



## SOCIOCULTURAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS

### QANUILIRPITAA? 2017

Nunavik Inuit Health Survey

This thematic report describes the results of the *Qanuilirpitaa?* 2017 Health Survey for several sociocultural determinants of the health and wellness of Nunavimmiut. Sociocultural determinants are conditions and actions that support the health of people and communities. The questions included in the psychosocial and physical health and food questionnaires of *Qanuilirpitaa?* 2017 were answered by Nunavimmiut aged 16 and older, except for some questions targeting people aged 50 and over, and certain others intended for people aged 55 and over. The following themes, which are important for spiritual, emotional, mental and physical aspects of health were identified in May 2015 through consultations with community leaders and experts in preparation for *Qanuilirpitaa?* 2017: 1) Cultural identity and spirituality; 2) Land-based activities; 3) Family; 4) Social support; 5) Involvement in community activities and perceived community cohesion; 6) Intergenerational traumatic events; 7) Discrimination; 8) Justice; 9) Perception and utilization of health and social services.

The survey results showed that a large majority of people strongly agreed or agreed with all statements related to **cultural identity**

and that nine Nunavimmiut out of ten (90%) reported being satisfied with their ability to communicate with others in Inuktitut. Furthermore, three quarters (75%) of people reported being satisfied with their knowledge and skills of cultural and traditional activities, which shows the significance of cultural identity in Nunavik.

For most Nunavimmiut, **spirituality** is an important part of life. In the year preceding the survey, 80% had participated in religious activities, services or meetings. A similar proportion reported that spiritual values played an important role in their life. This was especially true for women, people aged 55 and over and people who had not continued schooling after elementary school.

**Going on the land** to harvest country food is an important cultural activity that provides nutritious foods, positive social interactions in families and between generations, and an opportunity for physical activity. About nine out of ten (93%) Nunavimmiut agreed that being on the land is important for them. A large proportion had gone hunting (60%), fishing (58%), berry picking (54%) or seafood harvesting (31%) at least occasionally in the year leading up to the survey, and this was

associated with strong relationships with close and extended family, which are well known determinants of health and wellness.

**Social support** is an important determinant of health and wellness. The majority of Nunavimmiut reported having someone to have a good time with (68%) and someone who shows them love and affection (73%). Overall, women reported a higher level of social support. Sixty-two percent (62%) of the Nunavik population reported that there is a feeling of togetherness or closeness in their community and 94% experienced a feeling of togetherness in their family. The perception of family togetherness, of spending a lot of time doing things on the land with family, and of good relationships with family members is stronger among older Nunavimmiut than among younger ones.

Most Nunavimmiut have experienced **stressful social and historical events** with a potentially negative impact on their life, their family and their community. Thirty-seven percent (37%) reported that their family had been affected directly by three to six major difficulties such as suicide or a serious mental illness during the previous year. Almost every family has been affected directly by at least one historical event such as residential school attendance, forced relocation or the slaughter of sled dogs. Discrimination is another obstacle faced by many people (42%), especially women and younger Nunavimmiut.

During the two years prior to the survey, 28% of the population had appeared in **court either as an offender or as a witness**. The proportion was higher among younger people, individuals earning less than \$20 000 a year, and those who had not completed secondary school. About sixty percent (61%) felt that they had been treated fairly in court and most (77%) reported feeling supported by friends or family throughout this experience.

Also, in the year preceding the survey, 30% of the population had participated in **healing and wellness activities**; 53% of these activities involved a medical or psychological professional, 52% a natural helper or healer, and 41% a healing circle. Men were more likely than women to report that they had confidence in health and social services.

Participation in traditional cultural activities remains very strong in Nunavik. The majority of people reported enjoying good social support from friends and family, despite the fact that Nunavimmiut and their families have experienced, and continue to experience major life difficulties. This report provides a unique addition to knowledge on the social and cultural determinants of Inuit health and wellness, as these determinants were not extensively addressed in the health surveys conducted in Nunavik in 1992 and 2004.



*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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