



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

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

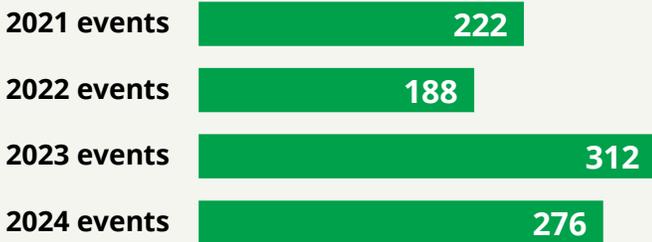
Colonization and intergenerational trauma have negatively impacted First Nations' health, including increased harms caused by toxic drug poisoning. Note that the data presented here is sensitive in nature and represents individuals, their families and loved ones.

Toxic drug poisoning events

Provincial comparison and regional overview

Between 2021 and 2024:

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

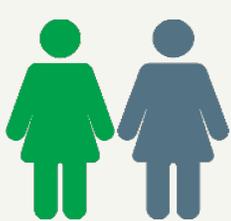


36.8%

Vancouver Island First Nations youth made up 36.8 per cent of all toxic drug events among First Nations people in the region in 2021-2024.

Comparison to other residents in the Vancouver Island Region

In 2024:

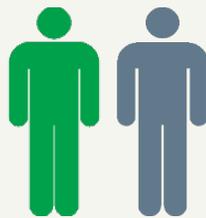


15x

The rate of toxic drug events among First Nations female youth was 15 times higher than other female youth residents.

The rate of toxic drug events among First Nations male youth was 8.7 times higher than other male youth residents.

8.7x

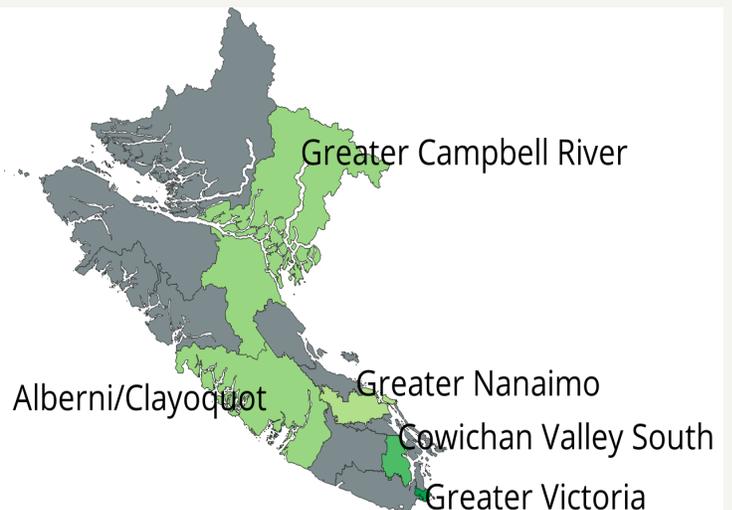


Geography

Between 2023 and 2024:

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

- Cowichan Valley South = 117
- Greater Nanaimo = 105
- Alberni-Clayoquot = 94
- Greater Campbell River = 94
- Greater Victoria = 78





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Toxic drug poisoning deaths

Provincial comparison and regional overview

Between 2023 and 2024:



Vancouver Island First Nations youth experienced 45 toxic drug deaths, out of a total of 182 among BC First Nations youth.

32.6%

Vancouver Island First Nations youth made up 32.6 per cent of the region's total youth deaths in 2023/24, even though they only make up 7 per cent of the Vancouver Island youth population.

Female youth in the Vancouver Island Region

Between 2021* and 2024:



52.4%

First Nations female youth made up 52.4 per cent of First Nations youth toxic drug deaths in the Vancouver Island Region.



44

First Nations female youth experienced 44 toxic drug deaths in the Vancouver Island Region (215 deaths per 100,000 First Nations female youth)

Time trend

2023-2024



Vancouver Island First Nations youth experienced 45 toxic drug deaths in 2023/24, compared to 39 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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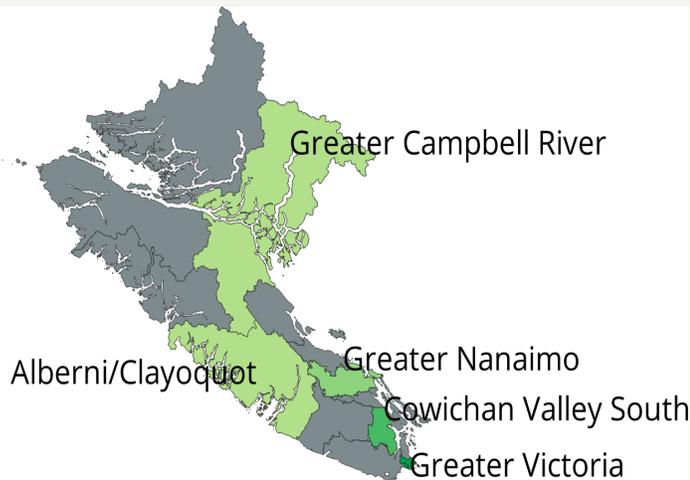
Opioid use disorder (OUD)



There were an estimated 382 First Nations youth who had health care interactions* coded as being related to OUD in 2022.



This number is a 2.4 per cent increase from 373 youth in 2021.



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

- Greater Victoria = 87
- Cowichan Valley South = 81
- Greater Nanaimo = 53
- Greater Campbell River = 41
- Alberni/Clayoquot = 41

Alcohol use disorder (AUD)



There were an estimated 1,188 First Nations youth who had health care interactions coded as being related to AUD in 2022.



This number is a 1.4 per cent increase from 1,172 youth in 2021.



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

- Greater Victoria = 205
- Alberni/Clayoquot = 198
- Cowichan Valley South = 196
- Greater Nanaimo = 186
- Vancouver Island North = 103



OUD and AUD related health care interactions

There were an estimated 198 First Nations youth who had health care interactions* coded as being related to both OUD and AUD in 2022.



This number represents a 10.6 per cent increase from 179 youth in 2021.

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



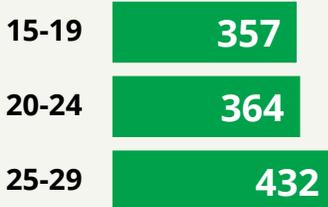
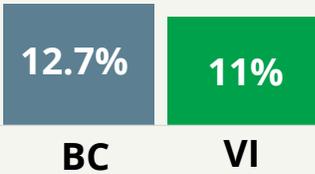
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Mental health and hospital service use

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

Depression

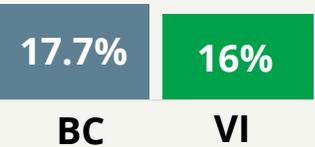


11 per cent of First Nations youth in the Vancouver Island Region were treated for depression, compared to 12.7 per cent of First Nations youth in BC in 2022/23.

There were a total of 1,153 cases of depression in 2022/23 (age breakdown shown above), remaining relatively stable from 1,221 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 per cent of First Nations youth in the Vancouver Island 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 1,686 cases of mood and anxiety disorders in 2022/23 (age breakdown shown above), remaining relatively stable from 1,744 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) use for mental health

For Vancouver Island First Nations youth:

70

There were 70 self-harm related hospitalizations in 2021/22.

684

684 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.