

Canadian Agriculture at a Glance

The socioeconomic portrait of the Indigenous farm population in Canada, 2021



by Michelle St. Pierre and Zong Jia Chen

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Indigenous Peoples are an integral part of the farm population and have been contributing to the agricultural landscape of what is now Canada for many centuries before the arrival of settlers. Results from Statistics Canada's Agriculture–Population Linkage (which combines data from the Census of Agriculture and Census of Population) show that the number of individuals in the farm population who self-identified as Indigenous has increased since the previous census.

In 2021, 2.8% of the farm population (16,705 people) self-identified as Indigenous. This was slightly higher than the share of 2.7% (15,760 people) reported in 2016.

This article provides a socioeconomic portrait of the Indigenous farm population, touching on population changes, gender, age, education, type of farming activity and income.

Key facts from 2021

Among the 8,130 men in the Indigenous farm population in 2021:

- 3,445 were farm operators
- the average age was 34.4 years
- 55.0% reported a certificate, diploma or degree as their highest educational attainment
- mechanic and repair technologies/technicians was the most frequently reported field of study
- beef cattle ranching and farming, including feedlots, was the most frequently reported farm type.

Among the 8,575 women in the Indigenous farm population in 2021:

- 1,950 were farm operators
- the average age was 38.5 years
- 68.5% reported a certificate, diploma or degree as their highest educational attainment
- health professions and related programs was the most frequently reported field of study
- oilseed and grain farming was the most frequently reported farm type.

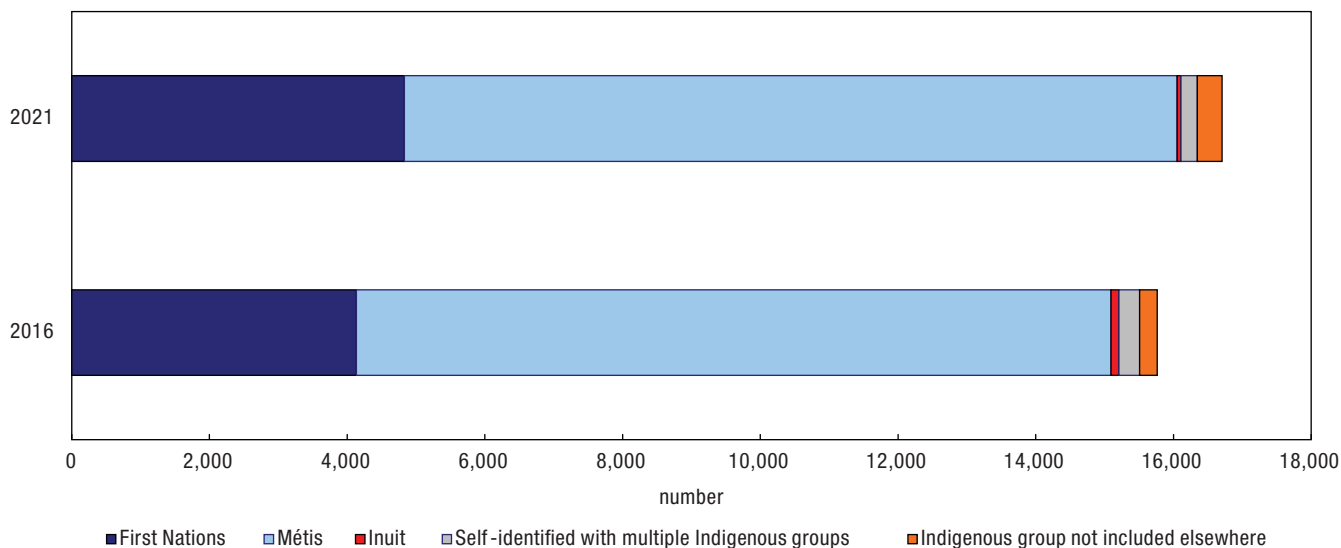
First Nations people are driving the Indigenous farm population increase

Since 2016, the Indigenous farm population has risen 6.0%, reaching 16,705 people in 2021. The largest increase in the farm population during this period was

reported by First Nations people, up from 4,135 people in 2016 to 4,830 people in 2021 (Chart 1).

