



Results of the 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey

# Northwest





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## RESULTS OF THE 2013 BC ADOLESCENT HEALTH SURVEY

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McCreary Centre Society is a non-government not-for-profit committed to improving the health of BC youth through research and community-based projects. Founded in 1977, the Society sponsors and promotes a wide range of activities and research to identify and address the health needs of young people in the province.



Youth health • Youth research • Youth engagement

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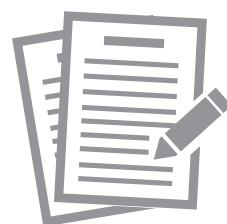
# Key findings

Local findings from the 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey showed that most youth reported good physical and mental health; felt connected to their family, school, and community; had positive plans for the future; and were engaging in health promoting behaviours which will assist them to transition successfully to adulthood.

However, the survey findings also highlighted some differences between this region and the province as a whole, and identified some groups of students who may need additional support.

- Most students rated their overall health (84%) and their mental health (78%) as good or excellent.
- As was the case provincially, males generally reported better mental health than females, including lower rates of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts. However, the percentage of local males who attempted suicide was higher than that for males across BC (7% vs. 3%). There was no difference among females (13%).
- In the past year, 11% of students missed out on mental health care which they felt they needed. Common reasons included hoping the problem would go away and not wanting their parents to know.
- Among Aboriginal youth, 32% spoke an Aboriginal language (which was higher than the provincial rate of 14%).
- Fifty-one percent of students slept for at least eight hours the night before completing the survey. Most students (83% of males vs. 89% of females) were doing something such as homework or using their cellphone after the time they were expected to be asleep. The more hours of sleep students got, the more likely they were to report positive mental health.
- Thirty-two percent of males and 25% of females were injured seriously enough to require medical attention in the past year. Youth took injury prevention more seriously in some activities over others. For example, 62% always wore a helmet when snowboarding or skiing, while 24% always wore one when riding a bike.
- Eighty-nine percent of youth reported eating fruit or vegetables on the day before taking the survey, compared to 94% throughout BC. Eating fruit or vegetables three or more times a day was associated with positive mental health among Northwest students.

- Local students were more likely than their peers across the province to report ever having sex. However, those who ever had sex were as likely as youth across BC to have used a condom or other latex barrier the last time (69%). Further, local students who ever had oral sex were more likely to have used a condom or other barrier the last time they had oral sex (30% vs. 17% provincially).
- Thirty-two percent of youth in the Northwest had ever tried smoking tobacco, compared to 21% across BC. Among local youth who had ever smoked, 34% had successfully quit in the past year, which was higher than the provincial rate of 23%.
- Fifty-seven percent of youth had tried alcohol, and 42% had used marijuana at some point. Females were more likely than males to have used substances because they wanted to have fun (70% vs. 56%) or because they felt down or sad (25% vs. 12%), whereas males were more likely to have done so to help them focus.
- Friends appeared to play a role in improved health outcomes. For example, students who had friends who would be upset with them if they got drunk were less likely to binge drink.
- Locally, 22% of males and 13% of females aged 12–17 met the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines by exercising for an hour every day in the past week.
- Protective factors which appeared to improve outcomes for even the most vulnerable youth included physical activity, meaningful engagement in activities, nutrition, and getting eight or more hours of sleep. Local results also highlighted the importance of a stable home, and supportive relationships with peers and adults, including family, teachers, and other professionals.
- Local students were more likely to be able to identify an adult in their neighbourhood or community who cared about them (69% vs. 61% provincially). Feeling cared about by such an adult was associated with positive mental health.



# Introduction

Between February and June 2013, almost 30,000 students in Grades 7–12 completed the BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) in schools across British Columbia. These students answered 130 questions about their health, and about the risk and protective factors in their lives.

This is the fifth time students have been asked to complete the survey since 1992. Fifty-six of the 59 BC school districts participated in the survey. This is seven more than when the survey was last conducted in 2008.

In addition to a provincial report (*From Hastings Street to Haida Gwaii* available at [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca)), 16 reports at the Health Service Delivery Area level will be published over the coming year. This report focuses on students in the Northwest Health Service Delivery Area.

The Northwest Health Service Delivery Area is comprised of Haida Gwaii (SD 50), Prince Rupert (SD 52), Bulkley Valley (SD 54), Coast Mountains (SD 82), Stikine (SD 87), and Nisga'a (SD 92). Although Bulkley Valley and Stikine were two of three school districts across the province which did not participate in the survey, Haida Gwaii took part in the BC AHS for the first time since 1998. The results presented in this report provide the most comprehensive and representative picture of youth health in the Northwest.

When reading this report it is important to keep in mind that the survey was administered in English to youth in public schools. This means that youth who were absent that day, had limited English language comprehension, or were not attending a mainstream class are not included in these results.

All comparisons and associations in this report are statistically significant at  $p < .05$ . This means there is up to a 5% likelihood that these results occurred by chance. Comparisons between the Northwest and the province are statistically significant at  $p < .01$ . Where relevant, differences in tables or charts that are not statistically significant are noted.



## SYMBOLS USED IN THIS REPORT

\* The percentage should be interpreted with caution as the standard error was relatively high but still within a releasable range.

NR The percentage could not be released due to the risk of deductive disclosure.



## QUOTES

Quotes from Northwest students who participated in the survey are included throughout this report.



## PARTICIPATING SCHOOL DISTRICTS

### Northern Health Authority

- 28 Quesnel
- 50 Haida Gwaii
- 52 Prince Rupert
- 57 Prince George
- 59 Peace River South
- 60 Peace River North
- 81 Fort Nelson
- 82 Coast Mountains
- 91 Nechako Lakes
- 92 Nisga'a

### Fraser Health Authority

- 33 Chilliwack
- 34 Abbotsford
- 35 Langley
- 36 Surrey
- 37 Delta
- 40 New Westminster
- 41 Burnaby
- 42 Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows
- 43 Coquitlam
- 78 Fraser-Cascade

### Vancouver Coastal Health Authority

- 38 Richmond
- 39 Vancouver
- 44 North Vancouver
- 45 West Vancouver
- 46 Sunshine Coast
- 47 Powell River
- 48 Sea To Sky
- 49 Central Coast

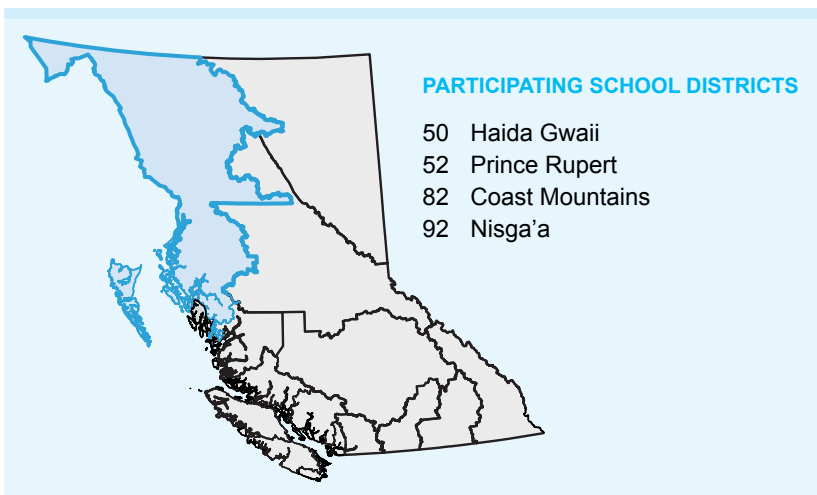
### Vancouver Island Health Authority

- 61 Greater Victoria
- 62 Sooke
- 63 Saanich
- 64 Gulf Islands
- 68 Nanaimo-Ladysmith
- 69 Qualicum
- 70 Alberni
- 71 Comox Valley
- 72 Campbell River
- 79 Cowichan Valley
- 84 Vancouver Island West
- 85 Vancouver Island North

### Interior Health Authority

- 05 Southeast Kootenay
- 06 Rocky Mountain
- 08 Kootenay Lake
- 10 Arrow Lakes
- 19 Revelstoke
- 20 Kootenay-Columbia
- 22 Vernon
- 23 Central Okanagan
- 27 Cariboo-Chilcotin
- 51 Boundary
- 53 Okanagan Similkameen
- 58 Nicola-Similkameen
- 67 Okanagan Skaha
- 73 Kamloops/Thompson
- 74 Gold Trail
- 83 North Okanagan-Shuswap

## NORTHWEST HEALTH SERVICE DELIVERY AREA



### ONLINE

A fact sheet explaining the methodology of the survey can be found at [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca).

# Youth in the Northwest

## Ethnic & cultural background

In the 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS), students in the Northwest most commonly reported that they were of European heritage (54%), which was consistent with the provincial picture.

Family background	
European	54%
Aboriginal	45%
East Asian	3%
Southeast Asian	3%
African	2%
Latin/South/Central American	2%
South Asian	2%
Australian/Pacific Islander	1%
West Asian	NR
Other	4%
Don't know	11%

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

Note: If youth did not feel any of the listed options represented their background, they could choose to write in their own identity. Most of these students wrote Canadian.

NR: The percentage could not be released due to the risk of deductive disclosure.

## ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

Provincially, 10% of students identified as Aboriginal, compared to 45% of local students. Among students who identified as Aboriginal, 90% were First Nations, 9% were Métis, and 2% specified another Aboriginal group, such as Blackfoot or Apache (youth could select more than one Aboriginal identity if applicable).

The majority of Aboriginal youth had lived on reserve (57% vs. 26% provincially), with 34% currently living there all of the time, 10% living there some of the time, and 13% having lived on reserve at some point in their lives. Thirty-two percent of Aboriginal youth spoke an Aboriginal language, which was higher than the provincial rate of 14%.

## NEW CANADIANS

Four percent of students were born outside of Canada, which was below the provincial rate of 19%. Among local students born outside Canada, 30%\* had lived here less than 2 years and 26%\* were here as international students.

## LANGUAGE

The majority of students (60%) spoke only English at home, which was above the provincial rate of 51%. Thirty-five percent reported sometimes speaking a language other than English at home, and 5% spoke another language at home most of the time (compared to 21% provincially).



## Sexual orientation & gender identity

Students in the Northwest identified with a range of sexual orientations. Consistent with youth across the province, males were more likely than females to identify as completely straight (83% vs. 77%), whereas females were more likely to identify as bisexual (7% vs. 3% of males) and questioning.

Local females were less likely than females across BC to identify as mostly straight (6% vs. 9% provincially) or as lesbian, but were more likely to identify as bisexual (7% vs. 4% provincially). There were no differences for male students.

Students were asked if they identified as transgender. The percentage who identified this way was too small to release.

Aboriginal students were also asked if they identified as Two Spirit. Although many did not know what the term meant, 5% of Aboriginal students identified as Two Spirit. This was consistent with the provincial rate.

Sexual orientation	
Completely straight	80%
Mostly straight	5%
Bisexual	5%
Gay or lesbian	NR
Questioning	NR
Don't have attractions	8%

NR: The percentage could not be released due to the risk of deductive disclosure.

## Home life

Similar to the rest of the province, 92% of students lived with at least one parent (including a step-parent), although local students were less likely to be living with their mother or stepmother (80% vs. 85% of youth across BC), with their siblings or step-siblings (47% vs. 58%), or with other adults not related to them (1% vs. 2%).

Consistent with the provincial rate, the majority of youth (90%) reported that their parents or guardians worked locally, while 10% reported that at least one parent worked somewhere else in BC or Canada. Six percent of youth reported that their parents did not work, which was above the provincial rate of 3%.

Who youth lived with most of the time	
Mother/stepmother	80%
Father/stepfather	69%
Sibling(s)/stepsibling(s)	47%
Grandparent(s)	9%
Both parents at different times	8%
Other adult(s) related to me	4%
Foster parent(s)	2%
Other adult(s) not related to me	1%
Two mothers/two fathers	1%
I live alone	1%
Other children or youth	NR

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

NR: The percentage could not be released due to the risk of deductive disclosure.

## In this report

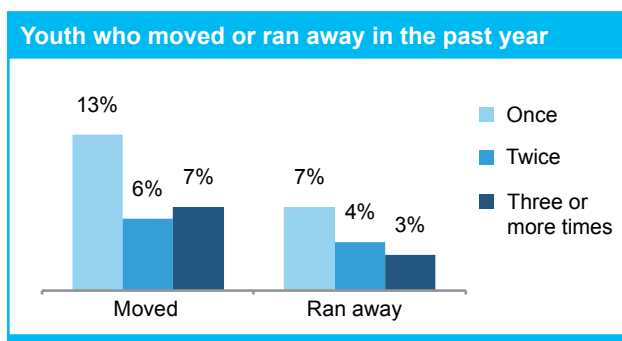
**PARENT** refers to students' parent or guardian. 

## Stable home

Local males were more likely than males across the province to have run away in the past year (13% vs. 8%), but the percentages were comparable among female students (16%).

Consistent with findings across BC, a quarter of Northwest students (25%) had moved from one home to another in the past year, with 7% having moved three or more times.

When compared to youth who had not moved, youth who had stayed in the same home for the past year were more likely to plan to continue their education beyond high school (80% vs. 67%) and to report good or excellent mental health (80% vs. 72%). They were also less likely to have self-harmed (16% vs. 29%), to have seriously considered suicide (14% vs. 21%), or to have attempted suicide (8% vs. 17%) in the past year.



