

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 as families provide support and security, and help to influence lifestyle choices. Over the past several decades, family structure has been changing. Although married couples continue to be the main type of family, the proportion of those in common-law marriages and lone parent* families have increased over the past three decades.^{1,2} The proportion of lone parent families in Canada was 9% in 1971. By 1996, this number had increased to 14.5%.

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.² These factors contribute to poorer health, on average, for lone parents and their children.³

During the 1996 census year, information was collected about different types of families, one of which was the “census family”. The census family was defined as a couple who were married or living common-law, or a lone parent with one or more never-married children living at home. The definition of a census family in 1996 did not include individuals living in same-sex relationships with children.

In 1996, Peel had a higher proportion of census families with children living at home (73.5%) compared to Ontario (66%). 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 following page*).

* A lone parent is defined as a mother or father, with no spouse or common-law partner present, living in a dwelling with one or more never-married children.

Table 2.1—Proportion of Census Families in Private Households with Children Living at Home by Family Structure, Region of Peel and Ontario, 1991 and 1996

Family Types	Peel		Ontario	
	1991	1996	1991	1996
Husband/wife families with children at home	58.3%	57.7%	49.9%	48.3%
Common-law couples with children at home	2.3%	2.8%	2.6%	3.3%
Lone parent families:	11.2%	13.0%	12.6%	14.4%
Male lone parent	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%	2.3%
Female lone parent	9.0%	10.8%	10.4%	12.1%
Total number of census families in private households	198,055	233,020	2,726,735	2,932,725

Sources: Statistics Canada, 1991 and 1996 Censuses.

Table 2.2—Number and Proportion of Census Families in Private Households by Type of Family, Mississauga, Brampton, Caledon, Region of Peel and Ontario, 1991 and 1996

	Mississauga		Brampton		Caledon		Peel		Ontario	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
1996										
Total husband/wife families 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 by sex of parent	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	
1991										
Total husband/wife families with children at home	71,975	57.5	37,580	59.7	5,965	60.4	115,525	58.3	1,359,790	49.9
Total common-law couples with children at home	2,790	2.2	1,635	2.6	215	2.2	4,640	2.3	70,135	2.6
Total lone parent families by sex of parent	14,545	11.6	7,000	11.1	660	6.7	22,205	11.2	342,805	12.6
Male lone parent	2,685	2.1	1,425	2.3	180	1.8	4,290	2.2	58,995	2.2
Female lone parent	11,855	9.5	5,580	8.9	485	4.9	17,915	9.0	283,810	10.4
Total number of census families in private households by family size	125,195		62,985		9,875		198,055		2,726,735	

Sources: Statistics Canada, 1991 and 1996 Censuses.

The majority of census families in Peel were married or common-law couples with children living at home (60.5%). Lone parents accounted for 13% of families. Although not shown in the table, 37.5% of Peel families with children had one child, 43.1% had two and 19.6% had three or more.

In Peel, the proportion of families comprised of one parent living with one or more children rose from 11.2% in 1991 to 13.0% in 1996. Females headed most of these lone parent families as shown in Table 2.1 (*see previous page*). The proportion of lone parent families was higher in Mississauga (13.2%) and Brampton (13.3%) as compared to Caledon (7.7%). The distribution of lone parent families in Peel is shown in Map 2.1 (*see page 20*). A section of Bramalea in Brampton had a fairly high proportion (24.4% to 29.3%) of lone parent families.

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 social contact.

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.⁴⁵ This association between income and health was documented for the Region of Peel in the *State of the Region's Health 2001* report.⁶

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.

