

NHS in Brief

The educational attainment of Aboriginal peoples in Canada



National Household Survey (NHS), 2011



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Standard symbols

The following symbols are used in Statistics Canada publications:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| . | 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 <i>Statistics Act</i> |
| E | use with caution |
| F | too unreliable to be published |
| * | significantly different from reference category (p < 0.05) |

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Box 1: National Household Survey

This is the second release of data from the National Household Survey (NHS). Roughly 4.5 million households across Canada were selected for the NHS, representing about one-third of all households.

This *NHS in Brief* article complements the analytical document [Education in Canada: Attainment, Field of Study and Location of Study](#), Catalogue no. 99-012-X2011001.

Further information on the National Household Survey can be found in the [National Household Survey User Guide](#), Catalogue no. 99-001-X. Specific information on the quality and comparability of NHS data on education and Aboriginal peoples can be found in the [reference guides](#) for these topics.

Box 2: Highest certificate, diploma or degree

The term 'Highest level of educational attainment' used in this document refers to the [Highest certificate, diploma or degree](#) completed by a person. The portion of the population that completed each type of education noted is the portion that completed it as their highest certificate, diploma or degree.

'Highest certificate, diploma or degree' is a derived variable obtained from the educational qualifications questions, which asked for all certificates, diplomas and degrees to be reported.

The following general hierarchy used in deriving 'highest certificate, diploma or degree' is loosely tied to the 'in-class' duration of the various types of education:

- No certificate, diploma or degree
- Secondary (High) school diploma or equivalent
- Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma
- College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma
- University certificate or diploma below bachelor level
- University certificate or diploma or degree at bachelor level or above: bachelor's degree; university certificate or diploma above bachelor level; degree in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine or optometry; master's degree; earned doctorate.

At the detailed level, someone who has completed one type of certificate, diploma or degree will not necessarily have completed the credentials listed below it in the hierarchy. For example, a registered apprenticeship graduate may not have completed a high school certificate or diploma, nor does an individual with a master's degree necessarily have a 'certificate or diploma above the bachelor's level.'

Although the hierarchy may not fit all programs perfectly, it gives a general measure of educational attainment.

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Throughout this document, certain category names are shortened for ease of use in text and graphics. These short forms are outlined here:

1. The term 'university degree' includes 'bachelor's degree,' 'university certificate or diploma above bachelor level,' 'degree in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine or optometry,' 'master's degree' and 'earned doctorate.'
2. The term 'medical degree' includes degrees in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine or optometry.
3. The term 'college diploma' refers to 'college, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma.'
4. The term 'trades certificate' refers to 'apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma' and is an aggregation which includes both 'Registered Apprenticeship certificates' as well as 'trades certificates other than Registered Apprenticeship certificates.'
5. The term 'Registered Apprenticeship certificate' includes those with a 'Certificate of Qualification/Journeyman's designation.'
6. The terms 'postsecondary qualifications' or 'postsecondary credentials' include trades certificates, college diplomas, university certificates below bachelor level and university degrees.
7. The term 'high school diploma' refers to 'secondary (high) school diploma or equivalent.'
8. The term 'no certificate, diploma or degree' refers to those who have not completed high school nor any postsecondary certificates, diplomas or degrees.

Almost half of Aboriginal people aged 25 to 64 had a postsecondary qualification

In 2011, nearly 671,400 adults aged 25 to 64 reported an Aboriginal identity^{1,2} on the National Household Survey questionnaire, representing 3.7% of the total population aged 25 to 64.

Almost one-half (48.4%) of Aboriginal people had a postsecondary qualification in 2011, including 14.4% with a trades certificate, 20.6% with a college diploma, 3.5% with a university certificate or diploma below the bachelor level,³ and 9.8% with a university degree.

1. Please refer to [Box 3: Concepts and definitions](#) at the end of the document.

2. Some Indian reserves and settlements did not participate in the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) as enumeration was either not permitted, it was interrupted before completion, or because of natural events (e.g., forest fires). These reserves are referred to as 'incompletely enumerated reserves.' There were 36 reserves out of 863 inhabited reserves in the 2011 NHS that were incompletely enumerated. Data for these 36 Indian reserves and Indian settlements are not included in the 2011 NHS tabulations. As a result, some estimates in this document may be underestimated for First Nations people. Please refer to the reference document entitled [Aboriginal Peoples Reference Guide, National Household Survey](#), Catalogue no. 99-011-X2011006, for more information on these exclusions.

