

Urban Fact Sheet

There are various definitions associated with Indigenous Peoples living in urban, rural and northern areas. Throughout the engagement for the Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy, we expect definitions about Indigenous Peoples living in urban, rural and northern areas should be led and agreed to by Indigenous Peoples.

However, for the purpose of these fact sheets, the phrase “urban, rural and northern” (URN) is used to refer to geographic areas where Indigenous Peoples reside outside of First Nation reserves and communities in modern treaty or self-governing territory, Inuit Nunangat, Métis Settlement regions and historic Métis communities.

Statistics Canada defines a census metropolitan area (CMA) as having a total population of at least 100,000 people with at least half of this population living in the core area of the CMA. A census agglomeration (CA) is defined as having a core population of between 10,000 and 100,000 people. A non-CMA/CA is any area that is outside of the CMA or CA area.

For this fact sheet, those living in URN areas are divided into three geographic regions:

1. Urban refers to those living in CMAs.
2. Rural refers to those living outside the Territories, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut, and not in a CMA.
3. North includes both:
 - Inuit Nunangat – Inuit homelands encompassing all of Nunavut as well as the Inuvialuit Settlement Region of the NWT (ISR); Nunavik in Northern Quebec; Nunatsiavut in Labrador; and
 - North outside of Inuit Nunangat – Territories outside of Inuit Nunangat (Yukon and NWT without the ISR and excluding reserves and self-governing/modern treaty territories). Only those living outside of Inuit Nunangat are considered to be living in URN areas.

Highlights

- For the purposes of this fact sheet, “urban” refers to the 41 large urban centres (census metropolitan areas, 100,000+ population size, excluding reserves) in Canada. Smaller communities are captured in the rural fact sheet.
- In 2021, there were 1.8 million Indigenous Peoples in Canada, representing 5% of the total population of the country. First Nations represent the largest Indigenous population group and now exceed 1 million people. ([Table 1](#))
- Due to historical and modern self-government land agreements and treaties, the proportion of Indigenous groups living in community (on-reserve, Inuit Nunangat, and Settlements) varies by Indigenous identity. ([Table 2](#))
- Ontario and Alberta have the highest percentage of urban Indigenous populations. ([Figure 1](#))
- Over half of First Nations, Métis and Inuit living in URN areas live in larger urban centres (CMAs). ([Table 3](#))
- While the overall growth rate for Indigenous populations has increased by 8%, the urban Indigenous population (777,405 people) has grown by 19.8% from 2016 to 2021¹. ([Table 4](#))
- From 2016 to 2021, Indigenous populations grew in all but one of the 12 CMAs listed. ([Table 5](#))
 - Winnipeg and Edmonton have the highest First Nation and Métis populations.
 - Inuit live predominantly in Ottawa-Gatineau, Edmonton and Montréal—likely because of service provision agreements (e.g., health care) with the territorial governments.
- Core housing need is higher for Indigenous populations as compared to non-Indigenous populations. In Regina and Saskatoon, rates of core housing need for Indigenous Peoples are triple those of non-Indigenous populations. ([Figure 2](#))
- First Nations experience higher rates of overcrowding as compared to Inuit and Métis in urban centres. While affordability rates are similar to non-Indigenous populations, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit experience higher rates of housing inadequacy (need for major repairs). ([Figure 3](#))
- Across CMAs, the rate of core housing need has declined between 2016 and 2021 for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous households. ([Figure 4](#))
- Indigenous renters in urban areas are more likely to be below housing affordability standards and/or below housing suitability standards than Indigenous homeowners in these areas. ([Figure 5](#))
- Indigenous Peoples experience homelessness at higher rates than non-Indigenous people and make up a significant proportion of those experiencing homelessness in CMAs. In three CMAs, the majority of those experiencing homelessness identified as Indigenous: Saskatoon [86%](#) (2018), Regina [79%](#) (2021), and Winnipeg [66%](#) (2021).

