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Information Guide

CHILD AND YOUTH MENTAL WELL-BEING RESOURCES





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Introduction / Background

**START
HERE**

WHAT IS THIS INFORMATION GUIDE? WHO IS IT FOR?

The purpose of this information guide is to highlight the ways that local governments impact the mental wellness of children and youth and to describe the roles, assets, and mechanisms within local governments that promote well-being for this age group.

The guide includes research, examples, and resources to inform and inspire the strengthening of local governments' awareness of how they impact these citizens and how to support action in this realm for optimal societal outcomes.

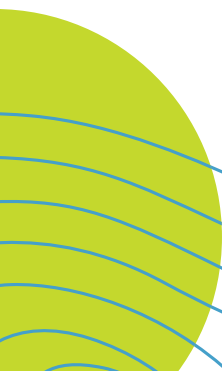
PROTECTIVE FACTORS

The four Protective Factors sections in this report look at factors that promote child and youth mental wellness, focusing on realms that local governments significantly influence and realms that were either negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic or highlighted during the pandemic as particularly strong protectors of young people's well-being.

The Protective Factors that will be covered are:

- **Social connection and belonging**
- **Play**
- **Safety**
- **Participation**

There are many protective factors that are important for children and youth mental well-being. The four covered in these information guides were chosen because they are powerful influencers on well-being and ones that local governments can greatly impact within their existing roles and with the assets and mechanisms at their disposal. Other influencers such as parents and other public sector agencies also impact these factors which underscores the importance of multi-stakeholder communication and collaboration to most effectively create healthy communities in which all children and families can thrive.



WHAT? WHY? HOW?

Each of the following sections will explore the “what,” “why,” and “how” of each protective factor. The “how” is meant to stimulate thought and discussion and provide inspiration rather than prescribing actions. Actions taken by local governments are dependent on their local context and on their priority issues, opportunities, available assets, and what has been tried in the past.

Key points to keep in mind:

- There is never just one solution.
- It is rarely just the purview of one local government department.
- It requires committed, sustained and appropriately resourced approaches.
- It often requires changes at several levels of the system.

“Local governments play a critical role in improving the mental well-being of children and youth with effects that can last into adulthood. Take up the challenge, be bold, push beyond status quo, and collaborate with other sectors to create healthy and supportive communities for all young people.”



WHERE TO START?

The following information guide provides examples as to how local governments are taking action on protective factors that matter for children and youth mental well-being. These examples are meant to stimulate thought and discussion and to inspire action to go beyond status quo, informed by local contexts, available assets, and capacity to build on strengths, address gaps, and try new approaches. A good place to start may be...

1. ARTICULATE A COMMITMENT TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- Articulating a commitment to the well-being of children and youth can be an important first step to set the foundation and guide action.
- E.g., The City of Auckland (New Zealand) created 7 goals for promotion of the wellness of young people under the banner of I Am Auckland:
 - i. I have a voice, am valued and contribute
 - ii. I am important, belong, am cared about and feel safe
 - iii. I am happy, healthy and thriving
 - iv. I am given equal opportunities to succeed and to have a fair go
 - v. I can get around and get connected
 - vi. Auckland is my playground
 - vii. Rangatahi tu Rangatira (All young people will thrive)¹

2. CREATE A PROFILE OF CHILD AND YOUTH MENTAL WELL-BEING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

- Gain an understanding of the current status of child and youth mental well-being at the local level.
- Municipal and regional governments may consider using local, regularly collected, and easily accessed data sets such as:
 - i. Early Development Instrument
 - ii. Middle Development Instrument
 - iii. Youth Development Instrument
 - iv. Adolescent Health Survey

Note, many data sources lack data stratified by socio-demographic variables that would help to identify where disparities are occurring.

3. CREATE A PROFILE OF PROTECTIVE FACTORS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

- Local governments would benefit from understanding the current picture of the protective factors outlined in these information guides. Many of the data points are already captured by the previously mentioned data sets.
- The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development framework Measuring What Matters for Child Well-Being and Policies lays the groundwork for improvements in child well-being measurement and identifies some key actions such as:
 - i. Increasing the regularity of data collection
 - ii. Reporting on a core set of indicators
 - iii. Strengthening capacity to collect data to better understand where disparities are occurring²

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 OECD Dashboard: <https://www.oecd.org/els/family/child-well-being/data/dashboard/>



HOW LOCAL GOVERNMENTS INFLUENCE

Child and Youth Mental Wellness



ROLES, ASSETS, AND MECHANISMS

THAT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS HAVE THAT
INFLUENCE AND IMPACT CHILD AND YOUTH
MENTAL WELL-BEING

PUBLIC REALM

The public realm – including parks, plazas, footpaths and other spaces that the public has access to – falls mostly within the purview of local governments. How these spaces are **designed, developed, maintained and activated** impacts children and youth's access, independence, feelings of belonging, safety, opportunities for play, social connectedness, and connection to nature.

PLANNING AND PLACEMAKING

Using planning powers and processes, local governments influence new developments and community design. When local governments fail to use a child and youth lens in these processes, it can lead to negative consequences such as removing young people from the public realm, hindering independent mobility, limiting play to playgrounds, and exposing an environmentally sensitive age group to high levels of noise and air pollution. To effectively support the mental well-being of children and youth, local governments should take into consideration the needs of its youngest citizens and the protective factors that support their well-being.

Examples:

- Engage the target population and other stakeholders in planning and decision-making
- Use a range of datasets to understand strengths and gaps in assets

INFRASTRUCTURE

Streets, sidewalks, lighting, public art and other civic infrastructure have traditionally been developed in ways that exclude or deter the development needs of children and youth. However, there are increasing examples of how towns and cities have rectified that situation by intentionally developing new and amending old infrastructure to promote social interaction, play and freedom for young people.

Examples:

- Streets that prioritize active transportation networks to destinations frequented by children
- Sidewalks that are wider with shade to enable play
- Youth-specific infrastructure such as skate parks
- Parking lots that are repurposed to parks

AMENITIES

Overlapping with the Public Realm and Infrastructure, towns and cities offer many different types of amenities that support child and youth well-being. These include parks, playing fields, tennis and basketball courts, libraries, recreational facilities, community centres, childcare centres, family places, civic theatres, community halls, youth centres and spaces for non-profit organizations. While these are already important community assets, they need to be designed in ways that are welcoming to young people, provide the type of space that meets their needs, and are easily physically accessed (e.g., via walking or public transit). Barriers to access must also be addressed through:

- Free or low-cost programs
- Easy navigation
- Integration of design elements such as imagery and messaging that feel inclusive to all children and youth

PROGRAMMING, EVENTS, EXPERIENCES

The types of programming that local governments often offer provide opportunities for children and youth to socialize, nurture their creativity, exercise, learn life skills, practice mindfulness, and build self-esteem. Civic initiatives such as festivals, free concerts, free access to art galleries and museums, pop-up events and other space activations can also be effective ways to provide children and youth with growth experiences and greater community engagement.

Key components to enabling positive child and youth development include ensuring that the kind of programming and experiences that young people seek are:

- Available, accessible, and equitable
- Informed by children and youth
- Delivered by skilled staff with experience working with this age group

PARTICIPATION

Opportunities for children and youth to give back to and invest in their communities are important for their sense of agency and community belonging. **Participation in planning processes, on youth advisory councils, and other means of engagement** are important ways for children and youth to have their voices heard to shape the environments in which they live. Other participation opportunities with local government include **internships, mentorships, volunteering and employment** – all ways for young people to be involved with their local government, build leadership skills, connect with others, and feel like active agents of change in their communities.

POLICIES

Most civic policies and strategies impact children and youth in some way. Integrating and increasing intentionality toward young people in those policies ensures that local government policies and actions support the well-being of their youngest citizens and do not inadvertently harm their healthy development. Cities that have seen positive results are those that have articulated a commitment to child and youth well-being and:

- Sustain that commitment with actions and budgets over time
- Set explicit goals and objectives
- Regularly monitor and report out on the state of children and youth
- Create a comprehensive child and youth friendly strategy (can be detrimental if they are myopic – e.g., just focused on recreation, keep actions for this age group contained within one local government department, or are separated out as a “nice to have” rather than a core part of city operations)

Local governments have many other policies and strategies that are integral to reducing stress on caregivers and families and these, in turn, help to reduce vulnerabilities for young people. Examples of policies that can significantly support the mental well-being of children and youth:

- Poverty reduction actions
- Childcare plans
- Climate change adaptation measures
- Community economic development

These policies can support caregivers by reducing toxic stress, ensuring access to basic needs, building protective factors, and reducing risks and barriers to positive child development.

THE GREAT INFLUENCER

Local governments greatly influence the quality and equitable distribution of resources, environments, and conditions needed for healthy children and youth. No one action will solve the current mental wellness crisis amongst children and youth. The complexity of health and social issues requires a systems approach with cross-cutting and cross-sectoral action and collaboration. However, local governments are in a powerful position to provide the kinds of environments and experiences that could help this population group to thrive. While many local governments are already taking action to promote mental wellness for this age group, improvement is always possible. This might require local governments to do something new, more, or different. In other areas, local governments might need to stop doing something that is not helping or that is adding to the problem.

FUNDAMENTALLY, CHANGE BEGINS WITH A STRONGER AWARENESS OF THE ISSUE, A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF HOW TO BE PART OF THE SOLUTION, AND AN INCREASED INTENTIONALITY AND SUSTAINED COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY'S YOUNGEST CITIZENS.



HOW LOCAL GOVERNMENTS BENEFIT

From Strengthening
Child and Youth Mental Wellness

“THE STATE OF THE YOUNG IN ANY CITY IS THE LITMUS TEST FOR A CITY’S LEVEL OF SUSTAINABILITY AND VIBRANCY”

– Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, former Executive Director of UN Habitat¹

Large and small cities and towns in BC are experiencing an unprecedented number of complex social and environmental issues which have resulted in communities with increasing social discord, higher crime rates and anti-social behaviour, increasing inequality, decreasing social cohesion and a lower level of overall community vibrancy and resilience.^{2,3,4} Part of an effective strategy to address some of these issues is to improve community well-being. This entails:

1. Strengthening the protective factors that reduce pain and alienation and that improve feelings of agency, safety, community belonging, and social connection.
2. Ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities that support everyone to flourish.

Investing in the well-being of younger age groups tends to yield a strong return on investment given that, more than any other time in human development, this age group is particularly impacted by their environments.^{5,6,7} Through the science of epigenetics, it has been well established that the experiences of children can become biologically embedded, not only impacting their health and social development in childhood but also into adulthood.^{8,9,10,11}

Becoming a child friendly city can improve a city’s:

- Economic performance
- Its ability to attract and retain a skilled workforce
- Overall functioning

Investing in children and youth’s mental well-being could benefit communities and address local government priorities, including socio-economic issues, community safety, and overall community functioning.

BELONGING

Young people with a strong sense of belonging are more engaged in their community, form positive social networks, and participate in activities such as fundraising and supporting organizations that help disadvantaged people.^{12,13} A strong sense of belonging has also been linked to lower rates of adolescent suicide and problematic substance use.^{14,15}

SOCIAL COHESION

Social cohesion refers to the strength of relationships and the sense of solidarity among members of a community. Children living in socially cohesive neighbourhoods experience lower rates of hyperactivity and aggression and are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviour.¹⁶ Social cohesion has also been associated with higher rates of child and youth physical activity, stronger feelings of safety, increased rates of community participation and higher levels of mutual respect among diverse groups of young people.^{17,18,19}

SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

Social connectedness is a sense of belonging and a psychological bond a person may feel towards other people or groups. Resilient children and youth have at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive, trusted, adult.²⁰ Positive connections between children and youth and adults in their community:

- Promotes healthy emotional development
- Increases levels of life satisfaction and better decision-making skills which, in turn, are associated with lower levels of delinquent behaviour^{21,22,23}
- Mitigates the negative impacts of Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Significantly increase school performance
- Lowers odds of alcohol use and involvement in violence in low resource neighbourhoods^{20,24}

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital deals with shared group resources, like a friend-of-a-friend's knowledge of a job opening. Individuals have access to social capital through their social networks. For children and youth, higher levels of neighbourhood social capital, strong connections and feeling like a valued member of the community has been linked to:

- higher civic participation
- trust in others
- prosocial and helping behaviours
- better education outcomes
- lower crime rates^{25,26,27,28}

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Youth volunteerism and community service increases resiliency, prosocial thinking and behaviour, a sense of community belonging, social responsibility and overall levels of happiness and academic achievement.^{29,30} Studies have also found that volunteering in childhood and adolescence is associated with lower crime and illegal behaviours in adulthood.³¹

INCLUSIVE PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING

Communities achieve better outcomes when the voices and competencies of diverse stakeholders – including children and youth – are involved in the identification, leveraging and mobilization of resources.³² Young people's unique perspective and propensity for action has led to positive change in organizations and communities and has helped to address issues such as public safety and to improve assets such as transit and parks.^{33,34} Child and youth involvement in planning, decision-making and local governance also develops their civic competence and fosters a greater commitment to their communities.^{35,36}

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Positive youth development programs take a strengths-based approach, emphasizing youth engagement and contribution, belonging, safe space, skill building, positive norms, social-emotional competencies, community collaboration, and positive adult role models and mentors.³⁷ Positive youth development programming, starting at a young age, is associated with reduced poverty in adulthood, possibly aided by higher educational attainment and the resulting higher income.^{38,39} Positive youth development programming has also been associated with an increased sense of social responsibility, stronger moral reasoning, and decreased juvenile delinquency.^{40,41}

STRUCTURED ACTIVITIES

Young people's (particularly adolescents) participation in structured social, arts and recreational activities positively affects academic achievement and psychosocial and behavioural functioning, increases life satisfaction, lowers rates of depression and reduces delinquency.^{42,43,44}

UNSTRUCTURED PLAY

Unstructured play, particularly in early childhood, is very important to social-emotional development. Unstructured play functions as the means by which children regulate their emotions, exert self-control, problem solve, nurture creativity, and develop social skills – all of which are integral assets for well-being across the lifespan.⁴⁵ Developing self-regulation in children and youth is a key investment in society given that stronger self-regulation predicts higher income, better financial planning, and fewer risk behaviours such as substance misuse and violence.^{46,47}

NEIGHBOURHOOD SAFETY

When children and youth view their neighbourhoods as safe, they do better socially and emotionally, with higher levels of well-being, fewer internalizing problem behaviours (e.g., depression, anxiety) and fewer externalizing problem behaviours (e.g., aggression, substance use).^{48,49,50,51} Young children's perceived safety is important because children develop a sense of self during their pre-school years, with more complex awareness and autonomy emerging around age seven.⁵² During these key developmental years, children's perceptions of safety significantly impacts health-related behaviours such as physical activity and their corresponding outcomes such as lower levels of psychological distress.^{52,53,54,55} For adolescents, studies show how lower levels of neighborhood safety disrupts academic achievement and functioning at school in addition to disrupting young people's lives more generally.^{56,57}

Promoting child and youth mental wellness is an effective, evidence-based measure to address core socio-economic issues and create healthier, more vibrant communities.

- More than 180 mayors have signed on to UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities Mayors' Declaration
- 100 mayors and senior staff from local governments from 30 cities joined the first cohort of the Urban95 Academy's Leadership Programme to strengthen knowledge on how to make communities better for the youngest citizens.

A child-friendly approach has the potential to benefit the broader population and to unite a range of forward-thinking agendas, including sustainability, safety, and resiliency.

“Looking at planning and design through children's eyes does not just offer fresh perspectives and a compelling new urban vision. It reveals the best way to set cities on a firm course away from ecological, economic and social decay”

– Tim Gill, Urban Playground: How Child-Friendly Planning and Design Can Save Cities⁵⁸

Enrique Penalosa, former mayor of Bogota, famously called children an “indicator species” for cities, emphasizing that taking action to create supportive environments that promote the well-being for young people strengthens well-being for all citizens and produces a more sustainable and equitable society.⁵⁹ In British Columbia the wellness of our indicator species is trending in the wrong direction. Rates of anxiety, depression and aggression are high and worsening. Local governments have many different roles, assets, and mechanisms that could help to improve this situation to promote the mental well-being of its youngest citizens and to restore some balance to communities as a whole.

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Closing The Gaps

POPULATION DISPARITIES



Some groups within the child and youth population may experience disparities in the status of their mental well-being, as well as in the protective factors. This section provides an idea of disparities, however, a more fulsome reflection at a municipal or regional level by age cohort, intersectionality, and trends over time is encouraged.

Many disparities in well-being are rooted in early childhood and as such it is critical to include action for the early years to ensure supportive environments in which all young children can thrive.¹

Regardless of whether a disparity is being caused by an inequity or something else, there should be an attempt to close any gaps in order to promote equal outcomes for the well-being of all young people.

“the promise of adolescence is severely curtailed by economic, social and structural disadvantage....These potent societal determinants shape adolescents’ life trajectories in multiple ways. They not only reduce access to the opportunities, services and supports enjoyed by more privileged youth, but they also expose less privileged youth to risks, stresses and demands that ‘get under the skin’, adversely affecting the body and the brain during critical developmental periods.”²

SOCIO- DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

The following is a list of some socio-demographic factors that can be associated with lower levels of mental well-being as well as disparities in protective factors that promote the wellness of children and youth. It is not an exhaustive list but rather is meant to stimulate thought and discussion and to underscore the importance of considering and addressing disparities for the optimum development of all young people. It should also be noted that disparities are not a given and population groups that experience them may change over time, particularly when effective actions and systemic changes occur to address them.

