



RHS

QUEBEC FIRST NATIONS
REGIONAL HEALTH SURVEY



FIRST NATIONS OF QUEBEC
AND LABRADOR HEALTH
AND SOCIAL SERVICES
COMMISSION

HOUSING

Highlights

- In communities located in Zone 1, adults usually own their homes, while in communities located in Zones 2, 3 and 4, they most often live in housing belonging to the band.
- Approximately one in four children live in overcrowded housing.
- More than one in five adults report that their home needs major repairs.
- One quarter of adults say they have observed mold in their home in the year preceding the survey.
- Adults living in overcrowded housing were more likely to report that they need to do major repairs on their home and that they have seen mold.



CONTEXT

This booklet describes the findings of the RHS on various issues relating to housing in First Nations communities, including the types of housing, infrastructure, services and amenities, and housing conditions.

According to the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL), First Nations communities are experiencing a housing crisis, the effects of which include overcrowded and outdated housing and the impossibility for many to settle in their communities. Because housing conditions are an important social determinant of health (Reading and Halseth, 2013), the crisis has significant repercussions on both the health of families and the development of communities. According to the AFNQL, the situation is getting worse: “It contributes in maintaining family tension, it causes learning problems with the children, it raises concerns with the health and security of the occupants, it sends a message of not belonging to the community, it increases the financial burden, indebtedness and financial risks that the community must support” (AFNQL, 2014).

In 2012, the AFNQL found that more than 9,400 housing units needed to be built and nearly 5,000 others needed to be renovated in order to contain the crisis affecting several communities in Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL, 2014).

TYPES OF HOUSING

In First Nations communities, there are three types of housing: rental, owned, and band. The RHS reveals that six out of ten adults report that they live in owned housing, while a third say that they live in band housing.¹ The proportion of people living in owned housing seems to increase with age (FIGURE 1).

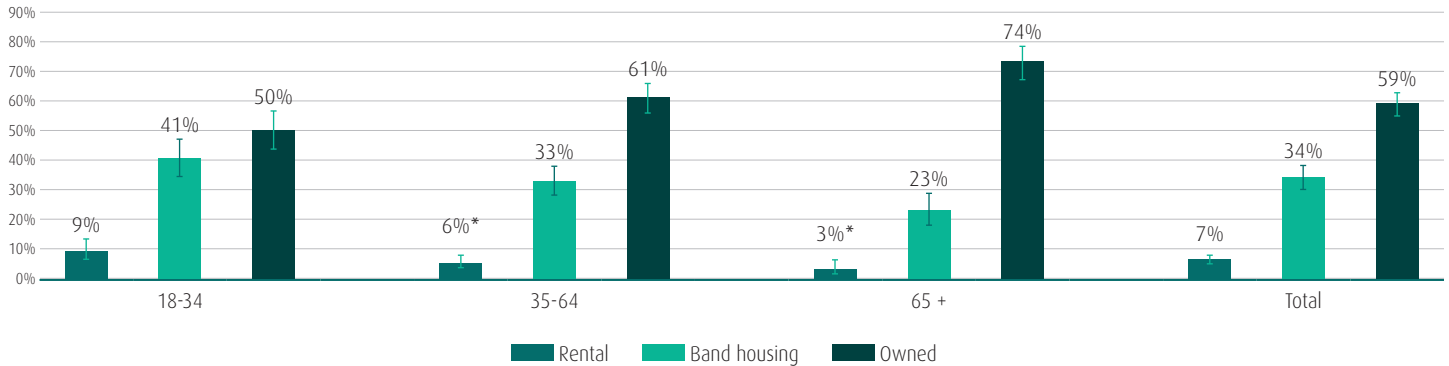
Band housing

“Access to property is moreover severely limited in the communities due to the *Indian Act* (1876), which nullifies the right to seize property on community land. By limiting access to private housing on the territories, this measure undermines the development of housing projects in the community, which largely consists in band council rental housing. Proportionately speaking, in comparison with the general population, more First Nations lease as oppose to own their homes” (FNQLHSSC, 2016).

