

# Summary

This report is based on data from CAN's national school survey, performed annually among ninth graders and students in year 2 in upper secondary school. The purpose is to report on young people's experiences of alcohol, narcotics, tobacco and gambling, among other things. The report reveals differences in usage patterns between boys and girls and between younger and older students. Another purpose of the report is to provide a snapshot of what young people's experiences of various substances looked like at the time of the latest survey in 2023. The following are chapter-specific summaries.

## *Alcohol*

Overall, the responses regarding on alcohol use indicate that consumption has decreased among Swedish school students over a longer time period. However, the downward trend has plateaued in both grades. In this year's survey, 39% of ninth graders and 70% of students in year 2 of upper secondary school responded that they had drunk alcohol in the preceding 12 months. Annual consumption in litres of pure alcohol (100%) was 0.9 litres in ninth grade and 2.3 litres in year 2 of upper secondary school. These are historically low levels.

The most common problems that students reported having experienced in connection with alcohol consumption were damage to objects or clothing, arguing and being photographed or filmed in an embarrassing or demeaning situation. A larger proportion of girls than boys mentioned these specific problems. In several other cases, the situation was the opposite. For instance, a larger proportion of boys than girls reported driving motor vehicles, getting into fights or getting in trouble with the police in connection with alcohol consumption.

## *Tobacco and nicotine*

Smoking has decreased dramatically among Swedish school students. The downward trend was particularly strong during the 2010s. In this year's survey, 9% of ninth graders and 21% of students in year 2 of upper secondary school indicated that they smoke. In the latter group, a small increase has occurred since 2021.

Use of snuff has increased in both grades over recent years. The increase has been particularly large among girls and use is now at historically high levels. However, it is still more common for boys to use snuff. For white snuff, the gender differences are smaller. In 2023, 14% of ninth graders and 26% of students in year 2 of upper secondary school indicated use of snuff.

Vaping has become more common among young people. In last year's survey, the proportion of students who had used vapes in the preceding month increased fourfold. The levels in this year's survey are also significantly higher

than in the 2010s, but a decrease is seen compared with the high levels in 2022. In 2023, 17% of ninth graders and 21% of students in year 2 of upper secondary school reported having vaped in the preceding month.

## *Narcotics*

Experience of narcotics has been at a fairly steady level over the last 20 years among ninth graders, albeit with some year-to-year variation. In 2023, 7% of ninth graders responded that they had ever used narcotics. This was more than twice as common among those in upper secondary school, where 15% reported having ever used narcotics. Seen across the entire measuring period, the level has been stable in the latter group as well. Over time, there has been an increase in how often students with experience of narcotics have used narcotics. The increase is clearest among ninth graders. This trend has plateaued in recent years, but ninth graders with experience of narcotics have, on average, used narcotics twice as many times compared with the same group 30 years ago.

In both grades, cannabis was the most common substance. The survey also includes a separate set of questions on if students have used prescription medication without a doctor's prescription. The purpose of this is to capture non-prescribed use of medication classified as narcotics. If the students who reported having used such prescription medication without a doctor's prescription are also defined as having experience of narcotics, the proportion in this year's survey that had ever used narcotics would be 14% instead of 7% among ninth graders. Among secondary school students, it would be 21% instead of 15%.

## *Prescription medication*

Unprescribed use of sleep aids or sedatives has been relatively stable over the last 30 years. Use of such medication was around 3% in the early 90s. It then increased somewhat, but decreased again in the early 00s. In the last 20 years, use has varied from year to year, but with a slight upward trend in both grades.

The survey's questions cover use of three different types of medication:

- Prescription sleep aids or sedatives
- Prescription analgesics
- Prescription central stimulants

In this year's survey, 5% of students in ninth grade and 6% in year 2 in upper secondary school reported having experience of sleep aids or sedatives classified as narcotics. It was about equally common to have used analgesics classified as narcotics, with 5% having experience of this in both grades. Use of a central stimulant was reported by 3% of students in each group. If all three types of medications are combined, the total proportion that had ever used medication classified as narcotics without a doctor's prescription was 10% in ninth grade and 11% in year 2 in upper secondary school.

### *Sniffing, inhalation and nitrous oxide*

The proportion of students who have sniffed or inhaled substances has decreased over time and is now at a relatively low level. In 2023, 2% of ninth graders and 1% of students in year 2 of upper secondary school reported having done this in the preceding 12 months. In the last ten years, there have been no large gender differences among students as regards experiences of sniffing/inhalation.

Starting in 2022, questions about use of nitrous oxide are also included in the survey. In 2023, 4% of ninth graders reported having used nitrous oxide in the preceding 12 months. In upper secondary school, the corresponding figure was 10%. This is a decrease compared with in 2022, when 14% of upper secondary school students reported use. However, the levels are unchanged among ninth graders. Experiences of nitrous oxide use are roughly equally common among boys and girls.

### *Doping*

Experiences of using anabolic androgenic steroids (AAS) have been at around 1% for the last 20 years in ninth grade and since 2004 in year 2 of upper secondary school. In this year's survey, less than 1% of students in ninth grade reported ever having used AAS. Among students in year 2 of upper secondary school, only 0.5 percent reported this.

### *Gambling*

Overall, an increase can be seen in the proportion of upper secondary school students who have gambled in the last 12 months. The proportion among boys has increased year-on-year since 2019, when it was 27%. This year, it was 40%. Among girls in upper secondary school, it has also increased – from 4% in 2019 to 12% in 2023. Among students in ninth grade, the proportion gambling appears to be more stable. Among boys, the proportion that has gambled has been at around 22% for the last ten years. Among girls, the proportion has been 9% for the last three years.

### *Age at first use*

In tandem with the proportion of students with experience of alcohol and tobacco having decreased among ninth graders, the proportion with an early first use (before age 14 years) of either substance has also decreased. In 1999, 63% of ninth graders had had an early first use of alcohol, cigarettes, cannabis or sniffing/inhalation. In 2010, early first use of snuff also began to be studied. At that time, 39% had an early first use of snuff or one of the aforementioned substances before the age of 14 years. In this year's survey, the proportion with an early first use is 21%. Among students with an early first substance use, it was most common to have drunk a glass of alcohol, followed by having smoked a cigarette. A larger proportion of girls than boys reported having drunk a glass of alcohol before the age of 14 years. An early first use of snuff was more common among boys than among girls.