3. Comparisons with other data sources suggest that the category 'University certificate or diploma below the bachelor's level' was over-reported in the NHS. It is recommended that users interpret the results for this category with caution. For detailed explanations on concepts and for information on data quality, please refer to the reference guides on the [2011 National Household Survey \(NHS\)](#) website.

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In comparison, almost two-thirds (64.7%) of the non-Aboriginal population aged 25 to 64 had a postsecondary qualification in 2011. Of this group, 12.0% had a trades certificate, 21.3% had a college diploma, 4.9% had a university certificate or diploma below the bachelor level, and 26.5% had a university degree. The main difference between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations in terms of postsecondary qualifications was with the proportion of university graduates.⁴

There was also a difference in the proportion of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people with 'no certificate, diploma or degree'. Among Aboriginal people aged 25 to 64, 28.9% had 'no certificate, diploma or degree' while the proportion for non-Aboriginal people in the same age group was 12.1%. The proportion of Aboriginal people aged 25 to 64 with a high school diploma or equivalent as their highest level of educational attainment was 22.8%. In comparison, 23.2% of non-Aboriginal people in the same age group had a high school diploma or equivalent as their highest qualification.

Younger Aboriginal people had higher levels of education than older ones

In this section, the proportions of Aboriginal men and women with various education qualifications are examined between two age groups to see how they have evolved between older and younger Aboriginal people. In 2011, higher proportions of younger Aboriginal people aged 35 to 44⁵ had completed at least high school⁶ compared with older Aboriginal people aged 55 to 64. There were 68.0% of Aboriginal people aged 35 to 44 with at least a high school diploma compared with 58.7% for those aged 55 to 64. The proportion of high school graduates among non-Aboriginal people aged 35 to 44 was 88.7% compared with 79.5% among those aged 55 to 64.

The proportion of Aboriginal women aged 35 to 44 who had a university degree in 2011 was 13.6%, compared with 10.2% of those aged 55 to 64. Among Aboriginal men, there was no difference in the proportions that held a university degree between age groups. It was 7.6% for both men aged 35 to 44 and 55 to 64.

In 2011, younger Aboriginal women and men were both more likely to have college diplomas than older ones. Among Aboriginal women aged 35 to 44, 27.1% had a college diploma in 2011, compared with 21.4% of those aged 55 to 64. With a proportion of 18.3%, Aboriginal men aged 35 to 44 were also more likely to have college diplomas than those aged 55 to 64 where the proportion was 14.1%.

4. The same pattern was observed in the 2006 Census.

5. Previous research has indicated that First Nations women may defer their postsecondary studies until later in life compared with women in the total Canadian population (Bougie, E, S. Milligan, First Nations Women and Postsecondary Education in Canada: Snapshots from the Census. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2009). For this reason, the 'younger' age group chosen in this paper is 35 to 44.

6. Refers to the population with a high school diploma or equivalent, including those who have obtained higher educational qualifications. Examples of high school equivalency certificates are General Educational Development (GED) and Adult Basic Education (ABE).

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Table 1 Proportion of Aboriginal people by selected levels of educational attainment, sex and age groups, Canada, 2011

Selected levels of educational attainment	Aboriginal women		Aboriginal men	
	35 to 44 years	55 to 64 years	35 to 44 years	55 to 64 years
	percentage			
Postsecondary qualifications	55.3	46.5	48.0	47.1
Trades certificate	9.9	10.1	19.3	22.3
College diploma	27.1	21.4	18.3	14.1
University certificate below bachelor ¹	4.6	4.8	2.7	3.2
University degree	13.6	10.2	7.6	7.6

1. Comparisons with other data sources suggest that the category 'University certificate or diploma below the bachelor's level' was over-reported in the NHS. It is recommended that users interpret the results for this category with caution. For detailed explanations on concepts and for information on data quality, please refer to the reference guides on the [2011 National Household Survey \(NHS\)](#) website.

Source: Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, 2011.

First Nations people

More than four in ten First Nations people aged 25 to 64 had a postsecondary qualification

Just over 389,200 adults, or 58.0% of the total adult Aboriginal identity population aged 25 to 64, reported a First Nations (North American Indian) identity^{7,8} on the NHS questionnaire in 2011.

Of these, 44.8% had a postsecondary qualification: 13.2% a trades certificate, 19.4% a college diploma, 3.6% a university certificate or diploma below the bachelor level and 8.7% a university degree.

The proportion of First Nations people with a postsecondary qualification was higher among those without registered Indian status⁹ (52.1%) than among those with registered Indian status (42.3%).

