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Millennium Development Goals: Challenges and Opportunities for First Nations Women and Girls

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Overview of Presentation

- Gender Issues facing Indigenous Women in Canada and Globally
- Education and Poverty
- Violence Against Women
- Women and their Children
- Opportunities and Recommendations

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Gender Issues Facing First Nations Women in Canada and Globally

- 370 million Indigenous Peoples in over 70 countries globally
- Indigenous women throughout the world are among the most marginalized groups suffering discrimination not only on the basis of gender but on the basis of race, culture and class as well.
- Colonization, globalization, nationalism, top-down and paternalistic approaches to development have provided a social and economic environment whereby indigenous women have suffered from the effects of poverty, the breakdown of traditional social mechanisms and institutions, violence and militarization, dislocation and migration.

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i. Education, Language and Culture^[1]

- First Nations women are close to twice less likely than First Nations men to have completed a university degree or higher, although there is no difference in high school completion rates (both genders are just over 50% only).
- 50% of First Nations women living in their communities understand a First Nations language relatively well or fluently and 83% consider traditional cultural events to be very or somewhat important.
- Nearly sixty percent of First Nations women have personal incomes under \$20,000 a year, and fifty percent did not complete high school education.

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ii. Housing

- There are chronic housing shortages on-reserve, in the North, and for First Nations women in urban centers. Poverty and higher risk of violence due to involvement in the sex trade are intimately linked to homelessness.^[2] First Nations women often migrate to urban centers to escape violence and poverty occurring on-reserve, only to become victims of “Canada’s triple force of race, class and sex discrimination”.^[3]

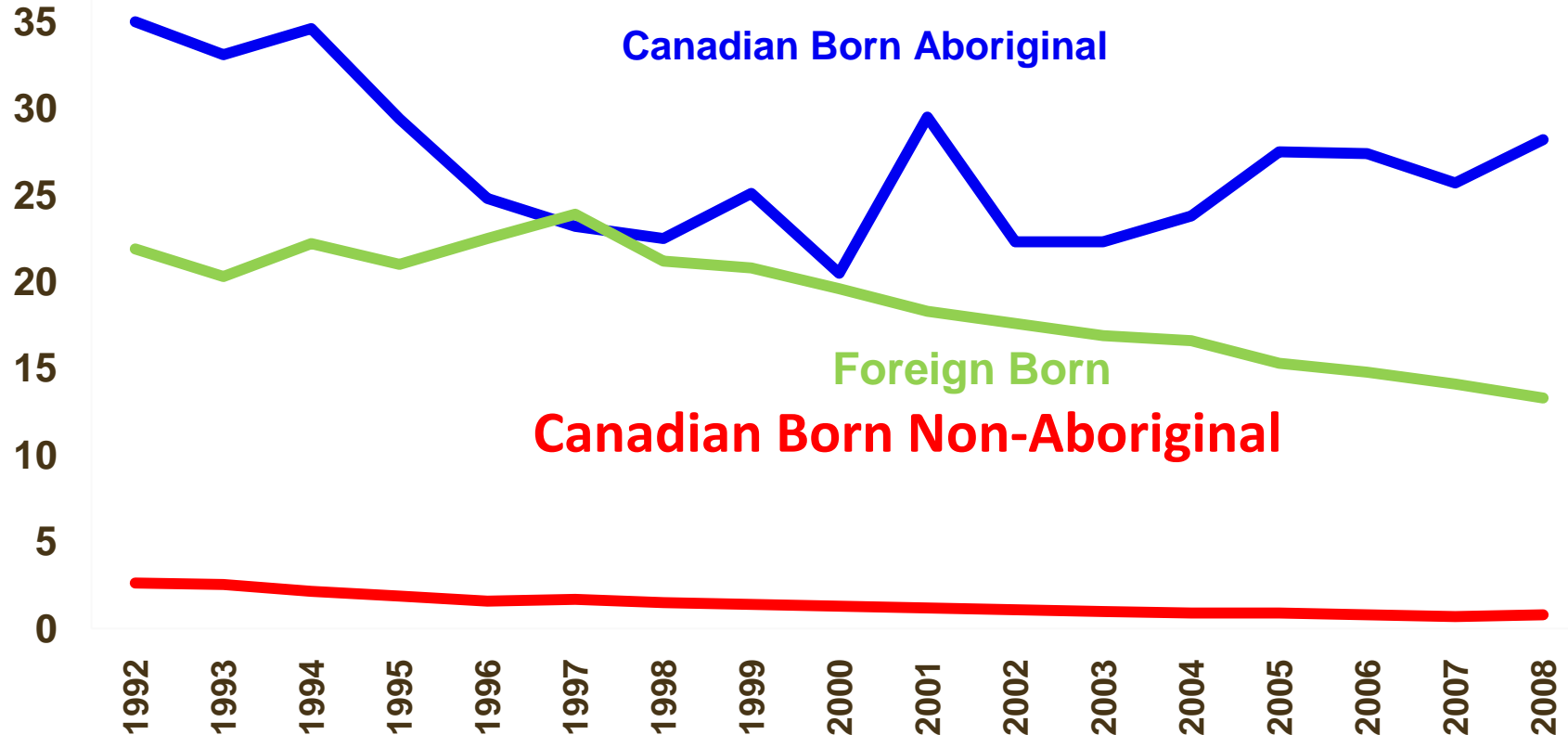
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TB/100,000 by Ethnic origin, 1996-2008



