Youth Needs and Assets Assessment
Final Report

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Yardstick Assessment Strategies
Stratégies en évaluation

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1 Executive Summary

In January 2019, Strathcona County commissioned Yardstick Research to conduct a Youth Needs and Assets Assessment (YNAA). The intention of the project was to report on what youth and young adults need to thrive and how Strathcona County can better meet their needs by identifying assets and opportunities in the community. The YNAA reviewed existing programs and services provided by Strathcona County through a literature review and online scan, statistical profile, public engagement, and surveys. For the purposes of this project, youth and young adults were defined as being between 14 and 29 years of age. Data was collected from May to August 2019 using online surveys, onsite/intercept engagement, and focus groups.

A total of 896 youth and young adults, 208 parents, 7 agencies, and 10 teachers provided input in the surveys while 41 agency representatives, 12 parents, and 35 youth and young adults participated in the engagement sessions. Through this holistic review of how Strathcona County is meeting the needs of youth and young adults, key themes that emerged from the data included recommendations around communication, engagement, mental health, gathering spaces, transportation, and affordability, with the overarching recommendation of a community-led strategy. In the recommendations below, the sections "what we know" list facts and trends garnered from the environmental scan and statistical profile while the sections "what we heard" list themes and trends from the public engagement and survey data.

It is important to note that the majority of those who participated in this research felt largely satisfied with the programs and services provided by Strathcona County and 43% of youth and young adults said that they have everything they need in Strathcona County. There are many wonderful assets in the community and overall, residents reported being satisfied with things like quality of life, physical and emotional safety, and working together to make the community stronger. Strathcona County has demonstrated their commitment to excellence and working with partners to address needs within the community, which is further evidenced by their investment in this project.

Key Recommendations

Desired State

All recommendations stem from the collective commitment that:

> **Youth feel connected, included and supported and access a range of programs and services that meet their needs without having to leave Strathcona County.**

Overarching Recommendation

Create a community-led collaborative strategy to guide implementation of recommendations, including youth and young adult representation.

Recommendation Areas

- ❖ Communication & Engagement
- ❖ Collaboration
- ❖ Mental Health
- ❖ Gathering Spaces
- ❖ Transportation
- ❖ Affordability

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1.1 Communication & Engagement

WHAT WE KNOW	WHAT WE HEARD
Compared to older Canadians, young people aged 15 to 24 are the highest users of social networking sites and are more than two times likely to use the Internet to follow current affairs.	Survey data revealed parents, some agencies, and 74% of youth and young adults are already using social media and would prefer to be informed via the platforms they are already using (i.e., Instagram).
Social media can be used to increase awareness of programs and services available. The County currently maintains several social media accounts, but few appear to be implementing a youth- and young adult-focused approach.	As part of the engagement, some youth and young adult participants called attention to environmental concerns (both locally and globally) and questioned what the County could do (or do better) to address issues. Agency and youth and young adult participants both identified political advocacy and engagement as critical youth and young adult opportunities.
Although young people are sometimes perceived as disengaged from civic life, in reality, young Canadians are active citizens, involved in community organizations and political causes and are increasing in their voter turnout.	Youth and young adults shared as part of the engagement they want to be part of the solution; they want to be heard and included in addressing issues that affect them.

Recommendations

- Develop an engagement plan to ensure a variety of youth and young adult perspectives (i.e., Indigenous peoples, LGBTQ+, newcomers, rural residents, etc.) are used to inform policies, programs, and services with feedback as an iterative process.

- Increase the use and diversity of existing social media accounts and other innovative means to communicate and engage with youth and young adults where they are at; consider creating new youth and young adult-focused accounts with guidance from youth and young adults and include multiple approaches to meet the differing needs within each sub-demographic.

- Continue to foster a context where youth and young adults can take more action in the community and connect with all levels of government on issues of importance to them in a variety of ways both formal and informal.

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1.2 Collaboration

WHAT WE KNOW	WHAT WE HEARD
The literature review highlighted the importance of community engagement, social inclusion, and capturing the voice of youth and young adults in creating youth- and young adult-friendly communities.	Agencies shared as part of the engagement that collaboration is currently happening but could be enhanced through increased awareness of each other's mandates and expertise. A curated service matrix would be beneficial.
Strathcona County and community partners share a commitment to community outcomes through the Social Framework and work together to create opportunities for community members in a collaborative way.	Agencies would welcome increased opportunities to facilitate collaboration with a greater focus on shared outcomes, with the integration of different services and efforts. Youth and young adults need multiple sources of service delivery and choice.
The efforts of Strathcona County to foster the current network with partnering agencies and municipalities have been successful and serve as a strong foundation moving forward.	Businesses have an opportunity to play a role in supporting youth and young adults. Some engagement session participants noted local businesses are an untapped resource when it comes to supporting youth and young adults.

Recommendations

- Continue to lead agency collaborative efforts by convening regular conversations focused on youth and young adults in urban and rural locations and expand the reach to include the participation of the local business community.
- Identify common outcomes among youth- and young adult-serving agencies that inform collective priorities to encourage agency collaboration over competition.

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1.3 Mental Health

WHAT WE KNOW	WHAT WE HEARD
Mental health issues are taking a heavy toll on youth and young adults.	Most survey respondents reported concerns for mental health or mental health of a loved one. Supports for mental health was listed by 22% of parents and 20% of youth and young adults as something that is missing in Strathcona County.
Factors that promote positive mental health and protect against mental illness include strong coping skills, adequate housing, peer support, a strong social network, and involvement with the community.	As part of the engagement sessions, both young people and agency representatives raised mental health concerns and emergency housing supports as existing challenges. It was noted language around mental health is changing and services need to reflect that (i.e., LGBTQ+ friendly & supportive, trauma-informed).
Access to counselling is important and is currently being provided by the County and community partners.	
There are growing calls for programs, initiatives, and systems to recognize the effects of adverse experiences and for the development of trauma- informed approaches to lessen potential harms. Services should aim to reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors for youth and young adults.	Agency representatives raised that youth and young adults may not be aware of nor have access to existing services, and that there are insufficient crisis response services available, including emergency housing options. Agencies identified that partnerships with existing services outside of the County could be formed to address gaps, with an invitation to establish services closer to home.

Recommendations

- Promote existing mental health supports through social media for youth and young adults and increase access to preventative resources.
- Explore options for short-term emergency housing supports to at-risk youth and young adults as well as accessibility to shelter locations.
- Connect with service organizations who can provide extended services and help address gaps within the County for mental health for high-risk youth and young adults.
- Facilitate training for public-facing staff throughout the community to recognize signs of mental health issues and increase knowledge of available mental health resources.
- Ensure the strategy moving forward helps to support collaboration among mental health supports.

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1.4 Gathering Spaces

WHAT WE KNOW	WHAT WE HEARD
Youth and young adults desire a strong sense of community and want to feel they belong. Youth identity is strongly tied to feelings of connection and belonging with social groups is an important contributor to physical and mental health.	During the public engagement, youth and young adults noted the importance of having "gently supervised" spaces to interact with other youth and young adults where they can build connections. There is a paradox that exists where parents want supervision for the safety of their children while youth and young adults want unsupervised space.
Informal gathering spaces for youth and young adults can address multiple needs and offer space for youth to connect while providing opportunities for engagement and awareness around issues that are important for youth and young adults.	Agencies are aware some youth and young adults are hanging out in public spaces, including parking lots of fast-food restaurants and basketball courts. Wi-Fi access was also identified as a priority for youth and young adult spaces.
Strathcona County has an established Youth Advisory Committee and delivers youth and young adult-focused initiatives, including hosting spaces such as the youth lounge at Millennium Place.	The survey findings reinforce that parents (22%), as well as youth and young adults, have a desire for more youth-friendly, non-programmed areas where they can interact.
Youth hubs or informal gathering spaces are becoming a popular means in Alberta for counties and communities to integrate services and make considerations for the physical and psychological safety of youth and young adults.	

Recommendations

- Test out new opportunities for youth and young adults to increase social connections in progressively "gently supervised spaces" with decreased levels of programming and adult involvement (based on age) in partnership with local agencies and businesses.

- Seek ways to support existing youth-identified gathering spaces by working with local business owners to identify how best to support a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment for youth and young adults.

- Engage rural residents in conversations around spaces that would be popular with rural youth and young adults.

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1.5 Transportation

WHAT WE KNOW	WHAT WE HEARD
The Strathcona County Transit Master Plan final report (2018) contains goals to ensure that transit services are available, accessible, and affordable for all residents regardless of age, ability, or means.	Accessible and affordable transportation, both within and external to the County, was raised as a concern by youth and young adults, and particularly by rural youth (67%). Youth and agencies identified key concerns around limited availability after peak hours and access points in Edmonton.
Public engagement conducted for the Strathcona County Master Plan revealed many people wanted to see a variety of service improvements as well as increased accessibility.	Transportation to the major educational institutions in Edmonton (University of Alberta, NAIT, Grant MacEwan and Concordia) during commuting times, and off-peak transportation to and from recreational areas (Whyte Avenue, West Edmonton Mall) was noted as a challenge.
The County currently offers discounted transit fares for seniors and youth, as well as a newer program called Safe Bus to help all riders feel more safe riding transit.	Agencies noted examples of transit drivers supporting youth in need, for example stopping at the Youth Emergency Shelter in Edmonton.
	Some engagement participants wondered about other mobile services that could be leveraged (for instance using the Bookmobile as additional transportation for rural youth). Ideas generated included a "will call" bus which would help solve transportation issues by bringing the service to the people and a first-time car buyer's subsidy for rural youth. Rural youth noted during the engagement that alternative forms of transportation are not a one size fits all.

Recommendations

- Continue to implement strategic directions from the Strathcona County Transit Master Plan, specifically supporting robust evening and weekend services and connections to Edmonton while exploring dynamic and demand-responsive transit services.
- Consider the feasibility of non-traditional transportation options for rural youth and young adults.
- Facilitate mental health training, specifically with transit operators, to recognize signs of distress and resources for youth and young adults in need.

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1.6   Affordability

WHAT WE KNOW	WHAT WE HEARD
While the median income is relatively high in the County, housing prices in the County are also higher than the provincial average.	Youth and young adult survey data show that affordability is a concern in Strathcona County (42%) and young adults specifically, would like to see more services and support around finances and cost of living (14%) and/or affordable housing (14%).
Four percent of the County's population is considered low income. The youth and young adult unemployment rate is close to double the overall unemployment rate in Strathcona County.	Some parents reported that affordability can keep them and their children from participating in activities in Strathcona County. They also shared concerns over their children's financial literacy.
Post-secondary student debt is taking a toll on many young people, tuition rates are increasing, leaving students in more debt than ever before.	Both young people and agency engagement session participants felt that a lack of affordable housing was a challenge in the County. Youth and young adult participants raised concerns around the cost of childcare, transportation and recreation opportunities.
	For some youth and young adults, their journey will involve leaving the County, to go to University, to travel, etc. However, concerns were raised around whether youth and young adults may leave because they want to or because they need to for affordability-related reasons.

Recommendations

- Explore resources and supports for youth and young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 to plan for their financial future and engage them in on-going discussions around affordability, debt management, and financial literacy.

- Investigate successful initiatives that continue to address issues around affordable housing, including continued conversations with other levels of government.

- Create more options for access to affordable childcare.

- Explore entrepreneurship and employment supports that target youth and young adults.

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1.7   Conclusions

Strathcona County is a unique place and cares deeply about its citizens. This level of care is evident from the responses of agencies, parents, and youth and young adults who participated in all phases of data collection. A common perception throughout Strathcona County is that the needs of the residents are being met overall, specifically the needs of youth and young adults, by existing programs and services. Strathcona County is an enviable place for youth and young adults to live and thrive and efforts are ongoing to ensure it continues to be viewed as such.

What contributes in making Strathcona County so unique is the existing Social Framework approach utilized to increase collaboration across and between stakeholders in the community. There is a positive working relationship between the County and its partners, and all are dedicated to filling programmatic gaps in collaborative, innovative, and efficient ways.

While Strathcona County has engaged citizens, who are devoted to contributing to their community, there are always opportunities to increase awareness around existing programs and services and encourage all involved to continually consider how they can best address the needs of youth and young adults.

2 Project Background and Objectives

At almost one-fifth of the population, youth and young adults in Strathcona County form a significant subset of the population. However, as a hard-to-reach audience, connecting youth with engaging programming and providing services that meet their needs is easier said than done. Particular challenges faced by youth and/or youth adults in the County include:

- Struggles with mental health, bullying, and dealing with stigma;
- Lack of youth-specific services, activities, amenities, and spaces;
- Limited access to affordable housing, affordable childcare, and transportation; and
- Building and maintaining healthy and trusting relationships with adults and authority figures.

In April 2018, forward a motion to identify the gaps as they relate to youth, raising concerns about youth falling through the cracks and why youth are accessing services in Edmonton. The intention of the motion was to identify who are the youth at-risk and homeless, the reasons/circumstances behind it, and how Strathcona County can better meet the needs. To understand these needs more clearly and provide strategic advice to Council, Family and Community Services contracted Yardstick Research to conduct a Youth Needs and Assets Assessment (YNAA).

The overarching project aim or goal is to deliver a report to Council on how Strathcona County is currently serving the needs of resident youth ages 14 to 29 and identify potential gaps in these services.

The **Principles** guiding this project are:

- Inclusion and diversity: seek to engage broadly with rural and urban youth/young adults and those who provide services and opportunities for youth and young adults;

- Co-creation of knowledge: share information and create understanding of the information with youth, young adults and the systems that interact with youth and young adults; and

- Openness: listen to learn and be clear and open about the process.

The research will ultimately provide Council with the information needed to guide strategic decision-making and policy changes to improve access to services for Youth and Young Adults, provide programming and services that meet their needs, and provide opportunities for engagement and success.

2.1 Project Components

The major project milestones included:

- **Environmental Scan** - A statistical profile of youth and young adults in Strathcona County, two comparator communities, and Alberta more broadly, plus a high-level, online scan regarding how small urban and rural communities can best serve the health, social, and community needs of resident youth and young adults, and socio-environmental trends that act as root contributors to youth issues and challenges. The Environmental Scan was completed by the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC), a sub-consultant engaged on the YNAA project.

- **Services and Assets Review** - Compilation of services and assets currently available to youth and young adults in Strathcona County into an online database of youth services and programs. The

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Services and Assets Review was completed by the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC).

- **Public Engagement Plan** - Strategies to be implemented in further public engagement stages; a shared vision of what/how/who/when of public engagement. The Public Engagement Plan was developed by Yardstick Research in consultation with Strathcona County

- **Engagement Phase 1** - Engagement of youth/young adults, and system partners to explore: gaps and opportunities; needs and assets; and seek perspectives and insights with organizations within various sectors that interact with youth, as well as explore the accessibility and awareness of programs and services – including awareness of each other and collaboration. Yardstick Research and AndersonDraper Consulting Inc., a consultant engaged on the YNAA project, were responsible for conducting all engagement.

- **Engagement Phase 2** - Engagement with youth/young adults, and systems partners to review all the information - including engagement results - and explore policy directions or recommendations.

- **Final Reporting and Presentations** to the Project Committee, Executive Team, and Council.

3 Project Methodology

3.1 Statistical Profile

The Social Research and Demonstration (SRDC) prepared a statistical profile of youth and young adults in Strathcona County and comparison communities. This work used publicly available data, primarily from Statistics Canada. The following comparison communities were selected in collaboration with the County:[1]

- St. Albert and adjacent Sturgeon County – selected for geographical proximity and roughly similar (albeit somewhat smaller) population size to Strathcona County;

- Red Deer and surrounding Red Deer County – selected for roughly similar (but somewhat larger) population size to Strathcona County; and

- Alberta – to provide a provincial average for comparison.

Table 1 lists the publicly available data sources used to develop the statistical profile.

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[1] At the outset of this work, St. Albert and Sturgeon County were considered one comparison location and Red Deer and Red Deer County another (plus Alberta more broadly as a third). However, federal census data separated St. Albert from Sturgeon County and Red Deer from Red Deer County. Figures in the report were separated accordingly.

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Table 1: Statistical Profile Data Sources

Data Sources
For Strathcona County and comparison locations
• Canada's 2016 Federal Census Profile results (Statistics Canada, 2018b)
For Strathcona County only
• *2011 Youth survey: Final report* – results of a survey regarding Strathcona County youths' attitudes, behaviours, and events; conducted in April and May 2011 with 437 young people in Grades 6, 8, and 11 attending school in Sherwood park and rural areas of the County (Strathcona County, 2013)
• *Community talk: What we heard* (survey results) – results of a community engagement initiative involving individuals who lived and work in Strathcona County from October to December 2016; nearly 8,000 individuals participated via survey (including 2,919 aged 11 to 17 and nearly 400 aged 18 to 24) and over 600 through community conversations (Strathcona County, 2017)
• *Family and Community Services community social profile, 3rd edition, 2018* – social portrait of Strathcona County and its nearly 100,000 residents (Strathcona County, 2018a)
• *Together we count: Census 2018 results report* – results of municipal census of Strathcona County residents (Strathcona County, 2018b)
Other
• Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) – cross-sectional survey regarding Canadians' health determinants, health status, and health care use; sample size = approximately 65,000 (Statistics Canada, 2018a); comparison of results between Alberta and Canada overall, based on 2017 data, included in the profile
• Government of Alberta data pertaining to rates of high school completion within five years of entering Grade 10, available for the Edmonton and Central Regions and Alberta overall (Government of Alberta, 2018)

A summary report for the Statistical Profile as prepared by SRDC is available under a separate cover.

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3.2 Literature Review and Online Scan

The Social Research and Demonstration (SRDC) completed a literature review and online scan as part of YNAA (appended as Appendix B). It addressed two questions:

1. What socio-environmental trends act as root contributors to youth issues/challenges today?

2. How can small urban and rural communities best serve the health, social, and community needs of resident youth?

Table 2 provides an overview of the methods used to access and retrieve materials to address the above questions.

Table 2: Methods to Access and Retrieve Materials

Method	Description
Search for academic literature	• Use of Google Scholar, PubMed, and Web of Science to identify principles, critical factors, and best/promising practices in youth programming and contributors to youth issues/challenges • Search terms consisted of combinations related to the specific population (youth and young adults), jurisdictions (Alberta and Canada more broadly), youth programming, issues, and trends • Primarily focused on literature/systematic reviews and meta-analyses to maintain scope and ensure highest quality of evidence, supplemented with individual studies and grey literature
Access to municipal and other websites	• Access to official websites of Strathcona County and other Alberta communities to identify programming appearing to demonstrate principles, critical factors, and best/promising practices of youth programming identified in the literature • Communities selected in collaboration with Strathcona County based on geographical proximity and/or similar population size – they included: Fort Saskatchewan (adjacent to Strathcona County), St. Albert (Sturgeon County), Spruce Grove (Parkland County), Leduc (Leduc County), Camrose (Camrose County), Red Deer (Red Deer County), and Lethbridge (Lethbridge County) • Also included access to websites of national youth-serving organizations (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, 4H)
Google search	• Identification of other programming in Canada (outside the selected Alberta locations) also demonstrating identified principles, critical factors, and best/promising practices, using similar search terms as identified above
Review of additional documents	• Review of additional documents provided by Strathcona County for inclusion in the scan

In many cases, information on initiatives in Alberta or Canada more broadly was relatively sparse, often limited to the program's name and a brief description; few had been the focus of research or evaluation. As such, linkages made between programming and specific principles, critical factors, or best/promising practices in youth programming represent the opinion of SRDC researchers rather than a formal best practices assessment.

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A summary report for the Literature Review and Online Scan as prepared by SRDC is available under a separate cover.

3.3   Services and Assets Review

The Social Research and Demonstration (SRDC) developed the initial structure for the services review database using the following process:

- Review and update of pre-existing inventory provided by Strathcona County (e.g., updates to services provided, web links, and contact information; removal of a small number of providers/programs that no longer appear to exist);

- Expansion of the database to include two new categories of information (Faith/ Spirituality and Financial Supports and Services) as well as additional service providers and programs – information was obtained through an online search;

- Inclusion of service providers and programs located within Strathcona County, Edmonton, and Fort Saskatchewan, plus key provincial services, as agreed upon in advance with the County; recognizing that as a large urban centre, Edmonton alone has numerous providers and programs, we focused on key services that would appear to be of particular use to Strathcona County youth (e.g., in terms of well-known service providers or programming not provided within the County) rather than an exhaustive list of all services; and

- Additional targeted searching to ensure the database included information related to Indigenous and other ethno-cultural groups, as well as gender diverse youth, where possible across the categories of services.

An initial version of the database (MS Excel format) was provided to Strathcona County on May 1, 2019. It identified the location, name and brief description of service provider/program, website link, and contact name/information (where available) across 15 categories of service:

Table 3: Services Providers in Strathcona County

Category	# of service providers/programs[2]
24-hour emergency numbers	28
Quick reference resources (not 24-hour)	9
Clothing and household goods	10
Community support and services[3]	29
Education	10
Employment and training[4]	7
Faith/spirituality	4
Financial supports & services	3

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[2] Some service providers/programs fit into multiple categories. They were included where they appeared to best fit and, in a few cases, in more than one category.

[3] The Community Support and Services and Employment and Training categories included a few providers offering supports to persons with disabilities. We recognize these represent but a small portion of services in the disability sector but determining which of these are youth-focused as opposed to serving a broader clientele was beyond the scope of this project.

[4] See footnote (2).

Food	6
Health, wellness, and safety	37
Housing	12
Emergency housing	7
Legal services	3
Recreation and leisure	11
Transportation	3
Youth groups	9
Volunteer organizations/opportunities	4

**The Community Support and Services and Employment and Training categories included a few providers offering supports to persons with disabilities. We recognize these represent but a small portion of services in the disability sector but determining which of these are youth-focused as opposed to serving a broader clientele was beyond the scope of this project.

A publishable PDF directory of service providers for youth/young adult programming has been provided separately.

3.4   Public Engagement Phase 1

3.4.1   Engagement Plan and Communications Plan

Yardstick Research developed an Engagement Plan in consultation with the Strathcona County Executive Team and Project Committee. The Engagement Plan outlined the planned methods for data collection and anticipated response rates.

A Communications Plan was drafted internally by Strathcona County, including details about survey launch date and promotions.

The Engagement Plan and Communications Plan are available under separate cover.

3.4.2   Ad Design

Examples of potential communications (images, copy) were shared with the Strathcona County Youth Council for feedback; based on the feedback and discussion gathered, the chosen image was used for all future project promotions and communications, including the project website, postcards, and posters.

3.4.3   Questionnaire Design

The questionnaires for all three surveys (Youth/Young Adults, Parents, and Agencies/Service Providers) were designed by Yardstick Research, drawing from previous needs assessment tools and similar studies. The draft tools were vetted by the Project Executive Team and Project Committee. Additionally, the Youth/Young Adults survey was pre-tested with the Strathcona County Youth Council, after which a few adjustments were made. The final surveys were programmed for online data collection by Strathcona County.

To increase the response rates, the Project Team created a separate "short-form" version of each the Parents' Survey and the Youth/Young Adults Survey. This shortened survey form was used for onsite/intercept data collection.

3.4.4 Data Collection

Online

All surveys were programmed and hosted online by Strathcona County. The project website (https://strathcona.ca/youthvoice) provided links to access all 3 surveys. The link to the project site was promoted via postcards, posters around the community, and social media. Elk Island Public Schools and Elk Island Catholic Schools (Archbishop Jordan) also participated in the survey by forwarding the Student Survey link to teachers for distribution with students.

A total of 1,111 surveys were completed through the online links (including both long- and short-form versions of the Parent and Youth/Young Adult Surveys):

- Parent Surveys – n=208
- Youth/Young Adult Surveys – n=896
- Agency Surveys – n=7

An online Google form was also used to capture the perspectives of teachers; the form was distributed to both EIPS and EICS. In total, ten (n=10) teachers from EIPS submitted responses to Yardstick Research and Strathcona County.

SCOOP

The Parent Survey was also programmed and distributed through Strathcona County's Online Opinion Panel (SCOOP). A total of 145 surveys were completed through this link.

Intercept/Onsite

Yardstick Research and Strathcona County provided onsite staff and volunteers for a number of events in and around the community, such as farmer's markets, Community Day events, and other locations such as recreation centres and the public library. Onsite staff wore branded t-shirts promoting the project and completed surveys – either via programmed link on iPad or via hard copy form – and distributed postcards to event attendees and facility visitors.

Public Engagement Sessions

Public Engagement is a formal process that engages citizens and stakeholders to provide input into local issues and decisions. It involves them to clarify issues, identify solutions or alternatives, and partner in decision making. It is a process that helps create sustainable decisions that balance perspectives (Public Engagement Handbook, Strathcona County, p. 2).

Engagement sessions were held with Youth Council, (April 8, 2019), the Strathcona County Interagency Committee (May 8th, 2019 & June 19th, 2019), the Strathcona County Youth Advisory Committee (June 3rd, 2019), and a Youth Engagement Session held in Ardrossan (June 26th, 2019) as part of Phase 1. Youth ranged from high school to university age. Interactive technology combined with traditional focus group methods was used to stimulate conversation and engage participants. It is important to note the information collected in Phase 1 is based on a small number of participants in both the Agency and Youth focus groups. Phase 2 engagement opportunities scheduled in August with youth, young adults and parent groups validated and added to this research and considered potential recommendations.

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3.5   Public Engagement Phase 2

Responses from the previous engagement sessions as well as the survey were used to create questions to direct discussion to specific areas to help further explore or clarify or expand on previous results. Phase 2 included:

- Community Partner Engagement (August 7th, 2019)
- Parent, Youth & Young Adult Engagement (August 17th, 2019)
- Project Coordination Committee Engagement (August 19th, 2019)

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT - PHASE 1&2

035	041	012
Youth and Young Adults	Agency/Staff Representatives	Parents

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4 Overview of Survey Findings

4.1 Youth and Young Adults

4.1.1 Areas of Concern

- Half of youth and young adults were concerned about pressures to do well in school (50%) and nearly one-in-three were concerned about finances or having enough money (30%).

- The majority of youth and young adults felt that a loved one's mental health was important (80%), followed by nearly three-quarters who felt their own mental health (73%) and their own physical health (71%) were important.

4.1.2 Recreation Needs and Habits

- Most of the youth and young adults have accessed indoor sports and recreation (78%) and outdoor parks, trails, and green spaces (73%) in the last year.

- When asked what is preventing them from participating in services or programming near them, a third of youth and young adults stated that transportation (34%) was an issue.

- One-in-five of youth and young adults felt that supports for mental health (20%) were needed where they lived, while over two-in-five felt that no (43%) more were needed.

- Nearly half of youth and young adults liked to do physical activity (45%) in their spare time and nearly two-in-five like to spend time with family and friends (38%).

4.1.3 Communication

- Youth and young adults would most commonly rely on friends (76%) and family (54%) for help and support.

- Nearly three-in-four youth and young adults felt that Instagram (74%) was the best way to share information within the community. Nearly half felt Snapchat (50%) and SMS (44%) would also be effective.

4.2 Parents

4.2.1 Areas of Concern

- Most parents felt that friends and peers (85%) were a major influence on youth and young adults under their care, followed by parents and guardians, including themselves (62%).

- Three-in-four (76%) parents talked with their children frequently or all the time.

- Over half of parents were concerned about their children's mental health (55%) and nearly two-in-five were concerned about peer pressure (39%), alcohol and drug use (39%), and their children doing well in school (38%).

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4.2.2 Recreation Needs and Habits

- Families with youth and young adults were most likely to have accessed outdoor parks, trails and green spaces (84%) and indoor sports and recreation facilities (84%) within the last year.

- When asked if there were any barriers preventing their family from participating in services or programming, half of parents stated the reason was due to transportation (50%).

- Nearly one quarter of parents felt that supports for mental health (22%) were needed for Strathcona County.

- Two-in-five of parents felt that recreational activities (39%) was something the county is doing well for youth and young adults.

4.2.3 Agencies and Stakeholders

- Two-in-three parents would seek a health care professional (68%) or their partner/spouse (67%) if they needed help or information for the youth or young adult under their care.

- The majority of parents identified the Strathcona County Website (78%) as the best way to share information with them about their community, followed by Facebook (59%) and E-newsletter (53%).

5   Appendix A – Detailed Survey Results & Summary of Engagement

5.1   Youth and Young Adult Survey Results & Summary of Engagement

Note: Two survey versions were programmed – a 'long form' and a 'short form' version. The 'n' for each question refers to the valid number of responses collected per question.

To provide a more comprehensive picture, survey results and findings from the engagement sessions are presented together.

5.1.1   Issues Facing Youth and Young Adults - What We Heard from the Survey

Youth and young adults were most often concerned with pressures to do well in school (50%). Nearly a third (30%) were concerned about having enough money/finances. See Figure 1, on the following page.

Subsegment Analysis

Females were more likely to be concerned with the following (compared to males):

- Bullying or verbal harassment (28% versus 17% of males);

- Conflicts with friends (29% versus 17% of males);

- Conflicts with family (28% versus 20% of males);

- Sexual health and contraception (23% versus 13% of males);

- Gender identity/LGBTQ2S+ issues (18% versus 10% of males);

- Having enough money/finances (35% versus 26% of males);

- Pressures to do well in school (62% versus 37% of males);

- Pressures to manage home responsibilities (24% versus 17% of males); and

- Personal safety walking in their community after dark (25% versus 11% of males).

Those 14 to 22 years old were more likely to be concerned with:

- Conflicts with friends (26% to 30% versus 4=6% of those 23 to 29 years old); and

- Conflicts with family (25% to 33% versus 7% of those 23 to 29 years old).

Those 18 to 22 years old were more likely to be concerned with:

- Their alcohol and/or drug use (24% versus 11% of those 14 to 17 years old or 7% of those 23 to 29 years old);

- A loved one's alcohol and/or drug use (36% versus 23% of those 14 to 17 years old and 14% of those 23 to 29 years old); and

Yardstick Research

- Romantic relationships (33% versus 19% of those 14 to 17 years old and 12% of those 23 to 29 years old).

Those 23 to 29 years old were more likely to be concerned with:

- Having stable housing (40% versus 16% of those 14 to 17 years old and 27% of those 18 to 22); and

- Having enough money (50% versus 27% of those 14 to 17 years old).

Those 14 to 17 years old were more likely to be concerned with personal safety walking in their community after dark (20% versus 7% of those aged 23 to 29).

Those 18 to 29 years old were more likely to be concerned with their ability to support themselves in Strathcona County (39% to 50% versus 17% of those 14 to 17 years old).

Those 23 to 29 years old were more likely to be concerned with getting around Strathcona County (31% versus 16% of those 14 to 17 years old).

Figure 1: Q4. In your life, how concerned are you about the following? (1 = not at all concerned; 5 = very concerned).
BASE: Long survey version

Issues of Concern

Issue	Moderately Concerned (4 out of 5)	Very concerned (5 out of 5)
Pressures to do well in school	20%	30%
Having enough money/finances	16%	14%
Conflicts with family	12%	12%
Conflicts with friends	14%	10%
Bullying or verbal harassment	16%	7%
A loved one's alcohol and/or drug use	11%	12%
My ability to support myself in Strathcona County	14%	7%
Pressures to manage home responsibilities	11%	9%
Peer pressure	13%	6%
Romantic relationships	12%	7%
Personal safety walking in my community after dark	10%	9%
Having stable housing	11%	8%
Sexual health and contraception	10%	9%
Discrimination	9%	9%
Getting around	11%	6%
Gender identity/LGBTQ2S+ issues	8%	7%
Affordable childcare	7%	5%
My alcohol and/or drug use	7%	5%
Cultural or language barriers	5%	4%

■ Moderately Concerned (4 out of 5)   ■ Very concerned (5 out of 5)

n=498
*Figure depicts ratings of 4 and 5 out of 5.

