

Gespe'gewa'gi Health & Well-being Survey Results

April 2025



**Gespe'gewa'gi Mi'gmaq
Social Health Baseline Assessment**

Mi'gmawei Mawio'mi Secretariat

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1. Introduction

In June 2024 as a part of the Gespe'gewa'gi Mi'gmaq Social Health Baseline Assessment (SHBA), Mi'gmawei Mawio'mi Secretariat (MMS) launched the Gespe'gewa'gi Health and Well-being survey which ran until December 31, 2024. A total of 322 Gespe'gewa'gi Mi'gmaq people completed the survey.

The primary purpose of the survey was to gain more knowledge about Gespe'gewa'gi Mi'gmaq's key indicators and determinants of health and how health relates to the environment. The survey was comprised of 42 questions, in addition to a consent form.

The survey was split into seven sections:

1. Section one included a description of the SHBA and the consent form.
2. Section two gathered demographic information.
3. Section three gathered information relating to personal physical, mental, and overall wellbeing, how the environment impacts wellbeing.
4. Section four gathered information about consumption of traditional foods.
5. Section five gathered information about changes in personal harvesting and changes in wildlife and vegetation quality and availability.
6. Section six gathered information about the quality of water in communities, homes, and on the land.
7. Section seven gathered information about employment and education rates, and language and culture.

Each question of the survey was optional, therefore, not every question has the same number of respondents. In each figure and table, the number of respondents to the question is represented by N (N = number of respondents).

2. Methods

The survey was created in partnership with MMS, Odonaterra, Trent University, and the Gespe'gwa'gi Institute of Natural Understanding (GINU). Once the survey was drafted, it was sent to Trent University's Ethics Board for approval before being distributed. While the survey was created in partnership with several organizations, both the survey itself and its results followed Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP®) principles. The survey and all the data that came from the survey solely belong to MMS and their member Mi'gmaq communities of Listiguj, Gesgapegiag and Gespeg.

Before participating in the survey, participants signed a consent form which stated that:

- MMS was conducting the survey;
- participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any point;
- answering each question was optional;
- individual data would remain confidential and anonymous; and
- MMS and/or the Trent University ethics board could be contacted for any questions or concerns.

To distribute the survey and to encourage participation, MMS created physical posters and social media advertisements. Through posters and digital advertisements alone, less than 50 individuals completed the survey. To increase participation, MMS hired individuals from Gesgapegiag, Gespeg, and Listiguj to go door-to-door to survey community members, which greatly increased survey participation and survey completion.

The goal was to survey 10% of the adult population from each of the three communities. While the 10% goal was not reached, almost 9% of both Gesgapegiag and Gespeg were surveyed (Table 1). Surveying 10% of the adult population of Listiguj was a larger challenge as they have the highest population, thus only 5% of population was surveyed.

Table 1 Survey goals and completion rates

Community	Adult population*	Survey goal	Surveys completed to date	Percent of adult population
Gesgapegiag	997	100	91	9.10%
Gespeg	1050	105	93	8.86%
Listiguj	2638	260	138	5.31%

*Assumes adult participants account for 60% of the population

1. Which community are you a band member of?

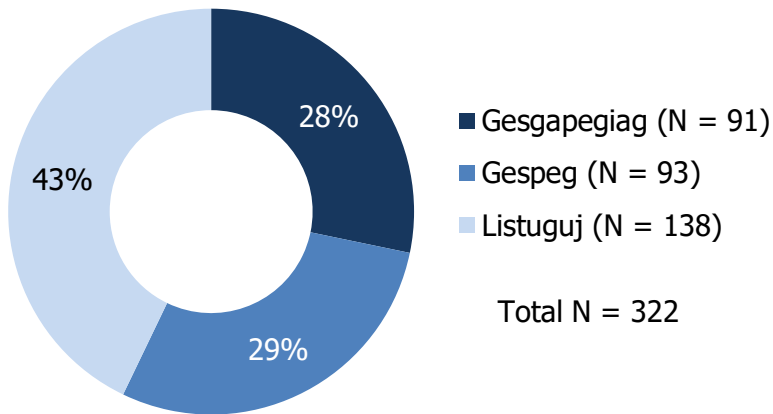


Figure 1 Survey participation by community

Most of the people who completed the survey still reside in their membership community, as shown in Figure 2. The majority of respondents (120) reside in Listuguj, 65 reside in Gespeg (Gaspé), 83 reside in Gespegiag, 26 reside elsewhere in Quebec, 10 reside in New Brunswick, and 10 reside in other areas including Nova Scotia, Ontario, and in the United States.

2. Demographics

Figure 1 shows that 322 people started the survey; of which 91 were from Gespegiag, 93 were from Gespeg, and 138 were from Listuguj (Figure 1). While only 5.3% of the population of Listuguj was surveyed, participation from members of Listuguj still made up of 42.9% of all participants.

2. Where do you live now?

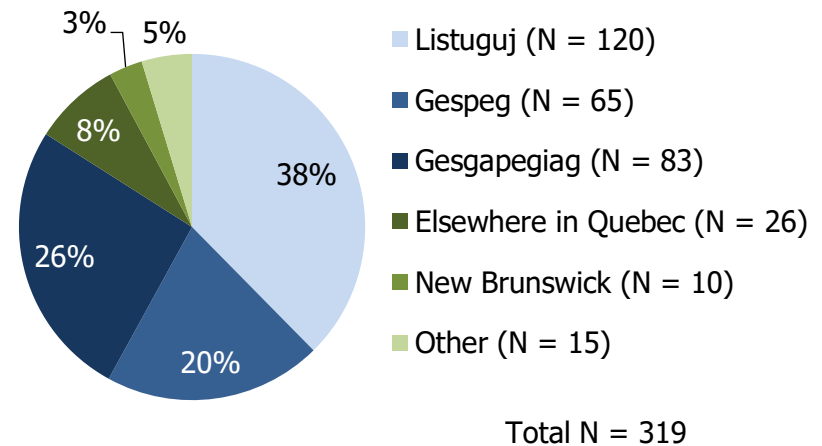


Figure 2 Current residency of survey participants

3. Please select your age category:

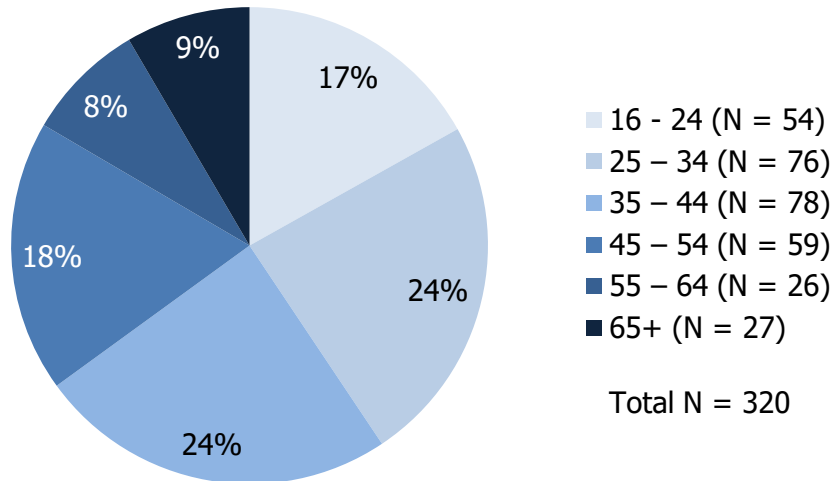


Figure 3 Age of participants

Figure 3 shows that most (48%) survey participants were between 25 and 44. There were 54 youth (17%) between 16 and 24 who completed the survey, and 53 Elders, aged 55 and above (17%).

4. How do you identify?

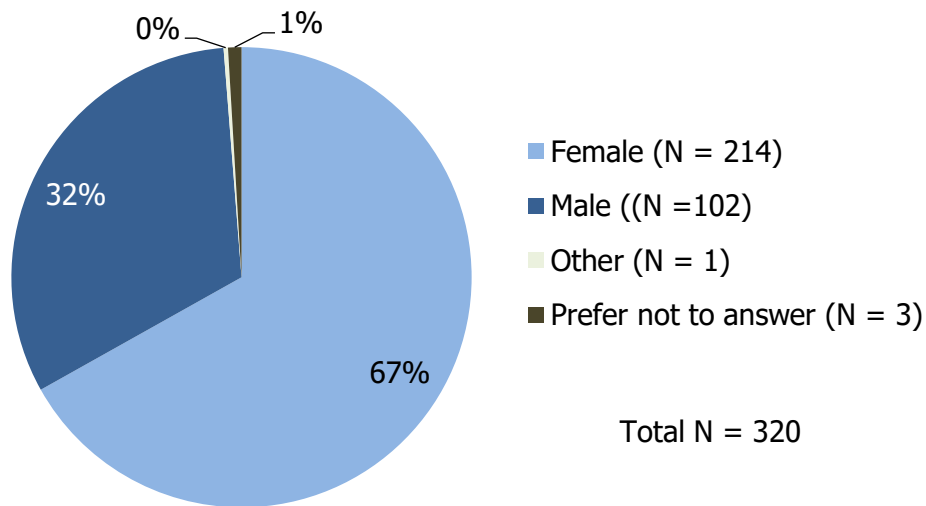


Figure 4 Gender identity of participants

Two thirds (67%) of the survey participants identified as female and less than one third (33%) identified as male. One person identified as other, and three people (1%) preferred not to disclose their gender identity, as shown in Figure 4.

3. Health & Wellbeing

Question 5 of the survey asked, “how would you rate the current state of your physical wellbeing?” For this question, we defined physical wellbeing as the normal functioning of the body. Representing one dimension of total wellbeing, it's about how your body grows, feels, and moves, how you care for it, and what you put into it (Figure 5).

A total of 296 participants answered this question. The most common answer was good, receiving 45% of all answers. The second highest answer was great receiving 22% of answers. The third most common answer was fair receiving 21%, followed by excellent with 8% and poor with 4%, as shown in Figure 5.

Based on these results, 75% of participants rated their physical wellbeing as either good or higher.

