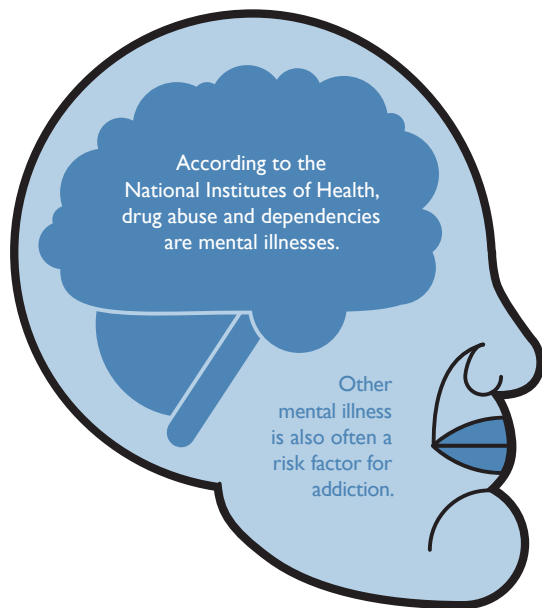


# Addiction *in* Canada

Plenty of jokes have been made recently about Rob Ford and his admitted alcohol and crack cocaine use. However, it's important to remember that the reality of addiction is no laughing matter. It's a widespread problem.

**1 in 10**

Canadians over 15 is dependent on drugs or alcohol.



## How is an addiction defined?

One common set of criteria is known as the "Four Cs":

- **Cravings** for the substance
- Inability to **control** quantity or frequency of use
- An irresistible **compulsion** or urge to use
- **Continued** use despite consequences

*Addiction changes the brain, disturbing the normal hierarchy of needs and desires.*

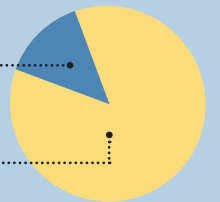
—National Institutes of Health

## Social costs

The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) found that substance abuse has a tremendous social cost to Canadians; as much as **\$39.8 billion** in a year. That's equivalent to **\$1,267** for each and every Canadian. Most of this cost comes from the abuse of legal substances.

Annual social cost of illegal drugs  
\$8,300,000,000 CAD

Annual social cost of legal drugs  
\$31,600,000,000 CAD



## What factors impact susceptibility to addiction?

There is no simple "profile" of a person with and addiction. However, there are many different factors that can influence someone's vulnerability to substance abuse.

### GENDER

**MEN** Are more likely to develop an addiction than women.

**WOMEN** suffer from medical and social consequences of addiction more quickly, face more difficulty quitting, and are more likely to relapse than men are.

### POVERTY

Prevention and high-quality treatment resources are more readily available to people with higher socioeconomic status. Poverty is a disadvantage for those with addictions at both the preventative and recovery stages of addiction.

### AGE

People aged 15 to 24 are more likely to face substance abuse or mental health issues than other age groups. The average age that drug abuse begins is **15.7** years old.

### MENTAL HEALTH

While addiction is considered a mental health issue in itself, other mental health issues such as mood disorders make some more susceptible to the development of an addiction.

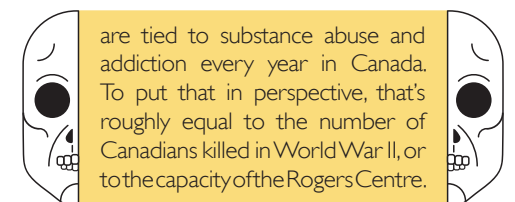
### GENETICS

While genes certainly don't determine whether or not one is going to develop an addiction, there is a growing body of research indicating that genetics can predispose an individual to addiction. There is not just one gene that has an influence on susceptibility to addiction, rather there is a broad spectrum of genes that may influence bad habits. However, it is important to remember that environmental factors are equally important to developing an addiction.

### STRESS

High levels of stress have been identified as often predictive factors in vulnerability to addiction and for relapse.

# 47,000 DEATHS



## Who should I contact if I or someone I know needs help with an addiction?

- **The Ontario Drug & Alcohol Helpline**  
drugandalcoholhelpline.ca  
1-800-565-8603
- **The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse**  
ccsa.ca
- **National Anti-Drug Strategy (Youth-Oriented)**  
nationalantidrugstrategy.gc.ca