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Table 4: Q4. In your life, how concerned are you about the following? (1 = not at all concerned; 5 = very concerned).
BASE: Long survey version

Issue or Concern	Percentage of Respondents (n=498)							
	(1) Not at all Concerned	(2) Slightly Concerned	(3) Somewhat Concerned	(4) Moderately Concerned	(5) Very Concerned	Not Applicable	No Response	Mean
Pressures to do well in school	13%	15%	15%	20%	30%	5%	1%	**3.43**
Having enough money/finances	30%	17%	15%	16%	14%	6%	1%	**2.66**
Conflicts with friends	30%	22%	18%	14%	10%	4%	1%	**2.48**
Bullying or verbal harassment (physical/in-person or cyber)	31%	21%	19%	16%	7%	6%	0%	**2.45**
Conflicts with family	36%	19%	17%	12%	12%	3%	1%	**2.43**
Peer pressure	29%	25%	21%	13%	6%	5%	1%	**2.40**
Pressures to manage home responsibilities (e.g., cooking, cleaning, childcare, babysitting younger siblings, etc.)	32%	28%	15%	11%	9%	4%	1%	**2.34**
A loved one's alcohol and/or drug use	40%	16%	9%	11%	12%	10%	1%	**2.31**
Romantic relationships	35%	18%	15%	12%	7%	12%	1%	**2.30**
My ability to support myself in Strathcona County	36%	21%	13%	14%	7%	8%	1%	**2.29**
Personal safety walking in my community after dark	37%	22%	16%	10%	9%	4%	1%	**2.28**
Sexual health and contraception (e.g., pregnancy, STIs, birth control)	40%	13%	11%	10%	9%	17%	0%	**2.21**
Discrimination	42%	14%	14%	9%	9%	10%	2%	**2.18**
Getting around (transportation)	45%	21%	13%	11%	6%	3%	1%	**2.11**
Having stable housing	51%	14%	10%	11%	8%	6%	0%	**2.05**
Gender identity/LGBTQ2S+ issues	47%	8%	10%	8%	7%	19%	0%	**2.00**
Affordable childcare	39%	12%	8%	7%	5%	29%	1%	**1.95**
My alcohol and/or drug use	51%	12%	7%	7%	5%	18%	0%	**1.80**
Cultural or language barriers	54%	12%	8%	5%	4%	15%	1%	**1.71**

In the short version of the survey, two-in-five of youth and young adults were concerned about finances or having enough money (42%) and pressures to do well in school (40%). See Figure 2, below.

Figure 2: Q8. From the list below, rank up to 3 things you worry about most.
BASE: Short survey version

Issues of Concern

Issue	Percentage
Having enough money/finances	42%
Pressures to do well in school	40%
Conflicts with friends and/or family	31%
Peer pressure	26%
Bullying or verbal harassment	22%
Pressures to manage home responsibilities	20%
A loved one's alcohol and/or drug use	19%
Having stable housing	18%
Getting transportation as necessary	15%
Gender identity/LGBTQ2S+ issues	13%
Discrimination	9%
Other; specify	2%
None/Nothing	6%
Don't Know/Not Stated	1%

n=398

Table 5
BASE: Short survey version

Q8. Other issues of concern	(n=398)
Finding a job/employment opportunity	1%
Anxiety related issues (general)	1%

Single mentions not shown

Yardstick Research

5.1.2 Issues Facing Youth and Young Adults - What We Heard from the Youth Engagement Focus Groups

What We Heard from the Focus Groups

Similarly, youth as part of the public engagement were asked to comment on issues and challenges facing youth today as part of an open-ended conversation. Although the sample size was small (n=7) it is interesting to note the different issues raised by youth in conversation. Clearly when engaged in conversation with others youth noted the importance of addressing environmental issues. Mental health was a prevalent issue in both the survey and engagement sessions.

- Mental Health (+4)
- Global Warming (+4)
- Environment (+3)
- Identity (+2)
- Politics (+2)
- Reliance on Drugs & Alcohol (+2)
- Stigma surrounding Mental Health and Disabilities (+3)
- We Need Student Housing (+1)
- Family Issues (+1)
- Money (+1)
- Jobs (+1)
- Vaping (+1)
- Suicidal and Self Harm (+1)
- Overall Stress (+1)
- School (+0)

Note: Number represents the total number of "likes" the item received and is an indicator of consensus and ranking. Participants contributed new items as well as upvoted items they felt were most important to them.

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Most of the youth and young adults felt that a loved one's mental health was important (80%), followed by nearly three-quarters felt their own mental health (73%) and their own physical health (71%) were important. See Figure 3, below.

Figure 3: Q5. In your life, how important are the following? (1 = not at all important; 5 = very important). BASE: Long survey version

Important Issues

Issue	Important (4 out of 5)	Very Important (5 out of 5)
A loved one's mental health	30%	50%
My mental health	30%	43%
My physical health	35%	36%
Pressures to do well in school	30%	36%
Making friends/establishing friendships	36%	29%
Having access to healthy and affordable food	28%	36%
My physical appearance	35%	24%
My spiritual health	19%	22%

n=498
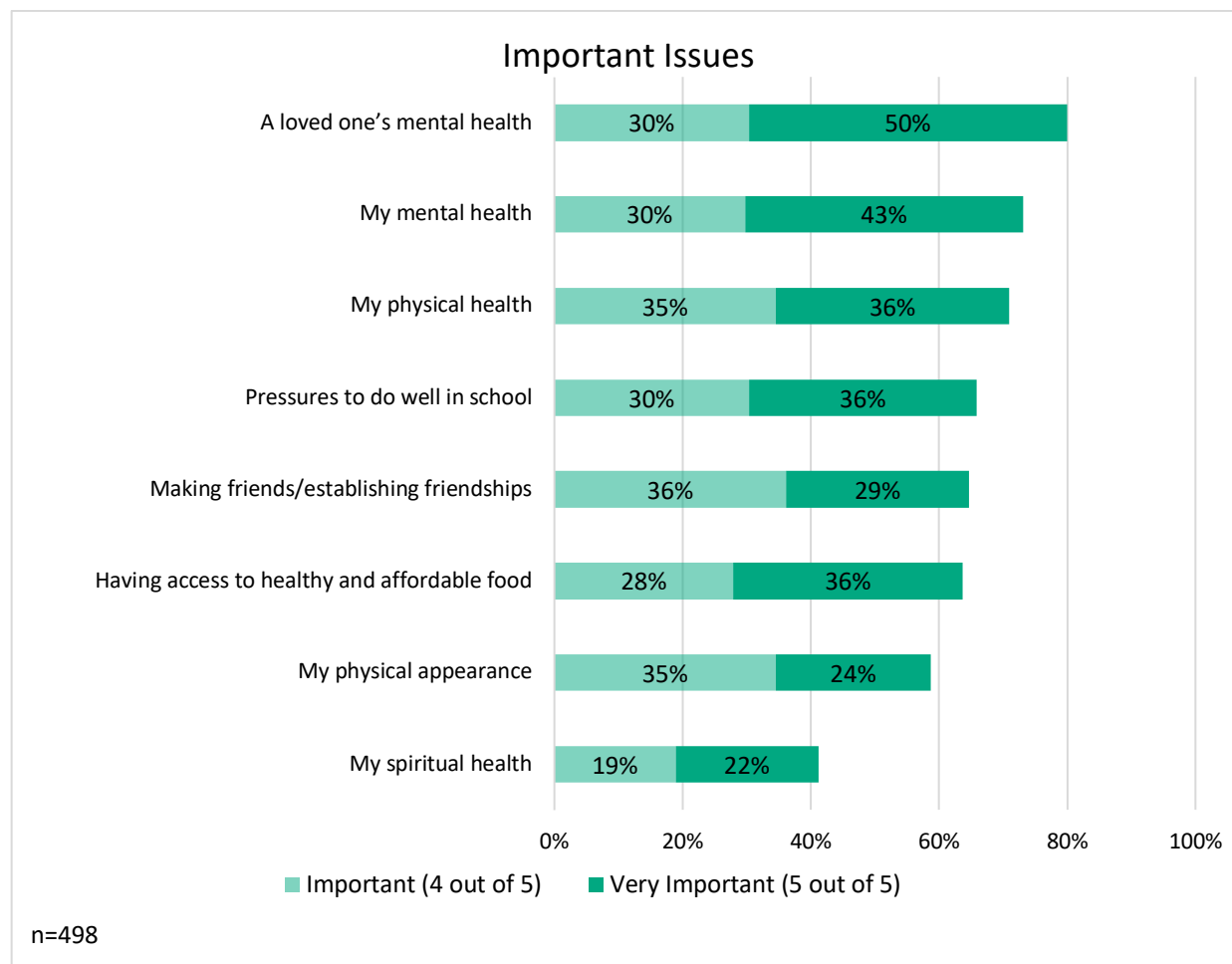
Subsegment Analysis

Those 23 to 29 years old were more likely to rate the following as important:

- Access to healthy and affordable food (81% versus 61% of those 14 to 17 years old);
- Their physical health (88% versus 70% of those 14 to 17 years old); and
- Their mental health (98% versus 70% to 79% of those 14 to 22 years old).

Table 6: Q5. In your life, how important are the following? (1 = not at all important; 5 = very important)
BASE: Long survey version

Issue or Concern	Percentage of Respondents (n=498)							Mean
	(1) Not at all Important	(2) Slightly Important	(3) Neutral	(4) Important	(5) Very Important	Not Applicable	No Response	
My spiritual health	23%	11%	21%	19%	22%	3%	1%	**4.16**
My physical appearance	9%	10%	21%	35%	24%	1%	1%	**3.96**
Pressures to do well in school	8%	6%	16%	30%	36%	4%	1%	**3.89**
My physical health	7%	6%	14%	35%	36%	1%	1%	**3.84**
Having access to healthy and affordable food	15%	7%	11%	28%	36%	3%	0%	**3.71**
Making friends/establishing friendships	8%	7%	17%	36%	29%	1%	1%	**3.64**
My mental health	9%	4%	13%	30%	43%	1%	1%	**3.56**
A loved one's mental health	7%	3%	8%	30%	50%	2%	1%	**3.07**

Table 7: Other Concerns/Worries

Q6. Is there anything else in your life that you worry about?	(n=58)
Employment related issues	17%
My relationship with my family/friends	14%
Drug/alcohol abuse/addiction	10%
Financial/personal income related issues	10%
Bullying related issues	9%
Being judged by others	7%
Climate change/global warming	5%
Discrimination related issues	5%

Labels below 4% not shown

5.1.3 Accessing Services - What We Heard from the Survey

Most of the youth and young adults have accessed indoor sports and recreation (78%) and outdoor parks, trails, and green spaces (73%) in the last year. See Figure 4, below.

Figure 4: Q7. Please check off the places listed below that you have visited/used anytime within the past 12 months (*select all that apply*).
BASE: Long survey version

Services and Programming Accessed in the Past Year

Service	Percentage
Indoor sports and recreation	78%
Outdoor parks, trails, and green spaces	73%
Outdoor sports and recreation	61%
Strathcona County Library	44%
Arts and culture activities	42%
School support or tutoring	31%
Programs or services for mental health and wellness	27%
Physical therapy	24%
Job/employment support services	21%
Birth control/sexual health services	20%
Religious activities/spiritual services	19%
Food bank	16%
Skate parks	15%
Housing support/affordable housing services	14%
Assistance with personal finances	14%
Programs for dealing with family violence	13%
Social programs	13%
Youth shelter or emergency shelter	12%
Called into a telephone help line/hotline	11%
Mentoring and leadership programs or services	10%
Programs or services for persons with disabilities	10%
Support for gender minorities/LGBTQ2S+	9%
Programs/services for dealing with addictions	8%
Daycare or childcare services	6%
Victim support services	5%
I did not access any services in the past 12 months	1%
Other; specify:	1%
Don't Know/Not Stated	1%

n=498

What We Heard from the Focus Groups

Youth Participants identified many programs and services either they or their friends used in Strathcona County. Youth who participated in the engagement sessions noted they were as likely to access private course offerings (e.g. gymnastics, dance, music lessons) as they were County programming.

Illustration 1: MindMap of Programs and Services Accessed

Table 8: Q8. Where did you access this service? (*select all that apply*). **RECREATION AND LEISURE.**
Base: Respondents who accessed each type of program or service in the last 12 months.

Indoor sports and recreation	(n=390)
Strathcona County	94%
Edmonton	45%
Ardrossan	1%
Calgary	1%
Red Deer	1%
Sherwood Park	1%
St. Albert	1%
Outdoor sports and recreation	**(n=305)**
Strathcona County	90%
Edmonton	45%
Ardrossan	1%
British Columbia	1%
Fort Saskatchewan	1%
Jasper	1%
Skate parks	**(n=76)**
Strathcona County	76%
Edmonton	42%
Outdoor parks, trails, and green spaces	**(n=363)**
Strathcona County	88%
Edmonton	45%
Jasper	1%
Elk Island	1%
British Columbia	1%
Calgary	1%
Canmore	1%
Banff	1%
Fort Saskatchewan	1%
Lac La Biche	1%
Arts and culture activities (e.g., performing arts, visual arts, museum, etc.)	**(n=207)**
Strathcona County	63%
Edmonton	59%
Sherwood Park	1%

Don't know/not stated and single mentions not shown.

Yardstick Research

Table 9: Q8. Where did you access this service? (*select all that apply*). <u>PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH</u>.
Base: Respondents who accessed each type of program or service in the last 12 months.

Physical therapy (e.g., speech therapy, occupational therapy)	(n=119)
Strathcona County	75%
Edmonton	29%
Sherwood Park	2%
Birth control/sexual health services	**(n=98)**
Strathcona County	61%
Edmonton	33%
Support for gender minorities/LGBTQ2S+	**(n=46)**
Strathcona County	54%
Edmonton	35%
Programs or services for persons with disabilities	**(n=51)**
Strathcona County	65%
Edmonton	37%
Programs or services for mental health and wellness (e.g., therapy, counseling, help for depression, mental illness, anxiety, self-harm)	**(n=134)**
Strathcona County	69%
Edmonton	33%
Service accessed online	1%
Programs or services for dealing with addictions or substance abuse	**(n=38)**
Strathcona County	68%
Edmonton	32%
Called into a telephone help line/hotline (e.g., suicide/distress line)	**(n=54)**
Strathcona County	70%
Edmonton	28%

Don't know/not stated and single mentions not shown.

Yardstick Research

Table 10: Q8. Where did you access this service? (*select all that apply*). <u>EDUCATION AND CAREER</u>.
Base: Respondents who accessed each type of program or service in the last 12 months.

School support or teaching	(n=156)
Strathcona County	85%
Edmonton	18%
Job/employment support services	(n=104)
Strathcona County	66%
Edmonton	28%

Don't know/not stated and single mentions not shown.

Table 11: Q8. Where did you access this service? (*select all that apply*). <u>FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE</u>.
Base: Respondents who accessed each type of program or service in the last 12 months.

Housing support/affordable housing services	(n=70)
Strathcona County	70%
Edmonton	24%
Assistance with personal finances and/or financial hardship	(n=69)
Strathcona County	57%
Edmonton	35%
Food bank	(n=80)
Strathcona County	64%
Edmonton	29%

Don't know/not stated and single mentions not shown.

Table 12: Q8. Where did you access this service? (*select all that apply*). <u>EMERGENCY SERVICES</u>.
Base: Respondents who accessed each type of program or service in the last 12 months.

Programs for dealing with family violence	(n=66)
Strathcona County	58%
Edmonton	29%
Youth shelter or emergency shelter	(n=62)
Strathcona County	60%
Edmonton	39%

Don't know/not stated and single mentions not shown.

Yardstick Research

Table 13: Q8. Where did you access this service? (*select all that apply*). OTHER SERVICES.
Base: Respondents who accessed each type of program or service in the last 12 months.

Mentoring and leadership programs or services	(n=51)
Strathcona County	80%
Edmonton	31%
Social programs	**(n=63)**
Strathcona County	83%
Edmonton	49%
Religious activities/spiritual services	**(n=96)**
Strathcona County	82%
Edmonton	30%
Daycare or childcare services	**(n=32)**
Strathcona County	84%
Edmonton	19%
Victim support services	**(n=25)**
Strathcona County	64%
Edmonton	48%

Don't know/not stated and single mentions not shown.

Yardstick Research

When asked what is preventing them from participating in services or programming near them, a third of youth and young adults stated that transportation (34%) was an issue. See Table 14, below.

Table 14: Barriers to Participation

Q9. Is there anything preventing you from participating in services or programming near where you live? *BASE: Youth and young adults that had something preventing them from participating in services or programming near them*	(n=163)
Transportation	34%
Cost of services and programs	20%
Availability of programming	16%
Lack of spare time	14%
Other; specify	**18%**
Service/program not available near the area I live	5%
Illness/injury/physical health related issues	2%
Fear of ridicule/being judged	2%
Inadequate/poor outdoor green spaces/parks	2%
Poor services/programming	2%
Anxiety related issues/reasons	1%
I don't feel supported by my family/friends	1%
No Response	6%

Single mentions not shown.

Subsegment Analysis

Rural respondents were more likely to indicate there was something preventing them from participating in services or programming near where they live (29% versus 16% of urban respondents).

When asked what is preventing them from participating in programs or services:

- Urban respondents were more likely to cite cost as a barrier (25% versus 7% of rural respondents).

- Rural respondents were more likely to cite transportation as a barrier (58% versus 25% of urban respondents).

Yardstick Research

One-in-five of youth and young adults felt that supports for mental health (20%) were needed where they lived, while over two-in-five felt that none (43%) more were needed. See Table 15, below.

Table 15: Programming Missing in the County

Q10. What kinds of services are needed where you live, or should be more available than they are now?	(n=896)
Supports for mental health	20%
Recreational activities (sports rec leagues, fitness classes, etc.)	16%
Physical space for youth and young adults to connect and hang out	15%
Supports around finances and learning about money	14%
Supports for affordable housing, homeless shelter	14%
Other; specify	**5%**
Public transit services	1%
Health care/medical related services	1%
Shopping centres/retail stores/businesses	1%
Educational related services	1%
None: All of the services I need are available where I live	43%
No Response	10%

Single mentions not shown.

Subsegment Analysis

Rural respondents were more like to indicate the following as needed services:

- Recreational activities (25% versus 15% of urban respondents)

- Public transit services (67% versus 15% of urban respondents)

5.1.5 Programs Missing in the County – What We Heard from the Youth Engagement Focus Groups

What We Heard from the Focus Groups

As part of the public engagement youth were asked "What Services or Programs are Missing from Strathcona County?" Youth noted accessible housing was missing and commented "If you want people in the Park don't exclude this entire group of people who need housing". Youth also identified a lack of crisis services, limited city and government services to do with environmental concerns, and a lack of things for youth to do (gathering spaces, year-round youth centre). Transportation in "the Park" as well as to Edmonton (Whyte Avenue & the University of Alberta) was also an issue raised (focus on commuter routes over social routes, seasonal changes to schedules, only one bus to NAIT).

Illustration 2: MindMap of Programs Missing in the County
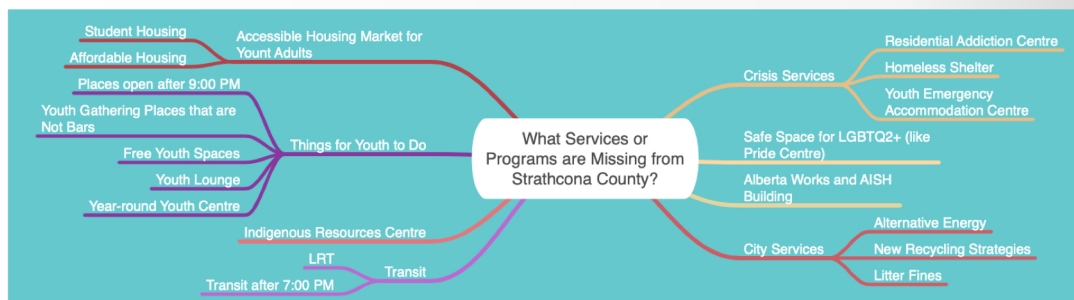
5.1.6 Life in Strathcona County – What We Heard from the Survey

Nearly half of youth and young adults liked to do physical activity (45%) in their spare time and nearly two-in-five like to spend time with family and friends (38%). See Table 16, below.

Table 16: Activities to Recharge and Relax

Q11. What do you like to do in your spare time? What do you like to do to relax and "recharge"?	(n=896)
Physical Activity (going for walks, sports, bike rides, etc.)	45%
Spend time with family and friends	38%
Watch TV	34%
Video games	28%
Reading	25%
A hobby (art, crafts, music, etc.)	24%
Other; specify	**10%**
Sleep	5%
Internet browsing/go online	1%
Eat/have a snack	1%
Card/board games	1%
Social Media	1%
Consume cannabis/marijuana	1%
Shopping	1%
Nothing	<1%
Don't know/Not sure	8%

Labels below 1% not shown.

Yardstick Research

Table 17: Good Parts of Living in the County.
BASE: Long survey version

Q12. What do you like about where you live?	(n=498)
Is safe/I feel safe	17%
Is quiet/peaceful	15%
Access to parks/green spaces/walking trails	13%
Ease of access to services/amenities/everything is close by	9%
Being with/close to my friends and family	7%
People are kind/friendly/welcoming	6%
Access to shopping/stores/businesses/restaurants	5%
Access to recreational facilities/programs/activities	5%
Is spacious/lots of space	4%
Good neighbourhoods/communities	4%
Nothing	6%
Don't Know/Not Stated	15%

Labels below 4% not shown.

Yardstick Research

What We Heard from the Focus Groups

Youth were asked to identify the biggest opportunities available to them and their friends living in the County. They noted the following:

- Boards and Committees
- Safety!
- Transit to the University
- Parks
- School
- French Immersion
- Extra Curricular
- Accessible Spaces
- Clean Public Transit
- Focus Groups

Yardstick Research

Table 18: Suggestions for Improvement.
BASE: Long survey version

Q13. What <u>one thing</u> would make your life better?	(n=498)
Having money/more money	13%
More recreational facilities	6%
Being under less pressure in my studies/at school	4%
More parks/green spaces/walking trails	4%
More job/employment opportunities	3%
Improve public transit services	3%
Being less busy/having more free time	3%
More mental health related services/support	3%
Having more friends	3%
More shopping/stores/retail businesses	3%
More activities/things to do/entertainment	3%
Nothing	3%
Don't Know/Not Stated	29%

Labels below 3% not shown.

Yardstick Research

Subsegment Analysis

Rural respondents were more likely to indicate that improved public transit services would be the one thing to make their life better (13% versus 2% of urban respondents)

5.1.10 Suggestions for Improvement – What We Heard from the Youth Engagement Focus Groups

What We Heard from the Focus Groups

Rather than asking youth suggestions for improvement as part of the public engagement, they were asked "If you had one piece of advice for the Mayor and Council, what would it be?". The broadest theme from Youth Participants was "Listen to our Youth" and there was an overall sentiment that there are issues in Sherwood Park that are being glossed over by adults, best captured in the quote "Stop sugar coating Sherwood Park" that was prevalent in both Youth sessions.

Illustration 3: MindMap of Advice for the Mayor and Council

5.1.11 Communications - What We Heard from the Survey

Youth and young adults would most commonly rely on friends (76%) and family (54%) for help and support. See Figure 5, below.

Figure 5: Q14. Who do you usually ask for help or advice? (*select all that apply*)

Sources for Help and Support

Source	Percentage
Friends	76%
Family	54%
Parent or legal guardian	44%
Online search/Google	34%
Teacher, coach, pastor, spiritual advisor	31%
Doctor, Counsellor, Therapist	22%
Watch videos on YouTube	20%
Social media or online chat rooms	15%
Telephone hotline/crisis line	5%
Resources at Strathcona County Library	2%
Community agency	2%
No one	1%
Don't Know/Not Stated	1%

n=896

Subsegment Analysis

Urban respondents were more likely to ask their parent or legal guardian (46%) or go online (35%) for help or advice (versus 34% and 26% of rural respondents, respectively).

Yardstick Research

Nearly three-in-four youth and young adults felt that Instagram (74%) was the best way to share information within the community. Nearly half felt Snapchat (50%) and SMS (44%) would also be effective. See Figure 6, below.

Figure 6: Q15. What would be the best ways to share information with you about your community? This could include information on things like activities or events for people your age, help or support services, or other types of activities and programming (*select all that apply*).

Effective Communication Methods

Method	Percentage
Instagram	74%
Snapchat	50%
Text message/SMS	44%
Through my school	30%
YouTube	30%
Posters in schools, recreation centres, bus stops, malls/shopping centres, etc.	27%
Facebook	24%
Strathcona County website	19%
Direct email	15%
Twitter	14%
Resources at the Strathcona County Library	9%
E-newsletter	7%
Other social media; specify:	3%
Other; please specify:	1%
Don't Know/Not Stated	5%

n=896

Yardstick Research

5.1.12 Survey Demographics - Youth/Young Adult Profile

Table 19: Living in Strathcona County

Q1. I live in:	(n=896)
Sherwood Park	83%
Other Strathcona County:	**17%**
Antler Lake	1%
Ardrossan	6%
Collingwood Cove	1%
Half Moon Lake	1%
Hastings Lake	1%
Josephburg	1%
North Cooking Lake	1%
South Cooking Lake	2%
Other Rural Area in Strathcona County	4%
Q2. How long have you lived in Strathcona County?	**(n=498)**
Less than 1 year	4%
1 to 5 years	15%
6 to 10 years	15%
More than 10 years	65%
Q3. Please select the category that includes your current age.	**(n=896)**
14 to 17	71%
18 to 22	12%
23 to 29	17%
Q24. Do you use the buses in Strathcona County?	**(n=498)**
Yes	53%
No	46%
Q32. Do you have a disability?	**(n=498)**
Yes	10%
No	81%
Prefer not to answer	9%

Yardstick Research

Table 20: Gender and Sexuality

Q25. I identify my gender as:	(n=896)
Male	36%
Female	55%
Trans male	1%
Trans female	1%
Non-binary	1%
Gender fluid	1%
Prefer not to answer	6%
Q27. What is your marital status?	**(n=498)**
Single, never married	80%
Married or common law	4%
Separated	<1%
Divorced	<1%
Widowed	<1%
Prefer not to answer	15%

Yardstick Research

Table 21: Education, Work, and Volunteering

Q16. What is the highest level of education you have completed?	(n=498)
In junior high	36%
Didn't finish high school	0%
In high school	41%
Didn't finish high school	4%
High school graduate	5%
Some college/technical school	1%
Completed college/technical school	1%
Some university	2%
University undergraduate degree	5%
Some post-graduate education	<1%
Post-graduate degree	1%
Prefer not to answer	4%
Q17. What is your main current employment status?	**(n=498)**
Work full-time (35 hours per week or more)	8%
Work part-time (less than 35 hours per week)	14%
Full-time student and working	11%
Full-time student and not working	16%
Homemaker	0%
Caregiver of dependent child(ren)/adult(s)	0%
Currently looking for work	14%
Permanently unable to work	0%
Not old enough to have a job	8%
On disability and receive payments	1%
Other	1%
Prefer not to answer	21%
I don't work	5%
Q18. Do you volunteer?	**(n=498)**
Yes	41%
No	59%
Q19. On average, how many hours per month do you volunteer? *Base: Respondents who volunteer*	**(n=202)**
1 to 10 hours	63%
11 to 30 hours	13%
31 to 60 hours	3%
Mean number of hours per month	**8.38 hours**

Yardstick Research

Table 22: Language and Culture

Q28. Is English your first language?	(n=498)
Yes	85%
No	12%
Prefer not to answer	3%
Q29. What is your first language? *Base: Respondents whose first language is not English*	(n=60)
Arabic	10%
Cantonese	3%
French	8%
Indigenous language	3%
Italian	2%
Mandarin	52%
Panjabi (Punjabi)	3%
Spanish	2%
Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino)	3%
Other; specify	**8%**
Ilocano	2%
Russian	2%
Sign language	2%
Thai	2%
Urdu	2%
Prefer not to answer	5%
Q30. Do you identify as an ethnic or visible minority?	(n=498)
Yes	19%
No	62%
Prefer not to answer	19%
Q31. Do you consider yourself to be an Indigenous person?[5]	(n=498)
Yes	9%
No	87%
Prefer not to answer	4%

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[5] Indigenous persons include members of First Nations (status or non-status), Inuit, or Métis peoples.

