

## One in Ten Ontario Students Have Carried a Weapon

This *eBulletin* describes survey findings on weapon carrying and being threatened or injured with a weapon at school among students across Ontario. The data are from the 2003 *Ontario Student Drug Use Survey (OSDUS)*, an anonymous in-class survey of 7<sup>th</sup>- to 12<sup>th</sup>-graders.

### Weapon Carrying

Among all 7<sup>th</sup>- to 12<sup>th</sup>-graders, **9.6%** (95% CI: 8.4% - 11%) report carrying a weapon at least once in the year before the survey. This percentage represents about 90,200 students across Ontario. The 2003 estimate is not significantly different from that found in the 2001 *OSDUS* (10.6%). In fact, a recent study on *OSDUS* trend data showed that weapon carrying among students has steadily declined over the past decade.<sup>1</sup>

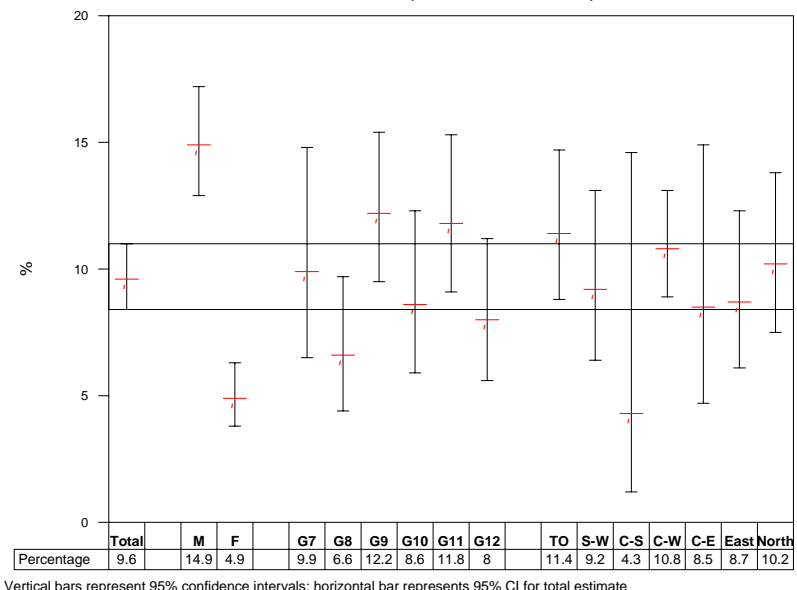
As seen in Figure 1, males are more likely than females to carry a weapon (14.9% vs 4.9%, respectively). However, despite variation, there are no significant differences among the grades, or among the 7 public health planning regions of Ontario.

### Threatened or Injured with a Weapon at School

Among all students, **7.7%** (95% CI: 6.5% - 9.0%) report being threatened or injured with a weapon *on school property* at least once in the past year. This percentage represents about 73,200 students across Ontario.

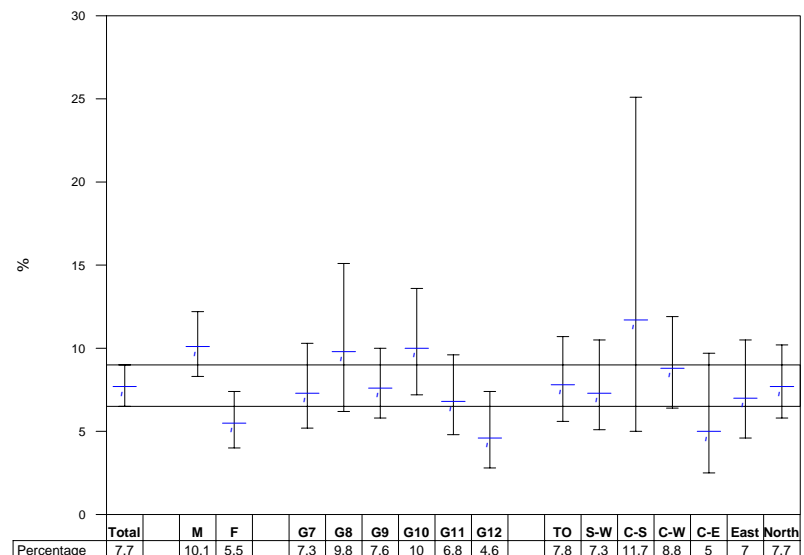
Figure 2 shows that males are significantly more likely than females to be threatened or injured with a weapon (10.1% vs 5.5%, respectively). Again, despite variation, there are no significant differences among the grades, or among the public health regions.

**Figure 1. Percentage of Students Reporting Carrying a Weapon at Least Once in the Past 12 Months, Grades 7 to 12, OSDUS 2003**



Vertical bars represent 95% confidence intervals; horizontal bar represents 95% CI for total estimate

**Figure 2. Percentage of Students Reporting Being Threatened or Injured with a Weapon at School at Least Once in the Past 12 Months, Grades 7 to 12, OSDUS 2003**



Vertical bars represent 95% confidence intervals; horizontal bar represents 95% CI for total estimate

### **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 participation rate was 72%. The two weapon questions were asked of a random half sample of students, N= 3,464.

All survey estimates were weighted, and variance and statistical tests were corrected for the sampling design. The 2003 sample size of 6,616 students represents about 970,000 students in grades 7 to 12 in public and Catholic schools across the province.

### **Terminology:**

- **Weapon Carrying** was measured with the question “How often (if ever) in the last 12 months have you carried a weapon, such as a gun or knife?” We present the percentage reporting doing so at least once in the past year. This question has been asked in each *OSDUS* cycle since 1993.
- **Threatened or Injured at School with a Weapon** was measured with the question “During the last 12 months, how many times has someone threatened or injured you with a weapon, such as a gun, knife or club, on school property?” We present the percentage reporting at least once during the past year. Because this question is new to the 2003 *OSDUS*, there are no trend data.
- **Public Health Planning Regions:** Ontario currently has 7 public health planning regions: Toronto (amalgamated), Southwest, Central-South, Central-West, Central-East, East, and North.
- **95% Confidence Interval (CI)** can be crudely interpreted as being 95% likely to include the “true” percentage value if every student in Ontario was surveyed.
- **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 at: [http://www.camh.net/research/population\\_life\\_course.html](http://www.camh.net/research/population_life_course.html)).

### **References:**

1. Paglia, A. & Adlaf, E.M. (2003). Secular trends in self-reported violent activity among Ontario students, 1983-2001. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 94(3), 212-217.

### **Suggested Citation:**

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