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# Aboriginal peoples living off-reserve in Western Canada

Estimates from the Labour  
Force Survey



April 2004 - March 2005



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Statistics Canada  
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# Symbols

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The following standard 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<sup>s</sup> 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 *Statistics Act*
- E use with caution
- F too unreliable to be published

## Acknowledgements

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# Table of contents

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<b>Highlights</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Analysis</b>	<b>5</b>
Steady growth in off-reserve Aboriginal population in West	5
Improvements for Aboriginal people in recent years	6
The provinces: Aboriginal people in Alberta fared better	7
Aboriginal youth: Tough times in the job market	8
Education: Levelling the playing field	10
Majority of Aboriginal people working in service-producing industries	11
<b>Related products</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>General information</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Charts</b>	
1. Employment rates, off-reserve Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people in Western Canada, April 2004 to March 2005	7
2. Unemployment rates, off-reserve Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people in Western Canada, April 2004 to March 2005	8
3. Off-reserve employment rates in Western Canada, youths (15-24) and adults (25+), April 2004 to March 2005	9
4. Off-reserve unemployment rates in Western Canada, youths (15-24) and adults (25+), April 2004 to March 2005	9
5. Off-reserve employment rates, postsecondary completers, non-students aged 25-64, April 2004 to March 2005	10
<b>Text tables</b>	
<b>Text table 1.</b> Selected labour force characteristics for off-reserve Aboriginal peoples in Western Canada	6
<b>Text table 2.</b> Selected off-reserve labour force characteristics, April 2004 to March 2005	6

## Highlights

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According to the new data, labour market conditions have improved for off-reserve Aboriginal people. However, gaps still persist between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population.

During the 12 months ending in March 2005, unemployment rates for Aboriginal people residing in the West were 2.5 times higher than for non-Aboriginal people, on average.

Additionally, the transition into the labour market was particularly difficult for Aboriginal youth, those aged 15 to 24.

There were a number of positive findings:

- Métis had relative success in the labour market, with employment rates similar to those of non-Aboriginal people;
- a robust Alberta economy produced strong labour market outcomes for Aboriginal people, and;
- completion of postsecondary education was particularly important for Aboriginal people since it dramatically increased their chance of obtaining employment.

## Analysis

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In 2002, at the request of the Alberta government, Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey added questions that made it possible for Aboriginal people living off-reserve to identify themselves as North American Indian, Métis or Inuit.

These questions were subsequently added to the LFS in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba in April 2004.

As a result, for the first time ever, Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey is now announcing details about labour market conditions for off-reserve Aboriginal people in the four western-most provinces. Such data were previously available only from the Census.

According to the new data, labour market conditions have improved for off-reserve Aboriginal people. However, gaps still persist between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population.

During the 12 months ending in March 2005, unemployment rates for Aboriginal people residing in the West were 2.5 times higher than for non-Aboriginal people, on average.

Additionally, the transition into the labour market was particularly difficult for Aboriginal youth, those aged 15 to 24.

On the other hand, there were a number of positive findings:

- Métis had relative success in the labour market, with employment rates similar to those of non-Aboriginal people;
- a robust Alberta economy produced strong labour market outcomes for Aboriginal people, and;
- completion of postsecondary education was particularly important for Aboriginal people since it dramatically increased their chance of obtaining employment.

This report uses the new LFS data and data from the 2001 Census of Population to analyze the labour market conditions of this population on a province-by-province basis. Effective immediately, key employment data on Aboriginal people living off-reserve will be available on a monthly basis.

### Steady growth in off-reserve Aboriginal population in West

Between 1996 and 2001, the population of Aboriginal people in western Canada grew steadily, especially in urban centres. In 2001 in western Canada, a total of 132,650 Aboriginal people, or 46.7% of Aboriginal people 15 years of age or older, lived in the 8 western census metropolitan areas.

Winnipeg, Edmonton, Vancouver and Calgary had the highest numbers of Aboriginal people among the western census metropolitan areas.

Saskatoon had the highest concentration of Aboriginal people where approximately 7.1% of the population identified themselves as an Aboriginal person.

During the five-year period, the 15+ off-reserve population of Aboriginal people in the West rose 28.4% to 283,890. This was more than four times the rate of growth of 6.6% in the non-Aboriginal population.

However, roughly half the growth in the Aboriginal population can be attributed to increased awareness of Aboriginal roots.

