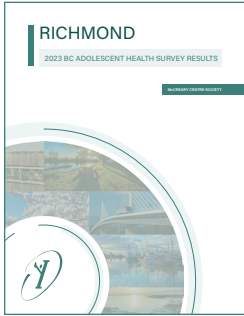


# Study finds Richmond youth less likely to exercise and to report positive mental health



McCreary Centre Society (McCreary) released the results of the 2023 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) for Grade 7–12 students in the Richmond area today.

As in previous years, there were many positive results for youth in the Richmond area. For example, Richmond youth (aged 12–19) remained less likely than their peers across BC to have engaged in sexual activity or used substances (e.g., 26% had tried alcohol vs. 38% provincially). Also, over a quarter of local youth (27%) volunteered in their community on a weekly basis (vs. 19% provincially), and 16% participated in cultural or traditional activities this frequently (vs. 13% provincially).

However, it was not all positive news as McCreary's Executive Director, Dr. Annie Smith, explained: *"Youth in Richmond have always been less likely to be sexually active and use substances compared to their peers in other parts of the province, but the survey results show us that local youth who have engaged in these behaviours are now more likely to be starting to do so at a younger age. For example, among those who had drunk alcohol, the percentage of Richmond youth who had their first drink before their 13<sup>th</sup> birthday rose from 18% in 2018 to 31% in 2023."*

Richmond youth were less likely than those across BC to participate in at least weekly physical activity in the past year, including informal sports such as biking and hiking (47% vs. 53%) and organized sports such as sports teams (44% vs. 49%). They were also less likely to report enjoying exercise and being able to swim (e.g., 13% could not swim at all vs. 9% provincially).

Smith reflected on these findings: *"I was concerned to see the percentage of youth who could not swim was above the provincial average, and that youth in Richmond were not only less likely to engage in sports and other types of regular physical activity, but were also less likely to report they enjoyed exercising. In comparison to many parts of the province, Richmond has some really good sports and exercise facilities so it is important to look at the reasons young people are not accessing these, and find ways that they can be supported to get the most out of the pools and other recreational facilities which are potentially available to them."*

*"We did ask young people on the survey about any barriers they experienced to engaging in extracurricular physical activity. The number 1 reason given by youth in Richmond was that they were too busy, but we also had 1 in 5 who said that they didn't engage because they thought it would be too competitive, 1 in 10 who couldn't afford to, and 1 in 10 who didn't feel welcome. Given the clear link between being physically active and more positive mental health, we need to ensure all young people get the opportunity to participate in fun, welcoming, and low barrier physical activities."*

In Richmond, there was a decrease in the percentage of youth who rated their overall health and their mental health positively (e.g., 60% rated their mental health as good or excellent compared to 74% in 2018 and 80% in 2013). Also, 49% felt quite or very hopeful for their future, which was lower than the provincial rate (59%) and a local decrease from 60% in 2018.

To read the full results for Richmond, please visit [mcs.bc.ca/pdf/2023\\_bcchs\\_richmond.pdf](https://mcs.bc.ca/pdf/2023_bcchs_richmond.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.

#### For interviews, contact:

**Annie Smith**  
Executive Director  
Tel: 604-291-1996 ext. 225  
Cell: 604-728-9494  
Email: [annie@mcs.bc.ca](mailto:annie@mcs.bc.ca)

#### Where to find us:

3552 Hastings Street East  
Vancouver, BC, V5K 2A7

# 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, and shares data provided by students in Grades 7–12 in the Richmond Health Service Delivery Area (HSDA). Richmond HSDA includes Richmond School District (SD 38), and local students in Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique (SD 93).

## Some key findings for Richmond:

- Results from the 2023 BC AHS showed that, as in previous years, youth aged 12–19 in Richmond continued to be less likely than those across BC to have been born in Canada (62% vs. 77% provincially). Also, the majority spoke a language other than English at home at least some of the time (81% vs. 54% provincially).
- One in 4 local youth who were born abroad had arrived in Canada within the past 2 years (vs. 13% in 2018). There was also an increase in the percentage of youth who arrived in Canada as an international student (11% vs. 8% in 2018) or refugee (3% vs. 1% 2018).
- The percentage of youth who had caretaking responsibilities for a relative on a typical school day was higher than 5 and 10 years earlier (e.g., 29% vs. 24% in 2018).
- Local youth were less likely than youth across BC to work at a paid job (25% vs. 32%). Among those who worked, youth in Richmond were more likely to report that the reason they worked was to contribute to their family's income (19% vs. 12% provincially).
- Richmond youth were less likely than those 5 years earlier to plan to attend post-secondary education (84% vs. 87% in 2018). However, local youth remained more likely than youth across BC to plan to attend (77% provincially in 2023).
- Compared to 5 years earlier, local youth were less likely to sleep for 8 or more hours the night before taking the survey (39% vs. 43% in 2018). They were more likely to report not having a quiet place to sleep, and to report they missed breakfast on school days (25% vs. 13% in 2018).
- Compared to the province as a whole, local youth were more likely to have felt or been told that their social media use had reached a point where they needed help (21% vs. 18% provincially). Also, 16% had reached this point with their video gaming (vs. 12% provincially).
- Around a quarter of youth (24%) had an adult both inside and outside their family they could talk to if they were having a serious problem. This was an increase from 16% in 2018.
- 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\\_bcchs](https://mcs.bc.ca/about_bcchs).

