

# Health and health-related behaviours among young people in Yukon

John G. Freeman ✦ Hana Saab  
Matt King ✦ Kathleen Gropp

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Data for this research has been taken from the *Canadian Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC) Study*. This acknowledgement shall, however, in no way be construed as an endorsement by the Public Health Agency of Canada of any products derived from HBSC Data.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

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Knowledge about young people's attitudes, behaviours, and physical and psychological well-being, and the factors that influence them is essential for the development of effective health education and school health promotion policy, programs, and practice. To gain such knowledge, ongoing efforts are required to collect data on related indicators. The Social Program Evaluation Group (SPEG) at Queen's University, Faculty of Education has been involved in collecting such national data from students ages 11 to 15 since 1990 through a large-scale survey, the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study. The purpose of the HBSC study is to gain insight and increased understanding of young people's health, well-being, and health behaviours and their social contexts.

### **The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study in Canada**

The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study, originally initiated in 1982 with researchers from three countries, is a continuing cross-sectional research project developed through an inter-disciplinary, cross-national collaboration. It examines the relationship between adolescent health and well-being and a wide range of determinants. There are now 42 HBSC participating countries and regions, in Europe, North America, and Israel. The HBSC researchers come from a variety of countries, disciplines, and theoretical perspectives. For example, the Canadian team based at Queen's University includes researchers from the areas of community health and epidemiology, education, kinesiology and physical education, and psychology.

HBSC is sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) and funded nationally by the Public Health Agency of Canada and Health Canada. The study is conducted every four years with schools and students in Grades 6 to 10 across Canada. The Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen's University in Ontario has led the study in Canada since its inception in 1990. The first cycle of the study resulted in the publication of *The Health of Canada's Youth* (1992); the second, in the international publication *The Health of Youth: A Cross-National Survey* (1996); the third, in two publications *Trends in the Health of Canadian Youth* (1999) and *Health and Health Behaviour among Young People* (2000); the fourth, in a national report *Young People in Canada: Their Health and Well-being* (2004), and the fifth in a national report *Healthy Settings for Young People in Canada* (2008).

HBSC uses a population health framework, recognizing that the determinants of health operate at two levels: (a) the individual level, and (b) the ecological level (Advisory Committee on Population Health, 1994). In accordance with the World Health Organization (WHO) perspective, health is acknowledged as a resource for everyday living and not just the absence of disease. As such, the HBSC regards young people's health in its broadest sense, encompassing physical, social, and emotional well-being. The HBSC survey adopts a three-

pronged approach to conducting research with adolescents, each approach representing a dimension of students' lives. A developmental approach examines students' lives at 11, 13, and 15 years of age to investigate significant changes that occur in health behaviours and attitudes from the onset of puberty to the middle of adolescence. A socio-demographic approach explores factors such as gender, cultural diversity, and socio-economic determinants in relation to health outcomes. An ecological perspective incorporates contextual determinants – such as the home, school, peers, neighbourhoods, and geographic locations – that may shape or influence a variety of behaviours, attitudes, and outcomes for young people. A broad range of outcomes are examined in the study in relation to the above three dimensions; these include the conventional health-compromising behavioural outcomes, such as smoking, alcohol use, limited physical activity, bullying, and injuries. In addition, the HBSC measures positive adolescent developmental outcomes such as happiness, life satisfaction, emotional well-being, relationships with others, attachment and connectedness to school, and student participation in curricular and extra-curricular activities (Currie et al., 2001). HBSC data from Canada are eventually integrated into a large database in Bergen, Norway where all international data are stored. The international database allows for cross-country research and data analyses. Such analyses enable international comparison, and the establishment of collaboration of international expertise in core research domains.

The overall purposes of the HBSC study in Canada are as follows:

- To collect data on school-aged young people that allows researchers to gain insights into young people's attitudes and behaviours, and examine the relationships between contextual factors and health behaviours.
- To contribute to the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological development of research related to youth as it pertains to health in schools, a prime setting for health monitoring and interventions.
- To develop a national information system on the health and lifestyles of young people in Canada that documents trends.
- To disseminate findings to relevant audiences, including researchers, health and education policy-makers, health promotion practitioners, teachers, parents, and young people.
- To promote and strengthen national and international research on health behaviour and the social context of health in youth and the network of experts in this field.

### **Survey Administration**

The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Survey was conducted by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics, on behalf of SPEG/Queen's University, and the Yukon Government Departments of Health & Social Services and Education. The survey results are considered important by these government groups because they offer a means of providing a wealth of

information that could guide health promotion programming, curriculum development and selection, and school policy. Allocated funding made it possible to survey every student in Grades 6 to 10 in the territory.

Prior to the commencement of survey administration, the Department of Education and Health & Social Services, Health Promotion Unit held a video conference with school administrators to explain the purpose of the survey and to ask for their support when contacted by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics (YBS). The school administrators were told they would receive a package from the YBS that contained the parent consent forms. The implicit consent process was used; that is, parents who did not want their child(ren) to participate indicated so on the consent form. The package also contained a survey questionnaire for school administrators, which they completed before the YBS came to their school.

Two experienced interviewers from the YBS travelled to each community to administer the surveys. Prior to the school visits, the school administrators were contacted to set up a convenient time to visit the school and to find out how many students would be in each group (Grades 6 to 8; Grades 9 and 10). At the beginning of each survey session, the interviewers introduced the survey, explained the importance of collecting the data, described how the results would be used, and answered questions that students had. In Grades 6 and 7, the survey was read aloud because of the varied literacy levels of students. This process helped keep the class together so that students could complete the survey at the same time. The classroom teacher was invited to stay in the classroom while the survey was being administered but was asked not to walk about so that the students' answers to survey items would remain confidential. At the end of the survey session, each questionnaire was put into its own envelope and sealed by the student. The data collection time for each classroom visit ranged from a low of about 45 minutes to a high of 1 hour and 15 minutes. YBS collected the questionnaires and forwarded them to Queen's University, where researchers analyzed the data.

The data collection started in the rural Yukon communities on September 28, 2009 and finished in Whitehorse, Yukon on December 11, 2009. In total, 13 schools in rural Yukon and 15 schools in Whitehorse were visited. The interviewers conducted a total of 80 classroom sessions, including two in French. A total of 1439 questionnaires were completed and mailed to Queen's University (see Tables 1 and 2). The students at the Catholic Secondary School, Grades 9 and 10, used the same questionnaire as the other Yukon Secondary Schools. Of the 28 school administrators, 23 completed the Administrator Questionnaire; 11 of these were from rural Yukon, and 12 were from Whitehorse. Some students from rural communities attend Grade 9 and/or 10 in Whitehorse. The responses of these students are subsumed in the Whitehorse data. Since the survey was administered in school, it necessarily excludes youth who are no longer attending. Care needs to be taken in extrapolating the results to age cohorts,

and in making comparisons across gender or geography, particularly if drop-out rates are different for boys and girls, or youth living in Whitehorse versus rural communities.

The survey administrators were generally positive about the survey. As they stated, “all-in-all, this survey was successful in gathering information. There were a few exceptions, largely due to some students not taking the survey seriously and answering inaccurately, as a joke.” They reported that the sexual behavior and drug consumption questions “seemed to cause discomfort and may contain inaccurate data.” Twenty-two surveys were identified as spoiled (not answered seriously) and removed from the data set accordingly. The method of reading the surveys to Grades 6 and 7 students generally worked well, and the students seemed quite able to comprehend what was being asked of them. In fact, the survey form was described by survey administrators as “well designed and [it] didn’t present any significant challenges.” One suggestion made, however, was to decrease the number of ratings per scale in the multi-part questions.

**Table 1. Number of Completed Survey Questionnaires by Grade**

Location	Grades 6, 7 and 8			Grades 9 and 10		
	Enrolment	Sample	Participation rate	Enrolment	Sample	Participation rate
Rural Yukon	251	183	72.9%	168	106	63.1%
Whitehorse	851	695	81.7%	626	438	70.0%
Total	1102	878	79.7%	794	544	68.5%

**Table 2. Distribution of Respondents by Region, Gender and Grade<sup>1</sup>**

		Boys	Girls	Total
Grades 6-8	Whitehorse	354	337	691
	Rural	95	86	181
	<b>Total</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>872</b>
Grades 9-10	Whitehorse	220	213	433
	Rural	54	52	106
	<b>Total</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>539</b>

<sup>1</sup> These are numbers in the final data file. The numbers do not match what appears in Table 1 since some questionnaires were spoiled, empty, or very incomplete and are, therefore, not included as part of the final data file.

**Outline of Report**

This report presents key findings from the 2009 cycle of the HBSC survey in Yukon and includes chapters on the following topics:

- Background and Resources
- Family
- Peer Group
- School Experiences
- Health Risk Behaviours
- Healthy Living
- Eating and Dieting
- Violence and Bullying
- Injuries
- Emotional and Mental Health

The choice of these focus topics was made in consultation with the Departments of Education and Health and Social Services in Yukon and researchers at Queen's University. These youth health outcomes are examined in relation to gender, age, and urban/rural location. The decision to present findings by age, gender, and location was also a collaborative one. Urban/rural designations were determined by school location, and do not necessarily reflect the communities in which students reside. The topic chapters each include an introduction to the themes and measures presented. The introduction is followed by tables and figures that depict the analyses of the corresponding variables, with a short text accompanying each figure or table. Summaries of findings are interspersed within these chapters. A concluding chapter summarizes the overall findings of the report, presenting causes for celebration and causes for concern.

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## **2 BACKGROUND AND RESOURCES**

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Background and resources, which are measures of students' socio-economic conditions, are considered an important element of the social determinants of health that need to be addressed to reduce disparities in health across populations. Analyses of the 2001/02 HBSC data show that health behaviours and well-being indicators vary by socio-economic circumstances; those young people from wealthier families engage in more health enhancing activities and have higher levels of well-being than their less wealthy counterparts. Subjective happiness, feeling confident, not feeling helpless, and perceived health and infrequent experiences of psychosomatic symptoms are generally associated with greater family affluence.

The measures used to assess students' background and resources in this chapter fall into two categories. The first asks students about their material possessions, such as having their own bedroom, vehicle, and computer. In addition, students' socio-economic conditions are inferred from the ability to travel and to have vacations. Students' family wealth, inferred from their consumption of material goods, is used as a proxy for family income because it is often difficult to gain clear information from adolescents about their parental and family income levels (Wardle, Robb & Johnson, 2002).

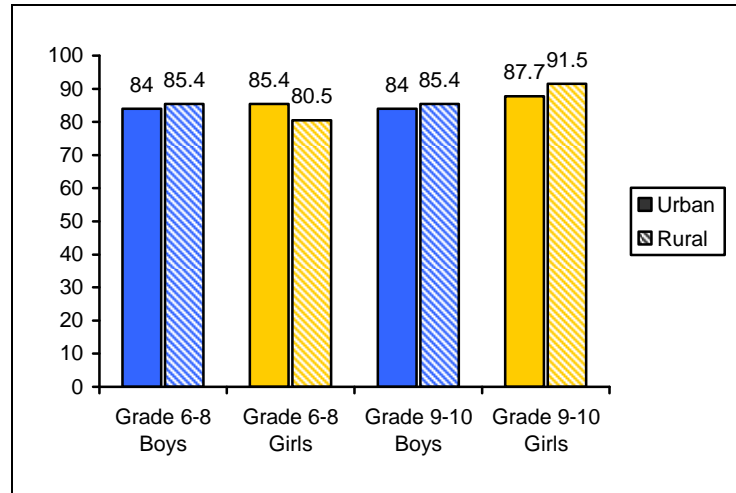
The second category addressed in this chapter is students' perceptions of the neighbourhood where they live. These perceptions are important because a neighbourhood is considered a resource for the healthy development of young people. Work by Kalnins and colleagues (1994), in the context of a community development project, indicates that many problems identified by children in a low income neighbourhood center around fear for their personal safety because of gangs, drug dealers, or "bad people." Young people in these neighbourhoods were also less likely to go outside to play when places in their neighbourhood were unkempt and perceived to be unsafe.

Moreover, the demographic and socioeconomic composition of a neighbourhood determines the kind of behavioural norms that are transmitted through the means of peer influence. This sharing of behaviours and attitudes with peers may transfer to the school setting. In addition, a school's neighbourhood affects the school ethos and may influence its social composition and determine the prevailing educational orientations and normative school ethos (Kaupinen, 2008).

**STUDENTS WITH THEIR OWN BEDROOM**

Figure 2.1 shows the proportion of students who have their own bedroom. The vast majority of students report having their own bedroom, with over four-fifths of students across grades and gender reporting so. In particular, over 90% of rural girls in Grades 9 and 10 report having their own bedroom.

**FIGURE 2.1** Students that report having their own bedroom, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**VEHICLES IN THE FAMILY**

Table 2.1 shows the number of family vehicles as reported by students. Not surprisingly, there are few differences in number of vehicles across grade and gender. Urban students tend to report having more vehicles than rural students, with the highest proportion of two or more vehicles being reported by urban boys in Grades 9 and 10 (81.2%) and the lowest being reported by rural boys in those grades (58.3%).

**TABLE 2.1** Number of family vehicles, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)

Grades	Male		Female	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
<b>6 to 8</b>				
None	1.3	7.2	1.6	8.4
One	22.5	30.1	21.9	28.9
Two or more	76.2	62.7	76.5	62.7
<b>9 and 10</b>				
None	3.0	10.4	1.9	2.1
One	15.7	31.3	18.9	29.2
Two or more	81.2	58.3	79.2	68.8

**FAMILY VACATIONS**

Table 2.2 shows the number of times traveled or vacations with family as reported by students. Across groups, about half the students vacation two or more times during the year. Around 15% of students, however, have not vacationed with their family during the last 12 months.

**TABLE 2.2** Number of times traveled or vacations with the family in the last 12 months, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)

Grades	Male		Female	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
<b>6 to 8</b>				
None	15.4	12.0	15.7	13.4
Once	32.1	34.9	33.3	32.9
Twice	31.4	27.7	25.2	22.0
More than twice	21.2	25.3	25.8	31.7
<b>9 and 10</b>				
None	18.5	22.9	15.8	17.0
Once	31.3	37.5	29.7	34.0
Twice	27.2	12.5	26.3	25.5
More than twice	23.1	27.1	28.2	23.4

**FAMILY COMPUTERS**

Table 2.3 shows the number of computers in the family home as reported by students. With the exception of rural girls in Grades 9 and 10, over half the students say they have at least two computers at home. Very few students report having no computers in the family home.

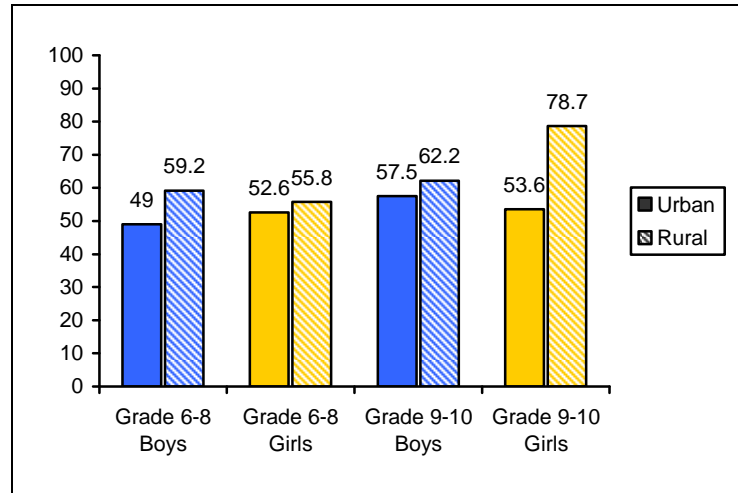
**TABLE 2.3** Number of computers in the family home, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)

Grades	Male		Female	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
<b>6 to 8</b>				
None	2.6	9.6	4.1	2.4
One	26.8	36.1	31.9	37.8
Two	31.6	26.5	32.5	29.3
More than two	39.0	27.7	31.6	30.5
<b>9 and 10</b>				
None	1.5	10.4	1.4	12.8
One	27.9	29.2	28.0	42.6
Two	32.5	35.4	26.5	21.3
More than two	38.1	25.0	44.1	23.4

**PEOPLE WHO SAY HELLO AND STOP TO TALK**

Figure 2.2 shows the proportion of students that agree or strongly agree that “people say ‘hello’ and often stop to talk to each other in the street.” Significantly more rural students across grades and gender report that people greet each other in the streets. These percentages increase across grades. Rural girls in Grades 9 and 10 are the most likely to report that “people say ‘hello’ and often stop to talk to each other in the street.”

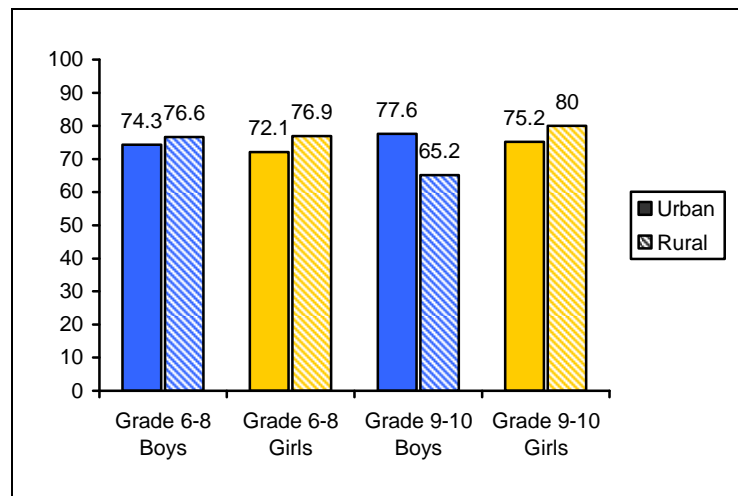
**FIGURE 2.2** Students that either agree or strongly agree that “people say ‘hello’ and often stop to talk to each other in the street,” by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**SAFE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN TO PLAY**

Figure 2.3 shows the proportion of students that agree or strongly agree that “it is safe for younger children to play outside during the day.” Relatively high numbers (around three-quarters) of students believe their neighbourhoods are safe for children to play in.

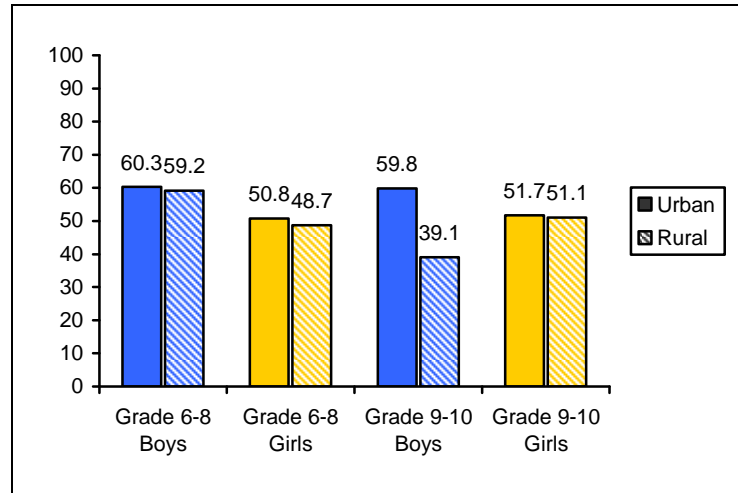
**FIGURE 2.3** Students that either agree or strongly agree that “it is safe for younger children to play outside during the day,” by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**TRUSTING PEOPLE**

Figure 2.4 shows the proportion of students that agree or strongly agree that they can trust people in their neighbourhoods. About half the students feel they can trust people in their neighbourhoods. These numbers are not affected appreciably by grade, gender, or location.

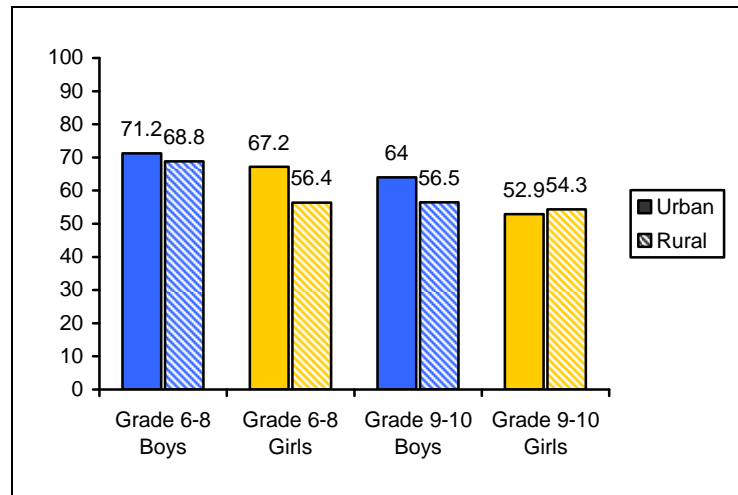
**FIGURE 2.4** Students that either agree or strongly agree that “you can trust people around here,” by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**GOOD PLACES TO SPEND FREE TIME**

Figure 2.5 shows the proportion of students that agree or strongly agree that there are good places to spend their free time (e.g. recreation centres, parks, shopping centres). There is an age-related decline in the proportion of students who report having good places to spend their time. This decline is most noticeable for urban girls and rural boys.

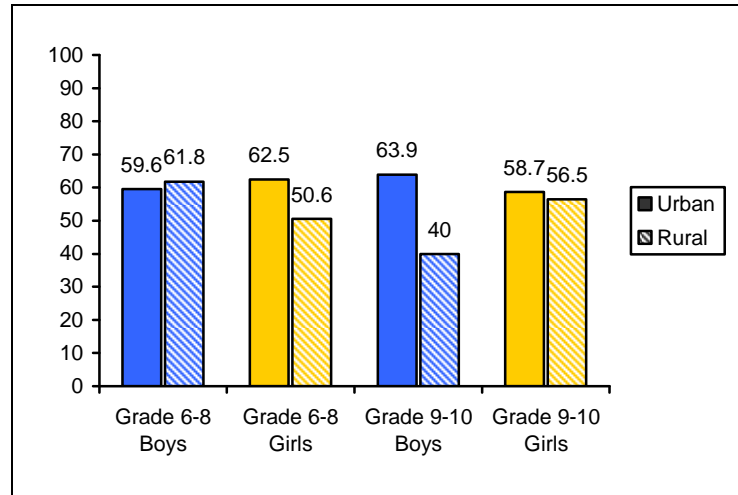
**FIGURE 2.5** Students that either agree or strongly agree that “there are good places to spend your free time (e.g., recreation centres, parks, shopping centres),” by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**HELPFUL NEIGHBOURS**

Figure 2.6 shows the proportion of students that agree or strongly agree that they could ask for help or a favour from neighbours. More urban girls in Grades 6 to 8 and urban boys in Grades 9 and 10 report the ability to ask for help or a favour from neighbours than their rural counterparts.

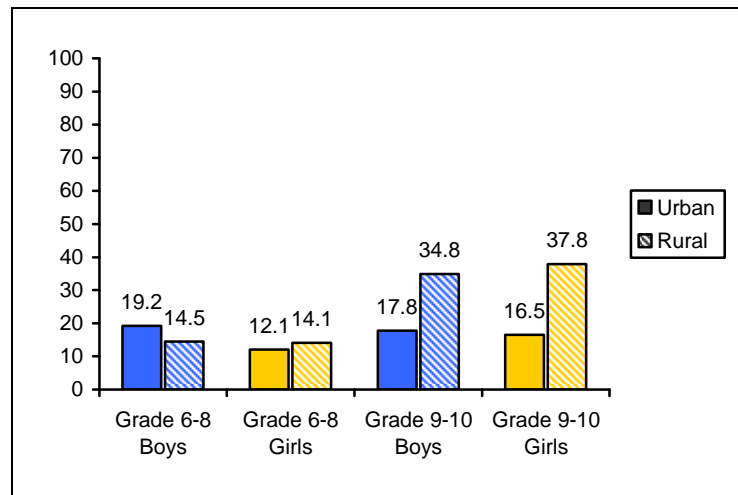
**FIGURE 2.6** Students that either agree or strongly agree that “I could ask for help or a favour from neighbours,” by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**PEOPLE TRYING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OTHERS**

Figure 2.7 shows the proportion of students that agree or strongly agree that most people in their neighbourhood would take advantage of them if they got the chance. Rural students in Grades 9 and 10 are much more likely to feel this way in comparison with other groups.

**FIGURE 2.7** Students that either agree or strongly agree that “most people around here would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance,” by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



Students in Yukon, regardless of location, grade, or gender, tend to have appropriate material resources within their homes. Most of the students have their own bedrooms, their families have at least one vehicle and at least one computer (and generally more), and they have been on vacation with their family at least once during the past year.

Some interesting patterns emerge when one examines neighbourhood resources. For example, while rural students in Grades 9 and 10 are the most likely to see their neighbours saying hello on the street, they are also the most likely to view neighbours as wanting to take advantage of them. In addition, although most students feel that their neighbourhoods are safe places for younger children to play, they are more evenly divided about the presence of good places to spend their own free time. Girls in Grades 9 and 10 are the least likely to report having good places at which to spend their free time. Such perceptions may indicate that more attention needs to be paid to creating community spaces for young people, especially as they enter adolescence.

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### **3 PARENTS**

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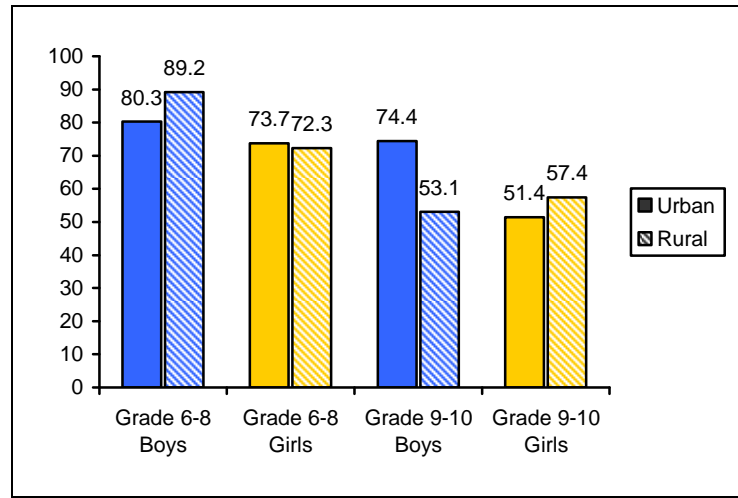
The family is the pre-eminent social system in a young person's development. Although adolescence is typically a time when young people begin to challenge parental controls and to be influenced by their peers, the family can be an integral source of support through the school years. Previous analyses of HBSC data (e.g., Currie, Todd & Platt, 1997; Holstein, Hansen & Due, 2004) suggest that, while both family and peers are both important in young people's lives, the influence each exerts depends on the health outcome, or health behaviour in question, and on the age and developmental stage of the child. For example, substance use, which is part of youth culture, is more influenced by peer factors; in contrast, physical activity, food habits, and educational aspirations are more influenced, at least in early adolescence, by parents (Inchley et al., 2001; Mazur et al., 2001). Moreover, connectedness to one's parents (and having parents who set firm limits and who are empathetic and nurturing) contributes to young people's social development, self-esteem, and health (Baumrind, 1991). Support from parents remains vital to the positive development of adolescents. Therefore, it is important to examine the home setting to better understand its relationship to health behaviours in school-aged children.

This chapter examines the relationships of students with their parents across Grades 6 to 10. These relationships were assessed by asking adolescents how well they communicate with their parents; to what extent they feel understood and trusted by their parents; and how often they have dinner with their parents. Students were also asked about parental expectations regarding school, arguments with their parents, and thoughts about leaving home.

**PARENTS ARE UNDERSTANDING**

Figure 3.1 shows the proportion of students who agree or strongly agree their parents understand them. There is a general decline in the proportion of students who believe their parents understand them as they get older. This decline is largest for rural boys (dropping from 89.2% to 53.1%), and smallest for urban boys (80.3% to 74.4%). Boys tend to think their parents understand them more so than girls.

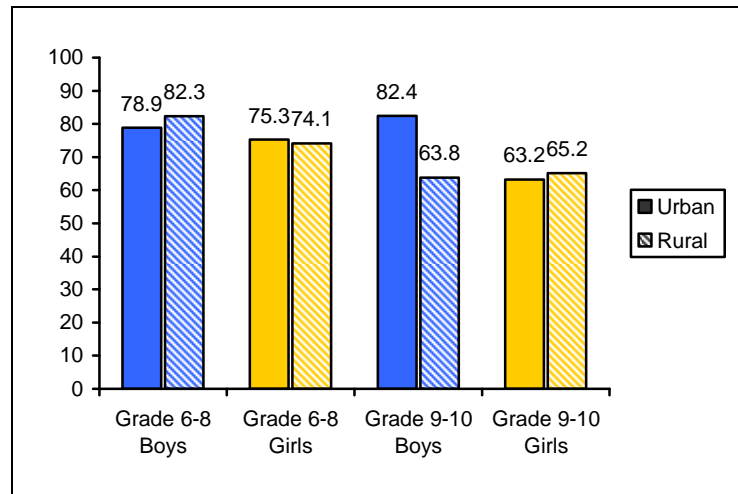
**FIGURE 3.1** Students who agree or strongly agree with the statement “My parents understand me,” by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**HAPPY HOME LIFE**

Figure 3.2 shows the proportion of students who agree or strongly agree they have a happy home life. Similar to the previous figure, there is a downward trend in the proportion of students who report having a happy home life as they get older. This trend is again most noticeable for rural boys, and is actually reversed for urban boys. Again, boys report more positive family outcomes than girls.

