

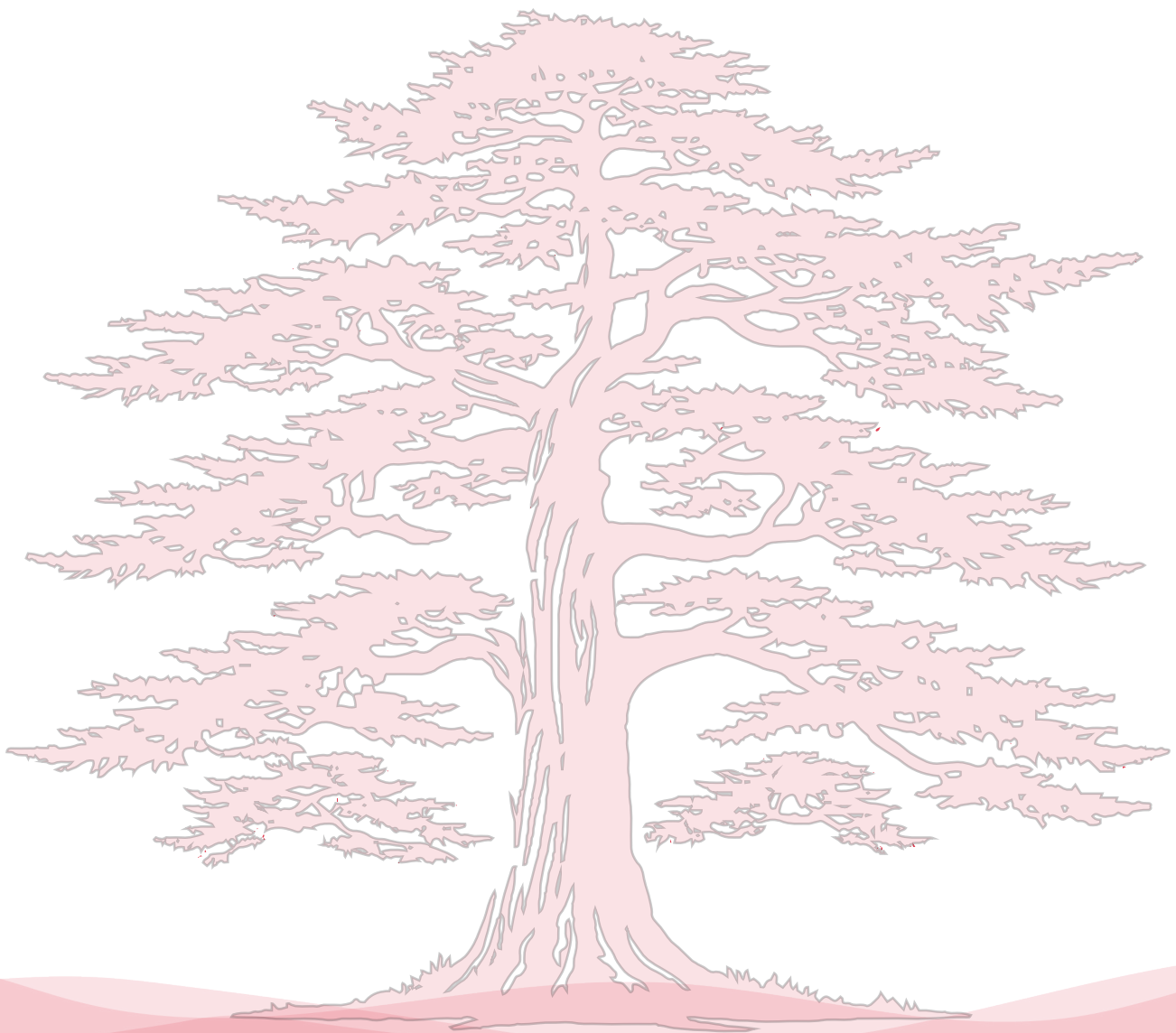
OUR LAND, OUR CULTURE, OUR SPIRIT

First Nations youth health in BC



McCreary
Centre Society

**This report is dedicated to Nate (2001-2026),
a founding member of McCreary's Young
Indigenous Research Team.**



We gratefully acknowledge that the McCreary Centre Society is located on the ancestral, traditional, and unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of the xwməθkwəy'əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səl'ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

OUR LAND, OUR CULTURE, OUR SPIRIT:

First Nations youth health in BC



Copyright: McCreary Centre Society, 2026

ISBN: 978-1-926675-90-9

McCreary Centre Society
3552 East Hastings Street
Vancouver, BC, V5K 2A7

Copies of this report are available at: mcs.bc.ca.
For enquiries about this report, please email: mccreary@mcs.bc.ca.



YIRT members who worked on this report

Azorius B.

Cera G.

Cheylene Moon

Fialka Osean Jack-Flesh

Nina Sunday

Shanae

Support was provided by McCreary's staff team.

Layout

Danielle Curtis

Young Indigenous Research Team

The Young Indigenous Research Team (YIRT) is a group of Indigenous Youth Research Academy alumni who work together on research projects that support Indigenous youth health and well-being.

This report was funded by McCreary Centre Society as part of our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation.

Funding for the 2023 BC Adolescent Health Survey was provided by the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development and the BC Ministry of Health.

The 2023 BC Adolescent Health Survey was approved by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board, University of British Columbia. H22-03063.

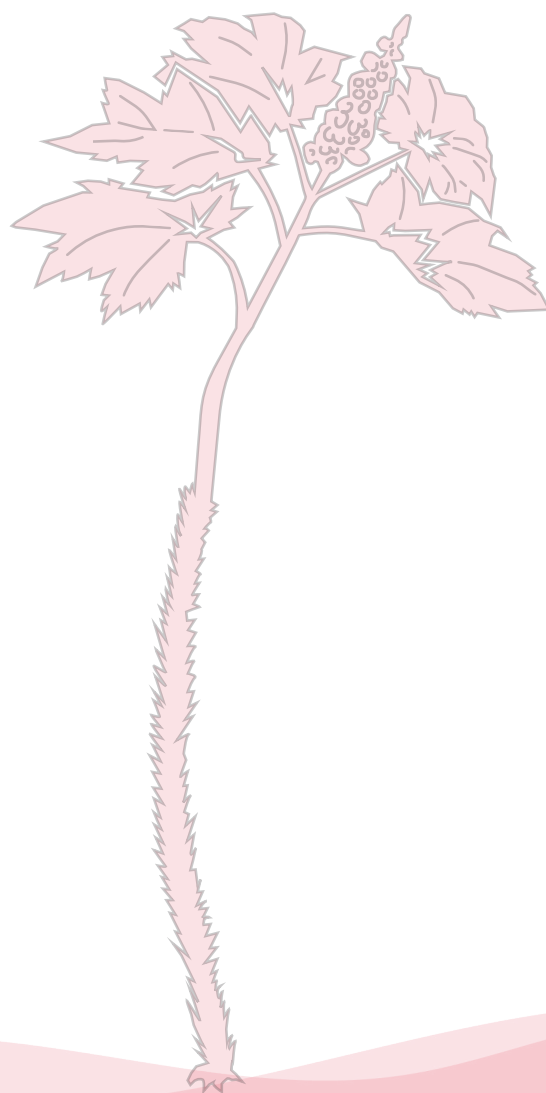
The collection of data for this report would not have been possible without the support and engagement of BC's public schools, Public Health Nurses, Public Health Resource Nurses, nursing students, and allied health professionals. We are indebted to each and every one of them for their support.

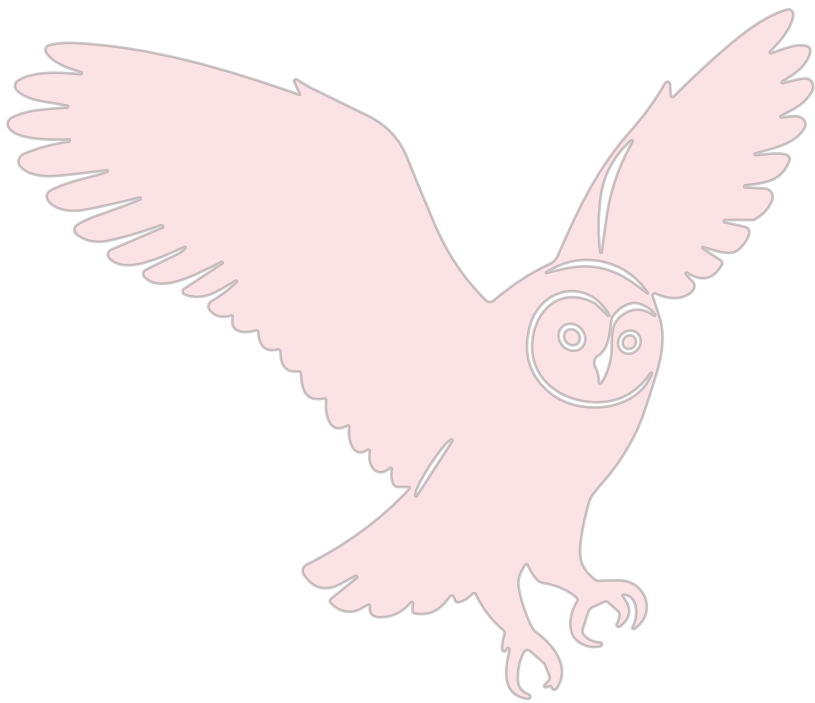
Special thanks are due to the First Nations young people who completed the BC AHS. Quotes from First Nations youth who completed the 2023 BC AHS are included throughout the report.

Citation: McCreary Centre Society's Young Indigenous Research Team. (2026). *Our land, our culture, our spirit: First Nations youth health in BC*. McCreary Centre Society.

Table of contents

KEY FINDINGS	1
INTRODUCTION	2
FIRST NATIONS YOUTH IN BC	4
HOME LIFE	6
CONNECTION TO CULTURE	9
○ <i>Indigenous language</i>	9
○ <i>Cultural activities</i>	11
○ <i>Cultural pride</i>	11
○ <i>Relationship to the land & nature</i>	12
ECONOMIC WELL-BEING	13
HEALTH & WELL-BEING	16
○ <i>Physical health</i>	16
○ <i>Eating behaviours & body image</i>	19
○ <i>Mental health & well-being</i>	20
○ <i>Sexual health</i>	26
○ <i>Substance use</i>	29
ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE	36
EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE & DISCRIMINATION	38
RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES	40
SCHOOL EXPERIENCES	43
FEELING SAFE & SUPPORTED	46
○ <i>Family</i>	46
○ <i>Community</i>	47
○ <i>Supportive adults</i>	48
○ <i>Friendships</i>	50
YOUTH LIVING ON A RESERVE	51
FINAL THOUGHTS	53
RESOURCES	54





Key findings

Results from the 2023 BC Adolescent Health Survey show that First Nations youth aged 12–19 continue to face systemic challenges as a result of colonialism. However, results also show we are resilient and with support and connections, particularly to culture, community and language, can experience more positive health and well-being.

First Nations youth were less likely to experience positive health and well-being than their peers.

For example, they were more likely to experience material deprivation (8% were deprived of three or more items on the Youth Deprivation Index vs. 4% of non-First Nations youth); have been in government care (19% vs. 4%); and have considered suicide (28% vs. 17%) and attempted suicide (11% vs. 5%) in the past year.

The majority of First Nations youth (54%) reported they had experienced discrimination in the past year.

Rates of most types of discrimination were higher than 5 years earlier, and higher than for non-First Nations youth.

Youth with a family history of residential school attendance were more likely to have other negative experiences, including physical abuse (28% vs. 14% of First Nations youth without a family history of residential school); sexual abuse (23% vs. 9%); government care (21% vs. 10%); bereavement due to an overdose (32% vs. 11%); and material deprivation (e.g., 18% felt deprived of two or more items on the Youth Deprivation Index vs. 10%).

Language, cultural pride, engagement in culture, and connection to community play an important role in First Nations youth well-being. For example, youth who were able to speak at least a few words of an Indigenous language were more likely to feel proud of their background, eat traditional foods, and regularly participate in cultural or traditional activities. They were also more likely to often or always feel connected to nature (38% vs. 25%) and feel quite or very much a part of their community (36% vs. 31%). Youth who felt quite or very proud of their background were also more likely to feel satisfied with their life (e.g., 56% felt their life was going well vs. 49% of those who felt not at all or a little proud).

Most youth felt that spirituality was important in their lives. The majority of youth (61%) felt that spirituality was at least a little important in their life, including 15% who felt it was very important.

Engaging in physical activity was linked to better health. The more days youth exercised in the past week the more likely they were to rate their overall and mental health positively, feel good about themselves, and sleep for at least 8 hours. For example, 41% who exercised on 2 or fewer days the previous week reported good or excellent mental health, compared to 57% who exercised on 6 or 7 days that week.

Connection to school, community, friends, and family can support mental health. First Nations youth were more likely to rate their mental health as good or excellent when they felt like a part of their school (69% vs. 23% of those who did not feel like a part of their school); felt quite or very connected to community (68% vs. 29% of those who felt not at all or only a little connected); had friends they could share their ups and downs with (52% vs. 25% of those who did not have such friends); and felt their family paid attention to them quite a bit or very much (61% vs. 16% of those who felt their family paid attention to them not at all or very little).

Connection to culture and supportive adults can help First Nations youth feel more hopeful for their future. For example, youth were more likely to feel hopeful for the future when they were quite or very proud of their background (52% vs. 43% who did not feel this way), felt quite or very much a part of their community (69% vs. 33%), had an adult to help them learn life skills (52% felt quite or very hopeful vs. 31% who did not have this), and had a teacher who they felt cared about them (61% vs. 27%).

Introduction

The BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) is a self-report survey for students in Grades 7–12 in BC schools. The 2023 BC AHS was the seventh wave of the survey, and was completed by about 38,500 youth aged 12–19. Since 2013, the survey has asked specifically about First Nations identity and this report is the first to focus exclusively on First Nations youth's health and well-being.

The report highlights the strengths and resilience of First Nations youth, as well as the supports that help them to thrive. However, it also draws attention to the ongoing impacts of colonialism and racism on First Nations youth well-being and some of the statistics may be disturbing and distressing to read. If you need to reach out to someone for support, below is a list of helplines and other resources:

Indigenous-specific supports

First Nations Health Authority plans, designs, manages, and funds the delivery of First Nations health programs across BC.

Tel: 604-693-6500 | Toll-free: 1-866-913-0033
Website: fnha.ca

Hope for Wellness Helpline has experienced and culturally competent counsellors available 24/7.
Tel: 1-855-242-3310 | Online chat: hopeforwellness.ca

KUU-US Crisis Line is a BC wide Indigenous crisis and support line that is available 24/7.
Tel: 250-723-2040 | Toll-free: 1-800-588-8717
Chat/text support (6pm–7am): 778-601-8009

Lamathut 24/7 Crisis Line is a First Nations–led, culturally grounded support service operated by the Indian Residential School Survivors Society.
Tel: 1-800-721-0066

National Indian Residential School Crisis Line offers 24/7 emotional support.
Tel: 1-866-925-4419

Other supports

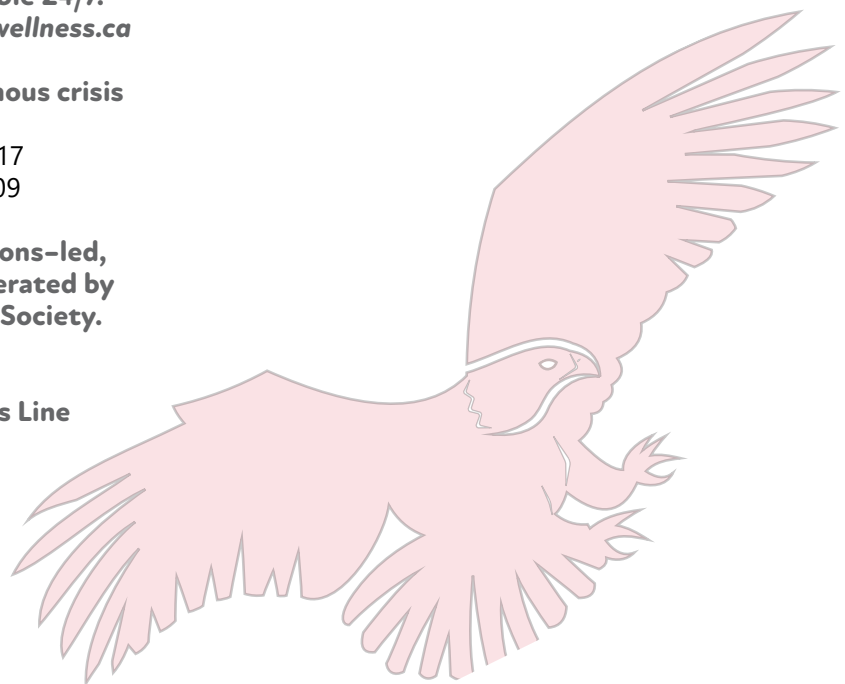
BC Crisis Line is offered 24/7 by the BC Crisis Line Network and provides lifesaving crisis intervention, suicide risk assessment, and strengths-based collaborative safety planning and follow-up.
Tel: 1-800-784-2433 | Call or text: 9-8-8

BC Mental Health Helpline offers mental health and crisis response across BC 24/7.
Tel: 310-6789

Foundry virtual services provides young people aged 12–24 living in BC free mental health and wellness same day services.
Get the app: foundrybc.ca/foundry-virtual-bc/
Tel: 1-833-308-6379

Kids Help Phone has phone and e-mental health services available 24/7 across Canada for kids, teens, and young adults.
Tel: 1-800-668-6868 | Text: 686868

Talk Suicide Canada is available to offer support from 4pm–midnight EST across Canada.
Tel: 1-833-456-4566 | Text: 45645



About this report

All reported analyses are among First Nations youth, unless otherwise stated.

Results are rounded to whole percentages, so may not always total 100%.

Where it is not obvious, differences in tables or charts that are not statistically significant are noted.

The report includes comparisons between the well-being of First Nations and non-First Nations youth. The non-First Nations sample includes non-Indigenous, Métis, Inuit, and other Indigenous students.

'Gap analyses' were conducted to determine if some of the discrepancies which existed between First Nations and non-First Nations youth and between those living on a reserve and off reserve have changed over time. To learn more about this statistical technique, visit: pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27215223/.

All comparisons and associations in this report are statistically significant at least at $p < .05$. This means there is less than a 5% likelihood that any of these results occurred by chance.

A fact sheet detailing the methodology for the BC AHS is available at: mcs.bc.ca/pdf/2023_bcahs_factsheet_methodology.pdf.

Limitations

The BC AHS was not designed as a First Nations-specific survey. In addition, First Nations identity was based on youth's self-report, and some youth may not know or report their heritage.

The BC AHS is considered representative of 97.6% of youth in Grades 7–12 in mainstream schools across the province. However, findings may not be representative of all First Nations youth in this age range, including those who were absent on the day the survey was administered, or had a health or learning challenge which prevented them from completing the survey.

The wording of some survey questions has changed over the years to reflect the current terminology. It is unknown if these changes may have affected students' responses.

This report provides associations, and cannot determine causation or the direction of any relationships between reported variables.

Glossary

First Nations refers to youth aged 12–19 who self-identified as First Nations.

Living on a reserve refers to youth living on a reserve at the time they completed the BC AHS.

Living off reserve includes students who never lived on a reserve and those who had previously lived there.

Non-binary youth were those who did not identify as male or female, or who were questioning their gender identity. The terms 'male', 'female', and 'non-binary' are used to describe the three gender identity categories used in the analysis. These terms reflect the preference of BC youth who participated in discussions about terminology for the 2023 BC AHS, and did not want to be referred to as boys and girls.

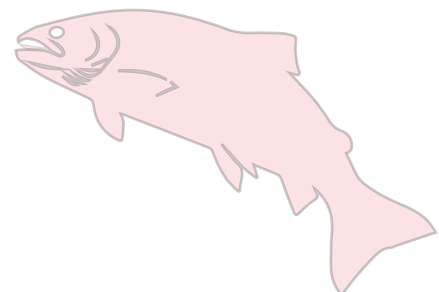
Protective factors are relationships and conditions in a First Nations youth's life that are associated with a higher likelihood of positive health and well-being. Protective factors can also reduce the negative impact of adverse experiences.

Two-Spirit is a term used within some First Nations communities to describe a person who embodies both masculine and feminine qualities, often encompassing a spiritual and non-binary gender identity.

Youth Deprivation Index was developed by McCreary with input from First Nations and non-First Nations students across BC. To learn more about the Index, visit: mcs.bc.ca/deprivation_article.

'Youth' and 'students' are used interchangeably to refer to survey participants aged 12–19.

For readability, 'in the past year' and 'in the past 12 months' are used interchangeably, as are 'in the past month' and 'in the past 30 days'.



First Nations youth in BC

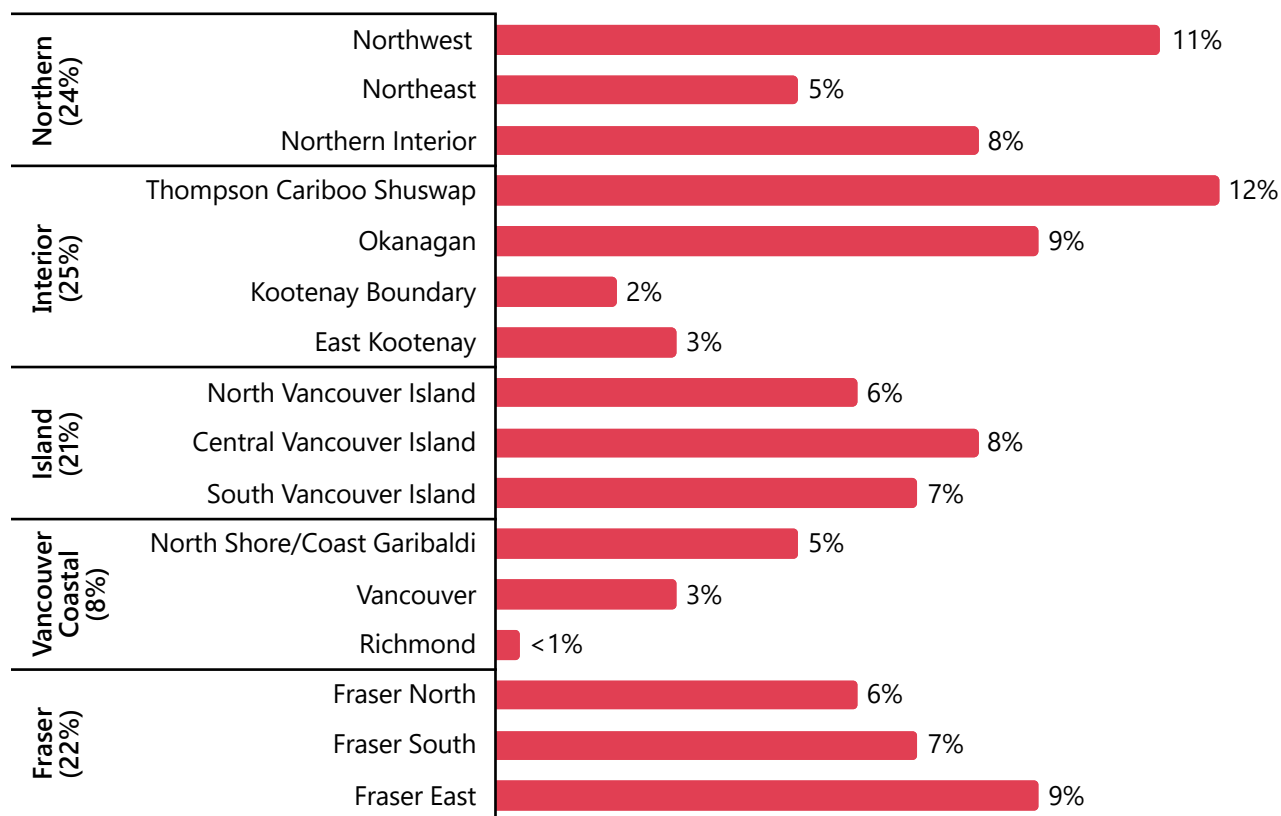
Among youth aged 12–19 who completed the 2023 BC AHS, 6% identified as First Nations. First Nations youth represented 59% of Indigenous youth who completed the survey, which was the same percentage as in 2018 and lower than in 2013 (63%).

