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SANTÉ ET BIEN-ÊTRE

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Québec Survey on Smoking, Alcohol, Drugs, and Gambling in High School Students, 2006: Highlights

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Among Québec students in Secondary 1 to 5, cigarette smoking decreased from 19% in 2004 to 15% in 2006. However, during the same period, the proportion of cigar and cigarillo smoking (22%) surpassed that of cigarette smoking (15%). This is one of the findings contained in the report of the *Québec Survey of Smoking, Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling in High School Students* made public in the autumn of 2007.

In the spirit of making the data of this survey more accessible and therefore more useful to people involved in the fight against smoking, alcohol and drug dependency and addiction to gambling, this newsletter highlights the main findings of the survey published in the full report. Indeed, only the highlights revealing statistically significant results are presented in this newsletter.

Tobacco Use

Cigarette smoking

In 2006, approximately 15% of Québec high school students had smoked cigarettes during a 30-day period. 6% smoked every day, 2.7% were occasional smokers and 7% were experimental smokers.

A higher proportion of girls were smokers compared to boys (17% vs. 13%).

The proportion of cigarette smokers in high school decreased from 19% in 2004 to 15% in 2006, particularly among students in Secondary 1 (12% vs. 7%), Secondary 2 (18% vs. 11%) and Secondary 5 (30% vs. 22%), and among girls who smoked every day (10% vs. 7%).

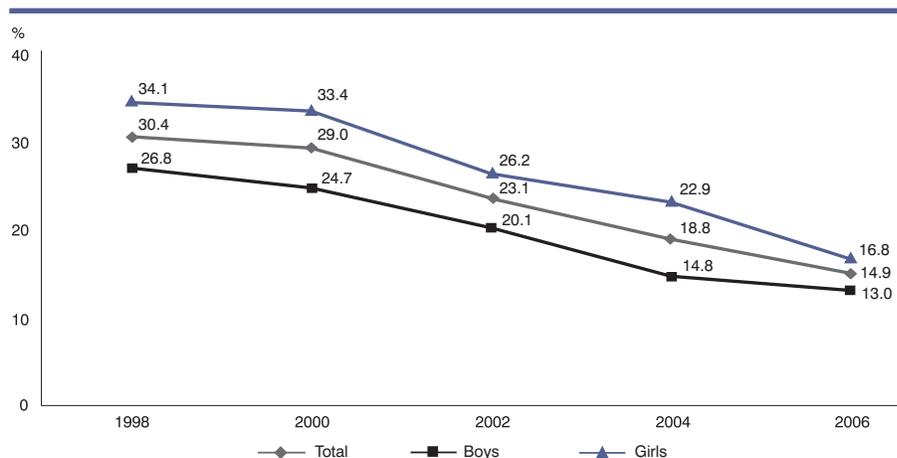
Though a majority of smokers (52%) smoked 2 cigarettes or less a day,

11% of smokers smoked 11 or more a day.

Both boys and girls had smoked their first cigarette at a slightly higher age as reported in the 2006 survey (12.5 years) compared to what was reported in the 2004 survey (12.3 years).

The findings indicate that 36% of students smoked in the morning before school, 49% smoked during the day at school, 43% smoked after school or weekday evenings and 57% smoked on weekends.

Figure 1
Trends in Cigarette Smoking Among High School Students, by Sex, Québec, 1998 to 2006



Sources: Institut de la statistique du Québec: *Québec Survey of Tobacco Use in High School Students 1998, 2000, 2002*, and *Québec Survey of Smoking, Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling in High School Students, 2004, 2006*.

Methodology

To ensure the validity of the comparisons, the survey methodology has remained the same since 1998. The target population is all students enrolled in high schools in Québec at the time of the survey, with the exception of schools not under the supervision of the *ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport du Québec* (Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sport), aboriginal schools, schools in remote regions, and schools comprising at least 30% handicapped people. Therefore the target population covered 98% of the population of students attending high (secondary) schools in Québec.

