

## Business Indicators ♦ August 2009

### The Aboriginal Population of B.C.: Highlights from the Statistical Profiles of Aboriginal Peoples in B.C.

BC Stats has recently released Statistical Profiles of Aboriginal Peoples in B.C., based on data from the 2006 Census. These profiles can be accessed at:

[http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/lss/abor/ap\\_index.asp](http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/lss/abor/ap_index.asp)

Aboriginal people live in many different areas of B.C., and in each area, Aboriginal people face different circumstances. Sub-provincial profiles provide comparisons of the socio-economic conditions of Aboriginal peoples, as well as profiles of Aboriginal groups such as First Nations, Métis, and Status Indians, using data available from the 2006 Census. The topics profiled are: demography, mobility, language, education, labour, income, and housing. This article addresses some of the highlights from these profiles.

#### Characteristics

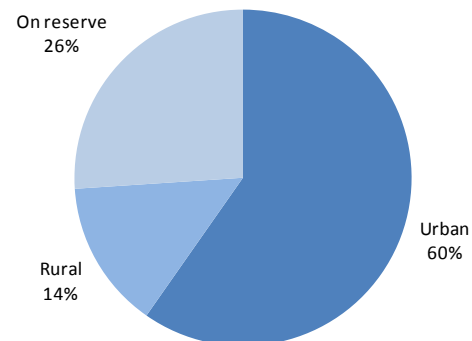
During the 2006 Census, 196,075 British Columbians (or 4.8 percent of B.C.'s total population) identified themselves as Aboriginal. The Aboriginal population is made up of those persons who self-identified with at least one Aboriginal group (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit), who reported being a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian (as defined by the Indian Act of Canada), or who were members of an Indian Band or First Nation.

First Nations account for 66% of the Aboriginal population in B.C., followed by Métis (30%), and Inuit (0.4%). The remainder either identified with more than one group or were members of an Indian Band or First Nation and

did not identify with a specific Aboriginal group.

Sixty percent of the Aboriginal population in B.C. is urban, 14% live in rural B.C., and just over a quarter of the Aboriginal population live on-reserve<sup>1</sup>. Of those who live on-reserve, the vast majority are First Nations (97%).

*Sixty percent of the Aboriginal population is urban*



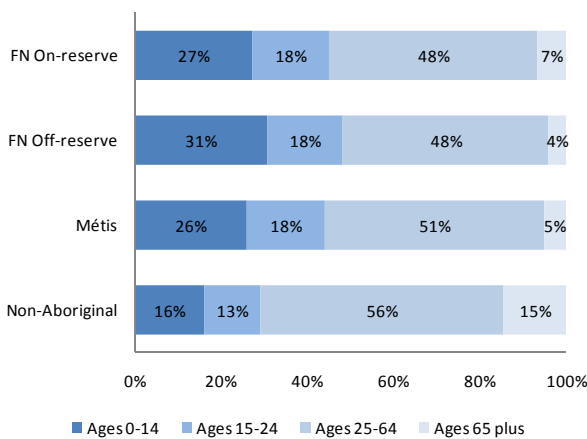
Source: Census 2006, Statistics Canada

Aboriginal people are much younger, on average, than the non-Aboriginal population. The median age of the Aboriginal population in B.C. in 2006 was 28, compared with 41 for the non-Aboriginal population. In 2006, over one quarter of the Aboriginal population was under 15 years of age, compared with only 16% percent of the non-Aboriginal population. At the other end of the age spectrum, 15% of B.C.'s

<sup>1</sup> On-reserve includes Indian Reserves and other census subdivision legally affiliated with First Nations or Indian bands. Statistics Canada does not classify reserves as urban or rural.

non-Aboriginal population was 65 and over, compared with only 5% of the Aboriginal population. First Nations people (living on-and-off-reserve) and Métis have similar age structures. As a proportion of the population, there are fewer First Nations children (0-14) living on-reserve, compared to the off-reserve population—27% vs. 31%. There is also a higher proportion of seniors living on-reserve than off-reserve.

