

# VANCOUVER

2023 BC ADOLESCENT HEALTH SURVEY RESULTS

McCREARY CENTRE SOCIETY



We gratefully acknowledge that the data shared in this report was gathered on the ancestral, traditional, and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəγ̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tseil-Waututh) Nations. We also acknowledge the ancestral and continuing connection to the land of the Métis Nation.

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*Quotes from Vancouver youth who participated in the BC AHS are included throughout the report. Photographs taken by Vancouver youth as part of a BC AHS photovoice project are also included. To view the complete photovoice project, please visit [mcs.bc.ca/pdf/2023\\_bcahs\\_photovoice.pdf](https://mcs.bc.ca/pdf/2023_bcahs_photovoice.pdf).*

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# Key findings

The 2023 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) results for youth (aged 12–19) in Vancouver showed:

- East Asian was the most common family background (40% vs. 17% provincially). However, youth were less likely than in previous survey years to identify as East Asian (47% in 2018 and 2013). Also, they were more likely to identify as European (31% vs. 26% in 2018); and Latin, South, or Central American (7% vs. 5% in 2018 and 2013).
- Local youth were less likely than youth across BC to have been born in Canada (69% vs. 77% provincially), and were more likely to speak a language other than English at home at least some of the time (72% vs. 54%).
- Vancouver youth were more likely to identify as a gender and sexual minority than in previous survey years. For example, the percentage who identified as straight decreased from 82% in 2018 to 72%.
- Youth in Vancouver were less likely than those across BC to work at a paid job during the school year (22% vs. 32%). Among those who worked, local youth were more likely to report working to contribute to their family's income (18% vs. 12% provincially).
- Most youth rated as good or excellent their overall health (74%) and mental health (63%). Consistent with the pattern across the province, there were decreases in positive health and well-being ratings over the past decade (e.g., 65% felt their life was going well vs. 70% in 2018).
- Youth most commonly accessed health care through a family doctor in the past year, but were less likely to have accessed a family doctor than Vancouver youth 5 years earlier (55% vs. 64% in 2018).
- Local youth were less likely than those across BC to have vaped (19% vs. 26%). Also, as in previous survey years, they were less likely to have smoked tobacco (10% vs. 15%), tried alcohol (31% vs. 38%), and used cannabis (15% vs. 22%).
- Vancouver youth were less likely than those across BC to participate at least weekly in extra-curricular physical activities, such as informal sports (44% vs. 53% provincially) and extreme sports (8% vs. 12%). Also, they were more likely to be unable to swim than youth across the province (11% vs. 9%).
- Reflecting provincial findings, local youth were generally less likely than those 5 years earlier to feel connected to school (e.g., 57% felt like a part of their school vs. 61% in 2018) and to feel safe there (65% vs. 75% in 2018). They were also less likely to feel connected to their community (37% felt quite or very connected vs. 40% in 2018).
- Provincially, there was a decrease from 2018 in youth who planned to continue their education beyond high school. In Vancouver, 83% planned to go to college, university, or trade school. This percentage was comparable to 5 years earlier and higher than the rate across BC (77%).
- Most youth felt connected to their family. However, they were less likely to feel their family understood them than youth in previous survey years (52% vs. 59% in 2013 and 2018). Vancouver youth were less likely than those across the province to feel their parents or guardians knew what they were doing online and to report they would turn to their parents for reliable health information.
- There was an increase over time in youth who reported having supportive adults in their life whom they could speak to if they were having a serious problem. This included an adult inside their family (73% vs. 68% in 2018) and an adult outside their family (29% vs. 24%).
- 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 demonstrate the importance of youth feeling connected to family, culture, school, and community.



# Introduction

The 2023 BC AHS was completed by around 38,500 young people aged 12–19 in 59 of BC's 60 school districts. The survey was developed in consultation with young people, parents, and other experts in youth health. It was pilot-tested with diverse young people in communities across BC before being administered in Vancouver by Public Health Nurses and Langara College nursing students to students in mainstream public schools in the spring of 2023.

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 Vancouver Health Service Delivery Area (HSDA). Vancouver (SD 39) has participated in all seven waves of the survey since 1992. Vancouver students in Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique (SD 93) have participated in the last two waves of the survey.

This report provides a health profile of youth (aged 12–19) in Vancouver. It includes comparisons to results across the province, as well as to local results over the past decade. It also includes grade and gender comparisons. The terms 'male,' 'female,' and 'non-binary' are used to describe the three gender categories used in the analysis. These terms reflect the preference of BC youth who participated in discussions about terminology, and for whom the terms 'boys' and 'girls' did not resonate. Non-binary youth include those who did not identify as male or female or were not yet sure of their gender identity.

## *Limitations*

The 2023 BC AHS is considered representative of 97.6% of BC youth aged 12–19 who were attending mainstream schools in the province. However, it may not be representative of all youth in this age range. For example, the BC AHS does not include students who were absent on the day the survey was administered, had a health or learning challenge which prevented them from completing the survey, were attending an independent school, or were home-schooled.

## *Using this report*

All reported comparisons and associations within Vancouver HSDA and to previous survey years are statistically significant at  $p < .05$ . This means there is less than a 5% likelihood these results occurred by chance. Comparisons between Vancouver HSDA and the province are statistically significant at  $p < .01$ , which means there is less than a 1% likelihood that the results occurred by chance.

Where it is not obvious, differences in tables or charts that are not statistically significant are noted.

Any percentage that is marked with an asterisk (\*) should be interpreted with caution, as it has a higher standard error than others, but is still within the releasable range.

The terms 'youth' and 'student' are used interchangeably to refer to BC AHS participants aged 12–19.

For more details about the BC AHS methodology and to read other BC AHS reports, visit [mcs.bc.ca/about\\_bcahs](https://mcs.bc.ca/about_bcahs).

# Profile of youth in Vancouver

Youth in Vancouver made up 9% of the Grade 7–12 students who participated in the 2023 BC AHS.

## Family background

Vancouver youth most commonly identified as East Asian. However, they were less likely to identify as East Asian than local youth 5 and 10 years earlier (40% vs. 47% in 2013 and 2018). There was an increase from previous survey years in youth who identified as European (31% vs. 26% in 2018); Latin, South, or Central American (7% vs. 5% in 2018); and who did not know their family background (4% vs. 2% in 2013 and 2018).

Local youth were more likely than those across the province to identify as East Asian; Southeast Asian; and Latin, South, or Central American. They were less likely to identify as European, South Asian, Indigenous, and another background. They were also less likely to not know their family background.

Family background		
	Vancouver	BC
East Asian	40%	17%
European	31%	43%
Southeast Asian	16%	8%
South Asian	8%	13%
Latin American, South American, Central American	7%	5%
Indigenous	4%	10%
Middle Eastern	3%	4%
African	3%	3%
Australian, Pacific Islander	1%	2%
Caribbean	1%	1%
Other	3%	4%
Don't know	4%	12%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Note: The difference between Vancouver and BC was not statistically significant for 'Middle Eastern' and 'Australian, Pacific Islander.'



## Indigenous youth

Among local Indigenous youth:

- 63% identified as First Nations; 24% as Métis; and 16% as another Indigenous background, including Inuit (they could mark all that applied).
- 13% previously lived on reserve and 15% were currently living on reserve.
- 25% could speak at least a few words of an Indigenous language.
- 10% identified as Two-Spirit.

Just under half of local Indigenous youth reported that at least one of their family members had been in residential school, including their parents (5%) and grandparents (34%). This is likely an under-representation as 26% of Indigenous youth did not know their family history of residential school.

An in-depth look at the health and well-being of Indigenous youth who completed the BC AHS will be published by McCreary's Young Indigenous Research Team (YIRT).

## Racial identity and religious affiliation

For the first time, the BC AHS asked youth about their racial identity. Vancouver youth were more likely than those across the province to identify as Asian (57% vs. 31% provincially); and were less likely to identify as White (35% vs. 57%), Indigenous (2% vs. 6%), and another racial identity (3% vs. 5%).

Racial identity	
Asian	57%
White	35%
Latin American/Hispanic	5%
Black	3%
Indigenous	2%
Mixed background	6%
Other	3%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied. Some youth of mixed racial backgrounds chose a single racial identity, while others selected more than one identity, and/or selected the option 'mixed background'.

Youth were also asked about their religious affiliation. Just under half (48%) indicated they did not identify with a religion, and 7% did not know their religion. Local youth were more likely than those across BC to affiliate with Buddhism (7% vs. 3% provincially), and were less likely to affiliate with Sikhism (4% vs. 8%) and Traditional (Indigenous) spirituality (1% vs. 2%).

Religious affiliation	
Christian	26%
Buddhist	7%
Sikh	4%
Muslim	3%
Hindu	2%
Jewish	2%
Traditional (Indigenous) spirituality	1%
Other	2%

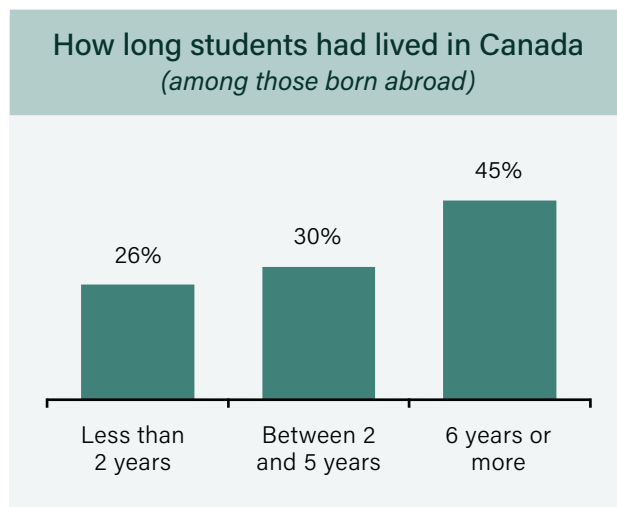
Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

## Time in Canada

Just over two thirds of youth (69%) were born in Canada, which was comparable to findings over the past decade. Local youth remained less likely to have been born in Canada than those across BC (77% provincially).

Immigration	
Born in Canada	69%
Born abroad and now a permanent resident or Canadian citizen	21%
Arrived in Canada as an international student	9%
Arrived in Canada as a refugee	1%

Among youth born abroad, 26% had been in Canada for less than 2 years, which was an increase from 5 and 10 years earlier (e.g., 20% in 2018).



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

## Gender identity and sexual orientation

In Vancouver, 51% of youth identified as male, 44% as female, and 5% as non-binary (vs. 2% in 2018). For 94% of youth, their gender identity matched their sex assigned at birth (vs. 98% in 2018).

Most youth (72%) identified their sexual orientation as straight. However, the percentage who identified as straight was lower than 5 and 10 years earlier (e.g., 82% in 2018), and there was an increase in youth who identified as a sexual minority (e.g., 2% identified as gay or lesbian vs. 1% in 2018).

Sexual orientation	
Straight	72%
Mostly straight	7%
Bisexual or pansexual	10%
Not sure	6%
Gay or lesbian	2%
Asexual	2%
Other	<1%

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

Males were the most likely to identify as straight, and non-binary youth were the least likely (86% of males vs. 64% of females vs. 4% of non-binary youth).

An in-depth look at the health and well-being of gender and sexual minority youth in BC will be published in partnership with the Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre (SARAVYC). For more information, please visit [saravyc.ubc.ca](http://saravyc.ubc.ca).

# Home life

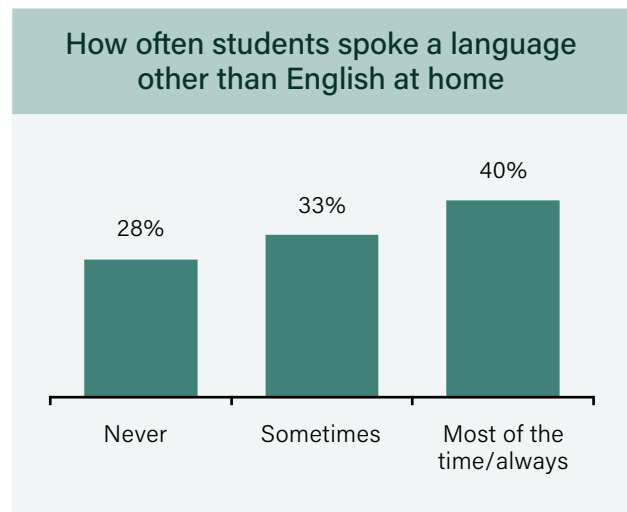
Most youth lived in a household with at least one of their parents, and there was an increase in those who lived with two mothers or two fathers (just over 1% vs. just under 1% in 2018). There was a local decrease in those whose household included their grandparents (14% vs. 18% in 2018).

Who youth lived with most of the time	
Mother/stepmother	90%
Father/stepfather	78%
Two mothers or two fathers	1%
Sibling(s)/stepsibling(s)	67%
Grandparent(s)	14%
Foster parent(s)	1%
Their own child or children	<1%
Other adults related to them	5%
Other adults not related to them	2%
Other children or youth	2%
Lived alone	<1%
Lived with both parents at different times	7%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

## Language spoken at home

The majority of youth (72%) spoke a language other than English at home at least some of the time. This percentage was consistent over the past decade and higher than the provincial rate in 2023 (54%).



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

# Caretaking responsibilities

***"[I'm really good at] taking care of pets."***

15-year-old youth

On an average school day, 23% of youth took care of a relative (e.g., a relative with a disability, or their younger sibling), and 40% took care of a pet or other animal. Youth were more likely to take care of a pet or other animal than in previous survey years (e.g., 30% in 2018).

There were no gender differences for taking care of a relative, but males were the least likely to have caretaking responsibilities for a pet or other animal (36% vs. 42% of females vs. 54% of non-binary youth).

# Government care experience

Youth experienced various types of government care (including through a delegated agency), as well as alternatives to government care, such as a Youth Agreement.

Types of care youth had experienced		
	In the past year	Ever
Extended Family Program or Out of Care Order	1%	2%
Foster home	1%	2%
Youth Agreement	1%	1%
Group home	1%	1%
Custody centre/ detention centre	<1%	1%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

McCreary's Youth Research Academy (YRA) will be releasing a report considering the health and well-being of youth with care experience.



