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Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2001 - initial findings: Well-being of the non-reserve Aboriginal Population



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Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2001 - initial findings: Well-being of the non-reserve Aboriginal Population

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.	not available for any reference period
..	not available for a specific reference period
...	not applicable
P	preliminary
r	revised
x	confidentiality to meet secrecy requirements of the <i>Statistics Act</i>
E	use with caution
F	too unreliable to be published

Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2001 – Initial findings: Well-being of the non-reserve Aboriginal population

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Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2001 – Initial findings: Well-being of the non-reserve Aboriginal population

Framework for Analysis

This report presents the initial findings of the 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS). It is a statistical portrait of the well-being of the Aboriginal population living in non-reserve areas across Canada. The concept of well-being is a complex one with physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects. While it is difficult to completely measure well-being using quantitative methods, APS findings can contribute to an understanding of the experiences and living conditions of Aboriginal people in Canada.

The complex interrelation between physical, mental/intellectual, spiritual, and emotional facets of well-being is a theme explored by many Indigenous cultures. For example, many Aboriginal societies use the “Medicine Wheel”, a symbol of holistic healing that embodies these four elements of “whole health”. The natural world is also a key part of well-being because of the intrinsic connections and interrelationships between people and the environment in which they live. Well-being flows from balance and harmony among these elements.

This report takes the broad topic of the well-being of the non-reserve Aboriginal population and uses several different indicators to explore the physical, mental/intellectual, emotional and spiritual facets of well-being. The result is a more complete picture of the well-being of the non-reserve Aboriginal population in Canada.

Setting the context¹

Aboriginal population: young, growing and increasingly urbanized

Analysis in this report refers to the “non-reserve Aboriginal identity population”. In the 2001 Census, about 713,000 people living in non-reserve areas identified themselves as Aboriginal, that is, as North American Indian, Métis or Inuit. Also included here are those that did not identify as Aboriginal but who were registered under the Indian Act and/or were members of a Band or First Nation. The non-reserve population excludes people living on Indian reserves². It makes-up over 70%³ of the total Aboriginal identity population in Canada, and includes people who live in Canada’s largest cities, other urban areas, rural areas and in the Canadian Arctic⁴.

Aboriginal people live in every province and territory, although according to the 2001 Census the highest concentrations of Aboriginal people were in the North and in the Prairie provinces. While Ontario had the largest number of Aboriginal people living in non-reserve areas (148,000), the population made up only 1% of the total provincial population. The non-reserve Aboriginal population represented 9% of the total population in Manitoba, 10% in Saskatchewan and 4% in Alberta. In the territories, the non-reserve Aboriginal population comprised a much higher proportion of the total population. For example, 85% of the population in Nunavut said they were Aboriginal.

The Aboriginal population is young and growing. The 2001 Census showed that nearly half of the non-reserve Aboriginal population was under the age of 25, compared to 32% of the non-Aboriginal population. Most of the non-reserve Aboriginal population (68%) lived in urban areas. Almost 40% were residing in census metropolitan areas, that is, cities with a population of more than 100,000 people.

Three Aboriginal groups: Inuit, Métis and North American Indian

In Canada, the Aboriginal population consists of three broad groups: Inuit, Métis and North American Indian. Each of these groups is linguistically and culturally distinct. Even within these groups, there is much diversity, as Aboriginal peoples across the country have many unique histories, cultures and traditions.

Inuit

In the 2001 Census, about 46,000 people living in non-reserve areas reported having Inuit identity. This group represented about 6% of the total non-reserve Aboriginal population. The majority of Inuit lived in the following four Inuit regions of the Canadian Arctic as defined by the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami:

- the northern coastal and southeastern area of *Labrador*, home to 7% of Inuit
- *Nunavik*, which lies north of the 55th parallel in Quebec, where 19% of the Inuit population lived
- the territory of *Nunavut*, home to about one-half of the Inuit population
- the *Inuvialuit* region in the northwestern corner of the Northwest Territories, home to about 7% of the Inuit population.

In 2001, about one-fifth of Inuit lived outside these areas. Of those residing outside of the Canadian Arctic, most lived in urban areas in southern Canada.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all data in this section are from the 2001 Census.

² For the purpose of this report, the Aboriginal non-reserve population includes the total Aboriginal population of the Northwest Territories. See *Note to Users* for detailed definition of “non-reserve”.

³ Not included in this calculation are those living in incompletely enumerated Indian reserves or Indian settlements.

⁴ For a definition of Canadian Arctic, urban and rural, see the section entitled “Terms”.

The Inuit population is young and growing. Between 1996 and 2001, high fertility rates and increasing life expectancy contributed to a 12% increase in the Inuit population. In 2001, about one-half of the Inuit population was under the age of 20, making the Inuit the youngest population of the three Aboriginal groups.

Métis

About 295,000 people living in non-reserve areas reported having Métis identity in the 2001 Census. This group represented about 40% of the total Aboriginal non-reserve population in Canada.

In 2001, the majority of the non-reserve Métis population (69%) lived in urban areas, while 31% lived in rural areas. The largest Métis population was in Alberta, home to 22% of Métis people. Manitoba had the second-largest Métis population. The census metropolitan areas with the largest Métis populations were Winnipeg, with about 31,000, and Edmonton, with 21,000.

The Métis population underwent tremendous growth from 1996 to 2001. While the Canadian population increased 3.4%, the Métis population increased 43%. High birth rates, increased life expectancy and improved enumeration contributed to this growth, as did a growing number of people newly reporting Métis identity.

North American Indian

North American Indian people make up the largest Aboriginal group. According to the 2001 Census, approximately 358,000 people living in non-reserve areas identified as North American Indian, representing about one-half of the total non-reserve Aboriginal population. The majority of the North American Indian non-reserve population was residing in urban areas, with about 43% in census metropolitan areas.

Unlike the Métis and Inuit, a significant number of North American Indian people live on Indian reserves (First Nation communities). There are some differences in characteristics between the North American Indian population living in reserve communities and those living in non-reserve areas. For example, a higher percentage of people living in reserve communities can speak an Aboriginal language. Therefore, it is important to note that the following report focuses only on the non-reserve population.

Terms

Aboriginal Identity Population refers to those people who reported on the APS: 1) being North American Indian, Métis and/or Inuit, and/or 2) having registered Indian status as defined by the *Indian Act*, and/or 3) having Band or First Nation membership.

Non-reserve population includes Aboriginal people who do not live on Indian reserves. For the purposes of this report, the total Aboriginal population of the Northwest Territories is also included, i.e. those residing in both reserve and non-reserve areas.

Canadian Arctic: refers to the four Inuit regions as defined by the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, where the majority of Inuit live: 1) the northern coastal and southeastern area of Labrador; 2) Nunavik, which lies north of the 55th parallel in Quebec; 3) the territory of Nunavut, and; 4) the Inuvialuit region in the northwestern corner of the Northwest Territories. In this report, the Canadian Arctic is also referred to as the **Far North**. See *Note to readers* for a map of the Canadian Arctic.

Urban areas: refers to areas outside of the Canadian Arctic with a minimum population concentration of 1,000 persons and population density of at least 400 people per square kilometre.

Rural areas: refers to all areas outside of the Canadian Arctic and urban areas.

This report refers to three Aboriginal groups: **North American Indian, Métis and Inuit**. These groups include those people who reported both single and multiple identities. For example, a person who reported identifying as both North American Indian and Métis would be counted in both the North American Indian population *and* the Métis population. However, such persons are only counted once in the total Aboriginal Identity population.

HEALTH

Health is a key component of well-being. This section reviews self-rated health status, levels of chronic conditions and contact with health professionals to explore the health status of the non-reserve Aboriginal population as a component of well-being.

Self-rated health status

Self-rated health status is considered a reliable indicator of health that successfully crosses cultural lines, and one that permits some assessment of positive health as opposed to just the absence of disease (Idler and Benyamini 1997; Shields and Shoostari 2001). Previous studies have found that asking respondents to rate their own health status on a scale from poor to excellent is “as good or better than measures such as functional ability, chronic diseases and psychological well-being” (Shields and Shoostari 2001:35).

Research has also shown that there are many factors that influence the way people rate their health status, including age, gender, and the presence of chronic conditions. In addition to other determinants of health such as maintaining a healthy weight and taking part in physical activity, there is a strong positive link between health status and socio-economic factors, such as having high levels of education and being employed (Shields and Shoostari 2001; Health Canada 2003a).

Majority of non-reserve Aboriginal population reported excellent or very good health

In the 2001 APS, the majority of the non-reserve Aboriginal population aged 15 or older – 56% – reported excellent or very good health. About 17% reported fair or poor health, and the remaining 26% described their health as good.

Men were somewhat more likely to rate their health as excellent or very good. The 2001 APS showed that 59% of Aboriginal men did so, compared with 54% of Aboriginal women. While differences between the sexes were smaller among older age groups, men in younger age groups were much more likely than women to rate their own health as very good or excellent.

