

Family and Community Context



Introduction

This section provides a description of family structure and a general overview of the social environment of families and children, including factors such as income, employment and language. These factors are referred to as “determinants of health” since they have a powerful influence on health and health-related behaviours. Comparisons of Peel data to Ontario will be made throughout.

Family Structure

Family structure plays an important role in our health status. Families provide support and security and help to influence lifestyle choices which impact our health. Over the past several decades, family structure has been changing. Although married couples continue to be the main type of family, the proportion of people in common-law marriages and lone-parent* families has increased over the past three decades.^{4,5} The proportion of lone-parent families in Canada was 9% in 1971. By 2001, this number had increased to 16%.

Lone parents, especially women, tend to have lower levels of education, fewer job skills and therefore lower income in comparison to other types of families.⁵ These factors contribute to poorer health, on average, for lone parents and their children.⁶

During the 2001 census year, information was collected about different types of families, one of which was the “census family”. The census family was defined as a married couple (with or without children of either or both spouses), a couple living common-law (with or without children of either or both partners) or a lone parent of any marital status, with at least one child living in the same dwelling. A couple living common-law may be of opposite or same sex.

In 2001, Peel had a higher proportion of census families with children living at home (73.6%) compared to Ontario (65.2%). Table 2.1 (*see following page*) shows the proportion of census families with children living at home by family structure. Details about census families by municipality can be found in Table 2.2 (*see page 11*).

* A lone parent is defined as a mother or a father, with no spouse or common-law partner present, living in a dwelling with one or more children.

Table 2.1: Proportion of Census Families in Private Households with Children Living at Home by Family Structure, Region of Peel and Ontario, 1996 and 2001

Family Types	Peel		Ontario	
	1996	2001	1996	2001
Husband-wife families with sons and/or daughters at home	57.7%	56.0%	48.3%	46.1%
Common-law couples with sons and/or daughters at home	2.8%	3.1%	3.3%	3.9%
Lone-parent families	13.0%	14.5%	14.4%	15.2%
Male lone parent	2.2%	2.6%	2.3%	2.7%
Female lone parent	10.8%	11.9%	12.1%	12.6%
Total Number of Census Families in Private Households	233,020	276,090	2,932,725	3,190,990

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 and 2001 Censuses.

In 2001, the majority of census families in Peel were married or common-law couples with children living at home (59.1%). Lone parents accounted for 14.5% of families. Among Peel families with children, 38.1% had one child, 42.4% had two and 19.5% had three or more (data not shown).

In Peel, the proportion of families comprised of one parent living with one or more children rose from 13% in 1996 to 14.5% in 2001. Females headed most of these lone-parent families as shown in Table 2.1. The proportion of lone-parent families was higher in Brampton (15.3%) and Mississauga (14.4%) compared to Caledon (9.3%) (*see Table 2.2 on following page*). The distribution of lone-parent families in Peel is shown in Map 2.1 at the end of this chapter. A fairly high proportion (25% to 30%) of lone-parent families lived in a section of Bramalea in Brampton, a section of south-central Brampton, a section of Malton in Mississauga, as well as a section near central Mississauga.

Table 2.2: Number and Proportion of Census Families in Private Households by Type of Family, Mississauga, Brampton, Caledon, Region of Peel and Ontario, 1996 and 2001

	Mississauga		Brampton		Caledon		Peel		Ontario	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
2001										
Total married couples with children at home	96,215	56.4	50,085	55.2	8,230	55.9	154,530	56.0	1,469,910	46.1
Total common-law couples with children at home	4,820	2.8	3,370	3.7	455	3.1	8,645	3.1	124,875	3.9
Total lone-parent families	24,645	14.4	13,925	15.3	1,375	9.3	39,945	14.5	486,105	15.2
Male lone parent	4,100	2.4	2,810	3.1	300	2.0	7,205	2.6	84,860	2.7
Female lone parent	20,545	12.0	11,115	12.2	1,080	7.3	32,740	11.9	401,245	12.6
Total Number of Census Families in Private Households by Family Size	170,565		90,815		14,715		276,090		3,190,990	
1996										
Total married couples with children at home	85,825	57.7	42,120	57.7	6,565	57.7	134,515	57.7	1,417,240	48.3
Total common-law couples with children at home	3,645	2.5	2,435	3.3	340	3.0	6,420	2.8	97,050	3.3
Total lone-parent families	19,685	13.2	9,685	13.3	880	7.7	30,250	13.0	421,705	14.4
Male lone parent	3,245	2.2	1,675	2.3	175	1.5	5,095	2.2	66,665	2.3
Female lone parent	16,445	11.1	8,005	11.0	710	6.2	25,155	10.8	355,040	12.1
Total Number of Census Families in Private Households by Family Size	148,690		72,965		11,370		233,020		2,932,725	

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 and 2001 Censuses.

