
Census in Brief

Housing conditions among First Nations people, Métis and Inuit in Canada from the 2021 Census

Census of Population, 2021



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Housing conditions among First Nations people, Métis and Inuit in Canada from the 2021 Census

Highlights

- In 2021, over one in six Indigenous people (17.1%) lived in crowded housing that was considered not suitable for the number of people who lived there.
- The share of Indigenous people living in crowded housing declined overall among all three groups (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) from 2016 to 2021, including among First Nations people with Registered or Treaty Indian status living on reserve. However, for Inuit living in Nunavut, the Inuvialuit region and outside Inuit Nunangat, the share living in crowded housing increased from 2016 to 2021.
- Multigenerational households were the most common living arrangement among First Nations people living in crowded housing (34.5%), followed by couples living with children (21.7%). Among Métis and Inuit living in crowded housing, the most common living arrangement was couples living with children.
- Indigenous people were almost twice as likely to live in crowded housing in 2021, compared with the non-Indigenous population (17.1% versus 9.4%). However, the gap between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population narrowed by 1.7 percentage points from 2016 to 2021.
- In 2021, 16.4% of Indigenous people lived in a dwelling that was in need of major repairs.
- First Nations people and Métis were less likely to be living in a dwelling in need of major repairs in 2021, compared with five years earlier. For Inuit overall, the share living in a dwelling in need of major repairs in 2021 was similar to 2016 levels, while Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat (+1.2 percentage points) were more likely to live in housing needing major repairs.
- Indigenous people were almost three times more likely to live in a dwelling in need of major repairs (16.4%) in 2021 than the non-Indigenous population (5.7%). Nevertheless, the gap between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population narrowed by 2.3 percentage points from 2016 to 2021.

Introduction

Adequate and suitable housing that provides residents with a safe environment to live and work in is essential for mental and physical well-being and a higher quality of life.¹ Living in poor housing conditions, such as houses with overcrowding, mould or structural defects, is associated with the spread of infectious and respiratory diseases, chronic illness, injuries, and poorer mental health.^{2,3}

In 2019, the *National Housing Strategy Act* declared that “the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right affirmed in international law” and recognized that having an affordable and safe place to live gives individuals and families the environment they need to succeed, grow and live in dignity. However, many Indigenous people in Canada live in inadequate housing, particularly among those living in remote or northern communities.⁴

Although the 2016 Census of Population revealed that housing conditions among Indigenous people had improved overall, they remained much more likely to be living in inadequate housing than the non-Indigenous population.⁵

1. World Health Organization. 2018. [WHO housing and health guidelines](#). Geneva: World Health Organization.

2. National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. 2017. [Housing as a social determinant for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis health](#). National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health.

3. Chief Public Health Officer of Canada. 2014. [The Chief Public Health Officer's Report on the State of Public Health in Canada, 2014: Public health in the future](#). Ottawa, ON: Public Health Agency of Canada.

4. Bleakney, A. and A. Melvin. 2022. “Indigenous women and girls: socioeconomic conditions in remote communities compared to more accessible areas.” *Insights on Canadian Society*. Catalogue No 75-006.

5. Statistics Canada. 2017. *The housing conditions of Aboriginal people in Canada*. Catalogue no. 98-200-X2016021.

Housing conditions among First Nations people, Métis and Inuit in Canada from the 2021 Census

This article uses new data from the 2021 Census of Population to report on housing conditions among Indigenous people in Canada. In addition, it will examine how housing conditions have changed among First Nations people, Métis and Inuit since 2016.

Over one in six Indigenous people live in crowded housing

Over one in six Indigenous people (17.1%, or 309,345 people) lived in housing that was considered [not suitable](#) for the number of people who lived there, according to the National Occupancy Standard.⁶ Housing suitability is a measure of crowding, which refers to whether a dwelling has enough bedrooms for the size and composition of the household.

Crowded housing is categorized into dwellings that have a shortfall of one, two, or three or more bedrooms. Just over 1 in 10 Indigenous people (10.7%) lived in housing that had a one-bedroom shortfall, 3.7% lived in housing with a two-bedroom shortfall, and 2.8% lived in housing with a shortfall of three or more bedrooms.

