



## **INCARCERATED INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN CANADA - CURRENT STATISTICS**

### Contents

<b>General Statistics of Incarcerated Indigenous Peoples in Canada.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Incarcerated Indigenous Women in Canada .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Incarcerated Indigenous Youth.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Statistics on Poverty &amp; Risks to Health .....</b>	<b>4</b>

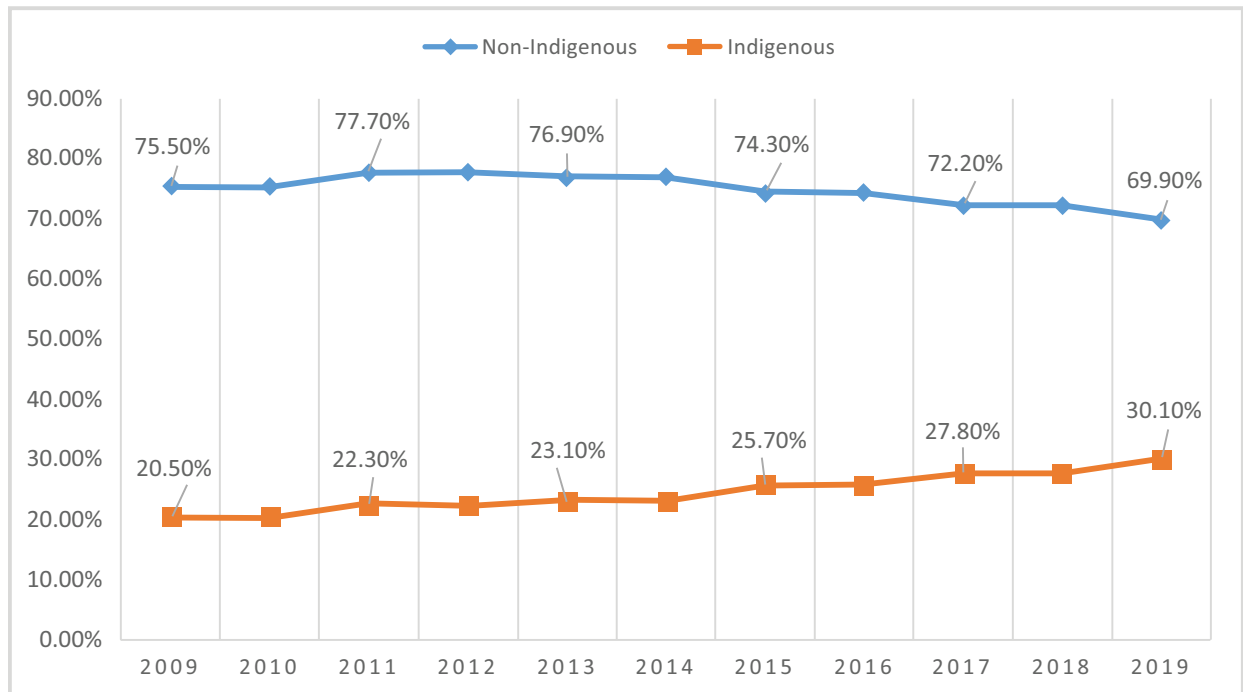
*Research compiled by Alexandria Ruigrok and Darragh Dzisiak  
for the Canadian Bar Association. Information is accurate as of July 28, 2022.*

## General Statistics of Incarcerated Indigenous Peoples in Canada

In the ten-year period between March 2009 and March 2018, the Indigenous inmate population increased by 42.8% compared to a less than 1% overall growth [in the total adult custodial population] during the same period. As of March 31, 2018, Indigenous inmates represented 28% of the total federal in-custody population while comprising just 4.3% of the Canadian population.

