

# PHYSICAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING

## INDICATOR #5 Fruit & Vegetable Consumption

### DEFINITION

**INDICATOR #5** — Percentage of BC students in grades 7–12 who report having eaten fruits and/or vegetables the previous day.

### KEY MESSAGES

- ▶ One of the most important aspects of fostering healthy eating in childhood is the potential for developing lifelong habits that could positively impact health in later years. High vegetable and fruit consumption and reduced consumption of red and processed meat, refined carbohydrates, and dairy products in the adult years is associated with decreased rates of some cancers, as well as reductions in cardiovascular risk factors and actual incidence of coronary heart disease.<sup>1–10</sup> Fruit and vegetable consumption is a proxy measure for healthy eating overall.
- ▶ Fruit and vegetable consumption can be more challenging for residents in some areas of the province. Health regions with the lowest percentage of fruit and vegetable consumption are often the ones that have less access to fresh produce. Climate, remote geographic location, and cost are important factors. High food costs, loss of food skills (i.e., skills and knowledge for storing, handling, and preparing food), limited access and availability, and poor quality of produce in rural and remote communities can all lower fruit and vegetable consumption.<sup>11</sup>
- ▶ Fruit and vegetable consumption can also be more challenging or more easily achieved based on the school a student attends. *The Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in B.C. Schools* is a health-promoting policy that includes a requirement for healthier foods in vending machines, canteens, and cafeterias in publicly funded schools.<sup>12</sup> Some schools have implemented this policy and therefore made healthy food the easy choice; however, many schools have not yet implemented this policy.
- ▶ As shown in Figure 5.1, from 2008 to 2013, the percentage of youth who reported eating vegetables and fruit the previous day increased by 2.5 percentage points; however, in 2013, 6.0 per cent of students still reported that they didn't eat any fruit or vegetables the previous day.

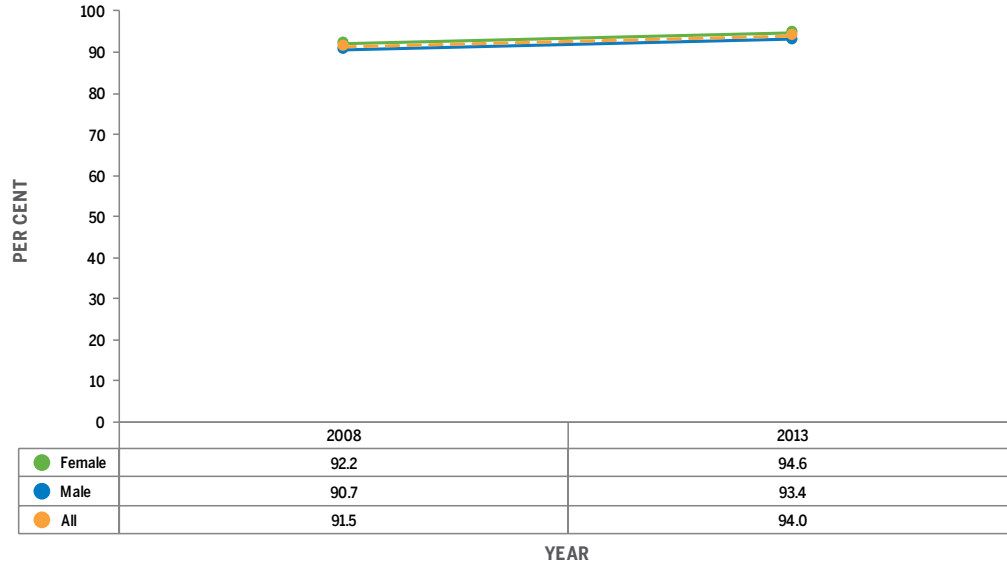
*“Junk food is easier and cheaper.”*

*“It is part of youth culture to drive to fast food stores and gas stations to get lunch.”*

*“I think this mostly has to do with poverty. Because parents want their kids to have good food.”*

