

# Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use Among Ontario Students

## What's the picture?

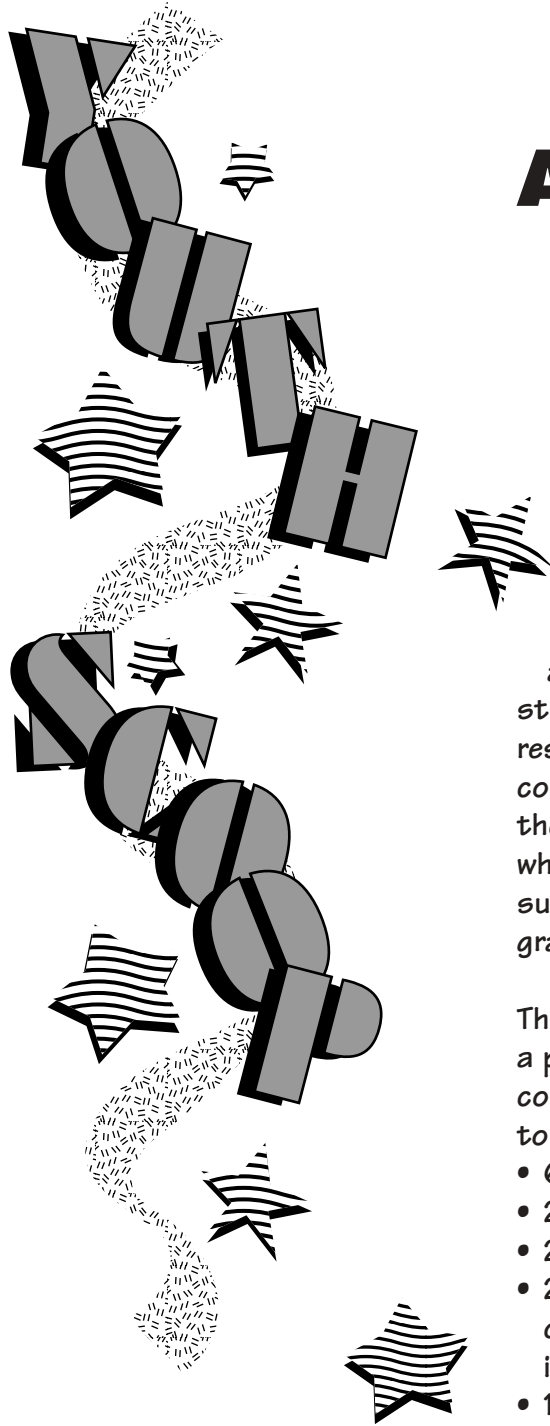
This quick fact sheet reveals the numbers and trends of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use among Ontario students. The information presented here is based on the results of the most recent Ontario Student Drug Use Survey, conducted by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in the Spring of 2001, and on the results of earlier surveys, which have been done every two years since 1977. The 2001 survey asked 4,211 of the 900,000 Ontario students, in grades 7 to OAC, to report on their drug use in the past year.

The results may or may not surprise you, but they will give you a picture of what's happening. These are the kids in your community, and they told us that, during the 12 months prior to the survey:

- 65.6% had used alcohol.
- 29.8% had used cannabis.
- 23.6% had smoked cigarettes.
- 20.3% had tried alcohol for the first time, 9.8% had tried cigarettes, 10.2% had tried cannabis and 5.6% had tried illicit drugs other than cannabis.
- 14.0% had used four or more different drugs.
- 27.5% reported binge drinking (defined as having 5 or more drinks on one occasion) during the past 4 weeks.
- 5.6% indicated they were unable to stop using drugs.

## How Has Drug Use Changed Over Time?

After a lengthy period of decline during the 1980s, the 1990s witnessed a resurgence in adolescent drug use. Despite the halt in the upward trend in drug use between 1999 and 2001, the following non-medical drug measures remained



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significantly higher in 2001 than 1993 among the grades 7, 9 and 11 and OAC students.

