

Population Health Profile on First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples in Waterloo Region

Overview

This is a brief profile of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations in Waterloo Region. Understanding the makeup of our community is important for planning programs and services. First Nations, Métis and Inuit people living off-reserve, as those residing in Waterloo Region do, tend to experience poorer health outcomes than non-Indigenous Canadians. This profile looks at indicators related to health status, access to health care and the social determinants of health. Definitions for key terms used throughout the document can be found in the Notes section.

Compared to Waterloo Region residents as a whole, the First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in Waterloo Region have:

- A younger population - more youth and young families
- Significant disparities in health, with more chronic health conditions occurring at younger ages, such as asthma, diabetes and arthritis
- Significant inequities in the social determinants of health, including education, income, employment and housing
- Reduced access to health care, especially for Indigenous traditional healing

Now is the time to learn about First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, and prepare for action to reduce the health disparities and inequities that exist between the Indigenous and the non-Indigenous populations in Waterloo Region.

Definitions

1. Statistics Canada exclusively uses the term "Aboriginal," which is a legally defined term frequently used by government agencies that collectively refers to "Indians, Inuit and Métis" - according to the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982.
2. First Nations replaced the term Indian in the 1970's (although there is no legal definition for this term in Canada).
3. Inuit peoples are from communities who traditionally lived north of the tree line. An Inuk is a singular Inuit person.
4. Métis peoples are those individuals who came from intermarriages of European men and First Nations women.
5. Indigenous peoples is an academic term used to describe all the peoples who originally inhabited lands before colonization by Europeans.

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Data Limitations

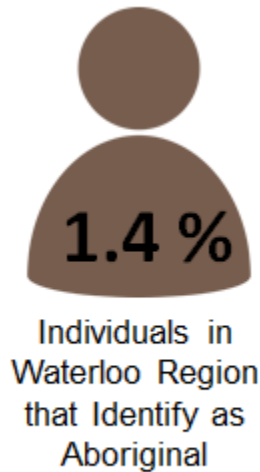
There are some challenges in obtaining reliable information on the health of First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations. To date, research involving First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in Canada has been primarily carried out by non-Indigenous researchers, and has not necessarily provided tangible benefit to Indigenous peoples or their communities. Where data are collected, First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples are not always asked to identify their Indigenous status, or not all individuals will self-identify, or are otherwise reluctant to participate in surveys and research due to mistrust. As a result, local data on the First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations in Waterloo Region is limited. The data that do exist provide a preliminary foundation of knowledge of the particular challenges for these communities.

There is a lack of data for the First Nations, Métis and Inuit population in Waterloo Region on the following topic areas:

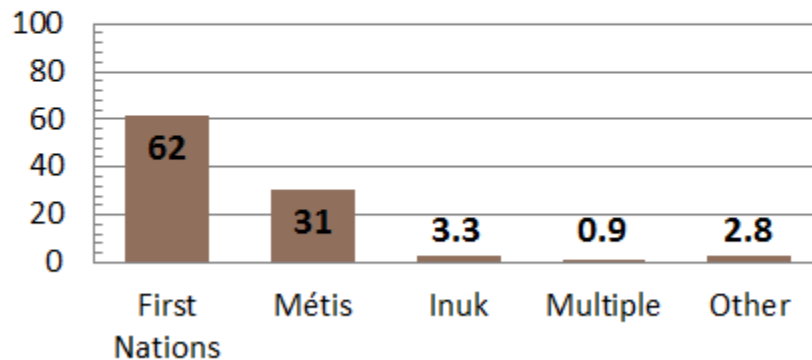
- Reproductive, maternal and infant health
- Health care utilization – hospitalizations and emergency department visits
- Injuries – e.g., childhood injuries, self-harm
- Infectious diseases – e.g., sexually transmitted infections (STIs), vaccine preventable diseases and tuberculosis
- Substance misuse beyond alcohol and tobacco
- Child health

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Aboriginal Peoples Identity



Identity of First Nations, Métis and Inuit population in Waterloo Region



'Multiple' includes persons who reported being any two or all three of the following: First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit).

'Other' includes persons who did not report being First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit) but who did report Registered or Treaty Indian status and/or membership in a First Nations or Indian band.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey.

- Aboriginal people made up approximately 4.3 per cent of the total Canadian population in 2011
- The Aboriginal population grew faster than the Non-Aboriginal population between 2006 and 2011 (20 per cent versus five per cent growth)
- Approximately one in five Aboriginal people in Canada lived in Ontario
- 6,825 people in Waterloo Region identified as First Nations, Métis or Inuit

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Aboriginal Peoples Ancestry



Proportion of Waterloo Region Population with Aboriginal Ancestry

Includes persons who self reported being any two or all three of the following: First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit).

Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey.

- In 2011, 13,230 individuals reported having Aboriginal ancestry
- Local community estimates approximately 18,000 to 22,000 individuals with Aboriginal ancestry¹
- Both those who identify as Aboriginal peoples and those who identify as having Aboriginal ancestry have been impacted by the legacy of colonization and residential schools²

Aboriginal Peoples Languages



0.7%

Proportion of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in Waterloo Region who have knowledge of an Aboriginal language



The languages shown were selected based on the Aboriginal mother tongues most often reported as single responses in Canada in the 2011 Census of Population.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey. Statistics Canada, 2011 Census of Population.

