The Students Commission of Canada
Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement

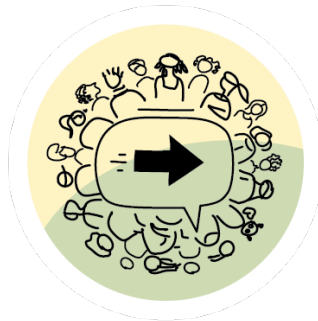La commission des élèves du Canada
Le centre d'excellence pour l'engagement des jeunes

Building Safer Communities Program Vancouver Preliminary Findings Report

Written by Students Commission of Canada, March 2025

The Students Commission of Canada
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METHODOLOGY

Research Question: Is the Building Safer Communities Program Vancouver (BSCP-V) having its intended impact on the youth in the City of Vancouver by supporting and creating safer spaces for them in the city?

Research Design: The BSCP-V and the SCC co-created a shared learning plan that utilized surveys as the key method to hear from youth and program partners. Questions were asked to understand the experience of community at the individual, social and system levels.

Level	Key Performance Indicators
Individual	**BSCP Youth Survey Tool** • Youth voice in decision making • Personal resilience • Youth voice in decision making • Responsible decision-making • Youth generativity
Social	**BSCP Youth Survey Tool** • Community Connectedness • Adult Support • Friendships • Safe Environment – Community • Features of positive developmental settings
System	**Partnership Assessment Tool** • Synergy • Leadership • Efficiency • Administration and management • Non-financial resources • Financial and other capital resources • Decision making • Benefits of participation • Drawbacks of participation • Satisfaction with participation

Tool: BSCP Youth Survey Tool

Process: The YEAR Team is a participatory action research group of 7 youth selected by program partners (grantees). The partners identified and selected a youth representative for the YEAR Team through a relationship-based approach to assist in gathering youth voice in the community.

The YEAR Team engaged in a relational approach to collecting youth voice in community. There were two groups of youth that the YEAR Team collected responses to the BSCP Youth Survey Tool.

- Group A: Youth connected to BSCP-funded program partners (Program Participants).

- Group B: Youth that are a part of the wider community, ex. a sibling, classmate, cousin (Youth in Community).

Data Collection Period: November 2024-February 2025.

Total Sample Size: N=421

- **Group A (Program participants):** N=202

- **Group B (Youth in Community):** N=219

Tool: Partnership Assessment Tool

BSCP Youth Violence Prevention Program Grant recipients (program partners) were requested to complete the survey as a part of their reporting for the funding. In addition to this program partners nominated a youth for the YEAR Team.
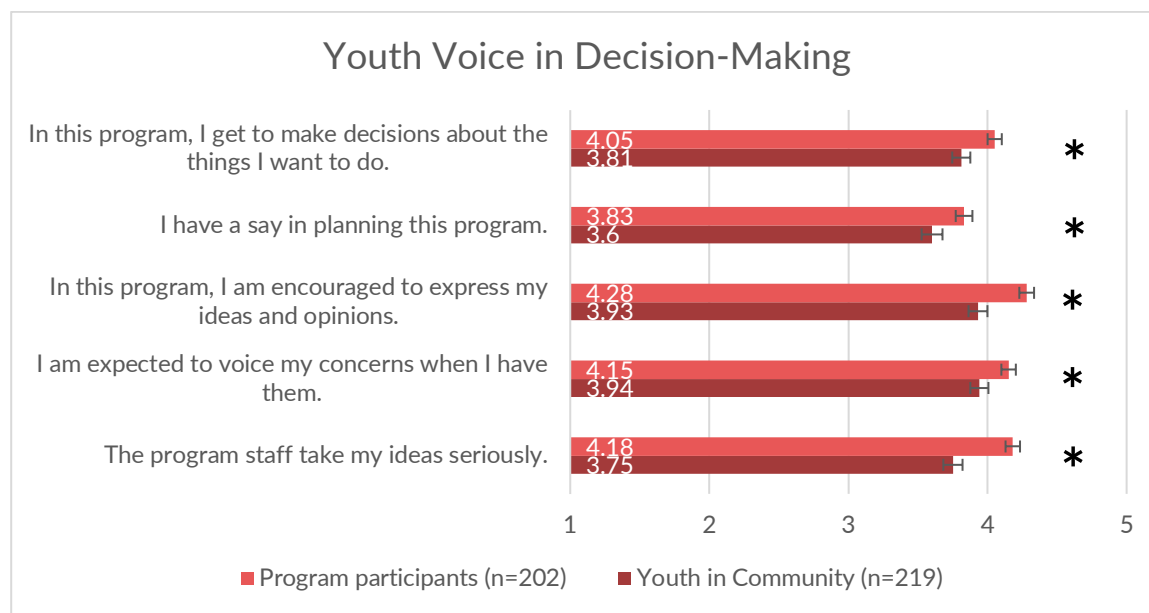
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In its first year of shared learning and second year of funding, the Building Safer Communities Program (BSCP) is funding community programs and partners and advancing their mission of building and maintaining safer spaces for youth in the City of Vancouver. Across all of the preliminary data that was collected from program participants and youth in the community, program participants tended to score higher than youth in community. In some key performance indicators, there were even some meaningful statistically significant outcomes that were analyzed. There were three significant themes that emerged.

Building empowerment and personal growth

- Participants in BSCP-funded programs exhibited higher confidence in their ability to influence outcomes (+6.4%, r = 0.11[1]), develop leadership skills (+6.3%, r = 0.15), and navigate social situations (+4.5%, r = 0.10) than youth in community. The program provided structured opportunities for youth to build resilience and critical thinking, fostering independence and self-efficacy.

   [1]The effect size is an objective measure of the magnitude of the difference between two averages. Pearson's r was used for this report. An r of 0.1 generally indicates a small effect size or difference between the two groups, 0.3 a medium size and 0.5 a large size. Asterisks denote a statistically significant difference between the average responses of program participants versus youth in community.

- Their participation in BSCP-funded programs allowed youth to feel that their voice was heard and encouraged self-expression and agency by being included in the decision-making process.

Youth Voice in Decision-Making

	Program participants (n=202)	Youth in Community (n=219)	
In this program, I get to make decisions about the things I want to do.	4.05	3.81	*
I have a say in planning this program.	3.83	3.6	*
In this program, I am encouraged to express my ideas and opinions.	4.28	3.93	*
I am expected to voice my concerns when I have them.	4.15	3.94	*
The program staff take my ideas seriously.	4.18	3.75	*

Building belonging and connection

- BSCP-funded programs fostered a strong sense of belonging by creating safe spaces where youth felt 7.2% ($r = 0.14$) more welcomed than their peers in the wider Vancouver community.

