

## ***Violence exposure is a reality for many young people in BC***

McCreary Centre Society today released *Violence exposure: The victimization experiences of male, female, and non-binary youth in BC*. The report considers the experiences of over 38,000 young people aged 12 to 19. Findings highlight gender differences in numerous types of sexual, physical, and emotional victimization, with non-binary and female youth more likely than males to experience most types of violence, and to have been victimized in multiple ways.

Violence exposure was associated with poorer health and well-being including increased risk of experiencing further violence, serious injury, substance use, poorer mental and sexual health, and challenges at school. These risks to health generally increased as the number of types of victimization increased. For example, the more types of violence youth experienced, the less likely they were to rate their overall health and mental health as good or excellent, and the more likely they were to report having anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); and to have self-harmed and attempted suicide in the past year.

McCreary's Executive Director Annie Smith noted: *"The report raises a number of concerns about the prevalence of violence in our culture, as well as the link between violence exposure and other challenges to growing up healthy. It also shows how violence disproportionately affects girls and non-binary youth, and highlights the extent of the work we have ahead to eliminate violence and create gender equality."*

Smith went on to state: *"The statistics make uncomfortable reading, but do also clearly show that youth who had been victimized reported better health and well-being when they had a supportive family and school, and had a trusted adult they knew they could turn to like a friend's parents, coach, or teacher. This tells us that as well as the urgent need to address the systemic issues which lead to some young people being victimized, we also have a personal responsibility to listen to young people, to speak out against violence, and to ensure we are aware of the services and supports that can help young people who are victimized."*

A copy of the report is available at [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca).

Webinar presentations of the results are scheduled for:

- **Thursday, December 9th, 11:00-11:30 am**
- **Monday, December 13th, 12:00-12:30 pm**
- **Thursday, December 16th, 9:00-9:30 am**

To join one of the webinars from your computer, tablet, or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/365601885>

Access Code: 365-601-885

**For interviews contact Annie Smith at 604-728-9494 or email [annie@mcs.bc.ca](mailto:annie@mcs.bc.ca)**

## **BACKGROUNDER**

This report considers exposure to various types of victimization among male, female, and non-binary young people in British Columbia. The report uses data provided by over 38,000 youth aged 12–19 who completed the 2018 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS). The 2018 BC AHS was conducted in 58 of BC's 60 school districts and is the sixth time students have been asked to complete the comprehensive health survey since 1992. The results are considered representative of over 95% of mainstream school students in Grades 7–12 in the province.

Some of the violence, discrimination, and harassment described in this report may not have been identified by the victim or perpetrator as gender-based violence. However, a clear picture of who is more likely to have these experiences was identified in the data.

### **Some key findings from the report:**

This report highlighted gender differences in numerous types of sexual, physical, and emotional victimization, with non-binary and female youth more than likely than males to experience most types of violence. For example, almost 1 in 4 non-binary youth and around 1 in 6 females had been sexually abused, compared to 1 in 20 males.

Females and non-binary youth were also more likely to have been victimized in multiple ways. For example, non-binary youth were more than three times as likely and females were more than twice as likely as males to have experienced at least 10 different types of victimization.

Despite the prevalence of violence exposure in BC, around a quarter (24%) of youth did not report experiencing any of the forms of victimization they were asked about.

There were changing trends in violence exposure. For example, sexual abuse, physical sexual harassment, intimate partner violence, and gender discrimination rates rose for males and females between 2013 and 2018; and for females there was also an increase in physical assaults, physical attacks, and verbal sexual harassment during this time (trend data for non-binary youth was not available).

Some youth appeared to be at greater risk of being victimized, including sexual minority youth and those living in poverty or with a health condition or disability.

Experiencing earlier sexual violence was associated with subsequent experiences of violence, as those who had experienced prior sexual abuse were more likely to have been victimized in the past 12 months, including males and females being more than twice as likely to have experienced recent intimate partner violence.

Males who experienced earlier sexual abuse were more likely to become perpetrators of recent violence, such as bullying, than those who had not been previously victimized in this way. Also, for males, females, and non-binary youth, the more types of violence they had been exposed to, the more likely they were to carry a weapon at school.