

Our Health Counts Thunder Bay

An inclusive community-driven health survey for Indigenous peoples of Thunder Bay

Mental Health

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada details the goals and impacts of Canada's Indigenous policies over time.¹ These included the elimination of traditional Indigenous governments and livelihood; disruption of our families and communities; and the planned expiry of treaty, half-breed script, and Inuit land claim obligations through processes of assimilation. While attempts at assimilation have not been successful, the implementation of these policies have negatively influenced structural determinants of health, such as housing, income, employment and land ties.² They also undermined language, cultural expression, and family systems.² The result is a continued negative impact on the health of Indigenous peoples – including mental and emotional health and wellbeing. An approach that addresses structural risks, social determinants, and the revitalization of balanced family and community relationships is essential to addressing mental illness for Indigenous peoples and moving towards thriving Indigenous populations in Canada.

Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing

70% of Indigenous adults in Thunder Bay reported very good or excellent mental health compared to **68%** of the general Ontarian population.³

Most Indigenous adults in Thunder Bay reported being happy, interested in life, having trusting relationships, being confident in expressing their ideas, and liking most of their personality everyday or almost everyday in the past month:



Over 3 in 4 are interested in life almost every day/every day.



2 in 3 feel happy almost every day/every day.

75%

liked most parts of their personality almost every day/every day.



feel that people are basically good and that they have warm and trusting relationships with others almost every day/every day.

64%

are confident to think or express their own ideas and feel that their life has a sense of direction and meaning almost every day/every day.

76%

are good at managing the responsibilities of their daily life and have experiences that challenge them to grow and become a better person almost every day/every day.

68%

are satisfied with their life and feel that they belong to a community almost every day/every day.

Mental Health Diagnosis

30% of Indigenous adults in Thunder Bay have been told by a healthcare worker that they have a psychological and/or mental health disorder.

71% of those who had a psychological and/or mental health diagnosis said that their condition(s) limited the amount or kinds of activities that they could do.

Rates of mental health diagnosis may be higher than reported due to issues accessing health professionals able to make these diagnoses.

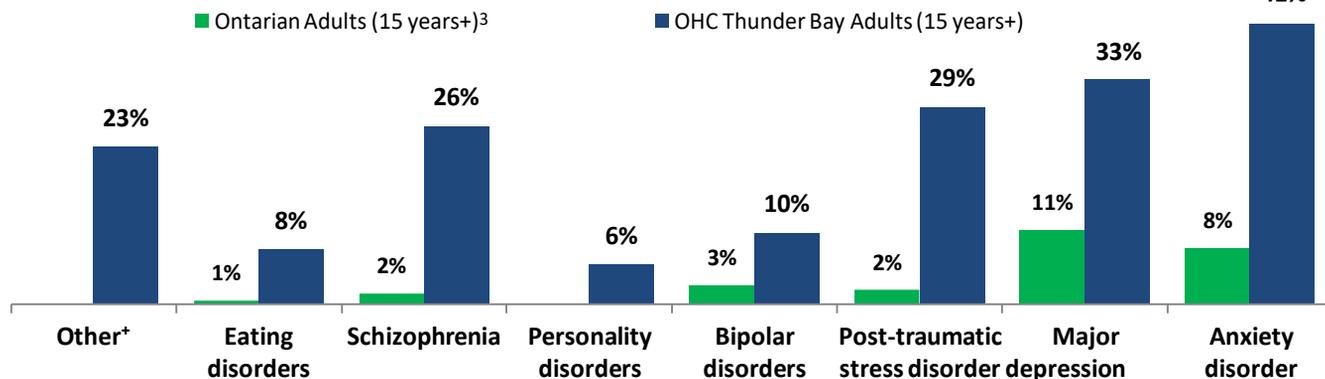
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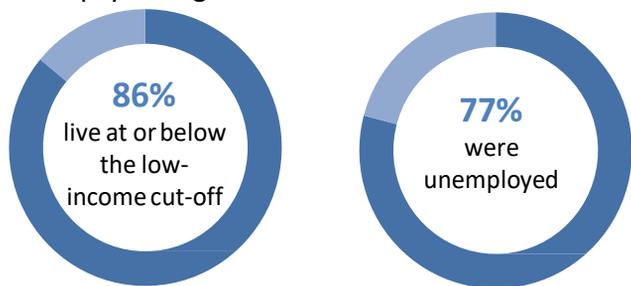
Indigenous adults in Thunder Bay have a **higher prevalence of mental health conditions** than the overall adult population (15 years and older) in Ontario.

