

Study: COVID-19 mortality among First Nations people and Métis in Canada, 2020 and 2021

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A new study released today helps fill a knowledge gap in understanding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Indigenous Peoples, using data from the 2016 Canadian Census Health and Environment Cohort linked to the Canadian Vital Statistics - Death database from 2016 to 2021.

The study provides insights into the national rates of COVID-19 mortality among First Nations people and Métis living in private dwellings and the social determinants of COVID-19 mortality among these populations. The study, entitled "[COVID-19 mortality among First Nations people and Métis in private dwellings in Canada: An analysis of social determinants of health and health inequalities](#)," is now available in the publication *StatCan COVID-19: Data to Insights for a Better Canada*.

First Nations people and Métis have higher COVID-19 mortality rates compared with non-Indigenous people

In 2020 and 2021, age-standardized rates of COVID-19 mortality were higher among First Nations people (85.5 deaths per 100,000 population) and Métis (29.4 deaths per 100,000 population) compared with non-Indigenous people (19.1 deaths per 100,000 population). Among First Nations people, rates of COVID-19 mortality were highest among those who lived on reserve (134.8 deaths per 100,000 population) and those with Registered or Treaty Indian status (104.5 deaths per 100,000 population).

The higher prevalence of chronic conditions and comorbidities among First Nations people and Métis is notable in the context of COVID-19 mortality. In fact, more than half of those who died of COVID-19 had three or more comorbidities at death—56.7% among First Nations people and 58.0% among Métis, compared with 46.3% among non-Indigenous people.

Additionally, disparities in rates of COVID-19 death were more than five times higher among First Nations females (74.3 deaths per 100,000 population) and more than double among Métis females (29.4 deaths per 100,000 population) compared with non-Indigenous females (14.0 deaths per 100,000 population).

Crowded housing and lower income are common risk factors for COVID-19-related deaths among First Nations people and Métis

This study examined the association between COVID-19 mortality and select social determinants of health, including age, sex, income, usual place of residence, type of dwelling, and housing suitability. Results indicated that First Nations people and Métis living in crowded housing had almost three times the likelihood of dying from COVID-19 compared with those not in crowded housing, after controlling for other characteristics.

First Nations people and Métis in the lowest income quintile were 1.7 and 3.1 times, respectively, more likely to die from COVID-19 than those in higher income quintiles. First Nations people living on reserve were more than twice as likely to die of COVID-19 compared with First Nations people living off reserve. These results are important, as First Nations people and Métis are more likely to experience social vulnerabilities and risk factors for COVID-19 death compared with non-Indigenous people.

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Note to readers

The authors would like to acknowledge the review of preliminary findings and versions of the study by the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, the Assembly of First Nations and the Métis National Council.

This study uses the 2016 Canadian Census Health and Environmental Cohort, which links the long-form 2016 Census of Population with the Canadian Vital Statistics - Death database from 2016 to 2021.

Deaths relating to First Nations people, Métis and non-Indigenous people were identified through a linkage with data collected via the 2016 Census long-form questionnaire, which asked if the person was a First Nations person, Métis or Inuk. Limited data restricted the examination of COVID-19 mortality among Inuit; therefore they were excluded from this study.

Age-standardized mortality rates, a method for comparing outcomes across different populations accounting for differences in age structure, were standardized to the 2016 Indigenous population, calculated from the 2016 Census.

While there are different ways to measure mortality due to the pandemic, this analysis uses death certificates in which COVID-19 is listed as the underlying cause of death. Statistics Canada and provincial and territorial vital statistics registrars use two International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems 10th Revision (ICD-10) codes to identify COVID-19 reported as a cause of death: U071 for COVID-19 specified as confirmed by a positive test result and U072 for COVID-19 described as "possible," "probable" or "pending a (positive) test result."

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers [3233](#) and [3901](#).

The full article "[COVID-19 mortality among First Nations people and Métis in private dwellings in Canada: An analysis of social determinants of health and health inequalities](#)" is now available as part of the publication *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).