

Highlights from the 2003 *Ontario Student Drug Use Survey* Drug Report

This eBulletin highlights the main drug findings from the 2003 *Ontario Student Drug Use Survey (OSDUS)*, an Ontario-wide school survey of students in grades 7 to 12. The 2003 sample size of 6,616 students represents about 970,000 students in grades 7 to 12 across the province.

Also highlighted are trends in tobacco, alcohol and other drug use, based on 14 surveys conducted since 1977. The *OSDUS* is the longest ongoing school survey of adolescents in Canada.

Past Year Drug Use (%) by Total, Sex, and Grade, 2003 *OSDUS*

	Total	Males	Females		G7	G8	G9	G10	G11	G12	
<i>Alcohol</i>	66.2	68.3	64.3	*	39.1	48.9	65.1	75.1	79.9	82.5	*
<i>Cannabis</i>	29.6	30.9	28.3		6.2	10.7	27.9	35.9	45.0	44.8	*
<i>Binge Drinking</i>	26.5	29.4	23.8	*	5.8	7.7	23.5	29.8	40.9	45.2	*
<i>Cigarettes</i>	19.2	18.0	20.3		4.4	10.2	17.0	21.8	28.3	30.2	*
<i>Hallucinogens</i>	10.0	12.1	8.0	*	1.8	2.6	7.8	12.5	17.4	15.3	*
<i>Solvents</i>	6.1	5.9	6.3		10.2	9.5	6.5	4.2	3.6	3.9	*
<i>Stimulants (NM)</i>	5.8	4.7	6.7	*	1.6	3.7	5.6	6.6	8.2	7.8	*
<i>Cocaine</i>	4.8	5.4	4.3		3.1	1.9	4.9	4.6	6.9	6.7	*
<i>Ecstasy (MDMA)</i>	4.1	4.2	3.9		0.5	0.8	3.7	4.6	6.6	7.2	*
<i>Methamphetamine</i>	3.3	3.8	2.9		1.0	0.9	3.8	4.2	5.4	3.6	*
<i>LSD</i>	2.9	3.5	2.3	*	0.7	1.1	3.7	4.2	4.0	2.7	*
<i>Ritalin (NM)</i>	2.9	3.4	2.5		1.2	1.2	3.0	3.3	5.0	3.1	*
<i>Glue</i>	2.8	3.0	2.6		5.2	3.2	2.4	2.4	2.3	1.8	*
<i>Crack</i>	2.7	2.8	2.6		1.7	1.7	3.1	3.0	3.6	2.5	
<i>Barbiturates (NM)</i>	2.5	2.6	2.5		1.8	2.2	3.0	2.8	3.1	1.8	
<i>PCP</i>	2.2	2.9	1.6	*	1.3	0.8	2.1	3.6	2.6	2.7	*
<i>Tranquillizers (NM)</i>	2.2	2.7	1.8	*	0.6	1.2	1.8	2.4	4.1	2.7	*
<i>Ketamine</i>	2.2	3.0	1.6	*	1.0	s	1.7	1.6	4.7	3.7	*
<i>Rohypnol</i>	1.6	1.7	1.5		1.2	1.2	1.4	2.0	2.3	1.3	
<i>Heroin</i>	1.4	1.9	0.9	*	1.4	0.8	1.5	2.0	1.3	1.1	
<i>Ice</i>	1.2	1.3	1.0		1.2	0.8	1.3	1.0	1.1	1.5	
<i>GHB</i>	0.7	0.8	0.6		s	s	s	0.9	1.7	s	
<i>Any Illicit, including cannabis</i>	32.2	33.1	31.3		10.1	13.9	29.6	38.6	47.5	47.1	*
<i>Any Illicit, excluding cannabis</i>	15.3	16.6	14.2	*	6.6	8.0	13.0	18.0	21.7	22.3	*
<i>Steroids (lifetime)</i>	3.0	4.4	1.7	*	0.7	1.8	1.6	3.8	4.6	5.3	*

Notes: binge drinking (5+ drinks on one occasion) refers to the past 4 weeks time period; NM=non-medical use; s=estimate suppressed; * indicates a significant a sex difference, or grade difference ($p < .05$), *not* controlling for other factors.

Demographic Correlates of Student Drug Use, 2003 OSDUS

Student drug use is associated with the following demographic factors:

Sex: Males are significantly more likely than females to drink alcohol and binge drink, to use LSD, PCP, other hallucinogens, tranquilizers, heroin, Ketamine, and any illicit drug (excluding cannabis). Females, however, are more likely to use stimulants (e.g., diet pills).