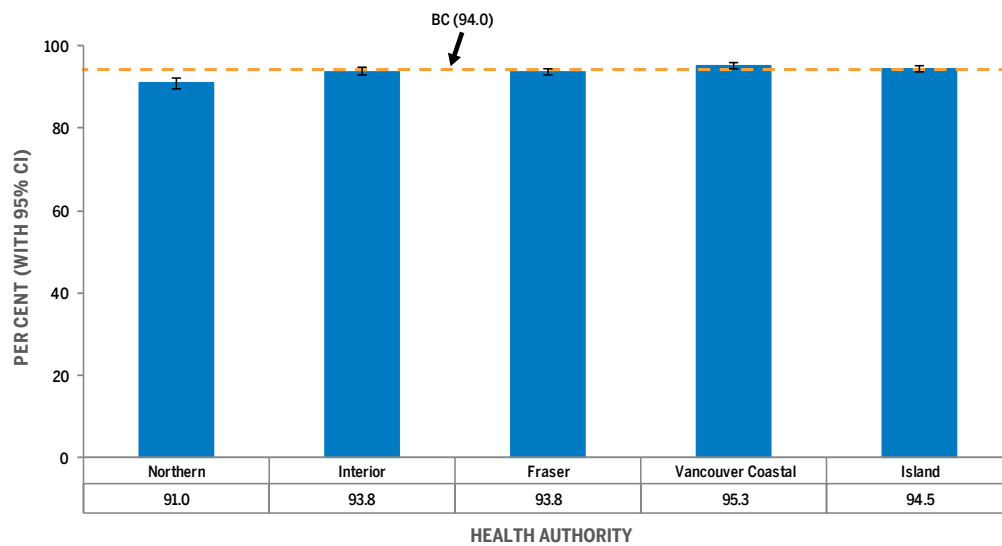
*“Not even one fruit or vegetable in a day? I can't imagine my diet without them.”*

**FIG 5.1** Percentage of Students in Grades 7-12 Who Reported Consuming Fruits or Vegetables the Previous Day, by Sex, BC, 2008 and 2013



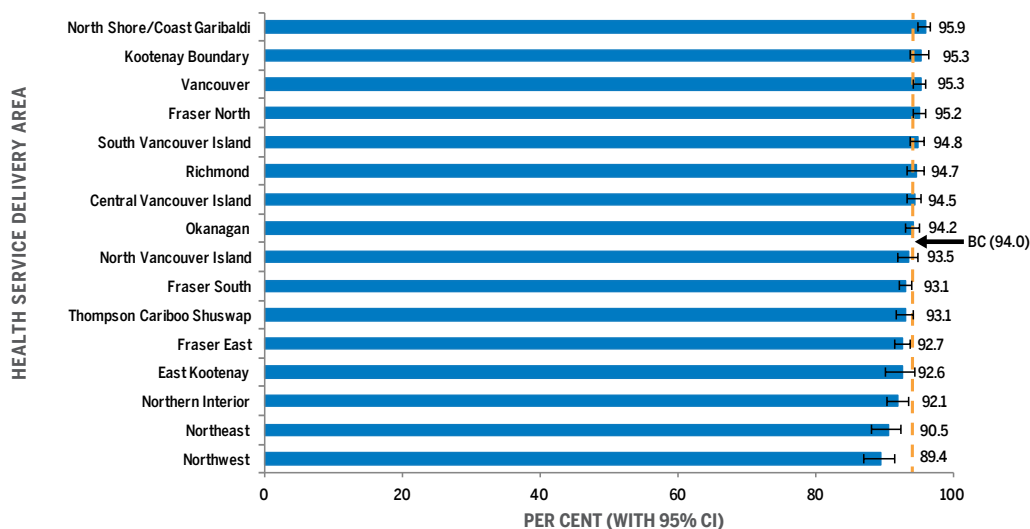
**Notes:** The difference between 2008 and 2013 was statistically significant for all groups. See Appendix B for more information about this data source.  
**Source:** McCreary Centre Society, BC Adolescent Health Survey, 2008, 2013. Prepared by the Surveillance and Epidemiology Team, BC Office of the Provincial Health Officer, 2016.

**FIG 5.2** Percentage of Students in Grades 7-12 Who Reported Consuming Fruits or Vegetables the Previous Day, by Health Authority, BC, 2013



**Notes:** Health authority is based on the location of the school. See Appendix B for more information about this data source.  
**Source:** McCreary Centre Society, BC Adolescent Health Survey, 2013. Prepared by the Surveillance and Epidemiology Team, BC Office of the Provincial Health Officer, 2016.

**FIG 5.3** Percentage of Students in Grades 7-12 Who Reported Consuming Fruits or Vegetables the Previous Day, by Health Service Delivery Area, BC, 2013



**Notes:** Health service delivery area is based on the location of the school. See Appendix B for more information about this data source.  
**Source:** McCreary Centre Society, BC Adolescent Health Survey, 2013. Prepared by the Surveillance and Epidemiology Team, BC Office of the Provincial Health Officer, 2016.

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