

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES AND LABOUR MARKET ISSUES

1. A growing population

In 2001, the Aboriginal population reached 1.3 million people with Aboriginal ancestry or 4.4% of Canada's total. Almost 1 million identified themselves as Aboriginal people or 3.3% of the total up from 2.8% in 1996. The results from the 2006 Census will show further important gains. Aboriginal peoples in Canada account for a higher percentage of the total population than in either Australia or the United States.

2. A young population

Aboriginal peoples are much younger than non-Aboriginal people. The median age (half are younger and half older) is 24.7 years compared to 37.7 years for non-Aboriginal people.

3. A higher percentage of working age people

Aboriginal people aged 20 to 64 in the core working age group formed 53.2% of the population compared to 41.2% for the population as a whole.

4. Aboriginal peoples are increasingly an urbanized population.

Roughly one-half (49%) of Aboriginal peoples lived in urban Canada up from 47% in 1996. The Aboriginal people who lived on-reserve went down from 33% to 31%. Among Canada's large cities, Winnipeg has some 55,755 Aboriginal persons and Edmonton has 40,935. Over the period 1996-2001, the Aboriginal population went up by 60% in Sudbury, 44% in Calgary, and 33% in Hamilton.

5. Education Attainment

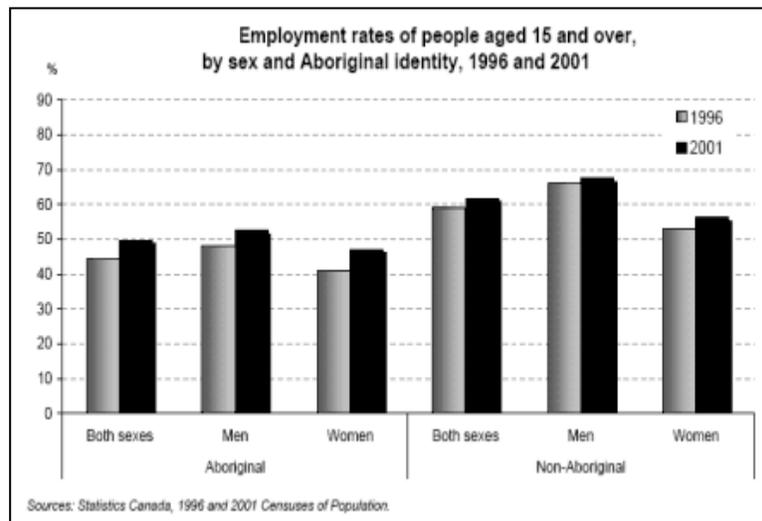
Aboriginal peoples' education attainment rates are improving but still fall far short of non-Aboriginal people. Between 1996 and 2001, the proportion of Aboriginal people aged 25 to 64 who did not have a high school diploma went from 45% to 39%. 76.9% of all Canadians graduated from high school in 2001. High school completion rates for Aboriginal peoples are much higher in the 25-44 age group than in the 15-24 range due to high rates of continuing education. For example, Registered Indians 15-24 have rates of 50.3% high school completion while those 25-44 have rates of 69.9%.

During the same period (1996-2001), the proportion of Aboriginal people with some post-secondary qualifications (trades, college and university) increased from 33% to 38%. In the category of trades certificate or diplomas, more Aboriginal people, 12.1%, had qualifications than non-Aboriginal people in 2001. However, only 4.4 % of Aboriginal people over 15 had a university degree, compared to 15.7% of non-Aboriginal people.

Among Aboriginal women, 14% had some university compared to only 10% of Aboriginal men; 9% of Aboriginal women compared to 16% of Aboriginal men had trades certification and 12% of Aboriginal women, and; 7% of Aboriginal men had other non-university certification.

6. Employment and unemployment rates

While employment rates for Aboriginal people have been increasing at a faster rate than for non-Aboriginal people, the rates still remain much lower. The employment rate of 49.7% in 2001 was far below the non-Aboriginal rate of 61.8%. Differences are, however, lower for women and for those over 55. The employment rate in 2001 was 54.2% in off-reserve areas compared to 37.7% for those Aboriginal people on-reserve.



Unemployment rates in 2001 for those aged 15 years and over were almost three times the rate - 19.1% - compared to 7.4% for the national rate. The Aboriginal rate has gone down from 24% in 1996. Here again, the overall rate is dropping faster than for non-Aboriginal people.

But the on-reserve unemployment rate of 29% in 2001 remains 4 times that of the overall unemployment rate. Even in Western Canada in 2005, where overall unemployment is very low, the 12.2% unemployment rate for off-reserve Aboriginal people was nearly 3 times the 4.7% rate for non-Aboriginal Canadians.

