

Our Health Counts London

The first inclusive, community-driven health survey for Indigenous peoples in London

SUBSTANCE USE

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) details the goals and impacts of Canada's Indigenous policies over time. These included the elimination of traditional Indigenous governments and livelihood, disruption of our families and communities, and the planned expiry of treaty, half-breed script, and Inuit land claim obligations through processes of assimilation. While attempts at assimilation have been unsuccessful, these policies have resulted in a disproportionate burden of poverty, dislocation from traditional lands, disruption of family and community support systems, the undermining of language and culture, and restricted access to traditional medicines and healing practices for many Indigenous people. These conditions and experiences have been linked to today's high rates of commercial or non-traditional tobacco use and substance use.^{1,2} Commercial tobacco reduction strategies have been effective in reducing tobacco use among the general population,³ however, Indigenous communities have not experienced the same benefits. The findings on alcohol use align with existing evidence that Indigenous people in Canada frequently abstain from drinking alcohol, but among those who do drink, heavy drinking is common.

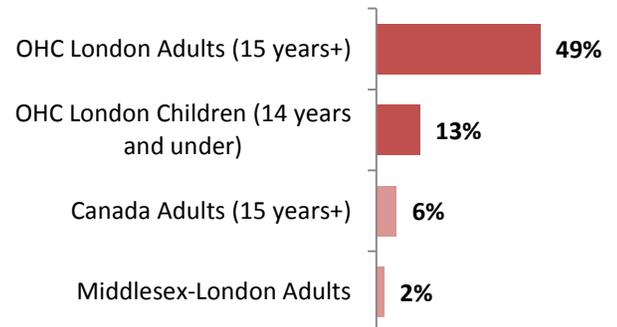
Cigarettes

67% of Indigenous adults in London smoke compared to 17% of adults (aged 12 years+) in Middlesex-London.⁴

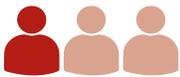
31% of smokers currently smoke 11 or more cigarettes per day.

Over Half (53%) of smokers tried to quit at least once in the past year. Nationally, 52% of daily smokers attempted to quit in the past year.⁵

Living in a Smoking Home



Alcohol

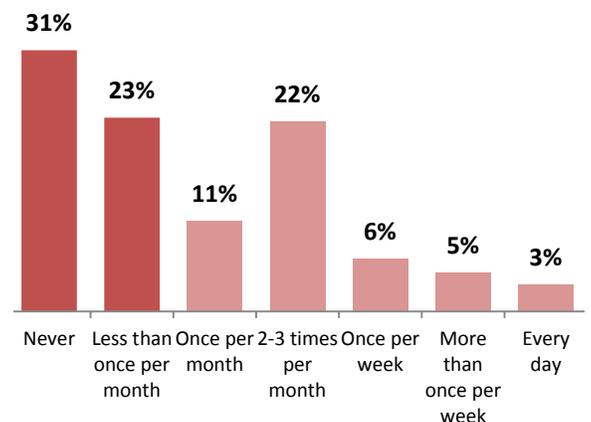
1 in 3 (33%) 

Indigenous adults in London did not drink any alcoholic beverages in the past month.

37% of Ontarians did not drink any alcoholic beverages in the past month.⁶

Over Half of Indigenous adults abstain or rarely engaged (less than once per month) in heavy drinking (5 or more drinks at a sitting) in the past year, compared to 79% of adults living in London.⁴

Heavy Drinking (5 or More Drinks)

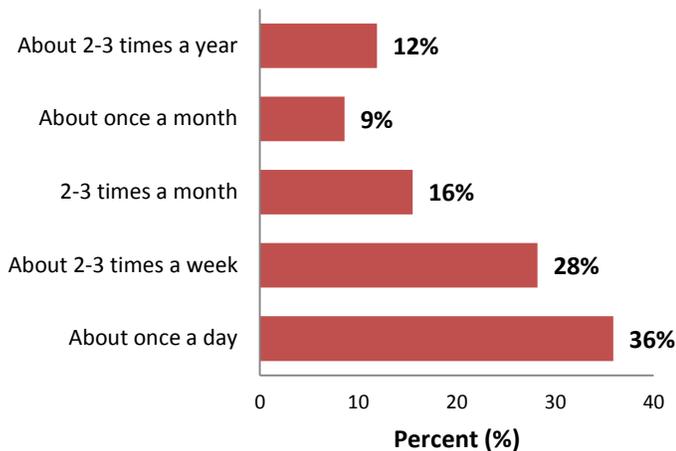


Cannabis Use

Cannabis use is a common method of self-medication among populations with unmet health care needs.⁷ Cannabis has also become a more accepted treatment for certain health conditions or side effects of health treatments. Given plans to legalize cannabis, it is important to understand its use within different populations in Canada. The growing opioid crisis among Indigenous peoples in Canada has also demonstrated a need for data on non-prescription opioid use and related harms to better address the needs of those at risk of overdose and to improve public health.