Band housing is thus community housing, generally under the authority of the band council and available to be rented by members of the First Nation. It is different from social housing, which is also community property, because its operating expenses are not subsidized by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). It is also different from rental housing, which is also discussed in this booklet, because in that case the lessor is a private individual, not the band council.

¹ Because of a change to the RHS questionnaire, the proportion of people living in rental housing, owned housing and band housing in 2015 cannot be compared with the data from 2002 and 2008.

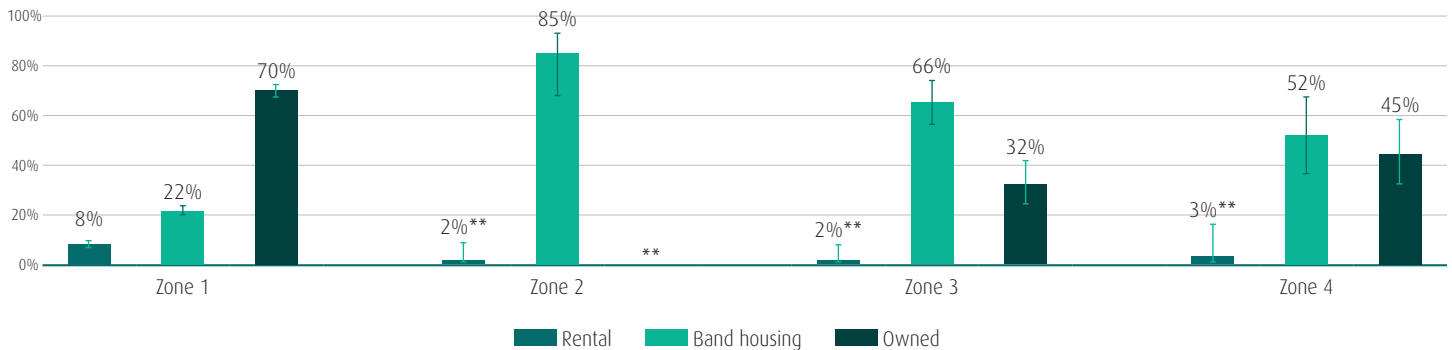
FIGURE 1
Breakdown of adults based on type of housing occupied and age



TYPES OF HOUSING ACCORDING TO ZONE

While on a regional level, the data indicate that a majority of adults live in owned housing (FIGURE 1), FIGURE 2 shows that this is the case primarily in communities located in Zone 1. In more remote communities, it is estimated that a majority of adults – and in Zone 2, a large majority – live in band housing.

FIGURE 2
Breakdown of adults based on type of housing occupied and geographic zone

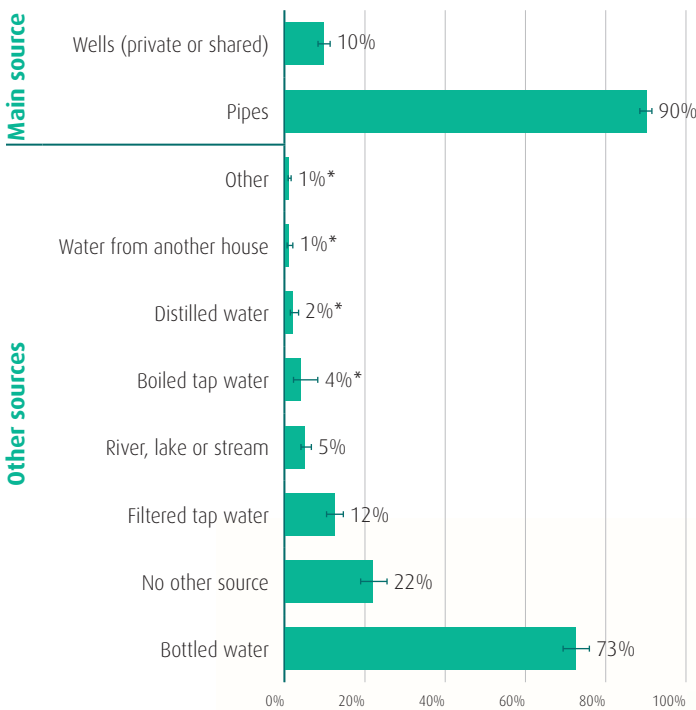


INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES AND AMENITIES

Drinking water supply

As FIGURE 3 shows, nine in ten adults have access to drinking water primarily through a local or community pipe network, while others have wells (private or shared). The other water supply that is generally used is bottled water.