Community Context

Income, education and employment are inter-related measures of socio-economic status. Persons with lower levels of education tend to earn lower incomes, have unskilled jobs and experience higher levels of unemployment. Employment is important as it enhances a person's identity, self-esteem and socialization.

Those with low incomes tend to be at higher risk of exposure to poor living and working conditions, and have lower life expectancy and higher mortality rates than those with higher incomes.^{7,8} This association between income and health was documented for the Region of Peel in the *State of the Region's Health 2001* report.⁹

Language has a direct effect on people's ability to deal with the written materials that they encounter on a daily basis. An inability to read or speak English or French can limit knowledge of, and access to, community resources, and increases the risk of social isolation. It may also reduce access to health services and impair communication with health practitioners.

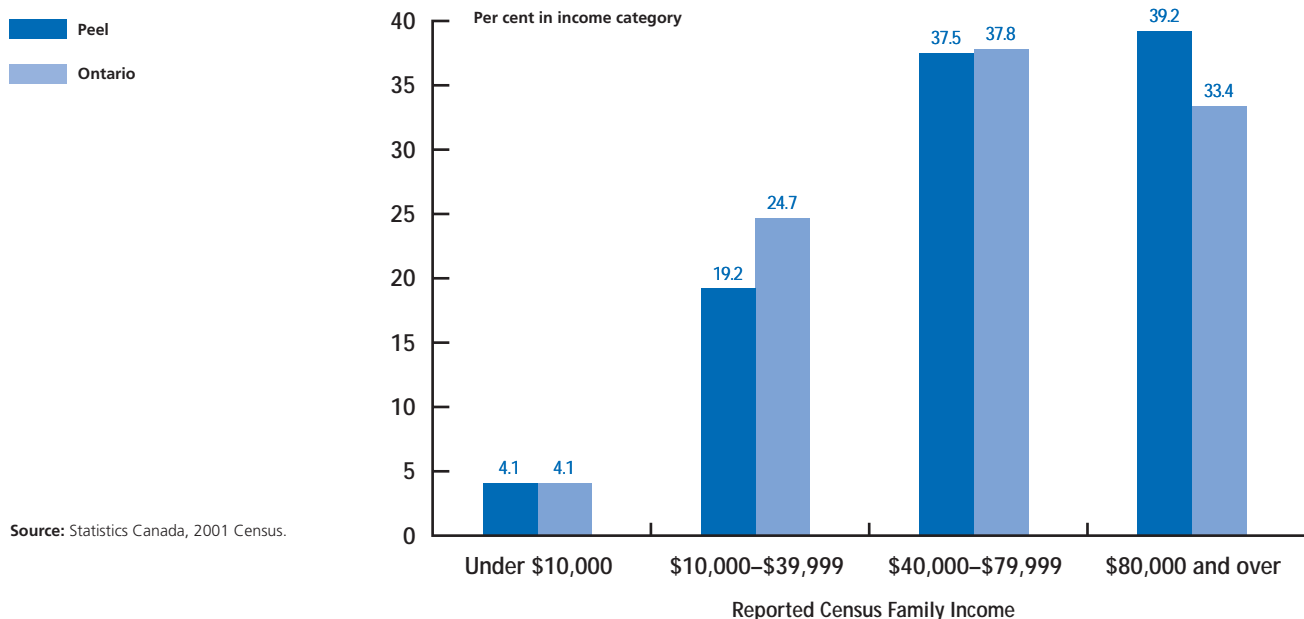
Two indicators of language from the 2001 census include language spoken at home and knowledge of official languages. “Home Language” refers to the language spoken most often at home by the individual at the time of the census. “Knowledge of Official Languages” refers to the ability to conduct a conversation in English only, in French only, in both English and French, or in neither of the official languages of Canada. While there are other indicators of language, such as mother tongue (first language learned at home in childhood and still understood by the individual at the time of the census), language at home and knowledge of official languages more accurately reflect whether a potential barrier to health exists at the time of the census.

