

Census in Brief

Diverse family characteristics of Aboriginal children aged 0 to 4

Census of Population, 2016

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- . not available for any reference period
- .. not available for a specific reference period
- ... not applicable
- 0 true zero or a value rounded to zero
- 0^s value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
- ^P preliminary
- ^r revised
- X suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
- ^E use with caution
- F too unreliable to be published
- * significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

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Highlights

- About 6 in 10 Aboriginal children aged 0 to 4 lived in a family with two parents. This was the case for 53.7% of First Nations, 71.8% of Métis and 68.8% of Inuit children in this age group.
- More than one-third of Aboriginal children aged 0 to 4 lived with a lone parent. This was the case for 38.9% of First Nations, 25.5% of Métis and 26.5% of Inuit children in this age group.
- About 1 in 6 Aboriginal children aged 0 to 4 shared a household with at least one grandparent. This was the case for 21.2% of First Nations, 10.5% of Métis and 22.8% of Inuit children.
- Aboriginal children accounted for 7.7% of all children aged 0 to 4, and about one-half of all foster children in this age group.

Introduction

One of the defining characteristics of Aboriginal peoples is that they are a young population. While the total Canadian population has recently undergone a generational shift such that there are now more seniors than children,¹ this is not the case for the Aboriginal population.

Among First Nations people, Métis and Inuit, children continue to make up a greater share of the population than seniors. Among the Aboriginal population in 2016, 8.7% were in the youngest age group (0 to 4 years), while 7.3% were seniors aged 65 and over. In contrast, among the non-Aboriginal population, 5.3% were children aged 0 to 4, while seniors accounted for more than triple this share (16.3%).

According to the 2016 Census, 145,645 Aboriginal children aged 0 to 4 lived in private households in Canada, making up 7.7% of all children in this age group. In some regions, Aboriginal children comprised a much higher percentage of children. In Nunavut, for example, 91.8% of children aged 0 to 4 were Inuit. In every province and territory, higher percentages of children aged 0 to 4 were Aboriginal than the total population in the region. For example, Aboriginal people represented 18.0% of the population of Manitoba in 2016, but 29.6% of children aged 0 to 4.

Understanding the characteristics of young children is important as early childhood experiences influence both current and future well-being. This analysis looks at the family characteristics of young Aboriginal children, including those in two-parent families and lone-parent families, those living with grandparents, and foster children. While the vast majority of Aboriginal children live with their parents, a relatively high percentage live with their grandparents, as foster children, and with other relatives. Past research also found that Aboriginal children were more likely to live in large families.² This information about diverse living arrangements may be helpful to those providing support and services for young Aboriginal children and their families.

About 6 in 10 Aboriginal children aged 0 to 4 live in a family with two parents

About 6 in 10 Aboriginal children aged 4 and younger (60.1%) lived in a two-parent family. Among Aboriginal children aged 0 to 4 who lived with two parents, 94.4% lived with both of their biological or adoptive parents. The other 5.6% lived with one biological or adoptive parent and one step-parent.

1. See *The Daily* (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/170503/dq170503a-eng.htm>) of May 3, 2017.

2. Turner, A. 2016. "Living Arrangements of Aboriginal children aged 14 and under." (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-006-x/2016001/article/14547-eng.htm>) *Insights on Canadian Society*. April. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-006-X.

Diverse family characteristics of Aboriginal children aged 0 to 4

Table 1
Population aged 0 to 4, by family characteristics and selected Aboriginal identity categories, Canada, 2016

| Family characteristics | Aboriginal identity | First Nations | Métis | Inuit | Non-Aboriginal identity |
|--|---------------------|---------------|-------|-------|-------------------------|
| | percent | | | | |
| Children aged 0 to 4 in private households | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Children in census families ¹ | 95.9 | 94.8 | 98.2 | 96.4 | 99.5 |
| Living with two parents ² | 60.1 | 53.7 | 71.8 | 68.8 | 86.2 |
| With two biological or adoptive parents | 56.7 | 50.2 | 69.0 | 65.0 | 83.8 |
| With one biological or adoptive parent and one step-parent | 3.4 | 3.6 | 2.8 | 3.8 | 2.4 |
| Living with one parent in a lone-parent census family ² | 34.0 | 38.9 | 25.5 | 26.5 | 13.0 |
| With a male lone parent | 5.3 | 6.1 | 3.5 | 6.0 | 1.9 |
| With a female lone parent | 28.7 | 32.7 | 22.0 | 20.6 | 11.1 |
| Living with grandparent(s) without parents present | 1.8 | 2.2 | 0.9 | 1.2 | 0.3 |
| Children not in census families | 4.1 | 5.2 | 1.8 | 3.5 | 0.5 |
| Living with other relatives ³ | 1.1 | 1.4 | 0.5 | 1.3 | 0.3 |
| Foster children | 3.0 | 3.8 | 1.3 | 2.2 | 0.2 |

