

Study: Early motherhood among off-reserve First Nations, Métis and Inuit women, 2012

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Friday, December 1, 2017

Children in First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities are often at the centre of extended families and interconnected community circles. Aboriginal families and communities play a large role in supporting parents, including young mothers, in raising their children.

Even with these supports, young mothers who are pursuing further education and employment may face challenges, given the responsibilities associated with motherhood.

Today, a new study examines the prevalence of early motherhood among off-reserve First Nations, Métis and Inuit women, and whether education and employment outcomes for women who became mothers early were different than for those who became mothers later.

In the study, titled "[Early motherhood among off-reserve First Nations, Métis and Inuit women](#)," early mothers are defined as women aged 20 to 44 who reported that they had become mothers before the age of 20.

Among women in this age group, 45% of Inuit women, 28% of off-reserve First Nations women and 20% of Métis women reported that they had become mothers before the age of 20.

The study finds that Inuit, off-reserve First Nations and Métis women who were early mothers were less likely to have a high school diploma than those who became mothers later.

Among Métis women, 58% of early mothers had completed high school, compared with 84% of those who became mothers later in life. The difference between early mothers and other mothers was also significant among Inuit (40% vs. 59%) and First Nations (62% vs. 81%) mothers.

Early mothers who had at least a high school diploma, however, were as likely to be employed as those who became mothers later. This finding was true for all the Aboriginal groups studied.

Note to readers

The data used for the Aboriginal population are from the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, which is conducted every five years. Its target population consists of First Nations people living off reserve, Métis and Inuit aged six years and older. The cycle used in the current study pertained to education, employment and health.

The relationship between early motherhood and high school completion may not be causal. Other background factors might also play a role in the socioeconomic outcomes of young Aboriginal mothers. For this reason, it is important to interpret the results of this study as associations, not as causal relationships.



Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers [3250](#) and [4501](#).

The article "[Early motherhood among off-reserve First Nations, Métis and Inuit women](#)" is now available in *Insights on Canadian Society* ([75-006-X](#)).

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