



Indigenous Peoples in Surrey: Highlights from the Census

2021 CENSUS FACT SHEETS

NOVEMBER 2023



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BACKGROUND

Welcome to the Indigenous Population Fact Sheets for Surrey. This collection of fact sheets provides a snapshot of the Indigenous population living in Surrey based on data from the 2021 Census of the Population (Census). The fact sheets summarize and visualize key findings on salient topics, including: demographics, children and youth, education, income, and housing.

To contextualize the findings, it's important to note that the 2021 Census was conducted during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although data quality for the region remained strong, the COVID-19 pandemic likely influenced the value of certain variables temporarily, like income, employment, and cost of living. Still, the Census presents a valuable snapshot of the Indigenous population in Surrey at a unique point in history.

For a full, more detailed report summarizing data from the 2021 Census of Population published by the Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Committee (SUILC), please visit: <https://surreyindigenousleadership.ca/our-work/facts-and-reports>.

Land Acknowledgement

The Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Committee acknowledges that Surrey is located on the traditional territories of the Coast Salish, including the Semiahmoo First Nation, the Kwantlen First Nation, the Katzie First Nation, the Kwikwetlem First Nation, the Qayqayt First Nation and the Tsawwassen First Nation.

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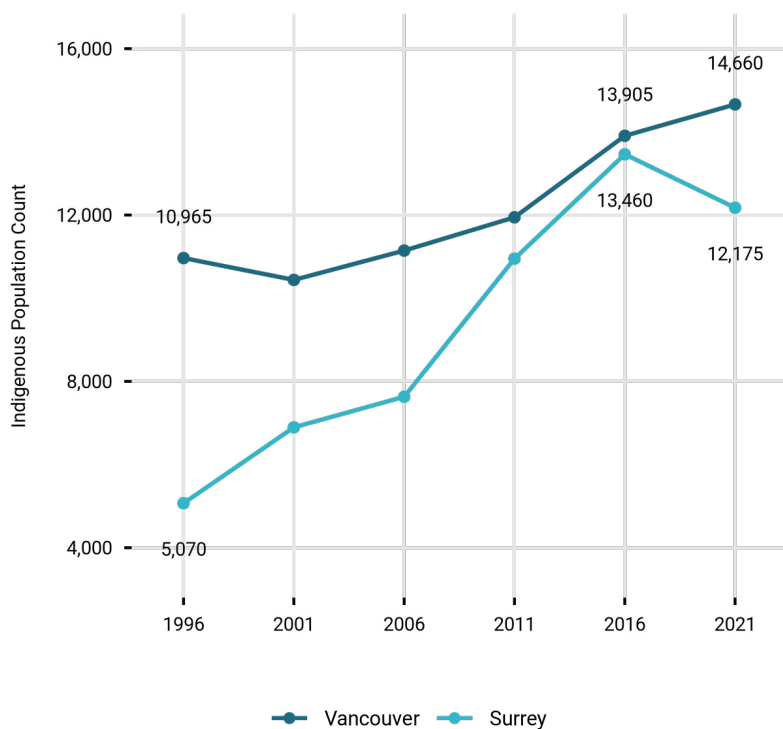
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Note on Gender

The Census now asks a gender question that includes man, woman, or non-binary as response options, in addition to a question on an individual's sex at birth. Due to low response rates, non-binary respondents are included in the gender categories of Men+ and Women+ by Statistics Canada and for all the gender statistics in this report.

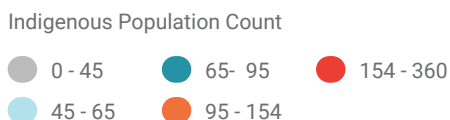
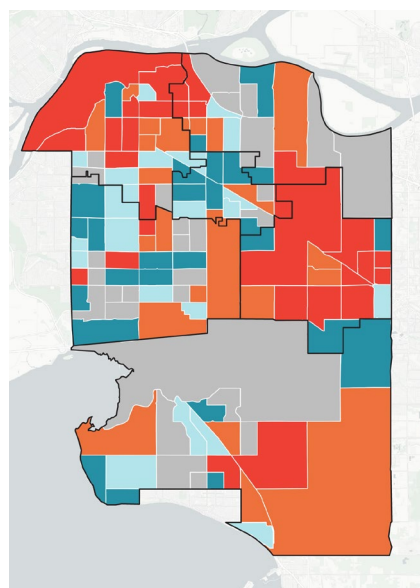


The Indigenous population in Surrey more than doubled between 1996 and 2021, but recently declined between 2016 and 2021.



The largest share of Indigenous residents live in Whalley and the City Centre.

