

SHAPES Survey Results
2017



**Northwestern
Health Unit**

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Northwestern Health Unit
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2017

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In February and March 2017, students in grades 6 to 8 across the Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) catchment area were asked to complete the Student Health Behaviours Survey. This survey was based on the School Health Action, Planning and Evaluation System (SHAPES), a survey service system used nationally, housed at the Propel Centre for Population Health Impact in Waterloo. This is the second time the survey has been administered in the NWHU catchment area, as it was previously administered in 2013.

- Overall, 13% of students had tried smoking. This proportion increased significantly in each grade; just over a fifth of grade 8 students had tried smoking. Of students who reported smoking, the most commonly used products were cigarettes and E-cigarettes.
- 19% of surveyed students reached the goal of 60 minutes or more of physical activity per day, as recommended by the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines; this is significantly higher than the proportion reported in 2014 (15%). Females (15%) were significantly less likely to reach this target than males (23%).
- 44% of all students exceeded the screen time guidelines set by the Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines of more than two hours of recreational screen time per day. This proportion remains unchanged since 2014.
- Only 2% met the recommended servings in all four food groups based on Canada's Food Guide. This was slightly lower than in 2014 (3%). Students were most likely to meet the recommendations for meat and alternatives (63%) and milk and alternatives (49%), and much less likely to meet the recommendation for vegetables and fruits (4%) and the recommendations for grain (3%).
- In regards to emotions, the most commonly cited feelings were being active, happy, energetic, lively, joyful and cheerful. Although, numerous students reported being quite a bit or extremely sad (18%), upset (15%) or even miserable (10%).
- 36% of students reported experiences with bullying in the last 30 days. Of all students, 24% had been verbally attacked by other students, 9% physically attacked, 8% were the target of a cyber-attack(s) and 8% had possessions stolen or damaged. A greater proportion of females reported being bullied (40%) when compared to males (32%). Males were slightly more likely to report bullying others (14%) when compared to females (11%).

These findings will be used for planning purposes going forward focusing on programming aimed at addressing healthy eating, physical activity and tobacco control in schools. Finally, this report provides a comprehensive profile of students' health behaviours in the region that is accessible to the public and will serve to inform the wider community.

INTRODUCTION

In 2014, the Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) sought services from Propel Centre for Population Health Impact in order to measure key health objectives which were identified as gaps in already available child health data. The health unit worked with Propel and school boards to create a customized survey based on Propel's SHAPES (School Health Action, Planning and Evaluation System) module. SHAPES is designed to measure youth health behaviour information in four main areas: physical activity; healthy eating; tobacco use; and mental health and includes students in grades six to eight.¹

This first cycle of the Student Health Behaviours Survey was conducted in early 2014 and was repeated in 2017. The results presented in this report will add to the existing information known about child health in the region and will provide baselines for indicators that will be monitored going forward.

METHODS

Data collection

In February and March 2017, 29 schools across the Northwestern Health Unit catchment area participated in the Student Health Behaviours Survey. Health unit staff, with permission of the school boards, went into each school and administered paper copies of the survey to students in grades six to eight. All responses and student information were kept confidential. Students and parents were given the option to opt out of participating in the survey.

The completed surveys were sent to the Propel team. Each school received an assessment of their results from Propel. These reports were school-specific and at the aggregate level so individuals could not be identified from the data.

The health unit received a data file of all the responses from the entire region. This was combined with surveys collected in 2014 and used for the purposes of this report. This data file did not have any identifying information specific to the schools or the students.

Analysis

Analysis of the data was conducted using STATA® (v. 15) and Microsoft Excel®. STATA® was used to calculate all proportions and 95% confidence intervals using a logit transformation method.

Sample

There were 1,930 students eligible to participate in the survey in 2017. The final sample was 1,711 students, corresponding to a response rate of 89%. Of the 1,667 respondents who identified their age and sex, 50% were females and 50% were males. By grade, 32% of participants were in grade six, 34% were in grade seven and 34% were in grade eight. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the sample by grade and sex.

¹ University of Waterloo. (n.d.). School Health Action, Planning and Evaluation System. Retrieved from <http://www.shapes.uwaterloo.ca/?section=1&page=111>.

Table 1. Participant characteristics, 2017

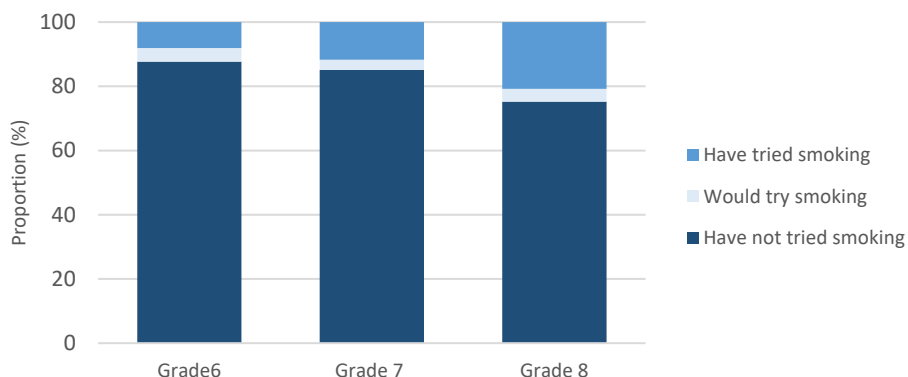
	Female	Male	Not Stated	Total
Grade 6	303	287	4	594
Grade 7	271	288	3	562
Grade 8	256	262	2	520
Not stated	0	0	35	35
Total	830	837	44	1,711

RESULTS

Experience with smoking

In 2017, 13% of students had tried smoking. This proportion increased from 8% in grade six to 21% in grade eight (Figure 1). In the same year, 7% of students reported smoking cigarettes and/or using alternative smoking/tobacco products² in the last 30 days. This was similar to the 8% of students in 2014 (Table 2). Students in grade 8 were significantly more likely to have smoked in the last 30 days compared to those in grades 6 and 7 (Table 2). Males (n=58; 7%, 95% CI: 5-9) and females (n=50; 6%, 95% CI: 5-8) were equally likely report smoking in the last 30 days (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Proportion of students by grade and smoking status, NWHU, 2017

