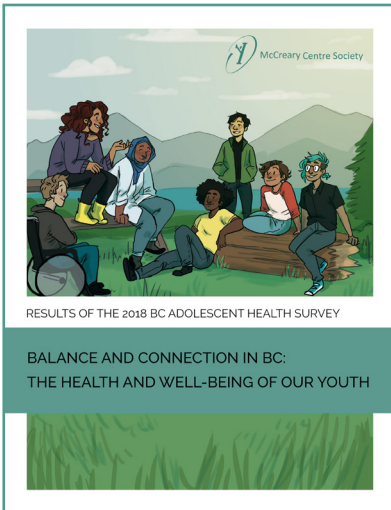


# BC YOUTH'S SCHOOL COMMUTE

A 2018 BC ADOLESCENT HEALTH SURVEY FACT SHEET



This fact sheet uses data from McCreary Centre Society's BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS). The most recent BC AHS was completed in 2018 by over 38,000 youth aged 12–19. To learn more about the survey and view other posters and reports, please visit [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca).

Studies have shown that the length of students' school commute and the type of transportation used can impact their health and well-being. For example, walking or cycling to school has been associated with increased physical activity (Committee on Physical Activity and Physical Education in the School Environment, 2013), as well as increased risk of injury (Gropp et al., 2013); whereas commuting by bus has been associated with experiences of victimization (e.g., Goodboy et al., 2016) and missing breakfast (Godin et al., 2018). A long commute to school has been linked to sleep deprivation (Voulgaris et al., 2019).

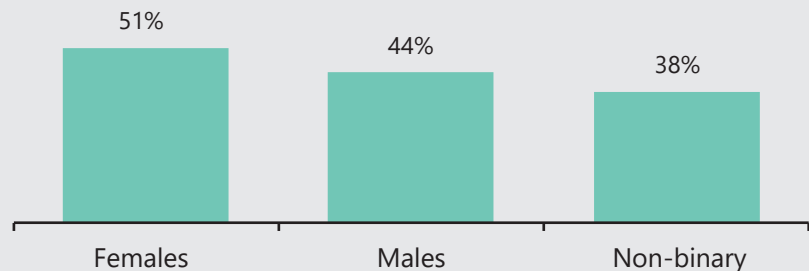
## TRANSPORTATION TO SCHOOL

BC youth typically got to school by car, school bus/public transit, or by active means such as walking, biking, and skateboarding. Also, less than 1% hitchhiked to school.

### By car

The most common way BC youth got to school was by car (47%), with older youth, females, and urban-based youth the most likely to do so. For example, 54% of those aged 17 or older commuted by car compared to 44% of those aged 12 or younger.

### YOUTH WHO COMMUTED TO SCHOOL BY CAR

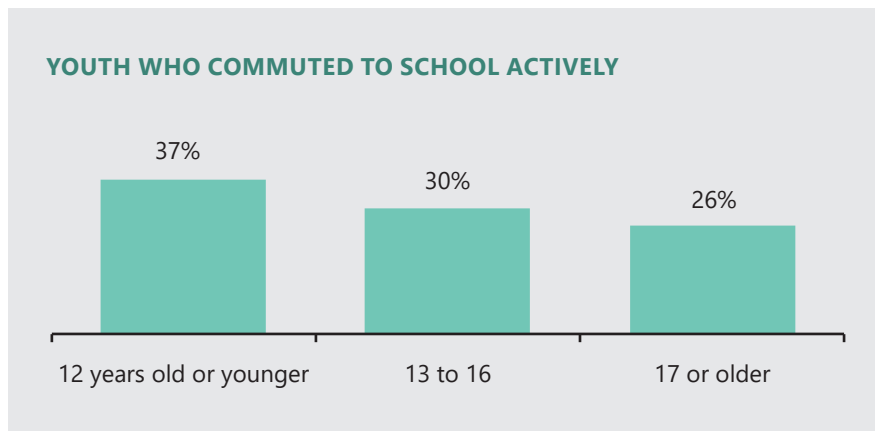


## Active transportation

The second most common way youth got to school was by active means (29%). Females were less likely than males and non-binary youth to use active means to get to school (e.g., 26% vs. 33% of males), as were older youth in comparison to younger ones).

