

A summary of the *Highlights  
Report* from the 2013  
Tan e ihtiyān survey of high  
school students  
DRAFT/ Report

This summary has been prepared by Ellen Bobet from a more technical report by Danny Du Mays and Monique Bordeleau, entitled *Cree survey on tobacco, alcohol, drugs and gambling (and other life habits) in high school students, 2013 Tan e ihtiyān Survey 10-19 Highlights*. Montréal: Institut de la statistique du Québec, September 2014, translated by Eloï Courchesne.

## Contents

Introduction: the <i>Tan e ihtiyar</i> survey .....	1
Understanding the survey results.....	2
Basic information about the students .....	1
Tobacco.....	4
Alcohol .....	8
Drugs .....	10
Gambling.....	12
Engaging in more than one risky behaviour .....	14
Physical activity.....	15
Nutrition.....	16
Body image .....	17

## INTRODUCTION: THE *TAN E IHTIYAN* SURVEY

### WHY THIS STUDY?

The study was meant to provide up-to-date information on the health habits of high school students, with a special focus on addictions (tobacco, alcohol, drugs, and gambling). It looks at

- how common these habits are
- the links between them (e.g., between use of alcohol and drugs)
- which groups of students seem to be at greatest risk

This information should help people in the schools, health board, and other community services to plan health programs for students.

### WHO WAS IN THE STUDY?

The study tried to reach every regular student in Eeyou Istchee's nine high schools. This included part-time students and those in the Work-Oriented Training Path (WOTP), but excluded the adults in the Professional Training Centres and the small number of students in special-education classes.

The survey was carried out in November 2013. Of the roughly 1,500 eligible students, 1,002 (66%) completed the questionnaire.

## UNDERSTANDING THE SURVEY RESULTS

The survey was carefully done, but any survey has limitations. And it's easy to read too much into statistics. As you read these results, it's important to keep four things in mind:

### 1. SOME OF THE SECONDARY 1 STUDENTS HAD TROUBLE WITH THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The youngest students had some problems following the questionnaire. As a result, we're less sure of the results for secondary 1 students than for students in the other grades.

The report's authors tried to compensate for this in their analysis, but we still need to keep it in mind.

### 2. THERE'S A DISTINCTION BETWEEN *HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS* AND *ALL YOUTH*

It's important to remember that this was a survey of high school students, not all youth. The survey doesn't tell us anything about the health or habits of youth who have dropped out of school.

### 3. THE STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED MAY NOT TRULY REPRESENT ALL STUDENTS

Many of the students registered at school were absent on the day the survey was done. In fact, *a third of the students on the school lists* were away on the day of the survey, which means that only two-thirds participated.

#### 4. JUST BECAUSE TWO THINGS “GO TOGETHER” DOESN’T MEAN THAT ONE CAUSES THE OTHER



Let’s take an example from the *Tan e ihtiyar* survey. The survey found that smoking rates are highest among the students with the most pocket money. So, does having lots of pocket money “cause” students to take up smoking?

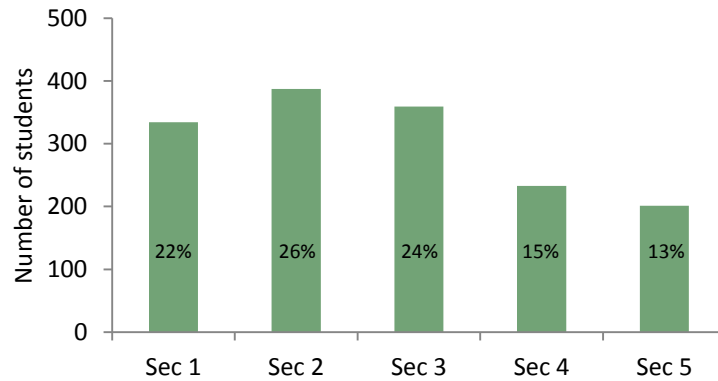
Maybe. It’s certainly possible, and it might be worth looking at. But it may also be that a third factor explains the link. For instance, the survey found that smoking rates rise with age. If the older students get more pocket money, then maybe the link we see between pocket money and smoking is simply due to the students’ age.

## BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDENTS

## GRADE LEVEL

The higher the grade, the smaller the number of students. There are only half as many students in secondary 5 as in the earlier grades (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: STUDENTS IN EYYOU ISTCHEE’S HIGH SCHOOLS, BY GRADE LEVEL AND SEX

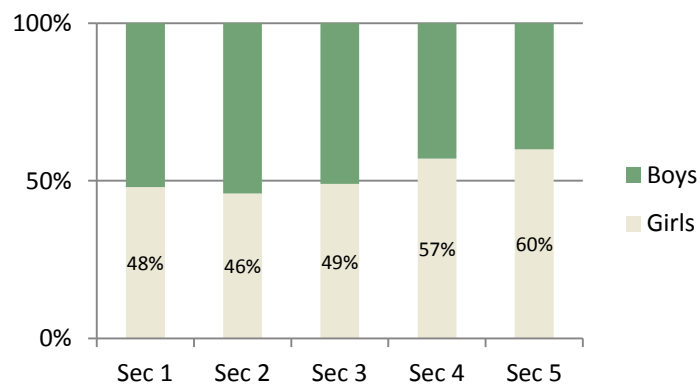


Data from Katlyn Thibodeau and Robert Courtemanche, *Rapport méthodologique* (ISQ, July 2014).

## SEX

Overall, girls make up about half of all high school students—but they outnumber boys in secondary 4 and 5.

FIGURE 2: PROPORTION OF GIRLS/BOYS IN EACH GRADE



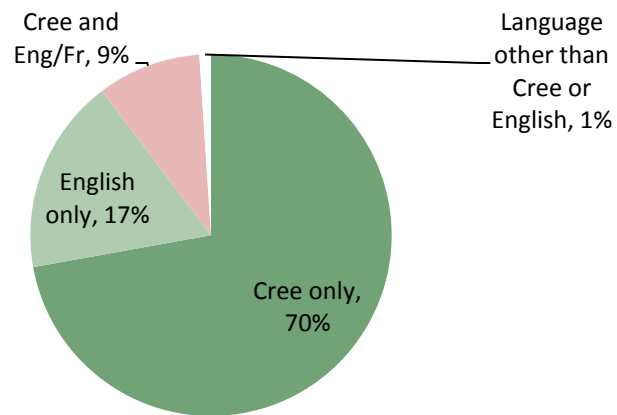
## FAMILY STRUCTURE

Out of every ten students, six live with both their biological parents, and another lives in a “blended” family. Just under two students in ten (17%) live in a single-parent family (although we don’t know if there are grandparents and other relatives in the home).

### LANGUAGE AT HOME

Most students—seven out of ten—said they speak only Cree at home, while nearly two out of ten speak only English. The rest speak a mixture.

FIGURE 3: LANGUAGE(S) SPOKEN IN THE HOME



### JOBS AND SPENDING MONEY

About one student in four had a paid job outside the home—especially students in the upper grades. Girls were more likely than boys to have such a job (recall that they outnumber boys in the upper grades). As a result, girls were also far more likely to have over \$31 per week in spending money.

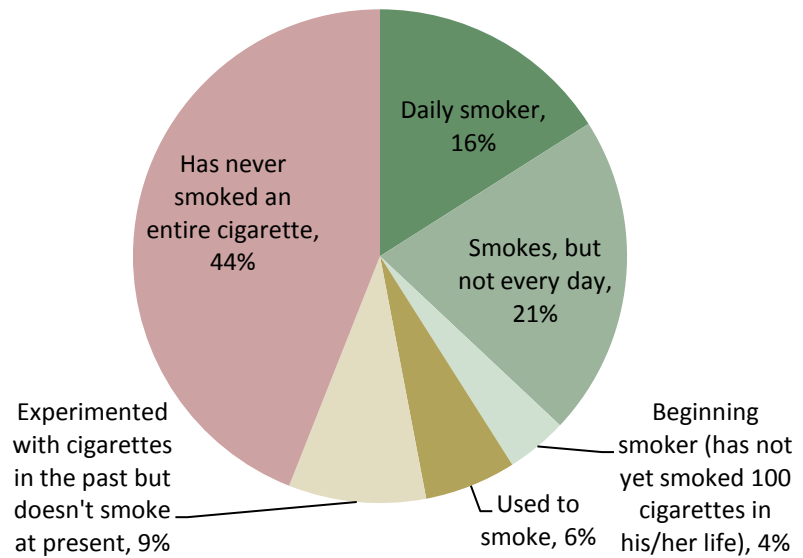
# TOBACCO

## CURRENT USE OF TOBACCO

Half the high school students in Eeyou Istchee use tobacco in some form, usually cigarettes. Specifically, out of every twenty students,

- 8 smoked cigarettes in the past month
- 3 have experimented with cigarettes or smoked in the past, but don't currently smoke
- The remaining 9 have never smoked beyond a few puffs