GENDER

FEMALES

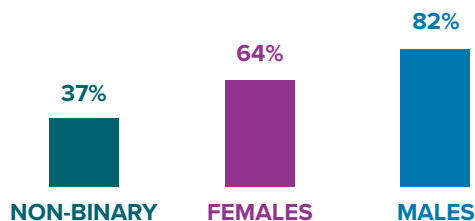
- Mental health issues tend to be more prevalent among young females than males.² Female children can sometimes encounter more barriers than their male counterparts to their everyday freedoms. There have been well-documented gender differences in children’s independent mobility.³ Studies also show that boys are more likely to play outside than girls.⁴

NON-BINARY

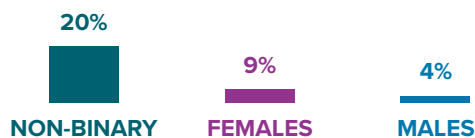
- Young people who identify as non-binary often have poorer mental health outcomes, with high rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation.⁵
- Gender-diverse adolescents experience discrimination within the school environment from the curriculum, space, peers and teachers, as well as in strategies such as disclosure negotiation.⁶

Studies indicate that higher gender equity and self-esteem can improve the mental well-being and life satisfaction of school-aged children.⁸

Adolescents who self-reported good or excellent mental health.⁷



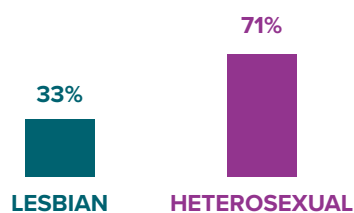
Adolescents who did not participate in extracurricular activities in the past year because they were worried about being bullied.



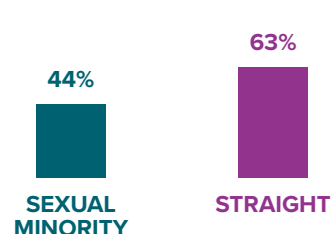
SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Mental health issues are prevalent in the 2SLGBTQIA+ population, often due to the stigmatization and discrimination that they face at home, at school and in the broader community. Exposure to discrimination is associated with higher levels of stress as measured by elevated cortisol.^{2,9}

33% of lesbian girls self-reported good or excellent mental health compared to 71% of heterosexual girls.¹⁰



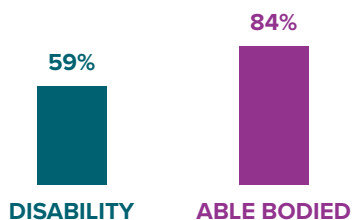
44% of sexual minority girls feel like a part of their school compared to 63% of straight girls.¹⁰



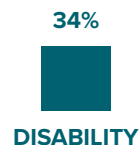
DISABILITIES AND CHRONIC CONDITIONS

Children with disabilities or chronic illness are at increased risk of impaired social functioning, less peer acceptance, social isolation, and more school absenteeism.^{11,12,13}

59% of youth with a disability self-reported good or excellent mental health compared to 84% of youth without a disability.¹⁴



34% of youth with a disability reported that their disability or chronic condition prevented them from doing things their peers could do.⁷



INDIGENOUS IDENTITY

Indigenous children and youth face high levels of mental health problems, including higher levels of depression and attempted suicide.^{15,16,17}

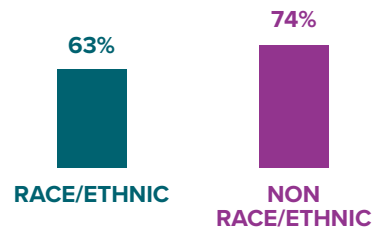
Urban Indigenous youth who feel like a part of their school are more likely to:

- ✓ **feel hopeful for the future,**
- ✓ **pursue post-secondary education,**
- ✓ **feel safe getting to and from school.¹⁸**

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Greater perceptions of racial/ethnic discrimination are linked to more depressive and internalized symptoms; greater psychological distress; poor self-esteem; less academic motivation; and greater engagement in externalizing behaviours.¹⁹

63% of youth who have experienced racial or ethnic discrimination self-reported good or excellent mental health compared to 74% of youth who had not.²⁰





NEW IMMIGRANTS

Children and youth from refugee backgrounds can be significantly vulnerable to mental, emotional and behavioural disorders due to exposure to war, human rights violations and severe deprivation abroad.²¹

New immigrant children and youth may struggle with a new culture and language, new school system and new social and peer norms which can present barriers to feeling socially connected and socially supported which can cause stress and isolation.^{22,23,24}

LOW INCOME

On average, children growing up in low-income households have poorer social, behavioural and cognitive outcomes, with lower self-esteem, and higher levels of stress.^{25,26,27}

Children in low socio-economic neighbourhoods may have less access to physical activity resources such as parks, trails and community centres, and even when they are available, low-income children use them less frequently than their peers in higher socio-economic status neighbourhoods.²⁸

Poverty intensifies loneliness and social isolation, particularly given the impact that lack of money has on the ability to take part in social activities and to access transportation, as well as the sense of shame, powerlessness, lack of agency and hopelessness that poverty often instills in individuals.^{29,30}

WHERE TO START?

As a first and ongoing step, local governments could identify and monitor where disparities are happening in their community and then involve the affected populations in further discussion to better understand the root causes of the disparities.

While participation in planning is important for children and youth overall, it is particularly important for groups who are facing additional barriers. If actions do not take into account what those barriers are, they can further exacerbate disparities.

ASK THREE QUESTIONS:

(adapted from National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine)²

1

What is generally expected in terms of the extent that children and youth can achieve well-being in physical, social, cognitive, and behavioural domains for their age?
(i.e., measuring overall population outcomes)

2

What is the extent to which members of different social groups achieve those levels of well-being?

3

What is the extent to which members of different social groups have had equal and equitable chances to achieve desirable development outcomes?

Disparities in child and youth outcomes by socio-demographic variables will translate into inequality in adult outcomes unless steps are taken to reduce them. Research shows that reducing risk factors, increasing protective factors and strengthening the resilience of children and youth can effectively close the gaps.

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INTRO

PARTICIPATION

PLAY

SAFETY

SOCIAL



QUALITY ADULTS IN CHILDREN'S LIVES





The adults in children's lives have a substantial impact on their mental well-being.^{1,2,3,4}

Adults support the mental well-being of children and youth by providing psycho-social support, including deep listening, buffering stress, and positive role modeling and by providing opportunities for young people to build social-emotional competencies and other development assets, including through the creation of enabling environments and the promotion of the four realms of protective factors outlined in this information guide.

“High levels of support from any trusted adult in childhood, regardless of relationship, halves the prevalence of low mental well-being amongst adults who experience high levels of childhood abuse and adversity compared to those who experience adversity but with no such adult support.”⁵

**EXAMPLES OF ADULTS
YOUNG PEOPLE
INTERACT WITH FROM
LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:**

- Youth Workers
- Librarians
- Planners
- Engineers
- Police
- Elected Officials

UNICEF'S REPORT CARD⁶

IN CANADA

26% of children said that they did not feel supported by their family

26%



IN NORWAY AND THE NETHERLANDS

6% of children said they did not feel supported by their family

6%



There are a wide variety of adults in children's lives, with the makeup of the adult contingent shifting as children grow older. With "increasing age, the neighbourhood evolves as a further ecological niche in which children spend time; just like the school setting, the community context is particularly significant because it can influence all young people."⁷

EARLY YEARS



Most important adults are parents and caregivers, including childcare providers.

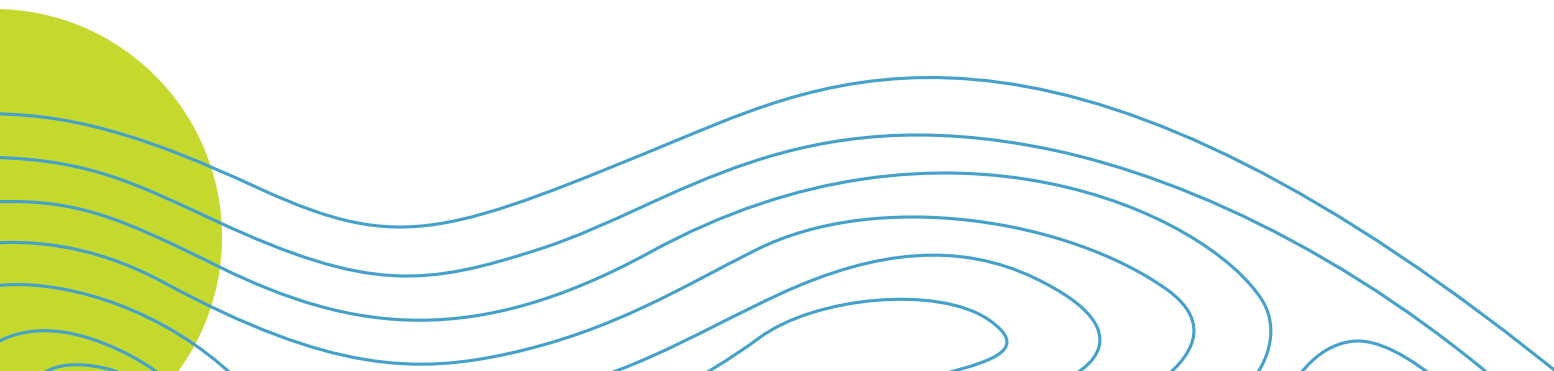
MIDDLE CHILDHOOD



As children age, their world expands to include adults in school, recreation centres, and the broader community.

ADOLESCENCE

The importance of non-parental adults and adults outside of the family is positively related to healthy emotional development, especially during early and middle adolescence.^{8,9,10,11}



TO ENABLE HIGH QUALITY ADULTS IN CHILDREN'S LIVES IT IS IMPORTANT TO:

FACILITATE AND PRACTICE SELF-CARE

There is a clear association between measures of caregiver well-being and that of their child.¹² Caregiver stress during a child's early years is a risk factor for mental health problems in children and youth.^{13,14,15,16,17,18,19} Modelling the use of social-emotional skills, managing stress, modulating emotional responses, and creating positive interactions with others, as well as other health promoting behaviours such as good nutrition, physical activity, maintaining social connections, and getting sufficient sleep.

DEVELOP SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS AND SOCIETAL SUPPORTS

Family-friendly communities that are affordable, equitable, connected, vibrant and safe. Family-friendly policies are a key ingredient in good public policy (e.g., reducing family poverty and income inequality and improving childcare and parental leave policies).²⁰

TRAIN ON HOW TO SUPPORT THE MENTAL WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Training and development for local government staff and elected officials could be quite varied, depending on the level of existing knowledge, one's role, and the amount of current engagement with the target population. For example, the training needs of youth workers experiencing compassion fatigue will be different from building the knowledge base of planners in participatory evaluation processes or the skills of elected officials in authentic youth civic engagement.^{21,22,23,24} As such, part of a municipal plan to better support the mental well-being of children and youth may include identifying the full contingent of staff and elected officials who are currently engaging young people or who are not but perhaps should be and assessing where the current strengths are in professional skills and experience and which gaps to address.

UNICEF Canada's *Where Does Canada Stand* report calls for reducing the stress of parents, caregivers and other adults in children's lives and creating supportive household and community environments.²⁵



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INTRO

PARTICIPATION

PLAY

SAFETY

SOCIAL

Protective Factor

PARTICIPATION





WHERE TO START

Participation involves thinking, feeling and doing for sustained, meaningful contributions to society.

Create welcoming spaces and environments and enable child and youth-led initiatives.

Progressively build the skills of children and youth over the ages to increase their capacity to participate, with increasing levels of responsibility and diversity of opportunities to contribute.

Include all ages of children and youth in planning, decision-making and governance.

Consider providing youth mentorship, internship and employment opportunities.

WHAT

The participation of children and youth takes many different forms. It can include internships, jobs, participation in planning and governance, and other acts of citizenship. It can be one-off or ongoing, temporary or permanent, formal or informal, paid or voluntary. In at nutshell, it is about engagement and participation in society.

When children are given opportunities to participate, they acquire greater levels of competence which in turn can enhance the quality of their participation.¹ The full engagement of young people considers the heart (emotion), the head (cognition) and the feet (action) and has five key dimensions: competence, confidence, connection, caring and character; and, that when engagement exhibits these 5Cs, young people can better exhibit the 6th: contribution.^{2,3}

“We are the future of Canada and want to be a part of the development and building of the future we want to see.”⁴

– Children First’s Young Canadians’ Parliament

CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship is the expression of a public identity. It is the recognition of an official position by a government and the ability to enjoy the rights and privileges following from that position by an individual.⁵ Children and youth are active agents in our society today, not passive recipients of external influences.^{6,7,8} Young people desire “to be treated as respected and valued members of society and as citizens in the ‘here and now.’”⁹

Citizenship and civic engagement are interrelated. Democracies are healthy to the extent that their citizens are involved and that in turn is dependent on citizens having opportunities to participate and believing that they can influence outcomes and make a difference.^{10,11}

DEGREES OF PARTICIPATION

- **Consultative** – entails mechanisms through which to elicit perspectives and then use that to inform initiatives. It is adult-initiated, adult-led and managed; children do not control outcomes
- **Participatory** – entails opportunities for children to be actively involved in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of initiatives. It is adult-initiated but is done in partnership with children. It empowers children to influence or challenge both process and outcomes and allows for increasing levels of self-directed action by children over a period of time
- **Self-initiated** – where children are empowered to take action and are not merely responding to an adult-defined agenda; issues of concern are identified by children; adults serve as facilitators rather than as leaders; children are controlling the process.¹⁰

THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child specifies the right of children to participate in decisions that affect them.¹²
- Goal 16.7 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals emphasizes the importance of ensuring “responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.”¹³
- In the report Child Participation in Local Governance, UNICEF notes that a common theme in its work across several nations is that participation “at the local level is considered key to ensuring that children’s participation endures.”¹⁴

“When children and youth are marginalized in planning and policy making, the public programs and environments that get created tend to exclude them thereby further relegating young people to the private realm of their homes where they further disengage from community with increasingly fewer opportunities to engage in the broader community and shape their place in society.”¹⁵

EARLY YEARS



ADOLESCENCE

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child imposes no lower age limit on the exercise of the right to participate.¹⁰ Young children are experts in their own lives with the competence to communicate and a unique insight into their experiences.¹⁶

In one study in the UK with a sample of six hundred 13 to 16 year-olds, 81% said that they had never been asked their opinion on local issues and had not had any opportunity to contribute to local government decision making; but, 72% wished to have opportunities to voice their opinion.¹⁷

66% of Grades 8-12 students in BC felt that the activities they took part in were meaningful.¹⁸

66%



44% of Grade 8-12 students felt that their ideas were listened to and acted upon in the meaningful activities they took part in over the past year.¹⁸

44%



DIGITAL PARTICIPATION

Digital Participation refers to the use of the internet, social media, and mobile technology to enable participation in democratic life.

Digital technologies are a key part of young people's realities and need to be taken into consideration when engaging children and youth.^{19,20} Children are going online more often, for longer, at younger ages, with more devices and for different purposes.^{21,22}

“Children value technology as a way to learn more about issues that their communities face, to gather information, to be informed about events, and to share views and experiences with others.”²³

Digital platforms and tools have been shown to be one way to increase the social inclusion of young people who may be experiencing disadvantages arising from their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, among other socio-cultural dimensions.^{24,25,26} However, not every young person has equal access to the internet or digital devices. Policy makers need to consider how digital participation can increase social inclusion but also to be aware of disparities in digital access, as it has the potential to both reinforce and exacerbate existing social inequalities.^{27,28,29} Digital literacy is also necessary to enable young people to meaningfully engage online.³⁰ The online world is complicated and full of misinformation (not intentional) and disinformation (intentional).³¹



IMPORTANCE OF PLAY TO CHILD AND YOUTH MENTAL Well-being

WHY

Participation has many benefits for young people's well-being.^{10,32,33,34,35} There is ample evidence showing its effects on positive child and youth development. Positive impacts include:



- Communication and collaborative skills
- Levels of civic competence
- Feelings of belonging
- Self-esteem
- Social connections to both peers and adults in the community
- Opportunities to have fun³⁶
- Awareness and capacity to engage in and contribute to their community³³
- Sense of purpose and hope for their future³⁷

AGENCY & AUTONOMY

Agency is the desire and ability to make decisions and drive change in one's own life, in community, and in the larger spheres of influence.³⁸ Agency is among the top priorities for young people's mental well-being.^{39,40,41,42,43,44}

Autonomy is feeling and thinking independently, a sense of self-governance and freedom to make choices. Even at young ages, when a child has autonomy, even in small ways, it helps to build self-confidence and self-esteem and is considered a critical part of healthy development.⁴⁵

*In a research project with a sample of over 200 students, 94% said that participatory activities had made them feel like they could improve things in the community and that they felt proud of their achievements; and 97% said that the participation had made them feel more independent, trusted and responsible.*⁴⁶

Poor quality and inauthentic opportunities for participation can have a negative impact on young people's sense of agency and autonomy and can create a barrier to young people's desire to get involved in future participatory opportunities.^{36,47,48,49} Several studies found that when the participation – particularly in decision making processes – is perceived to be tokenistic and ineffective, it can fuel young people's views that nothing matters and heightens their feelings of distrust, cynicism, exclusion and powerlessness.^{10,36,9,50}

*“children have highly developed skills to spot token participation”*⁵¹

*“token participation may be more problematic than non-participation because the invitation to participate creates expectations that remain unfulfilled.”*⁵²

SELF-ESTEEM, SELF-CONFIDENCE, SELF-EFFICACY, SELF-CONCEPT

Self-esteem refers to when you appreciate and value yourself.⁵³

Self-confidence is your belief in yourself and your abilities.⁵³

Self-efficacy refers to one's belief in one's ability to achieve specific goals.⁵⁴

