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**CANADA'S
ALCOHOL
AND
OTHER
DRUGS
SURVEY**

Canada

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Catalogue No. H39-338/1995E
ISBN 0-662-23876-1

Également disponible en français sous le titre
Enquête canadienne sur l'alcool et les autres drogues:
avant-première 1995

This a preview of findings of the most recent cross-Canada survey of alcohol and other legal and illegal drug use. The information is for people working in alcohol and other drug use related health and social fields-practitioners, policy makers, program planners, law enforcement officials, community advocates searchers, etc. The fact sheet responds to their requests for timely, easy-to-read updates on national and provincial attitudes and behaviours around alcohol and other legal and illegal drugs. A comprehensive report will follow in 1996.

Canada's Alcohol and Other Drugs Survey, 1994, (CADS) is the second national survey conducted under the research arm of Canada's Drug Strategy. A follow-up to the 1989 National Alcohol and Other Drugs Survey, or NADS, the new survey updates and expands on data gathered then. It also places more emphasis on applied research than did NADS. It is important to note that CADS is a telephone interview survey of Canadians who are 15 years and older, speak one of the two official languages, live in one of the 10 provinces, and are not full time residents of institutions.¹ For Yukon Territory and Northwest Territories, a second stage of CADS is being developed.

All the estimates included in this report meet Statistics Canada's data release criteria. Estimates with relatively high sampling variability are marked with an asterisk. Differences and changes specifically mentioned are statistically significant at the level that allows 99% confidence that the effect found is not due to chance.



LEGAL DRUGS

ALCOHOL

How many Canadians drink alcohol?

Responses to the survey indicate that 72.3% of women and men aged 15 years and older-about 16.7 million Canadians-report drinking in the past 12 months. This is a drop of 5.4 percentage points since the 1989 National Alcohol and Other Drugs Survey (NADS). However, provincial variations exist, as shown in Table 1.

How often do they drink?

About 26% of current drinkers drink less often than once per month, while 5% drink daily. The rest fall into the middle ranges, drinking at least once per month, but less than daily.

Table 1

Current Drinkers in Canada and Provinces (%)

	1989	1994
Canada	77.7	72.3
Newfoundland	67.6	71.4
Prince Edward Island	63.7	67.2
Nova Scotia	71.2	72.1
New Brunswick	68.0	67.8
Québec	76.4	73.9
Ontario	77.6	69.4
Manitoba	79.3	73.6
Saskatchewan	78.4	73.0
Alberta	81.9	76.4
British Columbia	82.9	75.6

How much?

Current drinkers report consuming an average of 3.9 drinks per week, as compared to 4.6 in 1989. The average maximum number of drinks consumed on any one occasion is 5.9 drinks, unchanged from 1989.

Are there gender differences?

Yes. Fewer women are current drinkers than men (66.7% versus 78.1%), and women are almost twice as likely as men to report never drinking (16.7% vs 8.9%). In terms of the maximum number of drinks per occasion, men report an average of 7.4 drinks and women, 4.2 drinks. Among women, the rate of current drinking is highest in the 18- to 19-year-old age group (79.1%) and among men in those aged 20 to 24 years (90.9%).

What harm is reported?

The vast majority of both current and former drinkers (79.2%) feel their own consumption has not harmed them. On the other hand, 73.4% of all Canadians-drinkers and non drinkers alike-say they have been harmed in some way at some point in their lives by others' drinking, and 41.0% of all Canadians experienced some form of harm in the past 12 months.

Harm to self

About one in five current and former drinkers (19.8%) feel their drinking harmed them sometime in their lives: 24.1% of men vs 15.3% of women.

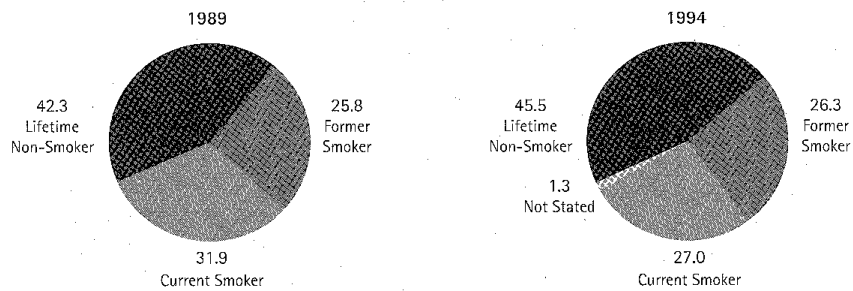
In the past 12 months, 10.5% of current drinkers reported at least one harmful effect resulting from their drinking. Physical health problems are reported by 6.2% of current drinkers and of those who are parents, 1.3% perceive their alcohol use to be harmful to their children.

