



NUMBER OF LONG- TERM DRINKING WATER ADVISORIES ON PUBLIC SYSTEMS ON RESERVE

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL
SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS



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CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS

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Table of contents

Number of long-term drinking water advisories on public systems on reserve5

- Key results5
- About the indicator6
 - What the indicator measures6
 - Why this indicator is important6
 - Related indicator6
- Data sources and methods7
 - Data sources7
 - Methods7
 - Recent Changes7
 - Caveats and limitations7
- Resource7
 - Reference7

Annex8

- Annex A. Data table for the figure presented in this document8

List of Figures

- Figure 1. Progress on long-term drinking water advisories on public systems on reserve as of September 30, 2020, Canada, 2015 to 20205

List of Tables

Table A.1. Data for Figure 1. Progress on long-term drinking water advisories on public systems on reserve as of September 30, 2020, Canada, 2015 to 20208

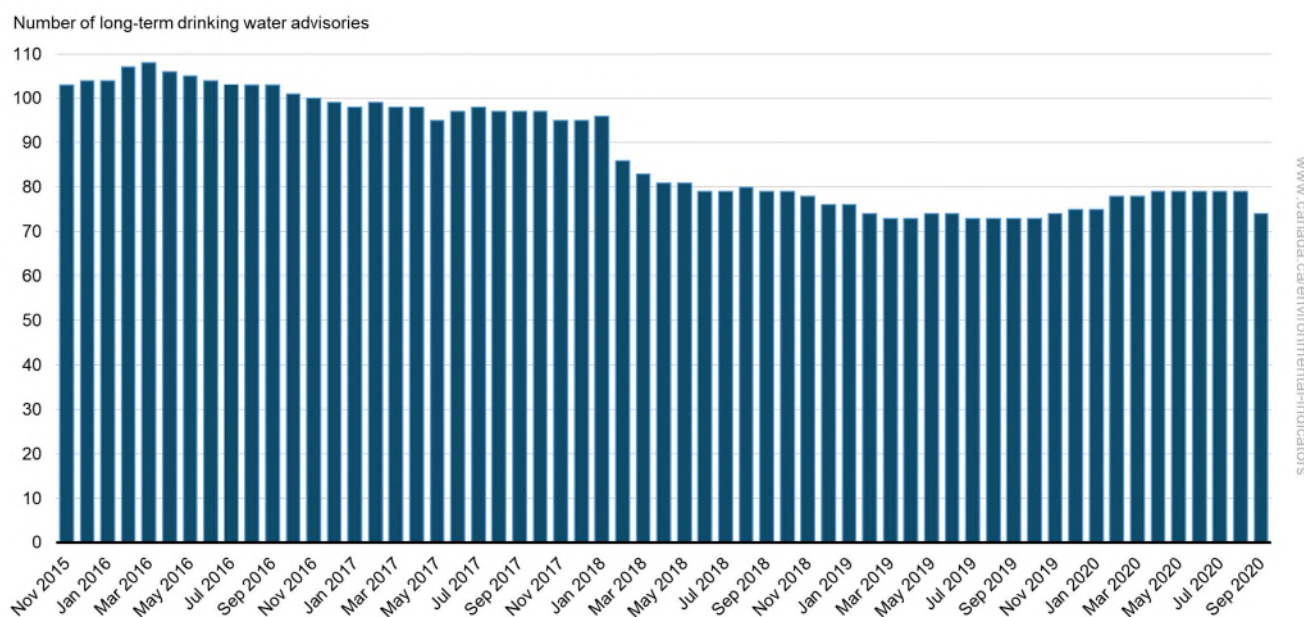
Number of long-term drinking water advisories on public systems on reserve

Drinking water advisories are public health protection notifications about real or potential health risks related to drinking water. In November 2015, the Government of Canada committed to ending all long-term drinking water advisories on public water systems on reserve. This indicator shows progress towards lifting these advisories.

