

SENIORS IN THE NWT - SUMMARY

There is no official age category defining a “senior”. Within this summary about older residents of the Northwest Territories (NWT), how a senior is defined depends on the data source. The sections related to population, health & wellness, and language & traditional activities use age categories of 60 years and older, while data related to employment, income and housing consider those 55 years and over seniors.

POPULATION

In 2019, there were 44,826 people in total living in the Northwest Territories (NWT) with males accounting for 51% of the population and females 49%. Indigenous (First Nation, Inuit and Métis) and Non-Indigenous have similar population counts at 22,382 and 22,444 respectively.

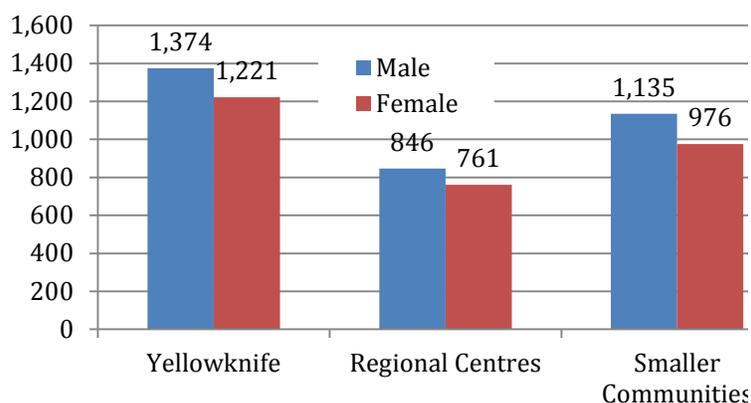
The 6,313 people 60 years and older make up 14% of the total NWT population. In the younger senior age groups, there are more Non-Indigenous than Indigenous persons. This pattern changes for people in their 70s however when the number of Indigenous NWT seniors is higher than that of Non-Indigenous.

2019 Population	NWT		Indigenous		Non-Indigenous	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
60 yrs & older	6,313	100.0	2,981	100.0	3,332	100.0
60 – 64 yrs	2,594	41.0	1,101	36.9	1,493	44.8
65 – 69 yrs	1,656	26.2	723	24.3	933	28.0
70 – 74 yrs	982	15.6	486	16.3	496	14.9
75 – 79 yrs	549	8.7	307	10.3	242	7.2
80 yrs & older	532	8.4	364	12.2	168	5.0

Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics Population Estimates

The proportion of males to females in the NWT widens for those 60 years and over with 53% of the senior population male and 47% female.

2019 Population 60 Years & Older



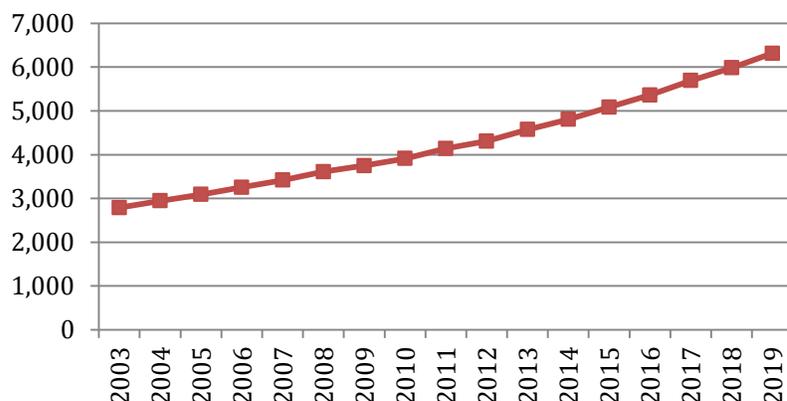
Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics Population Estimates

- There are more senior males than females in Yellowknife, the regional centres (Fort Smith, Hay River & Inuvik) and in the smaller NWT communities.

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Between 2003 and 2019, the senior population in the NWT rose from 2,787 to 6,313.

Number of Persons 60 years & older

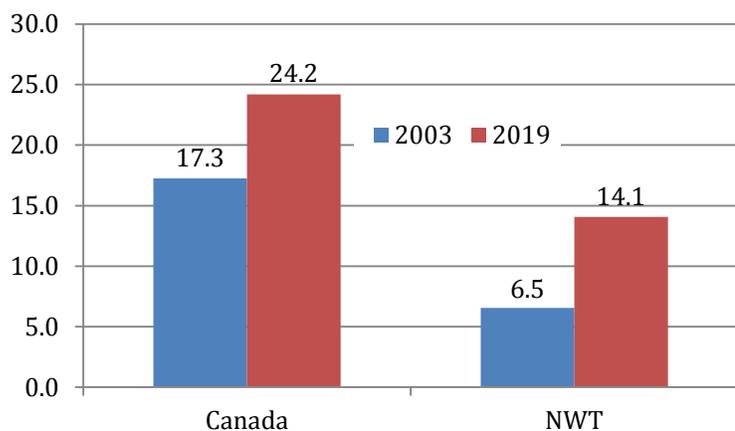


- The proportion of the NWT population 60 years and over increased by 127% between 2003 and 2019.
- In comparison, the total NWT population increased by 5% over the 16 year time period.

Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics Population Estimates

While the NWT mirrors the Canadian population pattern with increases in the proportion of seniors over time, the proportion of seniors in the NWT remains below that of Canada.

Percent of Total Population 60 years & older (%)



Source: Statistics Canada; NWT Bureau of Statistics Population Estimates

- Between 2003 and 2019, the proportion of seniors increased such that approximately one in four Canadians are now 60 years of age or older.
- The proportion of seniors in the NWT also increased – more than doubling between 2003 and 2019 to 14% of the total population.
- The proportion of seniors is projected to increase to 20% of the NWT population by 2035 (total = + 9,000 seniors).

EMPLOYMENT

NWT seniors are more likely to be employed compared to Canada:

2019 Employment Rates

	Canada	NWT
15 yrs & older	62%	66%
55 – 64 yrs	63%	68%
65 – 74 yrs	14%	35%

Source: NWT - 2019 NWT Community Survey ; Canada - LFS

- Employment rates in the NWT are higher than Canada for all age categories over the age of 35.

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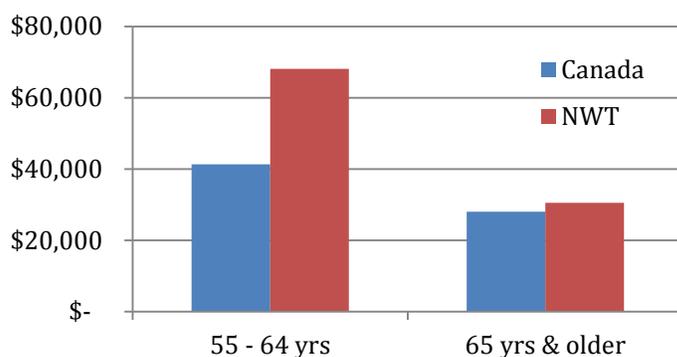
Employment rates and migration patterns in the NWT provide indications of why the proportion of NWT seniors is lower than that of Canada. Generally, people migrate to the NWT for employment opportunities with fewer remaining in the NWT upon the completion of their careers.

This migration pattern is evident when looking at the proportion of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous NWT seniors. There are higher numbers of Non-Indigenous in the senior “working age” population – between the ages of 60 – 74 – than Indigenous persons, but that pattern changes after the age of 75.

INCOME

While median income in the NWT is higher than that of Canada, median income drops considerably for those 65 years and over.

2017 Median Income (\$)



Source: Statistics Canada, T1 family file

- The gap between NWT and Canada median incomes was around \$2,500 for those 65 years and over compared to a +\$25,000 difference for 55 to 64 year olds.

A closer examination of the components of total income provides explanation of the income disparity between the NWT senior age groups.

Total income is comprised of various components such as employment income, government payments (such as Employment Insurance, Old Age Security, Canada Pension Plan, etc.), social assistance payments Registered Retirement Savings Plan Income, private pension plans and other forms of income.

Higher proportions of 55 to 64 year olds work in the NWT than in Canada (see Employment Rates on previous page) with employment income accounting for 81% of total income for this age group in the NWT compared to 71% in Canada. The amount of total income comprised of social assistance payments is the same for both NWT and Canadians aged 55 to 64 at 1.1% of total income.

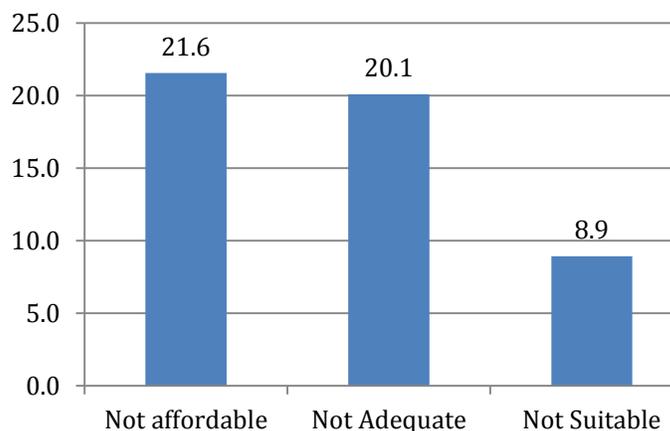
As the aging population leaves the workforce, and the NWT, the proportion of employment income decreases. For those 65 years and older, social assistance payments make up 1.9% of total income within the NWT compared to only 0.3% for Canada.

