

The 2007 OSDUHS Mental Health and Well-Being Report

Executive Summary

The Data

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health's *Ontario Student Drug Use and Survey (OSDUHS)*, is the longest ongoing school survey of adolescents in Canada. The study, which spans over two decades, is based on 16 surveys conducted every two years since 1977. In the 2006/2007 academic year, 6,323 students (68% of selected students) in grades 7 to 12 from 43 school boards, 119 schools and 385 classes participated in the survey administered by the Institute for Social Research, York University.

This report describes the mental health, physical health, and risk behaviours among Ontario students in 2007 and changes since 1991 where possible. Although the *OSDUHS* spans back to 1977, most physical and mental health indicators were first included in the survey in the early 1990s. Results in this report are provided for two groups of students: those in grades 7 to 12, and those in grades 7, 9, and 11 only. The first group is used to assess current behaviour and **short-term trends** (1999-2007), and the second is used to assess **long-term trends** between 1991 and 2007. All data are based on self-reports derived from anonymous questionnaires administered in classrooms.

Topics that are new to this 2007 report include participation in the "choking game," self-rated mental health, suicide attempt, gambling money at Internet poker, gang membership, and video gaming problems. We also examine the overlap between substance use problems, mental health problems, and delinquent behaviour.

Family and School

- ❑ Almost over three-quarters (77%) of Ontario students report living with two parents (biological, step, or adoptive). About 14% of students report that they split their time between 2 or more homes.
- ❑ About one-in-ten (12%) students report their family has been involved with a Children's Aid Society at some point.
- ❑ Overall, 6% of all students report being suspended from school at least once during the academic year.
- ❑ Although most students feel safe in their school, about 12% are worried about being harmed or threatened at school.

Physical Health

- ❑ Although a majority (56%) of students report that they are in excellent or very good health, about 13% report poor health. Females are more likely to report poor health compared to males (17% vs 10%, respectively).
- ❑ The percentage of students reporting daily physical activity is about 21%. At the other extreme, about one-in-eight (13%) were not physically active at all during the past 7 days.
- Significantly more students rated their health as poor in 2007 (13%) compared to their counterparts in 1991 (6%; among grades 7, 9, 11 only).
- The percentage of students reporting daily physical activity is significantly higher in 2007 (21%) compared to 2005 (17%). The percentage reporting no activity at all is significantly lower in 2007 (13%) compared to the estimate from 2005 (18%).

The “Choking Game”

- About 7% of students report self-asphyxiation or having been choked by someone else on purpose in order to “get high,” at least once in their lifetime. There is no significant difference between males and females, or among the grade levels.

Health Care Utilization

Physical Health Care

- Almost two-thirds (61%) of students visited a physician at least once during the 12 months before the survey. Females are significantly more likely than males to report at least one visit to a physician (67% vs 55%, respectively).
- The percentage of students reporting at least one visit with a physician significantly decreased between 1999 (70%) and 2007 (61%).
- About one-third (37%) of students were treated for a physical injury at least once during the past 12 months.
- The percentage of students reporting at least one physical injury significantly increased between 2005 (34%) and 2007 (37%).

Mental Health Care

- About 21% of students visited a mental health professional (such as a doctor, nurse or counsellor) at least once during the past 12 months. Females are more likely than males to report visiting a mental health professional (23% vs 20%, respectively).
- Between 2005 and 2007, the percentage of student reporting a mental health care visit significantly increased, from 12% to 21%.

Medical Drug Use

- Among all students, 41% report using a prescribed opioid pain reliever (e.g., Tylenol #3, Percocet) in the past 12 month; 4.5% used a prescribed tranquilizer/sedative (e.g.,

Valium, Ativan, Xanax); and 2% used a prescribed drug for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (e.g., Ritalin, Adderall, Concerta).

- Females are more likely than males to report medical opioid pain reliever use and tranquilizer use. Males are more likely to report using an ADHD drug medically.
- Less than 1% of students report that they had been prescribed medication to treat anxiety in the past year, and about 1% were prescribed medication to treat depression. Another 1.5% of students were prescribed medication for *both* depression and anxiety.

Telephone Crisis Helpline

- About 2% of all students report using a crisis helpline to discuss a problem during the past 12 months. Females are more likely than males to use a crisis helpline (3% vs 1%).

Internalizing Indicators

Self-Rated Mental Health

- About one-in-ten (11%) students rate their mental health as poor, with females more likely to do so than males (16% vs 7%).