¹ These numbers differ from the Statistics Canada publication [Indigenous population living in large urban centres](#) due to their adjustments in geographical boundaries between census years. In addition, population numbers do not account for those in urban reserves.

Table 1 – Indigenous Identity in Canada – Population and Growth Rate

Indigenous identity	Population in 2021	% Pop	Growth rate
Indigenous	1,807,250	100.0 %	8.0%
First Nations	1,048,405	58.0 %	7.3%
Métis	624,220	34.5 %	6.3%
Inuit	70,545	3.9 %	8.5%

Note:

a– Counts of Indigenous populations by identity only include respondents who identified as a single identity.

b– Excludes Indigenous populations living on reserves and on settlements.

c– Growth rate represents population change between the 2016 Census and 2021 Census.

Table 2 – Indigenous Peoples by Community and Status

	Urban, Rural, North	In community
First Nations with Registered or Treaty status	59.4%	40.6% living on-reserve
Métis with membership in Métis organization or Settlement	98.4%	1.6% living in 8 Settlements
Inuit	31%	69% living in Nunangat
First Nations non-status	98%	2%

Note: Table 2 refers to Single Indigenous responses only. This category includes persons who identify as only one Indigenous group, that is First Nations, Métis or Inuk (Inuit).

Figure 1 – Where Indigenous Peoples Live in Canada by Province or Territory, 2021 (%)

