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2021 Census Fact Sheets

Updated content for the 2021 Census of Population: Indigenous peoples

2021 Census of Population

Release date: July 17, 2020



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Updated content for the 2021 Census of Population: Indigenous peoples

The census is the country's storyteller. Through good and difficult times, the census has been providing a detailed picture of Canada's changing mosaic—giving Canadians facts on where we came from, to where we are, and guiding decisions on where we want to be. To respond to the country's needs and write the next chapter of Canadians' data foundation, Statistics Canada conducted country-wide engagements. We also conducted a census test with over 135,000 households to determine whether new or revised questions under consideration can be easily understood and correctly answered. We listened to Canadians, because we know that this is about your census, your community, your future.

This series of fact sheets provides an overview of the changes in content for the 2021 Census of Population, as the census process is ever changing to reflect changes in the Canadian population and its demographic characteristics.

This fact sheet covers the theme of Indigenous peoples. This theme encompasses census content from the following topics: returning content, membership within a Métis organization or Settlement, and enrollment under an Inuit land claims agreement.

For information on the broad social trends related to the specific topics within this theme, please see the respective sections below.



Returning content

Why are these questions asked?

These questions can be used to identify Indigenous populations—Indigenous group, Registered or Treaty Indian status, and membership in a First Nation or Indian band. The main purpose of these questions is to provide an Indigenous identity variable. Indigenous identity is commonly used to support evidence-based decision making across governments and organizations, as well as to understand the demographic and socioeconomic outcomes of First Nations people, Métis and Inuit in Canada.

Current trends and data gaps for this topic

To ensure that the census measures important trends in society and continues to produce relevant, high quality data, content changes were proposed for the 2021 Census. Updated terminology has been incorporated for the Indigenous group question which better aligns with a distinctions-based approach, while allowing continuity for data users.

Any changes made to census content are carefully analyzed and discussed with stakeholders and guided by expert advice to preserve data relevance, overall quality, coverage and comparability over time, as well as to ensure that legislative and policy requirements continue to be met. Statistics Canada gathered feedback specifically on questions used to identify First Nations people, Métis and Inuit through a series of regional discussions. More information can be found in [Regional discussion report: Review of First Nations, Métis and Inuit questions on the census](#). These discussions included Indigenous peoples, communities, organizations, and governments, as well as federal departments, and researchers.

Approach for the 2021 Census

As a result of its consultations and testing, Statistics Canada has modified the wording of the Indigenous group question.

Changes considered and tested successfully	Resulting approach for 2021
“Aboriginal” is no longer the preferred collective term. If a collective term is used, “Indigenous” is more appropriate. In addition, it is preferable to use the most specific term possible.	The 2021 version of this question will not include the term “Aboriginal” and will ask whether the person is First Nations, Métis or Inuk (Inuit). This is in line with the preferred distinctions-based approach identified during discussions with stakeholders..

What to expect in 2021

The results of the 2019 Census Test indicate that the 2021 version of the Indigenous group question produces estimates similar to those from the 2016 Census question for First Nations people, Métis and Inuit. The questions on Registered or Treaty Indian status and membership in a First Nation or Indian band will remain on the 2021 Census with no major changes.



Membership within a Métis organization or Settlement

Why is this question asked?

A new question is being asked to collect information on whether respondents are registered members of a Métis organization or Settlement. This was identified as an information gap during user engagement following the 2016 Census. The purpose of this question is to provide more detailed information on the Métis population to support policies and programs for Canada, and for Métis individuals and organizations. With this new question, it will be possible to differentiate between citizens of Métis governments that have signed the Canada-Métis Nation Accord and Métis individuals outside these entities.

Current trends and data gaps for this topic

To ensure that the census measures important trends in society and continues to produce relevant, high quality data, content changes were proposed for the 2021 Census. The new question on membership within a Métis organization or Settlement is intended to provide data users with more detailed and relevant information on the Métis population, in the context of a growing population and evolving legal landscape.

Any changes made to census content are carefully analyzed and discussed with stakeholders and guided by expert advice to preserve data relevance, overall quality, coverage and comparability over time, as well as to ensure that legislative and policy requirements continue to be met. Statistics Canada gathered feedback specifically on questions used to identify First Nations people, Métis and Inuit through a series of regional discussions. More information can be found in [Regional discussion report: Review of First Nations, Métis and Inuit questions on the census](#). These discussions included Indigenous people, communities, organizations, and governments, as well as federal departments, and researchers.

