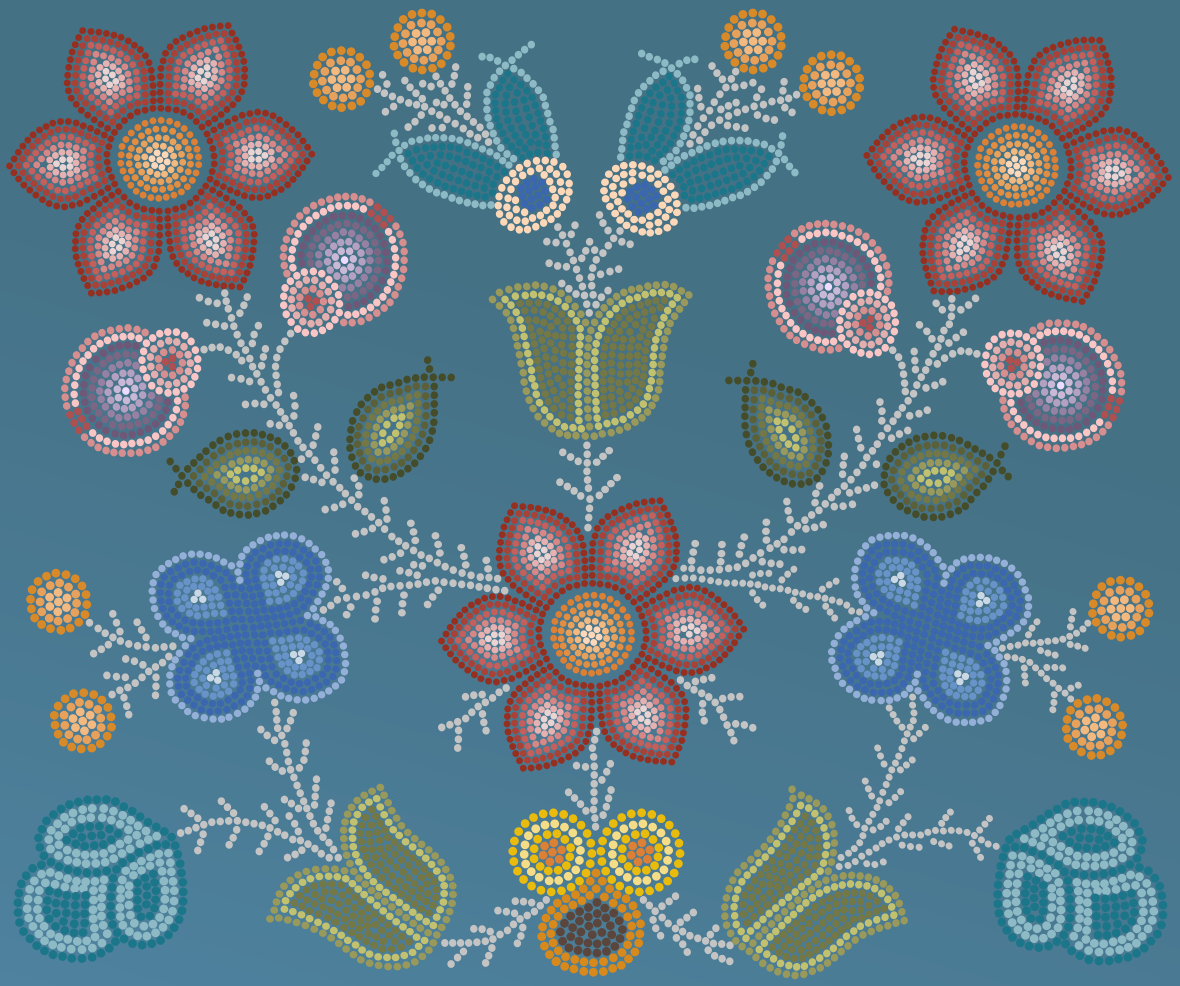

COMMUNITY REPORT:

WHAT WE HEARD: 2024 HEALTH SURVEY

Métis Nation of Ontario

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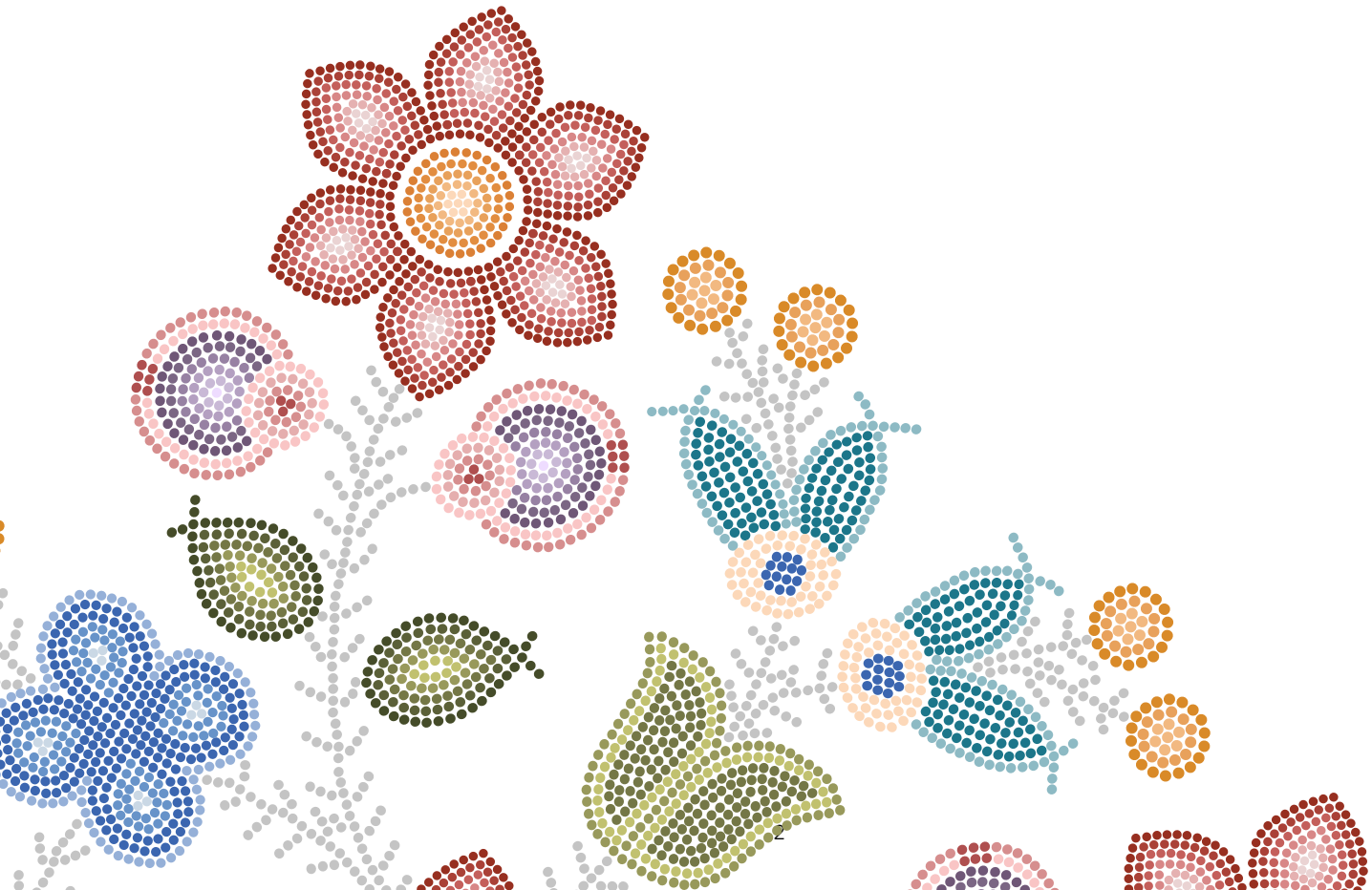
INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings from the Métis Nation of Ontario's (MNO) 2024 Health Survey. This is the third iteration of this survey of MNO citizens, with nearly 4,000 participants contributing their insights. We extend our sincere gratitude to all MNO citizens who took the time to complete the survey and share their health experiences. Your participation is invaluable in helping us assess whether current programs and services are effectively meeting the needs of our communities and advancing Métis-specific health research.