Key results

- In November 2015, there were 105 drinking water advisories¹ on public systems on reserve
- As of September 30, 2020, the total number of drinking water advisories has decreased from a baseline number of 105 to 58, which represents a 55% net decrease
- The greatest net reduction of advisories (11) occurred in February 2018²

Figure 1. Progress on long-term drinking water advisories on public systems on reserve as of September 30, 2020, Canada, 2015 to 2020



[Data for Figure 1](#)

Note: The graph shows the number of long-term drinking water advisories remaining in effect at the end of each month from the baseline number of 105 advisories.

Source: Indigenous Services Canada (2020) [Ending long-term drinking water advisories](#).

Drinking water advisories are issued in off-reserve communities across Canada by the relevant municipal, provincial or territorial government.

In First Nations communities, it is the responsibility of the Chief and Council to issue or rescind a drinking water advisory and take necessary actions.

¹ This indicator includes the baseline number of 77 long-term drinking water advisories originally established in November 2015 and the expanded list added January 2018, for a total of 105 advisories. For more information, please refer to the [“About the indicator”](#) section.

² Eleven (11) long-term drinking water advisories affecting public drinking water systems in Slate Falls Nation, Ontario were lifted on February 5, 2018 after a new water treatment plant replaced the 11 systems.

A drinking water advisory is considered long-term when it has been in place for more than a year. This generally happens when a water system is not functioning well for a variety of reasons, for example, because of equipment malfunction and/or operational issues which prevent the system from treating water to the required quality.

While a drinking water advisory is in effect residents must either purchase water, boil water or otherwise ensure their drinking water is purified.

About the indicator

What the indicator measures

In November 2015, the Government of Canada committed to ending all long-term drinking water advisories affecting approximately 800 federally funded public water systems on reserves by 2021. At that time, a baseline was established which included 77 advisories in effect in 53 First Nations communities.

In January 2018, approximately 250 additional public drinking water systems were added to the number of systems included in the commitment, as part of an expanded scope. Taking into account the additional systems that were affected by long-term drinking water advisories, the baseline from November 2015 was revised to 105 long-term drinking water advisories in effect in 67 communities.

Results for long-term drinking water advisories on public systems on reserve, along with a map of the communities affected, may be found at Indigenous Services Canada's website on [ending long-term drinking water advisories](#).

Why this indicator is important

Drinking water advisories inform those impacted about actions they should take to protect themselves from real or potential health risks related to their drinking water supply.

Although Canada's drinking water is among the safest in the world, understanding key trends related to drinking water advisories helps identify priorities to improve our drinking water systems. To help improve the safety and sustainability of drinking water in Canada, natural ecosystems from which drinking water is drawn may be assessed and revitalization efforts brought to affected ecosystems. In addition, improvements or upgrades to drinking water infrastructure and operations may help reduce drinking water advisories in Canada.



Clean drinking water

This indicator tracks progress on the [2019 to 2022 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy](#), supporting the target: All Canadians have access to safe drinking water and, in particular, the significant challenges Indigenous communities face are addressed. The most recent data available shows that, as of September 30, 2020, the total number of drinking water advisories was reduced³ to 58 from 105, representing a 55% overall decrease.

Related indicator

The [Drinking water advisories](#) indicator provides a long-term national view of why drinking water advisories are issued, whether it is due to water quality or equipment and process-related issues.

³ As shown in Annex A, advisories may be added and/or lifted in any given month, the total reported here represents the net change from the baseline number of 105.

Data sources and methods

Data sources

The data for this indicator come from [Indigenous Services Canada](#).

Indigenous services Canada supports First Nations communities in establishing their own drinking water quality monitoring programs and provides related funding through its Community-Based Water Monitor program.

Community-based drinking water quality monitors sample and test the drinking water for potential bacteriological contamination as a final check on the overall safety of the drinking water at tap. If a community does not have a community-based drinking water quality monitor, an environmental health officer⁴ will sample and test drinking water quality, with the community's permission. Environmental health officers test drinking water quality for chemical, physical, and radiological contaminants and maintain quality assurance and quality control. They also review and interpret drinking water quality tests and disseminate the results to First Nations communities. In all situations, if the drinking water is found not to be safe for drinking, the environmental health officer will immediately communicate the appropriate recommendation(s) to the Chief and Council for action, such as issuing a drinking water advisory.