Self-concept is how you perceive yourself and is derived from self-esteem and self-efficacy.⁵⁵

All of these strongly impact mental well-being and positive child and youth development.^{56,57,58,59,60} Young people's voice in decision making, particularly when supported by caring adults, promotes self-efficacy and self-confidence, among other developmental assets.^{61,62,63,64}

PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOURS & EMPATHY

Prosocial behaviours are acts that are intended to benefit others (e.g., helping, sharing, comforting, volunteering, and cooperating).⁶⁵

Empathy is the ability to perceive and to be sensitive to the emotional states of others, coupled with a motivation to care for their well-being.⁶⁶

Prosocial behaviour leads to increased well-being^{67,68}
 “Policy makers and practitioners are correct to see kindness interventions as effective ways of improving well-being.”⁶⁹

Empathy motivates many prosocial behaviours, inhibits aggression, and facilitates cooperation.⁷⁰ Children as young as one year of age demonstrate empathy, display prosocial behaviours and are generally eager to be helpful, seeking opportunities to assist others and taking pride in their helping.^{70,71,72,73,74} Empathy is also a protective against antisocial behaviour as low cognitive empathy is strongly associated with delinquent behaviour.^{75,76,77,78,79} The development of empathy is influenced by both biological and environmental processes.⁸⁰ Positive relationships foster empathy development from a young age via social learning and imitation. “In adolescence empathy development is more strongly associated with the quality of peer relationships at school and in community environments.”⁸¹

“[The] same region of the brain corresponding to personal rewards (the ventral striatum) is also activated by helping others. This has led to a new understanding of the adolescent brain as being ripe for social learning opportunities, and that providing opportunities for youth to help others is vital for their development.”⁸²

CITIZENSHIP, BELONGING & MATTERING

While citizenship has frequently been recognized as status, it is probably most immediately experienced as a feeling of belonging.^{83,84} Feeling like outsiders and not as full-fledged citizens negatively impacts young people's wellness.^{85,86}

“Being young right now is hard. It feels like we’re constantly reminded that nobody cares about our futures: not our government, not the generations that came before us and definitely not our political system.”⁸⁷

Participatory projects have been shown to overcome children and youth's feelings of social exclusion.^{88,41,42,43,86} One impact of participation on young people is a higher sense of belonging and an increased sense of commitment to their community.⁴⁷ Through young people's participation in the community, their social trust increases, their communities feel more welcoming and there is a higher acceptance of people different from themselves.^{36,89,48,90,91,92}

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SUPPORTIVE ADULTS

The evidence is clear on the importance of supportive adults for the mental well-being of children and youth.^{93,94,95} Participation in the community enables the formation of supportive connections between young people and adults.^{47,96,97} Supportive adults can also be a key enabler of the effective participation of young people.^{88,98}

Mentors: Research suggests that young people's mentoring relationships are associated with better academic, vocational and psychosocial functioning, including fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression and less problematic behaviours such as theft and violence.^{98,99,100,101}

Connecting a face to the action: Studies show that providing young people more exposure to community members can enhance their sense of belonging.¹⁰² Studies also emphasize to policy makers themselves that relationship building is key to the effective participation of young people in decision making and that this often involves long-term and frequent contact with young people to build those relationships and to strengthen trust.^{103,104}

The role of adults in child and youth participation: Studies show that the most effective adults in young people's lives are not overly directive but rather are responsive and provide appropriate structure, challenge and support.^{105,106,107} From a more equal collaboration perspective, a “youth-adult partnership” is one that involves citizens across generations working together to address common concerns, integrating young people's perspectives and skills with professional adults' experience and wisdom.¹⁰⁸ At their best, youth-adult partnerships emphasize mutuality and respect among young people and adults, with a goal-oriented focus on shared leading and learning.¹⁰⁹

VOLUNTEERING

Many studies have found that young people’s informal and formal volunteering is positively correlated with reduced depressive symptoms, better self-reported health, and increased self-esteem.^{110,111,112,113,114} While some benefits of volunteering (e.g., employability skills, social connections) can occur regardless of whether the participation is voluntary, research suggests that psycho-social benefits are more likely incurred when the participation is not compulsory, particularly if the volunteer work exposes young people to new opportunities, supports their experience, challenges them, and is of high quality.^{90,115,116,117,118}

EMPLOYMENT

There is debate as to whether child and youth employment positively or negatively impacts healthy development.¹¹⁹ However, it all comes down to “it depends.” Some of the negative employment contexts that studies have identified include inadequate training, worker injury, power imbalances, and situations where young workers may not know their rights, and may feel uncomfortable raising safety issues at work.^{120,121,122} Some of the benefits for young people include a growing sense of autonomy and purpose, broadening relationships with adults and peers, a sense of achievement and status and a stronger sense of responsibility.¹²³ Studies find that the majority of adolescents have had satisfying work experiences and have felt that it has helped to prepare them for adult life.^{124,125,126}

An evaluation of the Food Project – a Massachusetts organization that hires 140 adolescents each summer to grow food to donate to hunger relief organizations – found that the key elements to successful outcomes were:

- positive adult role models
- exposure to young people different from themselves
- strong alignment between activities and outcomes
- high expectations from staff
- opportunities to learn from mistakes.¹²⁷

“Actually, I think kids come here and sometimes don’t know who they are, but they discover it through the program. That’s what happened to me.”¹²⁸

- Former participant and current director of the program, Greg Gale

HOW

ACTIONS LOCAL GOVERNMENTS CAN TAKE TO SUPPORT PARTICIPATION

LEGEND

-  RURAL/SMALL TOWN
-  URBAN/MID-SIZED COMMUNITY
-  INTERNATIONAL

CREATE A STRATEGY

 Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland

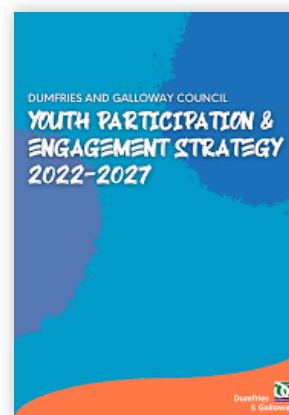
Dumfries and Galloway Youth Participation and Engagement Strategy 2022-2027

In 2018, Dumfries and Galloway Council agreed to the region's first Youth Participation and Engagement Strategy for people aged 12 to 25. The Dumfries and Galloway Council's commitment is:

- We will ensure young people have the skills, ability and confidence to speak out
- We will talk with, listen to and value our young people
- We will make sure that young people have opportunities and are given choices to actively and meaningfully get involved in the decisions that affect their lives
- We will act on the views of young people by reviewing and changing Council services as required

Examples of actions from the Youth Participation and Engagement Strategy implemented from 2018-2021 include 10,000 Voices, an initiative that succeeded in gathering the voices of 10,000 young people ages 10 to 25, reaching 46.9% of all young people in Dumfries and Galloway. The findings from 10,000 Voices were used to inform municipal planning priorities and service delivery by a wide range of partners across the region. A Youth Action Group was also created

and was given a budget of 120,000 pounds to invest in youth groups, projects and events to address issues highlighted through 10,000 Voices. Other events included the Roots Activist and Volunteer



Gathering which focused on providing young people with the opportunity to develop their activist and volunteer skills; and the LGBT Youth Gathering that brought together 200 LGBT youth and their allies. The Chameleon Youth Steering Group was formed coming out of the LGBT event and, among other activities, continues to hold a LGBT Gathering in Dumfries and Galloway every year.

The 2022-2027 Youth Participation and Engagement Strategy outlines the youth democracy structures that were put in place in the municipality: the Dumfries and Galloway Youth Council (DGYC) and the Galloway Champions Board Project. The DGYC is made up of 35 volunteers aged 12-25 who have been elected by their peers to serve a two-year term. Aside from a local focus, these Youth Councillors also represent the view of youth from Dumfries and Galloway at a national level. The Champions Board Project is the overarching term used to describe the engagement between youth in care and Senior Officers and Elected Members through the targeted services delivered by Council Youth Work Services for youth in care.

TIPS FOR ENGAGEMENT
7 GOLDEN RULES OF PARTICIPATION

Included in a report written by the Children and Young People’s Commissioner (Scotland). The rules were created to remind adults of what participation means from the point of view of children and youth and to remind young people to think about what they need from adults to support them to participate.

1. Understand my rights
2. A chance to be involved
3. Remember it’s my choice
4. Value me
5. Support me
6. Work together
7. Keep in touch

FIVE THINGS CITY COUNCILS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE, ACCORDING TO YOUNG PEOPLE

1. Engaging young people means breaking down a harmful tradition of exclusion
2. Don’t wait for young people to participate—bring participation to them
3. Make participation as informal as possible
4. Young people will give it to you straight
5. Know that this is a never-ending commitment

MECHANISM FOR PARTICIPATION
 Tirana, Albania

Children’s Local Council

Tirana, the capital and largest city in Albania, elected Erion Veliaj as mayor in 2015. He has structured his vision for urban change around children and has a Chief Child Officer to ensure that the vision of the mayor is translated into all parts of municipal affairs. One of the mayor’s approaches is the [Children’s Local Council](#) where every day different classes of students come to city hall to talk with the mayor or one of the City directors. It is about changing the way that people at city hall think by strengthening connections with young people and hearing about their experiences and ideas. Once a month, high school students are invited to take over City administration. One student becomes the mayor and others become directors. This results in upwards of 150 adolescents getting the opportunity to play at being senior-level City staff each month. An example of one idea that children raised with the mayor and senior staff was the need to make friendlier urban environments around schools. As part of the response to this, every weekend the City has groups of children work with the Parks and Recreation team, biking around the city and focusing on improvements to the built environment. The initiative is not just about improving the public realm; it is also about integrating the involvement of children as part of the City’s operational culture.



 Lewisham, United Kingdom

Young Mayor’s Project

The [Young Mayor’s Project](#) is at the heart of Lewisham’s Children and Young People’s Citizenship and Participation Strategy. The Young Mayor is elected by young people. Candidates must live or attend school in Lewisham and be between the ages of 12 and 17. The second place candidate automatically becomes the Deputy Young Mayor. The third and four place candidates are automatically invited to serve as Young Advisors to the Young Mayor and Young Deputy Mayor. Young Advisors are a group of around 25 young people who act in a similar role to a cabinet. Young people go through an application process to become a Young Advisor. There is also a Young Citizens Panel which is open to any 11 to 18 year-old who would like to get involved. Throughout the year, the young representatives work with peers, politicians, local government staff and other adults on local and regional activities. This includes campaigns, strategic conversations and project development. The young representatives also take responsibility for consulting with young people from across the borough about how the Young Mayor’s annual budget of 25,000 pounds should be spent.



BEST PRACTICES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

- Develop a Youth Council that is relevant to the local context, the current mission, and the developmental phase appropriate to the body
- Adult allies are important
- Recognize and address anti-youth attitudes
- Be purposeful in providing social networking opportunities
- Provide youth development opportunities (e.g., ongoing training)



The “Italian City of Youth 2023”

[Giovani Onlife Napoli](#) is a project developed by the City Council of Naples to allow for real change in how young people participate in their local government, with new mechanisms – both online platforms and physical structural shifts – that aim to enhance participation:

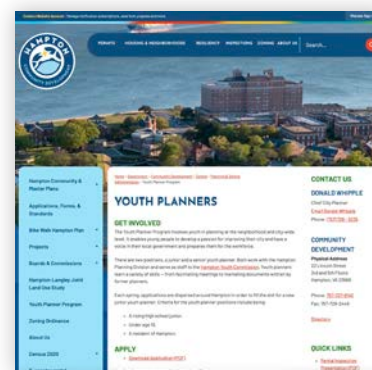
- Four Youth Ambassadors (YAs) will be elected to provide official representation of youth voices.
- An official and permanent local government table will be established to receive the thoughts and ideas from young people which will then be taken to Council.
- An online platform will be developed that will facilitate gathering input, thoughts and ideas from young people, with the ideas and requests brought to “the institutional working table to be discussed and integrated into the political intervention lines of the municipality”.

At the end of the project, a large public event will take place to celebrate and to provide a report-back to young people to communicate all the actions that have been taken. This will be held as part of the annual June Youth Review of the Councilorship for Youth and Employment.



City of Hampton Youth Planners

The City of Hampton established the [Youth Planner Program](#) (YPP). In the YPP there are two positions: a junior and a senior youth planner. Both youth planners work in the Hampton Planning Division and act as staff liaisons to the Hampton Youth Commission which is made up of 20 to 30 high school students appointed by the City. The youth planners work 15 hours a week after school for two years. Beginning with the 2010 Comprehensive Plan, each municipal document has an entire section written entirely by the youth planners and focused on young people’s strategic issues. The City of Hampton provides the youth planners with training so that they can effectively participate in the City’s Planning department, survey their peers, make recommendations to Council and serve on City Boards and committees.



 Toronto, Ontario

Mouse City

[Mouse City](#), developed by the organization Small Print, involves children aged 2 to 12 in designing a miniature cardboard city for mice that addresses real-life urban issues such as the need for accessible public transit. Small Print also educates municipal planners on how to transform fun, creative, accessible loose play materials into feedback that can inform policies and design that shape cities. Mouse City is a method that can instill lifelong engagement in civic issues and is both a way to educate young children in planning and city building, as well as a way to facilitate this age group to share their experiences and ideas using storytelling and art.



 Krakow, Poland

YouthKraKHack

Tools such as hackathons enable direct communication between young people and decision makers and can help to stimulate creativity, to develop public trust and to encourage a culture of participation. In 2018, the first YouthKraKHack took part in Krakow with 50 young people who designed ten proposals to present to municipal officials. “Young people were invited to innovate, be bold and dare to reform municipal policies”. Some of the projects from the hackathon are now in the implementation phase, some served as an inspiration to a similar solution, and some were directed as a recommendation for organizations outside of local government. All of the ideas were considered when designing Young Krakow 2.0, the City’s youth strategy. The Committee of Citizens Dialogue for Youth acted in the role of an information hub with regards to further action taken on the proposed youth recommendations.

 Oslo, Norway

Augmented Reality with Youth in Urban Planning

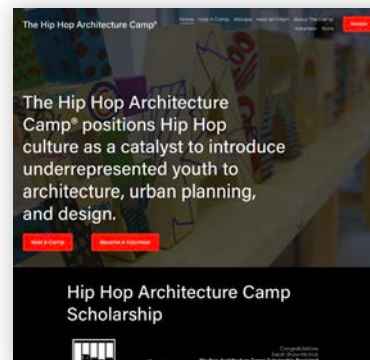
This [study](#) involved field work with Augmented Reality (AR) that was done in 2020 and 2021 over five weeks with 5 different groups of youth from 8 different districts in Oslo. The youth were tasked with planning where to plant a portion of Oslo’s 100,000 new trees. The researchers noted that AR was a highly intuitive tool for youth and that the youth found that the AR helped with the creation of their planning proposals on site at scale. Through their use of AR, the majority of the youth participants reported an increased understanding of urban planning and an increased sense of confidence in displaying their designs. The participants also expressed appreciation of being given control of the planning process. The downsides of the AR experience were mainly related to limitations with the current technology which still had bugs and was imprecise.

Following this case study, the research team embarked on a new set of case studies which expanded to other projects in Oslo (e.g., car-free streets) and included participants of all ages.

Madison, Detroit, United States

Hip Hop Architecture Camp

Founded in 2016, the aim of the [Hip Hop Architecture Camp](#) is to build the capacity of young people who may not otherwise engage in urban planning to participate by providing an introduction to architecture through the lens of hip hop culture. The Hip Hop Architecture Camp was created by architect Michael Ford to encourage under represented youth to pursue careers in design. The camp enables youth to collaborate with design professionals, as well as hip hop artists to draw connections between the complex structure of rap lyrics and design, sparking ideas for improvements of and new spaces for their communities. The first camp was hosted by the Madison (Detroit) Public Library over four Saturdays. The library provided the space, the municipal planning department provided the funding. The Toronto Public Library hosted a camp in 2018 for 10 to 14 year olds.

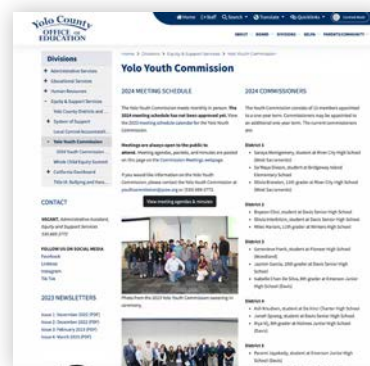


PUTTING YOUTH ON THE AGENDA

Yolo County, California, United States

Prioritizing Youth in Rural Communities

Yolo County is a rural region in California. In 2022 the County Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to establish the [Yolo Youth Commission](#) as a two-year pilot program and authorized the Yolo County Office of Education to administer the program. The Commission is meant to create “a permanent pathway for young people to shape their future and build community in Yolo.” 87 youth between the ages of 13 and 18 applied to the Commission of which 15 were selected. Youth Commissioners will provide insight into community and education issues to help the public sector better understand and address the needs of young people in the region.

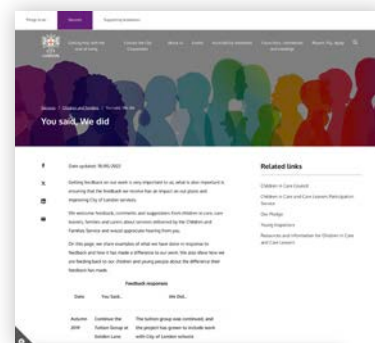


COMMUNICATION

 London, United Kingdom

You Said, We Did

As part of the City of London’s Children and Young People’s Plan 2020-2025 there is an articulated commitment to strengthen communication. One action the City has taken is the creation of the [You Said, We Did web page](#). On this page they share examples of what the City has done in response to feedback and how it has made a difference. The City also simplified the Children and Young People’s Plan 2022-2025 into a colourful, visual, [3-page document](#) that helps to communicate what the focus areas are and provides a template at the end with blank columns for “How we will achieve this” and “How we will measure this”, seeking input from young people for ideas on how they would like to see the outcomes achieved and measured.



