

Article

Métis in Canada: Selected findings of the 2006 Census



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by Linda Gionet

As part of its contribution to dissemination of Census findings, *Canadian Social Trends* is highlighting some of the key social trends observed in the 2006 Census.

In this issue, we present an adaptation from *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations, 2006 Census* (Catalogue no. 97-558-X2006001), which focuses on Métis population in Canada.

In the 2006 Census, 389,785 people identified themselves as a Métis person.¹ This represents nearly a doubling (a 91% growth) in the size of the Métis population since 1996. By way of comparison, the First Nations² and Inuit populations grew 29% and 26%, respectively, over the same period; the non-Aboriginal population grew at less than one-tenth the rate (8%). Higher birth rates and a greater tendency to self-identify as Métis on the Census underlie this increase in the Métis population over the past decade.³

The Métis account for more than one-third (34%) of the overall Aboriginal population, up from just over one-quarter (26%) in 1996.

Métis population is young and concentrated in the West

Nearly 87% of the Métis population lives west of Quebec, with the largest percentage in Alberta (22% in 2006), followed by Ontario (19%), Manitoba (18%), British Columbia (15%) and Saskatchewan (12%). Additionally, 7% of Métis live in Quebec, 5% in the Atlantic provinces and 1% in the territories (Chart 1).

Over two-thirds of Métis (69%) in Canada live in an urban area; of these, the majority (59%) live in a census metropolitan area (CMA) and the remainder (41%) in smaller urban centres with populations under 100,000. The CMAs with the largest number of Métis residents include Winnipeg (40,980), Edmonton (27,740), Vancouver (15,075), Calgary (14,770), Saskatoon (9,610) and Ottawa-Gatineau (7,990).

With a median age of 30 years, the Métis are younger than the non-Aboriginal population, which has a median age of 40 years. In fact, one-quarter (25%) of the Métis are children under age 15. A somewhat higher proportion of Métis in Saskatchewan (29%), Manitoba (27%) and Alberta (27%) are children.

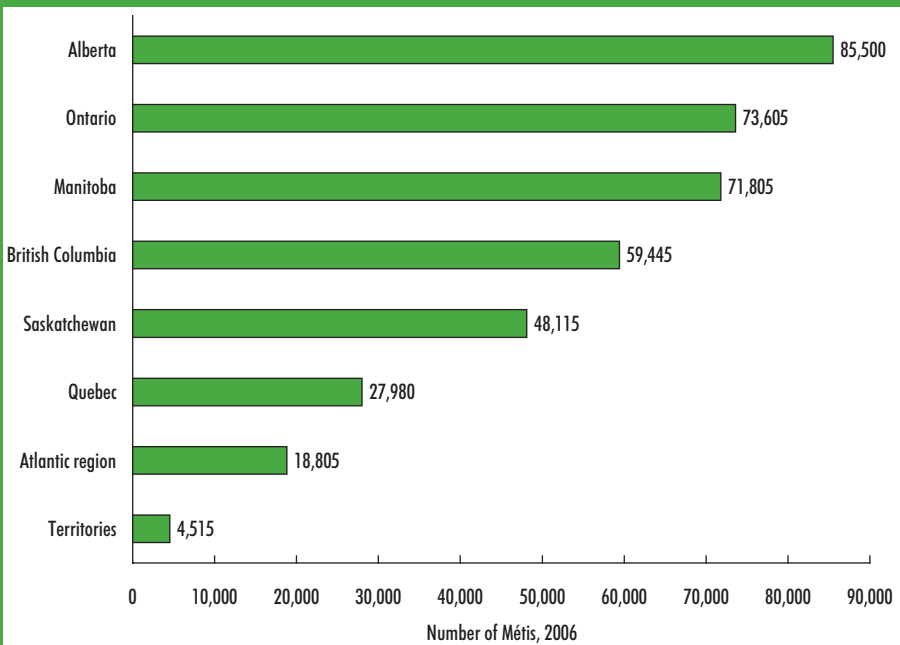
Métis children are almost twice as likely as non-Aboriginal children to live in a lone-parent family. In 2006, 31% of Métis children lived with a lone mother or father, compared with 17% of non-Aboriginal children. In Manitoba (35%) and Saskatchewan (36%), more than one-third of Métis children under age 15 lived with one parent. In cities where Métis made up a large proportion of the population – for instance, Winnipeg, Regina and Edmonton – about four in ten Métis children lived in lone-parent families.

GST Who are the Métis?

In this article, Métis refers to people who identify as Métis on the Census. This definition differs from that adopted by the Métis National Council (MNC), whereby: "Métis means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis nation ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples and is accepted by the Métis nation".⁴ According to the MNC, Métis ancestry derives, in part, from a person having ancestry from the historic Métis nation homeland, an area in west central North America.

