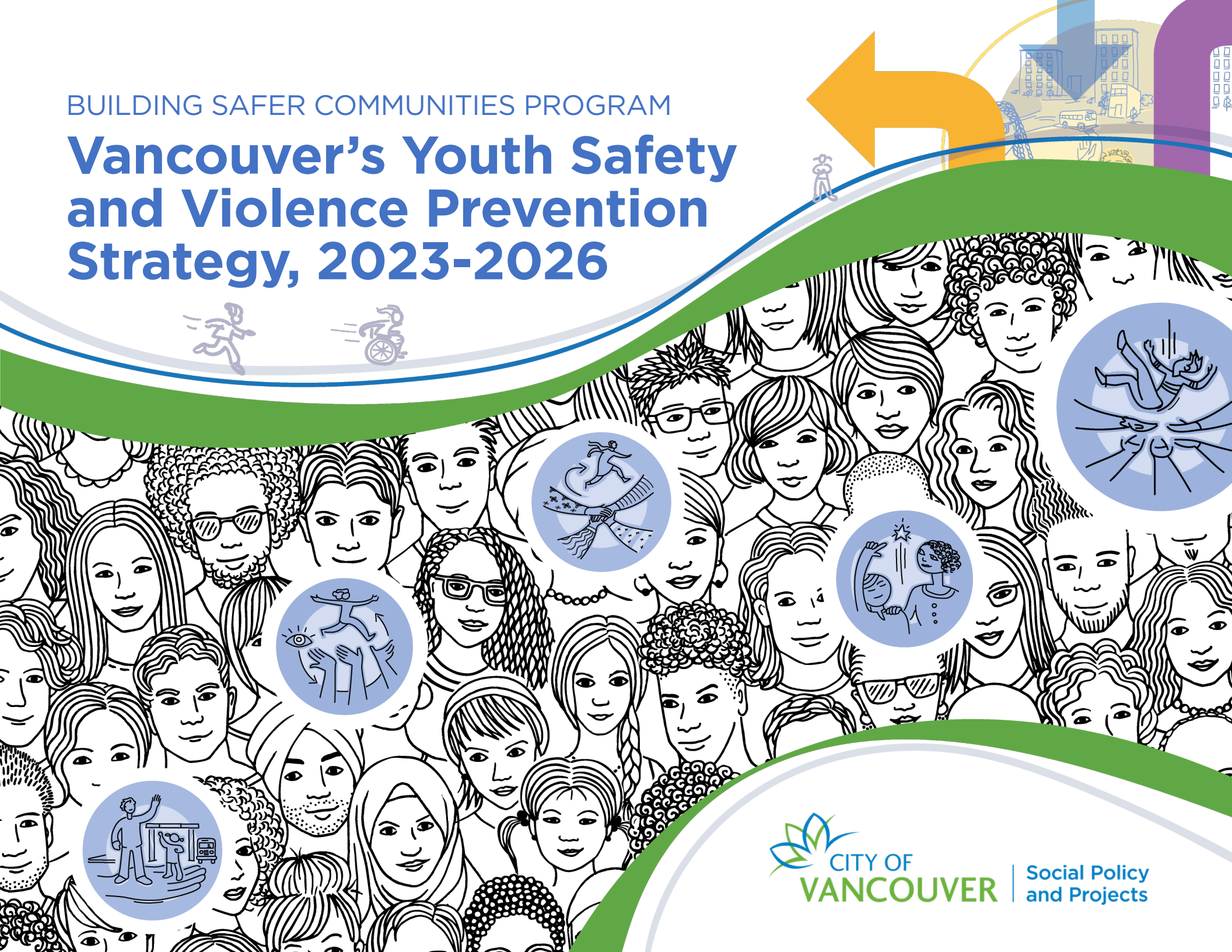


BUILDING SAFER COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

# Vancouver's Youth Safety and Violence Prevention Strategy, 2023-2026



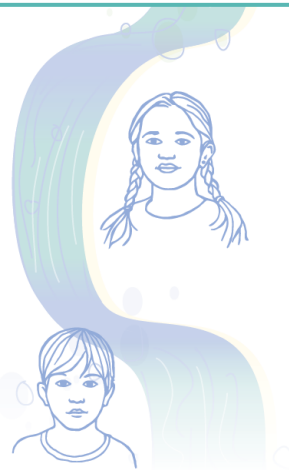


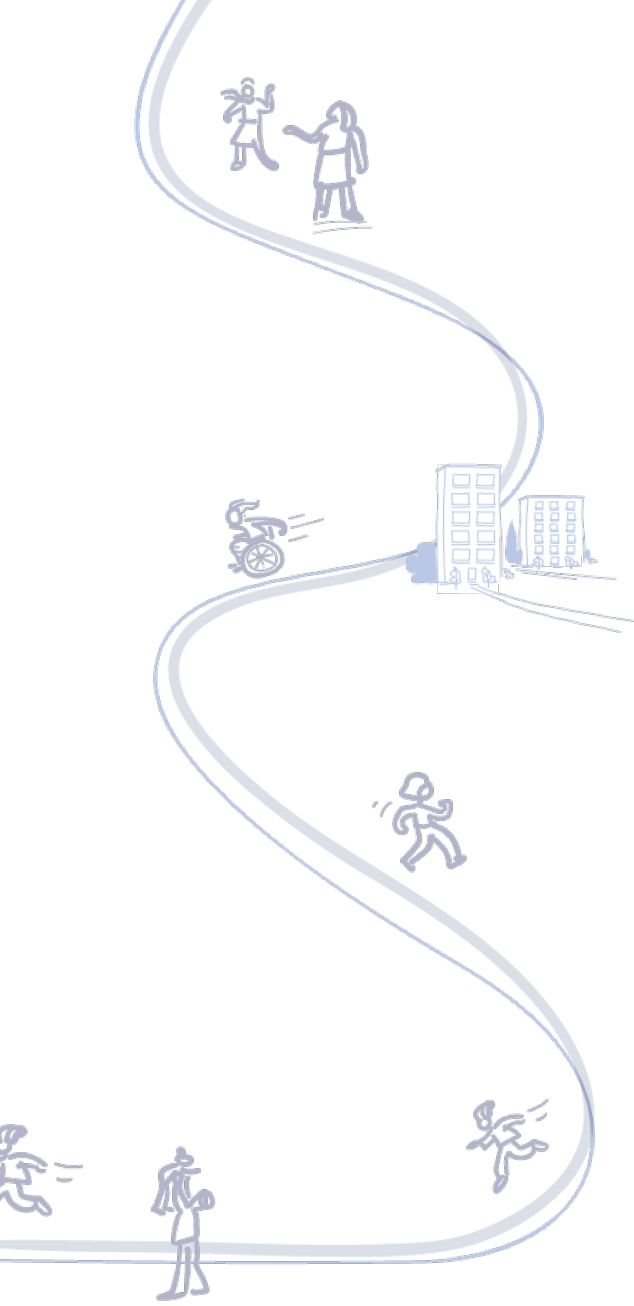
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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̅əm (Musqueam Indian Band), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish Nation), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation)

The City of Vancouver's Building Safer Communities Program is funded by Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada

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## Executive Summary

The City of Vancouver Youth Safety and Violence Prevention (YSVP) Strategy outlines a comprehensive approach to enhancing the safety and well-being of youth in Vancouver. It aims to address root causes of youth violence and identify community responses that effectively prevent its occurrence and recurrence. Developed as part of the Building Safer Communities Program and in alignment with the Healthy City Strategy, the YSVP Strategy primarily focuses on early violence prevention efforts that promote individual and community well-being, safety and belonging in the city. The Strategy sets out a plan to create safer spaces and empower young people and communities to develop and implement solutions.

A comprehensive community engagement and policy planning process took place over the last year to identify the vision, focus areas and priorities required to enhance youth safety and well-being in the city. Over 780 children and youth were reached as part of dialogue sessions, community-based research projects and events. 110 partners from non-profit youth serving agencies, community groups and public partners were involved in the policy discussions that set the direction of the strategy and implementation plan.

The Youth Safety and Violence Prevention Strategy is guided by a *vision of a city where youth feel safe, supported, connected, healthy and free of violence*. Focused primarily on upstream early violence prevention and some downstream interventions, this strategy proposes guiding principles that promote community-based solutions to youth violence. Grounded on a life course approach, the Strategy promotes understanding child and youth's needs and experiences of

safety along critical developmental stages including, early childhood, middle years, adolescence and transition to adulthood.

To achieve this vision, the Strategy identifies five focus areas and key priorities for collective action. Developed in collaboration with youth, representatives from youth-serving organizations, public partners and City departments, the focus areas and priorities are centered on community level protective factors which are positive influences that improve safety and decrease the likelihood of youth violence in the Vancouver context.

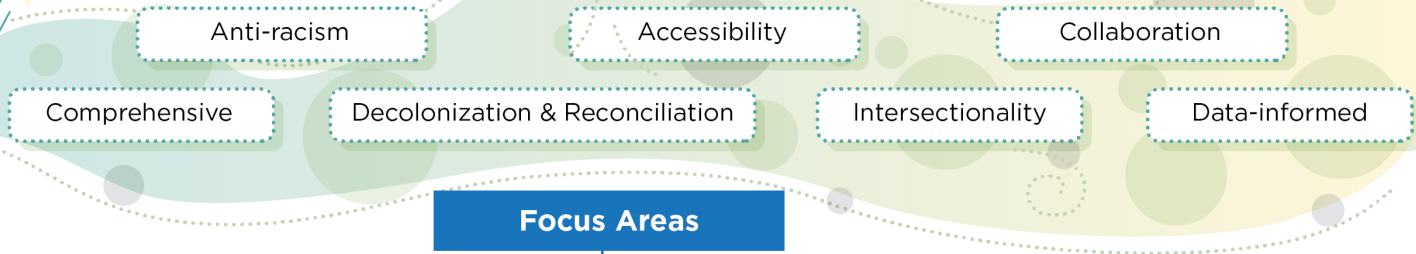
To support the implementation of the Strategy, the City will be administering the Building Safer Communities Granting Program over the next three years with funds from the federal contribution program. Federal funding will also support community mobilization, network building and priority setting efforts to address emerging issues related to youth violence in Vancouver in partnership with youth, community organizations and public partners.



# YOUTH SAFETY AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION STRATEGY

Guided by a vision of a city where youth feel safe, supported, connected, healthy and free of violence

## Guiding Principles:



1



**Create safer and protective community environments and public spaces for youth**

- Priorities:**
- Structured and unstructured spaces for youth to gather
  - Safety in public spaces and on public transit
  - Programs and supports attached to schools, community centres and libraries
  - Programs that promote youth involvement in local government

2



**Identify & strengthen community-based supports for healthy child development in the middle years (age 6-12)**

- Priorities:**
- Service provision and coordination of violence prevention programs for youth age 6-12 (“middle years”)
  - Services and supports that are appropriate to children in this age group
  - Parent and family engagement in violence prevention and intervention
  - Programs that are specially designed to be supportive of children who have experienced trauma

3



**Improve the coordination and delivery of positive youth development services and programs**

- Priorities:**
- Improve the planning and coordination of youth services
  - Targeted and identity-specific strategies and programs for equity-denied youth
  - Strengthen the youth services sector by investing in training and knowledge sharing
  - Promotion of youth development through arts, sports, recreation and community participation

4



**Connect youth to caring adults**

- Priorities:**
- Awareness about the importance of caring and supportive youth-adult relationships
  - Intergenerational programming
  - Mentorship programs
  - Training for staff in the youth services sector

5



**Lessen the impacts of serious violence and crime on children and youth**

- Priorities:**
- Focus on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) that reduce the risk of harm, criminality and future victimization
  - Mental health support for victims, offenders and bystanders
  - Intervention strategies for children and youth affected by cyberbullying, sexual exploitation and youth gang involvement





## Introduction

This Youth Safety and Violence Prevention Strategy (YSVP or “the Strategy”) is a culmination of extensive research and community engagement that brought together diverse voices with a shared commitment to seeing children and youth in Vancouver thrive. Over the 12 months leading up to the Strategy’s release, Social Policy staff convened key stakeholders including youth, public institutions and community organizations to articulate the state of youth safety and violence in Vancouver and opportunities for action. In addition, staff conducted extensive research on youth safety and the factors that both protect youth from harm and support their healthy development more broadly. This was done via a literature review, analyzing public health data and trends and highlighting pertinent studies from community organizations that helped paint a comprehensive picture of the well-being of youth in Vancouver. Over 780 children and youth were reached as part of dialogue sessions, community-based research projects and events. 110 partners from non-profit youth-serving agencies, community groups and public partners were involved in the policy discussions that set the direction of the Strategy and implementation plan.



# 1

## Youth Safety and Well-being of Youth in Vancouver: The Case for a Focus on Early Youth Violence Prevention

The City of Vancouver Youth Safety and Violence Prevention Strategy outlines a comprehensive approach and three-year plan to enhancing the safety and well-being of youth in Vancouver by working together to address youth violence before it occurs and identifying community responses that effectively prevent its recurrence.

Developed as part of the Building Safer Communities Program supported by contributions from Public Safety Canada, the YSVP Strategy emphasizes preventative approaches (i.e., “upstream” interventions) to mitigate social and community level risk factors associated with gun and gang violence in the city. Youth, community and public partners have been clear in articulating that in order to enhance safety and well-being outcomes for children and youth, our collective efforts should be focused on upstream early prevention initiatives and strategies. These initiatives should address youth violence in its broadest sense, to include racism, lateral and systemic violence, bullying and stigmatization, gun and gang violence, gender-based violence and online violence.

Youth violence results from the interplay of individual, relationship, family, community and societal factors. The occurrence of violence is strongly shaped by social

determinants of health such as poverty, social exclusion, racism, unemployment, inadequate housing and community disorganization.<sup>1</sup> As a public health issue, the prevention and mitigation of violence requires an organized effort across many sectors of society and disciplines to address the emotional, physical and environmental aspects of this problem.