In this report, we share key results regarding MNO citizens' self-reported wholistic health, including physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being, as well as their access to health services. Special sections focus on oral health, insurance coverage, and use of home care services. We also explore measures of community belonging, economic health, and basic demographics.

Additionally, the survey included an open-ended question, offering citizens the opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences. These responses are summarized at the end of this report and enrich the other information collected from this survey.



METHODOLOGY

Survey Development and Collection

RESULTS

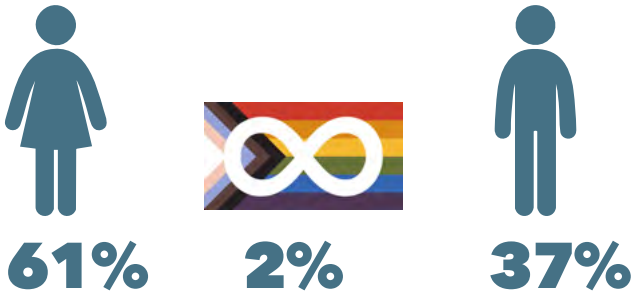
Who responded to the survey?

There were 18,893 MNO citizens 16 years and older with a valid email on the MNO Registry when this survey was released. Of those, 17,757 email invitations were successfully sent (1,136 bounced or failed). In total, 4,303 surveys were started, and 3,785 surveys were completed.

Demographics of MNO citizen respondents

The majority of the respondents to this survey were women (61%), however, the survey also garnered responses from men (37%), and Two-Spirit and non-binary individuals (2%), Figure 1.

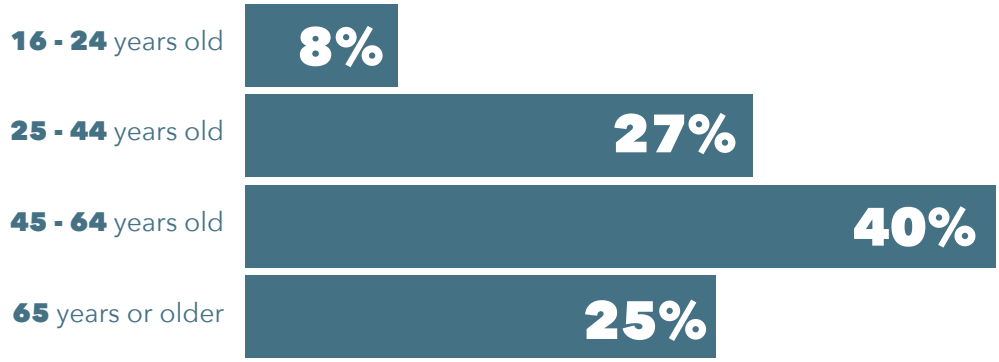
Figure 1: Self-reported Gender



3 in 5 respondents identified as a woman, nearly 4 in 5 as a man and less than 1 in 5 as another gender.

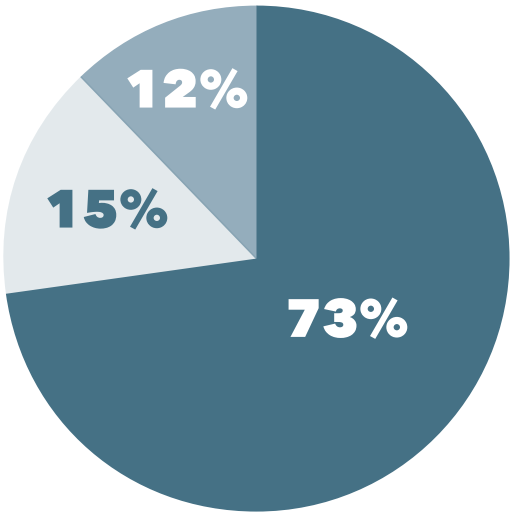
The age group with the highest number of MNO citizen respondents was 45 to 64 years (40%), followed by 25 to 44 years (27%), 65 years and older (25%), with the smallest proportion from MNO citizens aged 16 to 24 years (8%). Most MNO citizen respondents reported they were married or in a relationship at the time of the survey (73%), 15% were single and 12% were separated, divorced or widowed. For the first time MNO citizen respondents were asked their sexual orientation, if they were living with a disability and if they were currently or had previously served with the Canadian Armed Forces. Most MNO citizen respondents (92%) reported they were heterosexual with 8% reporting they were Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and other identities (2SLGBTQIA+). Approximately one quarter (26%) of MNO citizens reported they were living with a disability and 4% reported they were currently or had previously served with the Canadian Armed Forces. MNO citizen respondents were asked the highest level of education they had completed and 32% reported high school or less, 7% held a Red Seal or Trade Certificate, 49% had completed a college diploma or undergraduate university degree and 12% had completed a graduate or professional degree. In total, 43% of MNO citizen respondents were employed full time, 25% were retired, 4% were unemployed and 27% reported another employment status (e.g. full time caregiver, maternity leave, self-employed). Approximately 29% of MNO citizens reported a household income of ≤$49,999, 42% between $50,000 and $99,999 and 29% ≥$100,000.

Figure 2: Age



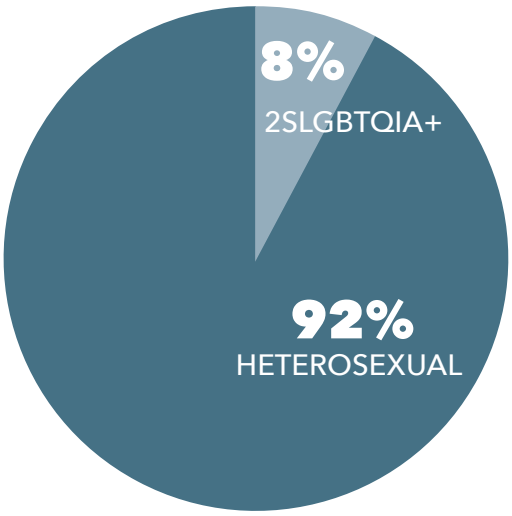
About 2 in 5 respondents were between the ages of 45 and 64 years.