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iii. Violence

- Research has shown that at least three-quarters of Aboriginal women have been victims of family violence, and they are three times more likely than non-Aboriginal women to die as a result of that violence. According to Statistics Canada^[4], 24% of Aboriginal women said that they had suffered violence from a current or previous spouse or common-law partner in the five-year period up to 2004. Aboriginal victims were also more likely to state that they were beaten, choked, threatened with or had a gun or knife used against them, or were sexually assaulted. Health Canada has reported that Aboriginal women aged 25-44 years are five times more likely to be killed by their abusive partner.^[5]

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Women and Children

- A country's ability to support the wellbeing of its women and children is well recognized as an essential element to achieving a healthy nation.

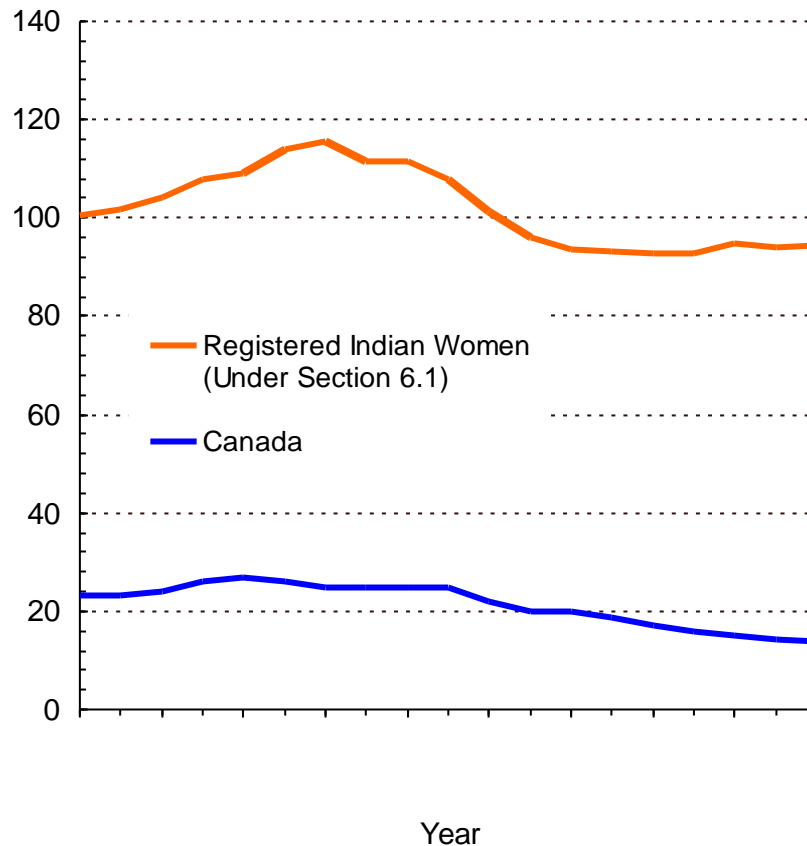
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Teen Fertility Rates (Women – Age 15-19)

Registered Indians and Canada, 1986-2004

Contrary to what the TFR would suggest, fertility of Registered Indian teenage girls remains extremely high, at about 100 births per 1,000 women.

