



Métis Nation of Ontario Housing and Health

Research that explores the impact of substandard housing conditions and their impact on health continues to be a significant gap among Métis people. In the absence of Métis-specific information, it is impossible to support their unique needs and experiences as one of Canada's three distinct rights-bearing Indigenous groups.

Acknowledgements

This project was only possible through the participation of 4,164 Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) citizens who completed an MNO-led survey in May 2022 sharing their housing conditions, state of repair and self-reported health outcomes as well as 36 citizens who spent hours of their time sharing their thoughts and opinions on housing and health between September 2022 and February 2023. Your participation in this research is truly invaluable. In addition, we would like to thank Métis Nation Senators Rene Gravelle, Gwen Lindsay, and Steve Callaghan for leading the focus groups in a good way.

Maarsi. Merci. Thank you.

Project Overview

The research project aligns with the Indigenous housing priority area for action as part of the National Housing Strategy. The research was co-developed with the Métis Nation of Ontario and included analysis of MNO-led survey data and qualitative focus group data with MNO citizens. The project had three research objectives:

1. Determine the sociodemographic, health outcomes and cultural correlates with housing conditions for MNO citizens.
2. Examine the association between housing conditions and self-rated physical and mental health and well-being.
3. Explore MNO citizens' thoughts, feelings, and opinions on how their housing conditions impact their health.

Key Findings

1. Most (72.9%) respondents reported being satisfied with their housing conditions. Similarly, most respondents reported good physical (69.6%) and mental (65.1%) health.
2. **Housing conditions and the state of dwelling/house repair both have strong associations** across all three measures of self-reported health, including physical and mental health as well as wellbeing.
 - Taking into account sociodemographic variables (gender, education, income, employment and relationship status), it is found that **satisfaction with housing conditions was strongly associated** with physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental balance. The odds of MNO citizens **reporting being in balance were 3.8 times higher** if they were satisfied with their housing conditions.
 - Satisfaction with housing conditions and housing repairs were strongly associated with self-reported **physical health**. The odds of MNO citizens reporting good physical health were 3.3 times higher if they were satisfied with their housing conditions, and 2.4 times higher if there were no repairs needed.
 - Satisfaction with housing conditions and housing repairs were also strongly associated with self-reported **mental health**. The odds of MNO citizens reporting good mental health were 4.2 times higher if they were satisfied with their housing conditions, and 2.4 times higher if there were no major repairs needed.

3. These associations were also present in the focus group conversations. Participants described the impact of good and poor housing on their physical, mental and holistic health, and wellbeing.

“The mental health, like just being in a basement. It’s dark. It’s small. It’s damp, it’s what I could afford. And yeah, just that feeling of being stuck kind of drains you. Just makes everyday kind of hard. So yeah, I’m just very glad that I was able to get out of there.”

– Focus Group Participant

4. **The idea of healthy housing for MNO citizens goes beyond concepts of a sound structure and a safe home condition** to include the relationships within the home, community and with the land and water.

“I start with what I define as a healthy home, as one that starts with love. And from the moment you enter it, love is within and it’s a really important value that indicates what home, for me, feels like. That’s how I define it. And the access to recreation and leisure, really for me creates that sense of place. So, recreation and leisure, for me, is being able to access the land — forested land is important. That’s where home is for me. And I’m a river person, similar to many, in that I grew up along with Kitchissippi river in the Ottawa valley, and for me, home is always there where the river is. If I’m beside the river, I’m good, and I know where it is, regardless of where I go in the world.”

– Focus Group Participant

Challenges

- Men and younger MNO citizens are less likely to participate overall. Increased participation from MNO citizens who identify as male and MNO citizens aged 18 to 24 years would have enhanced the results, particularly given that we see MNO youth over-represented among MNO citizens experiencing precarious housing situations or experiencing homelessness.



- Our planned objective of performing an intersectional analysis using multilevel analysis of individual heterogeneity and discriminatory accuracy (MAIDA) was not successful. The ability to perform intersectional analyses in MNO citizens may require different methods of sampling. Currently, MNO population-based surveys have used a census sampling methodology, inviting all MNO citizens with an email on file. Future surveys may have to incorporate quota sampling for individuals from particular groups (e.g. genders other than male or female, and those citizens with different levels of income and education) to support intersectional analyses.
- There were challenges in recruiting participants for the focus group conversations of the research. The plan to advertise the project on the MNO's website and social media channels led not only to MNO citizens volunteering to participate in the study but also individuals who were not Métis nor even residents of Canada attempting to participate. Our future projects will consider direct contact invitations (e.g., emails or phone calls) for the recruitment of MNO citizens.

Implications for the Housing Sector

The findings from this study will be shared back with MNO citizens and used to inform housing programs and services including strengthening collaborations across MNO's Housing & Infrastructure Branch, Healing & Wellness Branch and Community Well-being Branch to support the intersection of healthy housing and physical, mental and holistic health and wellness for MNO citizens. In particular:

- Several participants said that the income cut-offs or other requirements for MNO Housing programs should be re-assessed to ensure it is accessible across Ontario. For example, there are parts of Ontario where getting three quotes is impossible given the limited number of contractors in the region.
- Participants described a universal, community-based need for housing that encompassed intersectional identities including youth, seniors, Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+, women escaping from violence and individuals with disabilities.

Further Research Opportunities

- Although the intersectional analysis was unsuccessful with just one survey, the research team will attempt to pursue this analysis by combining MNO population-based surveys.
- Additional research funds will be pursued to examine in more detail specific relationships between housing condition as collected by the MNO housing census and occupant health. The latter survey included specific conditions like presence of mould and specific structural deficiencies. Linking census data with administrative health databases can enable researchers to examine more specific health outcomes like number of visits with a physician and presence or absence of chronic conditions (e.g. asthma).

Fast Facts

MNO Citizens satisfied with their housing conditions are more likely to report good health:

Element	Adjusted odds ratio
Balance	3.8 (95% Confidence Interval: 2.5–5.7)
Mental health	4.2 (95% Confidence Interval: 3.2–5.4)
Physical health	3.3 (95% Confidence Interval: 2.5–4.2)

Glossary of Key Terms

Multilevel analysis of individual heterogeneity and discriminatory accuracy (MAIDA) is a novel method for investigating socioeconomic disparities in health. By using multilevel analysis to model health inequalities within and between strata defined by the intersection of multiple social and demographic dimensions, the authors offer a better understanding of the health heterogeneity existing in the population. (see [Merlo, 2018¹](#))

To the MNO **holistic health** encompasses the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and cultural aspects of one's life. Through an understanding of self, a vision of wellness, and a balanced body, mind, and spirit the MNO promotes a vision of health and wellness through the healing continuum. (see [MNO website²](#))

¹ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29305018/>

² <https://www.metisnation.org/programs-and-services/healing-wellness/>

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For Further Reading

“My ancestors would be proud of us”: Métis women and 2SLGBTQIA+ people’s housing histories, experiences, struggles, and perspectives (2022)

https://assets.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/sf/project/archive/housing_organizations3/lfmo-housing-report_final.pdf

Housing experiences in Canada: Métis in 2016 (2022)

https://assets.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/sf/project/archive/housing_organizations3/00014-eng.pdf

Métis Housing in Canada: a literature review (2020)

https://assets.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/sf/project/archive/housing_organizations3/metis-housing-in-canada-in-nwac-literature-review-2020.pdf

A decade of research on housing and health: a systematic literature review Alidoust, S., & Huang, W. (2023).

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eoh&AN=62432530&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

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