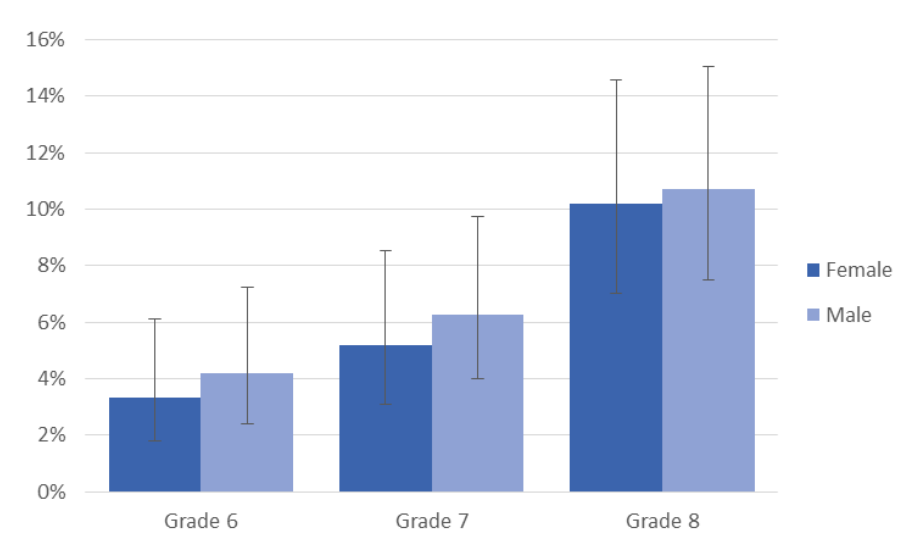


² Cigarillos, cigars, e-cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, and using a hookah to smoke tobacco or shisha

Table 2. Proportion of students who reported smoking or using alternative products² in the last 30 days by grade and year, NWHU, 2014 and 2017

	2017 n=1,669		2014 n=1,805	
	%	95%CI	%	95%CI
Grade 6	3.7	2.5-5.6	5.0	3.5-7.1
Grade 7	5.9	4.2-8.2	4.3	2.9-6.2
Grade 8	10.4	8.1-13.3	13.6	11.1-16.5
Total	6.5	5.4-7.8	7.7	6.5-9.0

Figure 2. Proportion of students who reported smoking or using alternative products² in the last 30 days by sex and grade, NWHU, 2017



Of the 109 students who reported smoking, the most commonly used products were cigarettes and E-cigarettes (Table 3). Females most commonly reported smoking cigarettes, while males most commonly reported smoking e-cigarettes (Figure 3). Of the 69 students who reported smoking cigarettes in the last 30 days, 44% (n=30) smoked only one of the 30 days and 7% (n=5) reported smoking every day (Figure 4).

Table 3. Proportion of students who reported using tobacco or alternative smoking products by type of product and year, NWHU, grade 6-8, 2014 and 2017

	2017 n=109		2014 n=140	
	%	95%CI	%	95%CI
Cigarettes	63.8	54.3-72.5	65.0	57.4-73.2
Cigarillos or little cigars	20.2	13.6-28.9	22.9	16.6-30.6
Cigars	13.8	8.4-21.7	7.1	3.9-12.8
E-cigarettes	39.4	30.7-49.0	30.7	23.6-38.9
Smokeless tobacco	20.2	13.6-28.9	15.0	10.0-22.0
Hookah to smoke tobacco	10.1	5.6-17.4	3.6	1.5-8.4
Hookah to smoke shisha	10.0	5.6-17.4	9.3	5.4-15.4

Figure 3. Proportion of students who reported smoking or using alternative products in the last 30 days by type of product and sex, NWHU, grade 6-8, 2017

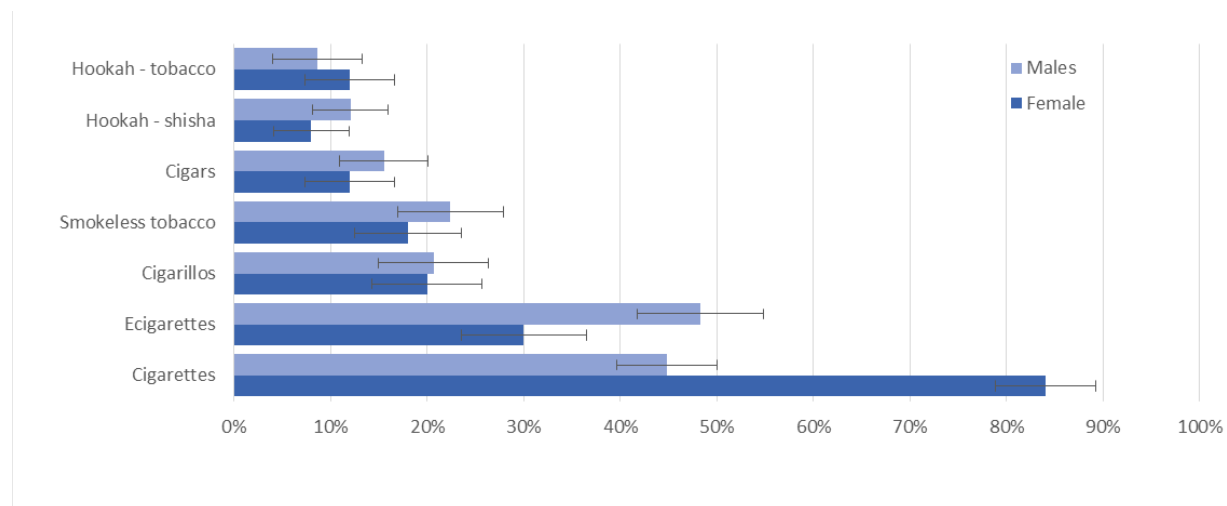
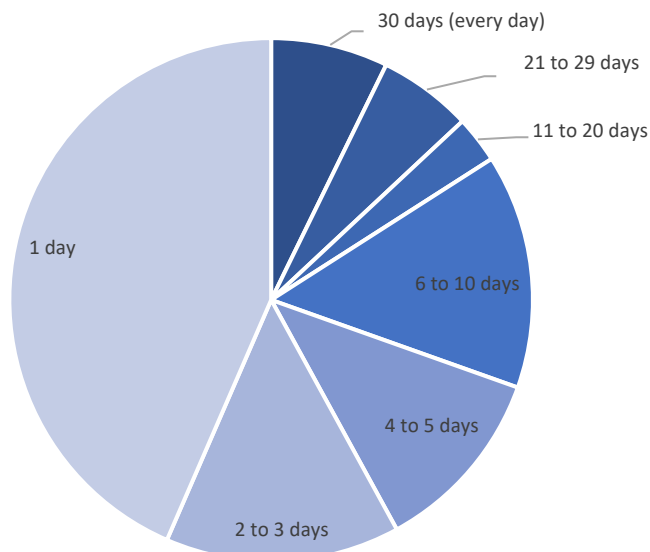


Figure 4. Proportion of students who reported smoking cigarettes by frequency of smoking, NWHU, grade 6-8, 2017



Of the 1,444 students who did not report smoking in the last 30 days, 7% had tried smoking in the past and 5% reported they might try smoking cigarettes in the future, while only 1% reported they thought they would smoke a cigarette during the next year. Peer pressure was not reported to be a factor for most students as 96% indicated they would not smoke a cigarette, if it were offered to them by one of their best friends.