The proportion of college and university graduates among First Nations people with registered Indian status was higher for those living off reserve than on reserve. Among the former, 21.2% had a college diploma and 10.9% had a university degree compared with 14.8% and 4.7% for the latter.

In 2011, 60.2% of First Nations people aged 25 to 64 had completed at least a high school diploma.

7. Respondents self-identified as 'First Nations (North American Indian)' on the NHS questionnaire; however, the term 'First Nations people' is used throughout this document.

8. Although both single and multiple responses to the Aboriginal identity question are possible, the data for each of the three Aboriginal groups are based on the population reporting a single identity of 'First Nations,' 'Métis,' or 'Inuit' in this document.

9. For the purpose of this document, the term 'registered Indian status' will be used for people who reported being a Status Indian, Registered or Treaty Indian on the NHS.

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Table 2 Proportion of First Nations people, Métis and Inuit aged 25 to 64 by selected levels of educational attainment and sex, Canada, 2011

Selected levels of educational attainment	First Nations single identity ¹			Métis single identity ¹			Inuit single identity ¹		
	Women	Men	Both sexes	Women	Men	Both sexes	Women	Men	Both sexes
	percentage								
Postsecondary qualifications	47.3	41.9	44.8	57.1	52.3	54.8	35.6	35.7	35.6
Trades certificate	8.5	18.6	13.2	10.8	22.2	16.3	7.5	19.3	13.2
College diploma	23.1	15.0	19.4	28.2	17.8	23.2	19.0	12.1	15.6
University certificate below bachelor ²	4.5	2.6	3.6	4.2	2.8	3.5	2.3	1.0	1.7
University degree	11.1	5.8	8.7	13.9	9.4	11.7	6.8	3.4	5.1

1. Although both single and multiple responses to the Aboriginal identity question are possible, the data for each of the three Aboriginal groups are based on the population reporting a single identity of 'First Nations,' 'Métis,' or 'Inuit' in this document.

2. Comparisons with other data sources suggest that the category 'University certificate or diploma below the bachelor's level' was over-reported in the NHS. It is recommended that users interpret the results for this category with caution. For detailed explanations on concepts and for information on data quality, please refer to the reference guides on the [2011 National Household Survey \(NHS\)](#) website.

Source: Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, 2011.

Métis

Over half of Métis aged 25 to 64 had a postsecondary qualification

Just over 237,700 adults, or 35.4% of the total adult Aboriginal identity population aged 25 to 64, identified themselves as Métis¹⁰ on the NHS questionnaire in 2011.

Over half (54.8%) of Métis aged 25 to 64 had a postsecondary qualification: 16.3% a trades certificate, 23.2% a college diploma, 3.5% a university certificate or diploma below the bachelor level and 11.7% a university degree. These are the highest proportions among the three Aboriginal groups (First Nations people, Métis and Inuit).

In 2011, the proportion of Métis aged 25 to 64 with at least a high school diploma was 73.6%.

Inuit

More than a third of Inuit aged 25 to 64 had a postsecondary qualification

Of the total Aboriginal population aged 25 to 64, just over 24,900 or 3.7% identified themselves as Inuit¹⁰ in the 2011 NHS.

Among Inuit aged 25 to 64, 41.0% had completed at least a high school diploma.

10. Although single and multiple responses to the Aboriginal identity question are possible, the data for each of the three Aboriginal groups are based on the population reporting a single identity of 'First Nations,' 'Métis,' or 'Inuit' in this document.

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More than one-third (35.6%) of Inuit aged 25 to 64 had a postsecondary qualification, including 13.2% with a trades certificate, 15.6% with a college diploma, 1.7% with a university certificate or diploma below the bachelor level and 5.1% with a university degree.

A smaller proportion of Inuit living within Inuit Nunangat (28.2%) reported a postsecondary qualification compared with those living outside Inuit Nunangat¹¹ (53.3%).

Table 3 Proportion with selected levels of educational attainment among Inuit population aged 25 to 64 living within or outside Inuit Nunangat, Canada, 2011

Selected levels of educational attainment	Within Inuit Nunangat	Outside Inuit Nunangat ¹
	percentage	
Postsecondary qualifications	28.2	53.3
Trades certificate	12.4	15.5
College diploma	12.7	22.4
University certificate below bachelor ²	1.3	2.7
University degree	1.9	13.0

1. Estimates and trends from other data sources suggest that the Inuit population living outside of Inuit Nunangat is overestimated at the national level.