## Improvements for Aboriginal people in recent years

On the whole, off-reserve Aboriginal people in western Canada did not have as much success in the labour market in 2004/05 as non-Aboriginal people.

Gaps between the employment and unemployment rates for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people remained. However, they are shrinking as a result of key improvements in the labour market performance of Aboriginal people.

**Text table 1**

### Selected labour force characteristics for off-reserve Aboriginal peoples in Western Canada

Labour Force Characteristic	2001 Census	2004-2005 LFS <sup>1</sup>
	%	
Employment rate	54.2	57.2
Unemployment rate	16.7	13.6
Participation rate	65.1	66.2

1. Labour Force Survey.

**Source:** 2001 Census of Population and Labour Force Survey.

Employment rates have risen in recent years, while unemployment rates have declined.

In fact, the share of off-reserve Aboriginal people in the West who had a job increased from 54.2% in 2001 to 57.2% in 2005. Still, this was well below the proportion of 65.2% among non-Aboriginal persons.

At the same time, the unemployment rate for these Aboriginal people fell from a high of 16.7% in 2001 to 13.6% in 2005. This was more than twice the rate of 5.3% among non-Aboriginal people.

**Text table 2**

### Selected off-reserve labour force characteristics, April 2004 to March 2005

Labour Force Characteristic	Total Western Provinces	Manitoba	Saskatchewan	Alberta	British Columbia
	%				
<b>Employment rate</b>					
<b>Identity</b>					
Non-Aboriginal	65.2	65.9	65.7	70.4	61.2
Aboriginal	57.2	58.9	50.7	62.6	54.5
North American Indian	50.1	48.6	42.1	57.4	49.8
Métis	63.7	65.6	57.9	66.4	62.5
<b>Unemployment rate</b>					
<b>Identity</b>					
Non-Aboriginal	5.3	4.8	4.5	4.2	6.6
Aboriginal	13.6	11.6	16.0	10.2	17.3
North American Indian	17.7	14.9	21.0	12.9	20.9
Métis	10.5	10.0	12.6	8.6	12.2
<b>Participation rate</b>					
<b>Identity</b>					
Non-Aboriginal	68.9	69.2	68.7	73.5	65.5
Aboriginal	66.2	66.6	60.3	69.7	65.9
North American Indian	60.9	57.0	53.3	65.8	62.9
Métis	71.2	72.9	66.2	72.7	71.2

**Source:** 2004-2005 Labour Force Survey.



Métis and North American Indians had different experiences in the labour market; Métis were much more likely to be employed than North American Indians.

In 2005, the employment rate for Métis was 63.7%, compared with 50.1% for North American Indians. Similarly, the unemployment rate was 10.5% for Métis, and 17.7% for North American Indians.

### The provinces: Aboriginal people in Alberta fared better

While Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan had the most difficulty finding employment, Alberta’s economic prosperity benefited the Aboriginal population along with the non-Aboriginal population.

Off-reserve Aboriginal people in Alberta had the highest employment rate (62.6%) and the lowest unemployment rate (10.2%) within the western provinces. In fact, their employment rate was similar to the Canadian average in 2005 of 62.7%.

