

9 QUEBEC FIRST NATIONS: ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND GAMBLING

Chapter 9 of the Quebec First Nations Regional Health Survey (RHS 2008) shows the results about alcohol, drug consumption and participation in gambling among Quebec First Nations. This is a summary of the information included in Chapter 9. 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.

Comparison with Quebec

When compared with those of the general Quebec population, results from the RHS 2008 show that the proportion of people who consume alcohol is lower among First Nations. In fact, while 68.2% of First Nations say that they have taken alcohol over the past year, the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS 2009-2010) reports that 82.9% of Quebecers aged 12 and up did so (ISQ 2011). The RHS 2008 and CCHS 2009-2010 results also show that First Nations drink alcohol less frequently than the Quebec population. However alcohol abuse is higher among First Nations. Risk groups appear to be mainly men, youths and individuals with mental health issues or who have suffered some form of trauma. The First Nations of Quebec's health authorities are naturally concerned by drug addictions and the lack of resources to prevent and treat them.

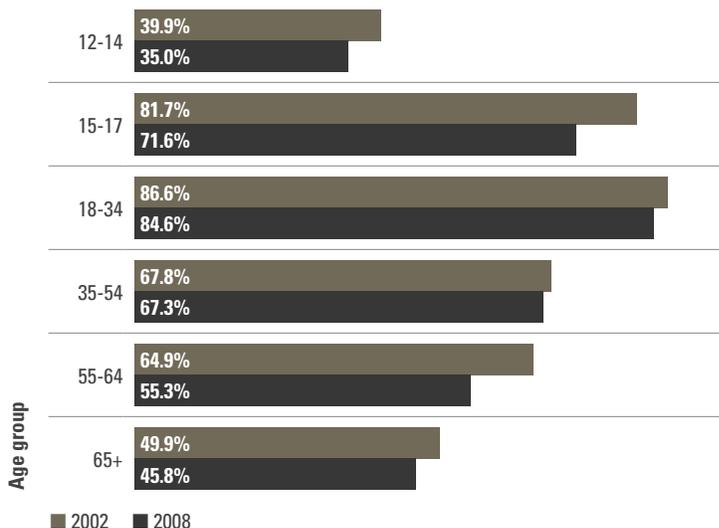
Frequency of alcohol consumption

Compared to the RHS 2002, results from RHS 2008 reveal that there are similar proportions of men and women that have taken alcohol during the year before the survey.

Figure 1 shows a significant relation between alcohol and age. Young adults (aged 18-34) have the highest proportion of drinkers (84.6%) followed by youth (aged 15-17) with a proportion of 71.6%. While the same trends were apparent in 2002, the number of youth drinkers aged 15-17 has decreased from 2002 to 2008.

The frequency of alcohol consumption also varies based on gender, with men drinking more frequently than women. According to RHS 2008, men are more likely than women to drink alcohol 2-3 times a week and once a day. The proportion of people who drink alcohol on a daily basis increases with age until age 54, and then begins to decrease.

Figure 1: Alcohol consumption over the past 12 years based on age, comparison 2002/2008



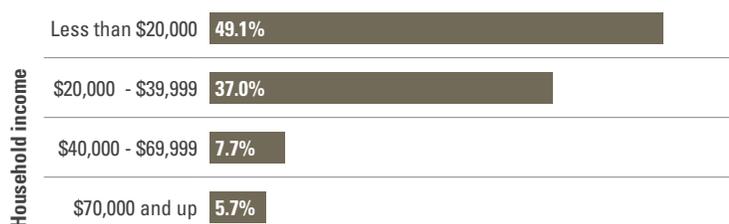
Alcohol abuse

Alcohol abuse is defined as drinking five or more alcoholic beverages on one occasion. More than half of the respondents (55.2%) say they have abused alcohol at least once over the year before the survey, with 40.4% having done so at least once per month. Alcohol abuse varies significantly based on gender, with men tending to exhibit that behaviour more frequently than women. Age also has an impact; respondents aged 12-14 and 65 and up were the least likely to exhibit alcohol abuse behaviour. Alcohol abuse on a monthly basis (1-3 times per month) decreases with education, from 45.9% for individuals without a high-school diploma (DES) to 34.2% for those with a university education.

