

2005 EAST KOOTENAY ADOLESCENT DRUG USE SURVEY

Summary Report

**Prepared by:
Dean Nicholson, Administrator
East Kootenay Addiction Services Society**

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EAST KOOTENAY ADOLESCENT DRUG USE SURVEY – 2005

1. Introduction

In the fall of 2002, East Kootenay Addiction Services Society (EKASS) undertook a comprehensive survey of all Grade 8 – 12 students in the East Kootenay, including all students in School Districts 5 and 6, and students in the Creston area from School District 8. The Survey was conducted to obtain current and relevant information on drug use levels amongst East Kootenay youth.

The survey was very successful. As a result of the information obtained, East Kootenay Addiction Services Society modified the prevention and education programs it offered to better convey the reality of drug use by East Kootenay youth. The findings were distributed to all the schools in the region, as well as to other agencies and organizations that work with youth and families.

It was also decided to conduct the survey every two years, to monitor changes in drug use patterns over time. The survey was expanded to include Grade 7 students. This was done because other large scale surveys, particularly the McCreary Centre Society's Adolescent Health Survey, included youth from Grade 7 to 12. By including Grade 7 students it was easier to compare the data obtained locally with other surveys which have a provincial or national scope.

This report highlights the findings of the 2005 East Kootenay Adolescent Drug Use Survey.

2. Methodology

The 2005 survey was similar to the 2002 survey with a few modifications. New questions were introduced that assessed the number of students who had experienced various negative consequences from their alcohol and/or drug use, or who engaged in alcohol and/or drug related risk behaviours, such as driving vehicles while under the influence or engaging in binge drinking. The survey was designed to be administered easily and took approximately 20 to 25 minutes to complete. The surveys were confidential and anonymous. Descriptive information consisted of age, sex and grade only.

Permission was obtained from School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay) and No. 6 (Rocky Mountain) to administer the survey in all schools, and from School District No. 8 (Kootenay Lake) to administer the survey in the Creston area. In addition, a private Christian school in Cranbrook agreed to take part in the survey.

The survey was administered between February 21 and 28, 2005. Each school selected a given day within the week, in which all students would receive the

survey at the same time. Student volunteers or staff handed out the survey to each class. Students completed the survey and placed them in manila envelopes. Upon completion the envelopes were sealed, collected and returned to the EKASS office. Data entry took place between February 23 and March 21.

3. Results

A total of 5981 surveys were distributed. 4786 completed surveys were returned, of which 77 surveys (1.6%) were deemed to be spoiled or unreliable and were not used in the analysis. 4709 surveys, representing 78.7% of registered students in the East Kootenay, were used in the analysis.

Analysis of the results was done in a number of ways. Basic information was obtained from the respondents as a whole. Respondents were also divided into different sub-groups based on their substance use patterns. Four sub-groups were defined as follows:

A) no substance use	985 respondents	=	21.0%
B) alcohol use only	1557 respondents	=	33.1%
C) alcohol and marijuana use only	769 respondents	=	16.3%
D) alcohol, marijuana and any combination of other substances	<u>991 respondents</u>	=	<u>21.0%</u>
Total:	4499 respondents	=	91.4%

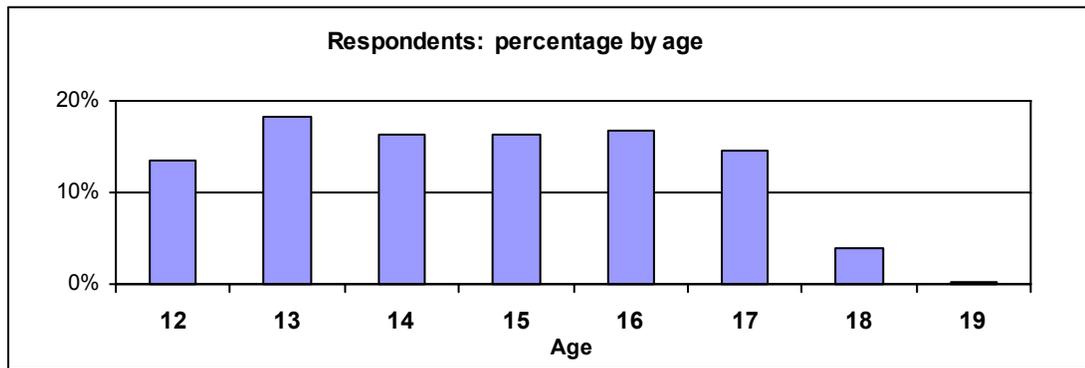
The first group represents youth who at the time of the survey reported no substance use of any kind. The next two groups represent youth who use the top two substances of choice for adolescents. The final group represents those youth who have used any combination of other substances in conjunction with alcohol and marijuana use. In total, these four groups account for over 91% of all youth who completed a survey. Analysis of the data looked at differences between these four groups.

Of note is that over 70% of the youth are either abstainers or have only used alcohol or alcohol and marijuana. It is a small minority of youth who try other substances and an even smaller group who have used substances in some combination other than the four categories. This data demonstrates that the majority of youth who eventually use drugs such as hallucinogens, cocaine, methamphetamine or heroin, have followed a predictable path of first using alcohol and then marijuana.

The following charts and graphs show the basic demographic information obtained:

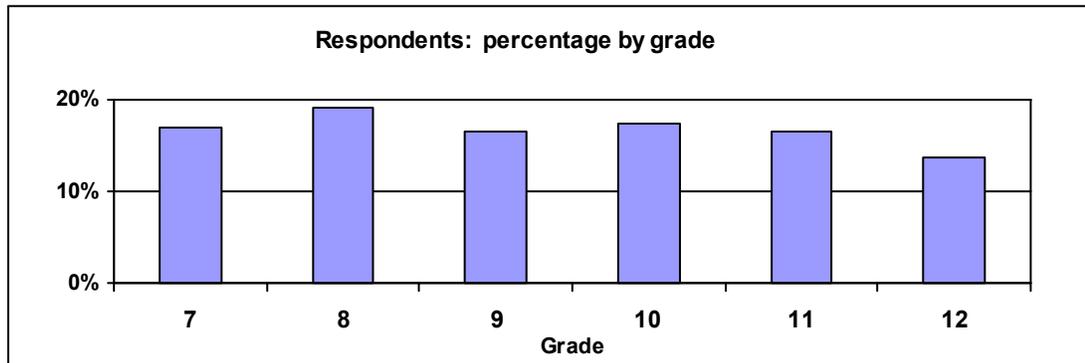
3.1 Age

Age	% of Respondents
12	13.5
13	18.3
14	16.4
15	16.3
16	16.8
17	14.5
18	3.9
19	0.3