DRUG	Percentage of Students Who Reported Using		INCREASE IN USE
	1993	2001	
Cannabis	12.7%	28.6%	15.9%
Any illicit drug use	18.5%	33.2%	14.7%
Binge drinking	17.7%	25.3%	7.6%
Hallucinogens	3.1%	10.3%	7.2%
Alcohol	56.5%	62.6%	6.1%
MDMA (Ecstasy)	0.6%	6.0%	5.4%
Solvents	2.3%	5.9%	3.6%
Cocaine	1.5%	3.8%	2.3%
PCP	0.6%	2.4%	1.8%

Between 1999 and 2001, the use of the following three drugs declined significantly among the total sample of students in grade 7 to OAC.

DRUG	Percentage of Students Who Reported Using		DECREASE IN USE
	1999	2001	
Cigarettes	29.2%	23.6%	5.6%
LSD	6.8%	4.5%	2.3%
Solvents	7.1%	5.7%	1.4%

The percentage of students who reported being drug-free remained stable between 1999 and 2001 (25.0% versus 27.4% respectively). This same time period also represented the first significant decline in student smoking since 1983.

In the last two years, the region to show the most noticeable change was Northern Ontario, where the use of cigarettes, LSD and crack as well as binge drinking declined, while ecstasy use increased. In Eastern Ontario, use of solvents and heroin declined, while in Western Ontario the use of cocaine and

ecstasy increased. No significant changes occurred among Toronto students.

## What Are Some Other Drug Use Statistics?

The following reflect rates and patterns of drug use among students in grade 7 to OAC in the 12 months prior to the 2001 survey.

### Alcohol

- 65.6% of all students reported drinking during the past year, while 70.6% reported drinking during their lifetime.
- Drinking did not differ significantly between males (66.3%) and females (65%).
- Hazardous drinking varies significantly by grade: from less than 1% of 7th graders to 19% of 13th graders.
- Rates of binge drinking continue to exceed rates found in the early 1990s.

### Tobacco

- About one third (28.5%) of smokers reported dependence on cigarettes, as indicated by smoking within 30 minutes of waking in the morning.
- Rates of smoking did not differ significantly between males (23.3%) and females (23.8%).
- 64.2% of smokers attempted to quit smoking. This percentage has not significantly changed since 1999, when 66% of smokers reported a quit attempt.
- 67.7% of underage students (74% under 16 and 62% aged 16 and older) were not asked for photo identification when purchasing cigarettes.
- The percentage of students reporting the use of "bidi" cigarettes (small, brown unfiltered cigarettes) was 4.9% for lifetime use and 3.9% for past year use.



### Cannabis (Marijuana)

- Marijuana was used by just under one in

- three students (29.8%).
- On average, students who used cannabis consumed the drug 15 times during the past 12 months. About 9% of users (3% of all students) used cannabis daily during the past four weeks.



### Drug Selling

- Just over one-third (39%) of students reported exposure to drug-selling in their neighbourhood.

### Drug Use and Driving

- About one-third (31.9%) of students reported being a passenger in a vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol.
- About one in five drivers (19.3%) reported driving a vehicle within one hour of using cannabis.

### Regional Differences

Toronto students were less likely to report using alcohol, cannabis and hallucinogens or binge drinking compared to the provincial average. However, they were more likely to use solvents. Students from Western Ontario reported above-average use of cannabis, methamphetamine, cocaine, crack, heroin, hallucinogens and ecstasy. Students in Northern Ontario were more likely to use alcohol and to binge drink than other

students in the province. Eastern Ontario students did not differ from the provincial average on any drug use measure.



### What Problems Were Experienced?

- 4% (about 36,600 students) reported both alcohol and mental health problems.
- 0.9% (about 8,200 students) reported having been in a treatment program for alcohol or other drug use.
- 9.1% of students reported drinking at hazardous levels.