Prevalence of mental health conditions among Indigenous peoples in Thunder Bay compared to the general Ontario population



⁺ Other includes: Minor depression, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), post-partum depression, etc.

Of Indigenous adults who have been told that they have a psychological or mental health disorder...



Rates of poverty and unemployment are significantly higher for those who have a mental health disorder compared to those who do not.[‡]

Over 2 in 5

Indigenous adults have experienced discrimination from others because of an emotional or mental health problem.

67%

of those who faced discrimination because of their condition, reported that this prevented or delayed them from getting the care or support that they needed.

Screening and Diagnosis for Depression and PTSD

OHC Thunder Bay screening for Indigenous adults in Thunder Bay demonstrated that there is a large gap in the diagnosis and screening for depression and PTSD

Depression

33% of Indigenous adults in Thunder Bay have been told by a health care provider that they have major depression.

vs.

51% of Indigenous adults in Thunder Bay screened to have a high likelihood of depression using the Kessler Scale.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

29% of Indigenous adults in Thunder Bay have been told by a health care provider that they have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

vs.

41% of Indigenous adults in Thunder Bay screened positive for PTSD.

11% of adults, 15 years and over, in Ontario have had a major depressive episode in their lifetime.³

2% of adults, 15 years and over, in Ontario have a current diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder.³

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Intentional Injury and Suicide

63% of Indigenous adults have had a close friend or family member die by suicide.

43% of Indigenous adults have harmed themselves on purpose.

Almost **5 in 10** Indigenous adults have thought about dying by suicide compared to

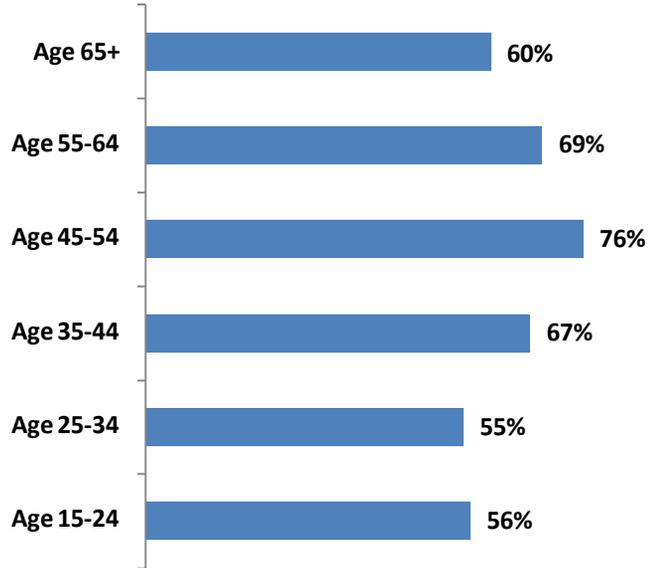
5 x HIGHER
than the general Ontario population

1 in 10 adults in Ontario.³



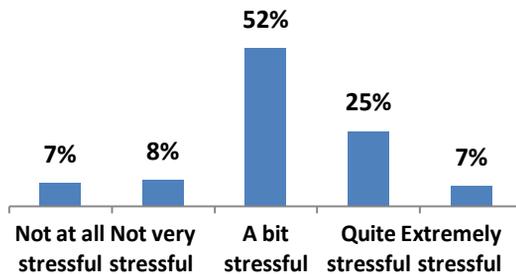
have attempted to die by suicide.

Rates of having a family member or close friend die by suicide was high across all age groups, and especially between age 45 to 54.



Stress and Coping

68% of Indigenous adults found most days a bit, not very, or not at all stressful.



Major Stressors

Financial situation	53%
Own physical, emotional, or mental health	32%
Personal relationships	36%
Time pressures/not enough time	30%
Caring for own children and/or others	20%
Other personal or family responsibilities	32%
Employment status	31%
School	18%
Personal and family's safety	34%
Discrimination	24%

7/10 of Indigenous adults rated their ability to handle stress as good, very good, or excellent.