3.2 Grade

Grade	% of Respondents
7	16.9
8	19.1
9	16.6
10	17.3
11	16.6
12	13.8

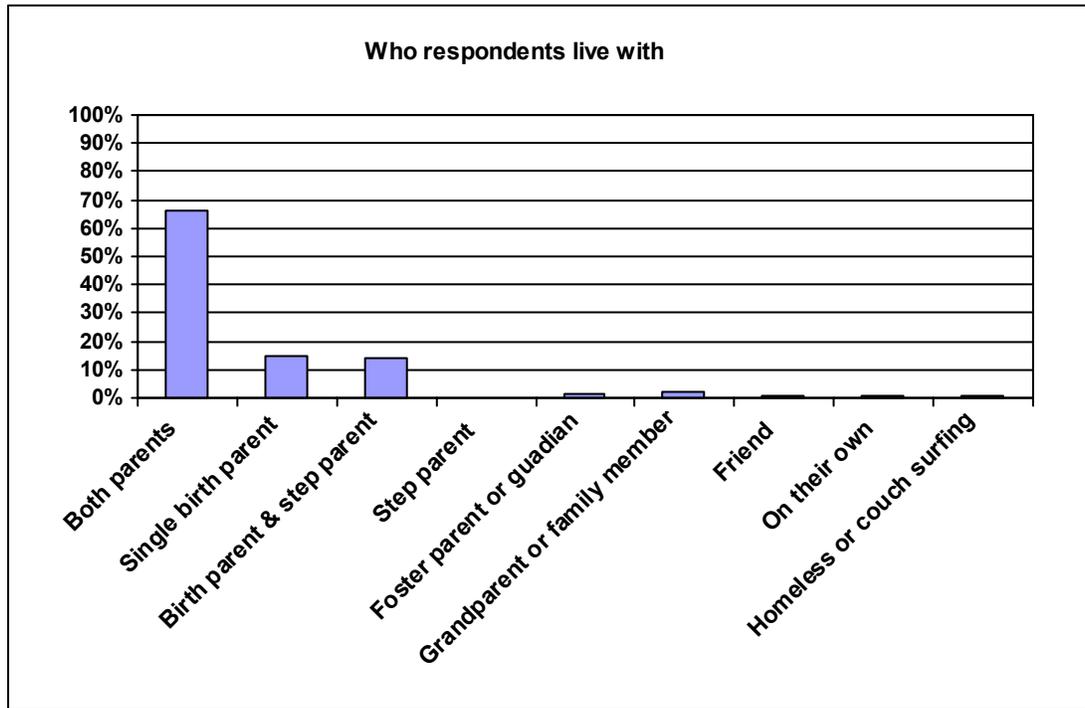


3.3 Gender

Male	50.1 %
Female	49.9 %

3.4 Who respondents live with

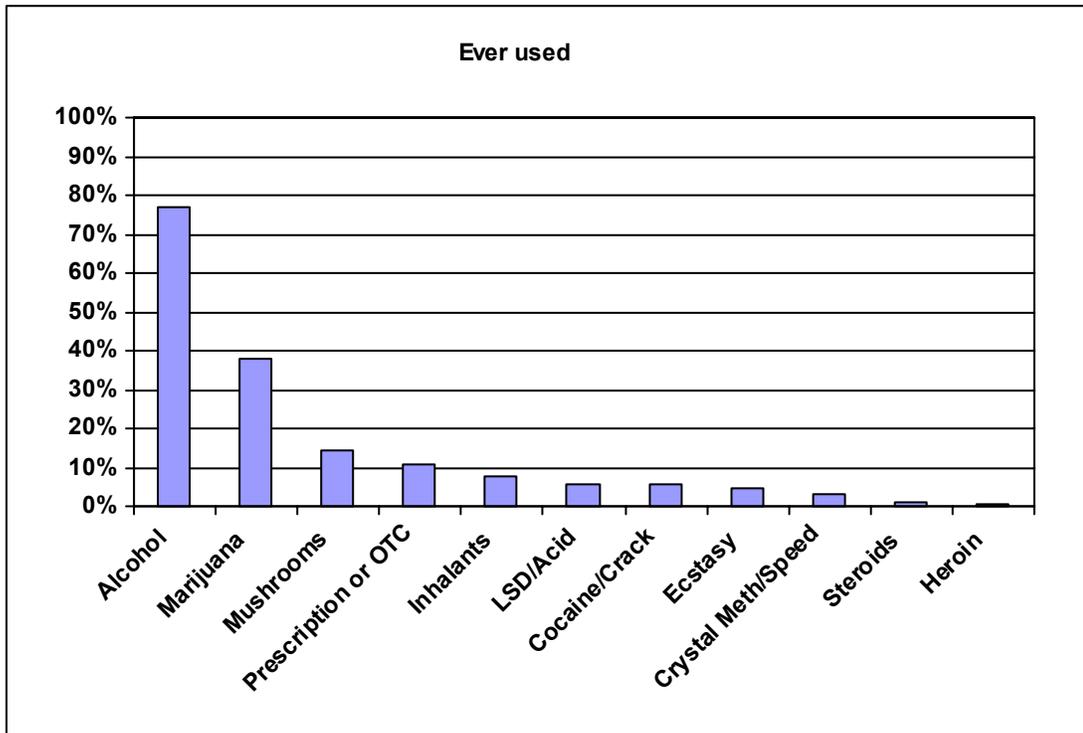
Who respondents live with	% of Respondents
Both birth parents	66.0
Single birth parent	15.1
Birth parent & step parent	13.9
Step parent	0.3
Foster parent or guardian	1.7
Grandparent or family member	2.1
Friend	0.6
On my own	0.6
Homeless or couch surfing	0.4



3.5 Life-time and past year substance use rates

The following chart and graph show the percentage of students who reported ever having used the following substances and the percentage who reported having used within the past year.

	% of Respondents	
	Ever Used	Used in Past Year
Alcohol	76.7	67.5
Marijuana	37.8	29.9
Mushrooms	14.5	10.3
Prescription or over the counter drugs (OTC)	11.0	7.0
Inhalants	7.9	4.9
LSD/Acid	5.6	3.4
Cocaine/Crack	5.6	3.4
Ecstasy	4.6	3.0
Crystal Meth/Speed	3.2	1.6
Steroids	1.0	0.6
Heroin	0.5	0.2



3.6 Number of times used in life

The following chart shows the number of times respondents reported having used a given substance. Percentages are only for the respondents who reported having used a given substance.

	Number of times used in life (% of Respondents who use)			
	1-3	4-10	11-40	40+
Alcohol	19.6	20.4	27.8	32.2
Marijuana	17.6	15.7	24.0	42.8
Mushrooms	39.4	35.3	17.5	7.7
Prescription or over the counter drugs (OTC)	37.8	27.4	21.3	13.5
Inhalants	44.8	27.6	9.0	18.6
LSD/Acid	51.6	22.3	15.9	10.2
Cocaine/Crack	43.9	21.6	15.1	19.4
Ecstasy	48.1	27.8	13.5	10.5
Crystal Meth/Speed	51.4	19.4	11.1	18.1
Steroids*	15.8	26.3	31.6	26.3
Heroin*	28.6	14.3	28.6	28.6

3.7 Frequency of use

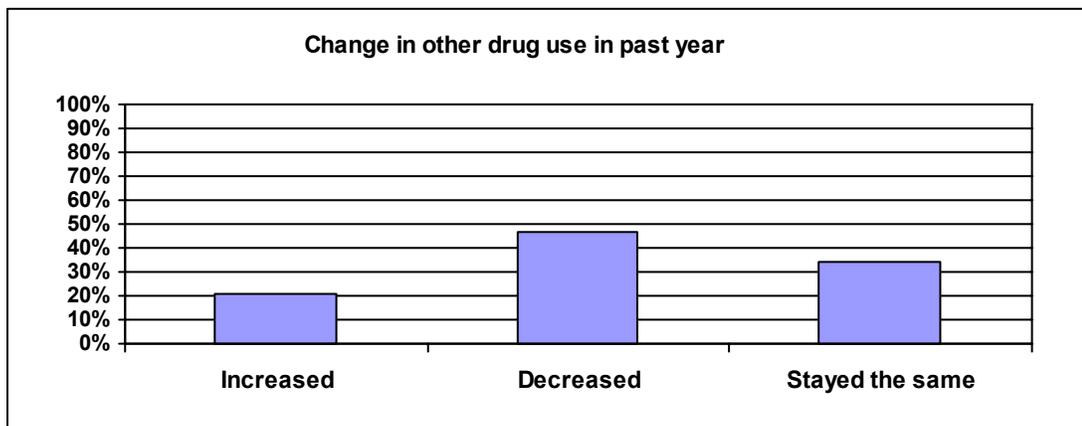
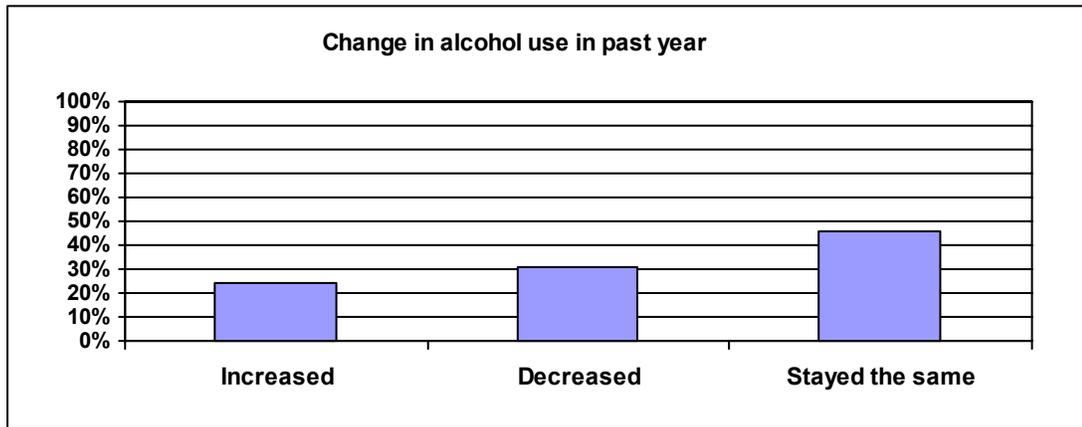
The following chart shows the frequency of use of each substance. Percentages are only for the respondents who reported using a given substance.

	% of Respondents who indicated using the substance in the past year			
	Less than 1/month	1-3 days a month	1-2 days a week	3-7 days a week
Alcohol	46.1	31.6	18.0	4.4
Marijuana	43.5	17.1	14.5	24.8
Mushrooms	79.0	16.3	3.0	1.7
Prescription or over the counter drugs (OTC)	71.8	14.1	6.9	7.2
Inhalants	71.4	16.9	4.8	6.9
LSD/Acid	80.0	13.3	3.3	3.3
Cocaine/Crack	73.0	13.2	5.9	7.9
Ecstasy	72.8	20.6	2.2	4.4
Crystal Meth/Speed	76.1	8.5	4.2	11.3
Steroids*	61.8	17.6	5.9	14.7
Heroin*	58.3	16.7	-	25.0

* Reported numbers should be interpreted with caution due to the low number of respondents

