

Newfoundland and Labrador
(Island Portion Only)

Student Drug Use Survey
2003



Summary
Report

**NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
STUDENT DRUG USE 2003
(Island Portion Only)**

SUMMARY REPORT

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The *2003 Newfoundland and Labrador Student Drug Use Survey* involved collaboration among the Department of Health and Community Services, the Department of Education, Memorial University and Dalhousie University.

The *Student Drug Use Survey in the Atlantic Provinces* was standardized in 1994 under the leadership of Dr. Christiane Poulin. Data collection was organized by the Division of Community Health, Memorial University, and coordinated by Dr. Michael Murray, Theresa Heath-Rogers and Beulah Jesso. Ethical approval for data collection was provided by the Human Investigation Committee at Memorial University. Data analysis and report preparation was completed by the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology, Dalhousie University.

The Student Drug Use Survey in Newfoundland and Labrador was coordinated by the following team: Debbie Sue Martin, Bernie Squires, Carol Ann MacDonald, Joan Casey, Kerry Pope, Dr. Michael Murray and Kim Baldwin.

Funding for this project was provided by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (grant # 14706) and the Canadian Population Health Initiative.

NOTE: A small number of students in Labrador also participated. We would like to thank those schools and teachers who participated. However, due to technical difficulties and time restraints, we were unable to administer the survey to a large enough sample size to allow for data analysis. As such, the Labrador students are not included in this report. We look forward to implementing the Student Drug Use Survey across Newfoundland and Labrador in 2006.

Although comparisons are made with previous provincial SDUS, it should be noted that this 2003 SDUS reports on the results for the Island portion of the Province only.

Overview

The 2003 Newfoundland and Labrador Student Drug Use Survey asked junior and senior high school students (grades 7, 9, Level I and Level III) about their experiences with substance use, gambling and associated risk behaviours. This was the third Student Drug Use Survey administered in Newfoundland and Labrador schools.

The results of the 2003 survey, with its random sampling of 2539 students, and previous two surveys (1996 and 1998) will be used to determine prevalence and trends in student drug use. The results will assist in determining future prevention and intervention initiatives in youth alcohol, tobacco and other drug use and youth gambling in this province.

NOTE: A small number of students in Labrador also participated; however, their number was not large enough to include in this report. Although comparisons are made with previous provincial SDUS, it should be noted that this 2003 SDUS reports on the results for the Island portion of the province only.

Findings

In 2003, 36% of students in Newfoundland reported they had not used **alcohol, cigarettes or any other drug** in the twelve months prior to the survey. The same proportion of students did not use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs in 1996 (36%) and in 1998 (35%).

Alcohol, cannabis and tobacco were the drugs most commonly used by adolescent students in Newfoundland. More than one half of the students consumed alcohol, just over one third used cannabis and slightly more than one quarter smoked cigarettes at least once in the 12 months before the survey.

The survey revealed a decrease in the prevalence of cigarette smoking and in the use of LSD and psilocybin/mescaline from 1998 to 2003.

Other drug use included Ritalin (6% of students), inhalants (6%), non-medical amphetamines (5%), LSD (5%) and cocaine or crack (4%).

In the case of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, these behaviours were more common in senior high students than junior high students. As well, males and females were equally likely to use alcohol, tobacco and cannabis.

Alcohol

The 2003 survey showed that about 58% of adolescent students in Newfoundland used some alcohol during the course of the year. This rate, which represents over half of students, is consistent with previous survey results. In 1996, the rate was 56% and in 1998, 58%.

About 36% of adolescent students reported they had consumed alcohol to the point of drunkenness on at least one occasion in the 30 days prior to the survey. The rate for 1996 was 26% and 33% in 1998.

Cannabis

In 2003, cannabis ranked as the second most commonly used substance by students.

About 35% of students reported they had used cannabis at least once during the year, as compared with 30% in 1998. About 5% of students reported they had used cannabis almost every day in the 30 days before the survey.

Tobacco

The most marked **decrease** in substance use among Newfoundland students was in the prevalence of cigarette smoking, down from 38% in 1998 to 27% in 2003. Similar decreases in youth smoking have been observed elsewhere in Canada.

Gambling

In 2003, 65% of students in Newfoundland participated in at least one gambling activity on at least one occasion in the course of the year, down from 74% in 1998.

The most common gambling activity was scratch tabs (47%). Playing cards and break open tickets were the second and third most popular gambling activities in Newfoundland students.

About 3% of students engaged in at-risk gambling behaviour, and 1% engaged in problem gambling behaviour.

High Risk Activities

In 2003, 18% of Newfoundland students with a driver's license drove a motor vehicle within an hour of having used alcohol. The survey found that 20% of students drove a motor vehicle within an hour of having used cannabis.

In 2003, 24% of students in grade 9, 43% in Level I, and 66% in Level III engaged in sexual intercourse. The comparable figures for 1998 were 44% for Level I and 58% for Level III. Of those who engaged in sexual intercourse, 39% had unplanned sexual intercourse while under the influence of a substance on at least one occasion during the year.

School Drug Education and Policy

The percentage of junior high school students who recalled classes on alcohol, tobacco, other drug and gambling ranged from 67-75%. There were fewer senior high school students who recalled such classes (46-53%).

"From the survey I would like to see something done about the results, such as presentations on drugs, alcohol, tobacco, etc. to have support placed for those wanting help. I find that surveys are given and nothing is ever done about it. What is the sense for us to do these if nothing will become of it. I just do surveys and forget about them because it's never brought up anywhere."

