

# Pilot Program to Permit Alcohol Consumption in Regional Parks

Fraser Health Medical Health Officer Recommendations

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March 6, 2023

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Medical Health Officer

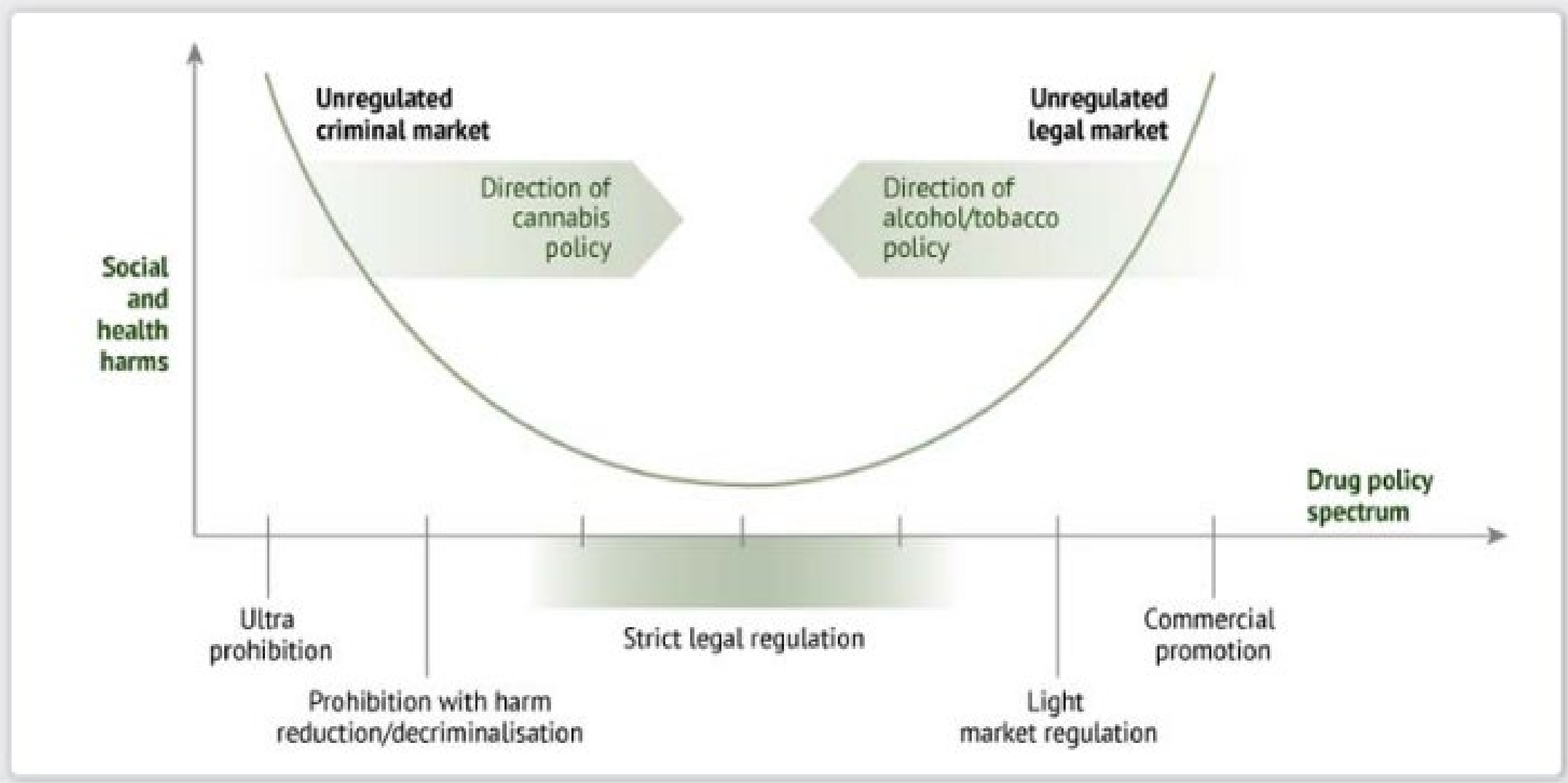
Fraser Health Authority

# Why is alcohol in parks a public health concern?

Increased # of places to drink → increased consumption → increased harm to individuals and the community