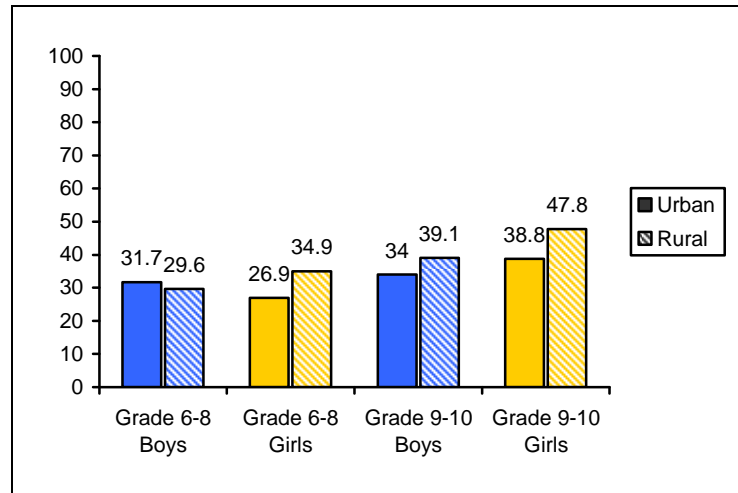
**FIGURE 3.2** Students who agree or strongly agree with the statement “I have a happy home life,” by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS**

Figure 3.3 shows the proportion of students who agree or strongly agree their parents expect too much of them. Across gender and grade, more rural than urban students report that their parents expect too much of them. This trend is especially true for rural girls in Grades 9 and 10.

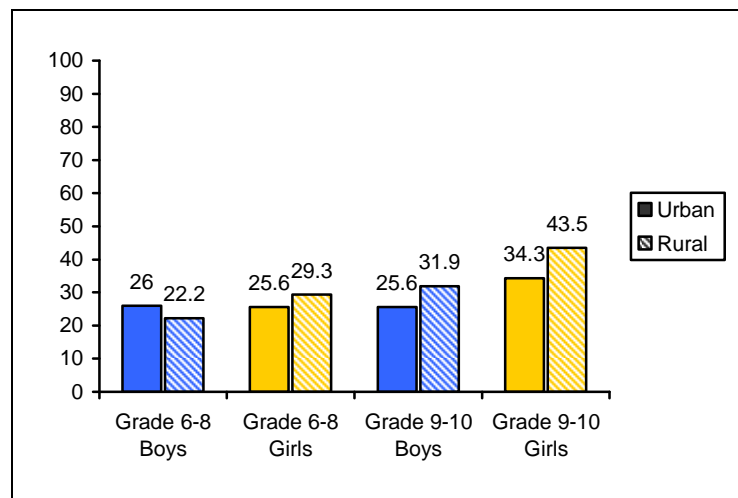
**FIGURE 3.3** Students who agree or strongly agree with the statement “My parents expect too much of me,” by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**ARGUING WITH PARENTS**

Figure 3.4 shows the proportion of students who agree or strongly agree they have a lot of arguments with their parents. More rural than urban students report that they have a lot of arguments with their parents, except for boys in Grades 6 to 8 (where the trend is reversed). There is a marked increase in arguments for girls across grade levels with rural girls in Grades 9 and 10 considerably higher (43.5%) than all other groups.

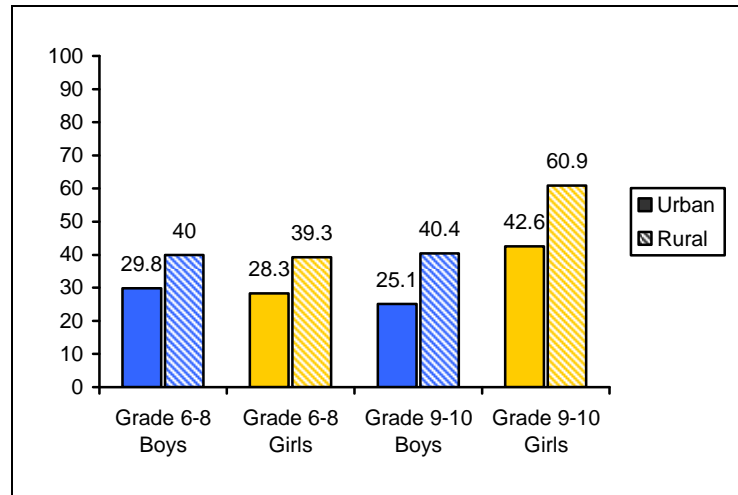
**FIGURE 3.4** Students who agree or strongly agree with the statement “I have a lot of arguments with my parents,” by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**THOUGHTS OF LEAVING HOME**

Figure 3.5 shows the proportion of students who agree or strongly agree there are times they would like to leave home. Significantly more rural than urban students report wanting to leave home. The urban/rural differential is especially steep for girls in Grades 9 and 10, with three-fifths of rural girls reporting there are times they would like to leave home, over 18% higher than urban girls.

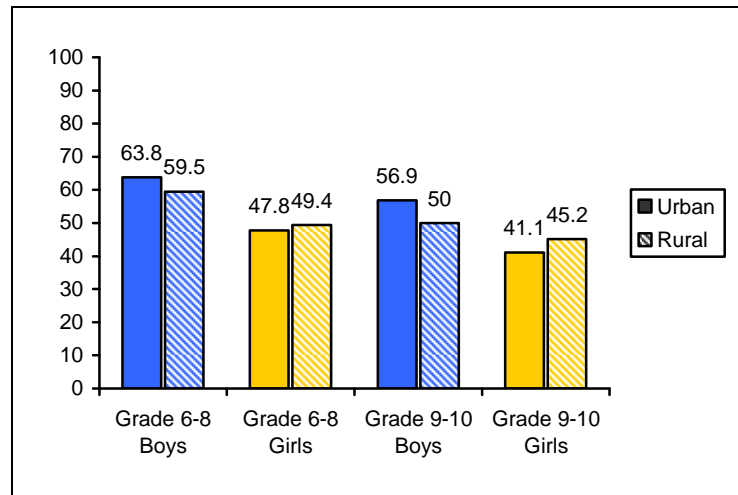
**FIGURE 3.5** Students who agree or strongly agree with the statement “There are times I would like to leave home,” by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**FATHER: EASY TO TALK TO**

Figure 3.6 shows the proportion of students who find it easy or very easy to talk to their fathers. Across the grades, more boys than girls (especially urban boys) find it easier to talk to their fathers. There is a decrease in ease of talking to fathers across grades.

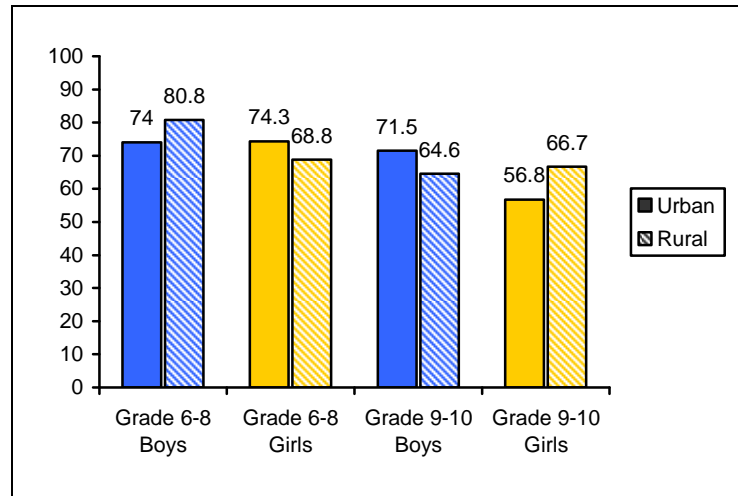
**FIGURE 3.6** Students who say their father is easy or very easy to talk to, by grade, urban/rural status and gender (%)



**MOTHER: EASY TO TALK TO**

Figure 3.7 shows the proportion of students who find it easy or very easy to talk to their mothers. Similar to Figure 3.6, there is a decline in the percentage of students who find it easy to talk to their mothers as they get older, especially among urban girls where only 56.8% indicate being able to do so. Across all groups, students find it easier to talk to their mothers than their fathers.

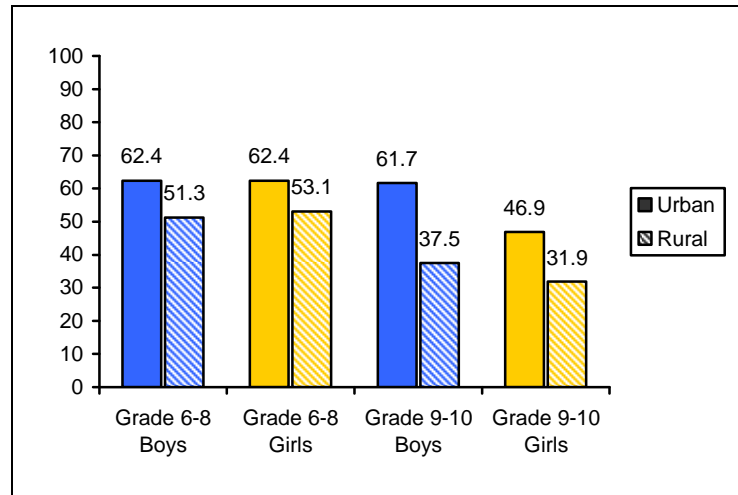
**FIGURE 3.7** Students who say their mother is easy or very easy to talk to, by grade, urban/rural status and gender (%)



**EATING DINNER AS A FAMILY**

Figure 3.8 shows the proportion of students who have dinner with their parents five or more days a week. Significantly more urban than rural students, across the grades, report having dinner with their parents five or more days a week. Rural students in Grades 9 and 10 are the least likely to do so with only 31.9% of rural girls and 37.5% of rural boys reporting having dinner with their parents five or more days a week.

**FIGURE 3.8** Students who have sit down at the table for dinner with their family five or more days a week, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



One of the most noticeable findings across questions about parents and home life is the urban/rural difference. Rural students compared to urban students tend to feel that their parents expect too much of them, that they have a lot of arguments with parents, and that there are times they would like to leave home. They are also far less likely to have dinner with their family regularly. The group most impacted in this respect is Grades 9 and 10 rural girls, who consistently report the most negative family relationships on these questions.

Age also seems to have an effect on students' perceptions of family. Older students tend to be less likely to eat dinner with their families. They also depict their home life in more negative terms, describing it as less happy, with parents who do not understand them and who expect too much of them. However, urban boys seem less affected by age with respect to their family relationships, their indicators either declining minimally or increasing. While developmental paths might well explain the general tendency to have weaker familial relationships as one gets older, they do not explain the differential pattern for urban boys.

Only in communication with parents is there a clear distinction between boys and girls. While both boys and girls are more likely to find it easy to talk with their mother than their father about things that really bother them, overall boys are more likely to find it easy to talk to both their mothers and fathers than girls. Girls in Grades 9 and 10 find communication with parents especially problematic.

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## **4 FRIENDS**

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Young people's relationships with friends of the same or opposite sex are important for their psychological and social development, and for fostering their self-esteem and sense of well-being. These friendships also form the basis for the development of their romantic relationships.

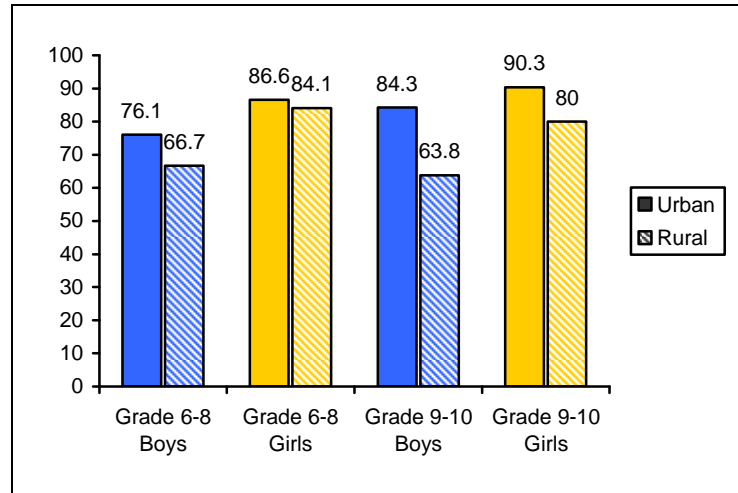
The transition from pre-adolescence to adolescence produces a change in the nature of relationships with peers, where friendships become more intimate in nature and friends become close confidants (Buhrmester, 1996). Intimacy can be described here in terms of the ease of communication within peer relationships, as well as comfort in disclosing problems and worries with others. Having close friends is associated with positive emotional health and social adjustment. Children with close friends demonstrate better academic performance, lower rates of juvenile delinquency, and lower dropout rates, compared with children who do not have friends as sources of intimacy and social support (Parker & Asher, 1987). Furthermore, the type of peer relationships, number of friends, and extent of involvement in a peer group evolve over adolescence and may influence the degree to which adolescents become involved in health-promoting (pro-social) or health-compromising (anti-social) behaviours (Sieving, Williams & Perry, 2000).

This chapter presents information on the peer context by asking students about the number of friendships they have with both genders, students' ease of communication with these friends, time spent with friends, closeness to their friends, and comfort with sharing matters of concern. Data on time spent with friends after school and in the evenings and the percentage of young people who communicate with their friends by phone, text message, and email are additionally reported. Since young people's friendships are usually formed based on shared interests and activities, this chapter concludes with exploring the attitudes of young people's peers towards pro-social and risk behaviours.

**BEST FRIEND: EASY TO TALK TO**

Figure 4.1 shows the proportion of students who find it easy or very easy to talk to a best friend about things that really bother them. Generally girls find it easier than boys to talk to a best friend. Urban students tend to be more comfortable than rural students talking about things that bother them to a best friend. Not surprisingly, then, rural boys tend to be the least comfortable talking to a best friend (66.7% in Grades 6 to 8; 63.8% in Grades 9 and 10).

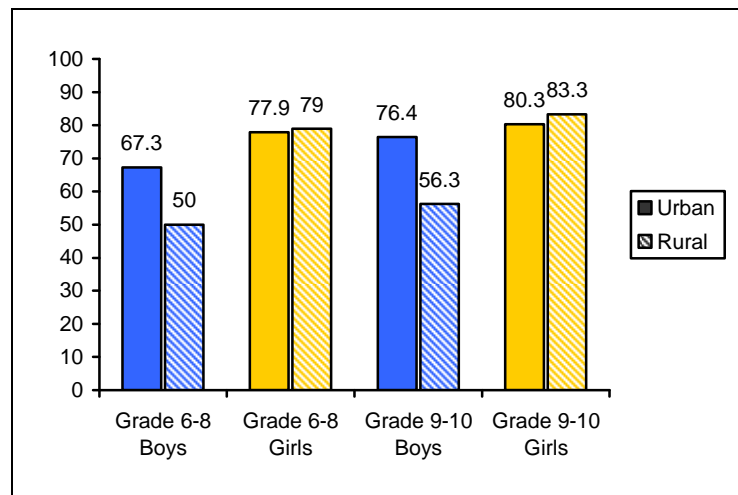
**FIGURE 4.1** Students who find it easy or very easy to talk to a best friend about things that really bother them, by age, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**FRIENDS OF SAME-SEX: EASY TO TALK TO**

Figure 4.2 shows the proportion of students who find it easy or very easy to talk to same-sex friends about things that really bother them. Similar to talking to a best friend, girls are generally most comfortable talking about things that bother them to their same-sex friends, while rural boys across the grades are least comfortable talking to same-sex friends about things that really bother them (50% in Grades 6 to 8; 56.3 % in Grades 9 and 10).

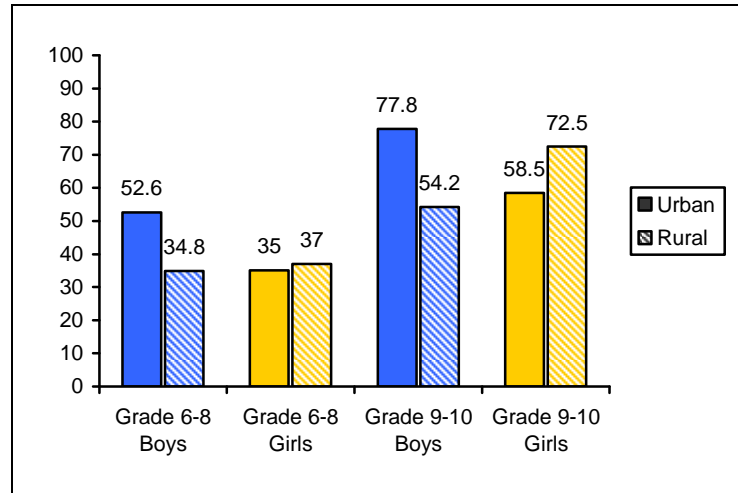
**FIGURE 4.2** Students who find it easy or very easy to talk to same-sex friends about things that really bother them, by age, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**FRIENDS OF OPPOSITE-SEX: EASY TO TALK TO**

Figure 4.3 shows the gender and grade distribution of students who find it easy or very easy to talk to opposite-sex friends about things that really bother them. Urban boys, especially those in Grades 9 and 10, are particularly comfortable talking about things that bother them to opposite-sex friends. Students in Grades 9 and 10 are more likely to feel comfortable talking to opposite-sex friends than students in the lower grades.

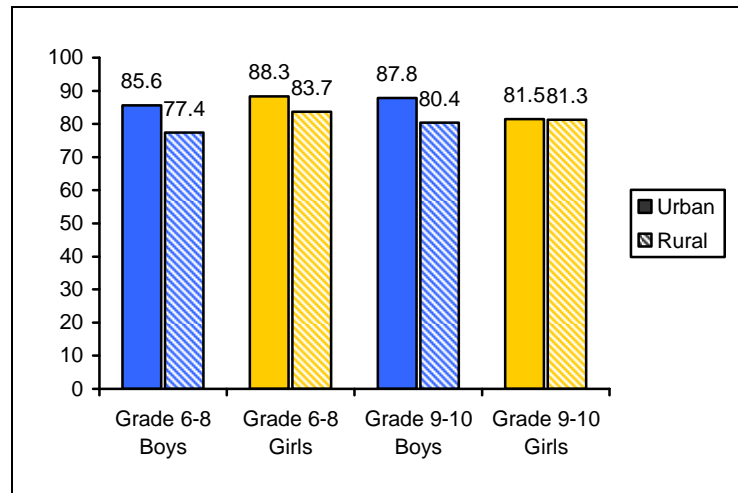
**FIGURE 4.3** Students who find it easy or very easy to talk to opposite-sex friends about things that really bother them, by age, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**NUMBER OF FRIENDS OF THE SAME SEX**

Figure 4.4 shows the proportion of students who have three or more friends of the same sex. Around four-fifths of students across gender, grades, and urban/rural communities report having three or more friends of the same sex. Except for girls in Grades 9 and 10 (where the proportion is basically identical), more urban than rural students report having three or more friends of the same sex.

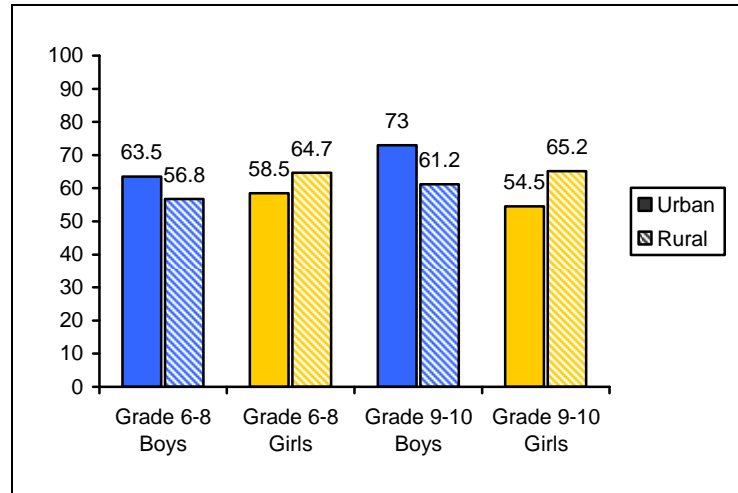
**FIGURE 4.4** Students who have three or more friends of the same sex, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**NUMBER OF FRIENDS OF THE OPPOSITE SEX**

Figure 4.5 shows the proportion of students who have three or more friends of the opposite sex. There is an increase in the proportion of boys who report having opposite-sex friends as they move up the grades, but a slight decline for girls. The lowest proportion of students with three or more friends of the opposite sex is urban girls in Grades 9 and 10 at 54.5%, while the highest proportion is Grades 9 and 10 urban boys at 73%.

**FIGURE 4.5** Students who have three or more friends of the opposite sex, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)

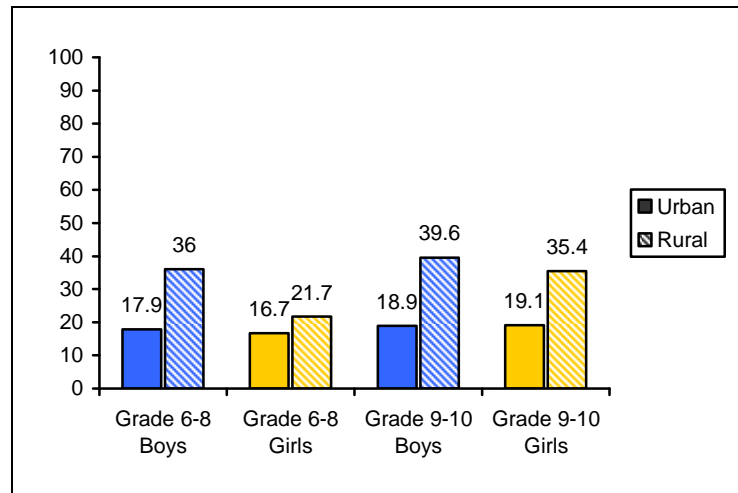


Source: Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Survey

**EVENINGS SPENT WITH FRIENDS**

Figure 4.6 shows the proportion of students who spend five or more evenings a week out with friends. Significantly more rural than urban students spend five or more evenings a week out with friends. Less than 20% of urban students spend five or more evenings a week out with friends, while (with the exception of Grades 6 to 8 girls) approximately one-third of rural students do so.

**FIGURE 4.6** Students who spend five or more evenings a week out with friends, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**FRIENDS' POSITIVE SOCIAL BEHAVIOURS**

Table 4.1 shows the proportion of students reporting positive social behaviours among their friends. Significantly more urban students report that their friends do well at school, participate in organised sports activities, and get along with parents. More urban than rural girls report that their friends care for the environment and help others in need. Compared to urban students, more rural students state their friends participate in cultural activities other than sports.

**TABLE 4.1 Positive Social Behaviours – Grades 9 and 10 students stating most of the friends in their social group perform these behaviours often, by urban/rural status and gender (%)**

	Male Urban	Male Rural	Female Urban	Female Rural
Do well at school	55.6	39.6	66.0	44.7
Participate in organized sports activities with others	58.4	56.3	60.8	41.7
Participate in cultural activities other than sports	12.5	22.9	17.0	21.3
Get along well with their parents	49.0	37.5	41.2	27.7
Care for the environment	15.4	20.8	34.0	18.8
Help others in need	26.0	25.0	43.4	34.0

**FRIENDS' RISK BEHAVIOURS**

Table 4.2 shows the proportion of students reporting 'Risk Behaviours' among their friends. Significantly more rural students than urban students report friends smoking, getting drunk, using drugs to get stoned, and having sexual relationships. In both urban and rural communities, more girls than boys report their friends having sex, while more boys than girls report their friends carrying weapons.

**TABLE 4.2 Risk Behaviours – Grades 9 and 10 students stating most of the friends in their social group perform these behaviours often, by urban/rural status and gender (%)**

	Male Urban	Male Rural	Female Urban	Female Rural
Smoke cigarettes	8.7	29.2	11.8	18.8
Get drunk	24.8	29.2	24.1	32.7
Have used drugs to get stoned	12.5	33.3	16.6	23.4
Carry weapons	5.4	8.3	2.4	0
Have sexual relationships	14.4	14.9	16.7	25.5

This chapter examined three aspects of friendship: the quality of friendships, the number of friends, and activities with friends. Quality of friendships was measured by ease of talking with one's best friend, same-sex friends, and opposite-sex friends. For both same-sex and best friends, rural boys were the least comfortable, whereas, for opposite-sex friends, the difference was age-based. As students got older, they had less difficulty talking to opposite-sex friends.

Approximately 80 percent of students, regardless of location, gender, or grade, indicated they had at least three same-sex friends. These percentages dipped considerably for opposite-sex friends, especially for urban girls. Urban girls seem more unlikely than the other groups to maintain friendships with the opposite sex, either compared to other students or to their own relationships with same-sex friends. We can conjecture that societal views of opposite-sex relations are most constraining for these urban girls.

The strongest pattern for activities with friends arises in terms of urban-rural differences. Urban students are far less likely than rural students to spend five or more evenings out with friends. However, they are also far more likely to see their friends as having positive social behaviours. The only exception here occurs with cultural activities other than sports, reported by more rural than urban students. In contrast to positive social behaviours, rural students tend to view their friends as more likely to take part in risk behaviours.

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## **5 SCHOOL EXPERIENCE**

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Schools are settings that can promote the health of students, not only through their curriculum and physical environments, but also through supportive school culture, climate, and opportunities (Weare, 2000).

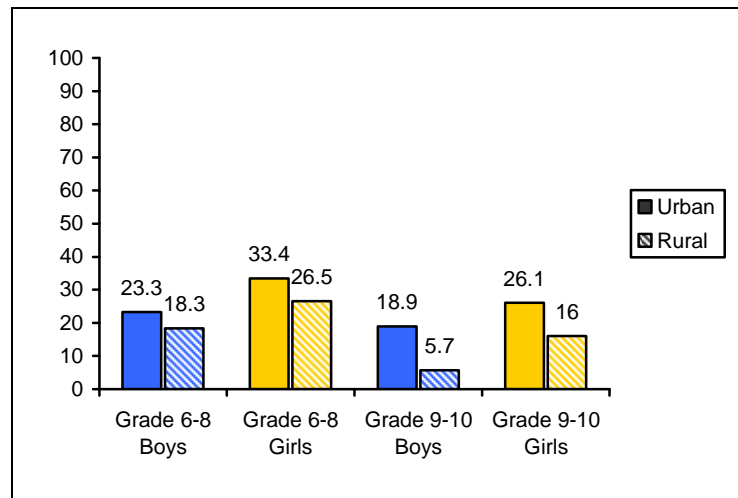
Because adolescents spend a substantial portion of their lives in school, experiences in school settings strongly influence their social and emotional health and their development, both positively and negatively (Wells, Barlow & Stewart-Brown, 2003). Specifically, students' health behaviours and their views of themselves are related to their lives in school (Anderman, 2002). In addition to the direct teaching of academic skills, schools provide opportunities for adolescents to develop social connections that often have lasting impacts on their lives. For the majority of adolescents, schools provide positive experiences with teachers and peers, helping them to develop strong emotional bonds and self-confidence. However, for some young people, school is a threatening and uninviting place. Research has consistently linked academic achievement to measures of school climate and parental support (e. g., Ho & Willms, 1996; Ma & Klinger, 2000). In addition, adolescents who feel isolated or rejected in school, or believe that their school's expectations are too high, tend to disengage from school life. These young people are prone to becoming involved with peers sharing similar negative attitudes, which can ultimately result in increased health-risk behaviours (Connop & King, 1999).

This chapter examines aspects of young people's school experiences as these experiences relate to their academic and social development with consequent implications for their emotional and physical health. Students are asked about liking and belonging to school; their perceptions of their school and school rules; teachers' perceptions of their work; teachers' attitudes towards them as people; and their perceptions of, and relationships with, classmates.

**LIKING SCHOOL A LOT**

Figure 5.1 shows the proportion of students who like school a lot. There is a downward trend in the proportion of students who like school for both girls and boys as they move up the grades. Significantly more urban than rural students report liking school a lot, especially urban girls in Grades 6 to 8, where a third report liking school a lot. The least likely students to like school are rural boys in Grades 9 and 10, with only 5.7% reporting that they like school.

