

A snapshot: Status First Nations people in Canada

Booklet prepared in collaboration
between Statistics Canada and the
Assembly of First Nations



April 2021



How to obtain more information

For information about the data in this booklet or the wide range of services and data available from Statistics Canada, visit our website:

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STATISTICS ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

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Introduction

This is a custom report produced by Statistics Canada in collaboration with the Assembly of First Nations. It includes a variety of social and economic statistics regarding Status First Nations people living on and off reserve and includes comparisons with the non-Indigenous population.



The term “Status First Nations” refers to anyone who reported being a “Status Indian” on the census.

When making comparisons between 2006 and 2016, the figures for the on-reserve population are adjusted to account for incompletely enumerated reserves. Only those communities that participated in both census years (2006 and 2016) are included.

Background

In 2016, there were **820,120** Status First Nations people in Canada. Of those, **40% (331,025) lived on reserve.**

The Status First Nations population is **younger** than the non-Indigenous population.

Almost **1 in 3** Status First Nations people living on reserve were younger than 15.



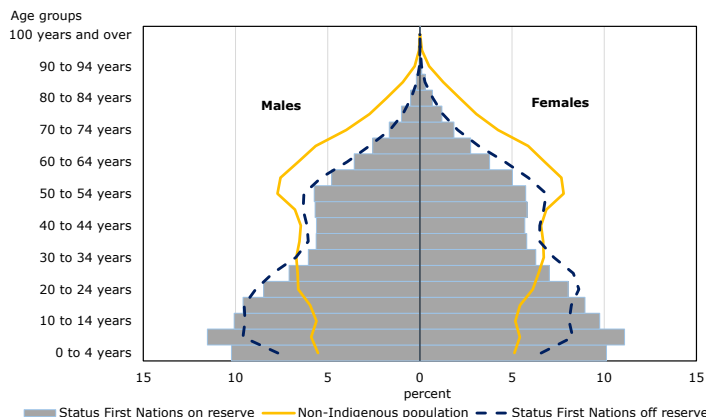
About **1 in 4** Status First Nations people living off reserve were younger than 15.



About **1 in 6** non-Indigenous people were younger than 15.



Population pyramid, Canada, 2016



The First Nations population is **growing** at a rate much faster than that of the non-Indigenous population. The main drivers of this population growth are births, deaths and migration, as well as legislative changes that lead to more people being registered as Status Indians.

Population growth rates, Canada, 2006 to 2016

12.0%

Status First Nations people on reserve

46.5%

Status First Nations people off reserve

9.6%

Non-Indigenous people

The fertility rate (**children per woman**) of the Status First Nations population is **higher** than that of the non-Indigenous population. In 2010/2011, the fertility rate of the Status First Nations population living on reserve was almost two times higher than that of the non-Indigenous population.

Total fertility rate (children per woman), Canada, 2010/2011



3.25

Status First Nations people living on reserve

2.20

Status First Nations people living off reserve

1.63

Non-Indigenous people

Labour force



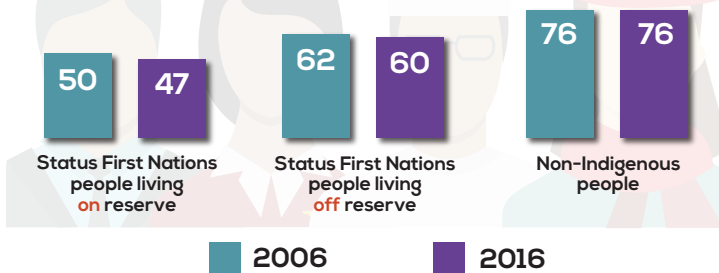
According to the 2016 Census, Status First Nations people aged 25 to 64 living on reserve had a lower **employment rate** (47%) than Status First Nations people living off reserve (60%). Employment rates were lower for both groups in 2016 compared with 2006.

The employment rate for the non-Indigenous population was steady between 2006 and 2016 at 76% in both years.