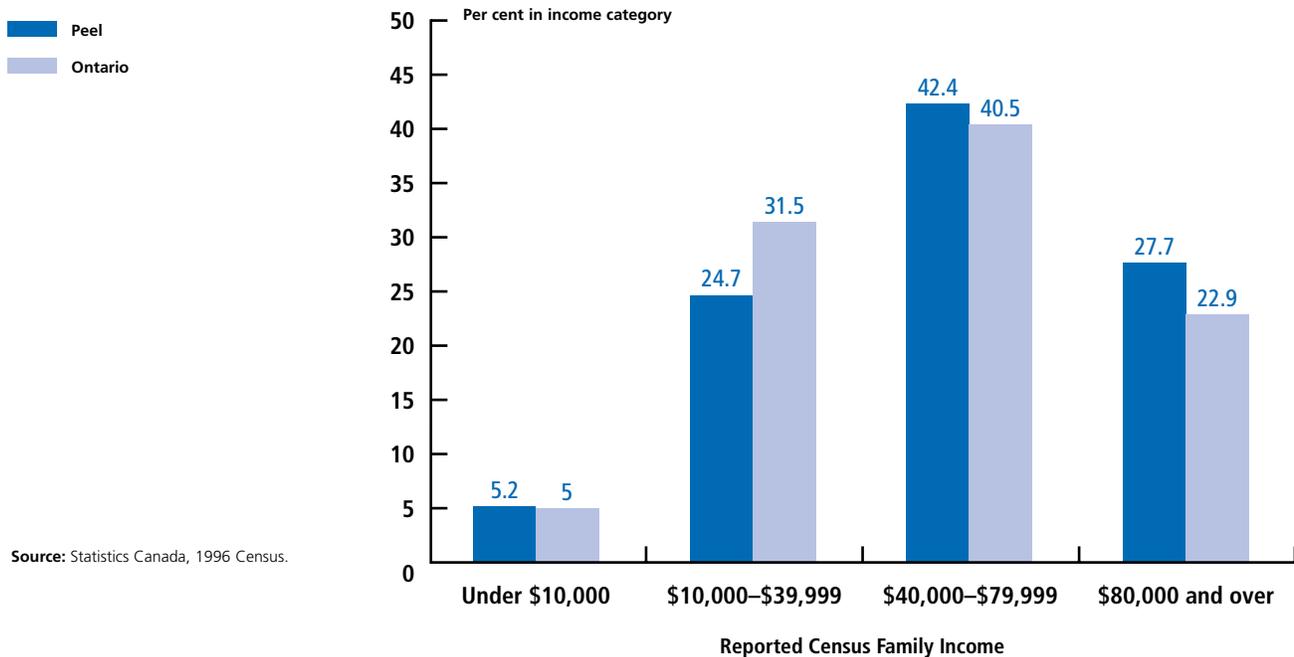
Two indicators of language from the 1996 census include language spoken at home and knowledge of official languages. "Home Language" refers to the language spoken most often at home by the individual at the time of the census. "Knowledge of Official Languages" refers to the ability to conduct a conversation 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 1996 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 1996 definition of the census family, which is a married couple, a couple living common-law, or a lone parent living with one or more never-married children at home.

As seen in Figure 2.1, there was a higher proportion of families in Peel (70.1%) who earned more than \$40,000 annually compared to Ontario (63.4%)

Figure 2.1—Distribution of Reported Census Family Income, Region of Peel and Ontario, 1995



On average, census families in Peel earned more annually than Ontario census families did. 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

Child poverty is an important determinant of the health of children. The term poverty in this report is used to describe low-income status as defined by Statistics Canada.

In the 1996 Census, the prevalence of low income was defined as the proportion of families or unattached individuals with an income below the low-income cut-off. The 1996 Census low-income cut-off was based on a matrix that included both family size and the size of the community of residence. For example, a family of four living in a populated area of between 100,000 and 499,999 people would be classified as low-income if their income level for the year 1995 was \$27,235 or less. The following table describes the prevalence of low income in census families with children under the age of 18 years.

Overall, almost one in five families with children under age 18 lived in poverty—19.0% in Peel compared to 22.2% in Ontario (*see Table 2.3*). The prevalence of low income for married or common-law couples with children under age 18 years was 13.3%, while the proportion for lone parent families with children under 18 years was 51.6%. The prevalence of low income was higher for lone parent families, especially for those headed by females (55.9%). Male lone parent families had a low income rate of 21.7%.

Table 2.3—Prevalence of Low Income by Type of Families with Children*, Region of Peel and Ontario, 1995

Type of Economic Family	Peel		Ontario	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
Married or common-law couple with children less than 18 years:	9,790	13.3	119,525	13.7
Families with children 0–9 years	5,365	13.2	67,640	14.6
Families with children 10–17 years	4,430	13.5	51,885	12.7
Lone parent families with children less than 18 years:	6,590	51.6	118,950	57.7
Families with children 0–9 years	3,410	60.4	65,415	66.8
Families with children 10–17 years	3,180	44.7	53,525	49.4
Male lone parent families with children less than 18 years:	350	21.7	8,160	30.5
Families with children 0–9 years	105	24.7	3,295	37.1
Families with children 10–17 years	240	20.2	4,860	27.2
Female lone parent families with children less than 18 years:	6,240	55.9	110,790	61.7
Families with children 0–9 years	3,305	63.3	62,120	69.8
Families with children 10–17 years	2,940	49.7	48,665	53.7
Total families with children less than 18 years:	16,380	19.0	238,475	22.2
Families with children 0–9 years	8,775	18.9	133,055	23.8
Families with children 10–17 years	7,610	19.0	105,410	20.4

* Category determined by age of oldest child.