3.8 Change in substance use

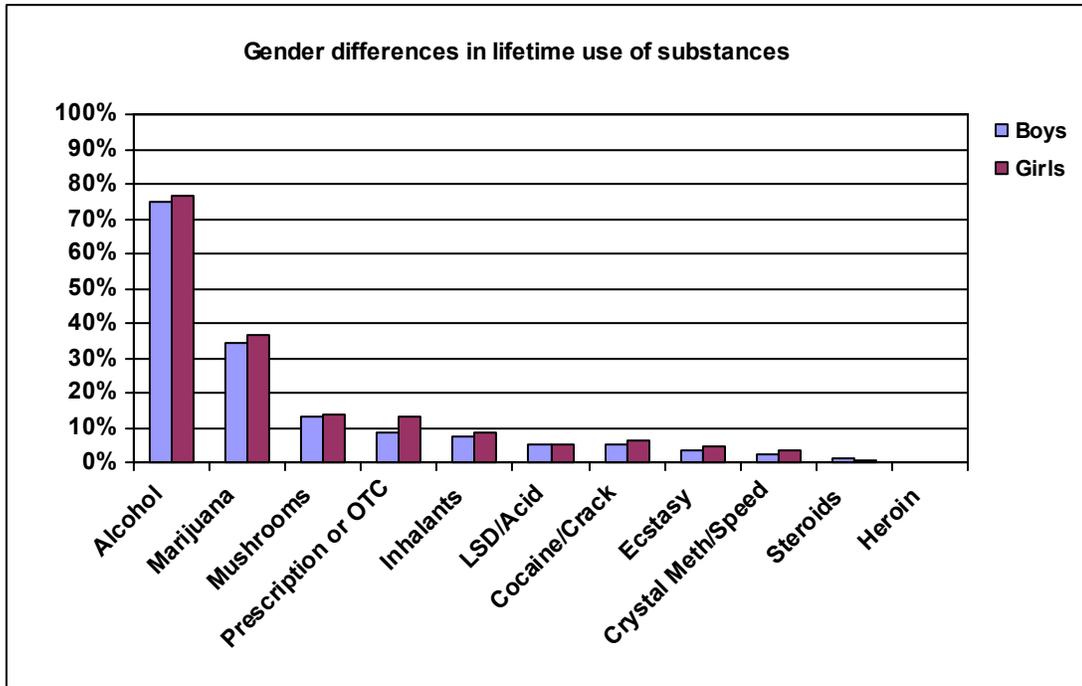
When asked if their alcohol use had changed in the past year, 24.5% of youth reported it had increased, 31.2% reported it had decreased and 45.5% said it had stayed the same. Similarly, when asked about their drug use over the past year, 20.7% said it had increased, 46.3% said it had decreased and 34.5% said it had stayed the same.



3.9 Gender differences

Girls reported higher levels of lifetime use of every substance, with the exception of steroids. In most cases the percentage differences were small; however some significant differences were that more girls than boys had used cocaine (6.1% vs. 4.9%); inhalants (8.6% vs. 7.2%) and prescription drugs (13.2% vs. 8.3%).

	Boys	Girls
Alcohol	74.9	76.6
Marijuana	34.4	36.8
Mushrooms	13.1	13.9
Prescription or over the counter drugs (OTC)	8.3	13.2
Inhalants	7.2	8.6
LSD/Acid	5.2	5.3
Cocaine/Crack	4.9	6.1
Ecstasy	3.6	4.5
Crystal Meth/Speed	2.4	3.7
Steroids	1.2	.8
Heroin	.2	.2



Boys tended to show greater overall consumption than girls. More boys than girls reported using alcohol and marijuana 40 times or more (alcohol: 17.1% vs. 15.1%; marijuana: 12.0% vs. 9.5%) and boys were more likely to report using marijuana 3 days a week or more. The rates of binge alcohol use were relatively equal for boys and girls, with a slightly higher number of girls saying they never binge drank.

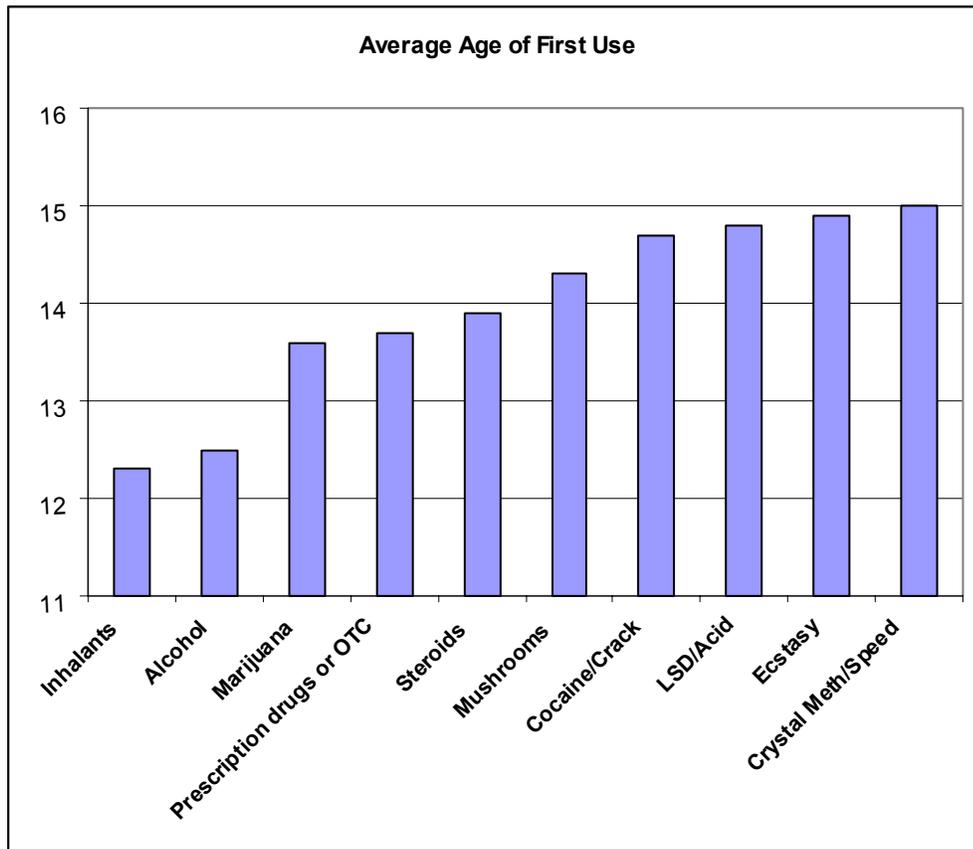
Girls were more likely than boys to state that fear of the effects, or fear of losing control were factors in their choosing not to use substances. Girls were also more likely than boys to say that they used substances to deal with unpleasant memories and feelings, or to deal with stress.

Girls were more likely than boys to state that their alcohol or drug use had caused conflict with their parents (23.0% vs. 19.1%), conflict with their friends (20.6% vs. 14.5%), or had caused unwanted or unplanned sexual activity (16.3% vs. 10.5%). Girls were also more likely than boys to have been a passenger in a vehicle with someone who had been using alcohol (52.3% vs. 43.9%) or drugs (30.3% vs. 24.2%), whereas boys were more likely than girls to have driven a vehicle after using alcohol (16.4% vs. 13.9%) or drugs (11.4% vs. 9.9%).

3.10 Average age of first use

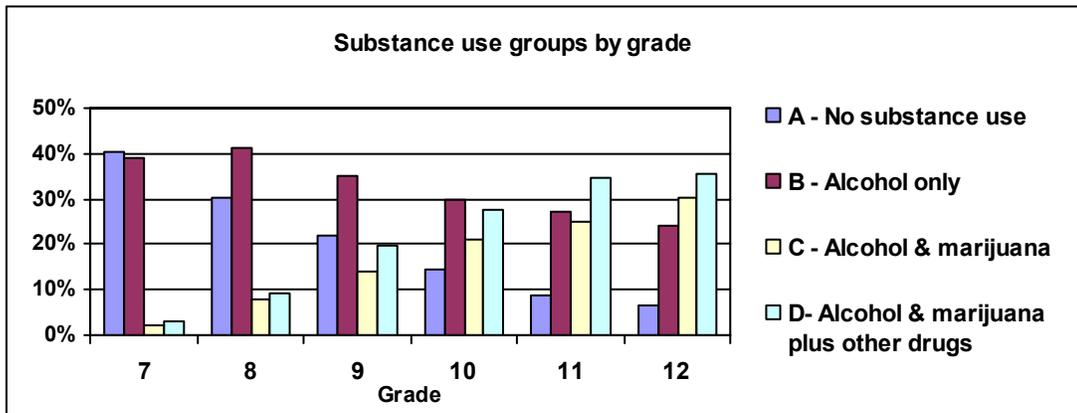
The following graph shows the average age of first use for all substances. Interestingly, inhalant use starts the earliest, followed by alcohol. The graph shows that experimentation with substances follows a predictable pattern from readily available substances (inhalants and alcohol) to marijuana and prescription medications, and then onto other less readily available substances.

Average age of first use	
Inhalants	12.3
Alcohol	12.5
Marijuana	13.6
Prescription or over the counter drugs (OTC)	13.7
Steroids	13.9
Mushrooms	14.3
Cocaine/Crack	14.7
LSD/Acid	14.8
Ecstasy	14.9
Crystal Meth/Speed	15.0



3.11 Rates and frequency of substance use

Substance use increases with age, in terms of number of substances tried, number of times used, and frequency of use. For example, amongst Grade 7 students, 53.9% have tried alcohol, 5.8% have tried marijuana, 2.2% have tried mushrooms and less than a half a percent have tried cocaine. By Grade 12, 92.7% of students have tried alcohol, 66.7% have tried marijuana, 27.5% have tried mushrooms and 10.7% have tried cocaine. A similar pattern is shown when looking at the four sub-groups. In Grade 7, 40% of students belong to Group A and only 2.9% belong to Group D. By Grade 12 only 6.5% of students are in Group A while 35.7% of students are in Group D.



Alcohol and marijuana continue to be the top two substances of choice for adolescents to use. Sixty percent of respondents who use alcohol (or 32.2% of all youth) report having used alcohol 10 or more times in their lives. Interestingly, of youth in Group B, who have used only alcohol, only 29.6% report having used alcohol 10 or more times in their lives, whereas 79.6% of youth in Group D report having used alcohol 10 or more times. Similarly, 66.8% of youth who use marijuana (or 18.3% of the entire population) report having used more than 10 times. Once again, of youth in Group C, who have used only alcohol and marijuana, 41.8% report having used 10 or more times in their lives, whereas 67.1% of youth in Group D report having used 10 or more times.

