

2021 Census of Canada

Indigenous People

Introduction

This release examines the demographic and geographic aspects of the self-identified Indigenous¹ population in Alberta from the 2021 Canadian Census. The Indigenous population is relatively young and growing at a fast rate. An increasing proportion of First Nations people lived in urban areas, while just under one third lived on reserves.

Indigenous Population

Indigenous population in Alberta the third largest among the provinces

- In Canada, 1,807,250 people identified themselves as Indigenous in the 2021 Census, accounting for 5.0% of the country's total population (Table 1). Of all Indigenous people in Canada, 15.7% (284,470) lived in Alberta, the third-largest number behind Ontario (406,585) and British Columbia (290,210).
- Indigenous people accounted for 6.8% of Alberta's total population, the fourth largest proportion among the provinces, behind Manitoba (18.1%), Saskatchewan (17.0%) and Newfoundland and Labrador (9.3%).

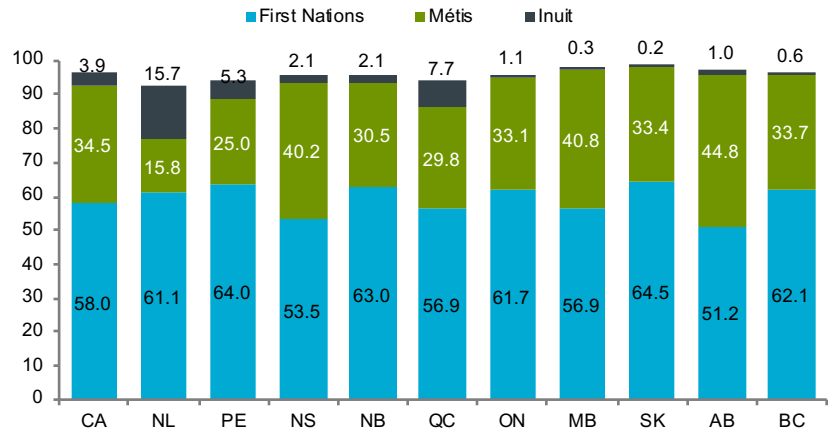
TABLE 1. INDIGENOUS POPULATION AS A % OF THE TOTAL POPULATION IN PRIVATE HOUSEHOLDS, 2021

Note: Response categories do not always sum to the Indigenous Identity due to rounding.

	CA	NL	PE	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC
Indigenous Identity	5.0	9.3	2.2	5.5	4.4	2.5	2.9	18.1	17.0	6.8	5.9
First Nations	2.9	5.7	1.4	2.9	2.8	1.4	1.8	10.3	11.0	3.5	3.7
Métis	1.7	1.5	0.6	2.2	1.3	0.7	1.0	7.4	5.7	3.1	2.0
Inuit	0.2	1.5	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0
Multiple responses	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1
Non-Indigenous	95.0	90.7	97.8	94.5	95.6	97.5	97.1	81.9	83.0	93.2	94.1

- All provinces had a larger proportion of First Nations² people than Métis or Inuit (Figure 1). Saskatchewan, followed by Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, had the highest proportion of First Nations people in the Indigenous population, while Alberta had the lowest proportion. In contrast, Alberta had the highest proportion of Métis (44.8%), followed by Manitoba (40.8%).

FIGURE 1. BREAKDOWN OF INDIGENOUS POPULATION BY IDENTITY GROUP



Population Growth

Strong growth in Indigenous population

- In Canada, the Indigenous population grew by 8.0% between 2016 and 2021. In Alberta it expanded at a higher rate of 10.0%, or 1.9% annually on average. The non-Indigenous population in Alberta grew by 4.7% in the same period (Table 2).

TABLE 2. POPULATION GROWTH IN ALBERTA, 2016 - 2021

	2016	2021	Growth (%)	Average Annual Growth (%)	Doubling Time (Years)
Indigenous Identity	258,640	284,470	10.0	1.9	36.1
First Nation	136,585	145,640	6.6	1.3	53.6
Métis	114,375	127,470	11.4	2.2	31.6
Inuit	2,500	2,945	17.8	3.3	20.8
Non-Indigenous	3,719,505	3,893,245	4.7	0.9	75.6

- The Inuit population in Alberta experienced the largest growth at 17.8% since 2016, while the Métis population grew by 11.4% during that time.
- If growth continued at current rates, the Indigenous population in Alberta would double in 36.1 years, the First Nations in 53.6 years, the Metis in 31.6 years and the Inuit in 20.8 years.
- While growth remains high for the Indigenous population in Alberta, the pace is slowing. Between 2006 and 2016, average annual growth for Indigenous people was 3.2%, dropping to 1.9% between 2016 and 2021.
- Of the identity groups, First Nations people saw the greatest decline in average annual growth. It slowed from 3.4% between 2006 and 2016 to 1.3% between 2016 and 2021.