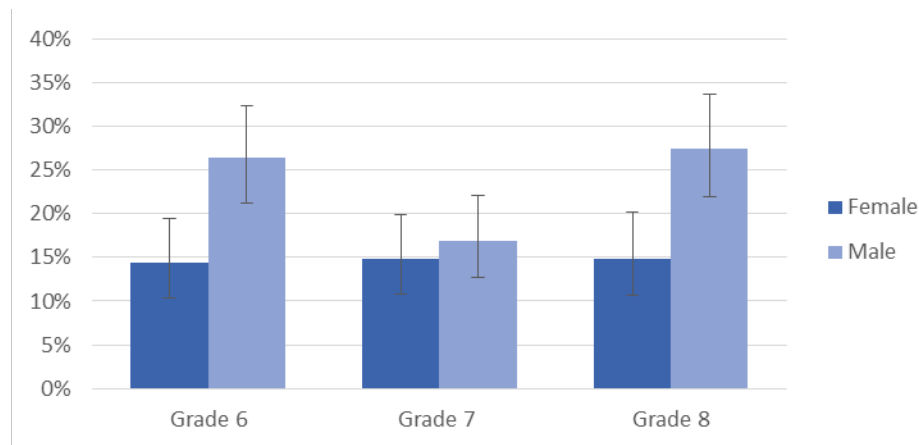
Physical activity

The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day for children and youth aged five to seventeen.³ In 2017, 19% of surveyed students reached this target, this is significantly higher than the proportion reported in 2014 (Table 4). Females (14.6%; 95% CI 12.1-17.5; n=102) were significantly less likely to reach this target than males (23.4%; 95% CI 20.4-26.7; n=167; Figure 5).

Table 4. Proportion of students who reported getting one hour or more of physical activity daily by grade and year, NWHU, 2014 and 2017

	2017 n=1,418		2014 n=1,574	
	%	95%CI	%	95%CI
Grade 6	20.0	16.8-24.0	14.2	11.4-17.6
Grade 7	16.0	13.0-19.6	18.9	12.1-18.2
Grade 8	21.3	17.7-25.3	15.0	12.3-18.3
Total	19.2	17.2-21.3	14.7	13.0-16.5

Figure 5. Proportion of students getting one hour or more of physical activity daily by grade and sex, NWHU, grade 6-8, 2017



The Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines recommend no more than two hours of recreational screen time per day for children and youth aged five to seventeen.⁴ Students were asked how much time they spent sitting or lying down looking at a screen per day. Less than half (44%) of all students exceeded the screen time guidelines, which remains unchanged since 2014 (Table 5). The number of hours of screen time increased with increasing grade (Table 5). These rates were similar among males and females (Figure 6).

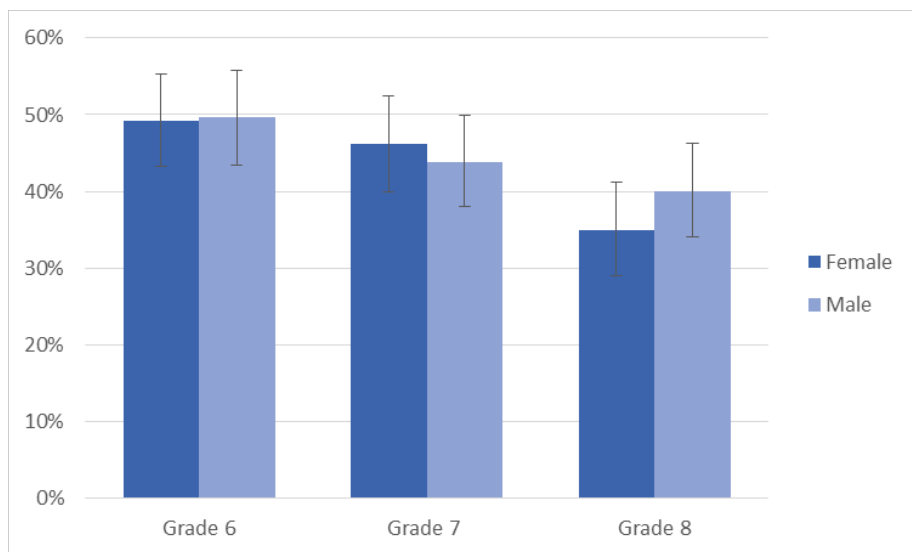
³ Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology. (2016). *Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines*. Retrieved from http://csepguidelines.ca/wp-content/themes/csep2017/pdf/Canadian24HourMovementGuidelines2016_2.pdf

⁴ Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology. (2016). *Canadian 24-hour movement guidelines for children and youth*. Retrieved from http://csepguidelines.ca/wp-content/themes/csep2017/pdf/Canadian24HourMovementGuidelines2016_2.pdf

Table 5. Proportion of students who reported getting two hours or less of recreational screen time daily by grade and year, NWHU, 2014 and 2017

	2017 n=1,252		2014 n=1,679	
	%	95%CI	%	95%CI
Grade 6	49.0	46.7-53.3	56.4	51.2-60.6
Grade 7	45.0	40.7-49.3	45.1	41.0-49.1
Grade 8	37.4	33.2-41.8	33.4	29.7-37.3
Total	43.9	41.5-46.4	44.4	42.1-46.8

Figure 6. Proportion of students getting two hours or less of recreational screen time daily per day, NWHU, 2017



Most students reported getting a ride in a school bus or car to and from school, accounting for 77% (n=1,224) of transportation to school and 67% (n=1,059) from school. Active transportation was less common; the main type reported was walking, with 20% (n=313) of students walking to school and 28% (n=429) of students walking home from school. Cycling, public transportation and driving a car were rare (see Table 6).