Sample design and stratification :

The sample was stratified by

- Language of instruction (French or English)
- Type of school (private or public)
- Region

... Clusters

- Random selection of classes in each stratum (36 by grade level, 180 in all) in the 156 schools selected at random (one class per school, occasionally two)
- All students in the classes asked to respond to a questionnaire (potential number of students: 5,180).

Data collection instrument:

- Self-administered, anonymous questionnaire (close-ended questions) in class supervised by an interviewer from the ISQ.

Data collection schedule:

- Beginning of November to mid-December, every two years since 1998.

Response rate:

96.4% of classes (173 / 180)

93.2% of students (4,571 / 5,180)

89.8% combined rate

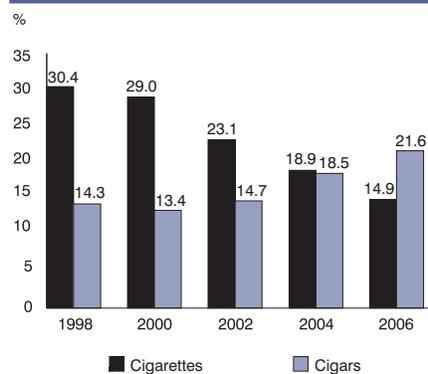
Cigar, cigarillo or little cigar smoking

Between 2004 and 2006, the proportion of high school students who had smoked cigars, cigarillos and small cigars in a 30-days period rose from 18% to 22%.

During the reference period of 30 days, 46% of students had smoked these tobacco products on one or two days, 32% a few days, 11% almost every day and 11% every day.

The majority of cigar and cigarillo smokers were daily smokers, occasional smokers or experimental smokers (80% respectively). In contrast, approximately 33% of former cigarette smokers, 27% of former experimental smokers and 8% of those who had

Figure 2
Trends in Cigarette and Cigar Smoking Among High School Students, Québec, 1998 to 2006



Sources: Institut de la statistique du Québec: *Québec Survey of Tobacco Use in High School Students 1998, 2000, 2002, and Québec Survey of Smoking, Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling in High School Students, 2004, 2006.*

never smoked had smoked cigars in a 30-day period. Approximately 11% of non-smokers of cigarettes had smoked cigars or cigarillos.

Between Secondary 1 and Secondary 5, the proportion of cigar and cigarillo smokers among all students increased from 9% to 33%.

Access to tobacco products

Approximately 16% of minors who smoked obtained their tobacco products exclusively in retail stores.

Approximately one quarter of minors purchased cigarettes him/herself in a retail store as well as using other means to obtain them (22%), obtained them free exclusively from friends (25%)

Table 1

Trends in the Usual Method of Obtaining Tobacco Products Among High School Students Who Smoke, Québec, 2000 to 2006

	2000	2002	2004	2006
	%			
Purchased in a retail store				
Store exclusively	14.9	12.0	12.2	15.5
Store and other sources	26.2	27.8	24.2	22.4
Did not purchase in a store				
Friends exclusively	20.9	20.4	31.2	25.4
Purchase by a third party and other sources	25.6	28.1	19.6	24.4
Other sources	12.5	11.7	12.9	12.3

Sources: Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Québec Survey of Tobacco Use in High School Students 1998, 2000, 2002, and Québec Survey of Smoking, Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling in High School Students, 2004, 2006.*

or asked a third party to purchase them for him/her as well as using other means of obtaining them (24%).

Slightly fewer than half of smokers (49%) had purchased or attempted to purchase cigarettes in a retail store. Of these, 43% had never been asked to indicate their age and 45% reported that a store clerk had never refused to sell them cigarettes because of their age.

Profile of teenage cigarette smokers

The proportion of current smokers (daily and occasional smokers combined) was higher among students in single-parent families and families with structures other than two-parent (14% and 21% vs. 6%), among students who had a job outside the home compared to those who did not (9% vs. 7%); and among those who had a weekly allowance of \$31.00 or more (13%, \$31.00 to \$50.00 and 16%, \$51.00 or more) compared to those whose allowance was \$30.00 or less (8%, \$11.00 to \$30.00 and 3.5%, \$10.00 or less).

