

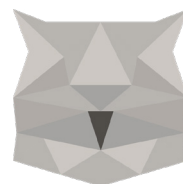


2024
YOUTH RESEARCH SLAM

**VIOLENCE PREVENTION
AND SAFETY PROMOTION**



McCreary
Centre Society



YOUTH
RESEARCH
ACADEMY

The youth researchers chose pink as the colour of this report in honour of Pink Shirt Day. Pink Shirt Day takes place on the last Wednesday in February each year. Pink Shirt Day began in 2007 when a student in Nova Scotia was bullied for wearing a pink shirt to school, and is an opportunity to raise awareness of bullying and celebrate anti-bullying initiatives.



YOUTH RESEARCH SLAM 2024: VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND SAFETY PROMOTION

Copyright: McCreary Centre Society, 2025

ISBN: 978-1-998481-19-4

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

For enquiries about this report, please email: mccreary@mcs.bc.ca.

Copies of this report are available at:

mcs.bc.ca/pdf/yrs_violence_prevention_safety_promotion.pdf.



Youth Researchers

Anaya Parab
Channing Chen
Cheryl Li
Cheylene Moon
Farhiya Dahir
Frankie Martinez
Grace Chen
Kelsey Kates
Malak Albadry
Michelle Xie
Muhadesa Qadiri
Vi Ho
Vivian Nguyen

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 xwməθkwəy̓ əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səl̓íl̓wətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. We also acknowledge the ancestral and continuing connection to this land of the Métis Nation.

Reflections from youth who participated in the Research Slam are included throughout this report.

Funded by: City of Vancouver's Building Safer Communities Program.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
KEY FINDINGS	3
YOUTH'S EXPERIENCES WITH VIOLENCE AND VICTIMIZATION IN THE PAST YEAR	4
Sexual harassment	4
Dating violence	4
Discrimination	5
Victimization at school or on the way to or from school	7
Cyberbullying	7
Missing class and activities due to bullying	8
PROMOTING VIOLENCE PREVENTION, SAFETY, AND WELL-BEING	9
Supportive school staff	9
Feeling like a part of school	12
Relationships with family	14
Community supports	16
Supportive peers	20
YOUTH RESEARCHERS' RECOMMENDATIONS	23
YOUTH'S FEEDBACK ABOUT THE RESEARCH SLAM	27
FINAL THOUGHTS	28

INTRODUCTION

McCreary Centre Society (“McCreary”) is a BC-based, non-profit agency committed to improving the health of BC youth through community-based research, evaluation, and youth participation projects.

Since 2016, McCreary has operated a Youth Research Academy (YRA) for youth with government care experience. YRA members (aged 16–27) learn community-based research skills and carry out research projects of interest to youth in and from care and the agencies that serve them. The YRA is comprised of one cohort each year, of up to eight youth and up to two Indigenous peer mentors. The group meets twice a week for a total of eight to ten hours each week.

A project of the YRA is the Research Slam. The Research Slam is a fast-paced event that involves young people, who are interested in learning about and participating in community-based research, coming together over a short period of time to do research on a particular youth health topic. This report documents the process and results of the 2024 Research Slam.

2024 Research Slam

In the fall of 2024, McCreary hosted a five-day Research Slam focusing on violence prevention and safety promotion. This year’s Research Slam was funded by the City of Vancouver’s Building Safer Communities Program (BSCP), in response to a growing concern about violence in the community.

The goals of the Research Slam were to create a low-barrier, safe environment where youth could develop skills and form positive peer connections; for youth to contribute to community-based research and to create youth-led dissemination materials about promoting safety and preventing violence among BC youth; and to share the findings with relevant stakeholders.

In preparation for the Research Slam, members of the YRA conducted a literature review to learn more about violence prevention and safety promotion among youth. They also completed a brief environmental scan of supports available to BC youth who have been victimized.

Fifteen young people with a personal connection to the topic took part in the Research Slam, including members of McCreary’s Youth Advisory & Action Council (YAC) and Youth Health Ambassadors (YHA), who joined the YRA for the event. Youth participants from the YAC and YHA were interested in learning about violence prevention and safety promotion; meeting and working alongside other youth connected to McCreary; and participating in community-based research.

The young people who participated learned to analyze quantitative data using SPSS statistics, carried out statistical analyses using 2023 BC AHS data, wrote up the findings, identified key findings and recommendations, and participated in a community mapping activity in which they identified how to make their community safer. They then created a presentation of their findings, brainstormed other ways the findings could be disseminated, and drafted a series of infographics for youth, caregivers, and school staff. On the final afternoon of the Research Slam, the youth presented their findings and key messages to community stakeholders.

BC Adolescent Health Survey

With the support of the BC Government, Public Health Nurses, and school districts, McCreary has carried out the BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) in public schools across BC every five years. The survey was first conducted in 1992, and the most recent survey was completed by over 38,000 students in 59 of 60 BC school districts between February and June of 2023.

The survey data provides comprehensive information on health and well-being among youth in Grades 7 to 12. The survey is voluntary and anonymous and contains approximately 140 questions. Questions include youth's experiences with violence and victimization; their relationships and connections within their family, school, and community; and how safe they feel at school and in their community.

Analyses in this report

The BC AHS analyses for the 2024 Research Slam focused on violence and victimization experiences in the past year. These included dating violence, sexual harassment, discrimination, victimization at school or on the way to or from school (specifically extreme teasing, social exclusion, and/or physical assaults), and cyberbullying.

After identifying students' experiences with violence and victimization in the past year, the youth researchers examined supports in students' lives that can help them to feel safer. They decided that a large focus should be on supports at school, given that young people spend most of their time at school, and not all young people have supports available within their family. However, the youth researchers also identified supports in the broader community, as well as within the family and among peers that were associated with youth feeling safer.

In addition to identifying supports among all students that were linked to a greater likelihood of feeling safe, the youth researchers looked at supports among students who had experienced victimization in the past year. The aim was to gain a better understanding of how these youth can be better supported to enhance their sense of safety and well-being.

All reported comparisons and associations are statistically significant at $p < .01$. This means there is less than a 1% likelihood the results occurred by chance.

GLOSSARY

Discrimination: Unless otherwise specified, discrimination refers to any type of discrimination in the past year that was asked about in the 2023 BC AHS (i.e., based on race, ethnicity or skin colour; religion; sexual orientation; gender identity or sex; disability; health condition; physical appearance; weight; and/or family income).

Protective factors: Healthy relationships and experiences in a young person's life that can support them to overcome risks and can contribute to their healthy development.

Victimization at school or on the way to or from school: Refers to youth who were the victims of extreme teasing, social exclusion, and/or physical assault at school or on the way to or from school in the past year.

KEY FINDINGS

Youth researchers who took part in the Research Slam reviewed the results and identified the following key findings:

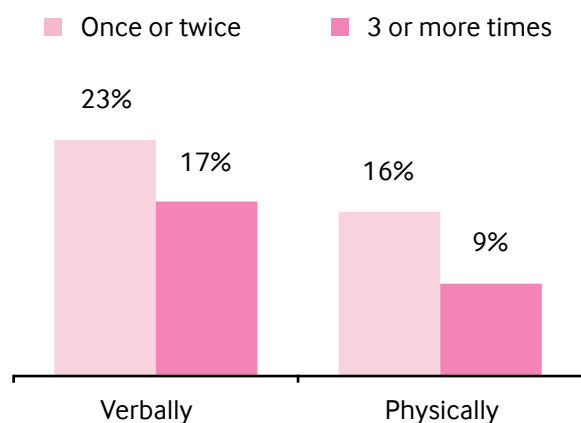
- ▶ Recent victimization through social media was a reality for students. For example, in the past year, 15% were cyberbullied, 13% were discriminated against on social media/online, and 13% experienced dating violence through social media/online (among those in a relationship).
- ▶ Youth also experienced victimization in person. For example, in the past year, 8% were physically attacked at school or on the way to or from school; 40% were verbally sexually harassed; and 24% were discriminated against because of their physical appearance.
- ▶ The findings highlight that feeling safe and connected can help to reduce violence and promote safety. For example, youth were less likely to perpetrate victimization at school or on the way to or from school in the past year if they felt connected to school (6% vs. 13% who did not feel connected to school).
- ▶ Caring adults can play an important role in violence prevention and safety promotion, and in supporting youth's well-being. For example, caregivers knowing what youth were doing online was linked to lower rates of cyberbullying victimization (10% vs. 21% of youth whose caregivers rarely or never monitored their time online) and perpetration (4% vs. 13%) in the past year. Also, among youth who had been cyberbullied, those who felt their family understood them were less likely than those who did not feel this way to experience extreme stress (12% vs. 42%) and despair (7% vs. 34%) in the past month, and were more likely to feel hopeful for their future (66% vs. 22%).
- ▶ Not all youth feel their caregivers understand and support them, so having supportive adults at school and in the broader community is important. For example, youth who experienced their teachers as caring were less likely to perpetrate in-person victimization at school or on the way to or from school in the past year (6% vs. 16% of those who did not feel their teachers cared about them). Also, among youth who had been discriminated against in the past year, those who felt their teachers cared were more likely to feel safe at school (65% vs. 19% of those who did not feel their teachers cared) and to report good or excellent mental health (51% vs. 27%).
- ▶ Youth who felt that at least one adult in their community (outside of their family and school) cared about them were more likely to feel safe in their neighbourhood during the day (91% vs. 86% of those who did not feel an adult in their community cared) and at night (66% vs. 57%).
- ▶ Youth who felt like a part of their community were more likely than those who did not feel connected to report feeling safe in their neighbourhood during the day (94% vs. 82%). Also, among youth who had experienced discrimination in the past year, the more connected youth felt to their community, the more likely they were to report good or excellent mental health.
- ▶ Having supportive peers also helped youth to feel safe. For example, among youth who had experienced victimization at school or on the way to or from school, those who had friends they could share their ups and downs with were more likely to feel safe at school (58% vs. 38% who did not have such friends) and in their neighbourhood (90% vs. 80%).