Yardstick Research

Table 23: Housing

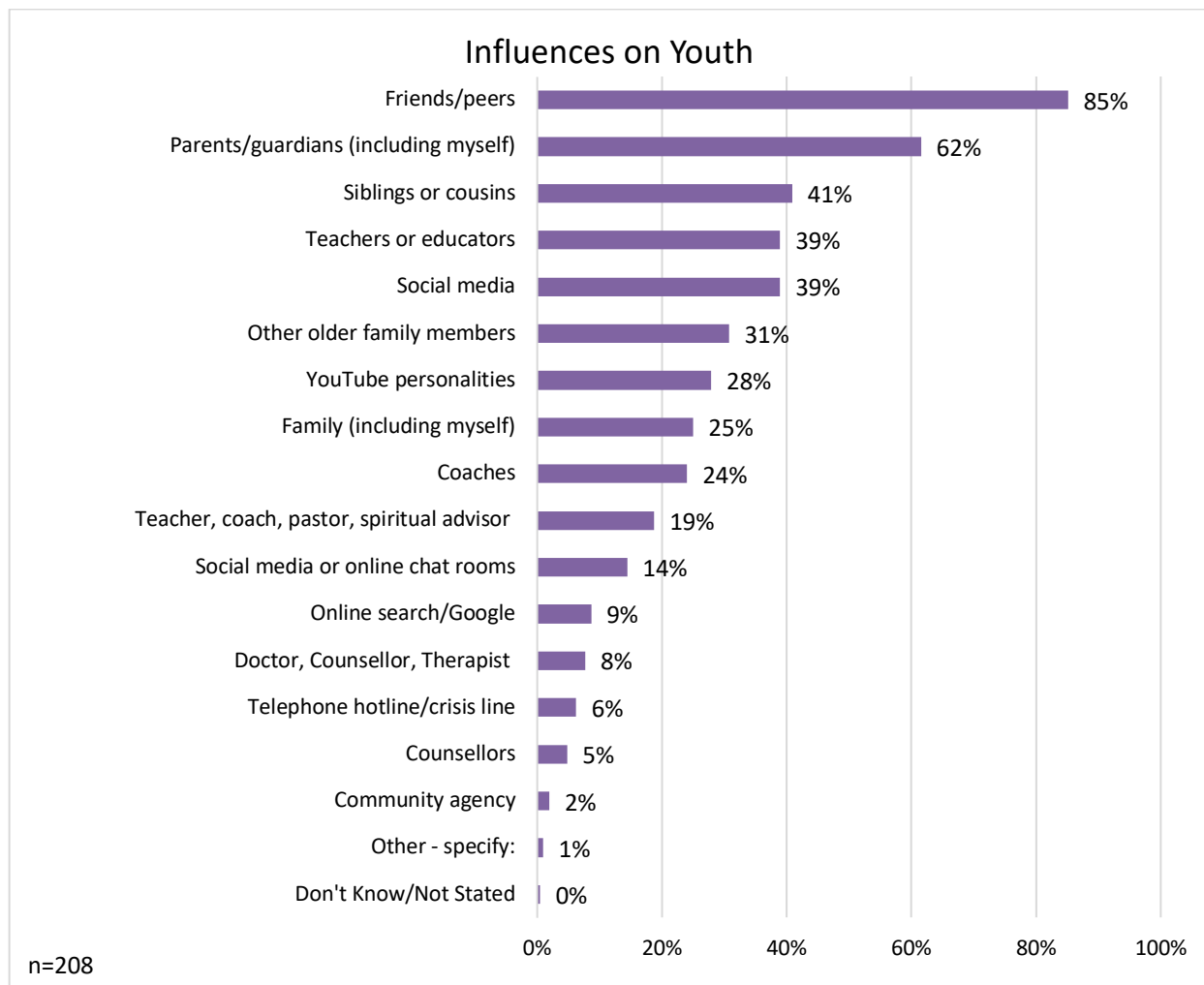| Q20. I live with:	(n=498)
A parent or guardian at home	90%
A roommate/roommates	1%
No one else	1%
A partner	3%
A partner and children	1%
Alone with a child or children	<1%
Other students in college or university housing	<1%
A friend for now (not permanently)	<1%
I do not have permanent housing	<1%
Prefer not to answer	3%
Q21. Where will you be staying tonight? *Base: Respondents who reported they do not have permanent housing*	(n=1)
Public space (sidewalks, parks, forests, or bus shelter, etc.)	100%; n=1
Q22. How long have you been in this situation? *Base: Respondents who reported they do not have permanent housing*	(n=1)
Years	100%; n=1
Q23. In total, how many different times have you experienced this kind (or a similar kind) of living situation over the past year? *Base: Respondents who reported they do not have permanent housing*	(n=1)
Don't know/Not stated	100%; n=1

Yardstick Research

5.2 Parent Survey Results

Note: Two survey versions were programmed – a 'long form' and a 'short form' version. The 'n' for each question refers to the valid number of responses collected per question.

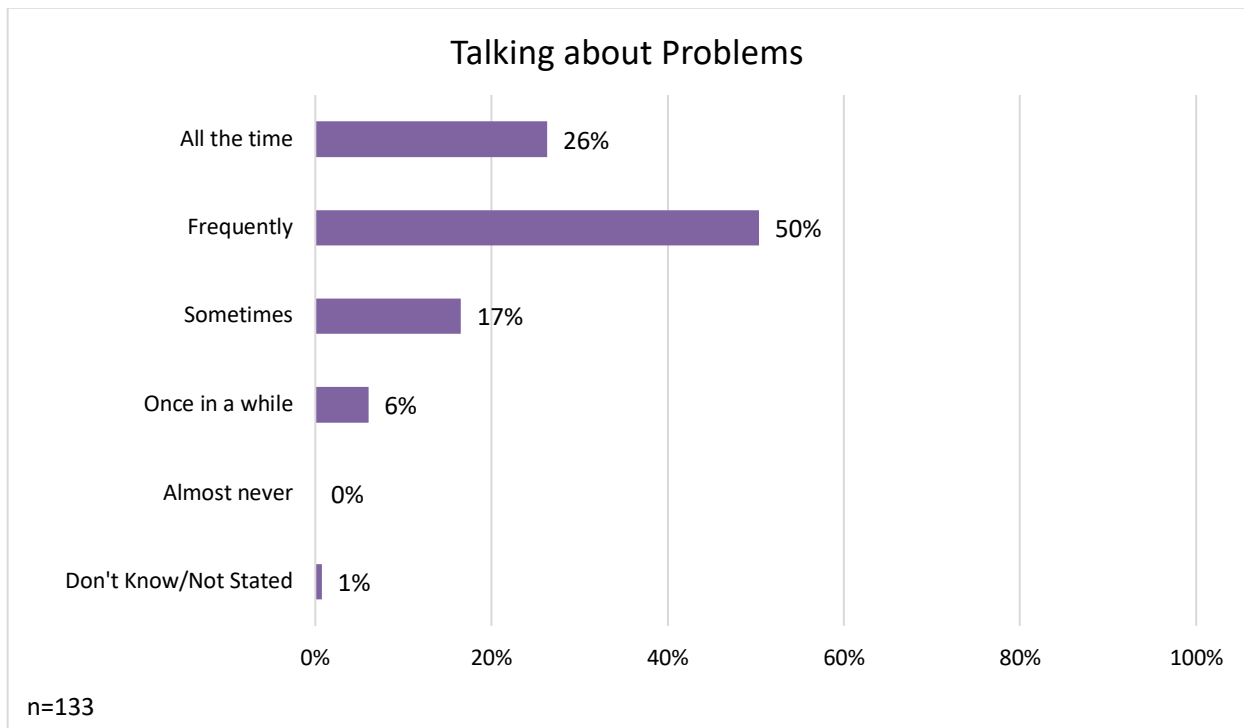### 5.2.1 Youth Influences – What We Heard from the Survey

Most parents felt that friends and peers (85%) were a major influence on youth and young adults under their care, followed by parents and guardians, including themselves (62%). See Figure 7, below.

Figure 7: Q4. Who or what are the major influences in the lives of those ages 14 to 29 living with you or under your care? (*select all that apply*).

Influences on Youth

Influence	Percentage
Friends/peers	85%
Parents/guardians (including myself)	62%
Siblings or cousins	41%
Teachers or educators	39%
Social media	39%
Other older family members	31%
YouTube personalities	28%
Family (including myself)	25%
Coaches	24%
Teacher, coach, pastor, spiritual advisor	19%
Social media or online chat rooms	14%
Online search/Google	9%
Doctor, Counsellor, Therapist	8%
Telephone hotline/crisis line	6%
Counsellors	5%
Community agency	2%
Other - specify:	1%
Don't Know/Not Stated	0%

n=208

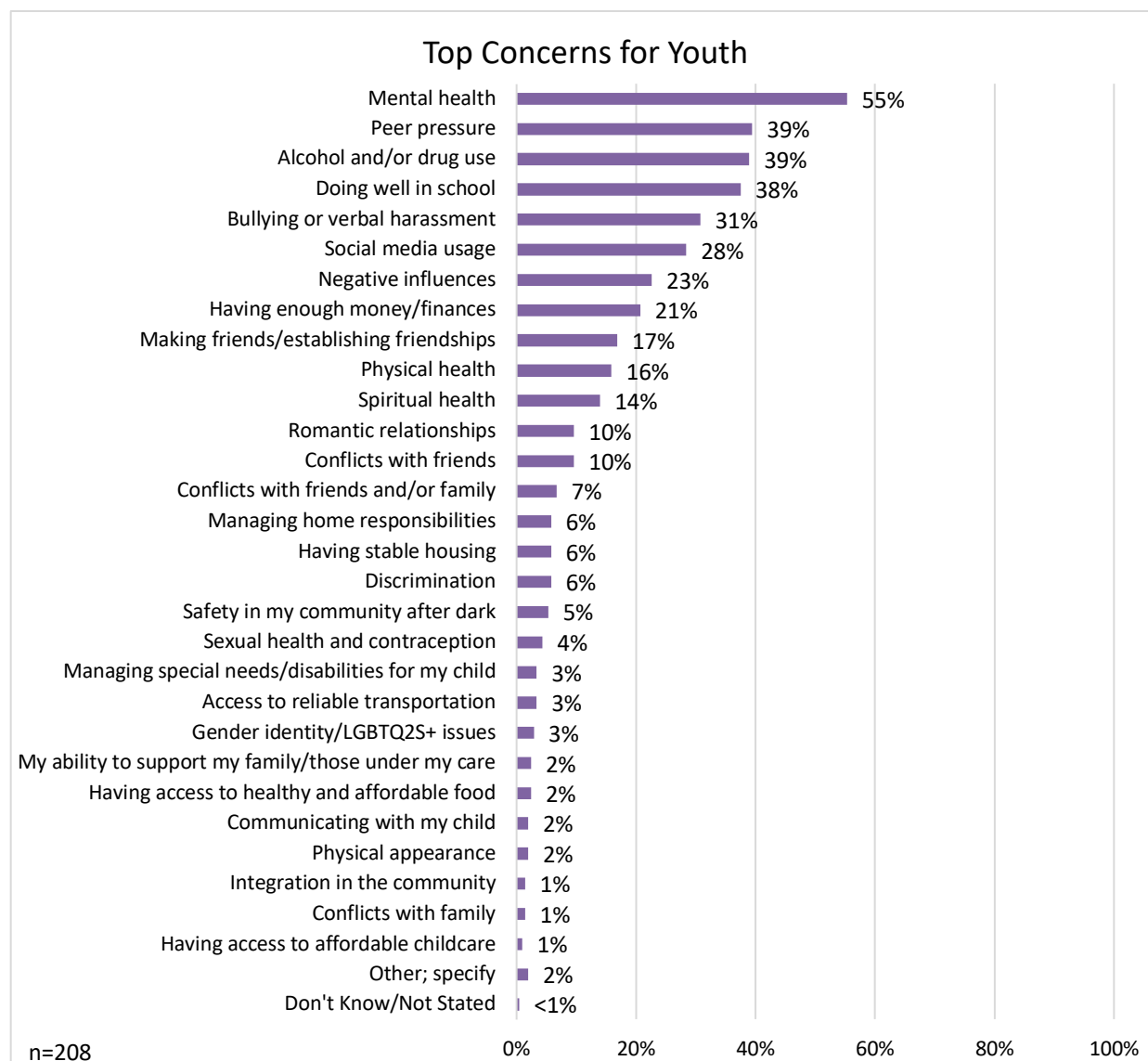Three-in-four (76%) parents talked with their children frequently or all the time. See Figure 8, below.

Figure 8: Q5. How often do you and your child(ren) talk when they are having a problem with others?

Talking about Problems

Category	Percentage
All the time	26%
Frequently	50%
Sometimes	17%
Once in a while	6%
Almost never	0%
Don't Know/Not Stated	1%

n=133

5.2.2 Issues Facing Youth and Young Adults – What We Heard from the Survey

Over half of parents were concerned about their children's mental health (55%) and nearly two-in-five were concerned about peer pressure (39%), alcohol and drug use (39%), and doing well in school regarding their children (38%). See Figure 9, below.

Figure 9: Q6. What are the top 5 things you're concerned about for your children or the youth/young adults under your care? (select up to 5 from list).

Top Concerns for Youth

Concern	Percentage
Mental health	55%
Peer pressure	39%
Alcohol and/or drug use	39%
Doing well in school	38%
Bullying or verbal harassment	31%
Social media usage	28%
Negative influences	23%
Having enough money/finances	21%
Making friends/establishing friendships	17%
Physical health	16%
Spiritual health	14%
Romantic relationships	10%
Conflicts with friends	10%
Conflicts with friends and/or family	7%
Managing home responsibilities	6%
Having stable housing	6%
Discrimination	6%
Safety in my community after dark	5%
Sexual health and contraception	4%
Managing special needs/disabilities for my child	3%
Access to reliable transportation	3%
Gender identity/LGBTQ2S+ issues	3%
My ability to support my family/those under my care	2%
Having access to healthy and affordable food	2%
Communicating with my child	2%
Physical appearance	2%
Integration in the community	1%
Conflicts with family	1%
Having access to affordable childcare	1%
Other; specify	2%
Don't Know/Not Stated	<1%

n=208

Subsegment Analysis

Urban parents were more likely to put social media in their top five concerns for their children or youth/young adults under their care (28% versus 13% of rural parents).
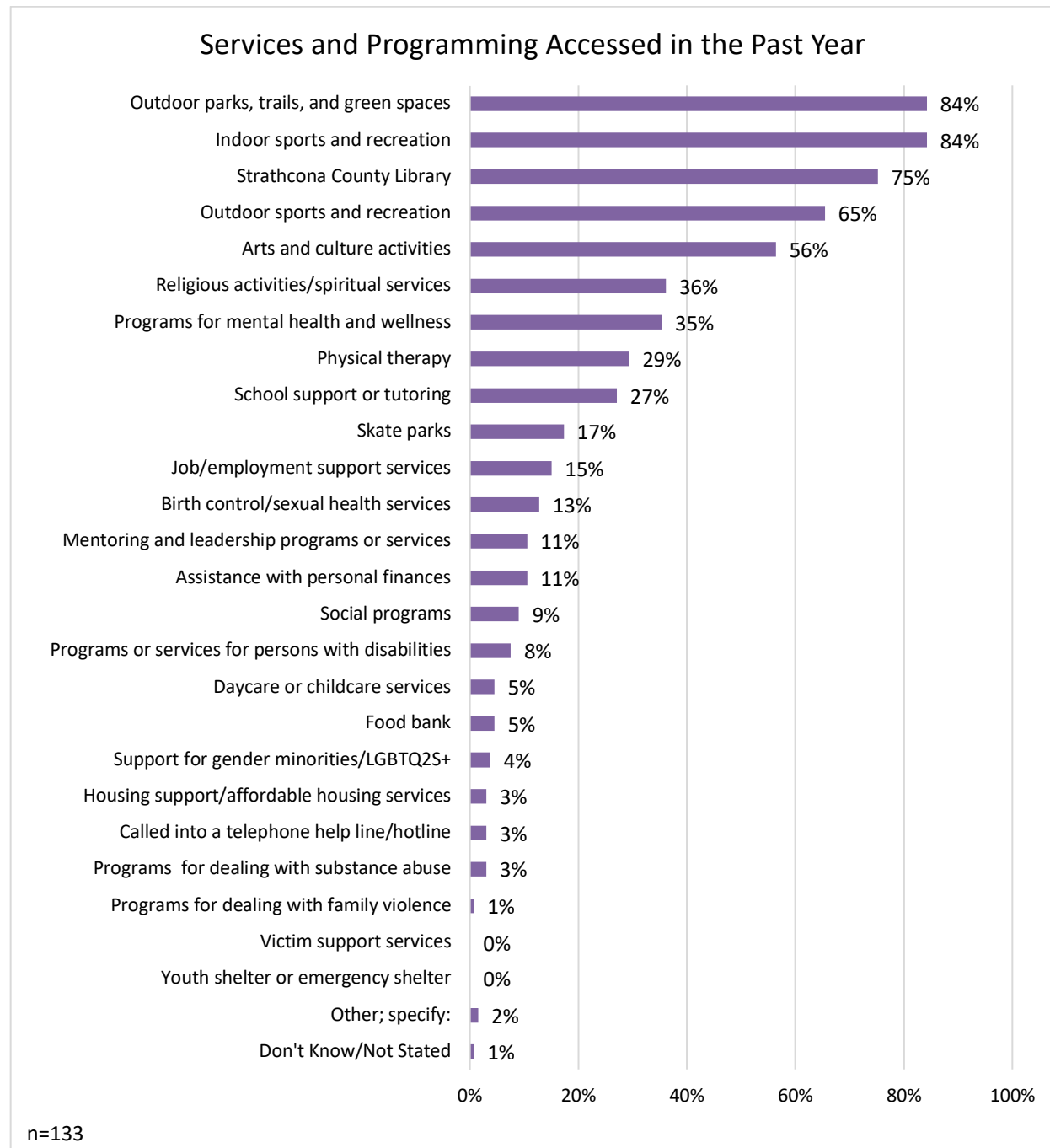
Rural parents were more likely to put making friends in their top five concerns for their children or youth/young adults under their care (28% versus 7% of urban parents).

Yardstick Research

5.2.3 Accessing Services – What We Heard from the Survey

Families with youth and young adults were most likely to have accessed outdoor parks, trails and green spaces (84%) and indoor sports and recreation facilities (84%) within the last year. See Figure 10, below.

Figure 10: Q7. Thinking specifically about those ages 14 to 29 under your care, which of the following have you or your family accessed or participated in Strathcona County in the past 12 months? (*select all that apply*). **BASE: Long survey version**

Services and Programming Accessed in the Past Year

Service	Percentage
Outdoor parks, trails, and green spaces	84%
Indoor sports and recreation	84%
Strathcona County Library	75%
Outdoor sports and recreation	65%
Arts and culture activities	56%
Religious activities/spiritual services	36%
Programs for mental health and wellness	35%
Physical therapy	29%
School support or tutoring	27%
Skate parks	17%
Job/employment support services	15%
Birth control/sexual health services	13%
Mentoring and leadership programs or services	11%
Assistance with personal finances	11%
Social programs	9%
Programs or services for persons with disabilities	8%
Daycare or childcare services	5%
Food bank	5%
Support for gender minorities/LGBTQ2S+	4%
Housing support/affordable housing services	3%
Called into a telephone help line/hotline	3%
Programs for dealing with substance abuse	3%
Programs for dealing with family violence	1%
Victim support services	0%
Youth shelter or emergency shelter	0%
Other; specify:	2%
Don't Know/Not Stated	1%

n=133

Yardstick Research

Table 24: Q8. Where did your family access this service for youth/young adults ages 14-29? (*select all that apply*). RECREATION AND LEISURE.
Base: Respondents whose families accessed each type of program or service in the last 12 months.

Indoor sports and recreation	(n=112)
Strathcona County	94%
Edmonton	36%
Camrose	1%
Cold Lake	1%
Fort Saskatchewan	1%
Vegreville	1%
Outdoor sports and recreation	**(n=87)**
Strathcona County	89%
Edmonton	52%
British Columbia	2%
Cold Lake	1%
Jasper	1%
St Albert	1%
Skate parks	**(n=23)**
Strathcona County	87%; n=20
Edmonton	39%; n=9
Fort Saskatchewan	4%; n=1
Leduc	4%; n=1
Outdoor parks, trails, and green spaces	**(n=112)***
Strathcona County	95%
Edmonton	42%
Banff	2%
Elk Island	2%
Fort Saskatchewan	2%
Arts and culture activities (e.g., performing arts, visual arts, museum, etc.)	**(n=75)**
Strathcona County	59%
Edmonton	76%
Drumheller	1%
Fort Saskatchewan	1%
United States	1%
Wetaskiwin	1%

Don't know/Not stated not shown. *Single mentions not shown

Yardstick Research

Table 25: Q8. Where did your family access this service for youth/young adults ages 14-29? (*select all that apply*). <u>PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH.</u>
Base: Respondents whose families accessed each type of program or service in the last 12 months.

Physical therapy (e.g., speech therapy, occupational therapy)	(n=39)
Strathcona County	85%
Edmonton	31%
Birth control/sexual health services	**(n=17)**
Strathcona County	82%; n=14
Edmonton	24%; n=4
Support for gender minorities/LGBTQ2S+	**(n=5)**
Strathcona County	60%; n=3
Edmonton	40%; n=2
Programs or services for persons with disabilities	**(n=10)**
Strathcona County	60%; n=6
Edmonton	50%; n=5
Calgary	10%; n=1
Programs or services for mental health and wellness (e.g., therapy, counseling, help for depression, mental illness, anxiety, self-harm)	**(n=47)**
Strathcona County	70%
Edmonton	45%
Programs or services for dealing with addictions or substance abuse	**(n=4)**
Strathcona County	25%; n=1
Edmonton	100%; n=4
Bonnyville	25%; n=1
Cold Lake	25%; n=1
Lloydminster	25%; n=1
Called into a telephone help line/hotline (e.g., suicide/distress line)	**(n=4)**
Strathcona County	25%; n=1
Edmonton	50%; n=1

Don't know/Not stated not shown.

Yardstick Research

Table 26: Q8. Where did your family access this service for youth/young adults ages 14-29? (*select all that apply*). EDUCATION AND CAREER.
Base: Respondents whose families accessed each type of program or service in the last 12 months.

School support or teaching	(n=36)
Strathcona County	94%
Edmonton	6%
Job/employment support services	(n=20)
Strathcona County	40%; n=8
Edmonton	55%; n=11
Service accessed online	10%; n=2

Don't know/Not stated not shown.

Table 27: Q8. Where did your family access this service for youth/young adults ages 14-29? (*select all that apply*). FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.
Base: Respondents whose families accessed each type of program or service in the last 12 months.

Housing support/affordable housing services	(n=4)
Edmonton	100%; n=4
Fort Saskatchewan	25%; n=1
Assistance with personal finances and/or financial hardship	(n=14)
Strathcona County	64%; n=9
Edmonton	36%; n=5
Food bank	(n=6)
Strathcona County	67%; n=4
Edmonton	33%; n=2

Don't know/Not stated not shown.

Table 28: Q8. Where did your family access this service for youth/young adults ages 14-29? (*select all that apply*). EMERGENCY SERVICES.
Base: Respondents whose families accessed each type of program or service in the last 12 months.

Programs for dealing with family violence	(n=1)
Strathcona County	100%; n=1
Edmonton	100%; n=1

Don't know/Not stated not shown.

Table 29: Q8. Where did your family access this service for youth/young adults ages 14-29? (*select all that apply*). <u>OTHER SERVICES</u>.
Base: Respondents whose families accessed each type of program or service in the last 12 months.

Mentoring and leadership programs or services	(n=14)
Strathcona County	79%; n=11
Edmonton	21%; n=3
Social programs	**(n=12)**
Strathcona County	83%; n=10
Edmonton	42%; n=5
Religious activities/spiritual services	**(n=48)**
Strathcona County	92%
Edmonton	31%
Lamont	2%
Daycare or childcare services	**(n=6)**
Strathcona County	83%; n=5
Edmonton	17%; n=1

Don't know/Not stated not shown.

When asked if there were any barriers preventing their family from participating in services or programming, half of parents stated the reason was due to transportation (50%). See Table 30, below.

Table 30: Barriers to Participation

Q9. Is there anything preventing your family from participating in services or programming near where you live?	(n=50)
Transportation	50%
Availability of programming	30%
Cost of services and programs	22%
Lack of spare time	4%
Other; specify	**6%**
Service/program not available near the area I live	4%
Poor services/programming	2%
No Response	12%

Subsegment Analysis

Rural parents were more likely to indicate that the community could be better for youth and young adults by improving public transit services (29% versus 0% of urban parents). Rural parents also mentioned that improving public transit services would be the one thing that would make life better for their family in their community (33% versus 0% of urban parents).

Nearly one quarter of parents felt that supports for mental health (22%) were needed for Strathcona County. See Table 31, below.

Table 31: Programming Missing in the County

Q10. What kinds of services are needed in Strathcona County for youth/young adults, that aren't currently available or should be more available than they are now?	(n=208)
Supports for mental health	22%
Physical space for youth and young adults to connect and hang out	22%
Recreational activities (sports rec leagues, fitness classes, etc.)	18%
Supports around finances and learning about money	16%
Supports for affordable housing, homeless shelter	15%
Other; specify	**11%**
Public transit services	7%
Educational related services	3%
Employment related services	1%
Health care/medical related services	1%
None: all of the services I need are available where I live	37%
No Response	6%

5.2.4 Community Wellness – What We Heard from the Survey

Two-in-five of parents felt that recreational activities (39%) was something the county is doing well for youth and young adults. See Table 32, below.

Table 32: Community Benefits

Q11. What do you think the community is doing well for youth and young adults ages 14 to 29?	(n=208)
Recreational activities (sports rec leagues, fitness classes, etc.)	39%
Supports for mental health	17%
Physical space for youth and young adults to connect and hang out	16%
Supports for affordable housing, homeless shelter	11%
Supports around finances and learning about money	9%
Other; specify	**13%**
Educational related services	5%
Availability of services/programs	3%
Access to parks/green spaces/walking trails	3%
Access to affordable services	1%
Employment related services	1%
Public library services	1%
None/nothing	8%
No Response	25%

Single mentions not shown.

Yardstick Research

Table 33: Suggestions for Improvement
BASE: Long survey version

Q12. What do you think the community could be doing better for youth and young adults ages 14 to 29?	(n=133)
More activities/things to do/entertainment	16%
More spaces/facilities for youth to hang out	11%
Nothing/no suggestions	11%
Improve public transit services	6%
More job/employment opportunities	6%
More affordable services/programs	5%
More awareness/information about programs and services	5%
More mental health related services/support	5%
More affordable housing	4%
No Response	23%

Labels below 3% not shown.

Yardstick Research

5.2.6   Communications – What We Heard from the Survey

Two-in-three parents would seek a health care professional (68%) or their partner/spouse (67%) if they needed help or information for the youth or young adult under their care. See Figure 11, below.

Figure 11: Q13. If you needed help or information for youth/young adults in your care, where would you go? (*select all that apply*)
BASE: Long survey version

Sources for Help and Support

Source	%
Health care professional	68%
Partner or spouse	67%
Friends	62%
Counsellor (could include a school counsellor)	54%
Online search/Google	51%
Another family member	50%
A teacher or other authority figure	36%
Community agency	32%
Library	23%
Religious leader or spiritual advisor	19%
Telephone hotline/crisis line	17%
Social media or online chat rooms	13%
Watch videos on YouTube	2%

n=133

Yardstick Research

Most parents identified the Strathcona County Website (78%) as the best way to share information with them about their community, followed by Facebook (59%) and E-newsletter (53%). See Figure 12, below.

Figure 12: Q14. What would be the best ways to share information with you about your community? (select all that apply).
BASE: Long survey version

Effective Communication Methods

Method	Percentage
Strathcona County website (https://www.strathcona.ca/)	78%
Facebook	59%
E-newsletter	53%
Direct email	41%
Posters in schools, recreation centres, bus stops, malls/shopping centres, etc.	37%
Text message/SMS	28%
Resources at the Strathcona County Library	27%
Instagram	19%
Twitter	16%
YouTube	5%
Snapchat	4%
Other; please specify:	5%
Don't Know/Not Stated	2%
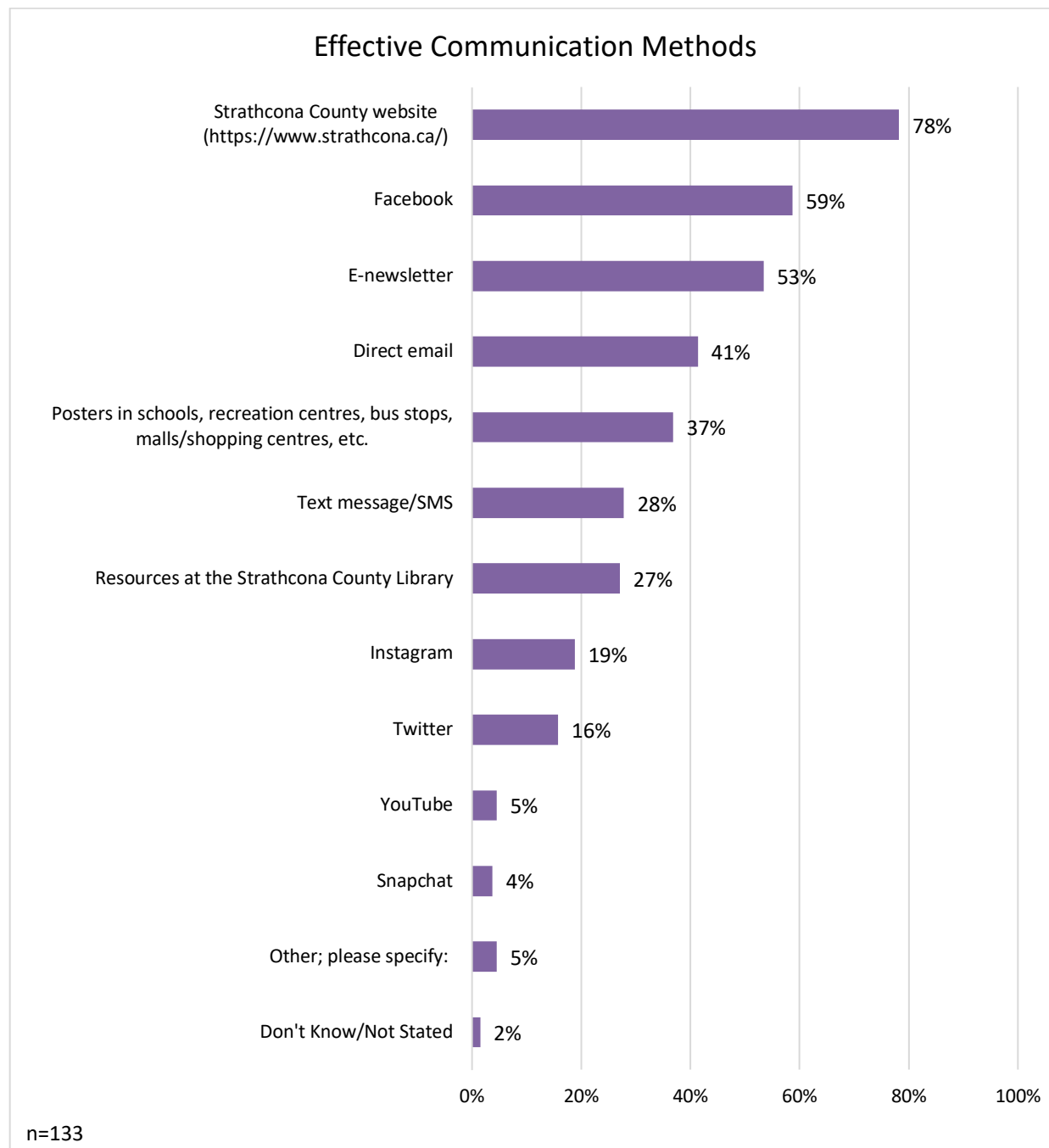
n=133

5.2.7 Improving Your Community – What We Heard from the Survey

Table 34: Suggestions for Improvement

Q15. If there was one thing that would make life better for your family in your community, what would that be?	(n=133)
Improve public transit services	8%
More activities/things to do/entertainment	8%
More affordable services/programs	8%
More affordable housing	5%
Nothing/no suggestions	5%
Lower taxes	4%
More spaces/facilities for youth to hang out	4%
More community engagement	3%
More educational related services/opportunities	3%
More job/employment opportunities	3%
More recreational facilities	3%
More sports/recreational programs/classes	3%
Improve traffic light synchronization/timing	2%
More parks/green spaces/walking trails	2%
A more inclusive/accepting community	2%
More diversity	2%
More live music/performance venues	2%
More mental health related services/support	2%
No Response	32%

Single mentions not shown.

