

Definition/Description:

Substance abuse, whether orally or by injection, is considered a major problem across many regions and is not specific to any particular age group or gender. The terms “substance abuse” and “drugs” have different meanings for different people however, what seems to be a common understanding is the negative impact on the health and well-being of an individual and a community. The lack of standard or universal definitions for substance abuse and drugs, along with the gaps in information contribute to the difficulty in measuring this impact. This subsequently results in limitations being placed on the limited data that are available.

Health Canada refers to substance abuse as the inappropriate or misuse of any legal and illegal drugs or mood-altering substances. These substances include alcohol, tobacco, licit drugs, illicit drugs and solvent/inhalants. For the purpose of this report, this section will address use of drugs, other than tobacco and alcohol, and as such will refer to them as ‘other drugs’.

Other Drugs

The presence and availability of other drugs is widespread. This is increasingly evident by the ongoing and significant number of drug seizures and drug-related offenses ranging from cultivation to possession and trafficking. Exposure to drugs and interest to use often occurs as a result of curiosity, pleasure, social or peer pressures, medical reasons and even emotional problems.

Licit Drugs are common prescription and non-prescription medications, often controlled substances, that when used inappropriately have the potential to be harmful and addictive.

Illicit Drugs are substances that are non-medical and non-scientific, often manufactured by illegal labs, and are restricted under the criminal code. These substances are commonly referred to as “street drugs”.

Solvents/Inhalants are substances that are typical household products, easily and inexpensively available to users. Solvents refer to non-beverage alcohol substances that, because of their high-alcohol levels, are a cheap substitute for liquor. Inhalants refer to hazardous substances, generally of strong chemical content, used for sniffing. Solvent/Inhalant abuse is one the most under-reported substance abuses because users tend to be loners or individuals who have no association with social service agencies.

Common examples of licit and illicit drugs and solvents and inhalants are presented further on in this section.

The impacts of drug use on the health of a population can be harmful and even deadly. In addition to the obvious physical affect on the bodily system itself, mental, social, legal and economic problems are potential risks associated with drug use. Some examples of these include suicidal thoughts and actions, poisoning and overdose, driving under the influence and traffic accidents, criminal activities, damage to private and public property, unsafe sexual practices and the spread of communicable diseases, pregnancy and the birth of unhealthy babies, and death. The majority of these result in medical treatment and hospitalization which contribute to increase demands on our health care system and resources.

Method

The information for this indicator was acquired by reviewing various documents from the Canadian Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use (CCENDU), Health Canada, Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM) and Statistics Canada.

Source:

The sources of information for this section:

1. Canadian Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use (CCENDU). 2003 CCENDU Report – Winnipeg
2. Canadian Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use (CCENDU). 2002 National Report: Drug Trends and the CCENDU Network
3. Addictions Foundation of Manitoba. Substance Use Among Manitoba High School Students, October 2001
4. Statistics Canada. Illicit Drug Dependence, 2002
5. Health Canada. Fact Sheet on Family Violence and Substance Abuse, 1993

Findings:

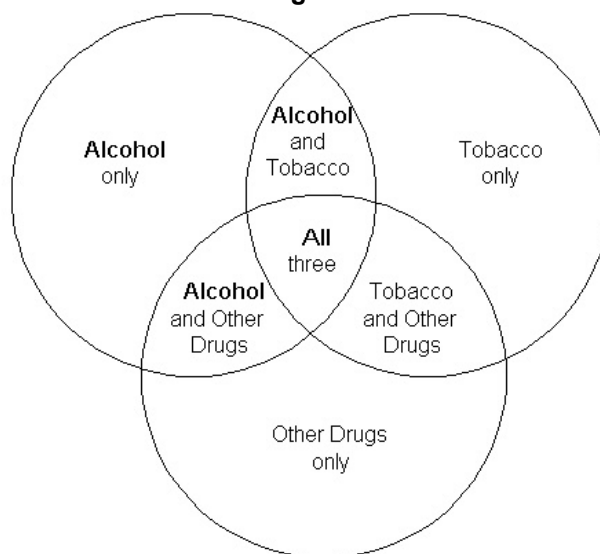
Common examples of licit and illicit drugs and solvents and inhalants

