

Study: Indigenous workers receiving Canada Emergency Response Benefit payments in 2020

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in The Daily, Wednesday, August 3, 2022

A new study provides insights on the socioeconomic characteristics of Indigenous workers who received Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) payments between March and September 2020. The CERB program, in effect from March 15 to September 26, 2020, provided federal government income support to eligible Canadian workers who had stopped working or were working reduced hours, involuntarily, because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study uses administrative data from the CERB program, which have been linked to data from the 2016 Census long-form questionnaire.

Among all workers who earned at least \$5,000 in 2019, Indigenous workers (39.2%) were more likely than non-Indigenous workers (33.9%) to have received CERB payments. Around 41.5% of First Nations workers received CERB payments in 2020, while 36.2% of Métis and 40.3% of Inuit workers did the same. Findings from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) showed that while the initial labour market impacts of the pandemic were similar for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, recovery was slower among Indigenous people in the six months following the onset of the pandemic (March to August 2020), particularly among Indigenous women and youth.

Among First Nations people, the proportions of Status and non-Status First Nations workers who received CERB payments in 2020 were similar, although Status First Nations workers living on reserve were more likely to have received CERB payments than those living off reserve.

Similar to their non-Indigenous counterparts, Indigenous workers aged 15 to 24 were the most likely among all age groups to have received CERB payments in the wake of a challenging summer job market in 2020. However, the largest difference between the proportions of Indigenous (38.2%) and non-Indigenous (32.0%) workers who received CERB payments was seen among those aged 25 to 54 years, particularly men.

Regional differences were seen among Indigenous workers receiving CERB payments, with those in Alberta (43.2%) and Saskatchewan (41.8%) the most likely to receive such payments. Among Inuit workers, those living inside Inuit Nunangat (42.1%) were more likely than those living outside (36.2%) to receive CERB payments.

Indigenous workers employed in certain industries were more impacted than others. Like their non-Indigenous counterparts, Indigenous workers employed in arts, entertainment and recreation, as well as in accommodation and food services, were most likely to receive CERB payments in 2020 as workers in these industries faced the greatest declines in actual hours worked.

Compared with other income groups, Indigenous workers in the bottom 10% of the employment income distribution were most likely to receive CERB payments (57.7%). This is consistent with data from the LFS, which showed that low-wage workers in general were among the most severely impacted by the COVID-19 labour market downturn.

Self-employed Indigenous workers, as well as those who worked for a small business (1 to 99 employees), were also more likely to receive CERB payments. Similar findings were seen among non-Indigenous workers. Data from the LFS and the Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, respectively, revealed that both these groups were more affected by pandemic-related economic shutdowns.



Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5356](#).

The study "[Indigenous workers receiving Canada Emergency Response Benefit payments in 2020](#)" is now available as part of the series *StatCan COVID-19: Data to Insights for a Better Canada* ([45280001](#)).

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; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).