

Cautionary notes regarding comparisons of Aboriginal data between the 1996 and 2001 Censuses

Aboriginal Population Increase

The increase in the population of Aboriginal people in BC between the 1996 and 2001 Censuses was partially due to an increase in the tendency of Aboriginal people to identify. Likewise, the rest of Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand have also experienced this increased willingness of Aboriginal people to identify. In BC, the largest increase was in the Métis population across all age groups and that increase was over 90% for seniors. The following table shows the Aboriginal population in total and its sub-groups

British Columbia		Population		Change between 1996 and 2001		
		2001	1996	Percent		
		Total	Total	Total	On-reserve	Off-reserve
Aboriginal Total	Total	170,020	139,655	21.7	9.2	27.2
	Under 35	106,200	93,845	13.2	1.5	18.1
	35 and older	63,825	45,815	39.3	23.8	46.7
North American Indian Total		118,290	107,375	10.2	7.4	11.9
	Under 35	75,470	73,480	2.7	-0.2	4.4
	35 and older	42,820	33,895	26.3	21.6	29.8
Band member		104,050	94,870	9.7	8.9	10.2
	Under 35	65,305	64,265	1.6	1.2	2.0
	35 and older	38,750	30,610	26.6	23.5	29.4
Registered		103,550	93,835	10.4	8.2	12.1
	Under 35	64,610	63,350	2.0	0.3	3.2
	35 and older	38,935	30,485	27.7	22.8	32.0
Métis		44,265	25,575	73.1	35.1	73.7
Inuit		805	740	8.8	150.0	5.4
Multiple Aboriginal		1,175	1,200	-2.1	250.0	-4.2
Other		5,490	4,765	15.2	72.9	-0.1
Non-aboriginal		3,698,850	3,550,100	4.2		

Note: Changes in the on- and off-reserve populations are due in part to flows of people on and off-reserve.

The differential rate of increase in the willingness to identify between the sub-groups of the Aboriginal population means the ethnic mix of the Aboriginal population has changed. Those identifying as Metis rose from 18% of the population in 1996 to 26% in 2001. Thus differences observed in the characteristics of Aboriginal people between 1996 and 2001 could be due to real changes or shifts in the importance of the Metis population to the total Aboriginal population.

Other Changes

Urban/rural: To be an urban area, the area must have a core population of at least 1,000 people and a population density of 400 people per square kilometer. Over the five years between the Censuses, an area may change its status. Migrants are those who moved from one Census subdivision (municipality, Indian Reserve or unorganized area) to another. If an area changed its status from rural to urban, the migration may have been to another Census subdivision within the same urban area.

Family: The Census family definition changed between 1996 and 2001. In 1996, a family consisted of a husband and wife, married or common-law, with or without never married children, or a lone parent with never married children, regardless of age, living at home. In 2001 this definition was broadened to include same-sex couples. In addition the requirement for a child to be never married was dropped. A married or formerly married child with no spouse or child(ren) living with his/her parents was considered part of the parent's family. The effect of these changes, is to increase the number of families in the same population and the number of income recipients, thus affecting family incomes.

In 1996, an never married person with child(ren) living with his/her parent(s) was considered part of the parent's family. The young child(ren) were treated as non-family person(s) in the household. In 2001, the younger parent/child(ren) was treated as a family and the oldest generation in the household was another family if it met the family definition, i.e. couple and/or parent/child relationship if other children were present.