

Responses to Members' questions during the
October 22, 2024 meeting - "Main Estimates for
the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025"

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Submitted by Statistics Canada

1. Indigenous data

Senator Smith: How does Statistics Canada plan to work with Indigenous communities to ensure that the data sovereignty and self-determination are respected in the process?

In the [2023–2026 Data Strategy for the Federal Public Service](#), it was clearly identified “that support for Indigenous data sovereignty is a government-wide priority that contributes to Indigenous self-determination. Over the next three years, work co-developed with Indigenous partners will lay a strong foundation for a whole-of-government approach to support First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nations as they realize their respective visions for data sovereignty”.

Through ongoing initiatives such as the Indigenous Liaison Advisory Program, the Indigenous Statistical Capacity Building Initiative, and the Directive on First Nations, Métis and Inuit Statistics, Statistics Canada continues to build relationships with Indigenous organizations and communities, to help them determine their data needs, improve data collection, and assist in building their own statistical capacity. More information on each of these initiatives is provided below, including specific metrics used to track progress towards this broader goal.

- **The Indigenous Statistical Capacity Building Initiative** enables First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit to develop and sustain their own statistical capacity through instructor-led training. There are currently 8 regular course offerings at no cost to Indigenous people. The training ranges in diversity of content, including *Introduction to Statistics*, *Surveys from Start to Finish*, and *Exploring Data Visualizations*, and more. New courses are in development, responding to growing needs identified by participants and Indigenous partner organizations and communities.
 - In 2023-2024, Statistics Canada shared their knowledge and expertise through the delivery of 35 courses to over 700 participants (over 95% of attendees reported being satisfied with training and capacity building).
- **The Indigenous Liaison Advisory Program** serves as a bridge between Statistics Canada and Indigenous communities. It plays a key role in conducting outreach in First Nations communities prior to census collection to demonstrate the value of census data. As part of a Nation-to-Nation relationship, Statistics Canada engages with First Nations through Indigenous Liaison Advisors, who request the permission of First Nations chiefs and council members to carry out Census enumeration in their community (reserve).
 - In general, the number of incompletely enumerated reserves and settlements has declined steadily over the past few decades. In 1996, there were 77 incompletely enumerated reserves (census subdivisions) during the census and over 100 in 1991. This fell to 30 in 2001, 22 in 2006, rose to 31 in 2011 and was 14 in 2016. In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic, forest fires, and lack of First Nation permission, resulted in 63 incompletely enumerated reserves out of a total of 1,026 census subdivisions in Canada that were classified as *on reserve*.
 - During the 2021 Census, Statistics Canada worked with local leaders and communities to promote census job opportunities and to reach harder to enumerate populations, resulting in hundreds of job opportunities across the country.
 - Following the 2016 Census, the agency visited 30 locations across the country, held approximately 60 discussions and listened to over 400 people from local, provincial,

- territorial and national Indigenous organizations to better understand the data needs of Indigenous organizations and communities and to gather feedback on the questions about First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations.
- Furthermore in 2021, two new questions were added to the long form census questionnaire following engagement with Indigenous communities and organizations and extensive questionnaire testing. These new questions will help Métis and Inuit governments and organizations better understand the demographic, social and economic characteristics of their members.
 - In preparation for the 2026 Census, a series of discussions, held virtually and in person, brought together members of Indigenous communities from across the country, representing individual data users, as well as local, provincial, territorial and national Indigenous organizations including friendship centres, health organizations, and individual First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. In facilitated discussions, contributors were asked to share their thoughts and opinions on five census questions used to identify First Nations people, Métis and Inuit, as well as provide feedback on specific terminology used in the census.
- **The Directive on First Nations, Métis and Inuit Statistics**, launched in April 2024, requires all employees, projects and initiatives at Statistics Canada pertaining to Indigenous statistics to notify and consult with the Centre for Indigenous Statistics and Partnerships. The main objective is to establish a consistent agency-wide approach to the collection and dissemination of statistics about First Nations people, Métis and Inuit—as well as to ensure appropriate engagement with Indigenous partners. Through the Centre for Indigenous Statistics and Partnerships, the following activities were carried out since the launch of the Directive (April 2024-October 2024):
 - Statistics Canada completed 26 analytic product reviews, and facilitated 14 reviews by National Indigenous Organizations
 - Strategic advice on engagement with Indigenous partners was provided to at least 14 Statistics Canada divisions; 5 external organizations and 5 other federal departments (ISC, Elections Canada, CHRC, ESDC, PHAC)
 - 36 instructor-led training sessions (1,338 participants) were provided on the topic of *Indigenous Peoples in Canada* to improve cultural awareness and competency among Statistics Canada employees

Senator Smith: How will Statistics Canada work with its partner organizations to better understand the data and improve the lives of Indigenous peoples?

The Indigenous Liaison Advisory program was founded in the late 1990s and has evolved to be a national program with eight advisors located across Canada. The program continues to play a vital role, with strong foundational relationships with Indigenous communities to help increase their understanding and access to Statistics Canada’s data; build statistical capacity; and liaise with communities on Statistics Canada surveys and initiatives. This work will continue with the emergence of new surveys and the 2026 Census.

Information from the Census and the Indigenous Peoples Survey have been used to measure the socioeconomic gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and provide more detailed information to further understand why those gaps may exist. The Census provides socioeconomic

information for all First Nations people, Métis and Inuit including First Nation and Inuit communities. One such product is [Status First Nations people in Canada: A snapshot from the 2021 Census \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/92-627-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm), produced in collaboration with the Assembly of First Nations.

