

Aboriginal Population, 1996



This series of maps illustrates the distribution of the Aboriginal identity population in Canada by means of 1996 Census data. Through history, many terms have been used to describe the Aboriginal peoples, and many methods to enumerate their population. For the first time in 1996, Statistics Canada asked a question about Aboriginal identity, whereas in previous censuses the figures on Aboriginal peoples were derived mainly from a question about ancestry.

A great many persons indicating that they are of Aboriginal origin do not consider themselves of Aboriginal identity. This question about ancestry was asked in the Census: "To which ethnic or cultural group(s) did this person's ancestors belong?" In 1996, 1 101 960 persons indicated an Aboriginal origin in response to this question, whereas 799 010 persons responded in the affirmative to the question on identity: "Is this person an Aboriginal person, that is, a North American Indian, Métis or Inuit (Eskimo)?"¹

This is the first time that The Atlas of Canada is producing a map on the Aboriginal populations using the data on identity rather than on ethnic origin. It is also the first time that a map on the Métis population is being produced. For the 5th edition of the National Atlas of Canada, the map Indian and Inuit Population Distribution [MCR 4031] had been compiled with the ethnic origin data from the 1976 census as well as data from the 1975 Indian Register of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.

The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs maintains a register of Status Indians that is continually being updated. The data are collected by bands, and an Indian may be registered with a band but not live there. The number of Status Indians in the Register is higher than the Statistics Canada data because of the different counting methods used.

The maps in this series illustrate the distribution of Aboriginal peoples in Canada using the data from the question on Aboriginal identity in the 1996 Census. To properly interpret these maps, you are invited to consult the Aboriginal Terminology and Note on Cartography located below.

Aboriginal Terminology

Aboriginal peoples have occupied the territory now called Canada for thousands of years. When the first Europeans arrived in North America, they called the people they encountered "Indians" because they thought they were in India. Today, the terms to describe Aboriginal peoples are continually evolving.²

The maps in this study have been created based on Statistics Canada's 1996 Census. Hence the expressions used to refer to Aboriginal peoples are the ones used in the Census questionnaire. These terms are similar to those used in the Constitution Act, 1982: Aboriginal, Indian, Métis and Inuit. Statistics Canada has specified "North American" Indian so as to avoid any confusion with Indians originally from India.

The other terms used in the census include First Nations, Indian Band, Treaty Indian and Registered Indian.

- The term First Nation came into common usage in Canada in the 1970s, and has sometimes replaced the terms band and Indian.
- Registered Indians (Status Indians) are people who are entitled to have their names included on the Indian Register, an official list maintained by the federal government.
- Treaty Indians are Indians who are registered pursuant to the Indian Act and who can demonstrate that they are descended from a band that signed a treaty. Status Indians and Treaty Indians enjoy certain rights and privileges under the Indian Act.
- Not Registered Indians (Non-Status Indians) are people who consider themselves Indians or members of a First Nation but whom the Government of Canada does not recognize as Indians under the Indian Act, either because they are unable to prove their status or because they have lost their status rights.
- A band is a community of Indians for whom lands have been set apart, and for whom money is held by the Crown under the Indian Act.
- An Indian reserve is land that is set aside by the Crown for the use and benefit of an Indian band. Generally speaking, it is Status Indians and Treaty Indians who live on reserves.

Note on Cartography

These Atlas of Canada maps have been created from the data on Aboriginal identity drawn from question 18 of the 1996 Census: "Is this person an Aboriginal person, that is, a North American Indian, Métis or Inuit (Eskimo)?" which was asked in the detailed questionnaire distributed to 20% of the population. Persons who answered in the question on Aboriginal identity in the affirmative were also required to answer these two questions: "Is this person a member of an Indian Band/First Nation?" (question 20) and "Is this person a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian as defined by the Indian Act of Canada?" (question 21). The figures on the questions about membership in an Indian band and Treaty Indians were added to the total Aboriginal population when persons answered "no" to the question on identity but "yes" to the question on membership in an Indian band, or indicated that they are Registered Indians. In this census, 19 215 persons responded that they were members of an Indian band or Registered Indians even though they indicated that they were not Aboriginal persons in question 18. There were 6415 multiple Aboriginal responses containing a combination of the Indian, Métis and/or Inuit responses. These numbers were not mapped here, however they are included separately in the database which is accessible from the Get Statistics function of the mapping tool.

