

Gender Results Framework: Data table on the representation of men and women in First Nations band councils and Chiefs in First Nations communities in Canada, 2019

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Statistics Canada's Centre for Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Statistics is releasing a new data table today on the proportion of women and men in leadership roles in First Nations communities. Women in leadership positions, including political representation as elected officials across different levels of government, is a topic of much interest. This information on governance in First Nations communities will be used to create two indicators within the Gender Results Framework, a whole-of-government tool designed to track progress in advancing gender equality in Canada.

The majority of First Nations are represented by a band council. Band councils are composed of councillors and are chaired by a chief (elected or hereditary). They are responsible for interacting with the federal, provincial and territorial governments as well as for making decisions on behalf of the First Nation and the members they represent. Many First Nations report their election results to the Band Governance Management System (BGMS).

Using data from the BGMS, the Centre for Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Statistics has produced a table to highlight the distribution of First Nations band councils and chiefs, on December 31 of each year, by sex. These statistics, which cover the period from 1992 to 2019 at the Canada level, can also be used to track changes over time.

Close to one in five chiefs in First Nations communities is a woman

In 2019, 19% of chiefs in First Nations communities were women. By comparison, according to the 2016 Census of Population, women represented 50% of First Nations people living on reserve in Canada. The numbers presented in the table also show that the proportion of women as chiefs has generally increased over time. In 1992, 12% of chiefs in First Nations communities were women. While the proportion had increased to 20% by 2008, it declined slightly over the following several years and has remained relatively stable for more than a decade.

Women make up more than a quarter of First Nations councillors

In terms of the proportion of seats held by women in First Nations band councils, the results show that representation of women is higher for these leadership roles than for chiefs. According to the data, more than one quarter (27%) of First Nations councillors were women in 2019. Again, the results show an increase over time. In 1992, women represented 21% of First Nations councillors. This proportion had increased to 31% by 2008 but has decreased slightly over the past decade, never reaching the one-third mark.

This new data table will soon be housed on the [Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Statistics Hub](#).

Note to readers

Band Governance Management System (BGMS) data were collected by Indigenous Services Canada. The BGMS collects administrative data on officials elected from elections conducted under section 74 of the Indian Act (Indian Band Election Regulations), the First Nations Election Act, Custom Code election processes, as well as self-government and treaty systems. The data were obtained directly from Indigenous Services Canada under section 13 of the Statistics Act.

Some First Nations are self-governing. They make their own laws and policies and have decision-making power on a broad range of matters. Under self-government, First Nations move out from under the Indian Act. It should also be noted that, prior to the implementation of the Indian Act, First Nations traditionally had their own governance systems, in which women often held the majority of positions of power.



The target population is all members of First Nations band councils. The BGMS contains information for over 95% of First Nations bands in each year from 1992 and onward.

Although gender is the more relevant concept, the BGMS collects data on sex and not gender. Data from the BGMS show that the number of records where sex is unreported is increasing over time. The Centre for Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Statistics conducted an evaluation of the data and an indicator of missing records is included in the published table. The results of the data evaluation showed that there does not appear to be any systematic reporting bias that would affect the sex distribution.

Data from the BGMS can be used for the calculation of Indicators 3.4.2c and 3.4.3c of the Gender Results Framework. These indicators are under the "Leadership and Democratic Participation" pillar. Indicator 3.4.2c measures the proportion of seats held by women in First Nations Band Councils. Indicator 3.4.3c measures the proportion of First Nations Chiefs who are women.

Available tables: table [41-10-0048-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5351](#).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).