The largest share of Indigenous residents live in Whalley (25%), followed by Cloverdale (21%) and Newton (20%). Between 2016 and 2021, the Indigenous population decreased in each neighbourhood in Surrey, aside from Cloverdale and South Surrey, where the Indigenous populations grew.



At over 12,000 people, the Indigenous population in Surrey is the second largest Indigenous population in BC, behind Vancouver.

The Indigenous population in Surrey grew an average of 21% every five years from 1996 to 2016. Between 2016 and 2021, however, the Indigenous population decreased by almost 10%.

The cause of the population decline is ultimately unknown, but may have been influenced by factors such as Indigenous peoples temporarily leaving the city due to the COVID-19 pandemic, or housing unaffordability.



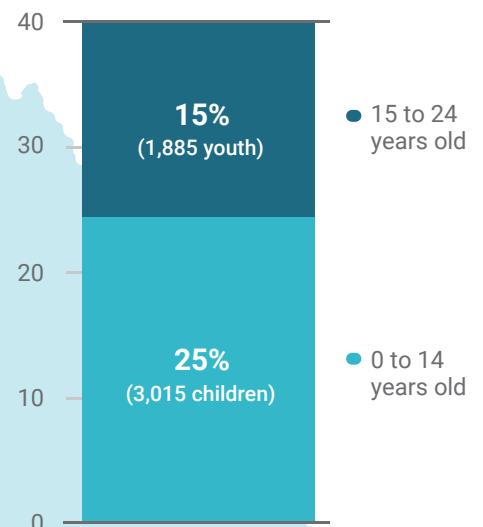
Surrey is home to the second largest population of Indigenous children and youth in British Columbia.



Surrey is home to 4,895 Indigenous children and youth (ages 0 to 24), the largest population of Indigenous children and youth in Metro Vancouver and second only to Prince George in the province. Notably, 40% of the Indigenous population in Surrey is under 25 years old, and 25% is under 15. Overall, the Indigenous population in Surrey is younger than the non-Indigenous population.

The Surrey school district has the highest enrolment of Indigenous students in K-12 in the Lower Mainland region. In BC, Prince George, Central Okanagan, and Kamloops-Thompson are the only school districts with a higher Indigenous student enrolment than Surrey.

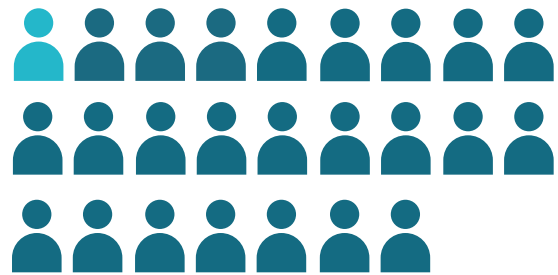
Indigenous Child & Youth Population in Surrey by Age





Indigenous children are overrepresented in Surrey's foster care system.

Of the 415 children in foster care in Surrey, 41% are Indigenous. This means 1 in every 25 Indigenous children under the age of 19 in Surrey is in foster care. By comparison, only 1 in 500 non-Indigenous children under 19 in Surrey is in foster care.



1 in every 25 Indigenous children in Surrey is in foster care

The percentage of Indigenous children and youth living in low-income households has decreased since 2016.

The percentage of Indigenous children and youth in low-income households in Surrey decreased from 31% in 2016 to 15% in 2021. This decline occurred after the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when relief benefits were still available.

However, additional efforts and investments are still needed, as Indigenous children and youth in Surrey still face disproportionate rates of low income and poverty compared to non-Indigenous youth. Specifically, the poverty rate for Indigenous children youth (18%) is nearly 1.5 times higher than for non-Indigenous (13%).

Education outcomes have improved for Indigenous youth, but are still lower than non-Indigenous youth.

GRADE SCHOOL STUDENTS

The high school graduation rate for Indigenous students in Surrey increased from 48% in the 2011/2012 school year to 74% in the 2021/2022 school year, but remains below the non-Indigenous graduation rate (94%). In 2021/2022, fewer Indigenous youth ages 15 to 19 attended schooling of any level compared to non-Indigenous youth (73% vs. 86%).

POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS

Almost a quarter (23%) of Indigenous youth ages 20 to 24 chose to pursue post-secondary school, with the majority attending college or trade school. In comparison, just over half (54%) of non-Indigenous youth pursued post-secondary, with the majority attending university.



The Indigenous population in Surrey is diverse and educated.

First Nations and Métis are the largest Indigenous population groups in Surrey.