About three-quarters (74%) of men aged 15 to 24 reported excellent or very good health status, compared with 65% of women in the same age group. Among individuals aged 25 to 34, 68% of men reported excellent or very good health status, as did 62% of women. (Table 1)

Table 1: Self-rated health status by age and sex, Aboriginal identity population, non-reserve, Canada, 2001

Age groups	Self-rated health status					
	Women			Men		
	Excellent or very good	Good	Fair or poor	Excellent or very good	Good	Fair or poor
15-24	65	29	7	74	20	5
25-34	62	27	11	68	24	8
35-44	54	29	16	57	26	17
45-64	41	26	33	45	27	27
65 and over	23	32	45	25	32	44
Total	54	28	18	59	25	16

Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2001

Not surprisingly, the likelihood of self-rating health as excellent or very good declined with each successive age group. The proportion of Aboriginal people rating their health as “excellent or very good” was highest

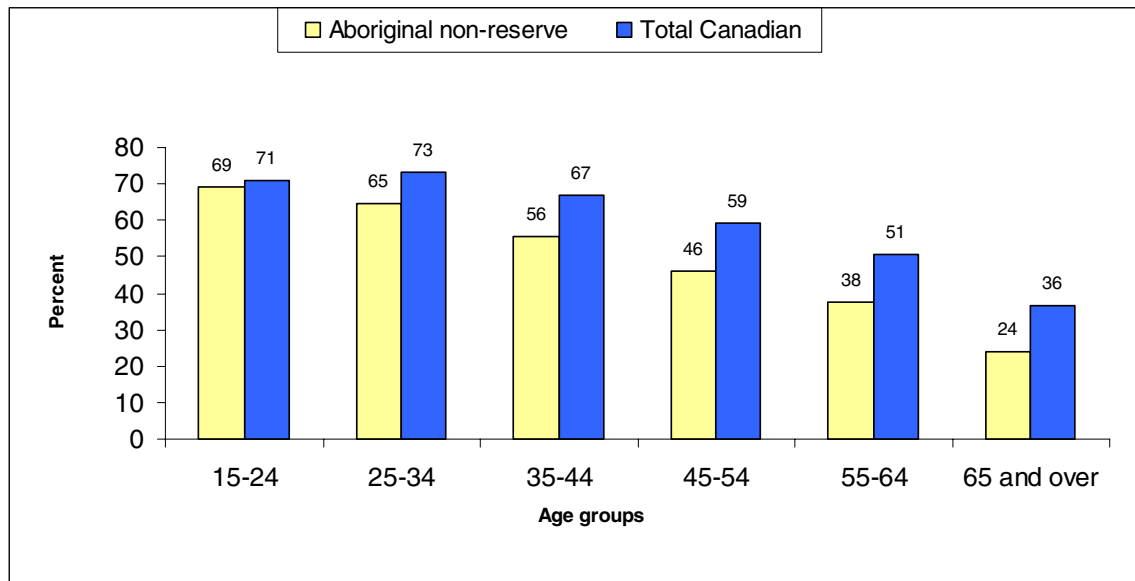
among those aged 15-24 (69%), and lowest among those 65 and over (24%). This pattern of declining health status among successive age groups is also found in the total Canadian population.

Aboriginal youth report health status on par with other Canadian youth

Overall, the Aboriginal non-reserve population rated their health status lower than the total Canadian population. However, among young adults this gap was negligible.

About 69% of Aboriginal people aged 15-24 in non-reserve areas rated their health as very good or excellent, compared with 71% of the total population in the same age group. (Chart 1) As the Aboriginal population is the fastest growing component of the youth population, these young people will play a pivotal role in the future.

Chart 1: Excellent or very good self-rated health status, Canada, 2001



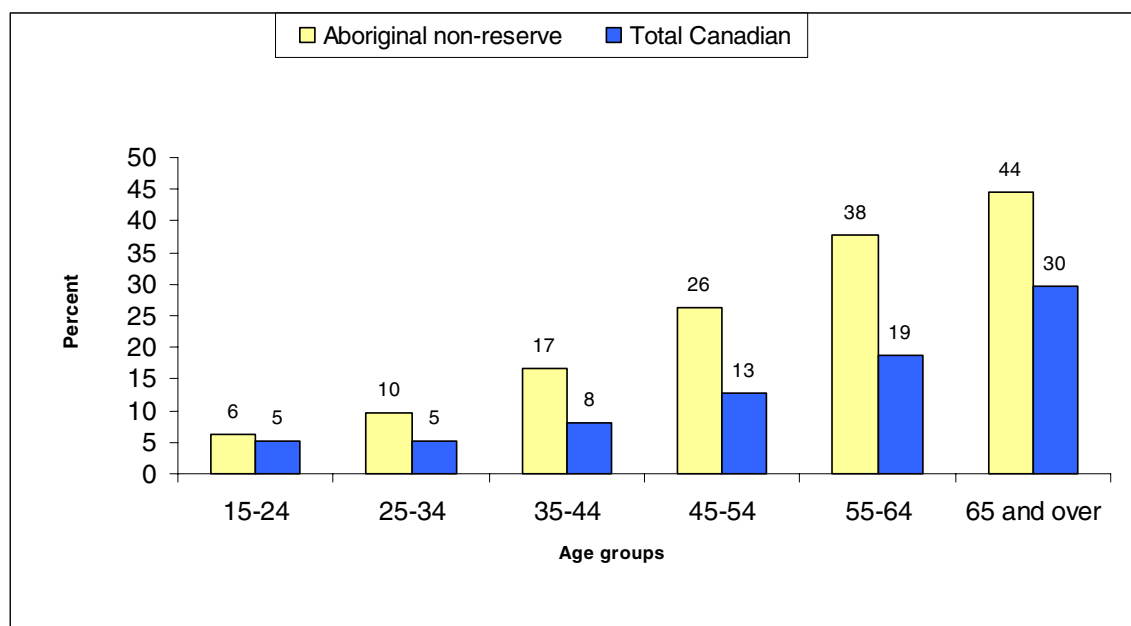
Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2001 and Canadian Community Health Survey, 2000-01.

While Aboriginal young people report similar levels of health status to the total Canadian youth population, in general the health status of Aboriginal people declines more quickly than the total population with each successive age group. As a result, the gap between the health status of Aboriginal people and the total Canadian population widens in older age groups.

As Chart 2 illustrates, for every age group between 25 and 64, the proportion of Aboriginal people reporting fair or poor health is about double that of the total population.

The effect is even more pronounced among Aboriginal women. For example, 41% of Aboriginal women aged 55-64 reported fair or poor health, compared with 19% of women in the same age group in the total Canadian population. Among individuals aged 65 and over, 45% of Aboriginal women reported fair or poor health, compared with 29% in the total female population.

Chart 2: Fair or poor self-rated health status, Canada, 2001



Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2001 and Canadian Community Health Survey, 2000-01.

Chronic Conditions

Arthritis or rheumatism most commonly reported chronic condition among Aboriginal adults

Differences in health ratings are also linked to the existence of chronic conditions. Individuals with chronic conditions rated their health as fair or poor more often than those without chronic conditions.

In the 2001 APS, 45% of the Aboriginal population aged 15 and over reported having one or more chronic conditions, that is, a health condition that had been diagnosed by a health-care professional and had lasted, or was expected to last, at least six months.

Arthritis or rheumatism, high blood pressure and asthma were the most commonly reported chronic conditions for the Aboriginal adult population (those aged 15 and over). Among Aboriginal children (those aged 14 and under) living in non-reserve areas, allergies, asthma and ear infections or ear problems were the most commonly reported chronic conditions. Allergies were reported by 15.5%, asthma by 12.1% and ear infections or ear problems by 9.8%.

Among the adult population, 19.3% of the non-reserve Aboriginal population reported arthritis or rheumatism, nearly twice the proportion of 11% among the total Canadian population. Similarly, 12.0% of the Aboriginal population reported high blood pressure, compared with 8.7% among the total population, while 11.6% of the Aboriginal population reported asthma, slightly higher than the 10.3% for the total population.⁵

Diabetes most prominent among older Aboriginal women

Rates of diabetes were considerably higher for the non-reserve Aboriginal population than for the total Canadian population, and were particularly high among older Aboriginal women. Seven percent of the Aboriginal non-reserve population reported diabetes, compared with 4.3% of the total Canadian population.

⁵ Rates of arthritis/rheumatism, high blood pressure and asthma for the total Canadian population have been age standardized to reflect the age structure of the non-reserve Aboriginal population.

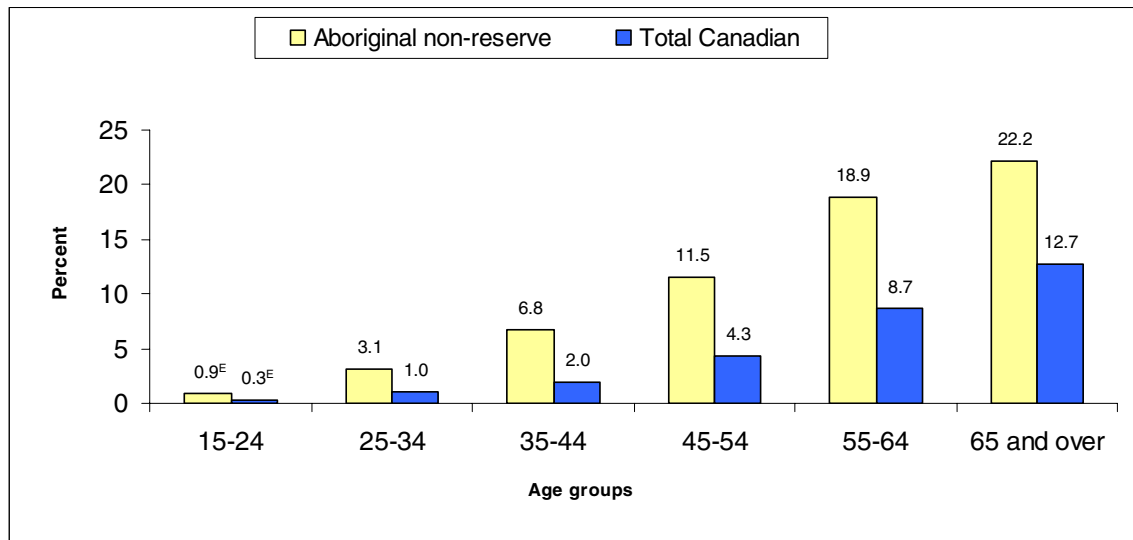
If the different age structure of the Aboriginal population and the total population were taken into account through age standardization, the gap would be even larger: 7% compared with 2.9%.

