



Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse
Centre canadien de lutte contre l'alcoolisme et les toxicomanies

Canadian Drug Summary: Ecstasy

Introduction

Illegal drugs accounted for approximately \$8.2 billion (20.7%) of the nearly \$40 billion cost of substance abuse in Canada in 2002. In the same year, 1,695 deaths, 554,131 criminal offences and 133,120 criminal charges were attributable to illegal drugs.¹

Ecstasy is a synthetic drug made in illegal laboratories, often with a number of different chemicals. Methylendioxyamphetamin (MDMA) was once the main and often only chemical used to produce ecstasy. Today, many drugs sold as “ecstasy” do not contain even trace amounts of MDMA.

Ecstasy is sold in pill, capsule and powder form, making it nearly impossible to determine its contents. Pills are typically coloured and stamped with a logo. Common terms for ecstasy are X, E and XTC.

Legal Status in Canada

MDMA is a Schedule I drug under the [Canadian Controlled Drugs and Substances Act](#) (CDSA). Possession of MDMA can result in seven years imprisonment, while trafficking and production of the drug can result in life imprisonment.²

Ranking among Top Five Substances

Ecstasy is the fourth most used substance by Canadians after alcohol, cannabis and hallucinogens.³

Table 1: Top five substances used in the past year by Canadians

Rank in Canada	1	2	3	4	5
General Population (15+)	Alcohol (77.0%)	Cannabis (10.7%)	Hallucinogens (1.1%)	Ecstasy (0.7%)	Cocaine/Crack (0.7%)
Youth (15-24)	Alcohol (71.5%)	Cannabis (25.1%)	Hallucinogens (4.6%)	Ecstasy (3.8%)	Cocaine/Crack (2.7%)
Adults (25+)	Alcohol (78.0%)	Cannabis (7.9%)	Hallucinogens (0.4%)	Cocaine (0.3%)	N/A (suppressed)

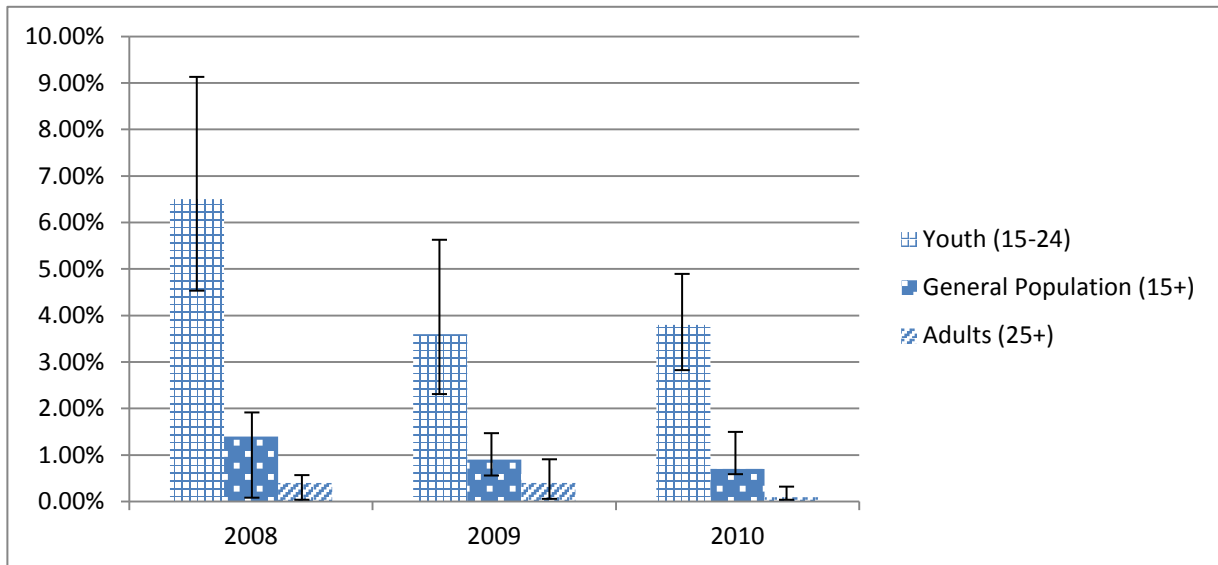
Source: Health Canada, [Canadian Alcohol and Drug Use Monitoring Survey](#) (CADUMS 2010)