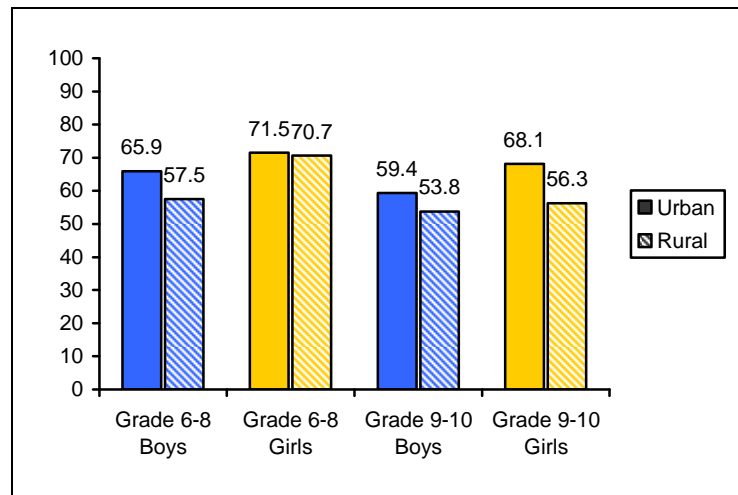
**FIGURE 5.1** Students who like school a lot, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

Figure 5.2 shows the proportion of students who say that teachers think their school work is good or very good. Except for girls in Grades 6 to 8 (where the numbers are similar), more urban than rural students report that their teachers think highly of their work. Girls indicate that their teachers are more pleased with their work than boys. Additionally, younger students report greater teacher satisfaction of their academic work.

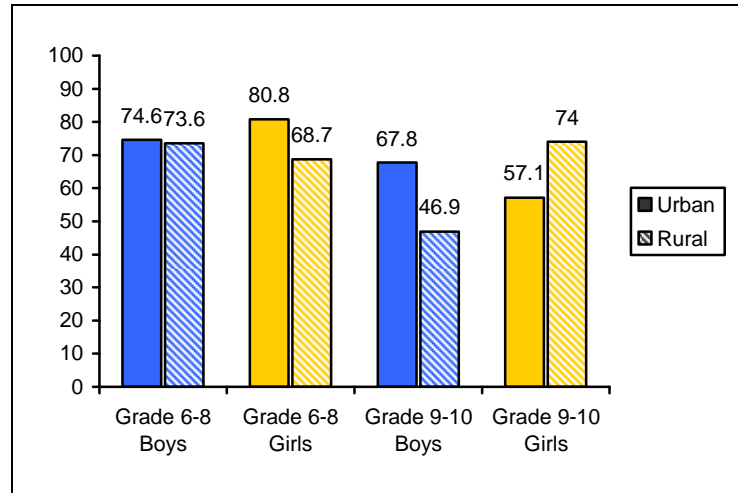
**FIGURE 5.2** Students who say that teachers think their school work is good or very good, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**TEACHERS' ACCEPTANCE OF STUDENTS**

Figure 5.3 shows the proportion of students who say their teachers accept them as they are. There is a decline in the proportion of students who feel accepted by their teachers as they move up the grades (except for rural girls). Rural boys in Grades 9 and 10 feel the least accepted by their teachers, with less than half of them reporting so. In contrast, urban girls in Grades 6 to 8 indicate the highest level of teacher acceptance at 80.8%.

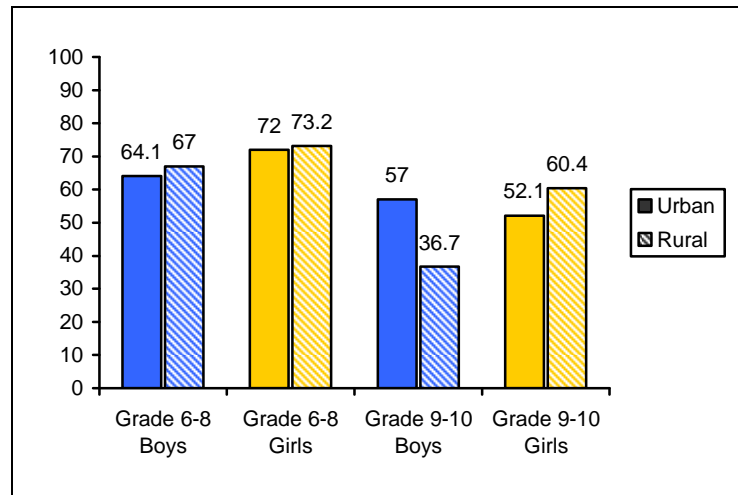
**FIGURE 5.3** Students who agree or strongly agree that their teachers accept them as they are by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**TEACHERS CARING ABOUT STUDENTS AS PERSONS**

Figure 5.4 shows the proportion of students who think their teachers care about them as persons. Across all groups, there is a sharp decline in the proportion of students who feel cared for by their teachers as they get older. As with acceptance, rural boys in Grades 9 and 10 feel the least cared for as persons by their teachers at 36.7%. Rural girls in Grades 6 to 8 feel most cared for at 73.2%.

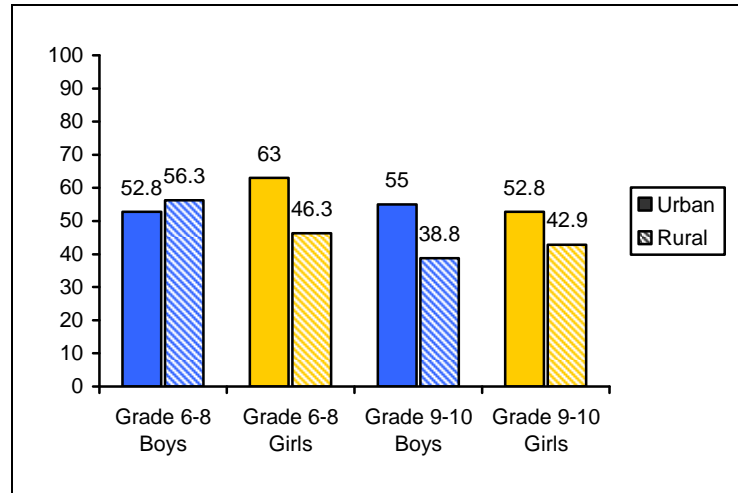
**FIGURE 5.4** Students who agree or strongly agree that their teachers care about them as persons, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**FAIRNESS OF SCHOOL RULES**

Figure 5.5 shows the proportion of students who agree or strongly agree that the rules in their schools are fair. Significantly more urban students across the grades consider their school rules to be fair (except for boys in Grades 6 to 8). Rural boys in Grades 9 and 10 are the least likely to consider the rules in their schools to be fair with 38.8% of them stating so, while urban girls in Grades 6 to 8 are most likely to consider their school rules as fair (63%).

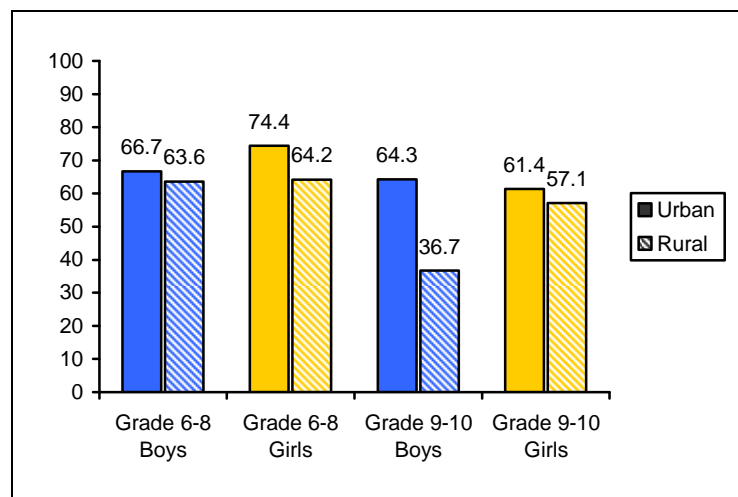
**FIGURE 5.5** Students who agree or strongly agree with the statement “The rules in this school are fair,” by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**SCHOOL IS A NICE PLACE**

Figure 5.6 shows the proportion of students who agree or strongly agree that their school is a nice place to be. Similar to patterns identified above, students’ positive perceptions of their school tend to wane in the higher grades. Significantly more urban than rural students across the grades still consider their school a nice place to be. Rural boys in Grades 9 and 10 seem to be least satisfied with their schools with only 36.7% reporting that their school is a nice place to be.

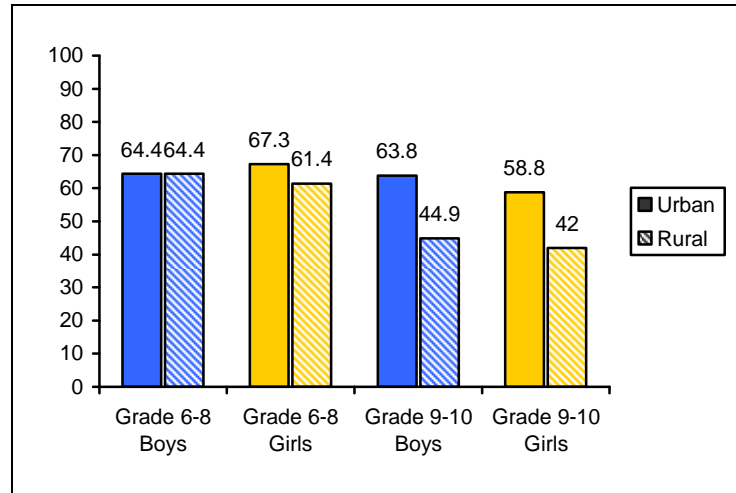
**FIGURE 5.6** Students who agree or strongly agree with the statement “Our school is a nice place to be,” by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**FEELING OF BELONGING AT SCHOOL**

Figure 5.7 shows the proportion of students who agree or strongly agree they feel like they belong at their school. Generally more urban than rural students across the grades feel like they belong at their school (with the exception of Grades 6 to 8 boys). The students that are least likely to feel a sense of school belonging are rural students in Grades 9 and 10, with only 44.9% of boys and 42% of girls reporting they belong at school, which is about 20% less than their urban peers.

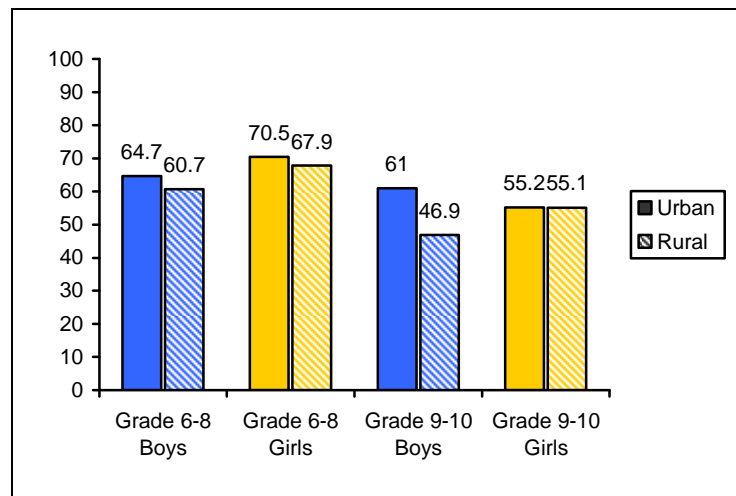
**FIGURE 5.7** Students who agree or strongly agree with the statement “I feel I belong at this school,” by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**TEACHERS TREATING STUDENTS FAIRLY**

Figure 5.8 shows the proportion of students who agree or strongly agree that their teachers treat them fairly. Generally, more urban than rural students across the grades feel that their teachers treat them fairly. Younger students are more likely to report teacher fairness than older students. Rural boys in Grades 9 and 10 are the least likely to report being treated fairly by their teachers, with less than half reporting so.

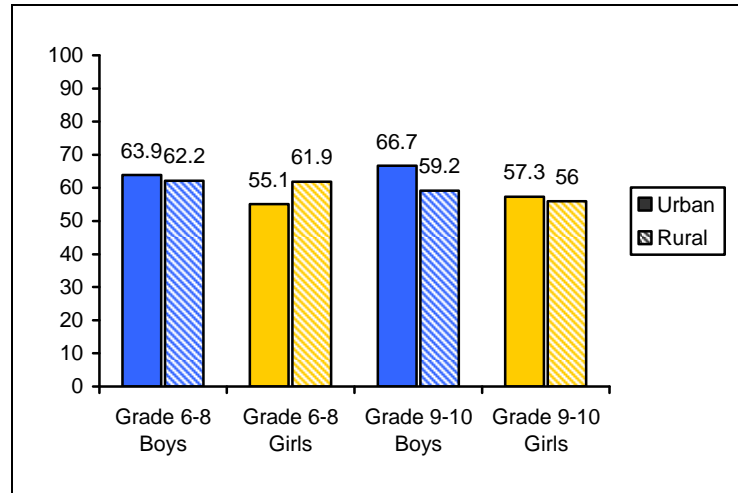
**FIGURE 5.8** Students who agree or strongly agree with the statement “Our teachers treat us fairly,” by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**STUDENTS ENJOYING BEING TOGETHER**

Figure 5.9 shows the proportion of students who agree or strongly agree that students in their class(es) enjoy being together. There are no marked gender and community differences. Generally, about three-fifths of urban and rural student across the grades report that students enjoy being together. Urban boys in Grades 9 and 10 have the highest reports of enjoying being together at 66.7%.

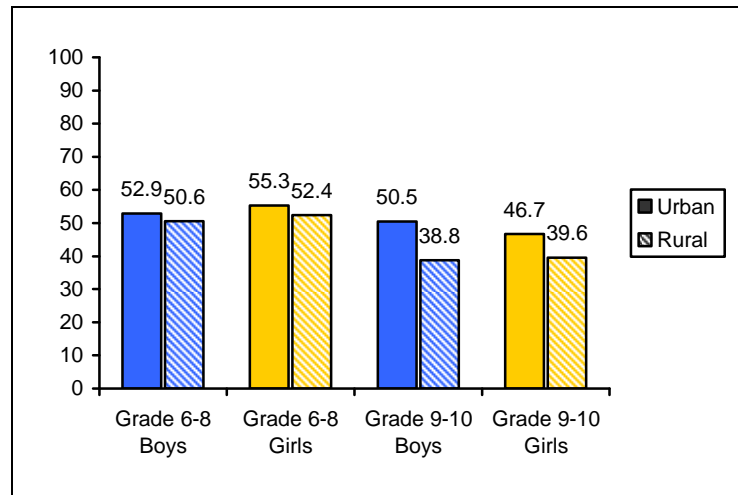
**FIGURE 5.9** Students who agree or strongly agree with the statement “The students in my class(es) enjoy being together,” by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**CLASSMATES BEING KIND AND HELPFUL**

Figure 5.10 shows the proportion of students who agree or strongly agree that students in their class(es) are kind and helpful. Generally, more urban than rural students across the grades feel that their classmates are kind and helpful, with larger differences in the higher grades. Less than two-fifths (40%) of rural boys and girls in Grades 9 and 10 feel that that students in their class(es) are kind and helpful.

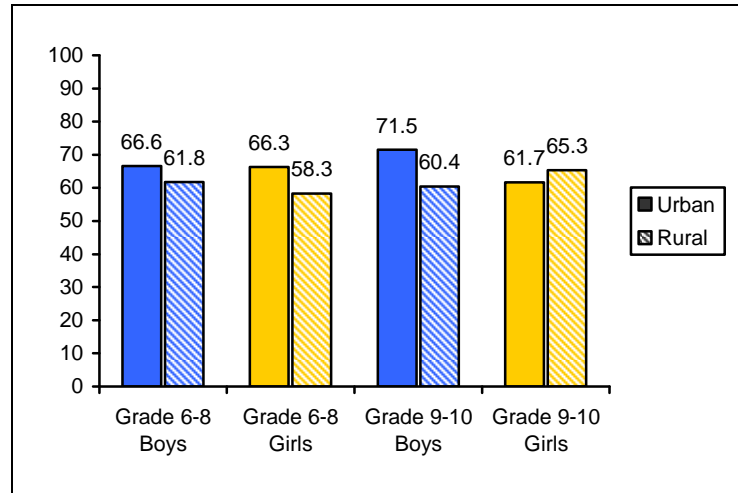
**FIGURE 5.10** Students who agree or strongly agree with the statement “Most of the students in my class(es) are kind and helpful,” by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**ACCEPTANCE BY CLASSMATES**

Figure 5.11 shows the proportion of students who feel that other students accept them as they are. More urban than rural students across the grades feel accepted by their classmates (with the exception of Grades 9 and 10 girls). Similar to students enjoying being together, urban boys in Grades 9 and 10 are the most likely to feel accepted by other students, with over 70% of them indicating so.

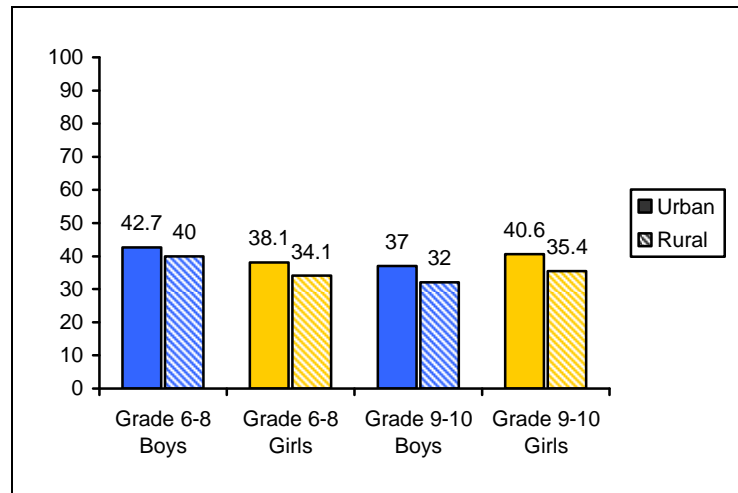
**FIGURE 5.11** Students who agree or strongly agree with the statement “Other students accept me as I am,” by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**CLASSMATES TREATING EACH OTHER WITH RESPECT**

Figure 5.12 shows the proportion of students who feel that their classmates treat each other with respect. More urban than rural students across the grades feel classmates treat each other with respect, although the difference is minimal for Grades 6 to 8 boys. Rural boys in Grades 9 and 10 are least likely (32%) to report that their classmates treat each other with respect.

**FIGURE 5.12** Students who agree or strongly agree with the statement “The students in my class(es) treat each other with respect,” by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



In most respects, Grades 9 and 10 rural boys view their school experiences in the most negative light. They are the least likely to like school a lot, to think their teachers are positive about their school work, to feel teachers accept them as they are and care about them as persons, to see the school as having fair rules and being a nice place, to perceive fair teacher treatment, and to indicate that students treat each other with respect and are kind and helpful. They are also second least likely to feel they belong at school (after Grades 9 and 10 rural girls). However, Grades 9 and 10 rural boys do see school positively in social terms. They are similar to other students in their perceptions, for example, of students enjoying being together and accepting them as they are.

Still it is clear that rural boys in Grades 9 and 10 do not see schools as meeting their needs. This comparison, though, masks another important consideration. Although the school experiences of Grades 9 and 10 rural boys are the most negative, there are significant numbers of students in Yukon who do not see schools in a positive light. At most a third in any group say they like school a lot and close to half of the students in Grades 9 and 10 and about a quarter in Grades 6 to 8 do not think their teachers care about them as persons. About half of the students do not think their school rules are fair or that students in their classes are kind and helpful. Additionally, more than a third of students do not believe their schools are nice places to be, that teachers treat them fairly, or that they belong at their school.

## **6 HEALTH RISK BEHAVIOUR**

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The use of tobacco, alcohol, and other substances during adolescence is sometimes regarded as non-normative and anti-social. Yet youths' desire for independence and their curiosity to discover the world around them contribute to initial experimental use of tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana. Many do not venture beyond the experimentation phase, but others continue to be involved in a lifestyle that predisposes them to various health risks. Engaging in health risk behaviours influences the morbidity (and mortality) of adolescents adversely (Sells & Blum, 1996). These behaviours tend to occur together in youth, creating a health-compromising lifestyle with consequences for physical health (Pickett et al., 2002).

Smoking behaviour is undeniably established in adolescence. Most Canadian adult smokers (nearly 90%) report lighting their first cigarette, or being already addicted to nicotine, before the age of 18 (Canadian Tobacco Usage Monitoring Survey [CTUMS], 2003). The initiation of smoking and alcohol in adolescence is largely influenced by social, cultural, and environmental factors including reciprocal social interactions among peers (Schmid et al., 2003). There is a strong link between early age of initiation of alcohol use and misuse or abuse in adulthood (Grant, 1998). Alcohol-related accidents are the leading cause of death among young people aged 15 to 25 (Facy, 2000), and alcohol is a primary factor in motor-vehicle crashes, smoking, illegal drug use (Johnston, O' Malley & Bachman, 2002), and risky sexual behaviour (Cooper, 2002; Johnston et al., 2002).

The peer group appears to have the strongest influence on drug use among adolescents. Peers shape norms, attitudes, and values around drug use, particularly cannabis, and also provide opportunities and support for its use. While early drug use has been associated with dropping out of school and involvement in delinquent activity, it is not necessarily drug use per se that causes these problems. Rather, it could be that young substance abusers, even before they start misusing alcohol and drugs, are more likely to have mental health and emotional problems, being generally less confident, less self-reliant, less sociable, and less likely to plan ahead (ter Bogt & Nic Gabhainn, 2005).

Sexual health is part of adolescents' general, social, and personal well-being. The key public health concerns around young people's sexual health include teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Teenage pregnancies and STIs can lead to significant health, social, and economic problems among young people, and are largely preventable through the co-ordinated efforts of families, schools, health and education agencies, and community organisations.

Identifying young people's age at first intercourse in the HBSC is important because those who engage in intercourse early are thought to be at greater risk for unplanned, unprotected sex and, therefore, unintended pregnancy and exposure to STIs, at least around the time of their first intercourse. Early first intercourse is also associated with other modes of

risk-taking such as alcohol and drug use, as it is more likely to be unintended and unprotected (Godeau, Nic Gabhainn, & Ross, 2005).

The four broad categories of risk behaviour examined are smoking, alcohol, drugs, and sexual behaviour. Some of the risk behaviour questions in this study are limited to students in Grades 9 and 10 only, like questions about sexual health and drug use. In smoking-related questions, students are asked if they have ever smoked tobacco, how often they smoke at present, how often they smoked in the last 30 days, and their age when they first smoked a cigarette. Questions on alcohol consumption address age at first time of drinking alcohol and getting drunk, types of alcohol consumed, frequency of drinking in the last 30 days, and how often respondents have been “really drunk” and had an elevated number of drinks.

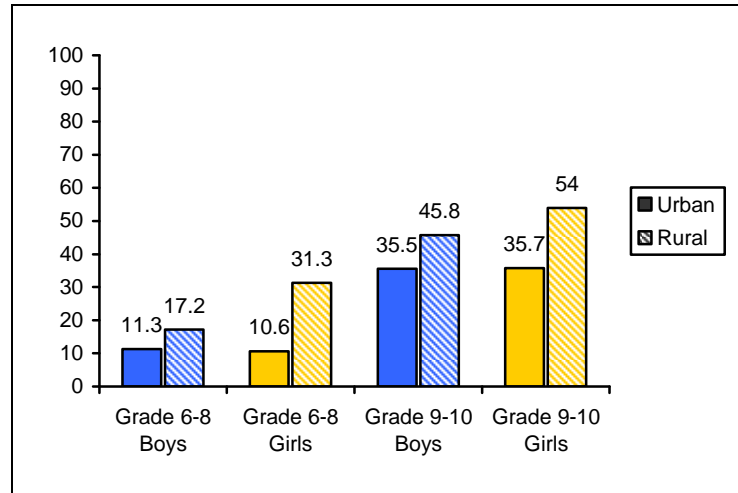
Grades 9 and 10 students are asked about the frequency of cannabis use and other substance use, including: ecstasy; pain relievers (Percodan, Demerol, Oxycontin, Codeine); glue or solvents; LSD and other hallucinogens (PCP, magic mushrooms, mescaline, peyote); and Salvia (Sally D, Divine Sage, Magic Mint). Data are presented on student perceptions of the risk of harm to health of infrequent and regular smoking, drinking, and drug use. Grades 9 and 10 students were also surveyed about whether or not they had had sexual intercourse, at what age, whether or not a condom was used last time, and what method of birth control was used the last time they had sexual intercourse.

**6.1 SMOKING**

**EVER SMOKED**

Figure 6.1 shows the proportion of students who have ever smoked tobacco. Significantly more rural students smoke tobacco compared to their urban counterparts. Rural girls are also more likely to smoke tobacco than rural boys but there is no gender difference for urban students. The incidence of smoking tobacco increases dramatically across grades. By the time students are in Grades 9 and 10, 45.8% of rural boys and 54% of rural girls report having ever smoked tobacco.

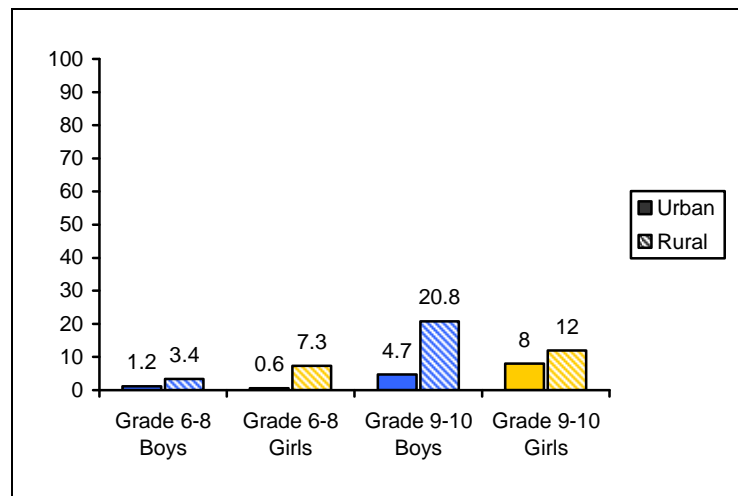
**FIGURE 6.1** Having ever smoked tobacco by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**DAILY SMOKERS**

Figure 6.2 shows the proportion of daily smokers. Significantly more rural students smoke daily than their urban counterparts. The urban-rural gradient is largest for boys in Grades 9 and 10, in that rural boys are about four times more likely to smoke daily compared to urban boys in the same grades.

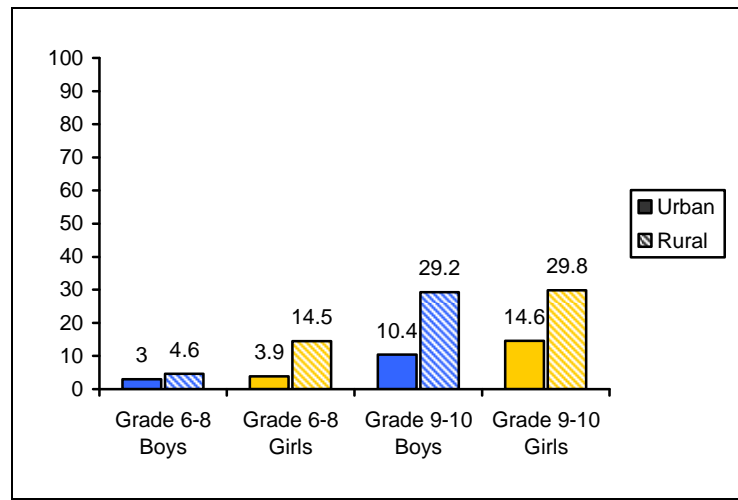
**FIGURE 6.2** Daily smokers, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**RECENT SMOKING**

Figure 6.3 shows the proportion of students who smoked tobacco in the last 30 days. Across grades and gender, rural students are much more likely to have smoked in the last 30 days. Again, reports of having smoked in the last 30 days increase across grades. Recent smoking is more common among Grades 6 to 8 girls than among Grades 6 to 8 boys; and slightly more common among Grades 9 and 10 girls than Grades 9 and 10 boys.

**FIGURE 6.3** Having smoked tobacco in the last 30 days by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**AGE AT FIRST CIGARETTE**

Rural students are more likely to have had their first cigarette at age 11 or less, with 8.2% of rural boys and 13.0% of rural girls starting smoking at this age, as compared to 3.3% of urban boys and 4.8% of urban females.

