



**MEDIA RELEASE | November 2014**

## ***First Fraser South report shows local students less likely to try tobacco, alcohol and marijuana***

Following the release earlier this year of the provincial results of the McCreary Centre Society's 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS), local results are now available.

Results for the Fraser South area, which included students in Langley (SD 35), Surrey (SD 36), and Delta (SD 37) 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.

One of the positive local findings was that compared to local students five years ago and to their peers across the province, Fraser South students were less likely to have tried tobacco, alcohol and marijuana and those that did were waiting longer before first doing so. For example, in 2008 74% of students had their first drink of alcohol before turning 15 years old compared to 61% in 2013. There was also a decrease in the percentage of students who had been binge drinking.

Students also reported feeling safer at school than those who participated in the survey in previous years, and local students were less likely to be bullied than students across the province. There were also improvements in the percentage of students who were cyberbullied

It was not all good news though and mental health was highlighted as an area of concern, particularly for girls where the percentage who attempted suicide increased from 6% in 2008 to 8% in 2013. One in ten students who felt they needed help for their mental health had not accessed services, and the most common reason for this was not wanting their parents to know.

The survey revealed that only around half of students (53%) got eight hours of sleep on the night before taking the survey, while 86% of girls and 79% of boys were on line, on their phone or doing homework after they were expected to be asleep. The more hours of sleep students got the more likely they were to report positive mental health.

Annie Smith, Executive Director of McCreary commented on the report: *"Thanks to the increased participation in the survey from school districts in other parts of the Fraser we have been able to produce a report for Fraser South for the first time ever, and it is great to see so many positives in terms*

*Society is a non-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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*of risky behaviours such as binge drinking and injury prevention behaviors like seatbelt wearing. But as with the rest of the province, girls mental health results were particularly concerning, as was the local rise in obesity rates for girls."*

A copy of the report *Fraser South: 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](http://www.mcs.bc.ca).

A series of webinars to share the findings have also been scheduled for **Tuesday Nov. 4<sup>th</sup> at 3:00pm, Friday Nov. 7<sup>th</sup> at 8:30am, and Thursday Nov. 13<sup>th</sup> at noon**. Log-in details are available at [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca).

## **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 BC AHS, as they did in 2008.

Due to increased participation of school districts in other parts of the Fraser, McCreary Centre Society was able to produce a Fraser South report for the first time.

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 South***

- Fraser South is ethnically and culturally diverse. For example, 22% of students were born outside of Canada and 61% spoke a language other than English at home.
- Consistent with provincial findings, local students were less likely to rate their mental health as good or excellent than their overall health. However, 84% of youth in Fraser South rated their mental health as good or excellent, which was higher than the percentage across the province (81%).
- Sixteen percent of local students reported having a mental health condition (compared to 19% provincially), and 10% of youth (5% of males vs. 15% of females) did not access mental health services when they thought they needed to. The most common reasons for not accessing these services included not wanting their parents to know, and thinking or hoping the problem would go away.

- Males generally reported better mental health than females, including feeling happy and calm more often in the past month, as well as lower rates of self-harm, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts.
- Around half of students (59% of males vs. 47% of females) slept for eight hours or more on the night before taking the survey. Most students (86% of females and 79% of males) were doing something such as homework or using their cellphone after the time they were expected to be asleep.
- In the past year, 28% of males and 22% of females were injured seriously enough to require medical attention. Fifteen percent of local students (18% of males vs. 12% of females) experienced a concussion during this time period.
- More students were engaging in injury prevention behaviour than five years earlier. For example, 74% always wore a seat belt when in a motor vehicle compared to 63% in 2008.
- A greater percentage of local females were classified as obese in 2013 than in 2008 (4% vs. 2%), while rates for males remained stable at 8%.
- Rates of ever having oral sex and other types of sex were lower in Fraser South than across the province, and reflected local decreases from 2008. Local youth were as likely as their peers across BC to have used a condom the last time they had sex, but were less likely to have used a condom the last time they had oral sex.
- Compared to their peers across the province, students in Fraser South were less likely to report ever smoking tobacco, drinking alcohol, or using marijuana. There were also local improvements from 2008. For example, youth were more likely to wait until the age of 15 to first drink alcohol or use marijuana, compared to five years earlier.
- Students were more likely to be teased and socially excluded than in 2008, while rates of being physically attacked or assaulted improved for females, and remained unchanged for males. Despite these bullying experiences, the percentage of students who felt safe at school increased.
- Eleven percent of students had been physically abused, and 8% had been sexually abused at some point. These percentages reflected local decreases from 2008.
- Students in Fraser South reported higher levels of school connectedness than students across the province. Local students also felt safer in every area of their school in 2013 than in 2008.
- 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.