The proportion of current smokers was higher among students whose marks in French or English (according to the language in which the questionnaire was filled out) were below the class average (13%) compared to those whose marks were higher than the class average (6%).

The proportion of current smokers was two times higher among students of whom at least one parent smoked compared to those of whom neither parent smoked (12% vs. 6%). It was three times higher among students whose brother or sister smoked compared to the contrary (19% vs. 6%). Most friends of smokers were also smokers (77% current and 40% experimental smokers vs. 6% non-smokers). Finally, a greater proportion of girls than boys had friends who were smokers (16% vs. 13%).

The majority of students who smoked cigarettes had the consent of at least one of their parents (63%), notably those in Secondary 4 and 5 and particularly daily smokers. One in five students (20%) had permission to smoke at home.

Exposure to second-hand smoke in the home

In the homes of nearly half of high school students (48%), people were not permitted to smoke; in 21% of students' homes, certain guests were allowed to smoke, in 15% people were permitted to smoke in certain areas of the home, and in 15%, people could smoke anywhere in the home.

Approximately 45% of students had never been exposed to cigarette smoke in the home. In contrast, 29%

had been exposed to cigarette smoke every day.

Students who were exposed to second-hand smoke every or nearly every day at home were more likely to live in a single-parent family (38%) than a two-parent one (26%), and were more likely to be current smokers themselves (54%) than experimental smokers (40%) or non-smokers (26%).

Dependency and quitting

One in ten students reported having tried to quit smoking in a 12-month period. Girls were more likely than boys to have tried quitting.

Approximately 48% of the smokers had tried to quit smoking once, 26% twice, and 27% had tried three or more times during a 12-month period.

The mean score on the Nicotine Dependence Scale for Adolescents increased with cigarette usage. Out of a maximum score of 16, daily smokers had a mean score of 8.7, occasional smokers 4.6 and experimental smokers 1.9.

More than four out of five students (82%), especially non-smokers, acknowledged that people can develop an addiction to cigarettes if they smoke every day. Smokers were more likely to think the risk was medium.

A low proportion of students, 6%, especially non-smokers, believed it is possible to develop an addiction to cigarettes if people smoke from

Table 2

Exposure to Second-Hand Smoke at Home Among High School Students, Québec, 2006

	%
Every day	29.0
Less than once a month	26.2
Never	44.8

Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Québec Survey of Smoking, Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling in High School Students, 2004, 2006.*

time to time, as when with friends. Experimental smokers were more likely to think the risk was low.

Alcohol Consumption

Overview

There was a drop in alcohol consumption (in a 12-month period) between 2004 (63%) and 2006 (60%). This was especially observed in Secondary 1 and 2 and among female experimental drinkers (11% to 8%).

In 2006, the proportion of student drinkers rose from 26% in Secondary 1 to 49% in Secondary 2, to 68% in Secondary 3 and 79% in Secondary 4, to attain 89% in Secondary 5.

The mean age of first consumption of alcohol increased by point two between 2004 and 2006 (12.4 years vs. 12.6 years). The mean age reported by girls was slightly higher than that reported by boys (12.7 years vs. 12.4 years).

Profile of high school drinkers

The proportion of students who had consumed alcohol in a 12-month period was higher among those who had a job compared to those who did not (69% vs. 51%).

The higher the weekly allowance the greater the proportion of students who consumed alcohol. Approximately 44% of students whose weekly allowance was \$10.00 or less were drinkers. This increased to 62% among those whose allowance was between \$11.00 and \$30.00, 74% among those whose allowance was between \$31.00 and \$50.00, and finally 82% among those whose allowance was higher than \$50.00.

A higher proportion of drinkers were living in single-parent homes compared to two-parent ones (69% vs. 58%).

There was also a greater proportion of drinkers among high school students whose marks were below the class average compared to those whose marks were above it (75% vs. 56%).

Table 3

Trends in the Type of Alcohol Consumption Among Québec High School Students, Québec, 2000 to 2006

	2000	2002	2004	2006
	%			
Abstainers	28.7	31.1	36.5	39.6
Experimental drinkers	11.1	12.3	10.1	8.1
Occasional drinkers	39.9	38.3	36.6	37.6
Regular drinkers	20.0	18.1	16.5	14.5
Daily drinkers	0.4*	0.3*	0.3**	0.2**

* Coefficient of variation between 15% and 25%; interpret with caution.