Yardstick Research

5.2.8   Survey Demographics – Parent Profile

Table 35: Living in Strathcona County

Q1. I live in:	(n=129)
Sherwood Park	53%
Other Strathcona County:	**47%**
Ardrossan	12%
North Cooking Lake	4%
Hastings Lake	4%
Josephburg	3%
Collingwood Cove	3%
South Cooking Lake	2%
Half Moon Lake	2%
Other Rural Area in Strathcona County	16%
Q2. How long have you lived in Strathcona County?	**(n=133)**
Less than 1 year	1%
1 to 5 years	5%
6 to 10 years	15%
More than 10 years	80%
Q24. Please select the category that includes your current age:	**(n=54)** **BASE: Long version survey, excluding SCOOP**
15 to 24	2%
25 to 34	6%
35 to 44	26%
45 to 54	56%
55 to 64	7%
65 to 74	-
75 to 84	-
85 years and older	-
Prefer not to answer	4%
Q4. How many children do you have or are you responsible for in the following age groups?	**(n=133)** **BASE: Long version survey**
14 to 17	1.33 on average
18 to 22	1.29 on average
23 to 29	1.68 on average

Yardstick Research

Table 36: Education, Work, and Volunteering

Q16. What is the highest level of education you have completed?	(n=54) BASE: Long version survey, excluding SCOOP
Some schooling below high school	2%
High school graduate	6%
Some college/technical school	13%
Completed college/technical school	24%
Some university	9%
University undergraduate degree	19%
Some post-graduate education	6%
Post-graduate degree	19%
Prefer not to answer	4%
Q17. What is your main current employment status? (*select all that apply*)	**(n=54) BASE: Long version survey, excluding SCOOP**
Work full-time (35 hours per week or more)	65%
Work part-time (less than 35 hours per week)	24%
Homemaker	2%
Currently looking for work	4%
Prefer not to answer	6%
Q32. What is your annual household income before taxes?	**(n=54) BASE: Long version survey, excluding SCOOP**
Under $5,000	0%
$5,000 to $19,999	0%
$20,000 to $39,000	4%
$40,000 to $59,999	2%
$60,000 to $79,999	2%
$80,000 to $99,999	9%
$100,000 to $119,999	9%
$120,000 to $139,999	7%
$140,000 to $159,999	7%
$160,000 or over	22%
Prefer not to answer/I don't know	37%
Q18. Do you volunteer?	**(n=133)**
Yes	63%
No	35%
Q19. On average, how many hours per month do you volunteer? *Base: Respondents who volunteer*	**(n=74)**
Average hours per month	9.69 on average

Yardstick Research

Table 37: Living Arrangements and Transit

Q20. Are you an adoptive parent or foster parent?	(n=133)
Yes, an adoptive parent	5%
Yes, a foster parent	-
No	94%

Q21. What is your present family/household composition?	(n=54) BASE: Long version survey, excluding SCOOP
Single person household	13%
Two adults, no children	4%
Two adults, one or more children living at home	76%
Single parent family (one adult, one or more children)	-
Other family/household composition not noted above	2%
Prefer not to answer	6%

Q22. Do you own or rent your living space?	(n=133)
Own	92%
Rent	8%
Other (e.g., transitional, living with someone else, etc.)	-

Q25. What is your marital status?	(n=54) BASE: Long version survey, excluding SCOOP
Single, never married	2%
Married or common law	80%
Separated	4%
Divorced	9%
Widowed	-
Prefer not to answer	6%

Q23. Do the youth/young adults in your household use Strathcona County Transit?	(n=133)
Yes	47%
No	53%

Q31. Do you or anyone else in your household have a disability?	(n=54) BASE: Long version survey, excluding SCOOP
I have a disability	-
Someone else in my household has a disability	9%
I and someone else in my household has a disability	2%
Neither I, nor anyone in my household, has a disability	74%
Prefer not to answer	15%

Table 38: Culture and Diversity

Q26. How many years have you lived in Canada?	(n=133)
All my life	89%
Part of my life:	**10%**
Average amount of years	31.31 on average
Prefer not to answer	1%
Q27. Is English your first language?	**(n=133)**
Yes	96%
No	3%
Prefer not to answer	1%
Q28. What is your first language? *Base: Respondents whose first language is not English*	**(n=4)**
French	25%; n=1
German	25%; n=1
Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino)	25%; n=1
Mandarin	25%; n=1
Q29. Do you identify as an ethnic or visible minority?	**(n=133)**
Yes	5%
No	88%
Prefer not to answer	7%
Q30. Do you consider yourself to be an Indigenous person?[6]	**(n=54)** **BASE: Long version survey, excluding SCOOP**
Yes	2%
No	93%
Prefer not to answer	6%

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[6] Indigenous persons include members of First Nations (status or non-status), Inuit, or Métis peoples.

Yardstick Research

5.3 Agency Survey Results

5.3.1 Organization Profile – What We Heard from the Survey

Table 39: Organization Profile

Q1. What is the name of the agency, organization, or program that you are representing?	(n=7)
Big Brothers Big Sisters	n=1
Community Adult Learning and Literacy Society	n=1
Rotaract Club of Strathcona County	n=1
Sherwood Park Chamber of Commerce	n=1
Sherwood Park Strathcona Primary Care Network	n=1
Strathcona County Library	n=1
Strathcona County Museum & Archives	n=1
Q2. Please select the category below that best describes your organization.	**(n=7)**
Non-profit or non-for-profit	n=6
Statutory services provided by provincial government	n=1
Municipal government service	-
Church/religious/spiritual organization	-
For profit	-
Q3. For how many years has your organization been providing services to residents of Strathcona County?	**(n=7)**
Less than 3 years	n=1
3 to 5 years	-
6 to 10 years	n=1
11 to 15 years	n=1
More than 15 years	n=4

5.3.2 User Group – What We Heard from the Survey

Table 40: Primary User Group

Q4. Please select the target age group(s) served by your agency, organization, or group (*select all that apply*).	(n=7)
Under 5 years of age	n=3
5 to 13 years of age	n=4
14 to 18 years of age	n=6
19 to 24 years of age	n=7
25 to 29 years of age	n=6
30 to 44 years of age	n=5
45 to 64 years of age	n=5
65 years of age or more	n=5
Q5. What are the key services or programs your organization provides to youth and young adults (ages 14 to 29)? (*select all that apply*)	**(n=7)**
Recreational programs or services (e.g., sports, recreation, social clubs)	-
Counselling services	-
Home help programs	-
Day-care or out-of-school care	-
Programs dealing with addiction or substance abuse	-
Victims' support services	-
Programs dealing with family violence	-
Programs or services for people with disabilities	-
Social support programs (e.g., income support, self-help, support groups, parenting support, emergency relief)	n=1
Services for youth with emotional, behavioural, or mental health issues	n=1
Suicide/distress line	-
Provision of basic needs (e.g., food, clothing)	-
Emergency shelter	-
Programs or services for adults with mental health issues	-
Educational services or support	n=5
Housing	-
Religious or spiritual guidance	-
Other; specify:	**n=1**
Fundraising services/programs	n=1
Volunteering services	n=1

Table 41: Client Tracking

Q6. Does your organization, agency, or group track the number of youth/young adults served each month?	(n=7)
Yes	n=5
No	n=1
Don't Know	n=1
Q7. In the past year, approximately how many youth/young adults (ages 14 to 29) did your organization serve in…? *Base: Organizations that track individuals served; excludes don't know/not stated*	**(n=2)**
Your busiest month	Mean = 206.5 individuals
Your slowest month	Mean = 0.5 individuals
Your average month	Mean = 83 individuals
Q8. Over the past 5 years, would you say the number of youth/young adults your organization is serving has…? *Base: Organizations that track individuals served*	**(n=5) BASE: Respondents who track those served each month**
Increased	n=4
Decreased	n=1
Is about the same	-
Don't Know	-
Q9. Thinking about where these youth/young adults reside, in the past year, approximately what percentage were from…? *Base: Organizations that track individuals served; excludes don't know/not stated*	**(n=2)**
Sherwood Park	Mean = 78.0%
Rural Strathcona County	Mean = 12.5%
Other municipalities outside of Sherwood Park/Strathcona County	Mean = 19.0%

Table 42: Referrals

Q10. Do you refer youth/young adults to services and/or programs outside of Strathcona County?	(n=7)
Yes	n=5
No	n=2
Don't Know	-
Q11. Approximately what percentage of the youth/young adults you serve do you refer to other services or programs outside of Strathcona County? *Base: Organizations that refer youth/young adults to somewhere else*	**(n=5)**
10%	n=1
Don't Know	n=4
Q12. For which services are you most likely to refer youth/young adults to outside of Strathcona County?	**(n=7)**
Counselling services	n=1
Educational services or support	n=1
Emergency shelter	n=1
Employment services	n=1
Library services	n=1
Newcomers/immigration services	n=1
Recreational programs or services (charitable causes)	n=1
Services for young/teen parents	n=1
Don't Know/Not Stated	n=3
Q13. Of these services, which should be made available in Strathcona County that currently are not?	**(n=7)**
Emergency shelter	n=1
Recreational programs or services (charitable causes)	n=1
Don't Know/Not Stated	n=5
Q14. Of services currently available, which should there be more of in Strathcona County?	**(n=7)**
Educational services or support	n=1
Recreational facilities for rural population	n=1
Recreational programs or services (charitable causes)	n=1
Services for youth with emotional, behavioural, or mental health issues	n=1
Don't know/Not stated	n=4

Yardstick Research

Table 43: Wait Lists

Q15. Do you have any wait lists for your services or programs for youth or young adults ages 14 to 29?	(n=7)
Yes	n=2
No	n=4
Don't Know	n=1
Q16. What services or programs for youth/young adults do you have waiting lists for? *Base: Organizations with wait lists for youth/young adults*	**(n=2)**
Educational services or support	n=2
Q17. How many youth/young adults are presently on waiting lists for your services or programs? *Base: Organizations with wait lists for youth/young adults*	**(n=2)**
5 or fewer	n=1
6 to 10	-
11 to 15	-
More than 15	n=1
Don't Know	-
Q18. Compared to the previous year, would you say the number of youth/young adults on wait lists is...? *Base: Organizations with wait lists for youth/young adults*	**(n=2)**
Increasing	n=1
Decreasing	-
Staying about the same	n=1
Don't Know	-

Yardstick Research

5.3.3 Priority Issues for Youth/Young Adults – What We Heard from the Survey

Table 44: Top Issues Faced by Priority Population

Q19. What do you think are the top issues faced by youth and young adults (ages 14 to 29) that your agency or organization serves?	(n=7)
Mental health related issues	n=2
Unemployment related issues	n=2
Peer pressure related issues	n=2
Bullying related issues	n=1
Lack of skills/abilities	n=1
Lack of study spaces/quiet areas to study	n=1
Over-reliance on technology	n=1
Lack of/poor public transit services	n=1
Unable to fit in/make friends	n=1
Climate change related issues	n=1
Lack of affordable child-care	n=1
Lack of housing/affordable housing	n=1
Maintaining healthy relationships	n=1
Q20. Is your organization planning to make changes to address any of these issues or needs facing youth and young adults?	**(n=7)**
Yes	n=3
No	n=4
Don't Know	-
Q21. How is your organization planning to make changes to address the current and future needs of youth and young adults in Strathcona County? (*select all that apply*) *Base: Organizations planning on making changes to address needs*	**(n=3)**
Offering more of the same types of programs or services	n=1
Offering new or different programs or services	n=1
Taking in more clients (increased ratios)	-
Reducing service time	-
Changing eligibility requirements	-
Adjusting fee schedule	-
Hiring additional staff	-
Partnering with or referring to other agencies, organizations, or groups	n=1
Offering or improving program subsidies	-

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Table 45: Top Issues Faced by Priority Population (cont'd)

Q22. Is your organization encountering or anticipating any social issues or trends that may affect the need for programs and services for youth and young adults in the future?	(n=7)
Yes; specify:	**n=3**
Unemployment related issues	n=2
Drug abuse/addiction	n=1
Gender related issues	n=1
Illiteracy related issues	n=1
Vaping related issues	n=1
No	n=3
Don't Know	n=1
Q23. Do you anticipate that Strathcona County youth/young adults will be in need of new, different, or additional services in the future, as a result of these issues or trends?	**(n=7)**
Yes; specify:	**n=5**
Will have new issues to deal with in each generation/ongoing development	n=3
Employment services	n=1
Mental health related services	n=1
No	n=1
Don't Know	n=1

Agencies identified recruiting and retaining quality volunteers (100%) as an important organizational issue. Sustainable funding, managing caseload and recruiting and retaining quality staff (86%) were also identified as important issues. See Figure 13, below.

Figure 13: Q24. How important are the following issues to your agency, organization, or group? (1 = not at all important; 5 = very important)

Important Organizational Issues

n=7
*Figure depicts ratings of 4 and 5 out of 5.
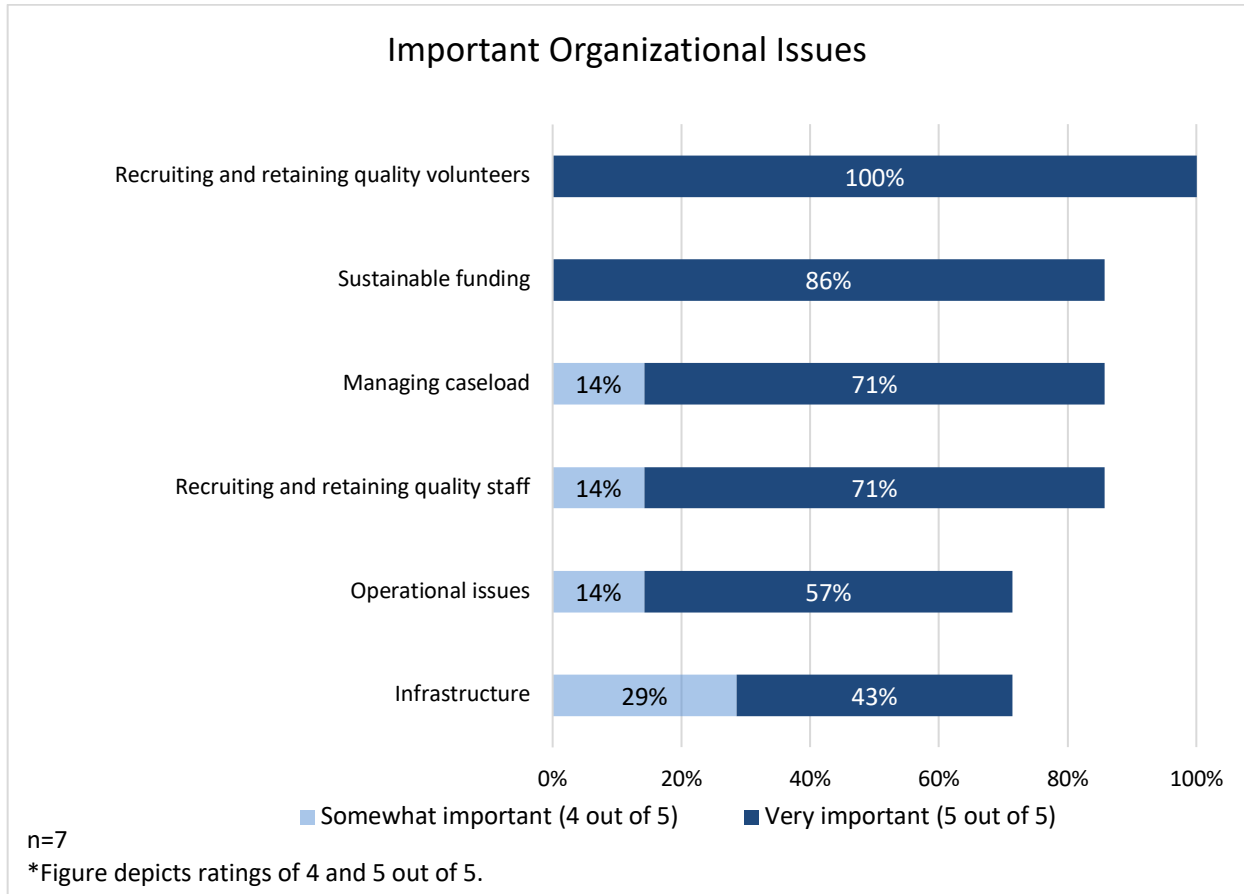
Table 46: Q24. How important are the following issues to your agency, organization, or group? (1 = not at all important; 5 = very important)

Organizational Issue or Concern	Percentage of Respondents (n=7)					
	(1) Not at all Important	(2) Slightly Important	(3) Neutral	(4) Important	(5) Very Important	No Response
Sustainable funding	0%	14%	0%	0%	86%	0%
Recruiting and retaining quality staff	14%	0%	0%	14%	71%	0%
Recruiting and retaining quality volunteers	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
Infrastructure	0%	14%	0%	29%	43%	14%
Managing caseload	0%	14%	0%	14%	71%	0%
Operational issues	14%	14%	0%	14%	57%	0%

A third of agencies (29%) felt they did not have adequate capacity to handle at-risk youth/young adults, while over half (57%) felt they did have the capacity to handle culturally and ethnically diverse youth and young adults.

Figure 14: Q25. Does your organization have adequate capacity (resources, knowledge, etc.) to deal with…?

Organizational Capacity

Category	Yes	No	N/A	Don't Know
Culturally/ethnically diverse youth/young adults	57%			43%
Youth/young adults facing trauma	43%	14%	29%	14%
Youth/young adults with disabilities	57%			43%
At-risk youth/young adults	43%		29%	29%

n=7

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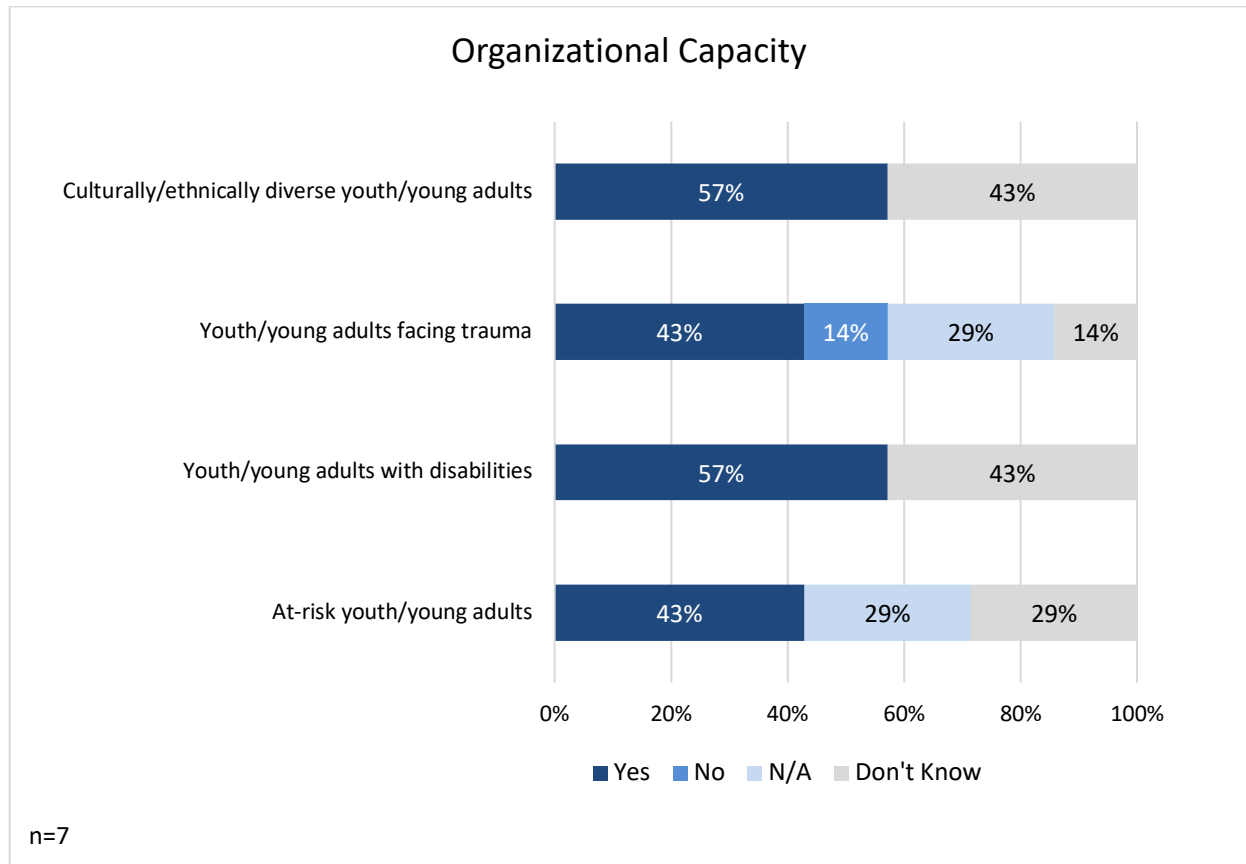
Table 47: Struggling with Capacity

Q26. Why doesn't your organization feel they have adequate capacity to deal with…?	(n=1)
Youth/young adults facing trauma	
Lack of adequate training/experience (general)	n=1
Q27. Are there any other issues your organization is facing, with respect to delivering services to youth/young adults?	**(n=7)**
Yes; specify	**n=3**
Individuals/families with low income/financial difficulties	n=3
Life readiness/preparedness (general)	n=1
Supporting good studying habits	n=1
No	-
Don't know/Not stated	n=3
Q28. Does your organization have adequate capacity (resources, knowledge, etc.) to deal with the specialized issue identified in the previous question?	**(n=7)**
Yes	n=1
No; specify	**n=3**
Lack of resources available (in general)	n=3
Large/demanding workloads	n=1
Don't know/Not stated	n=3
Q29. Are there any other issues your organization is facing, with respect to delivering services to youth/young adults?	**(n=7)**
Yes; specify	**n=3**
Lack of public awareness/knowledge of services	n=1
Limited tailored or custom programs/services offered (general)	n=1
Reaching the target audience	n=1
No	n=2
Don't know/Not stated	n=2

Yardstick Research

5.3.5   Assets and Opportunities – What We Heard from the Survey

Table 48: Community Assets

Q30. Broadly speaking, what do you think the community as a whole is doing well for youth and young adults ages 14 to 29?	(n=7)
Access to recreational facilities/programs/activities	n=4
Providing services/resources (general)	n=3
Access to counselling services	n=1
Access to family/parental services	n=1
Don't know/Not stated	n=1
Q31. What do you think are the top 3 strengths, unique features, or opportunities that Strathcona County demonstrates or offers for youth and young adults?	**(n=7)**
Providing services/resources	n=2
Striving to improve programs/services	n=2
Access to recreational facilities/programs/activities	n=1
Access to walking/biking trails	n=1
Community-minded/supporting the community	n=1
Don't know/Not stated	n=4

5.3.6   Improving Your Community – What We Heard from the Survey

Table 49: Suggestions for Improvement

Q32. What do you think the community could be doing better for youth and young adults ages 14 to 29?	(n=7)
Improve public transit services	n=1
More facilities/services for those in rural areas	n=1
Provide school readiness programs/services	n=1
Provide youth with more support (general)	n=1
Don't know/Not stated	n=4

5.3.7   Priority Issues for Youth/Young Adults – What We Heard from the Agency Engagement Focus Groups

What We Heard from the Focus Groups

Agency participants indicated affordability/income disparity as the biggest issue or challenge facing youth today tied with loneliness/isolation. Agency participants wondered the extent to which youth were aware of and able to access available services. Concerns around drugs and alcohol abuse or addictions were also raised in addition to mental health.

- Tied - 1st Affordability/Income Disparity
- Tied - 1st Loneliness/Isolation
- 3rd Access/Awareness
- 4th Addictions
- Tied - 5th Transportation
- Tied - 5th Mental Health Supports
- 7th Couch-Surfing
- 8th Older Youth Less Connected
- 9th Lack of Employment for Young People
- 10th Youth Being Left to their Own Devices
- 11th Civic Engagement
- 12th Perception of Inequality between Sherwood Park and Rural Areas
- 13th Experiential Opportunities/Safe Places to Take Risks

Note: Number represents the consensus ranking of challenges identified in the first agency engagement session by members of the second agency engagement session.

5.3.8 Collaboration and Challenges – What We Heard from the Agency Engagement Focus Groups

This free-flow discussion of the degree to which Agencies collaborated was captured live and reviewed with the Agency Representatives for content and clarity. Representatives at the May 9th engagement session felt the degree of collaboration amongst agencies was "some" to "a little." Agency Representatives identified Solutions Navigators in schools and the Community Drug Strategy as examples of good collaboration strategies.

Illustration 4: Agency Collaboration (May 9, 2019)
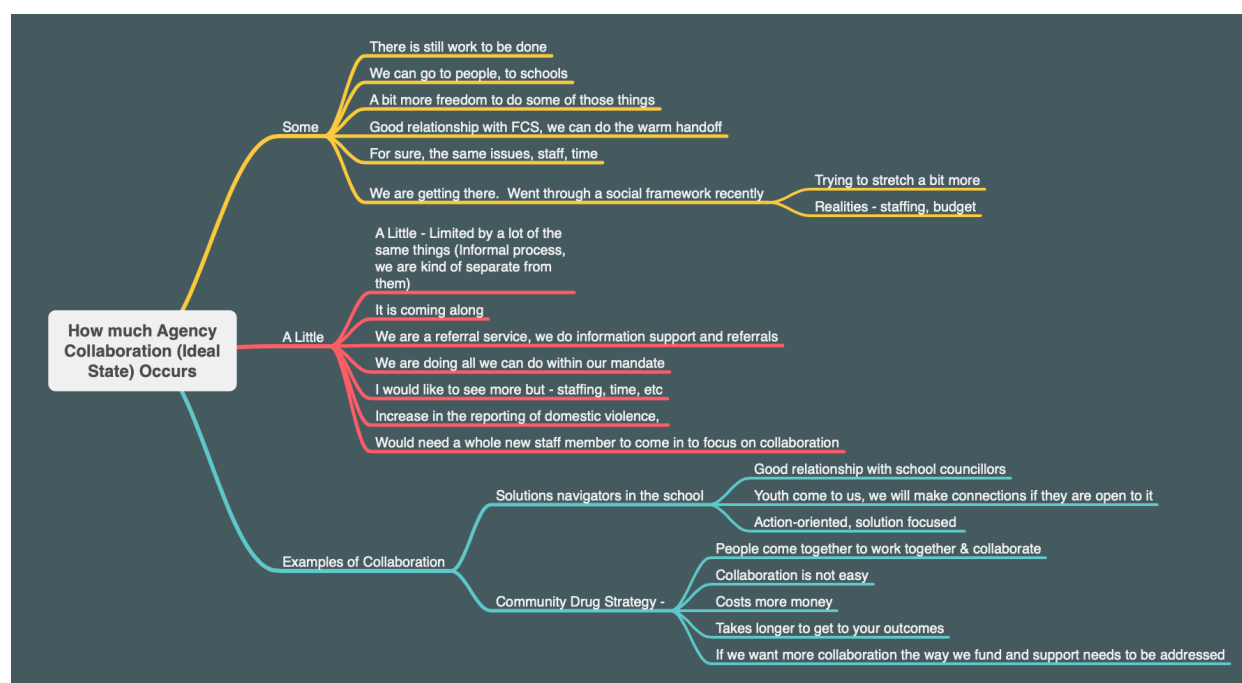
The same question was asked of the June 19th, 2019 agency engagement session. The overall perception of the degree of collaboration is best captured in the quote: "Between a little and some, but it is a lot more than it used to be – we have come a long way but have a long way to go." Agency Representatives identified the Fort Saskatchewan Mental Health Centre as an example of collaboration in action.

Illustration 5: Agency Collaboration (June 19, 2019)

How much collaboration currently happens between organizations providing services to youth?

What are some challenges with agencies connecting and working together or what facilitates that happening?

- Approaching high-level collaboration but we are not there yet?
- Since the social framework came out... I am at these meetings three times a month!
- Has not permeated the community as a whole yet
- Anyone working for any public body, "Children's First" - sharing of information
- Between a little and some, but it is a lot more than it used to be - we have come a long way but have a long way to go
- It is a history of where things have been, collaborating together, they have mandates, policies & procedures
- True collaboration is beyond transactional partnerships - trust is foundational for true collaboration to happen
- There is a lot of collaboration talk, and we are at the point we are trying to figure out what that means and what we can do together
- Fort Saskatchewan mental health centre as an example
- Our own policies and red tape, and privacy (FOIP) are getting in the way
- For lots of years in our organizations we felt we were achieving things - the state of youth in the last few years has gone down - we need to collaborate more, if we can we can address larger community problems
- We have to resource them to collaborate
- Isolation, loneliness, technology has driven the couch surfing, being on my own - I don't have to engage with people - mental health has spiralled because of this. You need the relational piece. Families are in a tougher spot
- Coming off an economic downturn - we are seeing all kinds of things as a result

Both Agency engagement sessions reached a consensus that there was collaboration going on but agreed there was more work to do to collaborate better. Both groups were able to point to examples of good collaboration.

5.3.9 Advice to Mayor and Council – What We Heard from the Agency Engagement Focus Groups

The final question posed to agency representatives was "If you had one piece of advice for the Mayor and Council, what would it be?" The main themes were around community spaces and resources, affordability, mental health and addictions, funding and resources and ultimately the importance of listening to those who provide services and youth themselves. The illustration below combines both agency engagement session responses.

If You Had One Piece of Advice for the Mayor and Council, What Would It Be?

Community
- Look at where the gaps are and look to community to resolve those gaps
- Don't have administration do the work of community. Community serving community is the best model and cheaper

Listen
- Listen to your people!
- See and hear what is being presented currently
- Provide easy opportunities for youth to connect with you as leaders

Mental Health & Addiction
- You are probably not an addict if there are not other things going on in your life
- Invest in wellness
- Youth have addictions issues, also presenting with other psychological issues
- How do you prioritize who gets helped

Funding & Resources
- Utilize funding opportunities to support organizations innovating youth services with bold new ideas.
- Support the capacity of our community agencies to take more responsibility for programming for youth
- Community grant budget needs to continue to increase over the years, not decrease
- Lean in to your community agencies. Resource them adequately to participate in true collaboration.
- Support local agencies, non-profits with resources
- Continue to stress the importance of community collaborations in grants

Community Spaces / Resources
- Look at what is in front of us today, reflect and move forward
- It's not the things that I don't know that get me into trouble, it's the things I know for sure
- More supportive housing
- Council run "Slab"
- Late night spaces that are event based
- Continual investment in physical infrastructure for youth (i.e. skateparks, drop in spaces, recreational spaces, hockey rinks, etc.)
- YouthHub
- Push forward with plans for a wrap-around service hub

Affordability
- Not an affordable community for youth - we give them the idea we don't want them here
- Make it affordable, have the supports, have the jobs

CASA House
- Struggle with CASA house, there needs to be more beds
- CASA has 19 beds and a one-year waiting list

Assumptions
- Assumptions, letting go of what we know and what we don't know, clearing the mind and listening to what people are saying
- Let go of the assumption that those things don't happen here
- Those things happen here
- Big city problem

5.4 Teacher Survey Results

Ten (n=10) teachers from Elk Island Public Schools completed an open-ended survey form. Their responses are captured in the qualitative summary below. Quotes may have been edited for clarity and brevity.

5.4.1 Profile

With the exception of one teacher who was fairly new to their role (less than 2 years), most of the teachers reported working as a teacher for at least 11 years. They taught a variety of grades from 7 through 12, with approximately half focused on high school and approximately half on junior high. A few teachers taught students in both high school and junior high.

5.4.2 Community Assets

In terms of what Strathcona County is currently **doing well** for youth and young adults, half of the teachers agreed that the variety of programming – particularly recreational opportunities and sports programs – is excellent, and that the facilities are "exceptional" (e.g., Millennium Place, skateboard park). Other mentions included outdoor spaces and local bus service. One teacher appreciated that Strathcona County is forthcoming about its limitations in providing services to rural areas (particularly for at-risk youth), something which the County is actively seeking to address.

