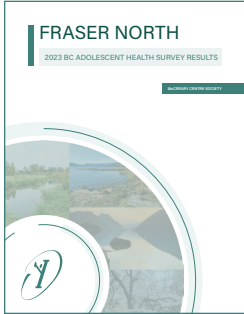


Access to health care a concern for Fraser North youth



Results of the 2023 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) were released today by the McCreary Centre Society for the Fraser North region. The survey included Grade 7–12 students (aged 12–19) in New Westminster, Burnaby, Maple Ridge–Pitt Meadows, and Coquitlam.

There were plenty of positive findings for youth in the region, but one of the more concerning results showed that although most youth who needed health care were able to access it, around 1 in 6 (17%) of those who felt they needed mental health services in the past year did not get the services they needed. Additionally, local youth were less likely than those 5 years earlier to have received health care from a family doctor (54% vs. 57% in 2018), walk-in clinic (25% vs. 34%), and youth clinic (2% vs. 4%).

McCreary Centre Society's Executive Director and co-author of the report, Dr. Annie Smith, noted: *"It is concerning to see that the percentage missing out on mental health services is higher than it was a decade ago, especially when we are also seeing declines in access to other types of health care as well. We also saw fewer than half of local youth who got a serious concussion in the past year received medical treatment for their head injury, as only 45% got checked out, compared to 54% in 2018."*

Smith also commented on the reasons youth are missing out on the care they needed: *"We asked about any barriers youth experienced to accessing mental health services and the number 1 reason why they didn't get care in Fraser North was that they didn't want their parents to know. We also saw a rise from 5 years earlier in those who reported that they had not been able to access care because their parents would not take them. I think this tells us we have a lot of work to do with young people and their families to make sure youth who are struggling understand what can be kept confidential if they seek help. We also need to ensure there is no stigma attached to seeking mental health support, and that families can have their questions and concerns answered, so they can feel comfortable supporting their child to access services when they need them."*

Other results from the survey showed that Fraser North youth remained less likely to be sexually active and to use substances than those across BC. They were also less likely than local youth in previous survey years to have engaged in these behaviours (e.g., 14% had tried cannabis vs. 20% of Fraser North youth in 2018). However, reflecting a provincial trend of earlier initiation, local youth who had smoked tobacco or drank alcohol were more likely to have first done so at a younger age compared to those 5 years earlier. For example, among those who had tried alcohol, the percentage who had their first drink before their 13th birthday increased from 22% in 2018 to 26%.

To read the full results for Fraser North, please visit mcs.bc.ca/pdf/2023_bcchs_fraser_north.pdf.



McCreary Centre Society is a non-government, non-profit organization committed to improving the health of BC youth through research, evaluation, and community-based projects.

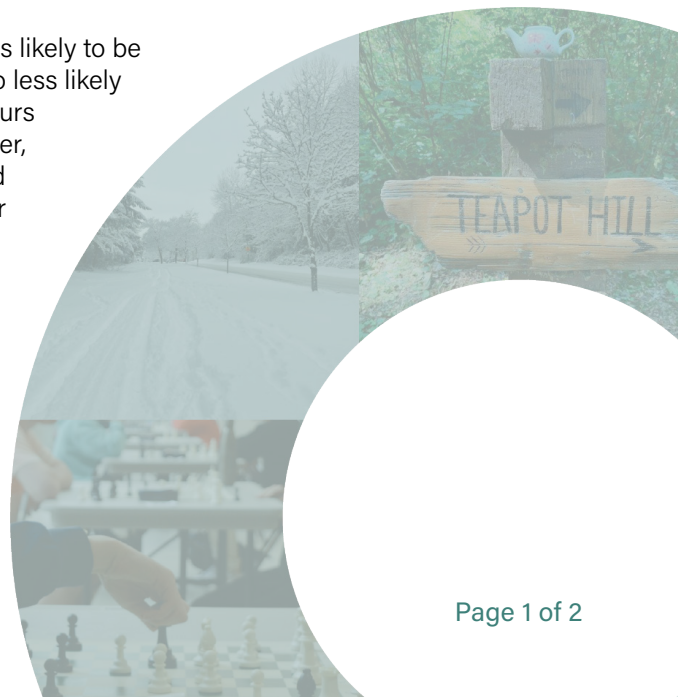
Founded in 1977, our vision is that all youth are supported to be healthy and connected.

