

HEALTH PROFILE FOR
ONTARIO



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ONTARIO HEALTH PROFILE

This Health Profile for Ontario details results from **Health Canada's 2016/2017 Canadian Student Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Survey (CSTADS)**. Grade 7-12 students with parental permission from randomly selected schools in each province were invited to participate in the pan-Canadian survey. Participating students were asked questions about tobacco, alcohol and drug use, in addition to questions about bullying, school connectedness and mental wellness.

In Ontario, 10,195 students from 62 randomly selected schools participated in the survey.

Health Canada has contracted the Propel Centre for Population Health Impact at the University of Waterloo to centrally coordinate the implementation of CSTADS across Canada biennially since 2004. For the 2016/2017 CSTADS, the survey was implemented in collaboration with a Co-Investigator and team at the following provincial institutions:

Memorial University of Newfoundland

University of Waterloo

Dalhousie University

CancerCare Manitoba

University of Prince Edward Island

University of Saskatchewan

Université du Québec à Montréal

University of Alberta

University of Victoria

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CSTADS data are collected on behalf of Health Canada to understand Canadian trends in tobacco, alcohol and drug use, and to effectively develop, implement, and evaluate strategies, policies and programs aimed at youth substance use and abuse. The results of the survey are provided to Health Canada in a manner that does not identify any participants in the survey. Health Canada has not reviewed, approved, nor endorsed this report. Any views expressed or conclusions drawn herein do not necessarily represent those of Health Canada.

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PLEASE NOTE:

1. The graphs and tables in this profile represent **student self-reported data**.
2. In some cases, the results in table columns or rows and graphs may not add to 100% due to rounding.
3. * indicates that data are NOT reportable due to low numbers or high variability.
4. ‡ indicates estimates should be interpreted with caution because of moderate sampling variability.
5. All provincial and national data presented in this profile are from the 2016/2017 implementation of the Canadian Student Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Survey (CSTADS), unless otherwise stated.

THE ISSUE

This profile presents results for Ontario on five interconnected issues facing students that impact their well-being. The following table shares information about the impact and prevalence of these issues for students in Canada.

Mental Wellness

- In Canada, 79% of students in grades 7-12 reported that they are happy to be at school and 81% feel close to people at their school.¹

Bullying

- In Canada, 35% of students in grades 7-12 reported being bullied (2016/2017 CSTADS).¹

Tobacco Use

- In Canada, 34% of students who have never smoked a cigarette are susceptible to smoking.¹

Alcohol Use

- In Canada, 24% of students in grades 7-12 reported high-risk/binge drinking (5 or more drinks on one occasion) in the past 12 months.¹

Cannabis Use

- In Canada, 21% of students in grades 7-12 reported that they have ever tried cannabis.¹



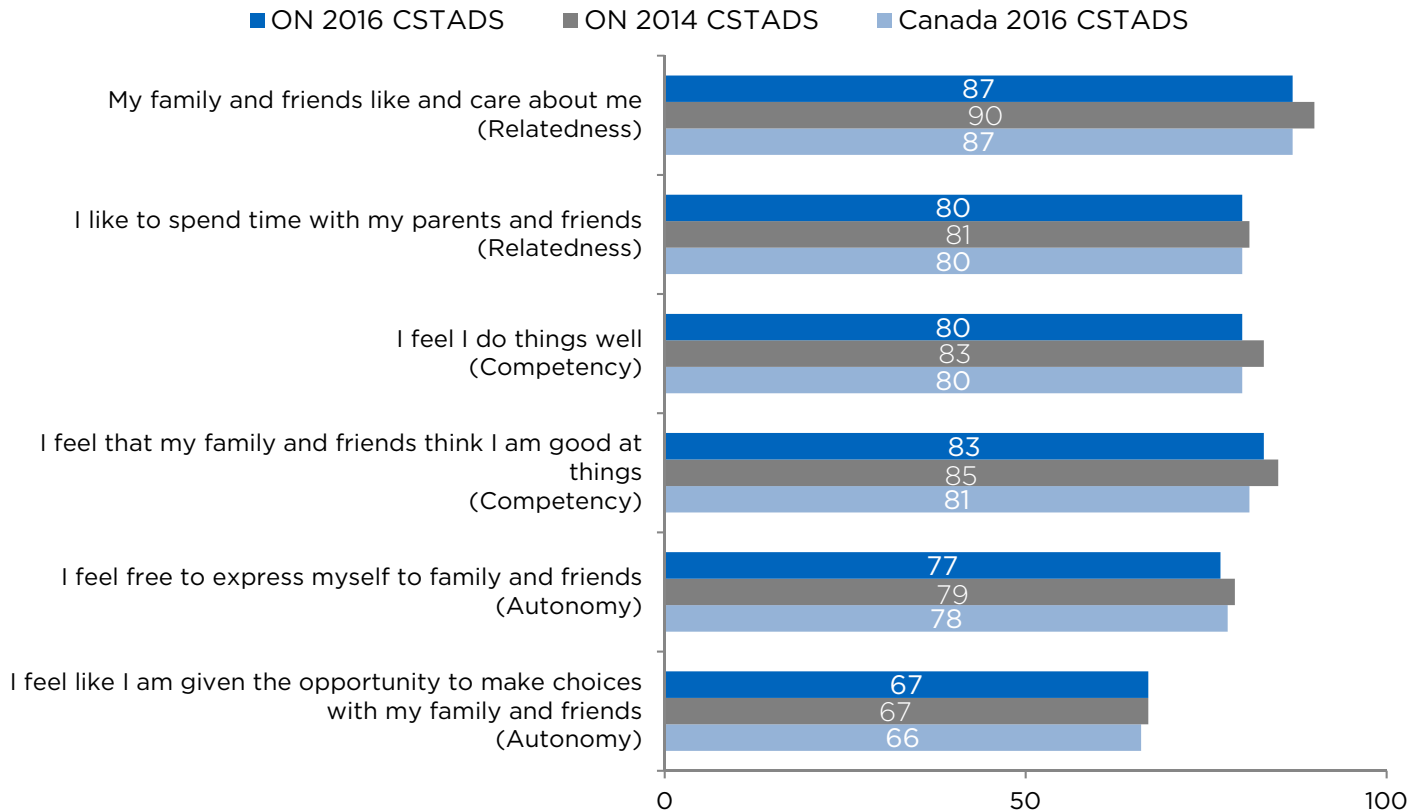
MENTAL WELLNESS IN ONTARIO

Mental wellness is the ability to think, feel and act in ways that strengthen our capacity to enjoy life and deal with challenges as they arise.² Students with higher levels of mental wellness tend to report higher levels of school connectedness and exhibit more pro-social behaviours, such as helping people or sharing things without being asked. Alternatively, students with lower levels of mental wellness tend to report more behaviours that are oppositional.²