Fertility of Registered Indian teenage girls is six to seven times higher than that of other Canadian teens.



Teen Fertility Rate equals the sum of births to women aged 15-19 divided by the female population aged 15-19 for a specific period.

Source: Guimond and Robitaille (2008).

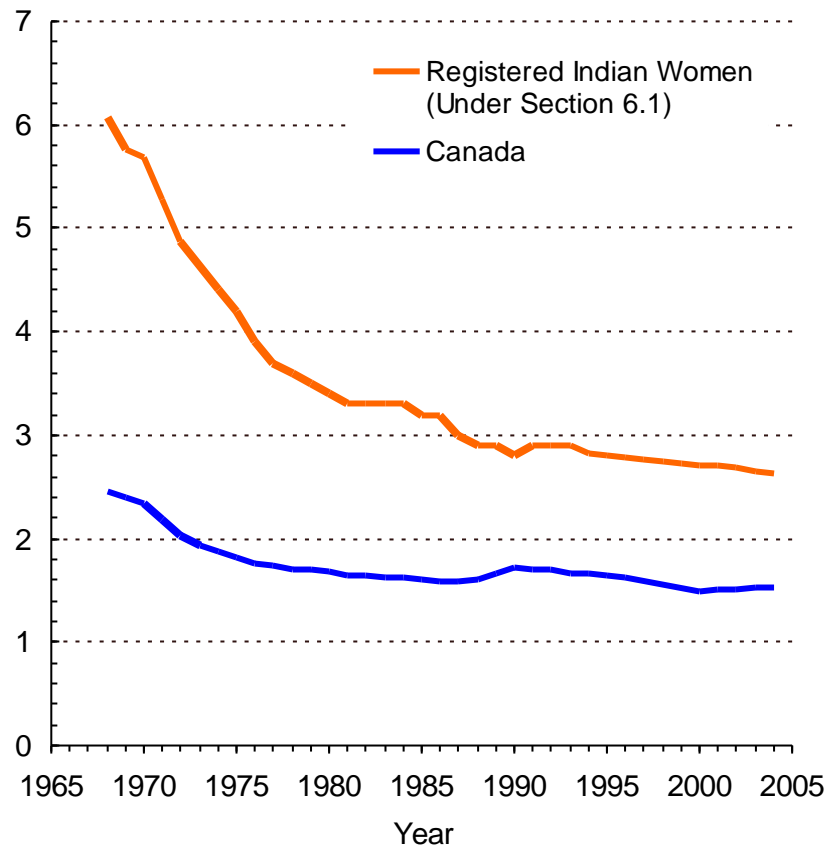
Total Fertility Rate (Women – All Ages)

Registered Indians and Canada, 1968-2004

Total Fertility Rate equals the sum of the age-specific fertility rates.

In Canada, the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of Registered Indian women has been declining since the 1960s, from 6.1 to 2.6 children per woman.

This decline in fertility was made possible by the increased availability of contraceptive methods.



Sources:
Romaniuk (1981),
Piché and George
(1973), Loh et al (1998),
Clatworthy
(unpublished), Statistics
Canada (CANSIM,
Table 102-4505).