Community Connectedness

	Program participants (n=202)	Youth in Community (n=219)
I feel close to people in my community.	3.68	3.5
I feel I am a part of my community.	3.88	3.62	*
I am happy to be in my community.	4.09	3.89	*
The people in my community treat me fairly.	3.97	3.85
I feel safe in my community.	3.89	3.78
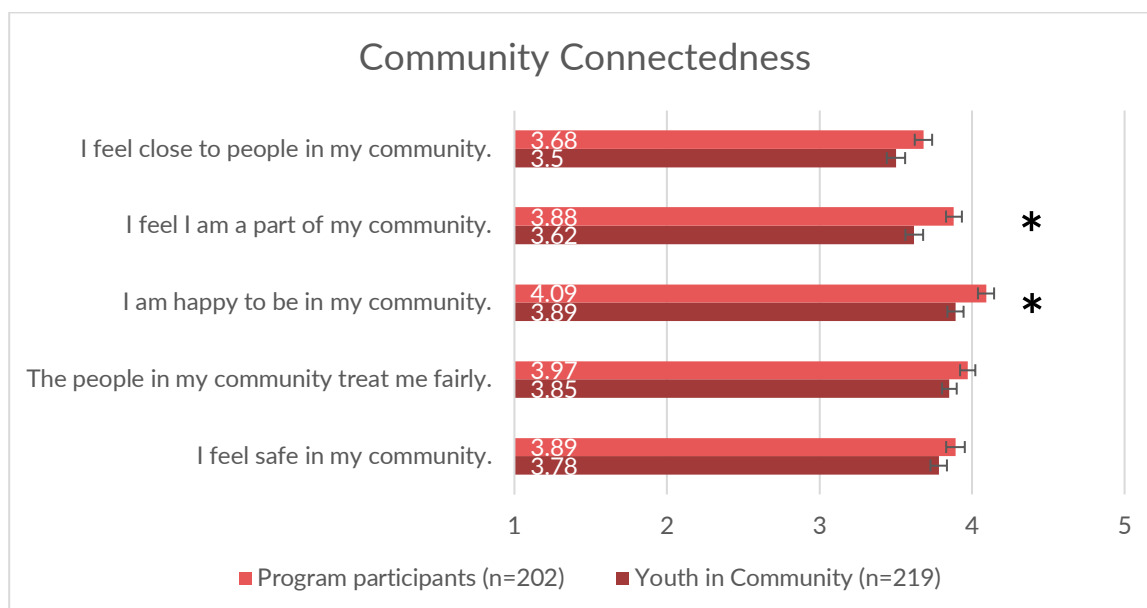
- Participants reported an 9.8% ($r = 0.21$) stronger sense of belonging in the program. They were also more likely to form meaningful relationships (+8.8%, $r = 0.17$) and feel that they had a place in the world (+5.0%, $r = 0.11$), reinforcing the program's role in building inclusive, supportive environments.

Friendships

	Program participants (n=202)	Youth in Community (n=219)
I feel like I belong in this program	4.13	3.76	*
I feel like I belong in my community	4.04	3.86
I feel like I belong in the world	4.01	3.82	*
I have made friends in this program	4.09	3.76	*

Building safety

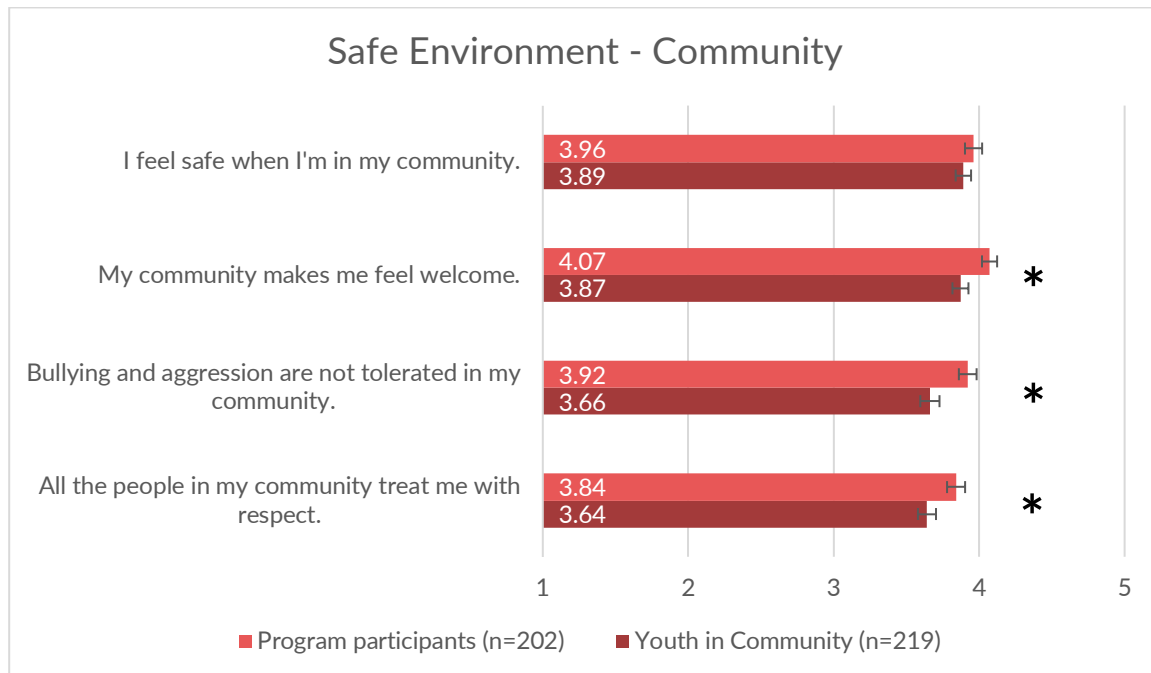- Program participants reported 6.0% ($r = 0.11$) higher feelings of safety (although this difference was not statistically significant, its effect size is comparable to that of the statistically significant differences shared in this report), having more access to trusted adults, and experiencing a 7.6% ($r = 0.17$) stronger sense of structure and guidance compared to youth in the wider community. This access contributed to a more positive developmental environment where young people could learn, grow, and feel secure.

Features of Positive Developmental Settings

Question	Program participants	Youth in Community	
Is your involvement connected to your family, school, or other work you do in your community?	3.57	3.70	
How supportive and caring do you think the people there are?	3.89	3.82	
Do you feel that you can get things done in this organization?	3.90	3.70	*
Do you feel like you can make positive things happen?	3.90	3.72	*
Do you think that there is the right amount of structure and guidance?	3.22	2.99	*
Do you think the people in the group show positive values?	3.92	3.70	*
Do you think there are opportunities to learn new things and develop new skills?	4.19	3.96	*
Do you feel safe?	4.15	3.92	
Do you feel included by other people in this activity?	3.93	3.76	*

■ Program participants ■ Youth in Community

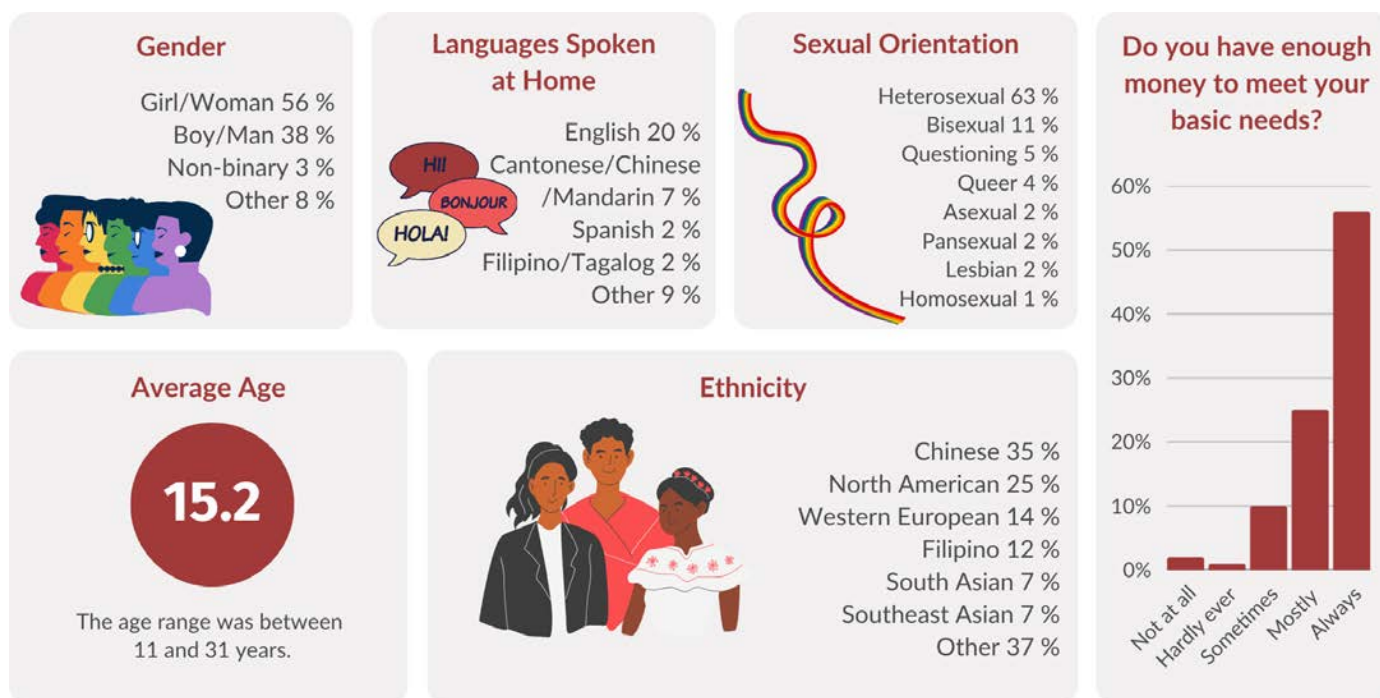The Students Commission of Canada / La commission des élèves du Canada

