total)

Starting with the December 2008 edition of Canadian Business Patterns, census subdivisions are no longer used.

Structure of the Standard Geographical Classification

Each of the three sets of areas cover all of Canada. They are hierarchical: a census subdivision aggregates to a census division, which in turn aggregates to a province or territory.

(1) Province and Territory

Provinces and territories are the major political divisions in Canada. From a statistical point of view they are a basic unit for which data are tabulated and cross-classified. The ten provinces combined with the three territories cover the entire country.

(2) Census Division

This is a general term applying to geographical areas established by provincial law, which are intermediate between the census subdivision and the province. Usually they are created to facilitate regional planning and the provision of services that can be more effectively delivered on a scale larger than a municipality.

Census division boundaries tend to be relatively stable over many years. For this reason the census division has been found useful for analyzing historical data on small geographical areas. There are currently 288 census divisions as per the 2006 Standard Geographical Classification.

A number of different types of census divisions are found in Canada.
These are listed below.

Census division
Communauté urbaine
County
District
District municipality
Metropolitan municipality
Municipalité régionale de comté
Region
Regional district
Regional municipality
Territory
United counties

(3) Census Subdivision

This is a general term applying to municipalities (as determined by provincial legislation) or their equivalent: Indian reserves, Indian settlements and unorganized territories. There are currently 5,418 census subdivisions in Canada as per the 2006 Standard Geographical Classification. You will notice that there is a net reduction of 182 census subdivisions compared to the 2001 Standard Geographical Classification, mainly due to municipal restructuring in many provinces.

It should be noted that each of the parts of a census subdivision that straddles provincial limits is treated as a separate census subdivision.

Each census subdivision has been assigned a type code. Usually "type" indicates municipal status, as given in the provincial acts of incorporation for each municipality. It provides important information about the nature of each census subdivision and helps to distinguish those with similar names.

The description of these types is found by clicking on the icon "Display active dimension". Then, click on "Summary" under "Dimension" to find the complete list of abbreviations and their descriptions.

Below is a depiction of the relationship between the geographical areas.
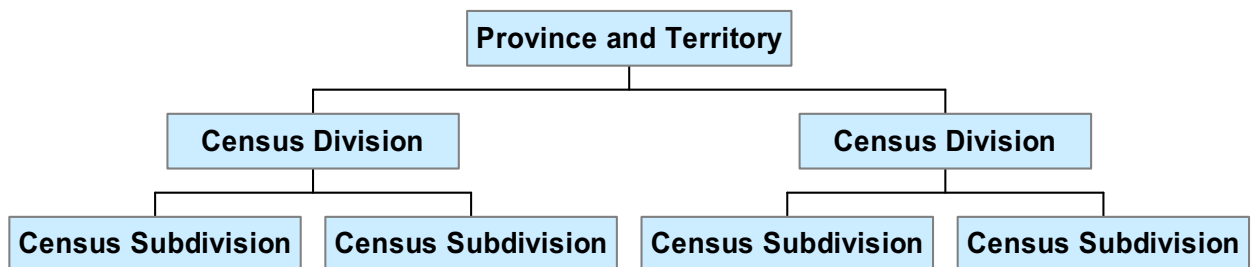
Census Metropolitan Area and Census Agglomeration

Census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations are other standard units created to present statistics for the largest urban centers in Canada.

A census metropolitan area is delineated around an urban area (urban core having populations of at least 50,000, and area have a population of at least 100,000, based on the last census). Across Canada, 33 census metropolitan areas (CMA) have been defined according to the SGC 2006. (This is 6 additional CMAs when compared to the SGC 2001.) Once an area becomes a census metropolitan area, it is retained as a census metropolitan area even if its population subsequently declines.

A census agglomeration is a smaller urban area with a population of at least 10,000. However, if the population of the urban core of a census agglomeration declines below 10,000, the census agglomeration is retired. There are 111 census agglomerations in Canada.

'000' Residue

Please note that codes have been created in the Canadian Business Patterns (CBP) for residues. They consist of the province/territory code followed by zeroes. This residual category reflects statistical locations in Canada where there is insufficient information to precisely locate the locations within a census division/census subdivision as determined by the 2006 Standard Geographical Classification. The information does, however, indicate within which province/territory the location resides.

Starting with the December 2007 CBP version, the number of establishments coded as "residue" (see description below) has increased with the change to the 2006 Standard Geographical Classification (SGC). Since the new geography is based on a more recent version of postal codes, a number of existing postal codes no longer find a matching geography code.

Note that for the census metropolitan areas and census agglomeration geography, the code for the residue has been set to 'blank'. This was implemented to counter the geography change from SGC96 to SGC2001 where the code 000 represents the territories.
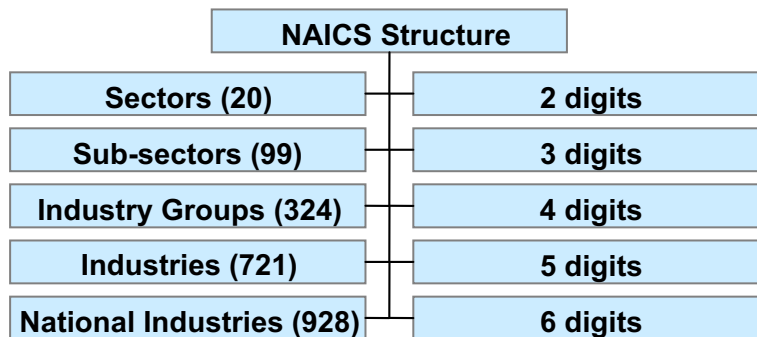
Industry Codes

North American Industry Classification System

The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) has been developed in 1997 and revised to the 2002, then the 2007 standard, by the three North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) trading partners (Mexico, the United States and Canada) to classify businesses throughout the three countries according to their activity (ies). NAICS 1997 appears in our products from December 1998 to December 2001; NAICS 2002 appears from June 2002 to June 2006; and NAICS 2007 appears as of December 2006.

NAICS is not intended to classify an enterprise, which may be very diverse, but rather the various components of an enterprise, at the establishment/location level.

The NAICS structure consists of a hierarchical listing of all industries with descriptions/definitions:

NAICS Structure	
Sectors (20)	2 digits
Sub-sectors (99)	3 digits
Industry Groups (324)	4 digits
Industries (721)	5 digits
National Industries (928)	6 digits

The first four levels of NAICS (2 to 5-digit codes) are designed for the production of comparable economic statistics by the three countries. At the fifth level (i.e. 6-digit code), each country can elaborate the national detail it requires for its own statistical purposes.

Please note that the 5-digit codes are not included in the Canadian Business Patterns (CBP) tables.

For a description of the NAICS 2002 and NAICS 2007 codes, please click on the "NAICS" button of the CBP – Canadian Business Pattern.