



# Mental Health in Circumpolar Canada

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President of Canadian Society for Circumpolar Health



Aboriginal Healing Foundation

[www.ahf.ca](http://www.ahf.ca)

## Suicide Among Aboriginal People in Canada

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation Research Series

Prepared for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation

By

Laurence J. Kirmayer

Gregory M. Brass

Tara Holton

Ken Paul

Cori Simpson

Caroline Tait

2007

## Addictive Behaviours Among Aboriginal People in Canada

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation Research Series

Prepared for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation

By

Deborah Chansonneuve

2007

## **Nunavik Inuk suicide rate 25 times Quebec average**

Author: Alex Roslin, Windspeaker Correspondent, Kuujiuaq Quebec

The Aboriginal Multi-Media Society (AMMSA)

Volume: 12 Issue: 21 Year: 1995

**People in South Africa and India are living longer than Inuit in northern Quebec, reports a new health study**

NEWS: Nunavut August 13, 2013 - 11:26 am **Leaders demand action after Nunavut boy, 11, dies by suicide**

July 18, 2012 **Updated:** July 18, 2012 | 6:33 pm Adjust  
**Suicide drives high death rates among Inuit kids**

## **Nunatsiavut to address suicide, drug and alcohol addiction**

(Andrew Waugh/The Labradorian, 24 April 2006) -- The Nunatsiavut Government is preparing to embark on an ambitious, unprecedented mission to find the root causes of the many social problems facing Labrador's Inuit people.

## NWT substance abuse above national levels

**Nicole Veerman**

Northern News Services

Published Monday, November 15, 2010 NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Sixty per cent of youths 15 to 24 years of age in the NWT participate in heavy frequent drinking, compared to 11.7 per cent nationally, according to the 2006 NWT Addictions Report and the 2009 Canadian Alcohol and Drug Use Monitoring Survey