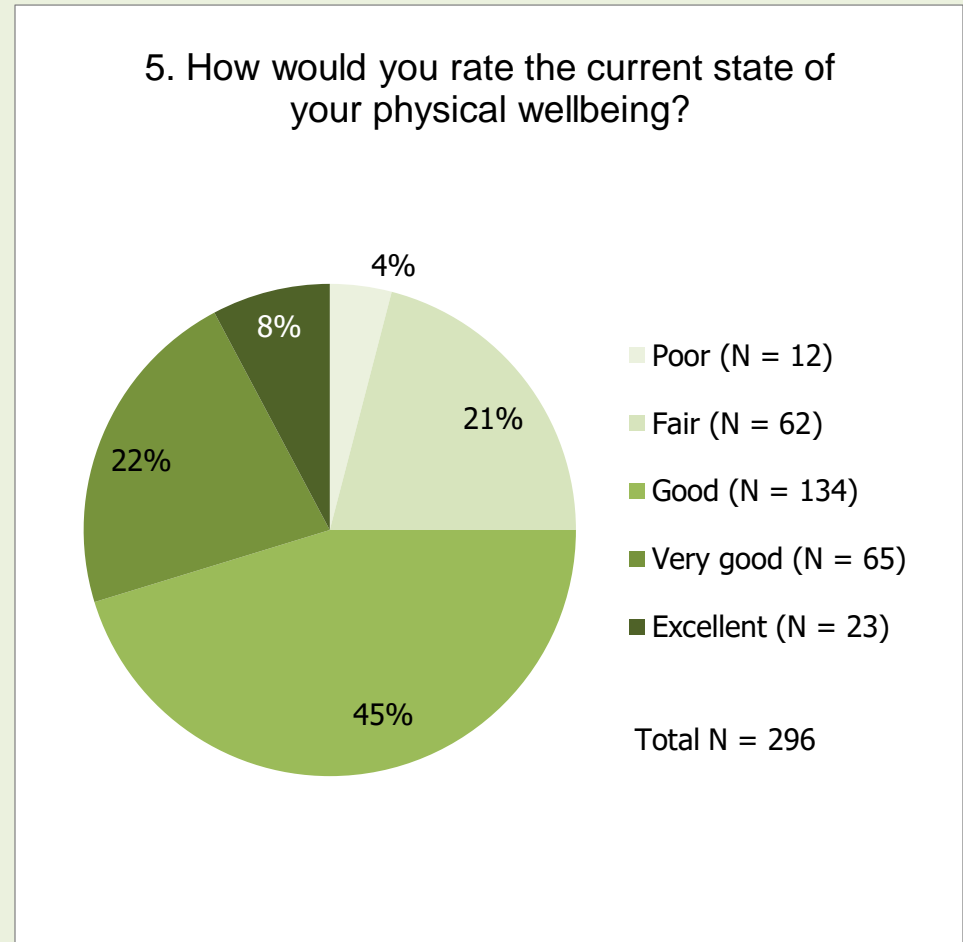


Figure 5 Physical wellbeing

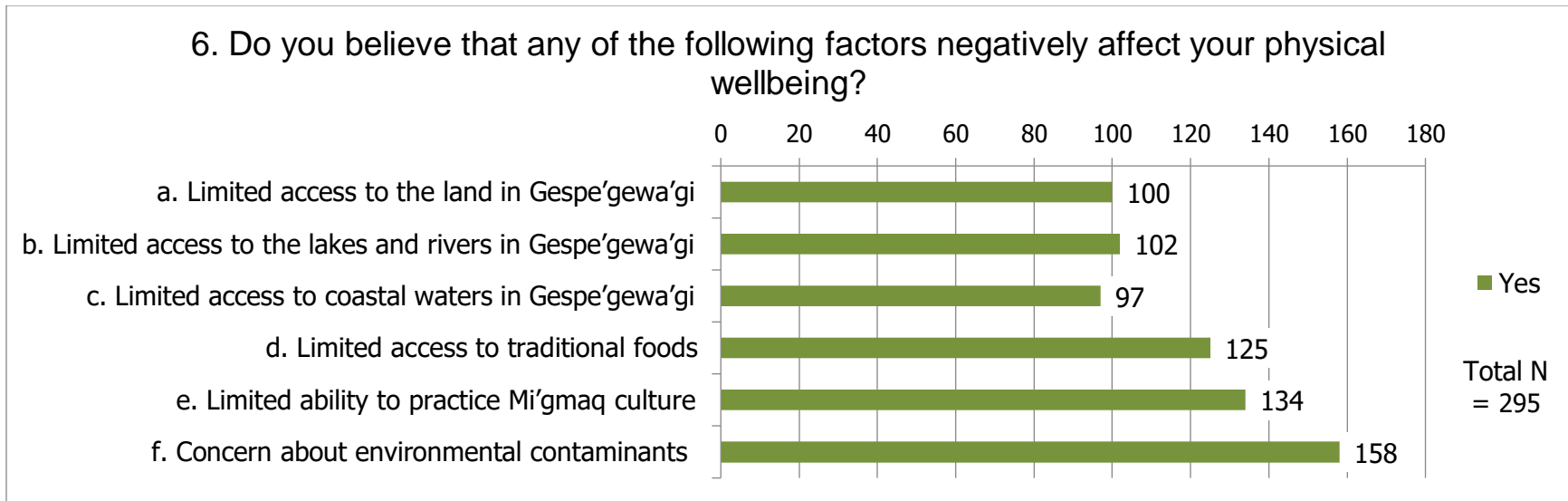


Figure 6 Factors affecting physical wellbeing

Figure 6 shows that the number one environmental factor that participants believe negatively impacts their physical health was contaminants in the environment, with 54% of participants believing that environmental contaminants are impacting them physically. The second highest factor that was negatively impacting participants wellbeing was limited ability to practice Mi'gmaq culture (46%).

A third (34%) of respondents said that limited access to the land in Gespe'gewa'gi negatively affects their physical wellbeing; 35% of respondents said that limited access to lakes and rivers was negatively affects their physical wellbeing; 33% of respondents said that limited access to coastal waters was negatively affects their physical wellbeing; and 43% of respondents said that limited access to traditional foods was negatively affects their physical wellbeing.

Participants were also given the option to write in other environmental factors that they believed are impacting their physical wellbeing. Two participants in Listuguj wrote that they believed the AV cell pulp mill was negatively impacting their health. Japanese Knotweed (an invasive plant species) was also listed by a participant as a "huge threat in our community". Another participant wrote that they feel the best when they're on their traditional lands and practicing their culture. Another participant said that limited access to Gespe'gewa'gi lands and waters was not impacting their health, but if they had limited access, it would affect both their physical and mental wellbeing.

7. How would you describe the current state of your mental wellbeing?

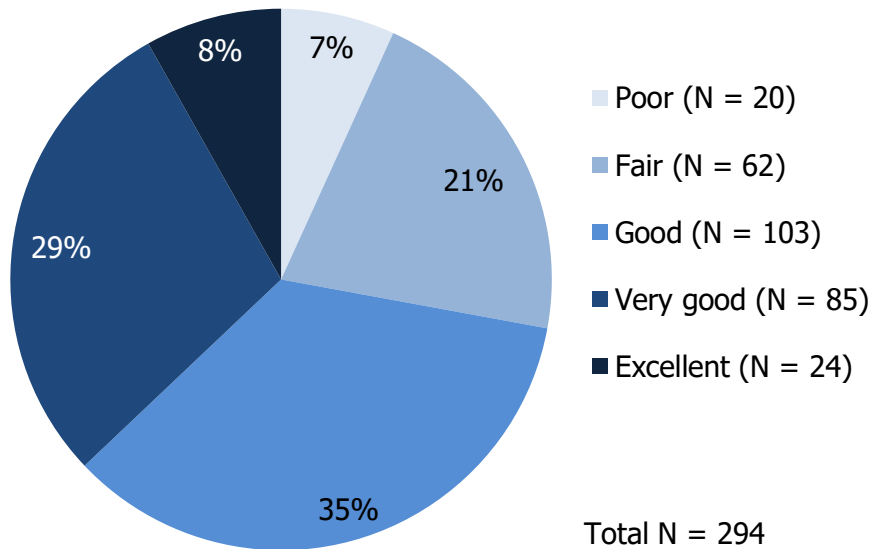


Figure 7 Mental wellbeing

Figure 7 displays the current state of respondents' mental wellbeing. From these responses, only 8% of participants rated their mental wellbeing as excellent and 29% people rated it as very good. More than a third (35%) of people rated it as good, which was the most common response.

Sixty-two people (21%) reported their mental wellbeing as fair and 7% of people reported it as poor.

Overall, over 70% of respondents reported their mental wellbeing as good or higher. There were many similarities found between participants mental and physical health rating, however, more people rated their physical health as either good or higher.

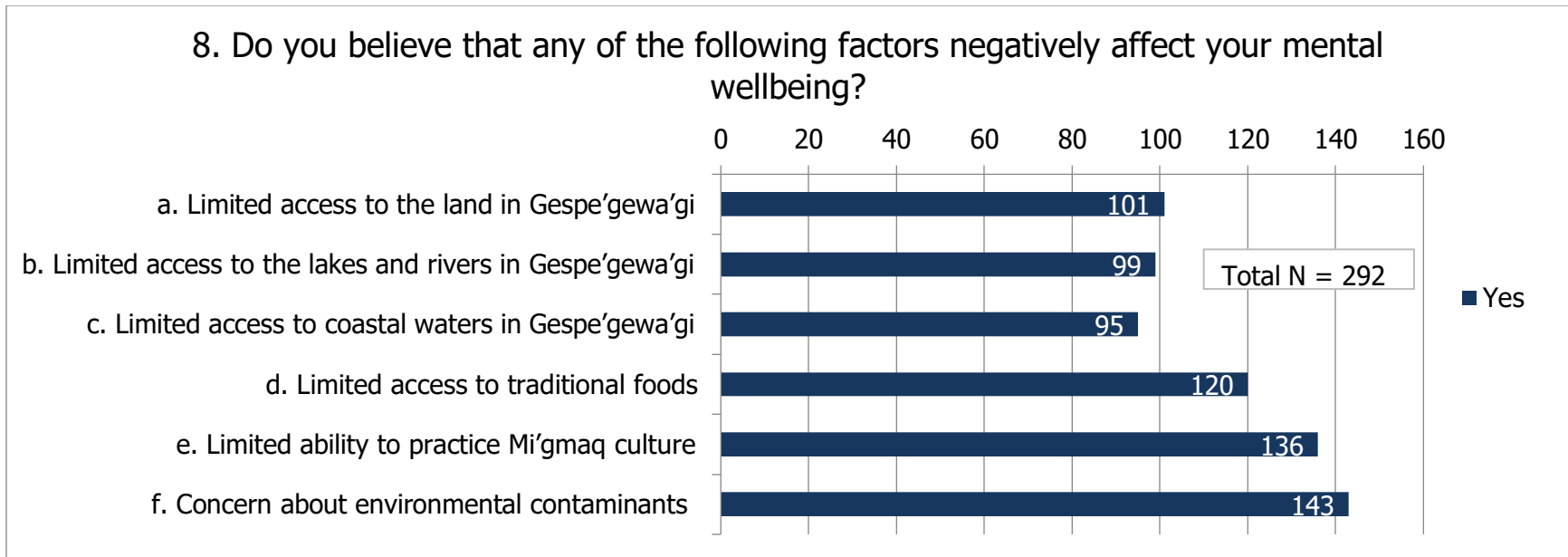


Figure 8 Factors influencing mental wellbeing

Figure 8 shows that the number one factor environmental factor that is negatively impacting respondents' mental wellbeing was contaminants in the environment (50%). This is the same factor affecting physical health. Also similar to the responses to physical health influencers, the second highest factor that was negatively impacting participants mental wellbeing was limited ability to practice Mi'gmaq culture (47%).

About a third (34%) of respondents said that limited access to the land in Gespe'gewa'gi negatively affects their mental wellbeing; 35% of respondents said that limited access to lakes and rivers was negatively affects their mental wellbeing; 33% of respondents said that limited access to coastal waters was negatively affects their mental wellbeing; and 43% of respondents said that limited access to traditional foods was negatively affects their mental wellbeing.

Three respondents wrote in additional factors that are affecting their mental wellbeing. These include limited availability to practice Mi'gmaq culture, concerns about water quality, and not living close to their traditional territory.

When participants were asked what the three most important things needed to be healthy, they responded with hundreds of different answers. Though there were many different responses, there were 21 main themes that emerged. These include:

- ◇ Positive energy
- ◇ Stress free
- ◇ Wealth / money
- ◇ Traditional food
- ◇ Housing
- ◇ Safety & peace
- ◇ Love
- ◇ Clean air
- ◇ Work
- ◇ Hunting & fishing
- ◇ Physical health
- ◇ Friends
- ◇ Good mental health
- ◇ Community
- ◇ Culture
- ◇ Sleep / Rest
- ◇ Water
- ◇ Nature / Land
- ◇ Physical activity
- ◇ Family
- ◇ Access to healthy food

Figure 9 shows that the most common theme that was repeated throughout participants answers was access to healthy food; approximately 50% (N=128) of participants identified access to healthy food as a necessity to be healthy.