Table 6. Method of transportation to and from school by year, NWHU, 2014 and 2017

a) To school

	2017 n=1,586		2014 n=1,718	
	%	95%CI	%	95%CI
<i>By car (passenger)</i>	35.1	32.8-37.5	37.6	35.3-39.9
<i>By school bus</i>	42.1	39.6-44.5	40.0	37.8-42.4
<i>By walking</i>	19.7	17.8-21.8	18.5	16.7-20.4
<i>By car (driver)</i>	0.1	0.0-0.4	0.4	0.2-0.9
<i>By public bus</i>	0.9	0.6-1.6	0.8	0.4-1.3
<i>By bicycling</i>	1.4	0.9-2.1	1.6	1.1-2.4
<i>Other</i>	0.7	0.4-1.2	1.0	0.7-1.7

b) from School

	2017 n=1,586		2014 n=1,718	
	%	95%CI	%	95%CI
<i>By car (passenger)</i>	22.5	20.4-24.6	25.5	23.5-27.7
<i>By school bus</i>	46.5	44.0-49.0	44.1	41.8-46.5
<i>By walking</i>	27.9	25.7-30.2	25.8	23.7-27.9
<i>By car (driver)</i>	0.2	0.1-0.6	0.4	0.2-0.8
<i>By public bus</i>	0.8	0.4-1.4	1.4	0.9-2.1
<i>By bicycling</i>	1.4	0.9-2.1	1.7	1.2-2.4
<i>Other</i>	0.7	0.4-1.3	1.1	1.0-1.7

When students were asked about their attitudes towards walking or biking to school, 655 reported they did not walk or bike. Of the remaining 769 students who answered the question, 79% (n=607) indicated they either somewhat or strongly liked walking or biking to school. 6% (n=45) said they either strongly or somewhat disliked walking or biking to school, and 15% (n=117) were neutral.

Students were also asked how much they enjoyed playing actively. The majority (88%, n=1,474) said they somewhat or strongly liked playing actively, 8% (n=136) were neutral, 4% (n=71) said they either somewhat or strongly disliked it. The majority of students (53%) reported having two or three physical education classes in the previous seven days. 3.6% said they had no physical education classes during this period, and 18% said they had five or more. Students were asked if they participate in league or team sports outside of school. The majority indicated that they did (64%), while 33% said they did not. The remaining students (3%) said that there were no league or team sports available where they live. Fewer students reported participating in before-school, noon hour or after-school physical activities organized by the school. 54% said they did participate, 43% said they did not and 4% indicated there were no such activities offered at their school.

Regarding parental attitudes towards physical activity, students were asked how physically active they considered their caregivers to be, and if these adults encouraged them to be physically active. More students considered their father (or other adult male in the home) to be more active than their mother (or other adult female in the home); 54% of students said their mother was active while 58% said their father was active. Mothers were more often considered to be somewhat active, with 40% of students indicating this response, compared with 34% for

fathers. The majority of students (87%) reported that their parents/caregivers encourage or strongly encourage them to be physically active. A very small proportion (2%) said they were discouraged or strongly discouraged to be physically active and the remainder (11%) of students said they were neither encouraged nor discouraged from being physically active.

Healthy Eating

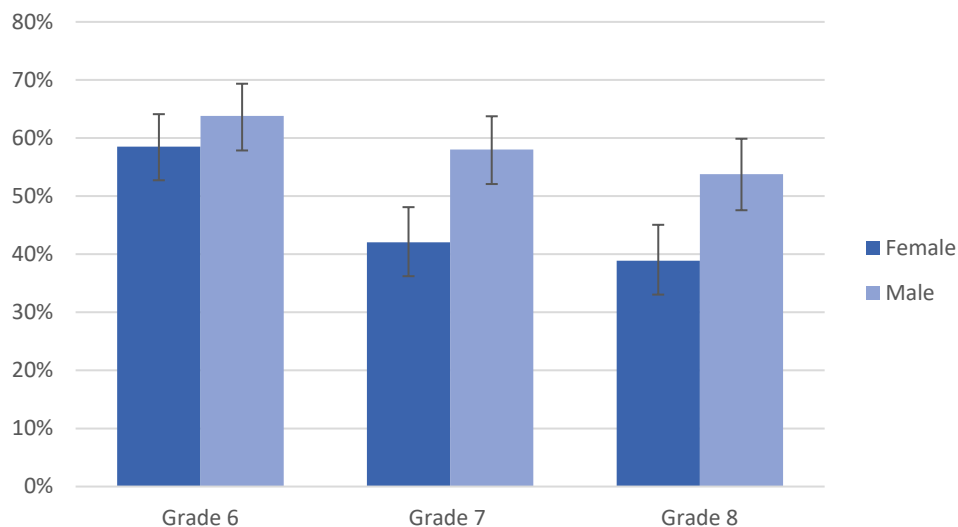
Overall, 53% of students ate breakfast every morning, this was slightly lower than in 2014 (56%; Table 7). A significantly lower proportion of females ate breakfast everyday (47%, 95% CI: 44-50) compared to males (59%, 95% CI: 55-62). The difference between sexes was significant among grade seven and eight students (Figure 7). When broken down by day of the week, females were significantly less likely to eat breakfast on weekdays but were not different from males on weekend days. The percentage of grade eight students who reported eating breakfast was significantly lower than grade six and seven students every day of the week.

Table 7. Proportion of students who reported eating breakfast daily by grade and year, NWHU, 2014 and 2017

	2017 n=1,252			2014 n=1,679		
	n	%	95%CI	n	%	95%CI
Grade 6	340	60.8	56.7-64.8	342	62.8	58.6-66.7
Grade 7	271	50.2	46.0-54.4	341	57.8	53.8-61.7
Grade 8	233	46.1	41.8-50.5	298	49.2	45.2-53.2
Total*	866	52.9	50.5-55.3	987	56.1	53.8-58.4

*Total includes 30 (2014=8, 2017=22) children where grade was not specified

Figure 7. Proportion of students who reported eating breakfast daily by grade and sex, NWHU, 2017



The most commonly consumed drink reported was water, with only 4% of students indicating that they had not drunk it during the last day and 29% having more than six glasses per day. The least commonly consumed drinks were high energy drinks, with 17% of students consuming them in the previous day. A full list of drinks and their reported servings can be found in Table 8.