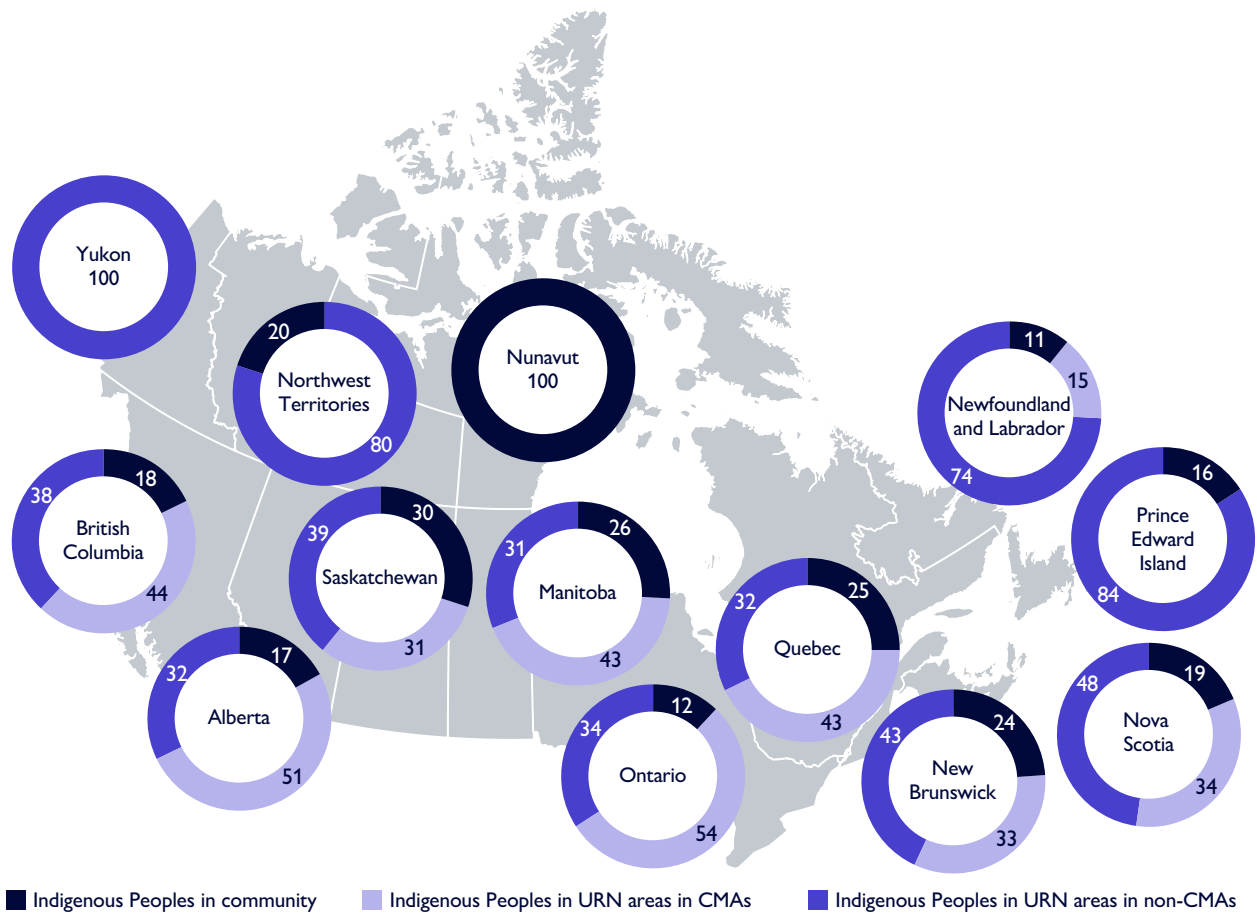


Table 3 – Indigenous Population by Single Identity for Urban, Rural and Northern Areas

	Total population in URN	Percentage in CMAs	Percentage in CAs	Percentage not in CMAs/CAs
All Indigenous population	1,430,375	54.3%	18.4%	27.2%
First Nations	735,230	54.3%	19.8%	26.0%
– Registered	447,185	50.2%	21.5%	28.2%
– Non-registered	288,035	60.5%	17.0%	22.5%
Métis	613,555	54.5%	17.0%	28.5%
Inuit	21,265	50.6%	16.7%	32.7%

Note:

- Indigenous population by identity only includes respondents who identified as a single identity.

Table 4 – Indigenous Population Growth Rate from 2016 to 2021 by Region

	Indigenous population	Growth rate
Total Indigenous population across Canada	1,807,250	8.0%
Indigenous population in community (Reserve, Settlement, Inuit Nunangat)	376,870	-3.0%
– Reserve	322,805	-4.9%
– Settlement	3,560	-23.4%
– Inuit Nunangat	50,505	3.3%
Indigenous population in URN	1,430,375	11.3%
Indigenous population in CMAs, excluding reserves	777,405	19.8%
– First Nations (CMA)	398,935	21.9%
– Métis (CMA)	334,335	14.9%
– Inuit (CMA)	10,750	29.1%
Indigenous population in rural areas (excluding reserves, North)	628,210	2.7%
Indigenous population in the North (excluding Inuit Nunangat)	24,760	0.6%

Note:

- Indigenous population by identity only includes respondents who identified as a single identity, which will be lower than the Indigenous total population.
- Growth rate represents population change between the 2016 Census and 2021 Census.

In the census, respondents can self-identify as being First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit. When we use the term single identity in this paper, we only refer to those people who identified uniquely as being in one of these Indigenous groups.

Table 5 – CMAs with Largest Indigenous Populations

	Indigenous population	Growth %	First Nations	Métis	Inuit
Winnipeg	101,660	10%	42,145	56,510	485
Edmonton	84,000	17%	35,840	44,235	1,290
Vancouver	59,885	4%	32,650	24,020	515
Calgary	48,625	19%	20,895	25,250	505
Ottawa-Gatineau	46,540	22%	23,395	19,295	1,730
Montréal	46,085	33%	25,350	16,270	1,140
Toronto	44,475	-4%	25,615	15,325	585
Saskatoon	34,390	11%	17,020	16,275	125
Regina	24,520	13%	14,405	9,360	140
Victoria	17,070	17%	8,580	7,575	140
Greater Sudbury / Grand Sudbury	18,525	22%	8,140	9,760	95
Halifax	17,600	12%	8,915	7,180	545

Note:

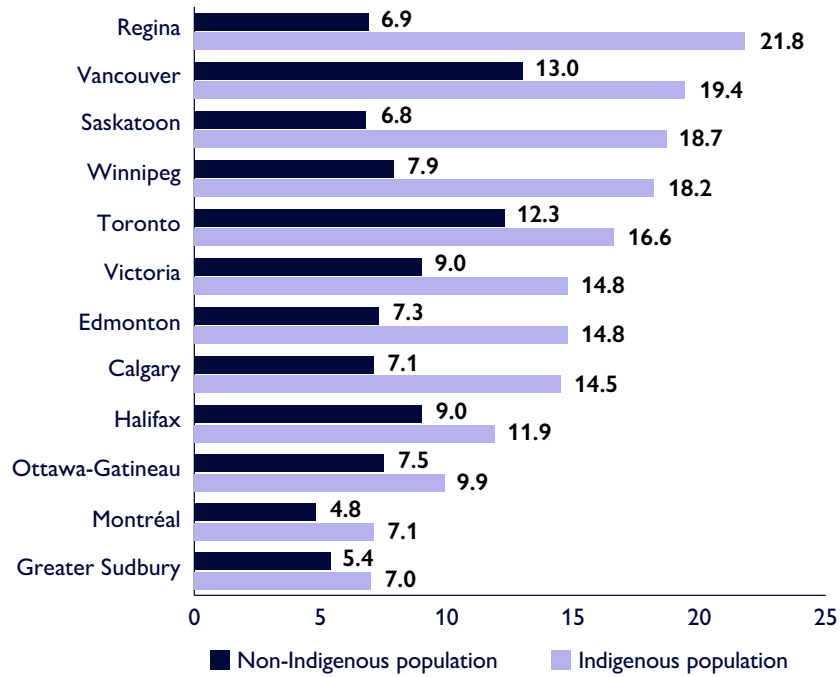
- Indigenous population by identity only includes respondents who identified as a single identity.
- Growth % compares the count of Indigenous populations between the 2016 Census and 2021 Census.

[Adequate](#) housing is reported by residents as not requiring any major repairs.

[Affordable](#) dwellings cost less than 30% of total before-tax household income.

[Suitable](#) housing has enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of resident households, according to [National Occupancy Standard](#) (NOS) requirements.

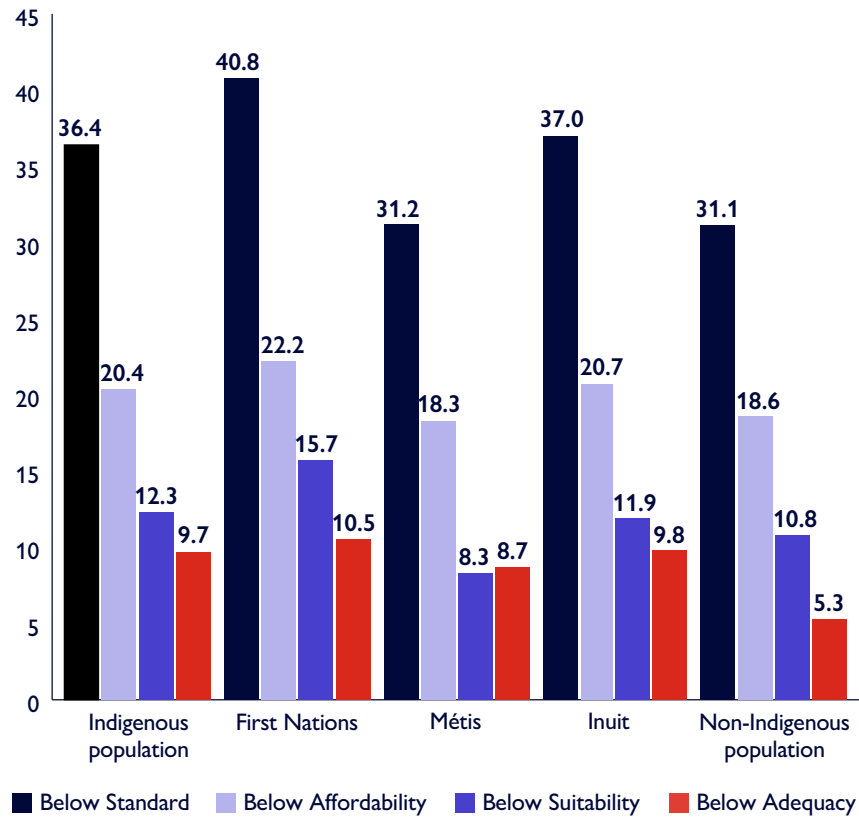
Figure 2 – Percentage of Urban Indigenous vs. Non-Indigenous Population Living in Core Housing Need, 2021