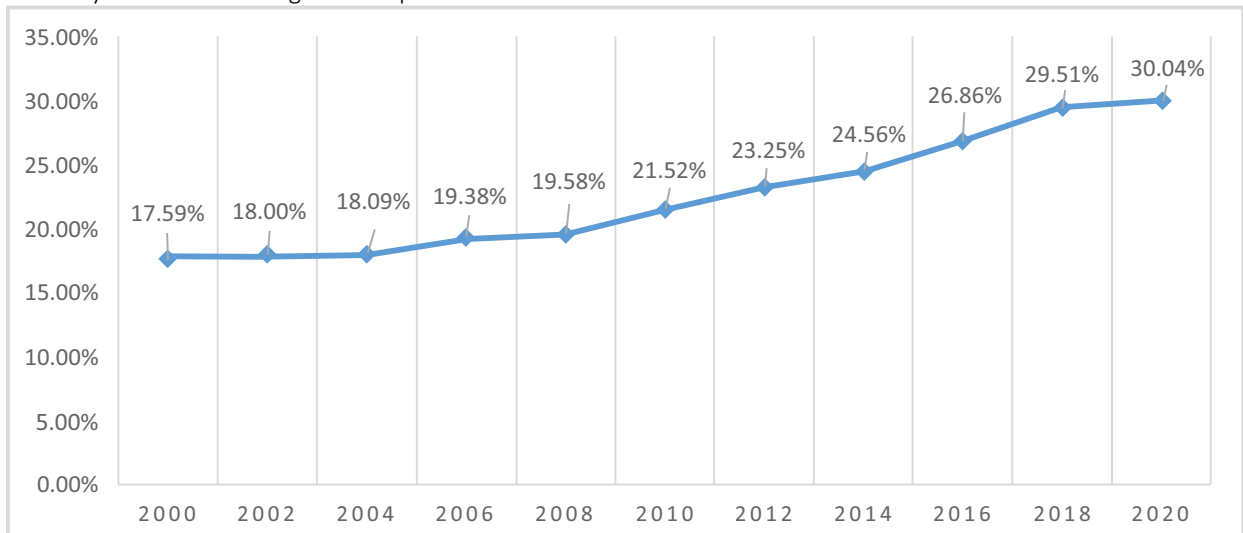
Indigenous adults represented 4.1% of the Canadian adult population in 2016/2017, while accounting for 28% of admissions to provincial/territorial correctional services and 27% of admissions for federal correctional services. In comparison, in 2006/2007, Indigenous adults accounted for 21% of admissions to provincial and territorial correctional services (excluding Prince Edward Island and the Northwest Territories) and 19% to federal correctional services. ([Department of Justice Report](#))

Federally Incarcerated Population Composition since 2009 % Indigenous vs. non-Indigenous



Source: [Office of the Correctional Investigator](#) Graph showing the Indigenous versus non-Indigenous compositions of the federally incarcerated population since 2009. The graph shows the percentage of the federally incarcerated population that identifies as non-Indigenous has been decreasing (from 79.5% in 2009 to 69.9% in 2019) while the percentage of the population identifying as Indigenous has been increasing (from 20.5% in 2009 to 30.1% in 2019).

Federally Incarcerated Indigenous Population since 2001



Source: [Office of the Correctional Investigator](#). Graph showing the percentage of the federally incarcerated population that identifies as Indigenous, each year since 2001. The graph demonstrates that the proportion of the incarcerated Indigenous population has been steadily increasing, from 17.59% in 2001, to 30.4% at present.

## Incarcerated Indigenous Women in Canada

The Indigenous inmate population has increased roughly 18 per cent over the past decade, while the number of non-Indigenous inmates has dropped by 28 per cent in the same period, says [Dr. Ivan Zinger's report](#).

