

Overview

This chapter encompasses all four themes of the *UAPS* (i.e., identity, experiences, aspirations and values) as it explores urban Aboriginal peoples' happiness with their life, their life aspirations, their definitions of a good life, and perceptions of their quality of employment and health.

The following points summarize the main findings around urban Aboriginal peoples' happiness, life aspirations and definitions of "success":

- **Majorities of urban Aboriginal peoples are happy with their lives.** Health, connection to their Aboriginal heritage and socio-economic status are all factors that affect their level of happiness, but homeowners and those who are very satisfied with their jobs are most likely to say they are very happy.
- **Completing or achieving higher education is the leading life aspiration of urban Aboriginal peoples today.** This is particularly the case for younger and less affluent urban Aboriginal peoples. Learning the importance of education and completing school is also a main way in which urban Aboriginal peoples hope the lives of future generations of Aboriginal peoples differ from their own.
- **Urban Aboriginal peoples' definition of a successful life mirrors universal notions of success in Canadian society at large.** They are most likely to feel family and a balanced lifestyle are very important ingredients of a successful life, and majorities also emphasize the importance of a good job or successful career, and financial independence.
- **In contrast, opinions about the importance of a strong connection to one's Aboriginal identity and background, and of living in a traditional way are more mixed.** These two elements are considered more central to a successful life by urban Aboriginal peoples who strongly identify as Aboriginal (i.e., those urban Aboriginal peoples who feel they belong to a mostly Aboriginal community and know their family tree very well).
- **Work is a positive experience for many urban Aboriginal peoples, which they chiefly attribute to passion for their job and a good working environment.** Nonetheless, job satisfaction is much lower among young urban Aboriginal peoples, part-time workers, and those with less education and lower household incomes – factors which are intertwined – leading to a greater inclination among these groups to move on to something else in the future.
- **Mental outlook and reducing stress are considered to be the most important factors determining a person's overall health.** Most urban Aboriginal peoples, and particularly those with a stronger Aboriginal identity (i.e., know their family tree very well, or feel they belong to a primarily Aboriginal community or one that is equally Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal), also believe that spirituality and being part of a healthy, vibrant community are important to good health.
- **Most urban Aboriginal peoples say that access to traditional healing practices is as, if not more, important to them than access to mainstream health care.** Moreover, six in ten say it is at least somewhat easy for them to access these types of practices. The relative importance of traditional healing practices is higher among status First Nations peoples and Inuit, although Inuit are most likely among urban Aboriginal peoples to find it difficult to access such practices.

IX. Happiness, Life Aspirations and Definitions of "Success" Among Urban Aboriginal Peoples

Much of the variation in the findings on happiness, life aspirations, and quality of employment and health is related to life stage (age) or socio-economic factors (education and income). Similar proportions of First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit are positive about their lives, their jobs and their personal health. The differences appear in subtle variations around their aspirations, how they define success, and what they believe contributes to good health. The following paragraphs elaborate upon the points-of-view of First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit.

First Nations

Education is the top life aspiration for First Nations peoples, followed by a good job or career, and raising a family. Like Métis and Inuit, they define a successful life primarily in terms of family and a balanced lifestyle. Yet, status First Nations peoples are among those most likely to identify a strong connection to one's Aboriginal heritage as another important element of a good life. Similarly, First Nations peoples are among the most likely to express the hope that future generations have stronger cultural connections, and to believe that being part of a healthy community has an influence on personal health.

Métis

Having a family is the leading life aspiration for Métis, just slightly edging out aspirations related to higher education. Like Inuit and First Nations peoples, Métis consider family and a balanced lifestyle the most important elements of a successful life. However, they place comparatively less importance on a strong connection to one's Aboriginal heritage and on living in a traditional way in defining a good life. Métis are more likely than other urban Aboriginal peoples to express the hope that future generations will enjoy financial stability, although this is secondary to their hopes for education, and a more tolerant society for their children and grandchildren.

Inuit

Education is the main life aspiration for Inuit, followed by a good job or career, and owning/having a home. Like First Nations peoples and Métis, Inuit define a successful life primarily in terms of family and a balanced lifestyle. In addition, they are most likely among urban Aboriginal peoples to believe that having a strong connection to one's Aboriginal heritage and living in a traditional way are important elements of a good life. When it comes to overall health, Inuit are the most likely to consider being part of a healthy community an important determinant, and are less likely than others to believe in the importance of physical exercise.

1. Happiness

Urban Aboriginal peoples are generally happy with their lives, including six in ten who say they are very happy. Happiness is highest among homeowners and those who are very satisfied with their job.

Almost all urban Aboriginal peoples describe themselves as happy, and a majority say they are very much so. More than nine in ten say they are very (58%) or somewhat (36%) happy with their life, while fewer than one in ten say they are not very (4%) or not at all happy (1%). Similar proportions of First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit say they are very happy with their lives.

Urban Aboriginal peoples' degree of happiness is strongly influenced by socio-economic status. The proportion of urban Aboriginal peoples who say they are very happy jumps markedly from four in ten (41%) of those in the lowest income bracket to three-quarters (77%) of those with household incomes of \$60,000 or more. Stated happiness is also higher among those who own their own home (81% very happy) and those with a post-secondary degree (66%).

Job status and job satisfaction are also associated with urban Aboriginal peoples' sense of happiness. Those employed full-time (72%) are more likely than those who are self-employed (61%) or employed part-time (50%) to be very happy with their life. As well, happiness rises with job satisfaction: half of urban Aboriginal peoples somewhat satisfied with their jobs are very happy compared to eight in ten (80%) of those who are very satisfied with their jobs.

Not surprisingly, urban Aboriginal peoples' perception of their own health affects their level of happiness. Those who feel they are in good or excellent health (69%) are more likely to be very happy with their life compared to those who feel their health is either fair or poor (44%).

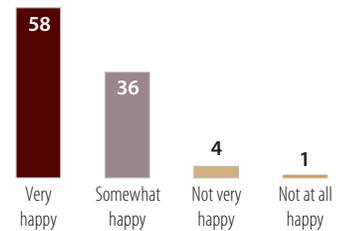
As well, the proportions of urban Aboriginal peoples who are very happy steadily rises with knowledge of their family tree, from some four in ten (43%) of those who know their family tree not at all, to seven in ten (70%) of those who know their family tree very well.

Across cities, urban Aboriginal peoples in Vancouver (64%) and Winnipeg (63%) are most likely to say they are very happy, while Torontonians (48%) are least likely to feel this way.

Despite these variations in the proportions of urban Aboriginal peoples who describe themselves as very happy, fewer than two in ten in any segment of the population say they are unhappy. Urban Aboriginal peoples who are unemployed or relying on social assistance (13%), and those in fair to poor health (14%) are among the most likely to say they are not happy.

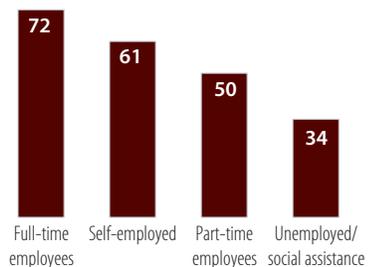
Level of happiness

Overall, are you very, somewhat, not very or not at all happy with your life?



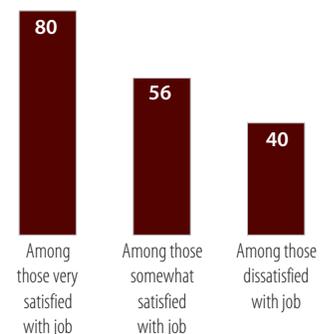
Level of happiness

Very happy, by employment status



Level of happiness

Very happy, by job satisfaction



2. Life aspirations and definitions of “success”

Life aspirations

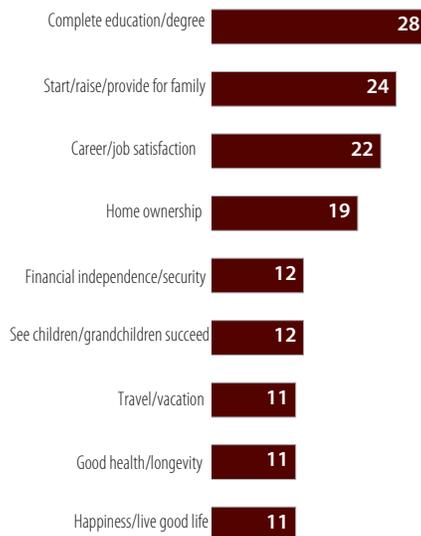
Urban Aboriginal peoples’ top life aspiration is completing their education, followed by raising a family, having a good job and home ownership. Education, and a job or career are particularly common goals for younger and less affluent urban Aboriginal peoples.

What do urban Aboriginal peoples consider to be a good life? To explore what urban Aboriginal peoples aspire to for their futures, *UAPS* participants were asked (unprompted, without response options offered) what three things they most want to achieve in their lifetime.

Life aspirations

What are three things that you most want to achieve in your lifetime?

Top mentions



The most commonly mentioned life aspiration among urban Aboriginal peoples is completing their education (28%), followed by starting, raising or providing for a family (24%), having a good or enjoyable job (22%), and owning a home (19%). Slightly fewer urban Aboriginal peoples mention becoming financially independent or wealthy (12%), seeing their children/grandchildren go to school and succeed in life (12%), getting to travel (11%), having good health (11%), or being happy or living a good life (11%) among their life goals.

