Inuit Health Survey 2007-2008

Nunavut
Community and Personal Wellness

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International Polar Year Inuit Health Survey: Health in Transition and Resiliency
with the
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Executive Summary

This report provides a summary of the results for the community and personal wellness from the Inuit Health Survey: Health in Transition and Resiliency conducted in Nunavut in 2007 and 2008.

OVERVIEW

Inuit in Nunavut have expressed a desire to have health information that is of practical relevance so that informed decisions can be made in the face of the rapid changes that are affecting all dimensions of life in Arctic communities. In response to these concerns, a multifaceted participatory health research project for those 18 years of age and above was developed and undertaken in 25 communities in Nunavut in 2007 and 2008. The goal of the survey was to obtain an overview of the health status and living conditions of Inuit living in Nunavut.

FUNDING

Funding for this project was received from the Government of Canada's Program for International Polar Year, Canadian Institutes for Health Research, Health Canada, University of Toronto, Government of Nunavut, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (formerly Indian and Northern Affairs) and ArcticNet.

APPROVAL

Ethical approval was provided by McGill's Institutional Review Board, the Nunavut Research Institute and all hamlets through community-university agreements.

A NOTE ON THE RESULTS

A total of 1923 Nunavut residents participated in the Inuit Health Survey. A subsample of these (1710 people) completed the Community and Personal Wellness questionnaire. It is possible that, due to the nature of the questions, some participants chose not to respond to some or all of the questions on the Community and Personal Wellness questionnaire. This occurrence is not uncommon in surveys dealing with sensitive topics such as mental health and wellness. As a result, the prevalence of some of these conditions in Nunavut communities may be even higher than our results suggest.

2007-2008 INUIT HEALTH SURVEY • NUNAVUT

RESULTS

COMMUNITY SAFETY

- The majority of respondents (69 %) said their communities were very peaceful or moderately peaceful places to live.

TRADITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- The majority of respondents (90%) said they believe it is important or necessary for them to be able to go out on the land.

SOCIAL NETWORKS

- The majority of respondents (66%) said they are able to spend time with someone they like most or all of the time.
- Sixty-four percent (64%) of respondents reported getting together with people to play games, sports, or recreational activities.
- Sixty-one percent (61%) of respondents reported participating in activities where people came together to work for the benefit of the community.
- However many residents of Nunavut lack a strong social support networks. Only 46% of respondents reported that they have someone to turn to most or all of the time when they need emotional support.

INDIVIDUAL MENTAL HEALTH

- Among Inuit living in Nunavut who are employed, 79% report being happy with their jobs. This rate is lower than in the rest of Canada.
- Rates of sleep disorder in Nunavut are similar to the rest of Canada.
- Similar to the rest of Canada, stress was reported as the main cause for sleeplessness (46%). Children and pain were also common reasons.
- People report using a variety of strategies to cope with stress in their lives, including spending time with family and friends, talking to others, meditation/prayer, watching TV/movie and going hunting.
- In Nunavut, 14% of respondents reported feeling anxious all or most of the time. Thirty-one percent (31%) of respondents reported feeling anxious some of the time.
- According to the Kessler-6 psychological distress scale 13% of respondents had scores indicating serious psychological distress.
- About 9% of respondents reported feeling depressed all or most of the time. Another 43% of respondents reported feeling depressed some or a little of the time.
- The feeling of depression was more commonly reported among women than men and among younger adults than older adults.

INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE

- In our study, 11% of respondents reported that as children they were often verbally abused by an adult.
- Thirty-eight percent (38%) of participants reported that as adults they have sometimes or often experienced verbal abuse.
- Thirty-one percent (31%) of respondents experienced severe physical abuse as children.
- Fifty-two percent (52%) of women and 46% of men reported having experienced at least one form of physical violence as an adult.
- Participants aged 18-49 years were more likely to have experienced physical violence than respondents aged 50 years or older.
- Fifty-two percent (52%) of women and 22% of men reported having experienced severe sexual abuse during childhood.
- Twenty seven percent (27%) of women and 5% of men reported having experienced some form of forced sexual activity as an adult.

SUICIDE

- Suicide is a significant concern in Nunavut, and suicide prevention is a key priority for the territory.
- Forty-eight percent (48%) of respondents reported having thought seriously about suicide at some point in their life.
- Fourteen percent (14%) reported recent suicidal ideation.
- Rates of attempted suicide in Nunavut are extremely high. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of respondents reported a non-fatal suicide attempt at some point in their lives.
- Five percent (5%) of all Nunavut respondents reported a recent non-fatal suicide attempt.
- Among Nunavut adults, younger adults (18-49 years) reported more recent suicide attempts than older people.
- Reports of suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts were more common among women than men. According to published studies, while women are more likely to report attempts, men are more likely to die from suicide.

LIFESTYLE

- In our survey, 12% of respondents reported that someone in their childhood home often had a problem with alcohol.
- Sixteen percent (16%) of respondents reported having lost a close personal relationship because of their own drinking.
- Sixty-two percent (62%) of respondents reported having experimented with substances in order to get high.
- Forty-three percent (43%) of respondents reported using recreational drugs such as marijuana or hashish in the previous 12 months.
- Men were more likely than women to report having used recreational drugs in the previous 12 months.
- Gambling is a common activity in Nunavut, though it may be somewhat less prevalent than in other parts of northern Canada.
- The pattern of gambling activities in Nunavut varied with age. While people of all ages reported spending money on lottery tickets and Bingo, younger adults (18-29 years) reported more frequent betting during card games.

Overview

- The Inuit Health Survey in Nunavut was conducted in 2007 and 2008.
- Twenty-five (25) communities representing Nunavut's three regions participated in the survey:

Baffin (2007)	**Kivalliq (2007)**	**Kitikmeot (2008)**
Sanikiluaq	Arviat	Kugluktuk
Hall Beach	Whale Cove	Cambridge Bay
Igloolik	Rankin Inlet	Gjoa Haven
Cape Dorset	Chesterfield Inlet	Taloyoak
Kimmirut	Coral Harbour	Kugaaruk
Iqaluit	Repulse Bay	
Pangnirtung	Baker Lake (2008)	
Qikiqtarjuaq		
Clyde River		
Pond Inlet		
Grise Fiord		
Arctic Bay		
Resolute Bay (2008)		

- Across Nunavut, a total of 1923 individuals 18 years of age or older participated in the Inuit Health Survey.
- One thousand seven hundred and ten (1710) Inuit in Nunavut completed the Community and Personal Wellness portion of the survey. Some respondents answered all questions (full participants) and some respondents answered some but not all questions (partial participants) on the Community and Personal Wellness questionnaire.
- Because of this combination of full and partial participants, results for the Community and Personal Wellness portion of the survey are presented as percentages calculated using the number of responses divided by the total number of participants who answered each question.
- The average age of those who completed the Community and Personal Wellness questionnaire was 41 years.
- More women than men and more individuals over 30 years of age completed the Community and Personal Wellness questionnaire.

Nunavut participation

	AGE GROUP			GENDER	
	18-29 years	30-49 years	50+ years	Men	Women
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	433	808	469	679	1031

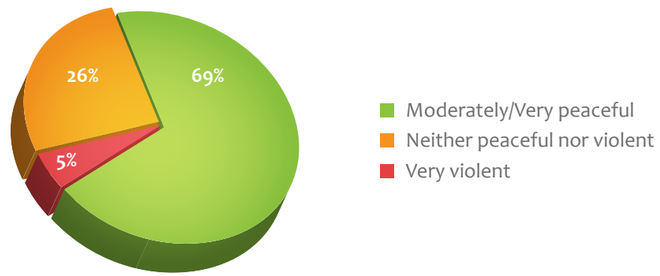
Detailed Results from the Community and Personal Wellness Questionnaire

I. COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY SAFETY

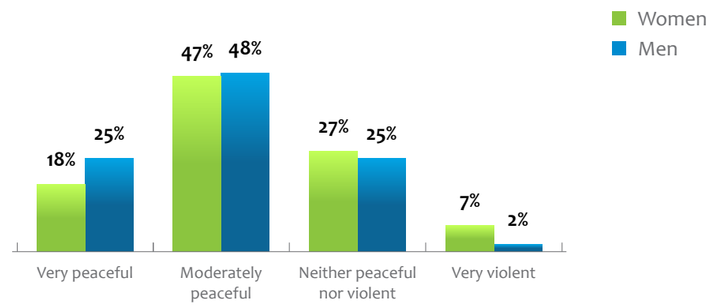
- People's mental health is affected by whether or not they feel their communities are safe places in which to live and raise their children.
- The majority of respondents (69 %) said their communities were very peaceful or moderately peaceful places to live in.
- It is important to note that these numbers indicate *how people feel* about their communities, *not the actual level of violence* in communities.

