Youth Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use in California

### Students Who Used Alcohol or Other Drugs in the Previous Month, by Gender and Grade Level: 2015-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some 7th Grade</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some 9th Grade</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some 11th Grade</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Non-Traditional</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Definition:** Estimated percentage of public school students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs who have used alcohol or drugs (excluding tobacco) in the previous 30 days, by gender and grade level (e.g., in 2015-2017, an estimated 22.7% of female 9th graders in California had used alcohol or drugs in the previous month).

**Data Source:** WestEd, California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) and Biennial State CHKS. California Dept. of Education (Mar. 2019).

### Students Who Have Driven When They Had Been Drinking, or Ridden with a Driver Who Had Been Drinking, on Seven or More Occasions in Their Lifetimes, by Race/Ethnicity: 2015-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>African American/Black</th>
<th>American Indian/Alaska Native</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Hispanic/Latino</th>
<th>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Multiracial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Definition:** Estimated percentage of public school students in grades 9, 11, and non-traditional programs who have ever driven a car when they had been drinking alcohol, or ridden in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol, by race/ethnicity and number of occasions (e.g., in 2015-2017, an estimated 3% of Hispanic/Latino students in grades 9, 11, and non-traditional programs in California had either driven when they had been drinking, or ridden with a driver who had been drinking, on seven or more occasions in their lifetimes).

**Data Source:** WestEd, California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) and Biennial State CHKS. California Dept. of Education (Mar. 2019).

### What It Is

On kidsdata.org, indicators of youth alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use come from:

- Student reports of alcohol or other drug use (excluding tobacco) in the previous month overall and on school property
- Student reports of the number of days they used alcohol, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, and marijuana in the previous month
- Student reports of the number of days they binge drank in the previous month
- Student reports of the number of times they have used alcohol, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, and marijuana in their lifetimes
- Student reports of the number of times they have driven when they had been drinking or ridden with a driver who had been drinking in their lifetimes
- Staff reports of the extent to which, at their school, student alcohol and drug use is a problem, substance abuse prevention is an important goal, and substance use prevention education is provided

### Why This Topic Is Important

Youth alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use is a significant public health concern linked to a wide range of academic, social, and health problems. Alcohol is the most widely used substance among the nation’s young people and initiation peaks in the years between Grades 7 and 11. Underage drinking is associated with risky health behaviors (e.g., unsafe sexual practices), injuries, motor vehicle accidents, impaired cognitive functioning, poor academic performance, physical violence, and suicide attempts; binge drinking places youth and those around them at even higher risk for negative outcomes. Drinking during adolescence increases the likelihood of alcohol dependence in adulthood, and excessive alcohol consumption can have long-term health consequences, including liver disease, cancer, and cardiovascular disease.

Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable and premature death in the U.S., resulting in more than 480,000 deaths.
Students Who Used Alcohol or Other Drugs in the Previous Month, by Sexual Orientation: 2015-2017

Definition: Estimated percentage of public school students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs who have used alcohol or drugs (excluding tobacco) in the previous 30 days, by sexual orientation (e.g., in 2015-2017, an estimated 33.2% of gay, lesbian, and bisexual students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs in California had used alcohol or drugs in the previous month).

Data Source: WestEd, California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) and Biennial State CHKS, California Dept. of Education (Mar. 2019).

Students Who Have Used Marijuana on Seven or More Occasions in Their Lifetimes, by Level of School Connectedness

California

Definition: Estimated percentage of public school students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs who have ever used marijuana, by level of school connectedness and number of occasions (e.g., in 2015-2017, an estimated 17.4% of California students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs with low levels of school connectedness had used marijuana on seven or more occasions in their lifetimes).

Data Source: WestEd, California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) and Biennial State CHKS, California Dept. of Education (Mar. 2019).

How Children Are Faring

According to 2015-2017 estimates, 7% of 7th graders, 20% of 9th graders, and 29% of 11th graders in California public schools used alcohol or drugs in the previous 30 days. Alcohol or drug use in the past month was 44% among students in non-traditional programs—one and a half times the estimate for 11th graders. Statewide, 11% of 11th graders binge drank at least once in the previous month, and 13% had either driven when they had been drinking, or had ridden with a driver who had been drinking, at least once in their lifetimes. E-cigarette use typically was more common than cigarette smoking: 31% of 11th graders had used e-cigarettes at least once, compared with 11% who had smoked cigarettes. Lifetime marijuana use among California 11th graders was 31% in 2015-2017, down from 41% in 2011-2013, with percentages ranging from 13% to 56% across counties with data.

With the exception of e-cigarette use by 11th graders, the estimated proportion of students in each grade level who have never used alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes, and marijuana is on the rise. In general, students with low levels of school connectedness, those whose parents did not finish high school, and gay, lesbian, and bisexual students more frequently report substance use than their peers in other groups.

High school staff reports from 2015-2017 show that 39% considered student alcohol and drug use a moderate or severe problem. During the same period, two-thirds agreed that substance abuse prevention was an important goal at their school, and seven out of ten reported that their school provided at least some substance use prevention education.

View references for this text and additional research on this topic: https://www.kidsdata.org/topic/28/youth-alcohol-tobacco-and-other-drug-use/summary