



# Adult Substance Use & Harms in the SWPH Region

Tobacco

Health Status Report  
Southwestern Public Health  
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# Summary

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In 2019/2020, the proportion of respondents in the SWPH region who reported being a current daily smoker had increased from the previous cycle of the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) in 2017/2018 to reach 17.2%. During the same period, the proportion of current daily smokers decreased across the province to 10.0%.

There have been increases in current daily smoking among SWPH residents aged 45 to 64 years and over since 2015, especially among males. Although the proportion of pregnant women reporting smoking at admission for birth has decreased over time, as of 2022, over 5% still reported smoking, which increased substantially among young mothers (24 years of age or under).

Targeted local programs and health promotion strategies for priority populations (such as middle-aged males, youth, and pregnant women) could be instrumental in decreasing the proportion of local current smokers.

# Substance Use & Harms Among Adults

## Tobacco & E-cigarette use

### Tobacco Use and Public Health

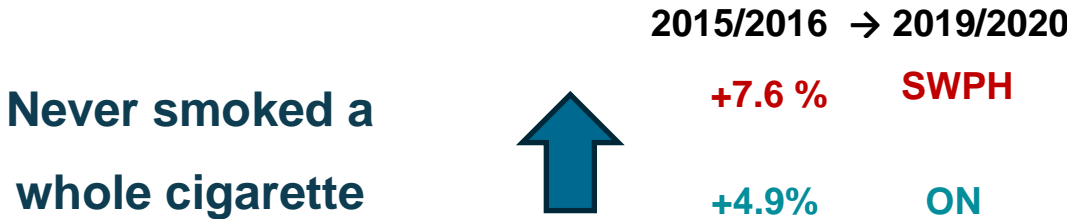
Tobacco use (including e-cigarettes and vaping) is associated with many health risks and is the leading preventable cause of premature death in Ontario and across Canada.<sup>1</sup>

Source:   
Government of  
Canada. Tobacco  
and Premature  
Death. 2023

Understanding local trends in tobacco use supports the development of tailored health promotion strategies and local programs geared toward reducing tobacco use. In turn, this would contribute to reducing the risk of tobacco-related morbidity and mortality among Southwestern Public Health (SWPH) residents over time.

### Lifetime abstainers

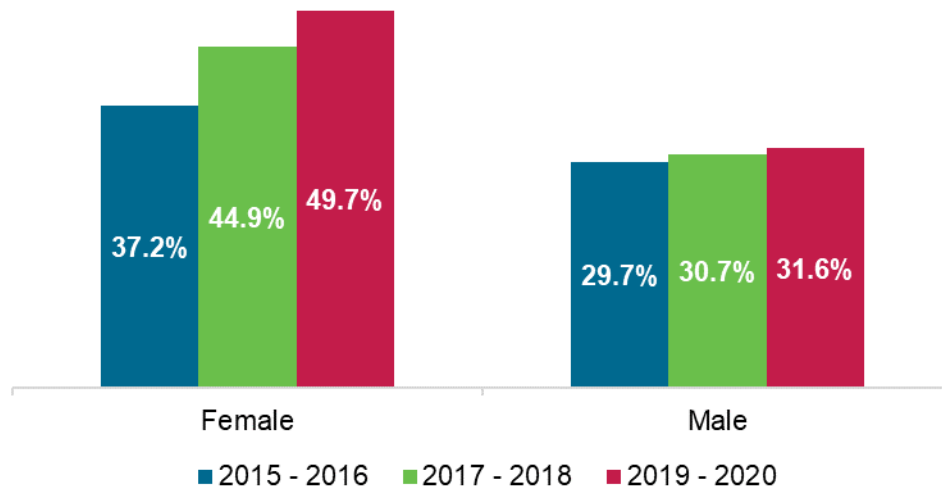
The proportion of respondents who reported that they have never smoked a whole cigarette in their lifetime has increased over time, which was also evident across Ontario. In 2019/2020, 41.6% of SWPH residents reported that they had never smoked a whole cigarette compared to 49.7% of Ontario residents.



In 2019/2020, approximately half (49.7%) of local females reported lifetime abstinence from tobacco cigarettes, which is an increase of more than 10% from 2015/2016. On the contrary, the proportion of male residents reporting never smoking a cigarette remained relatively the same over time with little to no improvement (**Figure 1**).

Figure 1

Locally, an increasing proportion of females reported lifetime abstinence from tobacco cigarettes where there has been minimal change in the lifetime abstinence among male residents.



SWPH residents between the ages of 20 and 44 reported increases in lifetime abstinence from smoking over time. In 2015/2016, 34.3% reported abstaining from smoking, whereas in 2019/2020, 44.7% reported abstinence. This indicates that fewer young adults are initiating tobacco use, or that they are initiating it later in life, as there was not much change among residents between the ages of 45 to 64 and 65 plus.

