

Highlights from the 2001 *CAMH Monitor eReport*: Addiction and Mental Health Indicators among Ontario Adults, 1977-2001

This eBulletin highlights findings from the 2001 *CAMH Monitor*, a survey based on telephone interviews with 2,627 Ontario adults aged 18 years and older. Also highlighted are trends in alcohol, tobacco,

and cannabis use, based on 16 surveys conducted between 1977 and 2001. The resulting compilation of these surveys represents the longest ongoing study of adult drug use in Canada.

Addiction and Mental Health Indicators, 2001

	Measure	Percentage Estimate*	Population Estimate
Alcohol	Percentage drinking alcohol in past 12 months	80%	7,248,900
	Percentage drinking daily	5%	419,400
	Average number of drinks consumed weekly among drinkers	3.4 drinks	
	Percentage consuming 15 or more drinks weekly	3%	310,000
	Percentage binge drinking on a weekly basis in the past 12 months	12%	1,121,500
	Percentage reporting hazardous or harmful drinking	6%	501,500
	Percentage of drivers who drank and drove in the past 12 months	11%	884,500
Tobacco	Percentage smoking cigarettes (current smokers)	25%	2,252,100
	Percentage of smokers consuming more than 20 cigarettes daily	22%	493,200
	Percentage of daily smokers reporting high smoking dependence	14%	236,900
Cannabis	Percentage using cannabis in lifetime	34%	3,136,600
	Percentage using cannabis in past 12 months	11%	1,021,200
Mental Health	Percentage reporting elevated psychological distress in past few weeks	13%	1,158,000
	Percentage using prescribed anxiety medication in past 7 days	3%	291,800
	Percentage using prescribed depression medication in past 7 days	3%	273,500
Gambling	Percentage reporting problem gambling in past 12 months	3%	255,300

* total sample percentages unless otherwise stated

Substance Use and Related Factors

Substance use was strongly associated with the following demographic factors:

- Gender was significantly associated with all 10 substance use measures examined in the report.

Men were more likely than women to:

- drink alcohol during the past year
 - drink alcohol daily
 - consume more drinks weekly
 - drink an average of 15 or more drinks weekly
 - binge drink weekly
 - drink hazardously or harmfully
 - report drinking and driving
 - smoke cigarettes
 - report high smoking dependence
 - use cannabis during the past year
- Age of respondent was significantly associated with 9 of the 10 substance use measures. In most cases, use decreases with age. One exception was daily drinking, which increased with age.

- Marital status was significantly associated with 3 of the 10 substance use measures. After adjusting for age differences, never married respondents were the most likely to report cannabis use, while married respondents were the least likely to smoke or to drink an average of 15 or more drinks weekly.

- Education level was associated with 5 of the 10 outcomes. The most dominant pattern showed that substance use declined with education.

- Region was associated only with 2 outcomes: average number of drinks weekly and drinking and driving. Those from Northern Ontario reported the highest number of drinks per week, and those from South Western Ontario were the most likely to drink and drive.

- Income was also associated only with 2 outcomes: past year drinking and drinking and driving. In both cases, substance use outcomes tend to increase with increasing income.

Mental Health Status and Related Factors

Overall, one in eight (12.7%) adults reported symptoms indicative of elevated psychological distress.

- Psychological distress was associated only with gender. Women were significantly more likely than men to report feeling distressed over the past few weeks.
- Psychological distress did not vary significantly by age group, marital status, region, education or income.

Anxiety: About one in twenty (4.7%) adults used a prescribed medication for anxiety during the 12 months before the survey, and 3.2% used such medication during the past seven days.

- Only gender was significantly related to both past year and past seven-day use. Women were significantly more likely than men to report use (6.3% vs. 3.4% and 4.3% vs. 2.0%, respectively).

Depression: About 4.6% reported use of a prescribed medication for depression during the 12 months before the survey, and 3.0% (2.3% to 3.7%) reported use during the past seven days. For both past year and past seven day period, use was significantly related to gender and age.

- Women were two times more likely than men to report use of depression medication.
- Those aged 18 to 29 years were less likely to report use than older respondents.

Gambling and Related Factors

Overall, 3 in 4 adults (75%) participated in at least one gambling activity in the past 12 months. The most common form of gambling was lottery (66%), followed by casino gambling (27.3%). About one in 30 (3.3%) gambled over the Internet.

Gambling varied by gender. Men were significantly more likely than women to gamble on any activity (80.3% vs. 70.4%, respectively), to buy lottery tickets (70.4% vs. 62.4%), to bet in sports pools (17.2% vs. 7.2%), to play cards (14.4% vs. 6.8%), and to buy sports lottery tickets (14.2% vs. 7.4%).

Approximately 2.8% of Ontario adults reported problem gambling during the past 12 months.

- Problem gambling did not vary significantly by gender, age, marital status, region, or income.
- Only education was significantly related to gambling problems. Those with only a high school diploma were significantly more likely to experience problems compared to other groups (6.4% vs. 2.0%).

