

# Our Health Counts Thunder Bay

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

## Child Health Care Access

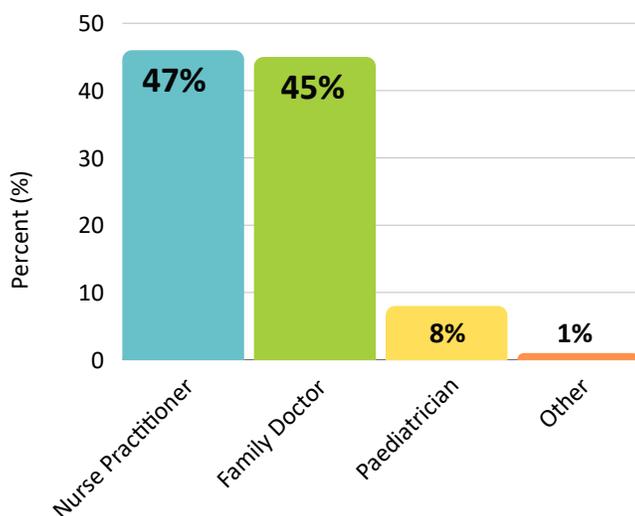
Due to data quality challenges with national surveys, there is a gap in data on health care use among Indigenous children, and health care access inequities tend to be significantly underestimated.<sup>1,2</sup> Given the higher rates of health disparities experienced by Indigenous children when compared to the general population,<sup>3</sup> there is a need to address access to health care among Indigenous children. Similar to Indigenous adults, the health disparities experienced by Indigenous children are linked to inequitable access to care, discrimination from healthcare providers, and inconsistencies in the federal and provincial jurisdiction over the provision of health services.

### Primary Care

**70%** of Indigenous children in Thunder Bay, age 14 and younger, have seen a healthcare provider in the past year.

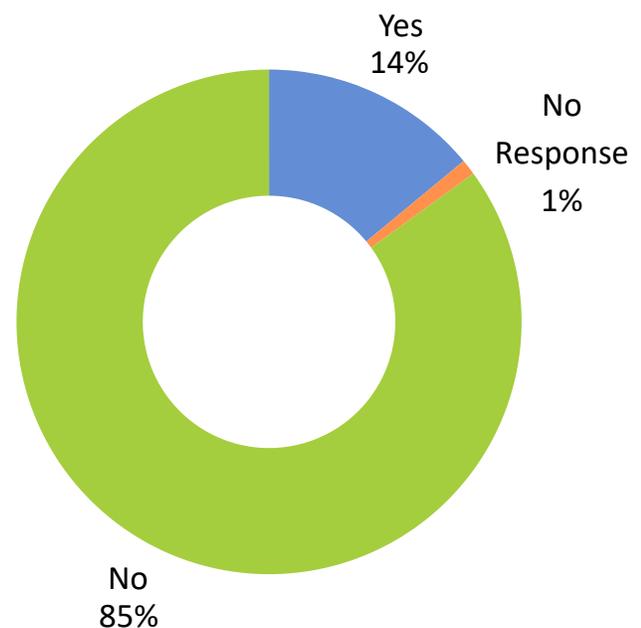
In comparison, more than three-quarters (76.7%) of the Canadian child population aged 1 to 11 had required or received the services of a family doctor, general practitioner, or pediatrician in the previous 12 months.<sup>4</sup>

**64%** of Indigenous children living in Thunder Bay had a regular primary health care provider who was familiar with their child's health and medical history. The most common primary health care providers include **Nurse Practitioners (47%)** and **Family Doctors (45%)**



### Specialist Care

**14%** of Indigenous caregivers in Thunder Bay said their child has been referred to see a medical specialist in the past 12 months.

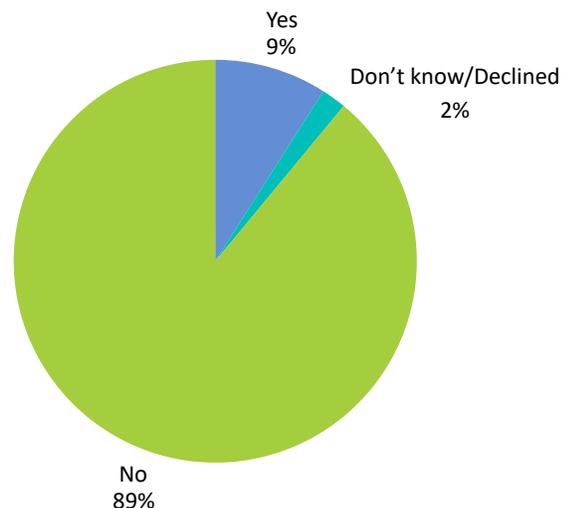


**12%** of parents of Indigenous children that were referred to a specialist reported that they encountered barriers getting to their child's specialist appointment.

