



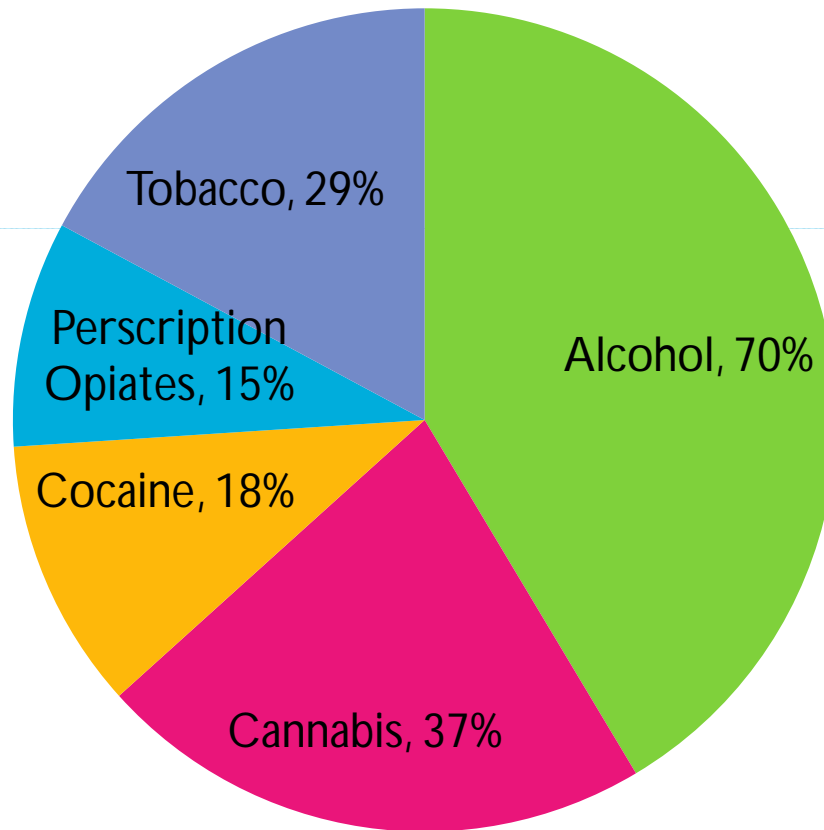
Harm Reduction in Everyday Life

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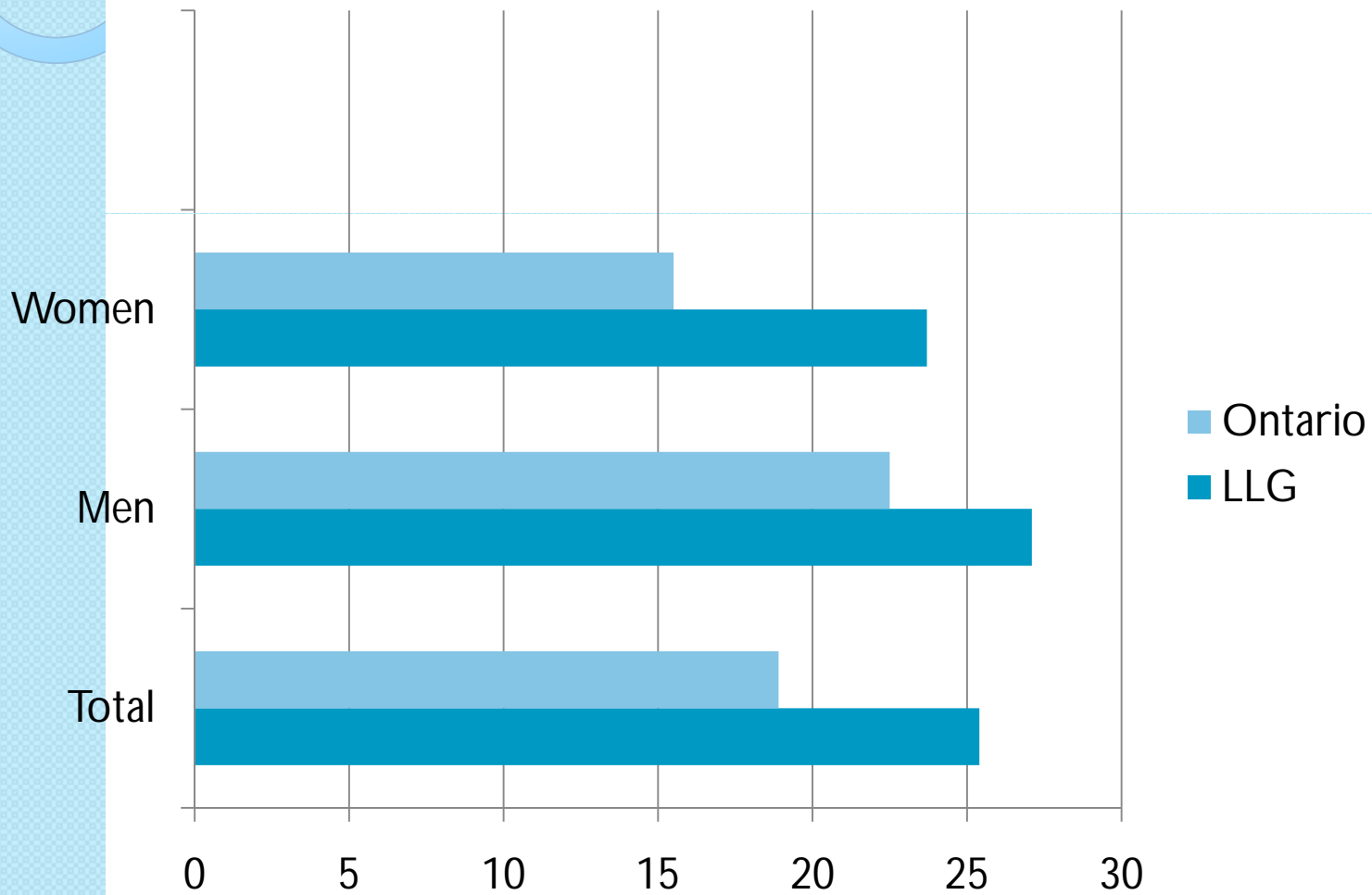
Health Promoter

