

# 5 QUEBEC FIRST NATIONS: PERSONAL WELL-BEING

Chapter 5 of the Quebec First Nations Regional Health Survey (RHS 2008) presents data about respondents' perceptions of their personal well-being. This is a summary of the information included in Chapter 5. 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.

## Feeling of balance

Based on the holistic First Nations approach, mental health cannot be separated from the physical, spiritual and emotional aspects. Consequently, a holistic approach that takes into account the physical, affective, psychological and spiritual needs is the most commonly used to refer to the values and principles related to the traditional First Nations world (AHF, 2006<sup>1</sup>).

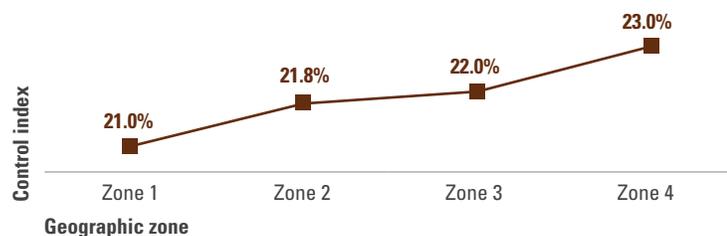
The data collected during this survey revealed that the majority of men and women feel in balance all of the time or most of the time on all four aspects of well-being (physical, affective, psychological and spiritual), with a slightly higher proportion of men reporting a feeling of being in balance. Comparing results with the 2002 survey demonstrates that overall, adults feel slightly more in balance in 2008 than in 2002. The most drastic change is with the spiritual aspect, where adults are now almost 80% likely to feel in balance all of the time or most of the time, compared to 74% in 2002. These results suggest that feelings of balance on the affective, psychological, and spiritual aspects increase with age.

## Feeling of control over one's life

The index of control over one's life, calculated with the Pearlin and Schooler scale (1978),<sup>2</sup> reflects the personal perception of control over one's life. The index is divided by age, gender, education and geographic zone. On the whole, adults consider their control over their life good, with similar reports from men and women. Comparing those results with a study based on Statistics Canada's National Population Health Survey 1994-1995 (cycle 1), Quebec First Nations men and women are more likely to feel in control of their lives than men and women from the general Canadian population.

Feeling of control also varies according to geographic zone, meaning the more isolated the community is from an urban centre, the higher the feeling of control over one's life will be (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Control index amongst adults based on geographic zone



## Psychological and affective support

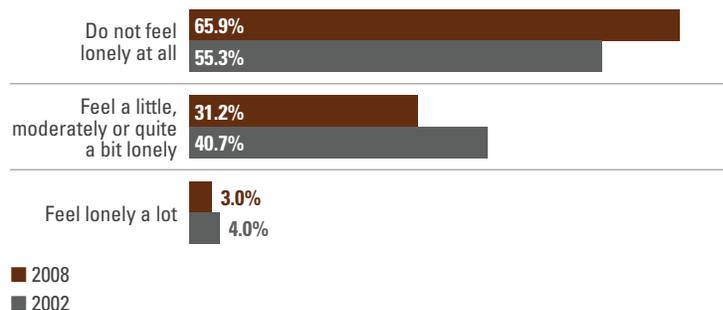
To discuss their affective or mental wellness, the majority of adults rely on friends (70.1%), close family (69.3%) or extended family (58.6%) for support instead of a health professional. The proportion of respondents who had contacted their family physician (29%) is very high compared to the Quebec population (3.1% in 2003).<sup>3</sup>

Women seem to be more likely than men to discuss their affective and mental wellness with someone. Youths are more likely to go to friends than family members for support. Among youths, those living in a remote community represent the highest proportion of people who have discussed their wellness with a parent or a friend.

## Feeling of loneliness and support for youths

The majority of youths (12-17) say that they do not feel lonely at all (65.9%), while 31.2% say that they feel a little, moderately or quite a bit lonely, and 3.0% feel lonely a lot. Comparing these results with 2002, youths tend to feel less and less lonely (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Comparison of feeling lonely between 2002 and 2008



The same goes for feeling loved. In 2008 there are significantly more youths who feel "loved a lot" than in 2002 (61.8% compared to 45.9%). Most youths also report that personal support is easily available when they need it. For adults, the majority of individuals say they can easily obtain personal support if needed. More than three-quarters (79.7%) of adults say they have someone showing them love and affection all of the time or most of the time, 20.3% feel they have this only some of the time, or almost none of the time. Also, 78.1% of women and 73.1% of men say they have someone to talk to all of the time or most of the time when they are in need.

<sup>1</sup> Aboriginal Healing Foundation – AHF (2006). *Un cheminement de guérison : Le rétablissement vers un mieux-être*, volume 1, pp. 133-182.

<sup>2</sup> Pearlin L. I. & Schooler, C. (1978). *The structure of coping*, Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 19(1), 2-21.

<sup>3</sup> Ministère de la santé et des services sociaux - MSSS du Québec (2011). *Portrait de santé du Québec et de ses régions*, Les statistiques, Pour guider l'action, pp. 204-210.

