

MEDIA RELEASE | November 2014

Richmond students show some decreases in risk taking but rises in sedentary behaviors

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 Richmond area 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.

Positive results included those that showed youth were more likely to engage in injury prevention behaviours such as seatbelt use than in previous years. They were also less likely to drink and drive or ride in a vehicle with a passenger who had been drinking or using marijuana.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the percentage of students who felt they had more sports opportunities as a result of the 2010 Winter Games was higher in Richmond than throughout BC (10% vs. 6%). However, despite these increased opportunities only 11% of 12–17 year olds exercised for the recommended 60 minutes a day in the past week. Additionally, the percentage of youth who were overweight or obese increased from 2008 to 2013, while the percentages engaging in sports, dance and exercise classes decreased.

Annie Smith, Executive Director of McCreary commented on the report: *"It is good to see Richmond youth making some safer choices around things like seatbelt use and mixing alcohol with driving. I think the results also show us where we need to target our efforts to make sure students are getting enough sleep and exercise. We see direct links between the number of hours of sleep students got and their mental health, and similar links between physical activity and mental health. The fact that less than half of Richmond students got 8 hrs sleep is concerning to me, as is the number who were online or on their phone after their parents thought they were asleep."*

A copy of the report *Richmond: 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.

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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A series of webinars to share the findings have also been scheduled for **Tuesday, Nov. 25th at 3:00pm, Friday, Nov. 28th at 8:30am, and Thursday, Dec. 4th at noon**. Login 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. Richmond School District participated in the BC AHS in 2003, 2008, and 2013.

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: Richmond

- Richmond's ethnic and cultural makeup is very different to that of the province as a whole, with half of Richmond students being of East Asian heritage (compared to 18% provincially). Local students are twice as likely as their peers across BC to speak a language other than English at home and to have a parent who works abroad.
- Consistent with provincial findings, students were less likely to rate their mental health as good or excellent than their overall health.
- Ten percent of students (5% of males vs. 14% of females) reported not accessing mental health services in the past year when they thought they needed to. The most common reason was not wanting their parents to know.
- There were local improvements in some injury prevention behaviours, as youth were more likely to wear a seat belt than their peers previously. Also, 3% of Richmond youth who had tried alcohol had driven after drinking, which was a decline from 13% in 2008.
- Less than half of Richmond students (46%) slept for at least eight or more on the night before taking the survey. Sixty percent of females and 48% of males were doing homework and 87% of females and 80% of males were online or on their phone after they were supposed to be asleep.

- Fewer students reported going to bed hungry because there was not enough money for food at home. In 2013, 6% went to bed hungry sometimes, and 1% went to bed hungry often or always. This was a decrease from 2008 when 11% went to bed hungry sometimes, and 3% went to bed hungry often or always.
- Youth who indicated going to bed hungry at least sometimes were more likely to also report not having any food at home to eat for breakfast (12% vs. 2% of those who did not go to bed hungry).
- The percentage of youth who were overweight or obese increased from 2008 to 2013 (from 20% to 25% for males and from 8% to 15% for females), after remaining stable between 2003 and 2008.
- Only 11% of 12–17 year olds exercised for the recommended 60 minutes a day in the past week, compared to 17% provincially. Additionally, students in Richmond were more likely to have not exercised at all in the past week (14% vs. 9% across BC).
- Local students were less likely than those across the province to be sexually active. They were also less likely to have had sex, to report an STI or to have been involved in a pregnancy than their local peers in 2008.
- The decrease in alcohol and marijuana use seen provincially was not seen in Richmond. However, Richmond rates of use remained below those across BC, and local students were waiting longer to try these substances than in 2008.
- Although the percentages of female students who experienced some forms of bullying (i.e., teasing and social exclusion) rose from 2008, both male and female students felt safer in every location at their school in 2013 than they had previously.
- Richmond students were more likely than their peers across the province to anticipate continuing their education beyond high school, such as through university, college, or trade school (89% vs. 86%).
- Students in 2013 were less likely than their peers in 2008 to report being the victims of physical assault, sexual abuse or sexual harassment.
- A number of protective factors were identified which appeared to contribute to better health outcomes and well-being for even the most vulnerable youth in Richmond. These included family, school, and community connectedness; cultural engagement; supportive and caring adults; sleep; good nutrition; and feeling listened to and valued.