

Our Health Counts Thunder Bay

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

Oral Health

Indigenous adults and children have unequal access to preventative care and dental services compared to the general Canadian population^{1,2}. Low socioeconomic status, limited access to nutrient-rich food and Non-Insured Health Benefits, and lack of private insurance contribute to an increase in adverse oral health outcomes such as tooth pain, cavities, and baby bottle tooth decay.³ The oral health of parents is highly linked to the oral health of their children³.

Adult Oral Health

47% of Indigenous adults in Thunder Bay rate their oral health as good, very good, or excellent.

vs.

85% of Canadian adults rate their oral health as good, very good, or excellent.¹

Almost **1 in 3** Indigenous adults in Thunder Bay indicate having experienced teeth pain/discomfort sometimes or often in the past month.



Over half of Indigenous adults have seen a dentist less than 1 year ago.



Meanwhile, **3/4** of Canadian adults have seen a dentist less than 1 year ago.¹

Reasons for not seeing a dentist regularly:

Have not gotten around to it

Fear (e.g., painful, embarrassing, finding something wrong)

Did not think it was important

27% of Indigenous adults go to the dentist less than once a year or only for emergency care.

Policy Implications

City of Thunder Bay, provincial, and federal policy makers work in partnership with urban Indigenous peoples and organizations to:

- Address barriers in accessing programs and services, including culturally relevant public health and health promotion programs to address oral health
- Increase availability of expanded dental health insurance coverage or oral health clinics for Indigenous people, including but not limited to Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) coverage
- Ensure education and oral health promotion materials for parents, schools, and communities are culturally safe and relevant, including Indigenous languages when appropriate
- Develop alternative and innovative ways to educate and deliver dental programs to Indigenous people, including using existing programs and providers through links with municipal programs, primary care providers and school programs

MMIWG Report Calls For Justice⁴ 3.2: We call upon all governments to provide adequate, stable, equitable, and ongoing funding for Indigenous-centred and community-based health and wellness services that are accessible and culturally appropriate, and meet the health and wellness needs of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people.

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| Definitions | Indigenous adults: persons 15 years or older self-identifying as Indigenous, such as First Nations, Métis, Inuit or other Indigenous nations, living or using services in the City of Thunder Bay; Indigenous children: persons 1 to 14 years self-identified as Indigenous by their parent or guardian, such as First Nations, Métis, Inuit or other Indigenous nations, living or using services in the City of Thunder Bay; |
| Sources | 1. First Nations Information Governance Centre (2012); 2. National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health (2013); 3. Irvine et al. (2011). 4. MMIWG Calls for Justice Report (2019). |
| Citation | Brar, R., Muir, N. M., Shields, T., McConkey, S., Hardy, M., & Smylie, J. (2020). Our Health Counts Thunder Bay: Oral health [Fact sheet] |

Population based estimates were created using respondent driven sampling

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



WELL LIVING HOUSE



Our Health Counts Thunder Bay

Adult Oral Health Reference

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 the health of your teeth and mouth is.... | |
| Excellent, very good, or good | 47.5% (41.0, 53.9) |
| Fair or poor | 52.5% (46.1, 59.0) |
| In the past month how often have you had any pain or discomfort in your teeth or gums? | |
| Often or sometimes | 30.3% (24.4, 36.2) |
| Rarely | 20.0% (14.7, 25.2) |
| Never | 49.3% (42.9, 55.8) |
| When was the last time that you went to the dentist? | |
| Less than one year ago | 55.2% (48.6, 61.7) |
| 1 year ago or more, or never | 44.8% (38.3, 51.4) |
| Do you usually visit the dentist... | |
| About once a year or more than once a year for check-ups | 72.9% (66.1, 79.6) |
| Less than once a year for check-ups or only for emergency care | 27.1% (20.4, 33.9) |



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