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Health Canada

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Health Concerns

Canadian Alcohol and Drug Use Monitoring Survey

Summary of Results For 2009

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Introduction

The Canadian Alcohol and Drug Use Monitoring Survey (CADUMS) is an on-going general population survey of alcohol and illicit drug use among Canadians aged 15 years and older, that was launched in April 2008. Derived from and similar to the Canadian Addiction Survey (CAS) of 2004, CADUMS was designed to provide detailed national and provincial estimates of alcohol and drug-related behaviours and outcomes. The following report presents results from the second cycle of the CADUMS which commenced in January 2009.

The results for 2009 are based on telephone interviews with 13,082 respondents, across all 10 provinces, which represent 25,957,435 Canadian residents, aged 15 years and older. Since CADUMS is an on-going survey, it will allow for the examination of trends over time. As such, the current Summary of Results for 2009 presents data from the latest CADUMS with a view towards the comparison of estimates with those from 2008. In addition, 2009 results will be compared to estimates from the Canadian Addiction Survey (CAS) of 2004 in order to identify any changes that have taken place in the past 5 years. A discussion of the results from CADUMS 2009, [detailed tables](#) and some [definitions](#) used in this report are also provided.

	CAS 2004 =13,909 %	CADUMS 2008 =16,672 %	CADUMS 2009 =13,082 %
Cannabis Use			
Cannabis - lifetime	44.5	43.9	42.4
Cannabis - past year	14.1	11.4*	10.6(*)
Cannabis - Average age of initiation for youth 15 to 24 years	15.6 years	15.5 years	15.6 years
Other Illicit drug use in past year			

	CAS 2004 =13,909 %	CADUMS 2008 =16,672 %	CADUMS 2009 =13,082 %
Cocaine/Crack	1.9	1.6	1.2
Speed	0.8	1.1	0.4
Hallucinogens (excluding salvia)	0.7	N/A	0.7
Hallucinogens (including salvia)	--	2.1	0.9 ±
Ecstasy	1.1	1.4	0.9
Salvia	--	--	0.2
Methamphetamine/Crystal meth	--	0.2	0.1
Any 6 drugs ^a (hallucinogens excl. salvia)	14.5	--	11.0 (*)
Any 5 drugs ^b (hallucinogens excl. salvia)	3.0	--	2.0
Any 6 drugs ^a (hallucinogens incl. salvia)	--	12.1	11.1
Any 5 drugs ^b (hallucinogens incl. salvia)	--	3.9	2.1 ±
Alcohol use			
Lifetime Use	92.8	90.2*	88.6 (*)
Past 12 month Use	79.3	77.3	76.5 (*)
Average age of initiation for youth 15 to 24 years	15.6 years	15.6 years	15.9 years
Alcohol pattern of use in past year			
Abstainer -never in life	7.3	9.9*	11.6 (*)
Former drinker - abstained in past year	13.7	13.0	12.2
Light infrequent drinker	38.7	36.3	36.1
Light frequent drinker	27.7	31.5*	31.3 (*)
Heavy infrequent drinker	5.6	4.2*	3.7 (*)
Heavy frequent drinker	7.1	5.1*	5.1 (*)
Alcohol related harms in past year			
Any alcohol harm to self - among drinkers	8.8	8.7	8.3
Any alcohol harm to self - among total population	7.1	6.8	6.5
<p>N - Sample size [95% Confidence Interval]</p> <p>* Indicates that the difference between 2008 and 2004 is statistically significant. (*) Indicates that the difference between 2009 and 2004 is statistically significant. ± Indicates that the difference between 2008 and 2009 is statistically significant. N/A -In 2008, the list of substances under hallucinogens included salvia and "magic mushrooms"; as a result the estimate is not comparable to 2004 and 2009. a Cannabis, cocaine/crack, speed, ecstasy, hallucinogens, heroin b Cocaine/crack, speed, ecstasy, hallucinogens, heroin</p>			

Detailed Tables:

[Table 1: Main 2009 CADUMS indicators by sex and age - Drugs](#)

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[Table 3: Changes between CAS 2004, CADUMS 2008 and 2009, overall - Drugs](#)

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[Table 8: Changes between CAS 2004, CADUMS 2008 and 2009, overall - Alcohol](#)

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Cannabis Use

The prevalence of past-year cannabis use among Canadians 15 years of age and older was 10.6%, a rate unchanged from 2008 (11.4%) but statistically significantly lower than the rate of 14.1% reported in 2004. Unlike 2008 where this decrease was only apparent for males and adults, the decrease in the prevalence of past-year cannabis use between 2004 and 2009 was significant among males (18.2% vs. 14.4%), females (10.2% vs. 7.2%), youth aged 15 to 24 years (37.0% vs. 26.3%) and adults aged 25 years and older (10.0% vs. 7.6%).