## N.W.T. MLAs call for more addictions treatment

Health Minister said Hay River, N.W.T., treatment centre only half full

CBC News Posted: Feb 08, 2012 8:41 PM CT | Last Updated: Feb 08, 2012 8:06 PM CT

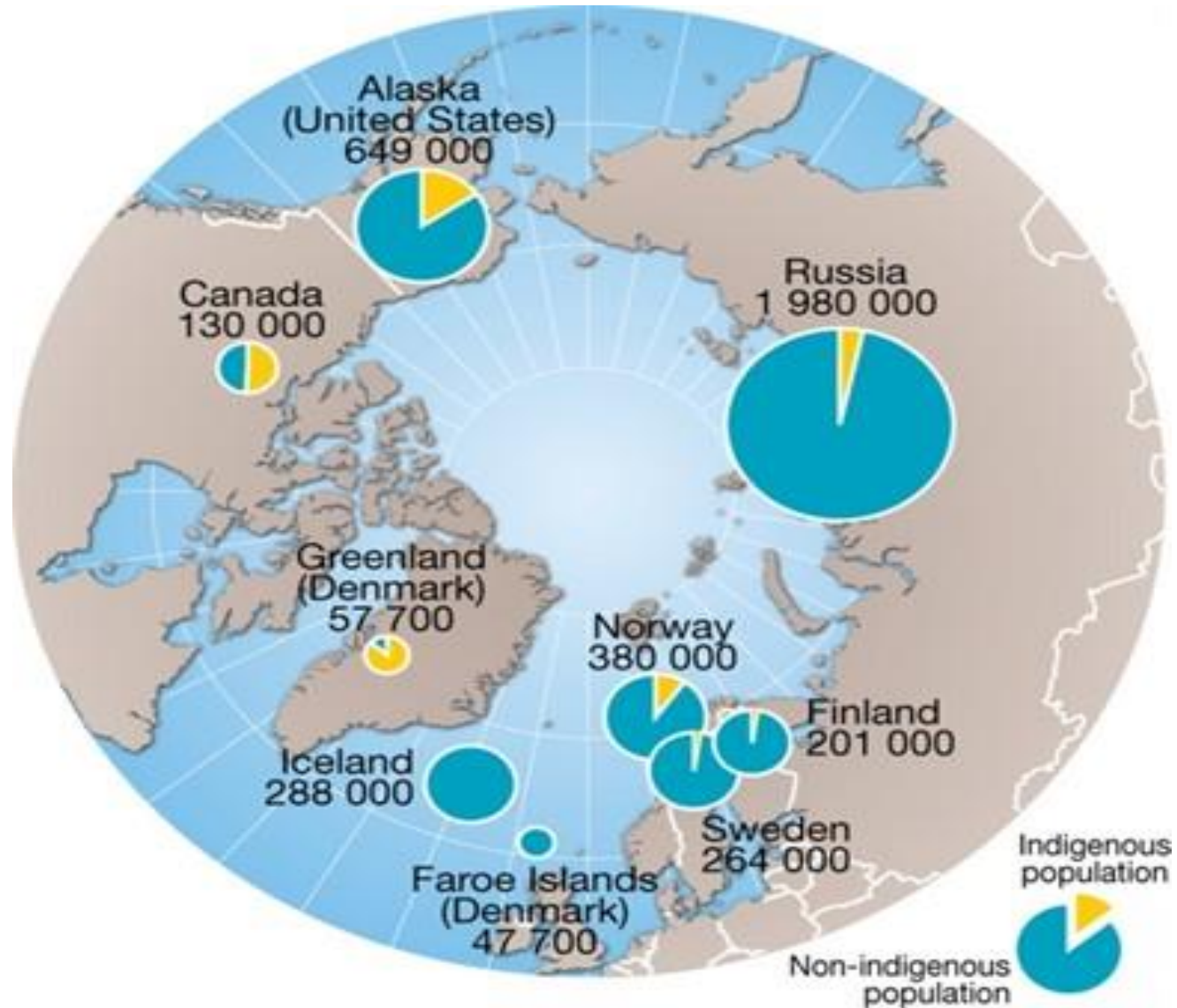
Yukon addictions  
services not  
adequate: expert

[CBC News](#) Posted: Feb  
08, 2011 7:33 PM CT  
Last Updated: Feb 08,  
2011 7:32 PM CT

Yukon leads nation in per capita  
liquor sales

N.W.T. and Nunavut in 3rd place behind N.L.  
CBC News Posted: Apr 12, 2013 11:59 AM CT |  
Last Updated: Apr 12, 2013 1:07 PM CT

