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Canadian Executive Council on Addictions
Conseil exécutif canadien sur les toxicomanies



The Canadian Addiction Survey (CAS) Background Information

The Canadian Addiction Survey (CAS) is the first survey dedicated to alcohol, cannabis and other drug use since *Canada's Alcohol and Other Drugs Survey (CADS)* in 1994. It is the most detailed and extensive survey of its kind ever conducted in Canada.

CAS objectives

The primary objectives of the survey are:

1. To determine the prevalence, incidence and frequency of alcohol, cannabis and other drug use in the Canadian population aged 15 years and older;
2. To measure the extent of harms that are associated with those individuals who use alcohol and other drugs;
3. To assess the context in which alcohol and drugs are used, and to identify the risk and protective factors related to that use, as well as the consequences of use;
4. To measure the public's opinions, views and knowledge regarding existing and potential addiction policies, and to identify emerging policy issues; and
5. To provide baseline data for future evaluations of the effectiveness of Canada's Drug Strategy and other efforts to reduce the harm associated with alcohol and other drug use.

The CAS provides a detailed picture of how Canadians aged 15 years and older use alcohol, cannabis and other drugs, and the impact that use has on their physical, mental and social well-being.

Researchers, addictions specialists and policy-makers need this information to determine where financial and human resources are most needed.

The participation of Health Canada in the CAS is an important initiative under Canada's renewed Drug Strategy, announced in May 2003 with an investment of \$245 million over five years.

Current plans are to repeat the CAS in the future.

Survey design and methodology

The survey was developed using selected or adapted questions from past surveys and polls that were dedicated to alcohol and other drug issues, as well as national general population health surveys. Addictions expertise was coordinated by the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA).

A sample of 13,909 Canadians 15 years of age and older living in Canada was compiled from a random selection of telephone numbers with a minimum of 1,000 respondents sampled in each province. Telephone interviews were conducted between December 16, 2003 and April 19, 2004 by the Montreal research firm Jolicoeur et associés.

Some of the new or unique content areas in the CAS include the following:

- An extended section on public attitudes, opinions and policy issues
- Newly developed health-related quality of life indicators (HRQoL)
- Information on the characteristics of drinking occasions
- Detailed items related to cannabis use opportunities, reasons for use and market factors
- World Health Organization measures of hazardous or harmful drug and alcohol use
- Extended detail on personal and contextual factors for illicit drug use
- An extended section on the harms to one's self and to others associated with drug and alcohol use
- Information to estimate the extent of drug use and driving
- Information to assess unmet treatment needs
- Information to support further study of economic cost issues.

The survey's scope precludes presenting analyses of all the items in a single report. In this report, national data on alcohol, cannabis and other drug use and related harms are presented along with provincial comparisons, and changes over time. Further results from the Canadian Addiction Survey (CAS) will be presented through a forthcoming series of reports and research papers.

Next steps

- Provinces that participated in the CAS are also expected to conduct detailed analyses within their jurisdictions.
- Work for comparable surveys in the three territories is underway and results are anticipated in summer 2005.
- The CAS data files will be made public for research purposes in June 2005.
- The Drug Strategy and Controlled Substances Programme of Health Canada is developing a surveillance strategy that will ensure that alcohol and other drugs monitoring and surveillance activities, such as the CAS, continue in a sustained and systematic manner.

Sponsors

The CAS is a collaboration of 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.

Highlights of the Canadian Addiction Survey: Prevalence of Use and Related Harms are available at www.ccsa.ca.

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