Figure 3: Relationship Status



73% of respondents were married or in a relationship, 15% were single and 12% were separated, divorced or widowed.

Figure 4: Sexual Orientation



About 9 in 10 respondents reported their sexual orientation as heterosexual.

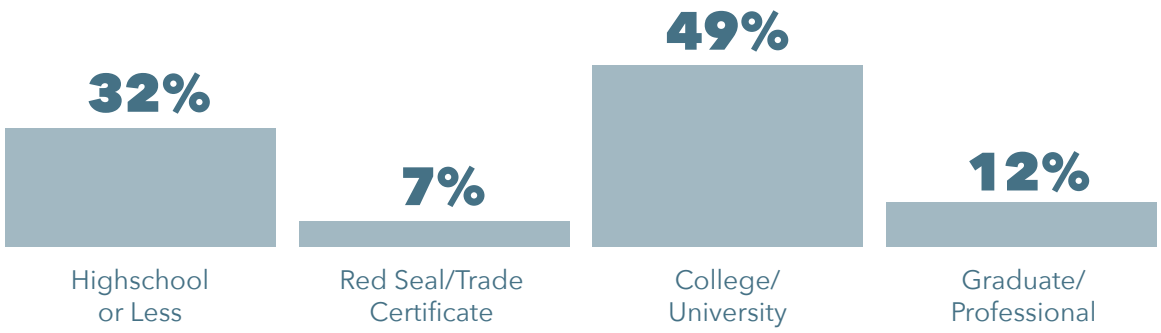
Figure 5: Disability Status

About 1 in 4 respondents reported living with a disability.

Figure 6: Service in the Canadian Armed Forces

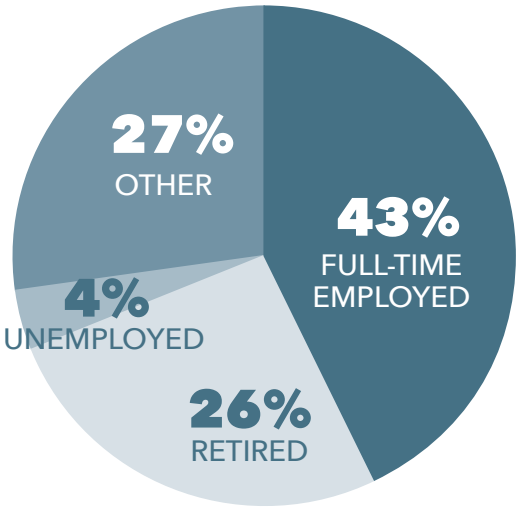
Fewer than 1 in 10 (4%) respondents reported previously or currently serving with the Canadian Armed Forces.

Figure 7: Education Level



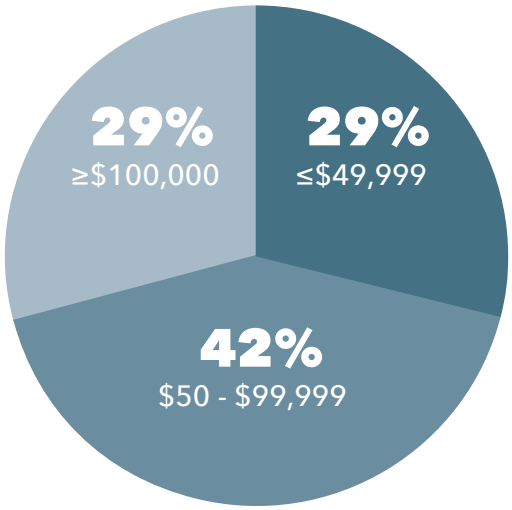
6 in 10 respondents reported a college or university degree, or higher level of education.

Figure 8: Employment Status



2 in 5 respondents were employed full time.

Figure 9: Annual Household Income



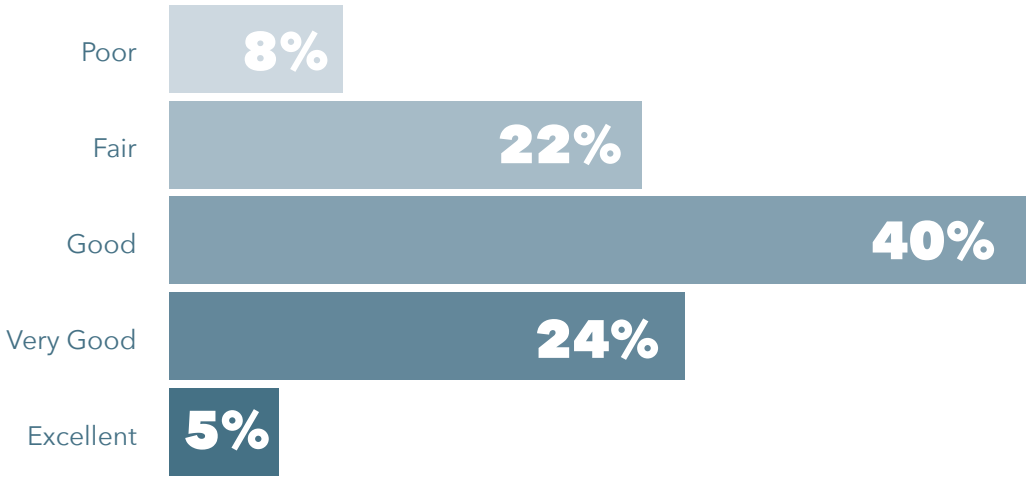
2 in 5 respondents reported an annual household income of between $50,000 and $99,999.

OVERALL HEALTH

Respondents were provided with the Métis definition of health from the Métis Vision of Health created and endorsed by the governing members of the Métis National Council (MNC) in 2023:

"Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. It is a state of balance and interconnected relationships between physical, mental, emotional, social, financial/economic, spiritual, environmental, and cultural well-being. And it is the extent to which Métis people, families, or communities can achieve individual or collective well- being now and for future generations".