- male, grade 9

How the survey was done

This is the third application of the self-reported SDUS in the Atlantic Provinces. Participation was anonymous and confidential. The survey was conducted in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island in the spring of 2002 and in Newfoundland and Labrador in the spring of 2003.

The survey requested information from students in the public school system in grades 7 and 9 (junior high) and Levels I and III (senior high). This report is based on the responses of 2539 students from randomly-selected classes in Newfoundland. A small number of students in Labrador also participated; however, their number was not sufficiently large for accurate reporting. This report thus provides information about junior and senior high school students residing on the island of Newfoundland.

The questionnaire comprised 100 items and one open-ended question. Information was requested on demographics, substance use, risk behaviours and problems, help seeking, gambling and school drug education and rules.

Findings in Newfoundland

- In 2003, alcohol, cannabis and tobacco were the drugs most commonly used by adolescent students in Newfoundland.
- More than one half of the students consumed alcohol, just over one third used cannabis and slightly more than one quarter smoked cigarettes at least once in the 12 months before the survey.
- About 5% of students used amphetamines without a prescription at least once in the 12 months before the survey.
- About 6% of students used methylphenidate (Ritalin) without a prescription at least once in the 12 months before the survey.
- The remaining substances were used by a small percentage of students.

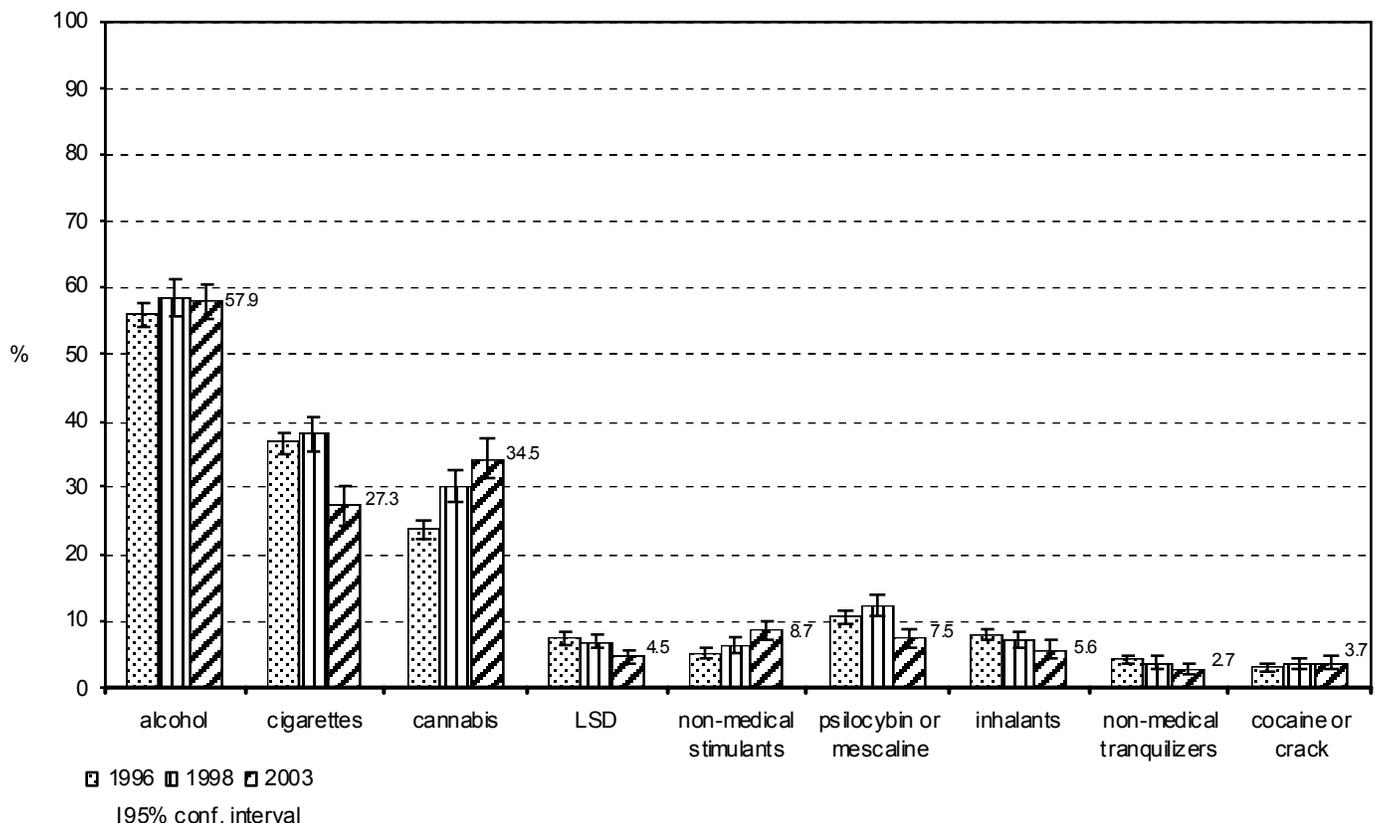
TABLE 1

Any substance use in the year before the survey among Newfoundland students in grades 7, 9, Levels I & III, as percentages, 2003	
Any use of ...	%
Alcohol	57.9
Cannabis	34.5
Cigarettes	27.3
Non-medical MPH (Ritalin)	6.3
Non-medical amphetamines	4.8
Psilocybin or Mescaline	7.5
Inhalants	5.6
LSD	4.5
Cocaine or crack	3.7
Non-medical tranquilizers	2.7
Anabolic steroids	2.5
MDMA (Ecstasy)	2.0
PCP	1.6
Heroin	1.3