## Population distribution in the circumpolar Arctic, by country (including indigenous population) 2008

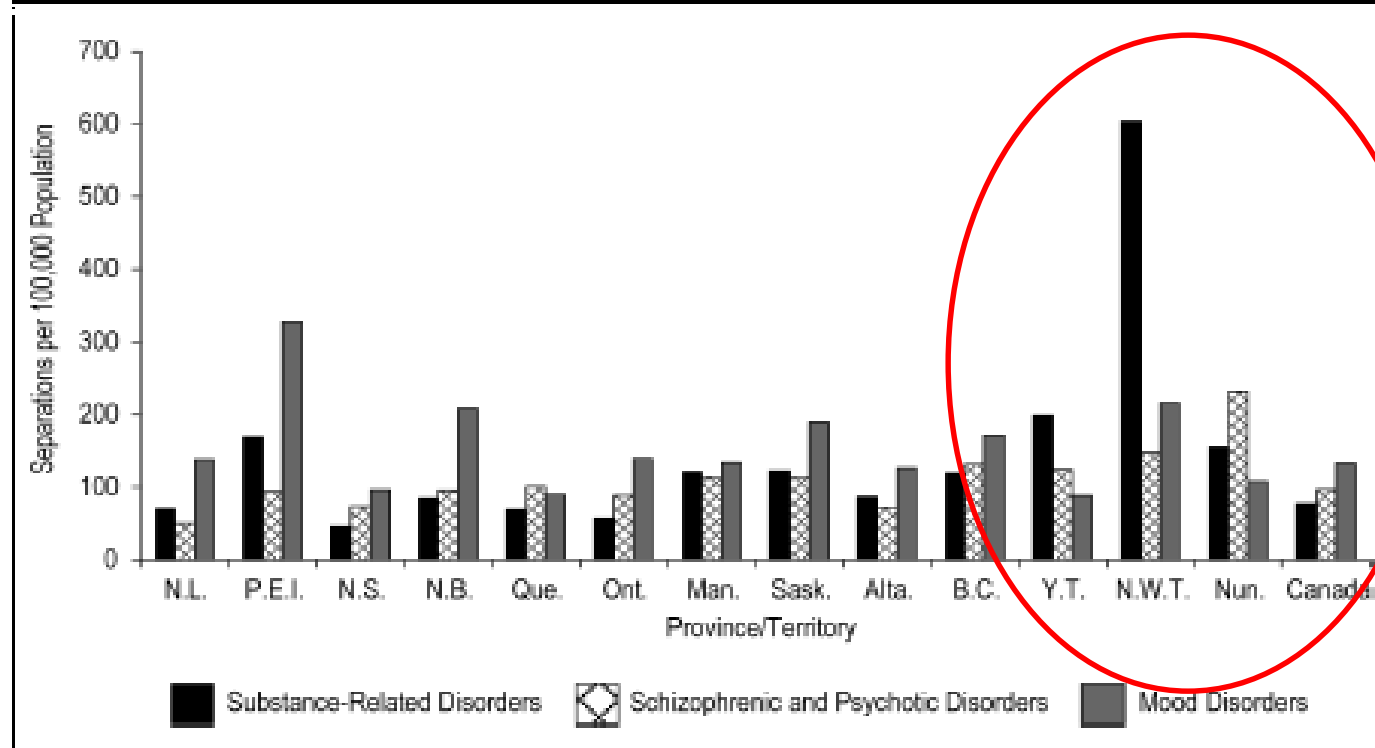


Author: Hugo Ahlenius, UNEP/GRID-Arendal



Statistics Canada

**Figure 6a: Age-Standardized Separation Rates per 100,000 Population, by Selected Primary Diagnosis Categories and by Province/Territory of Residence,\* General Hospitals, 2009–2010**



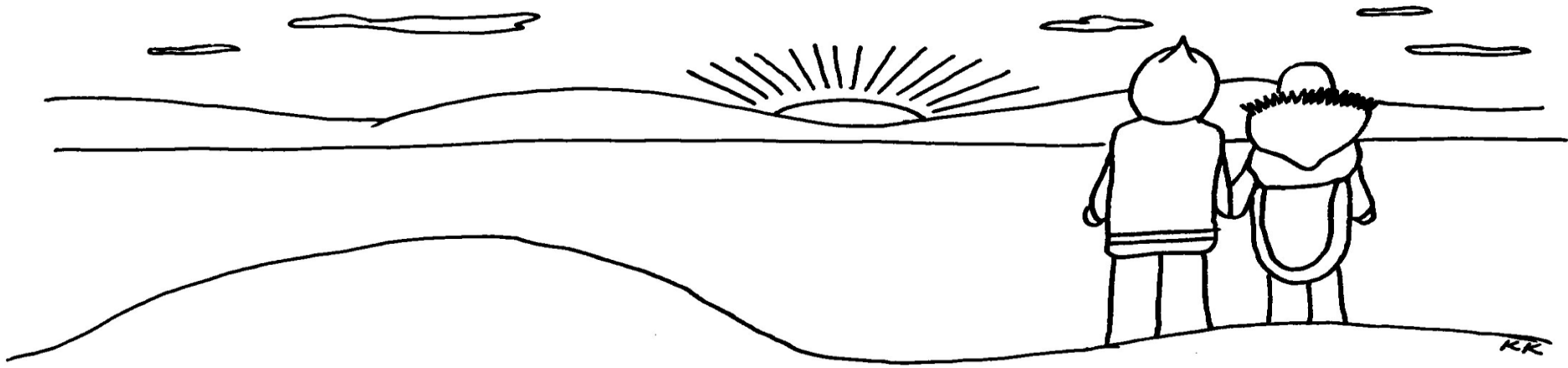
#### Notes

\* Data is based on the resident's postal code.

