

3 QUEBEC FIRST NATIONS: FIRST NATIONS MIGRATION

Chapter 3 of the Quebec First Nations Regional Health Survey (RHS; 2008) summarizes respondents' migratory habits and the impact of time spent outside of their home community. This is a summary of the information included in Chapter 3. Therefore, it does not include all the knowledge covered by the survey, and may be open to different interpretations. To have a complete understanding of the results, the reader is invited to consult the entire chapter.

While the impact of colonization significantly disrupted the traditional nomadic lifestyle of many First Nations peoples, considerable movement among this population is still seen today. Overall, migrant patterns illustrate that many respondents travel from their home community to an urban center.

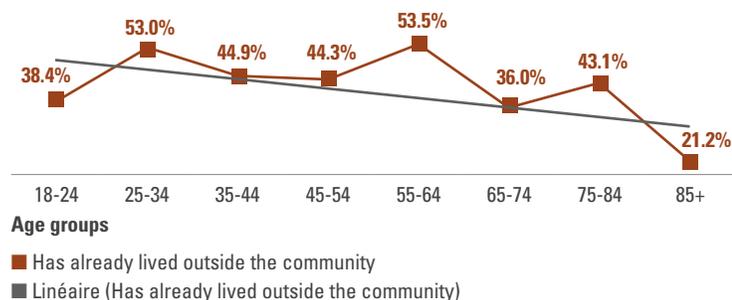
Because the RHS only sampled those living within their home community at the time of the survey, it should be noted that those among the population living outside their community are not included in the migration portrait and summary below.

A closer examination of migratory habits in the RHS identified 1) the migrant profile, 2) the reasons for migration, 3) the place of migration and time spent outside of the community and 4) the influence of migratory habits on identity and culture.

Migrant profile

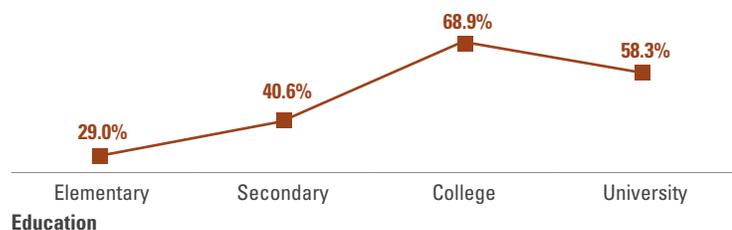
Almost half (45.5%) of respondents to the RHS (2008) stated that at some point, they have lived outside their community. No statistically significant association between migration and gender was noted. Among respondents, 25-34 year olds and 55-65 year olds represent the highest proportion of persons who have already migrated (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Migration according to age group (N=8,671)



A statistically significant association between migration and education is noted. Accordingly, a significant increase can be seen from primary school to college of the proportion of people who have already migrated from their community (29.0% and 68.9%, respectively). This proportion decreases to 58.3% among university students (Figure 2).

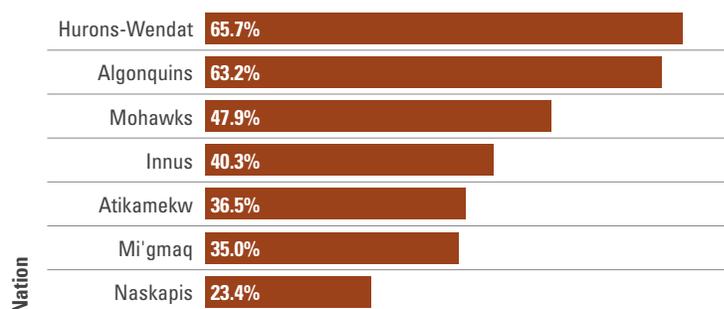
Figure 2: Migration according to education (N=8,671)



The geographic zone¹ in which participants live also appears to be associated with their migratory habits. Overall, migration tends to decrease with geographical isolation. This stated, respondents living in zone 1 and 2 (urban and rural) communities had the highest rates of migration (49.6% and 42.4% respectively), while those living in zone 4 (difficult access) had lower rates (34.2%).

While on average 45.5% of the population stated having lived outside their community, nations such as the Abenaki (three quarters), Huron-Wendat (65.7%), and Algonquin (63.2%) stand out by having much higher migration rates. Alternatively, the Atikamekw (36.5%), Mi'gmaqs (35.0%), and Naskapis (23.4%) nations reported the lowest rates of migration (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Migration according to the nation (N=8,671)



Reasons for migration

The most prominent reason noted by migrants for leaving their community was education (35.4%), followed by work (24.6%), relationships (14.65%), and housing (11.1%). Other reasons for migrating out of their community include but are not limited to marital/domestic problems (3.2%), spouse/partner employment (2.3%) and placement in a foster family or youth center (1.5%).

Among the reasons for returning to their community, family (63.8%) was most often cited. Connection to community of origin (36.5%), possibility of employment (29.5%), housing availability (17.4%), desire to live in a familiar culture (13.3%) or to get to know one's culture (11.7%) have also been reported among the reasons for returning to the community.

