



Portrait of youth in Canada: Data report

Chapter 4: Indigenous Youth in Canada

by Thomas Anderson

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Chapter 4: Indigenous Youth in Canada

by Thomas Anderson

Highlights

- Young people aged 15 to 24 make up a larger proportion of the Indigenous population (17%) than the non-Indigenous population (12%).
- The share of youth who are Indigenous varies significantly by region. For example, while less than one in 20 youth in Ontario are Indigenous, in both Manitoba and Saskatchewan, that proportion is almost one in four.
- Indigenous youth are about three times more likely to be young parents than those in the non-Indigenous population.
- Among Indigenous youth aged 20 to 24, 70% had completed high school in 2016, up from 57% in 2006.
- Young Indigenous women are more likely to have a chronic health condition than men. They are also more likely than Indigenous young men to have adverse mental health outcomes.
- The majority of First Nations (91%), Métis (93%) and Inuit youth (97%) reported that they felt good about their Indigenous identity.
- Half of Indigenous youth reported that speaking an Indigenous language was important or very important.

Introduction

Indigenous people represent one of the youngest populations in Canada. On average, Indigenous people were 8.8 years younger than the non-Indigenous population in 2016. Indigenous youth, those aged 15 to 24 years, make up one-sixth of the entire Indigenous population (16.9%), a larger proportion than among the non-Indigenous population (12%).

The relative youth of Indigenous people is a key reason that the population is expected to grow quickly over the coming decades. By 2041, it is projected that the Indigenous population in Canada could reach between 2.5 and 3.2 million persons. And while the Indigenous population is projected to age at a faster rate than the non-Indigenous population, it is expected that the Indigenous population will remain younger, and that youth will make up a larger share of the population into the coming decades.¹

The Indigenous population, while large and growing, is not homogeneous. Indigenous peoples comprise First Nations people,² Métis and Inuit, with their own distinct cultures, languages and histories, as well as their own unique experiences of colonization. Further, within these three groups, individuals will have differing experiences based on their intersecting identities.³

Indigenous youth live across Canada, in settings ranging from rural, remote and northern communities to large urban centres. Their labour and school experiences vary widely, and they take numerous pathways to attain education and employment.⁴

1. Statistics Canada. 2021. Projections of the Indigenous populations and households in Canada, 2016 to 2041: Overview of data sources, methods, assumptions and scenarios. Cat. No. 17-20-0001.

2. "First Nations people" refers to both those with and without registered or treaty Indian status.

3. For example, gender, age, sexual orientation, geographical location, status under the *Indian Act*, and those who are enrolled under, or beneficiaries, of an Inuit land claims agreement.

4. Bougie, E., Kelly-Scott, K. and P. Arriagada. 2013. The Education and Employment Experiences of First Nations People Living Off Reserve, Inuit, and Métis: Selected Findings from the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey. Cat. No. 89 653 X – No. 001.

Furthermore, Indigenous youth face unique structural inequities. The effects of colonization on Indigenous people in Canada continue to be felt and have reverberated through multiple generations.⁵ However, Indigenous youth continue to show resilience. While First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth are less likely to have an Indigenous mother tongue, many have taken on Indigenous languages as second languages.⁶

This chapter will look at Indigenous youth in Canada by examining their demographic, familial, educational, economic, health and cultural characteristics. Youth are defined as those aged 15 to 24. Data are largely taken from the 2016 Census of Population and the 2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, unless otherwise noted.⁷ While more recent data sources on health, education and labour market participation do exist, the APS was designed specifically to produce reliable and comprehensive distinction-based statistics about First Nations living off reserve, Métis and Inuit. Moreover, the Census is the only source at Statistics Canada that provides information about First Nations living on-reserve as well as off-reserve.

Demographics

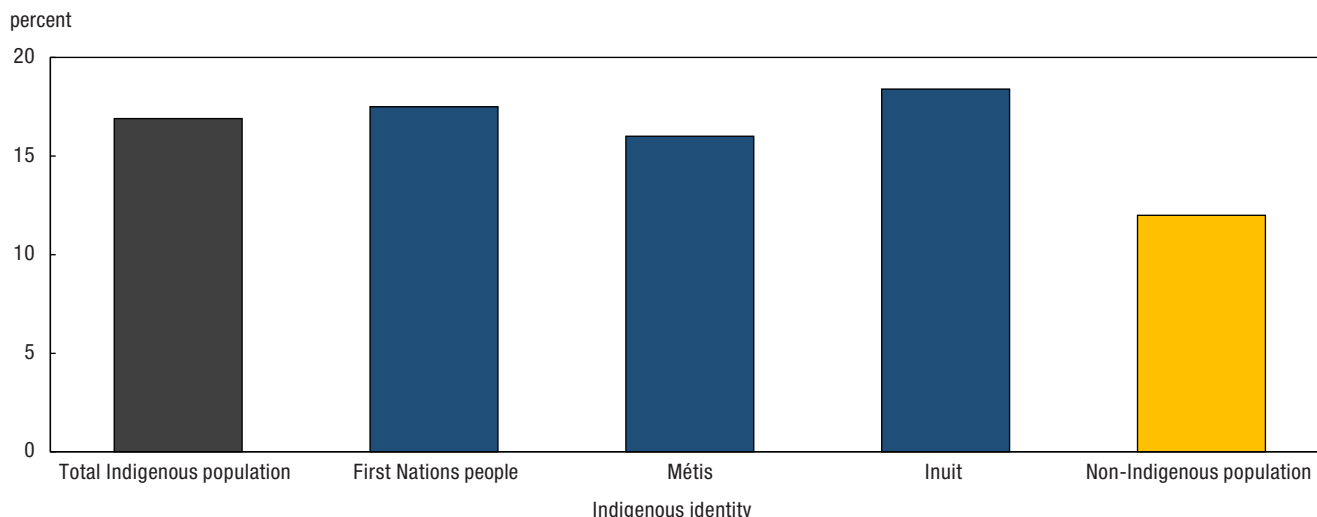
Indigenous youth make up more than one-sixth of the total Indigenous population

In 2016, there were 283,390 people aged 15 to 24 who identified as Indigenous persons in Canada.⁸ This group made up about one-sixth of the entire Indigenous population (16.9%).

Young people make up a larger proportion of the Indigenous population than in the non-Indigenous population. This was true for each of the Indigenous groups: First Nations people, Métis and Inuit. In 2016, those aged 15 to 24 made up 17.5% of the First Nations population, 16.0% of the Métis population and 18.4% of the Inuit population; the share was 12.0% for the non-Indigenous population (Chart 1).

