

This fact sheet provides a brief overview of the 2008 Adolescent Health Survey findings for the Okanagan area. School Districts in this area are Vernon (SD 22), Central Okanagan (SD 23), Okanagan Similkameen (SD 53), Nicola-Similkameen (SD 58), Okanagan Skaha (SD 67), North Okanagan-Shuswap (SD 83).

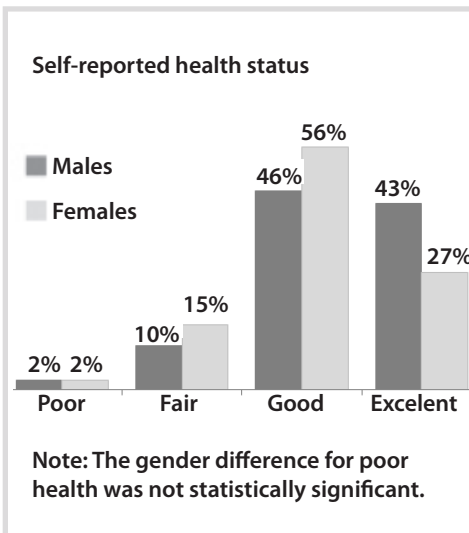
For a more detailed look at the results for this area see *A Picture of Health: Okanagan* available at [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca)



Students in this area identified with a broad range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The majority were of European heritage (72%). Twelve percent identified as Aboriginal/First Nations. Seven percent were born outside of Canada.

### Physical Health

Eighty-six percent of youth in the Okanagan area reported that their health was good or excellent, which was consistent with results for 2003. More youth in this area reported their health as excellent compared to the province as a whole. However, at least 49% of youth fell short of the recommended daily intake of fruit and vegetables.



In the past year, 14% of students did not get medical help when they felt they needed it, which was similar to the provincial rate. Among those youth who did not access needed medical care, the most common reason was thinking or hoping the problem would go away (49%).

### Substance Use

Twenty-nine percent of students in this area had ever tried smoking, which was similar to the provincial rate, and represented a local decrease from 39% in 2003. The percentage of students who had tried alcohol (62%) was unchanged from 2003; however, there was a decrease in the percentage who tried marijuana from 45% in 2003 to 35% in 2008. Both rates remained above the overall provincial rates.

### Sexual Health

As in 2003, 75% of youth had never had sexual intercourse. Among sexually active youth the most common age for first having sex was 16 years. Seventy one percent of sexually active students used a condom the last time they had sex.

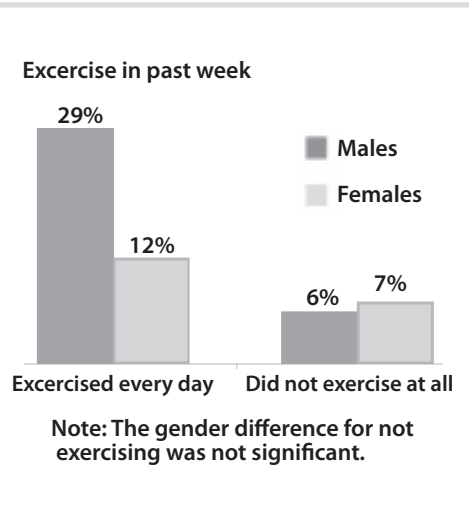


“I am a very happy person, my life is exactly how I want it to be!”

### Sports & Leisure

The majority of youth participated in extracurricular sports activities on a weekly basis: 60% of youth took part in sports activities with a coach (e.g., school teams, swimming lessons), and 76% participated in physical activities without a coach (e.g., biking, road hockey).

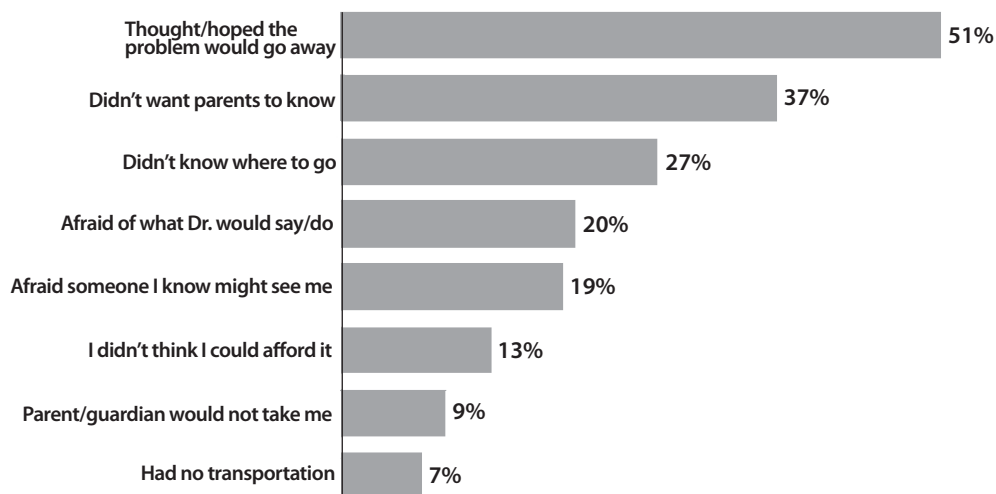
On a typical school day, 23% of students used the Internet (excluding doing homework) and 22% used the phone for three or more hours a day, 14% played video games for this amount of time.



## Mental Health

Twelve percent of students reported seriously considering suicide in the past year, which was lower than the 2003 rate (17%). Five percent of students actually attempted suicide in the past year, which was also lower than the 2003 rate of 8%. Twenty-two percent of females and 13% of males indicated cutting or injuring themselves on purpose without the intention of killing themselves.

Most common reasons for not accessing mental health services  
(among youth who felt they needed them)



## Injuries & Injury Prevention

There was a local decrease in the percentage of students who were injured seriously enough to require medical attention, from 41% in 2003 to 33% in 2008. There were also improvements in injury prevention behaviours; 70% of students always wore a seatbelt when riding in a motor vehicle (compared to 58% in 2003) and 29% of cyclists always wore a bike helmet (which was above the provincial rate of 24%).

## Abuse & Violence

Similar to youth across the province, 17% of students in this area reported that they had been physically abused and 8% had been sexually abused. These rates were similar to the 2003 rates in this area. In total, 21% of youth had experienced either form of abuse and 5% had experienced both types of abuse.

Twenty percent of students were cyber-bullied in the previous year, which was above the provincial rate (17%). Females were more likely than males to have been cyber-bullied (25% vs. 15%).

## Protective Factors

The AHS showed that building protective factors such as family, school and cultural connectedness can assist even the most vulnerable youth to overcome negative experiences, can assist young people to make healthier choices and can contribute to more positive health outcomes for all youth in BC.

Having friends with healthy attitudes about risky behaviours is a protective factor for youth. Compared to 2003, youth in 2008 were more likely to say their friends would be upset with them if they got arrested (67% vs. 54%), beat someone up (53% vs. 46%), dropped out of school (88% vs. 84%) or used marijuana (55% vs. 45%).

This fact sheet was produced with information from the fourth BC Adolescent Health Survey conducted by the McCreary Centre Society. Over 29,000 BC public school students in grades 7-12 completed the survey between February and June 2008. Previous surveys were conducted in 1992, 1998 and 2003.

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