



McCreary Centre Society



RESULTS OF THE 2018 BC ADOLESCENT HEALTH SURVEY

## BALANCE AND CONNECTION IN BC: THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF OUR YOUTH



Cover design by Alex van der Marel.

*Alex is a student and professional illustrator. As of 2017, he has been studying at Emily Carr University of Art and Design pursuing a degree in Illustration. His work focuses on themes of diversity and transformation. He lives in Vancouver with three adorable cats.*

Layout design by Stephanie Martin.

# BALANCE AND CONNECTION IN BC: THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF OUR YOUTH

*Results of the 2018 BC Adolescent Health Survey*

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*“Thank you—this really helped me see what is happening in my life and how I can fix it!”*

**Grade 9 student, Fraser**

*“Thank you for keeping it confidential and to be done alone. I probably wouldn’t have answered so honestly if it had not been confidential simply because I hide a lot from family and friends.”*

**Grade 9 student, Interior**

*“I highly appreciate whoever’s idea it was to do this, and I hope our information was useful to you.”*

**Grade 8 student, Vancouver Coastal**

38,015  
STUDENTS

2,175  
CLASSROOMS

840  
SCHOOLS

58  
SCHOOL  
DISTRICTS

469  
PUBLIC  
HEALTH  
NURSES

5  
HEALTH  
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# KEY FINDINGS


 BC students in Grades 7–12 have become more diverse with an increase in recent immigrants, international students, and those speaking a language other than English at home.


 In 2018, most youth reported they had a good quality of life, and most also rated their overall health and their mental health as good or excellent. For example, 79% felt they had a good life, and 73% felt their life was going well.


 However, health ratings declined from five years earlier, and there was an increase in youth reporting they had a mental health condition, and specifically Anxiety Disorder or panic attacks, Depression, PTSD, and ADHD.


 In 2018, 15% of students reported missing classes in the past month because of mental health challenges (e.g., depression, anxiety), and 14% were too anxious or depressed in the past year to participate in extracurricular activities.


 There was an increase from previous years in the percentage of students who had cut or injured themselves on purpose without trying to kill themselves, who had seriously considered killing themselves, and who had missed out on needed mental health services, although the percentage who had attempted suicide was lower than in 2013 and similar to 2008.


 Most BC youth aged 12–17 fell short of Canadian physical activity guidelines, although there was a slight increase in males who exercised daily (from 22% in 2013 to 24% in 2018).


 There were no improvements in experiences of violence, as rates of sexual abuse, dating violence, and sexual harassment increased from five years earlier.


 Twelve percent of youth with a phone used their device on their most recent school day to watch pornography. However, the percentage who used their phone for sexting halved (5% in 2018 vs. 10% in 2013).


 Half of students always ate breakfast on school days, which was a decrease from 2013, and less than 4 in 10 (37%) always ate three meals a day on school days. One in 10 BC students went to bed hungry because there was not enough money for food at home.


 An Index of Deprivation developed with BC youth showed that the more items youth were deprived of that they wished they had, the less likely they were to feel like a part of their school, plan to finish high school, and report positive mental health, and the more likely they were to go to bed hungry.


 The housing crisis in BC may be having an impact on students' well-being, as youth were more likely than five years earlier to have moved to a new home and to have moved multiple times in the past year. Youth were also more likely to be living in homes with related and unrelated adults and children than previously.


 There was an overall decrease in the percentage of youth who smoked tobacco, and those who did smoke waited longer to try it. However, in the past month, 21% had vaped with nicotine and 19% without nicotine.


 Among students who drank alcohol last Saturday, 61% engaged in binge drinking, which was a decrease from 76% in 2013. Females remained more likely than males to exceed the recommended number of drinks for adults.


 There was no increase from previous years in the percentages of youth who had tried marijuana or other substances. Youth who did use marijuana waited longer to first try it.


 The percentage of students who slept for eight or more hours the night before taking the survey decreased from 53% to 48%. Fewer than half of students (41%) reported going offline after their expected bedtime (e.g., turning off their phone or putting it on silent mode). Students who did go offline were more likely to have slept longer and woken up feeling rested.


 The majority of youth engaged in extracurricular activities over the past year. However, there were decreases in weekly participation in most activities (except cultural or traditional activities), including decreases in organized sports, informal sports, and dance/exercise classes.


 There was a decrease in the percentage of students who reported they had a concussion in the past year, including a decrease in those reporting multiple concussions. However, only around half (52%) of youth who experienced a concussion had received medical treatment for their injury.


 The percentage of students who had oral sex or intercourse was unchanged from five years earlier, although a lower percentage had intercourse at a young age. However, among those who did have intercourse, the percentage for whom withdrawal was their only attempt to prevent pregnancy increased from 6% to 10%.

 The majority of students felt like they were part of their school, were happy to be there, and had positive relationships with school staff. Most youth planned to complete high school and attend post-secondary. However, there was a slight decrease in the percentage who planned to finish high school, from 89% in 2013 to 87% in 2018. There was also a decrease in the percentage who planned to go on to post-secondary education (from 86% to 83%).

 Youth were asked how often they persevered when things went wrong. Among those who had experienced setbacks, 44% indicated they always pushed themselves to achieve their goals in these situations. The more often students persevered when faced with obstacles, the more likely they were to experience positive mental health and to have plans to pursue post-secondary education, and the less likely they were to experience extreme stress.

 Most students (71%) felt they had an adult inside their family they could talk to if they had a serious problem, and 27% had an adult outside the family they could talk to. These percentages were lower than in previous years.

 Compared to 2013, students were more likely to feel connected to their community and to have an adult in their community who cared about them.

 Youth who got enough sleep, ate well, exercised, and went offline, and those who felt supported and connected to family, school, community and peers reported better health than those who did not have these experiences and supports.

# INTRODUCTION

## THE 2018 BC ADOLESCENT HEALTH SURVEY

*"Thank you for putting in the time and effort to do this [survey]. I know so many people will appreciate and benefit from this."*

**Grade 11 student, Fraser**

The BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) is the most reliable, comprehensive survey of youth aged 12–19 in British Columbia. The survey was first conducted in 1992 and has been completed every five years since. In 2018, over 38,000 young people aged 12–19 in 58 of BC's 60 school districts completed the survey.

The 2018 BC AHS was developed in consultation with young people, parents, and other experts in youth health. It was extensively pilot tested before being administered by Public Health Nurses and Public Health Resource Nurses to students in mainstream public schools between February and June 2018.

The 2018 survey included more school districts and students than ever before. Details about the sampling, data weighting, validity checks, and information about trends can be found in a methodology fact sheet which is available at [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca).

2018 BC AHS participating school districts				
North	Interior	Island	Vancouver Coastal	Fraser
28 Quesnel	5 Southeast Kootenay	61 Greater Victoria	38 Richmond	33 Chilliwack
50 Haida Gwaii	6 Rocky Mountain	62 Sooke	39 Vancouver	34 Abbotsford
52 Prince Rupert	8 Kootenay Lake	63 Saanich	44 North Vancouver	36 Surrey
54 Bulkley Valley	10 Arrow Lakes	64 Gulf Islands	45 West Vancouver	37 Delta
57 Prince George	19 Revelstoke	68 Nanaimo	46 Sunshine Coast	40 New Westminister
59 Peace River South	20 Kootenay-Columbia	Ladysmith	47 Powell River	41 Burnaby
60 Peace River North	22 Vernon	69 Qualicum	48 Sea to Sky	42 Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows
81 Fort Nelson	23 Central Okanagan	70 Alberni	49 Central Coast	43 Coquitlam
82 Coast Mountains	27 Cariboo-Chilcotin	71 Comox Valley		75 Mission
91 Nechako Lakes	51 Boundary	72 Campbell River		78 Fraser-Cascade
92 Nisga'a	53 Okanagan Similkameen	79 Cowichan Valley		
	58 Nicola-Similkameen	84 Vancouver Island West		
	67 Okanagan Skaha	85 Vancouver Island North		
	73 Kamloops-Thompson			
	74 Gold Trail			
	83 North Okanagan-Shuswap			
93 Conseil scolaire francophone				

## LIMITATIONS

When reading this report, it is important to remember that although it is considered representative of over 95% of BC youth aged 12–19 who were attending mainstream schools in the province, it does not capture the health picture of all young people in this age range. For example, those who were in alternative schools, independent schools, were home-schooled, were dealing with challenges which kept them out of school, or were absent on the day the survey was administered were not included.

Also, the survey was only administered on paper and in English, which excluded some youth with certain disabilities, literacy or comprehension challenges.

## GLOSSARY

For readability, the following terms are used in this report:

- **Binge drinking** refers to males who consume four or more alcoholic drinks within a couple of hours and females who consume three or more.
- **Extreme sports** include activities such as back-country skiing and BMX.
- **Ideas listened to** refers to youth who reported that their ideas were listened to 'quite a bit' or 'a lot'.
- **Informal sports** are sports without a coach such as skateboarding and hiking.
- **Meaningful activities** are activities which youth indicated were 'quite a bit' or 'very meaningful' to them.
- **Non-binary** reflects youth who did not identify as either male or female, and those who were not sure of their gender identity.
- **Organized sports** are sports with a coach such as school teams and swimming lessons.
- **Phone** refers to a cell phone, smartphone, or other portable electronic communication device.
- **Sexting** refers to sending sexually explicit photographs or messages using a phone. It was also referred to on the survey as 'sending nudes.'
- **Youth** and **students** are used interchangeably to refer to survey respondents.

## A GUIDE TO THIS REPORT

This report is intended for a community audience, and therefore does not detail the methodology, statistical testing, or analyses that were conducted. This information is available on request from [mccreary@mcs.bc.ca](mailto:mccreary@mcs.bc.ca).

The report is divided into four main sections. The first provides background information about the young people who completed the survey, the second focuses on their health profile, the next section considers some potentially adverse experiences or challenges to growing up healthy, and precedes a section which looks at factors that can support young people to thrive. This final section also offers young people's ideas on what they would like to learn about in relation to their health.

The 2018 BC AHS included many questions which have been asked on the BC AHS in previous years. This allowed us to report trends over time. The survey also included some new items which reflected the changing challenges and opportunities experienced by young people. These items were deemed important to include by stakeholders who participated in consultations during the development of the survey.

Based on the feedback we received about the 2013 BC AHS and through consultations during the development of the 2018 survey, one of the areas which was updated was gender identity. Following recommendations from Statistics Canada, the 2018 survey included two new questions: one about what is listed on a student's original birth certificate, with an option of male or female, and one about current gender identity, which included the response options of male, female, neither male nor female, and not yet sure.

Previous versions of the BC AHS only included male and female options for gender. Therefore, in this report, trends are reported only for males and females (based on the birth certificate question). For analyses conducted exclusively with the 2018 data, results are reported using the second question about current gender identity (male, female, and non-binary). Non-binary youth includes those who identified as neither male nor female as well as those who were not yet sure of their gender identity.

Reported results for non-binary students are therefore among the 2% of students who identified as such. For example, if 50% of non-binary students provided a certain response to a survey question, this represents a relatively small group of youth and equates to 1% of the youth population surveyed. Results should be interpreted with this in mind.

All comparisons and associations within the 2018 data which are included in this report are statistically significant at  $p < .01$ . This means there is up to a 1% likelihood that these results occurred by chance. Comparisons to previous survey years (trends over time) were considered statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , which means there is up to a 5% likelihood that the results occurred by chance. Differences in tables or charts that are not statistically significant are noted. Any percentage that is marked with an asterisk (\*) should be interpreted with caution, as it has a higher than anticipated standard error, but is still within an acceptable range.



# YOUNG PEOPLE IN BC

## BACKGROUND

British Columbia has a diverse ethnic and cultural population. In 2018, the two most commonly reported family backgrounds were European and East Asian. Over the past decade, the percentage of youth who identified as European dropped, while those who identified as South Asian, Southeast Asian, Latin/South/Central American, West Asian, and African increased.

Family background	2008	2018
European	54%	46%
East Asian	18%	18%
South Asian	8%	11%
Indigenous	10%	10%
Southeast Asian	5%	8%
Latin/South/Central American	3%	5%
West Asian	2%	3%
African	2%	3%
Australian/Pacific Islander	2%	2%
Don't know	10%	10%
Other	4%	4%

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

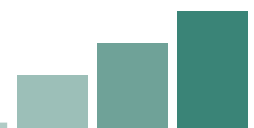
Note: The majority of youth who chose 'other' indicated they were Canadian.

## BIRTHPLACE & LANGUAGE

The percentage of students born in Canada decreased over the past decade (from 82% in 2008 to 79% in 2018). In 2018, 12% of those born outside Canada were permanent residents or Canadian citizens, 6% were international students (an increase from 4% in 2013), and 1% were refugees.

Among those who were born abroad, 29% had been in this country between two and five years, and 25% had been here less than two years (an increase from 17% in 2008 and 22% in 2013).

Over half (53%) of BC youth spoke a language other than English at home, with 23% doing so most of the time. The proportion of students who spoke another language at home increased over the past decade (from 47% in 2008 and 49% in 2013).



## INDIGENOUS YOUTH

Among youth who identified as Indigenous, 61% were First Nations, 32% Métis, 2% Inuit, and 6% specified another Indigenous background.

Similar to five years earlier, 17% of Indigenous youth currently lived on a First Nations reserve (13% all of the time and 4% some of the time), and another 10% had previously lived on reserve.

In 2013, 14% of Indigenous students reported that they spoke an Indigenous language. In 2018, the question was changed to ask about fluency. One percent of Indigenous youth could speak an Indigenous language fluently, 3% could speak at a conversational level, and 24% could speak a few words.

Around 4 in 10 Indigenous students (39%) reported that at least one member of their family had been in residential school, while another 38% did not know. Relatives who had been in residential school included their grandparents (24%), parents (4%), and/or other family members (22%).

Five percent of Indigenous youth identified as Two Spirit.

An in-depth look at the health of Métis youth will be published in the summer of 2019 in partnership with Métis Nation BC. Additional reports about the health of Indigenous youth who completed the 2018 BC AHS will also follow.

## GENDER IDENTITY & SEXUAL ORIENTATION

*"I am worried about what my parents would say or do if I ever told them I was bisexual. I'm worried they won't love me anymore."*

Grade 7 student, Fraser

*"I would like to transition but I am too afraid to. I would like to be able to be happy with myself and be seen as me."*

Grade 8 student, North

For the first time, the BC AHS asked youth about the sex on their birth certificate and also about their current gender identity. Half of participants were male on their birth certificate and half were female.

For nearly all youth, their current gender identity corresponded with what was on their birth certificate, whereas 0.5% were transgender (e.g., their birth certificate listed female and they currently identified as male). Two percent currently identified as non-binary (i.e., did not identify as either male or female or were not yet sure of how they identified).





Sexual orientation			
	Males	Females	Non-binary
Straight	89%	78%	16%
Mostly straight	3%	7%	9%
Bisexual	2%	7%	25%
Gay or lesbian	1%	1%	8%
Not sure yet	3%	5%	20%
Something other than those listed above	1%	1%	23%

Note: The difference between female and non-binary youth who identified as ‘mostly straight’ was not statistically significant.

The BC AHS question about sexual orientation was updated in 2018 and included an option for students to write in something other than the options listed. Males were more likely than females to identify as straight whereas females were more likely to identify as mostly straight or bisexual. Non-binary students were most likely to identify as gay/lesbian, bisexual, not sure yet, or to specify a different sexual orientation than those listed. Among the 2% of students who wrote in a specific response, the two most common were pansexual and asexual.

## GOVERNMENT CARE

Students were asked if they had ever experienced different types of government care (through the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development or a delegated agency) or alternatives to care. In total, 2% had been in a foster home, 2% had been on a Kith and Kin Agreement and 1% had stayed in a group home. Also, 1% had been held in a custody centre.

Youth Agreements and Agreements with Young Adults have specific eligibility criteria, including age restrictions. One percent of students had ever been on a Youth Agreement and less than 1% had been on an Agreement with Young Adults.

McCreary's Youth Research Academy will release a report about the health of youth in care in the summer of 2019.



## LIVING SITUATION

Most youth lived with at least one parent (95%). Compared to 2013, they were less likely to live alone and were more likely to be living in households with parents, grandparents, siblings, or other related or unrelated adults. Thirteen percent of youth had three or more types of people living with them in 2018, compared to 9% in 2013.

Most students (78%) always felt safe inside their home (vs. 81% in 2013), while 2% never or rarely felt safe there.

There was an increase in the percentage of students who had moved in the past year (from 23% in 2013 to 25%). There was also an increase in the percentage who had moved three or more times, from 5% in 2013 to 6%.

*"I got kicked out of my house yesterday for telling my mom I was unhappy and how I wanted to kill myself and she said I should try it."*

Grade 9 student, North

Eight percent of students had run away from home in the past year (which was slightly lower than the 9% in 2013 and 2008), and 6% had been kicked out. Over a third (37%) of students who had run away from home had also been kicked out in the past year. Non-binary youth were the most likely to have run away from home and to have been kicked out. For example, 13% had been kicked out, which was more than double the percentage among males and females.

People youth live with most of the time			
	2013	2018	Change
Mother/stepmother	85%	88%	↑
Father/stepfather	71%	78%	↑
Two mothers or two fathers	1%	1%	–
Grandparent(s)	9%	13%	↑
Foster parent(s)	1%	1%	–
Siblings/step-siblings	58%	69%	↑
Own child or own children	<1%	<1%	–
Other children or youth	2%	2%	↑
Other related adults	4%	5%	↑
Other unrelated adults	2%	3%	↑
Live alone	1%	<1%	↓
Live with both parents at different times	8%	8%	–

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

Note: The percentage who lived with other children or youth looks the same due to rounding but the rate in 2018 was slightly higher than in 2013.

↑ ↓ Indicates there was a statistically significant difference between 2013 and 2018.

## EMPLOYMENT

Youth were asked if they had caretaking responsibilities on a typical school day. In comparison to 2013, they were slightly more likely to be caring for a relative, including a relative with a disability or younger sibling (21% vs. 20% in 2013), and slightly less likely to be looking after a pet or other animal (51% vs. 52%) or their own child or children (1% vs. 2%).

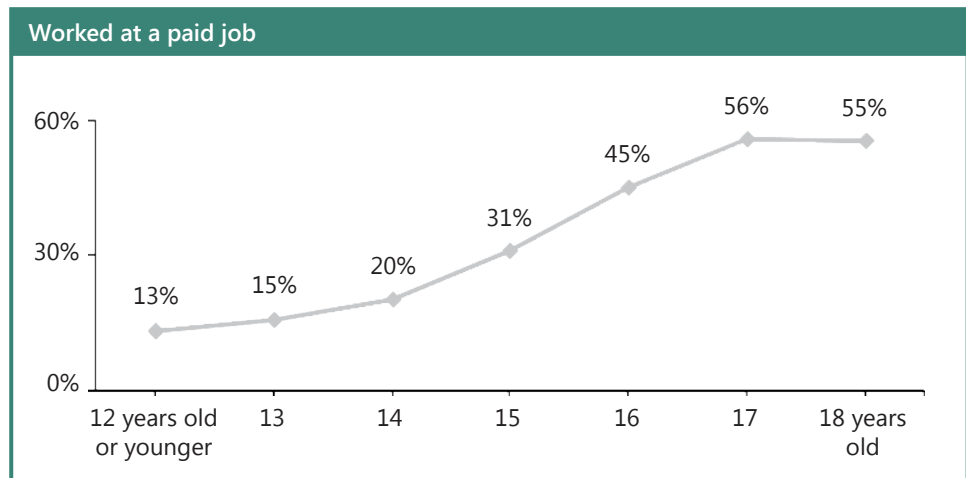
There were some gender differences in caretaking responsibilities. For example, as in 2013, females were more likely than males to be caring for an animal (55% vs. 47%) or a relative with a disability (24% vs. 18%). Non-binary youth were also more likely than males to have these caretaking responsibilities (60% cared for an animal and 25% cared for a relative).

*“Students in the upper grades are usually working. In our class of about 22 students everyone is employed.”*

**Grade 12 student, Fraser**

A third (33%) of students had worked at a paid job during the school year, with no gender differences. This was an increase from 29% in 2013 but lower than a decade earlier (41%). In 2018, 9% worked less than 5 hours a week, 13% worked 5 to 12 hours, 9% worked 13 to 20 hours, and 3% worked in excess of 20 hours a week.

Older students were more likely than younger ones to have been employed and to have worked more than 20 hours a week. For example, 8% of 18-year-olds worked 21 or more hours a week, compared to 3% of 16-year-olds and 1% of 14-year-olds.



Note: The difference between 17- and 18-year-olds was not statistically significant.

## PHONE USE

*"I think there should be more concern with social media and the youth. Through social media, we are exposed to so much at a young age and it can drastically change us. We also spend so much time on social media that we often miss out on important parts of living at a youthful age."*

Grade 9 student, Vancouver Coastal

*"We are not allowed to use phones or have them at school. This gives me WAY too much anxiety."*

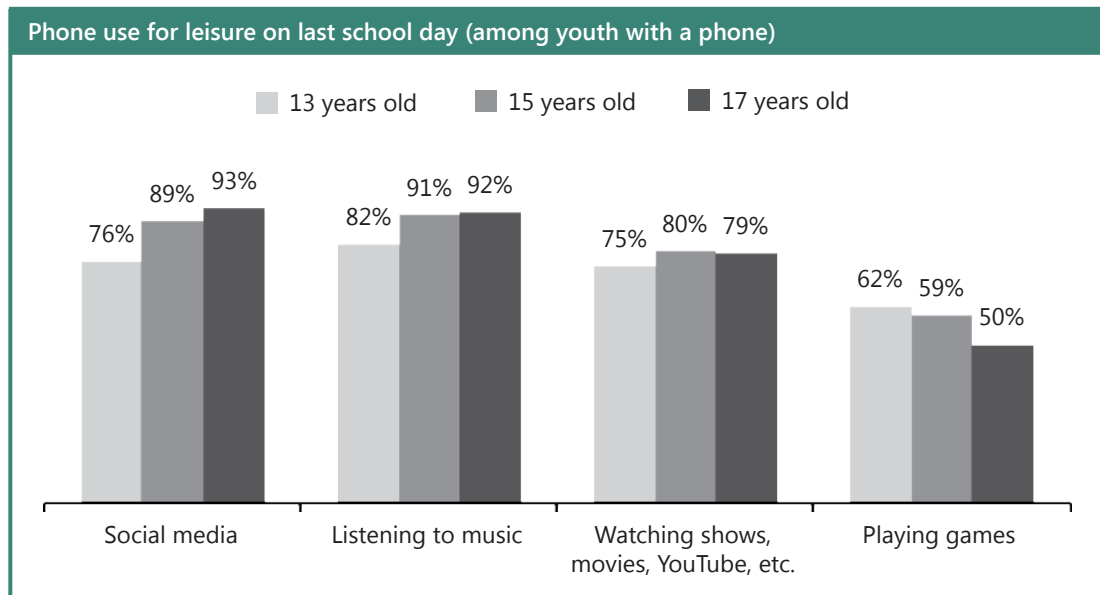
Grade 8 student, Island

Ninety-seven percent of students who had a phone used it for entertainment purposes on the previous school day, most commonly to listen to music (88%); access social media (85%); watch shows, movies or YouTube (78%); and play games (57%).

Older students were more likely than younger ones to use their phone to listen to music, access social media, and watch videos (movies, shows, YouTube, etc.), whereas younger students were more likely to play games.

There were some gender differences in phone usage. For example, males were the most likely to use their phone to play games, whereas females were the most likely to use it for linking to social media.

Around 6 in 10 students (61%) who had a phone used their device for doing homework on the day before they took the survey. Female students were more likely than males and non-binary students to use their device to do homework, as were older students compared to younger ones.



Note: The differences between those aged 15 and 17 were not statistically significant for 'listening to music' or for 'watching shows, movies, YouTube, etc.'

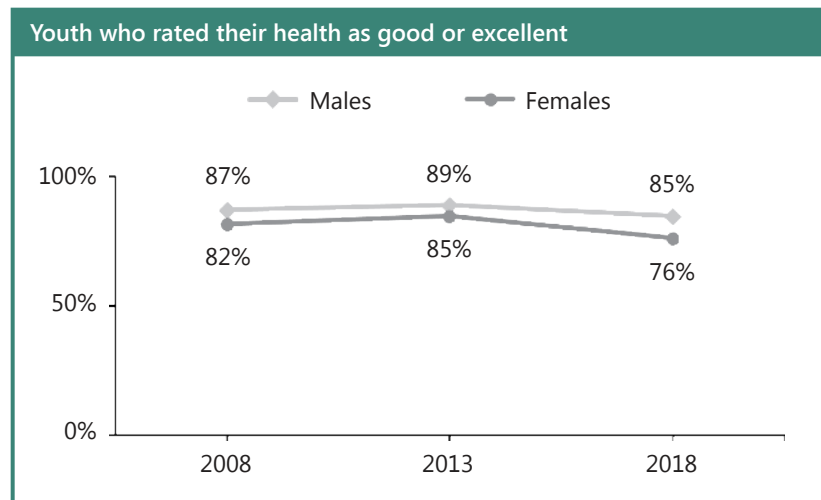
# HEALTH PROFILE OF BC YOUTH

## PHYSICAL HEALTH

*"I am quite healthy for most of the time."*  
Grade 12 student, Fraser

Most students (81%) rated their health as good or excellent. However, health ratings were lower in 2018 than in previous survey years. For example, compared to five years earlier, students were less likely to rate their health as excellent (29% in 2018 vs. 35% in 2013) and were more likely to rate it as fair (16% vs. 12%) or poor (3% vs. 2%).

Nearly 4 in 10 students (39%) had missed school due to illness at least once in the past month, including 9% who missed at least three days. Youth who rated their health as fair or poor were more than twice as likely as those who rated it as good or excellent to have missed classes due to illness on three or more days in the past month (16% vs. 7%).



## HEALTH CONDITIONS & DISABILITIES

*"My disability affects my daily life. Daily activities cause a lot of pain and there are few services available in my area to help me cope with this disability. I would like to connect more with people with the same disability."*

**Grade 11 student, Interior**

Compared to five years earlier, there was a decrease in the percentage of youth who reported having a long-term or chronic medical condition such as diabetes or asthma (8% in 2018 vs. 10% in 2013), and an increase in students with a severe allergy (3% vs. 2%) and a physical disability (1% vs. <1%). Four percent had a sensory disability (e.g., hearing or vision impairment), which was similar to the percentage in 2013.

Around a third of youth (34%) who had a physical disability, sensory disability, long-term medical condition, or severe allergy reported that it prevented them from doing things their peers could do.

## DENTAL VISITS

*"I visited the dentist but not for pain."*

**Grade 11 student, Vancouver Coastal**

*"I recently went to the dentist and had some things done on my teeth and was prescribed pills."*

**Grade 9 student, Island**

Most youth (83%) had been to the dentist in the past 12 months, 9% had visited the dentist between a year and two years ago, 5% had been there more than two years ago, and 2% had never been to the dentist.

One in ten students (10%) who had been to the dentist reported that their last visit had been for pain, which was higher than the percentage in 2013 (8%). The longer it had been since youth had visited the dentist, the more likely their last visit was for pain.



## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

*"I go to the gym 4 times a week. Working out with my friends has helped me relieve stress from school."*

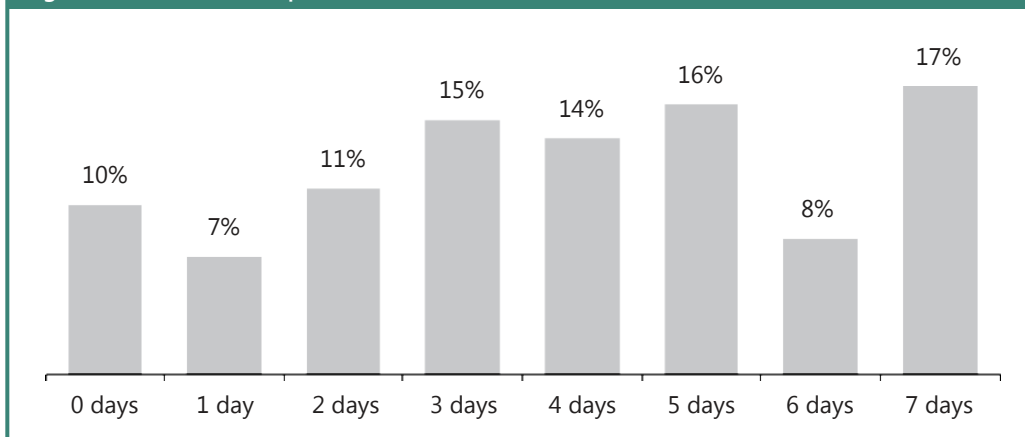
**Grade 10 student, Vancouver Coastal**

The Canadian Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines state that children and youth aged 5–17 should complete at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise every day. Only 18% of students aged 12–17 met these recommendations in the week before taking the survey, and 10% did not take part in this level of physical activity on any day in the past week. The percentage of males aged 12–17 who exercised on all seven days in the past week was higher in 2018 than in 2013 (24% vs. 22%), but the percentage among females was unchanged (12%).

The Guidelines recommend that individuals aged 18 or older take part in 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each week. Consistent with findings five years earlier, most males (68%) and around half of females (51%) in this age group achieved these recommendations by participating in 60 minutes of exercise on at least three days in the past week.

There were decreases in other types of physical activity. For example, 64% of students cycled in the past year, which reflected a steady decrease over the past decade (71% cycled in 2008 and 68% in 2013). Younger students and males were the most likely to have cycled in the past year.

Number of days on which students participated in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise in the past week



Note: Percentages do not equal 100% due to rounding.

## SLEEP

*"I have a lot of trouble sleeping at night due to anxiety and fear of having a bad sleep."*

**Grade 12 student, North**

*"With homework and my job I find it impossible to get the recommended 8 hours of sleep. 70–90% of the people I know are below the 6 hours a night on average. Please push school start times a little later."*

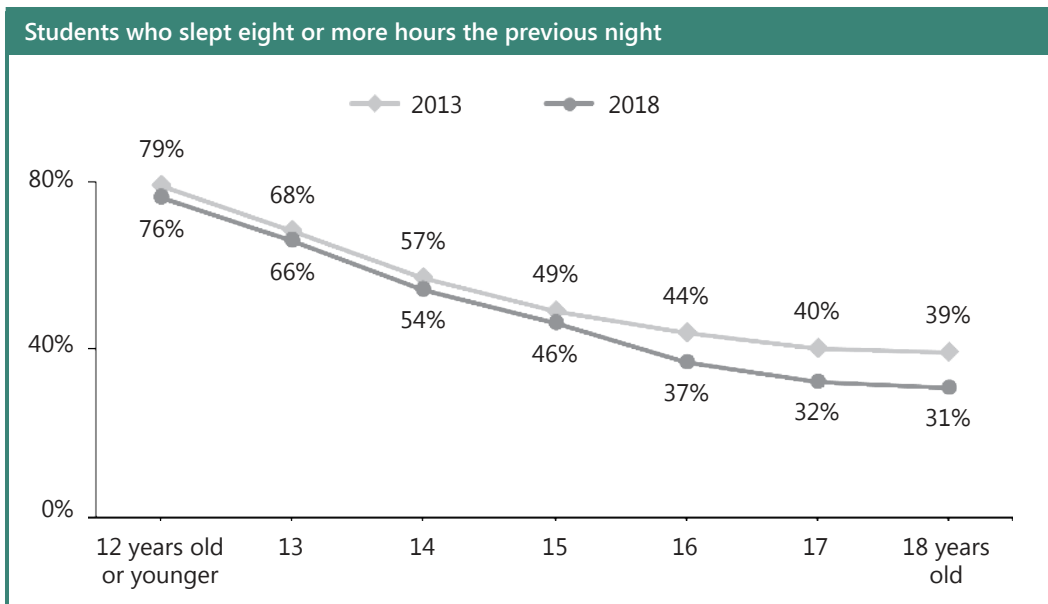
**Grade 12 student, Fraser**

*"I personally don't sleep with electronics in my room because I used to use them at night and get in trouble."*

**Grade 8 student, Vancouver Coastal**

Around half (48%) of students slept eight or more hours the night before completing the survey (a decreased from 53% in 2013). About a fifth (21%) of students slept nine hours or more, while 13% slept five hours or less. Older students were less likely than younger ones to have slept eight or more hours.

Students reported doing various activities after the time they were normally expected to go to sleep. These included chatting or texting (59%), homework (49%), gaming (29%), and online activities other than gaming (e.g., watching videos, checking social media; 72%). Females were more likely than other students to chat/text and to do their homework after their expected bedtime and were less likely to report gaming (17% reported gaming vs. 40% of males and 39% of non-binary youth).



Note: The difference between 2013 and 2018 among 13-year-olds was not statistically significant. Within each survey year, the difference between 17- and 18-year-olds was not statistically significant.



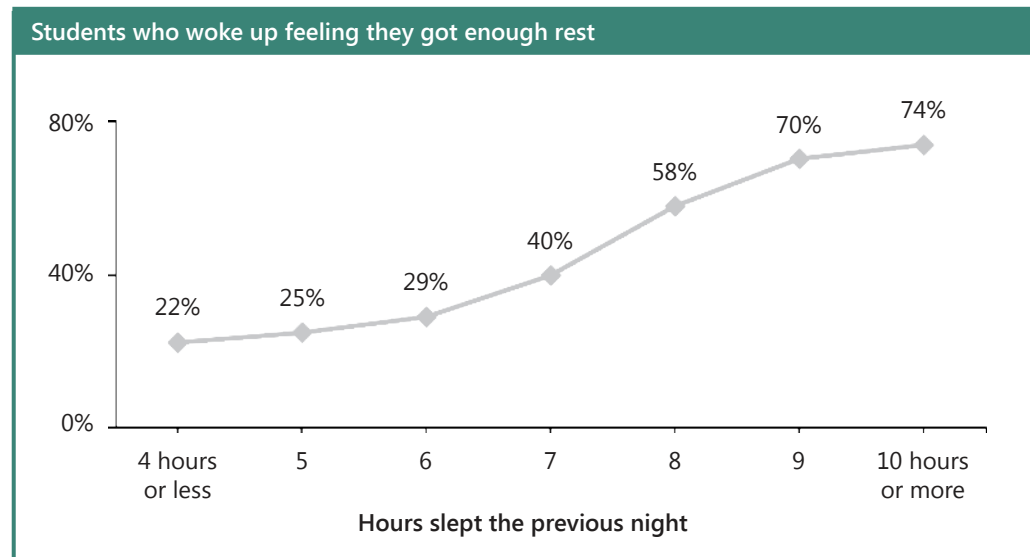
Around 4 in 10 students (41%) reported going offline after their expected bedtime (e.g., turning off their phone, putting it on silent mode, or putting it in another room). Students who went offline were more likely to have slept eight or more hours the previous night (59% vs. 40% who did not go offline).

On the day they completed the survey, 48% of students had woken up feeling like they got enough rest. Younger students were more likely than older ones to feel this way (e.g., 59% of 13-year-olds felt they got enough rest vs. 44% of 15-year-olds vs. 39% of 18-year-olds). The more hours they had slept the previous night, the more likely they were to wake up feeling rested.

*"I go to bed early every night but because school starts so early in the morning I feel like I still don't get enough sleep."*

**Grade 7 student, Fraser**

Students who reported going offline after their expected bedtime were more likely to wake up feeling rested than those who did not go offline.



Note: The difference between '4 hours or less' and '5 hours' was not statistically significant.

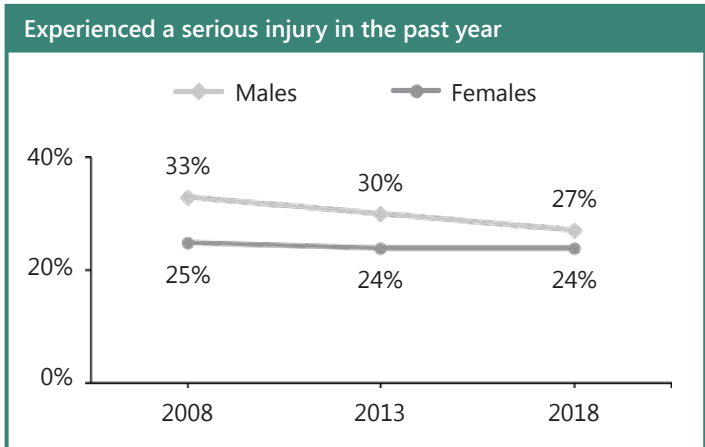
## INJURIES & INJURY PREVENTION

### INJURIES

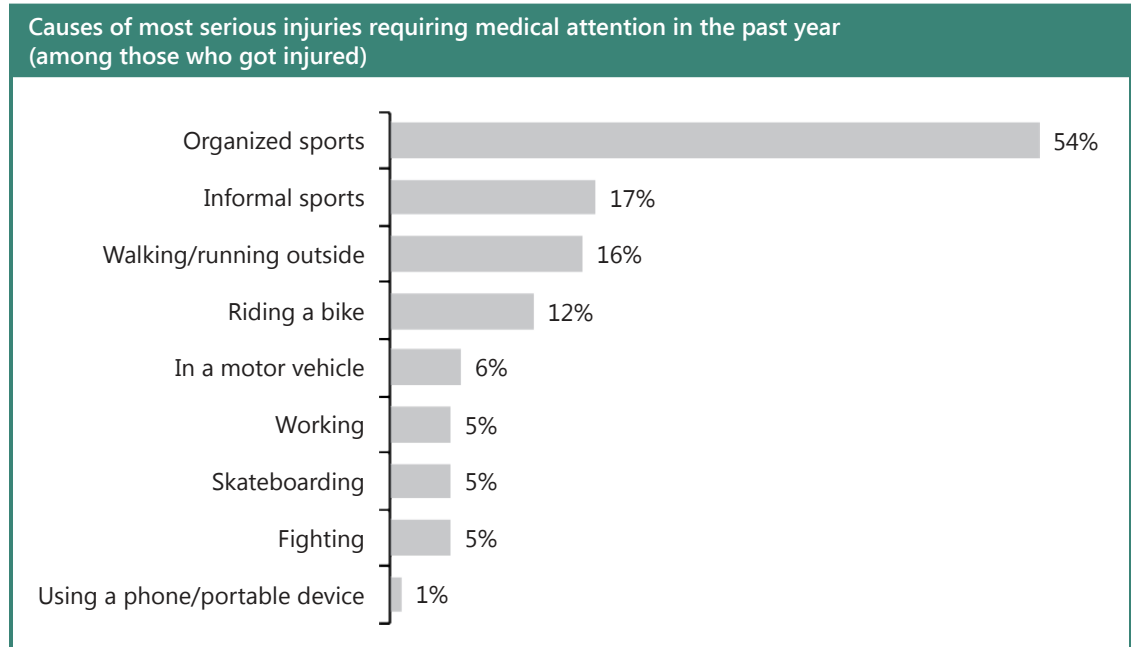
In the past 12 months, 26% of youth were injured seriously enough to require medical care. This included 6% who reported experiencing two serious injuries and 3% who had three or more. The percentage of females experiencing at least one serious injury remained consistent over the past decade, but the percentage decreased for males.

Consistent with previous BC AHS results, students were most likely to report that their most serious injuries happened when they were playing or training for organized sports.

*"I fractured my hand because of hockey."*  
 Grade 9 student, Vancouver Coastal



Note: The differences across survey years were not statistically significant for females.



Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

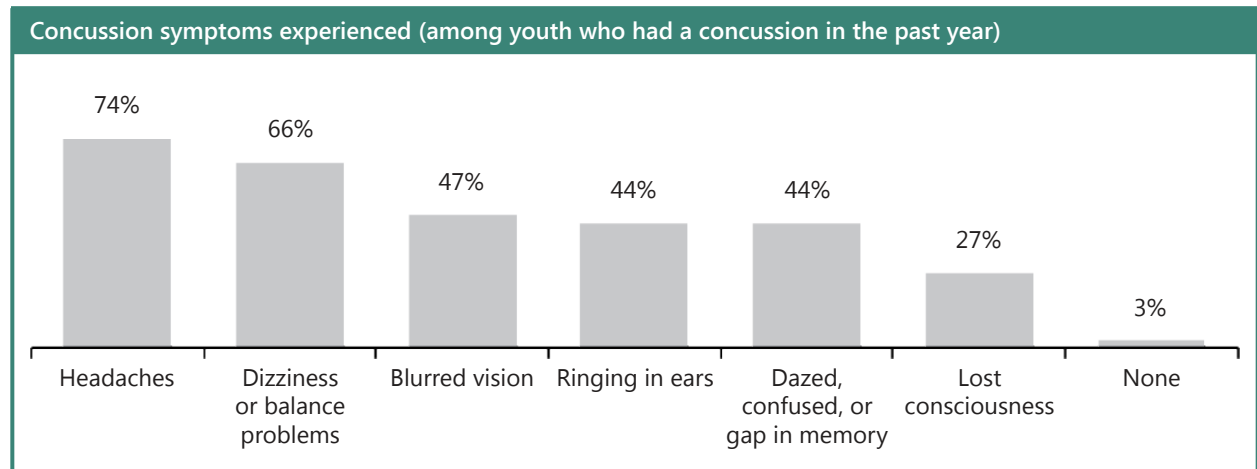
Note: Fifteen percent of youth wrote in a cause of injury other than those above, including injuries sustained while cooking, interacting with animals, or due to substance use.

## CONCUSSIONS

In the past 12 months, 13% of youth reported they had sustained a head injury where they lost consciousness, or were dazed, confused, or suffered a gap in memory. For males, this represented a decline from 19% to 14% and for females a decrease from 14% to 12% (and an overall decrease from 16%). There was also a decrease in the percentage of youth reporting multiple concussions, as 2% had experienced two concussions, and 1% had three or more.

*"I've had multiple concussions. I usually average one a year every year for the past 9 years, due to sports."*

**Grade 11 student, Interior**



Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

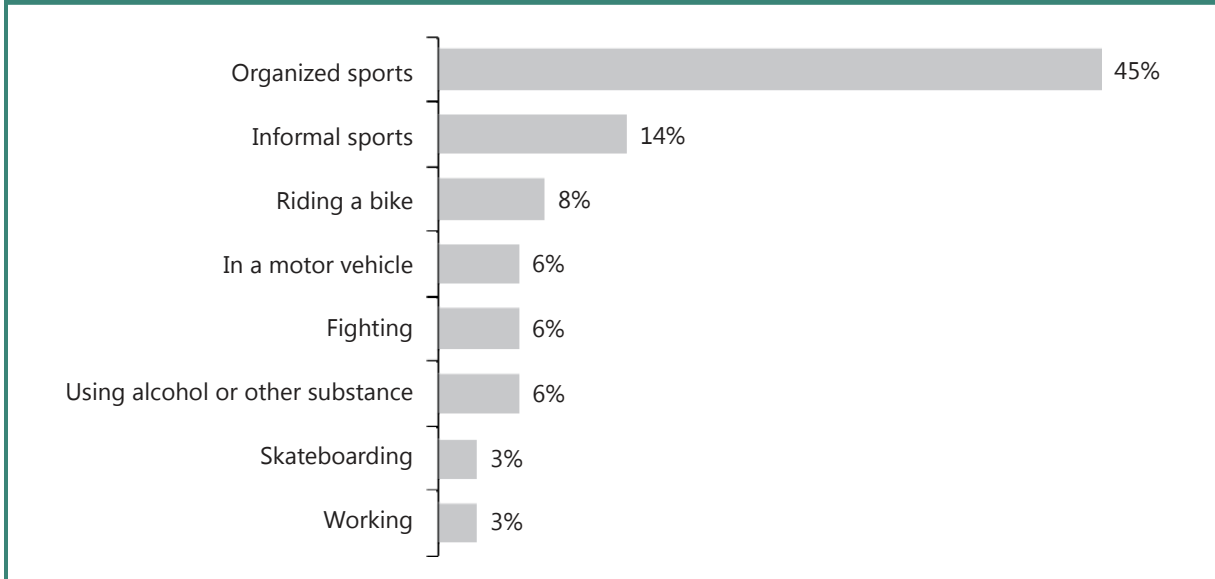
Reflecting the pattern seen generally for serious injuries, youth were most likely to sustain a concussion playing organized sports. Males were the most likely to play sports and also the most likely to sustain a concussion playing sports.

*"I have fallen in P.E. class and my head banged very hard on the floor. I don't know if I have a concussion, but it is no big deal."*

**Grade 8 student, Vancouver Coastal**

Around half of youth (52%) who experienced a concussion in the past year had received medical treatment for that injury.

**What youth were doing when they suffered a head injury in the past year (among those who had a concussion in the past year)**



Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

Note: A quarter of youth (25%) sustained a serious head injury engaging in an activity not included among the list of options, such as slipping, dangerous play, and fainting.

## INJURY PREVENTION

*"The school bus doesn't have seatbelts."*

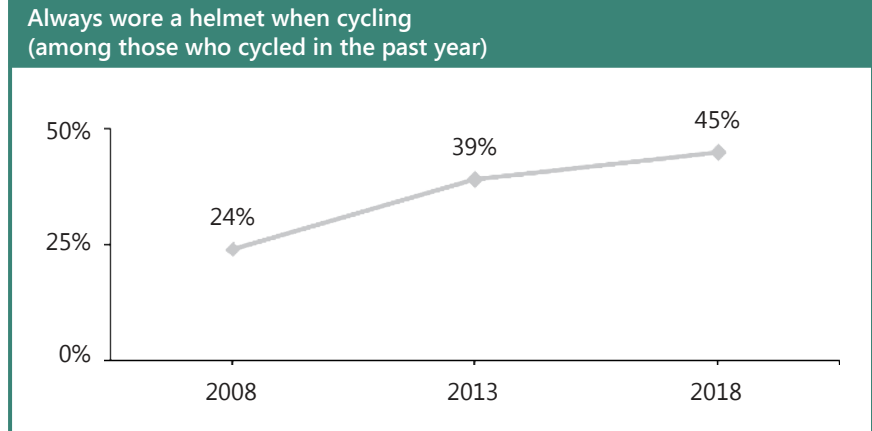
Grade 9 student, Vancouver Coastal

*"When downhill skiing I always wear a helmet, but while cross country skiing I never wear a helmet."*

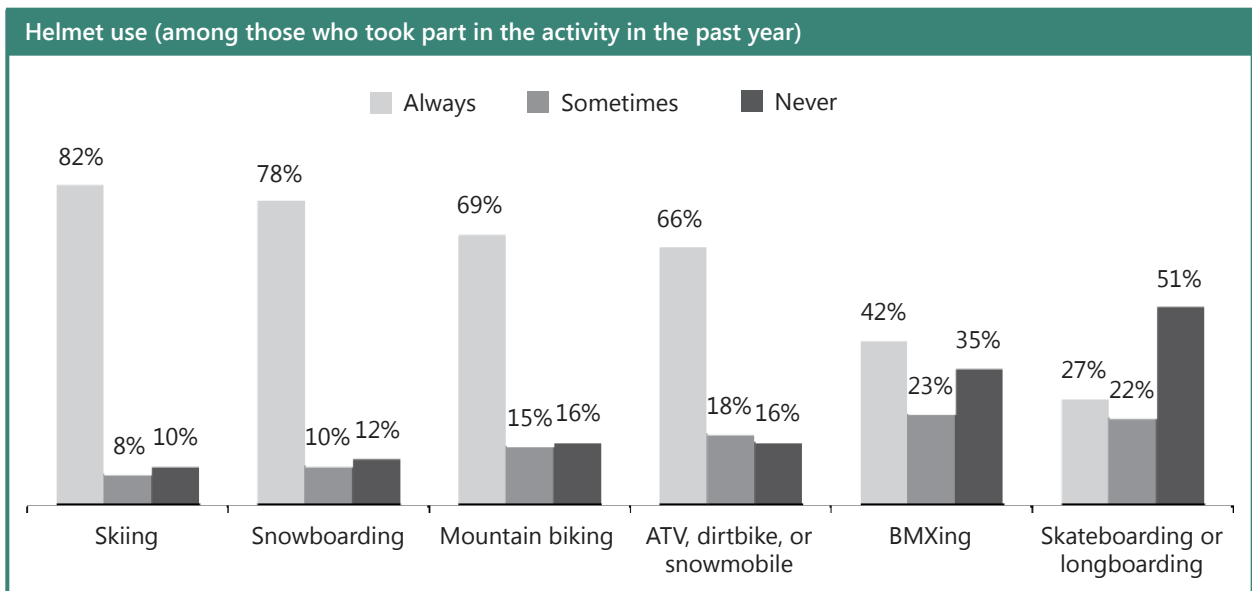
Grade 9 student, Island

Most BC youth (73%) always wore a seatbelt when riding in a car, truck, or van. This was a slight decrease from 2013 but remained above the 2008 rate (66%). In 2008, males were less likely than females to wear a seat belt, but no such difference existed in 2018. Youth aged 12 and younger were the most likely to always wear a seatbelt (82%).

Youth were asked if they wore a helmet when doing a range of activities which might put them at risk for a head injury. Many of the activities were asked about for the first time in 2018. However, helmet use when cycling has been a question on previous surveys, and there was an increase in the percentage who always wore a helmet.



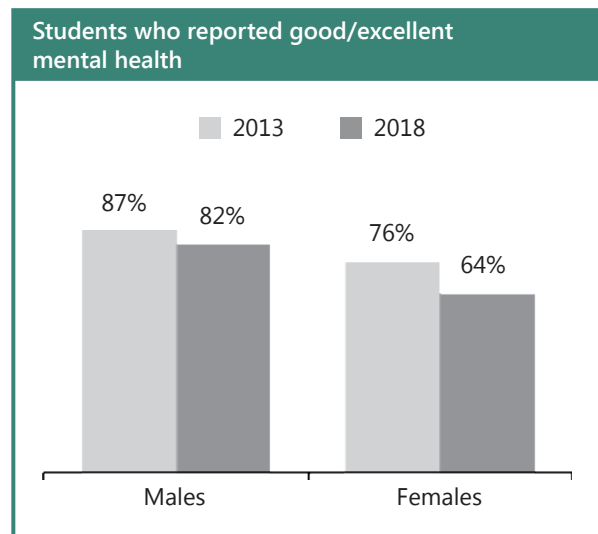
Among those who engaged in various activities, youth were most likely to always wear a helmet when skiing, and least likely to wear one when skateboarding or longboarding. Females were generally the most likely to wear a helmet.



Note: For mountain biking, the difference between 'sometimes' and 'never' was not statistically significant.

## MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Most students (73%) rated their mental health as good or excellent. However, similar to the pattern with overall health, students were less likely in 2018 than five years previous to rate their mental health as excellent (32% in 2018 vs. 41% in 2013) and were more likely to rate it as fair (20% vs. 15%) or poor (7% vs. 4%).



## MENTAL HEALTH & ASSOCIATED CONDITIONS

*"I frequently hallucinate and I'm very frequently paranoid."*

Grade 8 student, North

Fifteen percent of students reported having a mental health condition, which reflected an increase for both males (5% in 2013 vs. 8% in 2018) and females (15% vs. 23%). Consistent with the pattern in previous survey years, females were more likely than males to report having a mental health condition. The rate was 43% among non-binary youth.

When asked about specific mental health conditions, students were more likely to report having some of these conditions in 2018 than in 2013. These included Anxiety Disorder/panic attacks (19% in 2018 vs. 8% in 2013), Depression (15% vs. 10%), Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD/ADD; 7% vs. 6%), and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD; 3% vs. 1%).

*"I have daily headaches, so due to the chronic pain experienced, I can have feelings of anxiety and often times depression even though I do not have a diagnosed mental health disorder."*

Grade 12 student, Fraser

Not all students who answered that they had a specific condition such as Depression saw themselves as having a mental health condition. For example, 9% of students who reported they had an Anxiety Disorder and 5% with Depression did not identify as having a mental health condition.

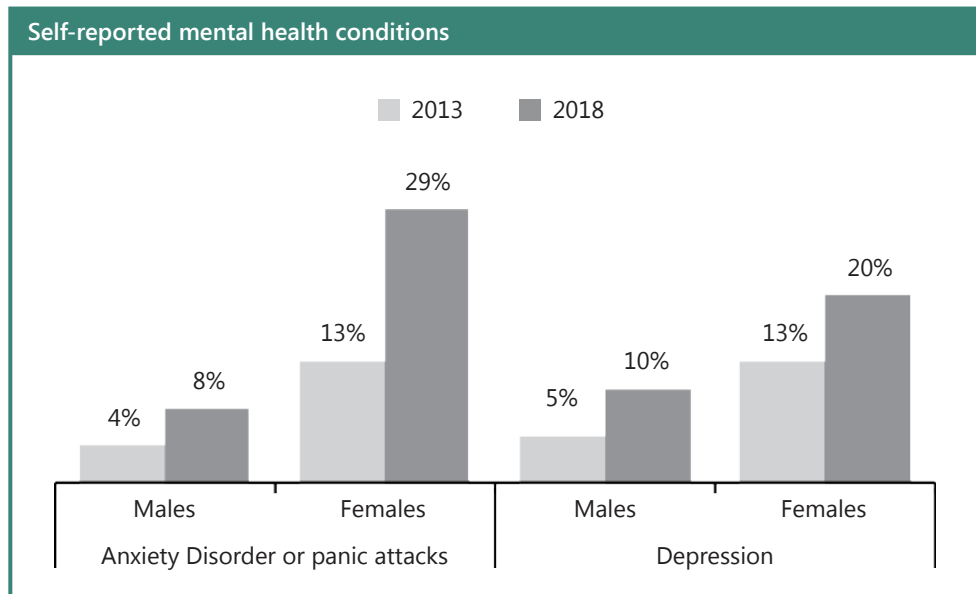
Females were more likely than males to report having Depression, Anxiety Disorder/panic attacks, and PTSD (4% vs. 1%). Males were more likely than females to report having ADHD/ADD (8% vs. 5%), Asperger's or Autism Spectrum Disorder (1% vs. <1%), and an addiction to alcohol or another substance (3% vs. 2%).

Non-binary students were the most likely to report having Depression (45%), Anxiety Disorder/panic attacks (42%), ADHD/ADD (17%), PTSD (11%), and Asperger's or Autism Spectrum Disorder (6%).

As was the case in 2013, fewer than 1% of students reported having Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

Fifteen percent of students reported missing at least one day of school in the past month because of mental health challenges (e.g., depression, anxiety), including 5% who missed three or more days for this reason. Also, 14% indicated they were too anxious or depressed in the past year to participate in sports or extracurricular activities.

Males were the least likely to miss school and to miss out on activities due to their mental health. For example, 8% missed at least one day of school for this reason, compared to 21% of females and 37% of non-binary youth.



