

Drug Use (youth)



Noteworthy:

- The results of the Canadian Addictions Survey (sited in the text to the right) can be found at: http://corp.aadac.com/content/corporate/research/cas2004_alberta_summary.
- The portion of Albertans over 15 years of age reporting the use of cannabis in the last year increased from 6.5% in 1989 to 15.4% in 2004.
- In 2003, there were 5,039 persons charged with drug related offences in Alberta.
- One study estimated the total cost of substance abuse for Canada at \$18.45 billion, or 2.7% of GDP; the authors say this is an optimistic estimate of costs since the actual figure is likely to be significantly higher.
- The Alcohol and Drug Addictions Commission estimates that the economic and social costs of illicit drug use in Alberta were \$135 million in 1992, or \$51 per person.
- According to Alberta's Chief Medical Examiner, 6% of investigated deaths in 1995 were drug-related. These included suicides from drug overdose or poisoning and accidental deaths involving drugs or alcohol, which caused or contributed to mortality.

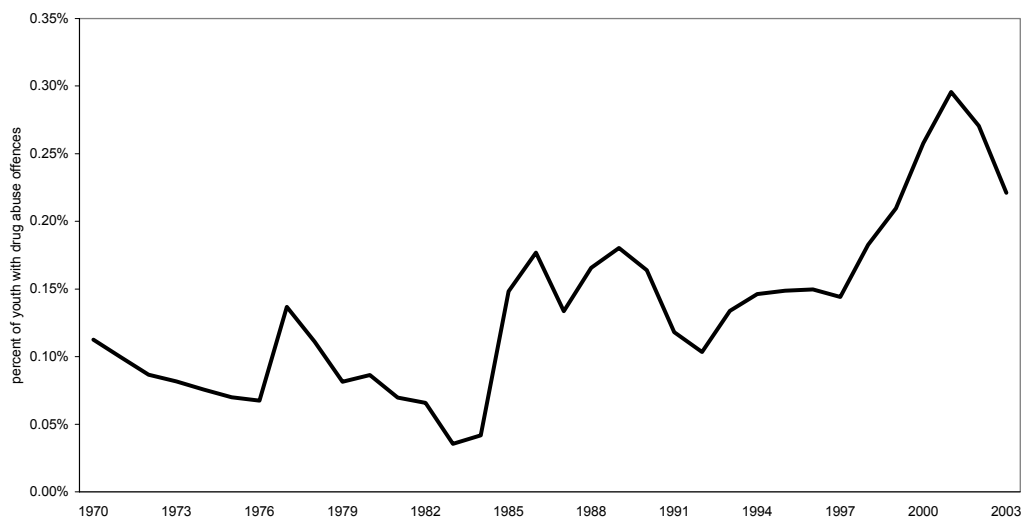
Substance Abuse in Alberta: How Much?

The Canadian Addiction Survey 2004 for Alberta revealed that the portion of Albertans over 15 years of age reporting the use of cannabis in the last year increased from 6.5% in 1989 to 15.4% in 2004. Almost half of all Albertans have tried cannabis at least once in their lifetime and three in 20 Albertans have used it during the last year. Almost half of those who

have used cannabis in the last year use the drug weekly or more, with about one in five using the drug daily or almost daily. Use of harder drugs such as cocaine/crack, LSD, and heroin was lower than cannabis, with 19.7% of Albertans sampled for the Canadian Addition Survey reporting the use of an illicit drug other than cannabis during their lifetime. In 2003, there were 5,039 per-

sons charged with drug related offences in Alberta. Of that total, 14% of offences were youths and the remainder adults. The figure below shows the percent of Alberta youths charged with drug related offences from 1971 to 1995. The percent of youth charged with drug related offences has varied over the years from 3% in 1971 to 14% in 2003.