**TABLE 6.1** Grades 9 and 10 students and age of first cigarette (more than a puff), by urban/rural status and gender (%)

	Male Urban	Male Rural	Female Urban	Female Rural
Never	73.8	61.2	71.8	56.5
11 or less	3.3	8.2	4.8	13.0
12	5.2	4.1	4.3	6.5
13	10.5	6.1	11.5	10.9
14	4.3	8.2	5.3	8.7
15	2.4	6.1	2.4	4.3
16 or older	0.5	6.1	0	0

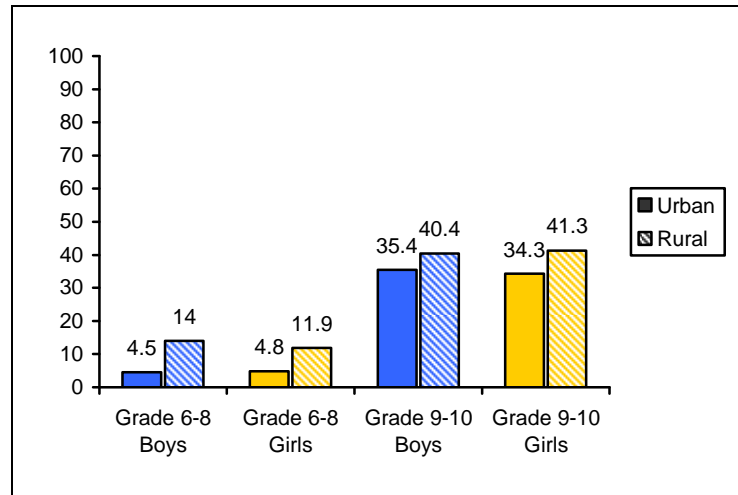
Smoking is affected by two factors: age and location. Not surprisingly, as students get older, they are more likely to have smoked, to have smoked recently, and to be daily smokers. In addition, rural students are more likely to respond that they engage in smoking, and are more likely to have started smoking at an earlier age. However, a substantial proportion of students in Grades 9 and 10 have never smoked a cigarette (more than a puff): more than 70 percent of urban students and well more than half of rural students. Furthermore, daily smoking is relatively uncommon at the lower grades and remains relatively low for urban students in Grades 9 and 10.

**6.2 ALCOHOL USE**

**BEEN DRUNK**

Figure 6.4 shows the proportion of students who have been really drunk. There is a sharp upward trend in the proportion of students who report getting drunk as they get older. Rural students are also more likely to get drunk than their urban counterparts. Roughly two in five rural students in Grades 9 and 10 report being drunk.

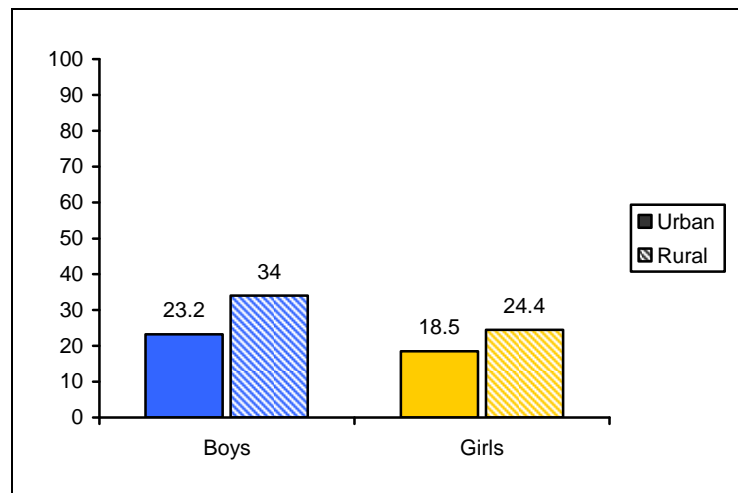
**FIGURE 6.4** Students who report being really drunk at least twice by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**HAVING FIVE OR MORE DRINKS (FOUR OR MORE FOR FEMALES) ON ONE OCCASION**

Figure 6.5 shows the proportion of students who have had five or more drinks (four or more for females) on one occasion more than once a month. Significantly more rural than urban students report heavy drinking more than once a month. Additionally, more boys than girls report frequent drinking.

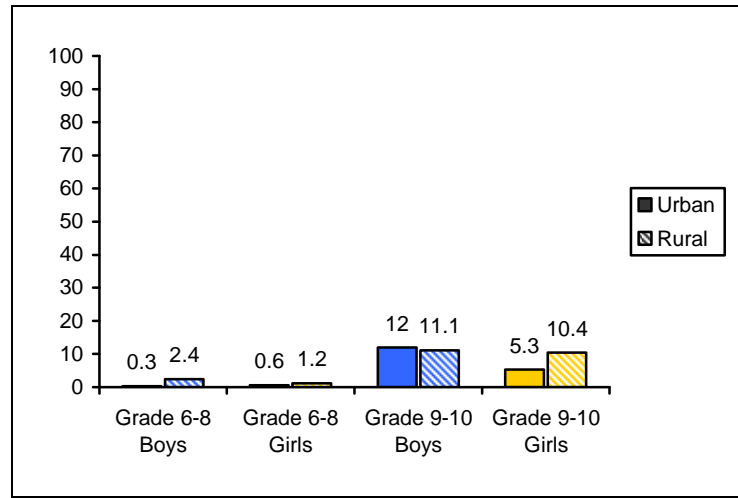
**FIGURE 6.5** Grades 9 and 10 students having five or more drinks (or four or more for females) more than once a month, by urban/rural status and gender (%)



**BEER**

Figure 6.6 shows the proportion of students who drink beer at least once a week. Rural girls in Grades 9 and 10 report more beer consumption than their urban counterparts.

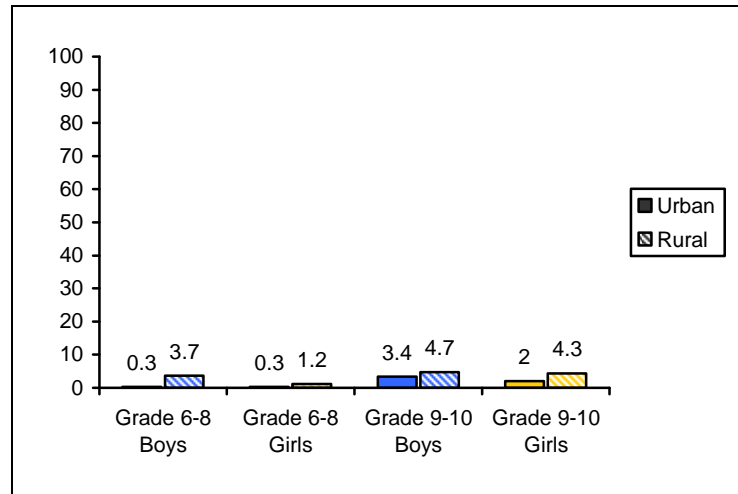
**FIGURE 6.6 Beer consumption at least once a week by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)**



**WINE**

Figure 6.7 shows the proportion of students who drink wine at least once a week. There is minimal wine drinking among the students surveyed, with less than 5% of students across grades and gender reporting drinking wine once a week.

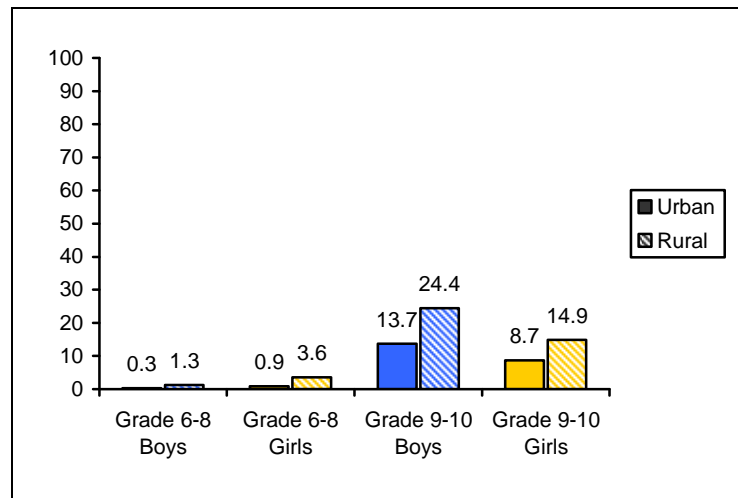
**FIGURE 6.7 Wine consumption at least once a week by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)**



**LIQUOR**

Figure 6.8 shows the proportion of students who drink liquor at least once a week. Significantly more rural than urban students report drinking liquor once a week, especially rural boys in Grades 9 and 10 where more than 20% report doing so as compared to approximately 14% for urban boys in the same grades.

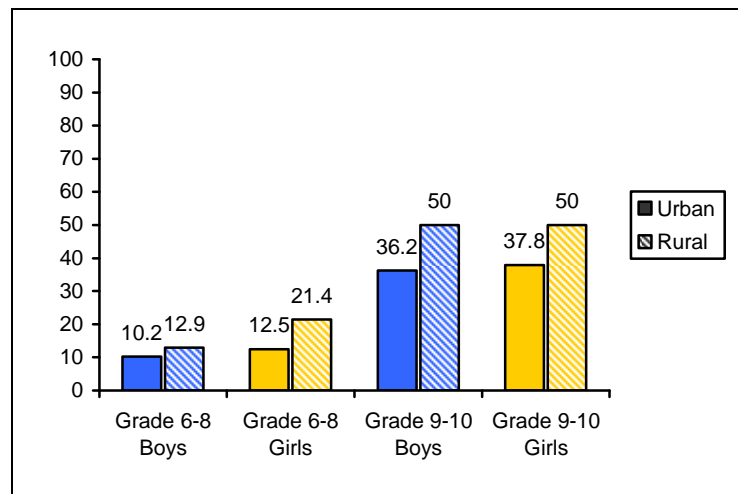
**FIGURE 6.8** Liquor consumption at least once a week by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**RECENT ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION**

As with the other questions, the proportions of students who report alcohol consumption in the last month increases as they get older. Similar to other findings, rural students are more likely to consume alcohol than their urban counterparts across grades and gender with this gap becoming more pronounced in Grades 9 and 10. Half of rural students in Grades 9 and 10 report drinking alcohol in the past month.

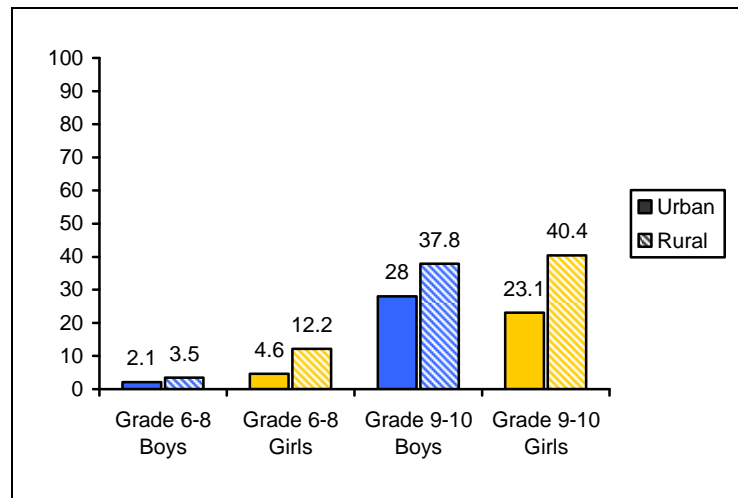
**FIGURE 6.9** Alcohol consumption in the past 30 days by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**RECENT DRUNKENNESS**

Figure 6.10 shows the proportion of students who have been drunk in the past 30 days. As in the previous figures, the proportion of students who report getting drunk increases considerably as they get older, with rural students being more likely to get drunk than their urban counterparts. The highest prevalence of drunkenness is among rural girls in Grades 9 and 10 (40.4%).

**FIGURE 6.10** Having been drunk in the past 30 days by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**AGE AT FIRST ALCOHOLIC DRINK**

Approximately one-third of Grades 9 and 10 students, report never having consumed an alcoholic drink with the percentages slightly higher for rural than urban students. Rural girls are the most likely to report having their first alcoholic drink at age 11 or less.

**TABLE 6.2** Grade 9 and 10 students and age at first alcoholic drink, by urban/rural status and gender (%)

	Male Urban	Male Rural	Female Urban	Female Rural
Never	32.2	37.5	32.4	33.3
11 or less	5.8	4.2	6.7	16.7
12	12.5	12.5	8.6	4.8
13	18.3	14.6	27.1	19.0
14	22.6	14.6	20.0	23.8
15	6.3	12.5	5.2	2.4
16 or older	2.4	4.2	0	0

**AGE AT FIRST CONSUMPTION OF FIVE OR MORE DRINKS (FOUR OR MORE FOR FEMALES) ON ONE OCCASION**

Approximately half of the students have never drunk heavily, with the highest percentage being urban girls (53.8%) and the lowest percentage being rural girls (47.5%). Rural girls report being drunk heavily at a younger age more than the other three groups of students (5.0% at age 11 or less and 7.5% at age 12).

**TABLE 6.3 Grade 9 and 10 students and age at first consumption of five or more drinks (four or more for females) on one occasion, by urban/rural status and gender (%)**

	Male Urban	Male Rural	Female Urban	Female Rural
Never	49.5	52.2	53.8	47.5
11 or less	1.5	2.2	1.9	5.0
12	3.9	6.5	3.4	7.5
13	12.3	10.9	11.5	12.5
14	20.6	13.0	20.7	20.0
15	10.3	6.5	8.7	7.5
16 or older	2.0	8.7	0	0

Two major trends emerge with respect to alcohol consumption. First, regardless of how consumption is measured, students in Grades 9 and 10 drink more alcohol than students in Grades 6 to 8. For example, while more than 33 percent of Grades 9 and 10 students, irrespective of gender or location, report having been really drunk at least twice, the highest proportion reported in Grades 6 to 8 is 13.3 percent (Grades 6 to 8 rural boys). Second, rural students report drinking more alcohol than urban students. In this respect, while about a half of Grades 9 and 10 rural students indicate they consumed alcohol in the past month, only about a third of Grades 9 and 10 urban students report doing so.

The increasing prevalence of alcohol use in the upper grades is consistent with what might be expected from a developmental perspective. As students get older, they try to emulate adult patterns of behaviour, including, in this case, consumption of alcohol. The reasons for the rural-urban split are less easy to specify. Perhaps the lack of alternative recreational activities contributes to this pattern of alcohol consumption.

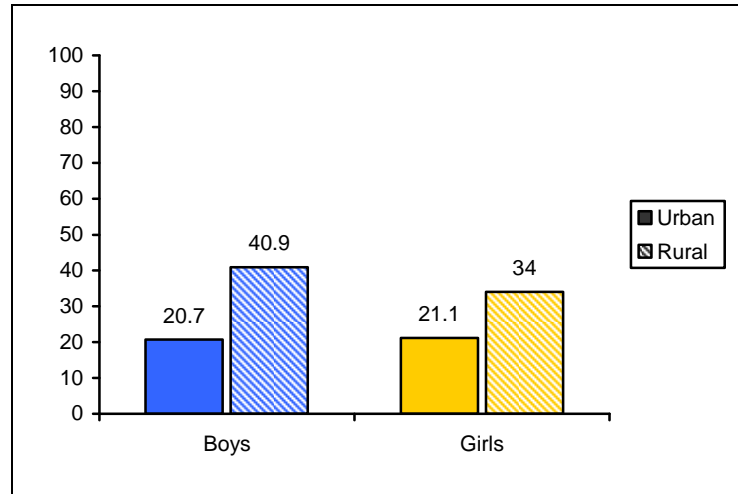
In addition to how many Yukon students drink alcohol, the statistics show types of alcohol consumed. Liquor consumption is the highest, followed by beer consumption. While neither liquor nor beer is heavily used by Grades 6 to 8 students, liquor use rises more quickly than beer use as students get older. Wine consumption remains low at all grades, for both genders, and for both locations.

**6.3 DRUGS**

**CANNABIS USE IN THE LAST 30 DAYS**

Figure 6.11 shows the proportion of students who report using cannabis in the last 30 days. A sizable proportion of students report cannabis use in the past 30 days. Significantly more rural than urban students report using cannabis in the past 30 days, with almost twice as many rural boys reporting cannabis use in the past 30 days compared to their urban counterparts. While there is virtually no difference in cannabis use between urban boys and girls, rural boys are more likely to have used cannabis in the past 30 days than rural girls.

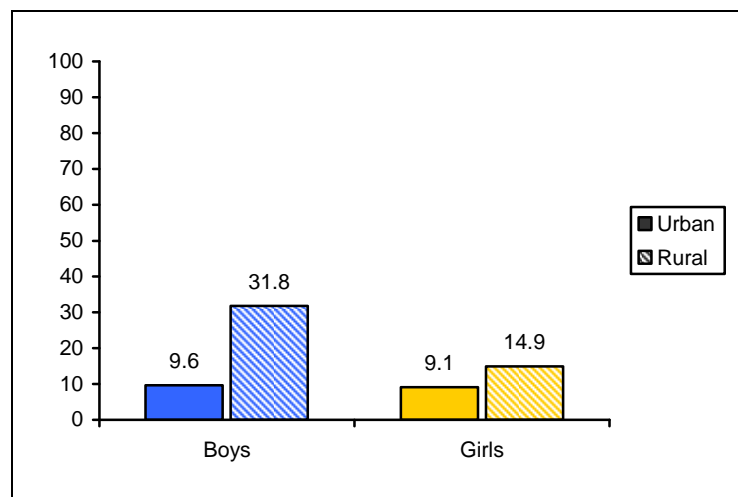
**FIGURE 6.11** Grades 9 and 10 students reporting cannabis use in the last 30 days, by urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**CANNABIS USE 6 OR MORE TIMES IN THE LAST 30 DAYS**

Figure 6.12 shows the proportion of students who report using cannabis six or more times in the last 30 days. The pattern of results is similar to that in the previous figure. The highest proportion of regular cannabis users is rural boys at 31.8%.

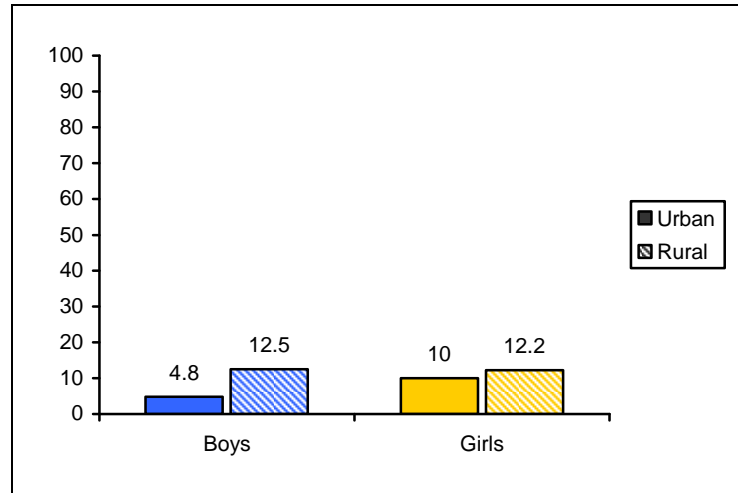
**FIGURE 6.12** Grades 9 and 10 students reporting cannabis use 6 or more times in the last 30 days, by urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**ECSTASY**

Figure 6.13 shows the proportion of students who report ever using ecstasy. Urban girls report using ecstasy more than urban boys, while ecstasy use is similar for rural boys and girls.

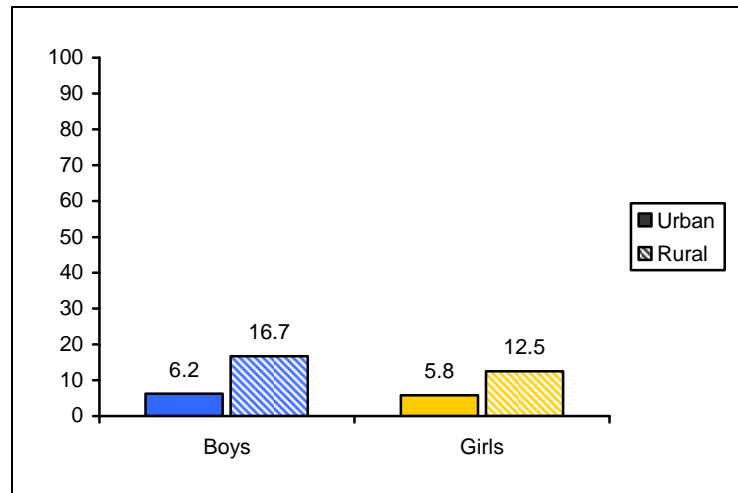
**FIGURE 6.13** Grades 9 and 10 students reporting ecstasy use ever, by urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**LSD**

Figure 6.14 shows the proportion of students who report using LSD and other hallucinogens. Significantly more rural than urban students report using these drugs.

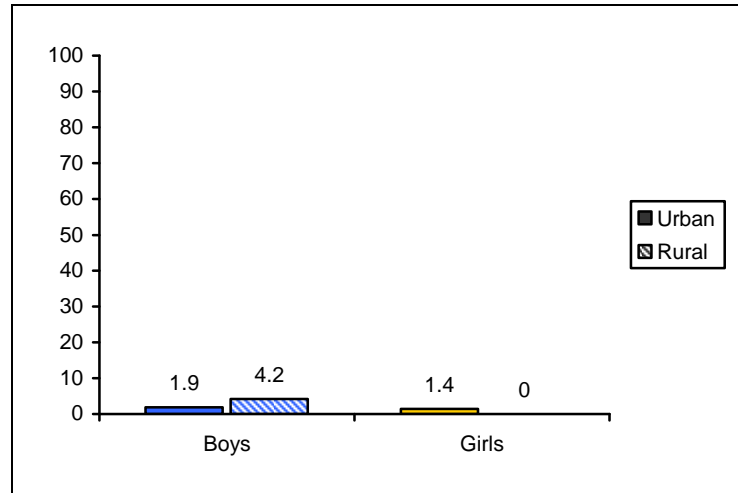
**FIGURE 6.14** Grades 9 and 10 students reporting LSD and other hallucinogens (PCP, magic mushrooms, mescaline, peyote) use ever, by urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**GLUE OR SOLVENTS**

Figure 6.15 shows the proportion of students who report using glue or solvents. Almost no students indicate the use of glue or solvents to get high.

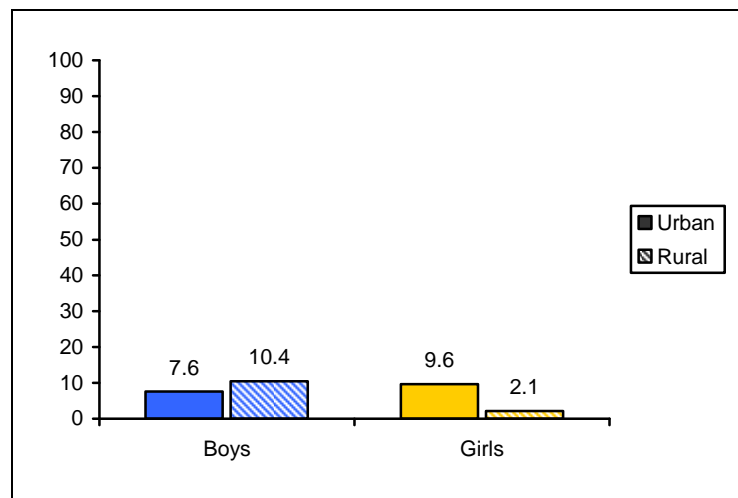
**FIGURE 6.15** Grades 9 and 10 students reporting glue or solvent use, by urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**PAIN RELIEVERS**

Figure 6.16 shows the proportion of students who report using pain relievers to get high. Urban girls are more than twice as likely to use pain relievers to get high compared to their rural counterparts. Rural boys are the most likely to use pain relievers to get high (10.4%).

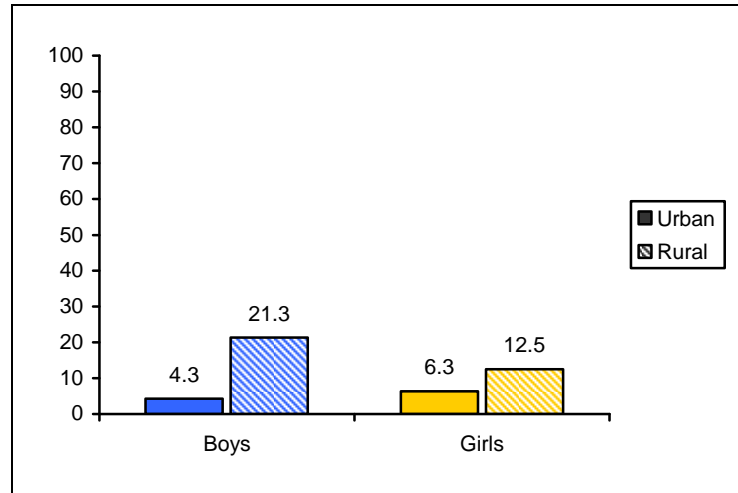
**FIGURE 6.16** Grades 9 and 10 students reporting pain reliever (Percodan, Demerol, Oxycontin, Codeine) use to get high ever, by urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**SALVIA**

Figure 6.17 shows the proportion of students who report using Salvia. Significantly more rural than urban students report using these drugs. The highest reports of Salvia use is among rural boys, with 21.3% indicating use of Salvia.

**FIGURE 6.17** Grades 9 and 10 students reporting Salvia (Sally D, Divine Sage, Magic Mint) use, by urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**AGE FIRST USED CANNABIS**

Age of onset for using cannabis is similar across age groups, with observed variations a result of overall use. That is, while rural males are the most likely to start cannabis use early (11 or less), they are also the most likely to have ever used cannabis. Rural males are also the most likely to have first used cannabis at ages 14 and 15.

**TABLE 6.4** Grades 9 and 10 students and first used cannabis, by urban/rural status and gender (%)

	Male Urban	Male Rural	Female Urban	Female Rural
Never	74.9	57.4	74.8	71.4
11 or less	3.0	8.5	1.4	4.8
12	2.5	8.5	7.1	7.1
13	5.4	6.4	4.3	7.1
14	10.8	12.8	9.0	7.1
15	2.5	6.4	3.3	2.4
16 or older	1.0	0	0	0

**AGE FIRST USED  
DRUGS OTHER THAN  
CANNABIS, ALCOHOL,  
AND CIGARETTES**

There are no clear trends in the age of onset of other drug use. For example, while females report greater initial use at most age levels, this result may simply be caused by girls being more likely to have used these drugs. A similar comment could be made about rural students.

**TABLE 6.5** Grades 9 and 10 students and first used drugs other than cannabis, alcohol, and cigarettes, by urban/rural status and gender (%)

	Male Urban	Male Rural	Female Urban	Female Rural
Never	89.3	81.3	82.9	78.0
11 or less	1.0	2.1	0	0
12	1.0	2.1	3.8	4.9
13	2.9	2.1	1.4	7.3
14	3.9	4.2	8.1	9.8
15	1.5	4.2	3.8	0
16 or older	0.5	4.2	0	0

It is helpful to divide the drugs in this survey into three categories: cannabis, other illegal substances (ecstasy and LCD/hallucinogens), and legal substances used to get high. Cannabis is the “drug of choice” in this respect. In each category, a greater percentage of students have used cannabis in the past 30 days (than report lifetime use of other drugs). Cannabis use is especially high among rural males, followed closely by rural females. Indeed, with just over 40 percent of rural males in Grades 9 and 10 indicating they have used cannabis in the last 30 days, it is approaching normative status.

Ecstasy and LSD/hallucinogens are each reported as every being used by about 10 percent of the population. Lifetime ecstasy use is more prominent among girls than boys, while lifetime LSD/hallucinogen use is more common among rural students than urban students. Use of legal substances to get high varies depending on locality. While there is virtually no reporting of glue and solvent use, using pain relievers to get high is more common. Using pain relievers to get high is more common among urban than rural students, in contrast to Salvia use, which is more pronounced in rural areas. The trends in use of legal substances are likely at least somewhat related to availability.

**6.4 ALCOHOL AND DRUG RISK PERCEPTION**

**RISK PERCEPTION**

Table 6.6 shows the percentage of students who feel there is “slight” or “no risk” in the use of cigarettes, alcohol, and various drugs on an occasional or a regular basis. Overall, urban females are the least likely to see these substances as posing minimal risks. Across all categories, occasional use is seen as less risky than regular use. The largest contrast in this respect is in smoking cigarettes.

**TABLE 6.6** Students indicating risk behaviours pose “slight” or “no risk” to health, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)

	Grades	Male		Female	
		Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
smoking cigarettes once in a while	6 to 8	38.6	46.3	38.1	36.9
	9 and 10	43.5	46.7	42.0	36.6
smoking cigarettes on a regular basis	6 to 8	11.7	20.7	9.5	15.3
	9 and 10	8.5	13.6	6.7	14.6
smoking marijuana once in a while	6 to 8	26.3	39.8	17.7	29.8
	9 and 10	48.8	44.4	41.1	41.5
smoking marijuana on a regular basis	6 to 8	13.1	31.3	9.8	16.7
	9 and 10	23.5	28.6	18.4	26.8
drinking alcohol once in a while	6 to 8	63.2	58.5	64.3	46.4
	9 and 10	67.8	48.9	68.9	45.0
drinking alcohol on a regular basis	6 to 8	20.3	23.8	13.9	16.5
	9 and 10	22.3	8.9	10.7	14.6
Use Ecstasy once in a while	9 and 10	14.0	13.6	15.0	20.5
Use Ecstasy on a regular basis	9 and 10	7.6	6.8	4.3	9.8
Use hallucinogens, LSD or PCP once in a while	9 and 10	13.5	13.6	10.1	14.6
Use hallucinogens, LSD or PCP on a regular basis	9 and 10	8.5	6.8	3.4	12.2
Use glue or solvents once in a while	9 and 10	15.4	22.7	12.6	14.6
Use glue or solvents on a regular basis	9 and 10	10.0	15.9	4.9	12.5
Use pain relievers, tranquilizers or stimulants once in a while	9 and 10	15.0	18.2	14.6	14.6
Use pain relievers, tranquilizers or stimulants on a regular basis	9 and 10	8.0	9.1	5.3	12.2

There are two trends in student perceptions of risks associated with drug and alcohol use that raise concerns. First, there is a gap between students' perceptions on the occasional versus regular use of these substances. While it is true that using a substance occasionally is less harmful than regular use, a perception that occasional use is not really risky can be problematic. This perception could lead young people to try a harmful substance without recognizing the addictive nature of it. This view is most noticeable with smoking cigarettes. Therefore, it needs to be imparted to young people that rarely do smokers, for example, start with the intention to be heavy smokers.