Diabetes was particularly prevalent among older people in both the Aboriginal and total Canadian populations. However, rates of diabetes were higher in the Aboriginal population. Among the non-reserve Aboriginal population, the prevalence of diabetes increased in each successive age group. About 1%^E of Aboriginal people aged 15-24 reported having been diagnosed with diabetes. This rose to a high of 22.2% for seniors aged 65 and over. (Chart 3)

There was little difference in the prevalence of diabetes between the sexes, except in the older age groups. Nearly one in four Aboriginal women aged 65 and over had been diagnosed with diabetes, compared with one in five Aboriginal men. The situation was opposite in the total population. About 15% of senior men aged 65 and over had been diagnosed with diabetes, as opposed to 11% of senior women.

In addition to high rates, according to Health Canada, diabetes is a significant concern for the Aboriginal population because of “early onset, greater severity at diagnosis, high rates of complications, lack of accessible services, increasing trends, and increasing prevalence of risk factors for a population already at risk.” (Health Canada 2000).

Chart 3: Percentage of population diagnosed with diabetes, Canada, 2001



Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2001 and Canadian Community Health Survey, 2000-01.

Diabetes most prevalent among North American Indian population

Diabetes among the non-reserve Aboriginal population was most prevalent in the North American Indian population, where 8.3% of the population age 15 and over was diagnosed with diabetes, as opposed to 6% of the Métis population and 2.3% of the Inuit population.

Rates of diabetes have risen for North American Indian adults not living on reserve since 1991 when the rate was 5.3%. Rates for the Métis and Inuit changed only slightly: 5.5% for Métis and 1.9% for Inuit adults in 1991.

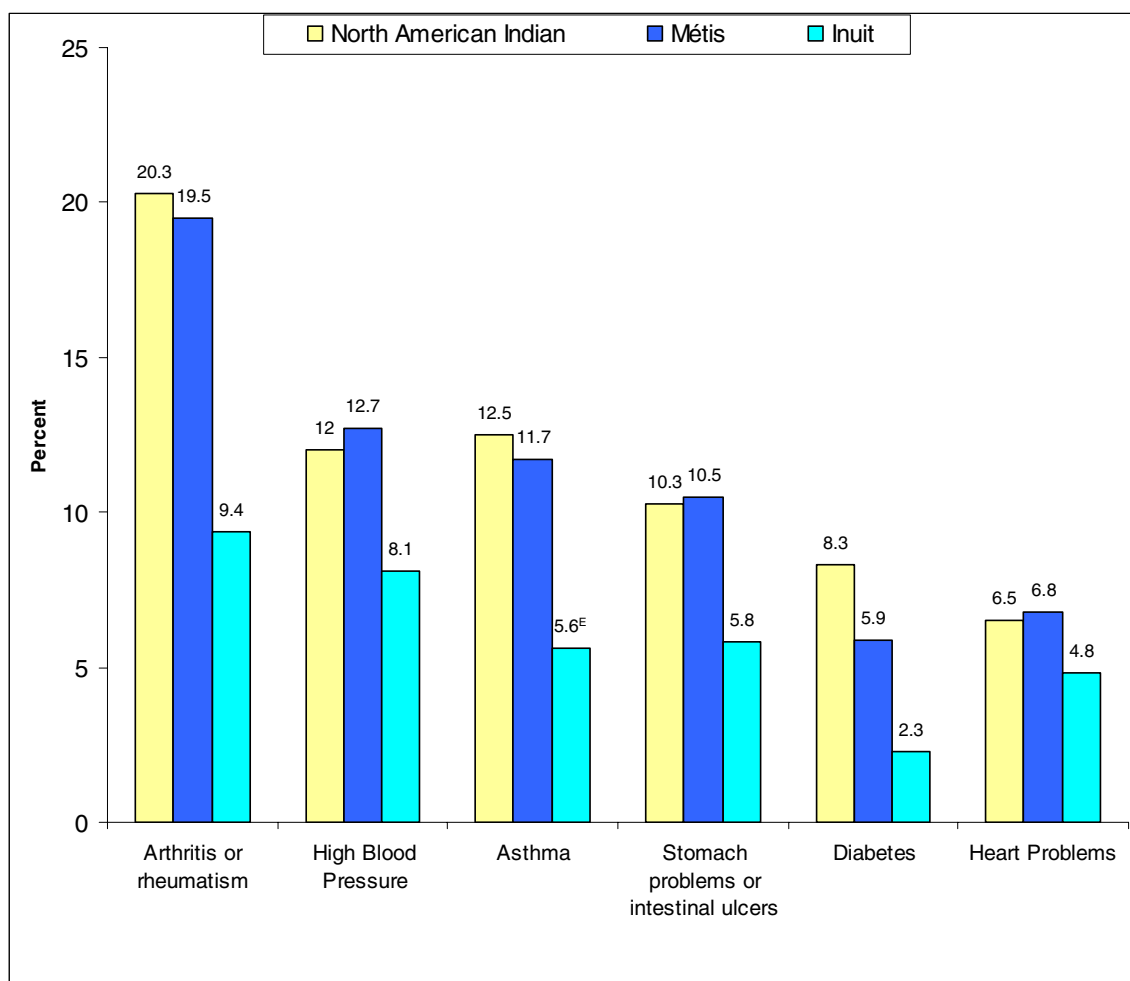
According to Health Canada, there is evidence that the prevalence of diabetes is higher among the Aboriginal population living on-reserve. (Health Canada 2000) If this group were included, it is likely that the rate of diabetes for the total Aboriginal population (both those living in reserve and non-reserve areas combined) would be higher than 7%.

The six most prevalent chronic conditions for the North American Indian, Métis and Inuit populations were: arthritis or rheumatism; high blood pressure; asthma; stomach problems or intestinal ulcers; diabetes; and heart problems (Chart 4). The North American Indian and Métis populations reported similar levels for most of these chronic conditions, while the Inuit had lower rates.

Many factors may be contributing to the relatively lower levels of chronic conditions in the Inuit population. As there is less contact with health care professionals in the Canadian Arctic, where the majority of Inuit live, there may be many undiagnosed chronic conditions.⁶

In addition, the Inuit population is younger than the North American Indian and Métis populations; nearly half of Inuit are under the age of 20. Generally, those in younger age groups are less likely to report chronic conditions.

Chart 4: Percentage of population with selected chronic conditions, Aboriginal identity non-reserve population, 15 years and over, Canada, 2001



Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2001.

⁶ A 1998 study found that while Aboriginal people living in the territories rated their health less positively than other northern residents, there was a relatively low prevalence of chronic conditions. The report suggested that this apparent anomaly may have been due to a substantial number of Aboriginal people with *undiagnosed* conditions (Diverly 1998).

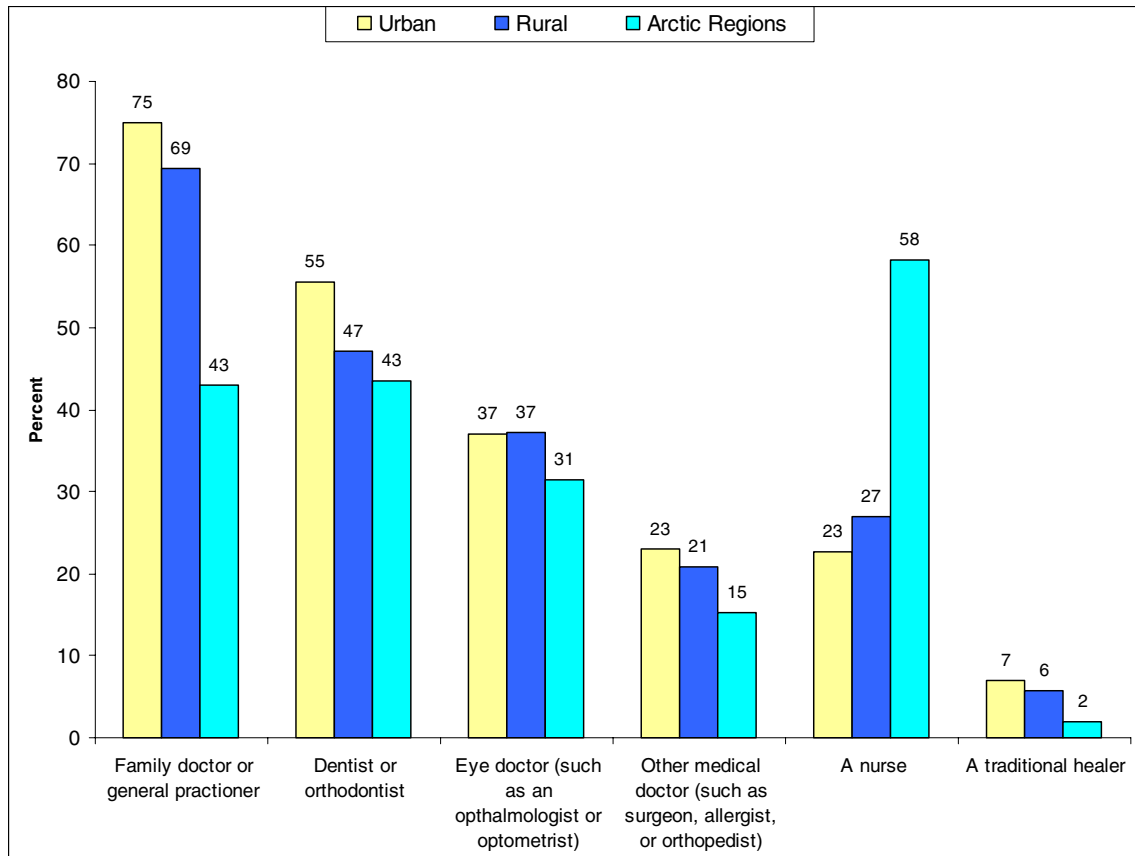
Contact with health professionals

In Canadian Arctic, Aboriginal people reported fewer contacts with health professionals

The 2001 APS showed that access to health care professionals remains an issue for Aboriginal people living in the Canadian Arctic. The Aboriginal population in the Far North had less contact with family doctors and general practitioners than Aboriginal people living in other regions. About 43% of the Aboriginal population in the Canadian Arctic had such contact, compared with 75% of those in urban areas and 69% in rural areas. In contrast, the 2000/01 Canadian Community Health Survey showed that 82% of the total Canadian population had seen a medical doctor in the 12 months prior to the survey.

