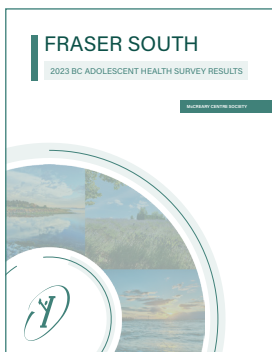


# Fraser South youth reporting strong connections to culture but also poorer mental health



Results from the 2023 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) were released today for the Fraser South region. The survey results confirmed the increasing diversity of the region. Compared to 5 years earlier, there was a rise in youth who had been in Canada for less than 2 years, came to Canada as international students (8% vs. 5% in 2018) or refugees (2% vs. 1%), and identified as a gender and/or sexual minority. For example, 4% identified as non-binary (vs. 1%), and 79% identified as straight (vs. 86%).

Youth in Fraser South were more likely than those across BC to live in multigenerational households (e.g., 21% lived with their grandparents vs. 14% provincially). They were also more likely to have caretaking responsibilities for a relative on a typical school day, and to have these responsibilities compared to local youth in previous survey years (e.g., 30% vs. 27% in 2018).

The survey also captured the importance of family, community, and culture to youth in the region. Fraser South Youth were more likely than those across BC to feel quite or very proud of their background (83% vs. 76% provincially), to participate at least weekly in cultural or traditional activities (20% vs. 13%), and to have eaten traditional food from their background the day before the survey (56% vs. 42%).

McCreary Centre Society's Executive Director, Dr Annie Smith, noted: *"We know that connection to culture and community can be huge protective factors for young people, so it is encouraging to see youth feeling like a part of their community, and engaging in local cultural activities. However, although local youth are more likely than those across BC to feel quite or very connected to their community, they are less likely to feel like they have an adult in their community who really cares about them, which is definitely something adults can be aware of and work on."*

Smith also spoke to the mental health statistics in the report: *"Across the province we have seen a decline in youth reporting positive mental health, and this region was no exception. This means that protective factors like having caring adults; feeling connected to school and community; and having the services and supports in place that youth need are even more important now than they were pre-COVID."*

Compared to 5 and 10 years earlier, Fraser South youth were less likely to rate their mental health as good or excellent (63% vs. 75% in 2018 vs. 84% in 2013). Males were the most likely to report positive mental health. For example, 76% rated their mental health as good or excellent, compared to 53% of females and 27% of non-binary youth.

Youth who experienced stress were less likely than those 5 years earlier to feel they managed their stress well or very well (51% vs. 55% in 2018). Also, the percentage who cut or injured themselves on purpose without the intention of killing themselves increased over the past decade (21% vs. 16% in 2018 vs. 14% in 2013).

To read the full results for Fraser South, please visit [mcs.bc.ca/pdf/2023\\_bcchs\\_fraser\\_south.pdf](https://mcs.bc.ca/pdf/2023_bcchs_fraser_south.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

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 South Health Service Delivery Area (HSDA). Fraser South HSDA is comprised of three school districts: Langley, Surrey, and Delta. Fraser South students in Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique also participated in the survey.

## Some key findings for Fraser South:

- Reflecting the provincial trend, local youth were less likely than those in previous survey years to sleep for 8 or more hours the night before taking the survey (42% vs. 48% in 2018 vs. 52% in 2013). Younger youth were the most likely to get at least 8 hours of sleep (e.g., 67% of Grade 7s got this much sleep vs. 26% of Grade 12s). Also, around 1 in 5 youth (21%) missed school in the past month because they slept in.
- During the school year, 23% of students worked at a paid job. This was a decrease from 27% in 2018, and lower than the 2023 provincial rate (32%). Compared to those across BC, local youth were more likely to be working to contribute to their family income (18% vs. 12%).
- Most youth planned to pursue post-secondary education (81% vs. 77% provincially). However, they were less likely than local youth in previous survey years to plan to continue their education after high school (81% vs. 87% in 2018 vs. 89% in 2013).
- Fraser South youth were less likely to have engaged in oral sex and sexual intercourse compared to local youth in previous survey years (e.g., 12% had ever had intercourse vs. 15% in 2018). Among youth who engaged in oral sex, 21% used protection the last time they did so. This was comparable to 2018, and an increase from 12% in 2013. However, condom use during intercourse declined from 71% in 2013 to 64% in 2018 to 55%.
- Youth in this region were less likely than those across BC to have vaped (19% vs. 26%), smoked tobacco (8% vs. 15%), tried alcohol (27% vs. 38%), and used cannabis (14% vs. 22%). However, Fraser South youth who had tried alcohol were more likely than those in previous survey years to have had their first drink before their 13<sup>th</sup> birthday (e.g., 24% vs. 18% in 2018).
- In the past 12 months, youth most commonly accessed health care through a family doctor (60% vs. 54% provincially). However, local youth were less likely than those 5 years earlier to have seen a family doctor (68% in 2018).
- Local youth were more likely than those across BC to indicate they could not swim (15% vs. 9%), and those who could swim were less likely to report they were a confident swimmer.
- Youth were more likely than 5 years earlier to have an adult inside their family they could talk to when they were having a serious problem (76% vs. 70% in 2018), as well as one outside their family (31% vs. 25%).
- The local survey findings 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\\_bcchs](https://mcs.bc.ca/about_bcchs).

