

Tobacco Use

Tobacco smoke contains many toxic substances. It affects the health of smokers and of non-smokers exposed to it and increases the risks of certain types of cancers and respiratory diseases. Tobacco products are highly addictive and can cause the premature death of smokers.

The 1992 Inuit health survey revealed an important proportion of smokers. Tobacco use was measured again in the 2004 survey. In the latter survey, all participants aged 15 years and over were questioned about smoking.

The results from the Nunavik Inuit Health Survey 2004 show that more than three quarters of the participants surveyed smoked daily or occasionally, compared to one quarter of residents of the southern populations of Quebec and Canada. The proportions of smokers reported in the 2004 survey are basically the same as those derived from the 1992 Inuit survey. When analyzed by age group, the results reveal that those aged 18 to 29 smoke the most – nearly 90% of them are smokers – whereas people aged 50 and over smoke the least, about 45% are smokers.

Inuit women smoke more than their male counterparts, 79% versus 74% respectively, but they smoke on average fewer cigarettes per day than do men. The average number of cigarettes smoked daily also increase with age: 11 cigarettes are smoked among those aged 15 to 29, and 15 are smoked among those aged 30 and over. Besides, a sizeable proportion of Inuit women smoked during their last pregnancy: 65% smoked daily and 17% smoked occasionally.

An introduction to cigarettes begins at a very young age with nearly half of daily smokers having had their first full cigarette at or before the age of 13; half of daily smokers began smoking on a daily basis before the age of 16.

A high proportion of smokers had tried to stop smoking in the 12 months preceding the survey: about 42% of daily smokers and 65% of occasional smokers. The results also show that the majority of smokers surveyed do not use any aid to try to stop smoking. Personal health was cited as the top reason motivating ex-smokers interviewed to stop smoking.

AUTHORS

> Catherine Plaziac
Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services

> In collaboration with Denis Hamel
Unité Connaissance-surveillance
Direction Planification, recherche et innovation
Institut national de santé publique du Québec

STATISTICAL ANALYSES

> Louis Rochette
Unité Connaissance-surveillance
Direction Planification, recherche et innovation
Institut national de santé publique du Québec

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