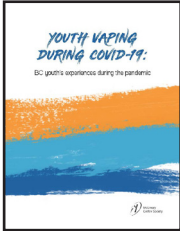


## MEDIA RELEASE | 15<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2021

# Youth-led study focuses on vaping during the pandemic



Today McCreary Centre Society released *Youth vaping during COVID-19: BC youth's experiences during the pandemic*. The report is based on data collected by youth researchers aged 13–18 from diverse communities across BC. The youth collected over 3,500 surveys from their peers in June, September and December 2020.

McCreary's Executive Director, Annie Smith, explains "We wanted to understand how the pandemic is affecting youth vaping in the province, so we hired and trained an incredible team of young people to help us develop surveys, as well as collect and interpret the data."

Smith went on to say "The results give us some really important information about how the pandemic is affecting young people not just in terms of their vaping but also their mental health and relationships. The report also shows us where we should focus our attention in terms of health promotion and messaging—for example, the fact that 56% of youth who vaped shared a vaping device during the pandemic is concerning to me."

The results also showed that around 1 in 5 youth (19%) reported that returning to school in September affected their vaping, most commonly because they were experiencing increased stress, or because they were again socializing with peers who vaped. Survey respondents offered a number of suggestions for how schools could teach young people about the effects of vaping and support those who want to stop or reduce their vaping.

A copy of the report *Youth vaping during COVID-19: BC youth's experiences during the pandemic* is available at [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca).

## WEBINAR PRESENTATIONS

Webinar presentations of the results are scheduled for:

- March 16<sup>th</sup> noon and 3pm
- March 17<sup>th</sup> 9am
- March 18<sup>th</sup> 9am and noon
- March 31<sup>st</sup> at 9am
- April 1<sup>st</sup> at 3pm

Webinar details:

- Join from your computer, tablet or smartphone:  
<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/283669373>
- Join via phone: 1-888-455-1389 (Toll free). Access code: 283-669-373



McCreary Centre Society is a non-government, non-profit organization committed to improving the health of BC youth through research, evaluation and community-based projects.

Founded in 1977, our vision is that all youth are supported to be healthy and connected.

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## **BACKGROUND**

To ensure we have a current understanding of vaping from a youth's perspective, the BC Ministry of Health commissioned McCreary Centre Society to conduct a study of youth vaping in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Twenty-eight youth researchers were recruited and trained from communities across BC to co-develop and deliver three online surveys to their peers. The youth researchers developed survey items; reviewed and provided context to results; and created dissemination materials. The researchers shared each wave of the survey with their peers through various social media channels, as well as through their school.

The study included young people aged 12 to 19 from across BC and was comprised of three different online surveys. The first survey was available three months after physical distancing regulations came into effect in BC (June 2020; 1,120 surveys were completed), and subsequent surveys took place in September 2020 (686 surveys) and December 2020 (1,774 surveys). Each survey was accessible online for one month, and youth were welcome to participate at any time-point, including at all three time-points.

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

In June, September and December 2020 around a quarter to a third of youth aged 12–19 had vaped.

Youth were more likely to have stopped vaping or to have vaped less since the pandemic started than they were to have vaped more or to have started vaping. However, by December, there was an increase in the percentage of youth who started vaping or vaped more recently, and a decrease in the percentage who reported vaping less.

Among youth who had never vaped, more than 8 in 10 reported not vaping because they thought it would be bad for their health and/or they were not interested in vaping.

Among youth who vaped daily, 75% had their first vape within 30 minutes of waking up, including 34% who had their first vape within five minutes of waking up.

The more time that elapsed since the pandemic started, the more likely youth were to report their stress levels were currently higher compared to pre-pandemic.

Among youth who had ever vaped, those who vaped during the pandemic were more likely than those who had vaped pre-pandemic to report last vaping because they felt addicted, anxious or sad, whereas those who had vaped pre-pandemic were more likely to have last vaped because they wanted to try it and because their friends were doing it.

Youth who had never vaped were more likely than those who had vaped to trust vaping information that came from health experts, their school, and family. In contrast, youth who had vaped during the pandemic were the least likely to trust information that came from these sources and were the most likely to trust information that came from vaping companies.

Just under two thirds of youth who vaped (64%) felt it made their physical health worse. However, 31% reported it improved their social life and 24% felt it improved their mental health.

Most youth who vaped (93%) had shared a vaping device, including 56% who shared one during the pandemic.