Similar to previous years, around a quarter of First Nations youth lived in the North and Interior regions, around a fifth in the Island and Fraser regions, and 8% lived in Vancouver Coastal. There were also differences within each region as to where First Nations youth lived. For example, in the North, First Nations youth were most likely to live in the Northwest and least likely to live in the Northeast.

Over two thirds of First Nations youth went to school in urban communities and 32% in rural communities, consistent with 5 and 10 years earlier.

The majority of First Nations youth (61%) had never lived on a reserve, 16% had previously lived on a reserve but did not currently, and 23% currently lived on a reserve. See [page 51](#) for a health profile of youth who lived on- and off-reserve.

Where First Nations youth lived in BC



Note: Not all differences between regions were statistically significant.

Sexuality, gender, & Two-Spirit identity

"By identifying as Two-Spirit, I don't mean I'm other gendered. It's specific to my culture & I wish more people knew."

– 16-year-old female

"I suffer with gender dysphoria & don't know where to go to be heard, understood & helped."

– 17-year-old male

"[I want to learn more about] queer identities, queer history."

– 14-year-old non-binary youth

Half of First Nations youth (50%) identified as male, 42% as female, and 8% as non-binary. The majority of youth indicated being cisgender (89% vs. 95% in 2018) and 3% were transgender (vs. 1% in 2018). Seven percent identified as Two-Spirit, which was an increase from 5% in 2018.

The majority of First Nations youth identified their sexual orientation as straight (64% vs. 77% in 2018). There was an increase in those who identified as a sexual minority (e.g., 4% identified as gay or lesbian vs. 2% in 2018).

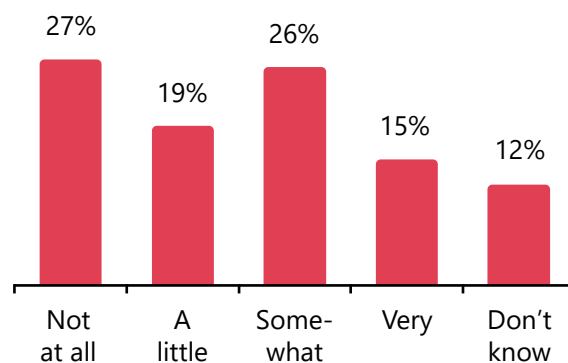
Sexual orientation of First Nations youth

Straight	64%
Mostly straight	6%
Bisexual or pansexual	17%
Gay or lesbian	4%
Asexual	2%
Not sure yet	6%
Something other than the options listed above	<1%

Religion & spirituality

A fifth of First Nations youth (20%) identified as practicing a traditional (Indigenous) spirituality, and 61% felt that spirituality was at least a little important in their life.

How important First Nations youth felt spirituality was in their life



Home life

The majority of First Nations youth (89%) lived with at least one of their parents. They were more likely than those a decade earlier to be living with their father or stepfather (64% vs. 59% in 2013), siblings (57% vs. 47%), grandparents (17% vs. 12%), and unrelated adults (4% vs. 2%). In addition, youth were less likely to be living alone (<1% vs. 1% in 2013).

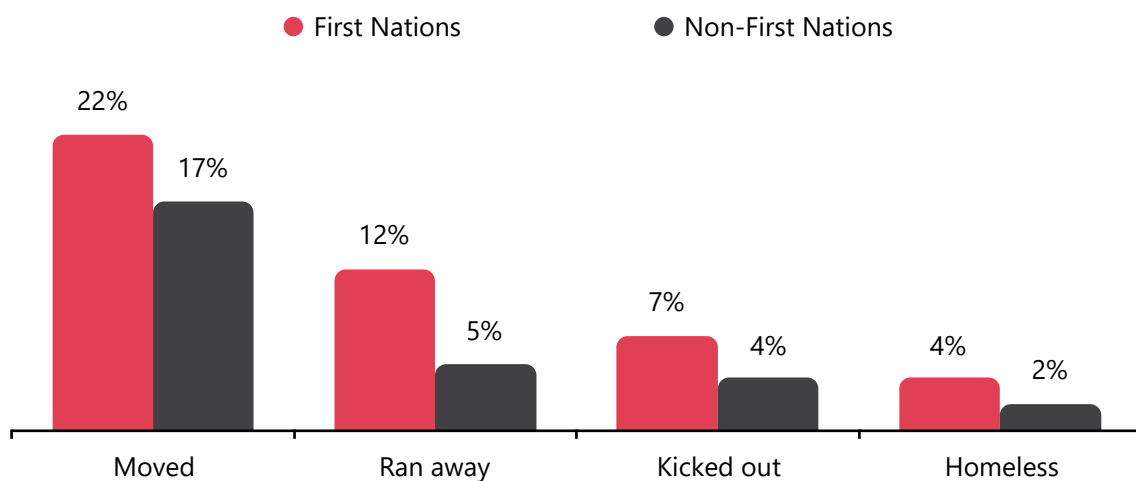
First Nations youth were more likely than their non-First Nations peers to have experienced unstable housing. However, they were less likely than First Nations youth 5 and 10 years earlier to have moved in the past year (e.g., 22% vs. 30% in 2018), including having done so three or more times (e.g., 5% vs. 10% in 2018). Rates of running away and being kicked out were comparable to 5 years earlier.

Who First Nations youth lived with most of the time

Mother/Stepmother	77%
Father/Stepfather	64%
Two mothers or two fathers	2%
Grandparent(s)	17%
Foster parents	3%
Sibling(s)/Stepsibling(s)	57%
Own child or own children	1%
Other children or youth	3%
Other related adults	6%
Other unrelated adults	4%
Alone	<1%
Both parents at different times	10%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

First Nations youth were more likely than non-First Nations youth to experience housing instability in the past 12 months



Caretaking responsibilities

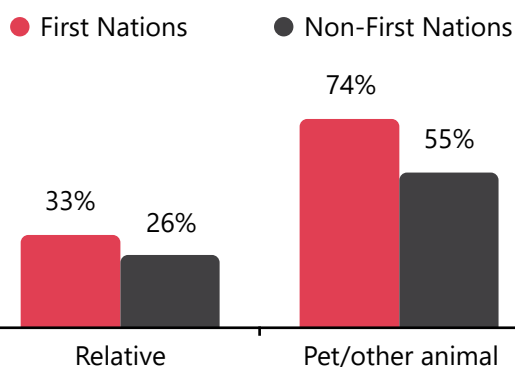
"[I am really good at] helping out around the house, caring for my dog."

– 13-year-old female

On an average school day, a third of First Nations youth looked after a relative (33% vs. 28% in 2018 vs. 25% in 2013), and around three quarters cared for a pet or other animal (74% vs. 65% in 2018). First Nations youth were more likely than their non-First Nations peers to have caregiving responsibilities.

Among First Nations youth, females were most likely to be caring for a relative (e.g., 37% vs. 30% of non-binary youth).

Caregiving responsibilities on an average school day



Note: Examples of a 'relative' included a relative with a disability or their younger siblings.

Government care experience

Nearly 1 in 5 First Nations youth had experience of government care and alternatives to care (19% vs. 4% of non-First Nations youth), including through Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies. This included 9% who had been in care in the past year (vs. 2% of non-First Nations youth).

Types of care youth had experienced

	Ever		In the past year	
	First Nations	Non-First Nations	First Nations	Non-First Nations
Extended Family Program or Out of Care Order	10%	2%	5%	1%
Foster home	10%	1%	3%	1%
Youth Agreement	3%	1%	2%	1%
Group home	4%	1%	2%	1%
Custody centre/detention centre	2%	1%	1%	<1%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Note: The difference between First Nations and non-First Nations youth was not statistically significant for having been in a custody centre/detention centre in the past year.

Family history of residential school

Nearly two thirds of First Nations youth (65%) reported a family member had attended residential school, including parents (5%), grandparents (45%), and other relatives (37%). About a quarter (26%) did not know whether any of their family had been in residential school.

Youth with a family history of residential school attendance were more likely to have experienced other adverse events, including:

- Having a close friend or family member attempt or die by suicide (28% vs. 9% of First Nations youth without a family history of residential school).
- Physical abuse (28% vs. 14%) and sexual abuse (23% vs. 9%).
- Government care (21% vs. 10%).
- Bereavement due to an overdose (32% vs. 11%) and violence (12% vs. 2%).
- Material deprivation (e.g., 18% felt deprived of two or more items on the Youth Deprivation Index vs. 10% of those without a family history of residential school).

Youth with a family history of residential school were more likely to report poorer mental health and challenges with substance use, such as being at a point in the past year where they needed help for their vaping (12% vs. 5%), alcohol use (9% vs. 2%), and cannabis use (11% vs. 4%).

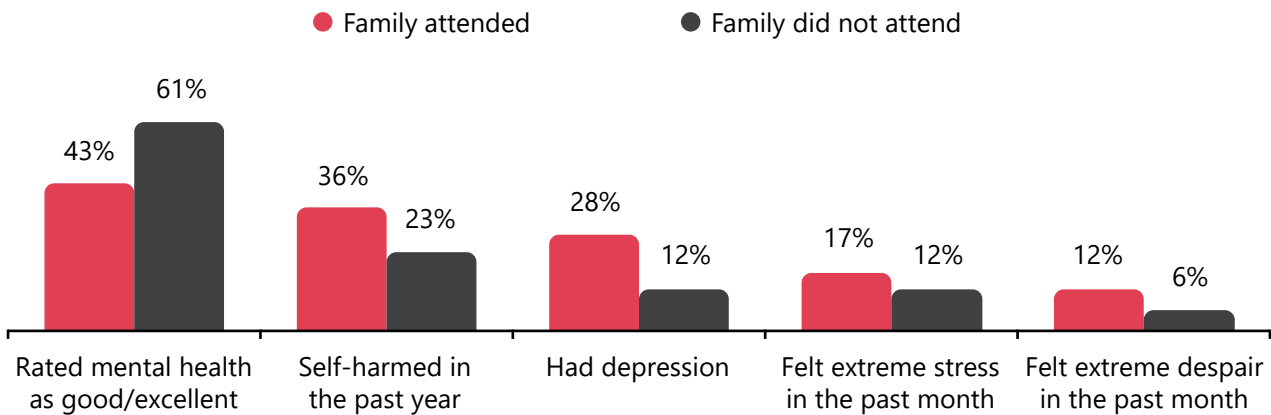
Bereavement

Most First Nations youth had experienced bereavement (82% vs. 71% of non-First Nations youth). There was an increase in those who had lost someone close to them due to an overdose (26% vs. 14% in 2018), suicide (21% vs. 19%), and violence (9% vs. 7%).

Reasons someone close to them had died		
	First Nations	Non-First Nations
Illness (other than COVID-19)	55%	46%
Old age/natural death	53%	45%
Overdose	26%	7%
Suicide	21%	8%
Accident	21%	11%
COVID-19	11%	6%
Violence	9%	3%
Other	3%	1%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

First Nations youth with a family history of residential school attendance reported poorer mental health



Connection to culture

"I think there should be more opportunities for Indigenous students to learn and celebrate our culture. Maybe school 'cultural days'?"

– 16-year-old female

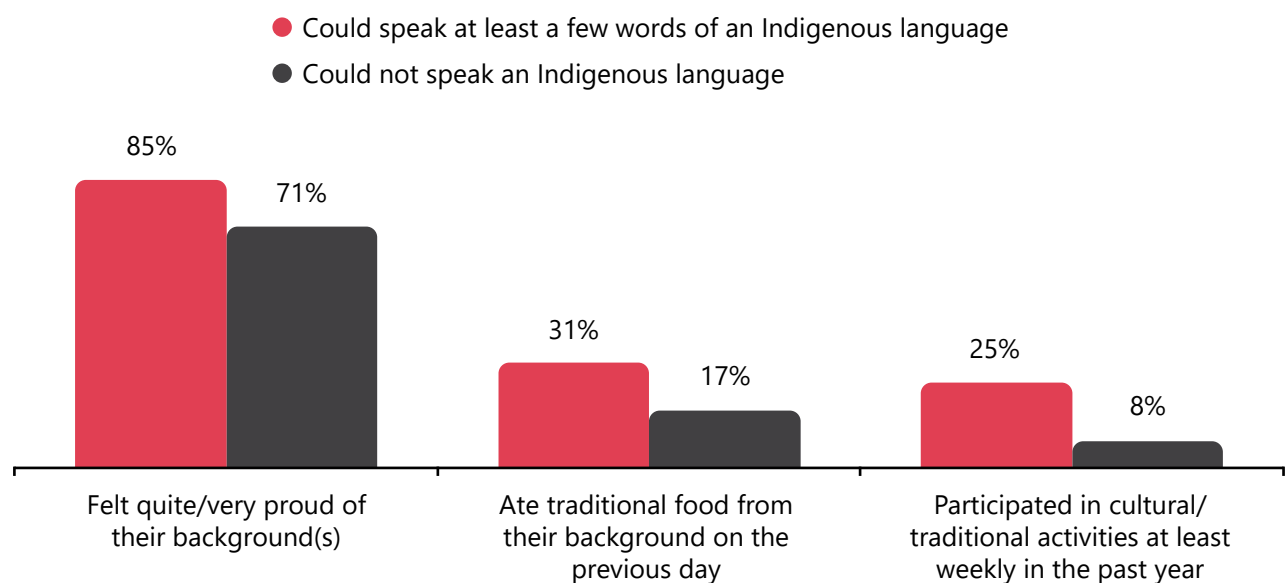
Indigenous language

Over the past decade there was an increase in First Nations youth who could speak at least a few words of an Indigenous language (44% vs. 39% in 2018 vs. 19% in 2013). However, the percentage who could hold a conversation or speak fluently declined (2% vs. 5% in 2018). Rural-based First Nations youth were more likely than urban-based ones to speak at least a few words of an Indigenous language (60% vs. 36%).

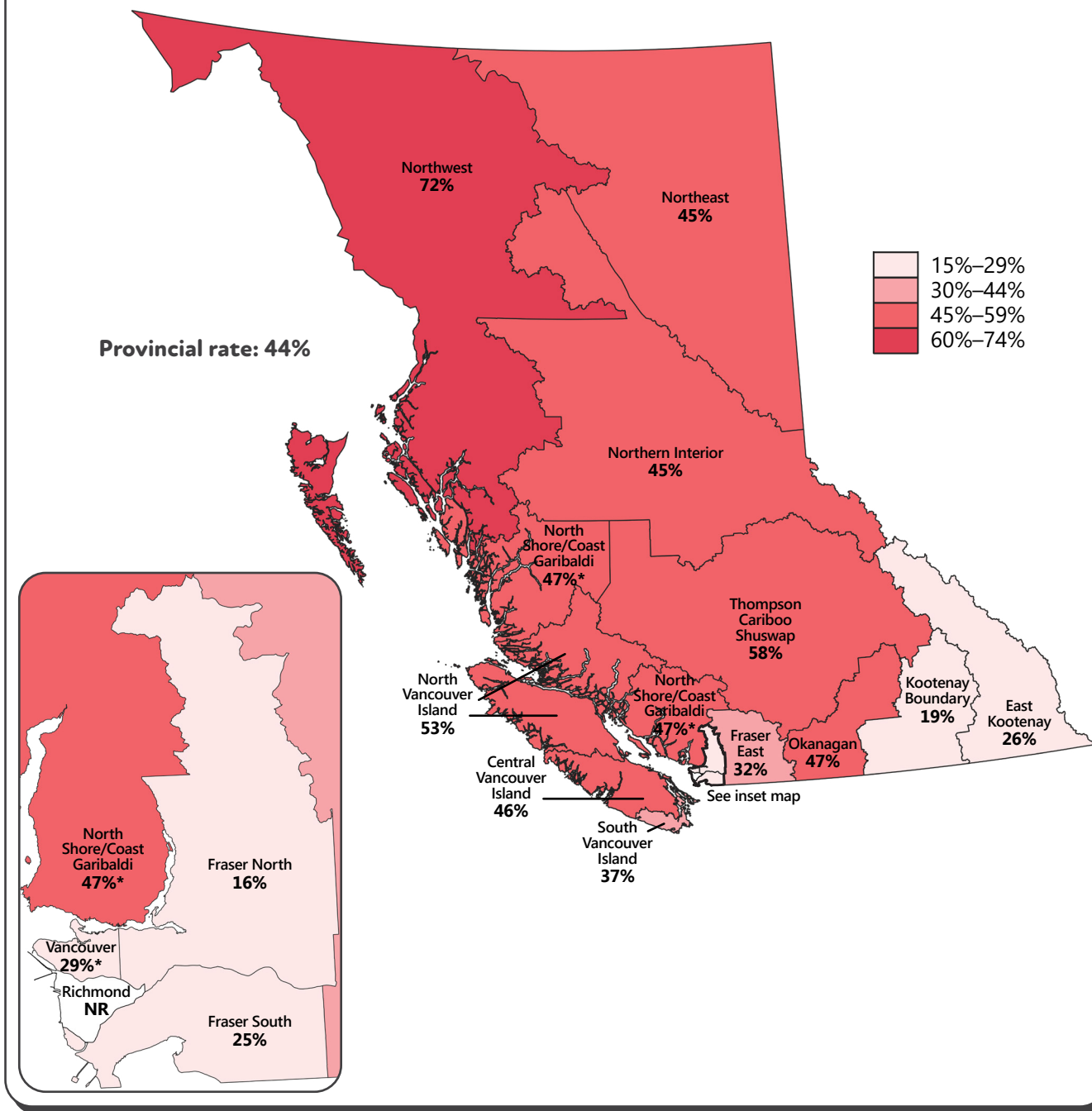
First Nations youth who were able to speak at least a few words of an Indigenous language were more likely to report feeling connected to their culture and community. For example, they were more likely to:

- Feel that spirituality was at least somewhat important in their lives (52% vs. 34% of those who could not speak an Indigenous language).
- Have volunteered in their community in the past year (49% vs. 39%), including on a weekly basis (17% vs. 13%).
- Often or always feel connected to nature (38% vs. 25%).
- Feel quite a bit or very much a part of their community (36% vs. 31%).
- Feel proud of their background, eat traditional foods, and regularly participate in cultural or traditional activities.

First Nations youth who could speak an Indigenous language were more likely to feel connected to & engage with their culture



First Nations youth who could speak at least a few words of an Indigenous language



Note: Not all differences between HSDAs were statistically significant.

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

NR: Percentage estimate was not releasable.

Cultural activities

"[I am really good at] anything really cultural or traditional."

– 17-year-old female

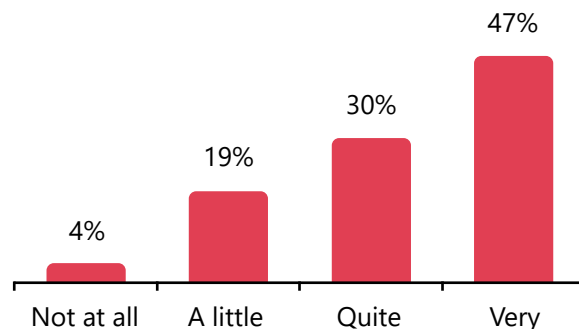
Compared to 5 and 10 years earlier, there was an increase in First Nations youth who participated in cultural activities in the past year (e.g., 52% vs. 31% in 2018), including on a weekly basis (15% vs. 8% in 2018 vs. 11% in 2013). Rural-based youth were more likely than urban-based youth to have taken part in cultural activities on a weekly basis (19% vs. 14%), as were female and non-binary youth (e.g., 18% of females vs. 13% of males).

First Nations youth who participated at least weekly in cultural activities were more likely to feel engaged in their activities and in their community. For example, they reported feeling quite or very proud of their background (87% vs. 76% of those who took part less often), quite or very much a part of their community (46% vs. 31%), and that the activities they participated in were quite or very meaningful to them (56% vs. 46%).

Cultural pride

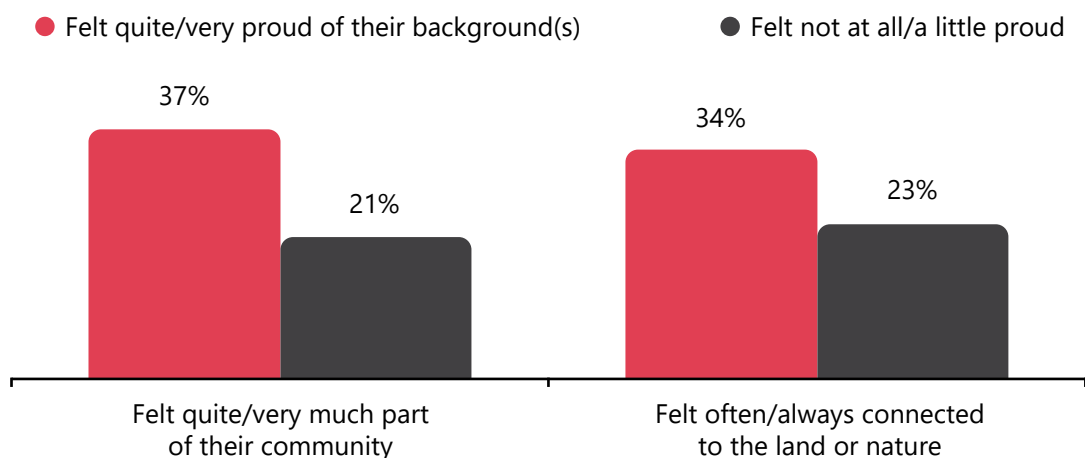
Over three quarters of First Nations youth were quite or very proud of their background, with no gender differences or differences between urban- and rural-based youth.

How proud First Nations youth felt to be part of their background(s) (among those who identified a background)



First Nations youth who felt quite or very proud of their background were more likely to feel satisfied with their life (e.g., 56% felt their life was going well vs. 49% of those who felt not at all or a little proud), as well as more connected to their community and the land.

