



SENIORS IN THE NWT

SUMMARY

Prepared by the NWT Bureau of Statistics

Government of
Northwest Territories

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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, language, traditional activities and housing use age categories of 60 years and older, while data related to employment and income consider those 55 years and over seniors.

POPULATION

In 2025, there were 45,950 people in total living in the Northwest Territories (NWT) with 51% men⁺ and 49% women⁺. Of the total population, 48% were Indigenous (First Nation, Inuit and Métis) and 52% were Non-Indigenous.

The senior NWT population closely mirrored that of the total population with 52% of the population 60 years and over men⁺ and 48% women⁺. Of the 8,056 NWT seniors, 48%, or 3,835 were Indigenous and 52%, or 4,221 were Non-Indigenous.

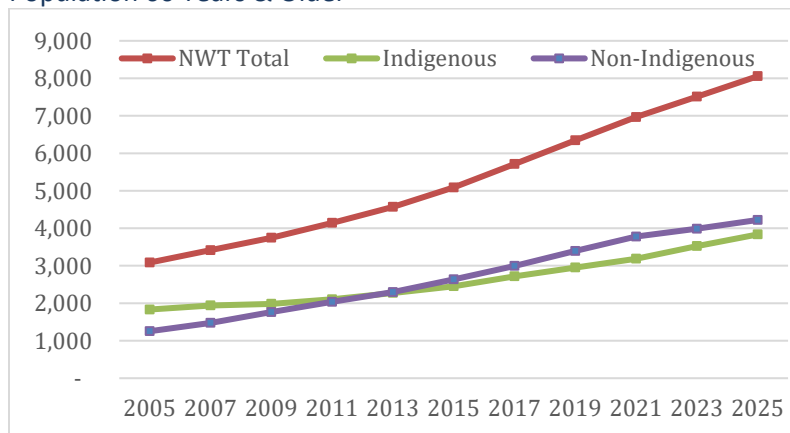
2025 Population	NWT		Indigenous		Non-Indigenous	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
60 yrs & older	8,056	100.0	3,835	47.6	4,221	52.4
60 – 64 yrs	2,792	100.0	1,337	47.9	1,455	52.1
65 – 69 yrs	2,058	100.0	942	45.8	1,116	54.2
70 – 74 yrs	1,430	100.0	643	45.0	787	55.0
75 – 79 yrs	924	100.0	486	52.6	438	47.4
80 yrs & older	852	100.0	427	50.1	425	49.9

Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics Population Estimates

- Senior men⁺ outnumbered women⁺ in all senior age categories except for those 80 years and older with 484 women⁺ compared to 368 men⁺.

The overall population in the NWT grew 6% between 2005 and 2025 from 43,399 to 45,590. Over the same period, those aged 60 years and older increased by 161% from 3,085 to 8,056.

Population 60 Years & Older



Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics Population Estimates

- The number of Indigenous seniors increased by 2,003 persons over the 20 year period, while Non-Indigenous seniors increased by 2,968 people.
- Starting in 2013, there were more Non-Indigenous than Indigenous seniors.

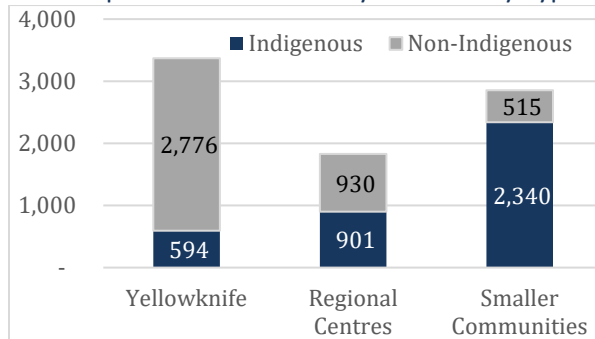
SENIORS IN THE NWT - SUMMARY

POPULATION BY COMMUNITY TYPE

Between 2005 and 2025, the number of people 60 years and older in Yellowknife grew by 283% to reach 3,370 persons. Growth occurred at a slower rate in Inuvik, Fort Smith and Hay River (Regional Centres) and smaller NWT communities at 113% and 112% respectively. In 2025, 1,831 seniors resided in Regional Centres and 2,855 in smaller communities.

