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This report is a summary of a longer paper entitled *Mental health*.

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Mental illness in Iiyiyiu Aschii

A “mental illness” is a long-term problem that seriously affects how a person thinks, feels, or gets along with others. Examples include:

Anxiety disorders like

- ◆ Phobias (strong fears of things that other people don’t find scary)
- ◆ Panic attacks

Mood disorders like

- ◆ Major depression (feeling sad or blue for months at a time)

- ◆ Bipolar disorder (moods that swing from very high to very low)

These problems are no more common in Iiyiyiu Aschii than in other parts of Quebec. In Iiyiyiu Aschii, about one person in thirty (2.9%) has been told that they have an anxiety disorder. One in twenty (4.7%) suffers from a mood disorder. Although First Nation groups in other parts of Canada have very high rates of depression, this does not seem to hold true in Iiyiyiu Aschii.

Mental health in Iiyiyiu Aschii

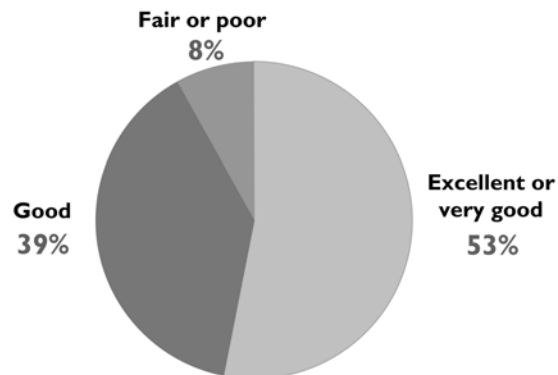
Even though rates of mental illness are average, people in Iiyiyiu Aschii are not that happy with their mental health. Just over half the people in Iiyiyiu Aschii describe their mental health as “excellent” or “very good,” while 8% rate it “fair” or “poor.” These results are not as good as in other parts of Quebec. People in the inland communities are twice as likely as those in the coastal areas to say their mental health is poor.

Some things seem to go with good mental health, but we don’t know if they actually cause it. Older adults are most likely to enjoy good mental health (this is usual). We also notice that people report better mental health if they are more educated, and if spiritual values play a big part in their lives. On the other hand, people who drink a lot or take drugs tend to report worse mental health.

Mental health is closely tied to physical health. People in poor physical health are

seven times more likely than others to feel that their mental health is also poor.

How people describe their own mental health
People age 12 and over, 2003



Are people getting help for their mental health problems? One person in ten (9%) said that they had talked with a health worker about a mental health problem in the past year. This was about the same as in the rest of Quebec. Most of the people who needed help spoke with a psychologist. Others turned to family doctors, social workers, and other helpers.



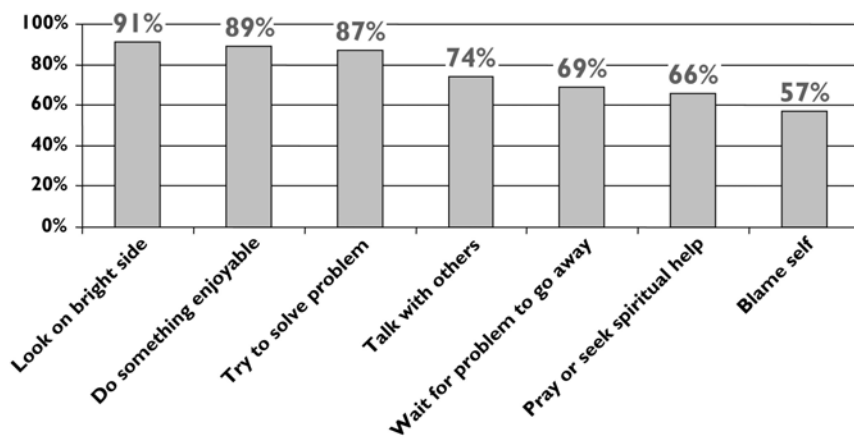
Coping skills in Iiyiyu Aschii

The survey asked people how well they handle stressful situations like a family crisis. Half of the people in Iiyiyu Aschii said that their ability to handle problems was “very good” or “excellent,” while only 14% thought it was fair or poor. People in Iiyiyu Aschii seem to be ahead of the rest of Quebec in this respect.

What are the main problems that people find stressful? For women, family duties are the biggest concern. For men, problems with work, school, or income top the list.

People deal with these problems in different ways. The three most common methods are to:

Most common ways of dealing with problems



- ◆ look on the bright side
- ◆ do something enjoyable
- ◆ try to solve the problem.

Almost everyone—both men and women—says they use these three methods. Some other ways of handling stress are

Coping seems to improve with age: 60% of the people over age 45, compared to just 40% of teenagers, feel that they handle problems well. Men are more likely than women to say that they cope well with problems (53% vs. 44%). Having more education also seems to help.

used more by one sex than the other. For instance, women are more likely than men to talk to another person, to wait for the problem to go away, to pray, or to smoke or eat more than usual. Men are more likely than women to react to stress by drinking or using drugs.

Summary

In sum, people’s views of their own mental health are not always good (especially in the inland communities). But serious mental illness seems to be no more common than average. About one person in ten has talked with a health worker about their mental health. Roughly one in twenty has a

mood problem like depression, while one in thirty has an anxiety disorder. Coping skills seem to be strong: one person in two feels that they deal very well with problems. Most people cope by looking on the bright side, by doing something they like, or by trying to fix the problem.