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census, Special Tabulation, distributed through HELPS (Health Planning System) by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

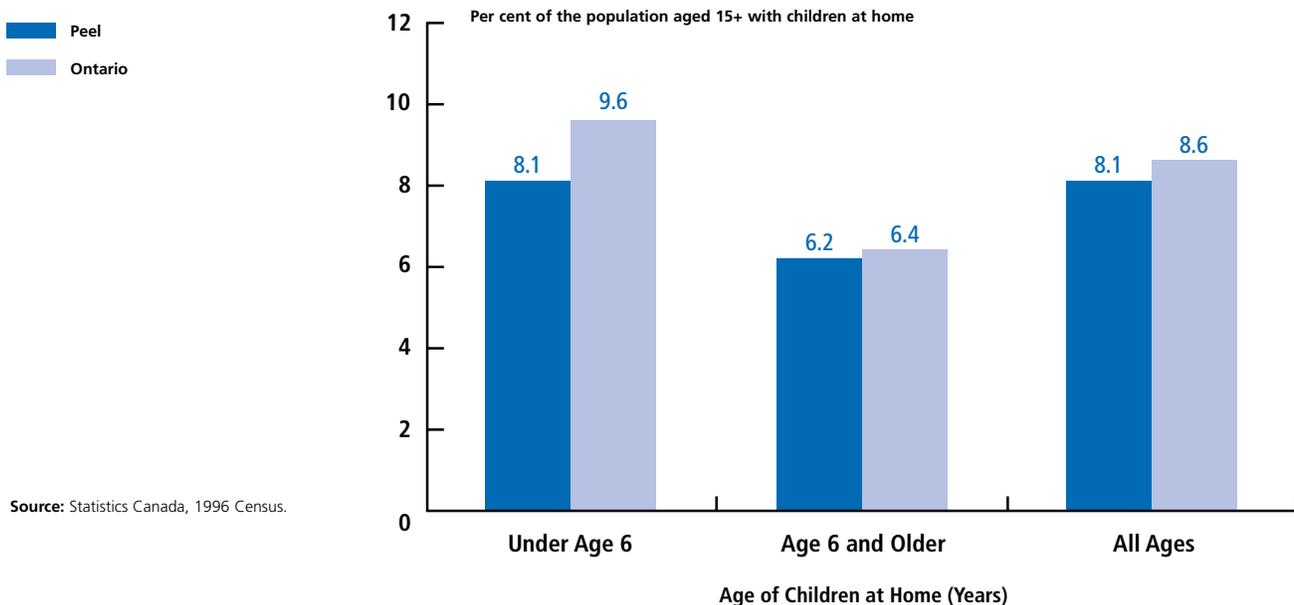
The prevalence of low income was also higher for families with young children aged 0–9 years compared to families with children aged 10–17 years. This was particularly evident for families headed by female lone parents (see Table 2.3 on previous page).

Although not shown, the proportion of low-income families increased between the 1991 and 1996 censuses for both Peel (from 8.7% in 1990 to 13.6% in 1995) and Ontario (from 10.9% in 1990 to 14.8% in 1995). 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 21), shows the variation in the prevalence of low income for economic families (married, common-law, lone parent or persons living with relatives) across the Region of Peel. Several areas, including the north-eastern corner of Mississauga (Malton), a portion of Port Credit, the area around Dixie/Bloor, and a section of Bramalea in Brampton, had a higher proportion (27% to 34%) of economic families living below the low income cut-off point.

Parent Unemployment

Unemployment rates of parents with children at home in 1996 were calculated by dividing the number of parents who were in the labour force and those who were unemployed by the total number participating in the labour force. As shown in Figure 2.2, unemployment rates were higher for parents who had children less than six years of age living at home. Although not shown below, this was particularly noticeable for Peel females with children aged less than six years, where 12.4% reported being unemployed compared to males (4.5%).