First Nations youth who felt proud of their background(s) were more likely to feel connected to their community & the land



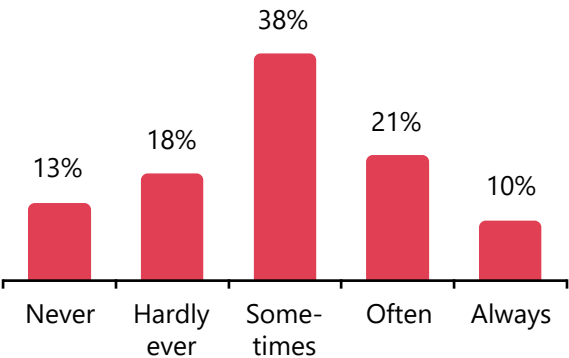
Relationship to the land & nature

The majority of First Nations youth (69%) felt connected to the land at least sometimes. They were more likely than their non-First Nations peers to often or always feel connected (31% vs. 22%). However, there was a decrease from 5 years earlier in First Nations youth who felt this level of connectedness (31% vs. 50% in 2018).

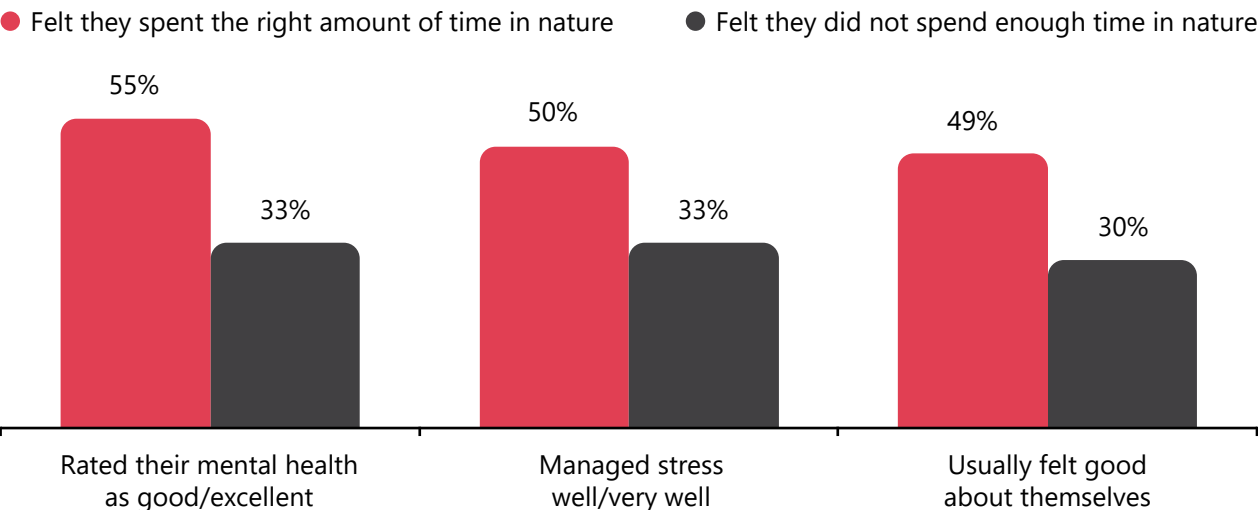
More than half of First Nations youth (56%) felt that they spent the right amount of time in nature, while 40% did not get enough time in nature and 4% felt they spent too much time in nature.

Feeling connected to the land and spending enough time in nature were linked with positive health and well-being. For example, First Nations youth who often or always felt connected to the land were more likely to rate their overall health as good or excellent (65% vs. 53% of those who never or hardly ever felt connected), to have engaged in moderate to vigorous exercise on at least 3 days in the past week (79% vs. 64%), to feel they managed their stress well or very well (47% vs. 38%; among those who experienced stress), and to usually feel good about themselves (46% vs. 38%).

How often First Nations youth felt connected to the land or nature



First Nations youth who felt they spent the right amount of time in nature were more likely to report positive health & well-being

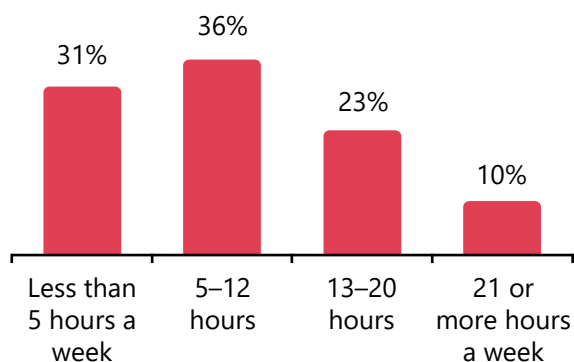


Economic well-being

Employment

Comparable to non-First Nations youth and to First Nations youth in 2018, 31% of youth worked at a paid job during the school year, including 3% who worked 21 or more hours a week (with no gender differences).

Hours First Nations youth spent working at a paid job during the school year (among those who worked)



First Nations youth were more likely than their non-First Nations peers to work because they needed money (51% vs. 44%). They were less likely to do so because they wanted spending money (53% vs. 60%), to learn skills (41% vs. 46%), save for school (36% vs. 42%), and to build up their résumé (34% vs. 43%).

First Nations youth's reasons for working during the school year (among those who worked)

Wanted spending money	53%
Needed the money	51%
To learn skills	41%
To save for school	36%
To build up their résumé	34%
To contribute to the family income	12%
Other	12%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Food insecurity

Among First Nations youth, 18% went to bed hungry at least sometimes due to there not being enough money for food at home, including 2% who did so often or always. These rates were comparable to 5 and 10 years earlier, and similar between rural- and urban-based youth and between genders. However, First Nations youth were more than twice as likely as their non-First Nations peers to go to bed hungry at least sometimes (18% vs. 8%), and this gap has remained consistent over the past decade.

In the past 12 months, 13% of youth cut the size of meals or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money for food at home (vs. 6% of non-First Nations youth). Also, First Nations youth were more likely than their non-First Nations peers to have eaten food from a food bank (5% vs. 2%) and school food program (11% vs. 5%) the day before completing the BC AHS.

In the week before completing the BC AHS, the majority of youth ate dinner every day but fewer ate lunch and breakfast this regularly.

Meals eaten by First Nations youth in the past 7 days

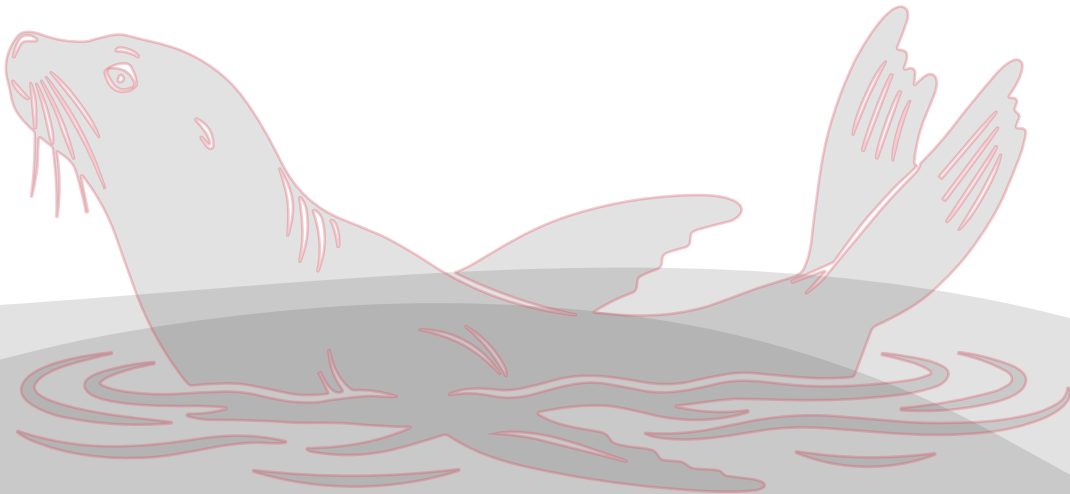
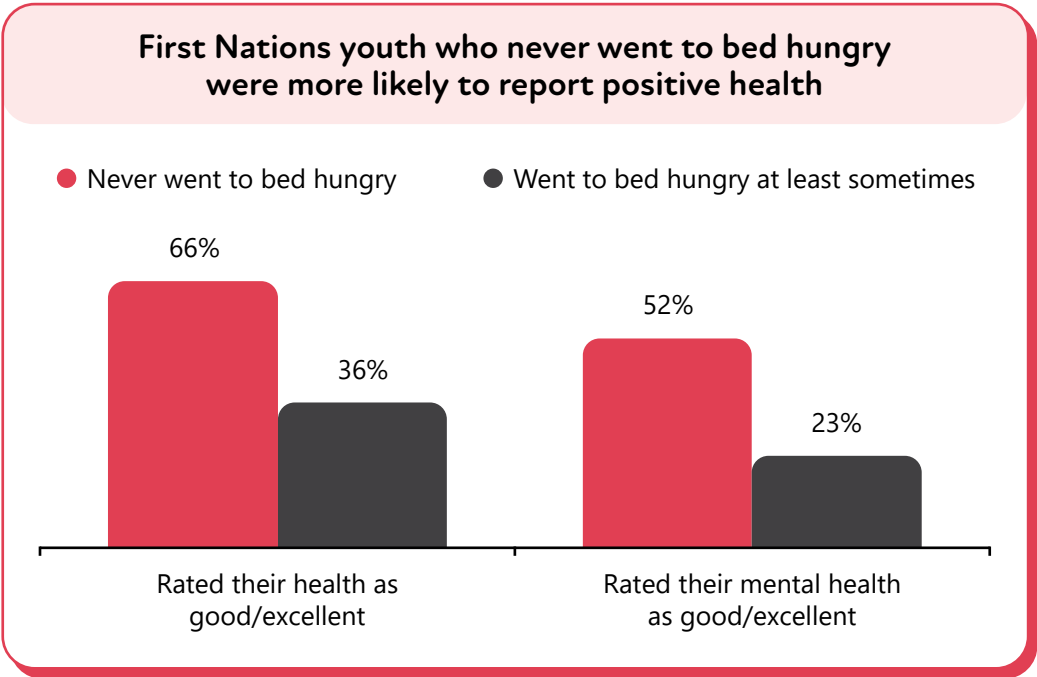
	0 days	1-2 days	3-4 days	5-6 days	All 7 days
Breakfast	26%	25%	13%	10%	27%
Lunch	8%	18%	19%	19%	36%
Dinner	1%	5%	10%	16%	68%

Nearly 4 in 10 First Nations youth (39%) did not eat breakfast on school days, which was an increase from 25% in 2018, and higher than among non-First Nations youth in 2023 (28%). First Nations youth were more likely than non-First Nations youth to have eaten breakfast at school (14% vs. 6%) and on the way to school (9% vs. 6%), and were less likely to have eaten breakfast at home (51% vs. 69%).

Youth who experienced greater food security reported more positive health and well-being.

Where First Nations youth got breakfast on school days		
	2018	2023
Did not eat breakfast on school days	25%	39%
At home	67%	51%
At school	13%	14%
On the way to school	11%	9%

Note: The difference between 2018 and 2023 was not statistically significant for eating breakfast 'at school'.



Material deprivation

The majority of First Nations youth had all 11 items on McCreary's Youth Deprivation Index. However, 35% felt deprived of at least one item on the list (vs. 23% of non-First Nations youth), including 8% who felt deprived of three or more items (vs. 4% of non-First Nations youth).

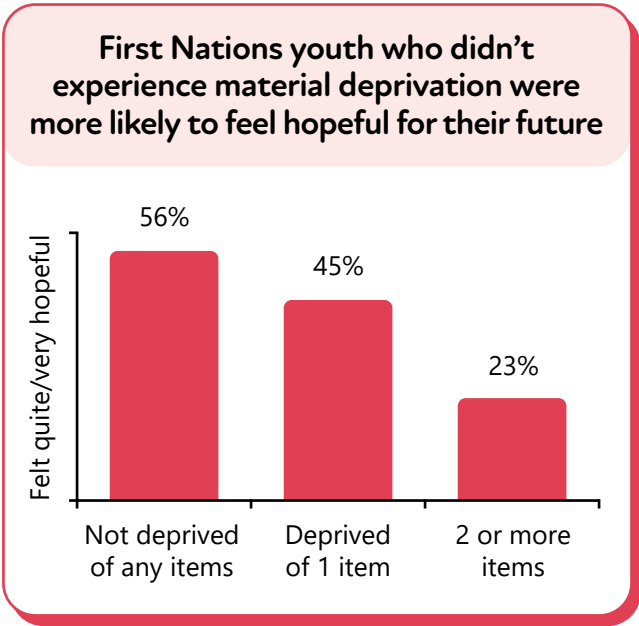
Youth who lacked but wished they had ...		
	First Nations	Non-First Nations
Money to spend on themselves	19%	11%
Lunch for school/ money to buy lunch	9%	4%
Space of their own to hang out in	8%	6%
Money for school supplies, school trips, and extracurricular activities	7%	3%
Equipment/clothes for extracurricular activities	5%	3%
Clothes to fit in	5%	4%
Access to transportation	5%	2%
Smartphone	5%	3%
A quiet place to sleep	4%	2%
Access to the Internet	1%	1%
Personal hygiene products (e.g., soap, deodorant)	1%	1%

Note: First Nations youth were more likely to have lacked but wished they had access to the Internet (just over 1% vs. just under 1% of non-First Nations youth).

Overall, the percentage of First Nations youth who experienced deprivation was comparable to 5 years earlier. However, First Nations youth were more likely than 5 years earlier to have felt deprived of clothes to fit in (5% vs. 3% in 2018) and money to spend on themselves (19% vs. 16%); and were less to feel deprived of a smartphone (5% vs. 11%) and access to the Internet (1% vs. 3%).

When the items on the Index were looked at individually, First Nations youth who had the equipment and clothes needed for extracurricular activities were more likely to have participated in weekly organized sports (47% vs. 12% of those who felt deprived of this). Similarly, those who had a quiet place to sleep were more likely to have slept for at least 8 hours the night before taking the survey (35% vs. 21% of youth who felt deprived of this), and those who had lunch for school or lunch money were more likely to have eaten lunch every day in the past week (40% vs. 10%).

Youth who did not feel deprived of any items on the Index were more likely to rate their quality of life positively (e.g., 73% felt they had a good life vs. 57% who were deprived of one item vs. 39% who were deprived of two or more items) and to feel hopeful for their future.

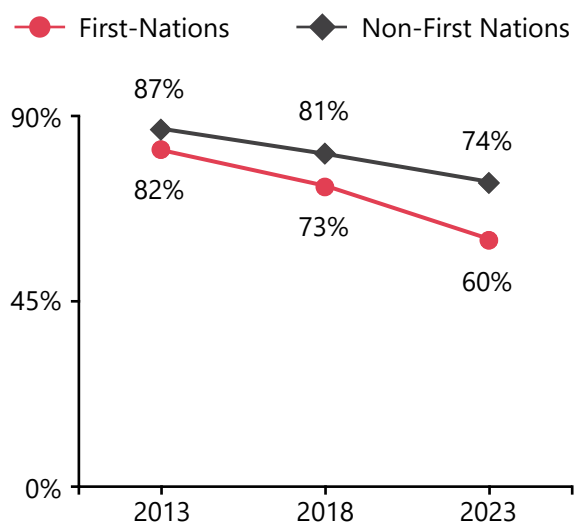


Health & well-being

Physical health

Overall, 60% of First Nations youth rated their health as good or excellent (35% of non-binary youth vs. 53% of females vs. 71% of males). The percentage of First Nations youth who described their health as good or excellent decreased over the past 10 years, and the gap in positive health ratings between them and non-First Nations youth increased.

Decrease over time in youth rating their health as good/excellent



Health conditions & disabilities

Mental health conditions are discussed on [page 23](#).

First Nations youth were more likely than their non-First Nations peers to experience a range of health conditions and disabilities.

Health conditions & disabilities

	First Nations	Non-First Nations
Learning disability	15%	7%
Long-term/chronic medical condition	10%	7%
Deaf or hard of hearing	4%	2%
Blind or visual impairment which cannot be corrected with glasses/contact lenses	3%	1%
Physical disability	2%	1%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Note: For physical disability, the difference between First Nations and non-First Nations youth was not statistically significant.

Among First Nations youth with a health condition or disability, 30% did not experience barriers related to their disability, 47% had what they needed to overcome the barriers they faced, and 23% did not have what they needed to overcome these barriers (vs. 19% of non-First Nations youth).

Physical activity

The majority of youth engaged in at least 60 minutes of physical activity that made them sweat, breathe hard, or be 'out of breath' on at least one occasion in the past week. Most youth (84%) reported that they enjoyed physical activity at least somewhat, including 29% who enjoyed it very much.

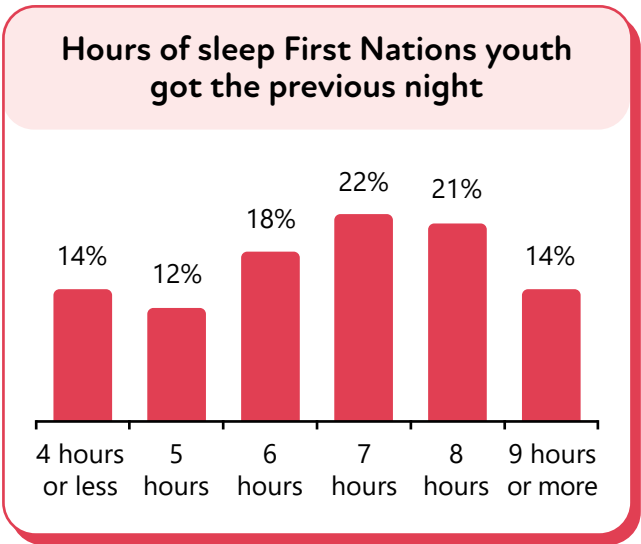
Number of days in the past week First Nations youth got at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise	
0 days	12%
1 day	7%
2 days	11%
3 days	16%
4 days	13%
5 days	16%
6 days	7%
All 7 days	19%

Canadian guidelines for physical activity recommend that youth aged 12–17 do an hour of moderate to vigorous activity every day (csepguidelines.ca/guidelines/children-youth/). Among First Nations youth aged 12–17 years old, 19% met these guidelines, which was similar to non-First Nations youth, and comparable to First Nations youth 5 and 10 years earlier. Males in this age range were most likely to have exercised every day (24% vs. 15% of females vs. 8% of non-binary youth).

The more days youth exercised in the past week, the more likely they were to rate their overall and mental health positively, feel good about themselves, and sleep for at least 8 hours. For example, 41% who exercised on 2 or fewer days the previous week reported good or excellent mental health, compared to 57% who exercised on 6 or 7 days that week.

Sleep

The night before taking the BC AHS, 35% of First Nations youth slept for at least 8 hours. This was a decrease from 48% in 2018, and lower than the rate among non-First Nations youth in 2023 (42%).

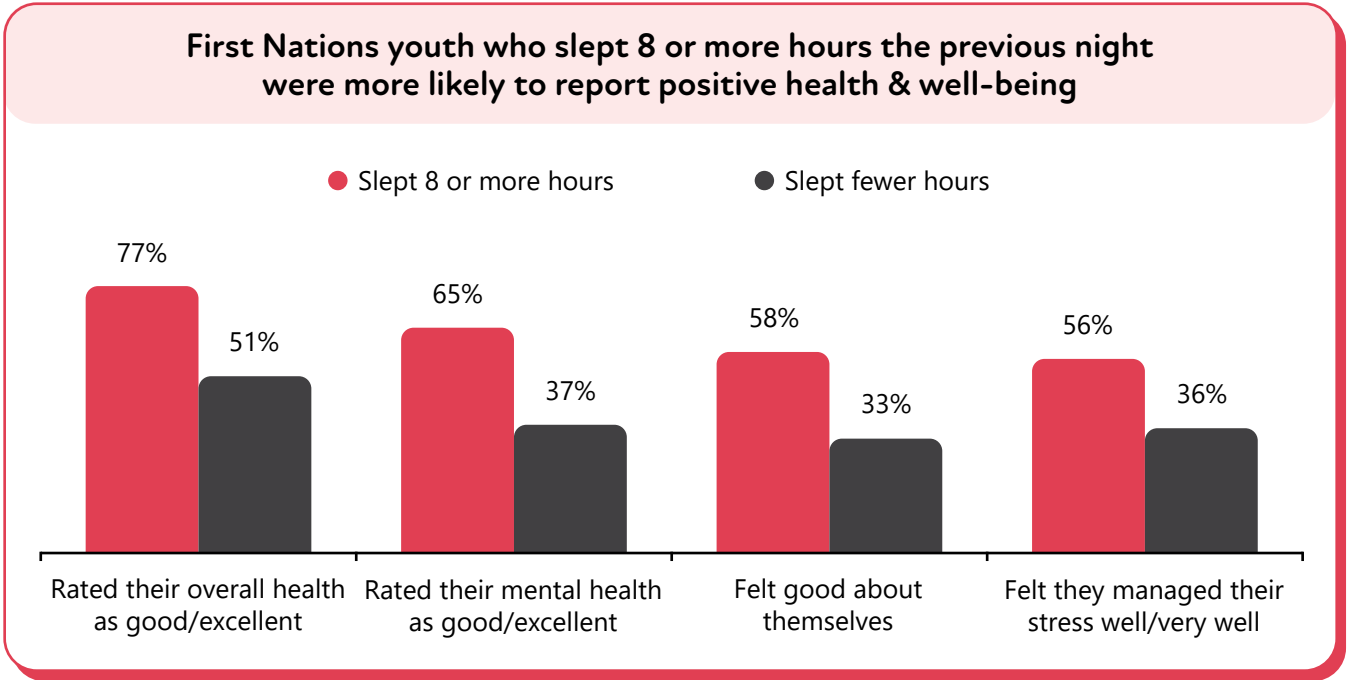


Most youth slept undisturbed the previous night. However, 33% reported their sleep had been interrupted (vs. 25% of non-First Nations youth). Additionally, most engaged in at least one activity after the time they were expected to be asleep, while 7% went offline and did not engage in any activities.

Activities First Nations youth engaged in after they were expected to be asleep	
Scrolling through social media	72%
Chatting or texting	63%
Gaming (other than esports)	38%
Doing homework	37%
Playing/watching esports	21%
Doing other things online (e.g., watching videos)	72%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

First Nations youth who went offline after they were expected to be asleep were more likely to have slept for 8 or more hours the night before taking the survey (61% vs. 29% of those who were online after bedtime). Youth who slept for 8 or more hours the previous night were more likely than those who slept fewer hours to report positive well-being.



Note: First Nations youth who felt they managed their stress well/very well is among those who felt stress.

Injuries & injury prevention

In the past 12 months, 37% of youth were injured seriously enough to need medical attention. This was an increase from 31% in 2013 and 2018, and higher than the percentage for non-First Nations youth in 2023 (33%).

First Nations youth were also specifically more likely than 5 years previous to have experienced a concussion in the past 12 months (22% vs. 18% in 2018), and compared to non-First Nations youth (22% vs. 15% in 2023).

Among First Nations youth who had experienced a concussion in the past year, there was an increase in those who sustained a concussion while using alcohol or other substances (17% vs. 8% in 2018), and a decrease in those who got a head injury playing organized sports (35% vs. 41%).

Among First Nations youth who had a concussion in the past year, 42% received medical treatment for their most serious injury, which was similar to non-First Nations youth and to First Nations youth 5 years earlier.

