

FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE LIVING ON-RESERVE

WAVE 1 – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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EKOS
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The purpose of this EKOS Research study is to enrich the dialogue through which First Nations people can express themselves on matters that affect them in their personal, social, economic and political lives. This document presents the results of the first component of the First Nations On-Reserve Syndicated Study: a national telephone survey of 1,502 First Nations residents living on-reserve. The survey included an over sample of 346 Aboriginal youth on-reserve, between the ages of 16 and 24. Interviews were conducted between May 7 and July 5, 2007.

In addition to the main line of evidence a number comparisons are offered, including some recent results from surveys with the general public, including the EKOS Research Information Highway. Tracking of results over time from the 2005 First Nations On-Reserve study are also highlighted where available. Also, results of a 500 cases survey with Aboriginal people living off-reserve are also included for some measures. Results are based on a national telephone survey conducted in March of 2008. The sample was drawn from geographic clusters in Canada where the proportion of Aboriginal people relative to the rest of the Canadian population is 10 per cent or higher (based on the last population census). The sample, once drawn was pre-screened using Interactive Voice Response (IVR) technology.

Conditions on Reserve

Views about quality of life are relatively positive. Nearly six in ten rate their current quality of life¹ as good; and these results are fairly stable since 2005. Most First Nations people living on-reserve also feel that their quality of life is better or equal to that of other Canadians. Looking ahead, First Nations people living on-reserve are also highly optimistic about the potential for their quality of life to improve; as over six in ten reported that they believe their quality of life will get better in the next 12 months.

When asked about the more positive aspects of inhabiting a First Nations reserve, family and friends, Aboriginal-culture/language and community/treaty rights are cited at the top of the list. This is followed closely by living in a small community which allows for ease in getting around, the rural aspect of being close to nature and the reserve being tax free as positive aspects.

Although respondents rated their general quality of life fairly highly, the picture painted of the conditions on-reserve is far less positive. The only exception is the positive assessment of the emotional support from family and friends (which is rated highly by two-thirds). The lowest ratings were provided for the amount of housing available and the amount and quality of jobs in and around First Nations

¹ It should be noted that respondents were not provided with a definition of "quality of life", and therefore were left to their own judgment of what that means.

communities, with fewer than one in five residents providing a positive rating of these. Across fourteen aspects of communities rated (e.g., linked to education, health, drinking water, public facilities, opportunities to participate in language and culture), six are rated negatively more often than positively by respondents.

While fewer than half of First Nations people living on-reserve rate the various service/issues in their community as good, a clearer picture emerges when they are asked to name the areas of their community that most urgently need attention to improve the lives of residents. At the top of the list are better and more housing, better education, decreasing drugs and alcohol use, more and better jobs, and health care services – all cited by roughly one in five community residents as requiring immediate attention to improve the lives of residents. Other concerns are cited less frequently

Combining ratings of the current situation with priorities for improvement, there are two areas with poor ratings that are also seen as relatively urgent: the amount and quality of housing; and, the amount and quality of jobs. In contrast, the quality of basic education is generally regarded as good, but is nonetheless seen as an urgent priority to improve quality of life. Decreasing the use of drugs and alcohol is also considered urgent and is identified as a top priority for government.

Roughly half of First Nations people believes that domestic or family violence is “somewhat of a problem” in their community; while just over one-third feel it is a problem. The issue is seen as less severe among youth. Looking at another aspect of the community, seven in ten First Nations people on-reserve feel that drugs and alcohol are a problem in their community, while virtually no one thinks that this is not a problem at all.

When asked to think about issues facing First Nations people on-reserve today that the Government of Canada should focus on, housing/homelessness; health care; and education were cited most often. Somewhat smaller numbers cited land claims, unemployment, alcohol and drugs, treaty rights, poverty or youth as government priorities. Furthermore, concern about housing/homelessness is rising (compared to responses in 2005).

When asked about the Government’s priorities for young people, education was clearly rated as the top priority by almost half of First Nations people on-reserve; and this emphasis on education was even more definitive among youth. Education is followed by recreation programs and facilities, drug and alcohol abuse, and employment as priorities for First Nations Youth.

First Nations Perspectives

Generally speaking, Aboriginal people living on-reserve regard their relationship with the broader Canadian public in a slightly less positive light than they did in 2005, although the proportion that are optimistic about current relations continues to outweigh the proportion that are pessimistic. Nearly four in ten rate the state of current relations between Aboriginal people and other Canadians as good, and just over one-third perceive the relationship as improving over time; although a significant minority — almost two in ten — rate current relations as bad and getting worse over time (representing an increase from 2005).

