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# Census in Brief

## Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement: Findings from the 2021 Census of Population

Census of Population, 2021



Release date: September 21, 2022

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# Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement: Findings from the 2021 Census of Population

## Highlights

- In 2021, 224,650 individuals reported being a registered member of a Métis organization or Settlement.
- Registered members accounted for one-third (33.3%) of the 624,220 people who identified as Métis on the 2021 Census.
- Four-fifths (79.8%, or 179,345) of those who reported being registered in a Métis organization or Settlement were a member of one of the five signatories of the Canada–Métis Nation Accord.
- In 2021, 45,355 people reported being registered members of the Métis Nation of Alberta—the largest reported membership among organizations.
- Almost half (46.7%) of the 43,920 people who reported being registered to the Manitoba Metis Federation lived in Winnipeg.
- Those reporting membership with the Métis Nation of Ontario (36,240 people) were relatively dispersed across the province, with members living in Toronto (2,785), Ottawa (2,090), Greater Sudbury (1,970), Midland (1,515), Windsor (1,390), Thunder Bay (1,220) and Sault Ste. Marie (1,145). Collectively, individuals in these seven cities accounted for one-third (33.4%) of Métis Nation of Ontario membership.
- Reported members of the Métis Nation—Saskatchewan (26,695 people) had the highest share (13.0%) of members living outside the province.
- Almost half (48.6%, or 1,405) of those identifying as Métis in the Northwest Territories (2,890) reported membership in a Métis organization that was not a signatory of the Canada–Métis Nation Accord.

## Background

Métis are a distinct Indigenous people with unique communities, history and customs and are one of three Indigenous peoples recognized as bearing rights under section 35 of *The Constitution Act (1982)*. In 2021, following engagement with Métis organizations, governments and stakeholders, the Census of Population measured registered membership<sup>1</sup> in a Métis organization or Settlement for the first time. Collecting such data allows for the analysis of a variety of characteristics specific to those who are registered in a Métis organization or Settlement and more informed policy decisions by governments and organizations.

In 2017, the Government of Canada and Métis governments entered into the Canada–Métis Nation Accord. Among other objectives, the accord sought to “advance reconciliation of the rights, claims, interests and aspirations of the Métis Nation.” Five Métis governments are recognized as signatories of this accord: the Manitoba Metis Federation<sup>2</sup>, the Métis Nation—Saskatchewan, the Métis Nation of Alberta, Métis Nation British Columbia and the Métis Nation of Ontario.

Along with the five governments, the eight Metis Settlements of Alberta represent the only provincially recognized land base of Métis that are governed through the Metis Settlements General Council. Membership overlap sometimes exists between the Metis Settlements of Alberta and Métis organizations.

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1. Those registered with one of the five signatories to the Canada–Métis Nation Accord or another Métis organization often regard themselves as citizens under a Métis government. However, for the 2021 Census of Population, the question was asked, “Is this person a registered member of a Métis organization or Settlement?” As a result, the term member to an organization is used throughout this article.

2. The Manitoba Metis Federation and the Metis Settlements of Alberta use the word “Metis” in contrast with the term “Métis” used by the other four signatories of the Canada–Métis Nation Accord. As such, “Metis” is used when referring to the Manitoba Metis Federation and the Metis Settlements of Alberta and “Métis” is used elsewhere.

# Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement: Findings from the 2021 Census of Population

In addition, some individuals reported being registered members of a Métis organization that was not a signatory to the Canada-Métis Nation Accord nor an Alberta Metis Settlement, and others who reported being a member of a Métis organization or settlement but did not specify to which organization or Settlement they belonged. Given the different collection methods, data on membership counts may not match official registers of Métis organizations and Settlements. However, a strength of the census data is the ability to examine the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of self-declared members of a Métis organization or Settlement.