- Program participants agreed 7.1% ($r = 0.13$) more than Youth in Community that bullying and aggression are not tolerated in their community and 5.5% ($r = 0.10$) more when asked whether they're treated with respect in their community.

Safe Environment - Community

Statement	Program participants (n=202)	Youth in Community (n=219)	
I feel safe when I'm in my community.	3.96	3.89	
My community makes me feel welcome.	4.07	3.87	*
Bullying and aggression are not tolerated in my community.	3.92	3.66	*
All the people in my community treat me with respect.	3.84	3.64	*

Overall, the BSCP-funded programs successfully met their intended impact by creating spaces where youth felt safer, more supported, and empowered to thrive. Through meaningful relationships, skill-building, and structured guidance, these programs provided a positive and secure environment that fostered personal and community growth.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender

Girl/Woman 56 %
Boy/Man 38 %
Non-binary 3 %
Other 8 %

Languages Spoken at Home

HI!
BONJOUR
HOLA!

English 20 %
Cantonese/Chinese /Mandarin 7 %
Spanish 2 %
Filipino/Tagalog 2 %
Other 9 %

Sexual Orientation

Heterosexual 63 %
Bisexual 11 %
Questioning 5 %
Queer 4 %
Asexual 2 %
Pansexual 2 %
Lesbian 2 %
Homosexual 1 %

Do you have enough money to meet your basic needs?

60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

Not at all
Hardly ever
Sometimes
Mostly
Always

Average Age

15.2

The age range was between 11 and 31 years.

Ethnicity

Chinese 35 %
North American 25 %
Western European 14 %
Filipino 12 %
South Asian 7 %
Southeast Asian 7 %
Other 37 %

The following graphic illustrates the identities and experiences shared by 511 participants (sample sizes varied by question from 127 to 511 participants) who responded to the About You survey.

*Note: 138 participants provided their birth dates used to calculate the average age.

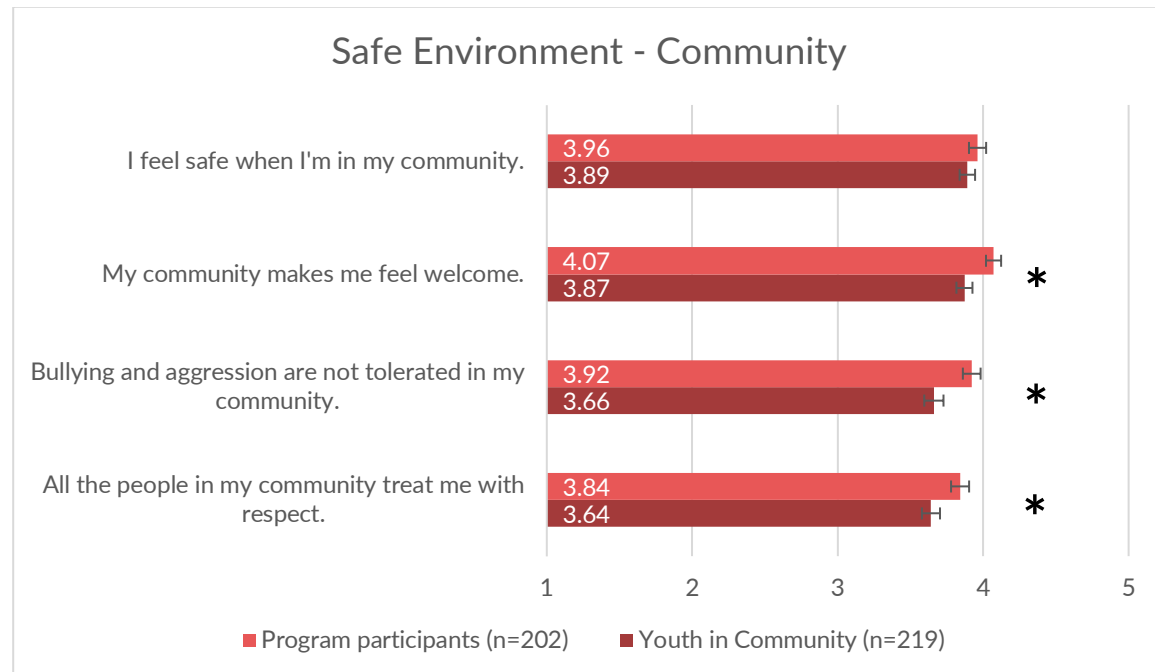The following sections discuss the results for each of the key performance indicators in more detail.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT - COMMUNITY

> **BSCP Logic Model**
> **Indicator**: % youth who feel safe in their community.
> **Outcome**: Increase youth sense of safety.

Survey participants were invited to rate the statements from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Asterisks denote a significant difference between the average responses of Program participants versus Youth in Community.

Safe Environment - Community

Statement	Program participants (n=202)	Youth in Community (n=219)	
I feel safe when I'm in my community.	3.96	3.89	
My community makes me feel welcome.	4.07	3.87	*
Bullying and aggression are not tolerated in my community.	3.92	3.66	*
All the people in my community treat me with respect.	3.84	3.64	*

■ Program participants (n=202)   ■ Youth in Community (n=219)

Takeaways:

- Program participants agreed 7.1% ($r = 0.13$) more than Youth in Community that bullying and aggression are not tolerated in their community.

- Program participants agreed 5.2% ($r = 0.12$) more than Youth in Community when asked if their communities make them feel welcomed and 5.5% ($r = 0.10$) more when asked whether they're treated with respect in their community.

