

Young adults more likely to smoke cannabis than drink before driving, survey shows

28 November 2012

Most adults are drinking responsibly, and fewer are smoking or using illicit substances – but several areas of concern were found in the 2011 CAMH Monitor survey of Ontario substance use trends, released today by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH).

"More [young adults](#) are reporting that they drive within an hour of using cannabis - even more than those who report drinking and driving," says Dr. Robert Mann, CAMH Senior Scientist and lead researcher. "Yet the risks of doing so are significant." Nine per cent of 18- to 29-year-olds report driving after cannabis use, versus six per cent in this age range who report drinking two or more drinks and driving.

The 2011 CAMH Monitor, which included 3,039 adults aged 18 or older from across Ontario, is the longest ongoing survey of adult [substance use](#) in [Canada](#).

[Cannabis users](#) are also aging, the survey found. Those aged 50 or older now account for 16 per cent of all adult users of cannabis, which is five times higher than in 1977.

Alcohol Use Most Ontario adults report [drinking alcohol](#) in the past year (81 per cent), but the majority does not drink excessively. Alcohol use is a concern when there are harmful drinking patterns, which occur in certain groups.

"Women are drinking more than in the past," says Dr. Mann. "Several key drinking indicators show an increase among women." Six per cent of women reported a pattern of drinking daily in 2011, compared to three per cent in 1998. About eight per cent of women were drinking in ways that were hazardous or harmful, up from five per cent in 1998.

"[Binge drinking](#) also remains high, particularly among 18- to 29-year olds," notes Dr. Mann.

"Overall, nine per cent of Ontario drinkers consume five or more drinks at one time each week, which represents 691,700 people." The survey also showed that the average number of drinks consumed weekly has increased, as has the number of drinkers overall who report daily [drinking](#).

Non-medical Prescription Opioid Use There was some good news, with the reduction in non-medical use of prescription opioids, which has been a concern in recent years. Use dropped by half between 2010 and 2011, down to four per cent in 2011.

This decline may be the result of Ontario's Narcotics Strategy as well as other policy measures to reduce the non-medical use of these powerful, addictive drugs, Dr. Mann suggests.

Mental Health One in seven Ontario adults (17 per cent) report elevated psychological distress, with rates highest among those aged 18 to 29. "This type of distress can reduce people's ability to function effectively socially and emotionally," says Dr. Mann.

Seven per cent of [adults](#) reported using an anxiety medication, and seven per cent took a depression medication. These medications were most likely to be used by those aged 40 to 49, and in the case of antidepressants, by women in this age range.

Smoking Smoking rates have been declining steadily for years in Ontario. Currently 15 per cent, or 1.4 million Ontarians, say they are smokers. However, this rate may be leveling off, says Dr. Mann. "The 15 per cent remains three times higher than the Cancer Care Ontario target of five per cent."

Provided by Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

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