Over half of the Indigenous population in Surrey is First Nations (52%), followed by Métis (42%). A total of 1,445 individuals, 12% of the Indigenous population in Surrey, are members of the First Nations on whose territories Surrey is located. Katzie First Nation has the largest number of total members (510), followed by Tsawwassen First Nation (400), Kwantlen First Nation (360), Semiahmoo (100), and Kwikw'lem (75).

The number of Indigenous language speakers declined between 2016 and 2021.

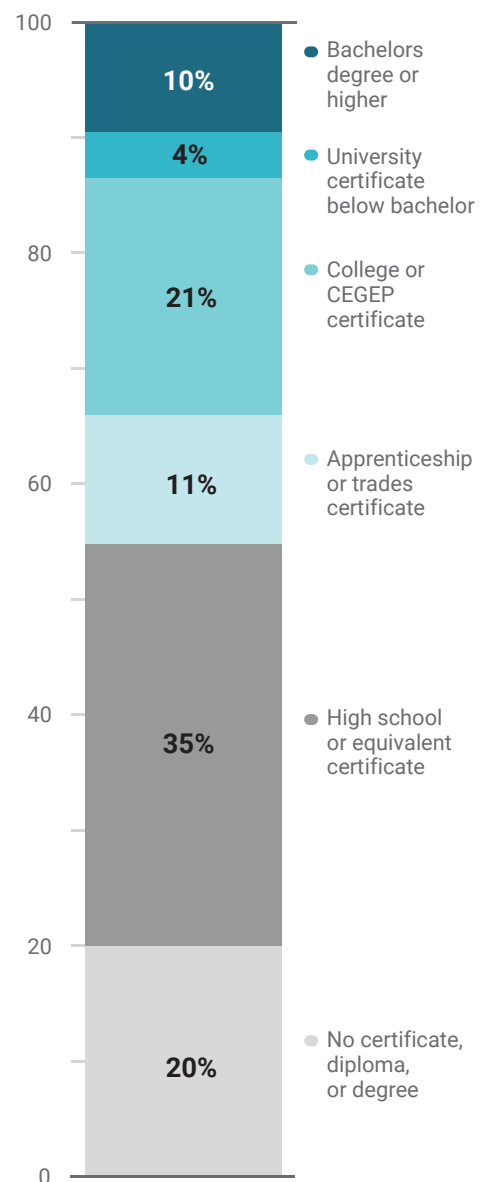
In Surrey, 1.1% of the Indigenous population have knowledge of an Indigenous language. Since 2016, the number of people in Surrey with knowledge of an Indigenous language has decreased from 225 to 140 in 2021. This decline demonstrates a need to evaluate the accessibility of cultural support and language revitalization programs.

Nearly half (45%) of Indigenous residents aged 25 to 64 in Surrey have some form of post-secondary credential as their highest level of education.

However, this is lower than the share of non-Indigenous residents of the same age range (62%) and slightly below the rates of the Indigenous population across BC (48%) and Canada (49%).

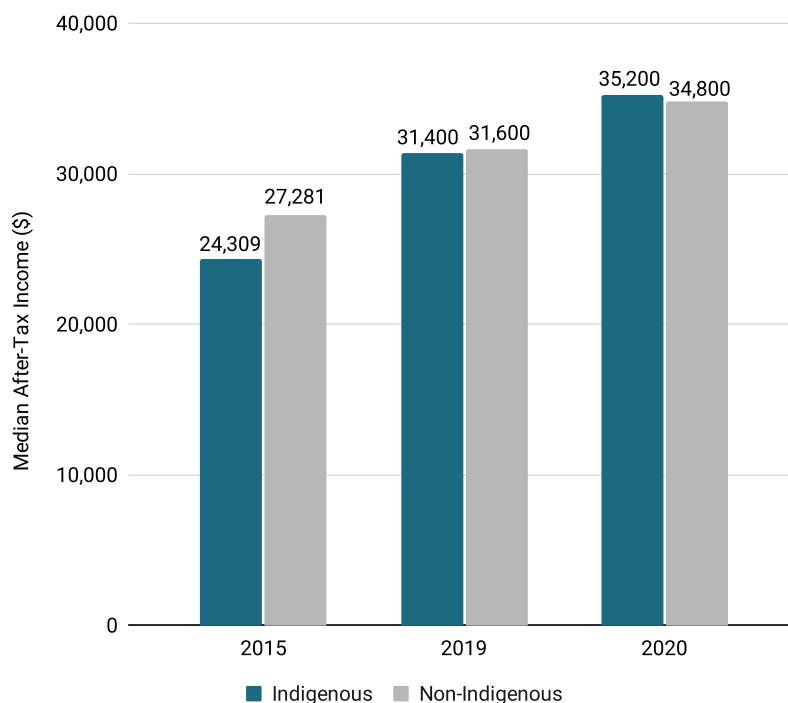
Despite being home to over 5 major post-secondary institutions, post-secondary outcomes differ substantially between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Surrey residents. The proportion of the non-Indigenous population aged 25 to 64 in Surrey with a bachelor's degree or higher (34%) is more than three times that of the Indigenous population (10%).

