



Youth Facts 2011

Mental Health, School Climate, and Bullying

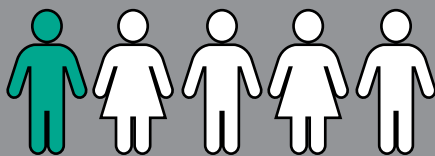
28%
of Ottawa students in grades 7 to 12
reported excellent mental health



1 in 3 students reported elevated
psychological distress

12%
of students had seriously considered
attempting suicide in the past year

28%
of students reported that they had been
bullied on school property in the past year




1 in 5 students reported that they had
been bullied on the internet at least
once in the past year

This *Youth Facts* outlines what Ottawa youth in grades 7 to 12 reported about their mental health and school environment as well as suicide and bullying. It also provides information about what Ottawa Public Health (OPH) is doing and ways we can help.

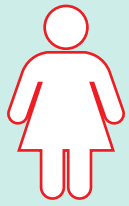
- Between the ages of 11 and 18 years youth go through many physical and emotional changes. This is a time when mental health and bullying issues may arise.
- Poor mental health is linked to lower success in school and more risk taking behaviours.
- Overall mental health can be improved when youth have the personal tools to overcome problems, positive role models, safe home and school environments and access to support services.

Youth Facts is a series that describes Ottawa results from the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS). It was conducted during the 2010/11 school year in the public and Catholic school systems.

To learn more about this *Youth Facts* topic and others, see www.ottawa.ca/healthreports. An [accessible version](#) is also available. 



Mental Health



Positive mental health is when a person copes with the normal stresses of life and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.



18%

38%

reported excellent mental health

42%

25%

reported elevated psychological distress over the few weeks prior to the survey

21%

15%*

reported at least one visit to a mental health professional in the past

14%

11%*

reported that they had seriously considered attempting suicide during the past year



Family Socio-Economic Status

A student's understanding of their family's social standing based on job status, education and income.

High SES

39%

reported 'very good' mental health

30%

reported elevated psychological distress

8%*

reported they had seriously considered attempting suicide during the past year

Low SES

17%*

50%

28%



OPH partners with Youth Net at CHEO to offer more bilingual mental health focus and activity groups.

OPH delivers the *Healthy Transitions* program to grade 7 and 8 students, parents, and teachers, to promote resiliency in youth.

OPH's *Healthy Babies, Healthy Children* program screens new mothers for postpartum depression and provides families with positive parenting strategies, as well as general mental health promotion and suicide prevention messages and resources.

The Canadian Mental Health Association Ottawa Branch and OPH offer free *safeTALK* suicide awareness and skills training to youth, parents, and vulnerable groups in the community.

OPH provides funding to the Youth Services Bureau's Youth Mental Health Walk-In Clinic and to the Substance Abuse and Youth in School Coalition for counselling in high schools.

School Climate

School climate is the physical environment and the social and cultural mood of a school.

90% reported that they felt they were a part of their school

93% reported that they felt they are close to people at their school

97% reported they felt safe in their school

18%* reported they were worried about being harmed or threatened at school

43% reported that they very much liked going to school

➔ Students who reported excellent mental health were more likely to feel that they were a part of their school and close to people at their school than those who reported poorer mental health.

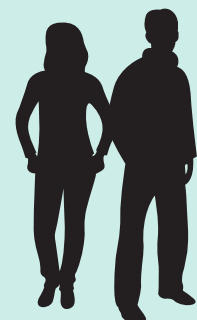
OPH supports the Ottawa Catholic School Board's annual Elementary Peace Festival and Secondary Peace Conference that reinforces the need to create safe and inclusive environments.

OPH partners with the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered, Two-spirited, Queer and Questioning (GLBTQ) Rainbow Service Providers Network to promote safe and inclusive schools and help host the annual Rainbow Youth Forum.

OPH partners with Crossroads Children Centre and Centre Psychosocial to screen children ages 18 months to 4 years for developmental, mental, social, and emotional issues and provide education, counselling and referrals as needed.