Among the provinces, the Indigenous farm population in Saskatchewan posted the largest increase, up from 3,050 people in 2016 to 3,810 people in 2021. Meanwhile, British Columbia recorded the sharpest decline, with the Indigenous farm population down from 2,355 people to 2,035 people.

Chart 1
Indigenous farm population by Indigenous group, Canada, 2016 and 2021



Sources: Statistics Canada, Agriculture–Population Linkage, 2016 and 2021.

Table 1
Indigenous farm population by geography, 2016 and 2021

Geography	2016	2021	Difference
	number		
Atlantic provinces	695	345	-350
Quebec	1,160	1,465	305
Ontario	2,345	2,445	100
Manitoba	2,410	2,620	210
Saskatchewan	3,050	3,810	760
Alberta	3,750	3,985	235
British Columbia	2,355	2,035	-320

Note: For confidentiality reasons, the Atlantic provinces have been combined.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Agriculture–Population Linkage, 2016 and 2021.

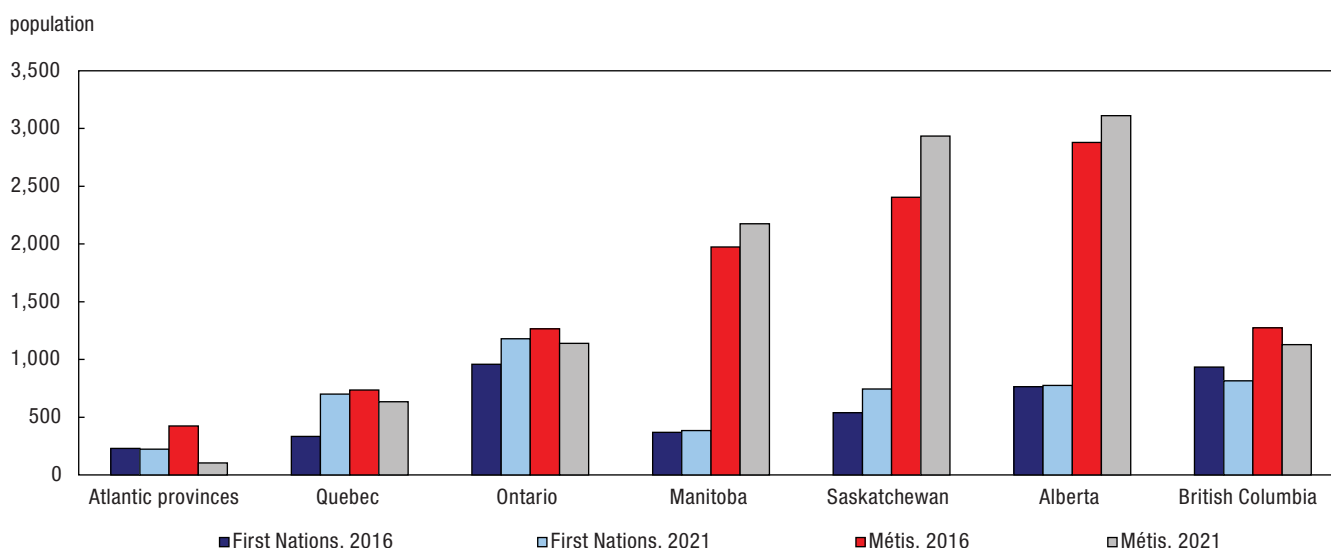
The First Nations farm population increases the most in Quebec and Ontario, while Métis farm population growth is strongest in the Prairies

Among the provinces, First Nations farm populations in Quebec (+365 people) and Ontario (+220 people) reported the largest increases in 2021. Ontario was home to the largest First Nations farm population in

2021, at 1,180 people, representing almost one-quarter (24.4%) of the total First Nations farm population in Canada. The overall First Nations population showed a similar trend, with 23.9% of First Nations people residing in Ontario in 2021—the largest provincial share.

Almost three-quarters (73.2%) of the Métis farm population lived in the Prairie provinces in 2021, up from 66.2% in 2016. Notably, Alberta (27.7%) reported the largest Métis farm population of all the provinces, while it accounted for the second-largest Métis population in Canada, behind Ontario (Chart 2).