2. Comparisons with other data sources suggest that the category 'University certificate or diploma below the bachelor's level' was over-reported in the NHS. It is recommended that users interpret the results for this category with caution. For detailed explanations on concepts and for information on data quality, please refer to the reference guides on the [2011 National Household Survey \(NHS\)](#) website.

Source: Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, 2011.

11. Estimates and trends from other data sources suggest that the Inuit population living outside of Inuit Nunangat is overestimated at the national level.

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Box 3: Concepts and definitions

Aboriginal identity: The term 'Aboriginal identity' refers to whether the person reported being an Aboriginal person, that is, First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit) and/or being a Registered or Treaty Indian, (that is, registered under the *Indian Act* of Canada) and/or being a member of a First Nation or Indian band. Aboriginal peoples of Canada are defined in the *Constitution Act, 1982*, section 35 (2) as including the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

Inuit Nunangat: Inuit Nunangat is the homeland of Inuit of Canada. It includes the communities located in the four Inuit regions: Nunatsiavut (Northern coastal Labrador), Nunavik (Northern Quebec), the territory of Nunavut and the Inuvialuit region of the Northwest Territories. These regions collectively encompass the area traditionally occupied by Inuit in Canada.

On reserve: 'On reserve' includes six types of census subdivisions (CSDs) legally affiliated with First Nations or Indian bands, i.e., Indian reserve (IRI), Indian settlement (S-É) (except for the five Yukon settlements of Champagne Landing 10, Klukshu, Two and One-Half Mile Village, Two Mile Village and Kloo Lake), Indian government district (IGD), *terres réservées aux Cris* (TC), *terres réservées aux Naskapis* (TK) and Nisga'a land (NL), as well as the northern village of Sandy Bay in Saskatchewan.

Registered or Treaty Indians (Status Indians): Registered Indians are persons who are registered under the *Indian Act* of Canada. Treaty Indians are persons who belong to a First Nation or Indian band that signed a treaty with the Crown. Registered or Treaty Indians are sometimes also called Status Indians.

For more information please see the [National Household Survey Dictionary](#), Catalogue no. 99-000-X, the [Aboriginal Peoples Reference Guide, National Household Survey](#), Catalogue no. 99-011-X2011006 and the analytical document [Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit](#), Catalogue no. 99-011-X2011001.

Additional information

Additional information on education can be found in the [NHS Data Tables](#), Catalogue nos. 99-012-X2011040 through 99-012-X2011048, the [NHS Profile](#), Catalogue no. 99-010-X, as well as in the [NHS Focus on Geography Series](#), Catalogue no. 99-010-X2011005.

[Thematic maps](#) showing 'highest certificate, diploma or degree' are also available for various geographic areas.

For details on the concepts, definitions, universes, variables and geographic terms used in the 2011 National Household Survey, please consult the [National Household Survey Dictionary](#), Catalogue no. 99-000-X. For detailed explanations on concepts and for information on data quality, please refer to the reference guides on the [2011 National Household Survey \(NHS\)](#) website.

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Note to readers

Random rounding and percentage distributions: To ensure the confidentiality of responses collected for the 2011 National Household Survey while maintaining the quality of the results, 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%.

Due to random rounding, estimates and percentages may vary slightly between different 2011 National Household Survey products, such as the analytical documents and various data tables.

Comparability between estimates from the 2006 Census long form and the 2011 National Household Survey estimates: When comparing estimates from the 2006 Census long form and estimates from the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) users should take into account the fact that the two sources represent different populations. The target population for the 2006 Census long form includes usual residents in collective dwellings and persons living abroad whereas the target population for the NHS excludes them. Moreover, the NHS estimates are derived from a voluntary survey and are therefore subject to potentially higher non-response error than those derived from the 2006 Census long form.

Indian reserves and settlements: The majority of Indian reserves and settlements participated in the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS). However, 36 of the 863 inhabited reserves were incompletely enumerated because enumeration was either not permitted, was interrupted before completion, or because of natural events (for example, forest fires). Most of the people living on reserves are First Nations Registered Indians, and consequently, the impact of the incomplete enumeration will be greatest on data for this population.

Inuit population living outside of Inuit Nunangat: Estimates and trends from other data sources suggest that the Inuit population living outside of Inuit Nunangat is overestimated at the national level. Information on the quality of the NHS data on Aboriginal peoples as well as explanations of concepts, classifications, questions and comparability with other data sources can be found in the [Aboriginal Peoples Reference Guide, National Household Survey](#), Catalogue no. 99-011-X2011006.

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