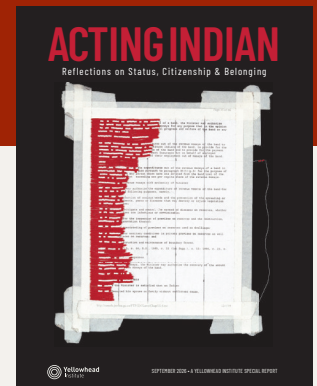


BY THE NUMBERS

The Rise and Fall of Status Indians

WITH EACH AMENDMENT to the Indian Act regarding status, there are concerns about “floods” or “waves” of new status Indians impacting scarce resources. But is that actually the case? 1985’s Bill C-31 and 2011’s Bill C-3 provide some insight. Meanwhile, the second generation cut-off is slowly reducing the amount of First Nations people who can pass on status, leading to fewer status Indians. How do these trends intersect? This overview considers the S-2 status Indian projections.



This resource is from the Yellowhead Special Report, **Acting Indian: Reflections on Status, Citizenship & Belonging.**

S-2 Indians, Gradually

As S-2 makes its way through the legislative process, it is still unclear if the second-generation cut-off will remain in the Senate’s Bill or be removed by the government. If the cut off is removed, there is likely to be a significant number of status Indians added to the register over time. Estimates project approximately 300,000. Importantly, this would be a gradual process where approximately 7,500 Indigenous peoples will register each year, not all at once (Government of Canada, 2026a; House of Commons, 2026; Smith, 2026).

Assuming that changes would be implemented by April 2028, the number of additional registrants across Canada are projected to be:

- Between 18,100 and 24,600 after the first year (2029)
- Between 86,000 and 115,900 after the first five years (2033)
- Between 154,000 and 200,000 after the first 15 years (2043)
- Between 304,500 and 438,400 by 2066 (long term)

These new registrants would be the result of those enfranchised (and their descendants) and 6(2) Indians potentially becoming eligible to pass on status. If the second generation cut-off is not removed in the legislation, these numbers are much smaller.

Bill C-31 and Bill C-3 Comparisons

Bill C-31 resulted in 174,500 people becoming eligible for Indian registration between 1985 and 1999 (Government of Canada, 2018).. Most growth occurred through reinstallments and new registrations (106,781), and children born after 1985 (59,798) (Government of Canada, 2018).

The 2011 Bill C-3 amendments to the *Indian Act* resulted in more than 37,000 newly entitled individuals registered from 2011 to 2017 (those who originally did not qualify under Bill C-31).

BY THE NUMBERS

The Rise and Fall of Status Indians

The 6(2) Shift

The potential increase that will result from removing the cut off is offset by a declining status Indian population. As we know, only 6(1) designated Indians can pass on status to their children (with some exceptions). Given the rates of “marrying out,” this has meant the 6(1) population is steadily decreasing. The table below illustrates the number of individuals registered under Section 6(2) of the *Indian Act* alongside all registered Indians.

While the average percentage of Indigenous individuals registered under Section 6(2) is 22.9%, these numbers vary in individual First Nations, ranging from as low as 4% to as high as 53%.

Region	Individuals under Section 6(2)	Individuals Registered under Indian Act Section 6(1) + Section 6(2)	Percent Registered under Section 6(2)
Alberta	40,994	186,286	22.01%
Atlantic	8,773	42,011	20.88%
British Columbia	47,055	211,177	22.28%
Manitoba	53,523	237,183	22.57%
Northwest Territories	6,523	27,412	23.80%
Ontario	81,411	330,011	24.67%
Quebec	28,424	136,380	20.84%
Saskatchewan	57,132	243,676	23.45%
Yukon	3,214	13,315	24.14%
Total	327,049	1,427,451	22.9%

Data derived from: Demographic Impacts of the Second-Generation Cut-off on the Registered Population of First Nations, https://geo.sac-isc.gc.ca/PNEDG-FNSGC/index_en.html