



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

Toxic Drug Poisoning Trends among First Nations Youth (aged 15-29) Northern Region

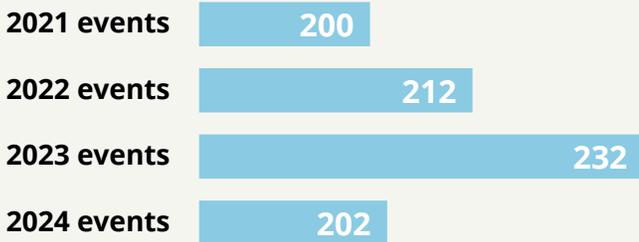
Colonization and intergenerational trauma have negatively impacted First Nations' health, including increased harms caused by toxic drug poisoning. Note that the data presented here is sensitive in nature and represents individuals, their families and loved ones.

Toxic drug poisoning events

Provincial comparison and regional overview

Between 2021 and 2024:

Northern First Nations youth experienced the following number of events in each year:

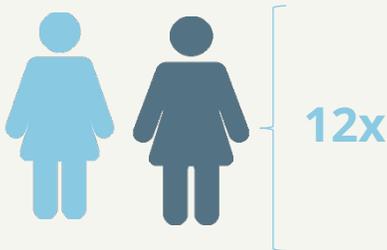


31.4%

Northern First Nations youth made up 31.4 per cent of all toxic drug events among First Nations people in the region in 2021-2024.

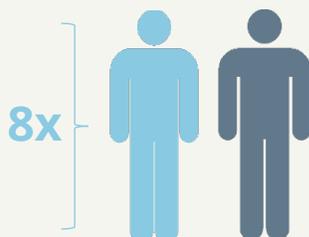
Comparison to other residents in the Northern Region

In 2024:



The rate of toxic drug events among First Nations female youth was 12 times higher than other resident female youth.

The rate of toxic drug events among First Nations male youth was 8 times higher than other resident male youth.



Geography

Between 2023 and 2024:

The highest number of toxic drug events among First Nations youth in the Northern Region was reported in:

- Prince George = 196
- Terrace = 108
- Peace River North = 32
- Nechako = 22
- Smithers = 16





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Toxic drug poisoning deaths

Provincial comparison and regional comparison

Between 2023 and 2024:



Northern First Nations youth experienced 47 toxic drug deaths, out of a total of 182 among BC First Nations youth.

61%

Northern First Nations youth made up 61 per cent of the region's total youth deaths in 2023/24, even though they only make up 19 per cent of the Northern Region youth population.

Female youth in the Northern Region

Between 2021* and 2024:



57%

First Nations female youth made up 57 per cent of First Nations youth toxic drug deaths in the Northern Region.



45

First Nations female youth experienced 45 toxic drug deaths in the Northern Region (215 deaths per 100,000 First Nations female youth)

Time trend

2023-
2024



Northern First Nations youth experienced 47 toxic drug deaths in 2023/24, compared to 32 toxic drug deaths in 2021/22.

2021-
2022



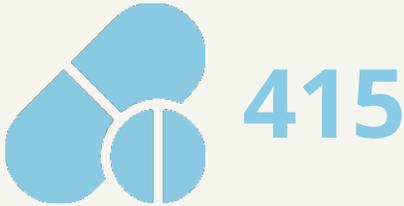
*A longer time frame is required to protect the anonymity of individuals represented in the data.



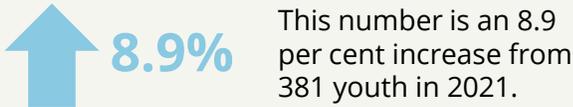
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Opioid use disorder (OUD)



There were an estimated 415 First Nations youth who had health care interactions* coded as being related to OUD in 2022.



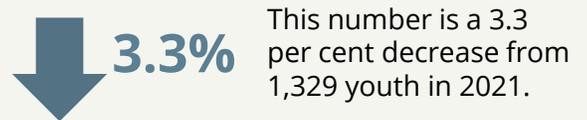
The number of First Nations youth who might have OUD in 2022, based on related health care interactions, was highest in:

- Prince George = 174
- Nechako = 45
- Terrace = 28
- Smithers = 23

Alcohol use disorder (AUD)



There were an estimated 1,285 First Nations youth who had health care interactions coded as being related to AUD in 2022.



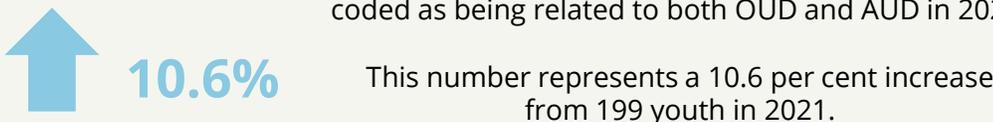
The number of First Nations youth who might have AUD in 2022, based on related health care interactions, was highest in:

- Prince George = 349
- Prince Rupert = 179
- Terrace = 160
- Nechako = 94
- Peace River North = 68



OUD and AUD related health care interactions

There were an estimated 220 First Nations youth who had health care interactions* coded as being related to both OUD and AUD in 2022.



*The health care interactions were coded for AUD or OUD, but don't necessarily indicate a confirmed diagnosis.



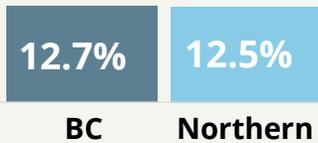
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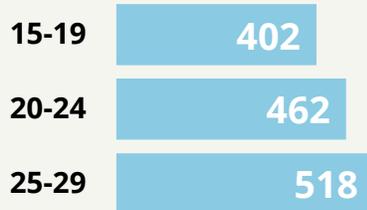
Mental health and hospital service use

Depression, mood and anxiety disorders, and health services use are examined due to their relationship with substance use.

Depression



12.5 per cent of First Nations youth in the Northern Region were treated for depression, compared to 12.7 per cent of First Nations youth in BC in 2022/23.

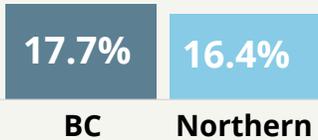


There were a total of 1,382 cases of depression in 2022/23 (age breakdown shown above), remaining stable from 1,375 cases in 2021/22.

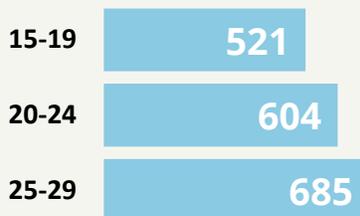


First Nations female youth were treated for depression at 2.6 times the rate of First Nations male youth in 2022/23.

Mood and anxiety disorders



16.4 per cent of First Nations youth in the Northern Region were treated for mood and anxiety disorders, compared to 17.7 per cent of First Nations youth in BC in 2022/23.



There were a total of 1,810 cases of mood and anxiety disorders in 2022/23 (age breakdown shown above), remaining relatively stable from 1,833 cases in 2021/22.



First Nations female youth were treated for mood and anxiety disorders at 2.4 times the rate of First Nations male youth in 2022/23.

Emergency departments (ED) and hospitalization use for mental health

For Northern First Nations youth:

62

There were 62 self-harm related hospitalizations in 2021/22.

792

792 First Nations youth used EDs for mental health-related reasons in 2022/23.



There were more First Nations female youth who were treated in the ED for mental health-related reasons than First Nations male youth in 2022/23.

Note: The mental health data in this iteration of this report is sourced from a different dataset than the previous iteration of this report with data up to 2020/21, therefore the numbers will not be directly comparable.