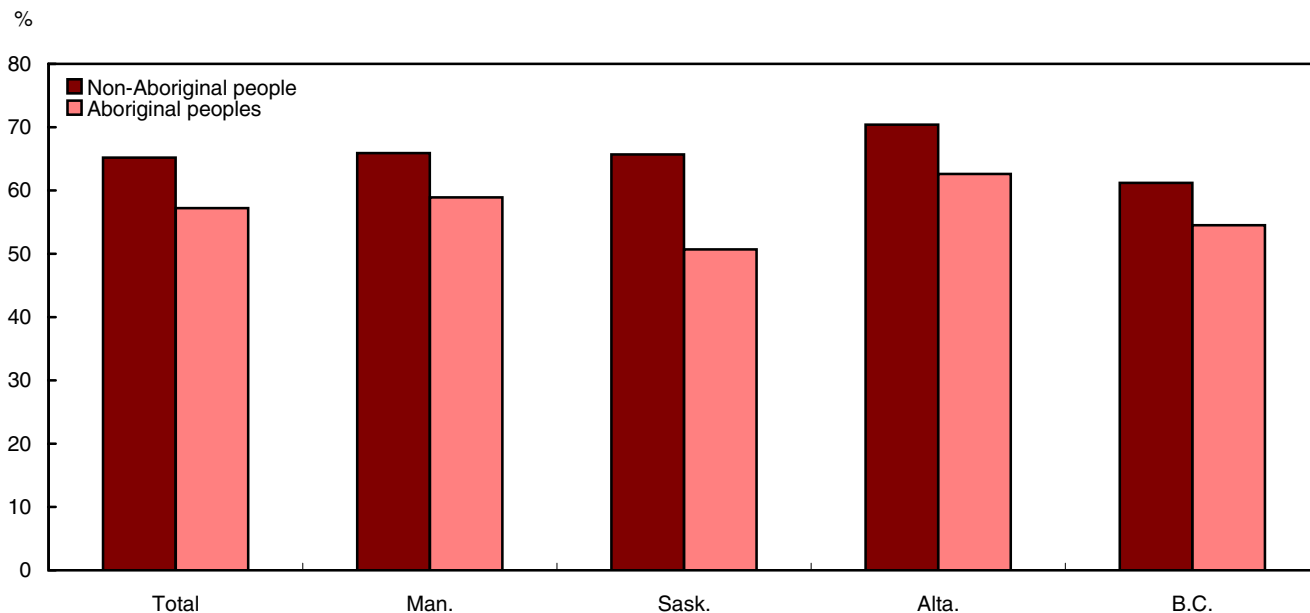
In contrast, Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan faced greater hardship in the labour market. Not only was their employment rate the lowest of all the western provinces at 50.7%, but their unemployment rate was very high at 16.0%.

In British Columbia, employment was also low among Aboriginal people at 54.5%, leading to a high unemployment rate of 17.3%.

In Manitoba, 58.9% of Aboriginal people had employment compared with 65.9% of non-Aboriginal Manitobans. About 4.8% of the non-Aboriginal labour force was unemployed compared with 11.6% of the Aboriginal labour force.

Chart 1

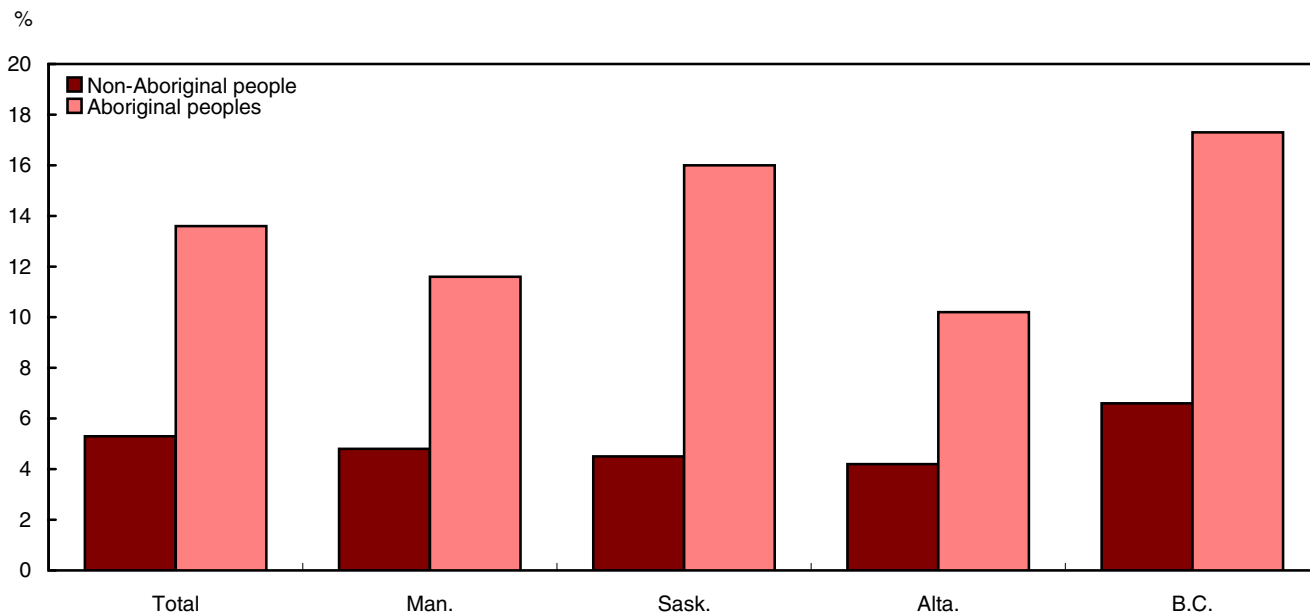
Employment rates, off-reserve Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people in Western Canada, April 2004 to March 2005



Source : Labour Force Survey

**Chart 2**

**Unemployment rates, off-reserve Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people in Western Canada, April 2004 to March 2005**



Source: Labour Force Survey.