FIGURE 4: USE OF CIGARETTES IN THE PAST MONTH



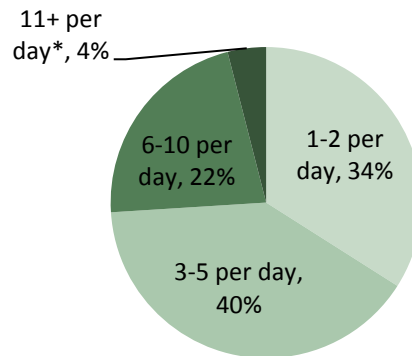
## INTENSITY OF SMOKING

The students who smoke cigarettes differ in how often they smoke. As Figure 4 above shows, some students smoke every day, while a slightly larger number smoke occasionally. A few are just taking up the habit.



In the month before the survey, about three out of four smoked fewer than five cigarettes per day. This leaves one smoker in four who is a heavier user, going through six or more cigarettes each day.

FIGURE 5: NUMBER OF CIGARETTES PER DAY AMONG STUDENTS WHO SMOKED IN THE PREVIOUS MONTH



\* Imprecise figure (based on a very small number of students).

#### *What factors go along with smoking habits?*



- Girls and senior-high students (Secondary 3, 4, 5) are most likely to have smoked cigarettes in the past month. (But remember that there are more girls than boys in the senior grades. So it's hard to tell if students are more likely to smoke because they're girls, or because they're older—or a bit of both.)
- Smoking rates go up with amount of pocket money. In the month before the survey, smoking rates were
  - 35% in the students with less than \$11 per week;
  - 51% in the students with \$11-30 per week; and
  - 69% in the students with \$31+ per week.

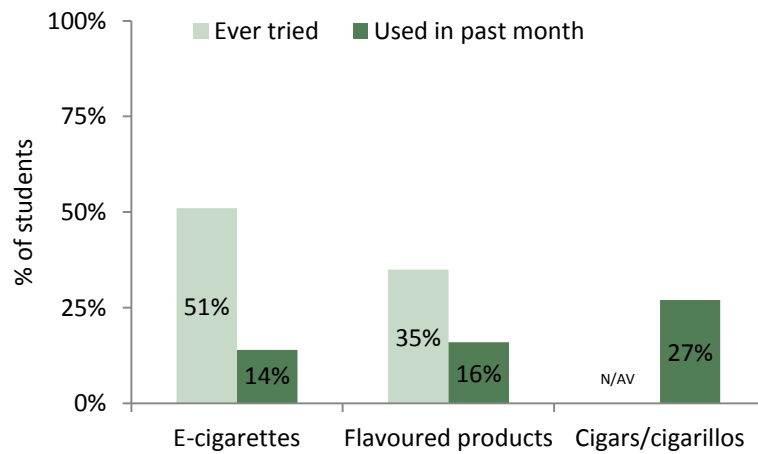
Recall that these findings too may be influenced by age, since the older students are likely to have more spending money.

## ALTERNATIVES TO REGULAR CIGARETTES

How many students are using alternatives to regular cigarettes, like e-cigarettes, flavoured tobacco, or cigars?

- One student in two has tried e-cigarettes at some point, and one student in seven tried them in the past month.
- About one student in three has tried flavoured products (menthol cigarettes or flavoured tobacco in a water pipe) at some time in their lives. Roughly one in six has used flavoured tobacco in the past month.
- About one student in four had taken at least a few puffs of a cigar or cigarillo in the past month. These were usually students who were already cigarette smokers—very few of the non-smoking students tried cigars.

FIGURE 6: PERCENT OF STUDENTS TRYING OR USING ALTERNATIVES TO REGULAR CIGARETTES



*What groups use alternatives to regular cigarettes?*



- Use of e-cigarettes and flavoured tobacco seems to be more common Inland than in the Coastal area.
- Girls and senior high students (secondary 3, 4, 5) were more likely than boys and younger students to try e-cigarettes.

## RESTRICTIONS ON CIGARETTE SALES

Half of all high school students reported that, in the past month, they had been asked to prove their age in a store, or refused cigarettes.\*

## SECOND-HAND SMOKE

A majority of students—about five out of seven—say that that they are never exposed to second-hand smoke in their home, or in cars. However, one student in seven is regularly exposed to smoke in these places.