** Coefficient of variation higher than 25%; imprecise estimate provided for information purposes only.

Sources: Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Québec Survey of Tobacco Use in High School Students 1998, 2000, 2002*, and *Québec Survey of Smoking, Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling in High School Students, 2004, 2006*.

Reasons¹ why high school students begin drinking alcohol (%)

Because friends drink	62.7
Curiosity – just to try it	57.9
To get drunk	54.8
Because it's cool	53.4
For its psychotropic effect (to get high)	36.3
Because parents drink	30.5
Because it's relaxing	28.1
Because popular kids drink	26.2
Because it's not allowed	21.5
Other reason	13.5
For something to do	12.6
Don't know	7.7

Drug Use

Overview

Drug use among high school students in a 12-month period decreased between 2004 and 2006 (36% to 30%). This was observed in all grades of high school, except in Secondary 3. The decrease applied to both boys (36% to 29%) and girls (37% to 31%), and in all categories of drugs – cannabis (36% to 29%), hallucinogens (11% to 9%), cocaine (5% to 3.3%), solvents (1.9% to 0.9%) and heroin (1.3% to 0.6%).

The proportion of drug users increased with the grade level, going from 8% in Secondary 1 to 20% in Secondary 2, to 36% in Secondary 3, 42% in Secondary 4, to attain 51% in Secondary 5.

The mean age of beginning to use drugs was slightly higher in 2006 (13.2 years of age) compared to 2004 (13 years of age).

Profile of high school drug users

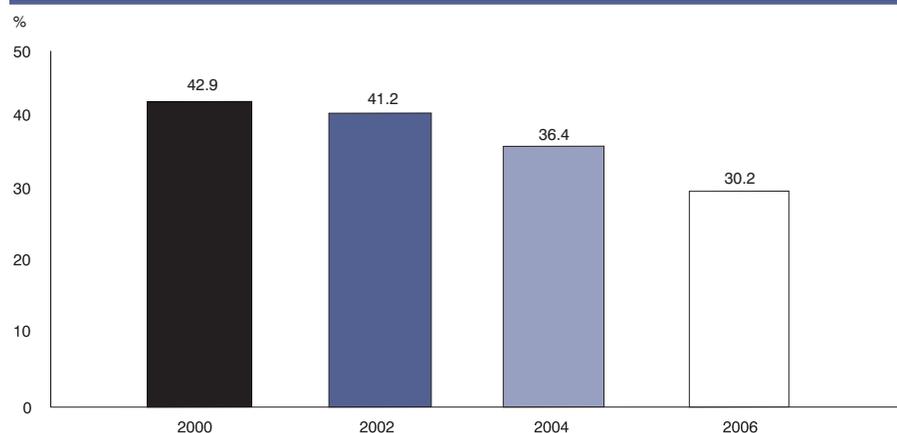
The proportion of students who had used drugs in a 12-month period was higher among those who had a job compared to those who did not (35% vs. 24%). The proportion of students who used drugs increased with the amount of weekly allowance: 17% among those who received \$10.00 or less, 30% who received between \$11.00 and \$30.00, 41% among those who received between \$31.00 and \$50.00, attaining 50% among those who received \$51.00 or more.

The proportion of high school drug users was higher among students who spoke French at home compared to those who spoke a language other than French (32% vs. 19%).

It was also higher among those living in single-parent home than in a two-parent one (42% vs. 27%).

1. The students could choose more than one response.

Figure 3
Trends in Drug Use Among High School Students, Québec, 1998 to 2006



Sources: Institut de la statistique du Québec: *Québec Survey of Tobacco Use in High School Students 1998, 2000, 2002*, and *Québec Survey of Smoking, Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling in High School Students, 2004, 2006*.

Similar to alcohol consumption, the proportion of student drug users was higher among those whose marks were below the class average compared to those whose marks were higher than the average (45% vs. 25%).

