



December 31, 2009

## CONTRABAND USE AMONG ONTARIO YOUTH

### The Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health's Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS) is the longest ongoing school survey of adolescents in Canada and the second longest in North America. Findings from the survey describe past year use of alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs, the non-medical use of prescription drugs, and changes since 1977. A total of 9,112 students (65% of selected students) in grades 7 to 12 from 47 school boards, 181 schools, and 573 classes participated in the 2009 OSDUHS. All data are based on self-reports derived from anonymous questionnaires administered in classrooms between November 2008 and June 2009. This update is based on excerpts from the tobacco summary section of the report, *Drug Use among Ontario Students, 1977-2009: Detailed OSDUHS Findings*.

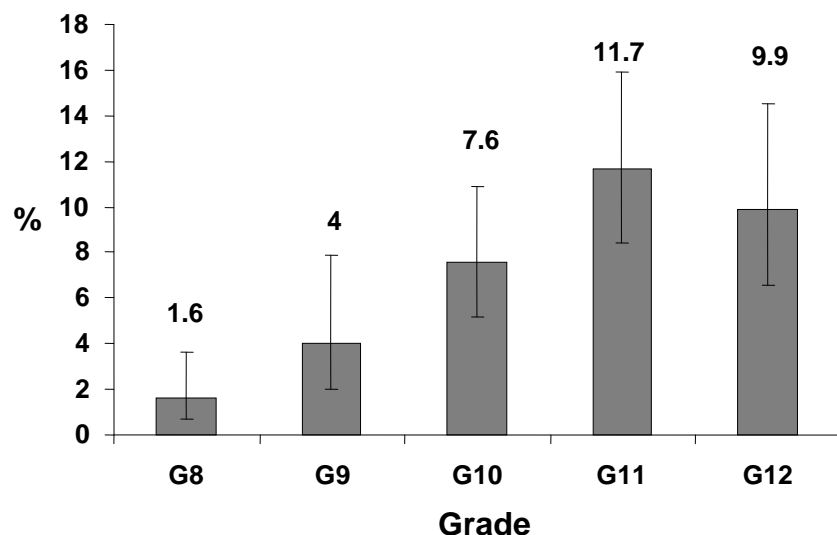
### Contraband Cigarette Smoking

For the first time in the survey's history, students were asked whether they had smoked any contraband cigarettes originating from native reserves during the previous 12 months. These cigarettes are regularly sold in clear plastic bags, although some are professionally packaged with standard health warnings. Only status Natives can legally purchase these cigarettes on reserves, while all others must pay the requisite federal and provincial taxes. These cigarettes, however, are illegally sold outside reserves without payment of the requisite taxes. Their lower prices make them especially attractive to youth.

### Prevalence of Contraband Cigarette Smoking among Ontario Youth

A random half-sample of approximately 4,200 students was asked about their contraband cigarette use. Use was defined as smoking at least one whole cigarette (more than a few puffs) in the last 12 months. Approximately 6.4% or 60,000 of all students reported smoking contraband cigarettes during the previous year. Among past year smokers only (includes daily and occasional smokers and excludes those having tried cigarettes), approximately half (53.5%) reported smoking contraband cigarettes. While there was no significant difference in use by sex and region, a significant grade effect demonstrated the increasing likelihood of smoking contraband cigarettes between grades 8 (1.6%) and 11 (11.7%).

**Figure 1: Past Year Contraband Cigarette Smoking by Grade, 2009, OSDUHS**



### **Conclusion**

The availability of contraband cigarettes undermines youth tobacco control efforts as it provides a less expensive alternative to commercial cigarettes. Further research is needed to investigate the determinants of contraband use as well as effective policy measures to reduce its use among Ontario youth.

### **Acknowledgement**

The 2009 OSDUHS report was authored by Angela Paglia-Boak, Robert Mann, Edward Adlaf and Jürgen Rehm. The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health is a co-sponsor of the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit.

### **Reference**

Paglia-Boak, A, Mann, RE, Adlaf, EM, & Rehm, J. *Drug Use among Ontario Students, 1977-2009: Detailed OSDUHS Findings*. (CAMH Research Document Series No. 27).