the Heatth of Aboriginal Populations in Montreal

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Produced by Direction régionale de Santé publique de Montréal

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The Health of Aboriginal Populations in Montréal Produced by Direction régionale de santé publique de Montréal CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île de Montréal

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We would like to thank the experts consulted at different stages of this publication. Their names are listed in the appendix.

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The mural White Supremacy Is Killing me was created for the Voix insoumises/Unceded Voices festival (13-21 August 2017), an Indigenous and women of colour street art convergence.

JESSICA SABOGAL is a first generation Colombian American muralist who believe in the right to women's own liberation, unbounded by man-made borders, white supremacy, misogyny and xenophobia. The artist continuously pushes the boundaries by utilizing her medium for social change, action and empowerment.

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Message from the Director

The mission of Montréal's regional public health department is to improve the health and well-being of Montrealers while reducing observable health inequalities in the population. As such, the public health department was spured into action by the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which recommended in 2012 to identify and close the gaps in health outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

Among Québec's cities and municipalities, most people who self-identify as Aboriginal live in Montréal. As is the case elsewhere in the country, Aboriginal populations generally live in less favourable socioeconomic conditions than the rest of the population, and this has impacts on their health and well-being. Over the past few years, the public health department has released publications on the topics of persistent inequalities, housing problems, poverty and some of the difficult social conditions in which Aboriginal people live.

With this health profile, the public health department wants to move forward and answer the TRC's call to action. Although currently available information does not allow us to present a complete picture, it is enough to confirm a link between the state of health of Aboriginal people and social inequalities that persist between this population and non-Aboriginal groups.

This document aims to enhance Montrealers' awareness of the presence of Aboriginal people in the city, and to act as a first step in creating a space for discussion and collaboration around the topic of health promotion and Aboriginal people. This health profile was developed in collaboration with field workers from Aboriginal organizations in Montréal. The public health department thanks them for their invaluable contributions.

La directrice de santé publique de Montréal,

Aylune Browin

Mylène Drouin, M.D.



Preface

While there has been progress in health, more needs to be done. The current health and social services system still does not adequately meet the realities or needs of First Nations and Inuit in Québec, regardless of where they live.

Several reports, including that of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, point out the need to transform current systems to deal with the inequalities that First Nations, Métis and Inuit encounter in Canada. It is obvious that there are shortcomings and that, unfortunately, available data cannot adequately measure results pertaining to health and well-being, in comparison with Québec's population. The solution involves making significant changes in policy and program development.

Results in this portrait present an overview of the situation around which all stakeholders must mobilize and work together. The federal and provincial governments must support the autonomy of First Nations communities and organizations, in a perspective of self-determination and improvement of their well-being. To accomplish this, partnerships must be renewed to provide culturally adapted services.

To conclude, I would like to acknowledge the work of Direction régionale de santé publique de Montréal (DRSP) and its partners, and I look forward to a continued partnership in the future.

The status quo is no longer an option... It's time to work together to initiate change that will enable us to turn the tide and make sure that the health and quality of life of First Nations change radically.

Auar

Ghislain Picard, Chief of the Assembly of First Nations Québec-Labrador



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Highlights

Among Quebec's cities and municipalities, Montréal has the highest number of people reporting an Aboriginal identity in the census.



The Aboriginal identity population in Montréal is growing much faster

than the non-Aboriginal population.

I here are more inuit in **Montreal** than in cities like **Calgary, Toronto, Winnipeg** and **Saskatoon** where the numbers of Aboriginal identity populations are higher.

^a In this document, the term Inuit is spelled without an *'s'*, since this is the plural form of the word *Inuk*.

\$22,000

versus \$26,900

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Despite having higher education levels than other Aboriginal people in Québec, the incomes of Aboriginal identity people in Montréal are no higher than those of Aboriginal individuals elsewhere in Québec.

25% have university degrees in Montréal versus

11% in the province as a whole



The proportion of smokers among Aboriginal people in Montréal is higher than among

the city's overall population:



About 33% of Aboriginal people have had suicidal thoughts in their liftetimes, compared with **9%** among all Montrealers.



Currently available data do not suffice to draw a complete portrait of the health of Aboriginal populations living in Montréal. However,



This is similar to the perceptions of Montrealers in the lowest-income group: **45%** of Montrealers in the lowest income quintile have positive perceptions of their health.

There is no significant difference in excessive alcohol use between Aboriginal people and all Montrealers.



When people living in Aboriginal communities in Québec are hospitalized, **1 in 5** is hospitalized in Montréal.



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Introduction

In Canada, the socioeconomic conditions of Aboriginal populations vary. However, most often, they are not as good as those of non-Aboriginal people in general. These less favourable conditions have an impact on health and well-being. Compared to other Canadians, Aboriginal people are more likely to develop chronic illnesses and have lower life expectancies^{1,2,3,4}. Among populations living in Aboriginal communities (First Nations and Inuit), health disparities can be attributed to poor housing conditions, poverty and, in some cases, lack of access to essential resources such as safe drinking water and healthy, nutritious food^{5,6,7,8,9}.

In Québec, while the health status and living conditions of First Nations and Inuit^a living in communities are documented¹⁰, little is known about the situations of those living in urban settings. Nonetheless, various studies reveal that Aboriginal people living in Canadian cites often face poverty, isolation, discrimination and housing problems, and are more likely to experience homelessness^{11,12,13,14,15}. According to census data, increasingly more people residing on the Island of Montréal report an Aboriginal identity. This population grew from 8,300 to 13,000 between 2006 and 2016¹⁶.

In 2012, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) called for action to redress past harms inflicted on Aboriginal peoples in Canada¹⁷. These calls to action include identifying and closing gaps in health outcomes, and recognizing the distinct health needs of off-reserve Aboriginal people. As noted in the Commission's report, historically, social inequalities in health are rooted in federal policies¹⁷. The legacy of residential schools is reflected in significant disparities in education, income, and health between Aboriginal people and other Canadians¹⁷.