THE COMMUNICATION OF YOUTH-FRIENDLY CITIES RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MUNICIPALITIES

In the report [Mapping Best Practices for Youth-Friendly Cities](#), municipalities in six countries were reviewed from 2020-2021 with regards to local youth policies, implementation methods and hands-on examples of various dimensions of youth friendliness. In the section on Communication and Information, the report writes that a youth-friendly city “communicates with young people in places and through channels young people are familiar with and in a language they comprehend.” Some examples are:

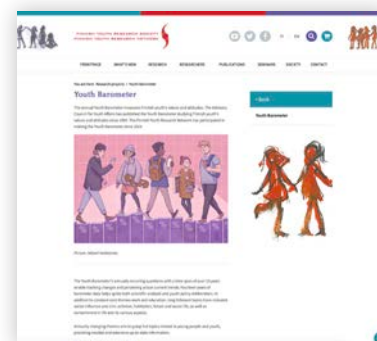
- Social media that young people can use to contact relevant decision makers
- The City has a dedicated and regularly updated web page for young people
- Young people (e.g., through a Youth Council) co-create municipal communication channels
- The City trains municipal staff to provide reliable information to young people
- The City provides an umbrella structure for youth organizations and youth facilities for communication, networking, cooperation and coordination of youth activities in the city

ANNUAL MASS PULSE CHECK



Youth Barometer

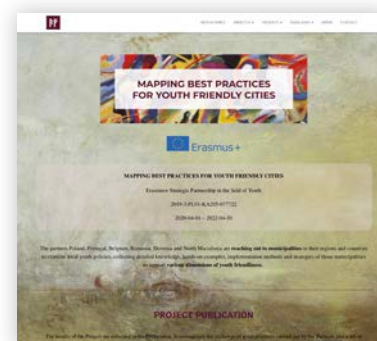
Published since 1994, the annual [Youth Barometer](#) in Finland has been one mechanism through which the government engages young people and keeps track of changes in values, attitudes, behaviours and other trends. The themes explored by the barometer change slightly each year, related, in part, to the hot topics of most relevance to young people aged 15 to 29.



YOUTH PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING



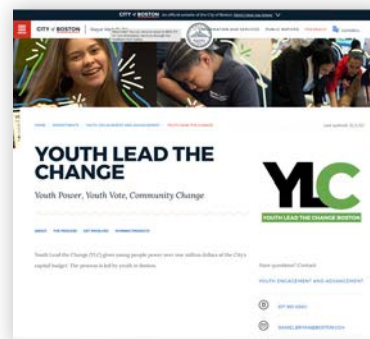
Valongo implemented its first youth [participatory budget](#) in 2014 as part of its broader initiative for a “more informed and more participatory community.” The main aims of the youth participatory budget are to promote positive youth development, deepen the dialogue between youth and the municipality, reinforce the democracy and transparency of municipal decisions, mix generations, and encourage young people to become more active in their communities. Every young person from the age of 6 can vote in the youth participatory budget, with implementation in all public schools, with particular emphasis on promoting the participation on schools located in rural districts. The Youth Participatory Budget has three categories: School, Extracurricular, and Generations (which encourages intergenerational initiatives). Young people submit ideas for projects within these categories, with the number of submissions growing each year and the budget increasing from 10,000 Euros to 200,000 Euros (which funded 20 projects in 2021).



 Boston, Massachusetts, United States

Youth Lead the Change

[Youth Lead the Change](#) (YLC) started in 2014 as an initiative for youth-led participatory budgeting in the City of Boston. The project goals of YLC are to: increase youth power; allow all voices to be heard; build stronger, safer and healthier communities; strengthen city-wide sense of pride, solidarity and equality; and, create pathways into civic life. Each year, the City of Boston invests one million dollars of the capital budget to YLC and empowers young people to decide how it will be spent in their communities. Youth pitch ideas, develop proposals and vote on three projects to be implemented. Examples of recent winning projects include: Plant trees and plants around the city; Improve the physical space of homeless shelters; Create an accessible youth Wi-Fi lounge in City Hall; Develop a space where people of all ages can come together and create all types of art; Expand Boston’s bike sharing system.



PARTICIPATION IN THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET

 Swansea, Wales

City of Swansea Annual Budget Conversation with Children and Youth

Since 2013, the City of Swansea has held an “[Annual Big Budget Conversation](#)” with children and youth. Through this process, young people participate in workshops to explore budget proposals and have taken part in a range of financial decisions related to education services, care services for older people and disabled adults, cultural services, highways and transport services, and future spending. All input is reported back to City Council for consideration and children and youth are provided feedback about how their input has been taken into account.

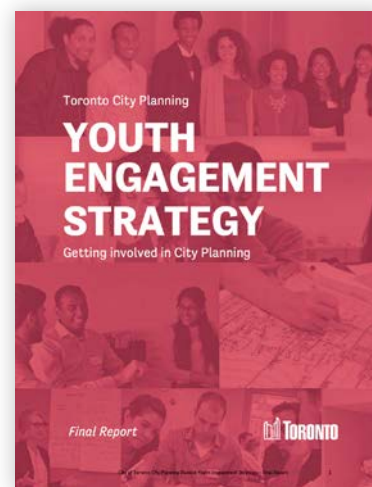


INTEGRATING URBAN PLANNING INTO SCHOOLS

 Toronto, Ontario

Planners in Classrooms

Among the Guiding Principles of the City of Toronto's Youth Engagement Strategy are: putting youth in positions of influence, building the capacity of youth, and going to where the youth are. This, combined with the City of Toronto Planning Department's goal to make Toronto the most engaged city in North America, led to the inclusion of [Planners in Classrooms](#), an educational outreach program, as one of the proposed actions in the strategy. The fundamental objective of Planners in Classrooms is to bring city planning out of City Hall and into Toronto schools, with the short-term aim of teaching younger generations about city planning and the long-term aim of mobilizing young people to feel more ownership over their communities and to engage in city planning throughout their lives.



MEASUREMENT

 Swansea, Wales

Measuring Young People's Participation in Decision-Making: What Young People Say

Drawing upon research undertaken in Swansea (U.K.) to explore how young people aged 11 to 16 thought their participation in decision making should be measured, the article [Measuring Young People's Participation in Decision-Making](#) focuses and reflects on the views of young people and the construction of a new participation measurement scale. The young people in Swansea identified three minimum standards for the development of a new scale: Easier to understand language – concise, non-technical, non-patronizing, no jargon; Simple and clean visuals – do not saturate it with graphical representations as it is often childish or irrelevant; Get rid of hierarchy – do not suggest, for example, that autonomous decision making is better than consultation. The young people did not see this as linear but rather as fluid – different modes for different times.

The youth from Swansea's new scale includes:

- I am able to take action or make decisions myself
- I am able to take action or make decisions jointly with other people
- I am able to give my view and it affects actions or decisions that are made
- I am able to give my view but it does not affect action or decisions that are made
- I am unable to give my view or take any action



EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

 Halifax, Nova Scotia

Youth WORX Program

[Youth WORX](#) is an employment program for 16 to 24 year olds that provides a supportive work environment that offers 24 weeks with a paid job and life skills building. The program targets young people who are not in school and who are facing barriers to employment. A recent analysis of program participants found that 51% had mental health issues, 48% had a learning disability, 48% did not graduate from high school, 44% lacked job experience, and 2% had a history of addictions. The City of Halifax funds the program but half of the program costs are offset by the fees that the program charges clients for the services provided by the participants. The employment part of the program has involved operating the Youth WORX café in the Sackville Sports Stadium, delivering and repairing green carts on behalf of the municipality, and working at the municipal Enviro Depot paper recycling services. The mentoring part of the program includes working alongside Youth WORX staff who provide guidance and coaching. The youth complete self-assessments throughout the program to monitor their own perceptions of the skills that they are gaining. Results have shown that participants experience an increase in all nine employability skills (e.g., confidence, stress management, time management, teamwork, accountability, adaptability, etc.).



MECHANISMS FOR EMPLOYMENT

 New Orleans, Louisiana

Pathways and Summer Success Youth Internship Programs

The Office of Youth and Families in New Orleans has a suite of what they refer to as their [Signature Programs](#). This includes the: Junior Civic Leadership Academy, an 8-week program that provides young people with an in-depth look at city government with hands-on demonstrations; the Mayor for a Day Contest in which the winners are sworn in and shadow the mayor for a day; as well as the Youth Advisory Council that provides feedback to City Council and City departments, organizes an annual youth summit, and leads a collective impact project. Also included in the suite of Signature Programs are two internship programs: Pathways Youth Internship Program, a year-round workforce readiness program that seeks to mitigate child poverty, unemployment and recidivism by providing participants with paid work internships, workshops, case management, and mentoring; as well as Summer Success Internship Program: a 5 week summer program for at-risk and system-involved youth which aims to increase financial stability, employment access, and positive social supports for participants.

 Amsterdam, Netherlands

DropOuts

Founded in 2014, DropOuts is a social enterprise advertising agency that only employs young people who have difficulty entering the labour market due to dropping out of school or due to a physical disability. While the agency is focused on young people between the ages of 18 to 30, there may be components of this approach that could inform initiatives for younger age cohorts. DropOuts aims to employ youth for a maximum of three years, after which the company helps them to move on to another employer. New employees are often recruited through cooperation with the City of Amsterdam. Many of DropOuts clients are companies that need to meet the social return investment (5% of revenue) that the City of Amsterdam sets in procurement processes.

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

 Amsterdam, Netherlands

Amsterdam Impact

[Amsterdam Impact](#) is the City of Amsterdam’s initiative to nurture social entrepreneurship in the city and to transform the whole economy into one that creates both social and financial value. Part of Amsterdam Impact includes integrating impact entrepreneurship into the curriculum at all levels to help build a generation with skills to make a difference. In 2021, Amsterdam Impact developed a six-lesson series on social and sustainable entrepreneurship for 500 children ages 9 to 12. Amsterdam Impact also co-founded 1,260 places in Futureproof, a nation-wide program for 16 to 27 year olds to gain entrepreneurial skills and work experience within impact businesses. In 2022, the City of Amsterdam joined the City Deal Entrepreneurship, a network of 80 organizations to strengthen the Dutch impact entrepreneurship ecosystem to accelerate the transition to a more sustainable and inclusive economy.



TOOLS, RESOURCES & GUIDES

Tips for Engagement: Relationships are Critical for Participation

https://www.yacwa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/2643_MeasuretheMagic_001.pdf

Practical Guide to Including Seldom-Heard Children and Young People in Decision-Making

<https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/24470/1/PracticalGuieSeldomHeardChildren.pdf>

Child and Youth Participation – Options for Action

https://ciudadesamigas.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/CFCL_Child_and_Youth_Participation_-_Options_for_Action.pdf

Knocking on the Door: Youth Civic Engagement and Its Impact on Social Connectedness and Wellness

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5fec97c81c227637fcd788af/t/636c9ec36328e25b234bd5fc/1668062919450/CivicEngagementReport_V8.pdf

Involving Young People in Civic Matters: Supplementary Guide

<https://www.edmonton.ca/public-files/assets/document?path=PDF/Involving-Young-People-Guide.pdf>

The Municipal Youth Engagement Handbook

<https://www.ubcm.ca/sites/default/files/2022-03/LGAW%20FCM%20-%20Municipal%20Youth%20Engagement%20Handbook.pdf>

Authentic Youth Civic Engagement: A Guide for Municipal Leaders

https://rhyclearinghouse.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/docs/19733-Authentic_Youth_Civic_Engagement.pdf

Encouraging Children's Participation in Municipal Services and Projects: Framework

<https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dretsocials/sites/default/files/arxiu-documents/encouraging-children-participation-municipal-services-projects.pdf>

Participatory Budgeting Tool

<https://pbnetwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Welsh-Govt-PB-toolkit.pdf>

Block by Block Playbook – Toolkit that walks through every step of running a community Minecraft Workshop

<https://www.blockbyblock.org/playbook>

Matrix for Measuring Child Participation

<https://bibalex.org/baifa/Attachment/Documents/114976.pdf>

Child Participation Assessment Tool

<https://participationpool.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Council-of-Europe-2016-Child-Participation-Assessment-Tool.pdf>

Are We Making a Difference? Understanding the Leading Practices in Youth Volunteerism and Service

https://youthrex.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/youthinnovation-report_final_lr.pdf



GUIDES TO ENABLE THE PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN OVERALL GOVERNANCE AND DECISION MAKING

Can You Hear Me? The Right of Young Children to Participate in Decisions that Affect Them

<https://bibalex.org/baifa/Attachment/Documents/114976.pdf>

Child Engagement Toolkit

<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/9093-tcs-child-engagement-toolkit.pdf>

Involving Children in Decision Making: Your Quick Guide

<https://childcomm.tas.gov.au/>

A Guide to the Effective Involvement of Children and Young People Resource Pack

https://www.nwleics.gov.uk/files/documents/guide_to_involving_children_and_young_people/Guide%20to%20Involving%20Children%20and%20Young%20People.pdf

Youth Participation in Governance: Creating Youth Friendly Communities

<https://heartwood.ns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/YouthGovernance.pdf>



GUIDES TO INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE IN URBAN PLANNING

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<https://www.cip-icu.ca/Files/Resources/kidsguide.aspx>

The City at Eye Level for Kids

https://thecityateyelevel.com/app/uploads/2019/06/eBook_CAEL_Kids_Book_Design_Kidsgecomprimeerd.pdf

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<https://www.routledge.com/Designing-Cities-with-Children-and-Young-People-Beyond-Playgrounds-and/Bishop-Corkery/p/book/9781138890824#>

RESEARCH

Child Led Participation: A Scoping Review of Empirical Studies

<https://www.cogitatiopress.com/socialinclusion/article/view/4921/4921>

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Protective Factor

PLAY



WHERE TO START

Play: Brain growth and development, stress relief, and exercise.

Quality play consists of a mix of indoor and outdoor, supervised and independent, free and structured, and solitary and social activity.

Create and maintain spaces for all kinds of play, not just in designated play places.

Consider how age, preferences, time, cost and inclusivity affect participation in play.

Ensure access to play through independent mobility, itself a form of play.

WHAT

Children and youth are hardwired for play-- if the conditions allow for it, they will. Play includes a wide range of activities from sports, games, and music; to beach days and snow forts; or building blocks and drawing. It can be guided, supervised, scheduled, and structured, or it can be unstructured “free” play. It can also be a social activity or experienced on one’s own.

“Playing is fun because you can choose what you want to play and who you want to play with. Play is when we can do what we want and not what grownups tell us.”¹

OUTDOOR PLAY

- Outdoor play is the preferred play space for young people of all ages.
- 89% of children prefer outdoor play to watching TV.²
- Outdoor play has shown to promote a wider diversity of play and longer play periods.³

INDEPENDENT MOBILITY AND PLAY

- Play and children’s independent mobility are interconnected. Children who are able to get to places on their own are more likely to meet up with friends to play, play outdoors more often, and have increased physical activity.^{4,5}
- In children’s independent mobility, the child chooses the type, speed, direction, and even the destination of their travel, with adults either absent or following. Independent mobility is play in its own right. “Adults forget how fun it is to just roam around.”⁵
- Child friendly communities need better provision for walking, cycling, and traffic management and improved connectivity between key destinations.⁶

PLAY THROUGH THE AGES

EARLY YEARS



Peers and social opportunities remain important from early childhood through adolescence. Choice and control are both common themes across age groups.

35% of 5 year olds played on average outside in their neighbourhood in the past 6 months⁷

MIDDLE CHILDHOOD



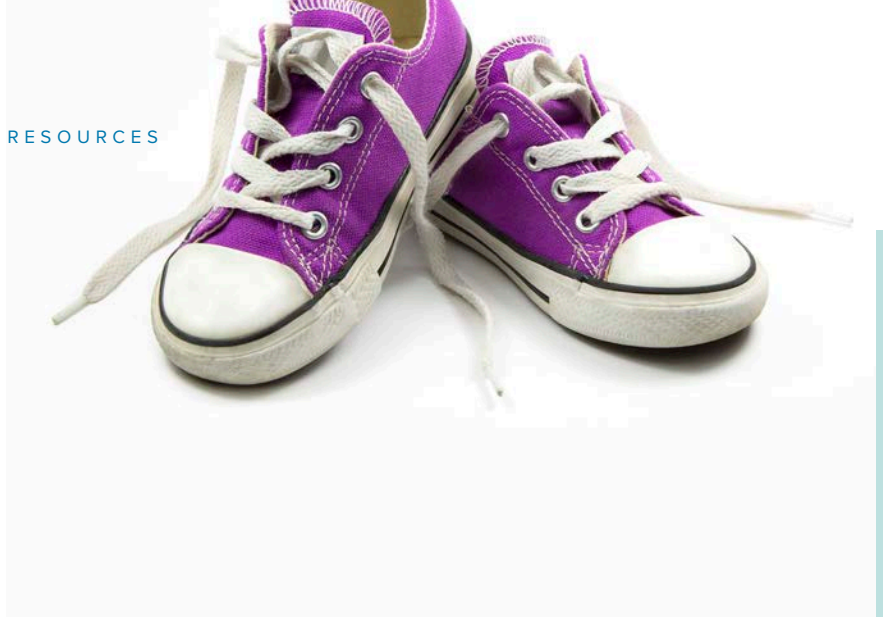
As children age, they seek more privacy and independence with less adult intervention and more opportunities to develop their social identity.