## Four-fifths of Métis who reported being registered to a Métis organization or Settlement were members of the Canada–Métis Nation Accord

In the 2021 Census of Population, 224,650 people reported membership in a Métis organization or Settlement.<sup>3</sup> In Canada, 624,220 people identified as Métis, with one-third (33.3%)<sup>4</sup> of the Métis population reporting membership in a Métis organization or Settlement.

Four-fifths of Métis who reported being registered in a Métis organization or Settlement (79.8%, or 179,345 Métis) were part of one of the five signatory organizations to the Canada–Métis Nation Accord.

Most members of the five signatory organizations (90.3%) lived in the same province in which the organization was based. However, this is not a necessary condition of membership for every Métis organization. Some respondents may have become members while living in the same province in which the organization was based before moving to another province.

## More than 27,000 people report membership to Métis Nation British Columbia

Historical records document the presence of Métis in British Columbia as far back as the late 18th century. Throughout the ensuing years, Métis were central to many political and cultural moments in the history of the province. In 1996, Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) was formed to be the representative organization for Métis in the province.

According to the 2021 Census, of those living in British Columbia, 97,865 people identified as Métis<sup>5</sup> and 25,580 people reported being registered in MNBC, accounting for 94.3% of those who reported membership in MNBC. Another 1,555 members of MNBC (5.7%) lived outside the province, bringing the total registrations up to 27,135.

Half (49.5%) of those reporting registration with MNBC lived in Vancouver (5,700), Prince George (1,865), Victoria (1,850), Kelowna (1,705), Kamloops (1,235) and Nanaimo (1,080).

Of the people living in British Columbia, 7,180<sup>6</sup> reported being registered with a Métis organization or Settlement other than MNBC. In all, 33,475 individuals in British Columbia indicated they were registered members of a Métis organization or Settlement.

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3. This includes all those who reported being a member of a Métis organization or Settlement, including individuals reporting a single Métis identity, those reporting multiple Indigenous identities and those reporting a single First Nations or Inuk identity.

4. This is based on the single Métis identity population, with 207,685 people reporting membership in a Métis organization or Settlement.

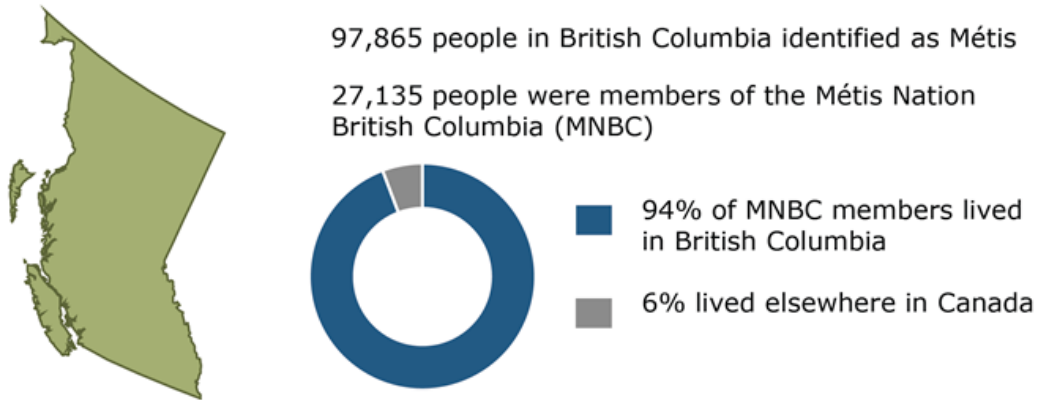
5. For total provincial counts, single Métis identity is used.

6. This figure excludes those who reported being a member of a Métis organization or Settlement but did not indicate to which Métis organization or Settlement they belonged.

# Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement: Findings from the 2021 Census of Population

**Figure 1**

**Most members of the Métis Nation British Columbia live within the province, the highest share of all signatory organizations**



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

## Métis Nation of Alberta reported largest membership among Canada–Métis Nation Accord signatories

Métis have a long history in what is now Alberta, with Métis communities forming along the North Saskatchewan River and the Peace River as early as the late 1700s. Métis collective organizations have origins in the democratic elections of hunt councils and captains during the biannual buffalo hunts, and the last recorded traditional Métis buffalo hunt occurred on April 1879 in what is now Alberta (Saunders and Dubois, 2019; Foster et al., 2000). The Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) has existed since 1928, when it was founded as the Association des Métis Alberta et les Territoires du Nord-Ouest. However, local organizations such as the St. Albert Métis Association, founded in 1897, predate this by decades (Métis Nation of Alberta, 2022).

The 2021 Census of Population enumerated 127,475 Métis in Alberta, and reported membership in the MNA reached 45,355, the largest membership population among Métis organizations. The vast majority of those who reported being a registered member of the MNA (93.4%, or 42,360 Métis) lived in Alberta, while 2,995 (6.6%) reported living out of province.

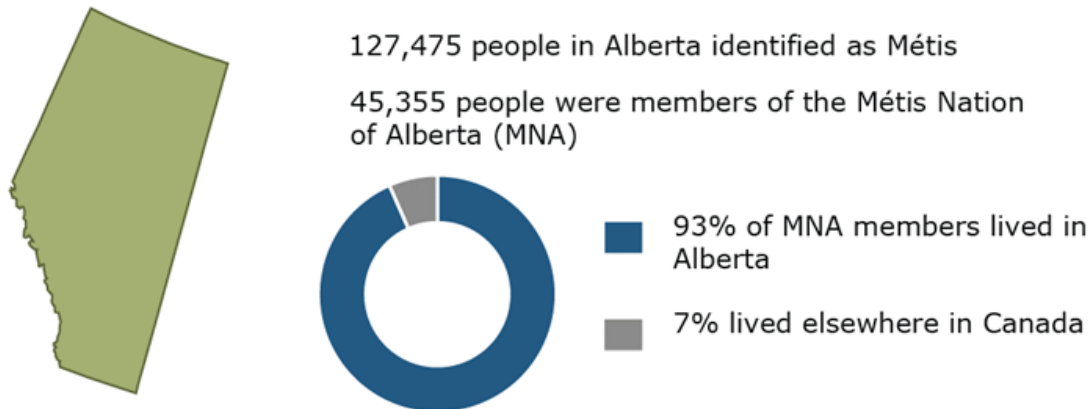
Half (49.8%) of those who reported membership in the MNA lived in Edmonton (14,820) and Calgary (7,760), with Wood Buffalo (1,250) and Red Deer (1,010) also having more than 1,000 reported members of the MNA.

Within Alberta, 52,780 people reported being a registered member of a Métis organization or Settlement. Among those in Alberta who reported membership in a Métis organization or Settlement, 9,805 (18.6%) did not report membership in the MNA. Instead, they indicated being a member of another organization or Settlement.

# Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement: Findings from the 2021 Census of Population

**Figure 2**

**Métis Nation of Alberta has the largest reported membership among all Métis organizations in Canada**



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

## More than 3,500 people report membership in a Metis Settlement of Alberta

The first Métis Settlement in Alberta was federally administered and named Saint-Paul-des-Métis, now the town of St. Paul, Alberta. This land was opened to general settlement in 1909, despite petitions from the Métis inhabitants (Betke and Baker, 2009). However, the desire for a Métis land base remained strong, and eventually 12 Metis Settlements of Alberta were established under Alberta's 1938 *Métis Population Betterment Act*, the first Métis-specific legislation in Canada. Today, the eight Metis Settlements of Alberta cover 1.25 million acres. Since 1975, the Metis Settlements of Alberta have been united, first as the Alberta Federation of Metis Settlements then as the Metis Settlements General Council since 1990 (Metis Settlements General Council, 2018).

While the 2021 Census counted 4,238 people living in the eight Metis Settlements, 3,540 people reported being registered members of the Metis Settlements of Alberta.<sup>7</sup> Of those reporting membership in the Settlements, 3,400 (96.0%) lived in Alberta.