Chart 1

Proportion of the population aged 15 to 24 years by Indigenous identity, Canada, 2016



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

In 2016, 6.7% of all youth aged 15 to 24 in Canada were Indigenous. However, there was significant regional variation. While that share was 2.8% in Québec and 3.7% in Ontario, it reached 23.6% in Saskatchewan and 24% in Manitoba. In Yukon, about one-third of all youth were Indigenous (32.4%), and in the Northwest Territories, almost two-thirds were (62.7%). Finally in Nunavut, 93.8% of youth aged 15 to 24 were Inuit.

5. O'Neill, L., Fraser, T., Kitchenham, A. and McDonald, V., 2018. "Hidden burdens: A review of intergenerational, historical and complex trauma, implications for indigenous families." *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma*, 11(2), pp.173-186.

6. Anderson, T. 2018. Results from the 2016 Census: Aboriginal languages and the role of second-language acquisition. Cat. no. 75-006-X.

7. While the Census of Population enumerates people in all geographies in Canada, the Aboriginal Peoples Survey is only for Métis, Inuit and First Nations people living off reserve. As a result, portions of this paper will only describe First Nations youth living off reserve.

8. The 2016 Census of Population asked respondents if they were an "Aboriginal person." However, for the purposes of this article, the word "Indigenous" is used.

More than 80 percent of First Nations (82.4%) and Métis youth (83.8%) lived in either Ontario or the western provinces, compared with 71.1% of the total non-Indigenous youth population in Canada.

The province with the largest number of First Nations youth was Ontario (41,410), while Alberta held the highest number of Métis youth (19,795). These figures are generally in line with the total First Nations and Métis populations.

The distribution of Inuit youth by province and territory was different than that of First Nations people and Métis. This was largely because three-quarters of Inuit youth (75.6%) lived in Inuit Nunangat, the homeland of Inuit in Canada. Almost half of Inuit youth lived in Nunavut (48.0%) and another 20.5% lived in Nunavik (see Figure 1). Outside Inuit Nunangat, the largest number of Inuit youth lived in Ontario (695), followed by Newfoundland and Labrador (620).

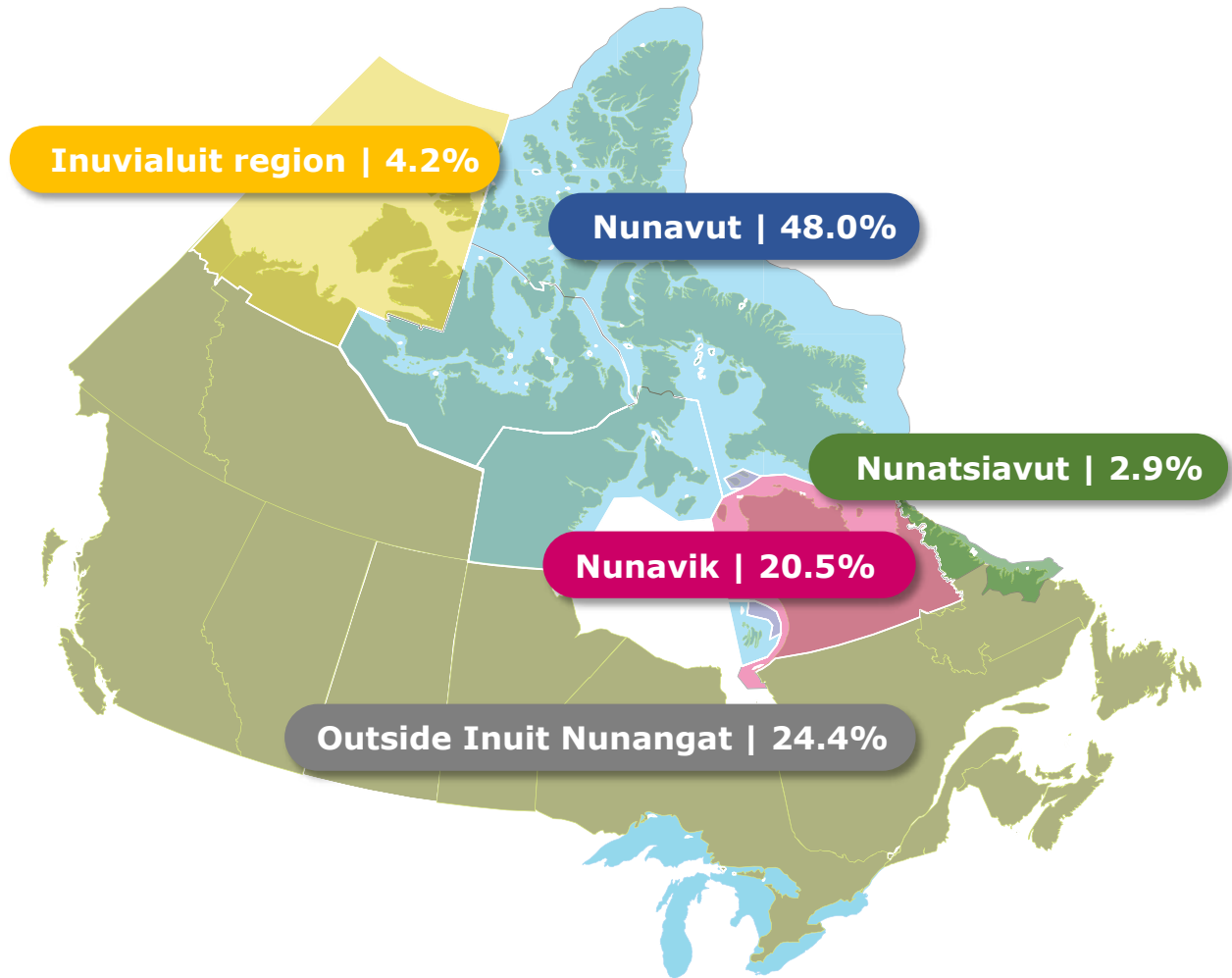
The Indigenous population was younger in rural areas than urban ones, with the average age of Indigenous people being 31.8 years in rural areas compared with 32.5 years in urban areas.⁹

The majority of Indigenous youth (62.8%) lived in an urban area in 2016, while the remaining 37.2% lived in a rural setting. The share of youth living in an urban area was highest among Métis (72.8%), followed by First Nations (57.7%) and Inuit (49.2%). By contrast, 84.8% of non-Indigenous youth lived in an urban area.

For many First Nations people, living in a rural area coincides with living in an on-reserve community. Among First Nations youth with registered or treaty Indian status, 44.0% lived on reserve; the share of those living off reserve was 56.0%. This breakdown was roughly equivalent to that of the total First Nations population with registered or treaty Indian status.

