

# Cost of Substance Use on the Economic Productivity of Canadians – Findings at a Glance

Lost productivity refers to the cost or lost income associated with people’s inability to work or reduced productivity due to substance use. These costs were due to *premature death, long-term disability and short-term disability*.

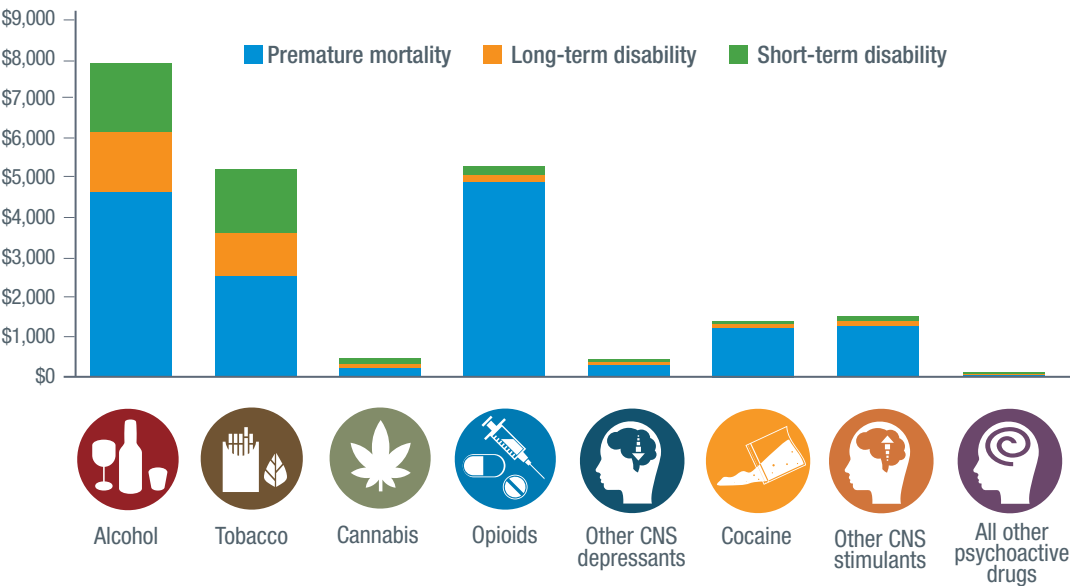
Substance use can also lead to short- and long-term health impacts, ranging from chronic diseases to injuries to substance use disorders. All of these can impact people’s health and well-being and their ability to earn an income.

In 2020, the overall economic cost of substance use in Canada was estimated to be

**\$49.1 BILLION**

- Almost half (\$22.4 billion or \$589 per person) of that cost is associated to lost productivity.
- Alcohol and tobacco, two legal substances, accounted for the most costs and harms.

Figure 1: Total cost of lost productivity due to substance use by substance in 2020 (in millions)



**Premature mortality**

People who died under the age of 65 years — accounted for almost **70%** of the total lost productivity costs due to substance use.

Opioid use is the leading cause of years of productive life lost due to substance use (see [What Are Opioids?](#)).

Opioids are a class of drugs used for medical and nonmedical reasons. Medically, opioids can be used for pain relief, while nonmedical use of opioids can be used to experience a “high,” inducing feelings of well-being and euphoria.

- More people died of opioid use at a much younger age than people who used alcohol and tobacco, leading to higher potential years of productive life lost.
- The harms and costs associated with opioid use was driven by poisonings caused by a toxic unregulated drug supply.

## What role can you play?

- Increase awareness and understanding of the long- and short-term impacts of legal and illegal substances on people’s health and ability to work.
- Support organizations and businesses to create a workplace environment that helps employees reduce potential harms of substance use. This may include creating:
  - Workplace policies on prevention (see [Substance Use and the Workplace: Supporting Employers and Employees in the Trades](#))
  - Educational programs and resources
  - A stigma-free workplace (see [Overcoming Stigma Through Language: A Primer](#))

## Additional Resources

The Canadian Substance Use Cost and Harms (CSUCH) project provides estimates of the economic cost and harms from substance use in Canada. CSUCH develops estimates for **Healthcare, Lost productivity, Criminal justice, and Other direct costs**. Visit [csuch.ca](#) to learn more about the costs and harms of substance use.

See [Canada’s Guidance on Alcohol and Health](#) for tools and resources.