- These results suggested that both groups felt safe in their communities in Vancouver. However, youth who participated in the BSCP-funded programs felt an increased sense of safety relative to youth in the wider Vancouver community. This could be attributed to having more access to safer spaces and a better sense of community.
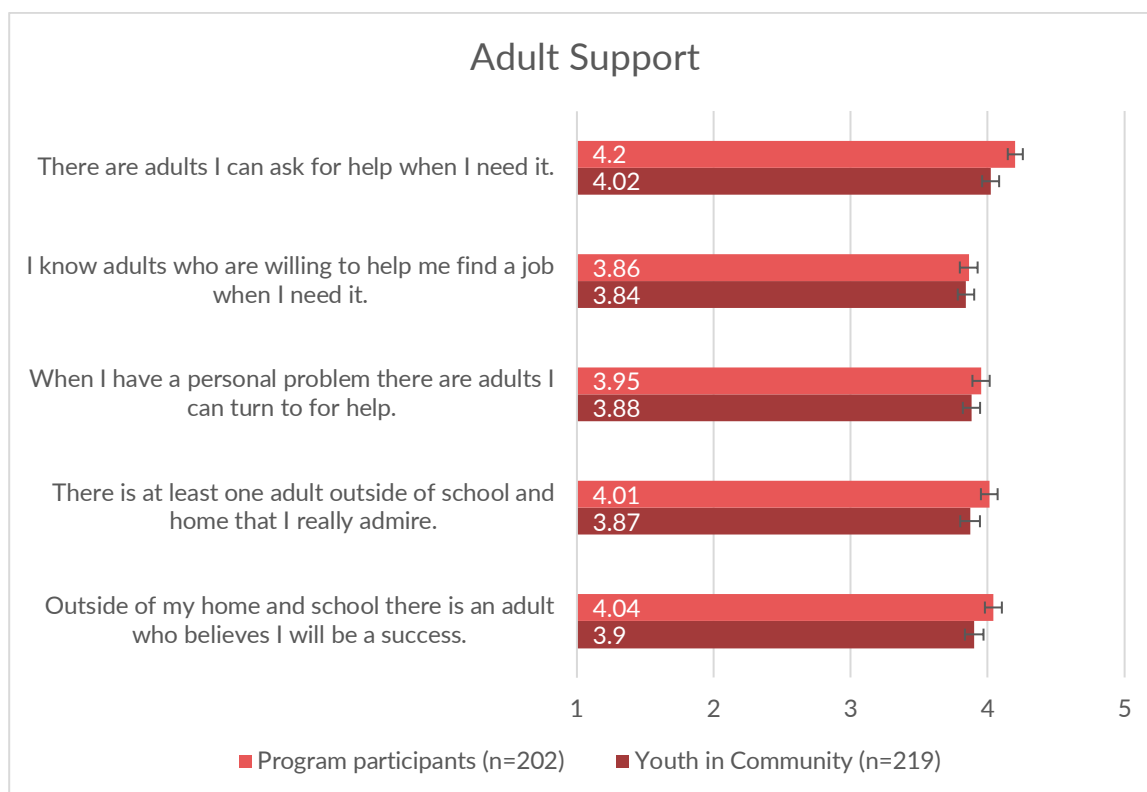
ADULT SUPPORT

> **BSCP Logic Model**
> **Indicator**: % of youth who feel a sense of belonging in their community.
> **Outcome**: Increase youth sense of belonging/connection to community.

Survey participants were invited to rate the statements from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Takeaways:

- Program participants and Youth in Community had similar responses for all of the statements in this survey. Both groups provided moderately high scores.

- These results suggested that Vancouver youth have adults who support and believe in them, regardless of their participation in BSCP-funded programs. This could indicate that having trusted adults can increase youth's sense of belonging and connection to community.
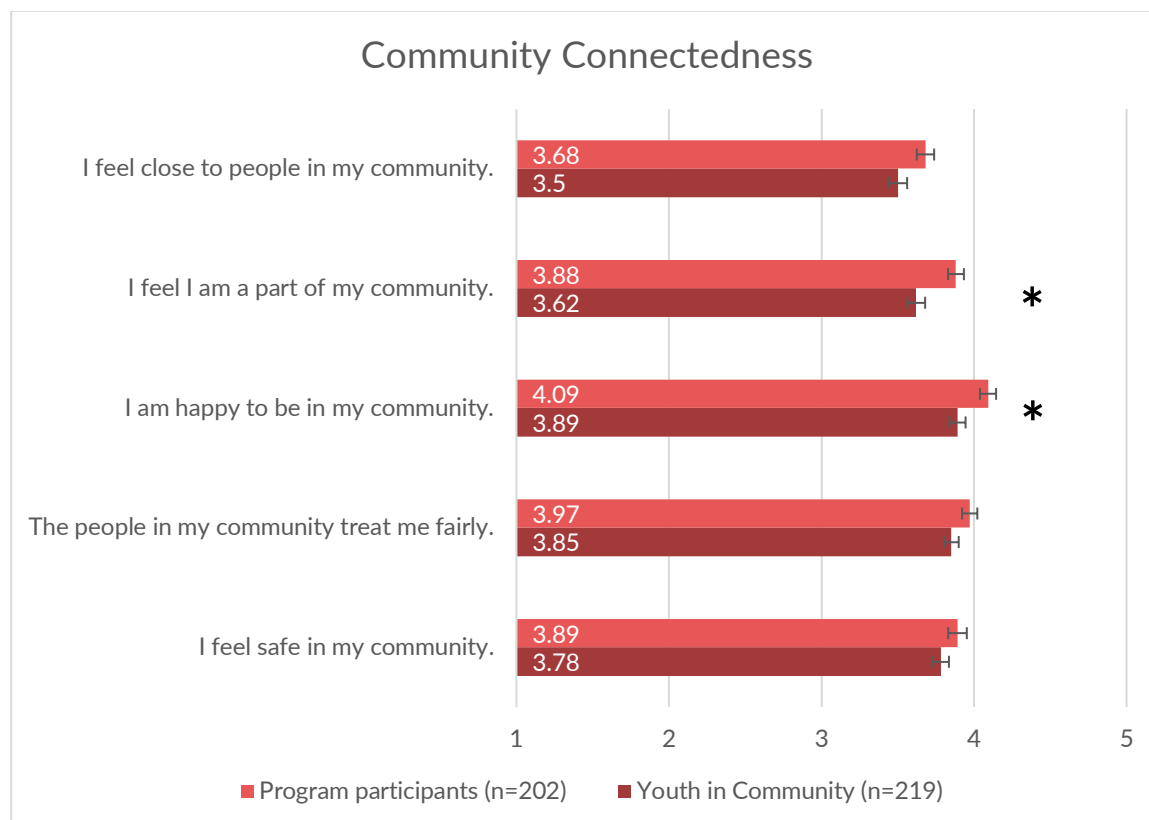
COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS

> **BSCP Logic Model**
> **Indicator**: % of youth who feel a sense of belonging in their community.
> **Outcome**: Increase youth sense of belonging/connection to community.