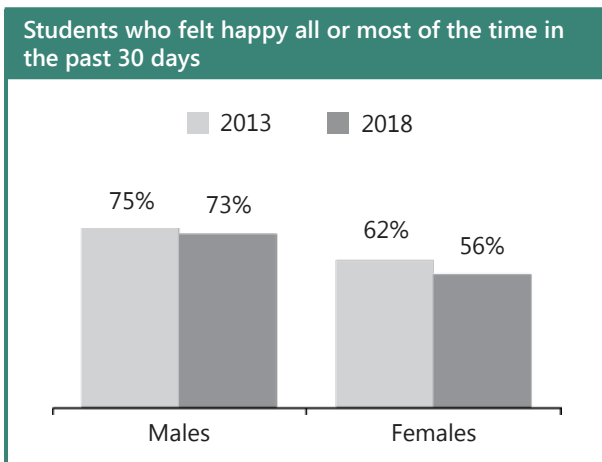


## HAPPINESS

*"I have a happy life."*

Grade 7 student, Vancouver Coastal

Overall, 65% of students reported feeling happy all or most of the time in the past month, a quarter (25%) felt happy some of the time, and 11% felt this way only a little of the time or never. Students were less likely than in 2013 to feel happy all or most of the time.



## STRESS & DESPAIR

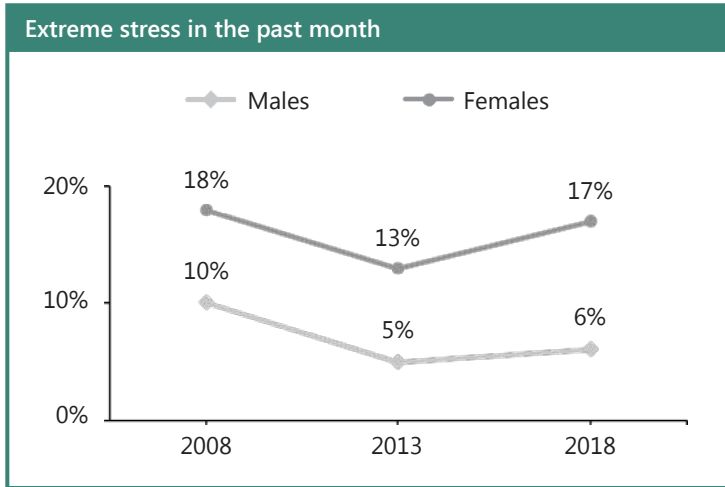
*"Sometimes I feel very stressed and start to shut down. Not wanting to get out of bed, go to school, just want to be alone."*

Grade 9 student, Interior

*"I believe stress can be a good thing and drive you to do better."*

Grade 10 student, North

Most students (86%) reported feeling stressed in the past month, including 12% who reported being so stressed that they could not function properly. Rates of extreme stress were higher in 2018 than in 2013, but were similar to 2008 rates for females and were lower than 2008 for males.



*"I would like to know more about mental health. Because I feel I am a bit stressed right now. I heard that stress can easily lead into other mental health issues. Through knowing them, I want to prevent them more easily."*  
**Grade 11 student, Fraser**

Note: The difference between 2008 and 2018 was not statistically significant for females.

For the first time, the BC AHS asked students how well they managed their stress. One in 10 reported that they did not experience stress, with younger youth more likely to feel this way. For example, 25% of students aged 12 and younger reported they did not experience stress.

Among students who experienced stress, a little over half felt they managed their stress well (35%) or very well (19%), whereas the rest felt they managed it fairly well (29%) or poorly (17%). Males were the most likely to feel they managed their stress very well and the least likely to feel they managed it poorly (12% of males felt they managed it poorly vs. 21% of females and 35% of non-binary youth).

Students were asked the extent to which they felt so sad, discouraged, or hopeless that they wondered if anything was worthwhile. Over half (58%) reported feeling this type of despair in the past month, including 8% who experienced extreme despair that prevented them from functioning properly.

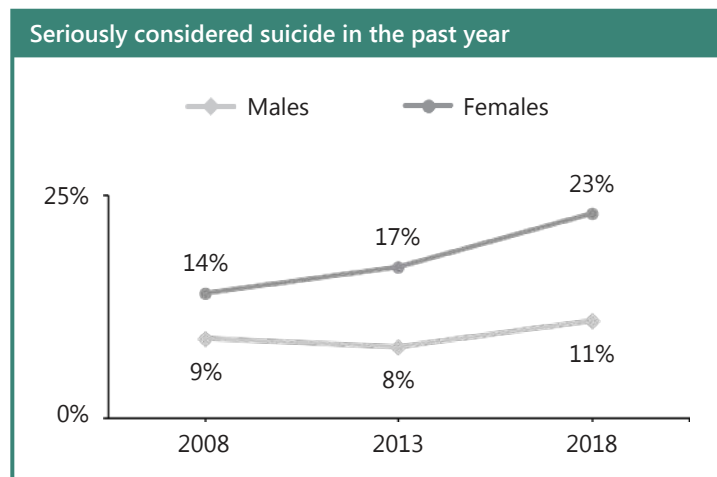
There was no change over the past decade in the percentage of males who reported extreme despair (4% in 2018). However, there was an increase for females, from 8% in 2008 to 11% in 2018 (which was similar to the percentage in 2013). The rate of extreme despair was 22% among non-binary youth.



## SUICIDE THOUGHTS & ATTEMPTS

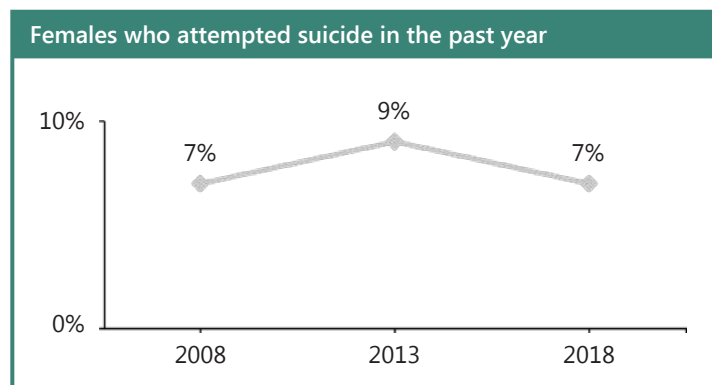
Seventeen percent of students reported they had seriously considered killing themselves in the past year, which was higher than the percentages in 2008 and 2013. However, the percentage who attempted suicide was slightly lower in 2018 than in 2013 (5% vs. 6%), and was similar to 2008. For example, just under 3% of males attempted suicide in 2018 compared to a little over 3% in 2013 and 2008.

Consistent with findings from previous survey years, females were more likely than males to have seriously considered and attempted suicide in the past 12 months. Among non-binary students, 44% had seriously considered suicide and 17% had attempted suicide in the past year.



*"I have been suicidal in the past. I was in the hospital because my mental health had become a concern."*

**Grade 10 student, Fraser**



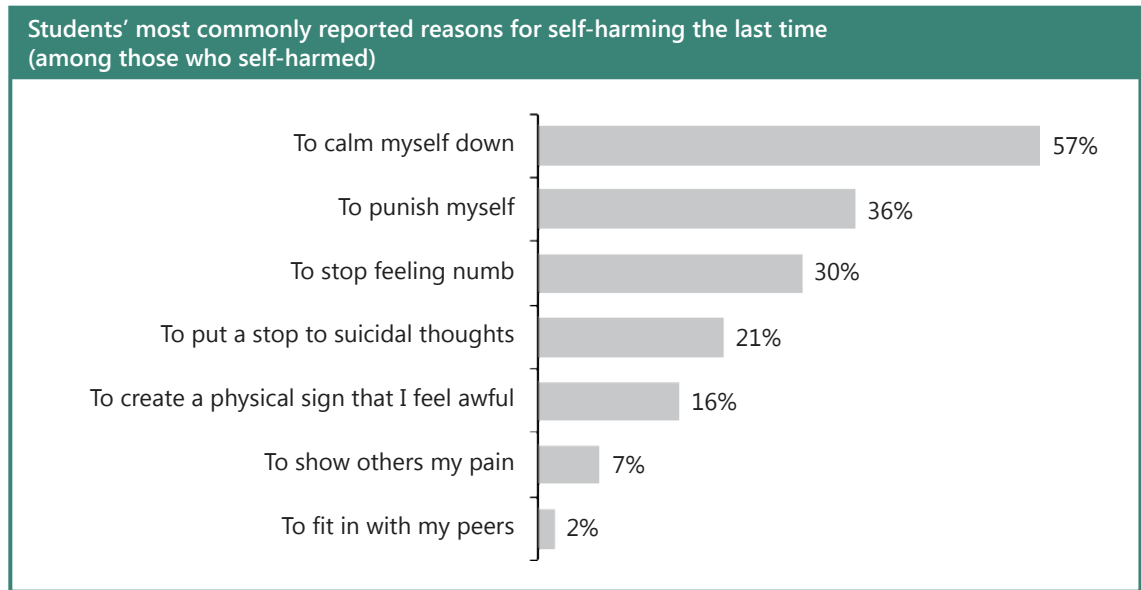
## SELF-HARM

*"Someone I know cuts and I have gotten them help."*  
**Grade 8 student, North**

A total of 17% of students had cut or injured themselves on purpose without trying to kill themselves in the past year, which was an increase from 15% in 2013. This pattern was seen for both males (11% in 2018 vs. 8% in 2013) and females (24% vs. 22%). Forty-seven percent of non-binary youth had self-harmed in the past year.

Among students who self-harmed in the past year, males were the least likely to have done so multiple times. For example, 18% of males had self-harmed six or more times, compared to 26% of females and 40% of non-binary youth.

For the first time, the BC AHS included a question which asked those who had self-harmed about the reasons they had done so. The most common reason was to calm themselves down.



Note: Youth could choose more than one response.



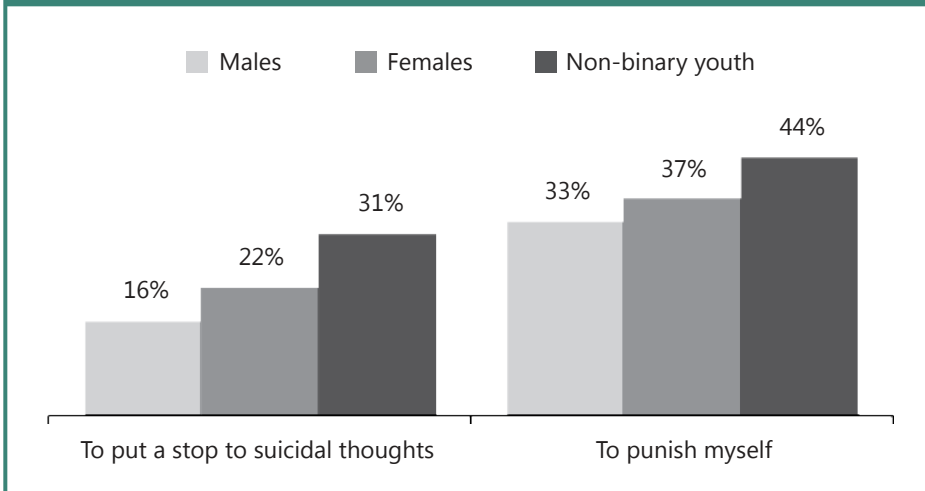
Non-binary youth were more likely than males and females who self-harmed to have done so to punish themselves and to put a stop to suicidal thoughts. Females were more likely than males to have self-harmed for these reasons, as well as to calm themselves down (62% vs. 44%), to stop feeling numb (33% vs. 20%), to physically show how awful they felt (16% vs. 13%), and to fit in with peers (2% vs. 1%). Percentages for non-binary youth were similar to those for females for these four reasons.

*“When I feel extreme stress/anger/irritation, I tend to hurt myself.”*

Grade 12 student, Fraser

Males and non-binary youth were more likely than females to indicate they had self-harmed for a reason not among the list of options, and specified reasons such as boredom, for fun, curiosity, and to avoid doing something.

Gender differences in students’ reasons for self-harming (among those who self-harmed)



## MISSED OUT ON NEEDED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

In the past year, 18% of students had not accessed mental health services they felt they needed (10% of males vs. 26% of females vs. 47% of non-binary youth). This was an increase for both males and females and an overall increase from 11% in 2013.

Among students who did not access needed mental health services, their most common reasons included thinking or hoping the problem would go away and not wanting their parents to know. These were also the most commonly reported reasons five years previous, but the percentages in 2018 were generally higher than those in 2013.

Reasons for not accessing mental health services in the past year (among students who felt they needed services)		
	2018	Change from 2013
Thought or hoped the problem would go away	63%	↑
Didn't want parents to know	62%	–
Didn't know where to go	44%	↑
Afraid of what I would be told	44%	↑
Afraid someone I know might see me	38%	↑
Too busy to go	36%	↑
Didn't think I could afford it	22%	↑
Had prior negative experience	14%	↑
Parent/guardian would not take me	12%	↑
Had no transportation	10%	–
Couldn't go when it was open	5%	↑
On a waiting list	5%	–
The service was unavailable in my community	2%	–

↑ Indicates there was a statistically significant increase from 2013 to 2018.

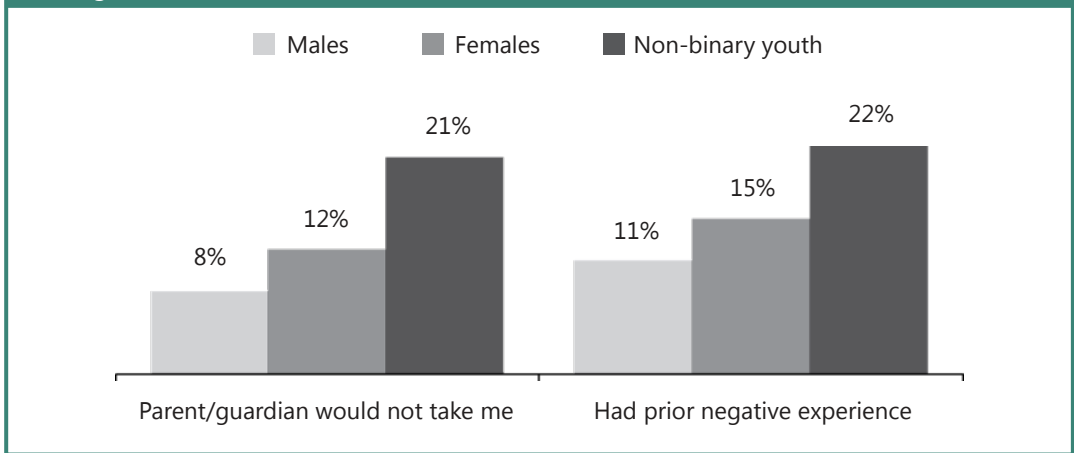


Non-binary youth were more likely than males and females to have missed out on needed services for certain reasons, such as having had a prior negative experience and because their parent or guardian would not take them.

Females were more likely than males to have missed out on needed services for these reasons, as well as because they thought or hoped the problem would go away (66% vs. 57%), they did not want their parents to know (64% vs. 56%), they were afraid of what the mental health professional would tell them (45% vs. 39%), and they were too busy to access needed services (38% vs. 32%).

*"I have wanted to go to the youth clinic but I was too scared and didn't want anyone seeing me."*  
**Grade 12 student, Fraser**

Gender differences in reasons for not accessing mental health services in the past year (among students who missed out on needed services)

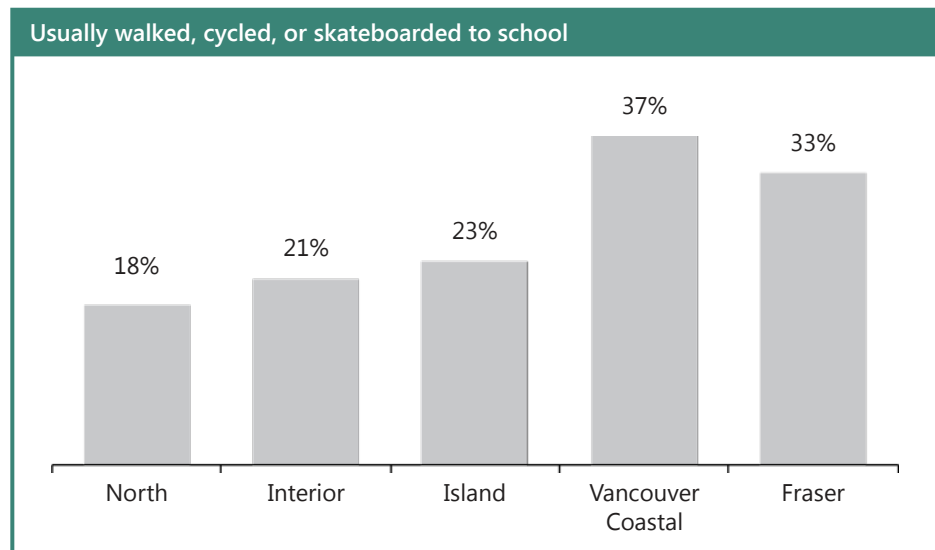


## TRANSPORTATION

Reflecting the pattern in 2013, students most commonly got to school by car (47% in 2018). Females were the most likely to get to school by car and the least likely to use active means such as walking, biking, or skateboarding. Overall, active means of transportation were the second most popular way to get to school (29%). Also, 23% took the school bus or public transit to school, with students in Fraser and Vancouver Coastal the least likely to do so.

Four percent of students had missed school once or twice in the past month because they had no transportation to get there, and 1% had missed school three or more times for this reason. Those who were reliant on public transit, the school bus, or who hitchhiked were the most likely to miss school because they did not have transportation. Also, 14% of students missed out on extracurricular activities because they could not get there or get home.

Provincially, a very small percentage of students hitchhiked to school (less than 1%). Youth who hitchhiked to school were less likely to feel safe on their commute than youth who had other ways to get to school. Overall, 92% of males, 88% of females, and 71% of non-binary youth felt safe on their way to and from school.



Note: The differences between the Interior and the North or Island were not statistically significant.

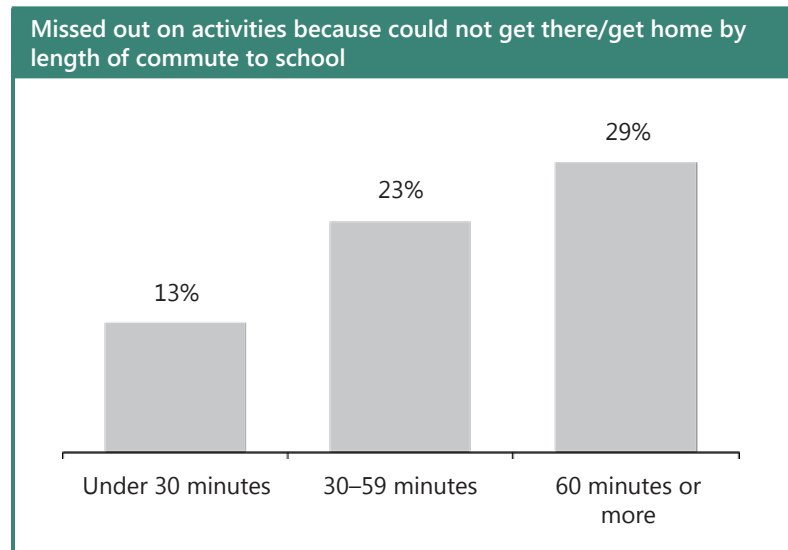


## LENGTH OF COMMUTE TO SCHOOL

Most students (90%) had a commute to school that was less than 30 minutes, whereas 2% commuted for an hour or more—including less than 1% who commuted more than 2 hours. Those who commuted an hour or more were less likely than those whose commute was shorter to feel like part of their school.

Students with a long commute were more likely to have missed school in the past month. For example, 78% who commuted for an hour or more missed class, compared to 72% who had a commute of less than half an hour.

Students who had a longer commute were also more likely to miss out on activities because they had no way to get there or get home.



## NUTRITION

*"You didn't ask if we had clean drinking water available at home."*

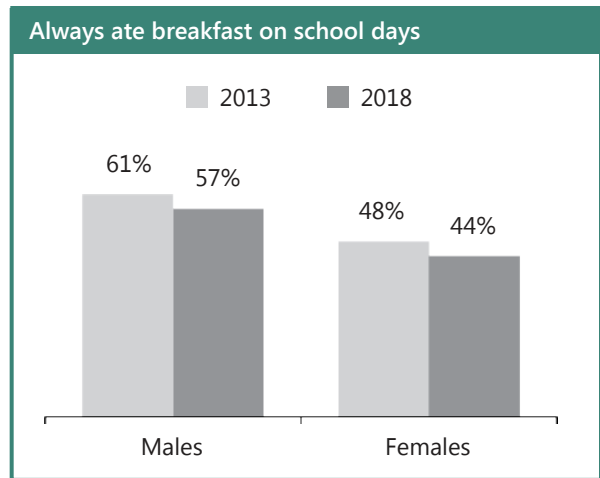
**Grade 11 student, North**

Some improvements in nutrition seen between 2008 and 2013 did not continue in 2018. There was a slight decrease in the percentage who ate fruit and vegetables at least once on the day before completing the survey (93% vs. 94% in 2013), and a rise in eating fast food (47% vs. 41%), and drinking pop/soda (37% vs. 35%) and energy drinks (7% vs. 6%).

However, the percentage who ate sweets remained stable (77%), and there was an increase in students who ate traditional foods from their culture or background (41% vs. 38%) and food grown or caught by their family (16% vs. 12% in 2013), as well as those who drank water (98% vs. 96%).

## BREAKFAST, LUNCH, & DINNER

After a rise between 2008 and 2013 in the percentage of students who ate breakfast, students were less likely to report they always ate breakfast in 2018 (50% vs. 54% in 2013) and more reported they never ate breakfast on school days (17% vs. 13% in 2013).



What students ate or drank yesterday		
	Once or twice	Three or more times
Water	21%	76%
Fruit	59%	25%
Vegetables or green salad	61%	20%
Sweets (cookies, cake, candy, chocolate, etc.)	62%	15%
Fast food (pizza, hot dogs, burgers, chips, fries, etc.)	40%	6%
Traditional food from their background	28%	13%
Pop/soda	33%	4%
Food grown/caught by them or their family	12%	4%
Energy drinks	6%	1%

*"The cafeteria food is too expensive. It's hard for me to pack lunch, so I have to buy. Sometimes I have to borrow money or eat part of a friend's meal to get lunch."*

Grade 12 student, Fraser

In 2018, students were also asked where they usually got their breakfast on school days. Among those who ate breakfast, 93% ate at home, 8% got breakfast on the way to school, and 8% ate breakfast at school (students could mark all that applied). Males were the least likely to skip breakfast and the most likely to eat their breakfast at home.

The 2018 survey also asked youth how often they ate lunch and dinner on school days. In total, 64% always ate lunch and 87% always ate dinner, whereas 5% never ate lunch and 1% never ate dinner. As was the case with breakfast, males were the most likely to always eat lunch and dinner. Fewer than 4 in 10 students (37%) always ate three meals a day on school days.

## EATING BEHAVIOURS

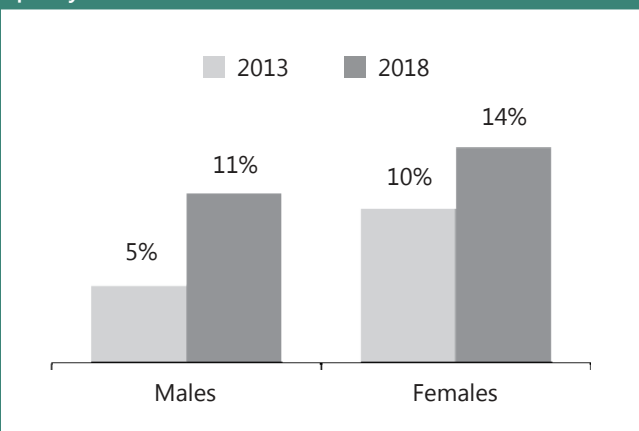
In comparison to 2013, male and female students were more likely to report they had vomited on purpose after eating. Nine percent had done so once a month or less over the past 12 months, while 2% had done so two or three times a month, and 1% had vomited on purpose at least once a week.

In 2018, non-binary students were the most likely to have made themselves vomit after eating. For example, 4% did so at least weekly in the past year, compared to 2% of females and 1% of males.

*"I have been diagnosed with eating disorder but do not struggle with it as much lately."*

Grade 11 student, North

Vomited on purpose after eating at least once in the past year



## SEXUAL HEALTH

Most youth in BC had not engaged in oral sex or sexual intercourse.

### ORAL SEX

The percentage of BC youth who engaged in oral sex decreased over the past decade from 26% in 2008 to 22% in 2018, although the rate remained stable over the past five years. The percentage of youth aged 14 or younger who had oral sex also remained stable after dropping between 2008 and 2013 (6% in 2013 and 2018 vs. 8% in 2008).

In 2018, as in previous years, females were more likely than males to have given oral sex (20% vs. 14%), and males were more likely to have received it (19% vs. 17%). Non-binary youth were less likely than males to have received oral sex.

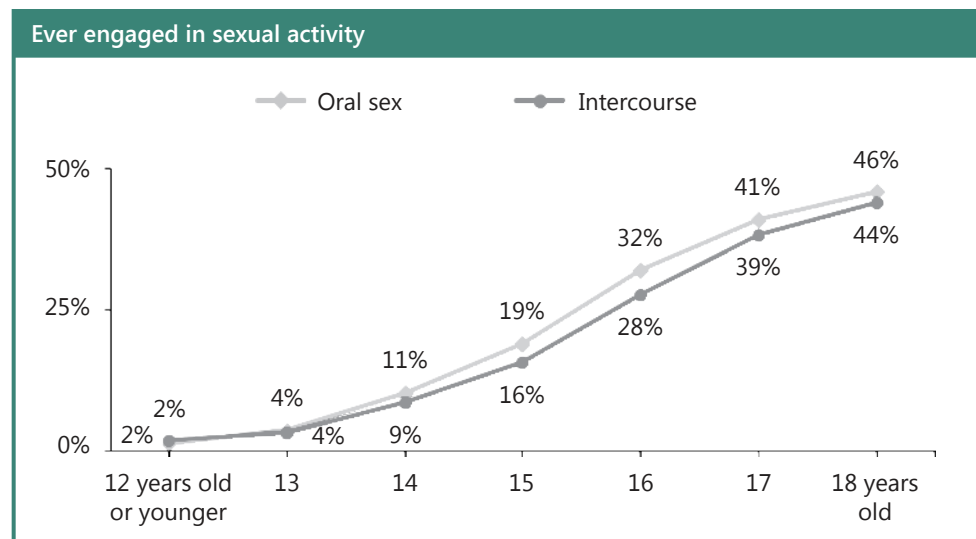
Among students who ever had oral sex, 17% used a condom or other barrier/protection the last time they had oral sex, which was unchanged from 2013.

### INTERCOURSE

*"Me and my boyfriend are sexually active. I would like to get birth control but I don't want my parents to know. We use condoms though."*

**Grade 9 student, Vancouver Coastal**

A fifth (20%) of youth in 2018 had ever had sex other than oral sex or masturbation, which was unchanged from five years ago, but a decrease compared to ten years ago (22%). The percentage of youth under age 15 who ever had sex decreased from 7% in 2008 to 4% in 2013, before rising slightly to 5% in 2018. There were no gender differences in ever having intercourse.



Note: The difference in rates between ever having oral sex and ever having intercourse were not statistically significant for 17- and 18-year-olds.

Among the 20% who ever had intercourse, the most common age for first doing so was 15 or 16 years old. Over the past decade, youth who had intercourse waited longer to first do so, with 68% first having sex at age 15 or older compared to 66% in 2013 and 61% in 2008. Just over half of youth (52%) who ever had intercourse had one sexual partner in the past year, while 20% had two partners, and 21% had three or more partners.

Among youth who ever had intercourse, condoms were the most common way they tried to prevent pregnancy the last time they had sex. Sixty-three percent of youth who ever had intercourse used a condom or other barrier/protection the last time they had sex.

Males were more likely than females and non-binary youth to use protection the last time they had sex. Condom use among males dropped compared to five and 10 years previous (68% vs. 72% in 2013 and 2008), and the rates among females dropped to 2008 levels (59%) after rising in 2013 (66%).

