

# Illicit Drug Use

## Why Is This Important?

Illicit drugs are those that are illegal. Abuse is a pattern of recurrent use despite health or social problems. Health risks depend on the drug, but include addiction, poisoning, injury and death. [Injection drug use](#) can transmit blood-borne infections like HIV and hepatitis C. Illicit drug use is linked to low [self-rated health](#) and [self-rated mental health](#) and with the use of legal drugs, including [smoking](#) and [heavy alcohol drinking](#). Rates are highest among youth and decrease with age. Other patterns of illicit drug use vary by gender, income, education, neighbourhood deprivation and geography.

## What Is Being Done?

[Saskatchewan's HIV Strategy](#) includes harm reduction, [methadone clinics](#) and needle exchange programs.

Saskatoon's [Lighthouse Supported Living](#) offers a stabilization shelter for people with addictions.

Ministry of Health provides [resource guides](#) for prevention education.

## What More Can Be Done?

[What is Health Equity?](#) A Primer for the Health Care System

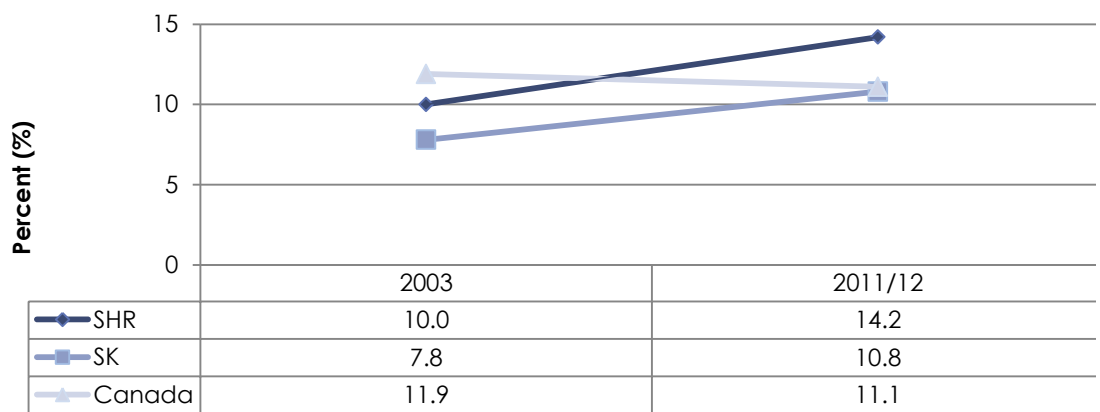
Chief Medical Health Officer's [Call to Action](#)

## Highlights

### Illicit drug use has increased slightly in Saskatoon Health Region.

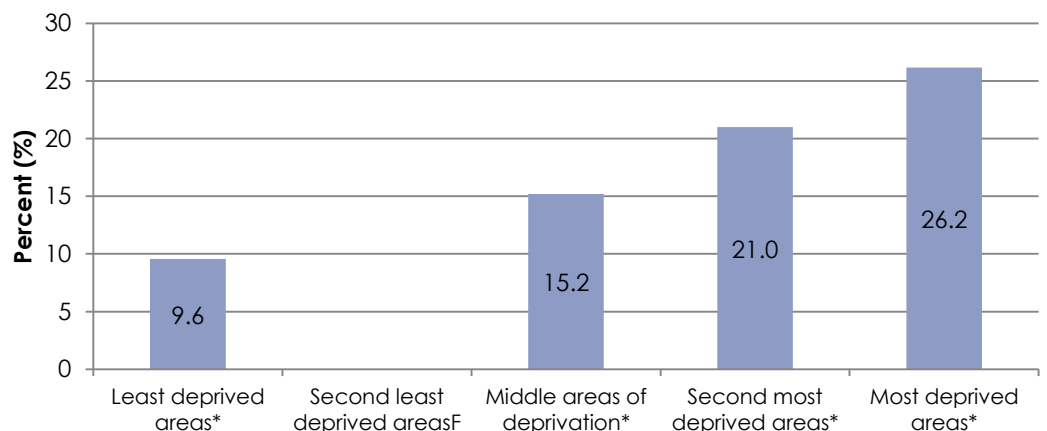
- About one in seven (14.2%) people in Saskatoon Health Region reported using illicit drugs in the past 12 months in 2011/12 (*Figure 1*). This is slightly higher than Saskatchewan and Canadian rates. This means that almost 39,000 people in the Region used illicit drugs.
- People living in the most deprived areas reported significantly higher rates of illicit drug use compared to people in the least deprived areas (26.2% and 9.6%; *Figure 2*).
- Illicit drug use varies by [sub-group](#).

**Figure 1: Individuals Using Illicit Drugs at least Once in the Past 12 Months, Excluding One-time Use of Cannabis, in Saskatoon Health Region, Saskatchewan, and Canada, 2003 and 2011/12**



Source: [Statistics Canada](#)

**Figure 2: Individuals Using Illicit Drugs at Least Once in the past 12 Months, Excluding One-time Use of Cannabis, by Deprivation Index Quintile, Saskatoon, 2011/12**



\*High variability. Use with caution. F value too low to publish. Source: [Statistics Canada](#). This study was conducted, in part, with data provided by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health to the Health Quality Council. The interpretations and conclusions herein do not necessarily represent those of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health or Government of Saskatchewan. The analyses are based on data from Statistics Canada and the opinions expressed do not represent the views of Statistics Canada.