It should be noted that certain Indian reserves and Indian settlements were only partially enumerated during the 1996 Census. Statistics Canada has issued the following note on data quality: "For the 1996 Census, on some Indian reserves and Indian settlements, enumeration was not permitted, or was interrupted before it could be completed. Moreover, for other Indian reserves and Indian settlements, the quality of the collected data was considered inadequate. These geographic areas (a total of 77) are called incompletely enumerated Indian reserves and Indian settlements." However, on the Atlas maps, we have indicated these incompletely enumerated Indian reserves with a symbol (·). Statistics Canada estimates the population of these reserves at 44 000 ¹.

The Northwest Territories included Nunavut at the time of the 1996 Census. Nunavut became a territory in 1999. However, we have produced a map that displays the three territories by separating the data for Nunavut communities from those for the Northwest Territories. The census divisions and subdivisions boundaries have not been modified.

The province of Newfoundland became Newfoundland and Labrador in December 2001, and this change has been made on the map.

Many municipalities have been amalgamated in recent years, but the names of the census divisions and census subdivisions remain as they were in 1996. However the toponyms of inhabited places have been updated on the maps.

The Aboriginal population maps are designed to illustrate the distribution of these populations within the territory of Canada. Two types of maps serve to illustrate this theme. The first type is a choropleth map that uses colours to present the percentage of Aboriginal population by province and by census division (CD). The

CDs are intermediate regions between provinces and municipalities; there are 288 of them across Canada. The choropleth cartography technique is less useful for indicating data covering the large northern regions and rural regions, where the populations are small and hence over-represented.

For this reason, a second type of map is used to complement the first. These maps show the absolute number of the Aboriginal population by census subdivision (CSD) by means of point symbols that increase in size with the population. A CSD is a geographic division determined by Statistics Canada or by the provinces, and is the equivalent of a municipality; in 1996, there were 5982 of them, classified into 43 types, covering all of Canada. Four separate maps illustrate the total population of Aboriginal people, North American Indians, Métis and Inuit.

If one wishes to compare the maps, it is important to remember that each map is based on a specific data set. The class intervals used have been generated to represent the specific information on each map. Therefore it is not possible to directly compare one map with another. The best sources for comparing content remain the individual maps combined with the explanatory texts accompanying each of them.

These maps are available in four scales, namely the initial view at 1:40 000 000, a provincial view at 1:15 000 000, and regional scales of 1:7 500 000 and 1:2 000 000. Simply use the tool bar at the top of the map and click on the area of interest to obtain a close-up of the region or to move from one place to another on the map. Each zoom level allows one to see more detail on the map: more place names, main roads, Indian reserves, etc. The cartographic tool also makes it possible to view the demographic statistics used to create the maps.

The demographic databases include the following fields:

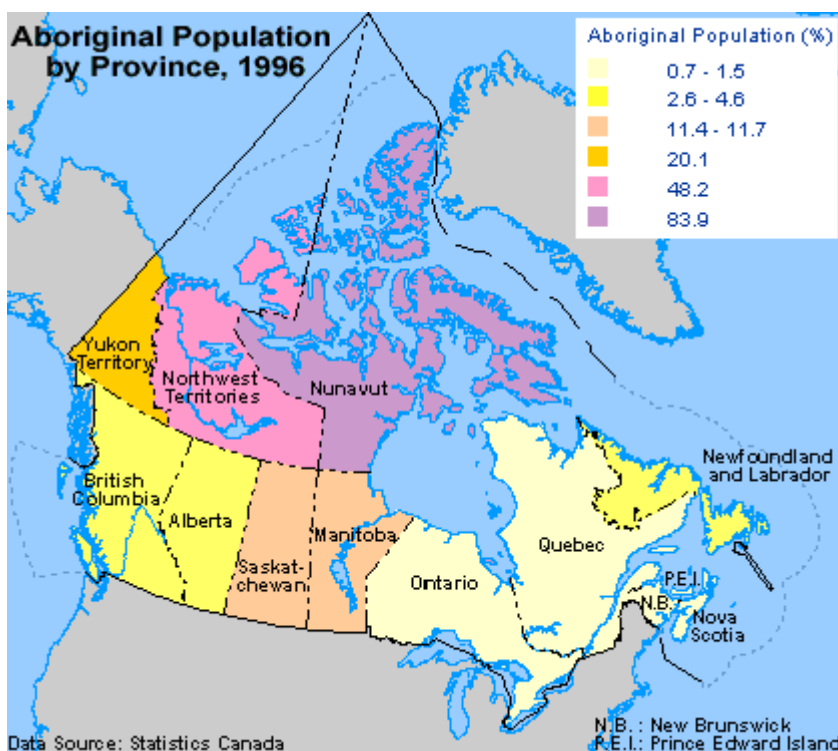
- Name of census division (CD), an intermediate region between provinces and municipalities, established by the provinces or by Statistics Canada.
- Name and type of census subdivision (CSD), a region corresponding to a municipality. The name is followed by a letter or group of letters indicating the type of CSD. The letters R, S-E, IGD, TR, VC and VK represent all lands reserved for Indians. See types of census subdivisions in the glossary for definitions of the 43 types of CSDs.
- Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population corresponds to the total population of the CD responding to question 18 on Aboriginal identity. (This total differs slightly from the CD population due mainly to rounding)
- Aboriginal population represents the total Aboriginal identity population, that is, North American Indians, Métis, Inuit, other responses and combined multiple responses.