**Table 1: One-fifth of reported members to Metis Settlements of Alberta are members of Kikino**

Metis Settlements of Alberta	Reported membership		Population living in Settlement	
	count	percentage	count	percentage
Kikino Metis Settlement	715	20.2	978	23.1
Peavine Metis Settlement	460	13.0	387	9.1
Buffalo Lake Metis Settlement	450	12.7	379	8.9
Paddle Prairie Metis Settlement	450	12.7	551	13.0
Elizabeth Metis Settlement	425	12.0	594	14.0
Gift Lake Metis Settlement	405	11.4	625	14.7
East Prairie Metis Settlement	340	9.6	310	7.3
Fishing Lake Metis Settlement	300	8.5	414	9.8
<b>Total - Metis Settlements of Alberta</b>	<b>3,540</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,238</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

7. The difference between residency and membership can be partly explained by official membership in the Metis Settlements being exclusive to those aged 18 years or older; thus, children living in the Metis Settlements of Alberta are not yet registered. Further, membership in the Metis Settlements of Alberta is not exclusive, and some living within the Settlements reported membership in Métis organizations, such as the MNA. However, only one answer was accepted in the 2021 Census of Population.

# Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement: Findings from the 2021 Census of Population

## Métis Nation—Saskatchewan has the highest share of reported members living outside the province

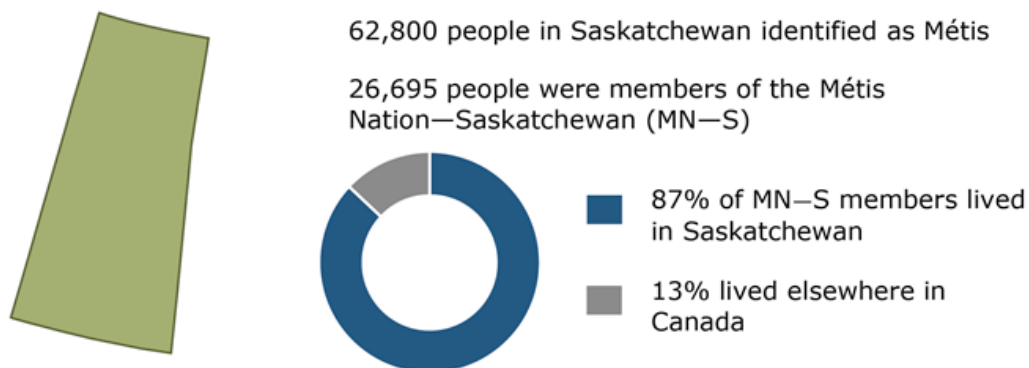
The Métis in Saskatchewan have long been linked to the fur trade networks of northern Saskatchewan, with the important fur trade depot of Cumberland House being one of the oldest continuous Métis communities in Canada (Dorion and Paquin, 2003). Many Métis relocated from Red River in the years following the Red River Resistance (1869 to 1870) to communities on the south branch of the Saskatchewan River (Gaudry, 2009). During the North-West Resistance of 1885, notable battles occurred in, and were named after, the communities of Duck Lake, Fish Creek and Batoche. “Back to Batoche,” an annual celebration of the Métis people, culture and survival that has occurred for over 50 years, is currently organized by the Métis Nation—Saskatchewan (MN-S) (Metis Gathering, 2022).

According to the 2021 Census of Population, 62,800 people identified as Métis in Saskatchewan, with those reporting registration in MN-S accounting for 34.9% of the Métis population in the province. MN-S membership was reported by 26,695 people, with 23,225 (87.0%) living in Saskatchewan. Just over 1 in 10 MN-S members (3,470 people, or 13.0%) lived outside the province, the highest share of membership living outside the province, nationally.

Over 4 in 10 MN-S members (43.2%) lived in Saskatoon (5,515), Prince Albert (3,370) and Regina (2,655).

