



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

Toxic Drug Poisoning Trends among First Nations Youth (aged 15-29) in British Columbia



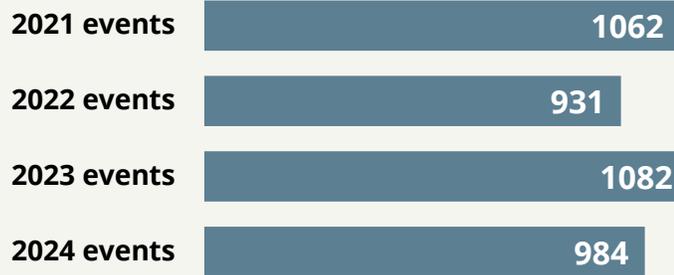
Colonization and intergenerational trauma have negatively impacted First Nations' health, including increased harms caused by toxic drug poisoning. Note that the data presented here is sensitive in nature and represents individuals, their families and loved ones.

Toxic drug poisoning events

Provincial overview

Between 2021 and 2024:

First Nations youth experienced consistently high numbers of events each year:



29.6%

First Nations youth made up nearly one third (29.6 per cent) of all toxic drug events among First Nations people in BC in 2021-2024.

Comparison to other residents in BC

In 2024:



20x

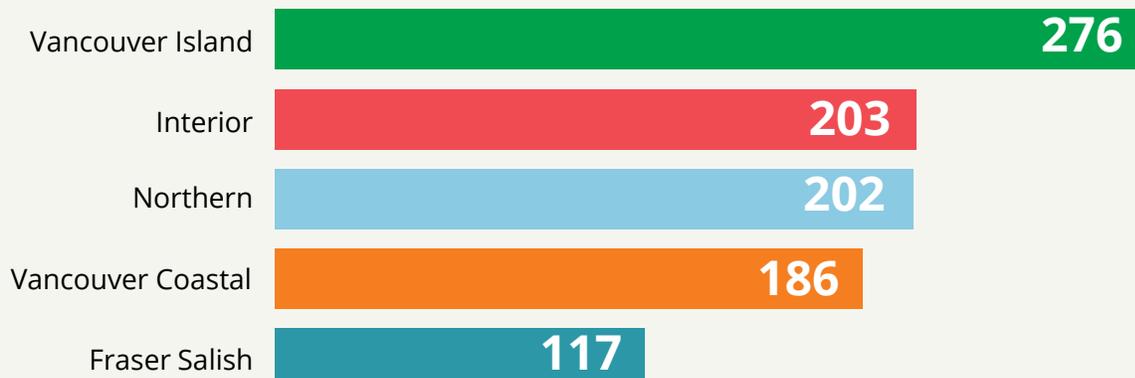
The rate of toxic drug events among First Nations female youth was 20 times higher than other resident female youth.

The rate of toxic drug events among First Nations male youth was 9.5 times higher than other resident male youth.



Geography

In 2024, the regional breakdown of the 984 toxic drug events among First Nations youth was as follows:





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Toxic drug poisoning deaths

Provincial overview

Between 2021 and 2024:

First Nations youth experienced the following number of deaths each year:



First Nations youth composed 24.4 per cent of the total number of youth deaths in BC in 2021-2024, even though they only compose 4.4 per cent of the BC youth population.

BC First Nations female youth

Between 2021* and 2024:



46.6%

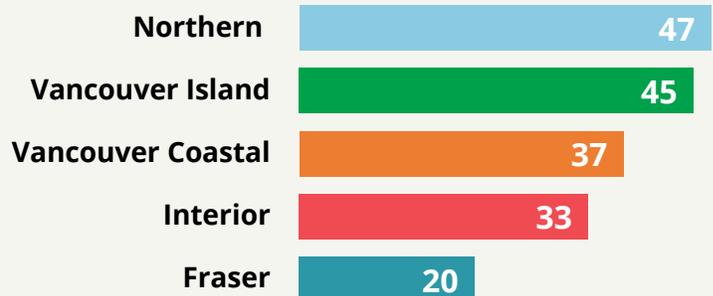
First Nations female youth made up 46.6 per cent of all First Nations youth toxic drug deaths in BC.



First Nations female youth experienced 160 toxic drug deaths in BC (178 per 100,000 First Nations female youth).