Table 8. Servings of drinks consumed by students the previous day, NWHU, 2017

	None	1	2	3	4	5	6+	Not Stated
Water	3.8	8.4	13.7	16.7	15.3	10.2	29.0	3.0
Milk	26.3	25.1	21.3	13.3	5.4	2.3	2.7	3.6
Juice	40.2	26.8	16.3	7.2	2.6	1.1	1.4	4.4
Fruit-flavoured drinks	50.8	19.8	13	6.0	2.1	1.1	1.1	6.1
Tea/iced tea/coffee	57.7	22.0	7.7	4.1	1.6	0.8	1.4	4.7
Pop/soft drinks	59.4	23.5	6.6	2.4	1.4	0.8	1.0	5.0
Hot chocolate/cappuccino/frappuccino	65.1	22.4	4.6	1.5	0.5	0.6	0.5	4.8
Sports drinks	65.3	18	5.5	3.4	1.6	1.1	0.9	4.3
Shakes	80.9	9.1	2.0	0.8	0.6	0.3	0.5	5.7
Diet pop/soft drinks	81.4	7.9	2.3	1.2	0.8	0.4	0.3	5.7
Slurpees/slushies/snow cones	81.6	9.5	1.5	0.9	0.9	0.3	0.4	4.9
Energy drinks	88.3	3.7	1.5	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.5	5.1

Canada's Food Guide recommends that children between the ages of nine and thirteen eat six servings of vegetables and fruit, six servings of grain products, three to four servings of milk and alternatives and one to two servings of meat and alternatives every day. There is no difference in recommendations based on sex for this age group.⁵

When students were asked about their food consumption in the previous day based on Canada's Food Guide, 2% (95%CI: 1-3) met the recommended servings in all four food groups, this was slightly lower than in 2014 (3%; 95% CI: 2-4; Figure 8). Students were most likely to meet the recommendations for meat and alternatives, with 63% of all participants getting the recommended one or two servings in the past day. 49% of students met the recommendations for milk and alternatives, 4% for vegetables and fruits and 3% met the recommendations for grain (Table 9).

⁵ Health Canada. (2011). Canada's Food Guide. Retrieved from http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fnan/alt_formats/hpfb-dgpsa/pdf/food-guide-aliment/view_eatwell_vue_bienmang-eng.pdf.

Figure 8. Reported consumption of food groups compared to recommended serving by food group and sex, NWHU, grade 6-8, 2017

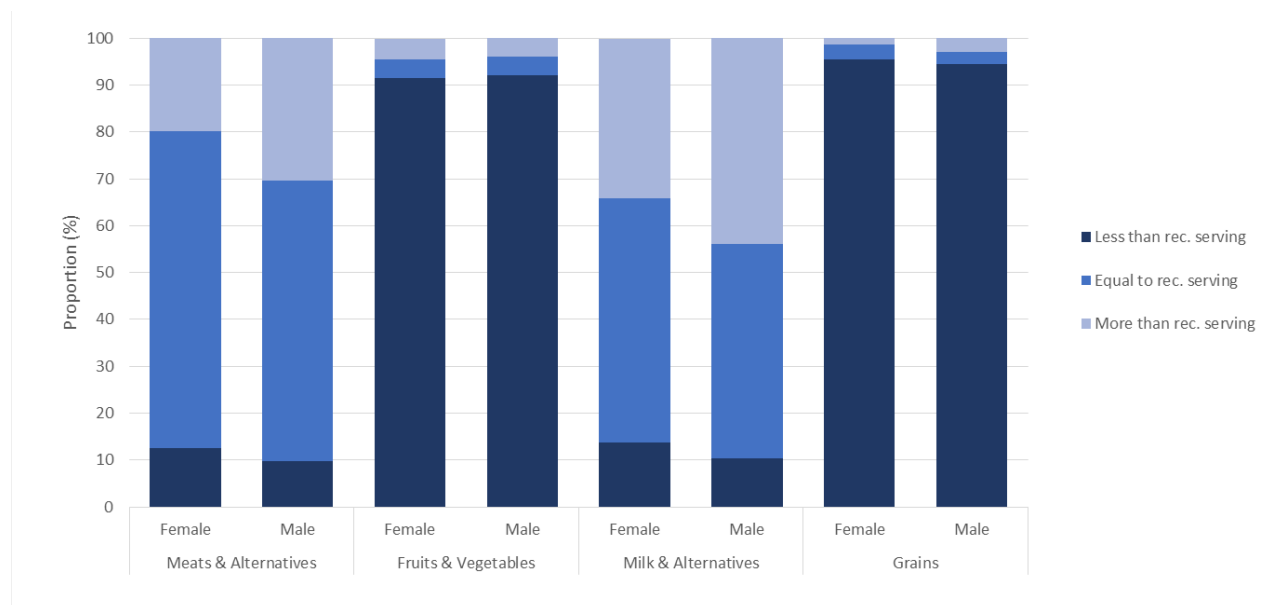


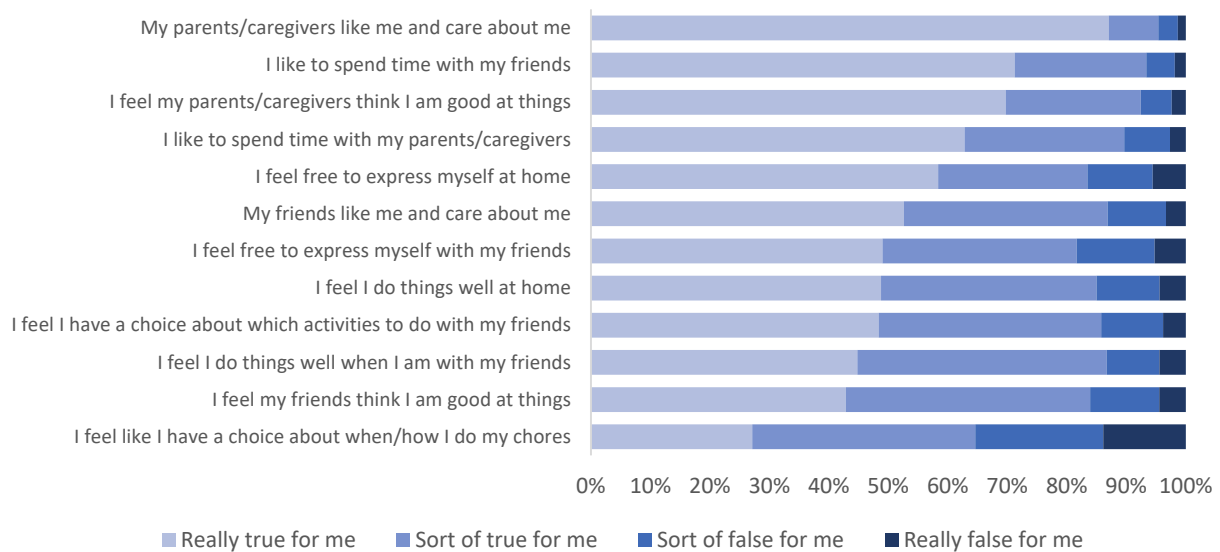
Table 9. Reported consumption of food groups compared to recommended serving by food group and sex, NWHU, 2017

