

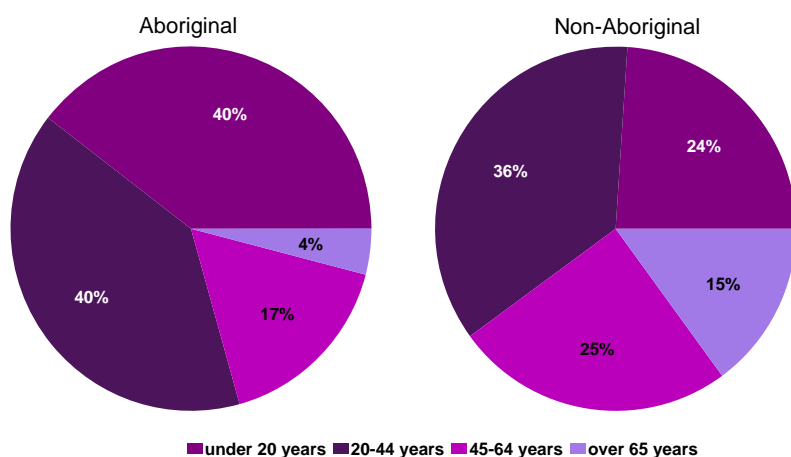
# Aboriginal Women in Nova Scotia

This collection of statistics provides an overview of the situation of Aboriginal women in Nova Scotia. The statistics show that the realities of Aboriginal women in this province are often different, not only from that of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men, but also from that of non-Aboriginal women.

## Demographics and Language

There are thirteen First Nations in Nova Scotia. According to the 2001 Census, persons indicating Aboriginal identity comprise just under 2% of the province's population. Three-quarters of women who identify themselves as Aboriginal indicate that they are North American Indian and, of these, the majority are of Mi'kmaq descent.

Age of Women by Aboriginal Identity  
Nova Scotia, 2001



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census, table # 97F0011XCB01001

Demographically, the Aboriginal population is significantly younger than the non-Aboriginal population. Forty percent of Aboriginal women in Nova Scotia are under the age of 20 compared to only 24% of non-Aboriginal women in the province. Likewise, there are, proportionally, close to four times as many non-Aboriginal women over the age of 65 than there are Aboriginal women this age.

While almost a quarter of Aboriginal women indicate their mother tongue as being an Aboriginal language, only 7% make regular use of an Aboriginal language at home. For the majority of Aboriginal women in Nova Scotia, English is both their mother tongue and home language.

## Family Life and Children

There are evident differences between the family life experiences of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women. Aboriginal women are considerably less likely to marry, are somewhat more likely to live in common-law relationships, and are more than twice as likely to be lone-parents as compared to non-Aboriginal women. Regardless of their marital status, Aboriginal women living on-reserve are much more likely to have three or more children while most Aboriginal women living off-reserve and all women have only one or two children.

## Education

Educational attainment is another area where differences are evident. While the educational attainment of off-reserve Aboriginal women and that of non-Aboriginal women is quite similar (approximately 57% of both groups complete some level of post-secondary education), Aboriginal women living on-reserve are somewhat less likely to complete post-secondary studies. Among those with post-secondary qualifications, non-Aboriginal women are slightly more likely to obtain university certificates or degrees, while Aboriginal women living off-reserve are more likely to obtain college certificates.

## Paid Work

There are striking differences in the labour force participation rates of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women, with Aboriginal women living on-reserve showing particularly low rates, depending on their age. The greatest differences in labour force participation are among youth aged 15-24. In this young age group, only 34% of on-reserve Aboriginal women are participating in Nova Scotia's labour force, compared to 63% of young non-Aboriginal women. This large gap is also evident for on-reserve Aboriginal men compared to non-Aboriginal men. While a similar pattern exists for those aged 25-44, the gap in labour force participation (62% versus 79%) between on-reserve Aboriginal women and non-Aboriginal women in this age group is not quite as large as it is for youth. For the 45-64 year age group, the differences in labour force participation, at least for women, are virtually non-existent.

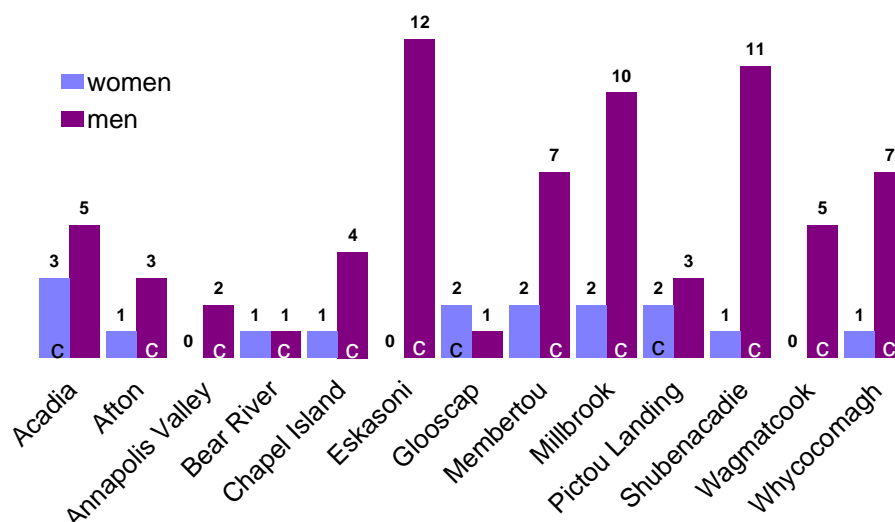
## Incomes

Regardless of their employment status (ie, full-time versus part-time), Aboriginal women, especially those living on-reserve, earn less employment income than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. On average, on-reserve Aboriginal women who work full-time earn close to \$6,000 annually less than do non-Aboriginal women who work full-time. For women who work part-time, the gap is a little over \$5,000. These wage gaps are even greater when comparing the earnings of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men.

## Political Involvement/Women as Leaders

First Nations Chiefs and Councillors by Gender  
Nova Scotia (as of March 20, 2006)

Aboriginal women who live on-reserve are involved in Band Council politics to varying degrees, depending on the Band. Overall, women comprise 23% of Chiefs (3 of 13) and 18% of Councillors (16 of 87) currently elected among Nova Scotia's 13 First Nations.



Source: Individual Band-Council Offices

While women are still under-represented on Band Councils overall, there are a few notable exceptions. Acadia, Glooscap, and Pictou Landing First Nations each have female Chiefs and between 38% and 67% of Councillor positions in these small Band Councils are filled by women. Women tend to have the poorest representation on larger Band Councils, which have from 0-17% female representation. Of the thirteen Band Councils in the province, there are currently three without any women engaged politically.

This collection of statistics demonstrates that Aboriginal women, and in particular, on-reserve Aboriginal women, still have many strides to make before achieving parity with their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Given the surging youth population in the Aboriginal community, the time is ripe for exploration and assessment to ensure that young Aboriginal women in Nova Scotia are afforded opportunities to advance and reach their full potential.

March, 2006. All statistics are from Statistics Canada, 2001 Census, unless otherwise specified.