- Over-normalization of alcohol use
  - Increased risk of underage drinking
- Risks from intoxication
  - Increased risk of drowning at waterfront locations
    - Centennial Beach
    - Derby Reach
  - Increased risk of impaired driving
    - Derby Reach
    - Campbell Valley
- § Potential for hazardous litter, vandalism, disruptive behaviour
- Inclusivity and equitable access to shared public greenspaces

# Paradox of Prohibition



# Harms Associated with Alcohol Use

## For the consumer:

- Cancers
  - Breast, Colorectal, Liver, Esophagus, Oropharynx (throat and mouth), Larynx (voice box)
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Liver Disease
- Unintentional injuries
- Substance use disorder
- Depression
- Fatigue
- Sleep disruption
- Decreased productivity

## Harms to others:

- Violence (random and intimate-partner)
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders
- Unintentional injuries
- Motor vehicle collisions
- Harassment
- Increased crime
- Costs on the healthcare and justice system
- Inequitable burden of harms

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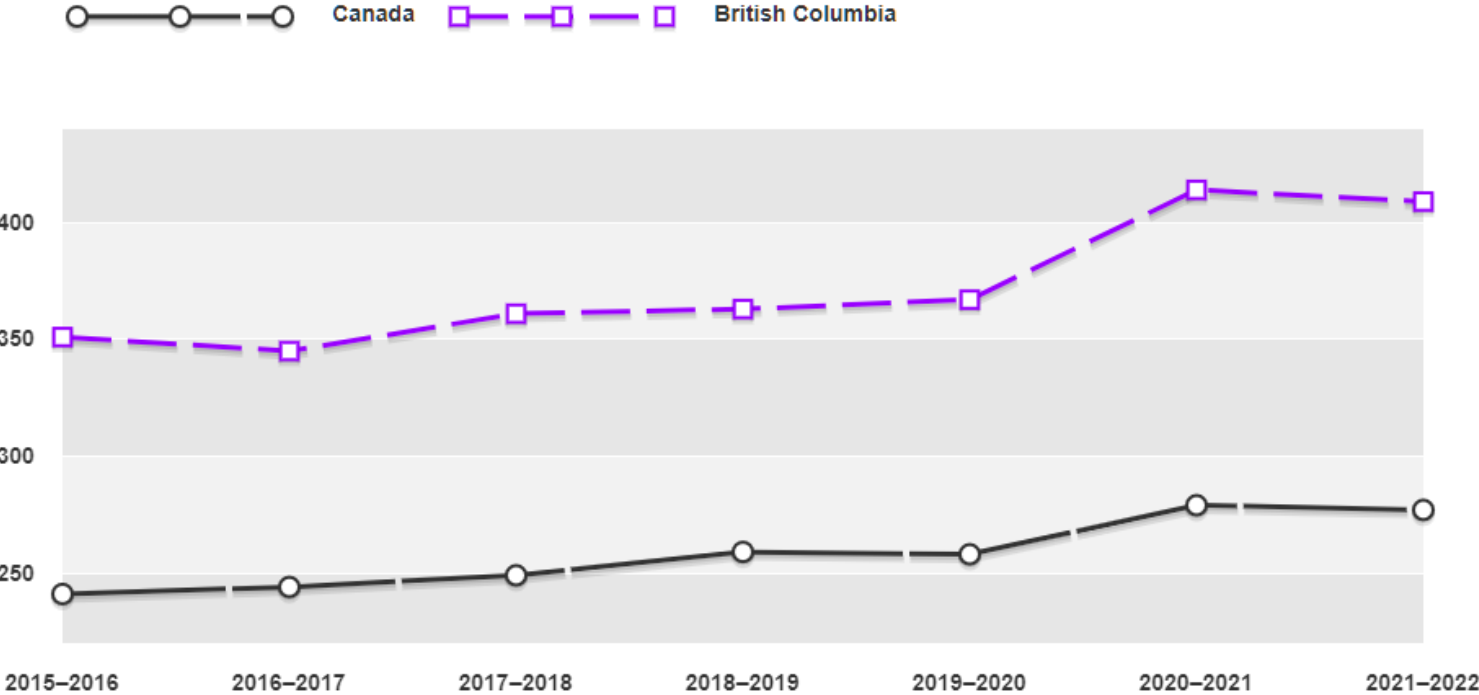
Alcohol causes nearly 7,000 cancer deaths every year in Canada.