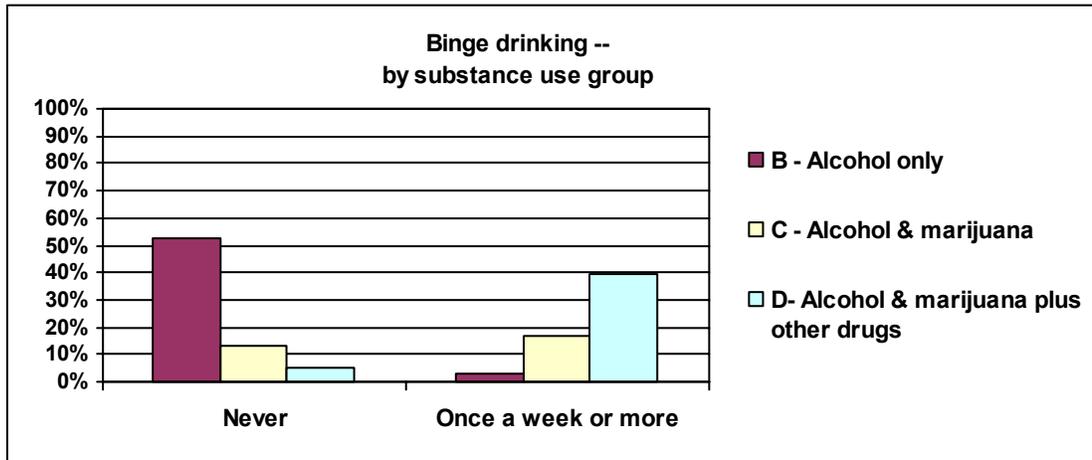
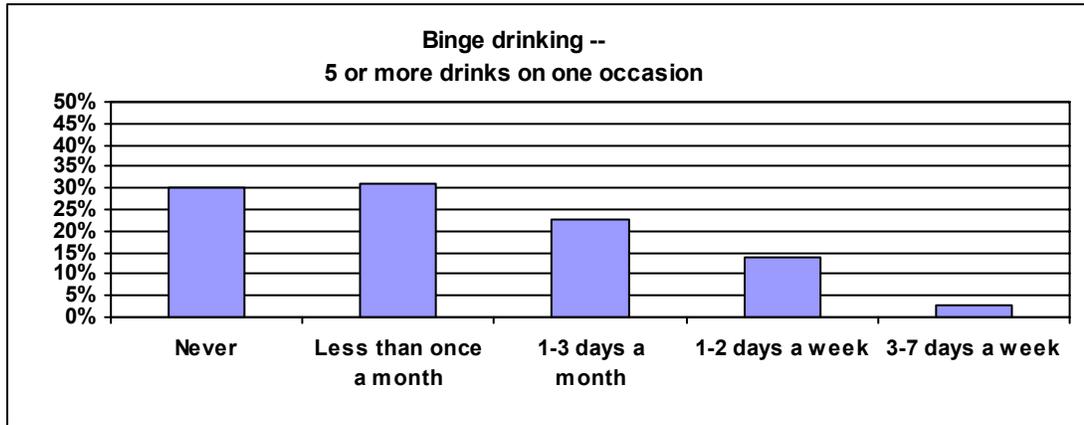
For all other substances the predominant usage pattern is that of experimental use. Between 43.9 to 51.5% of youth who had used cocaine, crystal meth/speed, LSD, ecstasy, or inhalants reported having used only 1 to 3 times. Similarly, 37.8% of youth who have used prescriptions and 39.4% who have used mushrooms have only used 1 to 3 times.

The predominant pattern of use for youth is to use substances infrequently, in what could be considered an experimental or recreational way. For all substances, at least 43.5% of youth who reported using in the past year stated they used less than once a month. In fact, with the exception of marijuana, 75% of youth who reported using any other substance, including alcohol, used that substance less than once a week on average.

With marijuana 39.3% of youth who reported using in the past year said they used once a week or more, with 24.8% saying they used 3-7 days a week. Although this figure represents only 7.2% of the total youth population, it raises a concern because of the negative impact regular marijuana use can have on short term memory, learning and emotional stability and the increased risk it creates for schizophrenia and psychosis. Youth in Group D are the most likely to report regular use. Of youth in Group C who report using only alcohol and marijuana, 68.3% report using less than once a month while only 4.9% report using 3 days a week or more. Of Group D youth however, 29.1% report using less than once a month while 36.9% report using 3 days a week or more.

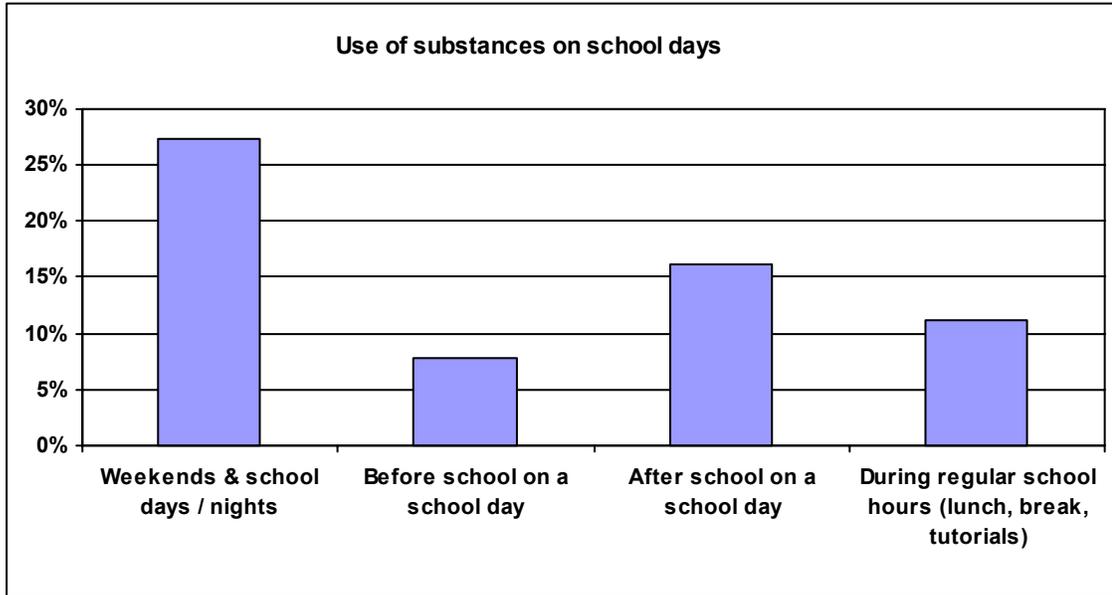
3.12 Binge drinking

Heavy episodic alcohol use, or binge drinking, is defined as having 5 or more drinks during one drinking episode. Of youth who use alcohol, 30.3% reported never binge drinking and 53.9% reported binge drinking less than 3 times a month. Only 16.3% of respondents reported binge drinking once a week or more. Analysis by substance use group revealed some interesting distinctions. Amongst Group B youth over half reported never binge drinking while only 2.7% reported binge drinking once a week or more. In Group C only 13.1% reported never binge drinking while 16.5% reported weekly binge drinking. Amongst Group D youth, 5.4% said they never binge drank while 39.5% reported weekly binge drinking.