Figure 2.2—Unemployment Rates of Parents with Children at Home, Region of Peel and Ontario, 1996



Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census.

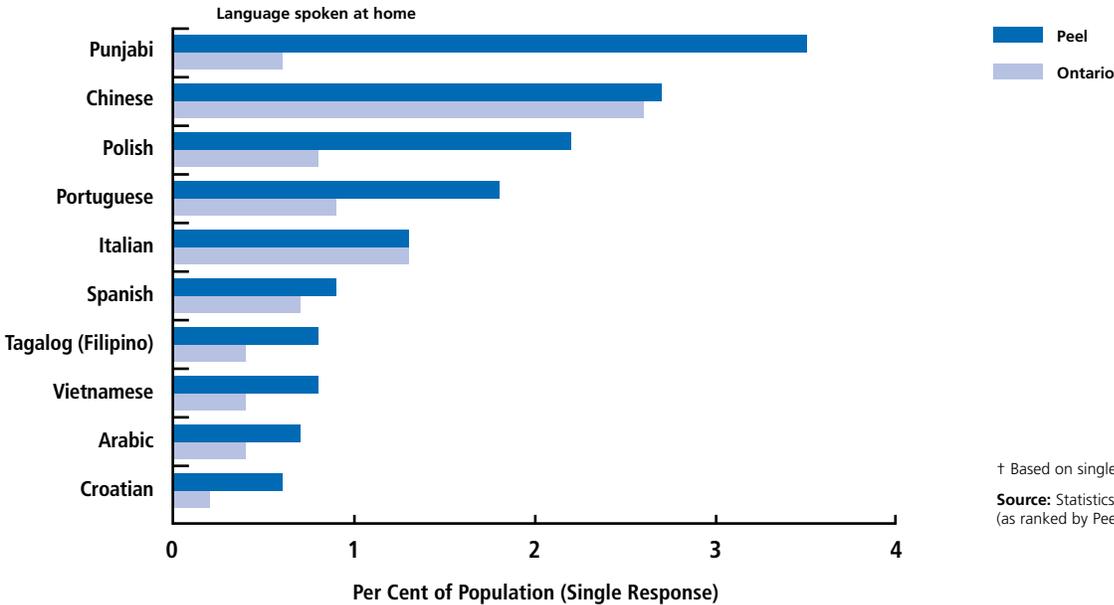
Language

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, English is the language most often spoken at home* (79.6%), followed by Punjabi, Chinese, Polish, Portuguese and Italian (see Figure 2.3). At least 20% of the population in Peel 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 1996 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, 1996



† Based on single responses only.
Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census (as ranked by Peel Health).

* Home language is the language spoken most often at home by the individual at the time of the census.

In Canada, English and French are the two official languages. In 1996, the proportion of the Peel population that did not speak either official language^{*} was 3.1%, an increase from 2.4% in 1991. 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), this accounted for only 26,355 people in 1996.

**Table 2.4—Population by Knowledge of Official Language
Region of Peel and Ontario, 1991 and 1996**

Official Language	Peel		Ontario	
	1991	1996	1991	1996
English only	90.3%	89.7%	86.1%	85.7%
French only	0.1%	0.1%	0.5%	0.4%
Both	7.2%	7.1%	11.4%	11.6%
Neither	2.4%	3.1%	1.9%	2.3%
Total population	729,650	849,305	9,977,050	10,642,795

Sources: Statistics Canada, 1991 and 1996 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 (3.5%; 19,140 people), compared to Brampton (2.6%; 7,045 people) and Caledon (0.4%; 170 people). Map 2.3 (see page 22) shows the proportion of the population who did not speak English or French by census tract in Peel. In some areas of northeast Mississauga, as high as 11% of the population were not able to speak English or French.

SUMMARY

Family Structure

The majority of families (61%) living in Peel were classified as married or common-law families. In 1996, 13% 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 (13%) than did Caledon (8%).

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, female lone parents reported earning less compared to male lone parents.

* 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.

The proportion of low-income families increased between the 1991 and 1996 censuses for both Peel (from 8.7% in 1990 to 13.6% in 1995) and Ontario (from 10.9% in 1990 to 14.8% in 1995).

