

Housing Need among North American Indians without Indian Status in Canada, 1991

Introduction

Twenty-two percent of Aboriginal people living off-reserve identify themselves as North American Indians but do not have Indian status under the *Indian Act*. These persons come from diverse backgrounds. Many older non-status Indians gave up their Indian status in order to pursue certain better paying careers or jobs. Others are descendants of those who through marriage were not able to pass on Indian status to their children. Some are persons now eligible under Bill C-31 who, as of 1991, had not applied for status, and a few are North American Indians, who, for one reason or another, never obtained Indian status and continue to live on their traditional lands.

The housing situation of non-status North American Indian people tends to be better than that of other Aboriginal people, but a sizeable gap remains between non-status Indians and other Canadian households. This difference can be explained largely by examining their demography, their educational and labour force characteristics and where most non-status Indian people live.

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 non-status North American Indians. 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 99,015 persons identified themselves as being North American Indians but were not registered under the *Indian Act*. These people resided in 44,985 households, 23% of all off-reserve Aboriginal households. Twenty-four percent of non-status Indian households are in core housing need, substantially below the 37% of other Aboriginal peoples living off-reserve. However, non-status Indian households remain much more likely to be in core housing need than non-Aboriginal Canadian households.

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Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre *Les besoins de logement des Indiens nord-américains non inscrits au Canada, 1991*.

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

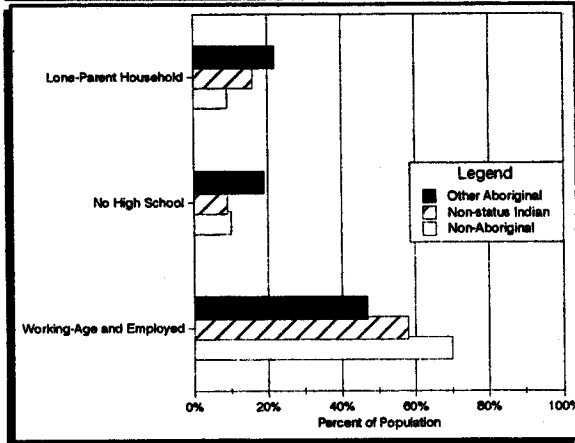
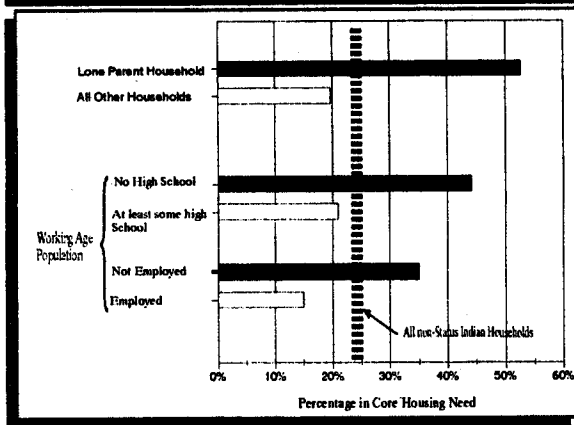


Figure 2: Level of Non-status Indian Core Housing Need by Selected Characteristics



Socio-demographic and Labour Force Influences on Core Housing Need

In terms of the socio-demographic and labour force characteristics that influence the likelihood of falling into core housing need, non-status Indian households and their members usually lie between non-Aboriginal and other Aboriginal households. For example:

- 18% of non-status Indian households include a lone-parent in contrast to 22% of other Aboriginal and 10% of non-Aboriginal households (see Figure 1). Lone-parent households are much more likely than other households to fall into core housing need. Fifty-three percent of non-status Indian households which include lone parents as members are in core housing need in contrast to 19% of those that do not. Non-status Indian lone parents in core housing need are largely women with low incomes who rent in urban areas. They primarily experience affordability problems.
- 12% of non-status Indian households are extended households in contrast to 17% of other Aboriginal and 4% of non-Aboriginal households. Aboriginal extended households are often formed by kin and persons from the same band or community who crowd together in order to afford shelter. The proportion of non-status Indian households that are crowded and in core need is half that (5%) of other Aboriginal people (10%). Still, non-status Indians are more than three times more likely to be in core housing need and crowded than non-Aboriginal households.
- 58% of working age non-status Indian adults are participating in the labour force compared to 70% of non-Aboriginal and the 47% of other Aboriginal adults. In particular, Figure 2 shows that core housing need levels are low among those who have found jobs—15% in contrast to 35% of those without employment.

In one key characteristic, non-status Indian adults closely resemble other Aboriginal adults. They are young—70% of non-status Indian adults are between the ages of 15 and 39 compared to 51% of non-Aboriginal Canadian adults. As in the Canadian population as a whole, a higher proportion of these younger adults have low incomes, rent their accommodations, and are in core housing need.

In another key characteristic they very closely resemble other Canadians. Non-status Indians tend to be relatively well educated—only 9% of working age adults have less than a high school education, in contrast to 10% of other Canadians and 19% of other Aboriginal people. Figure 2 shows that working-age non-status Indians with no high school are more than twice as likely to be in core housing need than those with high school or better.