Federally Sentenced Women Incarcerated Since 2012

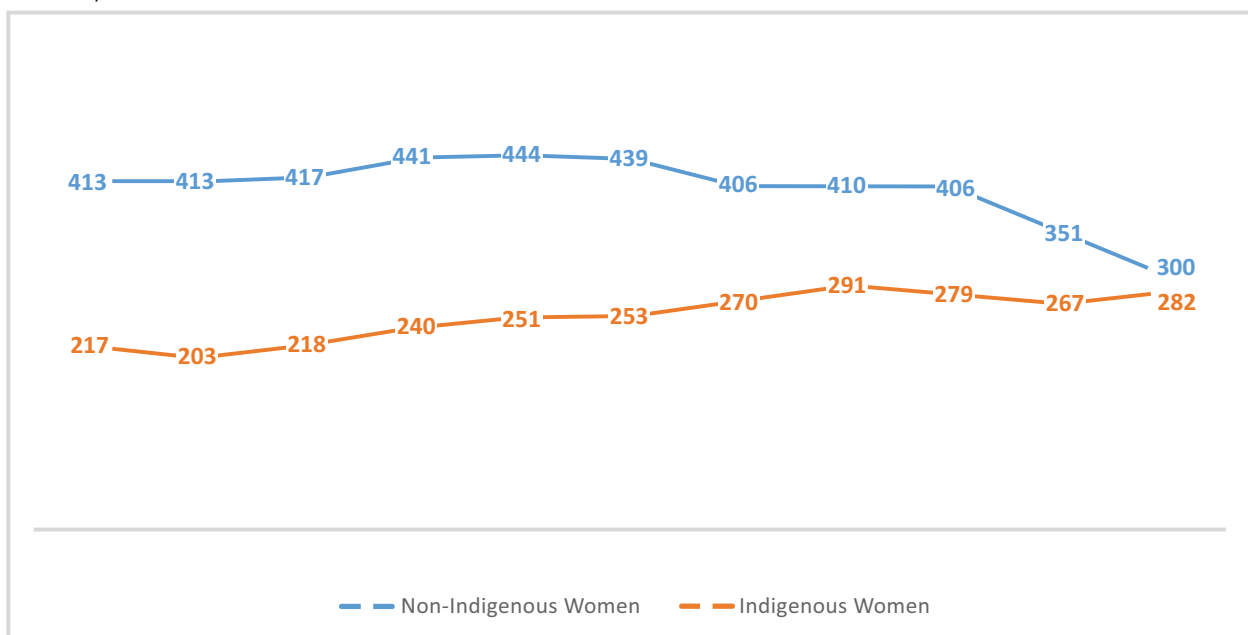


Chart: [Dexter McMillan CBC News](#). Source: Office of the Correctional Investigator. Graph showing a gradual decrease of non-Indigenous women in incarceration, going from 413 women in 2012 to 300 women as of December 2021. Graph also shows a gradual increase of Indigenous women in incarceration, going from 217 women in 2012 to 282 women as of December 2021.

## Incarcerated Indigenous Youth

A study exploring indigenous youth incarceration in Canada

“Indigenous inmates were less likely to be placed in minimum security institutions. Among Indigenous inmates, 31% were kept in segregation, 45% attempted some form of self-harm, and 90% were kept in prison until the end of their sentence” ([Exploring Indigenous Youth Incarceration in Canada](#))

Indigenous youth between ages of 12 to 17 years old represent approximately 7% of the Canadian youth population; yet they comprise 39% of young offenders in custody nationally and 47% of Indigenous victims are between the ages of 15 and 24yrs old. (Greenberg, Grekul, and Nelson 2016)

A study done in 2004 noted that “while there have been substantial reductions in the number of Indigenous youth in custody since 2000, Indigenous youth continue to experience an appreciably higher incarceration rate compared to non-Indigenous youth.” The incarceration rate of Indigenous youth was 64.5 per 10,000 population while the

incarceration rate for non-Indigenous youth was 8.2 per 10,000 population. Indigenous youth were almost eight times more likely to be in custody compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts.” ([Department of Justice Report](#))

“Indigenous youth in Manitoba are, ‘16 times more likely to be incarcerated than non-Indigenous youth. This over-representation signals the persistent legacy that colonization and residential schools have had on Indigenous Peoples.’

Penrose’s report says that while nationally, Indigenous males make up 47 per cent of the jail population, and Indigenous females make up 60 per cent, in Manitoba the numbers are ‘significantly greater at 81 per cent and 82 per cent, respectively.’” ([APTN News, Ashley Brandson](#))

Selected Characteristics	Total Custody		Total Community Supervision		Total Correctional Services	
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total
<b>Indigenous</b>	2,880	47%	3,378	40%	6,258	43%
<b>Non-Indigenous</b>	3,211	52%	4,747	56%	7,958	55%
<b>Unknown</b>	51	1%	311	4%	362	2%

Source: Statistics Canada, [Adult and Youth Correctional Statistics](#)