Low Self-Esteem

- About 8% of students report indicators of low self-esteem, with females more likely to do so than males (11% vs 6%).
- Between 1995 and 2007, there was no significant change in estimates of low self-esteem.

Depressive Symptoms

- About 5% of students report symptoms of depression. Females are more likely to be at risk for depression than males (8% vs 2%).
- Between 1997 and 2007, there were no significant changes in the percentage at risk

for depression among the total sample, or among subgroups.

Elevated Psychological Distress

- ❑ Just under one-third (31%) of students indicate elevated psychological distress (symptoms of depression, anxiety, social dysfunction), with females more likely to do so than males (42% vs 20%).
- ❑ The most common symptom experienced by students is the feeling of being constantly under stress (38%), followed by losing sleep because of worrying (28%).
- Among the total sample, elevated psychological distress has generally remained stable since 1999, hovering around 30%. However, females show a significant increase over the short-term, from 36% in 1999 up to 42% in 2007.

Suicide Ideation and Attempts

- ❑ About one-in-ten (10%) students had serious thoughts about suicide in the past 12 months. About 3% report a suicide attempt in the past 12 months.
- ❑ Females are more likely than males to contemplate suicide (14% vs 6%), and to attempt suicide (5% vs 2%).
- Suicide ideation did not significantly change between 2001 and 2007.

Body Image

- ❑ Over two-thirds (70%) of all students are satisfied with their weight. One-fifth (20%) feel that they are too fat, while one-tenth (10%) feel they are too thin.
- ❑ Over one-third (36%) of students are not trying to do anything about their weight. Another 28% are trying to lose weight; 23% want to keep from gaining weight, and 13% want to gain weight.

- ❑ Females are significantly more likely to believe that they are too fat, compared to males (25% vs 15%), whereas males are more likely to believe that they are too thin compared to females (13% vs 7%).

Externalizing Indicators

Overall Delinquent Behaviour

- ❑ Among all twelve delinquent behaviours asked about in 2007, the three most common were: vandalism (16%), theft of goods worth less than \$50 (14%), and assaulting someone (11%). The least reported behaviour was carrying a handgun (1.5%).
- ❑ Overall, 13% of students engage in delinquent behaviour (defined as 3 or more delinquent acts) during the 12 months before the survey. Males are more likely to engage in delinquent behaviour than females (16% vs 10%).
- The percentage of students reporting overall delinquent behaviour significantly declined between 1999 and 2007, from 18% to 13%.

Non-Violent Delinquent Behaviour

- ❑ Of the eight non-violent delinquent behaviours asked about (vandalism, theft of goods worth less than \$50, theft of goods more than \$50, car theft, breaking and entering, selling cannabis, selling other drugs, running away from home), males are significantly more likely than females to report seven. Females are more likely to report running away from home.
- Over the short-term, only reports of vandalism changed among the total sample, decreasing from 24% in 1999 to 16% in 2007.
- Reports of vandalism, theft of goods worth less than \$50, and car theft/joyriding are significantly lower in 2007 compared to reports from the early 1990s (among grades 7, 9, 11 only).

- The percentage of students (in grades 7, 9, 11 only) reporting selling cannabis is significantly higher in 2007 (6%) compared to 1991 (3%).

Violent Behaviour

- ❑ About one-in-ten (11%) students assaulted someone at least once during the past 12 months. About 9% carried a weapon (a gun or knife), 5% participated in a gang fight, and 1.5% carried a handgun. Males are significantly more likely than females to report engaging in each of these violent behaviours.
- Over the short-term, the percentage of students reporting assaulting someone significantly declined (from 20% in 1999 down to 11% in 2007).
- Reported weapon carrying significantly declined between 1999 (14%) and 2007 (9%).
- Reported gang fighting significantly declined between 1999 (8%) and 2007 (5%).

Gang Membership

- ❑ About 4% of students report that they currently belong to a gang of some type. Males are more likely than females to belong to a gang (6% vs 2%).

Fire Setting

- ❑ One-in-six (16%) students report setting something on fire (that they weren't supposed to) at least once during the 12 months before the survey. Males are significantly more likely to report so compared to females (20% vs 12%).
- ❑ About 7% report setting something on fire three or more times during the past 12 months.