1. Children in census families are biological, adopted or stepsons and stepdaughters who are living in the same dwelling as their parent(s), as well as grandchildren in households where there are no parents present.

2. One or more grandparents of the child may also be present in the household.

3. Excluding foster children.

Note: The **Aboriginal identity** (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/pop001-eng.cfm>) population includes people who are First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit) and/or those who are 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.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

Among First Nations children, 53.7% of those aged 0 to 4 lived in a family with two parents. Of those living in a two-parent family, more than 9 in 10 (93.3%) lived with both of their biological or adoptive parents, and 6.7% lived with one biological or adoptive parent and one step-parent.

The proportion of First Nations children who were living in a two-parent family was lower among those with **Registered Indian status** (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/pop116-eng.cfm>) (51.4%) and higher among those without Registered Indian status (59.3%). Among First Nations children with Registered Indian status, those living on reserve (52.7%) were more likely than those living off reserve (49.9%) to live in a two-parent family.

Just over 7 in 10 Métis children aged 0 to 4 (71.8%) lived with two parents. Of those who lived with two parents, 96.1% lived with both of their biological or adoptive parents, and 3.9% lived with one biological or adoptive parent and one step-parent.

Just under 7 in 10 Inuit children aged 0 to 4 (68.8%) lived in a two-parent family, 94.5% of whom lived with two biological or adoptive parents, and 5.5% of whom lived with one biological or adoptive parent and one step-parent. Among those living in a two-parent family, the proportion of Inuit children living with a step-parent was slightly higher outside **Inuit Nunangat** (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/pop168-eng.cfm>) (6.9%) than in Inuit Nunangat (5.0%).

About 1 in 3 Aboriginal children aged 0 to 4 live with a lone parent

In 2016, more than one-third (34.0%) of Aboriginal children aged 0 to 4 lived with a lone parent. This was the living arrangement for 38.9% of First Nations, 25.5% of Métis and 26.5% of Inuit children in this age group.

First Nations children aged 0 to 4 with Registered Indian status were more likely to live with a lone parent than those without Registered Indian status (40.8% versus 34.4%, respectively). For First Nations children aged 0 to 4 with Registered Indian status, there was little difference in the percentage living with a lone parent on reserve (40.6%) and off reserve (41.1%).

It is important to note that other relatives, for example grandparents or other extended family members, may be present in the household of children living with a lone parent. These types of living arrangements of lone parents living with extended family members are more common in the Aboriginal population. For example, 10.5% of Aboriginal children aged 0 to 4 were living with a lone parent and grandparent(s), compared to 3% of non-Aboriginal children with this living arrangement.

It is also important to note that these results refer to the structure of the immediate family living in the same household. The role of other family and community members outside the household in raising children is not captured by the census.

About 1 in 6 Aboriginal children share a household with at least one grandparent

Living in the same household with grandparents was more common among young Aboriginal children than non-Aboriginal children. There are many reasons why children may be living in the same household as their grandparents. These reasons may include an interplay of various cultural and economic factors, including the importance of extended family, the financial benefits of shared expenses and lack of sufficient housing.³

In 2016, 17.9% of Aboriginal children aged 0 to 4 shared a household with at least one grandparent. This was the case for 21.2% of First Nations, 10.5% of Métis and 22.8% of Inuit children. In comparison, 9.5% of non-Aboriginal children shared a household with a grandparent.

