

Projections of the Indigenous populations and households in Canada, 2016 to 2041

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New demographic projections suggest that the Indigenous identity population in Canada, which has grown steadily in recent decades, is projected to continue to increase between now and 2041.

The Indigenous population in Canada, which includes First Nations, Métis and Inuit, was estimated at 1,800,000 in 2016, and could reach 2,495,000 in 2041 under the low-growth scenario, 2,848,000 under the medium-growth scenario, and 3,182,000 under the high-growth scenario.

These projections are based on data from the 2016 Census, which were adjusted to account for, among other things, census net undercoverage and the population living on incompletely enumerated Indian reserves and Indian settlements. Because of these adjustments, the figures presented here for 2016 may differ from those obtained directly from the 2016 Census.

From 2016 to 2041, the Indigenous population is projected to grow faster than the non-Indigenous population, despite the fact that the non-Indigenous population would increase resulting from sustained international migration. As a result, the share of the Indigenous population in the overall Canadian population could range from 5.4% to 6.8% in 2041, compared with 5.0% in 2016.

Two main factors are behind the higher growth of the Indigenous population in the coming years: higher fertility and changes in the self-reporting of Indigenous identity over a person's lifetime, with some individuals newly self-identifying as Indigenous in the census, a trend that has continued over time.

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the projections of Indigenous populations

When these projections were being developed, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the growth of Indigenous populations was either very uncertain, hardly noticeable, or fairly insignificant, depending on the component. For these reasons, these projections do not include special adjustments to reflect the influence of the pandemic.

A population that is projected to remain younger

Throughout the projection period, the Indigenous population is projected to remain younger than the non-Indigenous population, but to age more quickly.

The median age of the Indigenous population, which was 29.1 years in 2016, is projected to range from 38.2 to 38.4 years in 2041. In comparison, that of the non-Indigenous population is projected to increase from 41.4 to 44.7 years over the same period.

The aging of the Indigenous population would be attributed to an increase in life expectancy and to projected levels of fertility that are projected to be lower than the average observed in recent decades. Note that changes in the self-reporting of Indigenous identity over a person's lifetime, which partly drive the growth of the Indigenous population, would have little impact on the aging of this population.

One in five people could be Indigenous in Manitoba in 2041

Similar to the projected population growth at the Canadian level, the Indigenous population is projected to increase in all provinces and territories from 2016 to 2041.



Three provinces could have more than 400,000 Indigenous people in 2041: Ontario (ranging from 574,000 to 762,000), Alberta (ranging from 429,000 to 526,000), and British Columbia (ranging from 406,000 to 507,000). In 2016, only Ontario (406,000) exceeded this threshold.

As in 2016, Manitoba and Saskatchewan could be the two provinces with the highest proportion of Indigenous people in their population in 2041.

The proportion of Indigenous people in Manitoba is projected to range from 19.3% to 22.5% (18.3% in 2016), while in Saskatchewan, it is projected to range from 16.5% to 19.0% (16.6% in 2016).

Indigenous people are projected to continue to represent a large proportion of the population of the territories in 2041: ranging from 87.3% to 88.5% of the population of Nunavut, from 46.0% to 48.7% of the population of the Northwest Territories, and from 20.4% to 22.4% of the Yukon population. In 2016, the comparable figures were 85.7%, 50.6% and 23.4%, respectively.

The Indigenous population is projected to also increase in all census metropolitan areas from 2016 to 2041. In 2041, Winnipeg (ranging from 132,000 to 159,000), Edmonton (from 127,000 to 155,000), Vancouver (from 91,000 to 120,000), Toronto (from 81,000 to 110,000), Montréal (from 68,000 to 106,000), Calgary (from 79,000 to 102,000) and Ottawa–Gatineau (from 58,000 to 85,000) are projected to have the largest Indigenous populations in Canada, as was the case in 2016.

As a proportion of the total population, it is in Thunder Bay (ranging from 18.1% to 22.3%), Greater Sudbury (from 14.1% to 18.3%), Winnipeg (from 11.9% to 14.2%), Saskatoon (from 9.4% to 11.5%) and Brantford (from 9.1% to 11.4%) that proportions of Indigenous people are projected to be the highest in 2041, a picture similar to that seen in 2016.

The First Nations population could reach 1.5 to 1.8 million by 2041

In 2016, the First Nations population was 1,072,000. Based on all selected scenarios, this population is projected to increase continuously by 2041. The First Nations population could range from 1,459,000 to 1,786,000 people in 2041, representing from 56.1% to 58.5% of the total Indigenous population in Canada.