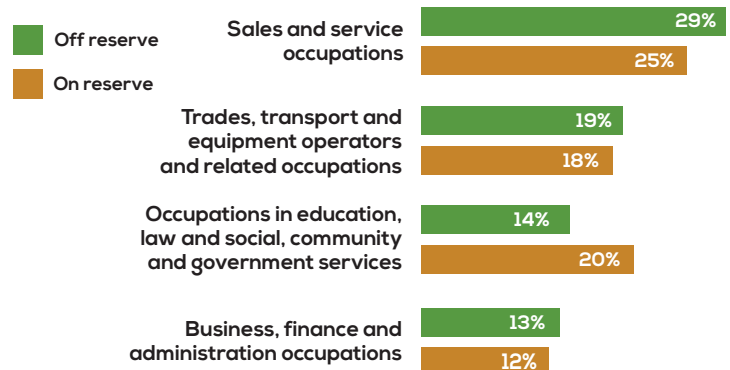
Unemployment rate among individuals aged 25 to 64, Canada, 2006 and 2016



Employment rate among individuals aged 25 to 64, Canada, 2006 and 2016



Percentage of Status First Nations people employed in select occupation categories, Canada, 2016

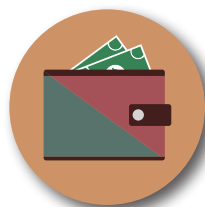


Among those aged 25 to 64, the **unemployment rate** in 2016 was highest for Status First Nations people living on reserve (23%), followed by those living off reserve (14%). In comparison, the unemployment rate for the non-Indigenous population was 6%.

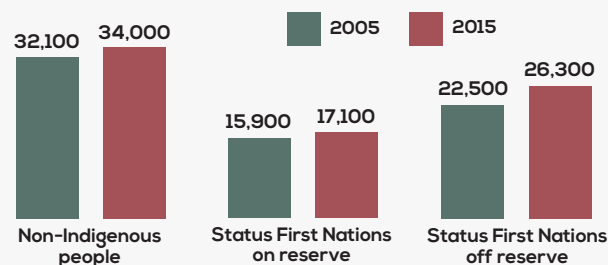


Income

In 2015, the non-Indigenous population had a **median employment income** that was nearly double that of Status First Nations living on reserve. From 2005 to 2015, median employment income increased for non-Indigenous people, as well as for Status First Nations people, both on and off reserve. Of these groups, Status First Nations people living off reserve recorded the largest increase.

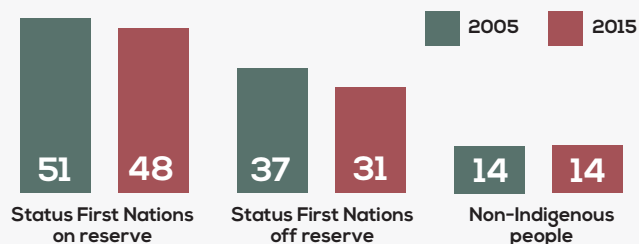


Median employment income (2015 constant dollars), Canada, 2005 and 2015



Among Status First Nations people living on reserve, 48% lived in a low-income situation, compared with 31% of those living off reserve and 14% of the non-Indigenous population. Low-income prevalence has **decreased** since 2005 both on and off reserve, but has remained the same among non-Indigenous people.

Percentage of the population in a low-income situation, Canada, 2005 and 2015

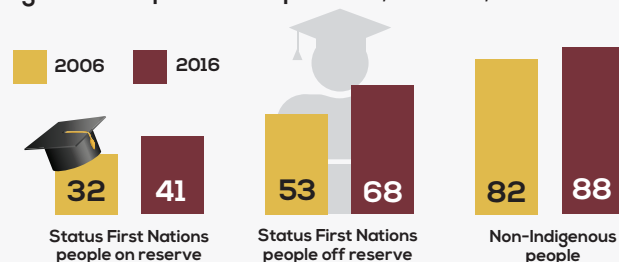


Education

The rate of high school completion among young adults has **increased** over time, but gaps remain. Between 2006 and 2016, the percentage of youth aged 18 to 24 with a high school diploma **increased** for Status First Nations people living on and off reserve. Status First Nations people living off reserve experienced the **greatest gains**, with the percentage of youth with a high school diploma **increasing** from 53% to 68%. On reserve, the percentage of youth with a high school diploma **increased** from 32% to 41%. The percentage of non-Indigenous youth with a high school diploma was **much higher** (82% in 2006 and 88% in 2016).

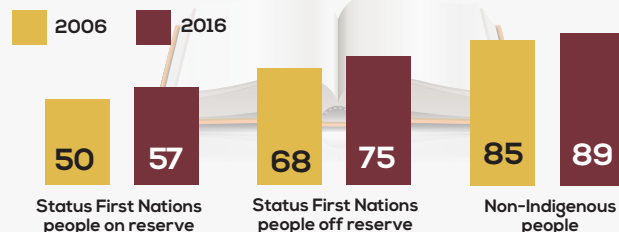


Percentage of individuals aged 18 to 24 with a high school diploma or equivalent, Canada, 2006 and 2016



From 2006 to 2016, there were also improvements to the educational profile of the **working-age** population. Over this period, the percentage of individuals with a high school diploma or higher **increased**. However, gaps with the non-Indigenous population remained.