Urban Aboriginal peoples mention a wide variety of other life aspirations, although none by more than 10 percent of survey participants, including owning a business, staying close to their family and community, giving back to their Aboriginal community, being successful, passing on their knowledge or keeping their culture alive, achieving peace, balance and prosperity, and finding a partner or getting married.

Higher education is the leading life aspiration, or among the top aspirations, in all cities and for most groups within the urban Aboriginal population, although some variation is evident. Completing their education is more likely to be identified as a top aspiration by Inuit (36%) and First Nations peoples (33%) than by Métis (23%). Métis (26%) are most likely among urban Aboriginal peoples to indicate that raising and providing for a family is among their top life aspirations, just surpassing higher education.

Education is also a more frequently mentioned life aspiration for young urban Aboriginal peoples (51% of those aged 18 to 24) and women (35%), as well as those without a post-secondary degree (33%) and those with household incomes under \$30,000 (35%).

In addition to education, a good career (45%), and starting or raising a family (35%) are also more common life aspirations among young urban Aboriginal peoples aged 18 to 24. While education and starting/raising a family are similarly the top life aspirations for those aged 25 to 44 (just less frequently mentioned compared to younger people), this age group is more likely than younger urban Aboriginal peoples to cite other family-related goals such as getting married, being a good partner or parent, seeing their children succeed in life and staying close to family. Older individuals (aged 45 and older) are more likely than others to focus on personal growth (e.g., good health/healthy lifestyle, peace and balance, spirituality) and a desire to pass on their knowledge to others.

In addition to education, a career and home ownership are more frequently mentioned life goals for urban Aboriginal peoples without a college or university degree, and those with lower household incomes. While still secondary to education, family and career goals, a desire to travel is a more common aspiration for those with more education and higher incomes. Urban Aboriginal peoples with a university degree are the most likely to cite giving back to the community (14%) or being a positive role model (9%) as life aspirations. Finally, those with higher incomes are more likely than others to want financial security or a comfortable retirement.

There are also differences in life aspirations across cities. Desire to complete one's education is most frequently mentioned in Saskatoon (45%), starting or raising a family is a more common life aspiration among urban Aboriginal peoples in Thunder Bay (32%) and Calgary (30%), while a good career is more frequently mentioned in Regina, Saskatoon and Winnipeg (32% each).

Definitions of "success"

Family and a balanced lifestyle are most important to First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit ideas of a successful life, but they diverge on the importance of having a strong connection to their Aboriginal identity and background, and living in a traditional way.

The UAPS survey asked urban Aboriginal peoples to rate the importance of eight factors to their idea of a successful life: financial independence; having a strong connection to their Aboriginal identity or background; owning a home; having a good job or a successful career; being close to family and friends; living a balanced life; living in a traditional way; and raising healthy, well-adjusted children who contribute to their community.

Urban Aboriginal peoples are most likely to consider family and a balanced lifestyle central to a successful life. Nine in ten (90%) say **raising healthy, well-adjusted children who contribute to their community** is very important to their idea of a successful life, and similar proportions say the same about **being close to family and friends** (88%), and **living a balanced life** (88%). Eight in ten (78%) urban Aboriginal peoples place the same degree of importance on a **good job or a successful career**. Majorities also define success as **financial independence** (71%), **having a strong connection to their Aboriginal identity or background** (63%), and **owning a home** (61%). For each of these elements, most of the remainder say they are somewhat important in defining a successful life, while no more than one in ten say they are not so important.

By comparison, urban Aboriginal peoples have mixed opinions about the importance of **living in a traditional way**. Fewer than four in ten (36%) rate this to be very important to a successful life, while a similar proportion (38%) say it is somewhat important and two in ten (22%) believe it is not so important.

First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit possess similar 'universal' notions of a successful life (i.e., family and a balanced lifestyle). However they diverge significantly on the importance of a strong connection to their Aboriginal identity and background, and living in a traditional way. In the first instance, Inuit (83%) and status First Nations peoples (75%) are much more likely than non-status First Nations peoples (56%) and Métis (52%) to associate a strong connection to their Aboriginal heritage with a successful life. With regards to living in a traditional way, fewer urban Aboriginal peoples overall think this is very important to a successful life, but, again, Inuit (62%) and First Nations peoples (status and non-status) (45%) are more likely than Métis (27%) to consider it central to a successful life.

Across cities, a strong connection to their Aboriginal heritage is most important to the concept of a successful life for urban Aboriginal peoples in Halifax (77%), Toronto (76%) and Vancouver (74%), as well as among Inuit in Ottawa (78%). Living in a traditional way is also considered particularly important in Halifax (54%) and among Inuit in Ottawa (57%). In contrast, urban Aboriginal peoples in Winnipeg are least inclined to consider a strong connection to their Aboriginal heritage (45%) and living in a

traditional way (27%) as very important factors in their idea of success, a finding which is in part due to the large Métis population in this city. Nonetheless, the proportion of Métis who consider a strong connection to their Aboriginal heritage to be key to a successful life is much lower in Winnipeg (35%) than in other cities (60%).

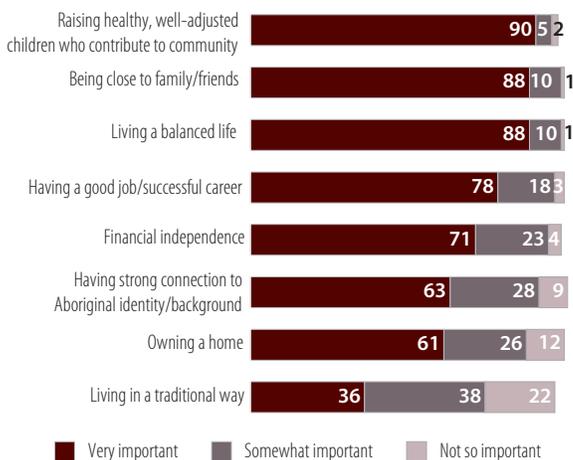
The extent to which a strong connection to their Aboriginal heritage is considered important for success is also influenced by urban Aboriginal peoples' age, birthplace and how strongly they identify as Aboriginal. Older urban Aboriginal peoples (72% of those aged 45 or older), and those born or raised somewhere other than their current city (68%) are more likely than others to value a strong connection to their Aboriginal identity or background. Furthermore, those who strongly identify as Aboriginal (i.e., those who know their family tree very well, and who feel the community they belong to is mostly or exclusively Aboriginal) are among those most likely to value both a strong connection to their Aboriginal heritage and living in a traditional way.

Finally, the importance of living in a traditional way to urban Aboriginal peoples' idea of a successful life declines the higher their household income.

Definition of a successful life

People define a successful life in a many different ways.

Please tell me if the following are very important, somewhat important or not so important to your idea of a successful life.



3. Work experiences

UAPS findings reveal a strong association between happiness and job status and satisfaction. The *UAPS* briefly addressed the topic of work, expanding upon existing labour statistics of the Aboriginal population by focusing on quality of employment and the types of successes that urban Aboriginal peoples have experienced in their working lives.

Employment profile

A majority of UAPS participants are working, either full-time, part-time or for themselves. The rate of employment is highest among those with a post-secondary degree.

First, it is useful to understand the employment profile of *UAPS* participants. Six in ten (58%) *UAPS* participants are working. Most are full-time employees (40%), while some are self-employed (7%) or are working part-time (11%). The remainder includes full-time students (10%), individuals who stay at home full-time (4%) or are retired (4%), those on social assistance (4%) or on a disability pension (3%), and those who are currently unemployed (14%).

Métis (48%) are more likely than First Nations peoples (33%) and Inuit (29%) to say they are working full-time, although rates of self-employment and part-time employment are similar. In turn, unemployment is more commonly reported by Inuit (21%) and First Nations peoples (17%) than by Métis (11%).

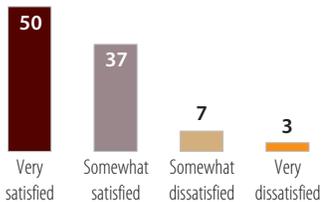
Employment rates (including full-time, part-time or self-employment) are highest among *UAPS* participants with a university (79%) or college (72%) degree, confirming the link between educational attainment and labour market success (Statistics Canada has demonstrated that the likelihood of employment increases and the likelihood of unemployment decreases significantly with more education). Age is also a factor, with younger urban Aboriginal people more likely than others to have part-time employment (16% vs. 9% of those aged 25 and older).

Rates of employment are highest in Vancouver (71% working full-time, part-time or self-employed), followed by Halifax (69%) and Winnipeg (64%), and lowest in Saskatoon (38%), where one-quarter (26%) of *UAPS* participants describe themselves as unemployed. Self-employment is most common in the big cities of Vancouver (14%), Montreal (12%) and Toronto (11%).

Urban Aboriginal peoples presently working either full-time or part-time work in a range of occupations and professions, although two sectors predominate: services and sales (white collar) (20%), and skilled and semi-skilled trades (15%). Smaller proportions say their principal occupation is in social work and counselling (9%), unskilled work (9%), the professions (i.e., doctor, lawyer, dentist) (7%), as an administrator or owner of a small business (5%) or big business (4%), consulting and management services (3%), technician and service professional (3%), and food services (3%). Some occupations are more common among part-time workers, including unskilled work (15%) and food services (7%).

Job satisfaction*

Would you say you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with your job?



* Subsample: Those who are working full- or part-time, or are self-employed.