9. Urban refers to small, medium and large population centres, using the population centre size variable. See the [2016 Census Dictionary](#) for more information.

Figure 1
Distribution of Inuit youth by Inuit region, Inuit aged 15 to 24 years, 2016



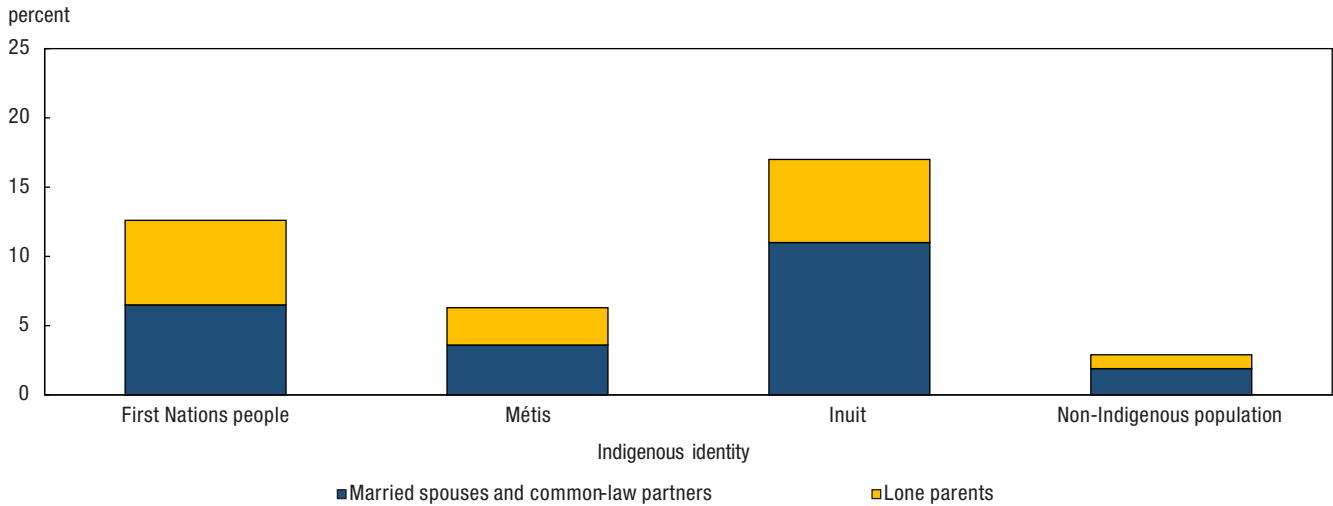
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

One in ten Indigenous youth have children

Indigenous people were more likely to be young parents than those in the non-Indigenous population. In 2016, one in ten (10.5%) Indigenous youth were a parent to a child living within their home compared with 2.9% of non-Indigenous youth (see Chart 2). Overall, young Indigenous women were more likely to be parents than young Indigenous men (15.1% versus 5.9%)

More than half of young Indigenous parents were classified either as a married spouse or common-law partner (53.6%); the other 46.4% were lone parents. Most young Indigenous lone parents were women (80.0%) while men accounted for the remaining share. Among non-Indigenous youth, women made up a greater majority of single parents than men (84.8% compared to 15.1%).

Chart 2
Proportion of youth who were a parent to a child living within the home by Census family type, First Nations people, Métis, Inuit and non-Indigenous population aged 15 to 24 years, 2016

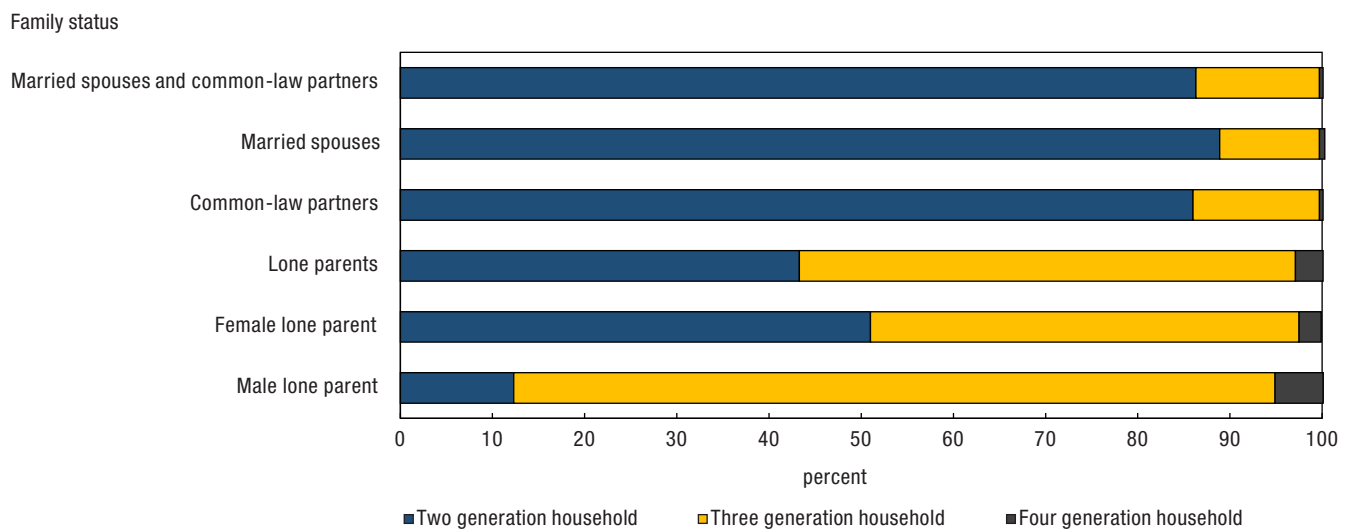


Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

A number of young parents lived within multi-generational households—along with their parents, grandparents or both.¹⁰ This was particularly true for lone parents. Indigenous lone parents were more likely to live in household with at least three generations (56.8%) compared with parents who were married or in a common-law relationship (13.7%). While it is generally an uncommon living situation, lone parents were more likely to live in a household with four generations (3.0% versus 0.4%).

Among all Indigenous youth, the group with the greatest likelihood to live in a three- or four-generation household were male lone parents. Nearly nine in ten lone fathers (87.9%) lived in a household with their children along with at least one parent or grandparent; this was almost two times greater than the share of single mothers (48.9%).

Chart 3
Census family status by number of generations living in a household, Indigenous parents aged 15 to 24 years, 2016



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

10. In such a case, “both” refers to a household with at least one child, one parent, one grandparent and one great-grandparent.