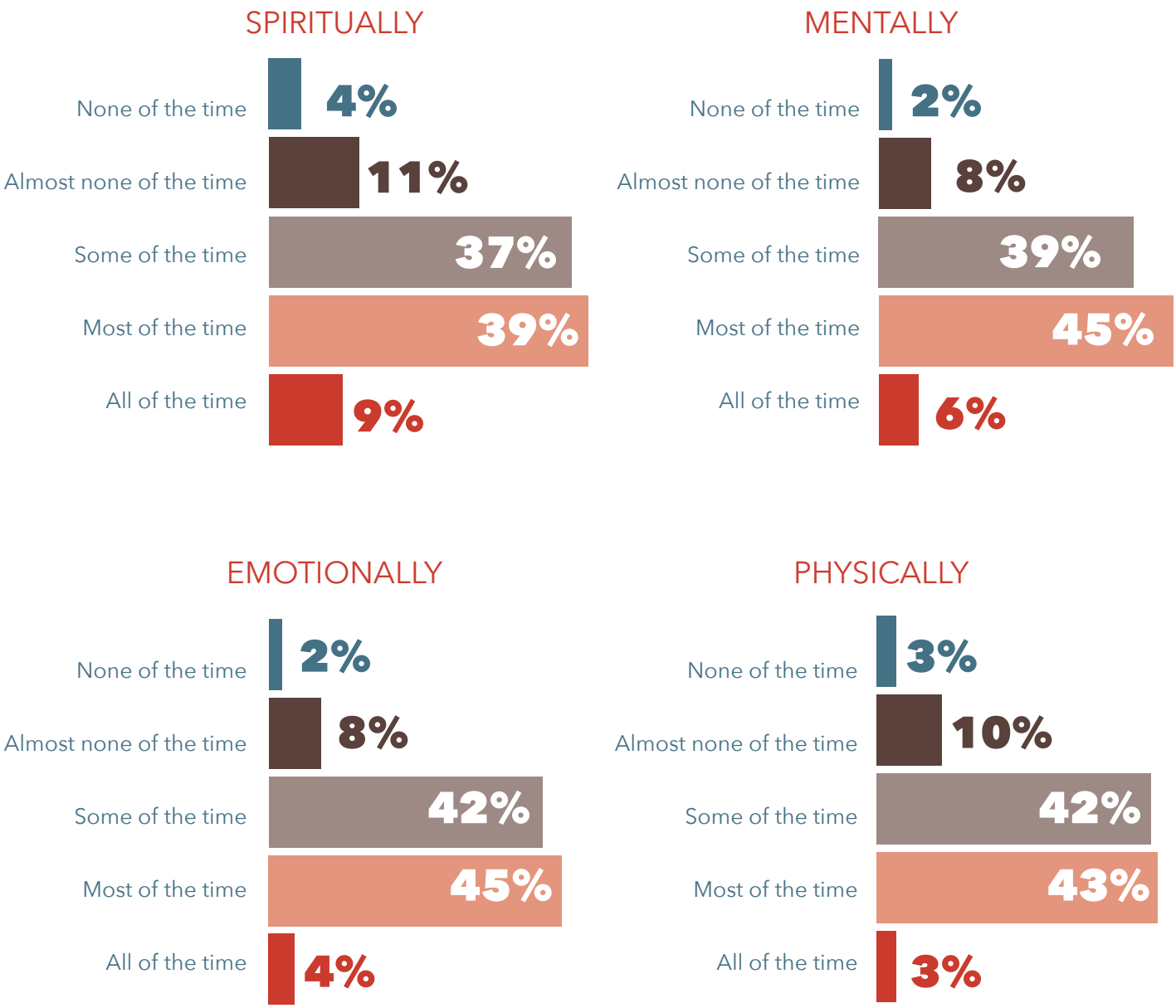
Figure 10: Self-reported Métis Health



The figure above shows that nearly 7 in 10 respondents reported good, very good or excellent health.

- 60% of respondents reported their **physical health** as either good or very good
- 62% reported their **mental health** as either good or very good, and the majority reported feeling in balance physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually most of the time.

Figure 11: Proportion of MNO citizens in-balance for four measures of wholistic health

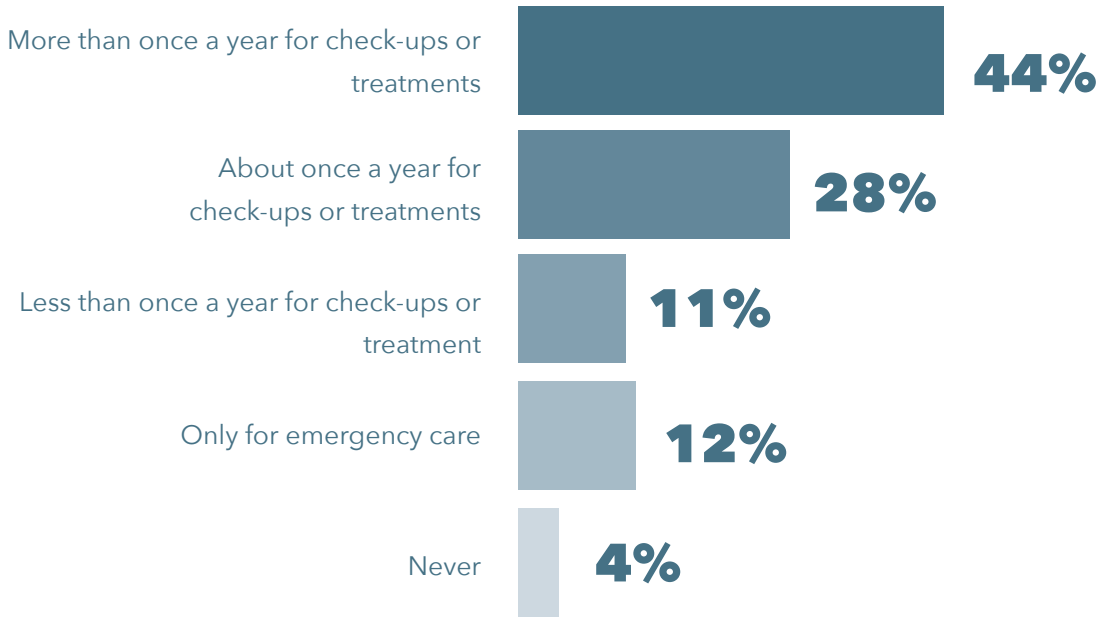


ORAL HEALTH

For the first time, information on **oral health** and **dental care** was collected from MNO citizens. 70% of MNO citizen respondents reported their oral health as good, very good, or excellent. And 96% reported having at least one or more of their own teeth. However, over half experienced persistent mouth pain in the past year before the survey.

The figure below shows that most respondents reported seeing a dental professional **at least once a year or more** often for check-ups or treatments, and about 1 in 4 MNO citizen respondents see a dentist **less than once per year** for check-ups.

