



McCreary Centre Society recently released the report *Understanding tobacco use and vaping among BC youth: Findings from the BC Adolescent Health Survey*. The report considers smoking and vaping among youth in British Columbia using data from the BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS). The BC AHS is a comprehensive youth health survey completed every five years since 1992 by students aged 12–19 in school districts across BC. In 2018, over 38,000 Grade 7–12 students in 58 of BC’s 60 school districts completed the survey. (For more details about the survey, visit [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca).)

The report takes an in-depth look at smoking trends over the past 15 years, the use of different smoking products, and risk and protective factors for regular smoking. It also considers vaping and how that differs from the use of cigarettes and other nicotine products.

The report highlights that it is youth who are experiencing struggles in areas such as mental health, discrimination, deprivation and violence who are the ones most likely to be turning to nicotine products.

The report identifies similarities and differences between youth’s use of different nicotine products and shows some key difference between smoking and vaping. One of those differences was that generally sports involvement was a protective factor for smoking and a risk factor for vaping. This confirms findings from other McCreary projects which show youth often view the potential negative effects of vaping and smoking differently (e.g., *Clearing the Air: A youth led research project about vaping* [https://mcs.bc.ca/pdf/yrs\\_clearing\\_the\\_air.pdf](https://mcs.bc.ca/pdf/yrs_clearing_the_air.pdf)).

Despite the differences between smoking and vaping, having caring adults and positive connections in their life was associated with youth being less likely to smoke or vape, or if they had tried smoking to be less likely to move on to be recent or regular smokers.

A copy of the report is available at [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca). Posters of the regional data and an infographic about tobacco, vaping, and exercise are also available. A video of Vancouver Whitecaps captain and Canadian soccer international, Russell Teibert, discussing the vaping results from the report is available at <https://www.youtube.com/user/McCrearyCentre>

McCreary’s Youth Advisory and Action Council are currently accepting applications for Youth Action Grants, which provide grants up to \$500 for youth-led projects which address findings from the BC AHS,

including vaping and smoking. For more details or to apply, visit [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca) or email [yag@mcs.bc.ca](mailto:yag@mcs.bc.ca).

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

- In 2018, 19% of BC students aged 12–19 had ever smoked tobacco. This was a decrease from previous years. For example, around a quarter (26%) had smoked in 2008 and around a third (34%) in 2003.
- Students in the Fraser and Vancouver Coastal regions were less likely to have smoked than students in the Interior, Northern, and Vancouver Island regions. Youth in the Fraser and Vancouver Coastal areas were also the least likely to have vaped, and those in the Interior were the most likely.
- Reflecting the pattern for smoking, rural-based youth were more likely than those from urban areas to have vaped (33% vs. 27%).
- Youth were more likely to have vaped in the past month than to have ever tried smoking tobacco (27% vs. 19%).
- In the month before taking the survey, 6% of youth had both vaped and smoked cigarettes; 21% had vaped and not smoked cigarettes; and 1% had smoked cigarettes and not vaped.
- Among youth who smoked tobacco in the past month, around half had been smoking for at least two years, including 19% who had started smoking at least four years earlier.
- Some youth were more likely to have smoked and/or vaped than others, including youth with a history of physical or mental health challenges, addiction, and adverse experiences (including abuse, housing instability, government care, discrimination, bereavement, and poverty and deprivation). For example, 53% of youth who had been sexually abused had vaped in the past month, compared to 24% of those who had not experienced this type of abuse.
- Overall, regular sports and exercise involvement was associated with an increased likelihood that youth would vape, and a decreased likelihood that they would smoke. However, when different types of sports were considered separately, weekly involvement in extreme sports was a risk factor for both smoking and vaping.
- Youth were less likely to smoke and/or vape when they felt connected to their family, school, and community. Many protective factors that reduced the likelihood that youth would have smoked or vaped recently also reduced the likelihood that youth who smoked would smoke daily. These included having caring adults and friends, and finding the activities they engaged in to be meaningful.

In February 2021, McCreary will release a report about youth vaping during COVID, which includes data collected between June and December 2020.