

## ALCOHOL USE AMONG ALBERTA YOUTH

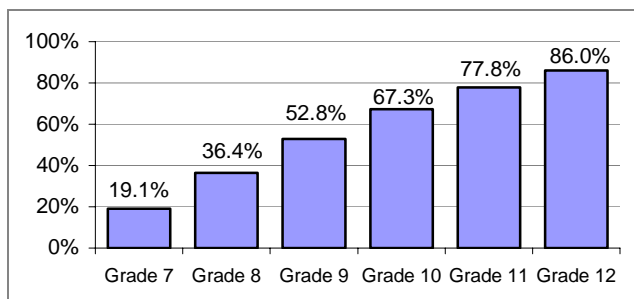
January 2007

In the fall of 2005, the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC) undertook the second cycle of The Alberta Youth Experience Survey (TAYES) to measure alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug use and gambling activity among Alberta students in grades 7 through 12. The survey also examined student attitudes, perceptions, and social networks, in relation to substance use and gambling activity. In TAYES 2005, 3,915 students participated in the survey.<sup>1</sup>

### Prevalence of Alcohol Use

Of students surveyed, 63.4% reported consuming alcohol (excluding sips) in the 12 months prior to the survey. These findings represent a 7.1% increase from TAYES 2002 findings, where 56.3% reported past-year alcohol consumption. Males (at 66.0%) were more likely than females (61.2%) to report that they used alcohol in the last year. As shown in Figure 1, as grade level in school increases, so does the likelihood of past-year alcohol use. While 19.1% of Grade 7 students reported past-year alcohol use, the proportion of students who used alcohol in the past year rose to 86.0% by Grade 12.

FIGURE 1: Percentage of adolescents who are current drinkers, by grade

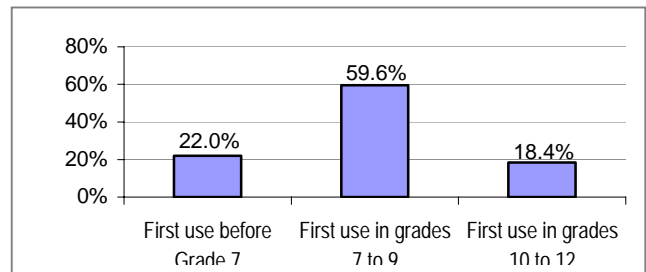


### Grade at First Use of Alcohol

Over half of current youth drinkers in Alberta reported their first use of alcohol as occurring between grades 7 and 9 (59.6%), as shown in Figure 2. Fewer reported that they first tried alcohol before Grade 7 (22.0%) or in grades 10 through 12 (18.4%).

The analysis did not reveal significant differences by gender and region.

FIGURE 2: Grade at first use of alcohol among current drinkers (as percentages)



### Binge Drinking

Overall, 49.6% of past-year alcohol users reported incidents of binge drinking (consuming five or more drinks on one occasion in the month prior to the survey). Current drinkers in grades 10 through 12 were more likely to report binge drinking than those in grades 7 through 9 (52.7% versus 34.6%).

### Hazardous Drinking

TAYES 2005 included the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT)<sup>2</sup> to determine the proportion of current drinkers who demonstrated evidence of hazardous drinking. Overall, 36.7% of current youth drinkers met AUDIT criteria for hazardous drinking. Current drinkers in grades 10 through 12 (39.5%) were more likely to meet AUDIT hazardous drinking criteria than those in grades 7 through 9 (24.0%).

For further information, contact AADAC Research Services at 780-427-0116.

<sup>1</sup> The TAYES 2005 results must be interpreted with caution because of limitations in sampling across Alberta. AADAC was unable to survey Calgary students and surveyed only a limited number of Edmonton high school students. As a result, the findings may not sufficiently represent Alberta students and comparisons to the 2002 TAYES results must be made with caution.

<sup>2</sup> The AUDIT was established by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a method of screening for hazardous drinking. The questionnaire consists of 10 questions that measure consumption levels, symptoms of alcohol dependence, and evidence of alcohol-related harms.