*Which groups are exposed to second-hand smoke?*



- Senior-high students are more likely than others to report that they are exposed to second-hand smoke at home and in the car.
- There's also a link between exposure to smoke and the student's own smoking habits: 25% of the youth who smoke say they're exposed to second-hand smoke at home, while this is true of only 7% of the students who don't smoke.

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\* Caution: Some of the secondary 1 students had problems with the questions on sales restrictions, and this may affect the results.

# ALCOHOL

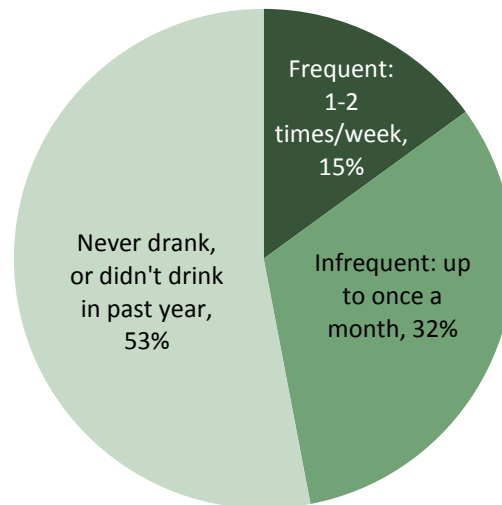
## TRYING ALCOHOL

Over half of high school students (57%) have tried alcohol at some time in their lives. One student in five reported trying alcohol before the age of 13, while one in twenty drank regularly—at least for a time—before age 13.\*

## DRINKING: HOW MUCH AND HOW OFTEN?

About half of all students said they had not had any alcohol in the past year, while the other half had had at least one drink. Nearly one student in six drinks frequently, meaning at least 1-2 drinks every week (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7: FREQUENCY OF DRINKING IN THE PAST YEAR



Binge drinking (having five or more drinks at one sitting) is a particular concern. In the previous year, over a third of students had binged at least once, while a sixth had binged repeatedly (five or more times).

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\* The figures on age of first use were recalled by students who were over the age of 13. "Drank regularly" means that the student drank at least once a week, over a period lasting at least a month.

## MIXING ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRINKS

A recent trend is to mix alcoholic drinks with energy drinks or caffeine. One student in four said they had drunk a mix of this type in the past year.

*Which groups of students have the highest drinking rates?*



Drinking at all in the past year, frequent drinking, and binge drinking are all more common among...

- Students in the senior grades as opposed to the junior ones
- Girls rather than boys (recall that girls outnumber boys in the senior grades)
- Students with greater amounts of spending money (this too may be linked to age and sex).

Students' drinking patterns are similar in the Coastal and Inland areas.

# DRUGS

## TRYING DRUGS

Half of all high school students report having tried drugs at some point. One student in four (26%) tried drugs before age 13, and about one in eight (13%) used drugs regularly before that age.\*

## USE OF ANY TYPE OF DRUG

Recall that half of all students have tried drugs. The same proportion report having

- Used them in the past year; and
- Used them in the past month.

Most (72%) of the students who use drugs at all seem to use them regularly. This means that in the previous year, they used drugs once a week or more, over a period of at least a month.

## USE OF CANNABIS

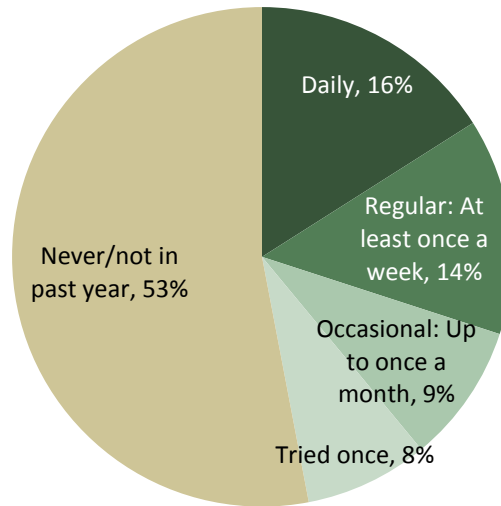
Cannabis is far and away the most common drug used by these students. One student in two uses cannabis, whereas the various other drugs are used by at most one student in fourteen. Of these other types, the most common are cocaine and synthetic drugs.

Of the students who use cannabis at all, the majority use it at least once a week. Appreciable numbers use it every day (Figure 8).

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\* These numbers for age of first use were recalled by students who were over 13. "Used regularly" means the student used drugs at least once a week, and did so for a period lasting a month or longer.

FIGURE 8: USE OF CANNABIS DURING THE PAST YEAR



*Which groups have the highest rates of cannabis use?*



The patterns for cannabis use are similar to those for cigarettes and alcohol. That is, the highest rates are seen in senior-high students, girls, and students with more spending money.