55% of Grade 5 students in BC are driven to school⁸

ADOLESCENCE

Adolescence tend to have a higher skill level based on life experience and are often allowed more freedom, however often feel more pressure from school, work, and household responsibilities.

18% of adolescents (Gr 8-12) are meeting the Canadian physical activity guidelines for this age group⁹



WHY

TRENDS IN PLAY



PLAY

Compared to previous generations, children are spending less time playing, in part due to increased time and weight given to schooling and other adult-directed activities.^{10,11}



PUBLIC SPACE FOR PLAY

Children are seen as increasingly unwelcome in places that are not considered “child spaces” (e.g., playgrounds). Over three generations, diversity of play has declined, the number and types of places children play has declined, and the number of people that children meet up with in public spaces has declined.¹²



INDOOR PLAY, AT HOME AND ON SCREENS

Young people are spending more time at home, indoors, and on screens.^{13,14,15} No age cohort of Canadian children is meeting the screen time guidelines, this is linked to lower levels of physical activity and reduced sleep.¹⁶



STRUCTURED AND SUPERVISED PLAY

Unstructured play is critical for children’s social and physical development.²⁵ Its decline is partially due to overly protective parenting, play structures, and environments, and coincides with more prescriptive play (e.g., Lego sets that tell you what to make), and more supervised and scheduled play.¹³ Structured play is important for positive child and youth development, however a balance must be struck between organized activities and informal play where young people are free to enjoy themselves without adult control.



CHILDREN’S ACTIVE TRAVEL AND INDEPENDENT MOBILITY

Compared to previous generations, children have smaller home ranges (the distance they can travel away from their home on their own during outdoor play).¹⁸ There has also been a decrease in active modes of travel to school over time.¹⁹ The average grade for Active Transportation for children on the Canadian Physical Activity report card since 2010 has been a D.²⁰

IMPORTANCE OF PLAY TO CHILD AND YOUTH MENTAL Well-being

“We are continuously learning that play is really essential for kids – it’s not just an afterthought or an accessory”²¹

– Dr. Hirsh-Pasek

Play is so fundamental to child development that it is included in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.²² Play is a uniquely all-in-one opportunity to promote the social-emotional, cognitive, language and self-regulation skills that build executive function and a prosocial brain.²³ Play fosters flexible and creative thinking, provides opportunities to encounter and solve real problems, and enables the building and demonstration of competence.^{24,25,26}

Play makes young people happy. Studies have shown that the highest levels of happiness occur when young people are out of school and playing with friends. Play also protects children from mental health issues. Socially active leisure time during adolescence is related to better long-term mental health.²⁷

PLAYGROUNDS & UNSTRUCTURED PLAY

The Canadian Public Health Association released a position statement in 2019 on unstructured play as a child’s right as well as a critical component to child well-being.²⁸ Unstructured play enables children’s agency and control over their experience and requires initiative-taking. Adults can limit play due to their own time constraints, noise level preference, energy levels, and perception of risk.²⁹ Adults who constrain play go beyond parents and caregivers. “Containing Children: Some Lessons on Planning for Play from New York City” explains that playgrounds are a 20th century invention created by adults to keep children off the street.³⁰ Playgrounds are a kind of structured, prescriptive play and generally present a narrow range of play options, separate children from daily community life and fail to satisfy the complexity of children’s development needs.³⁰

THE ROLE OF RISK IN PLAY

Taking risk is a typical part of growing up, exploring limits, and testing abilities. It is also important for child and youth development and well-being.^{31,32} Many young people today are growing up in a world full of fear and risk aversion which is resulting in over protection.³¹ Risk aversion is leading to a safe-at-all-costs mentality which is resulting in young people who have never explored risk and uncertainty on their own terms, have little idea of what they can and cannot do, and lack skills in risk assessment.^{32,33}

There is a difference between risk and hazard. For example, for young children, bushes that provide children to hide or “get lost” in are part of risky play but a rusted out slide is a hazard that should be removed.³² Risky play proponents encourage play environments that are “as safe as necessary” as opposed to “as safe as possible”.³³ Rather than focusing on eliminating all risk, the goal should be to build the capacity of children and youth to assess risk and manage it.

Children deliberately put themselves into moderately fear-inducing conditions in play. That is what makes play fun. If too little fear is induced in play, the activity is boring; but, if too much is induced, it is no longer fun, it is terrifying. Nobody but the child knows the right dose which is why all such play must be self-directed and self-controlled.³⁴

ACTIVE TRAVEL AND CHILDREN'S INDEPENDENT MOBILITY

Children's independent mobility is interconnected with unstructured play and, as such, unlocks the same kinds of benefits in relation to increased physical activity, increased creativity, increased sociability, and increased agency.^{35,36}

“The ability for a child to travel without supervision directly impacts the level of access children have to play.”⁴

Research shows that children who are able to get to places on their own are more likely to meet up with friends to play, play outdoors more often and have increased physical activity.^{4,5}

In fact, independent mobility is play in its own right.⁵

Children's independent mobility has been positively associated with psychological well-being, better spatial awareness and orientation, improved risk assessment and decision-making, stronger self-esteem, and a mastery over their environment.^{37,38,39,40,41}

Parents and children who use active modes of travel report more positive emotions than passive travelers.⁴² Providing more independent mobility options for diverse community members, including children, is a planning strategy that will lead to happier cities.⁴³

PLAY ALSO PROMOTES MENTAL WELL-BEING THROUGH:

Brain Development: A brain that is given opportunities for play and exploration is more resilient and can adapt better in unknown environments and unexpected situations.⁴⁴ The first 12 years of life are critical for brain development, with ages 0-3 being especially crucial as well as when humans enter adolescence.⁴⁵

Stress Relief: In the presence of childhood adversity, play becomes even more important due to its ability to regulate the body's stress response, instilling a sense of control and calm.^{23,46} Play therapy is frequently used to treat children who have experienced complex trauma such as neglect and abuse – a testament to its critical role in healing and supporting mental well-being.

Physical Activity: Play is one of the main ways in which children engage in physical activity, something associated with higher levels of well-being and stress reduction.^{47,48,49,50}

- **Early Years:** physical activity benefits cognitive development e.g., improved self-esteem, and lower levels of aggression.⁵¹
- **Middle Childhood:** physical activity is linked to fewer symptoms of depression and behavioural disorders over time.^{52,53,54}
- **Adolescence:** physical activity is a promising form of mental health promotion.⁴⁸

Time Outdoors: Exposure to natural environments benefits the mental well-being of all age groups, reducing blood pressure, reducing the production of stress hormones, and increasing feelings of calm and improved mood.^{55,56,57,58,59} It is also associated with lower levels of aggression, anger, stress, anxiety, and improved life satisfaction.^{60,61,62}

HOW

ACTIONS LOCAL GOVERNMENTS CAN TAKE TO SUPPORT PLAY

LEGEND

-  RURAL/SMALL TOWN
-  URBAN/MID-SIZED COMMUNITY
-  INTERNATIONAL

CREATE A STRATEGY

 Barcelona, Spain

Plan for Play in Barcelona’s Public Spaces

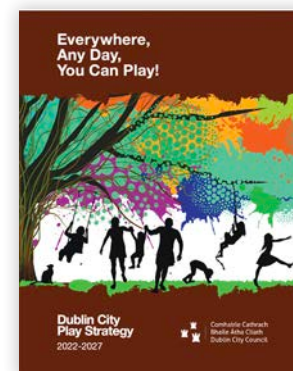
The City of Barcelona has created a [strategy](#) that aims to move from a city with playgrounds to a playable city. Actions range from removing signs that deter play to a Let’s Play in the Square initiative (recreational suggestions to encourage people to get together). Milestones outlined in the plan include ensuring 100% of refurbished areas are certified as inclusive and increasing opportunities for play with challenges especially designed for older children and adolescents (e.g., ziplines).



 Dublin, Ireland

Everywhere, Any Day, You can Play! Dublin Play Strategy

Dublin City Council released a [municipal play strategy](#) in 2022 that is grounded in children’s right to play, as well as in children’s autonomy for play and mobility. The strategy was created through an extensive engagement initiative with children, as well as an audit of current opportunities to play. Actions include ensuring that a reasonable percentage of public art involves playful interactive elements, supporting and encouraging the development of play-friendly neighborhoods, understanding the value of informal sports, and creating “play lounges.”





Sheffield Green and Open Space Strategy 2010-2030

Led by the Department of Landscape, the [Strategy](#) aims to improve the quality of Green and Open spaces and to green more of the city. Actions include developing a 20-year sustainability plan across the full range of play provisions, creating a City Play Working Group, developing key spaces for natural play, and involving children as partners in the development process.



BECOME A CHILD-FRIENDLY CITY



Ghent: Child-Friendly City

Ghent was among the first Flemish cities to be awarded “Child-Friendly City” status. The City asked young people how to make it better, they identified three things: more green areas, more spaces to play, and fewer cars. Ghent’s [Child Friendly Action Plan](#) contains 180 actions across all municipal departments.

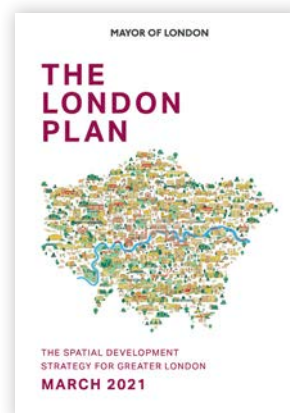


STRATEGY AND PLANNING GUIDANCE



The New London Plan and Making London Child-Friendly

The most recent [Official Community Plan for London](#) puts children and youth’s needs for play and independent mobility at the heart of spatial development. The Plan provides planning actions such as requiring residential developments likely to be used by children and youth to provide at least 10 square metres of place space per child that is free, well-designed, accessible, inclusive, stimulating, and affords play for different age cohorts, including adolescents. The Plan also requires all 33 boroughs to update their play strategies (originally required in the previous London Plan) to address unstructured play beyond playgrounds, as well as children’s independent mobility.



ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Count What Counts

In the book [Urban Playground](#), author and play expert Tim Gill highlights the need to “Measure what we value not value what we measure.” Rather than measuring playgrounds using checklists based on the presence and safety of play equipment, assessments of the richness and variety of play, suitability of location, and quality of design should be considered. He developed a list of indicators based on categories including:



CATEGORY

I WALK/CYCLE

EXAMPLE OF INDICATOR

% of children walking or cycling to public amenities; Presence of sidewalks in neighbourhoods; Presence of traffic calming measures

I HAVE PEACE AND QUITE OUTDOORS

% of streets with decibel levels above the standard 55dB;
% of neighbourhood tree cover

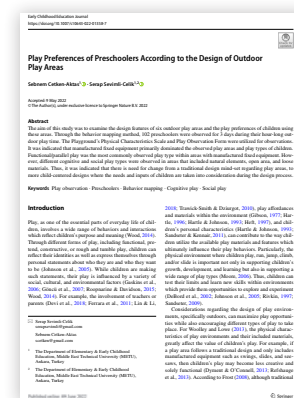
I HAVE A PICNIC WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY

\$ of parks at the neighbourhood-level with free public drinking water, toilets and other facilities for families

NATURALIZATION OF PLAY SPACES

Play Preferences of Preschoolers in Outdoor Play Areas

Well-designed play areas offer children opportunities to practice skills that affect their physical, intellectual, social and emotional development. Research shows that design features influence how children play and interact with each other. [A study](#) observing over 100 preschoolers found that children play according to the information they receive from the equipment. When using manufactured, fixed equipment, children often play in less creative and more repetitive ways. These designs also result in “parallel play” where children play beside each other but not with their peers. In contrast, play areas with vegetation, different landforms, and loose materials, result in a larger variety of play types. The more natural elements in a play area, the more cognitively complex play typically occurs.

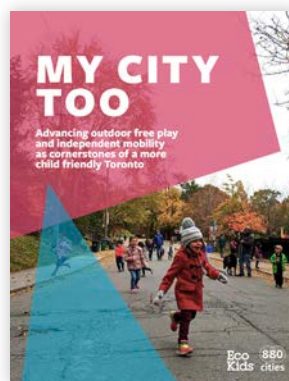


ADDRESS BARRIERS

 Toronto, Ontario

My City Too

[My City Too](#) is a project that was done in Toronto by EcoKids and 8 80 Cities. The project involved reviewing academic studies and policy documents, interviewing experts, and engaging children and caregivers to learn about barriers in Toronto and ideas to address them. 10 main recommendations were developed regarding child-led inclusive play; safe, healthy playful streets; and child-centred decision-making.



 Belgium & United Kingdom

How to Build Public Spaces for Teen Girls

Research shows that the way formal play areas are arranged often suit boys' preferences more than girls'. Girls tend to play in places where they feel welcome and when space is not claimed by other groups such as boys or older teenagers. Girls are often less active when other groups are present because of differences in play preferences as well as safety issues. Some solutions include raising awareness of disparities and the reasons for differences, addressing traffic safety, improving social safety, and using more thoughtful design to promote inclusion.



In 2019 the NGO Kind and Samenleving in Belgium focused on girls in public space, working to develop tips and design principles to make public space more accessible. Material use, lighting, shelter, seating, and concepts such as “a place for imagination” and “landscape thinking” were covered in their [report](#).

An architect with MUF, a female-led architecture collective in the U.K., has [designed spaces](#) with gender equity in mind, including elements such as playable bridges, hammocks, and lounge chairs. The team aims to give teenage girls freedom in the city.

REPURPOSING PUBLIC SPACE

 London, England

Hackney Play Streets

Hackney, a borough of London, launched a [Play Streets](#) pilot in 2015, where residential streets are closed to through traffic for a few hours to allow for play. As of 2022, Hackney has 60 Play Streets, and [evaluation](#) of the program has found that they have increased play, resulted in minimal disruption to local traffic, and encountered very little local opposition.



GREEN SPACES AND RISK IN PLAY

 Freiburg, Germany

Lessons from Freiburg

For decades, the City of Freiburg has been installing public playgrounds that make extensive use of slopes, logs, boulders, plants, sand and other natural features. These play areas have more hazards than typical playgrounds, but children learn to take more care and responsibility for their safety in the nature play spaces, and accident rates have not increased.



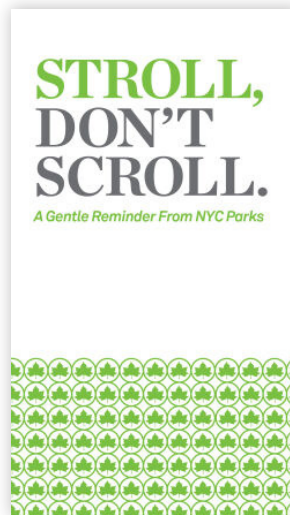
Credit: Reiselfeld, Freiburg, Lindsey Houston

MESSAGING

 New York City, USA

Parks Campaign- Get Outside

The New York City Parks Department launched an [ad campaign](#) in February 2023 to encourage residents of all ages to enjoy the outdoors in Winter. The campaign included art with slogans such as “More Green, Less Screen” and “Stroll, don’t Scroll.”



CREATING SAFE ACTIVE TRAVEL NETWORKS

  Griesheim, Germany

Playable Networks in a Rural Town

Griesheim is considered by some to be the first [playable town](#) in Germany. In response to children stating that their routes to school were boring, the Town conducted engagement with children to identify 101 routes that are important for children’s travel network. Over the course of three years, the routes were completed and designed with children so that each route has a distinct character, surface, wayfinding, and a playable object. The only criteria for the playable object was that it had to be ambiguous to allow for a variety of play. 75% of primary school survey respondents rated the project a positive improvement to the town.

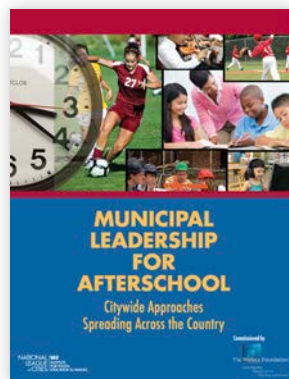


STRUCTURED PLAY ACTIVITIES

 Various Municipalities, USA

Municipal Leadership for Afterschool

The report [Municipal Leadership for Afterschool](#) profiles 27 cities in the United States to look at city-led efforts to build afterschool and out-of-school time systems. Each city made progress on six “action elements” for system building: (1) Multi-year planning; (2) Expanding participation; (3) Committed leadership; (4) Reliable information; (5) A commitment to quality; and, (6) A public or private coordinating entity. The report looks at the role of Mayor and Council, city departments, School Superintendents, and other stakeholders required in out-of-school time system building. Moving from individual afterschool programs to out-of-school time system building resulted in more sustainable approach to providing opportunities for positive youth development.



 Cardiff, Wales

Cardiff Passport to the City

Cardiff [Passport to the City](#) is a partnership between the City of Cardiff and Cardiff University to develop a “passport” program to ensure all children in Cardiff can access a broad range of extracurricular experiences. Amenities and experiences in the program include parks and open spaces, leisure, sports, recreation, arts and culture, and city centre attractions. Children and youth can also submit ideas and activities to be considered for inclusion in the program. Participants receive credits in relation to their participation, with a gathering at the end of the year in a graduation style event. The program has helped build a sense of local pride and belonging in the city, with over 400 participants in the pilot project and City Council committing to expand the project to ensure inclusion of children from all backgrounds.



