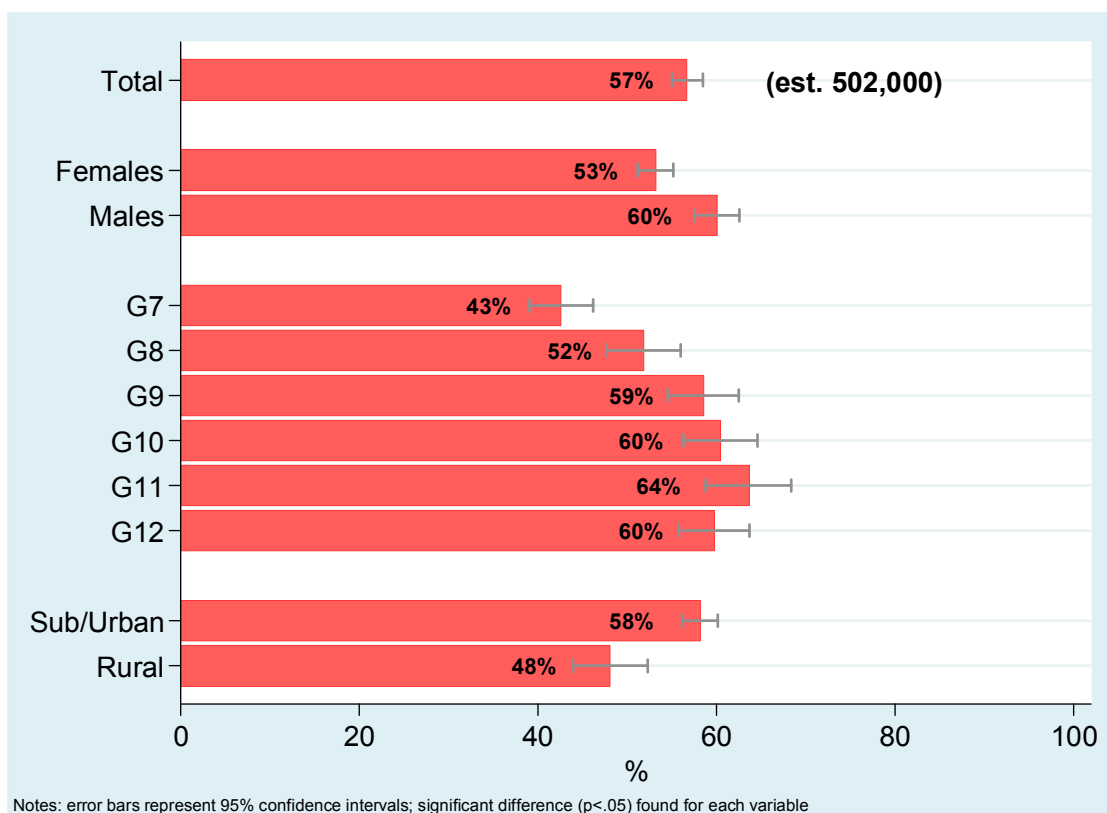


Are Ontario Students Exceeding the Canadian Screen Time Recommendation?

In February 2011, the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology published the Canadian Sedentary Guidelines for Children and Youth, recommending that recreational “screen time” (watching TV, playing video games, sitting at a computer) not exceed 2 hours per day.¹ This *eBulletin* presents the percentage of Ontario students who report exceeding the guideline of no more than 2 hours of screen time daily. Data are from the 2009 *Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey* (OSDUHS), which is an Ontario-wide school survey of students in grades 7 to 12 that repeats every two years.

As shown in Figure 1, over half (57%; 95% CI: 55%-58%) of students exceed the screen time recommendation. This estimate represents about 502,000 Ontario adolescents. Males are significantly more likely than females to exceed the recommended daily screen time (60% vs. 53%, respectively). There is a significant relationship between screen time and grade, with 7th-graders (43%) least likely to exceed the recommended daily screen time and students in grades 10 to 12 most likely (about 60%). Students living in urban or suburban areas are more likely to spend more than 2 hours in front of a screen daily compared with students in rural areas (58% vs. 48%, respectively).

Figure 1.
Percentage of Ontario Students in Grades 7 to 12 (Ages 12-17) Who Report Usually Spending More Than 2 Hours of Screen Time Daily, by Sex, Grade, and Urban/Suburban vs. Rural Location, 2009 OSDUHS (N=8,567)



Methods

CAMH's *Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey* (OSDUHS) is an Ontario-wide survey of elementary/middle school students in grades 7 and 8 and secondary school students in grades 9 to 12. The survey has been conducted every two years since 1977 with the purpose of monitoring substance use, perceptions about substance use, mental health, physical health, and risk behaviours among students. The 2009 survey, which used a stratified (region, school type) two-stage (school, class) cluster design, was based on 9,112 students in grades 7 to 12 from 47 public and Catholic school boards, 181 schools, and 573 classes. Self-administered questionnaires, which promote anonymity, were administered by staff from the Institute for Social Research, York University on a classroom basis between November 2008 and June 2009. The student participation rate was 65%. All survey estimates presented were weighted, and variance and statistical tests were corrected for the complex sampling design.

The CSEP guideline refers to youth aged 12 to 17, therefore students who reported an age younger than 12 years or greater than 17 years were excluded from the present analysis. This resulted in a sample size of 8,567.

Measures & Terminology

- **Screen time** was measured with the question "In the last 7 days, about how many hours a day, on average, did you spend: watching TV/movies, playing video/computer games, on a computer chatting, emailing, or surfing the Internet?" Students who responded 3 hours or more were considered to be exceeding the recommended guidelines. Students who reported "Don't know" were excluded from the analysis.
- **Suburban/urban versus rural** was determined using the school's six-digit postal code. It is assumed that students live near the school they attend. Among all students who participated in the 2009 OSDUHS, 15% attended a school in a rural area.
- **95% confidence interval (CI)** can be crudely interpreted as being 95% likely to include the "true" value if every student in grade 7 to grade 12 in Ontario was surveyed.
- **Statistically significant difference** refers to a difference between two percentages 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.

Please visit our OSDUHS webpage for drug use and mental health trend reports: <http://www.camh.net/research/osdus.html>

References

1. Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology. 2011. *Canadian sedentary behaviour guidelines for children (aged 5-11 years) and youth (aged 12-17 years): Clinical practice guideline development report*. Available from: http://www.csep.ca/CMFiles/Guidelines/CPAGuideline_Report_JAN2011.pdf

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For information on the OSDUHS and other CAMH population health surveys please visit our webpage: http://www.camh.net/research/population_life_course.html

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