Age-standardized rates are based on the number of separations per 100,000 population. Population counts are based on Statistics Canada's population estimates for 2009. (The standard population is based on Statistics Canada's population estimates for 1991.)

#### Source

Hospital Mental Health Database, 2009–2010, Canadian Institute for Health Information.



# Mental Health

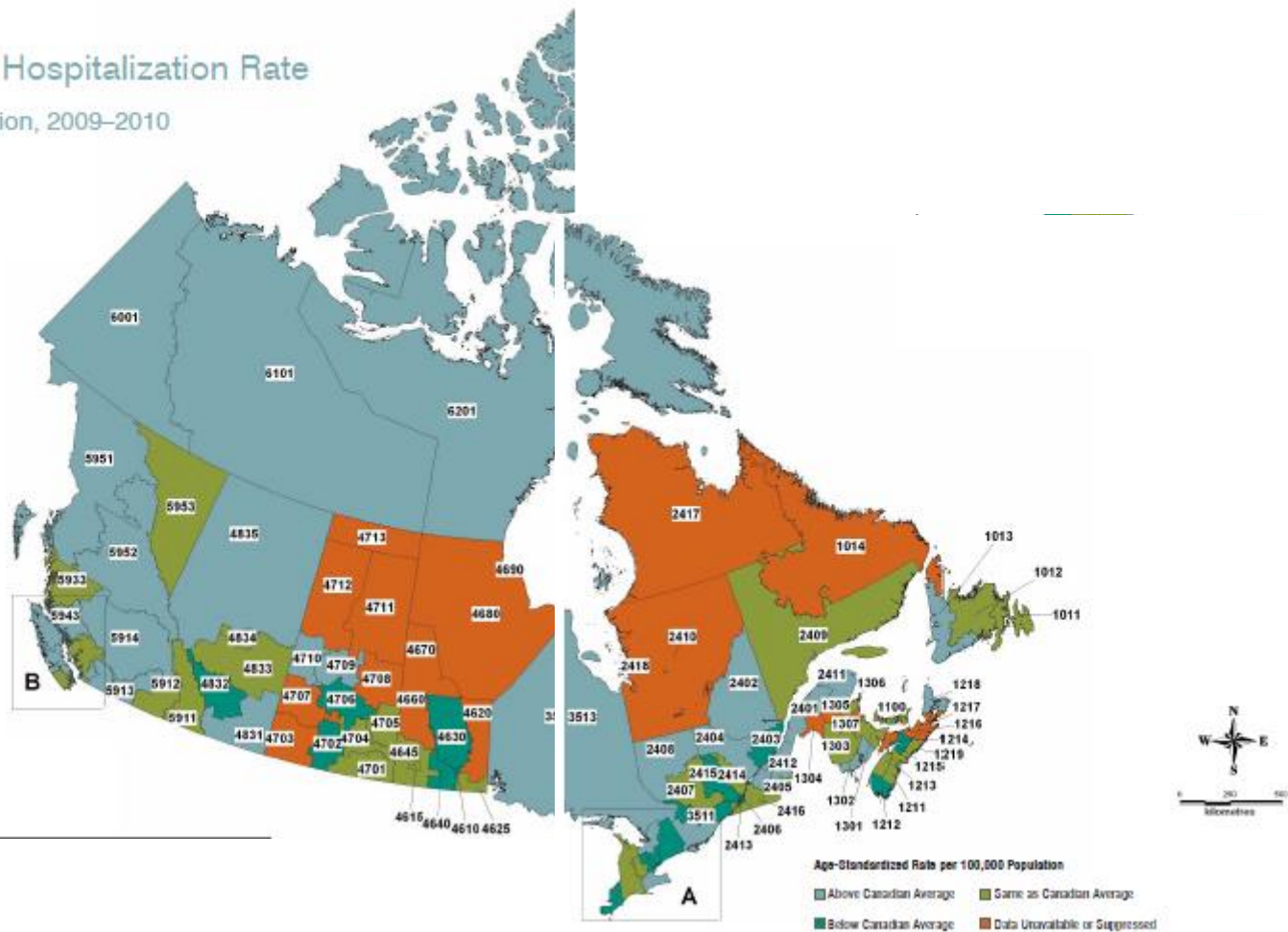
## Self-injury and Suicide

\*\*\* Artwork by Karin Kettler



# Self-injury Hospitalization Rate

by Health Region, 2009–2010



**Rate of suicide, all ages, average over 2000-2007, according to province or territory**  
*Age-standardized mortality rate per 100,000 population (Stats Canada)*

	Both Sexes	Males	Females
Canada	10.90	17.04	4.96
Alberta	13.13	19.81	6.41
British Columbia	9.73	14.95	4.68
Manitoba	12.04	18.04	6.13
New Brunswick	11.95	19.78	4.38
Newfoundland and Labrador	8.54	14.75	2.54
Northwest Territories	18.66	32.35	4.99
Nova Scotia	9.29	15.58	3.34
Nunavut	71.00	113.69	26.26
Ontario	7.86	12.16	3.80
Prince Edward Island	8.86	14.94	3.01
Quebec	15.20	24.05	6.53
Saskatchewan	11.46	17.83	5.19
Yukon	15.30	26.84	3.91

## Suicide in Inuit communities

National Inuit suicide rate is more than 11 times higher than the overall Canadian rate.

Suicide rates for Inuit regions from 1999 to 2003 (Health Canada)

- Nunavik – 181 per 100,000
- Nunatsiavut – 239 per 100,000
- Nunavut – 120 per 100,000
- Inuvialuit – 61 per 100,000



85% of Nunavut suicides are males, the majority in the 15-24 age range.

Number of suicide deaths in Nunavut and Nunavik has more than doubled in the past decade.

Suicide rate for Inuit women is lower than for Inuit men.