It is thus not surprising that when income characteristics are examined, non-status Indian households again lie "in-between". In 1990, the average income of non-status Indian households was 90% that of non-Aboriginal households—but 118% that of other Aboriginal households.

Twenty-six percent were below Statistic Canada's Low-income Cutoffs, higher than the 19% of non-Aboriginal households but considerably lower than the 37% of other Aboriginal households. The economic circumstances of non-status Indians influence the proportion of households which can afford to own their homes. Non-status Indian households are more likely to own their dwellings than are other Aboriginal households (51% in contrast to 42%), but are still much less likely to own than non-Aboriginal households (67%).

Yet, non-status Indian people are not a homogeneous group. Especially large differences exist between younger and older working-age adults. A significant proportion of older working-age adults (50 to 64 years of age) are drawn from those who gave up their Indian status in order to pursue professional degrees or post-secondary schooling. In comparison with both other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people of the same age, a higher proportion remain in the labour force and a higher percentage of those employed are in better paying managerial and professional occupations. As a result, the average income of older working-age adults is very similar to that of other Canadian adults and the level of core housing need is low (20%) in comparison with other Aboriginal people.

Non-status Indian adults between the ages of 15 and 49 are also more likely than other Aboriginal people of the same age to have at least some post-secondary training, to be employed, and to work in better paying jobs. However, these differences are much less pronounced than they are for their older working-age counterparts. Moreover, much smaller proportions have these characteristics than non-Aboriginal adults in the same age group. In particular, young non-status Indian adults are much less likely than young non-Aboriginal adults to participate in the labour force largely because of a combination of barriers facing a high proportion (26%) with disabilities and a very high proportion (20%) who attend school full time.

The level of non-status Indian housing need is below that of other Aboriginal people in every region of the country.

Geographical Variations in the Incidence of Housing Need

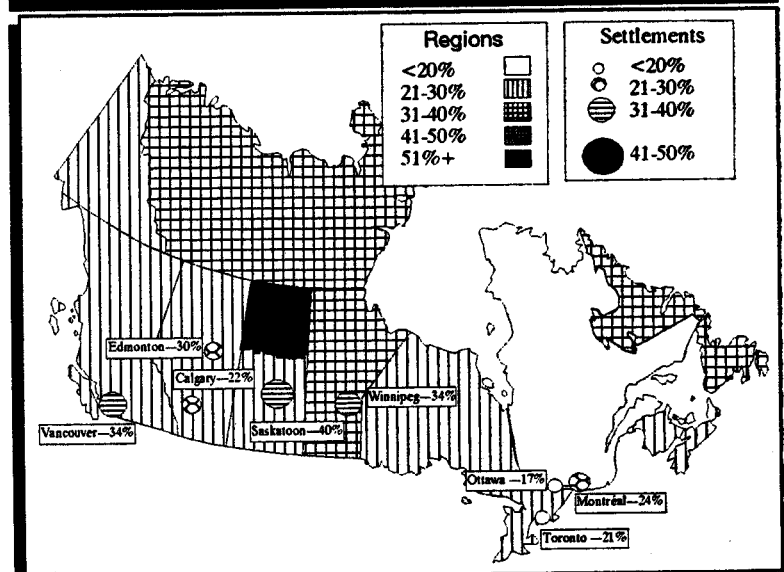
Overall, in every major region of the country, the proportion of non-status Indian households in core housing need is below that of other Aboriginal peoples—varying from a low of 19% in Québec to just over 39% in Saskatchewan.

The geographical distribution of non-status Indian households is very different from that of other Aboriginal people. A large majority live in Ontario and British Columbia/Yukon where, for the most part, housing conditions tend to be better for Aboriginal people. Reflecting the high proportion of the non-status population who reside in highly urbanized areas where housing costs tend to be higher, non-status Indian households that are in core housing need predominantly fall below the affordability standard.

In some pockets, however, core housing need is particularly high for non-status Indians. These pockets are located where core housing need is also very high for other Aboriginal households:

- the northern and remote areas of Labrador (36%) and northern Saskatchewan (64%) where a large proportion fall below adequacy standards; and

Figure 3: Levels of Core Housing Need by Selected Urban Areas and Regions, Non-status Indian Households



- the urban areas of Winnipeg (34%), Saskatoon (40%), Edmonton (30%) and Vancouver (34%) where almost all are below the affordability standard.

Vancouver is the only pocket that is home to a substantial part of the non-status Indian population. It claims one in nine of all non-status Indian core need households.

Conclusion

Non-status North American Indians are more likely to be in core housing need than non-Aboriginal people for many of the same reasons as other Aboriginal people. Adults tend to be young, many have a disability, and many are women raising a family alone. At the same time, a much smaller proportion of non-status Indians are in core housing need than are other Aboriginal people because most reside in parts of the country where housing conditions are generally better, they tend to be better educated and a larger proportion have well-paying jobs.

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

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