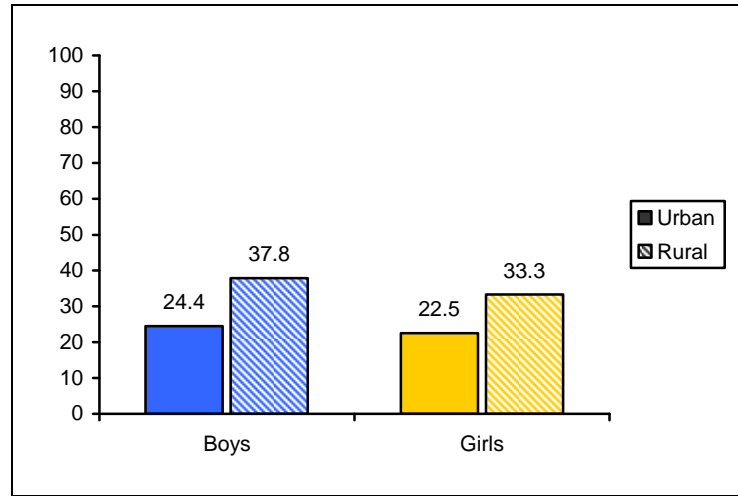
The second trend that bears further inspection is students' views of smoking marijuana. By Grades 9 and 10, approximately half of students do not think smoking cannabis occasionally is that harmful and about a quarter do not see regular use as risky. Indeed, regular use of cannabis is more positively viewed than regular use of alcohol. Perhaps, there has been insufficient attention paid to the effects of regular use of cannabis by policymakers, at least when compared to regular alcohol use.

**6.5 SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS**

**EVER HAD SEXUAL INTERCOURSE**

Figure 6.18 shows the proportion of students who ever report having had sexual intercourse. Significantly more rural students report having sexual intercourse compared to their urban counterparts. The proportions are relatively similar between girls and boys.

**FIGURE 6.18** Grades 9 and 10 students who report having had sexual intercourse, by gender and urban/rural status (%)



**AGE OF FIRST INTERCOURSE**

The age of first intercourse differs only marginally between urban boys and girls. However, among rural students who report having had sexual intercourse, boys tend to start at younger ages (4.3% at age 11 years or younger) as compared to girls (0%).

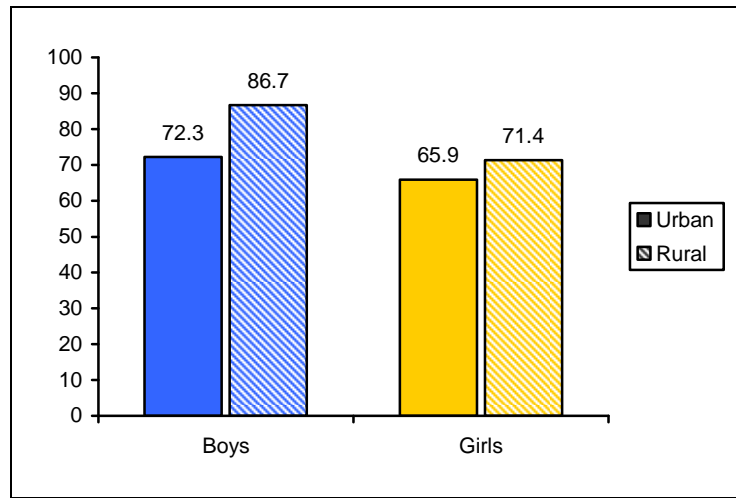
**TABLE 6.7** Age at which students in Grades 9 and 10 first had sexual intercourse (%)

	Boys Urban	Boys Rural	Girls Urban	Girls Rural
Never	76.8	67.4	78.8	68.9
11 years or younger	3.7	4.3	1.0	0
12	1.1	4.3	1.0	2.2
13	4.2	4.3	5.3	6.7
14	7.4	13.0	8.2	15.6
15	6.3	6.5	5.8	6.7
16	0.5	0	0	0

**CONDOM USE**

Figure 6.19 shows the proportion of students who report having used a condom the last time they had sexual intercourse. Rural boys were the most likely to report condom use the last time they had sexual intercourse, with 86.7% reporting doing so. Fewer urban than rural girls report using a condom the last time they had sex.

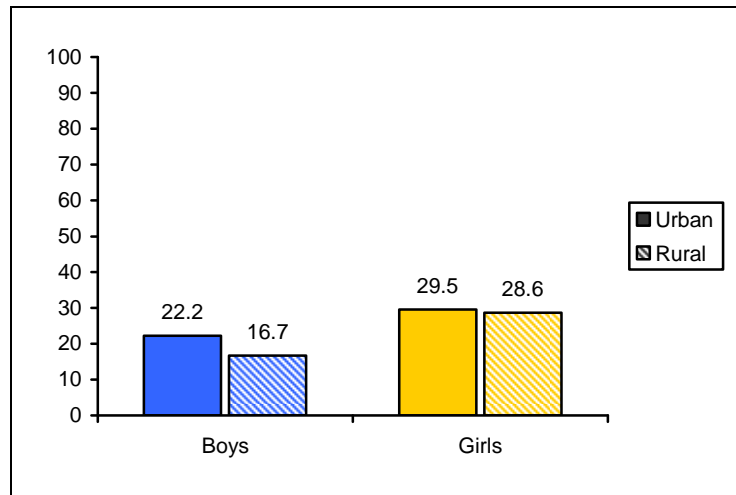
**FIGURE 6.19** Grades 9 and 10 students who report having used a condom the last time they had sexual intercourse, by gender and urban/rural status (%)



**LACK OF BIRTH CONTROL**

Figure 6.20 shows the proportion of students who report using no method of birth control the last time they had sexual intercourse. More urban than rural students report not using a method of birth control. Only 16.7% of rural boys report not using a method of birth control the last time they had sexual intercourse.

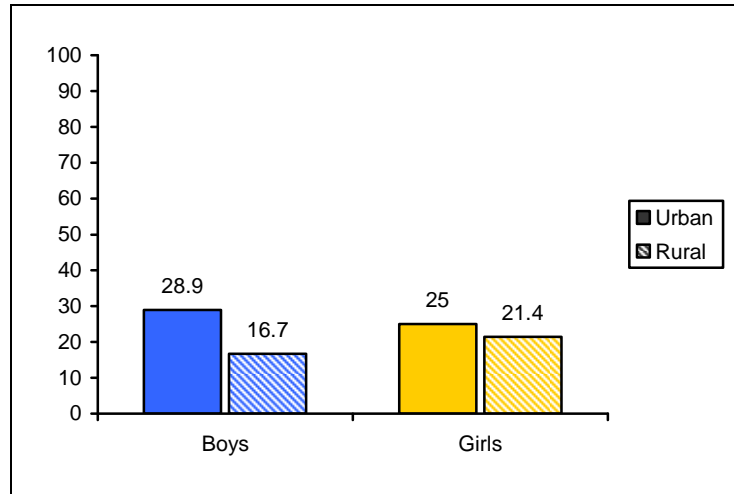
**FIGURE 6.20** Grades 9 and 10 students who report using no method of birth control the last time they had sexual intercourse, by gender and urban/rural status (%)



**METHOD OF BIRTH CONTROL: BIRTH CONTROL PILLS**

Figure 6.21 shows the proportion of students who report having used birth control pills as a method of birth control the last time they had sexual intercourse. More urban students report using birth control pills compared to their rural counterparts. Approximately one-fifth of rural students and one-fourth of urban students report using birth control pills as a method of birth control. Once again, there are limited gender differences.

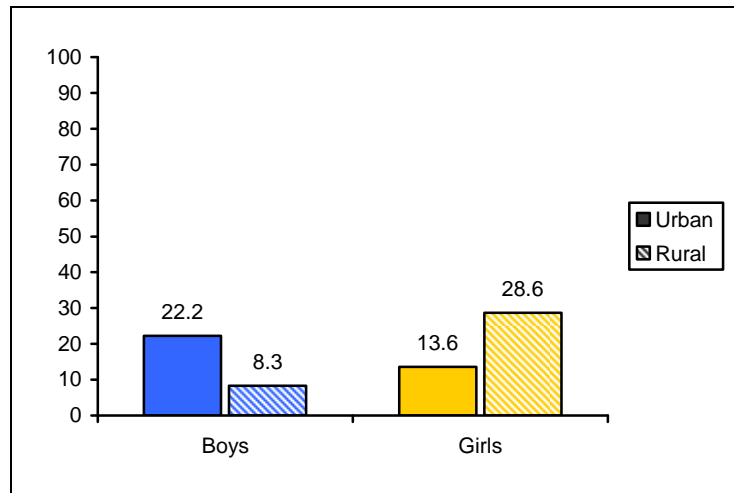
**FIGURE 6.21** Grades 9 and 10 students who report having used birth control pills as a method of birth control the last time they had sexual intercourse, by gender and urban/rural status (%)



**METHOD OF BIRTH CONTROL: WITHDRAWAL**

Figure 6.22 shows the proportion of students who report using withdrawal as a method of birth control the last time they had sexual intercourse. Significantly more rural girls report using withdrawal compared to their urban counterparts, with 28.6% reporting doing so. In contrast, more urban (22.2%) than rural boys (8.3%) report withdrawal as a means of contraception.

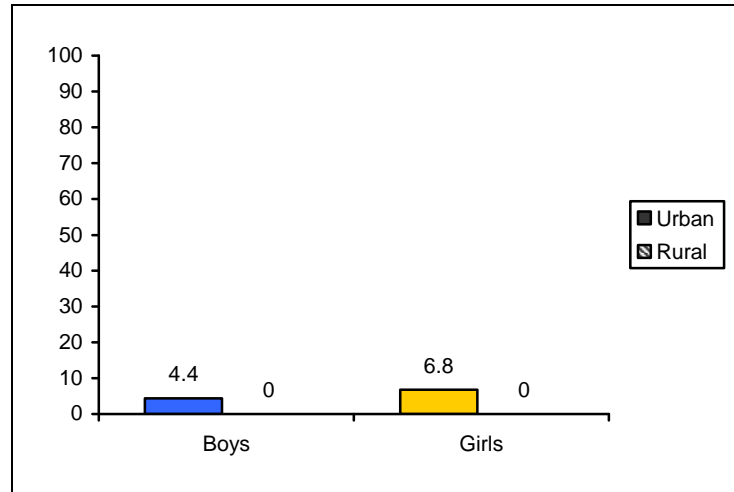
**FIGURE 6.22** Grades 9 and 10 students who report having used withdrawal as a method of birth control the last time they had sexual intercourse, by gender and urban/rural status (%)



**METHOD OF BIRTH CONTROL: OTHER**

Figure 6.23 shows the proportion of students who report use an alternative form of birth control the last time they had sexual intercourse. Very few urban students reported using a form of birth control other than condoms, withdrawal, or birth control pills, while no rural students reported doing so.

**FIGURE 6.23** Grades 9 and 10 students who report having used a form of birth control other than condoms, withdrawal, or birth control pills the last time they had sexual intercourse, by gender and urban/rural status (%)



There are two separate constructs examined in this section: the occurrence of sexual intercourse and the use of condoms and other birth control methods. By Grades 9 and 10, about a quarter of the students report having had sexual intercourse. While the numbers are higher for rural students, there is virtually no difference between males and females in this respect. In terms of condom use and birth control, rural boys appear to be the most conscientious, with almost ninety percent indicating a condom had been used the last time they had had sexual intercourse, in contrast to approximately three-quarters of the other groups. Rural boys were also the group the least likely to not use any method of birth control or to rely on birth control pills to prevent pregnancy. Given that condoms have the added benefit of reducing sexually transmitted infections, the high rate of condom use among rural boys is especially encouraging and suggests that sexual education programs in rural areas are consistently reaching these boys.

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## **7 HEALTHY LIVING**

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Physical activity may be defined both in terms of organized sports and pursuits, as well as unstructured activities related to active living. A systematic review of a large body of research suggests that regular and sustained physical activity among children and youth is associated with the promotion of skeletal health and fitness (Chan et al., 2003), and a decrease in cardiovascular risk factors (Kemper et al., 2000). Regular physical activity can also benefit adolescents in other ways through improved self-concept and self-esteem and decreased anxiety and depression (Strong et al., 2005).

Active living has been described as an integrated lifestyle that brings about a general state of physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional well-being (Frankish, Milligan & Reid, 1998), whereby individuals interact with their environment through relatively unstructured physical activities, for example, playing outdoors, skating, skiing, skateboarding, and bicycling (Stewart, 1995). As such, the HBSC study focuses on activities undertaken during and out-of-school hours.

Physical activity among young people may be compromised as a result of increased time spent in passive leisure activities, such as watching television or playing video games. Physical inactivity in adolescence is linked with a number of emotional and behavioural problems (Kantomaa et al., 2008).

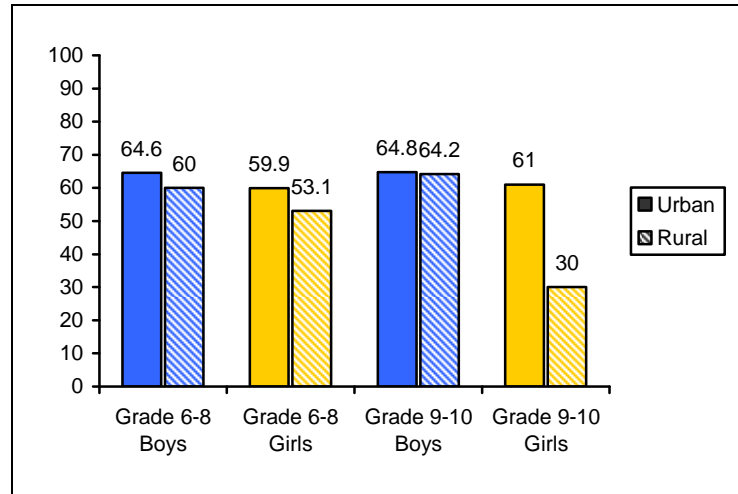
This chapter describes aspects of healthy living: patterns of physical activity among young people in Yukon, students' self-rated health, dental hygiene practices, and leisure activities (television watching and computer use).

**7.1 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN THE PAST SEVEN DAYS**

Figure 7.1 shows the proportion of students who were physically active five days or more over the past seven days for a total of at least 60 minutes per day. Across grade and gender, urban students are slightly more likely to be physically active than their rural counterparts. The urban-rural discrepancy is most evident for girls in Grades 9 and 10, where more than twice as many urban compared to rural girls report being physically active (61% vs. 30%).

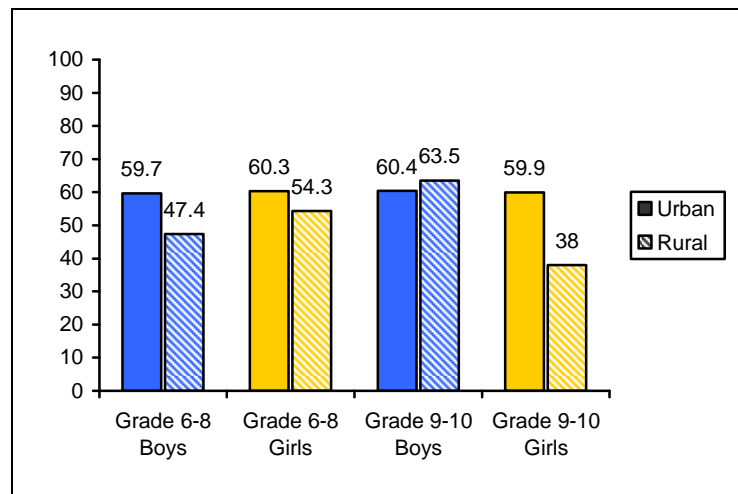
**FIGURE 7.1** Students physically active five days or more over the past seven days for a total of at least 60 minutes per day, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN A TYPICAL WEEK**

Figure 7.2 shows the proportion of students who are physically active five days or more over a typical week for a total of at least 60 minutes per day. Except for boys in Grades 9 and 10, numbers mirror those found in Figure 7.7. Grades 9 and 10 rural girls are once again least likely to be active, with only 38% reporting 60 minutes of physical activity for at least five days during a typical week.

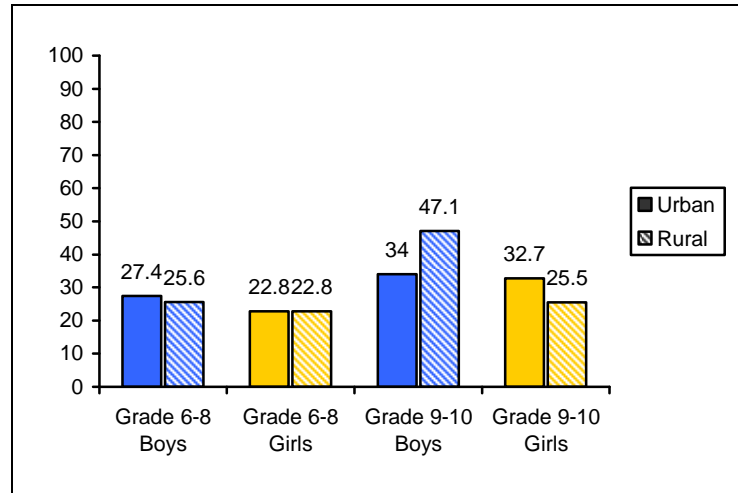
**FIGURE 7.2** Students physically active five days or more over a typical week for a total of at least 60 minutes per day, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DURING CLASS TIME AT SCHOOL**

Figure 7.3 shows the proportion of students who spend four or more hours per week doing physical activities in class time at school. More students in Grades 9 and 10 report being physically active than those in Grades 6 to 8. Rural boys in Grades 9 and 10 are most likely of all groups to do physical activity in class time at school.

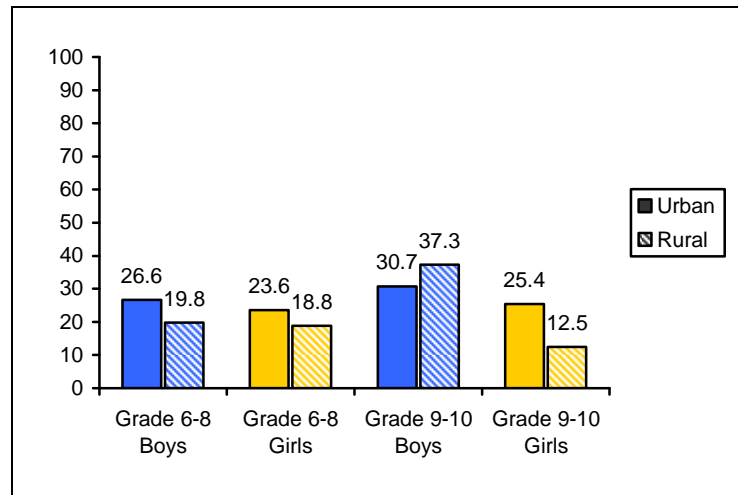
**FIGURE 7.3** Spending four or more hours per week doing physical activities in class time at school, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DURING FREE TIME AT SCHOOL**

Figure 7.4 shows the proportion of students who spend four or more hours per week doing physical activities during free time at school. Except for boys in Grades 9 and 10, more urban than rural students report being physically active during free time at school. Rural girls in the higher grades are least likely to be physically active during free time at school, similar to the findings in Figures 7.1 and 7.2.

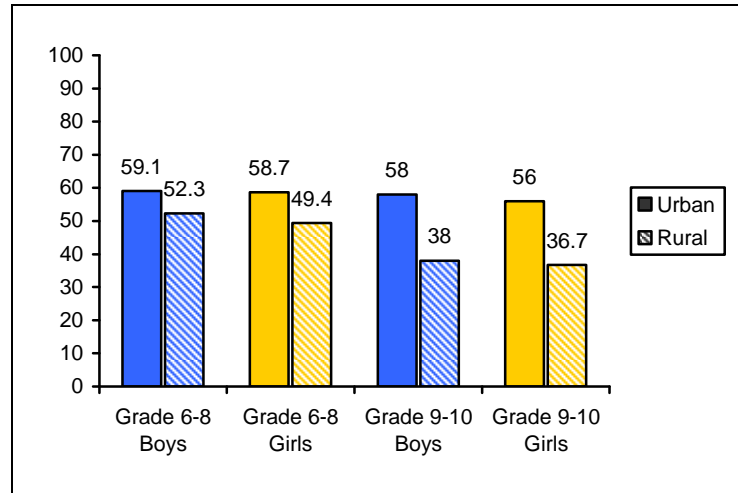
**FIGURE 7.4** Spending four or more hours per week doing physical activities in free time at school, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS: DAYS PER WEEK**

Figure 7.5 shows the proportion of students engaging in physical activity, such that one gets out of breath or sweats four or more times per week. Significantly more urban than rural students engage in physical activity that gets them sweating or out of breath. In particular, rural students in Grades 9 and 10 are far less likely to engage in rigorous physical activity outside school hours, with just over a third of students in these two groups doing so.

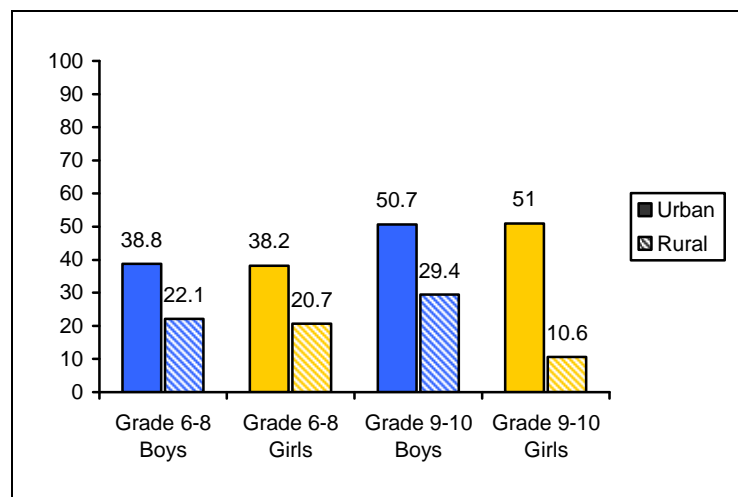
**FIGURE 7.5 Engaging in physical activity, such that one gets out of breath or sweats four or more times per week, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)**



**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS: HOURS PER WEEK**

Figure 7.6 shows the proportion of students who spend four or more hours per week doing physical activities outside of school. Across grades and gender, significantly more urban than rural students are physically active out of school. Rural girls in Grades 9 and 10 are least likely to engage in physical activity outside school, with only 10.6% of girls in this category being physically active out of school for four hours or more per week.

**FIGURE 7.6 Spending four or more hours per week doing physical activities outside of school, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)**

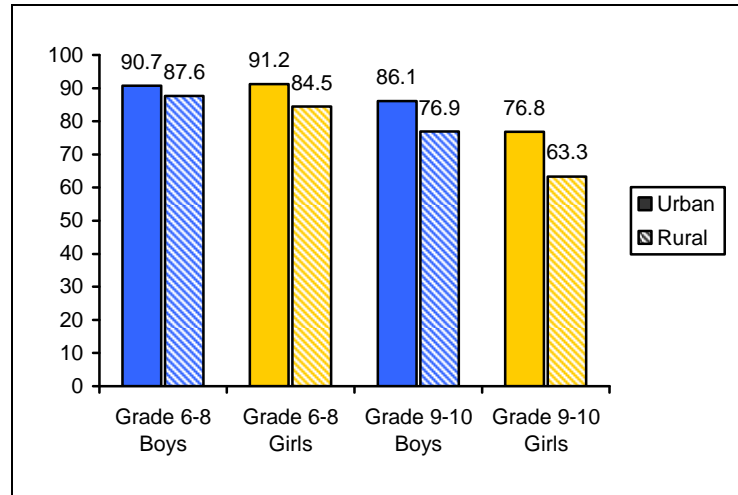


**7.2 SELF-RATED HEALTH**

**SELF-RATED HEALTH**

Figure 7.7 shows the proportion of students who rate their health as excellent or good. Relatively high numbers of students in Grades 6 to 8 report good or excellent health. There is, however, a decline in the proportion of students rating their health as excellent or good as they get older. The decline is particularly noticeable for rural girls (84.5% in Grades 6 to 8; 63.3% in Grades 9 and 10).

**FIGURE 7.7** Students who rate their health as excellent or good, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)

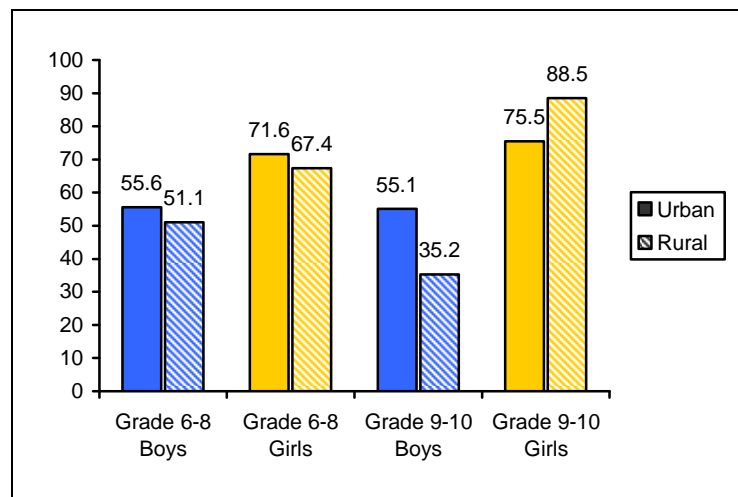


**7.3 DENTAL HYGIENE**

**DENTAL HYGIENE**

Figure 7.8 shows the proportion of students who brush their teeth more than once a day. Significantly more girls than boys practice good oral hygiene, especially among students in Grades 9 and 10. Rural girls in Grades 9 and 10 are the most likely to brush their teeth more than once a day, with 88.5% indicating they do so.

**FIGURE 7.8** Students who brush their teeth more than once a day, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)

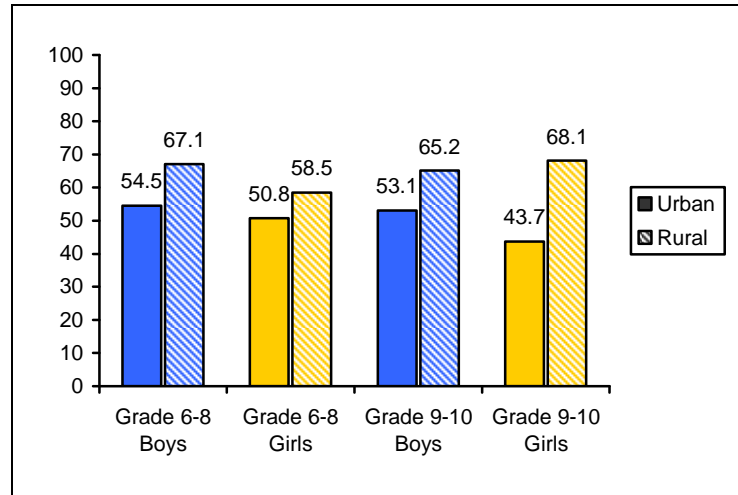


**7.4 LEISURE ACTIVITIES**

**HOURS WATCHING TELEVISION: WEEKDAY**

Figure 7.9 shows the proportion of students who spend two hours or more watching television on a weekday. Significantly more rural than urban students report watching television two hours or more on a weekday across the grades. There are only minimal gender and grade differences.

