

National Indigenous Peoples Day

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Today marks [National Indigenous Peoples Day](#), a unique opportunity to celebrate the heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding contributions of First Nations, Métis and Inuit in Canada. The month of June is also [National Indigenous History Month](#), dedicated this year to the missing children, the families left behind and the survivors of residential schools.

To mark the occasion, we are providing a brief profile of First Nations, Métis and Inuit, as well as a look at the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic on Indigenous people. More information can be found on Statistics Canada's [Indigenous Statistics Portal](#), a central location where users can find links to data and information products related to First Nations people, Métis and Inuit, including community profiles.

This spring, households across Canada received a Census form, short or long. Like every census since 2006, Indigenous communities were invited to access their questionnaire in 13 Indigenous languages.

The statistical stories told through the census will support policy development by Indigenous governments, communities and organizations, and will help better understand the experiences of Indigenous people living in Canada today. Data from the 2021 Census will be released throughout 2022 (see the [release calendar](#)).

Statistics Canada counted 1,673,785 Indigenous people during the [2016 Census](#), including 977,230 First Nations people, 587,545 Métis and 65,025 Inuit. Indigenous people accounted for 4.9% of the total population in 2016, up from 3.8% in 2006 and 2.8% in 1996.

The Indigenous population is young. The average age of the Indigenous population was 32.1 years in 2016—almost a decade younger than the non-Indigenous population (40.9 years).

Over half of First Nations people live in Western Canada

Over half of First Nations people were living in British Columbia (17.7%), Alberta (14.0%), Manitoba (13.4%) or Saskatchewan (11.7%) at the time of the 2016 Census.

Almost one-quarter (24.2%) lived in Ontario, the largest share among the provinces, while 9.5% lived in Quebec.

Over three in five Métis live in urban areas of at least 30,000 people

Of the three Indigenous groups, Métis were the most likely to live in a city, with 62.6% living in an urban area of at least 30,000 people in 2016, compared with 51.8% for the Indigenous population overall.

There were eight metropolitan areas with a population of more than 10,000 Métis in 2016: Winnipeg, Edmonton, Vancouver, Calgary, Ottawa–Gatineau, Montréal, Toronto and Saskatoon. Combined, these areas accounted for just over one-third (34.0%) of the entire Métis population.

Close to three-quarters of Inuit live in Inuit Nunangat

Inuit Nunangat is the homeland of Inuit in Canada and includes four Inuit regions: Nunatsiavut (Northern coastal Labrador), Nunavik (Northern Quebec), the territory of Nunavut, and the Inuvialuit region (Northwest Territories).

Among Inuit in Inuit Nunangat, the majority (63.7%) lived in Nunavut in 2016, while one-quarter (24.9%) lived in Nunavik. Another 6.6% lived in the Inuvialuit region, while 4.8% lived in Nunatsiavut.



Over 70 Indigenous languages spoken in Canada

Indigenous languages in Canada have been evolving over generations and reflect rich and diverse histories, landscapes, cultures and knowledge. More than 70 Indigenous languages were reported in the 2016 Census and 36 had at least 500 speakers. The most widely spoken were Cree, Inuktitut and Ojibway. The number of Indigenous people who could speak an Indigenous language grew by 3.1% from 2006 to 2016.

A growing number of people are [learning an Indigenous language as a second language](#). As a result, there were 263,840 people who reported that they could speak an Indigenous language well enough to conduct a conversation in 2016, up 8% from 1996.

In 2016, [over three-quarters of the residents of Nunavut](#) (76.8%) reported being able to conduct a conversation in Inuktitut.

Indigenous people are keeping cultural traditions alive

[Harvesting activities](#) such as hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering wild plants have been part of First Nations, Métis and Inuit way of life for millennia. These practices have endured despite the impact of colonization, and are important for fostering cultural identity, meeting nutritional needs, health as well as the local economy.

Just under two-thirds (65%) of Inuit in Inuit Nunangat participated in hunting, fishing or trapping in 2017, as did approximately one in three of First Nations people (33%) living off reserve and Métis (35%).

The impacts of the pandemic on Indigenous people

The measures put in place to slow the spread of COVID-19 have had a greater impact on Indigenous people, in part because they faced greater barriers related to unemployment, food insecurity and financial vulnerability, than on non-Indigenous people.

Statistics Canada conducted a [series of rapid response crowdsourcing surveys](#) from April to August 2020 to find out how Canadians were faring during the pandemic.

Over one-third (36%) of Indigenous participants reported that the pandemic had a strong or moderate impact on their ability to meet financial obligations or essential needs, compared with one-quarter (25%) of non-Indigenous participants.

Overall, 60% of Indigenous participants reported worsening mental health, and almost half (47%) of Indigenous women were "very" or "extremely" concerned about family stress due to confinement.

Indigenous women harder hit by job losses during the pandemic

Recent data from the Labour Force Survey provide insights on the labour market impacts of the pandemic on Indigenous people, as of May 2021.

While Indigenous men and women were hit equally hard by the initial labour market impact of the pandemic, the [employment rate](#) for Indigenous men has rebounded and by May 2021, it was little changed compared with February 2020 at 58.4% (three-month moving average, not seasonally adjusted). However, it remained lower than the rate among non-Indigenous men (63.4%), consistent with historical trends.

On the other hand, the employment rate for Indigenous women (51.6%) did not rebound in 2020. In May 2021, it was 3.3 percentage points below its pre-pandemic level, despite trending upwards since January 2021. In comparison, the employment rate for non-Indigenous women was 2.3 percentage points lower compared with its pre-pandemic level, at 55.5% (three-month moving average, not seasonally adjusted).

The tragic legacy of residential schools

With the recent confirmation surrounding the remains of 215 Indigenous children at the former residential school in Kamloops, resurfaces the shameful legacy of the Indian Residential School system in Canada, and the hurt and harm this system continues to cause for Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc and other First Nations people, Métis and Inuit.

The Indian Residential School system operated across Canada from 1867 to 1996, peaking in 1930 when 80 schools were in operation. Children were separated from their families and their communities to attend residential school. Incidents of abuse have been cited by many former students. The system has led to a loss of language and culture among Indigenous people, as a key objective of the residential school system was the assimilation of Indigenous children.

According to the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#), there are records of at least 4,100 children dying in residential schools. There were an estimated 80,000 survivors of the Indian residential school system in 2015. Although the residential school system no longer exists, intergenerational trauma remains, affecting many Indigenous people and their communities to this day.

A [National Indian Residential School Crisis Line](#) is available to provide support to former residential school students. Emotional and crisis referral services can be accessed by calling the 24-Hour National Crisis Line at 1-866-925-4419.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers [3250](#), [3701](#), [3901](#) and [5323](#).

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).