



Quebec's Social and Health Survey Information: Baseline Data Report 2008 (Section 4.1)

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4.1 Social Support Environment

- 80% of survey respondents reported having strong social support. Female survey respondents were more likely than males to report strong social support. For both males and females, weak social support is found among those aged 25-44 and 45-64.
- Survey respondents with a weak social environment were more likely to report psychological distress and long term health problems than those with a strong social environment.
- 13.6% of survey respondents are alone during their free time and the likelihood of being alone increases with age. Women 65 years and over are the most likely group to live alone. Women 45-64 years of age were somewhat more likely than men the same age to be living alone. Men 25-44 were more likely than women to report living alone.
- A greater percentage of survey respondents reported being more or less satisfied with their social life while 13% were not satisfied. When 1987, 1992-1993 and 1998 are compared, all age groups with the exception of those 65 years and over indicate an increase in their tendency to be dissatisfied with their social life.
- Anglophone respondents were much more likely than their Francophone respondents to say they were very satisfied with their social life and were also more likely to be very unsatisfied.
- When income levels are compared, survey respondents with the lowest income levels are more likely than others to report dissatisfaction with their social life. This group shows the greatest tendency to have no friends or confidants and no one they can turn to for affection. They are the most likely to report that they have no one that can respond in time of need.
- Middle and high income respondents are associated with higher levels of satisfaction with their social life. They report the greatest number of confidants and persons to whom they can turn to in time of need.
- When unemployed and employed respondents are compared, the unemployed are twice as likely to report being dissatisfied with their social life. Unemployed respondents were more likely to be alone during their free time, more likely to report having no friends or confidants, and no persons to respond to needs or show affection. Employment was linked with knowing more persons that could respond to need, more free time with others, more friends and greater numbers of persons showing affection.
- Single, widowed, separated or divorced respondents displayed the highest rate of persons lacking intimacy. Respondents reporting average or severe marital difficulties were more likely to report long term health problems and psychological distress than those reporting minor or no difficulties. Among those living with a partner, the lack of intimacy was associated with psychological distress, suicidal

ideas, consumption of drugs and alcohol, and long term health problems. Anglophone and Francophone respondents were similar in the rate of persons, roughly 20% of each language group, who experience lack of intimate contact.

Table 4.1.1 – Indicator of social support according to sex and age, population 15 years and over, Quebec, 1998

		Weak	Strong
		%	
Men			
	15-24 years	15.8	84.3
	25-44years	24.6	75.4
	45-64years	26.5	73.5
	65 years or more	15.4	84.6
	Total	22.5	77.5
Women			
	15-24 years	13.6	86.4
	25-44years	18.6	81.4
	45-64years	18.5	81.5
	65 years or more	15.9	84.1
	Total	17.4	82.6
Both sexes			
	15-24 years	14.7	85.3
	25-44years	21.6	78.4
	45-64years	22.4	77.6
	65 years or more	15.7	84.3
	Total	19.9	80.1
Pop '000		1,158	4,667

Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Enquête social et de santé 1998*.

- 80% of survey respondents reported having strong social support.
- Among those reporting weak social support the highest frequency was among those aged 25-44 and 45-64 years.
- Female survey respondents are more likely than males to report strong social support.
- For both males and females the weakest social support is found among those aged 25-64 years of age.

Table 4.1.2 – Components of the social support indicator according to age, population 15 years and over, Quebec, 1998

