



## Strategic Research La recherche stratégique

# 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey

## Gender Differences in Off-reserve First Nations Education and Employment

### Key Findings:

- Off-reserve First Nations women who completed high school are nearly as likely to be employed as their male counterparts.
- First Nations women living off-reserve are more likely to have completed postsecondary studies than their male counterparts.
- Around two-thirds of off-reserve First Nations respondents planned to pursue further studies.
- While off-reserve First Nations male respondents cited school factors or the need or desire to work most often as the reason for not completing postsecondary studies, their female counterparts cited pregnancy, childcare, personal, or family responsibilities most often.

### Introduction

The 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) is a national survey of First Nations people living off-reserve, Métis, and Inuit people aged six years and over. The Survey was conducted by Statistics Canada and reached over 38,000 Aboriginal respondents across Canada, making for a 76% response rate.

“The education and employment experiences of First Nations people living off reserve, Inuit, and Métis: Selected findings from the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey” was published by

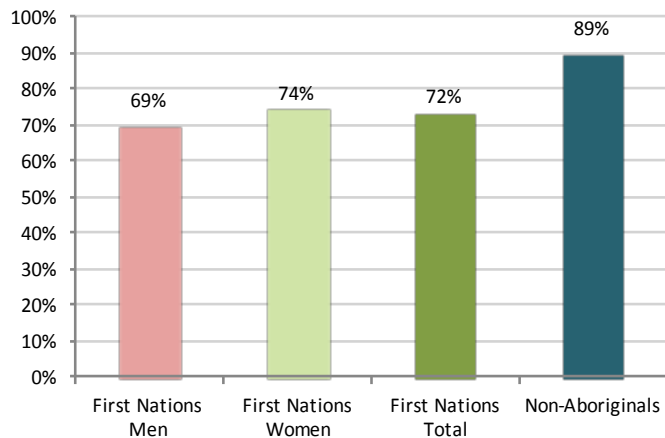
Statistics Canada on November 25, 2013. It is the first release of data from the APS 2012. The report describes education and employment experiences of respondents who completed high school (“completers”) and respondents who did not complete high school (“leavers”<sup>1</sup>), aged 18 to 44. It includes an analysis of personal, family, and school-related experiences during the last year of school and offers education-focused profiles of labour force activity. For added context, the report incorporates some comparisons between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations, using comparative statistics on the non-Aboriginal population from the 2011 National Household Survey<sup>2</sup>.

This strategic research brief provides an overview of gender differences on key findings for First Nations respondents aged 18-44 living off-reserve with respect to gender differences in educational and labour force outcomes. This is one of a series of three research briefs on gender differences among Canada’s Aboriginal groups. Two separate research briefs focus on gender differences for education and employment of Métis and Inuit respondents, respectively.

### Background

Given there are more than 600 First Nations communities with over 60 different languages spoken, it is fair to say that there are significant cultural differences among First Nations across the country. The 2011 National Household Survey indicated that there are 851,560 persons identifying as First Nations. This represented 60.8% of Canada’s Aboriginal population and 2.6% of the total Canadian population. Many First Nations individuals live in Ontario and the western provinces, but they are the largest proportion of the populations in the Northwest Territories, Yukon, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. In 2011, 637,660 persons identified as registered Indians. This represents around 75% of all First Nations people. Of the total identifying as First Nations, nearly half (49.3%) lived on a reserve or settlement. What follows is an analysis of the findings for those First Nations people not living on a reserve.

**Figure 1: Proportion of First Nations Persons Living Off-Reserve Aged 18-44 Holding a High School Diploma or Equivalent by Gender, Canada, 2011-2012.**



Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012; National Household Survey, 2011.

## Key Findings

### Completers and Leavers

The 2012 APS distinguishes between different outcomes of those First Nations persons living off-reserve who completed high school and obtained their diploma (“completers”) and those who left of high school before completing their studies (“leavers”). Seventy-two percent of First Nations respondents living off-reserve aged 18 to 44 had completed the requirements for a high school diploma or an equivalent. The proportion of male (69%) and female (74%) completers among off-reserve First Nations people did not differ significantly. For comparison, the National Household Survey found that 89% of the non-Aboriginal population 18-44 had at least a high school diploma or equivalent in 2011 (Figure 1).