## Government care

Five percent of students had ever lived in foster care, which was above the provincial rate of 2%. Two percent had lived in a group home, which was consistent with youth across BC. Three percent of youth were currently in government care (compared to 1% provincially).

Reflective of the picture across the province, close to half of local students with care experience had moved in the past year, and they were more likely to have moved than those who had not been in care (49%\* vs. 23%). They were also more likely to have moved three or more times (29% vs. 6% of youth who had not been in government care).

Among youth who had been in government care, those who had not changed address in the past year were more likely to report good or excellent general health, and to feel calm and at peace most or all of the time in the past month (65%\* vs. 38%\* who had moved). Further, they were more than twice as likely as youth who had moved to have plans to continue their education beyond high school and to report only positive aspirations for the future (such as having a job or being engaged in their community).

A young person who is on a Youth Agreement is not considered to be in the care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development. A Youth Agreement supports independent living for 16- to 18-year-olds (and occasionally 15-year-olds) who are homeless and cannot live with their family. The percentage of local students who had lived on a Youth Agreement was too small to report.

## Def.

In this report, when the term **GOVERNMENT CARE** is used, it refers to youth living in a foster home or group home.

## Caretaking responsibilities

On an average school day, 69% of local male and female students had some care-taking responsibilities, which was above the provincial rate of 61%. Caretaking responsibilities included caring for pets or other animals (62%) and caring for a relative (such as a relative with a disability or a younger sibling; 22%). The rate for caring for a relative was similar to the province, but local students were more likely to be taking care of pets or other animals (62% vs. 52% provincially).

Consistent with the provincial results, females were more likely than males to report caring for a relative (26% vs. 18%).

Students who took care of a relative were more likely than other students to be dealing with associated challenges, such as missing out on extracurricular activities. Specifically, male students who took care of a relative were more likely than those without that responsibility to miss out on activities because they could not afford them (16% vs. 7%), while female students were more likely to miss out on activities because they were too busy (60% vs. 49% of females without caretaking responsibilities).

## Transportation

Students were asked about the method of transport they usually used to get to school. Forty percent (45% of males vs. 34% of females) used active means, including walking, biking, or skateboarding. Fifty percent (43% males vs. 58% females) got to school by car, and 37% took a bus or other public transit. Two percent of students usually hitchhiked to school.

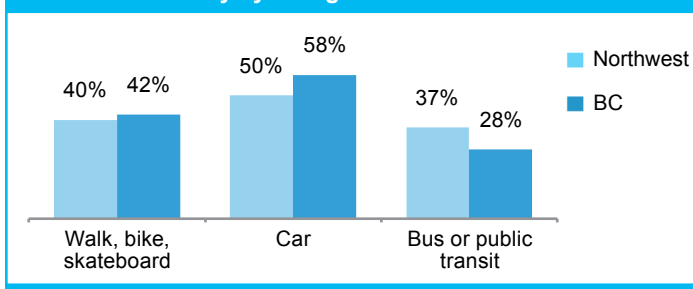
Youth who were dependent on transit to get to school were more likely to have missed out on extracurricular activities because they could not get there or home (19% vs. 10% of youth who did not use transit to get to school).

When asked about transportation in general, 56% of Northwest youth used public transit, which was below the provincial rate of 73%.

Seven percent of students had hitchhiked somewhere in the past month, which was above the 3% reported provincially. Males and females were equally likely to have hitchhiked, unlike provincially where the percentage was higher among males.

Thirty percent of Northwest youth held some sort of driver's licence, including 11% who had a novice licence.

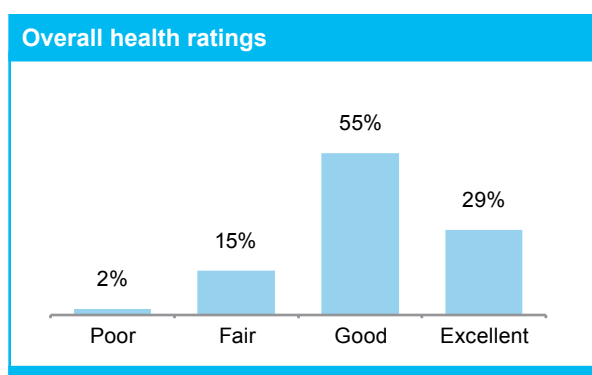
Most common ways youth got to school



Note: The difference between local students and those throughout BC who usually got to school by walking, biking, or skateboarding was not statistically significant.

# Physical health

Consistent with provincial findings, most students rated their health as good or excellent. Males were more likely than females to rate their health this way (87% vs. 79%).



Note: Percentages do not equal 100% due to rounding.

## Health conditions & disabilities

Thirty-two percent of male and female students had at least one health condition or disability. Among males, the local percentage was higher than the provincial rate of 22%.

There were no gender differences in the various types of health conditions and disabilities which youth reported, except females were more than twice as likely to report having a mental health condition (18% vs. 8% of males). These percentages rose when students were asked about specific conditions such as Depression and Anxiety Disorder (see page 16 for more details).

Among youth with a health condition or disability, 42% (34% of males vs. 47% of females) had a condition that sometimes prevented them from doing things their peers could do, and 7% had a condition that always prevented them from doing things.

Youth with a health condition or disability	
Mental or emotional health condition	13%
Long term or chronic condition (e.g., diabetes or asthma)	11%
Learning disability	6%
Behavioural condition	5%
Sensory disability	5%
Allergies severe enough to require an epinephrine injection	3%
A physical disability	1%

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.



I try not to let my asthma prevent me from doing things like running, sports.”

## Foregone medical care

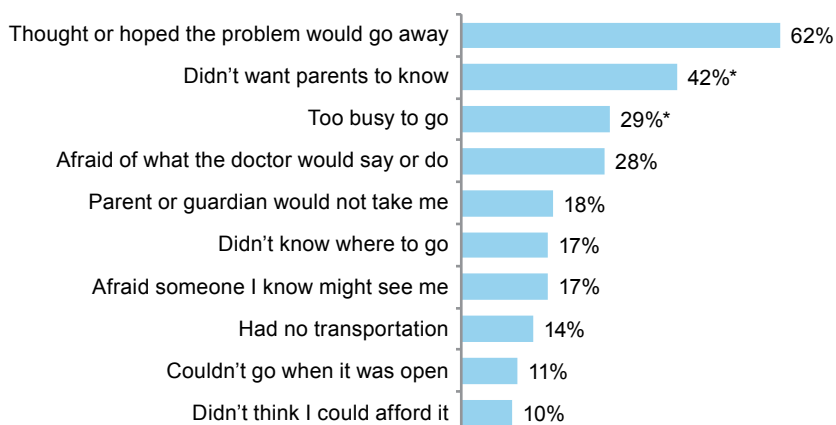
In the past year, 10% of students did not get medical help when they thought they needed it, which was similar to the provincial percentage.

Among students who did not access needed medical care, the most common reasons for not doing so were thinking or hoping the problem would go away and not wanting their parents to know. Females were more likely than males to have not accessed care because they were afraid of what the doctor would say or do and because they did not know where to go.

## Dental visits

Similar to the picture across the province, 85% of local students had visited the dentist in the past 12 months, while 4% had last visited more than 24 months ago, and 2% had never been to the dentist. Also comparable to the provincial picture, 10% of Northwest students reported that their last visit to the dentist had been for pain.

**Most common reasons students missed out on needed medical help in the past year (among those who felt they needed help)**



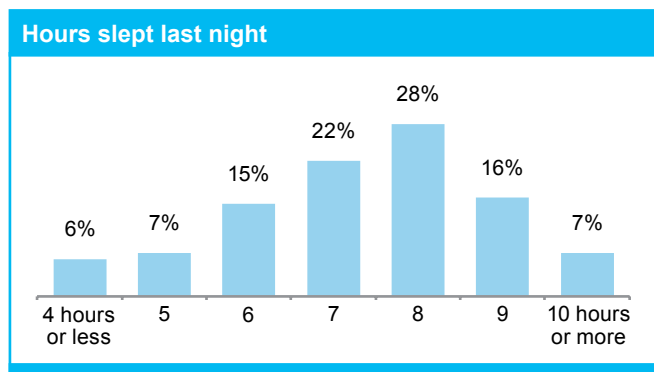
\* The percentage should be interpreted with caution as the standard error was relatively high but still within a releasable range.

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

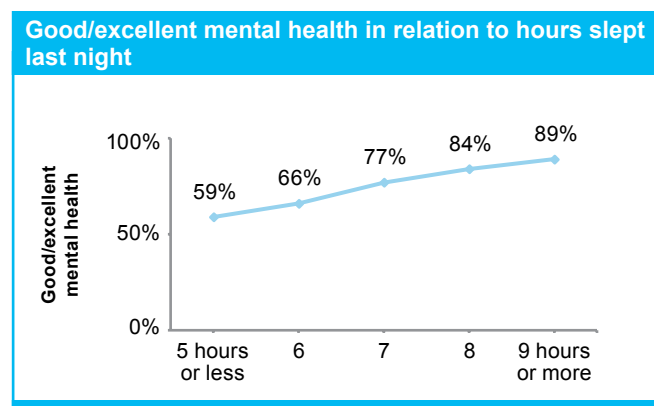


# Sleep

The National Sleep Foundation recommends that adolescents get between 8.5 and 9.25 hours of sleep each night. In the Northwest, 51% of students slept for eight hours or more, while 6% slept for four hours or less. Rates were similar between males and females.



Note: Percentages do not equal 100% due to rounding.



Note: Not all differences were statistically significant.

Comparable to the provincial picture, 83% of males and 89% of females were doing something such as homework or using their cellphone after the time they were expected to be asleep. For example, 40% of local students (34% of males vs. 46% of females) were doing homework during this time.

Some students were at particular risk for not getting enough sleep. For example, 33% of students who had been physically or sexually abused slept eight or more hours the night before taking the survey, compared to 57% of students who had not experienced abuse.

The more hours of sleep students got, the more likely they were to rate their mental health as good or excellent and to report other signs of positive mental health. This was true for all youth. For example, youth who had been physically or sexually abused who slept for at least eight hours were more likely to feel good about their abilities than those who slept less than eight hours (81% vs. 61%).

Similarly, Northwest students with a mental or emotional health condition who slept for eight or more hours were more likely than those who slept fewer hours to feel good about themselves (56%\* vs. 26%).



I have multiple nightmares in the night and do not sleep too well.”





# Mental health

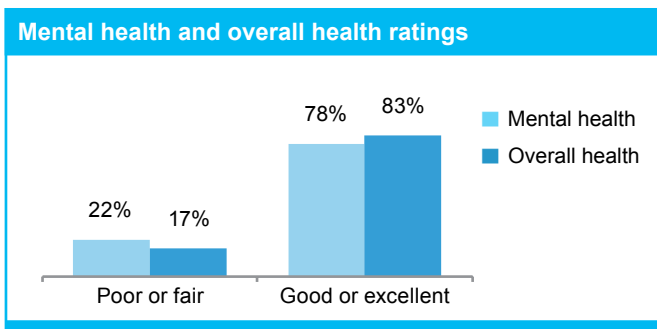
Most youth (78%) rated their mental health as good or excellent, which was comparable to the percentage across the province. As was the case in the province as a whole, males were more likely than females to rate their mental health as good or excellent (83% vs. 73%), whereas females were more likely to rate it as fair or poor (27% vs. 17% of males).

Consistent with provincial findings, students were less likely to rate their mental health as good or excellent than their overall health.

The majority of students felt good about themselves (89% of males vs. 65% of females) and felt they were as competent as most of their peers (89% males vs. 77% females).

Most students reported excelling in at least one area, such as sports, school, the arts, or relationships. As with self-confidence, males were more likely than females to indicate they were really good at something (80% vs. 69%).

Males were also more likely than females to feel happy and to feel calm and at peace most or all of the time in the past month.



I am happy to be alive—  
happy and well.”

## Mental health conditions

Students were asked about specific mental health conditions. As was the case provincially, females were more likely than males to have at least one condition (29% vs. 23%). They were also more likely to have multiple conditions (14% vs. 6% of males).

Youth most commonly reported having Depression (14%), Anxiety Disorder (10%), Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD; 7%), and/or an addiction to alcohol or other drugs (5%). Females were more likely to have Anxiety Disorder or Depression, whereas males were more likely to report ADHD.

Local male and female students were more likely than those across the province to have at least one condition (26% vs. 19% provincially). In terms of specific conditions, local students were more likely than those throughout BC to report an addiction to alcohol or other drugs (5% vs. 2%), and local females were more likely than females across BC to report Depression (20% vs. 13%).

Most commonly reported conditions		
	Males	Females
Depression	9%	20%
Anxiety Disorder/ Panic Attacks	5%	16%
ADHD	10%	4%

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

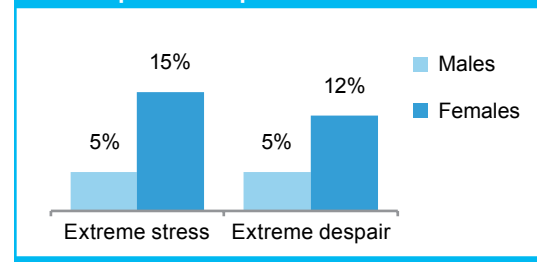
## Stress & despair

Most students (79%) reported feeling at least some stress in the past month. Females were three times as likely as males to experience extreme stress that prevented them from functioning properly.