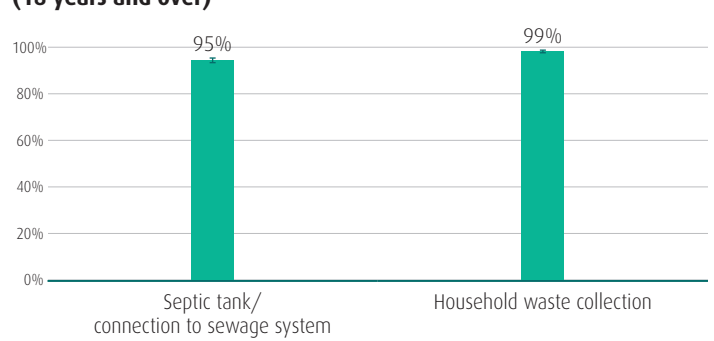
FIGURE 3
Drinking water supply sources



Sewage and waste management

A very large majority of adults say that they live in housing connected to a septic tank or sewer system, and nearly all say they have access to a household waste collection service (FIGURE 4).

FIGURE 4
Access to sewage and waste management systems and services (18 years and over)

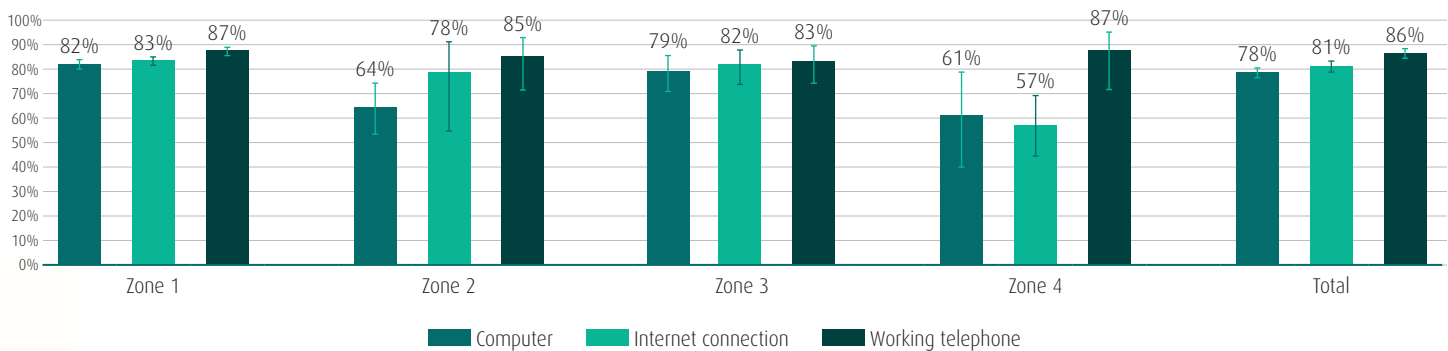


Amenities

According to the RHS findings, more than 99% of adults have a stove (for cooking or for heating), a refrigerator, electricity, running water and a flush toilet in their household, regardless of geographic zone.

As for communications devices, approximately three quarters of adults have a computer at home; this proportion appears to be lower in communities in Zones 2 and 4. Eight in ten adults say they have an Internet connection, with the proportion being lowest in communities in Zone 4. Moreover, nearly nine in ten people say they have a working telephone in their household (FIGURE 5). However, it is not possible to say whether the percentage represents only fixed landlines or whether it includes mobile telephones.

