

Together, with provincial and federal partners, our Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia created the **Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Client Linkage Registry**. This is an update to the communities about our population-level maternal health data, produced by the **Knowledge to Action Project (2021)** to support community education and planning.

Maternal Health

Moms are the heart of our communities, which is why their health is so important to us all.



Why Moms Matter

Compared to the rest of Nova Scotia, **motherhood in our communities begins earlier in life** and we are having bigger families.

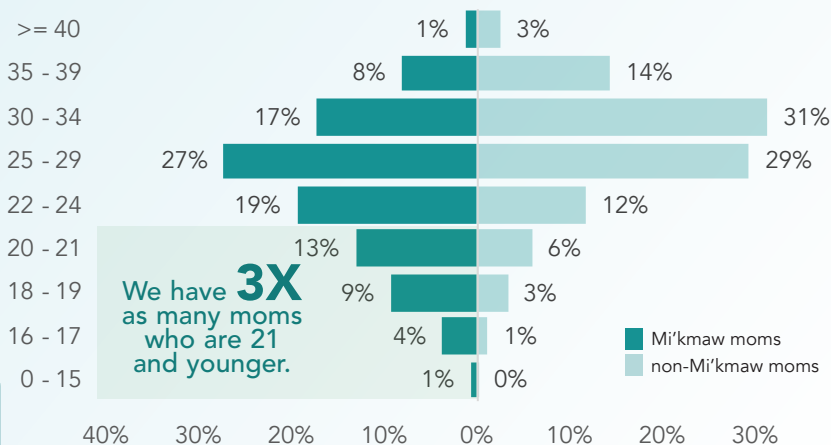


The proportion of mothers having their 5th baby or more was much higher in our communities (11.6% compared with 1.96% provincially) and has been increasing over time. With **bigger families**, our moms have a lot to manage.

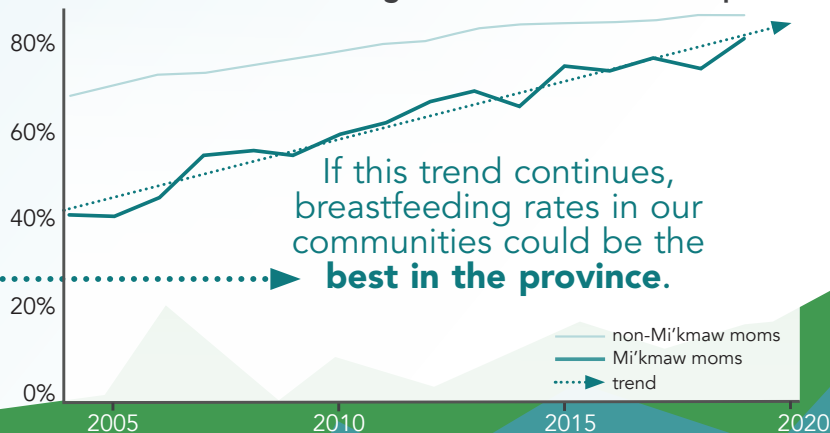


Today's moms are doing their best to get us back to our roots. **Our rates of breastfeeding are high and rising faster** than the rest of Nova Scotia.

Maternal Age Distribution



% of Newborns Being Fed Breast Milk in Hospital



**We know what to do.
We have the information to back it up.**

Data for this bulletin were obtained from:

- The Reproductive Care Program of NS, IWK Health Centre
- Digital Health, Analytics and Privacy, NS Department of Health and Wellness

Moms connect us to our past and create our future



The intergenerational cycle: babies born to moms with diabetes are at higher risk of developing diabetes at some point in their lives.

Because our rates of diabetes have been on the rise for generations, **today's moms are more likely to be the daughters of women who had diabetes when they were pregnant.**

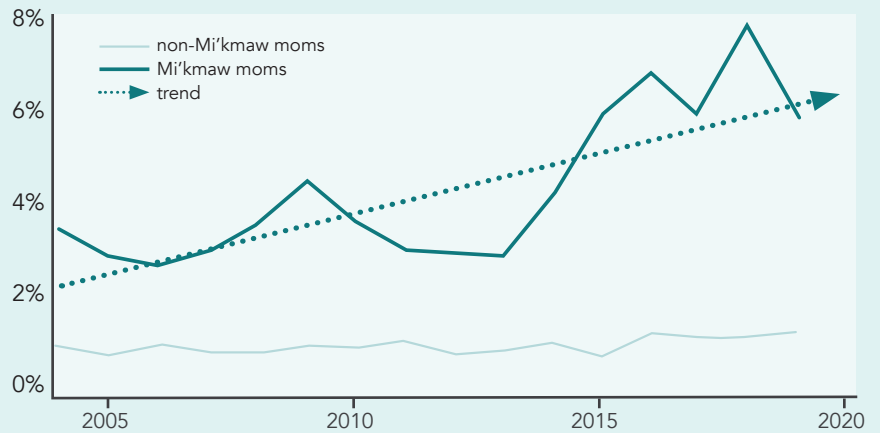
Diabetes & Pregnancy

The rate of **pre-existing diabetes** mellitus was higher among Mi'kmaw moms compared to other mothers in Nova Scotia and **is on the rise.**