Students were also asked the extent to which they felt so sad, discouraged, or hopeless that they wondered if anything was worthwhile. Fifty-one percent reported feeling some level of despair in the past month.

As was the case with extreme stress, percentages of students reporting extreme despair were comparable to those in the province as a whole.

Students who experienced extreme stress and despair in the past month



There's a whole other world out there of depressed kids, but nobody notices us. Nobody cares."

## Self-harm

Ten percent of males and 29% of females reported cutting or injuring themselves on purpose without trying to kill themselves in the past year. Youth in the Northwest were more likely than their peers across BC to have self-harmed (19% vs. 15%).

## Suicide

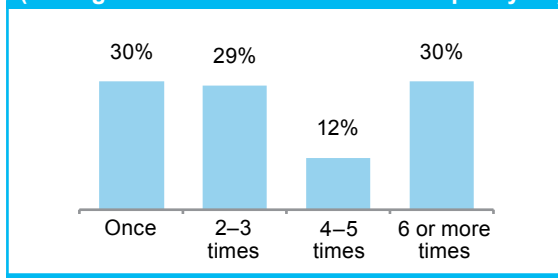
Females were more likely than males to have seriously thought about killing themselves and to have attempted suicide in the past year.

The percentage of local males who attempted suicide was higher than that for males across BC (7% vs. 3%), while there was no difference among females.

A known risk factor for attempting suicide is having a family member or close friend attempt or die by suicide. Twenty-two percent of students reported that a family member had tried to kill themselves at some point (8% in the past year), and 27% reported that a close friend had attempted suicide (16% in the past year).

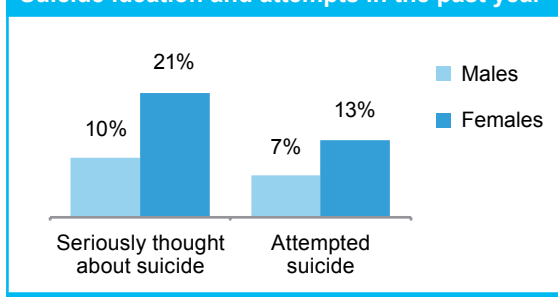
Students who indicated that both a friend and a family member had attempted suicide were more likely to have attempted suicide themselves in the past year than students who had either a friend or family member attempt suicide and to students who had neither experience.

Number of times students self-harmed  
(among those who self-harmed in the past year)

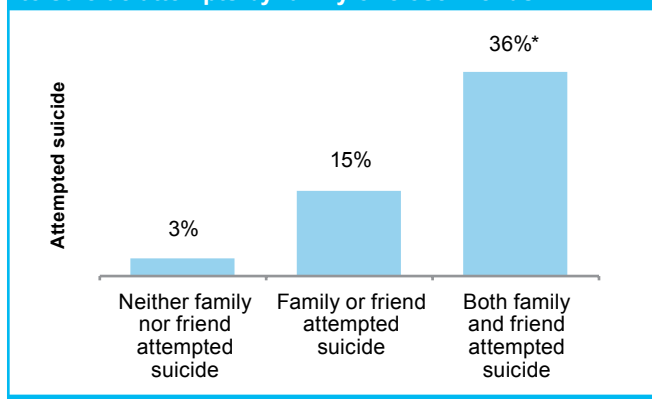


Note: Percentages do not equal 100% due to rounding.

Suicide ideation and attempts in the past year



Youth who attempted suicide in the past year in relation to suicide attempts by family or close friends



\* The percentage should be interpreted with caution as the standard error was relatively high but still within a releasable range.



I'm not suicidal anymore and I haven't cut for 9 months."

## Hope for the future

Students were asked where they saw themselves in five years. Most envisioned positive circumstances, including having a job or career, being in school, having a home of their own, having a family, and/or being engaged in their community.

A small minority saw negative circumstances in their future, including being in prison (2%), homeless (1%), or dead (2%).

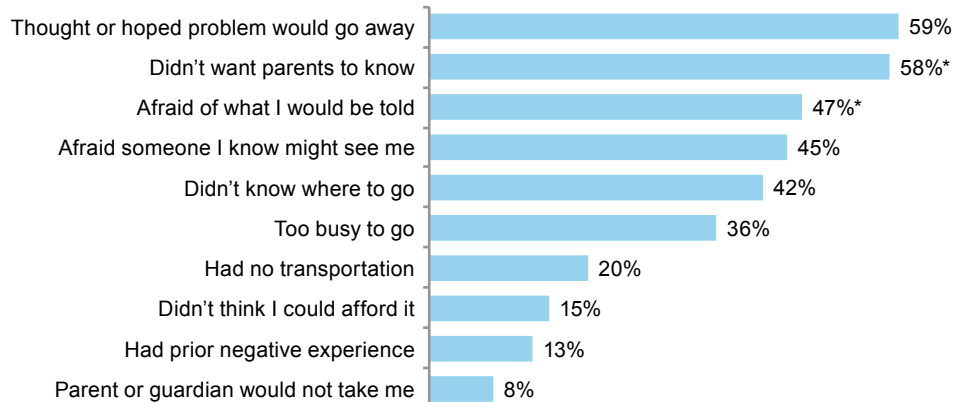
Local students were less likely than those across the province to see themselves in school (37% vs. 52%), and were more likely to envision having a home of their own (35% vs. 26%) and having a family (18% vs. 13%) in five years. They were also more likely to indicate not knowing what the future held for them (17% vs. 13% provincially).

## Foregoing mental health services

In the past year, 11% of Northwest students (5% of males vs. 17% of females) reported not accessing mental health services when they thought they needed to. These rates were the same as those in the province as a whole.

The most common reasons for students not accessing needed mental health services included thinking or hoping the problem would go away, not wanting their parents to know, and feeling fearful of what they would be told.

**Most common reasons for not accessing mental health services in the past year  
(among students who felt they needed services)**



\* The percentage should be interpreted with caution as the standard error was relatively high but still within a releasable range.

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

# Injuries & injury prevention

In the past year, 32% of males and 25% of females were injured seriously enough to require medical attention. These percentages were similar to the provincial rates.

Youth were most commonly injured playing or training for sports or other recreational activities (47%). Seven percent of injuries happened when riding a bicycle, 6% when walking or running outside, 5% when fighting with another person, and 5% when snowboarding or skiing.

Nine percent of youth who had been injured reported that they had been using a cell-phone or other portable electronic device when the injury happened.

## Concussions

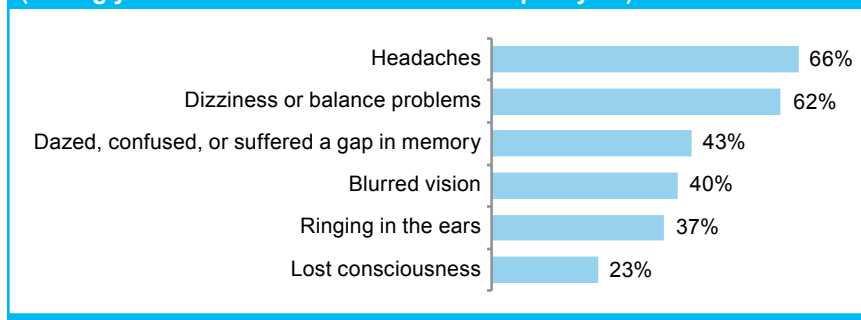
Nineteen percent of students (23% of males vs. 16% of females) had a concussion in the past year. Fourteen percent had one concussion, 3% had two, and 2% had three or more. The most common symptoms experienced were headaches and dizziness or balance problems.

Mirroring what was seen provincially, 19% of Northwest youth who had experienced a concussion in the past year had not accessed needed medical help.

## Def.

A **CONCUSSION** was defined in the survey as a head injury where youth lost consciousness, were dazed, confused, or suffered from a gap in their memory. ➔

**Concussion symptoms experienced**  
(among youth who had a concussion in the past year)



Note: Youth could choose more than one response.



Yeah, gotten injured and I'm on crutches, but still okay."

13%

of youth had been a passenger in a vehicle with a driver who had been drinking or using marijuana in the past month.

---

## Injury prevention

Sixty-six percent of male and female youth always wore their seat belt when riding in a motor vehicle, which was below the provincial rate of 74%. Similar to the province, 1% never wore a seat belt.

Local youth took injury prevention more seriously in some activities over others. For example, 62% always wore a helmet when snowboarding or skiing, while 24% always wore one when riding a bike, and 16% always wore one when on a skateboard or roller-skating.

Similar to youth across the province, 7% of local students who had tried alcohol had ever driven a car after drinking (10% of males vs. 5% of females). It was more common for local youth to have driven after using marijuana than after alcohol, which 15% of marijuana users had ever done and 8% had done in the past month.

Thirty-one percent of Northwest students had been a passenger in a vehicle with a driver who had been drinking or using marijuana.

Forty-two percent\* of youth who had driven after using alcohol or marijuana in the past month did not have a driver's licence.



# Nutrition

Eighty-nine percent of youth reported eating fruit or vegetables on the day before taking the survey, which was below the provincial rate of 94%.

Canada's Food Guide recommends that males aged 14–18 should eat eight servings of fruit and vegetables daily and females should eat seven servings, and youth aged 13 and younger need six servings. However, 37% of local students had fruit or vegetables only once or twice on the day before taking the survey, which was consistent with students across the province.

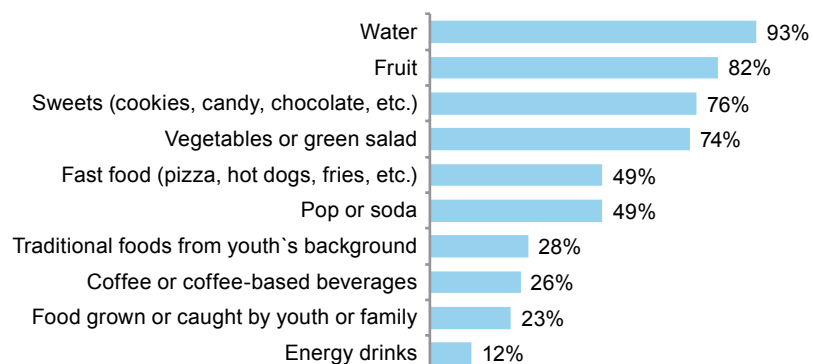
There were some gender differences in what youth consumed yesterday. Males were more likely to have consumed pop or soda (58% vs. 40%), fast food (55% vs. 42%), traditional foods from their background (33% vs. 23%), and energy drinks (15% vs. 9%), whereas females were more likely to have eaten fruit (85% vs. 80%).

In addition to being less likely to eat fruit and vegetables than their peers across the province, local youth were more likely to have had fast food (49% vs. 41% of youth across BC), pop or soda (49% vs. 35%), and energy drinks (12% vs. 6%). They were also more likely to have eaten food grown or caught by them or their family (23% vs. 12%).

Youth who reported eating fruit or vegetables three or more times on the day before taking the survey were more likely to report good or excellent mental health (85% vs. 71% who ate them less often) and to feel happy most or all of the time in the past month (74% vs. 62%).

Students classified as obese who ate three or more servings of fruit or vegetables yesterday were more likely than those in the same weight category who had fewer servings to rate their general health as good or excellent (72%\* vs. 57%\*).

## What youth ate and drank yesterday



It would be a cool idea if there was a place available for students to have healthy meal planning.”

## Breakfast

Fifteen percent of Northwest students reported never eating breakfast on school days. Although this was consistent with the provincial rate, the percentage who always ate breakfast was lower than that seen across BC (47% vs. 54%).

Female students were more likely to never eat breakfast (18% vs. 11% males), and male students were more likely to always eat breakfast (55% vs. 40% of females).

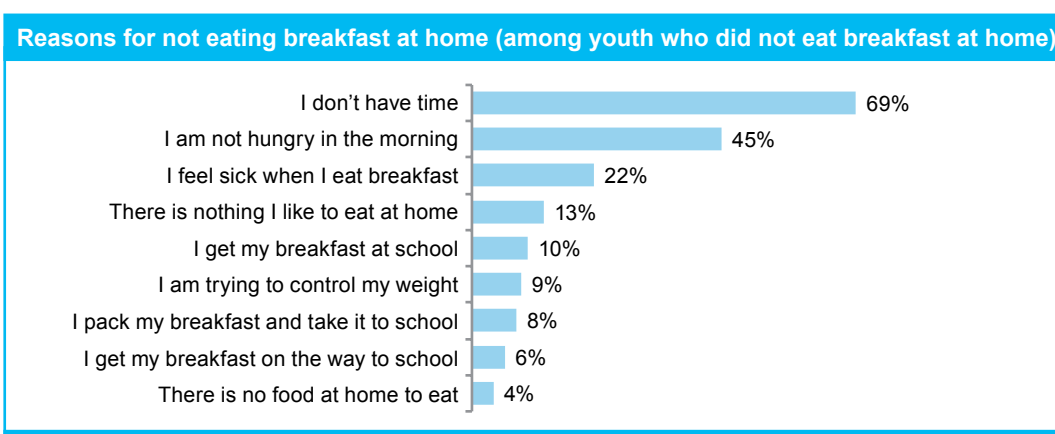
Among youth who did not eat breakfast at home, the reasons were generally similar to those seen provincially. The only difference was that 10% of male and female students in the Northwest reported getting their breakfast at school compared to 6% across BC. Females were more likely than males to report not eating breakfast because they did not have time (74% vs. 63%), they felt sick when they ate breakfast (31% vs. 10%), they packed their breakfast and took it to school, or because they were trying to control their weight.