The difference may reflect the living situations and access to extended family of young parents following the dissolution of a relationship. Among First Nations people with registered or treaty Indian status, two-thirds of single fathers (67.8%) lived on reserve. Among single mothers, however, the likelihood of living on reserve was more than twenty percentage points lower (46.8%). Among Inuit lone parents, 97.4% of Inuit lone fathers lived in Inuit Nunangat compared with 86.0% of Inuit lone mothers.

This family structure also means that young Indigenous people may be more affected by the unprecedented changes driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. Lone parents who are unable to access child care or who must take on the extra burden of homeschooling their children are particularly vulnerable to the economic impacts of the pandemic. Furthermore, multi-generational households may be vulnerable in another way, as parents or grandparents of Indigenous youth may be at risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms.¹¹

Education and employment

Educational outcomes of Indigenous youth improve

Data from the 2016 Census of Population revealed that there was improvement in the educational outcomes of First Nations people, Métis and Inuit in Canada from 2006 to 2016.¹² Notably, Indigenous women have also made significant gains in every level of the educational system.¹³ However, while the share of those who had completed postsecondary schooling did rise, the gap between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations persisted.

Among Indigenous youth aged 20 to 24, 70.0% had completed high school in 2016, up from 57.0% in 2006.¹⁴ Within this age group, the figure was 64.0% for First Nations people, 82.7% for Métis and 47.0% for Inuit. The corresponding figure for non-Indigenous youth aged 20 to 24 was 91.0%.

Among First Nations youth with registered or treaty Indian status, the rate of completing high school was higher for those living off reserve than on reserve. For those aged 20 to 24 years, 70.8% of those living off reserve had completed high school, compared with 45.5% of those on reserve. A similar pattern occurred with Inuit youth, as 77.6% of Inuit living outside of Inuit Nunangat had completed high school compared with 36.5% of those living inside Inuit Nunangat.

Within each of the three groups, there was a gender divide, as women were more likely to have completed high school than men. Among those aged 20 to 24, this pattern held true for First Nations people (66.4% of women versus 61.5% of men), Métis (85.3% versus 79.9%) and Inuit (50.2% versus 43.6%).

Past research has found that a large number of Indigenous people re-enter the education system in adulthood to gain secondary or post-secondary credentials.¹⁵ So, while these figures do indeed reveal a divide between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, they do not tell the entire story.

Indigenous youth who were parents of a child in their household were less likely to have completed high school than those who were not. The share of young Indigenous parents in the 20 to 24 age year group who had a high school diploma or equivalent was 50.6% compared with 74.4% of those who were not parents. These findings are in line with past research that found Indigenous women who had a child during adolescence were less likely to have completed high school.¹⁶

Along with lower levels of school completion, Indigenous youth were less likely to be attending school than non-Indigenous youth (56.0% versus 70.5%). However, there was some improvement since 2006, since at that time 54.7% of Indigenous youth the same age range were attending school. Chart 4 shows the share of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and non-Indigenous youth attending different types of school.

11. Statistics Canada. 2020. "First Nations people, Métis and Inuit and COVID-19: Health and social characteristics." *The Daily*. April 17th, 2020.

12. Statistics Canada. 2017. "Education in Canada: Key Results from the 2016 Census." *The Daily*. November, 29th 2017.

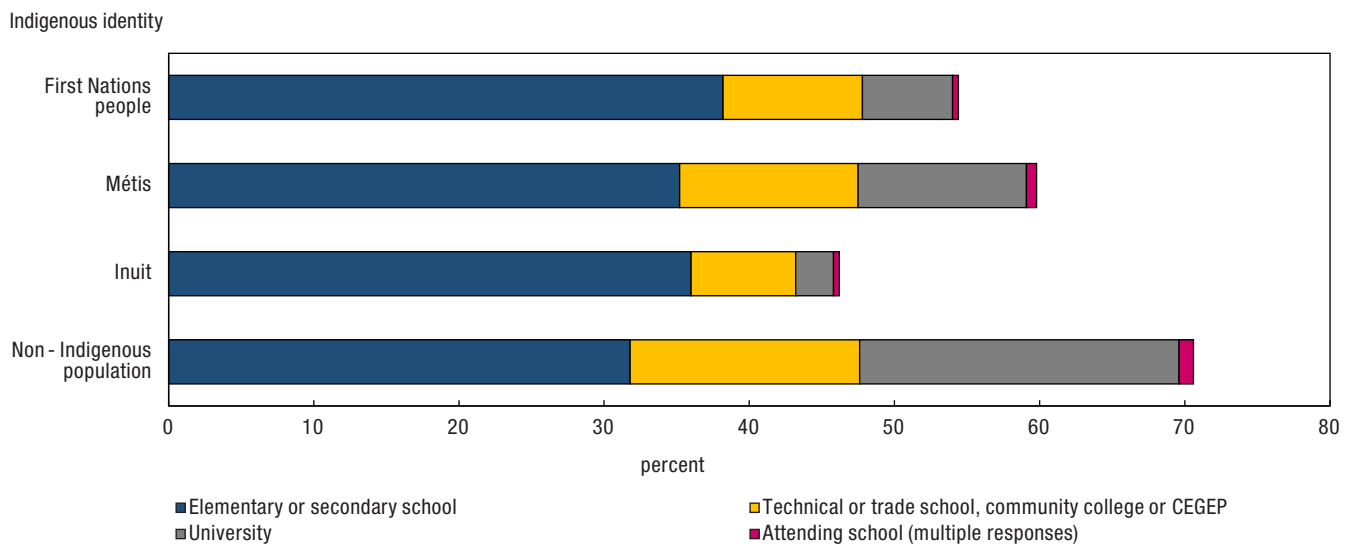
13. Arriagada, Paula. 2021. "The achievements, experiences and labour market outcomes of First Nations, Métis and Inuit women with bachelor's degrees or higher", *Insights on Canadian Society*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-006-X.

14. This figure refers to those who had either received a high school diploma or equivalency certificate.

15. O'Donnell, V. and P. Arriagada. 2017. "Upgrading and high school equivalency among the Indigenous population living off reserve." *Insights on Canadian Society*. Cat. no. 75-006-X.

16. Boulet, V. and N. Badets. 2017. Early motherhood among off-reserve First Nations, Métis and Inuit women. Cat. no. 75-006-X.

Chart 4
Proportion attending school, First Nations people, Métis and Inuit aged 15 to 24 years, 2016



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

As it has with the economy in general, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted schools and the wider education system in Canada.¹⁷ First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth may be especially vulnerable to the negative effects of school closures, particularly those who live in remote settings—whether those settings are on reserve, in Inuit Nunangat or in other remote locations. This may be due to difficulties accessing or affording electronic devices, accessing the Internet in these regions^{18,19} or travelling from a remote location to a place where school is accessible.