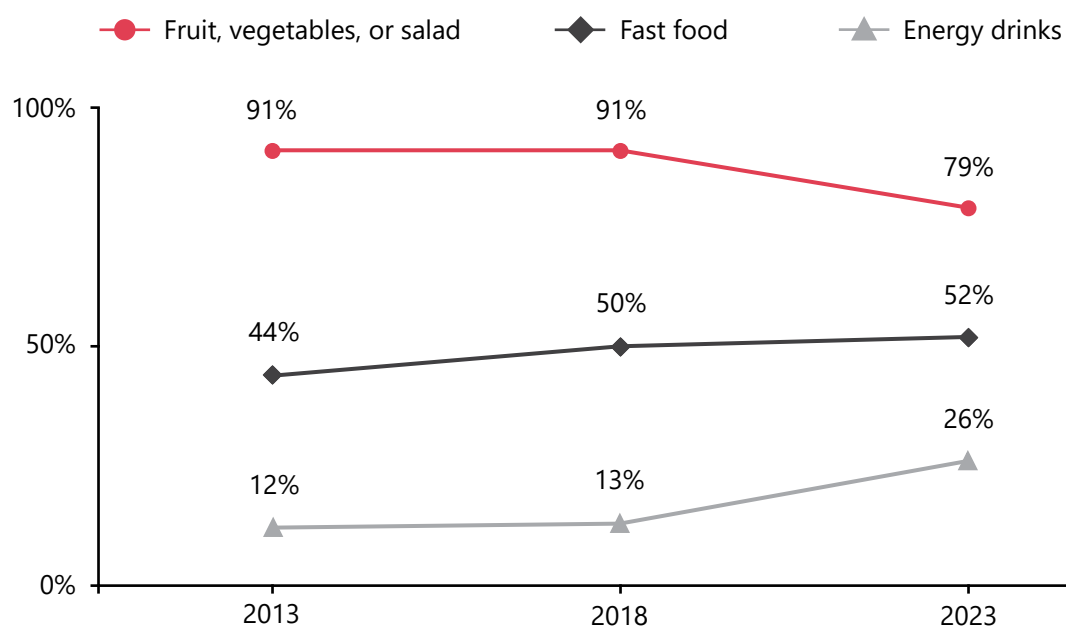
Reasons for most serious head injury (among First Nations youth who had a concussion in the past 12 months)	
Playing or training for organized sports	35%
Using alcohol or other substances	17%
Riding a bike	12%
Playing recreational sports (without a coach)	12%
Fighting with another person	11%
Skateboarding	8%
Working	8%
Riding/driving in a car or other motor vehicle	7%
Other	24%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Eating behaviours & body image

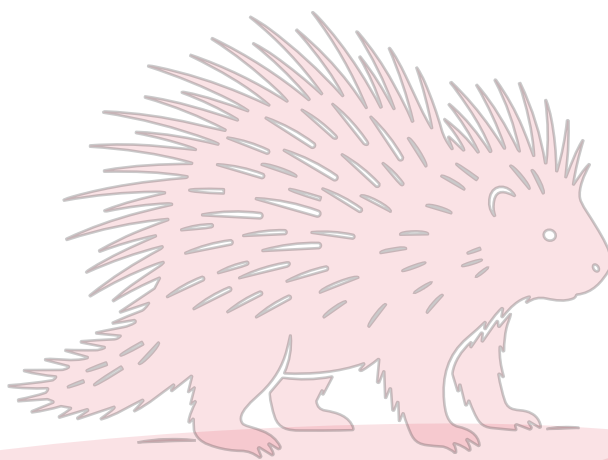
First Nations youth were less likely to have eaten fruit and vegetables on the day before taking the survey than in previous years, and were more likely to have consumed energy drinks and fast food.

Changes over the past decade in what First Nations youth ate & drank yesterday



Note: The difference between 2013 and 2018 was not statistically significant for energy drinks, nor was the difference between 2018 and 2023 for fast food.

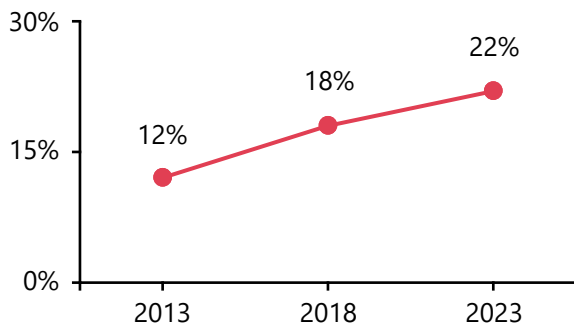
Compared to non-First Nations youth, First Nations youth were less likely to have eaten fruits or vegetables (79% vs. 87%), sweets (73% vs. 78%), and traditional foods from their background (23% vs. 43%) the day before completing the survey; and were more likely to have had fast food (52% vs. 45%) and energy drinks (26% vs. 14%). Among First Nations youth, rural-based ones were more likely to have eaten traditional foods that day (29% vs. 20% of urban-based youth).



Disordered eating

In the past year, 22% of First Nations youth had vomited on purpose after eating (purged), with males least likely to have done so (e.g., 16% vs. 28% of non-binary youth), including on a weekly basis (2% vs. 5% of female and non-binary youth). The percentage who purged increased over the past decade.

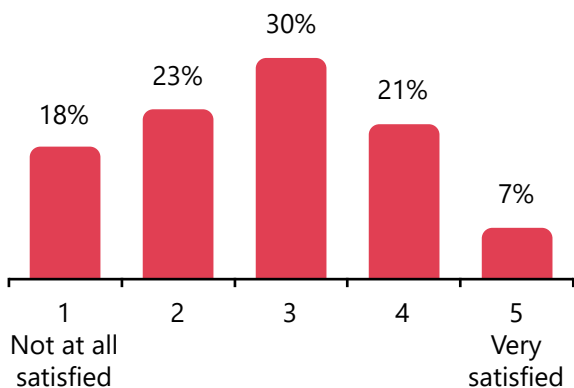
Increase over time in First Nations youth who had vomited on purpose after eating in the past year



Body image

Fewer than 1 in 10 First Nations youth (7%) felt very satisfied with how their body looked, and 18% were not at all satisfied. Males were most likely to rate their body satisfaction as a 4 or 5 out of 5 (e.g., 37% vs. 17% of non-binary youth).

How satisfied First Nations youth felt with how their body looked



Mental health & well-being

"[I want to learn more about] mental health (anxiety, depression, ADHD/ADD)."

– 17-year-old non-binary youth

"My mental health is a roller coaster."

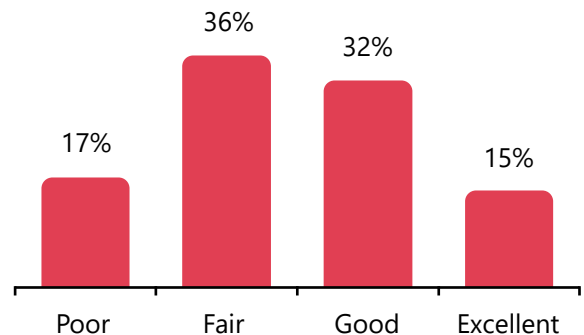
– 14-year-old female

"It's just part of life to feel sad cause that means you've been happy."

– 13-year-old male

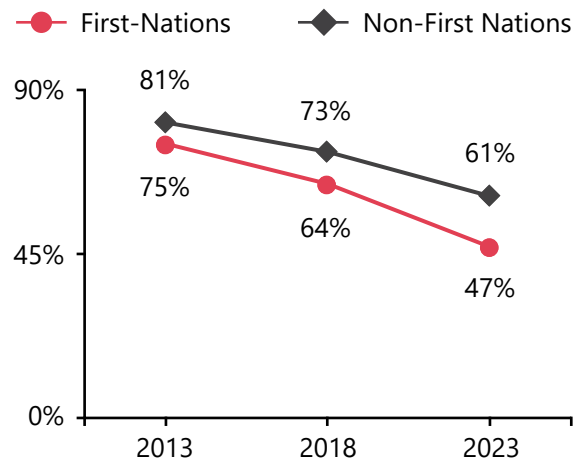
Just under half of First Nations youth (47%) rated their mental health as good or excellent, which was a decrease from 64% in 2018 and 75% in 2013. Rates were similar between urban- and rural-based youth. Males were most likely to rate their mental health this positively (63% vs. 34% of females vs. 17% of non-binary youth).

How First Nations youth rated their mental health



First Nations youth were less likely than their non-First Nations peers to rate their mental health as good or excellent (47% vs. 61%). This gap was similar to that seen in 2018 and wider than in 2013.

Decrease over time in students who rated their mental health as good or excellent



First Nations youth were more likely to rate their mental health as good or excellent when they:

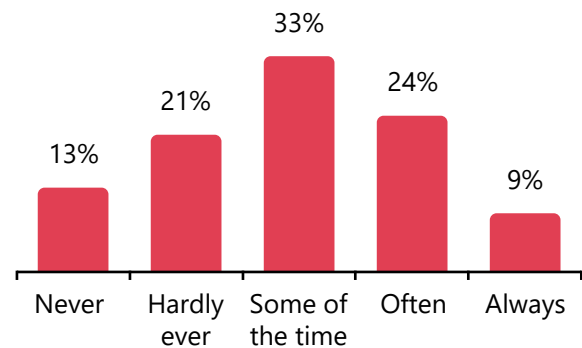
- Felt like a part of their school (69% vs. 23% of those who did not feel like a part of their school).
- Felt quite or very connected to community (68% vs. 29% of those who felt not at all or only a little connected).
- Had friends they could share their ups and downs with (52% vs. 25% of those who did not have such friends).
- Felt their family paid attention to them quite a bit or very much (61% vs. 16% of those who felt their family paid attention to them not at all or very little).

During the past 30 days, 50% of First Nations youth felt happy most or all of the time (vs. 59% in 2018 and 64% in 2013), 33% were happy some of the time, and 17% were happy a little or none of the time.

Time alone & loneliness

The majority of youth (61%) felt they spent the right amount of time on their own, 24% did not have enough time on their own, and 16% felt they spent too much time alone. First Nations youth were more likely than non-First Nations youth to often or always feel lonely (33% vs. 24%), and non-binary youth were most likely to feel this level of loneliness (50% vs. 41% of females vs. 24% of males).

How often First Nations youth felt lonely



Youth were less likely to often or always feel lonely if they felt they spent enough time with their family (27% vs. 53% who did not spend enough time with them) and with their friends (27% vs. 49%).

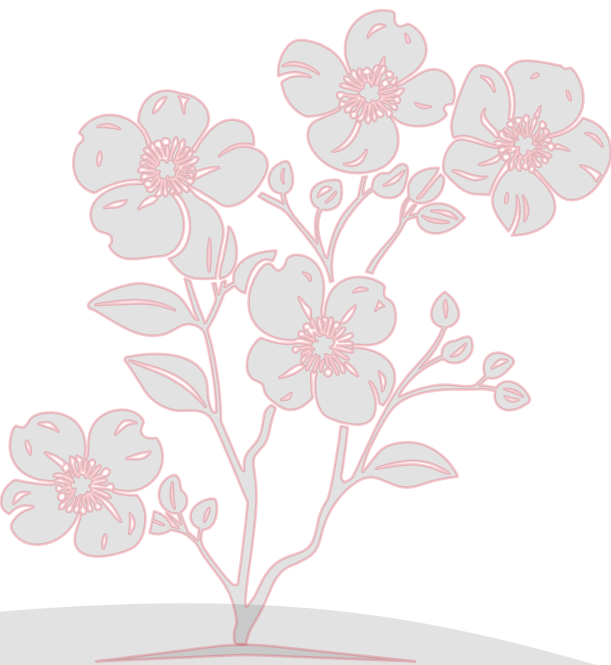
First Nations youth who felt they spent the right amount of time on their own were more likely than those who did not get enough time alone to rate their mental health as good or excellent (55% vs. 28%), usually feel good about themselves (51% vs. 22%), feel they managed their stress well or very well (50% vs. 29%; among those who felt stress), and feel quite or very hopeful for their future (58% vs. 36%).

Life satisfaction

The majority of First Nations youth reported they had a good life and that their life was going well. However, First Nations youth were less likely than those 5 years earlier to report positive life satisfaction and were also less likely than non-First Nations youth to do so.

How much youth agreed/strongly agreed ...			
	First Nations		Non-First Nations
	2018	2023	2023
They had a good life	71%	64%	76%
Their life was going well	65%	54%	66%
They had what they wanted in life	52%	47%	53%
Their life was going just right	52%	42%	52%
They wished they had a different life	20%	24%	19%

Males were most likely to feel satisfied with their life. For example, 75% felt they had a good life (vs. 58% of females vs. 39% of non-binary youth), and 16% wished for a different life (vs. 30% of females vs. 44% of non-binary youth).



Self-confidence & sense of competence

Most First Nations youth (70%) could name something they were good at. They commonly named skills in areas such as art (e.g., drawing, painting, creative writing, makeup, playing instruments, singing, theatre, and photography), sports (e.g., soccer, badminton, lacrosse, volleyball, baseball, basketball, hockey, dirt biking, skiing, snowmobile, football, golf, running, gymnastics, swimming, and skating), dance, cooking, baking, reading, school subjects, communicating, playing video games, horseback riding, fishing, and hunting. Examples included:

"I'm very good at playing video games and learning new things."

– 17-year-old male

"Art, cooking, theatre, writing, dance."

– 12-year-old female

"Communicating emotionally with others."

– 17-year-old female

"I'm good at some subjects at school and I'm good at sports like volleyball and skiing."

– 14-year-old female

"I like to cook and I'm good at it."

– 13-year-old male

"Makeup, anything beauty or art related, poetry and writing."

– 16-year-old non-binary youth

"I am really good at academics like math and science."

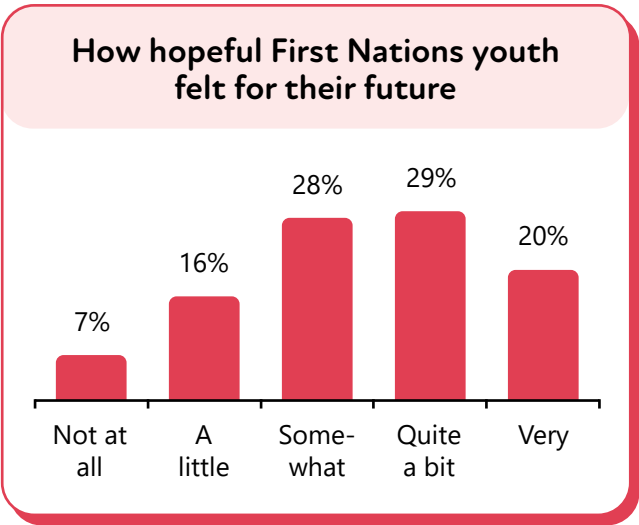
– 15-year-old male

Youth who had opportunities to participate in sports and volunteering in their community were more likely to be able to name something they were good at, as were those who had caring adults in their life such as a caring teacher (78% vs. 50% of those who did not feel their teacher cared about them). First Nations youth who felt that they were good at something were more likely to have felt happy most or all of the time in the past month (56% vs. 34% who could not name something they were good at), and to feel quite or very hopeful for their future (57% vs. 31%).

Just over 4 in 10 First Nations youth reported feeling good about themselves (42% vs. 52% of non-First Nations youth), which was a decrease from 53% in 2018. Males were most likely to feel good about themselves (56% vs. 30% of females vs. 19% of non-binary youth).

Hopefulness

About half of First Nations youth (49%) felt quite or very hopeful for their future. This was a decrease from 60% in 2018. Males were most likely to feel this hopeful (56% vs. 45% of females vs. 27% of non-binary youth).



Youth were more likely to feel hopeful for the future when they had connections and supports, such as an adult to help them learn life skills (52% felt quite or very hopeful vs. 31% of those who did not have this) and a teacher who cared about them (61% vs. 27%). They also felt more hopeful for their future when they were quite or very proud of their background (52% vs. 43% of those who were not at all or only a little proud), and quite or very much a part of their community (69% vs. 33% who felt not at all or a little connected).

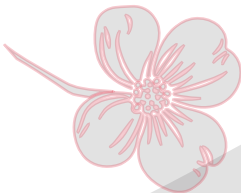
Mental health conditions

First Nations youth most commonly reported having an anxiety disorder (36%) and ADHD/ADD (32%). There was an increase over time in those who reported having an anxiety disorder, ADHD/ADD, PTSD, a substance use addiction, and autism spectrum disorder.

First Nations youth were more likely than their non-First Nations peers to report having a number of health conditions, including depression (25% vs. 13%), an eating disorder (14% vs. 7%), and a substance use addiction (12% vs. 4%).

First Nations youth's specific health conditions		
	2018	2023
Anxiety disorder	28%	36%
Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD/ADD)	11%	32%
Depression	26%	25%
Eating disorder	N/A	14%
Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)	N/A	10%
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	5%	10%
Alcohol or other substance use addiction	6%	12%
Autism spectrum disorder	1%	6%
Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD/FAS/FAE)	2%	2%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.
N/A: The item was not included on the 2018 BC AHS.
Note: The difference between 2018 and 2023 for 'depression' was not statistically significant.



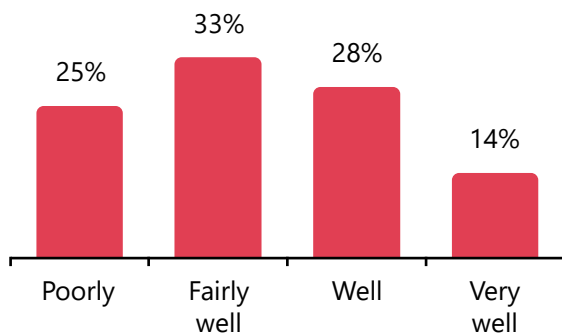
Stress & despair

Most First Nations youth experienced at least a little stress (89%) and despair (70%) over the past month, including 17% who experienced extreme levels of stress (vs. 14% in 2018) and 12% who experienced extreme levels of despair (vs. 9% in 2018). Non-binary youth were most likely to experience extreme stress (32% vs. 23% of females vs. 9% of males) and extreme despair (25% vs. 15% of females vs. 6% of males) in the past month.

First Nations youth were more likely than their non-First Nations peers to have experienced extreme stress (17% vs. 12%) and despair (12% vs. 8%) in the past month, and this disparity has been comparable over the past decade.

Among First Nations youth who experienced stress, 43% felt they managed it well or very well, which was lower than 5 years earlier (50% in 2018) and in comparison to non-First Nations youth (49% in 2023).

How well First Nations youth managed their stress (among those who felt stressed)



Youth were less likely to experience stress and despair, and were more likely to feel they managed their stress well when they had supportive adults in their life. For example, those who felt an adult in their community cared about them were less likely to experience extreme stress (15% vs. 22% of those without such an adult) or despair (10% vs. 16%) in the past month.

Self-harm

"I used to hurt myself a lot during 7th & 8th grade. I'm still struggling with it now and I don't know what to do."

– 15-year-old male

About a third of First Nations youth had self-harmed in the past year (34% vs. 27% in 2018 vs. 23% in 2013). Non-binary youth were most likely to have done so (59% vs. 45% of females vs. 21% of males).

As in previous survey years, First Nations youth were more likely than their non-First Nations peers to have deliberately cut or hurt themselves in the past year (34% vs. 23% in 2023), and to have done so on six or more occasions (13% vs. 7%). In addition to cutting themselves, First Nations youth indicated a range of other forms of self-harm, with the most common being starving themselves.

Types of self-harm First Nations youth engaged in during the past 12 months (excluding cutting)

Starved self	28%
Used alcohol or other substances	19%
Over-exercised or exercised while injured	14%
Got into a physical fight	7%
Made a medical situation worse	7%
Had unsafe sex	5%
Overdosed	3%
Drove recklessly	3%
Overused laxatives	1%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Youth who had an adult to turn to when they had a serious problem were less likely to have self-harmed in the past year (29% vs. 56% of youth who did not have this type of adult).

Suicidal thoughts & suicide attempts

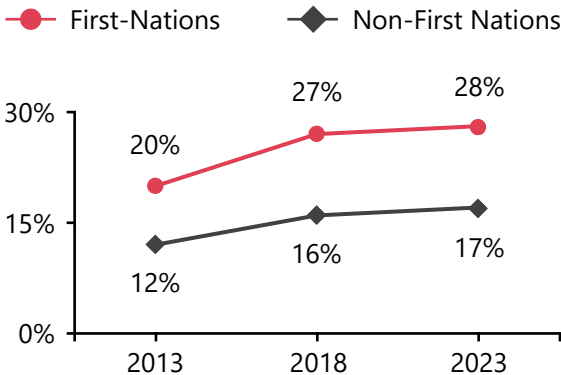
"I'd like to learn more about why I get suicide thoughts and why I have no motivation to do homework, extra-curricular activities, or talk to people."

– 14-year-old female

In the past year, 28% of First Nations youth seriously considered suicide, and 11% attempted suicide. Youth were more likely to have considered suicide than in 2013 (28% vs. 20%). Non-binary youth were most likely to have considered suicide (56% vs. 35% of females vs. 18% of males) and attempted suicide (23% vs. 15% of females vs. 6% of males) in the past 12 months.

First Nations youth remained more likely to have considered suicide compared to non-First Nations youth (28% vs. 17%) and to have attempted suicide (11% vs. 5%) in the past year.

Seriously considered suicide in the past year



Note: The differences between 2018 and 2023 were not statistically significant for First Nations or non-First Nations youth.

Youth who felt quite or very much part of their community were less likely to have considered suicide (16% vs. 42% of those who felt not at all or a little connected) and attempted suicide (6% vs. 17%) in the past year.

About half of First Nations youth had a family member or close friend who had tried to kill themselves (49% vs. 28% of non-First Nations youth), including 23% who had this experience within the past year (vs. 13%).

Information about mental health

First Nations youth most commonly went to a family member and a friend or peer when they needed reliable information about mental health. They were less likely than their non-First Nations peers to have accessed a website or online resource for this information (19% vs. 23%).

Where First Nations youth accessed reliable information about mental health

Family member	41%
Friend/peer	39%
Website/online resource	19%
Mental health professional	18%
School staff	15%
Another source	2%
Didn't know where to go	8%
Didn't go anywhere for this information	26%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Sexual health

Sex education & information

"[I want to learn more about] sex education: what to do, when to know if it's right, safety."

– 16-year-old female

Similar to non-First Nations youth, 79% of First Nations youth had received sex education at their school, with 50% finding it helpful and 29% not finding it helpful. Also:

- **80%** felt the sex education they received was respectful of their culture/religion.
- **80%** felt it started at the right age for them.
- **79%** felt it was relevant to their gender identity.
- **72%** felt it was relevant to their sexual orientation.
- **52%** felt it was relevant to any disability or health condition they had.

As with information about mental health, when they needed reliable information about sexual health, First Nations youth most commonly went to a parent or guardian and a friend or peer.