This document begins with a few contextual elements, followed by a short description of Aboriginal peoples in Québec and Canada. Section 2 focuses on the demographic, socioeconomic and health profiles of Aboriginal identity individuals in Montréal and some causes of social inequalities in health. Section 3 suggests avenues for action to improve the health and well-being of Aboriginal people in Montréal.

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^a In this document, the term Inuit is spelled without an 's', since this is the plural form of the word *Inuk*.

1. Aboriginal Peoples in Québec and Canada: Some Definitions

The Constitution Act of 1982¹⁸ recognizes **three Aboriginal groups**: First Nations, Métis and Inuit. The broad diversity of Aboriginal peoples is difficult to summarize using only identification with one of the three groups listed above. In Canada, there are between 60 and 80 Nations, and over 630 Aboriginal communities^{19,20}. There are also over 70 Aboriginal languages that can be divided into 12 language families²¹. Throughout the country, many Aboriginal persons also identify with the Nation to which they belong.



Inuit live in the arctic regions of Nunavik in Québec, as well as in Inuvialuit, Nunavut and Nunatsiavut.

Inuktitut is the most spoken Aboriginal language in Canada²⁴.

In Canada, just over 20% of the Inuit population live **in Québec**²².

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^b It is now recommended to use the term First Nations rather than "Indian". The term "Indian" will only be used in this document when referring to legal texts or legal or administrative elements in which the term is still used. National Aboriginal Health Organization. (2005). Glossary Terms. Available at <u>http://www.icah.ca/content/en/glossary/terms</u>.

Enfranchisement and loss of status

Since 1867, when the Indian Act was enacted, many people have lost their status against their will. Until 1951, the government could take away Indian status from First Nations people even if they met the criteria outlined in the Act, under the pretext that they were "enfranchised". For example, simply attending university could result in loss of status. What is more, until 1985, if a status woman married a non-status man, her status was automatically taken away and their children were not entitled to be registered as Indians^{28,29}.

Aboriginal peoples in Québec

There are 10 First Nations in Québec: Abénaki, Algonquin, Attikamekw, Cree, Huron-Wendat, Innu, Maliseet, Micmac, Mohawk and Naskapi, as well as the Inuit nation. In Québec, close to 70,000 people reported a Métis identity in the 2016 census²²; however the Québec government does not recognize the existence of historic Métis communities in the province³⁰. Aboriginal communities in Québec are identified on the map.



Source : Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones du Québec, 2016²⁶.

Aboriginal populations in urban areas

In 2016 in Québec, 51% of people who self-identified as Aboriginal lived in urban areas³¹. This is lower than **in Canada** as a whole, where **58%** of this population live in cities.

According to Statistics Canada, the growing propensity to report an Aboriginal identity could be motivated in part by a wish to acknowledge origins, a more positive perception of Aboriginal identity in broader society, and recent legal decisions that challenge state-imposed criteria defining Aboriginal identity in Canada^{32,33}

The increase in population is also partly due to Aboriginal people arriving from other towns or rural communities in Québec. The reasons for moving to the city most often cited by First Nations and Inuit individuals are access to education, employment opportunities, family and better living conditions^{34,35,36}. According to some stakeholders, the housing crisis plaguing many First Nations and Inuit communities is due to federal underfunding of social housing⁷. Lastly, some people have to move to cities to access the health care services they need, especially specialized care³⁶.

The ODENA Research Alliance has indicated that Aboriginal presence in cities should not be seen as a new phenomenon. Rather, it should act as a reminder that they were the first people to live on lands that are now Canada's big cities, and that they were eventually pushed outside city limits³⁵.

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2. Profiles

The specific characteristics of Aboriginal people in Montréal have an impact on health and service needs. This section presents statistics that provide a profile of this population. Indicators document the growth, social and economic conditions, living conditions and health status of Aboriginal identity populations.

Considerations about the data

A number of elements limit the capacity of information systems to document urban Indigenous health in Canada^{37,38}. Here are a few elements to consider when interpreting the findings contained in this document.

Limited availability of health indicators

Currently available data does not suffice to draw a complete portrait of the health of Indigenous populations living in Montréal. The usual sources of information are health administrative data^c, population health surveys and data from surveillance systems. Among those sources, most don't include a variable that distinguishes Aboriginal individuals from other residents³⁷.

However, some health surveys^d define populations based on Aboriginal identity. But the indicators in those surveys are often produced at the national level only, since statistical limitations challenge the accuracy and validity of results for smaller geographical regions^{39,40}. The results presented in this profile don't differentiate First Nations from Métis or Inuit, or various Aboriginal nations living in Montréal. Therefore, since health indicators refer to people who identify as Aboriginal, they don't convey the cultural diversity of this population.

An assessment of the health needs of Aboriginal people in Montréal was published in 2012. Some of the issues addressed in this study were city living, perceived barriers to services, perceived wellness and health, spirituality and maternal and child health⁴¹.

Lower survey participation

Participation rates of Aboriginal people in government surveys are often lower; when they do take part they don't always reveal their Aboriginal identity³⁷. Homeless and highly mobile individuals, both of which are overrepresented in Aboriginal populations, are often missed by the census and population health surveys³⁷. Health disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people may be underestimated³⁷. Findings for socioeconomic and health indicators put forward in this document present a more positive portrait than it actually is.

It is also difficult to accurately estimate the size of Aboriginal populations living in urban areas. Some Aboriginal people are only passing through Montréal or live part-time in the city and in other communities, but don't necessarily identify as residents. They come to the city for varying periods of time to work, study or access services that are not available in their home communities.

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^c Birth, death and hospitalization records.

^d A variable on Aboriginal identity is available in Statistic Canada's Canadian Community Health Survey. The Aboriginal Peoples Survey is a national survey of First Nations peoples living off reserve, Métis and Inuit.

