

## Housing Need among the Métis in Canada, 1991

### Introduction

In some regards, residents of Métis households fare slightly better economically than other Aboriginal peoples. A greater proportion are employed and many work in better paying jobs. Yet average household income is only marginally higher than for other Aboriginal people and the proportion of households in core housing need is in line with that of all other Aboriginal people. This incongruity is partly explained by especially high levels of core housing need among the high proportion of Métis who are: lone parents, seniors living in rural areas, and/or persons with disabilities. It is also partly explained by geography. Most Métis households reside in the Prairies, with a significant minority living in more northerly and remote locales. These are precisely the areas where housing conditions are poor for a large proportion of all Aboriginal households.

### The Data

The information and data provided in this issue primarily come from special tabulations using two of the richest and most comprehensive information sources available for understanding the housing situation of Canadian Aboriginal people—the *Aboriginal Peoples Survey* and the 1991 Census. The housing standards of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's core housing need model are applied to these data to assess housing need among the Métis. Households whose housing does not meet one or more of the standards for adequacy, suitability or affordability and whose income is insufficient to afford rental housing that does meet standards are considered to be in core housing need.

### Findings

In 1991, there were 131,260 persons who identified as Métis residing in 63,020 Métis households—just under a third of all off-reserve Aboriginal households. Thirty-two percent of Métis households are in core housing need, about the same proportion as other Aboriginal households, but more than twice the percentage of non-Aboriginal households.

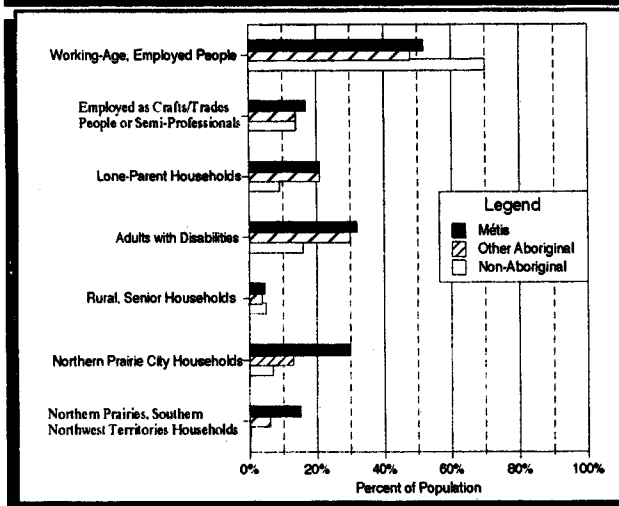
### Socio-demographic and Labour Force Influences on Core Housing Need

In comparison with the non-Aboriginal population, the Métis face a number of disadvantages which lead to much higher levels of core housing need. They are much less likely to have any post-secondary schooling; they are much less likely to be employed; and when employed, they are much more likely to have low earnings. Further, families are far more likely to be headed by a lone parent, and working-age adults are twice as likely as non-Aboriginal adults to have a disability. Largely as a result, in 1990, household income for the Métis averaged only 80% of that of other Canadians, and Métis households were more than twice as likely as non-Aboriginal households to have low incomes.

**Many Métis  
in housing  
need are lone  
parents,  
persons with  
disabilities  
and in rural  
areas, seniors.**

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre *Les besoins de logement des Métis au Canada, 1991*.

**Figure 1: Proportion of Métis, Other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Population with Selected Characteristics**

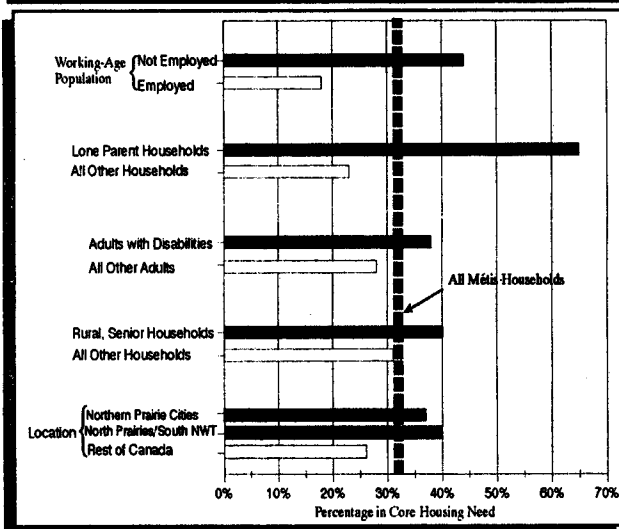


At first glance, Métis fare slightly better economically than other Aboriginal people. In 1990, their average household income was a marginal 2% higher than that of other Aboriginal households. At the same time, 2% fewer Métis than other Aboriginal households fell below Statistics Canada's Low-income Cutoffs.