The second most common theme that emerged was family (26%), followed by physical activity (23%); nature (19%); water (16%); sleep (10%); culture (9%); community (8%); good mental health (8%); friends (7%); physical health (7%); hunting & fishing (7%); work (7%); clean air (6%); love (6%); safety & peace (4%); housing (4%); traditional food (3%); wealth (3%); stress free (2%); and positive energy (2%).

9. In your own words, what are the three most important things you need to feel well and be healthy?

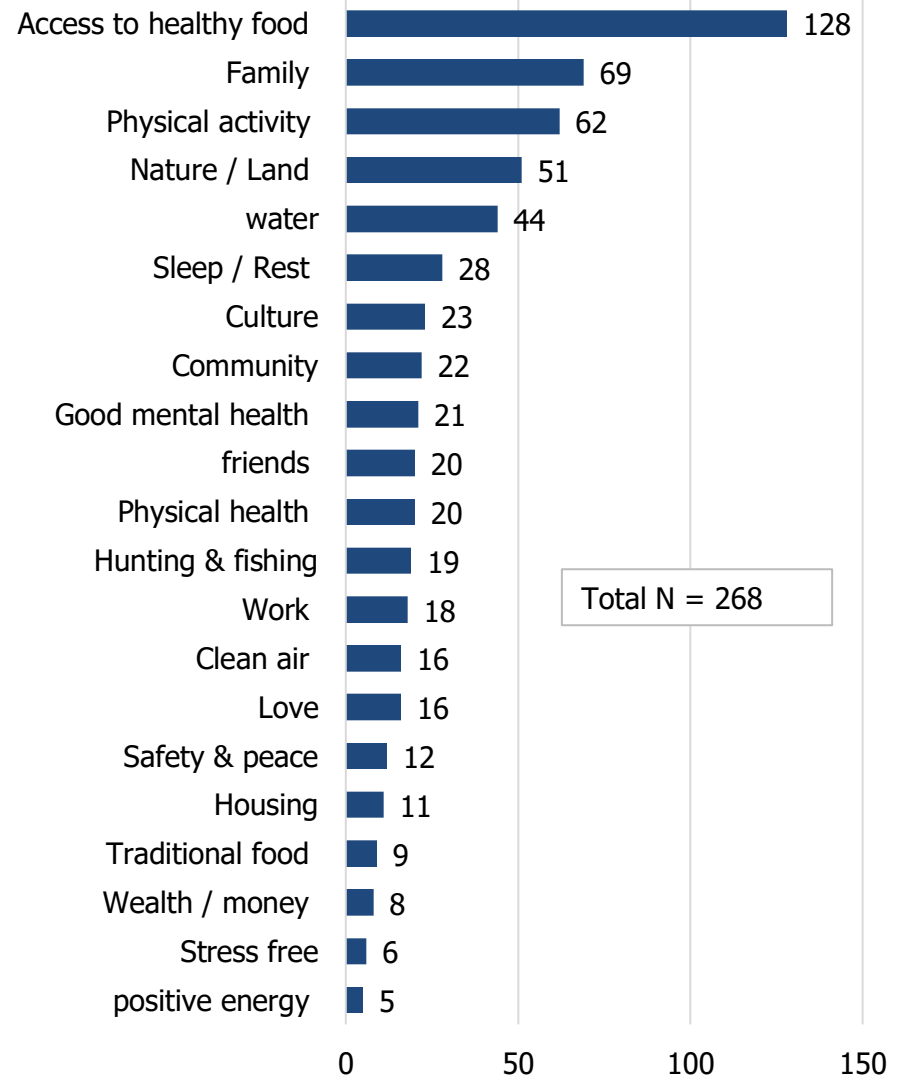


Figure 9 Factors required to be health

10. How would you rate your overall health?

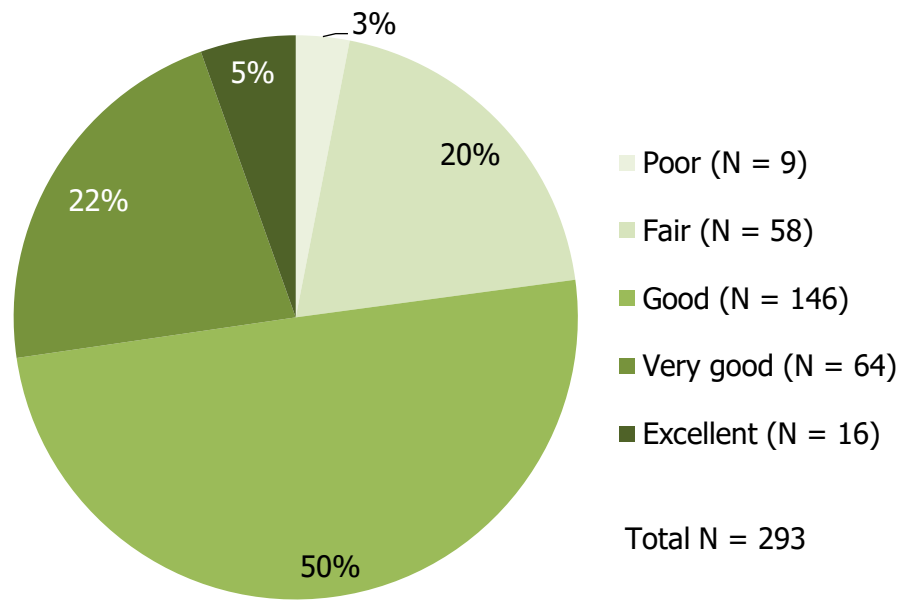


Figure 10 Overall health

When asked to rate overall health, nearly half of respondents (almost 50%) rated their health as good, as shown in Figure 10. A small percentage of respondents (5%) considered their health to be excellent and 22% considered their health to be very good. Meanwhile, 20% rated their overall health as fair, and 3% rated their overall health as poor.

Over 77% of respondents rated their overall health as either good or better. Overall health received slightly higher ratings than both mental and physical health.

11. When thinking about your overall wellbeing, what do you think is the biggest factor influencing it?

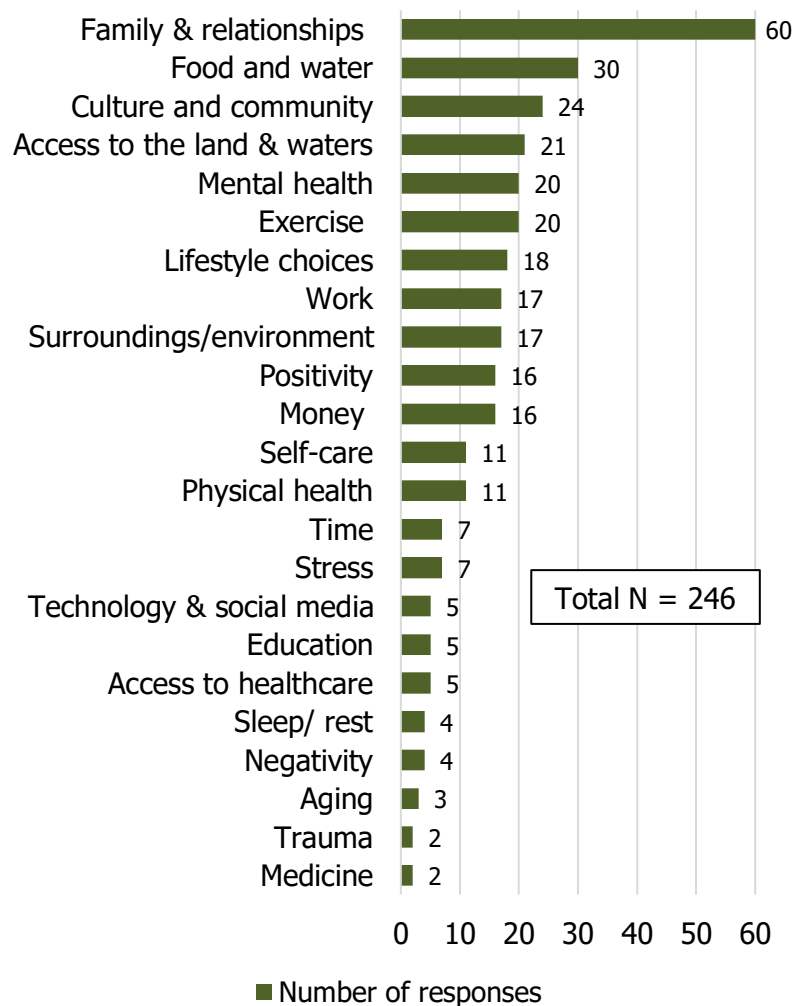


Figure 11 Factors influencing overall wellbeing

When participants were asked about the biggest factors influencing their overall wellbeing, they responded with hundreds of different answers, similar to question 9. While each person answered the question in a unique way, there were 23 themes that emerged from their answers (Figure 11). These include:

- ◇ Family & relationships
- ◇ Food and water
- ◇ Culture and community
- ◇ Access to the land & waters
- ◇ Exercise
- ◇ Mental health
- ◇ Lifestyle choices
- ◇ Surroundings/environment
- ◇ Work
- ◇ Money
- ◇ Positivity
- ◇ Physical health
- ◇ Self-care
- ◇ Stress
- ◇ Time
- ◇ Access to healthcare
- ◇ Education
- ◇ Technology & social media
- ◇ Negativity
- ◇ Sleep/ rest
- ◇ Aging
- ◇ Medicine
- ◇ Trauma

Many of the themes found in Figure 11 were also reported in question 9. Similarly to Figure 9, the two most common things that contribute to overall wellbeing include family and food.

The most common theme that emerged was family and relationships (24%), followed by food and water (12%); culture and community (10%); access to the land & waters (9%); exercise (8%); mental health (8%); lifestyle choices (7%); surroundings/environment (7%); work (7%); money (7%); positivity (7%); physical health (4%); self-care (4%); stress (3%); time (3%); access to healthcare (2%); education (2%); technology & social media (2%); negativity (2%); sleep/ rest (2%); aging (1%); medicine (1%); and trauma (1%).

4. Consumption of traditional foods

Question 12 gathered information about the consumption of traditional foods (food gathered from the land or waters in the region such as fish, berries, geese, etc.). The most frequently consumed traditional foods are berries and other plants; followed by fish and other seafood, large animals, game birds, and small animals, respectively, as shown in Figure 12. Most participants consume berries or other plants and large animals at least a few times per year, and only 54 respondents (19%) reported not eating them at all. Though fish and other seafood are consumed less frequently than berries or other plants, almost 90% of participants reported eating fish at least a few times per year; only 32 people (11%) reported not consuming fish and other seafood at all. Game birds and small animals were the least consumed traditional foods, as 188 people said they eat game birds and 215 people said they eat small animals.