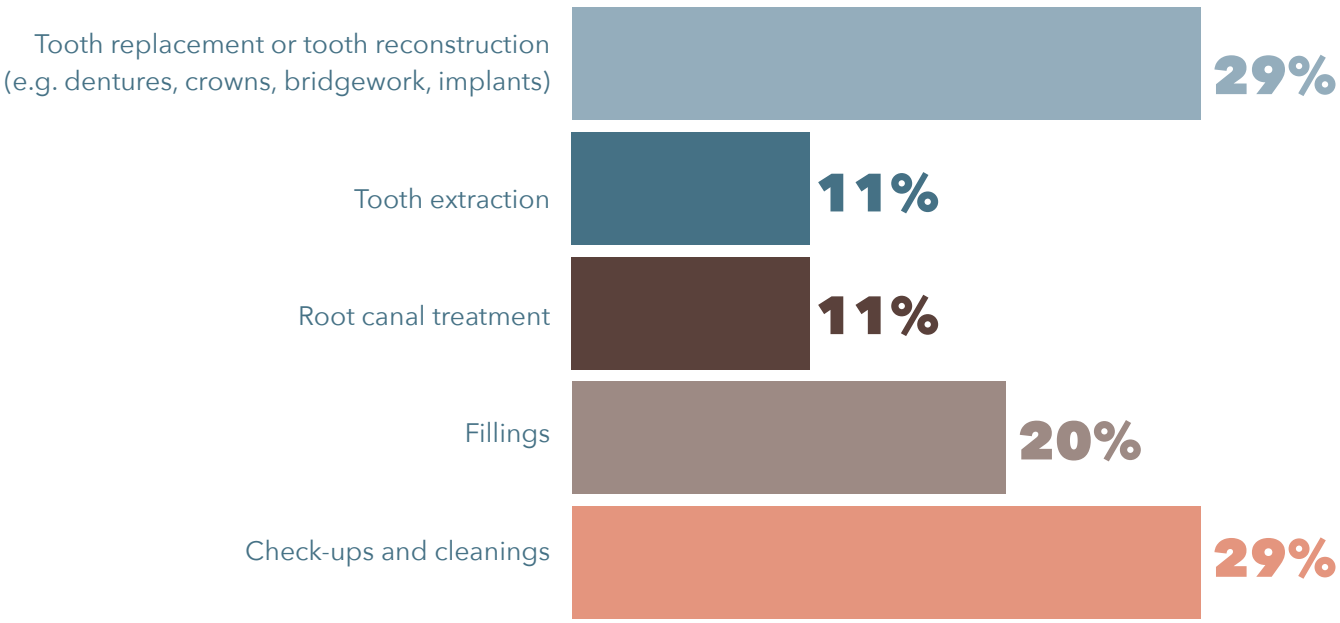
Figure 12: Visits with a Dental Professional



When asked whether they avoided dental visits or treatments due to cost in the past year prior to the survey:

- 40% of respondents reported avoiding dental visits
- 43% of respondents reported avoiding dental treatments

Figure 13: Dental treatments avoided due to cost



Among those who reported cost as a barrier to accessing dental care, the figure above shows the three most commonly reported treatments avoided were:

- 29% avoided regular check-ups
- 29% avoided tooth replacements or reconstructions
- 20% avoided fillings

EXTENDED HEALTH BENEFIT COVERAGE

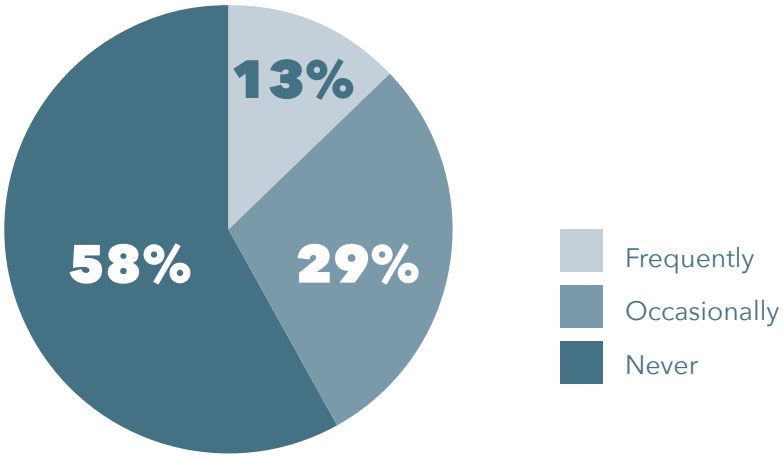
When asked if they had an insurance plan or government program that covers part or all of the cost of **dental care, prescription medication, and vision care**:

- 68% of respondents reported having dental coverage
- 78% reported coverage for prescription medication
- 70% reported coverage for vision care

MNO citizens participating in the survey were also asked about coverage for **long-term care services**, and only 27% reported having partial or full coverage.

In terms of cost-related barriers in the past year figure 14 below shows that:

Figure 14

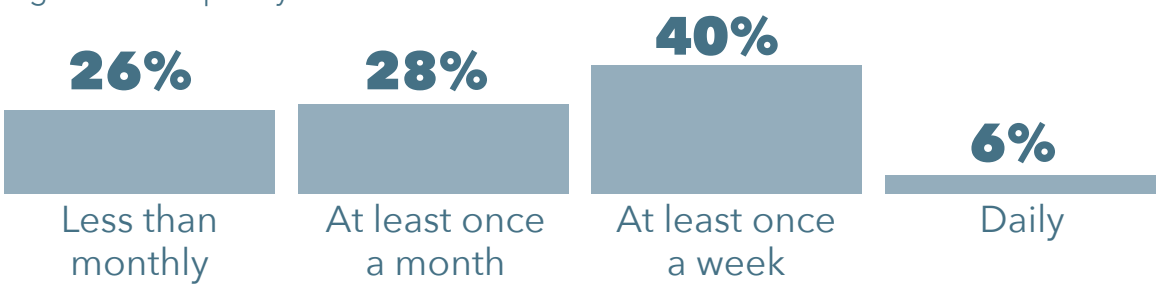


- 29% of respondents said they **occasionally** avoided or delayed prescription medication, long-term care services, or specialist services due to cost
- 13% said they did so **frequently**
- 58% of MNO citizen respondents said they **never** experienced these barriers

TOBACCO, ALCOHOL, AND CANNABIS USE

Most respondents (**85%**) reported they did not smoke cigarettes. Of the **15%** who do smoke, **11%** said they smoked daily. Regarding e-cigarettes or vaping devices, **94%** reported no use in the 30 days before the survey. **78%** of respondents reported consuming at least some alcohol in the year before the survey. The table below shows that among MNO citizen respondents who consumed alcohol, **74%** drank at least once a month or more often.

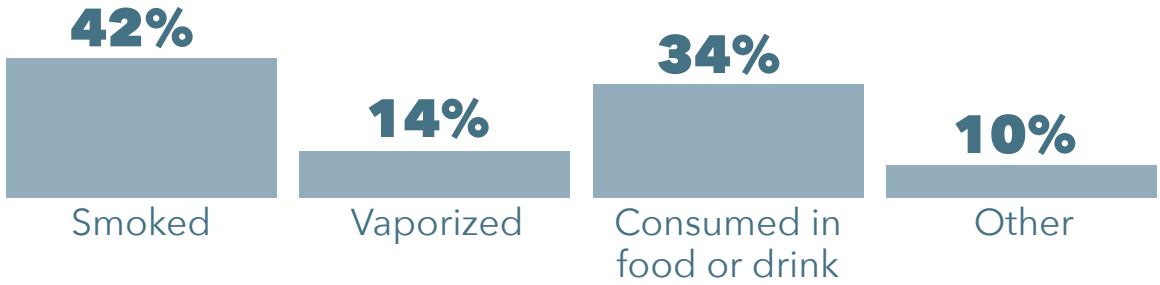
Figure 15: Frequency of Alcohol Use



- 69% of respondents reported no cannabis use in the 12 months prior to the survey.
- Among those who did use cannabis, 34% used it daily, while 33% used it less than once a month.