According to the Canadian Cancer Society, drinking less alcohol is among the top 10 behaviours to reduce cancer risk .

# Alcohol-related hospitalizations in BC are high

Lower alcohol consumption reduces costs to the health care system

Hospitalizations Entirely Caused by Alcohol (per 100,000)

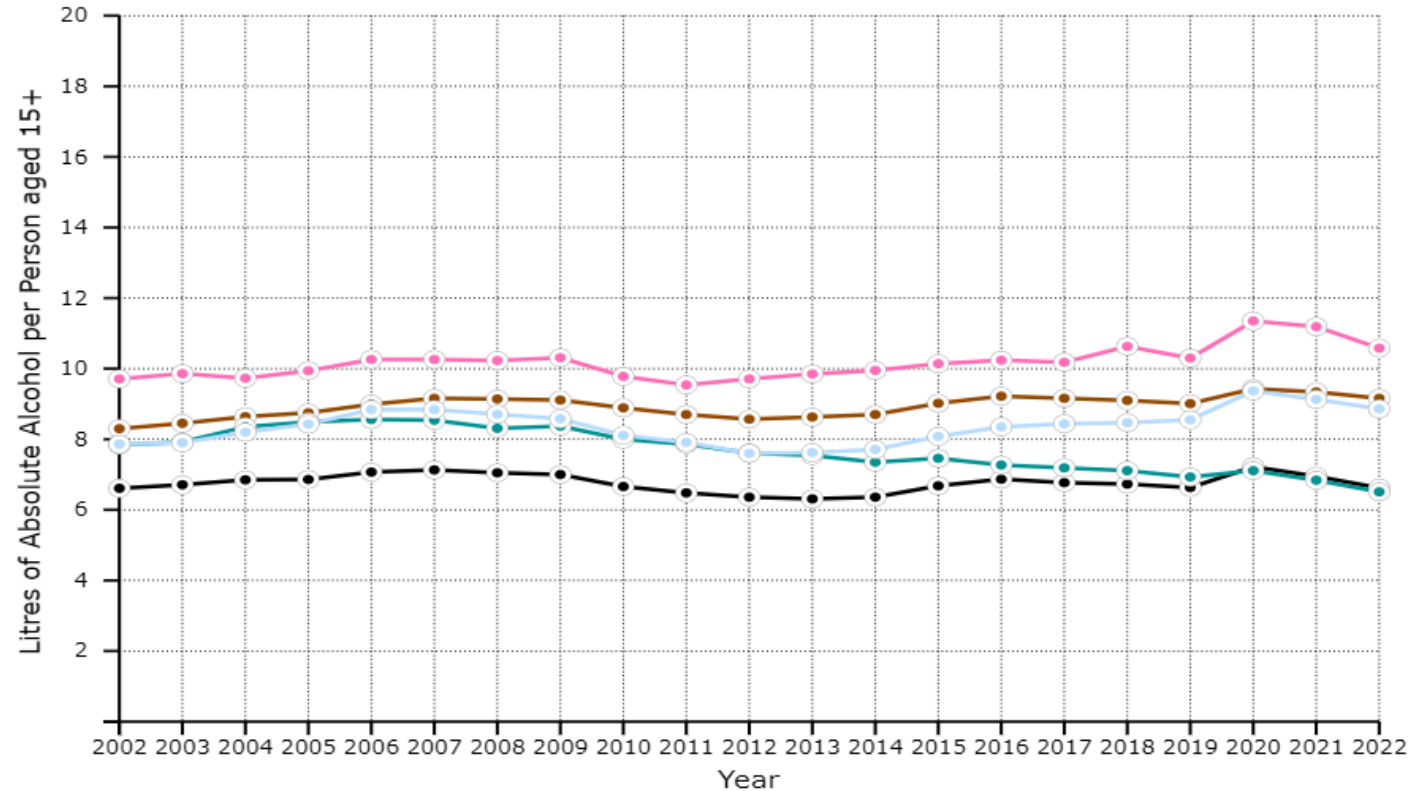


Source: Canadian Institute for Health Information 2023

# Fraser Region Alcohol Consumption

Consumption of alcohol in the Fraser region is less than the BC average, but **still at high risk level for health harms**

Annual Per Capita Alcohol Consumption vs years (2002-2022)



- Region: Fraser Total PCA Consumption
- Region: BC Total PCA Consumption
- Region: New Westminster Total PCA Consumption
- Region: Langley Total PCA Consumption
- Region: Delta Total PCA Consumption