Trends from 1996, 1998, and 2003

- The prevalence of cigarette smoking, and the use of psilocybin/mescaline and LSD, decreased from 1998 to 2003.
 - The most marked change from 1998 to 2003 was a decrease in the percentage of students who smoked cigarettes, down from 38% to 27%. The rate for 1996 was 37%.
 - There has been an upward trend in the prevalence of cannabis use, from 24% in 1996, to 30% in 1998, to 35% in 2003.
 - There has been an upward trend in the prevalence of non-medical stimulant use, from 5% in 1996, 6% in 1998, and 9% in 2003.
 - In 2003, 20% of students used all three of alcohol, cannabis and cigarettes. This pattern of substance use is important because it is associated with an increased risk of substance-related problems. The rate for 1996 was 18% compared to 23% in 1998.
 - There has been an upward trend in student-reported drunkenness on at least one occasion in the 30 days before the survey from 26% in 1996, 33% in 1998, and 36% in 2003.
- Note:** Non-medical stimulant use: Use of stimulants (methylphenidate (Ritalin), amphetamines) without a doctor's prescription.

TABLE 2
Any substance use, 1996-2003, in the year before the survey,
as percentages of all students



Alcohol

- In 2003, 29% percent of students in Newfoundland reported they had never consumed alcohol.
- Of the remaining students, over half said the first time they had consumed alcohol was in grade 8.
- About 58% of students used alcohol at least once during the course of the year.
- About 37% of students consumed alcohol more than once per month and 19% used alcohol at least once per week.
- About 36% of students reported they had been drunk at least once in the month before the survey.
- Patterns of alcohol use were about the same among males as among females.

TABLE 3
Any alcohol use in the year before the survey, as percentages of all students

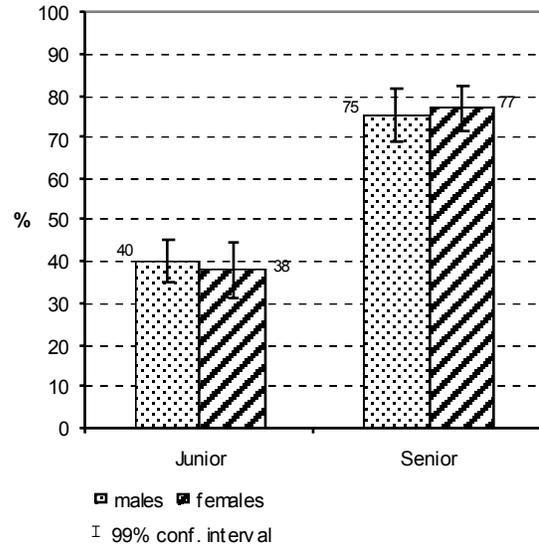
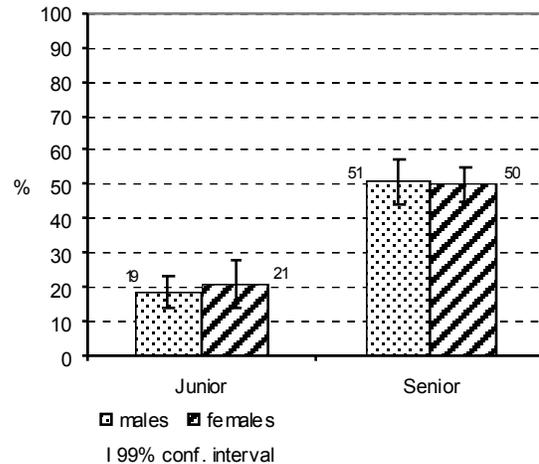


TABLE 4
Drunkenness in the month before the survey, as percentages of all students



"I rarely use alcohol (I have only had about 3 drinks in my whole life) but sometimes I feel like I am "weird" or "strange" because of this. A good number of the people I go to school with use alcohol (on weekends, parties, etc.) and I feel like I am different from them, or "not normal" in some way."
- female, grade 10

"I have done Drugs and Alcohol in the past, although I've quit and have been off both for about 4 months now!"
- female, grade 10

"Tell the RCMP to do more, I see kids aged 13-15 drinking at house parties and bars, I go to a house party very rarely and drink maybe 1 beer."
- male, grade 12

"I rarely drink (once a month maybe) but when I do I only have one drink, usually to make my friends happy."
- male, grade 9

"I don't do drugs, and I only smoke on weekends and drink almost every second weekend. Thank you."
female, grade 10

Tobacco

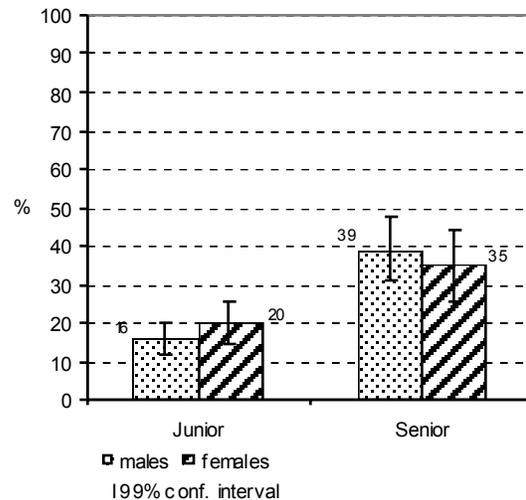
- In 2003, 46% of students reported they had smoked a whole cigarette at some point in their life. The average age for first smoking a whole cigarette was 12.5 years.
- In 2003, about 27% of students smoked more than one cigarette in the course of the year.
- About 5% of all students smoked more than 10 cigarettes per day in the course of the year.
- Cigarette smoking was more common among senior (36%) than junior (18%) high school students.
- In 2003, males and females were equally likely to have smoked cigarettes.
- Students were more likely to have smoked as more and more of their friends' smoked.
- In 2003, 13% of students reported they had smoked a cigar or pipe during the year. About 2% of students reported they had used chewing tobacco.
- More males than females smoked cigars or used chewing tobacco.
- More than half (57%) of students who smoked cigarettes tried to quit in the 6 months before the survey.

