

Alcohol Use

AMONG BC YOUTH

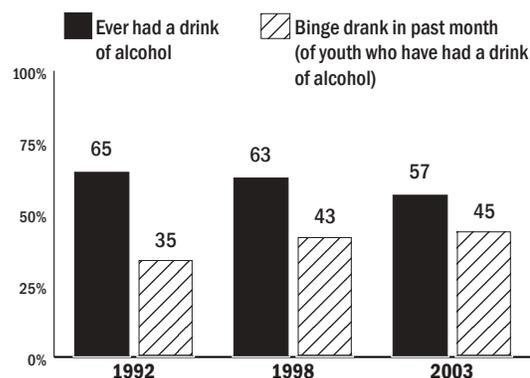
Prevalence of Alcohol Use

- The Adolescent Health Surveys show the percentage of BC youth who have tried alcohol declined from 65% in 1992, to 57% in 2003.
- However, binge drinking increased during the same period, among students who drank:
 - Binge drinking is defined as having five or more drinks in a row, within a couple of hours.
 - In 1992, 35% of youth who tried alcohol binge drank in the month before the survey.
 - This number rose to 45% in 2003.
- The proportion of students who have tried alcohol increases with age, from 37% of students 14 and younger, to 67% of those 15 to 16 years old, and 79% of students 17 and older.
- 15% of students who used alcohol first tried it when they were 10 or younger, 23% were 11 or 12 years old, 42% were 13 or 14, and 21% first tried alcohol at 15 or older.
- 68% of youth who used alcohol drank in the previous month, and 44% binge drank in the previous month: 25% binge drank on one or two days, 11% on three to five days, and 9% on six or more days.

This fact sheet is one of a series on various health issues among BC youth, and may be copied for use as a handout. Data for the fact sheets were collected in the 2003 Adolescent Health Survey III, a 140-question survey completed by over 30,500 students in grades seven to twelve, in schools throughout BC. In all, 45 of BC's 59 school districts agreed to take part in the survey. The first Adolescent Health Survey was conducted in 1992, and the second in 1998. In total, more than 72,400 BC students filled out the three surveys over a ten-year period.

The Adolescent Health Surveys were conducted by the McCreary Centre Society, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the health of BC youth through research, information sharing, and community-based projects that address the unmet health needs of young people.

Trends in Alcohol



Binge Drinking in the Past Month† (of youth who have had a drink of alcohol) (2003)

0 days	56%
1 to 2 days	25%
3 or more days	20%

†=Binge drinking was defined as having five or more drinks in a row within a couple of hours

Use of Alcohol in Past Month (of youth who have had a drink of alcohol) (2003)

0 days	32%
1 or 2 days	31%
3 to 5 days	18%
6 to 9 days	11%
10+ days	7%



- Male and female students were equally likely to try alcohol (58% compared to 57%). But male students were slightly more likely to binge drink on three or more days in the previous month (21% of males who drank versus 18% of females).

Geography

- Alcohol use varied across BC:
 - Greater Vancouver had the lowest rate of alcohol use at 49%, and binge drinking at 39% of youth who used alcohol.
 - The Kootenays had the highest rate of alcohol use at 71%, and binge drinking at 53% of youth who used alcohol.
 - Rates were also high in the Northwest region, with alcohol use at 69% of youth, and binge drinking at 50% of those who drank.

Risk Factors

- Alcohol use is associated with other types of risky behaviours. Adolescents who have tried alcohol are more likely to:
 - Be current smokers
 - Have used marijuana in the past month
 - Have used other illegal drugs three or more times in their lifetime
- Similarly, adolescents who have tried alcohol are more likely to have been physically and/or sexually abused, compared to those who have never used alcohol.

Protective Factors

- Adolescents who tried alcohol were less likely than those who haven't to be connected to their families and school:
 - Youth who tried alcohol had a family connectedness score of .74, compared to a score of .83 for those who haven't, and a school connectedness score of .63, compared to .72.
 - The connectedness score is between zero and one. A higher score is associated with a high degree of connection, while a lower score is associated with less connection. Lower scores are generally associated with greater risk taking, while youth with strong connections to family and school have better health, take fewer risks, and have higher educational aspirations.
- 73% of youth who have tried alcohol have post-secondary education goals, compared to 78% of those who haven't.

Alcohol Use By Region (2003)

	Ever had a drink of alcohol	Binge drinking in past month [†]
Greater Vancouver	49%	39%
Capital	63%	46%
Interior	65%	48%
Kootenays	71%	53%
Upper Island	66%	49%
Northwest	69%	50%
Northeast	67%	50%

†=of youth who have had a drink of alcohol

Risk Factors Among Youth Who Have Had a Drink of Alcohol vs. Youth Who Have Never Had a Drink of Alcohol (2003)

	Ever had a drink	Never had a drink
Current Smokers	12%	<1%
Used marijuana in past month	36%	1%
Used other drugs 3+ times in life	16%	2%
Ever been physically abused	19%	10%
Ever been sexually abused	11%	3%

Connectedness Among Youth Who Have Had a Drink of Alcohol vs. Youth Who Have Never Had a Drink of Alcohol (2003)

	Ever had a drink	Never had a drink
Average Family Connectedness Score [†]	0.74	0.83
Average School Connectedness Score [†]	0.63	0.72

†=Based on a zero to one scale where one refers to high family and school connectedness