Nevertheless, the share of Indigenous people living in crowded housing declined by 0.9 percentage points from 2016 to 2021.⁷

While the share of Indigenous people living in crowded housing remained much higher than the non-Indigenous population (17.1% versus 9.4%), the gap between the two groups narrowed from 9.5 percentage points in 2016 to 7.8 percentage points in 2021.

Fewer Indigenous people live in a dwelling in need of major repairs, compared with five years earlier

Approximately one in six Indigenous people (16.4%, or 295,745 people) lived in a dwelling that was in need of [major repairs](#) in 2021, down 2.7 percentage points from 2016.

Dwellings in need of major repairs include those that require major repairs such as defective plumbing or electrical wiring and those that require structural repairs to walls, floors or ceilings.

Although Indigenous people were almost three times more likely to live in a dwelling in need of major repairs (16.4%) than the non-Indigenous population (5.7%) in 2021, the gap narrowed by 2.3 percentage points from 2016.

First Nations people living on reserve are more likely to live in crowded housing

Over one in five First Nations people (21.4%, or 224,280 people) lived in crowded housing in 2021, with 12.9% living in housing with a one-bedroom shortfall, 4.8% living in housing with a two-bedroom shortfall and 3.8% living in housing with a shortfall of three or more bedrooms. Overall, the share of First Nations people living in crowded housing declined by 1.2 percentage points from 2016.

First Nations people who had Registered or Treaty Indian status under the *Indian Act* were over twice as likely to live in crowded housing, compared with First Nations people without Registered or Treaty Indian status (25.4% versus 11.2%).

First Nations people with Registered or Treaty Indian status living on reserve were almost twice as likely to live in crowded housing, compared with those who lived off reserve (35.7% versus 18.4%). However, the share of

6. The National Occupancy Standard was developed by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation through consultations with provincial housing agencies.

7. All comparisons with the 2016 Census of Population are calculated by adjusting for [incompletely enumerated reserves and settlements](#).

Housing conditions among First Nations people, Métis and Inuit in Canada from the 2021 Census

First Nations people with Registered or Treaty Indian status living in a crowded dwelling on a reserve fell at a faster pace from 2016 to 2021, compared with that of their counterparts living off reserve (-0.6 percentage points versus -0.2 percentage points).

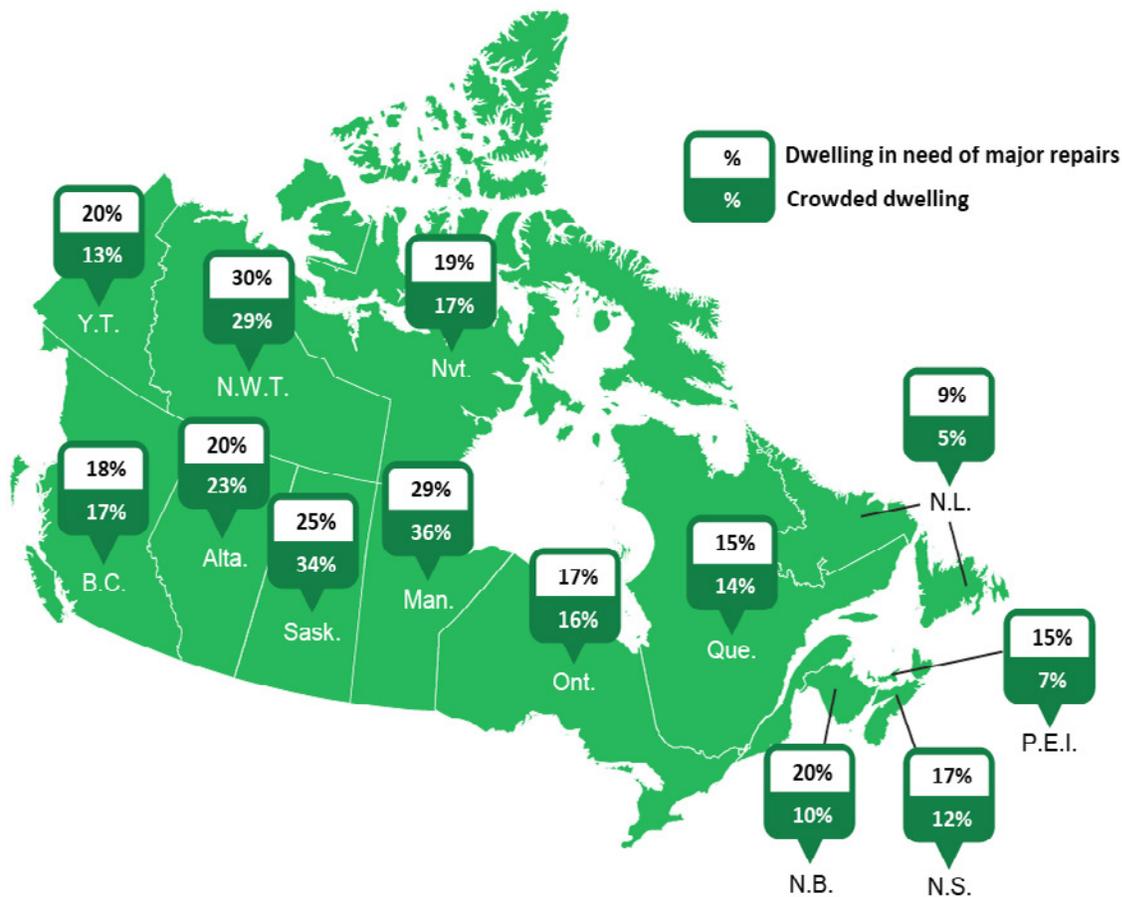
Just over one-third (34.5%) of First Nations people in crowded housing were living in a multigenerational household, with at least one person living with a child and a grandchild. This share was higher (44.9%) among First Nations people with Registered or Treaty Indian status living on reserve.

