

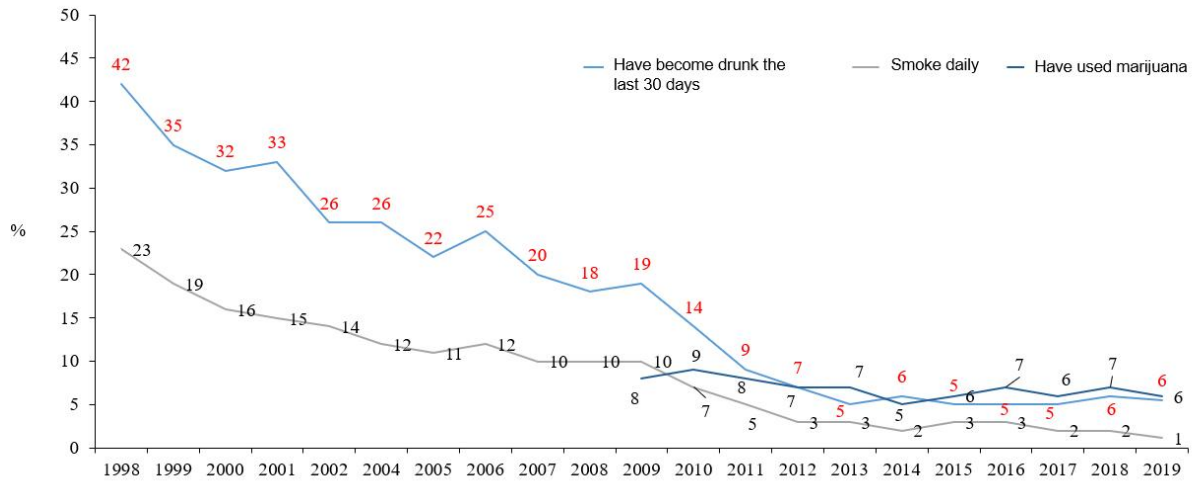
Planet Youth: Project Description

The Planet Youth methodology is different from the traditional methods often applied in prevention work. Instead of talking directly to adolescents trying to convince them of facts and faults of drug use, smoking and alcohol use, ICSRA (The Icelandic Center for Social Research and Analysis) has been working with municipalities, school authorities, and various NGOs, sports clubs and youth institutions in the effort to change the life-style environment of our children so that they would be in lesser risk of substance use.

The foundation of the approach is the information collected directly from students in schools anonymously regarding several factors in their lives. These are questions on: Their family, connection to others, health / mental health, well-being, substance use, studies and school, participation in extracurricular activities, diet, bullying, physical activities, anger and behavior, social media and computer use. The students, most often in 10th grade, fill out a questionnaire with 60-70 questions. Within 8 weeks from the data collection, reports are made based on their answers both for the municipality level and for individual schools.

Knowing the situation in a given community gives the municipalities the option to take informed actions to change the environment of children. This is based on the knowledge of so-called risk and protective factors in the lives of children and teenagers. The municipalities, NGOs, sports clubs and others can create projects based on their knowledge from the reports to strengthen protective factors and weaken risk factors. These can for example be actions to increase participation in leisure activities among children and teenagers, known to decrease the likelihood of certain risk behaviours. Other projects might focus their efforts on work with parents to limit parties where parents are not present which can lessen the risk of teenage substance use.

The result of the Planet Youth method has been noticeable since the substance use of Icelandic adolescents has decreased from being among the highest in Europe in 1998 to be amongst the lowest in Europe in the year 2020. The research output of ICSRA continues to be at the forefront of international research efforts and is providing expert and logistical support for youth research and intervention projects in several countries in Europe, North- and South American and Africa. ICSRA has partnered with over 200 communities in 32 countries and over 1.000.000 adolescents have participated in the surveys to date.



Trends in substance use amongst 10. grade in Iceland years 1997-2019

Since its establishment, ICSRA has established active collaborations with international research groups at Columbia University and Teachers College, New York; the University of California, Irvine; Northwestern University, Chicago; Mount Sinai Medical Center, New York; King’s College, London; the Karolinska Institute, Sweden; and the National University of Ireland, Galway.