

# Mental Health

## KEY MESSAGES:

- Algoma residents are satisfied in their lives (93.9%)<sup>(5)</sup> though females (22.4%) are more likely to feel stressed compared to males (17.1%)<sup>(5)</sup>.
- On average, the longest wait time for counselling and therapy for children and youth in Algoma was over a year (370 days)<sup>(18)</sup>.
- Hospitalizations for self-harm in Algoma (109.6 per 100,000) are higher than in Ontario (66.8 per 100,000), with females in Algoma being more likely to be hospitalized for self-harm (164 per 100,000) than males (59.8 per 100,000)<sup>(28)</sup>.
- In Algoma, youth aged 10-19 years old are hospitalized for self-harm more often than any other age group<sup>(28)</sup>.
- Emergency department visits for eating disorders in Algoma increased 85% in 5 years, from 15.4 per 100,000 to 28.5 per 100,000<sup>(25)</sup>.
- Emergency department visits for cannabis-related mental illness in Algoma (170.1 per 100,000) is more than double the provincial rate (82.8 per 100,000)<sup>(33)</sup>.

## Mental health in Canada<sup>(1)</sup>



- More than 5 million Canadians are living with a mental illness
- Half of Canadians have or have experienced a mental illness by the time they reach 40 years of age
- Females have higher rates of mood and anxiety disorders and are more likely to experience self-harm related to mental illness
- 15- to 24-year-olds are more likely to experience mental illness and/or substance use disorders than any other age group
- Canadians in the lowest income group are 3 to 4 times more likely to report having poor to fair mental health
- On average, 11 deaths by suicide occur each day in Canada

“Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community<sup>(3)</sup>.”

## Mental health

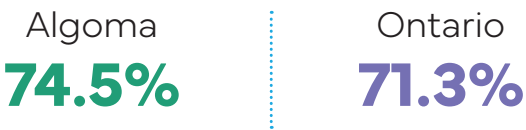
Mental health is an integral part of our health and well-being. Positive mental health is having the capacity to feel, think, and act in ways that let us enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face<sup>(4)</sup>. Mental health is more than the presence or absence of mental illness and it changes over time.

<b>Algoma residents report having very good or excellent mental health<sup>(5)</sup></b> <b>68%</b>	<b>Youth 12-17 years old report having fair or poor mental health<sup>(6)</sup></b> Algoma <b>19.2%</b>   Ontario <b>13.1%</b>
<b>Residents feel satisfied or very satisfied with their lives<sup>(5)</sup></b> Algoma <b>93.9%</b>   Ontario <b>92.7%</b>	<b>Adult residents reporting being usually happy and interested in life<sup>(5)</sup></b> Algoma <b>72%</b>   Ontario <b>76%</b>
<b>Youth 12-17 years old who report usually being happy and interested in life<sup>(5)</sup></b> Algoma <b>80%</b>   Ontario <b>74%</b>	<b>Algoma youth 12-17 years old who report being happy and interested in life<sup>(5)</sup></b> Males <b>84%</b>   Females <b>80%</b>
<b>Algoma youth 12-17 years old who reported changing their eating habits to manage weight<sup>(6)</sup></b> <b>21.2%</b>	<b>Algoma children and youth who report feeling anxious, nervous or worried almost daily<sup>(6)</sup></b> 5-11 years <b>15.5%</b>   12-17 years <b>24.3%</b>
<b>Algoma youth 12-17 years old who reported being preoccupied with a desire to be thinner<sup>(6)</sup></b> <b>28.1%</b>	<b>Algoma youth 12-17 years old who reported daily feelings of sadness and/or hopelessness which resulted in them discontinuing their usual activities within the past year<sup>(6)</sup></b> <b>26.4%</b>
<b>Ontario youth 12-17 years old who reported vomiting to lose weight in the past year<sup>(6)</sup></b> Less than <b>3%</b>	<b>Ontario youth and adults reported experiencing suicidal thoughts at least once in the past year<sup>(6)</sup></b> 5-17 years <b>16%</b>   Adults <b>4%</b>

## Factors affecting mental health

Many factors can make mental health better or worse, including our life experiences, social connections, the physical environment and economic conditions.

### Proportion of people who report feeling a strong sense of belonging to their local community<sup>(5)</sup>



## Positive childhood experiences

Positive childhood experiences such as healthy relationships, safe environments, and access to supportive services, contribute to positive mental health and well-being in children and youth. Participation in clubs, sports and activities, and spending time with friends and family can promote positive mental health throughout life.



