

## Diabetes Prevalence among First Nations in Alberta

### Age-standardized Diabetes Prevalence by First Nations Status, 2000-2015

Diabetes mellitus, commonly referred to as diabetes, is a group of metabolic diseases that can lead to high blood sugar levels. It can occur if the body cannot produce insulin, a hormone that helps to regulate blood sugar (type 1 diabetes). It can also occur if the body cannot effectively use the insulin it produces (type 2 diabetes), or during pregnancy if there is too much blood sugar (gestational). If left untreated, serious long term complications from diabetes can include foot ulcers, vision loss, kidney disease, and cardiovascular disease.<sup>1</sup>

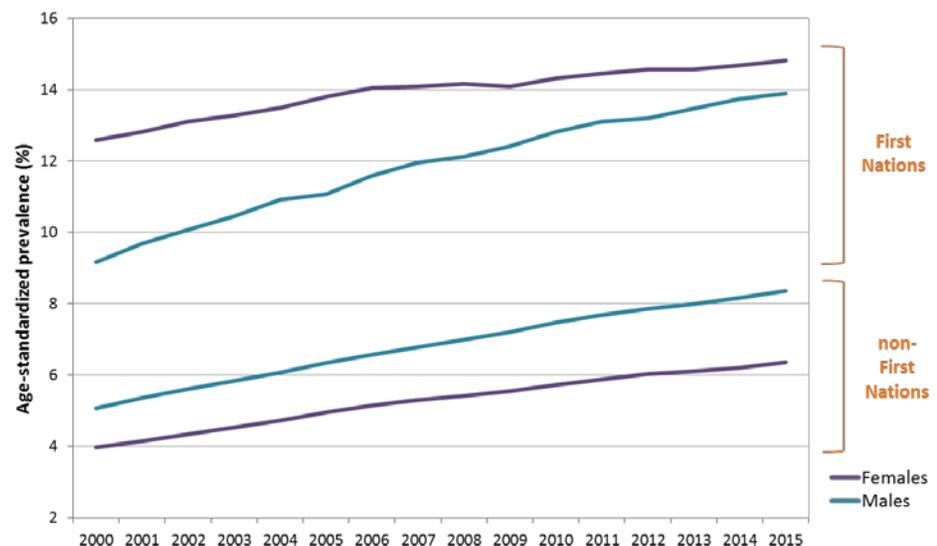
Given a strong interest in diabetes information among First Nations communities in Alberta, this is the first in a series of *First Nations – Health Trends Alberta*<sup>2</sup> dedicated to diabetes-related topics. Here, the age-standardized prevalence of diabetes between 2000 and 2015 is presented by sex and year for First Nations and non-First Nations in Alberta separately. Prevalence measures the percentage of a population living with a condition at a given point in time.

### Diabetes prevalence among First Nations is double that among non-First Nations

In Alberta in 2015, there were approximately 268,590 people living with diabetes (12,310 First Nations and 256,280 non-First Nations). The age-standardized diabetes prevalence among First Nations (14.4 per cent) was double that among non-First Nations (7.3 per cent).

Disparities between diabetes prevalence among First Nations and non-First Nations were most pronounced for females: in Alberta in 2015, the age-standardized prevalence of diabetes among First Nations females was 14.8 per cent (approximately 6,610 women) compared to 6.4 per cent among non-First Nations females (approximately 113,990 women).

Between 2000 and 2015, the prevalence of diabetes rose in Alberta for all populations. Among First Nations, females had a consistently higher prevalence of diabetes than males (annual average of 13.9 vs. 11.9 per cent); however, there was an apparent decrease in the gap in prevalence between males and females over time. The opposite was true among non-First Nations: males had a higher prevalence than females over the 16 year period (annual average of 6.8 vs. 5.3 per cent), with differences in prevalence increasing slightly over time.



<sup>1</sup><http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cd-mc/publications/diabetes-diabete/facts-figures-faits-chiffres-2011/index-eng.php>

<sup>2</sup> This is the 13<sup>th</sup> in a series of First Nations-specific Health Trends compiled in collaboration by Alberta Health and the Alberta First Nations Information Governance Centre (AFNIGC). To suggest future topics, please contact the AFNIGC ([communications@afnigc.ca](mailto:communications@afnigc.ca); 403-539-5775).