

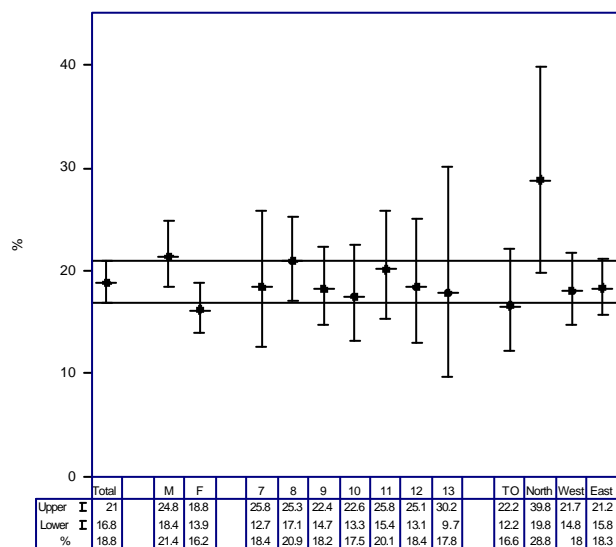
Rave Attendance among Ontario Students, 1995-1999

Prevalence of Rave Attendance, 1999

“Raves” are large all-night dance parties attended mostly by youth. As raves become more commonplace in youth subculture, receiving frequent media coverage, it is important to have a sense of the number of youth in the general population attending these events, and whether attendance is on the rise.

In 1999, 19% (about 173,500) of all Ontario students reported attending a rave at least once during the past 12 months (Figure 1). Given sampling error, it is estimated that between 16.8% and 21.0% of students attended a rave. Significantly more males attended a rave than females (21% vs 16%). Students from the North were more likely to have attended than students from the other three regions. There were no significant grade differences in rave attendance in 1999.

Figure 1. Percentage Reporting Attending a Rave by Sex, Grade and Region (G7-13), OSDUS 1999



Bars represent 95% confidence intervals

Trends in Rave Attendance

The OSDUS began asking students about raves in 1995. That year, 13% of all students surveyed reported attending a rave during the past 12 months. In 1997, this figure increased significantly to 18%, and in 1999 it remained stable at 19%.

This increase in rave attendance was especially prominent within certain age and region subgroups. Attendance increased significantly among 7th-graders, from 7% in 1995 to 18% in 1999.

Figure 2. Percentage Reporting Attending a Rave in the Past 12 Months by Region (G7, 9, 11, 13), OSDUS, 1995-1999

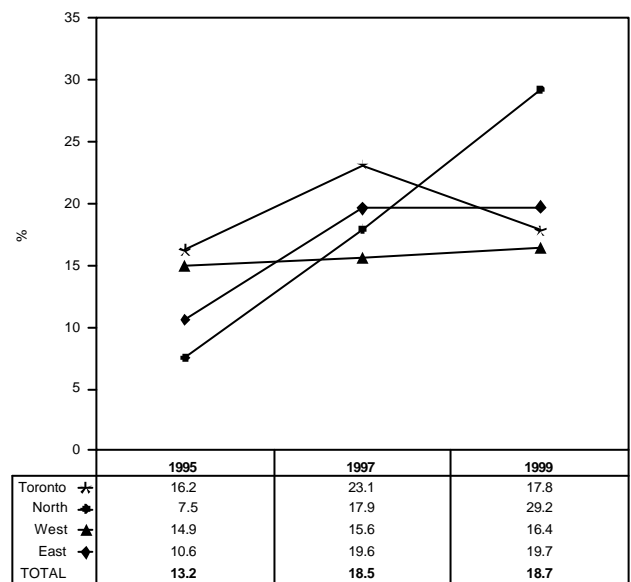


Figure 2 shows the percentage of all students reporting rave attendance by region. Between 1995 and 1999, attendance significantly increased in the North (from 8% to 29%) and in the East (from 11% to 20%). Rave attendance by students in Toronto and in the West did not significantly change over these years.

Raves and Drug Use, 1999

Much of the concern over raves centres upon the use of drugs such as MDMA, commonly known as “Ecstasy,” a synthetic amphetamine with both stimulant and hallucinogenic properties.

Not all students who attend a rave use drugs such as Ecstasy. In 1999, 4% of all students surveyed reported using Ecstasy during the past 12 months. Among those who reported attending a rave at least once during the past 12 months (n=472), 16% used Ecstasy. On the flipside, among Ecstasy users (n=96), 70% reported having attended a rave. It should be noted that the drug use measures in the OSDUS are of a general nature, and do not refer to drug taking specifically at raves or any other location.

Further, earlier research based on the 1995 OSDUS found that the drug use profile of rave attendees was not uniform.¹ The drug use pattern for one-third of rave attendees was no different from other students who attended other similar recreational activities (e.g., bush parties). However, for two-thirds of rave attendees drug use was significantly more prevalent compared to non-attendees. It was also found that 57% of rave attendees did not use an illicit drug other than cannabis.

Methods:

The *Ontario Student Drug Use Survey (OSDUS)* is an Ontario-wide survey of elementary and high school students conducted every two years since 1977.

The 1999 survey, which used a two-stage cluster design (school, class) included 4894 students in grades 7 to 13 from 38 school boards, 111 schools, and 285 classes. Self-administered questionnaires, which promote anonymity, were administered by staff from the Institute for Social Research, York University on a classroom basis. All estimates were weighted, and variance and statistical tests were corrected for the complex sampling design. Prior to the 1999 survey, only students in grades 7, 9, 11, and 13 (OAC) were included. Therefore, trend data refer only to these four grades.

Terminology:

- **Rave Attendance:** “Raves large all-night dance parties that are quickly organized and promoted by word-of-mouth. They are often held in large warehouses and other large buildings. How often in the last 12 months have you been to a rave?” Attendees were defined as having been at least once.
- **Ecstasy (MDMA) Use:** “In the last 12 months, how often did you use MDMA or ‘Ecstasy’?” Users were defined as having used at least once.
- **Region:** For the survey, Ontario was divided into four regions using the following boundaries: *Toronto* (schools within the amalgamated Toronto); *North* (schools within the North Bay and Sudbury areas and farther north); *East* (schools within York Region district and farther east); *West* (schools within Peel Region and farther west).
- **95% Confidence Interval:** The 95% confidence interval can be crudely interpreted as being 95% likely to include the “true” percentage value if every student in Ontario was surveyed.
- **Significant Difference:** refers to a difference between two percentage values that is not likely due to chance. For example, a difference found at the $p < .05$ level of statistical significance is one that is less than 5% likely to occur by chance alone.

Source:

Adlaf, E., Paglia, A., & Ivis, F. (1999). *Drug Use Among Ontario Students: Findings from the OSDUS, 1977-1999*. CAMH Research Document Series No. 5. Toronto: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

References:

1. Adlaf, E. & Smart, R. (1997). Party subculture or dens of doom? An epidemiological study of rave attendance and drug use patterns among adolescent students. *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, 29 (2), 193-198.

See also:

Weber, T. (1999). Raving in Toronto: Peace, Love, Unity and Respect in Transition. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 2 (3), 317-336.

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