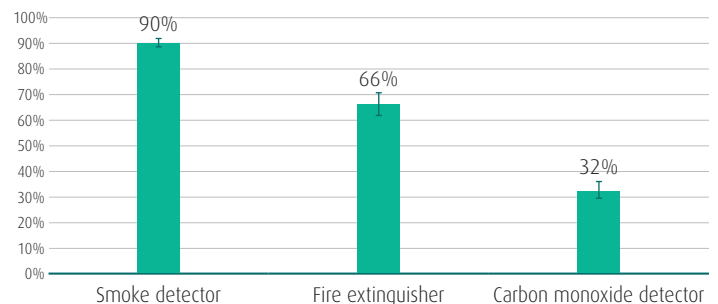
FIGURE 5
Adults with a computer, Internet connection and working telephone in their household, based on geographic zone



Safety devices

Nine in ten adults report that they live in a home equipped with a working smoke detector, two thirds own a fire extinguisher, and one third have a carbon monoxide detector at home (FIGURE 6).

FIGURE 6
Adults with various safety devices in their household



HOUSING CONDITIONS

According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, “[a]cceptable housing is adequate in condition, suitable in size, and affordable” (CMHC, 2015). The RHS does not provide data on the cost of housing, but the findings regarding the size and quality of housing are presented.

Overcrowding

In 2015, nearly one quarter of children and one in five adults lived in an overcrowded household. These proportions appear to be stable since 2002 (FIGURE 7). However, the situation varies by geographic zone. It is estimated that the proportion of children and adults living in overcrowded households in communities in Zones 2 and 3 are generally greater than that observed in communities in Zone 1 (FIGURE 8).

Overcrowding

If a home houses more people than rooms – for example, if more than four people live in a four-room apartment – it is considered overcrowded (CMHC, 2016).

FIGURE 7
People living in overcrowded housing, based on age (2002, 2008 and 2015)

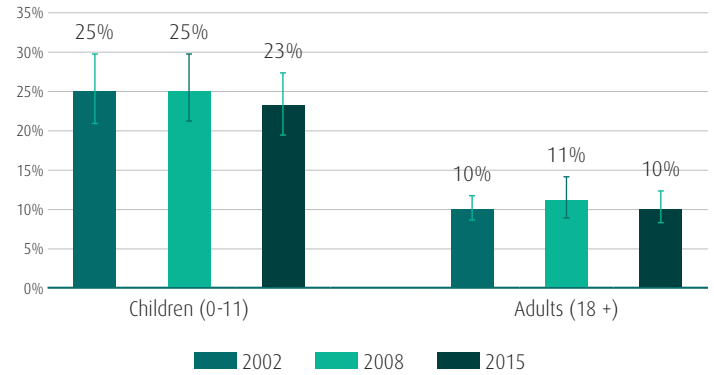
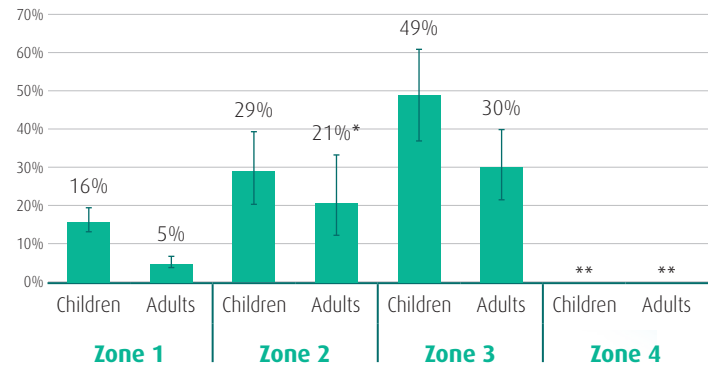


FIGURE 8
Children (0-11 years) and adults living in overcrowded housing, based on geographic zone