# of standard drinks per week

BC  
10

Fraser  
7.5

Langley  
11.9

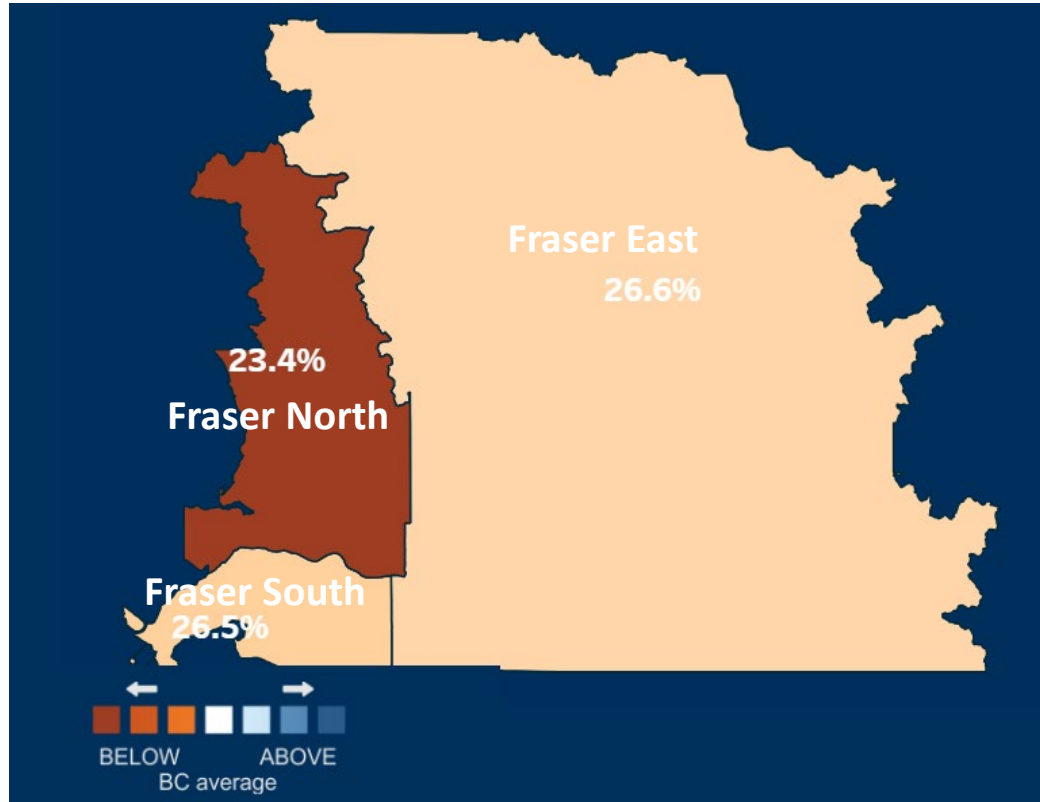
Delta  
10

New Westminster

7.3

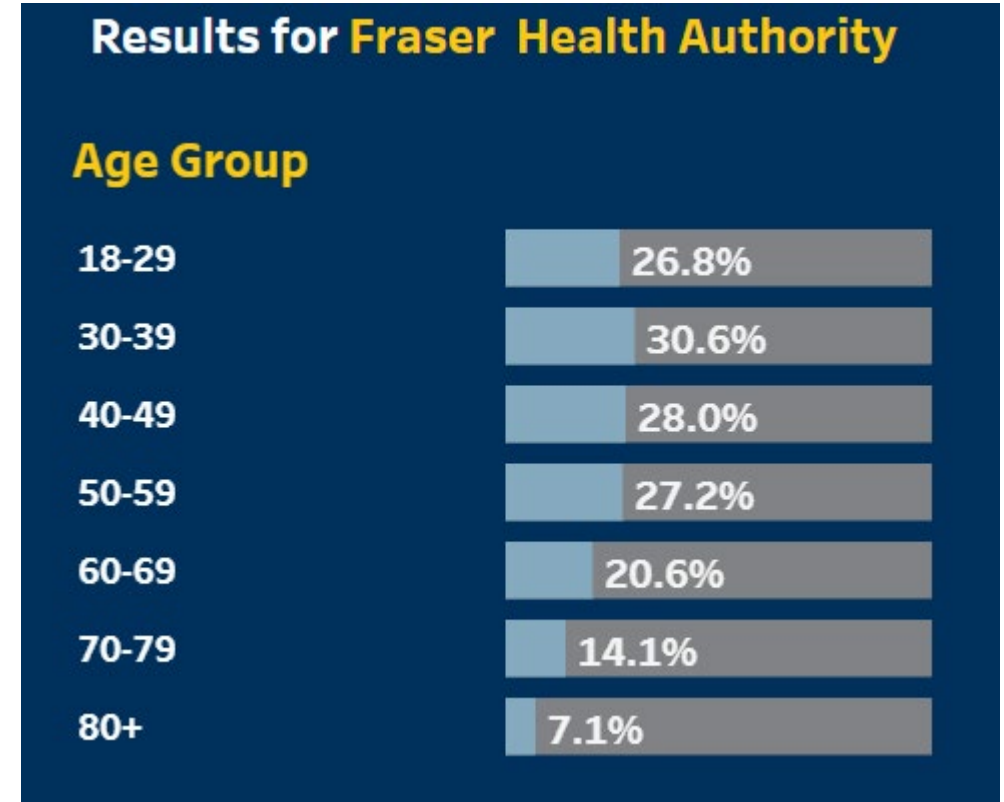
# Culture of binge drinking in Canada, BC, and Fraser Health