Since the 2001 Census, Manitoba has shown the greatest increase in employment. Its rate has risen from 55.0% to 58.9% in 2005.

British Columbia also increased from 51.0% in 2001 to 54.5% in 2005.

**Aboriginal youth: Tough times in the job market**

Aboriginal youth, a growing group, struggled to obtain employment in western Canada.

According to the 2001 Census, a much greater share of the Aboriginal population was concentrated in the younger age groups compared with the non-Aboriginal population.

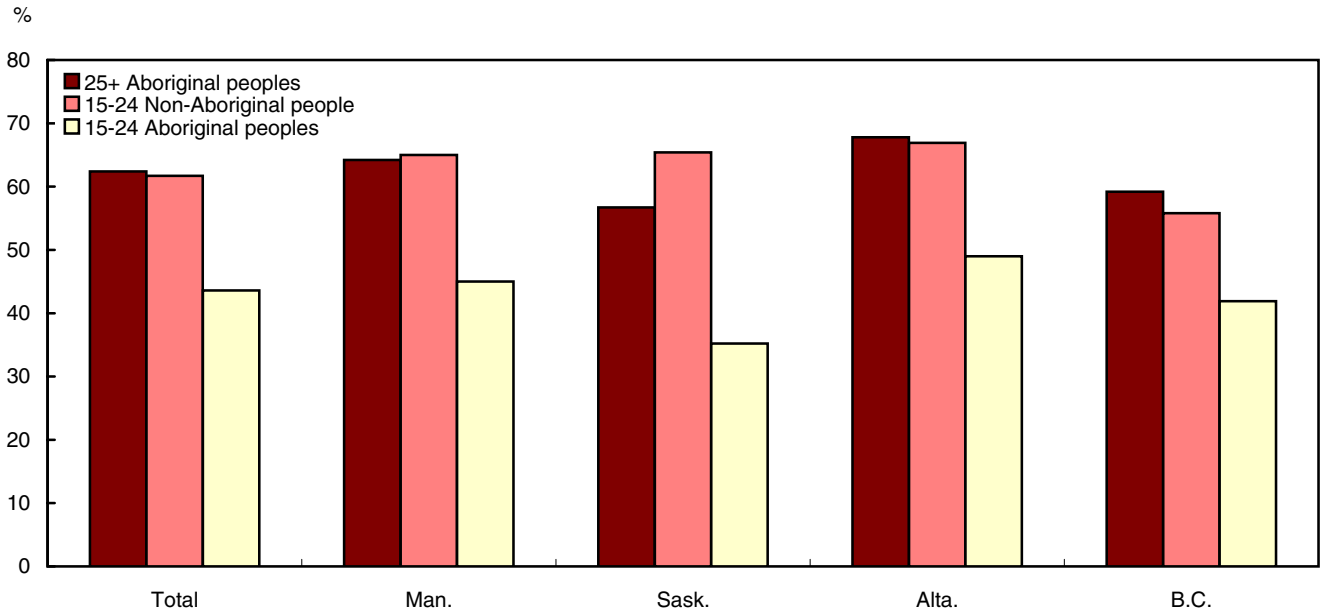
In western Canada, about 26.6% of the off-reserve Aboriginal persons were in the 15 to 24 age group in 2001, compared with 17.1% of non-Aboriginal persons.

While the situation improved for Aboriginal youth in the labour market between 1996 and 2005, this group made few gains since 2001.

In 2005, Aboriginal youths in western Canada had difficulty in the labour market, with an employment rate of 43.6%, compared with 61.7% for non-Aboriginal youths.