YOUTH'S EXPERIENCES WITH VIOLENCE AND VICTIMIZATION IN THE PAST YEAR

Sexual harassment

In the past year, 40% of youth had experienced verbal sexual harassment, including 17% who had this experience three or more times. Also, 25% had experienced physical sexual harassment during this time.

Youth who were sexually harassed in the past year



Dating violence

Among youth who were in a dating relationship in the past year, 8% experienced physical violence in that relationship. Also, 13% reported that someone they dated had used social media to try to control, embarrass, or hurt them.

YOUTH RESEARCHERS' REFLECTIONS

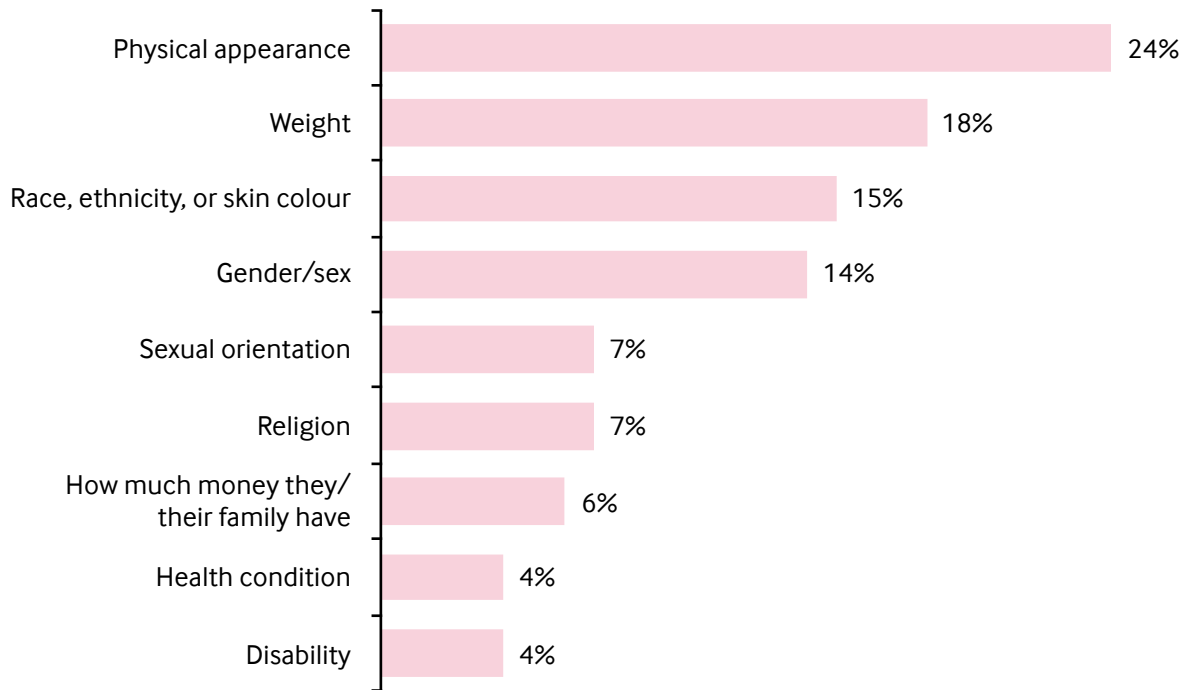
The percentage of youth who experienced verbal sexual harassment was high, but we expected it to be even higher given youth's use of the Internet and that people can make anonymous sexual comments online which they might not otherwise make in person. It may be that harassment is so normalized that youth might not recognize these acts as a form of violence. They might also be unclear about the line between a comment being considered a 'joke' as opposed to verbal sexual harassment.

It is important for youth to receive education on what constitutes sexual harassment, as well as dating violence and sexual exploitation, that can be experienced both in person and online. There could be campaigns in schools to educate youth and promote awareness of sexual harassment and violence in relationships. There should also be clear protocols and systems in place at schools for students to report harassment and other forms of violence.

Discrimination

In the past year, 40% of youth reported they had been discriminated against, including 3% who experienced discrimination regularly. Two common reasons youth reported they had been discriminated against included their physical appearance and their weight.

Reasons youth reported they had been discriminated against in the past year



Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

When asked where they had experienced discrimination in the past year, youth most commonly reported they had been discriminated against at school, followed by online.

Where youth experienced discrimination in the past year	
At school	26%
On social media/online	13%
On the street	7%
In extracurricular activities (e.g., sports)	4%
On public transit	4%
In a store or restaurant	4%
At work	3%
In a hospital or other health care setting	1%
Other	2%

Note: Youth could mark all that applied.

YOUTH RESEARCHERS' REFLECTIONS

School was the most common place that youth had been discriminated against, followed by social media/online. This finding was no surprise to us, given that youth spend a lot of their time at school and on social media. However, we had expected that even more youth would have been discriminated against online, due to the anonymity of the Internet.

Social media was created to be a useful tool but people can use it to have negative interactions, and youth can get victimized through it. Maybe the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on victimization through social media, in that youth spent more time online and were exposed to increased opportunities to experience discrimination and other forms of victimization.

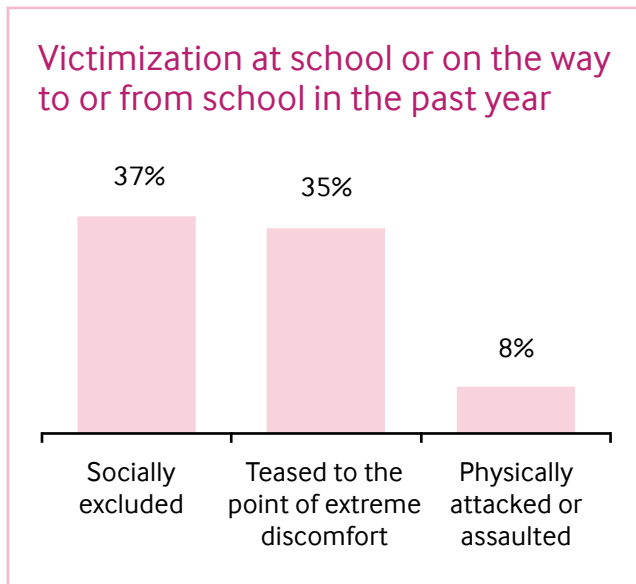
The findings showed that 6% of youth had been discriminated against because of how much money they or their family had, and we had expected this percentage to be higher. People put a lot of value on money, and there is negative stigma surrounding having less money.

There should be more education in schools to increase students' understanding of discrimination and to help reduce stigma and stereotypes. School staff could have conversations with students about discrimination, and staff and students should all make an effort to promote a safe and inclusive environment. Such an environment can contribute to reducing acts of discrimination at school, and can provide youth who have experienced discrimination with a support system that can help them to feel cared for and safer. There could also be spaces in schools and in the community where diverse youth are invited to socialize and support one another.

Victimization at school or on the way to or from school

Over a third of youth had been the victim of extreme teasing, and a similar percentage had experienced social exclusion at school or on the way to or from school in the past year. Just under 1 in 10 youth had been physically attacked or assaulted.

Also, 8% of youth reported they had perpetrated one of these forms of victimization in the past year.



Cyberbullying

In the past year, 15% of youth reported they had been cyberbullied. Also, 8% reported they had perpetrated cyberbullying during that time.

YOUTH RESEARCHERS' REFLECTIONS

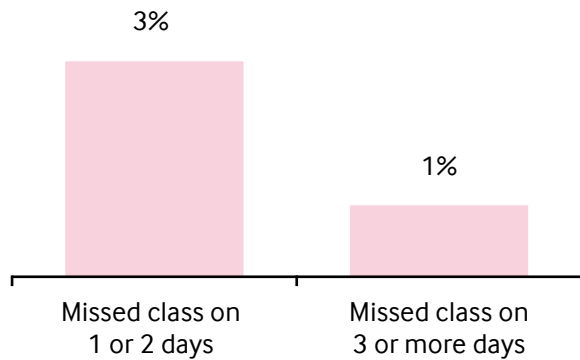
Youth were more likely to report they had been victims of in-person and online bullying than they were to report they had been perpetrators. It is important for youth to feel safe turning to supportive adults if they have experienced victimization. Supportive adults are those who know how to listen to youth, show compassion, are open-minded and non-judgmental, and who can help them to access the services and resources they might need.