Census Family Income

Family income from the 2001 Census was estimated by summing the self-reported total income of all members of the family for the year prior to the census. Although there are several definitions of family in the census, the term family in this graph refers to the 2001 definition of the census family, which is a married couple (with or without children of either or both spouses), a couple living common-law (with or without children of either or both partners) or a lone parent of any marital status, with at least one child living in the same dwelling. A couple living common-law may be of opposite or same sex.

As seen in Figure 2.1, there was a higher proportion of families in Peel (39.2%) who earned more than \$80,000 annually compared to Ontario (33.4%).

Figure 2.1: Distribution of Reported Census Family Income, Region of Peel and Ontario, 2000



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census.

On average, census families in Peel earned more annually than Ontario census families did (\$79,324 versus \$73,849 respectively in 2000). This finding was consistent across all family types. Although not shown, lone-parent females in Peel had the lowest annual income compared to other family types within Peel.

Low Income

Income is an important determinant of the health of children. In the 2001 Census, the incidence of low income was defined as the percentage of economic families or unattached individuals who spend 20% more, of their total income, than the average economic family or unattached individual on food, shelter and clothing (i.e. with an income below the low-income cut-off). If the average family spends 35% of their total income on food, shelter and clothing, a family of the same size having low income would spend 55% of their total income on these basic necessities. The 2001 Census low-income cut-off was based on a matrix that included both family size and size of the community of residence. For example, a family of four living in a populated area with between 100,000 and 499,999 people would be classified as low-income if their income level for the year 2000 was \$29,653 or less. The following table describes the incidence of low income in census families with children under the age of six years.

Overall, almost one in eight families with children under the age of six lived in poverty in 2001—12.5% in Peel compared to 17.7% in Ontario (see Table 2.3). The prevalence of low income for married or common-law couples with children under six years was 10.1%, while the proportion for lone-parent families with children under six years was 40.9%. The prevalence of low income was higher for lone-parent families, especially for those headed by females (44%). Lone-parent families headed by males had a low-income rate of 18.4%.

Table 2.3: Prevalence of Low Income by Type of Families with Children Less than 6 Years*, Region of Peel and Ontario, 2000

Type of Economic Family	Peel		Ontario	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
Married or common-law couple with children < 6 yrs	2,365	10.1%	28,890	11.4%
Lone-parent families with children < 6 yrs	820	40.9%	22,685	60.2%
Male lone-parent families with children < 6 yrs	45	18.4%	1,015	27.8%
Female lone-parent families with children < 6 yrs	775	44.0%	21,670	63.6%
Total Families with Children < 6 Years	3,185	12.5%	51,575	17.7%

* In families where there were several children, the oldest child was referred to.
Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census, distributed through HELPS (Health Planning System) by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.*