### Age at completion

The average high school completion age for First Nations respondents to the 2012 APS was 18.4 years. There is no notable difference between genders. Of those male and female First Nations persons living off-reserve with a high school diploma or equivalency, 88% obtained their diplomas by attending high school and 86% did so with no breaks in their educational path. Again, no significant gender difference was observed.

### Family situation

Male and female off-reserve First Nations completers were more likely to be living with their family during their last year in high school than were the leavers. Nonetheless, females, were less likely to be living with their families than males. While 38% of female leavers and 22% of female completers did not live with their families during their final year in high school, only 24% of male leavers and 16% of male completers said the same thing.

## Reasons for leaving high school

The reasons given by off-reserve First Nations respondents for why they left high school provide more information on the different realities experienced by First Nations men and women. Among the reasons given for those who left high school, 22% of men cited wanting to work, 14% reported having financial problems and/or the need to work, an additional 17% lost interest in school, and 12% cited school problems. The reason cited most often cited by women was pregnancy or the need to care for their own child (26%), while 14% of First Nations women respondents said they had lost interest in school.

## Postsecondary education profile

Off-reserve First Nations women are more likely than their male counterparts to have completed postsecondary studies. While 49% of them had done so, only 36% of men also held postsecondary credentials. Yet, the proportion of men and women attending a postsecondary institution for the first time did not differ by a wide margin (7% compared to 9%, respectively).

However, the education profiles for First Nations female and male respondents differed greatly. While a larger proportion of First Nations women than men completed postsecondary studies, men (45%) were much more likely to have a trades certificate than women (14%), while women were much more likely than their male counterparts to hold college diplomas (52% of women compared to 35% of men) and university degrees (29% of women and 17% of men – Figure 2).

## Reasons for leaving postsecondary studies

The reasons most often mentioned by First Nations respondents living off-reserve for not completing postsecondary studies were work-related factors (20%), the loss of interest or lack of motivation (18%), financial

**Figure 2: Postsecondary Education Profiles of Off-reserve First Nations Women and Men, 2012.**



Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012.

concerns (16%), pregnancy or the need to care for their own child (8%), other family responsibilities (7%), that they had moved away from home (6%), or that their classes were too hard (4%). The only notable gender difference was the higher probability of women mentioning family responsibilities, pregnancy, or childcare as the reason why they did not complete postsecondary education.

### Barriers to Further Education

Financial considerations are often a barrier to further education, with costs preventing many persons from going back to school. This especially affected First Nations leavers, who mentioned this reason 42% of the time compared to 34% of the completers. The gap between leavers and completers was greater among men (42% of leavers versus 30% of completers) than among women (41% of leavers compared to 36% of completers). Leavers were more likely than completers to report that furthering their education was not a personal priority (45% versus 25%), without a noticeable difference between genders. In addition, 42% of all leavers felt they lacked the confidence to further their education, while 20% of all completers reported the same thing.

### Plans for Further Education

Around two-thirds of respondents were planning further education, despite existing barriers. There was only a small difference between First Nations male leavers and completers (64% versus 61%, respectively). In contrast, there is a larger gap separating First Nations female leavers and completers (75% of female leavers and 64% of female completers planned to further their education).

### Employment

First Nations men living off-reserve had a higher employment rate than First Nations women living off-reserve. This difference is most evident among leavers, where 59% of

male leavers were employed compared to 37% of female leavers. The only exception to this rule is leavers with a trades certificate or a college diploma. In these cases, First Nations male and female respondents were just as likely to be employed. Among completers, 70% of women were employed compared to 74% of men. There was, however, a notable difference among completers with a college diploma, where 85% of off-reserve First Nations men were employed compared to only 71% of off-reserve First Nations women.

In every category, the majority of employed First Nations respondents living off-reserve were employed full time. This was the case for 83% of completers and 82% of leavers. Still, there is a significant difference between male and female completers, with 91% of males being employed full time compared to only 77% of females (Figure 3).