Schools can develop targeted programs, policies, curricula, and environments (that is, a culture) that fosters “mentally well” students by supporting their relatedness, competency and autonomy.³

STUDENT MENTAL WELLNESS IN ONTARIO



% OF STUDENTS RESPONDING "SORT OF TRUE FOR ME" OR "REALLY TRUE FOR ME"

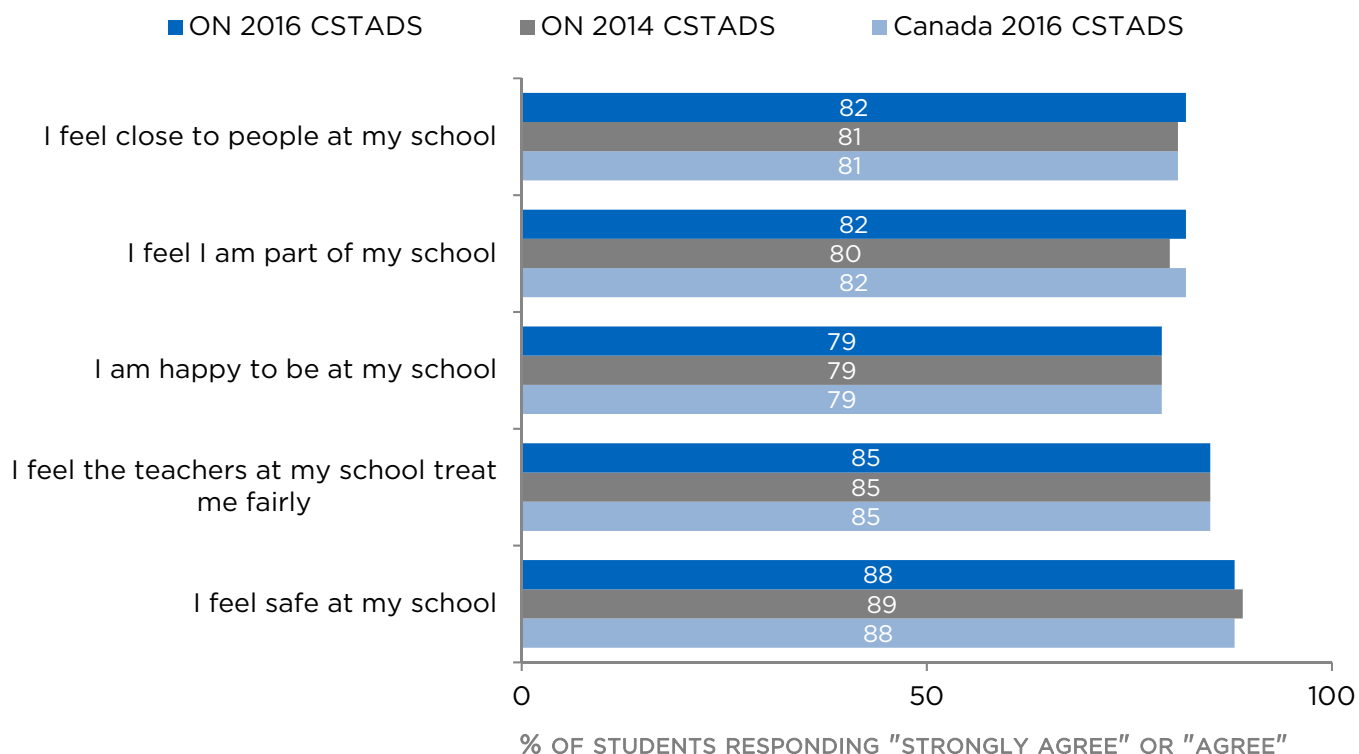
SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Schools, homes, and community are key environments influencing student wellness. We know that schools influence wellness independent of family, economic, and community factors.⁴ **Schools hold a unique position to create a culture of wellness, ideally in partnership with parents and community members/organizations.** This culture embraces the physical and social environment within the school and is foundational to healthy behaviour choices and academic success.

SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS

Students who feel an attachment to their school and who consider their teachers supportive are less likely to engage in unhealthy or risky behaviours.⁴

SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS IN ONTARIO



Schools Can Make Mental Wellness a Priority

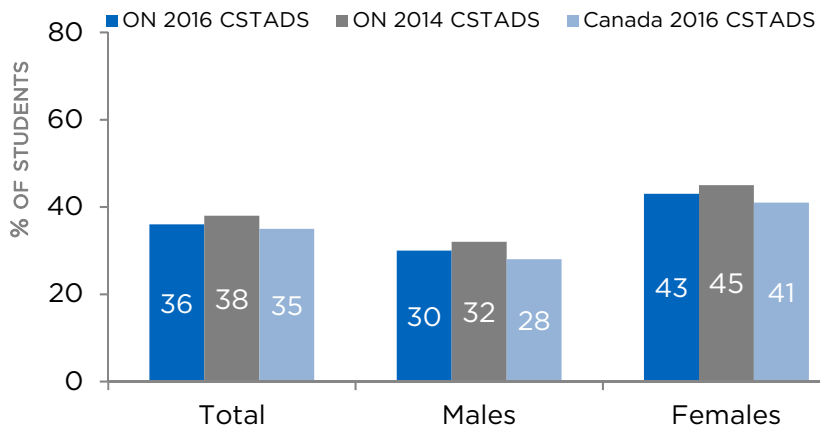
- Schools can provide opportunities for students to form healthy connections with an adult at the school. For example, schools can post all student names on a wall and ask staff to mark who they “know”. Schools can then plan to build connections with students who are not linked in.
- Schools can foster positive mental wellness habits through physical activity, journaling, learning to cope with negative thoughts, setting goals and sharing humour.⁵
- Schools can facilitate school connectedness by creating social spaces where students feel safe and valued.⁶
- Schools can establish awards that honour pro-social behaviour (behaviour that is intended to help other people). Schools can also ensure that students are included in decision-making processes for setting rules and consequences.