Figure 16: Cannabis Consumption Methods

The table below shows the most common methods of cannabis use were smoking and consuming it in food or drinks.



SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING

This survey collected information on **social** and **economic well-being** – which includes topics like community belonging, household income, and experiences of and risk of homelessness.

- The majority (92%) were not at risk or did not experience homelessness in the 12 months prior to the survey.

- 67% of MNO citizen respondents said their household income was enough to meet their household's needs for transportation, housing, food, clothing, and other necessities in the 12 months prior to the survey and 62% reported being able to cover an unexpected $500 expense.

- 56% of respondents reported having a somewhat or very weak sense of belonging to the Métis community, while 44% reported feeling a somewhat or very strong sense of belonging.

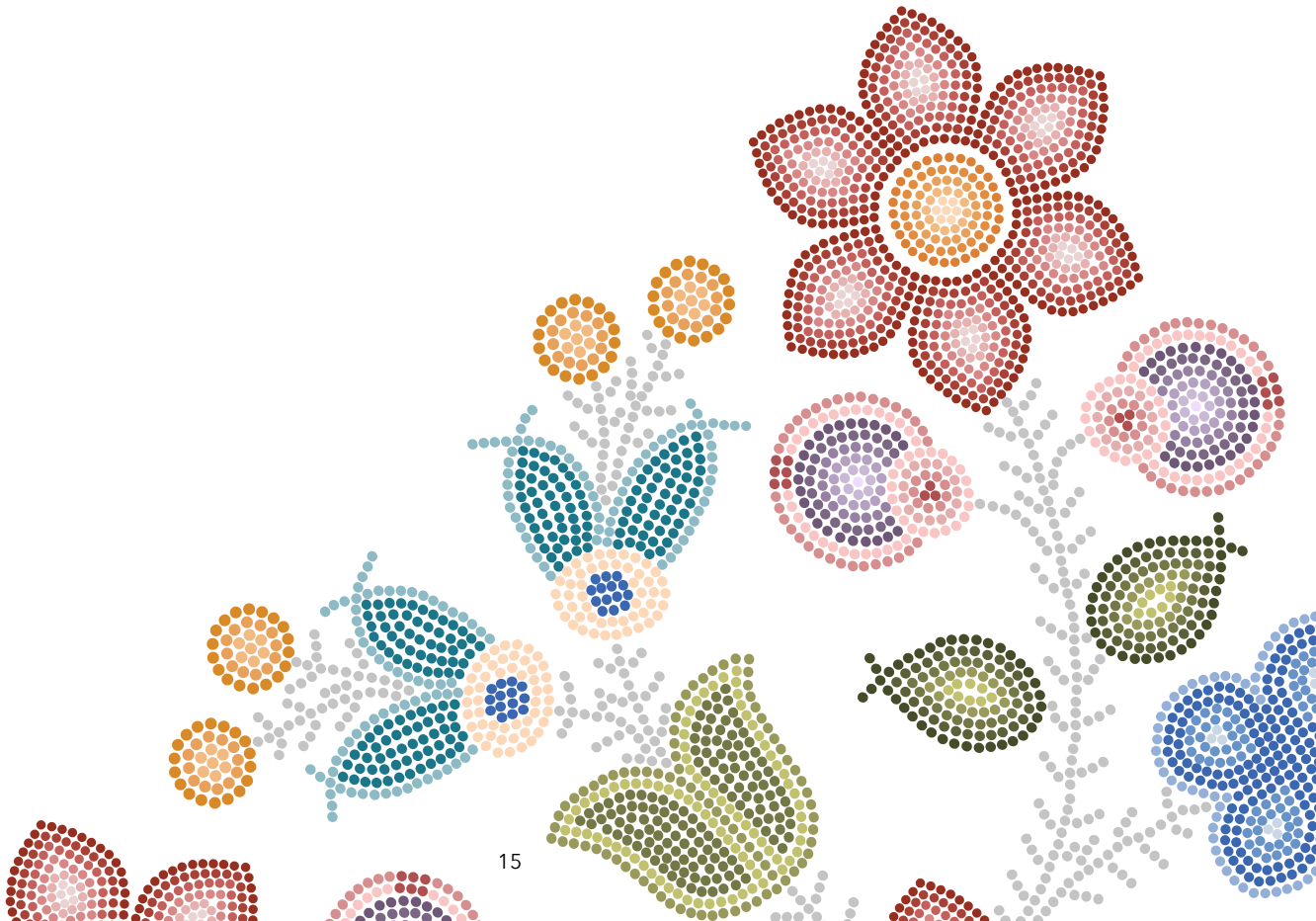
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION SHARED BY MNO CITIZENS

MNO citizen respondents were asked to share any additional thoughts about their health and wellness through an open-text box. The responses were categorized into themes and coded by two graduate students, one of whom is Métis, and reviewed by a Métis staff on the research team. The identified themes are presented below.

CHALLENGES FACED BY MNO CITIZENS IN MAINTAINING GOOD HEALTH

The themes presented in this section include:

- Barriers to accessing Ontario's healthcare system
- Lack of coverage for some medical services (extended benefits)
- MNO's health programs and services
- Métis way of life



BARRIERS TO ACCESSING ONTARIO'S HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Barriers to accessing healthcare services in Ontario included transportation to medical appointments, proximity to healthcare services, healthcare worker shortage, especially family doctors, not having a family doctor, wait times (i.e., to see your family doctor, wait times for the emergency department, wait times for diagnostic tests, wait times for specialist appointments), mental healthcare waitlists, and culturally safe care. As, one respondent explains:

> ***"I have had long wait time to see my doctor. And when I do I get referred and it takes another 6 to 8 months to get answers."***

This respondent illustrates the lengthy process of getting answers for their medical issue. They had to wait a considerable time to see their family doctor, followed by an even longer wait to see the specialist needed to diagnose their condition. This is not an uncommon experience. In fact, 76% of MNO citizens reported facing delays in accessing medical appointments or services, with the most difficult medical appointment to secure being with their family doctor:

> ***"Access to dr appointment in less than 2 months wait would be nice"***

Taken together, MNO citizens were affected by the current state of Ontario's healthcare system. In addition to issues that affect any Ontario healthcare system user, MNO citizens face the additional barrier of anti-Métis racism in healthcare which can cause them to avoid seeking healthcare services and negatively impact the quality of medical care they receive.

LACK OF COVERAGE FOR SOME MEDICAL SERVICES (EXTENDED BENEFITS)

Many respondents noted challenges in securing partial or full coverage on medical expenses such as dental, prescription medication, vision care, and long-term care (LTC). Due to lack of support in covering these expenses, many MNO citizens reported avoiding, going without, or delaying certain necessary medical services and expenses:

> ***"I have diabetes and can not afford some of the medicine I have been prescribed. So I go without them"***

Notably, financial barriers to dental services were often shared by respondents.