### Incarceration vs custody for Indigenous children

“Incarceration of youth generally across Canada has declined slightly each year since 2012. But the Statistics Canada data from 10 reporting provinces and territories also showed the proportion of Indigenous youth in custody has steadily increased. In 2006-07, the proportion was 21 per cent. But 10 years later, Indigenous boys made up 47 per cent of correctional admissions and Indigenous girls accounted for 60 per cent. In the provinces, the numbers of Indigenous youth in custody were highest in Saskatchewan (92 per cent for boys; 98 per cent for girls) and Manitoba (81 per cent for boys; 82 per cent for girls).” (Statistics Canada via [CBC News, Kelly Geraldine Malone](#))

## Statistics on Poverty & Risks to Health

General Statistics on Poverty

Study reviewing the Report of the Royal Commission on Indigenous Peoples (RCAP 1996)  
Describing the social and economic conditions of Canada’s Indigenous people:

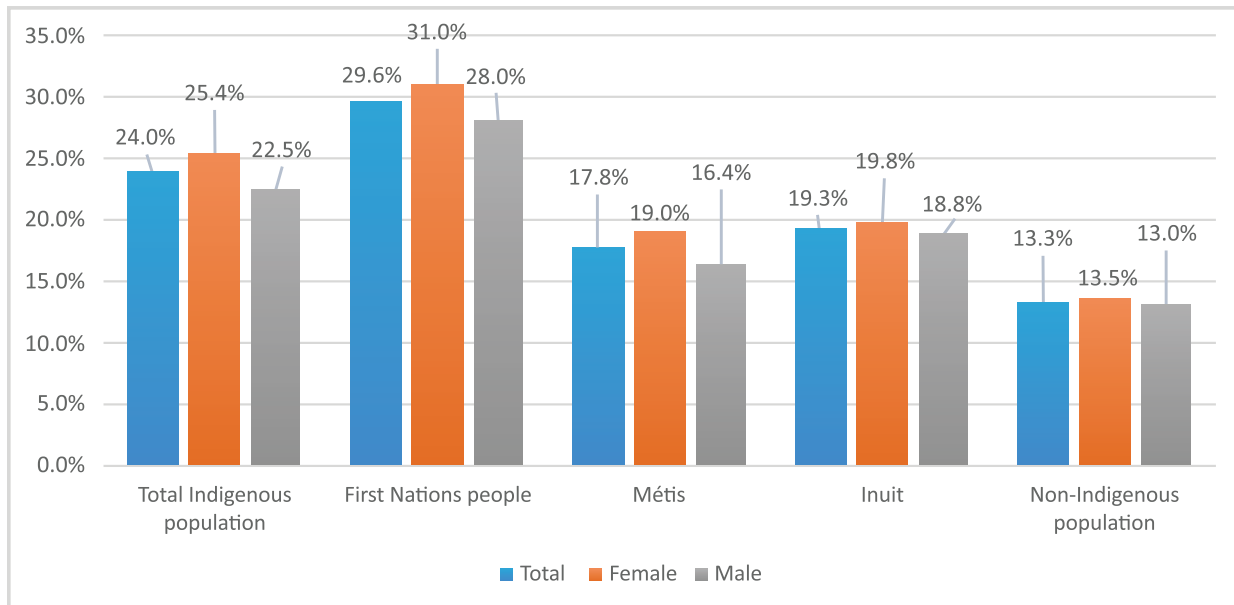
**Table 3. General Socioeconomic Characteristics - 1996**

	First Nations Communities	Total Canada Population
Education: % <9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	26.1	8.2
Employment Ration	44.3	71.1
Per capita Income (1995\$)	7,058	18,425
Housing: Persons/Room	0.74	0.43

Source: [Armstrong, Robin P., Assistant Director, Housing, Family and Social Services Division, Statistics Canada, 1996](#)

While these statistics are older, they provide a benchmark for more recent statistics. Reporting in 2011 noted that Indigenous peoples in Canada experience the highest levels of poverty: A shocking 1 in 4 Indigenous peoples or 25% are now living in poverty and 4 in 10 or 40% of Canada’s Indigenous children live in poverty. ([Canadian Poverty Institute](#))

Percentage living below the poverty line (market basket measure) in urban areas, Canada (excluding the territories), 2015



Source: [Statistics Canada, Census of Population 2016](#) Graph shows 24% of Indigenous peoples live in poverty, compared to 13.3% of non-Indigenous peoples. Amongst First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, more of the female population live in poverty than the male population.