"I smoke more when drinking."
- female, grade 12

"I think that everyone will try smoking and drinking. It is a part of growing up."
- female, grade 7

"I smoke and I love it."
male, grade 7

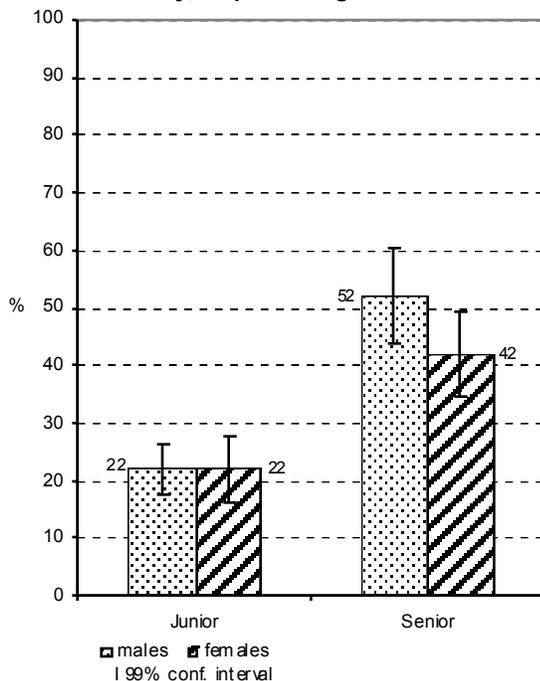
TABLE 5
Any cigarette smoking in the year before the survey, as percentages of all students



Cannabis

- In 2003, about 35% of students used cannabis on at least one occasion in the year before the survey.
- Males and females were equally likely to have done so.
- Cannabis use was more common among senior (46%) than junior (22%) high school students.
- Students were increasingly likely to have used cannabis as more and more of their friends used cannabis.
- In the month before the survey, about 21% of students used cannabis at least once and 5% of students used cannabis almost every day.

TABLE 6
Any cannabis use in the year before the survey, as percentages of all students



"More and more people or teens are using cannabis. Almost all of my friends."
 - male, grade 12

"I love to smoke weed b/c it relaxes me, & makes me feel good about myself. Weed is not a gateway drug & I feel that Pot should be legalized fully."
 - male, grade 12

"Legalize marijuana, illegalize tobacco products."
 - male, grade 12

"Yes I smoke cannabis & I don't Abuse. Nobody is around to see it, nobody is around when im [sic] on it. I use it to relax after work or to just take it easy."
 - male, grade 12

"I believe marijuana (cannabis) should be made legal, or at least legal to people who can control the effects of the drugs and use them for the best. Marijuana has helped me shape my personality [sic] to a level where I finally feel happy with myself and were [sic] I can finally say I'm unique. I don't use any drugs for the "Trip" but just for the ammount [sic] of creativeness that they give me."
 - male, grade 10

"Yes, I am an honours student who has used cannubis [sic] & my grades have not deteriorated. In fact, they have improved. I do not credit this to Cannubis [sic] but use of cannubis [sic] has harmed me less than alcohol. I am strongly in favour of legalizing it and I think our government should take steps towards the legalization & proper distribution of the drug. It could be a great source of revenue!"
 - female, grade 10

"I'm strickly [sic] a marijuana user. I do not feel I'm putting my self in any danger. It is not ruining my life, And my health is great. I am very active and my school work is good."
 - male, grade 12

LSD

- In 2003, 5% of students in Newfoundland used LSD at least once in the course of the year.
- Males were more likely than females to have used LSD.
- LSD use was more common among senior (6%) than junior (3%) high school students.

Amphetamines and methylphenidate (Ritalin)

- In 2003, about 5% of students used amphetamines without a prescription at least once in the course of the year.
- About 6% of students used methylphenidate (Ritalin) without a prescription at least once in the course of the year.
- Males and females were equally likely to have used these stimulants.
- Junior and senior high school students were equally likely to report the non-medical use of these stimulants.

Psilocybin and Mescaline

- Psilocybin and mescaline are hallucinogenic drugs. Psilocybin comes from certain mushrooms and mescaline comes from the peyote cactus.
- In 2003, about 8% of students in Newfoundland used psilocybin or mescaline in the course of the year.
- More males than females used these substances.
- Use of psilocybin or mescaline was more common among senior (10%) than junior (5%) high school students.

MDMA (Ecstasy)

- MDMA is a synthetic psychoactive drug with both stimulant and hallucinogenic properties.
- In 2003, about 2% of students used MDMA at least once in the course of the year.

Other substances

- In 2003, less than 4% of students used non-medical tranquilizers, cocaine or crack, PCP, anabolic steroids or heroin
- Less than 1% of students injected substances for non-medical purposes.