Indigenous youth are less likely to be employed than non-Indigenous youth

In 2016, there were over 111,000 Indigenous workers aged 15 to 24 in Canada, representing 5.1% of total youth employment in the country. Among the provinces, the proportion was highest in Manitoba (15.1%) and in Saskatchewan (13.6%). In the Northwest Territories, close to half (48.1%) of all young workers were Indigenous, while in the Yukon, the proportion was 22.8%. In Nunavut, the vast majority (87.8%) of young workers were Inuit.

Despite the significant contributions of First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth to the economy, gaps in labour market outcomes with non-Indigenous youth remain.²⁰ This was consistent whether the indicator was employment, unemployment or income.

This same pattern was evident for Indigenous youth. In 2016, among Indigenous people aged 15 to 24, the employment rate was 39.3% and the unemployment rate was 23.0%. The corresponding figures for non-Indigenous youth were 52.8% and 15.1%, respectively. A number of youth do not enter the labour market because they are attending school.²¹ However, when only those who were not attending school were considered, Indigenous youth were still less likely to be employed than their non-Indigenous counterparts (47.8% versus 72.0%).

Employment rates were lowest and unemployment highest among First Nations youth living on reserve and Inuit youth living in Inuit Nunangat. Overall, the employment rate of First Nations youth was 32.1%, while it was 52.3% for Métis and 36.2% for Inuit. Among status First Nations youth, the employment rate was 17.1% on reserve and 35.2% off reserve while for First Nations youth without registered or treaty Indian status, the employment rate was 48.5%. The employment rate was 33.8% for Inuit youth living in Inuit Nunangat and 44.0% for those outside.

17. Frenette, M., Frank, K. and Z. Deng. 2020. COVID-19 Pandemic: School Closures and the Online Preparedness of Children. Catalogue no. 45280001.

18. Statistics Canada. 2019. "Internet connectivity: Technology, service availability and cost." *The Daily*. February 25th, 2019.

19. Data from the Labour Force Survey revealed that people living in rural areas were roughly twice as likely as those in urban areas to not have internet access at home. However, these questions were not asked of those living on reserve or in Inuit Nunangat. See "Internet connectivity: Technology, service availability and cost" for more information.

20. Statistics Canada. 2017. Labour in Canada: Key Results from the 2016 Census. *The Daily*. November 29, 2017.

21. Morissette, R. 2021. Chapter 2: Youth employment in Canada. *Portrait of Youth in Canada: Data Report*. Cat. no. 42-28-0001.

Labour market impacts of COVID-19 on Indigenous youth

Past research on the labour outcomes of Indigenous people found that the 2008–2009 recession had a more pronounced negative effect on the Indigenous population and that it took the Indigenous population longer to rebound to its previous employment levels.²² Recent data on the COVID-19 economic downturn revealed a similar pattern: while the employment rates of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations fell by similar shares in the spring of 2020, employment for Indigenous people was slower to recover in the following months.²³ Furthermore, there was a sharp increase in unemployment among Indigenous youth during the summer of 2020, reflecting a challenging summer job market for youth.²⁴

However, more recent trends have converged and the summer job market was much more favourable in 2021 than in 2020, for Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth alike. The unemployment rate among Indigenous youth in the three months ending in August 2021 was 14.1%, 11.5 points below its level in the summer of 2020. Similarly, the non-Indigenous youth unemployment rate of 12.5% was much lower in the summer of 2021 compared with the summer of 2020 (-11.8 points).

The employment rate among Indigenous youth reached 57.4% in the three months ending in August 2021, surpassing its pre-pandemic and summer 2020 level of 47.4%. Finally, the labour force participation rate among Indigenous youth was 66.8%, the highest since the onset of the pandemic and 3.0 points above that seen in the summer job market one year earlier.

Mental and physical health

Indigenous youth are less likely to report excellent or very good mental health than older age groups

The World Health Organization describes mental health as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”²⁵ In general, youth in Canada have reported worse mental health outcomes than older age groups, both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁶ Past research on suicide and suicidal ideation among Indigenous people has also found that suicide rates were highest among youth.²⁷

The concept of self-reported mental health is one that asks respondents to rate their mental well-being as excellent, very good, good, fair or poor. In 2017, 48.9% of Indigenous youth reported that their mental health was either excellent or very good.²⁸ This was lower than the share of Indigenous people aged 25 to 44 (53.7%) as well as those aged 45 and over (55.4%). Chart 5 shows the proportion of First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth with excellent or very good mental health.

22. Moyser, M. 2017. Aboriginal People Living Off-Reserve and the Labour Market: Estimates from the Labour Force Survey, 2007-2015. Statistics Canada.

23. Bleakney, A., Masoud, H. and H. Robertson. 2020. Labour market impacts of COVID-19 on Indigenous people: March to August 2020. Statistics Canada. Catalogue no. 45-28-0001.

24. Ibid.

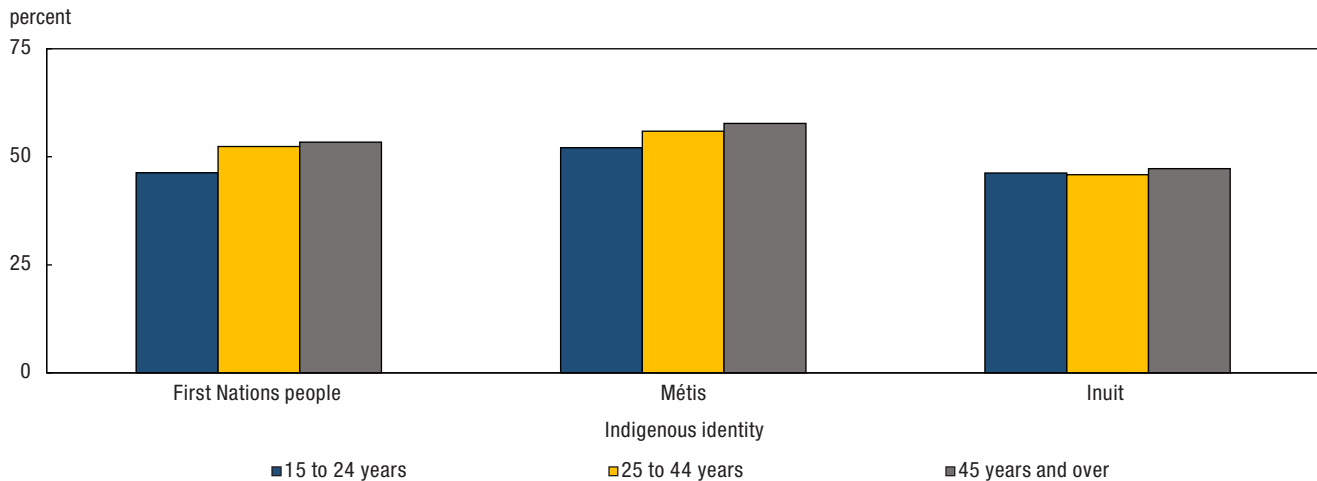
25. Herrman, Saxena, & Moodie, 2004. Promoting Mental Health: Concepts, Emerging Evidence, Practice.

