

Prevalence and Nature of Sexual Violence in Nunavik

Many Inuit community members have expressed their concern about the rates of sexual abuse in Nunavik. The objective of the Nunavik Inuit Health Survey 2004 was, among other things, to gather information regarding the prevalence of sexual abuse and the characteristics of the victims in Nunavik. A total of 856 adults completed the sexual abuse section of the confidential questionnaire from which the current data are drawn.

Results reveal that one in three adults has experienced sexual abuse during childhood and one in five during adulthood. About one in two women reported having been forced or having faced attempts made to force them to perform a sexual act while a minor. One out of four stated that they faced the same problem in adulthood. The prevalence of sexual abuse in men during childhood and adulthood is also significant: one man out of five reported sexual abuse during childhood and one in eight reported having been forced or having faced attempts made to force them to perform a sexual act during adulthood.

Sexual violence within the family is very common in Nunavik. Sexual abuse by a family member (excluding spouses) affects one third of men and women who reported having been victims of sexual abuse during childhood or adulthood. Domestic violence expressed through sexual abuse by a current or previous spouse or partner is also of concern. One third of women who were sexually assaulted reported having been sexually abused by their partner or ex-partner. One male victim out of six had experienced sexual abuse by their partner or ex-partner. Sexual abuse is not limited to the family nor to the marital or dating context. Many adults are confronted by sexual abuse from friends, colleagues or strangers during childhood or adulthood.

The community of Nunavik is facing a significant problem of sexual abuse that affects both children and adults. People of all ages have been affected by a sexual abuse experience during childhood or as an adult. Such numbers confirm that the problem transcends all periods of life and that no age group is safe from it. However, women and men do not experience sexual abuse in the same way when we consider partner abuse or abuse by strangers or peers and acquaintances.

Faced with this situation, the Inuit community wants to establish a tradition of prevention and intervention to address sexual abuse. During the 2004 survey, Nunavik residents have suggested a variety of solutions, which can be categorized into four main themes: 1) the value of the community collectively addressing the problem of sexual abuse, 2) the necessity that the victim talk about the abuse, 3) the merits of sanctions, as a preventive tool, following sexual abuse, and 4) the necessity that parents assume a guiding and protective role in their children's lives.

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STATISTICAL ANALYSES

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