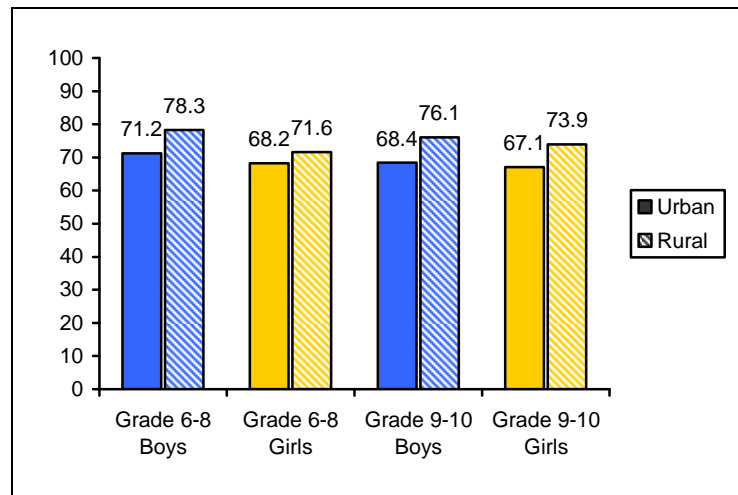
**FIGURE 7.9** Students who spend two hours or more watching television on a weekday, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**HOURS WATCHING TELEVISION: WEEKEND**

Figure 7.10 shows the proportion of students who spend two hours or more per day watching television on a weekend. As with weekday television viewing, significantly more rural than urban students report watching television on a weekend day, across grades and gender. Once again, gender and grade differences are slight.

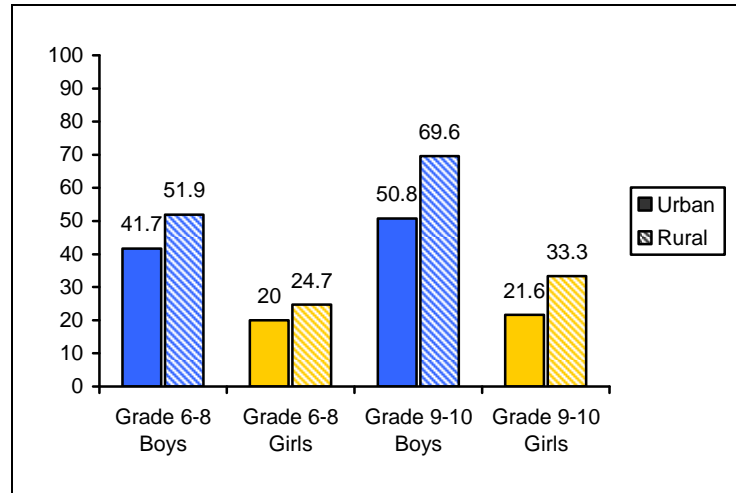
**FIGURE 7.10** Students who spend two hours or more watching television per day on a weekend, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**HOURS PLAYING ON A COMPUTER OR GAMES CONSOLE: WEEKDAY**

Figure 7.11 shows the proportion of students who spend two hours or more playing on a computer or a games console on a weekday. Significantly more boys than girls report spending two hours or more playing on a computer or a games console on a weekday across the grades. Rural students are also more likely to play on a computer or a games console, especially those in Grades 9 and 10, with 69.6% of rural boys reporting doing so.

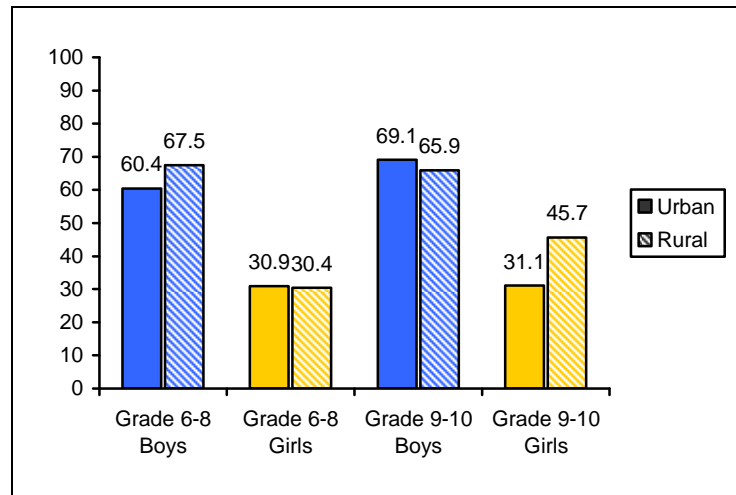
**FIGURE 7.11** Students who spend two hours or more playing on a computer or a games console on a weekday, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**HOURS PLAYING ON A COMPUTER OR GAMES CONSOLE: WEEKEND**

Figure 7.12 shows the proportion of students who spend two hours or more playing on a computer or a games console on a weekend. Similar to Figure 7.11, significantly more boys than girls report spending two hours or more playing on a computer or a games console on a weekend across the grades, especially boys in Grades 9 and 10. Unlike Figure 7.11, urban/rural differences are not pronounced, except for Grades 9 and 10 girls.

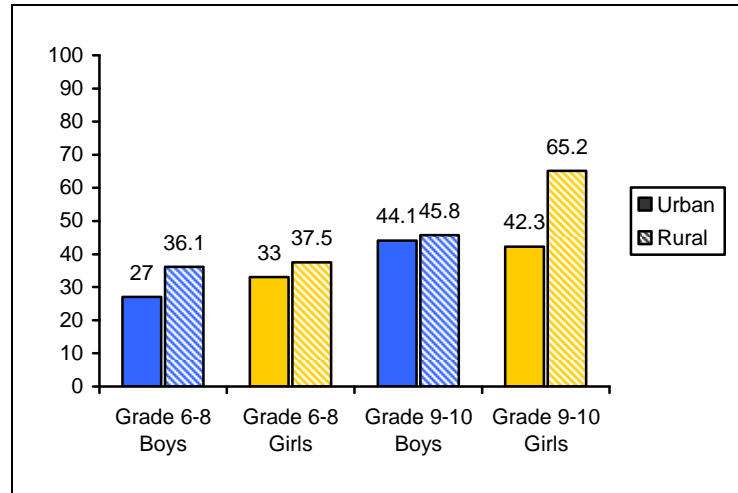
**FIGURE 7.12** Students who spend two hours or more playing on a computer or games console per day on a weekend, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**HOURS USING A COMPUTER FOR CHATTING ON-LINE: WEEKDAY**

Figure 7.13 shows the proportion of students who spend two hours or more using a computer for chatting on-line on a weekday. There is an increase in the proportion of students chatting on-line as they get older. Rural students are more likely to chat on-line. In particular, almost two-thirds of rural girls in Grades 9 and 10 report chatting on-line two hours or more on a weekday.

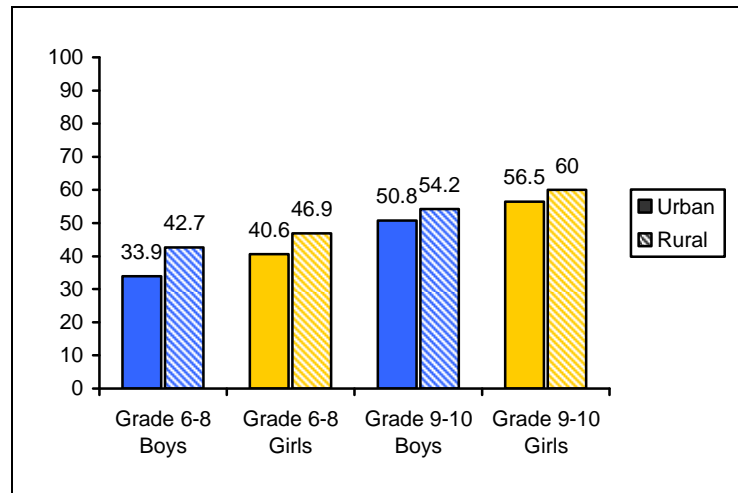
**FIGURE 7.13** Students who spend two hours or more using a computer for chatting on-line on a weekday, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**HOURS USING A COMPUTER FOR CHATTING ON-LINE: WEEKEND**

Figure 7.14 shows the proportion of students who spend two hours or more using a computer for chatting on-line on a weekend. Girls tend to chat on-line more than boys. There is an increase in the proportion of students chatting on-line as they get older, with over half of Grades 9 and 10 students chatting on-line two hours or more per day on a weekend. Rural students are more likely to chat on-line on weekends.

**FIGURE 7.14** Students who spend two hours or more using a computer for chatting on-line per day on a weekend, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



This section measured various indicators of healthy living: physical activity, self-rated health, dental hygiene, and television viewing/computer use. In terms of physical activity, the most significant finding is the minimal amount of physical activity reported by rural girls in Grades 9 and 10, compared to other groups. On five of the six physical activity measures, Grades 9 and 10 rural girls were the lowest and generally markedly so. The one exception to this pattern was in class time physical activity where students in Grades 9 and 10 had higher levels than their younger counterparts. Certainly, Grades 9 and 10 rural girls may be an appropriate group for physical activity interventions.

Self-rated health was affected by all three factors (gender, location, and age). Older students rated their health lower than younger students; girls rated their health lower than boys; and rural students rated their health lower than urban students. Not surprisingly, then, Grades 9 and 10 rural girls had the lowest self-rated health. They did, however, have the best dental hygiene, especially in comparison to Grades 9 and 10 rural boys, whose dental hygiene was the poorest. Indeed, girls' dental hygiene was consistently better than boys in the same age group and from the same location.

Television viewing was analyzed on weekdays and weekends. More rural than urban students watched television two hours or more a day with the discrepancy between locations more noticeable on weekdays. Computer use was assessed through playing computer games and chatting on-line. As students got older, they reported more frequent computer use on weekdays and weekends for both playing games and chatting. Computer activities matched gender stereotypes. Boys were more likely than girls to play computer games, while girls were more likely than boys to chat on-line.

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**8 EATING AND DIET**

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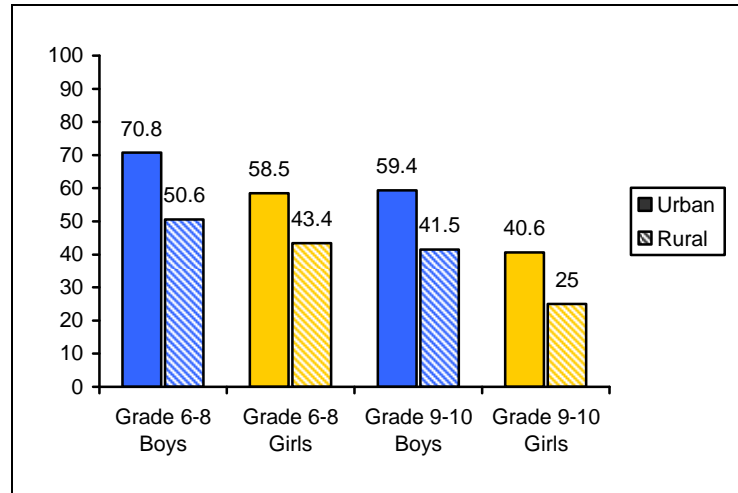
Eating habits acquired during childhood and adolescence continue into adulthood where the association between diet, disease morbidity, and mortality is well recognized (Vereecken, 2005). Healthy eating habits contribute to the physical and emotional health and well-being of youth. However, psychosocial changes during adolescence (associated with a need for increased independence), environmental factors (advertising, peer pressure, spending more time away from home), and consuming greater quantities of fast foods and snacks have a combined effect on adolescents' eating patterns and food choices. These factors may put adolescents at increased risk for unhealthy eating habits, resulting in poor nutritional health (Neumark-Sztainer et al., 1998; 2003). In addition, dieting behaviours may have a bearing on the health status of adolescents as there is widespread concern about excessive dieting among young girls in North American society, especially given that dieting occurs most frequently in young women of normal weight (French et al., 1995).

Exploring physical eating and dieting practices in the school setting is considered important for a variety of reasons. In addition to monitoring students' ongoing health practices, such research helps examine and evaluate national and local programs aimed at influencing students' diets and choices of foods.

**EATING BREAKFAST DURING THE SCHOOL WEEK**

Figure 8.1 shows the proportion of students who eat breakfast all five days of the school week. Significantly more urban than rural students report having breakfast regularly. There is a considerable decline in the proportion of students who report eating breakfast as they get older, particularly among girls. Only a quarter of rural girls in Grades 9 and 10 report having breakfast during the week on all five days.

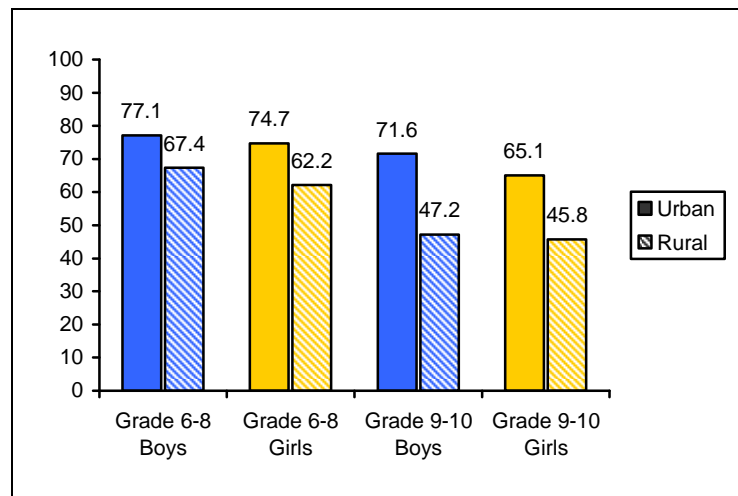
**FIGURE 8.1** Students that eat breakfast all five days of the school week, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**EATING BREAKFAST DURING THE WEEKEND**

Figure 8.2 shows the proportion of students who eat breakfast both days of the weekend. Similar to eating breakfast on weekdays, urban students are much more likely than their rural counterparts to report having breakfast on the weekend. There is again a downward trend in the proportion of students who report eating breakfast on the weekends as they get older, with the trend most noticeable among rural students.

**FIGURE 8.2** Students that eat breakfast both days of the weekend, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**FOOD FREQUENCY PATTERNS****Grades 6 to 8**

Girls are more likely to eat fruits, vegetables, dark green vegetables and orange vegetables and to drink fruit juice than boys.

Urban students are more likely to eat fruits and vegetables. They are also more likely to report eating whole grain breads and drinking fruit juice.

Rural students are more likely than urban students to eat sweets/candy/chocolate, and to drink soft drinks with sugar and energy drinks. They are also more likely to report eating game from hunting.

**Grades 9 and 10**

Girls are more likely to eat fruits and vegetables than boys, as are urban students compared to rural students.

Urban students are also more likely to report eating whole grain breads and drinking fruit juice.

Urban boys are most likely and rural boys least likely to eat sweets, candy, and chocolate.

Rural students are more likely than urban students to drink soft drinks with sugar and energy drinks.

Rural students are more likely to report eating game from hunting compared to urban students.

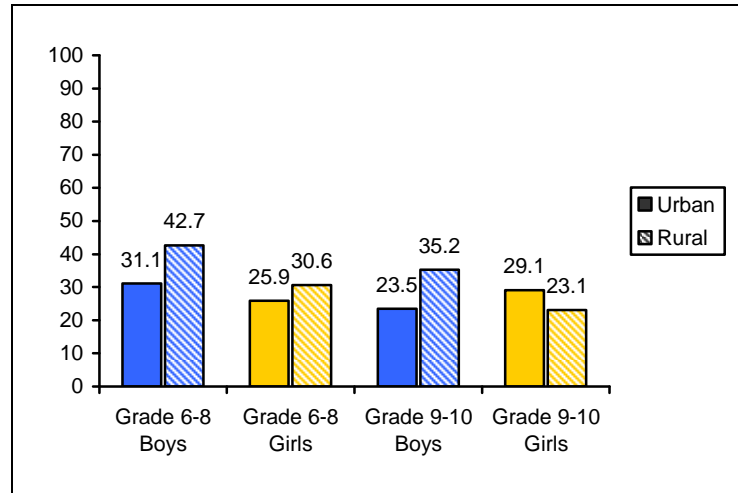
**TABLE 8.1 Students eating food items once per day or more often, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)**

Grades	Male		Female	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
<b>6 to 8</b>				
Fruit	43.2	39.3	52.0	42.9
Vegetables	41.2	26.8	51.6	42.0
Sweets/candy/chocolate	17.0	19.5	15.3	20.0
Soft drinks with sugar	10.4	14.0	4.3	16.9
Potato chips	4.4	5.8	2.8	4.8
French fries	1.8	2.4	2.5	1.3
Dark green vegetables	15.4	8.0	19.6	12.2
Orange vegetables	19.4	12.6	20.2	19.3
Fruit juice	30.3	26.4	39.8	30.9
Whole grain breads or cereals	41.7	37.1	49.5	37.0
Energy drinks	3.5	8.2	1.5	4.8
Game from hunting	14.4	24.4	10.1	25.3
<b>9 and 10</b>				
Fruit	44.4	21.6	57.3	34.0
Vegetables	49.1	23.1	57.9	38.0
Sweets/candy/chocolate	18.8	11.3	15.4	14.9
Soft drinks with sugar	12.6	19.6	9.0	14.6
Potato chips	2.8	3.8	2.8	4.1
French fries	1.9	3.8	1.9	2.0
Dark green vegetables	11.1	11.5	13.8	8.2
Orange vegetables	14.2	11.5	16.0	10.2
Fruit juice	37.8	13.5	40.0	25.0
Whole grain breads or cereals	44.5	25.5	45.3	22.0
Energy drinks	6.5	11.5	0.9	8.0
Game from hunting	14.2	26.4	8.6	12.0

**HUNGER**

Figure 8.3 shows the proportion of students who go to school or bed hungry at least sometimes because there is not enough food at home. Rural students are more likely to go to school or bed hungry because there is not enough food at home (except for Grades 9 and 10 girls). This is especially true of rural boys in Grades 6 to 8 where over two-fifths of students report going to school or bed hungry because there is not enough food at home.

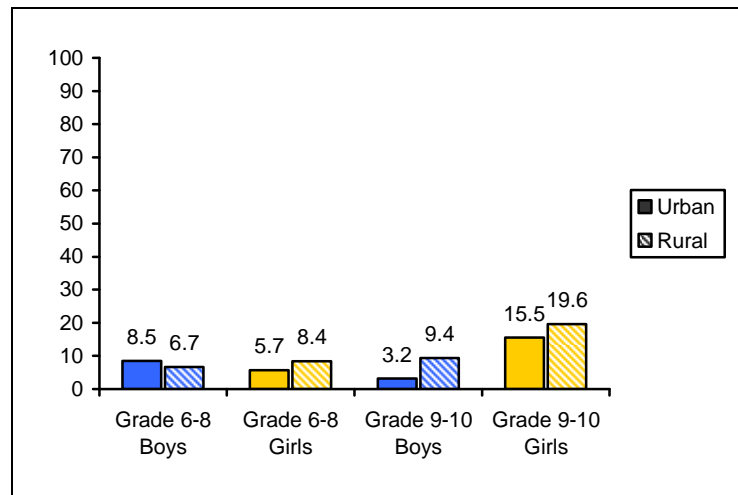
**FIGURE 8.3** Students who go to school or bed hungry at least sometimes because there is not enough food at home, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**CURRENTLY ON A DIET**

Figure 8.4 shows the proportion of students who are currently on a diet to lose weight. While the proportion for boys and girls is similar in Grades 6 to 8, substantially more girls than boys in Grades 9 and 10 report being on a diet, with the percentage doubling in the rural areas and more than quadrupling in the urban areas.

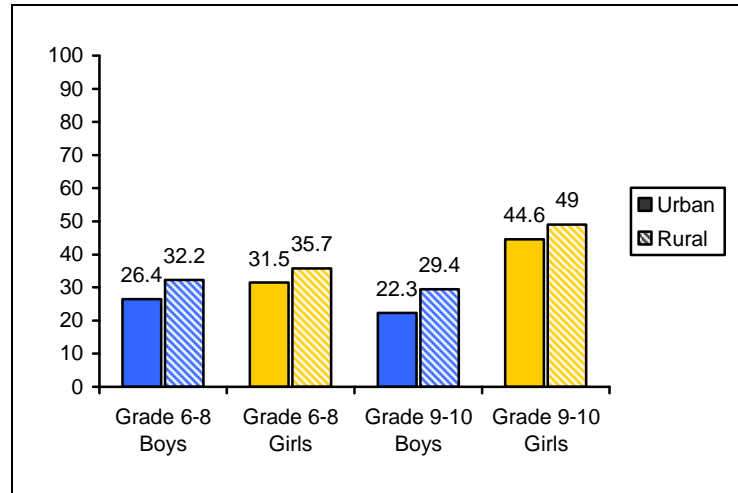
**FIGURE 8.4** Students who are currently on a diet to lose weight, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**DIET IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS**

Figure 8.5 shows the proportion of students who have dieted or changed eating habits to lose weight in the past 12 months. There is an upward trend across grades in the proportion of girls who report dieting or changing their food habits to lose weight but a slight downward trend for boys. Rural students are slightly more likely than their urban counterparts to report having dieted or changed their eating habits to lose weight, with close to half of rural girls in Grades 9 and 10 indicating they have done so.

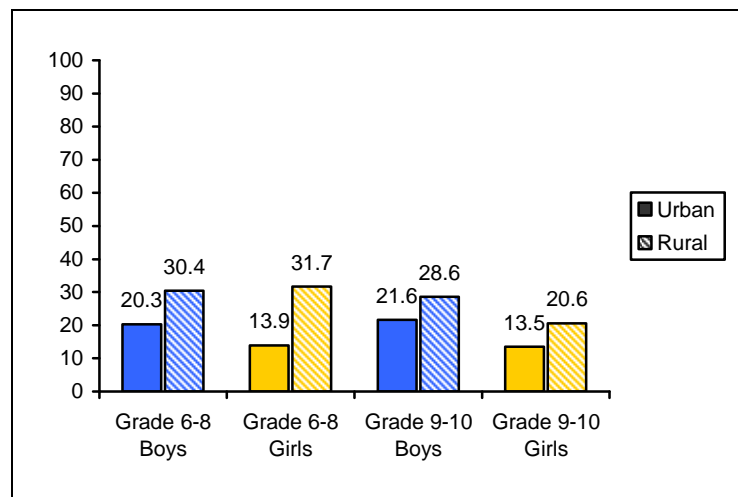
**FIGURE 8.5** Students who have dieted or changed eating habits to lose weight in the past 12 months, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**BMI CLASSIFICATION**

Overall, across grades, gender, and location, 13.7% of Yukon Grades 6 to 10 students are overweight and 5.6% are obese. However, these numbers hide differences across groups. Girls are less likely to be overweight or obese, with the gender difference most pronounced in urban areas. Rural students are more likely to be overweight or obese than urban students. Grades 6 to 8 rural girls are most likely to be obese or overweight (19.5% overweight; 12.2% obese); Grades 9 and 10 urban girls least likely (9.9% overweight; 3.5% obese).

**FIGURE 8.6** Students classified as overweight or obese on the Body mass Index (BMI), by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



A number of aspects of healthy eating were covered in this section – eating breakfast, food choices, going to bed hungry, and dieting to lose weight. Across grade and gender, rural students tend to eat less healthy than urban students. Rural students eat breakfast less during the week and on weekends than urban students. They consume less fruit, vegetables, dark green vegetables, orange vegetables, fruit juice, and whole grain breads. They also eat more potato chips and drink more soft drinks with sugar. However, they eat more game from hunting.

Healthy eating is not only related to preferences. It is strongly related to availability. Fresh produce is more readily available in urban centres than rural communities and costs less, whereas packaged foods (e.g., potato chips and soft drinks with sugar) travel better to rural areas and are relatively less costly than fresh food. Availability also is a likely explanation for the increased consumption of game from hunting in rural areas.

Girls' eating patterns are also different from boys. Girls are much more likely (especially by Grades 9 and 10) to be on a diet or to have been on one in the past year. Girls are more likely than boys to skip breakfast, perhaps in a belief that doing so help reduces their weight. Girls also tend to include more fruits, vegetables, and fruit juices in their diets. Eating such foods may also be seen as much as a weight control measure as a means to increase nutrition.

The number of students who report going to bed hungry because there is insufficient food is concerning. Rural boys seem especially affected in this regard with 42.7 percent of rural boys in Grades 6 to 8 and 35.2 percent of rural boys in Grades 9 and 10 stating they are hungry at night because they do not have enough to eat. They are not the only ones so affected in that more than 25 percent of Yukon students go to bed hungry because they do not have enough to eat.

## **9 VIOLENCE AND BULLYING**

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Bullying is considered a relationship problem involving a power differential between bullies and their victims, whereby the assertion of interpersonal power is established through various forms of aggression (Pepler & Craig, 2000).

Bullying consists of physical or verbal actions, occurring repeatedly, with the intention of causing distress to victims (Olweus, 1991; Pepler, Craig & Connolly, 1997). Repeated bullying consolidates the power relations between bullies and their victims, resulting in bullies gaining more power and victims increasingly becoming powerless to defend themselves. Physical fighting is another common manifestation of interpersonal violence in adolescence and often precedes substance use and other problem behaviours (Pickett & Craig, 2005).

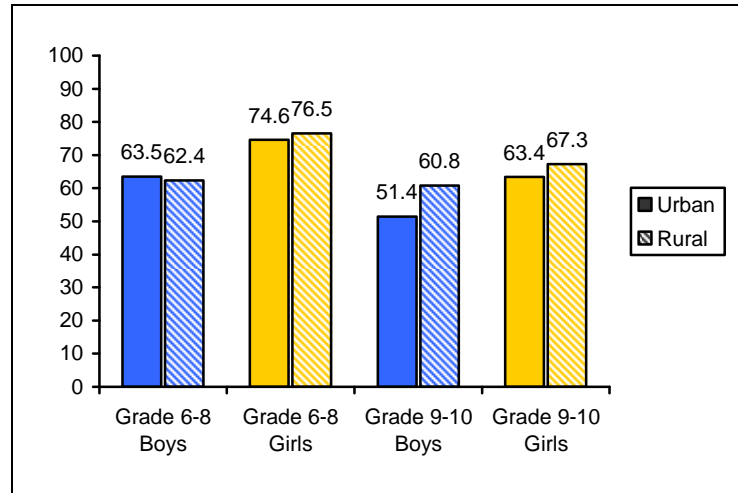
The use of power and aggression that commence in school and playground bullying are considered to be markers of future sexual harassment, dating aggression, workplace harassment, marital aggression, child abuse, and elder abuse (Pepler et al., 2001). Having examined bullying from a developmental perspective, Pepler and Craig (2000) argue that early onset bullying merits attention because it underlies many problems related to interpersonal violence in Canada; understanding bullying within peer relationships can be extended to other developmentally significant relationships reducing such problems later on. Moreover, bullies are more likely to engage in illegal activities, such as delinquency and substance use (Pepler et al., 2001). Furthermore, victims of bullying suffer emotional and psychological problems, ranging from depression and anxiety to, in extreme cases, suicide (Craig, 2004; Olweus, 1991). There is also a concern that victimized youth may become so frustrated and angry about the continuing abuse they experience that they start bullying others (Goldbaum et al., 2007).

The HBSC study assesses bullying and victimization by asking students about the frequency of being bullied and bullying others at school. In addition, there are questions about the types and modes of reported bullying experiences: (1) physical (e.g., hit, kicked, pushed, shoved around); (2) verbal (e.g., called mean names, made fun of, or teased in a hurtful way); (3) indirect (e.g., left out of things on purpose, excluded from a group of friends, or completely ignored; lies or false rumours spread about them); (4) sexual harassment (e.g., sexual jokes, comments, or gestures); (5) racial (e.g., mean names and comments about race or colour); (6) religious (e.g., mean names or comments regarding religion); and (7) electronic (e.g., teased using instant/text messaging, computer, or e-mail).

**HAVING BEEN BULLIED**

Figure 9.1 shows the proportion of students who have been bullied at school in the past couple of months. Between approximately half and three-quarters of students report being bullied. Across grades, girls exceed boys in their reports of being bullied with the difference especially striking in Grades 6 to 8. Bullying tends to decrease across grades. The lowest reports, still over 50%, are for Grades 9 and 10 urban boys.

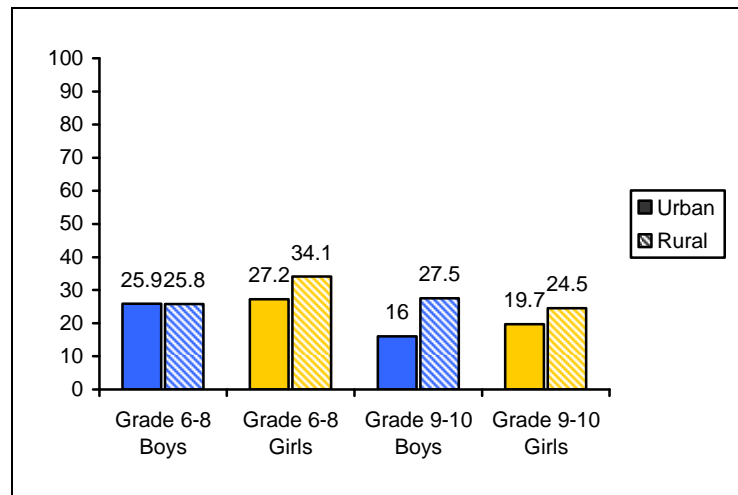
**FIGURE 9.1** Students who report having been bullied at school in the past couple of months, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**HAVING BEEN BULLIED ON A REGULAR BASIS**

Figure 9.2 shows the proportion of students who report being bullied at school once a week or more. Less than a third of students report being bullied at this frequency. Regular bullying is fairly similar across genders, but does tend to decrease across grades. Regular bullying is higher for rural students with the exception of Grades 6 to 8 boys.