**Chart 3**

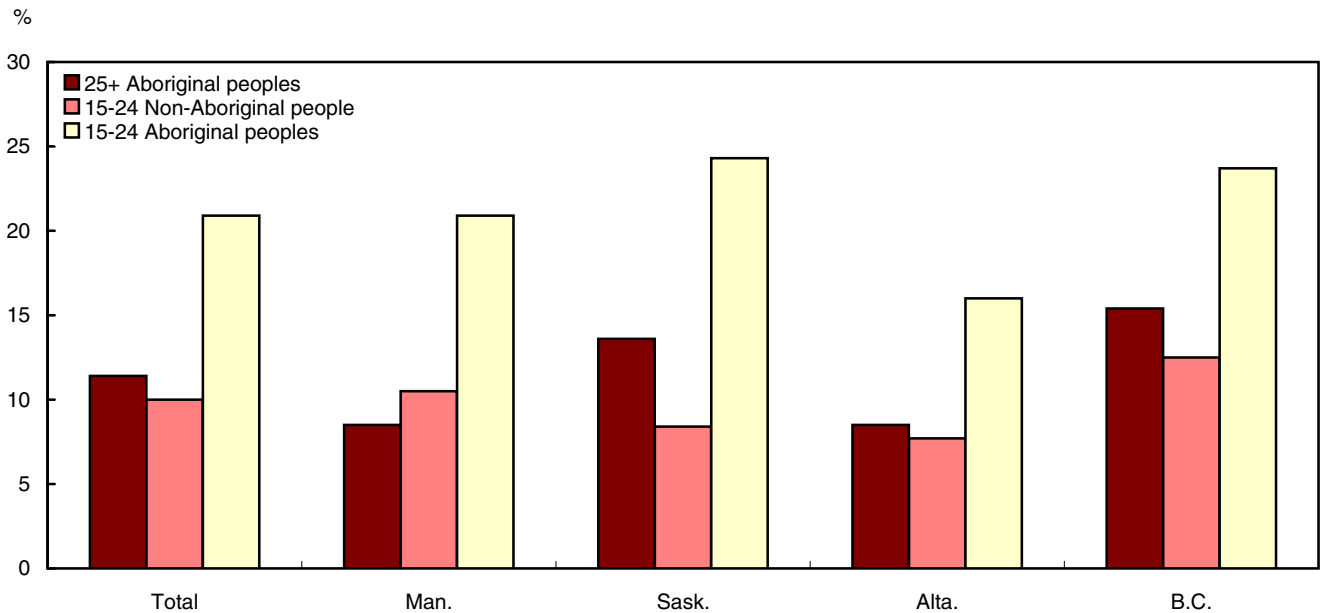
**Off-reserve employment rates in Western Canada, youths (15-24) and adults (25+), April 2004 to March 2005**



Source: Labour Force Survey.

**Chart 4**

**Off-reserve unemployment rates in Western Canada, youths (15-24) and adults (25+), April 2004 to March 2005**



Source: Labour Force Survey.

The unemployment rate for Aboriginal youth was more than double that of non-Aboriginal youth – 20.8% compared with 10.0%.

Of the four western provinces, Saskatchewan had the lowest employment rate (35.2%) and the highest unemployment rate (24.7%) among Aboriginal youth.

Aboriginal youth in Alberta fared best with an employment rate of 49.3% and an unemployment rate of 16.0%.

However, they were less successful than non-Aboriginal youths in Alberta, who had an employment rate of 66.9% and an unemployment rate of 7.7%.

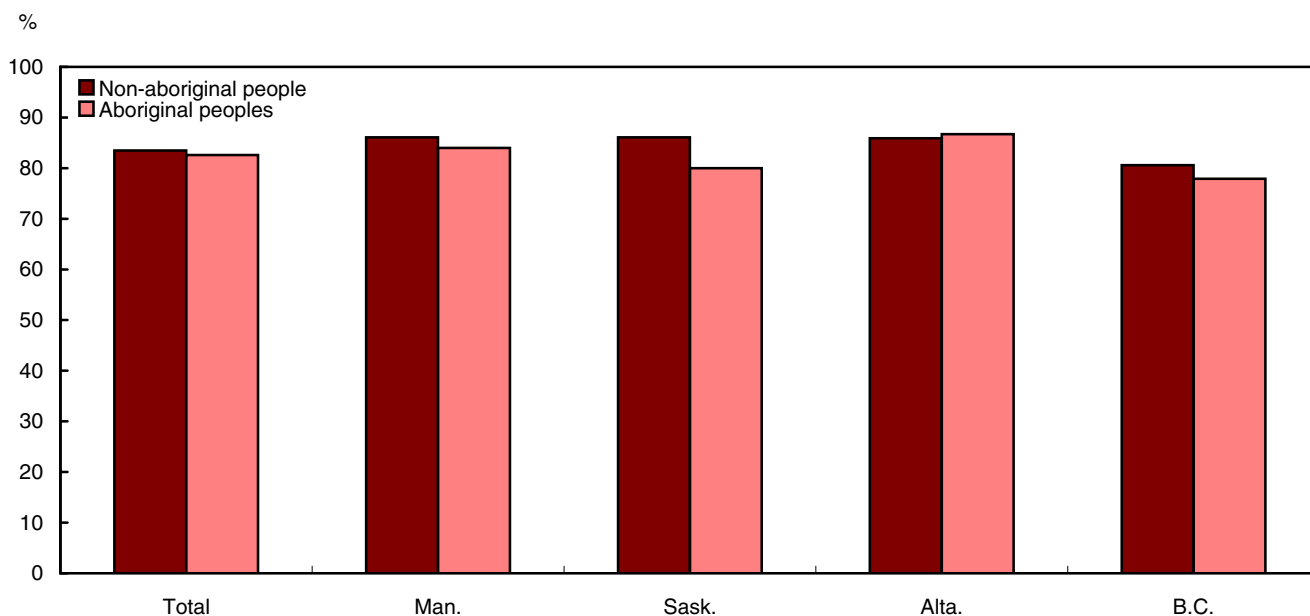
### Education: Levelling the playing field