### Upstream vs. downstream interventions

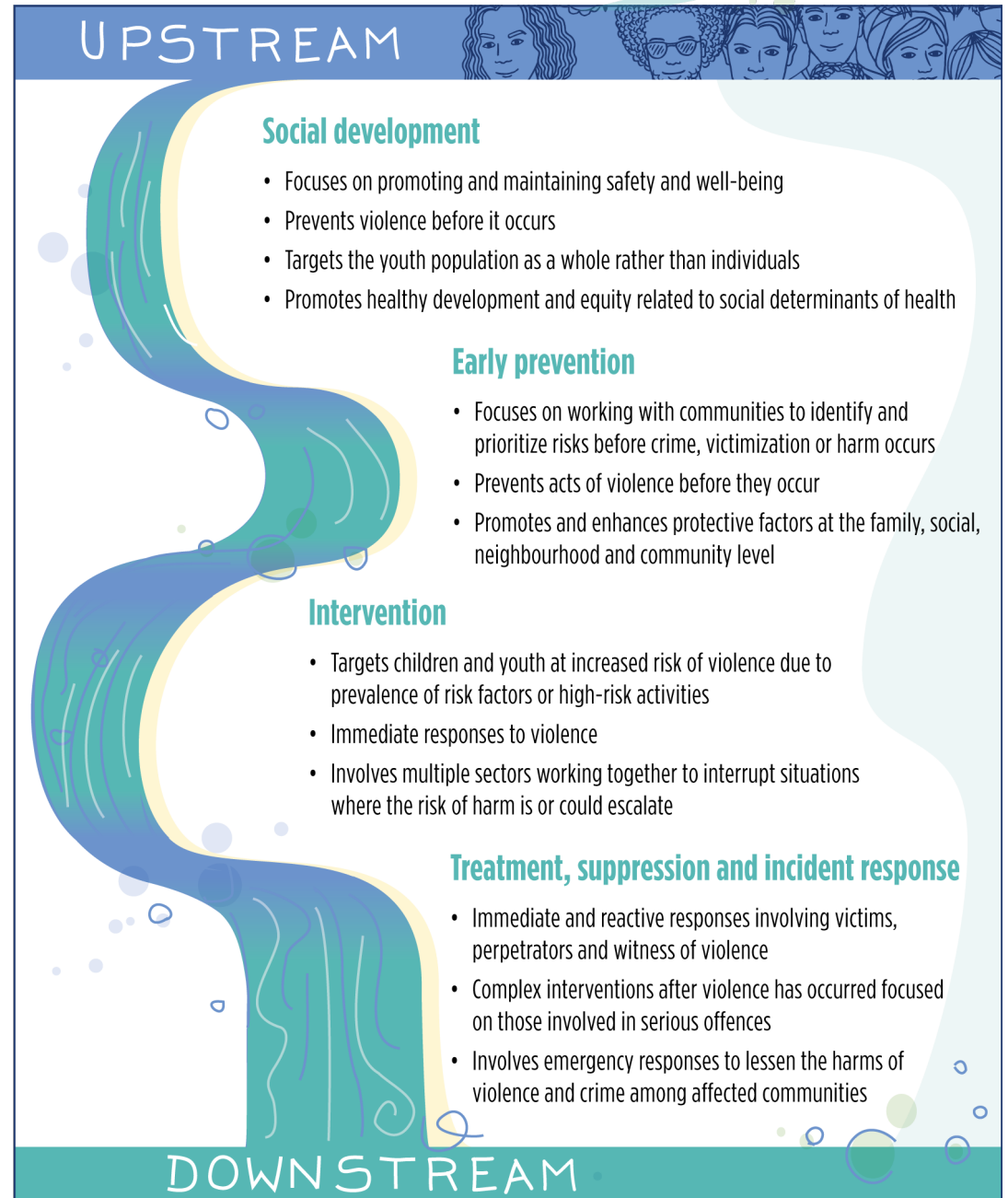
Using the analogy of a river, “upstream” and “downstream” are two different ways to address a problem in society. If you’re standing on the edge of a river and you keep seeing pollution in it, you could focus your efforts on cleaning up the pollution *downstream* from its original source. Or you could go *upstream* and stop the pollution from getting into the river in the first place. Downstream means solutions are more reactive and tend to focus on the individual while upstream solutions try and get at the source of the issue and focus on a broader population at risk of harm.



## Youth Violence Prevention Continuum<sup>i</sup>

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) explicitly states that all children and youth have the right to be protected and live in safe environments and that children and youth have the right to actively participate in decision-making affecting their lives. Under the UNCRC, children and youth need to be prepared to evolve into responsible adulthood. Given children's specific vulnerabilities and social status within societies, governments must make sustained efforts to proactively protect children and youth from harm.<sup>2</sup> Cities have significant power, influence and responsibility for the environments that children and youth experience on a daily basis as they grow. The City of Vancouver has a long history of working and investing in children and youth, both through dedicated programs and through population-based initiatives guided by the City's Civic Youth Strategy (1995). To enhance safety and well-being outcomes for youth within the context of youth violence prevention, both upstream and downstream strategies need to be considered across a spectrum of potential interventions that target different sub-populations. There is significant research and data illustrating that upstream prevention is more effective than downstream interventions in reducing violence,<sup>3,4</sup> although midstream and downstream interventions have an important role to play too.

<sup>i</sup> Adapted from the Region of Peel and City of Toronto youth violence prevention models.



The Youth Safety and Violence Prevention Strategy is mainly an upstream prevention strategy focused on the social determinants of health which are the non-medical factors that impact health outcomes of individuals.<sup>5</sup> These factors include:<sup>6</sup>

- Income and social protection
- Unemployment and job insecurity
- Food insecurity
- Early childhood development
- Structural conflict
- Access to affordable health services of decent quality
- Education
- Working life conditions
- Housing, basic amenities and the environment
- Social inclusion and non-discrimination

Meeting these goals also requires a participatory approach, with children and youth actively involved in planning and decision-making. The Youth Safety and Violence Prevention Strategy will work with community and public partners to develop children's and youths' capacities and skills in leadership, civic engagement, conflict resolution and



de-escalation, employment, advocacy and life-skills. The Strategy will also support the capacity of the City and the sector to engage with and provide services for children and youth, promoting youth safety and well-being and continually reducing the gaps children and youth experience in the determinants of health.

### Who are we focusing on and why?

A focus on the middle years (6-12) and adolescence (13-18) are priorities for the City's Youth Safety and Violence Prevention Strategy. Key experiences during these formative years shape minds and attitudes and play an important role in social identity development. These years include many physical, emotional and cognitive changes, as well as shifts in how children and youth engage with the broader community as they gain more independence.

Middle childhood (6-12) sets the course for success in adolescent and adult years. Research shows that a child's overall health and well-being during this critical period affects their ability to concentrate and learn, develop and maintain friendships, and navigate thoughtful decision-making.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, research has consistently shown that adolescence (13-18) requires healthy developmental supports and opportunities. During adolescence, young people reflect on self in relation to others, experiment with their identity, develop feelings of accountability and cultivate the capacity to enjoy life. During this time youth learn to develop competencies to participate as citizens, gain experience in decision-making, acquire a sense of belonging, formulate their own value system and learn to discuss conflicting values.<sup>8</sup>

As part of the engagement process for the Youth Safety and Violence Prevention Strategy, staff set out to better understand what safe and

inclusive cities look like for children and youth. Staff sought the perspectives of children and youth from diverse communities to identify the best ways to support healthy child and youth development and prevent youth violence (See Appendix A: The making of Vancouver's Youth Safety and Violence Prevention Strategy: Community Engagement and Research Journey that Shaped the Strategy). At our dialogue sessions staff heard that although Vancouver is generally considered to be a safe and inclusive city, some children and youth are struggling to meet basic needs, don't feel safe within their local neighbourhoods and, unfortunately, a large proportion of children and youth are lacking the supports to thrive during this important phase of their lives.

Research indicates that the overall well-being of children and youth in Vancouver has been deteriorating for some time and the pandemic exacerbated risk factors for this population group. Across communities, mental well-being and socio-emotional development indicators have worsened. Recent studies indicate diminishing health, well-being and resiliency among youth in Vancouver including increasing rates of adolescent obesity, heart disease, mental health issues, major

injuries due to violence, use of certain drugs and other risk behaviours. Research has linked these declining indicators in strong part to declining rates of youth engagement in their communities, increased social isolation and reduced access to social and community networks.<sup>9</sup>

### An opportunity to strengthen protective factors for healthy child and youth development

A key feature of effective prevention strategies includes a focus on protective factors, those positive influences that mitigate the impact of risk factors and decrease the likelihood of violence promoting behaviours, crimes or victimization. Protective factors, like risk factors, are often overlapping and interconnected at individual, family/peer, community/school and/or societal levels. The Strategy through the Building Safety Communities Program aims at strengthening social and community level protective factors through the implementation of prevention efforts. These efforts are specifically directed towards community mobilization and planning,

youth sector development and social interventions through community-based strategies and youth engagement.

Key protective factors prioritized through the engagement process include:

- Strong social supports
- Community engagement
- Problem-solving, conflict resolution and de-escalation skills
- Positive adult role models, coaches, mentors
- Healthy middle childhood development
- Support during the middle years
- Participation in traditional healing and cultural activities
- Opportunities for social connectedness
- Creation of safer online and physical spaces
- Positive peer relationships
- Affordable and stable housing and opportunities for steady employment and skills building
- Availability of social, recreational and cultural services and programs for children and youth

## Key City Policies

The Youth Safety and Violence Prevention Strategy builds on a range of policy work that relates to making Vancouver a safe and inclusive city for children and youth.

➤ **1989** | Canada signed onto the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

**1990**  
Civic  
Childcare  
Strategy

**1992**  
Vancouver  
Children's  
Policy

**1995**  
Civic Youth  
Strategy

**2002**  
Moving Forward -  
Childcare: A  
Cornerstone of  
Child Development  
Services

**2014**  
Healthy City  
Strategy

**2014**  
Reconciliation  
Framework

**2021**  
Equity  
Framework

**2022**  
Accessibility  
Strategy

**2022**  
Making  
Strides:  
Vancouver's  
Approach to  
Childcare

**2023**  
Youth Safety and  
Violence Prevention  
Strategy

## Children and youth participation in the City

The City of Vancouver's commitment to the children and youth can be traced back to 1992 with the adoption of the Children's Agenda Policy and the development of the Vancouver Civic Youth Strategy in 1995.

As the foundation for the City's Youth Safety and Violence Prevention Strategy, the Civic Youth Strategy is a statement of commitment to work in partnership with youth, within the City across departments and the larger community.

The Civic Youth Strategy has four core objectives:

- a) Ensuring youth have a place in the City;
- b) Ensuring strong youth voice in decision making;
- c) Promoting youth as a resource to the City; and
- d) Strengthening the support base for youth.<sup>10</sup>

Through this policy the City is committed to involving youth, youth-driven and youth-serving organizations as active partners in the development, assessment and delivery of civic services which have direct impact on youth.

The City is also committed to a broad-spectrum of consultations and initiatives on civic issues.

Strengthening a city that youth can identify as being safe requires the participation of young people in addition to planning and coordination across the youth-serving and public sectors. Creating safer spaces for youth requires meaningful youth engagement and a commitment to take protective measures proactively to ensure that youth are being appropriately supported on a societal level.

## Youth engagement as youth violence prevention

The implementation of this Strategy emphasizes youth engagement, since this is a well-established form of violence prevention. Youth engagement is considered an upstream approach to violence prevention that can mobilize the entire youth-serving sector, education system, academia, the business community and government agencies.

Youth engagement is defined as “the meaningful participation and sustained involvement of a young person in an activity that has a focus outside of themselves. Full engagement consists of a behavioral component (such as spending time doing the activity), an affective component (for example, deriving pleasure from participating) and a cognitive component (for example, knowing about the activity).”<sup>11</sup>

Youth engagement moves beyond the participation of young people. First and foremost, participation must be meaningful to the young person involved in order for them to become engaged. Also, engagement usually involves young people having opportunities to take responsibility and leadership while working in partnership with caring adults who value, respect and share power with them. Further, it should be noted that “engagement is a process, not a particular program – and most importantly, it is reciprocal, dynamic and interactive.”<sup>12</sup>

Scholars have identified three compelling rationales for organizations to engage youth and, more specifically, engage youth in organizational decision-making.<sup>13</sup>

1. Engaging youth in organizations helps to advance social justice and representation – **a rights-based approach** systematically upheld by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990). The UNCRC outlines in articles 12, 13 & 14, the right of children under 18 years of age to fully participate in decisions that affect them; to be able to express their ideas and concerns in any way that is appropriate for them; and to have access to full information about situations that affect them. This perspective on youth engagement is enacted mainly through consultation with young people.
2. Youth engagement **promotes youth development** – involving youth in community or organizational governance is a way for young people to actively participate in their own learning and therefore, a pathway for a young person’s healthy development. This perspective is limited to individual development, often at the cost of organizational/community development, particularly in initiatives that engage youth in ‘practicing’ organizational or community planning or decision-making until they are perceived to be adequately prepared to do so and/or until they are adults.
3. Engaging youth contributes to building civil society and supports youth’s ability to act on their individual rights while exercising their responsibilities to contribute to the common good. This rationale is based upon the notion that communities work better with **diverse stakeholders** that bring various valuable perspectives and competencies. This perspective emphasizes partnership models typically involving youth in adult-created institutional structures and working together in more equitable power dynamics to influence decisions and outcomes.

# 2

## The State of Child and Youth Safety and Well-Being in the City



Children and youth represent a generation full of promise, and yet, to reach their full potential, they need to be set up for success. As articulated in [Section 6 \(Demographic Profile of Children and Youth in the City\)](#), recent data demonstrates that young people are faced with significant pressures due to poverty, discrimination, immigration status and housing unaffordability. In this section, we dig into the data to explore how Vancouver’s children and youth are faring and the role community organizations can play in supporting them.

### Concerning trends in child and youth well-being

Socio-economic vulnerabilities play a significant role in children’s healthy development. Well-being measurements tailored to the early years, middle years and adolescents offer valuable insight into how children and youth are faring in BC and especially in Vancouver. Key trends are highlighted below for each of these stages of child development.



## Early years

According to data collected through the Early Years Development Instrument (EDI) between 2019 and 2022 (wave 8), 33.7% of Vancouver kindergarten students were considered developmentally vulnerable on one or more scales<sup>ii</sup> (on par with the BC-wide average of 32.9%) (figure 1). Over time

there has not been a significant change in vulnerability among this age group. Progress in addressing vulnerabilities in the communication skills scale has been offset by increasing vulnerability in other areas, particularly emotional development. These vulnerabilities mirror the social and economic challenges faced by parents, families and communities.

