

Does Student Substance Use Vary by Immigrant Status?

This *eBulletin* examines substance use and problem use among first generation immigrant students in Ontario – that is, students who were not born in Canada – and how they compare to their Canadian-born counterparts. Because most immigrants tend to locate in large urban centres, the statistical analyses controlled for whether or not students lived in an urban or rural area. The data used are from the 2003 *Ontario Student Drug Use Survey (OSDUS)*, which is an anonymous in-class survey of 7th- to 12th-graders conducted every two years in Ontario schools.

Smoking and Drinking

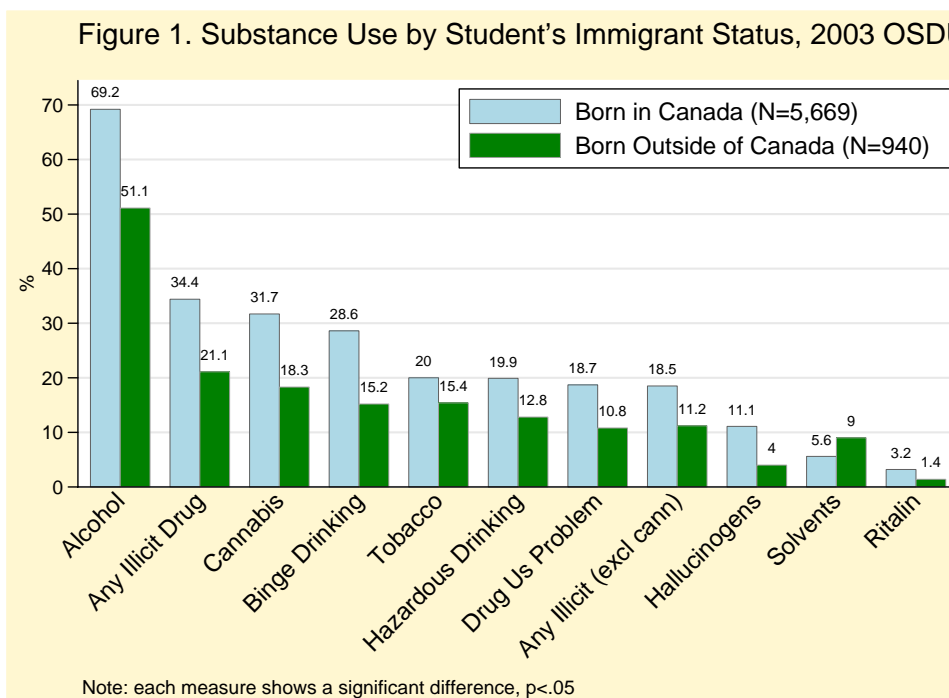
As seen in Figure 1, immigrant students were less likely to report the use of tobacco, alcohol, as well as binge drinking, compared with students who were born in Canada. Furthermore, immigrant students were also less likely to report a hazardous drinking problem.

Illicit Drug Use

Of the 19 illicit drugs asked about in the 2003 *OSDUS*, the use of 4 was significantly different between students born in Canada and those born outside of Canada (Figure 1). Immigrant students were less likely to report using cannabis, hallucinogens, and Ritalin for non-medical purposes during the past year, compared to their Canadian-born counterparts. However, immigrant students were more likely to report solvent use. When the use of any illicit drug, including and excluding cannabis, was examined, immigrant students again showed a lower likelihood of use compared to Canadian-born students.

Not surprisingly, the indication of a potential drug use problem was also significantly less likely among immigrant students.

Figure 1. Substance Use by Student's Immigrant Status, 2003 OSDUS



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%.

All survey estimates were weighted, and variance and statistical tests were corrected for the sampling design. The 2003 full 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:

- **Immigrant Status** was measured with the question “Were you born in Canada?” Students reported that they were either born in Canada, or not. A further question about country of origin was not asked.
- **Tobacco Use** is defined as smoking less than 1 cigarette or more daily in the past 12 months, but excludes trying a cigarette.
- **Alcohol Use** is defined as drinking any alcohol during the past 12 months, excluding sips, but includes drinking at special events.
- **Binge Drinking** is defined as consuming 5 or more drinks on one occasion during the 4 weeks before the survey.
- **Hazardous Drinking** was measured with the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT), which is a 10-item instrument designed to detect a drinking problem at the less severe end of the spectrum. The percentage reported here is based on a score of at least 8 out of 40.
- **Drug Use** pertains to use of the drug at least once during the 12 months before the survey.
- **Any Illicit Drug Use, Including and Excluding Cannabis** measures use of at least one of the following 17 drugs in the past 12 months: cannabis, barbiturates, heroin, methamphetamine, stimulants, tranquilizers, LSD, PCP, other hallucinogens, cocaine, and crack, ecstasy, ice, GHB, Rohypnol, Ketamine, and Ritalin (non-medical). This measure is also reported without cannabis use. The drugs excluded from both measures are glue, solvents, and prescription drugs.
- **Drug Use Problem** was measured with the CRAFFT-D screener, which is a 6-item instrument designed to detect a drug problem that requires treatment. Experiencing 2 or more of the 6 problems indicates a potential drug problem. The percentage reported here is based on reports of at least 2 problems.
- **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:

These results are based on unpublished statistical analyses of the *OSDUS* data. For more details on student drug use in Ontario, please see:

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. (available in PDF format at: <http://www.camh.net/research/osdus.html>).

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