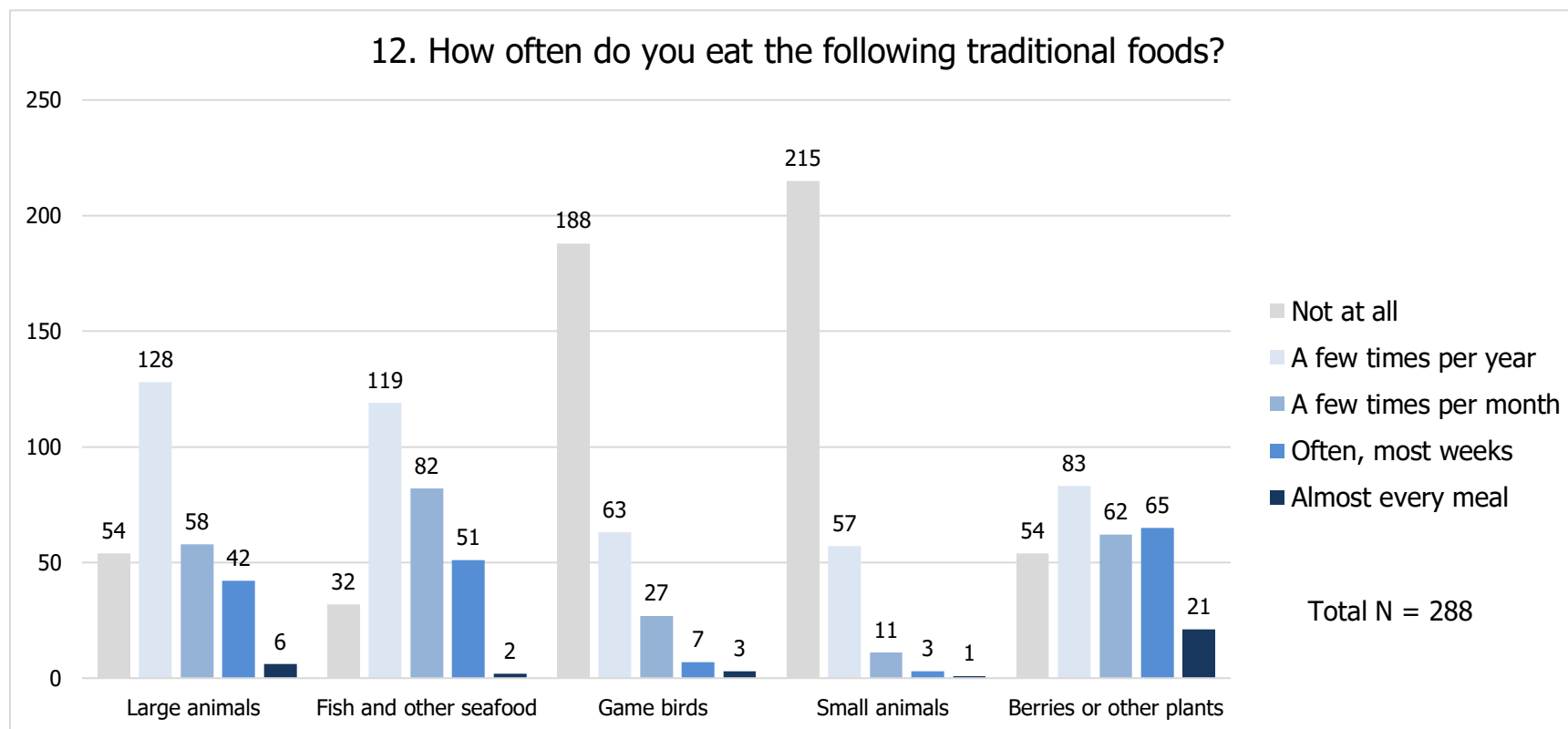


Figure 12 Consumption of traditional foods

13. What are the three most common traditional foods your family eats?

The most common traditional foods consumed by survey participants and their families include moose meat and salmon; 72% of people said they eat moose meat, and 57% of people said they eat salmon (Table 13). Other commonly eaten traditional foods include other types of fish and seafood including trout, smelt, cod, lobster, crab, and shrimp. Other consumed traditional foods include: small and large game including deer, bear, rabbit, and squirrel; game birds including partridge, duck, goose, turkey, and grouse. Berries and fruits consumed include: blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, apples, and chokecherries; plants and medicines consumed include: fiddle heads, potatoes, mushrooms, maple syrup, chaga, and labrador tea. Traditional meals prepared include: bannock, lusginign, Indian tacos, fry bread, and stew.

Table 13 Traditional food consumption

Traditional food	Number of respondents	Traditional food	Number of respondents	Traditional food	Number of respondents
Moose	195	Trout	10	Duck	2
Salmon	155	Lusginign	9	Cod	2
Berries/fruits	72	Indian tacos	8	Bear	2
Fiddle heads	51	Blueberries	8	Mushrooms	2
Deer	48	Clams	7	Maple syrup	1
Lobster	45	Shrimp	6	Changa	1
Fish	36	Raspberries	6	Labrador tea	1
Partridge	28	Fry bread	5	Goose	1
Plants/vegetables	18	Rabbit	5	Turkey	1
Shellfish	16	Potatoes	4	Grouse	1
Bannock	15	Stew	3	Squirrel	1
Crab	14	Smelts	2	Chokecherries	1
Wild game	14	Total respondents		272	

When asked about the changes in consumption of traditional foods, 108 participants (38%) said that they eat around the same amount of traditional foods now as they have throughout their lifetime. A third of participants (34%) said that they eat less traditional foods than they have in the past and 78 participants (27%) said that they now eat more traditional foods than they have in the past, as shown in Figure 14.

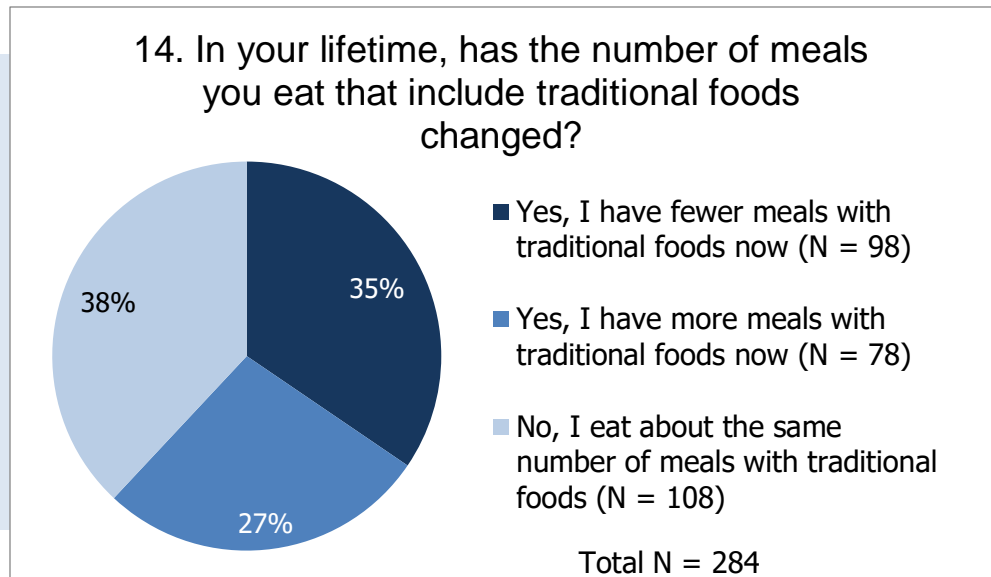


Figure 14 Changes in traditional food consumption

Figure 15 shows that just over half (153 respondents) said they wish they could incorporate more traditional foods into their diets. About 40% (112 respondents) said they were content with their current consumption of traditional foods, and 19 (7%) said they were indifferent.

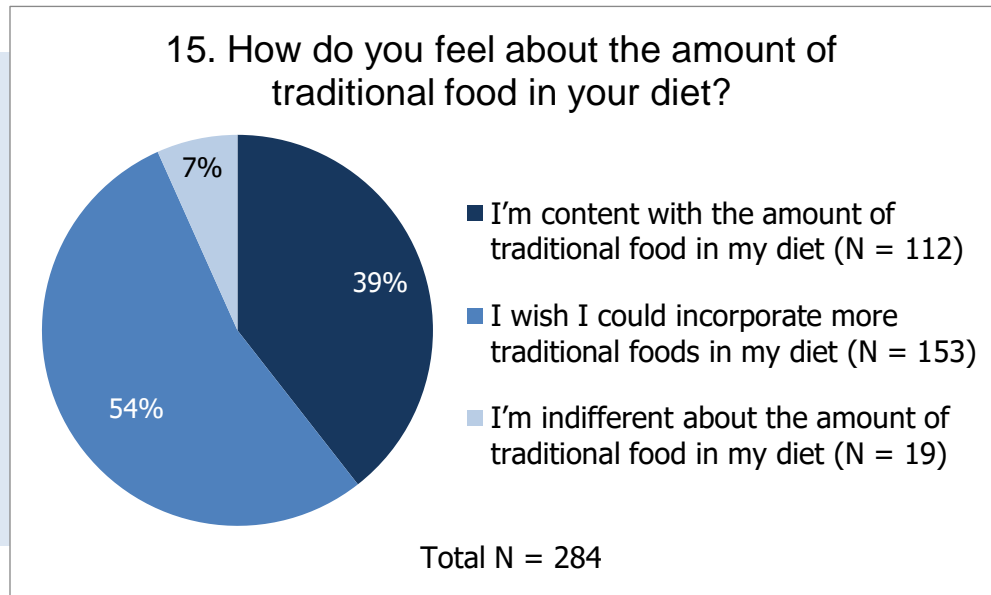


Figure 15 Sentiment towards consumption of traditional foods

16. Do you believe eating traditional foods positively contributes to your overall health?

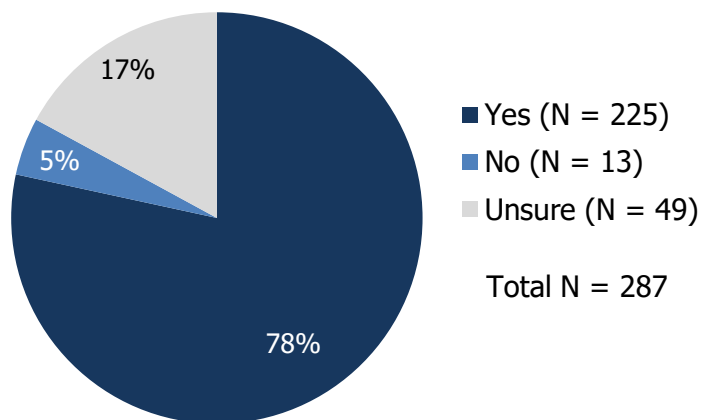


Figure 16 Traditional foods and health

Over three quarters (78%) of survey participants believe that eating traditional foods positively contributes to their overall health, as shown in Figure 16. The connection between traditional foods having positive benefits to people's health, combined with the fact that over 50% of survey respondents wish to incorporate more traditional foods into their diets, highlights the importance of ensuring the quality and quantity of traditional foods across Gespe'gewa'gi.

Less than 5% of survey respondents said they don't think traditional foods positively contributes to their overall health, and 17% said they were unsure if traditional foods positively contribute to their overall health.

17. Do you use and/or harvest traditional medicines?

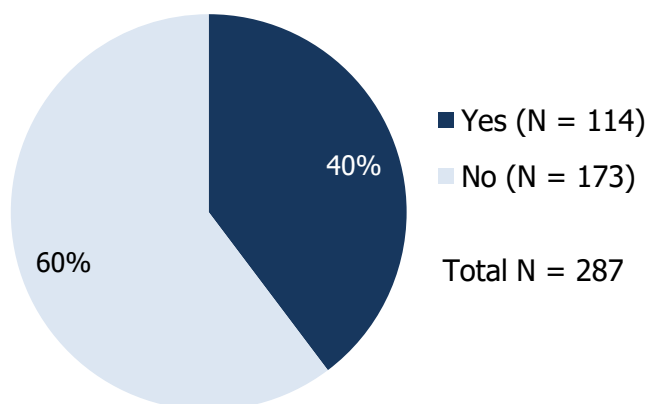


Figure 17 Traditional medicines

Figure 17 shows that the majority (60%) reported that they do not use or harvest traditional medicines, and 40% survey respondents reported that they do use and/or harvest traditional medicines.