Of Indigenous adults who rated their ability to handle stress as good, very good, or excellent:

57% participated in traditional Indigenous ceremonies.

41% used traditional Indigenous medicines or practices to maintain their health and wellbeing.

77% had a strong sense of belonging to the Indigenous community.

These rates are similar for those whose ability to handle stress was fair or poor indicating the need for more research on how traditional practices and identity are linked to stress management.

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Access to Services

28% of Indigenous adults in Thunder Bay thought there are inadequate mental health services available to Indigenous peoples.

38% of Indigenous adults thought there are inadequate services for suicide prevention available to Indigenous peoples.

2 in 5 Indigenous adults didn't feel they received the help they needed for emotions, mental health, or the use of alcohol or drugs.

The most common reasons for why this need was unmet:

- Lack of trust in health care provider
- Waiting list too long
- Chose not to see health care provider

Policy Implications

TRC Calls to Action 19: We call upon the federal government, in consultation with Indigenous Peoples, to establish measurable goals to identify and close the gaps in health outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Such efforts would focus on indicators such as mental health, addictions, and the availability of appropriate health services.

TRC Calls to Action 21: We call upon the federal government to provide sustainable funding for existing and new Indigenous healing centres to address the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual harms.

MMIWG Report Calls to Justice 1.8: We call upon all governments to create specific and long-term funding, available to Indigenous communities and organizations, to create, deliver, and disseminate prevention programs, education, and awareness campaigns designed for Indigenous communities and families related to violence prevention and combatting lateral violence.

MMIWG Report Calls to Justice 3.4: We call upon all governments to ensure that all Indigenous communities receive immediate and necessary resources, including funding and support, for the establishment of sustainable, permanent, no-barrier, preventative, accessible, holistic, wraparound services, including mobile trauma and addictions recovery teams.

MMIWG Report Calls to Justice 3.5: We call upon all governments to establish culturally competent and responsive crisis response teams in all communities and regions, to meet the immediate needs of an Indigenous person, family, and/or community after a traumatic event (murder, accident, violent event, etc.), alongside ongoing support.

Additional Recommendations: The City of Thunder Bay, provincial and federal policy makers work in partnership with urban Indigenous Peoples and organizations to:

- Develop, fund, and implement an Indigenous specific mental health human resources strategy to increase the number of Indigenous mental health providers, traditional counsellors, healers, and ceremonialists
- Address barriers to the access of mental health care including stigma, financial, accommodation, and transportation barriers
- Expand the number of and accessibility of dedicated safe spaces for the practice of ceremonies, healing and traditions that promote mental health and wellbeing

Definitions

Indigenous adults: persons self-identifying as Indigenous such as First Nations, Métis, Inuit, or other Nation aged 15 years and older living or using services in the City of Toronto; Anxiety disorders: includes anxiety, panic attacks, obsessive-compulsive disorder; Bipolar disorders: or manic depression.

‡ Denotes statistically significant difference $p < 0.05$

Population based estimates were created using respondent driven sampling

Sources

1. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015); 2. Charlotte Reading (2015); 3. Statistics Canada (2012).

Our Health Counts: Community health assessment by the people, for the people



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Our Health Counts Thunder Bay is an inclusive community-based health survey for Indigenous peoples of Thunder Bay and is part of the largest Indigenous population health study in Canada.

Participants were selected using respondent-driven sampling, a statistical method which uses social networks in the community to recruit Indigenous people living in the city.

Survey Question	RDS Prevalence Estimate (95% Confidence Interval)
In general, would you say your mental health is...	
Excellent, very good, good	70.00% (64.00, 76.10)
Fair, poor	29.60% (23.50, 35.60)
Don't know	0.40% (0.30, 0.50)
In the past month, how often did you feel...	
...interested in life	
Every day/almost every day	77.60% (71.90, 83.30)
2-3 times a week or less	22.20% (16.50, 27.90)
...happy	
Every day/almost every day	67.00% (60.80, 73.20)
2-3 times a week or less	32.70% (26.50, 38.90)
...good at managing the responsibilities of your daily life	
Every day/almost every day	75.70% (69.80, 77.50)
2-3 times a week or less	23.80% (17.90, 29.70)
...that your life has a sense of direction and meaning to it	
Every day/almost every day	64.80% (58.50, 71.00)
2-3 times a week or less	34.30% (28.10, 40.50)
...that you liked most parts of your personality	
Every day/almost every day	74.50% (68.50, 80.50)
2-3 times a week or less	25.10% (19.20, 31.00)
...confident to think or express your own ideas and opinions	
Every day/almost every day	64.00% (57.70, 70.40)
2-3 times a week or less	35.70% (29.40, 42.00)
...that you had experiences that challenge you to grow and become a better person	
Every day/almost every day	64.90% (58.70, 71.10)
2-3 times a week or less	34.70% (28.50, 41.00)
...that you had warm and trusting relationships with others	
Every day/almost every day	71.70% (65.90, 77.50)
2-3 times a week or less	28.30% (22.60, 34.10)



