

Housing Need among Off-reserve Status Indian Households in Canada, 1991

Introduction

Core housing need is substantially higher for status Indian than other Aboriginal households in almost all areas of the country. Moreover, the majority of Aboriginal core need households include at least one person with Indian status. For those living in urban areas, housing need often stems from very low income and the need to dedicate high proportions of that income to shelter. In the northern and remote areas of the West, a significant proportion of households reside in dwellings that are crowded, in poor repair, and/or lacking in basic bathroom amenities.

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 persons with Indian status. 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, an estimated 206,235 persons living off-reserve were registered as Indians as defined by the *Indian Act*. These persons with Indian status resided in 95,910 households, 49% of all off-reserve Aboriginal households. Thirty-six percent of status Indian households are in core housing need, substantially higher than the 28% of other off-reserve Aboriginal households. Status Indian households are about two and a half times more likely to be in core housing need than non-Aboriginal Canadian households.

Labour Force Characteristics and Core Housing Need

Low household income and high levels of core housing need are strongly related to the low proportion of working-age persons with Indian status who are employed. In 1991, only 44% of working-age persons with Indian status had a job, in contrast to 54% of other Aboriginal and 70% of non-Aboriginal working-age adults. Forty-eight percent of working-age status Indian

36% of
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Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre *Les besoins de logement des Indiens inscrits vivant hors réserves au Canada, 1991.*

Figure 1: Proportion of Status Indian, Other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Population with Selected Characteristics

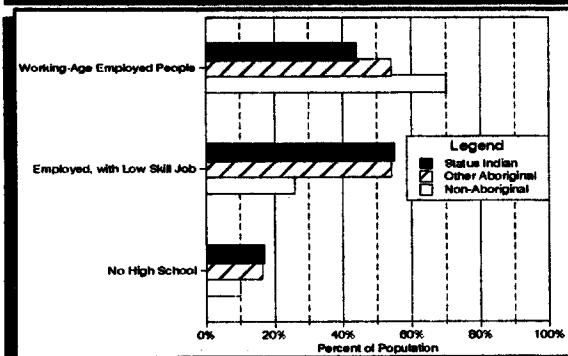
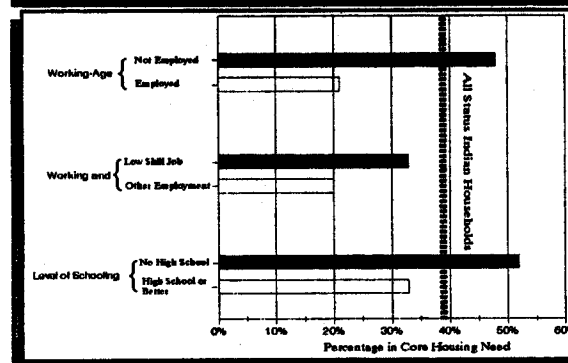


Figure 2: Level of Status Indian Core Housing Need by Selected Characteristics



Levels of status Indian housing need are higher than those of other Aboriginal people in almost all areas of the country.

adults without jobs are in core housing need, in contrast to 21% of those with employment.

Low labour force participation reflects the high proportion of working-age status Indians who are:

- young women raising children alone;
- persons with long-term health or activity limitations; and/or
- full time school attendees.

These persons make up approximately two thirds of status Indian working age adults without work.

Still, a large number of persons with Indian status are among the working poor. In particular, 55% of working people with Indian status have low-paying sales and service jobs or work as unskilled or semi-skilled labourers in contrast to 26% of non-Aboriginal working adults. A third of people with Indian status and these types of work are in core housing need in comparison to 20% of those with other types of jobs.

Occupation and labour force participation levels are strongly related to the level of schooling of working-age persons with Indian status. Irrespective of age, persons with Indian status are less likely to have reached high school or to have had any post-secondary schooling than other Canadians. Among non-senior adults who had not reached high school, 53% are in core housing need.