Official Languages

**Proportion of First Nations, Métis and Inuit
population in Waterloo Region who speak
English and French**



10.5%

**Proportion of First Nations, Métis and Inuit
population in Waterloo Region who speak
English only**

89.5%



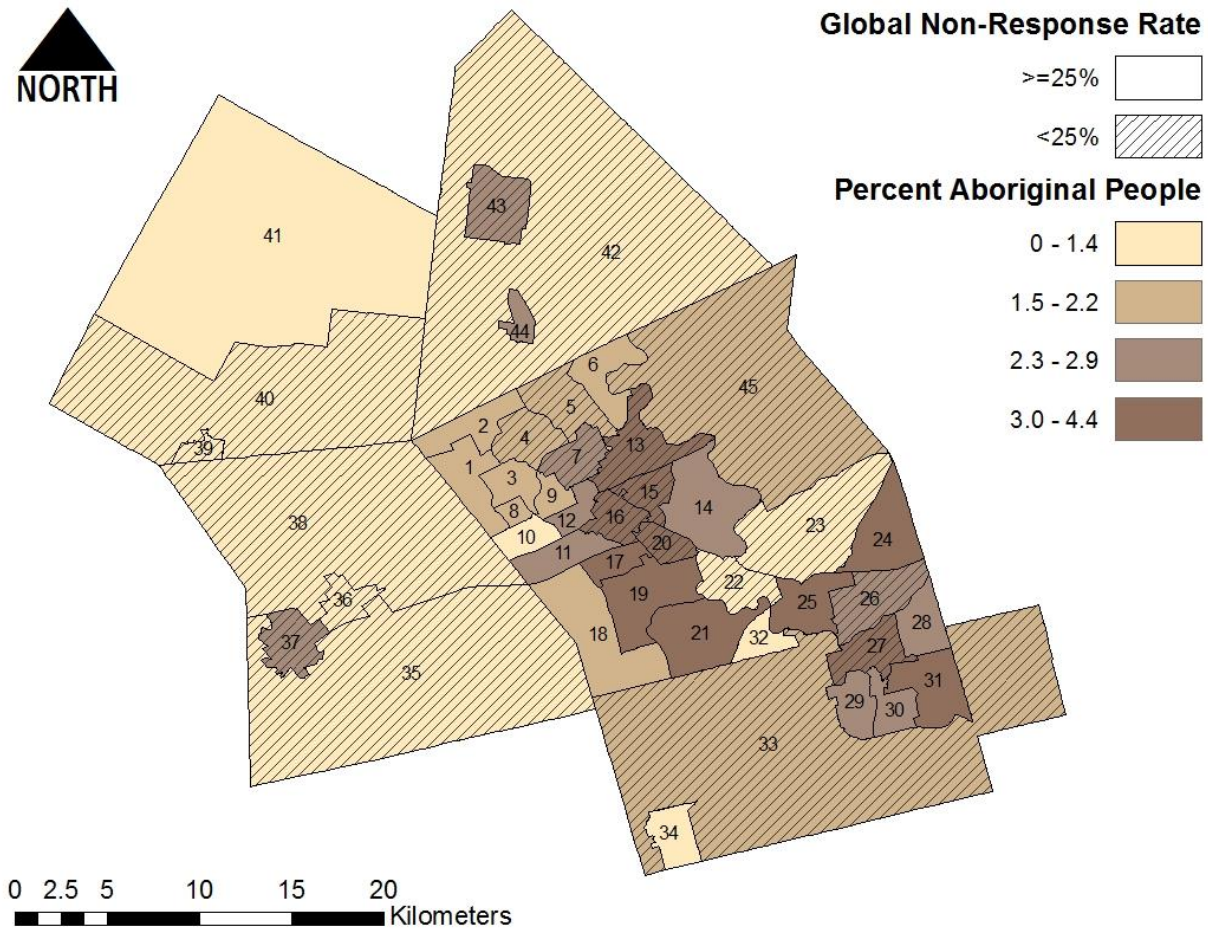
Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey. Statistics Canada, 2011 Census of Population.

- An estimated 89.5 per cent of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in Waterloo Region spoke English, compared to 10.5 per cent who spoke both English and French
- An estimated 96.8 per cent of individuals in Waterloo Region speak English only, compared to 0.5 per cent who speak both English and French
- The significant loss of First Nations, Métis and Inuit languages is largely due to the impacts of the residential schools system, where use of languages other than French or English was banned³

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Aboriginal peoples residence by neighbourhood

Per cent of residents who identify as North American Aboriginal, by neighbourhood, Waterloo Region, 2011



Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Survey Profiles.

