

The health and well-being of BC's Grade 7's



Results from the BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) are used by local schools and communities, as well as by provincial and national policy makers. The results can help us to understand the health and well-being of young people growing up in BC, as well as to identify those who may need additional supports.

The BC AHS results are also used to assess whether youth are receiving equitable access to services and activities, regardless of their background, gender identity, and sexual orientation, and to ensure there are sufficient age-appropriate supports available to different groups. This fact sheet is focused on students in Grade 7.

In 2018, 15% of Grade 7's were born outside of Canada, 10% were Indigenous, 8% had a health condition or disability which prevented them doing things that other Grade 7's could do, 18% identified as a sexual minority (including lesbian, gay, and bisexual), and 3% identified as gender diverse.

Since the first BC AHS in 1992, results have shown that most youth in Grade 7 experience positive health and well-being and feel connected to their family, school, and community. For example, 2018 BC AHS results showed that around three-quarters of BC's Grade 7's felt safe at school (76%) and that their teacher cared about them (76%). Also, around two-thirds felt like a part of their school (69%), and were happy there (67%).

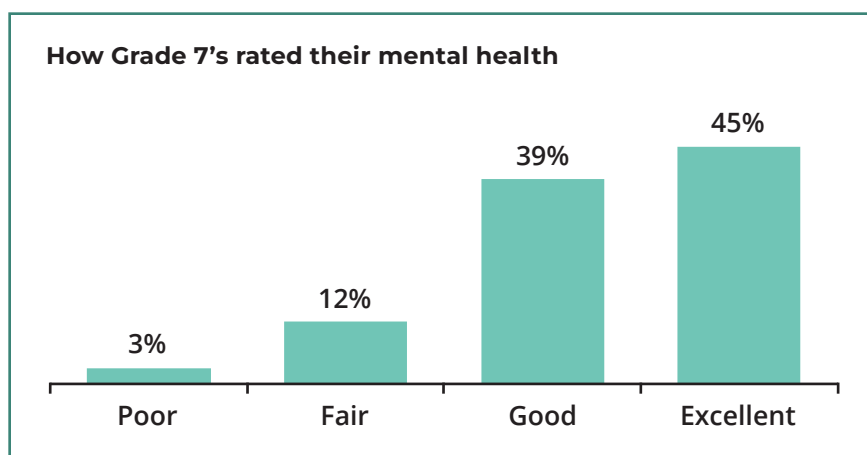
Most Grade 7's also report having supports outside of school. For example in 2018, 79% had an adult in their family they could talk to if they were having a serious problem, and 67% felt that an adult in their community really cared about them. Also, among youth who felt they needed help with various tasks, 97% had an adult who helped them with making and getting to appointments, and 90% had an adult who helped them with homework.

Although most Grade 7's are happy, healthy, and connected, the results of the BC AHS also clearly show that a minority are experiencing challenges to their healthy development. These challenges can impact their well-being as they transition through elementary or middle school to high school and into adulthood. **For example, among Grade 7's who completed the 2018 BC AHS:**

- **17%** had self-harmed (i.e., had cut or injured themselves on purpose without the intention of killing themselves), **13%** had considered suicide, and **4%** had attempted suicide in the past year.
- **13%** had an anxiety disorder, **10%** had depression, and **6%** had ADHD/ADD.
- **10%** had not accessed mental health services that they felt they needed in the past year. The most common reason Grade 7's gave for missing out on these services was not wanting their parent to know.
- **12%** had drunk alcohol, **4%** had used cannabis, **4%** had smoked tobacco, and **6%** had used prescription pills without a doctor's consent. Also, **7%** had vaped in the past month.
- **9%** went to bed hungry because there was not enough money for food.
- **52%** had experienced bullying (severe teasing, social exclusion, or physical assault in the past year).
- **10%** had been physically abused and **5%** had experienced sexual abuse.
- **2%** had engaged in oral sex and **2%** had engaged in sexual intercourse.

These results show that whilst Grade 7's are usually healthier and happier than youth in later grades (See mcs.bc.ca/pdf/2023_bc_ahs_age_matters.pdf for more details), a minority are dealing with significant challenges.

The 2023 BC AHS results will be used to assess the current needs of this age group. The results will also be used to consider the impact of the pandemic, and of initiatives aimed at supporting elementary and middle school students who experienced barriers to healthy development.



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

