

TOBACCO 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 12.¹ 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.

To complement the tobacco findings from TAYES 2005, relevant findings from the 2004–2005 Youth Smoking Survey (YSS) are also presented here. The YSS is a nation-wide survey assessing the smoking behaviour of students in grades 5 through 9.^{2,3}

Prevalence of Smoking

TAYES 2005 respondents were asked about their cigarette smoking behaviour within 30 days preceding the survey (past-30-day smoking). As shown in Table 1, 13.5% of students in grades 7 through 12 reported smoking at least one cigarette in the previous 30 days; no significant gender differences were found between males (13.7%) and females (13.4%). Students in grades 10 through 12 (18.3%) were considerably more likely to report past-30-day smoking than were students in grades 7 through 9 (4.6%).

TABLE 1: Past-30-day smoking by gender and grade, TAYES 2005 (as percentages)

	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
Students in grades 7–9	3.8	5.3	4.6
Students in grades 10–12	19.1	17.7	18.3
All grades	13.7	13.4	13.5

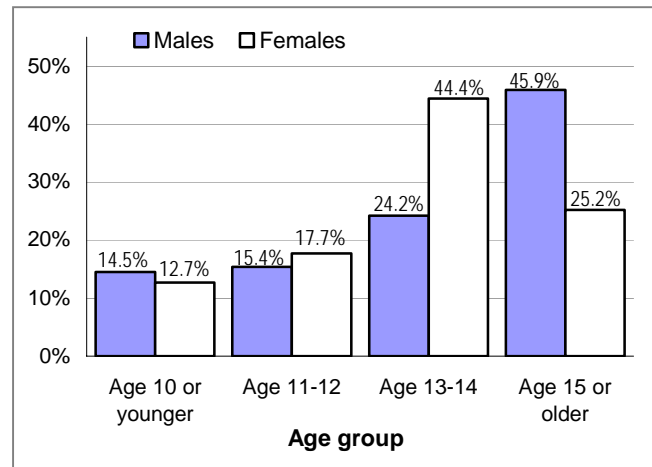
The YSS 2004–2005 classified current smokers as students who reported smoking within 30 days prior to the survey and had smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime. In Alberta, the YSS findings showed that 2.9%⁴ of students in grades 7 through 9 were

current smokers, 6.1% were former smokers or former experimental smokers, 3.4% were experimental smokers, 13.0% were puffers, and most (75.3%) had never tried smoking, not even just a puff.⁵

Smoking Initiation

Among TAYES 2005 respondents who had ever smoked a whole cigarette, 13.4% first tried smoking when they were aged 10 or younger, 16.8% first tried at age 11 or 12, 36.3% first tried at age 13 or 14, and 33.6% first tried at age 15 or older. As shown in Figure 1, marked gender differences were apparent only in that more females (44.4%) than males (24.2%) first tried smoking at age 13 or 14, and more males (45.9%) than females (25.2%) first tried smoking at age 15 or older.

FIGURE 1: Age first smoked a whole cigarette among ever smokers, by gender, TAYES 2005



Second-Hand Smoke Exposure

In both TAYES 2005 (which included students in grades 7 through 12) and YSS 2004–2005 (which included students in grades 5 through 9), about one-quarter of students (TAYES, 24.9%; YSS, 25.4%) reported having at least one person who smoked regularly in their home. As well, approximately one-third of students (TAYES 2005, 34.7%; and YSS 2004–2005, 32.5%) reported, at least once a week, riding in a vehicle in which someone was smoking.

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

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- ¹ The TAYES 2005 results must be interpreted with caution, because of limitations in sampling across Alberta. AADAC was unable to obtain approval to survey Calgary students and secured access to 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 findings must be made with caution.
- ² It is important to note that TAYES 2005 and YSS 2004-2005 data differ in key aspects, including sampling and methodology. As such, comparisons between the surveys should be made with caution.
- ³ More information on the YSS 2004-2005 can be acquired from the Health Canada website at http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/tobac-tabac/research-recherche/stat/survey-sondage/index_e.html
- ⁴ Moderate sampling variability, interpret with caution.
- ⁵ *Former smoker*: someone who has smoked 100 cigarettes or more but has not smoked at all during the 30 days preceding the survey

Experimental smoker: someone who has had between 1 and 99 cigarettes in his/her lifetime and has smoked within the 30 days preceding the survey