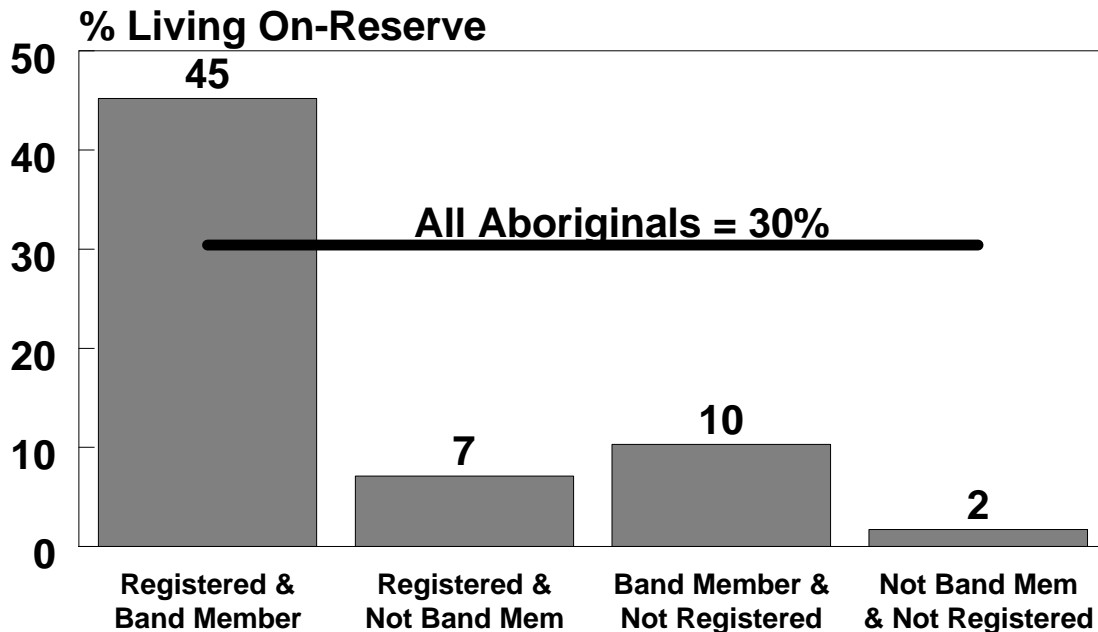


Focus on BC Aboriginals: Living On-Reserve/Off-Reserve

Fewer than One in Three Aboriginals Live On-Reserve



BC STATS

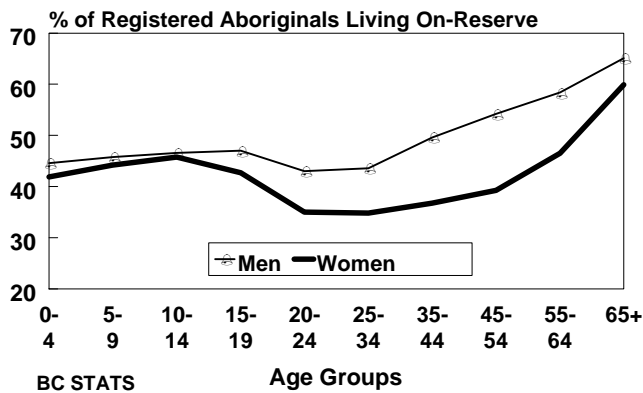
The legal and institutional structure of the Aboriginal community in Canada is many-layered. Often, the terminology to describe these layers is very confusing. Legally, Aboriginal peoples are either registered, or not registered under the Indian Act. To be a Registered Indian, the requirements are that the person has to have at least one Registered Indian parent, as well as choose to be on record with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. A further grouping, primarily decided by the Aboriginal community itself, is Band/First Nation Membership. An Aboriginal person can be registered and excluded from band membership, or, alternatively, can be a member of a band and not registered. These latter two groups are small

in numbers, representing only 2 and 3 per cent respectively.

There is a further confusion in the terminology applied to Aboriginal peoples. Statistics Canada provides us with two different definitions of Aboriginal peoples—the first includes those who stated any Aboriginal heritage, and the second includes only those who “identify”, or consider themselves as Aboriginal. (*This terminology is described in the BC Stats 1996 Census Fast Facts No. 10 release.*) The purpose of this particular release is to document who, among the persons that **identify** as Aboriginal, live on-reserve in British Columbia.

The largest proportion of Aboriginals in BC are both Registered Indians and Band Members (65 per cent of total). This group would have the closest ties (at least legally) with the aboriginal community, and yet less than half (45 per cent) actually live on-reserve. Among the other 35 per cent who are either not registered and/or not band members, a very small proportion live on-reserve (2.7 per cent). Consequently, the “on-reserve rate” is only 30 per cent for all Aboriginals.

