



RURAL WELLBEING

Indigenous Peoples Factsheet



HIGHLIGHTS

- Indigenous people represent 3% of Ontario's population. There is a higher proportion of Indigenous people in rural areas.
- 60% of Indigenous people identified as First Nations, while 30% identified as Metis. Fewer than 1% of Indigenous people identified as Inuk (Inuit).
- Approximately 12% of Indigenous people in Ontario are living in Indigenous communities.

Overview – What do society statistics tell us?

Census data helps us understand our communities and the people who live in them. This factsheet presents statistics for individuals who identified with the Indigenous peoples of Canada. It also presents information about Indigenous languages and spirituality.

We examine the differences across municipalities in Ontario to explore rural and urban trends. We also provide statistics for Indigenous communities. Summary statistics for census divisions and economic regions are presented in the appendices.

A note about terminology

It is difficult to describe groups of people because “terminology is fluid and what is considered most appropriate will likely evolve over time. Moreover, people within a group may disagree on preference and may choose to use different terms to describe themselves.”¹

If you, or your organization, disagrees with the terminology we have used in this factsheet, please let us know so that we can ensure our language is respectful and inclusive.

Date source:

Statistics Canada. 2022. Census Profile. 2021 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. [98-316-X2021001](#). Please note that 2021 census data was not collected for 13 Indigenous communities in Ontario because permission was not granted by the community or due to challenges caused by forest fires or COVID-19. In addition, some data are suppressed or adjusted for confidentiality reasons.

¹ [Ontario Human Rights Commission](#).

Definitions:

Indigenous Identity: people who identified with the Indigenous peoples of Canada. This includes those who identify as First Nations (North American Indian), Métis and/or Inuk (Inuit).

Indigenous Community: census subdivisions designated as Indigenous reserves or settlements.

Non-Indigenous Community: census subdivisions designated as cities, municipalities, towns, townships, villages, or unorganized territories.

Municipality: Census subdivisions, municipalities, and areas treated as municipal for statistical purposes, including unorganized territories and Indigenous reserves and settlements.

Rural: any municipality outside of census metropolitan areas.

Urban: any municipality within a census metropolitan area.

For details about ROI's rural classification, please see our [website](#).



Rural and Urban Trends

In 2021, Indigenous people represented 2.9% of Ontario's population, a slight increase from 2.8% in 2016. There is a higher proportion of Indigenous people in rural areas (Table 1). Urban areas have a larger number of Indigenous people. However, Indigenous people represent a smaller proportion of the overall urban population.

For interactive maps and data visualizations, please see the [Society page of the Community Wellbeing Dashboard](#).



Just over 60% of Indigenous people identified as First Nations, while 30% identified as Metis. Fewer than 1% of Indigenous people identified as Inuk (Inuit). A similar number of Indigenous people identified as First Nations in both rural and urban areas. More Indigenous people identified as Metis and Inuk (Inuit) in urban areas.

Table 1. Overview of rural and urban areas.

Geography	2021 Population	Number of Indigenous people	Proportion of total population	First Nations	Métis	Inuk (Inuit)	Number of people speaking Indigenous languages at home	Number of people with North traditional (American Indigenous) spirituality
Rural	2,481,753	184,820	7.6%	121,105	56,510	635	4,915	10,085
Urban	11,742,189	221,695	1.9%	129,665	77,910	3,170	675	5,250
Ontario	14,223,942	406,515	2.9%	250,770	134,420	3,805	5,590	15,335

A higher number of people speak Indigenous languages most often at home in rural areas (Table 1). However, this represents fewer than 1% of people in rural areas even though 7.6% of the rural population is Indigenous.

Rural areas also have a higher number of people with traditional Indigenous spirituality than urban areas. While Indigenous people represent 3% of Ontario's population, fewer than 1% of people in Ontario practise Indigenous spiritual traditions. People in urban areas are less likely to speak an Indigenous language at home, or practise Indigenous spirituality.

Indigenous Communities

Table 2. Overview of Indigenous communities.