BULLYING

STUDENTS WHO ARE BEING BULLIED IN ONTARIO

Bullying is a form of abuse that takes different forms at different ages. Bullying is often an aggressive behaviour imposed from a position of power, which is repeated over time. With each repeated bullying incident, the student who is bullying increases in power, while the student being victimized loses power.⁷ In Ontario, **36% of students reported being bullied by other students in the last month**, compared to 35% of students in Canada (2016/17 CSTADS).

STUDENTS WHO REPORT BEING BULLIED IN THE LAST MONTH



HOW STUDENTS REPORT BEING BULLIED IN ONTARIO

The table below displays the most common forms of bullying as reported by Ontario students who reported being bullied in the 2016-17 school year. **Non-verbal attacks** are the most common form of bullying in Canada (e.g., being ignored, being left out or excluded, being given dirty looks).

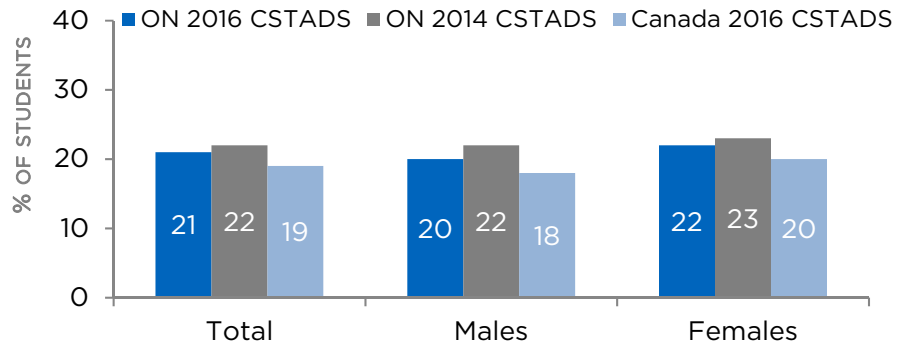
MOST COMMON FORMS OF BULLYING IN Ontario among students who reported being bullied by others	
1	Non-verbal attacks (ignored, being left out or excluded...)
2	Verbal attacks (teased, threatened, rumours spread about you...)
3	Had someone steal from you or damage your things
3	Cyber-attacks (mean text messages, rumours spread on internet...)
4	Physical attacks (beaten up, pushed or kicked...)

STUDENTS WHO BULLY OTHERS IN ONTARIO

Research shows that bullies and the victims of bullying report the highest levels of substance use.⁸ Girls are less likely than boys to be involved in bullying but are more likely to be involved in bullying if they smoke, compared to girls who do not smoke.¹

In Ontario, 21% of students reported bullying others in the last month. The graph to the right displays the percentage of students in Ontario who report bullying others, in comparison to the rest of Canada and 2016 CSTADS results.

STUDENTS WHO REPORT BULLYING OTHERS IN THE LAST MONTH



How Students Report Bullying Others in Ontario

In Ontario, bullies report non-verbal attacks as the most common way they bully others. The table to the right displays the most common forms of bullying in Ontario, as reported by students who reported bullying others in the 2016-17 school year.

There are sex differences among bullying behaviours. **In Ontario, girls who report bullying others indicate non-verbal attacks as the most common way they bully while boys report verbal attacks as the most common way they bully others.**

MOST COMMON FORMS OF BULLYING IN Ontario among students who reported bullying others	
1	Non-verbal attacks (ignoring, leaving someone out or excluding them...)
2	Verbal attacks (teased, threatened, spread rumours about them...)
3	Cyber-attacks (mean text messages, spread rumours on internet...)
3	Physical attacks (beat up, pushed or kicked them...)
3	Stole from them or damaged their things

Schools Can Provide Safe Environments and Address Bullying

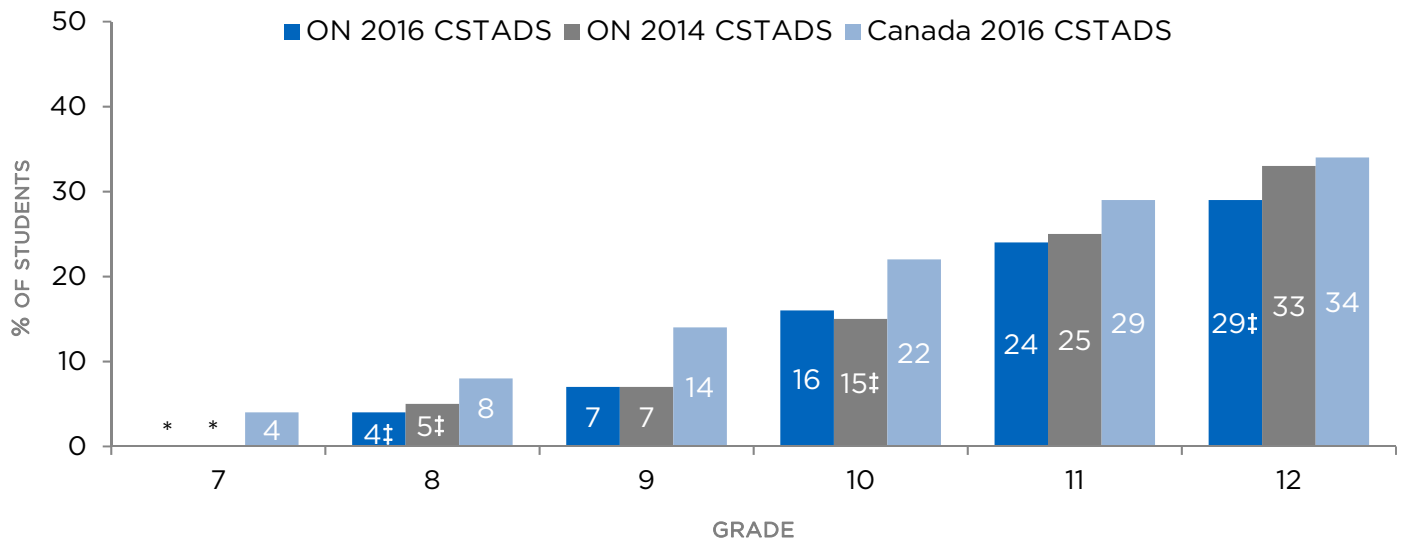
Many organizations are dedicated to ensuring that children grow up in safe and secure school environments. These groups recognize that the issue of student violence is a societal problem; schools cannot resolve it on their own. Shared responsibility is fundamental to the achievement of safe learning environments. Schools in Ontario may well be addressing bullying already. Here are ideas that schools may add to their kits:

- Teach students how to identify bullying, particularly attacks that are non-physical.
- Enable students to report bullying anonymously on the school website or other means.
- Train school staff to recognize target behaviour as it emerges so that intervention occurs early and works to prevent anti-social behaviour from escalating.
- Ask community youth workers to run restorative justice programs when incidents occur.

