

How Does Ontario Student Drug Use Compare With Other Regions of Canada?

This *eBulletin* presents Canadian regional comparisons of lifetime alcohol and other drug use among students in grades 7, 8 and 9. Data are from the national 2002 *Youth Smoking Survey* (YSS) conducted by Health Canada in the 10 Canadian provinces.¹

Nationally, just over half (54.5%) of students in grades 7 to 9 reported drinking alcohol in their lifetime, and 41.0% of these drinkers reported binge drinking (5 or more drinks on one occasion) at least once. There were significant differences by region of the country (Figure 1). Notably, Quebec students were most likely to have consumed alcohol (72.5%) and to have binged on alcohol (49.4%). Ontario students, on other hand, were least likely to report any drinking (46.5%) and binge drinking (32.3%). Students in British Columbia and the Atlantic provinces were slightly below the national prevalence of lifetime drinking. Students in the Prairie provinces were very close to the national prevalence of both drinking measures.

About 18.2% of Canadian students in grades 7 to 9 reported using cannabis at least once in their lifetime. Lifetime use of any other illicit drug was found to be 6.1% nationally. As seen in Figure 2, Quebec students were most likely to report any cannabis use (32.2%) and other illicit drug use (11.9%). Ontario students fell below the national prevalence of cannabis use (at 11.8%) and other illicit drug use (2.9%). Students in British Columbia and the Atlantic provinces were similar to the national prevalence of both drug use measures, whereas those in the Prairie Provinces were less likely to have used cannabis (13.5%).

Figure 1. Percentage of Students in Grades 7 to 9 Reporting Lifetime Alcohol Use and Binge Drinking According to Region of Canada, 2002 YSS (N=11,757)

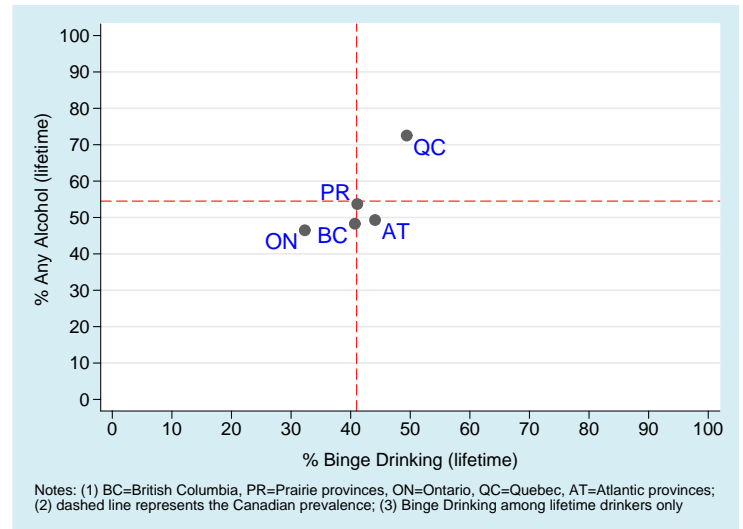
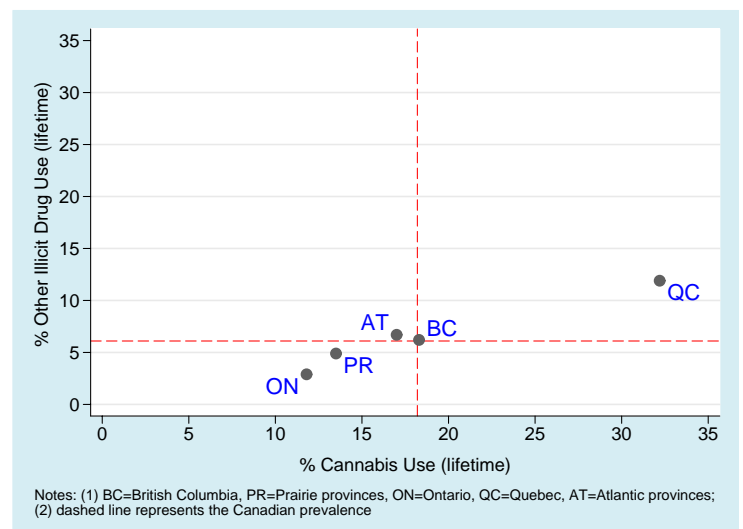


Figure 2. Percentage of Students in Grades 7 to 9 Reporting Lifetime Cannabis Use and Other Illicit Drug Use According to Region of Canada, 2002 YSS (N=11,757)



Methods:

The 2002 *Youth Smoking Survey* (YSS) was designed to collect detailed information about the smoking habits of youth in grades 5 to 9 attending public and private schools in the 10 Canadian provinces. The Yukon, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories were not included, nor were youth living on First Nations reserves. The survey was conducted in school classrooms between November 2002 and January 2003. The survey utilized a stratified (province) two-stage cluster (school, class) design. The student sample size was just over 19,000, however only students in grades 7 to 9 (N=11,757) were asked questions about their alcohol and non-medical drug use. The overall student-level response rate was 82%. All survey estimates presented here were weighted, and variance and statistical tests were corrected for the sampling design.

Terminology:

- **Prairie Provinces** include Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta.
- **Atlantic Provinces** include Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick.
- **Binge Drinking** was defined as ever having 5 or more alcoholic drinks on one occasion.
- **Other Illicit Drug Use** was defined as the use of any of the following in one's lifetime: cocaine, heroin, Ecstasy (MDMA), hallucinogens, or amphetamines.
- **Significant Difference** refers to a difference between two percentages that is not likely due to chance. For example, a difference found at the $p < .05$ level of statistical significance is one that is less than 5% likely to occur by chance alone.

Source:

Adlaf, E. M., & Racine, S. R. (2005). Alcohol and other drugs. In Health Canada (Ed.), *2002 Youth Smoking Survey Technical Report*. Ottawa: Ministry of Supply and Services Canada.

References:

1. Health Canada. (2005) *2002 Youth Smoking Survey Technical Report*. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada.

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To receive email notices of future *eBulletin* issues, please contact Maureen Kothare via email at: maureen_kothare@camh.net

Media Enquiries: Tel: 416-595-6015