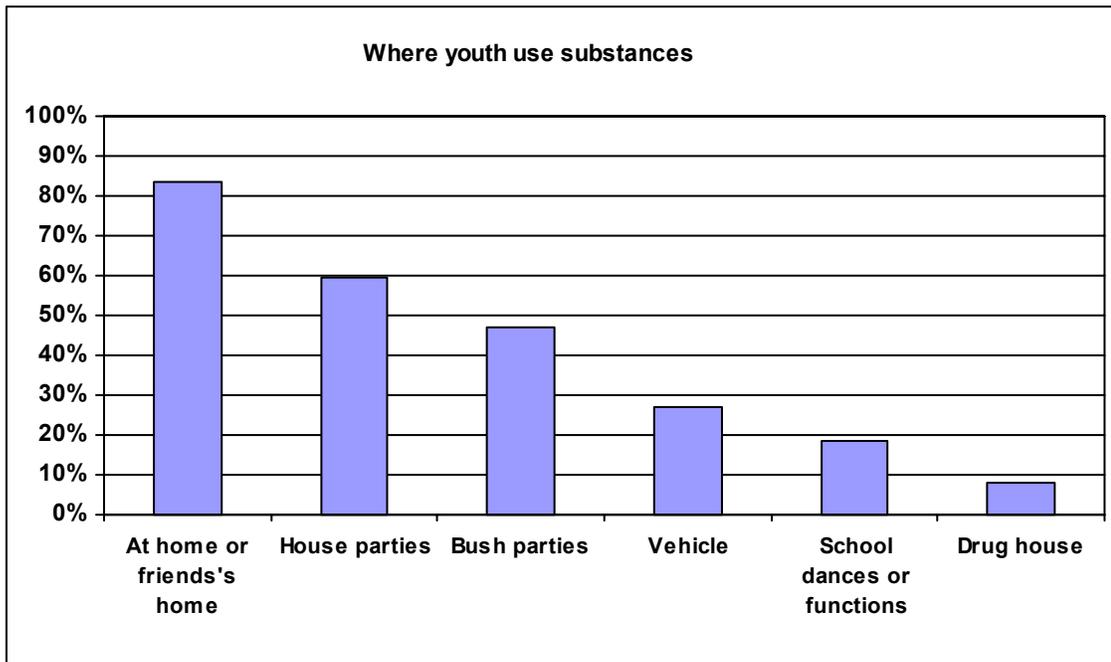


3.13 When, where and why of adolescent substance use

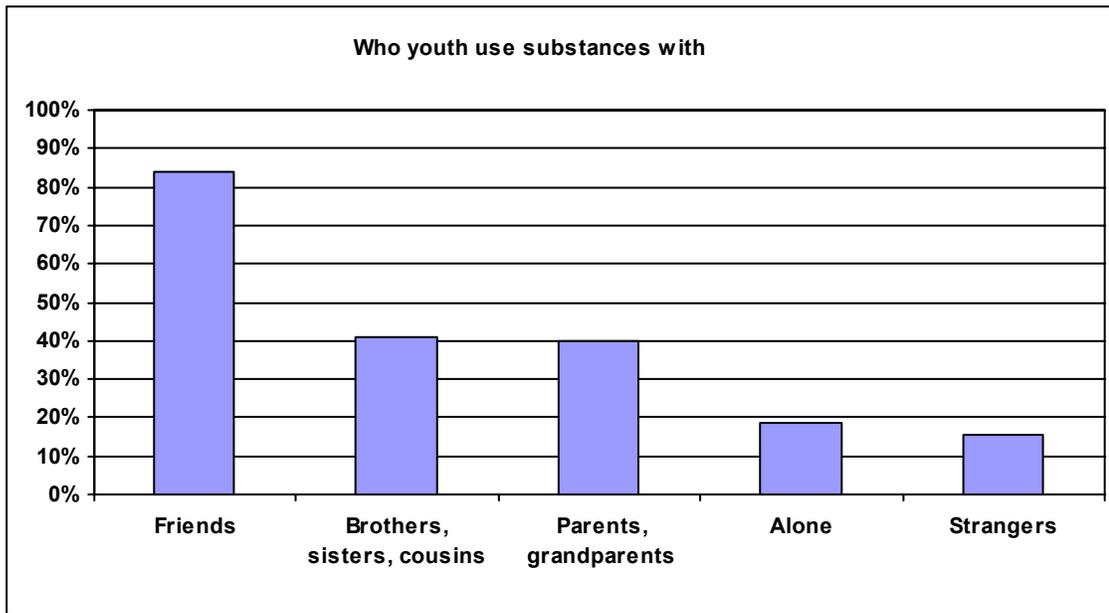
27.4% of youth who reported using substances stated they used on weekends and school days and 11.2% said they had used during regular school hours. Of youth in Group B, 1.3% said they had used during regular school hours. This increased to 8.7% for youth in Group C and 28.2% for youth in Group D.



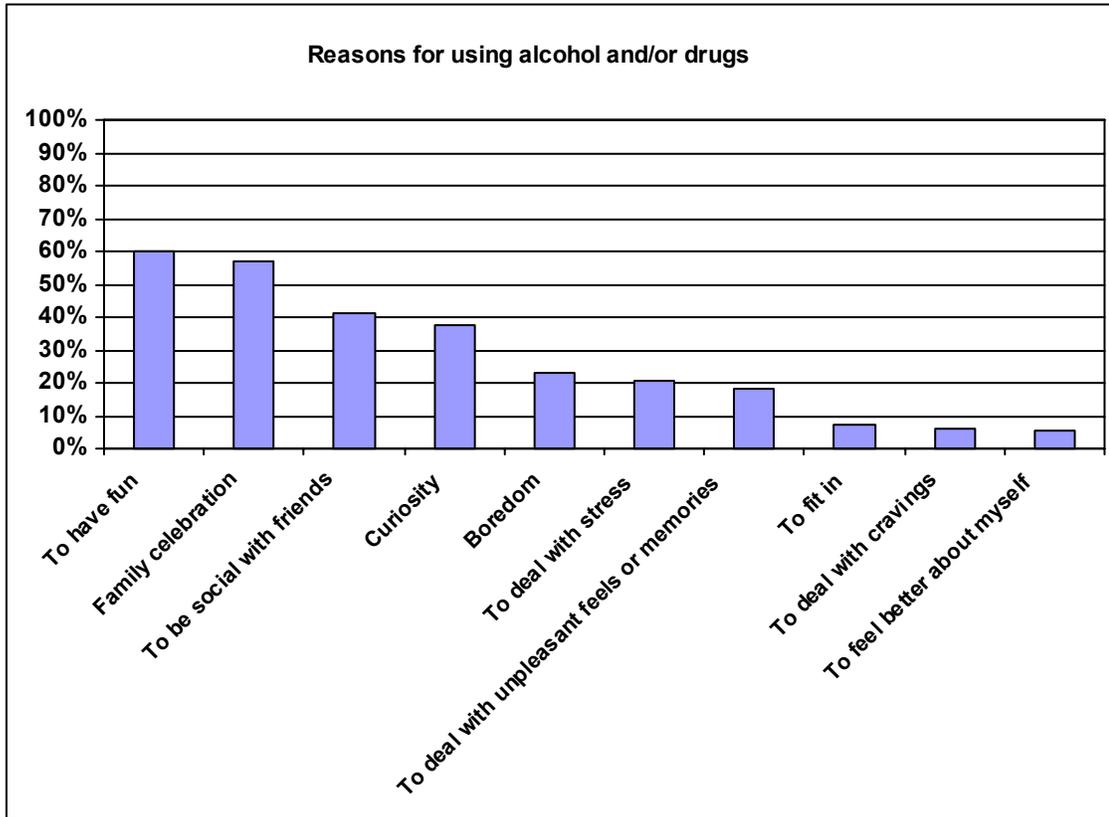
The main place that youth reported using substances was at their home or at a friend's home (83.6%). This is followed by house parties (59.4%) and bush parties (47.2%). 27.0% of youth reported using in a vehicle. For youth in Group B this figure is 3.5%, increasing to 31.9% for youth in Group C and 48.3% for youth in Group D.



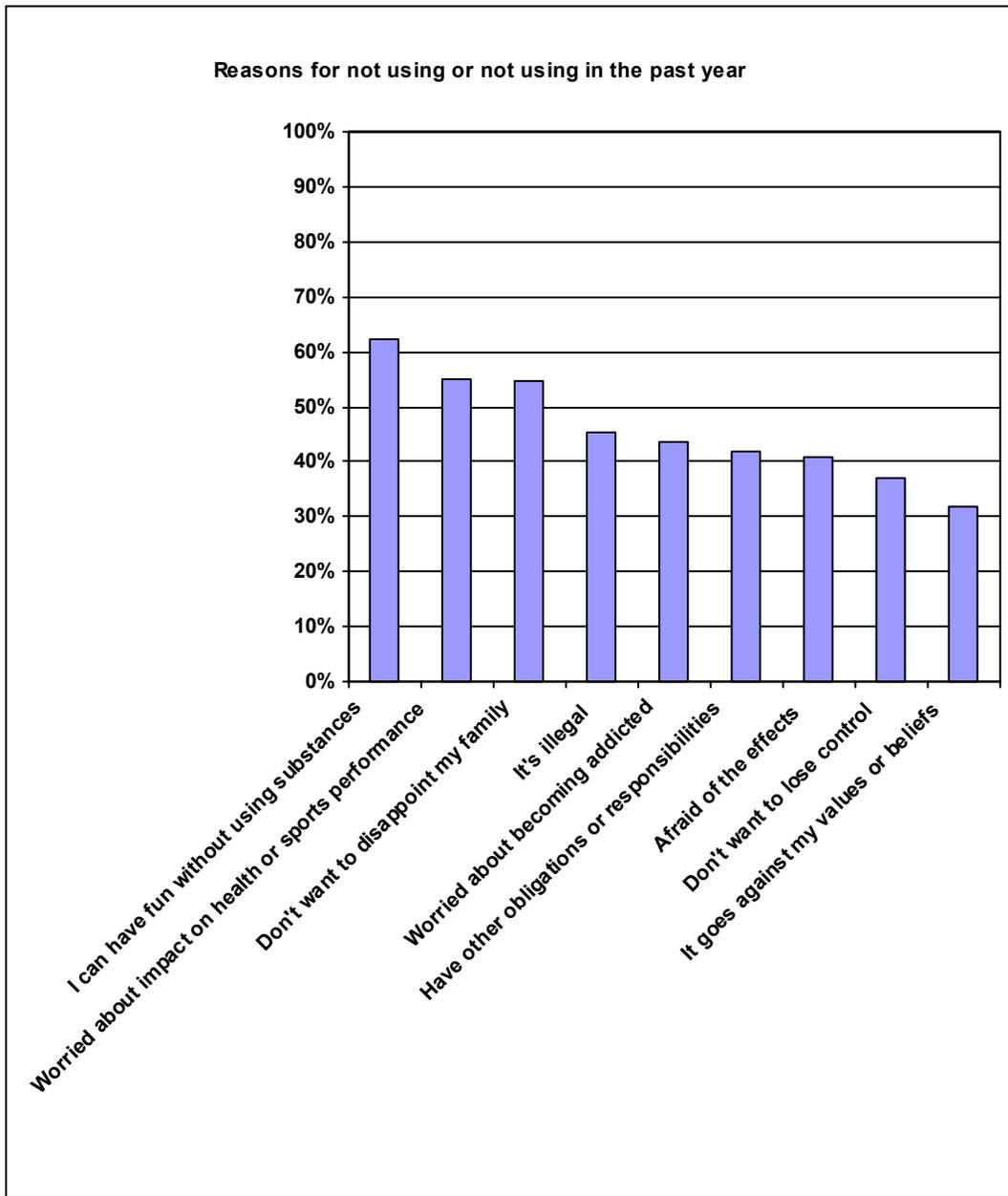
83.7% of youth report using with friends. 41.1% report using with siblings or cousins and 40.1% report using with parents or grandparents. 18.7% of youth report using alone, and 15.8% of youth report using with strangers. In Group D, 39.4% of youth report having used alone and 36.6% having used with strangers.