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HOUSING

While 20% of all NWT households were living in dwellings that were inadequate, 22% of households had issues with affordability.

Percentage of NWT Households with Housing Issues (%)



Source: 2019 NWT Community Survey

- Affordability issues – when shelter costs (like rent or mortgage payments, utilities, insurance etc.) are more than 30% of household income.
- Adequacy issues – when houses require major repairs, or are without running water or an indoor toilet.
- Suitability issues – when houses lack the suitable number of bedrooms

Analyzing housing issues by age of the household maintainer indicated differences between all NWT households and those led by seniors. Household maintainers are considered the people responsible for household payments, while a senior household maintainer is defined a household maintainer 65 years or older. Rates were similar for issues with affordability and adequacy, but only 2.5% of dwellings with senior household maintainers had suitability issues (compared to NWT 8.9%).

In the NWT, the percentage of households that require major repairs generally increases with the age of the household maintainer. The opposite trend is seen with the age of household maintainer and affordability – older seniors generally have fewer issues with affordability.

Age of Household Maintainer	Total Households		Not Adequate		Not Affordable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
60 yrs & older	3,182	100.0	712	22.4	728	22.9
60 – 64 yrs	1,212	100.0	230	19.0	306	25.2
65 yrs & older	1,970	100.0	481	24.4	421	21.4

Source: 2019 NWT Community Survey

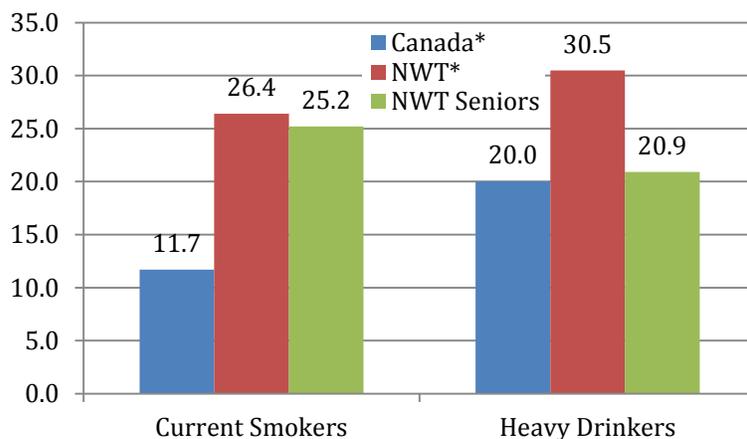
Among households with a senior housing maintainer, the proportion of houses with at least one housing problem ranged from 45% in Yellowknife area houses to 68% in the Tłı̄chó. Adequacy issues were most prevalent in the Dehcho (42%), Sahtu (45%) and the Tłı̄chó (50%) regions for senior household maintainers, while in Yellowknife it was affordability (37%).

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HEALTH & WELLNESS

NWT residents 60 years and over have lower rates of smoking and heavy drinking than the NWT total population, but are more likely to be smokers and heavy drinkers compared to Canada.

Percentage of Population, Selected Health Indicators (%)



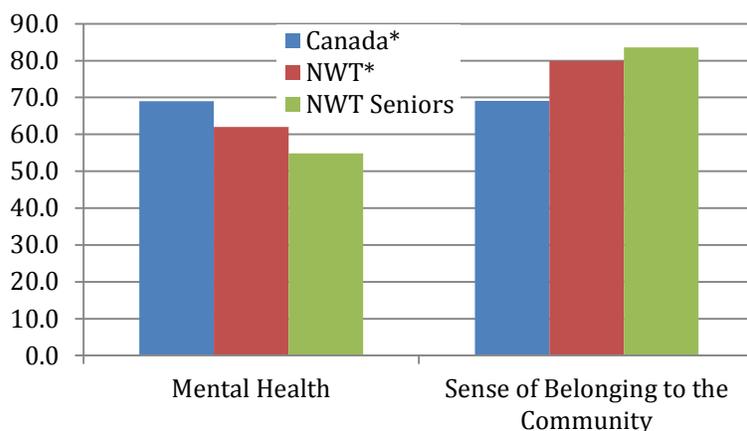
Source: 2017/18 Canadian Community Health Survey (data collected over 2 years)
*Population 15 years and over

- Close to 1 in 4 seniors in the NWT are daily or occasional smokers compared to 11.7% Canadians.
- 20% of NWT seniors are heavy drinkers – defined as consuming four or more drinks on one occasion at least once per month.