Percentage of individuals aged 25 to 64 with a high school diploma or higher, Canada, 2006 and 2016



Indigenous languages

Mother tongue

There were **162,865** Status First Nations people who reported having an **Indigenous mother tongue** in 2016. Of those, 75% lived on reserve.

A mother tongue refers to the language a person first learned in childhood and still understands.

There were **205,590** Status First Nations people who reported **knowledge of an Indigenous language** in 2016. This represents 25% of all Status First Nations people. Having knowledge of a language means speaking the language well enough to hold a conversation.

From 2006 to 2016, the percentage of the population with an Indigenous mother tongue, as well as the percentage of the population with knowledge of an Indigenous language, **decreased** among younger people and **increased** among older people.

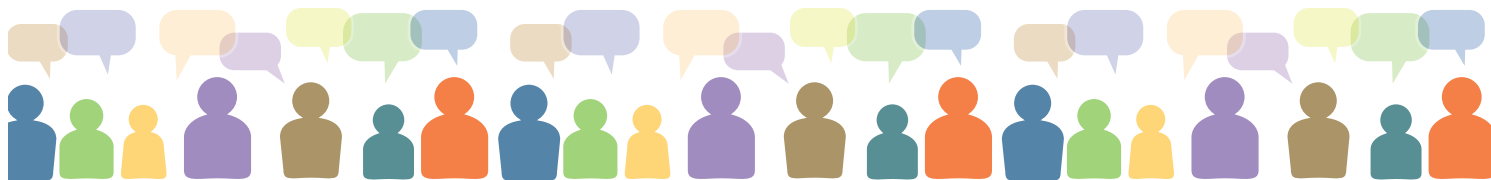
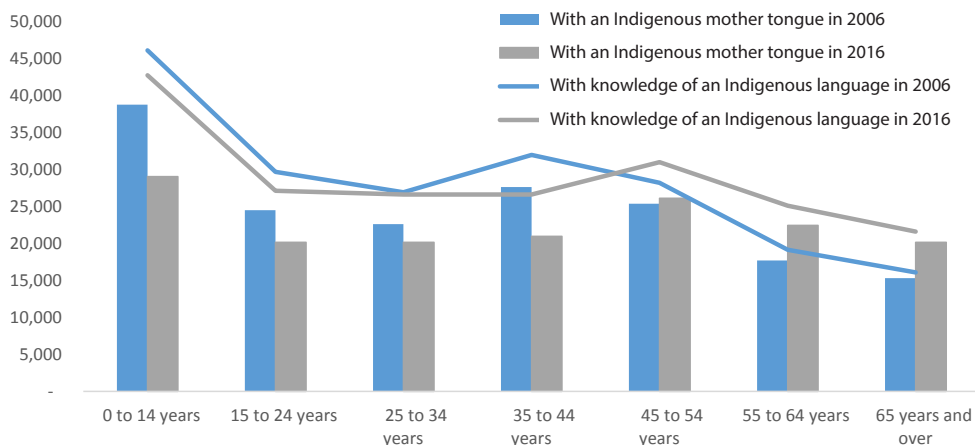


In 2016, there were more people who reported speaking an Indigenous language than who reported having an Indigenous mother tongue. This indicates that many people are learning Indigenous languages as **second languages**, especially children and youth.

The most commonly spoken Indigenous languages by Status First Nations people, Canada, 2016

Language	Number of speakers
1. Cree languages	89,690
2. Ojibway	26,675
3. Oji-Cree	15,430
4. Montagnais (Innu)	11,235
5. Dene	10,980

Status First Nations population with an Indigenous mother tongue and with knowledge of an Indigenous language, Canada, 2006 and 2016

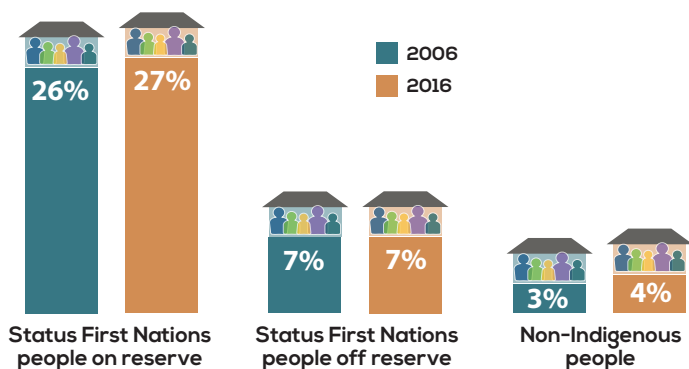


Housing

The housing conditions on reserve did not change significantly from 2006 to 2016. Among Status First Nations people on reserve in 2016, 27% were living in crowded conditions (i.e., more than one person per room), compared with 26% in 2006.