Supportive adults can also help youth to put safety measures in place on social media (e.g., to filter out violent content). These adults can additionally assist youth with reducing the amount of time they spend online, and with accessing physical and/or social activities in the community that the youth find meaningful, fun, and safe.

Missing class and activities due to bullying

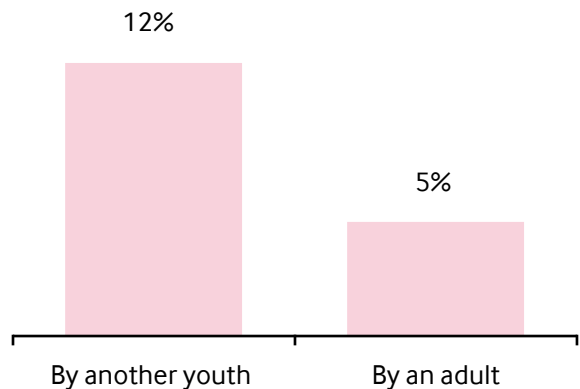
In the past month, 4% of students had missed class because of bullying. This included 1% who missed classes on three or more days for this reason.

Students who missed class in the past month due to bullying



Some youth also missed out on participating in extracurricular activities in the past year because they were worried about being bullied. This included concern about being bullied by another youth as well as by an adult.

Students who did not participate in extracurricular activities in the past year due to fear of bullying ...



YOUTH RESEARCHERS' REFLECTIONS

Youth might avoid situations where they have been bullied in the past, such as school and extracurricular activities. They might be reluctant to report when they have been bullied, because of fear that the bully will become angry and retaliate, and because of concern that there are insufficient supports in place to protect youth who have been victimized.

It is important for youth to feel safe taking part in activities in the community. Adults who are involved in youth's extracurricular activities (coaches, etc.) should be properly vetted to help ensure that young people can feel comfortable around them and can trust them. There should also be zero-tolerance policies for youth bullying other youth, and youth should be encouraged and supported to foster a climate of inclusivity.

PROMOTING VIOLENCE PREVENTION, SAFETY, AND WELL-BEING

This section describes protective factors in youth's lives that can promote violence prevention and safety. Youth Research Slam participants also identified supports among youth who had experienced victimization which were associated with positive well-being.

Supportive school staff

A supportive school environment can help youth to feel safe. For example, youth who felt their teachers cared about them were more likely to feel safe at school (79% vs. 23% who did not feel their teachers cared). Findings were similar if youth felt that school staff other than teachers cared about them.

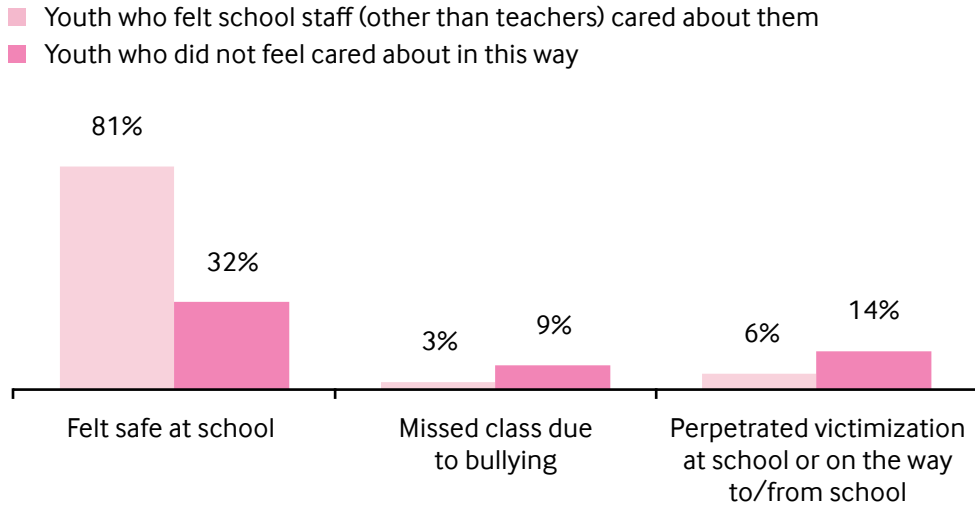
Students were also more likely to feel safe in specific school locations when they felt cared about by school staff. For example, 91% of students who felt school staff other than teachers cared about them reported feeling safe in the hallways and stairwells, compared to 67% who did not feel that school staff cared.

Having caring school staff can promote a safe and supportive environment, which appears to contribute to lower rates of school-based violence. For example, students who felt their teachers cared about them were less likely to have been victimized at school or on the way to or from school (44% vs. 68% who did not feel their teachers cared) and to have experienced discrimination at school (20% vs. 46%) in the past year. Students were also less likely to skip class (e.g., 21% vs. 46% who did not feel their teachers cared), and to miss class due to bullying.

In addition, students were less likely to perpetrate extreme teasing, social exclusion, or physical assaults at school or on the way to or from school if they felt school staff cared about them (e.g., 6% of those who felt their teachers cared had perpetrated these acts vs. 16% of those who did not feel their teachers cared about them).



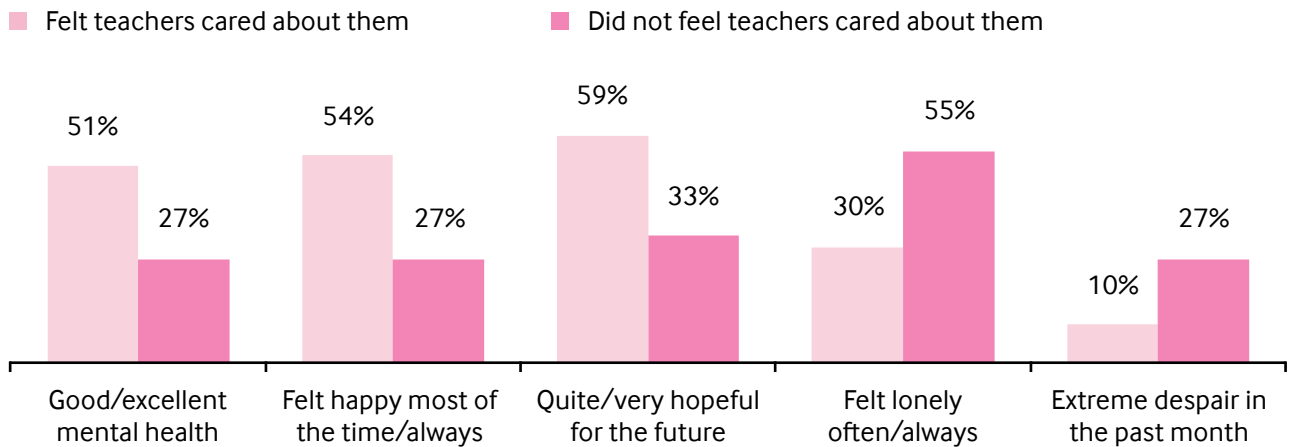
Youth feeling that school staff cared about them was linked to a safer school environment



Feeling that school staff treated them fairly was also important to feeling safe at school (e.g., 94% felt safe in their classrooms vs. 63% of youth who did not feel school staff treated them fairly). Also, if youth felt school staff treated them fairly, they were less likely to be both a victim and perpetrator of violence at school or on the way to or from school in the past year (5% vs. 14% who did not feel school staff treated them fairly).

Feeling that school staff cared about them and treated them fairly was also protective among youth who had been victimized. For example, among youth who had been discriminated against in the past year, they were more likely to feel safe at school if they felt their teachers cared about them (65% vs. 19% who did not feel their teachers cared). These youth were also more likely to report better mental health and well-being if they felt their teachers cared about them.

Youth who felt their teachers cared reported better mental health (among those who experienced discrimination in the past year)



Similarly, among youth who had been victimized at school or on the way to or from school, those who felt school staff other than teachers cared about them were more likely to feel safe at school (71% vs. 28% of those who did not feel school staff cared) and to plan to graduate high school and attend post-secondary education (80% vs. 73%).

YOUTH RESEARCHERS' REFLECTIONS

The findings highlight how much of a positive impact school staff can have on students' well-being. The statistics are eye-opening and show how important it can be for school staff to develop healthy connections with students. If students, including those who have experienced victimization, feel that school staff care about them, it can help them to feel safer as well as motivate them to pursue their academic goals after high school.

For students who have a difficult home life, school can be a type of escape and a safe place to go. School staff can play a very important role in the lives of these students, and can help to motivate, support, and guide them.

Teachers or other school staff could check up on students who miss class unexpectedly, particularly if they start missing class more frequently. Even if these students do not engage with school staff in these check-ins, it is important for staff to continue checking in with them. Doing so can convey to students that staff are available to talk with them at any point, if and when the student is ready to talk.