Youth who always ate breakfast on school days were more likely than those who ate breakfast less often to report good or excellent mental health (87% vs. 71%), better nutrition (such as eating fruit or vegetables three or more times yesterday; 62% vs. 44%), and sleeping for eight or more hours the previous night (66% vs. 38%).

## Going to bed hungry

Eighty-nine percent of youth in the Northwest never went to bed hungry because there was insufficient money for food at home, which was below the provincial rate of 93%. Two percent went to bed hungry often or always, compared to 1% across BC.

Youth who indicated going to bed hungry at least sometimes were more likely to also report not having any food at home to eat for breakfast.



Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

## Def.

Youth who **WENT TO BED HUNGRY** refers to youth who went to bed hungry because there was not enough money for food at home. ➔



# Body weight & body image

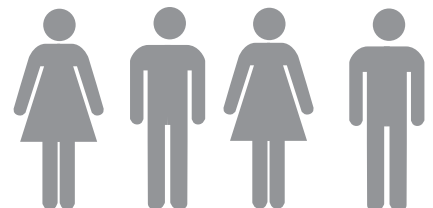
## Body weight

Students' body mass index (BMI) was calculated from their self-reported height and weight measurements. According to their BMI, 67% of Northwest youth were a healthy weight for their age and gender, while 2% were underweight, 19% overweight, and 13% were obese. Females were more likely than males to be a healthy weight (71% vs. 63%), but there were no other gender differences.

Compared to the province as a whole, youth in this region were less likely to be a healthy weight and more likely to be overweight or obese.

BMI weight categories		
	Northwest	BC
Underweight	2%	3%
Healthy weight	67%	76%
Overweight	18%	15%
Obese	13%	6%

Note: The difference between Northwest and BC in being underweight was not statistically significant.

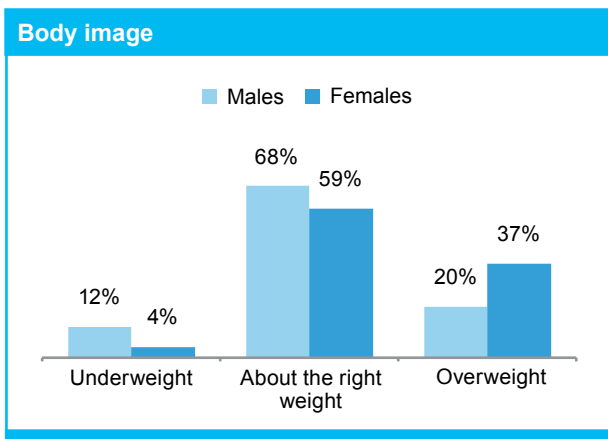


## Body image

Students were also asked how they saw themselves. Sixty-four percent of youth felt they were about the right weight, whereas 8% thought they were underweight, and the remaining 28% felt they were overweight.

Healthy weight females were nearly five times as likely as healthy weight males to think they were overweight (24% vs. 5%).

While 31% of healthy weight males were trying to gain weight (vs. 6% of healthy weight females), over half (51%) of healthy weight females were trying to lose weight (vs. 14% of healthy weight males).



## Eating behaviours

Twenty percent of males and 40% of females had binge eaten in the past year, with 9% having done so on a weekly basis. Local males were twice as likely as those across BC to report binge eating weekly (8% vs. 4%), while there was no difference among females.

Similar to the province, 10% of youth (7% of males vs. 13% of females) had vomited on purpose after eating (purged) in the past year, with 3% doing this weekly.

Youth who reported poorer mental health were more likely to binge eat. For example, 15% of youth who rated their mental health as poor or fair had binge eaten on a weekly basis in the past year, compared to 7% with good or excellent mental health. Furthermore, 21%\* of students who did not feel happy during the past month binge ate on a weekly basis compared to 6% of students who felt happy most or all of the time. Similar relationships were found between mental health and engaging in purging behaviour.



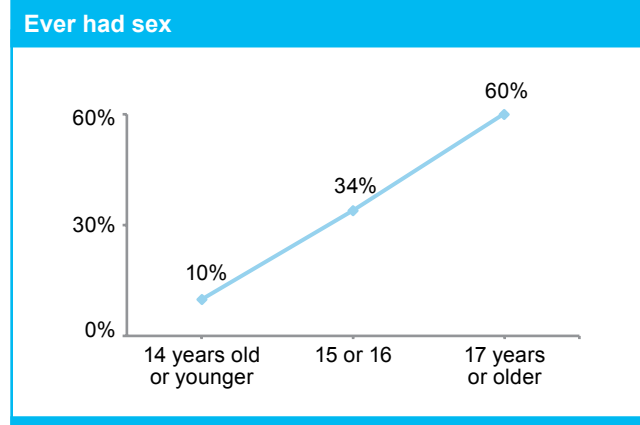
Sometimes I hate my body  
and other days I love it.”

# Sexual behaviour

## Oral sex

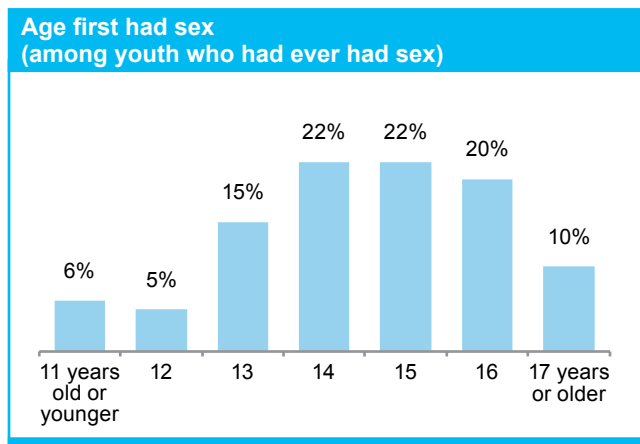
Thirty-one percent of students reported ever having oral sex, which was higher than the rate seen in the province as a whole (23%). Twenty-five percent of youth indicated they had received oral sex, with similar percentages for males and females. However, females were more likely to have given oral sex (29% vs. 16% of males).

The rate of ever having oral sex generally increased with age.



## CONDOM USE

Thirty percent of students who had oral sex reported that they or their partner had used a condom or other barrier the last time they had oral sex, which was higher than seen provincially (17%). Males and females in this region were equally likely to use a condom the last time they had oral sex.



## Sex (excluding oral sex)

Thirty-two percent of local male and female students indicated ever having sex, other than oral sex or masturbation, which was higher than the provincial rate of 19%. Consistent with the pattern for oral sex, older students were more likely than younger ones to have had sex.

## AGE YOUTH FIRST HAD SEX

Similar to the provincial picture, youth who ever had sex most commonly reported first doing so at age 14 or 15. Northwest students were more likely than those across BC to have first had sex before the age of 15 (47% vs. 34%).

Note: Sex refers to sex other than oral sex or masturbation.

## PARTNERS

Among students who ever had sex, 44% had one sexual partner during the past year. Twenty-four percent had two partners during this time, while a similar percentage (23%) had three or more partners, and 9% had not had sex. These rates were comparable to those found provincially.

Eighty-five percent of youth who ever had sex reported having opposite gender partners exclusively in the past year, and for 7% of students, the last time they had sex was with a same sex partner.

## SUBSTANCE USE

Comparable to the province as a whole, 27% of male and female students who had ever had sex reported using alcohol or other substances before they had sex the last time.

## CONDOM USE

Comparable to the provincial rate, 69% of students who ever had sex reported that they or their partner had used a condom or other latex barrier the last time they had sex, with similar rates for males and females.

## CONTRACEPTION

When students were asked about what efforts they or their partner made to prevent pregnancy the last time they had sex, they most commonly reported using condoms, birth control pills, and withdrawal (which is not a reliable method of birth control).

Similar to the provincial picture, 5% of Northwest students indicated they did not try to prevent pregnancy the last time they had sex.

## Sexually transmitted infections

Overall, 2% of students had been told by a doctor or nurse at some point that they had a sexually transmitted infection (STI). The rate was 4% among students who ever had sex (including oral sex), which was similar to the provincial rate.

## Pregnancy

Among all local students, 3% reported ever being pregnant or causing a pregnancy, which was higher than the provincial rate (1%).

### Efforts made to prevent pregnancy during last time students had sex (among students who ever had sex)

Condoms	60%
Birth control pills	46%
Withdrawal	34%
Emergency contraception	7%
Other method prescribed by doctor or nurse (e.g., IUD, patch, ring)	6%
Depo Provera	4%
Not sure	6%

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

Note: Sex refers to sex other than oral sex or masturbation.

# Tobacco use

Thirty-two percent of youth had ever tried smoking, which was higher than the provincial rate of 21%. Local males and females were equally likely to have smoked.

Male and female students started smoking at an earlier age than their peers across the province. Among those who had ever smoked, 32% first did so at age 12 or younger (compared to 21% provincially), while 37% waited until they were 15 years old or older (compared to 45% provincially).

Similar to the provincial picture, 48% of those who had tried smoking had smoked in the past month, and 11% smoked every day.

Youth who had smoked used a variety of tobacco products in the past month. Fifty-four percent had smoked cigarettes, 40% had smoked cigars or cigarillos (50% of males vs. 29% of females), 16% had used a hookah, and 21% had used electronic cigarettes with nicotine (26% of males vs. 15% of females).

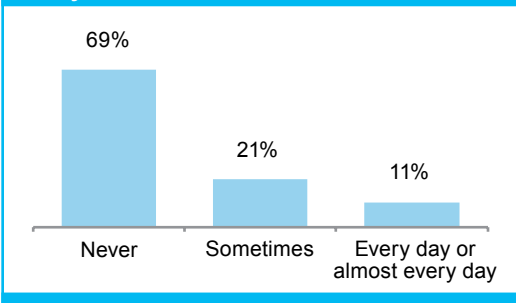
Thirteen percent of males reported using chewing tobacco in the past 30 days, whereas the percentage of females who did so was unreleasable.

Among youth who had ever smoked, 34% had successfully quit smoking in the past year (compared to 23% provincially), and 17% had tried to quit but had started again. In the past month, 9% of youth who smoked had used a product to help them stop smoking.

## Exposure to second-hand smoke

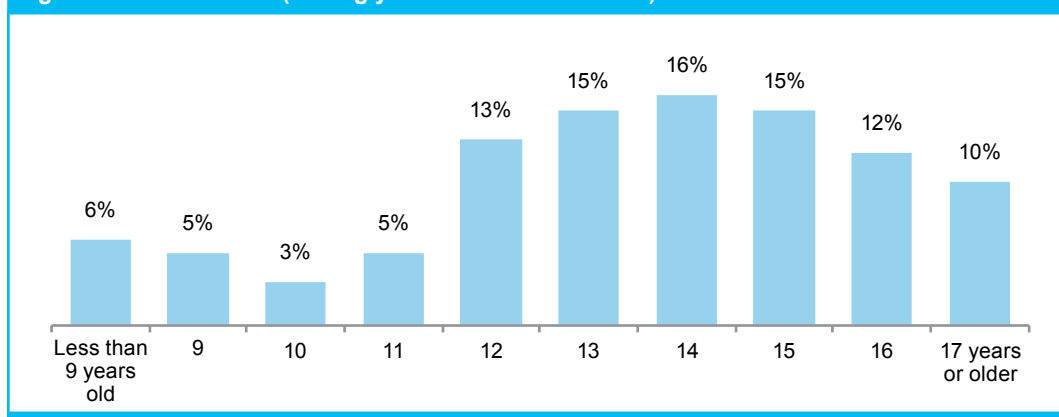
Being exposed to smoking is considered to be a risk factor for starting to smoke. Almost one in three local students (31%) were exposed to tobacco smoke inside their home or family vehicle at least sometimes, which was higher than the provincial rate of 21%.

**Exposed to second-hand smoke in home or family vehicle**



Note: Percentages do not equal 100% due to rounding.

**Age first tried tobacco (among youth who ever smoked)**



# Alcohol, marijuana, & other drug use

## Alcohol

Students in the Northwest were more likely to have tried alcohol than their peers across the province (57% vs. 45%). Males and females were equally likely to have tried alcohol, which reflected the provincial picture.

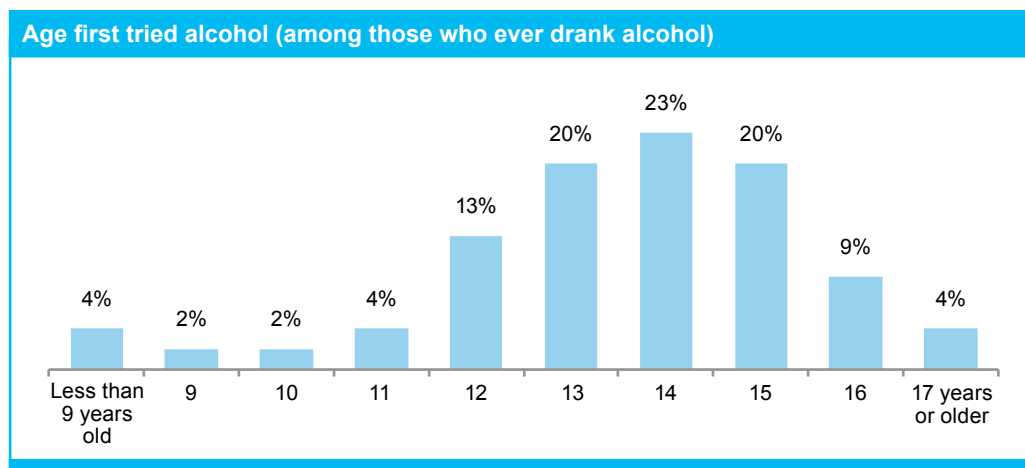
The age at which young people had their first drink of alcohol was generally consistent with provincial findings. Among Northwest youth who had tried alcohol, 67% first drank before turning 15 years old.