In your opinion is this community generally peaceful or affected by violence?
(All respondents)



- Very few residents of Nunavut said their communities were very violent places to live in. Among these, a higher proportion of women (7%) than men (2%) felt their communities were very violent places to live in.

In your opinion is this community generally peaceful or affected by violence?
(By gender)

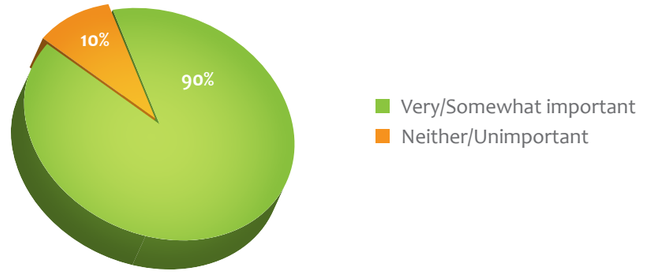


- The proportion of Nunavut respondents who rated their communities as safe is lower than in the rest of Canada. According to a survey by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 88% of Canadians feel it is safe to walk in their neighborhoods at night and 94% feel safe from crime (1).

TRADITIONAL ACTIVITIES

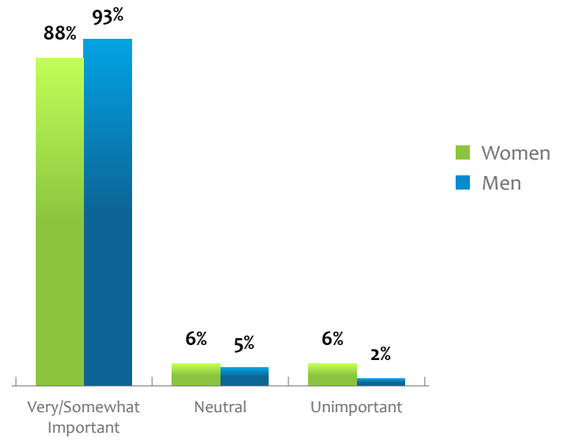
- Many Inuit stay connected to their culture by taking part in traditional activities on the land. These activities are seen as an important part of life.
- The majority of respondents (90%) said they believe it is important or necessary for them to be able to go out on the land.

How important/necessary is it for you to be able to go out on the land?
(All respondents)



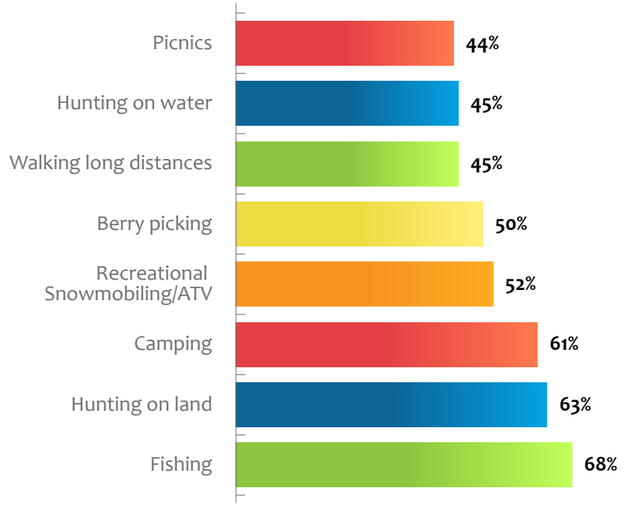
- Activities on the land were equally important to male and female respondents. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of women and 93% of men said it was very important or somewhat important to be able to go out on the land.

How important/necessary is it for you to be able to go out on the land?
(By gender)



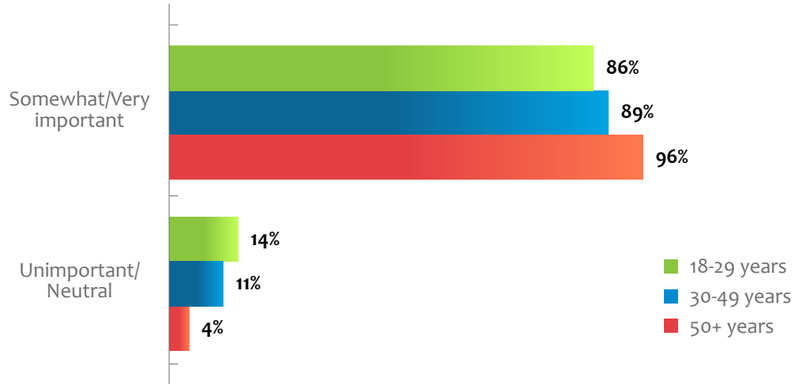
- Respondents reported that they engaged in activities such as fishing, hunting, camping, recreational snowmobiling, berry picking, and picnicking.

In the past 12 months, what sorts of activities have you carried out on the land?
(All respondents)



- Activities on the land were important to adults of all ages. Both younger and older adults felt it was important or necessary for to them to go out on the land.

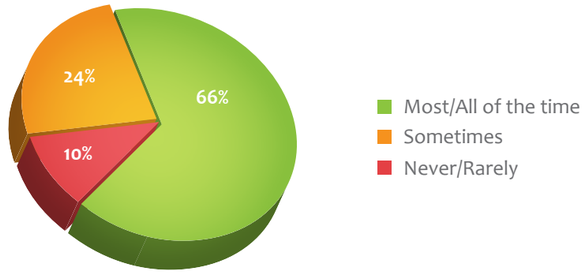
How important/necessary is it for you to be able to go out on the land?
(By age group)



II. SOCIAL NETWORKS

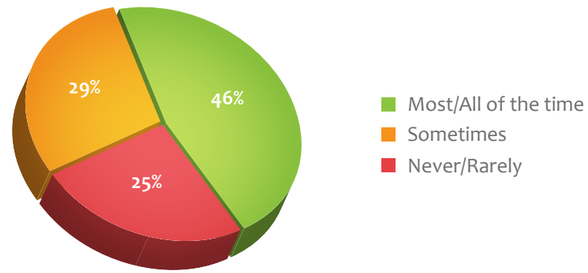
- Studies have shown that the quality of a person's social network is strongly associated with their overall health and well-being.
- The emotional support provided by close friends and family members is important in helping people deal with difficult and stressful periods in their lives. People with strong social networks are better able to cope with challenges and overcome obstacles in life.
- Social support can come from many sources including friends, family members and co-workers.
- The majority of respondents said they are able to spend time with someone they like to be with.

How often do you find you spend time with someone you like to be with?
(All respondents)



- Sixty-four percent (64%) of respondents reported getting together with people sometimes, often or very often to play games, sports, or recreational activities.
- Sixty-one percent (61%) of respondents reported participating sometimes, often or very often in activities where people came together to work for the benefit of the community, such as coaching, foster parenting, community board membership or food sharing.
- However many residents of Nunavut lack a strong social support networks. Overall, only 46% of respondents reported that they have someone to turn to most or all of the time when they need emotional support.

How often do you find that you have someone to talk to if you feel troubled or for some reason need emotional support?
(All respondents)

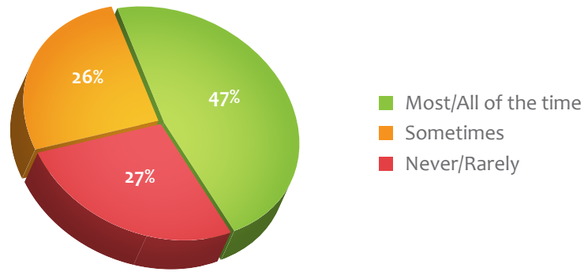


The majority of respondents said they are able to spend time with someone they like to be with.

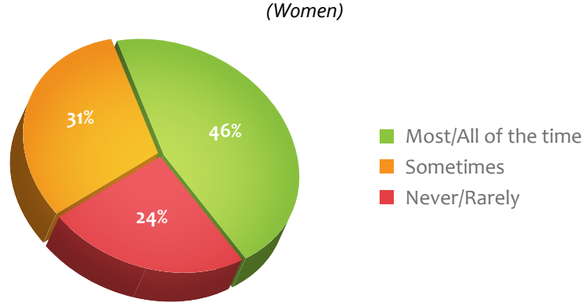
Only 46% of participants reported that they have someone to turn to most/ all of the time when in need of emotional support.