Fraser Health Authority: binge drinking one or more times per month



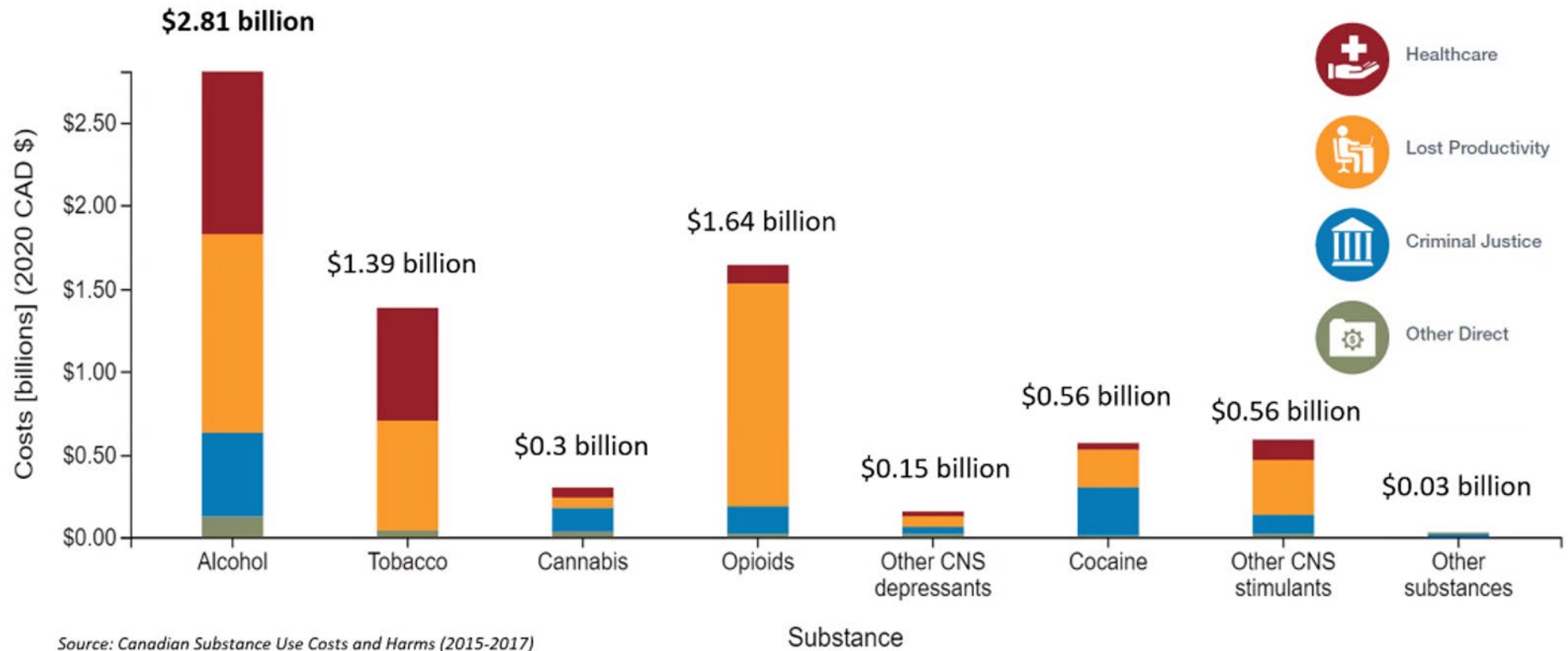
**Fraser Health Authority regional average of binge drinking one or more times per month is 25.3%**