- Inuit population represents the population that checked "Inuit" only (single responses to question 18).
- Métis population represents the population that checked "Métis" only (single responses to question 18).
- North American Indian population represents the population that checked "North American Indian" only (single responses to question 18).
- Multiple Aboriginal responses represents any combination of at least two of the following responses: North American Indian, Métis and/or Inuit.
- Other Aboriginal responses includes the responses of persons indicating in question 18 that they are not Aboriginal persons but indicating that they are Registered Indians as defined by the Indian Act (question 21) or members of an Indian band (question 20) who are not Registered Indians.
- Non-Aboriginal population includes the entire population answering "no" to question 18.
- CD population, 1996: total population of the Census Division.
- Aboriginal population (% by CD): $\text{Aboriginal population} \times 100 / \text{Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population}$.
- Profile of Canadian Communities, hyperlinks to the Statistics Canada site. The Profiles provide other 1996 Census data, notably on education, income and work, families and dwellings, for each census subdivision.

Aboriginal Population in Canada: an Overview

In the 1996 Census nearly 800 000 persons, i.e. about 3% of the Canadian population, reported that they were North American Indian, Métis or Inuit. Over two-thirds of Aboriginal persons identified themselves as North American Indians, one-quarter as Métis and one-twentieth as Inuit.

The map below gives an overview of the proportion of the Aboriginal population by province and territory. The data are taken from the question on identity in the 1996 Census. The question "Is this person an Aboriginal person, that is, a North American Indian, Métis or Inuit (Eskimo)?" was used to produce the following map. It depicts the Aboriginal population as a percentage of the total population of each province.

**Figure 1.** Percentage of Aboriginal Population by Province, 1996**Source:** Natural Resources Canada**Table 1:** Aboriginal Population

Provinces and Territories	Total Canadian Population	Total Aboriginal Population	North American Indian	Métis	Inuit	Aboriginal Population by Province (%)	Aboriginal Population in Canada (%)	Non-Aboriginal Population
Newfoundland and Labrador	547 155	14 200	5 430	4 685	4 265	2.6	1.8	532 955
Prince Edward Island	132 855	950	825	120	15	0.7	0.1	131 905
Nova Scotia	899 965	12 380	11 340	860	210	1.4	1.5	887 585
New Brunswick	729 630	10 250	9 180	975	120	1.4	1.3	719 380
Quebec	7 045 080	71 415	47 600	16 075	8 300	1.0	8.9	6 973 665
Ontario	10 642 795	141 520	118 830	22 790	1 300	1.3	17.7	10 501 275
Manitoba	1 100 295	128 680	82 990	46 195	360	11.7	16.1	971 615
Saskatchewan	976 615	111 245	75 205	36 535	190	11.4	13.9	865 370
Alberta	2 669 195	122 835	72 645	50 745	795	4.6	15.4	2 546 360
British Columbia	3 689 755	139 655	113 315	26 750	815	3.8	17.5	3 550 100
Yukon Territory	30 650	6 175	5 530	565	110	20.1	0.8	24 475
Northwest Territories	39 460	19 000	11 275	3 810	4 120	48.2	2.4	20 460
Nunavut	24 665	20 690	125	85	20 480	83.9	2.6	3 975
Canada	28 528 125	799 010	554 290	210 190	41 080	2.8	100	27 729 115

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census

The above table summarizes the population by Aboriginal group. In response to the question on Aboriginal identity, 554 290 persons identified themselves as North American Indian, 210 190 as Métis and 41 080 as Inuit. A number of persons (6550) identified themselves with more than one group; they are included in the total population in the above table.