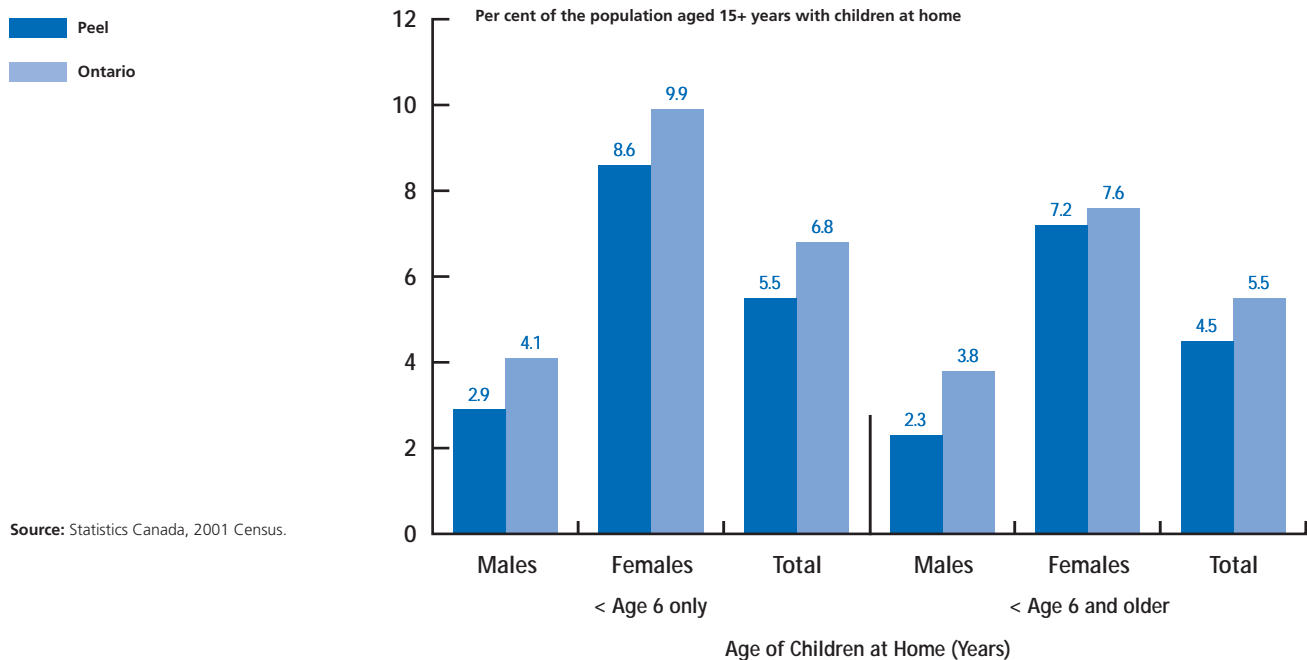
The proportion of low-income families with children less than six years old decreased between the 1996 and 2001 censuses for both Peel (from 18.1% in 1996 to 12.5% in 2001) and Ontario (from 24.4% in 1996 to 17.7% in 2001) (data not shown). Families living in Caledon had a much lower prevalence of low income compared to those living in Mississauga or Brampton. Map 2.2 (see page 19) shows the variation in the prevalence of low income from economic families (married, common-law, lone-parent or persons living with relatives) across the Region of Peel. Several areas, including a section of Bramalea in Brampton, and a section of South Central Mississauga, had a higher proportion (25% to 31%) of economic families living below the low-income cut-off point.

Parent Unemployment

Unemployment rates for parents with children at home in 2001 were calculated by dividing the number of parents who were in the labour force but were unemployed by the total number participating in the labour force.

As shown in Figure 2.2, unemployment rates were particularly high for Peel females with children aged less than six years living at home, where 8.6% reported being unemployed compared to males (2.9%). Unemployment rates for parents who only had children less than six years of age living at home were higher than those having children less than six and six years and older living at home.

Figure 2.2: Unemployment Rates of Parents with Children at Home, by Sex of Parent, Region of Peel and Ontario, 2001



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census.