Only 33% of seniors in the NWT considered their health to be very good or excellent – 20 percentage points lower than the total NWT population. Physical inactivity is also more pronounced in the older population of the NWT - 56% of NWT residents 60 years and over.

NWT seniors rise above the NWT average in their sense of belonging to the community.

Percentage of Population, Selected Health Indicators (%)



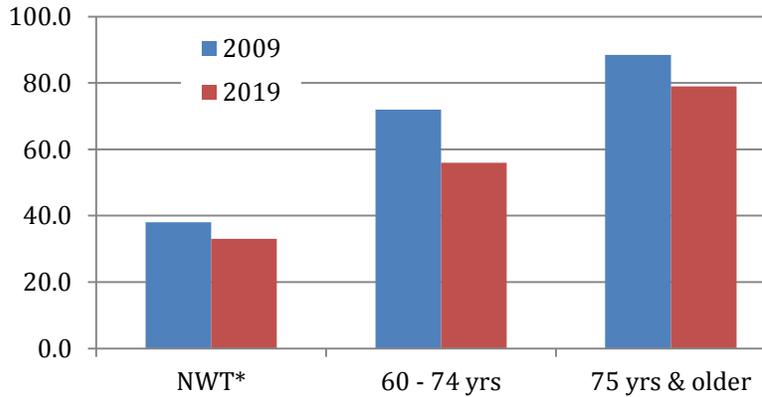
Source: 2017/18 Canadian Community Health Survey (data collected over 2 years)
*Population 15 years and over

- Approximately 84% of NWT seniors feel a very or somewhat strong sense of belonging to their community.
- Just over half of seniors in the NWT consider their mental health to be very good or excellent.

LANGUAGE

The proportion of NWT Indigenous seniors able to speak an Indigenous language well enough to carry on a conversation dropped slightly between 2009 and 2019.

Percentage of Indigenous Persons who Can Speak an Indigenous Language (%)



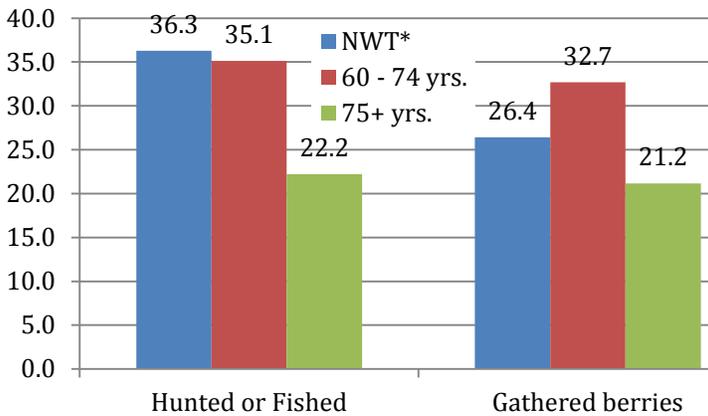
Source: 2009 & 2019 NWT Community Surveys
*Population 15 years and over

- The proportion of 60 to 74 year olds who were Indigenous language speakers decreased from 72% in 2009 to 56% in 2019.
- The proportion of Indigenous language speakers 15 years and older decreased by 5% between 2009 and 2019

TRADITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Hunting and fishing declines as seniors age, but many seniors are engaged in berry picking in the NWT.

Percentage of NWT Persons Participating in Selected Traditional Activities (%)



Source: 2019 NWT Community Survey
*Population 15 years and over

- Participation in hunting or fishing declines as people age, but seniors were more likely to gather berries than the NWT average.
- In 2019, 33% of 60 to 74 year olds had gathered berries in the previous year and 35% had hunted or fished.

47% of 60 to 74 year olds in smaller communities had hunted or fished in the past year, compared to 28% in Yellowknife and 34% of seniors in that age range in Fort Simpson, Hay River or Inuvik. 36% of those over the age of 75 in smaller communities hunted and fished.

NWT BUREAU OF STATISTICS

Please contact the NWT Bureau of Statistics for more information on any of the topics provided in this summary.

Phone: (867) 767-9169
Toll-free: 1-888-STATSNT (1-888-782-8768)
Email: info@stats.gov.nt.ca
Website: www.statsnwt.ca