# Parental monitoring

*“Dealing with strict parents is a topic not often talked about. Personally, it’s something that makes me depressed and anxious, just to be home ... I feel trapped without any freedom.”*

16-year-old youth

Youth were asked how much they felt their parents or guardians monitored what they were doing in their free time and online. Parents were more likely to know what youth were doing with their free time than their time online.

Compared to local youth 5 years earlier, Vancouver youth were more likely to report that their parents rarely or never monitored their time online (41% vs. 38% in 2018). They were also more likely to feel this way than youth across BC in 2023 (38% provincially).

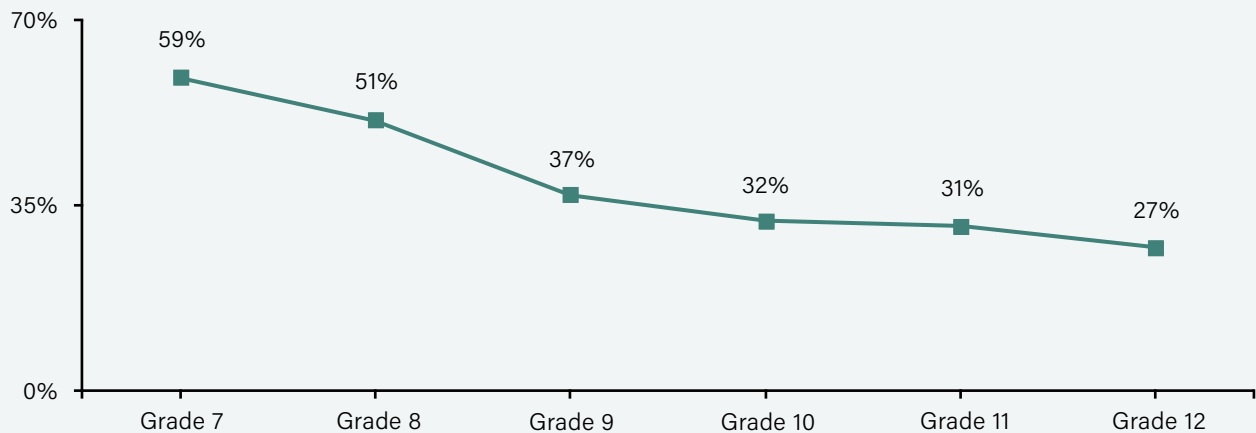
As might be expected, youth in higher grades were less likely than those in lower grades to report that their parents monitored their free time and time online.

In the past 30 days, how much youth felt their parents knew what they were doing ...

	Never/rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time/always
With their free time	14%	17%	69%
Online	41%	21%	39%

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

Parents knew what students were doing online most of the time/always in the past 30 days



Note: Not all differences between grades were statistically significant.

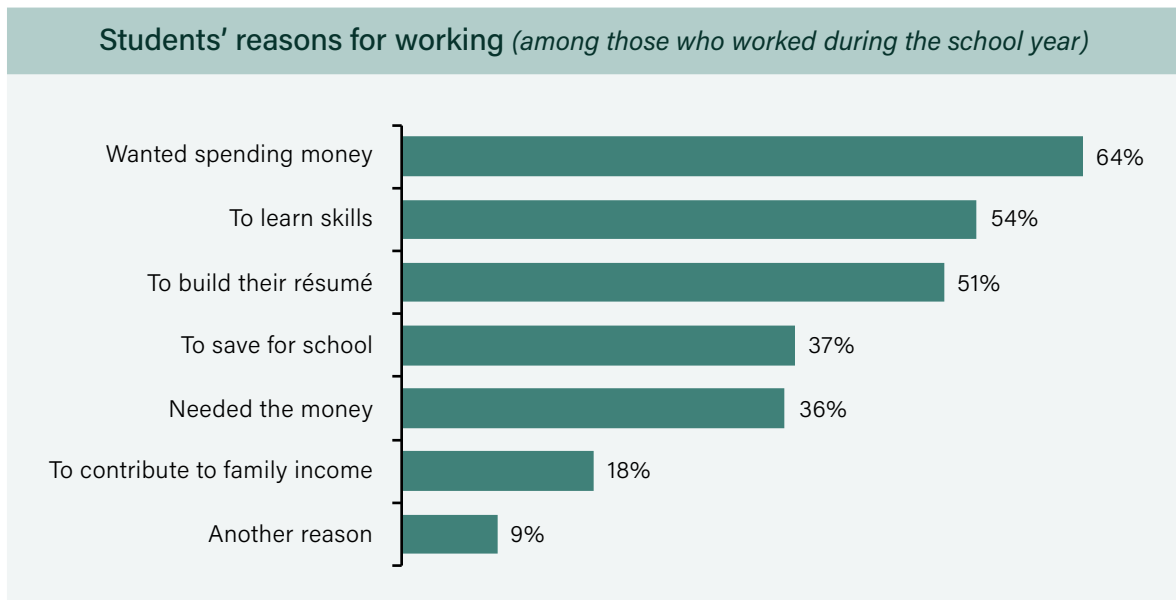
# Economic well-being

Economic well-being is a key component of young people's overall well-being. It can include access to employment opportunities, stable housing, nutritious meals, and material items.

## Employment

During the school year, 22% of students worked at a paid job. This rate was similar to 5 years earlier, and lower than the provincial rate in 2023 (32%). Youth most commonly worked fewer than 13 hours a week, with 8% working less than 5 hours and 10% working 5 to 12 hours. Also, 3% of youth worked 13 to 20 hours and 1% worked 21 or more hours a week. There were no gender differences in hours worked.

When asked about their main reasons for working, most youth reported they wanted spending money. However, 18% of those who worked did so to contribute to their family's income (vs. 12% provincially).



Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

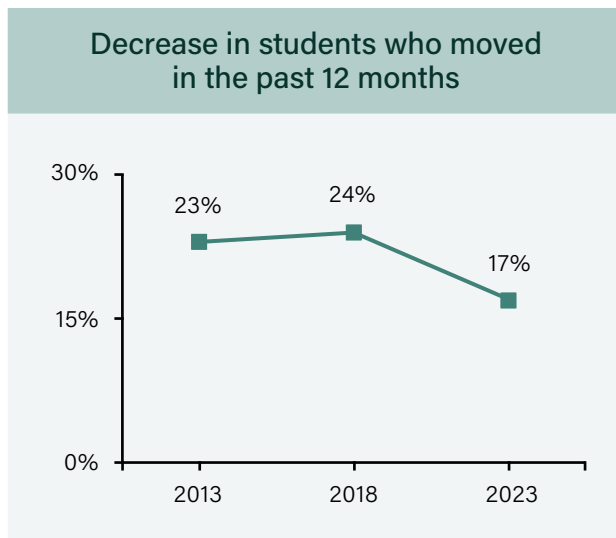


## Unstable housing

Most youth (94%) often or always felt safe in their home. However, 2% rarely or never felt safe there. Males were the most likely to feel safe in their home (96% vs. 93% of females vs. 82% of non-binary youth).

Reflecting provincial results, 5% of youth ran away from home (vs. 7% in 2018) and 3% were kicked out (vs. 5% in 2018) in the past 12 months. Two percent of youth experienced homelessness during this time.

Also reflecting the provincial picture, 17% of youth moved in the past 12 months, including 2% who moved three or more times. Youth were less likely to have moved than those 5 and 10 years earlier.



Note: The difference between 2013 and 2018 was not statistically significant.

## Material deprivation

In 2018, McCreary developed a 10-item Youth Deprivation Index with the help of 800 youth across the province (including youth in Vancouver). In preparation for the 2023 BC AHS, over 500 youth reviewed the Index to determine if it was still relevant. They confirmed that the 10 items still captured deprivation from a youth's perspective. They also indicated the need for the addition of an 11<sup>th</sup> item—personal hygiene products.

Youth generally had each of the items in the Index. However, 13% lacked but wished they had one item, 5% lacked two items, and 5% lacked three or more items. The percentage of youth who reported being deprived of three or more items increased from 3% in 2018. This trend was observed with and without the addition of the 11<sup>th</sup> item.

There were some differences in the individual items youth reported feeling deprived of compared to 5 years earlier. For example, they were more likely to report being deprived of money to spend on themselves (9% vs. 7% in 2018) and clothes to fit in (4% vs. 2%), and were less likely to feel deprived of a smartphone (4% vs. 6%).

Youth who lacked but wished they had ...	
Money to spend on themselves	9%
Space of their own to hang out in	9%
Equipment/clothes for extracurricular activities	4%
Clothes to fit in	4%
Smartphone	4%
Lunch for school/money to buy lunch	4%
A quiet place to sleep	3%
Money for school supplies, school trips, and extracurricular activities	3%
Access to transportation	2%
Personal hygiene products (e.g., soap, deodorant)	1%
Access to the Internet	1%

# Food security

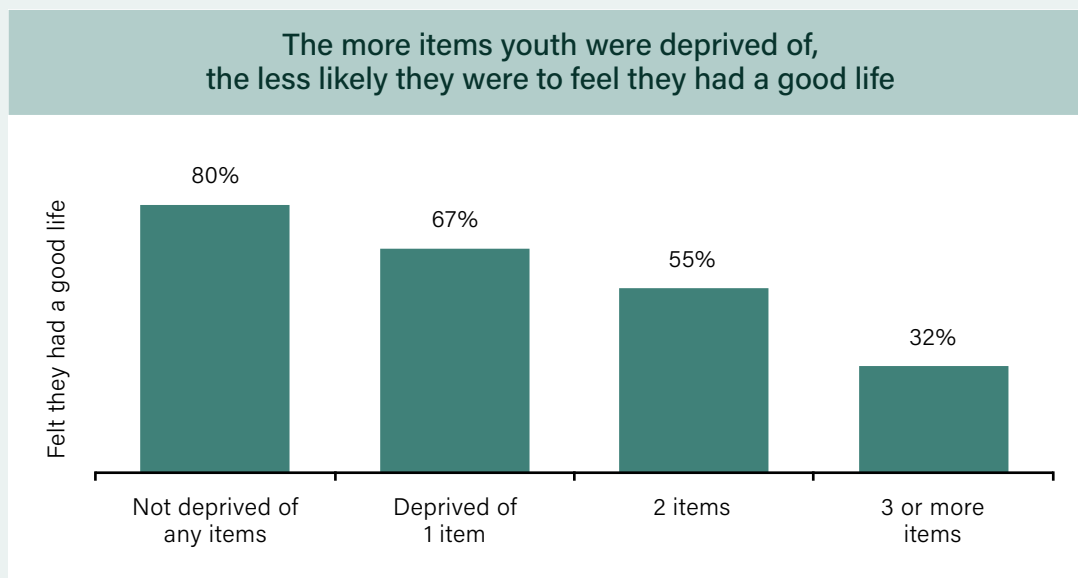
In the past 12 months, 5% of youth cut the size of their meals or skipped meals because there was not enough money for food.

Also, 6% went to bed hungry at least sometimes because there was not enough money for food (vs. 10% in 2018), including 1% who often or always went to bed hungry.

Comparable to youth across BC, 3% of local youth ate food from a food bank the day before completing the survey.

## Why is economic well-being important?

Youth who experience poorer economic well-being are less likely than their peers to report positive health. For example, the more items from the Youth Deprivation Index that youth felt deprived of, the less likely they were to report good or excellent mental health, satisfaction with their life, and hopefulness.



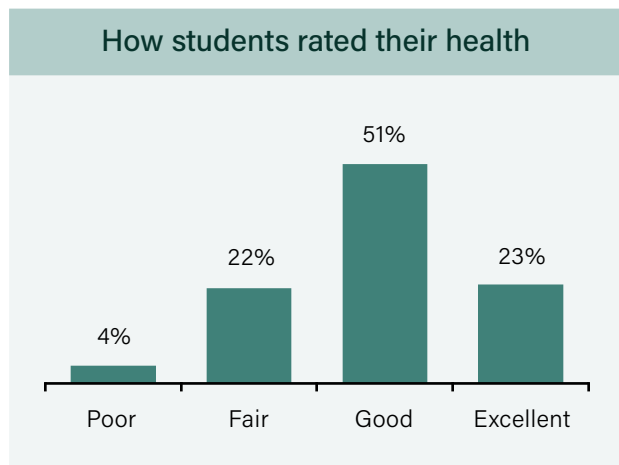
Similarly, youth who went to bed hungry because there was not enough money for food were less likely than those who never went to bed hungry to report good or excellent overall health (47% vs. 76%). They were also more likely to experience extreme stress in the past month (25% vs. 10%) and to use substances such as opioids, which are an appetite suppressor (3% had used heroin, fentanyl, or other opioids vs. <1% of youth who never went to bed hungry).

# Physical health

During adolescence, young people's bodies change physically, and they begin to make their own decisions around their physical health including sleep, nutrition, and physical activity. It is a time when they can learn to make healthy choices that can influence their behaviours into adulthood. It is also a time when they may take risks to their physical health, which can result in accidents and injuries.

## Health ratings

Most youth rated their health as good or excellent. However, there was a decrease in positive health ratings over the past decade. For example, 86% rated their health as good or excellent in 2013, compared to 82% in 2018 and 74% in 2023. Males were the most likely to rate their health as good or excellent (80% vs. 71% of females vs. 42% of non-binary youth).



## Sleep

***"Sleep is the biggest factor that can affect my day-to-day health. 7-8 hours is not enough for me."***

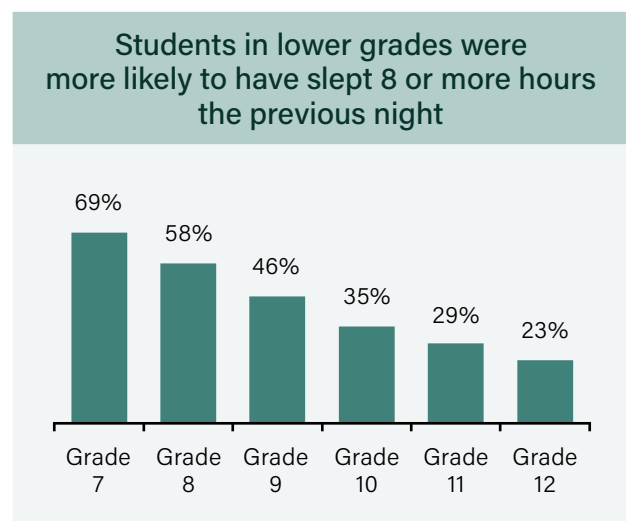
14-year-old youth

***"I have a hard time falling asleep—my brain is usually too active."***

16-year-old youth

Around 4 in 10 local youth (42%) slept for at least 8 hours on the night before completing the survey, while 17% slept for 5 hours or less. Provincially, the percentage of students who got at least 8 hours of sleep decreased from 5 and 10 years earlier. In Vancouver, rates were similar to 5 years earlier, and lower than in 2013 (48%).