Forty-seven percent of male and female youth who had tried alcohol had five or more drinks on at least one occasion in the past month, which was higher than the percentage across the province (39%).

Overall, 31% of youth drank last Saturday. Specifically, 25% had liquor, 20% had coolers, 18% had beer, and 5% had wine. Females were more likely to have drunk coolers (25% vs. 15% of males), while males were more likely to have drunk beer (21% vs. 15% of females).

Among youth who drank last Saturday, 71% had mixed different types of alcohol, with 36% mixing three or four different types, and 18% mixing alcohol with energy drinks.

The majority of youth who drank last Saturday reported binge drinking: 76% of females had four or more drinks and 75% of males had five or more drinks. These percentages were similar to provincial rates.



Note: Percentages do not equal 100% due to rounding.

“

I don't drink or do drugs.”

## Marijuana

Students in the Northwest were more likely to have ever tried marijuana than youth across BC (42% vs. 26%), and to start using at an earlier age.

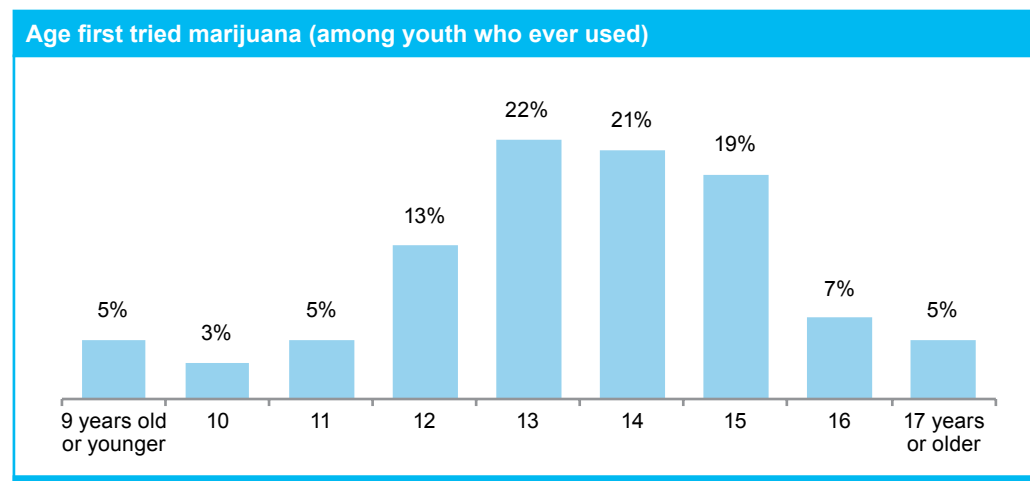
Among youth who had tried marijuana, 68% had first done so before their 15th birthday, compared to 59% provincially.

Comparable to the provincial picture, 60% of those who ever tried marijuana used it in the past month. Twenty-five percent used on six or more days, including 12% who used it on all 30 days (16% of males vs. 7% of females).

On the Saturday before taking the survey, 15% of local students used marijuana and 11% used both alcohol and marijuana (13% of males vs. 8% of females).

Among youth who had tried marijuana, their most common source was a youth outside their family (71%). Youth also got marijuana from an adult outside their family (26%), a youth in their family (10%), and from an adult inside their family (6%).

Local youth were less likely than those in the province overall to get their marijuana from a youth outside their family and more likely to get it from an adult outside their family.



I smoke marijuana every day, and I am dependent on it.”

## Substances other than alcohol & marijuana

Youth in the Northwest had tried a variety of substances other than alcohol and marijuana, including prescription pills without a doctor's consent (13%), mushrooms (9%), ecstasy/MDMA (6%), hallucinogens (6%), cocaine (5%), inhalants (3%), amphetamines (2%), crystal meth (2%), heroin (2%), steroids without a doctor's prescription (2%), and ketamine and GHB (1%). Males were more likely than females to have used mushrooms (11% vs. 6%) and hallucinogens (8% vs. 4%).

The rates of trying most substances were similar to the province overall, but local males were more likely to have tried mushrooms than males provincially (11% vs. 6%).

## Consequences of substance use

Fifty-seven percent of youth who had used alcohol or other substances reported negative consequences in the past year.

Females were more likely to report that they were told they had done something they could not remember (45% vs. 34% of males), got injured (20% vs. 11%), or had sex when they did not want to (12% vs. 5%).

In the past year, a total of 8% of students were either told or felt that they needed help for their substance use. Specifically, 4% needed help for their alcohol use, 5% for their marijuana use, and 2% for their other drug use.

Most common consequences of substance use in the past year (among youth who had used alcohol or other substances during that time)	
Was told I did something I couldn't remember	40%
Passed out	31%
Got injured	16%
Argued with family members	16%
School work or grades changed	12%
Got in trouble with police	9%
Lost friends or broke up with a girlfriend or boyfriend	9%
Had sex when I didn't want to	9%
Got into a physical fight	8%
Damaged property	6%
Overdosed	4%

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

Note: Not all response options are listed because the percentage estimates were not releasable due to risk of deductive disclosure.



## Reported reasons for using

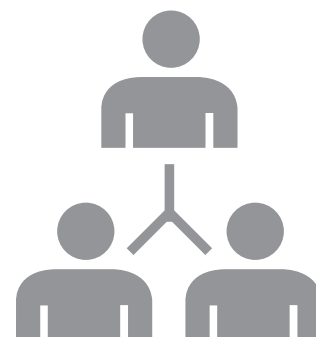
For the first time, the survey asked students who had used alcohol or other drugs what their reason for doing so was the last time they used. The most common reasons were wanting to have fun, wanting to experiment, and because their friends were doing it.

Females were more likely to have used substances because they wanted to have fun (70% vs. 56% of males) or because they felt down or sad (25% vs. 12%). Males, on the other hand, were more likely than females to indicate having used substances to help them focus.

Most common reasons for using substances the last time (among youth who ever used alcohol or other drugs)	
I wanted to have fun	64%
I wanted to try it/experiment	28%
My friends were doing it	28%
Because of stress	25%
I felt down or sad	19%
I felt like there was nothing else to do	15%
To manage physical pain	8%
I was pressured into doing it	6%
I thought it would help me focus	5%
Because of an addiction	4%
I didn't mean to do it	2%
Other	17%

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

Note: Not all response options are listed because the percentage estimates were not releasable due to risk of deductive disclosure.



# School

## School connectedness

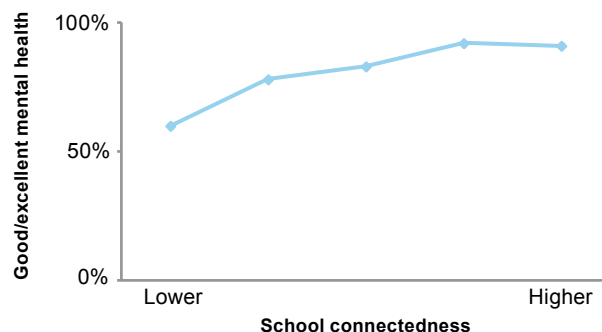
School connectedness was measured using a scale that included students' feelings about school and their school community.

More than half of students felt like they were a part of their school (52%), were happy to be at school (53%), and felt safe there (72%). The majority also felt that they were treated fairly by school staff (66%), got along with their teachers (62%), and their teachers cared about them (58%). In addition, half of students (50%) felt that school staff other than teachers cared about them.

The more connected students felt to their school, the better their mental health ratings. School connectedness also had positive associations for certain groups of youth. For example, youth who had been teased, excluded, and/or assaulted in the past year were more likely to have only positive aspirations for the future if they felt more connected to their school.



Good/excellent mental health by school connectedness



## School safety

Male and female students felt equally safe in most areas of their school except that males were more likely to feel safe in the washrooms (90% vs. 83% of females), the cafeteria (90% vs. 85%), and getting to and from school (90% vs. 86%).

In terms of overall feelings of safety at school, 72% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt safe at school (compared to 78% across the province).

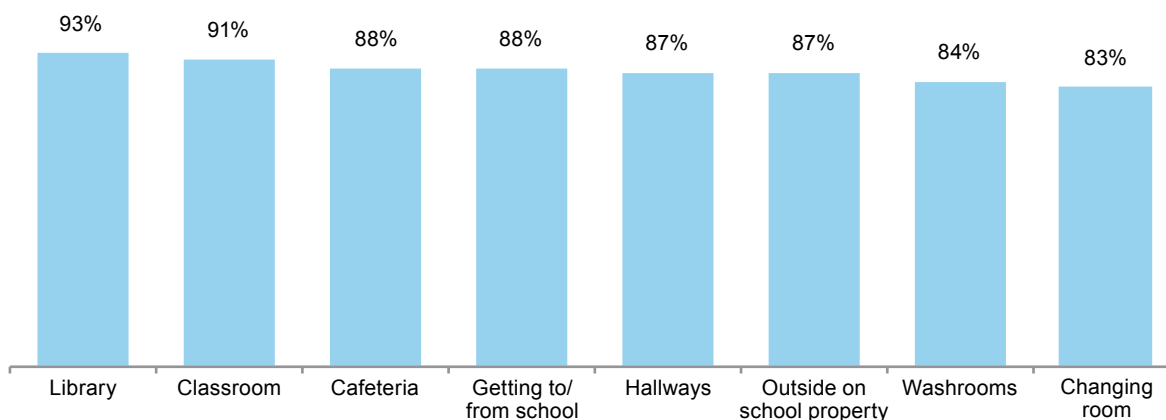
Youth who felt safe at school were more likely than those who did not feel this way to have post-secondary plans and to report good or excellent mental health. They were less likely than their peers who did not feel safe to have missed school for any reason in the past month.

## Weapon carrying

Six percent of students in the Northwest (10% of males vs. 3% of females) carried a weapon, such as a knife or bat, to school in the past month. This was similar to the provincial picture.

Two percent of students reported that they always carried a weapon at school, with males more likely than females to have done so.

Locations where students always or usually felt safe at school



## School absences

Overall, 68% of students (65% of males vs. 71% of females) in the Northwest had missed classes on at least one day in the past month. Illness was the most common reason for missing school.

Females were more likely than males to have missed school due to illness (55% vs. 42%) and because they had been bullied (7% vs. 3%). Males were more likely than females to have missed school because they had to work (9% vs. 4%). Males and females were equally likely to have missed school for other reasons, including skipping (30%) and family responsibilities (22%).

Older students were generally more likely than younger ones to have skipped school. For example, 55%\* of students aged 18 or older had skipped school in the past month, compared to 12% of those aged 13 or younger. In addition, students aged 18 or older were generally more likely than their younger peers to have missed school due to work.

## Educational aspirations

As seen provincially, 1% of students did not expect to complete high school. Local youth were less likely to anticipate continuing their education beyond high school, such as through university, college, or trade school (77% vs. 86% across BC). However, local students were more likely to have not thought about their school plans (10% vs. 6%) or to not know what their school plans were (6% vs. 4%).

Similar to the provincial picture, local males were less likely than females to have post-secondary plans (74% vs. 80%).

Some students were less likely to expect to continue their education beyond high school, including students who had been physically and/or sexually abused (69% had post-secondary plans compared to 80% who had not been abused).

Students who were doing weekly volunteer work in their community were more likely to anticipate continuing their education beyond high school (83% vs. 73% of students who did not volunteer).



# Bullying & discrimination

The percentages of students who reported being teased, socially excluded, and assaulted were similar to those seen across the province.

## In-person bullying

Students were asked about a range of bullying experiences they may have had in the past year, either as the perpetrator or victim. Youth were asked specifically about their bullying experiences with other youth at school or on the way to or from school. (Cyberbullying is discussed on page 44 in the section about technology use.)

### TEASING

In the past year, 36% of students (27% of males vs. 46% of females) had been teased to the point where they felt bad or extremely uncomfortable. Thirteen percent of students (10% of males vs. 16% of females) experienced teasing on three or more occasions in the past year.

For both males and females, rates of being teased peaked at 13 years old.

### SOCIAL EXCLUSION

In the past year, 35% of students (25% of males vs. 45% of females) reported being socially excluded at least once, and 10% were excluded three or more times (8% of males vs. 12% of females).

Similar to being teased, 13 years old was the age that students most frequently reported being excluded.

### ASSAULT

In the past year, 9% of students reported being physically attacked or assaulted at least once, and 2% had this experience three or more times.



[Bullies] make me feel worthless. I am not the only one who feels this way.”

The more types of bullying youth experienced, the more likely they were to also bully others.

### Impacts of bullying

Youth who were teased, excluded, or assaulted in the past year were more likely to report missing school in the past month (71% vs. 66% who had not experienced any of these types of bullying).