*Aboriginal people are younger than the non-Aboriginal population*



Source: Census 2006, Statistics Canada

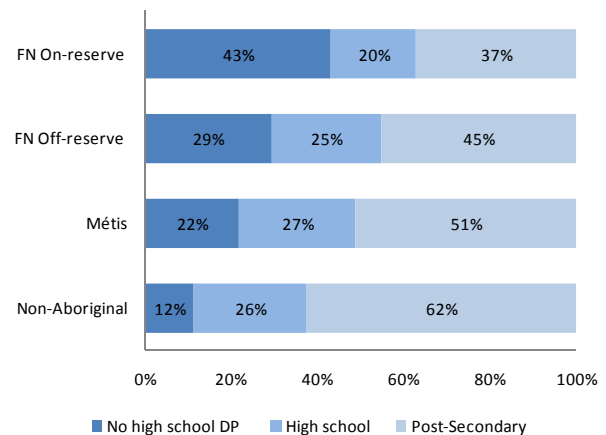
### Education Attainment

It has been recognized that Aboriginal Peoples in B.C. lag behind the rest of the population in educational attainment. The area of greatest concern is the very low high school completion rate of Aboriginal Peoples, as we know that persons without a high school diploma are at risk of facing challenges in the labour market. The Census data show daunting inequalities between the non-Aboriginal population and the Aboriginal population, especially for First Nations people living on-reserve.

The difference in educational attainment between Aboriginal groups is considerable—43% of First Nations people (age 25 to 64) living on-reserve have not completed their high school education, compared to 29% of First Nations people living off-reserve and 22% of

Métis. Only 12% of the non-Aboriginal population have not completed high school — a 31 percentage point gap with First Nations people living on-reserve. At the other end of the education spectrum, only 37% of the First Nations people living on-reserve have completed a post-secondary credential, compared to 62% of the non-Aboriginal population. The post-secondary completion rate is higher for Métis and First Nations people living off-reserve (51% and 45%, respectively), but still lower than the non-Aboriginal population.

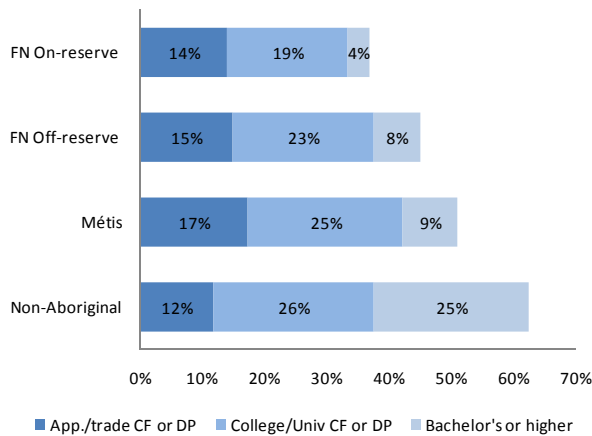
*Over 40% of First Nations people living on-reserve have not completed high school*



Source: Census 2006, Statistics Canada (age 25 to 64)

Compared to the non-Aboriginal population, First Nations (on-and off-reserve) and Métis are more likely to complete an apprenticeship or trades certificate (CF) or diploma (DP). However, Aboriginal groups are less likely than the non-Aboriginal population to complete a bachelor’s degree or higher, and the difference is even more pronounced among First Nations living on-reserve. For example, only 4% of the on-reserve population had a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to 8% of those First Nations living off-reserve.

*Aboriginal people are less likely to have a bachelor's degree or higher*



Source: Census 2006, Statistics Canada (age 25 to 64)

Aboriginal females appeared to have higher levels of education than males. Forty-five percent of First Nations females age 25 to 64 completed a post-secondary credential, compared to only 38% of males. Furthermore, 8% of females obtained a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to only 4% of males. This pattern holds true for First Nations off-reserve and Métis. That said, males (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) had higher completion rates when it came to an apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma. Nineteen percent of the First Nations males completed an apprenticeship certificate or diploma, compared to 11% of their female counterparts. Twenty-three percent of Métis males completed an apprenticeship program, compared to 13% of Métis females.