Of the 25,530 people reporting membership in a Métis organization or Settlement, 2,115 people living in Saskatchewan (8.3%) reported being a member of a Métis organization or Settlement other than MN-S.

**Figure 3**  
**Members of the Métis Nation—Saskatchewan were most likely to live in another province or territory**



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

## Almost half of all Métis who reported being registered in the Manitoba Metis Federation live in Winnipeg

At the forks of the Assiniboine River and the Red River, the Red River Settlement, now Winnipeg, has been called the birthplace of the Métis Nation and the heart of the Métis homeland (Manitoba Metis Federation, 2021; Royal Canadian Geographical Society, 2018). Métis history is integral to Manitoba’s history, as it was through the Red River Resistance (1869 to 1870) that a Métis provisional government was established and negotiated Manitoba’s entry into confederation. The *Manitoba Act, 1870* also declared the protection of Métis rights and culture. However, this act was not fully honoured, leading to the North-West Resistance of 1885. The federal government’s failure to honour its obligations to Métis people under the *Manitoba Act* was formally recognized in 2013 with the Supreme

# Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement: Findings from the 2021 Census of Population

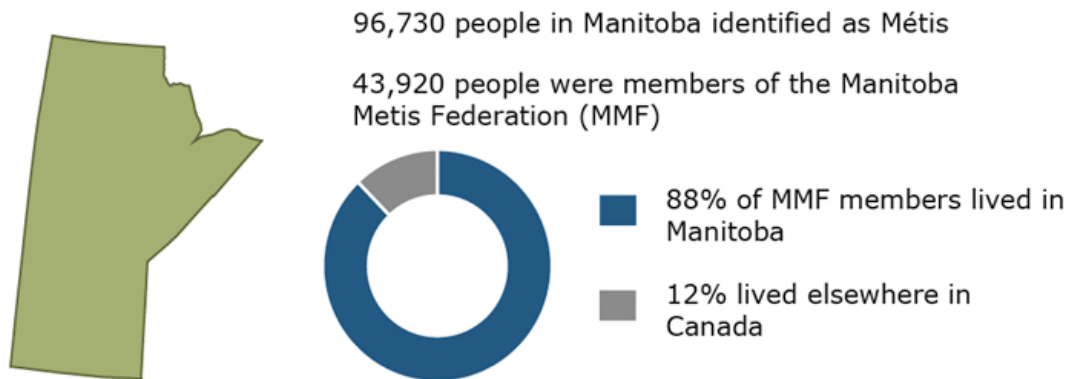
Court ruling *Manitoba Metis Federation Inc. v. Canada*. Founded in 1967, the Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) represents Métis of Manitoba and Red River Métis descendants.

In 2021, the census counted 96,730 people identifying as Métis in Manitoba. Almost two in five (38.3%) reported being a registered member of the MMF. The MMF had the second-highest count of registered Métis among organizations, with 43,920 people reporting membership. Of these members, 38,570 lived in Manitoba and 5,350 (12.2%) lived outside Manitoba in 2021.

Winnipeg had the largest number of people registered in a Métis organization or Settlement within Manitoba and Canada overall, with almost half of those who reported being registered in the MMF (20,525 people, or 46.7%) living in Winnipeg.<sup>8</sup> A further 1,105 (2.5%) lived in Brandon.

Of the 41,240 people who reported being a member of a Métis organization or Settlement, 1,240 people living in Manitoba (3.0%) reported being a member of a Métis organization or Settlement other than the MMF.

**Figure 4**  
**Manitoba Metis Federation has the second highest membership among all Métis organizations in Canada**



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

## Métis Nation of Ontario members spread across many cities

Ontario has the largest population identifying as Métis. Many Métis participated in the War of 1812, with some units mostly composed of Métis defending locations such as Mackinaw, St. Joseph Island and Sault Ste. Marie. It was from the community of Sault Ste. Marie that, in 2003, Métis would have their rights as outlined in section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* legally recognized through the Supreme Court ruling *R. v. Powley*. The anniversary of the Métis rights victory at the Supreme Court is celebrated annually on Powley Day (September 19) by the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO).