	15-24 years	25-44 years	45-64 years	65 years and over	Total
	%				
Frequency of meeting					
Once a year or never	5.9	5.0	5.8	4.3	5.3
At least once a month	19.2	26.7	26.1	19.0	24.2
Once a week or more	74.9	68.4	68.1	76.7	70.5
Solitude during free time					
Alone more than half the time	10.6	12.8	14.7	17.5	13.6
With others	89.4	87.2	85.3	82.5	86.4
Satisfaction with social life					
Not satisfied	11.2	15.0	14.1	7.6	13.1
More or less satisfied	52.5	57.6	55.5	55.32	55.8
Very satisfied	36.3	27.3	30.5	37.1	31.1
Presence of friends					
No	2.5*	5.8	7.9	7.8	6.2
Yes	97.5	94.2	92.1	92.2	93.8
Satisfaction with relations with friends					
Not satisfied	4.9	3.6	2.3	1.5*	3.1
More or less satisfied	45.7	50.5	46.5	35.8	46.6
Very satisfied	49.4	45.9	51.2	62.7	50.3
Number of confidants					
None	7.2	10.9	12.6	11.7	10.9
One	14.9	21.0	20.1	17.6	19.3
Two	30.7	31.4	30.6	26.8	30.4
Three or more	47.2	36.7	36.7	44.0	39.4
Number of persons that can respond to need					
None	2.1*	4.0	4.3	3.1*	3.6
One	8.3	12.7	14.0	11.1	12.1
Two	23.4	24.8	24.3	23.4	24.2
Three or more	66.3	58.5	57.4	62.5	60.0
Number of persons showing affection					
None	4.3	5.5	3.9	2.6*	4.4
One	13.9	15.6	13.1	9.8	13.8
Two	17.8	19.7	18.6	16.4	18.6
Three or more	64.1	59.2	64.4	71.3	63.2

Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Enquête sociale et de santé 1998*.

* Interpret with caution

- 70.5% of survey respondents attend meetings once a week or more. The greatest proportion of those attending meetings once a week or more are 65 years and over and 15-24 years of age.

- During free time, 13.6% of survey respondents are alone more than half the time, while 86.4% are with others.
- The likelihood of being alone more than half the time increases with age.
- The majority of respondents indicated they were more or less satisfied with their social life. 13% were not satisfied. Among those very satisfied, those aged 15-24 years and 65 years and over indicated the highest levels. The highest levels of dissatisfaction were reported by those aged 25-44 years and 45-64.
- 93.8% of survey respondents reported the presence of friends. Survey respondents were fairly equally divided between being more or less satisfied, and very satisfied, with their relations with friends. The least satisfied are those 15-24 years of age.
- Some 30% of survey respondents reported having none or one confidant while 70% reported having two or more confidants. Those aged 25-64 were the most likely age group to report having none or one confidant.
- 60% of survey respondents reported having three or more persons that could respond in time of need, 24.2% reported two such persons, 12.1% reported having one person and 3.6% reported having nobody. The 45-64 age group, followed by those 25-44 years, was the most likely to report having none or one person that could respond in time of need.
- 18.2% of survey respondents reported having none or one person who provided affection while 81.8% reported having two or more such persons. Respondents 65 years and over were the most likely group to report having two or more persons providing affection.

Table 4.1.3 – Persons unsatisfied with their social life according to age and sex, population 15 years and older, Quebec, 1998

	1987	1992-1993	1998
	%		
15-24 years	8.0	10.4	11.2
25-44years	11.8	12.6	15.0
45-64years	10.9	11.3	14.1
65 years or more	10.0	8.7	7.6
Men	10.1	10.8	12.8
Women	11.1	11.9	13.2
Total	10.6	11.4	13.1

Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Enquête social et de santé 1998*.

- When 1987, 1992-1993, and 1998 are compared, all age groups with the exception of those 65 years and over indicate an increase in their tendency to be dissatisfied with their social life.
- Men and women were similar in their levels of dissatisfaction.

Table 4.1.4 – Life situation according to sex and age, population 15 years and older, Quebec, 1998

	Does not live alone %	Lives alone	Pop '000
Men			
15-24 years	95.4	4.6*	23
25-44years	85.4	14.6	172
45-64years	86.3	13.7	116
65 years or more	84.0	16.0	56
Total	87.2	12.8	366
Women			
15-24 years	96.8	3.2*	15
25-44years	91.5	8.5	97
45-64years	84.1	15.9	138
65 years or more	58.8	41.2	193
Total	85.0	15.0	444
Both sexes			
15-24 years	96.1	3.9	38
25-44years	88.4	11.6	269
45-64years	85.2	14.8	254
65 years or more	69.5	30.5	249
Total	86.1	13.9	810

Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Enquête social et de santé 1998*.