*Aboriginal females have higher levels of education than their male counterparts*

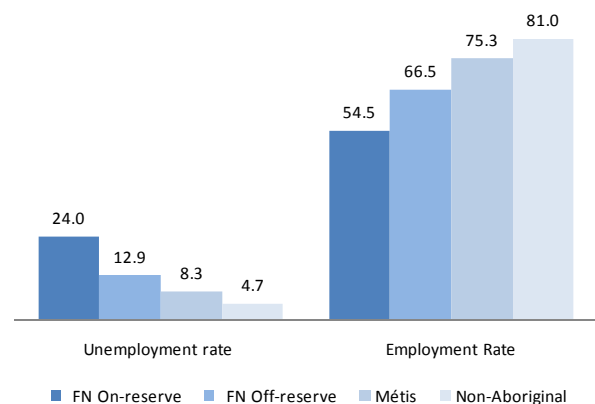
	First Nations	FN On-Reserve	FN Off-Reserve	Métis	Non-Aboriginal
<b>M</b> No high school DP	39%	47%	33%	25%	12%
High school	23%	19%	26%	26%	25%
App./trade CF or DP	19%	18%	20%	23%	16%
CF or DP	15%	14%	16%	19%	22%
Bachelor's or higher	4%	2%	6%	7%	25%
<b>F</b> No high school DP	31%	40%	26%	19%	11%
High school	23%	20%	25%	27%	27%
App./trade CF or DP	11%	11%	11%	13%	8%
CF or DP	27%	24%	28%	30%	29%
Bachelor's or higher	8%	5%	9%	10%	25%

Source: Census 2006, Statistics Canada (age 25 to 64)

**Labour Market Outcomes**

Employment prospects for the Aboriginal population are much bleaker than for the non-Aboriginal population. At the time of the 2006 Census, British Columbia's labour force had been performing extremely well and B.C.'s unemployment rate among those 25 to 54 was 5.0%. However, the Aboriginal unemployment rate, at 13.9 percent, was close to three times that of the non-Aboriginal population. First Nations people show the highest incidence of unemployment (16.9%). First Nations people living on-reserve<sup>2</sup> faced the highest unemployment rate, at 24.0%.

*First Nations people on-reserve face higher unemployment rates than other Aboriginal groups*



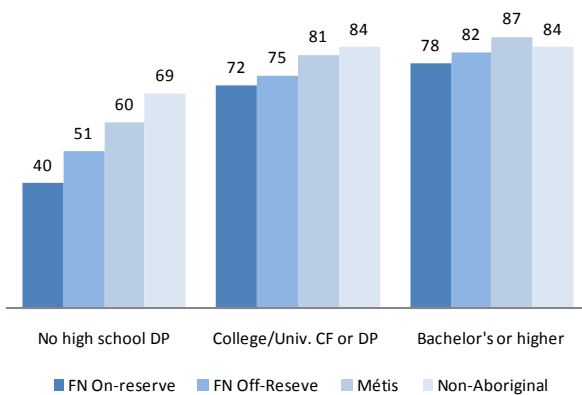
Source: Census 2006, Statistics Canada (age 25 to 54)

<sup>2</sup> The on-and off-reserve variations in unemployment rates among the First Nations population may simply reflect the varying total unemployment rates in each region. Please see the regional profiles for additional comparisons.

Among the Métis population, the percentage of the population who had a job was similar to that of the non-Aboriginal population—75.3% vs. 81%. However, the employment rate<sup>3</sup> was still quite a bit lower for First Nations people living on-and off-reserve.

Large gaps in educational attainment between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people persist in B.C. However, when you compare Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who have completed post-secondary education, many of the stark differences in employment rates diminish. Eighty-one percent of First Nations people with a bachelor’s degree or higher were employed in 2006, compared to 84% of the non-Aboriginal population. The employment rate for Métis with a bachelor’s degree or higher (87%) was actually greater than that of the non-Aboriginal population. The employment rate of the non-Aboriginal population without a high school diploma was 69%, compared to 46% for First Nations people. First Nations people without a high school diploma living on-reserve faced the lowest employment rate of any group, at 40% (11 percentage points lower than their counterparts living off-reserve.)

*Employment rates improve with education*

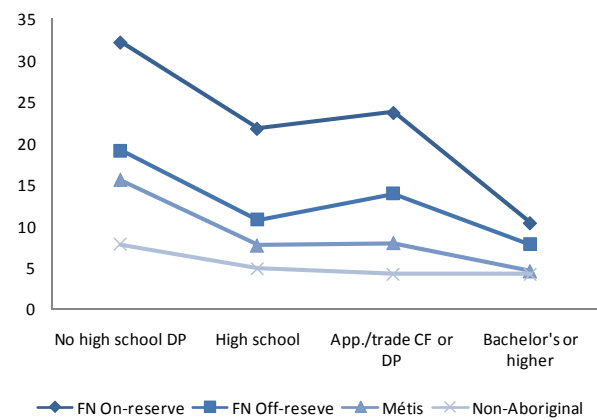


Source: Census 2006, Statistics Canada (age 25 to 54)

<sup>3</sup>The employment rate is the number of persons employed expressed as a percentage of the population.