A population established on a self-identification basis

Data in this document are originally from Statistics Canada's 2016 survey and the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey. The indicators presented cover people who identify as Aboriginal. Self-identification with an ethnic group is a subjective indicator of an individual's cultural affiliation⁴². This definition can vary significantly from one census to another, and evolution of changes over time can be difficult to interpret⁴².

Self-identification also leads to people forming groups where different realities coexist. For example, a First Nation could include individuals registered with a community and others who are not. Among Métis, some people claim a Métis identity while others refer to the more general idea of mixed identities (for example, First Nations and Inuit).

Demographic characteristics of Aboriginal populations living in Montréal

Aboriginal identity population in Montréal in 2016



Source: 2016 Census, Statistics Canada

In the 2016 census, 13,000 persons living on the Island of Montréal self-identified as Aboriginal. This represents 7% of the Aboriginal identity population in Québec (183,000 people). In the Montréal metropolitan area, which encompasses neighbouring suburbs, the number climbs to 35,000 people, or close to 20% of Québec's Aboriginal population²².

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The Aboriginal identity population in Montréal is relatively small, compared with other Canadian cities. However, among Québec's cities and municipalities, the highest number of people reporting an Aboriginal identity in the census were in Montréal (Figure 1).



Source: 2016 Census, Statistics Canada

A growing population

The Aboriginal identity population in Montréal is growing much faster than the non-Aboriginal population. From 1996 and 2016, the overall population on the Island of Montréal grew by 7%, whereas the Aboriginal identity population increased by 145% (Figure 2). Such growth is not unique to Montréal. For the past four decades in Canada, this group has significantly increased in numbers^{43,44}.

Legend -

Canada

Québec

Montréal





Figure 2 – Evolution of Aboriginal Identity Population, 1996 to 2016

Source: 2016 Census, Statistics Canada

Figure 1 – Aboriginal Identity Population in some Canadian Cities, 2016

The rise in the Métis identity population is especially pronounced for the period 1996 to 2016. This group alone accounts for over half the increase in the Aboriginal identity population in Montréal. Populations who self-identify as First Nations or Inuit doubled during the same period (Figure 3).

According to Statistics Canada, this growth in numbers is partly due the fact that more people are newly identifying as Aboriginal on the census—a continuation of a trend over time⁴⁵.

> Legend – 1996

2016



Source: 2016 Census, Statistics Canada

Growth from 1996 to 2016 (number and relative %)



Source: 2016 Census, Statistics Canada

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^e Since Statistics Canada does not distinguish between Métis Nation membership and Métis identity, the term "Métis" is used when referring to the group identified by census data.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit in Montréal

First peoples' identity is different among the Aboriginal identity population in Montréal than elsewhere in Canada (Figure 4).

In Montréal :

- a lower proportion of the Aboriginal identity population also identify as First Nations (45% in Montréal versus 58% in Canada);
- a higher percentage report a Métis identity (44% in Montréal versus 35% in Canada).



Montréal also stands out from other big Canadian cities with a more pronounced presence of Inuit (Figure 5).

There are more Inuit in Montréal (n=670) than in cities like Calgary (n=355), Toronto (n=275), Winnipeg (n=275) and Saskatoon (n=80), where the numbers of Aboriginal identity populations are higher.

Legend –

Canada Québec

Montréal



Source: 2016 Census, Statistics Canada





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Distribution of Aboriginal Identity Population on the Island of Montréal

In Montréal, half of the Aboriginal identity population lives in 4 territories (RLS^f):



^f RLS (local services networks) correspond to what were previously CSSS territories.

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Distribution (%) of **Aboriginal Identity** Population by **CIUSSS territory**⁹

A relatively young population

Compared with Montréal's total population^h, there are proportionately fewer older Aboriginal people and more young Aboriginal adults (Figures 6,7 and 8). The Inuit identity population also stands out by the high number of children under 15 (Figure 8).



CIUSSS territories	Number	%
Ouest-de-l'Île-de-Montréal	2,770	21
Centre-Ouest-de-l'Île-de-Montréal	1,395	11
Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal	3,055	23
Nord-de-l'Île-de-Montréal	2,160	16
Est-de-l'Île-de-Montréal	3,725	28
Montréal RSS	13,100	100

Source: 2016 Census, Statistics Canada



Figure 6 – Age Structure of First Nations Identity Population in

Source: 2016 Census, Statistics Canada

CIUSSS: Integrated university health and social services centre.

"Montréal's total population" includes all people living on the Island of Montréal, including those of Aboriginal identity.

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Source: 2016 Census, Statistics Canada



Figure 8 – Age Structure of Inuit Identity Population in Montréal, 2016

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Source: 2016 Census, Statistics Canada

As illustrated in the age structures, Aboriginal identity populations in Montréal are younger than the population as a whole. Therefore, the median ages of Aboriginal identity populations are relatively lower (Figure 9). The Inuit are particularly young, with an average age of just under 30.



In terms of education, in

general, Aboriginal identity individuals in Montréal are more educated than those living elsewhere in Québec. Proportionately fewer have

are likely to have a university

in education still exist when

compared with Montréal's

degree (Figure 10).

total population.





Source: 2016 Census, Statistics Canada

A more educated but poorer population

Figure 10 – Highest Level of Education Attained, 25- to 64-Year-Olds, 2016 no diploma, and more of them 18% No diploma 27% However, data also show gaps 11% 25% University 11% degree 40% 0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35% 40% 45% Proportion







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Despite their higher education levels, the economic situation of Aboriginal identity individuals in Montréal is no better than that of Aboriginal people living elsewhere in the province, whether in other cities or in Aboriginal communities. Findings from studies conducted in other big Canadian studies show that a high proportion of Aboriginal populations in large urban centres live in poverty^{46,47,48}. While some Aboriginal people are educated and employed, others are marginalized and have difficulty entering the workforce49,50,51.

When compared with Montréal's total population and Aboriginal identity populations living elsewhere in Québec, people of Aboriginal identity in Montréal have lower incomes and proportionately more of them live below the low-income measure (Figure 11 and 12). However, Aboriginal identity populations have similar unemployment rates, whether they live in Montréal or elsewhere in Québec (Figure 12).