58% of Indigenous adults in London used cannabis in the past year. 12.1 % of Ontarian adults used cannabis in the past year.⁸

Frequency of cannabis use in past year



Opioid Use

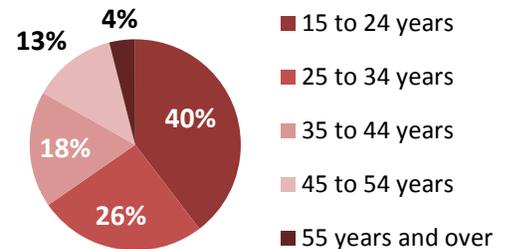
17% of Indigenous adults in London used prescription opiates without a prescription or out of keeping with how they were prescribed in the past year.

Of those who used prescription opiates without a prescription/out of keeping with how they were prescribed, **36%** used them about once a day.

72% of those who used prescription opiates without a prescription/out of keeping with their prescription (in the past year) have at least one chronic health condition.

These rates were similar to non-opiate users indicating that more research is needed to understand links between chronic illness and opiate use.

Age of cannabis users



Of those Indigenous adults in London who used cannabis in the past year:

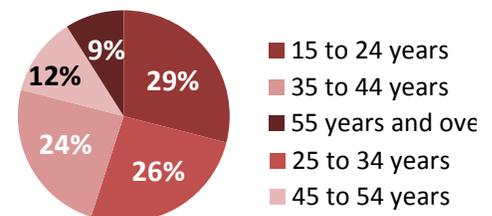
36% rated their general health as fair or poor

66% had at least one chronic condition

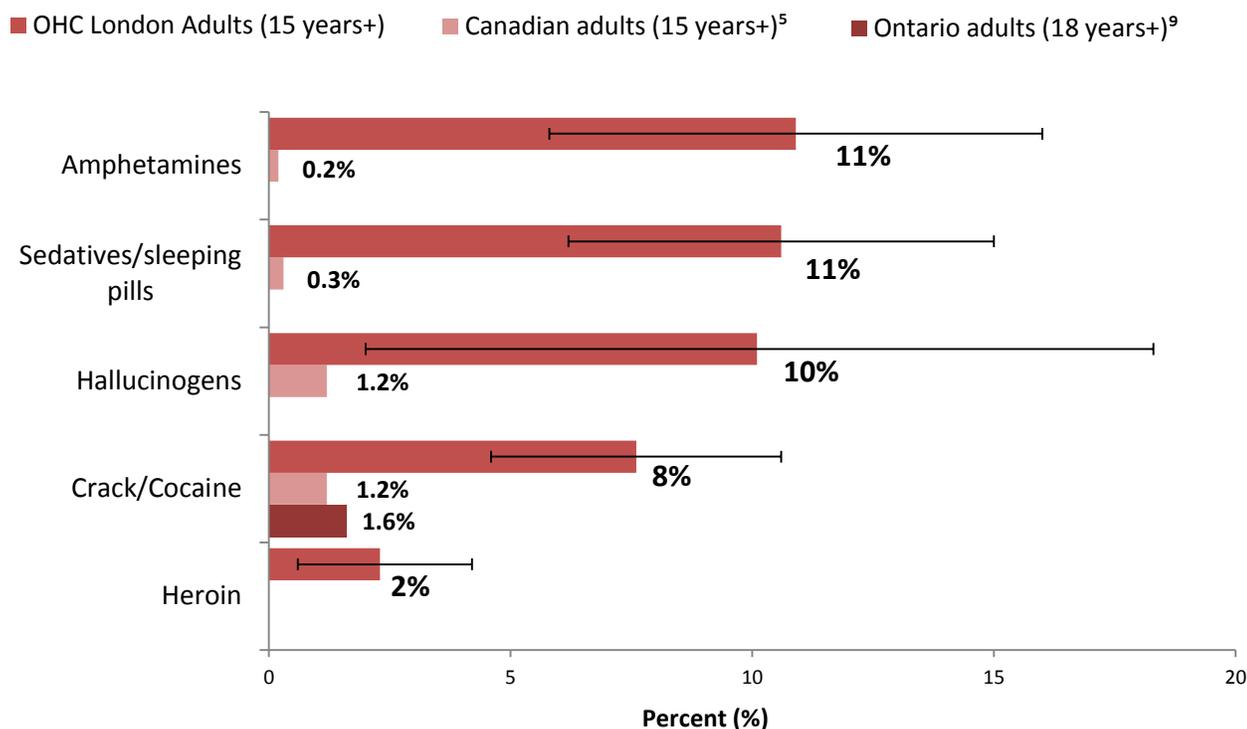
32% screened positive for PTSD

These rates were similar to non-cannabis users indicating a need for more research on the drivers of cannabis use.

Age of prescription opiate users



Other Substance Use in the Last 12 Months



13% of Indigenous adults in London have used a needle to inject a drug that wasn't prescribed to them in their lifetime.

4% of Indigenous adults have ever shared needles with someone else.

Population based estimates were created using respondent driven sampling (see Project Overview and Methods Factsheet)

Definitions

Indigenous adults: persons self-identifying as Indigenous such as First Nations, Métis, Inuit, or other Nation aged 15 years and older living or using services in the City of London.

Sources

1. Mikkonen & Raphael (2010); 2. Truth and Reconciliation Canada (2015); 3. Reid et al. (2017); 4. Statistics Canada (2016); 5. Statistics Canada (2015); 6. Statistics Canada (2012a); 7. Harris & Edlund (2005); 8. Statistics Canada (2012b); 9. Ialomiteanu et al. (2016)

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