Living with grandparents was more common among First Nations children with Registered Indian status who were living on reserve. More than one-third (33.6%) of such children aged 0 to 4 were living with their grandparents compared with 14.4% of those living off reserve. Inuit children aged 0 to 4 living in Inuit Nunangat were more likely to be living with a grandparent (26.5%) than those living outside Inuit Nunangat (8.9%).

Children sharing a household with their grandparents may be living in a household with both grandparents and parents present. Alternatively, they may be living with their grandparents without their parents present in a skip-generation family.

3. Milan, A., N. Laflamme and I. Wong. 2015. "Diversity of grandparents living with their grandchildren." (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-006-x/2015001/article/14154-eng.htm>) Insights on Canadian Society. April. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-006-X.

Diverse family characteristics of Aboriginal children aged 0 to 4

Table 2
Population aged 0 to 4, by family characteristics including presence of grandparents and selected Aboriginal identity categories, Canada, 2016

| Family characteristics of children including presence of grandparents | Aboriginal identity | First Nations | Métis | Inuit | Non-Aboriginal identity |
|---|---------------------|---------------|-------|-------|-------------------------|
| | percent | | | | |
| Children aged 0 to 4 in private households | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Living with two parents - Not living with grandparents | 54.5 | 47.7 | 67.5 | 60.2 | 80.0 |
| Living with two parents - Living with grandparents | 5.7 | 6.1 | 4.3 | 8.7 | 6.2 |
| Living with one parent - Not living with grandparents | 23.6 | 26.2 | 20.2 | 13.7 | 10.0 |
| Living with one parent - Living with grandparents | 10.5 | 12.8 | 5.4 | 12.8 | 3.0 |
| Living with grandparents without parents present | 1.8 | 2.2 | 0.9 | 1.2 | 0.3 |
| Living with other relatives | 1.0 | 1.2 | 0.4 | 1.2 | 0.3 |
| Foster children | 3.0 | 3.8 | 1.3 | 2.2 | 0.2 |

Note: The **Aboriginal identity** (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/pop001-eng.cfm>) population includes people who are First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit) and/or those who are 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.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

In 2016, 1.8% of Aboriginal children aged 0 to 4 were living in a skip-generation family. Although a relatively small proportion of Aboriginal children lived in a skip-generation family, this proportion was several times higher than that observed among non-Aboriginal children (0.3%). In 2016, 2.2% of First Nations children aged 0 to 4 lived in a skip-generation family. This type of living arrangement was more common among First Nations children aged 0 to 4 with Registered Indian status living on reserve (2.8%) than among those living off reserve (2.2%). About 1% of Métis and Inuit children aged 0 to 4 (0.9% and 1.2%, respectively) were living in a skip-generation family.

In 2016, 16.2% of Aboriginal children aged 0 to 4 were living with at least one of their parents and one of their grandparents. This was most common among Inuit children (21.5%) and First Nations children (18.9%). The rate of young Aboriginal children living with a lone parent and grandparent(s) (10.5%) was more common than among non-Aboriginal children (3%). In 2016, 12.8% of First Nations children, 12.8% of Inuit children and 5.4% of Métis children were living with a lone parent and grandparent(s).

Living with a male lone parent is more common among Inuit children and First Nations children living on reserve

Among Aboriginal children aged 0 to 4 living in a lone-parent family, most were living with a female lone parent (84.4%) as opposed to a male lone parent (15.6%). In 2016, 13.7% of Métis and 15.8% of First Nations children in lone-parent families were living with a male lone parent.

Living with a male lone parent was more common among Inuit children. In 2016, 22.5% of Inuit children aged 0 to 4 in lone-parent families were living with a male lone parent.

Living with a male lone parent was also more common among First Nations children living on reserve, where 23.7% of First Nations children with Registered Indian status aged 0 to 4 in lone-parent families had a male lone parent. This compares with 11.0% for their counterparts living off reserve.

Diverse family characteristics of Aboriginal children aged 0 to 4

About one-half of foster children aged 0 to 4 are Aboriginal

In 2016, there were 4,300 Aboriginal children aged 0 to 4 reported as foster children living in private homes in the Census of Population. Although Aboriginal children accounted for 7.7% of all children aged 0 to 4, they accounted for more than one-half (51.2%) of all foster children in this age group. In 2011, Aboriginal children accounted for a similar proportion of foster children aged 0 to 4 (49.1%).

