



## SUBSTANCE USE

### QANUILIRPITAA? 2017

Nunavik Inuit Health Survey

Substance use refers to the consumption of any psychoactive substance (tobacco, alcohol, cannabis or other drugs), no matter how the substance is consumed (through drinking, smoking, vaping, inhaling, chewing, injecting, etc.). Substance misuse occurs when the use of a substance has adverse consequences on a person's relationships or mental or physical health. This report is divided into four sections documenting the results of the *Qanuilirpitaa? 2017* Health Survey regarding, respectively, tobacco products use, alcohol consumption, drug use, and harm perception of risky behaviours.

Tobacco use is widespread in Nunavik communities: 72% of Nunavimmiut reported smoking daily and 8% occasionally. One out of five (20%) had not smoked in the year prior to the survey and of that proportion, 10% were former smokers and 10% lifetime abstainers. There was no significant difference in the prevalence of tobacco smoking between this survey and the *Qanuippitaa? 2004* survey. Among Nunavimmiut aged between 16 and 20 years old, 70% reported having smoked tobacco on a daily basis in 2017. Twelve percent (12%) of Nunavimmiut reported having used or tried an electronic cigarette in the year prior to the survey.

Initiation to tobacco occurs at an early age, with a little more than half of smokers (54%) having been younger than 14 when they had their first cigarette. Half of daily smokers (52%) had started smoking daily by the age of 16. Among daily smokers, men reported smoking more cigarettes per day than women. In the year leading up to the survey, 35% of daily smokers had tried to quit smoking for at least 24 hours. Younger Nunavimmiut were more likely to have tried to quit smoking. Most smokers (59%) did not use any specific method to quit smoking, but when they did, they most commonly sought help and support from family members or support programs, and spiritual or traditional methods. Nicotine replacement therapy (gum, patches) was used by less than a third (29%) of smokers trying to quit.

Sixty-three percent (63%) of Nunavimmiut had drunk alcohol at least once a month in the year prior to the survey and 20% had done so less than once a month. Seventeen percent (17%) had not drunk alcohol in the year prior to the survey and of that proportion 13% were former drinkers and 4% lifetime abstainers. The prevalence of Nunavimmiut drinking at least once a

month was higher in this survey than in the *Qanuippitaa?* 2004 Health Survey for people aged 21 years and over, but not for young people aged 16 to 20.

Binge drinking is defined as the ingestion of five or more drinks in a single occasion. The majority (73%) of Nunavimmiut reported at least one binge drinking episode in the year prior to the survey. Furthermore, 29% of the Nunavik population reported weekly binge drinking (at least once every week). Weekly binge drinking episodes were also reported by nearly a quarter of Nunavimmiut aged 16 to 20 (24%).

Based on the CAGE questionnaire used to identify potential problems with alcohol consumption, two thirds (69%) of Nunavimmiut who had drunk alcohol in the year prior to the survey were at risk of problem drinking. This represents a higher proportion than that observed in the *Qanuippitaa?* 2004 survey. Nunavimmiut aged 21 to 54 years old were more likely to be at risk of problem drinking than those under 21 or over 54 years old.

Sixty-three percent (63%) of the population having used cannabis in the year prior to the survey and 32% reporting daily use. In the case of women, the prevalence of cannabis use was higher than in the *Qanuippitaa?* 2004 survey, while in the case of men the proportion was higher compared to women in both surveys. One third (32%) of those who used drugs were considered at risk of a potential drug abuse problem, with people under 31 years old being at higher risk. Daily

cannabis use was associated with an increased risk of potential drug abuse problems.

Regarding abstinence, the proportion of former drinkers was higher among Nunavimmiut aged 55 and over compared to younger ones. Women were more likely than men to abstain from alcohol and cannabis use. Older Nunavimmiut, as well as those with higher annual income were more likely to abstain from cannabis.

This report provides an updated profile of substance use in Nunavik. Substance use was and remains an important challenge for Nunavik communities. While electronic cigarette use is an emerging practice among Nunavimmiut, the prevalence of smoking has not decreased. Alcohol and cannabis consumptions seem more prevalent compared to 2004. As in other populations, youth who frequently use drugs appear to be particularly at risk of potential abuse problems. Low expectations of harmful effects of substances, among other psychological and social predisposing factors, may play a role in the initiation and subsequent use of substances.



*Qanuillirpitaa? 2017 is a population healthy survey carried out in Nunavik from August to October 2017. A total of 1 326 Nunavimmiut aged 16 and over from all 14 villages participated to this survey.*

**Nakurmiik to all Nunavimmiut who contributed to this important health survey!**

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