Note: Men+ includes men (and/or boys), as well as some non-binary persons, while women+ includes women (and/or girls), as well as some non-binary persons.

Gender Ratio

Indigenous women+ outnumber men+ in Alberta*

- Of the total Indigenous population in Alberta, there were 137,665 men+ and 146,800 women+, a gender ratio of 93.8 men+ per 100 women+.
- Among the First Nations population, the gender ratio was 93.5 men+ for every 100 women+, while the Métis ratio was 94.0 to 100 (Table 3).
- The non-Indigenous population in Alberta had a gender ratio of 100.4 men+ for every 100 women+. Alberta and Saskatchewan were the only two provinces to have more men+ than women+ in the non-Indigenous population. This may be due to a higher proportion of working age men+ migrants seeking employment in the resource-based industries.

TABLE 3. GENDER RATIO: NUMBER OF MEN+ PER 100 WOMEN+

	CA	NL	PE	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC
Indigenous Identity	94.4	93.7	91.8	92.4	96.4	97.4	92.2	95.0	94.7	93.8	94.8
First Nations	93.5	92.5	98.2	91.5	94.9	92.7	92.4	93.6	93.9	93.5	95.3
Métis	96.3	96.3	87.8	94.6	99.7	107.6	93.0	97.8	96.6	94.0	95.3
Non-Indigenous	97.7	96.5	95.7	95.2	96.9	98.7	96.5	99.9	100.2	100.4	96.8

- In all provinces, there were a larger number of First Nations women+ in the population, when compared to men+. The Métis populations followed a similar trend with the exception of Québec, where there were more Métis men+ than women+.

Age Structure

The Indigenous population in Alberta is growing older but still relatively young

- The Indigenous population in Alberta and the rest of Canada is young compared to the non-Indigenous population. The average age of Indigenous people was 31.3 years in 2021 in comparison to 39.1 for non-Indigenous people.
- In Alberta, close to half of the Indigenous population was under the age of 25 (44.5%) compared to 30.0% in the non-Indigenous population. Only 55.5% of Indigenous people were over 25 years of age, compared with 70% of non-Indigenous people.
- The largest proportional differences between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations were among children under 15 years of age and for those 45 years and older (Table 4).
- In 2021, the Indigenous population had a much higher proportion of children (27.6% compared to 18.6%) while the non-Indigenous population had more than double the percentage of seniors (14.5% compared to 6.7%). Métis and First Nations people in Alberta followed a similar age pattern, but the differences were more pronounced among First Nations people.

TABLE 4. AGE STRUCTURE OF POPULATION IN ALBERTA, 2016 & 2021

		%				
		Indigenous	First Nations	Métis	Inuit	Non-Indigenous
2021	0-14	27.6	30.1	24.5	31.0	18.6
	15-24	16.9	17.4	16.4	16.3	11.4
	25-44	28.4	28.2	28.6	30.0	29.5
	45-64	20.4	18.7	22.5	19.0	25.9
	65+	6.7	5.6	8.0	3.6	14.5
	Avg. Age (yrs)	31.3	29.6	33.2	29.1	39.1
2016	0-14	29.1	32.2	25.3	30.6	18.7
	15-24	17.7	18.1	17.3	15.6	12.1
	25-44	28.4	27.7	29.0	33.2	30.7
	45-64	19.7	17.6	22.3	17.2	26.6
	65+	5.2	4.4	6.1	3.4	11.8
	Avg. Age (yrs)	29.8	28.1	31.8	28.5	37.8

The rate of aging of Indigenous population broadly similar to non-Indigenous population.

