

The Population Dynamics of Native Canadians

Friday, October 27, 2023 3:30 PM (20 minutes)

Native Canadians are the fourth pan ethnic group (6.1%) in Canada. As a minority ethnic group, they exhibit unique population characteristics. Using the 2021 Canadian Census Data, this paper explores the population characteristics of Native Canadians. Canadian Natives are broadly classified into three groups: Indians, Inuit, and Métis. Indians are believed to have entered North America through the Bering Sea about 10,000 to 30,000 years ago. Similarly, Inuit entered North America through the same land bridge with Asia that existed during the Pleistocene era. Over the years, the three groups had maintained different relationships with the federal government.

Apart from maintaining different relationships with the federal government, the three groups exhibit unique population characteristics. While the population of Métis increased at about 6.3% between 2016 and 2021, Inuit and Indians experienced an increase of about 8.3% and 9.7% respectively. The rate of increase was smaller for Registered or Treaty Indians (4.1%), compared to non-Registered or non-Treaty Indians (27.2%). Comparatively, the growth of the non-Native population was much lower (5.3%). Several factors including high fertility rates among Native Canadians, and a change in census definition of Aboriginal Canadians accounts for this phenomenon. Other population characteristics examined in this presentation include geographic distribution and use of Native languages. The analysis indicates that Ontario accounts for the largest concentration of Aboriginal Canadians. However, the largest provincial/territorial concentration of Aboriginal Canadians occurs in Nunavut (85.8%), Northwest Territories (49.6%) and Yukon (22.3%).

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Session Classification: Paper Presentations

Track Classification: Population & Migration