

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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Northwestern Health Unit Releases Report on Youth Health

The Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) is sharing information on grade 9-12 student health data collected in partnership with schools across the region during the 2023/24 school year. The COMPASS study measures health behaviors such as cannabis use, mental health, physical activity, alcohol, and tobacco use.

“This data provides valuable insights into the everyday life experiences and health behaviors of local youth. Communities, organizations, and schools can use this information to plan programs and policies aimed at improving health outcomes for youth. As students return to class, the results highlight the importance of supporting new school policies this fall that aim to reduce youth vaping rates and screen time,” says Stephanie Cran, Health Promotion Coordinator.

The 2023/24 COMPASS results showed that among all participating students in NWHU:

- 29% of student used an e-cigarette (vape) in the past 30 days
- 46% of never-smokers are susceptible to start smoking in the future
- 34% reported drinking alcohol in the past 30 days
- Among alcohol-ever users, 14% reported riding in a vehicle when the driver had been drinking alcohol, in the past 30 days
- 25% reported using cannabis in the past 30 days
- Among cannabis-ever users, 22% reported riding in a vehicle when the driver had been using cannabis, in the past 30 days
- Only 1% are meeting the national guideline of 2 hours or less of recreational screen time per day
- 7% sometimes go to bed hungry because there is not enough money to buy food

COMPASS is a prospective cohort study conducted in schools across Canada, led by researchers at the University of Waterloo. Students in the NWHU region have been participating in the survey since 2012-13. You can learn more about the COMPASS study by visiting the [University of Waterloo's COMPASS system website](#). The full [2023/24 NWHU School Health Profile](#) is now available on the [Reports, Publications, and Statistics page](#) of our website.

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