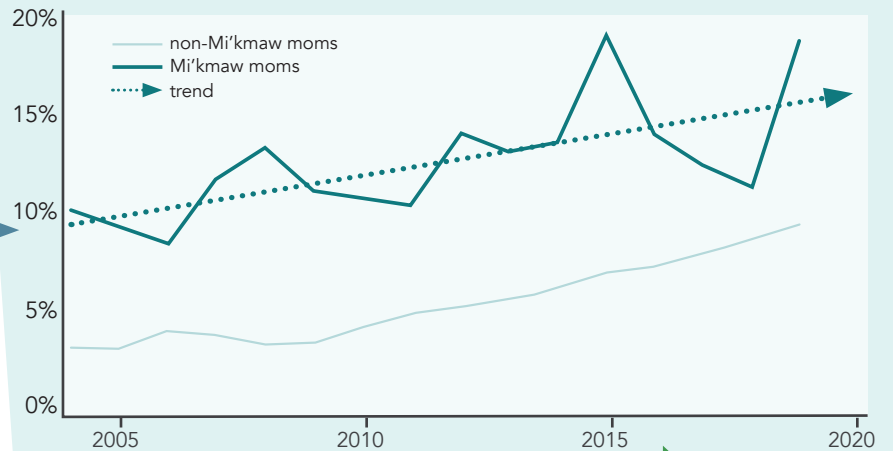
Getting tested for diabetes is an important part of prenatal care.

The same is true for our rate of **gestational diabetes** (the kind that happens during pregnancy). This is an issue for more than 1 in 10 moms in our communities.

% of Moms with Pre-existing Diabetes



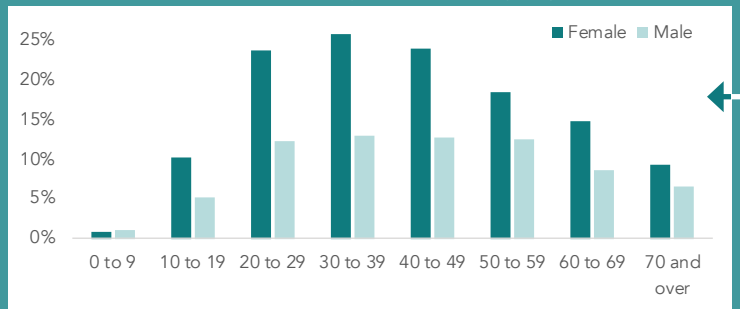
% of Moms with Gestational Diabetes



High blood sugar during pregnancy can lead to babies with higher birth weights. A natural birth can be more difficult for larger babies and they may have problems with their own blood sugar. They are more likely to develop obesity early in life, as well as diabetes and heart disease when they are older.

Let's talk about stress

Prevalence of Mood & Anxiety Disorders By Age & Sex (2019)



Looking at some of our mental health data, **women across all adult age groups in our communities are more likely than men to be carrying the burden of anxiety and mood disorders such as depression.**

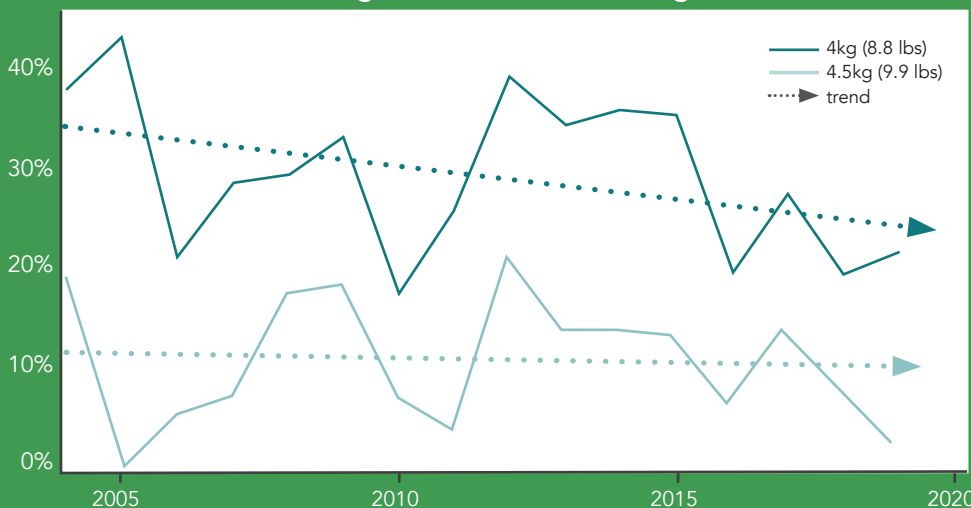


Even though cigarettes increase the level of stress in a person's body, many people smoke because they believe it calms their anxieties. **Our rate of tobacco smoking at the time of admission for birth is almost 3x higher than among non Mi'kmaw mothers in Nova Scotia** (16-year rate of 43.7% compared to 15.0%).

The rate of self-reported marijuana/cannabis use in pregnancy is more than 3x higher in our communities than among Nova Scotia non-Mi'kmaw mothers (16-year rate of 8.23% compared to 2.41%).

Good news! The rate of babies born with high birth weights among moms with diabetes is decreasing.

% of Mi'kmaw Infants with High Birth Weight (Among Moms with GDM Diagnosis)



The fact that fewer babies are being born with high birth weights may be showing that diabetes during pregnancy is being well managed by moms, with support from their health providers.



There are **4 things** to take away from our data about **maternal health**.

1 *Moms are dealing with a lot of anxiety.*

When you're caring for others, it can be hard to get enough sleep, eat good food and deal with stress. Moms need support to care for themselves so they can stay strong for their families.

Every mom should get screened for diabetes as soon as she knows she's pregnant.

2 *Diabetes during pregnancy is being better managed, and it's making a difference.*

3 *Smoking is a powerful addiction.*

Non-traditional tobacco use isn't a new problem but it's still a big one during pregnancy.

When moms are able to breastfeed, it's a good thing for her and her baby.

An important part of food security in our communities is supporting breastfeeding.
4 *We're on our way to having the best rate of breastfeeding in the province.*



ALWAYS KEEP IN MIND: Every mom has good days and bad days. When you need it, help is there.

You can start by talking to your **Community Health Nurse**.