

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

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Proportion of Crimes Associated with Substance Use

Over 40% of crimes committed by offenders admitted to Canadian federal institutions (excluding impaired driving or violations of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act) are associated with substance use.

Why we did this study

In 2002, Canadian crime-related attributable fractions¹ (AFs) were developed for alcohol and illicit drugs². The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) and the Canadian Institute on Substance Use Research (CISUR) partnered with the Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) Research Branch to update and expand (for a broader range of substances) these crime-related AFs.³

Although some offences may be considered 100% attributable to alcohol or substance use (SU) (i.e., impaired driving or the trafficking, possession or manufacturing of controlled substances), only a portion of other offences are a direct result of SU. These offences include violent offences such as homicide or assault and non-violent offences such as theft or arson. AFs are used to determine the proportions of offences causally linked to alcohol or other substance use.

What we did

The Men's Computerized Assessment of Substance Abuse (M-CASA) was completed by 27,803 federal men offenders between 2006 and 2016. The Women's-CASA (W-CASA) was completed by 1,335 federal women offenders between 2011 and 2016. We examined the proportion of offenders who indicated: 1) they would not have committed the offence for which they were incarcerated had they not been under the influence of alcohol or other substances at the time of their offence and 2) they committed the offence to support their use of alcohol or other substances. If they indicated substances were involved, questions from the CASA were used to assess which substances contributed to the offence. The proportions (AFs) of crimes that involved alcohol or other substances were summed to determine the proportion of crimes that would not have occurred in the absence of alcohol or other substances.

What we found

Results showed that 42% of all partially attributable offences⁴ were due to the involvement of alcohol or other

substances. Alcohol was associated more with violent (20%) than non-violent crime (7%), while other substances were equally associated with violent and non-violent crime (26% and 25%, respectively).

Substance category	Attributable fractions	
	Violent offences	Non-violent offences (excluding substance defined offences)
Alcohol	0.1991	0.0719
Cannabis	0.0546	0.0311
Opioids	0.0466	0.0626
CNS depressants	0.0114	0.0096
Cocaine	0.1059	0.1147
Other CNS stimulants	0.0315	0.0298
Other drugs	0.0089	0.0062
All substances combined	0.4581	0.3259

What it means

Using self-report data, over 40% of offences are a result of SU, with alcohol responsible for the greatest proportion of crimes. Added to offences that are 100% attributable to SU, these findings highlight the fact that a significant proportion of criminal justice expenditures (i.e., policing, courts and corrections costs) are attributable to SU.

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For more information

Canadian Substance Use Costs and Harms Scientific Working Group. (2018). Canadian substance use costs and harms (2007–2014). (Prepared by the CISUR and the CCSA.) Ottawa, ON: CCSA.

To obtain a PDF version of the full report, explore the online tool or for other inquiries, please visit www.csuch.ca.

For other inquiries, please e-mail the [Research Branch](#).

You can also visit the [Research Publications](#) section for a full list of reports and one-page summaries.

¹ The proportion of crimes that would not have occurred absent substance use.

² Pemanen K, Cousineau M, Brochu S, Sun F. (2002) Proportions of crimes associated with alcohol and other drugs in Canada. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse.

³ This work was incorporated into the [Canadian Substance Use Costs and Harms \(CSUCH\)](#)³ report and accompanying [online tool](#) that assess the harms and costs of SU

in Canada from 2007 to 2014 across four cost types (healthcare, lost productivity, criminal justice and other costs).

⁴ Excludes 8,649 offenders who had committed 100% attributable offences such as impaired driving or crimes defined under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

