Article

First Nations Children Under Six Years Old Living Off Reserve

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This fact sheet provides information on the families and communities of First Nations children under six years old living off reserve, as reported in the Aboriginal Children's Survey and the Census in 2006. Please note that children were identified as 'North American Indian'; however the term “First Nations” is used in this fact sheet. This report focuses on First Nations children living off reserve in the provinces and all First Nations children living in the territories.

In 2006, the Census enumerated about 47,000 First Nations children under the age of six years living off reserve in Canada.

The majority of off-reserve First Nations children were in urban areas (78%) and the remaining 22% lived in rural areas.

About two-thirds (67%) of First Nations children living off reserve were Registered or Treaty Indians.

Young off-reserve First Nations children and their families

The 2006 Aboriginal Children’s Survey found that 90% of off-reserve First Nations children were being raised by more than one person. Mothers were most commonly reported as being involved in raising the child (93%) followed by fathers (72%) and grandparents (44%). More than one-quarter (28%) of First Nations children had other relatives (such as siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles) playing a part in raising them. About 17% had non-relatives involved in raising them; for example, child care providers or teachers.

The 2006 Aboriginal Children’s Survey asked how often the child talked or played together with different people, focusing attention on each other for five minutes or more. Off-reserve First Nations children were most likely to receive focused attention at least once a day from their mothers (93%), followed by siblings (69%), and fathers (64%).

Many received focused attention from extended family and community members at least once a week: 67% from grandparents, 55% from aunts and uncles, 45% from cousins and 26% from Elders.

According to the 2006 Census, 17% of off-reserve First Nations children under the age of 6 (20% of those with Registered Indian status and 12% of those without Registered Indian status) were living in families with 4 or more children, compared to 8% of non-Aboriginal children.

Off-reserve First Nations children are being raised by younger parents than non-Aboriginal children. According to the 2006 Census, 27% of off-reserve First Nations children under six years old had mothers between the ages of 15 and 24; this is compared to 8% of non-Aboriginal children.

Just over half (52%) of First Nations children living off reserve lived with two parents. They were however, more likely than non-Aboriginal children to live with lone parents (41% compared to 13%). About 15% of off-reserve First Nations children living in lone parent families also had a grandparent living in the home.
In 2006, almost one in ten (9%) off-reserve First Nations children lived with their grandparents, compared to 5% of non-Aboriginal children.

**Socio-economic status**

According to the 2006 Census, nearly half (49%) of off-reserve First Nations children under the age of 6 were in low-income families, compared to 18% of non-Aboriginal children (table 1). Low income was measured by the low income cut-offs (LICOs), which refer to income levels at which families are expected to spend 20 percentage points more than average of their before tax income on food, shelter and clothing. The low income cut-offs are not applicable in the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut and on Indian reserves.

Of young off-reserve First Nations children living in large cities, 57% were living in low-income families. Young off-reserve First Nations children with Registered Indian status were more likely to live in low-income families than those without Registered Indian status (55% compared to 38%).

Off-reserve First Nations children who lived in low-income families were twice as likely to have parents or guardians who were dissatisfied with their finances and housing conditions as their counterparts who were not living with low incomes.

The majority of young off-reserve First Nations children (90%) had parents or guardians who reported that they were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘satisfied’ with their support network from family, friends or others. There were no statistically significant differences by low-income status.
Feelings about community

The 2006 Aboriginal Children’s Survey found that off-reserve First Nations children had parents or guardians who were generally satisfied with many aspects of their community as a place to raise children. More than half had parents or guardians who rated their community as ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’ in terms of ‘good schools, nursery schools and early childhood education programs’ (53%) and ‘adequate facilities for children’ (51%).

By comparison, 17% of young off-reserve First Nations children lived in a community rated as ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’ in terms of being a place with First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultural activities. Half (50%) lived in a community rated as ‘fair’ or ‘poor’ as a place with these cultural activities.

Cultural activities

According to the 2006 Aboriginal Children’s Survey, 46% of young off-reserve First Nations children had participated in or attended ‘traditional First Nations, Métis, or Inuit activities such as singing, drum dancing, fiddling, gatherings or ceremonies’.

In 2006, 45% of off-reserve First Nations children had someone who helped them to understand First Nations history and culture. Most of these children were being taught by their parents (60%) and grandparents (50%).

Off-reserve First Nations children with Registered Indian status were more likely than those without Registered Indian status to have someone who helped them understand First Nations history or culture (54% versus 32%).
Chart 2
First Nations children under six years old (living off reserve)
How parents or guardians rated their feelings about their community as a place with...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Excellent or very good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair or poor</th>
<th>Not stated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good schools, nursery schools, and early childhood education programs</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate facilities for children, ex. community centres, rinks, gyms, parks</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a safe community</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With health facilities</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively involved members of the community</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultural activities</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source(s): Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Children’s Survey, 2006

About 47% of off-reserve First Nations children under six years old were in some kind of child care arrangement. This refers to regular care arrangements by someone other than a parent, including daycare, nursery or preschool, Head Start, before or after school programs, and care by a relative or other caregiver.

Of those children currently receiving regular child care, about 24% were in child care arrangements that promoted First Nations, Métis or Inuit traditional and cultural values and customs, and 15% were in child care arrangements where Aboriginal languages were used.

How to obtain more information

Specific inquiries about this product and related statistics or services should be directed to: Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0T6 by telephone: 613-951-5979 or by e-mail at saasd-dsse@statcan.gc.ca.

Statistics Canada National Contact Centre
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