TriCounty Addiction Services

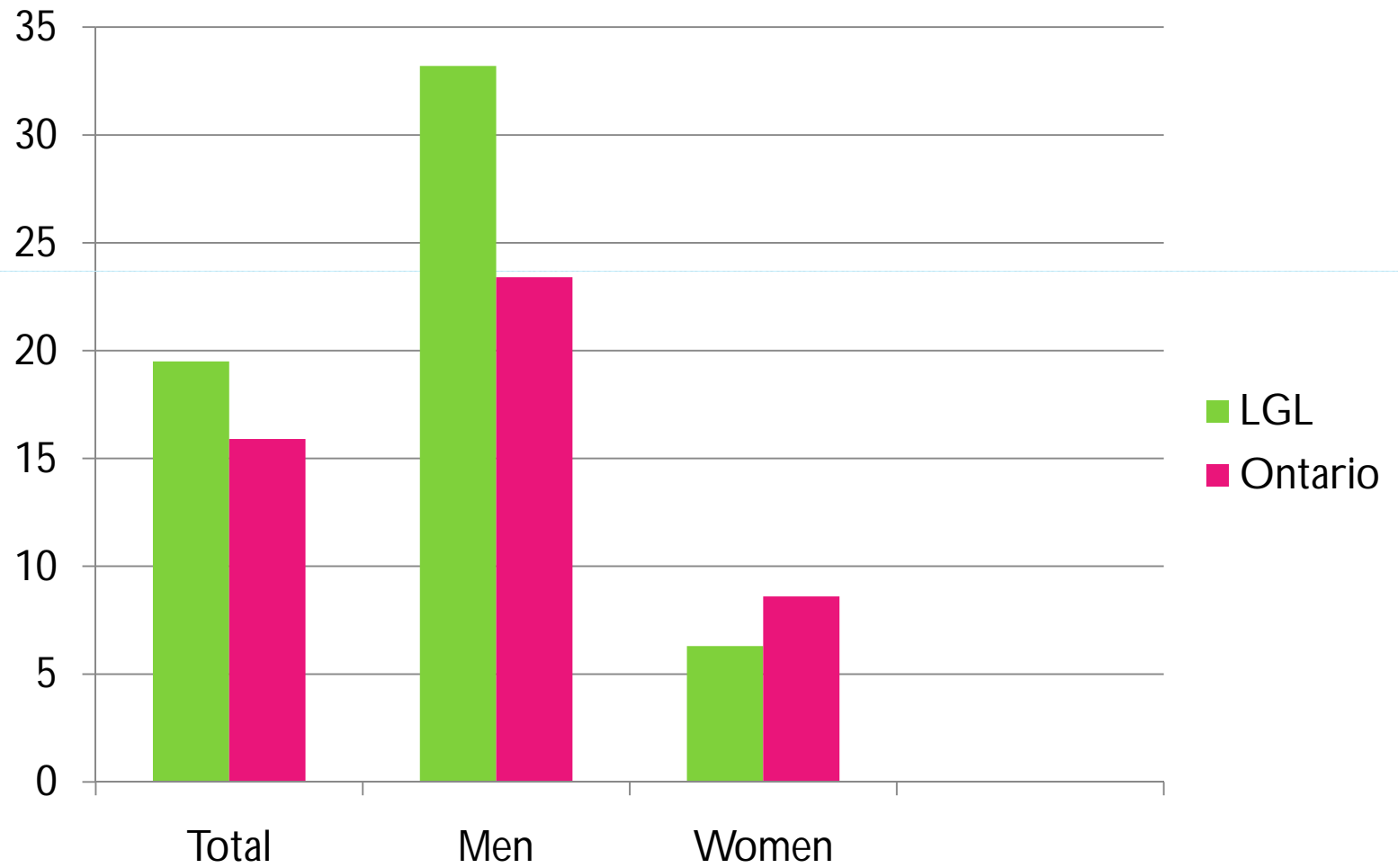
What are we Seeing?