Five Canadian provinces are home to over 80% of the Aboriginal people in Canada. The highest number of Aboriginal people lives in Ontario and British Columbia, which account for 35% of the Aboriginal citizens of Canada. Forty-five per cent live in the three Prairie Provinces of Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan. Less than ten per cent live in Quebec, five per cent in the four Atlantic Provinces and another five per cent live in the three territories.

However, proportionally, Aboriginal people are most dominant in the territories: Nunavut's population is 84% Aboriginal, that of the Northwest Territories, 48%; and that of the Yukon, 20%. Note that although the Northwest Territories included Nunavut at the time of the 1996 Census, we have produced a map displaying the three territories by separating the data for the communities of Nunavut from those for the Northwest Territories. Nunavut became a territory in 1999.

Manitoba and Saskatchewan have the highest proportion of Aboriginal people amongst the provinces: between 11% and 12% of their total populations. Alberta, British Columbia and Newfoundland have populations that are less than 5% Aboriginal. In the most populous provinces, i.e. Ontario and Quebec, as well as in the Maritimes, less than 1.5% of the total population is Aboriginal.

References

1. Canada. Statistics Canada. 1996 Census: Aboriginal data, The Daily. January 13, 1998. Ottawa, 1998. (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/980113/dq980113-eng.htm>)
2. Canada. Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Communications Branch. Words First: An Evolving Terminology Relating to Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. Ottawa, December 2000. (unpublished)

Definitions of underlined terms

Aboriginal Population: The concept of Aboriginal persons in the past has generally applied to persons resident in Canada who could trace their origins to the native people or First Nations people who inhabited the area of what is now Canada when the first Europeans arrived. In addition, some persons have gained Aboriginal rights under legislation (e.g. the spouses of Aboriginal persons). The total Aboriginal

population includes Indians (Registered, Not a Registered, Treaty), Métis and Inuit. (Source: Statistics Canada).

Census Division: Census Division (CD) is the general term applied to areas established by provincial law which are intermediate geographic areas between the municipality and the province levels. Census divisions represent counties, regional districts, regional municipalities and other types of provincially legislated areas. In Newfoundland, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, provincial law does not provide for these administrative geographic areas. Therefore, census divisions have been created by Statistics Canada in cooperation with these provinces for the dissemination of statistical data. In the Yukon Territory, the census division is equivalent to the entire Territory. (Source: 1996 Census Dictionary, Statistics Canada)

Census Subdivision Type: Census subdivisions (CSDs) are classified into various types, according to official designations adopted by provincial or federal authorities. The type indicates the municipal status of a census subdivision. The following list indicates the abbreviations used for census subdivision types:

BOR Borough
 C = City - Cité
 CC = Chartered Community
 CM = County (Municipality)
 COM = Community
 CT = Canton (Municipalité de)
 CU = Cantons unis (Municipalité de)
 DM = District Municipality
 HAM = Hamlet
 ID = Improvement District
 IGD = Indian Government District
 LGD = Local Government District
 LOT = Township and Royalty
 M = Municipalité
 MD = Municipal District
 NH = Northern Hamlet
 NT = Northern Town
 NV = Northern Village
 P = Paroisse (Municipalité de)
 PAR = Parish
 R = Indian Reserve - Réserve indienne
 RC = Rural Community
 RGM = Regional Municipality
 RM = Rural Municipality
 RV = Resort Village
 S-E = Indian Settlement - Établissement indien
 SA = Special Area
 SCM = Subdivision of CountyMunicipality
 SET = Settlement
 SM = Specialized Municipality

SRD = Subdivision of Regional District

SUN = Subdivision of Unorganized

SV = Summer Village

T = Town

TI = Terre inuite

TP = Township

TR = Terres réservées

UNO = Unorganized - Non organisé

V = Ville

VC = Village cri

VK = Village naskapi

VL = Village

VN = Village nordique

(Source: 1996 Census Dictionary, Statistics Canada)