SMOKING IN ONTARIO

In Ontario 15% of students (16% male and 13% female) report ever having tried a cigarette, even a few puffs. The graph below compares Ontario to the 2016/2017 CSTADS national results and the 2014/2015 CSTADS Ontario results. While rates of use have slowly declined over time, many students remain at risk to experimenting and starting new habits (see student susceptibility to smoking on following page).

STUDENTS WHO REPORT EVER TRYING A CIGARETTE



‡ Moderate sampling variability, interpret with caution

OBTAINING AND SHARING CIGARETTES

Smoking is a social activity and as a result, students often obtain their cigarettes from social sources in addition to retail outlets. In Ontario, **39%** of students who smoke report being **given cigarettes** by someone else.

In addition to social sources, **few* students who smoke in Ontario obtained cigarettes from retail outlets.**¹ Retail sources become a more common place to get cigarettes as students move into higher grades. In Ontario, the legal age to purchase tobacco products is 19.



STUDENT SUSCEPTIBILITY TO SMOKING IN ONTARIO

Most established smokers began experimenting with cigarettes between the ages of 10 and 18. Some students become nicotine dependent within a day of first inhaling cigarette smoke.⁹ People who become dependent can find it very difficult to quit. Therefore, we need to intervene before students become dependent.

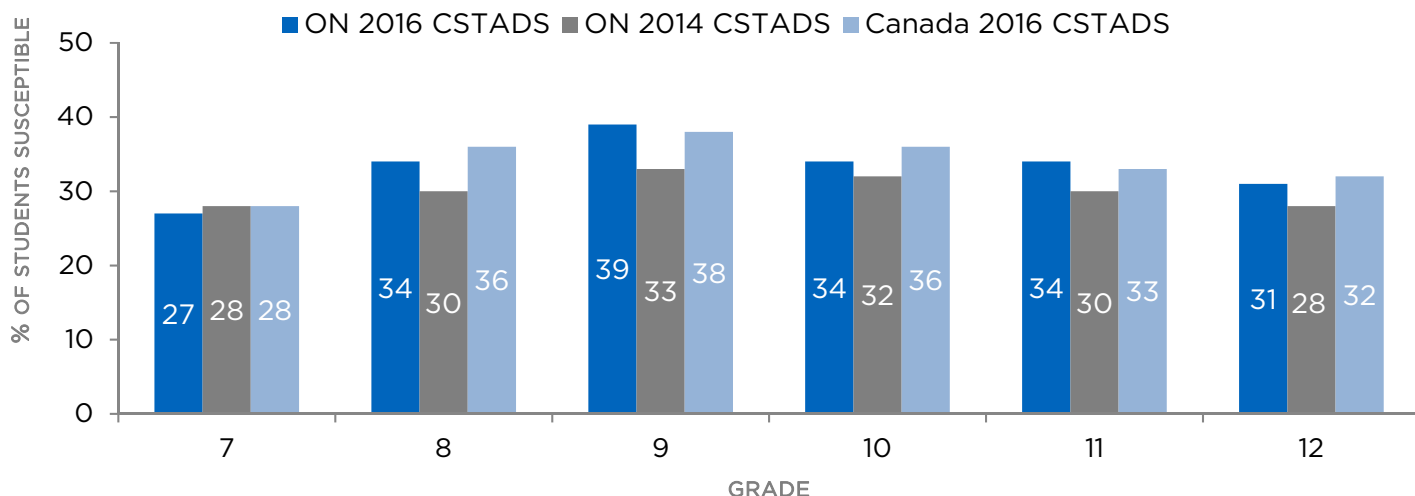
In Ontario, 33% of students who have never smoked a cigarette are unsure if they will remain smoke-free in the future. These students are susceptible to begin smoking.¹⁰

Students in Ontario were asked the following questions:

- Do you think in the future you might try smoking cigarettes?
- At any time during the next year do you think you will smoke a cigarette?
- If one of your best friends were to offer you a cigarette, would you smoke it?

The graph displays the percentage of students who answered “definitely yes”, “probably yes” or “probably not” to any of the above questions. Rates of susceptibility typically decline with increased grade, because more students have smoked.

SUSCEPTIBILITY TO SMOKING (of students who have never smoked)



Did You Know?

Students are less likely to begin smoking in the future if they have made a firm decision not to try smoking and if they have the resources to resist pressures to start¹¹.