26. Garriguet, D. 2021. “Chapter 1: Health of Youth in Canada.” *Portrait of Youth in Canada: Data Report*. Cat. no. 42-28-0001.

27. Kumar and Tjepkema found that suicide rates of First Nations people and Inuit were highest among those aged 15 to 24.

28. While the preceding sections were drawn from the 2016 Census of Population and covered Inuit, Métis and First Nations youth living both on and off reserve, the data for the next two sections are taken from the 2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey and do not cover First Nations people living on reserve.

Chart 5
Proportion with excellent or very good mental health, First Nations people living off reserve, Métis and Inuit by age group, 15 years and over, 2017



Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2017.

The 2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey asked respondents if they had been diagnosed with any long-term mental health conditions. Close to one in five Indigenous youth had been diagnosed with a mood disorder (19.3%) and nearly one in four had been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder (24.3%). While the rate of having a mood disorder was roughly the same for Indigenous people in older age groups, those aged 25 to 44 years (20.7%) and 45 years and over (15.3%) were less likely to report a diagnosed anxiety disorder.

The rates of those with a mood disorder were similar for First Nations and Métis youth (20.2% and 18.7%) as were the share of those with an anxiety disorder (24.9% and 24.6%); however, the share of Inuit youth with a diagnosed mood disorder was lower (15.9%) as was the share with an anxiety disorder (13.2%). The difference in rates may reflect an issue with the availability of health services for Inuit, as past research has pointed to the difficulties in accessing health care and getting a diagnosis in Inuit Nunangat.²⁹ Chart 6 shows the share of First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth who had been diagnosed with a mood or anxiety disorder.

29. Wallace, S. 2014. Inuit health: Selected findings from the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey. Catalogue no. 89 653 X – No. 003.

Indigenous people and mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic

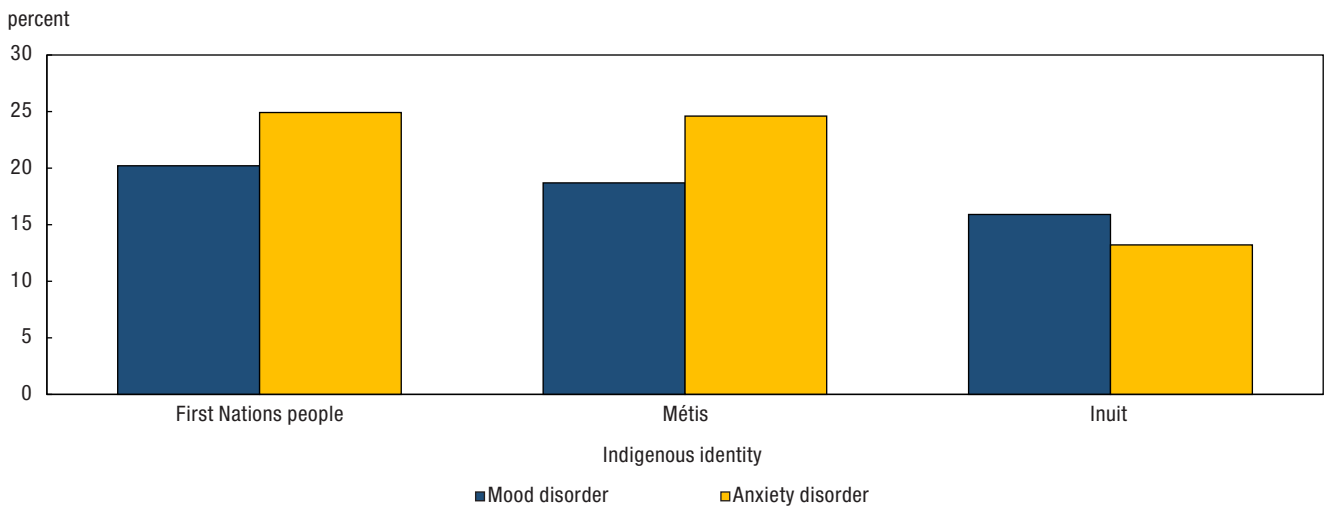
The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting social disruption have left many to struggle with changes to routines and feelings of uncertainty. A Statistics Canada crowdsourcing data collection initiative provided information about the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of Indigenous people in Canada. Since crowdsourcing data are not based on sampling principles, the findings cannot be applied to the overall Indigenous population; however, the results offer valuable insights on Indigenous people and mental health in the time of COVID-19.

Findings from the crowdsourcing data point to some of the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of Indigenous participants. Among Indigenous crowdsource participants, 38% reported fair or poor mental health, 32% reported good mental health, and 31% reported excellent or very good mental health. For context, in the 2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 16% of the Indigenous adult population (First Nations people living off reserve, Métis and Inuit) reported fair or poor mental health, 31% reported good mental health and 53% reported excellent or very good mental health.

The crowdsourced data reflect mental health disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Higher proportions of Indigenous participants reported fair/poor mental health than non-Indigenous participants (38% compared to 23%).

Higher proportions of Indigenous participants also reported that their mental health is “somewhat worse” or “much worse” since the start of physical distancing (60% compared to 52%). Regarding stress and anxiety, 40% of Indigenous participants described most days as “quite a bit stressful” or “extremely stressful” and 41% reported symptoms consistent with moderate or severe anxiety. This is compared to 27% and 25% of non-Indigenous participants respectively.

Chart 6
Proportion with a diagnosed mood or anxiety disorder, First Nations people living off reserve, Métis and Inuit aged 15 to 24 years, 2017



Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2017.