In Peel, 19% of families with children under the age of 18 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.

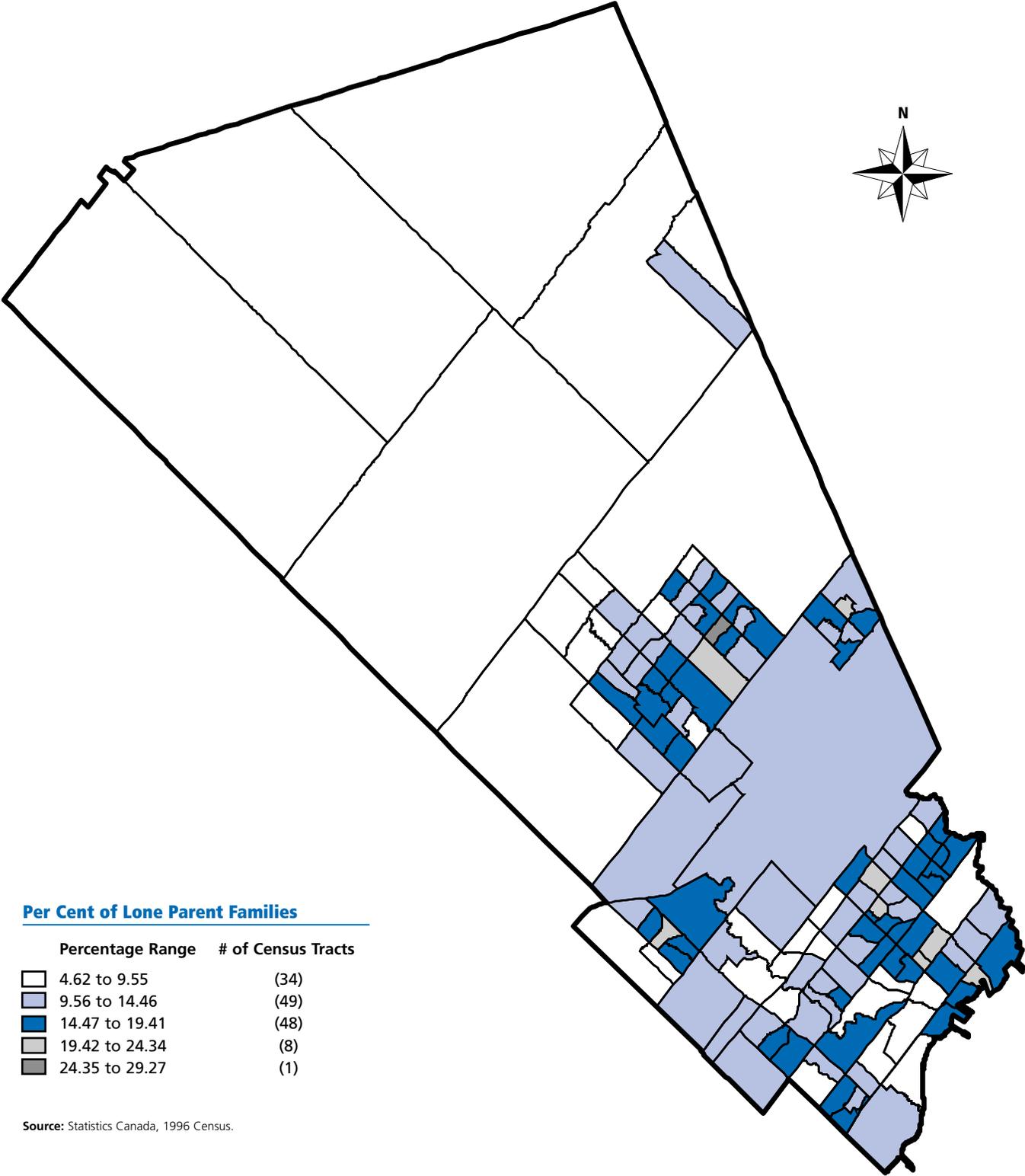
Unemployment

Unemployment rates of parents with children at home were higher for families with children less than six years of age. This was similar for both Peel and Ontario.

