

**STATCAN COVID-19:**  
DATA TO INSIGHTS FOR A BETTER CANADA

## **Economic impact of COVID-19 among Indigenous people**

by Paula Arriagada, Kristyn Frank, Tara Hahmann  
and Feng Hou

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## Economic impact of COVID-19 among Indigenous people

by **Paula Arriagada, Kristyn Frank, Tara Hahmann** and **Feng Hou**

Studies have highlighted the extent to which First Nations people, Inuit and Métis may be more vulnerable to the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic (Arriagada, Hahmann, & O'Donnell, 2020a, 2020b). Pre-existing economic vulnerabilities include higher prevalence of poverty and food insecurity, and a lower ability to cover unexpected expenses.<sup>1</sup>

This article uses data from a recent crowdsourcing data initiative to report on the employment and financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Indigenous participants.<sup>2</sup> It also examines the extent to which Indigenous participants applied for and received federal income support to alleviate these impacts. As Canada gradually enters a recovery phase, the article concludes by reporting on levels of trust among Indigenous participants on decisions to reopen workplaces and public spaces.

Readers should note that crowdsourcing data are not based on sampling principles. As a result, the findings reported below cannot be applied to the overall Indigenous population. However, they offer valuable insights on the economic impact of COVID-19 on Indigenous people.

### Indigenous participants more often reported that COVID-19 had a strong or moderate impact on their ability to meet financial obligations or essential needs than non-Indigenous participants

Crowdsourcing participants were asked whether they had experienced temporary or permanent job loss or reduced work hours since the COVID-19 pandemic. Among those employed prior to the pandemic, 37% of Indigenous participants experienced job loss or reduced work hours, compared to 35% of non-Indigenous participants (Chart 1).

Among non-Indigenous participants, women reported a slightly higher rate of job loss or reduced work hours than men. There was however little gender difference among Indigenous participants.

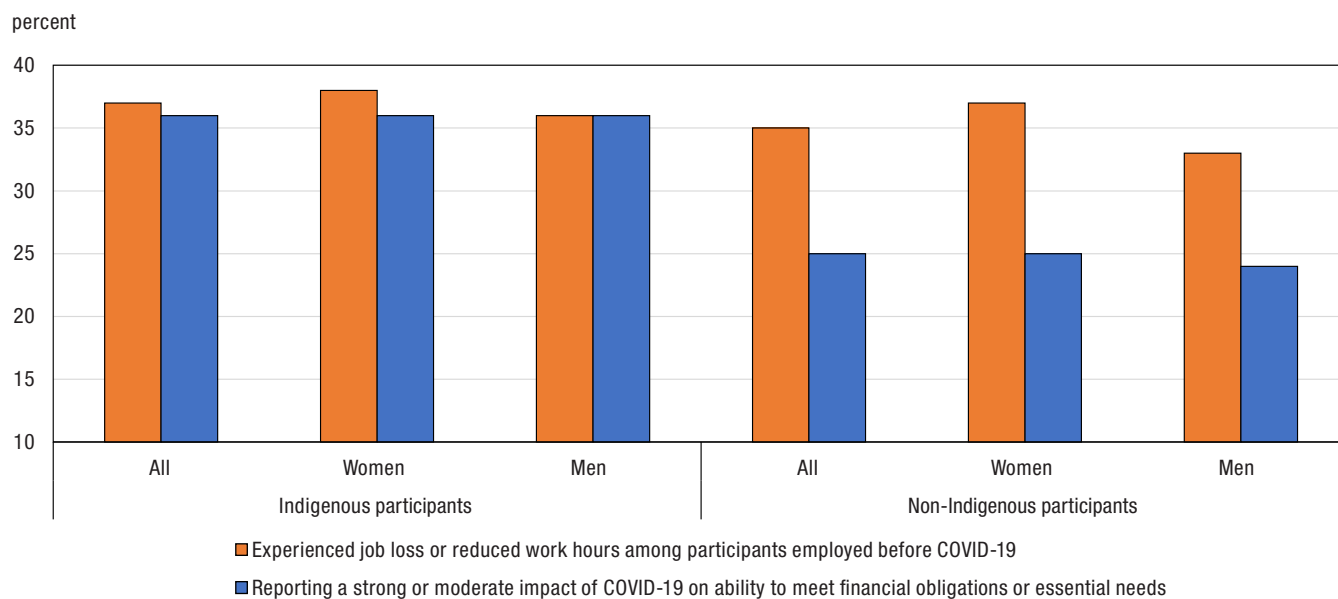
Over one-third (36%) of Indigenous participants reported that the COVID-19 pandemic had a strong or moderate impact on their ability to meet financial obligations or essential needs, such as rent or mortgage payments, utilities, and groceries. The corresponding rate among non-Indigenous participants was lower at 25%.

Among those who experienced job loss or reduced work hours, 65% of Indigenous participants reported a strong or moderate financial impact, compared to 56% among non-Indigenous participants.

Employment disruptions likely had a larger financial impact on Indigenous participants because of greater pre-existing vulnerabilities, such as lower income levels and higher proportions living in poverty and experiencing food insecurity (Arriagada, Hahmann & O'Donnell, 2020a).