Harm due to others' drinking

At some point in their lives, nearly half of all Canadians (49.4%)-some 11 million people-were insulted or humiliated by someone else's drinking; 34.0% were a passenger with a drinking driver; 33.8% had serious quarrels; 30.3% were pushed or shoved; 18.0% had family or marriage problems; and 15.4% were physically assaulted. Sexual assault was indicated by 2.7% of Canadians.

In the past 12 months, 19.2% of Canadians were insulted or humiliated, 14.0% had serious quarrels, and 10.8% were pushed or shoved. While 7.5% of the total population have been a passenger with a drinking driver, more young people have been in that situation - 19.4% of

Figure 1
Smoking Status of Canadians (%)



people aged 15 to 24 years. Young people also more often report insults, arguments, and being pushed or hit than do older people. Sexual assault in the past 12 months is indicated by 0.4%* (92,000) of the population.

Drinking and Driving

How many Canadians drive after drinking?

Approximately one in five current drinkers (20.3%) state that they drove after consuming two or more drinks in the previous hour. In 1989, the percentage was 22.8%.

Are there gender differences in drinking drivers?

Yes. Men are almost three times as likely as women to drive after drinking. At least once in the past 12 months, 27.8% of men compared to 10.8% of women had two or more drinks in the hour before driving.

TOBACCO

Who smokes?

Twenty-seven percent of Canadians aged 15 years and older report current smoking (daily or non-daily). This is a decrease since the 1989 survey, when 31.9% reported they were current smokers. Figure 1 shows changes in smoking status since 1989.

How much?

The majority of smokers (58.6%) smoke between 11 and 25 cigarettes daily, and 7.3% smoke more than 25 cigarettes daily.

How many have quit?

Approximately six million Canadians report having quit smoking. This represents 49.3% of those who have ever smoked, compared to 44.7% in 1989.

Are there gender differences among smokers?

In general, more males than females smoke (28.4% and 25.6% respectively).

Younger age groups report the highest levels of current smoking, particularly people aged 18 to 19 years (37.0%) and 20 to 24 years (34.3%), with 18 to 19-year olds showing the highest prevalence for females (35.3%) and 20- to 24-year-olds, the highest for males (39.4%).

Are there provincial differences in smoking?

Yes. The highest rates of current smoking are reported in Québec (33.6%) and the Atlantic provinces (31.7%). The lowest prevalence is found in Ontario (22.4%), while the Prairie provinces (26.4%) and British Columbia (25.0%) place in the middle.

MEDICATIONS

Respondents were asked about their use of medications in the past 12 months, including prescription pain pills, sleeping pills, tranquilizers, anti-depressants, and diet pills (stimulants). Because changes were required in the 1994 survey questionnaire, direct comparisons with 1989 data cannot be made.

How many Canadians use any one of the five listed medications?

Close to five million Canadians (20.8%) use one or more of these five medications. More women than men use medications (23.9% vs 17.7%). Provincial differences are shown in Table 2.

Prescription pain pills

Slightly more than three million Canadians (13.1%) use prescription pain pills, and more women (14.1%) than men (12.0%) use pain pills.

Sleeping pills

About 4.5% of Canadians use sleeping pills. Use tends to increase with age; 7.7% of people aged 55 years and older use these drugs. More women (5.4%) than men (3.7%) use sleeping pills.

Tranquillizers

Close to one million Canadians (4.3%) report using tranquillizers, with women more likely to use (5.3%) than men (3.4%). Use tends to increase with age.

Anti-depressants

About 3.0% of the population use anti-depressants. Women are twice as likely as men to use anti-depressants (4.2% vs 1.7%).

Diet pills/stimulants

Nearly 0.9% of Canadians use diet pills or stimulants. Overall, use is highest among those aged 20 to 24 years (2.2%).

What harm is reported?

Asked if their use of medications had ever caused harm to themselves or others, 15.7% of people who use medications reported at least one type of harm in their lifetime. In the past 12 months, 11.6% of users of medications reported at least one type of harm.