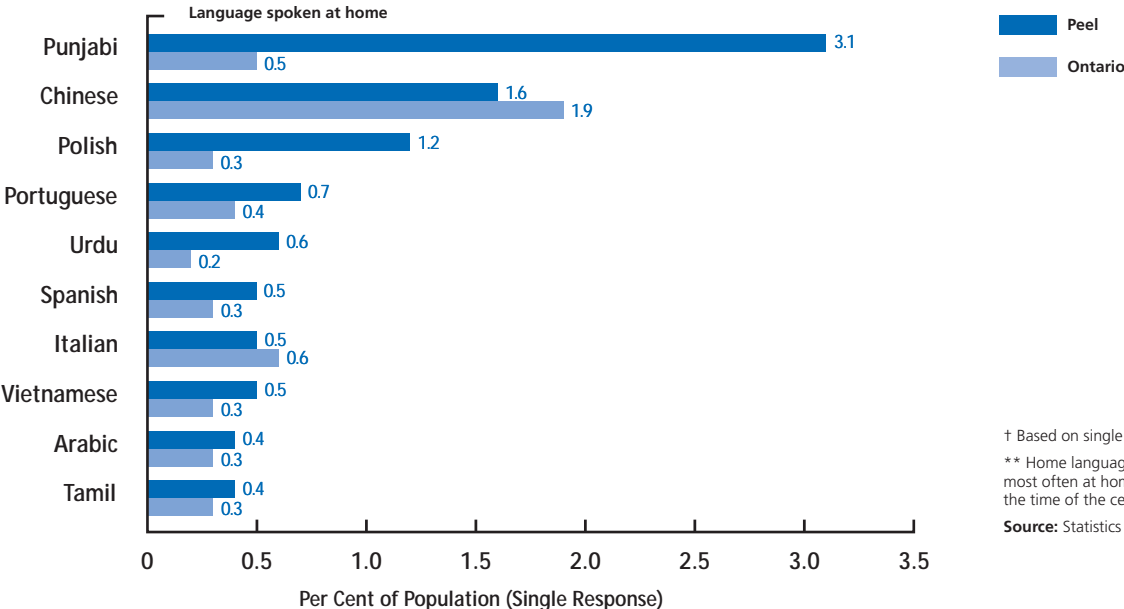
Language

The figure below represents languages spoken at home* by the total population and not by families; however, it is the best available measure of languages used by children. It is likely that within some families, there was a mix of languages spoken at home by both parents and children. For children who could not yet speak at the time of the census, the parent or guardian reported the language that the child would be taught to speak at home.

In Peel, in 2001, English was the language most often spoken at home (87%) followed by Punjabi, Chinese, Polish, Portuguese and Urdu (see Figure 2.3). At least 12.6% of the population reported speaking a language other than English or French most often at home.

More than 50 different home languages were reported in Peel in the 2001 census. This wide diversity in language reflects a growing multicultural mix within the Region of Peel.

Figure 2.3: Top 10 Languages Other than English†, Spoken at Home, Region of Peel and Ontario, 2001**



† Based on single responses only.
 ** Home language is the language spoken most often at home by the individual at the time of the census.
 Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census.

In Canada, English and French are the two official languages. In 2001, the proportion of the Peel population that did not speak either official language* was 3%, which was almost unchanged from 3.1% in 1996. Although the Region of Peel had a substantially greater proportion of people who were not able to communicate in either of the official languages than did Ontario (see Table 2.4 on following page), this accounted for only 29,290 people in 2001.

* In Canada, knowledge of official language is defined as the ability to conduct a conversation in English only, in French only, or in both English and French.

Table 2.4: Population by Knowledge of Official Language and Location of Residence, Region of Peel and Ontario, 1996* and 2001†

Official Language	Peel		Ontario	
	1996	2001	1996	2001
English only	89.7%	89.7%	85.7%	85.9%
French only	0.1%	0.1%	0.4%	0.4%
Both	7.1%	7.2%	11.6%	11.7%
Neither	3.1%	3.0%	2.3%	2.1%
Total Population	849,305	985,565	10,642,795	11,285,545

* Total Population with Knowledge of Official Language for Census 1996

† Total population with Knowledge of Official Language for Census 2001

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 and 2001 Censuses.

When comparing municipalities within Peel, Mississauga had the largest proportion of people who were unable to communicate in either of the two official languages (3.2%; 19,365 people), compared to Brampton (3%; 9,595 people) and Caledon (0.7%; 330 people). The number of people living in Brampton who were unable to communicate in either of the two official languages increased from 2.6% in 1996 to 3% in 2001, representing an increase of 2,550 people. Similarly, although the proportion of people in Caledon without knowledge of either of the two official languages was only 0.7% in 2001, this represented an almost two-fold increase from 1996 (data not shown).

Map 2.3 (*see page 20*) shows the proportion of the population who did not speak English or French by census tract in Peel. Between 9% and 11% of people living in some areas of southwest Brampton, downtown Brampton and part of Malton in Mississauga, were unable to speak English or French.

Summary

Family Structure

The majority of families (59.1%) living in Peel were classified as married or common-law families. In 2001, 14.5% of families in Peel were lone parents and of this type of family, the majority were headed by females. Mississauga and Brampton had a higher proportion of lone-parent families (14.8%) than did Caledon (9.3%).

Community Context

Income

Families in the Region of Peel reported higher average incomes than their Ontario counterparts. This was true across all family types.

In both Peel and Ontario, the prevalence of low income for lone parents with children under six years of age was higher than that for married or common-law couples with children in the same age group in 2000. Female lone parents reported earning less compared to male lone parents.

The proportion of low-income families with children less than six years old decreased between the 1996 and 2001 censuses for both Peel (from 18.1% in 1995 to 12.5% in 2000) and Ontario (from 24.4% in 1995 to 17.7% in 2000).

In Peel, 12.5% of families with children under the age of six years living at home were classified as having a low income according to Statistics Canada's low-income cut-off levels. A higher proportion of lone parents (especially females) was classified as having low income compared to other family types.