5.4.3 Gaps in Services

The type of service that teachers felt was **most often needed** for youth was a studying space or place to get help with homework and/or provide free or affordable tutoring outside of school (in fact, many teachers placed an emphasis on free/affordable services and programming, in general). It was also suggested that this space could provide help with "studying tips and tricks" and time management, in general. One teacher suggested this could take the form of a satellite library (e.g., in rural locations).

Some teachers mentioned that there was a need for better or improved access to mental health supports, including capacity-building initiatives (one teacher suggested outreach and/or school placement personnel while another suggested more family liaison workers – similar to a system that was in place approximately two years ago). To help promote relationship-building (e.g., with counsellors), it was emphasized that youth need more than drop-in opportunities.

A few of teachers suggested a "hang out space" for youth and teens, that could provide pool tables and free coffee, for example.

> *"Youth need wireless zones, where people can interact without digital devices. They need to actually form relationships and have genuine human interactions."*

A couple of teachers also felt there was a need for a gym or fitness centre for youth in rural areas, including affordable drop-in opportunities (e.g., ball hockey). Finally, other suggestions of missing programming or gaps in services included an emergency shelter and services/programming for LGBTQ2S+ youth.

Interestingly, one teacher reported that they personally do not have a good understanding of what is available, suggesting a need to improve general community awareness of the programming and services available to youth and young adults.

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5.4.4   Barriers to Youth Accessing Services

When asked if there was anything, from their perspectives, **preventing youth from participating** in or accessing services or programming for youth/young adults in Strathcona County, the most frequent response was a lack of knowledge or awareness of programming – whether it is youth or their parents who are unaware of what is currently offered. Other responses that were mentioned more than once included: lack of money or concerns that programming is too expensive; inconvenient location or distance (particularly for rural youth); and lack of time or scheduling issues (e.g., services are offered in the daytime when youth are in school or working). Single mentions included:

- Lack of programming in rural Strathcona County.

- Lack of interest.

- Concerns about respect for student confidentiality.

- Lack of mobile mental health services.

- Concerns about social image/fear of stigma.

5.4.5   Room for Improvement

In addition to improving awareness of community services, events and opportunities, and providing free lounge/recreational and study spaces for youth, teachers also suggested that more supports are needed in the County for:

- Drug and alcohol addictions/rehabilitation ("the County needs to be in less denial about the issues facing youth with drug use and identity issues").

- Youth emergency shelter with mental health services.

- Night-time bylaw enforcement.

- Sports/recreational opportunities (including more parks).

- Volunteer opportunities.

- Arts/culturally focused opportunities.

One teacher felt that the services currently provided for youth are sufficient, and suggested that cutting back on spending or ensuring fiscal responsibility would be in the best interest of youth, particularly as they grow up in Strathcona County and start becoming more financially responsible ("do not burden them with debt").

"We need a sense of community – for youth to develop a connection to the community. The County needs to be willing to invest time and effort in the community and promote a more vibrant social scene for youth."

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5.5 Phase 2 Engagement Results

5.5.1 Parents, Youth and Young Adult Engagement & Discussion

On August 17th, 2019, an engagement session for parents, youth and young adults was held at the Heartland Alliance Church in Strathcona County. Responses from the previous engagement sessions as well as the survey were used to create questions to direct discussion to specific areas to help further explore or clarify or expand on previous results. PollEverywhere was used to ask questions of the participants and their results were presented to compare responses of parents to youth. The questions presented were for the purpose of generating discussion and not for additional statistical data collection – they served as the starting point to the discussion.

Would youth and young adults benefit more from financial literacy or from making things more affordable?

Financial Literacy - Learning ... **A** | Affordability - reducing the c... **B**

	Financial Literacy (A)	Affordability (B)
Parent	64%	36%
Youth or Young Adult (age 14-29)	67%	33%
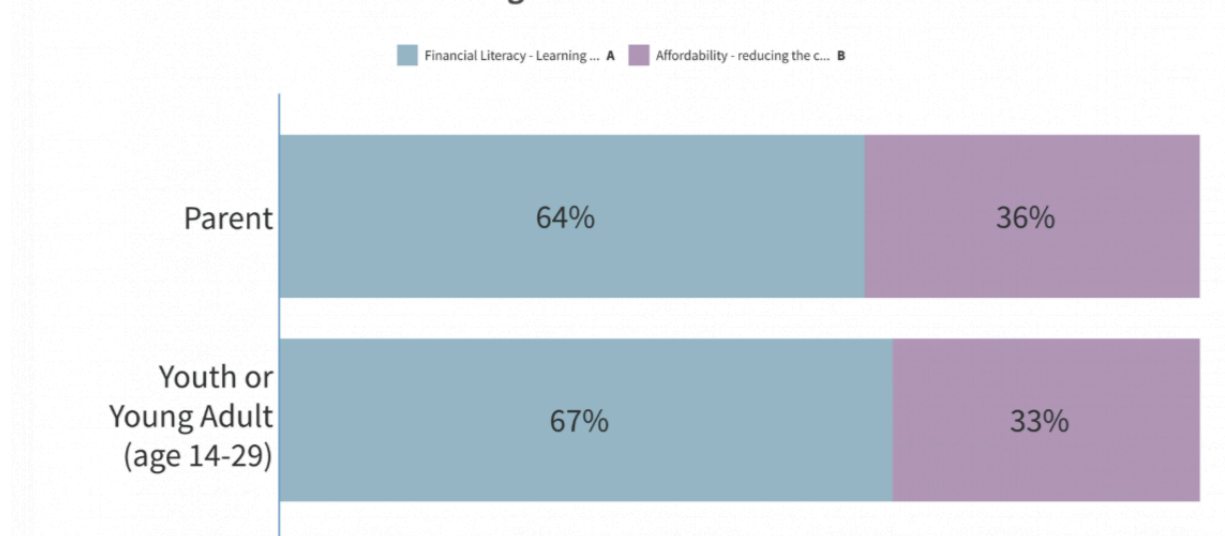
All groups across the engagement and the survey indicated affordability was a concern in Strathcona County. The parents' survey indicated support for increased financial literacy as a means to address affordability while the youth engagement sessions tended to focus more on reducing the costs (housing, transportation, childcare, recreation). In order to further explore this dynamic parents and youth were asked "Would youth and young adults benefit more from financial literacy or from making things more affordable?"

Both parents and youth in the session felt financial literacy was more important than affordability. The discussion centred around exactly what financial literacy was - with some parents commenting that youth and young adults who supported financial literacy were doing so without really understanding what it was. Youth countered *"we know what it is but we don't know how to get there - it's like knowing there is a book about something, you might not know what that 'something' is but you know the book exists."*

Yardstick Research

There is a lack of emergency mental health supports (shelters, crisis counselling)

Strongly Agree **A** ▪ Agree **B** ▪ Neither Agree nor Disagree **C** ▪ Disagree **D** ▪ Strongly Disagree **E**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree
Parent	58%	8%	25%	8%
Youth or Young Adult (age 14-29)	11%	37%	30%	22%
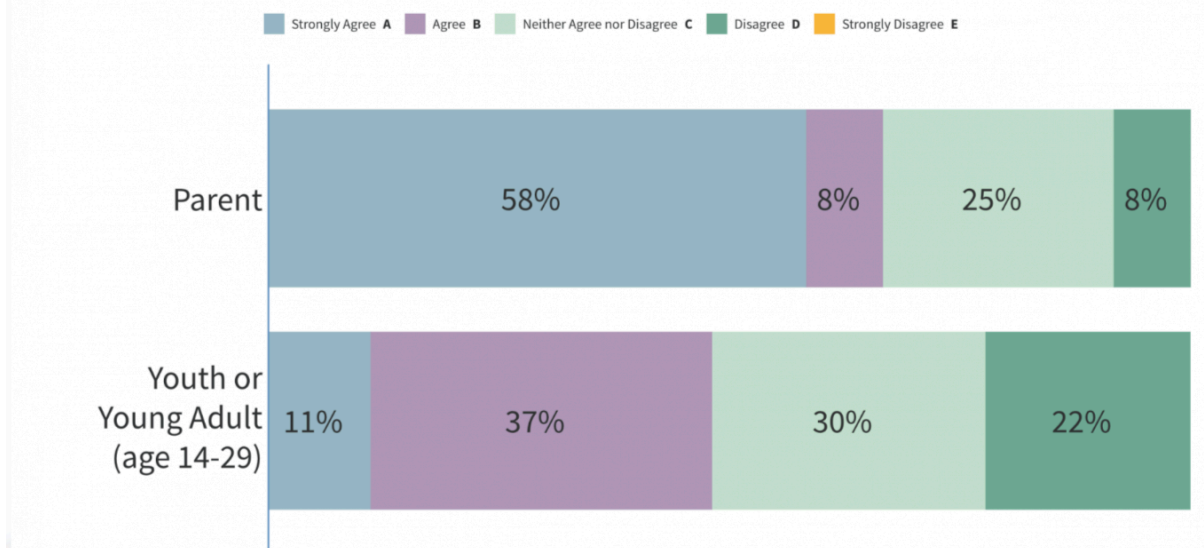
According to the survey and the engagement sessions, mental health is a concern among parents, agencies and youth. According to the survey, over half (55%) of parents were concerned with their children's mental health, 22% of parents felt supports for mental health were needed. One in five (20%) of youth and young adults felt supports for mental health were needed where they lived. To engage discussion on the awareness of existing mental health supports vs. the need for more supports, parents and youth were asked to respond to the statement: There is a lack of emergency mental health supports (shelters, crisis counselling) using a scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

In the discussion, both parents and youth in the session reaffirmed the survey and previous engagement session results - mental health is a concern. Parents and youth both felt there was a "lack of awareness all-round" when it came to mental health supports. Those who were more aware of services commented the "availability of counselling may be infrequent – once every couple of months is not very useful" and "what is available is not consistent. They may need to see more than one counsellor and building trust becomes difficult."

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More support is needed in the County for drug and alcohol addictions/rehabilitation

Strongly Agree **A**   Agree **B**   Neither Agree nor Disagree **C**   Disagree **D**   Strongly Disagree **E**

Parent	27%	73%		
Youth or Young Adult (age 14-29)	16%	40%	36%	8%
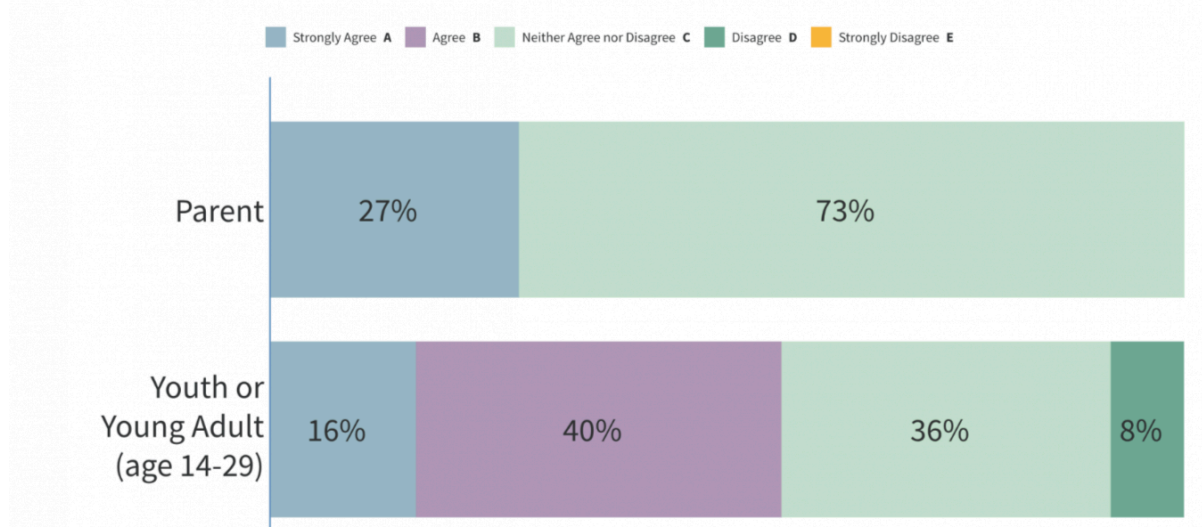
Drug and alcohol abuse were raised in the first youth engagement session as an issue. As part of the survey, teachers suggested more supports are needed in the County for drug and alcohol addictions/rehabilitation ("the County needs to be in less denial about the issues facing youth with drug use and identity issues"). To further explore the perception and awareness of drug issues parents and youth were asked to respond to the statement "More support is needed in the County for drug and alcohol addictions/rehabilitation" on a scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

Interestingly 73% of parents responded "Neither Agree nor Disagree" – leading to an interesting discussion between parents and youth around the idea that addiction issues are something that causes great concern because it is something parents felt youth were able to conceal from others – "youth are very good at hiding it." Parents clearly felt this was a bit of a "blind spot" in that they "did not know what they did not know." Both groups supported continuing the discussion around drug and alcohol issues as a means to affect positive change.

Yardstick Research

The biggest problem with transportation in the County is

Getting around within the Coun... **A**   Getting to or from places in E... **B**

Parent	58%	42%
Youth or Young Adult (age 14-29)	64%	36%
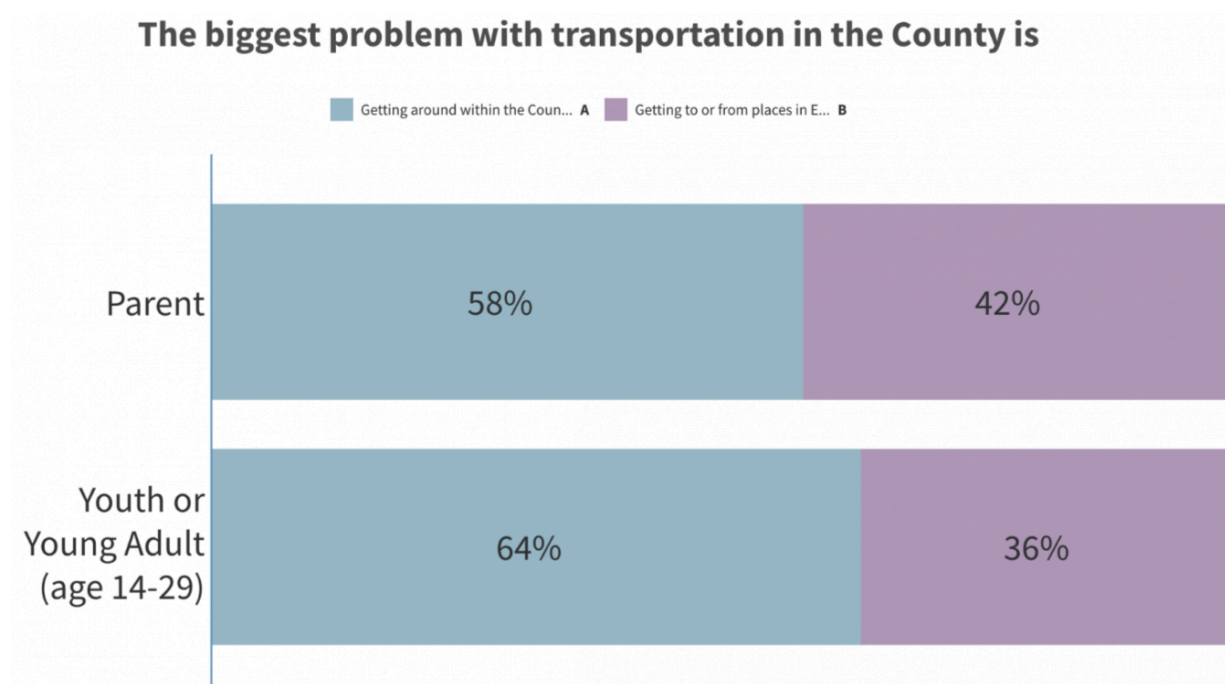
From the survey, a third of youth and young adults (34%) stated transportation was an issue preventing them from participating in programs or services where they live (n=163) and 50% of parents stated transportation was a barrier preventing their family from participating in programs and services (more prevalent for rural respondents). Transportation both within the County and between the County and destinations in Edmonton was identified by participants. In order to engage in discussion with this more rural-leaning group of parents and youth around the issues of transportation, participants were asked to respond to the statement "The biggest problem with transportation in the County is" with either "Getting around within the County" or "Getting to or from places in Edmonton."

Both parents and youth leaned towards "Getting around within the County" although it was noted that the same question asked of a group of University of Alberta students from Strathcona County could have revealed an entirely different result. Youth commented, "there is a wall around the heart of Sherwood Park and as soon as you want to go anywhere outside that wall you can't get anywhere outside that wall." Parents and youth both made reference to the geographical area of the county – "Strathcona County is a huge area, unique in its geographic area." Both groups felt solutions to rural transportation would be difficult to come up with, though one parent suggested a "1st-time car purchaser subsidy for rural kids where they need to meet a bunch of safe driving requirements in order to qualify for some cost reduction."

Yardstick Research

5.5.2 Community Partner Engagement & Discussion

On August 7th, 2019, an engagement session for community partners was held. Participants were asked to comment on aspects of the major themes identified when forming recommendations:

Collaboration **Spaces** **Affordability** **Mental Health** **Transportation**

From the survey and previous (phase 1) engagement, it was felt collaboration was happening but could be further enhanced. The survey indicated a third of agencies (29%) felt they did not have adequate capacity to handle at-risk youth/young adults, while just over half (57%) felt they had capacity to handle culturally and ethnically diverse youth and young adults. Agencies identified recruiting and retaining quality volunteers and staff, sustainable funding and managing caseloads to be particularly challenging. Opportunities to facilitate collaboration rather than duplicating services (i.e., shared space) was also raised in the agency engagement session.

Participants were invited to take part in a discussion around these issues.

What is the Desired State?
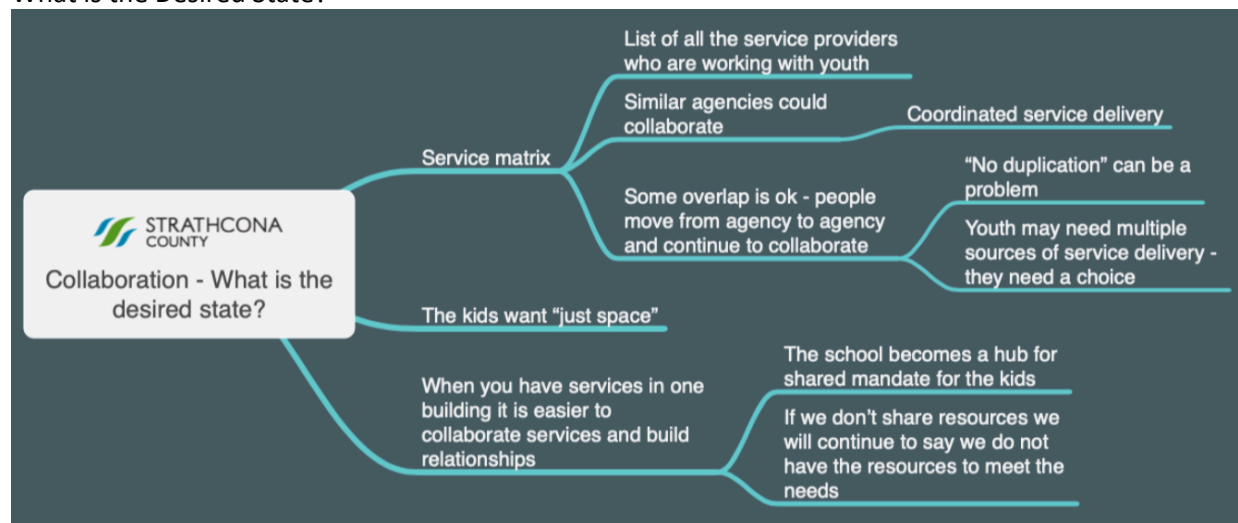
A curated matrix of all service providers/agencies working with youth was put forward as a means to encourage and support collaboration. While reducing duplication of services was generally agreed upon as important, participants cautioned against too much reduction in services in the pursuit of reduced duplication, preferring to leave youth in a position of more choices rather than fewer.

Yardstick Research

What Gets in the Way of Collaboration?
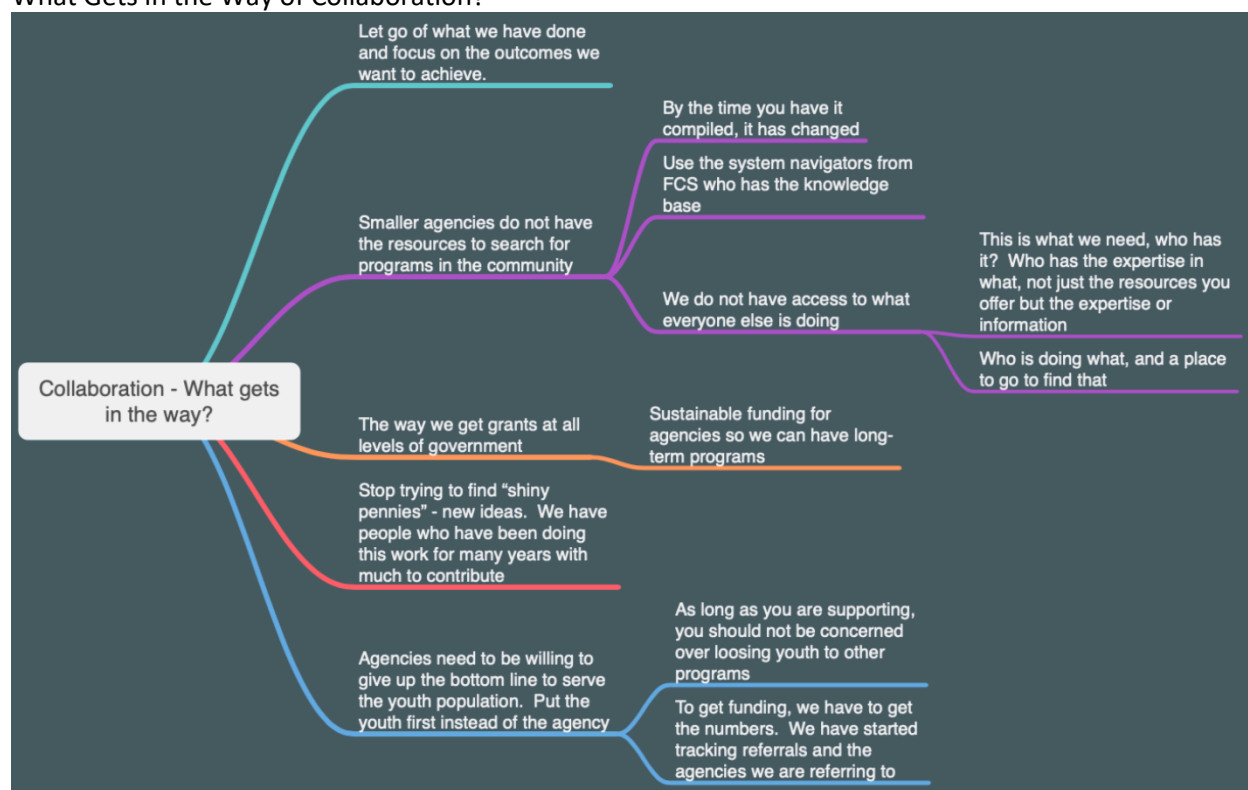
Agencies lacking the ability or resources to maintain awareness of the programs and services being delivered by others was again brought up. Sustainable long-term funding for agencies, not based only on the number of youth and young adults served was discussed – "As long as you are supporting you should not be concerned over loosing youth to other programs."

Spaces for Youth:

Reacting to a quote from a teacher (from the survey) participants felt "youth space that does not have WIFI will not have youth" (the teacher wanted spaces WIFI free spaces where youth could connect personally without technology). Supporting non-traditional youth selected spaces by providing guidance and support to local businesses was raised as part of this discussion.

Yardstick Research
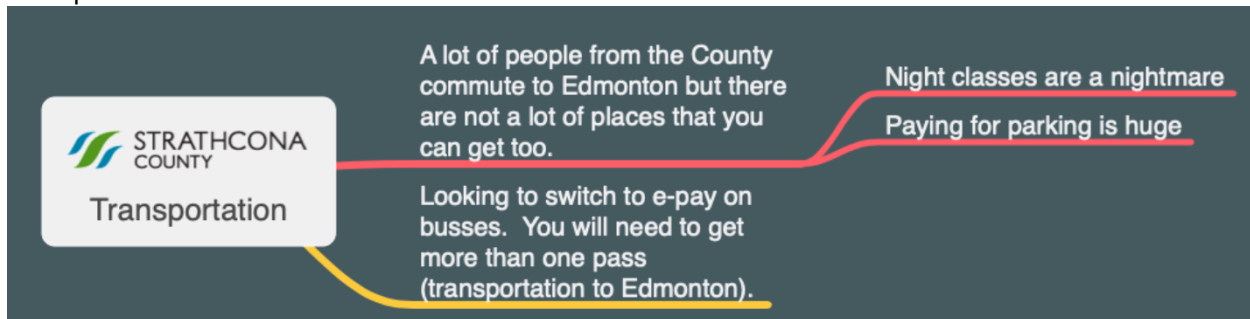
Transportation:

Limited insight was brought forth on the subject of transportation - cost and availability of destinations in Edmonton were again mentioned. The impact of switching to e-pay (meaning the necessity to purchase more than one pass for transportation to Edmonton) was raised as a concern, as was the cost of parking for transit.

Mental Health:
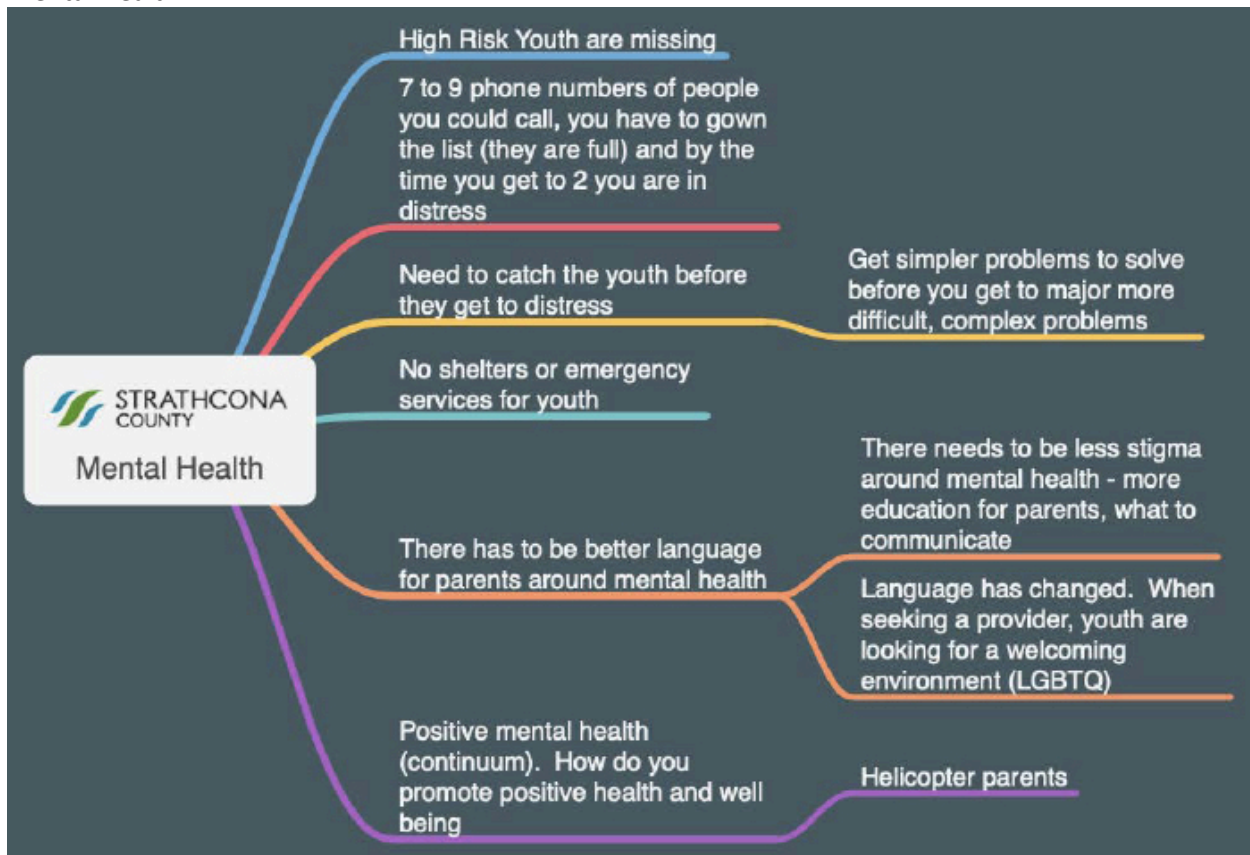
Participants noted high-risk youth as a group were missing from the engagement sessions and survey and cautioned against overlooking them from the report and recommendations. While previous themes were again repeated in this engagement session (lack of emergency or crisis service, awareness vs. availability) understanding mental health issues as a continuum and not overlooking the wellness aspect of mental health was brought up. Providing parents with better language and more around mental health also fit well with what was heard in the parent's engagement session.

Affordability:
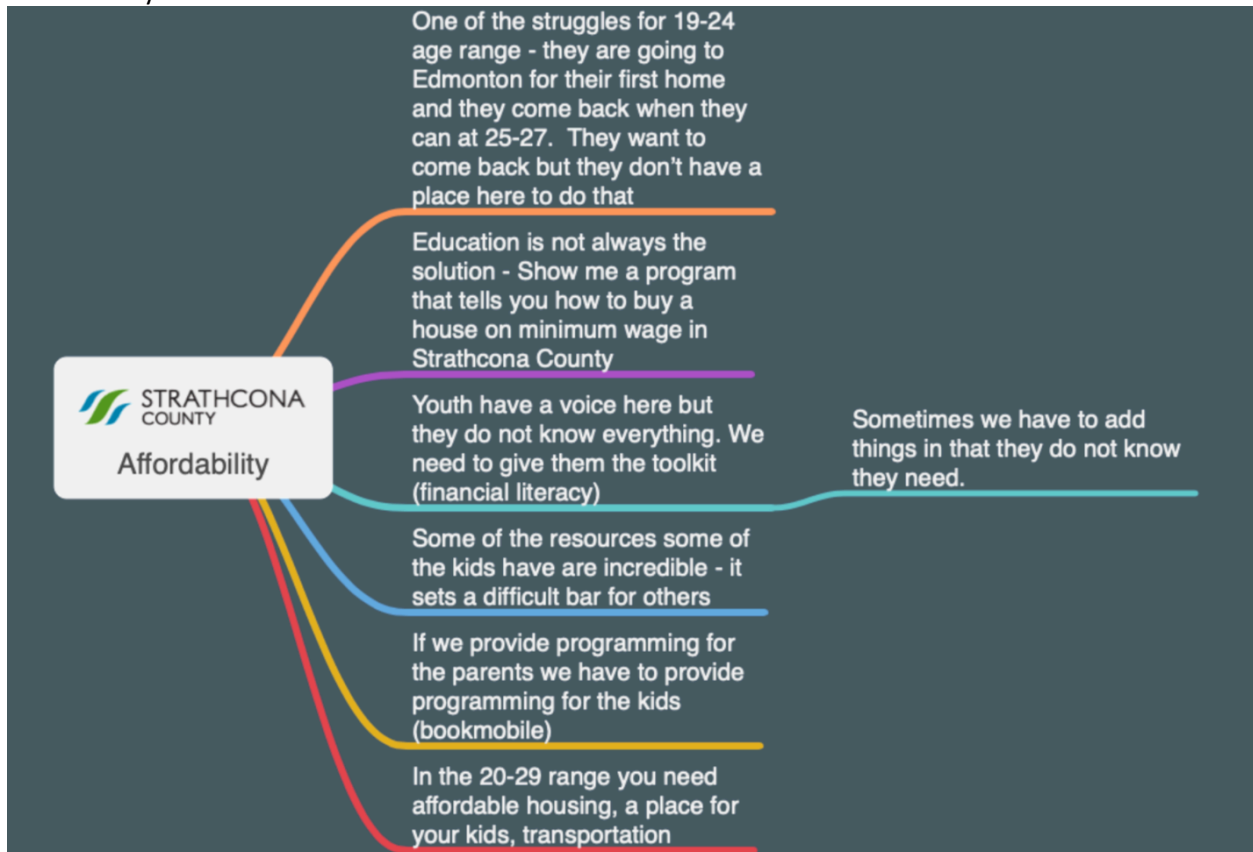
Financial literacy was again raised by participants as something that would help with managing affordability, but it was felt education was not always the solution – "Show me a program that tells you how to buy a house on minimum wage in Strathcona County." Participants in this session focused more on the older end of the age range (19+) specifically with regards to housing affordability.