Indigenous Population in Surrey by Highest Level of Educational Attainment





Income inequality between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population has been narrowing since 2015.



The median after-tax income is growing at a faster rate for Indigenous people than non-Indigenous people in Surrey.

Indigenous individuals' median after-tax income grew by 29% between 2015 and 2019, and by 12% between 2019 and 2020. Increased government transfers, particularly COVID-19 emergency and recovery benefits, sustained and accelerated Indigenous peoples' income growth. Government transfers are any payments from the provincial or federal government, including disability benefits, pension payments, child benefits, social assistance, employment insurance, and financial support for individuals affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is unclear whether this trend will continue as COVID-19 emergency and recovery benefits have stopped.

The share of Indigenous people who are low-income in Surrey is declining.

The share of Indigenous people in Surrey who are considered low-income decreased from 34% in 2016 to 12% in 2021. While this is higher than the non-Indigenous population in Surrey (9%), it is lower than the share of Indigenous people in Vancouver (20%) or BC (15%) who are considered low-income.

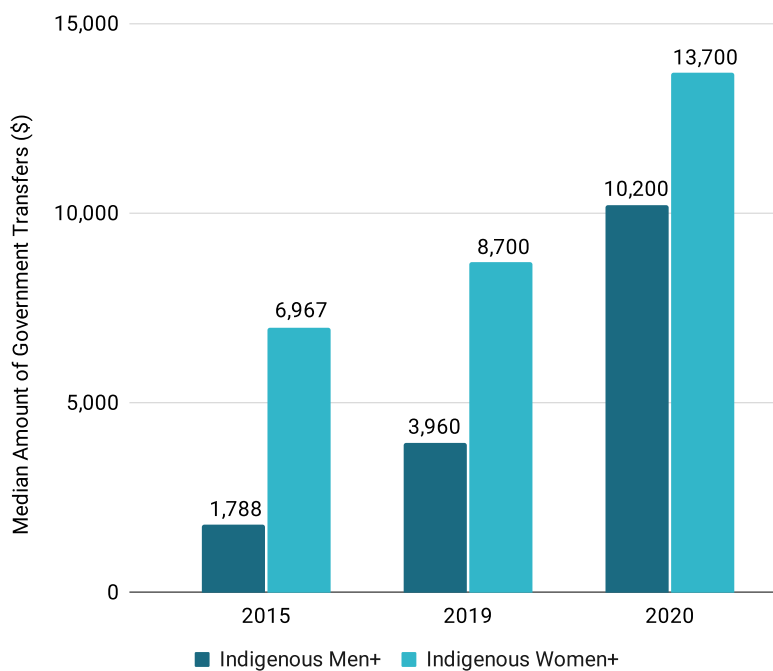
Unemployment is highest for Indigenous Women+ and lowest for non-Indigenous Men+.

Indigenous Women+ have the lowest employment and highest unemployment rates when compared to Indigenous Men+ and non-Indigenous Men+ and Women+.

Indigenous Men+ and Women+ also tend to work in different industries. The top employer of Indigenous Men+ is the construction industry, followed by manufacturing and retail services. The top employer of Indigenous Women+ is the health care and social assistance industry, followed by retail services and educational services.



Pandemic benefits reached a third of Indigenous people with more support for Indigenous Women+.



The proportion of Indigenous people receiving government transfers grew due to COVID benefits.

The percentage of Indigenous individuals ages 15 and over receiving government transfers increased from 64% in 2019 to 81% in 2020, 3,000 of whom (33%) received COVID-19 emergency and recovery benefits and 3,215 (35%) received earning replacement benefits. Five times more than the 640 Indigenous individuals who received earning replacement benefits in 2019.

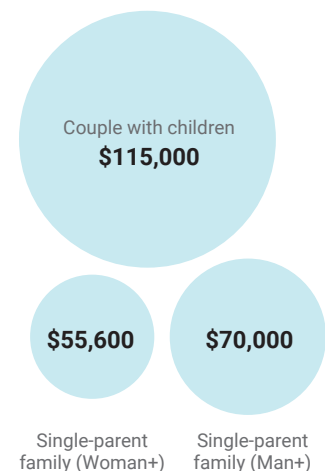
In 2020, a higher percentage of Indigenous Women+ (85%) received government transfers than Indigenous Men+ (77%); the average median government transfers received by Indigenous Women+ was \$3,500 greater than Indigenous Men+ and accounted for nearly one-third of the total income for Indigenous Women+, compared to only one-fifth for Indigenous Men+. Both of these trends have remained consistent since 2015.