In multigenerational households, grandparents play an important role in raising children and passing on traditional values, knowledge and teachings to younger generations. In addition, living in a multigenerational household may be a family's solution to housing issues in their community, such as affordability or housing shortages.

Other common living arrangements among First Nations people living in crowded housing included couples living with children (21.7%) and one-parent families (18.2%).

Nationally, First Nations people were most likely to live in crowded housing in Manitoba (35.7%) and Saskatchewan (34.3%) and least likely to do so in Atlantic Canada.

Figure 1
First Nations people living in Manitoba and Saskatchewan are most likely to live in crowded housing



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Housing conditions among First Nations people, Métis and Inuit in Canada from the 2021 Census

Fewer First Nations people living in a dwelling in need of major repairs

In 2021, almost one in five First Nations people (19.7%, or 206,845 people) were living in a dwelling in need of major repairs, down 3.9 percentage points from 2016.

First Nations people with Registered or Treaty Indian status were more likely to live in a dwelling in need of major repairs, compared with those without Registered or Treaty Indian status (22.8% versus 12.0%).

Over one-third of First Nations people with Registered or Treaty Indian status living on reserve lived in a dwelling in need of major repairs (37.4%), almost three times the rate of their counterparts living off reserve (12.7%). Nevertheless, the share of First Nations people with Registered or Treaty Indian status living in a dwelling in need of major repairs on a reserve fell at a faster pace from 2016 to 2021 than the share of those living off reserve (-6.5 percentage points versus -1.4 percentage points).

Nationally, the share of First Nations people living in dwellings in need of major repairs was highest in the Northwest Territories (30.0%) and Manitoba (28.7%) and lowest in Newfoundland and Labrador (8.6%).

Approximately 1 in 12 Métis live in crowded housing

Approximately 1 in 12 Métis (7.9%, or 49,565 people) were living in crowded housing in 2021, down 0.6 percentage points from 2016.

In 2021, 6.2% of Métis were living in housing with a one-bedroom shortfall, 1.3% were living in housing with a two-bedroom shortfall and 0.5% were living in housing with a shortfall of three or more bedrooms.

Among Métis living in crowded housing in 2021, one-quarter were living in a household composed of a couple with children (25.6%). Other common living arrangements among Métis living in crowded housing included one-parent families (23.3%) and multigenerational households (22.0%).