Legend – Aboriginal identity in Montréal Aboriginal identity in Québec Montréal's total population









Source: 2016 Census, Statistics Canada

Statistics Canada's Low Income Measure (LIM) threshold is one half of the median income of the total population. Income is adjusted according to the size and composition of family units.

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In Montréal, the proportion of the Aboriginal identity population with an "average"^j income is comparable to that of all Montrealers. However, Aboriginal identity populations are more likely to be in lower income categories and less likely to be in higher income ones (Figure 13).



Socioeconomic gaps among Aboriginal peoples

Gaps can also be observed within the Aboriginal identity population in Montréal (Figure 14).

Proportionately more Inuit than First Nations or Métis people don't have a diploma, and are less likely to have a university degree. Among the Aboriginal identity population, Métis people are the most educated.











Source: 2016 Census, Statistics Canada

"Average" incomes correspond to income deciles 4 to 7, as per income distribution in Canada.

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Compared with all Montrealers, average median income is lower in all three Aboriginal groups, although it is comparable among them (Figure 15).

First Nations

Montréal's total

population

Métis Inuit

Legend –

People Aged 15 and Over, 2015 30 000 26 900 S 25 000 22 100 \$ 22 100 \$ 21 700 \$ 20 000 Median income 15 000 10 000 5 000 0 **First Nations** Métis Inuit Montréal's total population





Older people who self-identify as First Nations are especially affected by poverty. Over a third of this population lives below the low-income measure (Figure 16).





Figure 16 – Low-Income Measure After Tax (LIM-AT) by Aboriginal

Source: 2016 Census, Statistics Canada

* Results for the Inuit identity population are not included in this figure as the number of individuals in this category is too low.

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The unemployment rate is particularly high among the Inuit identity population. It is also higher among First Nations and Métis compared with all Montrealers (Figure 17).







Aboriginal identity groups are overrepresented in the lower income category compared with all Montrealers. There are also proportionately fewer people from these groups in the higher income categories (Figure 18).





Source: 2016 Census, Statistics Canada



A high proportion of Aboriginal identity children live with one parent only

Children of Aboriginal identity are more likely to live in loneparent families. This is the case for over 40% of them, whereas the figure is 28% for Montreal's total population (Figure 19). Among the three groups, the number is highest for children of Inuit identity (55%).







Source: 2016 Census, Statistics Canada

Poorer living conditions than those of other Montrealers

There are serious housing problems in Aboriginal communities throughout the country: housing shortages, overpopulation, poorly built dwellings or dwellings in poor condition, and challenges in provision of safe drinking water^{7,52}. Aboriginal people also have trouble accessing affordable, adequate and safe housing in urban areas^{14,53,54}. One Montréal organization reports that Aboriginal people who live in the city have difficulty finding adequate housing at a reasonable cost, which jeopardizes their chances of finding stability and security⁵⁵.

Census data confirm that, in general, the housing conditions of Aboriginal people in Montréal are not as good as those of the overall population (Figure 20). A comparison with all households in Montréal shows the following:

- Proportionately fewer Aboriginal households **own** their homes. At only 13%, the proportion of Inuit households who own their dwellings is especially low.
- A greater proportion of First Nations and Métis households allot a significant part of their income to rent (30% or more). This is also the case for more than a third of Inuit identity households. Having to spend too much on housing limits their ability to meet other essential needs, such as eating, transportation, taking care of their health, or even heating their homes¹⁴.
- Proportionately more Aboriginal households in Montréal live in dwellings requiring **major repairs**.

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Figure 20 – Housing Characteristics^{k,t} of Aboriginal Dwellings

Source: 2016 Census, Statistics Canada

Specific housing needs

A study of people using Aboriginal community resources in Montréal showed certain preferences for housing and specific service needs⁵⁶. Over two-thirds of respondents reported incomes below \$750 a month, making it difficult to access suitable housing. When asked about the type of accommodation in which they would ideally like to live, the most frequently chosen option was their own apartment with a rent subsidy. This was especially the case for First Nations and Inuit women, who generally preferred this option to Aboriginal congregate housing. The second most frequently selected type of housing was "permanent housing in a building reserved for Inuit or First Nations people, with culturally sensitive supports".



^k Montréal households" includes all people living on the Island of Montréal, including Aboriginal Montrealers.

Aboriginal households are those where primary household maintainers self-identified as Aboriginal in the census.

Homelessness

In Canada, Aboriginal people are overrepresented among the homeless population⁵⁴. They are also more likely to experience hidden homeless, that is, having to stay with parents or friends because they can't afford housing⁵⁴.

The 2018 Count and Survey of Montreal's Homeless Population revealed that Aboriginal people represented 12% of the sample, even though they made up only about 1% of the city's population¹⁵. The Inuit comprised 25% of homeless Indigenous people, but only 5% of the Indigenous population in Montréal. The large majority of homeless Aboriginal people in Montréal were born elsewhere in Québec or in another Canadian province. Just over 22% were born in Montréal¹⁵.

Profile of the health of Aboriginal populations in Montréal

A system to monitor the health of Aboriginal people in urban settings

Overall, Aboriginal people who live in urban areas in Canada are in better health than those who live in Aboriginal communities, but in poorer health than the non-Aboriginal population^{36,57}.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) identified health indicators to track in cities as well as in Aboriginal communities⁵⁸.

Here is a list of those indicators:

- Infant mortality and infant and child health issues
- Maternal health
- Birth rates
- Suicide rates
- Addictions
- Life expectancy
- Chronic diseases (especially diabetes, COPD, heart diseases, high blood pressure and cancer)
- Illness and injury incidence
- Availability of appropriate health services

Unfortunately, data sources commonly used to produce indicators determined by the TRC do not identify Indigenous people. Therefore, the portrait presented here is limited.