The Aboriginal population living in the Canadian Arctic was more likely to have had contact with nurses – 58% – as opposed to other types of health professionals. These differences are likely due to the type of health care professionals available to people living in the Canadian Arctic.

Chart 5: Contact with health professionals, Aboriginal identity non-reserve population, 15 years and over, Canada, 2001



Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2001.

One-third of Aboriginal people living in urban areas had access to traditional medicines

About 31% of the non-reserve Aboriginal population had access to First Nations, Métis or Inuit traditional medicines, healing or wellness practices in their city, town or community, according to the 2001 APS. The highest percentage was found in urban areas, where 34% of the population reported having access to traditional medicines, compared with 26% in rural areas and 14% in the Canadian Arctic.

While one-third of the urban Aboriginal population reported having access to traditional healing practices, just as many reported that they did not know if such health practices were available in their community.

About 7% of the urban Aboriginal population had contacted a traditional healer about their physical, emotional or mental health in the 12 months prior to the survey.

SCHOOLING

Education has been called “the key that unlocks the door to the future” (RCAP 1996b:161). There are many types of knowledge and many things of great value that can be learned outside the classroom.

However, a sound formal education is increasingly important for participation in today’s workforce and is often a key component of mental and intellectual well-being. This section examines various aspects of education among the Aboriginal non-reserve population, and contains information on attendance at residential schools.

Young Aboriginal people in the school system

More Aboriginal youth finishing secondary school

As large numbers of people retire and leave the work force in coming years, employment opportunities will exist for many well educated young Aboriginal people. Aboriginal youth are making strides that could contribute to their success in the paid labour market. Since 1996, a larger percentage of Aboriginal youth have graduated from secondary school.

According to the census, just over one-half (52%) of non-reserve Aboriginal people aged 20 to 24 in 1996 had incomplete secondary school as their highest level of schooling. By 2001, this figure had declined to 48%. The comparable figure for the total Canadian non-reserve population in this age group in 2001 was 26%.

Youth in all three main Aboriginal groups made gains during this five-year period, although the situation improved more substantially for some groups than for others. For Inuit aged 20 to 24, the percentage with less than high school dropped from 66% in 1996 to 59% in 2001. Among Métis in the same age group, the figure declined from 47% to 42%. However, the situation for non-reserve North American Indian youth remained unchanged at 52%.

Obstacles to elementary and secondary school completion

Despite progress, Aboriginal youth still face challenges in the school environment. Several factors have contributed to many young Aboriginal people leaving the school system early.

According to the 2001 APS, the most common reason that young Aboriginal people aged 15 to 19 left elementary or secondary school early was that they were bored⁷. One-fifth (20%) of young people reported this reason. About 15% said they left school because they wanted to work.

Reasons differed between young men and women. Nearly one-quarter of young men aged 15 to 19 (24%) said they left school because they were bored, while 19% said they wanted to work. Among women in this age group, one-quarter (25%) cited pregnancy or the need to care for children, while 15% said they were bored, the second most common reason.

Aboriginal people more likely to complete their schooling later in life

Some young people aged 15 to 19 who leave the school system before graduating from secondary school will eventually return to school to complete their studies. Aboriginal people are more likely than others to return to school later in life.

According to the 2001 Census, 9% of the non-reserve Aboriginal population aged 20 to 64 was attending school full-time, compared with 7% of the total Canadian non-reserve population. In fact, a higher

⁷ Information in this section excludes those that never attended school.

percentage of Aboriginal adults attended school full-time in 2001, compared with all Canadians in every age group except those 20 to 24.

For example, among those aged 25 to 29, 14% of non-reserve Aboriginal people attended school full-time compared with 11% of the total Canadian non-reserve population the same age. The picture was similar for people aged 30 to 34 where the percentages were 10% for the non-reserve Aboriginal population and 5% for all Canadians not living on reserve.

Aboriginal people making progress at the post-secondary level

The situation among non-reserve Aboriginal people is also improving at the post-secondary level. Census data for 1996 show that 34% of Aboriginal people aged 25 to 44 residing in non-reserve areas had completed post-secondary studies. By 2001, this figure had risen to 39%. The 2001 proportion for the total Canadian non-reserve population was higher at 55%.

However, the post-secondary gap between Aboriginal people and others has narrowed slightly with time. In 1996, for every 100 non-Aboriginal people aged 25 to 44 with a post-secondary diploma or degree, there were 68 Aboriginal people⁸. By 2001, this ratio had increased slightly to 71 Aboriginal people for every 100 non-Aboriginal people.

Each of the three main Aboriginal groups in the country made progress at the post-secondary level over this time period. The percentage of North American Indian people aged 25 to 44 with a completed post-secondary education rose from 34% to 38%. Figures for the Métis went from 35% to 42%, while the percentage for Inuit increased slightly from 30% to 32%⁹.

Family responsibilities top list of reasons for not completing post-secondary studies

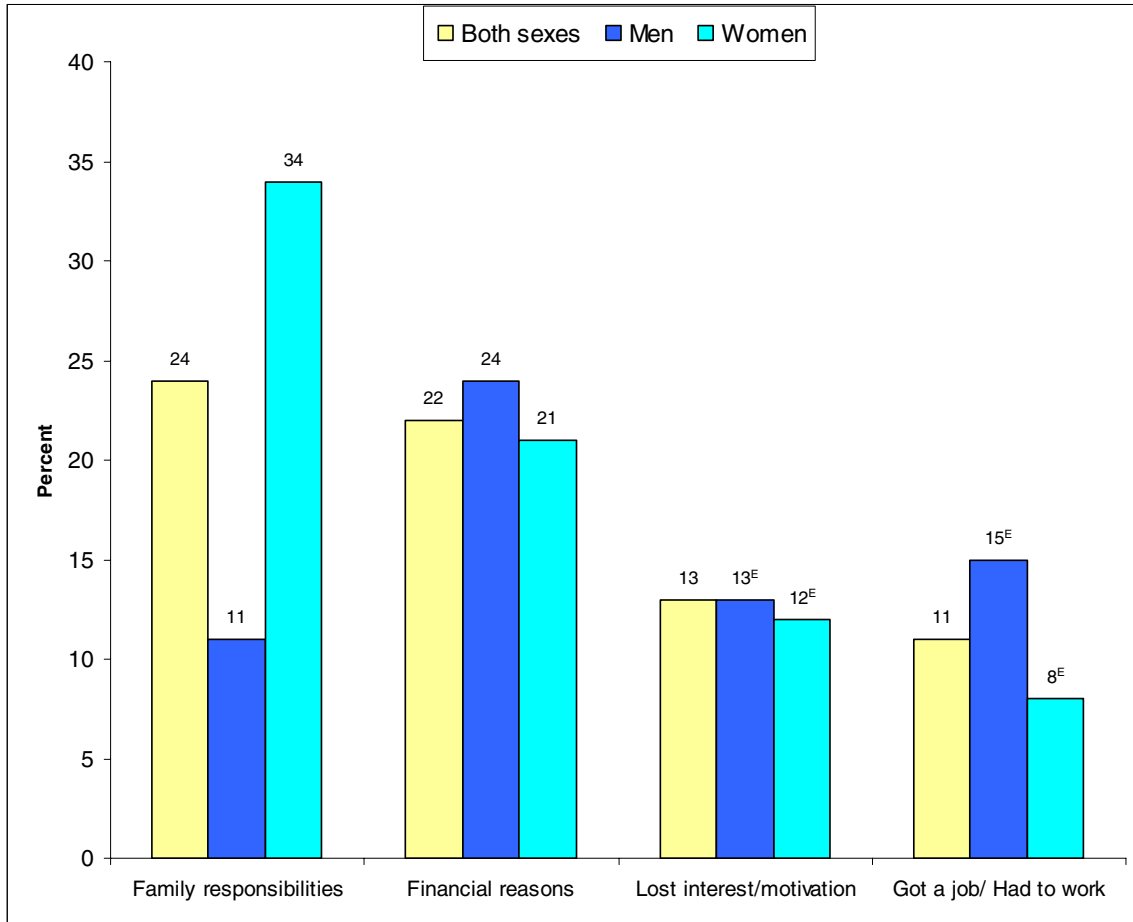
Family responsibilities and finances topped the list of reasons among the Aboriginal non-reserve population for not finishing post-secondary studies, according to the 2001 APS. Family responsibilities were cited by 24% of individuals aged 25 to 44, while 22% of people cited financial reasons (Chart 6).