- Lower rates of social support mean that some people in Nunavut face stressful situations alone, without the emotional support of friends and families.
- Both men and women in our survey reported difficulty finding social support. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of men and 24% of women reported that they never or rarely have someone to talk to when they need emotional support.

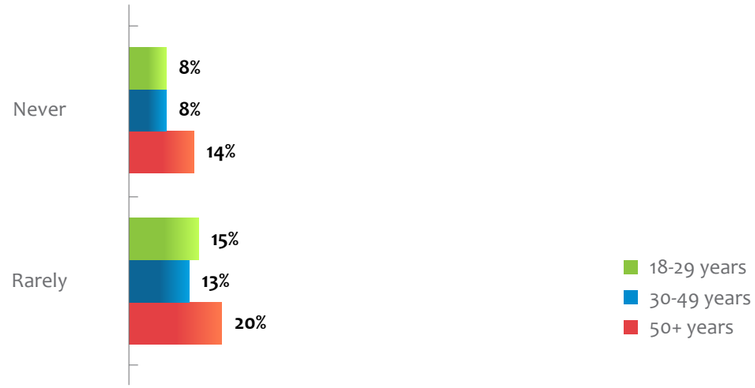
How often do you find you have someone to talk to if you feel troubled or for some reason need emotional support?
(Men)



How often do you find you have someone to talk to if you feel troubled or for some reason need emotional support?
(Women)



How often do you find you have someone to talk to if you feel troubled or for some reason need emotional support?
(By age group)



- The level of social support observed in our survey is lower than that reported in national studies. According to a Statistics Canada survey done in 2003, only about 7% of Canadians report having no close friends or family members to talk to when they need support (2).
- About twenty-three percent (23%) of women and men said that they always have someone to turn to when they need emotional support.
- When in need, 14% of older people said they can never find emotional support.

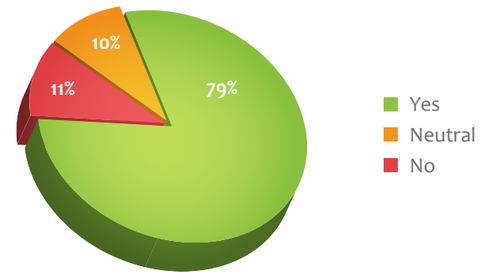
III. INDIVIDUAL MENTAL HEALTH

JOB SATISFACTION

- It is important to remember that unemployment is a major issue in Nunavut. Our study showed that only 36% of respondents had full-time jobs while another 21% had part-time or occasional employment.
- Among Nunavut respondents who were employed, the majority (79%) reported feeling happy about their job situation.
- In our survey, we only asked about people's satisfaction with their jobs. We did not ask respondents about satisfaction with non-wage earning work. Many Nunavut residents take great pride in performing traditional work that provides food, fuel and clothing for family and community members.

Unemployment is a major issue in Nunavut. However, among employed respondents, the majority is happy with their job situation.

If you have a job, are you happy with your present job situation, including any seasonal work?
(All respondents)

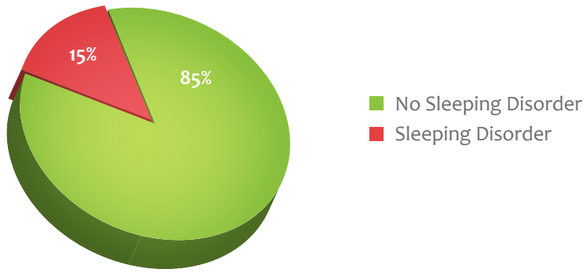


- Slightly more women (80%) than men (77%) reported feeling happy about their job situation.
- Reasons for dissatisfaction with employment included working evening or night shifts and job-related stress leading to burnout or depression.
- The level of job satisfaction in Nunavut is lower than in the rest of Canada. According to the 2002 Canadian Community Health Survey, 91% of employed Canadians reported feeling happy about their jobs (3).

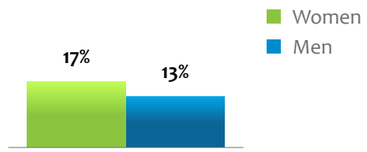
SLEEP PATTERNS

- Insomnia, or difficulty sleeping, is a widespread phenomenon that affects the health of Canadians. Statistics Canada scientists estimate that 3.3 million Canadians suffer from insomnia (4).
- Insomnia can take different forms, including difficulty falling asleep, disrupted sleep, and early morning awakening.

Insomnia
Defined as always or often having trouble falling or staying asleep
(All respondents)



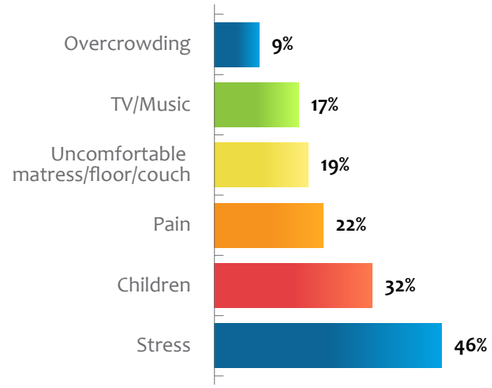
Insomnia
Defined as always or often having trouble falling or staying asleep
(By gender)



Insomnia
Defined as always or often having trouble falling or staying asleep
(By age group)

- The frequency of insomnia in Nunavut is similar to the rest of Canada, where according to Statistics Canada figures 15% of women and 12% of men have difficulty sleeping (4).
- Many factors can cause insomnia including chronic pain, physical limitations, psychological distress, life stress, obesity, and consumption of drugs or alcohol (4). As reported in the rest of Canada, stress was the main cause for sleeplessness (46%).
- In Nunavut the major causes of disrupted sleep were emotional stress, children, pain, issues related to sleeping on an uncomfortable mattress, floor or couch, and TV or music.

What is the reason you cannot sleep?
(All respondents)



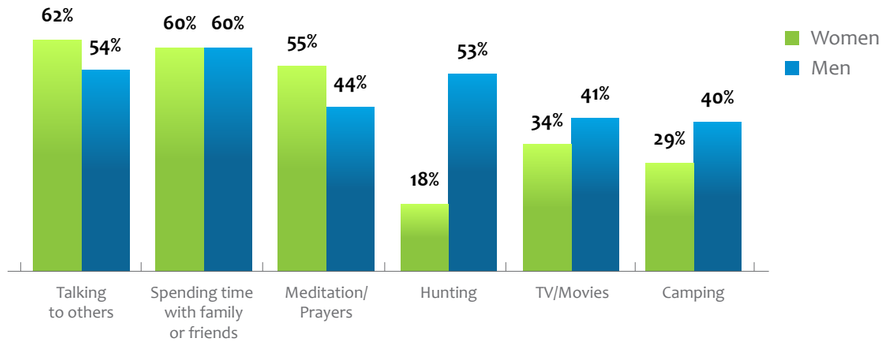
MANAGING STRESS

- Stress can come from major events in life such as changes in relationship status, changing jobs, or from minor everyday incidents, such as job pressures or household finances. Good stress, such as winning a game or going on vacation, can make you feel energized. But the negative effects of too much stress associated with being under pressure can affect your health (6).
- Nunavut respondents engaged in a wide variety of activities to relieve stress.
- Spending time with family and friends and talking to others were important forms of stress management for both men and women.
- Men (53%) were more likely than women (18%) to report engaging in hunting to relieve stress.
- Meditation and prayer were significant forms of stress management for both men and women.
- More men (40%) than women (29%) reported camping as an activity to relieve stress.
- TV and movies were also common forms of stress management for both men and women. On average, 37% of respondents reported watching TV and movies to relieve stress.
- Creative pursuits were important forms of stress management for women and men. On average, 33% of respondents reported engaging in music, art or craft activities to relieve stress.

In Nunavut the major causes of disrupted sleep were emotional stress, children, pain, issues related to sleeping on an uncomfortable mattress, floor or couch, and TV or music.

Inuit in Nunavut engaged in a wide variety of activities to relieve emotional stress.