Percentage of Youth Charged with Drug Related Offences, 1971 to 2003



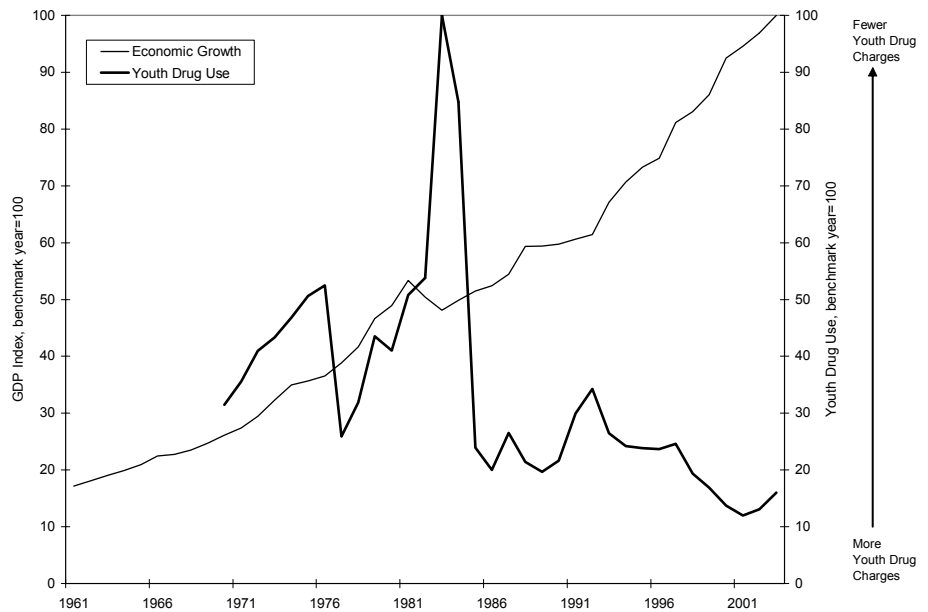
Source: Statistics Canada. CANSIM Table 252-0014

So What?

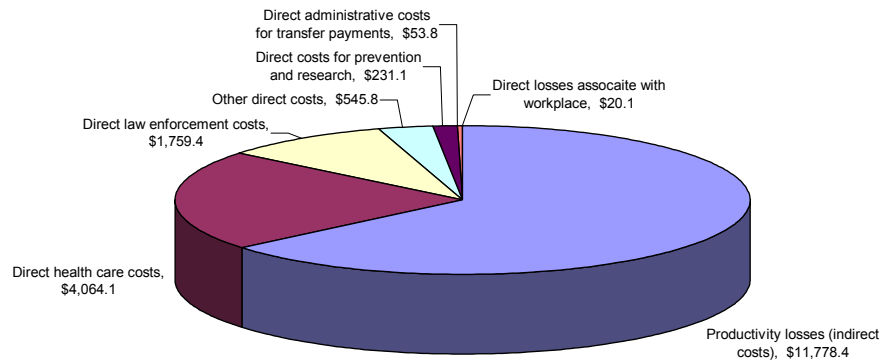
The figure at the upper right shows youth drug use and provincial Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as indices. Although the trend in youth drug use is variable, the figure shows that as provincial GDP has increased, so too has drug use by youths. And this increase is costly. Drug use and the economy of the drug trade affects all of society through health costs, crime, financial stress and other costs to social cohesion at the household and community level. One study estimated the total cost of substance abuse for Canada at \$18.45 billion or 2.7% of GDP, which the authors argue is an optimistic estimate of costs since the actual figure is likely to be significantly higher (see figure and source below).

The Alberta Alcohol and Drug Addictions Commission estimates that the economic and social costs of illicit drug use in Alberta were \$135 million in 1992, or \$51 per person. Most of these costs (\$88 million) related to productivity losses due to death and disability, followed by the cost of law enforcement, courts, corrections and customs and excise (\$30 million). According to Alberta's Chief Medical Examiner, 6% of investigated deaths in 1995 were drug-related, including suicides from drug overdose or poisoning and accidental deaths involving drugs or alcohol, which caused or contributed to mortality. Among adults surveyed in 1998, 35% reported personal or financial harm because of their own or someone else's drug use. If we assume the 1992 per capita estimate of \$51 to hold true in 2003, the total cost of illicit drug use in Alberta would have totaled \$161.1 million in 2003.

Youth Drug Use Index: Where are we today?



Total Costs of Alcohol, Tobacco and Illicit Drugs in Canada, 1992



Source: Single et. Al 1996. Canadian Centre for Substance Abuse. www.ccsa.ca/costhigh

The cost of illicit drug use in Alberta in 2003 was \$161.1 million, which is equal to 0.11% of provincial GDP.

As an index, youth drug use in Alberta ranked 16 on a scale of 0 to 100, where 100 represents the lowest youth drug rates that occurred between 1970 and 2003 (see figure above).

