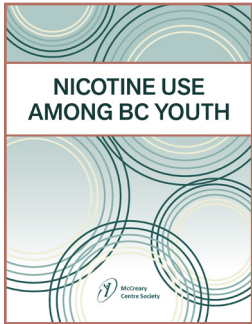


New report shows the changing picture of nicotine use among BC youth



McCreary Centre Society (McCreary) today released their latest report from the BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS). The report focuses on vaping and smoking among the province's 12- to 18-year-olds, but also includes information about the use of other tobacco products such as chewing tobacco.

Despite the introduction of regulations which aimed to reduce the appeal of vaping to young people, the report found that over a quarter of BC's Grade 7 to 12 students had vaped, and around 1 in 5 of these youth had reached a point in the past year where they needed help for their vaping. Findings also showed that most youth

who had vaped went on to vape regularly, and the majority of those who vaped in the past month had been vaping for at least 2 years.

In contrast, the percentage of youth who had smoked tobacco was lower than at any time since 1998. Also, those who had tried smoking were less likely to have gone on to smoke recently and regularly than in previous years, and the percentage who smoked daily was down.

Report co-author and Executive Director of McCreary, Dr. Annie Smith, commented: *"Even though the tobacco smoking trend is one we definitely want to see, when we looked into this in more detail it wasn't all good news. For example, among those who had smoked there was a rise in youth smoking before their 13th birthday.*

We also saw that youth who had vaped and smoked were more likely to have vaped before they smoked than they were to have smoked first. So, I think this tells us that while there has justifiably been a lot of attention paid to youth vaping in and of itself, we should not forget that vaping might also potentially lead to other forms of nicotine use."

Smith concluded: *"We know that lots of youth are vaping and smoking because they want to experiment or they want to fit in. However, our data also shows that youth may be doing so as a way to deal with trauma in their life, as we see much higher rates of nicotine use among youth who have experienced challenges such as abuse, bereavement, and food insecurity. This tells us that we need to support young people and equip them with other, healthier ways to manage the stress and trauma in their life so that they don't turn to substances to help them cope."*

The report did highlight a number of protective factors that were associated with a reduced likelihood that youth would vape or smoke, even when they experienced major challenges in their life. These included having access to health services when they needed them, as well as having supportive adults in their family, school, and community; having positive plans for their future; and having access to meaningful extracurricular activities.



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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To read the full report: mcs.bc.ca/pdf/nicotine_use_among_bc_youth.pdf.

Webinar presentations of the findings are scheduled for:

- ▶ Wednesday, May 13th from 10am–11am PDT (<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86086102814>)
- ▶ Wednesday, May 13th from Noon–1pm PDT (<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82636212786>)
- ▶ Thursday, May 14th from 1pm–2pm PDT (<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85729400413>)

BACKGROUND

The 2023 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) was completed by 38,277 youth aged 12–18 in 59 of BC's 60 school districts. The survey included questions about vaping, and about smoking tobacco and cannabis, as well as about the use of products such as a hookah and chewing tobacco.

Some key findings from the report:

- ▶ The majority of BC youth aged 12–18 had not used nicotine. In 2023, 28% had ever smoked and/or vaped. This included 26% who had vaped and 15% who had smoked tobacco.
- ▶ Youth were less likely to have smoked in 2023 than at any time since 1998. Those who had tried it were less likely to have smoked in the past month and to have smoked daily compared to previous survey years. For example, the percentage of youth who smoked daily decreased from 6% in 2018 to 3%.
- ▶ There was a rise from 1 in 5 youth (20%) first smoking before their 13th birthday in 2018 to 1 in 4 (25%) doing so in 2023. There was also an increase in youth who smoked for a longer period of time. For example, the percentage who smoked in the past month who had been smoking for at least 4 years rose from 19% in 2018 to 22%.
- ▶ The majority of those who had ever tried smoking had not smoked in the past month (60%). However, the opposite was true for vaping, with the majority of those who had ever vaped also vaping in the past month (57%).
- ▶ Among those who vaped in the past month, the majority had been vaping for at least 2 years (64%), including 28% who had been doing so for 4 or more years. The longer youth had been vaping and the more regularly they vaped, the more likely they were to report needing help for their vaping. Overall, 19% of youth who vaped reported their vaping had reached a point in the past year where they needed help.
- ▶ The longer and more regularly youth had been using nicotine products, the more likely they were to have used a product to help them quit in the past month. Among youth who had both smoked and vaped in the past month, 10% had used a product to help them stop smoking, 8% used a product to quit vaping, and 5% used products to quit both.
- ▶ The more regularly youth vaped or smoked in the past month, the less likely they were to experience positive health and well-being. For example, 47% who vaped daily in the past month rated their health as good or excellent, compared to 61% who vaped on 6 to 9 days that month, and 68% who had previously vaped but had not done so in the past month.
- ▶ Youth who participated in some types of sports and exercise (e.g., played on a coached sports team) were generally less likely to have vaped or smoked. However, frequent participation (four or more times a week) in some types of physical activity (e.g., extreme sports) was associated with youth being more likely to have used a variety of nicotine products, including chewing tobacco.



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