



YOUTH RESEARCH ACADEMY



VACFSS

This fact sheet was created by young people who attended the 2019 Youth Research Slam, as part of a joint initiative of McCreary Centre Society and Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society (VACFSS).



McCreary Centre Society

Data in this fact sheet comes from the BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS). For more information on the BC AHS and the Research Slam, visit [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca). The Research Slam was supported by:



## 14 YOUTH – 24 HOURS – 6 DAYS

Fourteen young people spent Spring Break learning research skills and analyzing data from the 2018 BC AHS. We looked at substance use in the lives of BC youth (aged 12–19), including alcohol, marijuana and tobacco use, misuse of prescription medication, and youth who had lost someone close to them to a fentanyl overdose. These are the findings we felt were most important to share.



38,015 grade 7–12 students filled out the 2018 BC AHS.

They answered questions about their health and life experiences, including questions about substance use.

44% OF YOUTH HAD TRIED ALCOHOL



25% HAD TRIED MARIJUANA



18% HAD SMOKED TOBACCO



9% HAD USED PRESCRIPTION PILLS WITHOUT A DOCTOR'S CONSENT



5% HAD USED MORE OF THEIR OWN MEDICATION THAN PRESCRIBED



### REASONS FOR SUBSTANCE USE...

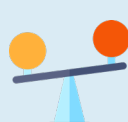
- 1 in 3 youth said the last time they used was to have fun (67%).
- 1 in 4 used because they were stressed (24%).
- 1 in 5 used because they were feeling sad (20%).

### AMONG YOUTH WHO HAD TRIED ALCOHOL...



54% had also tried marijuana (compared to 3% who had not used alcohol).

### AMONG YOUTH WHO HAD SMOKED TOBACCO...



81% had also tried marijuana (compared to 13% who had not smoked tobacco).

### SOME YOUTH WERE MORE LIKELY THAN OTHERS TO HAVE USED SUBSTANCES. FOR EXAMPLE...

45% with a mental health condition had used marijuana.

VS.

22% who did not have a mental health condition.



"If youth are depressed or anxious, they might use substances as a way to cope, such as to feel relaxed and comfortable."

44% who were deprived of a lunch for school/lunch money had tried marijuana.

VS.

25% who were not deprived of this.



"As a youth who grew up below the poverty line and felt personally deprived of some of these things (lunch money, access to funds for school trips, etc.), these findings make a lot of sense....A bus pass, hot lunch program, and feeling as though my teachers understood me and supported my goals were a few protective factors that worked in my case."

36% who lost someone to a fentanyl overdose had misused prescription medication.

VS.

11% who had not experienced this type of loss.



"If you know someone who died of a fentanyl overdose, you're more likely to use substances yourself, maybe because of peer influence. Also, maybe when youth lose someone to a fentanyl overdose, they feel sad and start using drugs to cope."

### PROTECTIVE FACTORS...



Among youth who used marijuana, those who felt more connected to their community used less frequently than those who felt less connected.



Youth took part in activities that were meaningful to them were less likely to have misused prescription pills, and were more likely to feel hopeful for their future.



Youth who had a trusted adult to turn to were less likely than those who did not have such an adult to have tried marijuana.



Among youth who lost someone to a fentanyl overdose, those who felt their teachers cared about them were less likely to have misused prescription medication.

### WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Read the full report, *Youth Research Slam 2019: A youth-led research project about substance use*, and other Research Slam reports created by young people in BC at: [www.mcs.bc.ca/download\\_resources](http://www.mcs.bc.ca/download_resources)

### WANT ACCURATE INFORMATION ABOUT SUBSTANCE USE & WELL-BEING?

[www.heretohelp.bc.ca/resource-library](http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/resource-library)  
[www.kidshelpphone.ca/topic/emotional-well-being/substance-use/](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca/topic/emotional-well-being/substance-use/)  
[www.foundrybc.ca/info-tools/](http://www.foundrybc.ca/info-tools/)

### NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE?

[www.youthinbc.com](http://www.youthinbc.com)  
Online chat and 24-hour helpline, plus info for youth on a range of topics.  
**Kids Help Phone (24/7/365)**  
Text CONNECT to 686868  
or call 1-800-668-6868