*"I was fully consensual to the sex I had, I trust(ed) the guy and we're still together"*

Grade 8 student, North

Among youth who had intercourse, the percentage who used withdrawal as their only contraceptive method rose from 6% in 2008 to 10% in 2018. Also, using any method prescribed by a doctor or nurse (including birth control pills and an IUD) decreased from 49% in 2013 to 46% in 2018.

One percent of youth had ever been pregnant or got someone pregnant, which was a slight decrease from 2013.

Twenty-two percent of students who had ever had sexual intercourse reported using alcohol or drugs before they had sex the last time. This was similar to the percentage in 2013 and a decline from 32% in 2008.

Method used to prevent pregnancy the last time they had intercourse (among youth who ever had intercourse)			
	2008	2013	2018
Condoms	64%	64%	58%
Withdrawal	23%	35%	46%
Birth control pills, birth control patch, vaginal ring, or other method prescribed by doctor or nurse	NA	NA	44%
Emergency contraception	5%	6%	7%
IUD	1%	NA	3%
Depo Provera	2%	2%	2%
Not sure	3%	3%	3%
No method	6%	3%	2%

Note: The differences for 'emergency contraception' and 'no method' between 2018 and 2013 were not statistically significant.

NA: The percentage was not available due to changes in the wording of the survey item.

## SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs) & THE HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS (HPV) VACCINE

*"I want to go to the doctors or someone who looks at things like HIV or STIs etc. I want to get checked to make sure I don't have anything."*

Grade 9 student, North

One percent of youth reported ever being told by a doctor or nurse that they had an STI, which was unchanged from 2013.

The HPV vaccines protect against infection from certain types of cancer-causing viruses, and have been available to girls in Grade 6 since 2008 and to boys in Grade 6 since September 2017. Yet just under a quarter (24%) of Grade 7 students indicated they had been vaccinated (56% did not know). Among all youth, 57% (66% of students who were assigned male at birth vs. 48% of females) did not know whether they had received the vaccine, while 28% (16% of males vs. 40% of females) indicated they had been vaccinated.

## REFUSAL SKILLS

*"In the past, I have felt pressured to do sexual things (give oral) to guys my age. I refused at first but they pressure you in the weirdest way that is nice and manipulative at the same time. So I don't say no and do it just so things won't get awkward."*

Grade 12 student, Island

Most youth felt they were able to say no if they were asked to engage in a sexual activity they did not want to take part in. Non-binary youth were the least likely to feel they could say no. Males were the most likely to report they could say no to having sex with a long-term partner and females were the most likely to report they could reject a sexting request.

Students aged 13 and younger were more likely than older students to think they had the skills to refuse unwanted sexual activity, whereas older students were more likely to believe they would be unable to say no or were generally unsure of how they would react.

Youth who had previously had oral sex or intercourse were more likely than those who had not had sex to feel they would be unable to say no to having sex with a new partner (3% vs. 1%) or long-term partner (7% vs. 3%), or to engage in sexting (5% vs. 1%).

Youth who felt they could say no if asked to...			
	Could say no	Couldn't say no	Not sure
Have sex with a new partner when they didn't want to	92%	2%	6%
Have sex with a long-term partner when they didn't want to	86%	4%	10%
Engage in sexting	92%	2%	6%

## USED PHONE TO SEXT OR WATCH PORNOGRAPHY

*"We NEED better sex ed classes!! I learned everything I know online."*

Grade 12 student, North

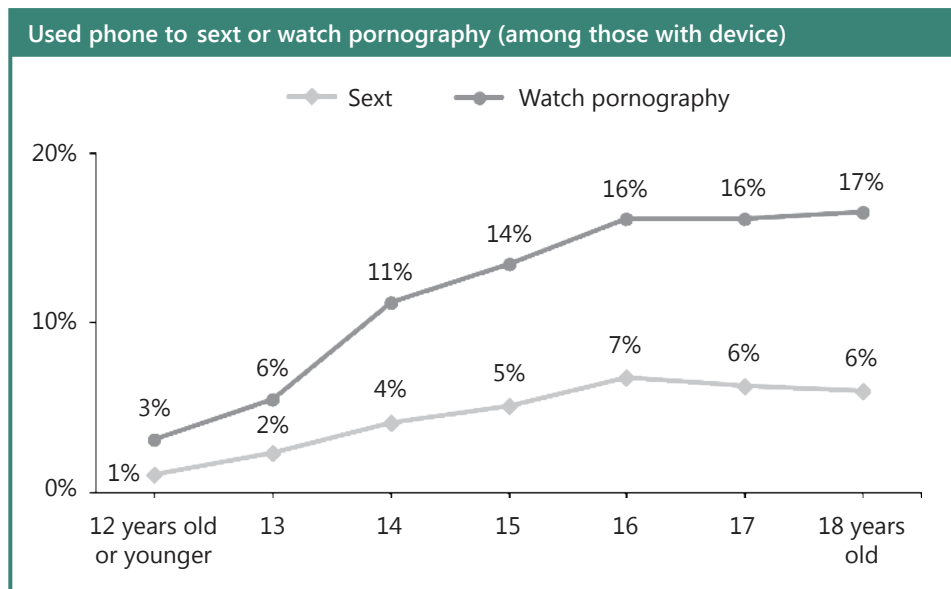
*"I have been asked on social media several times to share nudes."*

Grade 7 student, Vancouver Coastal

Five percent of youth with a phone used it on their most recent school day to engage in sexting (a decrease from 10% in 2013), and 12% used their device to watch pornography (asked for the first time on the 2018 survey). Younger youth and females were the least likely to engage in either of these behaviours. For example, 4% of females had watched pornography on their last school day, compared to over 20% of males and non-binary youth.

Youth who used their phone to watch pornography were more likely to have also engaged in sexting on their last school day (21% vs. 3% of those who did not use their phone to watch porn).

Youth who watched pornography on their phone were equally as likely as other youth to use a condom when they had sex. However, those who watched porn were more likely to have been in a dating relationship that was violent (12% vs. 7% of those who did not watch porn and had dated in the past year).



Note: Differences between ages were not statistically significant at every point.

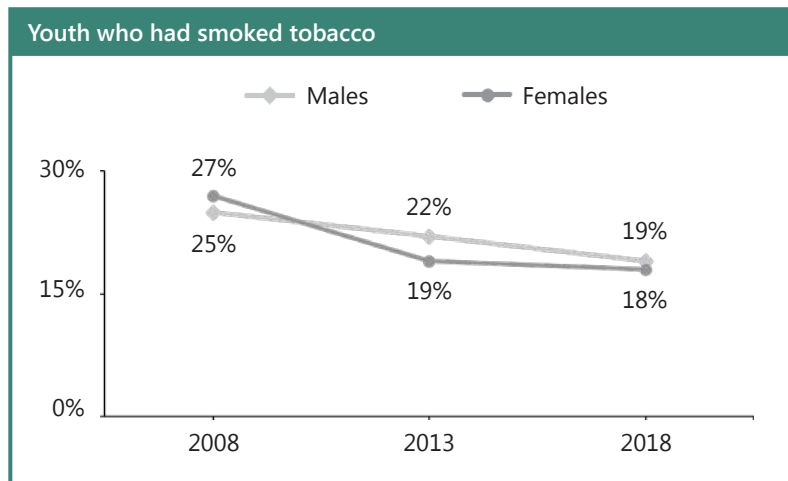
Note: Phone refers to a cell phone, smartphone or other portable electronic communication device.

## SUBSTANCE USE

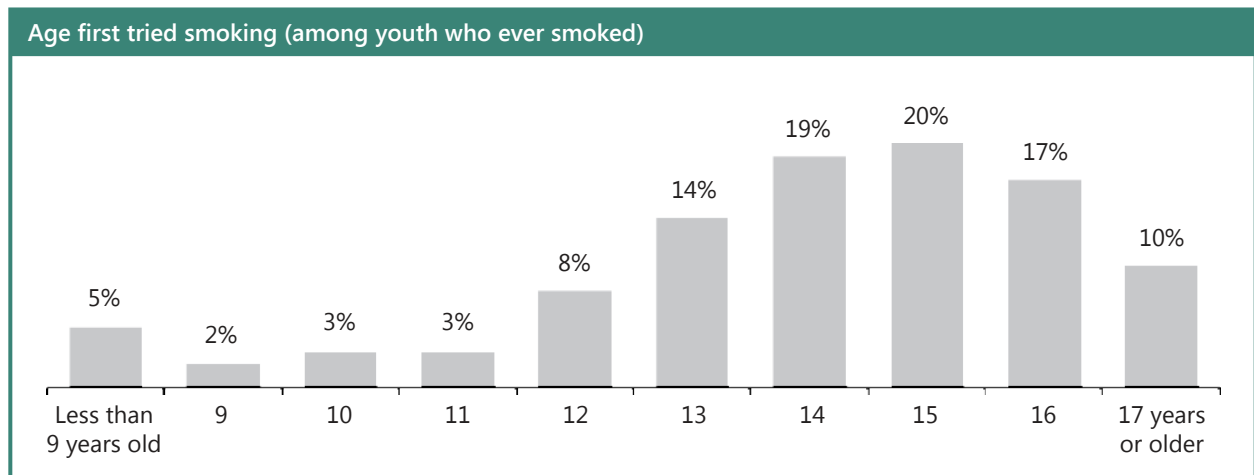
### SMOKING, VAPING, & TOBACCO USE

There was a decrease in the percentage of BC youth who had smoked tobacco, from 26% in 2008 to 21% in 2013 to 18% in 2018. Among those who had smoked, there were also decreases in the percentages who smoked recently and regularly, with 44% who smoked in the past month (vs. 48% in 2013) and 6% who smoked daily in the past month (vs. 7% in 2013 and 10% in 2008). There were no gender differences in smoking recently or regularly.

As in previous years, the most common ages for youth to first try smoking were 14 or 15, although more youth waited until they were at least 16 years old to first try it, compared to five years earlier (27% in 2018 vs. 24% in 2013; among those who tried smoking).



Note: In 2018, the difference between males and females was not statistically significant.





*"I would like to learn more about vaping side effects. How do I quit vaping when I'm severely addicted to nicotine?"*

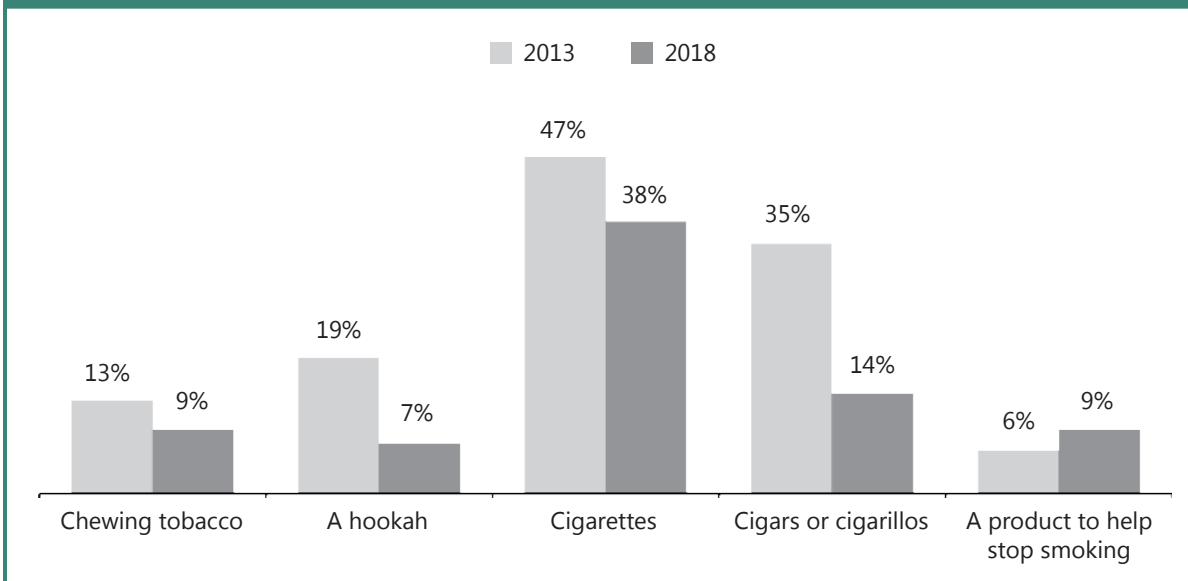
Grade 12 student, Interior

Among youth who had tried smoking, students in 2018 were less likely than their peers in 2013 to have used cigarettes, cigars, hookahs, and chewing tobacco in the past month, and they were more likely to have used a product to help them quit smoking.

*"I quit smoking 4 months now. I used e-cigarettes with nicotine to do so (I use it on a daily basis). I used to smoke 1–2 packs a week."*

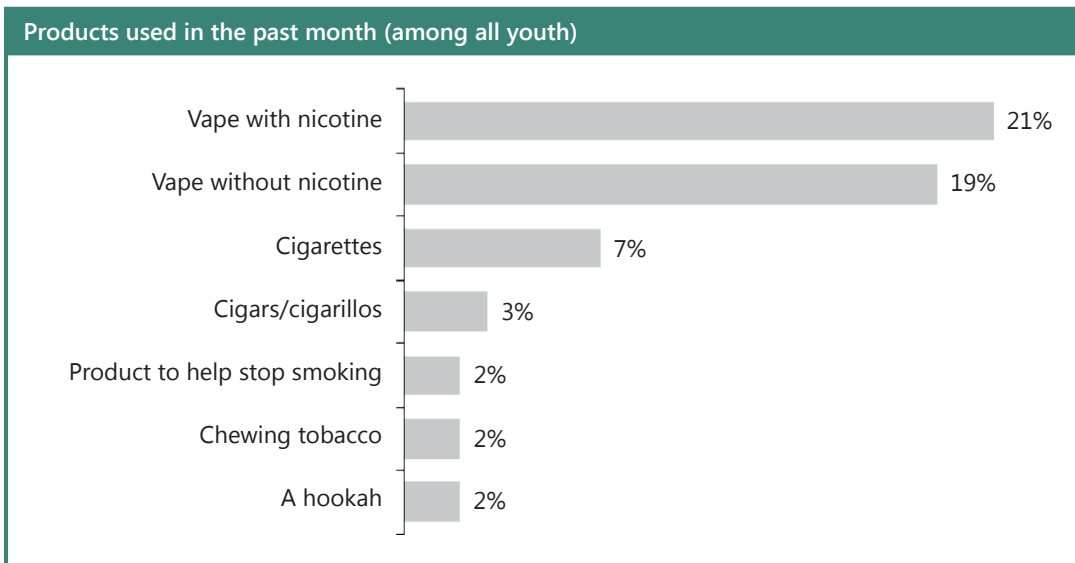
Grade 12 student, Fraser

Tobacco products used in the past month (among youth who had smoked)

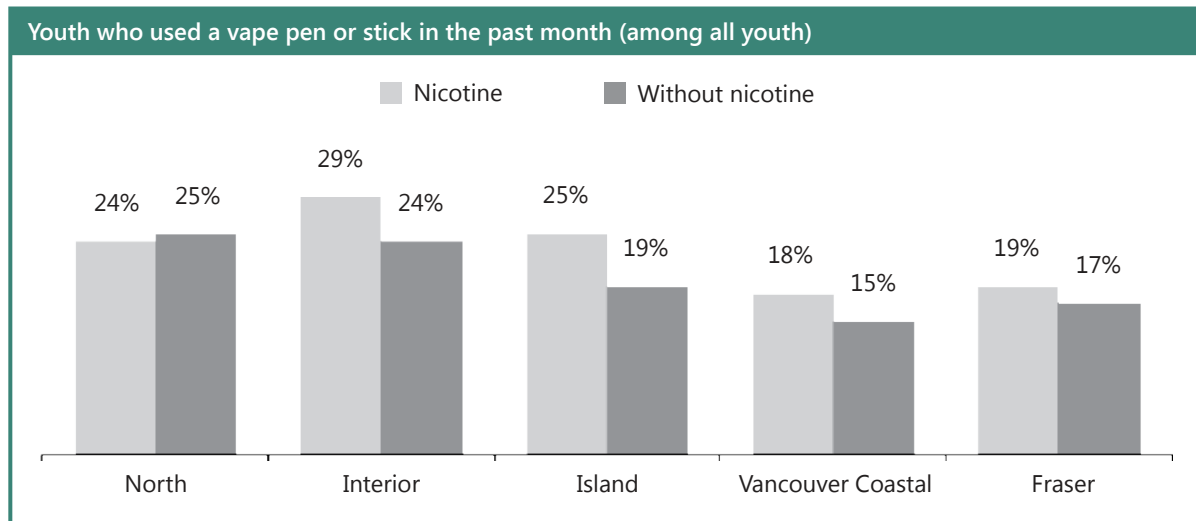


In 2013, 16% of students who had smoked reported using an e-cigarette in the past month. In 2018, 64% of students who had smoked used a vape pen or vape stick with nicotine, and 43% used a vape pen or stick without nicotine in the past month. This equated to 21% of all BC students vaping with nicotine and 19% without nicotine.

Among youth who had never smoked cigarettes, cigars or cigarillos, 11% used a vape pen or stick with nicotine, and 13% used one without nicotine in the past 30 days.



Note: Youth could choose more than one response.



Note: Among those vaping with nicotine, the differences between the North and Island, and between Vancouver Coastal and Fraser regions were not statistically significant.

Note: Among those vaping without nicotine, the difference between the North and Interior was not statistically significant.

## ALCOHOL USE

*"I am amazed by how many students drink, vape and smoke. I'm hoping college isn't like this."*

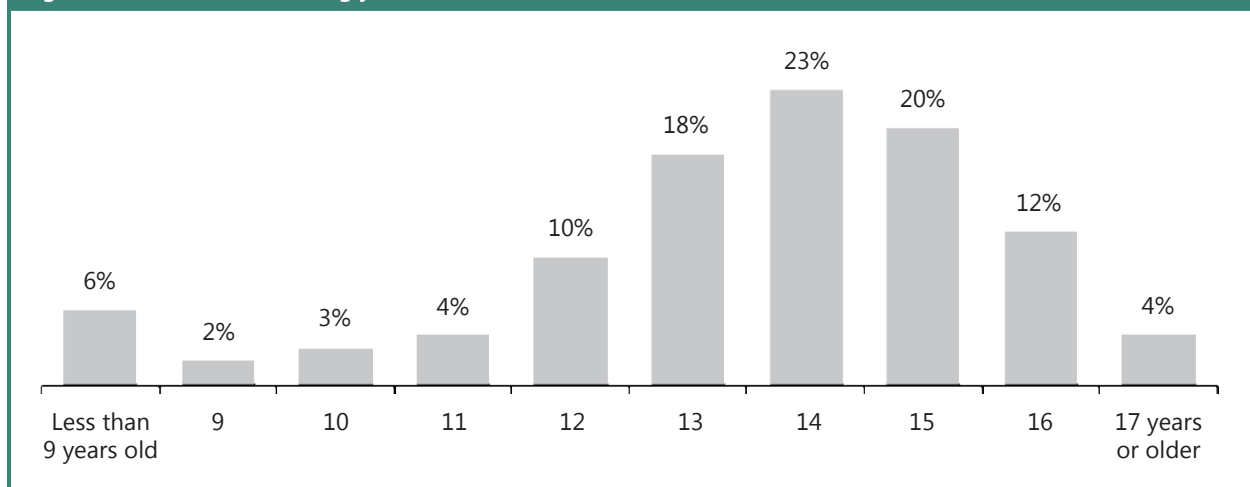
Grade 11 student, North

*"Drugs and drinking are not in my plans anytime soon."*

Grade 9 student, Interior

In 2018, 44% of youth had tried alcohol, which was similar to the percentage in 2013 and a decline from 54% in 2008. Females were more likely than males to have tried alcohol (45% vs. 43%), unlike in previous survey years when there was no gender difference.

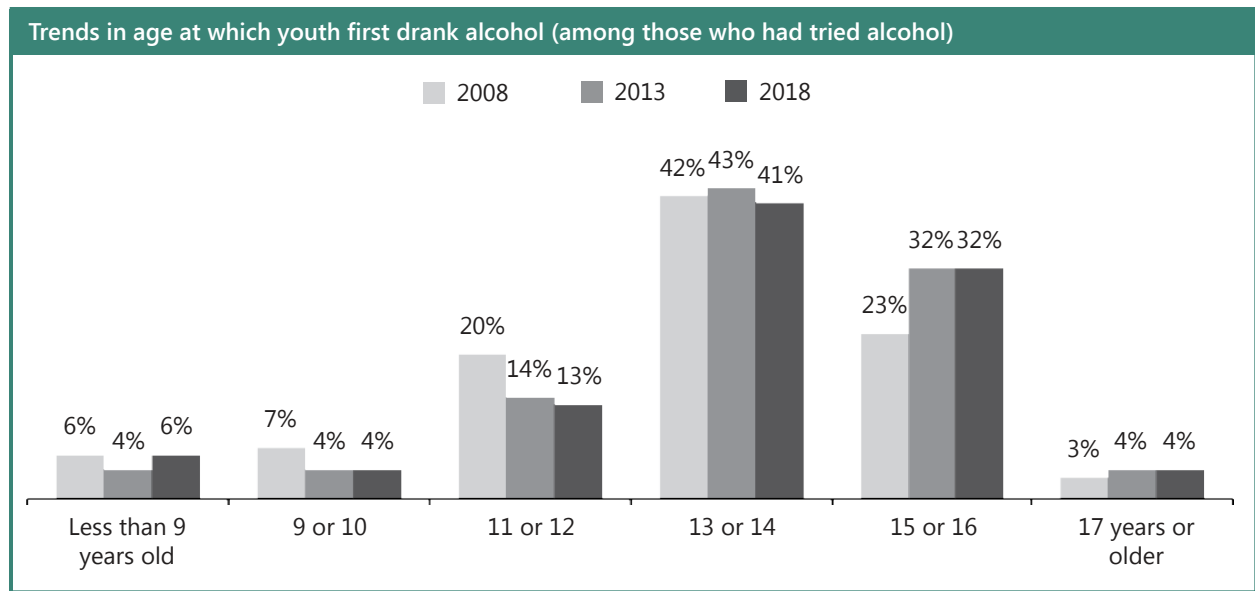
Age first tried alcohol (among youth who had tried alcohol)



Consistent with previous years, the most common age for youth to have their first drink of alcohol was 14. Among those who had tried alcohol, 37% waited until they were 15 or older to first drink, which was consistent with 2013 and an increase from 25% in 2008.

In 2018, 5% of youth who had tried alcohol drank on at least 10 days in the past month, and 1% drank daily. Although females were more likely than males to have consumed alcohol recently, non-binary youth and males were more likely than females to have done so every day in the past month.

Among youth who had tried alcohol, 64% had at least one drink in the past month. This represented a decrease from 2008 (67%) but a slight increase from 2013 (62%). However, this increase in recent alcohol use was only seen among females (66% vs. 63% in 2013), while rates among males remained similar to those five years earlier (61%).



Note: The difference between 2013 and 2018 for youth who first tried alcohol at 11 or 12 years old was not statistically significant.

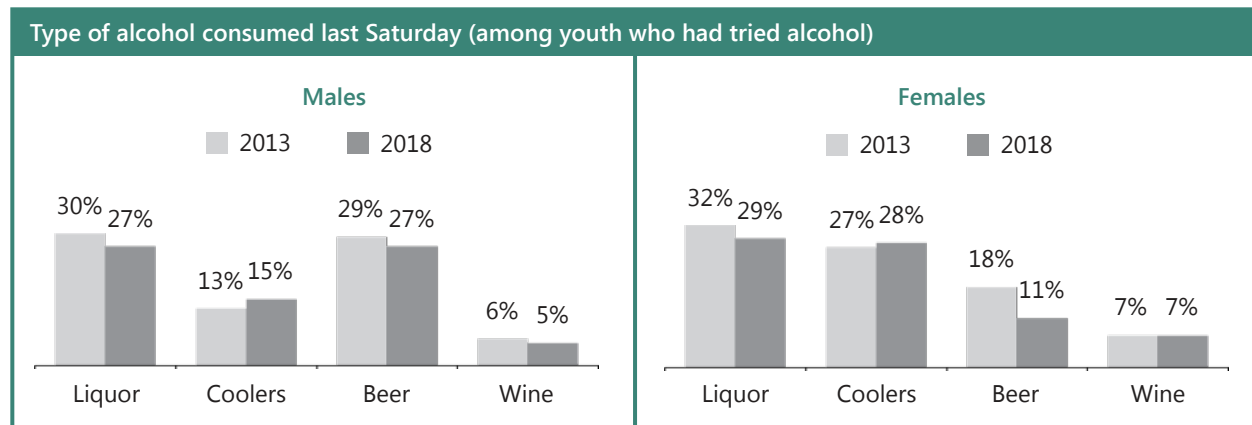
## LAST SATURDAY USE

On the Saturday before taking the survey, 15% of all BC students had at least one drink, which was a decrease from 19% in 2013. The rate was 35% among youth who had previously drunk alcohol, with 28% drinking liquor, 22% drinking coolers, 18% drinking beer, and 6% drinking wine. Compared to 2013, youth were more likely to be drinking coolers but less likely to be drinking liquor, beer, and wine.

Reflecting findings in 2013, males and females were equally likely to drink liquor, while males were more likely to have beer, and females were more likely to have coolers. Unlike in 2013 where males and females were equally likely to drink wine, females were more likely to do so in 2018.

Among alcohol users who drank last Saturday, around half (49%) drank at least two different types of alcohol (e.g., drank liquor and coolers). This represented a decrease from 64% in 2013.

In 2013, females were more likely than males to mix three or four different types of alcohol (27% vs. 21%), but that was no longer the case in 2018. The percentage of females who mixed three or four different types of alcohol dropped from 27% in 2013 to 14% in 2018, and the percentage of males who mixed this many different types of alcohol dropped from 21% to 18%.



Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

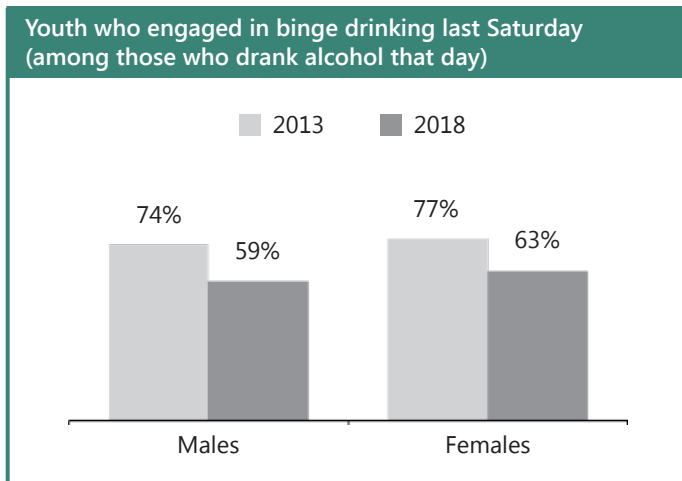
Note: The differences between 2013 and 2018 in drinking wine or coolers were not statistically significant for females.

## HEAVY DRINKING

*"I have gotten drunk about 4 times all at parties"*  
**Grade 8 student, Island**

Canadian Low Risk Drinking Guidelines suggest not exceeding two drinks on any one occasion. However, among those who had tried alcohol, 30% of students had more than two drinks at least once in the week before they took the survey, and 5% did so on at least three days that week. Also, 38% consumed five or more drinks within a couple of hours at least once in the past month (with no gender differences), and 5% did so on six or more days. The percentage of youth who engaged in heavy drinking in the past month was similar to 2013 and lower than 2008 (44%).