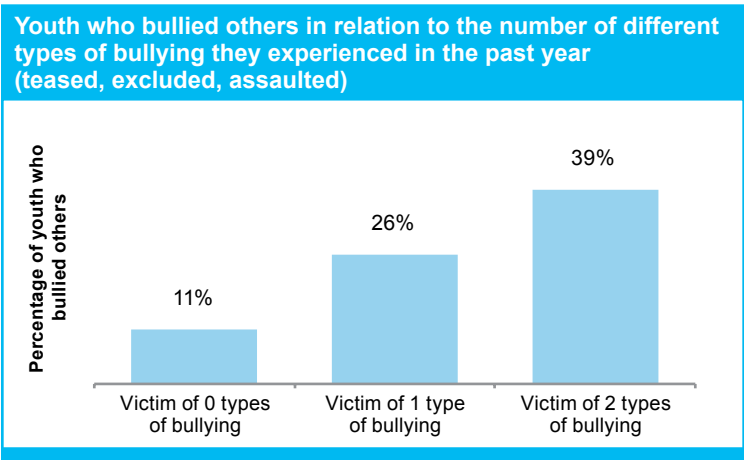
Nine percent of youth (5% of males vs. 12% of females) reported that they had not participated in extracurricular activities (e.g., sports, dance, art, or clubs) because they were worried about being bullied.

Missing out on activities for fear of being bullied was particularly evident among those who had already been bullied. For example, 27% of youth who had been assaulted did not participate in activities because they were worried about bullying, compared to 7% who had not been assaulted. Similar results were found for youth who had been teased (21% vs. 2% who had not been teased) or socially excluded (16% vs. 4% who had not been excluded).

### Perpetrators

In the past year, 12% of local students reported they had teased another youth with the intention of making them feel bad or extremely uncomfortable. Additionally, 14% had socially excluded another youth, and 4% (5% of males vs. 2% of females) had physically attacked or assaulted another youth. These rates were consistent with the provincial picture.

Students who had been the victim of a particular type of bullying were more likely to perpetrate that same type of bullying. For example, 24% of students who had been teased in the past year teased others during this same time frame, compared to 6% who had not been teased. Similarly, students who had been excluded themselves were more likely to exclude others (21% vs. 10% who had not been excluded), and students who had been physically attacked or assaulted were more likely to assault others (20% vs. 2% of those who had not been assaulted).



## Discrimination

Youth identified a number of different discrimination experiences.

Females were more likely than males to report being discriminated against because of their physical appearance (28% vs. 14%), their gender or sex (9% vs. 3%), their age (16% vs. 6%), and being seen as different (21% vs. 14% of males).

In comparison to the provincial picture, a greater percentage of Northwest students felt discriminated against because of their race, ethnicity, or skin colour (15% vs. 11% provincially), as well as for being seen as different (17% vs. 13%). In addition, local females were more likely than their peers across BC to report being discriminated against because of their sexual orientation (7% vs. 4%) and their age (16% vs. 11%).

Perceived reasons for being discriminated against in the past year	
Physical appearance	21%
Being seen as different	17%
Race, ethnicity, or skin colour	15%
Age	11%
Sexual orientation (being or thought to be gay or lesbian)	7%
Gender/sex	6%
Income or family income	6%
A disability	4%

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.



# Physical abuse, sexual abuse, & sexual harassment

## Physical abuse

Consistent with the experiences of youth across the province, 16% of students in the Northwest (13% of males vs. 19% of females) had been physically abused at some point in their life.

## Sexual abuse

When youth were asked specifically if they had ever been sexually abused, 9% (4% of males vs. 15% of females) indicated they had. Youth were also asked about other forms of sexual abuse they might not have recognized as abuse. For example, 6% of students (3% of males vs. 9% of females) had been forced into sexual activity against their will by another youth and 3% by an adult. In addition, 3% were the younger of an illegal age pairing the first time they had sex (i.e., they had sex with a partner who was not close in age according to Canadian law).

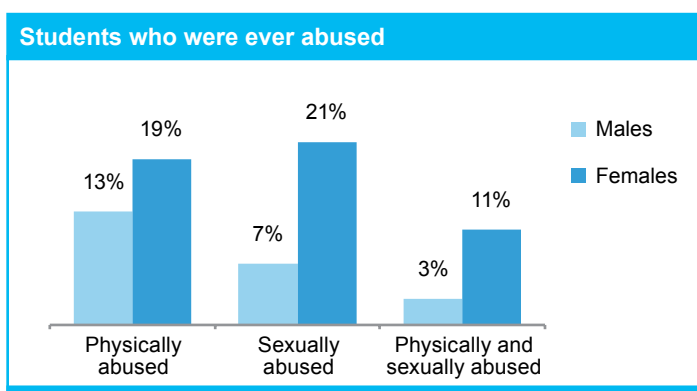
When all these forms of sexual abuse were considered, a total of 14% of students had been sexually abused. The local rate was higher than the provincial rate overall (9%) and for both males (7% vs. 4% provincially) and females (21% vs. 13% provincially).

## Sexual harassment

Thirty-four percent of males had experienced verbal sexual harassment in the past year (12% had been harassed three or more times). Half of female students had experienced verbal sexual harassment (including 19% who had been harassed three or more times).

Experiences of physical sexual harassment were less common. However, 14% of male students had been physically sexually harassed in the past year (including 4% who were harassed three or more times), and 29% of females had been harassed in the past year (including 6% who had experienced it three or more times).

Local rates of verbal and physical sexual harassment were comparable to those across the province.



Note: Sexual abuse included being forced into sexual activity by another youth or adult, or being the younger of an illegal age pairing the first time they had sex.

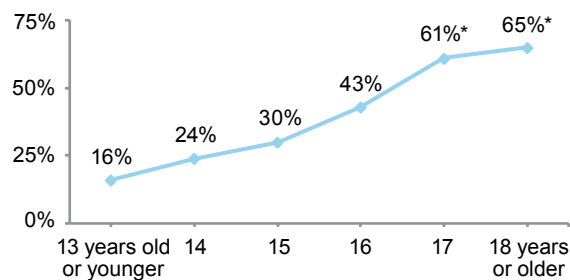


# Employment

Thirty-six percent of male and female students in the Northwest worked at a paid job during the school year. This was higher than the provincial rate (29%).

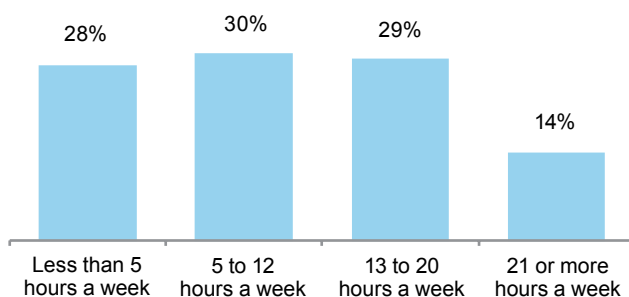
Fourteen percent of employed students in the Northwest worked 21 or more hours each week, compared to 6% of students across the province.

Students who worked at a paid job during the school year



\* The percentage should be interpreted with caution as the standard error was relatively high but still within a releasable range.

Hours spent working at a paid job  
(among youth who were employed)



Note: Percentages do not equal 100% due to rounding.

**5%** of Northwest students were employed 21 hours or more per week.

# Physical activity, sports, & leisure

## Physical activity

The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend that youth aged 12 to 17 do an hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day. Provincially, 17% of students exercised for an hour each day in the past week. The rate was similar in the Northwest, where 22% of males and 13% of females met these guidelines. Locally, male and female students were equally likely to have not exercised at all in the past week (9%).

Younger students were generally more likely than older ones to have met the physical activity guidelines.

Canadian Guidelines recommend that individuals aged 18 and older take part in 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each week. Similar to youth across BC, 69% of students aged 18 and older met these recommendations by participating in 60 minutes of exercise on at least three days in the past week.

Physical activity was associated with better health outcomes. For example, those who exercised daily during the past week were more likely to have slept for eight or more hours on the previous night (61% vs. 49% of students who exercised on fewer days).

Physical activity was also beneficial for those with challenges in their lives. For example, local youth who had been teased, excluded, and/or assaulted who exercised on at least three days in the past week were more likely than youth who had been bullied but exercised on fewer days to feel good about themselves (71% vs. 51%) and their skills and abilities (80% vs. 58%).

## Sports

During the past year, students were as likely as those throughout BC to have participated weekly in informal sports, such as road hockey, hiking, and skateboarding (60%). However, local students were less likely to have played weekly organized sports (48% vs. 55% of students across BC), and yoga, dance, or exercise classes (13% vs. 18%).

Similar to provincial results, males were more likely than females to have participated weekly in informal sports (68% vs. 51%) and organized sports (53% vs. 44%), while females were more likely than males to be involved in dance, yoga, or exercise classes (21% vs. 6%).



I do 4 ½ hours of swimming during the week then do 1 ½ hours of gymnastics.”



**86%** of students who played organized sports on a weekly basis reported good or excellent mental health, compared to 72% who never participated.

Provincially, younger students were more likely than older ones to play organized sports on a weekly basis. Locally, this was the case among females, but there were no age differences among males.

As with any sort of physical activity, those who took part in weekly sports or exercise classes were more likely than their peers who did not take part to rate their mental health as good or excellent and to have slept eight or more hours the previous night.

Among youth who had been physically and/or sexually abused, those who took part in organized sports on a weekly basis were more likely to rate their overall health as good or excellent (85% vs. 55% of those who did not play organized sports). Similarly, 76% of youth who had been abused who participated in informal sports rated their health as good or excellent, compared to 49%\* who did not take part in informal sports.

## Barriers to participation

Students were asked about the reasons they might not have participated in sports and other activities in the past year. The most common reason male and female students gave was being too busy, although not being able to afford to participate was a reality for more than 1 in 10 students.

Students in the Northwest were less likely than students across BC to indicate not taking part in sports and other activities because they could not afford to (11% vs. 15%). However, local students were more likely to indicate not participating because the activity was unavailable in their community (22% vs. 14% provincially) or because they were worried about being bullied (9% vs. 6%).

### Barriers to participation in activities

	Males	Females
Too busy	37%	52%
Activity wasn't available in community	20%	23%
Couldn't get there or home	10%	16%
Couldn't afford to	8%	13%
Worried about being bullied	5%	12%

Note: The difference between males and females who did not participate because the activity wasn't available in their community was not statistically significant.

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.



**I think kids need more physical activity at school.”**

**11%** of Northwest students reported that they were more physically active as a result of the 2010 Winter Olympics.

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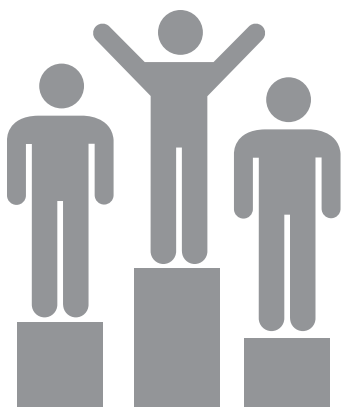
## 2010 Winter Olympics

Three years after the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games, 13% of males and 8% of females reported that they were more physically active as a result of the Games. These rates were comparable to those found provincially.

Locally, 7% of males and 2% of females felt they had more sports opportunities as a result of the Games. The rate among local females was lower than the provincial rate for females (5%), but there was no difference among males.

## Gambling

While the legal gambling age in BC is 19, 11% of Northwest students (17% of males vs. 6% of females) had gambled in the past 12 months, with almost all being aged 18 or younger. This was similar to the provincial rate, as was the 4% of students (6% of males vs. 2% of females) who had gambled more than once a month in the past year.



# Technology use

Ninety-two percent of females and 83% of males in the Northwest owned a cellphone or other portable electronic communication device. Among these students, 96% had used their device on the previous school day.

Youth who had a cellphone most commonly used it for communicating with friends, playing games/entertainment/music, chatting online or social networking, communicating with parents, and for finding information.

## Def.

**CELLPHONE** refers to a cellphone, smart phone, or similar portable electronic communication device.

Used cellphone to...	Did this on last school day	When activity took place		
		Before school	During school	After school
Communicate with friends	83%	37%	56%	63%
Play games/entertainment/music	83%	34%	48%	62%
Chat online or social networking	74%	33%	37%	60%
Communicate with parent(s)/guardian(s)	74%	16%	39%	52%
Find information	72%	17%	52%	43%
Engage in sexting	14%	3%	5%	11%
Communicate with teachers	9%	2%	4%	4%
Bully others	4%	NR	2%	2%

Note: Sexting is the sending of explicit photographs or messages via cellphone or other similar device.

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

NR: The percentage could not be released due to the risk of deductive disclosure.



Being on the computer so much is probably the biggest reason why I am not in the best physical shape.”

Females were more likely than males to use their cellphone to communicate with friends (88% vs. 77%) and parents (79% vs. 68%), as well as to chat online or for social networking (81% vs. 66%). Males were nearly twice as likely as females to use their phone to engage in sexting (18% vs. 10%).

Eighty-three percent of students were online or on their phone after they were supposed to be asleep. The most common activities included chatting online or social networking (62%), surfing the Internet (60%), and using a phone to talk or text (60%).

Thirteen percent of students reported not having a cellphone. There were some differences between these students and those who had a phone. For example, students without a phone were less likely than their peers with a phone to have self-harmed in the past year (13% vs. 20%), and they were more likely to have slept eight or more hours the previous night (61% vs. 50%).

However, students with a phone were more likely than their peers without a phone to have an adult outside their family they felt they could talk to if they had a problem (34% vs. 22%).

## Online safety

Seventeen percent of students (9% of males vs. 25% of females) reported that they had been cyberbullied in the past year, and 8% had cyberbullied someone else. Local percentages were similar to those seen across BC.