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is high among working urban Aboriginal peoples, and the low level of job dissatisfaction is on par with the Canadian population-at-large. Passion for their work and a good work environment are the top reasons for individuals who are very satisfied with their jobs.

What quality of employment do urban Aboriginal peoples experience? One way to explore this is through their level of satisfaction with their jobs. Most urban Aboriginal peoples express satisfaction with the work they do. Among urban Aboriginal peoples who are presently employed full-time or part-time or who are self-employed, half (50%) say they are very satisfied with their job and over a third (37%) are somewhat satisfied. Only one in ten feel somewhat (7%) or very (3%) dissatisfied with their job. Inuit, Métis and First Nations peoples who are presently employed do not differ substantially in their degree of job satisfaction.

Levels of job dissatisfaction, as defined by Statistics Canada, appear similar to that of the Canadian population-at-large. The 2002 Canadian Community Health Survey found that eight percent of Canadian workers were either “not too satisfied” or “not at all satisfied” with their jobs, a figure slightly lower than the one in ten urban Aboriginal peoples who report they are either “somewhat dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” with their jobs.

Job satisfaction is higher among those who are self-employed (55% very satisfied) or working full-time (51%) than among those who are employed part-time (40%). In part, money makes a difference. Strong job satisfaction grows from four in ten (39%) urban Aboriginal peoples with household incomes under \$30,000 to six in ten (62%) of those with household incomes of \$60,000 or more⁴⁷ – and urban Aboriginal peoples with full-time work are more than twice as likely as part-time employees to fall into this latter category.

Job satisfaction also increases with age, ranging from three in ten (28%) urban Aboriginal peoples aged 18 to 24 to two-thirds of those aged 45 and older (65%). This is not entirely due to a better work status among older urban Aboriginal peoples, since they are consistently more satisfied with their jobs than younger individuals regardless of whether they are employed full-time or part-time, or self-employed. Happiness with one’s job is also more evident among urban Aboriginal peoples with college (57%) or university (54%) degrees.

Urban Aboriginal peoples in Montreal (62%), Toronto (59%) and Vancouver (55%) are most likely to be very satisfied with their jobs, which is due in part to the higher proportion in these cities who are self-employed. Dissatisfaction (very or somewhat) is slightly more common in Calgary (16%) and Edmonton (14%) than elsewhere.

REASONS FOR JOB SATISFACTION OR DISSATISFACTION. Passion for their work and a positive work environment stand out as urban Aboriginal peoples’ top reasons why they are satisfied with their jobs.

When urban Aboriginal peoples who are very satisfied with their jobs are asked the reasons why (unprompted, without response options offered), more than one-third (36%) say it is because they “love their job.” A good boss, colleagues and work environment (24%) also make a difference, as does the sense among some that their work allows them to give back to (21%) or have a positive influence on

⁴⁷ This is consistent with other research demonstrating that, as people move into “middle income” brackets, they are more likely to report higher levels of job satisfaction. Statistics Canada, Health Reports: Job satisfaction, stress and depression, *The Daily*, 2006.

(13%) their community. Less common reasons for strong job satisfaction include a sense of fulfillment in their work (14%), the pay and/or the benefits (13%), and the opportunity for advancement available to them in their current role (10%).

The relatively small group of urban Aboriginal peoples who are dissatisfied with their current job are most likely to cite a lack of challenge (18%), poor pay (17%), and bad management or politics in the workplace (17%). Other reasons for their dissatisfaction include no link between their job and their interests or educational degree (15%), and a stressful or difficult job (11%).

The group of urban Aboriginal peoples who say they are somewhat satisfied with their job cite a mix of both positive and negative reasons for this, none of which stand out as unique reasons compared to those who are either very satisfied or dissatisfied with their employment. It is interesting that those who are somewhat satisfied are as likely as those who are dissatisfied to treat their job as temporary, and indicate that they are planning a career change (9%) or that their current job is just to pay the bills (5%).

Contentment with work versus plans to move on

Urban Aboriginal peoples are fairly divided between those who are content with their work and those who hope to move on to something else, views that are clearly affected by job satisfaction. Those who plan to move on ultimately hope to pursue educational aspirations and work in other fields.

Beyond their level of job satisfaction, how content are urban Aboriginal peoples with their type of work? Urban Aboriginal peoples who work full-time, part-time or who are self-employed are fairly divided between those who are comfortable in their job and those who favour a change. Just over one-half (53%) of this group say they are generally content with the type of work they do, while four in ten (43%) say they hope to move on to something else (4% are unable to offer an opinion). As was the case with job satisfaction, contentment with their jobs is similar for First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit.

Job satisfaction is a key influence on urban Aboriginal peoples' contentment with their work. Only one-quarter (23%) of those very satisfied with their jobs hope to move on to something else, compared to 57 percent of those who are somewhat satisfied and nine in ten (88%) who are dissatisfied with their jobs.

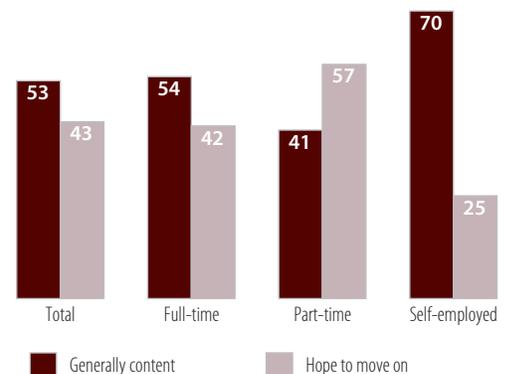
As could be expected, the desire to move on is highest among young urban Aboriginal people (76%) and declines with age (to only 24% of those aged 45 and older). More time in the workforce, and the fact that older urban Aboriginal peoples are more likely to be employed full-time and satisfied with their jobs, likely contribute to their greater contentment in their jobs.

The inclination to do something other than their current job is highest among those in the lowest income brackets (55% of those with household incomes under \$30,000). It is also more evident among those with part-time jobs (57%) compared to those with full-time jobs (42%). In contrast, urban Aboriginal peoples who are self-employed are most likely to be content with their type of work (70% vs. 25% who hope to move on).

Among urban Aboriginal peoples in the labour force, the desire to move on is highest in Calgary and Edmonton (where job dissatisfaction is most common), followed by Regina and Saskatoon. In the other cities, the balance of opinion is towards contentment with their current jobs.

Job contentment, by employment status*

Are you generally content with the type of work you do or do you hope to move on to something else?



*Subsample: Those who are working full- or part-time, or are self-employed.

Among urban Aboriginal peoples who intend to move on from their present job, what do they want to do? One in ten each plan to continue their education (10%), own their own business (10%)⁴⁸ or hope to be promoted within their organization (8%), a desire particularly common among those who are very satisfied with their jobs, and an indication that not all plans entail a departure from their current workplace. Others cite a wide range of different professions or fields in which they hope to be, the most common of which include social work (7%), working on behalf of the Aboriginal community (6%), teaching (5%), law (5%), nursing (4%) and art/design (4%).

Workplace successes

Urban Aboriginal peoples describe a range of successes in the workplace, including specific job successes and advancement, personal growth opportunities, job and financial stability, and the opportunity to give back to others.

What do urban Aboriginal peoples consider their biggest successes in their working life?

When asked (unprompted, without response options offered), urban Aboriginal peoples in the labour market described five main types of success:

- **On-the-job successes and advancement.** Urban Aboriginal peoples are most likely to mention on-the-job successes and advancement as their biggest success in their working life so far. Four in ten (39%) describe specific job successes, such as promotions, advancement in their company, greater responsibility, and prestige, awards and recognition gained through accomplishing particular goals, as examples of on-the-job success and advancement. Proportions of urban Aboriginal peoples who cite on-the-job successes and advancement as their biggest success rises to five in ten of those in Edmonton (54%), Vancouver (52%), and Montreal (49%).
- **Growth opportunities.** The second most common form of workplace success, three in ten (31%) feel the new skills they have acquired, stretch assignments received, personal growth achieved on the job, and educational opportunities for skills upgrading and certification constitute the biggest success in their working life so far. Urban Aboriginal peoples in Calgary (40%) are most likely to say growth opportunities have been their biggest success in their working life.
- **Employment and job stability.** More than two in ten (23%) urban Aboriginal peoples feel their biggest success so far has been achieving job stability and/or security in their industry or field. This is most evident in Thunder Bay (33%) and Calgary (31%).
- **Financial stability.** Two in ten (18%) urban Aboriginal peoples also feel their ability to afford what they want, support their family or themselves, and be able to afford their own home and car are the biggest successes they have had in their working life so far, rising to three in ten or more in Thunder Bay (34%), Halifax (32%) and Calgary (30%).
- **Giving back.** Similarly, two in ten (18%) emphasize the sense of success they feel by doing a job that requires them to help youth, work with other Aboriginal peoples and give back to their community. This type of “success” is cited most frequently in Toronto (25%) and Vancouver (23%).

⁴⁸ Beyond the general desirability of owning their own business, there is a strong trend in small business ownership among Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Statistics Canada data show Aboriginal peoples start businesses at nine times the rate of the average Canadian.

4. Hopes for the future

Urban Aboriginal peoples are most likely to hope for a future world of greater cultural connection, education and tolerance.

When asked to think about the future and in what ways they hope their children’s and grandchildren’s lives (or the lives of the next generation) will be different from their own (unprompted, without providing response options), urban Aboriginal peoples’ hopes centre on a world of greater educational aspiration, cultural connection and tolerance. Some of these hopes are presented in participants’ own words in the sidebar on this page.