Approach for the 2021 Census

As a result of its consultations and testing, Statistics Canada has added a question on membership within a Métis organization or Settlement to the 2021 Census.

Changes considered and tested successfully

Feedback from stakeholders identified an information gap regarding the distinction between individuals who identify as Métis in the context of the historical Métis Nation and those who identify as Métis in the context of a mixed First Nations and European identity

Concerns were raised about the increased response burden imposed by additional questions related to Indigenous populations.

Resulting approach for 2021

A new question has been added to the 2021 Census of Population to collect this information.

The question reads, “Is this person a registered member of a Métis organization or Settlement?” Respondents who answer “yes” can select a signatory of the *Canada-Métis Nation Accord*, or provide a response in the write-in box.

On the electronic questionnaire, only respondents who identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit will be asked this question. Mainly because of the difficulty of implementing skips on the paper questionnaire, all respondents who complete a paper questionnaire will be asked this question.

What to expect in 2021

The 2021 Census will include a question on membership within a Métis organization or Settlement. Respondents who complete an electronic questionnaire will only be asked this question if they identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit.



Enrollment under an Inuit land claims agreement

Why is this question asked?

This is a new question that is being asked to collect information on whether respondents are enrolled under—or beneficiaries of—an Inuit land claims agreement. This was identified as an information gap during user engagement following the 2016 Census. The main purpose of this question is to provide additional detail for the Inuit population to better support evidence-based decision making by the Government of Canada, as well as by Inuit governments and organizations.

Current trends and data gaps for this topic

To ensure that the census measures important trends in society and continues to produce relevant, high quality data, content changes were proposed for the 2021 Census. Canada has obligations to Inuit under land claims agreements and the new question on enrollment under an Inuit land claims agreement will provide more detailed and relevant information to data users, including Inuit governments and organizations.

Any changes made to census content are carefully analyzed and discussed with stakeholders and guided by expert advice to preserve data relevance, overall quality, coverage and comparability over time, as well as to ensure that legislative and policy requirements continue to be met. Statistics Canada gathered feedback specifically on questions used to identify First Nations people, Métis and Inuit through a series of regional discussions. More information can be found in [Regional discussion report: Review of First Nations, Métis and Inuit questions on the census](#). These discussions included Indigenous peoples, communities, organizations, and governments, as well as federal departments, and researchers.

Approach for the 2021 Census

Since the 2019 Census Test was not conducted in Inuit Nunangat, the analysis of the results of this particular question was limited to a small number of respondents who reported being Inuit land claims agreement beneficiaries. As a result of its consultations and testing, Statistics Canada has added a question on enrollment under Inuit land claims agreements.

Changes considered and tested successfully

Feedback from stakeholders identified an information gap for Inuit with regard to land claims agreements.

Resulting approach for 2021

A new question has been added to the 2021 Census of Population to collect this information.

The question reads “Is this person enrolled under, or a beneficiary of, an Inuit land claims agreement?” Respondents who answer yes can select an existing agreement or provide a response in the write-in box in the event that a new agreement is finalized prior to census data collection.

Concerns were raised about the increased response burden imposed by additional questions for Indigenous populations.

On the electronic questionnaire, only respondents who identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit will be asked this question. Mainly because of the difficulty of implementing skips on the paper questionnaire, all respondents who complete a paper questionnaire will be asked this question.



What to expect in 2021

The 2021 Census will include a question on enrollment under an Inuit land claims agreement. Respondents who complete an electronic questionnaire will be asked this question only if they identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit.

Additional information

The content of the 2021 Census questionnaire is the result of extensive engagement, discussions and testing, including comprehensive one-on-one interviews and a rigorous 2019 Census Test involving more than 135,000 households across Canada. Additional information on this can be found in the [2019 Census Content Test: Design and methodology](#) fact sheet.

Any changes made to census content are carefully analyzed and discussed with stakeholders and guided by expert advice to preserve data relevance, overall quality, coverage and comparability over time, as well as to ensure that legislative and policy requirements continue to be met.

For further information on new and modified content, as well as a description of content that was tested but did not proceed to the 2021 Census questionnaire, see [Painting a Portrait of Canada: The 2021 Census of Population](#).