






BALANCE & CONNECTION: PROTECTIVE FACTORS







The findings of the 2018 BC AHS highlight the importance of balance and connection in the lives of BC youth. In this section we provide examples of some protective factors that can help to support young people.

BALANCE

Protective factor	Examples
SLEEP	 Students who slept for eight or more hours were more likely than those who slept fewer hours to report positive overall health and mental health. For example, 89% of those who slept for eight or more hours reported good or excellent overall health, compared to 73% who slept for seven hours or less.
EXERCISE	 The more days on which youth exercised in the past week, the more likely they were to report positive health and well-being. For example, 46% of students who did not exercise at all reported feeling good about themselves, compared to 61% who exercised on at least two days. Those who exercised on 6–7 days in the past week were the most likely to feel good about themselves (70%).
TIME OFFLINE	 Students who went offline (i.e., turned off their phone, put it on silent mode, or put it in another room when they went to bed) were more likely to report good or excellent overall health (84% vs. 78% who did not go offline), and good or excellent mental health (76% vs. 71%).
NUTRITION	 Youth who ate a healthy diet and who ate regular meals reported better overall health. For example, 89% of those who always ate breakfast on school days reported good or excellent overall health, compared to 78% who sometimes ate breakfast and 63% who never ate breakfast.
SUFFICIENT TIME TO DO THINGS THEY ENJOY	 Students who felt they had enough time to spend in nature were more likely to feel connected to nature or the land than those who did not have enough time in nature (48% vs. 39%).

Students who felt they had enough time to spend on their own doing things they wanted were more likely than those who felt they had insufficient time on their own to report good or excellent mental health (80% vs. 53%), and were less likely to experience extreme stress (7% vs. 26%).

CONNECTION

Protective factor	Examples
FAMILY CONNECTEDNESS	 Family connectedness has consistently been shown to be one of the strongest protective factors for youth growing up in BC. For example, students who felt that their family paid attention to them quite a bit/very much were more likely to feel good about themselves (69%) than those who felt their family paid some attention to them (33%) or paid very little or no attention to them (18%). Also, students who often had fun with their family were less likely to experience extreme stress (8%) compared to those who rarely had fun with their family (29%).
SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS	 Alongside family connectedness, school connectedness is one of the most robust protective factors for youth in school. For example, students who felt that teachers cared about them were more likely than those who did not feel that their teacher cared to feel safe at school (85% vs. 30%) and to experience good/excellent mental health (79% vs. 53%). Also, students who had approached a teacher for help and found the experience helpful were more likely than those who felt it was unhelpful to feel like a part of their school (70% vs. 38%).
COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS	 Youth who had an adult in their community who they felt really cared about them were more likely to feel connected to their community (53% vs. 22% who did not have such an adult); to feel safe in their neighbourhood in the daytime (94% vs. 87%) and at night (69% vs. 56%); and to feel hopeful for the future (71% vs. 56%).
SUPPORTIVE ADULT	 Students who had an adult in their family they could talk to if they had a serious problem were more likely than those who did not have such an adult to feel comfortable refusing to do something they did not want to do, such as having sex with a new partner (94% vs. 88%) or sexting (94% vs. 89%). <p>Youth who had an adult who helped them with tasks—such as making and keeping appointments, homework, and finding a job— reported better outcomes. For example, 88% who had an adult to help them apply to post-secondary planned to go on to college after they finished high school, compared to 68% who did not have such an adult in their life.</p>
SUPPORTIVE FRIENDS	 Youth who had at least one in-person friend who helped them when they had a problem reported better mental health. For example, they were more likely to feel their life was going well (76% vs. 41%) and to be happy (67% vs. 28%), and were less likely to experience extreme despair in the past month (7% vs. 24%).
CULTURAL CONNECTEDNESS	 Students who took part in cultural or traditional activities infrequently in the past year were more likely than those who had not taken part to report feeling connected to their community (45% vs. 41%). Those who took part in these activities at least weekly were the most likely to feel connected to their community (52%).