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Survey Question	RDS Prevalence Estimate (95% Confidence Interval)
...that you belonged to a community	
Every day/almost every day	54.10% (47.50, 60.70)
2-3 times a week or less	44.70% (38.10, 51.30)
...satisfied with your life	
Every day/almost every day	68.40% (62.10, 74.70)
2-3 times a week or less	31.50% (25.20, 37.80)
...that people are basically good	
Every day/almost every day	71.30% (65.40, 77.10)
2-3 times a week or less	28.00% (22.20, 33.90)
Have you ever been told by a healthcare worker that you have a psychological and/or mental health disorder(s)?	
Yes	30.00% (24.40, 35.50)
No	68.50% (62.90, 74.10)
Has/have this/these condition(s) limited the amount or kinds of activities that you can do?	
Yes	70.80% (60.40, 81.10)
No	28.30% (18.00, 38.70)
Have you been told you have any of the following psychological and/or mental health disorders...	
Anxiety disorder	40.60% (29.60, 51.50)
Major depression	32.60% (22.00, 43.20)
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	28.50% (20.40, 36.70)
Bipolar disorders	10.30% (2.80, 17.90)
Schizophrenia	25.80% (17.50, 34.10)
Personality disorders	5.70% (0.40, 11.70)
Eating disorders	7.90% (4.30, 11.50)
Suicidal behaviour	9.20% (3.70, 14.70)
Other	22.80% (13.70, 31.80)
Have been told that you have a psychological/mental health disorder by LICO	
Below/at before-tax LICO	86.00% (77.50, 94.50)
Above before-tax LICO	14.00% (5.50, 22.50)
Have been told that you have a psychological/mental health disorder by employment status	
Employed	5.00% (0.30, 9.70)
Unemployed	77.40% (67.90, 86.90)
Not in the labour force	17.60% (8.80, 26.30)



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Survey Question	RDS Prevalence Estimate (95% Confidence Interval)
Have you ever experienced discrimination from others because of an emotional or mental health problem?	
Yes	22.60% (17.20, 28.00)
No	76.10% (70.60, 81.50)
Did this prevent or delay you from getting the care or support you needed?	
Yes	66.50% (54.60, 78.40)
No	32.80% (20.90, 44.70)
Kessler Scale for Depression	
Low (10-15)	27.00% (21.30, 32.70)
Moderate (16-21)	22.40% (16.60, 28.20)
High (22-29)	29.80% (23.90, 35.80)
Very high (30-50)	20.80% (15.40, 26.30)
PTSD Screener	
No PTSD symptoms	39.60% (33.30, 45.80)
1 or 2 PTSD symptoms	20.00% (14.70, 25.20)
3 or more PTSD symptoms (Positive Screen)	40.50% (34.20, 46.80)
Has a close friend or family member ever died by suicide?	
Yes	63.00% (56.50, 69.40)
No	35.10% (28.70, 41.40)
Have you ever harmed yourself on purpose?	
Yes	42.60% (36.10, 49.10)
No	55.20% (48.70, 61.70)
Have you ever thought about dying by suicide?	
Yes	47.50% (41.00, 54.10)
No	49.30% (42.80, 55.80)
Have you ever attempted to die by suicide?	
Yes	32.10% (26.00, 38.30)
No	65.40% (59.10, 71.70)
Age group by have had a close friend or family member ever die by suicide	
15 to 24 years	
Yes	56.40% (39.70, 73.10)
No	40.70% (24.70, 56.70)
25 to 34 years	
Yes	55.20% (43.30, 67.00)
No	44.20% (32.50, 56.00)
35 to 44 years	
Yes	66.80% (54.40, 79.30)
No	29.00% (17.30, 40.80)