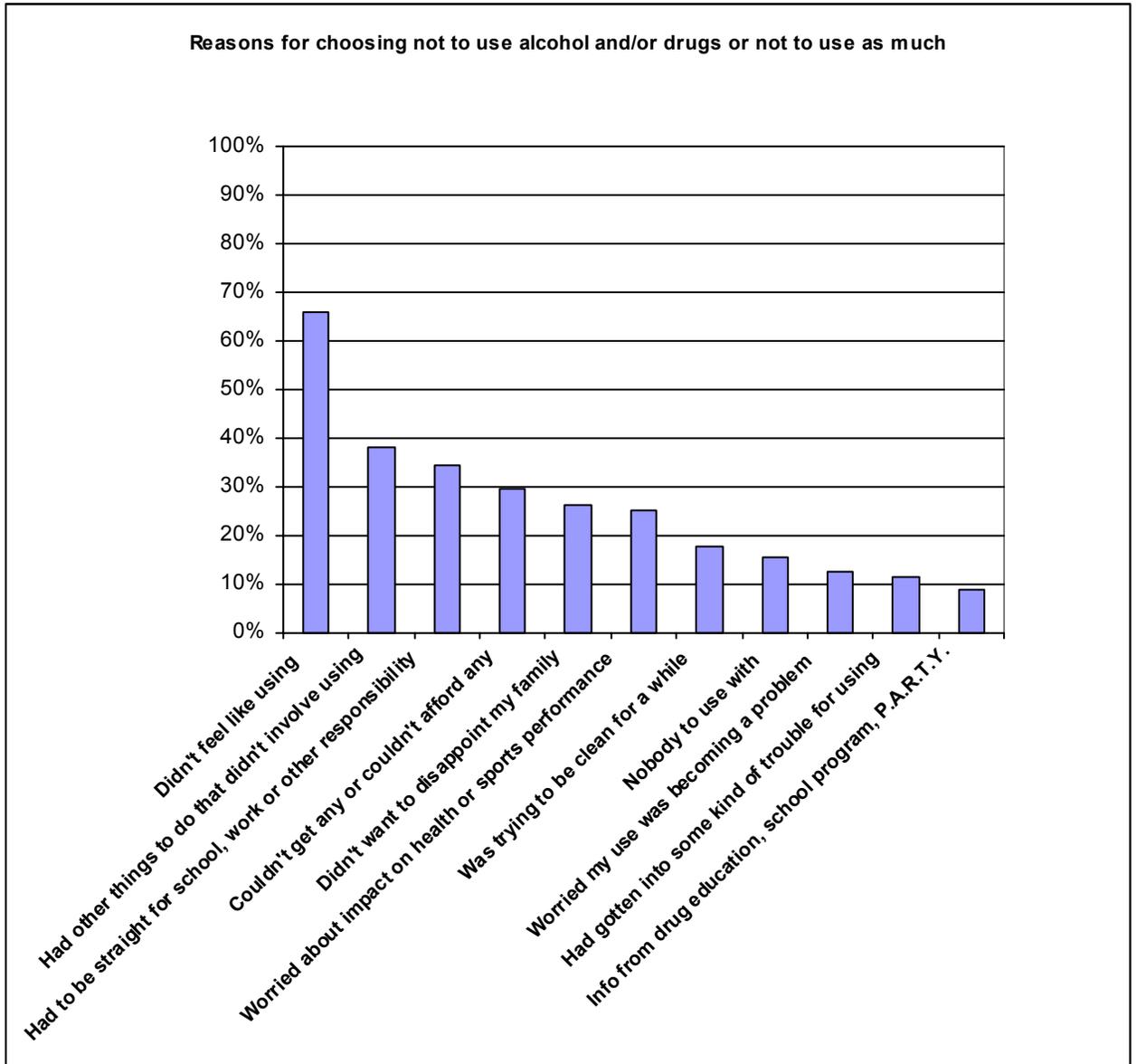
Amongst the youth who used substances, the primary reasons for using were: to have fun (59.8%), family celebrations (57.2%), to be social with friends (41.5%) and curiosity (37.6%). A significant percentage of youth report using to deal with internal pressures, including 23.1% who use to deal with boredom, 20.5% who use to deal with stress and 18.3% who use to deal with unpleasant feelings or memories. In Group D, these percentages increase to 43.9% for boredom, 42.3% to deal with stress and 36.6% to deal with unpleasant memories or feelings.



Amongst the youth who reported not using or who had not used in the past year, the primary reason for not using was that they could have fun without substances (62.2%), followed by worry about impact on health or sports performance (55.1%), not wanting to disappoint family (54.6%), and the illegality of using (45.5%).

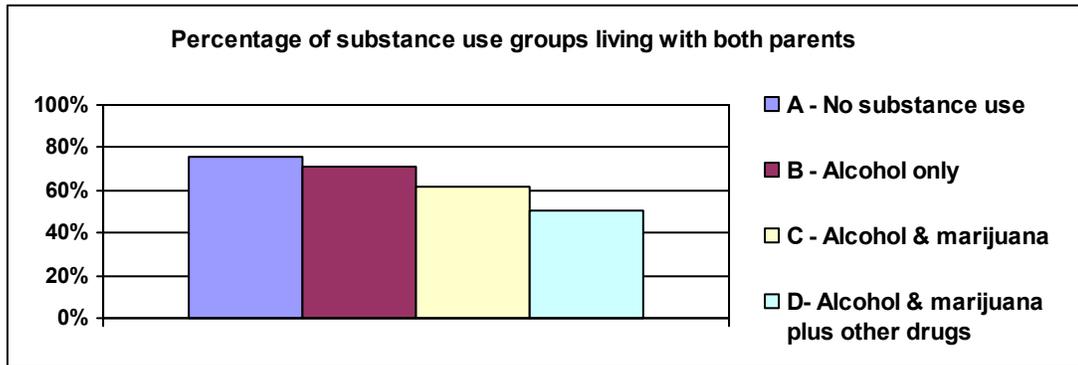


When youth who use chose not to use for a period of time, the main reasons given were: simply not feeling like it (65.8%); having other things to do that didn't involve using (38.1%); and needing to be straight for school, work or other responsibilities (34.4%). Inability to find or access substances was the 4th most common reason (29.6%). Not wanting to disappoint family (26.4%), and concern about the impact on health or sports performance (25.2%) were also important.



3.14 Living arrangements

The survey examined whether who a youth lives with is connected with their pattern of substance use. The analysis clearly showed that youth who live with both birth parents are less likely to be involved in substance use than their peers who live in some other arrangement. For example, 75.6% of non-users lived with both parents. As youth reported using more substances, the odds of them living with both parents decreased. Only 50.8% of youth in Group D reported living with both parents.