Youth in lower grades were more likely than those in higher grades to get at least 8 hours sleep. For example, youth in Grade 7 were three times as likely as those in Grade 12 to have slept for 8 or more hours the night before taking the survey.



Note: The difference between Grade 11 and Grade 12 was not statistically significant.

Most youth were able to sleep undisturbed the previous night. However, 22% reported that their sleep was interrupted.

One in 10 youth (10%) went offline after they went to bed, and did not engage in any activities (e.g., they put their phone on silent, turned it off, or put it in another room). The majority of students engaged in at least one activity after they were expected to be asleep.

Activities youth engaged in after they were expected to be asleep	
Scrolling through social media	64%
Chatting or texting	59%
Doing homework	58%
Gaming (other than esports)	30%
Playing/watching esports	21%
Doing other things online (e.g., watching videos)	67%

There were some gender differences in the activities youth engaged in after they were expected to be asleep. Females were the most likely to be chatting or texting (e.g., 67% vs. 55% of non-binary youth) and doing their homework (66% vs. 53% of males). Males were the most likely to be playing or watching esports (e.g., 30% vs. 16% of non-binary youth), and the least likely to be scrolling through social media (e.g., 57% vs. 72% of females). Females were more likely than males to engage in at least one activity after they were expected to be asleep (92% vs. 88%).

## Health conditions and disabilities

Youth experienced a range of physical and cognitive conditions and disabilities. (Mental health conditions are discussed in the *Mental health and well-being* section.)

The percentage of youth who reported having a learning disability doubled from 5 and 10 years earlier (6% vs. 3% in 2013 and 2018).

Health conditions and disabilities	
A learning disability (e.g., dyslexia)	6%
A long-term/chronic medical condition	6%
Deaf or hard of hearing	1%
Blind or visual impairment which cannot be corrected with glasses/contact lenses	1%
A physical disability (e.g., cerebral palsy, use a wheelchair)	<1%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Among youth with a health condition or disability, 31% did not experience any barriers because of their condition, while 51% had what they needed to overcome the barriers they experienced, and 18% did not have what they needed. These percentages were all similar to those across BC.



# Injuries

In the past 12 months, 29% of youth were injured seriously enough to need medical attention (with no gender differences). Local youth were more likely than those 5 years earlier to have been seriously injured (22% in 2018), but less likely than youth across BC (33% in 2023).

Youth were also asked specifically if they experienced a concussion in the past year (i.e., a head injury that was so serious they lost consciousness, were dazed, confused, or suffered a gap in memory). Locally, 10% of youth had experienced a concussion (11% of males vs. 9% of females).

As with serious injuries, local youth were less likely than those across BC to report a concussion (10% vs. 15% provincially). However, they were more likely than local youth 5 years earlier to have been concussed (8% in 2018).

When asked what they were doing when they got their concussion, youth most commonly reported they were playing or training for organized sports.

There were some gender differences in how youth got their most serious concussion. For example, among those who had been concussed, males were the most likely to get their concussion while riding a bike, and were more likely than females to be concussed while skateboarding.

Among youth who experienced a concussion in the past 12 months, 40% received medical treatment for their most serious head injury. This was comparable to the provincial rate.

## Access to health care

***“I have not been able to find a family doctor for 3 years now. I have had many health issues and need a family doctor. It has been very difficult.”***

18-year-old youth

### How youth got their most serious concussion in the past 12 months (among those who had been concussed)

Playing/training for organized sports	35%
Using alcohol or other substances	16%
Playing recreational sports (without a coach)	13%
Fighting with another person	8%
Riding a bike	7%
Riding/driving in a motor vehicle	5%
Skateboarding	5%
Working	3%
Other	23%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

In the past 12 months, 23% of youth reported they had not needed to access health care, and 2% had not been able to get the care they needed (vs. 4% in 2018).

Males were more likely than females to report not needing health care (24% vs. 20%), and non-binary youth were the most likely to report not getting the care they needed (7% vs. 2% of males and females).

Youth who accessed health care most commonly did so through a family doctor. There were some differences in where youth got their health care compared to 5 years earlier. For example, they were less likely to have accessed a family doctor (55% vs. 64% in 2018), walk-in clinic (23% vs. 29%), and youth clinic (3% vs. 5%).

### Where youth got health care in the past 12 months

Family doctor	55%
Specialist (e.g., dermatologist, psychiatrist)	32%
Walk-in clinic	23%
Emergency room (ER)	13%
Counsellor/psychologist	9%
Nurse	8%
Youth clinic	3%
School wellness centre	2%
Traditional healer	1%
Foundry centre/Foundry Virtual BC	1%
Other	3%

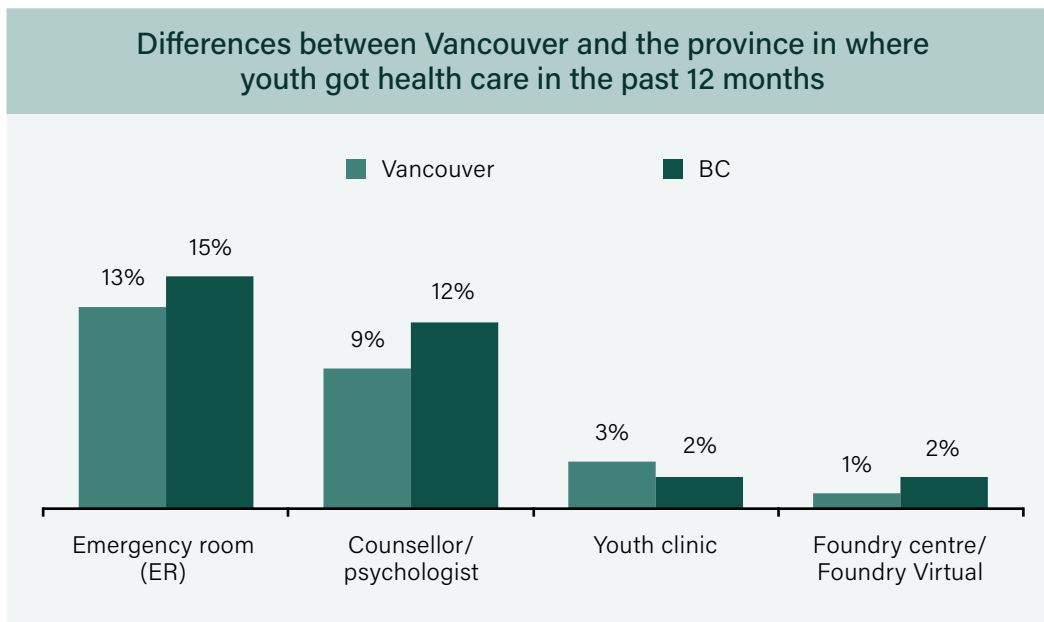
Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Local youth were less likely than those across BC to access an emergency room, a counsellor/psychologist, and a Foundry centre. However, they were more likely to access a youth clinic.

Youth were asked specifically if they had needed medical treatment in the past 12 months because they were physically sick or hurt. The majority (63%) had not needed treatment, and among those who needed treatment, most (81%) got the care they needed.

Most youth (83%) had been to a dentist within the past 12 months, while 10% last visited a dentist 12–24 months ago, and 6% had last been more than 2 years ago. Around 2% of youth had never been to the dentist, which was comparable to the provincial rate.

### Differences between Vancouver and the province in where youth got health care in the past 12 months



# Exercise

Regular exercise is an important component of well-being. (Engagement in sports and other extracurricular physical activity is discussed in the **Recreational activities** section.)

Most youth (84%) got at least an hour of moderate to vigorous exercise every week (vs. 88% provincially).

Number of days in the past week youth got at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise	
0 days	16%
1 day	10%
2 days	12%
3 days	14%
4 days	11%
5 days	15%
6 days	7%
All 7 days	14%

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

*The latest Canadian guidelines for physical activity recommend that youth aged 12–17 do an hour of moderate to vigorous activity every day, and those aged 18 and older get at least 2.5 hours of this type of exercise per week.*

Among youth aged 12–17, 14% engaged in 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise every day in the past week (comparable to 5 and 10 years earlier). Males in this age group were more likely than females to get this much exercise daily (19% vs. 9%). Local youth were less likely than those across BC to exercise every day in the past week (14% vs. 17% provincially).

Among youth aged 18 and older, 52% participated in 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise on at least 3 days in the past week. Males were the most likely to exercise this often (e.g., 64%\* vs. 34%\* of females).

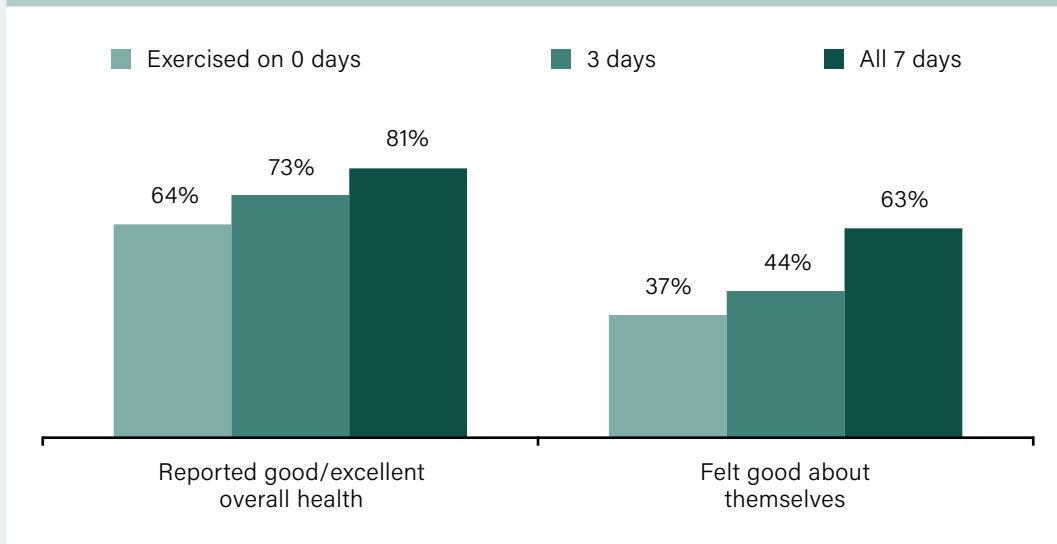
Most youth (85%) reported that they enjoyed exercising and being physically active at least somewhat, including 30% who enjoyed exercising very much.



## Why is physical health important?

Youth who engage in health-promoting behaviours are more likely to experience positive mental health and life satisfaction. For example, youth who slept for at least 8 hours the night before taking the survey were more likely to report good or excellent mental health (78% vs. 51% who slept fewer hours). Also, the more days on which youth exercised, the more likely they were to report positive overall health and mental health.

### The more days students exercised in the past week, the more likely they were to report positive health and well-being



Note: Exercise refers to engaging in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise.



# Eating behaviours and body image

## Meals and snacks

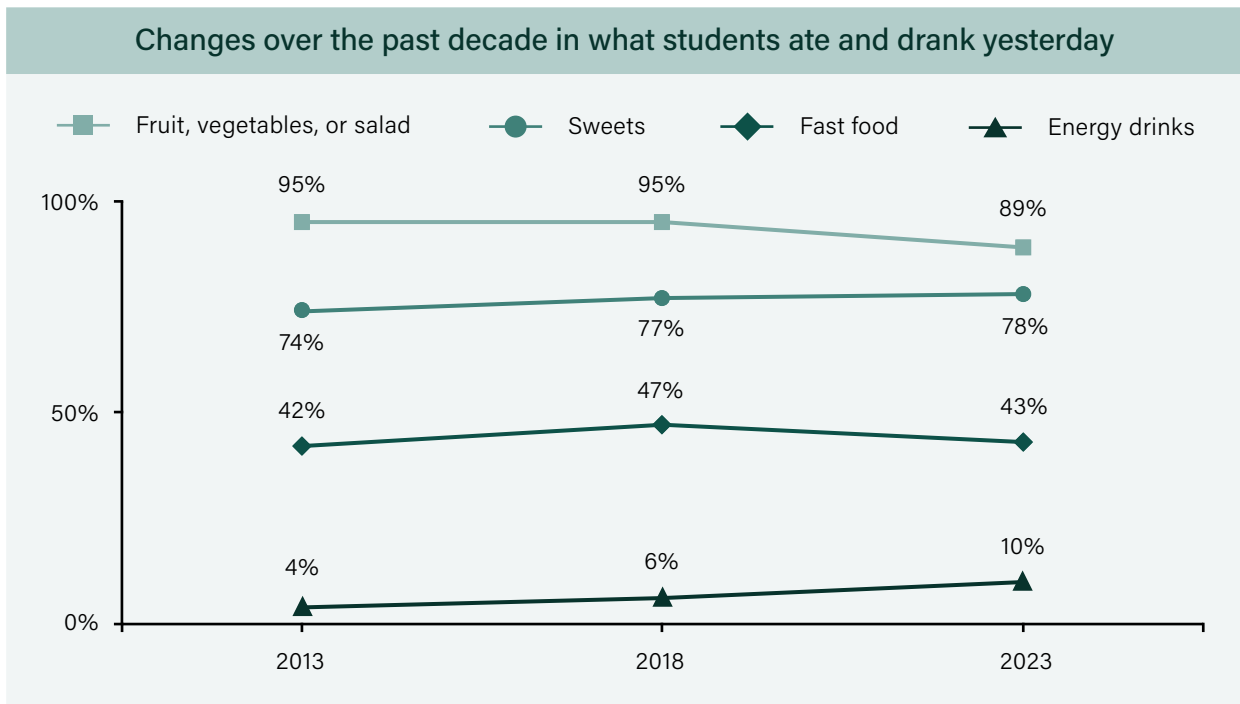
***"I am fit and healthy. I do not eat lunch on school days/weekdays but I do have a heavy breakfast with rice."***

15-year-old youth

Youth were asked about meals and snacks they had eaten on the day before taking the survey, and about where these came from.