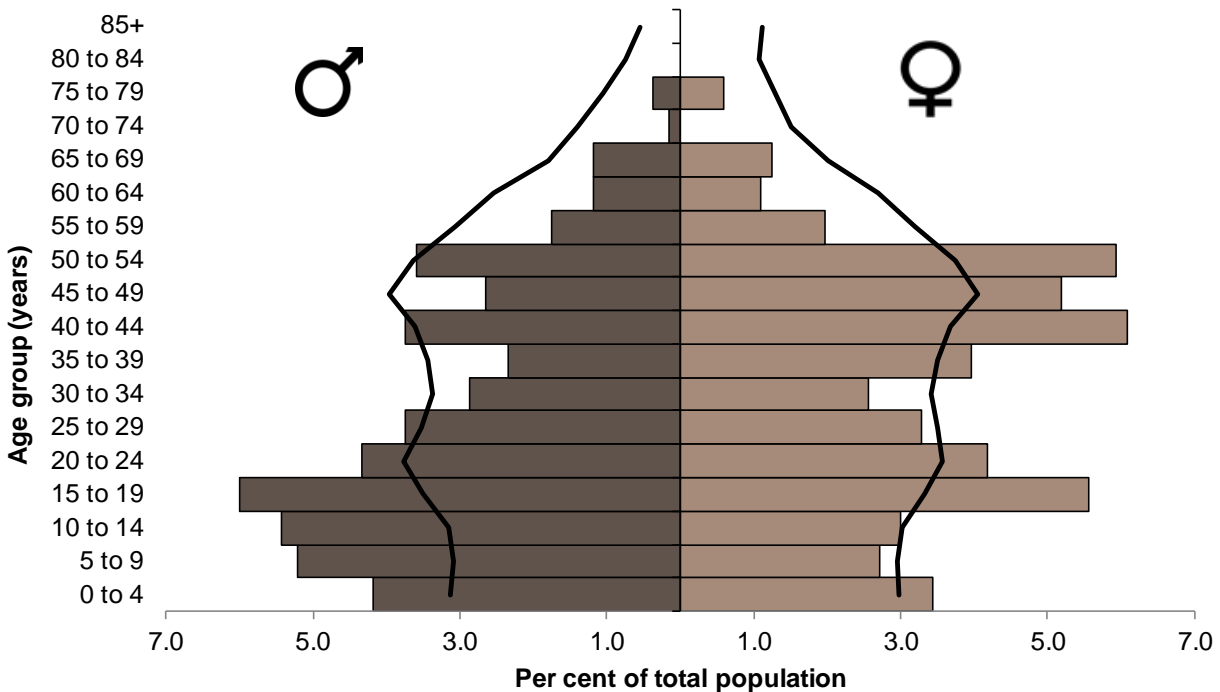
Due to the voluntary nature of the National Household Survey (NHS), there is the risk of non-response bias. NHS estimates for geographic areas that have non-response rates greater than 25 per cent should be interpreted with caution.

- First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples tended to reside in urban areas, primarily Kitchener and Cambridge

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Population size by age and sex

Proportion of population, by age group and sex, First Nations, Métis and Inuit & overall populations, Waterloo Region, 2011



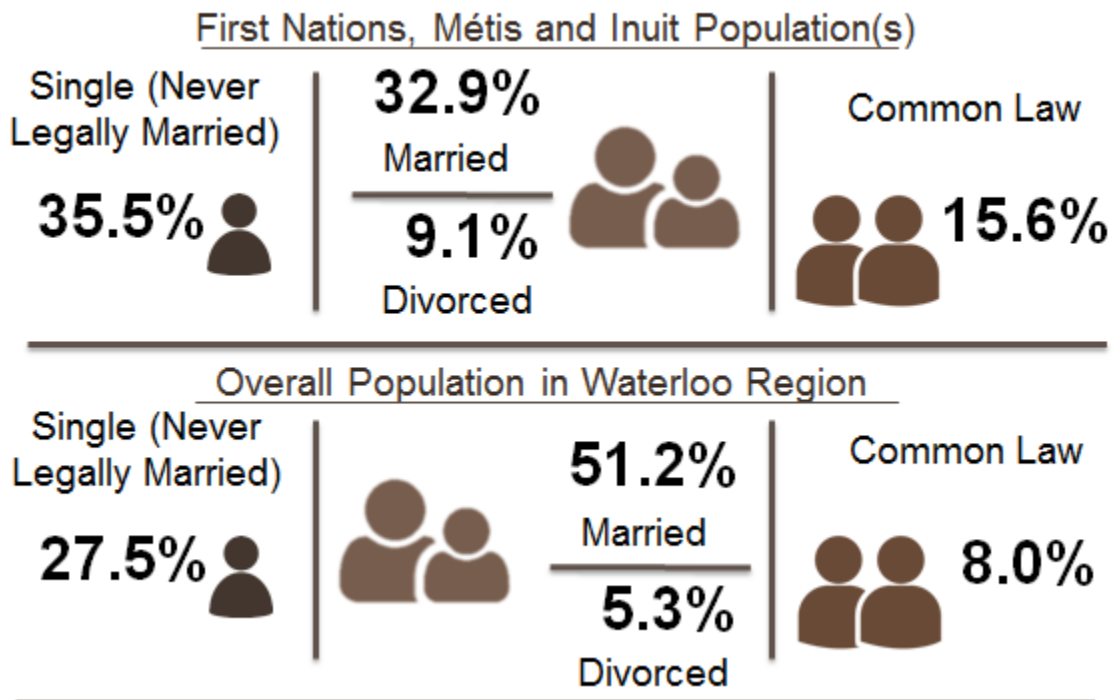
Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey. Statistics Canada, 2011 Census of Population.

The black line represents the age distribution of the overall population in Waterloo Region

- Overall, First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations were younger than the overall population in Waterloo Region
- The estimated median age of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in Waterloo Region was 28.9, compared to 37.7 years for the Waterloo Region population overall
- 35.6 per cent of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit population were 19 years and younger, compared to 25.1 per cent of the total population of Waterloo Region
- 3.5 per cent of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit population were over the age of 65, compared to 12.5 per cent for the Waterloo Region population overall

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Marital Status

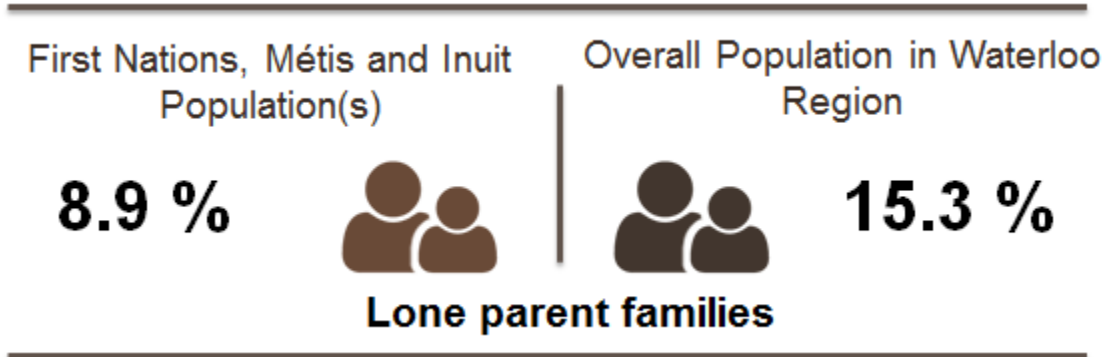


Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey; Statistics Canada, 2011 Census of Population.

