

PROFILE 1

Addictive Behaviours in Alberta's Workforce

Three population-based surveys, conducted in 1992, 2002 and 2009, provided prevalence estimates for addictive behaviours in Alberta's workforce. In *The Alberta Survey of Addictive Behaviours and Mental Health in the Workforce: 2009*, addictive behaviours (smoking, alcohol use, other drug use and gambling) were assessed in 2817 employed adults. This profile highlights results from the 2009 population and compares these to the 1992 and 2002 survey results.

How many individuals in Alberta's workforce engaged in addictive behaviours in 2009?

Almost three quarters of employed Albertans used alcohol, over half gambled and close to a quarter smoked. The use of illicit drugs was much less common in comparison to the other addictive behaviours (see Table 1).

Table 1: Prevalence of Addictive Behaviours in Alberta, 2009

 <p>Smoking</p>	 <p>Alcohol Use</p>	 <p>Illicit Drug Use</p>	 <p>Gambling</p>
<p>22.5%</p>	<p>74%</p>	<p>7%</p>	<p>57%</p>

Age and sex adjusted to 2009 population values.

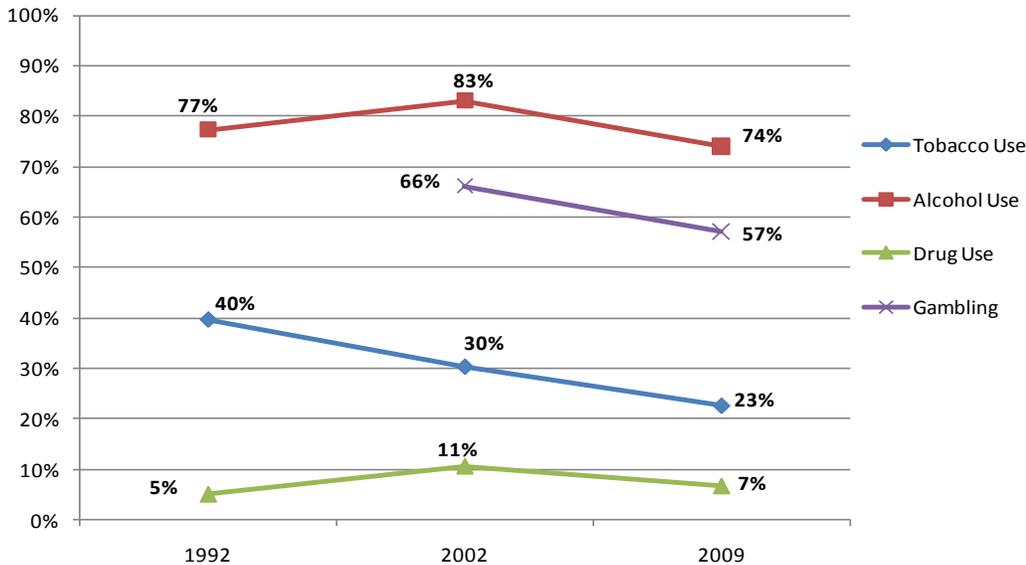
Were there differences in addictive behaviour rates by age and gender?

With the exception of gambling, gender was a risk factor for addictive behaviours in the workplace. A greater proportion of males were smokers (24% versus 18%) and males were more than twice as likely to report alcohol abuse (9.4% versus 4.1%) and illicit drug abuse (4.5% versus 1.9%). Typically, younger age was associated with elevated rates of substance-related addictive behaviours. Gambling on the other hand was lowest in young adults, increased steadily to peak between 45-64 years of age, then tapered off after age 65.

Were there changes in patterns of addictive behaviours across the three surveys?

A change over time was shown for the prevalence of addictive behaviours in the workforce (see Figure 1). Comparisons showed that tobacco use decreased considerably from 1992 (40%) to 2009 (23%). There were no discernible trends for alcohol and other drug use across the three intervals. Although gambling behaviours were not measured in 1992, prevalence rates in the workplace appear to have decreased in 2009 relative to 2002.

Figure 1: Twelve-month Adjusted Prevalence Rates from 1992 - 2009*



* Age & sex adjusted to 2009 population values

Summary

- Smoking has decreased considerably over time. Those smokers remaining in the workforce tend to be younger males.
- Alcohol consumption was highest and illicit drug use was lowest; however, in both cases males were at a much greater risk of experiencing these problems relative to females.
- More than half of the respondents engaged in some form of gambling. These behaviours seemed to increase with age, which differed from the patterns evidenced for substance use.

Addictive behaviours, especially in males who appear to be at greater risk for these problems, need to be a consideration in the forefront of Alberta's workplaces. Addictions often co-occur with mental health problems (see Profile 3) and are reported more frequently in certain lines of work (see Profile 4), highlighting important considerations for treatment-related service planning. Given the prevalence rates shown here, it is important to establish prevention and health promotion initiatives to help reduce the occurrence of addictive behaviours, and Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) to assist workers in getting support for their issues (see Profile 8).

For a link to the full report, *The Alberta Survey of Addictive Behaviours and Mental Health in the Workforce: 2009*, visit: <http://ihe.ca/publications/library/2011/the-alberta-survey-of-addictive-behaviours-and-mental-health-in-the-workforce-2009/>

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