Chart 2
Indigenous farm population by province and selected Indigenous group, 2016 and 2021



Note: For confidentiality reasons, the Atlantic provinces have been combined.
Sources: Statistics Canada, Agriculture–Population Linkage, 2016 and 2021.

The proportion of Indigenous farm operators who are women is increasing

The proportion of Indigenous farm operators who were women rose from 34.6% in 2016 to 36.1% (1,950 people) in 2021—higher than the share of women (30.4%) within the total farm population in Canada.

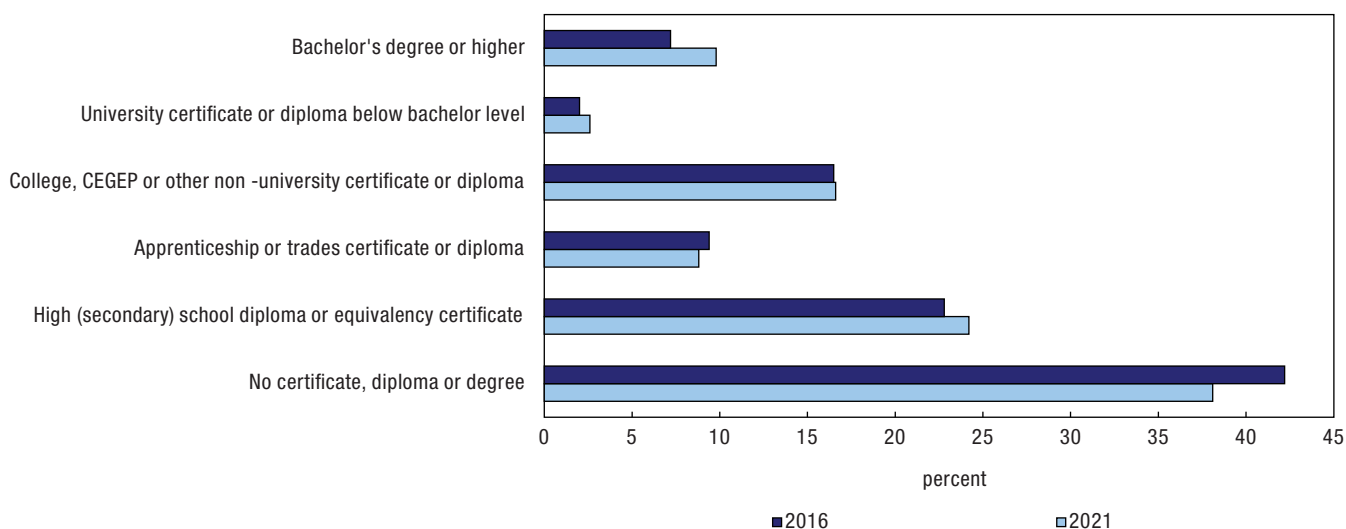
Similarly, the proportion of women within the overall Indigenous farm population also increased, albeit at a slower rate. In 2021, 51.3% of the Indigenous farm population (8,575 people) were women, up from 51.0% in 2016.

The share of the Indigenous farm population reporting a certificate, diploma or degree is increasing

From 2016 to 2021, the proportion of the Indigenous farm population reporting a certificate, diploma or degree grew by 4.0 percentage points to 61.9% (10,340 people) in 2021. This percentage point increase was sharper than that observed for the total farm population (+2.2 percentage points) during the same period. Notably, a rise in people reporting a bachelor’s degree or higher (+2.6 percentage points) drove the increase in the number of people with certificates, diplomas or degrees within the Indigenous farm population.

Chart 3

Proportion of Indigenous farm population by highest educational attainment, Canada, 2016 and 2021



Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Agriculture–Population Linkage, 2016 and 2021.

Within the Indigenous farm population, women tend to have a higher educational attainment than men

In 2021, over two-thirds (68.6%) of Indigenous women in the farm population reported a certificate, diploma or degree, compared with just over half (54.9%) of Indigenous men.

Notably, 12.8% of women in the Indigenous farm population reported a bachelor’s degree or higher

in 2021, up from 9.4% in 2016, nearly double the rate observed for Indigenous men in the farm population (6.6%).

Within the Indigenous farm population, over one-fifth (22.0%) of women reported a college, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma in 2021—more than double the rate reported by men (10.9%). In contrast, Indigenous men (12.2%) were over twice as likely to report an apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma as Indigenous women (5.5%).