Single-parent Women+ play crucial roles in many Indigenous families.

Indigenous families in Surrey have a unique family structure compared to non-Indigenous families. A higher proportion of Indigenous children (44%) live in single-parent families than non-Indigenous children (18%). Over 75% of Indigenous single-parent families are led by Women+.

Single-parent Women+ earn less than half the median after-tax household income of Indigenous couples with children, suggesting that these families may experience more economic vulnerability than two-parent households and single-parent Indigenous Men+.

Median After-tax Indigenous Household Income





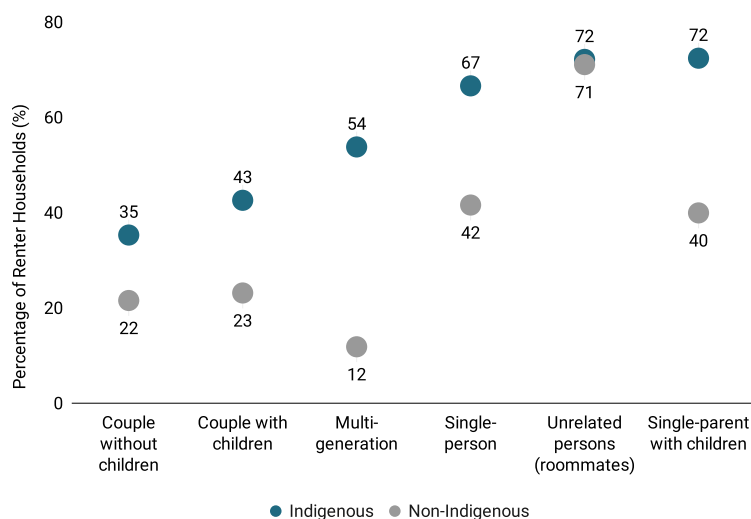
Over half of Indigenous households rent, with rising housing costs disproportionately affecting Indigenous renters.

Single-person and single parent Indigenous households are more likely to live in unaffordable housing, defined as shelter costs exceeding 30% of total before-tax household income.

A total of 39% of Indigenous households (owners and renters) live in housing that does not meet acceptability standards – unaffordable, requiring major repairs, or lacking enough bedrooms for the number of people living there. These rates are similar to non-Indigenous households where 26% live in unaffordable housing and 38% live in unacceptable housing.

Just under half (45%) of single-person Indigenous households and over a third (34%) of single-parent Indigenous families live in unaffordable housing. A higher share of single-parent Women+ (36%) live in unaffordable housing than single-parent Men+ (30%).

The share of homes that are unaffordable is higher for renters (31%) than homeowners (18%). Single-parent (34%) and single person (49%) Indigenous renter households in Surrey face housing unaffordability at an even greater rate.



The majority of Indigenous households rent their home, (54%) as compared to non-Indigenous households (34%).

The majority (72%) of Indigenous single-parent households and just under half (43%) of couples with children are renters, compared to 40% of non-Indigenous single-parent households and 23% of couples with children.

Indigenous homeownership rates in Surrey have remained relatively unchanged, hovering around 46% since 2016. Non-Indigenous homeownership rates declined slightly, from 72% in 2016 to 70% in 2021. Despite the decline, non-Indigenous homeownership rates are 1.5 times higher than Indigenous residents. Provincially, more Indigenous households are living in government, First Nation, or Indian band housing than in 2016.

42% increase in rents among Indigenous households in Surrey

Rising housing costs in Surrey have disproportionately affected Indigenous renters, with a 42% increase in median monthly rents between 2016 and 2021 – the highest increase when compared to Vancouver (35%), BC (31%), and Canada overall (16%). Over that same period, housing costs for Indigenous owners rose just 9%.



These fact sheets were prepared by Big River Analytics Ltd., a Métis-owned consulting firm based in BC, with the objective of providing statistical and analytical capacity to benefit Indigenous peoples, communities, governments, and organizations across Canada.

The project was completed on behalf of the Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Committee. SUILC gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, Indigenous Services Canada, and SPARC BC.

SUILC's mission is to be the collective voice of the urban Indigenous population in Surrey. We will advocate on behalf of all urban Indigenous people in Surrey and work collaboratively with other governments, organizations and individuals that are committed to understanding and achieving our vision.

For more information: www.surreyindigenousleadership.ca