Where First Nations youth accessed reliable information about sexual health

Parent/guardian	31%
A same-aged friend or peer	28%
Website/online resource	22%
An older youth	17%
Sexual health professional	11%
Other family member	10%
Adult outside their family	8%
School staff	8%
Pornography	5%
Other professional	3%
Printed resource (e.g., book, brochure, poster)	3%
Didn't know where to go for this information	6%
Didn't go anywhere	36%

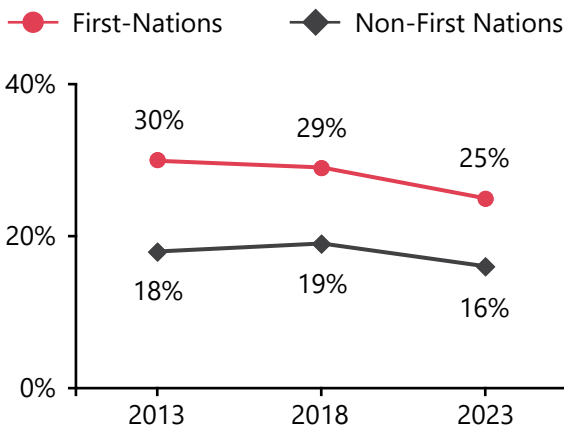
Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Oral sex & sexual intercourse

First Nations youth were less likely than 5 and 10 years earlier to have engaged in oral sex (e.g., 24% vs. 28% in 2018). They remained more likely than non-First Nations youth to have done so (24% vs. 17%). Among youth who had ever had oral sex, First Nations youth were more likely to have used a condom the last time they had oral sex (24% vs. 18% of non-First Nations youth). The rate was comparable over the past decade for First Nations youth, while the rate increased for non-First Nations youth.

The percentage of youth who had ever had sexual intercourse was the lowest in a decade (e.g., 25% vs. 29% in 2018). First Nations youth remained more likely to have had intercourse compared to their non-First Nations peers. However, the gap between the two groups narrowed over the past decade.

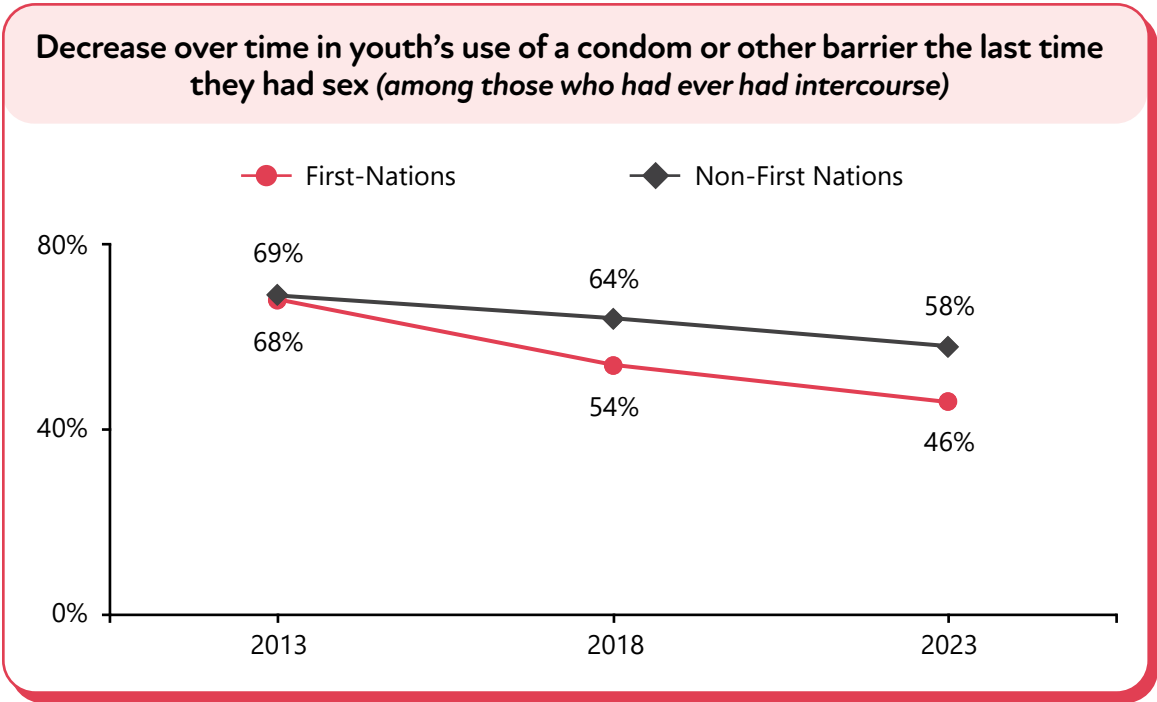
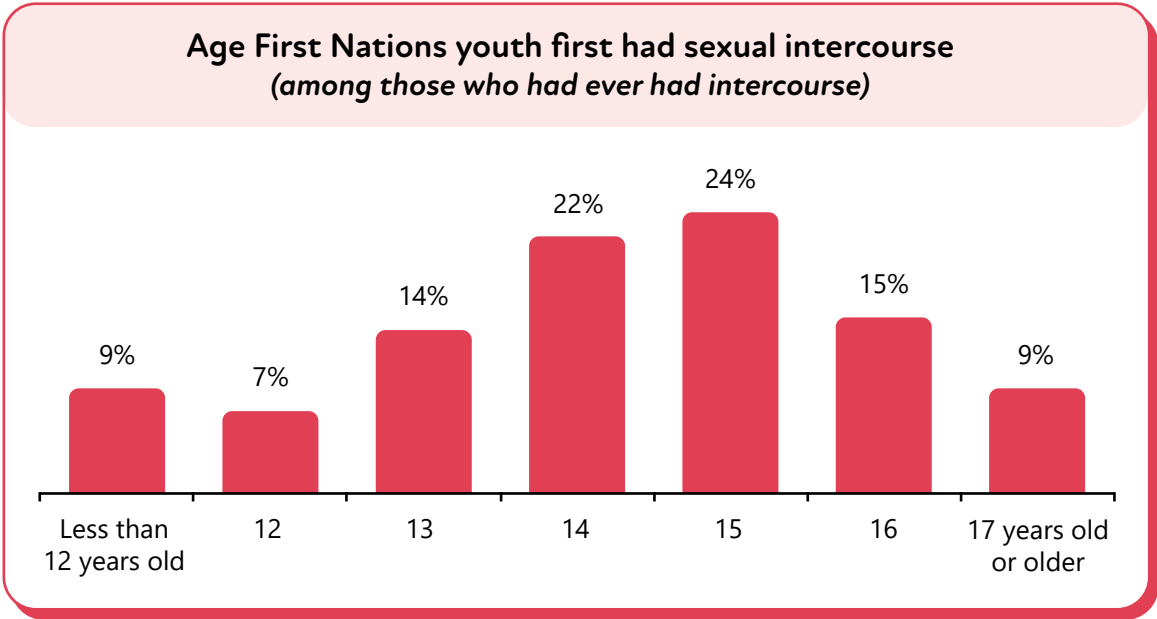
Trend over time in youth ever having had sexual intercourse



Note: The difference between 2013 and 2018 was not statistically significant for First Nations or non-First Nations youth.

Just under half of First Nations youth (48%) who had ever had intercourse first did so at age 15 or older.

About half of First Nations youth who had ever had intercourse reported they or their partner used a condom or other barrier/protection the last time they had sex (46% vs. 58% of non-First Nations youth).



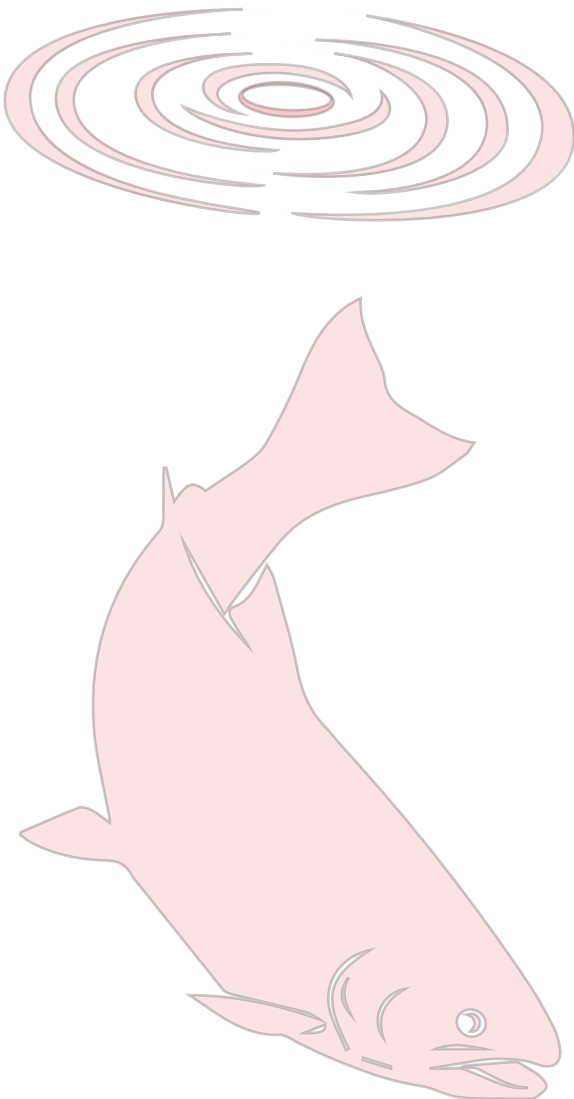
Note: In 2013, the difference between First Nations and non-First Nations youth was not statistically significant.

Forced sex

Compared to 5 and 10 years earlier, First Nations youth were more likely to have been forced into sexual activity by an adult (e.g., 5% vs. 4% in 2018), and by another youth (12% vs. 9% in 2018 vs. 7% in 2013). Males were least likely to report being forced into sexual activity by an adult (e.g., 2% vs. 12% of non-binary youth) and by another youth (e.g., 5% vs. 19% of females).

Sexually transmitted infections

Similar to their non-First Nations peers, 1% of First Nations youth had ever been told by a doctor or nurse that they had a sexually transmitted infection. This was half the rate of 10 years earlier (2% in 2013).



Pregnancy involvement

Compared to a decade earlier, First Nations youth were less likely to have been involved in a pregnancy (2% vs. 3% in 2013). However, they were more likely to report being unsure if they had been involved in one (2% vs. 1% in 2018 and 2013).

The most common methods youth used to prevent pregnancy were condoms and withdrawal. Youth who had ever had intercourse were more likely than a decade earlier to use withdrawal as their only method of contraception the last time they had sex (16% vs. 6% in 2013), and were less likely to have used condoms (45% vs. 62%). Youth were less likely to have used birth control pills, patch, NuvaRing or other prescribed method compared to 5 years earlier (29% vs. 38% in 2018).

Method(s) First Nations youth used to prevent pregnancy the last time they had sex (among those who had ever had sexual intercourse)	
Condoms	45%
Withdrawal	43%
Birth control pills, birth control patch, NuvaRing, or other method prescribed by a doctor or nurse	29%
Emergency contraception	9%
IUD	7%
Depo-Provera	4%
Not sure	7%
Didn't try to prevent pregnancy	4%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

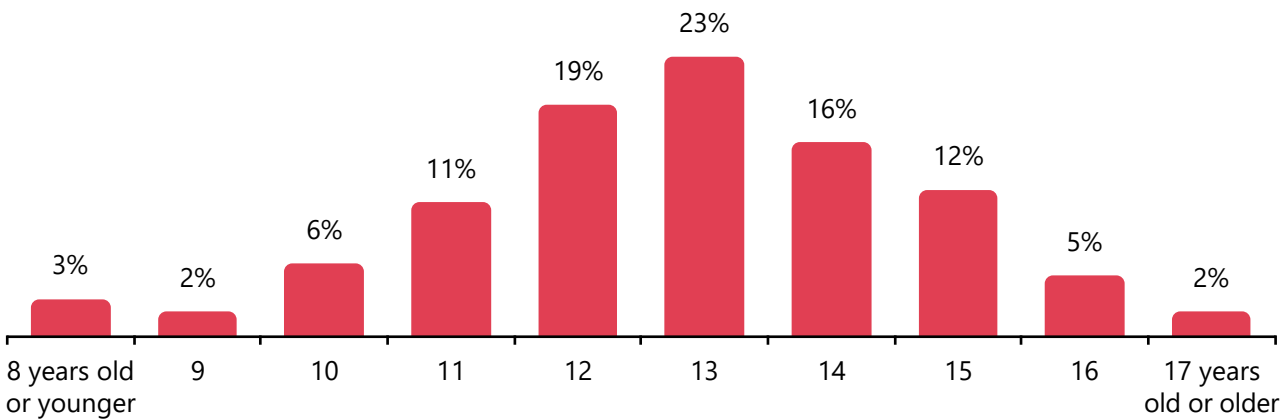
One in 10 youth (10%) who had ever had intercourse indicated the last time they had sex was with a same-sex partner.

Substance use

Vaping

First Nations youth were more likely to have tried vaping than non-First Nations youth (44% vs. 25%). Among First Nations youth, rural-based youth were more likely to have vaped (50% vs. 42% of urban-based youth). Also, females were most likely to vape (55% vs. 46% of non-binary youth vs. 36% of males) and were more likely than males to have first vaped before age 13 (45% vs. 37%; among those who had vaped).

Age First Nations youth first vaped (among those who had ever vaped)



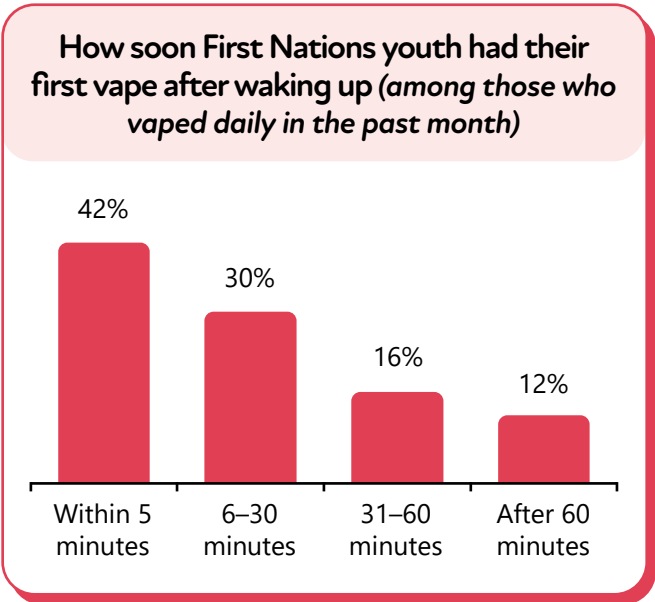
Among First Nations youth who had ever vaped, 63% vaped in the past 30 days (vs. 56% of non-First Nations youth).

One in 12 youth (8%) who vaped in the past month had used a product to help them stop vaping in that time.

Number of days First Nations youth vaped in the past 30 days (among those who had ever vaped)

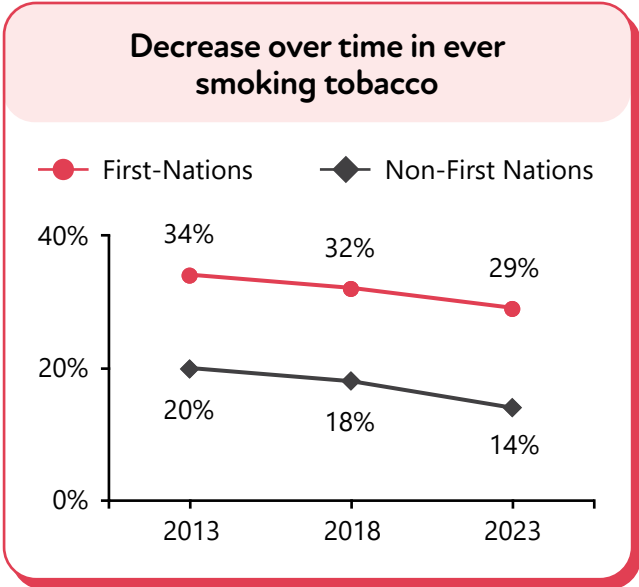
0 days	37%
1 or 2 days	16%
3 to 5 days	6%
6 to 9 days	6%
10 to 19 days	9%
20 to 29 days	8%
All 30 days	18%

Among the 18% of youth who vaped daily in the past 30 days, 72% had their first vape within 30 minutes of waking up.



Smoking

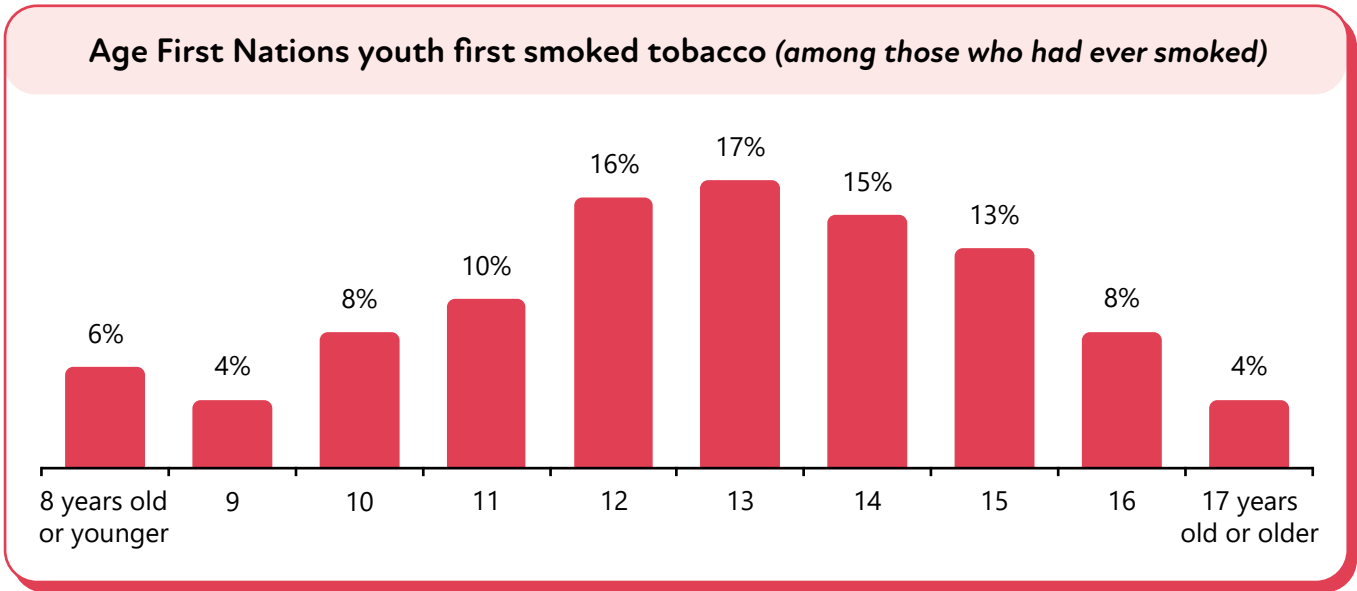
About 3 in 10 First Nations youth had smoked tobacco excluding traditional/ceremonial tobacco (29% vs. 14% of non-First Nations youth), which was a decrease from 5 and 10 years earlier.



Note: The difference between 2013 and 2018 was not statistically significant for First Nations youth.

Males were least likely to have smoked (e.g., 23% vs. 36% of females), and those who had were more likely than females to wait until they were at least 15 years old to first do so (29% vs. 21%). Also, urban-based youth were less likely to have tried tobacco compared to rural-based youth (27% vs. 34%).

First Nations youth who had smoked were more likely than non-First Nations youth to have first smoked at a younger age (e.g., 43% first smoked at 12 or younger vs. 22% of non-First Nations youth).



Among those who had smoked, 47% smoked in the past month.

Number of days First Nations youth smoked in the past 30 days (among those who had ever smoked)	
0 days	53%
1 or 2 days	23%
3 to 5 days	7%
6 to 9 days	4%
10 to 19 days	5%
20 to 29 days	3%
All 30 days	6%

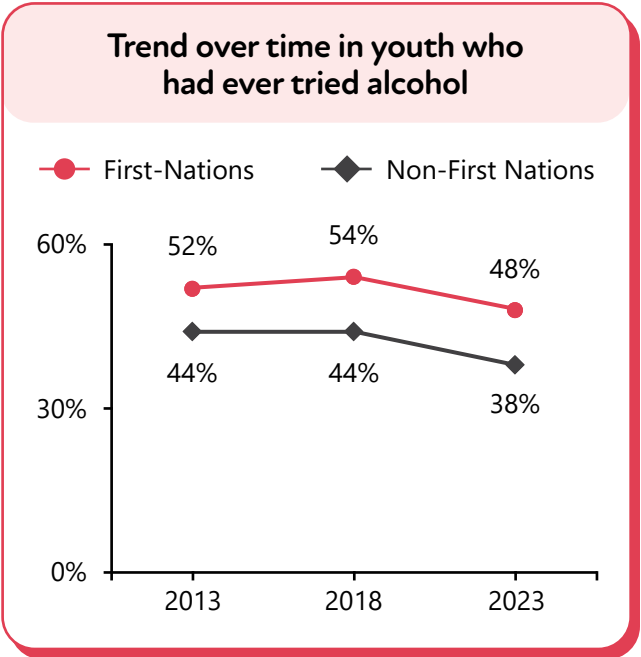
Tobacco products used by First Nations youth in the past month included cigarettes (14% vs. 5% of non-First Nations youth), cigars/cigarillos (4% vs. 2%), chewing tobacco (3% vs. 1%), and a hookah (1%).

Among First Nations youth who had smoked in the past month, 11% had used a product to help them stop smoking during this time (excluding vapes).

Most youth (89%) who had tried smoking had also vaped.

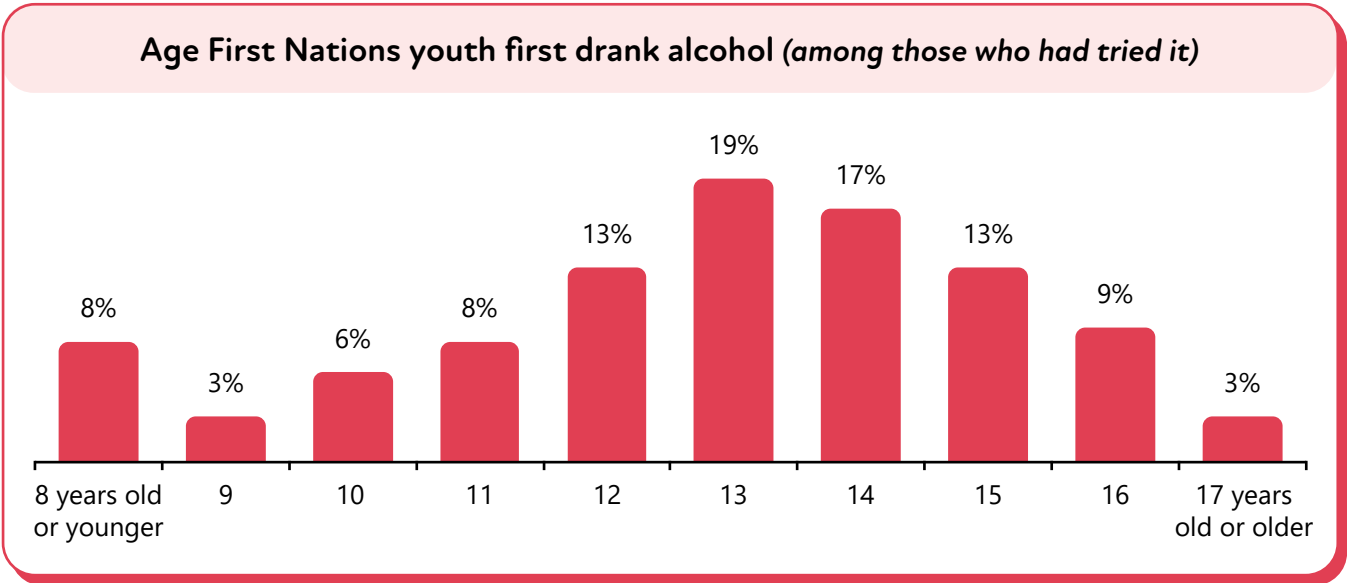
Alcohol use

Similar to non-First Nations youth, First Nations youth were less likely to have tried alcohol than 5 and 10 years earlier. Among First Nations youth, females were most likely to have tried alcohol (e.g., 55% vs. 42% of males).