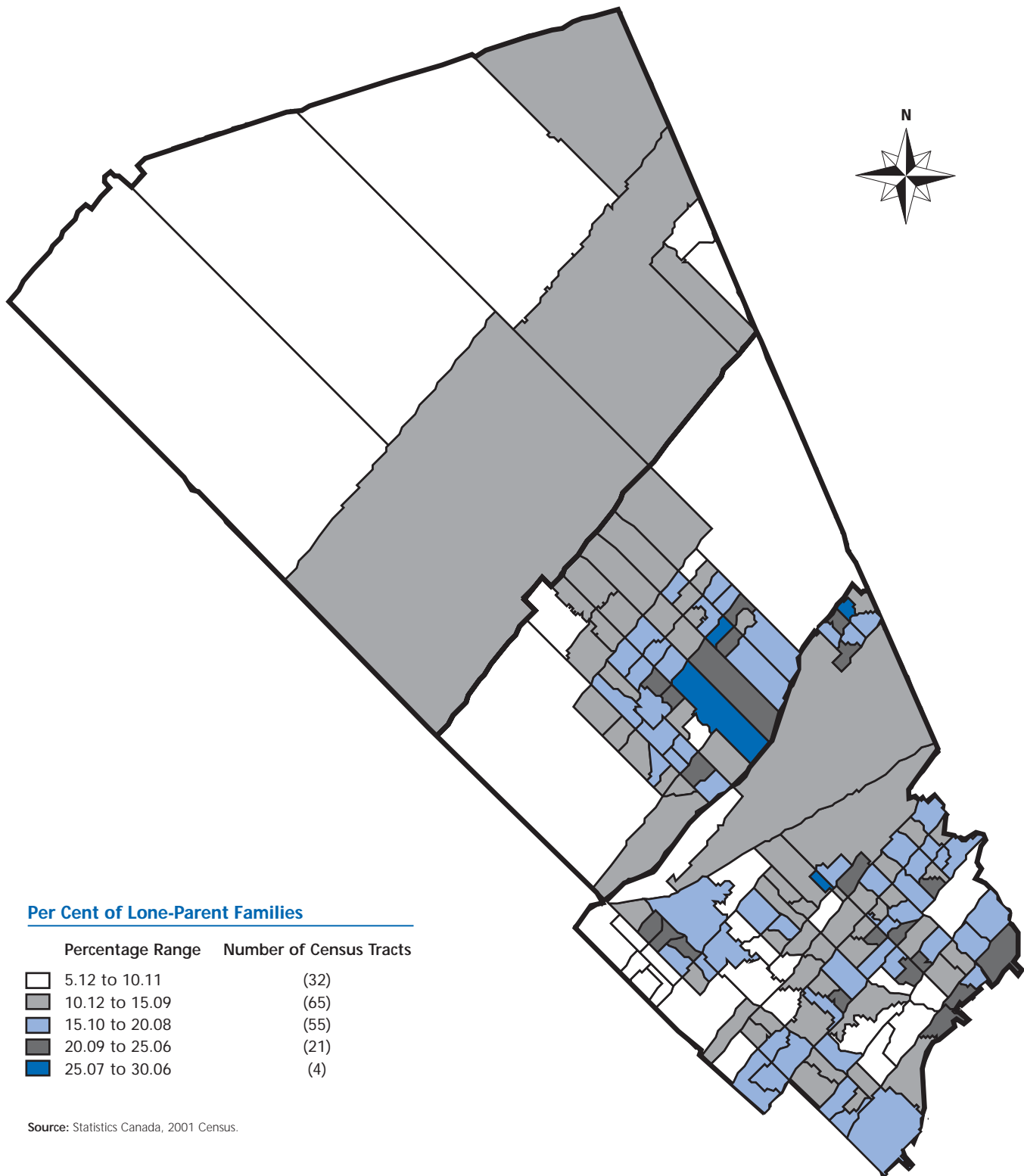
Unemployment

Unemployment rates were particularly high for Peel females with children aged less than six years living at home, where 8.6% reported being unemployed compared to males (2.9%). This finding was similar for both Peel and Ontario.

