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# Indigenous Peoples Reference Guide

Census of Population, 2021



Release date: November 9, 2022

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## Definitions and concepts

Data collected from the 2021 Census of Population are used to derive summary and detailed variables that provide a portrait of Indigenous peoples in Canada. The following variables specific to Indigenous peoples are available from the 2021 Census:

- [Indigenous identity](#)
- [Indigenous group](#)
- [Registered or Treaty Indian status](#)
- [Membership in a First Nation or Indian band](#)
- [Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement](#)
- [Enrollment under an Inuit land claims agreement](#)
- [Indigenous ancestry](#) (variable created from the ethnic or cultural origin data).

For each of these variables, “person” refers to an individual and is the unit of analysis. The variable **Indigenous identity** is derived from three component variables: Indigenous group, Registered or Treaty Indian status, and Membership in a First Nation or Indian band. **Indigenous identity** refers to whether the person identified with the Indigenous peoples of Canada. This includes those who identify as First Nations (North American Indian), Métis and/or Inuk (Inuit), and/or those who report being Registered or Treaty Indians (that is, registered under the *Indian Act* of Canada), and/or those who have membership in a First Nation or Indian band. Aboriginal peoples of Canada (referred to here as Indigenous peoples) are defined in the *Constitution Act, 1982*, section 35 (2) as including the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

The variable **Indigenous group** refers to whether the person is First Nations (North American Indian), Métis and/or Inuk (Inuit). A person may be included in more than one of these three specific groups. First Nations (North American Indian) includes Status and non-Status Indians.

The variable **Registered or Treaty Indian status** refers to whether or not a person is a Registered or Treaty Indian. Registered Indians are persons who are registered under the *Indian Act* of Canada. Treaty Indians are persons who belong to a First Nation or Indian band that signed a treaty with the Crown. Registered or Treaty Indians are sometimes also called Status Indians.

The variable **Membership in a First Nation or Indian band** refers to whether or not a person is a member of a First Nation or Indian band. Historically, the *Indian Act* defined a band as a body of First Nations people for whose collective use and benefit lands have been set apart or money is held by the Crown, or who have been declared to be a band for the purpose of the *Indian Act*. Many bands have elected to call themselves a First Nation and have changed their name accordingly. With the 1985 amendment to the *Indian Act* of Canada (Bill C-31), many First Nations exercised the right to establish their own membership code, whereby it was not always necessary for a member to be a Registered Indian according to the *Indian Act*. Additionally, some First Nations have negotiated self-government agreements and are no longer governed by the *Indian Act*.

The variable **Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement** refers to whether or not a person is a registered member of a Métis organization or Settlement. This includes organizations that are a signatory under the Canada-Métis Nation Accord of 2017, (Métis Nation of Ontario, Manitoba Metis Federation, Métis Nation – Saskatchewan, Métis Nation of Alberta, Métis Nation British Columbia) or one of the eight Metis Settlements established by the Alberta *Metis Settlements Act* in 1990 (Buffalo Lake Metis Settlement, East Prairie Metis Settlement, Elizabeth Metis Settlement, Fishing Lake Metis Settlement, Gift Lake Metis Settlement, Kikino Metis Settlement, Paddle Prairie Metis Settlement, Peavine Metis Settlement). Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement is derived from responses to the Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement question and the Indigenous group question. Non-Indigenous persons are classified in the category ‘Not a member of a Métis organization or Settlement’.

The variable **Enrollment under an Inuit land claims agreement** refers to whether or not a person is enrolled under, or a beneficiary of, an Inuit land claims agreement. Inuit have negotiated comprehensive land claims with the federal government. These agreements cover a wide range of issues, such as land title, fishing and trapping rights, and financial compensation. Enrollment under an Inuit land claims agreement is derived from responses to the enrollment under an Inuit land claims agreement question and the Indigenous group question. Non-Indigenous persons are classified in the category 'Not enrolled under, or a beneficiary of, an Inuit land claims agreement'.

The variable **Indigenous ancestry** refers to whether a person has ancestry associated with the Indigenous peoples of Canada, that is, First Nations (North American Indian), Métis and/or Inuit. Ancestry refers to the ethnic or cultural origins of the person's ancestors, an ancestor being usually more distant than a grandparent. A person can have more than one ethnic or cultural origin. In the 2021 Census, the terms "origins" and "ancestry" are used interchangeably.

Specific geographic regions are often important to users of First Nations, Métis and Inuit data. The following variables are available from the 2021 Census:

- [Residence on or off reserve](#)
- [Residence inside or outside Inuit Nunangat](#).

The variable **Residence on or off reserve** refers to whether the person's usual place of residence is in a census subdivision (CSD) that is defined as 'on reserve' or 'off reserve'. 'On reserve' includes eight CSD types legally affiliated with First Nations or Indian bands, i.e., Indian reserve (IRI), Indian settlement (S-É) (except for the two Indian settlements of Champagne Landing 10 and Kloo Lake, located in Yukon), Indian government district (IGD), Terres réservées aux Cris (TC), Terres réservées aux Naskapis (TK), Nisga'a land (NL), Tsawwassen Lands (TWL) and Tla'amin Lands (TAL). 'Off reserve' includes all CSDs in Canada not defined as 'on reserve'.