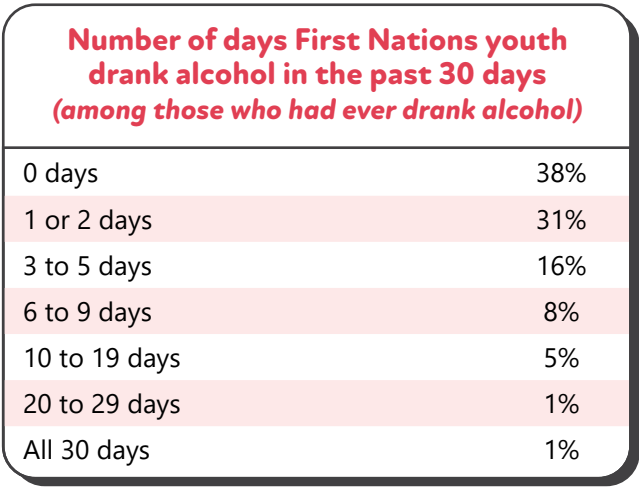


Note: The difference between 2013 and 2018 was not statistically significant for First Nations or non-First Nations youth.

Among youth who had tried alcohol, there was an increase in those who first drank before their 13th birthday (e.g., 38% vs. 34% in 2018). Females were more likely than males to have first tried alcohol at age 12 or younger (41% vs. 34%).

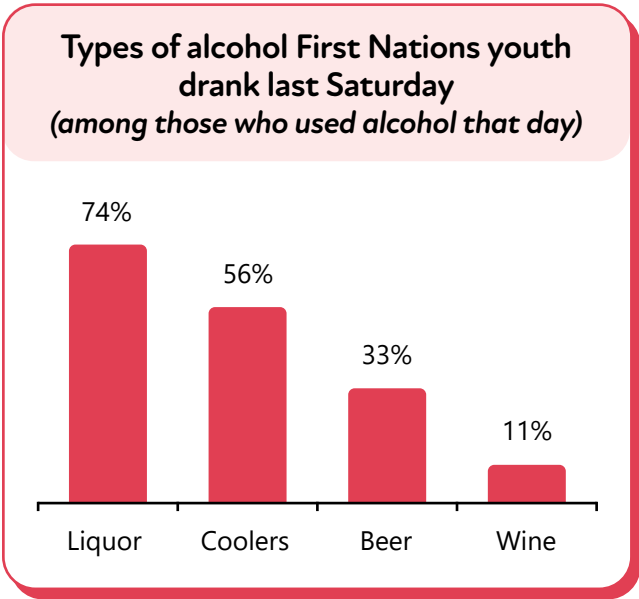


Comparable to non-First Nations youth, the majority of First Nations youth (62%) who had tried alcohol drank in the past 30 days.



About 4 in 10 youth who had tried alcohol had five or more alcoholic drinks within a couple of hours at least once in the past month (41% vs. 34% of non-First Nations youth), including 1% who did so on at least 20 days. Also, 32% of those who had tried alcohol had more than two drinks on at least 1 day the previous week, including 8% who did so on 3 or more days that week.

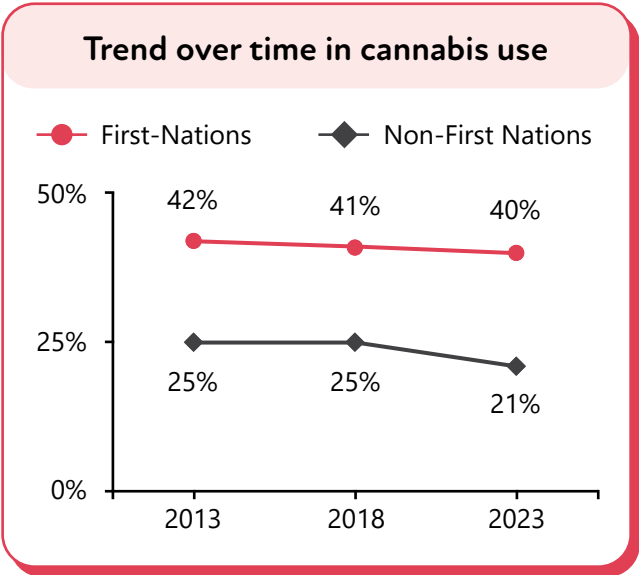
Among youth who had tried alcohol, 38% drank on the Saturday prior to taking the survey.



Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Cannabis use

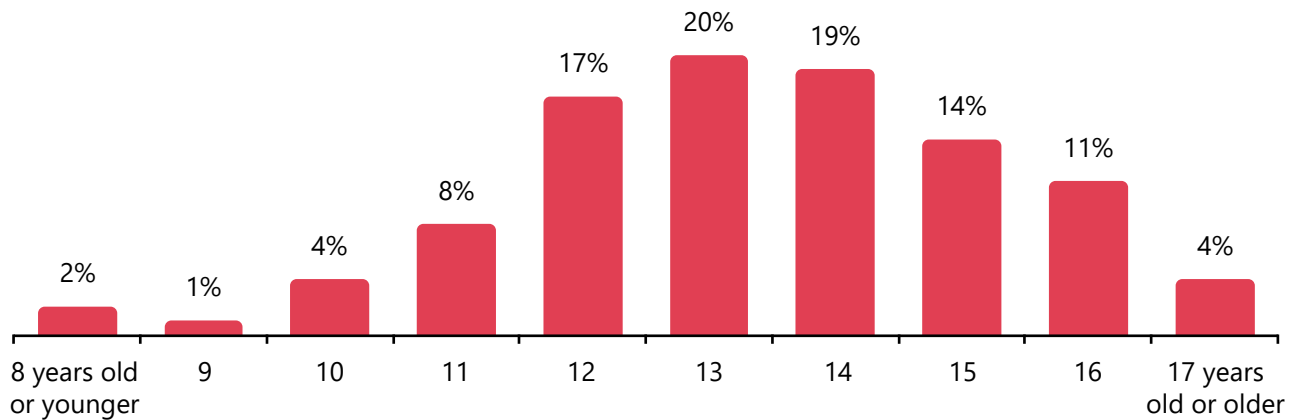
First Nations youth remained more likely to have tried cannabis than non-First Nations youth (40% vs. 21%), and the disparity between the two groups did not change in a decade. There were also no differences between rural- and urban-based First Nations youth in trying cannabis. Females were more likely than males to have used it (47% vs. 34%).



Note: There were no statistically significant differences between survey years for First Nations youth.

First Nations youth were less likely than their non-First Nations peers to have waited until age 15 to first try cannabis (28% vs. 46%; among those who had ever used cannabis). However, they were more likely to have waited compared to 10 years earlier (28% vs. 22% in 2013), with males most likely to have waited (e.g., 37% vs. 23% of females; among those who had ever used cannabis).

Age First Nations youth first tried cannabis (among those who had ever used it)



The majority of youth who had tried cannabis had used it in the past month, including 20% who used it on 20 or more days (vs. 15% in 2018), and 40% who used it on the Saturday before taking the survey.

Number of days First Nations youth used cannabis in the past 30 days (among those who had ever used cannabis)

0 days	37%
1 or 2 days	19%
3 to 5 days	10%
6 to 9 days	6%
10 to 19 days	8%
20 to 29 days	5%
All 30 days	15%

Where First Nations youth got their most recent cannabis (among those who had ever used cannabis)

It was shared among a group of friends	56%
Friend/family member gave it to them	41%
Bought it from a friend/family member	15%
Bought it from a cannabis store	11%
Bought it from someone they didn't know	4%
Someone they did not know gave it to them	3%
Bought it from a website	2%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Most youth (78%) who used cannabis last did so by smoking it, 32% vaped it, 25% ate it, and 1% took it another way (e.g., CBD oil). Their most common recent source of cannabis was sharing it among a group of friends.

Use of other substances

The most common other substance used by First Nations youth was mushrooms. They were more likely to have used mushrooms than 5 and 10 years earlier (13% vs. 10% in 2018 and 2013), and were less likely than 10 years earlier to have used other hallucinogens (4% vs. 6% in 2013) as well as ecstasy (3% vs. 7%).

Substances First Nations youth had ever used	
Mushrooms	13%
More of their own prescription than prescribed	8%
Prescription pills without a doctor's consent (other than benzodiazepines)	6%
Benzodiazepines without a doctor's consent (e.g., Xanax, Valium, Ativan)	4%
Hallucinogens (other than mushrooms)	4%
Inhalants	3%
Cocaine	3%
Ecstasy/MDMA	3%
Heroin, fentanyl, or other opioids	2%
Amphetamines	2%
Crystal meth	1%
Ketamine, GHB	1%

Driving after substance use

Among First Nations youth, 4% had driven a vehicle after consuming alcohol (vs. 5% in 2018), 5% had driven after using cannabis, and 2% had driven after using other substances. Also, around a quarter had been a passenger of a driver who had been using alcohol (27% vs. 22% in 2013) and cannabis (26% vs. 22% in 2013 and 2018), and 9% had been in a vehicle with a driver who had used other substances (vs. 6% in 2018).

First Nations youth who had been in a car or other vehicle after substance use

Driven after using substances		
	Urban-based	Rural-based
Alcohol	3%	5%
Cannabis	5%	7%
Other substances	2%	2%
Passenger of someone who had been using substances		
	Urban-based	Rural-based
Alcohol	26%	30%
Cannabis	23%	31%
Other substances	9%	9%

Note: The difference between urban- and rural-based youth was not statistically significant for driving after alcohol use.

Reasons for using substances

The most common reason youth last used substances was to have fun. There was an increase from 5 years earlier in those who had used because they felt like there was nothing else to do (18% vs. 14% in 2018), because of an addiction (11% vs. 4%), and to change the effects of another substance (4% vs. 1%).

Reasons First Nations youth used substances the last time (among those who had used alcohol or other substances)

Wanted to have fun	62%
Because of stress	32%
Wanted to try it/experiment	32%
Friends were doing it	31%
Felt down/sad	30%
There was nothing else to do	18%
To manage physical pain	11%
Because of an addiction	11%
Thought it would help them focus	8%
Felt pressured into doing it/ to fit in	5%
To change the effect of another substance	4%
Didn't mean to (e.g., drink was spiked)	2%
Other	9%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Consequences of substance use

In the past 12 months, the majority of First Nations youth who had used substances reported negative consequences of their use (55% vs. 62% in 2018), including 24% who experienced three or more consequences (vs. 30% in 2018).

When asked if they needed help for their substance use in the past year, First Nations youth were more likely than non-First Nations youth to need help with their vaping (10% vs. 5%), cannabis use (9% vs. 4%), alcohol use (7% vs. 3%), and other substance use (3% vs. 1%). Among First Nations youth, females were more likely than males to feel they needed help.

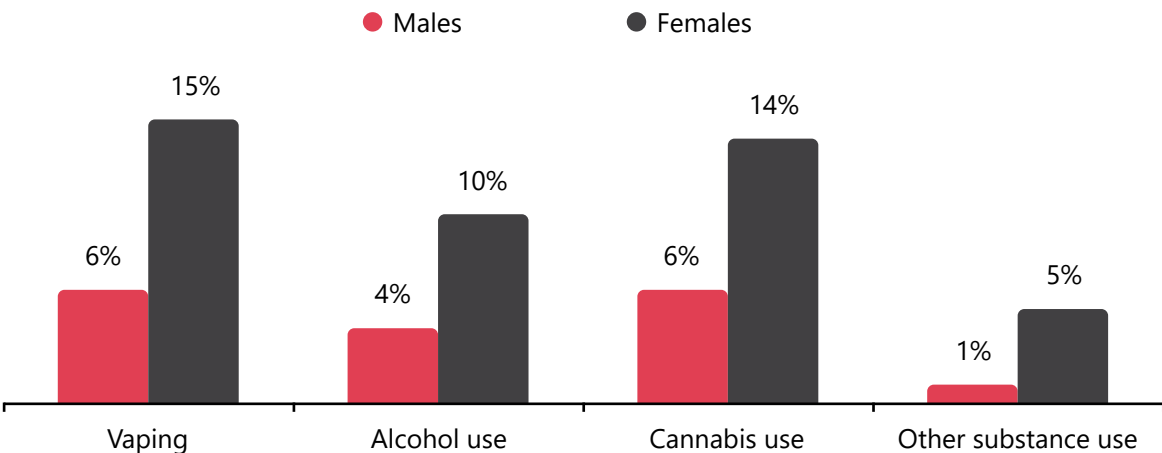
First Nations youth were less likely to use substances at an early age, and to use them regularly when they felt like part of their school and community. For example, among youth who had used the substance, those who felt like a part of their school were less likely to have first tried smoking (34% vs. 47% of those who did not feel like a part of their school), alcohol (31% vs. 45%), and cannabis (29% vs. 39%) before age 13.

Consequences of substance use First Nations youth experienced in the past year (among those who used alcohol or other substances during that time)

Were told they did something they couldn't remember doing	35%
Passed out	31%
Got injured	18%
Argued with family members	17%
School work or grades changed	14%
Lost friends or broke up with a romantic partner	12%
Got into a physical fight	8%
Damaged property	8%
Had sex when they didn't want to	8%
Got in trouble with police	6%
Overdosed	4%
Had to get medical treatment	3%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

First Nations youth whose substance use had reached a point where they needed help in the past year



Access to health care

In the past year, 25% of First Nations youth had not needed to access health care. Males were most likely to report not needing care (e.g., 31% vs. 21% of non-binary youth).

Those who did access care most commonly saw a family doctor, though they were less likely to do so compared to 5 years earlier (48% vs. 55% in 2018). Decreases were also seen in accessing a walk-in clinic (22% vs. 33%) and emergency room (17% vs. 20%). There was an increase in those who accessed a counsellor or psychologist (17% vs. 15% in 2018).

Where First Nations youth got health care in the past 12 months

Family doctor	48%
Specialist (e.g., dermatologist, psychiatrist)	24%
Walk-in clinic	22%
Emergency room (ER)	17%
Counsellor/psychologist	17%
Nurse	10%
Youth clinic	3%
School wellness centre	3%
Foundry centre/Foundry Virtual BC	2%
Traditional healer	2%
Other	4%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

First Nations youth were more likely than non-First Nations youth to have accessed health care from a counsellor or psychologist (17% vs. 12%), nurse (10% vs. 8%), Foundry (2% vs. 1%), and traditional healer (2% vs. 1%); and were less likely to have seen a family doctor (48% vs. 55%) and specialist (24% vs. 31%).

Among First Nations youth, those in urban areas were more likely than those in rural areas to have accessed a family doctor (50% vs. 42%), specialist (26% vs. 18%), counsellor or psychologist (19% vs. 14%), and Foundry (3% vs. 1%). Rural-based youth were more likely to have gone to a nurse (14% vs. 9% of urban-based youth).

When asked specifically if they needed help in the past year because they were physically sick or hurt, 60% of First Nations youth had not needed medical help, 30% had got the help they needed, and 11% did not get needed care (25% of non-binary youth vs. 13% of females vs. 6% of males). First Nations youth were more likely than their non-First Nations peers to have missed out on needed medical services (11% vs. 7%).

Dental visits

Most First Nations youth had been to the dentist in the past 12 months (77% vs. 83% of non-First Nations youth). However, 8% last went to the dentist more than 2 years ago and 1% had never been to the dentist (vs. 3% in 2018).

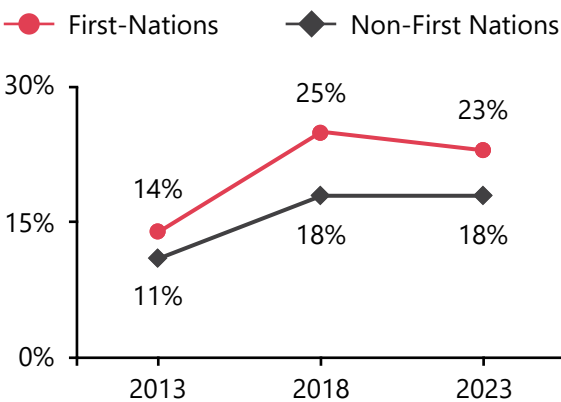
First Nations youth who had an adult to help them with making and getting to appointments were more likely to have seen a dentist in the past year (79% vs. 60% who did not have this type of support).

Access to mental health services

Overall, 61% of youth reported they had not needed mental health services in the past year (78% of males vs. 48% of females vs. 33% of non-binary youth), 16% were able to access the services they needed, and 23% did not get needed services (vs. 14% in 2013).

Consistent with the pattern from previous survey years, First Nations youth were more likely than non-First Nations youth to have missed out on needed mental health services.

Trend over time in youth who missed out on needed mental health services in the past year



Note: The difference between 2018 and 2023 was not statistically significant for First Nations youth.

Among those who missed out on needed mental health services, more than half reported this was because they thought or hoped the problem would go away, and because they didn't want their parent or guardian to know.

Reasons First Nations youth did not get the mental health services they needed in the past 12 months (among those who missed out on needed services)

Thought/hoped the problem would go away	54%
Didn't want parent/guardian to know	53%
Worried their information wouldn't be kept confidential	49%
Didn't know where to go	46%
Afraid of what they would be told	43%
Too busy to go	35%
Afraid someone they knew might see them	34%
Didn't think they could afford it	25%
Had negative experience(s) before	24%
Parent/guardian wouldn't take them	19%
Had no transportation	12%
On a waiting list	10%
Couldn't go when it was open	7%
The service was not available in their community	3%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Among youth who felt they needed mental health services in the past year, those who had an adult in their family they could turn to for support were less likely to have missed out on these services (53% vs. 68% of those who did not have this type of support).

Virtual mental health services

Over the past year, 15% of First Nations youth had accessed virtual mental health services and preferred these to in-person services, while 7% had accessed virtual services but would have preferred to have seen someone in person. There were no differences between urban- and rural-based youth in accessing virtual services.

Experiences of violence & discrimination

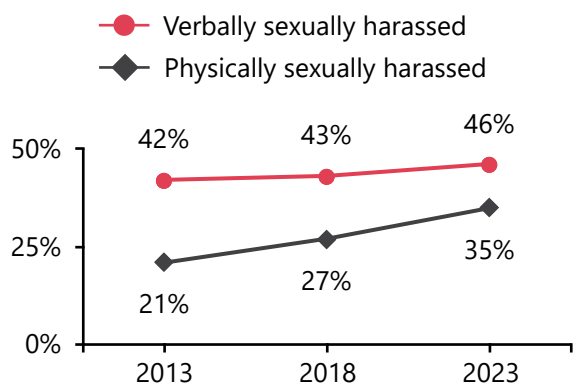
Dating violence

In the past year, 55% of First Nations youth had been in a dating relationship. Among these youth, 12% experienced physical violence in their relationship, which was similar to the percentage 5 and 10 years earlier. Around 1 in 5 youth who had dated (19%) had experienced someone they dated using social media to try to control, embarrass, or hurt them. First Nations youth were more likely than their non-First Nations peers to have experienced physical (12% vs. 8%) and digital (19% vs. 12%) dating violence.

Sexual harassment

In the past 12 months, 46% of First Nations youth experienced verbal sexual harassment (vs. 39% of non-First Nations youth) and 35% experienced physical sexual harassment (vs. 24%). Female and non-binary youth were around twice as likely as males to experience sexual harassment (e.g., 47% of females had been physically sexually harassed in the past year vs. 22% of males).

First Nations youth who had experienced sexual harassment in the past year

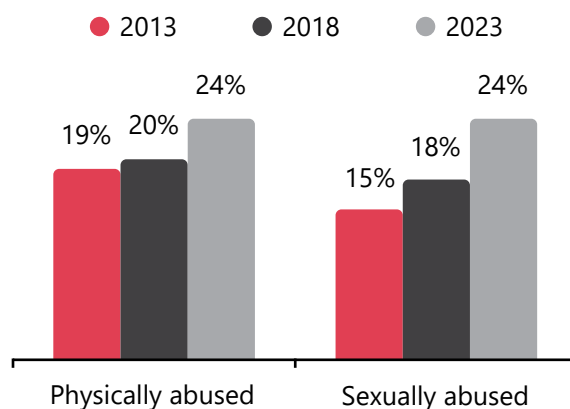


Note: The differences between 2013 and 2018 and between 2018 and 2023 were not statistically significant for verbal sexual harassment.

Physical & sexual abuse

Nearly a quarter of First Nations youth (24%) reported they had ever been physically abused, and the same percentage (24%) had been sexually abused. Both these rates were higher than those reported over the past decade, and higher than among non-First Nations youth (14% had been physically abused and 12% had been sexually abused in 2023).

First Nations youth who had experienced abuse



Note: The difference between 2013 and 2018 was not statistically significant for having experienced physical abuse.

Female and non-binary youth were more likely to experience physical abuse (e.g., 31% of females vs. 17% of males) and sexual abuse (e.g., 34% of females vs. 11% of males).

In-person & online victimization

In the past year, First Nations youth were more likely than non-First Nations youth to have been severely teased (40% vs. 34%), purposefully excluded (42% vs. 37%), and physically attacked or assaulted (13% vs. 8%) in-person at or on the way to/from school, and to be cyberbullied (24% vs. 15%).

In general, males were least likely to have been bullied in person and online. For example, 14% had been cyberbullied in the past year, compared to 31% of females.

In the past year, 9% of First Nations youth had bullied another youth in person, and 11% had bullied someone online.

Discrimination

The majority of First Nations youth (54%) had experienced discrimination in the past year. Rates of most types of discrimination were higher than 5 years earlier and than the rates for non-First Nations youth.

Around half of First Nations youth (53%) who experienced discrimination experienced it rarely, but 10% were discriminated against regularly (vs. 7% of non-First Nations youth). Youth most commonly reported that they were discriminated against at school, followed by on social media or online.

Where First Nations youth experienced discrimination in the past 12 months

At school	33%
On social media/online	21%
On the street	11%
In stores/restaurants	8%
On public transit	6%
In extracurricular activities (e.g., sports)	5%
At work	4%
In a hospital/other health care setting	2%
Other	2%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Reasons youth perceived they had been discriminated against in the past 12 months

	First Nations		Non-First Nations
	2018	2023	2023
Physical appearance	28%	33%	24%
Weight	21%	26%	18%
Race, ethnicity, or skin colour	18%	22%	15%
Gender/sex	10%	19%	13%
Sexual orientation	8%	13%	7%
How much money they/their family had	12%	11%	6%
Health condition	N/A	8%	4%
Religion	N/A	8%	7%
Disability	6%	7%	4%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Note: For 'how much money they/their family had', the difference for First Nations youth between 2018 and 2023 was not statistically significant. For 'religion', the difference between First Nations and non-First Nations youth in 2023 was not statistically significant.