* Interpret with caution

- 14% of survey respondents live alone with females 65 years and over being the most likely to live alone.
- Men 65 years and over are only slightly more likely than other age groups to be living alone.
- Women 45-64 years of age were somewhat more likely than men of the same age to report living alone.
- Men 25-44 were more likely than women to report living alone.

Table 4.1.5 – Certain social and health indicators according to indicators of social support environment, population 15 years and older, Quebec, 1998

	High level of indicator of psychological distress	Suicidal ideas in the course of 12 months	Consumption of alcohol and drugs in the course of 12 months	Long-term health problems (6 months or more)
	%			
Social support				
Weak	37.6	9.7	18.0	39.3
Strong	15.8	2.5	17.5	34.4
Marital difficulties¹				
None	13.1	1.8	14.4	32.0
Minor	28.0	5.8	19.3	35.6
Average	36.0	7.3*	19.3	38.8
Severe	44.8	9.2*	17.7	41.5
Lack of intimacy²				
Yes	36.6	8.8	25.3	38.0
No	15.4	2.4	15.9	32.4
Traumatizing events experienced in childhood or adolescence³				
None	13.1	1.7	11.8	32.7
One	20.9	4.3	17.9	37.1
Two	28.8	6.2	24.8	39.7
Three or more	37.1	10.6	28.1	45.8

Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Enquête sociale et de santé 1998*.

1- Population living with a partner (girlfriend or boyfriend)

2- Excluding persons not living with a partner (girlfriend or boyfriend) and not seeking this type of relationship

3- Population 18 years and older

- Survey respondents with psychological distress and long term health problems were the most likely to report a weak as opposed to a strong social environment. Respondents reporting average or severe marital difficulties were more likely to report long term health problems and psychological distress than those reporting minor or no difficulties.
- Among those living with a partner, the lack of intimacy was more likely to be associated with psychological distress, suicidal ideas, consumption of drugs and alcohol, and long term health problems.
- Two or more traumatizing events in childhood or adolescence increased the likelihood of respondents to report psychological distress, suicidal ideas, alcohol and drug consumption and long term health problems.

Table 4.1.6 – Components of the social support indicator according to marital status, population 15 years and older, Quebec, 1998

	Married	Common law	Widowed, separated, or divorced	Single
	%			
Frequency of encounters				
Once a year or never	4.5	4.3	5.9	7.0
At least once a month	26.5	27.0	19.9	20.4
Once a week or more	69.0	68.7	74.2	72.6
Solitude during free time				
Alone more than half the time	8.2	8.8	28.8	18.8
With others	91.8	91.2	71.2	81.3
Satisfaction with social life				
Not satisfied	10.3	13.0	17.7	15.7
More or less satisfied	56.9	56.1	55.5	53.7
Very satisfied	32.8	30.9	26.8	30.6
Presence of friends				
No	6.5	6.2	9.2	4.2
Yes	93.5	93.8	90.8	95.8
Satisfaction with relations with friends				
Not satisfied	2.2	3.7	3.5*	4.3
More or less satisfied	46.6	50.5	40.3	46.7
Very satisfied	51.2	45.7	56.2	49.0
Number of confidants				
None	12.7	9.5	10.2	9.2
One	21.0	21.3	17.2	16.0
Two	30.0	32.4	29.6	30.3
Three or more	36.3	36.8	43.0	44.5
Number of persons that can respond to need				
None	3.7	3.3	4.4	3.2
One	12.3	12.7	14.1	10.6
Two	23.6	25.3	25.9	24.1
Three or more	60.4	58.6	55.6	62.1
Number of persons showing affection				
None	4.0	3.7	4.7	5.6
One	12.8	15.0	13.2	15.1
Two	16.7	19.8	21.5	19.6
Three or more	66.5	61.5	60.6	59.8

Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Enquête sociale et de santé 1998*.

* Interpret with caution

- Survey respondents who were widowed, separated or divorced were much less likely (10 to 20% less likely in relative terms) than those who were single, married or living in a common-law situation to report spending their free time with others.
- A greater proportion of widowed, separated or divorced and single survey respondents reported dissatisfaction with their social life compared to married and common-law respondents.
- Widowed, separated or divorced survey respondents were slightly more likely to report a lack of available friends when compared to married, common-law or single individuals. They also are more likely to report being very satisfied with their relations with friends.