While many Aboriginal people in western Canada had a much harder time in the labour market than their non-Aboriginal counterparts who had completed some form of postsecondary education, such as trade school, college or university, did not.

The employment rate for Aboriginal people aged 25 to 64 who had finished postsecondary education was 82.5%, just shy of the 83.5% for non-Aboriginal persons in western Canada.

Chart 5

Off-reserve employment rates, postsecondary completers, non-students aged 25-64, April 2004 to March 2005



Source: Labour Force Survey.

In Saskatchewan, just over six percentage points separated the non-Aboriginal rate of 86.1% from the Aboriginal rate of 80.1%. Both British Columbia and Manitoba showed differences of less than three percentage points.

Education also considerably narrowed the gap in unemployment rates. For postsecondary-educated Aboriginal people, the unemployment rate was 6.9% compared with 3.9% for non-Aboriginal people.

In comparison, the unemployment rate for all levels of education was 4.4% for non-Aboriginal people and 11.5% for Aboriginal people.

Non-Aboriginal people aged 25 to 64 were more likely to have completed postsecondary education than Aboriginal people the same age.

In 2005, 55.6% of non-Aboriginal persons had completed some form of postsecondary education, while only 39.9% of Aboriginal persons had done so.

Aboriginal people were also less likely to have a university degree and more likely to have a trade certificate or college diploma than non-Aboriginal people.

### **Majority of Aboriginal people working in service-producing industries**

A high proportion of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people had jobs in the service-producing industries in western Canada. About 75.6% of non-Aboriginal people worked in service-sector industries, compared with 74.1% of Aboriginal people.

A slightly higher proportion of Aboriginal people than non-Aboriginal people worked in goods-producing industries - an estimated 26.0% compared with 24.4%.

In 2005, the health care and social assistance sector was the largest employer of Aboriginal people in western Canada, employing 11.6% of Aboriginal workers.

Other big employers of Aboriginal people were: retail trade (10.8%), accommodation and food services (10.0%), construction (9.4%), manufacturing (9.0%) and public administration (7.1%).

## Related products

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### Selected publications from Statistics Canada

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71-222-X	The Canadian labour market at a glance
71-526-X	Methodology of the Canadian Labour Force Survey
71-543-G	Guide to the Labour Force Survey
71-544-X	Labour Force Survey products and services.
71F0004X	Labour force historical review
71M0001X	Labour Force Survey microdata file
75-001-X	Perspectives on labour and income
94F0041X	Aboriginal Peoples of Canada, 2001 Census
94F0043X	2001 Census Aboriginal Population Profile
96F0030X	Analysis series, 2001 Census

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### Selected CANSIM tables from Statistics Canada

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282-0001	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by sex and detailed age group
282-0002	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by sex and detailed age group
282-0003	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by educational attainment, sex and age group
282-0004	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by educational attainment, sex and age group
282-0005	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by full- and part-time students during school months, sex and age group
282-0006	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by students during summer months, sex and age group
282-0007	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), sex and age group
282-0008	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), sex and age group