N/A: Not applicable as the question was not asked on the 2018 BC AHS.

Recreational activities

"[I am really good at] hockey, baseball, soccer, and video games."

– 13-year-old male

Swimming

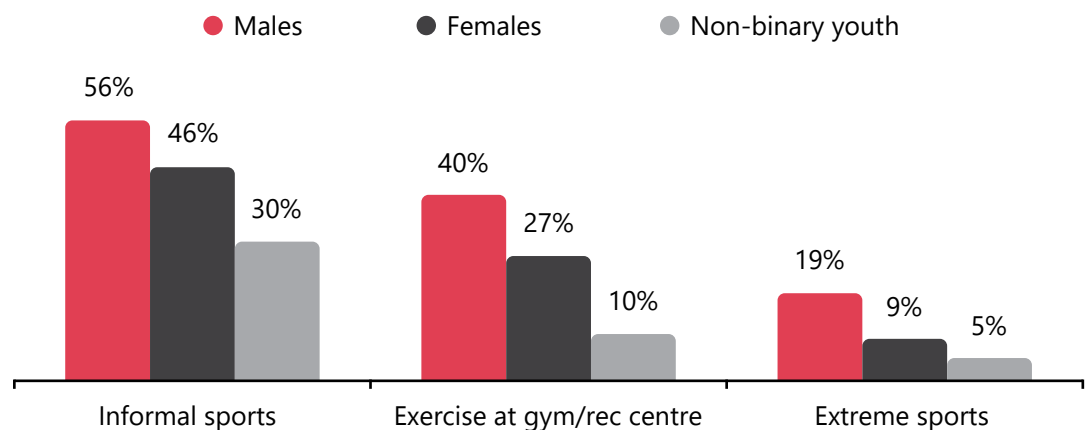
When asked about their ability to swim, 6% of First Nations youth reported not being able to swim (vs. 9% of non-First Nations youth). Also, 62% reported being a confident swimmer, and 32% were able to swim but not confidently.

Extracurricular physical activity

Compared to a decade earlier, rates of participation in weekly extracurricular physical activity decreased for informal sports such as road hockey (49% vs. 56% in 2013); coached sports (40% vs. 47%); and dance, yoga, or exercise classes (11% vs. 15%). Weekly participation in extreme sports such as backcountry skiing was comparable to rates over the past decade (13% in 2023).

There were gender differences in the activities youth engaged in. For example, females were more likely to have taken dance, yoga, or exercise classes on a weekly basis (e.g., 16% vs. 10% of non-binary youth) as well as to exercise to an online video or class (13% vs. 9% of males).

Gender differences in First Nations youth's weekly participation in extracurricular physical activities in the past year



With the exception of extreme sports and exercising to an online video or class, First Nations youth were less likely than non-First Nations youth to engage in regular extracurricular physical activities.

Youth's participation in at least weekly extracurricular physical activity in the past 12 months

	First Nations	Non-First Nations
Informal sports (without a coach)	49%	53%
Organized sports (with a coach)	40%	50%
Exercise at a gym/rec centre	32%	36%
Extreme sports (e.g., back-country skiing, BMX)	13%	12%
Exercise to an online video/online class	11%	12%
Dance, yoga, or exercise classes with an instructor	11%	14%

Note: The differences between First Nations and non-First Nations youth were not statistically significant for extreme sports and exercising to an online video or class.



Barriers to participation

In the past year, 68% of First Nations youth had experienced at least one barrier to participation in extracurricular physical activities (vs. 64% of non-First Nations youth).

Barriers youth experienced to participating in extracurricular physical activity in the past 12 months

	First Nations	Non-First Nations
Too busy	39%	40%
Too anxious/depressed	28%	17%
Was injured	25%	22%
Thought it was too competitive	20%	17%
Worried about being bullied by another youth	19%	12%
Didn't feel welcome	16%	9%
Couldn't get there/get home	16%	11%
Couldn't afford it	13%	9%
Activity wasn't available in their community	11%	8%
Worried about being bullied by an adult	8%	5%
Worried about catching something (e.g., COVID-19)	7%	6%
Parent/guardian would not allow them to	7%	7%
Health needs/disability could not be accommodated	3%	2%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

Note: The difference between First Nations and non-First Nations youth for being too busy and worried about catching something were not statistically significant.

Phone use

The majority of First Nations youth (97%) had a phone or tablet. On their last school day, they most commonly used a device to scroll through social media. They were less likely than 5 years earlier to have sexted (3% vs. 6% in 2018) and watched pornography (6% vs. 11%).

First Nations youth's phone use on their last school day	
Scrolling through social media	72%
Connecting with friends/family	57%
Gaming (other than esports)	28%
Playing/watching esports	16%
Watching porn	6%
Sexting	3%
Gambling	3%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

In the past 12 months, 22% of First Nations youth needed help for their social media use (vs. 18% of non-First Nations youth). Female and non-binary youth were more likely than males to report needing help (e.g., 30% of non-binary youth vs. 17% of males).

Playing games for money

In the past year, 38% of First Nations youth engaged in gambling and gaming for money, including 8% who did so at least weekly and 2% who did so daily.

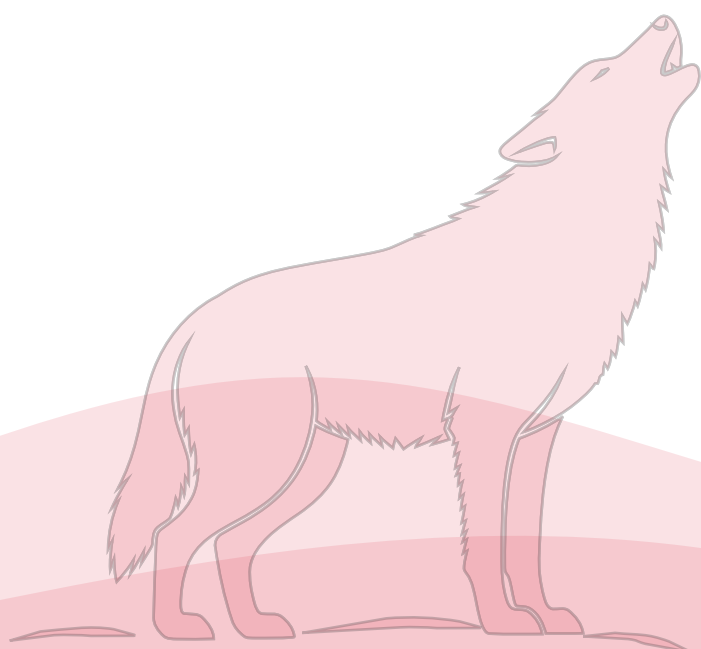
Activities First Nations youth engaged in for money in the past year	
Bought in-game items (e.g., loot boxes)	25%
Played cards/dice in person	12%
Played in a gaming tournament	11%
Streamed video games	10%
Bought lottery tickets/scratch cards	8%
Sports betting in person	7%
Played cards/dice online	5%
Sports betting online	4%

In the past year, 3% of First Nations youth reported needing help for their gambling (vs. 1% of non-First Nations youth), and 15% had reached this point with their gaming (vs. 12% of non-First Nations youth). Females were less likely to need help for their gaming (9% vs. 20% of male and non-binary youth) and gambling (2% vs. 4% of males).

First Nations youth whose parents knew what the youth was doing online most or all of the time were less likely to have participated in gambling and gaming activities, such as playing cards or dice online (4% vs. 6% whose parents rarely or never knew what they were doing online) and buying in-game items (21% vs. 28%).

Meaningful engagement

Just under half of youth felt that the activities they were involved in were quite a bit or very meaningful to them (47% vs. 55% in 2018 vs. 62% in 2013), and 24% felt that their ideas were listened to and acted upon at least quite a bit (vs. 34% in 2018).



School experiences

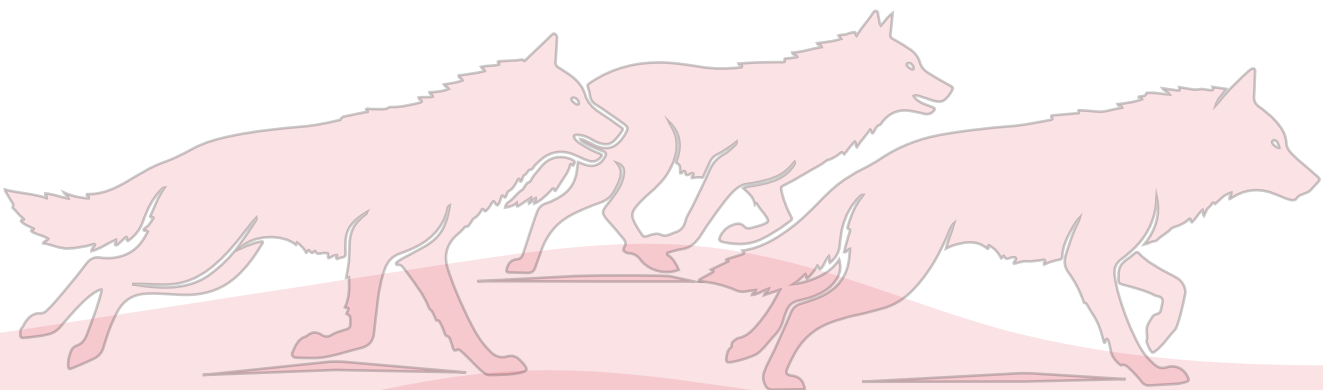
School absences

First Nations youth were more likely to have missed school in the past month than non-First Nations youth, and in comparison to First Nations youth 5 years earlier. The most common reason they were absent was because of illness. However, 18% skipped 3 or more days of school that month and 17% missed this many days because of their mental health.

Youth who had positive experiences at school were less likely to be absent from school. For example, First Nations youth who felt like a part of their school were less likely to have skipped class in the past month (29% vs. 52% of those who did not feel like a part of their school).

Reasons First Nations youth missed school in the past 30 days			
	First Nations		Non-First Nations
	2018	2023	2023
Illness	48%	56%	48%
Appointments	42%	48%	40%
Sleeping in	34%	43%	23%
Skipping	30%	39%	27%
Own mental health (e.g., anxiety depression)	25%	37%	21%
Family responsibilities	29%	35%	16%
No transportation	10%	15%	7%
Bullying	8%	8%	4%
Work	7%	7%	4%
Suspension	N/A	6%	2%

N/A: Not applicable as the question was not asked on the 2018 BC AHS.



School connectedness

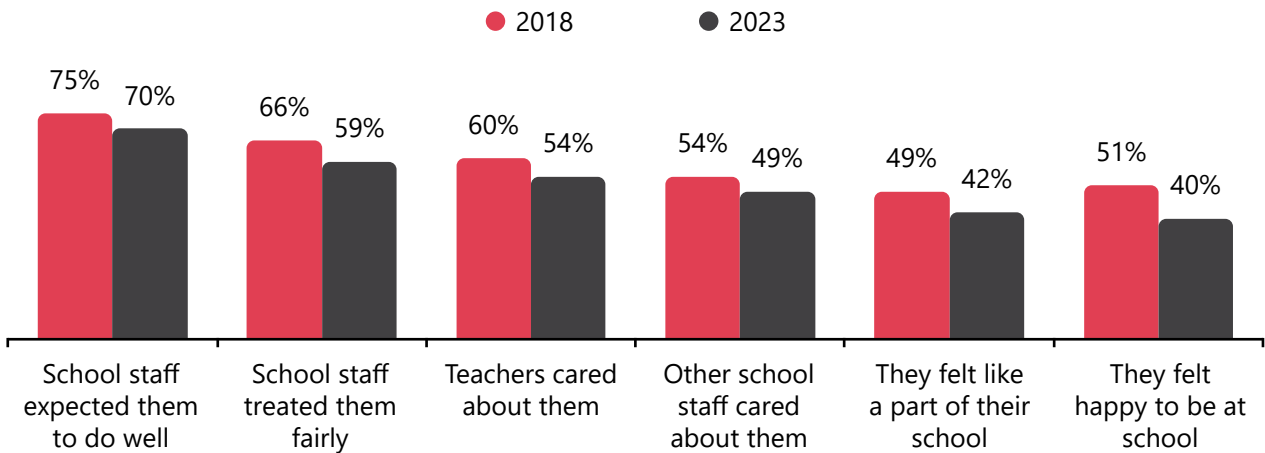
Compared to 2018, First Nations youth were less likely to feel positively about their school experience. Non-binary youth were least likely to feel connected, including to feel like a part of their school (26% vs. 35% of females vs. 50% of males).

First Nations youth who felt like part of their school and felt school staff cared about them were more likely to report positive health and well-being. Additionally, First Nations youth who felt like a part of their school were more likely to feel safe there (82% vs. 22%), and to have plans to attend post-secondary education (70% vs. 49%).

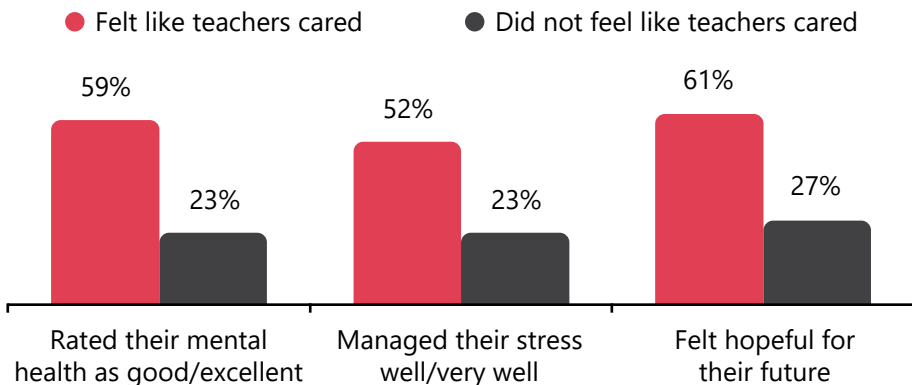
School safety

Overall, the majority of First Nations youth felt safe at school, although a smaller percentage felt safe compared to previous survey years (56% vs. 67% in 2018 vs. 73% in 2013). Males were most likely to feel safe at school (64% vs. 51% of females vs. 33% of non-binary youth). Youth were less likely to feel safe in all locations around their school compared to previous survey years.

First Nations youth who agreed/strongly agreed ...



First Nations youth who felt their teachers cared about them reported more positive health & well-being



Note: First Nations youth who felt they managed their stress well/very well is among those who experienced stress.

Where First Nations youth usually/always felt safe

	2013	2018	2023
School library	93%	89%	86%
Getting to and from school	87%	84%	81%
Classrooms	90%	86%	80%
Cafeteria	87%	84%	78%
Outside on school grounds	84%	82%	76%
Hallways and stairwells	86%	82%	75%
Washrooms	84%	81%	64%
Changing rooms	81%	79%	64%

Note: The differences between 2013 and 2018 for 'outside on school grounds' and 'changing rooms' were not statistically significant.

First Nations youth who felt safe at school were more likely to rate their mental health as good or excellent (63% vs. 16% who did not feel safe there).

Education plans

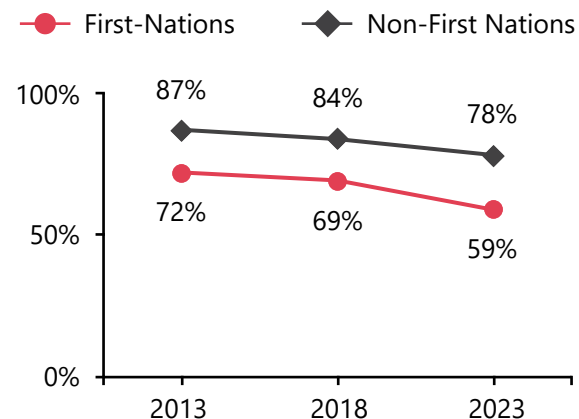
The majority of First Nations youth planned to finish high school and pursue post-secondary education. Non-binary youth were least likely to have post-secondary plans (48% vs. 57% of males vs. 64% of females). Also, rural-based youth were less likely than urban-based ones to plan to attend post-secondary (56% vs. 61%).

School plans of First Nations youth

Didn't expect to finish high school	3%
Planned to finish high school but not go to post-secondary	11%
Planned to go to post-secondary (e.g., university, college, trade school)	59%
Hadn't thought about it	18%
Didn't know	9%

First Nations youth were less likely than their non-First Nations peers to plan to go to post-secondary, consistent with the pattern seen in previous survey years.

Decrease in youth who plan to pursue post-secondary education



Having post-secondary plans was more common among youth who:

- Felt positively about school (e.g., 66% of those who felt their teachers cared about them planned to pursue post-secondary education vs. 44% of those who did not feel their teachers cared).
- Had an adult to support them with their education (e.g., 66% of those who had an adult to help them prepare for post-secondary education vs. 49% who did not have this).
- Had a caring adult in their neighbourhood (61% vs. 55% who did not have this).

First Nations youth who planned to pursue post-secondary education were more likely than those who did not have such plans to be able to name something they were good at (76% vs. 64%) and to usually feel good about themselves (46% vs. 37%).

Feeling safe & supported

"Life is hard and I'm scared to talk to anyone about it."

– 15-year-old female

This report has highlighted challenges that First Nations youth can experience, as well as shown that supports and connections can help them to experience more positive well-being. This section further explores the role of protective factors.

Family

Most First Nations youth often or always felt safe inside their home (88% vs. 91% in 2018 vs. 93% in 2013), although 5% rarely or never felt safe there. Males were most likely to often or always feel safe there (93% vs. 85% of females vs. 78% of non-binary youth).

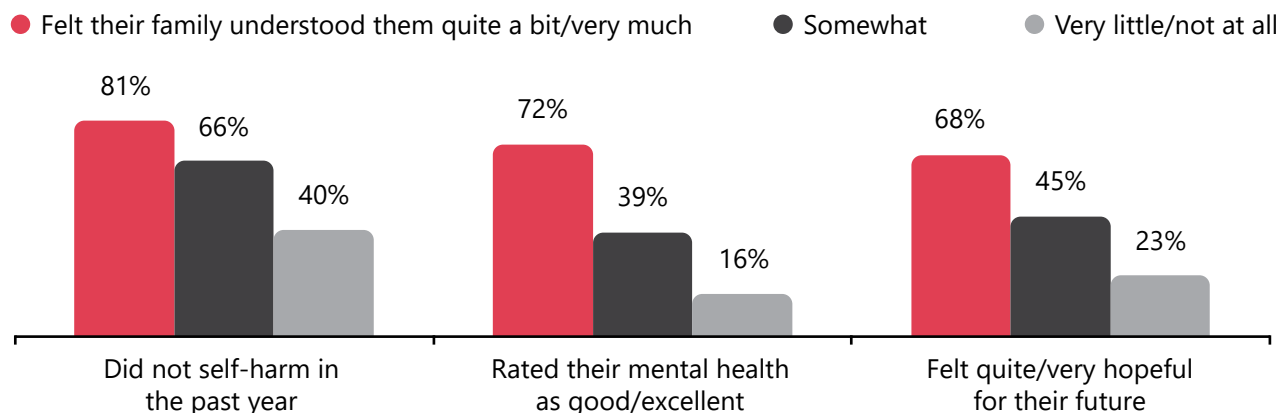
The majority of First Nations youth felt their family respected them (66%), paid attention to them (62%), and that they had fun together (64%). Fewer youth felt their family understood them (43%). Youth who felt connected to their family reported better mental health and well-being.

Adult to turn to inside family

Similar to results over the past decade, 69% of youth had an adult in their family they could turn to when they had a problem (vs. 75% of non-First Nations youth). Males were most likely to have this type of support (74% vs. 68% of females vs. 52% of non-binary youth).

First Nations youth who had an adult inside their family they could turn to for support were less likely to report mental health challenges, including self-harm (26% vs. 54% of those who did not have this type of support), seriously considering suicide (19% vs. 51%), and attempting suicide (7% vs. 21%) in the past year.

The more First Nations youth felt understood by their family, the more likely they were to report positive well-being



Caretaker monitoring

When asked how often their caregivers monitored what they were doing, 63% of First Nations youth reported that their caregivers knew most or all the time what they were doing in their free time (vs. 69% in 2018 and 2013), and 36% felt their caregivers knew what they were doing online this frequently (vs. 43% in 2018).

In the past 30 days, how often First Nations youth felt their parent/guardian knew what they were doing ...

	Never/ rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time/always
With their free time	19%	19%	63%
Online	45%	19%	36%

First Nations youth who had caregivers who knew what they were doing online most or all of the time were less likely to have been cyberbullied in the past year (16% vs. 30% of those whose caregivers monitored their time never or rarely), and to have reached a point where they needed help with their social media use (16% vs. 28%).

Time spent with family

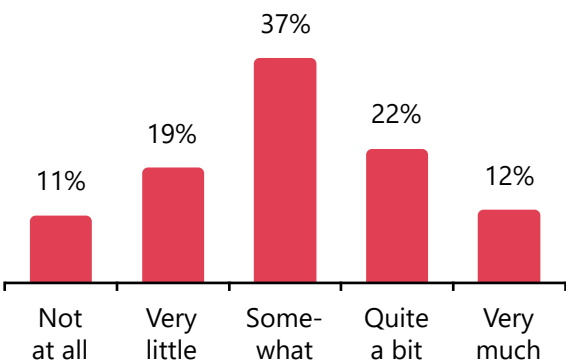
When asked how much time they had to do the things they wanted with their family, 72% of First Nations youth felt they had the right amount of time, 22% did not have enough time, and 6% felt they had too much time.

First Nations youth who felt they spent the right amount of time with their family were more likely than those who felt they did not get enough time with them to experience more positive mental health. For example, they were more likely to feel happy most or all of the time in the past month (56% vs. 30%).

Community

Most youth (70%) felt at least somewhat a part of their community. However, they were less likely to feel quite a bit or very much connected than 5 years earlier (33% vs. 37% in 2018), and compared to their non-First Nations peers (33% vs. 40%). Rural-based youth were more likely to feel quite a bit or very connected (40% vs. 30% of urban-based youth), as were male youth (39% vs. 30% of females vs. 18% of non-binary youth).

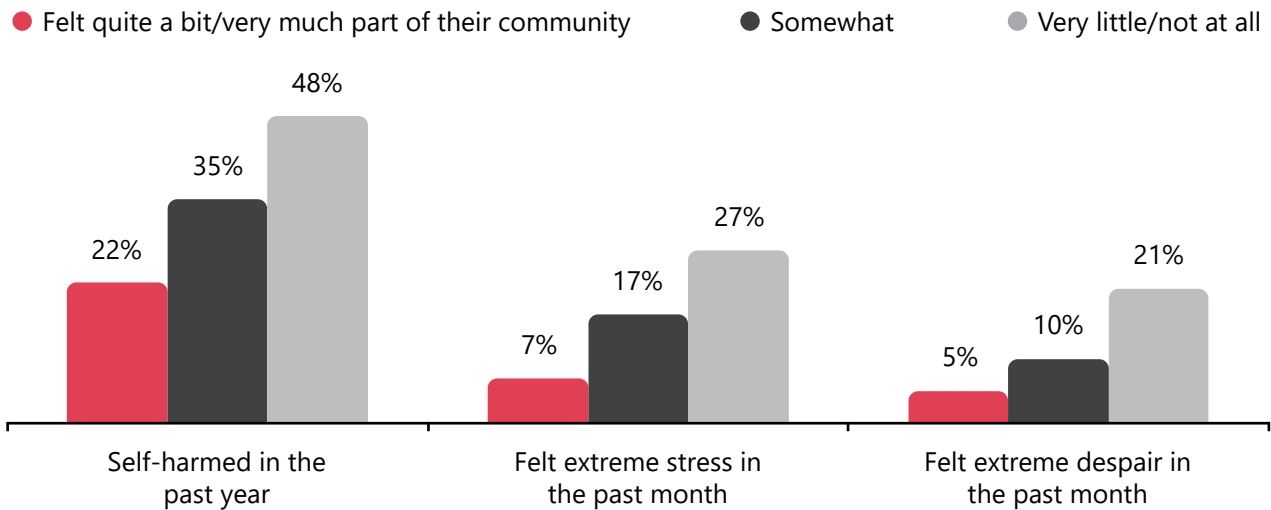
How much First Nations youth felt like part of their community



In the past year, 43% of First Nations youth participated in volunteer activities in their community, including 15% who did so on a weekly basis. Female youth were most likely to have volunteered this regularly (e.g., 17% vs. 13% of male youth).

