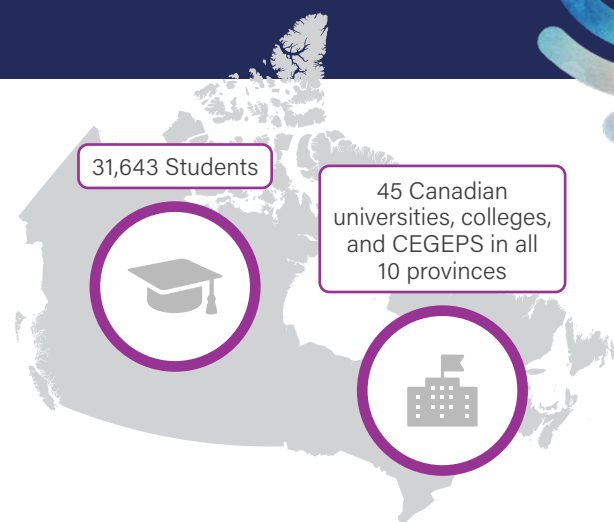


Substance use among university and college students in Canada, 2021–2022

In Canada, substance use generally peaks during young adulthood. Young adults attending a postsecondary institution have a range of new experiences during this life stage.

Through the 2021–22 Canadian Postsecondary Education Alcohol and Drug Use Survey (CPADS), Health Canada collected data on the prevalence and patterns of substance use and associated harms among postsecondary students aged 17–25 across Canada.

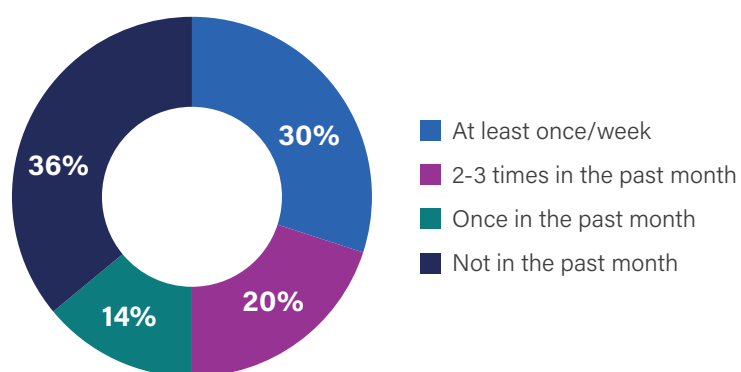
Note: Due to rounding, some percentages may not add up to 100.



Substances Used and Related Harms

Alcohol

How often was alcohol consumed in the past month?



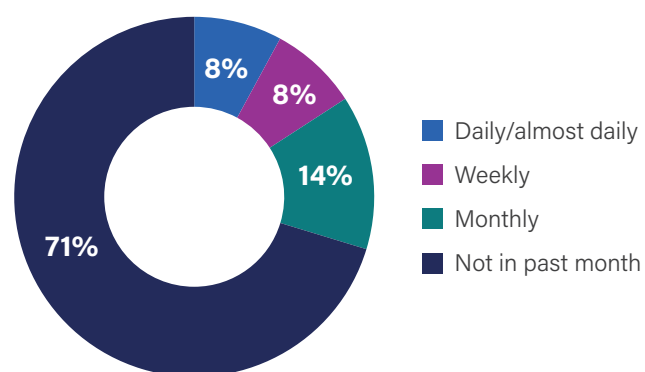
Alcohol Use

- + 64% of students consumed alcohol in the past month (decreased from 74% in 2019–20)
- + On average, students consumed 3.8 drinks on a typical drinking day (decreased from 4.5 in 2019–20)
- + On average, students consumed 5.9 drinks on their heaviest drinking day (decreased from 6.9 in 2019–20)



Cannabis

How often was cannabis used in the past month?