TOOLS & RESOURCES

Playful Cities Toolkit. Reclaiming Play in Cities

<https://www.arup.com/perspectives/publications/research/section/playful-cities-toolkit-resources-for-reclaiming-play-in-cities>

Play Sufficiency: Toolkit for Local Authorities

<https://www.gov.wales/play-sufficiency-toolkit>

Neighbourhood Evaluation and Engagement: Place Standard Tools

<https://www.ourplace.scot/place-standard-tool-children-and-young-people>

Checklist: Teen-Friendly Parks

<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781003108658/urban-playground-tim-gill>

Municipal Action Guide: Cities Connecting Children to Nature

https://eadn-wc04-796033.nxedge.io/cdn/wp-content/uploads/CCCN-Municipal-Action-Guide_webready.pdf

Framework: Cycling Cities for Infants, Toddlers and Caregivers

<https://bycs.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Cycling-Cities-for-Infants-Toddlers-Caregivers.pdf>

Tool: Making it Possible to Do Play Sufficiency: Exploring the Conditions that Support Local Authorities to Secure Sufficient Opportunities for Children in Wales to Play.

[https://eprints.glos.ac.uk/10160/7/10160-Russell-\(2020\)-Making-it-possible-to-do-play.pdf](https://eprints.glos.ac.uk/10160/7/10160-Russell-(2020)-Making-it-possible-to-do-play.pdf)

Information Sheet: Mental Well-Being and Play

<https://www.playengland.org.uk/>

Video: Do Young Girls Have Enough Public Spaces?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXOy-Z8AiX8>

Guide: Routes to Play: A Guide for Local Authorities

<https://www.playaustralia.org.au/sites/default/files/LibraryDownloads/Routes%20to%20play%20UK.pdf>

DESIGN IDEAS & GUIDELINES

Design Ideas: Where do the Children Play?

https://issuu.com/citiesforplay/docs/child_friendly_cities_natalia_krysiak?utm_medium=referral&utm_source=www-citiesforplay-com.filesusr.com

Streets for Kids Design Guide

<https://globaldesigningcities.org/streets-for-kids/>

Proximity of Care Design Guide

<https://www.proximityofcare.com/>

RESEARCH

Access to and Quality of Neighbourhood Public Open Space and Children's Mental Health Outcomes

<https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/19/11/6780>

Play Sufficiency: A Case Study.

<https://ludicology.com/store-room/play-sufficiency-a-case-study/>

Report: Building Cities Fit for Children

<https://timrgill.files.wordpress.com/2020/02/wcmt-report-2020-02-04.pdf>

Child-Friendly Urban Design. Observations on Public Space from Eindhoven and Jerusalem

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23748834.2019.1586327>

Influences of Neighbourhood Built Environments on the Outdoor Free Play of Young Children

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36534228/>

Influences of neighbourhood Built Environments on the Outdoor Free Play of Young Children

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36534228/>

It's Not Just about 'More': A Research Project Exploring Satisfaction with Opportunities to Play for Children in Two Welsh Neighbouring Communities.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/21594937.2017.1288393>



BOOKS

Urban Playground: How Child-Friendly Planning and Design can Save Cities by T. Gill.

<https://www.routledge.com/Urban-Playground-How-Child-Friendly-Planning-and-Design-Can-Save-Cities/Gill/p/book/9781859469293>

How to Grow a Playspace: Development and Design

<https://www.routledge.com/How-to-Grow-a-Playspace-Development-and-Design/Masiulanic-Cummins/p/book/9781138907065>

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Protective Factor

SAFETY



WHERE TO START

Safety includes both actual and perceived physical, psycho-social and environmental safety in all settings.

Create public realm that is safe and that feels safe for children and youth.

Address all forms of bullying, abuse and discrimination.

Reduce pollution, toxins, noise and other environmental health hazards.

Support the needs and well-being of adults in children's lives to ensure secure and supportive home and community environments.

Implement policies that respond to larger societal threats like poverty, the increasing costs of living, increasing inequality, and climate change.



WHAT

Safety is a very diverse concept and includes physical, psychological and social safety experienced at home and at school, in the neighbourhood and in the community, all couched within broader built, natural and geo-political environments. Among the top threats to childhood in Canada are unintentional and preventable injuries (e.g., transport injuries), systemic racism and discrimination, child abuse, poverty, bullying, pollutants, and climate change.^{1,2}

“Children’s specific vulnerability and social status within society imposes a heightened duty on governments and policy-makers to make sustained efforts to effectively protect children from harm” and “from harm that interferes with the enjoyment of their rights”³

– The United Nations Convention on the Children and youth’s “conceptualization of safety [have] multiple dimensions... being safe and feeling safe are two distinct, interrelated but sometimes non-concurrent experiences.”⁴ Fear is often intertwined with or based on one’s identity, be it based on race, class, ethnicity, culture, gender, religion, disability or age.⁵

FACTORS IMPACTING SAFETY

CAREGIVER AND HOUSEHOLD WELL-BEING

The emotional security that comes from the attachment between a child and their parent or main caregiver is crucial to child development. This attachment is based on warm, satisfying, reliable, stable and trusting relationships.⁶ For children and youth to feel safe at home, their caregivers need to be functioning well and feeling safe, secure and supported themselves.⁷ This is connected to a wide range of supports for caregivers such as access to employment and parental leave policies, as well as food security, housing availability and affordability and other basic needs.⁸

CHILD ABUSE

Around 30% of Canadian adults report having experienced at least one type of child maltreatment before the age of fifteen.^{9,10}

BULLYING

Childhood bullying in Canada is of concern with a country global ranking of 23 out of 33 wealthy countries.¹¹ Conflict is a natural part of human relationships as people grow and change.¹² In conflict, “there may be some strong words used and lots of big feelings involved” but it generally stops with the realization that someone is getting hurt; whereas with bullying the goal is to hurt, harm or humiliate and there is a power differential, and the behaviour continues even with the realization of the damage it is doing.^{12,13}

NEIGHBOURHOOD SAFETY

A number of factors can make neighbourhoods feel less safe, including crime rates, graffiti, a lack of social cohesion, litter, poor lighting, sidewalks in disrepair, and heavy traffic.^{14,15} “Traffic is considered by young people to be the greatest danger of the fourth environment” (public spaces beyond the home, school and playground).¹⁶ In one study, when children were asked to create their ideal community, half of the models contained no streets or cars at all.¹⁷ UNICEF recently ranked Canada 23 out of 43 wealthy countries for child road traffic casualties and 41 out of 43 for CO2 emissions.¹⁸

“The street is a place in which to die because cars drive at high speeds and don’t wait for you to cross.”¹⁷

– Child Research Participant

The maintenance, design and qualities of the built environment are important factors in making a community feel safe or unsafe, influence how safe children feel and therefore impact what children feel that they can engage in (and what parents will allow their children to engage in).¹⁷

“[when] children feel safe in their neighbourhood, they feel connected to place and are able to act autonomously within it.”^{14,19}

The more young people feel connected and supported by others in their neighbourhood, the stronger their sense of safety.^{20,21,22} A lack of social cohesion and connectedness can provoke fears of stranger danger which increases anxiety in parents and children.²³ The risk of abduction in Canada is extremely rare, estimated by Public Safety Canada as one in 14 million.²⁴ Ironically, “stranger danger” concerns have resulted in increasing volumes of traffic, with corresponding increases in traffic-related dangers”, injuries and death.²⁵

RACISM

Racism “is a persistent threat to the lives of children and youth in Canada.”²⁶

- 30% of African youth in British Columbia reported that they have had experiences of racism.²⁷
- 44% of First Nations people reported experiences of discrimination in the previous 5-year period, with 29% reporting that they perceived it was due to ethnicity, culture, and/or race.²⁸

Systemic racism includes the policies and practices entrenched in established institutions which result in the exclusion or promotion of designated groups.²⁹ The outcomes of systemic racism show up, for example, in an over-representation of Indigenous children in the BC child welfare system, outnumbering non-Indigenous children almost three to one; and while they represent 10% of the child population in BC, they make up 68% of children in care.³⁰ Similar results emerge in the criminal justice system with 46% of 12 to 17-year-olds in Canada admitted to the corrections system in 2016-2017 being Indigenous despite making up only 8% of this age group across the country.³¹ The negative impact of systemic racism is deep and cross cutting and also results in certain population groups fearing the societal systems and institutions that theoretically exist to protect all Canadians.^{31,32}

DISCRIMINATION

The Raising Canada 2022 report cites racism and discrimination in the top 10 threats to childhood in Canada and identifies a wide range of the basis of discrimination experienced by young people, including race, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, and disabilities.¹⁴

*39% of students had experienced at least one form of discrimination in the past year: 32% of males versus 44% of females versus 62% of non-binary youth.*³³

– 2018 BC Adolescent Health Survey

Age discrimination can be experienced across the age cohorts but is particularly felt by adolescents and youth who are often associated with anti-social behaviour and crime.^{34,35,36,37,38,39,40} on the British Crime Survey, 30% of adults surveyed identified “teenagers hanging around” as threatening anti-social behaviour; whereas young people saw “hanging around” as normal, pro-social behaviour and as a positive opportunity to enjoy some freedom away from adults (only 2% thought it was anti-social).³⁴

GLOBAL SAFETY

Global issues that young people have identified impact their safety and security include broad concepts such as economy (e.g. recessions), ecology (e.g., droughts), inequality, health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, war and terrorism.^{14,41,42} In 2020-2021, Grade 11 respondents for the Youth Development Instrument identified their top ten concerns of the most important issues they believe are impacting Canada as: climate change, racial inequality, pollution, violence against women, hate crimes, loss of natural resources, gender inequality, violent crime, housing affordability and hate speech.⁴³

WHY

IMPORTANCE OF SAFETY TO CHILD AND YOUTH MENTAL WELL-BEING

There is strong evidence that shows the link between safety and the mental wellness of children and youth.^{44,45,46,47} Safety impacts the mental well-being of young people because it denies them basic needs, impedes their participation in activities for healthy development, exposes them to unsafe situations; and, impacts their development at a cellular level.^{44,45,46,47}

Toxic Stress is “severe, prolonged or repetitive adversity with a lack of the necessary nurturance or support to prevent an abnormal stress response”.⁴⁸ Toxic stress during childhood can impact brain development and has been linked to depression, anxiety, behavioural problems, and poor coping skills.^{48,49} Studies have demonstrated that feelings of calm, peacefulness and safety have the highest correlation with lower levels of depression, anxiety, stress and self-criticism.⁵⁰

Young people’s **sense of control** or lack of control over their own lives intertwines safety and mental well-being.^{51,52} Studies show that children and youth are increasingly feeling a lack of personal control.⁵³ These feelings are correlated with poor school achievement, helplessness, ineffective stress management, and depression.⁵³ People who feel this way are also less likely to take responsibility for their own health, their futures, and their community.^{53,54}

Feeling **safe and secure at home** is extremely important for child and youth mental well-being. Housing quality, frequent household mobility, struggling caregivers, violence, and financial insecurity all show a connection to levels of safety at home and poor mental well-being among young people.^{4,6,9,14,55,56}

Of particular importance for the mental wellness of children and youth is **attachment to their caregivers**.^{57,58,59} Attachment is an emotional closeness that has been proven to be key for the emotional well-being of young people.^{57,59,60,61} “Attachment allows children the ‘secure base’ necessary to explore, learn and relate, and the well-being, motivation and opportunity to do so. It is important for safety, stress regulation, adaptability and resilience.”⁵⁷

When young people do not have access to basic needs, this significantly impacts their mental wellness.^{8,62,63,64}

Poverty can permeate every aspect of children’s lives, including “fitting in” and “joining in” (social exclusion), fears of social difference and stigma, shame, and the impact of poverty on self-esteem, confidence and personal security.⁶² Some research suggests that the negative impact of poverty can also be mitigated in early childhood through other measures such as strong attachment relationships with caregivers.⁶⁵

VIOLENCE

*In 2019 in Canada there were over 69,000 child and youth victims of police-reported violence in Canada – though a report by Statistics Canada notes that police-reported data are likely an underestimation of the true extent of violence against young people.*⁶⁶

There is ample research showing the connection of **violence** in childhood to mental health problems, stress, emotional detachment, and suicide attempts.^{67,68,69,70,71}

Community Violence: depression, anxiety, PTSD, and aggression all have negative associations with exposure to community violence.^{72,73,74,75} Victimization, witnessing and even just hearing about community violence negatively impacts mental well-being.⁷⁴

Bullying: There is a causal relationship between bullying victimization and anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and substance use in childhood, and can have long-lasting effects into adulthood, including difficulty forming relationships, integrating into work and poor psychosocial adjustment.^{76,77,78,79} The ability for the affects of bullying to endure into adulthood has been closely associated with poor mental health, particularly anxiety and depression.^{80,81,82,83} “The prevention of bullying behaviour in children and youth is an important factor for reducing the likelihood of future criminal activity.”⁸⁴

NEIGHBOURHOOD SAFETY

Studies have found that:

- Children living in a neighbourhood with poor physical characteristics (e.g., dilapidated housing, few amenities, etc.) have greater odds of anxiety, depression and disruptive behaviour.⁸⁵
- Factors such as lower crime and violence rates, stronger social cohesion, community spaces where people can socialise and other amenities, are associated with fewer depressive and anxiety symptoms in children and youth.⁸⁶

ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURES

Children suffer the effects of toxins more than adults do because children’s immune systems, brains, lungs and other organs are still developing.⁸⁷ Children are also more vulnerable to toxins because of their smaller body mass and their weaker ability to break down and excrete toxic compounds.⁸⁸

- **Air Pollution:** Ample research shows an association between exposure to air pollutants during pregnancy and early childhood with psychological and behavioural problems.^{89,90,91,92,93}
- **Noise Pollution:** Environmental noise such as construction, street traffic and leaf blowers are also a major environmental problem. “Noise pollution is more than a nuisance. It’s a health risk.”⁹⁴ Noise ranks only second to air pollution as the environmental exposure that is most harmful to public health.⁹⁵

RACISM & DISCRIMINATION

Even young children can recognize and experience the effects of racism.⁹⁶ The negative impacts of racism and perceived racism on children and youth include lower self-concept, internalizing symptoms, higher levels of hopelessness, substance use, risky sexual behaviour, and depression.^{96,97,98,99,100,101}

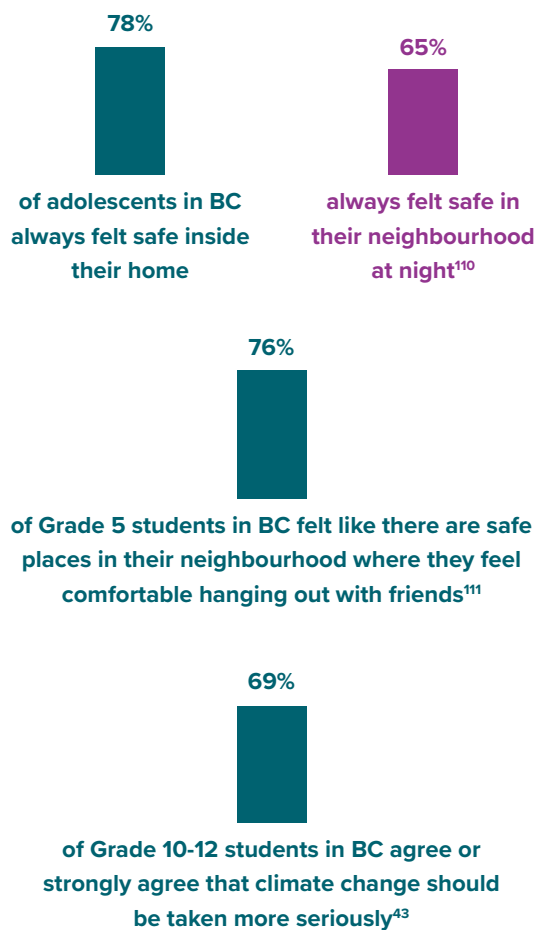
Positive racial and ethnic identities among children and youth has been associated with a buffering effect against racial and ethnic discrimination, preventing internalizing symptoms, and promoting higher levels of mental well-being.^{96,102,103,104,105}

Major life-time and day-to-day perceived discrimination based on age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical appearance, race, and/or ethnicity, have strong associations with lower mental well-being.¹⁰⁶

The negative impact of discrimination can be mitigated when other protective factors are present. For example, a Canadian study found that youth with a disability do not report lower life satisfaction when a high sense of belonging is present, even if they experience discrimination.¹⁰⁷

GLOBAL SAFETY

When young people view the world as a scary place, they live in a state of heightened fear and anxiety. A Canadian survey of 1,000 16 to 25 year-olds found that 56% were feeling afraid, sad, anxious and powerless about climate change and that 78% reported that it impacts their mental well-being.¹⁰⁸ “Working toward a solution is the consensus approach to calming young people’s fears about the future...the key to addressing eco-anxiety at any age, is “getting ‘unstuck’, losing that feeling of paralysis in the face of the problem’s magnitude.”¹⁰⁹



HOW

ACTIONS LOCAL GOVERNMENTS CAN TAKE TO SUPPORT SAFETY

This section provides a glimpse of the “how.” It is meant to stimulate thought and discussion and provide inspiration rather than prescribing actions. The majority of examples included here are evidence-based, evaluated, have been implemented by several local governments and/or have continued to be implemented over time. They represent a mere fraction of the information and tools that are available. Ultimately, the “how” is always dependent on any given local context and its priority issues, opportunities, available assets, and what has been tried in the past.