Compared to 5 years earlier, youth were less likely to have eaten traditional food from their background (56% vs. 64% in 2018) and fruit, vegetables, or salad (89% vs. 95%). However, they were more likely than youth across BC to have consumed these foods (provincially, 42% ate traditional food; and 86% consumed fruit, vegetables, or salad).

Local youth were also less likely than those 5 years earlier to have eaten fast food, but were more likely to have consumed energy drinks. The percentage who had consumed energy drinks was lower than the provincial rate (10% vs. 15% provincially).



Note: The differences between 2018 and 2023 for 'sweets', and between 2013 and 2023 for 'fast food', were not statistically significant.

Most youth reported that they ate meals and snacks prepared by their parent or caregiver on the day before they completed the BC AHS (86% vs. 83% provincially). Compared to youth across BC, local youth were less likely to have eaten food they prepared themselves (53% vs. 62% provincially).

Source of students' meals and snacks yesterday	
Prepared by parent/caregiver	86%
Prepared themselves	53%
Restaurant, food court, or delivery service	34%
Taken home from a school food program	4%
Food bank	3%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Around 4 in 5 youth ate dinner every day in the week before they completed the BC AHS. Fewer ate breakfast and lunch that regularly.

	Meals eaten in the past 7 days				
	0 days	1-2 days	3-4 days	5-6 days	All 7 days
Breakfast	13%	14%	12%	15%	46%
Lunch	4%	6%	10%	17%	63%
Dinner	<1%	2%	4%	11%	82%

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

Just under a quarter of youth in Vancouver (23%) did not eat breakfast on school days. This was lower than the rate across BC (29% provincially), and higher than the local rate 5 years earlier (14% in 2018).

Where youth got breakfast on school days	2018		2023	
	2018	2023	2018	2023
Didn't eat breakfast on school days	14%	23%	29%	23%
At home	82%	73%	71%	77%
On the way to school	6%	6%	0%	0%
At school	7%	5%	0%	0%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Note: The difference was not statistically significant for 'at school'.

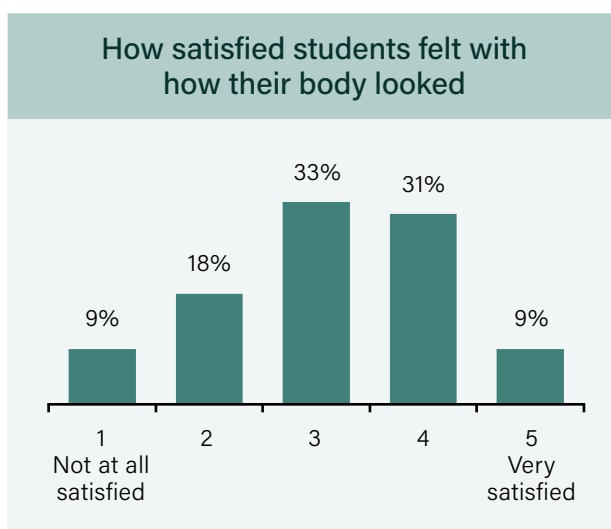
## Disordered eating

In the past 30 days, 29% of youth worried that they had lost control of how much they ate.

In the past 12 months, 12% of youth vomited on purpose after eating, including 2% who did so at least weekly. Rates of purging were similar to 5 years earlier and higher than in 2013 (7%). Females were more likely than males to have purged in the past year (14% vs. 10%), and to have done so on a weekly basis (3% vs. 1%).

## Body satisfaction

Youth were asked to rate how satisfied they were with how their body looked. Males were twice as likely as females to feel very satisfied with their body (12% vs. 6%).



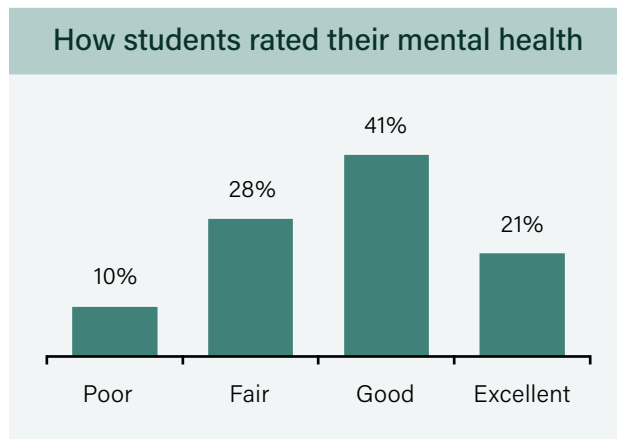
# Mental health and well-being

***“Mental health problems are very serious & I hope people can care more about it.”***

17-year-old youth

Mental health is a key component in healthy youth development, and includes psychological, social, and emotional well-being.

The majority of youth rated their mental health as good or excellent. However, there was a decrease in these positive mental health ratings over the past decade (63% vs. 75% in 2018 vs. 81% in 2013). Males were the most likely to rate their mental health as good or excellent (74% vs. 55% of females vs. 15% of non-binary youth).



## Quality of life

Youth generally indicated they had a good life and that their life was going well, and a minority wished they had a different life. However, there were some decreases in those who rated their quality of life positively.

Youth who agreed/strongly agreed ...		
	2018	2023
They had a good life	76%	74%
Their life was going well	70%	65%
They had what they wanted in life	56%	52%
Their life was going just right	55%	51%
They wished they had a different life	20%	20%

Note: The difference between 2018 and 2023 for 'they had a good life' was not statistically significant.

The majority of youth (60%) felt happy most or all of the time in the past month, but 9% rarely or never felt happy. Males were the most likely to feel happy most or all of the time (68% vs. 55% of females vs. 26% of non-binary youth).

The percentage who felt happy most or all of the time decreased over the past decade, from 68% in 2013, to 64% in 2018, to 60% in 2023.

## Self-confidence and sense of competence

***"[I am really good at] music (piano, flute, singing), some sports (badminton and ultimate frisbee), comforting someone, etc."***

14-year-old youth

***"[I am really good at] basketball, being kind to others, being helpful and respectful, and soccer."***

12-year-old youth

***"[I am really good at] fishkeeping, math (sometimes), ceramics, thinking."***

17-year-old youth

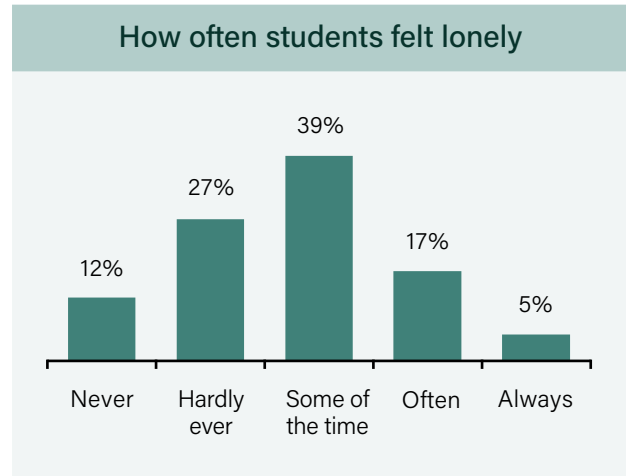
***"Je suis bonne en académiques et aux jeux de vidéos."  
[I am good at academics and video games.]***

16-year-old youth

Locally, 50% of youth felt good about themselves (vs. 56% in 2018), and 70% could identify something they were good at (vs. 74% in 2018). They commonly listed they were good at sports (e.g., badminton, basketball, soccer, volleyball); the arts (e.g., fine arts, creative writing, music, acting, dancing, photography); school (e.g., studying, mathematics, memorizing information); relational skills (e.g., supporting others, making friends); cooking/baking; playing video games; and technology and computer-based skills (e.g., coding, programming).

## Loneliness

For the first time, the BC AHS included a question about loneliness. In Vancouver, 22% of youth often or always felt lonely.



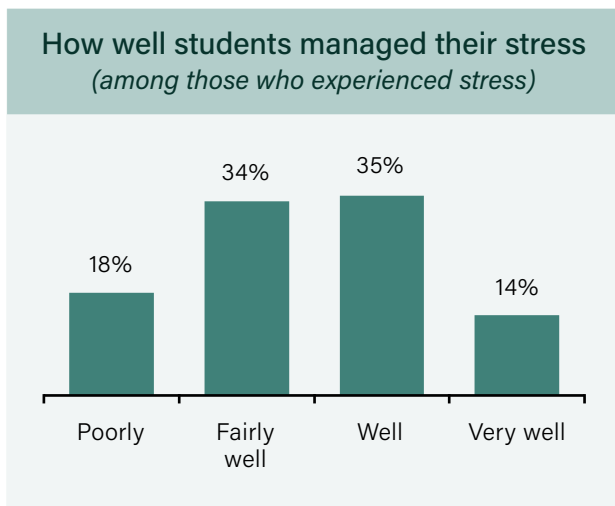
# Stress and despair

***“My parents always push me and force me to work/study to achieve a high grade, which makes me feel stressed.”***

17-year-old youth

Most youth (91%) experienced at least a little stress in the past month, including 11% who were so stressed they could not function properly. The percentage who experienced extreme stress was similar to 2018 and higher than in 2013 (7%).

Just under half of youth who experienced stress felt they managed their stress well or very well (vs. 54% in 2018).

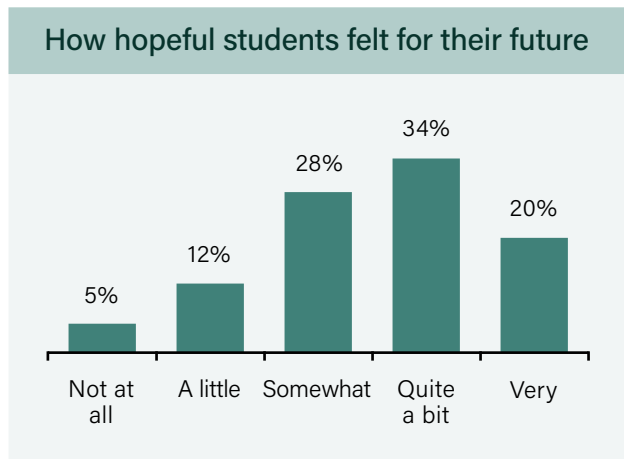


Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.

Reflecting results over the past decade, two thirds of youth (67%) experienced some level of despair in the past month. This included 8% who felt so sad, hopeless, or discouraged that they wondered if anything was worthwhile.

# Hopefulness

Just over half of youth (54%) felt quite or very hopeful for their future. Youth were less likely to feel this level of hopefulness compared to 5 years earlier (59% in 2018).



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



# Self-harm and suicidality

*“I have been struggling quite a bit with my mental health lately. I don’t think I ever would do anything, but the thought of not wanting to be here (in my life) is very recurring. It’s scary and I feel no one understands me.”*

16-year-old youth

In the past year, 22% of youth cut or injured themselves on purpose without trying to kill themselves, including 15% who self-harmed on multiple occasions. The percentage who self-harmed increased over the past decade (22% vs. 16% in 2018 vs. 13% in 2013).

Non-binary youth were the most likely to self-harm in the past year (54% vs. 28% of females vs. 14% of males), and to do so on multiple occasions (47% vs. 19% of females vs. 8% of males).

Youth also reported engaging in deliberate self-harm other than cutting in the past year.

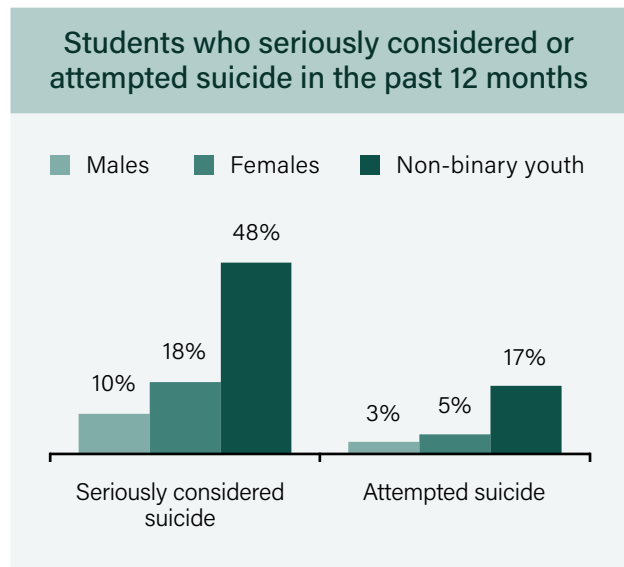
Types of self-harm youth engaged in during the past 12 months (excluding cutting)	
Starved self	16%
Over-exercised or exercised while injured	10%
Used alcohol or other substances	8%
Made a medical situation worse	4%
Got into a physical fight	3%
Had unsafe sex	2%
Overdosed	1%
Drove recklessly	1%
Overused laxatives	1%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

There were some gender differences in the types of self-harm youth engaged in. Non-binary youth were the most likely to purposefully make a medical situation worse (13% vs. 4% of females vs. 2% of males) and to starve themselves (36% vs. 24% of females vs. 7% of males). Females were more likely than males to have used alcohol or other substances to harm themselves (10% vs. 6%) and to have overdosed (2% vs. 1%), whereas males were more likely than females to have been in a physical fight (4% vs. 2%).

In the past 12 months, 15% of youth seriously considered killing themselves, and 4% attempted suicide. These percentages were comparable to 5 years earlier.

Non-binary youth were the most likely to have considered and attempted suicide in the past year.



Locally, 23% of youth had a relative or close friend who attempted or died by suicide, including 10% who had this experience in the past year.

# Specific conditions

Youth were asked about some specific conditions. Local youth most commonly reported having an anxiety disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. They were less likely than local youth 5 years earlier to report depression, but were more likely to report most other conditions. This pattern reflected the provincial picture, although Vancouver youth were generally less likely to report having most conditions than those across BC.

