

Where do Underage Students in Ontario Get Cigarettes and Alcohol?

The legal age to purchase cigarettes and alcohol in Ontario is 19. This *eBulletin* describes the typical sources of cigarettes and alcohol reported by students in grades 7 through 12 (ages 12–18) in Ontario who use these substances. Data used are from the 2011 cycle of the *Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey* (OSDUHS), which is CAMH's Ontario-wide school survey of students in grades 7 through 12 repeated every two years.

Source of Cigarettes

As seen in Figure 1, among students who smoked cigarettes, the most commonly reported source of their previous cigarette was a friend or family member (58%), followed by a corner store, grocery store, gas station, or bar (19%). There was a significant difference by sex, with males significantly more likely than females to report obtaining cigarettes from a corner store, grocery store, gas station, or bar (26% vs. 10%, respectively; results by sex not displayed). Females were more likely than males to report obtaining their previous cigarette from a friend or family member (73% vs. 46%, respectively). There was no significant difference according to urban/suburban versus rural residence.

Source of Alcohol

As seen in Figure 2, among students who consumed alcohol, the most commonly reported method for obtaining alcohol was that someone gave it to them (39%), followed by giving someone money to buy it for them (28%). There were no significant differences by sex. There were differences according to urban/suburban versus rural residence (data not displayed). Students in urban/suburban areas were more likely than students in rural areas to report that someone gave it to them (40% vs. 35%, respectively). Students in rural areas were more likely than students in urban/suburban areas to report that they gave someone else money to buy alcohol for them (33% vs. 27%, respectively).

Figure 1.
Source of Previous Whole Cigarette Smoked Reported by Ontario Students in Grades 7–12, 2011 OSDUHS (n=594)

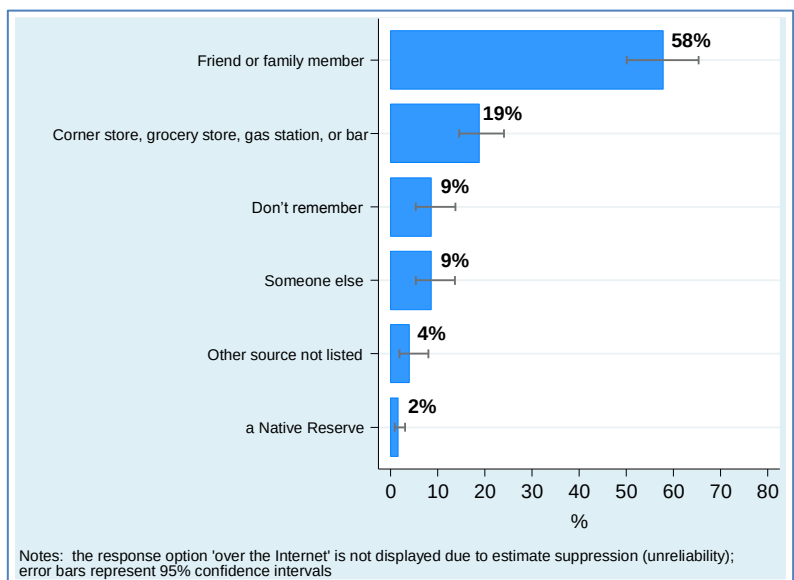
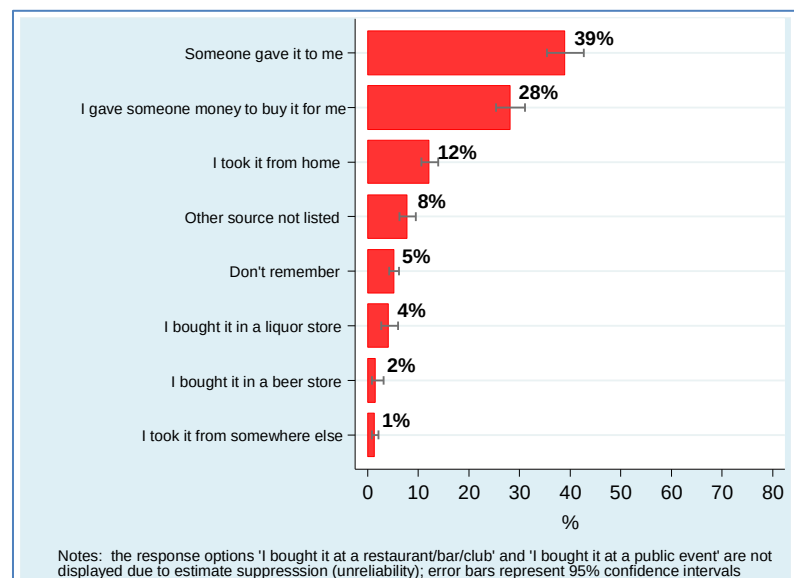