Binge drinking refers to males who consume four or more alcoholic drinks within a couple of hours and to females who consume three or more. Among students who drank on the Saturday before taking the survey, 61% engaged in binge drinking, which was a decrease from 76% in 2013. Females remained more likely than males to binge drink, as 63% drank three or more drinks on the Saturday before completing the survey (including 49% who drank four or more), and 59% of males drank four more or drinks.



Note: Binge drinking refers to males who consumed four or more alcoholic drinks and females who consumed three or more.

## SOURCE OF ALCOHOL

*"I only drink while at parties because I feel it allows for people to have fun. Drinking too much though is a bad idea."*

**Grade 8 student, Interior**

For the first time, the BC AHS asked youth where and from whom they got their alcohol the last time they drank. They most commonly got it from an adult, got it at a party, or gave someone money to buy it for them. There were a few gender differences in how youth accessed alcohol. Most notably, males were more likely than females to have bought it (8% vs. 5%), and females were more likely than males to have gotten it from an adult (42% vs. 38%) or to have given someone money to buy it for them (29% vs. 23%).

### Where youth got alcohol from the last time (among those who had tried alcohol)

Adult gave it to me	40%
At a party	35%
Gave someone money to buy it for me	26%
Youth gave it to me	13%
Took it without permission	11%
Bought it	7%
Exchanged something for it	1%
Made it	1%

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

## MARIJUANA USE

*"I use marijuana quite a bit. Usually every day. I don't know how it will affect me in the future. When I first began using it I noticed I slept much better and I was much more focused in school. That is why I use it."*

Grade 11 student, Interior

Data collection for the 2018 BC AHS was completed a month before marijuana was legalized for adults in Canada.

A quarter of students (25%) had tried marijuana, with no gender differences. For males this represented a decrease from both 2008 (31%) and 2013 (26%), whereas for females rates were similar to 2013 and lower than 2008 (29%).

In 2018, students generally waited longer to try marijuana than their peers in previous years. For example, the percentage who waited until they were 15 or older to first use marijuana rose from 33% in 2008, to 41% in 2013, to 47% in 2018 (among those who had tried marijuana).

The percentage of youth who had used marijuana recently was higher than in previous years (62% used marijuana in the past month vs. 58% in 2008 and 2013; among those who had tried it). Females were the least likely to have used recently: 60% of females who had tried marijuana had used it in the past month, compared to 64% of males and non-binary youth.



Note: The differences between 2013 and 2018 were not statistically significant for youth aged 10 and younger and for those aged 14. Among 11-year-olds, the percentages look the same due to rounding, but the rate in 2013 was slightly higher than in 2018.



*"Marijuana use is extremely common in youth and I struggle being able to stop smoking and I believe it affects my motivation, focus and mental health. I still go to work, do very well in school, and have close friends so no one seems to see how much I struggle."*

**Grade 12 student, Interior**

While recent use increased, regular use did not. The percentage who used marijuana on 6 or more days remained unchanged and the percentage who used it on 20 or more days decreased slightly from 2008 (12% in 2008 vs. 11% in 2018; among those who had tried marijuana).

As in 2013, 8% of BC students had used marijuana on the Saturday before taking the survey. This represented around a third (32%) of all youth who had tried marijuana.

Among all BC students, 5% used both alcohol and marijuana last Saturday, which was a decrease from 6% in 2013 and 9% in 2008.

The 2018 BC AHS asked students how they had consumed marijuana the last time they used it. The majority of students (89%) had smoked it, 16% had eaten it in a cooked recipe, and 6% had taken it in another form, such as vaping or gummies.

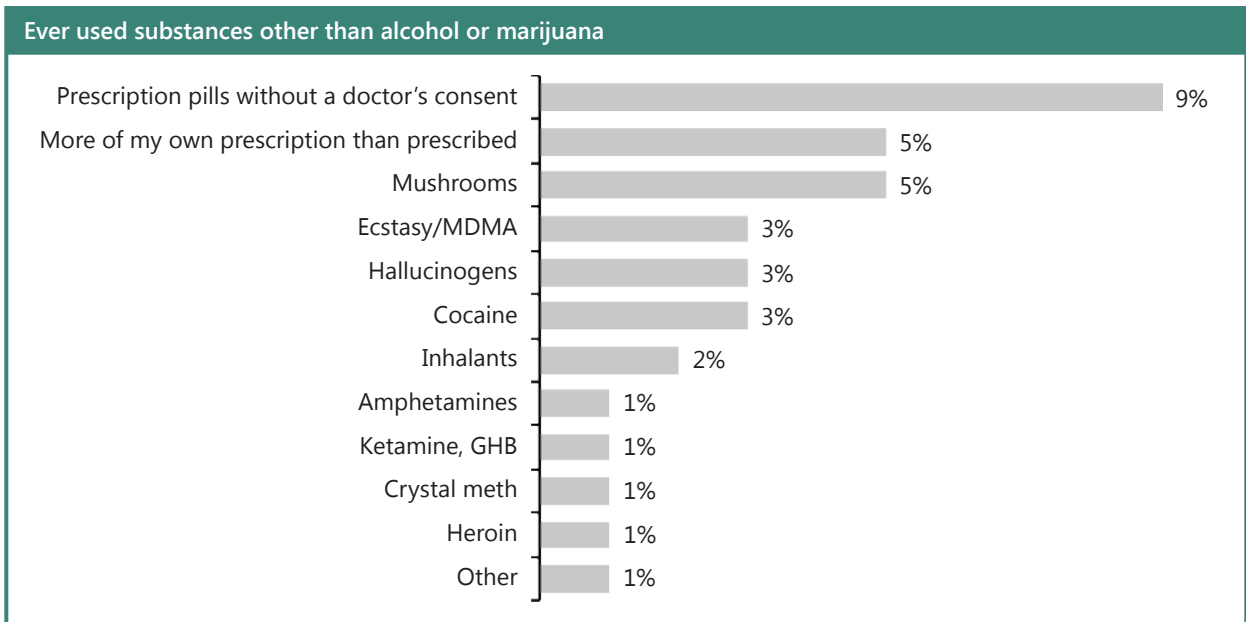
Around 1% of youth had been prescribed marijuana. Students with a health condition or disability were more likely than their peers to have had a prescription for marijuana.



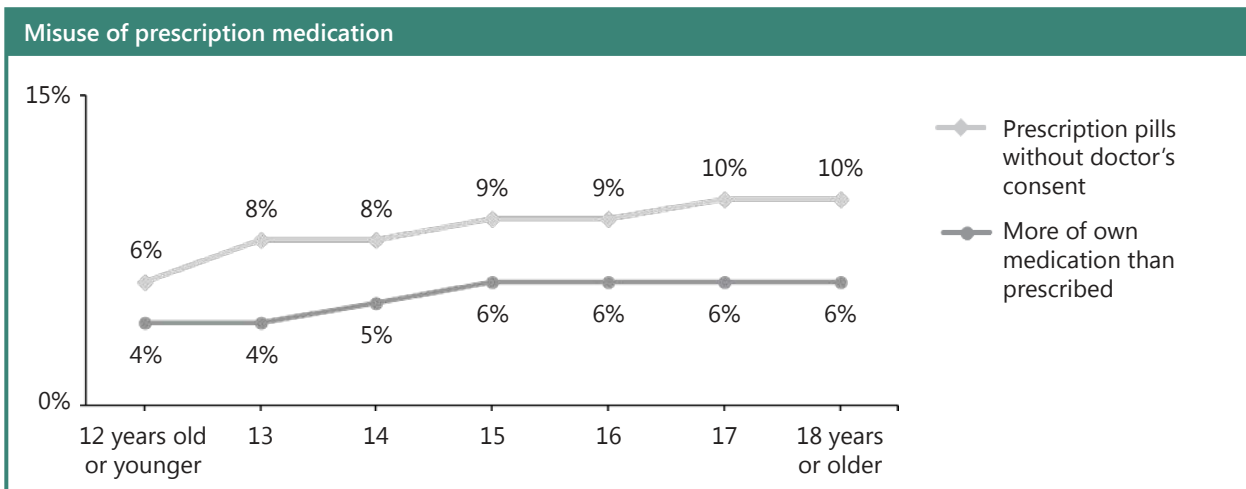
## USE OF SUBSTANCES OTHER THAN ALCOHOL & MARIJUANA

Students were asked about their lifetime use of a range of substances. Overall, 16% had tried at least one substance other than alcohol and marijuana, including 7% who had used two or more. The most commonly used substance was prescription pills without a doctor’s consent. Non-binary youth were generally the most likely, and males were the least likely, to have tried at least one substance other than alcohol and marijuana.

Older youth were generally more likely to have used substances. For example, 20% of 17-year-olds had tried at least one substance other than alcohol or marijuana, compared to 17% of 15-year-olds and 13% of 13-year-olds.



Note: Youth could choose more than one response.



Note: Differences between ages were not statistically significant at every point.

Over the past decade there was a decrease for both males and females in the use of most substances. However, between 2013 and 2018 there was no decrease in the use of mushrooms or inhalants for either males or females; and no decrease in use of cocaine, crystal meth, or heroin among females.

There was a slight decrease in the percentage of students who had injected an illegal drug from 1% in 2008 and 2013 to less than 1% in 2018.

*“Hard drugs such as cocaine are very popular but no one really knows the danger.”*

**Grade 11 student, Vancouver Coastal**

Some gender differences seen in previous years persisted, with females still more likely than males to use prescription pills and males more likely to use mushrooms, hallucinogens, inhalants, amphetamines, ketamine, and heroin. However, there was no longer a gender difference in crystal meth use.

Ever used substances other than alcohol and marijuana			
	2008	2013	2018
Prescription pills without a doctor's consent	15%	11%	9% <sup>∞</sup>
Mushrooms	8%	5%	5%
Ecstasy/MDMA	7%	4%	3%
Hallucinogens	5%	4%	3%
Cocaine	4%	3%	3%
Inhalants	4%	2%	2%
Amphetamines	2%	1%	1%
Ketamine, GHB	NA	1%	1%
Crystal meth	2%	1%	1%
Heroin	1%	1%	1%

NA: Youth were not asked about their use of ketamine and GHB in 2008.

<sup>∞</sup> In 2018, youth were also asked if they used more of their own medication than was prescribed to them. This addition may have affected the responses to this item.

Note: Between 2013 and 2018 there were no significant decreases in the use of mushrooms, inhalants, and crystal meth.

Note: Amphetamines do not include crystal meth or ecstasy/MDMA which were asked about separately. Hallucinogens do not include Ketamine or ecstasy/MDMA.

## CONSEQUENCES OF USE

As in 2013, a little over half (52%) of youth who used alcohol or other substances in the past year reported negative consequences. Reflecting patterns over the past decade, females were more likely than males to experience negative consequences of their substance use (54% vs. 51%). However, while rates of negative consequences rose for males over the past five years, they remained stable for females, and were lower than in 2008 for both genders.

The most common consequences youth experienced were being told they did something they could not remember, passing out, arguing with family members, and getting injured.

In the past year, 5% of students felt they needed help or were told that they needed help for their substance use. In total, 3% needed help for their alcohol use (an increase from 2013 for both males and females), 3% for their marijuana use, and 1% for their use of other substances.

Consequences of substance use in the past year (among youth who used alcohol or other substances during that time)	
Was told I did something I couldn't remember	37%
Passed out	27%
Argued with family members	15%
Got injured	15%
School work or grades changed	11%
Lost friends or broke up with a girlfriend, boyfriend, or significant other	9%
Damaged property	7%
Got into a physical fight	7%
Had sex when I didn't want to	6%
Got into trouble with the police	5%
Had to get medical treatment	2%
Overdosed	2%
Used alcohol or drugs but none of these happened	50%

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.



## DRIVING AFTER SUBSTANCE USE

*"I'm very scared of impaired driving."*

**Grade 9 student, Island**

Among youth who had tried alcohol, the percentage who had ever driven after drinking decreased from 12% in 2008 to 5% in 2013, before rising slightly in 2018 to 6%. Males remained more likely than females to have ever driven after drinking (7% vs. 5%). Two percent of youth who had tried alcohol had driven after drinking in the past month, which was similar to the percentage in 2013.

Fourteen percent of youth who had tried marijuana had driven after using it. This was similar to 2013 and a decrease from 20% in 2008, with similar patterns for males (24% in 2008 to 18% in 2018) and for females (15% to 11%). In the past month, 7% of youth (10% of males and 5% of females) who had tried marijuana drove after using it, which was a decrease from 2013 for males (from 11%) but unchanged for females.

For the first time, the BC AHS also asked students whether they had driven after using substances other than alcohol or marijuana. Four percent of youth who had ever used any of these substances reported driving after using, and 2% had done so in the past 30 days.

Youth were asked if they had ever been a passenger in a vehicle with someone who had been using substances. Twenty percent had been in a vehicle with a driver who had been drinking alcohol, 13% with a driver who had used marijuana, and 3% with a driver who had been using other substances.

In the past month, 7% had been a passenger with a driver who had been drinking, the same percentage had been in a vehicle with someone who had been using marijuana, and 1% with a driver who had used other substances.

## REPORTED REASONS FOR USING

*"I feel like people think youth use drugs or alcohol to be 'cool' or 'fit in' but that's not always the case—some youth use them to get away from stress or thoughts."*

**Grade 9 student, Island**

As in 2013, the most common reasons youth gave for using substances the last time were wanting to have fun, having friends who were doing it, and wanting to experiment. However, the percentage who used substances for various reasons increased, including to manage stress (from 21% in 2013 to 24% in 2018), because they were feeling down (16% to 20%), to help them focus (3% to 4%), and because of an addiction (2% to 3%).

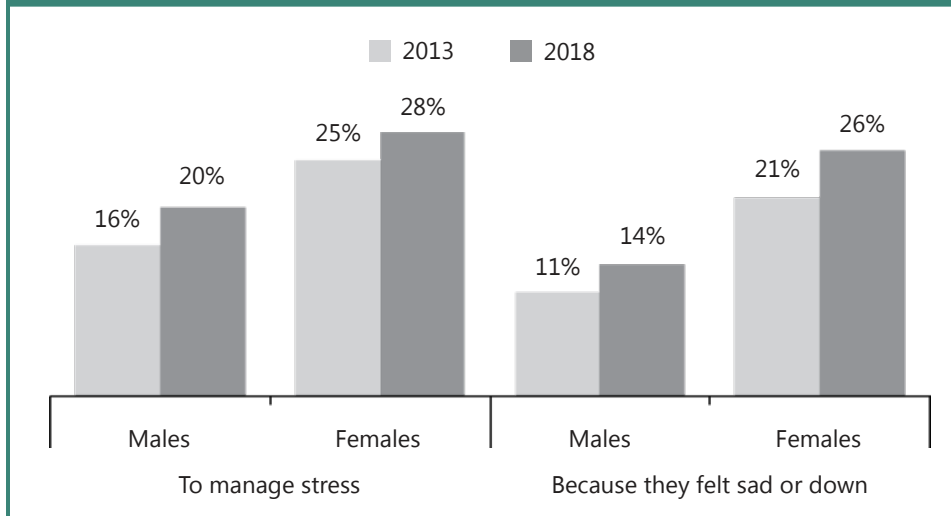
### Reasons for using substances the last time (among youth who had used alcohol or other substances)

I wanted to have fun	67%
I wanted to try it/experiment	32%
My friends were doing it	32%
Because of stress	24%
I felt down or sad	20%
I felt like there was nothing else to do	9%
To manage physical pain	6%
I thought it would help me focus	4%
I was pressured into doing it	3%
Because of an addiction	3%
I didn't mean to do it	1%
To change the effects of some other drug	1%
Other	9%

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

Note: Among youth who wrote 'other' they most commonly cited a special occasion as the reason they had used substances.

### Reasons for using substances the last time (among youth who had used alcohol or other substances)



## GAMBLING

*"[I would like to learn more about] spending too much time on technology, gaming, etc. I would say I'm kind of addicted to electronics."*

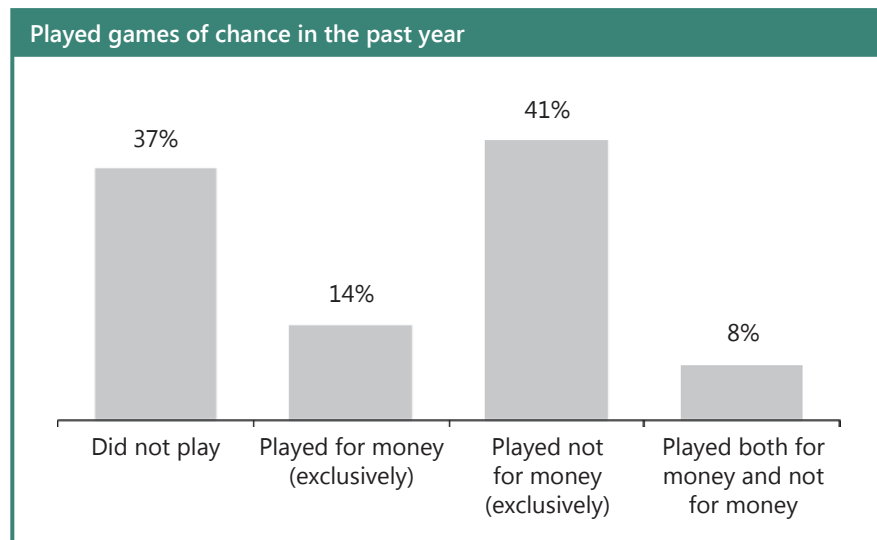
**Grade 12 student, Fraser**

*"I have a gambling addiction. But I make money."*

**Grade 12 student, Vancouver Coastal**

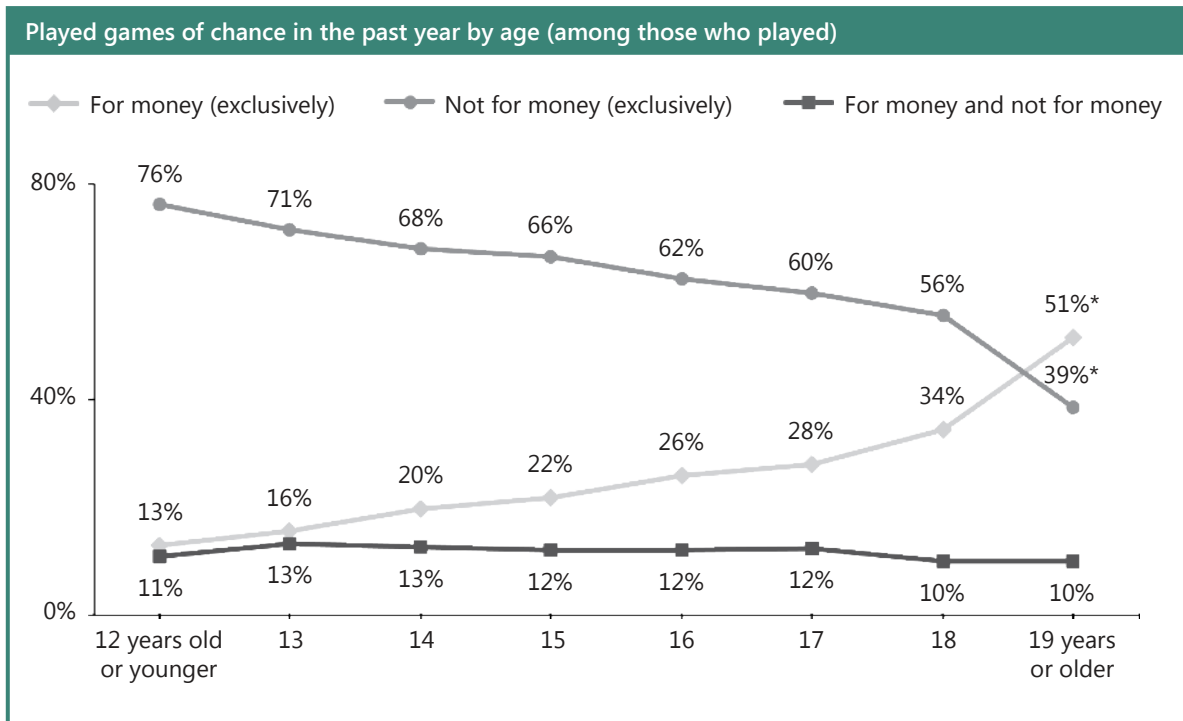
The 2018 BC AHS asked participants if they had played a number of games of chance in the past year, and if so whether they had played these games for money. Most youth who played games—such as cards/dice, bet on sports, used lottery tickets/scratch cards, or engaged in online gaming—had not done so for money.

Females were the least likely to have played any of these games in the past year and males were the most likely to have played (50% of females vs. 67% of non-binary youth vs. 77% of males). Females were also the least likely to have played for money.



The legal gambling age in BC is 19 years old. However, students aged 18 were equally likely to play games for money as 19-year-olds. In general, older youth were more likely than younger ones to have gambled exclusively for money, whereas younger youth were more likely to have played without the involvement of money. The percentage who played both for money and without money was largely consistent for all ages.

Among youth who gambled for money in the past year, most (64%) engaged in one type of gambling, 21% in two types, 8% in three types, and 6% in four or more different types.



Note: Differences between data points were not statistically significant across every age.

\* Percentage should be interpreted with caution as the standard error was higher than expected but is still within the releasable range.



The most common ways that youth gambled for money were by playing dice or cards in person (37%), buying lottery tickets/scratch cards (37%), and online gaming (37%; among those who gambled for money in the past year). Gaming was the most popular activity youth played for money on a weekly and daily basis.

In total, 4% of BC youth gambled for money on at least a weekly basis over the previous 12 months, and 2% had used their phone to gamble on the day before taking the survey.

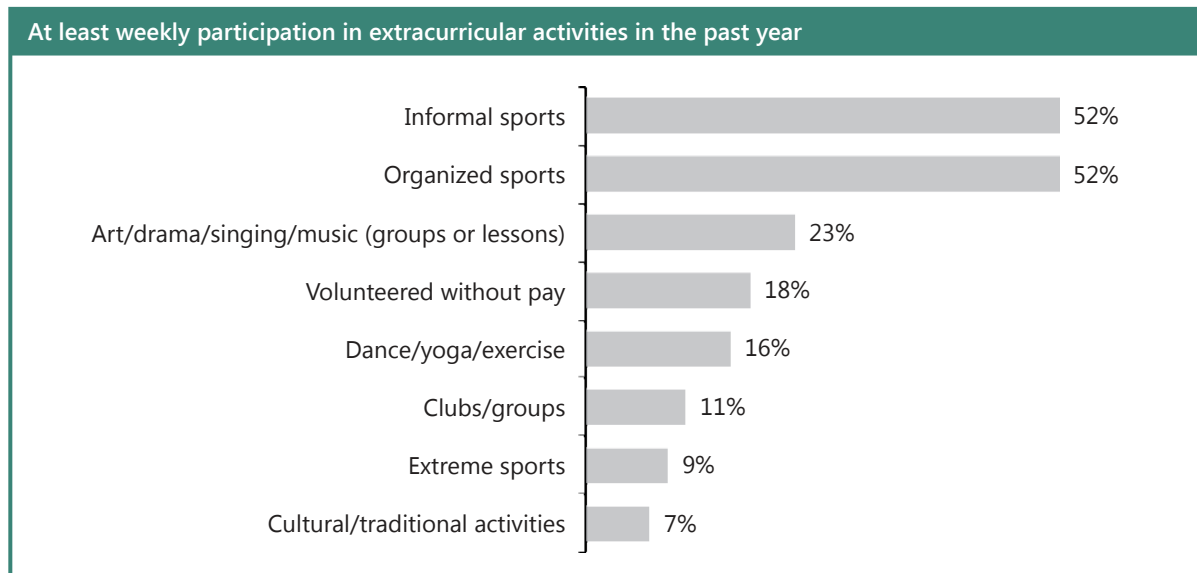
One percent of youth reported needing help for their gambling in the past year. Among these youth, 12% reported they had an alcohol or drug addiction. Also, 42% had been told or felt that they needed help for their alcohol use, and 37% needed help for their marijuana use.

Frequency of playing games of chance (among those who gambled for money in the past year)					
	Once a month or less	2–3 days per month	Once a week	2–6 days a week	Daily
Cards/dice in person	27%	5%	3%	1%	1%
Cards/dice online	6%	2%	1%	1%	1%
Sports betting in person	25%	5%	2%	1%	1%
Sports betting online	6%	2%	1%	1%	1%
Lottery tickets/scratch cards	31%	4%	1%	1%	1%
Gaming online	17%	5%	4%	4%	7%

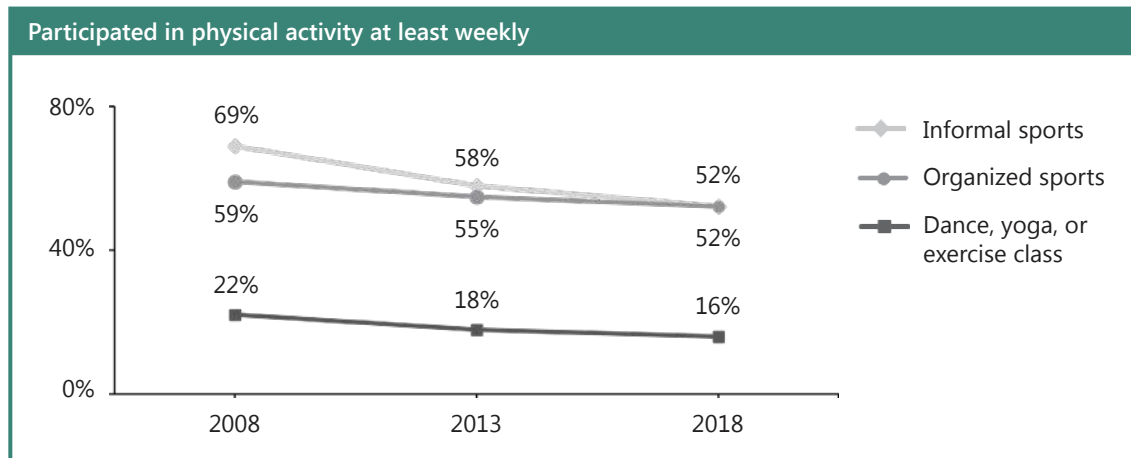
## EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

In the past year, 92% of students participated in at least one extracurricular activity (such as sports, dance, clubs, art, or volunteering), and 83% did so at least weekly. Among youth who took part in weekly activities, 30% took part in one activity, 36% participated in two activities, and around a third participated in three or more.

There were decreases in weekly participation in all types of extracurricular activities, except cultural or traditional activities, which remained at a similar rate to 2013 (the first time the question was asked). For example, the percentage who volunteered (helped others without pay) dropped from 27% in 2008, to 20% in 2013, to 18% in 2018. Participation in extreme sports was first asked on the survey five years ago, and declined from 11% in 2013 to 9% in 2018.



Note: Youth could choose more than one response.



Males were more likely than other students to engage in informal and organized sports on at least a weekly basis, while females were more likely than others to take part in volunteer activities and in dance, yoga, or exercise classes. Non-binary youth were more likely than others to participate in art, drama, singing, or music at least weekly.

Students were asked about any barriers they had experienced to taking part in extracurricular activities in the past 12 months. As in 2013, being too busy was the most common barrier they had experienced, with females and older students more likely than others to identify this barrier. Males were generally the least likely to identify each barrier to participation.

*"I would like to participate in school sports, but the pressure and stress prevents me from doing this."*

Grade 10 student, Island

*"I am generally tired a lot from the various extra activities I am involved with, on top of school."*

Grade 11 student, Interior

There was a slight increase from 2013 in students reporting being too busy to participate in extracurricular activities, while there were slight decreases in students reporting barriers relating to transportation, affordability, and availability of the activity in their community. Females (but not males) were slightly more likely than five years previously to identify fear of being bullied as a barrier to participation.