There were some gender differences in which conditions youth reported. Non-binary youth were the most likely to report they had an anxiety disorder (35% vs. 22% of females vs. 6% of males), depression (33% vs. 12% of females vs. 7% of males), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (22% vs. 13% of males vs. 10% of females), autism (12% vs. 3% of males vs. 2% of females), and a substance use addiction (8% vs. 3% of males and females). Females and non-binary youth were more likely than males to report having post-traumatic stress disorder (e.g., 7% of non-binary youth vs. 2% of males) and an eating disorder (e.g., 7% of females vs. 2% of males).

Specific conditions			
	Vancouver		BC
	2018	2023	2023
Anxiety disorder	12%	15%	22%
Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD/ADD)	5%	12%	18%
Depression	12%	10%	14%
Eating disorder	N/A	5%	7%
Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)	N/A	4%	6%
Alcohol or other substance use addiction	2%	3%	5%
Autism spectrum disorder	1%	3%	4%
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	2%	3%	5%
Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD/FAS/FAE)	<1%	1%	1%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.  
 N/A: Not applicable—The item was not included on the 2018 survey.  
 Note: The difference between Vancouver and BC for 'autism spectrum disorder' was not statistically significant.  
 The difference between 2018 and 2023 for 'fetal alcohol spectrum disorder' was not statistically significant.

# Access to mental health services

***“The wait time for mental health is too long in the youth clinic.”***

16-year-old youth

***“I wish there were more steady forms of free therapy for youth in BC, because most services are just crisis lines. I also think getting services are a lot more challenging than they should be.”***

17-year-old youth

In the past 12 months, around three quarters of youth had not felt they needed mental health services, while 10% were able to access the services they needed, and 17% did not access needed services. The percentage who did not access the mental health services they needed was comparable to 2018, and higher than in 2013 (10%).

Youth identified a variety of reasons for not accessing the mental health services they needed. They were more likely than youth 5 years earlier to identify missing out because their parent or guardian would not take them (19% vs. 10% in 2018; among those who felt they needed services), and were less likely to miss out because they thought or hoped the problem would go away (56% vs. 66%).

Reasons youth did not access mental health services in the past 12 months (among those who felt they needed these services)	
Didn't want parent/guardian to know	57%
Thought or hoped the problem would go away	56%
Didn't know where to go	46%
Worried their information wouldn't be kept confidential	42%
Afraid of what they would be told	39%
Too busy to go	39%
Afraid someone they knew might see them	30%
Didn't think they could afford it	27%
Parent/guardian wouldn't take them	19%
Had negative experience(s) before	12%
On a waiting list	6%
Had no transportation	5%
Couldn't go when it was open	3%
The service was not available in their community	2%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

## Virtual services

In the past 12 months, 12% of youth accessed virtual counselling or treatment for their mental health. This included 7% who preferred it to in-person counselling, and 5% who would have preferred to access in-person counselling. Males were the least likely to have accessed virtual mental health services (e.g., 8% vs. 15% of females).



# Accessing reliable mental health information

When asked where they went for reliable information on mental health, youth most commonly reported accessing a family member and a friend or peer. However, local youth were less likely than youth across BC to go to a family member (41% vs. 44% provincially), and were more likely to go online (27% vs. 23%) and to school staff (17% vs. 13%) for this information.

## Where youth accessed reliable information about mental health

A family member	41%
A friend/peer	39%
Website/online resource	27%
School staff	17%
Mental health professional	15%
Another source	2%
Did not know where to go	7%
Did not go anywhere for this information	26%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Non-binary youth were the most likely to not know where to go for reliable mental health information (e.g., 15% vs. 7% of females), and were the least likely to go to a family member (21% vs. 42% of males and females). Also, they were more likely than males to go to a mental health professional (22% vs. 13%).

Males were the least likely to visit an online resource (e.g., 23% vs. 31% of females), and were the most likely to not go anywhere for this information (e.g., 32% vs. 19% of non-binary youth). Females were more likely than males to go to a friend or peer for this information (45% vs. 34%).



# Sexual health

Adolescence is a time when young people can be supported to develop the knowledge and skills they need to avoid unwanted sexual activity, protect themselves if they become sexually active, and reduce the risk of a sexually transmitted infection or unwanted pregnancy.

## Sexual activity

In Vancouver, 12% of youth reported they had engaged in oral sex. This was a decrease from 2018 (15%), and lower than the provincial rate (17% in 2023).

Also, 12% of youth had ever engaged in sexual intercourse. This percentage was comparable to local rates over the past decade, and lower than the provincial rate (16%).

Among youth who had ever had intercourse, 89% were sexually active in the past 12 months. This included 35% who had multiple partners during this time.

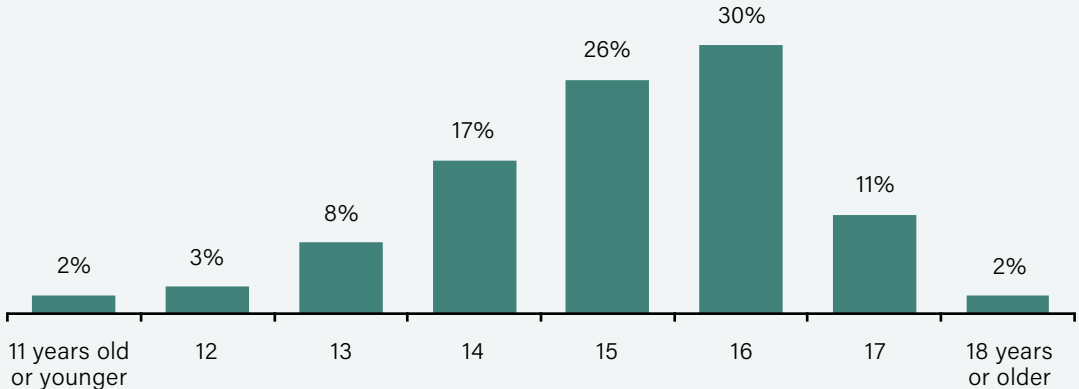
## Protection against sexually transmitted infections

In Vancouver, 1% of all youth had ever had a sexually transmitted infection. This rate was unchanged over the past decade, and was similar to the provincial rate.

Also comparable to rates over the past decade, 17% of youth who had ever had oral sex used a condom or other barrier the last time they had oral sex.

Among youth who had ever had sexual intercourse, 53% used a condom or other barrier the last time they had sex. This was similar to the rate in 2018 and lower than a decade earlier (67% in 2013).

Age students first had sex (among those who had ever had intercourse)



Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.  
Note: Not all differences were statistically significant.

## Pregnancy involvement

Similar to local results over the past decade and to the 2023 provincial rate, 1% of youth reported they had been involved in a pregnancy. Also, 1% were unsure if they had been involved in a pregnancy (vs. <1% in 2018 and 2013).

Youth who had engaged in sexual intercourse were asked if they or their partner had made any efforts to prevent pregnancy the last time they had sex. Condoms remained the most commonly used method to prevent pregnancy (52%; among those who had ever had intercourse). Condom usage was comparable to 5 years earlier and lower than in 2013 (64%). Also, 12% reported that the last time they had intercourse was with a same sex partner.

Among youth who had ever had intercourse, 35% used withdrawal (an unreliable method to prevent pregnancy). In addition, 10% indicated withdrawal was the only method they had used to prevent pregnancy, which was comparable to 5 and 10 years earlier.

### Method(s) youth used to prevent pregnancy the last time they had sex *(among those who had ever had intercourse)*

Condoms	52%
Withdrawal	35%
Birth control pills, birth control patch, NuvaRing, or other method prescribed by a doctor or nurse	22%
Emergency contraception	12%
IUD	4%
Depo-Provera	0%
Not sure	5%
Did not try to prevent pregnancy	3%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

## Forced sex

When asked specifically if they had been forced into sexual activity against their will, 6% of students reported they had been forced by another youth, and 2% by an adult. Males were the least likely to have been forced to engage in sexual activity against their will (e.g., 4% vs. 10% of females).

## Sex education at school

For the first time, the BC AHS asked youth about their views on the sexual health education they received at school. In total, 83% reported receiving sex education at school (comparable to the provincial rate), including 55% who found it helpful and 28% who did not find it helpful.

Youth who received sex education were asked whether this education had met their needs:

- 87% felt the sex education they received was respectful of their culture/religion.
- 84% felt it was relevant to their gender identity.
- 82% felt it started at the right age for them.
- 79% felt it was relevant to their sexual orientation.
- 56% felt it was relevant to any disability or health condition they had.

Females were the most likely to find the sex education they received to be helpful (e.g., 69% vs. 64% of males).

# Accessing reliable sexual health information

*“I wish we could have a sex ed class for girls only, like feminine issues.”*

17-year-old youth

Youth who wanted reliable information about sexual health commonly went to an online resource, and approached their parents and peers for this information.

Reflecting the pattern seen for accessing reliable mental health information, Vancouver youth were more likely than those across BC to access online resources (29% vs. 24% provincially) and go to school staff (10% vs. 8%) for sexual health information. They were also more likely to access a sexual health professional (13% vs. 10%) and printed resources (4% vs. 3%). They were less likely to go to their parent or guardian (27% vs. 31% provincially).

There were some gender differences in where youth went for reliable information about sexual health. Females were the most likely to go to a same-aged friend or peer (e.g., 32% vs. 22% of males) and an older youth (e.g., 20% vs. 10% of non-binary youth). Females were also more likely than males to approach an adult outside their family (6% vs. 3%). Males were the least likely to go to an online resource for this information (e.g., 25% vs. 32% of females).

Where youth accessed reliable information about sexual health	
Website/online resource	29%
Parent/guardian	27%
A same-aged friend or peer	26%
An older youth	16%
Sexual health professional	13%
School staff	10%
Family member other than parent/guardian	9%
Printed resource (e.g., book, brochure, poster)	4%
Adult outside their family	4%
Professional other than sexual health professional	3%
Pornography	3%
Did not know where to go	7%
Did not go anywhere	36%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

## Why is sexual health important?

Having access to reliable sexual health information and supplies was associated with safer sexual practices. For example, youth who used protection were less likely to have a history of STIs.

# Substance use

Youth were asked about their vaping and smoking, as well as their use of alcohol, cannabis, and other substances. They were also asked about their reasons for using substances and the consequences of their use.

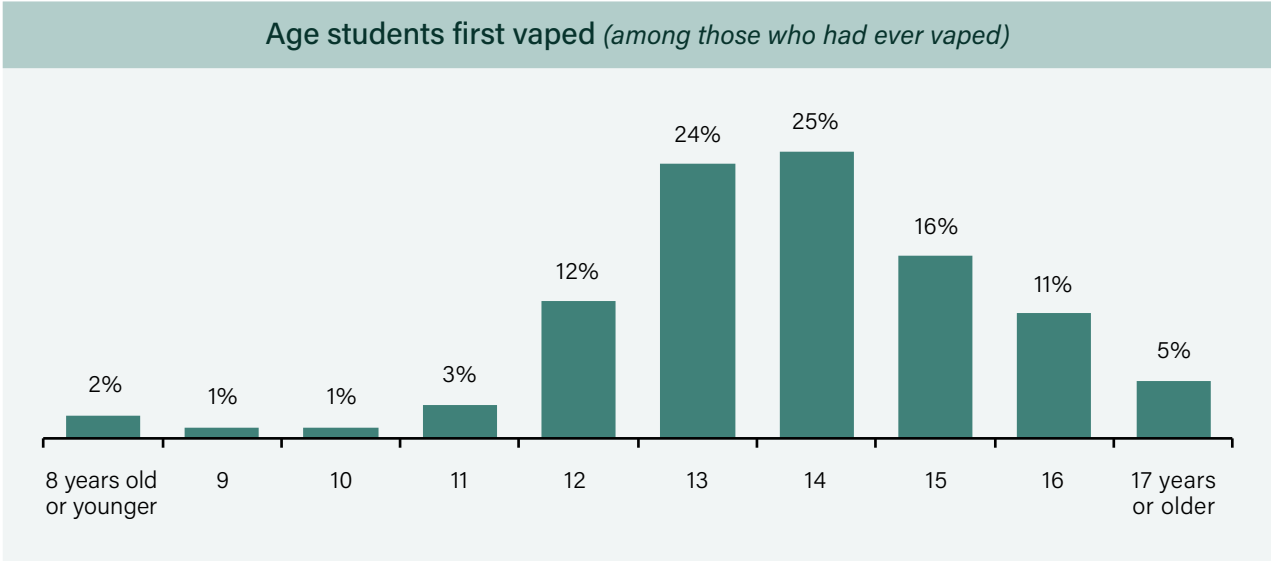
## Vaping

*“I sometimes feel that I am the disappointment in my family because I was caught with my vape.”*

17-year-old youth

In Vancouver, 19% of youth had ever vaped (vs. 26% provincially). Females were the most likely to have vaped (e.g., 24% vs. 15% of males).

Among youth who had ever vaped, around two thirds first vaped before their 15<sup>th</sup> birthday.



Note: Not all differences were statistically significant.

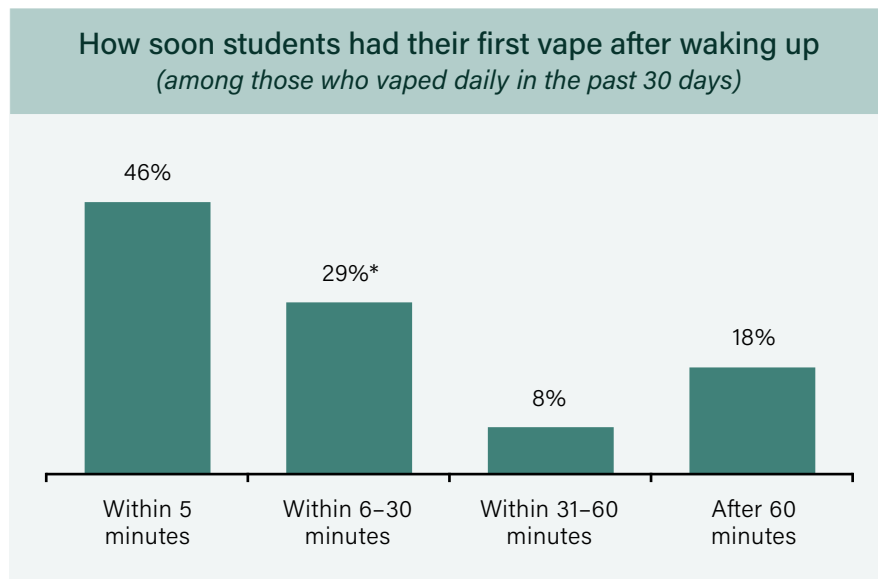
Over half of youth (54%) who had tried vaping had vaped in the past 30 days.