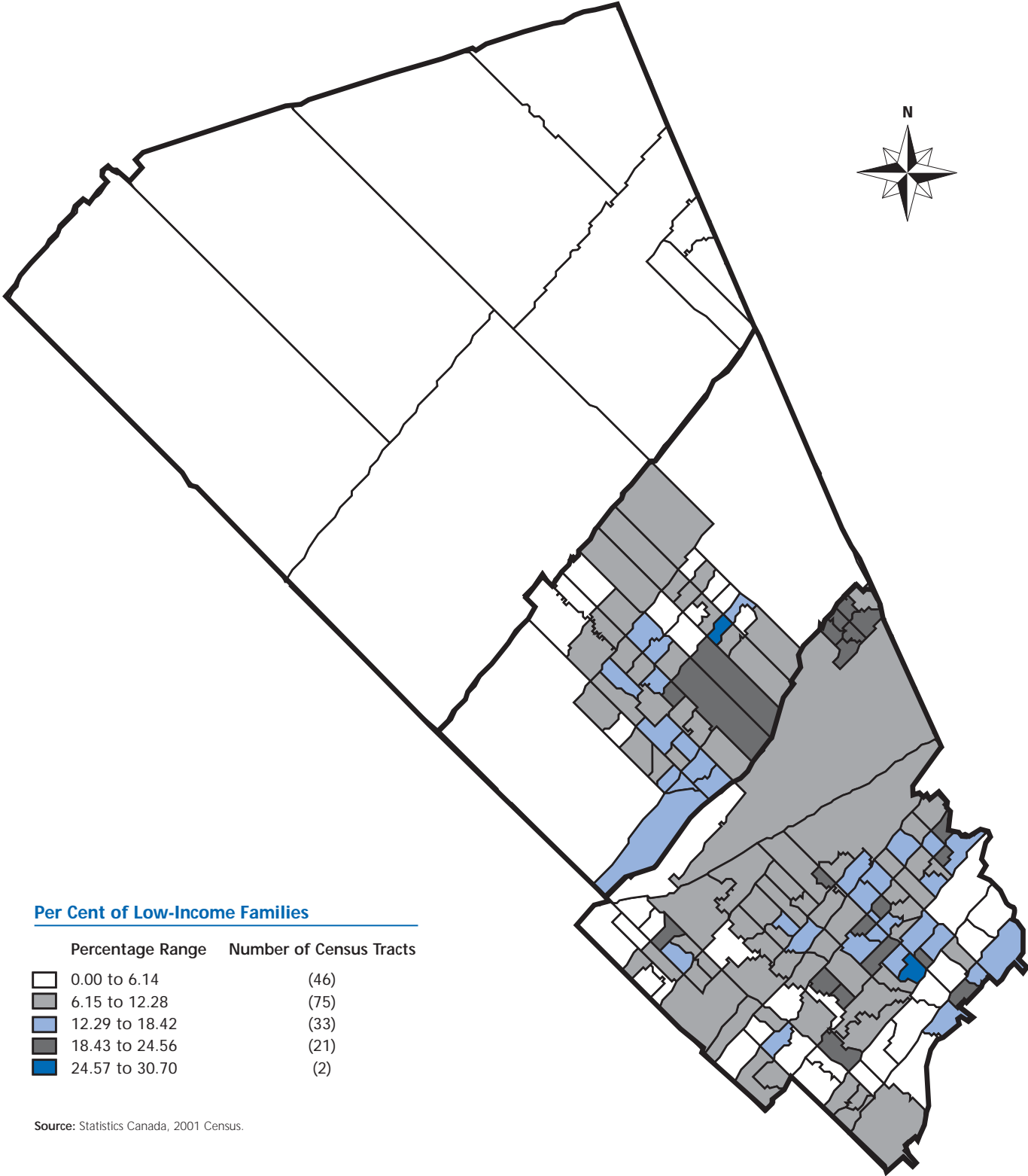
Language

In 2001, 87% of residents of Peel spoke English most often at home but many residents spoke other languages in the home, such as: Punjabi, Chinese, Polish, Portuguese and Urdu. The majority of the population was able to converse in one of Canada's two official languages (97%). Three per cent were unable to communicate using English or French; however, this proportion was over 9% in some areas of the Region of Peel.

Map 2.1: Proportion of Lone-Parent Families by Census Tract, Region of Peel, 2001



Map 2.2: Proportion of Low-Income Economic Families by Census Tract, Region of Peel, 2001



Map 2.3: Proportion of Population Not Speaking English or French by Census Tract, Region of Peel, 2001