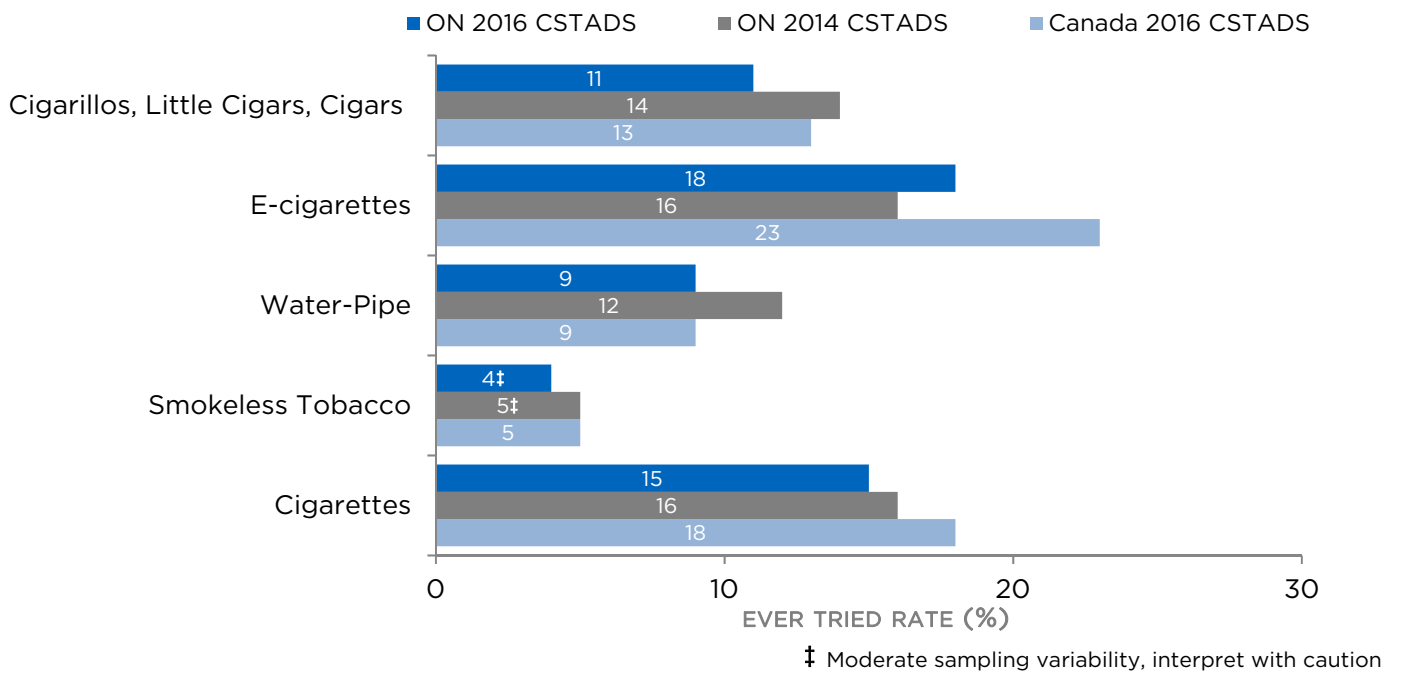


TRENDS IN TOBACCO USE IN ONTARIO

Students use tobacco and nicotine products other than cigarettes including: cigarillos, little cigars, cigars, e-cigarettes, water-pipes, and smokeless tobacco (i.e. chewing tobacco). The growing popularity of these products is concerning because students commonly misconceive alternate forms of tobacco as not being as bad for them as cigarettes. Research shows that these alternative forms of tobacco may be worse than cigarettes in some cases.^{12,13}

In Canada, 18% of Canadian students have ever tried cigarettes, and another 4% have not tried cigarettes but have ever tried “other” tobacco products (2016/17 CSTADS). The following graph displays the number of students from Ontario who have ever tried tobacco products as compared to the national 2016/2017 CSTADS results and the 2014/2015 Ontario results.

CIGARETTES, E-CIGARETTES AND ALTERNATE FORMS OF TOBACCO USE



ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES (E-CIGARETTES, VAPES, PENS)

The jury is still out on e-cigarettes. While some argue it is a way to reduce harm, e-cigarettes may promote continuation of an addiction in adults, or promote trying nicotine products in students. In Ontario 7% of students report having used e-cigarettes in the last 30 days (2016/17 CSTADS).

Did you know...

Among Canadian students in grades 7 through 12, 23% reported having tried e-cigarettes and 10% reported using them in the last month.¹ Of the students who reported smoking cigarettes in the last month, 53% also used e-cigarettes in the last month.

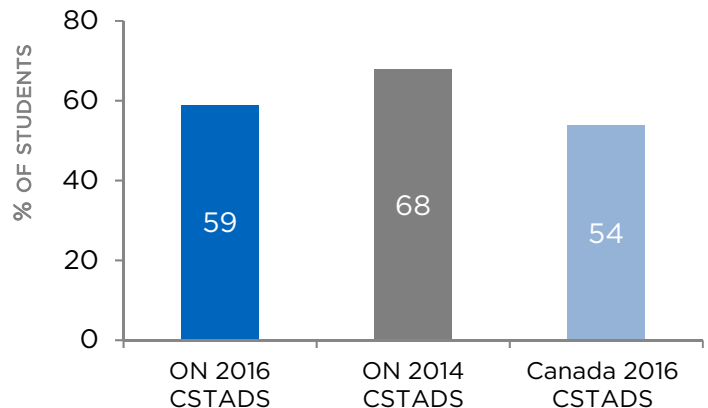


FLAVOURED TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Flavoured tobacco has appeal among students: they perceive them as less risky.¹⁴ In May 2016, the federal government proposed an amendment to the *Tobacco Act*, which would forbid the use of menthol in cigarettes, blunt wraps, and cigars, with the purpose of making these products less appealing to youth. The 2012-2013 Youth Smoking Survey was cited as support for the proposed legislation, highlighting that menthol cigarette smoking is most widespread among youth that are current tobacco smokers. As of October 2017 menthol tobacco products are no longer sold in Canada.

The graph to the right shows the percentage of students who used flavoured products among those that have used tobacco products in the last month. The current Ontario results are compared to the national 2016/2017 CSTADS results and 2014/2015 CSTADS Ontario results.

FLAVOURED PRODUCT USE IN THE LAST MONTH* (of students who use tobacco products)



* Flavoured products include: flavoured cigarettes, cigarillos, cigars, smokeless tobacco, and water-pipe.

Schools Can Help Keep Students from Smoking

Even when smoking rates are low, efforts need to focus on preventing susceptible students from experimenting with tobacco use. Schools can support established smokers and those experimenting with using tobacco products in the following ways:

- Brainstorm with students and staff about ways to re-purpose areas students use for smoking (both on and off school property) for more positive uses. Partner with the community to make changes feasible.
- Make sure students are aware that all tobacco products (e.g., cigarillos, little cigars, cigars, smokeless tobacco [snuff] and flavoured tobacco) have the same level of health risk. E-cigarettes also have risk.
- Use persuasive writing development or civics lessons to write to local merchants urging them not to sell or promote tobacco products to youth. Flavoured tobacco products are often targeted at youth. Engage local public health for support.