- Although the average age for indigenous people is lower than non-indigenous, it increased by 1.4 years between 2016 and 2021. This increase was similar to non-Indigenous people (1.3 years).
- The Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations both saw a decline in people under 45 as a proportion of their total population since the last census (-2.2 vs -2.0 percentage points respectively). For the Indigenous population, declines were focused in the 0-14 category while non-Indigenous people saw greater declines in the 25-44 age-group.
- Non-Indigenous people aged 45-64 saw a decrease in proportion (-0.7 pp). This is occurring as the baby-boom cohort ages into the senior age group. As a result, non-Indigenous people aged 65 and older saw a greater increase in proportion compared with Indigenous people (2.7 vs 1.5 percentage points).
- Compared with the previous census, the proportion of First Nations children (aged 0-14) saw the greatest percentage point decline of the identity groups (-2.1). The Métis population experienced the greatest increase in proportion of seniors (1.9 percentage points), while the Inuit saw a large decline in the proportion of people aged 25-44 (-3.2 percentage points).

Indigenous and non-Indigenous dependency ratios* converging

- The dependency ratio (DR) for Indigenous people was 52.2 in 2021, which was higher than non-Indigenous people (49.5). Compared with the non-Indigenous, Indigenous people had a higher child dependency ratio (32.0 vs 28.8) and a lower senior dependency ratio (10.2 vs 21.7).
- Compared to the previous census in 2016, the overall dependency ratio (DR) for the Indigenous population was virtually unchanged. A decrease in the child dependency ratio (CDR) counter-balanced an increase in the senior dependency ratio (SDR).
- The overall dependency ratio for non-Indigenous people, in contrast, has increased by over five points since the last census period, which is mainly attributable to the aging population.



- The drop in the CDR of Indigenous people could be indicative of a decline in the fertility rates of Indigenous people, which have historically been much higher than that of non-Indigenous people.

TABLE 5. DEPENDENCY RATIOS (DR), ALBERTA, 2021

***Note:** The dependency ratio is the ratio between dependents (those aged 0-14 and 65 and over) and the working age population (15-64), multiplied by 100.

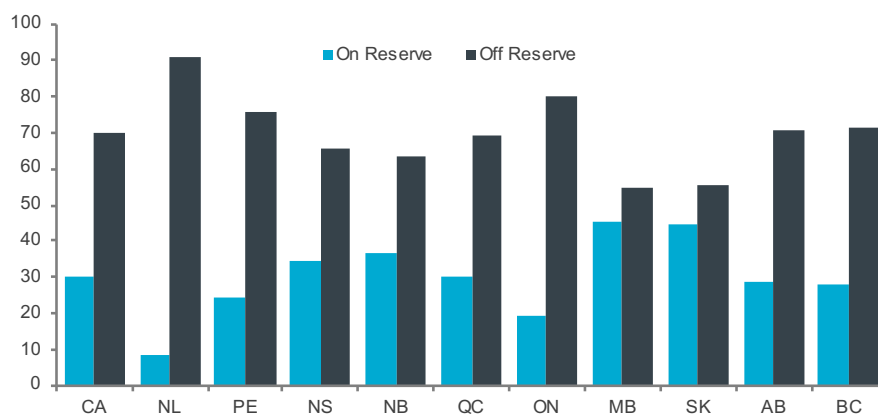
		/100 Working Age Population (15 to 64 years)				
		Indigenous	First Nation	Métis	Inuit	Non-Indigenous
2021	DR	52.2	55.4	48.3	53.2	49.5
	CDR	42.0	46.8	36.3	47.8	27.8
	SDR	10.2	8.6	11.9	5.5	21.7
2016	DR	52.1	57.6	45.7	51.8	44.1
	CDR	44.2	50.7	36.8	46.6	27.0
	SDR	7.9	6.9	8.9	5.2	17.1

Regional Distribution

More First Nations living off-reserve

- In Alberta, the percentage of First Nations people living off reserve increased from 63.4% in 2016 to 70.9%, or 103,250, by 2021 (Figure 2). Manitoba (54.9%) had the lowest off reserve population, followed by Saskatchewan (55.5%) and New Brunswick (63.2%).
- Compared to the previous census, Quebec saw the greatest jump in proportion of First Nations people living off reserve, from 55.6% to 69.5%. Alberta had the second highest increase from 63.4% to 70.9%.