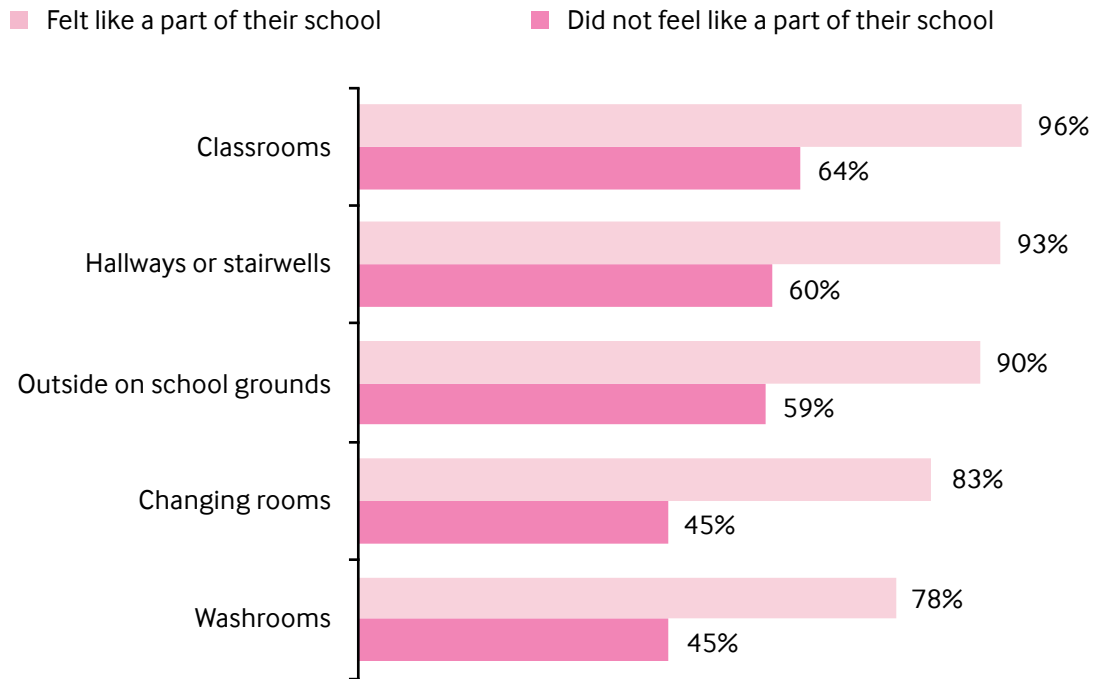
Ideally, the number of students in each classroom should be reduced, and more teachers should be hired, so that teachers have greater capacity to properly support each student in their classroom. Also, teachers' salaries should be increased to reflect the pivotal role they play in young people's lives.

All school staff should be trained in trauma-informed care to help ensure they can optimally support students who have been victims of discrimination, assaults, or other forms of violence. Also, all students should have opportunities to meet with school counsellors and to have mental health check-ins. School staff can also offer opportunities for students to talk with them about their school plans after high school, which can have a positive effect on students' trajectories.

Feeling like a part of school

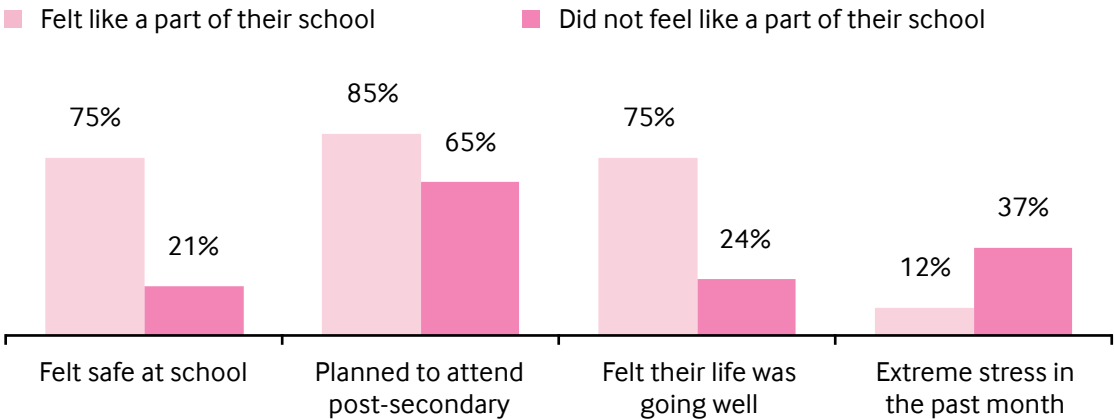
Feeling like a part of school was linked to feeling safe there, and to a lower likelihood of victimizing others at school or on the way to or from school (6% victimized others vs. 13% who did not feel like a part of their school).

Youth who felt like a part of their school were more likely to feel safe in various school locations



It was also important for youth who had been victimized to feel like a part of their school. For example, those who felt like a part of their school were more likely to feel safe there. They were also more likely to plan to continue their education after high school and to report better health and well-being compared to those who did not feel like a part of their school.

Benefits associated with feeling like a part of school (among youth who were victimized at school or on the way to/from school in the past year)



YOUTH RESEARCHERS’ REFLECTIONS

Feeling connected to school was associated with feeling safe there, for all youth as well as for those who had experienced victimization. Feeling connected to school could be fostered through building a sense of community at school, such as through involvement in school sports or clubs. All students can find a role within clubs or teams, even youth who do not wish to be in a leadership position (e.g., youth could help with the scoresheets in their school’s Athletics club). Being part of a school club or team can create a sense of community where youth feel safe to be themselves.

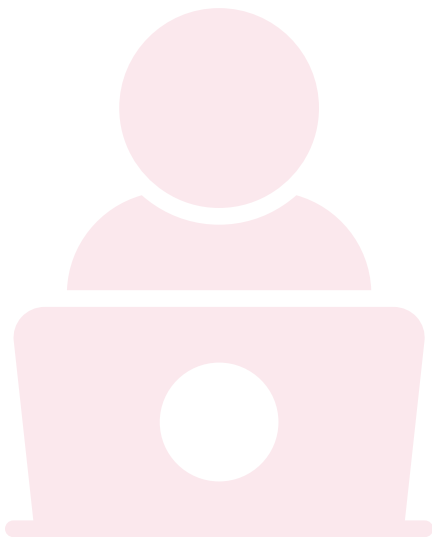
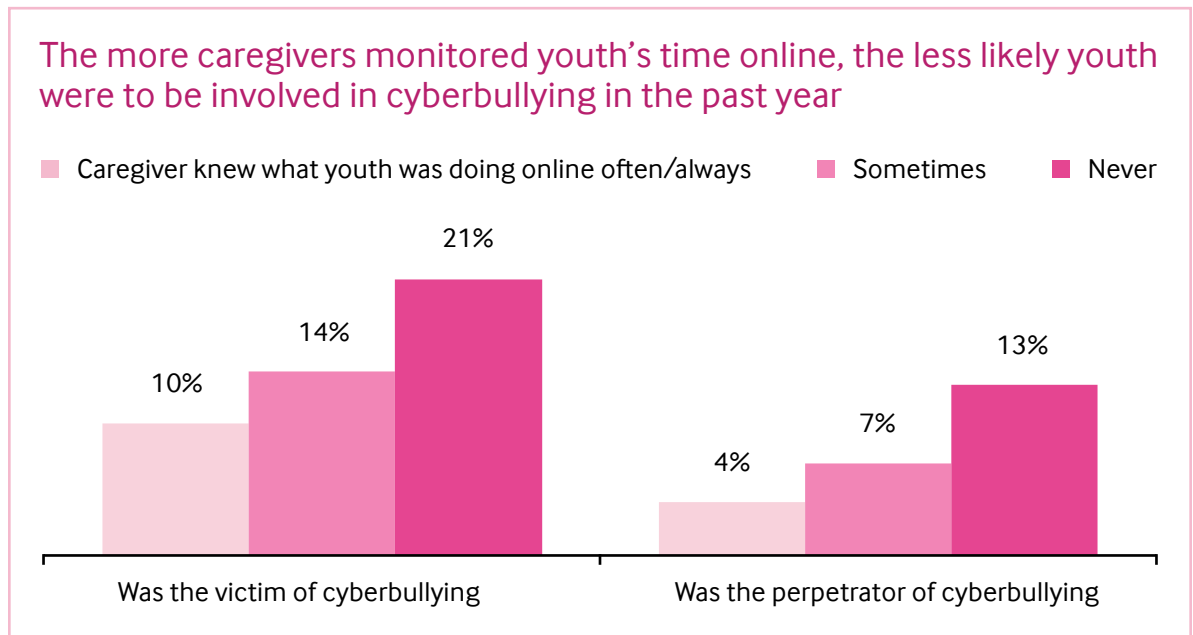
The findings showed that youth who felt like a part of their school were more likely than those who didn’t feel this way to report feeling safe in various school locations. However, youth were less likely to feel safe in changing rooms and washrooms than in other school locations. It could be that gender-diverse students feel less safe than other students in these locations, and more school washrooms could be designated as gender neutral to help these students feel safer and more welcome.

Also, changing rooms are typically open spaces that make it difficult for youth to change in privacy. This can contribute to youth feeling unsafe, and they might opt to not change before or after participating in physical activities. In addition, group bullying might take place in changing rooms because students are typically left unsupervised in these spaces. A recommendation is to create individual stalls for students to change in. Separate stalls would give students more privacy and could reduce the likelihood of group-based bullying incidents that go unnoticed by school staff. Moreover, a culture of inclusivity and safety should be fostered in schools, where students are supported and reinforced to act in accepting and friendly ways toward one another.