### Startling Statistics

According to the [2006 Census](#), there are 1,172,790 Indigenous peoples in Canada. There are approximately 698,025 First Nations individuals, a number which breaks down into 564,870 registered (status) Indians and 133,155 non-registered (non-status) Indians (Statistics Canada, 2006). As of 2011, there are 615 First Nations that represent more than 50 Nations (AANDC, 2010). BC has the largest number of First Nations (198) while Ontario has the second highest (126).

In the 20-year period from 1981 to 2001, Statistics Canada found that the gap in educational attainment (completion of high school) between the non-Indigenous population and the status Indian population had increased from twice as high (66% vs. 30%) to three times as high (51% vs. 15%) (Statistics Canada, 2004).

The gap also widened slightly for university education from 5 times as high (15% vs. 3%) to a little over 5 times as high (26% vs. 5%). The employment rates between 1981 and 2001 also showed a widening gap between Status Indians and the non-Indigenous population from 56% vs. 75% to 58% vs. 80%.

In 2000 the median total income of status Indians on-and off-reserve was reported at \$13,932 and \$16,949 respectively, compared to \$30,023 for the non-Indigenous population (Statistics Canada, 2004). In a more recent report, Pendakur notes that even when compared to ethnic minorities, the Indigenous income disparity gap is “very large” – [making them the most disadvantaged group in Canada](#). Even “a little ‘Aboriginality’ is associated with very poor labour market outcomes” (Pendakur, 2008). ([Pamela D Palmater, Death by Poverty in First Nations](#))

Among Indigenous people aged 16 and older, about 89,000 (11.8%) were below the poverty line in 2020. This is a decrease of 6.8 percentage points from the 2019 rate (18.6%). Despite this decline, the poverty rate among Indigenous people remained approximately double that of non-Indigenous people (6.6%). ([Canadian Income Survey 2020](#))

### **Poverty as risk factor for health**

“Indigenous status has been associated with higher rates of community-acquired MRSA (Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*), but there has been no attempt to separate Indigeneity from the impacts of systemic and colonial violence on Indigenous communities in Canada. They also describe that while other infections, such as susceptible tuberculosis, pneumococcal disease, sexually transmitted infections, and gastrointestinal infections, have a higher prevalence among Indigenous peoples, there does not appear to be an elevated rate of resistance for these infections within these groups”

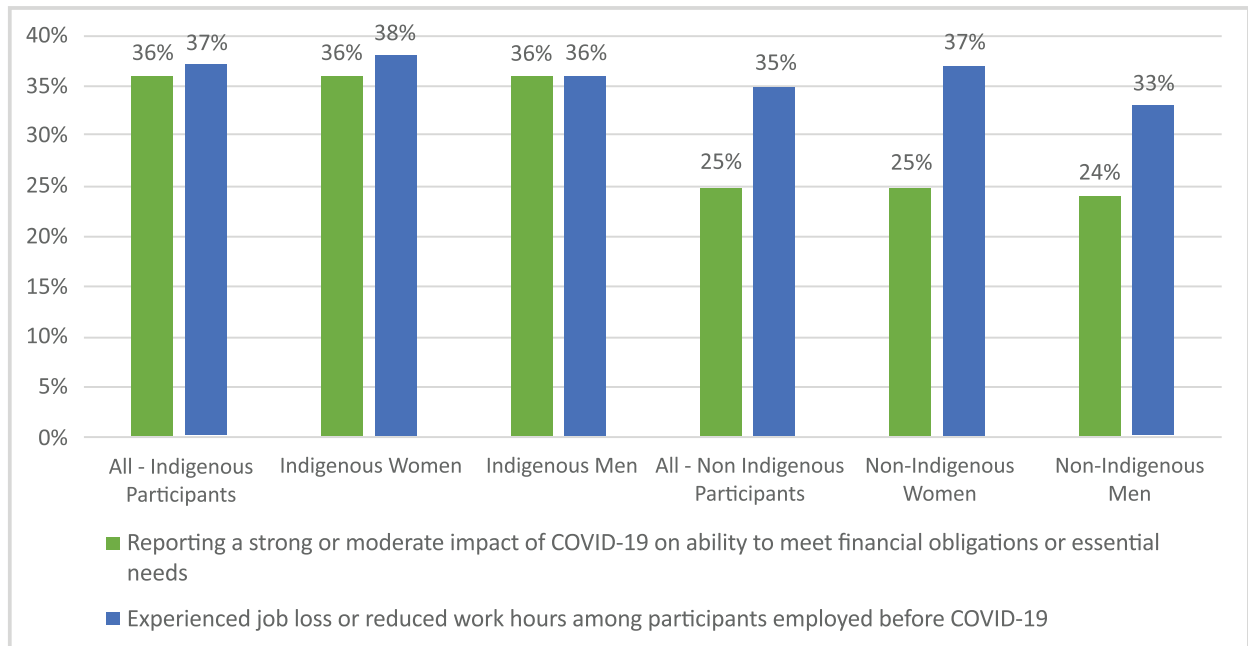
Data was not sufficient to conclusively link poverty to and risk of resistance in Indigenous communities, but did find an elevated burden of disease for these communities which indicates with further study, this may be found. ([Teagan King, Richelle Schindler, Swati Chavda & John Conly, 2022](#))