The definition of residence on reserve includes some census subdivisions for which a First Nation has signed a modern treaty or a self-government agreement that provides them land ownership.

The variable **Residence inside or outside Inuit Nunangat** refers to whether the person's usual place of residence is in a CSD that is inside or outside Inuit Nunangat. Inuit Nunangat is the homeland of the Inuit of Canada. It includes the communities located in the four Inuit regions: Nunatsiavut (Northern coastal Labrador), Nunavik (Northern Quebec), the territory of Nunavut and the Inuvialuit region of the Northwest Territories.

Detailed definitions for these variables can be found in the [Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-301-X.

## Questions

The 2021 Census of Population data on Indigenous identity, Indigenous group, Registered or Treaty Indian status, Membership in a First Nation or Indian band, Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement, Enrollment under an Inuit land claims agreement, and Indigenous ancestry were collected from answers reported in questions 23, 24, 26, 27, 28 and 29. More precisely:

- Indigenous identity: derived data from questions 24, 26 and 27
- Indigenous group: Question 24
- Registered or Treaty Indian status: Question 26
- Membership in a First Nation or Indian band: Question 27
- Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement: Question 28
- Enrollment under an Inuit land claims agreement: Question 29
- Indigenous ancestry: Question 23 (ethnic or cultural origin).

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This suite of questions provides information that is used by governments, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit governments and organizations, to develop programs and services.

For the 2021 Census, the [2A](#) short-form questionnaire was used to enumerate all usual residents of 75% of private dwellings. The [2A-L](#) long-form questionnaire, which also includes the questions from the 2A short-form questionnaire, was used to enumerate a 25% sample of private households in Canada. For private households in First Nations communities, Métis settlements, Inuit regions and other remote areas, the [2A-R](#) questionnaire was used to enumerate 100% of the population. On both questionnaires, questions 24, 26, 27, 28 and 29 were identical.

Two new questions were added to the 2021 Census to collect additional information on the Indigenous population—one on Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement (Question 28) and another on Enrollment under an Inuit land claims agreement (Question 29). These questions were added to address information gaps identified during content consultations and user engagement following the 2016 Census.

The purpose of the question on Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement (Question 28) is to provide more detailed information on the Métis population to support policies and programs for Canada, as well as for Métis individuals and organizations. This new question makes it possible to differentiate between citizens of Métis governments that have signed the Canada–Métis Nation Accord, members of a Métis Settlement established by Alberta's *Metis Settlements Act*, and Métis outside these entities.

The purpose of the question on Enrollment under an Inuit land claims agreement (Question 29) 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.

More information on these questions from the 2021 Census, as well as the instructions provided to respondents to assist them in answering these questions, can be found in the [2A-L](#) questionnaire; the [2A-R](#) questionnaire; the [Guide to the Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-304-X; and the entries in the [Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-301-X for [Indigenous group](#), [Registered or Treaty Indian status](#), [Membership in a First Nation or Indian band](#), [Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement](#), [Enrollment under an Inuit land claims agreement](#), and [Indigenous ancestry](#).

For more information on the reasons why the census questions are asked, please refer to the five [fact sheets](#) found on The road to the 2021 Census web page.

**Note:** Information on the historical comparability of the 2021 Census questions with those asked in earlier censuses is provided in the [Comparability over time](#) section of this document.

## Classifications

The 2021 Census uses standard Statistics Canada classifications for [Indigenous identity](#), [Indigenous group](#), [Registered or Treaty Indian status](#), [Membership in a First Nation or Indian band](#), [Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement](#), [Enrollment under an Inuit land claims agreement](#), [Residence on or off reserve](#), [Residence inside or outside Inuit Nunangat](#), and [Indigenous ancestry](#).

For the following classifications, only single responses are permitted:

- [Registered or Treaty Indian status](#)
- [Membership in a First Nation or Indian band](#)
- [Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement](#)
- [Enrollment under an Inuit land claims agreement](#)
- [Residence on or off reserve](#)
- [Residence inside or outside Inuit Nunangat](#).

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**Registered or Treaty Indian status** refers to whether or not a person is a Registered or Treaty Indian under the *Indian Act* of Canada. This classification has a binary code reflecting reported responses of either “Registered or Treaty Indian” or “Not a Registered or Treaty Indian.”

**Membership in a First Nation or Indian band** refers to whether or not a person is a member of a First Nation or Indian band. This classification reflects reported responses of either “Member of a First Nation or Indian band” or “Not a member of a First Nation or Indian band.”

**Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement** refers to whether or not a person is a registered member of a Métis organization or Settlement. This classification reflects responses reported as member of a Métis organization that is either a member of a signatory under the Canada–Métis Nation Accord of 2017, a member of a Metis Settlement under Alberta’s *Metis Settlements Act* (1990), a member of a non-signatory Métis organization or Settlement, or not a member of a Métis organization or Settlement.

**Enrollment under an Inuit land claims agreement** refers to whether or not a person is enrolled under, or a beneficiary of, an Inuit land claims agreement. This classification contains codes that reflect responses reported as enrollment in, or beneficiary of, one of the Inuit land claims agreements or not enrolled under, or a beneficiary of, an Inuit land claims agreement.

**Residence on or off reserve** refers to whether the person’s usual place of residence is in a [CSD](#) that is defined as ‘on reserve’ or ‘off reserve’. This classification contains two codes reflecting a response of either on reserve (as per Statistics Canada’s definition of CSDs on reserve) or off reserve.

**Residence inside or outside Inuit Nunangat** refers to whether the person’s usual place of residence is in a CSD that is inside or outside Inuit Nunangat. This classification contains codes that reflect responses reported as a place of residence in one of the four Inuit regions of Inuit Nunangat or living outside Inuit Nunangat.

For the following classifications, both single and multiple responses are permitted:

- [Indigenous identity](#)
- [Indigenous group](#)
- [Indigenous ancestry](#) (created from ethnic and cultural origin information).

**Indigenous identity** refers to whether the person identified with the Indigenous peoples of Canada. This includes those who identify as First Nations (North American Indian), Métis and/or Inuk (Inuit), and/or those who report being Registered or Treaty Indians (that is, registered under the *Indian Act* of Canada), and/or those who have membership in a First Nation or Indian band. This classification contains codes that reflect responses reported as a person who identifies as Indigenous, including First Nations (North American Indian), Métis and/or Inuk (Inuit) as single or multiple responses, Indigenous response not included elsewhere, or non-Indigenous identity.

**Indigenous group** refers to whether the person is First Nations (North American Indian), Métis and/or Inuk (Inuit). There are two classifications of Indigenous group—Indigenous group and Indigenous group response. The Indigenous group classification can be used to analyze persons belonging to more than one specific Indigenous group, with multiple responses being classified under the “Multiple Indigenous responses” category, whereas the Indigenous group response classification can be used to analyze each response individually. This approach is used to look at all responses belonging to a specific Indigenous group, and the sum of the Indigenous group responses may be greater than the total population count because a person may report belonging to more than one specific Indigenous group.

Data for Indigenous languages are disseminated using the standard Statistics Canada classifications for [Knowledge of non-official languages](#).

Detailed information on each of these classifications can be found in the [Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-301-X.



## Concepts over time

### Differences in the wording and format of Indigenous questions

The questions that appeared on the 2016 Census regarding Indigenous group, Registered or Treaty Indian status, Membership in a First Nation or Indian band, and Indigenous ancestry have been retained for the 2021 Census with a modification to the wording of the Indigenous group question (Question 24). In Question 24 (Indigenous group), the term “Aboriginal” has been removed from the question-and-answer category and a distinctions-based approach was used, referencing Indigenous peoples as First Nations (North American Indian), Métis and Inuk (Inuit).

Changes to the question for Indigenous ancestry – Question 23 (ethnic or cultural origin) are detailed in the [Ethnic or Cultural Origin Reference Guide](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-500-X.

Two new questions were added to the 2021 Census to collect information on Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement (Question 28) and Enrollment under an Inuit land claims agreement (Question 29).

To see how questions regarding the Indigenous population have changed over time, see:

- 2021 Census
  - [2A-L](#) questionnaire
  - [2A-R](#) questionnaire
- 2016 Census
  - [2A-L](#) questionnaire
  - [2A-R](#) questionnaire
- 2011 National Household Survey
  - [N1](#) questionnaire
  - [N2](#) questionnaire

## Collection and processing methods

The COVID-19 pandemic emerged in Canada in early 2020 and affected all steps of the 2021 Census process, from data collection to dissemination. Please refer to the [Guide to the Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-304-X, for more detailed information on this topic.

## Data quality

The 2021 Census of Population underwent a thorough data quality assessment. The different certification activities conducted to evaluate the quality of the 2021 Census data are described in [Chapter 9](#) of the *Guide to the Census of Population, 2021*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-304-X.

The data quality assessment was conducted in addition to the regular verifications and quality checks completed at key stages of the census. For example, throughout data collection and processing, the accuracy of specific steps such as data capture and coding was measured, the consistency of the responses provided was checked, and the non-response rates for each question were analyzed. As well, the quality of imputed responses was assessed during data editing and imputation.

During the data quality assessment, a number of data quality indicators were produced and used to evaluate the quality of the data. These indicators are briefly described below. Finally, resulting census counts were compared with other data sources and certified for final release.

The main highlights of this assessment of the data pertaining to Indigenous variables are presented below.