Relationships with family

Caregivers knowing what youth were doing online, and youth having positive relationships with their family members, was linked to reduced victimization experiences and a greater sense of safety and well-being.

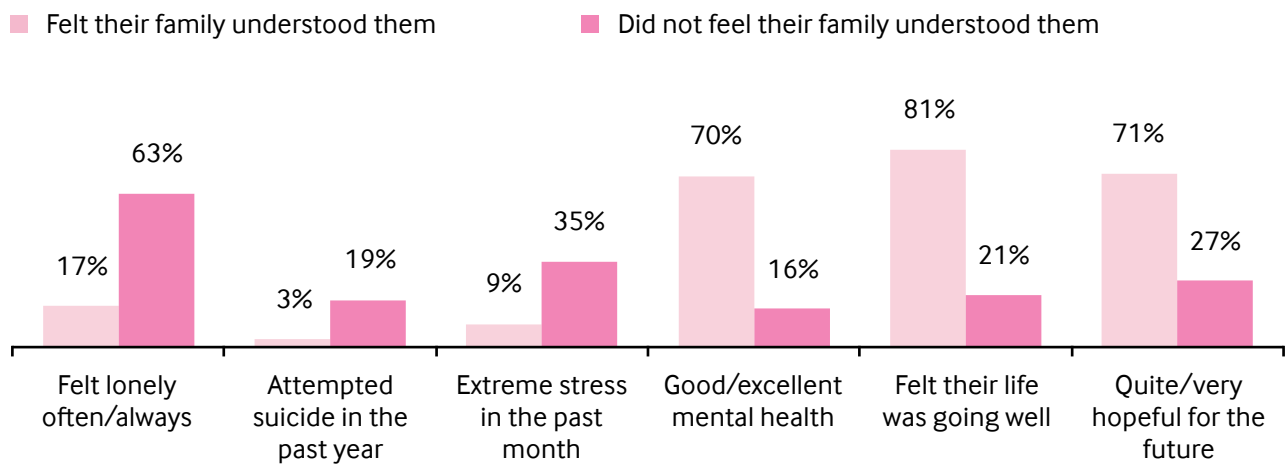
Youth who had parents or other caregivers who usually or always monitored their time online were less likely to have been the victim of online bullying in the past year, compared to youth whose parents monitored their time online less frequently. These youth were also less likely to have perpetrated cyberbullying in the past year.



Having positive family relationships helped to support youth who had experienced victimization. For example, among youth who had been cyberbullied, those who felt their family understood them were less likely than those who did not feel this way to experience extreme stress (12% vs. 42%) and despair (7% vs. 34%) in the past month, and were more likely to report good or excellent mental health (61% vs. 11%) and hopefulness (66% vs. 22%).

Similarly, among youth who had experienced in-person victimization at school or on the way to or from school, those who felt understood by their family were more likely to report better mental health and well-being than those who did not feel their family understood them.

Feeling understood by family was linked to health benefits (among youth who were victimized at school or on the way to/from school in the past year)



YOUTH RESEARCHERS' REFLECTIONS

It could be helpful for caregivers to monitor youth's Internet access more closely, especially their use of social media, to help protect youth from cyberbullying. This could be done through parental controls that are applied more extensively.

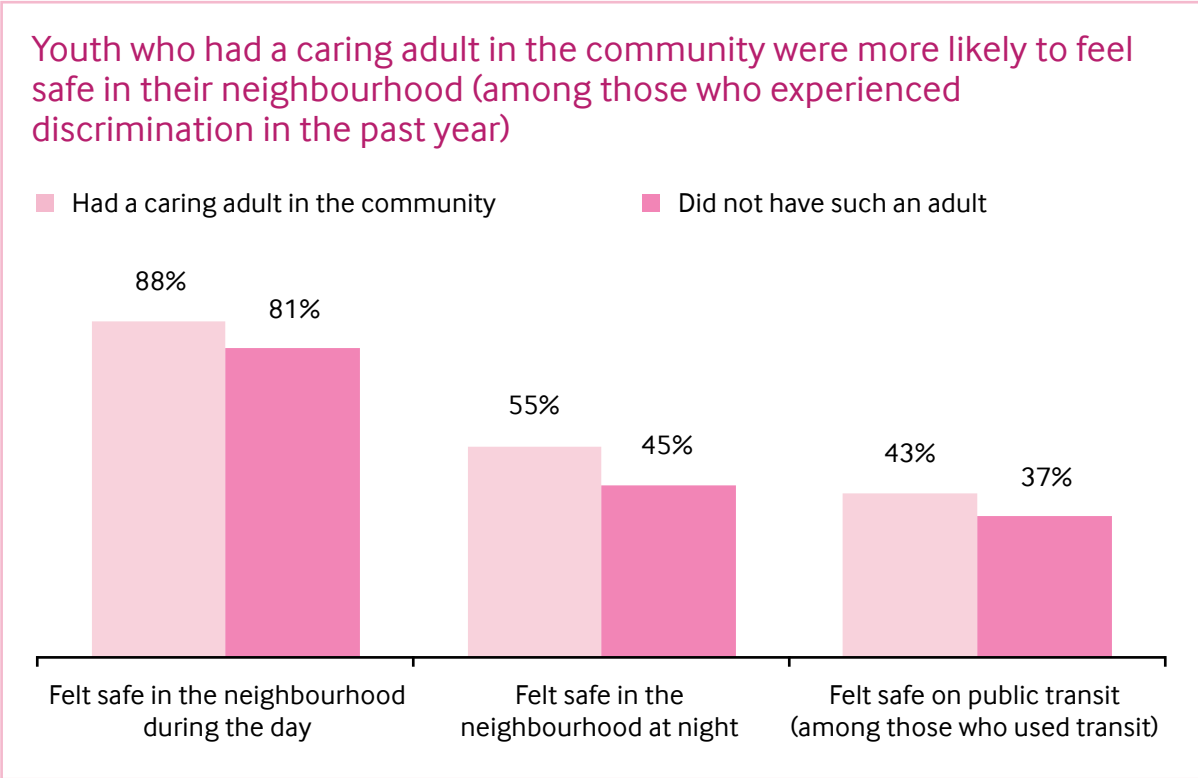
However, it is also important that caregivers try to understand youth's experiences and meet them where they are at. Youth who trust their caregivers and feel they can confide in them might be more likely to turn to them if they are experiencing challenges, including victimization at school or online. Talking with their caregivers in these situations could help to improve their well-being.

Community supports

Caring adults

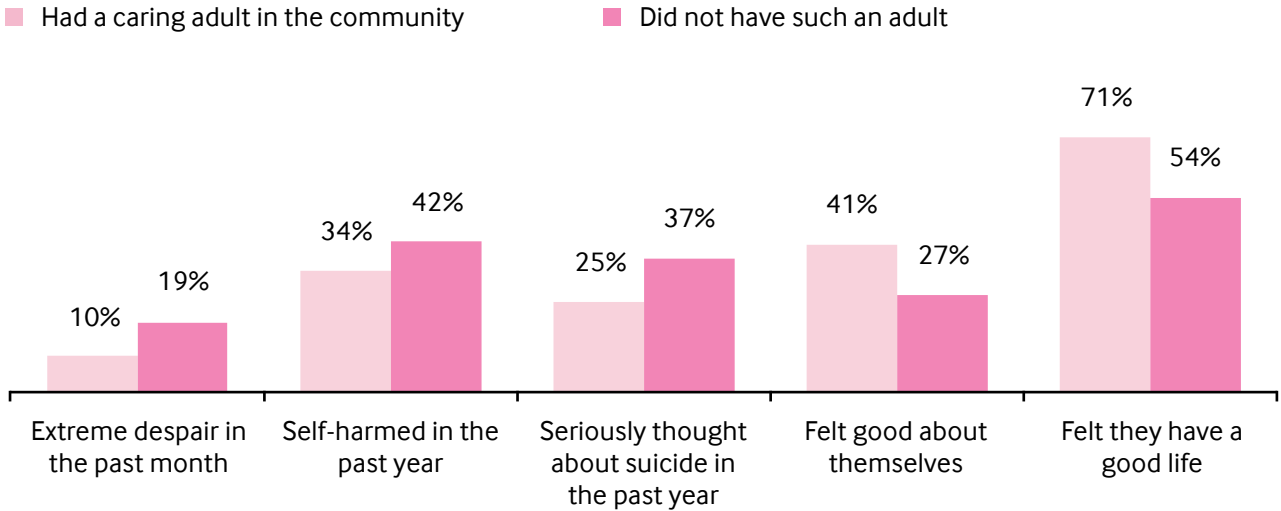
Youth who felt that at least one adult in their community (outside of their family and school) cared about them were more likely to feel safe in their neighbourhood during the day (91% vs. 86% of those who did not feel an adult in their community cared) and at night (66% vs. 57%).

