

SUPPORTING BC YOUTH WHO EXPERIENCED PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL ABUSE



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. For more information about the survey methodology please visit <http://mcs.bc.ca/>.

Experiencing physical and/or sexual abuse can negatively impact health and well-being during adolescence and into later life (Anda et al., 2006). For example, both have been associated with increased mental health challenges, suicidality, and health risk behaviours including problematic substance use (Adams et al., 2018; Campbell et al., 2016; Chen et al., 2010; Fergusson et al., 2013).

Experiencing more types of abuse can increase the risk of negative outcomes (Campbell et al., 2016). However, the presence of protective factors such as supportive relationships can be associated with improved outcomes for youth who have experienced abuse (Eisenberg et al., 2007; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015; Smith et al., 2018).

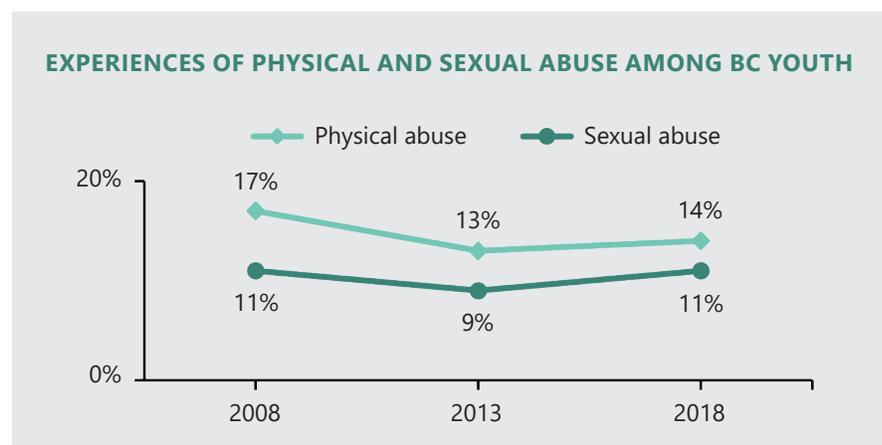
BC YOUTH WHO HAD EXPERIENCED ABUSE

The percentage of BC youth aged 12–19 who experienced physical and/or sexual abuse decreased between 2008 and 2013, but rose again in 2018. In 2018, 14% of BC youth indicated they had been physically abused, 11% had been sexually abused, and 5% had experienced both types of abuse. In total, 20% had experienced at least one type of abuse.

Non-binary youth were the most likely to have experienced abuse. For example, 13% had been both physically and sexual abused, compared to 8% of females and 2% of males.

Health and mental health

Youth who had experienced abuse were less likely to rate their overall health and mental health positively. For example, 85% of those who had never been abused rated their overall health as good or excellent, compared to 68% who had experienced one type of abuse, and 51% who had experienced both types. Similarly, 80% of youth who had not been abused rated their mental health as good or excellent, compared to 52% who experienced one type of abuse and 29% who experienced both types.



In BC, youth who experienced abuse were more likely than youth who had not experienced this to report having an Anxiety Disorder/panic attacks, Depression, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Youth who had been abused were more likely to experience stress and despair, and were less likely to feel that they managed stress well. For example, 8% of youth who had not been abused reported feeling so stressed that they could not function in the past month, compared to 23% who experienced one type of

abuse and 42% who experienced both types. Also, 59% of youth who had not been abused reported they managed stress well or very well, compared to 39% who experienced one type of abuse and 26% who experienced both types.

Youth who had experienced abuse were more likely to have injured themselves on purpose without the intention of killing themselves (self-harmed), to have considered suicide, and to have attempted suicide in the past year.

Injury prevention

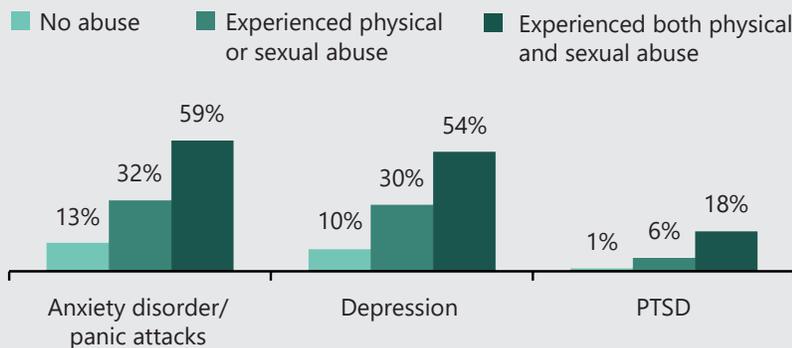
Youth who had experienced abuse were less likely to engage in injury prevention behaviours. For example, 75% of youth who had not been abused always wore a seat belt when riding in a vehicle, compared to 67% who experienced one type of abuse and 59% who experienced both types. Similarly, 48% of youth who had not been abused always wore a helmet when riding a bike, compared to 35% of youth who experienced one type of abuse and 30% of youth who experienced both types.