FIGURE 2. BREAKDOWN OF INDIGENOUS IDENTITY POPULATION (%)



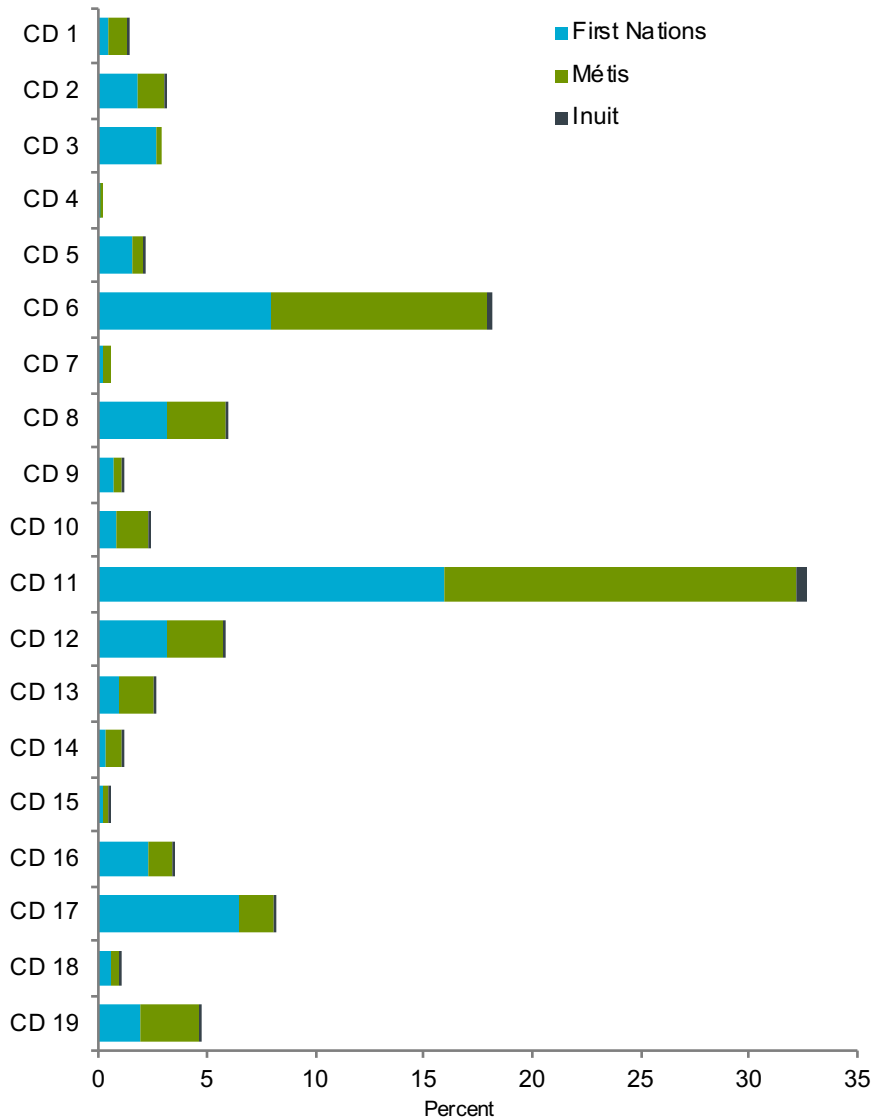
Proportion of Indigenous people highest in some northern regions of the province

- The Indigenous population in Alberta was widely distributed throughout the province (Map 1). Indigenous people made up the largest proportion of the total population in Census Division (CD) 17 (Slave Lake) at 38.6%, followed by CD 12 (Cold Lake) at 25.3%, CD 18 (Grande Cache) (23.5%) and CD 3 (Pincher Creek) (22.9%). Despite having populations with large proportions of Indigenous people and covering a large area of the province, the four CDs combined were home to only 51,705 Indigenous people, accounting for just under one-fifth of the Indigenous population in Alberta.

The largest Indigenous population located in the Edmonton region

- Census Divisions 11 (Edmonton) and 6 (Calgary) were home to the largest number of Indigenous people (Figure 3); in 2021, 33.7% (or 95,745) of Indigenous people in Alberta lived in CD 11, followed by CD 6 (53,700 or 18.9%). Together, these two CDs accounted for over half of the Indigenous population (46.6% of First Nations, 58.5% of Métis and 65.4% of Inuit) in the province.