Of note

The results presented here reflect the state of health of a small number of respondents. While
they point to broad trends, in general there are no statistically significant differences between the groups unless indicated.

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Perception of health status

About 44% of the Aboriginal identity population in Montréal **have a positive perception of their health**^m (Figure 21). Positive perception of health status is associated with lower mortality, more active life and better community health^{59,60}. Negative perception of health is associated with decreased physical capabilities, disease and mortality⁵⁹.

It is well documented that poverty is associated with poorer perception of health^{61,62,63}. Proportionately fewer Montrealers whose income is among the lowest have a positive perception of their general health than the population as a whole (45% versus 57%)ⁿ.

Figure 21 – Proportion of the Population Having a Positive Perception of their Health, 12 and Over, Montréal



Sources: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS, 2012) and Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), 2011-2012

Health-related behaviours

Abusive alcohol use, drug addiction and smoking are some of the coping mechanisms observed most frequently among populations experiencing poverty and social exclusion. These are ways to manage stress caused by difficult living conditions^{64,65}. According to some studies, the frequency of those behaviours among Aboriginal peoples can be explained by loss of cultural identity and deterioration of traditional lifestyles fuelled by assimilation measures^{66,67}. Aboriginal peoples around the world share these risk factors⁶⁸.

In 2012, the Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) revealed that 30% of the Aboriginal identity population in Montréal had not used alcohol in the past year. This figure is comparable to that of Montrealers in the Canadian Community Health Survey (24%)⁶⁹. The APS showed similar results in off-reserve First Nations and Inuit people in Québec: respectively, 28% and 35% of them had not used alcohol in the 12 months preceding the survey. The figure for Métis people in Québec was 22%⁷⁰.

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^m Population having a very good or excellent perception of health.

ⁿ When results are available, data for a group living in less favourable socio-economic conditions are presented. This is to highlight the fact that health disparities are associated to poor socioeconomic conditions and not cultural affiliation.

The proportion of Aboriginal identity individuals and of all Montrealers who engaged in excessive alcohol consumption° in the past year is similar. (Figure 22)





Sources: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS, 2012) and Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), 2011-2012

* Coefficient of variation above 15% and less than or equal to 25%. Therefore the proportion should be interpreted with caution.

Substance abuse linked to residential school experience

According to the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, many residential school survivors developed symptoms of post-traumatic stress as a result of their stays in one of those schools. People who suffer from this disorder can have difficulty functioning on a daily basis due to the many incapacitating symptoms. There is also an association between this disorder and abuse of alcohol and sedative medication drugs. Subsequent generations of residential school survivors are also more likely to report experiencing psychological distress and suicidal behaviours⁷¹.



High-quality social support and a sense of belonging to the community help to protect against the effects of stress^{72,73}. It has been shown that Aboriginal culture has powerful protection factors that limit or prevent substance abuse. These elements also contribute to reducing symptoms of intergenerational trauma and limit impacts on future generations^{72,73}.



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Excessive alcohol consumption is defined as having five or more drinks per occasion once a month or more over the past 12 months.

The proportion of **smokers** among Aboriginal people in Montréal is higher than among the city's overall population (Figure 23).

However, this finding may conceal differences among the Aboriginal identity population; again according to APS, in 2012 in Québec, 28% of First Nations and Métis aged 12 and over reported smoking regularly, whereas for Inuit, the figure was 61%⁷⁰.







Sources: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS, 2012) and Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), 2011-2012

* Coefficient of variation above 15% and less than or equal to 25%. Therefore the proportion should be interpreted with caution.

Chronic diseases

First Nations and Métis people in Canada bear a disproportionate burden of chronic diseases⁷⁴. However, among the Inuit population, in particular in Nunavik, prevalence of chronic diseases is currently lower than among First Nations and northern Métis populations (Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut)^{74,75}. This situation may be attributable to greater adherence, until very recently, to relatively active lifestyles and traditional dietary patterns in Inuit communities in Canada^{74,76}.

According to the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS), 66% of the Aboriginal identity population in Montréal reported **at least one chronic condition**⁷⁷. This result is comparable to that observed in the off-reserve First Nations population in Canada (63%)⁵⁷. However, the figures are higher than among the total Canadian population, where 49% reported being diagnosed with at least one chronic condition by a health professional⁵⁷.

Aboriginal people living in urban areas are particularly affected by **obesity**. which is associated with an increased risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some forms of cancer⁷⁸. About 30% of the Aboriginal identity population in Montréal is obese (Figure 24).

It should be noted that socioeconomic factors affect the probability of suffering from obesity⁷⁹. Prevalence of obesity in Montréal is higher among Montrealers who do not have a diploma (15% versus 28%). Moreover, among both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations in Canada, obesity is less prevalent among people with the highest levels of educational attainment⁷⁸.



Sources: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS, 2012) and Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), 2011-2012

* Coefficient of variation above 15% and less than or equal to 25%. Therefore the proportion should be interpreted with caution.

Diabetes

Diabetes is a chronic illness that can lead to many complications such as cardiovascular disease, kidney failure, neuropathy and retinopathy^{80,81}. For at least the past 20 years, the prevalence of diabetes in Canada has been growing, a matter of significant concern for public health⁸¹.

Currently, diabetes prevalence among Aboriginal people in Montréal cannot be determined with the available data sources. However, it is known that First Nations in Québec are more affected by this condition than non-Aboriginals (Table I). At this time, the prevalence of diabetes among Inuit is lower than among other Aboriginal peoples.