The most commonly reported problem in the past 12 months was the impact on physical health (7.3%), followed by outlook on life (5.6%), work/studies (4.0%), financial position (4.0%), family/home life (3.8%), and friendships (2.3%).

Table 2

Use of Selected Legal and Illegal Drugs in Canada
(past 12 months) 1994

	tranquillizers	diet pills stimulants	anti- depressants	codeine demerol morphine	sleeping pills	marijuana hash	LSD speed heroin
Canada	4.3	0.9	3.0	13.1	4.5	7.4	1.1
Atlantic	4.4	1.1*	3.3	13.3	4.3	6.3	0.9*
Québec	6.8	0.7*	3.7	6.8	5.8	8.6	1.6*
Ontario	3.3	0.7*	1.8	12.6	3.5	5.1	0.5*
Prairies	3.2	1.2*	3.7	17.5	4.5	8.2	1.1*
British Columbia	4.0	0.9*	3.9	21.2	5.3	11.6	1.6*

* High sampling variability.

STEROIDS AND SOLVENTS

What about steroids or solvents?

Less than 0.5% of people in Canada report either current use of steroids or ever having used steroids. Solvents are believed to be used mainly by young people and other groups not easily reached by a telephone survey. Less than 1.0% of Canadians report current use or ever having used solvents.



ILLEGAL DRUGS

CANNABIS, COCAINE, LSD, SPEED/AMPHETAMINES, AND/OR HEROIN

How many Canadians use illegal drugs?

One or more of these illegal drugs is used by 23.9% of Canadians sometime in their lives: 28.5% of males and 19.4% of females. In 1989, 23.5% of Canadians used one or more of these illegal drugs sometime in their lives: 29.2% of males and 18.1% of females.

CANNABIS (MARIJUANA/HASH)

What are the current rates of cannabis use?

More people use cannabis (called "marijuana or hash" in the survey) than any other illegal drug in Canada. Lifetime use remains almost the same as in 1989 (23.1% in 1994 compared to 23.2% in 1989). Current use (past 12 months) is reported at 7.4%; this compares to 6.5% in 1989.

More men (27.7%) than women (18.7%) say they have used cannabis more than once in their lives, and approximately twice as many men (10.0%) as women (4.9%) report use in the past 12 months.

COCAINE

How many Canadians use cocaine?

The percentage of people who have ever used cocaine or crack is 3.8%, indicating little change from 1989 (3.5%). The number of current users (past year) has dropped to 0.7% of the population from 1.4% in 1989.

LSD, SPEED (AMPHETAMINES), AND HEROIN

How many use LSD, speed, and/or heroin?

More than one quarter of a million Canadians—1.1%—are current users of one or more of these drugs, up from 0.4%* in 1989. More males (1.5%) than females (0.7%*) use these drugs. The proportion of people who have ever used any of these drugs has also risen to 5.9% in 1994 from 4.1% in 1989. More males (8.1%) than females (3.6%) have ever used these drugs.

How many Canadians are injection drug users (IDUs)?

Among users of cocaine, LSD, speed, heroin, and/or steroids, 7.7% (132,000) report injecting drugs at some time in their lives. Forty-one percent of injection drug users shared needles at some time in their lives.

What harm is reported?

About one in four people who used illegal drugs, steroids, or solvents felt their use had caused them some harm in their lifetime (26.9%), or in the past 12 months (23.8%). The proportion of users who reported specific harmful effects in their lifetime ranged from 17.6% for harm on physical health to 1.3%* for harm caused to their children (see Figure 2). The pattern of harm experienced in a 12-month period is very similar to that experienced in a user's lifetime, except for financial harm. It is ranked second among recently experienced problems, but fourth among problems experienced in a user's lifetime.