## Alcohol and Drug Prevention Programs for Youth: What Works?

Research has shown that most young people have experimented with some form of substance, such as alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs. This experimentation has concerned parents, teachers, public health agencies, police and others for a long time. One way to help young people is to develop effective prevention programs that address their immediate needs and promote healthy lifestyles.

*Youth Scoop Sheet #1 – Programs That Work with Youth and Preventing Substance Use Problems*



*Among Young People: A Compendium of Best Practices* are resources that outline evidence-based, best practice principles and prevention programs for youth. The compendium is a new resource outlining effective principles and including examples of model programs aimed at preventing substance use problems among youth. The resource was developed by Health Canada, the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, the Canadian Association of School Health and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. It is available on-line at [www.cds-sca.com](http://www.cds-sca.com).

### Reference

Adlaf, E., & Paglia, A. (2001). *Drug Use among Ontario Students: Findings from the OSDUS, 1977-2001*. CAMH Research Document Series No. 10. Toronto: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

Roberts, G., McCall, D., Stevens Lavigne, A., Anderson, J., Paglia, A., Bollenbach, S. & Wiebe, J. (in press). *Preventing Substance Use Problems among Young People: A Compendium of Best Practices*. Ottawa: Canada's Drug Strategy Division, Health Canada.



# Resources and Services for and about Youth

## Information Line

If you have a touch-tone phone, you can use the service 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Every day from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. (except holidays), trained staff are on hand to serve people without touch-tone service, and to provide information and referrals to anyone who needs help.

This service is free and completely confidential. Call as often as you like. Taped messages include: Alcohol, Children and the Family; Talking with your Kids About Drugs; and An Early Start: Drug Education Begins at Home. The 24-hour Information Line has more than 36 taped messages in English and French, touching on a wide variety of mental health, alcohol- and other drug-related topics. Selected messages are also available in several other languages, such as Cantonese, Greek, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi and Spanish.

- Ontario Toll-Free: 1-800-463-6273
- Toronto: (416) 595-6111
- Substance Abuse Network of Ontario (SANO): sano.camh.net

## Other Information

A large variety of information is available via fax, free of charge. To access the FaxBack Library, dial (416) 595-6099 and follow the prompts.

If you need more details about alcohol and other drug treatment, call the Drug and Alcohol Registry of Treatment (DART). Ontario Toll-Free: 1-800-565-8603

For courses related to specialized mental health and addiction knowledge and skills, contact Education and Training Services at (416) 595-6020.

## Web-based Resources

- Virtual Party: [www.virtual-party.org](http://www.virtual-party.org)
- Educating Students about Drug Use and Abuse: Ready-To-Use Lesson Plans for Drug Education in Your Classroom: [sano.camh.net/curriculum](http://sano.camh.net/curriculum)
- Preventing Substance Use Problems among Young People: A Compendium of Best Practices: [www.cds-sca.com](http://www.cds-sca.com)

## Public Information Materials

- An Early Start
- About Cocaine
- About Marijuana
- Help! There's a Teenager in My Home!
- Take Action: Alcohol, Other Drug Problems and Your Family
- My Kid On Drugs?
- About Smoking
- About Alcohol

## Other Resources

- Let 'Em Go: How to Support Youth in Creating Their Own Solutions
- Drug Use Among Ontario Students: Findings from the Ontario Student Drug Use Survey (1977-2001)
- Youth and Drugs: An Education Package for Professionals
- Youth Action Program
- The Smart Report: Substance Abuse and Canadian Youth
- Opening Doors (school-based program for Grade 9 students at risk)
- Freedom to Act: The Harm Reduction for Rural Youth Project Experience; Supporting Youth Creating Solutions for Youth

**For additional information about these or other CAMH products, or to place an order, please contact:**

**Marketing and Sales Services  
Centre for Addiction and Mental Health  
33 Russell Street  
Toronto, Ontario M5S 2S1**

**Continental North America: 1-800-661-1111  
Metro Toronto: (416) 595-6059  
e-mail: [marketing@camh.net](mailto:marketing@camh.net)**

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