

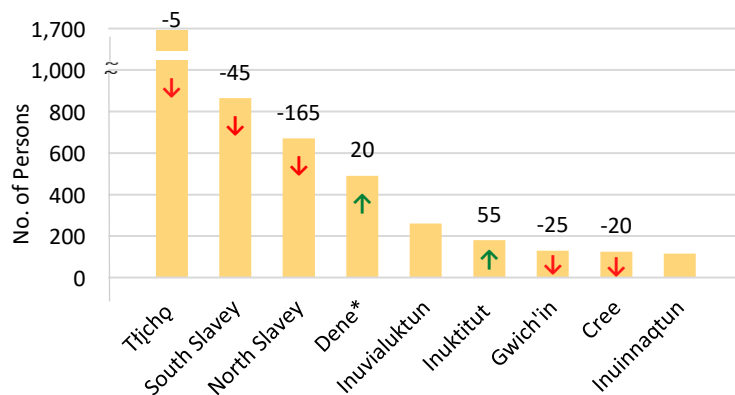
## Language 2021 Census

Yesterday, Statistics Canada published data from the 2021 Census on key language indicators such as mother tongue<sup>1</sup>, home language<sup>2</sup> and knowledge of language<sup>3</sup>. The Information covers all Indigenous languages, including the nine official languages of the Northwest Territories (NWT), namely, Chipewyan, Cree, Gwich'in, Inuinnaqtun, Inuktitut, Inuvialuktun, North Slavey, South Slavey and Tłı̄chǫ. Information was also released on English, French and other languages spoken in the territory.

Statistics Canada has indicated that collection challenges across Canada during 2021 may have impacted the results for some Indigenous languages. Subsequently, this information should be used with caution.

### Indigenous Languages - Mother Tongue

Figure 1: Population by Mother Tongue  
Northwest Territories, 2021 Census



**Notes:**

1. Arrows with numbers indicate change from 2016 Census.
2. The changes in Inuinnaqtun and Inuvialuktun were not available since these two languages were combined in 2016.
3. Responses coded to 'Slavey not otherwise specified' were distributed to North and South Slavey by geography.
4. \* Dene includes Chipewyan

The number of people who reported Inuktitut and Dene languages as a mother tongue increased by 55 and 20, respectively.

In 2021, the number of persons with an Indigenous language as a mother tongue fell to 4,485 from 4,950 in 2016. There were 1,670 people with Tłı̄chǫ as a mother tongue in 2021, the highest among all indigenous NWT languages.

Between 2016 and 2021, the combined number of persons with Inuvialuktun and Inuinnaqtun languages as mother tongue decreased by 45%, while the Slavey languages declined by 15%.

Some Indigenous languages saw a slight growth between 2016 and 2021.

<sup>1</sup> Mother Tongue is defined as the first language learned at home during childhood and still understood.

<sup>2</sup> Home language refers to the language spoken most often at home and other language(s) spoken regularly at home.

<sup>3</sup> Knowledge of the language refers to whether the person can conduct a conversation in this language.

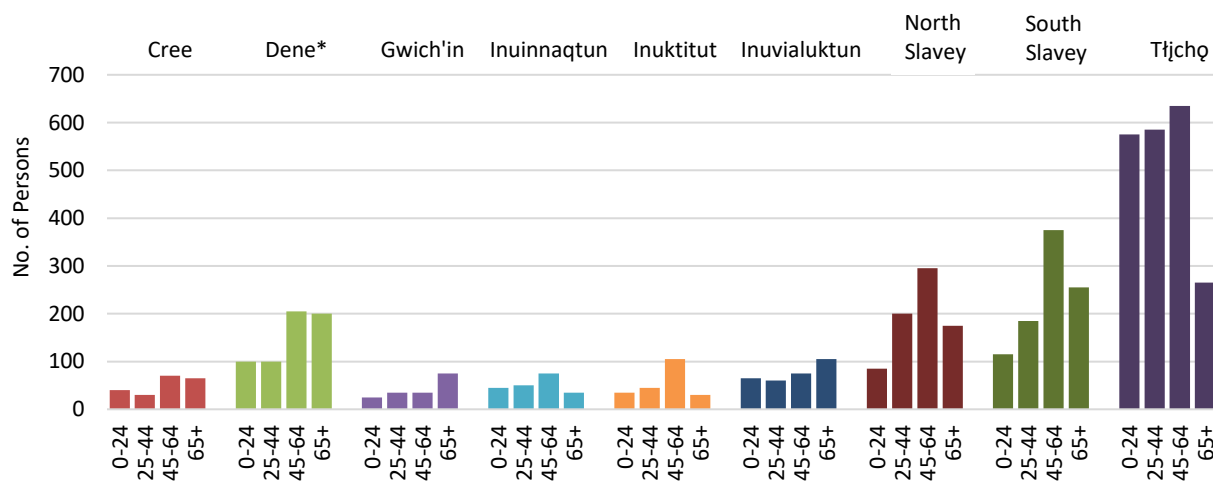
## Indigenous Language Spoken most often at Home

The overall number of people for whom an Indigenous language was the language spoken most often at home declined from 2,045 to 1,665 between 2016 and 2021. Different patterns were however observed for specific languages, with Inuktitut, and Inuinnaqtun combined with Inuvialuktun recording increased use, while Tłı̄ch̄q and the Slavey languages saw a decline.