## Variability due to sampling and total non-response

The objective of the long-form census questionnaire is to produce estimates on various topics for a wide variety of geographies, ranging from very large areas (such as provinces and census metropolitan areas) to very small areas (such as neighbourhoods and municipalities), and for various populations (such as Indigenous peoples and immigrants) that are generally referred to in this document as “populations of interest.” In order to reduce response burden, the long-form census questionnaire is administered to a random sample of households.

This sampling approach and total non-response introduce variability into the estimates that needs to be accounted for. This variability also depends on the population size and the variability of the characteristics being measured. Furthermore, the precision of estimates may vary considerably depending on the domain or geography of interest, in particular because of the variation in response rates. For more information on variability due to sampling and total non-response in long-form census questionnaire estimates, please refer to the [Guide to the Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-304-X.

## Non-response bias

Non-response bias is a potential source of error for all surveys, including the long-form census questionnaire. Non-response bias arises when the characteristics of those who participate in a survey are different from those who do not.

In general, the risk of non-response bias increases as the response rate declines. For the 2021 long-form census questionnaire, Statistics Canada adapted its collection and estimation procedures to mitigate the effect of non-response bias to the extent possible. For more information on these mitigation strategies, please refer to the [Guide to the Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-304-X.

## Data quality indicators

A number of quality indicators were produced and analyzed during the 2021 Census of Population data quality assessment. Four indicators are available to data users for long-form content: the total non-response (TNR) rate; the confidence interval; as well as the non-response rate and the imputation rate per question.

The **total non-response (TNR) rate** is the primary quality indicator that accompanies each disseminated 2021 Census of Population product, and is calculated for each geographic area. It measures total non-response at the dwelling level. Non-response is said to be total when no questionnaire is returned from a dwelling or when a returned questionnaire does not meet the minimum content. More information on the TNR rate is available in [Chapter 9](#) of the [Guide to the Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-304-X.

**The confidence interval** was selected as a variance-based quality indicator to accompany the 2021 Census of Population long-form estimates because it helps users easily make a statistical inference. This indicator provides a measure of the accuracy of the long-form estimates. Using a science-based approach, research and simulations were done to ensure that confidence intervals are constructed using adequate statistical methods for the Census of Population data and areas of interest.

A confidence interval is associated with a confidence level, generally set at 95%. A 95% confidence interval is an interval constructed around the estimate so that, if the process that generated the sample were repeated many times, the value of the interest parameter in the population would be contained in 95% of these intervals. The confidence interval consists of a lower bound and an upper bound. These two bounds accompany the long-form estimates in most data tables.

Further details on the different methods used to construct confidence intervals and their assumptions are provided in the [Sampling and Weighting Technical Report, Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-306-X.

The **non-response rate per question** is a measure of missing information due to non-response to a question. It measures only the non-response that is resolved through imputation during data processing (as opposed to weighting when a sample is used). For the long-form questionnaire, the non-response rate per question includes only partial non-response to the question, except for First Nations communities, Métis settlements, Inuit regions and other remote areas where both partial and total non-response are taken into account. Partial non-response is when answers to certain questions are not provided for a respondent household.

The non-response rate per question for a question on the long-form questionnaire is defined as the sum of the weights of in-scope units in the population of interest who did not respond to the question divided by the sum of the weights of in-scope units in the population of interest. Here “units” refers to the statistical units for which data are collected or derived (e.g., persons or households, depending on whether the question is about a person-level characteristic or a household-level characteristic). A unit is considered to be in scope for a given question if the question is applicable to that unit and the unit belongs to the population of interest related to the question.

The **imputation rate per question** measures the extent to which responses to a given question were imputed. Imputation is used to replace missing data in the event of non-response or when a response is found to be invalid (e.g., multiple answers are provided when a single answer is expected). Imputation is conducted to eliminate data gaps and to reduce bias introduced by non-response. Imputation is generally done by identifying persons or households in the same geographical area with similar characteristics to the incomplete record and copying their values to fill in the missing or invalid responses.

The imputation rate for a question on the long-form questionnaire is defined as the sum of the weights of in-scope units in the population of interest for which the response to the question was imputed divided by the sum of the weights of in-scope units in the population of interest (see the definition of “units” provided in the above section on the non-response rate per question).

For long-form content, imputation for most areas is done to resolve partial non-response—not total non-response, which instead is treated by weighting. However, in First Nations communities, Métis settlements, Inuit regions and other remote areas, whole household imputation (WHI) is used to resolve total non-response. It first imputes the occupancy status of non-respondent dwellings and further imputes all the data for those dwellings resolved as occupied in the first step. WHI is included in the imputation rate per question, including the use of administrative data to impute non-responding households in areas with low response rates; see [Appendix 1.7](#) of the *Guide to the Census of Population, 2021*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-304-X. As with the non-response rate, a unit is considered to be in scope if the question is applicable to that unit and the unit belongs to the population of interest related to the question.