5.5.3 Project Coordination Committee Engagement & Discussion

On August 19th, 2019, an engagement session for the project coordination committee was held. Participants were asked to comment on aspects of the major themes of the recommendations.
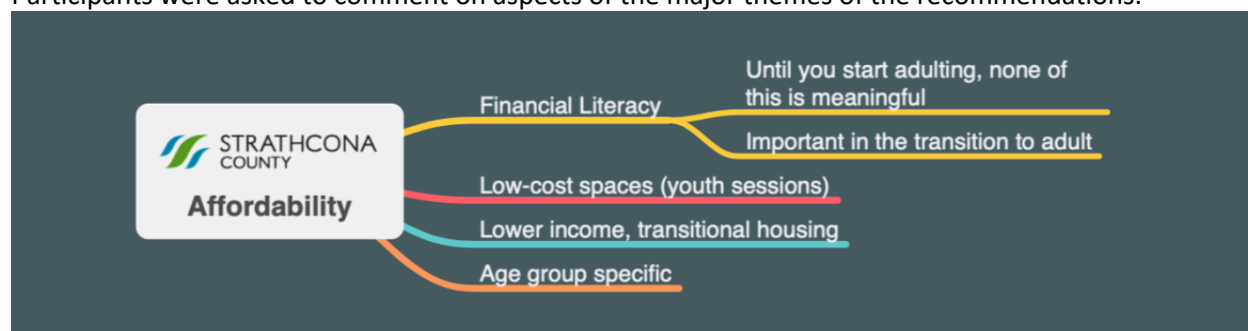
Participants highlighted affordability concerns are age group-specific – "Until you start adulting, none of this is meaningful".

Spaces:

Participants again highlighted the need for age-group specific solutions to find a "balance between freedom and supervision" for youth and young adults. Participants looked at the underlying purpose of

the space - meeting a need for connection and looked to the youth to provide "mentorship and examples of how to interact" in those spaces.

Mental Health:
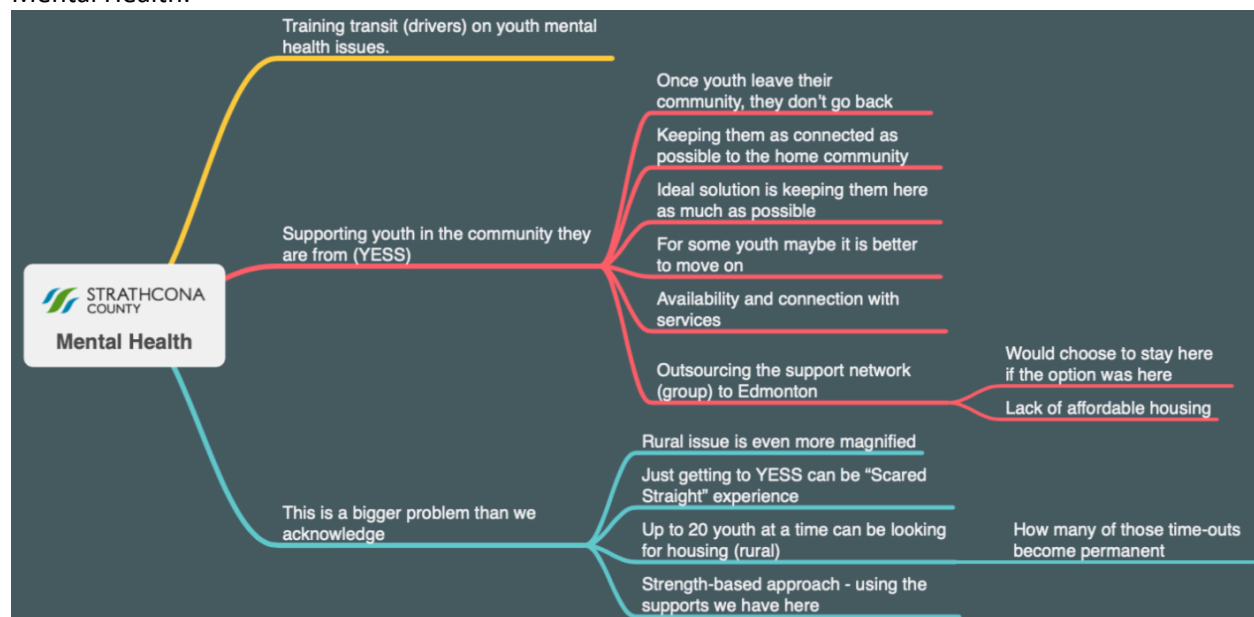
While commenting "mental health was a bigger problem than we acknowledge" participants wanted to see youth supported in their own community (Strathcona County) rather than having to leave to find support.

Transportation:
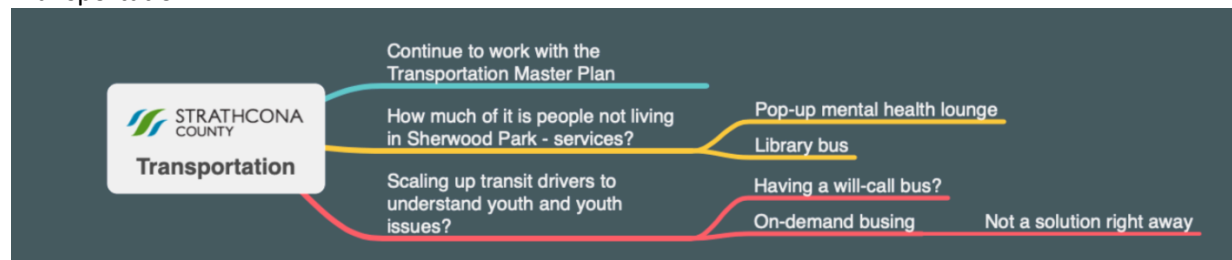
Participants suggested leveraging the existing dynamic between transportation staff and at-risk youth by enhancing driver training to provide additional support for youth issues.

Collaboration:

Participants indicated additional supports were needed for at-risk youth and youth in the 19-22 age range. They felt the role of the County was to find ways "to build on the tables already coming together" providing support around the already existing conversations happening now (both within community agencies and in business). The idea that "maybe we don't need to be doing more, just need to communicate it better" was raised. As in previous sessions, a curated service matrix was discussed, with Alberta 211 brought up as an example.

6   Appendix B – Environmental Scan

Yardstick Research

Strathcona County Youth Needs and Assets Assessment

Literature review and online scan summary report

July 29, 2019

SRDC SINCE DEPUIS 1991 SRSA

INNOVATION • EXPERIMENTATION • EVALUATION

The Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) is a non-profit research organization, created specifically to develop, field test, and rigorously evaluate new programs. SRDC's two-part mission is to help policy-makers and practitioners identify policies and programs that improve the well-being of all Canadians, with a special concern for the effects on the disadvantaged, and to raise the standards of evidence that are used in assessing these policies.

Since its establishment in December 1991, SRDC has conducted over 350 projects and studies for various federal and provincial departments, municipalities, as well as other public and non-profit organizations. SRDC has offices located in Ottawa and Vancouver, and satellite offices in Calgary and Montreal.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WHAT IS THIS STUDY ABOUT?

This report presents the results of a literature review and online scan conducted by the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation as part of the 2019 Strathcona County Youth Needs and Assets Assessment. It addresses two questions: 1) What socio-environmental trends act as root contributors to youth issues/challenges today? 2) How can small urban and rural communities best serve the health, social, and community needs of resident youth?

WHAT ARE THE MAIN FINDINGS?

What socio-environmental trends act as root contributors to youth issues/challenges today?

Prominent socio-environmental trends:

- A decreasing proportion of young Canadians relative to older adults, which can create competition with older professionals for jobs and a risk of fewer government resources to address youth needs.

- A greater proportion of young Canadians participating in post-secondary education and taking longer to complete their studies, resulting in high levels of student debt and delayed entry to full-time employment.

- Acceleration of technology development and the rise of social media, which allows youth to strengthen their peer connections, interact with new people, and share their voices but can also create serious challenges in terms of cyberbullying, cyberstalking, and addiction to social media.

Additional challenges identified by Alberta youth: Stress and mental health issues, bullying and discrimination, lack of recognition and voice in societal issues, and a diminished sense of belonging.

How can small urban and rural communities best serve the health, social, and community needs of resident youth?

Ecological systems lens: The ecological systems model recognizes the importance of creating a wider environment – both physical and social – that acknowledges youth issues and enables young people's positive development. Efforts have grown in Canada and internationally to develop youth-friendly communities that foster environments welcoming to young people and supportive of their long-term success.

Positive Youth Development approach: A positive youth development approach focuses more on building youth assets – such as skills, competencies, and attitudes that help them transition into healthy and productive adults – than on trying to fix deficits or problems. Research shows positive youth development to be an effective approach to youth programming.

Critical factors for youth programming: Within a Positive Youth Development framework, there are three critical factors for youth to thrive – a definition of each is provided below, along with why it is important and how it looks in practice in Alberta and across Canada.

Critical factor 1: Promote youth autonomy	
Definition	▪ Ability to be independent, voice one's viewpoints, contribute to decision-making about one's self, and direct one's own behaviours
Importance	▪ Allows young people to build cognitive abilities for decision making; key factor in youth motivation and engagement in programming
In practice	▪ Youth councils / youth advisory councils as forum for youth to share their voices, leadership training
Critical factor 2: Build youth competencies and skills	
Definition	▪ Competencies and skills – cognitive, emotional, social, moral, and behavioural – that support youth on the path to becoming independent and productive adults
Importance	▪ Youth programming can incorporate skill building among a variety of activities to help youth succeed in life
In practice	▪ Holistic, wrap-around supports and targeted supports (e.g., health or career and employment-related programming)

Critical factor 3: Promote relatedness and connection to others	
Definition	▪ Refers to how youth make connections, by: 1) forming supportive relationships, including with non-parental adults, 2) building social inclusion and a sense of belonging, particularly with peers, and 3) engaging with the community
Importance	▪ Adult connections can help youth obtain information, skills, and access to resources they may not otherwise be able to acquire
	▪ Peer relationships help foster a sense of belongingness and are linked to positive youth outcomes, including emotional and mental well-being, better social skills, and a more positive outlook on life
	▪ Community connection is integral to promoting developmental assets that support youth well-being
In practice	▪ Supportive relationships with adults: mentorship, assistance from service provider staff
	▪ Social inclusion and sense of belonging: youth spaces, peer support groups, youth events/nights, newcomer youth connections
	▪ Community engagement: opportunities for community service, linkages between youth councils and local government, youth consultations, awards and recognition

Additional considerations for program design: Three pragmatic features of programming are important for program developers to consider: ensuring the physical and psychological safety of youth, appropriate structuring of program time and resources, and, in keeping with an ecological systems lens and Positive Youth Development approach, recognition of young people's broader environments.

HOW CAN THESE FINDINGS BE USED?

Identification of aspects of youth-friendly communities and critical programming factors for youth to thrive – combined with examples of how Alberta-based and other Canadian programs are implementing these factors at a practical level – will help situate the results of the overarching Youth Needs and Assets Assessment and inform Strathcona County's efforts to support local youth.

INTRODUCTION

YOUTH NEEDS AND ASSETS ASSESSMENT

In January 2019, Strathcona County commissioned a Youth Needs and Assets Assessment to examine how the County is currently serving the needs of resident youth aged 14 to 29 years. The research will help identify potential gaps in services, along with local assets and opportunities to help address gaps and, ultimately, the needs of Strathcona County youth. The results will inform strategic decision-making and policy changes to improve access to services for youth and provide programming and services that meet their needs, along with opportunities for their engagement and success.

> ### Definition of "youth"
>
> For the purposes of the Youth Needs and Assets Assessment, youth are considered to be individuals from the ages of 14 to 29 years. The youth years are often further conceptualized according to two main phases: adolescence, roughly from the early teen years to age 18, and young or emerging adulthood, approximately age 19 to the mid- to late-20s (further details are provided beginning on page 7). However, categorizations and terminology vary by source. In this document, to the degree possible, specific age breakdowns are reported as indicated in source materials.

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This summary report presents the results of a literature review and online scan conducted between April and July 2019 by the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) as part of the Youth Needs and Assets Assessment. It addresses two research questions developed in collaboration with Strathcona County personnel:

1. What socio-environmental trends act as root contributors to youth issues/challenges today?

2. How can small urban and rural communities best serve the health, social, and community needs of resident youth?

METHODS

Table 1 provides an overview of the methods used to access and retrieve materials to address the above questions.

Table 1   Methods to access and retrieve materials

Method	Description
Search for academic literature	▪ Use of Google Scholar, PubMed, and Web of Science to identify principles, critical factors, and best/promising practices in youth programming and contributors to youth issues/challenges ▪ Search terms consisted of combinations related to the specific population (youth), jurisdictions (Alberta and Canada more broadly), youth programming, issues, and trends ▪ Primarily focused on literature/systematic reviews and meta-analyses to maintain scope and ensure highest quality of evidence, supplemented with individual studies and grey literature
Access to municipal and other websites	▪ Access to official websites of Strathcona County and other Alberta communities to identify programming appearing to demonstrate principles, critical factors, and best/promising practices of youth programming identified in the literature ▪ Communities selected in collaboration with Strathcona County based on geographical proximity and/or similar population size – they included: Fort Saskatchewan (adjacent to Strathcona County), St. Albert (Sturgeon County), Spruce Grove (Parkland County), Leduc (Leduc County), Camrose (Camrose County), Red Deer (Red Deer County), and Lethbridge (Lethbridge County) ▪ Also included access to websites of national youth-serving organizations (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, 4H)
Google search	▪ Identification of other programming in Canada (outside the selected Alberta locations) also demonstrating identified principles, critical factors, and best/promising practices, using similar search terms as identified above ▪ Identification of features and examples of youth-friendly communities welcoming and supportive to youth
Review of additional documents	▪ Review of additional documents provided by Strathcona County for inclusion in the scan

In many cases, information on initiatives in Alberta or Canada more broadly was relatively sparse, often limited to the program's name and a brief description; few had been the focus of research or evaluation. As such, linkages made between programming and specific principles, critical factors, or best/promising practices in youth programming represent the opinion of SRDC researchers rather than a formal best practices assessment.

Scope of the literature review and online scan

Definition of youth programming: In keeping with the overall Youth Needs and Assets Assessment, youth were considered to be from the ages of 14 to 29 years. However, recognizing that individuals aged 18 and over are often considered adults, programming for those aged 18 and over had to be specifically identified as youth or young adult programming in source materials in order to be included.

Jurisdictions: The scan focused primarily on Alberta communities (identified in Table 1 above) and Canada more broadly but remained open to seminal articles related to principles, critical factors, and best/promising practices for youth programming produced within other similar contexts (such as the United States, United Kingdom, Europe, and Australia), where relevant.

Community size: In order to focus on rural and small urban communities, the scan focused on communities with population sizes under 100,000. That said, a few exceptions were made (e.g., Red Deer, which some estimates place just over the 100,000 mark, due to the County's specific interest in this jurisdiction).

Types of literature: The scan included both academic and grey literature, that is, peer-reviewed research papers as well as publically available reports and other documents.

Years of publication: While at the outset we anticipated focusing solely on information published in the last 10 years, we opted to include a number of seminal articles related to concepts of youth programming published earlier. However, information about specific youth programs in Alberta and Canada remained limited to 2009 to 2019.

Language: The scan included English-language materials only.

Overall: Given the targeted nature of the scan, the report does not provide a comprehensive list of programming and approaches to dealing with *all* youth issues.

FINDINGS

WHAT SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL TRENDS ACT AS ROOT CONTRIBUTORS TO YOUTH ISSUES/CHALLENGES TODAY?

The period between 14 and 29 years of age marks a transition from childhood to adulthood and considerable change biologically and socially. To help contextualize the issues youth face, we preface the discussion of socio-environmental trends with an overview of the social and cognitive developmental milestones of youth. Consideration of these milestones can enhance understanding of the diversity among young people today, the issues they face, and the opportunities they bring (Dahl, Allen, Wilbrecht, & Suleiman, 2018). We follow the discussion of trends with an overview of issues and challenges specifically identified by Alberta youth.

Developmental milestones

A common conceptualization of the youth years is according to two main phases: adolescence and emerging or young adulthood (Arnett, 2007; Simpson, 2018).

Adolescence (approximately early teens to age 18)

During adolescence, youth have substantial brain plasticity (Dahl et al., 2018) and significantly expand their intellectual, psychological, and social development. More specifically, adolescent youth:

- Develop reasoning and analytical/problem-solving skills along with ability to consider higher concepts, understand diverse viewpoints, and evaluate their own decision making (Sanders, 2013);

- Grow their ability to think critically about society and issues around them (Meschke, Peter, & Bartholomae, 2012);

- Are capable of trying and learning new things – even more so than adults – and look for new experiences (Zarrett & Eccles, 2006);

- Can integrate and adapt into new places and cultures better than adults (Cheung, Chudek, & Heine, 2011);

- Are more attuned to developing social ties as they look for social acceptance, belonging, and peer support and can be more influenced by their environments and the people around them (Blakemore & Mills, 2014; Somerville, 2013);

- Can be particularly affected by social stressors, which may affect their mental health (Blakemore & Mills, 2014) – the onset of mental illness is highest among this age group (Kessler et al., 2005; Lee et al., 2014); and

- Should have opportunities for independence, affection, a sense of achievement, a feeling of belonging, and opportunities to explore new experiences to facilitate their development (Meschke et al., 2012; Sanders, 2013).

Emerging or young adulthood (approximately age 18 to mid- to late-20s)

While physical development is nearly complete by age 18, the brain is still plastic and continues to develop structurally (Dahl et al., 2018; Johnson, Blum, & Giedd, 2009). Higher intellectual and executive functions are thought to be fully developed by the mid-20s (Arain et al., 2013). Emerging and young adults:

- Want to explore possibilities, form an identity, and find their place in the world (Arnett, 2007);

- Can have a higher degree of brain stimulation compared to adults, enhancing their skill and development (Steinberg, 2014);

- Can experience improvements in their mental health – increased self-esteem and decreased depression have been found in youth followed over time (Galambos, Barker, & Krahn, 2006);

- Tend to have developed strong abilities for self-regulation and impulse control (Johnson et al., 2009; Meschke et al., 2012);

- Are much more independent, less influenced by peers or family, and better able to pursue their persona and career ambitions than younger adolescents, (Meschke et al., 2012; Zarrett & Eccles, 2006);

- Are often driven by a willingness to take risks and explore new opportunities, which can allow them to be successful innovators and entrepreneurs (Dougherty & Clarke, 2018; Futurpreneur Canada, 2014); and

- Tend to have more freedom and can devote time to expanding their skills (Arnett, Žukauskienė, & Sugimura, 2014).

Effects of adverse childhood experiences on lifelong outcomes

There is a body of research showing that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) – abuse, neglect, and other types of trauma experienced before the age of 18 – can reverberate into youth and adulthood. Various studies have linked ACEs to negative effects on mental and physical health, education, employment, and overall quality of life (Anda et al., 2006; Bethell et al., 2014; Carr et al., 2013; Centers for Disease Control, 2019; Felitti et al., 1998). Yet while ACEs may increase one's vulnerability to poorer outcomes, they are not a guarantee of them. Rather, positive experiences in children's lives can help buffer against negative consequences, even after ACEs have occurred (Centers for Disease Control, 2019).

As such, there have been growing calls for programs, initiatives, and systems to recognize the effects of adverse experiences and for the development of trauma- and violence- informed approaches to lessen potential harms. Across institutions and governments, these approaches aim to understand how to build resilience among individuals and encourage organizational changes that create enabling environments for youth to thrive (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2018). The work in this field underscores the importance of efforts to reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors for all young people – but particularly those who have faced adversity – to help maximize their chances for success.

Trends

In order to examine trends youth of today are facing, we drew upon three main sources: O'Rourke (2012) who looked at 'seismic shifts' affecting youth, as well as Cote & Byner (2008) and Franke (2010) who have explored socio-economic and demographic shifts affecting youth. We supplemented these sources with insights from other researchers and authors in this field.

Demographics are shifting towards an aging society

One of the most gradual but prominent changes in Canadian society in recent decades has been a demographic shift to an aging population (Côté & Bynner, 2008; Franke, 2010). With reduced fertility and improved life expectancy, the proportion of young people across Canada and many other countries is decreasing relative to older individuals (Harper, 2014). Young people currently make up about 25 per cent of Canada's population, down from about one third in the 1970s (Statistics Canada, 2018b).

Why is this important?

- There is a risk that societal focus on youth needs could falter as focus on aging adults increases (Franke, 2010).

- Government may focus fewer resources on young people who make up a smaller proportion of the voting population, leaving youth disengaged from civic life (Franke, 2010).

- Youth may face increasingly stiff competition in the work place as they compete against older professionals for jobs (Côté & Bynner, 2008; O'Rourke, 2012) – as it is, youth unemployment (14 per cent) is more than double the overall national average (O'Rourke, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2018a).

More young people are pursuing higher education

The Canadian economy has shifted toward a knowledge and service basis, driving rates of higher education across the county (Franke, 2010; Statistics Canada, 2018b). While in 1990, just 15 per cent of men and women had a college certificate or Bachelors degree, by 2016, the rate had grown to 29 per cent of men and nearly 42 per cent of women aged 25 to 34 (Statistics Canada, 2018b). Compared to previous generations of Canadians, young people are staying longer in education, taking longer to enter full-time employment, and delaying personal milestones like marriage or parenthood (Arnett, 2007; Côté & Bynner, 2008; Franke, 2010).

Why is this important?

- Post-secondary student debt is taking a toll on many young people – fifty per cent of Bachelor's students take on a loan and shoulder an average debt of $20,000 to $30,000 for a four-year degree (Statistics Canada, 2018b). Between 1991 and 2007, tuition rates in Alberta increased by 275 per cent, leaving students more in debt than ever before (O'Rourke, 2012).

- Despite having higher education, youth may still have trouble aligning their skills to job opportunities (Franke, 2010). Young people today are also more likely to have short-term, temporary work compared to previous generations (Côté & Bynner, 2008; Statistics Canada, 2018b).

- Vulnerable youth can be left behind – for example, youth from low-income backgrounds and Indigenous communities can experience high-school drop-out rates nearly seven times greater than high-income neighbourhoods, leaving them even more disadvantaged as higher education increasingly becomes the norm (O'Rourke, 2012).

Technology is changing how youth interact

The ongoing acceleration of technology development is changing the way society in general and youth in particular interact (Mesch, 2012). Compared to older Canadians, young people aged 15 to 24 are the highest users of social networking sites and are more than twice as likely to use the Internet to follow current affairs (Statistics Canada, 2018b). Online communication is allowing youth to strengthen their peer connections and interact with new people (Mesch, 2012). In addition, young people today have access to information and ideas that go beyond borders and are helping them form a 'global identity' rich with international ideas and experiences (Bourn, 2008).

Why is this important?

- Technology is giving youth a voice and empowering them to lead social change and advocate for civic causes (Thackeray & Hunter, 2010).

- Young people are also leveraging technology to innovate, collaborate, and lead as entrepreneurs more than previous generations (Dougherty & Clarke, 2018).

- However, technology is also bringing new challenges. For example, 15 per cent of youth aged 15 to 34 report having been a victim of cyberbullying or cyberstalking in the past five years (Statistics Canada, 2018b), and about half of today's teenagers are estimated to be addicted to social media and 'constantly connected' (Chassiakos et al., 2016).

Issues and challenges faced by Alberta youth

Below is a list of prominent issues and challenges experienced by Alberta youth, as identified by over 160 youth leaders, educators, and community workers who attended a 2017 youth forum at the University of Calgary (Holden, 2017). We note additional details from the research literature to describe each further.

By no means is this an exhaustive list of all youth challenges – rather, individual youth with varying circumstances and those in specific sub-groups or communities will have other important issues affecting them.

Stress and mental health

According to youth who attended the 2017 forum, mental health issues are taking a heavy toll, with many feeling socially isolated, anxious, and facing the stigma of mental illness (Holden, 2017).

- The onset of many mental health disorders is most prominent during youth ages (Kessler et al., 2005; Patel, Flisher, Hetrick, & McGorry, 2007). The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC, 2019b) estimates that approximately 1.2 million children and young people are affected by mental illness and that by age 25, nearly 20 per cent of young Canadians will be affected by some form of mental health issues.

- Many aspects of the youth years can increase the risk of mental health issues, including academic pressures, discrimination, worries about the future, and challenges coping with life transitions (Patel et al., 2007). Heighted emotional sensitivity can also make youth more prone to social pressures, anxiety, and isolation (Blakemore & Mills, 2014).

- Factors that promote positive mental health and protect against mental illness lie at multiple levels: individual (e.g., strong coping skills, resilience, self-efficacy), family (e.g., relationships with parents, adequate housing, affiliation with culture or ethnic identity), and community (e.g., involvement in social or civic activities, peer support, safe neighbourhoods, mentors) – in addition to a myriad of other socio-determinants and positive life circumstances (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009; Connell, Boat, & Warner, 2009; Petrasek MacDonald, Ford, Cunsolo Willox, & Ross, 2013).

- Providing access to clinical treatment is important, but prevention and promotion of positive mental health is increasingly becoming a priority (Weisz, Sandler, Durlak, & Anton, 2005). Ensuring youth have good physical health, opportunities for leisure, and positive role models, along with access to counseling and behavioural therapy, can help protect youth from mental illness (Patel et al., 2007; Weisz et al., 2005).

Bullying and discrimination

Bullying and discrimination among youth can range from discreet teasing and joking to severe cases of racism or aggressive abuse (Holden, 2017).

- The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR, 2012) estimates that one in three youth are affected by some form of bullying, with those from visible minorities and the LGBTQ2+ community experiencing even higher rates of discrimination.

- With growing online communication, discrimination, and cyberbullying – including cyberstalking, impersonation, tricking youth to share sensitive or personal information, and sharing sexually explicit content – are becoming increasingly common (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2014). Fifteen percent of Canadian youth have reportedly experienced cyberbullying or cyberstalking in the past five years (Statistics Canada, 2018b). While not conclusive, there is some evidence to suggest that rural youth may experience higher rates of peer abuse than their urban counterparts (Leadbeater et al., 2013).

- While bullying in the past tended to be limited to specific locations, bullying today can infiltrate all aspects of young people's lives through social media, text messaging, and online digital image sharing. The effects of bullying and cyberbullying can be dire, leading to poorer academic performance, higher substance abuse, severe youth mental illness, and suicide (Kowalski et al., 2014).

- Individual factors such as coping skills, supportive relationships, involvement in extracurricular activities, and a positive school environment can protect against bullying. Improving school policies, establishing peer-led education workshops, and creating support systems both bullies and victims, are key strategies recommended to reduce bullying and discrimination (Public Safety Canada, 2018).

Youth lacking recognition and voice

Many of today's youth live with a societal perception that youth are incompetent, unaware of wider issues, lack credibility to make change, and experience a lack of 'voice' (Holden, 2017).

- Young people want to be recognized for the value they can bring to their communities (Morton & Montgomery, 2011). However, as youth remain longer in education, combined with limited resources and opportunities to voice their perspectives on important issues, many feel less integrated in civic life (Franke, 2010; Morton & Montgomery, 2011). Worse still, some can feel powerless and undervalued in their communities (Zeldin, Christens, & Powers, 2013).

- Although young people are sometimes perceived as disengaged from civic life, in reality, young Canadians are active citizens, involved in community organizations and political causes (Franke, 2010), and increasing in their voter turnout. They are also more likely to participate in arts and cultural activities and are more connected than previous generations (Statistics Canada, 2018b).

- Empowering youth can improve their mental health, self-esteem and lead to greater community engagement (Morton & Montgomery, 2011). Across Canada, it is becoming a priority to invest resources in young people, especially marginalized youth, to gain from their innovation and community engagement (Franke, 2010; Government of Canada, 2019). Programs that consult youth, involve in them in decision making, and provide opportunities for youth-adult partnerships can help bridge the divide across ages (Morton & Montgomery, 2011).

Youth lacking a sense of belonging

The need for youth to be included socially and feel like they belong is a challenge linked to the three issues identified above (Holden, 2017).

- Young people have an inherent need for social connectedness and peer support (Blakemore & Mills, 2014; Somerville, 2013). As youth develop, they look to bolster their social ties but can be affected by loneliness if they experience bullying, are rejected from social groups, or experience discrimination (Qualter et al., 2015).

- Strong social support is essential to forming a sense of belonging and is an important factor in mental and physical health (Thoits, 2011). According to a recent survey by UNICEF Canada (2018), 85 per cent of youth feel a sense of belonging to their community, but only about one third feel supported by their friends, teachers, or family. Other research has shown that youth aged 12 to 19 tend to feel the highest sense of belonging to their local community, but rates sharply decline from age 20 to 34 (Painter, 2013).

- Overall, youth require support to promote positive relations (Blakemore & Mills, 2014; Somerville, 2013). They need opportunities to be a part of groups or associations that can support them in building positive social bonds (Cicognani, Mazzoni, Albanesi, & Zani, 2015). Especially within the Canadian context, communities must recognize the importance of inclusiveness, taking into account the diversity of circumstances and backgrounds of individuals (Painter, 2013).

- Aspects of the community environment – such as affordable housing; green spaces and other public places (e.g., recreation centres, libraries); public events reflecting the diversity of the population; welcoming workplaces; and overall safety and security – can all play a role in the sense of belonging and connection felt by residents of all ages (Community Foundations of Canada, 2017).

HOW CAN SMALL URBAN AND RURAL COMMUNITIES BEST SERVE THE HEALTH, SOCIAL, AND COMMUNITY NEEDS OF RESIDENT YOUTH?

Community response to youth needs is multi-faceted. We begin this section with a brief introduction to ecological systems theory, which acknowledges the role of environment in human growth and development.

