

Currently, there are some 600 Indian bands in Canada. Average band membership is about 700 people. Several bands have fewer than 50 members, and the largest (Six Nations of the Grand River) has roughly 13 000 members.

Reserves

Approximately 60 per cent of registered Indians live on reserves — special areas of land set aside through treaties or the *Indian Act* for the sole use and benefit of Indians. There are more than 2 200 such reserves across Canada. Most reserves are located in rural areas, many are isolated and some are not inhabited. In fact, approximately one in six Indians lives in an area so remote that there is no year-round road access to the nearest town.

Registered Indians living on a reserve are eligible for a variety of federal programs, including health, education, social assistance and, where available, housing assistance. As well, they may be exempt from paying income tax on earnings from on-reserve businesses or employment.

The 40 per cent of registered Indians who live off-reserve do so for a variety of reasons such as seeking employment opportunities or attending school. Although many Indians have never lived on a reserve, they nevertheless, maintain close ties with their traditional communities.

Population — age and distribution

Registered Indians currently comprise about 1.5 per cent of the Canadian population. The Indian population is relatively young, with well over half of registered Indians being under 25 years of age (compared to only 37 per cent of all Canadians).

Indian populations also vary widely from region to region. For example, fewer than one out of every 100 people in the Atlantic provinces is a registered Indian. In the Northwest Territories and Yukon, however, approximately one person in five is a registered Indian. (Métis and Inuit living in the North have not been included in this figure.)