Again, reasons differed among men and women. Men were most likely to report financial reasons (24%) while the reason most frequently cited by women was family responsibilities (34%).

⁸ The post-secondary gap is measured by taking the ratio of the Aboriginal post-secondary completion rate to the non-Aboriginal rate. The closer the ratio is to 100, the narrower the gap between the two groups.

⁹ People who were attending school at the time of the 2001 Census are not included.

Chart 6: Selected reasons for not finishing post-secondary schooling, Aboriginal identity population age 25-44, non-reserve, Canada, 2001



Note: respondents could have provided more than one reason

Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2001.

Aboriginal specific preschool programs most common in Far North

In recent years, early childhood development programs designed specifically for Aboriginal children have been introduced in many communities. According to the APS, in non-reserve areas, 53% of Aboriginal children aged 4 to 14 had attended some type of early childhood development or preschool program. Of these, 18% had taken part in a program specifically designed for Aboriginal children.

Programs of this type were most common in the North. In the Canadian Arctic, roughly one-third (34%) of Aboriginal children had gone to a preschool program. Of these children, 62% were part of a program specifically for Aboriginal children.

The rates for rural and urban areas were similar. Just over half of children had taken part in a preschool program and of these, about 16% were in a program for Aboriginal children.

Inuit youth most likely to have been taught by Aboriginal teachers

The presence of Aboriginal teachers and aides in the classroom could lead to a more positive education experience as they can serve as role models and may have an approach to education that is more culturally relevant for Aboriginal students.

APS data show that among Aboriginal youth aged 15 to 24 living in non-reserve areas, 30% said that they had had an Aboriginal teacher or aide. Young Inuit in the Far North were most likely to have had an Aboriginal teacher or aide - 81% - well above the 32% of non-reserve North American Indian youth and 22% of Métis young people.

Older Aboriginal people were less likely to have been taught by an Aboriginal teacher or aide: 18% of those aged 24 to 44 and 7% of Aboriginal people aged 45 to 64.

Residential Schools

For over a century, the residential school system operated across Canada, leaving a lasting impact on several generations of Aboriginal people. In many cases, this system negatively impacted students' physical, emotional, cultural and spiritual well-being. This section focuses on the percentage of Aboriginal people in non-reserve areas that attended a residential school and the attendance of other family members.

The data shown in this report are for those living in non-reserve areas only and do not include a large number of people living in First Nations communities who attended residential school (see the box entitled "*Residential School System: A Background*"). The latter will be discussed in a forthcoming report.

It is important to note that all the percentages of people attending residential school are based on the population that ever attended school. People without any formal schooling are not included.

Residential school system: A backgrounder

The residential school system operated across Canada between 1800 and 1990, peaking in 1930 when 80 schools were in operation. Residential schools were largely operated by churches (Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist and Presbyterian) and funded by the federal government. Aboriginal children were sent to residential schools across the country. However, higher percentages of children in British Columbia, the Prairies and the North attended residential school. (Aboriginal Healing Foundation 2002).

Often, children were separated from their families and their communities to attend residential school. While not all children had negative experiences in these schools, incidents of abuse have been cited by many former students. The system has contributed to a loss of language and culture among Aboriginal people, as a key objective of the residential school system was the assimilation of Aboriginal children.

The negative effects of these schools have, in many cases, been passed from one generation to the next. As a result, even though the residential school system no longer exists, an intergenerational legacy remains, affecting many Aboriginal people and their communities (Aboriginal Healing Foundation 2002; RCAP 1996c).

The 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) asked respondents: "Were you ever a student at a federal residential school or industrial school?". They were also asked if they had any family members who were ever students at schools of this type. Private boarding schools and boarding at a college residence were excluded.

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation estimates the number of residential school attendees still living at about 90,000 Aboriginal people. According to the 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 33,800 Aboriginal people living in non-reserve areas age 15 and over attended residential school. However, excluded from this APS count are residential school attendees living in First Nations communities, those in institutions such as hospitals and prisons, people living outside of the country and those that do not report Aboriginal ancestry or origins, among others. Based on 2001 APS and census data, the total (in reserve and non-reserve areas) still living who attended residential school is estimated to be between 80,000 and 90,000.

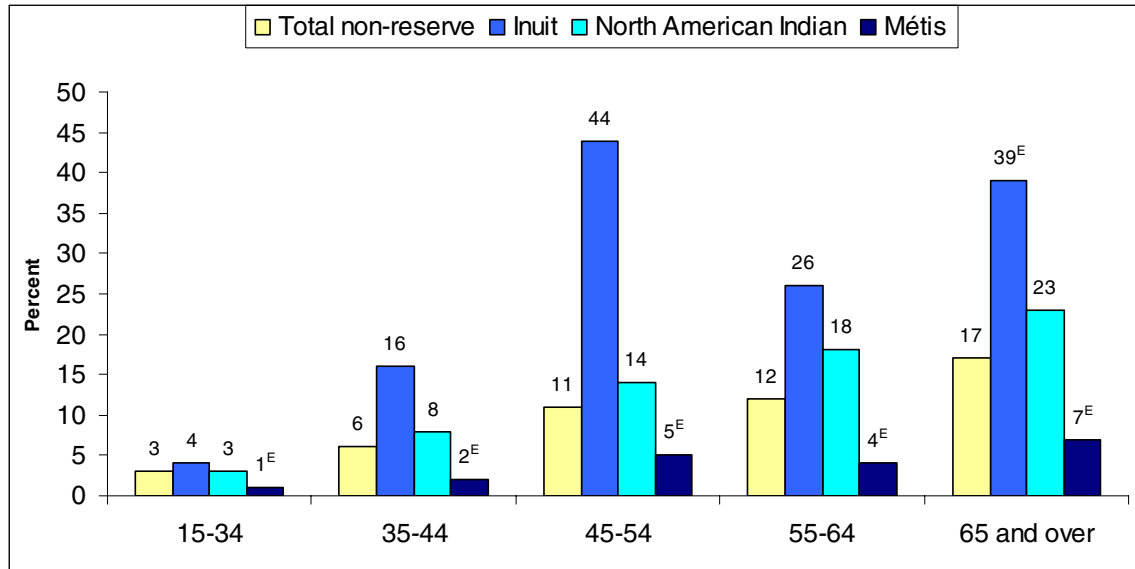
Many Aboriginal people in non-reserve areas aged 35 and over attended residential school

About 33,800 Aboriginal people aged 15 and over residing in non-reserve areas, attended a residential school. This represented 6% of the Aboriginal population with some formal education¹⁰. However, there were many differences by age and Aboriginal group. About 10% of those aged 35 and over attended a school of this type. People aged 65 and over were the most likely to have attended. About 17% of people in this age group stated that they had attended a residential school, followed by 12% of those aged 55 to 64 (Chart 7).

There were also differences in attendance between Aboriginal groups. About one-quarter (26%) of Inuit aged 35 and over attended, as did 13% of non-reserve North American Indian people and 4% of Métis.

¹⁰ Percentages for residential school attendance are based on the population that ever attended any school. Excluded are those with no formal education.

Chart 7: Attendance at residential school, Aboriginal identity population ever attending school, non-reserve, Canada, 2001



Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2001.

One-third of those 15 and over had family members who attended residential schools

The impact of the residential school system is often intergenerational. This system affects not only the person who attended. There is often a ripple effect that has spread out and touched other family members, and often entire communities.

Among all those aged 15 and over, 33% reported that at least one family member (grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, siblings) had attended residential school. For North American Indian people age 15 and over, 44% said that they had at least one relative that had attended, compared with 38% for Inuit and 19% for Métis people.

HOUSING AND WATER QUALITY

The home is where people are trying to raise families, the water they drink daily, a quiet place for study – these things are vital to health and happiness.

-- The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996a: 371

The fulfillment of the basic physiological needs of shelter and safe drinking water is necessary to the well-being of any person. This section examines housing conditions of Aboriginal people and the quality of their drinking water, with an emphasis on Inuit living in the Far North.

Crowding¹¹

Aboriginal people more likely to live in crowded conditions

Health experts maintain that inadequate housing can be associated with a host of health problems. For example, crowded living conditions can lead to the transmission of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and hepatitis A, and can also increase risk for injuries, mental health problems, family tensions and violence (Health Canada 1999: 14).

In all regions of the country, the homes of Aboriginal people living in non-reserve areas were more crowded than those of all Canadians, although the situation is improving slightly with time. (For the purpose of this analysis, crowding is defined as 1.0 or more people per room.)

According to the 2001 Census, 7% of the total Canadian non-reserve population lived in crowded conditions, down slightly from 8% in 1996. Among Aboriginal people in non-reserve areas, the proportion was 17% in 2001, but this was down from 22% in 1996.

Census data also show that Aboriginal children aged 14 and under were nearly twice as likely as all Canadian children to live in crowded conditions. While 25% of Aboriginal children in non-reserve areas lived in crowded conditions in 2001, the comparable figure for all Canadian children in non-reserve areas was 13%.

Crowded conditions in Prairie cities

Crowding is an issue for Aboriginal people living in many of Canada's largest cities, particularly Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon and Edmonton. In these four cities, rates of crowding for Aboriginal people were much higher than those for the total population.