SUBSTANCE USE AND ABUSE IN ONTARIO

Periods of transition and encountering new situations – such as when entering high school – tend to be the times when youth are at increased risk for substance use and abuse. It is startling to note the **young age** at which students first engage in these risky behaviours. Besides being illegal, students are making decisions to engage in these behaviours before they are developmentally capable of fully understanding the consequences. The table below shows the average age at which grade 12 students in Ontario reported having first tried alcohol and cannabis.

SUBSTANCE	AVERAGE AGE OF FIRST USE
EVER USED OR TRIED CANNABIS	15 YEARS
HAVING A DRINK OF ALCOHOL THAT WAS MORE THAN A SIP	14 YEARS
HAVING 5 OR MORE DRINKS OF ALCOHOL ON ONE OCCASION	15 YEARS

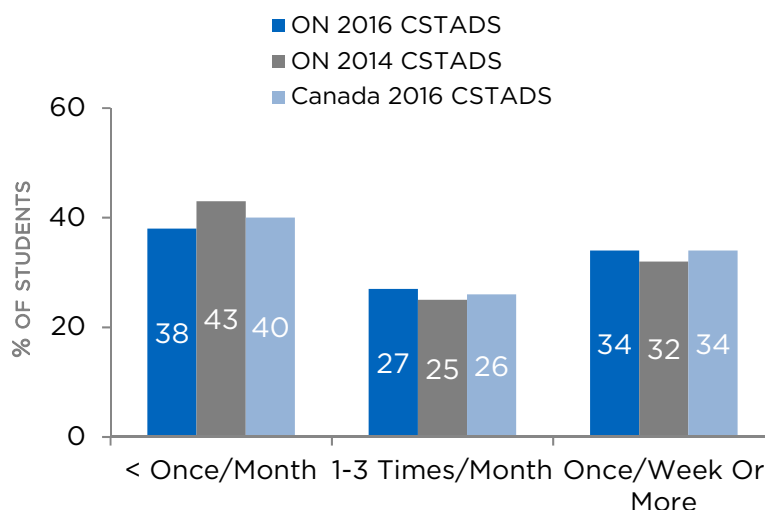
CANNABIS/MARIJUANA USE

In Ontario, 18% of students reported having tried cannabis (20% males and 17% females). Similarly, 21% of Canadian students reported having tried cannabis (22% of males, 20% of females). The use of cannabis has been linked to lower educational achievements, lower income and even a decline in IQ for those who start using cannabis as an adolescent.^{15,16}

Frequency of use

Students who reported using cannabis were also asked how often they use it. The graph to the right displays the frequency of cannabis use among Ontario students who reported using cannabis in the past 12 months.

FREQUENCY OF CANNABIS USE (of students who use cannabis)



Schools Can Help Prevent Cannabis Use

- Schools can create class projects (e.g., in health class, or English class) that explore the long-term and short-term health risks of and social influences on cannabis use. Among youth, immediate social influences (rather than health) are more likely to motivate behaviour.
- Schools can ask community resource people (former drug user, clinician) to paint a picture of drug use consequences. Ensure that there are options to deal with issues that surface for students later. Do not rely only on testimonials for long-term culture change.
- Schools can equip students with skills to recognize and avoid situations where they may feel pressured to use cannabis. Where students cannot avoid it (e.g., if a joint is passed to them at a party), they should commit in advance to a friend not to use cannabis.

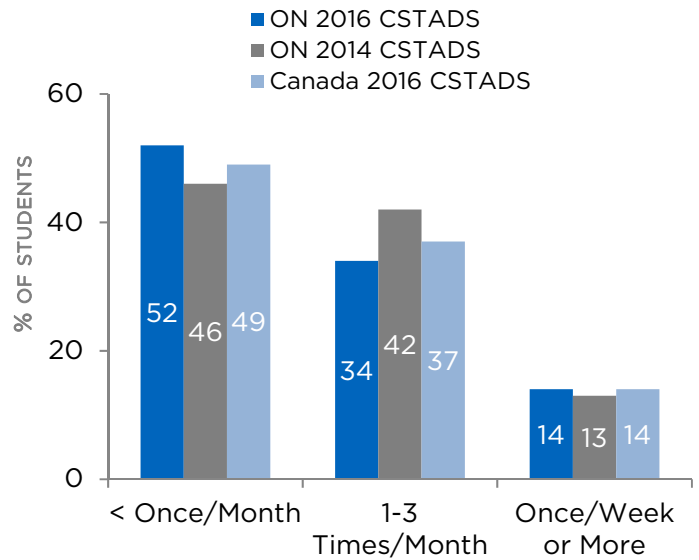
ALCOHOL USE

In Ontario, 40% of students reported having a drink of alcohol that was more than just a sip in the last 12 months. Of those students, 52% report having 5 drinks or more on one occasion (high-risk/binge drinking).

Frequency of use

Students who reported using alcohol were also asked how often they engaged in this behaviour. In Ontario, 19% of students reported consuming alcohol at least once a month in the last 12 months. The graph to the right shows the reported frequency of alcohol use in the last 12 months, among the students in Ontario schools who report using alcohol. These results are compared to the provincial 2014/2015 CSTADS results and the national 2016/2017 CSTADS results.

FREQUENCY OF ALCOHOL USE
(of students who use alcohol)



Trends in Alcohol Use and High-risk/binge drinking

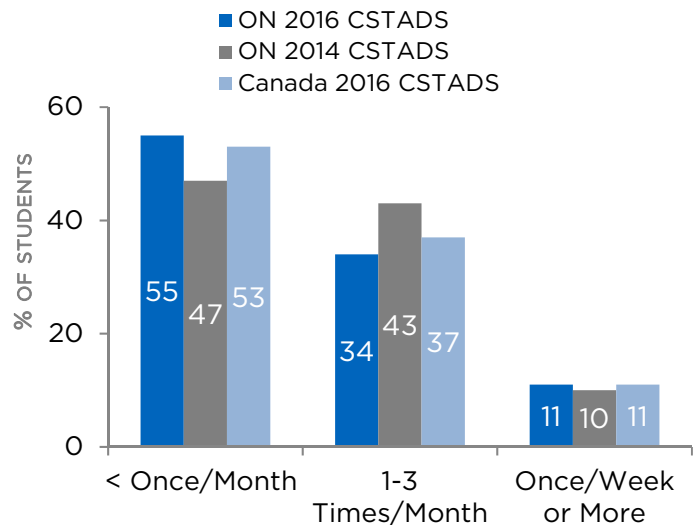
High-risk/binge drinking can be defined as drinking five or more drinks on a single occasion.¹⁷ In Ontario, 9% of students reported high-risk/binge drinking at least once a month in the past year. These students need support.