The rate for Inuit women in Nunavut in 2001 was 24.6 per 100,000 and in Nunavik, 52.4 per 100,000, compared to Canadian average of 4.9 per 100,000 in women.

# Suicide in Inuit children

Suicides accounted for a much larger share of all deaths of young people in Inuit Nunangat than elsewhere in Canada: **40% versus 8%**.

Among boys and young men in Inuit Nunangat, the suicide rate ratio rose from 15 to **35 times higher than those in the rest of Canada** from 1994-1998 to 2004-2008.

From 1994-1998 to 2004-2008, the rate ratios show suicide rates for girls and young women in Inuit Nunangat to be more than **20 times those in the rest of Canada**.

From 1994-1998 to 2004-2008, the percentage of suicides due to **hanging/suffocation** rose among children and teenagers in Inuit Nunangat (from 70% to 85%).

Rate ratios for suicides from **hanging/suffocation were 38 times higher in Inuit Nunangat** than elsewhere in Canada, and those for **suicides due to firearms, 51 times higher**

Stats Canada



# Contributing Factors

Breakdown  
cultural  
values

Barriers or lack of  
access to mental  
health treatment;

Intergenerational  
trauma

Suicide  
clusters

Poverty and lack  
of employment

Loss of control over land  
and living conditions

Lack of coping skills

Isolated  
geographic  
location

Lack of proper  
housing and  
inadequate  
sanitation and  
water quality

Low  
education  
and literacy

## Learning From Lives That Have Been Lived

This study, released June 5, 2013 shows that child abuse, pot smoking, and mental disorders rank among the biggest risk factors for suicide in Nunavut. (SOURCE: LEARNING FROM LIVES THAT HAVE BEEN LIVED)

$\phi \triangleright \psi \text{ iff } \Delta \vdash \neg(\phi \rightarrow \psi)$