- Overall, First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations were less likely to be married, more likely to be divorced and twice as likely to be in a common law relationship, compared to the overall population in Waterloo Region

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Family Composition

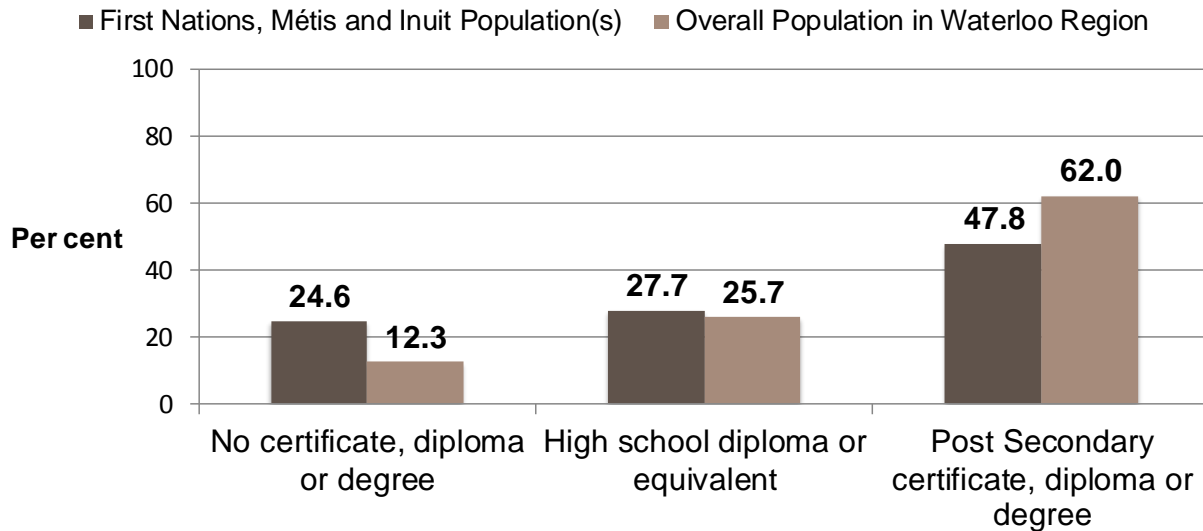


Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey; Statistics Canada, 2011 Census of Population.

- First Nations, Métis and Inuit children were less likely to live in lone parent families, compared to the overall population of Waterloo Region

Education

Proportion of population aged 25 to 64 years, by level of education, First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations and overall populations, Waterloo Region, 2011



Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey.

- The proportion of First Nations, Métis and Inuit population with a post secondary certificate, diploma or degree was lower (47.8 per cent) than for the overall population in Waterloo Region (62.0 per cent)
- An estimated 24.6 per cent of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people had no certificate, diploma or degree in 2011, compared to 12.3 per cent of the overall population
- Lower levels of education are commonly associated with worsened health status and decreased life expectancy⁴

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Employment

Proportion of population aged 15 years and older, by labour force status, First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations and overall populations, Waterloo Region, 2011

Labour Force Status	First Nations, Metis and Inuit Population(s)		Overall Poulation in Waterloo Region	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Total population (15+ yrs)	5,200	100.0	406,695	100.0
In the labour force	3,650	70.2	283,680	69.8
Employed	3,220	61.9	263,815	64.9
Unemployed	435	11.9	19,860	7.0
Not in the labour force	1,545	29.7	123,015	30.2

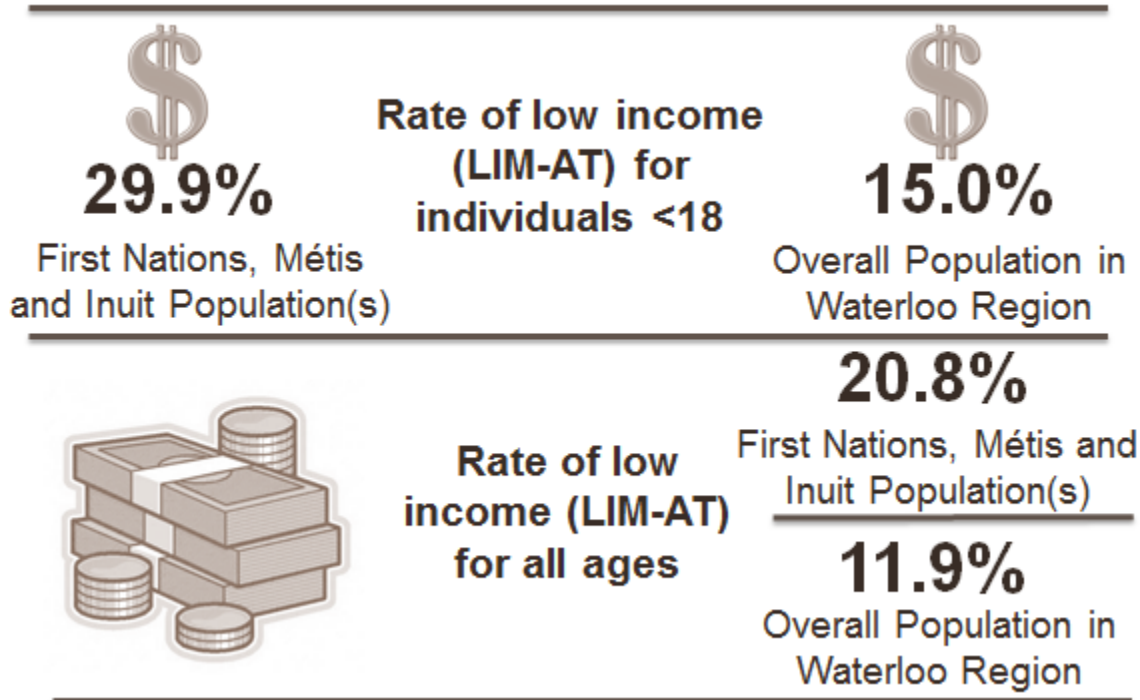
Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey.

