

Youth – Trends & Patterns of Alcohol Use

Alcohol is the most frequently used drug in Saskatchewan. In 2004, over 78% of Saskatchewan residents, age 15+ reported drinking alcohol in the past year. For students Grades 7-12, the reported past-year rate of alcohol consumption is almost 75%.

Reasons for Use

Youth use drugs and alcohol for a variety of reasons, including:

- Accessibility
- Positive portrayals by media
- Prevailing attitudes of peers
- Boredom
- Curiosity
- Lack of alternative, healthy activities
- Modeling learned practices
- Coping mechanism

Drinking Patterns

- Many youth go through phases of experimenting with alcohol use, and decrease their use as they reach their early twenties.
- Weekly and monthly drinking rates among youth, and quantity of alcohol consumed are almost double that of adults.

- Male youth are more likely to drink more, drink more often, and drink more on each occasion in comparison to female youth.
- Youth are drinking alcohol earlier than previous generations. On average, youth in Grades 7-12 report drinking at age 13.2 years and binge drinking (consuming 5 or more standard drinks on one occasion) at age 14.1 years.
- The chart below highlights a pattern of increased alcohol use and binge drinking among Canadian students from Grades 7-12.

Grade	Percentage of Students who have Consumed Alcohol	Percentage of Students who have Engaged in Binge Drinking
7	45.5%	19.1%
8	59.6%	37.9%
9	70.3%	49.6%
10	79.8%	61.9%
11	83.1%	72.5%
12	85.3%	75.3%

- Saskatchewan's youth alcohol use and binge drinking rates are high. Youth and young people, age 15-24 years report heavier and more frequent drinking patterns and heavier, infrequent drinking patterns than adults age 25+.
- One 2008 study conducted in Saskatchewan found the majority of youth drink alcohol between 1 and 3 times per month. Over 23% of 14 year olds and

70% of 17 year olds reported drinking 5 or more drinks within a 2-hour period at least once in the past month.

Associated Harms

- Higher rates of substance use are associated with higher rates of risk-taking behaviours.
- Youth who use alcohol and other drugs prior to age 14 are associated with increased risk of future and ongoing alcohol problems, poly-drug use and injection drug use.
- Approximately 40% of rural Saskatchewan youth reported consuming drugs or alcohol prior to having sexual intercourse. Youth, age 14+ who consumed drugs or alcohol prior to having sexual intercourse were less likely to use a condom, making them vulnerable to contracting sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies.
- One Saskatchewan Study, conducted in 2008, found that 1 in 3 youth surveyed stated they had been in a vehicle with a driver who had been drinking.

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