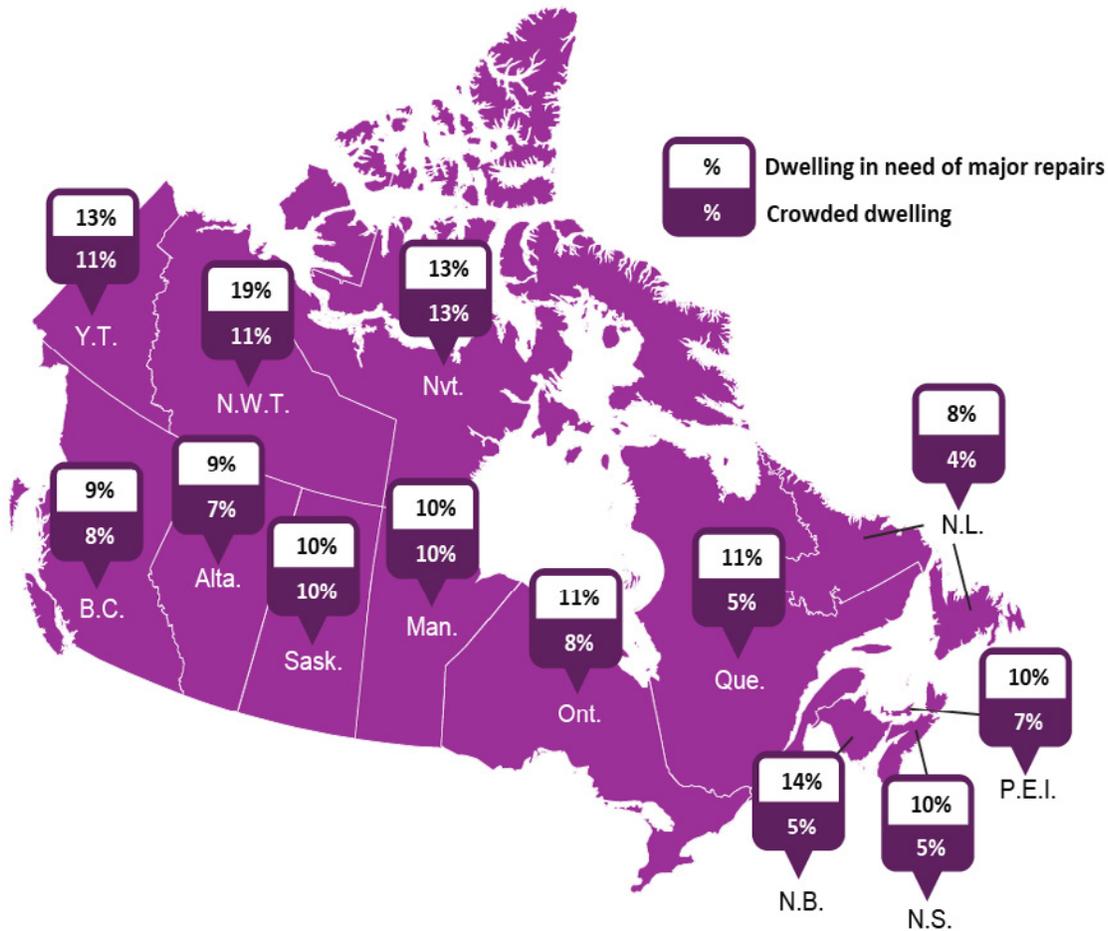
Nationally, the share of Métis living in crowded housing was higher in Yukon (10.9%), the Northwest Territories (10.7%) and Manitoba (10.0%), and lower in Newfoundland and Labrador (4.4%) and Nova Scotia (4.9%).

In 2021, 335,350 Métis were living in a census metropolitan area (CMA) of 100,000 or more people. Métis living in a CMA were more likely to live in crowded housing, compared with their counterparts living outside a large city (8.3% versus 7.5%). Among those living in large cities, the highest share of Métis living in crowded housing was seen in Kingston (14.8%), Toronto (11.3%) and Winnipeg (11.1%).

Housing conditions among First Nations people, Métis and Inuit in Canada from the 2021 Census

Figure 2

Almost one in five Métis in the Northwest Territories live in a dwelling in need of major repairs



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Métis less likely to be living in a dwelling in need of major repairs, compared with five years earlier

In 2021, approximately 1 in 10 Métis (10.0%, or 62,640 people) were living in a dwelling in need of major repairs, down 1.2 percentage points from 2016.