Patterns of cannabis use seem to be similar in the Coastal and Inland areas.

# GAMBLING

## TRYING GAMBLING

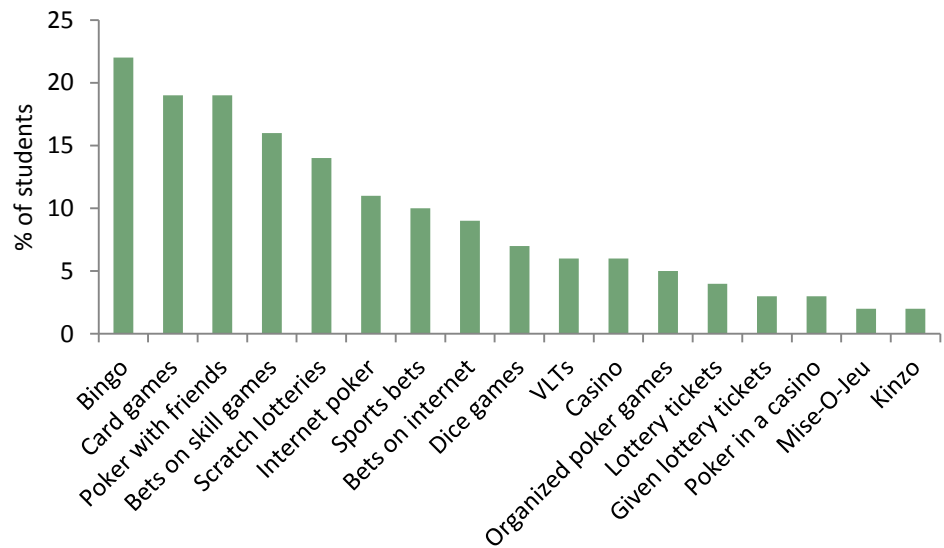
Nearly one student in five had tried some form of gambling before reaching the age of 13.\*

## GAMBLING IN THE PAST YEAR

All told, a third of high school students said they had engaged in some form of gambling in the past year. Of these, over half had done some of their gambling on the internet—be it internet bingo, online poker for real money, bets on sporting events, or other options.

The most common forms of gambling were bingo, poker with friends, and other card games.

FIGURE 9: FORMS OF GAMBLING THAT STUDENTS SAID THEY HAD ENGAGED IN DURING THE PREVIOUS YEAR



Note: Students may have engaged in more than one form of gambling.

\* These numbers for age of first use were recalled by the students who were over 13.



## PROBLEM GAMBLING

The survey asked a series of questions about whether gambling affected the student's life. For example, it asked students if they'd ever had financial problems due to gambling, if they played to escape problems, if they felt irritable when they tried to decrease or stop playing, and so forth. Based on their answers, students were then classed into one of three groups:

1. No gambling problem
2. At risk of becoming addicted to gambling
3. Probably has a gambling problem

All told, one student into ten (12%) fell into the last two groups, and was considered to either have a gambling problem or be at risk of developing one.

### *Which groups had the highest gambling rates?*

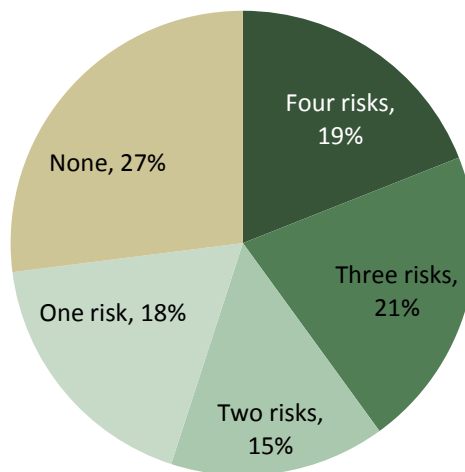
- Unlike the other addictions discussed in this report, boys were more likely than girls to gamble, and to fall into the “at risk/problem gambler” group.
- Rates of gambling during the past year, and “at risk/problem gambling” were higher among senior-high students than in the lower grades. (Caution: the secondary 1 students struggled with the questions about problem gambling, and the results for this group are suspect.)



## ENGAGING IN MORE THAN ONE RISKY BEHAVIOUR

The survey found that one student in four had not engaged in **any** risky behaviour over the past year: he or she hadn't gambled, nor used tobacco, alcohol, or drugs. On the other hand, one student in five had engaged in **all** of these behaviours. Alcohol and drugs were a particularly common combination: over a third of all students had used both (with or without other risky behaviours like gambling and smoking).