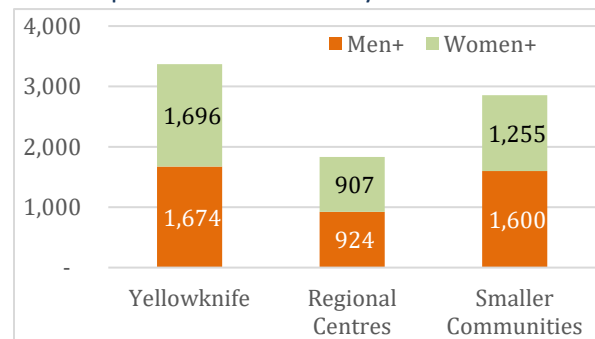
Yellowknife had more Non-Indigenous seniors than Indigenous, with the opposite being true in smaller communities. In 2025, similar numbers of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous, and men+ and women+ seniors resided in Regional Centres. Gender was also closely divided amongst seniors in Yellowknife, whereas in smaller communities, men+ outnumbered women+.

2025 Pop. 60 Years & Older by Community Type



Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics Population Estimates

2025 Pop. 60 Years & Older by Gender

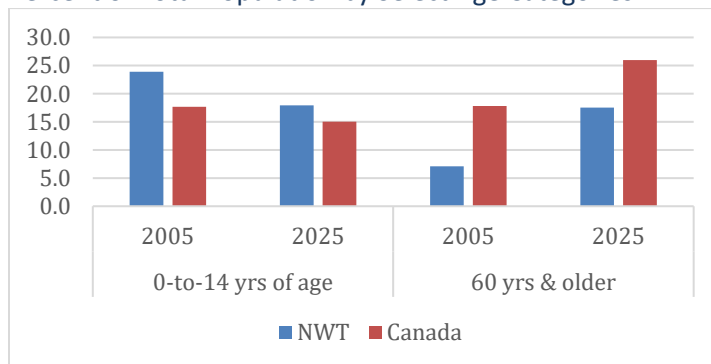


Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics Population Estimates

NATIONAL POPULATION

Between 2005 and 2025, the NWT age distribution has been shifting toward the Canadian average. The proportion of 0- to 14- year olds fell from 24% to 18% in the NWT, making for a similar proportion to the Canadian value of 15%. While the aging NWT population mirrors the Canadian trend, Canada still has a higher proportion of seniors at 26%, compared to 18% in the NWT. In 2005, the proportions were 18% for Canada and 7% for NWT.

Percent of Total Population by Select Age Categories



Source: Statistics Canada; NWT Bureau of Statistics Population Estimates

- By 2025, approximately one in four Canadians were 60 years and older.
- It is projected in the NWT that by 2044, 20% of the total population will be seniors (over 9,200 people).

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EMPLOYMENT

NWT seniors are more likely to be employed compared to Canada, particularly for those 65 years and older:

2025 Employment Rates	Canada	NWT
15 yrs & older	60.8%	65.5%
60 – 64 yrs	54.6%	58.6%
65 – 69 yrs	28.7%	37.5%
70 yrs & older	8.0%	14.3%

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey

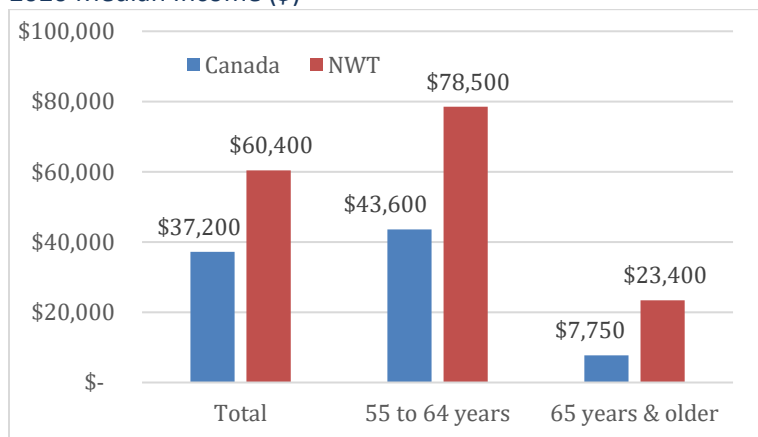
- Senior men+ had higher employment rates than senior women+ in both Canada and the NWT.