Because the definition of Métis in this article is broader in scope than the MNC's definition, the information about the Métis population presented here may vary from that provided by the MNC's national registry.

Chart 1 Nearly 9 in 10 Métis lived in the western provinces and Ontario



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

Older Métis more likely to speak an Aboriginal language

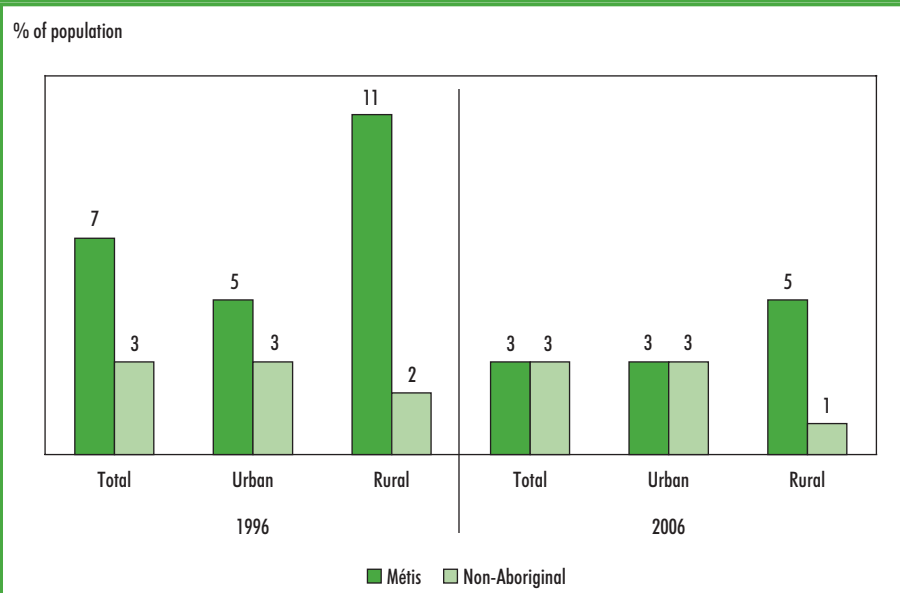
Overall, 4% of Métis had knowledge of an Aboriginal language in 2006, down slightly from 5% in 2001. Those living in rural areas were more likely to be Aboriginal language speakers, at 6% compared with 2% of urban dwellers.

Older Métis were more likely to speak an Aboriginal language. An estimated 12% of Métis aged 75 years and over could converse in an Aboriginal language, compared with 9% of those aged 65 to 74, and 6% of people aged 45 to 64. Less than 3% of Métis aged 44 and younger spoke an Aboriginal language.

Cree is the Aboriginal language most often spoken among the Métis (9,360 speakers in 2006). Other languages spoken by Métis include Dene (1,620), Ojibway (1,345) and other Algonquian languages, as well as Michif (fewer than 1,000 speakers).

Although few Métis are able to converse in an Aboriginal language, about half of the Métis population have reported that keeping, learning or re-learning their Aboriginal language was important or very important to them.⁵

Chart 2 Between 1996 and 2006, rates of crowding in Métis households decreased



Note: Crowding is defined as more than one person per room, excluding bathrooms, halls and similar.
Source: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1996 and 2006.

Crowding and need for major repairs

At the national level, 3% of Métis lived in crowded housing conditions in 2006, a rate equal to that of the non-Aboriginal population. This proportion marks a change from 1996, when 7% of the Métis population lived in crowded households.

Crowding was more common for Métis in rural than urban areas, at 5% compared with 3% in 2006. (In 2006, about one-third of the Métis population lived in rural areas.) Métis in rural Saskatchewan (11%) and rural Alberta (8%) were most likely to experience crowded housing conditions. Nevertheless, over the ten-year period from 1996 to 2006, rates of rural crowding declined in most parts of the country, especially in the Prairies. For instance, in rural

Saskatchewan it dropped from 21% to 11%, and in rural Alberta it fell by almost half from 15% to 8% (Chart 2).

While there is little difference overall between the Métis and non-Aboriginal populations in terms of crowding, Métis are more likely to live in homes that need major repairs. In 2006, 14% of Métis occupied dwellings that needed major repairs, a proportion twice as high as that of the non-Aboriginal population (7%).

Once again, conditions varied between the Métis living in rural (18%) compared to urban (12%) areas. In Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia and the Atlantic provinces, the gap was smaller, but in Saskatchewan and Alberta (where one-third of the Métis population reside), rural Métis were almost twice as likely as urban Métis to occupy housing that needed major repairs.

