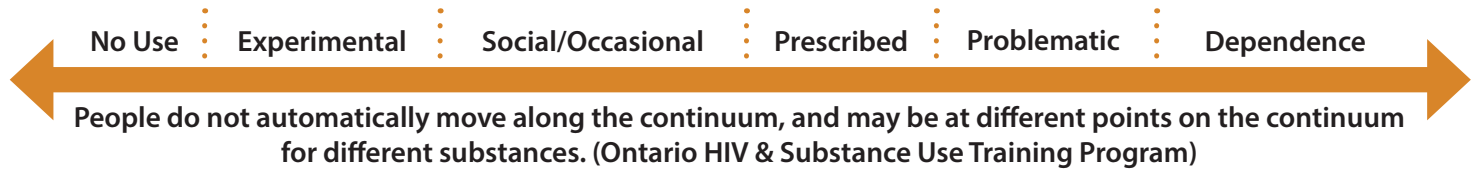


QUICK FACTS: RATES OF SUBSTANCE USE

People from all walks of life have used drugs throughout human history, for many reasons. The most commonly used drugs are alcohol and cannabis. Most substance use does not harm the individual or anyone else. In a small percentage of cases, people can develop problematic use (experience negative consequences from their substance use) or become physically or psychologically dependent on drugs.

CONTINUUM OF SUBSTANCE USE



People use many types of drugs, including:

Alcohol

Alcohol is a depressant^a and the most frequently used drug by both adults and youth in Toronto.

- 77% of adults report drinking alcohol in the past year.¹
- 7% of adults report binge drinking on a weekly basis (five or more drinks on one occasion).¹
- 29% of students in grades 7 to 12 in Toronto report having had a drink in the past year.²

Cannabis

Cannabis is a depressant and a stimulant^b, and is the most frequently used drug after alcohol.

- 45% of Ontarians report using cannabis in their lifetime, roughly 4.6 million people.¹
- 14.5% of Torontonians report using cannabis in the past year.¹
- 13% of students in grades 7 to 12 in Toronto report using cannabis in the past year.²

Opioids

Opioids are drugs used medically as pain relievers (e.g. codeine, fentanyl), and also include illegal street drugs such as heroin.

- 29% of Canadians aged 18 years and older report using opioids in the past five years.³
- 11% of students in grades 7 to 12 in Toronto reported using prescription opioids for non-medical reasons.² Most get these drugs from medicine cabinets at home.⁴
- 1% of adults in Ontario report using heroin in their lifetime.⁵ However, rates are higher among street-involved adults^{6,7} and youth^{5,6} and people with a history of incarceration.⁸

Cocaine

Cocaine, including crack cocaine, is a stimulant drug.

- 10% of adults in Toronto report using cocaine in their lifetime.¹
- 2% of Ontarians report using cocaine in the past year.¹
- In Toronto, rates of cocaine use are higher among adults who are homeless and street-involved.^{6,7} One study found 78% reported using crack cocaine in the past year.⁷

^a Depressants slow the central nervous system and affect parts of the brain that control thinking, behaviour, breathing and heart rate. (Types of Substances, www.camh.ca)

^b Stimulants increase activity in the central nervous system, including the brain. For example, they speed up mental processes and make people feel more alert and energetic. (Types of Substances, www.camh.ca)

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