Urban Aboriginal peoples are most likely to hope that future generations learn the importance of education and finishing school (20%). The next most common hopes for future generations are that they be more aware of, involved in and connected to their Aboriginal cultural community (18%), and that they will live in a society without racism and discrimination (17%).

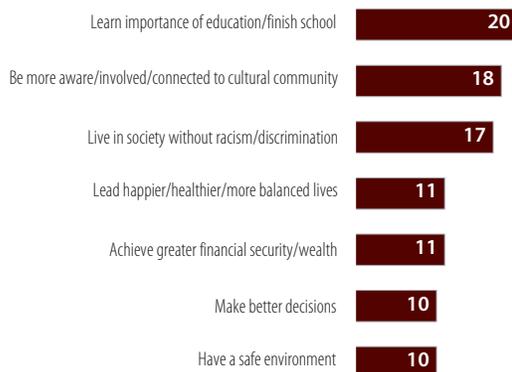
Smaller proportions of urban Aboriginal peoples hope their children and grandchildren will lead happier, healthier and more balanced lives (11%), achieve greater financial security and/or wealth (11%), make better decisions than themselves (10%), and enjoy a safe environment without crime, violence or physical or emotional abuse (10%). A wide variety of other hopes for the future are mentioned, although none by more than nine percent of survey participants, including avoidance of addictions to drug and alcohol, access to better resources or opportunities, a stable/strong supportive family life, pride in their Aboriginal identity, and more access to or support in education.

Hopes for the lives of future generations are generally similar across most demographic segments of the urban Aboriginal population, with a few exceptions. Education is a more common hope for future generations among older urban Aboriginal peoples (24% of those aged 45 and older) and those with no high school diploma (24%). In turn, those with at least a high school education are more likely than others to express a hope for a more tolerant society (19%). As well, First Nations peoples are most likely to express a desire for future generations to have stronger cultural connections (24%). Financial stability is a more common hope for Métis (13%) than for others.

Hopes for the future

Turning now to the future, are there ways in which you hope your children’s and grandchildren’s lives (or the lives of the next generation) will be different from yours?

Top mentions



Urban Aboriginal peoples’ hopes for the future:

A positive experience in education. That they will not face systemic or racial discrimination. They don’t experience bullying.

I wish the future generations, including my grandchildren, will have strong cultural connections and ties to the land and the spirits of their ancestors, to reclaim and restore our people to their roots and to the land, and most of all to their ancient values and beliefs.

My child and my grandchildren will be raised within our family, free of alcohol and drugs. They will be educated on the negative effects that addictions can have on their lives. They will take responsibility for the choices they make, and live life with integrity.

Hopefully, in their time they will be treated equally and there will be an end to racism.

That they have meaningful opportunities to participate in mainstream society; have knowledge of family history, lineage and culture; they don’t feel the inter-generational abuses caused by colonization; access to healthy, spiritual, cultural teachers and elders.

I hope they are happy and see less crime and drugs on the street. There are too many young kids dying of drug overdose and gang violence in the streets.

5. Health perceptions

Since quality of health clearly affects urban Aboriginal peoples' sense of happiness with their life, a short exploration of urban Aboriginal peoples' perceptions of their health and well-being is appropriate at this point in the report. The *UAPS* asked urban Aboriginal peoples to rate their own health and about the factors they feel are important in determining a person's overall health, as well as about the importance of and their ease of access to traditional healing practices.

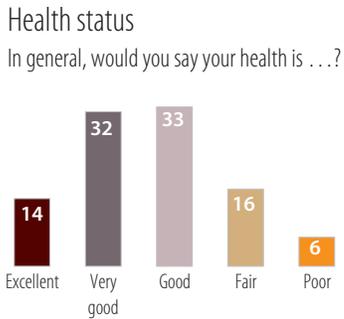
Assessment of personal health

Most urban Aboriginal peoples are positive about their personal health.

Urban Aboriginal peoples are generally positive about their personal health. When asked to assess their health, eight in ten urban Aboriginal peoples rate their health as excellent (14%), very good (32%) or good (33%). Two in ten say their health is fair (16%) or poor (6%). First Nations, Métis and Inuit are similarly positive about their personal health. These self-reported results are best interpreted as an indicator of how people perceive their health rather than as an objective measure of population health status.

Urban Aboriginal peoples' assessment of their health does not vary significantly by identity group. However, urban Aboriginal peoples in Halifax (86%), Vancouver (86%), Calgary (82%) and Montreal (82%) are more likely than average to report they are in excellent-to-good health.

Not surprisingly, perceptions of health are more positive among younger individuals and those with higher socio-economic status. Younger urban Aboriginal peoples (i.e., those under 45 years of age) (82%), those with a university education (89%), and those with higher household incomes (86% – \$60,000 or more) are all more likely than others to say they are in excellent-to-good health.



Perceived determinants of personal health

Positive outlook on life and reducing stress are perceived to be the most important factors determining a person's overall health.

There are various factors that determine personal health, apart from absence of disease. These include lifestyle choices, and societal and environmental factors. A growing body of literature also indicates that Aboriginal peoples' concept of overall health and well-being includes other considerations, such as spirituality, relation to the land and strength of Aboriginal identity.⁴⁹ To explore the ways in which urban Aboriginal peoples define good health, the *UAPS* asked survey participants to rate the importance of six factors in determining a person's overall health: physical exercise, diet, outlook on life, spirituality, being part of a healthy and vibrant community, and reducing stress and anxiety.

Majorities of urban Aboriginal peoples think all six factors are very important in determining a person's overall health. However, they are most likely to think a **positive outlook on life** (88%), and **reducing stress and anxiety** (87%) are very important in determining overall health, closely followed by **physical exercise** (84%). Fewer, albeit still majorities of urban Aboriginal peoples, think **diet** (76%), **spirituality** (69%), and **being part of a healthy, vibrant community** (67%) are very important in determining a person's overall health. Most of the remainder consider each of these factors to be somewhat important; very few (less than one in ten) say they are not so important.

Inuit, Métis and First Nations peoples prioritize the importance of these six health factors somewhat differently. Métis (85%) and First Nations peoples (84%) are more likely than Inuit (71%) to rate physical exercise as a very important determinant of overall health. Inuit (79%) and, to a lesser degree, First Nations peoples (73%) are more inclined than Métis (61%) to see being part of a healthy, vibrant community as a very important health determinant.

In addition, spirituality, and being part of a healthy, vibrant community are considered more important factors by urban Aboriginal peoples who know their family tree very well, and who feel they belong to a community that is primarily Aboriginal, or equally Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.

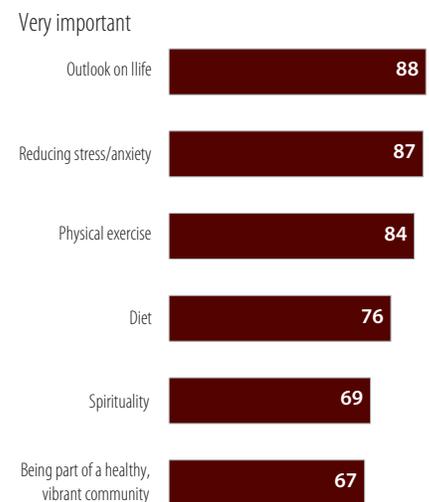
Urban Aboriginal peoples' views on the determinants of health also vary by gender and age. Women are more likely than men to perceive nearly all of these six factors as very important determinants of health. The one exception is physical exercise, which is similarly perceived as important by both men and women. The perceived importance of all six factors is higher among older urban Aboriginal peoples, and those aged 45 and older are most likely to believe in the value of a good diet, community and spirituality. However, these views do not vary substantially by personal health status.

Notably, while urban Aboriginal peoples without a high school diploma are least likely to place value on exercise, diet and life outlook, they are as likely as those with more education to believe community, spirituality and stress reduction are very important to overall health.

Across cities, urban Aboriginal peoples in Vancouver are more likely than average to consider exercise (92%), diet (87%) and reducing stress (93%; this latter together with Toronto at 91%) as very important to overall health. In comparison, those living in Winnipeg are less inclined than average to rate spirituality (56%) and being part of a healthy, vibrant community (56%) as very important.

Importance to overall health

Your health can make a big difference to your quality of life. Please tell me if you believe each of the following is very important, somewhat important or not so important in determining a person's overall health.



49 Nettleton, C., Napolitano, D., Stephens, C. (2007). An overview of current knowledge of the social determinants of Indigenous Health Working Paper. London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Commissioned by the World Health Organization.

Traditional healing practices vs. mainstream care

Access to traditional healing practices is as, if not more, important than access to mainstream health care for majorities of urban Aboriginal peoples, especially Inuit and status First Nations peoples, and those who strongly identify as Aboriginal.

How important is it for urban Aboriginal peoples to have access to traditional and culturally-appropriate health care? Most urban Aboriginal peoples say traditional healing practices are at least equally, if not more, important to them than mainstream health care. Almost half (45%) of urban Aboriginal peoples say access to traditional healing practices are equally important to them as access to non-Aboriginal or mainstream health care services, while one-quarter (27%) say traditional practices are more important. Only two in ten (22%) consider traditional healing to be less important than access to mainstream health care.