High-risk/binge drinking at this age may hinder important developmental changes. The potential for serious and unpredictable consequences are well known. For students, high-risk/binge drinking isn't "just a phase", not something that "all kids go through".

Did You Know?

Tobacco, alcohol and cannabis use are strongly related. Of students who smoked in the last 30 days, **94% drank alcohol and 83% used cannabis in the past 12 months.** Among non-smokers, only 41% and 12% used these substances in the last year respectively (2016/17 CSTADS).

FREQUENCY OF BINGE DRINKING
(of students who binge drink)

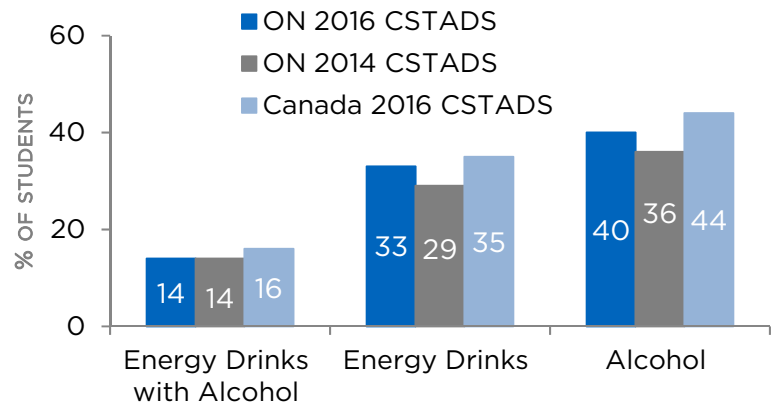


ENERGY DRINKS AND ALCOHOL

In Ontario, 14% of students have consumed an energy drink (e.g., such as Rockstar™ and Red Bull™) with alcohol, in the last 12 months.

Consuming energy drinks (i.e., Red Bull™) in combination with alcohol is common among Canadian students. The caffeine in the energy drinks keeps the consumer awake and able to party for a longer period of time. In the 2016/2017 CSTADS, 33% of grades 7-12 students who reported drinking alcohol in the last 12 months also reported consuming an energy drink on the same occasion as drinking alcohol.

ALCOHOL AND ENERGY DRINK CONSUMPTION in the last year



Did You Know?

People who consume alcohol mixed with energy drinks are:

- **More likely to binge drink** compared to people who do not mix their alcohol with energy drinks.¹⁸
- **2 times more likely** to report being taken advantage of sexually or to report taking advantage of someone else sexually when compared to drinkers who do not report mixing their alcohol with energy drinks.¹⁹
- **2 times more likely** to report riding with a driver who is impaired by alcohol when compared to drinkers who do not mix their alcohol with energy drinks.¹

Schools Can Take Action to Prevent Alcohol Abuse

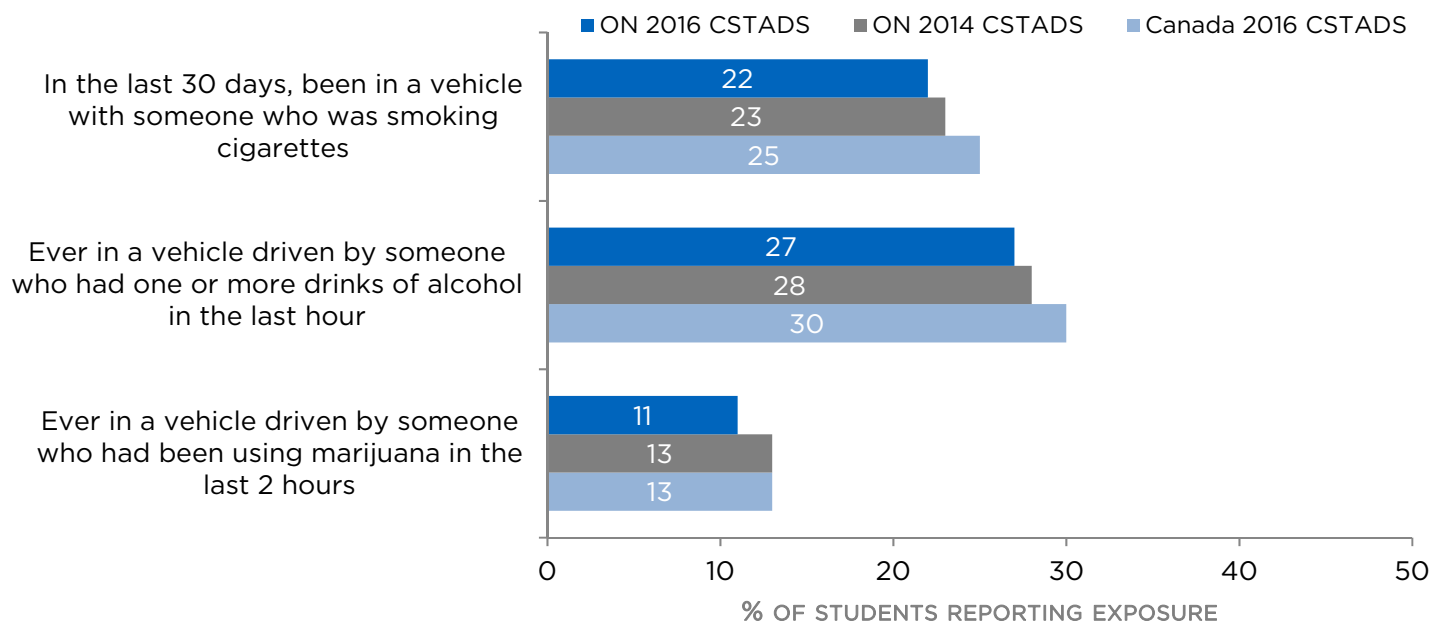
- Schools can encourage staff to seek timely opportunities to talk about high-risk/binge drinking with their students to help them develop strategies to minimize risk. For example, May 24 weekend and Prom are specific occasions where high-risk/binge drinking is typically the focus.
- Schools can provide students with the opportunity to discuss the pros and cons of using high-risk/binge drinking to put people at ease in social situations. Then schools can have students brainstorm healthier ways to have fun on weekends.
- Schools can have students work with local/provincial advocacy groups to identify how to put the issue of energy drinks and pre-mixed energy drinks with alcohol in the government's eye. For instance, promote more prominent warnings about the risks.
- Schools can ban energy drinks from school property.
- Schools can find ways to address common beliefs that can lead to alcohol abuse (e.g., "everyone does it" and "YOLO [you only live once]").