While the significant decline in past-year cannabis use among youth is very positive, the prevalence of use by youth was 26.3% and remains almost four times higher than the rate of 7.6% for adults. In addition, despite the 5-year decrease in prevalence of past-year cannabis use among both males and females, in 2009 the rate of such use among males remained nearly twice as high as that for females (14.2% vs. 7.2%).

Compared with the national average of 10.6%, no provinces differed statistically significantly from the national average, with prevalence rates ranging from 8.0% in Saskatchewan to 13.1% in Nova Scotia.

The average age of initiation for cannabis use among youth 15 to 24 years of age has remained unchanged over the past 5 years at approximately 15.6 years of age.

Other Illicit Drug Use

In 2009, cocaine or crack (1.2%) was, after cannabis, the illicit drug most commonly used in the past 12 months, followed by ecstasy (0.9%), hallucinogens (0.7%), speed (0.4%), and methamphetamine (0.1%), the reported rates of which, excluding hallucinogens, are comparable to those reported in 2004 and 2008.

In 2009, the prevalence of use of at least one of six drugs [including cannabis, cocaine or crack, speed, ecstasy, hallucinogens (excluding salvia) or heroin] in the past-year, was 11.0%. The rate of use by males at 14.7% was almost double that for females 7.6%; and the prevalence of use was more than three times higher among youth (27.3%) than adults (7.9%). Use of at least one of five illicit drugs excluding cannabis [cocaine or crack, speed, ecstasy, hallucinogens (excluding salvia), or heroin] was reported by 2.0% of Canadians. The difference in the reported rate of

such use by males (2.5%) was not statistically different from that reported by females (1.5%) however the rate of use by youth at 5.5% was almost four times higher than that reported by adults at 1.3%.

The rate of past year hallucinogen use (including salvia) in 2009 at 0.9% was statistically significantly lower than the rate of 2.1% reported in 2008. Statistically significant declines between 2008 and 2009 in the rate of past 12 month hallucinogen (including salvia) use were also apparent among males (3.3% versus 1.1%, respectively) and youth (10.2% versus 4.4%). Similarly, past-year use of at least one of five illicit drugs excluding cannabis [cocaine or crack, speed, ecstasy, hallucinogens (including salvia), and heroin] at 2.1% in 2009 was statistically significantly lower than the 3.9% rate reported in 2008. Past-year use of at least one of five illicit drugs also decreased among males from 5.5% in 2008 to 2.8% in 2009, and among youth from 15.4% reported in 2008 to 6.3% reported in 2009.

The prevalence of use of at least one of six drugs (including cannabis, cocaine or crack, speed, ecstasy, hallucinogens or heroin), at 11.0% in 2009 represents a statistically significant decline from the rate of use reported in 2004, at 14.5%. This decrease is primarily due to the decreased rate of past-year cannabis use over the past 5 years, since the past-year use of at least one of five drugs excluding cannabis (at least one of cocaine, speed, ecstasy, hallucinogens, and heroin), at 2.0% in 2009, is not a statistically significant decrease from 2004 (3.0%).

Although the individual rates of use of cocaine or crack, speed, hallucinogens, ecstasy and heroin have not changed significantly between 2004 and 2009, nor has overall use of at least one of these five drugs, when looking specifically at youth aged 15-24 an interesting pattern emerges. In 2009, the reported rate of using at least one of these five illicit drugs in the past 12 months, at 5.5% among youth, represents a statistically significant decline from the rate of 11.3% reported by youth in 2004.

Use of Salvia

Salvia, an emerging substance of interest, was examined on its own for the first time in 2009. An estimated 1.6% of Canadians, aged 15 years and older, reported that they had used salvia in their lifetime, and 0.2% reported using it in the past-year. Salvia appears to be a substance that is tried largely by youth with a 7.3% prevalence of lifetime use which was statistically significantly higher than that reported by adults (0.5%). Because this is a relatively new substance, Health Canada will be closely monitoring its use over the next years.

