

# National study shows a decline in risky adolescent behaviours and reports of bullying others among Canadian youth

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New research has shown positive social support leads to positive health outcomes.

Findings from the 2014 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children survey (HBSC) show that relationships with family, school, peers, and community play a critical role in the health of young people. Queen's University researchers William Pickett (Public Health Science) and John Freeman (Education) were co-principal investigators on the study.

The HBSC is a cross-national research study conducted in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) internationally and with the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) nationally. The survey was administered to 29,784 students in Grade 6 through 10 from 377 Canadian schools across all 10 Canadian provinces and three Canadian territories.

"The Government of Canada is pleased to support Queen's University in the development of this report," says Jane Philpott, Minister of Health. "Positive relationships and support systems are essential to the health of our youth. The study will help inform the work we do to improve their long-term health and well-being."

A number of key findings emerged from the report:

- Positive social supports provided from parents, teachers, friends, and communities are critical for positive health outcomes.
- Family matters—for virtually all relationships examined, family support was the most important source of support linked to better health outcomes.
- The prevalence of cannabis use peaked in 2002 and has declined ever since. Cannabis use among Canadian youth is now at its lowest level ever in the 24-year study, at 23% for both boys and girls.
- Reports of bullying others have declined 50% since the last survey, but reports of being victimized have remained the same.
- Girls were particularly vulnerable to mental health issues,

especially Grade 9-10 girls who reported more negatively on mental and emotional health outcomes than all other groups.

- Only 1 in 5 Canadian youth reported participating in enough moderate to vigorous [physical activity](#) to meet Canada's physical activity guidelines (i.e., 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity every day).
- Approximately 1 on 3 boys and 1 in 4 girls were classified as having overweight or obesity by their reported Body Mass Index (BMI).
- Over half of the reported injuries were experienced during healthy pursuits, such as sport participation.

"This report from the Canadian HBSC team focuses on the link between supportive relationships and adolescents' health," explained William Pickett of Queen's University, who is co-Principal Investigator of the study. "Do relationships matter to the health of [young people](#) in Canada? Clearly, the answer to that question is yes."

For the last 25 years, Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) has been a vital source of information in Canada, describing the health experiences of young Canadians and factors that determine their health. The survey is coordinated by the Social Program Evaluation Group (SPEG) at Queen's University, and researchers from Queen's University, the University of British Columbia, McGill University, and the University of New Brunswick collaborated on the study.

"The declines in many risk behaviours, like cannabis use and bullying, are good news," said Dr. Elizabeth Saewyc of the University of British Columbia, a co-Investigator on the study. "But there are still areas of concern. Too many young people aren't meeting the Canada guidelines for physical activity. Rates of overweight and obesity among adolescents and negative mental [health](#) outcomes, especially for Grade 9 to 10 girls, remain priority issues."

**More information:** The Canadian HBSC Report is available here:  
[healthycanadians.gc.ca/publica ... jeunes/index-eng.php](http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/publica...jeunes/index-eng.php)

Provided by Queen's University

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