## Middle years

The Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) surveys children in grade 4 through 8 directly to assess their well-being across five scales.<sup>iii</sup> When a child scores high on at least four of the five measures and receives no low scores, they are considered to be “thriving.” Across participating Metro Vancouver Districts, grade 4 well-being declined steadily from 2013-2019 with levels evening out through the pandemic. Meanwhile, grade 7s across Metro Vancouver have been experiencing a decline in well-being since 2015 and the pandemic only made things worse (figure 2).<sup>14</sup> Given the central role that school and friendships play in the middle years, the continued decline in well-being levels among grade 7 students is especially concerning. While 2023’s numbers suggest well-being in the middle years is showing early signs of rebounding, significant interventions are needed to support children in this developmental stage to thrive.

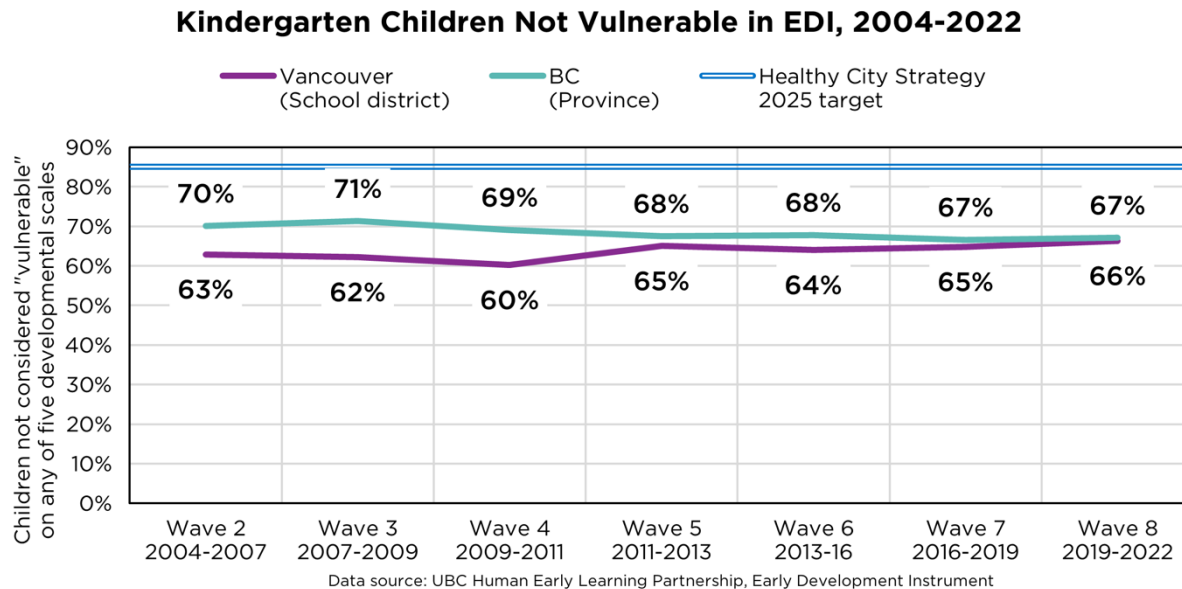


Figure 1 Overall trends in early childhood development, 2004-2022

<sup>ii</sup> The EDI’s five scales are: physical health; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive development; and communications skills.

<sup>iii</sup> The MDI’s five scales are: optimism; happiness; self-esteem; absence of sadness; and general health.

### Youth "Thriving" on MDI, 2013-2022

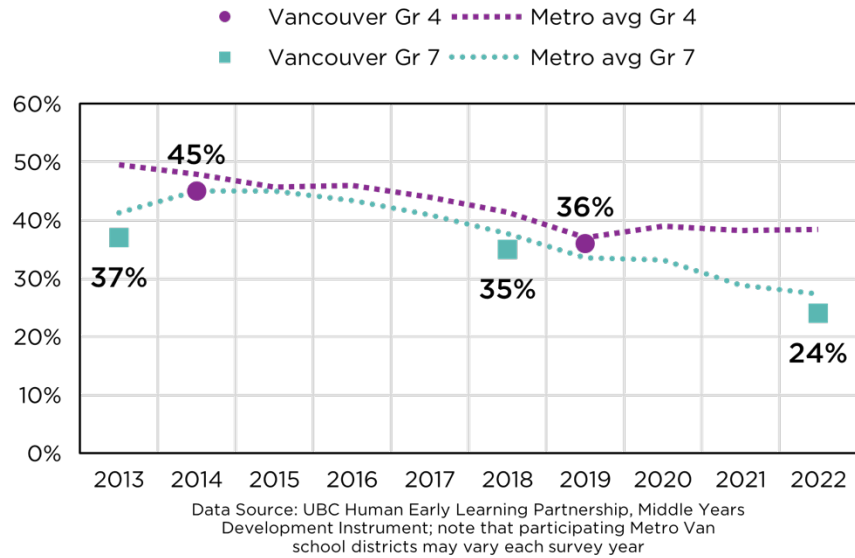


Figure 2 Grade 4 and 7 trends in overall MDI well-being index, 2013-2022

The MDI's Asset Index then measures whether four key assets that help to promote positive development and well-being are present in children's lives. Figure 3 shows scores for Vancouver overall, where we can also see a clear downward trend across Grade 7 children's assets, particularly since the pandemic. Asset scores also differed widely by neighbourhood,

<sup>iv</sup> Note that Strathcona neighbourhood data was suppressed due to low participation but typically

### Grade 7 Youth Assets, 2012-2022

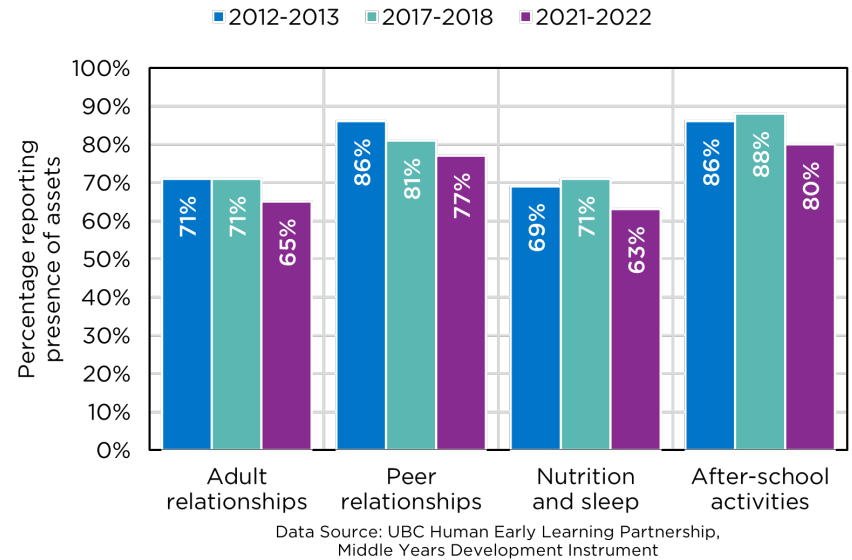


Figure 3 MDI grade 7 youth assets - Vancouver, 2012-2022

with wealthier neighbourhoods scoring higher across the Asset Index compared to neighbourhoods with lower average incomes.<sup>15</sup> For example, grade 7 students in the following neighbourhoods had lower than average scores for at least three of the four asset areas: Hastings-Sunrise, Kensington-Cedar Cottage, Killarney,

registers as a higher needs neighbourhood due to its overlap with the Downtown Eastside.

Marpole, Renfrew-Collingwood, Sunset, Downtown and Victoria-Fraserview.<sup>iv</sup>

### Adolescents

One measure of well-being for adolescents is the presence of "positive childhood experiences" (PCEs) that measures a child or youth's resilience to adversity.<sup>16</sup>



The seven PCEs include:

- the ability to discuss feelings with family;
- having family support during difficult times;
- participating in community traditions;
- having a sense of belonging in school;
- feeling supported by friends;
- having two invested non-parental adults; and
- feeling safe at home.

Of the grade 10/11 students who completed the 2023 Youth Development Instrument (YDI) in Vancouver, 30% reported having 6-7 PCEs (high score), 42% reported having 3-5 (medium score) and 28% reported having 0-2 (low score). Nearly three quarters of Vancouver youth feel they have supportive adults at home and have at least one close friend they can confide in. However, only 50% of youth strongly felt they belonged to a peer group and even fewer (37%) felt a strong sense of community belonging. Youth in our engagement sessions shared these general sentiments, lamenting the lack of adults in their lives who could offer mentorship, advice and non-judgemental listening – especially for those who had difficulty fitting in, such

as immigrants, children of immigrants, or those who hold marginalized sexual or gender identities.

### COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted children and youth well-being

The COVID-19 pandemic has had negative effects on the health and well-being of school-age children and youth. The SPEAK Survey (a province-wide study of the pandemic's impacts on many facets of social and economic well-being) showed a clear decline in children's levels of well-being, as

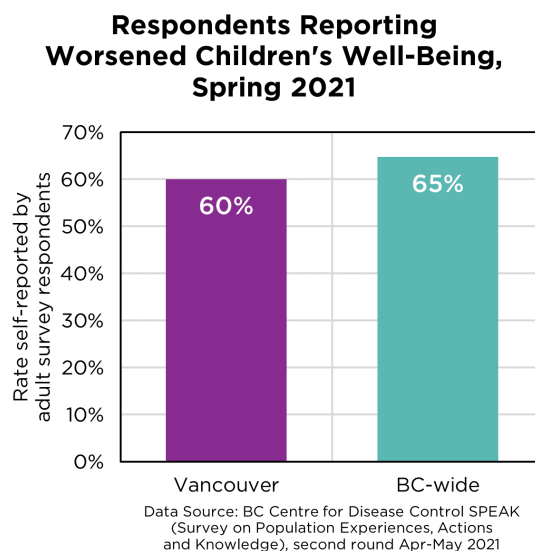


Figure 4 Changes in child well-being during the pandemic, 2020 and 2021

measured by stress, physical activity, participation in extra-curricular activities and connection with friends and family – all essential facets to children's healthy development.<sup>17</sup>

Based on data collected in the spring of 2021, 60% of respondents who had children ages 0-17 reported their children's well-being (physical, learning and behaviour) worsened as a result of the pandemic (figure 4). 83% of those with children 5-17 said their children experienced more stress (figure 5) and 87% were connecting less with their friends than before the pandemic.<sup>18</sup>

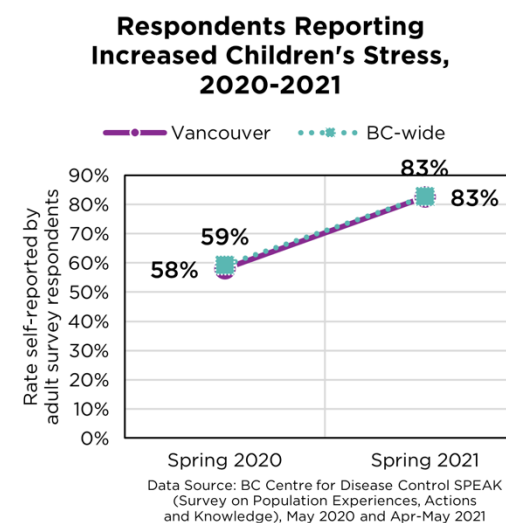


Figure 5 Changes in child stress during the pandemic, 2020 and 2021

Such stressors have borne out in a marked decline in young people's mental health: even as the acute effects of the pandemic have waned, another study of grade 10/11 youth in 2023 revealed that youth in Vancouver are experiencing a disproportionate rise in symptoms of anxiety and depression compared to other age groups.<sup>19</sup> These trends have played out across the region too.

## Factors that affect safety, security and belonging in the city

It is important to contextualize how children and youth are affected by violence in its many forms including: racism; lateral and systemic violence; bullying and cyberbullying; gender-based violence; and criminal activity. Exposure to such violence erodes the sense of safety, security and belonging youth need to thrive. Due to the stigma associated with violence affecting youth, we anticipate that the data below is an underestimate, as many transgressions go unreported.

## Racism, lateral and systemic violence

The link between discrimination and negative health outcomes amongst children and adults is well established.<sup>20</sup> In 2018, 36% of Vancouver students had experienced discrimination in the past year (up 4 percentage points since 2013). The three most commonly perceived reasons for such discrimination were physical appearance (19%), race, ethnicity or skin colour (16%) and weight (13%).<sup>21</sup> Exposure to discrimination is associated with higher rates of stress, depression and anxiety, as well as poorer physical health and unhealthy behaviours like smoking and excessive drinking.<sup>22</sup> Racism, as one particularly insidious form of discrimination, takes a similar toll. Numerous studies on the effect of racism on children and youth found that it led to lower self-concept; less academic motivation; more associations with deviant peers; and higher levels of hopelessness, depression, substance use and risky sexual behaviour.<sup>23,24</sup>

Those belonging to equity-denied communities experience disproportionately high levels of

violence. Between 2022 and 2023 in Vancouver, Indigenous females under 18 years old were nearly 12x more likely to be victims of violence relative to the general population.<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, Hispanic and Middle Eastern females under 18 were approximately 3x more likely to be victims of violence and Hispanic, Middle Eastern and Indigenous males were 3-5x more likely to be victims of violence compared to the general population.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, there has been a six-fold increase in the number of hate-motivated anti-Asian incidents reported to the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) in 2022 (56) relative to the pre-pandemic 2017-2019 average (9.3). However, there was an overall decrease since the peak observed in 2020.<sup>27</sup> While this data is not specific to youth, it has likely translated to an increase in race-based violence among youth as well.