School Violence and Bullying

- ❑ About 16% report fighting on school property at least once during the past 12 months, with males more likely than females to do so (24% vs 8%).
- ❑ About 9% were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property at least once during the past 12 months. Males are significantly more likely than females to report experiencing this (11% vs 6%).
- ❑ Just under one-third (30%) of all students report being bullied at school since September. The most prevalent form of bullying victimization is verbal (23%), while 4% were primarily bullied physically, and 3% were victims of theft/vandalism.
- ❑ About one-quarter (25%) of all students report bullying other students at school. The most prevalent form of bullying others is through verbal attacks (20%), followed by physical attacks (4%), and theft/vandalism (1%).

Gambling and Video Gaming

Gambling Activities

- ❑ Just over one-quarter (29%) of students played cards for money at least once during the 12 months before the survey. About one-in-five (19%) played lottery tickets, and 16% bet money in sports pools. The least prevalent activity is casino gambling (1%).
- ❑ Gambling at any activity over the Internet is reported by about 3% of students. Internet poker playing is also reported by 3%.
- ❑ Males are more likely than females to engage in nine of the eleven gambling activities asked about in 2007.
- ❑ Among all students, 5% gambled at five or more activities, and this group can be considered to be heavy gamblers. Males are more likely to report heavy gambling than females (8% vs 2%).

- The percentage of students that gambled at cards significantly *increased* between 2001 (25%) and 2007 (29%).
- Several gambling activities significantly *decreased* between 2001 and 2007: bingo (from 12% in 2001 down to 8% in 2007); sports pools (from 22% down to 16%); and sports lottery tickets (from 10% down to 6%). Playing dice for money significantly decreased between 2005 (15%) and 2007 (11%).

Gambling Problem

- ❑ About 2% of students may have a gambling problem (reported symptoms of loss of control, problems with family/friends, disruption to school/work), with males more likely than females (4% vs 1%).
- The percentage of students with a potential gambling problem significantly declined between 1999 (6%) and 2007 (2%).

Video Gaming Problem

- ❑ Almost one-in-five (18%) students play video games daily, with males more likely than females (30% vs 5%).
- ❑ About 9% of students may have a video gaming problem (reported symptoms of preoccupation, tolerance, loss of control, withdrawal, escape, disregard for consequences, disruption to family/school). Males are significantly more likely than females to indicate a video gaming problem (15% vs 3%).

Co-existing Problems

- ❑ The majority (54%) of students report none of the following four problems examined: elevated psychological distress, hazardous/harmful drinking, a potential drug use problem, or delinquent behaviour. About 27% report one of these problems, 10% report two problems, 6% report three problems, and 3% report all four problems.

Common Risk Factors

The report also profiles some individual, family, and school factors related to 10 problem indicators: high risk for depression; elevated psychological distress; suicide ideation; delinquent behaviour, violent behaviour, fire setting, a potential gambling problem; hazardous/harmful drinking; a potential drug use problem; and co-existing problems.

In order of importance, the factors associated with these problems (while controlling for other factors) were as follows:

- ❑ parental monitoring (all 10 problems)
- ❑ the parent-child relationship; sensation seeking (8 of 10 problems)
- ❑ school attachment; sex; grade (7 of 10)
- ❑ school marks (6 of 10)
- ❑ family immigrant status (4 of 10)
- ❑ perceived school safety; region (3 of 10)
- ❑ family structure (1 of 10)
- ❑ parents' education (0 of 10).

Regional Variation

- ❑ Only a few measures significantly differ by survey-design region (i.e., Toronto, North, West, East), *not* controlling for other factors:

- Compared to students in the other three regions, Toronto students are least likely to report a suicide attempt and being bullied, and most likely to indicate a potential video gaming problem.

- Northern Ontario students are most likely to indicate elevated psychological distress.

- Eastern Ontario students are most likely to report the medical use of tranquilizers/sedatives.

- Western Ontario students do not significantly differ from students in the other three regions on any measure.

- ❑ Readers should note that an overview of results according to Ontario's Local Health Integration Networks is provided in the report.