Urban-based youth were more likely than rural-based ones to get to school by active means (30% vs. 23%). Regionally, Vancouver Coastal youth were most likely to do so (37%). For example, 43% of youth in Richmond used active means to get to school, compared to 15% of youth in the Northeast.

Active transportation was not associated with an increased risk of injury, and there were apparent benefits. For example, youth who commuted actively were less likely than those who took the school bus/transit to have vaped (21% vs. 30%) or smoked cigarettes (6% vs. 10%) in the past month, and were more likely to wake up feeling rested (49% vs. 46%).



## School bus/public transit

Less than a quarter (23%) of youth took a school bus or public transit to school, with no gender differences. Youth aged 13 to 16 were more likely than younger and older youth to travel this way.

Rural-based youth were more likely to take a school bus/public transit to school (35% vs. 21% of urban-based youth). Also, youth in the North, Interior, and Vancouver Island were more likely to take a school bus/public transit than those in the Lower Mainland. For example, 40% did so in Kootenay Boundary compared to 9% in Fraser South.

Regardless of the length of their commute, when compared to youth who used active means to get to school, youth who commuted by school bus/public transit were less likely to:

- Participate weekly in organized sports (48% vs. 50%).
- Rate their health (78% vs. 82%) and mental health (69% vs. 74%) as good or excellent.
- Have slept eight or more hours the night before taking the survey (45% vs. 49%).
- Always eat breakfast on school days (46% vs. 52%).

They were more likely to have:

- Missed class in the past month due to a lack of transportation (8% vs. 3%), and because they skipped (27% vs. 22%).
- Missed out on extracurricular activities in the past year because they could not get there or get home (19% vs. 14%).
- Experienced bullying at school or on the way to/from school. For example, 10% were physically attacked vs. 8% of those who commuted actively.

## LENGTH OF COMMUTE

The majority of youth (90%) had a commute to school that was under 30 minutes (including 64% whose commute was less than 15 minutes), while 8% commuted for 30–59 minutes, and 2% commuted for at least an hour.

Rural-based and Northern youth had the longest commute. For example, 5% of youth in the North commuted for at least an hour (e.g., vs. 1% in Fraser). Across BC, youth with a commute of at least an hour ranged from 1% in Richmond, East Kootenays, and Fraser regions, to 7% in the Northeast.

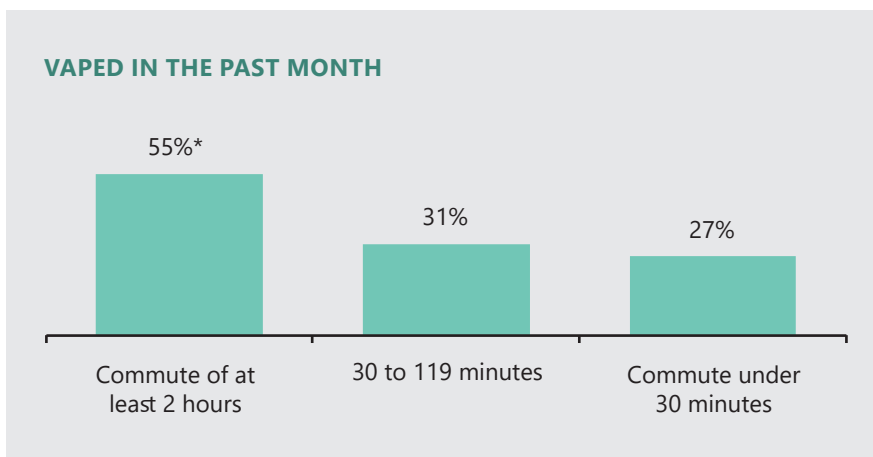
The longer youth's commute, the less likely they were to use active means or to take a car to school, and the more likely they were to take the school bus/public transit. For example, 4% of youth with a commute of at least 60 minutes used active means, compared to 12% of those with a commute of 30–59 minutes and 31% with a commute less than 30 minutes.