Binge drinking one or more times per month



**BC average of binge drinking one or more times per month is 27.1%**

# Alcohol costs in BC exceed government revenue



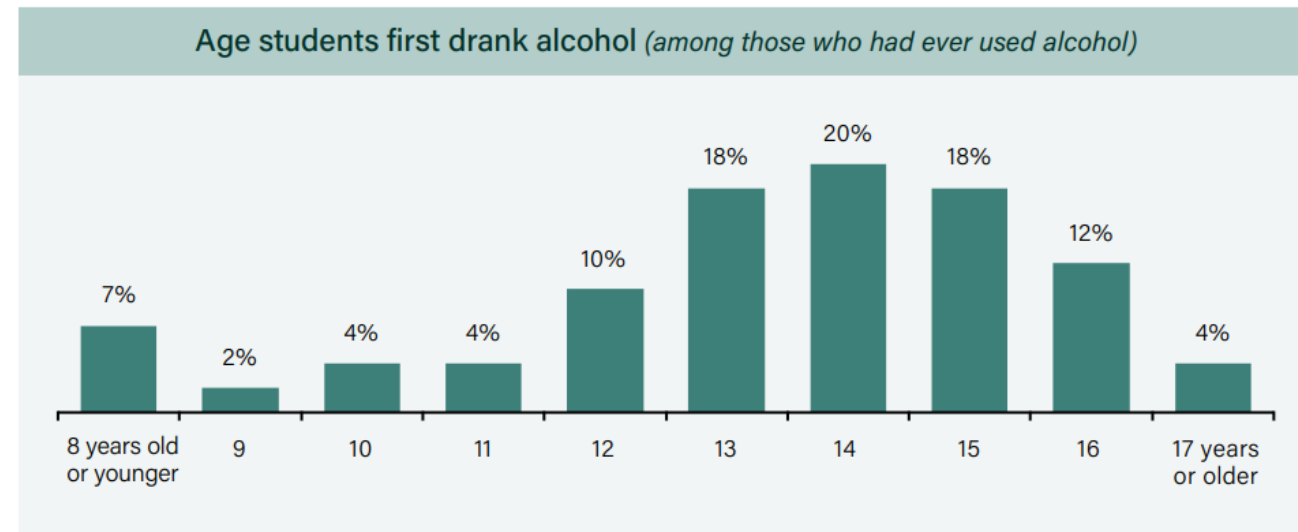
Source: Canadian Substance Use Costs and Harms (2015-2017)



# Youth and Vulnerable Populations

## Further normalization for children and youth

- Alcohol remains the substance with the highest prevalence of use among students in grades 7 to 12.
- In 2021-22, 55.7% of grade 10-12 students reported alcohol consumption
- About 1 in 5 youth reported high-risk drinking behaviour
- Number one substance responsible for poisonings at BC Children's Hospital



Source: The big picture: an overview of the 2023 BC Adolescent Health Survey provincial results. McCreary Centre Society, 2023

# Alcohol Consumption and Water Safety

- Drowning in recreational waters is the second leading cause of injury related death in children under 10
- Between 2012 and 2020, alcohol and/or drugs were found to be a contributing factor in 38% of drowning deaths



- Regional park locations near bodies of water are a safety concern
  - All proposed parks have ready access to water

# Evidence-based Guidance and Recommendations

## 1. Process:

- Seek early and ongoing engagement and feedback **across diverse groups**

## 2. Location:

- Avoid establishing designated areas adjacent to **bodies of water, child-specific areas (playgrounds, splash pads), along hiking trails**
- Post clear, **extensive and accessible signage** that includes:
  - Boundaries of designated sites
  - Hours of consumption
  - Health and safety guidance

## 3. Implementation:

- Ongoing **monitoring** and **evaluation** that includes:
  - Annual program review
  - Expanded inspection and **enforcement staffing**
  - Comprehensive public reporting





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