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 completion of their careers.

INCOME

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

2020 Median Income (\$)



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

- In 2020, 55- to 64-year-old women+ in the NWT had a median employment income almost double that of Canadian women - \$72,500 compared to \$36,800.
- NWT Men+ 55 to 64 years of age had a median employment income of \$87,000.

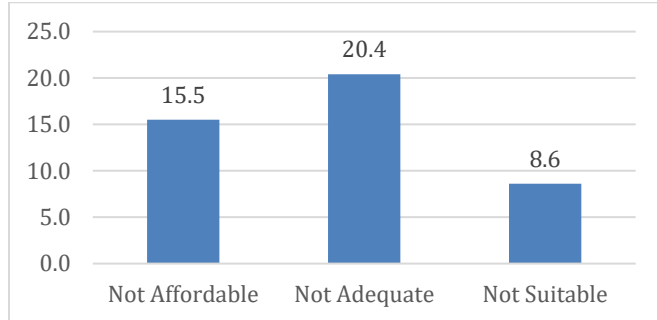
Total income is comprised of various components such as employment income, government payments (such as Employment Insurance, Old Age Security, Canada Pension Plan, etc.), social assistance payments, pension plans and other forms of income.

While NWT seniors have higher employment rates and median employment income than Canada, income disparity exists between NWT seniors. In 2023, Social Assistance Benefits for NWT residents 65 years and older comprised 1.8% of total income compared to 0.4% for Canada.

HOUSING

Senior households are defined as having at least one person living in the household 60 years or older. In 2024, 15.5% of senior households had affordability issues and 20.4% required major repairs (not adequate).

2024 Percent of NWT Senior Households with Housing Issues

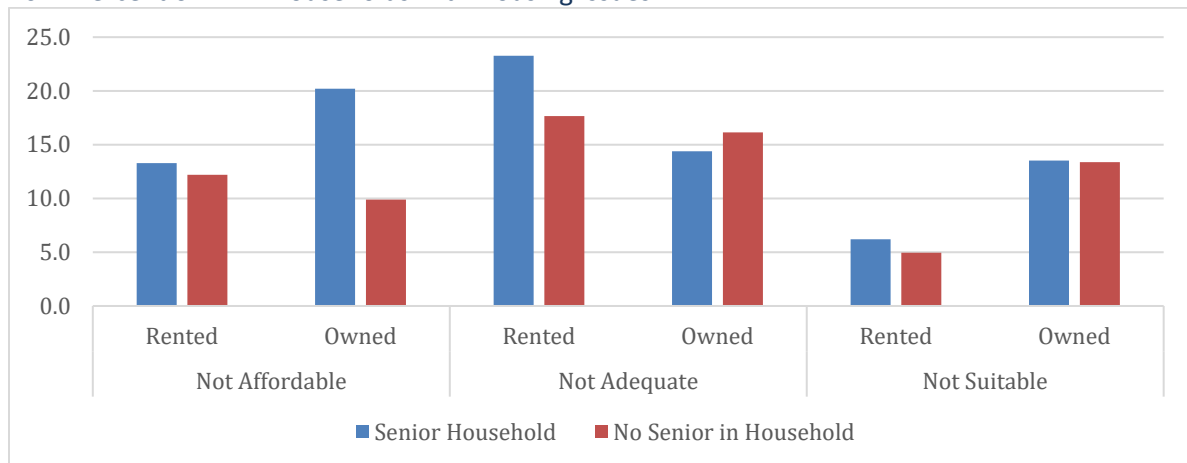


Source: 2024 NWT Community Survey

- 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, such as to the foundation, electrical systems or structural repairs to the roof.
- Suitability issues – when houses lack the suitable number of bedrooms for the characteristics of household occupants.