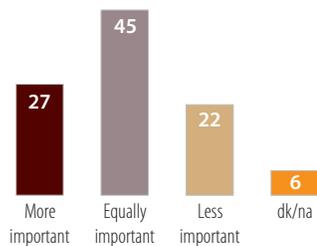
The view that access to traditional healing practices is more important than access to mainstream health care services is more evident among Inuit (37%) and status First Nations peoples (36%) than among non-status First Nations peoples (25%) and Métis (20%). Métis, in turn, are more inclined than others to say access to traditional healing is less important (30% vs. 15% of others), while non-status First Nations peoples are more likely to say the two are equally important (58% vs. 44% of others).

Urban Aboriginal peoples in Toronto (43%) and Inuit in Ottawa (47%) are more likely than those living in other cities to say accessing traditional healing practices is more important than accessing mainstream health care services. In contrast, those living in Winnipeg (18%), most likely driven by the higher proportion of Métis living in this city, Regina (19%) and Edmonton (20%) are least likely to share this view.

The relative importance of traditional healing practices among urban Aboriginal peoples also increases with age and strength of Aboriginal identity. Those aged 45 and older, and those who strongly identify as Aboriginal (i.e., those who know their family tree very well, and feel the community they belong to is mostly or exclusively Aboriginal) are more likely than others to think access to traditional healing practices is more important than access to mainstream health care. However, these views do not vary noticeably by personal health status.

Importance of traditional healing practices

Is having access to traditional healing practices more important, less important or equally important to you as access to non-Aboriginal or mainstream health care services?



Access to traditional healing practices

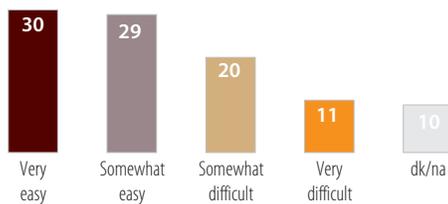
Six in ten urban Aboriginal peoples say it is easy to access traditional healing practices, especially urban Aboriginal peoples in Toronto.

Actual access to traditional healing practices appears easy for majorities of urban Aboriginal peoples. Six in ten say it is very (30%) or somewhat (29%) easy to access traditional healing practices such as natural medicines, healing circles and other ceremonies, and the counsel of elders. Three in ten say it is somewhat (20%) or very (11%) difficult to access these practices. (Ten percent do not give an opinion).

Status First Nations peoples (37%) are more likely than Métis (24%), non-status First Nations peoples (18%) and Inuit (13%) to say it is *very* easy for them to access traditional healing practices. Inuit (50%) are far more likely than Métis (34%) and First Nations peoples (29%) to say it is *difficult* for them to access traditional healing practices. Access to traditional healing is also judged considerably easier by urban Aboriginal peoples living in Toronto (52% very easy). However, the ease or difficulty of access does not vary significantly by personal health status.

Access to traditional healing practices

How easy or difficult is it for you to access traditional healing practices, such as natural medicines, healing circles and other ceremonies, and the counsel of elders?



Overview

A significant amount of the research literature on Aboriginal people in Canada has focused on the topic of education, at least in part because experts consistently agree that higher education is key to improving the prospects of Aboriginal people. Formal education is recognized as the path to well-paid occupations for Aboriginal people, and subsequently to lower Aboriginal poverty rates.⁵⁰

According to the 2006 Census, urban Aboriginal peoples have had greater success achieving a post-secondary education than their on-reserve counterparts: almost half (47%) of Aboriginal people living in the cities included in this survey (excluding Ottawa) have a college or university degree, compared to only three in ten (30%) on-reserve. Yet the university graduation rate of urban Aboriginal peoples (15%) continues to trail that of other Canadians (25%), despite having similar high school and college completion rates.

The focus of the *UAPS* was to expand upon the statistics about Aboriginal educational achievement, by exploring the impact that education has, and what can be done to ensure that those who want a post-secondary education are successful. The survey addressed the following questions: What has the educational experience of urban Aboriginal peoples been like? For those who pursued a post-secondary education, who and what motivated them, and what are the benefits they have realized from that experience? What supports did they rely on during their post-secondary studies, and what supports would they have liked to have had? And finally, how much value do urban Aboriginal peoples place on education, and on the different forms that learning can take? The following points summarize the main findings around their educational values, aspirations and experiences:

- John Richards has noted that “education from kindergarten to grade 12 is [in part] about transmission of culture.”⁵¹ **Yet, *UAPS* results suggest that most urban Aboriginal peoples do not learn about Aboriginal people, history and culture in elementary and high school, and it is not until the post-secondary level that they recall learning about their culture in any measure.** Nor have urban Aboriginal peoples had much exposure to Aboriginal teachers, despite the fact that many were attending schools with more than a few Aboriginal students.
- **For urban Aboriginal peoples who decide to pursue a post-secondary education, the main reason is to secure a good job or launch a career.** However, when reflecting on the ways in which post-secondary education has improved their life, they are more likely to value their increased sense of empowerment over job prospects or financial stability.
- **Family is central to the success of urban Aboriginal peoples at the post-secondary level**, both because they have the most impact on the decision to pursue studies at the post-secondary level, and because they are a primary source of support during college or university.

50 John Richards and Megan Scott, *Aboriginal Education: Strengthening the Foundations*, CPRN research report, December 2009.

51 John Richards, “Culture Matters, but... Explaining Trends among Urban Aboriginal people,” in *Belonging, Diversity, Recognition and Shared Citizenship in Canada*, p.14.

X. Educational Values, Aspirations and Experiences

2006 Census: Highest education level attained*

	Total Canadian population (%)	Urban Aboriginal population (%)	Aboriginal population on-reserve (%)
No degree	20	27	54
High school diploma	25	27	16
College	30	32	23
University	25	15	7

* All results based on those aged 20 and older.

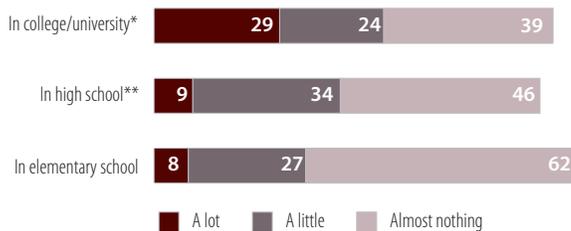
Source: 2006 Census

- While urban Aboriginal peoples may have overcome many barriers to get to the post-secondary level, once they are pursuing their studies the most common obstacle is funding. Perhaps most tellingly, those who started but did not finish their post-secondary degree are as likely as those who did finish to say they received emotional and moral support while in school, but are less likely to say they received financial support.
- Urban Aboriginal peoples strongly believe in the importance of formal education, both for themselves and for Aboriginal people generally. Notwithstanding this conviction, most consider education to be more than what is offered in mainstream schools, and through degree and diploma programs – and that it can also encompass Aboriginal schools and different forms of education like life-long learning or learning from Elders.
- Urban Aboriginal peoples rely primarily on Band or Aboriginal funding for their post-secondary education, and have less access to job income, family support and personal savings than do non-Aboriginal Canadians. They are also less comfortable with government student loans, and less likely to be saving towards their children's post-secondary education.

1. The educational experience

Urban Aboriginal peoples report learning more about their culture at the post-secondary level than they do in elementary or high school. Students have very limited exposure to Aboriginal teachers and classes in Aboriginal languages at all levels, although many report attending schools with a substantial Aboriginal student population.

Exposure to Aboriginal culture in school[†]
 Would you say you have learned a lot, a little or almost nothing about Aboriginal people, history and culture in...?



*Subsample: Excludes those who have never pursued education at the college or university level.

**Subsample: Excludes those whose highest level of education was elementary school

[†] Toronto results excluded due to inconsistent scale used in error.

Note: Percentages do not add to 100% due to those who said they don't know, or chose not to answer the question

To what extent do urban Aboriginal peoples learn about their culture in formal school settings? Relatively few say they learned about Aboriginal people, history and culture in their elementary and high schools, although this appears to change for students who reach the post-secondary level. Only one-third (35%) of urban Aboriginal peoples say they learned a lot or a little about their culture in elementary school; most (62%) say they learned almost nothing. This improves slightly in high school, with just over four in ten (43%) who say they learned at least a little about Aboriginal culture. Among those who pursue a college or university education however, the proportion who say they learned something about Aboriginal culture increases to one in two (53%); this is due to the dramatic increase in those who say they learned *a lot* (29%) during their post-secondary experience.⁵²

52 That those who pursue a college or university education learn more about Aboriginal culture during their post-secondary studies is not due to being exposed to more (or less) in previous educational environments; this group is no more likely than others to say they learned about Aboriginal culture in elementary or high school.

In addition to general lack of exposure to Aboriginal content in school curricula, few *UAPS* participants report receiving any instruction in an Aboriginal language while in school. More than eight in ten each say that none of their classes were in an Aboriginal language in elementary school (84%) or in high school (84%) (this was not asked about post-secondary education).

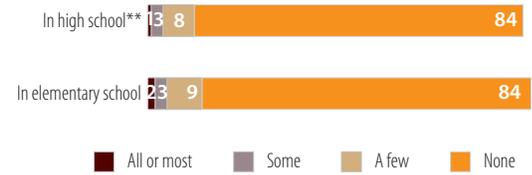
The limited exposure to Aboriginal content in school curricula is likely related, in part, to a lack of exposure to Aboriginal teachers while in school. Seven in ten (69%) urban Aboriginal peoples say that none of their teachers in elementary school were Aboriginal, and a similar proportion (67%) say the same of their high school teachers; at each level, fewer than one in ten say that all/most or some of their teachers were Aboriginal (9% in elementary school and 7% in high school). This changes slightly with post-secondary education: only half (51%) of those who attended college or university who say that none of their professors were Aboriginal, and the proportion who say that all/most or some of their professors were Aboriginal increases to 15 percent.