The majority of this section takes a programming lens. Successful youth programming is much more than simply adapting child-focused programming for an older age group. In fact, interventions that work well with children often fail when applied to youth (Yeager, Dahl, & Dweck, 2018). Instead, programs should be tailored for youth, taking into account their specific developmental needs and stages and socio-environmental context (Dahl et al., 2018).

Thirty years of research has shown Positive Youth Development to be an effective approach to youth programming (Khanna, Maccormack, Kutsyuruba, Mccart, & Freeman, 2014). Accordingly, we provide an overview of this approach below, followed by a description of critical factors in youth programming.

For the latter, we looked to the work of Khanna et al. (2014) whose extensive review identified common features of programs that implement a Positive Youth Development approach for youth aged 12 to 25 years.[1] We have supplemented this work with other research to lend greater support to these principles and illustrate how they can be put into practice. We close this section with additional considerations for program design.

Ecological systems lens

Ecological systems theory provides a structure for understanding the interactions between individuals and broader environmental systems. Since pioneered by Bronfenbrenner (1979), the ecological systems approach has figured prominently in the literature on youth development, programming, and services (Duerden & Witt, 2010; Halsall, Manion, & Henderson, 2018; Derksen, 2010). This model recognizes the importance of creating a wider environment – both physical (natural and built) and social – that acknowledges youth issues and enables young people's positive development. As shown in Figure 1, it is conceptualized as a set of nested circles depicting multiple systems

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[1] Khanna et al. (2014) do not separate critical factors by youth stages (i.e., adolescence versus emerging or young adulthood).

from the most immediate (microsystem) to the most distant from the individual (macrosystem).

Figure 1   Ecological Systems Theory (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016; adapted from Bronfenbrenner, 1979)
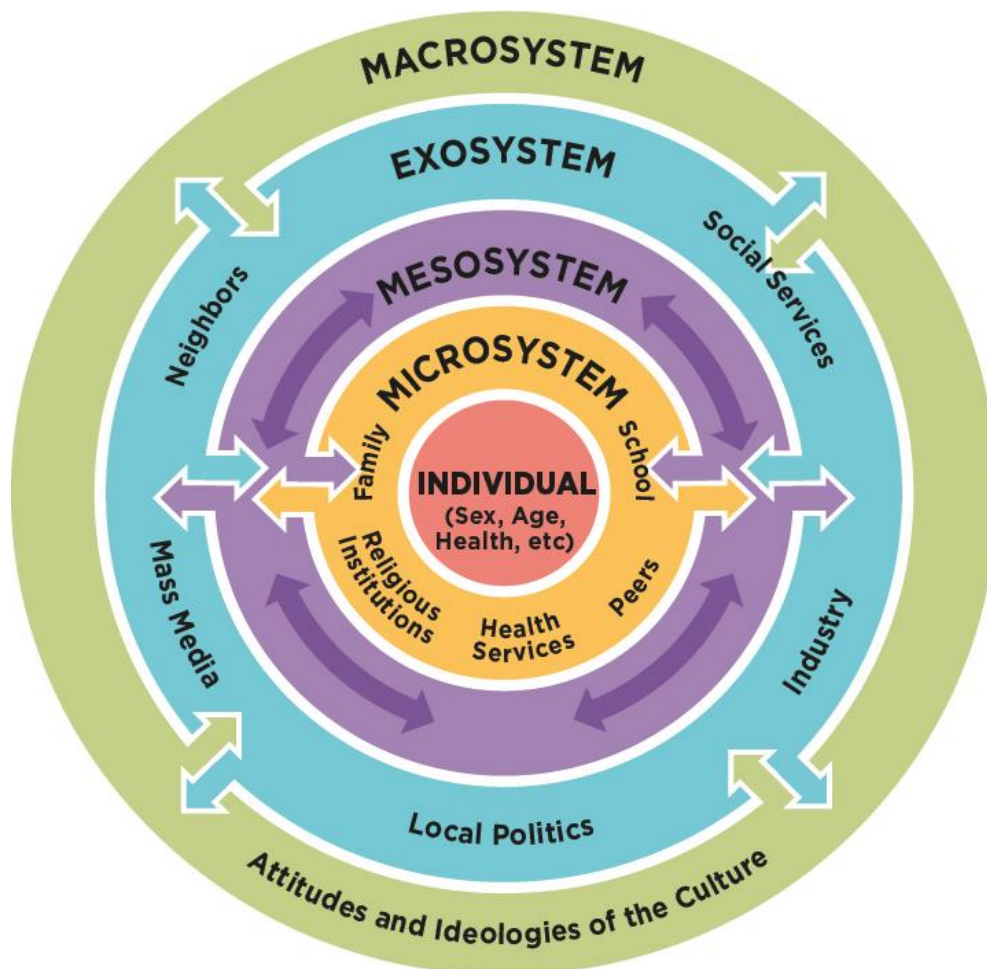
Figure 2 presents the widely used Community Action Framework for Youth Development, which conceptualizes a pathway for fostering positive outcomes and community contributions among youth (Gambone, Klem, & Connell, 2002). Box C is particularly representative of an ecological systems approach: it identifies community supports that offer a "lens through which a community should first examine its ecology to identify the resources available in the lives of its young people," representing "guideposts that communities can use to plan and assess these supports and their efforts to enrich and realign resources" (Connell, Gambone, & Smith, 2000, p. 290).

Figure 2   Community Action Framework for Youth Development (Gambone et al., 2002)
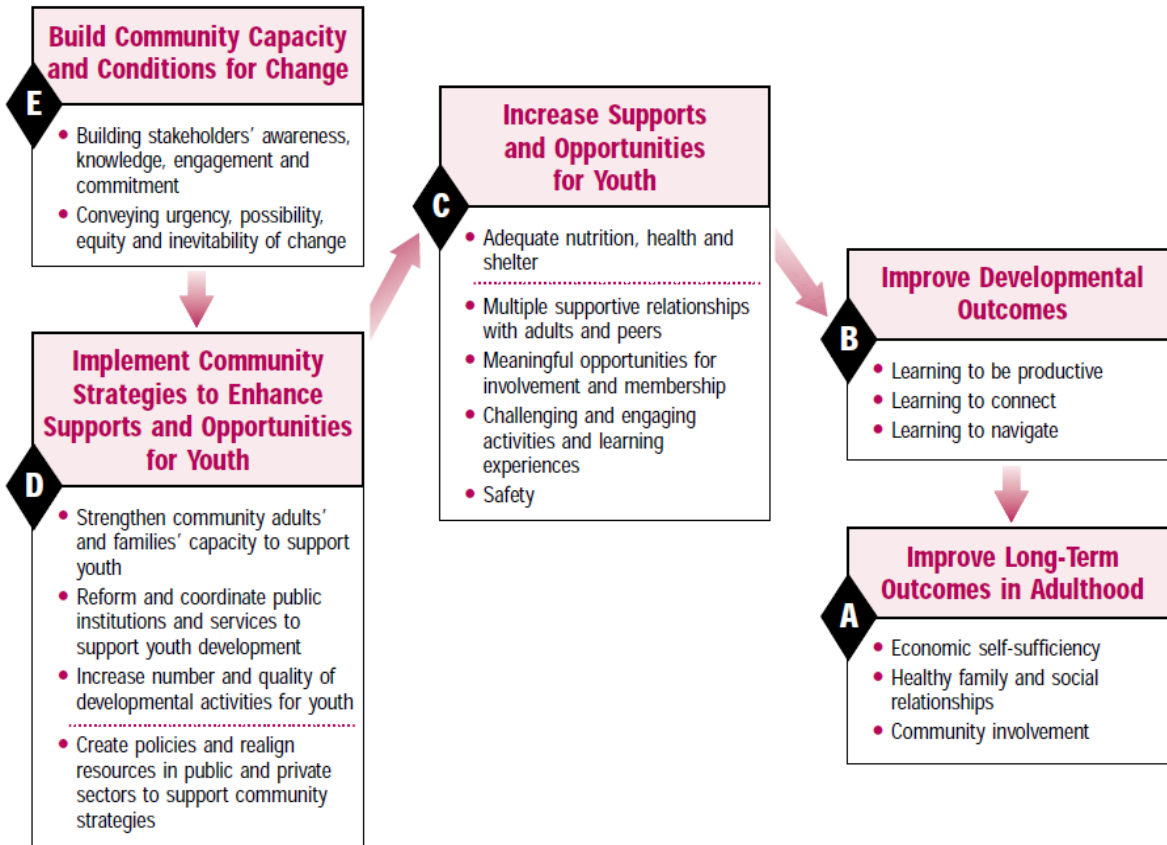
Youth-friendly communities

Since the mid-1990s, efforts have grown around the world to develop youth-friendly communities as a means of putting into practice features such as those identified in the above figure – essentially to foster environments welcoming to young people and supportive of their long-term success. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) defines a child- or youth-friendly community (CYFC) as "a city, town, community or any system of local governance committed to improving the lives of children within their jurisdiction by realizing their rights as articulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child" (UNICEF, 2019, para. 1). Table 1 describes what living in CYFCs looks like for young people and identifies 'building blocks' for local governments to become more child- and youth-friendly.

Table 1   Life for young people in child- and youth-friendly communities and building blocks for local governments

In child- and youth-friendly communities, young people…

- Experience a solid life start and are healthy and cared for
- Experience fair life chances
- Live free of violence, abuse, and exploitation
- Receive opportunities for high-quality, inclusive, and participatory education and skill development
- Access high-quality social services
- Make friends, play, and enjoy themselves
- Partake in different aspects of life – family, community, social, and cultural
- Share their voices and influence decisions affecting them
- Reside in clean, safe, and secure environment (UNICEF, 2019)

Building blocks for local governments to become more child- and youth-friendly

- Young people's participation in issues affecting them
- Child-friendly legal framework to promote and protect the rights of children and youth
- Community-wide Children's Rights Strategy to build a CYFC
- Children's rights unit or coordinating mechanism to prioritize the perspectives of children and youth
- Systematic child impact assessment and evaluation
- Children's budget to ensure sufficient resource allocation
- Regular 'State of the City's Children' report
- Making children's rights known among children, youth, and adults
- Independent advocacy for the rights of children and youth (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2004)

Key features of youth-friendly communities

Grounded in UNICEF's framework for child- and youth-friendly cities, the Society for Children and Youth of BC's Child and Youth Friendly Communities project has developed a series of toolkits to support communities in becoming CYFCs. Child- and youth-friendliness is organized around 18 rights- and evidence-based domains, outlined in Table 2 (Society for Children and Youth of BC, n.d.a, n.d.c) – a recent literature review conducted by the Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research (2015) provides additional support for the importance of these areas.

The Society recommends communities begin with just a few features within a single domain – perhaps one expected to make the biggest difference for local children and youth – and provides an online assessment tool and 'ideas bank' for users to share their ideas, experiences, and research (Society for Children and Youth of BC, n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.c).

Table 2   Domains of child- and youth-friendly communities

CYFC domains
▪ **Available and accessible early childhood education and school-age care**
▪ **Schools** that offer safe spaces, optimal learning opportunities, and modeling of concepts including human rights, democracy, and citizenship
▪ **Available and accessible health services** that take into account aspects of particular importance to young people, such as physical surroundings, confidentiality, and staff members' attitudes toward youth
▪ **Available and accessible social and family support services**, ideally working in collaboration to offer a wide range of supports for young people, including vulnerable children and youth
▪ **Accessible transportation** that supports the changing needs and growing independence of young people – youth-friendly public transportation is typically considered part of the equation in urban centres while smaller rural communities may need to consider other options
▪ **Housing** that is safe, comfortable, stable, and affordable
▪ **Access to parks and nature** for play and recreation
▪ **Opportunities for play in built environment**, including formal play areas and other community spaces
▪ **Leisure and social organizations** to support young people's wide range of needs
▪ **Organized sport and physical recreation opportunities**
▪ **Art and cultural opportunities**
▪ **Access to technology**, plus education and resources to help young people benefit from the internet
▪ **Community security and policing**, ensuring safe streets and public spaces that foster a sense of safety and freedom
▪ **Justice services** that keep young people safe while treating with them with fairness and respect
▪ **Local government** that gathers and considers young people's perspectives and advocates on their behalf
▪ **Local businesses** that welcome young people in terms of facilities and staff attitudes
▪ **Workplaces** that consider the needs of young people and their families in terms of balancing employment with home and/or school life
▪ **Media promotion** of issues important to children and youth and media organizations that understand the effect of their messaging on young people (Society for Children and Youth of BC, n.d.a)

Importance of capturing youth voice

The findings from the literature review and online scan highlight the importance of efforts to engage youth and provide them with a voice in decisions about their environments to ensure they address their unique needs and preferences (Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research, 2015; Flanders Cushing, 2016; Society for Children and Youth of BC, n.d.c). Recommendations for local governments to gather youth input and, ultimately, foster youth-friendly communities include the following (Ragan & McNulty, 2005):

- Conduct outreach efforts to engage a diverse range of young people, particularly marginalized youth;

- Create support structures that meaningfully involve youth in policy decisions;

- With other levels of government, promote youth participation in policy development and implementation, with a particular focus on Participatory Action Research and Community Asset Mapping;

- Establish a Local Government Plan of Action for Children and Youth;

- Provide support for sustainable and scalable youth programs and initiatives;

- Promote CYFCs in the media, taking care to portray youth positively.

Youth voice in service design, delivery, and evaluation

It is important to consider youth input in designing, delivering, and evaluating services targeted to them (Hawke et al., 2019). Much of the literature on what youth want and need in terms of services stems from the health sector (e.g., Hawke et al., 2019; International Planned Parenthood Federation, 2012; World Health Organization, 2012). For example, recent Canadian research identified the following aspects of youth-friendly mental health and substance use services, many of which can be applicable to social and community services more broadly:

- **Location:** Easy to find and accessible (e.g., next to public transit or other places youth frequent, such as youth centres or malls)

- **Organizational and policy characteristics**: Clear policies about youth privacy and confidentiality; appropriate promotion to youth; use of technological platforms to reach youth

- **Interior:** Comfortable, relaxed, and welcoming (e.g., bright colours, comfortable seating); music; artwork (e.g., created by youth or reflecting their diversity)

- **Staff/service providers:** Welcoming; reflective of local diversity (e.g., in terms of gender and sexual or cultural diversity); youth-friendly values and attitudes (e.g., genuine, non-judgemental)

- **Services:** Inclusive and culturally diverse; tailored to the needs of individual youth; flexible appointments that accommodate youth schedules; minimal wait times; affordable, free, or low-cost services

Examples of youth-friendly communities

Below we profile two small urban cities as examples of youth-friendly communities in Canada – one that has developed a formal strategy to guide its path as a CYFC (New Westminster, British Columbia) and another that has been formally recognized as a youth-friendly community (Brantford, Ontario). Examples of youth-friendly activities in Alberta communities follow.

New Westminster, British Columbia

In 2016, the City of New Westminster and the Society for Children and Youth of BC partnered on the development of a local *Child and Youth Friendly Community Strategy*. Using the UNICEF framework as a foundation, the Strategy is intended to inform neighbourhood development and "help ensure that municipal policy, practices, programs and services support children and youth to be healthy and safe; create opportunities for children and youth to actively participate in the decisions that affect them; and…assist children and youth to reach their full potential" (City of New Westminster, 2016a, p. 5). The document is organized by eight domains of influence – belonging, caring, engaging, learning, living, moving, playing, and working – each with its own vision, goals, actions (involving multiple City departments), and criteria (City of New Westminster, 2016a).

The City also provides a range of programs, services, and amenities to support 11 to 18 year-olds physically, socially, and culturally, including a Youth Centre, drop-in programming, and opportunities to participate in youth councils, clubs, and life skills development. It recently launched an after school youth civic engagement program – New West City 101 – for 13 to 18 year-olds to experience the workings of local municipal government (City of New Westminster, 2019). In addition, it offers special events, such as concerts, dances, and out-trips; special programming, such as the Youth Firefighter Program and Royal City Sound DJ program; and an annual Youth Week and Youth Awards (City of New Westminster, 2016b, 2019; New West Youth Services, n.d.a, n.d.b).

Brantford, Ontario

The City of Brantford (2017) defines a youth-friendly community as one "where youth are engaged; have strong connections with friends, family and resources; and have diverse opportunities to thrive" (p. 4). In 2017, the City partnered with the County of Brant to launch *Together for youth: A coordinated youth services strategy for the City of Brantford and the County of Brant* as a framework to support youth and youth agencies in the two municipalities. The Strategy outlines 22 goals plus 20 outcomes across seven theme areas: 1) civic engagement and leadership, 2) health and wellness, 3) education, training, and apprenticeships, 4) employment and entrepreneurship, 5) diversity, social inclusion, and safety, 6) strong supportive friends and family, and 7) coordinated and youth-friendly communities. A Youth Coordination Committee is responsible for coordinating and operationalizing the Strategy (County of Brant and City of Brantford, 2017).

The City also offers a number of programs and services to local youth. For a $5 annual fee, youth can access youth-only drop-in programming and lounges and receive discounts on other programs (e.g., Red Cross courses, art, cooking and baking, technology, sports). A local Youth Council provides leadership experience and a voice to youth on local issues, in

addition to hosting an annual Youth Week. The City's Youth Leadership Development Program, open to 13 to 16 year-olds, provides in-class training and placements at City-operated day camps. In addition, the City hosts other special events, such as dances and day trips, throughout the year (City of Brantford, n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.c).

Brantford has been designated a Youth Friendly Community by Ontario's Play Works Youth Friendly Community Recognition Program, described further below (Gray, 2017).

Spotlight on Play Works Youth Friendly Communities Program (Ontario)

The Youth Friendly Community Recognition Program, operated in Ontario by Play Works, acknowledges communities' efforts to invest in youth aged 13 to 19 and provide them access to a variety of opportunities for arts and culture, sports and recreation, volunteerism, leadership, and civic engagement. Criteria for recognition – each specifically linked to themes in Ontario's *Stepping Up: A Strategic Framework to Helping Ontario's Youth Succeed* – include the following:

1. Options for youth play
2. Formal, community-wide connections for youth
3. Ease of finding information about community play activities
4. Community recognition and celebration of youth
5. Formal commitment of funding for youth play
6. Community support for positive youth development
7. Young people's sense of being valued by the community
8. School and school board support for the Youth Friendly approach
9. Accessible play for youth
10. Socially inclusive play

Forty-six Ontario communities are currently recognized under the program (Play Works, 2019, n.d.).

Other examples in Alberta

The scan also showed evidence of youth-friendly elements within a number of Alberta communities. For example, the City of St. Albert's Youth Development Policy recognizes the value of youth contributions to the city and voice in the community. Under the policy, City Council's responsibilities include encouraging local youth via youth-driven events and providing opportunities for youth input on policies (City of St. Albert, 2015). St. Albert is also home to a Youth Advisory Committee comprising citizen and City Council members whose responsibilities include research and input on youth-relevant policies, the provision of information and advice to Council on youth issues and initiatives (including those at other levels of government), and consultations with City administration and youth-supporting initiatives (City of St. Albert, n.d.d). As well, the City recently became the first municipality in the province to pass a motion banning

conversion therapy attempting to change sexual identity or orientation, a practice denounced by bodies including the Canadian Psychological Association, Amnesty International, and the World Health Organization (Black, 2019; Short, 2019).

Elsewhere in Alberta, the City of Airdrie has established a Youth Engagement Strategy – most recently updated for 2019 to 2023– to foster the participation of youth in the community as part of its efforts to be youth-friendly and retain its local youth population (City of Airdrie, 2018). As well, various Alberta communities – including Leduc, Parkland County, Red Deer, Spruce Grove, St. Albert, and Strathcona County – have actively sought youth voices in recent years through methods including surveys, needs assessments, and/or broader engagement initiatives (Banister Research & Consulting, 2014; City of Leduc, 2018b; Mercer, 2017; Parkland County, 2018; Spruce Grove Family & Community Support Services, 2016; Strathcona County, 2017). Additional examples from Alberta and Canada are provided in the *Critical factors for youth programming* section.

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Spotlight on the YouthfulCities Canada Index

The YouthfulCities Canada Index is a ranking of cities' 'youthful infrastructure' in three main domains:

- **Live:** civic engagement, digital access, diversity, environment, health, safety, and transit
- **Work:** affordability, education, employment, entrepreneurship, and financial services
- **Play:** creative arts, fashion, film, food and nightlife, music, public space, sports, and travel

The 2018 Canadian Index relied on data collected by local youth researchers in 13 cities, selected based on population size, geographical representation, and support of municipalities and youth. Most were large urban cities, including two in Alberta: Edmonton and Calgary. However, it also included one small urban city: Moncton, New Brunswick. Moncton was awarded the top spot in the work domain due primarily to local opportunities for education and entrepreneurship. However, the city reportedly has room for improvement in the live and play domains, resulting in a score of 42 per cent and a ninth-place ranking (YouthfulCities, 2018). With Toronto ranked the highest, despite a score of only 63 per cent, the results show that "cities still have a long way to go to meet the needs and priorities of the next generation" (Aboelsaud, 2018, para. 3).

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Positive Youth Development

Positive Youth Development is an approach that promotes youth assets, that is, the skills, competencies, and attitudes that help youth transition into healthy and productive adults (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004). It takes a strengths based perspective that focuses on enhancing young people's positive qualities and behaviours, rather than a deficits perspective which considers youth to be immature or delinquent and reprimands negative behavior (Catalano et al., 2004; Durlak et al., 2007).

Positive Youth Development can be conceptualized with many different theoretical frameworks.[2] However, most tend to emphasize the value of holistic programming that considers young people as a whole (Catalano et al., 2004) and – reflecting an ecological systems approach – acknowledge the role of external influences (e.g., peers, socio-economic circumstances, environments) on young people's cognitive and social development (Durlak et al., 2007; Hinson et al., 2016; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Interventions that promote individual-, family-, and systems-level (e.g., school) changes are generally more effective, since they promote healthy development across all fronts (Durlak et al., 2007). Figure 3 depicts Hinson et al.'s (2016) framework, which shows how multiple components come together to promote healthy development.

Figure 3   Positive youth development framework (Hinson et al., 2016)

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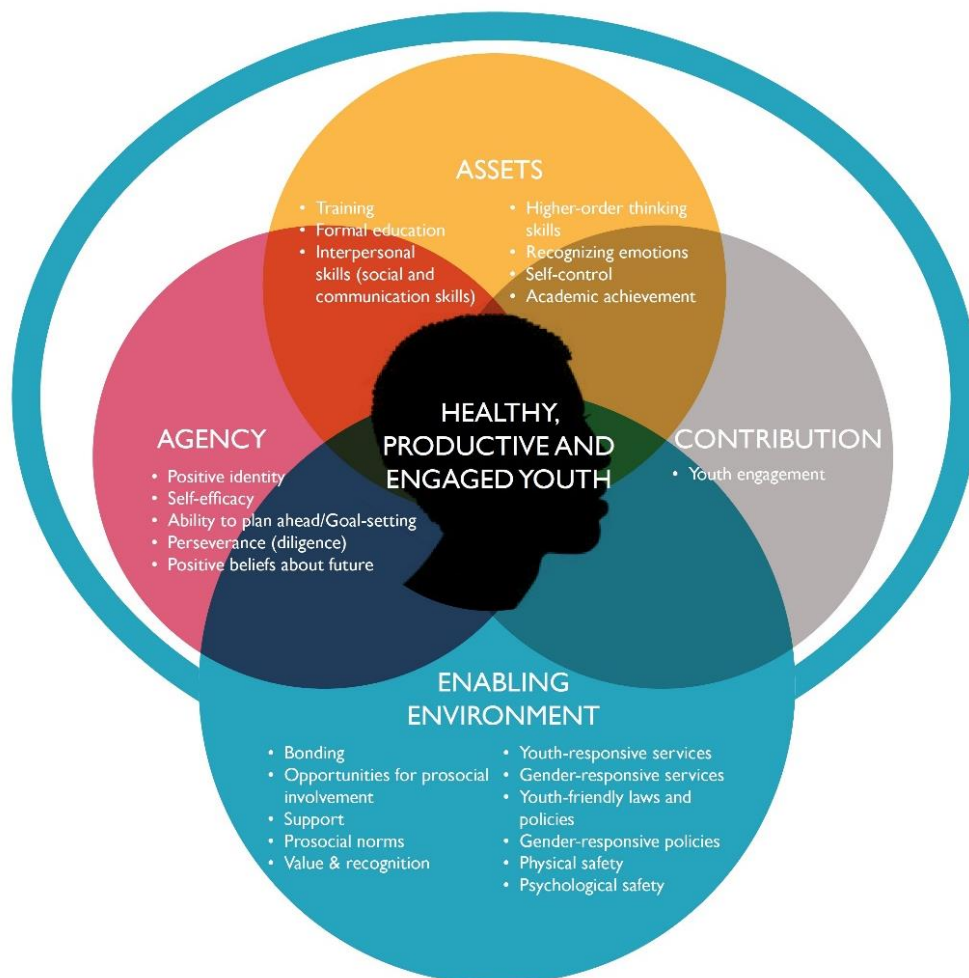
[2]   For example, the Five Cs, Developmental Assets, and Self-Determination Theory, among many others (Khanna et al., 2014; Lerner et al., 2006; Lerner, Fisher, & Weinberg, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Search Institute, 2019).

In this figure:

- **Agency** means that youth should have confidence in their abilities, achieve their goals, and form a positive identity of themselves (Bowers et al., 2010; Hinson et al., 2016);

- **Assets** are resources youth access/attain and skills developed (Hinson et al., 2016);

- **Contribution** refers to programs' ability to ensure youth feel connected and empowered to make positive changes in their communities (Hinson et al., 2016; Lerner, Alberts, Jelicic, & Smith, 2006); and

- **Enabling environment** is the holistic thread that ties the components together – it refers to a broad range of social connections to peers and adults, structural policies and laws, attitudes that recognize the value and potential of youth, and physical spaces that promote youth development (Durlak et al., 2007; Hinson et al., 2016).

As such, Positive Youth Development provides an overarching lens that can guide program design to promote the well-being of young people. By promoting the strengths of youth, both individuals and communities can thrive.

> ### Spotlight on Student Voice for Mental Health Study
>
> We see the Student Voice for Mental Health study recently conducted by Elk Island Catholic Schools – one of two main school divisions serving Strathcona County – as supportive of Positive Youth Development. Through the project, students from Grades 4 to 12 were invited to share their perspectives in areas including having fun at school and connections to others. The project highlighted the fact that youth and their ideas matter and help make a difference. It also actively invited youth advice for senior leadership, which included looking at root causes of students' issues, listening to their needs, asking their opinions, and understanding what they are going through (Elk Island Catholic Schools, n.d.).

Critical factors for youth programming

This section focuses on how best to implement the Positive Youth Development approach in practice. It builds on the work of Khanna et al. (2014), who have brought together multiple frameworks to highlight three critical factors for youth to thrive:

1. **Promote youth autonomy**;

2. **Build youth competencies and skills**; and

3. **Promote relatedness and connection to others**.

For each of the three factors, we discuss what the concept means, why it is important, and what it looks like in practice (example programs described often overlap across these areas, and many also reflect an ecological systems perspective).

Critical factor 1: Promote youth autonomy

What does it mean?

Autonomy is the ability to be independent, voice one's viewpoints, contribute to decision-making about one's self, and direct one's own behaviours (Khanna et al., 2014).

Why is it important?

Autonomy is an important aspect of youth development because it allows young people to build cognitive abilities for decision making rather than simply following directions (Morgan, Sibthorp, & Wells, 2014). It is also a key factor in their motivation and active engagement in programming (Khanna et al., 2014). Research shows that youth who are given autonomy have greater motivation to succeed, stronger connections to peers, and more optimism (Van Ryzin, Gravely, & Roseth, 2009).

How does it look in practice?

- **Youth Councils:** Youth Councils – also known as Youth Advisory Councils (YACs) – appear to be a common way to promote youth autonomy. Although the specifics vary by location, they generally provide a forum for youth to share their voices on local issues and concerns and help generate ideas and solutions to address them. Fort Saskatchewan, Lethbridge, Red Deer, Strathcona County, St. Albert, and Sturgeon County are among the Alberta communities with these Councils (City of Fort Saskatchewan, n.d.; City of Lethbridge, n.d.; Red Deer Youth Council, 2019; Strathcona County, 2019e; Sturgeon County, 2019). According to testimonials from a handful of Strathcona County's Youth Council members, participation in the Council has contributed to a feeling of being heard and making a positive difference (Strathcona County, 2019e).

  Other councils have been established in Alberta to provide a youth voice on health issues specifically. For example, the Child and Youth Advisory Council provides the perspectives of Southern Alberta youth (rural and urban) on health programming and services (Family & Community Resource Centre, 2019a). The Youth Transition Patient and Family Advisory Council provides advice regarding the transition from pediatric to adult care (Family & Community Resource Centre, 2019b).

- **Leadership training:** Various communities provide leadership training and opportunities to youth. For example, in Alberta, Fort Saskatchewan offers the Leaders in Training program where youth volunteers aged 13 to 17 learn to plan and lead activities at City-operated Children's Summer Camps while also practicing their communication and supervision skills. They receive a $100 honorarium for their efforts (City of Fort Saskatchewan, 2019a). Strathcona County offers a similar program (Strathcona County, 2019b) as well as the multi-level Junior Outdoor Leader Program (Strathcona County, 2019a).

At the national level, the Prime Minister's Youth Council is made up of youth aged 16 to 24 from a variety of backgrounds across the county who guide the Prime Minister's work as Minister of Youth. The Council is currently providing input to support Canada's first national Youth Policy, among many other areas of advice to the federal government (Government of Canada, 2019b, 2019c). In addition, Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada has established a National Youth Council and Provincial Youth Councils, plus the Youth Leading Reconciliation Program, which fosters confidence and leadership skills in Indigenous 13 to 18 year-olds (Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada, 2019d).

Spotlight on Building Assets & Memories

Building Assets & Memories in St. Albert is a 'youth-for-youth' program. Current and former high school students (aged 10 to 24 years) promote the development of community assets by sharing experiences, encouraging other youth to get involved, fostering leadership, and providing support and access to resources. With support and guidance from the City of St. Albert, the program offers weekly youth meetings and youth-organized retreats and provides youth with a voice in the community (City of St. Albert, n.d.b).

Critical factor 2: Build youth competencies and skills

What does it mean?

According to Khanna et al. (2014), the term 'competency' covers a broad range of skills: cognitive (academic or vocational and problem solving), emotional (ability to manage feelings), social (interpersonal), moral (understanding ethical considerations), and behavioural (ability to make change or work towards goals). In this context, we refer to competencies and skills that support youth on the path to becoming independent and productive adults.

Why is it important?

Competencies equip youth to succeed in life. Although schools traditionally play a significant role in enhancing youth competencies (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011), after-school and community programs can be a key contributor (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010). Such programming has the ability to cater to varied interests and can incorporate skill building among a variety of activities, such as sports, hobbies, arts, vocational, or leisure-related (Lyon, Jafri, & St Louis, 2012).

How does it look in practice?

- **Holistic support:** A number of communities and service providers offer holistic supports that foster youth competencies. For example, The Open Door in Camrose takes a wrap-around, harm-reduction approach to support 11 to 24 year-olds in need. It offers an emergency shelter, housing supports, no-cost counselling, and outreach services in a range of areas (e.g., education, employment, transportation). Supports are also available for youth over age 18 with suspected or diagnosed Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (Camrose Open Door Association, n.d.b).