### Youth experiences of bullying by type (Grade 10-11s, '22/23 school year)

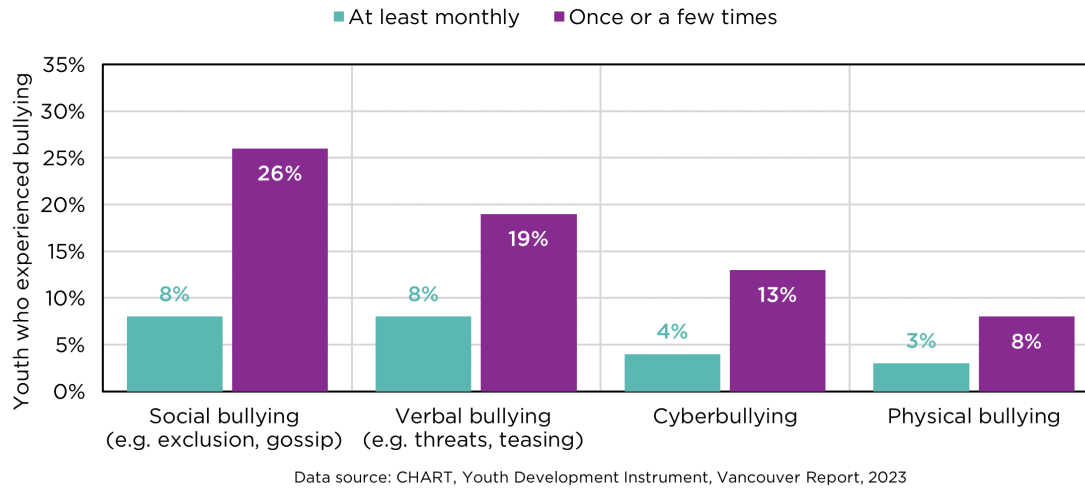


Figure 6

### Bullying, cyberbullying

Bullying continues to be something the majority of Vancouver youth experience. Bullying can be physical (e.g., bodily assault), social (e.g., gossip or purposeful exclusion), or verbal (e.g., teasing or threats). In 2018, 52% of Vancouver students reported being bullied in some way in the previous year.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, 11% of Vancouver students reported they had bullied someone else at school or on the way

to or from school in the past year.<sup>29</sup> Since this data was self-reported, this is likely an underestimate – yet it suggests that a small number of youths are doing the bullying, while a large number are victims of it. Cyberbullying, in particular, is a growing concern as the internet and social media sites have become an essential social space. Yet it unfolds in a highly unmonitored environment compared to school or extra-curricular spaces. The 2023 Youth Development

Instrument<sup>v</sup> provides a snapshot of how grade 10 and 11 students in Vancouver reported experiencing bullying in 2022/2023 (see figure 6).

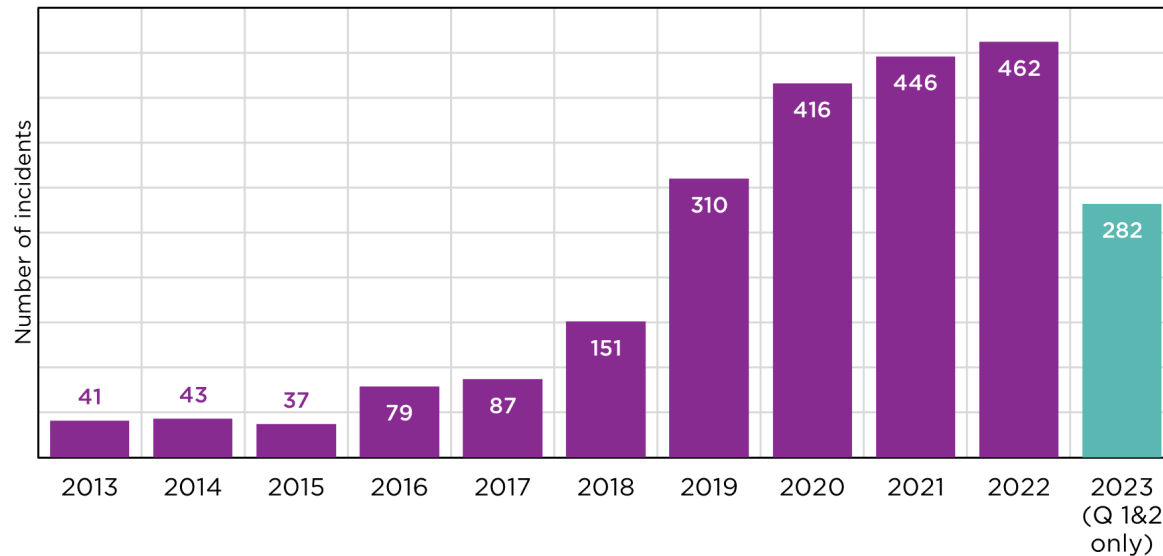
### Sexual violence and sexual exploitation

Patriarchal social norms and systemic power imbalances mean that violence is experienced differently across genders and abilities. Those who are racialized, younger, of marginalized genders (gender identities other than cisgender men), of sexual orientations other than heterosexual, and living with disabilities all experience higher rates of sexual violence.<sup>30</sup>

Youth are also particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation by adults and in some cases their peers. Sexual exploitation is the sexual abuse of a minor when they are manipulated into exchanging sexual acts for money, drugs, shelter, transportation, etc.<sup>31</sup> Reports of online child sexual exploitation rose sharply during the pandemic, with stay-at-home orders leading to more opportunities for offenders to engage in and distribute

<sup>v</sup> The Youth Development Instrument surveyed 1,816 grade 10 and 11 students in the Vancouver School Board.

### 10-year trend for child sexual abuse material (child pornography) in Vancouver



Data source: Vancouver Police Department, Public Safety Indicators Report 2022-2023

Figure 7

child pornography and more children being kept at home without access to their usual community safeguards.<sup>32</sup> Relative to the pre-pandemic 2017-2019 average, Vancouver-based incidents of child pornography were up 152.9% in 2022. 2023 is on track to be even worse, with well over half 2022’s levels recorded half-way through the year (figure 7).

Indigenous women and girls are particularly at risk of violence and exploitation. They are 16x more likely to go missing or be murdered than white women; Indigenous women are sexually assaulted 3x more often than non-Indigenous women; and the majority of the women and children sex trafficked in Canada are Indigenous.<sup>33</sup>

### Children and youth in care

Children and youth in care (CYIC)<sup>vi</sup> are particularly at risk of various forms of violence and harm – during and after their experience in the system. As of 2022, there were 617 CYIC in the Vancouver/Richmond service area, with nearly 100 additional youths transitioning out of care or youth agreements as they reached adulthood (age 19).<sup>34</sup> Indigenous children and youth are significantly over-represented in this system.

While Vancouver-specific data was not accessible, BC-wide figures highlight some concerning trends in the number of CYIC who experienced critical injury or death. In 2021-2022 fiscal year, BC’s Representative for Children and Youth (RCY) reviewed 1,518 reports of critical injury<sup>vii</sup> and 10 reports of death among CYIC. The majority of both kinds of cases involved Indigenous children/youth. RCY reviews cases beyond just the child welfare system<sup>viii</sup> and has recorded an upward trend. In fact, the number of in-mandate critical injury

<sup>vi</sup> Children or youth who are under the care of the Government of British Columbia and live in a foster or group home

<sup>vii</sup> Types of critical injury: emotional harm, physical assault/harm, sexual violence, substance-related harm and suicidal attempts or ideations that resulted in (or were intended to result in) a critical injury or death.

<sup>viii</sup> Reviewable services under RCY’s mandate are: child welfare; children and youth with special needs; addiction; child mental health services; and youth justice.

cases reviewed by their office more than doubled between 2018 and 2022.<sup>35</sup>

Within the provincial child welfare system – which is under the purview of the Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD) – young people regularly go missing. While there is no complete and accurate measure of this, RCY received over 500 reports between April-December 2022 regarding CYIC who were lost, missing, or away from their placement and who experienced a critical injury or were considered at risk of harm during that time.<sup>36</sup> This represented 198 distinct children and an average of 37 children who went missing one or more times per month. While missing, young people are particularly vulnerable to being harmed by others (e.g., sexual violence), suffering mental health crises and using substances which could result in overdose or death.

As youth in care transition to adulthood, research shows that they are at a greater likelihood to engage in violence/commit crime.<sup>37</sup>

They are also at a higher risk to experience poverty and homelessness: 31% of those surveyed in Vancouver’s 2023 Homeless Count were or had been in the care of MCFD or other child welfare system reflecting the gaps in supports for youth who age out of care.<sup>38</sup>

### Exposure to crime

According to VPD data, there has been an increase in youth crime in recent years. While the number of adolescents between 12 and 17 with adverse police interactions in the violence category decreased by 15% from 2018 to 2020, it rose by nearly 56% over the two years that followed (figure 8). Youth being charged in the violence category shows a similar pattern, sharply rising in recent years (figure 9). Notably, many violent interactions do not result in a charge being laid even if sufficient evidence is present as victims may decide not to press charges or the charges may be dropped.

### Identified Youth (12-17 yrs) with Adverse Police Interactions

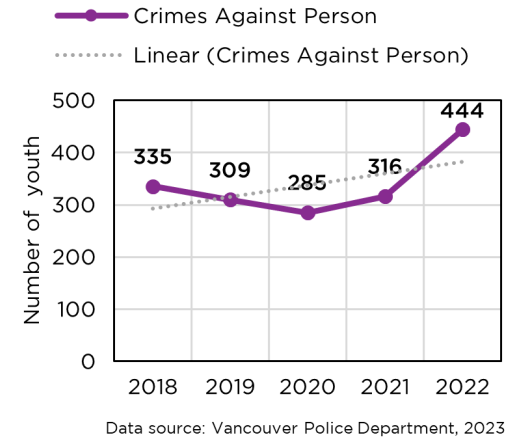


Figure 8

### Youth (12-17 yrs) Being Charged

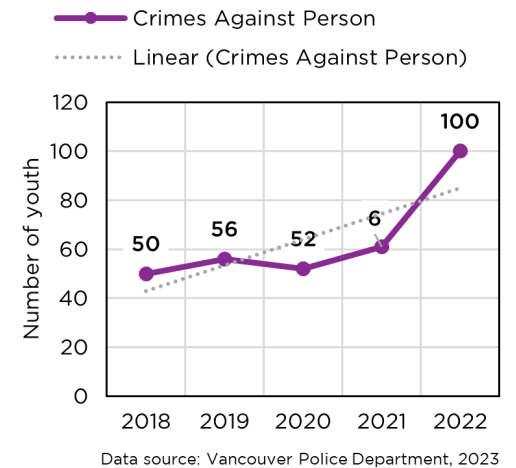


Figure 9

VPD has noted that youth violent offences involving bear spray have been on the rise in recent years. Such offences went up from 100 in 2021 to 115 in 2022. This remains significantly higher than the 2017-2019 average of 57.6 incidents per year.<sup>39</sup>

Meanwhile, the number of youth victims for violent offences (robbery, assault, sexual assault and domestic assault) has remained relatively steady during the same five-year period (figure 10).<sup>40,41</sup>

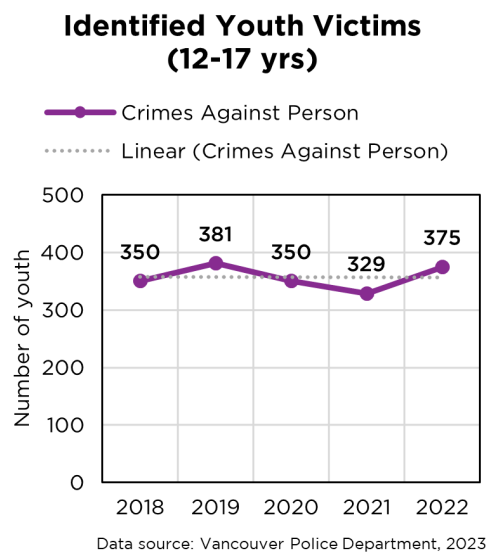


Figure 10

<sup>ix</sup> Weapons violations, according to the Canada Criminal Code, include possession, sale, or trafficking of weapons; whereas weapon use is categorized as violent crime.

## Possession of weapons

Weapons continue to be quite present in schools contributing to a culture of fear and violence among youth. According to Statistics Canada data, the number of youths charged with weapons violations<sup>ix</sup> has been steadily decreasing over time and reached a record low in 2021 with just two charges.<sup>42</sup> While the number of Vancouver youths charged with weapons violations may be at an all-time low, many incidents do not result in a charge or do not get reported to police. The 2018 Adolescent Health Survey reported that 5% of students surveyed in Vancouver carried a weapon to school in the past month, including 1% who always carried a weapon. Notably, students who had been the victim of bullying were more likely to carry a weapon. For example, 22% of Vancouver youths who had been physically attacked in the past year carried a weapon, compared to 4% who had not been attacked.<sup>43</sup> This suggests that weapons are increasingly being carried not as a tool of aggression but as a form of protection.

## Gun and gang violence

There is limited data on the scale of youth gangs in BC/Vancouver area. As of 2023, BC's anti-gang agency, the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit, estimates that there are 188 gangs or organized crime groups in British Columbia (adult/youth combined).<sup>44</sup>

Young people join gangs for a range of reasons: excitement, prestige, protection, a chance to make money, or a sense of belonging.<sup>45</sup> Data gathered from Canadian law enforcement suggests that youth involved in gangs hail from diverse ethnic, geographic, demographic and socio-economic contexts<sup>46,47</sup> Other studies found that youth who suffered from social inequality were at a higher risk of gang involvement.<sup>48,49</sup>

There is a strong link between gang presence in urban high schools and the availability of both guns and drugs in schools.<sup>50</sup> Becoming a “dialer” – someone hired to deliver drugs to a specific location – is the typical first step into gang life for youth. New dialers are often forced into debt with

their dealers, which, along with threats of violence, keeps youth under their control.<sup>51</sup> Research also shows that youth who drop out of school and get involved in selling drugs are at higher risk of being involved in gun-related violence.<sup>52</sup>

### Cultural pressures towards gang ideation

Males tend to be overrepresented in gangs and as perpetrators of physical violence. Aggressive and domineering representations of masculinity in movies, video games and social media establish unhealthy norms to which boys can easily aspire. A US study on the state of gender equality among American adolescents found that a third of boys think society expects them to ‘be a man’ and ‘suck it up’ when they feel sad or scared.<sup>53</sup> This was reflected in our youth engagements as well.

On top of that, we are in a crisis of connection: youth across genders are feeling starved for authentic relationships. Some participants in our youth engagement sessions reflected feeling like they had to “mask” to fit in. When boys struggle to develop a healthy sense of self and form healthy

relationships with peers, they may find the acceptance they seek in gang life.