In contrast to their lack of exposure to Aboriginal cultural content and languages, and Aboriginal teachers, *UAPS* participants have had a substantial proportion of Aboriginal classmates at every level of their education. Half report that all/most (25%) or some (25%) of their fellow students in elementary school were Aboriginal, another three in ten (32%) say that only a few were, and only a small proportion (14%) say there were no other Aboriginal students where they went to elementary school. The proportion of Aboriginal classmates reported drops slightly in high school: only 14 percent say all/most of their classmates were Aboriginal, although another one in three (34%) say some were. By college or university, urban Aboriginal peoples are least likely to have Aboriginal classmates: 11 percent report that all/most of their classmates were Aboriginal, and only a further three in ten (28%) say some were.

In elementary and high school, the likelihood of learning about Aboriginal culture and languages, and having Aboriginal teachers and classmates, is highest among Inuit, followed by First Nations peoples, and is lowest among Métis. Accordingly, these in-school experiences are also more common during the elementary and high school years among those who were born and raised somewhere other than their current city of residence. These experiences are also more common among younger Aboriginal peoples aged 18 to 24 (those who were most recently in elementary and secondary school). The main city difference is that the proportion of Aboriginal classmates reported in elementary and high school is lower among those currently living in Toronto, Montreal, Halifax and Calgary (although it cannot be assumed that all of them attended elementary and secondary school in these cities).

Instruction in an Aboriginal language

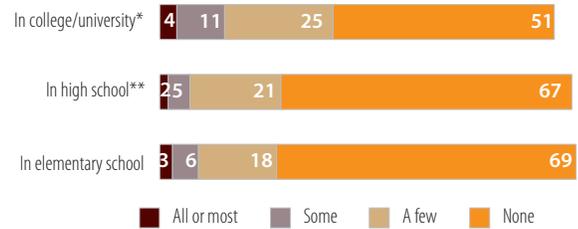
How many of your classes in [school level] were in an Aboriginal language? All or most, some, a few or none?



**Subsample: Excludes those whose highest level of education was elementary school

Aboriginal teachers

How many of your teachers in [school level] were Aboriginal? All or most, some, a few or none?

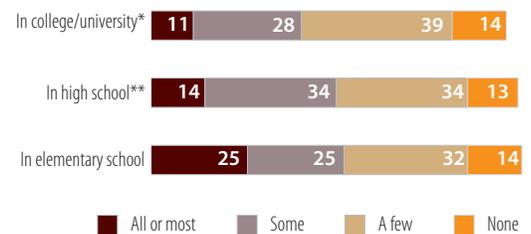


*Subsample: Excludes those who have never pursued education at the college or university level.

**Subsample: Excludes those whose highest level of education was elementary school

Aboriginal classmates

How many students in [school level] were Aboriginal? All or most, some, a few or none?



*Subsample: Excludes those who have never pursued education at the college or university level.

**Subsample: Excludes those whose highest level of education was elementary school

Note: Percentages do not add to 100% due to those who said they don't know, or chose not to answer the question

There is little consistent variation by demographic segment in post-secondary experiences with Aboriginal culture, teachers or classmates among those who pursued this level of education. However, the likelihood to have learned a lot about Aboriginal history, to have had at least some Aboriginal teachers, and to have gone to school with at least some Aboriginal classmates is highest among those who completed a university degree.

Educational experiences: UAPS comparison groups

The survey was designed to focus on post-secondary education through the eyes of three different groups: those who have past experience with post-secondary education but are no longer in school; those who are currently studying towards a post-secondary degree; and elementary or high school students who are planning to attend college or university.

The first group is comprised of **urban Aboriginal peoples who have gone to college or university but are no longer in school**, and represents 47 percent of the urban Aboriginal population aged 18 and older. Over half (54%) of this group have completed a college degree, and 16 percent have completed a university degree, while three in ten (30%) started but did not complete their degree. This group is comprised of similar proportions of First Nations (47%) and Métis (53%). As one might expect, this group is older, with half (51%) aged 25 to 44, and four in ten (40%) aged 45 and older, with only nine percent in the youngest age bracket (18-24). Women (55%) are more likely than men (44%) to have pursued a post-secondary degree in the past.

The second group consists of **students who are currently enrolled in college or university**, and represents 15 percent of the urban Aboriginal population 18 years and older. Nearly half (46%) of this group are working towards a college degree and an equal proportion are enrolled in an undergraduate degree (46%). A small group (8%) is working towards a post-graduate degree (e.g., medicine, Masters or Doctorate). This group is comprised of a somewhat higher proportion of First Nations (54%) than Métis (45%), and consists of more women (58%) than men (41%). Half (51%) are between the ages of 25 and 44, and most of the remainder (35%) are between 18 and 24, although there is a small group (14%) aged 45 and older.

The third group of **elementary or high school students who plan to go on to post-secondary education** is very small. Only three percent of urban Aboriginal peoples 18 years and older indicate they are currently studying at the elementary or high school level, and most of these (82%) say they plan to go to college or university. Thus, the sample size on which these questions are based is small (n=76) and limits the conclusions that can be drawn.

2. The decision to pursue post-secondary education

Reason for choosing a post-secondary education

Urban Aboriginal peoples say that choosing a post-secondary education is primarily about getting a good job or career, but also about financial and quality of life benefits, and for their own personal development. Yet, when reflecting on the outcome of their education, they say the experience made the most difference by helping to empower them.

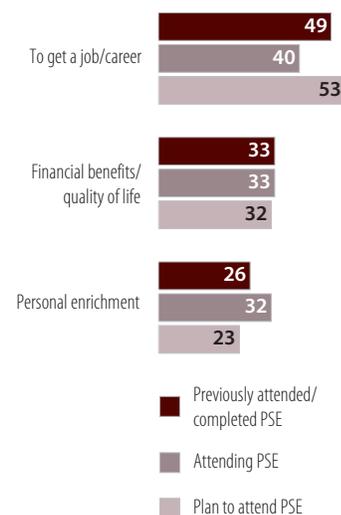
Why do urban Aboriginal peoples choose to pursue a post-secondary education? What motivates them to strive for this goal? To explore this issue, participants who are currently or were previously in college or university, or who plan to pursue a college or university degree, were asked an unprompted question about their main reasons for deciding to get a post-secondary education. No matter the stage at which a person is in their education, the responses reveal three main reasons:

- **To get a career/job.** The most common reason is that post-secondary education opens up opportunities for getting, or advancing in, a job or career. Some also mention that it can help in achieving a career or position that they *enjoy*. Career or job-related reasons were given by half (49%) of those who previously studied at the post-secondary level and a similar proportion of those who plan to do so in the future (53%), and by four in ten (40%) who are currently in college or university.
- **For the financial benefits that ensure quality of life.** Another major reason for choosing a post-secondary education is to achieve financial security, so that students can provide a good quality of life for themselves and their family. Although not as commonly mentioned as job-related reasons, financial reasons are given by one-third (33%) of those who previously attended college or university, one-third (33%) of those who are currently doing so, and one-third (32%) of those who plan to do so in the future. Notably, women are more likely than men to cite financial reasons for their decision to pursue a post-secondary education.
- **For personal enrichment.** A third reason given for pursuing a post-secondary education is personal development, whether through the enjoyment of learning, by completing their education or upgrading their skills, because education is important to them, or by proving that they can do it (to themselves, their family and others). It is notable that, among current post-secondary students, personal enrichment (32%) is as common a reason for deciding to get their education as financial ones (33%); their current experiences in school may be influencing this perspective, and they have yet to realize the financial and life quality benefits. In contrast, those who are no longer in college or university and those who plan to go in the future are less likely to mention personal enrichment (26% and 23%, respectively), compared to financial reasons (33% and 32%, respectively).

A fourth reason for choosing a post-secondary education was expressed by a smaller number of people, which is to give back to their community and make a difference (12% of those currently in college or university, 8% of previous students and 14% of those who are planning post-secondary studies).

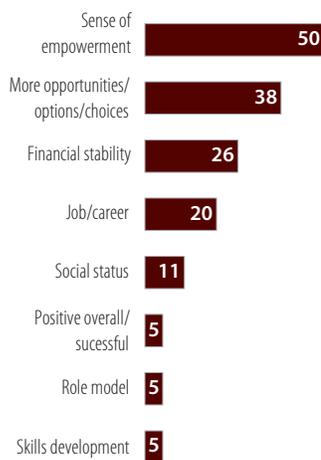
Reasons for choosing post-secondary education

What are the main reasons why you decided to get a post-secondary education?



Impact of post-secondary education*

What kind of difference did education make in your life?



*Subsample: Those who pursued post-secondary education, and who agreed that education has significantly or somewhat improved their life

BENEFITS OF A POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION. It is noteworthy that when urban Aboriginal peoples who have been to college and university but are no longer in school are asked to reflect on the difference that post-secondary education made to their life, the primary benefit that comes to mind is not job/career or financial considerations. Instead, half (50%) of this group say their post-secondary education improved their life in various ways that, taken together, represent an increased sense of empowerment. This includes: making them more self-confident, open-minded, mature and responsible; giving them a sense of accomplishment; and expanding their knowledge generally or about themselves as an Aboriginal person. Many also recognize that their education opened up opportunities and gave them more options (38%). Other benefits that this group attributes to their post-secondary education include financial stability (26%), the ability to get a job or develop a career (20%), social status (11%), becoming a role model for others (5%), skills development (5%) and a generally positive outcome/success (5%).