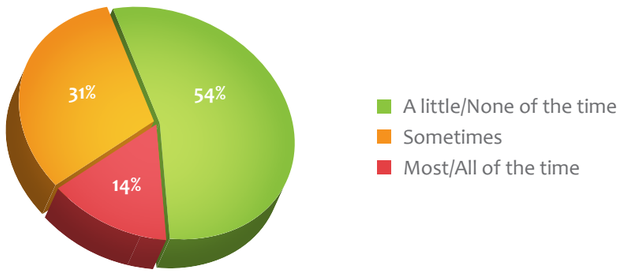
What do you do to relieve stress?
(By gender)



ANXIETY

- Everyone feels anxious at times. Anxiety is a normal emotional response to stress. All people feel some level of anxiety over stressful situations such as the loss of a job or the break-up of a relationship.
- In our survey, we did not collect data on whether people suffered from an anxiety disorder. We simply asked respondents how often they felt anxious.
- Excessive or frequent anxiety can interfere with a person's ability to cope with everyday life: school, work, social activities and recreation.
- In Nunavut, 14% of respondents reported feeling anxious all or most of the time. Thirty-one percent (31%) of respondents reported sometimes feeling anxious.

During the past 30 days, about how often did you feel anxious?
(All respondents)



- Anxiety disorder is the most common cause of mental illness in Canada. Statistics Canada estimates that one in ten Canadians suffer from some form of anxiety disorder (7).
- There are effective treatments for anxiety including counseling and stress management.
- In this survey, we did not collect information on whether people had sought treatment for anxiety.

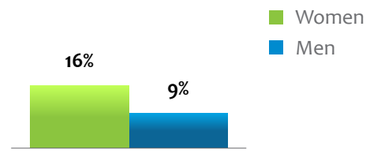
PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

- Surveys use the Kessler-6 psychological distress scale to screen for psychological distress experienced by persons with anxiety and mood disorders (8).
- The Kessler-6 scale asks respondents how frequently they have experienced six forms of psychological distress in the past 12 months, which include feeling 1) nervous, 2) hopeless, 3) restless or fidgety, 4) so sad or depressed that nothing could cheer the respondent up, 5) that everything is an effort, and 6) feeling worthless.
- Responses are "all of the time," "most of the time," "some of the time," "a little of the time," and "none of the time."
- An individual's score is calculated by adding the items together, which gives a score ranging from 0 to 24. A score of 13 or more indicates the person has experienced serious psychological distress (9).
- Serious psychological distress as defined by the Kessler-6 score is highly associated with anxiety disorders and depression but does not identify a specific mental illness (8).
- According to our survey, 13% of Nunavut respondents had scores indicating serious psychological distress.

Serious Psychological DIstress
(30 days prior to the survey)
Kessler's scale (K-6) score: ≥ 13
(All respondents)

- More women than men had scores indicating serious psychological distress.

Serious Psychological DIstress
(30 days prior to the survey)
Kessler's scale (K-6) score: ≥ 13
(By gender)



A survey cannot diagnose an anxiety disorder or depression. However, results suggest that 13% of participants experienced serious psychological distress.

- Younger adults (18-49 years) were more likely than older adults to have scores indicating serious psychological distress.

Serious Psychological DIstress
(30 days prior to the survey)
Kessler's scale (K-6) score: ≥ 13
(By age group)

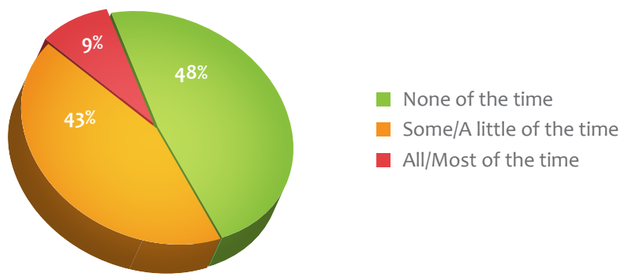
- Using the same scale, about 8% of American Indians/Alaska Natives reported serious psychological distress (33-35).

DEPRESSION

- The term "depression" can be used to describe both a general feeling and a serious mental illness.
- The feeling of depression is characterized by a general sadness.
- In our survey, we asked people to report whether they experienced the feeling of depression. We did not ask respondents whether they had a diagnosed depressive illness.

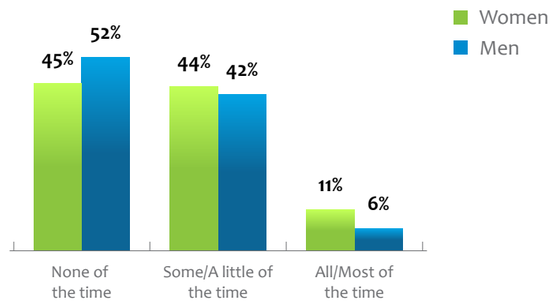
A survey cannot diagnose a depressive illness or disorder, however 9% of participants reported feeling depressed all or most of the time and more young people reported feeling depressed.

During the past 30 days, about how often did you feel so depressed that nothing could cheer you up?
(All respondents)



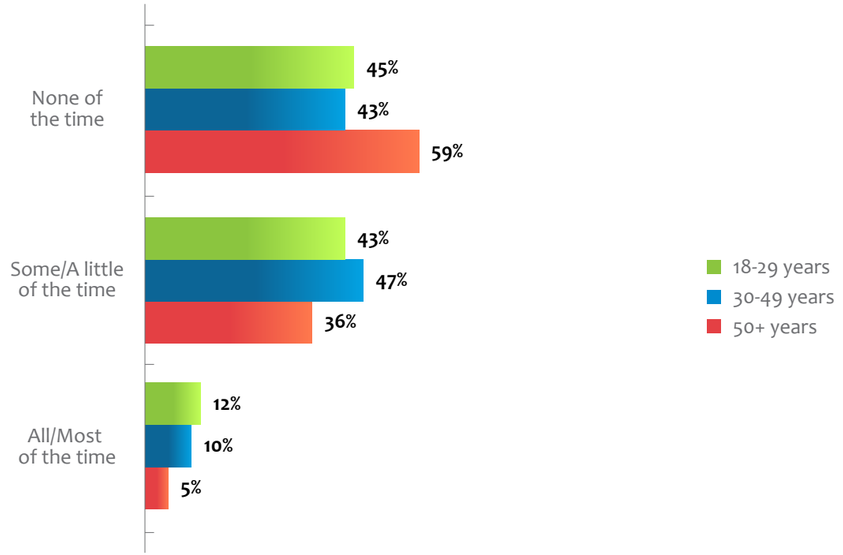
- More Nunavut women (11%) than men (6%) reported feeling depressed all or most of the time.

During the past 30 days, about how often did you feel so depressed that nothing could cheer you up?
(By gender)



- The feeling of depression was more common among young people living in Nunavut. Compared with older adults, more young people reported that they felt depressed some, most or all of the time.

During the past 30 days, about how often did you feel so depressed that nothing could cheer you up?
(By age group)



- Feeling depressed is not sufficient to diagnose someone with depressive disorder which is a serious mental illness requiring treatment. Low mood, lack of motivation and energy, persistent feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, or lack of interest in any activities are symptoms that characterize depressive disorder.
- Statistics Canada estimates that 8% of Canadians will experience a major depressive illness at some point in their lives (7).
- Depressive illness can be triggered by stressful events such as the death of a close friend or family member, the break-up of a relationship, or exposure to physical or psychological violence. Sometimes it occurs without any stress event or loss.
- There is widespread recognition that many mental health challenges faced by Inuit are the result of collective historical trauma. Disruptions to inter-generational transmission of language and culture through such colonial processes as residential schooling, forced relocation and community settlement have resulted in cycles of sustained and unresolved trauma that play out from generation to generation (12,13).
- There are very effective treatments for depression, including professional counseling and antidepressant medications. In this survey we did not collect data on whether Nunavut residents had sought treatment for depression.