In the 2021 Census, 134,615 respondents identified as Métis in Ontario, the largest population of self-identified Métis in Canada. Of these, over one-fifth (21.7%) reported belonging to the MNO. In total, 36,240 people reported being members of the MNO, with 32,290 (89.1%) living in Ontario and 3,950 (10.9%) living outside Ontario.

8. The city of Selkirk is included within the Winnipeg census metropolitan area boundaries.

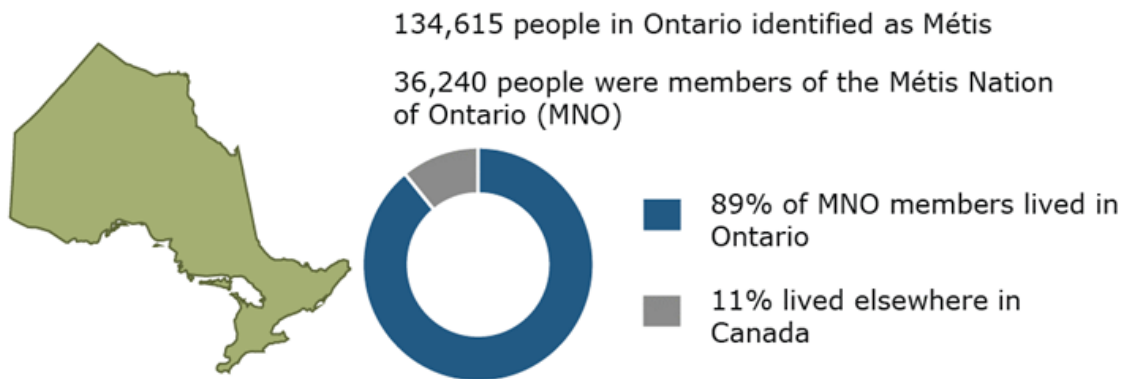


## Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement: Findings from the 2021 Census of Population

Those reporting being registered in the MNO were relatively dispersed across Ontario, with one-third (33.4%) living in Toronto (2,785 people), Ottawa (2,090), Greater Sudbury (1,970), Midland (1,515), Windsor (1,390), Thunder Bay (1,220) and Sault Ste. Marie (1,145).

Of the people living in Ontario, 10,345 reported being registered in a Métis organization or Settlement other than the MNO, almost one-quarter (23.4%) of the 44,215 people who reported belonging to a Métis organization or Settlement.

**Figure 5**  
**Nine in ten Métis Nation of Ontario members live in Ontario**



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

### Métis in the Northwest Territories and Newfoundland and Labrador are more likely to report membership with a non-Canada–Métis Nation Accord organization

In 2021, 33,775 individuals reported being registered members of a Métis organization that was not a signatory to the Canada–Métis Nation Accord or an Alberta Metis Settlement. Reported members of non-signatory organizations were found in every province and territory, most notably in Quebec (10,335 people, or 30.6%), Ontario (8,380, or 24.8%), Nova Scotia (3,810, or 11.3%) and Newfoundland and Labrador (3,225, or 9.5%). Taken together, members in these four provinces accounted for over three-quarters (76.2%) of people reporting membership in non-signatory Métis organizations.

Almost half (48.6%, or 1,405) of those who identified as Métis in the Northwest Territories reported membership in a Métis organization that was not a signatory of the Canada–Métis Nation Accord, the largest share nationally. Almost 4 in 10 of those identifying as Métis in Newfoundland and Labrador (39.7%, or 2,910 people) also reported belonging to a non-signatory organization. Nova Scotia (17.1%), Quebec (15.3%), New Brunswick (11.7%) and Ontario (5.6%) also had relatively large shares of Métis belonging to a non-signatory organization.