The longer youth's commute to school, the more likely they were to have skipped class. For example, over half (52%\*) of those with a commute of at least two hours skipped class in the past month, as did 32% of those with a commute between 60 and 119 minutes, compared to a quarter of those with a commute under 30 minutes. Youth with a long commute were also more likely to have vaped and used other substances including tobacco, alcohol, and cannabis.

The longer students' commute, the less likely they were to report positive health and well-being and to feel connected to their school. For example, 47%\* of those with at least a two-hour commute rated their health as good or excellent, compared to 83% of those with a commute under 15 minutes. Also, 24% felt like a part of their school, compared to over half of those with a shorter commute.

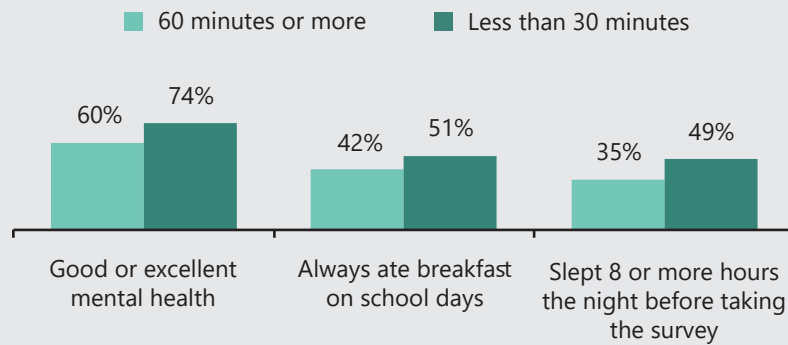
Youth who commuted for at least an hour were more likely to miss school due to transportation challenges (e.g., 13% vs. 4% of those with a commute under 30 minutes) in the past month. In comparison to youth with a commute of 30 minutes or less, they were also less likely to:

- Rate their mental health as good or excellent.
- Always eat breakfast on school days.
- Get eight or more hours of sleep.
- Wake up feeling like they got enough rest (37% vs. 49%).
- Feel connected to their community (35% vs. 43%).
- Feel like they had the right amount of time with family (61% vs. 74%), friends (52% vs. 69%), and on their own (57% vs. 67%).
- Feel happy most or all the time in the past month (57% vs. 66%).



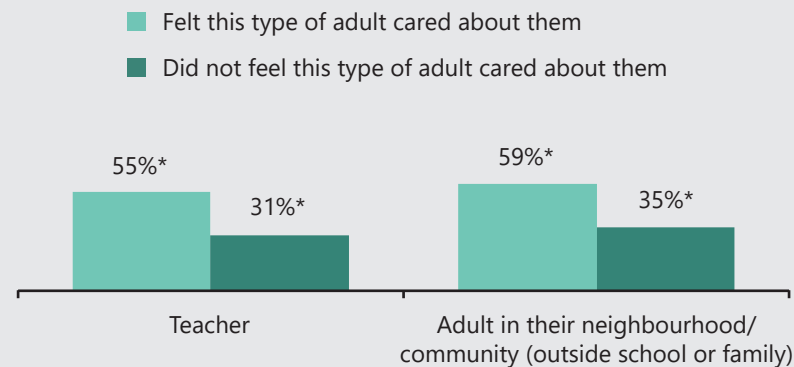
\* Any percentage that is marked with an asterisk should be interpreted with caution, as it has a higher than anticipated standard error, but is still within a releasable range.

## LENGTH OF SCHOOL COMMUTE IN RELATION TO HEALTH OUTCOMES



Adults can play a role in supporting youth with a long commute. For example, students who commuted for at least two hours were less likely to have skipped class in the past month if they felt an adult in their neighbourhood or community really cared about them (42% vs. 62%\* of those who did not feel this way). They were also more likely to rate their health positively if they felt their teacher or another adult cared about them.

## YOUTH WHO RATED THEIR HEALTH AS GOOD OR EXCELLENT (among those with at least a two-hour commute)



\* Any percentage that is marked with an asterisk should be interpreted with caution, as it has a higher than anticipated standard error, but is still within a releasable range.

## REFERENCES

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