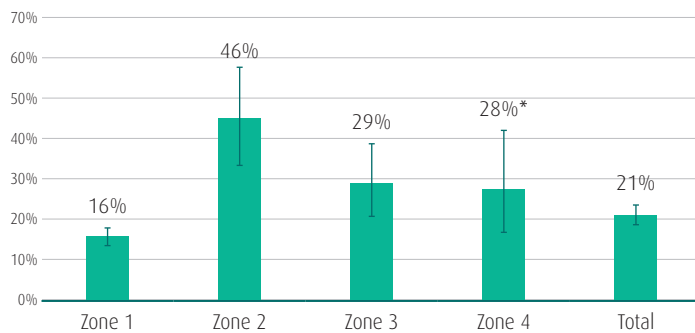


Private dwellings requiring major repairs

Along with size and cost, quality (see box) is one of the criteria used to determine whether housing is acceptable. According to the RHS, more than one in five adults report that they live in a dwelling that needs major repairs. Differences exist according to geographic zone. While the proportion is approximately one in ten adults in communities in Zone 1, it is estimated that the proportion is three times higher in communities in Zone 2, and nearly twice as high in communities in Zone 3 (FIGURE 9).

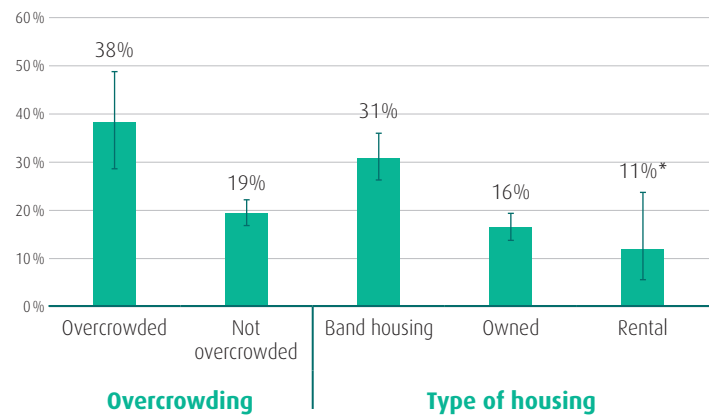
Adequate housing does not require any major repairs, according to residents. Major repairs include those to defective plumbing or electrical wiring, or structural repairs to walls, floors or ceilings. (CMHC, 2015).

FIGURE 9
Adults whose home needs major repairs, based on geographic zone



The quality of housing also varies depending on overcrowding and the type of housing. Adults living in overcrowded housing are more likely to state that their home needs major repairs than adults living in housing that is not overcrowded. The need for major repairs is also raised more frequently by occupants of band housing than by occupants of housing that is owned or rented (FIGURE 10).

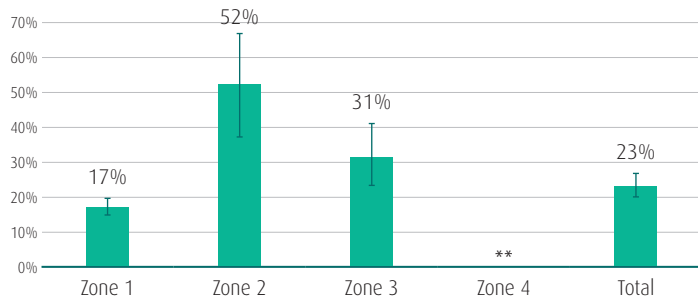
FIGURE 10
Adults whose home needs major repairs, based on type of housing and overcrowding