FIGURE 3. DISTRIBUTION OF INDIGENOUS POPULATION AND IDENTITY GROUP BY CENSUS DIVISION, 2021



First Nations the majority in some regions, the Métis in others

- The three CDs where First Nations made up the largest proportion of the Indigenous population were CD 3 (Pincher Creek) (88.9%), CD 17 (Slave Lake) (78.3%) and CD 5 (Strathmore) (75.2%). The CDs with a larger proportion of Métis were CD 4 (Hanna) (67.1%), CD 7 (Wainwright) (66.9%) and CD 14 (Hinton) (66.1%).

Many non-reserve CSDs⁴ with highest proportions of Indigenous people located in the northern region

- Out of the top ten census sub-divisions (CSDs) with the highest proportion of Indigenous people (excluding reserves and Metis Settlements), five were

Note: Figures in this section are significantly impacted by missing reserves. See <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/ref/iers-repd-eng.cfm> for a list of incompletely enumerated reserves.

located in CD 17. The highest proportion was found in Improvement District No. 24 Wood Buffalo (99%), followed by Opportunity No. 17 (81.2%) and Smoky Lake County (43.0%).

- CSDs with the highest proportion of Métis (excluding Metis Settlements) were Smoky Lake County (35.4%) and Big Lakes County (24.5%). Lac la Biche County also had a prominent Métis population, making up 19.5% of the total population.
- Municipalities with the highest proportion of First Nations populations (excluding reserves) included Opportunity No. 17 (72.7%), High Level (25.8%) and High Prairie (25.8%).

Wetaskiwin was the city with the highest share of Indigenous people

- Cities with the highest proportion of Indigenous peoples (see map 2) were Wetaskiwin at 18.0%, followed by Cold Lake (15.2%), Grande Prairie (11.7%) and Lloydminster (10.5%).
- Cities with the lowest proportion of Indigenous people were Brooks (2.4%), Chestermere (2.6%) and Calgary (3.2%).

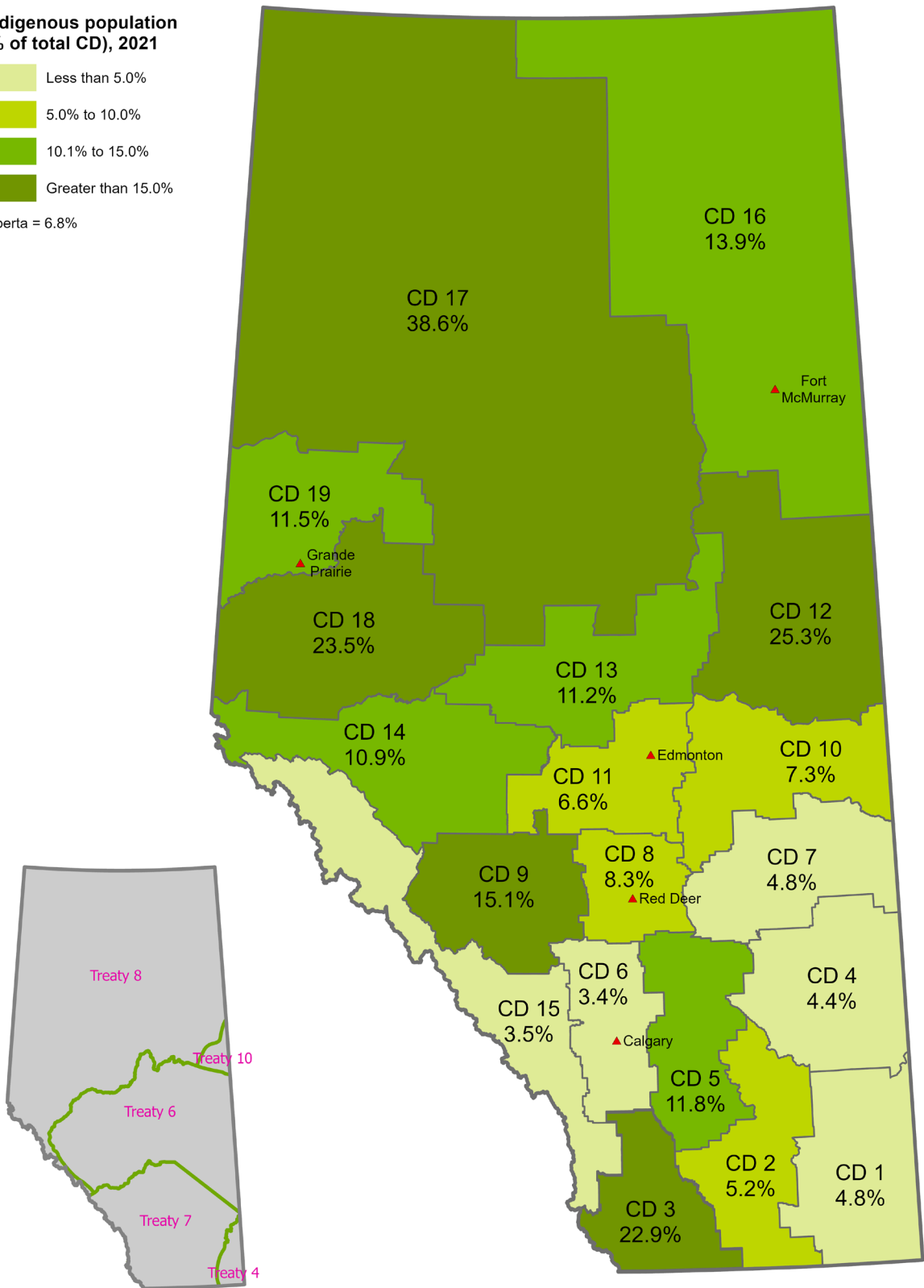
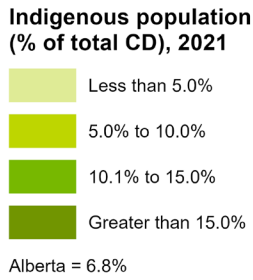
Many populous reserves located in Edmonton Census Division

