



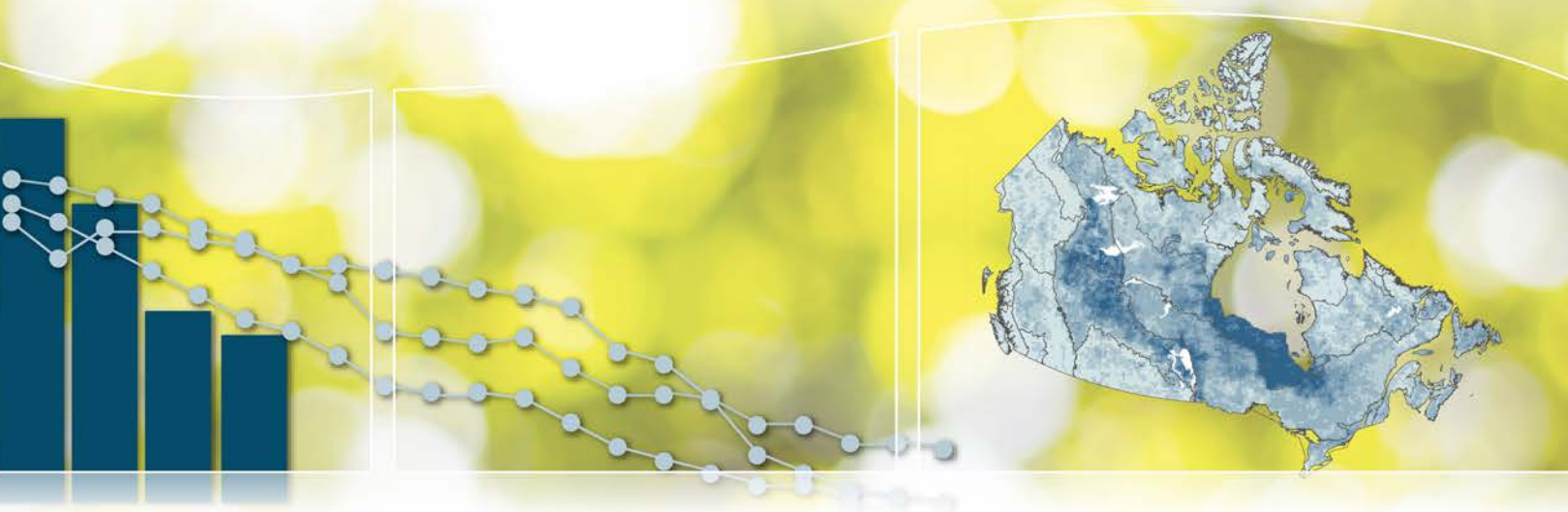
Environment and  
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# **Canadian Environmental Sustainability Indicators**

## **Number of long-term drinking water advisories affecting First Nations water systems**



Canada 

**Suggested citation for this document:** Environment and Climate Change Canada (2018) Canadian Environmental Sustainability Indicators: Number of long-term drinking water advisories affecting First Nations water systems. Consulted on *Month day, year*.  
Available at: [www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/environmental-indicators/drinking-water-advisories-first-nations.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/environmental-indicators/drinking-water-advisories-first-nations.html).

Cat. No.: En4-144/87-2018E-PDF  
ISBN: 978-0-660-28368-5

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## Number of long-term drinking water advisories affecting First Nations water systems