	2017			2014		
	less #(%)	equal #(%)	more #(%)	less #(%)	equal #(%)	more #(%)
Meat and alternatives	189(11.3)	1056(63.3)	422(25.3)	144(8)	1134(62.8)	528(29.2)
Fruit and Vegetables	1527(91.7)	66(4)	72(4.3)	1635(90.4)	91(5)	83(4.6)
Milk and alternatives	203(12.1)	817(48.9)	652(39)	150(8.3)	788(43.7)	867(48)
Grains	1592(95)	48(2.9)	36(2.1)	1681(92.7)	80(4.4)	53(2.9)

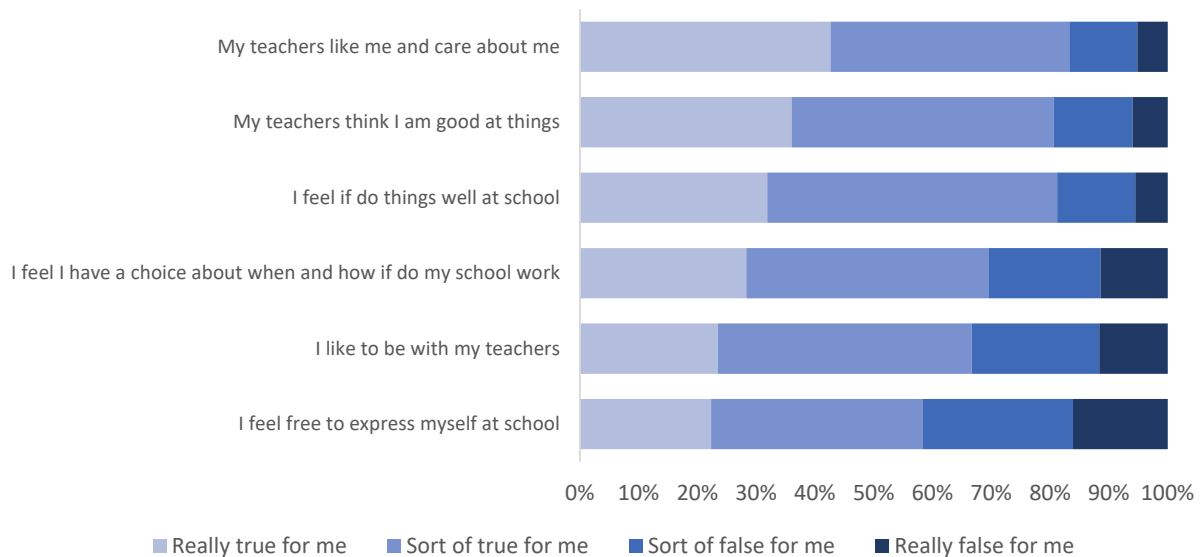
Feelings

Overall, students most often agreed with positive statements about their home (including parents/caregivers) and friends, followed by the school environment. Students felt that their parents and friends thought they could do things well, more often than their teachers thought so. They also felt more strongly that they could express themselves at home and among friends than at school (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Student's feelings about themselves and how other perceive them, NWHU, grade 6-8, 2017
 a) At home or with friends

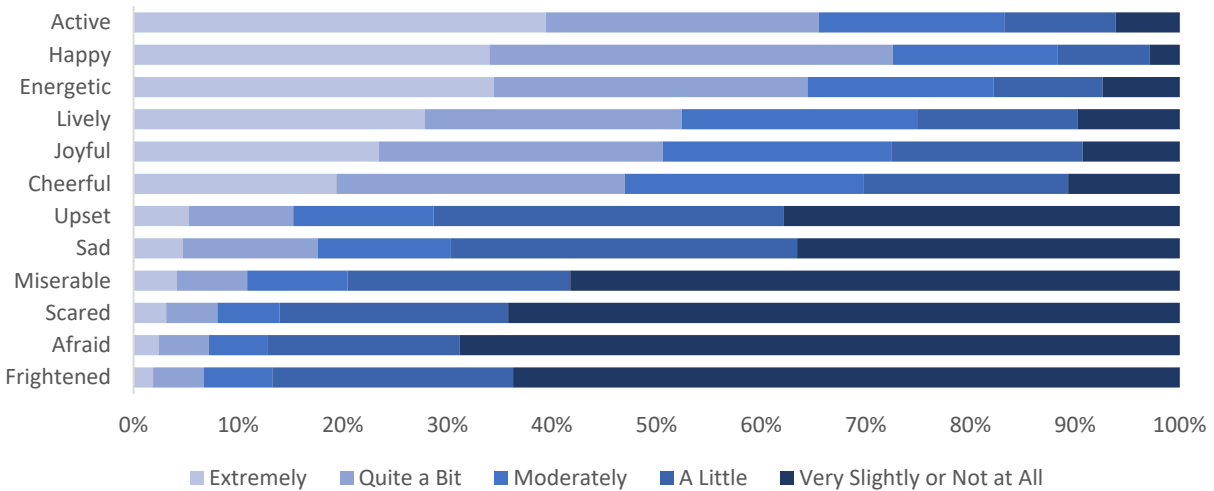


b) At school



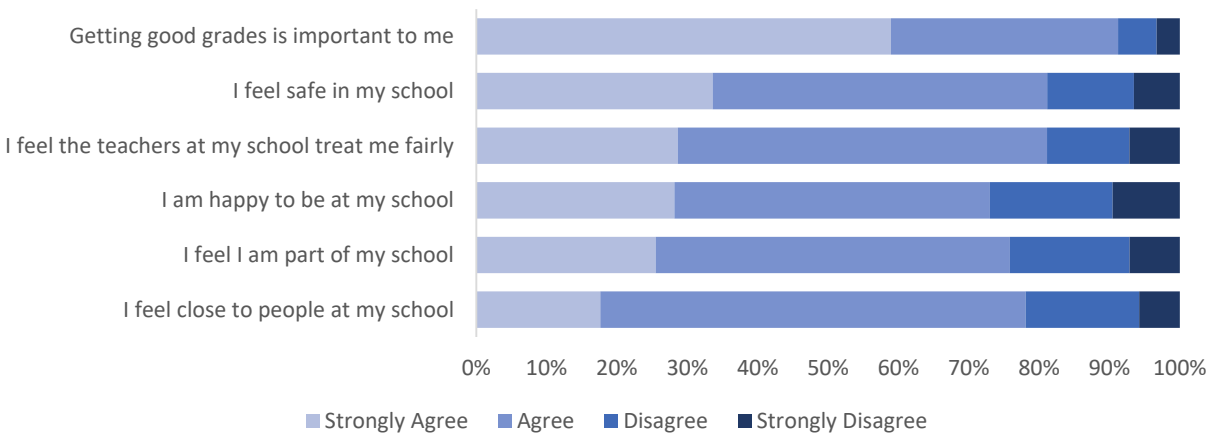
In regards to emotions, students were asked to what degree they had felt particular feelings in the past week. The most commonly cited feelings were being active, happy, energetic, lively, joyful and cheerful. Although, numerous students reported being quite a bit or extremely sad (n=294; 17.9%), upset (n=252; 14.7%) or even miserable (n=177; 10.3%; Figure 10).

