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Alcohol Use Among Students in the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit 2017 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS)

Alcohol is a drug[†] that can be legally purchased by persons who have reached the age of 19 years (in Ontario). In 2015, alcohol was the most commonly used drug in Canada with an estimated 77% of individuals, 15 years of age or older, reporting to have consumed alcohol in the previous 12-months.¹ Among grade 7 – 12 students in Ontario, during the 2016/2017 school year, more than 4-in-10 students (42.5%) report drinking alcohol in the previous 12-months.²

Although research indicates that the per cent of adolescents and youth consuming alcohol, as well as binge drinking, is decreasing², the per cent is still relatively high. Between 1999 and 2017, the per cent of grade 7 – 12 students who reported binge drinking in the previous month declined by nearly 11%, from 27.6% to 16.9%.²

Excess alcohol consumption is known to negatively affect one's health and well-being. Negative effects of alcohol may occur quickly (i.e., alcohol poisoning, verbal/physical altercations, injuries) or may occur after a longer period of time (i.e., addictions, mental health issues, liver disease, cancer).³ Along with the potential for or risk of chronic diseases in later years, the potential effects of alcohol on the developing brains of children and youth is also a cause for concern.

The purpose of this *inFORM* is to highlight findings on alcohol use from the 2017 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS) within the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge (HKPR) District.

Methods & Data Notes

The OSDUHS is a population survey of Ontario students from grade 7 through grade 12, conducted every two-years, that is distributed within publicly-funded schools within Ontario.³ The survey is self-administered, anonymous, and considered representative of all Ontario students in both English and French language schools, within the Public and Catholic School Boards.¹ In 2016/17, the HKPR District Health Unit purchased an over-sample of the OSDUHS in order to obtain estimates for youth residing within the HKPR District. In total, there were 1215 surveys completed for the 2016/2017 OSDUHS survey by students within the HKPR District; 585 by elementary-school students and 630 by high-school students. Males accounted for 43.4% and females accounted for 55.6% of the respondents. Surveys were completed for students in grade 7 (n=232), grade 8 (352), and grades 9 – 12 (629)[‡]. The median age of respondent was 14 years of age (mean: 14.0; standard deviation (SD): 1.72).

[†] A "substance other than food intended to affect the structure or function of the body."⁵

[‡] Two surveys did not report the grade of the student; summing the number of students by grade will not match the total sample size.

Results

- 54.1% (95% confidence interval (CI): 48.1, 60.1) of grade 7 – 12 students reported using alcohol in the previous 12-months. The estimate for HKPRDHU students is significantly higher than the rest of Ontario students ($p < 0.05$).
- 13.5% (95% CI: 9.4, 19.0) of grade 7 – 8 students reported drinking alcohol in the previous 12-months, while 54.5% (95% CI: 45.8, 62.9) of grade 9 and 10 students reported drinking alcohol in the previous 12-months, and 84.9% (95% CI: 77.7, 90.1) of grade 11 and 12 students reported drinking alcohol in the previous 12-months. The estimates for HKPRDHU students in grades 9 – 10 and grades 11 – 12 are significantly higher than the rest of Ontario students ($p < 0.05$).
- 40.2% (95% CI: 32.9, 48.1) of grade 7 – 12 students reported consuming alcohol in the previous 4-weeks. The estimate for HKPRDHU students is significantly higher than the rest of Ontario students ($p < 0.05$).
- 19.3% (95% CI: 16.0, 22.9) of grade 7 – 12 students reported consuming alcohol for the first time in the previous 12-months. The estimate for HKPRDHU students is not significantly different than the rest of Ontario students ($p > 0.05$).
- By grade, 16.3% (95% CI: 11.3, 22.9) of students in grades 7 – 8 reported consuming alcohol for the first time in the previous 12-months, compared to 26.3 (95% CI: 18.0, 36.9) of students in grades 9 – 10, and 15.7% (95% CI: 11.5, 21.0) of students in grades 11 – 12. The estimates for HKPRDHU students are not significantly different than the rest of Ontario students ($p > 0.05$).
- Slightly less than half of grade 7 – 12 students (45.9% (95% CI: 40.0, 51.9)) had yet to consume alcohol for the first time. The estimate for HKPRDHU students is significantly lower than the rest of Ontario students ($p < 0.05$).
- Nearly one-third (32.4% (95% CI: 26.1, 39.5)) of HKPRDHU grade 7 – 12 students reported first consuming alcohol in elementary (primary) school, and more than one-quarter (28.7% (95% CI: 23.7, 34.4)) reported first consuming alcohol in high-school (secondary).
- 26.2% (95% CI: 20.6, 32.8) of grade 7 – 12 students reported consuming 5 or more alcoholic drinks on the same occasion in the previous 4-weeks (i.e., binge drinking). The estimate for HKPRDHU students is significantly higher than the rest of Ontario students ($p < 0.05$).
- Nearly 1 in 4 students (24.2% (95% CI: 18.8, 30.5)) in grades 7 – 12 reported being drunk[§] in the previous 4-weeks. The estimate for HKPRDHU students is significantly higher than the rest of Ontario students ($p < 0.05$).
- 1 in 6 (16.1% (95% CI: 12.1, 21.0)) of grade 7 – 12 students indicated that, in the previous 12-months, they had been a passenger in a vehicle whose driver had consumed two or more alcoholic drinks within one-hour of driving. The estimate for HKPRDHU students is not significantly different than the rest of Ontario students ($p > 0.05$).