Community type	2021 Population	Number of Indigenous people	Proportion of total population	First Nations	Métis	Inuk (Inuit)	Number of people speaking Indigenous languages at home	Number of people with traditional (North American Indigenous) spirituality
Indigenous Communities	54,808	50,030	91.8%	48,935	315	10	4,360	8,210
Non-Indigenous Communities	14,169,134	356,485	2.6%	201,835	134,105	3,795	1,230	7,125
All communities	14,223,942	406,585	2.9%	250,770	134,420	3,805	5,590	15,335

Indigenous people make up 91.8% of the population in Indigenous communities, but most of Ontario's Indigenous population are living in non-Indigenous communities (Table 2). Approximately 12% of Indigenous people in Ontario are living in Indigenous communities.

Most of the Indigenous people living in Indigenous communities identified as First Nations. Almost all of the people who identified as Métis and Inuk (Inuit) are living in non-Indigenous communities.

English is the most common language spoken at home in Indigenous communities (Table 3). Eight percent of people in Indigenous communities speak an Indigenous language at home, even though 91.8% of the population is Indigenous. The most commonly spoken Indigenous languages are Oji-Cree, Ojibway, and Cree.

Fifty-six percent of people in Indigenous communities hold religious or spiritual beliefs, compared to 68% of people in non-Indigenous communities. Fifteen percent of people in Indigenous communities practise traditional Indigenous spirituality. Christianity is the dominant religion among people with religious or spiritual beliefs in Indigenous communities (Table 4). Many Indigenous people hold both Christian beliefs and Indigenous spirituality in tandem with respect to Creation Theory.

Table 3. Top 10 languages spoken at home in Indigenous Communities.

Language	Number of People	Proportion of people
English	48,275	92%
Oji-Cree	1,760	3%
Ojibway	1,675	3%
Cree	760	1%
French	115	<1%
Anishinaabemowin (Chippewa)	50	<1%
Nehinawewin (Swampy Cree)	30	<1%
Daawaamwin (Odawa)	20	<1%
Ililimowin (Moose Cree)	20	<1%
Mohawk	10	<1%

Table 4. Religious or spiritual beliefs in Indigenous Communities.

Religion or Spirituality	Number of people	Proportion of people with religious or spiritual beliefs
Christian	21,950	71%
Traditional (North American Indigenous) spirituality	8,210	27%
Other traditions	545	2%

Summary

The statistics presented in this factsheet can help to provide important context for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action. Communities, policy makers, and researchers can use this information to acknowledge the past and the legacy of colonialism and residential schools on Indigenous peoples. We can also use this information to inspire social transformation that will enable us to "...live together in dignity, peace, and prosperity on these lands we now share."²



This factsheet was prepared by Danielle Letang, Manager of Data Strategy for the Rural Ontario Institute. Questions about data sources and any comments or feedback can be directed to facts@ruralontarioinstitute.ca.

This factsheet complements ROI's [Community Wellbeing Dashboard](#). Factsheets provide insight and analysis of rural facts and trends featured in the dashboard.

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Appendix 1. Summary of statistics for Census Divisions.

Census Division	Number of Indigenous people	Proportion of Indigenous people	First Nations	Métis	Inuk (Inuit)	Number of people speaking Indigenous languages at home	Number of people with traditional (North American Indigenous) spirituality
Algoma	15,945	14.2%	9,860	5,535	50	125	710
Brant	6,960	4.9%	5,535	1,120	35		480
Bruce	3,200	4.4%	2,205	860		10	230
Chatham-Kent	4,565	4.5%	2,645	1,765	25	5	185
Cochrane	14,550	19.0%	8,820	5,310	55	550	465
Dufferin	1,390	2.1%	930	365			
Durham	13,790	2.0%	7,380	5,290	250		190
Elgin	2,045	2.2%	1,410	530	30		
Essex	12,060	2.9%	5,310	6,105	45		75
Frontenac	6,685	4.2%	4,115	2,155	115	10	90
Greater Sudbury / Grand Sudbury	18,030	11.1%	8,035	9,415	100	35	375
Grey	2,570	2.6%	1,350	1,070	15		20
Haldimand-Norfolk	4,010	3.5%	3,010	820			135
Haliburton	695	3.4%	340	310			
Halton	5,890	1.0%	3,340	2,120	45	5	20
Hamilton	12,520	2.2%	8,555	3,205	120	20	375
Hastings	10,645	7.4%	7,005	3,100	90	15	350
Huron	1,145	1.9%	625	450			
Kawartha Lakes	2,210	2.9%	1,240	830	20		25
Kenora	32,335	49.7%	27,785	4,080	10	3,510	3,835
Lambton	6,040	4.8%	4,295	1,445	10	25	320
Lanark	3,240	4.4%	1,740	1,265	50	5	