Reasons for not participating in activities		
	2013	2018
Too busy	46%	48%
Couldn't get there or get home	16%	14%
Too anxious or depressed	NA	14%
Activity wasn't available in community	14%	13%
Couldn't afford to	15%	12%
Worried about being bullied	6%	7%

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

NA: Youth were not asked about being too anxious or depressed in 2013.

# RISKS TO HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

This section of the report considers adverse experiences which can have lasting negative effects on health and well-being.

## POVERTY & DEPRIVATION

### GOING TO BED HUNGRY

Ninety percent of BC youth never went to bed hungry because there was not enough money for food at home. However, 10% went to bed hungry at least some of the time (9% sometimes and 1% often or always), which was higher than the percentage in 2013 (7%) but slightly lower than in 2008 (11%).

For more information about the Deprivation Index, please contact [mccreary@mcs.bc.ca](mailto:mccreary@mcs.bc.ca).

## DEPRIVATION

Getting an accurate measure of youth poverty and deprivation has always been challenging. With the help of over 800 young people across the province, an Index was created to more accurately measure youth deprivation. The Index highlights the 10 items BC youth felt were most important for them to have to feel like they belonged, or if they did not have them, could make them feel like they were missing out on things their peers had.

The 2018 BC AHS asked youth if they had these items, and if not, whether they wished they had them. Most youth had all the items in the list. For example, 97% had a quiet place to sleep, while 2% did not have this but wished they had it, and 1% did not have it and did not want it or did not know if they wanted it.

Youth who felt deprived of...	
	Did not have this item but wished they had it
Money for self	10%
Smartphone	6%
Space of their own to hang out in	6%
Money for school supplies, trips	4%
Lunch for school/money for lunch	4%
Access to transport	3%
Equipment/clothes for extracurricular activities	3%
Clothes to fit in	2%
Quiet place to sleep	2%
Access to Internet	1%

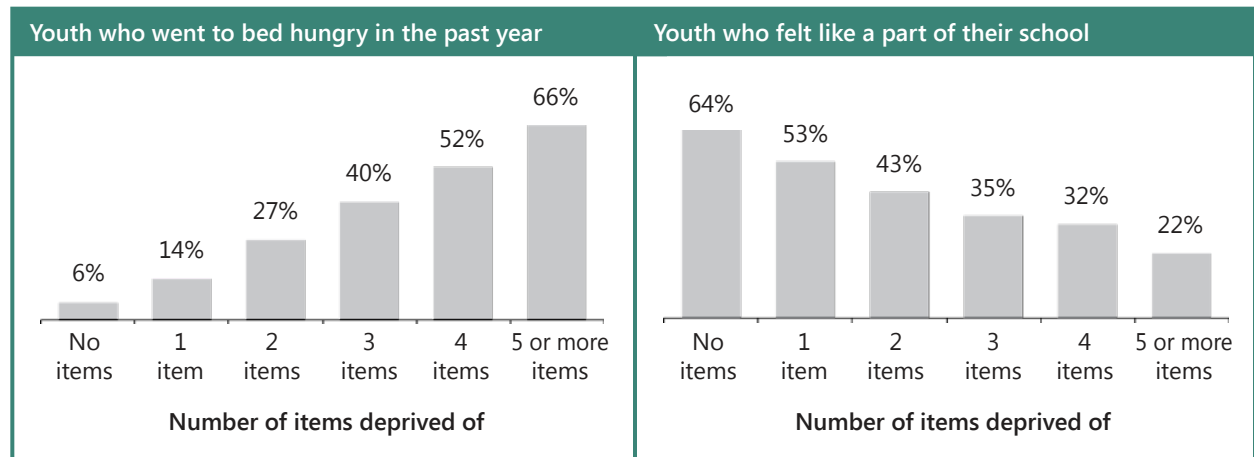
The most common item that youth reported wanting but not having was money to spend on themselves, followed by a smartphone, and a space of their own where they could hang out.

When the items were considered individually, there was a link between feeling deprived and potentially negative outcomes. For example, almost half of youth (49%) who had a quiet place to sleep had slept for eight or more hours the night before completing the survey, compared to 27% who wished for but did not have somewhere quiet to sleep. Also, youth who wished for but did not have the money to buy school supplies, go on school trips, or join in extracurricular activities were three times more likely than their peers who could afford these things to anticipate they would not complete high school.

*"We need free school lunches! We need free school buses! How are we supposed to learn when our shoes are SOAKING WET?!"*

**Grade 11 student, Fraser**

Around a quarter of BC youth reported they lacked but wished they had at least one of the items in the Index, including 15% who lacked one item, 5% who lacked two items, and 4% who lacked and wanted three or more of the items their peers had.

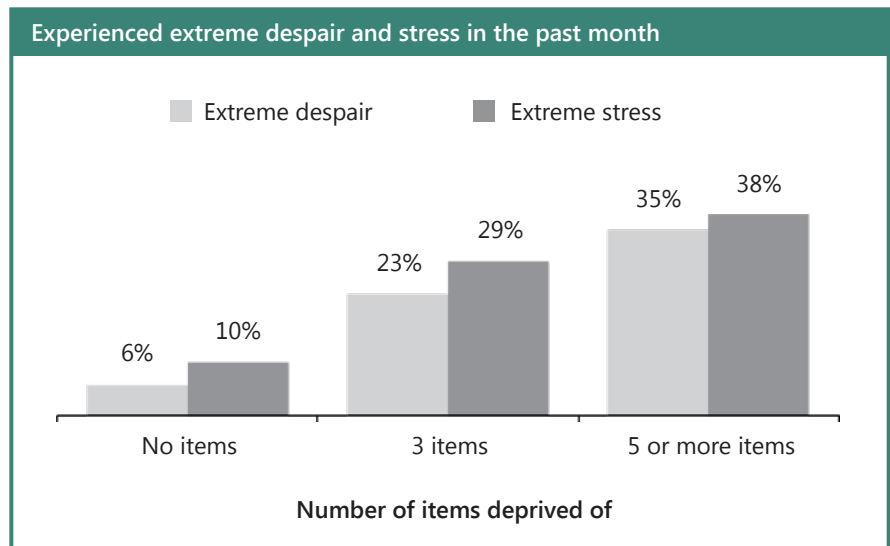


Note: The difference between missing out on 3 or 4 items was not statistically significant for youth who felt like a part of their school.

*"I'm pretty much just poor and I think It's affecting me mentally like I'm not as good as some people."*  
**Grade 9 student, Fraser**

The more items youth reported not having but wishing they had, the more likely they were to miss meals and to go to bed hungry because there was not enough money for food at home. Also, the more items youth felt deprived of, the less likely they were to feel like a part of their school or to plan to continue their education beyond high school. For example, 86% of youth who had all the items planned to continue their education after high school, compared to 66% who lacked three items and 57% who lacked five or more items.

Youth deprivation was linked to poorer mental health and well-being. The more items youth lacked that they wished they had, the less likely they were to report good or excellent mental health, to feel happy in the past 30 days, to feel like their life was going well, that they had a good life, or to usually feel good about themselves, and the more likely they were to wish they had a different life. Also, the more items they lacked, the more likely they were to report experiencing stress and despair in the past month, which was so severe they could not function properly.



## LOSS & BEREAVEMENT

*“One of my best friends tried to kill himself and I have found out most of my friends have tried to commit suicide and some more than once.”*

**Grade 8 student, Island**

*“I am crying 2–4 times a week and more often with the recent passing of my grandma.”*

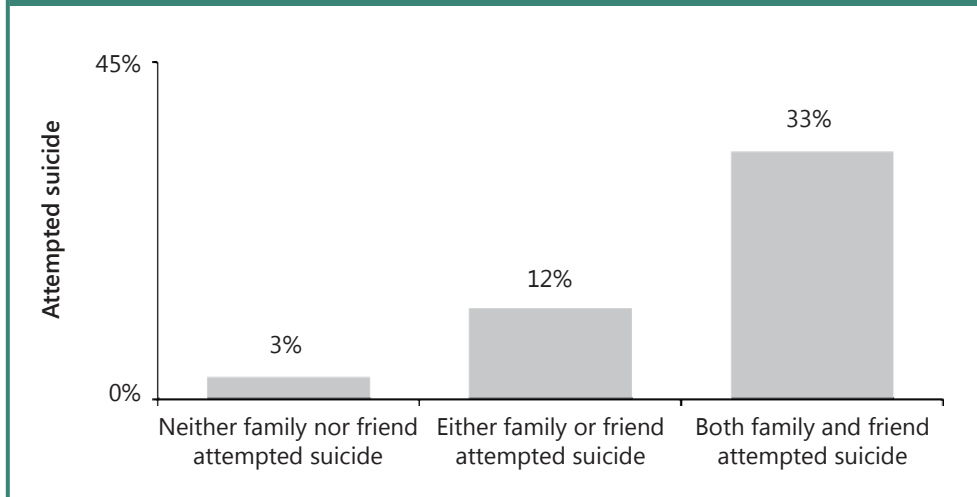
**Grade 11 student, Vancouver Coastal**

Most students (71%) reported that at least one person close to them had died. Causes of death included illness (46%), old age (44%), accident (13%), suicide (9%), violence (3%), fentanyl overdose (2%), and an overdose other than fentanyl (4%).

More than a third (36%) of students reported that someone in their family or a close friend had attempted or died by suicide. This was an increase from 30% in 2013. In the past year, 17% had a close friend who had attempted or died by suicide, and 5% had a family member who had done so, which was also an increase from 2013.

Students who had this experience were more likely to have attempted suicide themselves. Those who reported that both a friend and a family member had attempted suicide in the past year were the most likely to have attempted suicide themselves in the same time period.

Students who attempted suicide in the past year in relation to suicide attempts by family or close friends in the past year



## VIOLENCE & DISCRIMINATION

### DATING VIOLENCE

*"I am stuck in an abusive relationship and don't know what to do."*  
**Grade 12 student, Vancouver Coastal**

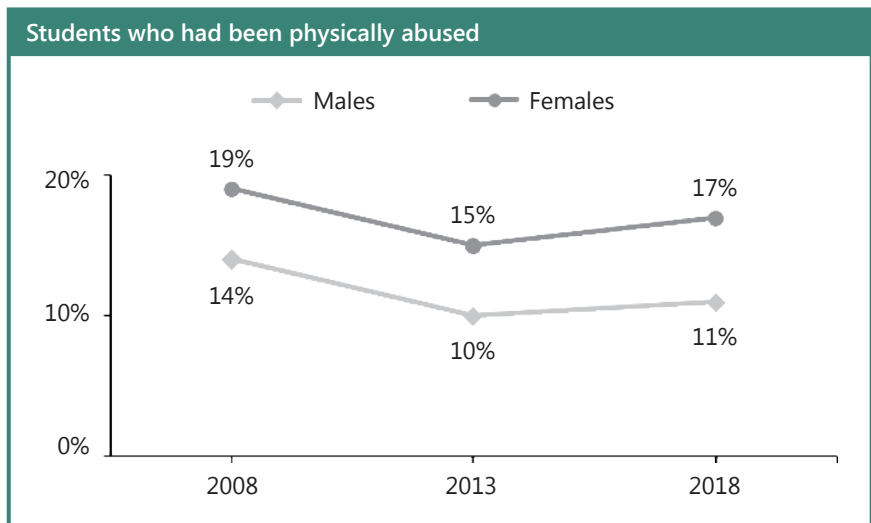
In 2018, 43% of youth had been in a romantic relationship in the past year (compared to 39% in 2013 and 57% in 2008). Among these students, 8% had been the victim of physical violence within their dating relationship (7% of both males and females vs. 14% of non-binary youth). This percentage reflected an increase from 6% in 2013 and was a return to the 2008 rate.

### SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Compared to five years previously, males were less likely to have been verbally sexually harassed in the past year (28% in 2018 vs. 32% in 2013), whereas females were more likely to have had this experience (50% in 2018 vs. 46% in 2013). Physical sexual harassment increased from 2013 to 2018 for both males (10% to 13%) and females (26% to 31%). Non-binary youth experienced physical and verbal harassment at similar rates to females.

### PHYSICAL & SEXUAL ABUSE

Fourteen percent of students reported they had been physically abused or mistreated at some point, with males less likely than females and non-binary youth to have had this experience.



Note: The difference between 2013 and 2018 was not statistically significant for males.

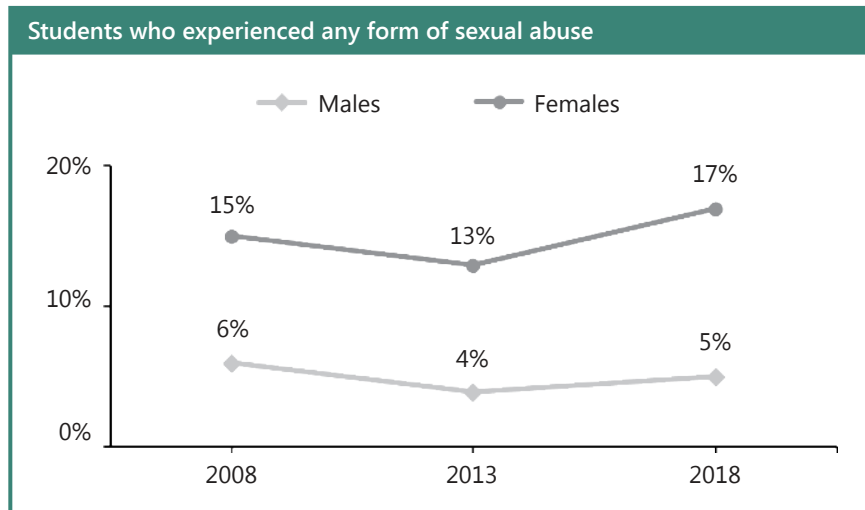


When students were asked specifically if they had ever been sexually abused, 8% indicated they had experienced this type of abuse. Students were also asked about other forms of sexual abuse they may have not recognized as abuse. For example, 6% had been forced into sexual activity against their will by another youth, and 2% had been forced into sexual activity by an adult. Also, 1% of students were the younger of an illegal age pairing the first time they had sex (based on Canadian law stating that sex between a youth under age 16 and someone who is not close in age is sexual abuse).

*"I've been abused sexually. I am getting help currently."*

Grade 11 student, Fraser

When all forms of sexual abuse were considered, 11% of students had been sexually abused (with females and non-binary youth more likely to have been abused than males). This percentage reflected an increase from five years earlier for both males and females, and for females the percentage was also higher than a decade ago.



Note: Forms of abuse included ever being sexually abused, being forced into sexual activity, or being the younger of an illegal age pairing the first time they had sex.



## DISCRIMINATION

Thirty-nine percent of students reported they had experienced at least one form of discrimination in the past year (32% of males vs. 44% of females vs. 62% of non-binary youth). The most commonly perceived reason for being discriminated against was physical appearance.

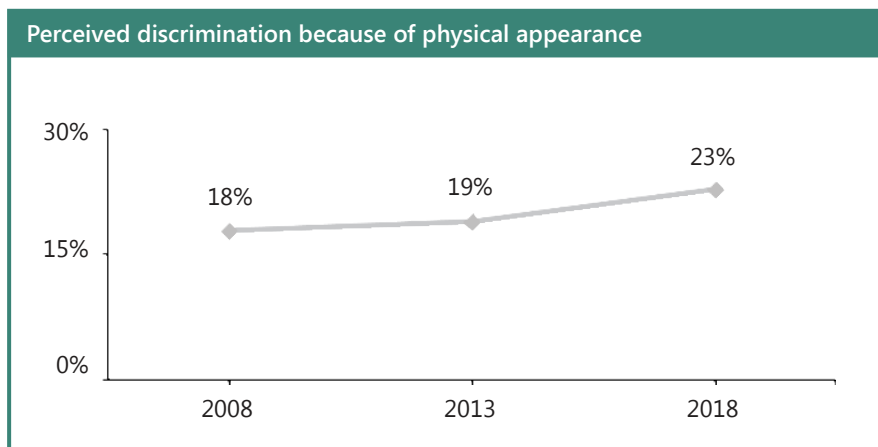
Students were asked about their experiences of discrimination on the grounds of race, sexual orientation, and physical appearance in each wave of the BC AHS over the past decade, and the percentages for all three were highest in 2018.

In 2013, 11% of students reported they had experienced discrimination because of their race, ethnicity, or skin colour (with a similar percentage in 2008), and this rose to 14% in 2018. There was a slight increase in reporting discrimination due to sexual orientation (4% in 2013 vs. 5% in 2018), and a larger increase in discrimination due to physical appearance.

Perceived reasons for being discriminated against in the past year	
Physical appearance	23%
Weight	16%
Race, ethnicity, or skin colour	14%
Gender/sex	9%
Income or family income	8%
Sexual orientation (e.g., being or thought to be gay or lesbian)	5%
A disability	3%

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

Note: A third of bisexual youth and 54% of gay and lesbian youth reported experiencing discrimination because of their sexual orientation.



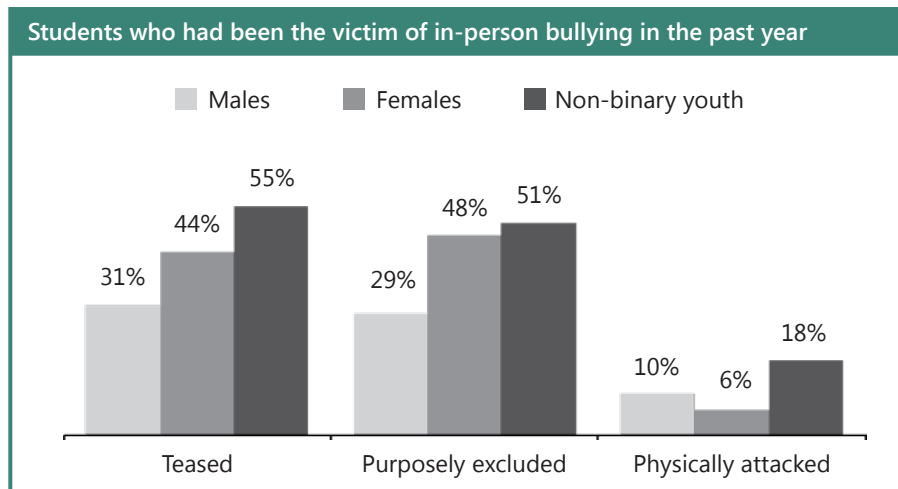
## BULLYING

The 2018 BC AHS asked students how many times in the past year they had been teased to the point that they felt bad or extremely uncomfortable; been socially excluded on purpose; and been physically attacked at school or on the way to or from school. They were also asked if they had teased, excluded, or physically attacked anyone.

*“As a kid in elementary school I did not look like everyone else. That caused a lot of bullying, sometimes physical, other times not but it all just hurts.”*

Grade 9 student, Fraser

Overall, 53% of students reported they had been bullied in at least one of these ways in the past year. This percentage was higher than five years earlier (50% in 2013). In 2018, 39% of students had been deliberately excluded, 38% had been teased, and 8% had been physically attacked.



Note: The difference between females and non-binary youth who were excluded was not statistically significant.

Ten percent of students had bullied someone else, and females were the least likely to have done so. Overall, 2% of students were exclusively the perpetrator of bullying, 45% were exclusively bullied, 8% were both a victim and a perpetrator, and (as in 2013) the remaining 45% had not been involved in bullying either as a victim or a perpetrator.

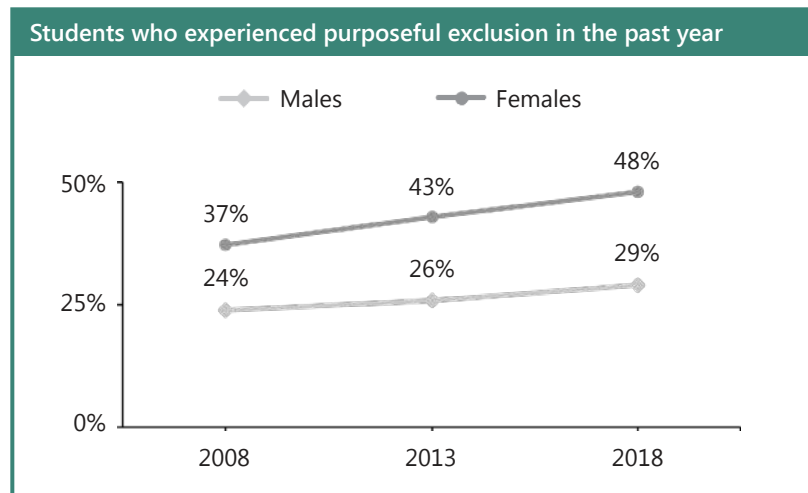
Four percent of students missed school due to bullying in the past month (2% of males vs. 5% of females vs. 13% of non-binary youth). One percent missed class on three or more days for this reason.

Seven percent of students reported that they did not participate in extracurricular activities in the past year because they were worried about being bullied (4% of males vs. 9% of females vs. 20% of non-binary youth).

## WEAPON CARRYING

In 2008, 6% of students carried a weapon to school in the past 30 days, which decreased to 4% in 2013 before rising slightly in 2018 to 5%. Among students who carried a weapon to school in the past month, 1% always carried one.

Students who had been the victim of bullying were more likely to carry a weapon. For example, 18% of youth who had been physically attacked in the past year had carried a weapon, compared to 4% who had not been attacked.



## INTERNET SAFETY

*"I got bullied online and people made a group chat threatening me—they told me to kill myself—mocked me."*

**Grade 9 student, Fraser**

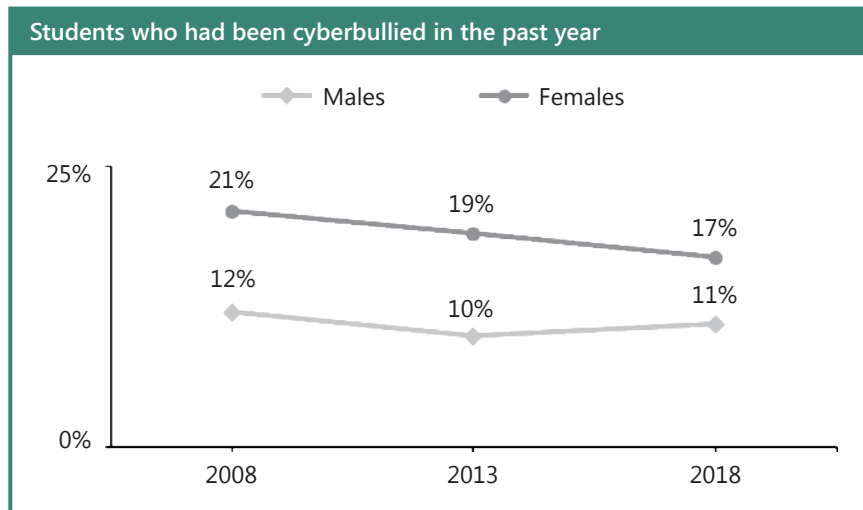
*"I want to learn how to better interact with people online safely."*

**Grade 12 student, Vancouver Coastal**

At some point in their lives, 17% of students had met someone through the Internet who made them feel unsafe. This reflected an increase over the past decade for both males (6% in 2008 vs. 11% in 2018) and females (18% in 2008 vs. 23% in 2018). The percentage of non-binary youth who met someone through the Internet who made them feel unsafe was comparable to that for females.

In the past year, 14% of students had been cyberbullied (including 23% of non-binary youth). Among females, there was a consistent decrease in cyberbullying victimization since 2008, whereas among males the decrease from 2008 to 2013 was followed by a slight increase in 2018.

Six percent of students reported they had cyberbullied someone else in the past year. Females were less likely than males and non-binary youth to have done so. Females were also less likely to have cyberbullied compared to five years earlier (5% in 2018 vs. 6% in 2013), whereas the percentage among males was the same across survey years (7%).



# SUPPORTING HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

For young people in BC to thrive and become healthy and contributing adults, they need caring, supportive relationships; opportunities to grow, develop, and challenge themselves; and the resources to participate in their community. Providing these supports can also reduce a wide range of health-risk behaviours.

In this section we consider BC youth's experiences with their families, school, community, and peers, and their internal strengths and resiliency. The section concludes with a look at some examples of the protective factors that support healthy development, and youth's suggestions for health-related topics they would like to learn more about and which they believe can support their healthy transition to adulthood.

## FAMILY

*"My life is actually the Best with my family."*

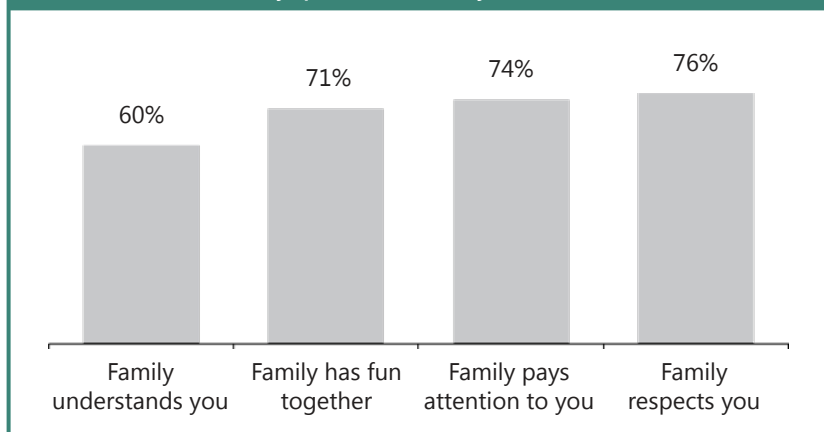
Grade 7 student, Interior

*"I am happy when I am at home with family."*

Grade 9 student, Fraser

Generally, youth felt connected to their families, but they were more likely to feel respected by their families than understood by their families.

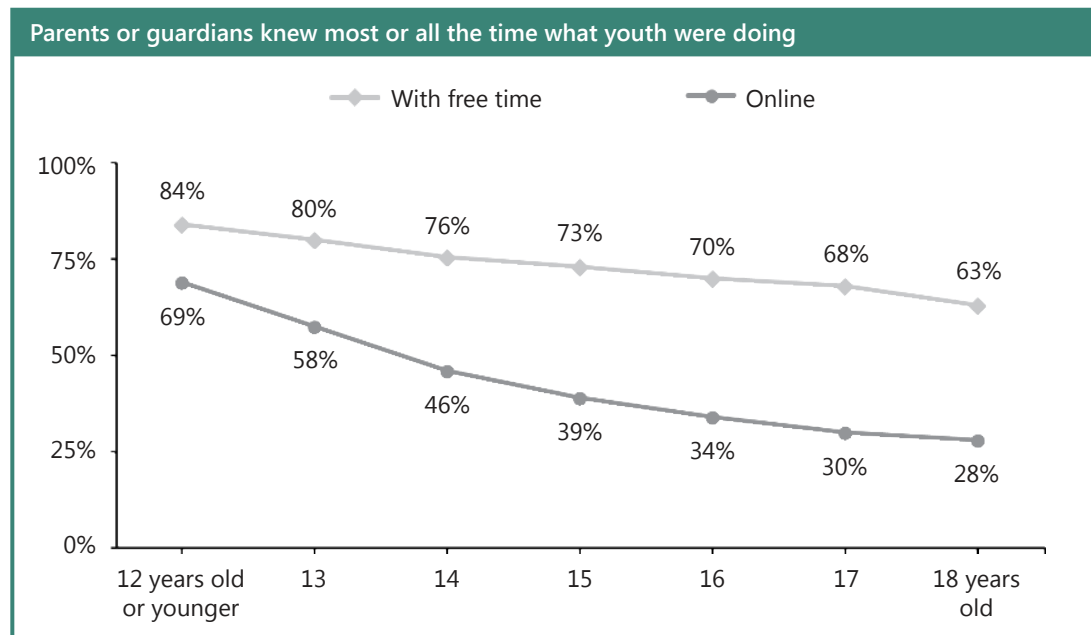
Felt connected to family quite a bit or very much



About 4 in 5 students (79%) with a phone used it to communicate with their parents or guardians on their most recent school day. Younger students were less likely than older ones to use their device to communicate with their parents/guardians. For example, 63% of those aged 12 and younger with a phone used their device to communicate with parents compared to 83% of those aged 15 and older.