### When and where youth feel unsafe

Echoing what participants shared in our engagement sessions, many young people do not feel safe in public space at night and on public transit. Data from the 2018 Adolescent Health Survey reveals gender strongly influences how youth experience their neighbourhoods, with females and non-binary youth feeling less safe than males (see figure 11). In our engagement sessions, some participants reflected that it wasn’t as much about the space that made it unsafe as it was about whether they were in the company of people they knew and trusted. When young people perceive their neighbourhood as safe it has a positive effect on their development: they do better socially and emotionally, experiencing fewer internalizing problem behaviours (e.g., depression, anxiety) and fewer externalizing problem behaviours (e.g., aggression, substance use).<sup>54</sup>

### Vancouver youth who often or always feel safe in their neighbourhood...

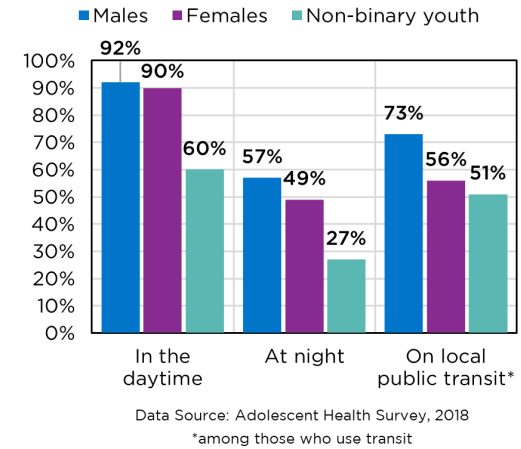


Figure 11

### The child- and youth-serving sector

Community organizations are among the many players in the ecosystem that foster safety and support the healthy development of children and youth. Provincially, the Ministry of Child and Family Development has a mandate to protect vulnerable children, support their mental health and operate key services such as the foster care system. The public school system also falls under provincial jurisdiction. Meanwhile, the federal government plays a key role in delivering policies and programs that contribute to child and youth well-being

more broadly such as settlement for newcomers, employment programs and income supports. The programs and services offered by non-profits have emerged as an essential safety net for children and families, especially where various levels of government have failed to adequately protect them. Although child and youth services are not generally the purview of municipal governments, cities are well-positioned to collaborate with and fund non-profits who work closely with community.

The City of Vancouver directly reaches children and youth by delivering services related to:

- park and playground infrastructure;
- public libraries;
- community centres; and
- recreation programs.

In addition, the City invests in the non-profit sector through:

- social and urban planning interventions;
- providing lease subsidies and funding capital projects for non-profits; and
- funding non-profit service delivery.

### Social Policy department funding to child and youth sector (2022)

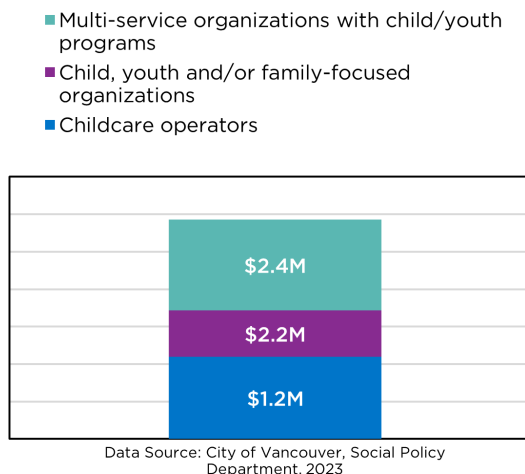


Figure 12

In 2022, the City's Social Policy Department provided \$3.4 million in funding to non-profits with a mandate to serve children, youth and/or families (including childcare operators) and another \$2.4M to multi-service agencies like Neighbourhood Houses and community centres that run children/youth programs (figure 12).

### The case for community-based responses to violence prevention

Given their close connection to community, non-profit service providers are a powerful tool for fostering the healthy development of

children and youth. As data in the previous pages illuminates, many young people feel unsafe in their neighbourhood, do not have a trusted adult they can turn to for help or advice, and feel disconnected from their community (something that was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic). Access to safer spaces and supportive programming in the community can give young people the foundation they need to navigate life's challenges, helping fill developmental gaps caused by systemic inequities and difficult life circumstances. Research demonstrates a positive link between child development programming and reduced poverty in adulthood, an increased sense of social responsibility, stronger moral reasoning and decreased juvenile delinquency.<sup>55</sup> Particularly for adolescents, participating in structured social, arts and recreational programs is likely to improve academic achievement, psychosocial and behavioural functioning, increase life satisfaction and lower rates of depression.<sup>56</sup> Community programs also help increase a sense of community belonging and build out a web of trusted adults and older teens to be leaned on for support. In a time when so many young people do not feel safe outside their homes, community



centres are one of the few environments offering respite.

## Snapshot of Vancouver's child- and youth-serving sector

Vancouver is home to 195 non-profits that serve children and youth. Of these, 74 are youth-focused organizations<sup>2x</sup> and 121 are multi-service organizations that include youth as one of their target communities. Across all non-profits serving this demographic, social service agencies are the most common, comprising nearly 30% of the sector, with development and housing, sports and recreation, and arts and culture each playing a significant role as well.<sup>xi</sup>

The vast majority (65%) of Vancouver's child and youth-serving non-profits offer in-person, place-based programs or services at 141 sites across the city.<sup>57</sup> Place-based services are most concentrated in Vancouver's Downtown and Strathcona neighbourhoods, reflecting the relative density of populations at risk<sup>xii</sup> (figure 13).

<sup>x</sup> Of the 74 youth-focused organizations, 3 were youth-led.

## Youth sector capacity strengths and challenges

Child- and youth-serving organizations bring many assets to the table: staff are able to meaningfully connect with youth and meet their needs; program staff are diverse and tend to represent the community they serve; and there is a strong sense of community within the organization which promotes a positive culture and staff retention.<sup>58</sup> There is also a high degree of support for collaboration with other agencies, which contributes to their ability to remain nimble, responsive and efficient.<sup>59</sup> Through COVID, youth organizations rapidly pivoted online and many have been able to reach even greater numbers by now offering a blended of online and in-person programs.<sup>60</sup>

Yet the sector is not without its challenges. Similar to other social service non-profits, youth-serving organizations face being stretched thin; rising staffing and program costs; limited time/resources to do fundraising and reporting; restricted grant funds; and high levels of staff stress and burnout.<sup>61,62</sup> While many non-profits struggle to recruit and

<sup>xi</sup> Non-profits were categorized based on the International Classification of Non-Profit Organizations (ICNPO)

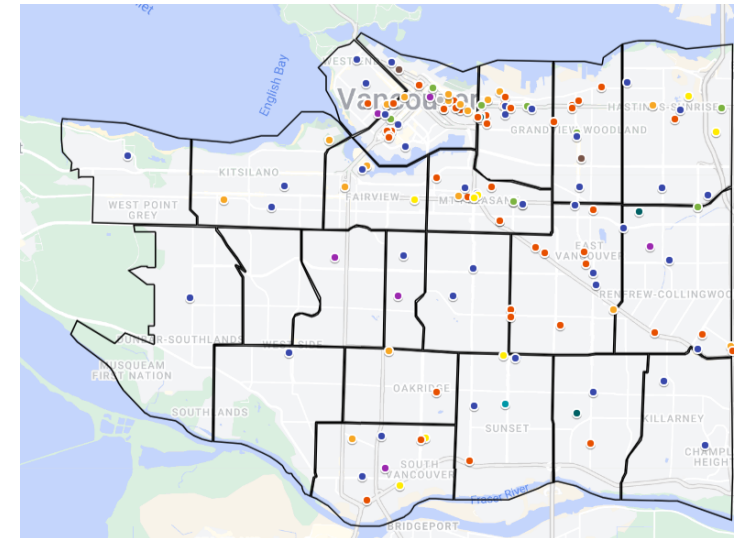


Figure 13 Map of Vancouver's place-based child and youth programs/services

retain skilled staff, the child- and youth-serving sector seems to be disproportionately afflicted with this challenge.<sup>63</sup> In addition to delivering on their core mandates, non-profits are also being called to step up their supports amidst the pressures presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the overdose crisis and the movement for racial justice. Without adequate resourcing, the sector's ability to do its best work will be hindered.

<sup>xii</sup> An interactive version of this map is available [here](#)

# 3

## A Municipal Approach to Youth Safety and Well-being in Vancouver: Guiding Principles



The Youth Safety and Violence Prevention Strategy is guided by a *vision of a city where youth feel safe, supported, connected, healthy and free of violence.*

In order to achieve this vision youth, community and public partners convened several times over the last year to collaboratively develop a set of principles recommended to guide the Strategy going forward.

These principles align with best practices in the literature as well as existing commitments made by the City of Vancouver. The 7 principles are set out below along with how they are intended to be reflected in what the Strategy focuses on and how the work will be approached.

# Guiding principles



## Principle 1: Decolonization and Reconciliation

Related City of Vancouver policies:  
UNDRIP, MMIWG2S, RF

### Rationale

Decolonization is a way of deconstructing ideologies that privilege Western thought and approaches. Decolonization involves dismantling structures that perpetuate imbalanced power dynamics that contribute to different forms of violence.

Meanwhile, reconciliation speaks directly to Indigenous rights and title. As a City of Reconciliation, the municipal government has a responsibility to uphold and protect Indigenous rights.

Decolonization is a process of addressing past and current impacts of colonialism and as such, reconciliation and decolonization efforts are central to advancing Indigenous rights. Given that Vancouver is also home to three Host Nations and a large urban Indigenous population (those who hold Indigenous identity but are not of the three local Host Nations), the needs of this wider community must also be centred throughout this Strategy.

### How this principle is reflected in the Strategy

Host Nations and urban Indigenous organizations will be invited to participate in reference groups and sector development opportunities.

Cultural safety will be a lens applied to all youth engagements (e.g., presence of an Elder).

Evaluation methods will include qualitative methods that invite oral storytelling.

Networking and capacity-building events will emphasize non-hierarchical knowledge sharing and Indigenous perspectives.

Grant adjudication will involve City staff and community representatives rather than solely City staff. This helps share power and influence in a more horizontal way.

Grants program will encourage culturally-informed services and programs.

Granting intake and reporting processes will be reviewed for cultural sensitivity with processes adapted where possible to be more accessible for Indigenous and grassroots organizations.

#### Legend:

- ARS - Anti-racism Strategy/Action Plan (forthcoming)
- AS - Accessibility Strategy (2022)
- EF - Equity Framework (2021)
- HCS - Healthy City Strategy (2014)
- MMIWG2S - City of Vancouver MMIWG2S Response Report (2022)
- RF - Reconciliation Framework (2014)
- UNDRIP - UNDRIP Action Plan (2022)
- WES - Women's Equity Strategy (2018-2028)





## Principle 2: Anti-racism

Related City of Vancouver policies:  
HCS, EF, ARS

### Rationale

Applying an anti-racism principle allows us to identify and challenge racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices, and attitudes to redistribute power in an equitable manner.

### How this principle is reflected in the Strategy

Organizations with a focus on racialized youth are part of the Community Partner Reference Group.

Grants to organizations serving racialized youth at a higher risk of violence and harm will be prioritized.

The Strategy's upstream approach ensures equity-denied youth, who are at an increased risk of various forms of violence, receive additional resources to support their healthy development.



## Principle 3: Intersectionality

Related City of Vancouver policies:  
HCS, EF, ARS, WES

### Rationale

An individual's lived experience is deeply shaped by the multiple, overlapping identities they hold including but not limited to race, gender, sexuality and dis/ability. Intersectionality provides a basis for understanding how these individual identity markers work with one another. By taking an intersectional approach, we are shining a light on how systems can reinforce oppression from different angles which can then compound negative effects on certain populations.

### How this principle is reflected in the Strategy

Grants to organizations serving equity-denied communities at a higher risk of violence and harm will be prioritized (e.g., those experiencing multiple forms of marginalization due to intersectionality).

When possible, data analysis is disaggregated to examine how those with intersecting marginal identities experience safety/violence compared to those with dominant identities.





### Principle 4: Accessibility

Related City of Vancouver policies:  
HCS, AS

#### Rationale

There are a range of mental and physical conditions that can make it difficult for some members of the community to access programs, services and public spaces. This Strategy aims to ensure the activities/actions herein are inclusive to diverse accessibility needs.

#### How this principle is reflected in the Strategy

Staff will develop a checklist of accessibility considerations that forthcoming public engagement events falling within the YSVP Strategy will meet.

Grantees will be asked how they are taking steps to ensure their proposed program/service is inclusive of diverse accessibility needs.



### Principle 5: Collaboration

Related City of Vancouver policies:  
HCS

#### Rationale

When we collaborate across organizations and sectors we are more able to break down silos and support young people in a holistic way. Collaboration is key to creating systems change.

#### How this principle is reflected in the Strategy

The making of the Strategy was highly collaborative, involving stakeholders from community agencies, public institutions and diverse youth voices. The implementation of this Strategy will continue in the same spirit.

The Strategy will establish cross-sectoral networks that support collaboration between community agencies and public institutions including the City and other levels of government where appropriate.

Grants that involve collaboration within and between sectors will be prioritized.

Advocacy work will pursue collaboration between the City, community agencies and higher levels of government.





### Principle 6: Data-informed

Related City of Vancouver policies: HCS

#### Rationale

Information is power. Collecting community-based data is an important part of tracking community progress and identifying community strengths, opportunities and challenges. This information gathering empowers stakeholders to make decisions with the benefit of data that is relevant and based on each community's unique needs, preferences and contexts.

#### How this principle is reflected in the Strategy

The Strategy is grounded in academic and practitioner literature, population level data, findings from community-based research grantees, and qualitative data that came from our community consultations.

Going forward, we will continue to learn from community-based research, incorporate research/data insights into engagements, and monitor and evaluate the Strategy's impact through a robust evaluation framework.

Desired outputs and outcomes will reflect the Strategy's equity-related principles.



### Principle 7: Comprehensive

Related City of Vancouver policies: HCS

#### Rationale

A comprehensive strategy gives upstream prevention programming the time required to demonstrate success and system change. Having a varying timeframe for goals allows the City and youth-serving sector to track progress on multiple fronts from specific quick wins to comprehensive visionary aspirations that require time and patience to realize.

#### How this principle is reflected in the Strategy

Short-, medium- and long-term objectives are built into the Strategy.

Proposed interventions support action at the individual, community and systems levels.

Proposed interventions emphasize upstream solutions while acknowledging the important role of midstream and downstream efforts.



# 4

## Youth Safety and Violence Prevention Focus Areas and Priorities for the City

In order to achieve the vision for a safer Vancouver where youth feel supported, connected, healthy and free from violence, the YSVP Strategy identifies five focus areas and key priorities to recommend for collective action.