As with in-person bullying, students who had been cyberbullied were more likely to have not taken part in extracurricular activities because they were worried about being further bullied (27% vs. 5% who had not been cyberbullied).

Fourteen percent of youth had met someone through the Internet who made them feel unsafe, with females over twice as likely as males to have had this experience (22% vs. 8% of males).

**Technology use after students were expected to go to sleep**

	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>
Surfing the Internet	58%	62%
Chatting online or social networking	55%	69%
Using a phone to chat or text	51%	68%
Online gaming	47%	24%

Note: The difference between males and females who surfed the Internet after they were expected to be asleep was not statistically significant.



# Youth engagement

Students were asked about their level of engagement in the activities they took part in. Specifically, they were asked about how meaningful they felt their activities were and how much they felt their ideas were listened to and valued within these activities.

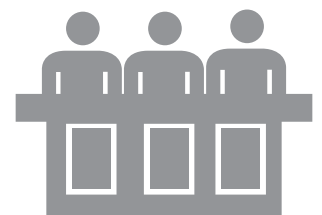
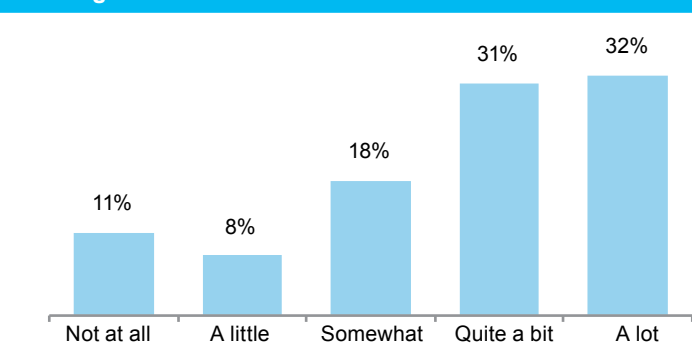
Sixty-three percent of Northwest students reported that the activities they were involved in were at least quite a bit meaningful to them.

When asked if they felt that their ideas were listened to and acted upon in these activities, 36% of local students (41% of males vs. 31% of females) felt that they were to a significant extent, compared to 44% provincially.

There were many positive associations for youth who felt that they were valued within their activities and who felt that those activities were meaningful. For example, students who felt their ideas were listened to at least quite a bit were more likely to rate their overall health as good or excellent (92% vs. 71% of students who felt their ideas were not listened to as much).

Among youth who had been teased, excluded, or assaulted in the past year, those who felt their activities were quite a bit or very meaningful were more likely to feel good about themselves than those who reported participating in less meaningful activities (71% vs. 42%\*). Similarly, youth who had been bullied were more likely to rate their mental health as good or excellent if they felt listened to in the activities they were involved in (79% vs. 60% who did not feel listened to).

Meaningfulness of activities



# Family relationships

The BC AHS asked youth about their sense of connectedness to their family. Most students in the Northwest felt their family understood them, their family had fun together, and their family paid attention to them.

There were associations between positive family relationships and mental health. For example, students who felt their family paid attention to them were less likely than those who did not feel this way to have considered suicide (8% vs. 47%), to have actually attempted suicide (5% vs. 37%), and to have self-harmed (12% vs. 48%\*) in the past year. They were also more likely to rate their mental health as good or excellent, and to report feeling good about themselves (88% vs. 32%) and their abilities (89% vs. 58%). Additionally, among students who had tried alcohol, those who felt their family paid attention to them were less likely to have first tried alcohol before age 15 (62% vs. 81%\*).

There was a link between family relationships and injury prevention. For example, students who felt that their family understood them were less likely than those who did not feel this way to have ever been a passenger in a vehicle with someone who had been drinking (17% vs. 33%) or using marijuana (17% vs. 31%). When students felt that their family paid attention to them, they were also more likely to report always wearing a seat belt (71% vs. 52%\* who felt their family did not pay attention to them).

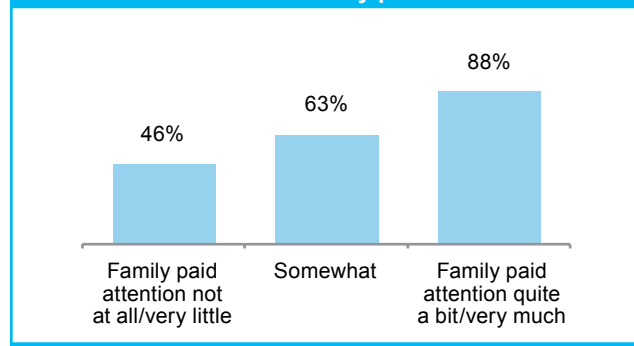
In addition, students who felt that their family understood them were more likely to plan to continue their education after high school (81% vs. 64% who did not feel their family understood them) and to have only positive aspirations for the future (88% vs. 73%).

The more connected youth who had been physically and/or sexually abused felt to their family, the more likely they were to report their mental health as good or excellent.

## Def.

**FAMILY CONNECTEDNESS** included students feeling that members of their family paid attention to them, had fun together, and understood them.

Good or excellent mental health in relation to how much students felt their family paid attention to them





**70%** of students ate an evening meal with their parents most or all of the time in the past month, while 16% never or rarely did so.

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Students were asked on the survey if there was an adult in their family they could turn to if faced with a serious problem. In the Northwest, 72% of males and 65% of females indicated that there was. Students who had such an adult in their lives were less likely to miss out on mental health services when they felt they needed them (7% vs. 22% of students who did not feel they could turn to an adult relative).

Among youth who identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, those who felt they had an adult in their family to talk to were twice as likely to rate their mental health as good or excellent than those who did not have a supportive adult in their family. In addition, among students with a mental health condition, those who had an adult in their family to talk to were less likely to have seriously considered suicide in the past year (33%\* vs. 69% without such support).

## Parental monitoring

Seventy-one percent of Northwest students reported that their parents always or mostly knew what they were doing in their free time. Local males were less likely than those across BC to report this experience (69% vs. 76%), while local female students responded similarly to those in the province as a whole. Fifteen percent reported that their parents never or rarely knew what they were doing.

Students whose parents were aware of what they were doing in their free time were less likely to surf the Internet (56% vs. 67% of those whose parents were not monitoring their spare time) or to chat online or be social networking (58% vs. 73%) after the time they were normally expected to go to sleep. They were also more likely to have slept for at least eight hours on the night before taking the survey (57% vs. 34%).

Youth who ate their evening meals with their parents most or all of the time were more likely to report consuming fruit or vegetables three or more times yesterday (58% vs. 40% who never or rarely ate with their parents). They were also more likely to feel good about themselves (83% vs. 54%) and their abilities (87% vs. 69%).

Youth with a mental or emotional health condition who ate evening meals with their parents most or all of the time were half as likely to have missed out on needed medical care in the past year (26% vs. 49%\*).



# Supportive & caring adults outside the family

## Adult to turn to for help

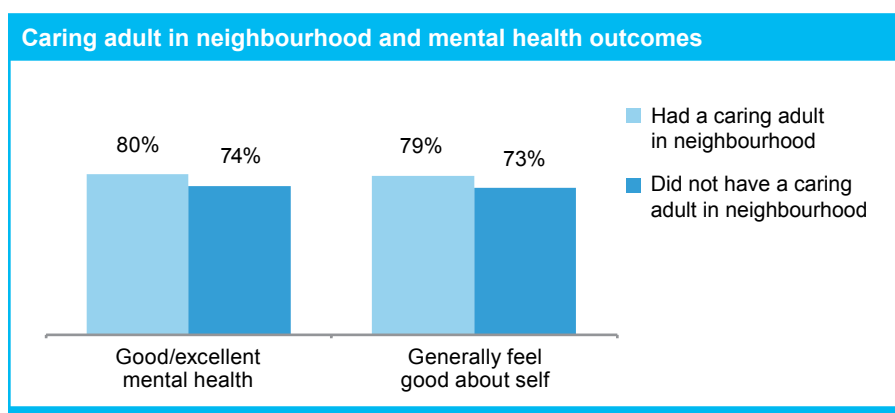
Similar to the provincial rate, 32% of local youth felt they had an adult outside their family they could turn to if faced with a problem. Although males throughout BC were less likely than females to have an adult outside their family to talk to, this gender difference was not found in the Northwest.

Students who could identify a supportive adult outside of their family were more likely to have post-secondary plans (83% vs. 75% without this support). This type of adult support was protective for even the most vulnerable young people. For example, among those who had been both physically and sexually abused, youth who had an adult outside of their family to talk to were more likely to have only positive future aspirations than those without such an adult in their lives.

## Local adult who cares

Sixty-nine percent of students in this region reported having an adult in their neighbourhood or community (beyond their school or family) who cared about them. This was higher than the provincial rate (61%), and the difference was seen for both males (66% locally vs. 59% provincially) and females (73% vs. 63%).

Feeling cared about by an adult in their neighbourhood or community was associated with positive mental health.



# Help seeking

When students in the Northwest needed help, they most commonly approached friends and family members. This was similar to students throughout BC, though local males were less likely than those provincially to have sought help from their friends (59% vs. 65%) or family (59% vs. 66%).

Students also sought support from a variety of different professionals, most commonly teachers, school counsellors, doctors, and sports coaches. Males in this region were less likely than those throughout BC to have sought help from a teacher (38% vs. 44%).

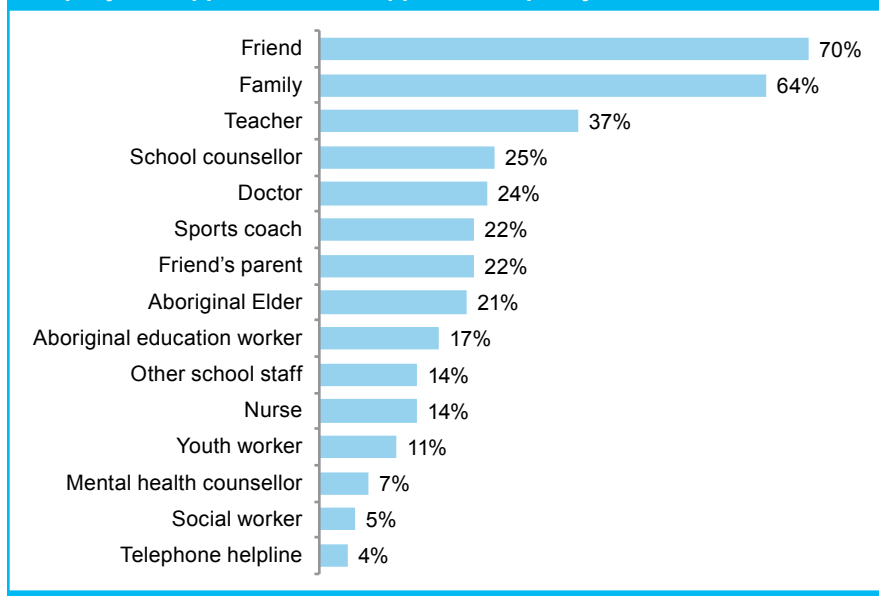
Locally, females were more likely to have sought help from their friends (81% vs. 59% of males), a family member (69% vs. 59%), and a school counsellor (29% vs. 21%), whereas males were more likely to seek help from a sports coach (25% vs. 19% of females).

The majority of male and female students found the people they approached for help to be helpful, although some vulnerable groups were less likely to feel this way. For example, youth who had been teased, socially excluded, and/or assaulted who asked a teacher for help were less likely than their peers who had not been bullied to have found the teacher to be helpful (85% vs. 93%).

When youth found the adults in their lives to be helpful, there were benefits. For example, among youth who had been bullied, those who asked their teacher for help and found this experience helpful were less likely to have seriously thought about suicide in the past year than those who did not find the assistance helpful (18% vs. 41%\*).

In addition, among youth who had been physically and/or sexually abused and who asked a school counsellor for help, those who found the assistance helpful were less likely than those who did not find this support useful to have self-harmed in the past year.

People youth approached for support in the past year



Note: The rates for accessing an Aboriginal education worker and an Elder are among Aboriginal youth.

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

“ I am worried that I have schizophrenia, but it's hard to find someone to ask since there aren't many people I look up to or trust enough.”

# Peer relationships

Just under half (49%) of students had been in a romantic relationship in the past year, which was higher than the provincial percentage of 39%. Among Northwest students who had been in a dating relationship, 11% had been the victim of dating violence. Eight percent of local females had experienced dating violence in the past year, which was comparable to females throughout the province. However, Northwest males were more likely than those across BC to have been the victim of dating violence (14% vs. 6%).

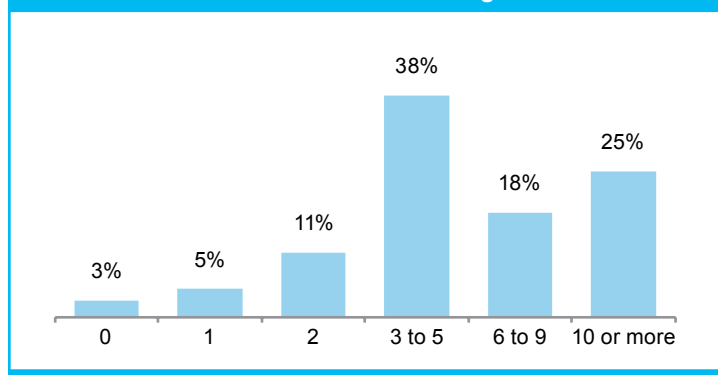
Students were asked about the number of close friends they had in their school or community. Similar to youth across the province, 97% of local students reported having at least one close friend (excluding online friends), and 81% had three or more close friends.