Having this type of adult in youth's life was also protective for those who had experienced victimization. For example, among youth who had been discriminated against in the past year, those who had at least one caring adult in their community were more likely to feel safe in their neighborhood and to feel like a part of their community (37% felt like a part of their community vs. 16% who did not have a caring adult in their community).



There were other positive associations with having a caring adult in the community, among youth who had been victimized. These included a lower likelihood of experiencing distress (e.g., extreme despair, suicidal ideation), and a greater likelihood of feeling good about themselves and their life.

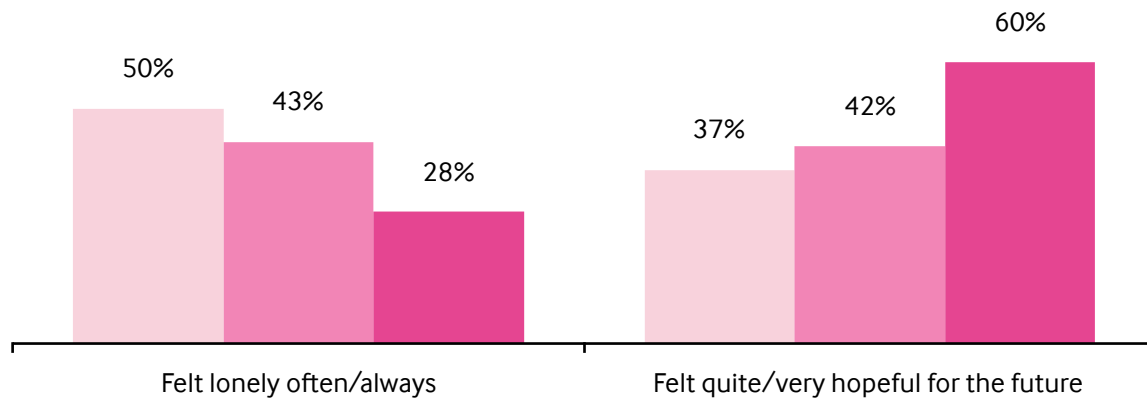
Benefits associated with having a caring adult in the community (among youth who were victimized at school or on the way to/from school in the past year)



Among youth who had experienced victimization, the more caring adults they had in the community, the more likely they were to report positive mental health and well-being.

The more caring adults that youth had in the community, the better their well-being (among those who experienced discrimination in the past year)

- Felt that no adults in the community cared about them
- Felt 1 or 2 adults cared
- Felt 3 or more adults cared



YOUTH RESEARCHERS' REFLECTIONS

Youth who feel safe talking with an adult in the community might be more likely to disclose to them if they have experienced discrimination, bullying, or other forms of victimization. Talking with a trusted adult about these experiences can help youth to feel less alone and more hopeful.

Youth should also have access to drop-in clinics in the community where they can talk with trained adults about their experiences with victimization or any other topic. Youth should additionally be aware of non-emergency helplines they can contact where there is an option to remain anonymous.

These survey results should be shared with adults to show them the positive impact that adults can have on a youth's life.

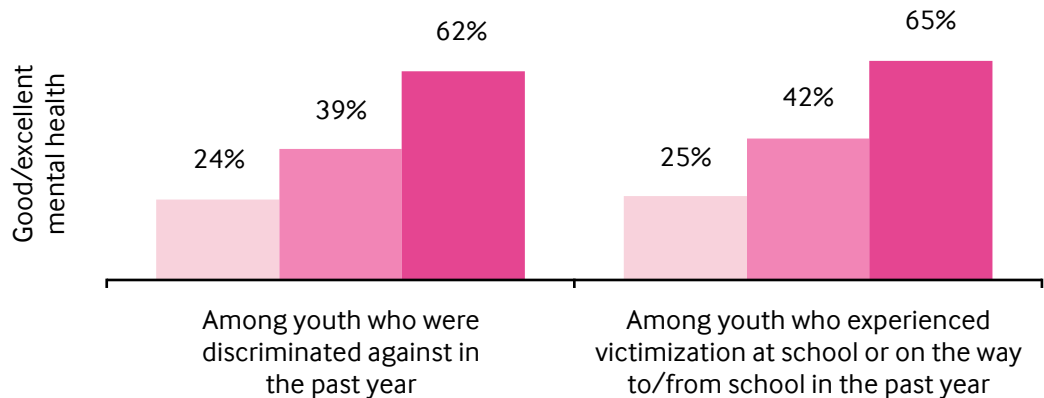
Feeling connected to the community

Feeling like a part of the community was linked to youth feeling safe there (e.g., 94% felt safe in their neighbourhood in the daytime vs. 82% of youth who did not feel like a part of their community).

Findings were similar among youth who had experienced victimization in the past year. For example, if youth had been discriminated against but felt like a part of their community, they were more likely to feel safe in their neighborhood during the daytime (92% vs. 77% of those who did not feel like a part of their community), at night (63% vs. 43%), and on public transit (51% vs. 32%; among those who used transit). Youth who felt connected to their community were also more likely to report better health and well-being.

The more connected youth felt to their community, the better their mental health

- Not at all/a little connected to the community
- Somewhat connected
- Quite a bit/very much connected



YOUTH RESEARCHERS' REFLECTIONS

The findings show the potential benefits of youth feeling connected to their community. Adults could support youth to feel like a part of their community by introducing them to community events and activities where youth can meet others and socialize in a safe environment. For example, taking part in team sports or other interactive physical activities in the community can help youth to improve not only their physical health but also their mental health and well-being.

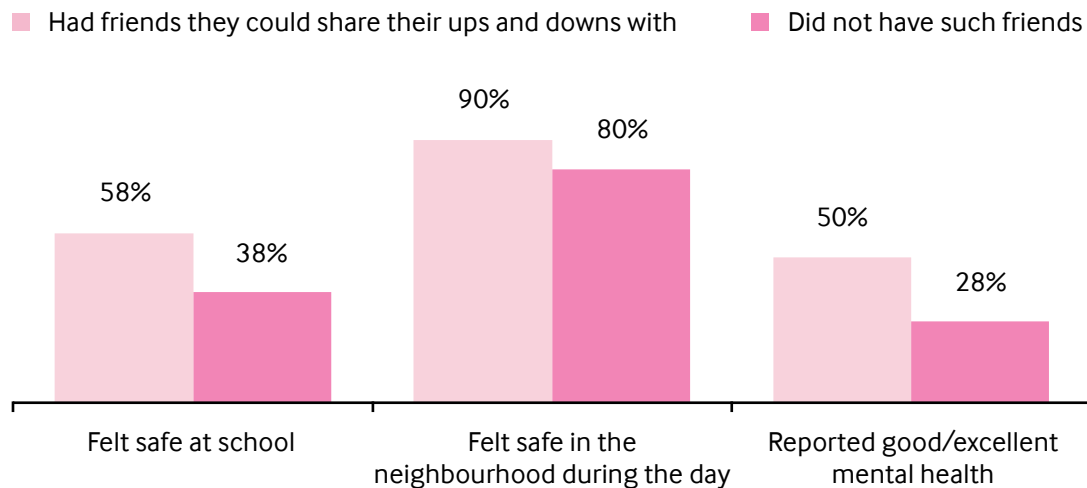
Feeling connected to the community was associated with increased feelings of safety in the neighbourhood. However, a greater percentage of youth should feel safe using public transit. It could be helpful to have transit police or another transit worker (other than the driver) on buses and SkyTrains, who can immediately take action if a violent incident unfolds. The ability for transit staff to respond immediately to violent situations, or situations that could potentially escalate to violence, could help young people to feel safer using public transit.

Supportive peers

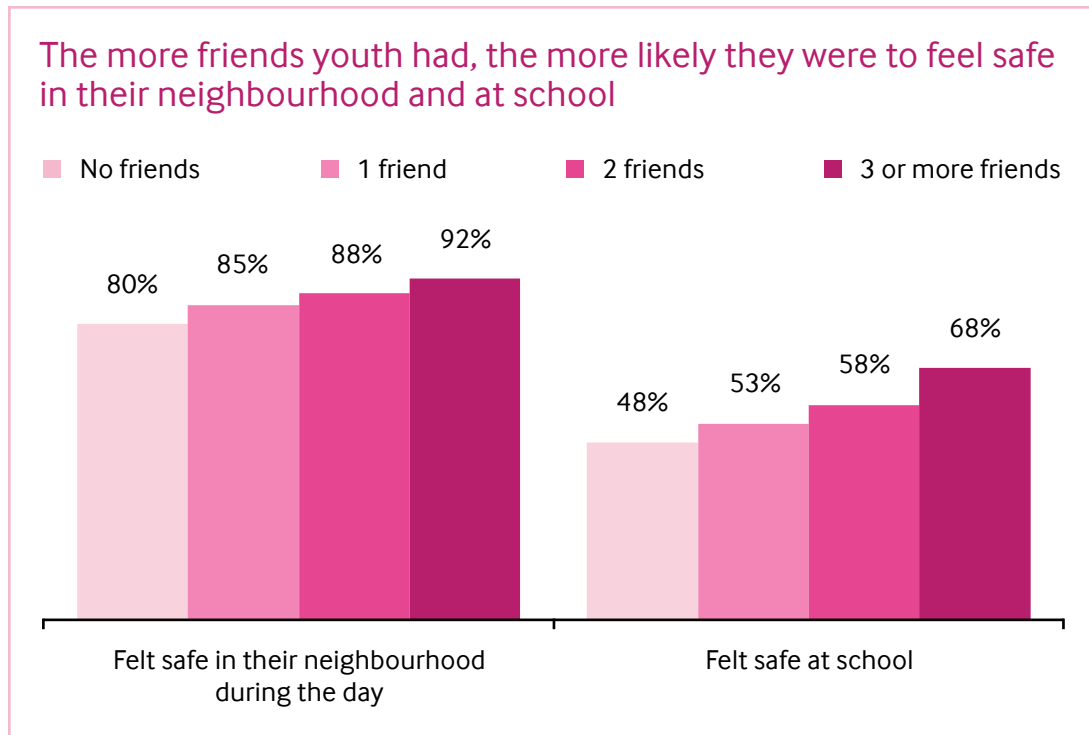
Having supportive peers helped youth to feel safe. For example, youth who had friends they could share their ups and downs with were more likely than youth who did not have such friends to feel safe at school (69% vs. 48%) and in their neighbourhood (e.g., 92% felt safe in their neighbourhood during the day vs. 84% who did not have these types of friends).