In general, senior households tend to have higher rates of housing issues than households without seniors. Housing problems for senior households varied by tenure with renters more likely to have adequacy issues and owners more likely to have affordability issues.

2024 Percent of NWT Households with Housing Issues



Source: 2024 NWT Community Survey

A household is considered in core need if it has at least one housing problem and a total household income below the community Core Need Income Threshold (CNIT). Among households with at least one senior, 28% were in core need compared to 20% for households with no seniors. The proportion of senior households in core need ranged from 21% in the Yellowknife area to 40% in the Tłıchó region.

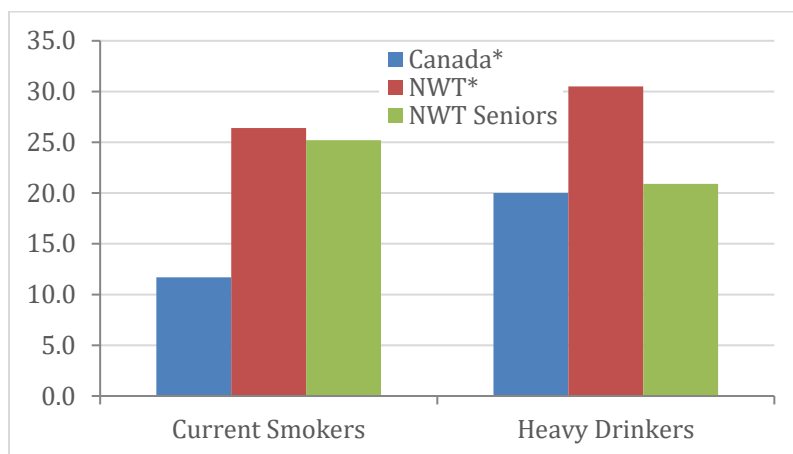
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HEALTH & WELLNESS

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

Percentage of Population, Selected Health Indicators (%)

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



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

*Population 15 years and over

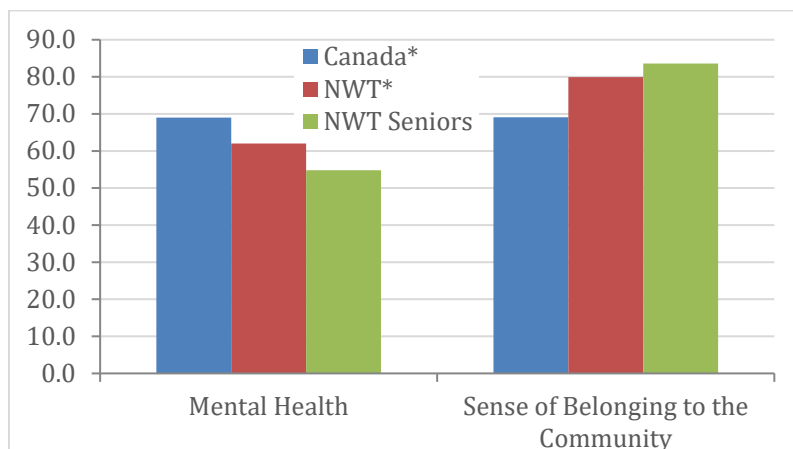
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Only 33% of seniors in the NWT considered their health to be very good or excellent – 20 percentage points lower than the total NWT population. Physical inactivity was also more pronounced in the older population with 57% of NWT residents 60 years and over inactive.

NWT seniors tend to have a higher sense of belonging to their community than the NWT average.

Percentage of Population, Selected Health Indicators (%)

- 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.