First Nations people living on-reserve face higher unemployment rates compared to their peers living off-reserve, despite having the same educational attainment. In 2006, the unemployment rate for First Nations people living on-reserve without a high school diploma was 32.2%, compared to 19.1% for their off-reserve counterparts. The gap in the unemployment rate lessens as education levels increase.

*Unemployment rates improve with post-secondary completion*



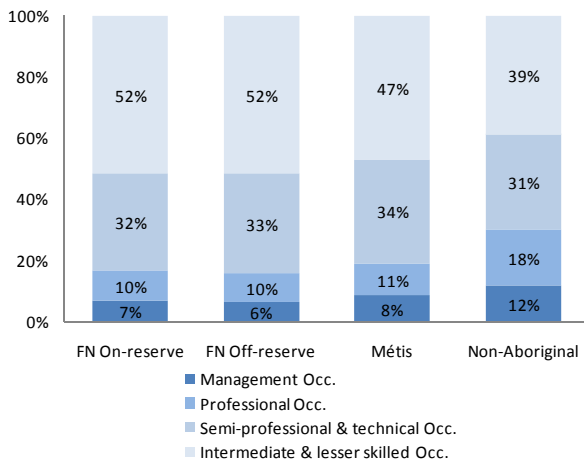
Source: Census 2006, Statistics Canada (age 25 to 54)

The unemployment rate for First Nations people living on-reserve with a bachelor’s degree or higher was 10.4%, compared to 7.8% living-off reserve. It is interesting to note that the unemployment rate for the Métis population with a bachelor’s degree or higher was very similar to the non-Aboriginal population—4.6% and 4.2%, respectively. It is very clear that education plays a significant role in improving labour market outcomes.

### Occupations, Industries and Employment Income

Seventeen percent of First Nations people living on-reserve (age 25 to 54) were employed<sup>4</sup> in management and professional occupations in 2006. Over half of the First Nations population (on-and off-reserve) were employed in intermediate and lesser skilled occupations, compared to 39% of the non-Aboriginal population.

*Aboriginal people are less likely to be employed in management and professional occupations*



Source: Census 2006, Statistics Canada (age 25 to 54)

Eight of every ten non-Aboriginal people, aged 25 to 54, were employed in service industries, compared to 69% of the First Nations population living on-reserve and 73% of First Nations people living off-reserve. Almost a quarter of First Nations people living on-reserve were employed in government service industries, compared to only 9% of their off-reserve peers and 6% of the non-Aboriginal population. On the goods producing side, First Nations people living on-reserve were almost three times more likely to be employed in

<sup>4</sup> Occupations are based on the National Occupational Classification (NOC). The NOC refers to the kind of work persons were doing during the reference week, as determined by their kind of work and the description of the main activities in their job. If the person did not have a job during the week prior to enumeration, the data relate to the job of longest duration since January 1, 2005.

forestry, wood and paper production compared to the non-Aboriginal population.

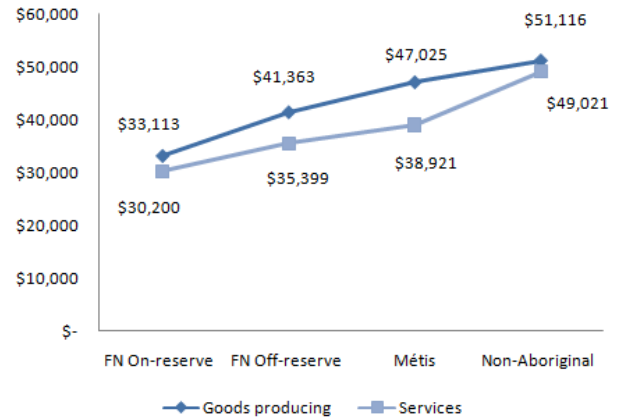
*In 2006, over 30% of First Nations people living on-reserve were employed in goods producing industries*