Statistics Canada also conducts the Indigenous Peoples Survey every five years to further understand the health and socioeconomic well-being of First Nations people living off reserve, Métis and Inuit. The latest cycle was recently released on August 14, 2024, highlighting select findings on the well-being and health of First Nations children living off reserve, Métis children and Inuit children aged 1 to 14 years.

Investments from Budget 2021 (the Transformational Approach to Indigenous Data) have increased opportunities to deepen established collaboration between Statistics Canada and Indigenous partners to co-develop analytical projects and to seek ways to improve the visibility of Indigenous peoples in the national statistical system. These co-developed initiatives (around 40 discrete projects and activities) continue to offer statistical and data capacity development opportunities to First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, organizations and governments in support of Indigenous self-determination and data sovereignty initiatives. For example:

- The Survey Series on First Nations Peoples, Métis and Inuit consists of three short web panel surveys administered to respondents from the 2022 Indigenous Peoples Survey who volunteered to participate in follow up studies. Data collection will take place in 2024/25. Responses to the Indigenous Peoples Survey will be appended to the data from the same respondents from the web panel surveys to provide additional targeted insights on emerging issues.
- Projects have been co-developed with national, regional and other Indigenous organizations on a variety of priority areas, including Indigenous languages, economic development, children in care, avoidable mortality, tuberculosis and food security.
- Statistics Canada is currently working under a memorandum of collaboration with the First Nations Information Governance Centre to support initial implementation of the First Nations Data Governance Strategy through several co-developed projects designed to build their statistical and information governance capacity. Similar arrangements are being developed with Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages, and the British Columbia Regional Information Governance Centre.

Additionally, Statistics Canada is also working with organizations such as the National Indigenous Fire Safety Council (NIFSC) to generate data and insights that help identify risk factors related to fires on Indigenous communities, thereby helping Indigenous fire marshals develop prevention strategies that help save lives by preventing fire-related losses of life and properties in their communities. For these efforts, the NIFSC presented Statistics Canada with their first Fire Prevention Leadership Award.

2. Plastic Waste Reduction Strategy

Senator MacAdam: Can you speak to why there is this lag in data and the barriers to achieving more real-time, accurate data? What are some of the ways you might be allocating resources towards adapting methods to improve the pace and availability of data? (referencing the Commissioner of Environment and Sustainable Development report on the federal government's plastic waste reduction strategy)

The Physical Flow Account for Plastic Material (PFAPM) integrates internal Statistics Canada data with high-quality information from industry and government sources while adhering to privacy and confidentiality standards. Key data sources include the Supply and Use Tables (SUTs), the Waste Management Survey, the Annual Survey of Manufacturing and Logging Industries, and the Canadian International Merchandise Trade Data. Additionally, alternative data sources such as waste audits, industry stewardship reports, and provincial/territorial recycling reports are utilized.

Data are received by the PFAPM team at various intervals, with the availability of required survey and alternative data sources varying anywhere from approximately one to two years after the reference year.

The SUTs, which are integral to the production of the PFAPM, take significant time to put together as they rely on multiple data sources and are published 2 years and 11 months after the end of the reference year. Their production cannot commence until all required data sources have completed their work.

SUTs provide a coherently integrated picture of the economy in terms of industries and products. They represent a detailed snapshot of all economic activity taking place in a geographic region and are a powerful analytical tool that presents the structure of an economy as well as interlinkages among the various economic actors. Canada is one of few countries that produce annual SUTs at the national and sub-national provincial/territorial levels.

To ensure comprehensive analysis and dissemination, the PFAPM is released approximately 120 days after the SUTs are published. The account is finalized about 4 months after all relevant data are received, allowing sufficient time for thorough review and reporting.

StatCan will investigate the possibility of creating timelier PFAPM data by using SUT projections to produce preliminary estimates one year earlier. However, to produce SUT projections would require further exploration and potential supplementation with other data sources.

The preliminary PFAPM estimates would need to be revised when the final SUTs are released a year later.

3. Canadian Dental Care Plan

Senator Kingston: I'm looking at your strategic priorities, and you have one for informing health care. You speak in that about the Canadian Dental Care Plan. Now that Bill C-64 has gotten Royal Assent and there is a committee of experts that's being struck in the near future, do you have any plans, or are you now making plans to support that committee of experts much as you speak of what you've done for the Canada dental plan?

The mandate of Statistics Canada is to produce data that help Canadians better understand their country – its population, resources, economy, environment, society and culture. In this context, one of Statistics Canada's main roles is to provide statistical information and analysis about Canada's economic and social structure to develop and evaluate public policies and programs; and to improve public and private decision making for the benefit of all Canadians.

The Oral Health Statistics Program (OHSP) is a particular example that illustrates Statistics Canada's mandate in action. In [Budget 2023](#), the Government of Canada introduced a national dental program to be implemented by Health Canada, with \$23.1 million allocated to Statistics Canada over two years "to collect data on oral health and access to dental care in Canada, which will inform the rollout of the Canadian Dental Care Plan". As such, Statistics Canada created the OHSP, which is built upon a comprehensive strategy to collect data needed to assess and produce information on Canadians' self-reported oral health status, track changes in oral health care needs and oral health outcomes. The OHSP data strategy also enables Health Canada to track the performance of the Canada Dental Benefit (CDB) and the Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP) and track the impact of these programs on the Canadian dental infrastructure as well as self-reported measures of the oral health of Canadians.

With royal assent of Bill C-64 (the [Pharmacare Act](#)), Statistics Canada acknowledges the potential need for statistical information and analyses to support the soon to be created *committee of experts* that will be tasked with developing and delivering evidence-based recommendations to the Minister of Health on national, universal, single-payer pharmacare. To this end, Statistics Canada would support the work of *committee of experts* through any relevant existing data sources that may inform the development of recommendations related to pharmacare.