- Widowed, separated or divorced and single survey respondents were more likely than married and common-law respondents to report having three or more confidants.
- Widowed, separated or divorced survey respondents were the least likely to report three or more persons that can respond to need.

Table 4.1.7 – Components of the social support indicator according to income level, population 15 years and older, Quebec, 1998

	Very poor	Poor	Lower middle income	Upper middle income	High income
	%				
Frequency of encounters					
Once a year or never	10.9	6.4	5.4	4.4	3.5**
At least once a month	17.6	21.4	22.3	25.9	30.3
Once a week or more	71.5	72.2	72.3	69.7	66.2
Solitude during free time					
Alone more than half the time	26.8	19.7	13.0	10.9	10.8
With others	73.2	80.3	87.0	89.1	889.2
Satisfaction with social life					
Not satisfied	21.6	17.3	12.6	11.3	11.0
More or less satisfied	50.6	54.2	56.0	57.4	55.0
Very satisfied	27.8	28.5	31.4	31.3	34.0
Presence of friends					
No	10.5	7.4	6.2	5.4	4.8
Yes	889.5	92.6	93.8	94.6	95.2
Satisfaction with relations with friends					
Not satisfied	3.8*	3.6*	3.5	2.6	3.3*
More or less satisfied	41.6	45.0	46.1	48.0	47.2
Very satisfied	54.6	51.4	50.4	49.4	49.5
Number of confidants					
None	15.1	12.6	10.7	10.3	9.5
One	21.9	19.7	20.7	18.4	16.1
Two	26.2	31.2	30.0	31.3	30.2
Three or more	36.7	36.5	38.6	40.0	44.2
Number of persons that can respond to need					
None	10.7	4.8	3.3	2.9	1.7*
One	17.1	16.0	13.0	10.6	8.3
Two	25.7	26.4	24.6	23.7	22.2
Three or more	46.5	52.8	59.1	62.8	67.8
Number of persons showing affection					
None	10.8	6.0	4.2	3.5	2.8*
One	18.8	16.1	14.7	12.2	11.6
Two	20.2	21.2	18.6	18.2	16.4
Three or more	50.2	56.7	62.5	66.1	69.2

Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Enquête social et de santé 1998*.

* Interpret with caution

- When income levels are compared, respondents with the lowest income levels are more likely than others to report dissatisfaction with their social life. This group also shows the greatest tendency to have no friends or confidants and no one they can

turn to for affection. They are the most likely to report that they have no one that can respond in time of need.

- Conversely, middle and high income respondents are associated with high levels of satisfaction with their social life. They report higher levels of satisfaction with their relations and their friends as well as the greatest number of confidants and persons to whom they can turn in time of need.

Table 4.1.8 – Components of the social support indicator according to employment status, population 15 years and older, Quebec, 1998

		Employed	Unemployed
		%	
Frequency of encounters			
	Once a year or never	4.7	11.0
	At least once a month	27.7	22.8
	Once a week or more	67.5	66.2
Solitude during free time			
	Alone more than half the time	12.0	25.2
	With others	88.0	74.8
Satisfaction with social life			
	Not satisfied	13.2	27.2
	More or less satisfied	58.1	48.3
	Very satisfied	28.7	24.5
Presence of friends			
	No	5.5	10.0
	Yes	94.5	90.0
Satisfaction with relations with friends			
	Not satisfied	3.5	4.1*
	More or less satisfied	50.0	46.7
	Very satisfied	46.5	50.2
Number of confidants			
	None	11.3	14.9
	One	20.0	24.2
	Two	31.3	27.4
	Three or more	37.4	33.6
Number of persons that can respond to need			
	None	3.4	8.8
	One	12.0	18.2
	Two	24.5	25.5
	Three or more	60.1	47.5
Number of persons showing affection			
	None	4.4	9.7
	One	14.5	18.0
	Two	19.1	21.7
	Three or more	62.0	49.6

Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Enquête sociale et de santé 1998*.