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Survey Question	RDS Prevalence Estimate (95% Confidence Interval)
Age group by have had a close friend or family member ever die by suicide	
45 to 54 years	
Yes	76% (59.40, 92.50)
No	23.10% (6.70, 39.50)
55 to 64 years	
Yes	68.90% (48.30, 89.50)
No	29.70% (8.70, 50.70)
65 years and over	
Yes	59.90% (14.40, 100)
No	34.90% (14.00, 83.80)
Of Indigenous adults who identified as Two-Spirit...	
Have harmed themselves on purpose	42.60% (22.10, 63.10)
Have attempted suicide	46.50% (25.70, 67.40)
Thinking about the amount of stress in your life, would you say that most days are...	
Not at all stressful	7.40% (4.40, 10.50)
Not very stressful	8.40% (4.50, 12.30)
A bit stressful	52.20% (45.70, 58.70)
Quite a bit stressful	24.70% (18.80, 30.60)
Extremely stressful	6.60% (3.40, 9.80)
How would you rate your ability to handle stress?	
Excellent, very good, or good	71.80% (65.90, 77.60)
Fair/Poor	27.90% (22.10, 33.70)
What are the sources of stress that you experience?	
Financial situation	53.40% (47.10, 59.70)
Own physical, emotional, or mental health	32.30% (26.60, 38.00)
Personal relationships	35.90% (29.70, 42.10)
Time pressures/not enough time	29.80% (23.70, 35.80)
Employment status	31.30% (25.50, 37.00)
Caring for your own children and/or others	19.70% (14.60, 24.90)
Other personal family responsibilities	32.10% (26.10, 38.10)
School	18.30% (13.40, 23.20)
Own work situation	12.60% (9.40, 15.80)
Personal and family's safety	33.80% (27.80, 39.80)
Discrimination	24.00% (18.70, 29.20)
For those who rated their ability to handle stress good, very good, or excellent....	
Participation in traditional Indigenous ceremony	57.00% (49.00, 65.00)



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Survey Question	RDS Prevalence Estimate (95% Confidence Interval)
Used traditional Indigenous medicines or practices	41.60% (33.90, 49.30)
Had strong sense of belonging to the Indigenous community	77.30% (71.70, 83.00)
During the past 12 months, was there ever a time when you felt that you needed help for your emotions, mental health or use of alcohol or drugs, but you didn't receive it?	
Yes	39.60% (33.50, 45.60)
No	60.30% (54.30, 66.30)
Why was this need unmet?	
Doctor not available	20.70% (13.80, 27.70)
Nurse not available	12.50% (9.00, 16.00)
Lack of trust in health care provider	39.70% (29.50, 49.90)
Waiting list too long	38.00% (29.20, 46.90)
Unable to arrange transport	23.80% (15.20, 32.30)
Could not afford transport	18.80% (12.10, 25.60)
Difficulty accessing traditional healer and/or medicines	10.30% (4.60, 16.00)
Do not have health benefits from my work	0.10% (0.00, 0.30)
Not covered by non-insured health benefits	1.20% (0.00, 3.30)
Prior approval for services under NIHB was denied	1.10% (0.00, 2.70)
Could not afford direct cost of care/services	0.70% (0.00, 2.50)
Felt health care provider was inadequate	11.60% (6.60, 16.50)
Felt service was not culturally appropriate	11.30% (4.80, 17.80)
Chose not to see health professional	25.50% (16.00, 35.00)
Service was not available in my area	11.60% (7.30, 16.00)
Could not get time off of work	1.60% (0.80, 2.40)
Did not have safe or reliable childcare option	5.10% (0.70, 9.50)
Could not afford childcare	3.80% (0.00, 7.80)
Was referred to a specialist but had difficult getting an appointment	3.10% (1.30, 4.90)
Was referred to a specialist and got an appointment but missed it	1.70% (0.00, 4.10)
Was excluded because I was under the influence of alcohol or other substances	2.10% (0.00, 4.60)
Other	21.20% (12.50, 29.90)
Do you think there are inadequate community resources serving Indigenous people in Toronto for....	
Mental health services	46.40% (40.00, 52.90)
Suicide prevention	35.30% (29.20, 41.40)



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