Current Smoker, Daily or occasional (%)



Heavy Drinking (%)



Harms associated with general use




Alcohol

- Almost 1 in 10 current drinkers report that they experienced harm from their drinking during a one year period
- Almost 1 in 3 people report having been harmed at least once during a one year period because of someone's drinking

Illicit Drugs

- About 17.5% of past-year users of illicit drugs, including cannabis, and 36.7% of past-year users, excluding cannabis, report experiencing harm due to their drug use





Strategies that are used to address substance use




Prohibition



Abstinence



Placing limitations or bans on substances



**NO SINGLE SOLUTION TO
PROBLEM SUBSTANCE
USE WORKS ALL THE TIME**



What is Harm Reduction?

Harm reduction is a way of thinking about and practicing healthy ways of being that build on the risk reduction strategies we all use to keep ourselves as safe and healthy as possible.

Trip Project of Toronto definition



Harm Reduction and Treatment

- Not only for formal programs, many ways to make harm reduction work in everyday life
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- Can be used with clients who use substances, or are concerned about a friend or family member who uses substances



Harm Reduction and Treatment

- Harm Reduction May Not Always Fit
 - Residential clients who are required to be abstinent
 - Other conditions placed by outside sources
 - Other programs that require abstinence e.g. AA

Harm Reduction can be as simple as...



Giving information about safer use



Substituting the drug of choice with a safer one



Planning Ahead



Getting a healthy amount of food, water, sleep and exercise



Avoiding mixing different drugs



Referring to needle exchange programs



Lower Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines

- 1) The simplest way of avoiding any risks from cannabis use is to abstain from use
 - risks may be affected by patterns of use and individual circumstances.
- 2) The risks of dependence and other key problems related to use is higher for those who initiate use early,
 - desirable to delay use until late adolescence (e.g., 16+ years) or early adulthood (e.g., 18+ years).



Lower Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines

- 3) Frequent use (i.e., daily or near-daily use) is associated with most severe problems and should be avoided.
- 4) Frequent users who experience difficulty controlling their use should attempt to cease use; if they are unable to do so unaided, they should seek professional help.
- 5) In order to reduce respiratory, bronchial and cancer risks, users who insist on cannabis smoking should (in this priority order):
 - avoid smoking cannabis with tobacco
 - avoid deep inhalation or breath-holding
 - use vaporizers rather than smoking joints, blunts or water pipes.



Lower Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines

- 6) Use of higher-potency cannabis products may lead to more intense impairment or even acute problems like psychotic symptoms.
- exercise caution with regard to the cannabis substance consumed, especially when using an unfamiliar cannabis product
 - learn to limit their intake to the minimum amount needed to achieve the desired effects.



Lower Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines


- 7) Given the evidence of acute cannabis impairment on MVA risk (and the absence of clearly definable 'low risk' levels of use), users
 - should not drive for conservatively 3-4 hours after use, or longer if larger doses are used or the effects of acute impairment persist.

- 8) The possibility of cannabis use-related problems is elevated in the following groups:
 - pregnant women; middle-aged
 - older men with cardiovascular problems
 - individuals with a history of psychosis, or a first-degree relative with a history of psychosis.
- These groups should consider entirely abstaining from use.

Know the Laws



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Harm Reduction is not just for individuals

- Focus attention and resources on communities:
 - Designated driver programs
 - No smoking policies
 - Policies around alcohol use
 - Condom distribution programs
 - Safer sex information



Final Thoughts

Even if substance use does not stop, harm reduction strategies can improve the health and social situation of the person who uses substances, his or her family and the community