Over **90%** of Algoma children receive positive praise often from the person most knowledgeable (PMK) in their lives<sup>(6)</sup>



**90%** of Algoma PMKs reported often spending intentional time talking or playing with the child<sup>(6)</sup>



Nearly **95%** of Algoma PMKs reported laughing with their children often throughout the day<sup>(6)</sup>



**55.4%** of Algoma PMKs reported playing sports/games, participating in hobbies or doing something special for their child once in a while<sup>(6)</sup>



**49.1%** of Algoma children and youth (3-17 years old) reported participating in either organized clubs/ community groups or music, drama, art clubs/lessons in the past year<sup>(6)</sup>

It has been noted that 70% of mental health problems in Canadian adults begin in childhood and adolescence<sup>(7)</sup>. This means that prevention and early identification of mental health concerns is important for positive long-term health outcomes.

In 2023, the [Algoma Youth Wellness Hub](#) opened on Dennis Street in Sault Ste. Marie. The hub provides a safe and welcoming space for youth aged 12 to 25 to participate in activities, learn new skills, connect with friends, and access services related to mental health, substance use and primary care. The site is operated by Algoma Family Services with support from various community partners.

# Stress

Stress is a natural response when people are faced with a challenge or threat<sup>(8)</sup>. While small amounts of stress can be good, prolonged or toxic stress can cause physical and/or mental health problems. Everyone experiences different levels of stress throughout their life, and the way we respond and cope with that stress can have an important impact on our mental health and well-being.



- **1 in 5 (19.7%)** people in Algoma reported experiencing quite a bit or extreme stress, most days in their lives or at their jobs<sup>(5)</sup>.
- Algoma females **(22.4%)** reported feeling stressed more often than males **(17.1%)**<sup>(5)</sup>.
- In Algoma, **18%** of youth aged 12 to 17 reported experiencing quite a bit or extreme stress, most days in 2019, compared to **21.4%** of Ontario youth<sup>(5)</sup>.

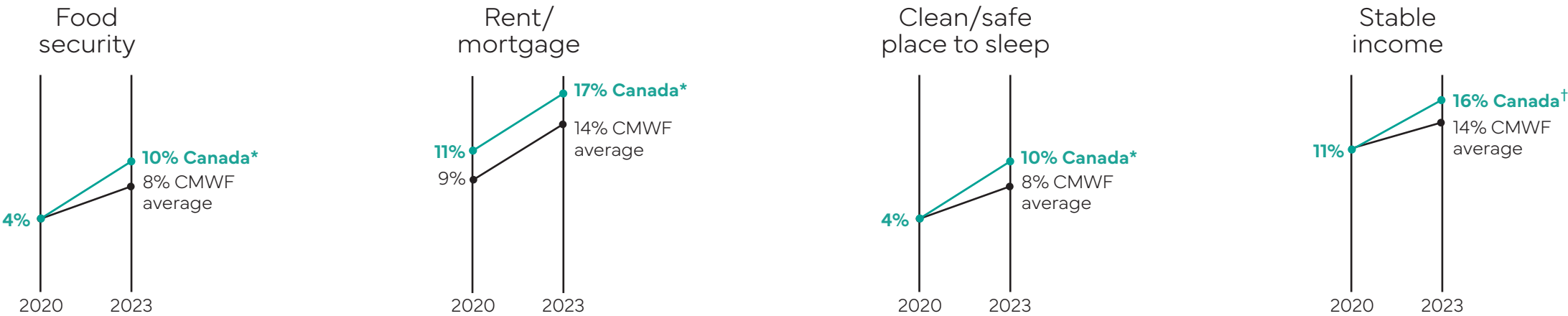
# Money concerns

Money concerns can negatively impact mental health. Several surveys have shown increasing levels of stress and anxiety among Canadians as inflation rates rise and more people are having a hard time meeting their financial needs<sup>(9-11)</sup>. People living in food insecure households are at a higher risk of depression, anxiety, mood disorders, and suicidal thoughts<sup>(12)</sup>.

► Between 2018 and 2023, nearly half of all opioid toxicity deaths in Ontario occurred among people living in areas where there was extreme difficulty meeting their basic material needs<sup>(13)</sup>.

The Canadian Institute of Health Information report results from the 2023 Commonwealth Fund (CMWF) survey, highlighting the association between basic economic needs and stress<sup>(14)</sup>.