Trends in Substance Use

Alcohol

- Most alcohol consumption indicators remained stable between 2000 and 2001.
- Earlier increases seen between 1995 and 1996 in the rate of binge drinking weekly remained at an elevated rate, especially among men.
- The most dominant long-term change was one of greater moderation in drinking. Although the percentage drinking has varied between 77% and 87%, fewer drinkers reported daily drinking. The percentage of drinkers who drink daily dropped from 13% in 1977 to 6% in 2001. This decline was especially prominent among men aged

30 to 49 years, whose rate of daily drinking dropped from 21% in 1977 to 5% in 2001.

Tobacco

- The percentage reporting cigarette smoking remained stable between 2000 and 2001 (26% and 25%, respectively).
- Since 1995, rates of current smoking have been slowly moving downward weakly among the total sample (from 28.5% in 1995 to 24.5% in 2001), but more noticeably among women (from 26.7% to 21.5%).

Cannabis

- Rates of past year cannabis use remained stable between 2000 and 2001 (10.8% and 11.2%, respectively), and no dominant long-term trends were evident.
- However, long-term subgroup trends in past year cannabis use showed upward trends for: men (from 11.4% in 1992 to 15.4% in 2001), 18 to 29 year-olds (from 18.3% in 1996 to 26.8% in 2001), and 30 to 49 year-olds (from 11.3% in 1996 to 15.8% in 2001).
- The most salient change showed an aging of cannabis users. On average, cannabis users in 2001 were older than their counterparts in 1977 (31.1 years vs. 25.6 years). Also, 49% of cannabis users in 2001 were 30 years or older compared to only 18% in 1977.

Short-Term Changes in Mental Health Indicators

Elevated Distress

- Overall, indicators of elevated distress remained stable between 2000 and 2001 at 13%.

Prescribed Anxiety Medication

- The percentage reporting use of medication for anxiety remained stable between 1997 and 2001, varying from 4.5% to 4.7%.

Prescribed Depression Medication

- The percentage reporting use of medication for depression remained stable between 1997 and 2001, varying from 3.6% to 4.6%.

Flagging Public Health Issues

- Despite a decline in cigarette smoking among women, reductions in smoking have been nominal and current rates of smoking (25%) significantly exceed the 12% health objective set for the year 2010.
- Although the percentage of the population who drink alcohol has not changed dramatically, a sizeable proportion of drinkers (about 1 in 15) continues to drink at hazardous levels. Moreover, current rates of binge drinking on a monthly basis (28%) significantly exceed the 6% health objective set for the year 2010.
- A substantial percentage of individuals experience alcohol problems, but do not meet the clinical criteria for more severe alcohol disorders, such as dependence.
- A sizeable proportion of the adult population (about 1 in 8) experiences elevated psychological distress, which can reduce the ability to effectively function socially and emotionally.

Methods:

The *CAMH Monitor (CM)* is an addiction and mental health random, anonymous telephone survey of the Ontario population aged 18 and older, administered by the Institute for Social Research. The *CM* is an ongoing monthly survey, based on a regionally stratified design. The 2001 data are based on 12 survey cycles from January to December 2001 (N=2,627).

All survey estimates were weighted, and variance and statistical tests were corrected for the sampling design. The population number estimates are based on a population of 9,118,084 adults in Ontario over age 18.

Terminology:

- **Binge Drinking** is defined as consuming five or more drinks on a single occasion.
- **Hazardous/Harmful Drinking** was measured by 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 11 out of 40.
- **Current Smoker** is defined as someone who: 1) has smoked over 100 cigarettes in his or her lifetime, 2) is a daily or occasional smoker, and 3) has smoked in the past 30 days.
- **Smoking Dependence** was measured among daily smokers using the Heaviness of Smoking Index (HIS), a scale based on points given for the time to the first cigarette each morning and number of cigarettes smoked per day. The high smoking dependence is based on a score 5 or 6 on the HIS.
- **Psychological Distress** was measured using the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) which is a 12-item screening instrument used to assess current mental health problems in surveys. The items assess the recent frequency of experiencing 12 symptoms (e.g., stress, depression, problem making decisions). Elevated Psychological Distress is defined as experiencing at least 3 of the 12 symptoms.
- **Gambling Problems** were measured using a short version (5 items) of the South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS). A cut-off of 2 or more of the 5 problematic symptoms is used to indicate problem gambling.
- **Significant Difference** refers to a difference between two percentage values 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., & Ialomiteanu, A. (2002). *CAMH Monitor eReport: Addiction and Mental Health Indicators Among Ontario Adults in 2001, and Changes Since 1977*. CAMH Research Document Series No. 12. Toronto: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. [electronic document]; available: http://www.camh.net/research/population_life_course.html

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Previous *CAMH Population Studies eBulletins* are also available at: http://www.camh.net/research/population_life_course.html

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