*"I think that the only reason teens do drugs is because of boredom. There is nothing to do and nowhere to go in our community."
- female, grade 9*

*"I don't usually do weed or drink unless there's a party and I want to have a buzz on and have a good time. And when I do smoke weed or drink I know what my limit is and I know when to stop."
- female, grade 10*

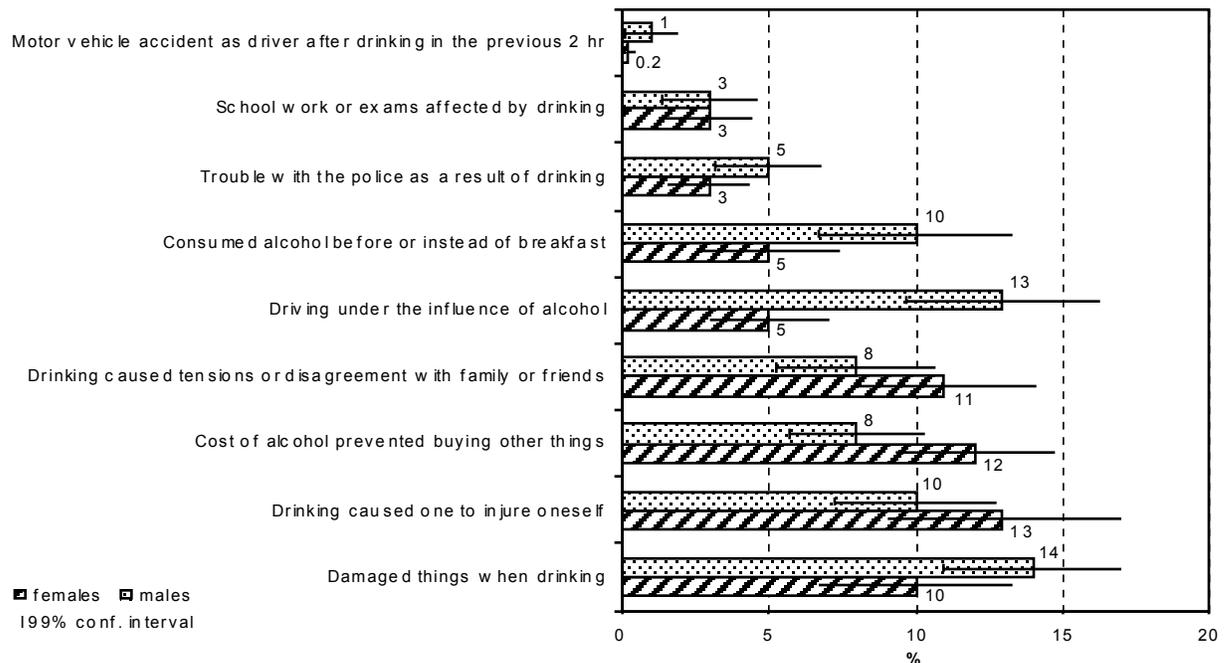
*"Ask if you have drank [sic] outside of school in barn or hangout."
- male, grade 9*

Alcohol-related Problems and Risks

- In 2003, about 32% of students had at least one of 9 alcohol-related problems or risks, identified below, in the course of the year.
- About 10% had three or more alcohol-related problems or risks in the course of the year.
- Male and female students were both likely to have had alcohol-related problems or risks.
- The three most common problems or risks were having damaged things when drinking, injuring oneself as a result of drinking and having given up buying things due to the cost of alcohol.
- Alcohol-related problems or risks were more common among students in senior than in junior high school.

"I have been using alcohol, tobacco, and occasionally cannabis and it has never affected my school work. I am on the honor [sic] list."
 - female, grade 12

TABLE 7
Alcohol-related Problems or Risks in the Year
Before the Survey, as Percentages of all Students



Drug-related Problems and Risks

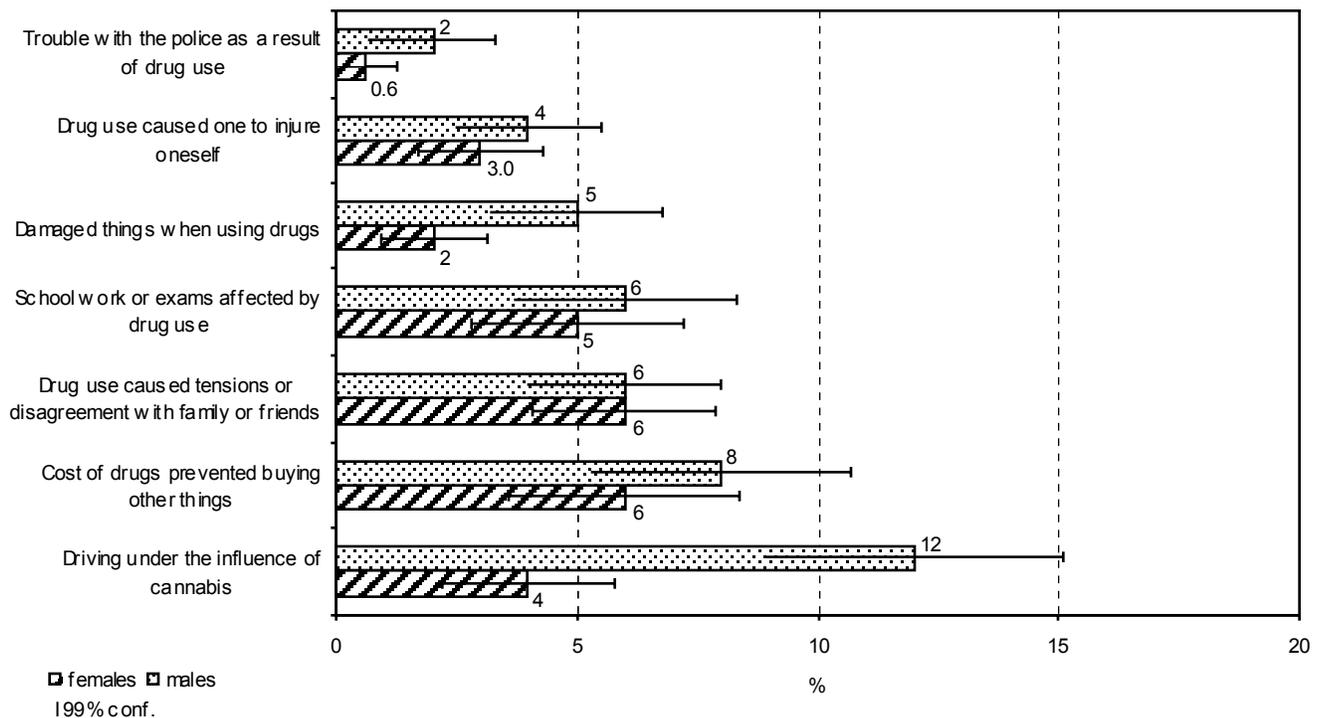
- In 2003, 17% of students in Newfoundland had at least one of 7 drug-related problems or risks, identified below, in the course of the year.
- About 5% of students had three or more drug-related problems or risks in the course of the year.
- The three most common drug-related problems were driving after having used cannabis, giving up buying other things due to the cost of drugs and drug use causing tensions or disagreement with family or friends.
- Males and females were equally likely to have these drug-related problems or risks.
- Drug-related problems or risks were more common among senior than junior high school students.