Licit Drugs	Illicit Drugs	Solvents/Inhalants
Opioid Analgesics (Codeine, Demerol, Morphine)	Cannabis (Marijuana, Hashish, Hashish Oil)	Rubbing alcohol/muscle massage
Tranquillizers	LSD	Hairspray
Diet Pills	Speed	Mouthwash
Anti-Depressants	Cocaine	Chinese cooking oil
Sedatives	Heroin	Lysol spray
Sleeping Pills		Aftershave
Steroids		Nail polish remover
		Glues/adhesives
		Paint thinner
		Gasoline

Source: Canadian Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use (CCENDU), 2003

The Addictions Foundation of Manitoba undertook a study that looked at substance use and the relationships between alcohol, tobacco and other drug use among high school students. The following diagram depicts the potential combinations of use in the population.

Patterns of Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use



Source: Adapted from the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba. Substance Use Among Manitoba High School Students, 2001

Highlights:

General

- Data from the Canadian Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use (CCENDU) suggests there is a steady increase in “other drug” use by females.
- The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) reports that 1 in 3 deaths in Canada and hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations result from use and misuse of alcohol and illicit drugs each year. Of the minimum of \$10 billion per year cost to the economy for these hospitalizations, more than \$2 billion was for direct healthcare costs. (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, 2002)
- CCENDU also reports that deaths in Canada (1999) due to licit/illicit drug use totalled 846 (592 males and 253 females). This included drug use in which it was not possible to determine e.g. accidental poisoning, if the purpose of use was medically or scientifically intended or not). (CCENDU-National Report, 2002)
- Manitoba’s total population aged 15 years and over who are dependent on illicit drugs in 2002 was 5245 (3580 males and 1665 females). (Statistics Canada, 2002)
- In 2001/2002, of the 41196 clients who presented at the Main Street Project facility, more than half (22959) were due to substance use such as alcohol, non-beverage alcohol, drugs and prescription drugs. This accounts for approximately 55.7% of clients. (CCENDU Report-Winnipeg, 2003)
- There is evidence of an increasing complexity in substance use and abuse. Substances are being used simultaneously in various combinations such as alcohol and other drugs or tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. (Addictions Foundation of Manitoba-Substance Use Among Manitoba High School Students, 2001)

Youth

- Substance use is a reality in the day-to-day life of today’s youth, especially high school students. The Addictions Foundation of Manitoba reported that in 2001, 40% of students surveyed from a cross-section of Manitoba high schools admitted using drugs other than alcohol and tobacco in the past year. This is a slight increase from the 37% reported in 1995. (Addictions Foundation of Manitoba-Substance Use Among Manitoba High School Students, 2001)
- In 2001, the average age at which students started to use drugs was 14.1 years, however it is suspected that there is a trend towards starting at an earlier age. (Addictions Foundation of Manitoba-Substance Use Among Manitoba High School Students, 2001)
- Thirty-eight percent of students surveyed identified cannabis as the drug most often used. Although still relatively new to the region, use of Cocaine and Ecstasy were reported to be less than 5%. Unfortunately, the usage and availability of Ecstasy appears to be on the rise based on the increases of large seizures by police that have occurred over the past few years. (Addictions Foundation of Manitoba-Substance Use Among Manitoba High School Students, 2001)
- Less than 4% of the students involved in the survey reported stimulant, methamphetamine, crack cocaine and solvent or inhalant use. (Addictions Foundation of Manitoba-Substance Use Among Manitoba High School Students, 2001)
- When students were asked the location of where the drug use took place, a frequent response was at school, during school hours (48%). Other locations included in vehicles, at parties and friends’ homes. (Addictions Foundation of Manitoba-Substance Use Among Manitoba High School Students, 2001)
- Several school divisions within the Winnipeg Health Region have partnered with organizations like the AFM to provide school-based assessment, counseling and education services to parents/caregivers and staff of students affected by substance use. These programs also promote the non-use of substances and provide information to assist students with making educated and healthy decisions about substance use. (Addictions Foundation of Manitoba-Substance Use Among Manitoba High School Students, 2001)