

Two in 10 adults seriously considered suicide in 2013, survey shows

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Results from an ongoing survey conducted by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) show that 2.2 per cent of adults—or over 230,000 people in Ontario, Canada—seriously contemplated suicide in the last year. The 2013 edition of the CAMH Monitor, released today, included questions about suicidal ideation for the first time in the

survey's history.

"Suicide is a major public health issue, and these data confirm that large numbers of Ontario adults report having suicidal thoughts," said Dr. Hayley Hamilton, CAMH scientist and co-principal investigator of the study. "While we've asked about [mental health](#) in past editions of the survey, we felt it was important to include a specific question about suicide so that we can better understand the scope of the issue."

The 2013 report is based on responses from 3,021 adults age 18 and older from across Ontario. First introduced in 1977, the CAMH Monitor is the longest ongoing representative survey of adult mental health and substance use trends in Canada.

Results also revealed a significant overall increase in self-rated poor mental health, from 4.7 per cent in 2003 to 7.1 per cent in 2013 - this translates to an estimated 716,000 Ontario adults in 2013. This increase was especially evident during the past five years among those aged 18 to 29, rising from approximately 3 per cent in 2009 to 12 per cent in 2013.

"We are noticing higher [rates](#) of self-reported [poor mental health](#) among young adults," said Dr. Hamilton. "This is a troubling trend and is generally consistent with what we're seeing in the research we conduct among Ontario adolescents. This could be an indication that [young adults](#) and youth transitioning to adulthood need more support from family, friends, and health professionals when it comes to their mental health and overall well-being."

Rates of cannabis use up significantly

Increasing rates of cannabis use are also cause for concern, with past year cannabis use climbing from 8.7 per cent of Ontario adults in 1996 to 14 per cent in 2013. While 40 per cent of past year users report using

cannabis less than once per month, the percentage reporting daily use is 19 per cent. Among cannabis users, rates of self-reported cannabis use problems jumped from 38.5 per cent in 2012 to 55.4 per cent in 2013.

"The fact that we are seeing a steady increase in cannabis use and that more than half of those who use cannabis regularly are saying it's problematic underscores the need for a public health approach to [cannabis](#) control," said Dr. Robert Mann, CAMH senior scientist and co-principal investigator of the CAMH Monitor.



Infographic shows highlights from a mental health and substance use survey in Ontario, Canada. Credit: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

Non-medical prescription opioid use declining

The proportion of Ontario adults who reported non-medical use of prescription opioids in the past year dropped significantly from 7.7 per cent in 2010 to 2.8 per cent in 2013. However, use among 18-29 year olds remained stable at approximately 7 per cent in this same time period, and as many as 295,000 Ontario adults - 3 per cent— reported non-medical use of prescription opioids in 2013.

"It is encouraging to see that the number of adults who report using prescription opioids for non-medical reasons has dropped, and these declines may be reflecting efforts on the part of government and others to address this problem. However, there is still a significant number of people who report using these drugs inappropriately, and it is concerning that rates of non-medical use have not changed among younger adults," said Dr. Mann.

Daily alcohol use increasing

Rates of alcohol consumption were also high, with nearly one in four drinkers reporting that they exceed Canada's low-risk drinking guidelines. Increases were also found in daily drinking among those who have consumed alcohol in the past year, from 5 per cent in 2002 to 8.5 per cent in 2013 who report having at least one drink per day. The results also showed that women are drinking at higher rates.

"We continue to see that more women are drinking more frequently," said Dr. Mann. Rates of daily drinking among women increased from 2.6 per cent in 2001 to 5.6 per cent in 2013. "This increase is worrying because heavy alcohol use is associated with a number of health risks, including cancer."

While rates of consumption are increasing, a positive finding is that drinking and driving continues to decrease. From 1996 to 2013, driving after drinking declined by more than half, from 13 per cent to 5 per

cent, respectively.

Fewer Ontario adults smoke tobacco

Another positive finding in the survey was that the majority of Ontario [adults](#), 83 per cent, do not smoke cigarettes and current cigarette smoking has significantly declined since 1996 from 27 per cent in 1996 to 17 per cent in 2013. Daily smoking showed the same pattern, declining from 23 per cent in 1996 to 13 per cent in 2013.

More information:

www.camh.ca/en/research/news_and_publications/CAMH%20Monitor/CAMH_Monitor_eReport_2013_Final.pdf

Provided by Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

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