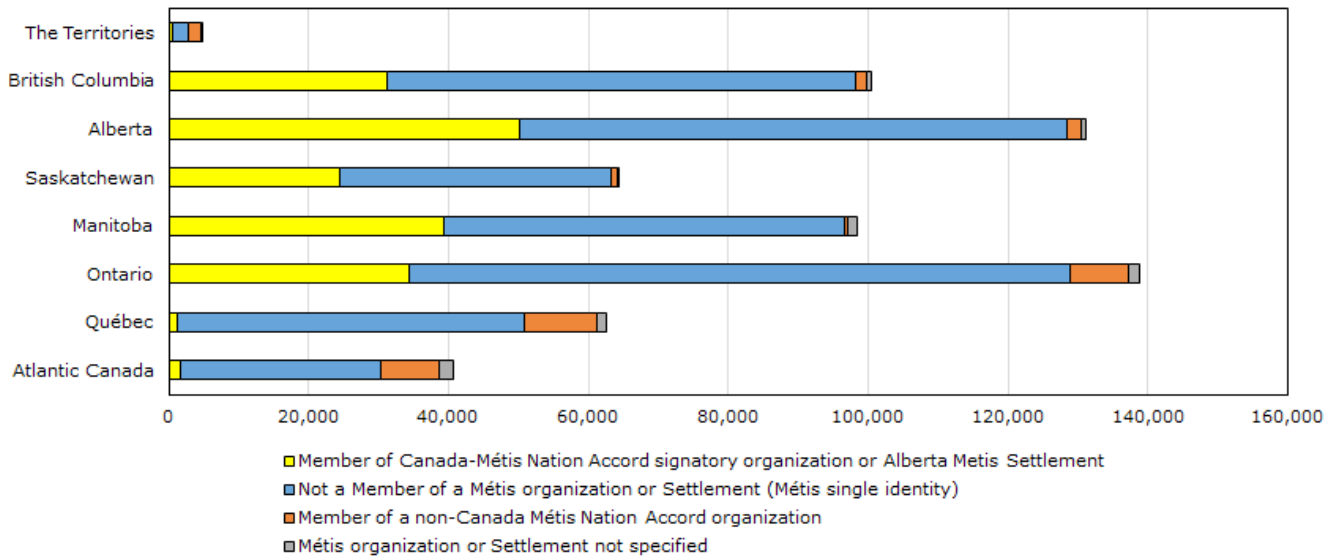
### Almost 8,000 Métis reported membership in a Métis organization or Settlement but did not specify the organization or Settlement

In 2021, 7,990 people reported being a member of a Métis organization or Settlement but did not specify to which organization or Settlement they belonged. This represented about 3.6% of the 224,650 people who reported being registered in a Métis organization or Settlement.

Over half (55.5%) of those who did not specify an organization or Settlement lived in Ontario (1,585 people), Quebec (1,425) and Manitoba (1,425).

# Membership in a Métis organization or Settlement: Findings from the 2021 Census of Population

**Chart 1**  
Registered members to a Métis organization or Settlement accounted for one-third of those who identified as Métis



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

## Additional information

Additional analysis on First Nations people, Métis and Inuit can be found in the *Daily* article on First Nations people, Métis and Inuit in Canada and in the *Census in Brief* article on the housing conditions of Indigenous peoples, Catalogue no. 98-200-X.

Additional information on First Nations people, Métis and Inuit can be found in the [data tables](#); the [Census Profile](#), Catalogue no. 98-316-X; and the [Focus on Geography Series](#), Catalogue no. 98-404-X.

For details on the concepts, definitions and variables used in the 2021 Census of Population, please consult the [Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021](#), Catalogue no. 98-301-X.

In addition to response rates and other data quality information, the [Guide to the Census of Population, 2021](#), Catalogue no. 98-304-X, provides an overview of the various phases of the census, including content determination, sampling design, collection, data processing, data quality assessment, confidentiality guidelines and dissemination.

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