

# CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

## Men Offenders' Substance Use Patterns: An Ethnocultural Comparison over Time (2006 to 2019)

*CNS stimulant use increased among all ethnocultural groups, except Black offenders, and IDU increased among Other ethnocultural offenders.*

### Why we did this study

Indigenous and White offenders have greater substance use needs than other ethnocultural groups.<sup>1</sup> Substance use patterns change over time,<sup>2</sup> therefore, this study was conducted to explore the substance use patterns of ethnocultural men offenders over time.

### What we did

Pre-incarceration substance use patterns of federal men offenders are assessed by the Computerized Assessment of Substance Abuse for men (M-CASA) upon admission into custody. Between January 2006 and March 2019,<sup>3</sup> a total of 34,202 men offenders were assessed and categorized into ethnocultural groups: White (63%; *n* = 21,405), Indigenous (18%; *n* = 6,154), Black (10%; *n* = 3,517), and Other ethnocultural groups (9%; *n* = 3,126).<sup>4</sup> Year of assessment was categorized into two-year increments for analysis.

### What we found

Offenders indicating lifetime drug use increased across all study groups; the greatest increase was in the Other group (21%, from 42% to 63%), followed by Indigenous (20%, from 71% to 91%), White (16%; from 63% to 79%), and Black offenders (12%; from 39% to 51%). Lifetime alcohol use decreased slightly among Black offenders and offenders in the other group by 4% (both from 91% to 87%). White and Indigenous offenders' lifetime alcohol use remained constant over the study period.

Across all ethnocultural groups, poly-substance use (using multiple substances in one day) increased over time. White offenders reported the largest increase (22%, from 34% to 56%), followed by Indigenous offenders (15%, from 45% to 60%), Other ethnocultural groups (11%, from 17% to 28%), and Black offenders (10%, from 13% to 23%).

Indigenous and White offenders reported a 6% decrease of injection drug use (IDU) (from 31% to 25% and from 26% to 20%, respectively). Reports of IDU among Black offenders also decreased by 2% (from 4% to 2%) but

increased by 5% (from 2% to 7%) among the Other group. All groups reported a decrease in using substances while incarcerated; White and Indigenous offenders reported the largest decreases to 20% and 31%, respectively.

Across all ethnocultural groups, cannabis has been the most used drug over time and cocaine/crack has been the second most used drug (see Table). Central nervous system (CNS) stimulant use has increased, particularly for Indigenous and Other ethnocultural offenders.

**Table: Most Used Drugs over Time across Ethnocultural groups**

Ethnocultural Group	Time Periods	
	2006-2007	2018-2019
Black	Cannabis (30%) Cocaine/crack (3%) CNS stimulants (2%)	Cannabis (25%) Cocaine/crack (5%) Opioids (2%)
Indigenous	Cannabis (50%) Cocaine/crack (12%) Opioids (2%)	Cannabis (26%) Cocaine/crack (12%) CNS stimulants (17%)
White	Cannabis (26%) Cocaine/crack (24%) Opioids (10%)	Cannabis (22%) Cocaine/crack (12%) Opioids and CNS stimulants (both 11%)
Other Ethnocultural groups	Cannabis (27%) Cocaine/crack (15%) CNS stimulants and opioids (both 4%)	Cannabis (24%) CNS stimulants and cocaine/crack (both 7%) Opioids (6%)

### What it means

These results demonstrate that substance use patterns have changed over time for all ethnocultural groups, specifically increases in lifetime drug use and poly-substance use. However, there are a few unique patterns across ethnocultural groups, such as the increased use of CNS stimulants among Indigenous offenders and the increase of IDU among the Other group.

### For more information

Please e-mail the [Research Branch](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Garrel, S. & Farrell MacDonald, S. Substance use patterns of ethnocultural men offenders (RIB-20-04). Ottawa, ON: CSC.

<sup>2</sup> Cram, S. & Farrell MacDonald, S. Federal men offender's substance use over time: 2009-2016 (RIB-20-06). Ottawa, ON: CSC

<sup>3</sup> Data from phase 1 of the M-CASA implementation in the Atlantic and Ontario regions between 2002 and 2005 were also examined, but are not presented.

<sup>4</sup> Other ethnicities include Arab, Asian, Latin American, multi-ethnic offenders and offenders who did not self-report an ethnicity.