The cost of dental services creates financial stress impacting both physical and mental health. A respondent noted:

> ***"A dental program to help with the financial burden of ongoing issues would be amazing. I need a broken tooth pulled and 6 cavities filled but cannot afford to have the work done. I'm scared of an infection in the broken tooth but I can't afford the work to be done. I'm scared and there is no supports."***

Avoiding dental work can worsen oral health, lead to more expensive and invasive treatment, and cause other health issues.

MNO'S HEALTH PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Respondents identified several health areas they felt the MNO could help address. These areas include extended benefits, long-term care and assisted living, end-of-life planning, disability supports, stable housing and pathways out of homelessness, housing maintenance, gender inclusiveness, sexual and reproductive healthcare, employment, universal income, food security, chronic/specialized care, mental health and wellness supports, family and spousal supports, and transportation services. Some of these services are already offered through MNO programs, which may indicate a lack of awareness or highlight a need to expand certain programs to better meet the needs of MNO citizens. Equitable access to these services was often a reason why MNO citizens felt the MNO needed to address the issue.

Awareness and advertising of MNO's health programs and services

It is crucial for MNO citizens to know which programs and services they are eligible for and how to access them – yet many do not have this information:

> ***"I don't know how to access services, and I don't know who to go to in order to figure it out"***

This lack of awareness can create a sense of frustration and helplessness and keep MNO citizens from accessing programs that would benefit their health.

MÉTIS WAY OF LIFE

Respondents mentioned important aspects of Métis ways of living in their responses. This included visiting with the land, physical activity, cultural continuity, food sovereignty, sense of community, and visiting with each other. Community and taking care of each other is an important part of Métis health. Learning more about culture and continuing to establish a strong sense of community were noted by respondents. As one MNO citizen respondent said:

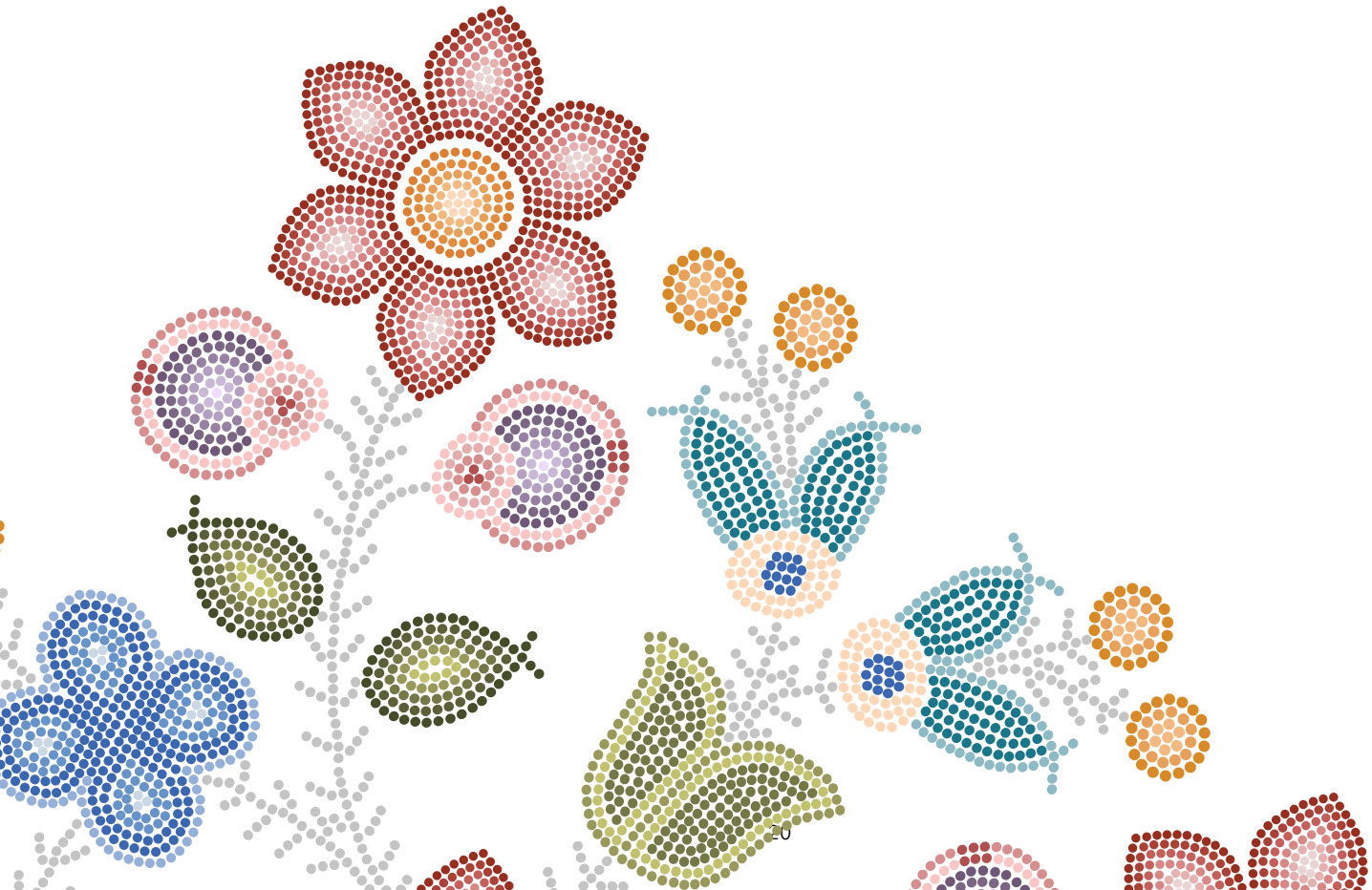
> ***"The Métis are people who depend upon each other, and having a sense of community is such a huge part of health."***

For many years, the MNO was able to support its citizens by providing access to traditional foods, an important aspect of Métis culture, health, and community well-being. However, recent enforcement of stringent food safety regulations by Public Health Units has created significant barriers. These rules, while designed for general food safety, are often not easily adaptable to the unique context of traditional food practices, particularly in office-based environments associated with MNO Councils. As a result, access to traditional foods has been significantly reduced, undermining cultural practices and community connection.

CONCLUSION

This report presents insights into the wholistic health of MNO citizens, collected from a survey launched in May 2024. While most respondents reported being in good health, many still face barriers to accessing the healthcare and support necessary to maintain or improve their health and wellness. The findings from this report help bridge the gap in our understanding of Métis health and will inform the programs and services offered by MNO's Healing & Wellness Branch. By monitoring the health of MNO citizens, the MNO can determine key priorities and align them with funding opportunities to expand services. Addditionally, the report highlights areas for future health research. The MNO is committed to continuously monitor the population-level health of its citizens in alignment with our Statement of Prime Purpose:

"to promote the improved health and wellness of the individual, the family and the whole Métis community".