Presence of mold

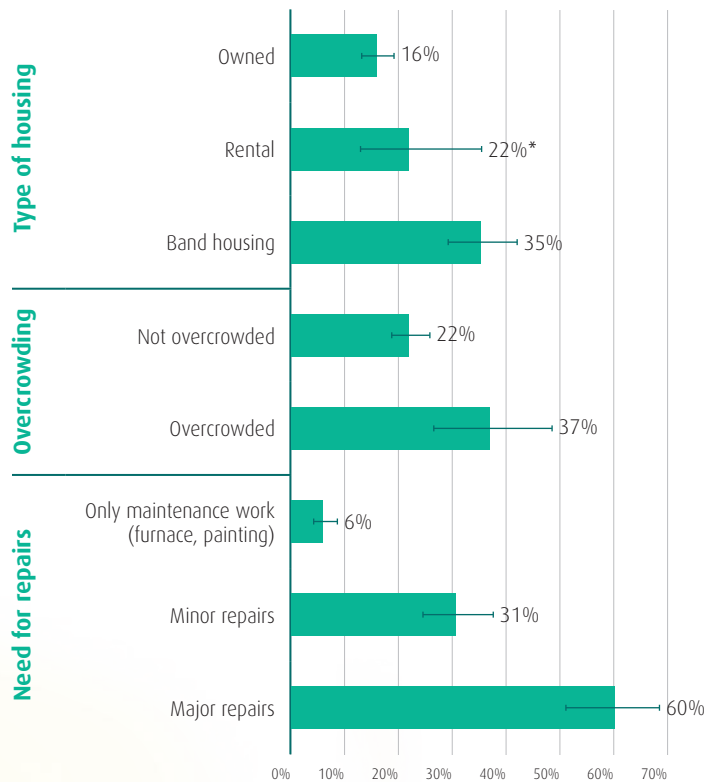
Nearly one quarter of adults say they have observed mold in their home in the year preceding the survey. The situation varies depending on geographic zone. While the proportion is less than one in five adults in communities in Zone 1, it rises significantly in communities in Zones 2 and 3 (FIGURE 11).

FIGURE 11
Adults who observed the presence of mold in their home, based on geographic zone



As FIGURE 12 shows, the proportion of adults who have observed the presence of mold is higher among occupants of band housing than among occupants who own their homes and, apparently, occupants of rental housing. This proportion also increases with overcrowding and the need for repairs.

FIGURE 12
Adults who observed the presence of mold in their home, based on type of housing, overcrowding and need for repairs



CONCLUSION

The RHS findings reveal that, on a regional level, a majority of adults live in owned housing. However, this proportion is observed to decrease with remoteness, while the proportion of adults living in housing belonging to the band increases. A very large majority of people live in housing equipped with basic amenities and essential services, such as a drinking water supply, waste collection and sewage management, and electricity.

On the other hand, the findings on overcrowding and housing conditions seem to indicate that the housing crisis identified by the AFNQL in 2012 is not over. According to the AFNQL, the scarcity of housing results in overcrowding, which is one of the main causes of the deterioration of housing and the presence of mold (AFNQL, 2014). The data reveal that adults are more likely to state that their homes need repairs and that mold is present when their homes are overcrowded. A significant number of homes that are overcrowded and in poor condition represent a risk to the health and safety of the population, to family and community cohesion, and to the academic success and safety of young people. It therefore appears to be urgent to act on the recommendations of the AFNQL by building and renovating the number of houses needed to contain the crisis. This is all the more the case since “population growth tendencies indicate that the housing needs of First Nations of Quebec-Labrador will increase” (AFNQL, 2014).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (2014). *The Housing Needs of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador*, AFNQL, 53 p. Online: <http://www.cssspnql.com/docs/default-source/centre-de-documentation/apnql-rapport-besoins-log-ang-franc.pdf?sfvrsn=2>.

First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission (2016). *Portrait of Homelessness in First Nations Communities in Quebec*, FNQLHSSC, 52 p. Online: http://www.cssspnql.com/docs/default-source/centre-de-documentation/portrait_itin_eng_web.pdf?sfvrsn=2.

Reading, J. & R. Halseth (2013). *Pathways to Improving Well-being for Indigenous Peoples: How Living Conditions Decide Health*, Prince George, British Columbia, National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. Online: <https://www.ccsa-nccah.ca/docs/determinants/RPT-PathwaysWellBeing-Reading-Halseth-EN.pdf>.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2015). *Research Highlight. 2011 Census/National Household Survey Housing Series: Issue 3. The Adequacy, Suitability and Affordability of Canadian Housing, 1991-2011*, Ottawa, CMHC. Online: http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2015/schl-cmhc/nh18-23/NH18-23-2015-2-eng.pdf.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2016). *Measuring Overcrowding — USA and Canada*. Online: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/housing-observer-online/2016-housing-observer/measuring-overcrowding-usa-and-canada> (Consulted May 22, 2018).

