

Providing new statistics for populations often missing from the statistical system in Canada

Presentation for Group of Experts on Measuring Poverty and Inequality
Geneva, December 2022



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Context

- In their data collection, statistical agencies always make every effort to reach as much of the population as possible. However, some populations are still more challenging to describe than others.
- In Canada, hard-to-enumerate groups include:
 - who speak neither English nor French,
 - single-person households
 - vulnerable populations
 - recent immigrants and non-permanent residents
 - older persons living alone
 - Populations living in First Nations communities (also known as “on-reserve”) and in the Northern territories of Canada are often excluded from surveys due to their remoteness or other reasons.
 - mobile populations
 - Young people, especially single men, can be very mobile, and are less likely to participate in surveys or to file taxes





Objectives

- to describe three recent initiatives at Statistics Canada (including one conducted by partners in academia with Statistics Canada's assistance)
 1. Using vital statistics to assess the coverage of vulnerable populations in administrative and census data
 2. Adding the low-income measure for the on-reserve and territorial population in Census 2021
 3. Labour market indicators for the populations living in First Nations communities using census and administrative data
- These examples demonstrate how new data strategies and simple adjustments can provide enhanced information about populations excluded from the traditional collection methods.




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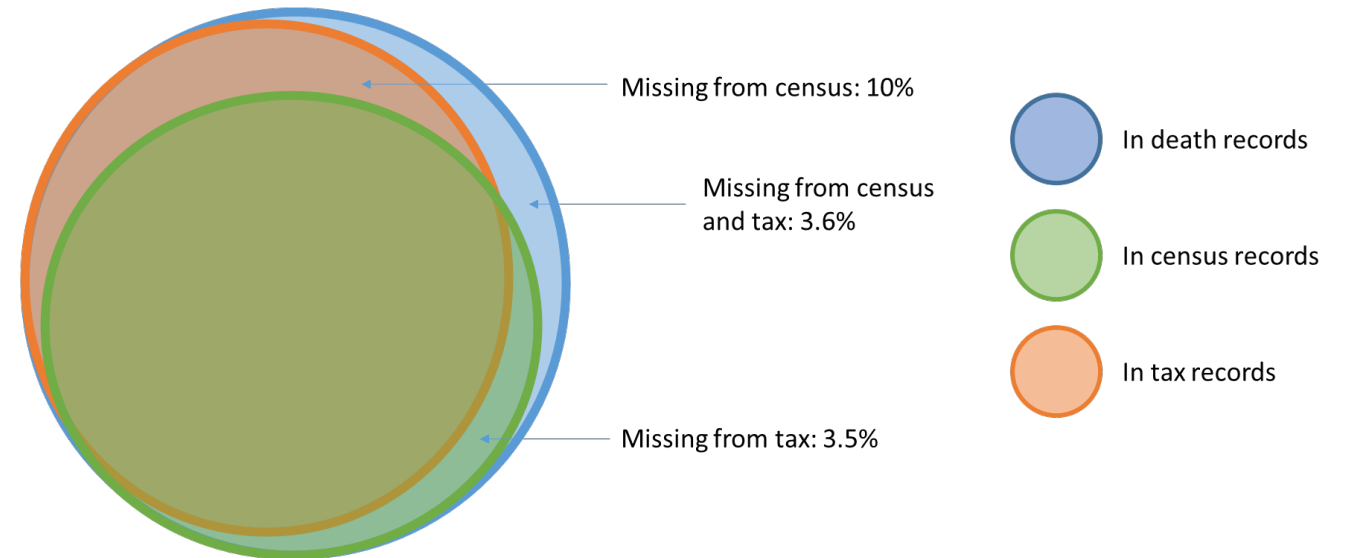
1. Using vital statistics to assess the coverage of vulnerable populations in administrative and census data

- Those who are living on the margin of the society experience barriers to participation in surveys or the census and may fail to file tax returns.
- As a result, they may be absent from many government statistics, making it difficult to pinpoint the size and composition of this group.
- Those absent from administrative data face an added challenge in Canada as taxfiling serves as a gateway for the distribution of several transfer payments to individuals and therefore, some vulnerable persons may not access benefits to which they are entitled and would need.
- Record linkage provides one way to assess the absence of persons from one-file or another.
- In several instances, Statistics Canada has undertaken record linkages for this purpose and studied the patterns or provided the data to academic researchers to do the same.




- Green et al. (2021) searched for the existence of presence and absence patterns from government data sets such as administrative tax forms and Census
- They start from the premise that while people may be absent from Census and tax filings, the vital statistics records should be relatively complete in recording deaths.
- Among persons dying from deaths of despair, early results found that deaths of despair make up 4.5% of deaths in British Columbia compared to 17% among the population absent from both census and tax filings.