Proportion of Canadians who reported being always or usually stressed or worried about economic stressors, 2020 to 2023



The way we talk about food and body weights can impact people’s relationships with food and their body. Diet culture and weight stigma can lead to poor body image, disordered eating behaviours, and eating disorders. Public health commits to removing stigma from conversations about food and body weight and educating others on the importance of food neutral and [weight-inclusive approaches](#) to improve health and well-being for all.

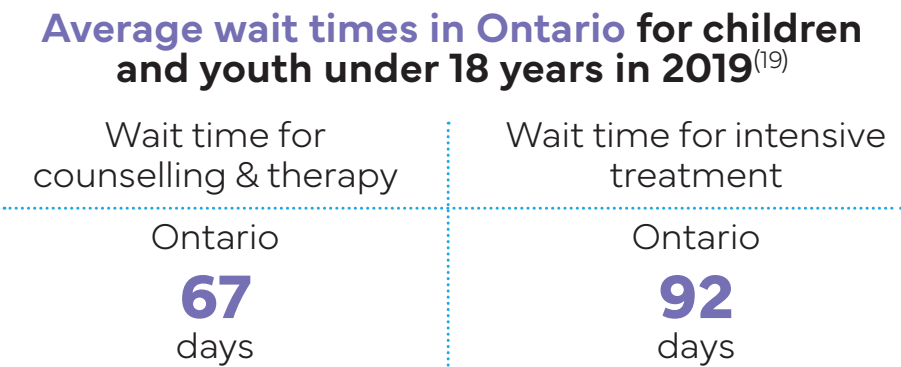
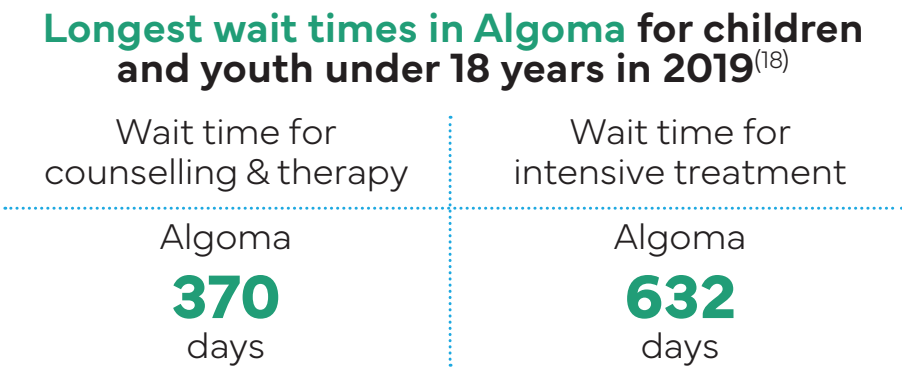
\* Canada’s 2023 result is significantly higher than the CMWF average.  
† Canada’s 2023 result is similar to the CMWF average.

## Mental health care access

Research shows that many people have trouble accessing the mental health services they need<sup>(15)</sup>. There can be many reasons for this, including cost of services, distance from services, wait times, limited number of providers, not knowing how to get help, fear of stigma, language barriers and culture, and a complex system that is hard to navigate<sup>(16)</sup>.

**Health care costs related to mental illness and substance use cost Ontario more than cancers and infectious diseases<sup>(1)</sup>**

- Approximately 14% of Algoma residents reported having consulted a mental health professional at least once in the past year<sup>(5)</sup>.
- Less than 8% of Algoma and Ontario adults reported receiving medication to help treat their emotions, mental health or substance use<sup>(5)</sup>.
- More than 1 in 3 (36.6%) Canadians living with mood, anxiety, or substance use disorders reported having unmet or partially met mental health care needs<sup>(17)</sup>.




Stigma has been defined as “negative attitudes, beliefs or behaviours about or towards a group of people because of their situation in life. It includes discrimination, prejudice, judgment and stereotypes”<sup>(20)</sup>. The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health estimates that stigma prevents 40% of people with anxiety or depression from seeking medical help<sup>(21)</sup>.

## Mental illness

Mental illness may look and feel different for each person. Mental illness is defined as “alterations in thinking, mood or behaviour associated with significant distress and impaired functioning”<sup>(2)</sup>. These include mood disorders, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, personality disorders, and eating disorders<sup>(22)</sup>. Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness and are one of the most common chronic illnesses among youth, particularly females<sup>(23)</sup>.