The Choice to Live On-Reserve Differs by Gender and Age Group



Registered women are less likely to live on-reserve than men, particularly in the child-bearing/rearing years. This difference in the gender profile could best be explained by the inter-marriage of registered Indians with the non-registered population. Because the males' living style is usually adopted by a new couple, women who live on-reserve and marry a man off-reserve, they would tend to move off-reserve, whereas on-reserve men would likely stay where they are and their partners would join them.

The difference in the on-reserve rate by age group has many stories to tell. The numbers do not just reflect a generational phenomenon; i.e., the older generation are more likely to live on reserve than their children's generation, but also reflect the lifetime pattern of living arrangements of registered Indians.

Although the current definition of aboriginals is not identical to previous censuses, the current on/off reserve age pattern is very similar to historical age patterns from previous censuses. It is also similar to historical administrative data from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

Some points the age data show are:

- Young adults (age 20–34) are most likely to live off-reserve.
- As both men and women reach their 50s, they are inclined to move back to their reserves.
- Young girls start to move off-reserve in their teens, and boys wait until their twenties.
- A higher proportion of young children live on reserve than do women in their child-bearing/rearing years. This would indicate that family size is larger on-reserve than off-reserve amongst registered Indians.

Are Aboriginal peoples more or less likely to live on reserve today than in previous times? With aboriginal land claims and self-government initiatives in progress, it would be very useful to be able to make these comparisons. Unfortunately, this is not possible, as earlier censuses did not use the aboriginal “identity” definition. Furthermore, the population count of residents on reserve land is no longer a gauge of Aboriginal living patterns—now, many non-aboriginal persons live in homes located on leased reserve land. Therefore, for any time trend analysis, researchers will have to rely on the administrative data from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.



**Aboriginals in British Columbia
Registered and Band Membership Status by Living On/Off-Reserve**

	All Aboriginals	Band Members	Non-Band Members
All Aboriginals			
Total	139,655	94,870	44,785
- Living On-Reserve	42,455	41,515	935
- Living Off-Reserve	97,200	53,355	43,850
% Living On Reserve	30.4	43.8	2.1
Registered Indians			
Total	93,835	90,880	2,955
- Living On-Reserve	41,320	41,105	210
- Living Off-Reserve	52,515	49,775	2,740
% Living On Reserve	44.0	45.2	7.1
Not Registered Indians			
Total	45,820	3,990	41,830
- Living On-Reserve	1,135	410	720
- Living Off-Reserve	44,685	3,575	41,110
% Living On Reserve	2.5	10.3	1.7

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 1996

Produced By: BC STATS

British Columbia Registered Indians Age and Sex By Living On/Off-Reserve

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Living On-Reserve</u>	<u>Living Off Reserve</u>	<u>% Living On-Reserve</u>
Both Sexes				
Age 0-4	9,765	4,225	5,540	43.3
Age 5-9	10,545	4,755	5,790	45.1
Age 10-14	9,470	4,380	5,090	46.3
Age 15-19	8,620	3,875	4,745	45.0
Age 20-24	8,075	3,140	4,935	38.9
Age 25-34	16,875	6,560	10,315	38.9
Age 35-44	14,325	6,105	8,220	42.6
Age 45-54	8,190	3,785	4,405	46.2
Age 55-64	4,570	2,370	2,200	51.9
Age 65+	3,400	2,120	1,280	62.4
All Ages	93,835	41,320	52,515	44.0
Males				
Age 0-4	4,965	2,215	2,755	44.6
Age 5-9	5,425	2,485	2,940	45.8
Age 10-14	4,910	2,290	2,615	46.6
Age 15-19	4,525	2,125	2,395	47.0
Age 20-24	3,985	1,715	2,270	43.0
Age 25-34	7,780	3,395	4,385	43.6
Age 35-44	6,525	3,235	3,285	49.6
Age 45-54	3,780	2,050	1,725	54.2
Age 55-64	2,055	1,200	855	58.4
Age 65+	1,505	985	525	65.4
All Ages	45,455	21,700	23,755	47.7
Females				
Age 0-4	4,800	2,010	2,780	41.9
Age 5-9	5,120	2,265	2,850	44.2
Age 10-14	4,560	2,090	2,475	45.8
Age 15-19	4,090	1,745	2,345	42.7
Age 20-24	4,090	1,430	2,665	35.0
Age 25-34	9,095	3,165	5,930	34.8
Age 35-44	7,800	2,870	4,930	36.8
Age 45-54	4,415	1,735	2,675	39.3
Age 55-64	2,515	1,170	1,350	46.5
Age 65+	1,895	1,135	755	59.9
All Ages	48,380	19,620	28,760	40.6

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 1996

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