Statistics Canada. *Tenure*. Online: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/ref/dict/households-menage024-eng.cfm> (Consulted June 18, 2018).



METHODOLOGY IN BRIEF

The third phase of the First Nations Regional Health Survey (RHS) aims to describe the health status of the population in First Nations communities in Quebec. It was conducted from February 2015 to May 2016 in 21 communities from eight nations and reached 3,261 people (825 children aged 0 to 11 years, 769 adolescents aged 12 to 17 years and 1,667 adults aged 18 years and over) who responded to an electronic questionnaire submitted by field agents.

Data followed by the “*” sign have a coefficient of variation of 16.6% to 33.3% and should be interpreted with caution. The sign “***” indicates a coefficient of variation greater than 33.3%. This data is not published, except for estimates below 5%, which must be interpreted with caution. The lines presented in the bar or line charts are the confidence intervals calculated using a 95% confidence level.

In certain cases, the data are presented according to the geographic zone of the community of the respondents. These zones are defined as follows:²

- Zone 1 (urban): less than 50 km from a service centre with road access;
- Zone 2 (rural): between 50 and 350 km from a service centre with road access;
- Zone 3 (isolated): more than 350 km from a service centre with road access;
- Zone 4 (difficult to access): no road.

Service centre: The nearest access to suppliers, banks and government services.

In the context of the RHS, the term “community” is used to represent “Indian reserves.”

For more details, please refer to the *Methodology* booklet of the RHS.

The RHS report consists of 20 thematic booklets. All the booklets can be consulted at the FNQLHSSC documentation center: <https://centredoc.cssspnql.com>.

² INAC, <http://fnp-pnn.aandc-aadnc.gc.ca/fnp/main/Definitions.aspx?lang=eng> [accessed 2018-01-03].

Writing

Matthieu Gill-Bougie, Technical Research Assistant,
First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and
Social Services Commission

Regional Advisory Committee

André Simpson, Epidemiologist,
Institut national de santé publique du Québec

Françoise Gédéon, Social Services Coordinator,
Foster Families, Gesgapegiag

Marie-Noëlle Caron, Public Health Advisor,
First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and
Social Services Commission

Martine Awashish, Coordinator – Suicide Prevention Program,
Services de santé d'Opitciwan

Oumar Ba, Regional Manager,
First Nations and Inuit Health Branch

Serge Rock, Danny Robertson, Regional Youth Coordinator,
Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador

Sony Diabo, elder of Kahnawake

Content review

Mathieu-Olivier Côté, Senior Data Analyst,
First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and
Social Services Commission

Reviewers

Faisca Richer, Aboriginal Health Sector,
Institut national de santé publique du Québec

Mathieu-Olivier Côté, Principal Data Analyst,
First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and
Social Services Commission

Nancy Gros-Louis McHugh, Research Sector Manager,
First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and
Social Services Commission

Linguistic revision

Chantale Picard, Linguistic Services Coordinator, FNQLHSSC
Vicky Viens

Graphic design and page layout

Patricia Carignan, Graphic Designer

This document is also available in French and
can be downloaded from the FNQLHSSC website:
<https://centredoc.cssspnql.com>.

Photo credits: FNHRDCQ, Manon Dumas, Marc Tremblay and
Patrice Gosselin.

Suggested citation:

First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services
Commission. (2018). *Quebec First Nations Regional Health
Survey – 2015: Housing*. Wendake: FNQLHSSC.

ISBN: 978-1-77315-195-3

Legal deposit – 2018

Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec /
Library and Archives Canada

© All intellectual property rights reserved by the FNQLHSSC

© FNQLHSSC – 2018