## Unmet Health Needs

# Almost 1 in 10

Indigenous children in Thunder Bay, age 14 and younger, needed healthcare services in the previous 12 months but did not receive them.



## Policy Implications

We call on the City of Thunder Bay, provincial, and federal governments to work in partnership with Indigenous peoples living in urban and related homelands and urban-based Indigenous organizations to:

1. Develop, fund, and increase access to Indigenous-specific social and health programming for Indigenous children and youth.
2. Increase equitable access to primary care providers and health care services. Investigate and address barriers to accessing specialist care for Indigenous children and families. Barriers identified by providers and OHC studies include long waitlists, as well as a shortage of healthcare specialists, including speech professionals and traditional wellness navigators. Children’s Mental Health Ontario (CMHO) reports that in Thunder Bay, children may wait up to 348 days for counselling and therapy.<sup>5</sup>
3. Promote and increase the accessibility of existing programming in Thunder Bay, as many families in need are still unable to access these supports due to physical, financial, and transportation barriers.<sup>6</sup>

**Implement TRC Call to Action 19:** establish measurable goals to identify and close the gaps in health outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, and to publish annual progress reports and assess long-term trends. Such efforts would focus on indicators such as: infant mortality, maternal health, suicide, mental health, addictions, life expectancy, birth rates, infant and child health issues, chronic diseases, illness and injury incidence, and the availability of appropriate health services.<sup>7</sup>

**Implement TRC Call to Action 23:** Increase the number of Aboriginal professionals working in the healthcare field; Ensure the retention of Aboriginal healthcare providers in Aboriginal communities; Provide cultural competency training for all healthcare professionals.<sup>7</sup>

<b>Definitions</b>	Indigenous children: persons 1 to 14 years self-identified as Indigenous (First Nations, Metis, and/or Inuit) by their parent or guardian, and living or using services in the City of Thunder Bay.
<b>Sources</b>	1. Smylie & Firestone (2015); 2. Public Health Agency of Canada (2019); 3. Kim (2019); 4. Statistics Canada (2019); 5. Children’s Mental Health Ontario (2020); 6. Wellesely Institute (2019); 7. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015)
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Population-based estimates created using respondent-driven sampling



# Our Health Counts Thunder Bay

## Child Health Care Access 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.

Adult 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.

Child surveys were completed by OHC Thunder Bay adult survey participants who were parents/custodial relatives/guardians of children 14 years of age or younger. Children resided with them and were under their care.

Survey Question	RDS Prevalence Estimate (95% Confidence Interval)
<b>Do your child have a regular primary health care provider who is familiar with their health and medical history?</b>	
Yes	64.3% (57.7, 70.4)
No	31.7% (25.9, 37.4)
Don't know	3.0% (0.8, 5.2)
No response	0.8%
<b>Which is your child's primary health care provider?</b>	
Family doctor	44.5% (36.3, 52.7)
Nurse practitioner	46.5% (38.3, 54.8)
Paediatrician	8.2% (4.1, 12.3)
Other	0.6% (0.0, 2.0)
<b>Has your child been to see a health care provider within the last year?</b>	
Yes	70.4% (63.8, 75.7)
No	27.3% (22.0, 33.4)
Don't know	1.3 (0.0, 3.0)
No response	0.8%
<b>Has your child been referred to see a medical specialist in the past 12 months?</b>	
Yes	14.0% (9.6, 18.9)
No	85.0% (80.1, 89.4)
No response	0.8%
<b>Did you encounter barriers in getting your child to this specialist appointment?</b>	
Yes	12.5% (3.1, 25.0)
No	87.5% (75.0, 96.8)
<b>In the previous 12 months, was there a time you felt your child needed health care services but did not receive them?</b>	
Yes	9.3% (5.8, 13.3)
No	89.7% (85.7, 93.7)
Don't know	87.5% (75.0, 96.8)
Declined	0.4% (0.0, 1.3)



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