Survey participants were invited to rate the statements from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Asterisks denote a significant difference between the average responses of Program participants versus Youth in Community.
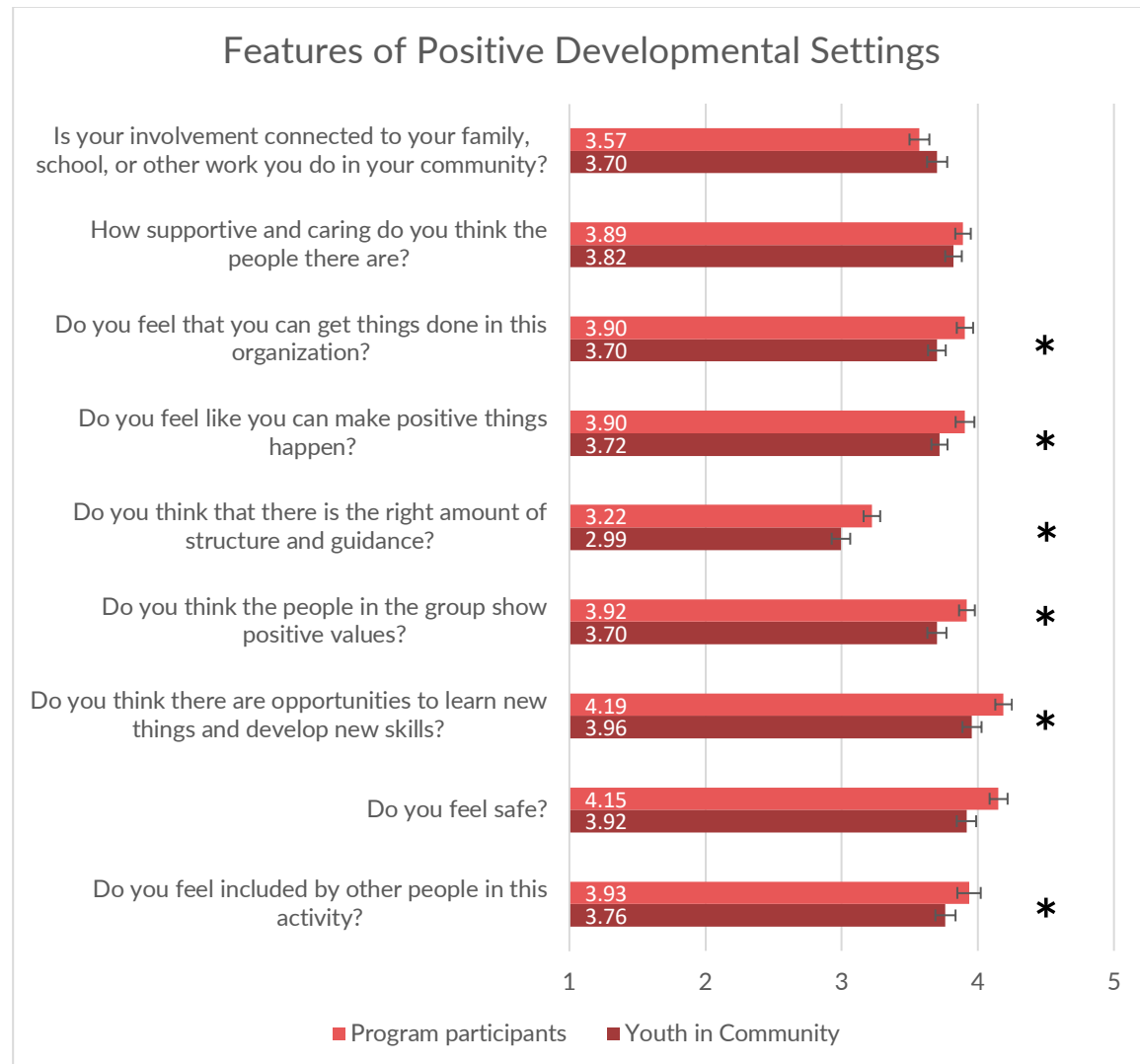
Community Connectedness

Statement	Program participants (n=202)	Youth in Community (n=219)	
I feel close to people in my community.	3.68	3.5	
I feel I am a part of my community.	3.88	3.62	*
I am happy to be in my community.	4.09	3.89	*
The people in my community treat me fairly.	3.97	3.85	
I feel safe in my community.	3.89	3.78	

■ Program participants (n=202)   ■ Youth in Community (n=219)

Takeaways:

- Program participants agreed 7.2% more than Youth in Community to the statement, "I feel I am a part of my community" ($r = 0.14$) and 5.1% for "I am happy to be in my community" ($r = 0.14$).

- These results suggested that while Vancouver youth felt generally connected to their community, youth who participated in BSCP-funded programs had a greater perception of belonging in their community than youth outside the programs.

FEATURES OF POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTAL SETTINGS

Survey participants were invited to rate the statements from 1 (not at all/way too little) to 5 (completely/way too much). Asterisks denote a significant difference between the average responses of Program participants versus Youth in Community.
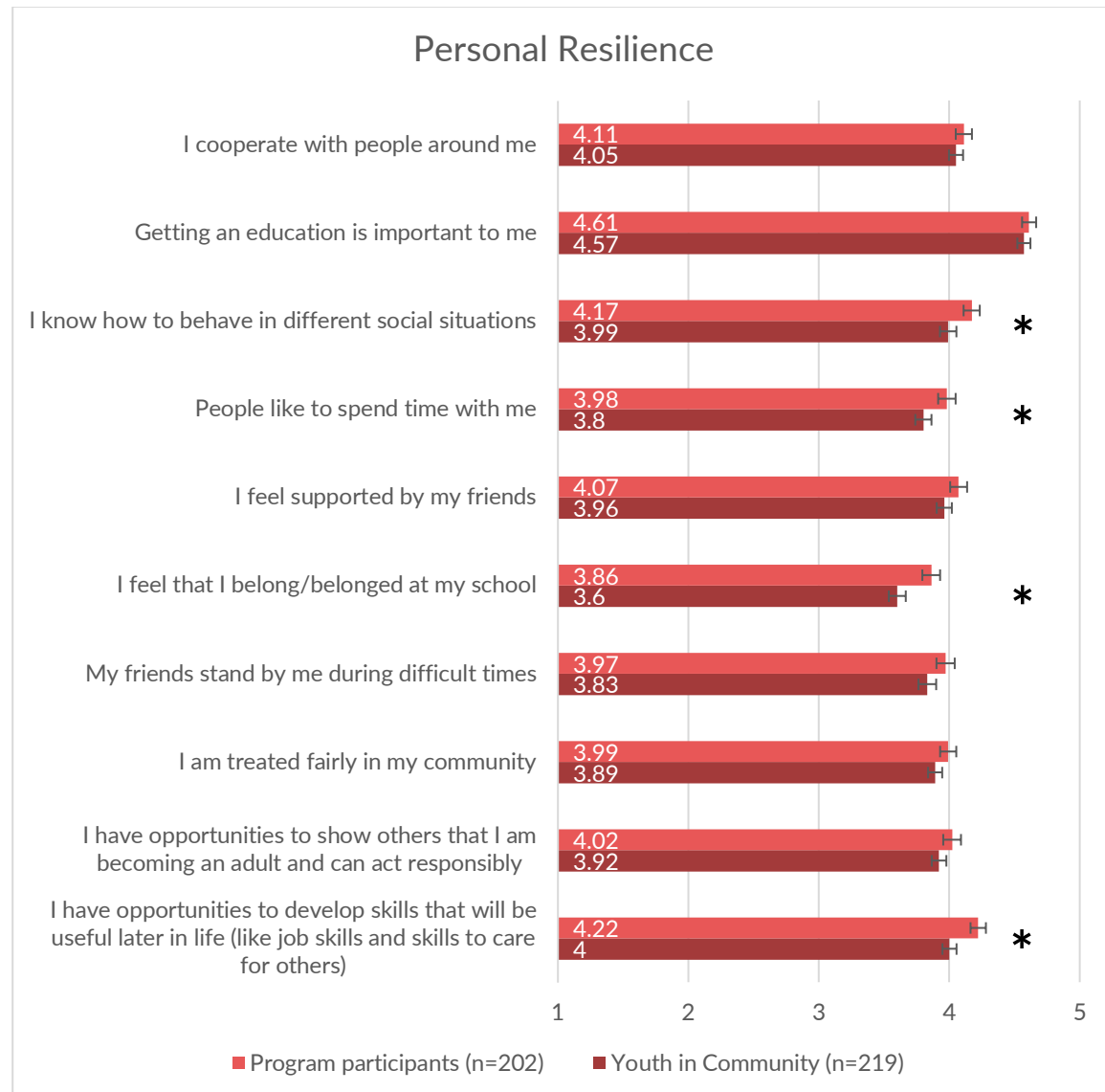
Features of Positive Developmental Settings

Question	Program participants	Youth in Community	Significant
Is your involvement connected to your family, school, or other work you do in your community?	3.57	3.70	
How supportive and caring do you think the people there are?	3.89	3.82	
Do you feel that you can get things done in this organization?	3.90	3.70	*
Do you feel like you can make positive things happen?	3.90	3.72	*
Do you think that there is the right amount of structure and guidance?	3.22	2.99	*
Do you think the people in the group show positive values?	3.92	3.70	*
Do you think there are opportunities to learn new things and develop new skills?	4.19	3.96	*
Do you feel safe?	4.15	3.92	
Do you feel included by other people in this activity?	3.93	3.76	*

■ Program participants   ■ Youth in Community

Takeaways:

- Program participants scored 5.6% ($r = 0.15$) higher than Youth in Community when asked about their capacity to get things done and 5.0% ($r = 0.12$) higher when asked if they feel that they can positively affect outcomes.