- A decrease in the proportion of Algoma residents living with mood disorders was seen. Between 2019 - 2020, **9.7%** of Algoma residents reported diagnosis of a mood disorder, compared to **15.1%** in 2015 - 2016<sup>(5, 24)</sup>.
- Conversely, Ontario’s proportion of residents who reported living with a mood disorder has increased to **9.5%** between 2019 - 2020 from 8.7% in 2015 - 2016<sup>(5, 24)</sup>.
- Mood disorder, including depression, bipolar disorder, mania and dysthymia are reported more frequently among females province-wide<sup>(5)</sup>.
- Between 2019 - 2020, **8.8%** of Algoma residents reported a diagnosis of an anxiety disorder, compared to 10.8% of Ontario residents<sup>(5)</sup>.
- Females aged 10 – 24 are more likely to seek medical treatment for eating disorders in Ontario<sup>(25)</sup>.



Mood disorders are characterized by the fluctuation of a person’s mood, while anxiety disorders are characterized by excessive and persistent feelings of nervousness, anxiety, and even fear. Both types of disorders can result in prolonged interference in an individual’s everyday life<sup>(26)</sup>.

Hospitalization rates due to self-harm have been notably higher in Algoma compared to Ontario for the last several years but seem to be on a downward trend. Females in Algoma are more likely to be hospitalized for self-harm (164.4 per 100,000) compared to males (57.8 per 100,000)<sup>(28)</sup>. Self-harm hospitalization rates in Algoma are consistently higher amongst adolescents and young adults<sup>(28)</sup>.

Year	Algoma - female count	Algoma - male count	Rate - Algoma	Rate - Ontario
2016	260	155	205	68
2017	295	130	210	70
2018	215	100	158	68
2019	240	105	172	65
2020	125	68	95	58
2021	180	82	128	68
2022	165	55	110	65

**Age-standardized  
rate (per 100,000) for  
self-harm in 2022<sup>(28)</sup>**

Algoma	109.6
Ontario	66.8

Year	10-19	20-44	45-65	65-74	75+
2016	450	240	100	40	10
2017	440	270	60	80	20
2018	260	230	50	40	0
2019	330	210	70	30	20
2020	150	100	50	80	0
2021	490	70	50	20	10
2022	190	120	60	30	10

Algoma  
**310.6**  
per 100,000

Ontario  
**151.3**  
per 100,000

Emergency department mental health visits can be an indication that people did not receive timely and appropriate care for mental illness or addiction in the community<sup>(27)</sup>.

**Age-standardized rate (per 100,000) of ED visits for 10-19-year-olds were seen in the ED for self-harm more than any other age group<sup>(28)</sup>**

Algoma  
**958.8**  
per 100,000

Ontario  
**412**  
per 100,000



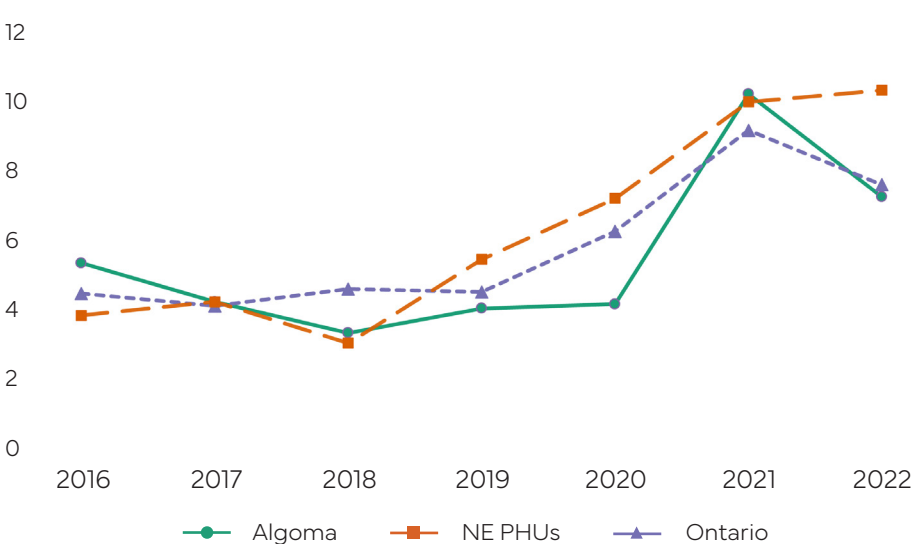
## Eating disorders

Emergency department visits for eating disorders in Algoma have been steadily increasing since 2016, peaking in 2021 then dropping off in 2022. This is similar to the trend seen in Ontario, while it continued to rise in the NE PHUs.