These areas and priorities were developed in collaboration with youth, representatives from youth-serving organizations, public partners and City departments, and are centered around community-level protective factors which are positive influences. These factors improve safety and decrease the likelihood of violence affecting youth in the Vancouver context by improving the lives of children and youth within their local communities.

In this section, focus areas and associated priorities are described along with a summary of research that helps make the case for the importance of each focus area's importance. Throughout our engagement events, youth shared a wide range of ideas that could be considered actions within this strategy. These ideas have been summarized in Attachment 1: Youth Ideas for Action and will be utilized in the forthcoming community planning process to help develop a detailed action plan.



## Strategy focus areas, priorities and rationale



### Focus Area 1: Create safer and protective community environments and public spaces for youth

Cities can significantly influence and shape the environments that children and youth grow up in and experience on a daily basis. In safe and protective spaces, children and youth can express themselves and feel confident that they will not be exposed to any type of physical or emotional harm (e.g., discrimination, harassment or bullying).<sup>64</sup> These spaces can accommodate the needs of racialized youth, especially those vulnerable to marginalization or violence, providing opportunities to build skills and participate in decision-making processes.

#### Priorities:

- Structured and unstructured spaces for youth to gather
- Safety in public spaces and on public transportation
- Community-based supports attached to schools, community centres and libraries
- Community and civic programs that promote youth decision-making and engagement in governance

#### Why this is important:

- The media coverage and narrative surrounding incidents of violence reported on the news and through social media creates both a physical and mental environment of fear.
- A majority of youth at the Vancouver Youth Voice: Violence Prevention Forum shared that the lack of safety on transit creates an environment where youth feel in danger and must think about defensive safety measures (e.g., carrying sunscreen cans or big water bottles).
- A common theme in community discussions established that poorly lit areas and dark streets are areas that youth feel unsafe. Youth steer clear of these areas to avoid being exposed to violent activities/gangs. However, when poorly lit areas are their neighborhoods, they are unavoidable.
- Youth who feel connected to their community are more likely to feel safe in their neighbourhood, to have post-secondary aspirations and to feel hopeful for the future. They are less likely to engage in binge drinking and other health risk behaviours. They are also less likely to miss out on mental health services when they need them.<sup>65</sup>
- Most youth (62%) who took the Adolescent Health Survey felt the activities they took part in were meaningful to them and 42% felt their ideas were listened to and acted upon in these activities. Youths who experienced meaningful engagement in their activities were more likely to report positive mental health, to feel an adult in their community cared about them and to feel connected to their community.<sup>66</sup>





## Focus Area 2: Identify and strengthen community-based supports for healthy child development in the middle years

Children between the ages 6 and 12 are at a critical developmental stage in which their experiences set a foundation for the habits, perceptions and attitudes they will have for a lifetime. Families, extended families, community-based organizations and caring public institutions all play a central role in supporting the well-being of children. However, the middle years provide key opportunities for early interventions that will have a significant impact in preventing youth violence in the future. Having a strong sector of community-based organizations that understand and are able to respond to the challenges and opportunities of this population group is critical to ensuring safer and inclusive communities for children and youth.

### Priorities:

- Middle childhood service provision and coordination of early violence prevention programs
- Developmentally and culturally appropriate services and supports
- Parent and family engagement in violence prevention and intervention
- Trauma-informed middle childhood approaches and programs

### Why this is important:

- At the Vancouver Youth Voice: Violence Prevention Forum, youth identified that family members can significantly contribute to a sense of security and safety for youth if there is a healthy dynamic.
- When citing the spaces in which they felt safest, *at home* and *in their room* was a recurring theme. This sense of safety is connected to feeling protected in their own spaces. Potentially, the impact of COVID has intensified this and the outcome is that fewer youth are experiencing the extracurricular and out-of-home activities that help them grow, develop and thrive in the middle and adolescent years.
- Youth engagement sessions established that a lack of safe spaces and supports results in youths putting on a mask to fit in within their community and in turn losing a sense of self.
- Research shows that children with positive peer relationships feel better about themselves, experience greater mental health, are more prosocial and perform better academically. Conversely, children who do not feel part of a group or feel cast out by their own group are at risk of anxiety and depression. They are also at higher risk of low school attendance and future school drop-out.<sup>67</sup>
- Social competencies and friendship-building skills can buffer children against bullying, anxiety and depression. Social and emotional competencies include children's ability to recognize, understand and effectively respond to emotions, manage stress and be optimistic. They also include showing concern for others, sustaining healthy relationships and making effective personal and social decisions.<sup>68</sup>

- Promoting children’s social and emotional competence is critical for their successful development across the lifespan. Social and emotional competencies can be best promoted when children experience supportive environments across multiple contexts: at school with teachers and peers; in the home with elders, family, or caregivers; and in after-school programs with peers and community members.<sup>69</sup>



### Focus Area 3: Strengthen the coordination and provision of positive youth development services and programs

Positive youth development programs strengthen young people’s sense of identity, belief in the future, self-regulation and self-efficacy, as well as their social, emotional, cognitive and behavioral competence.<sup>70</sup> As an approach, Positive Youth Development focuses on protective factors rather than on risk behaviours related to a single condition of marginalization. It promotes asset building, meaningful youth engagement and considers young people as resources and equal partners. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted various areas of young people’s lives, including access to youth services, programs and supports. As a result, the youth-serving sector in Vancouver is experiencing a transformation and resurgence to ensure youth reconnect with programs and opportunities that support their healthy development.

#### Priorities:

- Improve service planning and coordination
- Targeted and identity-specific strategies and programs for equity-denied youth
- Capacity-building of the youth sector
- Promotion of youth development through arts, sports, recreation and community participation

- Research demonstrates a positive link between child development programming and reduced poverty in adulthood, an increased sense of social responsibility, stronger moral reasoning and decreased juvenile delinquency.<sup>71</sup> Particularly for adolescents, participating in structured social, artistic or recreational activities is likely to improve academic achievement and psychosocial and behavioural functioning, increase life satisfaction, lower rates of depression and reduce delinquency.<sup>72</sup>

- Community programs also help increase a sense of community belonging and build out a web of adults and older teens beyond a young person's immediate sphere who they can lean on for support. In a time when so many youths do not feel safe outside their homes, community centres are one of the few environments offering respite.<sup>73</sup>
- Community youth programs also present an opportunity for young people to cultivate their leadership skills and give back to their community in various ways which are important for their sense of agency and belonging.<sup>74</sup> Deeper engagement, such as contributing to municipal planning processes and sitting on youth advisory councils, are valuable ways for young people to have their voices heard and shape their environments.
- Community dialogue sessions highlighted that there is need to strengthen the youth service sector, due to the impact of the pandemic which fractured communities and displaced youth from those core pillars of community belongingness.
- Participants in the City's Youth Violence Prevention Forum shared that community programs are often inaccessible Vancouver's reputation as a lonely city or the perception that certain neighbourhoods are unsafe added to these challenges.
- Community partners have highlighted current challenges resulting from the pandemic, social distancing restrictions, limited access to resources and a narrowed pool of youth workers and youth experts to work in the field. Service delivery models had to be adjusted to reach out to youth while at the same time delivering quality and user-tailored activities with limited resources, causing strain in many organizations.



## Focus Area 4: Connect youth to caring adults

Children and youth grow and develop in an environment of relationships. The presence of a caring adult can positively influence a child's life and promote resilience and healthy development. Safe, stable, nurturing relationships help build resilience and buffer the negative impact of adverse experiences. Positive adult role models are an importance source of mentorship, advice and non-judgemental listening. Supportive adults can come in many forms, including trained youth workers, counsellors/therapists, club/team leaders, caring parents and caregivers and teachers who are willing to go the extra step to offer students emotional support.

### Priorities:

- Awareness about the importance of caring and supportive youth/adult relationships
- Intergenerational programming
- Mentorship programs
- Youth sector staff development, capacity and recognition

### Why this is important:

- Research from the Adolescence Health Survey identified that youth were more likely than five years earlier to feel that an adult in their neighbourhood or community (outside their family or school) really cared about them (59% vs. 50% in 2013). However, youth in Vancouver were less likely than those across the province to have such an adult in their life (65% provincially).<sup>75</sup>
- Similarly, youth who have a supportive adult in their life are more likely to feel comfortable refusing to do something they do not want to do such as engaging in unwanted sexual activity or sexting, and they are less likely to miss out on needed mental health care. They are also more likely to feel happy if they have an adult who cares about them.<sup>76</sup>
- Around a quarter of youths (24%) reported having an adult outside their family they could talk to when faced with a serious problem, which was lower than five years earlier (29% in 2013). Vancouver youth were less likely than students across BC to have this type of supportive adult in their life (24% vs. 27% provincially).<sup>77</sup>
- As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, overall children and youth well-being decreased and stress levels increased. Protective factors such as community connectedness, physical and social activities were negatively impacted.<sup>78</sup> There was increased levels of social isolation, loss of opportunities for activating and a reduction of those buffering supports that act as protective factors for violence prevention.
- A common theme at the Vancouver Youth Voice: Violence Prevention Forum was that parents can be good role models if they have a healthy relationship with the youth. The consensus was that sometimes it's

hard for friends to give critical feedback, while parents will provide advice that youth may not want to hear, but need to hear.

- Participants in the youth engagement sessions indicated that lack of connection makes it more difficult to trust people and as a result it makes it harder to have a safe, inclusive space and inclusive city. There is a general feeling of mistrust between younger and older generations. Youth commonly experience a lack of validation from adults and other peers about the challenges that they are uniquely facing. This often results in youth feeling the need to

prove themselves which can result in carrying weapons, threatening others and other intimidation tactics.

- Youth events like the Vancouver Youth Forum, where youth can go and share their opinions and adults will actually listen, results in youth continuing to share their experiences and voice.





## Focus Area 5: Lessen the impacts of serious violence and crime on children and youth

Many risk factors for youth violence are linked to experiencing “adverse childhood experiences” (ACEs) and toxic stress that is prolonged and repeated. Toxic stress can negatively change the brain development of children and youth and can result from situations such as living in impoverished neighbourhoods, experiencing food insecurity, experiencing racism, limited access to support and medical services, as well as direct experiences with violence, mental health concerns, substance abuse and other instability. ACEs are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years). These are associated with major health and violence risk factors in adulthood and poor quality of life. As children and youth can be directly affected by violence either as victims, offenders or witnesses it is important to reduce the risk of future harm.

### Priorities:

- Focusing on ACEs in order to reduce the risk, harm, criminality and future victimization
- Mental health support for victims, offenders and bystanders
- Intervention strategies for children and youth affected by cyberbullying, sexual exploitation and youth gang involvement

### Why this is important:

- Vancouver is an inequitable city that faces many longstanding barriers to social sustainability. The city has high rates of poverty, a high cost of living, unaffordable housing and a polarized distribution of income and wealth.
- Youth at risk or already involved in gangs tend to be from groups that suffer from the greatest levels of inequality and social disadvantage.<sup>79</sup> Some children and youth in Vancouver experience significant gaps across the social determinants of health including early childhood development, mental health, perceptions of belonging, safety and access to services.
- In a recent longitudinal study that looked at the profile of 1,719 young offenders in British Columbia from 1998-2022, it was determined that the risk of persistent justice system involvement increases with negative experiences associated with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, foster care involvement and self-identity challenges. For girls, a negative self-identity and running away from home were informative of persistent justice system involvement.<sup>80</sup>
- Youth dialogue participants consistently stated the need for greater accessibility to mental health support such as counselling services. They also brought up youth have stigma against people in the Downtown Eastside and have expressed the need for support for individuals who struggle with addictions. Reducing the stigma and stereotypes about certain groups of people is crucial to building an inclusive, safe city.

## Approach to implementation and next steps

With Federal funding secured until March 2026, the City is well-positioned to launch into a multi-faceted planning, engagement and sector capacity-building phase. A number of broad areas of work are outlined below, with a community planning process in place to help City staff articulate an action plan for the medium and long-term.

Community tables and advocacy	Network building and sector development	Granting program	Youth engagement	Research, monitoring and evaluation
<p><b>Broad actions:</b></p> <p>Convene public partners, community partners and youth in a process to narrow in on key actions the City and partners could take to enact the Youth Strategy and associated advocacy efforts in the medium and long-term.</p>	<p><b>Broad actions:</b></p> <p>Strengthen or create youth service networks to facilitate collaboration and coordination among youth-serving agencies.</p> <p>Offer sector development opportunities including training, resourcing collaboration processes (aligned with granting stream).</p> <p>Host annual gatherings to promote networking and knowledge exchange.</p>	<p><b>Broad actions:</b></p> <p>Launch and deliver three grant programs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Youth engagement project grants</li> <li>2. Youth violence prevention program grants</li> <li>3. Organizational and youth sector capacity-building grants</li> </ol>	<p><b>Broad actions:</b></p> <p>Engage a core group of youth in the planning and roll-out of the Strategy (e.g., outreach; public education; event planning; policy-development).</p> <p>Involve youth in the planning and delivery of annual youth conference/capacity-building session.</p>	<p><b>Broad actions:</b></p> <p>Conduct research to advance knowledge on youth safety and violence prevention.</p> <p>Analyze emerging social and demographic trends on safety and belonging for children and youth.</p> <p>Coordinate monitoring and collective reporting across key outcomes and indicators.</p>

# 5

## Assessing our Impact and Tracking our Work

In order to monitor, evaluate and communicate progress of the work included in the Youth Safety and Violence Prevention Strategy, the City will work closely with funders and community partners in implementing a program evaluation framework that will highlight learnings and impact of our collective action.

Throughout this Strategy's implementation, remaining accountable to youth, our community partners, our public partners and our funders is essential. The following accountability principles will be incorporated in our assessment of impact.

- **Transparency:** honest sharing of facts, information and context needed to ensure informed and equitable decision-making
- **Consistency:** regular, ongoing, frequent progress reports on the status of actions to youth, the project funder and community and public partners
- **Proactivity:** proactively identifying opportunities for collaboration and joint interventions for violence prevention
- **Responsibility:** a culture of self-reflection and taking responsibility for errors or oversights
- **Openness:** creating opportunities for expression and discussion of dissenting views, needs, concerns and priorities





## Gathering data and reporting progress

The key system levels focus for the Vancouver Youth Safety and Violence Prevention Strategy is on the peer, social and community levels. Therefore, data being collected from stakeholders should reflect analysis on multiple levels of individual, social and systems layers (family, school, community, other systems).