Language

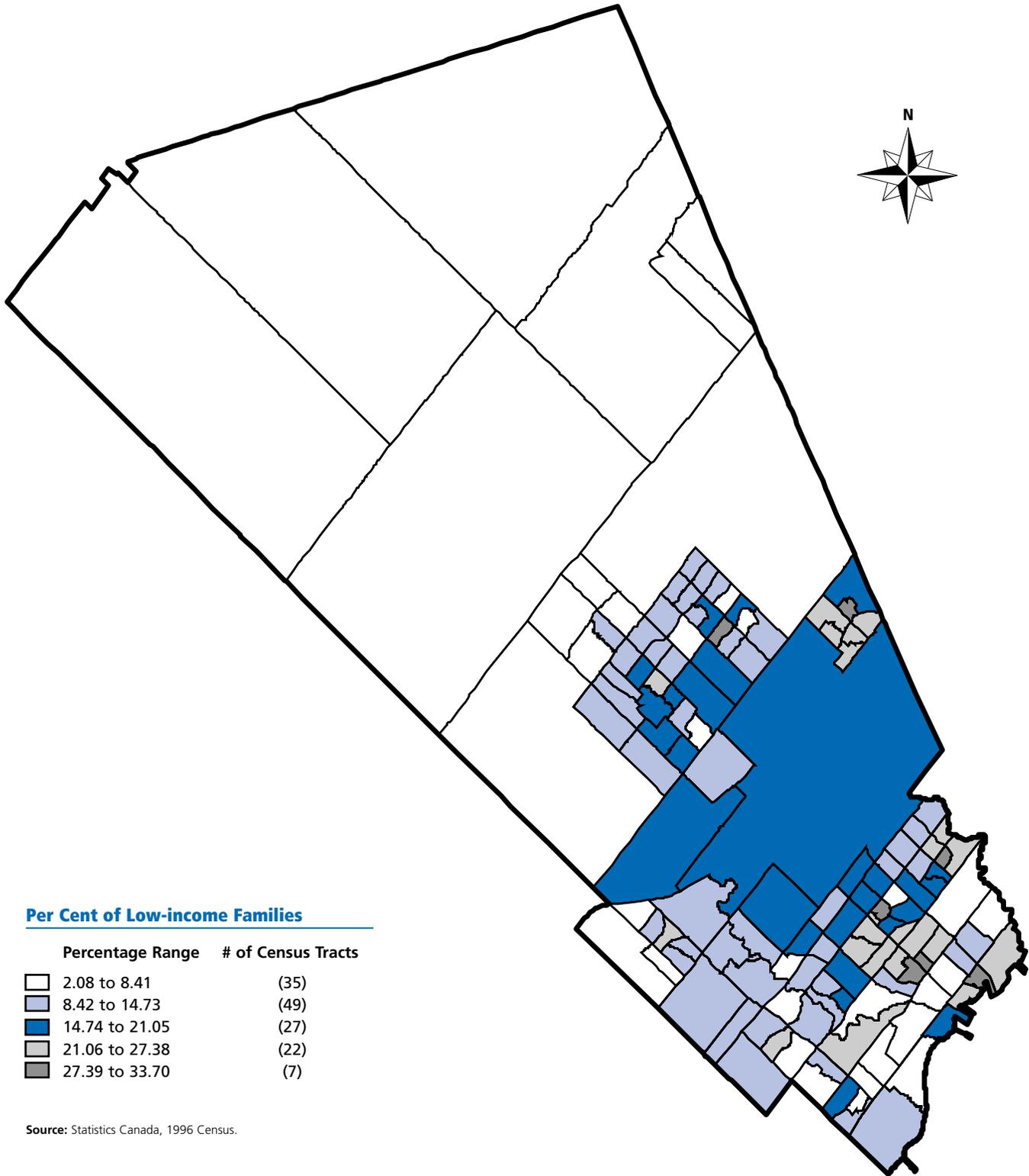
In 1996, four-fifths of residents of Peel spoke English at home but many residents spoke other languages in the home, such as Punjabi, Chinese, Polish and Portuguese. The majority of the population was able to converse in one of Canada's official languages (97%). Three per cent were unable to communicate using English or French; however this proportion was over 10% in some areas of the Region of Peel.

Map 2.1—Proportion of Lone Parent Families by Census Tract, Region of Peel, 1996



Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census.

Map 2.2—Prevalence of Low-income Economic Families by Census Tract, Region of Peel, 1996



Map 2.3—Proportion of the Population Not Speaking English or French by Census Tract, Region of Peel, 1996