First Nations people living on-reserve are generally quite positive in their personal outlook. Most believe that they “have a lot of things to be proud of”; are confident that they can meet future challenges; and only one in four feels that they do not have control over the things that happen to them. More alarmingly, roughly one in five say they often feel sad or depressed – a higher figure than found in the general population. Compared to the general public, First Nations people on-reserve also report somewhat lower levels of pride, confidence and personal control.

Nearly half of First Nations residents report having fallen victim to racism or discrimination over the last two years as a result of their Aboriginal origin, representing an increase of eight per cent since 2005. The source of discrimination is most often identified as a non-Aboriginal person, and racism or discrimination is most often reported to have occurred when dealing with a private business or a public institution. When it comes to both direct personal experience and what they have seen of discrimination or racism against First Nations people living on-reserve, over four in ten say that discrimination or racism happens often; about one-third report that it happens once in a while; and one in five report that it happens only rarely. These numbers remain fairly stable since 2005. Furthermore, four in ten respondents report that discrimination or racism happen only off-reserve; while about six in ten have observed or experienced discrimination both on and off the reserve.

Cultural Consumption

First Nations people living on-reserve report attending cultural activities somewhat regularly in the last 12 months. Of the various types of activities, live performances are most frequently attended, while many are not in the habit of going to see art shows over the course of a year. Almost six in ten reserve residents have attended a live performance (such as a play, musical, music concert, dance performance, opera, or storytelling); nearly half attended a visual art exhibit (such as sculpture, painting, photography, mixed media or crafts); four in ten have been to an exhibit of artifacts; and only just over one-third attended an art show that makes use of film, video, audio or digital technologies in the past year.

Overall participation in creative activities is also relatively substantial. Between three in ten and four in ten partook in a wide range of creative activities in the previous year (including working with arts and crafts; acting, dancing or writing; creative writing; painting, drawing, sculpture or printmaking activities; and in photography, film or video)

Health Issues

The quality of health care available in their community continues in 2007 not to be very highly rated by First Nations people with just over four in ten rating the quality as good or excellent; four in ten rating it as only fair; and nearly one in five rating it poorly. Although First Nations people do not generally rate the quality of health care available in their community very highly, they nonetheless report that they are relatively satisfied with the quality of health care services they (personally) have received over the past year. Consistent with 2005 results, less than one-quarter are reported to be dissatisfied with the services received, and almost three in four are either mostly satisfied or completely satisfied.

Just over half of First Nations residents are satisfied with the current wait times to access health care services in their community; while four in ten are not. Just under half believe the wait times experienced within their communities are about the same as those experienced in other communities in Canada, while just over two in ten feel that they are worse. Most residents are not aware of the Federal government's proposed Patient Wait Times Guarantee (PWTG) pilot projects for First Nations (with only a 13 per cent recall of the proposed project). Upon hearing a description of the Patient Wait Times Guarantee, three-quarters of First Nations residents support the idea, while only one in ten oppose the project. Furthermore, a strong majority believe that the Patient Wait Times Guarantee pilot will be successful.

First Nations residents are almost exclusively focused on diabetes as by far the most important health issue currently facing their community today (close to half identified this as the most important issue). By comparison, alcoholism and drug abuse are identified considerably less often by one in ten. Given that most community residents say that drugs and alcohol are a large problem, a likely explanation of this result is that First Nations people do not think of drugs and alcohol as a "health" issue, but perhaps as a social issue or one related to crime.

The perceived causes of obesity are varied, with the top three reasons cited for obesity in the First Nations community being lack of exercise, fast food, and poor diet; while just over one in ten can not list a cause of obesity. Less than half of residents believe that First Nations people living on-reserve are more likely than people living in other communities in Canada to be obese, while one-third believe that the likelihood of obesity is comparable to other communities.

Water

Findings indicate that drinking water quality is perceived as a health issue for some, given that one-third of First Nations residents rate their water quality as poor. On the other hand, almost half (44 per cent) say that it is good. Although almost two in three also consider their water supply to be safe, 35 per cent consider their water supply to be unsafe. Looking at perceptions of quality over time, roughly four in ten believe that water quality has improved within the last five years; however, almost one in four say that it has deteriorated with time, largely found among those who believe their water to be unsafe. Although there are some regional differences in views about water quality, there are also gender differences, suggesting that the variation in responses is as much, if not more, about perception than it is grounded in a true reflection of water quality.

Perceptions around water quality and safety clearly have a strong impact on decisions about how to use tap water. Most residents of reserves use their tap water for a wide range of everyday applications, such as tooth brushing, food preparation and cooking. Drinking is the use that is the least popular, although two-thirds drink their tap water. It is also the area where there is the largest gap in usage depending on whether people perceive their water to be safe or unsafe. One in three of those who believe their water to be unsafe nonetheless drink their tap water. The other two in three (presumably) choose to use bottled water. Depending on whether the tap water is or is not safe, there are households either drinking unsafe tap water, or households consuming bottled water who need not do so.