Use of Psychoactive Pharmaceutical Drugs

CADUMS includes questions relating to the abuse of three classes of psychoactive pharmaceutical drugs. The three classes of drugs were: opioid pain relievers, (such as Percodan[®], Demerol[®], and OxyContin[®]); stimulants, (such as Ritalin[®], Concerta[®], Adderall[®], and Dexedrine[®]); and tranquilizers and sedatives, (such as Valium[®], Ativan[®], and Xanax[®]). While these drugs are prescribed for therapeutic purposes, they have the potential to be abused due to their psychoactive properties. To provide a baseline on overall use, (including therapeutic use), respondents were asked whether or not they had used opioid pain relievers, stimulants, or sedatives, and among those who had used these drugs, questions as to whether they were used to get high were included.

Over the past-year, pharmaceutical use and abuse has remained comparable to that measured in 2008. There were no significant differences in the rates of pharmaceutical use between 2008 and 2009, with the exception of pain reliever use overall, where the rate of such use among women decreased significantly from 24.2% in 2008 to 20.2% in 2009.

In 2009, while 25.0% of respondents indicated that they had used a psychoactive pharmaceutical drug in the past-year, only 2.3% of these users reported that they used such a drug to get high. Similar to 2008, in general, women and adults 25 years and older reported higher rates of pharmaceutical use, but among youth 15 to 24 years of age, there were higher rates of use to get high with 9.5% of current users aged 15 to 24 years reporting such use compared to 1.3% of adults 25 years and older (representing 1.7% and 0.3% total population, respectively).

Of the three categories of pharmaceuticals, opioid pain relievers were the most commonly used in 2009. Approximately one in five (19.2%) of the respondents reported the use of opioid pain relievers in the 12 months preceding the survey. Among users of opioid pain relievers, 2.3% (which corresponds to 0.4% of the total population) reported using them to get high. The prevalence of abuse was roughly six times higher among youth, 15 to 24 years of age, (8.5% of users, 1.2% of the population), compared to adults, 25 years and older, (1.4% of users, 0.3% of the population).

While the use of stimulants in the past 12 months was reported by significantly fewer Canadians (1.0%), the prevalence of abuse by stimulant users was substantially higher than that reported for opioid pain relievers. Among users, one in ten, 9.4% (representing 0.1% of the total population) reported the use of stimulants to get high.

Almost one in ten Canadians (9.1%) reported the use of sedatives or tranquilizers in the past 12 months. As with opioid pain relievers, only 1.7% of users (representing 0.2% of the total population) reported the use of sedatives to get high.

Alcohol

There were no statistically significant changes, overall or by age or sex, between 2008 and 2009 in the prevalence of alcohol use, patterns of use, and related harms. When examining data over the past 5 years however, some statistically significant differences were evident.

Prevalence and Patterns of Use of Alcohol

In 2009, 76.5% of Canadians reported drinking in the past 12 months, a statistically significant decrease from that reported in 2004 (79.3%). The overall decline was driven by a significant decrease in past 12 month alcohol use among females from 76.8% in 2004 to 73.0% in 2009, as well as among youth, aged 15 to 24 years of age, from 82.9% to 75.5%.

A significantly higher proportion of males than females reported past-12 month alcohol use (80.2% versus 73.0%, respectively). The prevalence of past-year drinking among youth, at 75.5%, was not statistically different from that of adults (76.7%). For most provinces, the rate of current drinking was not different from the national average (76.5%) ranging from 70.7% to 79.6%, although statistically significantly lower rates were recorded for Newfoundland and Labrador (70.7%) and Prince Edward Island (71.3%).

Similar to 2008, in 2009 at 88.6%, the rate of lifetime alcohol use was statistically significantly lower than it was in 2004 at 92.8%. There was no change in the average age of first alcohol use among youth (15.9 years of age).

Patterns of Alcohol Use

The patterns of alcohol use reported in 2009, which best describe Canadians usual drinking when they drank, were comparable to those reported in 2008. The majority of Canadians reported

drinking lightly (i.e. less than five drinks per drinking occasion) with 36.1% of Canadians reporting a light infrequent (i.e. less than once a week) pattern and 31.3% reporting a light frequent (i.e. once a week or more often) drinking pattern. The remaining Canadians fell into the former drinker (12.2%), abstainer (11.6%), heavy frequent drinking (5.1%) and heavy infrequent drinking (3.7%) patterns.

Consistent with 2008, differences in drinking pattern exist between the sexes and between age groups. A significantly higher percentage of males than females reported heavy frequent drinking (7.9% versus 2.6%), whereas a significantly higher percentage of females than males reported being abstainers (13.9% versus 9.1%). In addition, the prevalence of heavy frequent drinking among youth 15 to 24 years of age at 11.7% was three times higher than the rate for adults 25 years and older at 3.9%.