Across each of these indicators, young Indigenous women were more likely to have adverse mental health outcomes than men. For example, young Indigenous women were less likely to report that their mental health was excellent or very good (40.5%) compared with young Indigenous men (58.1%). Young Indigenous women were also more likely than men to be diagnosed with a mood disorder (26.2% versus 11.8%) and were more likely to have been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder (32.6% versus 15.3%). This reflects the greater likelihood for women to seek help or expertise for mental health care.³⁰

30. Turcotte, M. 2015. Women and Health. Cat. no. 89-503-X.

Young Indigenous women are more likely than men to report a chronic condition

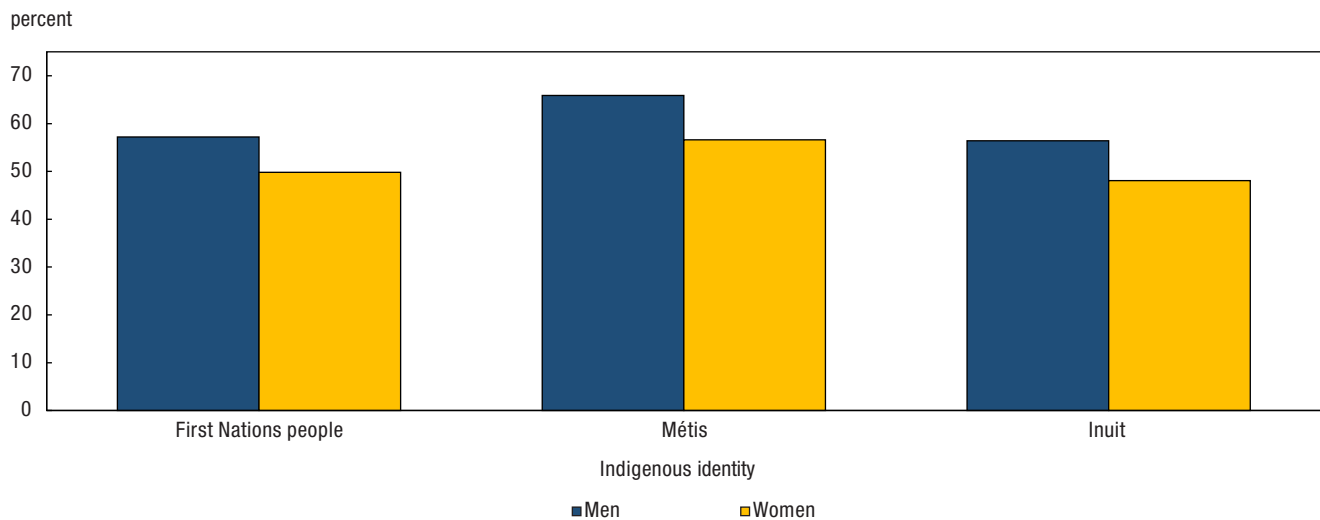
More than half (56.4%) of Indigenous youth reported that their health was excellent or very good. Unlike with self-reported mental health, Indigenous youth were more likely to report excellent or very good health than those aged 25 to 44 years (51.1%) or 45 years and over (40.7%).

Young Indigenous men were more likely to report excellent or very good health (60.8%) compared with young Indigenous women (52.3%). Chart 7 shows the share of First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth who reported excellent or very good health by sex.

Overall, 43.7% of Indigenous youth had a chronic health condition that was diagnosed by a health professional. Young Indigenous women were more likely (50.5%) than men (36.4%) to report having such a chronic health condition.

Chart 7

Proportion reporting excellent or very good health by sex, First Nations people living off reserve, Métis and Inuit aged 15 to 24 years, 2017



Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2017.

The share of Inuit youth who had been diagnosed with a chronic condition was 30.7%, which was lower than that of First Nations youth (44.5%) or Métis youth (43.8%). As with mood and anxiety disorders, this may be related to difficulties accessing health care in Inuit Nunangat.³¹

Language and Culture

Half of Indigenous youth reported that speaking an Indigenous language was important or very important

The history of colonization in Canada has had a profoundly negative impact on Indigenous languages.³² However, Indigenous languages continue to occupy an important place for First Nations people, Métis and Inuit and are considered key to Indigenous resilience.³³ While some languages have become endangered,³⁴ more than 70 unique Indigenous languages continue to be spoken in Canada.³⁵

31. Past research has noted that the number of chronic health conditions diagnosed may be lower than the number experienced within Inuit Nunangat (see Wallace, S. 2014).

32. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. 2015. Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

33. Kirmayer, L.J. et al. 2011. "Rethinking Resilience from Indigenous Perspectives." *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*. 56(2).

34. Norris, M.J. 2007. "Aboriginal languages in Canada: Emerging trends and perspectives on second language acquisition." *Canadian Social Trends*. No. 83. May. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 11-008-X.

35. O'Donnell, V. and T. Anderson. 2017. Census in Brief: The Aboriginal languages of First Nations people, Métis and Inuit. Catalogue no. 98-200-X2016022

In 2016, 13.0% of Indigenous youth could speak an Indigenous language well enough to conduct a conversation; this figure was 17.3% for Indigenous people aged 25 years and over. Among First Nations youth, 16.5% could speak an Indigenous language, while 0.8% of Métis youth could do the same. The figure was highest among Inuit youth at 64.4%, most of which constituted the ability to speak a dialect of Inuktitut such as Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun.

The majority of First Nations (68.1%) and Inuit youth (87.0%) who could speak an Indigenous language learned their language as a mother tongue. Among Métis youth who could speak an Indigenous language, the share was closer to half, as 54.5% learned their language as a mother tongue and the remaining share learned it as a second language.

The 2017 APS has a more broadly defined concept for people with knowledge of an Indigenous language. This concept is based not on those who could conduct a conversation, but those who could speak an Indigenous language “even if only a few words.” Using this broader concept, 42.5% of First Nations youth, 18.4% of Métis youth and 80.8% of Inuit youth could speak an Indigenous language in 2017.

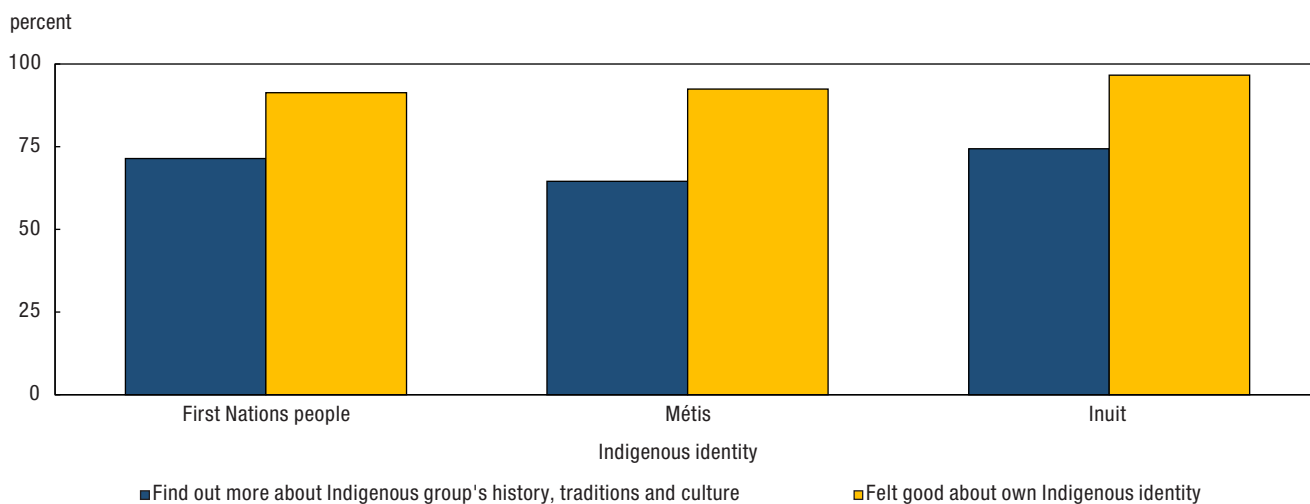
Half (50.0%) of Indigenous youth reported that they considered the ability to speak an Indigenous language either important or very important. This figure was roughly equivalent to that of the older age groups, as 50.3% of those aged 25 to 44 years and 49.5% of those 45 years and over reported the same thing.