Algoma reached a rate of **28.5 per 100,000** people in 2021, an 85% increase since 2016 (15.4 per 100,000 people)<sup>(25)</sup>.

Hospitalizations for eating disorders in Algoma have fluctuated over recent years, rising in 2021 to nearly double the 2016 rate, similar to Ontario and other NE PHUs who more than doubled their rate in 2021. Individuals aged 10-24 years old are more likely to be hospitalized for eating disorders than other age groups<sup>(29)</sup>.

**Age-standardized rate (per 100,000) of hospitalization for eating disorders<sup>(29)</sup>**

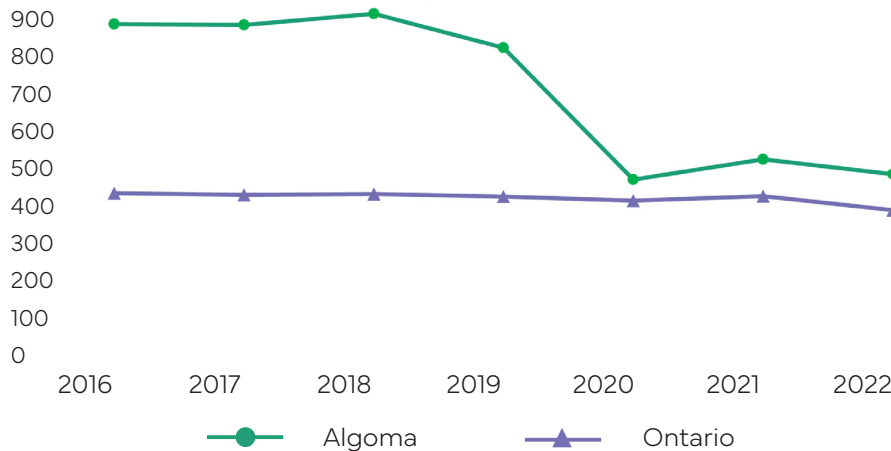


## Acute Psychiatric Beds

There is an average of **729** admissions to adult acute psychiatric beds for mental illness in Algoma each year<sup>(29)</sup>. This rate has been consistently higher than Ontario for the last several years.

Algoma saw a steep drop in admissions in 2020 and has not risen since, while Ontario's rate has remained relatively stable<sup>(29)</sup>.