### **COVID-19 and Poverty in Indigenous Communities**

During pandemics, Indigenous Peoples suffer higher infection rates, and more severe symptoms and death than the general population because of the powerful forces of the social and cultural determinants of health and lack of political power.

- During the 1918 Spanish Influenza pandemic, Māori died at a rate of seven times that of the European population, which is likely an underestimation because of undocumented Māori deaths. (Summers, Baker, & Wilson, [2018](#))
- First Nations people in Canada were eight times more likely to die compared with non-First Nations. (Kelm, [1999](#))
- Although COVID-19 infection rates are currently low, in the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic, Indigenous people in central Australia experienced rates five times higher than the nonindigenous population.
- Pacific Island and Māori people were seven times more likely to be hospitalized than Europeans and three and a half times more likely to die. (Mousseau, [2013](#))
- Mortality for American Indian and Alaska Natives from H1N1 was four times higher than people from all other ethnicities combined. (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, [2009](#))
- In Canada, First Nations people were three times more likely to be hospitalized, and six and a half times more likely to be admitted to an intensive care unit. (Boggild, Yuan, Low, & McGeer, [2011](#))
- The COVID-19 case fatality rate among First Nations people living on a reserve is 63% of the case fatality rate in the general Canadian population ([Government of Canada](#))

Self-reported employment and financial impact of COVID-19, Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants, May 26 to June 8, 2020



Source: [Statistics Canada](#). Graph shows that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants experienced job loss or reduction in work hours due to COVID-19, while 11% more of Indigenous participants reported a strong or moderate impact of COVID-19 on their ability to meet financial obligations or essential needs.

**“Indigenous people are more likely to be living in poverty and they also show greater incidence of a range of afflictions and premature death from a variety of causes”** ([Smylie & Firestone, 2016](#))

### Gendered Poverty

In Canada, it is widely recognized that Indigenous women experience violence, including spousal abuse, at much higher rates than non-Indigenous women. (Brzozowski et al. [2006](#); Brzozowski and Brazeau [2008](#); Brennan [2011](#))

Between the two groups of women, there are considerable socioeconomic differences. In Canada, the poverty rate of Indigenous women is considerably higher than that of non-Indigenous women, with that of Indigenous single mothers at 73%. (Statistics Canada [2006](#); see also McCaskill et al. [2011](#), sec. 6.2.2)

Indigenous women aged 15 years and over experienced relatively high rates of low income. In 2005, 30% of all Indigenous females were classified as living in a household with incomes below Statistics Canada’s LICO-BT. This was almost double the figure for non-Indigenous women, 16% of whom had low incomes that year. The share of Indigenous women with low incomes was also higher than that of Indigenous men (26%). ([Statistics Canada](#))