Table 3
Proportion of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children among all children and among children in foster care, by selected Aboriginal identity categories, population aged 0 to 4, Canada, 2016

| Aboriginal identity | As a percentage of all children aged 0 to 4 | As a percentage of foster children aged 0 to 4 |
|--|--|---|
| | percent | |
| Children aged 0 to 4 in private households | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Aboriginal identity | 7.7 | 51.2 |
| First Nations | 4.9 | 41.4 |
| Métis | 2.2 | 6.7 |
| Inuit | 0.4 | 2.0 |
| Non-Aboriginal identity | 92.3 | 48.8 |

Note: The [Aboriginal identity](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/pop001-eng.cfm) (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/pop001-eng.cfm>) population includes people who are First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit) and/or those who are 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.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

Data sources, methods and definitions

Data sources

The data in this analysis are from the 2016 Census of Population. Further information on the census can be found in the [Guide to the Census of Population, 2016](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/98-304/index-eng.cfm) (http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/98-304/index-eng.cfm), Catalogue no. 98-304-X.

Children categorized as living with only one biological or adoptive parent may in fact be dividing their time between the separate households of their parents. The census does not capture these situations. Instead, the census questionnaire contains this instruction: "Children in joint custody should be included in the home of the parent where they live most of the time. Children who spend equal time with each parent should be included in the home of the parent with whom they are staying on May 10, 2016."

Additional information on census data quality and comparability for Aboriginal peoples can be found in the [Aboriginal Peoples Reference Guide, Census of Population, 2016](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/guides/009/98-500-x2016009-eng.cfm) (http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/guides/009/98-500-x2016009-eng.cfm), Catalogue no. 98-500-X2016009.

Methods

Random rounding and percentage distributions: 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 the analytical documents, highlight tables and data tables.

Definitions

Please refer to the [Dictionary, Census of Population, 2016](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/index-eng.cfm) (http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/index-eng.cfm), Catalogue no. 98-301-X for additional information on the census variables.

Additional information

Additional analysis on Aboriginal peoples can be found in [The Daily](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025a-eng.htm) (http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025a-eng.htm) of October 25, 2017, and in the Census in Brief articles entitled [The housing conditions of Aboriginal people in Canada](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016011/98-200-x2016021-eng.cfm) (http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016011/98-200-x2016021-eng.cfm), catalogue no. 98-200-X2016021 and [The Aboriginal languages of First Nations people, Métis and Inuit](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016022/98-200-x2016022-eng.cfm) (http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016022/98-200-x2016022-eng.cfm), catalogue no. 98-200-X2016022.

Additional information on the Aboriginal population can be found in the [Highlight tables](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/hltfst/abo-aut/index-eng.cfm) (http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/hltfst/abo-aut/index-eng.cfm), Catalogue no. 98-402-X2016009; the [Data tables](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/dt-td/Lp-eng.cfm?LANG=E&APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GID=0&GK=0&GRP=1&PID=0&PRID=10&PTYPE=109445&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=2017&THEME=122&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF) (http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/dt-td/Lp-eng.cfm?LANG=E&APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GID=0&GK=0&GRP=1&PID=0&PRID=10&PTYPE=109445&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=2017&THEME=122&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF), Catalogue nos. 98-400-X2016154 to 98-400-X2016180; the [Census Profile](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E) (http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E), Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001; and the [Focus on Geography Series](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Index-eng.cfm) (http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Index-eng.cfm), Catalogue no. 98-404-X2016001.

Diverse family characteristics of Aboriginal children aged 0 to 4

An infographic entitled *The Aboriginal population in Canada* (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2017027-eng.htm>) illustrates the demographic growth of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations and touches on Aboriginal languages in Canada.

For details on the concepts, definitions and variables used in the 2016 Census of Population, please consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2016* (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/index-eng.cfm>), Catalogue no. 98-301-X.

In addition to response rates and other data quality information, the *Guide to the Census of Population, 2016* (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/98-304/index-eng.cfm>), Catalogue no. 98-304-X, provides an overview of the various phases of the census including content determination, sampling design, collection, data processing, data quality assessment, confidentiality guidelines and dissemination.

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