Major Mental Health and Well-Being Indicators for the Total Sample (N=6,323) and by Sex, 2007 OSDUHS (Grades 7 to 12)

Indicator	Estimated Number	Total % (95% CI)	Males %	Females %	
% self-rated poor physical health (current)	129,000	12.9 (11.8-14.2)	9.6	16.6	*
% physically inactive (past week)	129,000	13.1 (11.8-14.6)	12.1	14.2	
% daily physical activity (past week)	207,000	21.1 (19.4-22.9)	26.5	15.3	*
% treated for a physical injury (past year)	342,000	37.4 (35.2-39.6)	39.4	35.2	
% ever participated in the “choking game” (lifetime)	79,000	7.4 (6.2-8.8)	7.0	7.8	
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% used tranquilizers/sedatives medically (past year)	48,000	4.5 (3.7-5.3)	3.2	5.8	*
% used an ADHD drug medically (past year)	23,000	2.3 (1.9-2.9)	3.2	1.3	*
% 1+ mental health care visits (past year)	224,000	21.2 (19.4-23.1)	19.5	23.0	*
% prescribed medication for depression/anxiety/both	39,000	3.7 (2.9-4.6)	2.4	5.0	*
% used telephone crisis helpline (past year)	20,000	1.9 (1.5-2.5)	1.0	2.8	*
% self-rated poor mental health (current)	121,000	11.4 (10.0-13.0)	7.1	15.8	*
% low self-esteem (current)	90,000	8.5 (7.3-9.9)	6.2	10.9	*
% high risk for depression (past week)	56,000	5.3 (4.4-6.3)	2.4	8.3	*
% elevated psychological distress (past few weeks)	329,000	30.8 (28.8-32.8)	19.9	42.0	*
% suicide ideation (past year)	103,000	9.8 (8.6-11.1)	5.9	13.7	*
% suicide attempt (past year)	35,000	3.3 (2.6-4.2)	1.8	4.9	*
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% overall measure of delinquent behaviour (past year)	138,000	13.1 (11.8-14.6)	16.1	10.1	*
% gang fighting (past year)	50,000	4.8 (3.9-5.9)	7.1	2.4	*
% currently belong to a gang	41,000	4.0 (3.0-5.3)	5.6	2.4	*
% carried a weapon (past year)	90,000	8.7 (7.5-10.0)	13.2	4.2	*
% carried a handgun (past year)	15,000	1.5 (1.0-2.1)	2.5	s	*
% set something on fire (past year)	166,000	15.9 (14.1-17.9)	19.6	12.2	*
% fought at school (past year)	166,000	15.8 (14.2-17.7)	24.0	7.5	*
% threatened/injured with weapon at school (past year)	90,000	8.6 (7.5-9.8)	11.0	6.0	*
% been bullied at school (since September)	315,000	29.9 (27.8-32.0)	27.7	32.1	*
% bullied others at school (since September)	261,000	24.7 (22.8-26.7)	26.0	23.4	*
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% heavy gambling activity (past year)	49,000	4.7 (3.8-5.8)	7.5	1.8	*
% potential gambling problem	24,000	2.3 (1.8-2.9)	3.5	1.1	*
% potential video gaming problem	86,000	9.4 (8.2-10.8)	15.1	3.1	*
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% reporting 3 or all 4 co-existing problems [†]	96,000	9.0 (7.9-10.2)	8.4	9.6	

Notes: the estimated number of students is based on a student population of about 1,011,200; * indicates a significant sex difference ($p < .05$), *not* controlling for other factors; ‘s’ indicates estimate suppressed (less than 0.5%); [†]among the problems: elevated psychological distress, hazardous/harmful drinking, a potential drug use problem, and delinquent behaviour.