APPENDIX A:
SURVEY QUESTIONS

Physical Health
In general, how would you describe your physical health?
How often do you feel in balance physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually?
In the past 12 months, have you personally experienced problems accessing any of the following health care services? (please check all that apply)
In general, how would you rate the health of your mouth?
Do you have at least one of your own teeth?
In the past 12 months, how often have you had any persistent or on-going mouth pain?
How often do you usually see a dental professional?
When was the last time you saw a dental professional?
In the past 12 months, have you avoided going to a dental professional for your dental care due to the cost?
In the past 12 months, have you avoided having any of your recommended dental treatment because of the cost?
What types of dental treatment did you avoid due to cost? Please mark all that apply (if selected yes for the question above)
Are all or part of your dental expenses covered by any insurance plan or government program?
What type of insurance plan or program? Please mark all that apply (if selected yes for the question above)
Do you have insurance or a government program that covers all or part of the cost of your prescription medications?
Do you have insurance or a government program that covers all or part of the cost of eye examinations, eye glasses, and contacts?
If you are in need of long-term care, do you have insurance or a government program that covers all or part of your long-term care costs, including home care?
Over the past 12 months, has the cost of services such as prescription medications, long-term or specialist care ever prevented you or other members of your household from getting the care and treatment that is needed?

Mental Health

In general, how would you describe your mental health?

In the last 2 WEEKS, how often have you experienced the following? -Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge. -Not being able to stop or control worrying. -Litter interest or pleasure in doing things. -Feeling tired or have little energy. -Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless. -Thoughts that you would be better off dead or of hurting yourself in some way. -Worrying too much about different things. -Trouble relaxing. -Being so restless it is hard to sit still. -Becoming easily annoyed or irritable. -Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen.

In the last MONTH, how often have you experienced the following? -Felt unable to control the important things in your life. -Felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems. -Felt that things were going your way. -Felt difficulties were piling up so much that you could not overcome them.

In the last 7 DAYS, how often have you felt -Lonely. -Hopeful about the future.

Tobacco, alcohol, and cannabis

At the present time, do you smoke cigarettes every day, occasionally or not at all?

How soon after waking up do you smoke your first cigarette? (if selected Daily for the question above)

How many cigarettes do you smoke each day (if selected Daily for the first question in this block)

On the days that you do smoke, how many cigarettes do you usually smoke? (if selected Occasionally for the first question in this block)

In the past month, on how many days have you smoked one or more cigarettes? (if selected Occasionally for the first question in this block)

In the past 30 days, how often did you use e-cigarette or vaping device?

In the past 30 days, how often did you use other commercial tobacco products such as cigars, pipe, chewing tobacco, snuff or dip?

During the past 12 months, have you had a drink of beer, wine, liquor or any other alcoholic beverage?

During the past 12 months, how often did you drink alcoholic beverages?

How often in the past 12 months have you had 3 or more drinks (for women) or 4 or more drinks (for men) on one occasion?

Have you used cannabis in the past 12 months?

How often did you use cannabis in the past 12 months?

In the past 12 months, which of the following methods did you use most often? -Smoked. -Vaporized. -Consumed in food or drink. -Other, please specify. -Not sure. -Prefer not to say

In the past 12 months, have you used cannabis for _____? -Non-medical purposes only. -Medical purposes only, either with or without a medical document. -Both medical and non-medical purposes. -Not sure. -Prefer not to say

Social Wellbeing and Community

How would you describe your sense of belonging to your Métis community?

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with each of the following statements. There are no right or wrong. –"I felt accepted by other Indigenous people." –"Métis people had less opportunities than other Canadians." -Métis people had less opportunities than other Indigenous groups in Canada." –"I feel good about being Métis." –"There is hardly ever anything good about Métis people in the media (TV, radio, newspapers, social media)." –"I often witnessed racism." –"I often experienced racism."

Food Insecurity

Please indicate if the statement was often true, sometimes true, or never true for you and other household members in the past 12 months.
–"You and other household members worried that food would run out before you got money to buy more." –"You and other household members couldn't afford to eat balanced meals." –"You or other adults in the household relied on only a few kinds of low-cost food to feed the children in your household because you or they were running out of money to buy food." –" You or other adults in the household couldn't feed the children in your household a balanced meal because you or they couldn't afford it." –"The children in your household were not eating enough because you or other adults in the household just couldn't afford enough food."

In the past 12 months, did you or other adults in the household ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?

How often did this happen? (if selected yes for the question above)

In the past 12 months, did you personally ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money to buy food?
In the past 12 months, were you personally ever hungry but didn't eat because you couldn't afford enough food?
In the past 12 months, did you personally ever lose weight because you didn't have enough money for food?
In the past 12 months, did you or other adults in the household ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food?
How often did this happen? (if selected yes for the question above)
Do you currently have children 18 years or younger in your household?
In the past 12 months, did you or other adults in the household ever cut the size of any of the children's meals because there wasn't enough money for food? (if selected yes for the question above)
In the past 12 months, did any of the children ever skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?
How often did this happen? (if selected yes for the question above)
In the past 12 months, were any of the children ever hungry but you couldn't afford more food?
In the past 12 months, did any of the children ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food?
Home Care Experiences
In the past 12 months, what type of home care services have been received?
Who received these home care services?
How long were home care services received?
In a typical month over the past 12 months, how much was paid for home care services?
Overall, what was the level of satisfaction for the home care services received?
What are the reasons for the dissatisfaction? Please mark all that apply (if selected somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied for the question above)
Thinking of the home care services received in the past 12 months, how helpful were they in allowing the person or persons receiving these services to stay at home?

Why weren't the home care services helpful in allowing the person or persons receiving these services to stay at home? Please mark all that apply
During the past 12 months, was there ever a time when you or anyone in the household felt that home care services were needed but were not received?
Were these home care services needed for yourself or someone else living in the household?
Thinking of the most recent time, what type of home care was needed? Please mark all that apply and please only report for the home care services you personally needed
Sociodemographic
What is your highest level of completed education?
What is your current relationship status?
How would you describe your gender?
What is your sexual orientation?
Do you identify as a person with a disability?
Have you ever had any Canadian military service?
What best describes your current employment status?
Which of these describe your household income last year (2023)? -Less than $9,999 per year. -$10,000 to $24,999 per year. -$25,000 to $49,999 per year. -$50,000 to $74,999 per year. -$75,000 to $99,999 per year. -$100,000 to $149,999 per year. -Over $150,000 per year. -Prefer not to say
Overall, in the past 12 months, was your household income enough to meet your household's needs for transportation, housing, food, clothing and other necessary expenses?
Today, could your household cover an unexpected expense of $500 from your household's resources?
Have you or your family experienced or been at risk of experiencing homelessness in the past 12 MONTHS?
Is there anything else you would like to tell the MNO about your health and wellness to support Métis-specific programming?

Métis Nation of Ontario