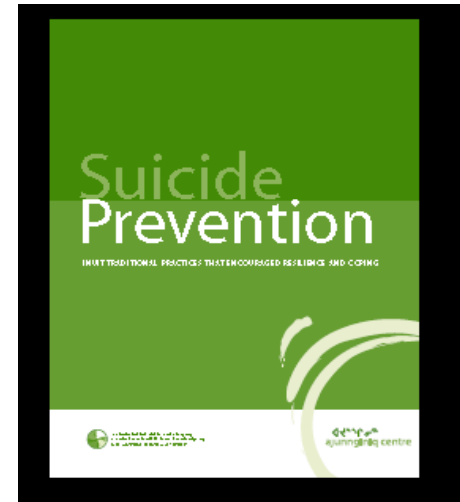


# Elders' Advice: Helping Yourself and Others

NAHO Ajunnginiq Centre's 2006 report on suicide prevention

Inuit elders believe the **coping and resilience skills** and values they used in the past are just as necessary in today's world

- Patience
- Perseverance
- love and caring
- Communication
- Awareness of self and others
- Confidentiality and respect for others
- Personal responsibility to youth.



Certain coping skills as especially important in Inuit culture

- Paying attention to each other's needs
- Focusing on helping others as a way of promoting connection and a sense of usefulness
- Doing something productive, active and healthy
- Talking things out
- Solving conflicts with others, and
- Accepting that life is not always easy but that tomorrow can be better



# Addictions



"The reality is that we have such limited resources. We have to deal with the two of them together. And part of the problem is that stigma around addictions and the stigma around mental health are so huge that people are loathe to come forward and get the help that they need. And even when they do get the courage and find out how to get that help - there isn't much."

Sue Edelman, the co-chair of the mental health committee of the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, May 2012



# Alcoholic consumption in Canada – Stats Canada

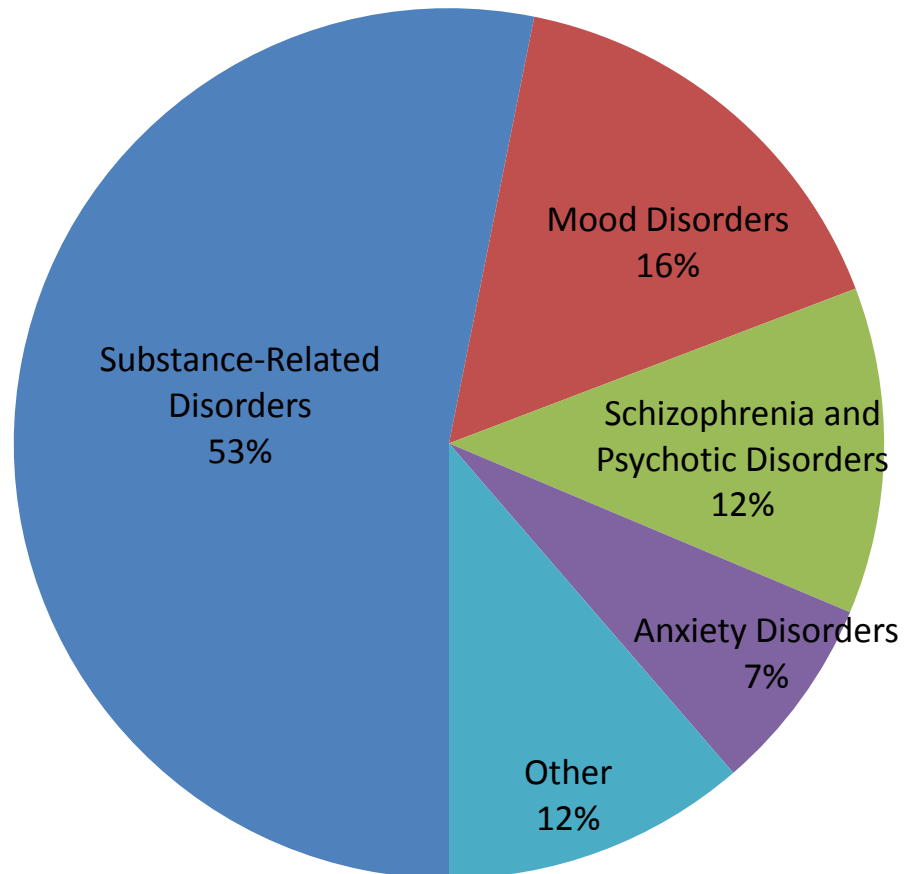
	Wine	Rank	Beer	Rank	Spirits	Rank	Total	Rank↓
<a href="#">Yukon</a>	18.3	1	145.1	1	13.8	1	12.7	1
<a href="#">Northwest Territories</a>	8.1	7	85.1	5	10.8	2	9.2	2
<a href="#">Alberta</a>	13.9	4	89.8	4	7.6	9	8.6	3
<a href="#">Newfoundland &amp; Labrador</a>	6.5	11	93.3	3	7.3	10	8.0	4
<a href="#">British Columbia</a>	14.5	3	76.6	12	9.0	7	7.8	5
<a href="#">Ontario</a>	11.8	5	84.3	6	8.8	8	7.8	6
<a href="#">Quebec</a>	17.4	2	93.9	2	4.1	12	7.8	7
<a href="#">Prince Edward Island</a>	7.4	10	78.9	9	9.7	3	7.5	8
<a href="#">Nova Scotia</a>	8.0	8	79.5	8	9.1	5	7.5	9
<a href="#">Manitoba</a>	8.0	9	76.8	10	9.4	4	7.4	10
<a href="#">Saskatchewan</a>	5.0	12	76.8	11	9.1	6	7.0	11
<a href="#">New Brunswick</a>	8.4	6	79.8	7	6.8	11	6.7	12
<a href="#">Nunavut</a>	Data unavailable							
Canada	13.1		85.6		7.5		7.8	

