



## Social Connection

- South Island youth reported **lower levels of belonging** to their families, schools, and peers in 2023 compared to youth in 2018
- **One in four youth** in School District 62 reported feeling **lonely** often or always
- **45% of youth** in School District 62 who use transit reported **never or only sometimes feeling safe on transit**
- Social isolation and loneliness harm mental health, while **strong social connections promote well-being**

## Hope for the Future

- **66% of youth in grades 7-12** in School District 62 reported experiencing **despair** in 2023
- South Island youth reported feeling **less hopeful about their future** in 2023 than youth did in 2018
- **The population of the West Shore and Sooke is expected to grow** by 26.7% by 2032, with the 0-19 age group expected to grow by 10%
- Higher levels of hope in youth are linked with better academic performance and **stronger psychological well-being**


# THE CHALLENGE

## The health and well-being of Sooke and West Shore youth is in decline ...

Data Sources: South Vancouver Island and School District 62 2023 BC Adolescent Health Survey Results (McCreary Centre Society); Early Years Development Instrument, Wave 8 Results, School District 62 (Human Early Learning Partnership); Western Communities Local Health Area Profile (Island Health); BC Statistics P.E.O.P.L.E. 2024.

## Mental Well-Being

- South Island youth in grades 7-12 in 2023 rated their **mental health as worse** than youth in 2018 and 2013
- **19% of South Island youth seriously considered suicide** in 2023, which was higher than youth in 2013
- Teachers in School District 62 have reported a **worsening trend in anxious, aggressive, and inattentive behaviour** amongst kindergarten students during the period of 2004-2022



## Youth thrive when they have:

- Adequate **housing** and access to affordable, healthy **food**
- Opportunities and spaces to build **strong connections** to peers, adults, and community members
- High-quality **education** and a **sense of belonging in school**

## Youth thrive when they have:

- Timely access to **mental health services**
- Opportunities to build **skills**, develop **healthy habits**, and explore **new interests**
- **Safe and reliable transportation** to access activities and opportunities

# THE OPPORTUNITY

## Research shows that investments made in youth well-being lead to long-term benefits\*

\*Hendren, N., & Sprung-Keyser, B. (2020). A unified welfare analysis of government policies. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 135(3), 1209-1318.

We ALL have an important role to play in creating the conditions for children and youth to thrive in our communities. Investing in young people not only improves their quality of life — it also saves taxpayer dollars. So, we can either invest proactively now or pay the price of inaction later.