November 2018

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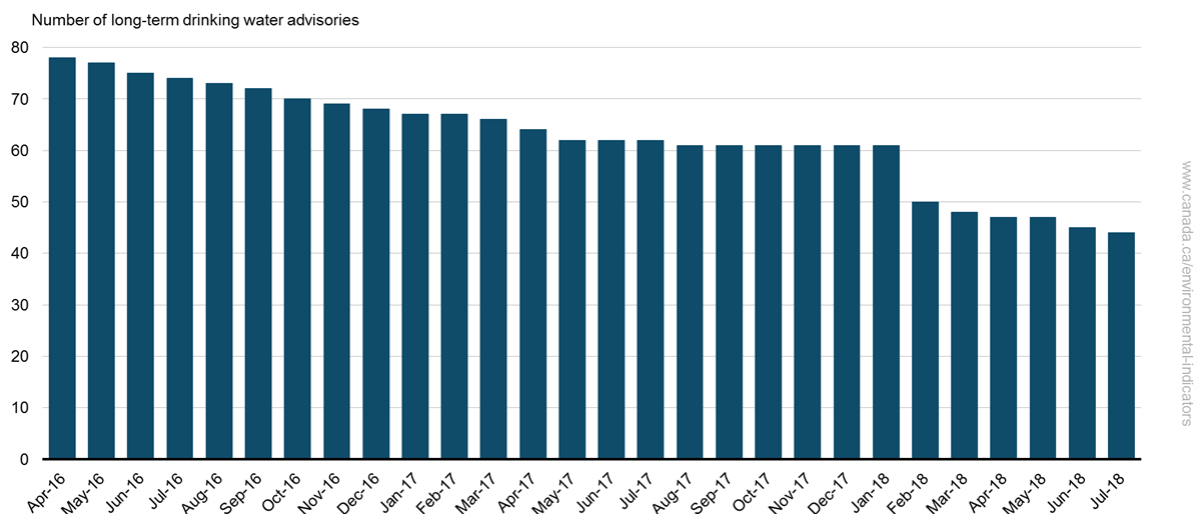
# Number of long-term drinking water advisories affecting First Nations water systems

Drinking water advisories are public health protection notifications about real or potential health risks related to drinking water. This indicator shows progress towards lifting the 78 long-term drinking water advisories affecting First Nations communities as of April 2016 that were included in the Government of Canada's initial commitment.

## Key results

- In April 2016, there were 78 long-term drinking water advisories<sup>1</sup> affecting federally supported First Nations public water systems
- As of July 2018, 34 (44%) of these long-term drinking water advisories were removed
- The greatest number of advisories (11) was lifted in February 2018

**Figure 1. Progress on the 78 long-term drinking water advisories affecting First Nations as of April 2016, Canada, 2016 to 2018**



[Data for Figure 1](#)

**Note:** The graph shows the number of long-term drinking water advisories remaining in effect at the end of each month from the original 78 advisories.

**Source:** Indigenous Services Canada (2018) Ending long-term drinking water advisories.

<sup>1</sup> This indicator is restricted to an original set of about 800 drinking water systems financially supported by Indigenous Services Canada in First Nations communities and does not include the set of about 250 additional public drinking water systems on reserve added January 23, 2018 to the government's commitment to ensure the lifting of all long-term drinking water advisories on public systems on reserve by 2021. The number 78 is a revised baseline which replaces the baseline of 77 mentioned in the [2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy](#).

Drinking water advisories are issued in off-reserve communities across Canada by the relevant municipal, provincial or territorial government.

In First Nations communities, it is the responsibility of the Chief and Council to issue or rescind a drinking water advisory and take necessary actions.

A drinking water advisory is considered long-term when it has been in place for more than a year. This generally happens when a water system is not functioning well for a variety of reasons, for example, because of equipment malfunction and/or operational issues which prevent the system from treating water to the required quality.

## About the indicator

### What the indicator measures

In November 2015, the Government of Canada committed to end all long-term drinking water advisories affecting public water systems on reserves by 2021. The overall scope of the original commitment included 800 public water systems and 77 long-term drinking water advisories. In April 2016, 78 long-term drinking water advisories were in effect. The indicator, used to assess the progress towards the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy, provides a snap shot as of July 2018 of the Government of Canada's progress towards eliminating these 78 long-term drinking water advisories affecting First Nations water systems financially supported by Indigenous Services Canada.

Real-time results for long-term drinking water advisories on public systems on reserve, along with a map of the communities affected, may be found at Indigenous Services Canada's website on [ending long-term drinking water advisories](#)

### Why this indicator is important

The indicator is used to assess progress towards the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy target of lifting all long-term drinking water advisories on federally funded public water systems on reserves by March 2021. The indicator focuses on the progress made towards lifting the 78 long-term drinking water advisories on water systems financially supported by Indigenous Services Canada that were in effect as of April 2016.<sup>2</sup>

### Related indicator

The [Drinking water advisories](#) indicator provides a long-term national view of why boil water advisories are issued, whether it is due to water quality or equipment and process-related issues.