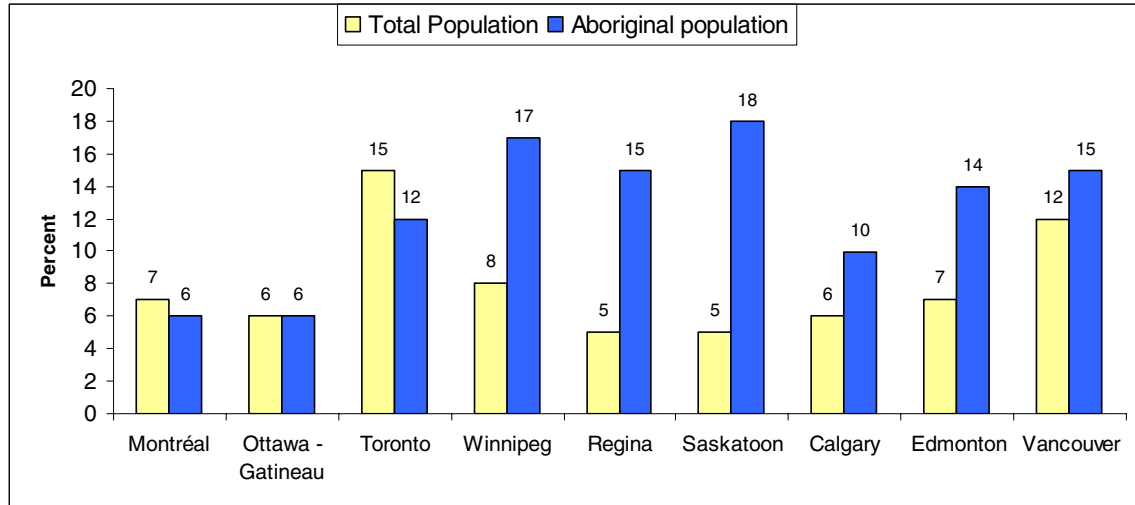
For example, 2001 Census information shows that 18% of Aboriginal people of all ages living in Saskatoon lived in crowded households, more than three times the proportion of 5% for the total population. The gap between Aboriginal people and the total population living in Regina was also large. While 5% of the total population of Regina lived in crowded conditions, the figure for Aboriginal people was three times higher: 15%.

Between 1996 and 2001, dwellings in many of Canada's biggest cities became somewhat less crowded for both the Aboriginal and total population. For example, in Winnipeg, 17% of Aboriginal people lived in crowded conditions in 2001, down from 20% five years earlier.

¹¹ Unless otherwise noted, all data for the crowding section are from the 1996 or 2001 Census.

The census showed that the situation also eased slightly in Regina, where the percentage of Aboriginal people in crowded dwellings went from 17% in 1996 to 15% in 2001. It also improved in Saskatoon, where the percentage declined from 20% to 18%. There were similar declines in many other major Canadian cities including Montreal, Ottawa-Gatineau, Toronto, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver.

Chart 8: Percentage of people living in homes with 1.0 or more persons per room, selected Census Metropolitan areas, 2001



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada.

Crowding an important issue for Inuit in Canadian Arctic

Crowding among Inuit in the Far North is a serious concern. There, 53% of Inuit lived in crowded conditions, compared with 13% of all Aboriginal people living in urban areas across the country and 19% in rural areas outside the Canadian Arctic.

According to Health Canada, “there is a higher risk of tuberculosis in communities with higher levels of crowding” (Health Canada 2003b:44), and crowding could be one factor associated with the high rate of tuberculosis among the Canadian Arctic Inuit population. About 3.6% of Inuit in the Far North had tuberculosis, compared with 1.7% for the non-reserve North American Indian population, and 0.9% for the Métis.

In the Canadian Arctic, the housing crunch has improved slightly over time. In 2001, five in 10 Inuit (53%) in this region lived in crowded conditions, down from six in 10 (61%) five years earlier.

Of the four Inuit regions (Inuvialuit, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Labrador¹²), Nunavik in northern Quebec was the only region in which the crowding situation for Inuit did not improve, in the five years between censuses. In Nunavik, 68% of Inuit lived in crowded conditions in 2001, up slightly from 67% five years earlier.

In 2001, 54% of Inuit in Nunavut experienced crowding compared to 63% in 1996. There was a similar decline for Inuit living in Labrador where the proportion fell from 33% in 1996 to 28% in 2001. Finally, the Inuvialuit region in the Northwest Territories saw a decline from 51% to 35%.

¹² In this article, the Labrador area consists of the following communities: Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Makkovik, Nain, Postville and Rigolet. For information on the other Inuit regions, see the “Note to Users” section.

Many Aboriginal people live in homes requiring major repairs

In general, the homes of Aboriginal people are more likely in need of major repairs than are the homes of others. Major repairs include such items as defective plumbing or electrical wiring, structural repairs to walls, floors or ceilings and so on.

Among Aboriginal people living in non-reserve areas, 18% lived in homes requiring major repairs compared with 8% for the total Canadian non-reserve population. Many Aboriginal people living in Canada's largest cities live in homes in need of major repairs.

The situation was most serious in Regina and Vancouver where 17% of Aboriginal people lived in homes of this type. These two cities were followed closely by Winnipeg where the percentage was 16%. In contrast, 8% of the total population of Regina lived in dwellings needing major repairs, as did 8% in Vancouver and 10% in Winnipeg.

Water quality

Inuit in Nunavik state water quality concerns

A safe source of drinking water is fundamental to good health. Water contamination resulting from agricultural activities, industrial discharge and so on can lead to many health problems in adults and children. In urban and rural areas, a relatively small percentage of adults had concerns about the contamination of drinking water.

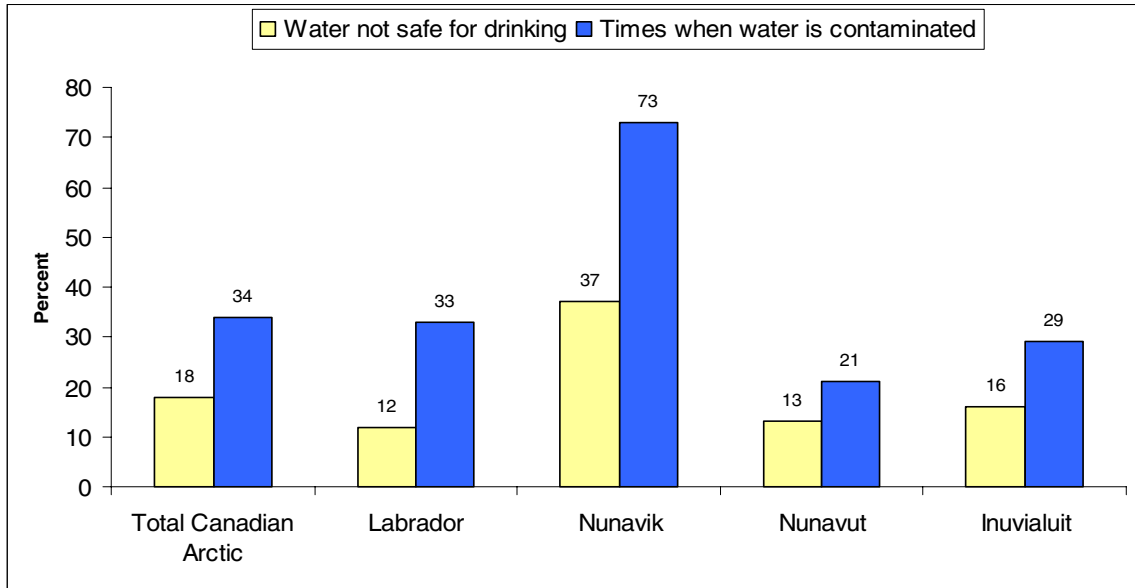
According to the 2001 APS, 16% of Aboriginal people in urban areas said there were times of the year when their water was contaminated. For Aboriginal people in rural areas, the figure was slightly higher at 19%.

However, the situation for Inuit in the Far North was somewhat different. Overall, 34% of Inuit in this region said that there were times of year when their water was contaminated. There were some differences from one Inuit region to the next. For example, water contamination was a major issue in Nunavik in northern Quebec, where 73% of Inuit stated that their water was contaminated at certain times of the year. This was followed by 33% in Labrador, 29% in the Inuvialuit region and 21% in Nunavut (Chart 9).

In addition to water contamination, general safety of water was also a concern among many. The 2001 APS showed that the majority of Aboriginal people in urban and rural areas were confident that their water was safe for drinking. However, just under 15% of those in urban and rural areas felt their water was unsafe.

Water safety was more of an issue for Inuit in the Far North as 18% reported unsafe drinking water. The proportion varied from one region to another. About 37% of Inuit in Nunavik reported that the water available to their homes was not safe for drinking, compared with 12% in Labrador, 13% in Nunavut and 16% in the Inuvialuit region.

Chart 9: Drinking water safety and water contamination by Inuit region, Inuit population age 15 and over, 2001



Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2001.

ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES

Language is often recognized as the essence of a culture. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples has stated that the revitalization of traditional languages is a key component in the creation of healthy individuals and communities (RCAP 1996a:163).

Language is “not only a means of communication, but a link which connects people with their past and grounds their social, emotional and spiritual vitality” (Norris 1998: 8).

This section examines the strength of Aboriginal languages among North American Indian people, the Métis and Inuit in non-reserve areas, and focuses on factors associated with perpetuating and revitalizing these languages.

Indicators of language strength

Overall, Aboriginal languages on decline for North American Indian and Métis people in non-reserve areas

In general, many of the Aboriginal languages spoken by North American Indian and Métis people in non-reserve areas are on unsteady ground. Aboriginal language retention and transmission is often difficult due to few opportunities to practice these languages and often fewer opportunities for people to learn an Aboriginal language. The census showed that from 1996 to 2001, several key indicators of Aboriginal language strength declined for North American Indian and Métis people.