## Knowledge of Indigenous Languages

In the Northwest Territories, 5,385 persons were able to conduct a conversation in an Indigenous language. For most Indigenous languages, the share of speakers was higher among persons aged 45 or older, ranging from 53.7% for Inuinnaqtun to 67.5% for Dene. The exception was Tłı̄ch̄q, where less than half (43.9%) of the speakers were aged 45 years or older, suggesting a younger population able to conduct a conversation in the language.

Figure 2: Ability to Speak Selected Indigenous Languages by Age Group  
Northwest Territories, 2021 Census



\* Dene includes Chipewyan

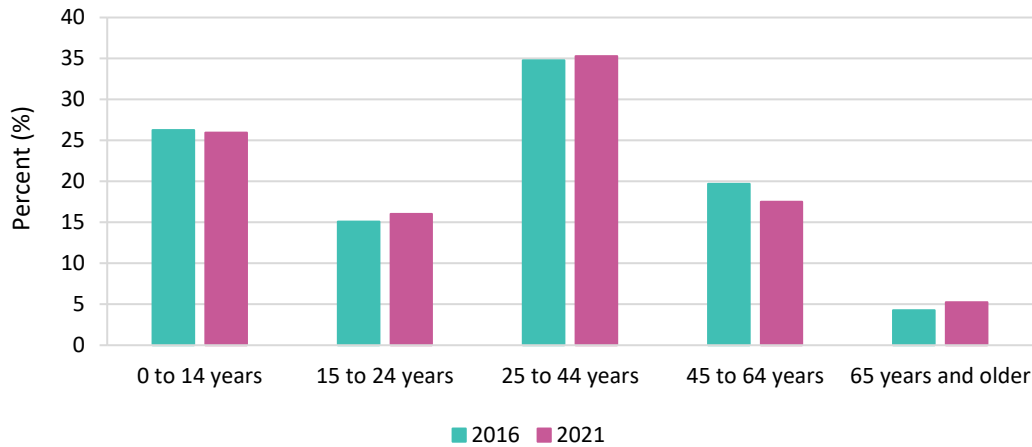
## French

In the NWT, the number of persons with French as a mother tongue increased from 1,360 persons in 2016 to 1,475 in 2021. The majority (74.9%) lived in Yellowknife, while 8.8% resided in Hay River, 5.1% in Fort Smith and 2.7% in Inuvik.

Fewer people spoke French most often at home in 2021 compared to 2016, down by 2.4% to 615 people. In 2021, 4,395 people reported being able to conduct a conversation in French, either as the only language or in combination with English. Approximately three in four people with the knowledge of French lived in Yellowknife (77.9%), followed by Hay River (7.5%), Inuvik (4.3%) and Fort Smith (4.0%).

Figure 3 shows that between 2016 and 2021, the proportion of persons who could conduct a conversation in French declined among those aged 45 to 64 years, while it slightly increased for those 15 to 24 years old and 65 years and older.

Figure 3: Knowledge of French by Age Group  
Northwest Territories 2016 and 2021



## Other Languages

In the NWT, more than 90 other languages were reported as a mother tongue by 3,840 persons in 2021. Tagalog as a mother tongue had the highest number of persons (970) followed by Vietnamese (175 persons), Punjabi (170 persons) and Arabic (165 persons). Between 2016 and 2021, Punjabi (+120 persons), Tagalog (+95 persons) and Mandarin (+65 persons) showed the largest increases. By comparison, the fastest growing other languages in Canada were Punjabi, Arabic and Mandarin.

In the next few months, Statistics Canada will continue to release results from the 2021 Census of Population on a variety of topics. Please see a release schedule below.

### Planned Release Dates for 2021 Census Information

September 21, 2022	Indigenous Persons Housing
October 26, 2022	Immigration, Place of Birth and Citizenship Ethnocultural and Religious Diversity Mobility and Migration
November 30, 2022	Education, Labour Language of Work, Commuting Instruction in the Official Minority Language

*Note: The release dates may change.*

For more information, please visit the NWT Bureau of Statistics website at <http://www.statsnwt.ca> or call (867) 767-9169.