Findings were similar among youth who had experienced victimization at school or on the way to or from school. These youth were more likely to feel safe at school and in their neighbourhood, and to report good or excellent mental health, if they had friends they could turn to.

Benefits associated with having supportive friends (among youth who experienced victimization at school or on the way to/from school in the past year)



In addition, the more friends that youth had in their school or neighbourhood, the more likely they were to feel safe.



YOUTH RESEARCHERS' REFLECTIONS

Youth can support their friends to feel safer at school and in their neighbourhood. The findings suggest that youth can play an important role in violence prevention and safety promotion.



YOUTH RESEARCHERS' RECOMMENDATIONS

After reviewing the findings, the youth researchers offered recommendations for how peers, schools, the community, and family can help to promote violence prevention and enhance safety and inclusion.

Relationships with peers

- ▶ Youth should learn about healthy relationships starting at a young age (e.g., Kindergarten). Education about healthy relationships can include gaining skills and understanding in the areas of communication, active listening, conflict resolution, and consent. By gaining these skills, youth can help to foster healthy relationships and a safer environment.
- ▶ There should be more education and awareness about bullying and sexual harassment, including what these behaviours might look like and how to respond if youth witness another young person being victimized.

Schools

- ▶ It is important for students to receive education and gain awareness on how to report experiences of victimization at school (e.g., through the erase website, erasereportit.gov.bc.ca).
- ▶ School staff can support students to become 'anti-bullying ambassadors' to help promote a safe school environment.
- ▶ Caring behaviours among students can be encouraged and reinforced through school-based activities, such as 'kindness clubs.'
- ▶ Older students could be trained to act as mediators to help resolve conflicts and prevent victimization among students.
- ▶ All school staff can contribute to fostering a safe and welcoming school environment, such as by ...
 - ▶ Demonstrating to students that they remember the student's name, interests, and other personal details a student has shared with them.
 - ▶ Having informal check-ins with students (e.g., saying hello, asking about a youth's weekend).
 - ▶ Reaching out to a student if they seem to be acting different than usual.
 - ▶ Being non-judgmental, treating students fairly, and not making assumptions about a youth or their behaviour.

Online

- ▶ Youth should receive early and consistent education to develop social media literacy. This education would include learning about digital footprints, privacy, and online safety, which could promote violence prevention and reduce the risk of sexual exploitation.
- ▶ Social media literacy education and training should be provided to caregivers, so that they can help to prevent online victimization among youth, and know how to intervene if they suspect a youth has experienced online victimization.
- ▶ Caregivers could help youth to set limits on social media use. This should be part of a caring, open, and trusting relationship.
- ▶ Youth should know about resources to report cyberbullying and online accounts that are used to bully others.

Communities

- ▶ Community infrastructure should be in place to promote violence prevention and increase youth's sense of safety (e.g., street lights, well-maintained sidewalks, covered bus stops, frequent transit, inclusive washrooms).
- ▶ There should be youth-specific places, programs, and services that are accessible and offer youth a safe place to hang out. These places could provide free Wi-Fi and food for youth.
- ▶ Connections to pets can help youth to feel safe and secure. Programs, services, and housing should support youth with their pets, and/or help them connect with animals.
- ▶ Adults can support youth to feel comfortable and safe in their community by connecting them to community events and activities, as well as meaningful job and volunteer opportunities.

The youth researchers also took part in a community design activity, in which they designed a community that promotes violence prevention, safety, and inclusion. They focused on upstream approaches that included ensuring there were many welcoming places for young people to spend their time, and where youth could have their basic needs met.



YOUTH'S FEEDBACK ABOUT THE RESEARCH SLAM

Findings in this section reflect qualitative feedback from all youth who took part in the Research Slam. In addition, participants were invited to complete an anonymous survey at the end of their involvement in the Research Slam. Findings from the nine youth who completed a survey are also included in this section. Most survey respondents (78%) identified as a visible minority.

What youth hoped to gain from taking part

In their first session, youth were asked to write down what they hoped to gain from their involvement in the Research Slam. They were also invited to verbally share their thoughts with the group. They most commonly identified wanting to gain research skills and connections with peers. Some added that they were interested in gaining analysis skills and in applying those skills to address the topic of violence prevention and safety promotion.

Youth participants who completed a survey at the end of their involvement in the Research Slam were asked why they had decided to take part. The majority identified they had wanted to gain knowledge about youth health issues (89%) and community-based research (68%), and to gain research skills (78%). Also, most wanted to gain connections with other youth (68%) and to be involved in something meaningful (68%).

What youth wanted to gain from their participation in the Research Slam ...

"Research experience."

"Research analysis skills and the opportunity to meet new people!"

"Experience with real-world data analysis and statistics."

"Connections and friends."

"I'm excited to learn from everyone."

"New perspectives."

"More research and presenting experience."

"Having a community feel in our school helped me a lot. When I saw the topic of the Research Slam, it drew me in. I want to know what other youth are thinking about the topic, and what is happening in other youth's schools and communities, and what we can do to promote safety."

"To learn at school, students need to feel safe there. So, this is a really important topic and the reason I wanted to get involved."

"I would like to help improve outcomes for students who have experienced violence and victimization."

What youth gained from participating in the Research Slam

At the end of their participation in the Research Slam, youth survey respondents were asked if they gained what they had hoped to gain from their involvement. Most (89%) indicated that they had, including two thirds (67%) who felt they had very much gained what they had hoped to gain from taking part.

When asked to explain, youth survey respondents shared that they gained research skills, including how to run statistical analyses and present research findings; they developed connections with other youth; and learned more about the topic of violence prevention and safety promotion. Some youth also shared verbally that they gained a better understanding of the importance of feeling connected and safe, and what they could do to promote violence prevention and safety in their school and community.

Survey respondents also reported that through the Research Slam, they gained new knowledge and understanding about community-based research (100%), youth health and well-being (100%), risk and protective factors (89%), and ways to reduce violence and increase safety among BC youth (100%).

What youth reported they had gained from taking part in the Research Slam

"I gained connections with youth and workers in the community. I learned how to analyze data and put it into my own words."

"I learned an extensive amount of data analysis and presenting research, using SPSS, Excel and more."

"I realized the impact of adults and supportive family, and the impact of bullying, and violence on youth's life."

"Knowledge and new skills, being able to share my skills were also a huge part."

"Learnt how to use SPSS and Excel and met a lot of passionate youth."

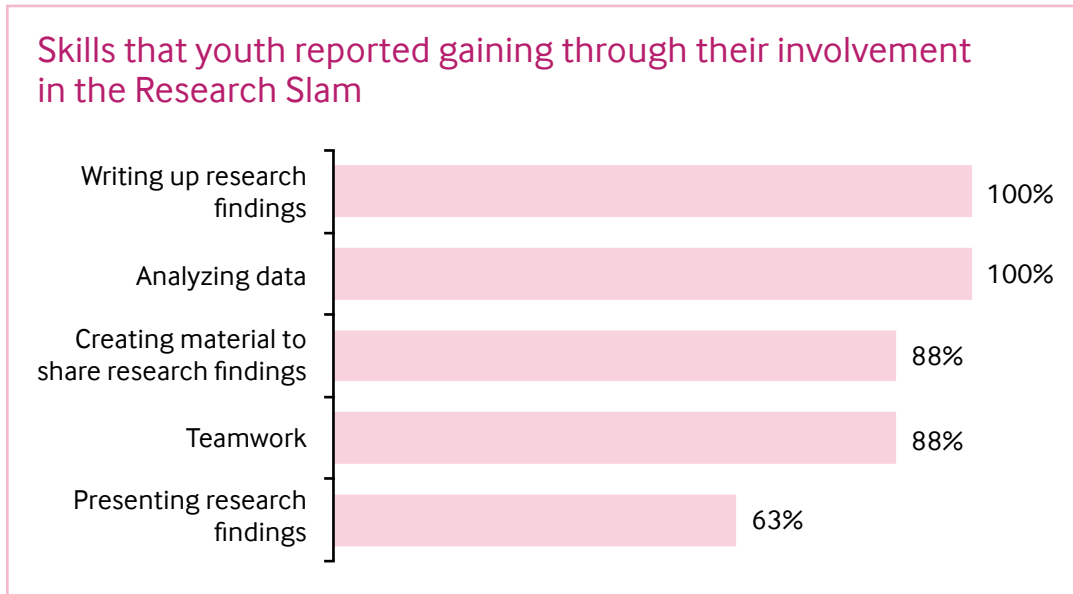
"I can't believe I know how to make a chart now!"