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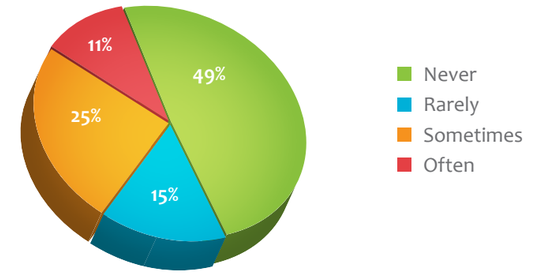
IV. INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE

PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE DURING CHILDHOOD

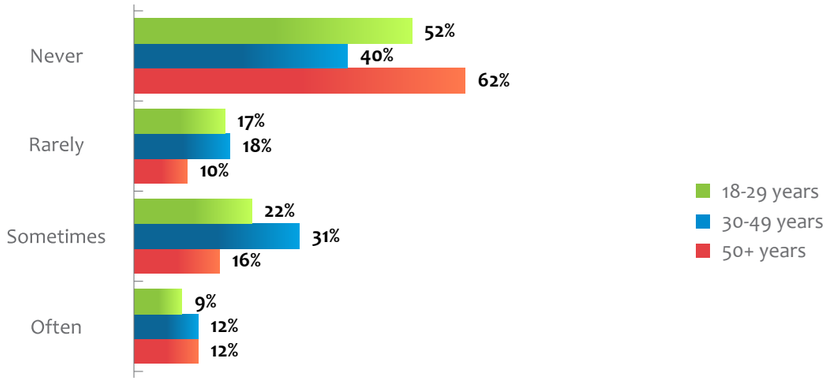
- It is well-known that psychological violence towards children has harmful effects and can lead to anxiety and emotional distress that last into adulthood.
- Statistics Canada estimates that 19% of all investigations into violence against children involve verbal or psychological abuse (10).
- Verbal abuse includes being insulted, sworn at, intimidated or threatened. According to research, verbal abuse harms children's sense of themselves as valuable members of their families and communities (11).
- In our study, many respondents (12%) reported that they were often bullied as children. We did not ask respondents to report whether they were bullied by an adult or another child.
- Eleven percent (11%) of respondents reported that as children they were often verbally abused by an adult.

When you were growing up (to the age of 16), how often did any adult abuse you verbally?
(All respondents)



- Among Nunavut respondents there was a pattern of more reports of psychological abuse among respondents aged 30-49 years. This age group was more likely to report having experienced verbal abuse when they were growing up than younger or older participants.

When you were growing up (to the age of 16) how often did any adult abuse you verbally?
(By age group)



Psychological abuse during childhood has harmful effects that can last into adulthood.

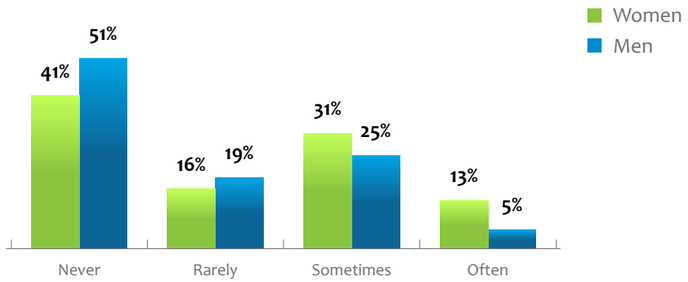
Participants between the ages of 30–49 years were more likely to report having experienced verbal abuse when they were growing up than younger or older participants.

Psychological abuse during adulthood can have serious health effects. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of participants reported experiencing verbal abuse as adults sometimes or often.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE DURING ADULTHOOD

- Psychological abuse during adulthood can have serious health effects. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of participants reported that as adults they have sometimes or often experienced verbal abuse.
- Significantly more women (13%) than men (5%) reported that they experienced verbal abuse often as adults.

As an adult have you ever experienced one or more of the following forms of violence: Verbal abuse?
(By gender)



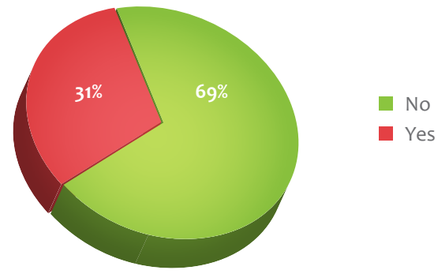
PHYSICAL ABUSE DURING CHILDHOOD

The majority of participants did not report being physically abused as children.

- Physical abuse is the second most common cause of investigation into violence against children, after neglect. The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics estimates that currently, across Canada, physical abuse is responsible for 31% of all investigations into violence against children (10).
- Physical abuse takes many forms, but is defined as the deliberate application of force to any part of the body, which results or may result in a non-accidental injury.
- Child physical abuse may involve a single episode or it may involve a pattern of repeated incidents. Physical abuse includes any harmful or dangerous use of force or restraint.
- Individuals who experience physical aggression and violence as children are more likely to experience emotional distress and depression, and are more likely to attempt suicide as adults (14).
- In our survey, we asked respondents a series of questions about whether they had experienced physical abuse as children.
- We combined answers from several questions into one category called "severe physical abuse during childhood". Respondents who reported experiencing serious forms of physical abuse (such as being punched, kicked, bitten, choked or burned) often during childhood were deemed to have suffered severe physical abuse.

- The majority of respondents did not report having been physically abused as children.
- Thirty-one percent (31%) of respondents experienced severe physical abuse as children.

Severe physical abuse during childhood
(All respondents)



- Equal percentages of men (31%) and women (31%) experienced severe physical abuse as children.
- Participants aged 18-49 years had higher rates of severe physical abuse as children than participants 50 years of age or older.

Severe physical abuse during childhood
(By age group)

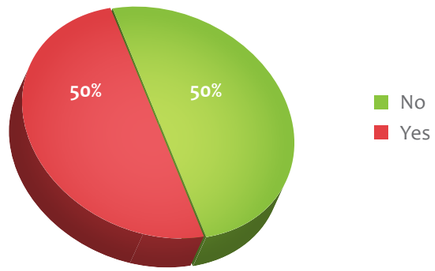
PHYSICAL ABUSE DURING ADULTHOOD

- In our survey, we asked respondents a series of questions about whether they had experienced physical abuse as adults.
- We combined answers from several questions into one category so we could report the number of respondents who reported having experienced at least one form of physical violence as an adult. This category includes all those who answered "yes" to at least one question about having been punched, kicked, bitten, shaken, choked or assaulted with a weapon.

Half of survey respondents report having experienced at least one form of physical violence as adults.

- Half (50%) of survey respondents reported having experienced at least one form of physical violence as an adult.

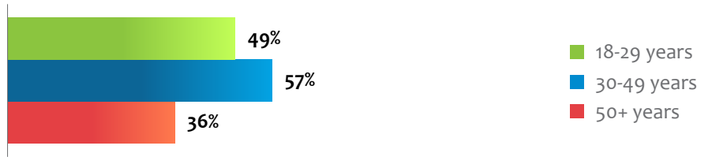
At least one form of physical violence as an adult
(All respondents)



- Fifty-two percent (52%) of women and 46% of men reported having experienced at least one form of physical violence as an adult.
- Our study did not ask respondents to identify the persons responsible for the abuse, therefore we cannot report whether higher rates of physical violence among women were the result of spousal abuse.
- However previous research has shown that rates of spousal violence are higher among Aboriginal Canadians than in the general population. A 2006 report by Statistics Canada indicates that in Canada's three territories, 12% of people who are married or living in common-law relationships experience spousal abuse, compared with 7% of those living in the provinces (15).
- Participants aged 18-49 years were more likely to have experienced physical violence than respondents aged 50 years or older.

Some forms of physical abuse were more common among women than among men.

At least one form of physical violence as an adult
(By age group)



- Another important consideration is the pattern of physical violence in remote communities. People who live in small or isolated communities may have more difficulty avoiding physical violence or accessing family services. The result can be a form of chronic abuse which has a significant negative effect on individual and family health. This fact was observed in a 2003 report on factors affecting the health of Nunavut residents (16).

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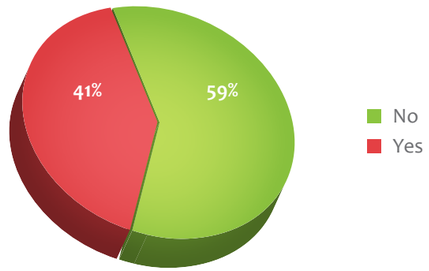
Sexual abuse is very harmful to the emotional development of children and youth.

SEXUAL ABUSE DURING CHILDHOOD

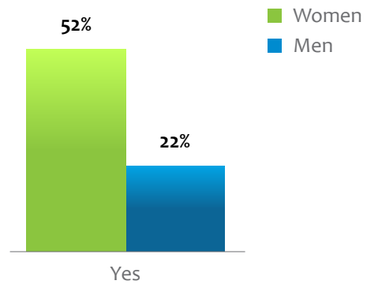
- Sexual abuse includes any form of unwanted sexual touching, sexual coercion or forced sexual intercourse.
- Sexual abuse is very harmful to the emotional development of children and youth. It can cause low self-esteem and feelings of helplessness and anxiety and is strongly associated with major depression, suicide attempts, drug use and alcoholism in survivors (17-19).
- In our survey, we asked participants three questions about whether they had experienced sexual abuse as children. The results were combined into the category "severe sexual abuse during childhood" which reports whether, as a child, an individual has experienced someone threatening to have sex with them, touching the sex parts of their body, trying to have sex with them or sexually attacking them.
- Forty-one percent (41%) of respondents experienced severe sexual abuse during childhood.