College and university graduates are more likely than those who started but did not complete a degree to mention the financial benefits that stem from their education. College graduates are also more apt than the other two groups to say that their education helped them get a job in the field they wanted; university graduates are more likely than others to say their education helped them become a role model.

"It gave me the ability to accept myself for who I am, brought a great deal of self-confidence and that ordinary people can rise above what people say about them."

"I have a job that I love, and where I can be of service and live my Aboriginal culture every day."

"What did it not do? It got rid of my inferiority complex, better economic position, improved social status position...I stopped tolerating abuse, and people saw my resiliency and determination. My kids and my nephews and nieces are now pursuing a better standard of living for themselves and trying to stop the cycle as well."

Key influences on the decision to pursue post-secondary education

Parents/guardians and other family members were generally most supportive of the decision to pursue post-secondary studies, while role models are also a significant source of encouragement for those currently in or planning to attend college or university.

In addition to the reasons for choosing post-secondary education noted in the previous section, who or what influences the educational choices of urban Aboriginal peoples? Those who went to, are currently in, or intend to go to college or university were asked to assess the degree to which certain individuals or groups encouraged their decision to pursue post-secondary education or training.

Regardless of one's stage of education – previously attended, currently attending, or planning to attend college or university – family is the main influence on the decision to pursue studies at the post-secondary level. More than half of both past (53%) and current students (60%) say that their **parents or guardians** significantly encouraged that decision, and about four in ten (41% and 43%, respectively) say **other family members** did the same. Among those who are planning to attend college or university, the reported influence of parents (70%) and other family members (62%) is even stronger.

After family, the greatest encouragement to attend college or university comes from a **role model**. This is particularly the case among those currently in school and those who are planning a post-secondary education, both of whom indicate that role models were as, if not more, likely to significantly encourage their decision (50% and 62%, respectively) as other family members (43% and 62%, respectively). Among past post-secondary students, four in ten (39%) report that a role model offered significant encouragement.

Teachers have also provided significant encouragement to urban Aboriginal students in their decision to pursue a post-secondary degree, but particularly for those who are still planning to go to college or university. Two-thirds (65%) of this group say their teachers significantly encouraged them, which is almost double the proportion of past (33%) and current (35%) students who say the same. Similar to teachers, **friends** and **guidance counsellors** are also more likely to be key influences for those planning post-secondary studies (52% and 50%, respectively) than among those who have already gone to or are currently attending university. **Representatives from a university, college or apprenticeship program** are generally considered to have provided the least encouragement among all three groups (21% of past students, 25% of current students and 33% of future students).

Urban Aboriginal peoples who previously pursued, are currently pursuing or plan to pursue a post-secondary education generally do not feel that any of these groups actively discouraged their decision. In each case, four percent or fewer report that any one group either somewhat or significantly discouraged them from pursuing post-secondary studies. However, older urban Aboriginal peoples appear to have encountered greater challenges. A fair proportion of those aged 45 and older who are currently in school cannot say how their parents influenced them (20%) or say their parents discouraged their decision (8%) to get a post-secondary education. As well, college graduates and those who started but did not complete a post-secondary degree report greater encouragement from guidance counsellors, while those with a university degree are more likely than others to recall discouragement from this source (8%).

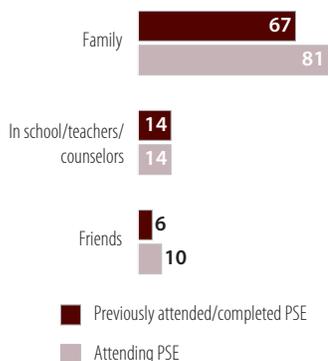
Key influences on decision to pursue post-secondary education

	Previously attended or completed PSE	Attending PSE	Plan to attend PSE
Parents/guardians	53	60	70
Other family members	41	43	62
Role model that you admired	39	50	62
Teachers	33	35	65
Friends	30	34	52
Guidance counsellors at school	24	25	50
University/college representative	21	25	33

Supporting factors to post-secondary education

Main sources of support

Was there anything or anyone that really made a difference in helping you get your education?



Family is the main source of support for urban Aboriginal peoples throughout their post-secondary education. Emotional, motivational and financial support are all identified as important in helping these students get their education.

The UAPS was interested in identifying the types of supports that make the most difference to educational achievement, and how these supports help. Urban Aboriginal peoples who are currently in college or university, or who have pursued post-secondary studies in the past were asked to identify (unprompted) up to three people or things that really made a difference in helping them get their education, and the ways in which that person/thing helped them.

WHO OR WHAT MADE A DIFFERENCE. Not only does family play an important role in encouraging the decision to pursue education beyond high school, but it is also vital support for urban Aboriginal peoples while they are pursuing their post-secondary studies. Support from family is most frequently mentioned as having made a difference helping urban Aboriginal peoples get their education, by many of those currently in college or university (81%), as well as those who attended in the past (67%). This support has come from a variety of family members, including mothers/fathers/parents, spouses or partners, children and grandchildren, grandparents, siblings and other family members.

The next most common source of support, albeit to a much lesser degree, has been that received in school, which includes primarily teachers or professors, but also school counselors, Aboriginal student services or centres, and classmates. Equal proportions of those currently studying towards a post-secondary degree (14%) and those who have done so in the past (14%) say the support they received from school-related sources really made a difference.

Friends are identified by small groups as another major source of support for students (10% of those in school and 6% of those previously in school). A wide variety of other supporting factors are mentioned, although none by more than 10 percent of survey participants, including employers and work colleagues, funding sources (i.e., loans, scholarships, bursaries), their community, their Band, the Métis Nation, their own personal determination, and mentors or role models.

Is there a relationship between supports received and the level of education achieved?

Urban Aboriginal people with a university degree are more likely than those with a college degree or those who started but did not complete a post-secondary degree to say their parents and their professors really made a difference in helping them get an education.

Past students are equally likely to say they received emotional and motivational support no matter the level of education they ultimately achieved. However, financial assistance is more likely to be mentioned by those who completed a college or university degree than by those who began but did not complete a degree, which is consistent with the existing body of research that identifies lack of funding as a substantial barrier to post-secondary education for Aboriginal people.

The results suggest there is a relationship between receiving support and level of education achieved. Those who have completed a university degree are more likely than those with a college degree or those who started but never completed their post-secondary degree to mention the support they received both from family (particularly their parents) and from school-based sources (e.g. professors); the latter group is least likely to identify anything or anyone who made a difference in this respect.

HOW THIS MADE A DIFFERENCE. From these sources, urban Aboriginal peoples pursuing post-secondary education have received three main types of support: emotional, motivational and financial.

Two-thirds of those currently in school (65%), and those who previously attended college or university (64%) acknowledge the emotional and moral support they received while pursuing their studies. This includes love, having someone always there for advice or to talk to, someone who believed in them or gave them confidence, and social support from friends and peers.

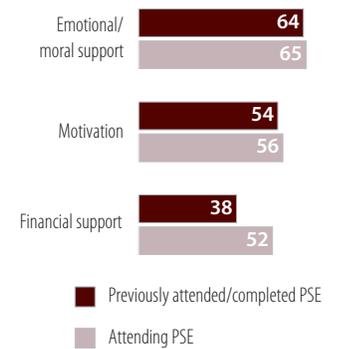
Motivational support is almost as widely mentioned as a way urban Aboriginal peoples received help in getting their education (56% of those in school and 54% of those previously in school). This refers to those who encourage them to succeed and achieve their dreams, and those who inspire them to do so, including role models and mentors.

Half (52%) of urban Aboriginal peoples currently in college or university also acknowledge the financial support they have received, although this proportion is not as high among those who are no longer in school (38%). For this latter group, memory may contribute to the emphasis on emotional and motivational support over financial assistance; the greater role that funding played for college (40%) and university (35%) graduates, compared to those who started but did not complete a degree (23%), underlines the importance of financial support in achieving a post-secondary education.

Other types of support include tangible assistance (e.g., child care, housing, time off from work, transportation), general guidance and counseling, and academic support (e.g., help with homework, exams), although none of these other supports are mentioned by more than two in ten survey participants.

Main types of support

How did that person/it help you?



3. Obstacles to achieving educational goals and supports desired

Cost is the main obstacle that urban Aboriginal peoples say they have to overcome in order to complete a post-secondary degree. Consequently, financial support is what they believe would most help them to achieve their educational goals.

Aside from any support they may have received, the survey was also designed to identify the obstacles that urban Aboriginal peoples face while pursuing a post-secondary education, and the types of supports they would like to have.

OBSTACLES. Financial issues are by far the most common obstacle that urban Aboriginal peoples say they have to overcome in order to complete their post-secondary degree. Almost half (45%) of those currently in college or university, and four in ten (39%) of those who attended in the past, identify the cost of their education, poverty or the cost of living as barriers to post-secondary education. Financial issues are also the barrier most often mentioned by those who are planning to attend college or university (36%), although not quite to the same extent as current or past students. This may be because they already have funding for their post-secondary education or believe that they can get it, or because they have not yet thought about what funding will be necessary.

