

Substance use among students in grades 7 to 12 in the NPBSDHU region, 2014/15:

Executive Summary

This report provides an updated picture of use of various substances among seventh to twelfth grade students attending schools within the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit (NBPSDHU) region in 2014/15. Where noted, the 2010/11 and 2014/15 samples were combined to make estimates with greater statistical confidence.

Overall substance use

Tobacco use

Within the combined sample of 2010/11 and 2014/15 school years, about 1 in 7 students in the NBPSDHU region used tobacco at least once in the previous 12 months, comparable to the 2014/15 Ontario percentage. About 6 of 100 students in the region used tobacco daily in the previous 12 months, about double the Ontario percentage. About double the percentage of students who felt disconnected from their school community in the region used tobacco in the previous 12 months (22.5%) compared to students who felt connected to school (11.0%).

Alcohol consumption

In 2014/15, over half (55.4%) of students in the NBPSDHU region reported using alcohol, about 10% higher than the Ontario estimate (45.8%). Students who perceived their socio-economic status (SES) to be lower reported significantly higher rates of alcohol use in the region (64%) compared to those who reported higher SES (50%). Almost a quarter (22.5%) of students in grades 7 and 8 reported using alcohol for the first time in the past year, significantly higher than the Ontario estimate for the same grade levels (13.8%). Almost a third of students in grades 9 and 10 in the region scored as having harmful or hazardous drinking behaviors, significantly higher and about triple the Ontario estimate for the same grade level (10.6%).

Cannabis use

For the combined 2010/11 & 2014/15 sample, about a third (32.2%) of students in the NBPSDHU region reported using cannabis in the previous 12 months, compared to 21.3% of Ontario students in 2014/15. Almost 4 in 10 males in the region reported previous year use of cannabis, compared to about 3 in 10 females in the region, and two in ten males in Ontario. Significantly higher percentages of students in the region reported first using cannabis in grades 6 or below (2.7%), or grades 7 to 8 (11.6%) compared to Ontario students in the same grade levels (1.1% & 5.5%, respectively). Almost a quarter of grades 7 and 8 students in the NBPSDHU region perceive cannabis as easy to obtain, significantly higher than the Ontario estimate (10.6%). Almost four in ten students in the region reported having had at least one class about cannabis and other drugs in the past 12 months, significantly lower compared to about five in ten Ontario students.

Other illegal substances & Prescription drug use for non-medical purposes

For the combined 2010/11 & 2014/15 sample, about one in four students in the NBPSDHU region reported using an illegal drug (including LSD, hallucinogens/psilocybin, cocaine, crack, methamphetamines, heroin, ecstasy, and non-medical use of prescription drugs- excluding cannabis) in the previous 12 months, significantly higher than the Ontario estimate of about one in five student. A significantly higher percentage of students in the region who perceive their SES to be lower than other

students reported use of illegal drugs in the previous year, compared to Ontario students with low perceived SES.

A significantly higher percentage of students in the NBPSDHU region reported using hallucinogens or psilocybin (11.4%), LSD or acid (3.7%), *Salvia divinorum* (8.7%), and opioids non-medically (15.7%) in their lifetime compared to students in Ontario. Almost one in three secondary students scored high enough on the CRAFFT screening test indicating a potential drug use problem, significantly higher compared to between one and two in ten secondary students in Ontario.