18. Are there environmental factors that you believe affect your ability to harvest traditional foods? If yes, please select all that apply from the list of environmental factors below:

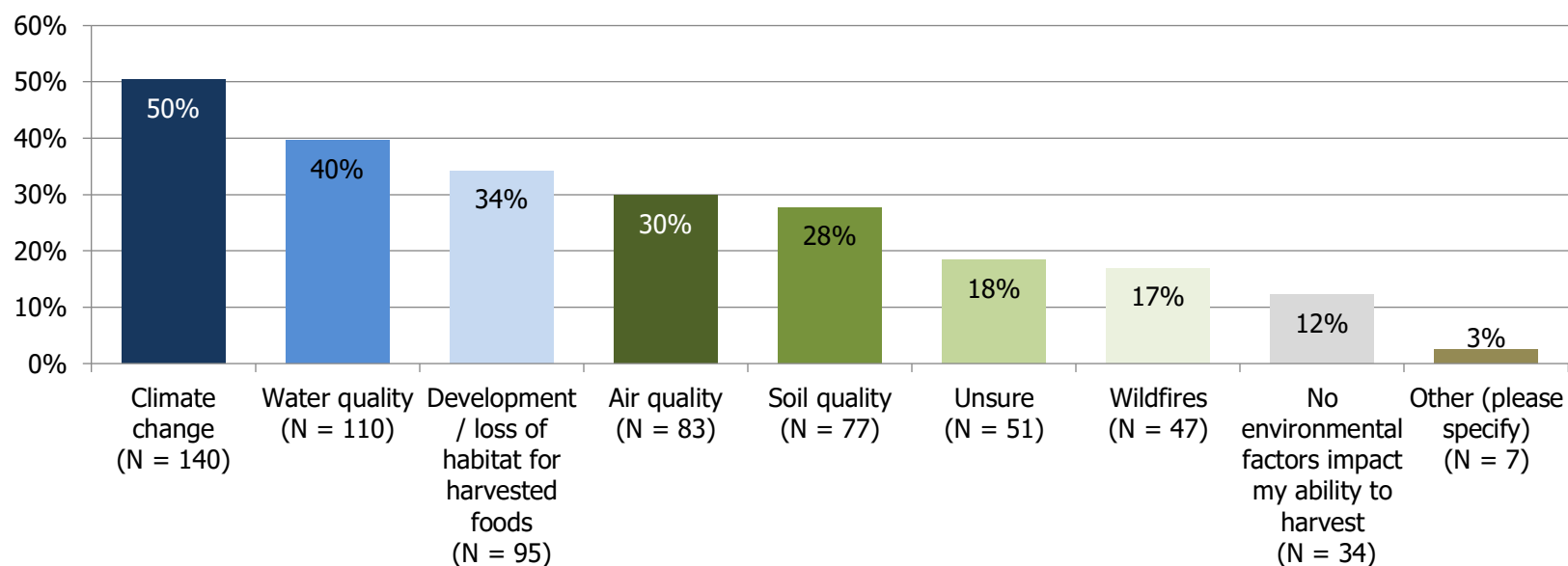


Figure 18 Factors impacting ability to harvest traditional foods

When asked about environmental factors that may affect people’s ability to harvest traditional foods, respondents identified several key concerns, as shown in Figure 18. The most cited factor was climate change (50%). Water quality was also a significant concern, affecting 40% of respondents, while air quality and development/loss of habitat for harvested foods were identified by 30% and 34% of respondents, respectively. Soil quality was mentioned by 28% of respondents, and wildfires were mentioned by 17%. About a fifth of respondents (18%), were unsure about the impact of environmental factors, and 12% stated that environmental factors do not impact their ability to harvest.

Other factors that were identified as impacting people’s ability to harvest traditional foods include forestry, concerns over contamination including glyphosates in moose habitat, and the lack of knowledge on how to harvest traditional foods.

5. Fish & aquatic life

Since the portion of Gespe'gewa'gi overlapping with the Gaspé is a peninsula surrounded by the ocean and containing numerous beautiful lakes and rivers, it is unsurprising that fish and fishing are an integral part of Gespe'gewa'gi Mi'gmaq culture. This is confirmed with over 75% of respondents indicating that they or their family fish (Figure 19).

Many (38%) survey respondents noted that the amount of fish that they or their family harvests has decreased. Only 14% of survey respondents said that they or their family now harvest more fish, 13% of respondents noted that the amount they harvest has remained the same, and 13% respondents were unsure if the amount that they or their family harvests has changed.

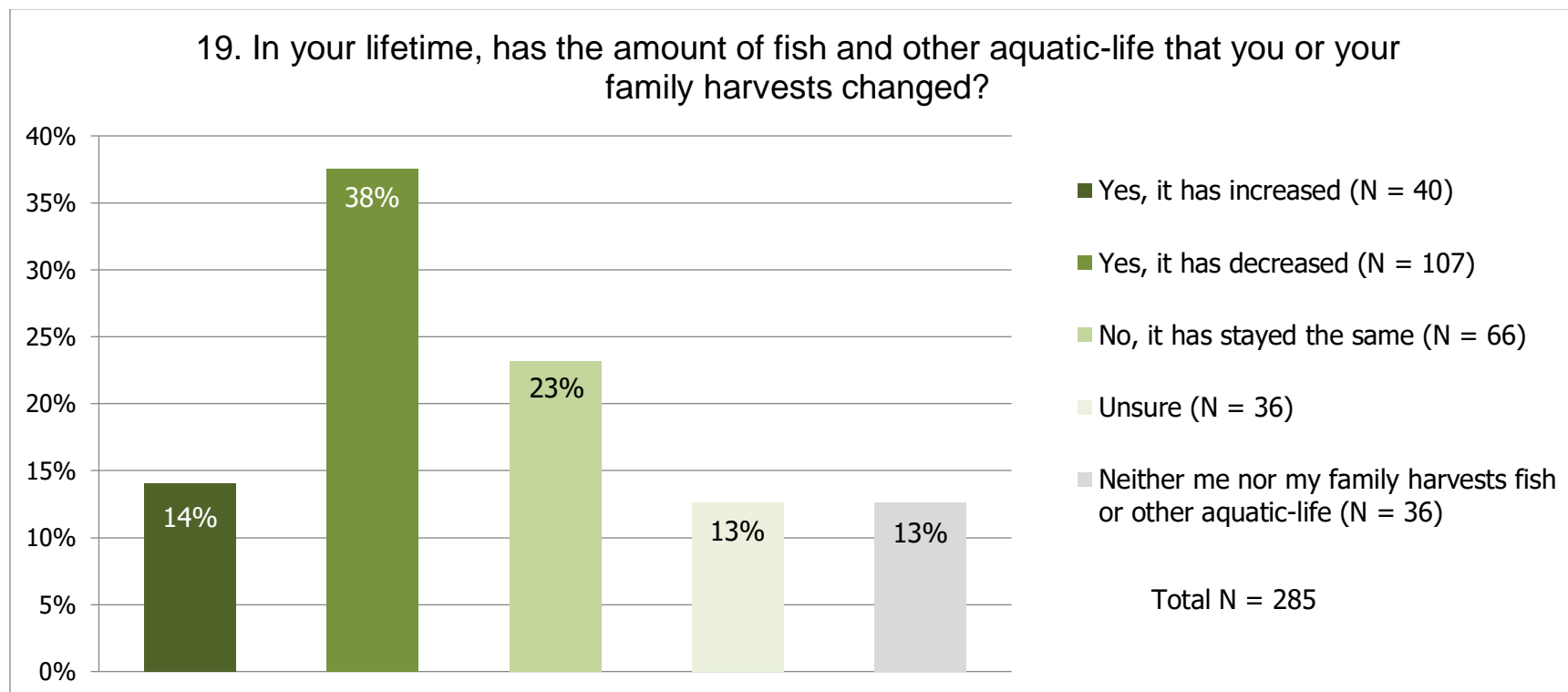


Figure 19 Changes in fish harvesting

20. In your lifetime, have you noticed a decline in the availability of fish and other aquatic-life?

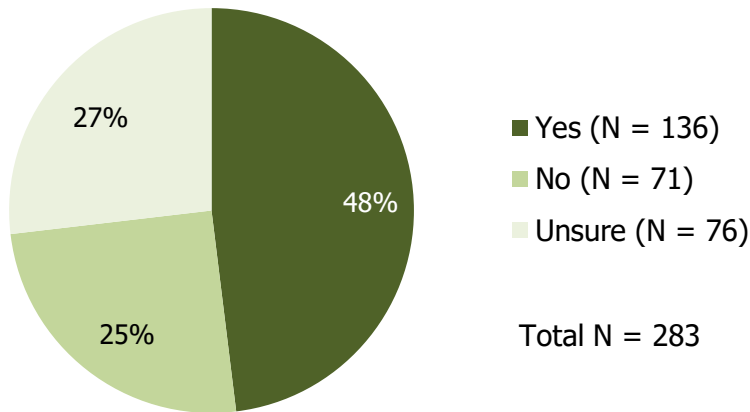


Figure 20 Availability of fish and aquatic-life

About half (48%) of survey respondents said they have noticed a decline in the availability of fish and aquatic life, as shown in Figure 20. A quarter of respondents (25%) said they have not noticed a decline in availability of aquatic life and 27% said they were unsure.

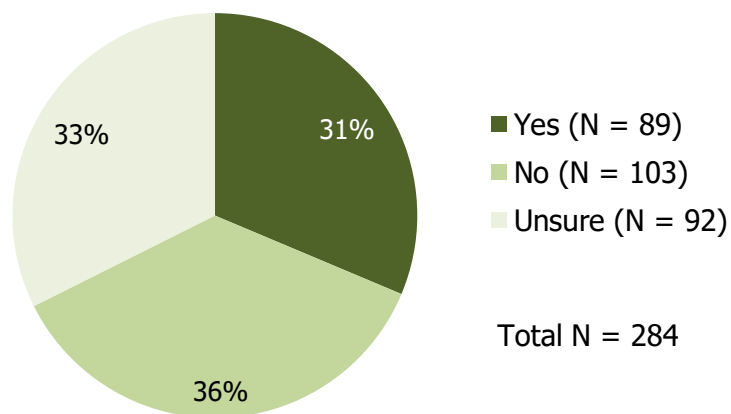
With almost 40% of people stating that they fish less now than they have in the past, and almost 50% of people noticing a decline in aquatic life, it suggests a causal relationship between the decline of fish abundance and the decline in people fishing.

21. If yes, do you know the cause of the decline in the availability of fish and other aquatic-life? Please explain:

When asked about the cause of the decline in the quantity of fish and other aquatic species, the top answers included overfishing, striped bass and invasive species impacting salmon, and climate change, amongst other including:

- ◇ Overfishing & sport fishing (N = 30)
- ◇ Striped bass and invasive species outcompeting salmon (N = 21)
- ◇ Climate change (N = 20)
- ◇ Pollution & contamination (N = 11)
- ◇ Racism impacting Mi'gmaq rights to fish (N = 9)
- ◇ Restricted access to the territory (N = 6)
- ◇ Changes in water levels (N = 6)
- ◇ Commercial fishing & bottom trawling (N = 3)
- ◇ Mercury contamination (N = 2)
- ◇ Habitat loss (N = 2)

22. In your lifetime, have you noticed a decline in the quality of fish and other aquatic-life?



When respondents were asked about whether they have noticed a decline in the quality of fish and other aquatic life over their lifetime, the responses were divided. A slight majority, 36%, indicated that they had not noticed a decline in quality. Meanwhile, 31% of respondents reported that they had observed a decline in quality. Finally, 32%, were unsure about any changes in the quality of fish and other aquatic life (Figure 22).