	First Nations	FN On-Reserve	FN Off-Reserve	Métis	Non-Aboriginal
<b>Goods producing</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>21%</b>
Forestry & Wood & Paper	9%	11%	8%	7%	4%
Other primary	5%	8%	4%	4%	3%
Other goods producing	15%	13%	16%	17%	15%
<b>Services</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>79%</b>
Elementary & Secondary Ed.	5%	7%	4%	5%	4%
Health & Social Services	11%	10%	11%	11%	11%
Government Service Industries	14%	23%	9%	7%	6%
Other service industries	42%	29%	49%	50%	58%

Source: Census 2006, Statistics Canada (age 25 to 54)

Considering only those employed full-time for at least 40 weeks per year, First Nations people living on-reserve working in the goods producing industries had an average employment income<sup>5</sup> in 2005 of \$33,113; this was less than their peers living off-reserve (\$41,363) and considerably less than the non-Aboriginal population (\$51,116.) This pattern holds true for the service sector as well.

*Employment income (for those working full-time for 40 weeks or more) varied by group*



Source: Census 2006, Statistics Canada (aged 15 years and over)

<sup>5</sup> Average employment income is calculated for those with employment income (positive or negative)

Aboriginal employees in B.C. earn less than their non-Aboriginal counterparts, even when they are employed in similar occupations and have similar levels of educational attainment. For example, First Nations people employed in management occupations (full-time for 40 weeks or more) had an average employment income of \$48,720, compared to \$72,111 for the non-Aboriginal population—a difference of \$23,000. This pattern holds true for all occupational categories.

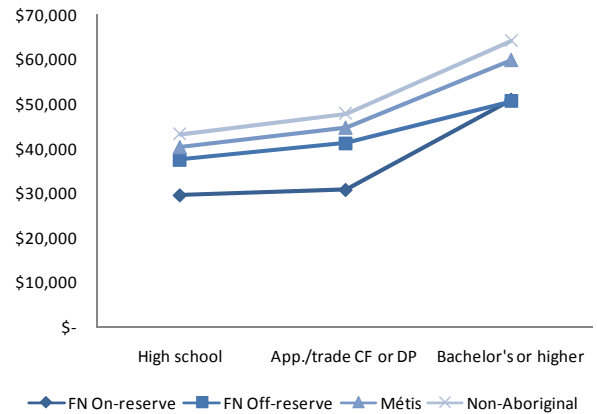
*Aboriginal people earn less than their non-Aboriginal counterparts, even when controlling for occupational category*

	First Nations	FN On-Reserve	FN Off-Reserve	Métis	Non-Aboriginal
Management Occ.	\$ 48,720	\$ 41,675	\$ 53,009	\$ 55,658	\$ 72,111
Professional Occ.	\$ 47,088	\$ 39,973	\$ 50,897	\$ 53,359	\$ 67,026
Semi-professional & technical Occ.	\$ 36,091	\$ 30,368	\$ 38,393	\$ 42,590	\$ 45,924
Intermediate & lesser skilled Occ.	\$ 29,146	\$ 26,605	\$ 30,278	\$ 34,454	\$ 35,372

Data: Employment income, 2005 (full time, minimum 40 weeks)  
 Source: Census 2006, Statistics Canada (aged 15 years and over)

In addition to occupation and industry, educational attainment also influences employment income. As educational attainment increases, so does employment income. This is true for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. However, even when they have the same levels of educational attainment, Aboriginal people earn less than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Non-Aboriginal people age 25 to 54 with a bachelor’s degree or higher had an average employment income of \$63,957 in 2005, compared to \$ 50,569 for First Nations people.

*Aboriginal people earn less than their non-Aboriginal counterparts, even when controlling for education*



Data: Employment income, 2005 (full time, minimum 40 weeks)  
 Source: Census 2006, Statistics Canada (aged 25 to 54)

**Conclusion**

Results from the 2006 census data confirm that factors such as educational attainment, gender, regional differences (size and location of community), occupation and industry all affect labour market outcomes and other socio-economic issues. In order to improve the socio-economic conditions of Aboriginal peoples in B.C., a better understanding of these factors is required.

In addition to the highlights noted in this article, the Statistical Profiles of Aboriginal Peoples in B.C. examine mobility, language, and housing issues. For more information on Aboriginal Peoples in B.C., please visit:

[http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/lss/abor/ap\\_index.asp](http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/lss/abor/ap_index.asp) or

<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen06/facts/facts.asp>