Figure 2.
Usual Source of Alcohol Consumed Reported by Ontario Students in Grades 7–12, 2011 OSDUHS (n=2,469)



Methods

CAMH's *Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey* (OSDUHS) is an Ontario-wide survey of elementary/middle school students in grades 7 and 8 and secondary school students in grades 9 through 12. This repeated cross-sectional survey has been conducted every two years since 1977. The 2011 survey, which used a stratified (region by school level) two-stage (school, class) cluster design, was based on 9,288 students in grades 7 through 12 from 40 public and Catholic school boards, 181 schools, and 581 classes. Self-completed questionnaires, which promote anonymity, were administered by staff from the Institute for Social Research, York University on a classroom basis between October 2010 and June 2011. Seventy-one percent of selected schools, and 62% of eligible students in participating classes participated in the survey. The 2011 total sample of 9,288 students is representative of over one million Ontario students in grades 7 through 12 in publicly funded schools.

The source questions were asked of a random half sample of students. The present analysis excluded students who were aged 19 or older ($n=34$). Further, the source of cigarettes analysis excluded students who reported that they did not smoke and the total sample size for this analysis was 594. The source of alcohol analysis excluded students who reported that they did not drink and the total sample size for this analysis was 2,469. All estimates presented were weighted, and variance and statistical tests were accommodated for the complex survey data.

Measures & Terminology

- **Source of cigarettes** was queried with the question: *"Thinking about the last time you smoked a whole cigarette in the past 12 months, where did you get it from? (Please choose only one answer.)"* The following seven options were listed: corner store, small grocery store, supermarket, gas station, or bar; over the Internet; friend or family member; someone else; native reserve; another source not listed; don't remember. Respondents also had the option of saying that they do not smoke cigarettes and these cases were excluded from the analysis.
- **Source of alcohol** was queried with the question: *"In the last 12 months, how did you usually get the alcohol you drank? (Please choose one answer only.)"* The following 10 options were listed: someone gave it to me; I took it from home; I took it from somewhere else; I bought it in a liquor store; I bought it in a beer store; I bought it at a restaurant, bar, or club; I bought it at a public event; I gave someone else money to buy it for me; I got it some other way; don't remember. Respondents also had the option of saying that they don't drink alcohol and these cases were excluded from the analysis.
- **Urban/suburban versus rural residence** was derived from the first three digits (Forward Sortation Area) of the school's postal code. The assumption is that students live in the same FSA as their school.

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- **95% confidence interval** shows the probable accuracy of the estimate – that is, with repeated sampling, 95 of 100 sample CIs would contain the "true" population value. Design-based confidence intervals account for characteristics of the sample design (i.e., stratification, clustering, weighting).
- **Statistically significant difference** refers to a difference between (or among) estimates that is statistically different at the $p<.05$ level, or lower, after adjusting for the sampling design. A finding of statistical significance implies that any differences are not likely due to chance alone.

Source

Paglia-Boak, A., Adlaf, E. M., & Mann, R. E. (2011). *Drug use among Ontario students, 1977–2011: Detailed OSDUHS findings* (CAMH Research Document Series No. 32). Toronto, ON: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. [Available online at <http://www.camh.net/research/osdus.html>]

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