Most First Nations residents living on-reserve also indicate that they obtain sufficient tap water to meet all their domestic needs. Over half of survey respondents say that they have their household tap water piped directly into their home; two in ten say they rely on a cistern; and a similar proportion say they obtain their water from an individual well. Piped in water is considered to be safe more often by respondents than water from other sources. Water quality is typically reported as poorer in rural areas.

Emergency Preparedness

Roughly one in three First Nations people living on-reserve has taken some steps to be prepared (with either a kit, a plan or both) for dealing with an emergency that might endanger the life or health of household members; while nearly two-thirds have not. First Nations residents are less apt than Canadians in general to say that they have taken concrete steps toward emergency preparedness.²

There is however a strong recognition of the importance of preparing an emergency kit; as eight in ten agree that preparing an emergency kit is a necessary part of ensuring their own or their family's safety. While few residents have a kit or plan in place, three-quarters agree that they would know what to do and where to go for help in an emergency. The perceived importance of being prepared, as well confidence in knowing what to do and where to go for help is considerably higher among First Nations residents living on-reserve than it is among the general public more broadly. In an emergency situation, where they or their community would be cut off from supplies and assistance for a number of days, more First Nations people would rely on themselves for help (half would) than would rely on their community (four in ten).

Models of Policing

Nearly two-thirds of First Nations people living on-reserve are aware that some First Nations communities have police services that are managed by their own First Nation in co-operation with the province; while slightly fewer are aware that some communities have police services that are managed by the RCMP in cooperation with the province and the local community.

While there are only modest differences in the confidence First Nations residents express in the professionalism and speed of responsive of a FN police service versus RCMP police service; First Nations residents are more apt to express confidence in FN police services to provide culturally appropriate policing and accountability to the community they serve. Similarly, 78 per cent of First Nations people living on-reserve indicate that they would have moderate or complete trust in a police service provided by their own First Nation, and 75 per cent indicate that they would have this trust in a RCMP administered police service.

² General public source: *Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada 2006-7 Advertising Evaluation and Baseline Study* (Wave 2, March 2007).

Media Consumption

When asked about general television consumption, First Nations people living on-reserve indicate spending an average of 3.8 hours a day watching television during the week. Reported hours spent watching television is higher on the weekend (at an average 5.3 hours a day). The overall weekly average is 22.8 hours in total. News and current affairs, movies and sports top of the list of the types of programs First Nations people on-reserve most often watch. These are followed by comedy and fun and dramas, while fewer than two in ten most often watch traditional stories and music arts/ entertainment.

A majority (two-thirds) report that their household receives a television signal from a satellite dish. Combined, slightly over one-quarter said they receive television signals from cable and antennas. Digital cable television ownership is quite rare.

General awareness of APTN is very high, with only one in ten reporting that they have not heard of it. Eight in ten First Nations people living on-reserve said they receive APTN in their home. However, a sizable portion of First Nations people living on-reserve (close to four in ten) does not spend any time watching APTN on week days (spending an average of 1.2 hours a day on weekdays watching APTN). Furthermore, the amount of time spent watching APTN programming tends to decrease on weekends (with the average daily time spent watching APTN of 0.8 hours). The average weekly amount of viewership of APTN, including weekdays and weekends, is 6.7 hours. A considerable volume of APTN programming is watched in an Aboriginal language with nearly half reporting that they do so.

Traditional stories, news and current affairs and movies top the list of programs viewed on APTN. The most common reason for *not* watching APTN programming is that it is not included in their TV service. Lack of time, dislike for the shows featured on the APTN and a greater preference for shows playing on other television networks are the next most common reasons cited. Those who do not watch news on APTN most often cite the quality of news offered by APTN as the primary reason, followed by APTN news not covering issues, or coverage on other channels being more accurate.

When asked to rate different aspects of APTN, views tended to be more positive than negative, although it should be noted that roughly one in three respondents to the survey did not feel that they were able to comment on any aspect of the channel. In relation to news programming, APTN received higher ratings for its ability to reflect the perspectives of Aboriginal people and lower ratings for the amount of local coverage addressing issues of importance to reserve communities. Apart from news programming, APTN received very high ratings for being able to reflect Aboriginal cultures and traditions, as well as for having the best traditional stories, cultural programming and documentaries. It received low ratings for its capacity to help First Nations people to preserve their language. Viewers who watch APTN more intensely (i.e., number of hours per week) have a much stronger and more positive view than others about APTN. Finally, roughly half the First Nations residents surveyed perceive APTN programs as entertaining.