Using death records to identify those missing from census and tax



Source: Adapted from Green et al., 2021.



2. Adding the low-income measure for the on-reserve and territorial population in Census 2021

- With Census 2021, low-income statistics have been made widely available for the first time for persons living on reserve or in the Northern territories.
- Up to that point, low-income statistics were not available in these regions due to the idea that substantial in-kind transfers (for example, subsidized housing) and economic activities based on sharing and own consumption such as fishing, hunting and farming would make interpretation of the measurement difficult.
- For the 2021 Census, these populations have been included in the estimates for the first time



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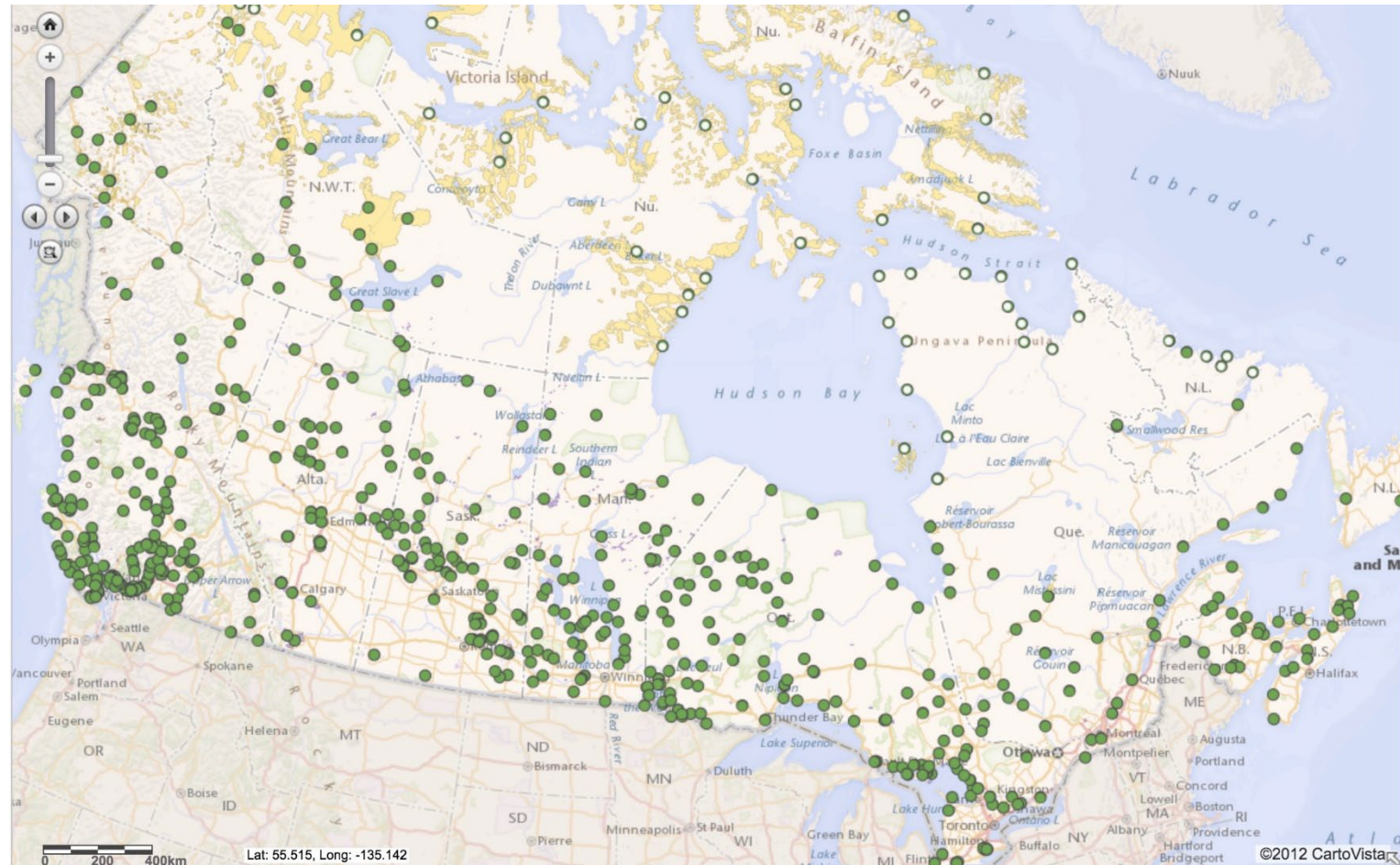
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Spatial diversity of First Nation communities