[§] Drunk is defined in the survey question as “had so much to drink that you could not do what you wanted to do, or you threw up.”

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- 11.5% (95% CI: 8.3, 15.5) of grade 7 – 12 students perceived there to be a “great risk” of harm associated with having five or more drinks (binge drinking) each weekend, significantly lower than the rest of Ontario students ($p < 0.05$).
- Additionally, 16.7% (95% CI: 11.9, 22.9) of HKPRDHU students indicated they did not know if there was a risk of harm in consuming 5 or more alcoholic drinks once or twice a weekend.
- About 1 in 10 (10.9% (95% CI: 8.4, 14.0)) grade 7 -12 students reported that they strongly disapprove of adults (18-years and older) binge drinking each weekend. The estimate for HKPRDHU students is significantly lower than the rest of Ontario students ($p < 0.05$).
- Almost 2-in-3 students in grades 7 – 12 (63.5% (95% CI: 58.2, 68.5)) reported that it is “fairly easy” or “very easy” to obtain alcohol. The estimate for HKPRDHU students is not significantly different than the rest of Ontario students ($p > 0.05$). Additionally, the most common sources of alcohol for grade 7 – 12 students who were under-age and drank alcohol in the previous 12-months were from a family member (50.4% (95% CI: 46.8, 54.0)), someone else they got to buy it (13.8% (95% CI: 10.6, 17.7)), and from a friend (12.4% (95% CI: 8.9, 17.0)).
- A third of grade 9 – 12 students (32.2% (95% CI: 24.7, 40.8)) reported that they believed it would be more difficult to buy beer in a LCBO or Beer Store than in a grocery store, though another third (33.4% (95% CI: 26.8, 40.7)) thought it would be the equally as difficult. The remaining students were not sure (26.1%) or reported greater perceived difficulty in a grocery store (8.3%). These estimates for HKPRDHU students are not significantly different than the rest of Ontario students ($p > 0.05$).
- Almost half of grade 9 – 12 students (45.5% (95% CI: 33.7, 57.8)) report that their parents/guardians allow them and their friends to drink at home during a party or get-together. The estimate for HKPRDHU students is significantly higher than the rest of Ontario students ($p < 0.05$).

“The data used in this publication came from the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey conducted by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and administered by the Institute for Social Research, York University. Its contents and interpretation are solely the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily represent the official view of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health”.

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Definition of Terms

Estimate – The estimate is the per cent or value observed/reported in the sample that is generalized to the broader population with similar characteristics (e.g., grade 7 – 12 students).

95% confidence interval (95% CI) – Confidence intervals (CIs) are the range of variability around an estimate. The 95% CI displays the range surrounding an estimate in which there is a 95% probability that the population value occurs.

Significantly different ($p < 0.05$) – When estimates are said to be significantly different (or statistically significant; $p < 0.05$), this indicates that the differences observed are not likely due to chance alone. Additional factors may be present (or absent) to a greater degree in one or more of the groups being compared.

Mean – The mean (or average) is calculated by adding the observed values together and dividing by the number of observations.

Standard Deviation (SD) – The standard deviation (SD) indicates how much the observed values vary from the mean. A lower SD indicates that more of the observed values are closer to the mean (higher precision), whereas a higher SD would indicate that the observed values are spread out more widely around the mean (lower precision).

Coefficient of Variation (CV) – The coefficient of variation is the ratio of the standard deviation to the estimate, displayed as a percentage. The CV indicates the size of the standard deviation compared to the estimate. As the variability around an estimate increases so too does the CV. For example, a CV of 33% indicates that the SD is 33% or one-third the size of the estimate.

Sample-size – The sample-size is the number of responses or individuals observed. As the size of a sample increases the SD decreases, and the ability to detect differences (power) increases.

* – A single asterisk (*) indicates that the reported estimate has a higher degree of variability and should be interpreted with caution. When a single asterisk (*) is used, the CV for the estimate is within the range of 16.6% – 33.3%.

** – A double asterisk (**) indicates that an estimate has been suppressed. Data are suppressed when the CV or an estimate is equal to or greater than 33.3%. Additionally, values have been suppressed when the reported sample-size (the number of people responding to a question) is less than 30.

References

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