Table 2

Number and share of Indigenous farm population by highest educational attainment, Canada, 2021

Educational attainment	Men		Women	
	number	percent	number	percent
No certificate, diploma or degree	3,655	45.0	2,705	31.5
High (secondary) school diploma or equivalency certificate	1,955	24.1	2,090	24.4
Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma	990	12.2	470	5.5
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma	885	10.9	1,885	22.0
University certificate or diploma below bachelor level	105	1.3	330	3.8
Bachelor's degree or higher	535	6.6	1,100	12.8

Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Source: Statistics Canada, Agriculture–Population Linkage, 2021.

Indigenous farm operators' median income is rising

In 2020, Indigenous farm operators reported a median income of \$43,251, up 8.8% from \$39,740 (in 2020 constant dollars) in 2015. Despite the increase, the median income reported for Indigenous farm operators in 2020 was slightly below the median income reported for all farm operators (\$46,345).

A farm operator's income includes [income from all sources](#), regardless of whether their income sources are related to farming.

Indigenous farm operators working on hog and pig farms show the largest increase in median income

In 2020, Indigenous farm operators reported a higher median income than in 2015 for all farm types except dairy cattle and milk production, poultry and egg production, and sheep and goat farms. Hog and pig farms (+\$25,251) and vegetable and melon farms (+\$18,080) reported the largest net increases.

Indigenous farm operators working on hog and pig farms reported the highest median income in 2020,

at \$66,008. This median income was considerably higher (+56.9%) than that reported for these types of farms by all operators in Canada. Sheep and goat farms recorded the second-highest median income among farms operated by Indigenous Peoples, at \$54,283. This median income was also significantly higher (+43.4%) than that reported for these types of farms by all operators in Canada.

By contrast, the median income for Indigenous farm operators working on vegetable and melon farms (\$37,452) in 2020 was 22.1% lower than that reported by total farm operators in Canada (Table 3).

The share of the Indigenous farm population living below the poverty line is decreasing

In 2020, 5.2% of the Indigenous farm population (875 people) lived below the poverty line, down by nearly half from 10.0% (1,580 people) in 2015. Over the same period, the proportion of the Indigenous farm population living below the poverty line dropped below the share observed for the total farm population (Chart 4).

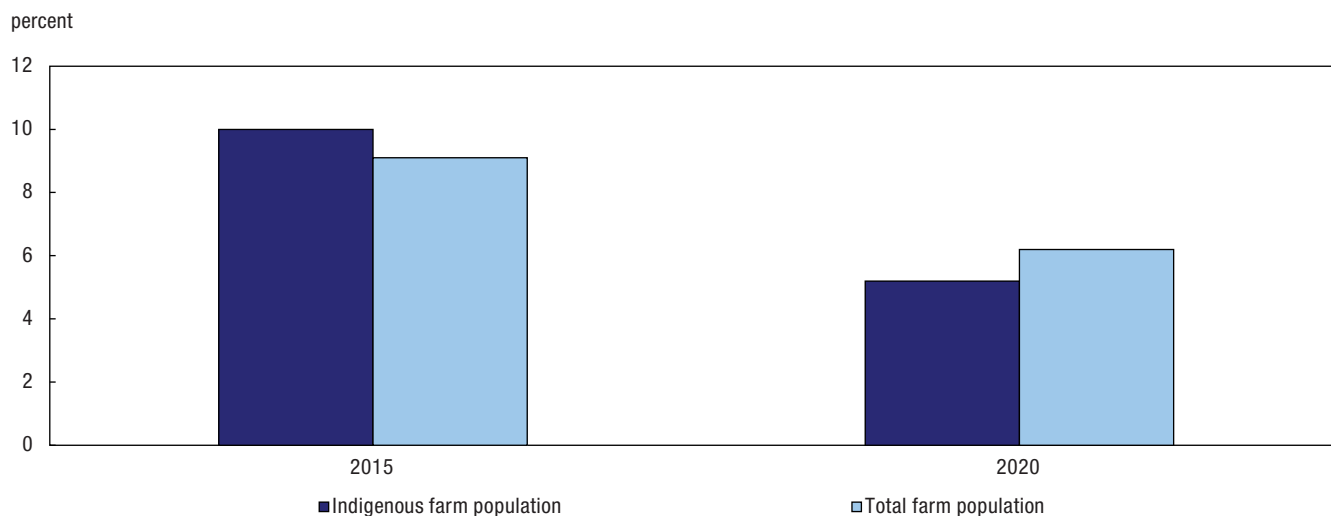
Table 3
Median income for Indigenous farm operators and total farm operators by farm type, Canada, 2020