LEGEND

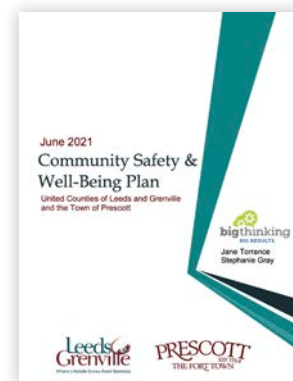
-  RURAL/SMALL TOWN
-  URBAN/MID-SIZED COMMUNITY
-  INTERNATIONAL

CREATE A STRATEGY

 Leeds, Grenville, and Prescott, Ontario

Community Safety and Well-Being Plan

Municipalities in Ontario are mandated under the Police Services Act to develop a [Community Safety and Well-Being Plan](#). The Ministry of Solicitor General provides a framework to help municipalities with plan development. The framework includes: Incident Response; Risk Intervention; Prevention; and, Social Development. The United Counties of Leeds and Grenville and the Town of Prescott decided to focus mostly on the Social Development realm. Through consultation with a variety of stakeholders 13 local priority risks were identified as impediments to Community Safety and Well-Being in Leeds, Grenville and Prescott. Three of these fall under the category of “Safety” (domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking). Three fall under the category of “Population Health” (physical health, mental health, substance use). The majority of the priority risks fall under the category of “Community Development” (poverty, basic needs and food security, income and employment, transportation, rural inclusion, early years, youth, seniors and Indigenous Peoples). All of the priority risks identified affect child and youth well-being but sometimes the plan refers specifically to these age groups. The word “children” occurs 73 times and the word “youth” 80 times in the 67-page document and the report highlights the need to monitor the Early Development Instrument.

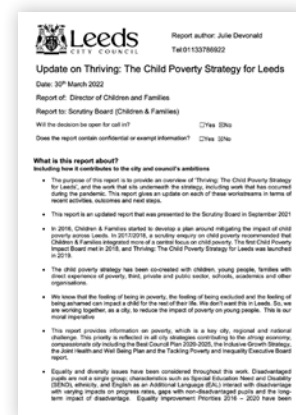




Thriving: The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds

The City of Leeds developed [Thriving](#), its child poverty plan, in 2019 and renewed its commitment to the plan in 2022. The plan aligns with other municipal strategies such as Child Friendly Leeds, the Children and Young People Plan, the Future in Mind Strategy, and others. The priority of reducing poverty is also reflected in all City strategies such as the Inclusive Growth Strategy and the Joint Health and Well-Being Plan. Equality and diversity issues are considered throughout the work. The Plan includes the following fundamental principles:

- All work needs to be informed by the knowledge of children, youth and caregivers
- All projects need to work with a wide variety of partners
- The focus is on changing structures, not individuals



ADDRESS CHILD POVERTY BY INTEGRATING ACTION INTO OTHER PLANS



Combatting Child Poverty in Ghent

Instead of having a child poverty reduction plan, the City of Ghent included child poverty as one of the key issues in its [Child and Youth-Friendly City strategy and action plan](#). Ghent is considered one of the ultimate municipal champions of children and youth and has received the official label of a “Child-Friendly City.” This label has led to an even stronger commitment to children, with more investment in services, programs, and infrastructure, including organizational changes such as the appointments of a Child Secretary and a Director of Child Poverty. Examples of actions in the Plan include: income-related child care and affordable meals, strengthening youth welfare work, and developing family support teams to focus on the most deprived neighbourhoods. Ghent has also committed to investing 570 million Euros from 2020-2024 to tackle child poverty through this integrated municipal plan.



POLICY

 Amsterdam, Netherlands

Activity Pass

The City of Amsterdam offers an activity pass for low income families that provides free or reduced cost for sports and cultural activities.

 Barcelona, Spain

Low Income Fund

The City of Barcelona developed a Low Income Fund—a grant fund for children up to the age of 16. A child can access 100 Euros per month to help with covering basic subsistence needs. An evaluation of the fund has demonstrated that the initiative has been effective in reducing the severity of child deprivation and improving quality of life. It has also allowed caregivers to dedicate more time to look for work.

 Frankfurt, Germany

Free Child Care

The City of Frankfurt offers free child care for children 3 to 6 years of age. In 2018, the German state of Hesse started to cover the costs for families for up to 6-hours of child care, the City of Frankfurt covers the remaining costs. As of 2020, there were 25,000 day care spaces for children in 800 day care centres with 97% of all children of that age group enrolled. Day care for children ages 0 to 3 from low income families are also subsidized by the City.

 Wales

The Future Generations Act

The Welsh Government created the [Well-Being of Future Generations Act](#) (2015) and appointed a Future Generations Commissioner to advise government bodies on sustainable development and the long-term impacts of their decisions. The Act itself is about mandating public agencies to: think more about the long term; work better with people and communities and each other; and, look to prevent problems, using a collaborative and collective approach. Among the public bodies that must adhere to the Act are local governments. There are seven connected well-being goals in the Act to ensure that now and in the future Wales is: Prosperous; Resilient; Healthier; More Equal; Globally Responsible; Has Cohesive Communities; and Supports a Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language.

 Cabo Verde

Making Climate Policies for and with Children and Youth

Only 34% of 103 countries covered in the UN report [Making Climate and Environment Policies for and with Children and Youth](#) are child-sensitive. Using a child lens the report displays how many plans include child-sensitive words, references to disadvantaged children, the indication of the social co-benefit of mitigation, inclusive planning processes, and how young people are positioned in the plans (e.g., as a vulnerable group, as drivers of change, etc.). One example of good child-sensitive policy was from Cabo Verde. The country created a network of youth associations in each municipality to provide focal points for young people's participation in climate action. Cabo Verde also promoted opportunities for young people in the fields of renewable energy, conservation, and sustainable tourism.

COMMUNITY SAFETY INTERVENTIONS

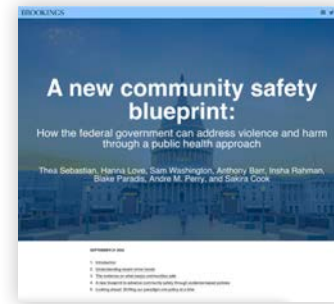
 Boston, United States

A New Community Safety Blueprint

[A New Community Safety Blueprint](#) is a report that includes five categories of “evidence-based investments that are proven not only to prevent and reduce violence and harm, but also address patterns of geographic inequality that fuel violence and harm in the first place.” The categories presented in the report are:

- Employment and Job Quality
- Youth Development and Education
- Built Environment and Community Spaces
- Community-Based Organizations
- Public Health and Prevention

The report provides a list of policy recommendations, each accompanied by a short case study. For example, The City of Boston program *SuccessLink Youth Jobs* offers employment opportunities in municipal government, as well as in non-profits. With regards to the non-profit job placements, the City specifies that these “jobs are mission-driven employment opportunities with organizations rooted in positive social impact that benefit communities and neighborhoods” and that, among other benefits, these job placements aim to provide “opportunities to develop connections and create a positive impact in your community.” A 2018 study of the City of Boston’s summer employment program found that youth participants were 35% less likely to be charged with a violent crime in the 17 months following the intervention.

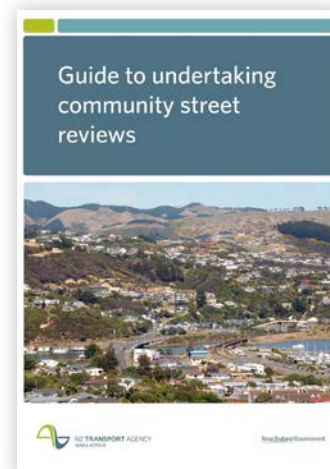


ASSESSMENTS

 United Kingdom and New Zealand

Community Street Audits

When children identify safety issues in their community, fear of traffic is often a top concern. Community Street Audits are a way to evaluate the quality of streets and spaces from the viewpoint of people who use them. The audits help to identify personal security concerns, maintenance issues, dangerous crossings, and other obstructions. The New Zealand Transport Agency developed a step-by-step [Guide to Undertaking Community Street Reviews](#) in 2010. The guide emphasizes the importance of including all age groups in street audits.



BUILDING TRUST AND COMMUNITY COHESION

 Local governments in six countries

Community Trust

Perceived community trust and safety impacts children's well-being in both urban and rural contexts. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) ran an initiative called TrustLab with the aim of improving measures of trust and what drives trust and identifying how policy makers might go about restoring it. Results included:

- Self-reported measures of trust in institutions are validated experimentally
- Self-reported measures of trust in others capture a belief. About trustworthiness
- Perceptions of institutional performance strongly correlate to both trust in government and trust in others
- Perceived government integrity is the strongest determinant of trust in government
- Indicators associated with social capital (e.g., neighbourhood connectedness, attitudes towards immigration) matter for trust in others

The built environment has a significant impact on social connections and social trust. The report [Designing Trust: Building Social Trust through Urban Design](#) describes how each generation is becoming less trusting and how this is impacting mental well-being. The report provides a comprehensive list of interventions (e.g., town squares, parks, seating everywhere) and highlights several actions in relation to children.



MONITORING AND PARTNERSHIPS

 Rotterdam, Netherlands

Municipal Policy on Domestic Violence

The City of Rotterdam pioneered a [municipal policy on domestic violence](#) that has been taken up at a national level. The goal of the policy is to stop domestic violence and prevent the transfer of it to future generations by: raising awareness of domestic violence, child abuse and witnessing of violence; intervening as early as possible; and maintaining a network of organizations to collaborate to implement the policy. The City has a monitoring and reporting role, coordinating role, capacity building role (e.g., training), provides the backbone for the Support Centre of Domestic Violence, and led the development of local domestic violence teams. The Association of Dutch Municipalities now supports Rotterdam and other cities in some of the leadership and administrative pieces of the policy.

Some lessons from Rotterdam include:

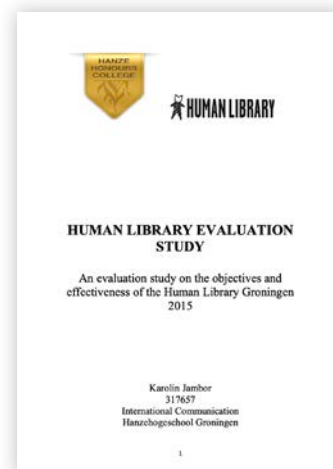
- The importance of the introduction of the Code of Conduct of reporting domestic violence and child abuse
- Strong cooperation is needed between partners in the local domestic violence teams
- The enhanced involvement of day care centres, schools, family doctors, and others is critical
- Invest in positive youth development programs

ENABLE COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

 Over 85 countries

Living Library

The [Living Library](#) gives people an opportunity to speak in private and personally to a “stranger” in a structured, protected, time-limited, brief encounter with no further commitment. There have been [reports](#) on the impact of the Living Library on young people. For example, in Valongo, Portugal the activity has been found to help 14- to 18-year-olds with deconstructing stereotypes regarding ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, religion and disability; and, in strengthening their awareness of the issues encountered by migrant communities which “indirectly contributes to the increase of intercultural competence.”



ENGAGEMENT

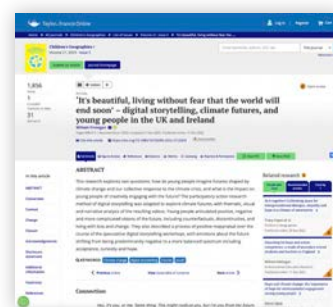
 Ireland and the United Kingdom

Municipal Policy on Domestic Violence

“It’s Beautiful, Living Without Fear that the World Will End Soon.”

– Digital Storytelling, Climate Futures and Young people

Recent [research](#) has found high levels of climate anxiety among young people, with students rating negative climate scenarios as more likely than positive ones. This research used digital storytelling to explore climate futures with young people, with thematic, visual and narrative analyses of the resulting videos. Speculative digital story telling is a method and promising capacity-building practice to support young people’s positive re-appraisals to environmental problems. During this study, the reflections of youth indicated a shift from a sense of dread to more positive emotions and an increase in hope and determination.



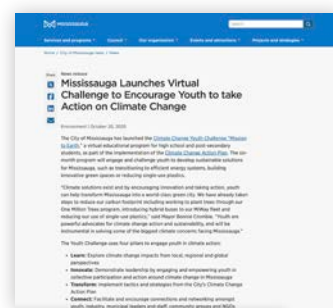
 Mississauga, Ontario

Mission to Earth: Climate Change Youth Challenge

As part of the municipal Climate Change Action Plan, the City of Mississauga implemented [Youth Challenge “Mission to Earth”](#) in 2020, a 6-month long program to encourage youth to develop suitable solutions for Mississauga. The City uses four pillars to engage youth in climate action:

- Learn – explore climate change impacts from local, regional and global perspectives
- Innovate – demonstrate leadership by engaging youth in collective participation and action around climate change in Mississauga
- Transform – implement tactics and strategies from the City’s Climate Change Action Plan
- Connect – facilitate and encourage connections and networking amongst youth, municipal leaders, industry, NGOs and community groups

The initiative concluded with a summit that brought together youth, local government leaders, industry leaders and community members to celebrate and showcase the young people’s ideas.





TOOLS & RESOURCES

10 Child Rights and Urban Planning Principles to Ensure that Cities are Child Responsive and Safe

https://www.unicef.org/media/55261/file/Global_Annual_Results_Report_2018_Goal_Area_4.pdf.pdf

Toolkit: Early Years Starter Kit

<https://bernardvanleer.org/publications-reports/an-urban95-starter-kit-ideas-for-action/>

Violence Prevention Best Practices: Kindergarten to Grade 12

https://www.gov.nl.ca/education/files/k12_safeandcaring_pdf_violence_prevention_best_practices.pdf

Toolkit: Don't Judge a Book by its Cover! The Living Library Organiser's Guide:

<https://www.belongnetwork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/EYCB-Living-Library.pdf>

P.R.I.D.E – Positive Racial Identity Development in Early Education

<https://www.racepride.pitt.edu/>

American Psychological Association RESilience Initiative

<https://www.apa.org/res>

The Children's Climate Risk Index

<https://www.unicef.org/reports/climate-crisis-child-rights-crisis>

Aiming Higher: Elevating Meaningful Youth Engagement for Climate Change

<https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-05/UNDP-Elevating-Meaningful-Youth-Engagement-for-Climate-Action-2.pdf>

RESEARCH

Children and Youth's View on Institutional Safety

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/297707798_Taking_us_Seriously_children_and_young_people_talk_about_safety_and_institutional_responses_to_their_safety_concerns

Young People's Perception of Being Safe

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/225730170_Young_People's_Perception_Of_Being_Safe_-_Globally_Locally

The Effectiveness of School-Based Violence Prevention Programs for Reducing Disruptive and Aggressive Behaviour

<https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/211376.pdf>

Housing and Healthy Child Development: Known and Potential Interventions

<https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-040119-094050>

The Drivers of Perceptions of Anti-Social Behaviour

<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/drivers-of-perceptions-of-antisocial-behaviour>

Bully Prevention: Nature and Extent of Bullying in Canada

<https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/blng-prvntn/blng-prvntn-eng.pdf>

Ethnic-Racial Identity Formation in the Early Years

https://equity-coalition.fpg.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/Ilruka-et-al_Ethnic-Racial-Identity-Collaborative-Research-Summary-2021.pdf

Fighting Child Poverty in European Cities

<https://eurocities.eu/latest/fighting-child-poverty-in-european-cities/>

BOOKS

Bully Busters: A Teacher's Manual for Helping Bullies, Victims and Bystanders (Grades K-5)

<https://www.researchpress.com/product/bully-busters/>

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Protective Factor

SOCIAL

Connection and Belonging



WHERE TO START

Create opportunities with welcoming multi-functional public spaces and events.

Provide childcare and program options that engage all ages of children and youth.

Ensure access with options for independent mobility and transportation.

Model inclusivity, mobilize resources, host groups, and facilitate mentorships.

When children are asked what matters most to their well-being, good quality relationships are cited as one of their top priorities.

- The Office for National Statistics in London (UK)

WHAT

Social connectedness and belonging happen when people connect in meaningful ways.

- A person experiences **social connectedness** through relationships with other people or engagement in their community.
- People develop a sense of **belonging** when they have meaningful interactions, feel valued, and fit in as part of a “we.”

Where we live, how we access public spaces, economic inclusion, social inclusion, safety and security all enable strong social connections for children, youth, and adults in their lives.

THREE KEY ELEMENTS OF SENSE OF BELONGING:



1. **Authentic interaction such as opportunities to empathize and develop relationships with others**
2. **Feeling welcome through social interactions and the physical environment**
3. **Shared experiences through common interests, goals, and traits¹**

YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE AND NEED DIFFERENT CONNECTIONS AT DIFFERENT LIFE STAGES.