At the national level, levels of housing affordability among the Métis were similar to those for the non-Aboriginal population. In 2006, 22% of Métis lived in a household that spent at least 30% of its income on shelter costs, compared with 21% of the non-Aboriginal population. At the provincial level, Ontario (24%) and British Columbia (29%) recorded rates of housing affordability above the national Métis average. Additionally, the widest gap between the Métis and the non-Aboriginal population was in Saskatchewan, at 21% and 15%, respectively.

Métis are less likely than the non-Aboriginal population to own their own home. In 2006, 64% of Métis lived in a home that was owned by a member of the household; for the non-Aboriginal population, the proportion was 75%.

While the national homeownership rate is lower for the Métis population than the non-Aboriginal population, the provincial gap is particularly wide in the Western provinces. For instance, in Saskatchewan and Alberta, the proportion of Métis who lived in their own homes were 20 and 18 percentage points lower,

respectively, compared to the non-Aboriginal population.

College education more common among Métis

Half of Métis adults aged 25 to 64 have completed a postsecondary education: the comparable proportion in the non-Aboriginal population is 61%. A college education was most common, with 21% of Métis having completed a diploma, followed by a trades certificate (16%). Between 2001 and 2006, the percentage of Métis with a university degree increased from 7% to 9%. This percentage was 14 percentage points less than the non-Aboriginal population (23%).

In the Prairie provinces and New Brunswick, the proportion of Métis adults who have a postsecondary qualification was slightly lower than the national Métis average. In the remaining provinces, the proportion was higher than the Métis national average, aged 25 to 64.

Métis women were somewhat more likely to have a postsecondary education, at 51% compared with 48% of men in 2006. Métis women were more likely to have a college diploma – 25% versus 17% of men – while Métis men were more likely to have a trades certificate – 21% versus 12% of women. In addition, Métis women were slightly more likely to have a university degree, at 10% compared with 8% of men.

In most of the Atlantic provinces and in Quebec, Métis men had a greater likelihood than women of finishing a postsecondary education, particularly a trades certification.

Employment rates for adults of core working age

Between 2001 and 2006, the employment rates for Métis adults of core working age (aged 25 to 54 years) increased 4 percentage points from 70.4% to 74.6%. Although the Métis employment rate was lower than that of the non-Aboriginal population (81.6%), the gap has narrowed between these two populations by about 3 percentage points.

Métis employment rates were lower than those of the non-Aboriginal population across the country in 2006. The differences were widest in New Brunswick (18 percentage points), Prince Edward Island (14 points), Saskatchewan (14 points) and Quebec (13 points).

Métis men had higher employment rates than women, at 79.2% compared with 70.4%. In the provinces with larger Métis populations, Métis men had higher rates of full-time, full-year employment than Métis women. In parts of the country with smaller Métis populations, as in Newfoundland, New Brunswick, the Yukon and Nunavut, Métis women were more likely than Métis men to be employed.

Unemployment rates represent the proportion of people in the labour force who are looking for work but cannot find it. At the national level, unemployment rates of Métis adults of core working age were higher than those in the non-Aboriginal population – in 2006, 8.4% versus 5.2%, respectively.

Between 2001 and 2006, the unemployment rates for Métis decreased 4 percentage points from 12.5% to 8.4%. Although the Métis unemployment rate was lower than that of the non-Aboriginal population (5.2%), the gap has narrowed by 3 percentage points.

The percentage of unemployed Métis in the labour force was below the Métis national average west of Quebec, except in Saskatchewan and Nunavut.

The unemployment rate for Métis women was comparable to that for Métis men, at 8.2% compared with 8.6% in 2006.

Median income

In 2005, the median income of the Métis in Canada was lower than that of the non-Aboriginal population. Indeed, it was about \$5,000 less than the median income of \$25,955 reported for the non-Aboriginal population. Nonetheless, between 2000 and 2005, the Métis median

income increased by about \$2,600, over three times faster than the nearly \$800 increase for the non-Aboriginal population. This rise narrowed the income gap between the Métis and the non-Aboriginal population during this period.

Across the country, the difference in median income between the Métis and the non-Aboriginal population was widest in Alberta and in the territories. In Alberta, the Métis median income (\$22,839) was about \$6,600 less than that of the non-Aboriginal population (\$29,501). Within the small Métis population in the territories, there was a larger gap. In the Northwest Territories, for example, the Métis median income (\$36,211) was approximately \$13,000 less than that of the non-Aboriginal population (\$49,219).

In most regions, the median income of Métis women was less than that of Métis men. In 2005, it was about \$9,000 less (Métis men reported \$26,466), a difference consistent with that recorded in 2000. At the regional level, the gap was widest in Alberta and Nova Scotia. Métis women in Alberta made about \$14,000 less than Métis men (\$31,869) while Métis women in Nova Scotia made about \$10,200 less than their male counterparts (\$25,329).

