

7 QUEBEC FIRST NATIONS: FIRST NATIONS PERCEPTIONS OF FOOD AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Chapter 7 of the Quebec First Nations Regional Health Survey (RHS, 2008) presents results about food, food security, body weight, physical activity and sedentary living amongst children, youth and adults. This is a summary of the information included in Chapter 7. 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.

Results from the study indicate a need for targeted prevention measures in terms of body mass index (BMI), physical activity, and sedentary living. Food insecurity and the high cost of food in remote communities were also identified as important issues. Perceived challenges and strengths are outlined in the sections presented below.

Perceptions with regards to food

When asked, parents largely consider their child's diet to be always or almost always balanced (60% of parents). Also, it was found that the higher the income, the more favourable the parent's perception of the child's diet seems to be.

Interestingly, most youth and adults believe their diet is always, nearly always or sometimes balanced. However, compared to the RHS 2002, youths and adults had a gloomier perception of their diet in 2008. The perceptions of youths as to whether their diets are balanced or not are related to their satisfaction with regards to their weight, meaning that youth who are satisfied with their weight have a better perception of their diet. Similar findings occurred in regards to perceptions of overall health. Youths who think their health condition is excellent have a better perception of their diet than those who think their health condition is fair or poor. For example, 37.2% of youths who think their health condition is bad consider that their diet is never balanced. A similar conclusion was drawn among adults.

Perceived strengths: food

In this domain, there is many positive conclusions. For example, 66.9% of children are drinking milk and eating other dairy products several times a day, and 22.8% at least once a day. Similarly, the majority of youth and adults are consuming milk or dairy products every day. Overall the majority of children, youth, and adults surveyed are eating meat or meat alternatives at

least once a day, meaning that meat and fish are the main sources of protein consumed by members of Quebec First Nations. The majority of children, youth, and adults eat grain products daily (over 80%).

In addition, there are some highlights in terms of breastfeeding. More than one-third (35.4%) of children under 11 had been or were being breastfed at the time of the survey. At the time of the survey, breastfeeding support groups existed in 9 out of 21 communities surveyed (according to those surveyed). It is also important to note that the proportion of breastfed children increases with household income. Of breastfed children, 37.2% were breastfed for at least six months, and 62.8% were breastfed for less than six months.

Healthy food consumption

The survey also identified some important challenges in regards to food. Unsurprisingly, access to healthy food was directly linked to household income. Individuals whose household income is lower than \$20,000 are less likely to eat dairy, fruits and vegetables several times a day. Higher income was correlated with a greater number of children eating food from all four food groups daily. Geographic location also impacted the cost of food. The cost of food increases with the geographic isolation of communities, which makes it hard for First Nations living in geographically remote communities to access healthy, varied and affordable food.

Junk food consumption

As shown in Table 1, junk food consumption was also seen to be a challenge in Zone 3 and 4¹ communities. Adults living far from urban centres are more likely to eat fast food every day. Consumption of soft drinks and fast food varies among adults depending on the nation. Among youth and children, junk food consumption is high. More than half (53.4%) of children and 62.4% of youths eat fast food meals at least a few times per week.

Table 1: Proportion of First Nations youths who consume fast food, soft drinks and sweets daily, based on the geographic zone (N=3,661)

	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
Fast food [†]	12.6%	17.0%	20.8%	31.2%
Soft drinks	38.1%	40.0%	30.0%	35.2%
Sweets ^{††}	26.5%	18.9%	21.1%	31.0%

[†]p < 0.01
^{††}p < 0.05

As with access to healthy food, consumption of fast food among children is correlated with the community's geographical isolation. However in reference to sweets, more than a quarter of children (26.4%) eat sweets every day. Children in Zone three eat much more (38.3%) and children in Zone 4 eat less (18.3%). It is important to note that children living in households with revenues over \$70,000 are less likely to consume fast food or soft drinks every day than children from households with lower revenues.

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.

Traditional food

Questions regarding traditional food consumption revealed other important findings. Among children, traditional foods that appear to be most popular are land-based animals (moose, caribou, bear, or deer). Close to one fourth (22.6%) of children eat these foods often, as well as bannock and other types of fry bread. Consumption of traditional foods among youths is infrequent. As for adults, there are only a few foods considered traditional that are consumed regularly: land-based animals, bannock, other types of fry bread, and fresh water fish. While consumption of traditional foods is higher in remote areas, it also appears to be correlated with household income.

