



MEDIA RELEASE | October 2014

First McCreary report focusing on Northeast youth health is released

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. This is the first time that McCreary has been able to publish a report specifically on the health of Northeast youth.

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 Northeast which included students in Peace River South, Peace River North, and Fort Nelson, 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.

However, 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.

Mental health was an area of concern highlighted in the survey, particularly among females, who were three times more likely than males to report cutting or injuring themselves on purpose in the past year (27% vs. 9%). They were also twice as likely as males to have seriously considered suicide and to have attempted suicide in the past year.

The more hours of sleep students got, the more likely they were to report positive mental health. Yet less than half of youth (48%) slept for 8 or more hours on the night before taking the survey, and 80% were on line or on their phone after they were expected to be asleep.

In the past year, 33% of youth were injured seriously enough to require medical attention, which was above provincial rate of 27%. During the same time frame, 25% of local males and 14% of females reported they had suffered a concussion. Almost 1 in 5 (19%) who experienced a concussion did not seek medical help.

Annie Smith, Executive Director of McCreary commented on the report: "The Northeast results very clearly show us where we should be focusing our efforts in terms of health risk behaviours such as tobacco use and binge drinking and also show us we need to address big issues such as bullying, obesity rates and mental health. What was encouraging about the local survey results was the identification of a number of protective factors which seemed to be linked to better health for even the most vulnerable students,

*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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including supportive and caring relationships, physical activity, nutrition, and sleep, as well as school, family, community, and cultural connectedness.”

A copy of the report *Northeast: 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 **Wednesday October 8th (3:00pm)**, **Thursday October 9th (8:30am)** and **Tuesday October 14th (12:00 noon)**. Log-in details are available at 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. In 2013, all three school districts in this region participated, allowing a report for the Northeast to be published 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: Northeast

- More than a third of students had at least one health condition or disability. Yet most students rated their overall health and their mental health as good or excellent. The majority also felt good about themselves, could name things they were good at, and felt they were as competent as their peers.
- More than half of local students slept for less than eight hours on the night before taking the survey. Comparable to the provincial picture, 80% of students were online or on their phone after they were supposed to be asleep.
- Males in the Northeast generally reported more positive mental health than females. For example, 27% of females (and 9% of males) reported cutting or injuring themselves on purpose in the past year. Females were also twice as likely as males to have seriously thought about killing themselves and to have attempted suicide in the past year.
- In the past year, 33% of male and female students were injured seriously enough to require medical attention. This was above the provincial rate of 27%. During the same

time frame, 25% of local males and 14% of females reported they had suffered a concussion.

- When compared to the province, local youth reported poorer nutritional intake. For example, fewer youth in the Northeast ate fruit the day before taking the survey (79% ate fruit at least once vs. 86% of youth across BC) and more drank pop or soda (46% vs. 35%)
- Seventy percent of youth who had sex reported using a condom the last time they were sexually active. Condom use among those who had oral sex was higher than seen provincially. Rates of STI's and pregnancy were comparable with the province as a whole.
- Sixteen percent of Northeast students had experienced physical abuse and 11% had been sexually abused. Females were more than three times as likely to be sexually abused as males (18% vs. 5%).
- Students reported a range of bullying experiences with females more likely to be the victim and males more likely to be the perpetrator. Students who had been a victim of bullying in the past year were more likely to have also bullied others.
- A third of students had ever smoked. Among these students, 36% had successfully quit in the past year.
- Sixty-eight percent of students who had tried alcohol had their first drink before turning 15 years old. A similar result was found for marijuana.
- In the Northeast, 27% of males and 12% of females aged 12 to 17 met the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommendation that they get an hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day.
- Similar to youth across the province, 69% of youth in Northeast always wore their seat belt when riding in a motor vehicle.
- Comparable to the province, 70% of youth who ever had sex reported using a condom the last time they were sexually active, while condom use among those who had oral sex was higher than seen provincially.
- Sixty-seven percent of students reported having an adult in their neighbourhood or community (beyond their school or family) who cared about them. This was higher than the provincial rate of 61%.
- Protective factors which appeared to improve outcomes for even the most vulnerable youth included physical activity, nutrition, sleep, and school, family, community, and cultural connectedness. Local results also highlight the importance of supportive relationships with peers and adults including family, teachers, and other professionals.