Summary

In 2006, over one-third of people – almost 390,000 – who identified themselves as an Aboriginal person reported that they were Métis. In the last 10 years, the Métis population has grown by 91%, due to higher fertility rates, and an increasing tendency to self-identify as Métis.

Almost nine in ten Métis live in the Western provinces and Ontario. The Métis are the most urbanized of the Aboriginal groups, with 69% of the population living in an urban area in 2006.

Overall, housing conditions of the Métis population improved between 1996 and 2006. In 2006, about 3%

of Métis reported living in crowded conditions, about the same rate as the non-Aboriginal population; however, they were more likely to live in homes that needed major repairs, especially in rural areas.

Of those Métis who had completed a postsecondary education, most had obtained a college diploma or trades certificate. Between 2001 and 2006, the percentage of Métis who had completed a university degree increased.

Métis adults of core working age were less likely to be employed than the non-Aboriginal population, at 74.6% compared with 81.6% in 2006. In comparing the employment rates of the Métis and the non-Aboriginal population, the largest differences were recorded in New Brunswick (18 percentage points), Prince Edward Island (14 points), Saskatchewan (14 points) and Quebec (13 points).

GST

Linda Gionet is an analyst with the Aboriginal Statistics program, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada.

1. All estimates in this article are based on the Aboriginal identity population. For descriptions of definitions and concepts used, please see "What you should know about this study" at the end of this article.
2. Data have been adjusted to account for incompletely enumerated reserves in 1996 and 2006.
3. Statistics Canada. (2005). *Aboriginal Conditions in Census Metropolitan Areas, 1981-2001*. Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 89-613-MIE. Ottawa: Minister of Industry.
4. Métis National Council. (2007) Who are the Métis: National Definition of Métis. Retrieved October 31, 2008 from Métis National Council Website: <http://www.metisnation.ca/who/definition.html>
5. Statistics Canada. (2008) *Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2006*

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Aboriginal identity refers to those persons who reported identifying with at least one Aboriginal group, that is, North American Indian, Métis or Inuit; and/or those who reported being a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian, as defined by the *Indian Act* of Canada; and/or those who reported they were members of an Indian band or First Nation.

Census metropolitan area (CMA): an area consisting of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a major urban core. A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000, of which 50,000 or more live in the urban core.

Crowding: more than one person per room. Not counted as rooms are bathrooms, halls, vestibules and rooms used solely for business purposes.

Dwellings in need of major repairs: in the judgment of the respondent, the housing they occupy requires the repair of defective plumbing or electrical wiring, structural repairs to walls, floors or ceilings, etc.

Employed: during the reference week prior to Census Day, persons who had a paid job or were self-employed or worked without pay in a family farm, business or professional practice. It includes those absent from their workplace due to vacation, illness, work disruption or other reason.

First Nations people: persons reporting a single response of "North American Indian" to the Aboriginal identity question. Although respondents self-identified as "North American Indian," the term "First Nations people" is used in this article.

Housing affordability: the share of household income spent on shelter costs, whereby a threshold of 30% is the upper limit for defining affordable housing, as defined by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Those who spend above the threshold may do so by choice, or they may be at risk of experiencing problems related to housing affordability. The data related to housing affordability does not include households living on reserve or on farms.

Income: refers to the total money income received from various sources during calendar years 2005 by persons 15 years of age and over. For a list of total income sources, please refer to *2006 Census Dictionary*. <http://www12.statcan.ca/English/census06/reference/dictionary/pop020a.cfm>

Inuit: persons reporting a single response of "Inuit" to the Aboriginal identity question. Inuit of the western Arctic are known as Inuvialuit; in this article, the term "Inuit" includes Inuvialuit.

Knowledge of an Aboriginal language: the respondent is able to conduct a conversation in a given Aboriginal language.

Median age: the point where exactly one-half of the population is older and the other half is younger.

Median income: the dollar amount where one-half of income recipients aged 15 years and over has more income and the other half has less income. Persons without income are not included in the calculation of this statistic. All dollar figures are expressed in 2005 constant dollars, i.e., in terms of their value, or purchasing power, in 2005.

Métis: persons reporting a single response of "Métis" to the Aboriginal identity question.

Postsecondary education: educational attainment above the level of secondary (high school) completion. This includes apprenticeship or trades certificate; college or CEGEP diploma; university certificate or diploma below bachelor level; university degree at bachelor's degree and above.

Unemployed: during the reference week prior to Census Day, persons who did not have paid work or self-employment work and was available for work, and was looking for employment, was on temporary lay-off, or expected to start work within 4 weeks.

Urban areas: an area with a population of at least 1,000 and no fewer than 400 persons per square kilometre. They include both census metropolitan areas and urban non-census metropolitan areas.