Food security

In the 12 months before the survey, 11.2% of adults did not have enough to eat because they lacked the money to buy more food. In 5.2% of households, respondents often could not afford to eat a balanced diet whereas almost one-third of adults said that they are “sometimes” caught in this situation. More than two-thirds (68.4%) of adults live in a household that is food secure but 24.8% are suffering from moderate or severe food insecurity. This represents significantly more food insecure homes than in the general Quebec population (as surveyed in 2004). In particular, food insecurity is higher in Zone 4 than in the other geographical zones. Close to two-thirds (65.1%) of adults living in a household with children were food secure whereas 31.2% of households with children are suffering from moderate or severe food insecurity

Height, weight and body mass index (BMI)

According to the BMI data obtained for adults, 26.3% of adults have a normal weight or are underweight, 33.1% are overweight and 40.6% suffer from various degrees of obesity. In regards to obesity, the higher the adult’s household income is, the larger the population of obese individuals.

Data from children age 2-11 revealed that 47.8% have a normal weight or are underweight while 21.4% are overweight and 30.8% are obese. In the 12-17 age group, 12.4% are obese (11.6% of boys and 13.4% of girls). There was no significant difference between the BMI of youths in 2002 and 2008. Youths living in Zone 4 are more likely to suffer from overweight and obesity than youths from the other three zones.

The survey shows that 65.1% of youths are very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their weight, whereas 13.2% said they were somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their weight. More boys than girls are satisfied with their weight and almost twice as many girls (18.0%) than boys (8.6%) said they were very dissatisfied or somewhat dissatisfied about it. The data revealed a relationship between the satisfaction with weight in youths and their body mass index.

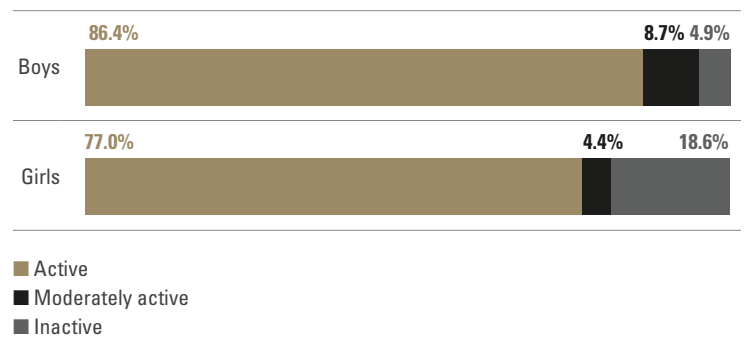
Physical activity

Many positive elements are present in the results of the survey concerning physical activity. 81.7% of children aged 6-11 are considered active, 13.6% are considered moderately active, and 4.7% are inactive. For youths, only 0.7% said they did not take part in any physical activity during the past 12 months. For adults, 30.2% said they were physically active at least one hour a day, and 28.9% between 30 to 59 minutes every day. Only 8.5% of adults did not perceive themselves as being physically active. Among the elderly (aged from 65 and up), only 15.4% said they did not take part in any physical activity during the past twelve months.

Perceived challenges: physical activity

There were some challenges revealed by the survey as concerns physical activity, which will be summarized here. Almost a quarter of children spend most of the day sitting down. A significant difference is observed between the physical activity levels in children based on sex. As Figure 1 shows, only 4.9% of boys are considered inactive, compared to 18.6% of girls.

Figure 1: Physical activity level of children aged 6 to 11, based on sex (N=3,779)



Among youths (12-17), boys (77.9%) are more likely to be active than girls (62.8%). Similarly, 14.7% of boys are inactive compared to 25% of girls of the same age. Among adults, men are more likely to be active than women (59.6% versus 39.4%).

Sedentary activities

Almost two out of five children (39.8%) watch television over 90 minutes per day on average, and one out of five children (19.5%) watch it between 60 to 90 minutes per day. The results of the survey showed that 19.8% of children play video games over 90 minutes per day. Children in Zone 4 are more likely to spend over 90 minutes per day in front of a television or computer. For youths, watching television for more than 90 minutes per day is part of the normal routine for 41.1% of respondents. More than a third (36.4%) spend more than 90 minutes in front of a computer. Youth boys are more likely to play video games.

Conclusion

This survey identified a need for ongoing prevention measures for body mass index (BMI), physical activity and sedentary activity. Numerous strengths are indicated in the survey, including high levels of physical activity among children and youths.

Finally, this summary provides an overview of Chapter 7 of the Quebec First Nations Regional Health Survey. For more details on the survey results, the full chapter is available at the following link: <https://www.cssspnql.com/docs/concours---mon-mieux-etre/chapter-7.pdf?sfvrsn=0>



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