Over a third of students (37%) reported their parents rarely or never monitored their time online, and 11% had parents who rarely or never knew what they were doing in their free time.

When asked whether their parents or guardians monitored their leisure time activities, a greater proportion of youth indicated their parents mostly or always knew what they did with their free time than what they did online (73% vs. 43%). However, the percentage whose parents monitored their free time most or all the time dropped from 76% in 2013.



Note: Differences between data points were not statistically significant across every age.

## SCHOOL

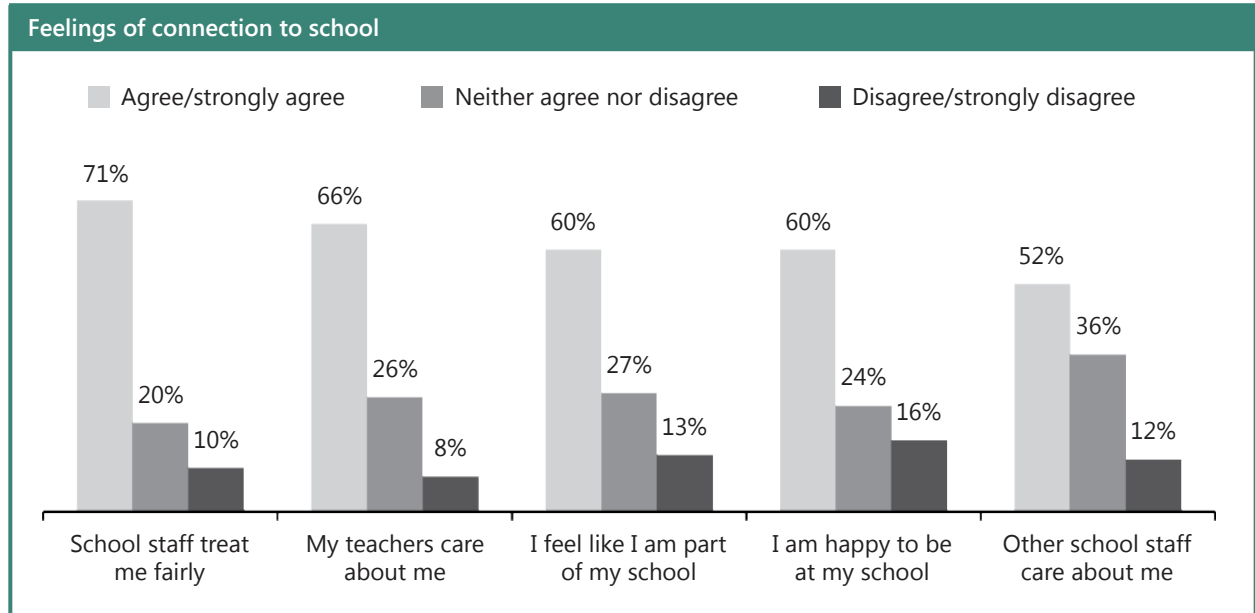
### FEELING CONNECTED

The majority of students felt like they were part of their school, were happy to be there, and had positive relationships with school staff. Compared to five years ago, students were more likely to report that their teachers cared about them (66% vs. 63% in 2013) and other school staff cared about them (52% vs. 48%); but were less likely to report that they felt like part of their school (60% vs. 62%), that they were happy to be at school (60% vs. 67%), and that staff treated them fairly (71% vs. 74%).

*"I like my school!"*

Grade 9 student, Island

Non-binary students were the least likely to feel connected to their school. For example, 33% felt like part of their school, compared to 59% of females and 62% of males.



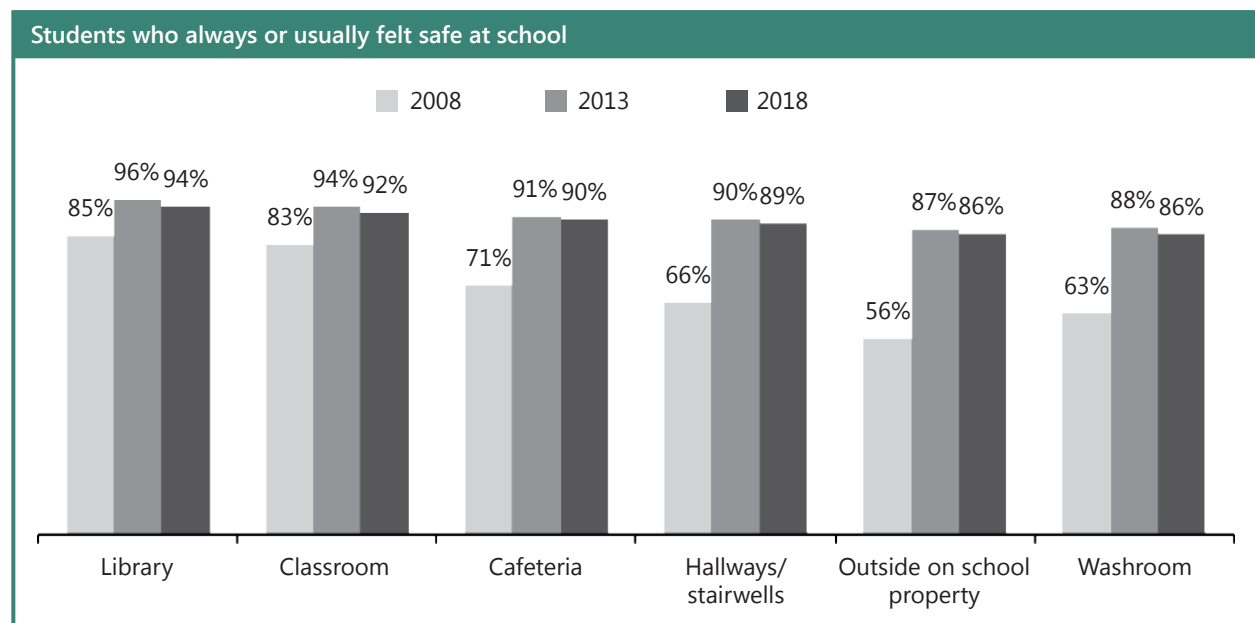
Note: Percentages do not always equal 100% due to rounding.



## SAFETY AT SCHOOL

Overall, 73% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they felt safe at school (76% of males, 71% of females, and 47% of non-binary students). This was a decrease from 78% in 2013 and slightly lower than the 2008 rate (74%).

As in previous survey years, students felt safest in the library and classroom. In total, 85% of students felt safe in the changing rooms (87% of males, 84% of females, and 56% of non-binary students). This represented a decrease from 87% in 2013 when the question was first asked.



Note: The difference between 2013 and 2018 for feeling safe 'outside on school property' was not statistically significant.

## SUPPORTIVE ADULTS AT SCHOOL

*"Generally, teachers and staff care about me."*  
**Grade 12 student, Fraser**

Youth in 2018 were more likely than their peers five years earlier to approach school staff for help. In the past year, 55% of students had asked a teacher for help (vs. 41% in 2013), 31% asked a school counsellor (vs. 27%), and 23% asked other school staff (vs. 16%).

Among students who asked these professionals for help, the majority found them helpful, with males the most likely and non-binary students the least likely to find them helpful. For example, among those who approached a school counsellor for help, 86% of males, 76% of females, and 71% of non-binary students found the support helpful.

Among all students, there was an increase in the percentage who approached an Aboriginal Education Worker for help (from 4% in 2013 to 6% in 2018). Among Indigenous students, 22% asked an Aboriginal Education Worker for help in the past year, and 86% found this experience helpful.

For the first time, the BC AHS asked students if school staff expected them to do well at school. Most (79%) felt this way, with females the most likely to report that school staff expected them to do well.

## SCHOOL ABSENCES

In the past month, students most commonly missed school because of illness or to attend an appointment, and 5% missed school for appointments on at least three occasions. Around a quarter of students had skipped class in the past month, and 8% skipped on three or more days.

Reason for missing classes in the past month	
Illness	39%
Appointments	36%
Skipping class	26%
Slept in	21%
Other school responsibilities	18%
Mental health (e.g., anxiety, depression)	15%
Family responsibilities	14%
No transportation	5%
Work	4%
Bullying	4%

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

*"I can't come to school all the time because I work so late with no time to study for my test the next day so I sleep and catch up on work."*

**Grade 11 student, North**

Four percent of students reported having a learning disability. These students were more likely than their peers to have missed class because of appointments (48% vs. 35%), other school responsibilities (22% vs. 17%), and because they were being bullied (11% vs. 3%).

There was a slight increase in the percentage of youth who missed school in the past month due to family responsibilities (from 13% in 2013 to 14%), and because they were working (3% vs. 4%).

Older students were more likely than younger ones to miss classes because they were working. For example, 9% of 18-year-olds missed class on at least one day because of work in the past month, compared to 4% of 16-year-olds and 2% of 14-year-olds.

## EDUCATION PLANS

Most students planned to finish high school. However, there was a decrease in the percentage who planned to finish Grade 12 (87% vs. 89% in 2013), and who planned to go on to post-secondary education (83% vs. 86%). There was a slight increase in the percentage who had not thought about their school plans or did not yet know if they would finish high school (from 11% in 2013 to 12% in 2018). One percent of students did not intend to finish high school, which was similar to the percentage in 2013.

Females were the most likely to anticipate continuing their formal education beyond high school (87% vs. 80% of males vs. 67% of non-binary students).

## COMMUNITY

*"I have 2 communities. One in China and one in Canada."*

Grade 9 student, Fraser

Around 4 in 10 students (42%) reported feeling quite a bit or very much connected to their community (an increase from 39% in 2013), whereas 36% felt somewhat connected and 22% felt not at all or only a little connected. Students aged 13 or younger were more likely than older students to feel connected to their community.

Consistent with findings from five years previous, the majority of students often or always felt safe in their neighbourhood in the daytime (91%) and at night (65%). Males were the most likely to feel this way.

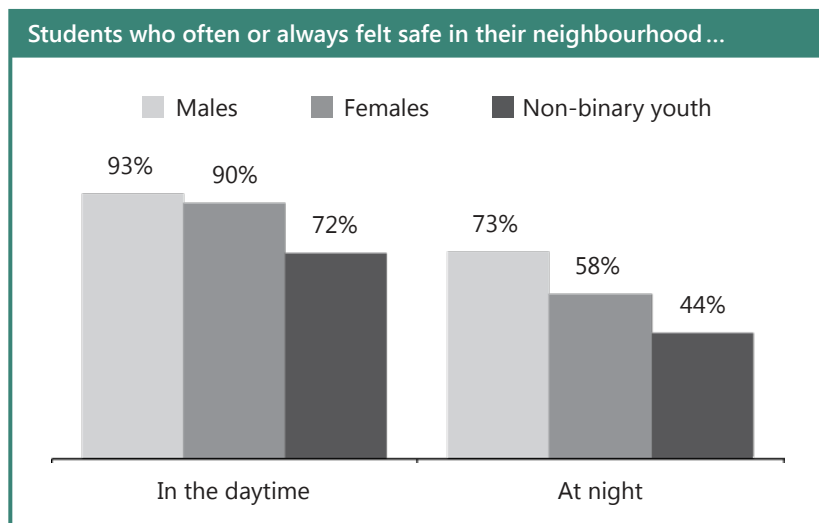
Most students (65% overall) felt there was an adult in their neighbourhood or community—outside their family or school—who really cared about them (66% of females vs. 64% of males vs. 52% of non-binary youth). This reflected an overall increase from 61% in 2013, and increases for both males and females.

## RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAND/NATURE

*"I get anxious a lot and really easily, but nature usually helps when I feel very stressed or anxious."*

Grade 12 student, Fraser

For the first time, the BC AHS asked about feeling connected to the land or nature. Forty-four percent of students reported often or always feeling this way (most commonly females), whereas 38% sometimes felt this way, and 18% hardly ever or never felt connected.



## SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

### FRIENDS

The majority of students (96%) reported having at least one close friend in their school or neighbourhood, and 81% had three or more close friends.

Having three or more in-person friends has been associated with a number of positive outcomes. Females were less likely than five years previously to have at least three close friends (79% in 2018 vs. 81% in 2013), whereas the percentage for males was consistent (84%).

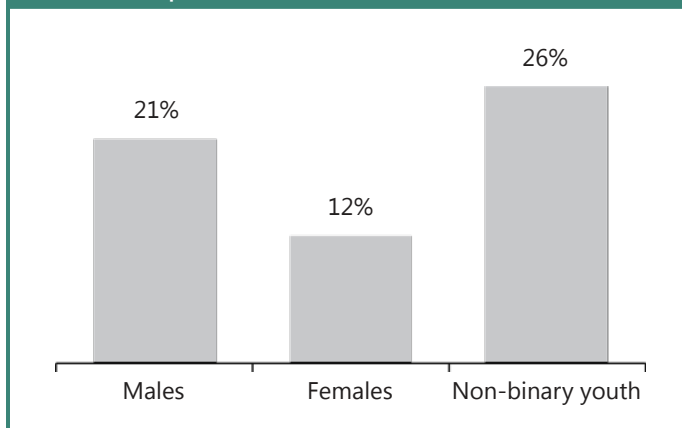
*"I have hurt myself in the past but I have received a lot of help from friends and family that have got me up and going again."*

Grade 7 student, Interior

For the first time, the BC AHS included a question about online friends. Around a third (34%) of students had at least one close friend online whom they had never met in person, and 17% had three or more such friends.

In the past year, 43% of youth had dated someone. Also, 7% indicated they had a romantic partner whom they had met online and had never met in person (18% of non-binary youth vs. 7% of males and females).

Students who had three or more close online friends they never met in person



*"One of my best friends is an online one I've never actually met, but we have spoken on mic. My boyfriend and I met online and haven't met (yet) and I have spoken, as well as shared pictures of ourselves with each other."*

Grade 9 student, North

## CONNECTING WITH FRIENDS

*"I have an amazing best friend who can make me feel okay using so little words."*

Grade 9 student, Interior

On the previous school day, 86% of students used their phone to communicate with friends they knew in person, and 25% used it to communicate with someone they only knew online. Females were the most likely to use their phone to communicate with friends they knew in person and the least likely to use it to communicate with someone they only knew online. For example, among those with a phone, 23% of females, 26% of males, and 45% of non-binary youth connected with someone they only knew online on their most recent school day.

When asked how much time they had to do the things they wanted with friends, most students (68%) felt they had the right amount of time, and 27% felt they did not have enough time. Older students were more likely than younger ones to report not having enough time with friends (e.g., 30% of 18-year-olds vs. 18% of those aged 12 or younger).

## ASKING FRIENDS FOR HELP

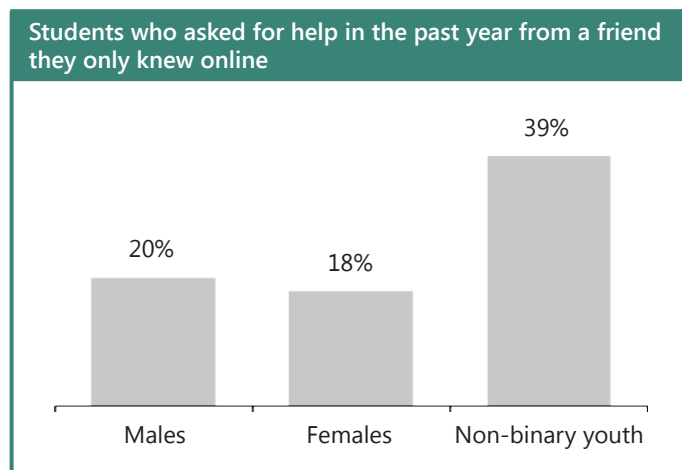
*"I have this one friend, he's the best guy ever. He's helped me though a lot."*

Grade 8 student, Island

Most students (76%) turned to a friend they knew in person for help in the past year, and the majority of these students found the support helpful (96% of males vs. 93% of females vs. 85% of non-binary youth). Also, 19% asked a friend they only knew online for help in the same time period, and 81% of these students found it helpful.

Females were the most likely to have sought help from a friend they knew in person (80%) and the least likely to have sought help from a friend they only knew online.

Most students (81%) reported that at least one of their friends had asked them for help in the past year. Among these students, 96% felt able to help their friend (97% of males vs. 96% of females vs. 87% of non-binary youth). The percentages who felt they could help their friend were generally similar for students of all ages.



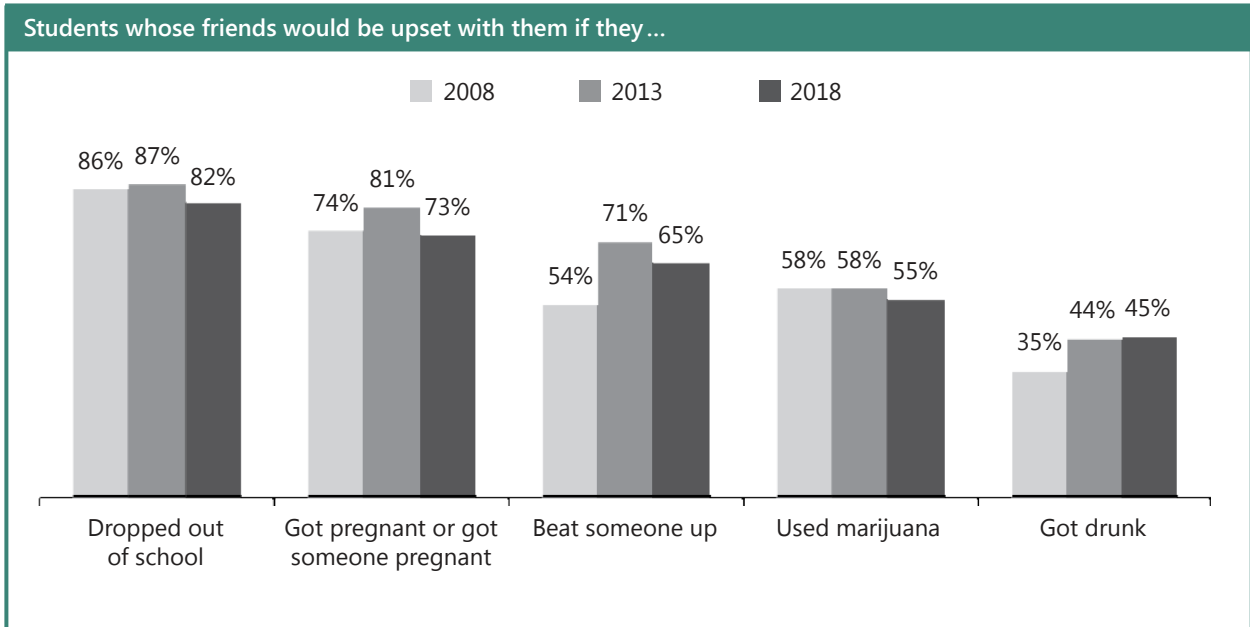
## FRIENDS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS POTENTIALLY RISKY BEHAVIOURS

Students were less likely than five years earlier to have friends who would be upset with them if they dropped out of school, were involved in a pregnancy, beat someone up, and/or used marijuana. However, males in 2018 were more likely than in 2013 to report that their friends would be upset with them if they got drunk (42% vs. 40%), whereas the percentage among females was unchanged (48%).

*"My friends would only be OK if I beat someone up if it was in self defence."*

**Grade 8 student, Vancouver Coastal**

Similar to the pattern over the past decade, females were more likely than males to report that their friends would be upset with them for engaging in any of these behaviours.



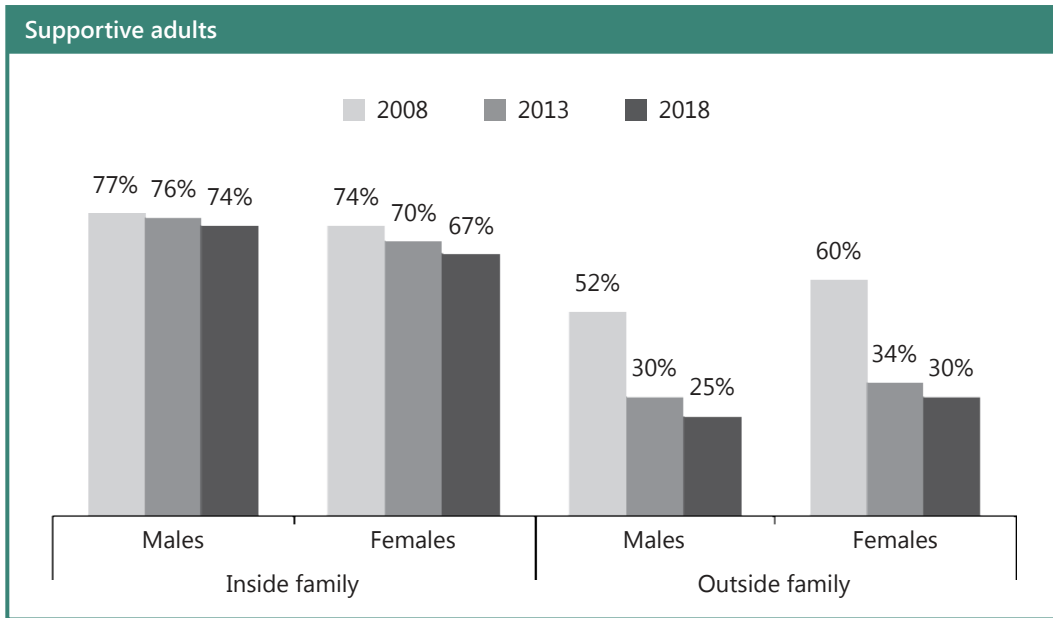
## ADULTS

*"I am incredibly skinny and it's really been bothering me lately but my grandmother is helping me through it."*

Grade 8 student, Interior

As was the case over the past decade, males were more likely than females to report having a supportive adult inside their family, whereas females were more likely to have a supportive adult outside their family. Non-binary students were the least likely to feel they had a supportive adult inside their family (44%).

The percentage of students who reported they had access to a supportive adult inside and outside their family decreased over the past decade. However, most students (71%) still felt they had an adult inside their family they could talk to if they had a serious problem, and 27% had an adult outside the family they could talk to.





For the first time, the BC AHS asked students if they had an adult in their life who helped them in various areas. A minority of students felt they did not need this help from adults. For example, they most commonly reported not needing adults' help with their homework, with older students more likely than younger ones to feel this way (23% of 18-year-olds vs. 12% of those aged 12 or younger).

Younger students were generally more likely than older ones to have an adult in their life who helped them in these areas, but there were some exceptions. For example, students aged 14–16 were more likely than older and younger students to receive adults' help with finding a job. Also, getting help to prepare for post-secondary education was highest among students aged 15–16.

## ASKING ADULTS FOR HELP

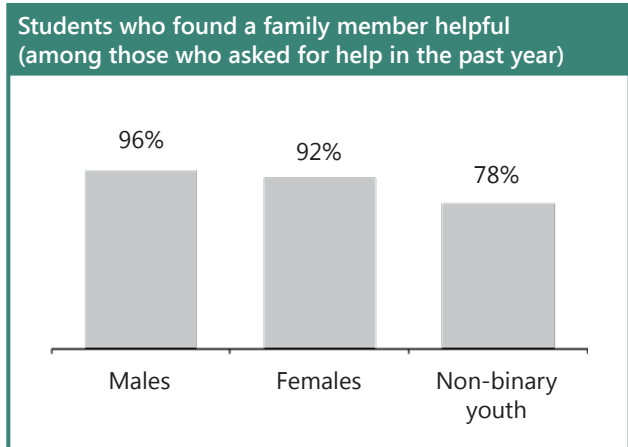
Students asked various adults for help in the past year, most commonly a family member. Most students who asked an adult for help found the experience helpful. Non-binary students were generally the least likely to find the assistance they received helpful, whereas males were generally the most likely to find it helpful. For example, among students who asked a doctor for help in the past year, 94% of males, 89% of females, and 79% of non-binary youth found the experience helpful. There were no gender differences for finding a mental health counsellor helpful.

Students who had an adult who helped them with ...			
	Don't need this	No	Yes
Making appointments	6%	6%	89%
Getting to appointments	6%	5%	89%
Preparing for post-secondary	9%	14%	77%
Getting a job	15%	16%	69%
Homework	18%	19%	63%

Note: The percentages for "Making appointments" do not equal 100% due to rounding.

Students were more likely to ask adults for help in 2018 compared to five years previously. This included asking both professionals and non-professionals for help. For example, 73% of males (vs. 66% in 2013) and 74% of females (vs. 72% in 2013) went to a family member for help. Rates of accessing a mental health counsellor also increased among both females (7% in 2013 to 13% in 2018) and males (5% to 8%).

Non-binary youth were less likely than males and females to have asked a family member and a sports coach for help, and were more likely to have sought help from a youth worker (20% of non-binary youth), social worker (18%), mental health counsellor (28%), and spiritual leader (13%).



**Adults whom students approached for help and found helpful in the past year**

	Asked for help	Found helpful (among those who asked for help)
Family member	74%	94%
Teacher	55%	93%
Doctor	34%	91%
School counsellor	31%	80%
Sports coach	27%	94%
School staff (other than teacher, counsellor, or Aboriginal Education Worker)	23%	85%
Friend's parent	21%	89%
Nurse	16%	91%
Mental health counsellor	11%	77%
Youth worker	9%	81%
Social worker	6%	68%
Spiritual leader	6%	78%
Aboriginal Education Worker <sup>‡</sup>	6%	69%
Indigenous Elder <sup>‡</sup>	4%	66%

<sup>‡</sup> Among Indigenous youth, 22% approached an Aboriginal Education Worker and 86% found the experience helpful. Also, 15% approached an Elder for help and 89% found this experience helpful.

## ACCESS TO SERVICES

*"I would like to learn about the availability of mental health services in my community, especially ones that can be accessed like a walk in clinic."*

Grade 11 student, Island

When asked where they got health care in the past year, youth had most commonly gone to a family doctor. Twenty-two percent of students indicated they had not needed health care, and 4% did not get the care they needed.

There were no regional differences in missing out on health care or in the most commonly accessed sources of health care, with youth in every region most likely to see a family doctor when they needed care. However, compared to other regions, youth in Vancouver Coastal and Fraser were more likely to get health care from a family doctor (63%) and less likely to have gone to a nurse (8%). Those in Fraser and Vancouver Island were more likely to go to a walk-in clinic (38–39% vs. 31–32% in other regions).

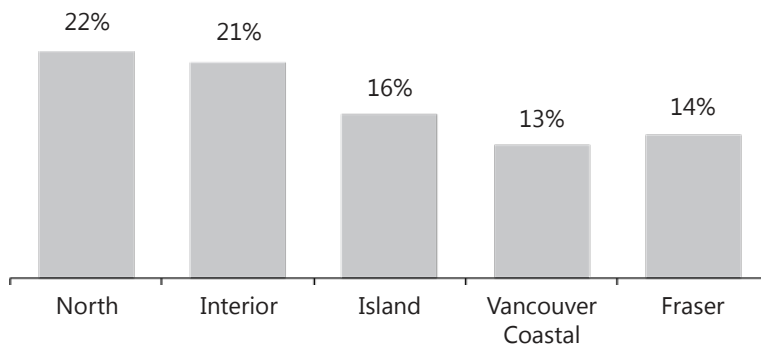
### Where youth got health care in past 12 months

Family doctor	61%
Walk-in clinic	35%
Emergency room (ER)	16%
Counsellor/psychologist	11%
Nurse	9%
Youth clinic	4%
School wellness centre	2%
Traditional healer	1%

Note: Youth could choose more than one response.