1. It is important to note that Indigenous people are often overrepresented among those experiencing precarious housing or homelessness. These populations may not be represented by these crowdsourced data.
2. Because of the limited number of Indigenous participants in the crowdsourced data and other data limitations, it was not possible to present the analysis in this study separately for First Nations people, Métis and Inuit (see methodology section).

**Chart 1**  
**Self-reported employment and financial impact of COVID-19, Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants, May 26 to June 8, 2020**



Source: Statistics Canada, Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians - Trust in Others

## Among Indigenous participants reporting a strong or moderate financial impact, 44% applied for federal income support

Governments at all levels have implemented programs to assist those impacted by the pandemic. For example, the Government of Canada has introduced the Canada Emergency Response Benefit ([CERB](#)), to provide financial support to employed and self-employed people directly affected by COVID-19.

Among Indigenous participants who reported a strong or moderate financial impact of COVID-19, 44% applied for federal income support. The corresponding rate among non-Indigenous participants was 50% (Table 1).

In both cases, approximately 95% of participants who applied for federal income support received such support.

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**Table 1**  
**Percentage who applied for and received federal income support, Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants, May 26 to June 8, 2020**

	All participants		Participants who reported strong or moderate impact of COVID-19	
	Applied for federal income support	Received federal income support	Applied for federal income support	Received federal income support
	percent			
All				
Indigenous participants	22	21	44	42
non-Indigenous participants	19	18	50	47
Men				
Indigenous participants	22	21	44	41
non-Indigenous participants	19	18	50	48
Women				
Indigenous participants	21	20	43	42
non-Indigenous participants	20	19	49	47

Source: Statistics Canada, Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians - Trust in Others

## Indigenous participants report lower levels of trust in reopening decisions

As Canada gradually enters a recovery phase, reopening decisions by governments and health authorities will have an impact on health vulnerabilities and socio-economic conditions, especially among groups disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

The crowdsourcing initiative asked Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants how much trust they have in federal, provincial or territorial and municipal governments and health authorities to make good decisions about when and how to reopen workplaces and public spaces.

Indigenous participants had lower levels of trust across all levels of government and public health authorities than non-Indigenous participants. For example, 46% of Indigenous participants and 56% of non-Indigenous participants expressed a high<sup>3</sup> level of trust in provincial and territorial governments when asked about reopening decisions. Similarly, 50% of Indigenous participants and 62% of non-Indigenous participants expressed a high level of trust in the federal government on reopening decisions.

Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants reported a higher level of trust in public health authorities than in government at all levels. Among Indigenous participants, more women than men reported a high level of trust in federal public health authorities.

3. A high level of trust is indicated by a response of 4 or 5 on a five-point scale, where "1" means "Not at all" and "5" means "A great deal".

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**Table 2**  
**Self-reported trust in governments and health authorities in decisions on reopening, Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants, May 26 to June 8, 2020**

	Federal government	Federal public health authorities	Provincial or territorial government	Provincial or territorial public health authorities	Municipal government	Municipal public health authorities
	percent					
All						
Indigenous participants	50	68	46	66	43	54
non-Indigenous participants	62	75	56	74	55	65
Men						
Indigenous participants	47	64	48	68	42	51
non-Indigenous participants	61	73	55	74	54	65
Women						
Indigenous participants	52	71	44	66	44	57
non-Indigenous participants	63	76	57	75	56	66

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians - Trust in Others

This article is the fourth of an ongoing series of releases aimed to inform on the economic, social and health challenges facing Indigenous people during the COVID-19 pandemic. A [first Daily article](#) examined health and social characteristics associated with a higher risk of contracting or spreading the COVID-19 virus among Indigenous people living in rural, remote and northern communities. A [second article](#) focused on vulnerabilities to socioeconomic impacts among Indigenous people living in urban areas. A [third article](#) reported on mental health among Indigenous people during the pandemic. Over the coming weeks, Statistics Canada will continue to report the impacts of the current pandemic among Indigenous people.

## Methodology

From May 26 to June 8, over 1,000 Indigenous people and 35,000 non-Indigenous people participated in the Statistics Canada crowdsourcing survey *The Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians: Trust in Others*. Unlike other surveys conducted by Statistics Canada, crowdsourced data are not collected under a sample design using probability-based sampling. Methodological adjustments have been made to account for age, sex and provincial differences. However, these adjustments are for the general Canadian population and do not take into account the differences in age structure and geographic distribution of the Indigenous population. Because of these limitations, it was not possible to report findings separately for First Nations people, Métis or Inuit or for diverse subpopulations within the Indigenous population (for example, those living on reserve or those living in Inuit Nunangat). Caution should be exercised when interpreting the findings.

## References

Arriagada, P., Hahmann, T., & O'Donnell, V. (2020a). Indigenous people in urban areas: Vulnerabilities to the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 45-28-0001. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.

Arriagada, P., Hahmann, T., & O'Donnell, V. (2020b). Indigenous people and mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 45-28-0001. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.