A drinking water advisory automatically becomes a long-term drinking water advisory once it has been in existence for a year.

Methods

Indigenous Services Canada records when drinking water advisories are issued and when they become a long-term drinking water advisory. This information is maintained in a database and updated as new data becomes available.

Recent Changes

In this update, an expanded baseline number of 105 long-term drinking water advisories on public systems on reserve is used. The previous update was based on an original set of about 800 drinking water systems financially supported by Indigenous Services Canada in First Nations communities and did not include approximately 250 additional public drinking water systems on reserve added in January 2018.

Caveats and limitations

This indicator is a snapshot of the progress towards eliminating the 105 long-term drinking water advisories on public systems on reserve as of September 30, 2020. Advisories may be added and/or resolved in any given month. The total reported in this indicator represents the net change from the baseline number of 105.

The number of long-term drinking water advisories on public systems on reserve is not static and the data are updated frequently in response to changing situations. Results for long-term drinking water advisories on reserve, along with a map of the affected communities, may be found at Indigenous Services Canada's website: [Ending long-term drinking water advisories](#).

The data on the number of long-term drinking water advisories that are in place and that have been resolved are overall numbers. They are not broken down by type of advisory (boil water, do not consume, do not use).

Resource

Reference

Indigenous Services Canada (2020) [Ending long-term drinking water advisories](#). Retrieved on October 2, 2020.

⁴ An environmental health officer is a certified public health inspector employed by Indigenous Services Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch or First Nations stakeholders.

Annex

Annex A. Data table for the figure presented in this document

Table A.1. Data for Figure 1. Progress on long-term drinking water advisories on public systems on reserve as of September 30, 2020, Canada, 2015 to 2020

Month	Number of long-term drinking water advisories added	Number of long-term drinking water advisories resolved	Long-term drinking water advisories remaining
Baseline	n/a	n/a	105
November 2015	2	4	103
December 2015	1	0	104
January 2016	0	0	104
February 2016	3	1	106
March 2016	2	2	106
April 2016	0	2	104
May 2016	0	1	103
June 2016	1	2	102
July 2016	0	2	100
August 2016	3	2	101
September 2016	1	1	101
October 2016	0	2	99
November 2016	0	1	98
December 2016	0	1	97
January 2017	0	1	96
February 2017	2	0	98
March 2017	0	1	97
April 2017	2	2	97
May 2017	1	4	94
June 2017	2	0	96
July 2017	2	0	98
August 2017	0	1	97
September 2017	0	0	97
October 2017	1	1	97
November 2017	1	3	95
December 2017	2	6	91
January 2018	1	0	92
February 2018	2	13	81
March 2018	1	4	78
April 2018	2	4	76
May 2018	1	1	76

Month	Number of long-term drinking water advisories added	Number of long-term drinking water advisories resolved	Long-term drinking water advisories remaining
June 2018	0	4	72
July 2018	1	1	72
August 2018	1	0	73
September 2018	0	4	69
October 2018	1	3	67
November 2018	0	1	66
December 2018	0	4	62
January 2019	0	0	62
February 2019	0	2	60
March 2019	0	1	59
April 2019	2	4	57
May 2019	1	0	58
June 2019	0	0	58
July 2019	0	2	56
August 2019	0	0	56
September 2019	0	0	56
October 2019	1	1	56
November 2019	1	0	57
December 2019	1	0	58
January 2020	1	1	58
February 2020	3	0	61
March 2020	0	0	61
April 2020	1	0	62
May 2020	0	0	62
June 2020	2	2	62
July 2020	1	1	62
August 2020	1	1	62
September 2020	2	6	58

Note: n/a = not applicable. The table shows the number of long-term drinking water advisories remaining in effect at the end of each month from the baseline number of 105 advisories.

Source: Indigenous Services Canada (2020) [Ending long-term drinking water advisories](#).

Additional information can be obtained at:

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