First Nation(s): The term “First Nations” came into common usage in the 1970s to replace “band” or “Indian”, which some people found offensive. Despite its widespread use, there is no legal definition for this term in Canada. The term itself has two main uses –

- (1) First Nations people: Many people today prefer to be called “First Nations” or “First Nations people” instead of “Indians”. Generally, First Nations people is used to describe both Status and Non-Status Indians. The term is rarely used as a synonym for “Aboriginal peoples” (i.e., it usually doesn’t include Inuit or Métis people);
- (2) First Nation: First Nation has been adopted by some Indian communities to replace the term “Indian band”. Many Indian bands started to replace the word “band” in their name with “First Nation” in the 1980s. (Source: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development)

Indian Band: A band is a community of Indians for whom lands have been set apart, and for whom money is held by the Crown. A band is also a body of Indians declared by the Governor-in-Council to be a band for the purposes of the Indian Act. Many bands today prefer to be called “First Nations” and have changed their names to incorporate “First Nation”. (Source: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development)

Indian Reserve: A reserve is the land that is set aside by the Crown for the use and benefit of a band in Canada. Many First Nations now prefer the term “First Nation community”, and no longer use “reserve”. (Source: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development)

Indian Reserve (R) is one of Statistics Canada’s census subdivision (CSD) type. Other CSD types which include First Nation communities are: Indian Government District (IGD), Indian settlement (S-E), Terres réservées (TR), Village cri (VC) and Village naskapi (VK). (Source: Statistics Canada)

Inuit: Inuit are the Aboriginal people of Arctic Canada. The word “Inuit” means “the people” in Inuktitut, the Inuit language, and is the term by which Inuit refer to themselves. The term “Eskimo”, applied to Inuit by European explorers, is no longer used in Canada. (Source: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development)

Métis: The word “Métis” is French for “mixed blood”. The Canadian Constitution recognizes Métis people as one of the three Aboriginal peoples. Historically, the term “Métis” applied to the children of French fur traders and Cree women in the Prairies, and of English and Scottish traders and Dene women in the North. Today, the term is used broadly to describe people with mixed First Nations and European ancestry who identify themselves as Métis. They are distinct from Indian people, Inuit, or non-Aboriginal people. (Many Canadians have mixed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ancestry, but not all identify themselves as Métis.) (Source: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development)

Non-Aboriginal people: The term non-Aboriginal people refers to anyone who is not an Aboriginal person. Note that the “non” in non-Aboriginal stays lower case. (Source: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development)

Non-Status Indians (Not Registered Indians): Non-Status Indians are people who consider themselves Indians or members of a First Nation but whom the Government of Canada does not recognize as Indians under the Indian Act, either because they are unable to prove their status or have lost their status rights. Non-Status Indians are not entitled to the same rights and benefits available to Status Indians. [Statistics Canada has used “Not Registered Indians” in the 1996 Census.] (Source: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development)

Registered or Treaty Indian: Refers to those persons who reported they were registered under the Indian Act of Canada. Treaty Indians are persons who are registered under the Indian Act and can prove descent from a band that signed a treaty. Although there was a question in the 1991 Census on registration status, the layout of the 1996 question was somewhat different. In 1991, Question 16 on Registered Indians had two components. In the first part of the question, respondents were asked about their registration status, while the second part of the question dealt with band membership. The question used in 1996 asked only for registration or treaty status, while band membership was dealt with in a separate question.

The wording of the question, starting in 1996, differs slightly from the one in previous censuses. Prior to 1996, the term ‘treaty’ was not included in the question. It was added in 1996 at the request of individuals from the Western provinces, where the term is more widely used.

The 2006 Census question is the same as the one used in 1996 and 2001. (Source: Statistics Canada. 2006 Census Dictionary)

Status Indians (Registered Indians): Status Indians are people who are entitled to have their names included on the Indian Register, an official list maintained by the federal government. Certain criteria determine who can be registered as a Status Indian. Only Status Indians are recognized as Indians under the Indian Act, which defines an Indian as “a person who, pursuant to this Act, is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian.” Status Indians are entitled to certain

rights and benefits under the law. [Statistics Canada has used “Registered Indians” in the 1996 Census.] (Source: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development)

