

Consequences of Alcohol and Drug Use – Experiencing Harms

Alcohol and drug use and misuse are associated with a vast array of negative social, economic and health consequences.

- Substance abuse places a strain on health care, criminal justice, education, social service and workforce systems and has both direct and indirect impacts. In Canada in 2002, the alcohol and drug related harms associated with loss of productivity due to illness and premature death, direct health care, and law enforcement totaled \$14.6 billion.
- In Canada, the single largest cost associated with substance abuse is health care, followed closely by policing and other law-enforcement related costs.
- Negative consequences related to substance use can include: financial difficulties, poor academic performance, decreased productivity in the workplace, violence, interpersonal conflicts, sexually transmitted and other infections, unplanned and unwanted sexual encounters, involvement with legal authorities, vandalism and other property damage, and injury related to physical altercations or motor vehicle crashes.
- Because males tend to consume drugs and alcohol at a higher rate and in larger quantities than females, males experience more negative impacts.
- Harms reported by youth (age 15-24 years) are approximately 10 times higher than harms reported by adults (age 25+).

Comparison among Canadian Jurisdictions

- Fewer Canadians are reporting lifetime harms as a result of alcohol use.
- In comparison to other provinces, Saskatchewan has slightly higher rates of hazardous drinking and experiencing harm related to others alcohol use (including family and marriage problems, being insulted or humiliated, involvement in serious arguments, verbal abuse, physical altercations and physical assaults).
- Saskatchewan ranks higher than the national average in illicit drug related harms to oneself, including physical, friendship, social, home, marriage, and financial harm.

Harms related to illicit drug use

- Social, health or legal problems associated with cannabis use are reported by 4.9% of cannabis users. Harm to physical health has also been identified by a significant number of both past-year and lifetime cannabis users.
- Overall, rates of lifetime harms related to drug use has declined between 1994 and 2004. Between 2004 and 2008, the rate of harms related to drug uses has remained constant.

Sources:

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