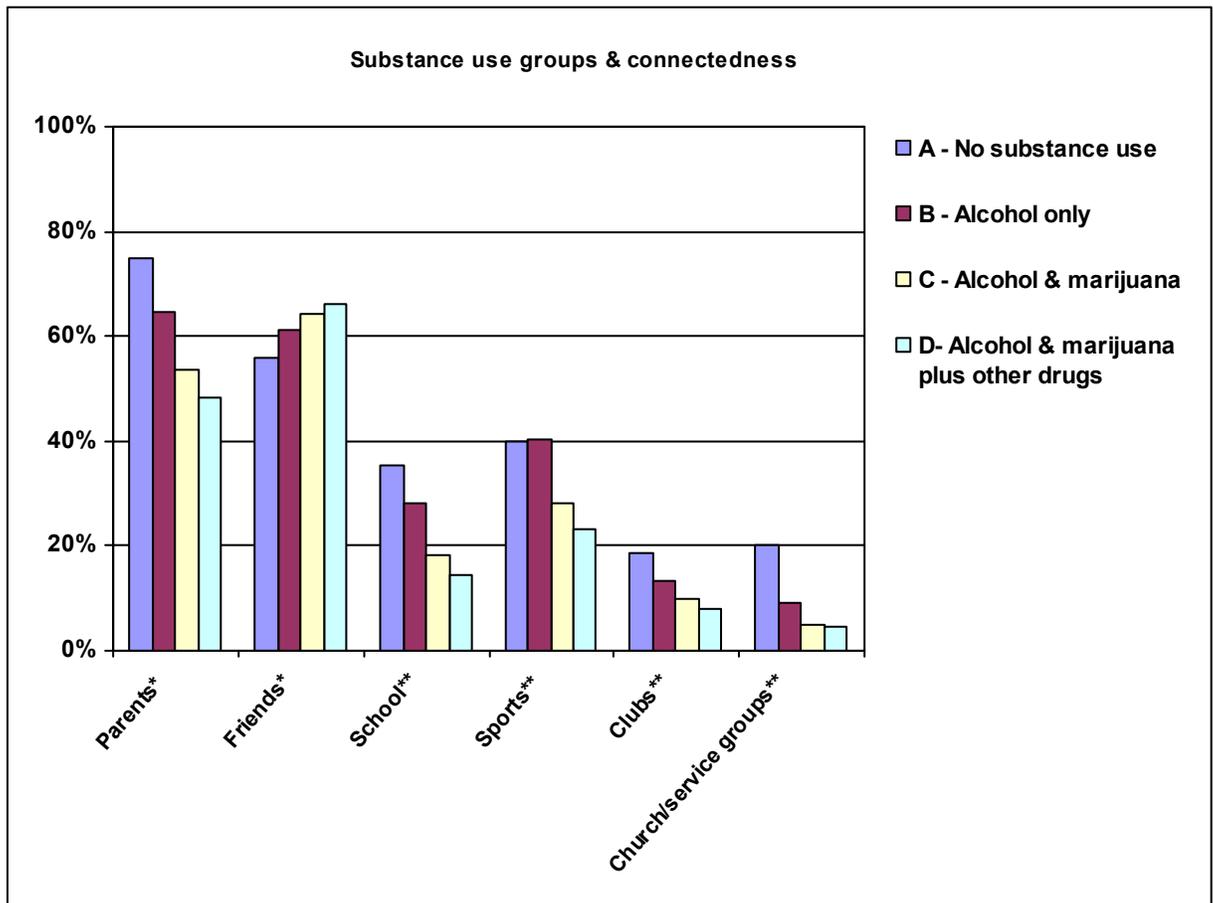


3.15 Connection and involvement

The survey examined whether the degree of connection or involvement that a youth feels towards family, friends, school, sports, clubs and community groups or church has any relation to substance use patterns. The data was analyzed using the four substance use categories, and the results clearly show a connection between social and community involvement and substance use.

Youth from Group A had the highest percentage reporting feeling very close to family and the highest overall weighted average (75.0%; 3.7), and the highest percentage reporting being very involved with school (35.4%; 3.2), with sports (40.0%; 2.9) and clubs (18.5%; 2.2) and to community groups or church (20.0%; 2.3). By contrast, youth in Category D had the lowest percentage and overall weighted average reporting feeling very close to family (48.1%; 3.3), being involved with school (14.3%; 2.7), sports (23.2%; 2.3), clubs (7.9%; 1.7) or community groups or church (4.4%; 1.6). In all cases, the percentages of youth reporting being very involved in any category, and the weighted averages for that category, decreased moving from drug category A to D, and the percentage reporting being not at all close or involved increased. The weighted average represents the average score of all respondents in a given group for a given question.

The one exception is in the report of being close to friends. The majority of youth from all categories reported being close or very close to their friends. The percentage of youth reporting being very close to their friends increased from Group A (55.8%) to Group D (66.2%).

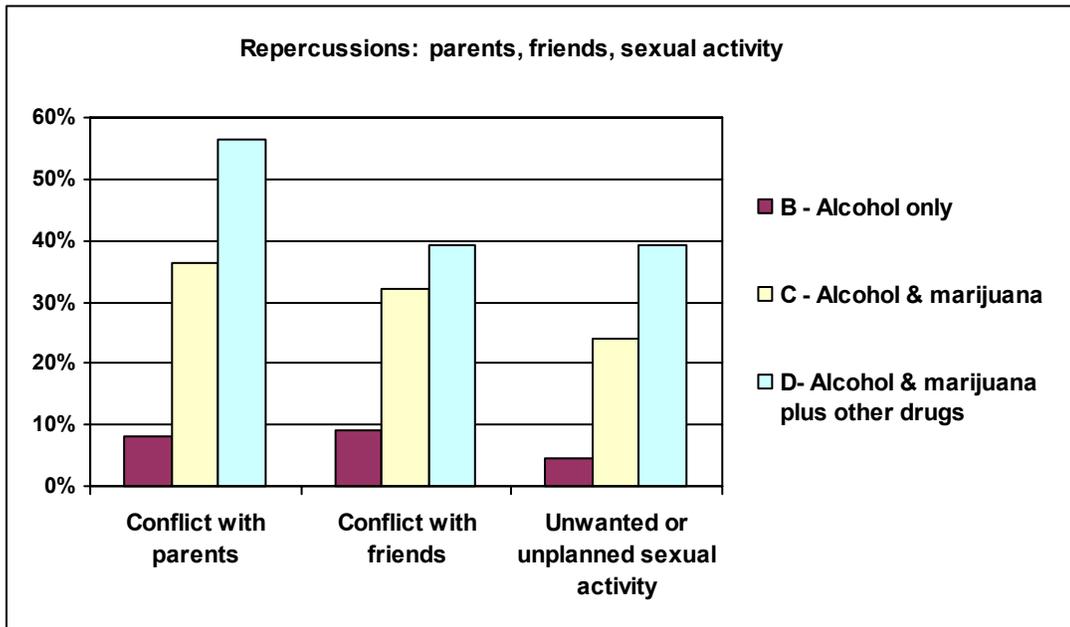


*Very close with **Very involved in

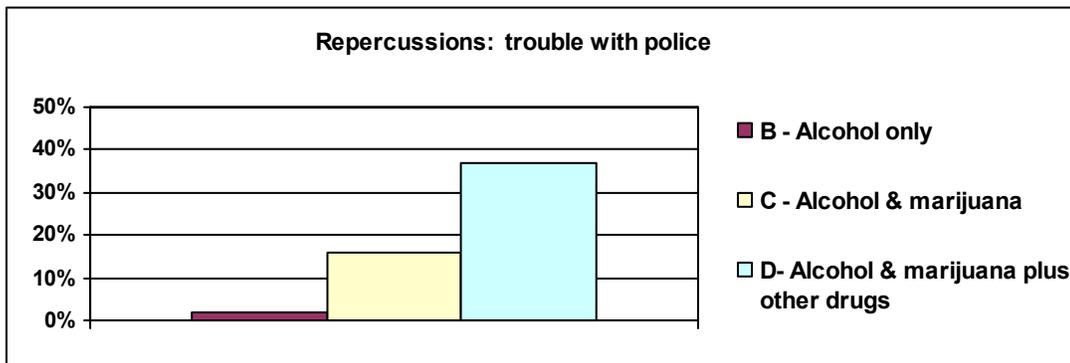
3.16 Repercussions of substance use

The survey examined the impact that substance use has on a variety of adolescent relationships and behaviours. The overall results clearly show that as substance use increases the likelihood that youth will experience negative consequences or engage in risky behaviours also increases.

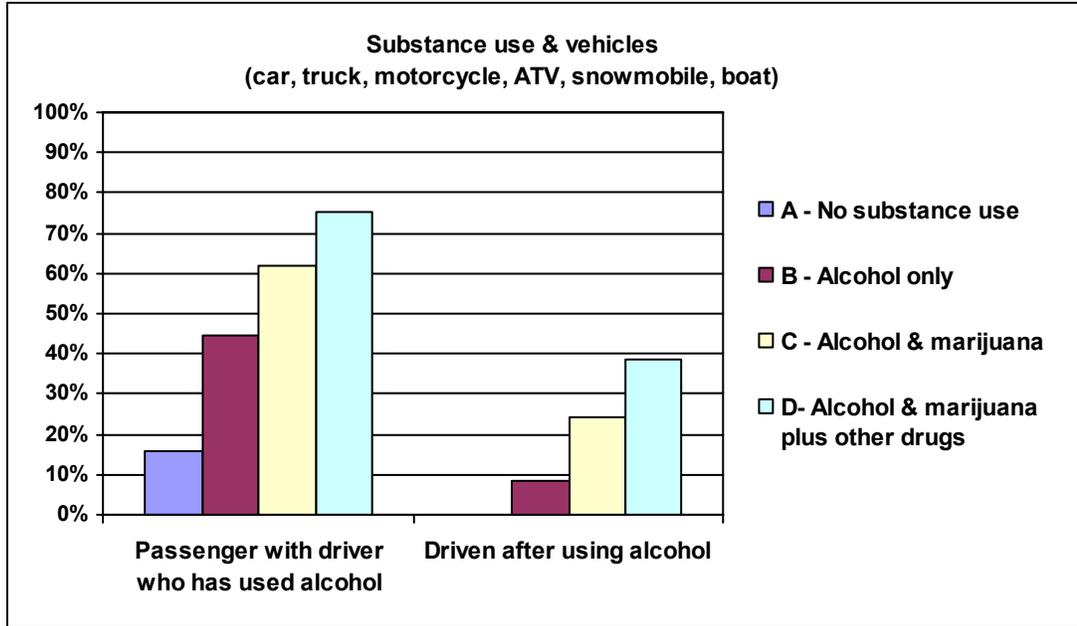
For example, 21.7% of youth report that their alcohol or drug use has caused conflict between themselves and their parents. When broken down by group, this figure ranges from 8.2% for Group B youth, 36.4% for Group C youth to 56.4% for Group D youth. Similarly, 17.7% of youth say their use has caused conflict with their friends. Once again, the figures range from 9.1% for Group B to 39.2% for Group D. When asked if their substance use had ever caused them to have unwanted or unplanned sexual activity 14.3% of youth overall reported yes. By group, 4.4% of Group B youth said yes compared to 24.1% of youth in Group C and 39.2% of youth in Group D.



11.6% of youth said their use had gotten them into trouble with the police with 2.1% of youth in Group B and 36.9% of youth in Group D answering yes. When asked if they had ever been charged with a crime 1.4% of Group A answered yes, compared to 3.6% of Group B, 8.6% of Group C and 25% of Group D.