However, about the same proportion of Métis and other Aboriginal households fall into core housing need. That the Métis incur this similar level of core housing need to some degree reflects a number of small off-setting socio-demographic and labour force differences in comparison to other Aboriginal people. On the positive side:

- Métis working-age adults are more likely to be employed (52% versus 48%) and those with employment are much less likely to be in core housing need than those without employment (18% versus 44%); and
- Higher percentages of Métis work as semi-professionals or as skilled crafts/tradespersons (17% versus 14%). Among them, core housing need is again lower at 16%.

**Figure 2: Level of Métis Core Housing Need by Selected Characteristics**



On the other hand:

- While similar proportions of Métis and other Aboriginal households include lone parents, Métis lone-parent households are more likely to be in core housing need (65% versus 60%). The great majority of Métis lone-parent households live in urban areas. There, they make up 22% of all Métis households but just under half (47%) of Métis households in housing need. Predominantly renters, the majority of these Métis lone parents are in core housing need and below the affordability standard.
- Thirty-two percent of Métis adults have disabilities, slightly above the 30% disability rate of other aboriginal adults. As among other Aboriginal people, levels of core housing need are higher among adults with a disability. Overall, 38% of Métis adults with a disability are in core housing need in contrast to 28% of those with no disability.

- Five percent of Métis households are led by seniors residing in rural areas, in contrast to 3% of other Aboriginal households. Forty percent of rural Métis senior households are in core housing need. The great majority (81%) of rural Métis seniors in core housing need own their home, and 9 out of 10 of these dwellings fall below the adequacy standard.

### Geography and the Incidence of Housing Need

Thirty-two percent of off-reserve households are Métis. As 7 out of 10 reside in the Prairie Provinces they make up a majority of off-reserve prairie Aboriginal households. In this region, where Aboriginal housing conditions are particularly bad, Métis core housing need peaks in the north and in a number of larger cities (see Figure 3). Nonetheless, even in these pockets, as in the

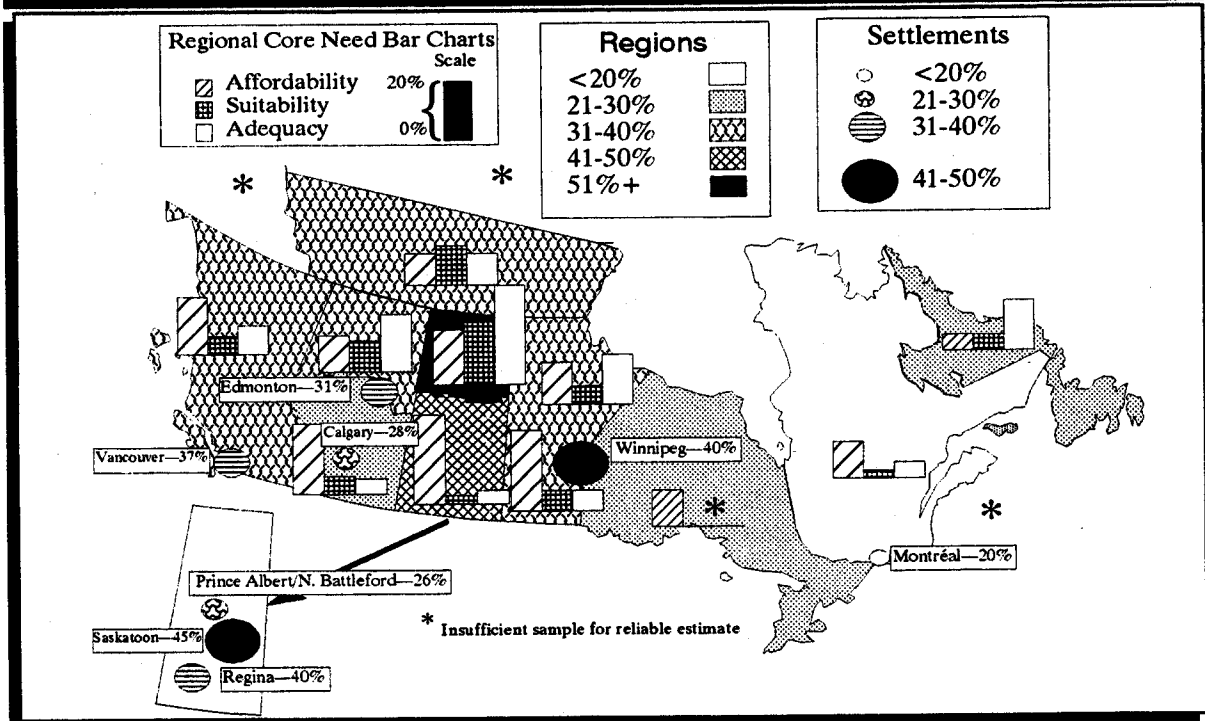
rest of the country, economic and housing circumstances among the Métis are never any worse, and are very often somewhat better than for their Aboriginal neighbours.