"Violence prevention and safety is a sensitive topic, and learning about it (i.e., the specifics of these issues) was a great experience. We did all of that through analysis which taught me so much about the databases, but also how valuable these results are. I also met so many new people, which is awesome!"

"Being involved in this project has been important for us because it can change the way we interact with people. For example, the findings highlight the impact that teachers can have on youth, and if a teacher is treating another student in a way that we think is unfair, we could be kinder to that student and give them the support they need."

Skills gained

All survey respondents (100%) reported they had gained skills that would help them in their education and/or employment. When asked about specific skills they had gained through the Research Slam, youth most commonly cited skills in data analysis and writing up the findings.



Note: Survey respondents could mark all that applied.



Additional feedback

All survey respondents indicated they felt supported by project staff and that they made connections with other youth through the Research Slam. They all felt they had contributed to the research process, and virtually all indicated they had fun and that their involvement was meaningful to them.

All youth who completed a survey reported that their participation in the Research Slam increased their interest in conducting research in the future, at least a little. This included 63% who indicated their involvement increased their interest very much. When asked to explain, some youth commented that they appreciated what they had learned, and had a positive experience taking part in research through the Research Slam. As a result, they wanted to be involved in more research in the future.

Youth's comments about their interest in participating in future research

"Analysis specifically is something I'm interested in, so doing something similar to what we did now would be great!"

"Really fun and engaging. Learnt a lot and would love to learn more."

Youth were asked if they had any suggestions to improve future Research Slams. No youth offered suggestions, and several added explanations that they had no suggestions because they were very satisfied with their experience and how the Research Slam was delivered.

Additional survey comments

"Learned so much. Thank you!"

"It was loads of fun :)"

"Thank you for this opportunity."

Summary and conclusion

Youth participants' feedback about the Research Slam indicated that their experience taking part enabled them to learn about and meaningfully contribute to community-based health research. They gained knowledge and skills to carry out research (e.g., analysis skills) and to share the findings (e.g., through creating slides and presenting the results). Youth also reported gaining skills that would support them to pursue their education and employment goals.

In addition to gaining research-related skills and knowledge through the Research Slam, youth reported developing connections with other young people and gaining skills in teamwork. They also reported that through the research findings they gained a better understanding of the importance of feeling connected and safe, and what they can do to promote violence prevention and safety in their school and community.

The goals of the Research Slam included providing a low-barrier safe environment for youth to develop skills and positive peer connections. The goal was also for youth to contribute to community-based research and knowledge translation with support from positive peer and adult mentors. Feedback from youth participants suggests that the goals of the Research Slam were achieved. Many described having a positive and meaningful experience in the Research Slam, and wanting to take part in future research as a result.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The Research Slam findings, based on 2023 BC AHS data, highlighted that feeling supported and connected to family, school, peers, and community were associated with youth feeling safer and less likely to perpetrate violence. Among youth who had experienced discrimination or victimization at school or on the way to or from school in the past year, feeling supported and connected were linked to a greater sense of safety and well-being.

The youth researchers' recommendations included ensuring that young people receive age-appropriate education about healthy-relationship skills starting at a young age; offering youth and their caregivers more education around online safety; providing more education and awareness about harassment and other forms of violence, including how to respond if youth witness victimization; increasing youth's awareness of how to report violent incidents; and providing tools for school staff, adults in the community, and young people to promote violence prevention and a safe and inclusive environment.

In addition to creating a PowerPoint presentation to share their findings, the youth researchers co-designed a series of infographics for youth, caregivers, and school staff. These infographics are available on the McCreary website [mcs.bc.ca/youth_research_academy].

The youth researchers are available to present findings from this report. To schedule a presentation, email mccreary@mcs.bc.ca.



PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS CAN PROMOTE SAFETY FOR STUDENTS

In fall 2024, 15 young people came together to analyze data from the 2023 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) to promote safety and reduce experiences of violence among BC youth in Grades 7-12.

BC youth had a range of in-person and online victimization experiences in the past year. For example, 40% had experienced discrimination, 15% were cyberbullied, and 4% had been physically attacked.

Parents and other caregivers can play an important role in reducing the chances youth will experience victimization. For example:

- 21%** of youth who felt their caregivers rarely or never knew what the youth was doing online had been cyberbullied.
- 10%** whose caregivers often or always knew what they were doing online.

Feeling supported by caregivers and other family members can improve the well-being of those who have been victimized. For example, youth who felt their family understood them were:

- More likely to report good or excellent mental health (4% vs. 11% who did not feel this way).
- More likely to feel quite or very hopeful for their future (71% vs. 27% who did not feel this way).
- Less likely to experience extreme stress in the past month (12% vs. 42% who did not feel this way).
- Less likely to often or always feel lonely (17% vs. 63% who did not feel this way).

Many youth who had been cyberbullied. Many youth who had been bullied in person.

Based on our findings and discussions, we suggest that parents and other caregivers:

- Check in regularly with the youth in their lives to see how they are doing.
- Have conversations about online safety with young people from an early age and before they have a phone.
- Develop a plan with youth to help them stay safe online.
- Receive support to learn and stay up to date about social media and online safety.
- Learn about the different video games their youth play, who they play with, and the features of the different games.

To learn more about the BC AHS and read the full report from the Youth Research Slam, visit mcs.bc.ca/youth_research_slam. To request a youth-led presentation, email mccreary@mcs.bc.ca.

PROMOTING SCHOOL SAFETY: THE ROLE OF STUDENTS

In fall 2024, 15 young people analyzed data from the 2023 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) to identify supports that promote safety and reduce experiences of violence among BC youth aged 12-18.

We found that 24% of students had been discriminated against at school in the past year. Also, 35% had experienced extreme bullying, 37% had been social excluded, and 4% were physically attacked at school or on the way to or from school.

Along with caring and supportive adults, students can also play a role in helping to create a safer school environment.

Youth who had been victimized at school or on the way to or from school reported better health and well-being when they had friends they could share their ups and downs with. For example:

58% felt safe at school.	50% reported good or excellent mental health.	90% felt safe in their neighborhood.
38% who didn't have these kinds of supportive friends.	28%	60%

Based on our findings and discussions, we suggest that students:

- Reach out to a friend or trusted adult if they need support.
- See something, say something; talk to friends or a trusted adult if they see bullying behaviour.
- Check in on friends and peers regularly.
- Consider becoming an advocate for anti-bullying to promote a safer school environment.
- Consider starting a Random Acts of Kindness Club at their school.
- Think about participating in social clubs at school with their friends.

If you or your friends are being bullied or you have seen something that concerns you, you can use the mcs.bc.ca/youth_research_slam report to request a youth-led presentation, email mccreary@mcs.bc.ca.

PROMOTING SCHOOL SAFETY: THE ROLE OF SCHOOL STAFF

In fall 2024, 15 young people came together to analyze data from the 2023 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) to promote safety and reduce experiences of violence among BC youth in Grades 7-12.

We found that 24% of students had been discriminated against at school in the past year. Also, 35% had experienced extreme bullying, 37% had been social excluded, and 4% were physically attacked at school or on the way to or from school.

Creating a caring school environment can increase safety and reduce bullying*. For example, youth who felt their teacher cared about them were:

- More likely to feel safe at school (79% vs. 23% who did not feel teachers cared).
- Less likely to have been bullied (44% vs. 68% who did not feel teachers cared).

A safe, caring, and inclusive school can also improve the well-being of students who have been victimized. For example:

51% of those who had experienced discrimination who felt their teachers cared about them reported good or excellent mental health.	80% who had been bullied and felt that school staff cared about them planned to go on to post-secondary.
27% who did not feel teachers cared.	73% who did not feel this way.

Based on our findings and discussions, we suggest all BC schools:

- Encourage and reinforce caring behaviour among students (e.g., by establishing "Kindness Clubs").
- Provide opportunities for regular, informal check-ins with students.
- Ensure students have access to a mental health counsellor if they need one.
- Provide anonymous ways for students to talk about potentially unsafe behaviours they see happening among their peers.
- Receive training in trauma-informed practice to help recognize and support students who may be struggling.
- Receive training to address bullying, including cyberbullying.
- Ensure students are aware of available resources and how to use them, such as the Erase website and reporting book.

To learn more about the BC AHS and read the full report from the Youth Research Slam, visit mcs.bc.ca/youth_research_slam. To request a youth-led presentation, email mccreary@mcs.bc.ca.

Bullying refers to having been verbally harassed, excluded, or physically attacked at school or on the way to/from school in the past year.



**McCreary
Centre Society**