Note:

- Not all households are assessed for core housing need (CHN). Only non-farm, off-reserve households with income > 0 and shelter-to-income ratios (STIR) < 100% are assessed for core housing need.

Figure 3 – Percentage of Urban Indigenous Populations in Core Housing Need by Identity

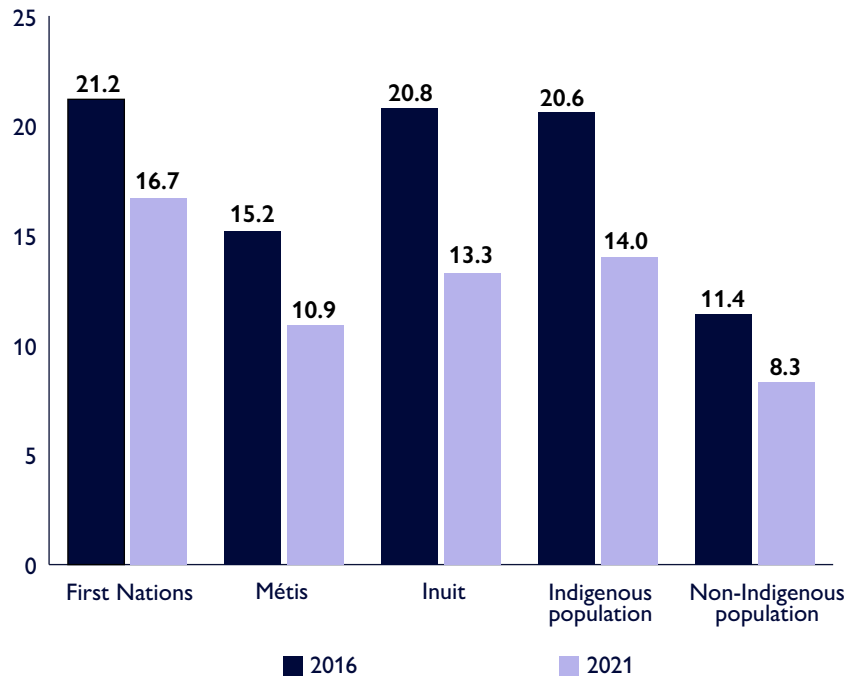


Note:

- Percentages of Indigenous populations by identity only include respondents who identified as a single identity.
- The sum of Indigenous populations below each individual housing standard will be greater than the total below standards due to individuals falling below more than one housing standard.

Below housing standard refers to the population (as opposed to household) that is below at least one standard of Adequacy, Affordability or Suitability. Below housing standard differs from core housing need since CHN typically assumes that one cannot move to a housing unit that meets the Adequacy, Affordability, Suitability standards.