The non-response and imputation rates per question can be interpreted as the proportion of in-scope units in the population of interest for which information was not reported or was imputed, respectively. The long-form rates are weighted to reflect the fact that the long-form questionnaire is only distributed to a sample of the population, so in this case, the proportion is estimated.

The non-response and imputation rates for a question are often similar, but some differences can be observed for a given question because of additional data processing steps that may have been required. These rates were regularly checked during data assessment, and a detailed analysis was done if there was a difference between the two rates for a question, to ensure the appropriateness of the processing steps taken and the quality of the data. A difference between the non-response rate and the imputation rate for a question can generally be explained by one of the following two factors:

- Some responses were considered invalid or inconsistent during the edit stage and imputation was needed, which is why the imputation rate is higher than the non-response rate for a question.
- Some non-responses were resolved in a straightforward manner early during data processing because a single resolution was possible based on the answers provided to other questions, making imputation unnecessary. This may explain why the non-response rate is higher than the imputation rate for a question.

Tables 3, 4, 5 and 6 below present the non-response and imputation rates per question for Canada and for each province and territory.

The non-response and imputation rates per question at lower levels of geography are also available in 2021 Census data tables presenting data quality indicators. This information is scheduled for release on August 17, 2022, for short-form questions and on November 30, 2022, for long-form questions.

The [2021 Census Data Quality Guidelines](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-26-0006 provides all the information required to understand and interpret the data quality indicators for the 2021 Census, along with guidelines to enable their proper usage. Data quality indicators are provided so that users are informed about the quality of the statistical information and can determine the relevance and the limitations of the data relative to their needs. In general, the quality of the 2021 Census of Population data is very good, but in some cases, data have to be used with caution. It is strongly recommended that users consult all available data quality indicators to get a better sense of the quality of the data products they are interested in.

## Certification of final counts

Once data editing and imputation were completed, the data were weighted to ensure that estimates represent the total Canadian population living in private dwellings. Certification of the final weighted estimates was the last step in the validation process, which led to the recommendation to release the data for each level of geography and domain of interest. Based on the analysis of the data quality indicators and the comparison of long-form census questionnaire estimates with other data sources, the recommendation is for unconditional release, conditional release, or non-release (for quality reasons on rare occasions). For conditional release or non-release, appropriate notes and warnings are included in the products and provided to users. Moreover, other data sources were used to evaluate the long-form census questionnaire estimates. However, since the risk of error often increases for lower levels of geography and for smaller populations, and the data sources used to evaluate these counts are less reliable or not available at these lower levels, it can be difficult to certify the counts at these levels.

Long-form census questionnaire estimates are also subject to confidentiality rules that ensure non-disclosure of respondent identity and characteristics. For more information on privacy and confidentiality, please refer to [Chapter 1](#) of the *Guide to the Census of Population, 2021*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-304-X. For information on how Statistics Canada balances the protection of confidentiality and the need for disaggregated census data, with specific attention to new 2021 Census content, please refer to [Balancing the Protection of Confidentiality with the Needs for Disaggregated Census Data, Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-26-0005.

For more information on data processing and the calculation of estimates and their level of precision, please refer to the [Sampling and Weighting Technical Report, Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-306-X.

## Data quality for Indigenous variables

### Total non-response rates for persons on reserve and in Inuit Nunangat

The long-form questionnaire total non-response (TNR) rates for persons living on reserve and in Inuit Nunangat are shown in tables 1 and 2. These areas are based on geographic boundaries of residence but are usually displayed in data tables as a variable rather than a geography. The TNR rates for the CSDs that comprise these areas will vary, and users interested in a specific CSD should refer to its TNR rate directly.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the collection strategy for First Nations communities and Inuit regions had to be adapted to ensure the safety of respondents and census employees. Early enumeration was cancelled, and completion of the census questionnaire online was encouraged where possible. Engagement efforts were bolstered through an expanded Indigenous Liaison Program at Statistics Canada, and efforts were made to hire census staff locally within communities. Unique challenges, such as travel restrictions, border closures,

unavailability of local staff and wildfires, were encountered. To improve response rates as much as possible under these challenging circumstances, the collection period was extended for these regions.

For the population living on reserve, the TNR rate nationally is 23.1% for the long-form questionnaire and ranges from 11.7% in the Northwest Territories to 36.5% in Alberta. For the population living in Inuit Nunangat, the TNR rate is 21.9% overall and ranges from 14.4% in Inuvialuit to 25.3% in Nunavik. More information about quality indicators and their interpretation can be found in the [2021 Census Data Quality Guidelines](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-26-0006.