## Self-esteem and psychological distress

In this survey self-esteem was addressed for the youth population only. Less than half (42.5%) of youths describe their mental health as excellent, 32.3% as very good, and 22.6% as good. Only 2.5% of youths considered their mental health as fair or poor.

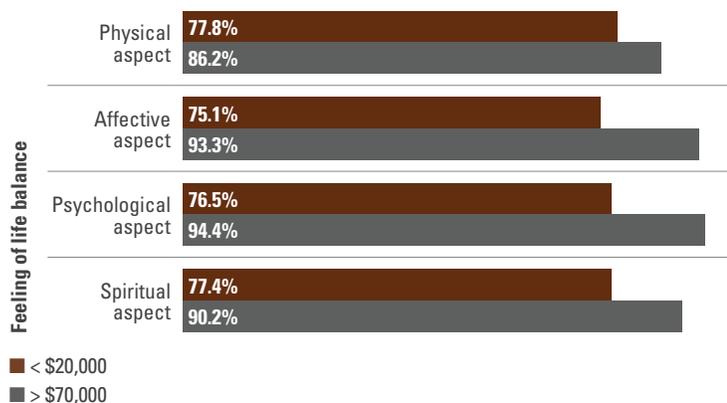
More specifically, youths generally like the way they are (90.0% strongly agree, or agree). The majority (90.7%) also say they have a lot to be proud of. Overall they tend to have a better self-perception in 2008 than in 2002. Also, the majority of youths (61.6%) say they are not stressed at all; 30.2% feel little or moderately stressed and 8.2% feel quite a bit or a lot of stress.

## Feeling of life balance based on education and income

Individuals with incomplete education are the least likely to feel in balance on all four aspects (physical, affective, psychological and spiritual) of their lives. For example, with the affective and psychological aspects, the proportion of adults who say they feel “some of the time” or “almost none of the time” in balance and who haven’t completed high school is twice as high as adults who say the same thing but who have completed a college or university diploma.

Feeling of balance also seems to be influenced by income. The higher the income, the higher the proportion of adults who say they are in balance all of the time or most of the time (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Proportion of adults with an annual income under \$20,000 and those with an annual income over \$70,000 who feel in balance some of the time or almost none of the time**



## Psychological distress

### Violence

The majority (88.2%) of youths say they have never been victims of any form of abuse or maltreatment during childhood. However 11.8% report that they have been, and girls (16.1%) are twice as likely than boys (7.7%) to be victims of abuse or maltreatment. Among adults, victimization rates due to abuse or maltreatment during childhood or conjugal violence is higher. More than one quarter (27.5%) of adults surveyed report some form of maltreatment or abuse during childhood, while 30% have suffered from conjugal violence. More than twice as many women have suffered from conjugal violence as men (38.5% compared to 18.3%).

### Psychological distress index

Using the Kessler<sup>4</sup> scale, 74.7% of adult respondents show a low or moderate psychological distress index, while 25.3% show a high index. Women also have a significantly higher stress level compared to men.

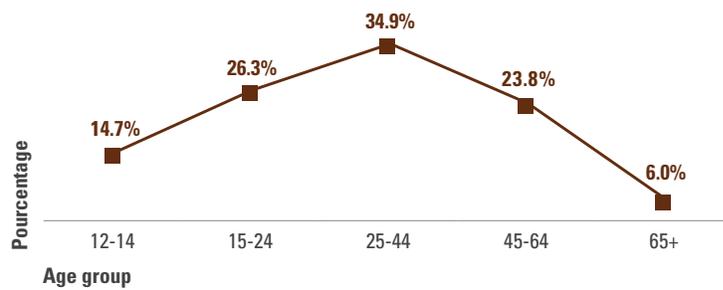
## Suicide

Among First Nations, suicide rates are two times higher than the national average.<sup>5</sup> In this survey, suicidal thoughts are especially present among adults aged 25-44 and young adults (15-24) (Figure 4). Overall, a majority (80.8%) of First Nations youth answered “no” to a question about suicidal ideation.

According to the survey, girls (25.1%) are significantly more likely than boys (13.8%) to have suicidal thoughts. Suicidal ideation is nearly twice that of the Quebec population for respondents aged 15-24 and 25-44.

Suicide attempts range more from youth to adulthood and tend to decrease after age 45. Close to one teenager in ten (7.7%) has already attempted suicide, with more girls (10.0%) attempting than boys (5.6%). Suicide attempts are much more likely to occur in later adolescence (15-17) than early adolescence. Among adults, 14.6% have already tried to commit suicide.

**Figure 4: Proportion of respondents, based on age group, who have already had suicidal thoughts in their life**



Finally, this summary provides an overview of Chapter 5 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-5-bien-%C3%AAtre-personnel---eng-v2.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

<sup>4</sup> The Kessler (K10) scale consists of ten questions rated from 0 to 4, with a final score between 0 and 40. The higher the score, the more severe the distress will be. For this survey and in order to compare data with other studies, the index is divided into categories. Using a dichotomous variable, any score of 11 or more indicates a high level of psychological distress.

<sup>5</sup> Government of Canada, *The Human Face of Mental Health and Mental Illness in Canada 2006*, 188 pages.



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AND LABRADOR HEALTH  
AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
COMMISSION