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## Substance Use in Canada Costs \$38.4 Billion a Year

### Alcohol and tobacco together cause the most harm—by a large margin

**Ottawa, June 26, 2018** — Substance use costs Canadian society \$38.4 billion a year, or almost \$1,100 for every person in Canada, according to a new study. Alcohol and tobacco use contributed over two thirds (70%) of these costs, with opioids ranked a distant third. These costs have been rising in recent years, especially for alcohol, opioids and cannabis.

Released today, the *Canadian Substance Use Costs and Harms* study was produced by the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) and the University of Victoria's Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research (CISUR). This comprehensive study examined the costs and harms associated with substance use. Estimates span four broad areas: health care, lost production, criminal justice and other direct costs, and cover a broad range of substances including alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, opioids and central nervous system (CNS) depressants, cocaine and CNS stimulants, and other substances such as hallucinogens and inhalants. The study provides national, provincial and territorial estimates for the cost and harms of substance use between 2007 and 2014—the latest year for which comprehensive data was available.

“Alcohol causes more substance use-related costs for Canadians than either tobacco or all other drugs combined. This is particularly the case when it comes to lost productivity due to premature deaths and disabling injuries,” says Dr. Tim Stockwell, director of CISUR. “The alcohol industry has been extensively deregulated in Canada over the past decade. While we urgently need to address harms from opioid use, policymakers should not overlook critical policies needed to reduce harms from the legal substances we now take for granted.”

Costs related to lost productivity amounted to \$15.7 billion or 41 percent of the total, while healthcare costs were \$11.1 billion or 29 percent of the total. The third highest contributor to total substance-related costs was criminal justice with a cost of \$9.0 billion or 23 percent of the total.

“We are in a critical period for Canadian policy making about substance use, given the opioid crisis and the impending legalization of cannabis. These data provide evidence we can use to develop and evaluate the success of such substance use policies,” says Dr. Matthew Young, senior research and policy analyst at CCSA and one of the principal investigators.

Drawing from a variety of national, provincial and territorial databases, the data will be updated annually to help inform decision makers, policy advisors and researchers. To view the full *Canadian Substance Use Costs and Harms* report, visit [www.ccsa.ca](http://www.ccsa.ca).



**Dr. Tim Stockwell**, director of the University of Victoria's CISUR and a psychology professor at the University of Victoria, has published over 400 research papers, book chapters and monographs, as well as several books on the prevention and treatment of substance use issues. He worked in clinical and research work in the United Kingdom before spending 16 years with Australia's National Drug Research Institute as director. Stockwell received the 2013 E.M. Jellinek Memorial Award, an international prize for outstanding research on social, cultural and policy aspects of alcohol, as well as a 2014 Health Research Leadership Award from Research Canada on behalf of CISUR.

**Dr. Matthew M. Young** is a senior research and policy analyst at CCSA and an adjunct research professor of psychology at Carleton University. He leads CCSA's drug use epidemiology research activities. Young is a senior advisor on the Canadian Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use (CCENDU) and the Student Drug Use Surveys Working Group, and leads CCSA's work on novel psychoactive substances.

The **Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction** (CCSA) was created by Parliament to provide national leadership to address substance use in Canada. A trusted counsel, CCSA provides national guidance to decision makers by harnessing the power of research, curating knowledge and bringing together diverse perspectives. To learn more visit [www.ccsa.ca](http://www.ccsa.ca).

The University of Victoria's **Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research** (CISUR; formerly the Centre for Addictions Research BC or CARBC) is a network of individuals and groups dedicated to the study of substance use and addiction in support of community-wide efforts to promote health and reduce harm. Their research is used to inform a broad range of projects, reports, publications and initiatives aimed at providing all Canadians and beyond with access to happier, healthier lives, whether using substances or not. To learn more visit [www.uvic.ca/cisur](http://www.uvic.ca/cisur).

### Media availability

Dr. Stockwell is available for telephone, skype, on-camera and in-person interviews. He is located in Victoria, B.C.

To book an interview with Dr. Stockwell contact Jen Theil ([jtheil@uvic.ca](mailto:jtheil@uvic.ca) or 250-472-5445).

Dr. Young is available for telephone, skype, on-camera and in-person interviews. He is located in Ottawa, Ont.

To book an interview with Dr. Young contact Lee Arbon ([larbon@ccsa.ca](mailto:larbon@ccsa.ca) or 613 235-4048 ext. 276)



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