Age/Grade: Use of the following drugs increases steadily with grade: alcohol, binge drinking, cigarettes, cannabis, ecstasy, and any illicit drug use including and excluding cannabis. Use of certain drugs typically peaks in grades 10 or 11 and then somewhat subsides by grade

12. These drugs are: stimulants, tranquilizers, LSD, PCP, other hallucinogens, methamphetamine, cocaine, Ritalin, and Ketamine. Only glue and solvent use decrease with grade. Use of heroin, Rohypnol, crack, barbiturates, and ice is not significantly associated with grade.

Region: Regional differences exist for: cigarette smoking, binge drinking, the use of stimulants, hallucinogens, and Ritalin. Students from Toronto are the least likely to use these drugs, whereas Northern students are most likely. Students from the East and West do not differ from the province as a whole.

Short-Term and Long-Term Trends in Student Drug Use, OSDUS 1977-2003

1999 – 2003 (Grades 7 to 12)

Generally, the changes in student drug use over the short-term have been decreases in use. In 2003, the prevalence rates for the following drugs are lower than either those in 2001 or 1999: cigarettes, LSD, other hallucinogens, ecstasy, barbiturates, methamphetamine, and the use of any illicit drug, (excluding cannabis). However, cocaine use has increased since 1999.

1977 – 2003 (Grades 7, 9, 11 only)

There are 5 general patterns that describe the long-term trends in student drug use:

1) Decreased during the 1980s, Increased during the 1990s, Currently Stable, but Elevated:

Alcohol
Binge drinking
Inhalants (glue & solvents)
Cannabis
Ecstasy
Hallucinogens

2) Decreased during the 1980s, Increased during the 1990s, and Currently on a Downward Trend:

Cigarettes
LSD

3) Decreased during the 1980s, Upward Movement during the 1990s:

Cocaine
Crack

4) Decreased during the 1980s, Stable during the 1990s:

Stimulants
Tranquilizers
Barbiturates

5) Low and Stable Over Time:

Heroin
PCP
Methamphetamine

Methods:

The *Ontario Student Drug Use Survey (OSDUS)* is an Ontario-wide survey of elementary (grades 7 and 8) and secondary (grades 9-12) school students conducted every two years since 1977. The 2003 survey, which used a stratified (region) two-stage cluster design (school, class) included 6,616 students in grades 7 to 12 from 37 school boards, 126 schools, and 383 classes. Self-administered questionnaires, which promote anonymity, were administered by staff from the Institute for Social Research, York University on a classroom basis between January and June 2003. The student response rate was 72%.

All survey estimates were weighted, and variance and statistical tests were corrected for the sampling design.

Note that prior to the 1999 survey, only students in grades 7, 9, and 11 were included. Therefore, long-term trends are limited to only these three grades.

Terminology:

- **Past Year Drug Use:** Unless otherwise indicated, percentages reflect use at least once during the 12 months before the survey.
- **Alcohol Use** is defined as any alcohol use during the past 12 months, excluding sips, but including drinking at special events.
- **Binge Drinking** is defined as having 5 or more drinks on one occasion during the 4 weeks before the survey.
- **Cigarette Smoking** is defined as smoking less than 1 cigarette or more daily in the past 12 months, but excludes trying a cigarette.
- **Any Illicit Drug Use, Including and Excluding Cannabis:** is defined as using at least 1 of the following 11 drugs: cannabis, barbiturates, heroin, methamphetamine, stimulants, tranquilizers, LSD, PCP, other hallucinogens, cocaine, and crack. This measure is also computed without cannabis. The drugs excluded from both measures are: glue, solvents, prescription drugs, ecstasy, ice, GHB, Rohypnol, Ketamine, and Ritalin. The second measure of any illicit drug use is similar to the first, but also excludes cannabis.
- **Region:** For the survey design, Ontario was divided into four regions using the following boundaries: *Toronto* (schools within the amalgamated Toronto); *North* (schools within the North Bay and Sudbury areas and farther north); *East* (schools within York Region district and farther east); *West* (schools within Peel Region and farther west).
- **Significant Difference** refers to a difference between two percentages that is not likely due to chance. For example, a difference found at the $p < .05$ level of statistical significance is one that is less than 5% likely to occur by chance alone.

Source:

Adlaf, E.M., & Paglia, A. (2003). *Drug Use Among Ontario Students, 1977-2003: Detailed OSDUS Findings*. CAMH Research Document Series, No. 13. Toronto: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. (The report is available in PDF format on the web site: www.camh.net)

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