**Table 1**  
**Total non-response rate for the population living on reserve, Canada and regions, 2021 Census long-form questionnaire**

<b>Geography</b>	<b>Total non-response rate</b>
	percent
Canada (on reserve)	23.1
Atlantic	16.3
Quebec	27.7
Ontario	27.7
Manitoba	19.6
Saskatchewan	19.4
Alberta	36.5
British Columbia	19.7
Northwest Territories	11.7

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

**Table 2**  
**Total non-response rate for the population living in Inuit Nunangat and regions, 2021 Census long-form questionnaire**

<b>Geography</b>	<b>Total non-response rate</b>
	percent
Inuit Nunangat (total)	21.9
Nunavik	25.3
Nunatsiavut	23.8
Inuvialuit	14.4
Nunavut	21.9

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

## Non-response and imputation rates at the question level

The non-response and imputation rates for the questions on Indigenous group, Registered or Treaty Indian status and membership in a First Nation or Indian band are shown in tables 3 and 4. At the national level, the 2021 non-response rate for the Indigenous group question is 1.5%. The questions on Registered or Treaty Indian status and membership in a First Nation or Indian band have non-response rates of 1.3% and 1.7%, respectively. Within the provinces, non-response ranges from 0.9% (Registered or Treaty Indian status, Prince Edward Island) to 2.6% (membership in a First Nation or Indian band, Saskatchewan). The highest non-response rates for each question are within the territories, particularly in Nunavut. Users should keep in mind that in First Nations communities, Métis settlements, Inuit regions and other remote areas, both partial and total non-response are taken into account for this indicator.

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**Table 3**

**Non-response rates for questions on Indigenous group, Registered or Treaty Indian status, and membership in a First Nation or Indian band, Canada, provinces and territories, 2021 Census**

Geography	Indigenous group	Registered or Treaty Indian status	Membership in a First Nation or Indian band
	percent		
Canada	1.5	1.3	1.7
Newfoundland and Labrador	1.4	1.1	1.6
Prince Edward Island	1.1	0.9	1.4
Nova Scotia	1.3	1.1	1.5
New Brunswick	1.7	1.2	1.8
Quebec	1.7	1.1	1.8
Ontario	1.2	1.0	1.4
Manitoba	2.3	2.2	2.5
Saskatchewan	2.3	2.3	2.6
Alberta	1.7	1.7	2.1
British Columbia	1.4	1.4	1.7
Yukon	4.8	5.0	5.2
Northwest Territories	9.5	9.9	9.9
Nunavut	24.2	24.4	25.7

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

**Table 4**

**Imputation rates for questions on Indigenous group, Registered or Treaty Indian status, and membership in a First Nation or Indian band, Canada, provinces and territories, 2021 Census**

Geography	Indigenous group	Registered or Treaty Indian status	Membership in a First Nation or Indian band
	percent		
Canada	1.1	1.3	2.1
Newfoundland and Labrador	1.0	1.1	2.3
Prince Edward Island	0.7	0.9	1.6
Nova Scotia	0.9	1.1	1.8
New Brunswick	1.1	1.2	2.3
Quebec	1.1	1.1	2.1
Ontario	0.8	1.0	1.7
Manitoba	2.0	2.2	3.2
Saskatchewan	2.0	2.3	3.4
Alberta	1.4	1.7	2.5
British Columbia	1.2	1.4	2.1
Yukon	4.7	5.0	6.5
Northwest Territories	9.2	9.9	15.4
Nunavut	23.8	24.4	26.2

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

The non-response and imputation rates for the questions on membership in a Métis organization or Settlement and enrollment under an Inuit land claims agreement are shown in tables 5 and 6. Based on the flow of the electronic questionnaire, the scope for the non-response and imputation rates for these questions is limited to respondents who are members of an Indigenous group (First Nations, Métis or Inuit). At the national level, the

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2021 non-response rate for the question on membership in a Métis organization or Settlement is 7.7% and for the question on enrollment under an Inuit land claims agreement is 7.8%. Within the provinces, non-response ranges from 2.8% in Prince Edward Island to 8.9% in Saskatchewan for both questions. The highest non-response rates for both questions are within the territories, particularly in Nunavut. Users should keep in mind that in First Nations communities, Métis settlements, Inuit regions and other remote areas, both partial and total non-response are taken into account for this indicator. In addition, the scope being limited to Indigenous group members means that respondents who are in scope for the non-response and imputation rates for these questions are more likely than the general population to live in an area where both partial and total non-response are included.

**Table 5**  
**Non-response rates for questions on membership in a Métis organization or Settlement, and enrollment under an Inuit land claims agreement, Canada, provinces and territories, 2021 Census**

Geography	Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement	Enrollment under an Inuit land claims agreement
	percent	
Canada	7.7	7.8
Newfoundland and Labrador	5.0	5.0
Prince Edward Island	2.8	2.8
Nova Scotia	4.5	4.4
New Brunswick	5.4	5.6
Quebec	8.8	8.7
Ontario	5.3	5.3
Manitoba	8.4	8.4
Saskatchewan	8.9	8.9
Alberta	8.5	8.5
British Columbia	7.1	7.2
Yukon	13.0	13.0
Northwest Territories	16.1	16.0
Nunavut	25.0	24.8