- **The individual level** focuses on reporting changes for individual youth and adult allies.
- **The social level** focuses on reporting on changes in relationships. For example: how youth interact with other youth or how youth interact with adult allies.
- **The system level** focuses on reporting changes for programs, organizations and policymakers. For example, how youth influence government policy or program design.

This data will be analyzed and reported back to community stakeholders as well as the funder. At the end of each

reporting year, an evaluation report will be published to further engage the community and generate an understanding of the impact of programming on the different systems levels.

## Monitoring long-term change

This Strategy is rooted in the Healthy City Strategy (approved by Council in 2014) which sets out 13 long-term goals for the well-being of everyone in Vancouver. The Healthy City Strategy is an overarching framework with targets and associated indicators that measure progress towards a healthy city for all. The Vancouver Youth Safety and Violence Prevention Strategy supports Goal #6: *A safe city in which residents feel secure* which includes targets related to sense of belonging and perceived sense of safety. Upon approval of this Youth Safety and Violence Prevention Strategy, staff will work with partners to identify outcomes and indicators to evaluate progress on the Strategy's objectives and will continue to monitor population level data through the Healthy City Strategy to gauge how these efforts are translating to systems change.



# 6

## Demographic Profile of Children and Youth in the City

The national census is an important source of demographic data that helps identify changes or trends impacting the lived experience of local children and youth. Understanding the demographic profile of young people helps ensure policy is relevant and responsive to current realities.

Vancouver is home to nearly 141,000 children and youth under age 25, representing 21% of the city’s population (table 1). The number of children and youth has remained stable or declined in some age groups, even while the city’s overall population continues to grow (figure 14). Vancouver’s proportion of people under 18 is lower than most other cities in the region and in Canada, and there is an ongoing trend of families leaving Vancouver when their children reach school age due to affordability and other housing challenges. While there was a decline in the total number of young adults (18-24) since the last census, this age group still comprises a significant portion of the population.

Table 1 City of Vancouver: Child/Youth Population by age, 2021 Census

Age group	Total population	% of population
0-6	33,155	5.0%
7-12	27,985	4.2%
13-17	25,025	3.8%
18-24	54,530	8.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>140,695</b>	<b>21.2%</b>

Child/Youth Pop., 2001-2021

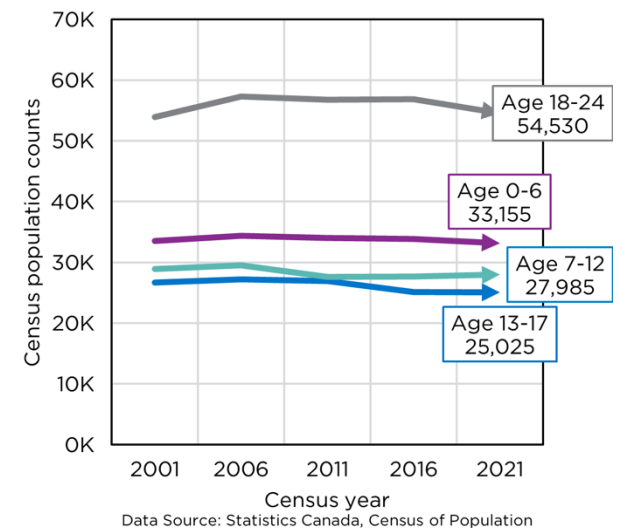


Figure 14 Vancouver’s child/youth population by age, 2001-2021

## Where youth reside

In Vancouver there are 22 established local areas that are used as neighbourhood boundaries for community statistics, service planning, and resources. The maps in figure 15 illustrate the locations of children and youth by age group across Vancouver within these neighbourhood boundaries. Notably, school-age children and youth tend to live in neighbourhoods farther away from downtown, with less access to transportation, services and networks that could support their sense of connection and belonging. As youth move out on their own past age 19, they begin to make up a larger share of the population in central neighbourhoods.

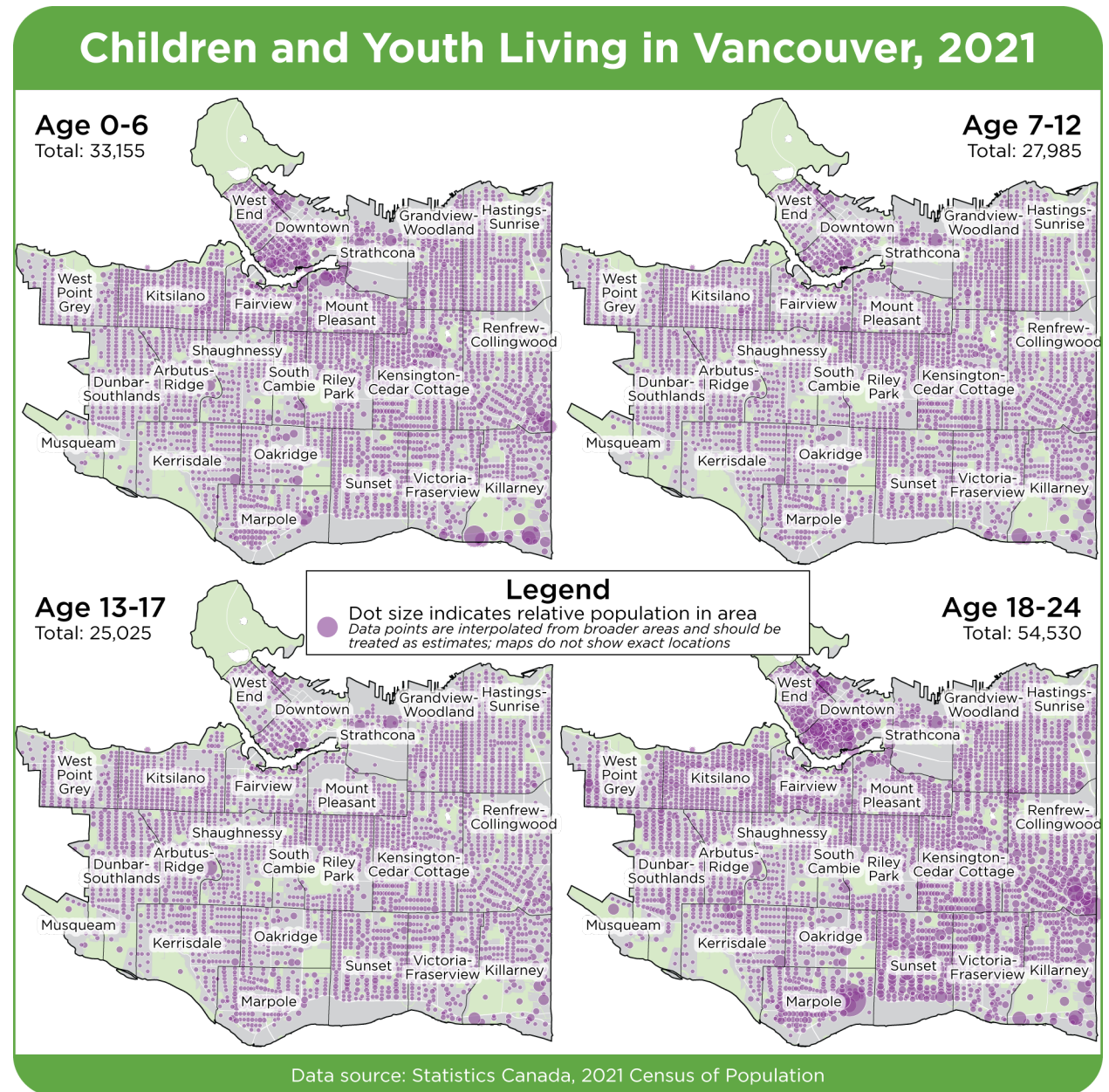


Figure 15 Maps of youth population by age, 2021

## Older youth disproportionately experience poverty

In Vancouver, 12% of children ages 0-6, 13% of youths ages 7-12 and 14% of youths ages 13-17 are part of individual or family households that fell below the low-income measure in 2020 (figure 16).<sup>xiii</sup> This is on par with the average low-income rate across all ages in the city (13%). However, 19% of older youths (age 18-24) are considered low income and youths living independently are particularly likely to be below the low-income measure.

Note that all income statistics in 2020 were significantly impacted by COVID-19, with a loss of employment income in some sectors and widespread access to government income benefits such as the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). Among people with income in 2020, 61% of youths aged 18-24 accessed CERB in 2020, more than double the rate of the overall population with income. Low-income rates for youth have likely increased since the CERB program ended.

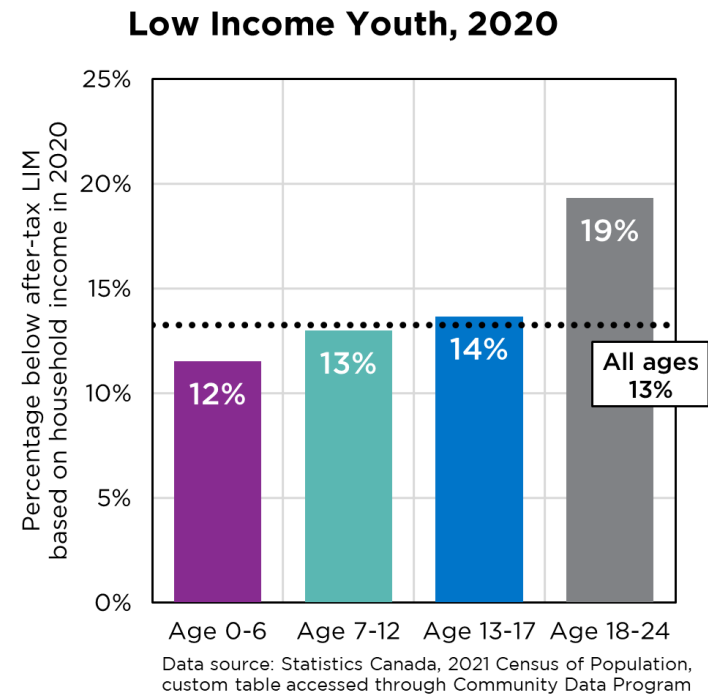


Figure 16 Vancouver low-income rate of youth by age, 2020

<sup>xiii</sup> The after tax low-income measure (LIM) defines a low-income household as having income less than half the national median, adjusted to household size. (e.g., a 4 person household earning below \$53,000 after tax was low income in 2020).

## Vancouver youth are very diverse

- Indigenous:** Compared to the overall population, children and youth are more likely to identify as Indigenous: approximately 3% of children/youth (age 0-24) identify as Indigenous, with school-age children and youth having a higher percentage (figure 17). Note that these statistics include people living in the Musqueam community in southwest Vancouver, but the census program may also undercount many Indigenous people.
- Racialized:** More youth are in a racialized group compared to the general population. Two-thirds of children and youth in Vancouver are either Indigenous or in a racialized population group (figure 18).

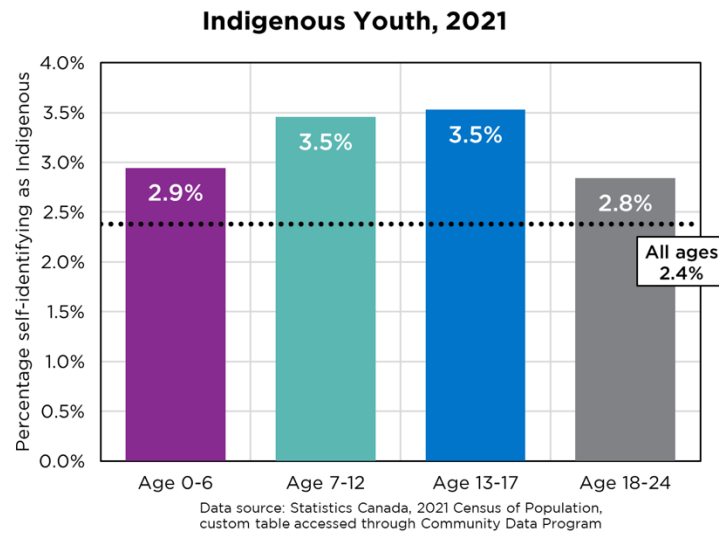


Figure 17 Youth in Vancouver with Indigenous identity by age, 2021

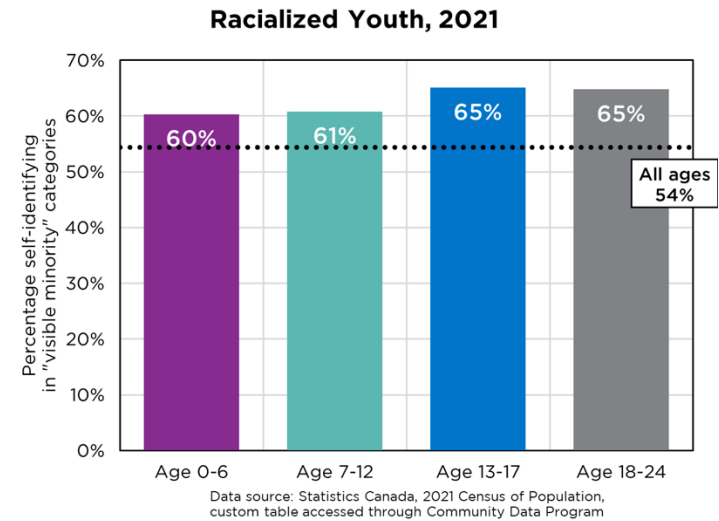


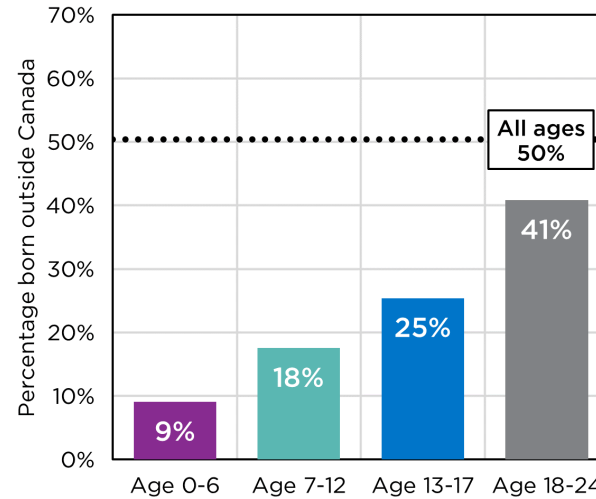
Figure 18 Racialized populations by age, 2021

- Gender and sexual orientation:** Many identities are not captured in the census. According to Vancouver respondents to the 2018 BC Adolescent Health Survey of youths in grades 7-12: 2% were non-binary and another <1% were transgender. 18% identified as a sexual orientation other than straight.
- Disability:** As of the 2022-2023 school year, 11% of students in the Vancouver School District were designated as having special needs.<sup>xiv, 81</sup> A snapshot of grade 10 and 11 students in the 2023 Youth Development Instrument survey found that 9% of Vancouver respondents self-reported as having a learning disability, 6% reported having a chronic health condition and 4% reported having a physical or sensory disability (e.g., use a wheelchair, vision-impaired).<sup>82</sup>

<sup>xiv</sup> Note the Ministry includes "gifted" as one type of special need. For more details on how this term is defined, visit <https://studentsuccess.gov.bc.ca/glossary#162>

- Newcomers/recent immigrants:** Overall, Vancouver youth are more likely to be second generation immigrants (i.e. to have a parent born outside of Canada) than be immigrants themselves. Younger children (0-6) are over twice as likely to have at least one parent born outside of Canada, while older youth (age 18-24) are the more likely than other children/youth to be immigrants themselves (figure 19, figure 20).