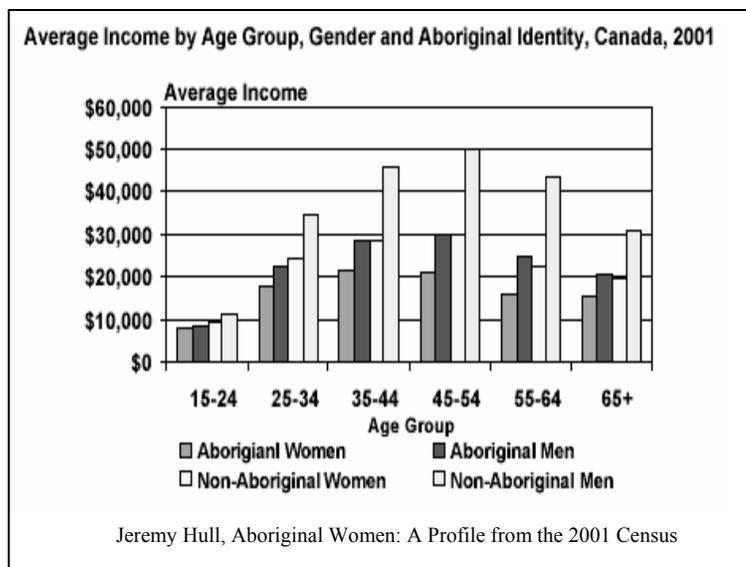
Aboriginal people tend to be over and underrepresented in certain job fields: over represented in public administration, mining, oil and gas, and construction and under represented in finance and insurance, management, and professional scientific and technical services.

7. Labour market outlook improves with education

The employment rate in 2001 for Aboriginal people aged 25 to 64 years with some high school education or less was 42.9% while for those with a university degree it was 82.3%. Employment rates of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal university graduates were about the same. However, Aboriginal people 25 to 64, with less than a high school diploma, had a much lower rate (lower by a high 17 percentage points) than for non-Aboriginal people with the same level of education.

8. Aboriginal peoples' incomes remain much lower

Aboriginal peoples' incomes remain far below that of the non-Aboriginal population. In 2000, Aboriginal women earned \$16,519, compared to an average income of \$23,065 for non-Aboriginal women. For men, the difference was \$21,958 compared to \$37,265. Even with a university degree both Aboriginal men (\$43,752) and women (\$33,624) earned much less on average than non-Aboriginal men (\$63,255) and women (\$38,276).



9. Conclusions

Improving the situation for Aboriginal peoples in terms of the labour market is important first and foremost as a matter of righting centuries of inequality. It is also important in meeting Canada's labour market needs with our country's aging workforce. By 2011, one in six citizens will be over 65. While most segments of Canada's population are aging rapidly, Canada's Aboriginal population is much younger and able to meet many of the labour market needs when given the opportunities in terms of education, training and access. To ensure that Aboriginal peoples are given this chance requires major new resources at all levels of education, the development of Aboriginal control of the process at the level of self-government and an urban Aboriginal strategy. Furthermore, the setting up of series of partnerships between Aboriginal organizations and governments, with governments at the municipal, provincial and federal levels, as well as with business, labour and educational institutions needs to be instituted.

Some of the major directions which have been put forward for years by Aboriginal organizations include:

- Securing adequate funding to develop a comparable K-12 education system for all Aboriginal people
- Achieving comparable rates of university education and all aspects of other post-secondary training
- Ensuring adequate child care and early learning opportunities
- Ensuring that Aboriginal people are given opportunities in all career groups to reach percentages similar to those in the overall population.
- Ensuring pay and employment equity for Aboriginal peoples especially for women.
- Working to establish targets to rapidly lower unemployment for Aboriginal peoples
- Setting up partnerships between governments, business, labour, and educational institutions to ensure that the Aboriginal communities are part of the educational and training planning process, so that Aboriginal peoples can be able to fill present and future vacancies in the job market.

Acknowledgements:

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Here is the contact information for some of the major Aboriginal peoples' organizations.

- Assembly of First Nations <http://www.afn.ca/>
- Congress of Aboriginal Peoples <http://www.abo-peoples.org/>
- Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) <http://www.itk.ca/>
- Métis National Council <http://www.metisnation.ca/>
- National Association of Friendship Centres <http://www.nafc.ca>
- Native Women's Association of Canada <http://www.nwac-hq.org/home.htm>

Sources:

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<http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/71-222-XIE/2004000/chart-o80.htm>
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