- Program participants scored 7.6% ($r = 0.17$) higher than Youth in Community when asked about their perception of structure and guidance from people around them and 6.0% ($r = 0.14$) higher when asked if people around them show positive values.

- Program participants reported having 5.9% ($r = 0.14$) more opportunities to learn new skills and knowledge than Youth in Community.

- Program participants felt 6.0% ($r = 0.11$) safer than Youth in Community. Although this difference was not statistically significant, the effect size of the difference is comparable to that of statistically significant differences highlighted in this report.

- In general, youth participants reported higher levels of features of a positive developmental environment. However, youth in BSCP-funded programs tended to have more access to organizations and people to go to for guidance, exercising positive values and learning new skills and knowledge. These results could be attributed to an increase in wellbeing and feeling of safety among youth engaged in the BSCP.

PERSONAL RESILIENCE

Survey participants were invited to rate the statements from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a lot). Asterisks denote a significant difference between the average responses of Program participants versus Youth in Community.
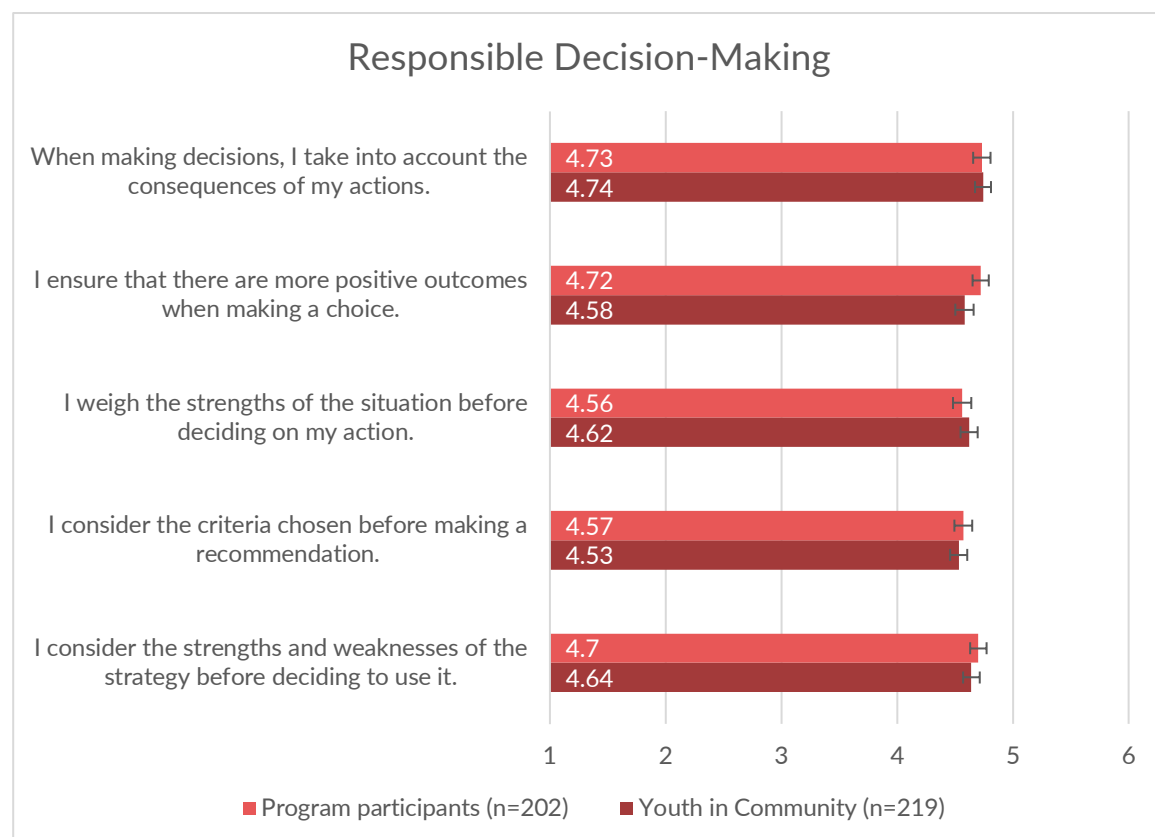

Personal Resilience

Statement	Program participants	Youth in Community	
I cooperate with people around me	4.11	4.05	
Getting an education is important to me	4.61	4.57	
I know how to behave in different social situations	4.17	3.99	*
People like to spend time with me	3.98	3.8	*
I feel supported by my friends	4.07	3.96	
I feel that I belong/belonged at my school	3.86	3.6	*
My friends stand by me during difficult times	3.97	3.83	
I am treated fairly in my community	3.99	3.89	
I have opportunities to show others that I am becoming an adult and can act responsibly	4.02	3.92	
I have opportunities to develop skills that will be useful later in life (like job skills and skills to care for others)	4.22	4	*

■ Program participants (n=202)   ■ Youth in Community (n=219)

Takeaways:

- Program participants agreed 4.5% ($r = 0.10$) more than Youth in Community to the statement: "I know how to behave in different social situations."

- Program participants agreed 4.7% ($r = 0.11$) more than Youth in Community when asked about whether people like spending time with them. Even more so, Program participants felt that they belong in their schools 7.2% ($r = 0.13$) more than Youth in Community.

- Program participants agreed 5.5% ($r = 0.16$) more than Youth in Community to the statement: "I have opportunities to develop skills that will be useful later in life."

- These results suggested that youth participants have a high personal resilience. However, youth in BSCP-funded programs seemed to be more adept at handling different social situations, feel a greater sense of belonging and have more access to opportunities for professional development compared to youth in the wider Vancouver community.

RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

Survey participants were invited to rate the statements from 1 (not at all true of me) to 6 (very true of me).

Responsible Decision-Making

Statement	Program participants (n=202)	Youth in Community (n=219)
When making decisions, I take into account the consequences of my actions.	4.73	4.74
I ensure that there are more positive outcomes when making a choice.	4.72	4.58
I weigh the strengths of the situation before deciding on my action.	4.56	4.62
I consider the criteria chosen before making a recommendation.	4.57	4.53
I consider the strengths and weaknesses of the strategy before deciding to use it.	4.7	4.64

Takeaways:

- Program participants and Youth in Community had similar responses for all of the statements in this survey. Both groups provided moderately high scores.

- These results suggested that youth participants generally weighed their choices and outcomes before deciding, demonstrating good critical thinking and decision-making skills.