For example, among those of all ages, the percentage of non-reserve North American Indian people with an ability to speak an Aboriginal language well enough to conduct a conversation fell from 20% in 1996 to 16% in 2001. At the same time, the use of an Aboriginal language at home¹³ declined from 8% to 6%. In addition, the proportion of North American Indian people with an Aboriginal mother tongue¹⁴ fell from 16% to 13%.

The 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey asked respondents if they could speak or understand an Aboriginal language¹⁵. For the non-reserve North American Indian population aged 15 and over, 32% said they could. Of this group, 46% said that they were able to speak an Aboriginal language very well, or relatively well (Table 2).

It is important to note that the information above is for North American Indian people living in non-reserve areas and are not representative of the total Aboriginal population. Generally speaking, Aboriginal languages are spoken and understood more widely in First Nations communities.

Aboriginal language indicators for Métis slip to low levels

Of the three main Aboriginal groups, the Métis were the least likely to know an Aboriginal language. As was the case with the North American Indian population, Aboriginal language use by the Métis declined between 1996 and 2001.

According to the census, 5% of Métis of all ages were able to converse in an Aboriginal language in 2001, down from 8% five years earlier. Similarly, only 2% of Métis of all ages used an Aboriginal language at home in 2001 compared to 3% in 1996. The same was true for mother tongue with a decline from 6% to

¹³ Home language is defined as the language spoken most often at home.

¹⁴ Mother tongue is defined as the language first learned at home in childhood and still understood.

¹⁵ The APS question asked about speaking or understanding whereas the census question asked about the ability to speak a language well enough to converse.

4%. The 2001 APS showed that 16% of Métis were able to speak or understand an Aboriginal language. Of people in this group, 34% were able to speak very well, or relatively well.

North American Indian children less likely than adults to know Aboriginal languages

The percentage of North American Indian children aged 14 and under in non-reserve areas with knowledge of an Aboriginal language has declined with time. Census data showed that between 1996 and 2001, the percentage of these children who could converse well enough in an Aboriginal language to carry out a conversation declined from 12% to 9%. The same was true for Aboriginal languages used at home, as the percentage fell from 6% to 5%.

The proportion of North American Indian children with an Aboriginal mother tongue also fell from 9% in 1996 to 7% in 2001. According to the 2001 APS, while 25% of these children reported being able to speak or understand an Aboriginal language in 2001¹⁶, only 22% of these could do so very well or relatively well.

Low levels of Aboriginal language use among Métis children

Métis children in non-reserve areas were less likely than their North American Indian counterparts to use an Aboriginal language. Census data show that the strength of Aboriginal languages among Métis children ebbed between 1996 and 2001.

In 2001, 3% of Métis aged 14 and under could speak an Aboriginal language well enough to converse, down from 4% five years earlier. Very few Métis children spoke an Aboriginal language at home – only 3% in 1996 and 1% in 2001. The proportion of Métis children with an Aboriginal language as their mother tongue fell from 3% to 2%.

The 2001 APS showed that 11% of Métis children reported being able to speak or understand an Aboriginal language and of these, 16% said they could speak very or relatively well.

Continuing and Revitalizing Aboriginal languages

Despite some declines, Inuktitut remains strong in Far North

Despite the decline of many Aboriginal languages, some remain viable. Inuktitut remains one of the strongest Aboriginal languages in the country.

Like other Aboriginal languages, Inuktitut is not as strong as it was five years ago. However, its decline is not as rapid as that of many other Aboriginal languages. The census showed that in the Canadian Arctic in 1996, 82% of Inuit of all ages knew Inuktitut well enough to carry on a conversation¹⁷. In 2001, the percentage remained unchanged.

However, this language is being used less often in the home than in the past. In 1996, Inuktitut was the language used most often in the home by 68% of Inuit. By 2001, this had declined to 64%. A somewhat smaller percentage of Inuit reported an Inuktitut mother tongue in 2001, as the figure dipped slightly from 78% in 1996 to 77%.

According to the 2001 APS, the vast majority (90%) of Inuit aged 15 and over living in the Far North said they could understand or speak Inuktitut. Of these, 89% said they could speak it very or relatively well. Older Inuktitut speakers, those aged 65 and over, were most likely to be able to speak or understand Inuktitut; 94% could do so. Almost all of these people (97%) said they could speak Inuktitut very or relatively well.

¹⁶ Excluded are children that were too young to speak or understand a language.

¹⁷ These data include a very small percentage of Inuit with an Aboriginal language who report an Aboriginal language other than Inuktitut. Data from the 2001 Census show that approximately one half of one percent of Inuit with an Aboriginal language fall into this category.

Inuktitut strong among young Inuit but its use in the home is declining

Although those most likely to speak this language are the elders, there is a strong, solid base of young speakers. Census data for both 1996 and 2001 revealed that 80% of Inuit children aged 14 and under living in the Far North could converse in Inuktitut.

There has been little change in the percentage of Inuit children in the Far North reporting an Inuktitut mother tongue. In 2001, the figure was 73%, virtually unchanged from 74% in 1996.

However, the story is somewhat different for Inuktitut use in the home. In 2001, 64% of Inuit children used this language most often at home, down from 68% five years earlier. This decrease, although slight, is important because using an Aboriginal language in the home is the best way to transmit language from older to younger speakers, thus increasing the likelihood of its survival (Norris 1998).

Another indicator pointing to the strength of language from the 2001 APS shows that nine in 10 (90%) Inuit children in the Far North reported an ability to speak or understand Inuktitut. About 70% of Inuit children who could speak Inuktitut said they could do so very well or relatively well.

Table 2 - Ability to speak or understand an Aboriginal language and level of ability to speak an Aboriginal language, for North American Indian, Métis and Canadian Arctic Inuit identity population, adults and children, non-reserve areas, 2001

		North American Indian	Métis	Inuit in Canadian Arctic
Adults	Percent speaking or understanding Aboriginal language	32	16	90
	Percent of those able to speak or understand that can speak Aboriginal language very or relatively well	46	34	89
Children	Percent speaking or understanding Aboriginal language ¹⁸	25	11	90
	Percent of those able to speak or understand that can speak Aboriginal language very or relatively well	22	16	70

Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2001.

Some people learn an Aboriginal language as a second language

One indicator of language revitalization is the difference between the percentage of people that had an Aboriginal mother tongue and the percentage of people that could converse in an Aboriginal language.

According to the 2001 Census, in non-reserve areas, 12% of people reported that the first language they learned and still understood was an Aboriginal language, while 15% said they could converse in an Aboriginal language. The difference between these two figures suggests that some people are learning an Aboriginal language as a second language.

¹⁸ Excluded from this indicator are children that were too young to speak or understand a language.

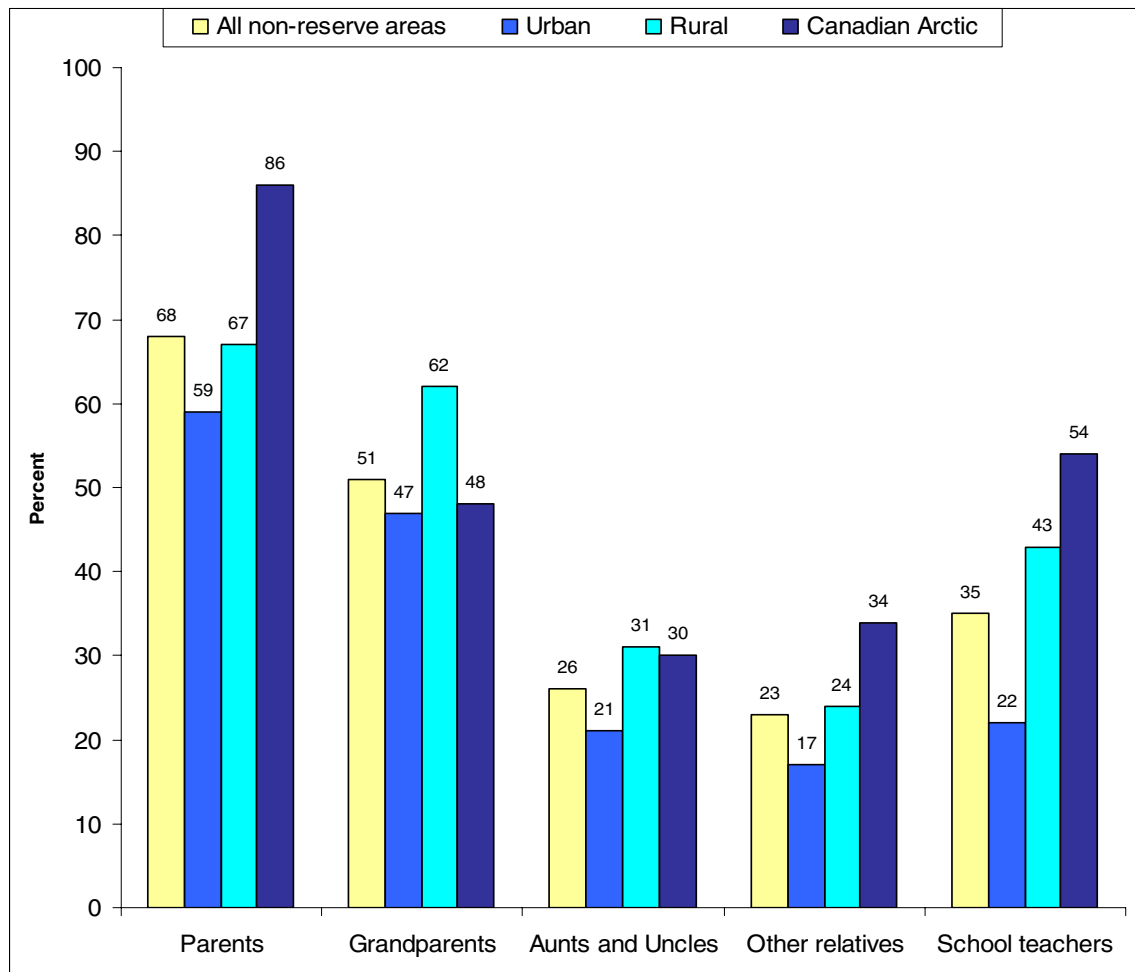
Children receive most help learning an Aboriginal language from their parents

In non-reserve areas, parents were cited as the people most likely to help young language learners. Data from the 2001 APS show that almost seven in 10 children (68%) who could understand or speak an Aboriginal language received some help from their parents. This was followed by grandparents who were cited by 51% of children able to speak or understand an Aboriginal language¹⁹ (Chart 10).