Geography

Between 2023 and 2024, the regional breakdown for First Nations youth toxic drug deaths was:



Between 2021 and 2022, the regional breakdown for First Nations youth toxic drug deaths was:



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

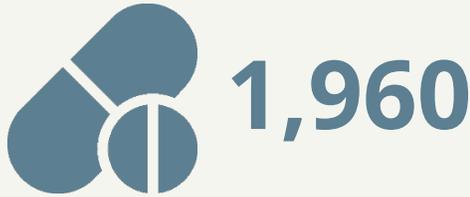


First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

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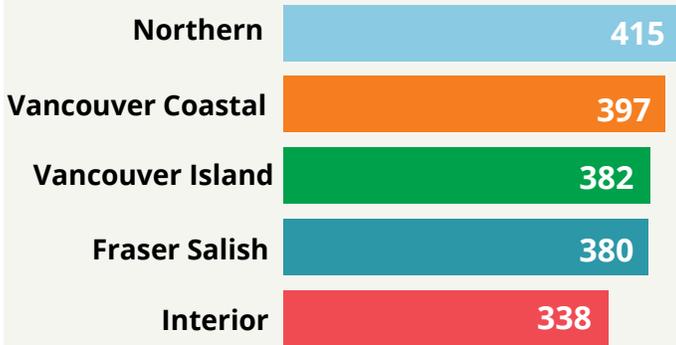
Opioid use disorder (OUD)



There were an estimated 1,960[‡] First Nations youth who had health care interactions* coded as being related to OUD in 2022.



This number is a 0.8 per cent increase from 1,945 youth in 2021.

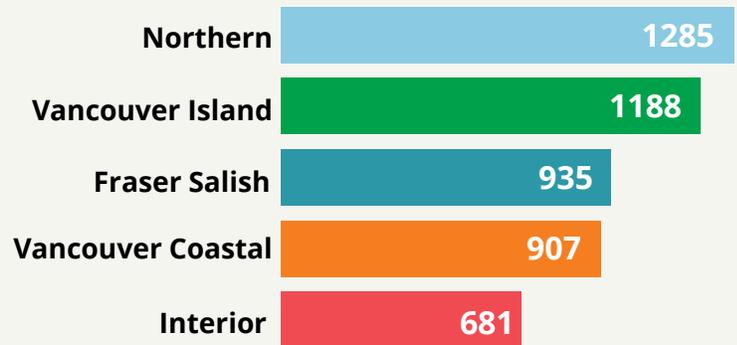


Alcohol use disorder (AUD)



There were an estimated 5,016[‡] First Nations youth who had health care interactions* coded as being related to AUD in 2022.

This number is a 1.2 per cent decrease from 5,076 youth in 2021.



OUD and AUD related health care interactions

There were an estimated 964[‡] First Nations youth who had health care interactions* coded as being related to both OUD and AUD in 2022.



This number represents a 2.1 per cent increase from 944 youth in 2021.

[‡] Regional sub-totals do not sum to the provincial total, since regional information is unknown for some individuals

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



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Health through wellness

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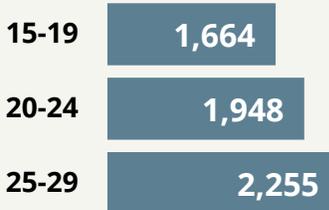
Mental health and hospital service use

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

Depression



12.7 per cent of First Nations youth were treated for depression across BC in 2022/23.

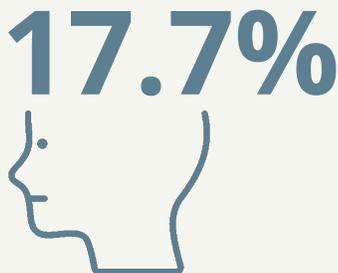


There were a total of 5867 cases of depression in 2022/23 (age breakdown shown above), remaining relatively stable from 6,069 cases in 2021/22.

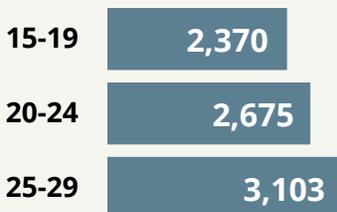


First Nations female youth were treated for depression at 2.5 times the rate of First Nations male youth in 2022/23.

Mood and anxiety disorders



17.7 per cent of First Nations youth were treated for mood and anxiety disorders in 2022/23.



Total cases of mood and anxiety disorders were 8,148 in 2022/23 (age breakdown shown above), which was relatively stable from 8,351 cases in 2021/22.



First Nations female youth were treated for mood and anxiety disorders at 2.3 times the rate of First Nations male youth in 2022/23.

Emergency departments (ED) and hospitalization use for mental health

For BC First Nations youth:

242

There were 242 self-harm related hospitalizations in 2021/22.

2,914

2,914 First Nations youth used EDs for mental health-related reasons in 2022/23.



There were more First Nations female youth that 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.