Major Mental Health and Well-Being Indicators by Grade, 2007 OSDUHS

Indicator	G7	G8	G9	G10	G11	G12	
% self-rated poor physical health (current)	4.1	7.8	11.7	14.1	18.9	18.6	*
% physically inactive (past week)	11.3	9.3	11.7	14.3	16.0	15.4	*
% daily physical activity (past week)	28.1	29.6	22.4	20.7	15.4	13.1	*
% treated for a physical injury (past year)	31.3	31.4	39.9	37.7	38.9	42.7	*
% ever participated in the “choking game” (lifetime)	7.6	7.8	7.1	6.0	9.9	6.4	
% used tranquilizers/sedatives medically (past year)	2.7	3.7	3.4	4.0	5.1	7.1	*
% used an ADHD drug medically (past year)	3.4	1.7	3.0	2.2	1.7	2.1	
% 1+ mental health care visits (past year)	23.3	18.5	22.4	19.0	21.3	22.5	
% prescribed medication for depression/anxiety/both	1.2	2.0	2.7	4.0	4.1	7.2	*
% used telephone crisis helpline (past year)	2.4	1.0	1.9	1.9	3.0	1.5	
% self-rated poor mental health (current)	6.1	9.1	12.4	12.3	12.5	14.5	*
% low self-esteem (current)	7.6	8.7	10.0	8.6	8.1	8.0	
% high risk for depression (past week)	4.5	6.2	6.0	5.5	4.5	4.9	
% elevated psychological distress (past few weeks)	18.5	22.7	31.1	32.5	34.9	41.1	*
% suicide ideation (past year)	7.9	9.2	11.5	11.4	10.0	8.7	
% suicide attempt (past year)	2.7	3.0	3.2	5.5	3.1	2.5	
% overall measure of delinquent behaviour (past year)	5.9	9.7	16.9	14.4	17.3	13.4	*
% gang fighting (past year)	4.3	5.3	6.3	4.1	6.4	2.9	
% currently belong to gang	3.9	4.2	7.0	4.4	3.8	1.4	*
% carried a weapon (past year)	4.8	10.2	11.3	8.6	10.1	7.1	
% carried a handgun (past year)	s	s	2.2	1.5	2.6	1.0	
% set something on fire (past year)	6.1	15.3	23.8	18.8	18.8	12.2	*
% fought at school (past year)	22.9	26.2	18.1	11.6	12.1	7.4	*
% threatened/injured with weapon at school (past year)	9.3	10.1	10.8	8.2	8.6	5.2	
% been bullied at school (since September)	34.2	34.7	36.7	33.0	24.3	19.2	*
% bullied others at school (since September)	17.2	30.4	25.9	27.8	24.7	22.2	*
% heavy gambling activity (past year)	1.3	2.5	4.6	4.1	6.0	8.5	*
% potential gambling problem	s	1.7	2.8	1.2	4.1	3.2	*
% potential video gaming problem	10.4	10.8	8.9	9.1	9.2	8.6	
% reporting 3 or all 4 co-existing problems [†]	1.3	2.7	9.6	10.0	13.6	14.7	*

Notes: entries are percentages; * indicates a significant grade difference ($p < .05$), *not* controlling for other factors; ‘s’ indicates estimate suppressed (less than 0.5%); [†]among the problems: elevated psychological distress, hazardous/harmful drinking, a potential drug use problem, and delinquent behaviour.

Overview of Selected Trends in Mental Health and Well-Being Indicators Among the Total Sample of Students, OSDUHS

Indicator	Among Grades	Period	Change
% poor self-rated physical health (current)	7, 9, 11	1991-2007	Increased from 6% to 13%
% physically inactive (past week)	7, 9, 11	1997-2007	Decreased between 2005 (18%) and 2007 (13%)
% daily physical activity (past week)	7 to 12	1999-2007	Increased between 2005 (17%) and 2007 (21%)
% 1+ physical health care visits (past year)	7 to 12	1999-2007	Decreased from 70% to 61%
% 1+ physical injuries requiring treatment	7 to 12	2003-2007	Increased between 2005 (34%) and 2007 (37%)
% 1+ mental health care visits (past year)	7 to 12	1999-2007	Increased between 2005 (12%) and 2007 (21%)
% low self-esteem (current)	7, 9, 11	1995-2007	Stable
% high risk for depression (past week)	7, 9, 11	1997-2007	Stable
% elevated psychological distress (past few weeks)	7 to 12	1999-2007	Stable
% suicide ideation (past year)	7 to 12	2001-2007	Stable
% overall delinquent behaviour (past year)	7, 9, 11	1993-2007	Peaked in 1995 (18%), decreased to about 13% in recent years (2001-2007)
% sold cannabis (past year)	7, 9, 11	1991-2007	Increased between 1991 (3%) and 2001 (8%), remains stable in 2007 (6%)
% carried a weapon (past year)	7, 9, 11	1993-2007	Peaked in 1993 (16%), decreased to about 9% in recent years (2001-2007)
% carried a handgun (past year)	7 to 12	2005-2007	Stable
% gang fighting (past year)	7 to 12	1999-2007	Decreased from 8% to 5%
% threatened/injured with a weapon at school	7 to 12	2003-2007	Stable
% been bullied at school (since September)	7 to 12	2003-2007	Stable
% Internet gambling at any game (past year)	7 to 12	2003-2007	Stable
% gambling at card games (past year)	7 to 12	2001-2007	Increased from 25% to 29%
% heavy gambling activity (past year)	7 to 12	2003-2007	Stable
% potential gambling problem	7 to 12	1999-2007	Decreased from 6% to 2%

Notes: the changes presented are based on the total sample of students in the grades shown; subgroup changes are not presented