Compared to 2004, a significantly higher percentage of Canadians in 2009 reported either not drinking (11.6% versus 7.3%) or drinking more moderately. In 2009, the rate of light frequent drinking at 31.3% was significantly higher than it was in 2004 at 27.7%. In contrast, a lower proportion of Canadians in 2009, than in 2004, reported heavy drinking to be their usual consumption, whether they be drinking frequently (5.1% versus 7.1%) or infrequently (3.7% versus 5.6%).

Harm from one's own use of alcohol

In 2009, consistent with a lower rate of lifetime alcohol use, 16.1% of Canadians reported experiencing at least one harm in their lifetime as a result of their alcohol use, a statistically significant decline from 28.3% reported in 2004. The rate of alcohol harm in the past-year, reported by 6.5% of Canadians, was not statistically different from the rate reported in 2004 (7.1%).

The prevalence of lifetime harm due to alcohol use for males (21.4%) was almost double that reported by females (11.2%). Unlike 2008 however, there was no difference between males and females in the prevalence of past-year harm due to alcohol use (7.9% versus 5.2%, respectively). This finding could be attributed to the fact that, unlike in 2008, in 2009 there was no difference between the two sexes in the rate of a heavy infrequent drinking pattern. Consistent with differences in drinking patterns between youth and adults, youth 15 to 24 years of age also had higher rates of harm than adults 25 years and older, in their lifetime (20.9% versus 15.2%) as well as in the past-year (15.1% versus 4.8%).

Consistent with an overall decline in lifetime harms due to alcohol use, the prevalence of lifetime harms reported by adults at 15.9% was a statistically significant decline from the 21.2% reported in 2004; as was the 20.9% reported by youth in 2009 from the rate of 30.6% reported in 2004. There were no statistically significant differences in the prevalence of past-year harm over the past 5 years.

Definitions

The terms used above have the following definitions:

Prevalence - the proportion of a group or population reporting the indicated behaviour or outcome, usually expressed as a percentage.

Past-year use - reported use in the 12 months preceding the interview.

Age of initiation - the age at which a person first used alcohol or a drug.

Abstainer - a person who has never used alcohol in their life.

Former drinker - a person who has used alcohol in their life, but not in the past year.

Harm - Alcohol and Drug related harms include harms in any of the following 8 areas: physical health; friendships and social life; financial position; home life or marriage; work, studies or employment opportunities; legal problems; difficulty learning; and housing problems.

Light infrequent drinker - a person who drinks less than once per week on average in a year, and usually consumes less than 5 drinks on each drinking occasion.

Light frequent drinker - a person who drinks once or more per week on average in a year, and usually consumes less than 5 drinks on each drinking occasion.

Heavy infrequent drinker - a person who drinks less frequently than once per week on average in a year, and usually consumes 5 or more drinks on each drinking occasion.

Heavy frequent drinker - a person who drinks one or more times per week on average in a year, and usually consumes 5 or more drinks on each drinking occasion.

Reference Information

The Canadian Alcohol and Drug Use Monitoring Survey (CADUMS) is an on-going general population survey of alcohol and illicit drug use among Canadians aged 15 and older, sponsored by Health Canada. It was developed in collaboration with the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health (CAMH), the Centre for Addiction Research - British Columbia (CAR-BC), Alberta Health Services (formerly, Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission), Manitoba Health, the Centre québécois de lutte aux dépendances (CQLD), and the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA). Designed to provide annual national and provincial estimates of alcohol and drug-related behaviours and outcomes, CADUMS was launched in April 2008.

Within each year, the targeted number of CADUMS interviews to be conducted by telephone is 1,008 per province, randomly selected to produce a national survey of 10,080 interviews annually. Due to methodological issues, the territories are not included in the survey. Provinces have the option to buy additional interviews to allow for more detailed analysis of results within their jurisdiction. For the 2009 calendar year, the province of British Columbia arranged for their sample to be increased to 4,009. This resulted in a final sample of 13,082 respondents in 2009, representing approximately 25,957,435 Canadians aged 15 and older. The response rate for the 2009 CADUMS was 44.7%, an increase from the rate of 43.5% in 2008. For purposes of this report only univariate analyses were conducted, with statistical significance being determined by confidence interval overlap. The data presented in this report have been weighted to allow the results to be generalized to the Canadian population. Should you wish further details on the survey methodology, a technical guide will be available upon request after August 1, 2010.

For more information about the survey and its results, please write to the Office of Drugs and Alcohol Research and Surveillance, Controlled Substances and Tobacco Directorate, Health Canada, 123 Slater Street, Address Locator 3506D, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0K9, or send an e-mail request to cadums@hc-sc.gc.ca.