Proportion of users by type of drug² (%)

Cannabis	29.4
Amphetamines (speed, uppers)	9.4
Hallucinogens (LSD [acid], PCP, MESS, magic mushrooms, mescaline, ecstasy, etc.)	8.8
Cocaine (coke, snow, crack, free-base, powder)	3.3
Other drugs or medications taken without prescription	1.9
Solvents (glue)	0.9*
Heroin (smack)	0.6*

Similar to what was observed in 2004, girls were more likely to use amphetamines than boys in 2006 (11% vs. 8%).

Reasons³ why students begin to use cannabis (%)

Friends use it	74.2
Curiosity – just to try it	70.4
For the psychotropic effect (to get high)	68.2
Because it's cool	62.5
Because it's relaxing	52.8
Because popular kids use it	33.2
Because it's not allowed	26.4
Because parents use it	24.1
For something to do	19.4
Other reason	7.5
Don't know	7.3

Problematic consumption of alcohol and drug use (DEP-ADO)

According to the criteria of the DEP-ADO scale, the vast majority (87%) of high school students in Québec did

not have an at-risk problem of alcohol consumption or drug use (green light). However, 7% presented problems with alcohol or drugs for which front-line intervention would be recommended (yellow light). A similar proportion of students presented serious problems with drugs and alcohol for which professional intervention would be recommended (red light).

Compared to 2004, fewer students in 2006 reported having consumed five drinks or more of alcohol on a single occasion at least once in the reference period of 12 months (43% vs. 40%). This decrease in excessive alcohol consumption was observed especially among boys (44% vs. 40%). Approximately 66% of student drinkers drank excessively in 2006.

Gambling Including Lotteries

Overview

Between 2004 and 2006, the proportion of students who participated at least once in gambling including lotteries in a 12-month period decreased from 45% to 36%.

The gambling rate was higher among boys than girls (41% vs. 31%).

This decrease particularly applied to students from Secondary 1 to Secondary 4 and to both boys (48% in 2004) and girls (43% in 2004).

In 2006, 30% of high school students were occasional gamblers and 6% habitual gamblers.

* Coefficient of variation between 15 and 25%; interpret with caution.

2. The students could choose more than one type of drug.

3. The students could choose more than one response.

Table 4
DEP-ADO Scale Among High School Students, Québec, 2006

	Total	Green Light	Yellow Light	Red Light
	%			
Alcohol	60.4	77.8	11.4	10.8
Excessive drinking	39.8	67.6	16.3	16.1
Repeated excessive drinking	13.7	39.5	26.9	33.6
Drugs				
Cannabis	29.4	55.8	22.2	22.0
Hallucinogens	8.8	16.1	28.3	55.6
Amphetamines	9.4	21.0	27.0	52.0
Cocaine	3.3	16.5*	18.4*	65.1
Solvents	0.9*	28.5**	14.9**	56.6
Heroin	0.6*	—	—	81.3
Other drugs or medications taken without prescription	1.9	29.2*	20.5*	50.3

* Coefficient of variation between 15% and 25%; interpret with caution.

** Coefficient of variation higher than 25%; imprecise estimate provided for information purposes only.

— Infinitesimal datum.

Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Québec Survey of Smoking, Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling in High School Students, 2004, 2006.*

Profile of high school gamblers

The gambling rate was higher among students who had a paid job outside the home compared to those who did not (40% vs. 31%).

The gambling rate increased with the size of the weekly allowance: 24% among students whose weekly allowance was \$10.00 or less, increasing as follows: 39%, \$11.00–\$30.00; 42%, \$31.00–\$50.00, and 51%, \$51.00 or more.

The gambling rate was higher among students whose language spoken at home was other than French compared to those whose language spoken at home was French (42% vs. 35%).

The gambling rate was higher among students in a single-parent family than those in a two-parent family (41% vs. 35%).