Table I - Prevalence of Diabetes, 18 and Over, Province of Québec, 2010-2015

	Rate (%)	Confidence interval
Total population, Pr. Québec ¹	6,5	6,1 - 6,8
First Nations (on communities) ²	17,4	15,2 - 19,9
First Nations (off communities)1	12,2	6,2 - 18,2
Métis	8,1	4,8 - 11,5
Inuit ³	5	-

Sources: ¹Statistics Canada, CCHS, Annual Component, 2010-2013, taken from the Pan-Canadian Health Inequalities Data Tool, 2017 Edition 2017. A joint initiative of the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Pan-Canadian Public Health Network, Statistics Canada, and the Canadian Institute of Health Information. Accessed on 2018-02-13; ²CSSSPNQL, Enquête régionale sur la santé des Premières Nations du Québec, 2015. Résultats préliminaires, phase 3 (2017); ³Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012, taken from Inuit health: Selected findings from the 2012

Aboriginal Peoples Survey. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-653-x/89-653-x2014003-eng.htm

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Mental health

Perceived mental health is a reliable indicator of a population's well-being. Negative perception does not necessarily correspond to diagnosed mental health disorders, but is associated with greater service use⁵⁹.

In Montréal, the proportion of Aboriginal people with **positive perceptions of their mental**^p health is lower than in the overall population (Figure 25). Positive perception of mental health is influenced by social status and socioeconomic position. Among Montrealers whose incomes are among the lowest, proportionately fewer have positive perceptions of their mental health compared to the overall population (61% versus 72%)⁶⁹.



Sources: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS, 2012) and Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), 2011-2012

About a third of Aboriginal people have had **suicidal thoughts** in their liftetime. This proportion is statistically higher than for Montrealers in general (Figure 26).





Sources: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS, 2012) and Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), 2011-2012

* Coefficient of variation above 15% and less than or equal to 25%. Therefore the proportion should be interpreted with caution.

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^P Population having a very good or excellent perception of mental health.

Figure 27 – Proportion of the Population with Mood or In Montréal, the proportion Anxiety Disorders of Aboriginal people with mood or anxiety disorders is 35 statistically higher than in the 21* overall population (Figure 27). 30 25 20 % 15 12 Legend -Aboriginal identity 10 in Montréal 5 Montréal's total 0 population

Sources: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS, 2012) and Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), 2011-2012

* Coefficient of variation above 15% and less than or equal to 25%. Therefore the proportion should be interpreted with caution.

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Impact of residential schools on Indigenous people in Montréal

According to the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study, in 2011, **50%** of Aboriginal respondents in Montréal or a family member had attended a residential school³⁴.

Most of them (80%) said this experience has had an impact on their lives and who they are today³⁴.

Service utilization

At this time, there is little data available to estimate the actual number of Aboriginal people who are temporarily in Montréal each year to receive care and services.

However, it is possible to get information using the place of residence of hospitalized individuals. When people living in Aboriginal communities in Québec are hospitalized, 1 in 5 is hospitalized in Montréal; according to hospitalization data, a large majority of them are from Nunavik and Eeyou Istchee James Bay Territory.

Table II - Hospitalizations Among the Population Living in Indigenous Communities, by Type and Place

Type of hospitalization	Pr. Québec	Montréal	% in Montréal
Total (all types)	26,200	4,800	18%
Short-term hospitalization	17,600	3,100	18%

Source: Med-Écho 2013-2014 à 2014-2015

Note: Data include residents of territories subject to agreements

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Some studies show that having experienced or being afraid of experiencing discrimination in health care settings is an obstacle to Aboriginal people accessing services. Those studies suggest that Aboriginal individuals face prejudice in the health system, which has an impact on how they are treated when seeking medical helps^{41,82,83}. Among Aboriginal people living in poverty, the fear of not being taken seriously or not receiving appropriate treatment is even more pronounced⁸⁴.

In an evaluation of the health needs of Aboriginal people in Montréal carried out in 2012, fear of experiencing racism was identified as an obstacle to accessing health services. Respondents also reported being "mistreated"^q in the past year. Respondents identified their ethnic origin and language spoken as the reasons behind the discrimination they experienced⁴¹.

According to that same study, it is in mental health and maternal and child health that the needs are most pressing. This is due to the fact that the needs are significant and access to services is especially difficult for Aboriginal populations in Montréal. Many people also identified access to traditional healing services as problematic. Indeed, the majority of survey respondents did not know where to go to access those services⁴¹. Traditional healing methods include access to a traditional healer or elder, and various ceremonies⁴¹.

Aboriginal women: Particularly vulnerable

Aboriginal women in Canada are at greater risk of developing chronic illnesses than non-Aboriginal women and Aboriginal men²⁵. Aboriginal women's poorer health may be explained in part by less favourable socioeconomic conditions³⁶. Compared with Aboriginal men, Aboriginal women face a double marginalization of racism and sexism³⁴. They are particularly affected by social inequalities, racism and discriminatory behaviours directed toward Aboriginal people^{25,36,85,86}.

The 2014 General Social Survey indicates that Aboriginal women in Canada had been three times more likely than non-Aboriginal women to be victims of spousal assault in the past five years⁸⁷. Some women take their children and move to the city because of domestic violence, relationship breakdown and housing instability, and so improve their living conditions^{36,87}. These women are more likely to have low incomes, be lone-parents and experience housing instability³⁶. The health status and living conditions of Aboriginal women in urban settings cannot be dissociated from the reasons for which some of them leave their communities⁸⁸.

They are also more likely than other women to experience violence and be victims of homicide⁸⁷. In the past decade, the average rate of homicides involving Aboriginal female victims was six times higher than that observed among non-Aboriginal women⁸⁹. Since 1980 in Canada, there have been almost 1200 cases of missing or murdered Aboriginal women⁹⁰. These crimes occur more often in urban areas, where 60% of murders and 70% of disappearances have been recorded⁹⁰.

^q The study does not define the term "mistreatment".


3. Avenues for Action

A system to monitor the health of Aboriginal people in urban settings

A system to monitor the health of Aboriginal people in Montréal should enable production of local evidencebased data. These data are especially needed to plan care, services, and social and prevention programs, and to evaluate public policy.

The system should normally allow for the following:

- 1. Provide a picture of the health and well-being of the Aboriginal population.
- 2. Measure health disparities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations.
- 3. Observe how health status and health disparities evolve over time.
- 4. Document the social and economic conditions in which Aboriginal people live (social determinants of health).