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

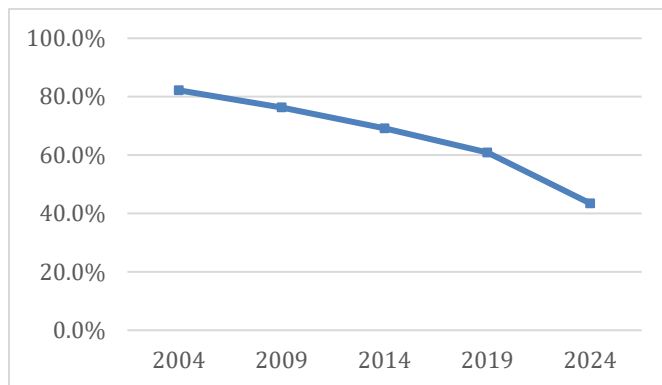
*Population 15 years and over

LANGUAGE

The proportion of NWT Indigenous people 60 years and older able to speak an Indigenous language well enough to carry on a conversation decreased from 82.2% in 2004 to 43.4% in 2024.

Indigenous Persons 60 year & older who Speak an Indigenous Language

- The decline in Indigenous seniors who speak at least one Indigenous language was consistent in all regions and in all 9 official NWT Indigenous languages.



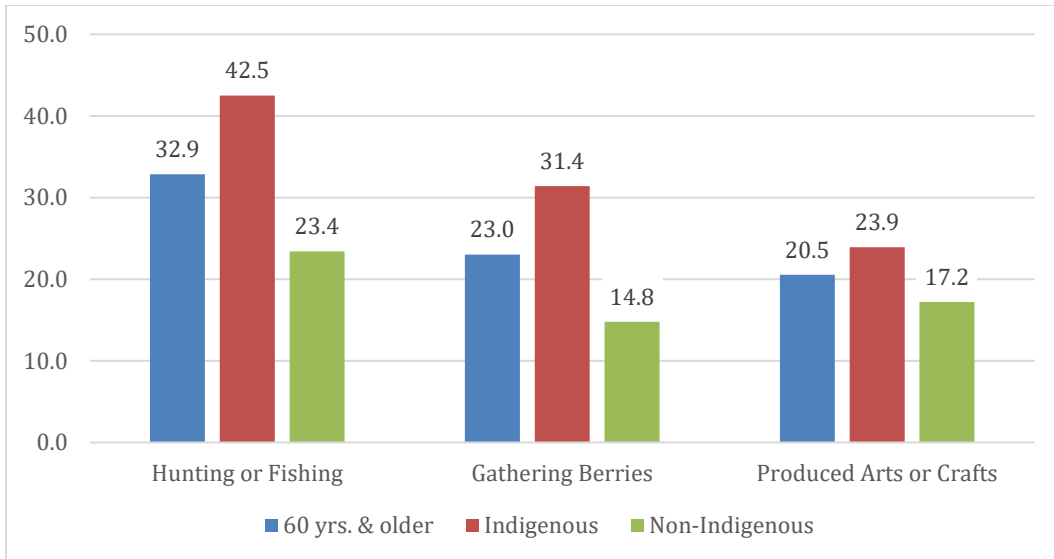
Source: NWT Community Surveys

TRADITIONAL ACTIVITIES

In 2024, 23% of those 60 years & older in the NWT had gathered berries or other wild plants in the previous year, 33% had hunted or fished and 21% had produced arts or crafts. Indigenous seniors were more likely to have engaged in these activities than Non-Indigenous seniors.

2024 Percent of Seniors Participating in Traditional Activities

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Source: 2024 NWT Community Survey

Half of all Indigenous seniors in smaller NWT communities hunted or fished, compared to 35% of Indigenous seniors in Regional Centres and 30% in Yellowknife.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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

Contact

Phone: (867) 767-9169
Toll-free: 1-888-STATSNT (1-888-782-8768)
Website: www.statsnwt.ca

SENIORS IN THE NWT - SUMMARY

ⁱ Female+/Women+ includes cisgender women, transgender women, and some non-binary people.
Male+/Men+ includes cisgender men, transgender men, and some non-binary people.