In urban and rural areas and in the Far North, parents were cited as the people most likely to help, followed by grandparents. However, there were some variations between regions.

For example, parents were much more likely to be named as language learning helpers in the Far North than in other areas. While 86% of children in the Far North received help from their parents, 67% of children in rural areas and 59% of children in urban areas did so. Grandparents in rural areas were more likely than those in the far north and urban areas to help children learn an Aboriginal language.

Chart 10: Who helps child learn an Aboriginal language by region, Aboriginal identity children (under 15 years of age), non-reserve, Canada, 2001



Note: respondents could provide more than one source of help
 Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2001.

¹⁹ In most cases, children did not respond to the questionnaire directly. Answers were usually provided by the person who knew the most about the child.

School teachers help facilitate language revitalization

Although parents contribute much to teaching their children an Aboriginal language, schools also have an important role to play. For example, children enrolled in *Aboriginal Headstart*, a pre-school program designed specifically for Aboriginal children, are introduced to the basics of many Aboriginal languages.

For children under 15 who could understand or speak an Aboriginal language, 35% received some help from their school teachers. This was especially the case in the Far North where over one-half (54%) of children who could understand or speak an Aboriginal language received help from their teachers.

Schools also helped facilitate language learning in non-reserve rural areas. Here, over four in 10 (43%) children that could understand or speak an Aboriginal language reported receiving help from teachers. Schools were somewhat less important in urban areas as 22% of young Aboriginal language learners cited teachers as someone from whom they received help learning an Aboriginal language.

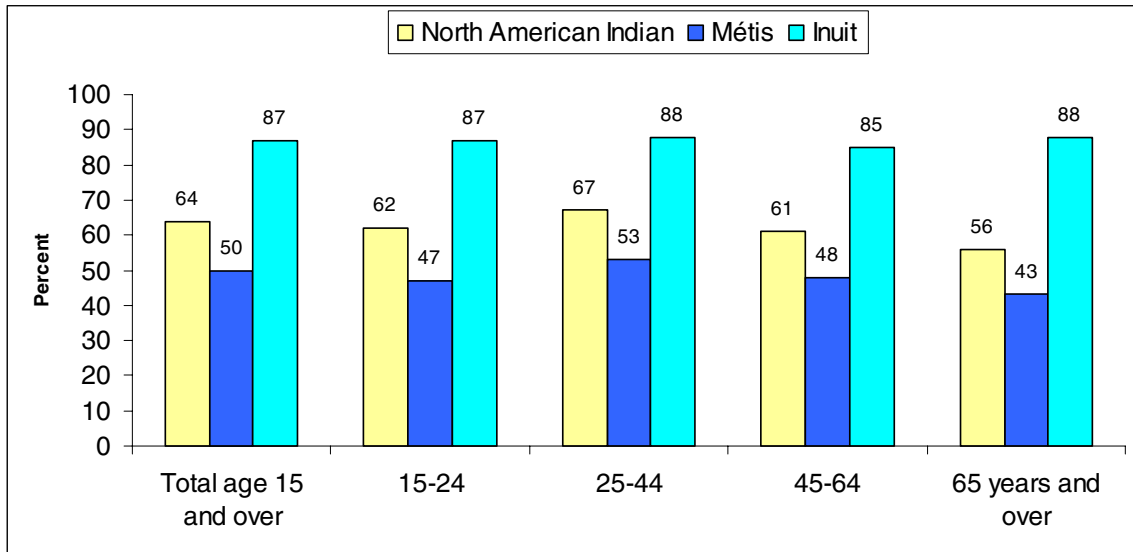
Among youth aged between 15 and 24, 16% had been taught in an Aboriginal language in the classroom. Again, this was especially true for Inuit youth in the Canadian Arctic as 82% of people in this age group stated that they had been taught an Aboriginal language in elementary or high school. This was followed by 16% of youth in rural areas and 11% in urban areas.

Majority of Aboriginal people feel Aboriginal language retention and learning are important

Many Aboriginal people living in non-reserve areas stated the importance of Aboriginal languages. There were variations from one Aboriginal group to another and by age (Chart 11). The majority of adults, approximately six in 10, felt that keeping, learning or relearning their Aboriginal language was very or somewhat important. Information for children was gathered from a slightly different question that was asked to the person who knew the most about the child. This person was asked how important it was for them that the child speak and understand an Aboriginal language. A response of very or somewhat important was provided by 6 in ten respondents.

The greatest support for Aboriginal languages came from Inuit as nearly nine in ten Inuit adults stated that their language was very or somewhat important. A similar proportion was provided by those answering on behalf of Inuit children. The comparable proportions for Métis and North American Indian people were one-half and two-thirds respectively.

Chart 11: Percent rating learning, relearning or keeping an Aboriginal language as very important or somewhat important by age group, Aboriginal identity population, non-reserve, Canada, 2001

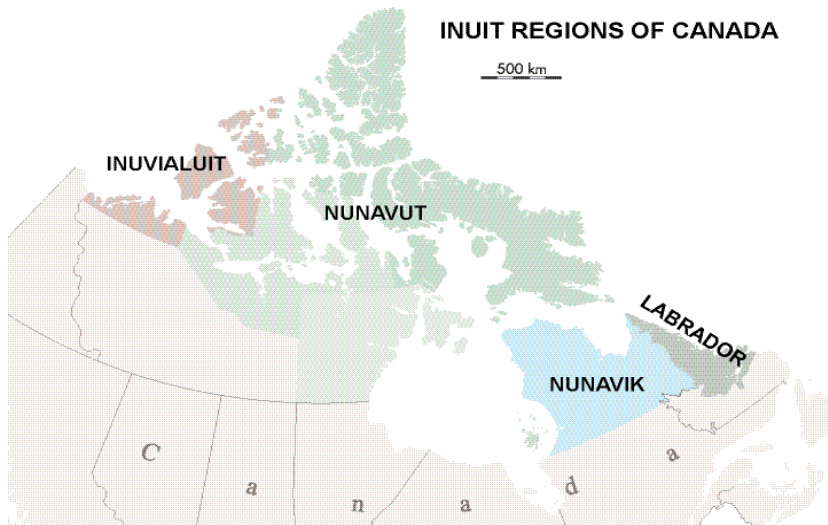


Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2001.

- In the Yukon Territory: Pelly Crossing (Settlement), Old Crow (Settlement) and Ross River (Settlement)

Geographic Areas – Canadian Arctic, urban and rural areas

Canadian Arctic refers to the four Inuit regions as defined by the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, where the majority of Inuit live 1) the northern coastal and south eastern area of Labrador; 2) Nunavik, which lies north of the 55th parallel in Quebec; 3) the territory of Nunavut, and; 4) the Inuvialuit region in the northwestern corner of the Northwest Territories. (See map below.) In this report, the Canadian Arctic is also referred to as the *Far North*.



Source: Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami

Urban areas refer to those areas outside of the Canadian Arctic with a minimum population concentration of 1,000 persons and population density of at least 400 people per square kilometre.

All areas outside of urban areas and the Canadian Arctic are considered *rural*.

APS Population Counts

There are some differences in the APS Aboriginal identity population and the 2001 Census Aboriginal identity population. Specifically, the APS Aboriginal identity population is larger, and many more respondents identified with more than one Aboriginal group.

Because APS is meant to provide an overview of characteristics of the Aboriginal population rather than provide a count of the Aboriginal population, the differences between the APS and the census counts have been left intact in the data tables to minimize distortion of the characteristics.

Respondents may have provided different responses regarding affiliation to the Aboriginal population on the census questionnaire and the APS questionnaire because of several factors:

- The proxy effect has been removed for adults responding to the APS. Usually only one member of the household fills in the census questionnaire for the entire household. Because APS selected specific individuals, the person who answered the APS may not be the same person who filled in the census questionnaire.

- The questions about Aboriginal origin and Aboriginal identity are asked slightly differently on the APS. The APS Aboriginal identity question follows three specific questions about North American Indian, Métis and Inuit origins, whereas the census Aboriginal identity question follows an open-ended question on ethnic origin in general.
- The APS has an Aboriginal identity question that allows for multiple responses whereas the census Aboriginal identity question may lead to more single responses. A higher percentage of people identified with more than one Aboriginal group in the APS than in the census. The data in this publication represent both single and multiple Aboriginal identity populations. For example, an individual who identifies as both North American Indian and Métis would be included in the tables for both the North American Indian and Métis groups.
- In addition, some respondents who reported only Aboriginal origins (and no Aboriginal identity) on the census reported Aboriginal identity on the APS. Conversely, people who reported identity on the census were less likely to change their response to Aboriginal origin without identity on the APS.

For more detailed information about the 2001 APS, the types of information it collected, and the populations for which data is available, clients should consult *The 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey: Concepts and Methods Guide*.

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