- A higher proportion of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people were unemployed compared to the overall population in Waterloo Region (11.9 per cent versus 7.0 per cent)
- Employment has been linked to health at an individual level⁵

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Low Income Measure

The Low Income Measure After Tax (LIM-AT) is a threshold that delineates low income in relation to the median income of a population; different versions of this measure are used internationally.

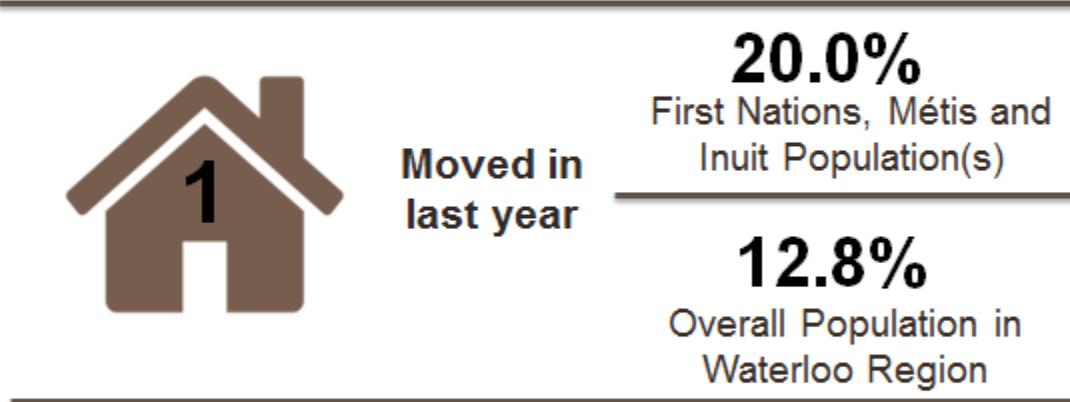
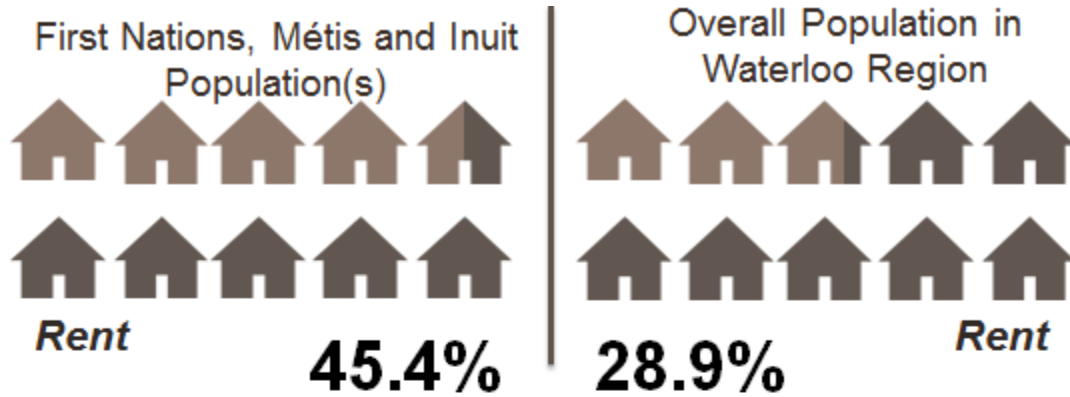


Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey.

- First Nations, Métis and Inuit people under 18 years of age were two times more likely to live in a low income household, compared to the overall population
- First Nations, Métis and Inuit people 18 years of age and older were 1.7 times more likely to live in low income households, compared to the overall population in Waterloo Region
- Individual risk for lung cancer, cirrhosis of the liver and alcoholism, and diseases of the digestive system decrease as an individuals income increases⁶
- Individuals living with low income are more likely to report being inactive and daily smokers than those with middle or high incomes⁷