Number of days youth vaped in the past 30 days <i>(among those who had ever vaped)</i>	
0 days	46%
1 or 2 days	16%
3 to 5 days	6%
6 to 9 days	4%
10 to 19 days	8%
20 to 29 days	6%
All 30 days	12%

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

Among youth who vaped in the past 30 days, 7% used a product to help them stop vaping during this time.

Among youth who vaped daily, 75%\* vaped within 30 minutes of waking up.



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

\* Percentage should be interpreted with caution as it has a higher standard error than others, but is still within the releasable range.

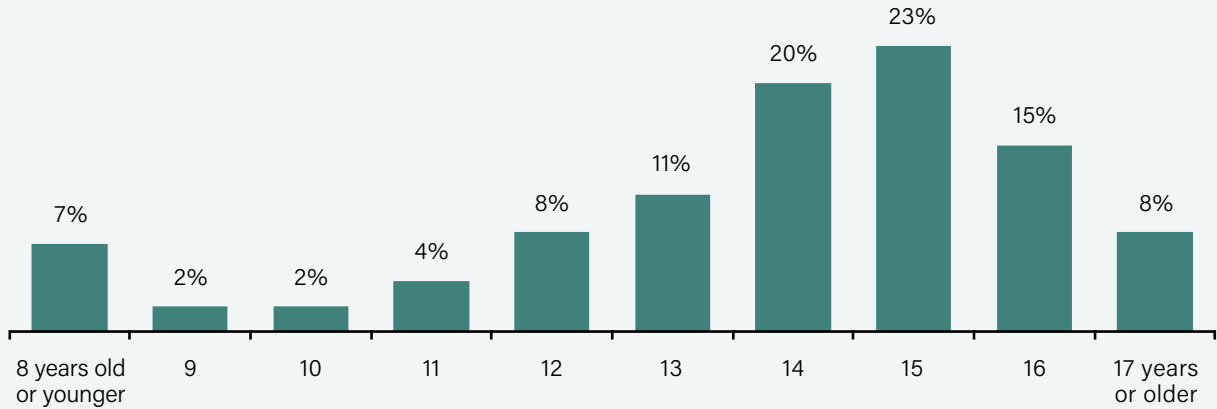
## Smoking

In Vancouver, 10% of youth had smoked tobacco, including 2% who smoked tobacco exclusively, and 8% who both smoked and vaped. Also, 11% vaped exclusively. There were no gender differences in youth who smoked.

The percentage who had tried smoking was similar to 5 years previously and lower than a decade earlier (10% vs. 14% in 2013). Local youth remained less likely than those across BC to have ever smoked (15% provincially).

Among youth who had ever smoked, 47% waited until they were 15 or older to first do so, which was similar to 5 and 10 years earlier.

### Age students first smoked tobacco (among those who had ever smoked)



Note: Not all differences were statistically significant.

Among youth who had ever smoked, 37% smoked in the past 30 days, and 6% of these youth used a product to help them stop smoking during that time (excluding vapes).

Youth used a variety of tobacco products in the past month, including cigarettes (4% vs. 7% in 2013), cigars/cigarillos (2% vs. 4% in 2013), and a hoo-kah (1% vs. 4% in 2013). The percentage who used chewing tobacco was comparable to rates over the past decade (1% in 2023), and the rates of using each of the products were similar to 5 years earlier.

### Number of days youth smoked in the past 30 days (among those who had ever smoked)

0 days	63%
1 or 2 days	22%
3 to 5 days	4%
6 to 9 days	4%
10 to 19 days	3%
20 or more days	4%



# Alcohol

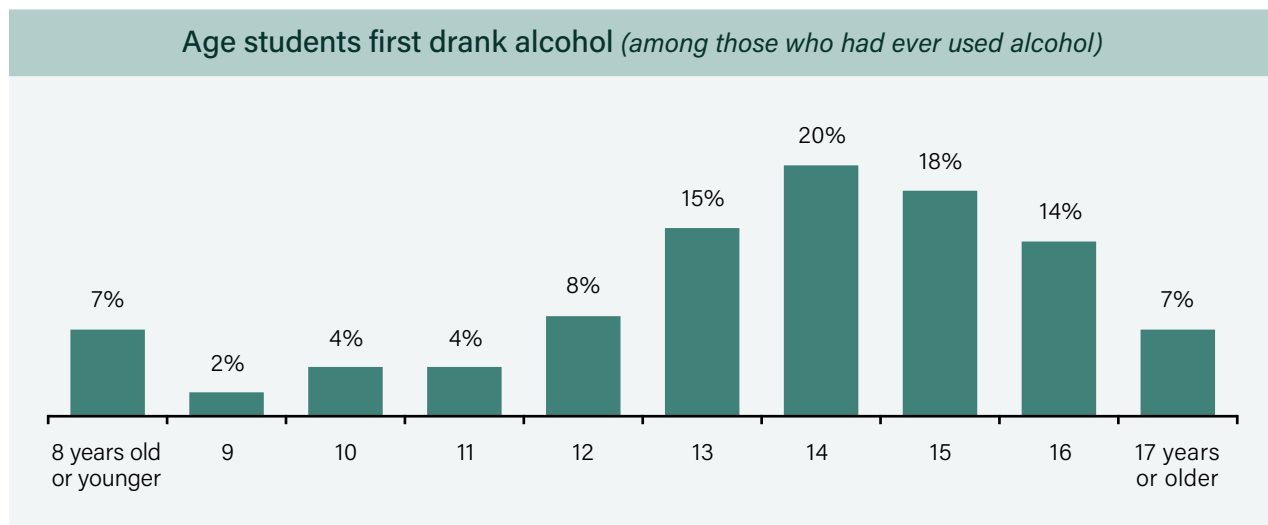
The Canadian Low Risk Drinking Guidelines recommend that youth do not drink until they are of legal drinking age. However, if they decide to drink, the guidelines suggest they should not drink alcohol more than once or twice a week, and should never have more than two drinks on any one occasion ([ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2019-04/CCSA-Youth-and-Alcohol-Summary-2014-en.pdf](https://ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2019-04/CCSA-Youth-and-Alcohol-Summary-2014-en.pdf)).

In Vancouver, 31% of youth had tried alcohol (beyond a few sips), which was lower than the provincial rate (38%). The percentage was also lower than the local rate 5 years earlier (35% in 2018) and comparable to the rate in 2013. Females were more likely than males to have tried alcohol (34% vs. 28%).

Among youth who had tried alcohol, 39% waited until they were 15 or older to first do so, which was comparable to 5 and 10 years earlier.

Among youth who had ever used alcohol:

- 56% drank in the past month.
- 30% had five or more drinks within a couple of hours on at least 1 day in the past month, including 1% who drank this heavily on 20 or more days.
- 21% had more than two drinks on at least 1 day in the past week, including 1% who did so daily.



Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.  
Note: Not all differences were statistically significant.



**Number of days youth drank alcohol in the past 30 days**  
(among those who had ever used alcohol)

0 days	44%
1 or 2 days	31%
3 to 5 days	15%
6 to 9 days	5%
10 to 19 days	2%
20 to 29 days	1%
All 30 days	1%

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

Youth who had used alcohol were asked about the types of alcohol they drank on the Saturday before taking the survey. Just over a quarter of these youth (27%) drank that day, and they most commonly drank liquor.

**Types of alcohol youth drank last Saturday**  
(among those who drank that day)

Liquor	73%
Coolers	43%
Wine	23%
Beer	21%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

# Cannabis

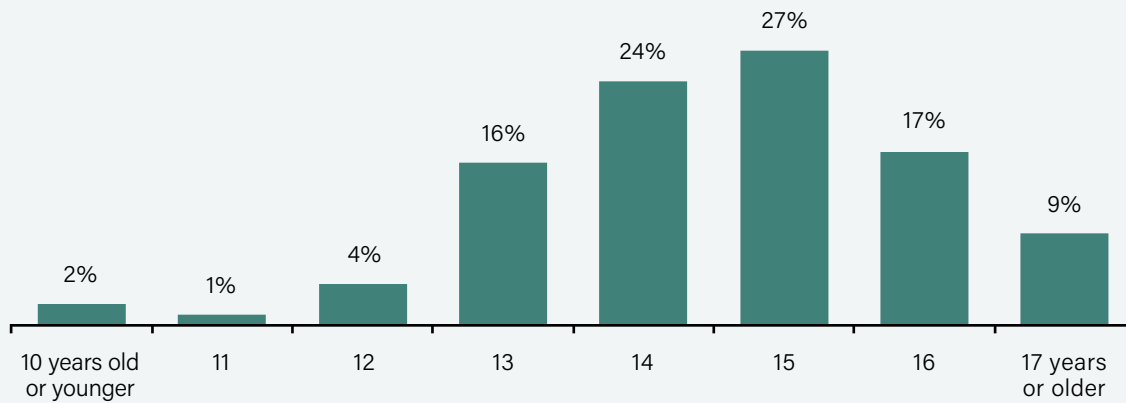
*Lower-risk cannabis use guidelines for youth were recently developed by researchers at the University of Victoria (Card et al., 2023: [uvic.ca/research/centres/cisur/assets/docs/youth-cannabis-guidelines.pdf](https://uvic.ca/research/centres/cisur/assets/docs/youth-cannabis-guidelines.pdf)). The researchers recommend youth consider waiting until they are older before using; “start low and go slow” with the amount of cannabis they consume; be aware of the source of their cannabis and what it might contain; and know the different health risks associated with the various modes of cannabis consumption.*

In Vancouver, 15% of youth had ever used cannabis, which was comparable to local rates over the past decade, and remained below the provincial rate (22% in 2023). Females were the most likely to have tried cannabis (e.g., 18% vs. 13% of males).

Among youth who had tried cannabis, just over half waited until they were 15 or older to first do so, which was similar to findings over the past decade.



### Age students first used cannabis (among those who had ever used cannabis)



Note: Not all differences were statistically significant.

Among youth who had tried cannabis:

- 60% used it in the past month.
- 4% used it every day that month.
- 30% used it on the Saturday before taking the survey.

Youth who had used cannabis were asked about all the ways they consumed it the last time. Most of these youth smoked it (70%), 28% vaped it, and 25% ate it.

When asked about their most recent source of cannabis, most youth reported they shared it among a group of friends.

### Number of days youth used cannabis in the past 30 days (among those who had ever used cannabis)

0 days	40%
1 or 2 days	26%
3 to 5 days	12%
6 to 9 days	5%
10 to 19 days	8%
20 or more days	9%

### Most recent source of cannabis (among those who had ever used cannabis)

It was shared among a group of friends	63%
Friend or family member gave it to them	25%
Bought it from a friend or family member	14%
Bought it from a cannabis store	8%
Bought it from a website	6%
Bought it from someone they did not know	4%
Someone they did not know gave it to them	2%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

## Other substances

Rates of trying substances other than alcohol and cannabis were generally similar to the province, except Vancouver youth were less likely to have tried mushrooms (5% vs. 6%). However, the percentage of Vancouver youth who had tried mushrooms increased compared to 5 and 10 years earlier (3% in 2013 and 2018).

Substances youth had ever used	
More of their own prescription than prescribed	5%
Mushrooms	5%
Prescription pills without a doctor's consent (other than benzodiazepines)	3%
Hallucinogens (other than mushrooms)	2%
Cocaine	2%
Ecstasy/MDMA	2%
Benzodiazepines without a doctor's consent (e.g., Xanax, Valium, Ativan)	1%
Inhalants	1%
Ketamine, GHB	1%
Amphetamines	1%
Crystal meth	1%
Heroin, fentanyl, or other opioids	1%

## Reported reasons for using substances

The majority of youth who had used alcohol or other substances reported that the reason for their most recent substance use was to have fun. However, they also reported using substances as a way to manage their emotions.

Reasons youth used substances the last time <i>(among those who had used alcohol or other substances)</i>	
Wanted to have fun	58%
Wanted to experiment	36%
Friends were doing it	29%
Because of stress	21%
Felt down or sad	18%
There was nothing else to do	11%
To manage physical pain	4%
Thought it would help them focus	4%
Felt pressured into doing it/to fit in	3%
Because of an addiction	3%
To change the effect of another substance	2%
Didn't mean to (e.g., drink was spiked)	1%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

There were some gender differences in the reasons youth used substances the last time. For example, among those who used substances, females were more likely than males to use because they were stressed (25% vs. 17%), they felt down or sad (21% vs. 14%), and because they felt there was nothing else to do (14% vs. 9%).

# Consequences of substance use

Among youth who used substances in the past year, 58% did not report any negative consequences of their use. Over a quarter of youth had been told they did something they could not remember.

Consequences of substance use experienced in the past 12 months <i>(among youth who had used alcohol or other substances during this time)</i>	
Was told they did something they couldn't remember	26%
Passed out	19%
Got injured	13%
Argued with family members	11%
School work or grades changed	9%
Lost friends or broke up with a romantic partner	7%
Damaged property	7%
Had sex when they didn't want to	5%
Got into a physical fight	5%
Got in trouble with police	3%
Overdosed	2%
Had to get medical treatment	1%

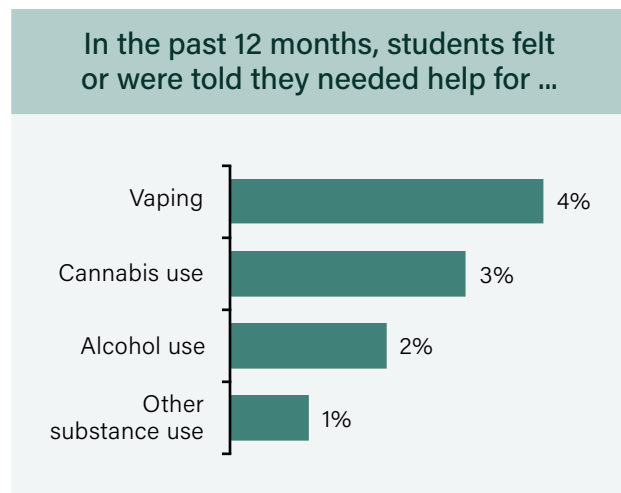
Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

There were some gender differences in the consequences of substance use youth reported. For example, males were the most likely to have been in a physical fight (7% vs. 3% of females vs. 0% of non-binary youth; among those who used substances in the past year), and were more likely than females to have damaged property (10% vs. 5%). Females were more likely than males to have argued with family (13% vs. 8%) and been told they did something they could not remember (30% vs. 22%).