The share of Métis living in a dwelling in need of major repairs was lowest in Newfoundland and Labrador (8.2%), British Columbia (9.0%), and Alberta (9.0%), and highest in the Northwest Territories (19.4%), New Brunswick (13.7%) and Yukon (13.2%).

Métis living outside a large city were more likely to live in a dwelling in need of major repairs, compared with their counterparts living in a CMA (11.5% versus 8.7%). However, among Métis residing in CMAs, the share living in a dwelling in need of major repairs was higher for those in Trois-Rivières, Quebec (15.9%); Saint John, New Brunswick (14.6%); and Moncton, New Brunswick (12.5%).

Housing conditions among First Nations people, Métis and Inuit in Canada from the 2021 Census

Just over half of Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat—specifically Nunavut—live in crowded housing

Just over two in five Inuit (40.1%, or 28,260 people) lived in crowded housing in 2021, with 20.7% living in housing with a one-bedroom shortfall, 10.0% with a two-bedroom shortfall and 9.4% with a shortfall of three or more bedrooms.

This large share of Inuit living in crowded housing was mainly driven by those living in Inuit Nunangat, who were four times more likely to live in crowded housing than Inuit living outside Inuit Nunangat (52.9% versus 11.4%). Inuit Nunangat is the traditional homeland of Inuit, which includes Nunatsiavut (Labrador), Nunavik (northern Quebec), Nunavut and the Inuvialuit region (Northwest Territories).

Among Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat, those living in Nunavut (60.0%) were the most likely to live in crowded housing, while those in Nunatsiavut (17.7%) were the least likely to do so.

Within Inuit Nunangat, the lack of access to appropriate and affordable housing is well documented. Inuit living in these regions face a number of challenges, including high construction, operation and maintenance costs. In addition, due to barriers such as higher costs of living, fewer employment opportunities, lower income levels and the lack of housing markets for resale, many Inuit rely on public or subsidized housing.⁸

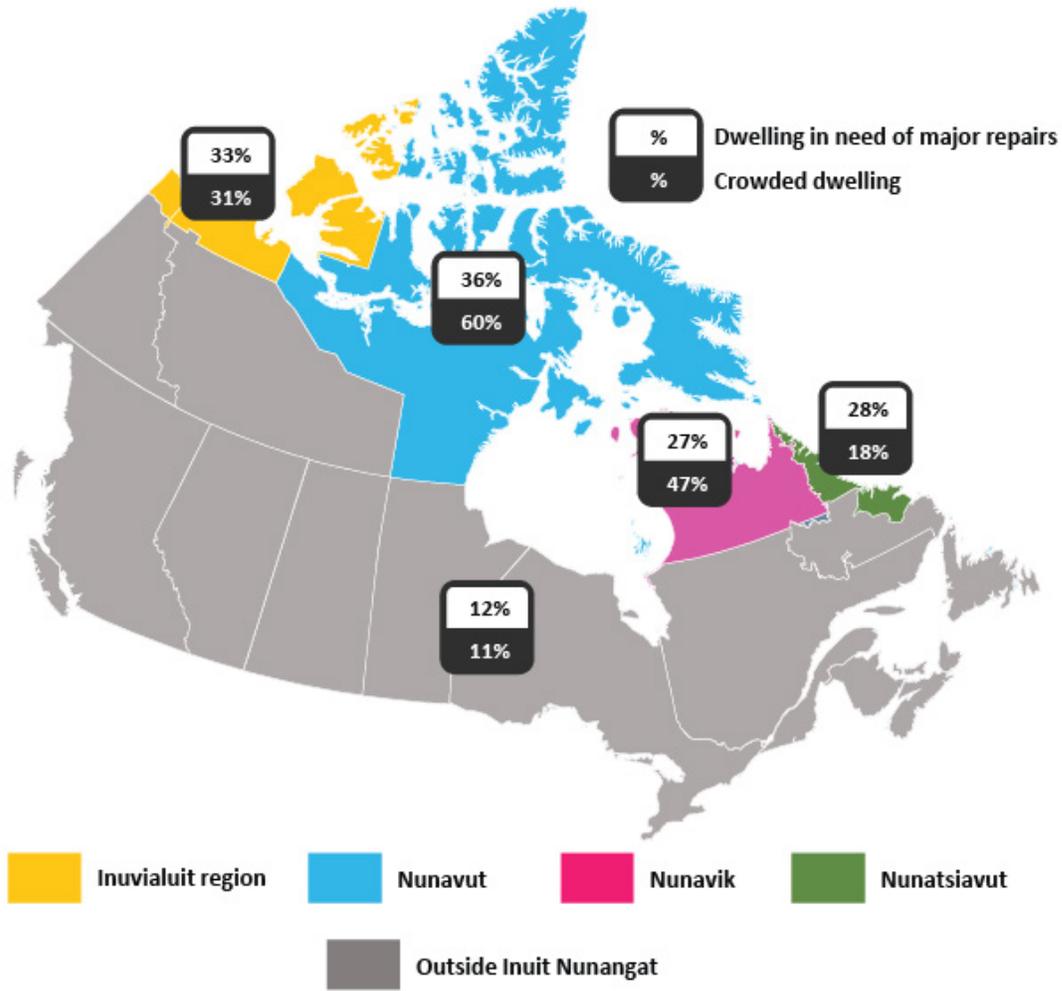
Among Inuit living in crowded housing in 2021, the living arrangements were mostly made up of couples living with children (36.3%) and multigenerational households (35.4%). Over one-third of Inuit living in crowded housing in Inuit Nunangat were couples living with children (37.2%) or multigenerational households (36.7%). Outside Inuit Nunangat, approximately one-quarter of Inuit living in crowded housing were couples living with children (27.6%) or multigenerational households (22.9%).