The surveillance system should be culturally adapted and useful to Aboriginal people. It should be developed in accordance with First Nations' governing process, and approved by First Nations, Inuit and Cree authorities. Elements that reflect a holistic world view of health should also be incorporated in this system, including indicators of effects of colonization, well-being of the community and strength of the culture³⁹. Indeed, such systems are already in place in communities as well as in territories subject to agreements, that is, Eeyou Istchee James Bay Territory and Nunavik⁹¹.

Access to culturally safe services

Cultural competency can be defined as the result of a service or care delivered in a respectful manner and in a way that the user feels safe. Therefore, cultural competency "is about creating a health care environment that is free of racism and stereotypes, where Aboriginal people are treated with empathy, dignity, and respect ⁹²." Aboriginal people describe fear of discrimination as an obstacle to using health services⁴¹. Culturally safe care requires communicating respect for a patient's beliefs, values and knowledge, and ensures the person is a partner in decision-making⁹².

Holistic health

For First Nations and Inuit, whole health results from harmony and balance involving body, mind, emotions and spirit. Attaining harmony and balance is a process that necessitates full commitment of the person interacting with the territory, environment and other people. Many Aboriginal cultures share the concept of holistic health^{68,93}.

For Aboriginal peoples, culture, identity, territory, language, spirituality and health are closely linked. For some of them, access to traditional healing practices is as, if not more, important than access to mainstream non-Aboriginal health care⁹⁴. Those practices vary among Nations and cultures, and are often less accessible in urban settings⁹⁴.

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Conclusion

Currently available data does not suffice to draw a complete and satisfactory portrait of the health of Aboriginal people living in Montréal. Some information isn't available, and the data collected isn't accurate enough to measure health gaps for most indicators. The vision of health described in this profile also reflects a Western perspective.

Still, it is possible to highlight findings that emerge from the information analyzed. First, as is the case elsewhere in Canada and in other big cities, significant socioeconomic inequalities remain between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations in Montréal. Health data also suggest the presence of psychological distress among Aboriginal Montrealers. The latter experience difficulty accessing culturally safe health care and services. Some Aboriginal people in Montréal also face challenges in trying to hold on to a strong cultural identity.

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APPENDIX I

Health data sources and their limitations to produce indicators for Aboriginal populations in Montréal

Data source	Limitations	Impacts on outcomes				
Census (Statistics Canada)	Very low or even no representation of people who move around or are homeless	Underestimation of social inequalities and health disparities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals				
	The Aboriginal population is established on a self-identification basis	Variations in size of Aboriginal populations from census to census				
		Challenges in interpreting changes over time				
Health administrative data For example: birth, death and hospitalization records	No ethnic identifier in Québec records	Impossible to produce the usual mortality, morbidity and birth indicators for Aboriginal populations outside communities				
Population health surveys (Statistics Canada) Indigenous identifiers available in the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) and the Aboriginal People's Survey (APS).	Lack of representation of Indigenous people living in Montréal. Same limitations as for the census, since samples are based on the census population.	Impossible to produce indicators for Montréal, or indicators inaccurate.				
Surveillance system data	Only concerns status Indians ^r or those living in a community, and Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat	Production of indicators possible solely for FN with Indian status and Inuit given care in Montréal who also have an address in their communities.				

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^r In Montréal, "Status Indians" make up a bit less than 40% of the Aboriginal population.

Appendix II

Demographic characteristics of the Aboriginal identity population in Montréal, 2016

	All Montrealers	Aboriginal identity population in Montréal								
			iginal y (Total)	First I	Nations	Mé	étis	Ir	nuit	
Age structure		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Total population	100,0	13 100	100	5 910	100,0	5 745	100	670	100,0	
0 to 4 years	5,8	775	5,9	300	5,1	345	6,0	80	11,9	
5 to 19 years	15,4	2 015	15,4	960	16,2	765	13,3	170	25,4	
20 to 64 years	63,6	8 940	68,2	3 970	67,2	4 100	71,4	390	58,2	
Aged 65 +	15,2	1 375	10,5	680	11,5	535	9,3	45	6,7	
Population aged 15 and over	84,0	11 020	84,1	4 975	84,4	4 935	85,9	475	69,7	
Median age of the population	38,5	-	35,8	-	36,5	-	35,7	-	29,6	
Relative increase in the population from 1996 to 2016	+ 7%	+ 7,745	+ 145%	+ 2,885	+ 96%	+ 4,070	+ 143 %	+ 380	+ 131 %	
Family structure	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Children living with one parent only	27,6	1 440	43,2	695	46,0	555	40,1	135	55,1	

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APPENDIX III

Socioeconomic characteristics of the Aboriginal identity population in Montréal, 2016

	All Montrealers %	Aboriginal identity								
		Aboriginal identity (Total)		First Nations		Métis		Inuit		
Education		Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%	Ν	%	
No certificate, diploma or degree	10,6	1,390	17,7	620	17,7	560	15,6	135	38,0	
University certificate, diploma or bachelor's degree	40,3	1,960	25,0	810	23,2	1,045	29,1	35	9,9	
Socioeconomic characteristics	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Unemployed	9,0	855	12,2	390	12,3	390	12,3	45	16,1	
Income for the populati	on aged 15 yea	rs and ove	er (2015, a	after-tax)						
Median income (\$)	26,880	21,950	-	22,085	-	21,681	-	22,053	-	
Average income (\$)	35,155	28,155	-	27,871	-	28,083	-	27,522	-	
Household income (201	5, after-tax)									
Median income (\$)	46,525	35,344	-	35,480	-	34,927	-	35,991	-	
Average income (\$)	61,682	44,166	-	43,745	-	44,411	-	42,075	-	
Low-income status for the population (2015, after-tax LIM)	21,3	3,940	30,1	1,805	30,5	1,750	30,5	160	-	
Under 18 years of age	22,6	695	28,0	325	29,7	280	28,1	45	-	
Under 6 years of age	22,7	260	28,6	125	34,7	105	25,9	15	-	
18 to 64 years	21,0	2,770	29,9	1 230	29,7	1,290	30,4	105	26,9	
65 years and over	21,2	480	34,7	250	36,8	185	33,6	10	33,3	
Housing	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Owner households	40,0	1,415	21,0	640	21,1	660	21,4	30	13,0	
Tenant households spending 30% or more of income on shelter costs	36,8	-	43,4	-	43,4	-	45,2	-	34,1	
Dwellings needing major repairs	7,9	945	14,0	425	14,0	435	14,1	50	21,7	
Housing not suitable	8,2	375	5,5	170	5,6	170	5,5	20	8,7	