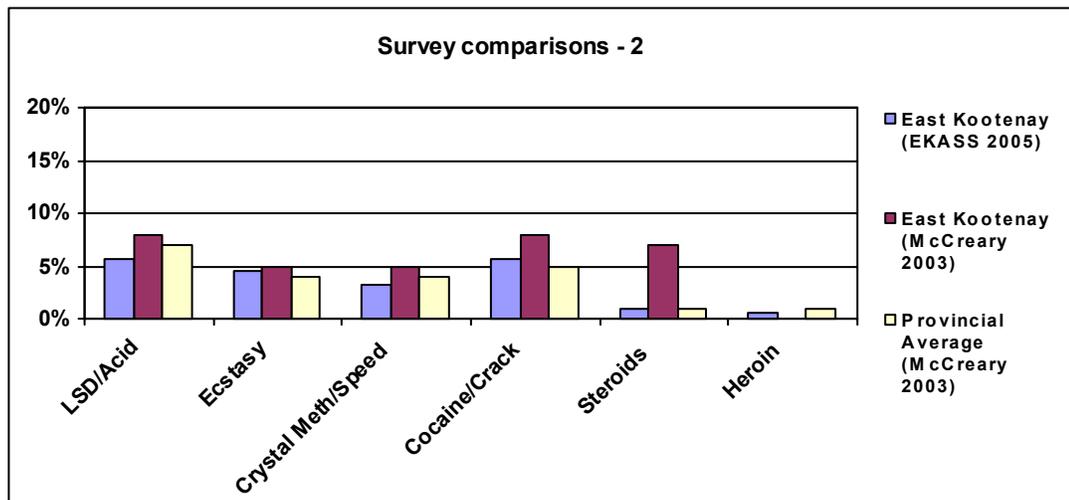
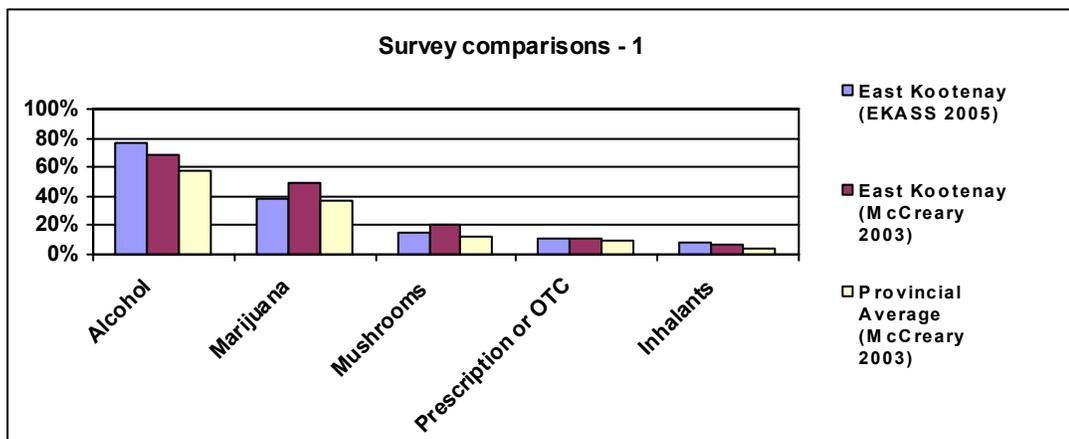


Youth from Group D were nearly five times more likely to have been a passenger in a vehicle with someone who has been using alcohol than youth in Group A (75.2% vs. 16.0%) and eighteen times more likely to have been a passenger in a vehicle with someone who had been using other drugs (70.8% vs. 3.9%). Similarly, 8.2% of youth in Group B reported they had driven a vehicle after using alcohol compared to 38.8% of Group D youth, and 0.4% of Group B youth said they had driven after using other drugs compared to 39.8% of Group D youth.



4. Comparison with the 2003 McCreary Centre Society's Adolescent Health Survey

Comparing the 2005 Adolescent Drug Use Survey with the results of the 2003 McCreary Centre Society Adolescent Health Survey shows a very encouraging trend in overall drug use patterns. The McCreary study surveyed Grade 7 – 12 students from across B.C., including schools in the East Kootenay. Compared to the 2005 Survey, the McCreary study found higher rates of lifetime use for all substances, with the exception of alcohol. The following chart highlights the differences. Overall, with the exception of alcohol, the East Kootenay rates of use appear to be declining and are now in line with or lower than the Provincial averages determined by the McCreary study.



5. Conclusions

The 2005 East Kootenay Adolescent Drug Use Survey continues on the success of the 2002 Drug Use Survey.

The findings are encouraging as they suggest that drug use by youth has decreased in the past two years, when compared to the results of the McCreary study. The survey shows that a significant minority of youth choose to abstain from substances completely. It also shows that of those youth who have used substances, the majority restrict their use to alcohol and/or marijuana, and that the vast majority of these youth use on a limited recreational basis. The survey also showed that the use of drugs such as LSD, ecstasy, crystal methamphetamine, cocaine and heroin is restricted to a small minority of youth, and that the use of these drugs appears to be largely experimental in nature.

Also encouraging was the indication that the majority of youth who use substances appear to be in control of their use. This is suggested by the fact that the use is infrequent, and that youth report being able to actively choose not to use, be it for work, school, concern about disappointing family or health, or just lack of interest. Also encouraging is that more youth report decreasing their use rather than increasing.

On the cautionary side, the survey showed that a significant minority of youth use alcohol on a regular weekend basis, and that an even larger minority use marijuana regularly on both weekends and school days. This raises concerns for the health and safety of these youth, the risk of such use progressing to dependency, and the impact on their academic and social functioning. Also of concern is the number of youth who report binge drinking. Binge drinking at any time is risky for adolescents, and regular binge drinking significantly increases the risk of alcohol-related injury. Of further concern is the high number of youth who report having been a passenger in a vehicle driven by someone who has been impaired by alcohol or other drugs, and the number of youth who report operating a vehicle after using alcohol or other drugs.

As was also shown by the 2002 Survey, who a youth lives with and how connected they feel to family and social institutions has a bearing on their substance use. Youth who live with both parents are less likely to be involved in heavier substance use, and more likely to be abstinent, than youth who do not live with both parents. Similarly, as the reported degree of closeness or connectedness to family, school, sports or clubs decreases the likelihood that youth will engage in increasing substance use goes up.

Family is also important in role modeling responsible attitudes and behaviours with respect to alcohol and other substance use. Given that over 40% of respondents who have used a substance say they have used with family members, and that nearly 60% of youth who have used say they have done so

as part of a family celebration, the message that parents give to youth about substance use through their words and actions, will have a significant bearing on the behaviour of their children.

The analysis of the data based on the four sub-groups yields some important information on youth substance use behaviour. The analysis clearly demonstrates that as youth add more substances to their repertoire, there is a corresponding increase in frequency of use (days per month, binge drinking), using in inappropriate settings (school, vehicles), using in riskier ways (alone, with strangers) and using for riskier reasons (to deal with stress, cravings or unpleasant feelings or memories). There is also a corresponding increase in negative consequences from use, including increased problems with family, friends, school, work and police, an increased risk of unwanted sexual activity, and increased risk of being a passenger in a vehicle with an impaired driver, or the driver of a vehicle after using substances.

Although the overall trend towards increased risk with increased use was anticipated, what was surprising was that the addition of marijuana alone to alcohol use significantly increased risk behaviours or negative consequences. This unexpectedly large increase can be seen across such diverse behaviours or consequences as binge drinking, using during school time, conflict with parents and unwanted sexual activity. Although youth will typically downplay negatives consequences from marijuana use, the survey suggests that marijuana use will dramatically increase risky behaviours and negative consequences. This is of particular concern as, when compared to alcohol, a greater percentage of youth who use marijuana will use on a regular weekly or daily basis.

The information gained from the survey also suggests that educational and prevention programs need to be designed for specific audiences. The data on age of first use suggest that in Grades 7 and 8, information on alcohol, marijuana and inhalants is important. By Grade 9 and 10, when the majority of youth will begin experimenting with other drugs, the information needs to be broadened. By Grades 11 and 12, when most youth who will experiment with substances have already started, information needs to shift to harm reduction strategies to reduce risky behaviour and encourage responsible decision making. Education programs should also take into account that the experiences of the different sub-groups with respect to substance use are quite different, and that the message should be designed with the different sub-groups in mind.

Finally, the information could be used to argue for broad-based community initiatives aimed at reducing some of the obvious risk-behaviours associated with substance use. Initiatives aimed at reducing levels of binge drinking, driving with impaired drivers, or exposure to unwanted or unplanned sexual activity could greatly reduce the risk of injury associated with these behaviours.

6. Acknowledgements and contact information

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EKASS has offices at the following locations:

Cranbrook/Kimberley	202-1617 Baker Street Cranbrook, BC V1C 1B4 Ph: 250-489-4344 Fax: 250-489-1020 ekand@cintek.com
Columbia Valley	625 Fourth Street Box 2289 Invermere, BC V0A 1K0 Ph: 250-342-3868 Fax: 250-342-3850 colvalad@telus.net
Elk Valley	802 Second Avenue Box 2049 Fernie, BC V0B 1M0 Ph: 250-423-4423 Fax: 250-423-6698 evadcs@elkvalley.net

For further information on the survey or to obtain a copy, contact Dean Nicholson, Administrator, at 250-489-4344.