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

**Table 6**

**Imputation rates for questions on membership in a Métis organization or Settlement, and enrollment under an Inuit land claims agreement, Canada, provinces and territories, 2021 Census**

Geography	Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement	Enrollment under an Inuit land claims agreement
	percent	
Canada	8.0	7.9
Newfoundland and Labrador	5.4	5.1
Prince Edward Island	3.0	3.0
Nova Scotia	5.0	4.5
New Brunswick	5.9	5.6
Quebec	9.1	8.9
Ontario	5.5	5.4
Manitoba	8.7	8.5
Saskatchewan	9.3	9.0
Alberta	8.8	8.6
British Columbia	7.4	7.3
Yukon	13.3	13.2
Northwest Territories	16.4	16.4
Nunavut	25.1	25.2

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

The non-response and imputation rates for ethnic or cultural origin (Question 23), which is used to derive Indigenous ancestry, are available in the [Ethnic or Cultural Origin Reference Guide, Census of Population, 2021](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-500-X.

## Data quality notes

### Incompletely enumerated reserves and settlements

In 2021, there were 63 reserves and settlements that were “incompletely enumerated” in the census. The issue of incompletely enumerated reserves and settlements has an impact on census estimates for the First Nations population living “on reserve” and the Registered or Treaty Indian population living “on reserve.” Estimates for other populations could also be affected.<sup>1</sup>

Estimates associated with other variables related to First Nations, such as language and band housing, may also be affected by the incomplete enumeration of certain reserves and settlements in the Census of Population.

For more information on the incompletely enumerated reserves and settlements, please refer to [Appendix 1.5](#) of the *Guide to the Census of Population, 2021*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-304-X.

### Self-reporting of membership

Census estimates of the number of members of a specific First Nation or Indian band, Métis organization or Settlement, or Inuit land claims agreement reflect self-reported responses to the census question and may differ

1. Other affected populations include the total Indigenous identity population, the First Nations (North American Indian) identity population, the total Indigenous ancestry population, the First Nations (North American Indian) ancestry population, the Registered or Treaty Indian population, the population who reported membership in a First Nation or Indian band and the population living on reserve.



from the administrative records collected by individual First Nations, Métis organizations and Settlements, and Inuit bodies for a number of reasons. These data should not be used as official counts of membership.

## Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement as a single response variable

It is possible for a person to be a member of the Métis Nation of Alberta and a Metis Settlement. However, because the question on membership in a Métis organization or Settlement was designed and processed as a single response variable, respondents could only make a single selection. This may have a slight impact on the counts in these categories.

## Comparability over time

When Census Program data are compared over time—for example, comparisons between the 2021 Census and the 2016 Census or the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS)—changes in coverage, measurement and processing need to be taken into account. Changes to coverage include the participation of some reserves and settlements in one year but not another and changes to the definition of “on reserve.” Changes in measurement can include changes to the questionnaire and legal changes. In addition, other factors can have an impact on how individuals respond to the census questions. This section outlines various elements that could affect comparability over time for the Indigenous variables in the 2021 Census.

### Changes in coverage

#### Changes made to the definition of reserves

From time to time, changes are made to the geographies that are associated with the on-reserve population (see the [Census subdivision \[CSD\]](#) definition in the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-301-X, for the definition of “on reserve”). In 2006, there were 1,174 on-reserve CSDs; in 2011, there were 997; in 2016, there were 984; and in 2021, there were 1,026. Changes could be the result of additions, deletions, boundary changes or amalgamations. For more information about reserves and settlements, consult the [Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada](#) website.

#### Differences in the list of incompletely enumerated reserves and settlements

In 2021, 63 reserves and settlements were incompletely enumerated in the census (see [Incompletely enumerated reserves and settlements](#)). In 2016, 14 reserves and settlements were incompletely enumerated in the census. In 2011, 36 reserves and settlements were incompletely enumerated in the NHS; 31 of these were also incompletely enumerated in the 2011 Census. The five additional reserves that were incompletely enumerated in the NHS were cases where only the census portion of the enumeration was completed, and the NHS enumeration was either not permitted or was interrupted before it could be completed, or enumeration was not possible because of natural events. In 2006, 22 reserves and settlements were incompletely enumerated in the census.

The issue of incompletely enumerated reserves and settlements has an impact on census estimates for the First Nations population living on reserve and the Registered or Treaty Indian population living on reserve. Estimates for other populations could also be affected.<sup>2</sup>

Estimates associated with other variables related to First Nations, such as language and band housing, may also be affected by the incomplete enumeration of certain reserves and settlements in the Census of Population.

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2. Other affected populations include the total Indigenous identity population, the First Nations (North American Indian) identity population, the total Indigenous ancestry population, the First Nations (North American Indian) ancestry population, the Registered or Treaty Indian population, the population who reported membership in a First Nation or Indian band and the population living on reserve.