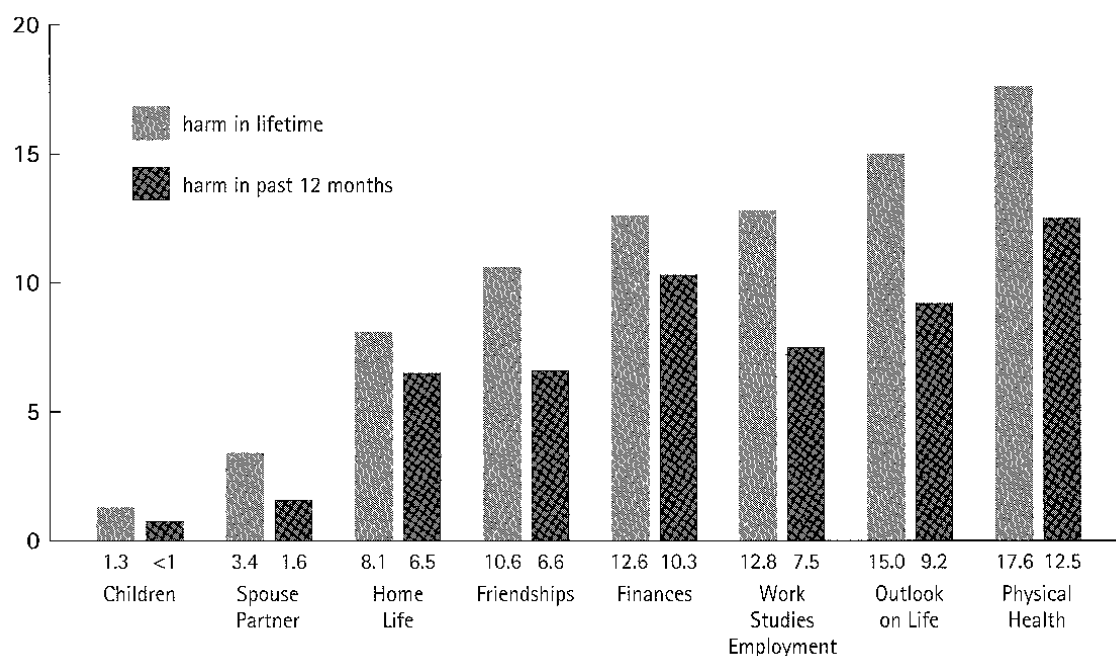


RELATED ISSUES

ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG PREVENTION AND CONTROL MEASURES

How do Canadians view alcohol and other drug prevention and control measures?

The results of this survey indicate widespread support for alcohol and other drug prevention and control measures. Indeed, the majority of Canadians support increases in alcohol and other drug prevention programs (74.4%), efforts to prevent serving alcohol to intoxicated persons (75.5%), and alcohol and other drug treatment programs (64.6%).



Approximately two-thirds of Canadians oppose the sale of alcohol in convenience stores (66.8%) and favour the introduction of warning labels on alcoholic beverages (69.5%). A similar proportion of Canadians believe that beer and liquor store hours should remain the same (66.6%). The majority prefer no change in the drinking age (54.7%) and 44.8% believe alcohol taxes should remain the same.

However, compared to 1989, Canadians are somewhat less supportive of prevention and control measures. In 1994, support for increased government advertising against drinking declined to 48.8% in 1994 from 61.1% in 1989. Although other measures are still favoured by a majority, support for increases in alcohol and other drug prevention programs and in efforts to prevent serving alcohol to intoxicated people declined by 6.6% in 1994, support for more alcohol and other drug treatment programs declined by 9.5%, opposition to the sale of alcohol in convenience stores declined by 6.8%, and support for warning labels on alcoholic beverages declined by 4.9%. The percentage of people who favour keeping beer and liquor store hours the same declined to 66.6% in 1994 from 69.9% in 1989. And while 49.7% of Canadians favoured an increase in the legal drinking age in 1989, 54.7% now prefer no change.

The proportion who support lower alcohol taxes increased to 25.4% in 1994 from 18.1% in 1989.

What about cannabis?

In the 1994 survey, respondents were asked for their opinions about the possession of marijuana. The results indicate that 27.0% of Canadians feel that possession of marijuana should be legal; 42.1% believe it should be illegal, but subject to a fine or non-jail sentence; and 16.8% feel it should be illegal, with even a first offence subject to a jail sentence. The remaining 14.1% did not express an opinion.

¹ The survey was conducted by Statistics Canada on behalf of Health Canada. Data were collected using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). Respondents were selected using Random Digit Dialing (RDD) techniques. All interviewing took place in five regional offices—Edmonton, Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. Respondents, whose participation was voluntary, were interviewed in the official language of their choice. The survey was carried out during the period of September 7, 1994 to November 5, 1994. The sample size is 12,155; response rate, 75.6%.

* Data should be interpreted with caution due to high sampling variability.