FRIENDSHIPS

Survey participants were invited to rate the statements from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Asterisks denote a significant difference between the average responses of Program participants versus Youth in Community.
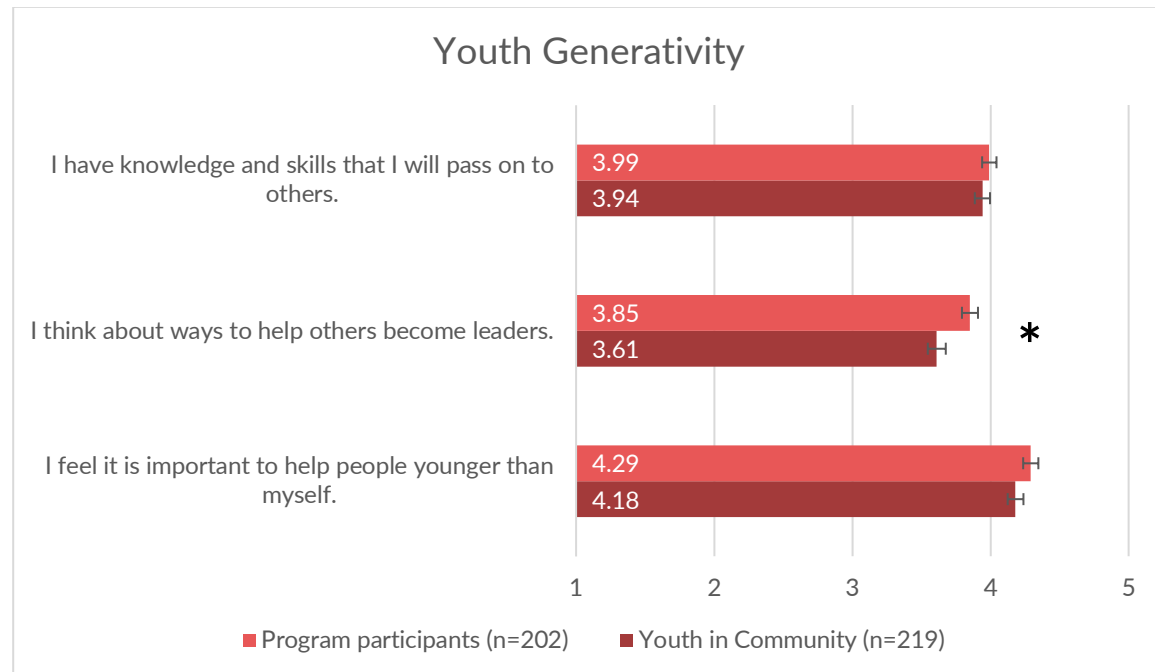
Friendships

Statement	Program participants (n=202)	Youth in Community (n=219)	
I feel like I belong in this program	4.13	3.76	*
I feel like I belong in my community	4.04	3.86	
I feel like I belong in the world	4.01	3.82	*
I have made friends in this program	4.09	3.76	*

■ Program participants (n=202)   ■ Youth in Community (n=219)

Takeaways:

- Program participants agreed 9.8% (r = 0.21) more than Youth in Community when asked if they feel like they belong in the program and 5.0% (r = 0.11) more when asked if they feel like they have a place in the world.

- Program participants agreed 8.8% (r = 0.17) more than Youth in Community to the statement: "I have made friends in this program."

- These results suggested that BSCP-funded programs provided youth more opportunities to form meaningful relationships and feel a greater sense of belonging.

YOUTH GENERATIVITY

Survey participants were invited to rate the statements from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Asterisks denote a significant difference between the average responses of Program participants versus Youth in Community.

Youth Generativity

Statement	Program participants	Youth in Community
I have knowledge and skills that I will pass on to others.	3.99	3.94
I think about ways to help others become leaders. *	3.85	3.61
I feel it is important to help people younger than myself.	4.29	4.18

■ Program participants (n=202)   ■ Youth in Community (n=219)

Takeaways:

- Program participants agreed 6.6% (r = 0.13) more than Youth in Community to the statement: "I think about ways to help others become leaders."

- These results suggested that youth in BSCP-funded programs exhibited high youth generativity. Specifically, these young people were more likely to be adaptive to effectively help others become leaders than youth in the wider Vancouver community.
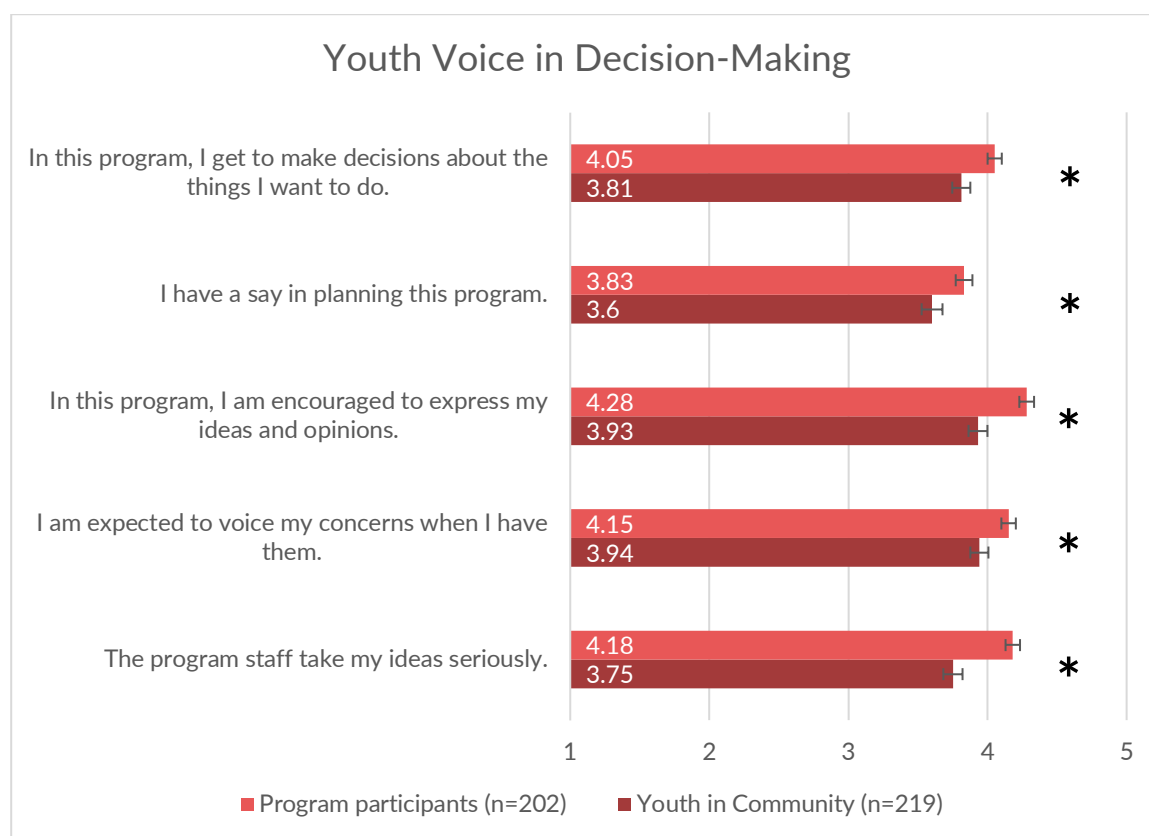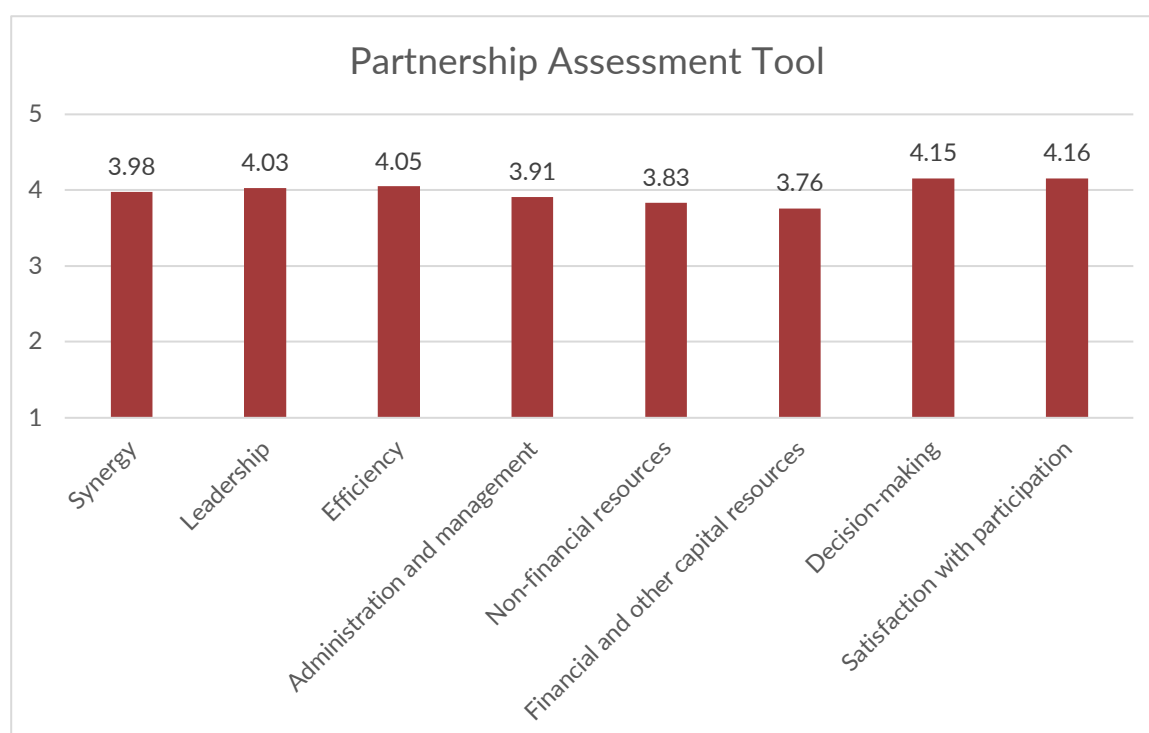
YOUTH VOICE IN DECISION-MAKING