To compare two different points in time, the exclusions in each reference point have to be applied to both base estimates. This means that only reserves present at both time points should be used in the comparison.

## Comparability of population and dwelling counts over time

In 2016 and 2006, dwellings on reserves for which the occupancy status could not be verified or determined during collection were mostly assumed to be unoccupied. In 2011, dwellings for which the occupancy status could not be verified or determined were mostly assumed to be occupied. Actual occupancy for these dwellings was unknown, and the assumptions made during collection may reflect the actual situation across reserves with different degrees of accuracy.

In 2021, a manual intervention step was added, allowing the number of dwellings on reserves for which occupancy status could not be determined during collection to be reviewed by subject-matter experts. These dwellings were assumed to be unoccupied unless subject-matter experts provided a number of dwellings in a given community that should be assumed to be occupied. This change to the methodology was recommended as an improvement.

This difference in methodology does not affect the comparability of counts over different censuses for all reserves. It might have an impact when comparing counts for reserves that had a significant number of dwellings with unknown occupancy status at a given point.

When changes in population and dwelling counts are analyzed over time, it is recommended that multiple reference years be included, especially for smaller geographic areas. Smaller population counts may be more affected by non-response. The methodology for the 2016 Census is comparable with that employed for the 2006 Census. Therefore, comparisons between the 2006 Census and the 2016 Census are not affected by this difference in methodology.

## Changes in measurement and response

### Differences in the wording and format of Indigenous questions

There are various ways to define the Indigenous population based on the four questions asked in the census. These questions are Indigenous ancestry (Question 23 on ethnic or cultural origin), Indigenous group (Question 24), Registered or Treaty Indian status (Question 26) and membership in a First Nation or Indian band (Question 27). Although measuring the same concepts, question wording has been modified over time (see section [Concepts over time](#)).

### Legislative changes that affect concepts such as Indigenous identity and Registered or Treaty Indian status

Changes to Canada's laws as they pertain to Indigenous peoples may affect how Canadians respond to the questions to identify Indigenous peoples. For example, in September 2011, the Government of Canada, by order in council, recognized the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation in Newfoundland and Labrador under the *Indian Act*. The number of Registered or Treaty Indians living in Newfoundland and Labrador grew from 6,600, according to the 2006 Census, to 21,155, according to the 2016 Census. Relevant legislation includes Bill C-31 in 1985, Bill C-3 in 2011 and Bill S-3 in 2017.

### Other factors that affect responses to the Indigenous questions

In addition to the factors listed above, some people report their Indigenous identity or ancestry differently from one data collection period to another for a variety of reasons. While the pattern for the majority of people reporting an Indigenous identity or ancestry has been stable over time, there can be changes in reporting patterns between Indigenous groups and between non-Indigenous and Indigenous populations. Changing attitudes about Indigenous identity, judicial decisions or anticipated legal changes, the social climate and other factors may influence how people self-identify.

## Changes in processing

### Difference in detailed First Nation or Indian band classification

In 2016, the detailed classification for the membership in a First Nation or Indian band variable included general response categories such as “Algonquin” or “Cree.” In 2021, these categories were removed and imputation was used for general responses.

In summary, population estimates for concepts such as Indigenous identity and Registered or Treaty Indian status are influenced by numerous factors. Users should be aware that point estimates and changes over time are influenced by a combination of natural growth, changes to coverage, measurement, processing and other factors affecting how people self-identify. It is not possible to quantify the impact of these changes in isolation.

## Comparability with other data sources

The Census of Population is Statistics Canada’s main source of data on Indigenous peoples. In addition to the Census of Population, Statistics Canada has other key data sources specific to the Indigenous population—for example, the [2022 Indigenous Peoples Survey](#), the [2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey](#) (Economic Participation), the [2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey](#) (Education and Employment), the [1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey](#), the [2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey](#), the [2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey](#) and the [2006 Aboriginal Children’s Survey](#). Some of Statistics Canada’s other household surveys (for example, the [Labour Force Survey](#)) can produce estimates on the Indigenous population. Generally, the Indigenous population living on reserve is not covered by these household surveys.

Statistics Canada has also produced projections, under specific scenarios, of the Indigenous identity population in Canada (for example, [Projections of the Aboriginal Population and Households in Canada, 2011 to 2036](#), Catalogue no. 91-552-X).

Indigenous Services Canada maintains the Indian Register (IR), which includes all individuals who have been registered under the *Indian Act*. The IR differs from the 2021 Census, which estimates the number of individuals who report being a Registered or Treaty Indian. For more information on differences between census estimates and counts from the IR, please refer to the [Aboriginal Peoples Technical Report, Census of Population, 2016](#), Catalogue no. 98-307-X.

Many factors affect comparisons of Indigenous data across these sources. Among other factors, comparability is affected by differences in survey target populations; reference period; sampling and collection methods; question wording, questionnaire format, examples and instructions; approaches to data processing; and the social and political climate at the time of data collection.