

Canadian Addiction Survey

Canada's Drug Strategy is the federal response to the harmful use of substances. These include illegal drugs, alcohol, pharmaceuticals, inhalants and solvents. The Strategy takes a balanced approach to reducing both the demand for, and the supply of, drugs and substances. It contributes to a healthier, safer Canada through prevention, treatment, enforcement, and harm reduction initiatives.

The Canadian Addiction Survey

Canada's Drug Strategy supports ongoing research and monitoring activities essential to build understanding of the nature and scope of substance abuse in Canada, to evaluate the effectiveness of substance abuse policies and programs, and to inform decisions on future initiatives.

The Canadian Addiction Survey, conducted over a four-month period from December 2003 to April 2004, is the most extensive survey of substance use ever done in Canada. In all, close to 14,000 people participated in the survey, providing a detailed picture of Canadians' use of, and attitudes toward, alcohol and other drugs, as well as the impact that use has on their physical, mental and social well-being.

As the first major survey dedicated to alcohol and drug use in Canada since 1994, the data acquired through the Canadian Addiction Survey will help determine both the future direction of Canada's Drug Strategy and the effectiveness of the Strategy. Among other important information, the survey results identify:

- prevalence and frequency of alcohol, cannabis (marihuana) and other illegal drug use in Canada;
- extent of the harms associated with alcohol and other drugs;
- context in which alcohol and other drugs are used, assisting in identifying both risk and protective factors, as well as the consequences of use;

- views and knowledge of the Canadian public regarding current and potential addiction policies;
- emerging trends and issues; and
- baseline data for future evaluations of Canada's Drug Strategy and other efforts to reduce the harm associated with substance abuse.


While the majority of Canadians who drink alcohol do so in moderation, and a large majority do not use illegal drugs, the survey results indicate some areas of concern, particularly the increase in marihuana and alcohol use by young Canadians. Fourteen percent of Canadians surveyed reported having used marihuana in the previous year – nearly double the number reported in a similar survey conducted in 1994. Younger Canadians made up by far the greatest proportion of this number, with 30% of 15-17 year olds and 47% of 18-19 year olds having used marihuana in the previous year.

Nearly 80% of Canadians aged 15 years and older reported having consumed alcohol during the preceding year, up from 72% in the 1994 survey. Of the people who drank in the past 12 months, fewer than one in four exceeded low-risk drinking guidelines. Past-year drinking rates peaked among youth 18-24 years of age, with 90% of people in this age group having consumed alcohol during the course of the year. Rates of use of illegal drugs other than cannabis remain relatively low, with past-year use levels at 3% or less.

Partnership for Knowledge

The Canadian Addiction Survey is the result of a collaboration between Health Canada, the Canadian Executive Council on Addictions (CECA) — which includes the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA), the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC), the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM), the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), Prince Edward Island Provincial Health Services Authority, and the Kaiser Foundation/Centre for Addictions Research of BC (CAR-BC) —and the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and British Columbia.





*More information about the Canadian
Addiction Survey and its findings is available at
<http://www.ccsa.ca/CCSA/EN/Statistics/2004CanadianAddictionSurvey.htm>*

*To learn more about Canada's Drug Strategy,
please visit www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cds*

*Find out what governments, non-governmental
organizations, and other partners are doing –
National Framework for Action – Visit
www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cds-nfa*