Severe sexual abuse during childhood
(All respondents)



- Fifty-two percent (52%) of women and 22% of men reported that they experienced severe sexual abuse during childhood.

Severe sexual abuse during childhood
(By gender)



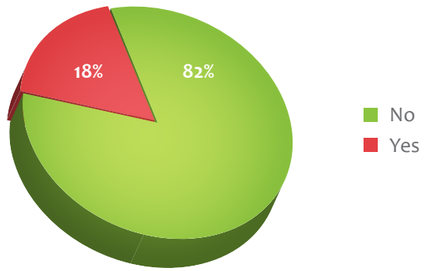
- In our survey, adults of all ages reported that they had experienced severe sexual abuse during childhood.
- Accurate data on child sexual abuse is extremely difficult to obtain. Both the Canadian Department of Justice and the Public Health Agency of Canada acknowledge that current statistics on family violence vastly under-report child sexual abuse (20,21).

Eighteen percent (18%) of participants reported having experienced sexual abuse as adults. Rates of sexual abuse were significantly higher among women than men.

SEXUAL ABUSE DURING ADULTHOOD

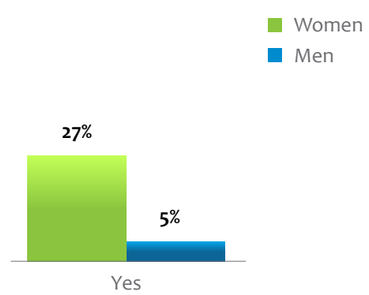
- Eighteen percent (18%) of Nunavut respondents said they had experienced some form of forced sexual activity as adults.

As an adult have you ever experienced any form of forced or attempted forced sexual activity?
(All respondents)



- Rates of reported sexual abuse were significantly higher among women (27%) than men (5%). That means that at least one in four women and one in twenty men in Nunavut reported being the victim of forced sexual activity as an adult.

As an adult have you ever experienced any form of forced or attempted forced sexual activity?
(By gender)



- It is extremely difficult to locate data on the prevalence of sexual assault in Canada. Although researchers estimate the rate of reported sexual assault at approximately 2%, it is generally acknowledged that the actual rate is much higher since 91% of sexual assaults are not reported to police (22).

Suicide is a significant concern in Nunavut and suicide prevention is a key priority for the territory.

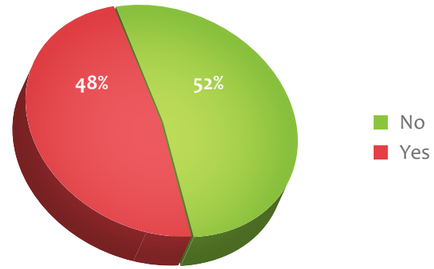
V. SUICIDE

- Suicide is a significant concern in Nunavut and suicide prevention is a key priority for the territory.
- The frequency of reported suicidal thoughts and attempts were extremely high and much higher than for other Canadians.

LIFETIME SUICIDAL IDEATION

- Suicidal ideation, or having thoughts about suicide, is a sign that a person is having severe difficulty coping with life events and needs immediate treatment.
- Forty-eight percent (48%) of respondents had suicidal thoughts in their lifetime; when divided by age group, more people below the age of 50 years (54%) reported suicidal ideation than older participants (33%).

Have you ever in your life thought seriously about committing suicide (taking your life)?
(All respondents)

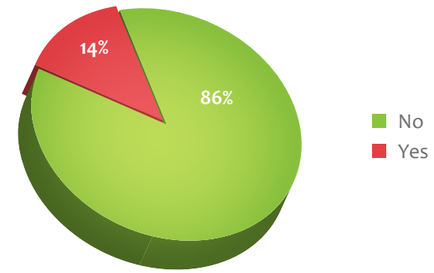


- The frequency of reported suicidal thoughts in Nunavut is higher than that reported among First Nations Canadians where, according to the First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey, 31% of adults report having had suicidal thoughts at some point in their lives (23). This is higher than the rate of 13% for the rest of Canada (24).

PAST 12 MONTHS SUICIDAL IDEATION

- Fourteen percent (14%) of respondents reported having recently experienced suicidal ideation (within the past 12 months).

In the past 12 months, have you thought seriously about committing suicide?
(All respondents)



The frequency of reported suicidal thoughts and reported suicide attempts of participants was extremely high and much higher than for other Canadians.

- For comparison, in the overall Canadian population, the rate of suicidal ideation in the past 12 months is 4% (25).
- Younger adults were more likely to report having recent suicidal ideation than older adults.

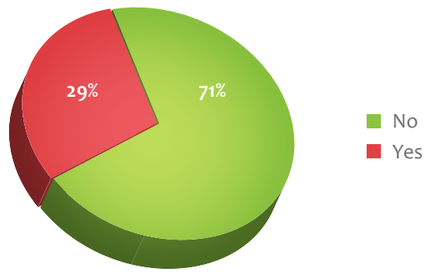
In the past 12 months, have you thought seriously about committing suicide?
(By age group)

- Among respondents who had suicidal thoughts, 56% sought help by talking to someone.
- The proportions of women (57%) and men (54%) who sought help when they experienced suicidal ideation were about equal.

LIFETIME SUICIDE ATTEMPTS

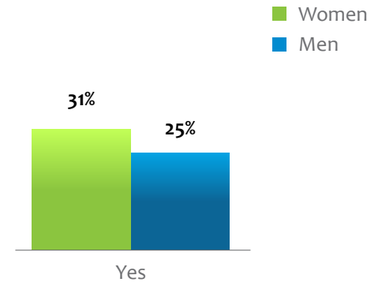
- Twenty-nine percent (29%) of Nunavut respondents reported having attempted suicide at some point in their lives.

Have you ever in your life attempted suicide (tried to take your life)?
(All respondents)



- Women (31%) were slightly more likely than men (25%) to report having attempted suicide.

Have you ever in your life attempted suicide (tried to take your life)?
(By gender)



- The higher rate of suicide attempts among women compared to men is consistent with studies, which show that in Canada and in other countries, women are more likely to report attempting suicide (24, 25).
- These studies also show that men are more likely than women to die by suicide (24,25).
- In Nunavut, while adults of all ages had attempted suicide, suicide attempts were more common among people in the 18-29 and 30-49 year age categories.

Among Nunavut adults, younger people reported more recent suicide attempts than older people.

Have you, ever in your life, attempted suicide (tried to take your life)?
(By age group)

PAST 12 MONTHS SUICIDE ATTEMPTS

- In Nunavut, 5% of all respondents reported having attempted suicide in the 12 months prior to the survey.
- Among Nunavut adults, younger adults (18-49 years) reported more recent suicide attempts than older adults.

In the past 12 months have you attempted suicide (tried to take your life)?
(By age group)

- Researchers estimate that, in Canada, deaths from suicide are two to four times more frequent in the Aboriginal population compared to the non-Aboriginal population (25).
- Much of the burden of suicide risk rests with Aboriginal youth, whose rate of suicide is five-to-seven times higher than among non-Aboriginal youth in Canada (26).
- Studies of suicide among Inuit show that young people are more likely to die by suicide than older people (27).
- We asked respondents who reported having attempted suicide to tell us what they were doing just prior to the suicide attempt.

Just before you made the suicide attempt, were you… ?

Remembering someone who has commited suicide	24%
Having conflict with friends	29%
Drinking alcohol	34%
Having conflict with family	47%
Having a fight or break-up	56%
Feeling bored or tired with life	63%
Feeling very angry	75%
Feeling very depressed	76%

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VI. LIFESTYLE

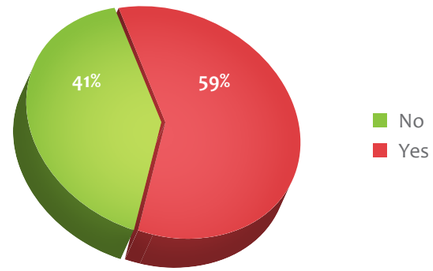
LIFESTYLE AND ALCOHOL USE

- The use of alcohol, illicit drugs and gambling is associated with poor mental health outcomes such as increased anxiety, emotional distress and depressive illness (28).