The proportion reporting that speaking an Indigenous language was important did, however, differ between Indigenous groups. Specifically, 56.4% of First Nations, 37.9% of Métis and 83.1% of Inuit youth stated that speaking an Indigenous language was either important or very important.

The 2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey asked respondents a number of questions on their sense of belonging to their Indigenous community and identity. Most Indigenous youth reported making an effort to find out more about their history, traditions and culture; the figures were 71.4% for First Nations youth, 64.6% for Métis and 74.4% for Inuit.

There was also a general consensus about the way Indigenous youth viewed their identity; the majority of First Nations (91.4%), Métis (92.5%) and Inuit youth (96.7%) all reported that they felt good about their own Indigenous identity.

Chart 8
Proportion who either agree or strongly agree with selected cultural indicators, First Nations people living off reserve, Métis and Inuit aged 15 to 24 years, 2017



Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2017.

Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter was to examine a broad range of social and economic indicators that affect young First Nations people, Métis and Inuit. While there was improvement in the educational outcomes of First Nations people, Métis and Inuit in Canada in recent years, Indigenous youth continue to face disparities in education and employment, reflecting the ongoing impacts of colonization. It will be necessary to continue to monitor these indicators to continue to assess whether these gaps narrow.

Many Indigenous youth highly value the ability to speak an Indigenous language and are active participants in their tradition and culture. They also hold their own identity within their Indigenous group as being valuable; this was true for First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced significant changes upon the economy and social structure of Canada as a whole. Indigenous youth are not insulated from these effects and, in many cases, may be among the most vulnerable to disruptions of social, educational and economic systems.³⁶ In the coming years, future research will be invaluable to better understand the multifaceted well-being of First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth in Canada.

Data sources and methods

Data sources

Two data sources were used for this article. The first was the 2016 Census of Population. Further information on the census can be found in the [Guide to the Census of Population, 2016](#), Catalogue no. 98-304-X.

Additional information on census data quality and comparability for Aboriginal peoples can be found in the [Aboriginal Peoples Reference Guide, Census of Population, 2016](#), Catalogue no. 98-500-X2016009.

The second data source was the 2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS). The 2017 APS is a voluntary, national survey of First Nations people living off reserve, Métis and Inuit aged 15 or older. The objectives of the APS are to identify the needs of these Indigenous groups and to inform policy and programs. The APS aims to provide current and relevant data for a variety of stakeholders, including Indigenous organizations, communities, service providers, researchers, governments, and the general public.

The APS is a post-censal survey, designed to follow and complement the Census of Population. The 2017 APS represents the fifth cycle of the survey and follows the thematic approach that was first introduced in the 2012 APS. The focus for the 2017 APS is on participation in the Canadian economy, transferable skills, practical training, use of information technology, Indigenous language attainment, etc. It collected data on part-time employment, self-employment, business assistance, job satisfaction, job seeking, and non-participation in the labour force and job skills. It also collected unique and detailed information on education, health, languages, society and community, etc.

The 2017 APS was developed by Statistics Canada with funding provided by Indigenous Services Canada, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Health Canada, and Employment and Social Development Canada.

The target population of the 2017 APS was composed of the Indigenous identity population of Canada, 15 years of age or older as of January 15, 2017, living in private dwellings. It excluded people living on Indian reserves and settlements and in certain First Nations communities in Yukon and the Northwest Territories (NWT). The sample for the survey was derived from a sampling frame of individuals who answered “Yes” to one of the three Census questions defining the Indigenous identity population (questions 18, 20 and 21) or those who reported Indigenous ancestry to question 17 on the Census. Although not part of the 2017 APS target population, some individuals with Indigenous ancestry who did not report Indigenous identity were still sampled, since past survey experience indicates that nearly one-third of these individuals will report an Indigenous identity on the APS. Therefore, unlike the target population, the sampled population (or survey population) was composed of both the identity population and the Indigenous ancestry-only population. Additional details of the survey are available on [Statistics Canada’s Aboriginal Peoples Survey](#) page and in the Concepts and Methods Guide.

36. Arriagada, P., Hahmann, T. and V. O’Donnell. 2020. Indigenous people in urban areas: Vulnerabilities to the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19.

The 2017 APS was conducted from January through August, 2017. The overall response rate was 76%. More information on the APS is available on the [APS information page](#).

Methods

The population of study for this analysis was people who identified as Aboriginal persons on the 2016 Census of Population and the 2017 APS aged 15 to 24 years.

To ensure the confidentiality of responses collected for the 2016 Census, a random rounding process is used to alter the values reported in individual cells. As a result, when these data are summed or grouped, the total value may not match the sum of the individual values since the total and subtotals are independently rounded. Similarly, percentage distributions, which are calculated on rounded data, may not necessarily add up to 100%. Because of random rounding, counts and percentages may vary slightly between different census products such as analytical documents, highlight tables and data tables.

Prevalence estimates presented in this article from the 2017 APS are based on descriptive analysis conducted using SAS-callable SUDAAN. Weighted estimates are calculated using methods that take into account the survey design of the APS. Missing values including “don’t know,” “not stated” and “refusal” are excluded from the denominator when calculating percentages. Variance is estimated using 1,000 sets of bootstrap weights and a Fay adjustment factor of 16. Variance around each estimate is depicted using 95% confidence intervals. Statistically significant differences between two estimates are identified using hypothesis testing.

To ensure confidentiality of respondents, estimates based on small cell counts (10 or less) are suppressed. Furthermore, estimates with unacceptable precision (coefficient of variation greater than 33.3%) are suppressed. Estimates with marginal precision (coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%) are presented with an “E” and should be used with caution.

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