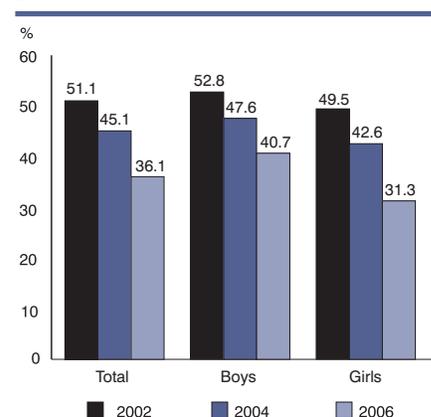
The gambling rate was also higher in students whose marks were below

the class average compared to those whose marks were above the class average (44% vs. 35%).

Popularity of various forms of gambling⁴ (%)

Card games	20.8
Instant lotteries	16.9
Betting on games of skill	14.2
Private sports gambling	12.6
Bingo	9.7
Regular lotteries	8.4
Dice games	8.3
Other forms of gambling	7.0
VLTs (video lottery terminals)	4.5
Mise-O-Jeu [®]	3.6
Internet gambling	3.4
Casino gambling	1.6
Boys preferred card games, skill-testing games, betting on sports, dice games, the Mise-O-Jeu [®] lottery, inter-	

Figure 4
Trends in Gambling During a 12-Month Period Among High School Students, by Sex, Québec, 1998 to 2006



Sources: Institut de la statistique du Québec: *Québec Survey of Tobacco Use in High School Students 1998, 2000, 2002, and Québec Survey of Smoking, Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling in High School Students, 2004, 2006.*

net gambling, casino gambling and other forms of gambling. There was no difference between male and female students in terms of the other types of gambling listed in the table above.

Popularity of poker

In the 12 months preceding the survey, approximately 2.5% of high school students reported having played internet poker, 15% had played poker for money with friends and 4.7% had taken part in poker games with other people.

A higher proportion of boys played internet poker compared to girls (3.9% vs. 1.1%^{*}). The same applied to poker games with friends (21% vs. 9%) and poker games organized by other people (7% vs. 2.6%).

The majority of gamblers did so on an occasional basis in terms of all the forms of gambling. However, all proportions combined, habitual gamblers were more likely to participate in diverse

* Coefficient of variation between 15% and 25%; interpret with caution.

4. The students could choose more than one type of gambling.

forms of playing poker. Approximately 20% of habitual gamblers reported having played internet poker compared to 4.7% of occasional gamblers, 62% had played poker with friends (vs. 38% of occasional gamblers), and 32% had played in poker games organized by other people (vs. 10% of occasional gamblers).

Prevalence of problematic gambling

According to the criteria of the gambling measurement scale (DSM-IV Youth), approximately 3.8% of high school students were at risk of developing a gambling addiction and 2.1% could be considered as potential pathological gamblers.

Only the proportion of gamblers at risk showed a decrease between 2004 and 2006 (6% to 3.8%).

Links between smoking, alcohol, drugs and gambling⁵ (%)

Proportion of students with none of these risk behaviours.	30.3
Proportion of students whose only risk behaviour was smoking.	0.4*
Proportion of students whose only risk behaviour was alcohol consumption.	16.9
Proportion of students whose only risk behaviour was drug use.	0.7*
Proportion of students whose only risk behaviour was gambling.	7.7
Proportion of students who smoke cigarettes and consume alcohol.	0.9*
Proportion of students who smoke cigarettes and use drugs.	0.3**
Proportion of students who smoke cigarettes and gamble.	0.1**

Proportion of students who consume alcohol and use drugs.	8.3
Proportion of students who consume alcohol and gamble.	12.5
Proportion of students who use drugs and gamble.	0.3**
Proportion of students who smoke cigarettes, consume alcohol and use drugs.	6.2
Proportion of students who smoke cigarettes, consume alcohol, and gamble.	1.1*
Proportion of students who smoke cigarettes, use drugs and gamble.	0.1**
Proportion of students who consume alcohol, use drugs and gamble.	8.4
Proportion of students who smoke cigarettes, consume alcohol, use drugs and gamble.	5.8

The trend between 2004 and 2006 is encouraging: in terms of students who had none of the risk behaviours, the proportion increased from 26% to 30%; the proportion of those who had only one risk behaviour increased from 23% to 26%; and there was a decrease in those who had three risk behaviours (18% to 16%) or four risk behaviours (9% to 6%). In terms of students who had two risk behaviours, there was a significant decrease since 2002 (26% to 22%).