ALCOHOL USE

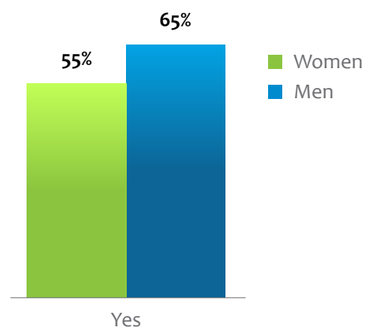
- In our survey, 59% of respondents reported that they had consumed alcohol in the 12 months prior to the survey.

In the last 12 months, did you drink alcohol?
(All respondents)



- Sixty-five percent (65%) of men and fifty-five percent (55%) of women reported having consumed alcohol in the 12 months prior to the survey.

In the last 12 months, did you drink alcohol?
(By gender)

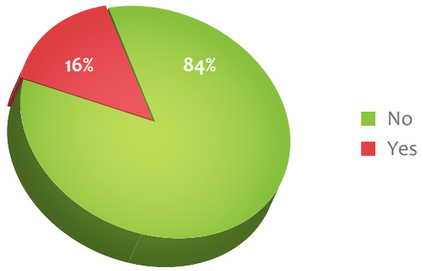


- In Canada (2010), 77% of the population aged 15 years old and older used alcohol in the past 12 months (29).

The use of alcohol and illicit drugs is associated with poor mental health outcomes.

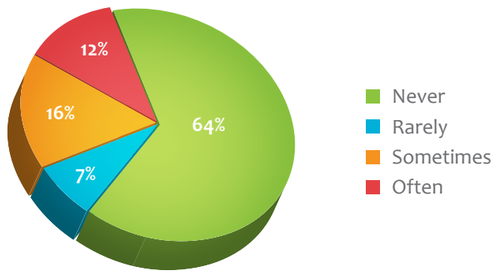
- In our survey, sixteen percent (16%) of respondents reported that someone in their household had a problem with alcohol and 16% of respondents reported having lost a close personal relationship because of their drinking.

Have you ever lost a close relationship (spouse, friend) because of your drinking?
(All respondents)

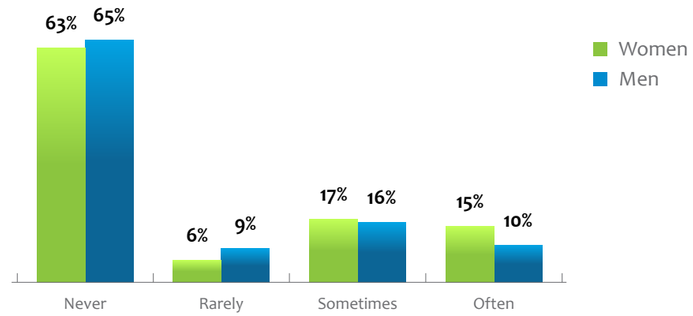


- There were similar rates of men (18%) and women (15%) who reported having lost a close personal relationship because of their drinking.
- In Canada, about 17% of people report experiencing alcohol-related interpersonal problems (28).
- Studies have shown that excessive alcohol use can lead to verbal and/or physical violence in the home, which in turn has a negative effect on children's health (28).
- A total of 28% of respondents reported that often or sometimes someone in their childhood home had a problem with alcohol.

Did someone in your childhood home have problems with alcohol?
(All respondents)

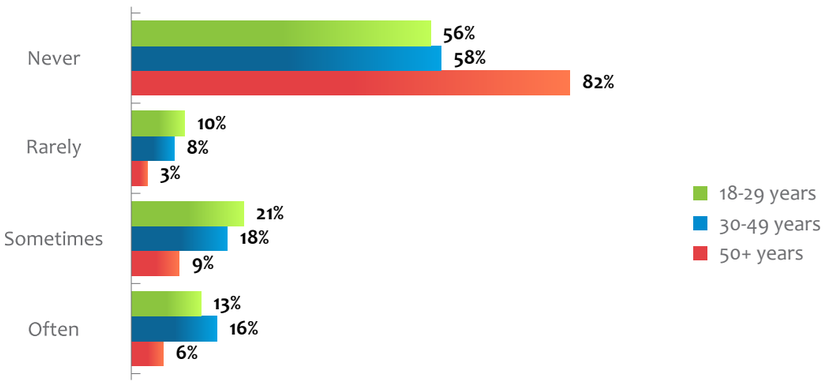


Did someone in your childhood home have problems with alcohol?
(By gender)



- Rates of reported alcohol problems in the childhood home were higher among adults in the 18-29 and 30-49 year age categories.

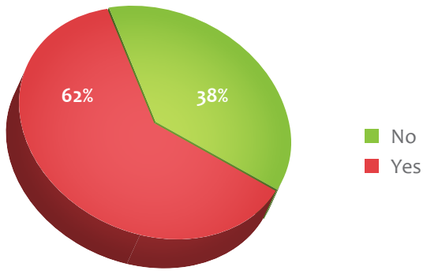
Did someone in your childhood home have problems with alcohol?
(By age group)



LIFETIME DRUG USE

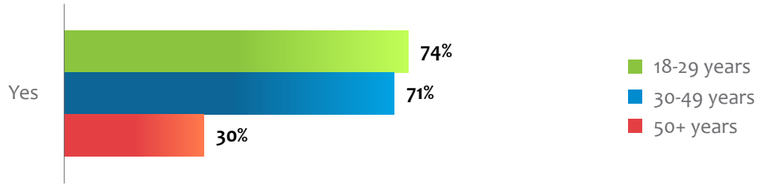
- A total of 62% of respondents reported having experimented with substances in order to get high.

Have you ever experimented with substances to get high?
(All respondents)



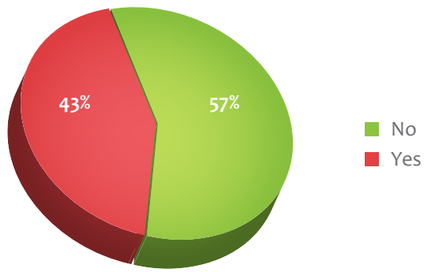
- More men (68%) than women (57%) reported having experimented with substances to get high.
- Broken down by age category, rates of experimentation were highest among respondents 18-29 years and 30-49, and lowest among respondents 50+ years.

Have you ever experimented with substances to get you high?
(By age group)



- Forty-three percent (43%) of respondents reported using recreational drugs such as marijuana or hashish in the previous 12 months.

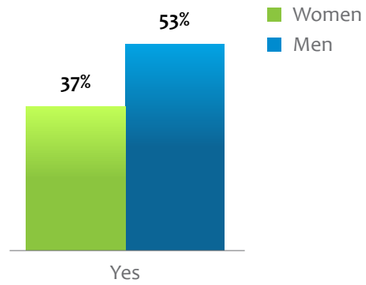
In the past 12 months, have you used or tried recreational drugs such as pot/marijuana, hashish etc. ?
(All respondents)



Forty-three percent (43%) of respondents reported using recreational drugs such as marijuana. Younger people were more likely to report having used recreational drugs than older people.

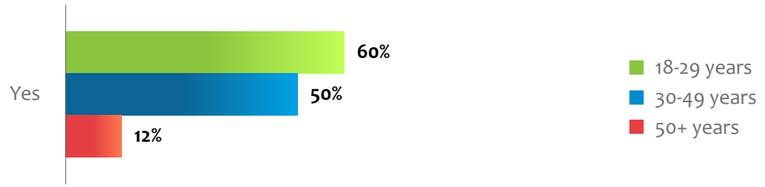
- The rate of reported recent marijuana and hashish use is higher than that for Canada, where according to the 2010 Alcohol and Drug Use Monitoring Survey 10.7% of Canadians 15 years of age and older reported using marijuana in the past year (29).
- In Nunavut, men were more likely than women to report having used recreational drugs in the previous 12 months.

In the past 12 months, have you used or tried recreational drugs such as pot/marijuana, hashish etc. ?
(By gender)



- Younger adults were more likely than older adults to report having used recreational drugs in the previous 12 months.

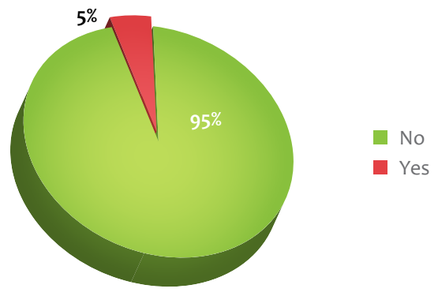
In the past 12 months, have you used or tried recreational drugs such as pot/marijuana, hashish etc. ?
(By age group)



Reported use of current consumption for hard drugs such as cocaine and crystal methamphetamine was low among participants, although 5% is higher than the Canadian rate (1%).