Among youth who had ever had intercourse, 16% reported drinking alcohol or using other substances before the last time they had sex. This percentage was comparable to results over the past decade.

A small minority of youth had ever driven a vehicle after using alcohol (2%), cannabis (2%), or other substances (1%). A greater percentage had been a passenger in a vehicle with a driver who had been using alcohol (14%), cannabis (6%), or other substances (3%).

Youth were asked if they felt or had been told that they needed help for their substance use in the past year. They were less likely than youth across BC to report needing help for their vaping (4% vs. 5% provincially), cannabis use (3% vs. 4%), and alcohol use (2% vs. 3%).



Note: Not all differences were statistically significant.

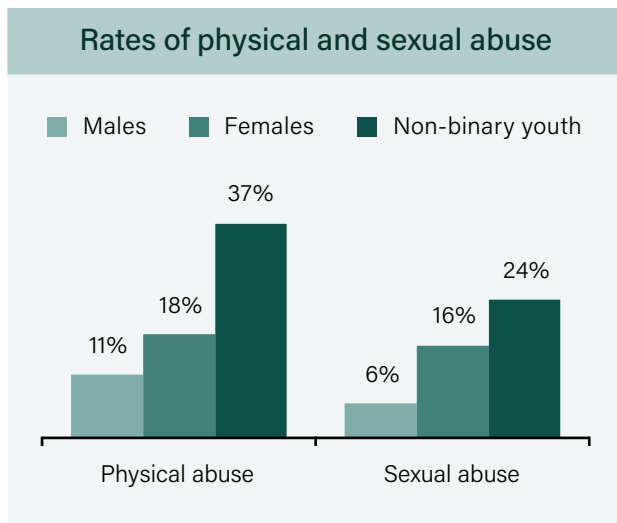
# Adverse experiences

Adverse experiences during childhood and adolescence can have a lasting negative impact on health and well-being into adulthood. Such experiences can include abuse, violence, harassment, discrimination, and bereavement.

## Physical and sexual abuse

In their lifetime, 15% of youth had been physically abused, which was comparable to rates over the past decade. Also, 11% had experienced sexual abuse, which was an increase from 7% in 2013 and 2018.

Males were the least likely to report experiencing physical and sexual abuse.



## Sexual harassment

*“What to do if ‘playfully’ groped by friends and there was no discussion?”*

17-year-old youth

In the past 12 months, 35% of youth experienced verbal sexual harassment (similar to percentages over the past decade). Also, 21% experienced physical sexual harassment during this time, which was higher than 5 years earlier (17% in 2018).

Males were the least likely to have experienced verbal sexual harassment (e.g., 25% vs. 49% of non-binary youth) and physical sexual harassment (e.g., 16% vs. 26% of females) in the past year.

## Dating violence

In the past 12 months, 35% of youth had been in a dating relationship. Among these youth, 5% experienced physical violence within that relationship (such as being hit, punched, or slapped).

Provincially, there was an increase from 5 years earlier in the percentage of youth who experienced physical dating violence. This was not the case in Vancouver, as the percentage who reported physical dating violence decreased from 8% in 2018 to 5%, and was lower than the 2023 provincial rate (8%).

Also in the past year, 11% of youth reported that the person they dated used social media to try to control, embarrass, or hurt them (with no gender differences).

# Discrimination

Youth reported being discriminated against for a variety of reasons in the past year. Compared to 5 years earlier, youth were more likely to have experienced discrimination because of their gender or sex (12% vs. 8%) and their sexual orientation (7% vs. 4% in 2018). They were less likely to be discriminated against because of how much money they or their family had (6% vs. 7%).

Reasons youth perceived they had been discriminated against in the past 12 months	
Physical appearance	20%
Race, ethnicity, or skin colour	17%
Weight	14%
Gender/sex	12%
Sexual orientation	7%
Religion	6%
How much money they/their family had	6%
Health condition	4%
Disability	3%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

A new question was added to the 2023 BC AHS asking where youth had experienced discrimination in the past year. They most commonly reported experiencing discrimination at school.

Where youth experienced discrimination in the past 12 months	
At school	20%
On social media/online	12%
On the street	8%
On public transit	6%
In extracurricular activities (e.g., sports)	4%
In a store/restaurant	3%
At work	2%
In a hospital or other health care setting	1%
Other	2%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

The majority of youth who had experienced discrimination in the past year had this experience rarely. However, 6% experienced discrimination regularly.



## Other forms of victimization

Youth were asked about their experiences of victimization at school and on the way to and from school in the past year. Around a third (34%) had been teased to the point of extreme discomfort, which was a decrease from 38% in 2018. Also, 35% were socially excluded, and 7% were physically attacked or assaulted (rates were comparable to those in 2018).

Non-binary youth were the most likely to have been severely teased (51% vs. 40% of females vs. 26% of males). Males were the least likely to have been socially excluded (e.g., 26% vs. 44% of females), and were more likely than females to have been physically attacked or assaulted (9% vs. 5%).

There was a decrease from 5 years earlier in youth perpetrating one of these forms of victimization in the past 12 months (8% vs. 11% in 2018).

In addition to in-person victimization, 12% of youth reported they had been cyberbullied in the past year (including through texts and social media). Non-binary youth were the most likely to have been cyberbullied (e.g., 22% vs. 12% of females). Also, 7% of youth perpetrated online victimization in the past year (with no gender differences). Rates of cyberbullying victimization and perpetration were similar to 5 years earlier.

## Bereavement

*“My grandpa died before summer, and it changed everything. I also cry about that too.”*

13-year-old youth

Two thirds of youth (67%) had experienced bereavement. Compared to 5 years earlier, there was an increase in those who had lost someone to an overdose (5% vs. 3% in 2018).

Reasons someone close to them had died	
Illness (other than COVID-19)	43%
Old age/natural death	43%
Accident	8%
COVID-19	6%
Suicide	6%
Overdose	5%
Violence	3%
Other	2%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

# School experiences

## School connectedness

*“[I am really good at] being involved in my school community through sports and leadership.”*

17-year-old youth

Youth were asked how much they agreed with a series of statements about their school experience. Compared to 5 years earlier, local students were generally less likely to feel connected to school and to feel safe there.

Youth who agreed/strongly agreed they felt ...	2018		2023	
	2018	2023	2018	2023
School staff expected them to do well	76%	73%		
School staff treated them fairly	72%	71%		
Safe at school	75%	65%		
Teachers cared about them	62%	60%		
Like a part of the school	61%	57%		
Happy to be at school	64%	57%		
Other school staff cared about them	47%	44%		

Note: The difference between 2018 and 2023 was not statistically significant for 'school staff treated them fairly' and 'teachers cared about them'.

## Absences

Youth were asked about their reasons for missing school in the past 30 days. They most commonly missed school due to illness and appointments, and more than 1 in 5 skipped school.

Reasons for missing school in the past 30 days	
Illness	43%
Appointments	34%
Skipping	22%
Sleeping in	20%
Own mental health (e.g., anxiety, depression)	15%
Family responsibilities	10%
No transportation	7%
Work	2%
Bullying	2%
Suspension	1%



# School safety

***“There are almost always boys vaping in high school bathrooms, which is not the appropriate place to be doing so.”***

16-year-old youth

Youth generally felt safe at school, and getting to and from school. However, they were more likely to feel safe in supervised locations, such as classrooms and libraries, than in less supervised spaces. They were less likely to feel safe in most locations compared to 5 years earlier.

Locations where youth usually/always felt safe		
	2018	2023
Library	94%	93%
Classrooms	92%	91%
Getting to and from school	88%	86%
Hallways and stairwells	90%	86%
Cafeteria	90%	84%
Outside on school grounds	85%	81%
Changing rooms	84%	72%
Washrooms	86%	69%

Note: The difference between 2018 and 2023 was not statistically significant for 'library.'

# Education plans

Most youth (83%) planned to pursue a post-secondary education (vs. 77% provincially). The local percentage was comparable to 2018 and lower than a decade earlier (90% in 2013). Females were the most likely to plan to attend post-secondary (e.g., 89% vs. 78% of males).

School plans	
Did not expect to finish high school	1%
Planned to finish high school but not go to post-secondary	4%
Planned to go to post-secondary	83%
Had not thought about it	8%
Didn't know	5%

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

## *Why is feeling connected to school important?*

School connectedness can contribute to other aspects of well-being. For example, students who felt like a part of their school were less likely to skip classes in the past month (16% vs. 41% who did not feel part of their school). They were more likely to rate their mental health as good or excellent (76% vs. 29%), feel quite or very hopeful for their future (67% vs. 30%), and plan to attend post-secondary (88% vs. 73%).

# Relationships and connections

*"I have friends and a family but I don't feel like I belong anywhere."*

16-year-old youth

Adolescence is a time when young people can learn how to develop and maintain safe and healthy relationships with peers, romantic partners, family members, caregivers, teachers, and adults in the community.

## Friendships and dating relationships

Compared to 5 years earlier, youth were less likely to have close friends in their school or neighbourhood (93% vs. 96% in 2018), and were more likely to have online friends whom they had never met in person (37% vs. 32%).

In Vancouver, 74% of youth reported they had friends whom they could share their ups and downs with, and 73% reported that they got along with the people around them.

In the past 12 months, 9% of youth dated someone online whom they had never met in person (vs. 6% in 2018).

## Caring and supportive adults

Most youth (69%) had at least one adult in their neighbourhood or community (outside of their family and school) who they felt cared about them. Youth were less likely to have such an adult in their life compared to those across BC (73% provincially).

However, there were increases in youth who had an adult they could go to for support if they were having a serious problem. For example, 73% had an adult inside their family they could talk to (vs. 68% in 2018), 29% had one outside their family (vs. 24%), and 23% had both (vs. 16%).

Most youth who felt they needed help with specific tasks had an adult who would help them.

Had an adult to help with tasks <i>(among those who needed help)</i>	
Making/getting to appointments	96%
Learning life skills (e.g., cooking, budgeting)	91%
Preparing for university, college, or trade school	86%
Homework	80%
Getting a job	79%

# Family connectedness

*“My parents give my brothers the attention I wish I had.”*

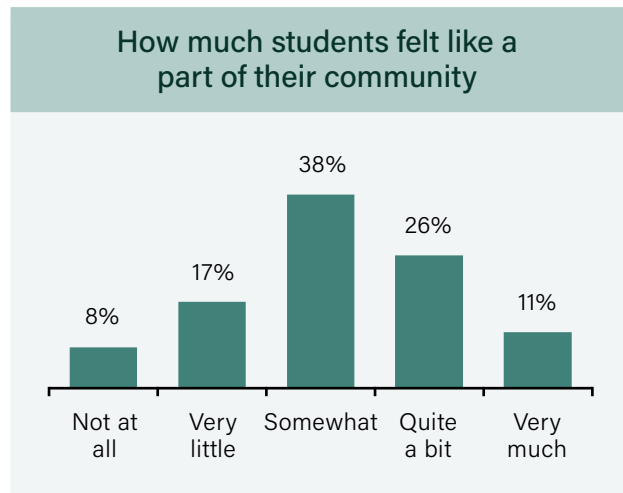
14-year-old youth

The majority of youth felt connected to their family. However, they were less likely to feel their family understood them than youth in previous survey years (52% vs. 59% in 2013 and 2018).

Youth who felt their family quite a bit/very much ...	
Paid attention to them	74%
Respected them	73%
Had fun together	69%
Understood them	52%

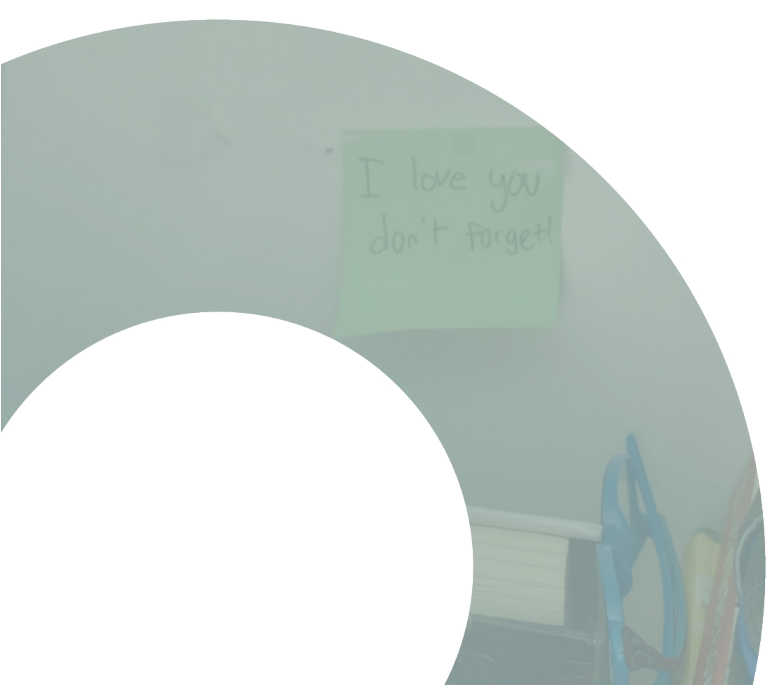
# Community connectedness and sense of safety

Most youth felt at least a little connected to their community. However, they were less likely to feel quite or very connected to their community than students in 2018 (37% vs. 40%).



The majority of youth often or always felt safe in their neighbourhood during the day (91%) and at night (57%). Compared to the province, local youth were less likely to feel this level of safety in their neighbourhood at night (64% provincially).

In Vancouver, 53% of those who used transit often or always felt safe doing so. This was a decrease from 5 and 10 years earlier (e.g., 64% in 2018).



# Other types of connectedness

## Spirituality

Just over half of youth (52%) felt that spirituality was at least a little important to them, including 11% for whom it was very important.