> **BSCP Logic Model**
>
> **Indicator**: # and % of youth engaged directly in BSCP activities (Forum, Youth Action Team…) who express themselves/ feel voice is heard.
>
> **Outcome**: Youth engaged in the BSCP feel that their voice is heard by participating in the program.

Survey participants were invited to rate the statements from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Asterisks denote a significant difference between the average responses of Program participants versus Youth in Community.

Youth Voice in Decision-Making

Statement	Program participants (n=202)	Youth in Community (n=219)	
In this program, I get to make decisions about the things I want to do.	4.05	3.81	*
I have a say in planning this program.	3.83	3.6	*
In this program, I am encouraged to express my ideas and opinions.	4.28	3.93	*
I am expected to voice my concerns when I have them.	4.15	3.94	*
The program staff take my ideas seriously.	4.18	3.75	*

■ Program participants (n=202)   ■ Youth in Community (n=219)

Takeaways:

- Program participants provided significantly higher scores for all the statements than Youth in Community.

- This suggested that participation in BSCP-funded programs supported youth to feel that their voice was heard and encouraged self-expression and agency by being included in the decision-making process.

PARTNERSHIP ASSESSMENT TOOL

Partners (n=13) of the City of Vancouver filled out the Partnership Assessment Tool (PAT) which evaluates their experiences with the partnership across different components, including: synergy (the partners' ability to work together to address various aspects of the partnership), leadership (the efficacy of the partnership's leadership), efficiency (the partnership's use of resources), access to non-financial and financial resources, administration and management (the effectiveness of the partnership in carrying out various administrative and managerial duties), decision-making (the inclusiveness and effectiveness of the decision-making process), and satisfaction with overall participation in the partnership. Partners were asked to rate their level of agreement with various statements regarding these components of the partnership on a five-point scale. The following graph illustrates the average score for each component.

Partnership Assessment Tool

Component	Score
Synergy	3.98
Leadership	4.03
Efficiency	4.05
Administration and management	3.91
Non-financial resources	3.83
Financial and other capital resources	3.76
Decision-making	4.15
Satisfaction with participation	4.16

Takeaways:

- Partners were overall highly satisfied with their partnership with the City of Vancouver on the Building Safer Communities Program.

- Partners expressed a high level of agreement with the effectiveness of leadership in terms of fostering a positive, diverse partnership with a common goal. Partners showed high alignment with, and involvement in, the decision-making process.

- Partners reported moderate to high levels of agreement with the quality of the administration and management of the partnership, expressing the most satisfaction with internal meeting and activity logistics and the lowest satisfaction with the evaluation of the progress and impact of the partnership. Sharing back the findings of the Building Safer Communities Program evaluation with partners could help mitigate this challenge, to showcase youth outcomes to demonstrate this impact both directly (through youth directly involved in the program) and indirectly (through their peers).

- Scores were also high for the synergy and efficiency of the partnership, signaling that partners felt that they worked well together and made good use of their combined resources to more effectively address needs in the community. Partners felt that the partnership had most of what it needed to work effectively, including non-financial (e.g., connections) and financial/other capital resources.

- Partners reported feeling that their role and influence in the partnership was satisfactory, and that the partnership was effective in developing and implementing plans to achieve its goals. This resulted in the highest level of agreement with their overall satisfaction with their participation in the partnership.

PAT also assesses partners' perceptions of the benefits and drawbacks of participation in the partnership, both separately and weighted against each other. Partners (n=13) indicated whether they had experienced a series of benefits and drawbacks to participation on a Yes or No scale. They then reflected on the overall balance between the benefits and drawbacks of participation on a five-point scale, with 1 indicating that the drawbacks greatly exceeded the benefits and 5 indicating that the benefits greatly exceeded the drawbacks. The following graphic depicts the percentage of "Yes" responses to the various benefits and drawbacks presented, as well as partners' comparisons of the benefits versus the drawbacks.

Benefits of Participation

87%

Comparing Benefits and Drawbacks

Benefits greatly exceed drawbacks — 5

4

3

2

1

Drawbacks greatly exceed benefits — 0

Drawbacks of Participation

17%
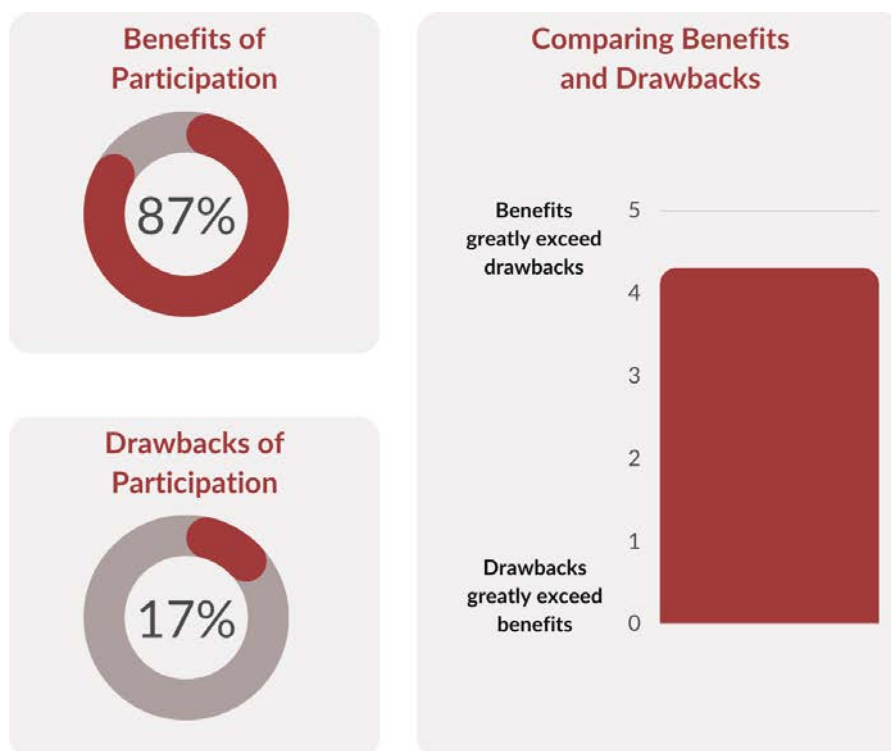
Takeaways:

- Partners reported several benefits to participation in the partnership including the enhanced ability to address an important issue, the development of valuable relationships, and the ability to make a contribution to the community and have an impact outside of the self.

- Partners expressed some drawbacks to participation including the diversion of time away from other, competing priorities in order to focus on the partnership, but ultimately expressed that the benefits greatly exceeded the drawbacks overall (with an average of 4.3).