Figure 22 Quality of fish and aquatic life

23. If yes, do you know the cause of the decline in the quality of fish and other aquatic-life? Please explain:

When asked about the cause of the decline in the quality of fish and other aquatic species, there were both similar and new themes that arose in question 21 when asked about quantity. The top three reasons mentioned for the decline in quality of fish and aquatic species included climate change and striped bass, with the most common answer being pollution and contamination. Other causes for the decline in quality of fish and aquatic species included:

- ◇ Pollution and contamination (N = 19)
- ◇ Striped bass and invasive species outcompeting salmon (N = 11)
- ◇ Climate change (N = 12)
- ◇ Overfishing (N = 9)
- ◇ Diseases & parasites (N = 6)
- ◇ Decline in fish size (N = 5)
- ◇ A loss of harvesting rights (N = 4)
- ◇ Microplastics (N = 3)

6. Wildlife

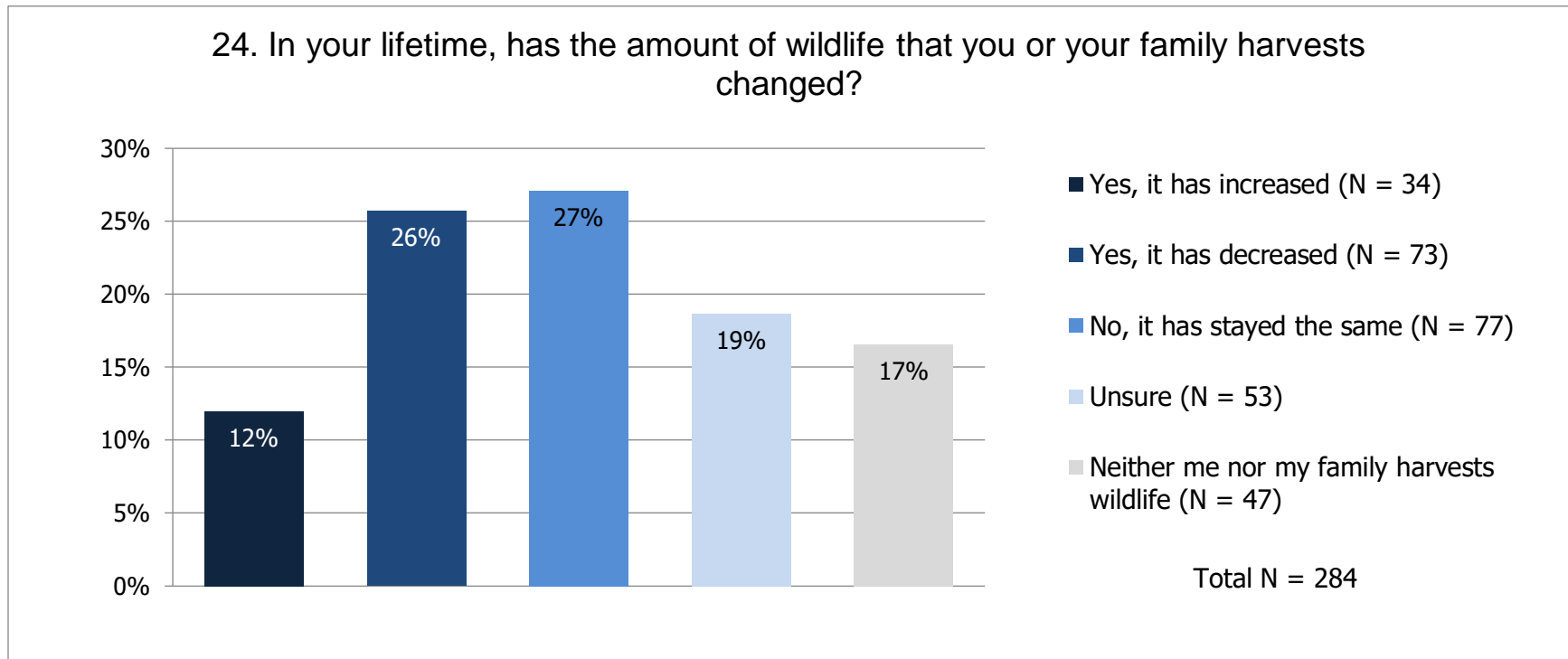


Figure 24 Changes in harvesting wildlife

When asked about changes in the amount of wildlife that they or their family harvests over their lifetime, the responses were varied as shown in Figure 24. A significant portion, 27%, reported that the amount of wildlife harvested has remained the same. Meanwhile, 26% indicated a decrease in the amount of wildlife harvested, suggesting challenges in availability or access. On the other hand, 12% of respondents mentioned that the amount of wildlife they harvest has increased. A smaller group, 17%, stated that neither they nor their family harvests wildlife at all. Finally, 19% were unsure whether the amount of wildlife harvested had changed.

25. In your lifetime, have you noticed a decline in the availability of wildlife?

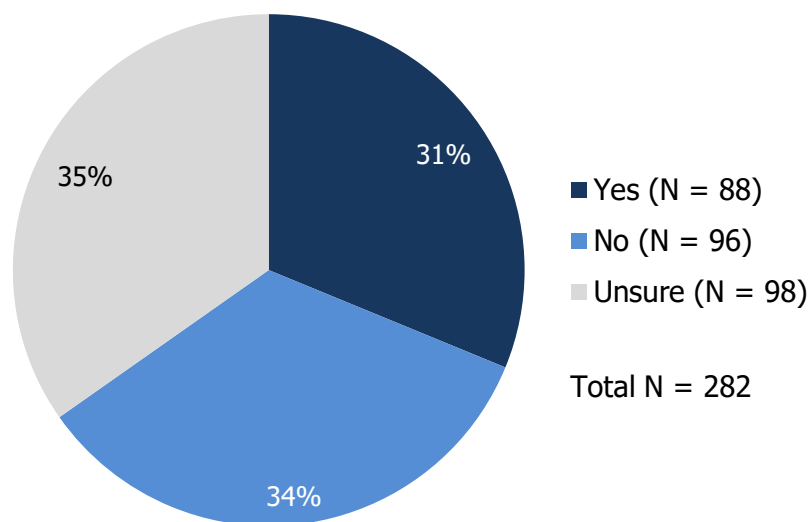


Figure 25 Availability of wildlife

When asked if they have noticed a decline in the availability of wildlife over their lifetime, the responses were divided. A slight majority, 35%, were unsure about any changes in wildlife availability. 34% of respondents reported that they had not noticed a decline, while 31% indicated that they had observed a decrease in the availability of wildlife (Figure 25).

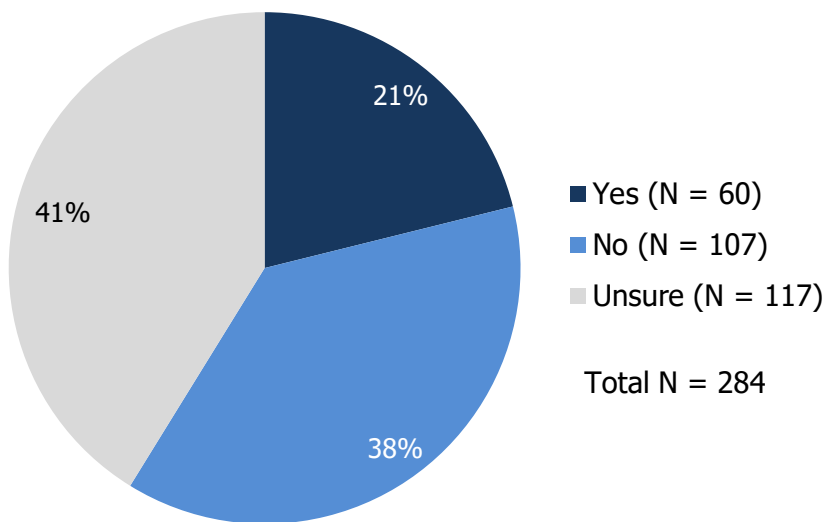
26. If yes, do you know the cause of the decline in the availability of wildlife? Please explain:

When asked about the cause of the decline in the availability of wildlife, the most common answer reported was overharvesting. Other answers that were reported include:

- ◇ Overharvesting (N = 32)
- ◇ Habitat loss/ deforestation (N = 9)
- ◇ Decreased access to hunt (N = 8)
- ◇ Development (N = 7)
- ◇ Environmental changes (N = 5)
- ◇ Non-Indigenous hunters (N = 3)
- ◇ Changes in wildlife behaviour (N = 2)
- ◇ Illness (N = 2)

Two respondents also noted a change in wildlife availability following the construction of windmills. Four respondents also noted that that forestry and clear cutting was impacting their ability to hunt.

27. In your lifetime, have you noticed a decline in the quality of wildlife?



When asked if they have noticed a decline in the quality of wildlife over their lifetime, the responses were mixed. The largest group, 41%, were unsure about any changes in the quality of wildlife. Slightly less, (38%) of respondents reported that they had not noticed a decline, while 21% indicated that they had observed a decrease in the quality of wildlife (Figure 27).

Figure 27 Quality of wildlife

28. If yes, do you know the cause of the decline in the quality of wildlife? Please explain:

When asked about the cause of the decline in the quality of wildlife, similarity to question 27, the number one answer was overharvesting. Other answers included:

- ◇ Overharvesting (N = 12)
- ◇ Habitat loss (N = 6)
- ◇ Tics (N = 5)
- ◇ Illness (N = 4)
- ◇ Pollution (N = 4)
- ◇ Decrease in size of wildlife (N = 4)
- ◇ Climate change (N = 3)
- ◇ Development (N = 3)
- ◇ Pesticides/ herbicides (N = 2)
- ◇ Poor wildlife management (N = 2)
- ◇ Non-Indigenous occupation of the territory (N = 2)