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Food Insecurity

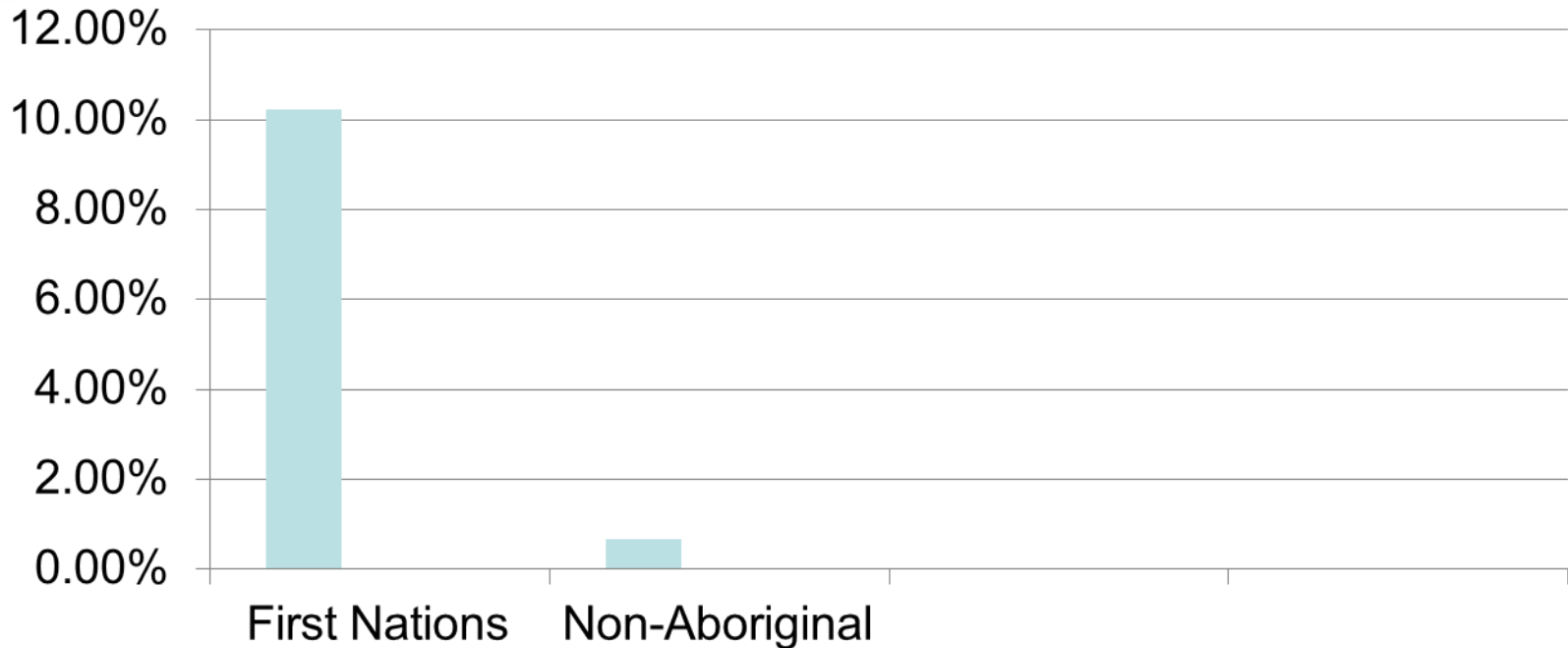
- 53% of Aboriginal homes are led by single women who are food insecure.
- 7% of Aboriginal Canadians utilize food banks compared with less than 1% of the non-Aboriginal population.

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Proportion of First Nations Children in Care



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iv. Women and Health Care access

- Nearly one in six First Nations women (16%) reported that the cost of transportation prevented them from accessing a health service that they needed in the past year.
- An additional 9.2% identified barriers with childcare costs.