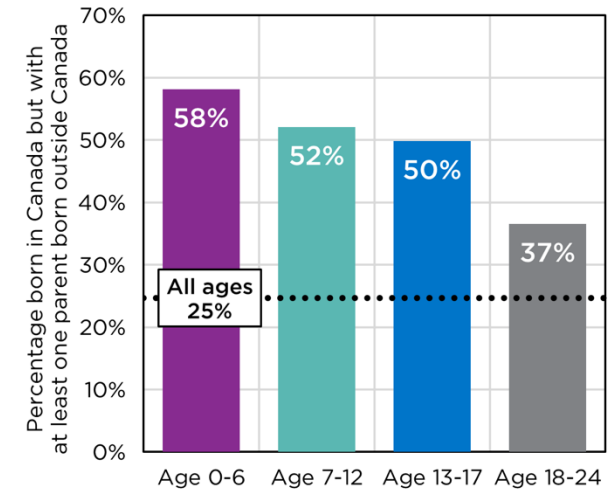
**First Generation Youth, 2021**



Data source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population, custom table accessed through Community Data Program

Figure 19 First generation population by age, 2021

**Second Generation Youth, 2021**



Data source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population, custom table accessed through Community Data Program

Figure 20 Second generation population by age, 2021



## Youth transitioning to independent living are at higher risk of housing insecurity

While nearly all children 12 and under live with at least one parent, 4% of 13-17 year-olds are living separately from their parents, including 470 living with relatives other than parents and 420 living with non-relatives. Among 18-24 year-olds, 47% live separately from their parents (figure 21). A growing independence with age is to be expected; however, housing security can pose a particular challenge for young adults in Vancouver as they set out on their own. When youths under 25 form their own households, 86% rent their homes and many experience affordability challenges. Participants in the City's youth engagement sessions were concerned about the high cost of living they would face once they moved out on their own.

When youths form their own households, they are...

- 13% more likely to live in an apartment building
- 1.5x more likely to be rented
- Almost 5x more likely to be made up of roommates

### Households Children and Youth Live In, 2021

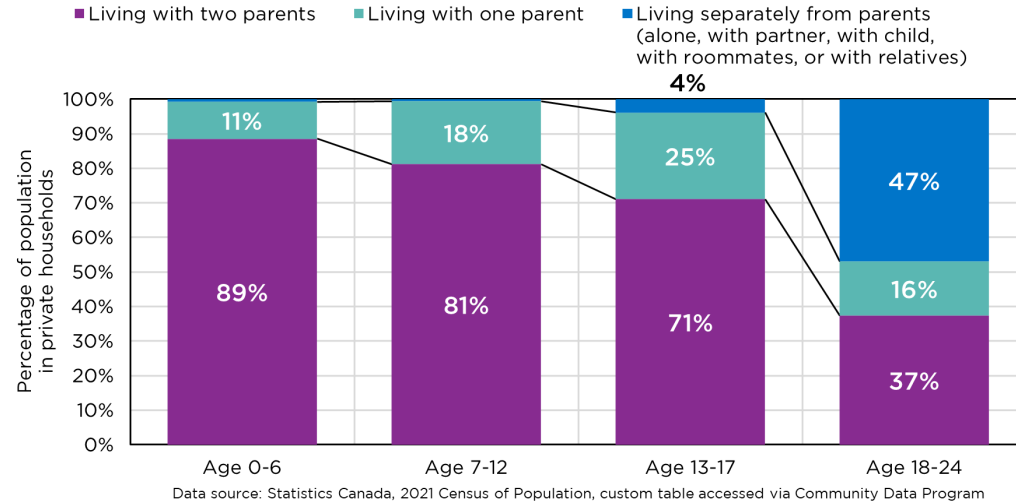
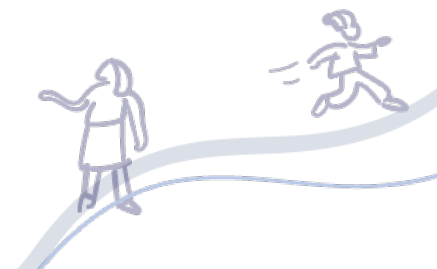


Figure 21 Living arrangements by age, 2021

While people who are unhoused are not readily counted by the national census, an estimated 8% of Vancouver's homeless population was under 25 as of 2023.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, 47% had first experienced homelessness before the age of 25 suggesting that youth homelessness is likely to persist into adulthood.



# A1

## Attachment 1: Partner and Youth Ideas for Action

Throughout the various engagement sessions, youth and staff from partner agencies shared many ideas for the kinds of changes they'd like to see unfold to make Vancouver safer for young people. These ideas are summarized below and will be included for consideration as part of the proposed community planning process.







## Focus Area 1: Create safer and protective community environments and public spaces for youth



### Partner recommended actions:

Inform the design of public spaces through the lens of disability justice.

Provide housing subsidies through schools.

Examine the current active travel and transit accessibility to spaces and places for youth in the city and improve upon the gaps.

Integrate youth into the planning process of city planning, alongside facilities, engineering and social infrastructure as a way to effectively involve young people in planning and design.

Generate more frequent, informal platforms for youth to speak directly to decision makers, not filtered through bureaucracy.

Compensate youth for their input and participation.

Identify ways to engage youth in discussions and planning processes for positive police engagement.

### Youth ideas:

Security posts set up around the city similar to the ones at the University of British Columbia. These posts will connect directly to a security or police phone line and will make youth feel safer. In situations where they do not have access to a mobile phone, they will still be able to contact local authorities if they need help.

Sit-on transit guards: Youth would feel safer at night on specific bus lines if there was one security guard or a transit police officer travelling en route with them. This would also allow youth to build stronger relationships with police and security personnel in their communities.

Brighter streetlamps to ensure that the streets of the Vancouver are well lit. This will increase visibility and the degree of safety youth feel transiting around Vancouver at night.

Affordable transportation for youth: transit fares can pose as a barrier especially in cases where youth are using public transportation regularly. Having free Compass cards for youth would give them greater freedom to access to more community services and safe spaces around the city.

Increased shelter option for young people. Not all youth have access to housing and not all housing they have access to is safe. Ensure there are safe shelter options for youth who may not be supported by their caregivers.

Advocating for more accessible and well- known youth shelters would make youth feel safer in their communities.



## Focus Area 2: Identify and strengthen community-based supports for healthy child development in the middle years



### **Partner recommended actions:**

Identify protective factors and increase support for them (individual, family, community and societal levels).

Teach conflict resolution early in life.

Prioritize teaching trauma-informed curriculum in low barrier pre-teen programming.

Convene youth service providers to understand current state of sector and opportunities for enhanced violence prevention programming.

Engage directly with children in the middle years to hear their perspectives on safety and belonging in the city.

Promote children's social and emotional competence through early violence prevention programs through schools and community organizations.

### **Youth ideas:**

City funded sports teams for youth will increase the sense of belonging that youth feel within their communities. It will allow youth to build connections with their peers and gain intergenerational mentorship from trusted adults such as coaches.

More funds for afterschool care. Youth want a space where they feel accepted, welcomed and safe but not all youth have access to spaces like this. Afterschool care can be costly which can create a barrier for many families. As well, most programs don't support older youth. Some youth don't feel safe at home and feel an extrinsic pressure to belong - somewhere. This pushes them into connecting with bad people. To avoid this, we should work on increasing the accessibility and quality of afterschool care.

City funded sports teams for youth will create other positive opportunities for belonging, allowing youth to build connections with their peers and gain mentorship from trusted adults such as coaches.



### Focus Area 3: Strengthen the coordination and provision of positive youth development services and programs



#### Partner recommended actions:

Design an accessible dashboard for community members to self-report and track progress on community programming and efforts. Collect both qualitative and quantitative data from the community ethically, through informed consent.

Design more arts- and sports-based community programming to increase the opportunity for youth seeking social connection within their communities.

Support organizations/agencies to self-evaluate and implement changes to make their cultures more inclusive.

There needs to be a clear understanding of institutional power that continues to enforce barriers to true youth involvement.

Integrate a long-term strategy that embeds project goals into service goals to extend beyond project funding scope.

#### Youth ideas:

Invest more into community centers to ensure that all services are accessible and up to date. Community centers should also have a designated space for youth to gain access to resources they may need, including contacts for therapists, access to computers to complete schoolwork and receive guidance from youth workers.

Provide supplementary funding for certificates, relieving the cost of youth gaining certain certifications such as the Canadian Red Cross Babysitting Certificate. Certificates would increase - opportunities to gain valuable work experience and financial independence.

Fund and support more professional development for the youth-serving sector, creating opportunities to develop a common approach and language for supporting youth in Vancouver. This would increase the sector's capacity to support youth.

Advocate for culturally sensitive resources. There are programs and resources in Vancouver communities which increase the safety and knowledge youth have. The issue with these resources is that not all of them consider cultural sensitivity. It is important that there are people advocating for these programs to adopt some culturally sensitive protocols so they can ensure there are no barriers to accessing their programs.

Invest in living wage rather than minimum wage. Youth should have access to obtain a living wage; minimum wage does not supply youth with enough money to support themselves in situations where their parents/guardians may fail to. Youth want access to living wage jobs with enough income to meet their needs and rights.

Fund care that supplement youth with some of the necessities they need such as food, hygiene products and single fare bus passes.



## Focus Area 4: Connect youth to caring adults



### **Partner recommended actions:**

Increase in the amount of mentorship opportunities available for youth.

Facilitate additional community forums such as the Youth Violence Prevention Forum to create spaces for youth to connect with other like-minded youth on cause-based opportunities.

Increase engagement with youth, providing them with platforms to be peer leaders.

Set standards, increase wages and benefits and raise the profile of staff working with youth in community-based agencies.

Apply an anti-oppressive, emancipatory and equity-focused secular approach that recognizes Indigenous teachings and stewardship.

### **Youth ideas:**

More youth forums: Youth feel safe when they have a say in what happens in their communities. Giving youth more opportunities to voice their opinions and share their knowledge will not only offer new and refreshing ideas, but it will help youth build a stronger connection to their community.

Communications strategy: Youth want to be more involved in their communities but sometimes lack the resources to gain information on how to get more involved. Develop a centralized information hub, or send monthly communications published by the City that outline the events and opportunities for youth around Vancouver.



## Focus Area 5: Lessen the impacts of serious violence and crime on children and youth



### **Partner recommended actions:**

Design partnerships between organizations that are providing culturally safe programming and issue-based organizations.

Ensure a collaborative and integrative approach for the prevention of youth violence in the city. Non-profits and the City are equally accountable stakeholders.

Create a referral/promotion plan across the service providers in the city to foster collaboration while considering the current strain on the sector and resources.

Integrate restorative justice into programs: resolve conflict and teach conflict resolution based on Indigenous principles to address low impulse control, trauma and anger.

Build programs and safe spaces for at-risk youth affected by violence without stigmatization.

### **Youth ideas:**

Free, accessible and customizable therapy. Youth have identified that there are few free therapy solutions and the ones that do exist have long wait times or other barriers of entry. Youth want more options for free therapy both in and out of school. This would also increase the network of trusted adults for youth in their community.

Invest more funds into skills building programs. Youth want to build on their professional skills to gain financial independence. Some programs could include financial literacy programs and resume building workshops.

Invest in youth specific positions in youth-serving agencies. The City could supplement funds for community centers and youth-serving agencies around Vancouver to hire more with lived experience to help provide work experience.

## Acknowledgements

The Youth Safety and Violence Prevention Strategy would not have been possible without the time and thoughtful input of our public and community partners. Special thanks to the Youth Community Developers who supported the youth engagement process and the members of the Youth Reference Group who gathered regularly to provide feedback on aspects of the Strategy in its development.

### Public Partners

CoV Arts Culture and  
Community Services  
Department  
CoV Planning  
Department  
CoV Engineering Services  
Department  
Vancouver Park Board  
Vancouver Public Library  
Vancouver Police  
Department  
Vancouver School Board  
Vancouver Fire Rescue  
Services  
Vancouver Coastal Health

### Community Partners

AfroVan Connect  
Big Sisters of BC Lower  
Mainland  
Boys and Girls Clubs of  
BC  
Britannia Community  
Centre  
Covenant House

EQUITAS  
Family Services of Greater  
Vancouver  
KidSafe  
Leave Out Violence  
MOSAIC  
Mount Pleasant  
Neighbourhood House  
Pacific Community  
Resources Society  
PeerNET  
Progressive Intercultural  
Community Services  
Red Fox  
Simon Fraser University -  
School of Criminology  
South Vancouver  
Neighbourhood House  
The Students Commission  
of Canada  
TRRUST  
Urban Native Youth  
Association  
Vancouver Park Board -  
Youth Worker Collective

### 2023 Youth Reference Group

Almas  
Anahita  
Arshia  
Chung Wang  
Ayanle  
Brian  
Carly  
Edison  
Erin  
Faith  
Jamie  
Long  
Matt  
Maya  
Micah  
Ruth  
Sebastian

### 2023 Youth Community Developers

Cheylene Moon  
Emma Lefebvre-Tatti  
Lilia Hessabi  
Maeve Sheen  
MaryLou Djida  
Naya Tait  
Nola Charles  
Sondor Ganduulga



## Endnotes

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