

# COMMUNITY ADVISED SMOKING CESSATION PROJECT: LOWER INCOME FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY



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# Lower Income Focus Group Summary

**Aim:** To better understand the needs and challenges of reducing the use of commercial tobacco or quitting smoking for lower-income community members. Lower income included those with an annual household income under \$40,000.

Thirty-three people from Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island took part in one of four small group discussions. Two sessions included a peer champion. All discussions occurred in person at the following project partner locations:

- The Community Outreach Centre in Charlottetown, PEI.
- LifeHouse Emergency Shelter & Transition Housing for Women and Children, Summerside, PEI.
- MetroWorks, Halifax, NS.
- The Ally Centre of Cape Breton, NS.

Participants were aged 18 to older than 65. They were gender diverse and eight self-identified as First Nations. Most had been smoking since a young age (i.e., under 10 years). Many had concurrent substance use disorders and or were housing insecure/street involved.



# Take Away Themes

- **Stress** was the # 1 reason for smoking and held people back from quitting. Smoking was a coping method. Most people smoked daily, often starting as soon as they wake up. Smoking was a big part of their daily routine.
- Other reasons for smoking and challenges to quitting were: **boredom, the social acceptance of smoking among peers and easy access to cigarettes.** For some, the motion of smoking or doing something with their hands was tied to their ADHD (attention-deficient hyperactivity disorder).
- Packaging changes with enhanced warnings or increasing prices have **not** been a deterrent. Many turned to ‘discount’ cigarettes as a cheaper-priced option to support their nicotine dependence. The cost of Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) and a lack of insurance coverage were barriers to accessing cessation support.
- People want more focus on the **benefits of non-smoking and motivating people.** Not negative messaging and shaming people about their use of tobacco. Incentives such as small rewards were also cited as a way to help people quit or reduce their use.
- Needed cessation supports included **easy access to free NRT** including inhalers. They also want on-site counselling at locations clients are comfortable visiting. Enhanced education and alternative activities for smoking (i.e., flexible programming and activities) were also supported.



# Thank you!

*“I remember when I quit smoking, I said I want to be that person that stands at the bus stop and says, No, I don't smoke. I would visualize that in my head and then I became that person.”*

*“I feel like if I quit smoking, I can do other better things, so it's a stepping stone too.”*

*“...if I had been aware that it would've been so hard to quit and the mistake I was making, I may, I might not have made it.”*

Thank you to everyone who joined the focus group discussions! Your feedback will help LungNSPEI and its partners develop needs-based tobacco cessation programming. Visit <https://www.lungnspei.ca/casc> for more detailed findings.