Figure 10. Frequency of particular emotions felt by students in the last seven days, NWHU, grade 6-8, 2017



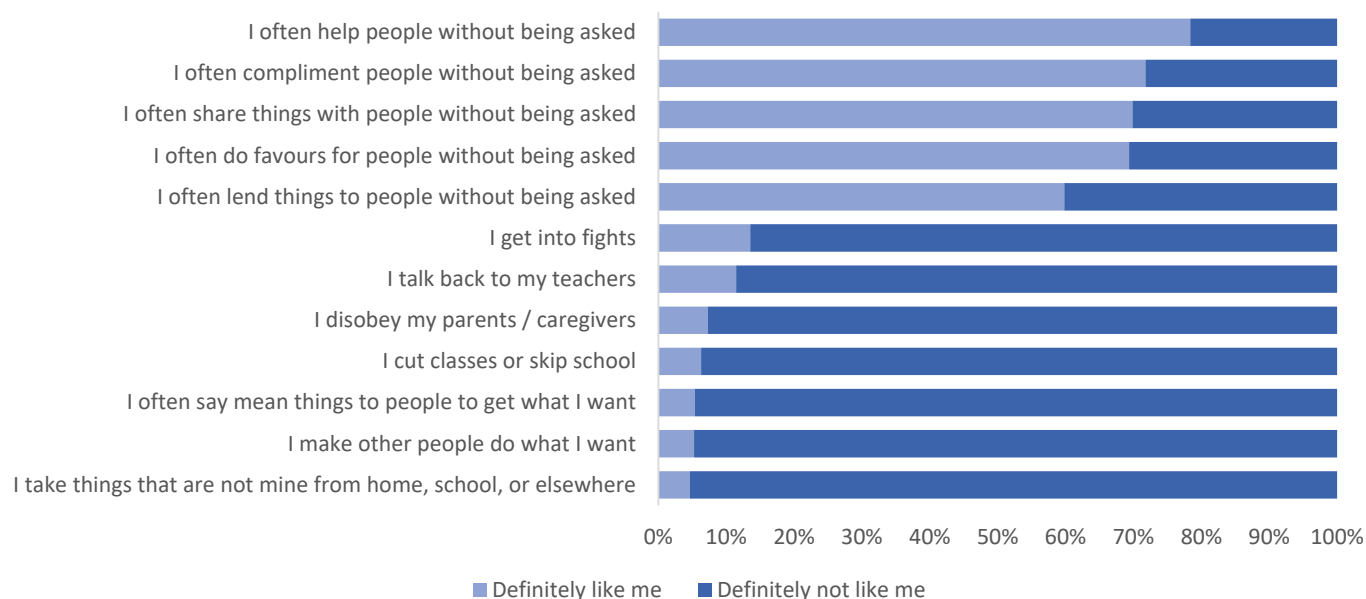
Students were also asked about the school setting and their feelings towards the school environment and personal interactions. Most students indicated that they felt a part of the school, that the teachers treat them fairly and that they felt safe. However, 23 % (n=399) disagreed or strongly disagreed that they felt that they were a part of the school, 18 % (n=312) disagreed or strongly disagreed that their teachers treated them fairly and 18% (n=311) did not agree that they felt safe in their school (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Frequency of student's feelings regarding their school environment, NWHU, grade 6-8, 2017



In terms of perceptions of their own actions, students most commonly reported positive actions such as helping, complimenting and sharing with others without being asked. A smaller proportion of students said they got into fights (13.7%; n=223), talked back to teachers (11.5%; n=188) and disobey their parents/caregivers (10.3%; n=119; Figure 12).

Figure 12. Frequency of student's perceptions of what they are like as a person, NWHU, grade 6-8, 2017



Thirty six percent of students (n=601) in 2017 reported experiences with bullying in the last 30 days. Of all students, 24% (n=390) indicated they had been verbally attacked by other students, 8.6% (n=142) indicated they had been physically attacked, 8% (n=134) said they had been the target of a cyber-attack(s) and 8% (n=132) said someone stole or damaged their possessions (Table 9). On the other hand, only 9% admitted to verbally attacking other students, 3% said they had physically attacked other students, 2% said they had done a cyber-attack and 1% said they stole or damaged someone else's things (Table 10). A greater proportion of females reported being bullied (40.0%; 95%CI: 36.8-43.5) when compared to males (32.3%; 95%CI 29.2-35.7). While males were slightly more likely to report bullying others (14.0%; 95%CI 11.9-16.7) when compared to females (11.0%; 95% CI 9.0-13.3).

Table 10. Proportion of students who were bullied, by type of bullying and year.

	2017 n=1,660			2014 n=1,765		
	n	%	95%CI	n	%	95%CI
Physical attacks	142	8.6	7.3-10.0	143	8.1	6.9-9.5
Verbal attacks	390	23.5	21.5-25.6	457	25.9	23.9-28.0
Cyber-attacks	134	8.1	6.9-9.5	122	6.9	5.8-8.2
Stole or damaged their possessions	132	8.0	6.7-9.4	116	6.6	5.5-7.8
Total*	601	36.2	33.9-38.5	613	34.7	32.5-38.5

