



USE OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND OTHER DRUGS AMONG
STUDENTS IN GRADES FIVE THROUGH TWELVE IN
THE SUN WEST SCHOOL DIVISION

Executive Summary of June 2008 Report

Methodology

- There were parent and student surveys which were on-line questionnaires developed using Survey Monkey software (see www.surveymonkey.com for details).
- The student survey was administered during school hours by Sun West Child and Youth Counsellors. Precautions were taken to ensure student anonymity.
- The parent survey was voluntary and posted on the Sun West School Division website; parents were informed via school newsletters and an information letter from the school.

Duration

- The survey was administered to students and made available to parents between April 21 and May 20, 2008.

Participation

- Two thousand, six hundred and two grades 5-12 students participated out of a potential 2,920 (approximately 89%).
- Four hundred and four-two parents of parents with grades 5-12 students participated in the survey (approximately 15%).

Context

Survey results were compared and cross-referenced against similar surveys administered by the following authorities in order to provide context:

- Former Greenhead Health District, Saskatchewan (2001)
- Canadian Addiction Survey (2004 & 2008)
- Former Biggar School Division (2005)

Key Findings

Alcohol Use

- Sun West students are more frequent users of alcohol than students the same ages in other Canadian jurisdictions.

- Sixty-six per cent of grades 10-12 respondents indicated they use alcohol at least 1-3 times monthly with fully 42% of that same group indicating they use alcohol as much as 1-7 times a week.
- Twenty-three per cent of grades 7-9 respondents indicated they use alcohol at least 1-3 times monthly with 11% of that same group indicating they use alcohol as much as 1-7 times a week.
- Fifty-six per cent of Sun West students in grades 10-12 indicated they have been drunk 10 or more times and 10% of grades 7-9 students report being drunk 10 or more times.
- The average Sun West student who uses alcohol starts at age 12, while the national average is age 15.
- Nearly 40% of grades 10-12 students have driven under the influence of alcohol or other drugs at least once and 30% have driven under the influence of alcohol or other drugs more than once. Ten percent indicated they more-or-less habitually drive under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
- In all age categories, including grades 5 and 6, 33% of students who used alcohol, reported obtaining the alcohol from their parents.

Smoking

- Sixty-seven per cent of Sun West grades 10-12 students do not smoke, which is comparable to, or better than, other Canadian jurisdictions.
- Twenty per cent of Sun West grades 10-12 students reported smoking 1-7 times a week.
- Eight-eight per cent of Sun West grades 7-9 students indicated they do not smoke and 5% indicated they smoke 1-7 times a week.
- On average, students who smoke have their first cigarette at 12 years of age.

Marijuana

- Sun West students are less frequent users of marijuana than students the same age in other jurisdictions.
- Seventy-six of grades 10-12 Sun West students indicated they do not use marijuana.
- Ten per cent of grades 10-12 Sun West students reported using marijuana 1-7 times a week.
- The average Sun West student who uses marijuana starts at age 14, while the national average is age 15.

Other Drugs

- The use of cocaine, ecstasy and mushrooms/hallucinogens in grades 10-12 students in Sun West is comparable to other Canadian jurisdictions and the use of crystal meth/speed is lower than national averages.
- Ten per cent of Sun West grades 10-12 students reported using ecstasy, 9% reported using cocaine, 3% reported using crystal meth/speed and 15% reported using mushrooms/hallucinogens.

Chart Summaries

Chart #1 – Alcohol Use

Grades	Never Use	Once a month	1-3 times monthly	1-7 times weekly
5-6	89.7%	7%	2.6%	0.6%
7-9	52.8%	24.3%	12.2%	10.8%
10-12	16%	18.2 %	23.8%	42.1%

Chart #2 – Frequency of Drunkenness

Grades	Never	Once	2-3 times	4-5 times	More than 10 times
5-6	88.5%	6.7%	2.8%	1.1%	0.9%
7-9	34.4%	10.7%	11.0%	8%	10.5%
10-12	19.5%	5.2 %	7.1%	11.7%	56.4%

Chart #3 – Driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs

Grades	Never	Once	2-3 times	4-5 times	More than 6 times
10-12	61.1%	9.1 %	12.0%	4.7%	13.1%

Chart #4 – Alcohol obtained from . . .

Grades	Never	Friends	Parents	Store	Other
5-6	53.8%	5.6%	32.6%	1.1%	9.4%
7-9	27.3%	32.5%	33.8%	2.7%	16.3%
10-12	10%	56.6 %	33.1%	24.1%	19.6%

Chart #5 – Smoking

Grades	Never	Once a month	1-3 times monthly	1-7 times weekly
5-6	97.8%	0.3%	0.9%	0.6%
7-9	88%	4.4%	2.7%	4.9%
10-12	66.7%	8 %	5.2%	20.2%

Chart #6 – Marijuana use

Grades	Never	Once a month	1-3 times monthly	1-7 times weekly
5-6	99%	0%	0.9%	0%
7-9	93.9%	1.4%	2.1%	2.5%
10-12	75.6%	9.1 %	5.7%	9.7%

Chart #7 – Lifetime use of other drugs

Grades	Ecstasy	Cocaine	Crystal Meth/Speed	Mushrooms/ Hallucinogens
7-9	2.6%	2.6%	1.1%	3.3%
10-12	10.4%	8.9 %	3.2%	14.7%

Recommendations

- Addressing the issues raised by this survey requires a collaborative process involving the collective resources of Education, Health, Social Services and Justice.
- Student input and leadership is needed.
- Research is needed to develop the best practices to address issues around substance use and addictions.
- Current research suggests education and preventative strategies are best aimed at younger students before they start using substances.
- School Community Councils and other community organizations need to be involved in the development of strategies to address the issues raised by this survey.
- Parents need to be involved in the development of strategies to address the issues raised by this survey.