Farm type	Indigenous farm operators	Total farm operators	Difference
	dollars		
Dairy cattle and milk production	28,110	34,833	-6,723
Beef cattle ranching and farming, including feedlots	40,665	39,819	846
Hog and pig farming	66,008	42,080	23,928
Poultry and egg production	49,780	53,820	-4,040
Sheep and goat farming	54,283	37,861	16,422
Other animal production	50,888	44,341	6,547
Oilseed and grain farming	45,318	52,838	-7,520
Vegetable and melon farming	37,452	48,069	-10,617
Fruit and tree nut farming	50,044	50,377	-333
Greenhouse, nursery and floriculture production	44,185	50,254	-6,069
Other crop farming	41,052	44,330	-3,278

Source: Statistics Canada, Agriculture–Population Linkage, 2021.

Chart 4

Proportion of the Indigenous farm population and total farm population below the poverty line, Canada, 2015 and 2020



Note: The poverty line is based on Market Basket Measure thresholds.

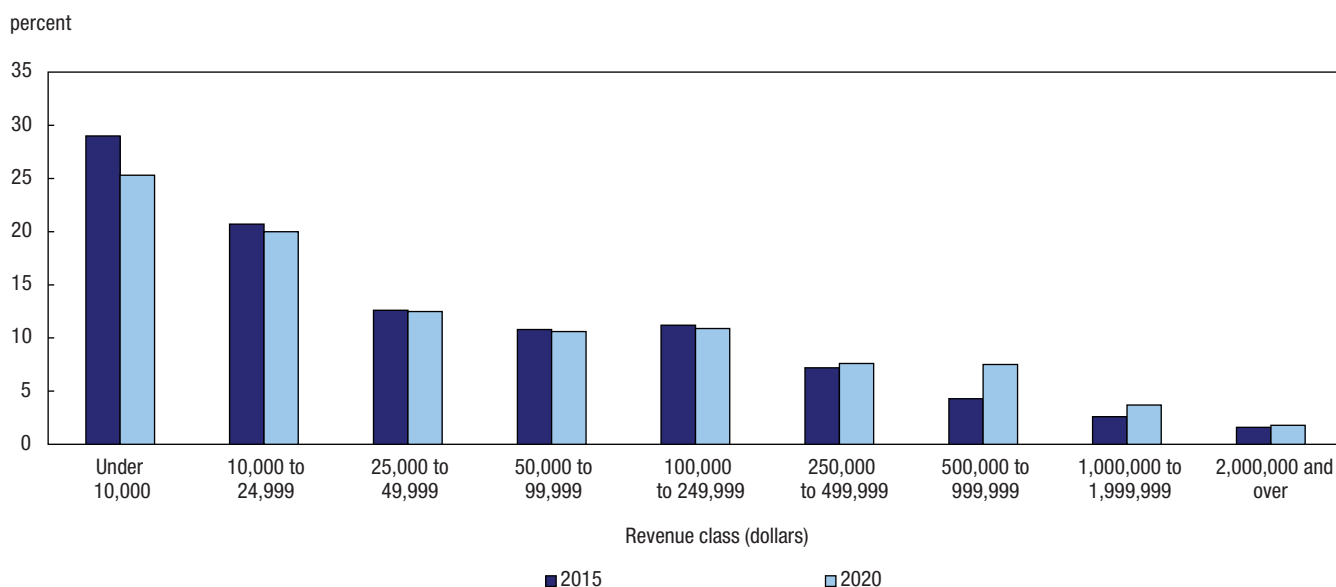
Sources: Statistics Canada, Agriculture–Population Linkage, 2016 and 2021.