"I have a drug addiction, I don't know what to do. I sell drugs so I will have money."
 - male, grade 10

"I believe smoking & drugs & tobacco suck! People don't understand how they are ruining themselves, their future, their families, and friends. People should be educated at a very young age about this before they become addicted. DRUGS SUCK!"
 - female, grade 7

"I have a drug problem. Every cent of my money goes into drugs."
 - male, grade 9

TABLE 8
Drug-related problems or risks in the year
before the survey, as percentages of all students



Alcohol, Drugs and Sexual Behaviour

- Students in grade 9, Level I, and Level III responded, where comfortable, to a section of the questionnaire on sexual behaviour.
- In 2003, 24% of students in grade 9, 43% in Level I, and 66% in Level III engaged in sexual intercourse in the course of the year.
- Males and females were equally likely to have done so.
- Engaging in sexual intercourse was more common among senior than junior high school students.
- Of the students who had sexual intercourse, 39% had unplanned sexual intercourse under the influence of a substance.
- Of those who had sexual intercourse, 62% used a condom at the time of their last sexual intercourse. Senior high students were less likely than junior high students to have done so.
- The three most common reasons for not having used a condom were not having a condom at the time of intercourse, feeling that condoms interfere with sex and one's partner being under the influence of a substance.
- Unplanned sexual intercourse under the influence of a substance is associated with an increased risk of multiple sexual partners and inconsistent condom use, among both male and female adolescent students.

"I think sex is a bigger issue for teens & I was surprised at the small number of questions related to sexual intercourse."

-female, grade 12

"Someone I know brags about having sex and I'm worried something may happen to that person."

- female, grade 7

"I have been told I drink to [sic] much and I have too much sex."

- male, grade 10

Driving, Drinking and Cannabis Use

- About 18% of students with a driver's license drove a motor vehicle within an hour of having two or more drinks of alcohol on at least one occasion in the course of the year. More males (26%) than females (11%) did so.
- In 2003, 8% of students drove a motor vehicle within one hour of having used cannabis on at least one occasion in the course of the year.
- About 20% of students with a driver's license drove a motor vehicle within an hour of using cannabis on at least one occasion in the course of the year. More males (29%) than females (13%) did so.
- In 2003, 22% of students in Newfoundland were passengers in a motor vehicle with an alcohol-impaired driver on at least one occasion in the course of the year. Males and females were equally likely to be passengers of alcohol-impaired drivers. Students in senior (29%) high school were more likely than those in junior (15%) high school to have done so.

School Drug Education and Rules

- Students were asked four questions on school education related to alcohol, tobacco, drugs and decision-making. The percentages of junior high school students who recalled such classes ranged from 67% to 75%. The percentages of senior high school students who recalled such classes ranged from 46% to 53%.
- In 2003, 82% of students were aware their school had a rule against alcohol use, 3% reported their school did not have such a rule and 15% did not know .
- About 61% of students indicated their school had a rule against smoking, 26% reported their school did not have such a rule and 13% did not know .

*"But about the school classes on drugs, we pick our courses, and they only care about the classwork, not our drug use. A class or 2 on drugs/alcohol/sex would be nice."
- female, grade 10*

*"I said my school has a rule against the use of tobacco on school property. They have a rule, but it is slack and poorly enforced."
- female, grade 10*

*"Our school has a certain area for smokers but the smoke still floats throughout the school. Smoking should be banned and should have stricter punishments. Alcohol and drug use are becoming more frequent on school grounds."
- female, grade 12*