Drugs

Among respondents aged 12 and up, 37.2% said that they have used at least one type of drug over the year before the survey. The 15-17 and 18-34 age groups have the highest proportions of drug users, with more than half of respondents reporting using them (54.8% and 56.4% respectively). Household income also has an impact on drug use among First Nations (Figure 2). Respondents with a household income under \$20,000 have the highest proportion of drug users (49.1%)

Figure 2: Drug consumption over the last 12 months based on household income, adults 18 and up (N=14,676)



Types of drugs used

Similarly as elsewhere in Quebec, cannabis is the most frequently used drug, with nearly one third of respondents (28.6%) saying they had used it during the year before the survey. It is followed by cocaine (16.6%) and amphetamines (6.9%). Since 2002, cocaine use has increased, whereas opioid use has decreased. Men use drugs in greater proportions than women.

Among youth, individuals aged 15-17 distinguish themselves from the 12-14 age group in their higher proportion of users in all three main drug groups (cocaine, cannabis and amphetamines). The use of cannabis among First Nations youths has decreased between 2002 and 2008 (42.7% vs. 40.7%), whereas the use of cocaine has increased significantly between 2002 and 2008 (3.7% vs. 7.9%). Among youth users aged 12-17, there is a statistically significant upward trend in the daily use of both cannabis and cocaine between 2002 and 2008. In 2002, 24% of this age group used cannabis daily, which increased to 34% in 2008. As for cocaine, no youth admitted to using it daily in 2002; in 2008, 11.1% say that they used it daily.

It should be noted that among users, nearly 10% of individuals take cocaine nearly every day. Household income has an influence on consumption frequency. For example, the daily use of cocaine is more widespread (13.9%) with users who have an annual income of \$70,000 and more. However, these users distinguish themselves by a much lower daily use of cannabis (7.2% compared to 35% and 45% in other household income categories). Compared to their Quebec counterparts, First Nations report a much higher frequency of drug use.

Alcohol and drug use: Associated psychosocial factors

There is a connection between substance use and mental health issues. In the RHS 2008 survey, respondents who say they have already experienced suicidal thoughts or attempted suicide show significantly higher proportions of alcohol and drug use. Individuals who have gone through youth centers are also more likely to have used alcohol or drugs than youths who haven't.

Adults who have been through residential schools have the lowest consumption of alcohol or drugs. While the opposite would have been expected, the individuals who have been through residential schools are currently older and their consumption reflects their age (alcohol and drug consumption decrease with age). Also, among adult respondents, those who reported that at least one of their parents had been in residential school had significantly higher drug and alcohol use than those whose parents have not been in a residential school.

Gambling

Out of 22 First Nations communities surveyed, 17 have access to video lottery devices within the community. More than two thirds (68.4%) of participants 18 and up have already participated in gambling. RHS 2008 shows that 16.8% of the respondents aged 18 and up have already borrowed money to gamble. 8.4% of respondents said they experienced personal or household financial problems caused by gambling.

Cumulation of risk behaviours

Poly drug use is an increasing problem in Quebec. Based on RHS 2008, 33.6% of the respondents say that they have used both alcohol and drugs over the year before the survey compared to 31.7% in 2002. Young adults (aged 18-34) and men use both alcohol and drugs at the highest proportion.

Services from the National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program

42.4% of the adult respondents have used NNADAP services, and the majority were very satisfied, or rather satisfied with the services. That said, it is worth highlighting that nearly one in three users (30.2%) were rather unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with the services.

Data from RHS 2008 revealed that 17.4% of respondents aged 12 and up have already sought treatment for substance abuse or addiction in their lives and 4% of respondents said they have been admitted to one of NNADAP's treatment facilities over the year before the survey.

Conclusion

In RHS 2008, respondents voiced their opinions on what they perceived their communities' major issues to be. 83.6% of them stated that these issues include alcohol and drug use. Drug addiction continues to be a major issue for the majority of First Nations who have seen little improvement in this field. While there has been some improvement, including an increase in alcohol abstinence, there has been mostly stagnation or degradation in the situation between 2002 and 2008.

Finally, this summary provides an overview of Chapter 9 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-9-alcool-drogues-jeux-eng-v2.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

Bibliography

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