Values for wine, beer and spirits consumption are given in litres per person over 15, per annum. The total is expressed in litres of absolute alcohol.

Heavy drinking, by sex, provinces and territories Population aged 12 and over who reported having 5 or more drinks on one occasion, at least once a month in the past 12 months (Percent)					
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
	percent				
Canada	16.7	17.2	17.3	19.0	17.4
Newfoundland and Labrador	22.3	25.1	23.8	26.4	27.2
Prince Edward Island	16.5	21.0	18.1	19.5	20.1
Nova Scotia	20.6	20.8	20.2	20.3	22.3
New Brunswick	19.4	19.2	20.6	21.7	19.9
Quebec	17.3	18.6	17.7	18.5	18.9
Ontario	15.5	15.6	16.1	18.3	15.4
Manitoba	19.6	17.4	19.0	22.9	19.6
Saskatchewan	18.8	18.7	18.9	21.7	18.0
Alberta	17.6	18.2	19.5	21.3	18.8
British Columbia	15.5	16.1	15.7	16.6	16.1
Yukon	24.0	28.4	26.3	24.6	22.5
Northwest Territories	23.5	31.1	35.5	31.2	31.7
Nunavut	25.1 <sup>E</sup>	19.7	12.9 <sup>E</sup>	26.1 <sup>E</sup>	22.0