*Some students reported experiencing more than one type of

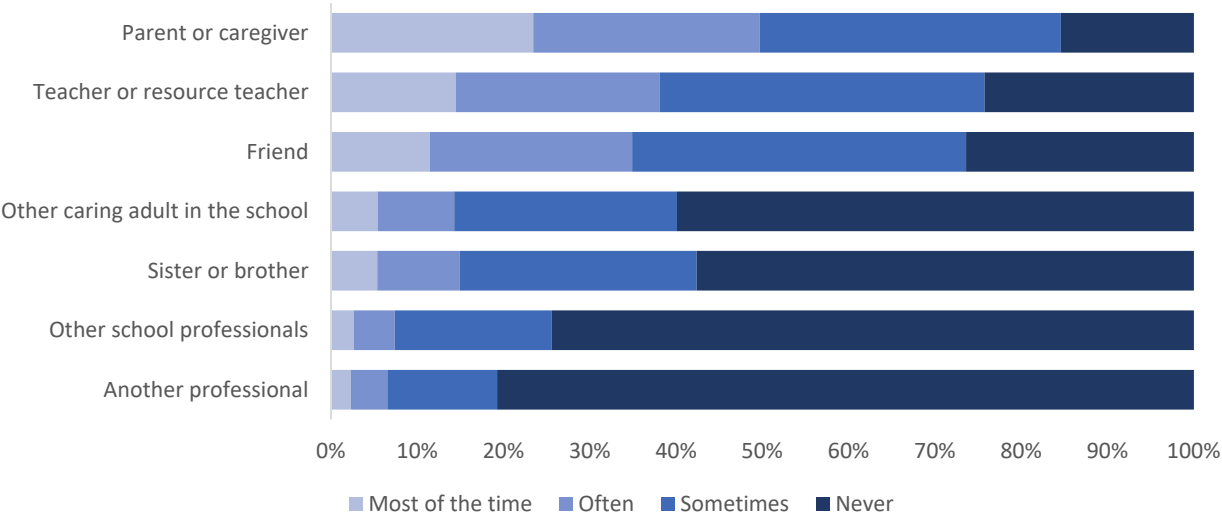
bullying

Table 11. Proportion of students who bullied others, by type of bullying and year.

	2017 n=1,658			2014 n=1,773		
	n	%	95%CI	n	%	95%CI
Physical attacks	53	3.2	2.5-4.2	55	3.1	2.4-4.0
Verbal attacks	116	7.0	5.9-8.4	158	8.9	7.7-10.3
Cyber-attacks	23	1.4	0.9-2.1	32	1.8	1.3-2.5
Stole or damaged their possessions	14	0.8	0.3-1.1	10	0.6	0.5-1.3
Total*	205	12.4	10.9-14.0	224	12.6	11.2-14.3

Students were asked how they deal with school-related problems and whom they would seek assistance from in such cases. Students indicated that they would most often seek the help of a parent or caregiver, followed by solving the issue by themselves. Students were least likely to seek assistance from other school professionals (i.e. not teachers; Figure 14).

Figure 13. Frequency of who students seek assistance from for school related problems, NWHU, grade 6-8, 2017



Finally, students were asked how they deal with problems. The results were quite diverse and reflect the variety and differences in coping mechanisms. The least common actions tended to be speaking with parents/caregivers and friends about problems, whereas the most common ones included playing sports, playing video games or doing a hobby and internal coping strategies, such as wishing bad things did not happen or wishing things were better (Table 12).

Table 12. Frequency of what students did when they had a problem in the last month, NWHU, grade 6-8, 2017

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time
	%	%	%	%
<i>You talked with friends about what you would like to happen</i>	33.4	31	16.7	13.6
<i>You told your mother/father/caregiver how you would like to solve the problem</i>	28.5	31.5	20.5	14.5
<i>You told your friends about what made you feel the way you did</i>	31.9	29.8	18.7	14.7
<i>You figured out what you could do by talking with one of your friends</i>	27.6	31.3	20.3	15.1
<i>You talked with your friends about your feelings</i>	36.2	27.5	15.7	15.6
<i>You told your mother/father/caregiver how you felt about the problem</i>	22.2	34.6	22.9	16.8
<i>You asked your mother/father/caregiver for help in figuring out what to do</i>	16.2	39.8	23.4	17
<i>You watched TV</i>	18.4	35.5	22.8	18.1
<i>You told yourself you could handle whatever happens</i>	17.6	32.6	25.5	19.1
<i>You did something to solve the problem</i>	13	32.1	29.5	19.8
<i>You thought about what would happen before you decided what to do</i>	13.9	31.4	29.4	20
<i>You told your mother/father/caregiver how you felt</i>	24.3	29.2	20.9	20.5
<i>You did some exercise</i>	22.2	27.6	21.9	22.3
<i>You told yourself that it would be OK</i>	17.1	30.1	25.6	22.5
<i>You reminded yourself that overall things are pretty good for you</i>	15	28.1	27.9	22.6
<i>You thought about why it happened</i>	10.4	28.5	34	23.1
<i>You avoided the people who made you feel bad</i>	13.3	27.8	26.5	27.3
<i>You tried to put it out of your mind</i>	11.5	27.2	28.1	28.5
<i>You did something like video games or a hobby</i>	13.1	23.5	26.3	31.5
<i>You wished that things were better</i>	12.9	25.9	22.7	32.8
<i>You played sports</i>	18.2	21.7	18.5	36.9
<i>You wished that bad things wouldn't happen</i>	10.7	19.8	21.9	42.9

DISCUSSION

This is the second cycle of the Student Health Behaviours Survey done in Northwestern Ontario and provides important health information about the grade six to eight student demographic in the area. This survey revealed that overall 13% of students have ever smoked, this is higher than the approximately 9% of youth in grades six to nine had ever tried smoking in Ontario overall.⁶ Of students who did smoke, cigarettes and e-cigarettes were most commonly used, with Females most commonly reporting using cigarettes and males e-cigarettes.

The survey results also have many important implications for healthy eating and physical activity programming in terms of both content and targeting approaches. In terms of physical activity, only 19% of students met the Canadian Physical Activity Guideline of 60 minutes or more of physical activity per day. Although this was an increase of 4% from 2014. This report showed that only 2% of students met the recommended food servings for all four food groups, this was a 1% decrease when compared to 2014.

The emotional wellbeing of students is also an important factor in terms of individual school actions and also for the health unit's future development of a mental health strategy. This report revealed some coping strategies students use when faced with problems and the people they turn to for assistance. Getting bullied by others was always reported more often than bullying actions themselves. This discrepancy is likely due to social desirability bias where students did not want to "admit" to bullying. This example highlights one important limitation of this survey; all of the measures were self-reported. This may lead to overinflated results or underreporting in some categories. Steps to mitigate these biases were included in the survey administration, such as anonymizing the survey so students were not individually identifiable and explaining the confidentiality of information to students. However, more valid measures such as using physical measures of physical activity (e.g., accelerometers) or dietary diaries for food intake would likely provide a more accurate depiction of what is occurring.

CONCLUSION

This report provides student health behaviour information that is both region-specific and current. In conjunction with the COMPASS survey that was administered to high school students from grades 9 to 12 some key data gaps relating to child and youth health indicators have been filled. The results presented in this report serve a variety of purposes. Firstly, they will inform program planning at the health unit and act as key performance indicators to gauge the effectiveness of current and future programming. Secondly, this report is relevant to community members in informing them and providing information regarding the health behaviours of students in Northwestern Ontario.

⁶ Propel Centre for Population Health Impact. (2014). 2012/2013 Youth Smoking Survey: Results Profile for Ontario. Waterloo (ON): University of Waterloo, 1-18.