In addition, students on Vancouver Island were more likely than those in other regions to go to a school wellness centre (4% vs. 1–2%), but less likely to see a family doctor (56% vs. 60–63%). Students in Vancouver Coastal were more likely than those in other areas to get care at a youth clinic, while those in the North and Interior were least likely (5% vs. 2%). There were also regional differences in visiting the emergency room (ER) to get health care.

### Youth who went to emergency room (ER) for health care in the past year

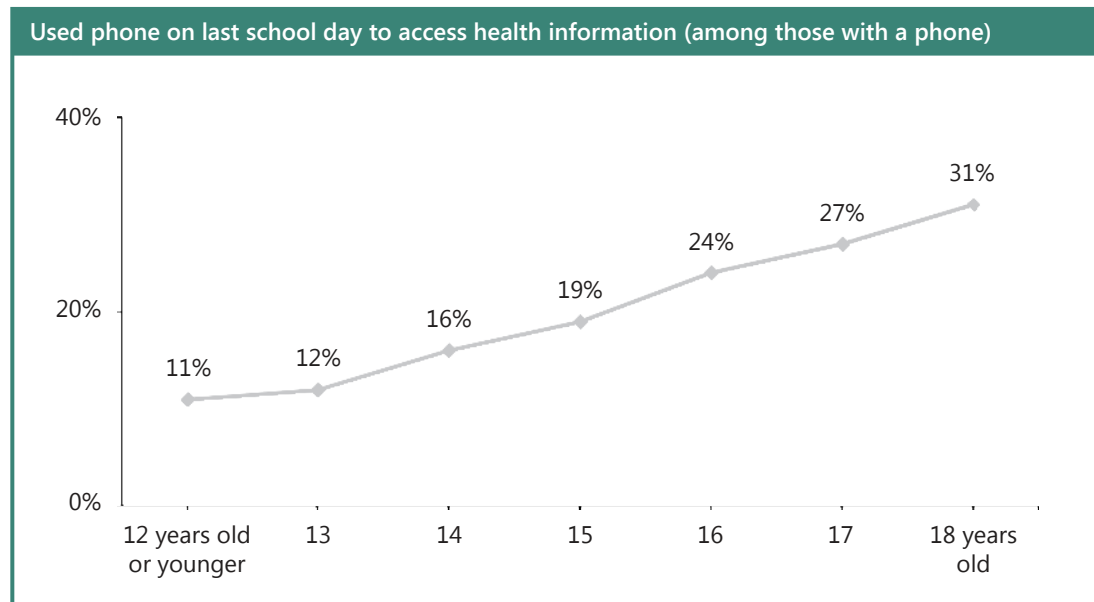


Note: The differences between North and Interior and between Vancouver Coastal and Fraser were not statistically significant.

Youth were also asked specifically about accessing medical care when they were physically sick or hurt in the past year. Nearly 6 in 10 youth (59%) felt they did not need medical help in the past year, and a third got the help they needed. Eight percent did not get needed medical care when they were physically sick or injured, which was unchanged from 2013, after decreasing from 13% in 2008.

Youth also reached out for help on their phone and online. Five percent had accessed a telephone helpline in the past year, and 58% of these students found it helpful. Six percent had accessed an online community or online support group, and 71% found it helpful.

Also, 20% of youth with a phone used it on the previous school day to access health information, with older students more likely than younger ones to do so.



Note: The difference between 12 years old or younger and 13 was not statistically significant.

## YOUNG PEOPLE'S STRENGTHS & RESILIENCY

### QUALITY OF LIFE & WELL-BEING

The 2018 BC AHS asked students to rate their quality of life, including how much they agreed that their life was going well, they had a good life, they had what they wanted in life, or they wished they had a different life. Males and younger students were the most likely to experience positive well-being. For example, students aged 13 or younger were more likely than those 14 or older to feel their life was going well.

*"I feel extraordinarily blessed to live as well as I have. Please use this information to help kids who haven't had this opportunity."*

**Grade 12 student, Vancouver Coastal**

Quality of life and well-being (students who agreed or strongly agreed)				
	Overall	Males	Females	Non-binary
I have a good life	79%	84%	76%	53%
My life is going well	73%	79%	68%	43%
I have what I want in life	59%	65%	55%	34%
My life is going just right	58%	65%	51%	30%
I wish I had a different life	18%	14%	20%	40%

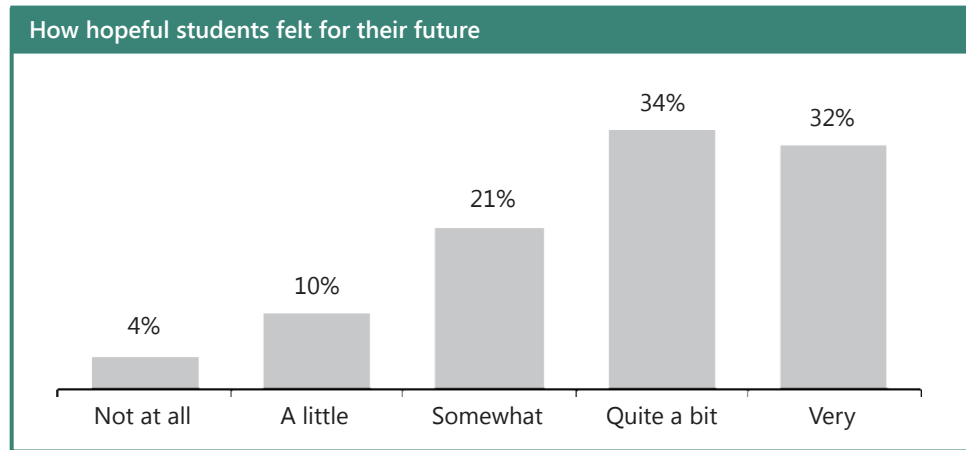


## HOPEFULNESS

Most students felt quite a bit or very hopeful for their future, with males the most likely to feel this way. Youth who felt hopeful were more likely than their peers to report positive mental health, including feeling happy, as well as lower rates of extreme stress and despair.

*"I've been in a positive zone as of late and my attitude has changed drastically due to my epiphany about positivity and grasping my life."*

**Grade 11 student, Vancouver Coastal**



Note: Percentages do not equal 100% due to rounding.



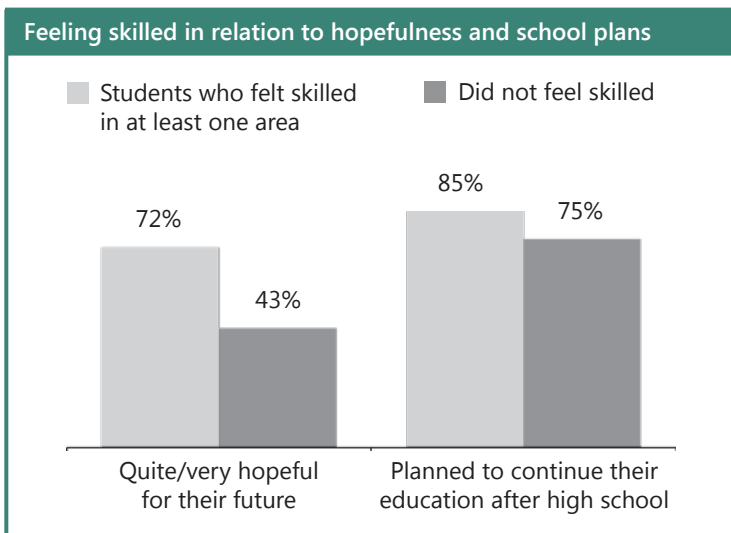
## FEELING SKILLED & CONFIDENT

Most students (79%) were able to name something they were really good at. Examples they commonly gave included being good at sports, school, the arts, and relationships.

Compared to five years earlier, there was no change in the percentage of males reporting they were really good at something (82%), but there was an increase for females (72% in 2013 vs. 76% in 2018). Seventy percent of non-binary youth reported they were really good at something.

Students were also asked if they usually felt good about themselves. Most (59%) agreed, whereas 20% disagreed, and 21% neither agreed nor disagreed. As with feeling they had a skill, males were the most likely to feel good about themselves.

Students who felt they were good at something and felt good about themselves were more likely to feel hopeful for their future and to be planning to pursue post-secondary education. For example, 86% of those who generally felt good about themselves expected to continue their education after high school, compared to 77% who did not feel good about themselves.



## PERSEVERANCE

*"[I would like to learn more about] resilience, determination, being able to keep working towards my goals even after a loss."*

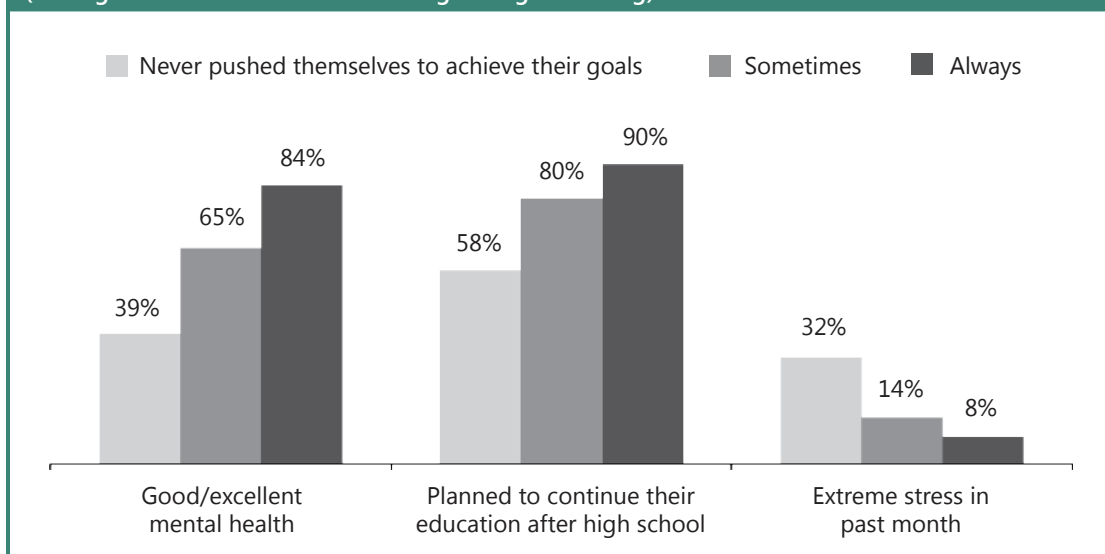
**Grade 9 student, Island**

For the first time, the BC AHS included a question about how often students pushed themselves to achieve their goals when things went wrong. Four percent of students indicated that things never went wrong for them, with younger students more likely than older ones to feel this way. Among those who had experienced setbacks, 44% indicated that they always pushed themselves to achieve their goals in these situations (49% of males vs. 40% of females vs. 23% of non-binary youth), whereas 5% reported never pushing themselves, and the remaining 51% reported sometimes pushing themselves.

The more often students persevered when faced with obstacles, the more likely they were to experience positive mental health and to have plans to pursue post-secondary education, and the less likely they were to experience extreme stress.

This was also the case for more vulnerable groups of youth. For example, among students with Anxiety Disorder or panic attacks who had experienced setbacks, those who always pushed themselves to achieve their goals when things went wrong were less likely to experience extreme stress in the past month (30% vs. 36% of those who sometimes persevered vs. 52% of those who never persevered).

How often students pushed themselves to achieve their goals when things had gone wrong (among those who indicated that things had gone wrong)





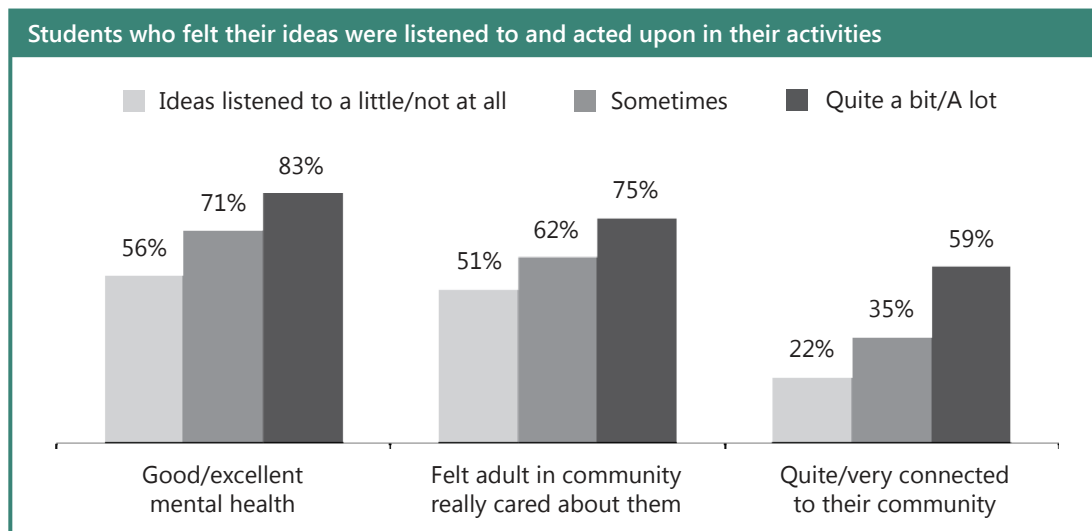
## MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

The BC AHS asked students about how meaningful they felt the activities they were involved in were to them, and how much their ideas were listened to and valued within these activities.

Around two thirds of students (66%) felt their activities were meaningful to them, which was a decrease from 70% in 2013. Forty-four percent reported that their ideas were listened to, which was similar to the percentage five years previous.

Males and females were equally likely to feel their activities were meaningful, whereas a lower percentage of non-binary youth felt this way. Males were more likely than other youth to feel their ideas were listened to and acted upon.

Students who experienced meaningful engagement in their activities were more likely to report positive mental health, to feel an adult in their community cared about them, and to feel connected to their community.



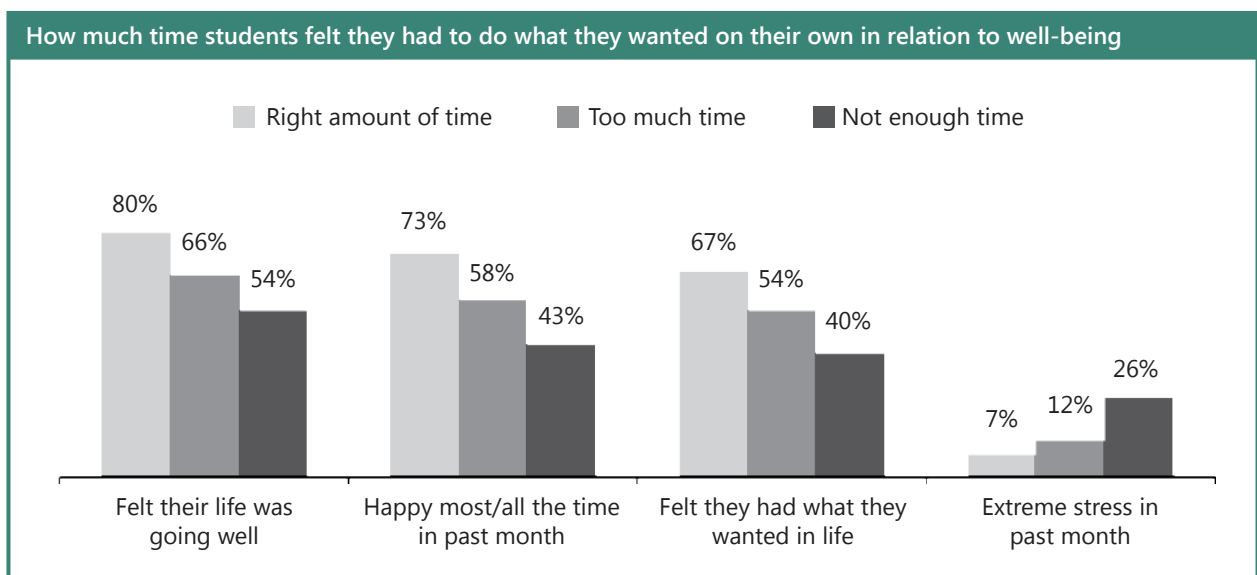
## UNSTRUCTURED TIME

Sixty-six percent of students felt they had the right amount of time to do what they wanted on their own, whereas 22% did not have enough time, and the remainder felt they had too much time. Older students were more likely than younger ones to feel they had insufficient time to do what they wanted on their own, whereas younger ones were more likely to feel they had the right amount of time. For example, 72% of 13-year-olds felt like they had enough time to do what they wanted on their own, compared to 66% of 15-year-olds and 59% of 18-year-olds.

Students who felt they had the right amount of time to do what they wanted on their own were more likely to report positive mental health and well-being. For example, they were more likely to feel happy in the past month and to feel their life was going well, and were less likely to experience extreme stress.

These associations were found among youth of all ages. For example, among 18-year-olds, 10% of those who felt they had the right amount of time to spend on their own reported experiencing extreme stress, compared to 30% who felt they had insufficient time on their own.

Students were also asked how much time they had to do the things they wanted in nature. Over half (56%) felt they had the right amount of time, whereas 41% wanted more time in nature. Those who felt they had the right amount of time to spend in nature were more likely to feel connected to the land/nature (48% vs. 39% who felt they did not have enough time to spend in nature).



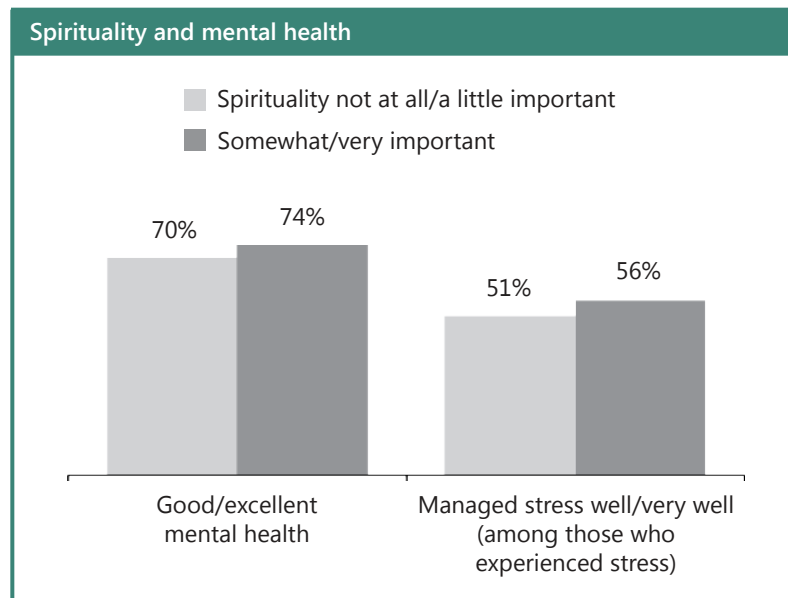
## SPIRITUALITY

*"I'm in a horrible social situation in my school but spiritually, I'm surprisingly content."*

**Grade 9 student, Interior**

Overall, 16% of students reported that spirituality was very important in their life, whereas 22% felt it was somewhat important, 16% felt it was only a little important, and 39% felt it was not important. The remaining 12% indicated not knowing how important spirituality was in their life.






Feeling that spirituality was important was linked to positive well-being and mental health. For example, students who felt that spirituality was very important in their life were more likely to feel hopeful for their future (74%), compared to those who felt it was somewhat important (66%) and those who felt it was only a little or not at all important (63% felt hopeful).



# BALANCE & CONNECTION: PROTECTIVE FACTORS







The findings of the 2018 BC AHS highlight the importance of balance and connection in the lives of BC youth. In this section we provide examples of some protective factors that can help to support young people.

## BALANCE

Protective factor	Examples
SLEEP	 Students who slept for eight or more hours were more likely than those who slept fewer hours to report positive overall health and mental health. For example, 89% of those who slept for eight or more hours reported good or excellent overall health, compared to 73% who slept for seven hours or less.
EXERCISE	 The more days on which youth exercised in the past week, the more likely they were to report positive health and well-being. For example, 46% of students who did not exercise at all reported feeling good about themselves, compared to 61% who exercised on at least two days. Those who exercised on 6–7 days in the past week were the most likely to feel good about themselves (70%).
TIME OFFLINE	 Students who went offline (i.e., turned off their phone, put it on silent mode, or put it in another room when they went to bed) were more likely to report good or excellent overall health (84% vs. 78% who did not go offline), and good or excellent mental health (76% vs. 71%).
NUTRITION	 Youth who ate a healthy diet and who ate regular meals reported better overall health. For example, 89% of those who always ate breakfast on school days reported good or excellent overall health, compared to 78% who sometimes ate breakfast and 63% who never ate breakfast.
SUFFICIENT TIME TO DO THINGS THEY ENJOY	 Students who felt they had enough time to spend in nature were more likely to feel connected to nature or the land than those who did not have enough time in nature (48% vs. 39%).

Students who felt they had enough time to spend on their own doing things they wanted were more likely than those who felt they had insufficient time on their own to report good or excellent mental health (80% vs. 53%), and were less likely to experience extreme stress (7% vs. 26%).

## CONNECTION

Protective factor	Examples
FAMILY CONNECTEDNESS	 Family connectedness has consistently been shown to be one of the strongest protective factors for youth growing up in BC. For example, students who felt that their family paid attention to them quite a bit/very much were more likely to feel good about themselves (69%) than those who felt their family paid some attention to them (33%) or paid very little or no attention to them (18%). Also, students who often had fun with their family were less likely to experience extreme stress (8%) compared to those who rarely had fun with their family (29%).
SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS	 Alongside family connectedness, school connectedness is one of the most robust protective factors for youth in school. For example, students who felt that teachers cared about them were more likely than those who did not feel that their teacher cared to feel safe at school (85% vs. 30%) and to experience good/excellent mental health (79% vs. 53%). Also, students who had approached a teacher for help and found the experience helpful were more likely than those who felt it was unhelpful to feel like a part of their school (70% vs. 38%).
COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS	 Youth who had an adult in their community who they felt really cared about them were more likely to feel connected to their community (53% vs. 22% who did not have such an adult); to feel safe in their neighbourhood in the daytime (94% vs. 87%) and at night (69% vs. 56%); and to feel hopeful for the future (71% vs. 56%).
SUPPORTIVE ADULT	 Students who had an adult in their family they could talk to if they had a serious problem were more likely than those who did not have such an adult to feel comfortable refusing to do something they did not want to do, such as having sex with a new partner (94% vs. 88%) or sexting (94% vs. 89%).
	<p>Youth who had an adult who helped them with tasks—such as making and keeping appointments, homework, and finding a job— reported better outcomes. For example, 88% who had an adult to help them apply to post-secondary planned to go on to college after they finished high school, compared to 68% who did not have such an adult in their life.</p>
SUPPORTIVE FRIENDS	 Youth who had at least one in-person friend who helped them when they had a problem reported better mental health. For example, they were more likely to feel their life was going well (76% vs. 41%) and to be happy (67% vs. 28%), and were less likely to experience extreme despair in the past month (7% vs. 24%).
CULTURAL CONNECTEDNESS	 Students who took part in cultural or traditional activities infrequently in the past year were more likely than those who had not taken part to report feeling connected to their community (45% vs. 41%). Those who took part in these activities at least weekly were the most likely to feel connected to their community (52%).

# HEALTH TOPICS BC YOUTH WOULD LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT

The final question on the 2018 BC AHS was an open-ended question which asked youth if there were any topics which affected their health that they wanted to learn more about.

In total, 4% provided a comment and 3% identified at least one health-related topic they would like to see included in their school’s curriculum, or to receive training on from an outside facilitator.

Most common topics youth wanted to learn more about (among those who specified a topic)	
Mental health	50%
Sexual health	15%
Physical health	15%
Learning styles, techniques, and curriculum	10%
Healthy relationships	9%
Substance use	5%
Gender identity/sexual orientation	5%
Recognizing and reporting abuse	4%
Accessing services	4%
Life skills	3%
Technology use	2%
Discrimination	2%

Half of all students who identified a topic that they would like to learn more about wanted more information about mental health, including information about specific conditions, how to manage symptoms of depression, stress and anxiety, where and how to access help, and how to help a friend or relative who had mental health challenges.

*“I would like to learn more about coping with anxiety and depression.”*  
**Grade 10 student, Island**

*“Many of my peers and friends suffer with a mental illness (depression, anxiety, PTSD, addiction) and there aren’t enough resources and information within schools to properly help them. I think we need to talk about mental health way more in schools, have presentations, helplines, more counsellors, and create a more open and inviting environment for people with mental health issues to be comfortable to open up with their problems.”*  
**Grade 11 student, Vancouver Coastal**

*“I want to learn what constitutes good mental health, and at what point should someone seek help.”*  
**Grade 11 student, Island**



Sexual and physical health were the next most common topics youth wanted to learn more about. Sexual health information they wanted to learn included general sex education, sex education aimed at LGBTQ youth, and how to recognize symptoms of a sexually transmitted disease. Physical health topics included sleep hygiene, nutrition, and information about how to adopt a healthy lifestyle and become more physically active.

*"I would like someone to come to our class and teach us about sex."*

Grade 8 student, Fraser

*"How to know if you have STD (symptoms, etc.) and where to go/call."*

Grade 9 student, Interior

*"How teenagers should be eating and how much food our body requires to stay healthy."*

Grade 11 student, Island

*"How the amount of sleep I get affects my health? What is a good amount of sleep for me?"*

Grade 8 student, Fraser

Students also had suggestions for additions to the current curriculum, including adding more language and psychology courses. They also wanted to learn more about how to study effectively.

Other topics students wanted to learn more about included substance use; sexual orientation and gender identity; healthy relationships; recognizing and reporting abuse; accessing services; life skills; technology use; and discrimination.

*"Kids need to be educated on relationships."*

Grade 12 student, Island

*"How to help friends in need."*

Grade 9 student, North

*"We should learn the effects of smoking, drinking and what it does at a young and old age."*

Grade 11 student, Island

*"The topic that I would like to learn a lot about would be technology use because I want to learn more about dangerous people on the internet and how to avoid them."*

Grade 12 student, Interior

*"I would like the curriculum to implement more ways to learn about discrimination in communities (ie: racism, homophobia, sexism)."*

Grade 9 student, Interior

# USING THE DATA

This report provides an overview of the health of youth aged 12–19 in mainstream public schools in the province. Reports at the regional (Health Service Delivery Area) level will be published in 2019. Additional resources are posted at [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca) as they become available.



McCreary's Youth Advisory and Action Council (YAC) have created a youth friendly poster of the key findings of this report. Additional youth friendly posters will be available on a range of topics, including substance use and mental health.



The YAC distributed over \$87,000 in Youth Action Grants (YAGs) to youth (aged 12–19) in school districts that participated in the 2013 BC AHS. The granting program for the 2018 BC AHS is now accepting applications from youth wanting to deliver a project to improve youth health in their school or community. The YAC are also available to offer grant-writing workshops to young people who may be thinking of applying for a YAG.



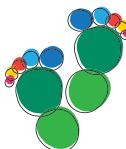
A range of special topic reports will be published using data from the 2018 BC AHS. The first will be an in-depth look at the health of Métis youth who completed the survey.



Canada has committed to implementing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This resource uses the 2018 BC AHS results to consider how BC is doing in achieving these goals for youth.



McCreary's Youth Research Academy (YRA) is a group of youth aged 16 to 24 with experience of the government care system. Members of the YRA are trained to conduct research projects of interest to youth in and from government care and the agencies that serve them. They have created a report looking at the findings of the 2018 BC AHS for youth in and from care.



McCreary is committed to returning the results of the 2018 BC AHS to young people in school districts across BC. An interactive 'Next Steps' workshop will be available shortly to engage young people in a dialogue about the results and youth health in their community.



In addition to creating community resources, research projects involving secondary analysis of BC AHS data will be conducted in collaboration with academic institutions and other agencies, and will be submitted for peer review.



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