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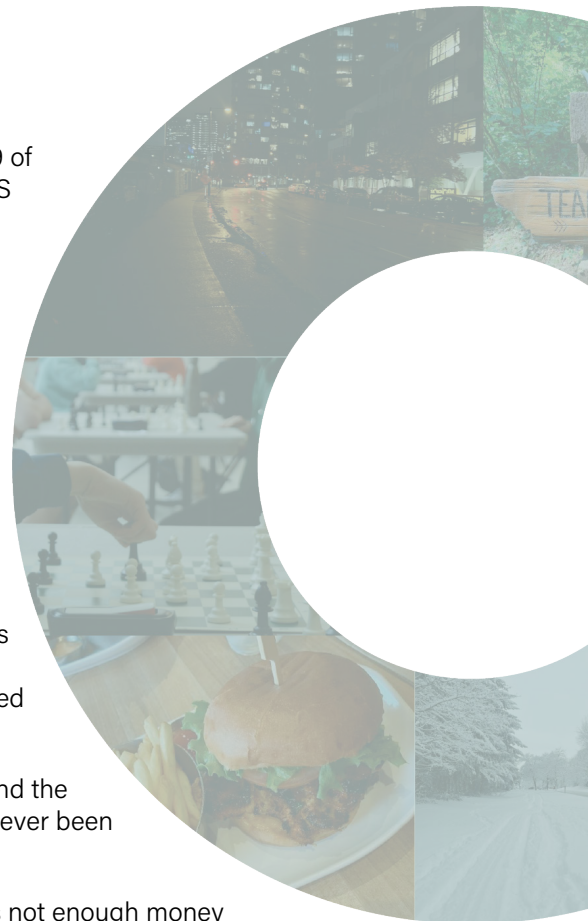


Backgrounder

The 2023 BC AHS was completed by around 38,500 young people aged 12–19 in 59 of BC's 60 school districts. This report is one of 16 regional reports of the 2023 BC AHS results. It shares data provided by students in Grades 7–12 in the Fraser North Health Service Delivery Area (HSDA). Fraser North HSDA is comprised of four school districts: New Westminster, Burnaby, Maple Ridge–Pitt Meadows, and Coquitlam. All school districts in this region have participated in the survey since 2008, and three of the four have participated in all seven waves of the survey. Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique students in Fraser North have also participated in the last two waves of the survey.

Some key findings for Fraser North:

- Fraser North youth were less likely than those across BC to have been born in Canada (67% vs. 77%), and were more likely to speak a language other than English at home at least some of the time (66% vs. 54%). Compared to students across BC, a greater percentage of local youth identified as East Asian; Middle Eastern; Southeast Asian; and Latin, South, or Central American. Fewer identified as Indigenous and European.
- Males were generally the most likely to report positive health and well-being, and the least likely to experience a range of adverse experiences. For example, 9% had ever been physically abused, compared to 14% of females and 31% of non-binary youth.
- Locally, 8% of youth went to bed hungry at least sometimes because there was not enough money for food. This reflected a decrease from 10% in 2018, and a return to the 2013 rate. Youth were also less likely than those 5 years earlier to feel deprived of material items their peers had (22% felt deprived of at least one item vs. 24% in 2018).
- Similar to trends across the province, local youth were less likely to rate their overall health as good or excellent (75% vs. 81% in 2018 vs. 87% in 2013), and to rate their mental health this positively (62% vs. 75% in 2018 vs. 81% in 2013).
- Compared to 5 years earlier, Fraser North youth were more likely to participate at least weekly in informal sports (52% vs. 49% in 2018) and extreme sports (10% vs. 7%).
- Similar to provincial findings, local youth were less likely than those 5 and 10 years earlier to feel like a part of their school (55% vs. 61% in 2013 and 2018), to feel safe there (e.g., 65% vs. 74% in 2018), and to plan to attend post-secondary (79% vs. 85% in 2018 vs. 90% in 2013).
- There was an increase in the percentage of youth who reported they had an adult both inside and outside their family they could talk to if they were having a serious problem (25% vs. 16% in 2018).
- The local survey results highlight some of the factors that can negatively affect health and well-being, such as experiencing deprivation; as well as the value of exercise, sleep, and access to healthy food. The results also clearly show the importance of youth feeling connected to family, culture, school, and community.



For more information about the BC Adolescent Health Survey, please visit mcs.bc.ca/about_bcahs.

