

MEDIA RELEASE | February 2015

Fraser North students drinking and smoking less but not getting enough sleep

Following last year's release of the provincial results of the McCreary Centre Society's 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS), local results are now available. The BC AHS was conducted in 56 of BC's 59 school districts, with almost 30,000 students in Grades 7–12 taking part.

Results for the Fraser North area, which included students in New Westminster (SD 40), Burnaby (SD 41), Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows (SD 42), and Coquitlam (SD 43) 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.

The survey also highlights some differences between this region and the province as a whole, as well as identifying some groups of students who may need additional support.

Students in Fraser North were less likely than those across BC to have got enough sleep, as only half of 12 to 19-year-olds got at least eight hours of sleep on the night before taking the survey. More than three-quarters of local students were online or on their phone after they were supposed to be asleep, and 48% were doing homework after their expected bedtime.

The survey found a direct link between sleep and mental health, as for each additional hour of sleep that students got there was a corresponding increase in them reporting positive mental health.

Compared to their peers five years ago, Fraser North students were less likely to have tried tobacco and alcohol, and the percentage who had driven after drinking halved.

Annie Smith, Executive Director of McCreary commented on the report: *"It is great to see so many positives in areas such as substance use and injury prevention behaviors like seatbelt wearing. But the number of students who are online or on their phone when they should be sleeping is concerning and is something we should focus on."*

A copy of the report *Fraser North: Results of the 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey*, as well as the provincial report *From Hastings Street to Haida Gwaii: Provincial 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 Feb. 19 at 3:00pm, Monday Feb. 23 at 11:00am**, and

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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Wednesday Feb. 25 at 8:30am. Log-in details are available at www.mcs.bc.ca.

BACKGROUNDER

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 and 2008, which allowed for the inclusion of trends over the past five years.

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: Fraser North

- Students in Fraser North were more likely to be of East Asian heritage and were less likely to identify as European or Aboriginal compared to their peers across the province. They were also more likely than youth across BC to have been born outside Canada (32% vs. 19% provincially) and to usually speak a language other than English at home (31% vs. 21%).
- Most students rated their overall health and mental health as good or excellent. However, students were more likely to rate their overall health this way than their mental health.
- Males generally reported better mental health than females, including higher rates of self-confidence and sense of competence, and lower rates of self-harm and suicide attempts. However, both local males and females were more likely to have attempted suicide in 2013 than five years earlier.
- Nine percent of students (6% of males vs. 11% of females) did not get medical help in the past year when they thought they needed it, which was an improvement from the rate five years previous (11% in 2008). However, there was an increase in the percentage of youth not accessing needed medical care or mental health care because they did not want their parents to know.
- Students in Fraser North were less likely than those across BC to have slept for eight or more hours the previous night (50% vs. 53%). Seventy-eight percent of students were online or on their phone after they were supposed to be asleep, and 48% (43% of males vs. 53% of females) were doing homework after their expected bedtime, which was higher than the rate across BC (45%).

- In the past year, 26% of males and 23% of females were injured seriously enough to require medical attention. Fourteen percent of students had a concussion during this same time period (17% of males vs. 12% of females).
- There were improvements in some injury prevention behaviors. For example, 76% of local youth always wore a seat belt when in a vehicle, compared to 67% five years previous. The percentage of youth who had tried alcohol who had ever driven a car after drinking halved (from 8% in 2008 to 4% in 2013).
- A third of students had eaten fruit or vegetables only once or twice the day before completing the survey, which was consistent with students across the province. Local students were less likely than those across BC to have consumed pop or soda (31% vs. 35%), coffee or coffee-based beverages (24% vs. 27%), and energy drinks (3% vs. 6%). They were more likely to have had traditional foods from their background (49% vs. 38% provincially).
- Rates of ever smoking tobacco or trying alcohol were lower than those across BC and were lower than the local rates five years previous. Fraser North youth were also less likely to have tried marijuana than their peers across the province (20% vs. 26%). In addition, local students were waiting longer to use alcohol and marijuana than those in previous survey years.
- Most students felt connected to their school and that their teachers cared about them. They were more likely to feel safe at school and happy at school compared to five years ago. However, rates of school-based bullying, including social exclusion (among females) and teasing, increased from 2008.
- In the past year, 55% of students took part in organized sports on a weekly basis, while 55% took part in weekly informal sports (e.g., road hockey, hiking, and skateboarding), and 18% took part in weekly yoga, dance, or exercise classes. The participation rates in all of these activities were lower than what was seen five years previous.
- Protective factors which were linked to health benefits 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.