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APPENDIX IV

Aboriginal identity population in Montréal, 2016, CIUSSS and RTS territories

Territories	Aboriginal identity		Premières Nations		Métis		Inuit	
	First Nations	Métis	Inuit	%	N	%	N	%
Montréal RSS	13,105	100,0	5,910	100,0	5,750	100,0	670	100,0
061 - RTS de l'Ouest-de-l'Île-de- Montréal	2,765	21,1	1,375	23,3	880	15,3	340	50,7
062 - RTS du Centre-Ouest-de-l'Île- de-Montréal	1,395	10,6	725	12,3	500	8,7	95	14,2
063 - RTS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de- Montréal	3,055	23,3	1,410	23,9	1,385	24,1	65	9,7
064 - RTS du Nord-de-l'Île-de- Montréal	2,160	16,5	890	15,1	1,030	17,9	70	10,4
065 - RTS de l'Est-de-l'Île-de- Montréal	3,725	28,4	1,510	25,5	1,950	33,9	105	15,7
RLS de l'Ouest-de-l'Île	1,180	9,0	540	9,1	475	8,3	85	12,7
RLS de Dorval-Lachine-LaSalle	1,585	12,1	830	14,0	405	7,0	250	37,3
RLS Cavendish	625	4,8	370	6,3	155	2,7	50	7,5
RLS de la Montagne	765	5,8	360	6,1	345	6,0	45	6,7
RLS du Sud-Ouest–Verdun	1,690	12,9	855	14,5	710	12,3	50	7,5
RLS Jeanne-Mance	1,365	10,4	555	9,4	675	11,7	20	3,0
RLS de Bordeaux-Cartierville– Saint-Laurent	435	3,3	130	2,2	200	3,5	35	5,2
RLS d'Ahuntsic et Montréal-Nord	895	6,8	350	5,9	470	8,2	15	2,2
RLS du Cœur-de-l'Île	835	6,4	410	6,9	365	6,3	20	3,0
RLS de Saint-Léonard et Saint-Michel	525	4,0	225	3,8	265	4,6	15	2,2
RLS de la Pointe-de-l'Île	1,505	11,5	610	10,3	825	14,3	20	3,0
RLS Lucille-Teasdale	1,695	12,9	670	11,3	865	15,0	65	9,7

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APPENDIX V

Aboriginal identity population in Montréal, 2016, CLSC territories

Territories	Aboriginal identity		First Nations		Métis		Inuit	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Montréal RSS	13,105	100,0	5,910	100,0	5,750	100,0	670	100,0
CLSC Lac Saint-Louis	530	4,0	250	4,2	210	3,7	50	7,5
CLSC Pierrefonds	650	5,0	295	5,0	265	4,6	35	5,2
CLSC Dorval-Lachine	885	6,8	455	7,7	205	3,6	155	23,1
CLSC Lasalle	705	5,4	380	6,4	195	3,4	90	13,4
CLSC René-Cassin	85	0,6	35	0,6	40	0,7	0	0,0
CLSC Notre-Dame-de-Grâces - Montréal-Ouest	540	4,1	330	5,6	115	2,0	50	7,5
CLSC Parc-Extension	90	0,7	40	0,7	40	0,7	10	1,5
CLSC Côte-des-Neiges	460	3,5	200	3,4	225	3,9	20	3,0
CLSC Métro	225	1,7	120	2,0	80	1,4	10	1,5
CLSC Saint-Henri	415	3,2	170	2,9	200	3,5	20	3,0
CLSC Verdun	1 105	8,4	595	10,1	435	7,6	20	3,0
CLSC Pointe-Saint-Charles	175	1,3	90	1,5	75	1,3	10	1,5
CLSC Saint-Louis-du-Parc	380	2,9	190	3,2	160	2,8	0	0,0
CLSC Plateau-Mont-Royal	485	3,7	195	3,3	260	4,5	0	0,0
CLSC Des Faubourgs	495	3,8	170	2,9	245	4,3	10	1,5
CLSC Bordeaux-Cartierville	155	1,2	50	0,8	75	1,3	0	0,0
CLSC Saint-Laurent	280	2,1	75	1,3	125	2,2	35	5,2
CLSC Ahuntsic	340	2,6	155	2,6	155	2,7	10	1,5
CLSC Montréal-Nord	550	4,2	195	3,3	315	5,5	10	1,5
CLSC Villeray	390	3,0	205	3,5	155	2,7	10	1,5
CLSC La Petite Patrie	445	3,4	205	3,5	210	3,7	10	1,5
CLSC Saint-Michel	270	2,1	125	2,1	125	2,2	10	1,5
CLSC Saint-Léonard	255	1,9	100	1,7	140	2,4	10	1,5
CLSC Rivière-des-Prairies	270	2,1	120	2,0	130	2,3	0	0,0
CLSC Mercier-Est-Anjou	660	5,0	260	4,4	390	6,8	0	0,0
CLSC Pointe-aux-Trembles-Mon- tréal-Est	570	4,3	225	3,8	305	5,3	20	3,0
CLSC Rosemont	775	5,9	310	5,2	415	7,2	15	2,2
CLSC Olivier-Guimond	325	2,5	145	2,5	140	2,4	20	3,0
CLSC Hochelaga-Maisonneuve	595	4,5	215	3,6	310	5,4	30	4,5

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