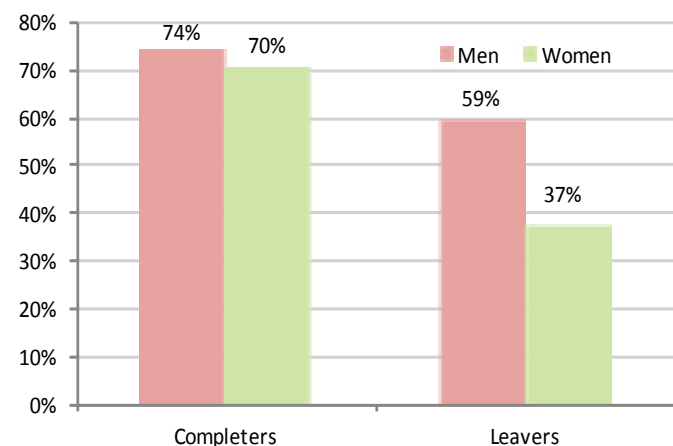
### Income Ranges

A very clear difference can be seen between the income levels for off-reserve First Nations men and women respondents. First Nations women living off-reserve fare less well than their male counterparts. Various factors are tied to this outcome and it is the case for both leavers and completers. Among leavers, for instance, off-reserve First Nations women found themselves in the \$10,000 to \$20,000 median<sup>3</sup> income range, while men scored one level higher, ranging between \$20,000 and \$30,000. This gendered income gap is even greater for completers, with off-reserve First Nations men reaching the \$40,000 to \$50,000 median range while off-reserve First Nations women are in the same range as male leavers, at \$20,000 to \$30,000 (Figure 4).

### Factors for the non-participation in the labour force

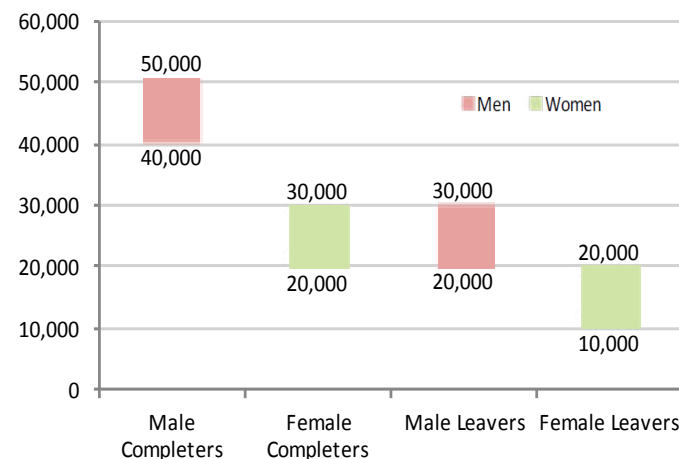
Among off-reserve First Nations respondents to the 2012 APS, 26% of the women who were not in the labour force but wanted a job cited the need to care for one or more children. Eighteen percent of men said that furthering their education

**Figure 3: Proportion of Employed Male and Female Off-Reserve First Nations High School Leavers and Completers, 2012**



Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012.

**Figure 4: Median Income Ranges of Male and Female First Nations High School Leavers and Completers, 2012.**



Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012.

was the reason why they were not in the labour force. In an even more pronounced way, 62% of First Nations female leavers cited personal or family responsibilities as the main factor preventing them from seeking further education. This reason was mentioned less often by First Nations female completers.

## Conclusion

This preliminary look at gender differences in education and income outcomes of off-reserve First Nations respondents to the 2012 APS reveals the existence of important differences between First Nations men and women. It also shows the complex nature of these differences. Female respondents gave different reasons for not completing high school, for interrupting their postsecondary studies, and for lower levels of participation in the labor force. Furthermore, while off-reserve First Nations women were more likely than men to have completed postsecondary studies and while the employment situation of female completers was comparable to that of male leavers, off-reserve First Nations women's income was substantially lower than that of their male counterparts in every category. Finally, female leavers found themselves were less likely to be employed and reported lower income ranges.

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## Notes

1. Statistics Canada defines school “leavers” as persons who had not obtained a high school diploma or the equivalent and was not attending an elementary or high school at the time of the survey. It is important to note that individuals enrolled in a high school equivalency program when they were interviewed for the APS are also considered “leavers”. It is also important to recognize that some “leavers” may return to school in the future and obtain high school credentials. Furthermore, high school graduation may not be the highest level of education of “leavers”, as some may also have a trades certificate, college diploma, or university degree.
2. It was possible to report both single and multiple responses to the Aboriginal Identity questions in the National Household Survey (NHS) and the Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS). The NHS data are based on single responses only, while the APS data represent a combination of single and multiple responses.
3. Because personal employment income was reported in ranges, a median income range is calculated. The “median range” is the category for which the cumulative percentage of reporting respondents came closest to 50%.

## Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

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