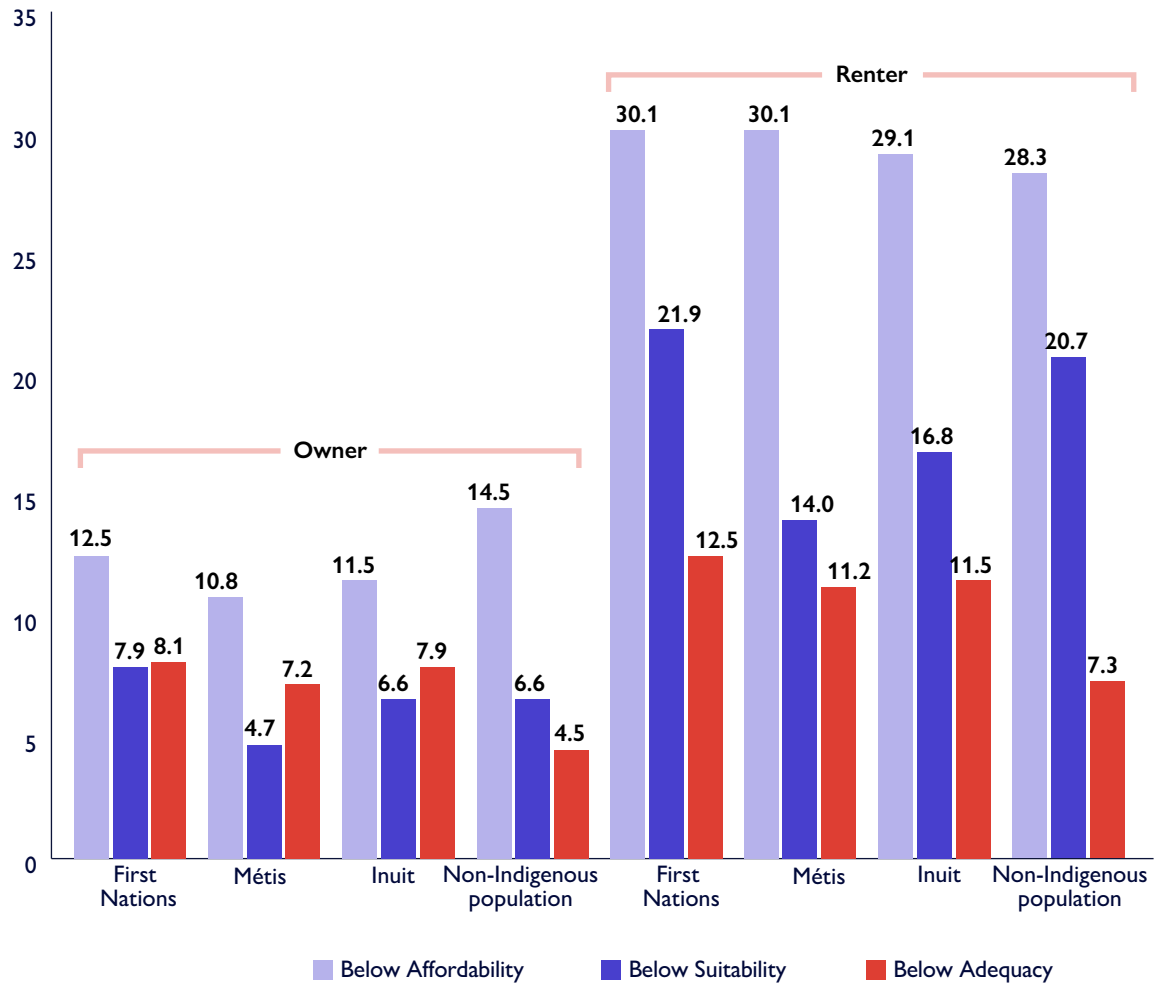
Figure 4 – Percentage of Urban Indigenous Populations in Core Housing Need in 2016 and 2021



Note:

- Not all households are assessed for core housing need (CHN). Only non-farm, off-reserve households with income > 0 and shelter-to-income ratios (STIR) < 100% are assessed for core housing need.
- Percentages of Indigenous populations by identity only include respondents who identified as a single identity.

Figure 5 – Percentage of Urban Indigenous Populations Below Housing Standards by Tenure, 2021



Note:

- The sum of Indigenous populations below each individual housing standard will be greater than the total below standards due to individuals falling below more than one housing standard.
- Percentages of Indigenous populations by identity only include respondents who identified as a single identity.