From 2016 to 2041, the increase in the First Nations population is projected to be proportionately greater than that of the non-Indigenous population. This is reflected in the projected average annual growth rate ranging from 1.2% to 2.1% for the First Nations population, compared with about 1.0% for the non-Indigenous population. This faster increase in the First Nations population is projected to be mainly due to two factors: relatively high fertility and, to a lesser extent, changes in the self-reporting of Indigenous identity over a person's lifetime, the net number of which would be favourable for the growth of the First Nations population.

As with the Indigenous population as a whole, the First Nations population is projected to age throughout the projected period. In 2016, the median age of this population was 27.2 years, while in 2041, it could range from 36.0 to 36.5 years. This aging would mostly be due to an increase in life expectancy and continued below-replacement fertility levels.

Based on all selected scenarios, the First Nations population is projected to increase in all provinces and territories by 2041.

In 2016, Ontario (262,000) had the largest number of First Nations people, followed by British Columbia (187,000) and Alberta (152,000). In 2041, Ontario (ranging from 358,000 to 449,000), British Columbia (from 249,000 to 301,000), and Alberta (from 224,000 to 272,000) are projected to continue to have the largest First Nations populations.

Population with Registered or Treaty Indian status

In these projections, the population with Registered or Treaty Indian status includes people who reported having Registered or Treaty Indian status in the census.

Based on all selected scenarios, the size of the population with Registered or Treaty Indian status is projected to increase from 2016 to 2041. Therefore, this population, which was estimated at 910,000 people in 2016, is projected to range from 1,120,000 to 1,425,000 in 2041. High fertility and changes to the Indian Act in recent years, which would enable more people to apply for Registered Indian Status during the projection, would be the main drivers of this growth.

From 2016 to 2041, the average annual growth rate for this population is projected to range from 0.8% to 1.8%, compared with about 1.0% for the non-Indigenous population.

In 2041, from 439,000 to 485,000 Registered or Treaty Indians are projected to live on reserve, compared with 386,000 in 2016.

As a proportion, 42.4% of the population with Registered or Treaty Indian status lived on reserve in 2016. This proportion is projected to decline, ranging from 34.0% to 39.2% in 2041. Consequently, the population of Registered or Treaty Indians is projected to increase more quickly off reserve. The main reasons for this result are legislative changes that would enable more people, living mainly off reserve, to apply for Registered Indian status, and negative net migration of reserves.

In 2016, Manitoba and Ontario were the two provinces with the largest number of Registered or Treaty Indians living on reserve, given that each of them had 69,000. However, at the end of the projection in 2041, the populations of Registered or Treaty Indians living on reserve are projected to be largest in Manitoba (ranging from 79,000 to 88,000) and in British Columbia (ranging from 75,000 to 82,000).

The population with Registered or Treaty Indian status is projected to remain younger on reserve than off reserve.

In 2041, the median age is projected to range from 34.1 to 35.7 years (25.6 years in 2016) for the Registered or Treaty Indian population living on reserve, compared with a median age ranging from 39.7 to 40.8 years (29.9 years in 2016) for the population living off reserve.

The Métis population could exceed one million by 2041

The Métis population, which has grown quickly in recent decades, could exceed one million in the coming years.

From 615,000 people in 2016, this population could range from 883,000 to 1,152,000 by 2041, which could represent from 35.4% to 37.0% of the total Indigenous population.

From 2016 to 2041, the Métis population is projected to grow faster than the non-Indigenous population. This faster growth would be largely due to changes in the self-reporting of Indigenous identity over a person's lifetime, which would be largely in favour of the Métis population. The average annual growth rate for the Métis population from 2016 to 2041 is projected to range from 1.5% to 2.5%, compared with about 1.0% for the non-Indigenous population.

Over the next few years, the Métis population is projected to age. In 2041, the median age of this population is projected to range from 42.3 to 42.5 years, compared with 33.0 years in 2016. The increase in life expectancy and a fertility level similar to that of the non-Indigenous population would be the reasons for this projected aging. The growth of the Métis population as a result of changes in self-reported identity is projected to contribute marginally to the aging of this population.

From 2016 to 2041, based on all selected scenarios, the Métis population is projected to grow in all provinces and territories. In 2041, as in 2016, the largest Métis populations are projected to be in Ontario (ranging from 192,000 to 261,000) and Alberta (from 191,000 to 226,000).

However, as in 2016, the proportion of Métis in the total population is projected to be highest in Manitoba (ranging from 7.0% to 8.1%) and Saskatchewan (from 5.1% to 5.9%) in 2041.

In these projections, the Métis population refers to those who self-identified as Métis in the 2016 Census. It is important to note that a new question was added to the 2021 Census to allow Métis to identify themselves further, opening up possibilities for more detailed analyses of this population in the future. In particular, it will be possible to produce estimates and projections by membership in a Métis organization or settlement.

The Inuit population could reach nearly 100,000 by 2041

The Inuit population is projected to increase from 2016 to 2041 and could reach nearly 100,000 by 2041.