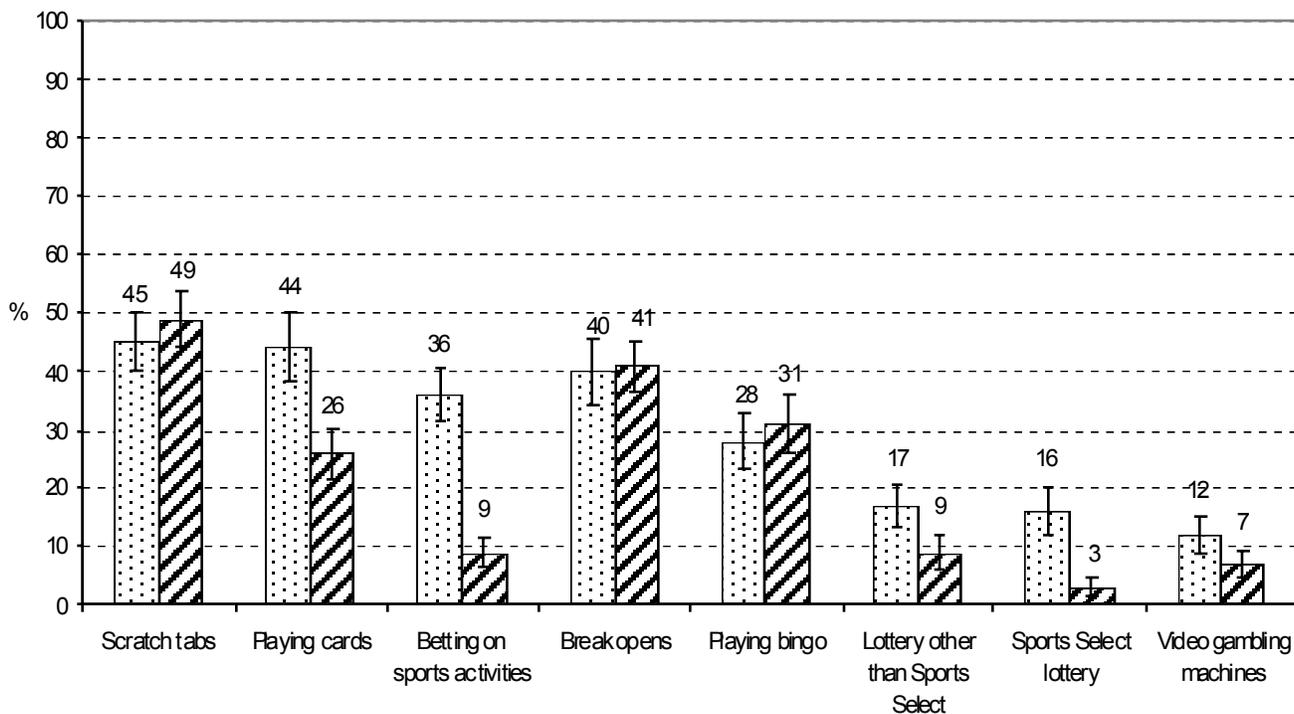
Gambling

- In 2003, 65% of students in Newfoundland participated in at least one of eight gambling activities, identified below, on at least one occasion in the course of the year.
- The most common gambling activity was scratch tabs (47%). The least common activities were the Sports Select lottery and video lottery terminals.
- Males and females were equally likely to have played bingo, scratch tabs, and break-opens. Males were more likely than females to have participated in any of the remaining 5 gambling activities.
- About 3% of students met the definition of at-risk gambling and 1% met the definition of problem gambling.
- More males (3%) than females (less than 1%) met the definition of problem gambling.

"I do not gamble a lot. I only play Bingo, and that's not very often."
 - female, grade 7

"I don't gamble. I just played a few break-opens at garden parties etc."
 - male, grade 9

TABLE 9
Participation in gambling activities in the year
before the survey, as percentages of all students



□ males □ females
 | 99% conf. interval

Help Seeking

- In 2003, 2% of students felt they needed help for their alcohol use and 2% received such help.
- About 6% of students felt they needed help for their cigarette smoking and 3% received such help.
- About 3% of students felt they needed help with other substance use and 2% received such help.
- About 2% of students felt they needed help for their gambling and about 2% received such help.

Substance Use by Adolescent Students in the Atlantic Provinces

- The substances most commonly used by adolescent students in the Atlantic provinces are alcohol, cannabis and cigarettes. Students in Prince Edward Island have lower rates of use of these substances than their counterparts in the other Atlantic provinces.
- The prevalence of cigarette smoking by adolescent students decreased markedly in all four provinces.

*"Guidance counsellors [sic] should be more available to students to talk to on personal issues."
 - female, grade 12*

*"Teens need help, we need to be spoken to more often. People (parents) need to know what's going on with us. We should have classes related to this topic."
 - female, grade 9*

TABLE 10
Any substance use in the year before the survey among students
in grades 7, 9, 10 & 12 in the Atlantic provinces, as percentages

	NL 2003	NS 2002	NB 2002	PE 2002
Any use of . . .	%	%	%	%
Alcohol	57.9	51.7	53.2	48.2
Cannabis	34.5	36.5	34.9	23.7
Cigarettes	27.3	23.2	20.7	18.2
Psilocybin or mescaline	7.5	12.2	11.7	6.3
Non-medical MPH (Ritalin)	6.3	7.5	5.8	6.3
Non-medical amphetamines	4.8	9.3	11.0	6.2
Inhalants	5.6	4.9	5.3	5.8
LSD	4.5	5.5	5.2	3.5
Cocaine or crack	3.7	3.9	3.6	2.4
Non-medical tranquillizers	2.7	4.7	5.0	3.7
Anabolic steroids	2.5	2.7	2.8	2.8
MDMA (Ecstasy)	2.0	4.4	4.0	3.2
PCP	1.6	3.2	3.9	1.5
Heroin	1.3	1.6	1.9	1.7

Discussion

The findings of the Student Drug Use Survey indicate that more than one-third (36%) of students were alcohol, tobacco and other drug free in 2003. It is essential that we continue to support these students who are making and maintaining healthy lifestyle choices.