Thirty percent of Métis households reside in four Prairie cities—Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Regina, and Edmonton. In these cities, in 1990, although the incomes of Métis households averaged 10% higher than those of other Aboriginal households, they ranged from only two thirds to just over three quarters of those of non-Aboriginal households. As a result, despite the fact that Prairie urban shelter costs are among the lowest in Canada, the incidence of Métis core housing need still ranges from a low of 31% in Edmonton a high of 45% in Saskatoon. In these urban areas, Métis as well as other Aboriginal core need households predominantly rent and almost all are below the affordability standard. In addition, a small, but significant minority of renters in core need fall below both the suitability and affordability standards.

Another 15% of Métis households are located in the sparsely populated northern parts of the Prairie Provinces and the adjacent southern part of the Northwest Territories. There, they comprise two thirds of all off-reserve Aboriginal households and 40% of them are in core housing need. Housing adequacy is the most prevalent problem. While 26% of northern Métis households are in core housing need and below the adequacy standard, the problem peaks at 38% in northern Saskatchewan. This housing problem prevails even though a very large proportion of the stock in these areas is relatively new and subsidized through federal, provincial, and territorial housing programs. Climatic extremes, the high costs of transporting building materials to these remote areas and inadequate incomes to undertake needed maintenance all lead to the accelerated deterioration of many northern Aboriginal dwellings. As a result, high proportions of Canada's northern Métis households are in core housing need because their housing is in poor repair. Further, inadequate community water and sewage disposal facilities result in the absence of adequate bathroom facilities in a number of northern Aboriginal communities, a situation which is extremely rare to non-Aboriginal households in Canada.

**High levels of core housing need occur in the Prairies where most Métis reside.**

**Figure 3: Core Need Levels in Métis Households by Region and Selected Métis Population Centres Showing Proportions Below Core Need Standards**



In part of this area, a significant minority of households fall into core housing need and below the suitability standard. They live in crowded housing because of low incomes combined with a shortage of subsidized housing. The area of high suitability need stretches through northern Saskatchewan and Alberta to the adjacent southern Northwest Territories. There, 18% of households are in core need at least partially due to crowding. Crowding often leads to rapid housing deterioration and as a result, crowded core need households also often live below the adequacy standard.

## Conclusion

In comparison to the non-Aboriginal population, the Métis face a number of disadvantages which translate into much higher levels of core housing need. They are much less likely to have any post-secondary schooling; they are much less likely to be employed; and when employed, much more likely to have low earnings. Further, a much higher proportion of families are headed by a lone parent and the disability rate among working-age adults is twice that of non-Aboriginal adults.

When the housing situation of the Métis is contrasted with that of other Aboriginal households, a number of small, but distinct differences emerge. In comparison to other Aboriginal people, a higher proportion of Métis working-age adults have the advantage of having found employment and many of these people are in relatively well-paying jobs. Core housing need among these people is relatively low. At the same time, however, higher proportions of the Métis are in core housing need because they have disabilities, are lone-parents or are seniors living in rural areas. Similar contrasts emerge as a result of Métis geography. In most parts of the country, Métis households are less susceptible to being in core housing need than their other Aboriginal neighbours. What seems to be an advantage, however, is off-set by the fact that most Métis reside in areas where the housing conditions of all Aboriginal peoples are likely to be at their worst—the larger urban areas of the northern Prairies, and the rural, remote areas stretching to their north and into the Northwest Territories.

This issue of *Research and Development Highlights* has been produced as part of a concerted research program that aims to better understand Aboriginal housing conditions in Canada today. This work draws on comprehensive studies of Aboriginal peoples and their housing conditions across the country. For further information about the contents of this highlight, contact John Engeland, Research Division, at (613) 748-2799, or e-mail: [jengelan@cmhc.e-mail.com](mailto:jengelan@cmhc.e-mail.com)

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