First Nations youth who felt connected to their community reported more positive well-being. For example, youth who felt quite or very much part of their community were more likely than those who felt not at all or a little connected to feel they managed their stress well or very well (60% vs. 28%; among those who felt stress), plan to attend post-secondary education (66% vs. 52%), and feel quite a bit or very hopeful for their future (69% vs. 33%).

The more First Nations youth felt part of their community, the less likely they were to report mental health challenges



Neighbourhood safety

Similar to rates in 2018, 84% of First Nations youth often or always felt safe in their neighbourhood during the day. Also, 57% felt safe there at night (vs. 61% in 2018). Fewer felt this safe using public transit compared to 10 years earlier (48% vs. 54% in 2013; among those who used transit).

Males were most likely to feel safe in their neighbourhood and on transit. For example, 88% felt safe in their neighbourhood during the day, compared to 81% of females and 68% of non-binary youth.

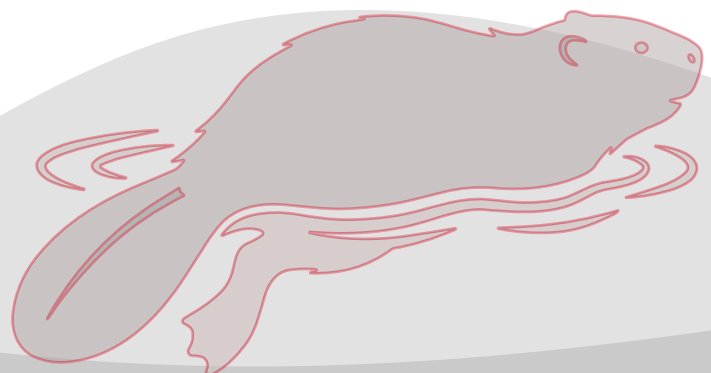
Feeling safe was associated with positive health and well-being. For example, First Nations youth who often or always felt safe in their neighbourhood during the day were more likely than those who rarely or never felt safe to participate in community activities, including informal sports (52% vs. 38%) and coached sports (42% vs. 27%) on a weekly basis. Also, they were less likely to experience extreme stress in the past month (14% vs. 33%).

Supportive adults

Caring adult in community

Most First Nations youth (77%) had at least one adult in their neighbourhood or community (outside their family or school) who really cared about them, including 51% who had three or more such adults. First Nations youth were more likely than their non-First Nations peers to have at least one adult in their community who cared about them (77% vs. 73%).

First Nations youth who had at least one adult in their neighbourhood who they felt cared about them were more likely than those who did not have this type of adult support to report positive mental health and feel quite a bit or very hopeful for their future (52% vs. 39%).



Adult to turn to outside the family

Over a third of youth (36%) could turn to an adult outside their family, which was an increase compared to 5 years earlier (30%) and a return to the 2013 rate. Females were more likely than males to have this type of support (40% vs. 33%).

First Nations youth who lacked a supportive adult in their family but had one outside their family reported better health and well-being than those without this outside support, including being more likely to feel they managed their stress well or very well (33% vs. 24%; among those who experienced stress), and less likely to have felt extreme despair in the past month (15% vs. 27%). They were also more likely to plan to pursue post-secondary education (58% vs. 45%), and to feel quite or very hopeful for their future (40% vs. 24%).

Adult to help with tasks

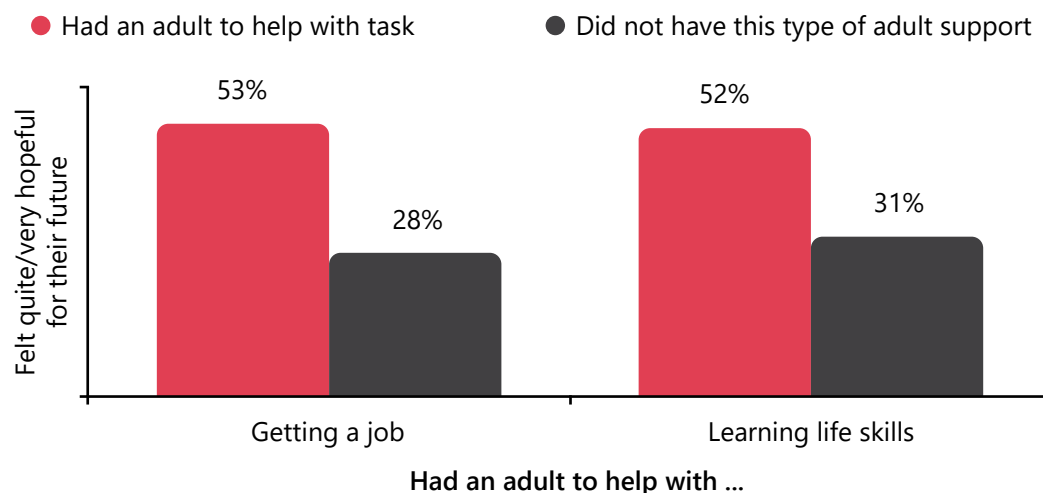
Most youth had an adult who could help them with tasks such as getting to appointments. Compared to 5 years earlier, First Nations youth were more likely to have an adult to help with applying to post-secondary (82% vs. 78% in 2018) and getting a job (85% vs. 81%).

First Nations youth who had an adult to help them with ... (among those who needed help)

Making/getting to appointments	95%
Learning life skills (e.g., cooking, budgeting)	90%
Getting a job	85%
Preparing for university, college, or trade school	82%
Homework	75%

First Nations youth who had an adult who helped them with learning life skills and finding a job were more likely than those without this type of support to feel quite or very hopeful for their future.

First Nations youth who had an adult to help with tasks were more likely to feel hopeful for their future



Friendships

Most First Nations youth (93%) had at least one close friend in their school or neighbourhood, including 64% who had three or more such friends. Reflecting the pattern among non-First Nations youth, First Nations youth were less likely than those 5 and 10 years earlier to have three or more close in-person friends (64% vs. 77% in 2018 vs. 81% in 2013).

As in 2018, 50% of youth had at least one close friend online whom they had never met in person (vs. 35% of non-First Nations youth), including 24% who had three or more such friends (vs. 16% of non-First Nations youth). First Nations youth in rural regions were more likely to have online friends whom they had never met (53% vs. 48% of urban-based youth).

Also in the past year, 16% of First Nations youth dated a partner that they met online and had never met in person, which was higher than 5 years earlier (14% in 2018), and higher than for non-First Nations youth (9%).

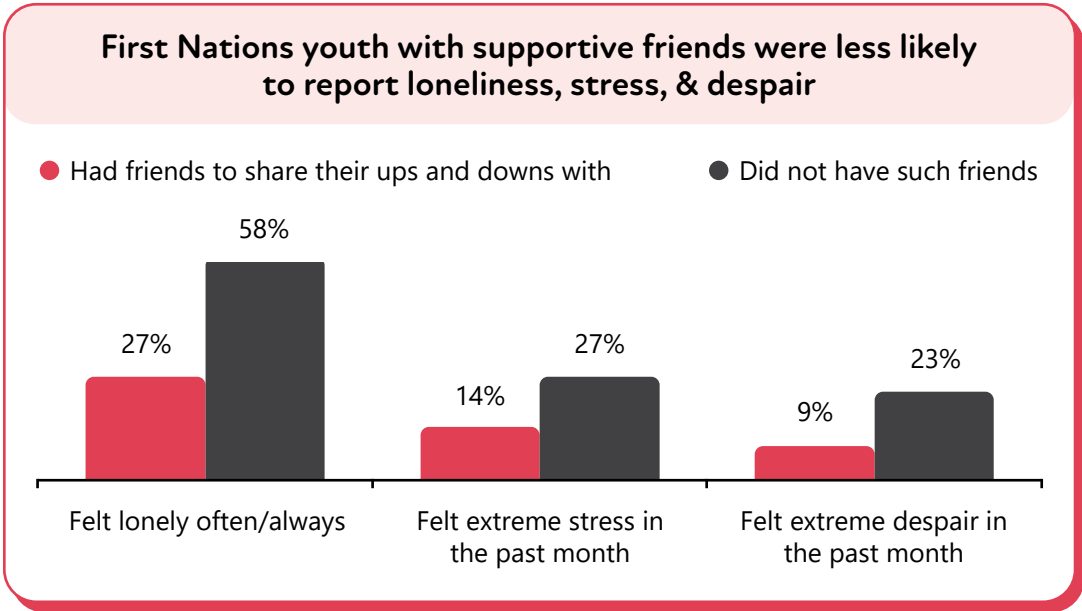
First Nations youth who had three or more in-person friends were less likely than those who had fewer in-person friends to have felt lonely often or always (25% vs. 49%). They were also less likely to have seriously considered suicide (23% vs. 37%) or attempted suicide (8% vs. 15%) in the past year.

Time spent with friends

The majority of First Nations youth (66%) felt they spent the right amount of time with their friends, while 29% felt they did not have enough time, and 5% felt they had too much time with them. Youth who felt they spent the right amount of time with friends were more likely than those who did not have enough time to rate their mental health as good or excellent (54% vs. 30%), feel happy most or all of the time in the past month (56% vs. 34%), and feel they had a good life (73% vs. 49%).

Friends to share ups & downs with

Most First Nations youth (68%) had friends they could share their ups and downs with, with no gender differences. Youth who had this type of peer support reported more positive mental health and well-being. For example, they were more likely to feel happy most or all of the time in the past month (57% vs. 29% of those without friends to share their ups and downs with) and that they had a good life (70% vs. 49%).



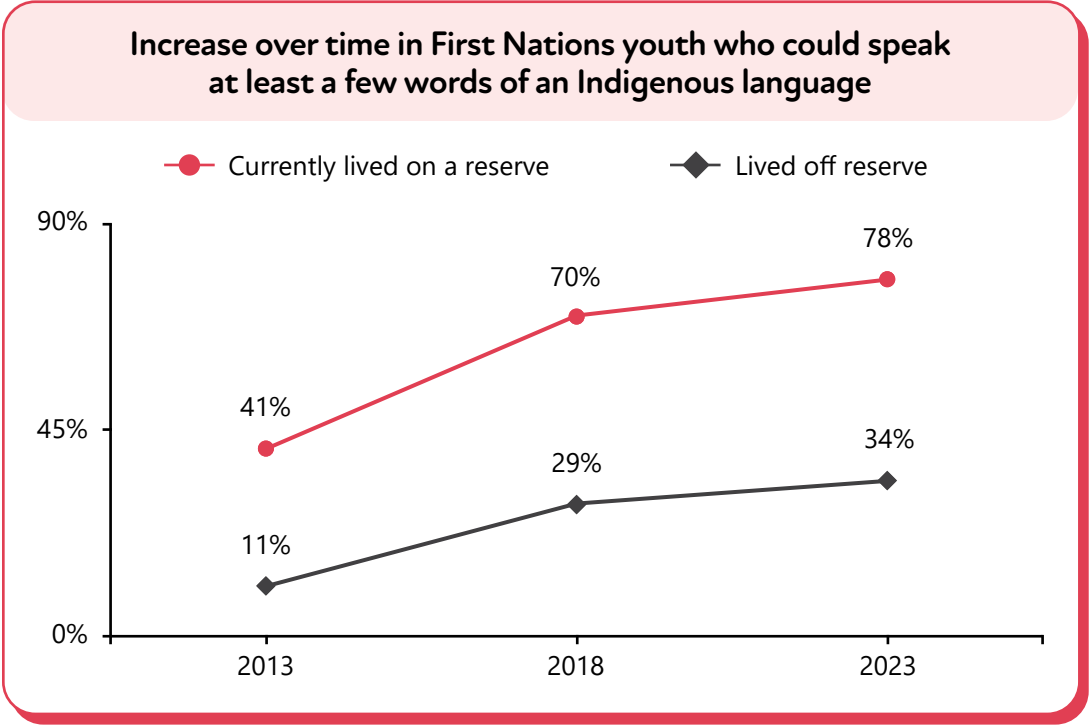
Youth living on a reserve

Youth living on a reserve rated their overall health and mental health similarly to those living off reserve, as well as their life satisfaction. However, youth living on a reserve reported higher rates of care experience, more economic challenges, and higher rates of substance use. They also reported greater connection to culture.

Examples of differences in well-being between First Nations youth living on a reserve and off reserve

	Youth living on a reserve	Youth living off reserve
Been in government care	23%	17%
Deprived of three or more items on Youth Deprivation Index	11%	7%
Went to bed hungry at least sometimes because there was not enough money for food at home	21%	17%
Could speak at least a few words of an Indigenous language	78%	34%
Were fluent or could hold a conversation in an Indigenous language	5%	1%
Felt quite/very proud of their background	83%	76%
Participated in weekly cultural activities	28%	12%
Ate traditional food yesterday	35%	20%
Ate dinner daily in past week	61%	70%
Felt spirituality was somewhat/very important to them	52%	39%
Felt quite a bit/very much part of their community	41%	31%
Felt an adult in community cared	82%	76%
Planned to pursue post-secondary education	49%	63%
Received sex ed at school	71%	81%
Needed help for vaping in the past year	14%	9%
Needed help for alcohol use in the past year	10%	6%
Needed help for cannabis use in the past year	13%	8%
Accessed a family doctor in past year	41%	50%
Visited the dentist in past year	72%	79%
Saw a specialist health care provider in the past year	17%	26%
Felt quite a bit/very hopeful for their future	44%	50%
Could not swim	8%	5%
Participated in weekly extracurricular sports and exercise in the past year	64%	72%
Often/always felt safe in neighbourhood in the daytime	80%	84%

Most differences between youth living on a reserve and off reserve were similar to 5 and 10 years ago. For example, there was an increase over time for both groups in speaking at least a few words of an Indigenous language. However, youth living on a reserve remained more than twice as likely as those off reserve to do so and the gap between the two remained consistent.



Similarly, rates of planning to attend post-secondary dropped for both groups but youth living off reserve remained more likely to plan to pursue post-secondary education.

One area where there was a different pattern on and off reserve was in experiences of bereavement. The percentage who experienced bereavement due to violence increased for youth living off reserve (8% vs. 6% in 2018), but remained comparable to 5 years earlier for those living on a reserve (11% in 2023). In contrast, the percentage who experienced bereavement due to suicide increased for those on a reserve (30% vs. 25% in 2018), and was comparable to 5 years earlier for those living off reserve (19%).



Final thoughts

This report shows First Nations youth still face many challenges. Despite this, they remain resilient. They will be the leaders of tomorrow, and with the right help, support, and connections, their overall health and well-being can be improved. Here are a few things that we thought would be important to focus on, based on our work with the data and our own lived experiences.

High rates of mental health challenges and suicidality continue to be a concern for First Nations youth. To address this, we think there needs to be a focus on upstream approaches that also address factors such as material deprivation and discrimination, and which ensure First Nations youth have opportunities for connection to the earth and spirituality.

Connections are an important part of our health, and First Nations youth should have more opportunities to connect with Elders and their First Nations peers. We also see the value of connections to supportive adults, particularly at school. We think all schools should have Indigenous support workers.

Physical activity can also play a large role in the health of First Nations youth, and it is important to reduce the barriers to participation as much as possible. This could mean giving youth free or reduced-price access to community recreation centres, as well as providing more access to physical activities for youth, including those with small children or who are caretaking for their siblings. Local parks could also provide boxes with sports equipment so that youth have what they need to use the park amenities, like playing basketball.

The data shows that access to regular cultural activities and language have a positive impact on First Nations youth well-being. There are so many different First Nations languages and it can be hard to have access to people who can teach us our own traditional language. Schools and community organizations should make an effort to find someone who can speak a youth's language or support them to find ways of connecting with that language, if they want to. It would be amazing if there was an online database or app that could help First Nations youth access their traditional languages.

Finally, we also saw that youth were more likely to feel hopeful for the future when they felt proud of their background. Teaching about our history is very important. It shows how far First Nations people have come, everything they have been through and all the things they have survived, which is something every First Nations youth should be proud of. Our ancestors fought for our land and the future generations, and we think it's important to acknowledge the past in order to fix the future. We need to do our best to make sure our youth feel supported, included, important, and protected so they can be the best versions of themselves they can be.

Thank you for reading this report,

**McCreary Centre Society's
Young Indigenous Research Team**



Resources

YIRT

This report is one of several resources created from BC AHS data by members of McCreary's YIRT. The YIRT also recently completed ***Raven's Children VI: Indigenous youth health in BC*** which used BC AHS data to provide a health profile of Indigenous youth (aged 12–19) across BC, including First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and urban Indigenous youth.

Infographic posters of results from this report, *Raven's Children VI*, and *Ta Saantii III* (an upcoming report about Métis youth health) will also be available on McCreary's website as they are completed.

Members of the YIRT are available to offer presentations and workshops about their work, and to complete research and evaluation projects which promote Indigenous youth health and well-being.

Please contact yirt@mcs.bc.ca if you have any questions or requests.

Opportunities for Indigenous youth

The YIRT are all graduates of McCreary's **Youth Research Academy (YRA)**. To learn more about the YRA and how to join, please visit mcs.bc.ca/youth_research_academy.

McCreary also has a number of other youth groups which engage Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth in paid positions. These include:

The Youth Health Ambassadors (YHA) are a team of school-aged youth across BC who facilitate conversations with their peers about youth health topics, and support the sharing of BC AHS data. For more information or to apply to become a YHA, visit mcs.bc.ca/yha or email mccreary@mcs.bc.ca.

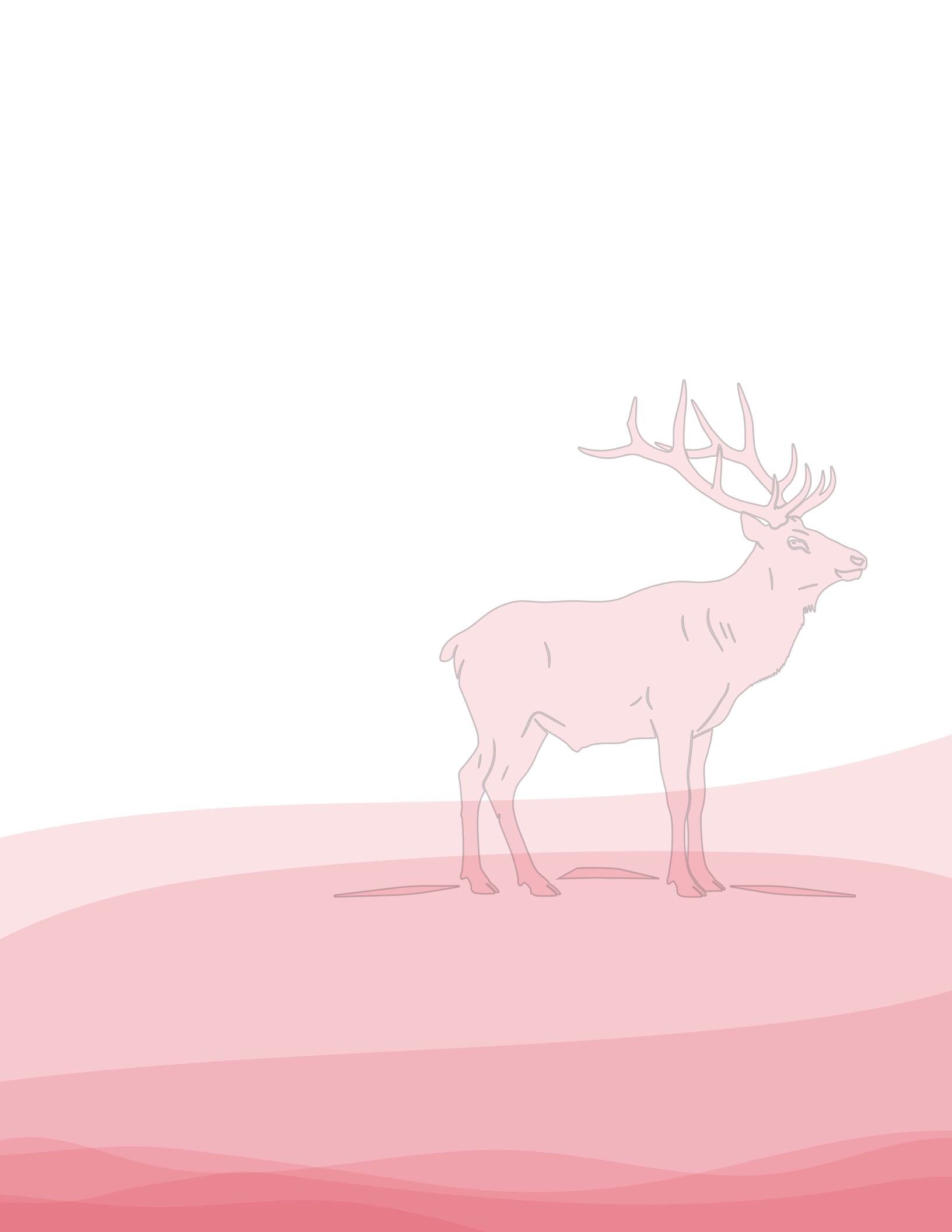
The Minister of Health's Youth Advisory Council on Health and Wellness (BC YAC) is a diverse group of youth from all across BC who provide their perspectives on topics related to health and wellness to inform BC government decisions. The group's main areas of focus include vaping, tobacco, and other related issues that matter to youth. For more information visit mcs.bc.ca/bc_yac or email mccreary@mcs.bc.ca.

Youth wanting to address youth health issues and promote well-being in their school or community can apply for funding to deliver a project:

Youth Action Grants (YAGs) offer up to \$750 for youth-led projects that address findings from the BC AHS and that seek to support or improve youth health. For more information on how youth can apply, please visit mcs.bc.ca/youth_action_grants.

The Trevor Coburn Memorial Grants are available to BC youth (up to age 29) wanting to carry out projects to support BC youth facing barriers, including youth with experiences of homelessness, substance use challenges, and government care. For more information and/or to apply, please visit mcs.bc.ca/trevor_coburn_memorial_grants.

To learn more about McCreary Centre Society, and to view provincial, regional, and topic specific reports, fact sheets, infographics, and other resources produced from the 2023 BC AHS, please visit mcs.bc.ca/about_bcahs.





**McCreary
Centre Society**