

# Trends in self-harm, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts (2008–2013)

Most youth in British Columbia who completed the 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey had never self-harmed or experienced serious suicidal thoughts or a suicide attempt. This fact sheet focuses on those who have had one or more of these experiences, and specifically considers trends in self-harm and suicidality by age.

## Self-harm

In 2013, 17% of youth (9% males vs. 24% of females) had ever cut or injured themselves on purpose without the intention of killing themselves (self-harmed).

Overall, there was a decrease in the percentage of males who self-harmed from 12% in 2008 to 9% in 2013, while rates of self-harm among females increased from 22% in 2008 to 24% in 2013.

When these rates were considered by age, there was a decrease in the percentage of males who self-harmed at every age level. However, among females rates of those aged 13 and younger and 16 and older remained consistent, and rates of those aged 14 and 15 increased.

The BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) is conducted every five years by the McCreary Centre Society, a not-for-profit organization committed to improving the health of BC youth through research, evaluation, and youth engagement projects.

This fact sheet uses BC AHS data from 2008 and 2013. The 2013 survey was completed by nearly 30,000 students in Grades 7 to 12, in 56 of BC's 59 school districts.

The data reflects the responses of youth who attended mainstream public school on the day of the survey and who were willing and able to participate. Therefore, the results may not be representative of all youth who self-harmed or were suicidal.

### Youth who ever self-harmed

#### Males

	2008	2013	Change
13 years old and younger	10%	8%	↓
14 and 15 years old	12%	8%	↓
16 years old and older	12%	9%	↓

#### Females

	2008	2013	Change
13 years old and younger	19%	19%	—
14 and 15 years old	23%	31%	↑
16 years old and older	22%	22%	—

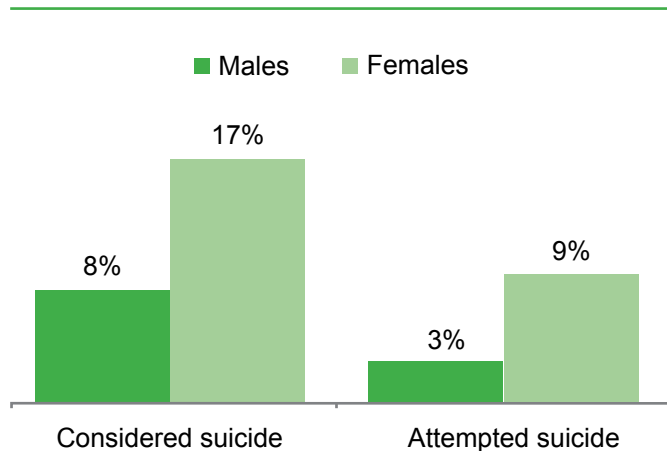


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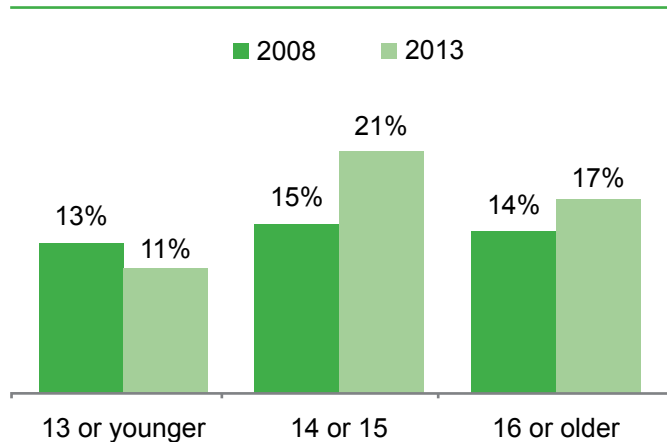
## Suicidal ideation and attempts

Overall, the rates of youth who had seriously considered suicide in the past year remained consistent (12% in 2013). Six percent of youth made a suicide attempt, an increase from 5% in 2008.

Youth who seriously considered or attempted suicide in the past year



Female youth who considered suicide in the past year



For males, the rates of considering suicide decreased among those aged 13 and younger (8% in 2008 vs. 6% in 2013), and 14 or 15 years old (9% vs. 7%), and stayed consistent among those aged 16 or older (9%). There were no changes in rates of males attempting suicide in any of the age groups.

There was no change among females aged 13 and younger in considering or attempting suicide, but rates increased among older females. For example, the percentage of 14 and 15 year olds who attempted suicide increased from 8% to 12%, and the percentage of 16 year olds who did so rose to 8% from 6% in 2008.

## Summary

Between 2008 and 2013, there were improvements in the percentages of males who self-harmed or considered suicide but no improvements in the percentage who made a suicide attempt, at any age level.

For females, there were increases in rates of self-harm, and considering or attempting suicide. The largest increase in rates of self-harm and suicidal ideation were among females aged 14 or 15 years old.

For enquires about this fact sheet or information about accessing data from the BC AHS, please email: [mccreary@mcs.bc.ca](mailto:mccreary@mcs.bc.ca).

This fact sheet was created by Douglas College Child and Youth Care student Chris Smith.

 McCreary Centre Society

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