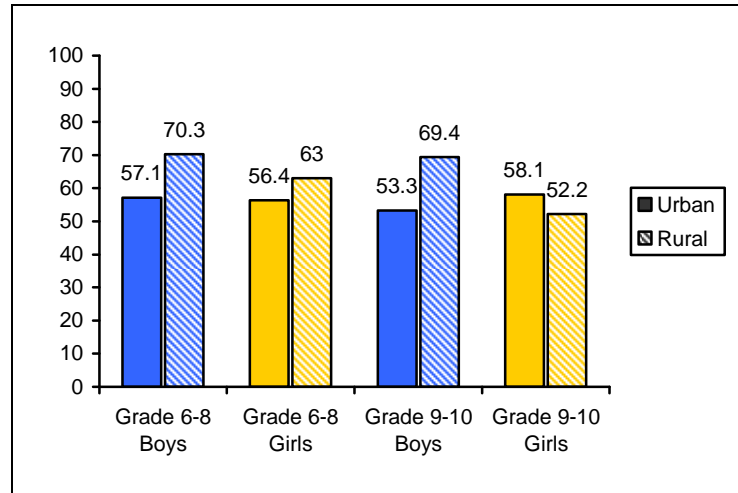
**FIGURE 9.2** Students who report being bullied at school once a week or more, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**BULLYING OTHERS**

Figure 9.3 shows the proportion of students who report bullying others at school in the past couple of months, with over half of students across the grades reporting that they bully others. Although being bullied in the past couple of months shows a marked decrease across grades, this trend is not apparent in bullying others.

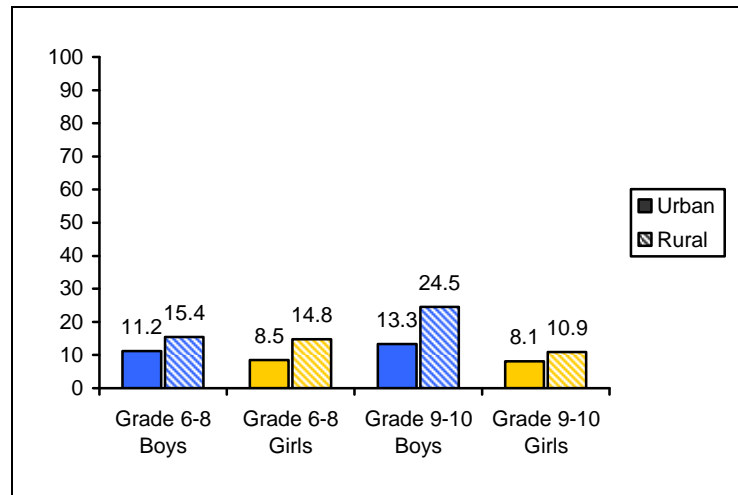
**FIGURE 9.3** Students who report having bullied others at school in the past couple of months, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**BULLYING OTHERS ON A REGULAR BASIS**

Figure 9.4 shows the proportion of students who report bullying others at school once a week or more. Regular bullying is considerably lower than the proportions reported in Figure 9.3. Bullying others regularly increases across grades for males, but not for females. Rural boys in Grades 9 and 10 are the most likely to report bullying others with 24.5% of them reporting bullying others at school once a week or more.

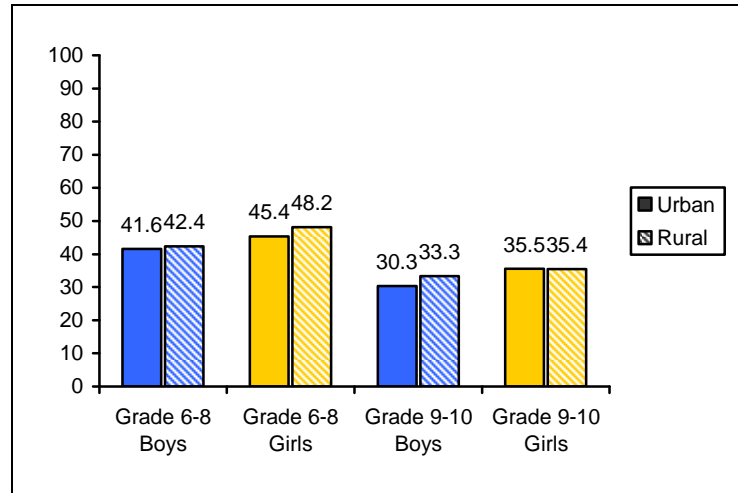
**FIGURE 9.4** Students who report bullying others at school once a week or more, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN BULLIED: MADE FUN OF, OR TEASED**

Figure 9.5 shows the proportion of students who have been called mean names, or been made fun of, or teased in a hurtful way. There is a marked decline in the proportion of students who report this type of bullying as they get older. The highest reports of such forms of bullying occur among girls in Grades 6 to 8, where 45.4% of urban girls and 48.2% of rural girls are bullied in this fashion.

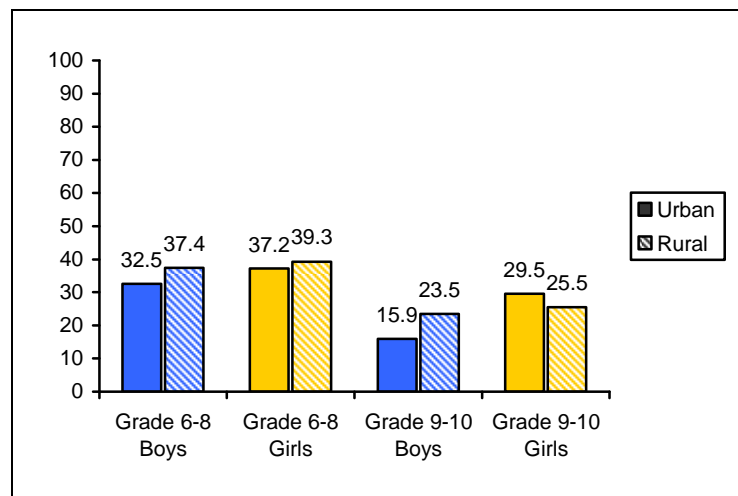
**FIGURE 9.5** Students who report having been called mean names, or being made fun of, or teased in a hurtful way, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN BULLIED: BEING LEFT OUT**

Figure 9.6 shows the proportion of students who report being left out of things on purpose, being excluded from a group of friends, or being completely ignored. Similar to Figure 9.5, there is a decline in such reports of bullying as students get older, especially for boys. Thus there are more pronounced gender differences in Grades 9 and 10 than in Grades 6 to 8, particularly for urban students.

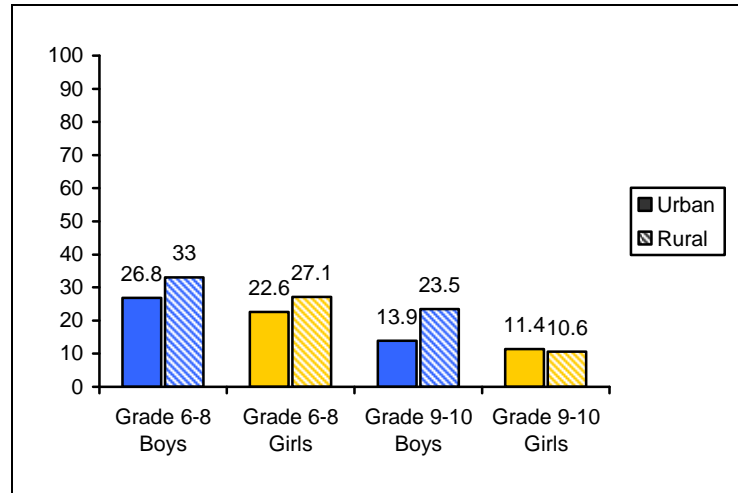
**FIGURE 9.6** Students who report being left out of things on purpose, being excluded from a group of friends, or being completely ignored, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN BULLIED: PHYSICAL**

Figure 9.7 shows the proportion of students who report being hit, kicked, shoved around, or locked indoors. Similar to other forms of bullying, incidence rates decrease across grades. Rural boys tend to report more physical bullying compared to other groups. Boys are more likely to be physically bullied than girls.

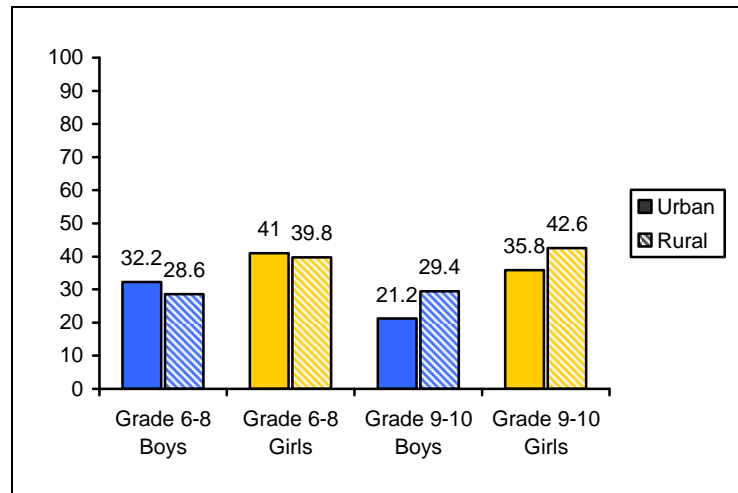
**FIGURE 9.7** Students who report being hit, kicked, shoved around, or locked indoors, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN BULLIED: LIES AND RUMOURS**

Bullying through lies and false rumours is depicted in Figure 9.8. This type of bullying is gender-specific in that girls are much more likely to be bullied in this manner than boys.

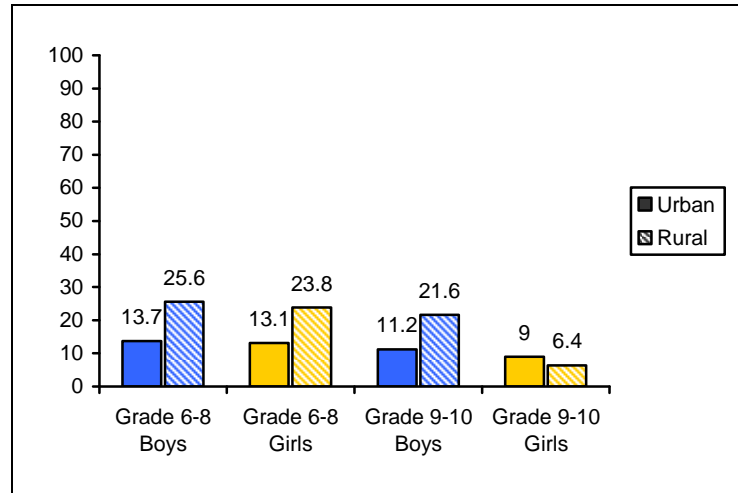
**FIGURE 9.8** Students who report others told lies or spread false rumours about them and tried to make others dislike them, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN BULLIED: RACISM**

Figure 9.9 shows the proportion of students who have been called mean names or have been commented on because of their race or colour. Except for Grades 9 and 10 girls, such reports are more prominent among rural students. There is a decrease in this type of being bullied across grades, most particularly for rural girls.

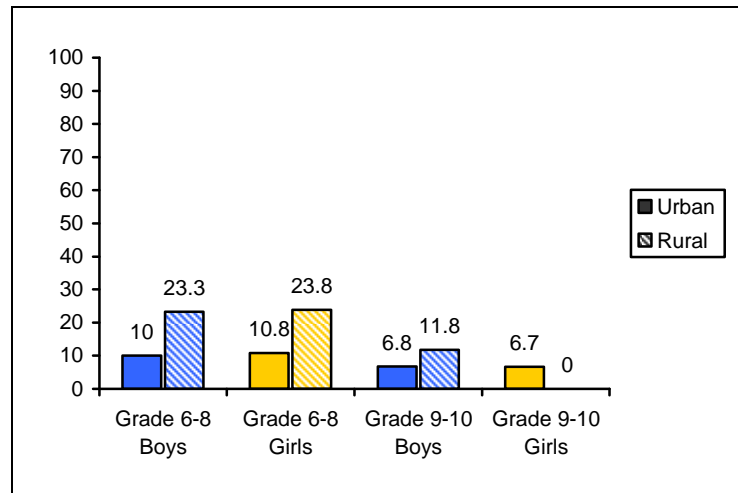
**FIGURE 9.9** Students who report being bullied with mean names and comments about their race or colour, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN BULLIED: REGARDING RELIGION**

Being bullied based on religion is shown in Figure 9.10. The proportion of students reporting such bullying is largely independent of gender. The only noticeable gender gap is among Grades 9 and 10 rural students where no girls report being bullied in this fashion, while 11.8% of boys do so. Reports of being bullied in this way decrease notably across grades.

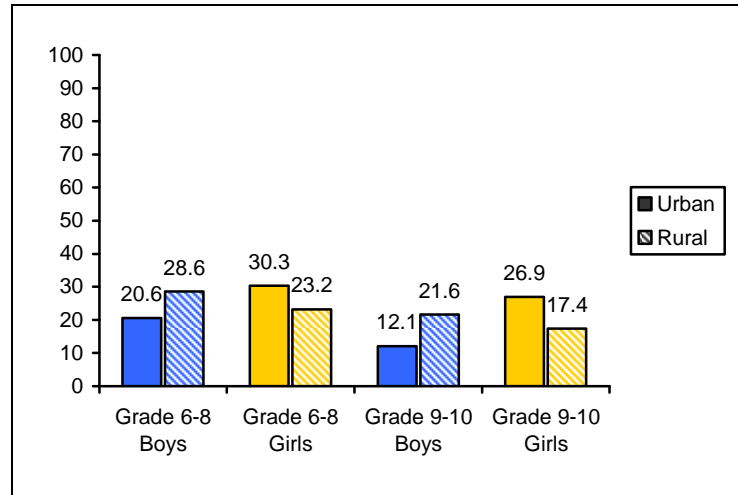
**FIGURE 9.10** Students who have been called mean names or commented on regarding their religion, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN BULLIED: SEXUAL JOKES, COMMENTS, OR GESTURES**

Figure 9.11 shows the proportion of students who have had sexual jokes, comments, or gestures made to them. This form of bullying appears to be more prevalent among rural boys than urban boys, while the reverse is true for girls. Once again, there is a decrease in being bullied across grades. Urban boys in Grades 9 and 10 are the least likely to report having sexual jokes, comments, or gestures made to them at 12.1%.

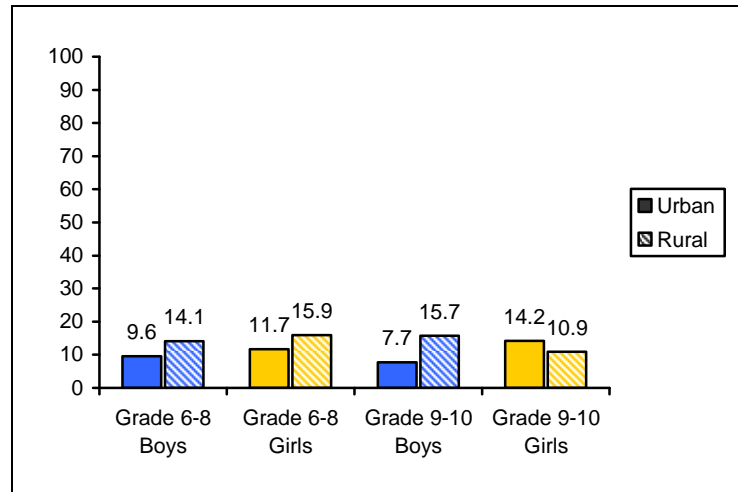
**FIGURE 9.11** Students who have had sexual jokes, comments, or gestures made to them, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN BULLIED: MESSAGING- AND INTERNET-BASED**

Figure 9.12 shows the proportion of students who have been sent mean instant messages, wall postings, emails, or text messages or have had a website made about them to make fun of them. With the exception of Grades 9 and 10 girls, significantly more rural than urban students report this form of bullying. These reports are highest for rural girls in Grades 6 to 8 at 15.9% and lowest for urban boys in Grades 9 and 10 at 7.7%.

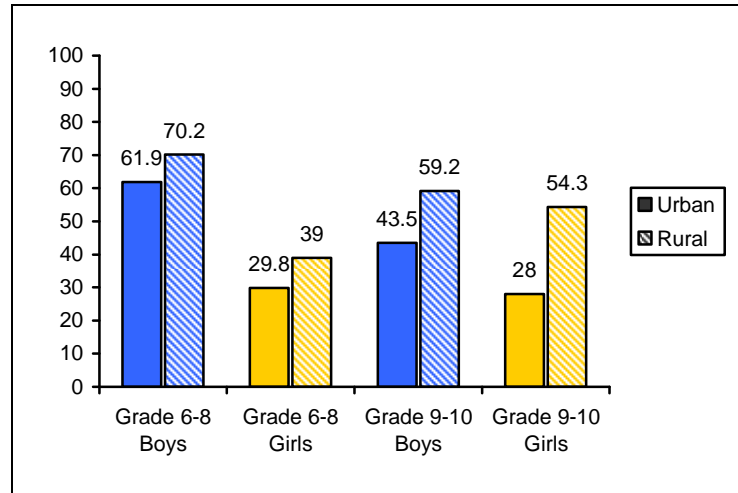
**FIGURE 9.12** Students who have been sent mean instant messages, wall postings, emails, or text messages or have had a website made about them to make fun of them, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**PHYSICAL FIGHTS**

Figure 9.13 shows the proportions of students who have been in a physical fight in the past 12 months. Significantly more boys than girls, and more rural than urban students, engage in physical fights across the grades. There is a declining trend in reported fights for boys as they get older, but a sharp increase for rural girls. The highest proportion of reported physical fights in the past 12 months is among rural boys in Grades 6 to 8, at 70.2%, while the lowest is among urban girls in Grades 9 and 10 at 28%.

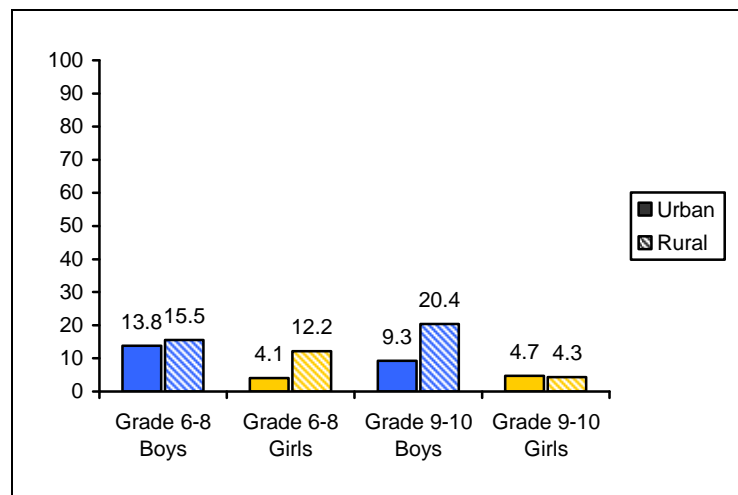
**FIGURE 9.13** Students who report having been in a physical fight in the past 12 months, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**PHYSICAL FIGHTS FOUR OR MORE TIMES**

Figure 9.14 shows the proportion of students who have been in four or more physical fights in the past 12 months. The proportions of regular/frequent reports of fighting are much less than what appears in Figure 9.13, yet the gender and rural-urban patterns remain similar. Rural boys in Grades 9 and 10, and rural girls in Grades 6 to 8 are more than twice as likely to engage in fights compared to their urban counterparts.

**FIGURE 9.14** Students who have been in four or more physical fights in the past 12 months, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



This section examined the various forms of bullying that are common among young people. These forms can either be overt, expressed physically and verbally, or more underground through lies and rumours or popular electronic means. More than half the students across grade, gender, and locality report being bullied in the past couple of months, with the problem especially prevalent for Grades 6 to 8 girls. Regular bullying (at least once a week or more) is less than half that number but is still high. Bullying behaviours tend to show a downward trend as students get older, especially for verbal forms of bullying, such as using mean names or being made fun of and teased, and for social ostracism (being left out of things and excluded). Electronic bullying, however, is only marginally affected by age. These figures suggest that students may start to outgrow most forms of bullying as they develop. The limited change in electronic bullying pinpoints this kind of bullying as a possible focus for more concentrated intervention efforts.

Type of bullying appears to be affected very much by gender and somewhat by locale. Girls are more likely to be bullied indirectly through having lies and false rumours told about them or being left out or excluded. Boys are more likely to be bullied through physical violence than girls (hitting, kicking, shoving, or being locked indoors). Boys are also far more likely than girls to engage in physical fights. With respect to the rural-urban split, rural students are more likely to have been bullied in terms of their race, colour, or religion than urban students. They are also more likely to engage in physical fights. Identifying the various forms of bullying across grades, gender, and locale is important for informing the development of tailored bullying intervention programmes. However, interventions need to incorporate individual, class, and whole school approaches in order to be effective because bullying is a group phenomenon involving the bully, victim(s), and bystander(s) (Ttofi, Farrington & Baldry, 2008). Thus information around the factors associated with bullying behaviours among young people in Yukon is likely to make such interventions more successful.

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## **10 INJURIES**

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The risk of injuries rises dramatically during adolescence and is considered to be the greatest single cause of death and serious morbidity to young people in most developed countries. Approximately one hospitalization in six experienced by young people can be attributed to an injury. Non-fatal injuries occur at least 1,000 times more often than fatal injuries and their impacts in terms of treatment, rehabilitation, and ongoing disability are of huge importance (Pickett, 2004; 2006). Therefore, studying factors that influence the health of adolescents must include the assessment of injuries and should encompass an examination of the factors that affect the risk for injuries (Pickett & Malcho, 2005)

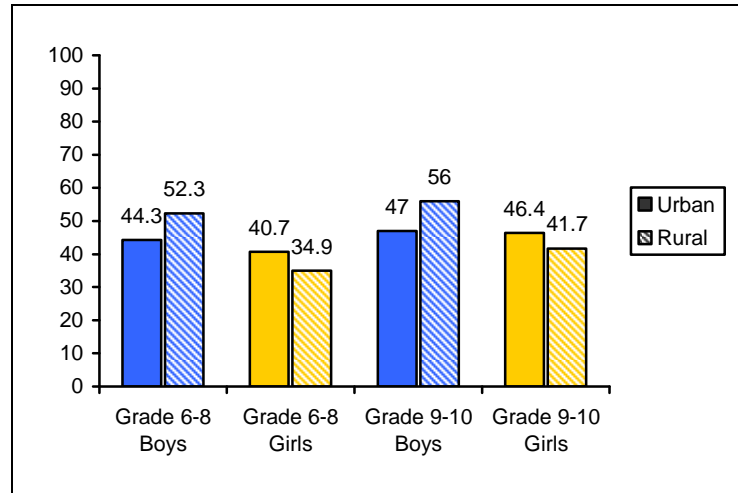
Injuries represent a common health problem among young people in Canada; however, injuries among young people should not be viewed as “accidents” because they are both predictable and preventable (Pickett, 2004). The data reported in this chapter show some of the circumstances that are associated with reported injury events. Such information can contribute to the development of effective injury prevention programs.

The assessment of injury, and its immediate causes and effects, is an important component of the HBSC survey. This chapter presents data on the percentage of students who experience at least one injury that required medical treatment in a year and the percentage of students who experience multiple injuries. The prevalence of more serious injuries that required significant medical treatment is also examined. Activities during which injuries occurred are identified, as well as the locations where these injuries occurred. Whether or not injuries resulted in time lost at school and/or other productive activities is also presented. Safety practices around helmet use with motorized vehicles and driving or riding in a car where the driver is under the influence of alcohol or drugs conclude this chapter.

**INJURIES IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS**

Figure 10.1 indicates the number of students in Yukon reporting an injury requiring medical treatment in the past 12 months. Injuries range from 34.9% among rural Grades 6 to 8 girls to 56% among rural Grades 9 and 10 boys. Injuries are more common among boys than girls. Injuries increase as students get older. For boys, injuries are more common in rural areas, while the reverse holds true for girls.

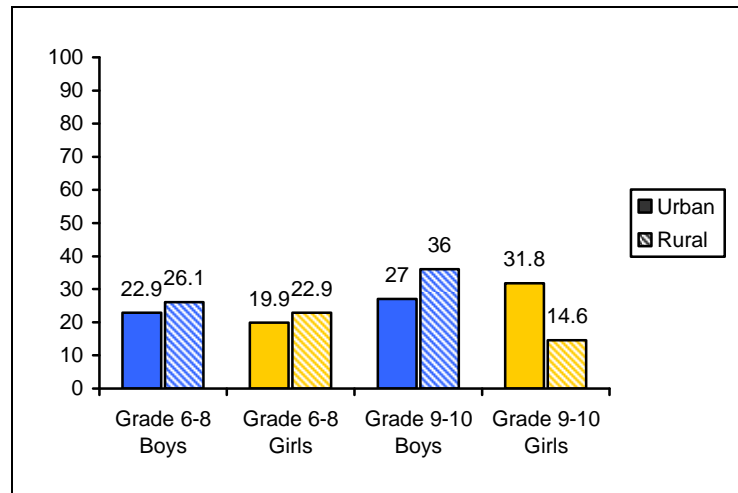
**FIGURE 10.1** Students reporting an injury during the past 12 months requiring treatment by a doctor or nurse, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**MULTIPLE INJURIES IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS**

Multiple injuries follow the same pattern as single injury with higher prevalence among boys and older students than girls and younger students, respectively. Grades 9 and 10 rural boys and Grades 9 and 10 urban girls are most prone to multiple injuries, whereas Grades 9 and 10 rural girls are least prone.

**FIGURE 10.2** Students reporting multiple injuries during the past 12 months requiring treatment by a doctor or nurse, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**LOCATION WHERE MOST SERIOUS INJURY OCCURRED**

For urban students, regardless of grade or gender, injuries are most likely to occur at a sports facility or field. In contrast, rural students generally are injured at home or in the yard, or at another location. Rural students are more likely to be injured at school during school hours than urban students. There are virtually no age- or gender-related trends.

**TABLE 10.1** Locations of the most serious injury in the past 12 months, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)

Grades	Male		Female	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
<b>6 to 8</b>				
I was not injured	57.0	50.0	60.1	66.7
At home or in the yard	8.5	16.7	8.8	6.2
At school during school hours	3.4	6.0	6.0	6.2
At school outside of school hours	0.6	0	2.2	6.2
At a sports facility or field	15.2	7.1	12.6	3.7
In the street or parking lot	3.7	7.1	1.9	6.2
Other location	11.6	13.1	8.5	3.7
<b>9 and 10</b>				
I was not injured	53.8	44.7	55.2	59.6
At home or in the yard	4.3	14.9	8.4	10.6
At school during school hours	4.8	8.5	4.4	8.5
At school outside of school hours	1.9	4.3	3.0	4.3
At a sports facility or field	20.5	4.3	16.3	6.4
In the street or parking lot	4.8	6.4	4.4	0
Other location	10.0	17.0	8.4	10.6

**ACTIVITY DURING WHICH MOST SERIOUS INJURY OCCURRED**

Sports account for many of the injuries reported by students, especially when playing or training for a sport. “Playing or training for a sport” injuries generally increase by age and are more common among urban students. Fighting and paid or unpaid work are responsible for 5% or less of injuries in any group. Injuries in other activities are fairly common, most particularly for rural students.

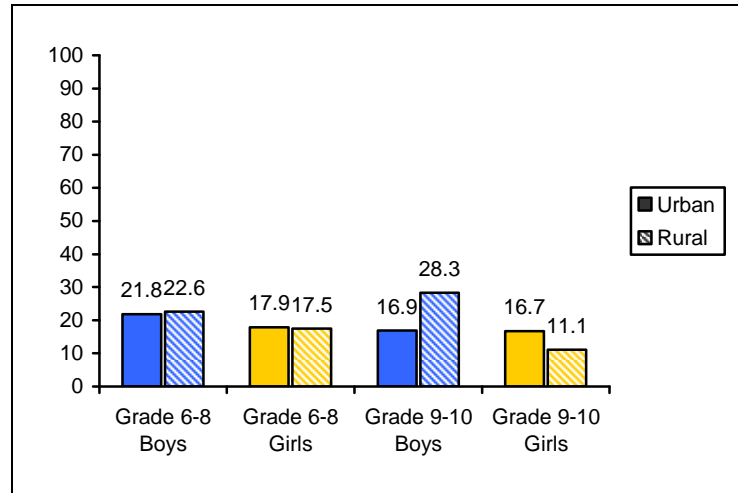
**TABLE 10.2 Activities during which the most serious injury occurred in the past 12 months, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)**

Grades	Male		Female	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
<b>6 to 8</b>				
I was not injured	58.1	50.6	61.0	67.5
Biking	7.8	14.8	1.6	3.8
Playing or training for a sport	8.7	9.9	12.9	2.5
Skating (Ice, roller, or inline)	5.0	3.7	1.3	0
Walking or running not for sports	2.8	2.5	3.9	1.3
Riding or driving in a car	1.6	0	0.3	1.3
Fighting	5.0	4.9	0.6	3.8
Paid or unpaid work	0.6	0	0.3	0
Other	10.6	13.6	18.1	20.0
<b>9 and 10</b>				
I was not injured	54.5	48.9	55.7	60.9
Biking	7.2	2.2	1.5	0
Playing or training for a sport	17.2	8.9	17.7	10.9
Skating (Ice, roller, or inline)	3.8	2.2	2.5	2.2
Walking or running not for sports	1.9	4.4	4.9	8.7
Riding or driving in a car	1.4	4.4	1.5	0
Fighting	4.3	4.4	3.9	0
Paid or unpaid work	0.5	4.4	1.0	0
Other	9.1	20.0	11.3	17.4

**INJURIES REQUIRING SIGNIFICANT MEDICAL TREATMENT**

Figure 10.3 shows the proportions of students requiring significant medical treatment for injuries. Grades 9 and 10 rural boys sustain more serious injuries than urban boys. Like the injuries reported in Table 10.1, injuries with significant medical treatment are higher for boys than girls. However, unlike Table 10.1, these injuries generally decrease with age (except for rural boys).