## Connection to the land and nature

The majority of youth (58%) felt connected to the land and nature at least sometimes, including 4% who always felt this way.

## Time to do the things they want

***“I don’t get enough sleep, exercise, or time with family/friends because of homework. I receive a lot of work from all my classes.”***

17-year-old youth

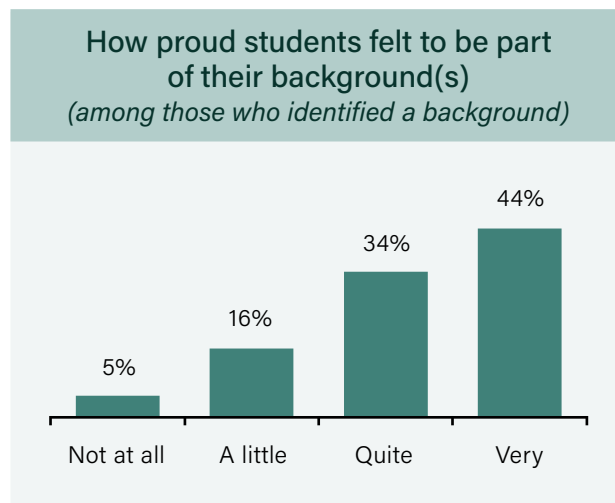
Reflecting findings 5 years earlier, youth generally felt they spent the right amount of time with family, friends, on their own, and in nature.

How much time youth felt they had to do what they wanted ...			
	Not enough	Right amount	Too much
With family	20%	74%	7%
With friends	27%	69%	4%
On their own	21%	65%	13%
In nature	46%	50%	4%

Note: Percentages for 'with family' and 'on their own' do not total 100% due to rounding.

## Cultural pride

Most youth felt at least a little proud to be part of the background(s) they identified with.



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

## Why are connections important?

Having positive and supportive connections to peers, family, and community promotes youth’s health and well-being. For example, youth who felt they had an adult in their neighbourhood who cared about them were more likely to feel quite or very hopeful for their future (59% vs. 42% of those who did not feel an adult cared).

Other types of connections were also important. For example, youth who often or always felt connected to the land or nature were more likely to feel they managed their stress well or very well (56% vs. 43% of those who never or hardly ever felt connected).

# Recreational activities

Engagement in recreational activities can help young people to not only relax and build connections with peers who have similar interests, but also to identify their skills and interests, and develop their sense of autonomy.

## Extracurricular physical activity

### *“My gym is a mood booster.”*

17-year-old youth

Youth were asked about their participation in various types of physical activity over the past 12 months, including whether they did these activities at least weekly.

Compared to previous survey years, youth were less likely to participate weekly in informal sports (44% vs. 48% in 2018 vs. 54% in 2013), and were more likely to participate weekly in extreme sports (e.g., 8% vs. 5% in 2018). Weekly participation in organized sports as well as dance, yoga, and exercises classes were comparable to 5 years earlier.

Local youth were less likely than those across BC to participate at least weekly in informal sports (44% vs. 53% provincially), extreme sports (8% vs. 12%), and exercise in a gym or rec centre (29% vs. 36%).

### Participated in sports and exercise at least weekly in the past 12 months

Organized sports (with a coach)	49%
Informal sports (without a coach)	44%
Exercise at a gym or rec centre	29%
Dance, yoga, or exercise classes with an instructor	13%
Exercise to an online video or online class	12%
Extreme sports (e.g., backcountry skiing, BMX)	8%

There were some gender differences in sports and exercise participation. For example, males were the most likely to participate at least weekly in informal sports (52% vs. 37% of females vs. 26% of non-binary youth), extreme sports (e.g., 10% vs. 5% of females), and to exercise at a gym or rec centre (38% vs. 21% of females vs. 9% of non-binary youth). Females were the most likely to exercise to an online video or online class (e.g., 16% vs. 8% of non-binary youth).

# Barriers to engaging in extracurricular physical activity

*“Doing any kind of exercise in a public space feels embarrassing, and [there’s a] fear of being bullied.”*

16-year-old youth

In Vancouver, 66% of youth reported experiencing barriers to engaging in extracurricular physical activity in the past 12 months. The most commonly reported barrier was that they were too busy (45% vs. 40% provincially). Local youth were more likely than youth across BC to miss out because they were worried about catching something such as COVID-19 (10% vs. 6% provincially).

Barriers youth experienced to participating in physical activity in the past 12 months	
Too busy	45%
Was injured	22%
Thought it was too competitive	19%
Too anxious/depressed	15%
Worried about being bullied by another youth	11%
Worried about catching something (e.g., COVID-19)	10%
Didn't feel welcome	9%
Couldn't get there or get home	9%
Couldn't afford it	8%
Activity wasn't available in their community	7%
Parent/guardian would not allow them to	7%
Worried about being bullied by an adult	6%
Health needs/disability could not be accommodated	2%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

# Swimming ability

For the first time, the BC AHS asked youth about their swimming ability. In Vancouver, 11% of youth reported they could not swim at all (with no gender differences), and 36% could swim but not confidently. The remainder were confident swimmers, and males were the most likely to report they were a confident swimmer (e.g., 57% vs. 49% of females).

## Why is physical activity important?

Youth who take part in physical activity on a regular basis are more likely to report positive health and well-being. For example, youth who participated in informal sports at least weekly were more likely than those who took part less often to report good or excellent overall health (82% vs. 68%) and mental health (69% vs. 57%).

Also, youth were more likely to get 8 or more hours of sleep if they participated in regular physical activity, including weekly organized sports (49% vs. 36% who took part less often) and informal sports (47% vs. 39%).

# Cultural and volunteer activities

*"I love helping out/volunteering."*

16-year-old youth

In the past 12 months, 54% of youth took part in cultural or traditional activities, including 13% who participated at least weekly. Also, 55% volunteered without pay during this time, including 23% who volunteered at least once a week.

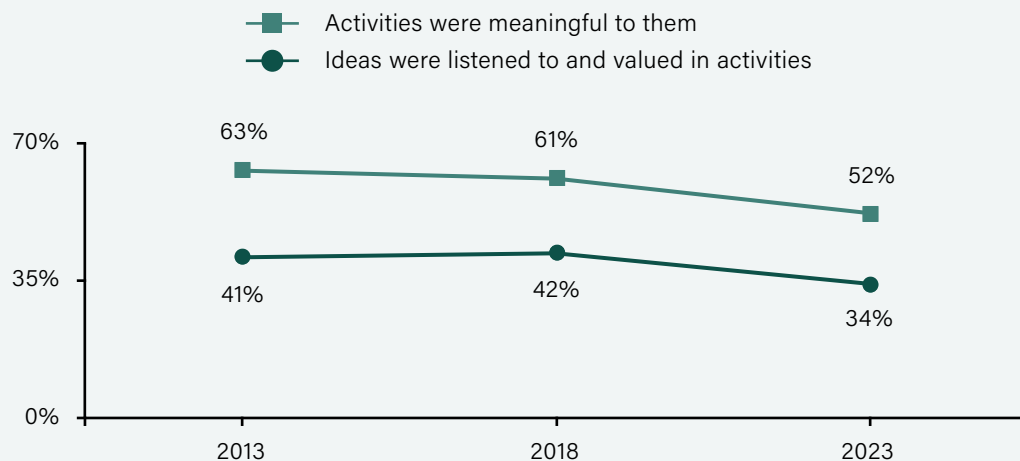
## *Why is engagement in community activities important?*

Engagement in the community can help youth to feel connected and supported, and can contribute to positive well-being. For example, youth who took part in cultural or traditional activities on a weekly basis were more likely to feel quite or very connected to their community (46% vs. 36% who took part less often), as well as proud of their culture (89% vs. 77%).

## Connection to activities

Most youth felt the activities they engaged in were at least somewhat meaningful to them, including 52% who felt this way quite a bit or a lot. However, this percentage was lower than in previous survey years, as was the percentage who felt their ideas were listened to and valued quite a bit or a lot.

Decreases over time in students who felt quite a bit/a lot that their ...



Note: The differences between 2013 and 2018 were not statistically significant.

# Gambling

Youth were asked about different types of gambling. In the past 12 months, 31% gambled for money, 16% gambled for something of value other than money, and 41% gambled 'just for fun.'

Ways that youth gambled for money in the past 12 months		
	Vancouver	BC
Bought in-game items (e.g., loot boxes)	19%	20%
Played cards/dice in person	9%	11%
Played in a gaming tournament	7%	9%
Bought lottery tickets/scratch cards	6%	7%
Streamed video games (e.g., Twitch)	5%	7%
Sports betting in person	5%	6%
Played cards/dice online	4%	5%
Sports betting online	3%	4%

Note: The differences between Vancouver and BC were not statistically significant for 'bought in-game items,' 'bought lottery tickets/scratch cards,' and 'played cards/dice online.'

Youth were also asked whether they bet for virtual credits within the past 30 days. Around a quarter (26%) did not play video games at all during this time, and 53% did not bet with virtual credits. However, 8% bet with virtual credits they purchased using real money, 15% bet with virtual credits they won or earned in a video game, and 7% bet for prizes.

In the past year, 1% of youth felt or had been told that their gambling had reached a point where they needed help, and 15% were at this point with their video gaming. Local youth were more likely to report they needed help with their video gaming than those across BC (12%).

An in-depth look at the gambling behaviours of BC youth will be published using 2023 BC AHS data.





# Phone use

*“[I would like to learn] how to limit social media consumption as I often feel ‘addicted’ to it.”*

16-year-old youth

Most youth (98%) had a phone or tablet, and they most commonly used it for scrolling through social media. Compared to 5 years earlier, youth were less likely to report using a device to watch pornography (5% vs. 12% in 2018) and for sexting (2% vs. 3%).

In the past year, 18% of local youth felt or had been told that their social media use had reached a point where they needed help. This was comparable to the provincial rate.

## What youth used a phone/tablet for on their last school day

Scrolling through social media	74%
Connecting with family and friends	67%
Gaming other than esports	30%
Playing/watching esports	20%
Watching porn	5%
Sexting	2%
Gambling	2%
None of these	10%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.



# Topics youth wanted to learn more about

The final page of the survey offered youth the opportunity to share anything about their health which they had not been asked about, and to identify any topics they would like to learn more about. In Vancouver, 8% of youth chose to provide a comment.

Mental health was one of the most common topics students wanted to learn more about. For example, they wanted to learn more about specific conditions, the impact of social media and online relationships on mental health, how to manage mental health challenges, and where to access services and other resources.

*"What do you do if you feel like you have a mental illness but you're too scared to get a diagnosis?"*  
16-year-old youth

*"Anxiety/depression/trauma (how to deal with mild symptoms)."*  
14-year-old youth

*"Mental health and where to get help."*  
16-year-old youth

*"Online interaction and its effects on mental health. The media and their effects."*  
16-year-old youth

*"How social media and other stuff affects your mental health."*  
12-year-old youth

Techniques to manage school-related stress was another area that youth wanted to learn more about.

*"Pressure of education systems at both a high school and university level."*  
17-year-old youth

*"School stress & expectations."*  
14-year-old youth

Youth also wanted to learn more about physical health (including sleep, nutrition, and injuries) and sexual health.

*"Nutrition and how to create a balanced diet for teenagers."*  
17-year-old youth

*"The importance of sleep."*  
17-year-old youth

*"Injuries when it comes to sports."*  
17-year-old youth

*"Sexual health, how to feel good in your skin."*  
17-year-old youth

*"Different types of birth control and their pros and cons."*  
17-year-old youth

In addition, youth were interested in gaining life skills, including healthy relationship skills and time management.

*"Break-ups. Friendship-breakups."*  
16-year-old youth

*"Managing parental relationships: what do healthy parent-children relationships look like?"*  
16-year-old youth

*"How to manage time & tasks/studying more efficiently."*  
16-year-old youth

# Resources

To request a presentation or workshop, and for further details about all the resources listed below, please email [mccreary@mcs.bc.ca](mailto:mccreary@mcs.bc.ca).

## 2023 BC AHS dissemination materials

The results presented in this report provide an overview of the 2023 BC AHS data for this region. To view the provincial results, and the latest reports, fact sheets, infographics, and other resources produced from the 2023 BC AHS, visit [mcs.bc.ca/about\\_bcahs](https://mcs.bc.ca/about_bcahs). Please also consider joining our community mailing list by emailing [mccreary@mcs.bc.ca](mailto:mccreary@mcs.bc.ca).

A video created by a group of young hip hop artists in Vancouver shares some of the comments provided by participants in the 2023 BC AHS, and is available at [youtube.com/user/McCrearyCentre](https://youtube.com/user/McCrearyCentre).

## Accessing the BC AHS data

Researchers from academic institutions and other partner agencies are encouraged to contact [mccreary@mcs.bc.ca](mailto:mccreary@mcs.bc.ca) if they would like to apply to access the data, or to commission McCreary to conduct additional research projects with the data.



## Engaging youth in the 2023 BC AHS results

### Next Steps workshops

The Next Steps is an award-winning workshop series that supports youth to engage with the BC AHS data. A toolkit is available that provides adult facilitators with a workshop template that can be used to share results of the survey with youth aged 12 to 19. It includes an introduction to the results, interactive activities to learn about risk and protective factors, and discussion questions to explore local youth health issues. Additional arts-based activities and a grant writing workshop are included in the toolkit. More information and the toolkit are available at [mcs.bc.ca/next\\_steps](https://mcs.bc.ca/next_steps).

### Research Slam

The Research Slam program is a fast-paced weekend or week-long program which teaches youth basic community-based research skills, including ways to answer their research questions using BC AHS data.

### Youth Action Grants (YAGs)

YAGs offer up to \$750 for youth-led projects that address findings from the BC AHS and seek to support or improve youth health. For more information on how youth can apply, please visit [mcs.bc.ca/youth\\_action\\_grants](https://mcs.bc.ca/youth_action_grants).

### Youth Health Ambassadors (YHA)

The YHA are a team of school-aged youth across BC who facilitate conversations with their peers about youth health topics, and support the sharing of the BC AHS data. Youth interested in these paid positions can contact [evelyn@mcs.bc.ca](mailto:evelyn@mcs.bc.ca).



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