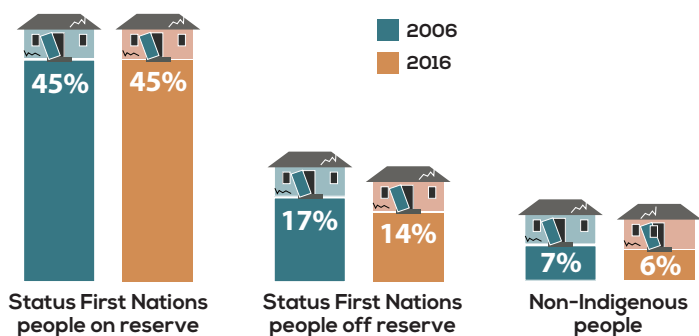


Percentage of the population living in crowded dwellings Canada, 2006 and 2016



In 2016, 45% of Status First Nations people on reserve lived in a dwelling in need of major repairs—**over three times higher** than the off-reserve population (14%) and **over seven times higher** than the non-Indigenous population (6%).

Percentage of the population living in a dwelling in need of major repairs Canada, 2006 and 2016



Justice¹

In 2014, **28%** of the Indigenous population living in the provinces reported that they or a member of their household had been **victim** of at least one of eight types of offences measured by the General Social Survey (sexual assault, robbery, physical assault, theft of personal property, breaking and entering, theft of motor vehicle or parts, theft of household property, and vandalism). This is down from 38% in 2009.



Among the non-Indigenous population, the percentage decreased from 26% to 18%.

Indigenous adults and youth are overrepresented **in custody**. In 2018/2019, Indigenous adults accounted for **31%** of all adult admissions to provincial/territorial custody and **29%** of adult admissions to federal custody, while they represented approximately **4.5%** of the Canadian adult population.

In 2018/2019, **Indigenous youth** accounted for **43%** of youth admissions to custody in the reporting jurisdictions (excluding Quebec and Alberta), while representing about **9%** of the Canadian youth population.

Foster children

In 2016, there were 10,340 Status First Nations younger than 15 living in private households who were **foster children**.

While Status First Nations children made up about **4%** of all children in 2016, they represented **36%** of all foster children living in private households in Canada.

Glossary

Employment rate refers to the number of people employed during the week of Sunday, May 1, to Saturday, May 7, 2016, expressed as a percentage of the total population aged 15 and older.

The employment rate for a particular group (e.g., age, sex, marital status, geographic area) is the number of employed people in that group, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that group.

Unemployment rate refers to unemployed people, expressed as a percentage of the labour force during the week of Sunday, May 1, to Saturday, May 7, 2016.

The unemployment rate for a particular group (e.g., age, sex, marital status, geographic area) is the number of unemployed people in that group, expressed as a percentage of the labour force in that group.

Mother tongue refers to the first language learned at home in childhood and still understood by the person at the time the data were collected. If the person no longer understands the first language learned, the mother tongue is the second language learned. For a person who learned two languages at the same time in early childhood, the mother tongue is the language this person spoke most often at home before starting school. The person has two mother tongues only if the two languages were used equally often and are still understood by the person. For a child who has not yet learned to speak, the mother tongue is the language spoken most often to this child at home. The child has two mother tongues only if both languages are spoken equally often such that the child learns both languages at the same time.

Knowledge of Indigenous languages refers to whether the person can hold a conversation in an Indigenous language. For a child who has not yet learned to speak, this includes languages that the child is learning to speak at home.

References

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Morency, J.-D., É. Caron Malenfant, and D. Daignault. 2018. "Fertility of Aboriginal people in Canada: An overview of trends at the turn of the 21st century." *Aboriginal Policy Studies* 7(1): 34–61. Edmonton: University of Alberta.

Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006 and 2016.

Notes

Footnote 1.

The term "Indigenous" is used to refer to First Nations people, Métis and Inuit. Estimates cannot be produced for the First Nations population specifically.



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