**Data source:**   
Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS). StatsCan.  
2015 – 2016  
2017 – 2018  
2019 – 2020

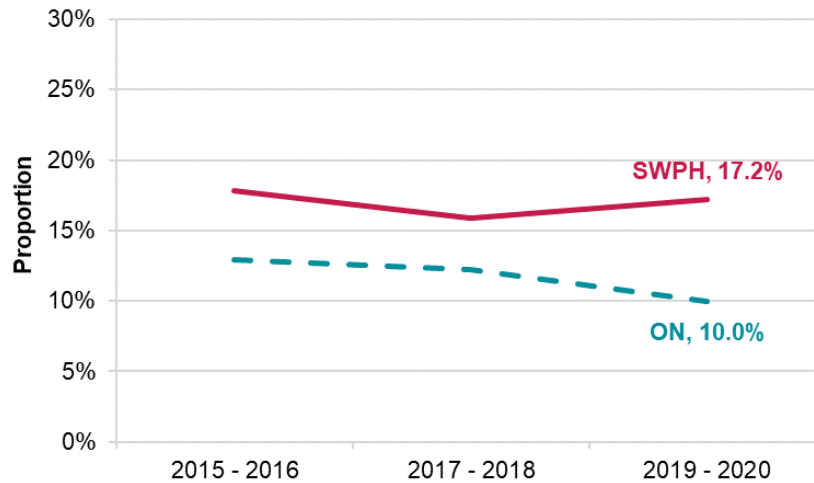
### Current daily smoker

Current daily smokers are defined as respondents who reported smoking at least one full tobacco cigarette each day in the last 30 days. Locally, the proportion of residents who report being a current daily smoker has remained relatively consistent over time (17.8% in 2015/2016 versus 17.2% in 2019/2020), with little improvement (**Figure 2**).

This contrasts with the trend across Ontario, which has been decreasing year over year since 2015. However, the decreases were relatively minimal over time (12.9% in 2015/2016 to 10.0% in 2019/2020).

**Figure 2**

**The proportion of residents in the SWPH region who reported being a current daily smoker has remained relatively consistent over time, whereas there was a marginal decrease across Ontario.**

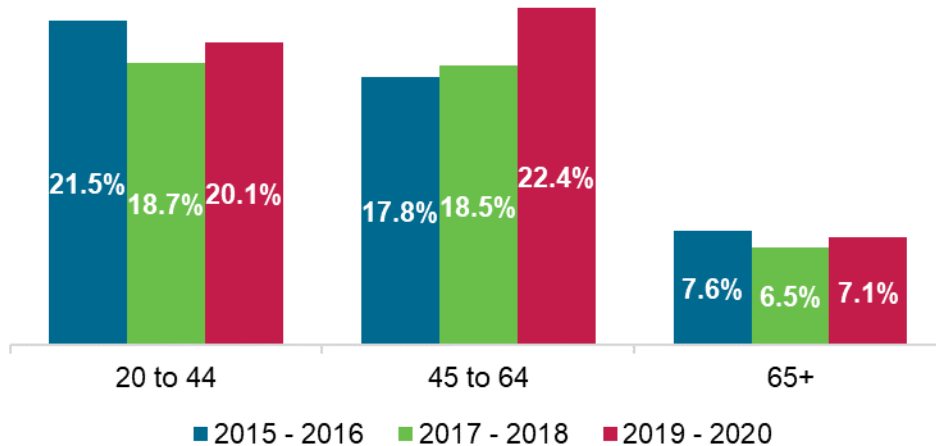


On average, male residents report proportions of current daily smoking are approximately 6% higher compared to female residents between 2015 and 2020 (not shown). As of the 2019/2020 cycle of the CCHS, 21.4% of SWPH males report being a current daily smoker compared to 13.0% of SWPH females.

Locally, only residents between the ages of 45 and 64 reported a significant increase in current daily smoking between 2015 and 2020 (**Figure 3**). In 2019/2020, 22.4% of residents aged 45 to 64 reported being current daily smokers, which was 4.6% higher compared to the 2015/2016 cycle. During that same cycle, male residents between 45 and 64 had the highest proportion of current smokers at 26.8% (not shown).

Figure 3

The proportion of SWPH residents between the ages of 45 and 64 who reported being a current daily smoker has increased year over year since 2015/16, while those of other ages decreased.

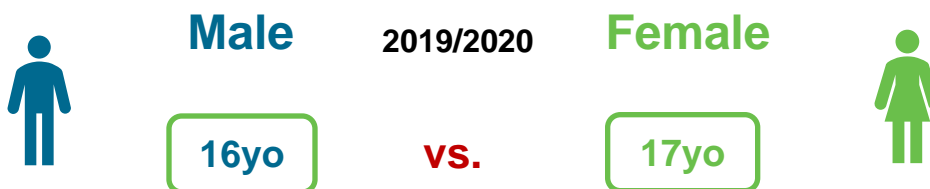


### Age when smoking began

Historically, residents in the SWPH region reported beginning to smoke (i.e. the first time they smoked a whole cigarette) at a younger age compared to residents across Ontario. The average age of initiation did not change over time for either SWPH or Ontario.

