

# Trends in Drug Use among Youth

## Overview of Youth Substance Use Trends

- Youth (ages 15-24) continue to have the highest self-reported past-year use of illicit substances compared to other Canadians.<sup>1</sup>
- The top five substances used by youth according to the 2010 Canadian Alcohol and Drug Use Monitoring Survey (CADUMS) were alcohol (71.5%), marijuana (25.1%), hallucinogens (4.6%), ecstasy (3.8%) and cocaine (2.7%).
- Since 2008, there has been a downward trend in past year use among youth, in general and by gender, for each of the drugs listed above.
- There were no statistically significant differences in self-reported past year use of alcohol, cocaine or ecstasy between males and females, according to 2010 CADUMS data. However, significantly more young males reported using marijuana in the past year (2010) than young females.

## Youth Alcohol Use in Canada

Alcohol is the number one substance used by youth in Canada. The prevalence of past-year use of alcohol among youth in Canada remains high (71.5%), despite a statistically significant decrease of 7% between 2008 and 2010. Past-year use among young males has also decreased significantly from 83.6% in 2008 to 74% in 2010, while past-year prevalence among female youth remained statistically unchanged from 2008 to 2010 at approximately 70%. Past-year prevalence is the same for male and female youth.

According to data collected by the CADUMS in 2010, 57% of Canadian youth of legal drinking age (18/19–24 years of age) reported drinking in a risky manner (4+ drinks for women, 5+ drinks for men on one occasion) in the past month and this has not changed significantly over time, for either gender. Significantly more young males reported risky drinking in the past year than females (62.9% compared to 50.1%).<sup>2</sup>

## Youth Marijuana Use in Canada

Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit substance among youth in Canada. However, the prevalence of past-year marijuana use among youth decreased significantly between 2008 and 2010 (32.7% compared to 25.1%). Among male youth, past-year marijuana use remained statistically unchanged between 2008 and 2010 (~30%). However, past-year marijuana use decreased significantly among female youth from 29.6% in 2008 to 19.7% in 2010, a difference of nearly 10%. The use of marijuana increases significantly by grade between grades 7 to 12, and the past-year prevalence ranged from 16.7% to 32.4%.<sup>2</sup>



## Youth Ecstasy Use in Canada

Ecstasy is the third most used illicit drug among youth in Canada. The prevalence of past-year ecstasy use among Canadian youth decreased from 6.5% in 2008 to 3.8% in 2010; this decrease, however, was not statistically significant. Similarly, between 2008 and 2010 there were no statistically significant changes in past-year use of ecstasy among or between males and females.

## Youth Cocaine Use in Canada

Cocaine is the fourth most used illicit drug among youth in Canada. The prevalence of past-year cocaine use among youth decreased significantly between 2008 (5.9%) and 2010 (2.7%). Among male youth, past-year cocaine use decreased significantly from 8.3% in 2008 to 3.2% in 2010. Past-year cocaine use among female youth remained statistically unchanged at approximately 2%. There was no significant difference in the prevalence of past-year cocaine use between males and females.

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<sup>1</sup> Health Canada. (2010). Canadian Alcohol and Drug Use Monitoring Survey (CADUMS). Unless otherwise noted, all data in the summary comes from this source.

<sup>2</sup> Young, M.M., Saewyc, E., Boak, A., Jahrig, J., Anderson, B., Doiron, Y., Taylor, S., Pica, L., Laprise, P., and Clark, H (Student Drug Use Surveys Working Group) (2011). *Cross-Canada report on student alcohol and drug use: Technical Report*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse.