While this statistic has remained constant in the past two surveys (1996 and 1998), there is a significant number of students who are using alcohol, cannabis and tobacco.

More than one half of the students consumed alcohol, just over one third used cannabis and slightly more than one quarter smoked cigarettes at least once in the 12 months before the survey.

These three substances were the most commonly used in the other three Atlantic provinces as well. Newfoundland had the highest level of alcohol use with 58% of students reporting any use in the year before the survey. New Brunswick reported 53%, Nova Scotia 52% and Prince Edward Island reported 48%.

Over half (58%) of students in the Newfoundland survey reported alcohol use. This rate is consistent with previous survey results. In 1996, the rate was 56% and in 1998, 58%. This use of alcohol by our youth population continues to be an area of concern.

The most marked change from 1998 to 2003 was a decrease in the percentage of students who smoked cigarettes, down from 38% to 27%. This decrease is attributed to several factors including the comprehensive tobacco reduction strategy in place in this province. Media messages about the harm caused by smoking, restrictions in access to tobacco by minors, increased taxation on tobacco products, public smoking bans and increased advertising on cigarette packages about the harms associated with smoking, also have contributed to the reduction in adolescents smoking tobacco. While

smoking rates among youth are on the decline, there is still cause for concern since more than one in four students report smoking behaviour.

This survey also assessed adolescent gambling. In 2003, 65% of students in Newfoundland participated in at least one gambling activity in the course of the year compared to 74% in 1998. Since most problem gamblers report starting gambling as a teenager, the fact that almost two-thirds (65%) of Newfoundland adolescents have gambled, is another cause for concern.

Some students use more than one drug. In 2003, 20% of students reported having used alcohol, tobacco and cannabis. In 1998, 18% of students reported the use of the three drugs while in 1996, 23% reported this use. Multiple drug use is considered to be a high risk behaviour as it is associated with a greater number of negative consequences.

With respect to gender, the same proportion of males and females reported any use of alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, and Ritalin. Furthermore, male and female students were equally likely to have had alcohol and/or drug related problems. Males were found more likely than females to use LSD, psilocybin or mescaline.

The 2003 survey found that more senior high students used alcohol, tobacco and other drugs than junior high students. The only exception was in the case of Ritalin use in which junior and senior high students were equally likely to have used these stimulants. This supports the importance of early intervention with younger adolescents.

Peer identification and pressure are often suggested as reasons why adolescents start to use drugs. The survey results identified students were more likely to use alcohol, tobacco, and/or cannabis if their friends used these substances. This highlights the importance of friendship patterns in the adoption of drug use among youth.

Using alcohol and other drugs was also associated with risk-taking behaviours (e.g., driving under the influence of alcohol and other drugs) and harmful consequences such as causing injury to oneself or property damage, neglecting school or work commitments and causing tension with family and friends.

This survey also investigated adolescent sexual activity. In 2003, 24% of students in grade 9, 43% in Level I, and 66% in Level III engaged in sexual intercourse. Of those, 39% had unplanned sexual intercourse while under the influence of a substance on at least one occasion during the year. The health and social risks associated with sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy supports the need for further development of sexual health education and its integration with substance use education and intervention.

In conclusion, it is positive that the school participation, student response rate and general interest in this study remains high. The continued collaboration with the other three Atlantic provinces offers the opportunity to gain insight into the prevalence and trends of student substance use and gambling. This information is valuable to support students, families, schools and communities to ensure health and safe lifestyles for the youth of our province.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

A large proportion of students continue to choose not to use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs and to make responsible choices about gambling. The number of students making these decisions has not changed since 1996 and 1998. Efforts to support students in making and maintaining healthy choices must be continued.

Parents/guardians, schools, communities and government should work together to support adolescents making healthy decisions about substance use and gambling.

Recommendation 2

Alcohol, tobacco, other drug use and gambling are realities for many students in Newfoundland. Substance use and gambling behaviour can interfere with the healthy growth and development of youth.

Resources should be strengthened to address substance use and gambling prevention, intervention and health promotion for youth.

Recommendation 3

There are youth in our Province experiencing problems as a result of substance abuse and/or gambling. A comprehensive and integrated approach is needed to develop policies and programs to help adolescents with these issues.

Partnerships between education, health, justice and the community are needed to ensure that a full continuum of services is available to address adolescent substance abuse and/or gambling issues.

Recommendation 4

Students, parents/guardians, schools, communities and policy makers should be informed about the trends in substance use and gambling as well as education, prevention and intervention strategies. Understanding these trends will assist in the enhancement of adolescent specific services spanning the continuum of care, which includes prevention, early intervention, referral and treatment.

The findings of the 2003 Student Drug Use Survey should be communicated to key stakeholders throughout the province.

Recommendation 5

The standardized Student Drug Use Survey provides relevant monitoring data to study the complex and variable trends in adolescent substance use and gambling. Collaboration with the other three Atlantic provinces will enhance the ability to advance the field of addictions-related health as it pertains to adolescents.

The standardized Student Drug Use Survey should be repeated in the Atlantic provinces in a three to four year cycle.

For more information:

If you require further information on alcohol, tobacco, other drug use or gambling, please contact **Addictions Services** at your Regional Health Authority.

For additional copies of the SDUS Summary Report, please contact:

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