**Age of Smoking Initiation**  
**SWPH: 16 years old**  
**ON: 17 years old**

Locally, male residents first smoked a whole cigarette at a younger age compared to females. On average, males reported smoking a whole cigarette for the first time at 16 years old and females reported doing so at 17 years old.





## Age at which daily smoking began

Like the average age of first smoking a whole cigarette, SWPH residents also reported the initiation of daily smoking (among daily and former daily smokers) at a younger age compared to residents across Ontario. The average age of respondents when they began to smoke daily was 18 years old in the SWPH region and 19 years old among Ontarians.

There were no major differences when comparing male and female residents.

## Electronic cigarettes

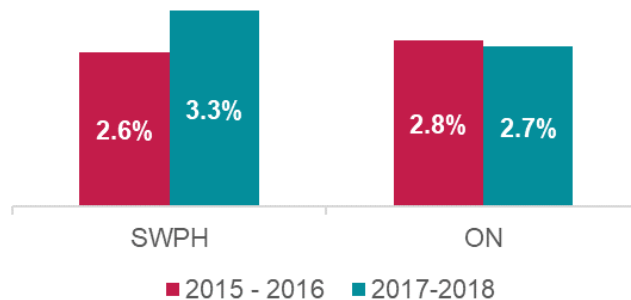
Between 2015/16 and 2017/18, the proportion of SWPH residents who reported using electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) in the last 30 days increased slightly, whereas the proportion across Ontario remained the same (**Figure 4**).

However, since the proportions are so small, it is not possible to look at them broken down by either age or gender.

**Data source:**   
Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS). StatsCan.  
2015 – 2016  
2017 – 2018

**Figure 4**

**Residents in the SWPH region report having used an e-cigarette in the last 30 days more than residents across Ontario.**



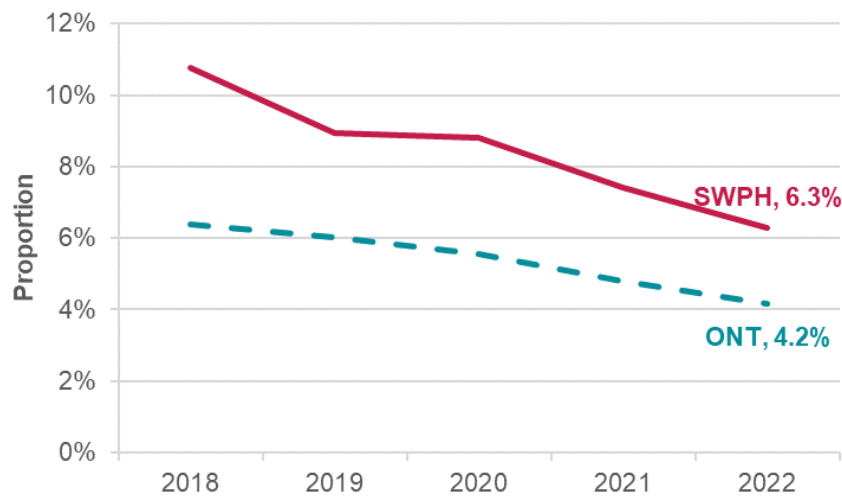
The tobacco alternatives module was not selected for Ontario for the 2019/2020 cycle of the CCHS.

## Smoking during pregnancy

Pregnant women in the SWPH region historically reported smoking at admission for birth more often compared to pregnant women across Ontario. Although this has been on a downward trend since 2018, the local proportion remains over 5%. In 2022, 6.3% of pregnant women in the SWPH region reported smoking versus 4.2% in Ontario (**Figure 5**). This proportion doubled among young mothers who were under the age of 25 years old, remaining 12.7% in 2022, which decreased from 18.7% in 2018 (not shown).

**Figure 5**

**More pregnant women in the SWPH region report smoking at admission for birth compared to pregnant women in Ontario.**



## Conclusion

Targeted local programs and health promotion strategies for priority populations (such as middle-aged males, pregnant women and youth) could be instrumental in decreasing the proportion of local current smokers, which continues to remain high locally.

# References

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1. Government of Canada. Tobacco and premature death. 2023. Accessed on 17 June 2024. Available from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/health-concerns/tobacco/legislation/tobacco-product-labelling/smoking-mortality.html>
2. Statistics Canada. Using the severity of dependence scale to examine cannabis consumers with impaired control in Canada. 21 June 2023. Available from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-003-x/2023006/article/00001-eng.htm>

# Data sources

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1. Canadian Community Health Survey (2015-2016, 2017-2018, 2019-2020), Statistics Canada, Share File, Ontario MOHLTC. NACRS. IntelliHEALTH. Ministry of Health.



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