EARLY YEARS



MIDDLE CHILDHOOD & ADOLESCENCE

In the early years, social connection is most reliant on a strong attachment to caregivers.² Caregivers provide and shape the environments and experiences of young children, and their well-being impacts the children in their care.³

As children age, their social environment expands to include peers, childcare providers, educators, mentors, and other members of the community.⁴

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC SHONE LIGHT ON THE IMPORTANCE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY TO KEEP CONNECTED.⁵

However, not everyone has reliable access to the internet or digital devices which can lead to health and social inequalities.⁶ Online connection cannot replace in-person interaction, particularly for young people.^{7,8,9} Engaging through digital platforms is often seen as social connection when it is actually just communication and can lead to feelings of disconnection, social exclusion and isolation.^{10,11}

How much social media use that young people engage in, as well as how they use social media may determine its positive and negative impacts.^{12,13}

WHY

Studies have found that a strong sense of belonging is associated with self-rated mental health for all ages, even when controlled for geography and socio-economic status.^{14,15}

IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS AND BELONGING AS PART OF A VIBRANT COMMUNITY

Relationships are one of the strongest predictors of children's well-being throughout the life course, impacting lifelong health, success in education, occupational attainment, and job performance.^{16,17}

The quality and stability of relationships in the early years are critical to social-emotional development and set the foundation for well-being into adulthood.^{18,19}

Positive peer relationships promote healthier behaviours, buffer the effects of life stressors and contribute to a better sense of self, social competence, academic performance and life satisfaction.^{20,21,22,23}

Children's positive relationships with adults in the community is correlated with outcomes such as resiliency, positive mental health, mitigation of toxic stress, motivation to learn, impulse control and social competence.^{24,25,26,27}

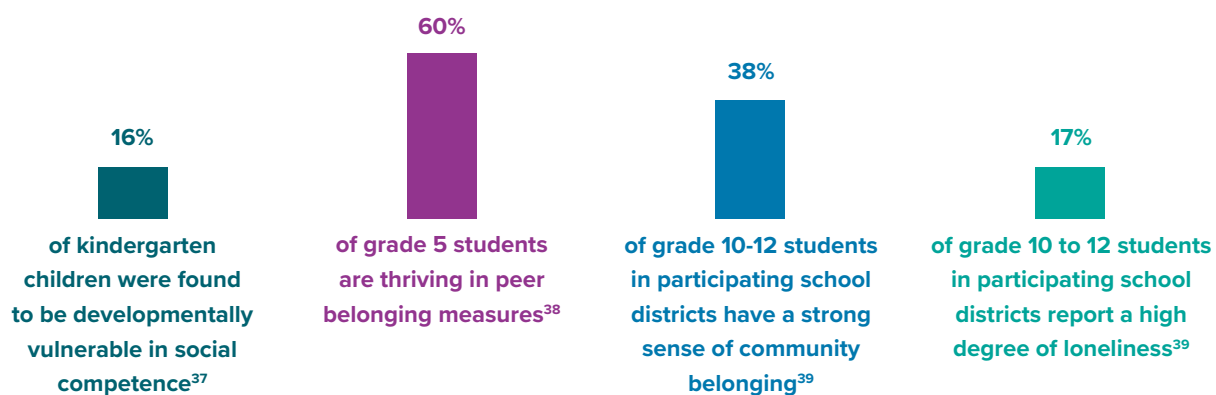
Having a positive role model helps young people to feel safe and socially supported and these types of high quality contacts with non-parental adults are associated with higher mental well-being, fewer behavioural problems, and better overall social skills.^{28,29,30} Building relationships with

adults in the community also helps to increase children's sense of neighbourhood safety and belonging, encourage participation in community activities and provide more social opportunities.³¹

People with higher levels of social support tend to be more engaged in their community, and experience lower levels of psychological distress, stronger resiliency, and lower prevalence of mental illness.^{4,32,33,34,35}

Strong neighbourhood social cohesion is associated with less depression and anxiety among young people, as well as increased resilience to adverse events and a higher likelihood to exhibit prosocial behaviour such as helping, consoling, and cooperating with others.³⁶

Indicators of social development, social connection, and belonging have been trending downward across the Vancouver Coastal region since before the COVID-19 pandemic.



HOW

ACTIONS LOCAL GOVERNMENTS CAN TAKE TO SUPPORT SOCIAL CONNECTION & BELONGING

This section provides a glimpse of the “how.” It is meant to stimulate thought and discussion and provide inspiration rather than prescribing actions. The majority of examples included here are evidence-based, evaluated, have been implemented by several local governments and/or have continued to be implemented over time. They represent a mere fraction of the information and tools that are available. Ultimately, the “how” is always dependent on any given local context and its priority issues, opportunities, available assets, and what has been tried in the past.

LEGEND

-  RURAL/SMALL TOWN
-  URBAN/MID-SIZED COMMUNITY
-  INTERNATIONAL

CREATE A STRATEGY

 Bristol, UK

Strategy for Children and Young People: Belonging in the Community 2021-2024

The City of Bristol created a [strategy](#) with the goal of every child and young person to feel a sense of connection to their city and a freedom to be themselves. The views of children and youth were used to establish a set of priorities to help young people to feel valued and supported in the context of their city. Content included mental health & well-being, race equality, community assets, and violence.

Goal: “We want every child and young person to feel a keen sense of connection to their city and a freedom to be themselves.”

- City of Bristol



EXPLORATION OF ACTIONS

 Kitchener, Waterloo, & Woolwich, Ontario

We Can Design Belonging

The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation completed a project with the goal to understand the state of belonging in the area and to develop and prototype an approach for improving on the current state of belonging. Content in the [report](#) includes the building blocks of belonging, authentic interactions, shared purpose, feeling welcome, obstacles to belonging, and demographic differences.



PROJECT

 Copenhagen, Denmark

The Urban Belonging Project

The [Urban Belonging Project](#) investigated how people perceive, experience, and attach themselves to the City of Copenhagen. The project was launched in 2021 by a group of planners and academics to map the lived experiences of under-represented communities in the city. When and where do people feel at home in cities? Which signals and visual cues stimulate attachment to place? How do different people read and respond to these signals? Over 3 months, participants went on 100+ walks, took 1400+ photos, built 200+ maps, and further elaborated on their experiences in workshops. The result is a catalogue that tells individual and collective stories of belonging. The final phase includes outreach activities targeted at urban planners, architects, and others through blog posts, podcasts, exhibitions, and conferences.



 Calgary, Alberta

Where I Belong: A Youth Community Photo Project

[Where I Belong](#) was a partnership between CBC, City of Calgary Library, and Umoja Community Music, an NGO that focuses on youth and inclusion. The project involved ten young residents from Calgary borrowing CBC cameras, receiving training in photography, and setting out to explore their city and documenting what belonging means to them. The goal was to build skills and connections, as well as an understanding that while belonging is critical to everyone's well-being, there are many different paths to find it.

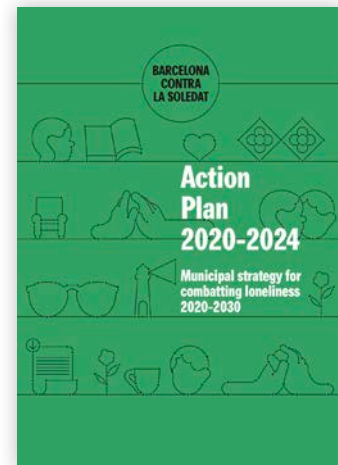


ACTION PLAN

 Barcelona, Spain

Action Plan 2020-2024: Municipal Strategy for Combatting Loneliness 2020-2023

A survey done by the City of Barcelona found that 70,000 people from all age groups felt lonely often or very often. The City created an [Action Plan](#) to combat this. Examples of actions in the plan include: conducting an analysis of loneliness among people with disabilities, hosting a conference “Look Closely: Loneliness Affects Young People Too,” restructuring the city to create community spaces that encourage connection, strengthening organizational development to support municipal staff (e.g., detect loneliness among municipal staff and implement measures to tackle it), including loneliness perspective in municipal grants, and promoting volunteering to combat loneliness at all life stages. They also have actions targeted at children and youth such as facilitating access to leisure activities and developing *Aqui t’escoltem* (We Listen to You Here) for people 12-20 years old that provides tools and resources to strengthen personal and social skills and encourage personal growth. The City also created a [website](#) which lists and maps, by age group, more than 50 municipal services that help combat loneliness,

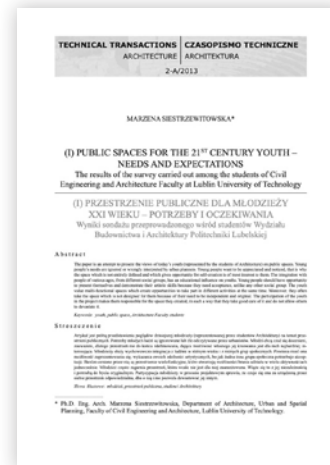


INFRASTRUCTURE AND PROGRAMMING

 Lublin, Poland

Research: Public Spaces for the 21st Century Youth – Needs and Expectations

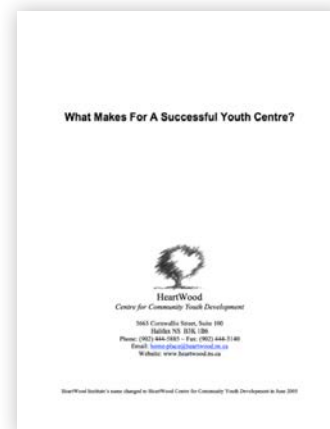
[Survey results](#) carried out by civil engineering and architecture students from Lublin University found that well designed space influences the social behaviour of youth. Spaces that provide an opportunity for self-creation rather than being entirely designed and defined are preferred. Seating for larger and smaller groups, intimate alcoves, multi-functional space that allows for different activities at the same time, greenery, and the integration with people of various ages and from different social groups were all common themes that emerged.



 Nova Scotia

Research: What Makes for a Successful Youth Centre?

A team of young people across Nova Scotia conducted a participatory action research project on what makes a successful youth centre. [The report](#) covers elements such as mentorship and community connectedness.



 Sweden

Research: Leisure-Time Youth Centres as Health-Promoting Settings: Experiences from Multicultural Neighbourhoods in Sweden

[This study](#) involved surveying youth at two youth centres in multicultural, socially-deprived suburbs in Sweden. Structured and unstructured leisure-time activities are offered by centres with an emphasis on fostering supportive relationships and youth empowerment. Staff are trained professional youth workers and volunteers are older youth and former participants with leadership training. The survey results revealed that what was most important to youth is that the activities enable them to hang out with friends, as well as make new friends in a safe and respectful atmosphere. Participants rated “leaders and adults who care about me” just below “making new friends” and just above “seeing current friends.”

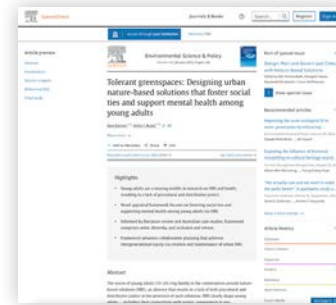


ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

 Sydney & Melbourne, Australia

Research: Designing Urban Nature-Based Solutions that Foster Social Ties and Support Mental Health among Young Adults

Research shows youth prefer green spaces as places to both hang out with friends and to seek solace in solitude, with elements such as cleanliness, wildness, space for a range of activities, and freedom from supervision. An [Urban Greenspace Appraisal Framework](#) was tested on green spaces in Sydney and Melbourne. The themes in framework are 1) Order: spaces that maintain their naturalness without feeling messy, uncared for or unsafe; 2) Diversity: both plant diversity and diversity of features to carry out a range of activities; 3) Seclusion and Retreat: freedom from formal and informal social control by adults.



GREENING AND ACTIVATION OF STREETS

 Antwerp, Belgium

Neighbourhood Greening: Living Streets

[Living Streets](#) is the City of Antwerp’s targeted action to encourage residents to create lively and nature-filled streets. Residents can apply for funding for soil and plants and receive advice from an expert who can suggest appropriate plants for their local area. The goal is to make it easy for residents to take action. Neighbourhoods are also encouraged to shut down their streets to traffic during the summer and are provided with funds for seating, play equipment, and overnight campouts. Living streets zones are recognized by their light interventions of colour road markings, pedestrians are permitted to use the full width of the road, playing is allowed, no parking is permitted, and the speed limit is 20km/hour.



COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMMING FOR MARGINALIZED YOUTH



Scotland

Exploring Youth's Perceptions of the Hidden Practice of Youth Work in Increasing Social Capital with Young People Considered NEET in Scotland

[A study](#) in both urban and rural areas in Scotland looked at the impact of community-based programs in creating social capital amongst NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) young people deemed socially excluded or marginalized. The youth participants felt negativity was directed at them from more formal and traditional structures within the community (e.g., police, libraries, local shops) which they felt affected equal opportunities which resulted in feelings of resentment and isolation. The programs offered involvement in sports, music, media skills, and job readiness. Youth workers help to build self-esteem, remove barriers, and develop trusting relationships. Youth wanted to help others as they themselves had been helped and they began to generate ideas about interventions that could help their local communities to become more inclusive.



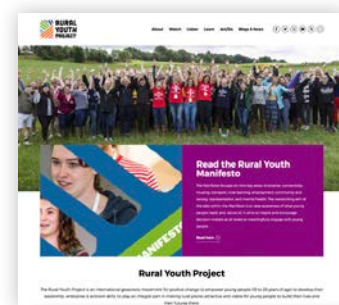
FESTIVALS AND OTHER GATHERINGS



UK, Greece, & Romania

Rural Youth Ideas Festival

[The Rural Youth Ideas Festival](#) was a gathering to bring together young people to share ideas on how to make life better for themselves and their peers. The festival included a series of talks, workshops, music, food and camping to promote fun, leadership, and networking.

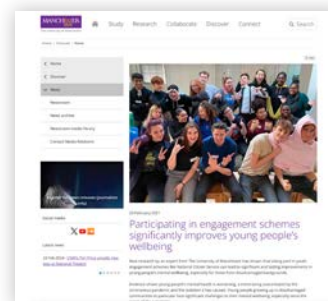


VOLUNTEERING AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

 United Kingdom

National Citizen Service

The [National Citizen Service](#) provides 16- and 17-year-olds with local community experiences, social action projects and other volunteering opportunities. The Futuremakers program targets 18- to 24-year-olds with paid work placements ranging from 9 to 12 months. Participation in the program led to a significant improvement in mental well-being and this was still evident 4 to 6 months after they had finished taking part. Former participants reported an increase in the number of people they felt they could rely on for support if they needed help; and, they became more confident in themselves and felt a greater sense of control over their lives and future. Taking part also appeared to close the gap in well-being between those from the least and most disadvantaged communities.



YOUTH-IDENTIFIED ACTIVITIES IN THEIR RURAL COMMUNITIES

 Quebec

Partenaires 12-18

Partenaires 12-18 started in the rural municipality of Lyster, Quebec when a group of 12-year-olds said that there was nothing to do in their community. They wanted opportunities to participate in recreation and other activities. The program was established as a partnership between the young people, parents, the municipality, local businesses and others. Coached by adults, young people learned to establish committees and decision-making structures and how to set goals. The program has expanded over the years and is now found in 21 rural municipalities in Quebec.

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT



Strategies and Tactics for Retaining and Encouraging Youth to Return to Small and/or Rural Communities

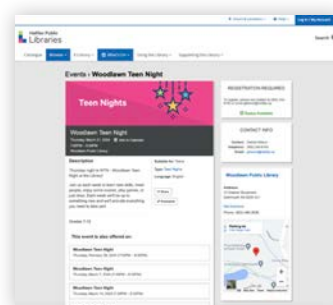
The Ontario Project looked at how to communicate to and with youth in grades 9 to 12 that their towns can support their career development, and how to increase the emotional engagement and connection for youth in grades 6 to 12 to build a stronger association of their rural community as being their “home.” The project also looked at the need to train municipal Economic Development Officers in how to bring together schools and businesses and how to engage with students on a regular basis.

PROGRAMMATIC



Woodlawn Library Teen Night

The [Woodlawn Library Teen Night](#), a weekly event for the past 12 years, typically attracts around 50 participants in grades 7 to 12. The event features organized activities, a drop-in component, and opportunities for open mic performances and socializing. Many former attendees return as volunteers or program assistants, and the staff often provides references for their first jobs. Teen Night had a positive impact on youth mental health during the pandemic and it’s seen as a safe and accepting space.



PROGRAM ELEMENT



Youth Time Banking

[Youth time banking](#) involves youth earning time credits to support their interests and development. Some youth programs treat youth as service recipients. Some community service programs emphasize doing good without collecting givers and receivers. The organization YTB combines aspects of both approaches with loops of giving and receiving and paying it forward to build community. YTB also created YTBGenZ customized for GenZ ages 14-25 and provides opportunities for marginalized youth to make contributions to community, practice leadership, and develop social capital.



TOOLS & RESOURCES

Tactic: Young People Now: Positive Public Images of and Stories about Young People

<https://www.youthandpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/youthandpolicy1011-1.pdf#page=4>

How to Build a Successful Mentoring Program Using the Elements of Effective Practice: A Step-by-Step Tool Kit for Program Managers

https://www.mentoring.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Full_Toolkit.pdf

Socially Connected Communities: Action Guide for Local Governments and Community Leaders

https://healthyplacesbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Socially-Connected-Communities_Action-Guide-for-Local-Government-and-Community-Leaders.pdf

Social Connectedness Action Guide

<https://planh.ca/socialconnectionguide>

Tackling Loneliness through the Built Environment: Promising Approaches Framework

<https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/wp-content/uploads/CEL-Tackling-loneliness-through-the-built-environment-Final.pdf>

Happy Homes Interactive Toolkit

<https://happycities.com/happy-homes-toolkit>

Hey Neighbour! A Resident Animators Guide. Recipes for Building Connections between Neighbours

<https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/hey-neighbour-recipe-book-resident-animators-guide.pdf>

Photovoice

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1472586X.2010.523274?journalCode=rvst20>



RESEARCH

The Effects of Play Streets on Social and Community Connectedness in Rural Communities

<https://playingout.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Gill-Can-I-Play-Out.pdf>

The Pedestrian Pound: The Business Case for Better Streets and Places

<https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/3890/pedestrian-pound-2018.pdf>

The Effects of Youth Mentoring Programs: A Meta-Analysis of Outcome Studies

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10964-019-00982-8>

“I just feel safe with him” : Emotional Closeness in Male Youth Mentoring Relationships

<https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2F1524-9220.8.3.185>

Mentoring Interventions to Affect Juvenile Delinquency and Associated Problems: A Systematic Review

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.4073/csr.2013.10>

Unpacking Community-Based Youth Mentoring Relationships: An Integrative Review

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8198211/>

BOOKS

Restorative Cities: Urban Design for Mental Health and Well-Being by J Roe and L McCay

<https://www.bloomsbury.com/ca/restorative-cities-9781350112889/>

Community Programs to Promote Youth Development

<https://nap.nationalacademies.org/read/10022/chapter/7>



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