282-0009	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S) and sex
282-0010	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S) and sex
282-0011	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employment by class of worker, North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) and sex
282-0012	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employment by class of worker, North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) and sex
282-0013	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), part-time employment by reason for part-time work, sex and age group
282-0014	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), part-time employment by reason for part-time work, sex and age group
282-0015	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by usual hours worked, main or all jobs, sex and age group
282-0016	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by usual hours worked, main or all jobs, sex and age group
282-0017	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by actual hours worked, main or all jobs, sex and age group
282-0018	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by actual hours worked, main or all jobs, sex and age group
282-0019	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by usual hours worked, class of worker, North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) and sex
282-0020	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by usual hours worked, class of worker, North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) and sex
282-0021	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by actual hours worked, class of worker, North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) and sex
282-0022	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by actual hours worked, class of worker, North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) and sex
282-0023	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by usual hours worked, class of worker, National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S) and sex
282-0024	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by usual hours worked, class of worker, National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S) and sex
282-0025	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by actual hours worked, class of worker, National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S) and sex

282-0026	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by actual hours worked, class of worker, National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S) and sex
282-0027	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by total and average usual and actual hours worked, main or all jobs, type of work, sex and age group
282-0028	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by total and average usual and actual hours worked, main or all jobs, type of work, sex and age group
282-0029	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), average days lost for personal reasons per full-time employee by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), sex and age group
282-0030	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), average days lost for personal reasons per full-time employee by National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S), sex and age group
282-0031	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), multiple jobholders by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), sex and age group
282-0032	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), multiple jobholders by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), sex and age group
282-0033	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), multiple jobholders by National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S), sex and age group
282-0034	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), multiple jobholders by National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S), sex and age group
282-0035	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), multiple jobholders by usual hours worked at main and all jobs
282-0036	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), multiple jobholders by usual hours worked at main and all jobs
282-0037	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), job tenure by type of work, sex and age group
282-0038	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), job tenure by type of work, sex and age group
282-0039	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), job tenure by National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S) and sex
282-0040	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), job tenure by National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S) and sex
282-0041	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), job tenure by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) and sex
282-0042	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), job tenure by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) and sex
282-0047	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), duration of unemployment by sex and age group
282-0048	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), duration of unemployment by sex and age group
282-0049	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), unemployment by type of work sought and search method, sex and age group



282-0050	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), unemployment by type of work sought and search method, sex and age group
282-0051	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), retirement age by class of worker and sex
282-0052	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by census metropolitan area, sex and age group, 3-month moving average
282-0053	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by census metropolitan area, sex and age group
282-0054	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by economic region and Yukon Territory and Northwest Territories, 3-month moving average
282-0055	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by economic region and Yukon Territory and Northwest Territories
282-0056	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employment by census metropolitan area and North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), 3-month moving average
282-0057	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employment by census metropolitan area and North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)
282-0058	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employment by census metropolitan area and National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S), 3-month moving average
282-0059	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employment by census metropolitan area and National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S)
282-0060	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employment by economic region and North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), 3-month moving average
282-0061	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employment by economic region and North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)
282-0062	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employment by economic region and National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S), 3-month moving average
282-0063	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employment by economic region and National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S)
282-0064	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by selected medium-sized cities
282-0069	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), wages of employees by type of work, National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S), sex and age group
282-0070	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), wages of employees by type of work, National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S), sex and age group
282-0071	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), wages of employees by type of work, North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), sex and age group
282-0072	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), wages of employees by type of work, North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), sex and age group
282-0073	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), wages of employees by job permanence, union coverage, sex and age group

282-0074	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), wages of employees by job permanence, union coverage, sex and age group
282-0075	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employees by establishment size, North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), sex and age group
282-0076	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employees by establishment size, North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), sex and age group
282-0077	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employees by union coverage, North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), sex and age group
282-0078	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employees by union coverage, North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), sex and age group
282-0079	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employees by job permanency, North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), sex and age group
282-0080	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employees by job permanency, North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), sex and age group
282-0081	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employees working overtime (weekly) by National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S), sex and age group
282-0082	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employees working overtime (weekly) by National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S), sex and age group
282-0083	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employees working overtime (weekly) by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), sex and age group
282-0084	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employees working overtime (weekly) by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), sex and age group
282-0085	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), supplementary unemployment rates by sex and age group
282-0086	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), supplementary unemployment rates by sex and age group
282-0087	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by sex and age group, seasonally adjusted and unadjusted
282-0088	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employment by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), seasonally adjusted and unadjusted
282-0089	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employment by class of worker and sex, seasonally adjusted and unadjusted
282-0090	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by census metropolitan area, 3-month moving average, seasonally adjusted and unadjusted
282-0091	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver census metropolitan areas, seasonally adjusted and unadjusted
282-0092	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), actual hours worked by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), seasonally adjusted
282-0093	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employment by National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S), seasonally adjusted