Past-Year Prevalence in Canada and Internationally

- **General population (age 15+):** The prevalence of ecstasy use among the general population is quite low (~1%) and has decreased by half since 2008 (CADUMS [2008](#), [2009](#), [2010](#)).³

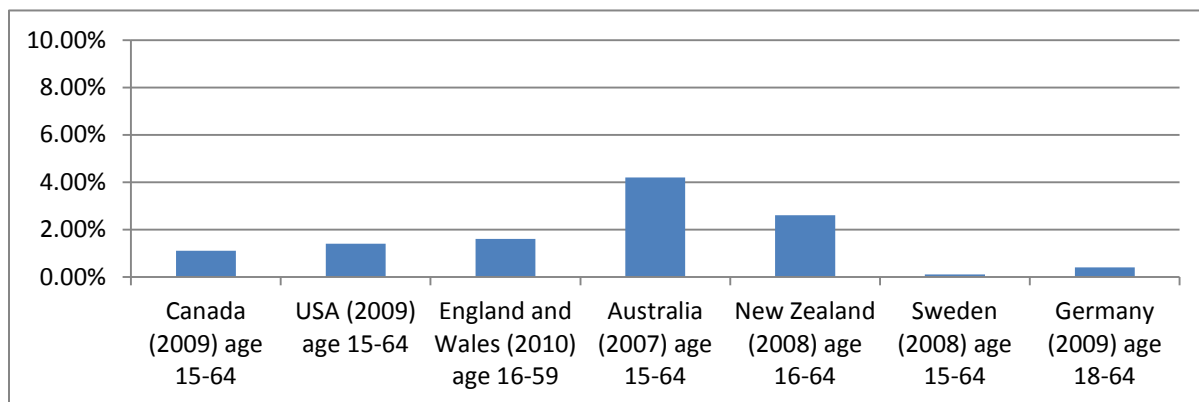
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Figure 1: Prevalence of self-reported ecstasy use among Canadians by age category (CADUMS)³



- **Youth (age 15-24):** Youth have the highest rates of ecstasy use among all Canadians (3.8% for 2010).³ Use of ecstasy is relatively high among students in Grades 7 to 12 (3.4-7.2%).⁴
- **Adults (age 25+):** Canadian adults have the lowest rates of ecstasy use among the Canadian population.³
- **Gender:** Use of ecstasy remained statistically unchanged between 2008–2010 for each of the respective sub-populations (i.e., young males and females, adult males and females).³ Data from the 2010 CADUMS indicates that the prevalence of ecstasy use does not significantly differ between males and females.
- **International:** According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), ecstasy use is lower in Canada than in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, but higher than Sweden or Germany.⁵

Figure 2: Prevalence of self-reported ecstasy use among the general population by country



Source: UNODC, [World Drug Report 2011](http://www.unodc.org/wdr2011/)

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Associated Harms

- **Short-term:** Muscle aches; nausea and vomiting; teeth grinding; increased energy; hyperactivity; increased heart rate; increased temperature and sweating; depression; sleeplessness.⁶
- **Long-term:** Sleeping problems; high blood pressure; liver problems; panic attacks; jaundice; memory deficits; attention deficits.⁶

Additional Resources

- Xperiment.ca
- [*Cross-Canada Report on Student Alcohol and Drug Use*](#)
- [*The Costs of Substance Abuse in Canada 2002*](#)

¹ Rehm, J., Baliunas, S., Brochu, S., Fischer, B., Gnam, W., Patra, J., Popova, S., Sarnocinska-Hart, A., Taylor, B., (2006). *The Costs of Substance Abuse in Canada 2002*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse.

² Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, SC 1996, c 19, <<http://canlii.ca/t/lgn8>> retrieved on 2012-08-30

³ Health Canada. (2010). Canadian Alcohol and Drug Use Monitoring Survey (CADUMS).

⁴ Young, M.M., Saewyc, E., Boak, A., Jahrig, J., Anderson, B., Doiron, Y., Taylor, S., Pica, L., Laprise, P., and Clark, H (Student Drug Use Surveys Working Group) (2011). *Cross-Canada report on student alcohol and drug use: Technical Report*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse.

⁵ UNODC, World Drug Report 2011 (United Nations Publication, Sales No. E. 11.XI.10).

⁶ Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse. (2012). *Addictionary: Ecstasy*. Xperiment.ca



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The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) provides national leadership, develops sustainable partnerships and advances solutions to ensure that all people in Canada live in a healthy society free of alcohol- and other drug-related harm.

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