Cannabis Use

- + 29% of students used cannabis in the past month (decreased from 33% in 2019–20).
- + The top source used to obtain cannabis products was a legal store front, increased from 34% in 2019–20 to 63% in 2021–2022.
- + Students who consumed cannabis with another substance in the past 12 months most often reported using it in combination with alcohol (75%), tobacco or e-cigarettes with nicotine (23%), and illegal hallucinogens/dissociatives (12%)

Other Substances

- + 13% of students had used a pain reliever, stimulant, sedative or over-the-counter medication in a higher-risk way¹ in the past 12 months
- + 12% of students had used an illegal drug (e.g., cocaine, heroin) in the past 12 months
- + 2% of students reported smoking daily and 8% reported vaping daily in the past month

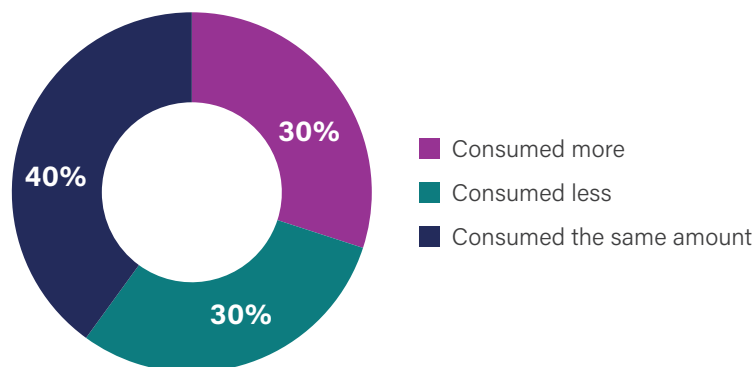


Harms Related to Substance Use

- + Among students who drank alcohol in the past 12 months:
 - + 47% experienced at least one of 28 different harms from their alcohol use in the past month
 - + 11% drove within 2 hours of consuming at least 2 drinks
- + Among students who used cannabis in the past 3 months, 64% experienced at least one of 5 different harms from their cannabis use
- + Among students who used cannabis in the past 12 months, 23% drove within 2 hours of consuming cannabis

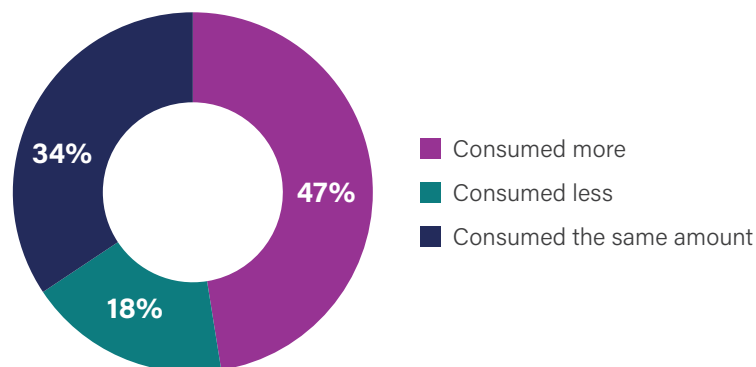
How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect substance use?

Change in amount/quantity of alcohol consumed since March 2020 with onset of the COVID-19 pandemic



- + Students who reported decreased use said this was mainly due to fewer social gatherings
- + Students who reported increased use said this was mainly due to boredom, stress, anxiety, depression/low mood, and lack of a regular schedule

Change in amount/quantity of cannabis consumed since March 2020 with onset of the COVID-19 pandemic



SOURCE :

¹ Higher-risk use of psychoactive pharmaceuticals includes using opioid pain relievers, stimulants, sedatives or over-the-counter medication, in a larger dose, using more frequently than recommended or to get high.

Acknowledgements: These data were made possible through collaboration with 45 postsecondary institutions across Canada. The CPADS is conducted in collaboration with the Postsecondary Education Partnership-Alcohol Harms (PEP-AH).

Recommended citation: Health Canada (2023), Canadian Postsecondary Education Alcohol and Drug Use Survey (CPADS).