Conclusion

The results of the survey show that cigarette smoking decreased from 19% in 2004 to 15% in 2006. The trend continued of a greater proportion of girls who smoke compared to boys. However, the proportion of students who smoke cigars, cigarillos and small

cigars surpassed that of those who smoke cigarettes.

The proportion of high school students who consume alcohol decreased between 2004 and 2006. However, in 2006, 60% of students had drunk excessively and 14% had done so repeatedly. These findings underscore the need to sensitize young people to the dangers of drinking to excess and doing so repeatedly.

The proportion of drug users also decreased compared to the previous survey, particularly among those who use cannabis, hallucinogens, cocaine, solvents and heroin. However, the 2006 survey revealed that girls were more likely than boys to use amphetamines, 7% of students had problematic alcohol consumption and drug use for which a minor intervention would be needed to address and emerging problem, and that a similar proportion had consumption and use level for which major, specialized intervention would be required.

Prevention and sensitization programs are recommended to precisely target students in Secondary 2 and 3. These are pivotal years in which the proportion of students who consume alcohol rose from 26% to 68% and those who use drugs increased from 8% to 36%. Special attention should also be paid to the needs of students whose marks are below the class average and to families and students whose family structure is single-parent.

Gambling and lotteries seemed to hold less interest for students in 2006 compared to 2004. However, it is noteworthy that 3.8% of students were at risk of developing a gambling addiction and 2.1% were already addicted. The behaviour and attitude of male students should be particularly

* Coefficient of variation between 15 and 25%; interpret with caution.

** Coefficient of variation higher than 25%; imprecise estimate provided for information purposes only.

5. The categories shown are mutually exclusive.

monitored. It would be productive to increase our knowledge of the factors why boys seem particularly interested in card games in general and poker in particular. This would be interesting to document mainly in light of recent advertising and broadcast programming that presents poker as a “sport” in which a player’s skill can have an impact on the outcome of the game.

One of the key elements of any program designed to combat smoking, alcohol consumption, drug use or gambling is the regular investigation of trends in behaviours and the characteristics of students engaging in them. To develop effective programs, it is therefore essential to carefully monitor high school student risk behaviours every two years. This is exactly the

type of data that the *Québec Survey of Smoking, Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling In High School Students* has been providing since 1998.

About the survey

The *Québec Survey of Smoking, Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling in High School Students* is conducted by the *Institut de la statistique du Québec* (Québec Institute of Statistics) for the *ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux* (Ministry of Health and Social Services). Its main goal is to produce, on a biannual basis, an accurate portrait of trends in smoking, alcohol consumption, drug use and gambling including lotteries among Québec high school students from Secondary 1 through 5. The findings provide data for policymakers and other stakeholders to help them design policies and interventions evaluate their effectiveness. Two indicators make this survey a unique tool – one covering problematic alcohol consumption and drug use, the DEP-ADO scale, the other covering problematic gambling, the DSM-IV-J scale. In 2006, for the first time in this survey, poker behaviour was investigated. The data of this fifth edition of the survey was collected in the autumn of 2006 from 4,571 students in 173 classes among 149 high schools across the province.

To learn more

The full report (in french only), can be downloaded from this web page: www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/publications/sante/index.htm#tabac. A printed version can also be ordered from the Centre d’information et de documentation of the ISQ by telephoning 1 877 677-2087.

The microdata files of the surveys from 1998 to 2006 can be accessed from the Centre d’accès aux données de recherche de l’ISQ (CADRISQ) at www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/cadrisq or by telephoning (514) 343-2299.

This article, translated in English by James Lawler, is also available in French under the title « *Enquête québécoise sur le tabac, l’alcool, la drogue et le jeu chez les élèves du secondaire, 2006 : les faits saillants* », *Zoom Santé*, Québec, Institut de la statistique du Québec, novembre 2007, 8 p.

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