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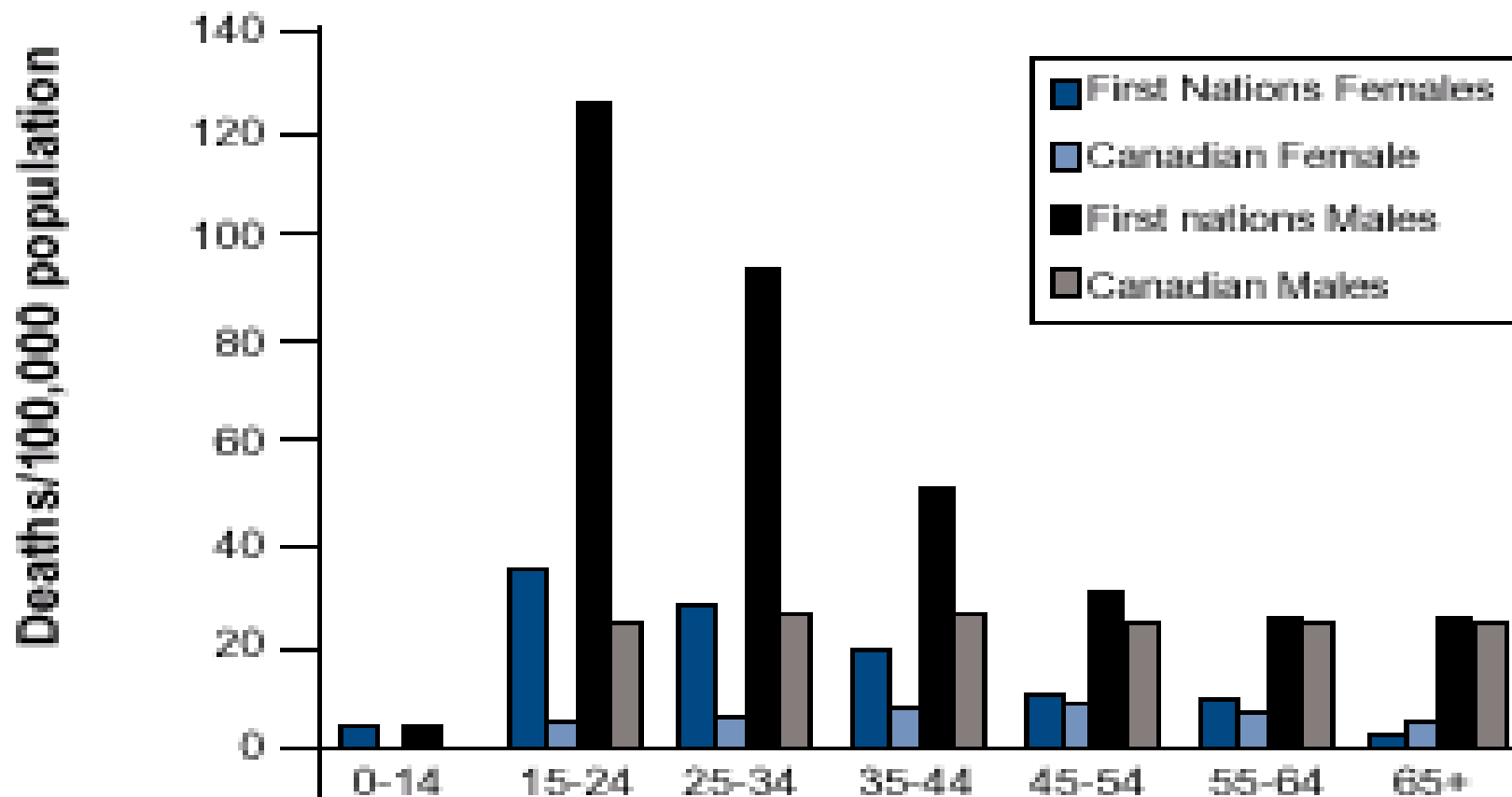
Suicide

- One in three First Nations women have thought about committing suicide at least once in their lifetime; a rate over 40% higher than the reported rate for men.
- This trend is seen throughout the life cycle. Nearly one in five First Nations women reported to have attempted to suicide at least once in their lifetime.

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Crude Suicide Death Rate by Age Group First Nations and Canadian Population, 1989-1993



	0-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
First Nations Females	4.1	35	28.1	18.8	11.1	9.1	2.4
Canadian Female	0	4.5	5.2	7.8	8.2	6.5	5.4
First nations Males	3.6	125.7	93.3	50.3	30.9	24.7	25.2
Canadian Males	0	24.1	26.7	26	24.5	23.9	24.3

Source: 1996, *Trends in First Nations Mortality, 1979-1993*. Ottawa: Health Canada, Medical Services Branch.



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Opportunities

The precedence of developing and periodically updating databases disaggregated by gender, ethnicity/race is essential to establish and utilize better policies, strategies and plans for Indigenous Peoples' economic and social development, paying close attention to gender equity and equality

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Recommendations

- Increased representation in the public domain.
- Improve indigenous women's access to education.
- Address the issue of sexual abuse and vulnerability to physical violence.
- Measures should be adopted to stop trafficking of indigenous women and girls for prostitution and sex slavery. HIV/AIDS programs should be tailored to address the special needs and problems of indigenous women. Health care agencies should be more responsive to indigenous women.

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