Females were more likely than males to have 3 to 5 close friends (44% vs. 32%), whereas males were more likely to report having 10 or more close friends (32% vs. 17%).

There were positive associations with having more than just one or two friends. For example, students who had three or more close friends were more likely than those with fewer friends to rate their overall health as good or excellent (85% vs. 74%). They were also less likely to have been teased, excluded, or assaulted in the past year (45% vs. 65%).



Number of close friends in school or neighbourhood

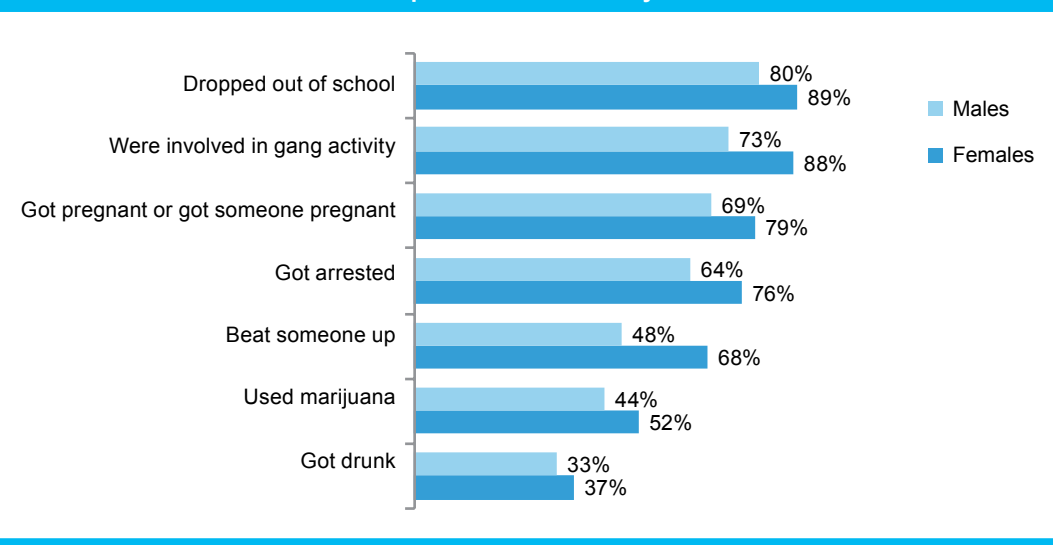


## Friends with pro-social attitudes

Students were asked if their friends would be upset with them if they were involved in certain risk behaviours, such as getting arrested, dropping out of school, or using marijuana. They generally had friends who would be upset with them for engaging in most of these behaviours. However, students in the Northwest were less likely than their peers throughout BC to have friends who would be upset with them if they got arrested (70% vs. 78% provincially), beat someone up (58% vs. 71%), were involved in gang activity (80% vs. 85%), got pregnant or got someone pregnant (74% vs. 81%), got drunk (35% vs. 44%), or used marijuana (48% vs. 58%).

Having pro-social peers was a protective factor for Northwest youth. For example, students whose friends would be upset with them if they beat someone up were less likely to have assaulted someone than those whose friends would not be upset. In addition, among students who drank alcohol in the past month, those whose friends would be upset with them for getting drunk were less likely to report binge drinking during this time period than students whose friends would not be upset with them for getting drunk (42%\* vs. 71%).

Students whose friends would be upset with them if they...



Note: The differences between males and females whose friends would be upset with them if they used marijuana or got drunk were not statistically significant.

# Neighbourhood safety

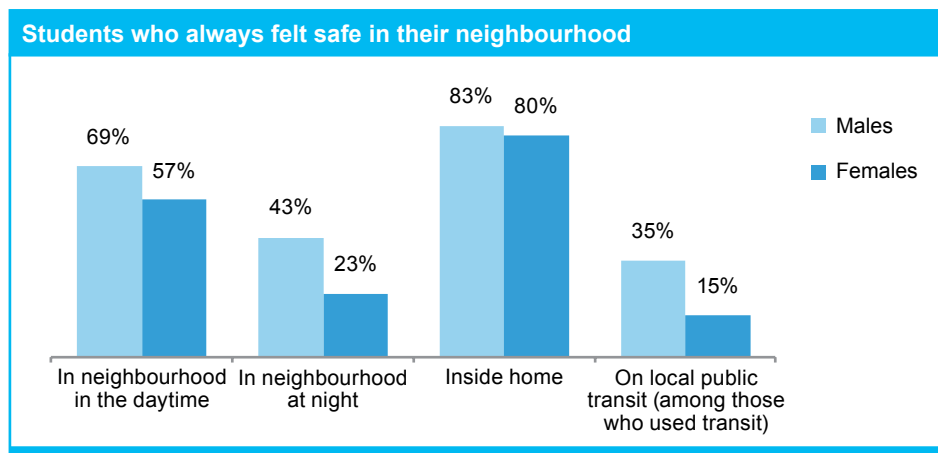
Reflective of the picture across the province, most local youth always felt safe inside their home (81%) and in their neighbourhood during the day (63%), and 33% felt that way in their neighbourhood at night. Twenty-five percent always felt safe on public transit, while 9% never felt safe on transit.

Males were more likely to always feel safe in their neighbourhood in the daytime, at night, and on transit.

When compared to youth who never felt safe in their neighbourhood during the day, those who always felt safe were more likely to describe their mental health as good or excellent (84% vs. 60%\*), report good or excellent general health (88% vs. 57%\*), plan to continue their education after high school (81% vs. 61%\*), and have only positive

future aspirations (88% vs. 55%\*). In addition, youth who always felt safe in their neighbourhood during the day were less likely to have attempted suicide in the past year than youth who never did.

Local students who had been physically abused were less likely to always feel safe in their neighbourhood in the daytime (50% vs. 65% who were not abused) or in their home (58% vs. 86%). However, if these students did feel safe in their neighbourhood during the day, they were more likely to feel that they could do things as well as most people, compared to those who never or rarely felt safe. Similarly, youth who had been teased but who always felt safe during the day were more likely to feel good about themselves.



Note: The difference between males and females in always feeling safe inside their home was not statistically significant.

# Community connectedness & cultural engagement

## Community connectedness

Students were asked how much they felt like a part of their community. Consistent with results across BC, 39% of students reported that they felt quite a bit or very much connected to their community.

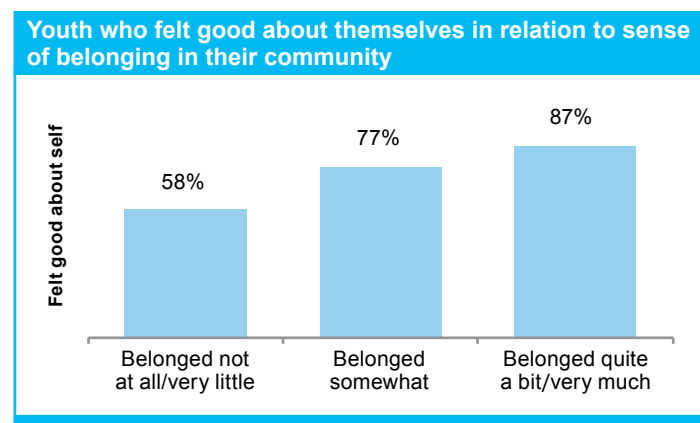
There were many benefits associated with students feeling like a part of their community. For example, these youth were more likely to report good or excellent mental health and overall health. They were also more likely to feel good about themselves and their abilities, compared to their peers who did not feel like a part of their community.

Youth who had been bullied also specifically benefitted from being a part of their community. For example, youth who had been teased in the past year were more likely to rate their mental health as good or excellent if they felt connected to their community (79%) than if they only somewhat felt

that way (66%) or did not feel connected (48%\*). Similarly, the more connected youth who had been socially excluded felt to their community, the more likely they were to feel good about themselves (73% vs. 38%\* of those who felt less connected).

## Cultural engagement

In addition to feelings about their community, students were asked questions about their engagement in their culture. Nine percent of local youth participated in cultural or traditional activities at least weekly, which was higher than the provincial rate of 7%. Youth who were involved in traditional activities on a weekly basis were over four times as likely to have volunteered weekly (45%\* vs. 11% of youth who never took part in traditional activities).



# Summary list of protective factors

Throughout this report a number of protective factors in the lives of local students have been identified. This chapter provides a list of some of those protective factors along with an example for each.

PROTECTIVE FACTOR	EXAMPLE
Stable home	When compared to youth who had moved house, youth who had stayed in the same home for the past year were more likely to plan to continue their education beyond high school and to report good or excellent mental health.
Eight or more hours of sleep	Students with a mental or emotional health condition who slept for eight or more hours the previous night were more likely than those who slept fewer hours to feel good about themselves.
Good nutrition	Among students classified as obese, those who ate three or more servings of fruit or vegetables the previous day were more likely to rate their general health as good or excellent than those who had fewer servings.
Sports and exercise	Youth who took part in organized sports on a weekly basis were more likely to have slept for eight or more hours the previous night than their peers who did not take part.
Feeling safe at home, in school, and the community or neighbourhood	Youth who always felt safe in their neighbourhood during the day were less likely to have attempted suicide in the past year than youth who never felt safe.
Feeling connected to school	Youth who had been bullied in the past year were more likely to have only positive future aspirations if they felt connected to their school.
Feeling engaged in activities	Students who felt their ideas were listened to in their activities were more likely to rate their overall health as good or excellent than students who did not feel their ideas were listened to.
Feeling connected to family	Students who felt their family paid attention to them were less likely than those who did not feel this way to have considered suicide, to have actually attempted suicide, and to have self-harmed in the past year.



**PROTECTIVE FACTOR****EXAMPLE****Parental monitoring**

Students whose parents were aware of what they were doing in their free time were less likely to have been online after the time they were expected to go to sleep, compared to students whose parents were not monitoring their spare time.

**Adult in the family students could talk to**

Students who had an adult in their family they could turn to if faced with a serious problem were less likely to have missed out on needed mental health services than students who did not feel they had such a relative in their lives.

**A supportive adult outside family**

Among youth who had been both physically and sexually abused, those who had an adult outside their family to talk to were more likely to have only positive future aspirations than those without such an adult in their lives.

**Adult outside their family who cares about them**

Youth who had an adult in their neighbourhood or community who cared about them were more likely to report positive mental health than youth who did not feel that an adult in the community cared.

**Helpful sources of support**

Among youth who had been physically and/or sexually abused and who asked a school counsellor for help, those who found the assistance helpful were less likely to have self-harmed in the past year than their peers who did not find this support useful.

**Having close friends (excluding online friends)**

Among students who had been teased or socially excluded, those with three or more friends were more likely than those with fewer friends to report their overall health was good or excellent.

**Having friends with pro-social attitudes**

Students whose friends would be upset with them for beating someone up were less likely to have assaulted someone than those whose friends would not be upset with them for this reason.

**Community connectedness**

Youth who felt like a part of their community were more likely to report good or excellent mental health and overall health compared to their peers who did not feel like a part of their community.

**Cultural engagement**

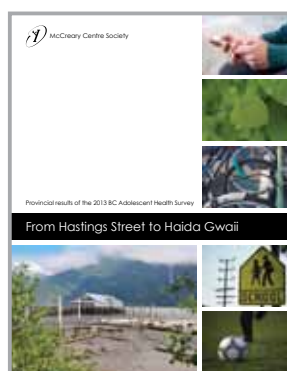
Youth who were involved in weekly cultural activities were over four times as likely as those who were involved less frequently to have volunteered in the community on a weekly basis.

# How to use these results

McCreary will continue to produce reports and other resources using the results of the 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey. All of the resources can be accessed at [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca). Upcoming reports include a sexual health report and 15 other regional reports at the Health Service Delivery Area level.

If you would like to join our community mailing list to receive updates about when new reports are released, when webinar presentations are scheduled, and other news related to the BC Adolescent Health Survey, please contact [community@mcs.bc.ca](mailto:community@mcs.bc.ca).

## A selection of BC AHS resources

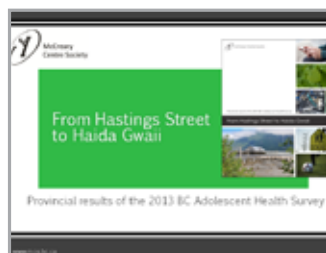


### *From Hastings Street to Haida Gwaii*

This report offers a comprehensive picture of the health and health behaviours of BC youth.



This film shares responses from key BC figures to results of the BC Adolescent Health Survey.



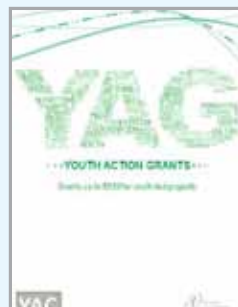
This PowerPoint provides an overview of the provincial BC Adolescent Health Survey results. It is aimed at adult audiences. McCreary staff are also available to present local and provincial results.

## YOUTH RESOURCES



This and other posters were designed by McCreary's Youth Advisory and Action Council (YAC) for a youth audience.

Other resources for youth include interactive workshops and the Next Steps program which uses the results of the survey to engage youth in local community projects.



McCreary's YAC has a granting program open to students in school districts which participated in the survey. Grants of up to \$500 are awarded to youth who wish to conduct a project that aims to address a local youth health issue.