Census Division	Number of Indigenous people	Proportion of Indigenous people	First Nations	Métis	Inuk (Inuit)	Number of people speaking Indigenous languages at home	Number of people with traditional (North American Indigenous) spirituality
Leeds and Grenville	3,545	3.5%	2,105	1,195	35		35
Lennox and Addington	2,370	5.5%	1,395	855	30		
Manitoulin	5,530	40.4%	5,200	265	10	405	860
Middlesex	12,720	2.6%	8,915	3,140	120	25	495
Muskoka	2,655	4.1%	1,505	1,010			35
Niagara	13,965	3.0%	7,790	5,385	115	5	190
Nipissing	12,000	14.5%	6,705	4,775	80	40	230
Northumberland	3,100	3.6%	1,880	965	15		100
Ottawa	26,395	2.6%	13,300	10,545	1,270	170	445
Oxford	2,770	2.3%	1,650	960	25		45
Parry Sound	3,265	7.2%	2,090	990		30	270
Peel	7,430	0.5%	4,160	2,655	120	10	35
Perth	1,230	1.5%	605	535	15		25
Peterborough	7,090	4.9%	4,835	1,880	35	15	315
Prescott and Russell	4,110	4.4%	2,005	1,825	65		25
Prince Edward	795	3.2%	525	210			
Rainy River	5,695	29.8%	4,170	1,385		65	1,120
Renfrew	9,040	8.7%	5,085	3,515	15		65
Simcoe	24,520	4.7%	11,515	11,920	100	25	575
Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry	4,945	4.4%	3,080	1,505	100	15	75
Sudbury	4,065	18.4%	2,275	1,610	20	5	175
Thunder Bay	23,325	16.2%	18,105	4,665	20	365	980
Timiskaming	2,845	9.2%	1,470	1,145	15		20

Census Division	Number of Indigenous people	Proportion of Indigenous people	First Nations	Métis	Inuk (Inuit)	Number of people speaking Indigenous languages at home	Number of people with traditional (North American Indigenous) spirituality
Toronto	22,925	0.8%	13,800	7,440	240	80	935
Waterloo	9,965	1.7%	5,745	3,385	175	10	125
Wellington	3,815	1.6%	2,100	1,440	20	5	85
York	5,885	0.5%	3,230	2,075	100	5	195

Appendix 2. Summary statistics for Economic Regions.

Economic Region	Number of Indigenous people	Proportion of Indigenous people	First Nations	Métis	Inuk (Inuit)	Number of people speaking Indigenous languages at home	Number of people with traditional (North American Indigenous) spirituality
Hamilton--Niagara Peninsula	39,840	2.7%	26,315	11,370	280	30	1,180
Kingston--Pembroke	29,535	6.2%	18,125	9,835	250	25	505
Kitchener--Waterloo--Barrie	39,690	2.8%	20,290	17,110	295	40	785
London	17,535	2.5%	11,975	4,630	175	25	540
Muskoka--Kawartha	15,750	4.0%	9,800	4,995	70	15	475
Northeast / Nord-est	76,230	13.9%	44,455	29,045	330	1,190	3,105
Northwest / Nord-ouest	61,355	26.9%	50,060	10,130	30	3,940	5,935
Ottawa	42,235	3.1%	22,230	16,335	1,520	190	580
Stratford--Bruce Peninsula	8,145	2.6%	4,785	2,915	30	10	275
Toronto	53,535	0.8%	30,485	18,740	745	95	1,375
Windsor--Sarnia	22,665	3.5%	12,250	9,315	80	30	580