**Age-standardized rate (per 100,000) of hospitalization to adult acute psychiatric beds<sup>(29)</sup>**



## Deaths by suicide in Algoma, 2013 - 2021<sup>(30)</sup>

Total reported deaths

**141**

Average annual rate

**13.5**  
per 100,000

Average male rate

**172.4**  
per 100,000

Average female rate

**71.3**  
per 100,000

Average rate, 10 - 19  
year olds

**5.8**  
per 100,000

Average rate, 20 - 44  
year olds

**18.2**  
per 100,000

Average rate, 45 - 64  
year olds

**16.6**  
per 100,000

Average rate, 65 - 74  
year olds

**12.7**  
per 100,000

Average rate, 75 years  
and older

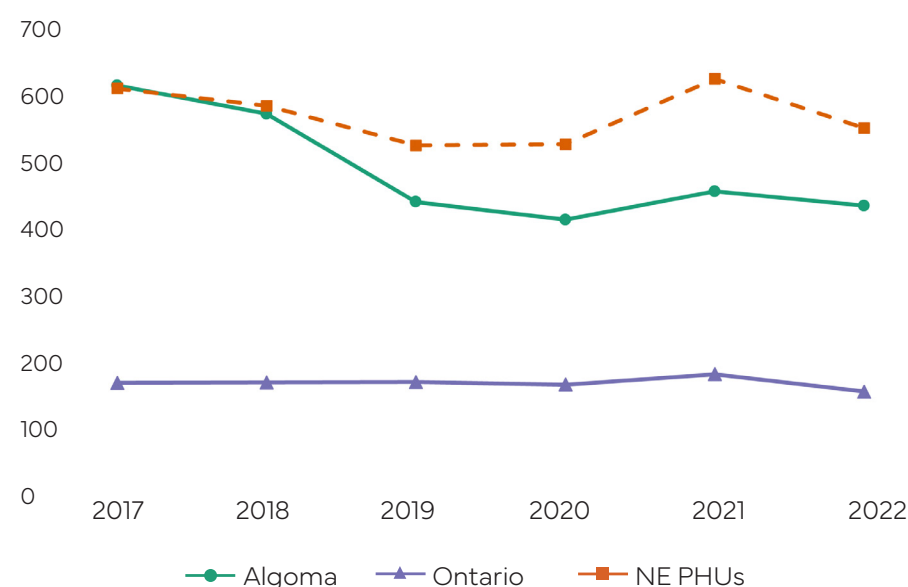
**12.2**  
per 100,000

## Mental health and substance use

The relationship between mental health and substance use is complex. Substances can be used to cope with mental health symptoms, and on the other hand, using substances can trigger mental health problems. Substance use disorder is a treatable medical condition. When mental illness and substance use disorder occur together, it is more serious and complicated to treat<sup>(31)</sup>.

Algoma saw an average of **539** hospitalizations per year due to mental health and substance use disorders between 2017 - 2022 (average rate of 491.5 per 100,000 people)<sup>(29)</sup>.

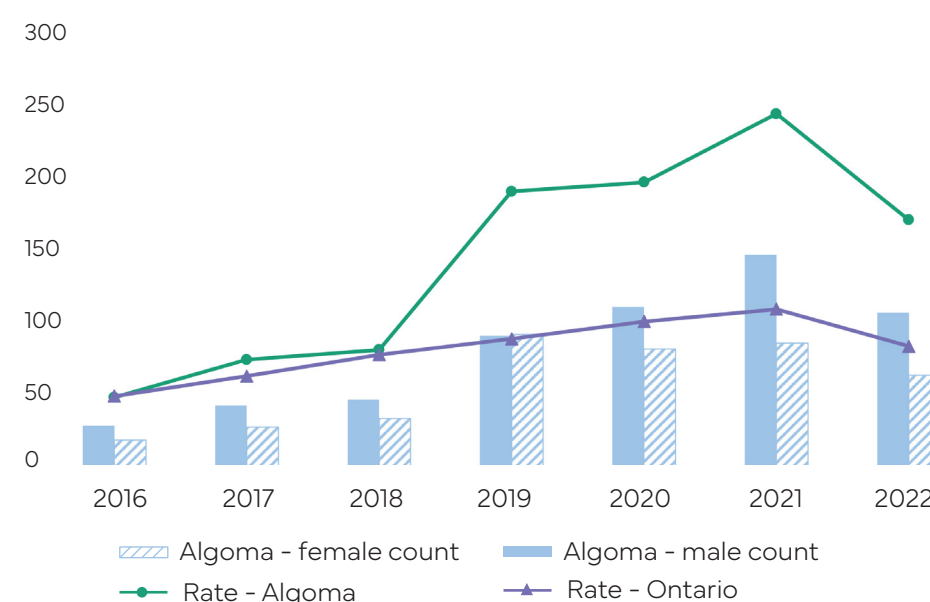
**Age-standardized rate (per 100,000) of hospitalizations due to mental health and substance use disorders<sup>(29)</sup>**



Canadians living with a mental illness increased their use of substances during the pandemic<sup>(32)</sup>. **Daily cannabis use** can negatively impact our mental health and increase feelings of anxiety and depression. Local data shows a notable increase in Algoma ED visits for cannabis-related mental illness during the pandemic and rates consistently higher than the province for the last few years.

In Algoma, males and youth aged 13 to 18 years old sought medical treatment for cannabis-related mental illness more often than females and other age groups. Adults aged 19 to 44 years old were the second most common age group seen<sup>(33)</sup>.

**Count by sex and overall age-standardized rate (per 100,000) of ED visits for cannabis-related mental illness<sup>(30)</sup>**



Public health is focused on improving population mental health through health promotion. This involves strengthening protective factors, building resiliency, and working collaboratively across all sectors to address the social, physical, and socioeconomic environments that determine the mental health of populations and individuals.

### Resources:

[Get Help | 9-8-8: Suicide Crisis Helpline \(988.ca\)](https://www.gethelp.ca/)

[www.jack.org](https://www.jack.org)

[CMHA Algoma](#)

[Algoma Public Health - Mental Wellness](#)



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