

Alcohol Use

Over 75% of youth across all age groups have tried alcohol

Alcohol use is prevalent among rural youth and they begin drinking at a young age. Over 75% of youth across all age groups have had their first drink of alcohol (other than a few sips).

There is a sharp increase in the number of students trying alcohol between 11 and 14 years of age. Over 50% of youth had their first drink between these years.

Students were also asked to indicate roughly how many drinks they have had in their life. Despite a legal drinking age of 19 years in Saskatchewan, 97% of 17 year olds have had at least one drink of alcohol in their lives. The age of youth and the amount of alcohol they have had in their lives is significantly related ($p < 0.01$). As youth get older they are drinking more.



34% of youth reported binge drinking

Binge drinking is defined as more than five drinks within a couple of hours for males, or 4 or more drinks for females. Heavy binge drinking is defined as more than 2 binge drinking episodes within a two week period.

Close to 34% of youth across all age groups said they had binge drank on at least one day in the past month. While the largest number of binge drinking students did so on one day of the month, over 5% of students binge drank on 6 or more days in the past month.

Binge drinking is strongly related to age. Over 23% of 14 year olds reported one occasion of binge drinking in the past 30 days, increasing to over 70% of 17 year olds.



3/4 of youth think alcohol use is a problem in their school

Overall, close to half of the youth in the survey saw alcohol use to be a small problem in their schools. Only about 22% thought that alcohol use was not a problem and almost 30% thought it was a big problem in their schools.

Perception of alcohol use was significantly related to the age of youth in the survey. Youth in grades 7 and 8 were most likely to report that alcohol use was not a problem at all in their school. However, youth in the early years of high school (Grades 9 and 10) were more likely to think alcohol use was a problem compared to older students. This suggests that as students get older, they are more involved in consuming alcohol and as a result downplay it as a problem.

"I think it is ironic how some people are all against marijuana, like I have heard about people, I know they go out to a party and get drunk out of their minds and then they hate people who use marijuana because it's a drug. But alcohol is a drug too and how can you not make that connection, like they are doing just as bad to themselves as they would have if they would be using marijuana."

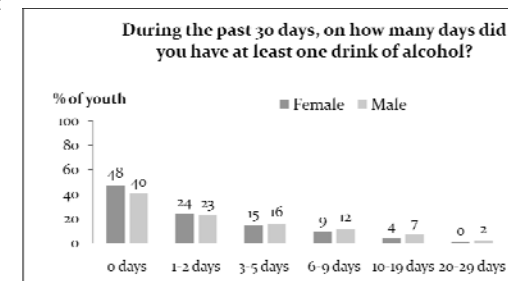
- Youth Focus Group Participant

Male youth start drinking younger, drink more often and are more likely to drink and drive

Males and females are significantly different when different aspects of alcohol use were compared between the two sexes. The table shows that females were drinking on fewer days than males in the previous month.

The age at which male and female students begin to drink alcohol is also significantly related between the sexes. Male students tend to begin drinking alcohol at a younger age than female students.

Male students are also close to twice as likely to be drinking and driving more than two times in the past 30 days.



Males were more likely to say that they thought alcohol use was not a problem at all in their schools while females were more likely to report alcohol use as a big problem in their school.