282-0094	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), Canada, seasonally adjusted
282-0095	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by full- and part-time students during school months, sex and age group
282-0096	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by urban and rural areas based on 2001 census boundaries, sex and age group
282-0098	Labour force survey estimates (LFS), employment by urban and rural areas based on 2001 census boundaries, class of worker and North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)

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### **Selected surveys from Statistics Canada**

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3701	Labour Force Survey
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### **Selected tables of Canadian statistics from Statistics Canada**

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- *Canada: Economic and financial data*
- *Canadian Statistics - Labour force characteristics*
- *Canadian Statistics - Employment by industry*
- *Canadian Statistics - Selected economic indicators, Canada and United States (monthly and quarterly)*
- *Canadian Statistics - Days lost per worker due to illness or disability, by sex, by provinces*
- *Canadian Statistics - Economic indicators, by provinces and territories (monthly and quarterly)*
- *Canadian Statistics - Labour force and participation rates by sex and age group*
- *Canadian Statistics - Labour force, employed and unemployed, numbers and rates, by provinces*
- *Canadian Statistics - Employment by industry and sex*
- *Canadian Statistics - Full-time and part-time employment by sex and age group*
- *Canadian Statistics - Labour force characteristics by age and sex*
- *Canadian Statistics - Distribution of employed people, by industry, by provinces*
- *Canadian Statistics - Labour force characteristics, population 15 years and older, by census metropolitan areas*
- *Canadian Statistics - Labour force characteristics, population 15 years and older, by economic regions, by province*
- *Canadian Statistics - Days lost per worker by cause, by provinces*

- *Canadian Statistics - Days lost per worker by industry and sex*
- *Canadian Statistics - People employed, by educational attainment*
- *Canadian Statistics - Reasons for part-time work by sex and age group*
- *Canadian Statistics - Self-employment, historical summary*
- *Canadian Statistics - Employment by age, sex, type of work, class of worker and provinces (monthly)*
- *Canadian Statistics - Employment by major industry groups, seasonally adjusted, by provinces (monthly)*
- *Canadian Statistics - Actual hours worked per week by industry, seasonally adjusted (monthly)*
- *Canadian Statistics - Average hourly wages of employees by selected characteristics and profession, unadjusted data, by provinces (monthly)*
- *Canadian Statistics - Labour force characteristics, seasonally adjusted, by provinces (monthly)*
- *Canadian Statistics - Labour force characteristics, unadjusted, by provinces (monthly)*
- *Canadian Statistics - Labour force characteristics, seasonally adjusted, by census metropolitan areas (3 month moving average)*
- *Canadian Statistics - Labour force characteristics, unadjusted, by census metropolitan areas (3 month moving average)*
- *Canadian Statistics - Labour force characteristics, unadjusted, by economic regions (3 month moving average)*

## **Special requests (\$)**

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Custom tabulations can be arranged on an ad hoc or regular basis. This service enables you to specify tables and time series to meet your own requirements. The cost varies according to the request. For more information, contact us toll-free at 1-866-873-8788 or e-mail us at [labour@statcan.ca](mailto:labour@statcan.ca).

## **Other source**

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*Latest LFS release in The Daily (free)*

## General information

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The data presented in this report are from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The LFS is the household survey which produces Canada's official unemployment rate, among other data.

Beginning in August 2002, at the request of the Alberta government, the Labour Force Survey (LFS) added two questions to allow Aboriginal people living off reserve to identify themselves, and determine what Aboriginal group they may belong to. As an extension to the project, the questions were also added to British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba in April 2004. Based on the main self-identifying questions on the Census, the questions are as follows:

[Are you / Is ...] an Aboriginal person, that is, North American Indian, Métis or Inuit?

If yes and if respondent has not volunteered the information during response to question above,

[Are you / Is ...] a North American Indian, Métis or Inuit?

By January 2003, all LFS respondents had been asked the above questions.

In addition to excluding Aboriginal peoples living on reserve and on Métis settlements, full-time members of the armed forces are also excluded.

The LFS is now announcing details about labour market conditions for off-reserve Aboriginal people in the four western-most provinces. Such data were previously available only from the census.

This report also uses the new LFS data and data from the 2001 Census of Population to analyze the labour market conditions of this population on a province-by-province basis.