HEALTH RISK BEHAVIOUR IN VEHICLES

IMPAIRED OR HIGH DRIVING

According to the 2016/2017 CSTADS, 31% of Canadian students in grades 7-12 reported either driving in a vehicle themselves after consuming alcohol or riding in a vehicle with someone who had been consuming alcohol, and 14% reported either driving in a vehicle themselves after using cannabis or riding in a vehicle with a driver who had used cannabis. Unfortunately, many young people and some adults have the misperception that driving while high on cannabis is safer than driving under the influence of alcohol.²⁰ The 2016/2017 CSTADS revealed that 5% of Canadian students in grades 7-12 had ever driven a vehicle after drinking.¹ **In Ontario, 4%† of students reported ever driving after drinking.¹** Similar findings show that 4% of Canadian students in grades 7-12 reported having driven a vehicle within 2 hours of using cannabis, with **4%† in Ontario reporting ever driving after using cannabis.** The following graph shows the percentage of students in Ontario who were at risk in a vehicle with someone who had been drinking alcohol or using cannabis.

EXPOSURE TO HEALTH RISKS IN A VEHICLE



Did You Know?

The 2016/2017 CSTADS results reveal that, in the last 30 days, 25% of Canadian students rode in cars with someone who was smoking cigarettes, even though smoking in cars with children is banned in most provinces.



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Table 1

Student mental wellness in Ontario, percentage of students responding "sort of true for me" or "really true for me"

	Ontario 2016 CSTADS	Ontario 2014 CSTADS	Canada 2016 CSTADS
I feel like I am given the opportunity to make choices with my family and friends (Autonomy)	67	67	66
I feel free to express myself to family and friends (Autonomy)	77	79	78
I feel that my family and friends think I am good at things (Competency)	83	85	81
I feel I do things well (Competency)	80	83	80
I like to spend time with my parents and friends (Relatedness)	80	81	80
My family and friends like and care about me (Relatedness)	87	90	87

Table 2

School connectedness in Ontario, percentage of students responding "strongly agree" or "agree"

	Canada 2016 CSTADS	Ontario 2014 CSTADS	Ontario 2016 CSTADS
I feel safe at my school	88	89	88
I feel the teachers at my school treat me fairly	85	85	85
I am happy to be at my school	79	79	79
I feel I am part of my school	82	80	82
I feel close to people at my school	81	81	82

Table 3

Percentage of students who report being bullied in the last month

	Ontario 2016 CSTADS	Ontario 2014 CSTADS	Canada 2016 CSTADS
Total	36	38	35
Males	30	32	28
Females	43	45	41

Table 4

Percentage of students who report bullying others in the last month

	Ontario 2016 CSTADS	Ontario 2014 CSTADS	Canada 2016 CSTADS
Total	21	22	19
Males	20	22	18
Females	22	23	20

Table 5

Percentage of students who report ever trying a cigarette

	Ontario 2016 CSTADS	Ontario 2014 CSTADS	Canada 2016 CSTADS
Grade 7	*	*	4
Grade 8	4	5	8
Grade 9	7	7	14
Grade 10	16	15	22
Grade 11	24	25	29
Grade 12	29 [†]	33	34

*data are NOT reportable due to low numbers or high variability

[†] Moderate sampling variability, interpret with caution.

Table 6

Susceptibility to smoking (of students who have never smoked)

	Ontario 2016	Ontario 2014	Canada 2016
Grade 7	27	28	28
Grade 8	34	30	36
Grade 9	39	33	38
Grade 10	34	32	36
Grade 11	34	30	33
Grade 12	31	28	32

Table 7

Cigarettes, e-cigarettes and alternate forms of tobacco use

	Canada 2016 CSTADS	Ontario 2014 CSTADS	Ontario 2016 CSTADS
Cigarettes	18	16	15
Smokeless Tobacco	5	5	4
Water-Pipe	9	12	9
E-cigarettes	23	16	18
Cigarillos, Little Cigars, Cigars	13	14	11

Table 8

Flavoured product use in the last month* (of those who use tobacco products)

	Percentage of tobacco users who have used flavoured products
Ontario 2016 CSTADS	59
Ontario 2014 CSTADS	68
Canada 2016 CSTADS	54

* Flavoured products include: flavoured cigarettes, cigarillos, cigars, smokeless tobacco, and water-pipe.

Table 9

Frequency of cannabis use (of students who use cannabis)

	Ontario 2016 CSTADS	Ontario 2014 CSTADS	Canada 2016 CSTADS
Less than once a month	38	43	40
1-3 times a month	27	25	26
Once a week or more	34	32	34

Table 10

Frequency of alcohol use (of students who use alcohol)

	Ontario 2016 CSTADS	Ontario 2014 CSTADS	Canada 2016 CSTADS
Less than once a month	52	46	49
1-3 times a month	34	42	37
Once a week or more	14	13	14

Table 11

Frequency of binge drinking (of students who binge drink)

	Ontario 2016 CSTADS	Ontario 2014 CSTADS	Canada 2016 CSTADS
Less than once a month	55	47	53
1-3 times a month	34	43	37
Once a week or more	11	10	11

Table 12

Alcohol and energy drink consumption in the last year

	Ontario 2016 CSTADS	Ontario 2014 CSTADS	Canada 2016 CSTADS
Energy Drinks with Alcohol	14	14	16
Energy Drinks	33	29	35
Alcohol	40	36	44

Table 13

Exposure to health risks in a vehicle

	Canada 2016 CSTADS	Ontario 2016 CSTADS	Ontario 2014 CSTADS
Ever in a vehicle driven by someone who had been using marijuana in the last 2 hours	13	11	13
Ever in a vehicle driven by someone who had one or more drinks of alcohol in the last hour	30	27	28
In the last 30 days, been in a vehicle with someone who was smoking cigarettes	25	22	23