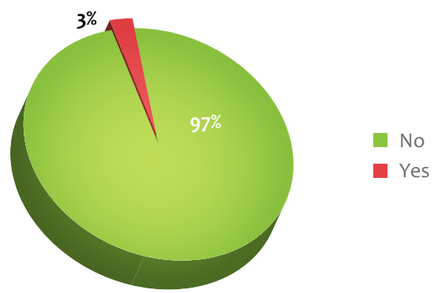
- The pattern of greater reported marijuana and hashish use among young adults is consistent with data from the 2010 Canadian Alcohol and Drug Use Monitoring Survey (29).
- In our survey, reported use of hard drugs such as cocaine and crystal methamphetamine was low among participants.

In the past 12 months, have you used or tried hard drugs (example: cocaine, crystal meth, etc.)?
(All respondents)



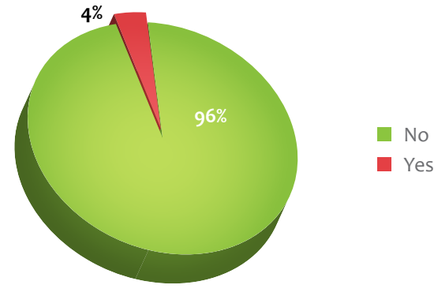
- Fewer than 1% of Canadians report using hard drugs such as cocaine, crack or heroin (29).
- Reported use of solvents and inhalants was low among respondents.

In the past 12 months, have you tried to get high with gasoline, propane, naptha, sniffing glue, hairspray, vanilla or any other solvent?
(All respondents)



- Four percent (4%) of respondents reported using over-the-counter or prescription drugs to get high.

In the past 12 months, have you used regular medicine or prescription drugs to get high (eg. Tylenol, Ativan, cough syrup)?
(All respondents)

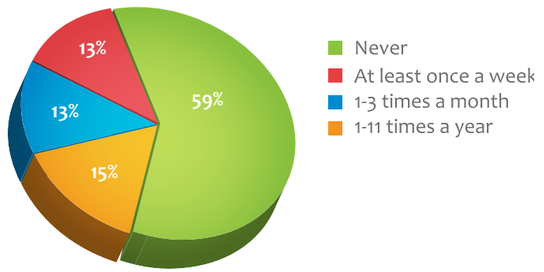


- According to the 2010 Canadian Alcohol and |Drug Use Monitoring Survey, about 1% of adults report using prescription drugs to get high (29).

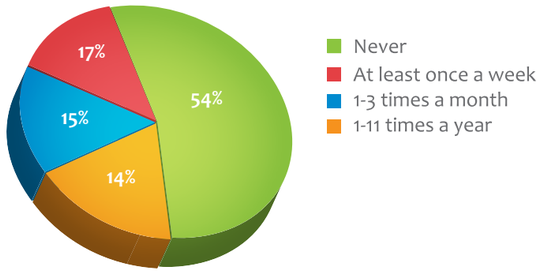
GAMBLING AND GAMING ACTIVITIES

- Our results suggest that while gambling is a relatively common activity in Nunavut, it may be less common than in other parts of Canada's north.
- About 13% of respondents reported buying lottery or raffle tickets at least once a week in the 12 months prior to the survey.
- About 18% of respondents reported spending money on Bingo at least once a week in the 12 months prior to the survey.
- About 18% of respondents reported spending money betting on card or board games at least once a week in the 12 months prior to the survey.

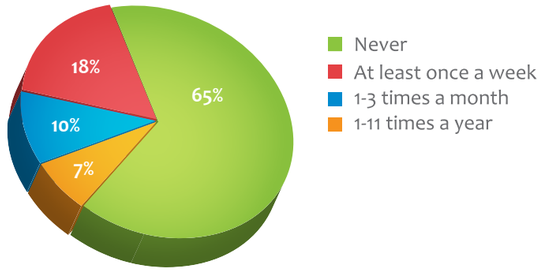
In the past 12 months, how often did you bet or spend money on lottery tickets, raffles and/or fund-raising tickets?
(All respondents)



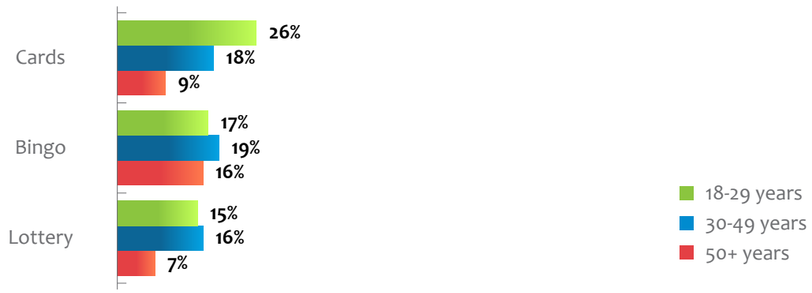
In the past 12 months, how often have you bet or spent money on Bingo?
(All respondents)



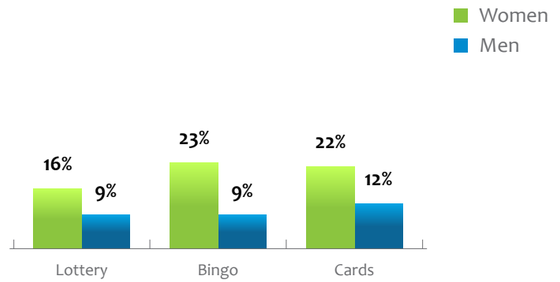
In the past 12 months, how often have you bet or spent money playing cards such as Patik (or board games) with family or friends?
(All respondents)



Percentage of respondents who have participated in various gambling activities at least once a week?
(By age group)



Percentage of respondents who have participated in various gambling activities at least once a week?
(By gender)



- According to Statistics Canada's 2008 Survey of Household Spending, 70% of Canadian household spent money on at least one gambling activity. These included lotteries, raffles, casinos, video lottery terminals and bingo (30).
- The pattern of gambling activities in Nunavut varied with age. While people of all ages reported spending money on lottery tickets and Bingo, younger adults (18-29 years) reported more frequent betting during card games.
- Gambling is an activity that has social, economic and health consequences. While gambling activities such as bingo and card games are social events for many, gambling activities are associated with higher rates of bankruptcy, divorce and suicide (31,32).

Sunset - Gjoa Haven

Statement from the Nunavut Steering Committee and the Research Team

The members of the Nunavut Steering Committee and the research team wish to acknowledge the generosity and courage of Nunavut Inuit who participated in the Community and Personal Wellness portion of the 2008 Inuit Health Survey. Nunavut Steering Committee members have expressed great pride in their communities for their willingness to assist with this challenging task.

Many Nunavut respondents shared personal information about subjects which must have been extremely difficult or painful for them. We wish to honour their courage by using this information to improve mental health services in Nunavut communities.

Conclusion

Community and individual mental health and wellness are priority areas for health and social service providers in Nunavut. The Partners of the Inuit Health Survey continue to collaborate on Mental Health and Wellness issues beyond the scope of the Survey, for example, through the recent launch of the Nunavut Suicide Prevention Strategy 'Action Plan' (13). The Plan is an initiative of the Government of Nunavut, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, Embrace Life Council, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The Suicide Prevention Action Plan addressed eight commitments identified in the Nunavut Suicide Prevention Strategy (12); it aims to provide individuals, families and communities with the tools and support to respond effectively to suicide prevention, employing the expertise and support of Government of Nunavut Departments, non-governmental organizations and other levels of Government. These commitments are being addressed in further detail in the Implementation Plan.

In addition to the above, the Government of Nunavut, through the public health strategy "Building Healthy Communities", has prioritized implementing initiatives aimed at reducing the number of people experiencing mental, physical, emotional or sexual abuse, with a focus on children by promoting parenting and early childhood development programs and supporting Wellness Committees in each of the communities.

Please, if you or someone you know is showing signs of mental illness, distress, or addiction, talk to a Healthcare Provider at your local health centre. You can also call the Kamatsiaqtut Help Line for support: (867) 979-3333 or toll free at (800) 265-3333. The hours of operation are 7pm – 12 am Eastern Standard Time, 6pm – 11 pm Central Standard Time, and 5 pm – 10pm Mountain Standard Time.

In an emergency, please contact your local RCMP detachment.

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