Urban Residence and Core Housing Need

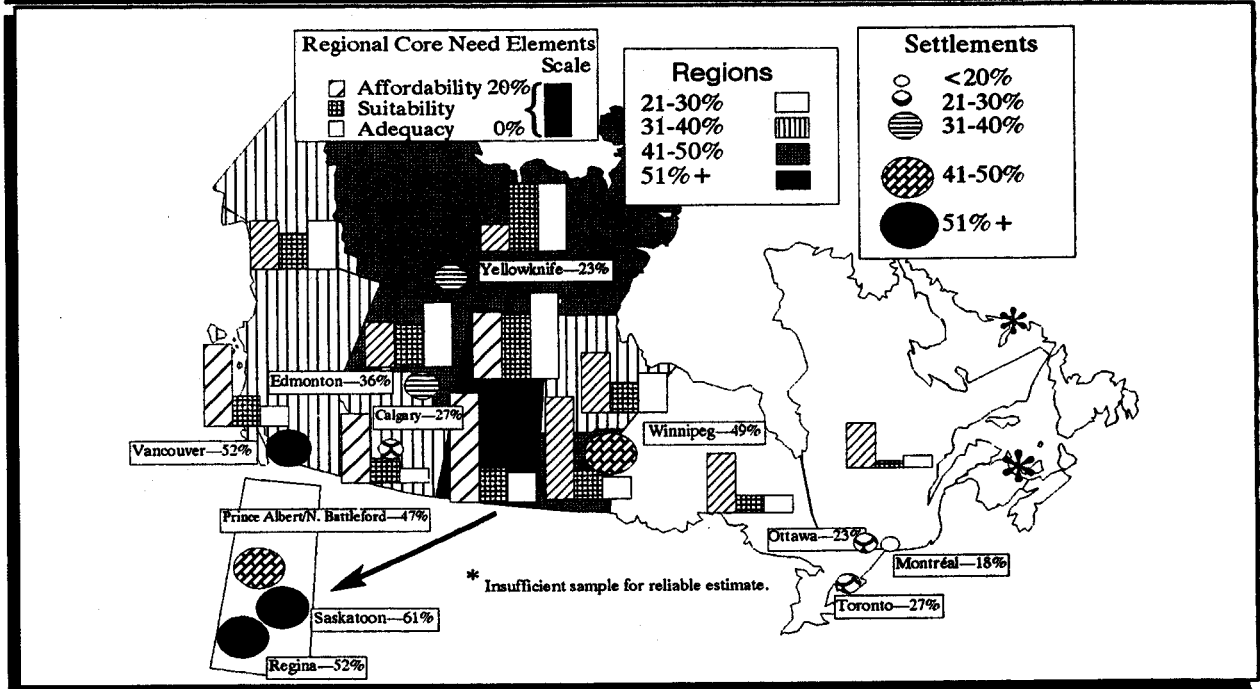
A higher proportion of off-reserve status Indian than other Aboriginal households are in urban areas (78% versus 70%) and there, status Indian households are more likely to be in core housing need (38% versus 31%). Core housing need among status Indian households in urban areas is tied to their low income. In 1990, their average household income was only 70% that of urban non-Aboriginal and 84% that of other Aboriginal households, and 44% were below Statistic Canada's Low-income Cutoffs. It is also linked to the very low income of the 25% of urban households that include a lone parent. The great majority of these lone parents are young women, 74% of whom are in core need households.

Most persons in urban areas with low income cannot afford homeownership, and so it is not surprising that two thirds of urban status Indian households rent. Almost half of these renters are in core housing need, 93% of whom are below the affordability standard. One in seven urban renter households is in core housing need and crowded but reflecting their low incomes, nine in ten of these also spend 30% or more of their income for shelter. A large proportion of crowded renters live in extended households, often formed because of a collective responsibility felt by many status Indian people to share housing with other band and/or community members in need.

Geographic Variations in the Incidence of Housing Need

Off-reserve status Indian households are more likely to be in core housing need than other Aboriginal households in all areas of the country except those heavily populated by the Inuit. Further, off-reserve status Indian households are more evenly spread out across the country than are other Aboriginal households.

Figure 3: Levels of Core Housing Need by Selected Urban Areas and Regions Showing Proportions Below Core Need Standards, Status Indian Households



Still, as is generally the case among other Aboriginal people, levels of core housing need are highest west of Ontario, peaking in the area stretching through southern Manitoba, all of Saskatchewan, northern Alberta, and the Northwest Territories (see Figure 3). Levels of core housing need are particularly high among status Indian households in this area's cities—Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert/North Battleford, and Edmonton. Taken together, the average income of status Indian households in these cities is approximately 60% that of non-Aboriginal households and moreover, the majority have incomes which are below Statistics Canada's Low-income Cutoffs. These extremely low incomes more than counterbalance housing costs that are well under the national average. While most households in these cities own, over 80% of status Indian households rent and just under 6 of 10 of these renters are in core housing need.

In rural areas, the majority of status Indian households in core housing need are located in an area stretching over northern Saskatchewan, northern Alberta, and the Northwest Territories. In this area, well over half of status Indian households are in core housing need, most falling below adequacy and/or suitability standards. Here, core housing need has at its root:

- a mismatch between the size of much of the available housing stock and the needs of many larger family and extended households;
- many people do not have sufficient financial resources to pay the high ongoing cost of adequately maintaining existing housing in these remote areas; and
- a large proportion of dwellings that do not have access to the water and sewage facilities required for adequate bathroom amenities, a situation extremely rare in non-Aboriginal households in Canada.

These circumstances are shared with many other Aboriginal people located here both on- and off-reserve.

Figure 3 shows that a second peak in the level of core housing need occurs in the large status Indian community located in the Vancouver area. There, average housing costs are that much higher than in Prairie cities that they more than offset any potential benefits that could have been derived from slightly higher average status Indian household incomes.

Conclusion

A significantly higher proportion of off-reserve status Indian households are in core housing need compared to other Aboriginal households in almost all areas of the country. Moreover, status Indian households are approximately two and a half times more likely to be in core housing need than other Canadian households.

First and foremost, high levels of core housing need are tied to the high proportion of working-age adults without employment; and the very low proportion of people with jobs who have good-paying jobs. These employment characteristics, in turn, largely reflect the low levels of schooling received by many working-age adults, the high disability rate and the great many adults who are women raising young children on their own.

A large majority of off-reserve status Indian households are located in urban areas where a very high proportion have low incomes, are renters, and fall below the affordability standard. These circumstances are most prevalent in western cities. In rural areas, core housing need is concentrated in the remote area of northern Saskatchewan, northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories where those in housing need are in dwellings which are often in poor repair, lack basic bathroom amenities, and/or are crowded.

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 issue, contact John Engeland, Research Division, at (613) 748-2799 or e-mail: jengelan@cmhc.e-mail.com

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