¹ Geographic zone

Degree of geographic isolation is based on a zone system developed by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC).

Zone 1: The community is located less than 50 km from a service centre with year-round road access.

Zone 2: The community is located between 50 km and 350 km from a service centre with year-round road access.

Zone 3: The community is located over 350 km from a service centre with year-round road access.

Zone 4: The community has no year-round road access to a service centre.

Service centre: The nearest location where the community members must go in order to access service providers, banks and governmental services.

Congruent with previous research, the data collected suggest that First Nations migratory push factors are primarily education and work, whereas pull factors for return to one's home community are community, family, and culture.

Place of migration and time spent outside the community

As Table 1 shows, among individuals who have migrated, a high proportion (65.9%) left their community for a city, whether in Quebec (58.7%) or another province in Canada (7.2%). Smaller proportions of First Nations individuals reported having moved to a different First Nations community than their own (13.2%), a small town or rural area within Quebec (8.2%), or the United States, (8.4%).

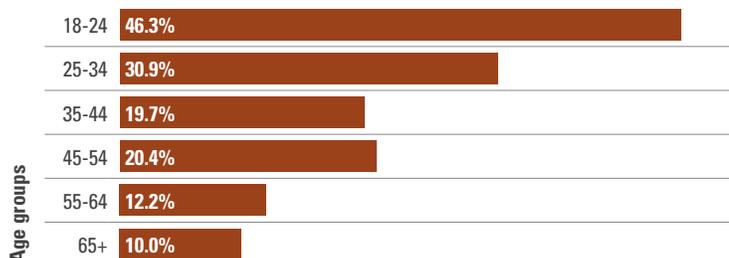
Table 1: Place of migration

Where did you spend the majority of your time away?	%
City, same province	58.7
Different First Nations community	13.2
United States	8.4
Small town or rural area, same province	8.2
City, different province	7.2
Small town or rural area, different province	2.1
Other	2.1
Total	100.0

40.4% of respondents who have migrated have spent one to five years outside of their community and 35% reported having been away for more than five years. Age of respondents influences time spent away. Among migrations longer than five years, there is a notable gap between young adults aged from 18 to 24 (17.9%) and from 25 to 34 (13.8%), and elders 65 and older (64.5%).

The majority of migrants do not move back and forth from their home community more than once a year (74.7%). However as Figure 4 depicts, a connection between age and moving back and forth is observable.

Figure 4: Proportion of people who have moved back and forth from the community more than once a year according to age (N=8,671)



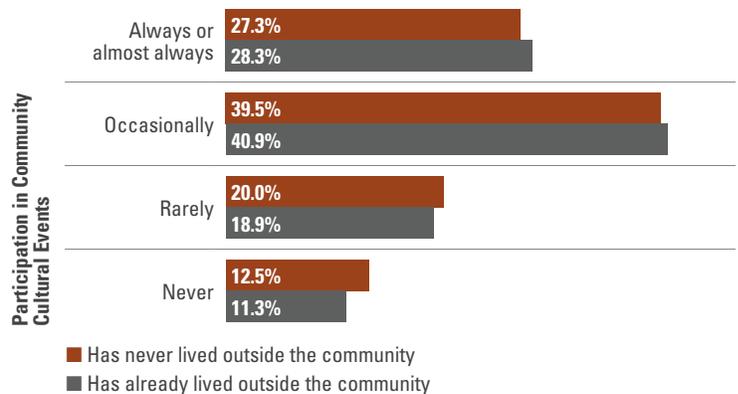
Influence of migratory habits on identity and culture

The migration of First Nations peoples away from their home community can lead to a loss of cultural markers in addition to increased vulnerability to social exclusion and racism stemming from the ignorance and biases of many non-First Nations individuals they may encounter. Respondents were asked about their experiences of racism in the past year and responses indicate that a higher proportion of migrants experienced racism (26.2%) than those who have never lived outside their community (10.8%).

Migration also appears to be associated with First Nations language use. Non-migrants are more likely to use primarily a First Nations language daily (77.2%) than their migrant counterparts (55.1%). Moreover, while 83.7% of First Nations members who have never left their community speak and understand a First Nations language, this percentage is 71.7% among migrants.

While migratory habits impact language, the data does not suggest that migration influences participating in community or cultural events. Comparably, 69.2% of migrants and 66.8% of non-migrants reported that they participate in their community's cultural events always, almost always, or occasionally. It is worth noting that because this sample only includes those who have returned to their community, cultural belonging could be a factor that influenced their return.

Figure 5: Participation in the cultural events of communities according to migration habits (N=8,671)



Finally, this summary provides an overview of Chapter 3 of the Quebec First Nations Regional Health Survey. For more details on the survey results, the full chapter is available at the following link: <http://www.cssspnql.com/docs/centre-de-documentation/chapitre-3-migration-eng-v2.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