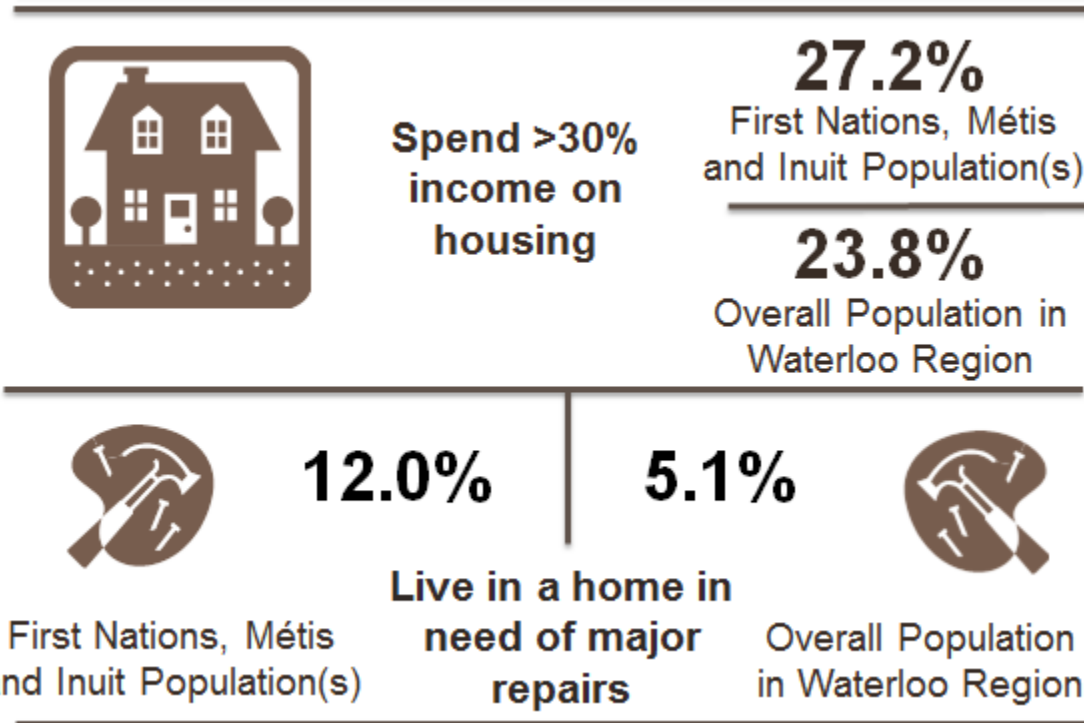
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Housing



Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey.

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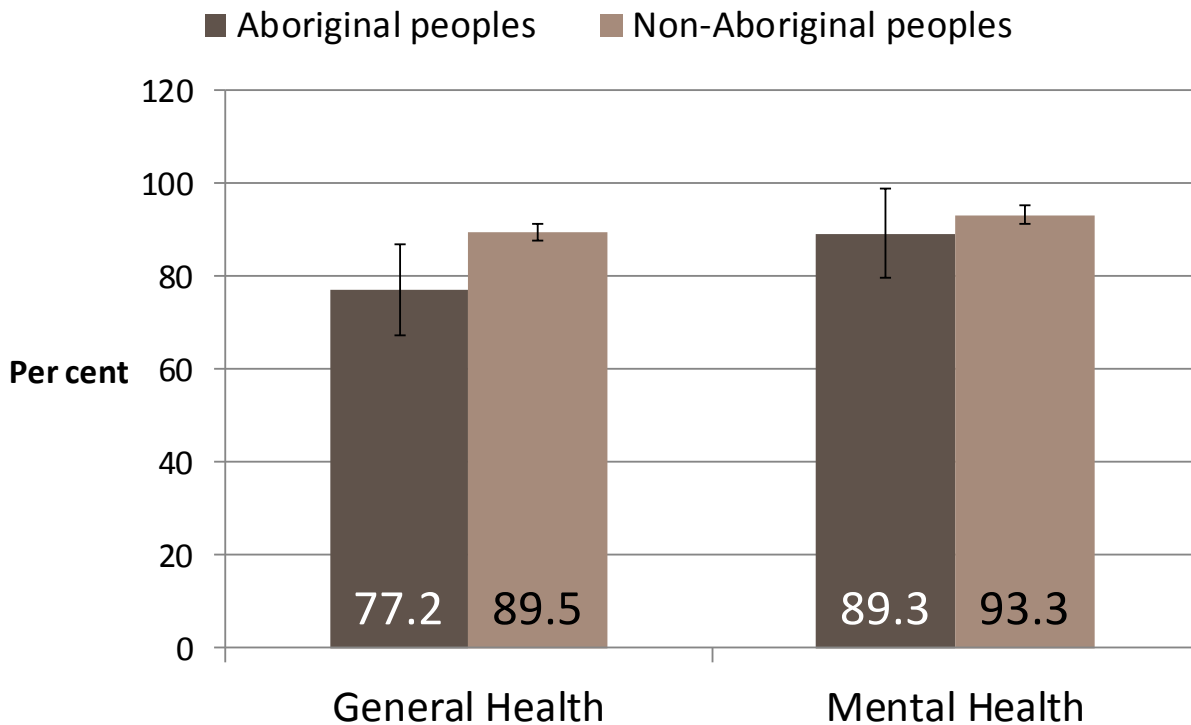
Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey.

- The proportion of First Nations, Métis and Inuit population who rented a home was higher (45.4 per cent) than that for the overall population in Waterloo Region (28.9 per cent)
- An estimated 51.9 per cent of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people had moved in the last year in 2011, compared to 39.4 per cent of the overall population
- Approximately twice as many First Nations, Métis and Inuit people had a home in need of major repairs in 2011, compared to the overall population in Waterloo Region; a condition that is linked with poor health outcomes⁷
- In 2014, Region of Waterloo Community Services found 16 per cent of the 261 individuals surveyed for chronic homelessness self-identified as First Nations, Métis or Inuit⁸

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Health Status of Aboriginal People in Waterloo Region