7. Trees and Plants

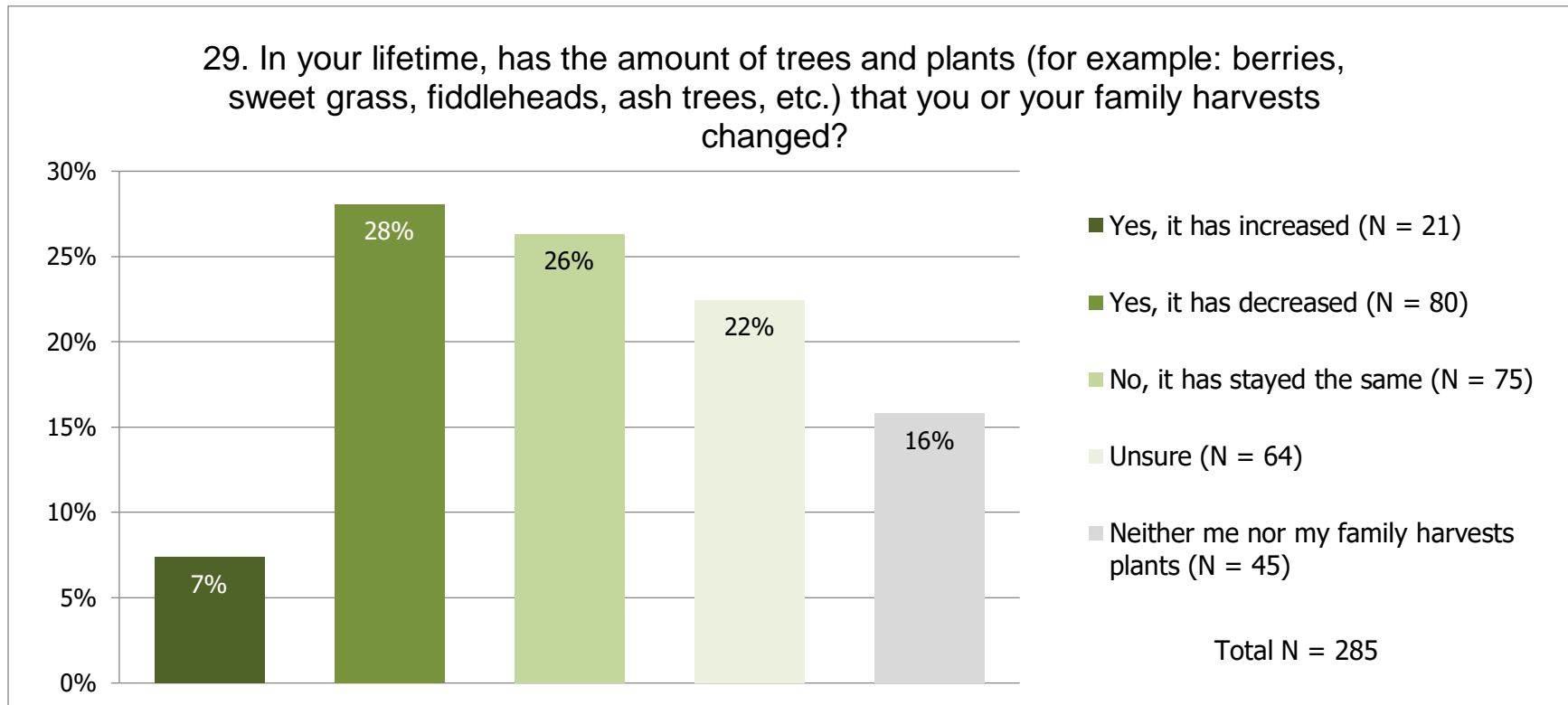
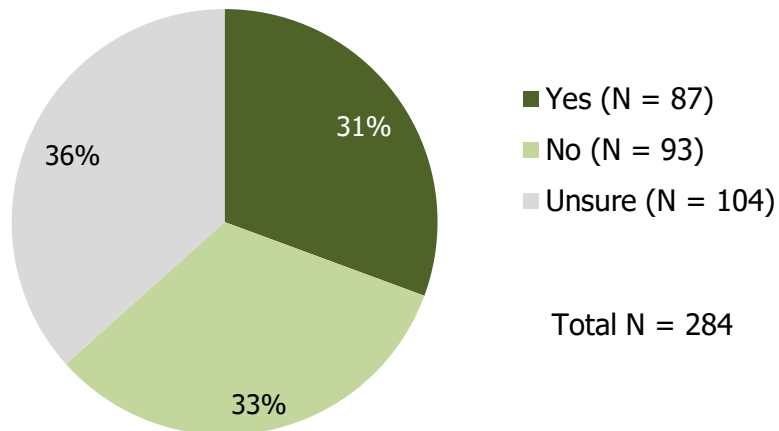


Figure 29 Changes in trees and plants harvesting

As shown in Figure 29, 28% reported that the amount of trees and plants harvested has decreased. In contrast, 7% of respondents said that the amount of plants they harvest has increased over time. Just over a quarter (26%) of individuals indicated that the amount of plants harvested has remained the same throughout their lives and 22%, were unsure whether the amount of plants they harvested had changed. Additionally, 16% of respondents noted that neither they nor their family harvest plants.

30. In your lifetime, have you noticed a decline in the availability of trees and plants (for example: berries, sweet grass, fiddleheads, ash trees, etc.)?



When respondents were asked if they noticed a decline in the availability of trees and plants over their lifetime, the responses were divided as shown in Figure 30. The largest group, 36%, were unsure about any changes in the availability of trees and plants. 33% of respondents reported that they had not observed a decline, while 31% indicated that they had noticed a decrease in the availability of trees and plants such as berries, sweet grass, fiddleheads, and ash trees.

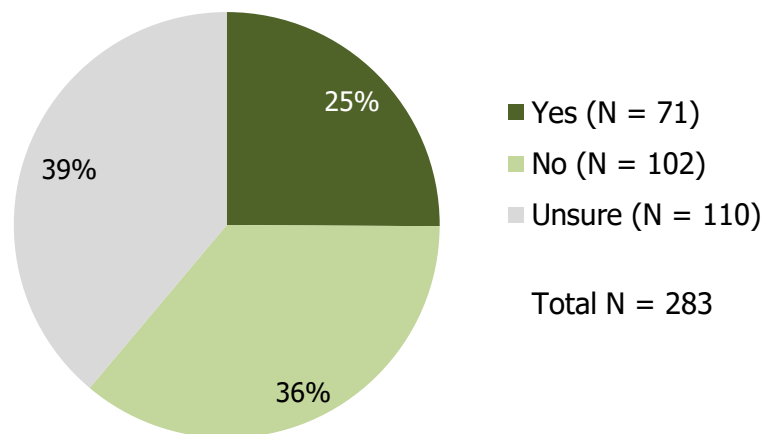
Figure 30 Availability of trees and plants

31. If yes, do you know the cause of the decline in the availability of trees and plants (for example: berries, sweet grass, fiddleheads, ash trees, etc.)? Please explain:

Development (N=20), overharvesting (N=14) and clearcutting (N=12) were the top three reported answers for the decline in availability of trees and plants. Other reported reasons included:

- ◇ Decline in berry bushes (N = 9)
- ◇ Harvesting for profits (N = 7)
- ◇ Illness (N = 6)
- ◇ Limited access (N = 6)
- ◇ Climate change (N = 5)
- ◇ Pollution (N = 2)

32. In your lifetime, have you noticed a decline in the quality of trees and plants (for example: berries, sweet grass, fiddleheads, ash trees, etc.)?



When asked if respondents have noticed a decline in the quality of trees and plants over their lifetime, the responses were divided, as shown in Figure 32. A slight majority, 39%, were unsure about any changes in the quality of trees and plants. Some (36%) of respondents reported that they had not observed a decline, while 25% indicated that they had noticed a decrease in the quality of trees and plants such as berries, sweet grass, fiddleheads, and ash trees.

Figure 32 Quality of trees and plants

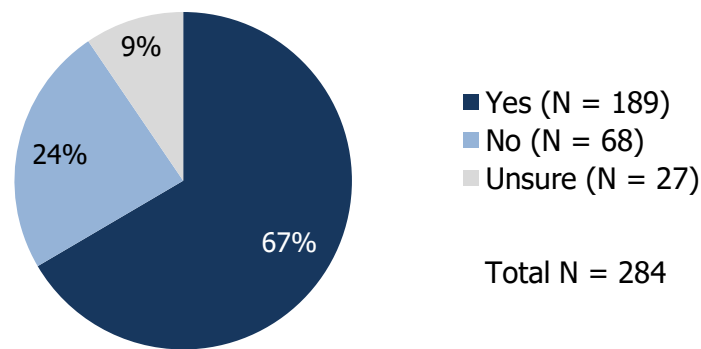
33. If yes, do you know the cause of the decline in the quality of trees and plants (for example: berries, sweet grass, fiddleheads, ash trees, etc.)? Please explain:

Similarly to question 31, the main reason reported for the cause of the decline in the quality of trees and plants was reported to be overharvesting (N = 10) and development (N = 8). Other answers included:

- ◇ Clearcutting (N = 5)
- ◇ Climate change (N = 5)
- ◇ Berries not growing where they used to (N = 4)
- ◇ Illness (N = 3)
- ◇ Invasive bugs (N = 3)
- ◇ Harvesting for profits (N = 3)
- ◇ Pollution (N = 3)
- ◇ Environmental degradation (N = 2)
- ◇ Less old growth trees (N = 2)

8. Water

34. Do you consider the main water supply in your home safe for drinking?



When participants were asked if they consider the main water supply in their home safe for drinking, most respondents, (67%), affirmed that they do. About a quarter (24%) of respondents stated that they do not consider their water supply safe for drinking and 10% of participants were unsure (Figure 34).

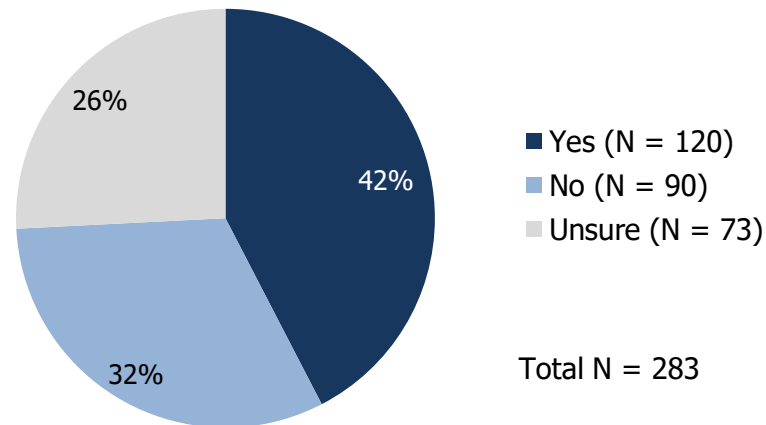
Figure 34 Water potability

35. If you don't consider the main water supply in your home safe for drinking, please explain why?

There were several issues raised when participants were asked why they don't consider the water in their home safe for drinking. Some people who reported their water supply safe for drinking, they still answered this question to report on some of the issues they were experiencing. The biggest concern amongst participants was the taste or smell of chlorine and other chemicals (N = 19), followed by boil water advisories (N = 9). Other reasons for not considering the water in their house safe for drinking included:

- ◇ Bad taste or smell (N = 8)
- ◇ Water causing illness (N = 7)
- ◇ Concerns of contamination (N = 7)
- ◇ Not clear (N = 6)
- ◇ Water needs to be filtered/boiled (N = 6)
- ◇ Too high in minerals (N = 5)
- ◇ Too much calcium (N = 4)
- ◇ Well water (N = 3)
- ◇ Hard water (N = 3)
- ◇ Old pipes (N = 2)
- ◇ Tastes like salt (N = 1)
- ◇ Tastes like dirt (N = 1)

36. Do you believe the water in the lakes and rivers in Gespe'gewa'gi is generally clean?



When participants were asked if they believe the water in the lakes and rivers in Gespe'gewa'gi is generally clean, the majority (42%) of respondents affirmed that they do. Just under a third of respondents (32%), felt that the water is not clean and 25% were unsure about the cleanliness of Gespe'gewa'gi waterbodies.