#### Clean drinking water

This indicator supports the measurement of progress towards the following [2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy](#) long-term goal: All Canadians have access to safe drinking water and, in particular, the significant challenges Indigenous communities face are addressed.

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<sup>2</sup> The number 78 is the revised baseline which replaces the baseline of 77 mentioned in the [2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy](#).

## Data sources and methods

### Data sources

The data for this indicator come from [Indigenous Services Canada](#).

#### More information

Indigenous services Canada supports First Nations communities in establishing their own drinking water quality monitoring programs and provides related funding through its Community-Based Water Monitor program.

Community-based drinking water quality monitors sample and test the drinking water for potential bacteriological contamination as a final check on the overall safety of the drinking water at tap. If a community does not have a community-based drinking water quality monitor, an environmental health officer<sup>3</sup> will sample and test drinking water quality, with the community's permission. Environmental health officers test drinking water quality for chemical, physical, and radiological contaminants and maintain quality assurance and quality control. They also review and interpret drinking water quality tests and disseminate the results to First Nations communities. In all situations, if the drinking water is found not to be safe for drinking, the environmental health officer will immediately communicate the appropriate recommendation(s) to the Chief and Council for action, such as issuing a drinking water advisory.

A drinking water advisory automatically becomes a long-term drinking water advisory once it has been in existence for a year.

### Methods

Indigenous Services Canada records when drinking water advisories are issued and when they become a long-term drinking water advisory. This information is maintained in a database and updated as new data becomes available.

### Caveats and limitations

This indicator is a snapshot of the progress towards eliminating the 78 long-term drinking water advisories affecting First Nations water systems financially supported by Indigenous Services Canada that were in effect as of April 2016.

In January 2018, the Government of Canada expanded the scope of its commitment to eliminate all long-term drinking water advisories to include all public drinking water systems on reserve (an additional 250 public systems). At that time, the 2016 baseline was reset to 105 long-term drinking water advisories. This indicator is used to assess the progress towards the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy, it does not include the additional public systems.

The number of long-term drinking water advisories affecting First Nations reserves is not static and the data are updated frequently in response to changing situations. This indicator does not include long-term drinking water advisories added since April 2016. Real-time results for long-term drinking water advisories on reserve, along with a map of the affected communities, may be found at Indigenous Services Canada's website: [Canada.ca/water-on-reserve](http://Canada.ca/water-on-reserve).

The data on the number of long-term drinking water advisories that are in place and that have been lifted are overall numbers. They are not broken down by type of advisory (boil water, do not consume, do not use).

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<sup>3</sup> An environmental health officer is a certified public health inspector employed by Indigenous Services Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch or First Nations stakeholders.

## Resources

### References

Indigenous Services Canada (2018) [Ending long-term drinking water advisories](#). Retrieved on June 4, 2018.



## Annex

### Annex A. Data tables for the figures presented in this document

**Table A.1. Data for Figure 1. Progress on the 78 long-term drinking water advisories affecting First Nations as of April 2016, Canada, 2016 to 2018**

Month	Number of long-term drinking water advisories lifted	Long-term drinking water advisories remaining
April 2016	n/a	78
May 2016	1	77
June 2016	2	75
July 2016	1	74
August 2016	1	73
September 2016	1	72
October 2016	2	70
November 2016	1	69
December 2016	1	68
January 2017	1	67
February 2017	0	67
March 2017	1	66
April 2017	2	64
May 2017	2	62
June 2017	0	62
July 2017	0	62
August 2017	1	61
September 2017	0	61
October 2017	0	61
November 2017	0	61
December 2017	0	61
January 2018	0	61
February 2018	11	50
March 2018	2	48
April 2018	1	47
May 2018	0	47
June 2018	2	45
July 2018	1	44

**Note:** n/a = not applicable. The table shows the number of long-term drinking water advisories remaining in effect at the end of each month from the original 78 advisories.

**Source:** Indigenous Services Canada (2018) Ending long-term drinking water advisories.

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