Based on various scenarios, this population, which was estimated at 67,000 in 2016, is projected to range from 92,000 to 101,000 in 2041, which would represent from 3.2% to 3.7% of the total Indigenous population in Canada.

From 2016 to 2041, the average annual rate of increase in the Inuit population is projected to range from 1.2% to 1.6%, a higher rate than that expected for the non-Indigenous population (+1.0%). This higher projected growth in the Inuit population is mainly due to its fertility, which is projected to remain well above that of the non-Indigenous population and the replacement level.

The age structure of the Inuit population is particularly young. The median age of the Inuit population in 2016 was 24.6 years, compared with 41.4 for the non-Indigenous population. By 2041, the Inuit population is projected to remain significantly younger than the non-Indigenous population but would still age. In 2041, the median age of the Inuit population is projected to range from 30.0 to 31.8 years (compared with 44.7 years for the non-Indigenous population). The projected increase in the median age of the Inuit population would be largely due to increased life expectancy.

Historically, Inuit have always been the main inhabitants of Canada's Arctic regions and, in that respect, they differ from the rest of the population, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

In 2016, 72.7% of Inuit lived in one of the four Inuit Nunangat regions (Nunavut, Nunavik [northern Quebec], the Inuvialuit region of the Northwest Territories, and Nunatsiavut [northern Labrador]). In 2041, the picture would be similar, since this proportion is projected to range from 74.0% to 74.6% based on all selected scenarios.

From 2016 to 2041, the Inuit population is projected to increase in each of the four regions of Inuit Nunangat, but the average annual growth rate is projected to be much lower in Nunatsiavut (ranging from +0.1% to +0.5%) than in the other three regions of Inuit Nunangat (from +1.4% to +1.7% in Nunavut; from +1.4% to +1.8% in Nunavik; and from +1.5% to +1.9% in the Inuvialuit region). In 2041, Nunavut is projected to remain the region of Inuit Nunangat with the largest Inuit population in Canada (ranging from 44,000 to 48,000).

In these projections, the Inuit population refers to those who self-identified as Inuit in the 2016 Census. It is important to note that a new question was added to the 2021 Census to allow Inuit to identify themselves further, opening up possibilities for more detailed analyses of this population in the future. In particular, it will be possible to produce estimates and projections by enrolment under an Inuit land claims agreement.

Note to readers

This release presents new demographic projections developed by Statistics Canada with financial support from Indigenous Services Canada. These projections were generated using Demosim, Statistics Canada's microsimulation demographic projection model.

These projections are not predictions, but rather an effort to provide a picture of what Indigenous populations may be in the years to come under various growth scenarios. The scenarios developed provide a plausible range of Indigenous population growth based on our knowledge of these populations. The reader is asked to consider this range instead of a single scenario.

For this projection exercise, three scenarios were developed regarding the growth of Indigenous populations: a low-growth, medium-growth and high-growth scenario. These scenarios are designed to address the uncertainty surrounding the various factors of Indigenous population growth, primarily the future evolution of fertility and mortality, changes in the self-reporting of Indigenous identity over a person's lifetime, and registrations on the Indian Register. The low-growth scenario combines the low assumptions for each of these four components, the medium-growth scenario, the medium assumptions, and the high-growth scenario, the high assumptions. To compare Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, the various assumptions involving Indigenous people in each scenario were combined with a series of assumptions corresponding to a medium growth of the non-Indigenous population.

Finally, it should be noted that the results of the projections of Indigenous households are also released for the period from 2016 to 2041.

Available tables: [17-10-0144-01](#) and [17-10-0145-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5131](#).

The report "[Projections of the Indigenous populations and households in Canada, 2016 to 2041: Overview of data sources, methods, assumptions and scenarios](#)" is also available.

Five infographics were developed, one for each of the following population groups: Total Indigenous population ([11-627-m2021066](#)); First Nations people ([11-627-m2021067](#)); Métis ([11-627-m2021068](#)); Inuit ([11-627-m2021069](#)); Registered or Treaty Indians ([11-627-m2021070](#)). Each infographic presents results based on a selection of indicators at the 2041 horizon.

An interactive data visualization tool ([71-607-x2021022](#)) can also be used to explore projection results regarding Indigenous populations in a dynamic manner. The base data for this tool are those from the two Common Output Data Repository tables, both of which present the projected size of the Indigenous populations. The first table (table 17-10-0144-01) is broken down using an Indigenous identity classification that gives precedence to Indigenous groups, while the second table (table 17-10-0145-01) is broken down using an Indigenous identity classification that gives precedence to Registered or Treaty Indian status (see the "Key concepts related to Indigenous populations" section in the report for more details regarding these classifications). In both cases, the projected population figures are broken down by age group, sex, region of residence, provinces and territories, and projection scenario for years 2016 to 2041.

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).