



MEDIA RELEASE | January 2015

McCreary report shows improvements in injuries and substance use but raises concerns about mental health

East Kootenay results of the McCreary Centre Society's 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) are now available.

Results for the East Kootenay area, which included students in Southeast Kootenay (SD 05), Rocky Mountain (SD 06), and Kootenay Lake (SD 08) showed that the majority of Grade 7–12 students reported good physical and mental health; felt connected to their family, school, and community; had positive plans for the future; and were engaging in health promoting behaviours which will assist them to transition successfully to adulthood.

Although local students were more likely than their peers across the province to have tried tobacco, alcohol or marijuana, there were local decreases in the percentages who had done so. Also in comparison to 2008, more youth who had tried alcohol were delaying their first drink until they were at least 15 years old.

Students were less likely to be seriously injured than five years previously, and were more likely to be engaging in injury prevention behaviours such as wearing a seatbelt, and not mixing alcohol and driving.

It was not all good news though. Mental health results were concerning as 27% of East Kootenay girls and 19% of boys reported a mental health condition (such as Depression, ADHD or Anxiety Disorder). Girls were also more likely than boys to have deliberately harmed themselves in the past year, and to have seriously thought about and attempted suicide.

Annie Smith, Executive Director of McCreary commented on the report: *"We have seen great local improvements in areas such as substance use that show young people are making some good choices about their health, but the results also show us that a lot of students are not getting enough sleep, and are struggling with mental health issues. We also see a direct relationship between these two, as the more hours of sleep students got the more likely they were to report positive mental health."*

"I think the results also show the importance to students of supportive and caring relationships, and it was great to see higher than usual percentages of youth who had an adult in their community who cared about them."

A copy of the report *Easy Kootenay: Results of the 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey* can be obtained at www.mcs.bc.ca.

A series of webinars to share the findings have also been scheduled for **Thursday January 29th at 11:00am, Monday February 2nd at 3:30pm, and Friday February 6th at 8:30am.** Log-in details are available at www.mcs.bc.ca.

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

Founded in 1977, the Society sponsors and promotes a wide range of activities and research to address unmet health needs of young people.

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BACKGROUND

Between February and June 2013, almost 30,000 students in Grades 7–12 completed the BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) in schools across British Columbia. This is the fifth time students have been asked to complete the survey. It was conducted previously in 1992, 1998, 2003 and 2008. All school districts in this region participated in the survey in 2013, 2008 and 2003, which allowed for the inclusion of trends over the past decade

The survey results are used by federal and provincial policy makers and program planners, as well as by local decision makers and others with an interest in youth health.

The survey is designed to consider emerging youth health issues and to track trends over time. It included 130 questions asking youth about their perceptions of their current physical and emotional health, as well as risky behaviours and health promoting practices. Healthy development for youth includes many contributing factors, and the survey also asked about broader issues such as feelings of safety, relationships, and engagement in a variety of activities.

Key Findings: East Kootenay

- The percentage of students in East Kootenay born outside Canada doubled (from 4% in 2008 to 8% in 2013) but remained below the provincial rate of 19%. Students were more likely than their peers across the province to identify as European (71% vs. 53%) and Aboriginal (15% vs. 10%).
- Comparable to the provincial rates, 92% of youth never went to bed hungry, while 6% went to bed hungry sometimes, and 2% went to bed hungry often or always. The percentage of youth who never went to bed hungry, increased locally from 87% in 2008.
- In the past year, 11% of East Kootenay students (5% of males vs. 16% of females) reported not accessing needed mental health services, and 9% of students (6% of males vs. 12% of females) did not get medical help when they thought they needed it.
- Males generally reported better mental health than females, including higher rates of self-confidence and sense of competence, and lower rates of suicide ideation (11% vs. 19%) and suicide attempts (5% vs. 10%) in the past year.
- In the past year, a third of students were injured seriously enough to require medical attention. This percentage was higher than the rate across BC for both males (37% vs. 30% provincially) and females (29% vs. 24% provincially). However, this was a local decrease, from 43% in 2003 and 38% in 2008.
- More than 1 in 5 students experienced a concussion in the past year (26% of males vs. 17% of females). Mirroring what was seen provincially, 16% of youth who had a concussion had not accessed needed medical help.

- Rates of ever having sex were higher than those across BC, however there was a decrease in the percentage of youth who ever had sex (other than oral sex), from 33% in 2003 to 29% in 2013. Also, most local youth who ever had sex (64%) reported using a condom or other latex barrier the last time, which was similar to the percentage throughout the province.
- Youth in East Kootenay were more likely than their peers across the province to have ever tried tobacco, alcohol, or marijuana. However, there were local improvements over time, including reductions in the use of all three substances across survey years. Also, youth who drank alcohol were waiting longer to have their first drink than five years previous, with 74% having their first drink before age 15 compared to 84% in 2008.
- Eight percent of youth who had tried alcohol had ever driven a car after drinking alcohol, which reflected a local decline from 14% in 2008. It was more common for local youth to have driven after using marijuana, which 20% of marijuana users had ever done (no different from the 2008 rate), and 11% had done in the past month.
- Rates of physical abuse physical and verbal sexual harassment decreased from previous survey years for both males and females. Rates of sexual abuse decreased for males but not for females. As was the case provincially, female students were more likely than males to have experienced physical abuse, sexual abuse, physical sexual harassment and verbal sexual harassment in the past year.
- Fifty-six percent of students (61% of males vs. 51% of females) slept for eight or more hours the night before taking the survey, and 6% slept four hours or less. Most youth (78%) were online and/or on their phone after their expected bedtime.
- Females were more likely than males to be a healthy weight for their age and gender (79% vs. 70%), while males were more likely than females to be obese (9% vs 4%). Sixteen percent of healthy weight females thought they were overweight, compared to 5% of healthy weight males. Also, nearly half (49%) of healthy weight females were trying to lose weight, and 29% of healthy weight males were trying to gain weight.
- Protective factors which appeared to improve outcomes for even the most vulnerable youth included physical activity, meaningful engagement in activities, nutrition, and getting eight or more hours of sleep. Local results also highlighted the importance of supportive relationships with peers and adults, including family, teachers and other professionals.
- Sixty-nine percent of students (65% of males vs. 72% of females) reported having an adult in their neighbourhood or community (beyond their school or family) who cared about them. This percentage was higher than the provincial rate (61%). Feeling cared about by an adult outside the family was associated with positive mental health, including higher rates of self-confidence and perceived competence, and lower rates of suicide attempts.

In addition to local findings, the provincial report: *From Hastings Street to Haida Gwaii: Provincial results of the 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey* and other resources are available at www.mcs.bc.ca.