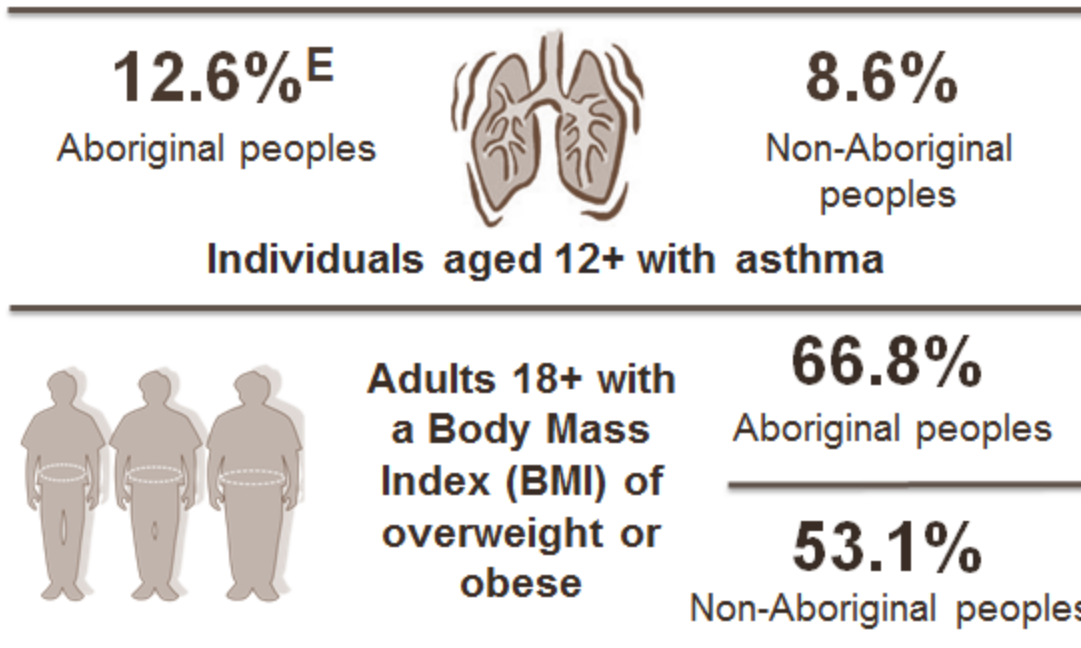
Proportion of population aged 12 years and older who reported good, very good or excellent self-perceived general and mental health, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people, Waterloo Region, 2009-2014



Source: Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), 2009-2014.
Error bars in the bar graph refer to 95 per cent confidence interval of the estimate.

- The proportion of Aboriginal people who reported having good, very good or excellent self-perceived general health was 77.2 per cent where the Non-Aboriginal peoples' self-perceived general health was 89.5 per cent for the overall population in Waterloo Region
- There was no statistically significant difference in the proportion of Aboriginal people who reported their mental health as good, very good or excellent compared to Non-Aboriginal people in Waterloo Region

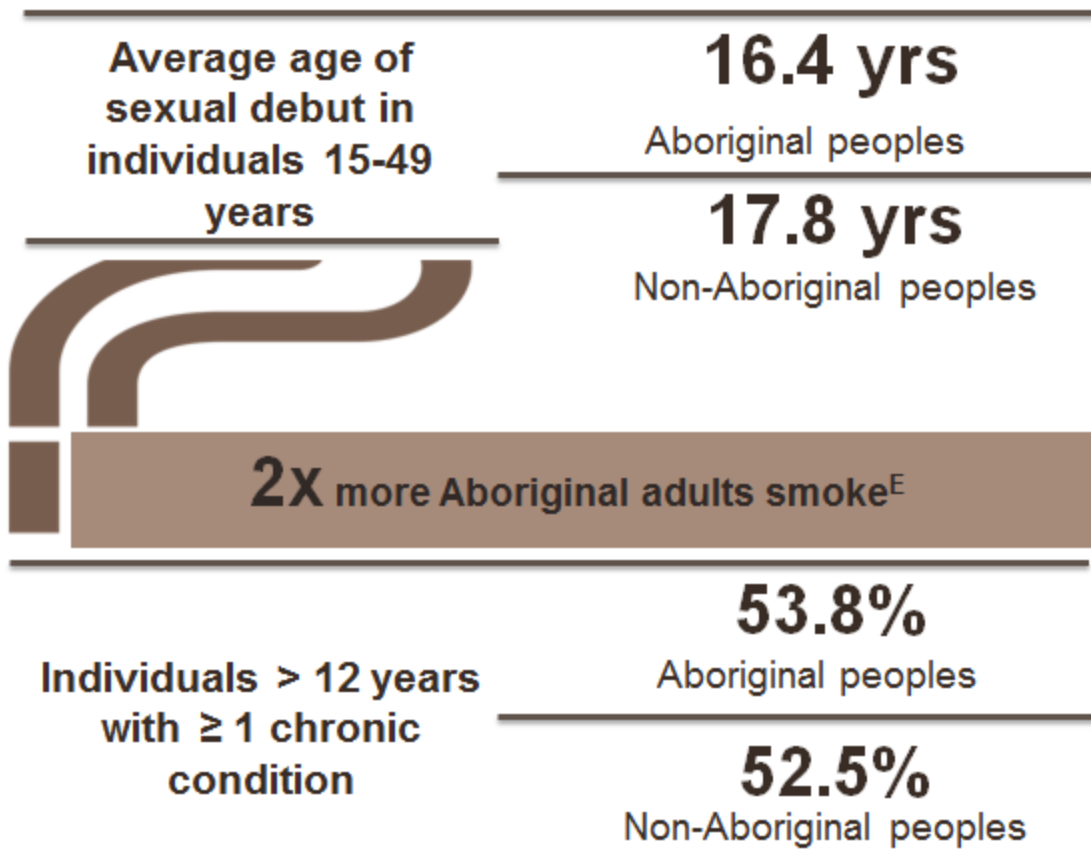
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The superscript 'E' denotes high sampling variability and estimates must be interpreted with caution.
Source: Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), 2009-2014.