Grades 7-8
29%*



Grades 9-12
13%

reported they were worried about being harmed or threatened at school

Bullying

Bullying is when one or more people tease, hurt, upset, or isolate another person on purpose, over time.

Girls 36%
Boys 21%

Grades 7-8 38%
9-12 25%

students who reported that they had been bullied at least once on school property in the school year

81%
of all bullying is verbal or non-physical attacks

fair to poor mental health **33%***

excellent mental health mental **16%***

High SES 18%

students who reported that they had been bullied at least once on the internet in the past year

Girls 27%

Low SES 32%

Boys 14%*

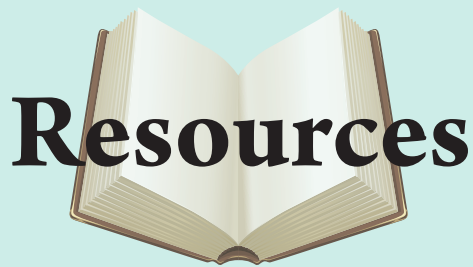
Girls 28%
Boys 18%

students who reported that they had bullied other students on school property in the school year

OPH offers *Playground Activity Leaders in Schools* (PALS), a peer-to-peer program that increases physical activity and prevents bullying in elementary schools.

OPH promotes *Keeping It Cool*, a community-based program for youth on how to deal with anger. It runs out of various community health and resources centres in Ottawa: 613-722-4000 ext. 323.

OPH promotes The Ottawa Police Service *Teens & Technology* presentation for parents and youth about sexting, cyberbullying, safety and mental health: www.ottawapolice.ca or email youth@ottawapolice.ca



When should I be concerned?

- **Withdrawing** from family, friends, school or hobbies.
- **Changing behaviours** of sleeping, eating, or personal hygiene.
- Complaining of **physical symptoms**, such as stomach aches, headache, or feeling tired.
- Increasing participation in **risky behaviours** such as substance misuse.
- **Seeing or hearing things** that others don't.
- Feelings of **depression**, hopelessness, and helplessness.
- Talking about death or **suicide**.

If you notice these signs, be sure to follow up with a health care provider or with the community resources listed below.

What can I do to promote positive mental health and prevent bullying in youth?

- Build empathy in youth; discuss how another person might be feeling and why that is important. Empathy can reduce bullying incidents when empathetic bystanders intervene.
- Discuss steps involved to solve problems such as effective communication with others and being assertive.
- Discuss stress management and coping strategies, such as positive self talk, relaxation, and physical and artistic activities.
- Create opportunities to talk openly, especially during meals.
- Encourage youth to get plenty of rest, eat right, and be physically active.



Where can I go for help?

- **Youth Services Bureau (YSB) of Ottawa** provides a Youth Mental Health Walk-In Clinic, youth and family counselling, crisis support, and a 24/7 Crisis Line: 613-260-2360. www.ysb.on.ca.
- **Distress Centre** - Ottawa and Region: 613-238-3311 and www.dcottawa.on.ca
- **Youth Net at CHEO** provides a variety of mental health programs, including bilingual focus group sessions, programs in schools and the community, and in-house initiatives for youth dealing with mental health issues. To find out more, visit www.youthnet.on.ca or call 613-738-3915.
- **Le Centre Psychosocial** provides mental health services to Francophone youth and their families in the Ottawa region: www.centropsychosocial.ca/fr/
- **Parents' Lifeline of Eastern Ontario (PLEO)** provide family support meetings for parents of children, youth and young adults living with mental illness, held the 3rd Thursday of every month. For dates and locations, visit their website: www.pleo.on.ca/

More Information

For general information about mental health services available in Ottawa, please see our [Mental Health Referral Tool](#) or visit ottawa.ca/healthreports. You can also visit www.ementalhealth.ca for information about local mental health-related resources.

For more information about healthy living, follow us on [Facebook](#), [Tumblr](#) and [Twitter @ottawahealth](#)

Acknowledgements

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Legend

* A high variability in the responses from students; these findings should be interpreted with caution.

Larger fonts indicate a number which is significantly larger.

No significant differences were observed between Ottawa and Ontario for any of the indicators.