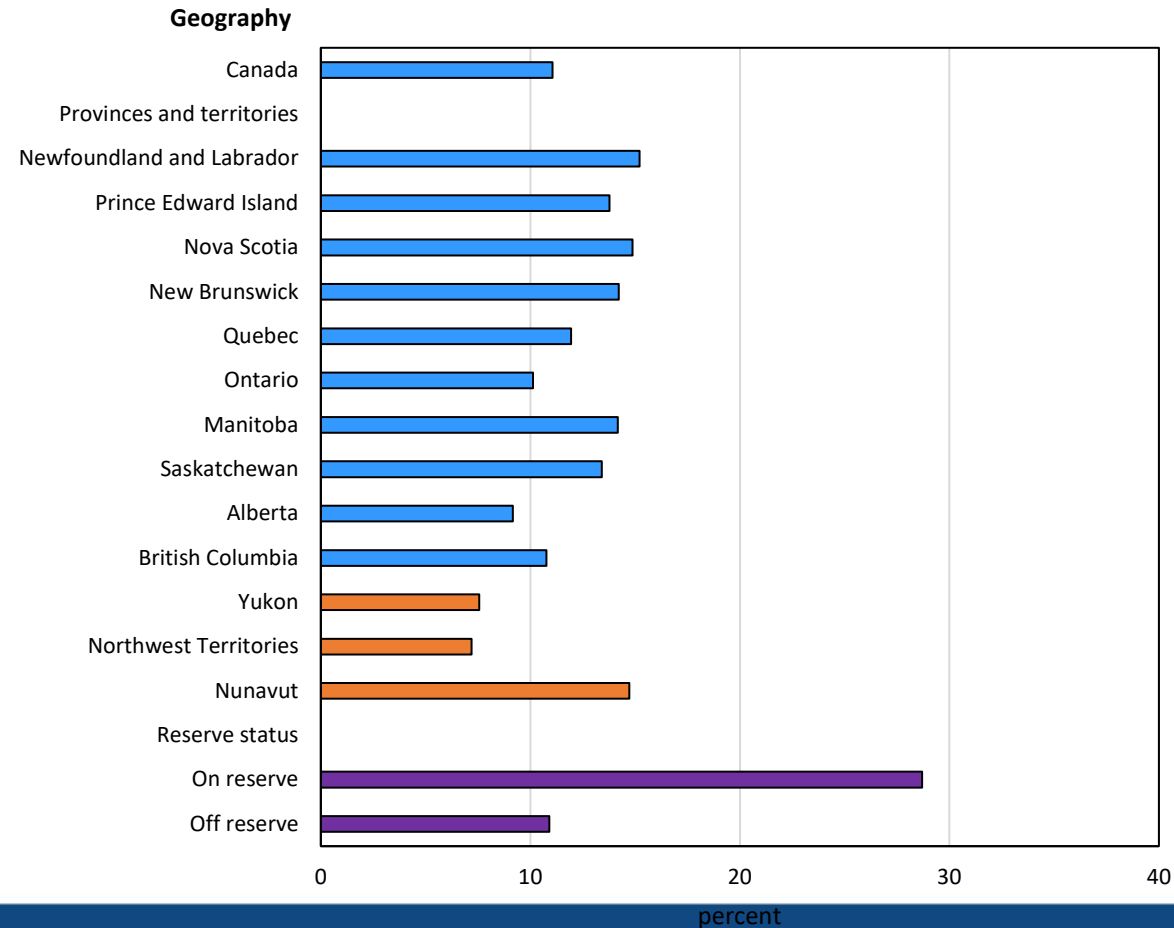
- Over 1.8 million Indigenous people counted in the 2021 Census
 - Approximately 425,000 live “on-reserve”
- First Nation communities
- Inuit Land Claim agreements

There are three northern territories in Canada: Yukon territory (population=40,232 in 2021), Northwest territory (41,070) and Nunavut (36,858); Canada’s total enumerated population was 36,991,981




Inclusion of previously excluded regions in low-income statistics

Percentage of individuals in low-income (LIM-AT), by selected level of geography, 2020