Overall, the share of Inuit living in crowded housing edged down 0.6 percentage points from 2016 to 2021. There were fewer Inuit living in crowded dwellings in Nunatsiavut (-2.5 percentage points) and Nunavik (-5.1 percentage points) compared with five years earlier, and more Inuit living in crowded housing in Nunavut (+3.6 percentage points), the Inuvialuit region (+1.9 percentage points) and outside Inuit Nunangat (+0.4 percentage points).

8. Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. 2019. [Inuit Nunangat Housing Strategy](#). Catalogue number R5-737/2019 E-PDF.

Housing conditions among First Nations people, Métis and Inuit in Canada from the 2021 Census

Figure 3
Three in five Inuit in Nunavut live in crowded housing



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat are more likely to live in a dwelling in need of major repairs

Over one-quarter of Inuit (26.2%, or 18,460 people) were living in a dwelling in need of major repairs in 2021. However, Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat were almost three times more likely to live in a dwelling in need of major repairs, compared with their counterparts living outside Inuit Nunangat (32.7% versus 11.5%).

Within Inuit Nunangat, approximately one-third of Inuit in Nunavut (35.5%) and the Inuvialuit region (33.0%) were living in a dwelling in need of major repairs, compared with one-quarter of Inuit living in Nunatsiavut (28.2%) and Nunavik (26.5%).

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Overall, Inuit were as likely to be living in dwellings in need of major repairs in 2021 as they were in 2016. However, Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat were more likely to be living in a dwelling in need of major repairs (+1.2 percentage points) compared with five years earlier, while Inuit living outside Inuit Nunangat (-0.6 percentage points) were slightly less likely to be living in a dwelling requiring major repairs.

Looking ahead

In the coming months, releases from the Census of Population will provide more comprehensive data for Indigenous people living in Canada. Upcoming data releases for the 2021 Census include education and labour force characteristics, which will provide a more comprehensive socioeconomic portrait of Indigenous populations in Canada.

Additional information

Additional analysis on First Nations people, Métis and Inuit can be found in the *Daily* article; in the Census in Brief article on Métis in Canada, Catalogue no. 98-200-X; and in the article on shelter costs on reserve.

Additional information on First Nations people, Métis and Inuit can be found in the [data tables](#); the [Census Profile](#), Catalogue no. 98-316-X; and the [Focus on Geography Series](#), Catalogue no. 98-404-X.

For details on the concepts, definitions and variables used in the 2021 Census of Population, please consult the [Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021](#), Catalogue no. 98-301-X.

In addition to response rates and other data quality information, the [Guide to the Census of Population](#), 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.

Acknowledgements

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