A wide range of other barriers are identified. These include: managing the balance between work, school and family life (particularly being a parent and raising a family); personal issues such as health or mental health, issues with family or one's partner, or overcoming addictions; academic-related concerns such as time management, study habits, keeping grades up, stress, language barriers and learning disabilities; lack of support or isolation; transportation or housing issues; racism or discrimination; and maintaining their commitment or motivation. In general, the identified barriers are similar for those currently in school and for those who are thinking back or ahead to their experience. The exception is academic-related concerns, which are more frequently mentioned by those currently in the midst of their post-secondary degree (31%, compared to 13% of those who have previously attended or completed post-secondary education, and 12% of those who plan to in the future).

Only a minority say they have or had no barriers to overcome, or could not think of any, ranging from fewer than two in ten (16%) current post-secondary students to one-quarter (26%) of those who have previously attended college or university.

SUPPORTS DESIRED. Given the extent to which urban Aboriginal peoples say that cost is an obstacle in their pursuit of a post-secondary education, it is not surprising that they also consider this the main area in which they would like more support. Almost half (44%) of urban Aboriginal peoples who are currently attending college or university say they would like to have more financial support in the form of bursaries, scholarships, loans, grants or lower tuition; one-third (33%) of those who previously studied towards a post-secondary degree and three in ten (31%) of those who plan to do so say the same.

Past, current and future post-secondary students identify a wide variety of other types of supports they would consider helpful, although none are mentioned as often as financial assistance. Useful types of support include Aboriginal resources (teachers, counsellors, courses, programs, cultural centres, student housing and more Aboriginal presence generally); daycare, housing or transportation; as well as more of the support provided by family and friends, counselors, role models, tutors, and one's Band or home community.

The results of these two questions among those who started but never completed a post-secondary degree provides little additional insight into obstacles they faced and supports they needed (they are less likely than others to be able to identify any obstacles or desired supports). However, when asked separately, if there was a particular reason why they did not complete these studies, the most common reasons are those related to the cost of a post-secondary education. Many in this group say they did not finish their degree due to a lack of funds (19%) or because they had a job (14%). A wide variety of personal reasons are also given by one-quarter (26%) of those not finishing their post-secondary degree, including pregnancy and needing to care for children, personal illness or illness/death of friends and family, and addiction or substance abuse problems.

Main obstacles to overcome while pursuing post-secondary degree – top mentions

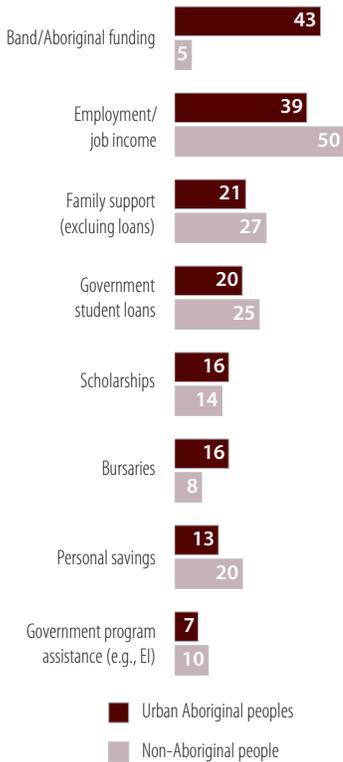
	Previously attended or completed PSE	Attending PSE	Plan to attend PSE
Cost of education/poverty/cost of living	39	45	36
Balancing work/school/family/being a parent	20	16	14
Personal issues (e.g., health, mental, family)	13	12	16
Academic requirements (e.g., time management, stress)	13	31	12
Lack of support/isolation/leaving home	7	4	2
Transportation/housing	7	4	11
Racism/discrimination	6	4	–
Commitment/dedication/motivation	3	10	8

Support that would have liked, to make it easier to achieve educational goals – top mentions

	Previously attended or completed PSE	Attending PSE	Plan to attend PSE
Financial support/bursaries/scholarships/loans	33	44	31
Aboriginal resources	11	13	6
Daycare/housing/transportation	8	11	13
Advisor/support/encouragement (general)	6	3	2
Family/friends/home visits	7	5	3
Guidance/counselling	6	2	9
Role models/mentors	5	4	1
Better service/resources/information	5	4	6
Band/community/social support	4	4	6
A tutor	3	6	10
None/nothing	20	18	34
dk/na	14	8	7

Total funding sources for post-secondary education (top mentions)*

What is the primary source of funding for your current post-secondary education or training? Do you have any other sources of funding?



*Subsample: Those currently enrolled in college or university.

4. Paying for post-secondary education

Urban Aboriginal students rely primarily on Band or Aboriginal funding for their post-secondary education, and have less access to job income, family support and personal savings than non-Aboriginal Canadians. They are also less comfortable with government student loans, and less likely to be saving for their children's post-secondary education.

The UAPS identifies some of the potential obstacles that urban Aboriginal peoples face in funding their post-secondary education. First, urban Aboriginal peoples rely on a different mix of funding sources than do non-Aboriginal Canadians. Band or Aboriginal funding (43%) is the primary source of funding for urban Aboriginal students who are currently enrolled in college or university, followed by employment income (39%). Yet they are much less likely than their non-Aboriginal counterparts to have access to employment income (50%), as well as family support and personal savings.⁵³ This disparity is also evident among those who have previously attended or completed their post-secondary education. For example, one-third (33%) of non-Aboriginal Canadians in this group had access to personal savings to fund their post-secondary education, compared to only one in ten (9%) urban Aboriginal peoples.

Current First Nations students are by far the most likely to be funding their post-secondary education with Band or Aboriginal funding (69% vs. 12% for Métis); the sources that Métis students report using to pay for their education are very similar to those used by non-Aboriginal students.

A second potential obstacle is that urban Aboriginal peoples are less comfortable using government student loans to finance post-secondary education than are non-Aboriginal Canadians. When considering an individual (themselves or someone they know) who wanted to go to college or university but didn't have sufficient money to pay for it, a majority (57%) of urban Aboriginal peoples say it would be a good idea to borrow the money through a government student loan program. By comparison, one-quarter (28%) say it would be a bad idea and 14 percent say it depends. This degree of comfort with government student loans is much lower than among non-Aboriginal Canadians (87% say such loans would be a good idea).

Third, urban Aboriginal peoples are less than half as likely as non-Aboriginal Canadians to be saving for their children's post-secondary education. Only one-third (34%) of urban Aboriginal peoples with children under 18 say they are currently saving money to pay for their children's education after high school, compared to three-quarters (75%) of non-Aboriginal Canadians with children in the same age group. Although the proportion who are saving for this purpose grows to six in ten (60%) urban Aboriginal peoples with household incomes of \$80,000 or more, this is still well below the level reported by non-Aboriginal Canadians in the same income bracket (86%).

⁵³ It is likely that the amount of funding available through sources such as job income, family support and personal savings is also lower for urban Aboriginal peoples than for non-Aboriginal Canadians, although this question was not asked in the survey.

The importance of education and alternative forms of learning

Urban Aboriginal peoples place tremendous value on the role of education in their own lives and in the lives of Aboriginal people generally.

Among urban Aboriginal peoples who have taken some or completed a college or university education, the large majority say it significantly (62%) or somewhat (19%) improved their life, compared to only eight percent who said it made no difference. This sense of conviction increases with level of education: while less than half (43%) of those who did not complete their college or university degree say this experience nonetheless significantly improved their life, this grows to two-thirds (67%) of college graduates and just over eight in ten (83%) university graduates. Women (67%) are also more likely than men (56%) to say that post-secondary education made a significant contribution to their life.

Moreover, almost nine in ten (86%) urban Aboriginal peoples say that formal education is very important to improving the lives of Aboriginal people, compared to 12 percent who say it is somewhat important and only one percent who say it is not so important. The belief that education is very important is strongest among First Nations peoples (88%) and Métis (85%), compared to Inuit (76%), among those aged 45 and older (91% very important), and among those with a high school (89%) or college (90%) degree.

Urban Aboriginal peoples value different forms of learning, and most think of education as being more than what is offered in mainstream schools and through diploma/degree programs.

Urban Aboriginal peoples have mixed views about whether it is better to attend mainstream or Aboriginal schools, but most believe that it should not be a choice between the two. One-quarter (27%) say it is preferable to attend mainstream schools to learn the skills and knowledge required by contemporary society, while slightly fewer (21%) believe it is preferable to attend Aboriginal schools that reflect Aboriginal culture, language and traditions. However, half (49%) say that both are equally important or that it depends on various things.

There are similarly mixed opinions about the relative benefits of a degree-based education versus different forms of learning. One in five (18%) say it is most important to complete a degree or diploma through an educational institution, while one-quarter (27%) say learning opportunities such as life experiences, continuing education, and learning from elders or mentors, are as important as mainstream schooling. Yet again, a slight majority (53%) decline to choose between the two, saying that both are equally important or that it depends on various things.

Preference for mainstream schools and a degree-based education are both higher among those aged 18 to 24. Preference for attending a mainstream school tends to be higher among those with household incomes of \$80,000 or more, and those who identify their community as mostly or exclusively non-Aboriginal. In turn, preference for Aboriginal schools and forms of learning other than degree/diploma programs are higher among those aged 45 and older, and those who are more oriented towards an Aboriginal community. Preference for other forms of learning is also stronger among Inuit (38%) than First Nations (28%) and Métis (26%).