# Mental Health Hospitalizations

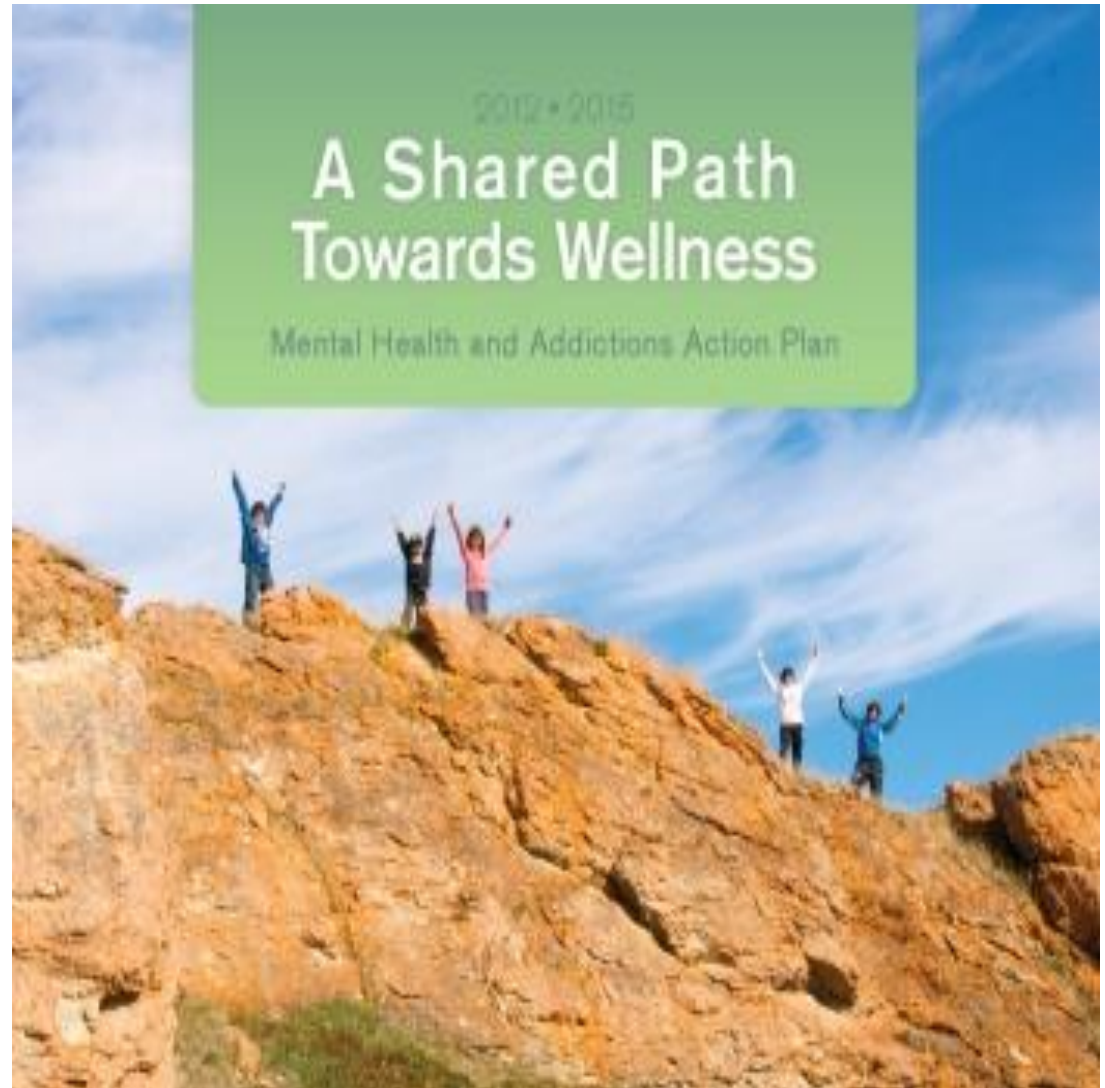
## Northwest Territories, 2009/10-2011/12



June 12, 2012

[A Shared Path Towards Wellness.](#)

- GNWT's 2012-2015 action plan to improve mental health and reduce addictions.
- 17<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly's priority
- ensuring a fair and sustainable health system
  - by investing in prevention, education and awareness, and
  - by enhancing addictions treatment programs using existing infrastructure



# Youth Photovoice in Iqaluit, Nunavut

**Qaujigiartiit Health Research Centre (QHRC)**

**Executive Director Gwen Healey**

Photovoice is a research method that allows the photographer to be the researcher.

QHRC collaborated with youth centres in Nunavut communities to provide youth with the opportunity to explore and share perspectives on Mental Health and Wellness through Photovoice on a larger scale.

This project continues to generate new research knowledge about the mental health of Nunavut youth as well as raise awareness of youth perspectives with regard to the number of issues they are faced with.

These photos were taken over a 2-week period in April and May 2010. More than 60 photos were taken and all of them were discussed by the group. Select photos that highlighted certain parts of the discussion will be shown.



# Youth Photovoice in Iqaluit, NU

Child and Youth Mental Health and Wellness  
Intervention, Research, Community Advocacy Project

Qaujigiartiit Health Research Centre,  
Iqaluit, NU