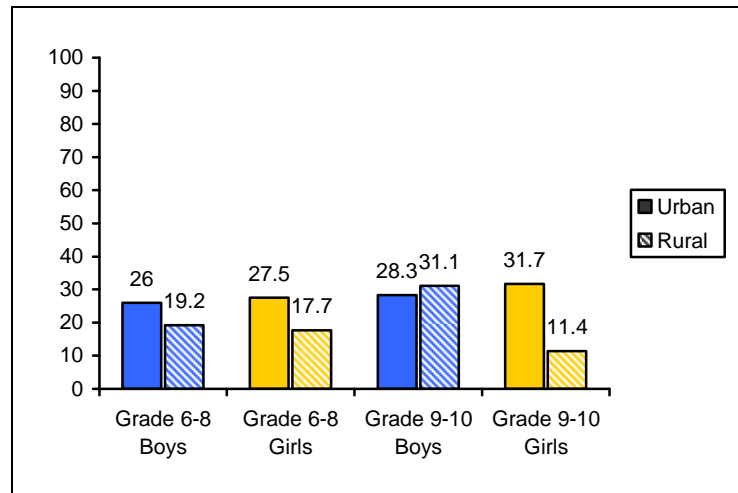
**FIGURE 10.3** Students reporting one or more serious injuries during the past 12 months requiring significant medical treatment, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**MISSING SCHOOL OR ACTIVITIES DUE TO AN INJURY**

Urban students, with the exception of Grades 9 and 10 boys, are more likely than rural students to miss school because of injuries, with 31.7% of Grades 9 and 10 urban girls reporting missing school because of an injury compared with 11.4% of Grades 9 and 10 rural girls. There are no noteworthy differences between boys and girls in the same location and grade missing school, except for Grades 9 and 10 rural students, where the boys are more than twice as likely to miss school from injury than are the girls.

**FIGURE 10.4** Missing one or more days from school or usual activities due to an injury, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**HELMET USE**

Rural students are much more likely than urban students to ride other vehicles. When they do ride such vehicles, they tend to be somewhat less likely to use helmets. Girls are less prone than boys to wear helmets, with rural girls being the least likely to wear helmets. While students tend to ride other vehicles more often as they get older, their likelihood of wearing a helmet varies little by age.

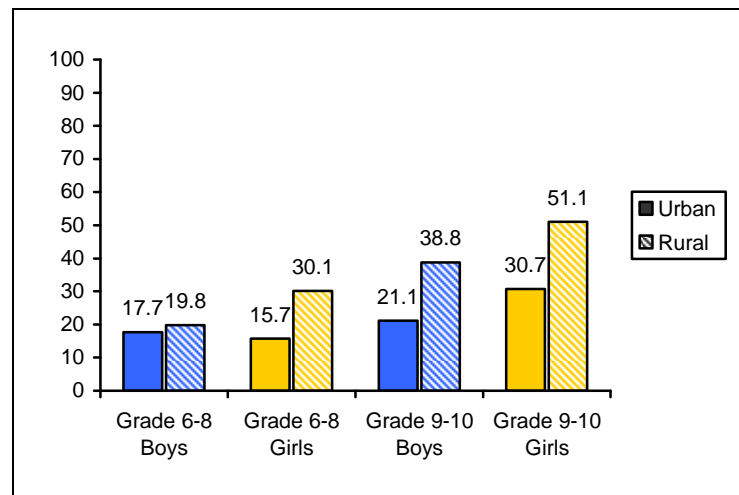
**TABLE 10.3** Reported helmet use while riding other vehicles (e.g. snowmobile, ATV, dirt bike) by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)

Grades	Male		Female	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
<b>6 to 8</b>				
I do not ride other vehicles	29.2	14.6	43.3	19.5
Never	7.9	13.4	8.8	15.9
Sometimes	9.7	13.4	6.6	19.5
Most of the time	9.1	6.1	9.7	17.1
Always	44.0	52.4	31.7	28.0
<b>9 and 10</b>				
I do not ride other vehicles	25.6	16.3	28.4	14.9
Never	10.8	14.3	10.1	27.7
Sometimes	5.6	8.2	18.8	21.3
Most of the time	11.8	18.4	19.2	14.9
Always	46.2	42.9	23.6	21.3

**RIDING IN A VEHICLE WITH AN IMPAIRED DRIVER**

Older students and rural students are much more likely to ride in a vehicle or car with an impaired driver than younger students and urban students. Rural girls are much more likely than rural boys to have ridden in such a vehicle, with 30.1% of Grades 6 to 8 rural girls and 51.1% of Grades 9 and 10 rural girls having done so.

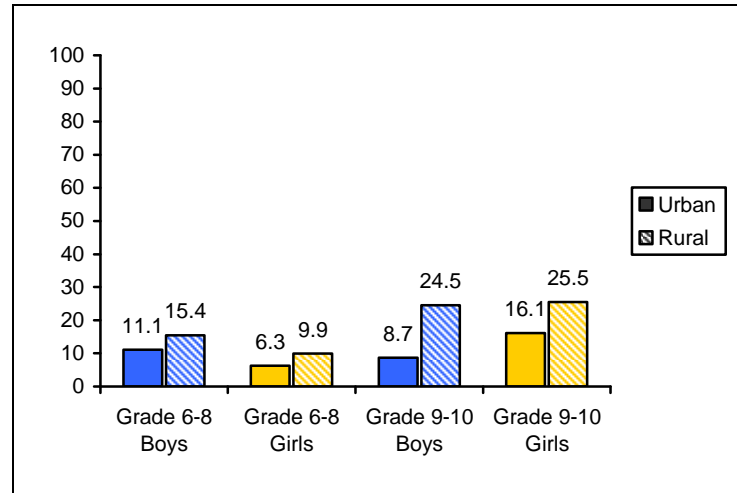
**FIGURE 10.5** Students that report riding in a car or vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol or using drugs at least once in the past 30 days, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**IMPAIRED DRIVING**

Impaired driving follows a similar pattern to riding with an impaired driver. In Grades 6 to 8, boys are more prone than girls to have driven impaired in the past 30 days. In Grades 9 and 10, girls are more likely to have been impaired drivers. Over a quarter of rural girls in Grades 9 and 10 state they have driven while impaired in the past 30 days.

**FIGURE 10.6** Students that report driving a car or vehicle after drinking alcohol or using drugs at least once in the past 30 days, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



Injuries are fairly common among young people in Yukon with just under half of the students indicating they had a medically treated injury during the past 12 months. While there is a general trend for injuries to be more frequent among boys and older students, this trend masks variability based on location of injury, type of injury, and consequence of injury. Location of injury differs primarily by whether students are rural or urban, with urban students most likely to have been injured at a sporting venue and rural students most likely to sustain an injury at school or another location. Not surprisingly, then, urban students tend to be more likely to report they were injured in sports activities than rural students, while rural students say they were injured in other activities. Consequence of injury with respect to requiring significant medical treatment tends to decrease (rather than increase) with age, and missing school for an injury is more likely among urban students.

The survey also measured three indicators of taking risks that could lead to injury: riding in a vehicle such as a snowmobile without a helmet, riding with an impaired driver, and driving while impaired. The pattern across these variables is quite similar. Girls are more likely to engage in these activities than are boys; older students also engage in these behaviours more often than younger students. Rural girls in Grades 9 and 10 are particularly vulnerable for taking risks that might lead to injury. Given the findings about Grades 9 and 10 rural girls with respect to their lower mental health and well-being (see Chapter 11), their taking these risks is perhaps expected.

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## **11 MENTAL HEALTH**

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While young people are generally regarded as a healthy cohort, they face multiple challenges on their way to adulthood. Being in good health physically, emotionally, and socially is important for young people to be able to cope effectively with these challenges.

Reports by the WHO indicate that mental health problems increase the share of the overall disease burden; therefore, monitoring and documenting the psychological, social, and physical well-being of young people may serve as an important first step in making public health services adapt to the rising burden of mental health problems. Well-being in this sense encompasses the presence of positive affective states, such as happiness as well as young people's evaluation of their lives (e.g. Diener, 1984; Huebner, 1991; Wilkinson & Walford, 1998).

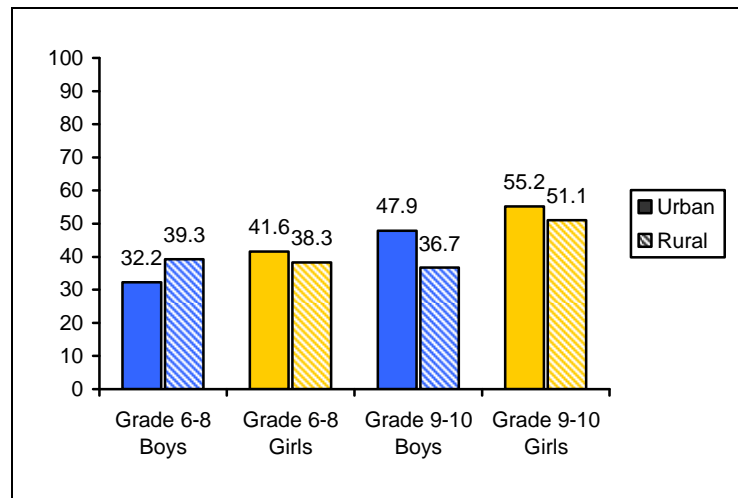
This chapter assesses psychosomatic symptoms, through the presence of backaches, headaches, feeling depressed or low, and feeling bad tempered or irritable. Young people indicate how often these symptoms have occurred in the past six months, with possible responses being about every day, more than once a week, about every week, about every month, or rarely or never. The presence and prolonged duration of backaches and headaches can be an indicator of mental health issues because frequent pain symptoms are associated with depression in adolescents (Harma et al., 2002).

Emotional well-being is addressed using questions that target psychosocial aspects of mental health and young people's perceptions of their self-confidence, whether they often wish to be someone else, feeling helpless, and feeling sad and hopeless.

**BACKACHE**

Figure 11.1 shows the proportion of students experiencing backaches at least once a month. Girls are more likely to experience backaches than boys with over half of Grades 9 and 10 girls indicating they do so. Grades 9 and 10 urban boys are more likely to experience backaches than their rural counterparts. This trend is reversed for Grades 6 to 8 boys.

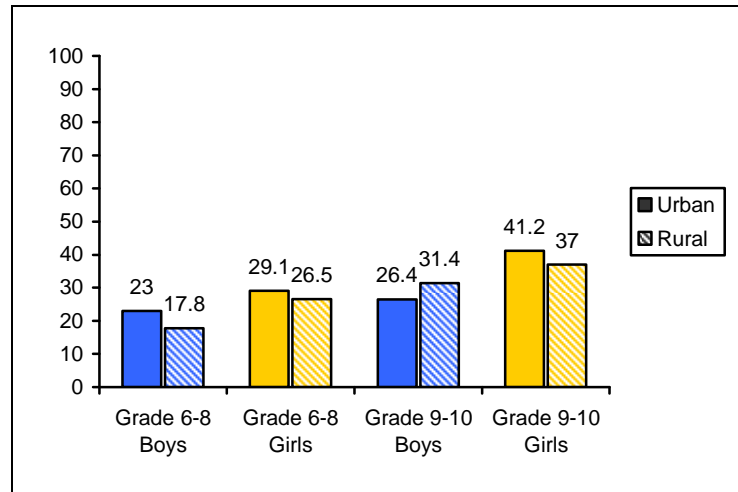
**FIGURE 11.1 Having backache at least once per month, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)**



**HEADACHE**

Figure 11.2 shows the proportion of students reporting headaches at least once per week. The proportion of young people who experience headaches increases for both boys and girls across the grades. In particular, over two-fifths of Grades 9 and 10 urban girls experience headaches at least once per week.

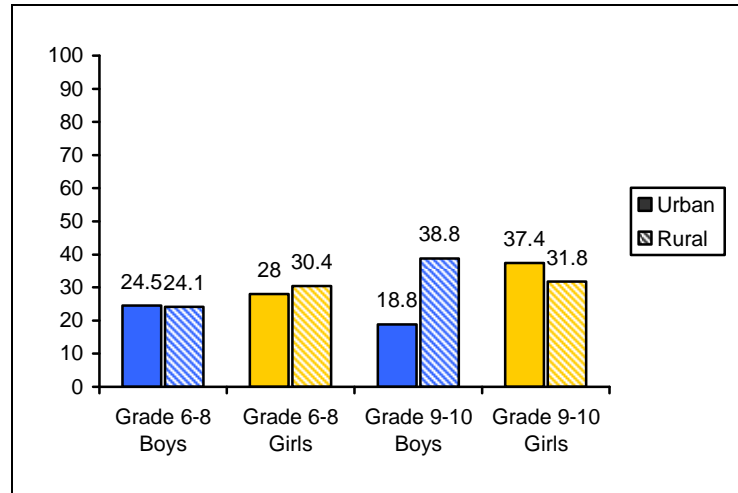
**FIGURE 11.2 Having headache at least once per week, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)**



**FEELING DEPRESSED OR LOW**

Figure 11.3 shows the proportion of students feeling depressed or low at least once a week. Except for urban boys in Grades 9 and 10, there is an increase in the proportion of young people who feel low or depressed as students move across the grades. Rural Grades 9 and 10 boys are much more likely to report feeling depressed than those from Whitehorse.

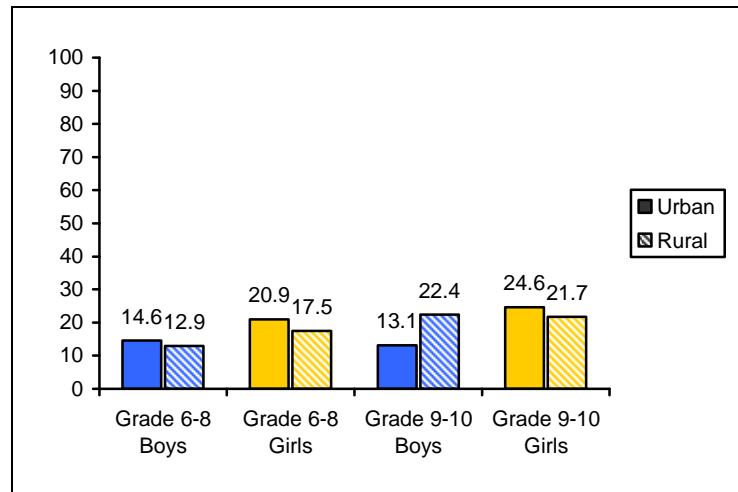
**FIGURE 11.3** Feeling depressed or low at least once a week, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**FEELING BAD-TEMPERED OR IRRITABLE**

Figure 11.4 shows the proportion of students feeling bad tempered or irritable more than once a week. Across gender and grade, differences between urban and rural students are small, with the exception of Grades 9 and 10 rural boys who are more likely to feel bad tempered and irritable compared to their urban counterparts. Girls are generally more likely than boys to feel bad-tempered and irritable, with almost a quarter of urban girls indicating they feel that way.

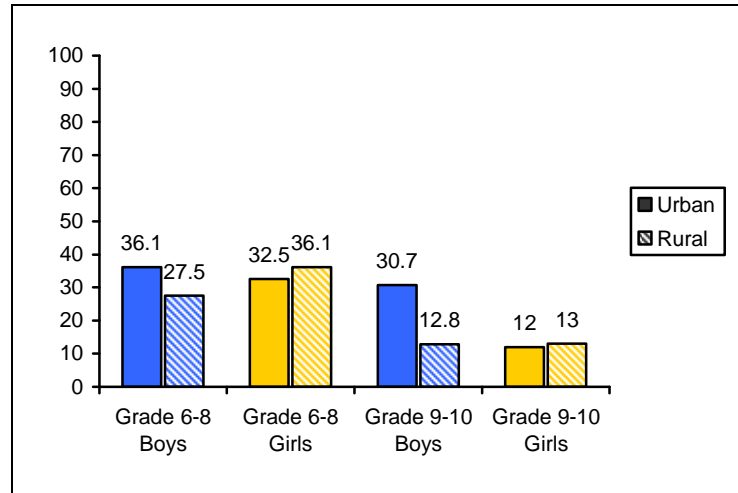
**FIGURE 11.4** Feeling bad-tempered or irritable more than once a week, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**CONFIDENCE**

Figure 11.5 shows the proportion of students who strongly agree they have confidence in themselves. Urban boys have considerably more confidence in themselves than their rural counterparts. Confidence levels decrease for both boys and girls as they get older. This decline is most pronounced among girls in Grades 9 and 10, where only 12% of urban girls and 13% of rural girls report being self-confident.

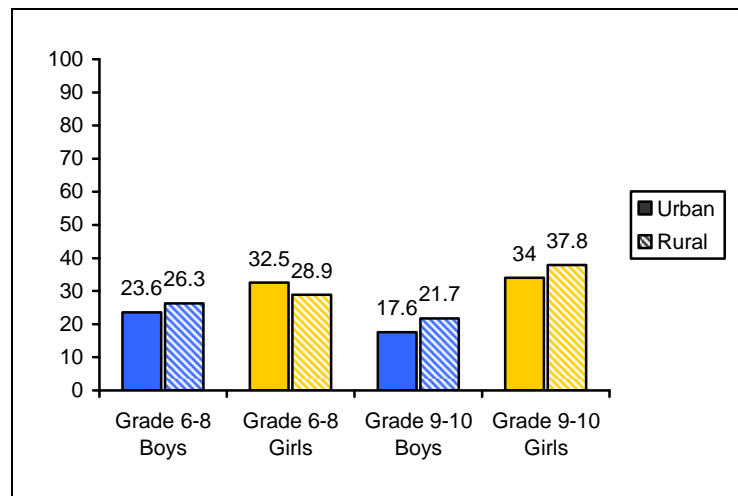
**FIGURE 11.5** Students who strongly agree they have confidence in themselves, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**OFTEN I WISH I WERE SOMEONE ELSE**

Figure 11.6 shows the proportion of students who agree or strongly agree they often wish they were someone else. Across grade levels and settings, more girls than boys are uncomfortable with who they are. The highest rate is among Grades 9 and 10 rural girls with 37.8% wishing they were someone else. The lowest rate is among Grades 9 and 10 urban boys, with less than 20% of them in this category.

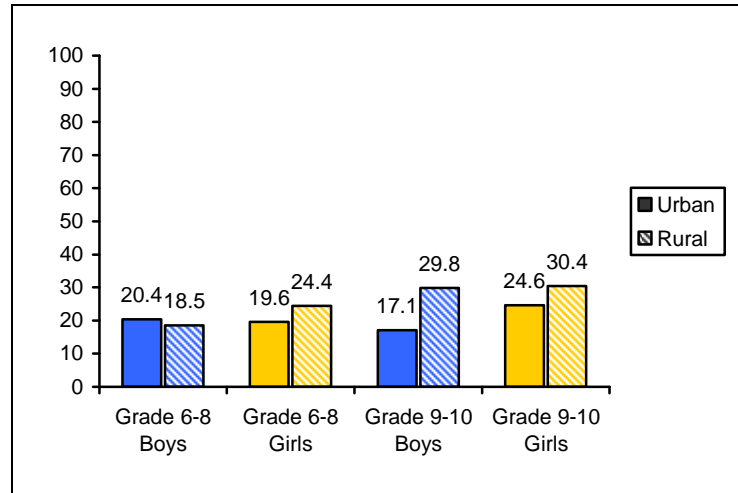
**FIGURE 11.6** Students who agree or strongly agree they often wish they were someone else, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**HELPLESSNESS**

Figure 11.7 shows the proportion of students who agree or strongly agree they often feel helpless. Young people in rural regions are more likely to feel helpless than their urban counterparts, with the exception of Grades 6 to 8 boys. There is a steady increase across age, regardless of gender, in the proportion of students living in rural areas who feel helpless. Rural girls in Grades 9 and 10 are most likely to feel helpless with nearly a third indicating they feel that way.

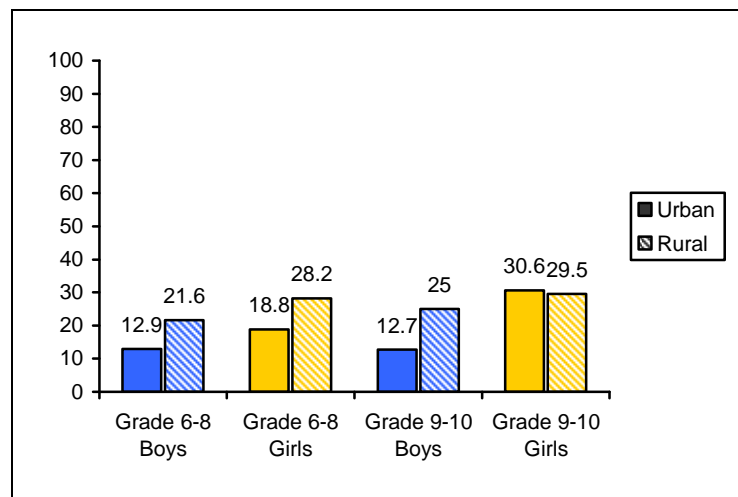
**FIGURE 11.7** Students who agree or strongly agree they often feel helpless, by grade, urban/rural status, and gender (%)



**SADNESS AND HOPELESSNESS**

Figure 11.8 shows the proportion of students who feel sad and hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row. Young people in rural areas are more likely to report feeling that way, except for Grades 9 and 10 girls. Girls especially are more likely than boys to feel sad and hopeless with close to a third of Grades 9 and 10 urban and rural girls indicating they do so. The lowest proportion of students who feel sad and hopeless are urban boys in Grades 9 and 10 at 12.7%.

**FIGURE 11.8** During the past 12 months, did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities? (% Yes)



Students' mental health seems to be more problematic among girls, especially those in Grades 9 and 10. These girls are more prone to experience psychosomatic symptoms, such as backaches and headaches; they are also more likely to feel dissatisfied with whom they are, and to wish they were someone else. For example, between 30 and 40 percent of rural girls in Grades 9 and 10 report feeling helpless and wishing they were someone else. These findings are consistent with the research literature in that girls are more likely to exhibit self-esteem and self-concept issues, especially as they get older (Bolognini et al., 1996).

There is also a worsening of students' states of mental health and well-being for both genders as they get older, with the exception of urban boys in Grades 9 and 10. These boys are the group least likely to report feeling depressed, helpless, sad, hopeless, bad tempered or irritable, and they are also able to maintain their sense of confidence. The fact that more rural than urban boys feel helpless and hopeless might be a function of less opportunities for engagement for these boys, and a dissatisfaction with their schooling conditions as comes through in the school experience chapter. Urban-rural differences are less visible for girls in Grades 9 and 10, suggesting that the reasons behind those feelings are different for boys and girls. These findings require further exploration through statistical analyses examining the association of helplessness and hopelessness with other aspects of students' lives, and through qualitative explorations that examine the sources of such feelings.

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## 12 CONCLUSION

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As we read through the chapters in this report and reflected on the lives of students in Yukon, we realized there were both causes for concern and causes for celebration. There are areas where Yukon students in general are doing poorly from a health standpoint, and areas where students are doing well. There are places where a certain group is not doing well compared to their counterparts, and places where a certain group is succeeding beyond expectations. We highlight each of these types of causes in this final chapter, beginning with causes for concern.

### *Causes for Concern*

#### 1) *Bullying*

Bullying is a major area of concern for students in Yukon. Across age levels, grades, and genders, over 50 percent of students report having been bullied in the past couple of months. While lower, the rate of students being bullied at least once a week or more is still alarmingly high. It certainly seems that bullying prevention programs, especially programs targeted to individual groups and their likely experience of bullying, deserve continued support by schools and communities.

#### 2) *Cannabis Use*

Cannabis use is high among Grades 9 and 10 students in Yukon. 40.9% of rural males in Grades 9 and 10 indicate cannabis use in the past 30 days. Additionally, students do not see that smoking cannabis is that risky on an occasional basis or, for about one-quarter of Grades 9 and 10 students, on a regular basis. For cannabis use to decrease, students' perceptions of its risk must be challenged.

#### 3) *Grades 9 and 10 Rural Girls and Mental Health*

Several findings point to the difficulties rural girls in Grades 9 and 10 are having with their emotional health and well-being. They self-rated their health more negatively than other students. Significant numbers of them felt helpless and wished they were someone else. They also engaged in more risk-taking, such as driving while impaired, riding with an impaired driver, and not wearing a helmet. They viewed their family experiences in a negative light, and they generally were physically inactive. Indeed, Grades 9 and 10 rural girls seem to be a population at-risk.

#### 4) *Grades 9 and 10 Rural Boys and School Experiences*

Put simply, the Grades 9 and 10 rural boys were much more negative toward school than other groups. They liked school the least, they viewed teachers in a poor light, and they did not see the school setting as either fair or nice. While efforts should be made to more actively engage students in the school setting across locales and grade

levels, specific efforts for Grades 9 and 10 boys in rural settings might be especially warranted.

5) *Eating Patterns*

Not all groups in Yukon eat as well as other groups. Boys tend to make poorer food choices than girls; and rural students poorer choices than urban students. While the rural-urban difference may be explicable through the cost and availability of healthy foods, the gender difference is almost assuredly affected by gendered attitudes toward healthy foods. Furthermore, greater than 25 percent of Yukon students say they go to bed hungry because of lack of food with the percentages particularly high for boys in rural areas.

***Causes for Celebration***

1) *Low Incidence of Glue and Solvent Use and of Smoking Tobacco*

There were virtually no instances of young people in Yukon using glue and solvents to get high. This finding might be credited to territorial policies and media reports committed to informing young people of the dangers of such activities.

2) *Grades 9 and 10 Rural Boys and Birth Control*

Grades 9 and 10 rural boys indicated the greatest level of responsibility towards preventing pregnancies and reducing STIs. 86.7% of rural boys said they had used a condom the last time they had had sexual intercourse. They did not rely on their partners for birth control in that they infrequently indicated that the birth control pill was a means of pregnancy prevention employed. Sex education for all groups in Yukon seems to be doing very well, but it is especially effective for rural boys.

3) *Grades 9 and 10 Urban Boys*

Consistently, we found that urban boys in Grades 9 and 10 had better health outcomes and more positive attitudes than rural boys in those grades or than girls (rural or urban) in those grades. In fact, for variables that worsened sharply for the other three groups from Grades 6 to 8, there was improvement or minimal change for urban boys. Perhaps part of this positive trend can be attributed to urban boys finding more ways to spend their time in an active fashion.

4) *Material Resources*

Students in Yukon have generally excellent material resources. Most of the students have their own bedrooms, their families have at least one vehicle and at least one computer, and they have been on vacation during the past year. Having such material resources is an important forerunner for good health.

5) *Friendships*

Yukon students were very likely to have at least three same-sex friends and quite likely to have at least three opposite-sex friends. They also reported it being easy to talk to

their best friend and their same-sex friends about concerns. As well, they more often indicated that their friends participated in pro-social as opposed to risk behaviours. Yukon students are a strong social resource for them.

6) *Neighbourhoods*

High numbers of Yukon students believe their neighbourhoods are safe for children to play in. Growing up in a positive, safe neighbourhood is a vital component of healthy development for children and youth.

7) *Self-reported Health*

The vast majority of children and youth in the Yukon are in good health. Self-reported health has proven to be a very good indicator of actual health in a number of studies. High proportions of Yukon students, particularly those in Grades 6 to 8 report good or excellent health.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

This report represents an initial attempt to get a detailed understanding of the health and health behaviours of students in Grades 6 to 10 in Yukon. While there are areas and groups that need greater attention if we are looking to promote healthy experiences, there are also areas and groups where current health efforts have been successful. Over the next few years, we need to work in a strong collaborative fashion to ensure that all Yukon students have the best possibility for healthy and productive lives in the future.

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