**FIGURE 10: PERCENT OF STUDENTS ENGAGING IN VARIOUS NUMBERS OF RISKY BEHAVIOURS IN THE YEAR BEFORE THE SURVEY: GAMBLING, DRINKING, SMOKING, DRUGS**



*Which groups of students were most likely to have multiple risks?*

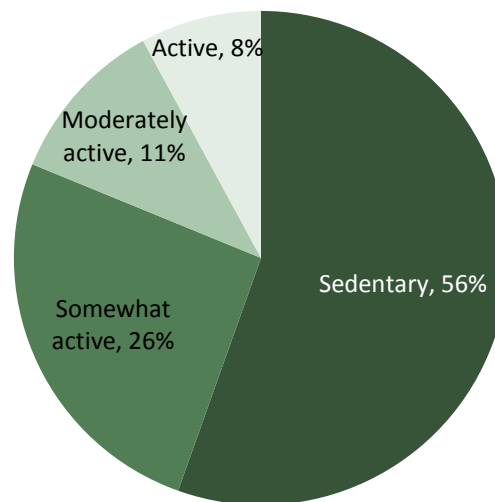
- The number of risk behaviours rose with grade level. In senior high school, almost half the students had three or more risk behaviours.
- Students living with both their biological parents were much more likely than others to fall into the “no risky behaviour” group.



## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The survey used a measure of physical activity developed by Nolin<sup>\*</sup>, which weighs the frequency, duration, intensity, and energy expenditure of each activity. Based on this formula, it assigns people to one of five groups (from “active” to “sedentary”).<sup>†</sup> Over half of high school students fell into the “sedentary” group.

FIGURE 11: LEVELS OF LEISURE-TIME PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



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<sup>\*</sup> B. NOLIN et D. HAMEL. « Les Québécois bougent plus mais pas encore assez », dans : M. Venne et A. Robitaille (sous la direction de), *l'Annuaire du Québec 2006*, Montréal, Fides, 2005, pp. 296-311.

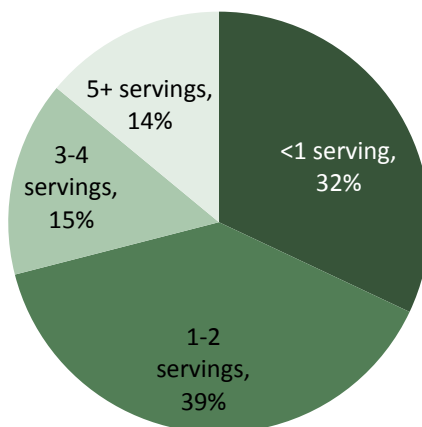
<sup>†</sup> Note that this refers to activity during a student's leisure time. The survey did not count gym classes, work activity, or things like walking or biking to school.

## NUTRITION

### HEALTHY FOODS

- Only one student in ten drinks at least three glasses of milk each day. Most students drink less than two glassfuls, while one in ten never drinks milk.
- Similarly, few students eat the recommended five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day, and a third of all students eat basically *no* fruits and vegetables (Figure 12). (Note that fruit juice was not counted.)

FIGURE 12: SERVINGS OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES PER DAY (EXCLUDING FRUIT JUICE)



### BREAKFAST

Two out of six students say that they eat breakfast every day before leaving for school, and one in six never has breakfast. The remaining three out of six students fall between these two extremes.

### HIGH-SUGAR DRINKS

Nearly half (48%) of high-school students drink fruit-flavoured beverages at least twice a week, while about a third regularly drink pop and/or sport drinks.

## BODY IMAGE

In this part of the survey, students were shown drawings of figures ranging from underweight to overweight, and asked to:

1. Pick the one that they felt resembled their own build
2. Pick the one that they would *like* to resemble. If a student wanted to resemble a figure that was noticeably different from their own, this was taken to mean that they were dissatisfied with their current weight.



Most students (eight out of ten) said that they resembled the normal-weight figures (drawings 3, 4, and 5). The remaining students were about evenly split between the overweight figures and the underweight ones.

Even though most students indicated a normal weight, a majority were dissatisfied with their current body shape. Over half the students said that they would like to resemble figures that were slimmer than their own, while one student in ten would prefer a figure heavier than their present one.

*Which groups were content with their weight?*

- Boys and students in secondary 1 and 2 were significantly more satisfied with their weight than others.