1- Excluding students, homemakers and retired persons

* Interpret with caution

- When unemployed and employed survey respondents are compared, the unemployed are twice as likely to report being dissatisfied with their social life.

- Unemployed respondents were more likely to be alone during their free time, more likely to report having no friends or confidants, and more likely to report no persons to respond to needs or to show affection.
- Employment was linked with knowing more persons that could respond to need, more free time with others, more friends and greater numbers of persons showing affection.

Table 4.1.9 – Persons lacking intimacy according to certain demographic and socio-economic characteristics and according to sex, population 15 years and older,¹ Quebec, 1998

		Men	Women	Total
		%		
Civil status				
	Married	14.3	17.5	15.9
	Common law	15.8	19.3	17.5
	Widowed, separated or divorced	37.0	40.5	39.2
	Single	40.4	41.7	41.0
Income level				
	Very poor	29.3	35.5	32.5
	Poor	30.1	29.8	29.9
	Lower middle income	24.1	26.5	25.3
	Upper middle income	21.7	23.9	22.8
	High income	17.8	21.0	19.3
Employment status				
	Employed	21.0	25.0	22.7
	Student	35.0	36.1	35.5
	Homemaker	26.2*	20.7	21.1
	Retired	17.1	24.0	19.8
	Unemployed	32.5	33.0	32.7
Relative scolarity				
	Very low	24.3	24.3	24.3
	Low	22.4	24.9	23.7
	Average	21.9	27.4	24.9
	High	23.2	26.0	24.4
	Very High	24.0	25.8	24.9

Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Enquête sociale et de santé 1998*.

1- Excluding persons not living with a partner (girlfriend or boyfriend) and not seeking this type of relationship

* Interpret with caution

- Single, widowed, separated or divorced respondents displayed the highest rate of persons lacking intimacy.
- Persons lacking intimacy showed a tendency to be poor and very poor, and unemployed or students.

Table 4.1.10 – Satisfaction with social life by mother tongue

	N=	18211	1054	685	445
		English	French	Other	n/a
Very satisfied		29.96%	39.28%	33.87%	30.11%
More or less satisfied		57.09%	46.58%	53.72%	42.47%
More unsatisfied		10.11%	9.96%	9.78%	6.07%
Very unsatisfied		1.87%	3.42%	1.17%	2.70%
Refusal		0.96%	0.76%	1.46%	18.65%
		100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Enquête social et de santé 1998*.

- Anglophone survey respondents were much more likely than Francophone respondents to say they were very satisfied with their social life and were also more likely to be very unsatisfied.

Table 4.1.11 – Level of social support by mother tongue, Quebec, 1998

	N=	18211	1029	1045	445
		French	English	Other	n/a
Low level of social support		19.09%	16.62%	20.29%	14.38%
High level of social support		78.61%	81.92%	75.69%	59.33%
Unknown		2.30%	1.46%	4.02%	26.29%
		100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Enquête social et de santé 1998*.

- Anglophone survey respondents were slightly more likely to report high levels of social support than Francophones.

Table 4.1.12 – Difficulties in a relationship with a spouse by mother tongue, 1998

	N=	13688	752	747	248
		French	English	Other	n/a
No difficulties		67.77%	66.76%	67.60%	55.24%
Light difficulties		11.41%	14.76%	11.51%	17.34%
Moderate difficulties		6.68%	7.71%	6.56%	6.45%
Severe difficulties		5.98%	4.12%	5.62%	3.63%
Unknown		8.15%	6.65%	8.70%	17.34%
		100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Enquête social et de santé 1998*.

- Anglophone survey respondents were more likely to report light and moderate difficulties in a relationship with a spouse than Francophones. They were less likely to report severe difficulties.

Table 4.1.13 – Lack of intimate contact by mother tongue, Quebec, 1998

N=	16895	919	955	420
	French	English	Other	n/a
Yes	21.04%	20.24%	24.29%	15.48%
No	70.04%	71.49%	67.02%	49.05%
Unknown	8.92%	8.27%	8.69%	35.48%
	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Enquête social et de santé 1998*.

- Anglophone and Francophone survey respondents were similar in the rate of persons who experience lack of intimate contact.