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021

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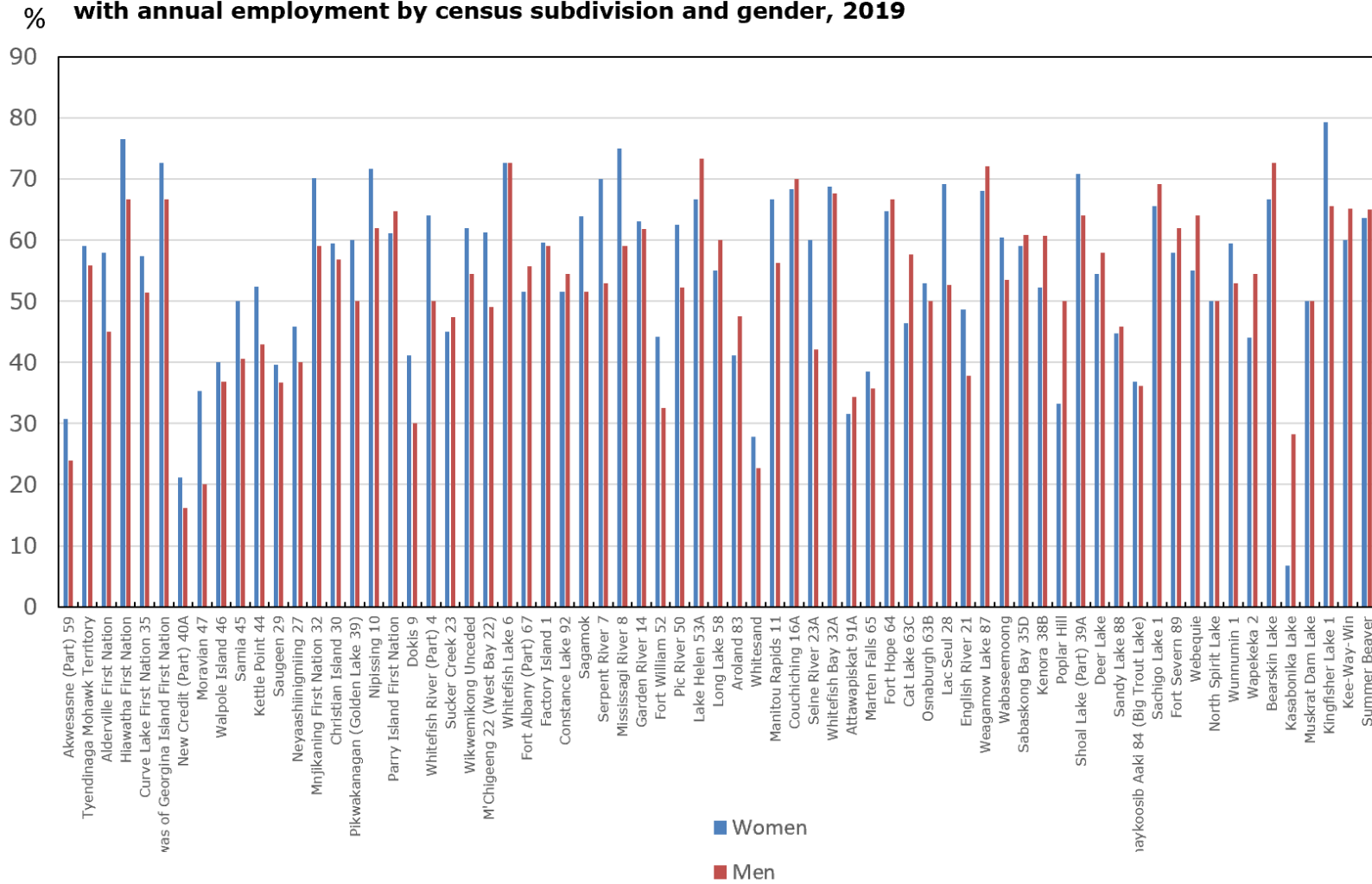


3. Labour market indicators for the populations living in First Nations communities using census and administrative data

- While the country's Labour Force Survey provides timely estimates for the majority of the population, it does not include reserves in its coverage.
- This project leverages administrative data to provide annual information on labour market indicators. It uses census data to identify the on-reserve First Nations population and administrative data to provide information on employment.
- By combining the Census of Population which includes sociodemographic and geographic variables with tax data (which provides annual income and earnings data), annual labour market indicators can be constructed.



Percentage of on-reserve First Nations population, 20-64 years old with annual employment by census subdivision and gender, 2019



- Results show significant variations across these 70 reserves in Ontario
- Contrasts appear both in levels and gender profiles



Conclusions

- These three initiatives provide a glimpse into some of the strategies Statistics Canada is using to address data gaps:
 1. Using vital statistics to assess the coverage of vulnerable populations in administrative and census data – **describing undercovered populations**
 2. Adding the low-income measure for the on-reserve and territorial population in Census 2021 – **extending key statistics to previously excluded populations**
 3. Labour market indicators for the populations living in First Nations communities using census and administrative data – **Using administrative data to provide statistics where survey data does not exist**
- The growing importance of data in decision and policymaking means part of a poverty reduction strategy should involve developing statistics for those who are missing from key data sets.