- Of the reserves with available data, twelve had a population greater than 1,000. Of these, four were located in CD11 (Edmonton): Ermineskin 138 (2,255), Enoch Cree Nation (1,840), Louis Bull 138B (1,320) and Alexander 134 (1,060).
- CD3 (Claresholm) and CD12 (Cold Lake) both had two reserves with populations topping 1,000. Blood 148 (CD 3) had the highest population (4,550), followed by Siksika 146 in CD 5 (3,560) and Samson 137 in CD 8 (3,220).

1. Indigenous Identity Population - Persons who reported identifying with at least one Indigenous group, that is, North American Indian, Métis or Inuit, and/or those who reported being a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian, as defined by the Indian Act of Canada, and/or those who reported they were members of an Indian band or First Nation. In general, the category includes:

Single Indigenous responses – persons who are in only one Indigenous group, that is First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit); Multiple Indigenous responses – persons who are any two or all three of the following: First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit) and; Indigenous responses not included elsewhere – persons who are not First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit), but who have Registered or Treaty Indian status and/or Membership in a First Nation or Indian band.
2. For First Nations, users should be aware that the estimates associated with this variable are more affected than most by the incomplete enumeration of certain Indian reserves and Indian settlements in the 2021 Census of Population. For additional information, refer to the Indigenous Peoples Reference Guide, Census of Population, 2021.
3. 'Population' in this highlight refers to the non-institutional population i.e. excludes people living in an institutional collective dwelling, like a hospital, nursing home or a jail. All data in this publication is from the Censuses of Canada, conducted by Statistics Canada.
4. Census subdivisions are smaller geographic areas that align with municipalities and municipality-like entities such as cities, towns, counties and reserves, but excluding Metis settlements.
5. The census enumerates the entire Canadian population, on a "usual residence" basis (de jure). The population enumerated consists of usual residents of Canada who are Canadian citizens, landed immigrants and non-permanent residents and their families living with them in Canada.

MAP 1. INDIGENOUS POPULATION DISTRIBUTION
(% of Total Population in Each CD)



Created by the Alberta Office of Statistics & Information on February 09, 2023
For more information contact: osi.support@gov.ab.ca



MAP 2. CENSUS SUBDIVISION
(MUNICIPAL) SHARE OF INDIGENOUS
POPULATION IN EACH CENSUS
SUBDIVISION
(%)