The proportion of Indigenous farm operators on farms with operating revenues of \$500,000 and over is increasing

In 2020, 13.0% of Indigenous farm operators (700 people) worked on farms with operating revenues of \$500,000 and over, up from 8.4% in 2015. However, this proportion was still below that observed for total farm operators in Canada (20.7%, or 54,165 people).

By revenue class, the proportion of Indigenous farm operators working on farms with operating revenues of less than \$10,000 posted the largest decrease, down from 29.0% (1,495 people) in 2015 to 25.3% (1,370 people) in 2020. By contrast, the share of Indigenous farm operators working on farms with operating revenues of \$500,000 to \$999,999 posted the largest percentage point increase, up 3.2 percentage points to 7.5% (405 people) in 2020. However, this proportion was still below the share of 9.9% reported for total farm operators (Chart 5).

Chart 5
Proportion of Indigenous farm operators by revenue class, Canada, 2015 and 2020



Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.
Sources: Statistics Canada, Agriculture–Population Linkage, 2016 and 2021.

The Indigenous farm population has proportionally more veterans than the total farm population

For the first time, the 2021 Agriculture–Population Linkage includes information on the military service status of Canada’s farm population. In 2021, 1.0% of the Indigenous farm population (165 people) were

veterans. This was almost double the rate reported for the same age group within the total farm population (0.6%, or 3,485 people).

Notably, compared with the Indigenous farm population, Indigenous farm operators had higher rates of veteran status. In 2021, 2.2% of Indigenous farm operators (120 people) were veterans, more than double the rate for all farm operators in Canada (1.0%, or 2,490 people).

Note to readers

The data in this article exclude people residing in Canada's three territories and [collective dwellings](#).

The Consumer Price Index was used to obtain 2020 constant dollar estimates of income to eliminate the impact of price change in year-over-year comparisons.

A random-rounding procedure is applied to all data appearing in this article to protect the confidentiality of respondents.

Definitions and concepts

Farm

A significant conceptual change has been introduced for the 2021 Census of Agriculture: a “farm” or an “agricultural holding” (i.e., the census farm) now refers to a unit that produces agricultural products and reports revenues or expenses for tax purposes to the Canada Revenue Agency. Before 2021, a “farm” was defined as an agricultural operation that produced at least one agricultural product intended for sale. For more information, refer to the Census of Population dictionary.

Farm operator

The term “farm operator” refers to any person responsible for the management decisions in operating a farm or agricultural operation. Also known as an agricultural operator, farmer, operator or rancher.

Farm population

Canada's farm population comprises farm operators (people responsible for the management decisions in operating a farm) and the individuals in their households.

Farm type

The type of farm is established through a procedure that classifies each census farm according to the predominant type of production. This is done by estimating the potential revenues from the inventories of crops and livestock reported on the questionnaire and determining the product or group of products that makes up the majority of the estimated receipts. For example, a census farm with total potential revenues of 60% from hogs, 20% from beef cattle and 20%

from wheat would be classified as a hog and pig farm. The farm types presented in this document are derived based on the 2017 North American Industry Classification System. For more information, refer to the [Census of Population dictionary](#).

Indigenous Peoples

The term “Indigenous Peoples” includes people who identify as First Nations (North American Indian), Métis and Inuk (Inuit); those who report being Registered or Treaty Indians (that is, registered under the *Indian Act* of Canada); and those who have membership in a First Nation or Indian band.

Indigenous Peoples consist of the following five groups: First Nations, Métis, Inuit, self-identified with multiple Indigenous groups and Indigenous group not included elsewhere.

Men

This gender category includes men (and/or boys) and may include some non-binary persons as well.

Military service status

Military service status refers to whether the person is currently serving or has previously served in the Canadian military. Military service status is asked of all Canadians aged 17 and older. Canadian military service includes service with the Regular Force or Primary Reserve Force as an Officer or Non-Commissioned Member. It does not include service with the Cadets, Cadet Organizations Administration and Training Service (COATS) instructors or the Canadian Rangers.

Poverty line

The poverty line is based on the [Market Basket Measure \(MBM\)](#) thresholds. The MBM establishes poverty thresholds based on the cost of a “basket” of food, clothing, shelter, transportation and other items for a family of four that reflects a modest, basic standard of living. Indigenous Peoples on reserves are excluded from the analysis.

Women

This gender category includes women (and/or girls) and may include some non-binary persons as well.