Figure 36 Gespe'gewa'gi water cleanliness

37. Are there any specific lakes or rivers that you believe are not clean or have been negatively impacted?

When asked about specific waterbodies participants believed were not clean or negatively impacted, 18 places were mentioned. The most commonly reported river was the Retigouche River (N = 15), followed by Q(G)ospem Lake (N = 12). Other places noted included:

- ◇ Water surrounding Gesgapegiag (N = 8)
- ◇ Indian Lake (N = 7)
- ◇ All of them (N = 6)
- ◇ York River (N = 6)
- ◇ Mail ages (N = 5)
- ◇ Cascapedia River (N = 4)
- ◇ Sipug (N = 4)
- ◇ Condos Point (N = 3)
- ◇ Gesgapegiag River (N = 2)
- ◇ Dube Lake (N = 1)
- ◇ Ugjitapa'j (N = 1)
- ◇ Emerald River (N = 1)
- ◇ Waters near Maria (N = 1)
- ◇ Matapedia Lake (N = 1)
- ◇ Jules River (N = 1)
- ◇ Listuguj River (N = 2)

9. Employment & Education

Table 38 shows that most respondents, 154 individuals (55%), are employed full-time. Sixteen respondents (6%) reported being employed part-time and another 28 respondents (10%) have seasonal or casual employment. Eighteen respondents (6%) are retired, and 15 respondents (5%) are students. Eighteen respondents (6%) reported being unemployed while actively looking for work, and an additional 7 (2%) are unemployed but not looking for work. Nine respondents (3%) preferred not to disclose their employment status. Finally, 16 respondents (6%) said that the above options didn't correspond with their current employment situation. Of these 16, three people were on maternity leave, one person was on sick leave, four people wrote that they were self-employed, three people reported being on social assistance, and two people said they had just graduated from school.

Table 38 Employment Status

38. What is your current employment status?		
Employment status	Percent of respondents	Number of respondents
Employed, full-time	55%	154
Employed, part-time	6%	16
Unemployed (looking for work)	6%	18
Unemployed (not looking for work)	2%	7
Seasonal/casual	10%	28
Retired	6%	18
Student	5%	15
Prefer not to answer	3%	9
Other (please specify)	6%	16
Total N	100%	281

Table 39 summarizes responses for the ability for household income to support family necessities. The table shows that almost half of respondents, 140 individuals, report that their income always supports their family's necessities. Seventy-four respondents (26%) say their income usually covers necessities, while 30 respondents (11%) say it sometimes does. Seventeen respondents (6%) rarely find their income sufficient, and 7 respondents (2%) never find their income sufficient to support their family's monthly necessities. Additionally, 10 respondents (4%) preferred not to answer, and 3 respondents (1%) selected "Other" as their response.

Table 39 Income and ability to support monthly necessities

39. How often does your household income sufficiently support you and your family's monthly necessities (food, housing, utilities, monthly bills, etc.)?		
Frequency	Percent of respondents	Number of respondents
Always	50%	140
Usually	26%	74
Sometimes	11%	30
Rarely	6%	17
Never	2%	7
Prefer not to answer	4%	10
Other (please specify)	1%	3
Total N	100%	281

Table 40 shows the highest level of education held by survey respondents. The table shows that 75 respondents (27%) have completed some post-secondary education, such as a diploma or certificate from a community college or university, and 39 respondents (14%) hold a diploma or certificate from a trade, technical, or vocational school. Some (10%) respondents hold a Bachelor’s degree, and 14 respondents (5%) hold a Master’s degree. Only one respondent (<1%) has a professional degree, and no respondents reported having a PhD. There were 76 respondents (27%) with a high school diploma or G.E.D., and 31 respondents (11%) did not complete high school. Additionally, 14 respondents (5%) preferred not to answer, and 4 respondents (1%) indicated that they had other educational training, such as vocational training and reporting that they we’re still completing their studies.

Table 40 Highest level of education

40. What is the highest level of education you’ve completed?		
Level of education	Percent of respondents	Number of respondents
Did not complete high school	11%	31
High school diploma or G.E.D. (general education development)	27%	76
Diploma or certificate from a trade, technical, or vocational school	14%	39
Diploma or certificate from a community college, CEGEP, or university	27%	75
University Bachelor’s degree	10%	29
Professional degree (e.g., medicine, law)	<1%	1
Master’s degree	5%	14
PhD	0%	0
Prefer not to answer	5%	14
Other (please specify)	1%	4
Total N	100%	283

10. Language and Culture

For responses related to the English language, most respondents, 86.5%, reported being fluent in English, which was described as capable of carrying on complex conversations in various situations. A smaller group, 5.7%, stated that they could speak at an intermediate level, meaning they are able to engage in casual conversations. Only 5.3% of respondents indicated they could use basic vocabulary in English, for example being able to ask simple questions and phrases, while 2.1% were able to speak a few words like "hello" or "thank you." A very small percentage, 0.4%, reported that they could not speak or understand any words in English.

For responses related to the French language, 34.2% of respondents reported being fluent. Some (18%) reported an intermediate level, while 21% reported a basic French vocabulary. About a fifth (21%) could speak a few words, and 6.4% of respondents stated they could not speak or understand French at all.

For responses related to the Mi'gmaq language, 22.1% of respondents reported being unable to speak or understand any words in Mi'gmaq. Nearly half (47%) could speak a few words and 16% were at a basic level. A few (6%) could engage in casual conversations at an intermediate level and 8.9% of respondents indicated they were fluent in Mi'gmaq.

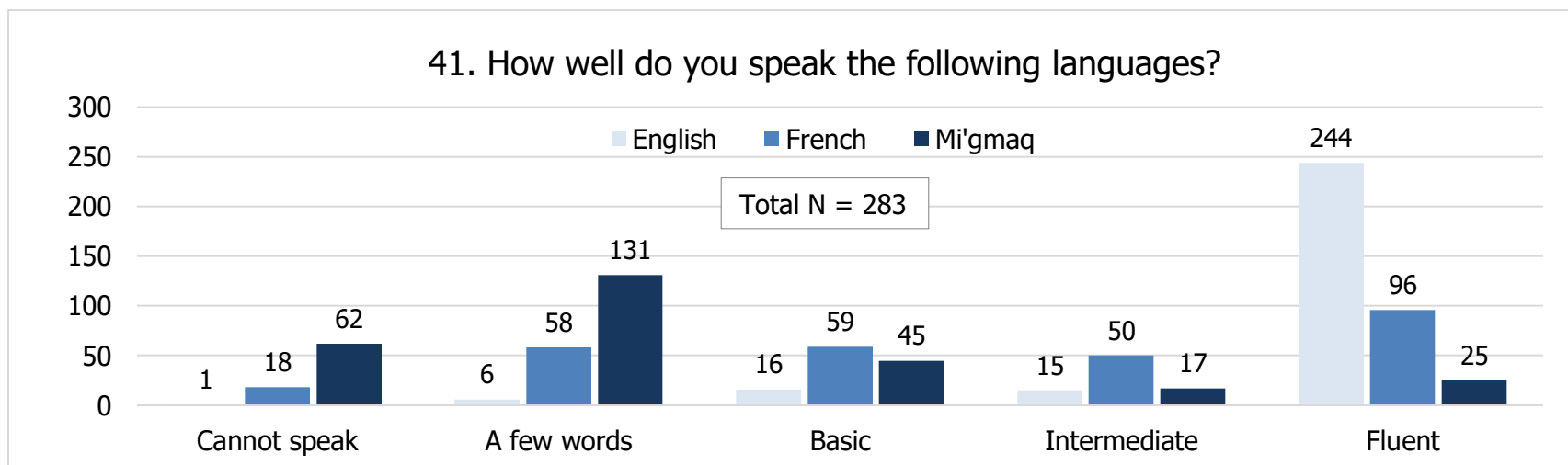
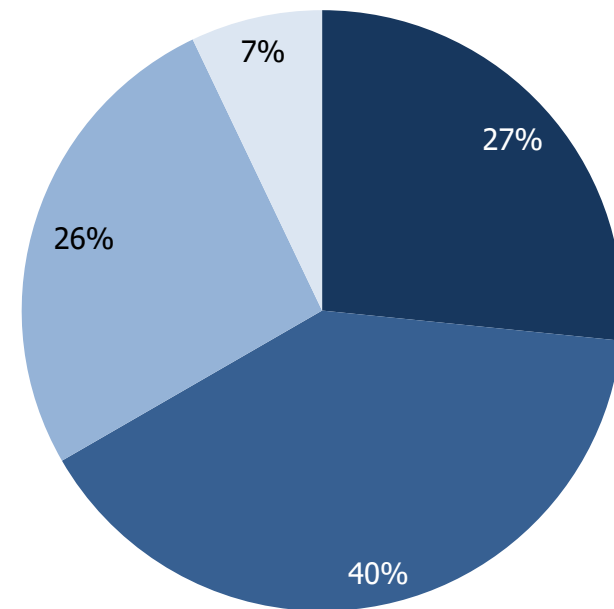


Figure 41 Language capability

Figure 42 shows that the frequency of opportunities to learn about Mi'gmaq culture were available to most respondents. A significant portion, 40%, reported having a few opportunities each year to engage with cultural aspects such as ceremonies, language, traditional harvesting, and other elements of Mi'gmaq culture. Just over a quarter (27%) of respondents stated they have such opportunities often, at least once per month or more. Meanwhile, 26% indicated they have opportunities rarely, less than once each year. A smaller group, 7%, reported never having the chance to learn about Mi'gmaq culture.

42. How often have you had opportunities to learn about your culture (i.e., cultural ceremonies, Mi'gmaq language, traditional harvesting, or other aspects of Mi'gmaq culture)?



- Often (once per month or more) (N = 75)
- A few times each year (N = 113)
- Rarely (less than once each year) (N = 74)
- Never (N = 20)

Total N = 282

Figure 42 Ability to learn about Mi'gmaq culture

11. Conclusion

The survey aimed to gather results from 10% of the population over age 16 in each of the Mi'gmaq communities represented by MMS (Listiguj, Gesgapegiag and Gespeg). This goal was nearly reached for Gesgapegiag and Gespeg but fell short in Listiguj. The majority of respondents were female adults between age 25 and 54.

The physical health and well-being of respondents was considered good or better. A majority of respondents noted that physical health is negatively impacted by contaminants in the environment, limited ability to practice their culture and limited access to traditional foods. Limited access to the land and waterbodies in the territory were also factors. Mental health was also reported to be good or better, with nearly identical factors contributing to negative mental health as were reported for physical health. Access to health food, family, physical activity, nature, land and water were noted most frequently as contributing to health. Over three quarters of respondents rated their overall health to be good or better with family and relationships, food and water, community and culture and access to the land and waters being the biggest contributing factors.

Country foods most consumed are berries and other plants (blueberries, raspberries, fiddle heads), followed by fish and other seafood (mainly salmon) and large animals (mainly moose). More than half of respondents eat about the same amount or more country foods now as they have throughout their lifetime. Over half of respondents wished they could incorporate more traditional foods into their diet. A majority (78%) of respondents believe eating traditional foods positively contributed to their overall health. About 40% of respondents use and/or harvest traditional medicines. The ability to harvest traditional foods has been negatively impacted by climate change, water quality and loss of food sources through development.

Most respondents (67%) considered their home drinking water safe. Of those who did not, the taste or smell of chloring and boil water advisories were the main causes. Fewer (42%) believed that the water in regional lakes and rivers are generally clean and noted that the Restigouche River, Q(G)ospem Lake were the main impacted waterbodies.



The results of this survey demonstrate the interconnectedness between overall health and the environment and the importance of protecting the lands, waters, and wildlife to ensure the continued health of Gespe'gewa'gi peoples. Changes to the environment such as overharvesting, environmental contaminants and development have negatively impacted access to traditional foods and medicines which are an important part of Mi'gmaq diet and that are important to maintain health. Access to traditional foods is important for food security in the region where incomes are not sufficient for all families to cover monthly necessities.

