

Census Definitions

To collect the best data, Statistics Canada relies upon well-defined variables to describe groups of people.

Here are some definitions of terms you might encounter when working with Census data in this lesson.

From Statistics Canada:

Indigenous identity refers to whether the person identified with the Indigenous peoples of Canada. This includes those who identify as First Nations (North American Indian), Métis and/or Inuk (Inuit), and/or those who report being Registered or Treaty Indians (that is, registered under the Indian Act of Canada), and/or those who have membership in a First Nation or Indian band.

The [term] **Registered or Treaty Indian status** refers to whether or not a person is a Registered or Treaty Indian. Registered Indians are persons who are registered under the Indian Act of Canada. Treaty Indians are persons who belong to a First Nation or Indian band that signed a treaty with the Crown. Registered or Treaty Indians are sometimes also called Status Indians.

The variable **Indigenous ancestry** refers to whether a person has ancestry associated with the Indigenous peoples of Canada, that is, First Nations (North American Indian), Métis and/or Inuit. Ancestry refers to the ethnic or cultural origins of the person's ancestors, an ancestor being usually more distant than a grandparent. A person can have more than one ethnic or cultural origin. In the 2021 Census, the terms "origins" and "ancestry" are used interchangeably.

From the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC):

Indian: A term that has been used historically by explorers and settlers to identify Indigenous peoples in South, Central, and North America. In Canada, the term has legal meaning in the Indian Act, which defines who has Indian "status" for their purpose. For some Indigenous peoples, the term "Indian" confirms their ancestry and protects their historic relationship with the federal Crown. For others, the definitions set out in the Indian Act are not affirmations of their identity. In terms of these curricular resources, Indian is used in historical and legal contexts. For example, it is the Indian Act which still has legal and governmental importance today.

Census Definitions (cont'd)

From Indigenous Services Canada (ISC):

Use of the term "Indian"

Many Indigenous people in Canada prefer not to describe themselves as "Indians" and view this term as rooted in colonialism and racism. Under the Indian Act, the precise legal meaning of the term "Indian" refers to First Nations persons who are entitled to registration.

From the Métis National Council:

Who are the Métis?

The Métis are a distinct Indigenous people and nation recognized in the Constitution Act 1982 as one of the three Aboriginal peoples in Canada. They emerged in the historic Northwest during the late 18th century, originally the mixed offspring of Indian women and European fur traders. As this population established distinct communities separate from those of Indians and Europeans and married among themselves, a new Indigenous people emerged – the Métis people – with their own unique culture, traditions, language (Michif), and way of life, collective consciousness, and nationhood.

What is the Historic Métis Nation Homeland

The Historic Métis Nation Homeland encompasses the three Prairie Provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta), as well as parts of Ontario, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, and the Northern United States.

"Métis" means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry, and who is accepted by the Métis Nation.