Substance use

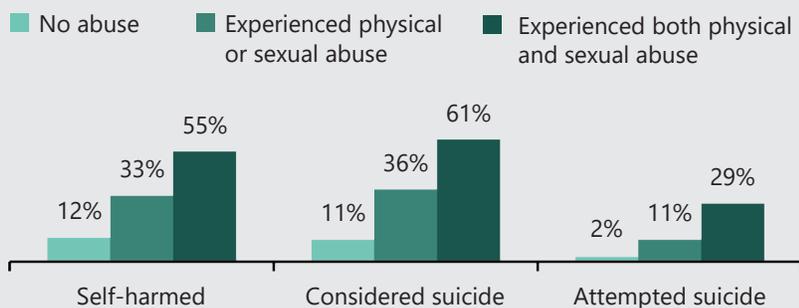
Youth who had been abused were more likely to have used alcohol, cannabis, and other substances. For example, 39% of those who had not experienced abuse had tried alcohol, compared to 61% who experienced one type of abuse and 79% who experienced both types. Similarly, 20% of youth who had not been abused had used cannabis, compared to 40% who experienced one type of abuse and 61% who experienced both types.

Also, 6% of youth who had not been abused had used prescription pills without a doctor's consent, compared to 14% who experienced one type of abuse and 25% who experienced both types.

MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS IN RELATION TO EXPERIENCES OF ABUSE



SELF-HARM, SUICIDE IDEATION, AND SUICIDE ATTEMPTS IN THE PAST YEAR IN RELATION TO EXPERIENCES OF ABUSE



SUPPORTING YOUTH WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED ABUSE

The presence of protective factors in the lives of youth who had experienced one or both types of abuse was associated with more positive outcomes. For example, 63% of youth who had experienced either physical or sexual abuse who had an adult in their family they could talk to if they had a serious problem felt hopeful for their future, compared to 36% without such an adult in their family. Similarly, 56% of those who experienced both physical and sexual abuse who had such an adult in their family felt hopeful for the future, compared to 29% without this support in their life.

Family connectedness

Youth who had experienced abuse who had an adult in their family they could turn to if they had a serious problem were more likely than those without this support to usually feel good about themselves (49% vs. 21%), and to experience good or excellent mental health (61% vs. 32%). Also, they were less likely to have felt extreme stress in the past month (19% vs. 36%).

Spending quality time with family was also important. For example, youth who had experienced abuse who felt that they got to spend the right amount of time with their family were more likely to report good or excellent mental health (54% vs. 34% of

those who did not spend enough time with their family) and to have felt happy most or all of the time in the past month (47% vs. 28%). They were also less likely to have experienced extreme stress in the past month (21% vs. 38%) and to have attempted suicide in the past year (13% vs. 21%).

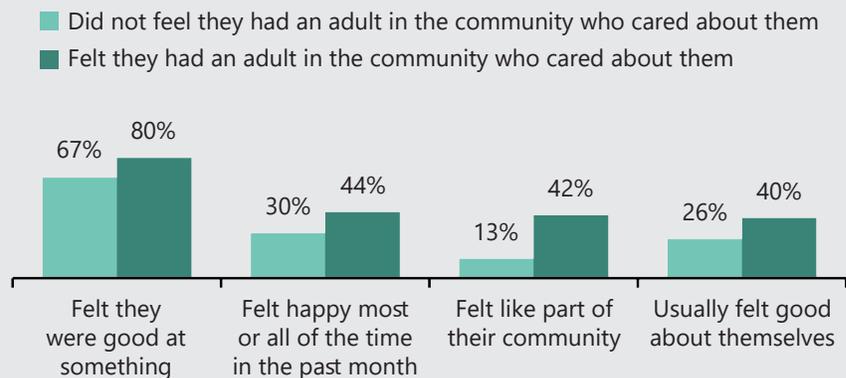
Supportive adults in the community

Youth who had experienced abuse who had an adult in their community (outside of their family or school) who really cared about them were more likely to report good or excellent overall health (69% vs. 54% of those without such an adult in their life) and mental health (51% vs. 38%). They were also more likely to feel like part of their community, usually feel good about themselves, feel happy, and be able to name something they were good at.

Also, youth with such an adult in their community were less likely to have felt extreme stress in the past month (26% vs. 32%), to have considered suicide in the past year (37% vs. 51%), and to have attempted suicide in the past year (13% vs. 21%).

Youth who had been abused who had an adult who helped them with tasks such as homework, finding a job, and appointments, were more likely to report positive outcomes. For example, youth who had an adult who helped them get to appointments were more likely to feel hopeful for the future (48% vs. 33% of those who did not have this type of help) and to have felt happy in the past month (40% vs. 24%).

WELL-BEING IN RELATION TO THE PRESENCE OF A CARING ADULT IN THE COMMUNITY (among youth who had been abused)



Adults in specific community roles can also support youth who have been abused. For example, youth who had experienced abuse who approached a sports coach for support and found them helpful were more likely to describe their mental health as good or excellent (69% vs. 34% of those who did not find the support helpful) and to always push themselves to achieve their goals when things went wrong (50% vs. 29%). Also, they were less likely to have experienced extreme stress in the past month (19% vs. 42%) and to have attempted suicide in the past year (9% vs. 33%). Results were generally similar for those who had sought help from their friend's parents, youth workers, social workers, and spiritual leader, and found the experience helpful.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU KNOW OR SUSPECT A CHILD OR YOUTH IS IN DANGER (duty to report)

If you suspect a child or youth 18 years old or younger is being abused or neglected, you have the legal duty to make a report. Call 1-800-663-9122 or 604-660-4927 (24 hours). If a young person is in immediate danger, call 911 or your local police department.

For more information on reporting child abuse in BC, visit: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/public-safety/protecting-children/reporting-child-abuse>

If you are a child or youth and would like to talk to someone, call the Helpline for Children at 310-1234. You do not need an area code. You can call at any time of the day or night and you do not have to give your name.

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