

An Overview of Youth Health in Montreal

UNDERSTAND, MOBILIZE, TAKE ACTION



Victimization at School or on the Way to School

Young high school students are exposed to various forms of violence in school settings, including bullying, intimate partner violence, sexual violence, educational and pedagogical violence, and institutional and systemic violence. They may be involved as perpetrators, victims, or witnesses, often playing all three roles at some point in their lives.

Experiencing violence in educational settings has significant impacts on young victims' overall health and academic success (mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, problematic substance use, low self-esteem, a diminished sense of safety, risky behaviours, etc.).

HIGHLIGHTS



Violence affects a small number of young people, but it is on the rise.

- In Montréal, a majority of high school students (62% of girls and 56% of boys) report experiencing no violence at school or on their way to school, while a minority (8% of girls and 10% of boys) say they experience it “often.”
- Younger students (secondary 2 and 3), boys, and those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds experience more violent victimization than the average.
- The historical trend observed since the first edition of the Québec Health Survey of High School Students (QHSHSS) survey (2010–2011) shows a significant decline, followed by a relative increase between the second and third editions of the survey (2016–2017 and 2022–2023). This increase is particularly pronounced among girls and secondary three students, and less pronounced among boys and students in other grades.



A complex array of individual, relational, environmental, and systemic factors play a protective role against victimization and its negative impacts. Among these:

- Thriving mental health
- Strong self-esteem
- Well-developed personal and social skills
- Prosocial peers and high levels of parental supervision
- Strong social support (especially for girls) at school, within the family, among friends, and in the community

Violence committed by and against young people at school or on the way to school is a major public health issue in Montréal.

Montréal's educational community and its partners can already rely on a robust set of foundational prevention initiatives (including the development of personal and social skills, anti-bullying plans, educational materials, and themed prevention activities). Nevertheless, these initiatives must be strengthened and improved to ensure a comprehensive and effective prevention framework at the regional level, while remaining flexible and tailored to the needs and realities of Montréal's various neighbourhoods.

Strong political commitment, backed by cross-cutting coordination among various institutional and community partners, is essential to breaking down the silo mentality that hinders an integrated approach centered on young people throughout their life journey and across their various living environments.