- In 2009 to 2014, an estimated 66.8 per cent of Aboriginal people in Waterloo Region had an overweight or obese body mass index, which was higher than Non- Aboriginal people in Waterloo Region at 53.1 per cent, although these differences were not statistically significant (53.1 per cent)
- Being overweight or obese is predictive of a poor health outcome⁹
- The proportion of Aboriginal people who had asthma was 12.6 per cent compared to the Non-Aboriginal people in Waterloo Region at 8.6 per cent^E

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The superscript "E" denotes high sampling variability, and estimates must be interpreted with caution. Source: Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), 2009-2014.

- The mean age of sexual debut was lower for Aboriginal people (16.4 years of age) than Non-Aboriginal people (17.8 years of age) in Waterloo Region
- Lower age of sexual debut puts teens at risk of sexually transmitted infection (STI) and unwanted pregnancies¹⁰
- Two times more Aboriginal adults smoke than Non-Aboriginal people^E
- Smoking has a substantial impact on health and life expectancy, it is estimated that smokers could lose about nine years of life expectancy¹¹
- Aboriginal people in Waterloo Region older than 12 years of age had similar proportions of chronic conditions, even though the median age for First Nations, Métis and Inuit people is younger (28.9 years of age compared to 37.7 years of age for the overall Waterloo Region population)

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Health Status of Aboriginal People in Ontario

According to data from the Canadian Community Health Survey (2009-2014), Aboriginal people are statistically significantly different than the overall Ontario population on many common indicators of health

- Lower vegetable and fruit consumption
- Lower breastfeeding initiation and duration rates
- More frequent presence of chronic health conditions
- Higher rates of smoking and alcohol use (in both youth and adults)
- Fewer have a regular doctor and more have unmet health care needs; similar results were found locally in a report by the Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network¹²

There were no significant differences in health status between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal populations in Ontario for:

- Leisure time physical activity and leisure time screen use (sedentary activity)
- Self-reported heart disease
- Condom use in those at increased risk of sexually transmitted infections

Blood pressure was the only indicator examined where Aboriginal people had better health outcomes than non-Aboriginal populations (14.9 versus 16.7 per cent) in Ontario. The difference is not large, and may result from the relatively younger age of the population.

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Mental Health of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples in Canada

- Historical determinants, such as the legacy of residential schools, are believed to have shaped the mental health of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples
- A research project commissioned by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation found that 75 per cent of the case files for a sample of Aboriginal residential school survivors found that the most common mental health issues were post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse disorder and major depression¹³
- Suicide occurs approximately six times more often among First Nations youth than non-Aboriginal youth in Canada
 - Among First Nations men between the ages of 15 to 24 years of age, the suicide rate was 126 per 100,000 versus 24 per 100,000 for Canadian men of the same age group
 - First Nations young women have a suicide rate of 35 per 100,000 versus 5 per 100,000 for Canadian women¹⁴
- First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples are also significantly more likely to be represented in child protection services, to be victims of domestic violence, and to be incarcerated¹⁵

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Data Notes

1. Due to the voluntary nature of the 2011 NHS, caution must be used when interpreting the data. Further, due to changes in the survey methodology from 2006 and previous census years, direct comparisons, including the calculation of growth rates, percentage and absolute changes should not be made.
2. The CCHS is based on self-reported data collected in-person and telephone interviews. Self-reported measures are subject to such sources of bias as social desirability and recall bias.
3. Statistically significant differences in CCHS data were defined as non-overlapping 95 per cent confidence intervals.
4. The CCHS excludes individuals living on Indian reserve communities, institutions, full-time members of the Canadian Armed Forces, and residents of remote regions of the country.
5. NHS defines 'Aboriginal' as referring to whether the person reported being an Aboriginal person, that is, First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit) in Question 18. Aboriginal peoples of Canada are defined in the *Constitution Act, 1982*, Section 35 (2) as including the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada. A person may report being in more than one of those three specific groups.
6. Being at increased risk of STIs is defined as either:
 - a. Not being married or common-law and had one or more sexual partners in the last 12 months, or
 - b. Being married or common-law and had more than one sexual partner in the last 12 months
7. Body Mass Index (BMI) is calculated as weight (kg) divided by height (m) squared. Overweight: BMI of 25.0-29.9kg/m²; Obese: BMI > 30kg/m².
8. The Low Income Measure After Tax (LIM-AT) is a threshold that delineates low income in relation to the median income and different versions of this measure are in wide use internationally. This threshold is set at half the median of adjusted household after-tax income. To account for potential economies of scale, the income of households with more than one member is divided by the square root of the size of the household. Statistics Canada considers the after-tax Low Income Measure as better suited to the analysis of low income in the voluntary NHS because the threshold level of income below which one is



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considered to have low income is itself derived from the households that responded to the survey.

CCHS defines Aboriginal peoples as persons who are First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit). These are the three groups defined as the Aboriginal peoples of Canada in the Constitution Act, 1982, Section 35 (2).

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 - ^{4,5,6}Canadian Institute for Health Information. 2008. Reducing gaps in health: a focus on socio-economic status in urban Canada. Ottawa, ON.
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 - ¹⁴Health Canada. 2013. Activating what we know: preventing youth suicide in First Nations. The report of the advisory group on suicide prevention.
 - ¹⁵Office of the Premier. 2016. News Release: Ontario acting to end violence against Indigenous women. Premier Wynne unveils new long-term strategy.
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