  The Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre in the rural community of Ingersoll, Ontario provides youth aged 12 to 18 with stimulating after-school activities to enhance their academic or vocational skills and build other holistic competencies (Cross & Lauzon, 2015). The Centre has a large multimedia and technology centre as well as arts, cooking, sports, and outdoor activity programs (Fusion, 2019). Entry is $5.00 per day. According to local youth, Fusion helps them build self-esteem and skills and develop positive relationships with peers and adults (Cross & Lauzon, 2015).

- **Health-related supports:** Programs targeting health-related competencies are also available. For example, Leduc County's Youth Health Asset program aims to boost self-esteem, coping skills, development of healthy relationships, and leadership skills in 13 to 17 year-olds via an annual weekend camp. The program also provides training to help older youth aged 18 to 25 increase their self-awareness and achieve their goals (Leduc County, n.d.).

  Nationally, Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada's Fare Advantage Program aims to help 12 to 18 year-olds improve their physical activity, nutrition knowledge, and ability to plan and prepare healthy foods to help build lifelong healthy habits. As well, its Flex Your Head program provides peer-centred opportunities for youth aged 13 and up to develop knowledge and skills to cope with adversity (Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada, 2019a). A 2013 evaluation of the Flex Your Head pilot concluded the program was a success in numerous ways, including improvements in youth mental health

awareness, literacy, knowledge, and anti-stigma attitudes. Participants also demonstrated improved understanding of coping strategies and willingness to ask for help when needed (Newberry, Love, & Parkin, 2013).

The international Prevent Alcohol and Risk-Related Trauma in Youth (P.A.R.T.Y.) Program delivers one day sessions to help youth recognize alcohol and drug-related injury risks and make decisions to reduce those risks (Banfield, Gomez, Kiss, Redelmeier, & Brenneman, 2011; P.A.R.T.Y., n.d.a). The program operates in over two dozen Alberta communities (rural, small urban, and large urban) and seven other provinces and territories, as well as the United States, Australia, Germany, Japan, and Brazil (P.A.R.T.Y., n.d.b). A study of P.A.R.T.Y.'s effectiveness in preventing injuries from 1992 to 2004 concluded that program participation reduced the number of traumatic injuries, particularly among females and prior to the implementation of graduated drivers' licenses (Banfield, Gomez, Kiss, Redelmeier, & Brenneman, 2011).

▪ **Learning, career, and employment-related supports:** Programming in Alberta includes 5th on 5th Youth Services in Lethbridge, which helps youth aged 15 to 30 find and retain work. Specific programs include Forward Life Impact for employment and life skills (which offers participants an allowance equal to minimum wage), work experience for Forward Life Impact graduates, and Reach Up for persons with disabilities (5th on 5th Youth Services, n.d.).

Sturgeon County's Job Experience Training provides 12 to 17 year-olds with work experience by volunteering with the County's Summer Program. Hours worked count toward high school credits (Sturgeon County, 2019). As well, YWCA Girls with Tools in Lethbridge helps girls and women explore non-traditional roles and careers, such as carpentry, plumbing, and mechanics (YWCA Lethbridge & District, n.d.).

Youth in Newfoundland and Labrador's Conservation Corps are employed within communities to support local environmental and cultural projects (Conservation Corps NL, 2019). They provide youth with meaningful employment (Murphy, 2009) and opportunity to develop social and cognitive skills (Conservation Corps NL, 2019).

Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada also offers a number of learning and career development initiatives for youth across Canada, including homework support, in-class and virtual driver training, pre-employment training, and information on post-secondary education, trades, and other careers (Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada, 2019c). One example is Raise the Grade, a youth-driven program aimed at boosting academic skills and engagement, high school graduation rates, and post-secondary access among 14 to 18 year-olds through a range of supports and learning opportunities (e.g., mentorship, academic assistance, career planning, and technology-based learning). A

2012 to 2017 evaluation showed a number of positive changes one year post-program for academically vulnerable participants, including improved academic engagement, more time spent on homework and career exploration, and feeling 'smart' in school (Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, 2017).

Spotlight on Jobs4Youth

The Camrose Association for Community Living's Jobs4Youth Program helps youth aged 15 to 30 – currently attending school but facing significant employment barriers – find and keep 'meaningful' part-time paid work through a strengths-based approach. Specific services include 'the discover process' focused on young people's skills and abilities; resume building, job search and development; one-on-one on-site employment supports (no time limit) to help build independence; and ongoing communication involving the youth, family, and employer (Camrose Association for Community Living, 2019).

Critical factor 3: Promote relatedness and connection to others

What does it mean?

Relatedness describes how youth make connections, by: 1) forming supportive relationships, including with non-parental adults, 2) building social inclusion and a sense of belonging, particularly with peers, and 3) engaging with the community (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Khanna et al., 2014).

Why is it important?

Each of these components provides key benefits to youth:

- **Supportive relationships with adults:** Youth often need support to understand and use the services of societal institutions that can help them on their path to independence and self-sufficiency (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Khanna et al., 2014). By engaging with adults, youth can obtain information, skills, and access to resources they may not otherwise be able to acquire (Sullivan & Larson, 2010). Connections with adults can also help open networks and opportunities for youth (Zeldin et al., 2013).

- **Social inclusion and sense of belonging:** In comparison to earlier and later stages of life, youth rely more significantly on the perceptions of others and have a higher need for social acceptance (Blakemore & Mills, 2014). Youth need to form relationships with their peers to foster a sense of belonging both within and outside school to promote healthy development (Khanna et al., 2014). The literature shows established links between social inclusion/connection and belongingness and positive youth outcomes,

including emotional and mental well-being (Bowers et al., 2010), better social skills, and a more positive outlook on life (Wright et al., 2010).

▪ **Community engagement:** Building a connection to one's community is an important aspect of building relatedness, as communities play an integral role in promoting developmental assets that support youth well-being (Benson, Leffert, Scales, & Blyth, 2012; Khanna et al., 2014). Youth engagement should include opportunities for youth to be involved in the political process as well as wider opportunities for youth to be active citizens driving social change (Chan & Lee, 2017).

How does it look in practice?

Supportive relationships with adults

▪ **Mentorship:** Adult-youth mentorship programs appear to be a common way to develop supportive relationships. For example, at the community level, Spruce Grove's FCSS Youth Mentorship Program is a drop-in program for youth to connect with mentors and peers and participate in a wide range of activities. Youth can also apply to work in a concession with adult mentors at a local hangout spot (City of Spruce Grove, 2019a).

The Alberta Mentoring Partnership (AMP) is a network of youth, government, and community mentoring agencies committed to boosting the profile of mentoring and supporting mentoring opportunities across the province (Alberta Mentoring Partnership, n.d.c). As an example, AMP partners with the Camrose Boys & Girls Club on the Keystone Program for youth in Grades 7 to 12, which targets leadership and service to Club and community, as well as teamwork, healthy choices, and learning for life through a range of opportunities (Alberta Mentoring Partnership, n.d.b).

Provincially, in 2014, the Government of Alberta launched the Children and Youth in Care and Mentoring Pilot Program in partnership with local organizations in Edmonton, Red Deer, and Calgary to provide one-on-one and group mentorship to marginalized youth up to the age of 24 (AndersonDraper Consulting, 2015; Alberta Mentors, 2018). According to a 2015 evaluation of the pilot, youth mentees felt supported, cared for, and inspired by their mentors, while mentors benefited in terms of developing new perspective on the often difficult circumstance many youth face (AndersonDraper Consulting, 2015).

Nationally, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada provides mentorship to children and youth in over 1,100 communities across the country via one-on-one, group, and in-school opportunities (Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada, 2019a, 2019b). The

previously mentioned Alberta Mentoring Partnership is one of its collaborators. In Lethbridge, for example, joint initiatives include Occasional Bigs to mentor six to 16 year-olds waiting to be matched with a Big Brother or Big Sister; Couples for Kids, which matches adult couples with six to 16 year-olds for fun activities in the community; and Cultural Mentoring to connect Indigenous mentors and youth (Alberta Mentoring Partnership, n.d.a).

- **Service provider staff:** The scan identified a number of professional roles – such as Family-School Liaisons, Family Support Workers, Youth Outreach Workers, and School Resource Officers – providing a range of supports to youth, including advocacy, system navigation, connection to resource, and counseling. For example, the City of St. Albert's Family and School Liaison Program provides free-of-charge counselling and other supports to for children, youth and families facing challenges at home or in school (City of St. Albert, n.d.c).

Tips for adults to play meaningful roles in youth programming

Put youth first

- Value, respect, and acknowledge youth
- Recognize opportunities for learning
- Make youth engagement a priority

Raise the bar for youth performance

- Set high expectations and communicate them to youth
- Provide opportunities for youth to develop and practice leadership

Create the space

- Provide administrative and logistical structure
- Make it fun

Be in positive relationships

- Be open and available
- Be role models
- Be nurturing, protecting, and defending of youth

Provide influence, control, and authority

- Set appropriate boundaries
- Keep youth on task
- Exert influence to encourage youth interaction, maintain discipline, foster diversity & increase youth potential

Communicate and connect with the broader community

- Create communication and support networks
- Mobilize resources
- Reach out to the community and expand youth networks

(Messias et al., 2005)

Social inclusion and sense of belonging

- **Youth spaces:** Within Alberta, the Collective in St. Albert is a unique concept combining support services, space for community groups, and retail business opportunities for young people specifically in a one-stop downtown location. The Collective's goals for young people in the city include social inclusion, community engagement, timely access to resources and support, and skills and resources required for successful careers or businesses. An on-site intake specialist is also available to provide youth support and advocacy (City of St. Albert, n.d.a).

   The Slab in Strathcona County is a youth-driven hangout space for ages 12 to 17. It was piloted in the summer of 2018 to gather learning about what works in terms of spaces for rural and urban youth. According to a pilot evaluator, having a regular place to hang out, young people's sense of ownership for the initiative, and programming were attractive to youth. Due to the success of its first summer, programming has since continued (Mueller, 2018; Strathcona County, 2018; Strathcona County, 2019c).

   In response to a lack of space for youth, the City of Maple Ridge, British Columbia established the Greg Moore Youth Centre and Ridge Meadows Youth Wellness Centre, which provides a range of athletic and recreational activities for young people (City of Maple Ridge, 2018; MRCF, 2019). In the rural community of Vernon, British Columbia, the Okanagan Boys & Girls Clubs offers multiple drop-in centres and leisure spaces for 13 to 19 year-olds to make friends while they play video and board games, practice cooking, engage in crafts, and go on trips (Okanagan Boys & Girls Clubs, 2019).

- **Peer support groups:** Peer support groups also appear to be common, either for youth in general or specific sectors of the youth population. For example, Strathcona County's Youth Connect provides 12 to 17 year-olds with a free weekly drop-in opportunity to connect to peers and supportive adults (Strathcona County, 2019d). Fort Saskatchewan's Family and Community Support Services and the altView Foundation have partnered on the Rainbow Alliance, a peer support group for youth aged 12 to 25. It offers "a supportive and safe place open to all sexual orientations and identities, where youth can be themselves in a safe, affirming, sex-positive, alcohol and drug free environment" (altView Foundation, 2015, para. 1).

   GirlSpace at the Lethbridge & District YWCA provides extracurricular community programming aimed at addressing issues girls face today in a space where they can also make friends and better their self-esteem. The Senior GirlSpace group is open to older girls aged 14 to 17. In addition, the Girl2Girl program links younger girls in elementary and middle school with high school girls as mentors (YWCA Lethbridge &

District, n.d.). Spruce Grove FCSS's Girls Group provides peer mentoring during a range of activities such as spa nights and movies (City of Spruce Grove, 2019b).

▪ **Youth events and youth nights:** Youth events and youth nights are common across communities. For example, Fort Saskatchewan's YouthFest is an annual event to 'showcase' local youth talent along with opportunities to volunteer and participate in activities and workshops (City of Fort Saskatchewan, 2019b). The City of Camrose offers regular drop-in Youth Community Use Nights at the local Community Centre (City of Camrose, 2019). Parkland Village Youth in Spruce Grove offers a changing a roster of drop-in activities – such as games, movie nights, trips to a local leisure centre – once or twice a week throughout the school year for youth aged 12 to 17 (City of Spruce Grove, 2019c).

▪ **Newcomer connections:** Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada's Newcomer Youth Advancement Program helps newcomer youth of all ages establish community and social connections. Academic and employment supports and opportunities for recreation and civic engagement are also available (Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada, 2019b).

Spotlight on the Youth Wellness Initiative

The City of Leduc's Youth Wellness Initiative was established in 2018 as a means to boost youth quality of life. One of its four goals is to increase inclusion and decrease isolation, along with improving access to youth-targeted opportunities; encouraging participation in art, cultural, social, and recreational opportunities; and promoting physical activity and overall healthy habits. Recognizing the decline in sports and recreational activities and wellness in Grades 8 and 9, especially among girls, the Initiative targets youth in these grades specifically. In order to strengthen the Initiative, the City set aside $15,000 in funding for 2019 for which external applicants can apply (maximum $5,000 per applicant) to implement a variety of opportunities for 12 to 17 year-old youth (City of Leduc, 2019b).

Community engagement

▪ **Opportunities for community service:** The Katimavic Program is a national program established in 1977 to provide youth aged 17 to 25 – particularly from marginalized backgrounds – experiential learning through community service projects (Katimavic, 2019). Selected youth applicants travel to communities across Canada (mostly rural) for two three-month placements where they learn a diverse set of skills that can improve their employability and foster engagement in civic matters, especially related to the environment. A 2010 summative evaluation showed that the program helped youth appreciate diversity within Canadian societies, improved their employability, markedly enhanced their leadership skills, and increased their personal skills, such as

managing budgets or household tasks, to make them more independent (Canada Heritage, 2010).

4-H Canada's Hands to Larger program promotes local community engagement by training youth leaders from across Canada who travel to various communities to develop short community service projects. In 2018, participating youth implemented a range of projects that supported refugees, seniors, vulnerable urban populations, and the environment (4-H Canada, 2019).

▪ **Linkages between youth councils and local government:** As previously discussed in relationship to youth autonomy, youth councils are a popular means for youth to share their voices. Some of these councils focus more directly on youth civic engagement through direct links to municipal government. For example, Lethbridge's Youth Advisory Council advises the City of Lethbridge, City Council, and community partners on youth-related issues, conducts related research and consultation, and provides regular updates to Council (City of Lethbridge, n.d.).

> **Practices for effective engagement of youth on municipal councils:**
>
> ▪ Be honest and clear about the role youth play on the council to prevent youth from being dissuaded if they find their role limiting
>
> ▪ Have adults facilitate the process to be formal while still keeping it fun
>
> ▪ Reach out to youth in places where they feel comfortable – may include using social media or other online platforms
>
> ▪ Ensure the youth council represents the diversity of youth (that is, young people from different backgrounds)
>
> ▪ Train adults working with the youth council to be collaborative and sensitive to different perspectives youth may bring
>
> (Augsberger, Collins, & Gecker, 2017; Northam, 2014)

▪ **Youth consultations:** In 2018, the City of Hamilton, Ontario convened over 250 attendees at its National Youth Week workshop to identify what the City does well and what could be improved in terms of youth services (Williamson, 2018a). The aim is to continue to use further consultations to help create a municipal youth strategy (Williamson, 2018b).

▪ **Awards and recognition:** Various communities recognize youth contributions to the community. In Alberta, for example, the City of Leduc's #Influencers campaign recognizes young leaders in Grades 9 to 12 – those who demonstrate character, service to others, and leadership by example through small and large acts – at a local red carpet event (City of Leduc, 2018a, 2019a). Parkland County's Sustainability

Awards have a category to recognize the contributions of youth aged 18 to 30 to environmental sustainability (Parkland County, 2016).

- **Other support:** Lethbridge's 5th on 5th Youth Services has a Get Out and Vote Coordinator to help engage youth in the voting process as well as an Equity Coordinator to support equity-related issues in the community, for example, regarding human rights issues and hate crimes (5th on 5th Youth Services, n.d.).

Considerations for program design

In addition to the above critical factors, three pragmatic features of programming are important for program developers to consider:

- **Safety:** Ensuring the physical and psychological safety of youth is critical from a practitioner's perspective (Khanna et al., 2014). In terms of the latter, the Mental Health Commission of Canada provides resources for adults who work with youth to recognize signs of mental illness, assess risk of harm, and provide the appropriate support or referral to services (MHCC, 2019a).

- **Structure:** Structure refers to how time and resources are provided for youth programs (Khanna et al., 2014) and stems from the understanding that programming should establish structure so as to maximize young people's time while there (Duerden & Witt, 2010; Khanna et al., 2014). Adults can play a key role in ensuring adequate program structure by establishing guidelines and ensuring accessibility and adequate resources (Messias, Fore, McLoughlin, & Parra-Medina, 2005).

- **Environment:** In keeping with a ecological systems lens, delivering effective interventions, especially within the Positive Youth Development perspective, should recognize that youth are affected by their wider familial, peer, school, and social environments (Durlak et al., 2007). As youth can face many barriers across multiple areas of their lives, programs should aim to integrate different services and efforts (Khanna et al., 2014).

Spotlight on youth hubs in Alberta

One-stop youth 'hubs' are becoming an increasingly popular means to integrate services. In Alberta specifically:

- The Youth Hub in Camrose – a partnership between the Camrose Primary Care Network and Camrose Open Door Association – provides one-stop access to youth- and family-centred health, mental health, and social supports. Outreach navigators help youth aged 11 to 24 connect to required services and ensure the services work for them. Initial contact is available in person during office hours or via a 24-hour helpline (Camrose Open Door Association, n.d.a). Initially made possible through a $300,000 provincial grant to the Camrose Primary Care Network for a pilot project, the Hub served 361 young people between November 2017 and December 2018. The Executive Director has attributed its success to a collaborative approach – whereby youth can self-refer or be referred – and quick access to services (Antoneshyn, 2019).

- The Youth Hub in Medicine Hat – funded by the Medicine Hat Community Housing Society and operated by McMan Youth, Family and Community Services Association, South Region – offers outreach and navigation services to connect 13 to 24 year-olds to a variety of services and supports (housing, mental health, financial, and other). As well, individual youth and family support is available to help prevent youth homelessness (McMan Youth, Family and Community Services Association, South Region, 2019).

- In Spruce Grove, Alberta Health, WestView Primary Care Network, and the local school division are collaborating on a youth mental health hub with funding from an Edmonton-based foundation (Pretzer, 2018).

- The Fort Saskatchewan Wellness Hub for Youth is expected to launch in spring 2019 in the city's downtown as a single access point to integrated health and social services. Services will be provided in a safe, comfortable, 'youth-friendly' setting. The Hub includes a steering community and multiple partners, including local and provincial government and others from the health, education, and community sectors. Local youth have also been consulted to ensure decisions about programming and services are made 'by youth for youth' (Janzen, 2019).

CLOSING REMARKS

Today's youth face many challenges from shifts in social, economic, demographic, and technological changes. These, in turn, have been linked to rising rates of youth mental health issues, along with challenges in forming personal identity, finding employment, and establishing a sense of belonging. Yet youth also have many strengths, abilities, and potential as a result of their unique stage of development. Addressing their complex needs and providing opportunities for them to develop their potential requires acknowledgement of their broader environments. It also entails understanding and integration of a Positive Youth Development approach that views them as key assets for their communities and focuses on programs to build their capabilities for navigating successfully through life.

Identification of aspects of youth-friendly communities and critical programming factors for youth to thrive – combined with examples of how Alberta-based and other Canadian programs are implementing these factors at a practical level – will help situate the results of the overarching Youth Needs and Assets Assessment and inform Strathcona County's efforts to support local youth.

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7   Appendix C – Statistical Profile

Strathcona County Youth Needs and Assets Assessment

SRDC SINCE DEPUIS 1991 SRSA

INNOVATION • EXPERIMENTATION • EVALUATION

The Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) is a non-profit research organization, created specifically to develop, field test, and rigorously evaluate new programs. SRDC's two-part mission is to help policy-makers and practitioners identify policies and programs that improve the well-being of all Canadians, with a special concern for the effects on the disadvantaged, and to raise the standards of evidence that are used in assessing these policies.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT?

This report presents a statistical profile of youth in Strathcona County and comparison communities, including St. Albert and adjacent Sturgeon County, Red Deer and surrounding Red Deer County, and Alberta more broadly. This work was conducted by the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation as part of the 2019 Strathcona County Youth Needs and Assets Assessment and used publicly available data, primarily from Statistics Canada.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN FINDINGS?

- **Age and gender:** Youth aged 15 to 29 years make up 18 per cent of Strathcona County's population, slightly below the provincial average of 20 per cent and roughly in the middle of the other comparison communities. There are similar proportions of male and females between the urban and rural service areas of Strathcona County.

- **Education:** Strathcona County has just over 20,000 students from Kindergarten through to post-secondary education, accounting for a little over twenty per cent of the County's population. Completion rates for high school and post-secondary education are somewhat higher than provincial averages, while high school drop-out rates are similar.

- **Income and employment:** Strathcona County's individual and household incomes exceed provincial averages and those in some other comparison communities. However, four per cent of the County's population is considered low income – this includes six per cent of 0 to 17 year olds and three per cent of 18 to 24 year olds. Youth unemployment (for those aged 15 to 24 years) is close to double the overall unemployment rate in Strathcona County, which is similar to trends in other comparison locations.

- **Family and household:** About half of Strathcona County youth aged 25 to 29 are married or in common law relationships, which is similar to the other comparison locations and Alberta overall. Lone parent families in general represent 12 per cent of families in Strathcona County, falling between rates in other comparison locations but below the Alberta average of 16 per cent.

- **Health and well-being:** Health-related statistics, although not specific to Strathcona County, are generally similar for Albertans and Canadians overall but with some statistically significant differences. For example, Albertans were more likely to report very good or excellent health, higher rates of physical activity (among both those 12 to 17 and 18 years of age and over), and lower rates of stress than Canadians in general.

- **Culture and diversity:** The vast majority (96 per cent) of Strathcona County residents are Canadian citizens, exceeding the provincial average of 91 per cent but falling roughly in the middle of other comparison locations. However, compared to provincial averages, substantially smaller proportions of individuals in Strathcona County are immigrants (including those with citizenship) and self-reported visible minorities. In addition, a smaller percentage identify as Aboriginal.

- **Community perceptions and self-concept:** According to a 2016 survey by Strathcona County, youth and adults in the County share similar perceptions of what they feel is important to achieve as a community – belonging and connection; physical and emotional safety; value, respect, and fair treatment; health; and working together to make the community stronger. However, youth were less likely than adults to feel these aspects are currently true in the County. In terms of self-concept, they majority of youth agreed they felt positive about the future, can stand up for what they believe in, and take responsibility for their actions.

HOW CAN THESE FINDINGS BE USED?

The results of the statistical profile help provide a picture of Strathcona County youth in comparison to youth in other comparison locations and across Alberta more broadly. They also help inform planning for future work to be conducted for the County's Youth Needs and Assets Assessment.

INTRODUCTION

YOUTH NEEDS AND ASSETS ASSESSMENT

In January 2019, Strathcona County commissioned a Youth Needs and Assets Assessment to examine how the County is currently serving the needs of resident youth aged 14 to 29 years. The research will help identify potential gaps in services, along with local assets and opportunities to help address gaps and, ultimately, the needs of Strathcona County youth. The results will inform strategic decision-making and policy changes to improve access to services for youth and provide programming and services that meet their needs, along with opportunities for their engagement and success.

Definition of "youth"

For the purposes of the Youth Needs and Assets Assessment, youth are considered to be individuals from the ages of 14 to 29 years. The youth years are often further conceptualized according to two main phases: adolescence, roughly from the early teen years to age 18, and young or emerging adulthood, approximately age 19 to the mid- to late-20s. However, categorizations and terminology vary by source. In this document, to the degree possible, specific age breakdowns are reported as indicated in source materials.

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This summary report presents a statistical profile of youth completed as part of the Youth Needs and Assets Assessment. Statistical figures are provided for Strathcona County and the following comparison locations, selected in collaboration with the County:[1]

- St. Albert and adjacent Sturgeon County – selected for geographical proximity and roughly similar (albeit somewhat smaller) population size to Strathcona County;

- Red Deer and surrounding Red Deer County – selected for roughly similar (but somewhat larger) population size to Strathcona County; and

- Alberta – to provide a provincial average for comparison.

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[1] At the outset of this work, St. Albert and Sturgeon County were considered one comparison location and Red Deer and Red Deer County another (plus Alberta more broadly as a third). However, federal census data separated St. Albert from Sturgeon County and Red Deer from Red Deer County. Figures in this report have been separated accordingly.

DATA SOURCES

Table 1 lists the publicly available data sources used to develop the statistical profile.

Table 1   Statistical profile data sources

Data sources
For Strathcona County and comparison locations
▪ Canada's 2016 Federal Census Profile results (Statistics Canada, 2018b)
For Strathcona County only
▪ *2011 Youth survey: Final report* – results of a survey regarding Strathcona County youths' attitudes, behaviours, and events; conducted in April and May 2011 with 437 young people in Grades 6, 8, and 11 attending school in Sherwood park and rural areas of the County (Strathcona County, 2013)
▪ *Community talk: What we heard* (survey results) – results of a community engagement initiative involving individuals who lived and work in Strathcona County from October to December 2016; nearly 8,000 individuals participated via survey (including 2,919 aged 11 to 17 and nearly 400 aged 18 to 24) and over 600 through community conversations (Strathcona County, 2017)
▪ *Family and Community Services community social profile, 3rd edition, 2018* – social portrait of Strathcona County and its nearly 100,000 residents (Strathcona County, 2018a)
▪ *Together we count: Census 2018 results report* – results of municipal census of Strathcona County residents (Strathcona County, 2018b)
Other
▪ Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) – cross-sectional survey regarding Canadians' health determinants, health status, and health care use; sample size = approximately 65,000 (Statistics Canada, 2018a); comparison of results between Alberta and Canada overall, based on 2017 data, included in the profile
▪ Government of Alberta data pertaining to rates of high school completion within five years of entering Grade 10, available for the Edmonton and Central Regions and Alberta overall (Government of Alberta, 2018)

High-level results are presented in the next section, with detailed data tables available in Appendix A. Results presented include frequencies and/or proportions for Strathcona County and comparison locations, where available and applicable. Statistically significant results from the Canadian Community Health Survey are noted. However, other differences are described in qualitative terms, since significance testing was beyond the scope of this project.

FINDINGS

The statistical profile is organized by seven thematic areas: 1) age and gender, 2) education, 3) income and employment, 4) family and household, 5) health and well-being, 6) culture and diversity, and 7) community perceptions and self-concept.

AGE AND GENDER

According to 2016 federal census figures, at just under 100,000, the total population of Strathcona County falls between the population sizes of St. Albert and adjacent Sturgeon County combined (approximately 86,000) and of Red Deer and surrounding Red Deer County combined (approximately 120,000). Strathcona County makes up approximately two per cent of the provincial population of just under 4.1 million (Statistics Canada, 2018b).

The median age of 40 years in Strathcona County also falls roughly in the middle of comparison communities, which range from a median of 36 years in the City of Red Deer to 43 years in Red Deer County; the provincial median is 37 years of age. Youth between the ages of 15 to 29 years represent 18 per cent of the total population in Strathcona County. Again, this falls between the other comparison locations, which range from 16 percent in Red Deer County to 21 per cent in the City of Red Deer; the provincial proportion of youth is 20 per cent (Statistics Canada, 2018b). See Figure 1.

Figure 1   Proportion of youth aged 15 to 29 (2016)
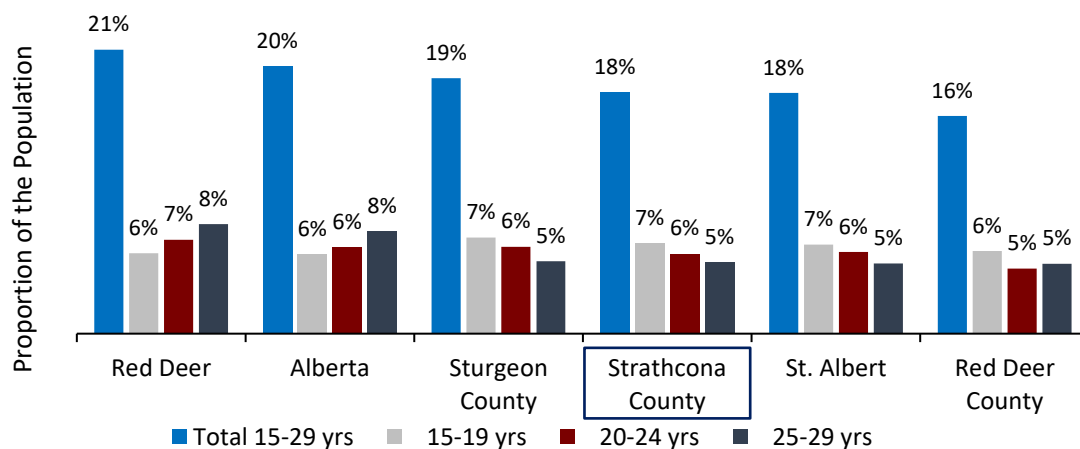
Source: Statistics Canada (2018b)

According to Strathcona County's 2018 municipal census, young people between the ages of 15 to 24 represent 12 per cent of the urban and 13 per cent of the rural service areas. Males and females comprise similar proportions in each area (Strathcona County, 2018b).

EDUCATION

Strathcona County falls within the boundaries of the Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS) and Elk Island Catholic Schools (EICS) Divisions. According to 2018 figures, nearly 70 per cent of the County's residents support the public system while about 20 per cent support the Catholic system; the remainder were undecided (Strathcona County, 2018a).

According to Strathcona County's 2018 municipal census, the County had just over 20,000 students in 2018: 17,182 Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) students and 2,996 post-secondary students. These accounted for 19 per cent and three per cent of the local population, respectively (Strathcona County, 2018b).

In 2016, EIPS high school completion rates ranged from 81 per cent (three-year completion) to 87 per cent (four- and five-year completion), exceeding provincial averages of 78 per cent, 81 per cent, and 83 per cent, respectively. In 2016, the EIPS drop-out rate was two per cent, similar to the provincial average of three per cent; just under one fifth of those who dropped out in Strathcona County and provincially returned to school one year later. The proportion of Strathcona County students who transitioned to post-secondary education within four years (39 per cent) and six years (63 per cent) slightly exceeded provincial rates of 37 per cent and 58 per cent, respectively (Strathcona County, 2018a).

More recent (2018) figures for Elk Island Catholic Schools showed three-, four-, and five-year completion rates of 87 per cent, 92 per cent, and 91 per cent, respectively, exceeding those of EIPS (Strathcona County, 2018a).[2]

In terms of highest level of education attained, 59 per cent of Strathcona County residents above the age of 15 have earned a post-secondary certificate, degree, or diploma (Statistics Canada, 2018b). This figure is similar to St. Albert but exceeds the provincial average of 55 per cent and rates in other comparison locations. Across all locations compared, roughly one fifth of young people aged 15 to 24 have completed post-secondary education (Statistics Canada, 2018b); see Figure 2 for further details.

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[2] EICS drop-out, returning, and transition rates were not available in the source documents.

Figure 2   Highest level of education attained by youth aged 15 to 24 (2016)
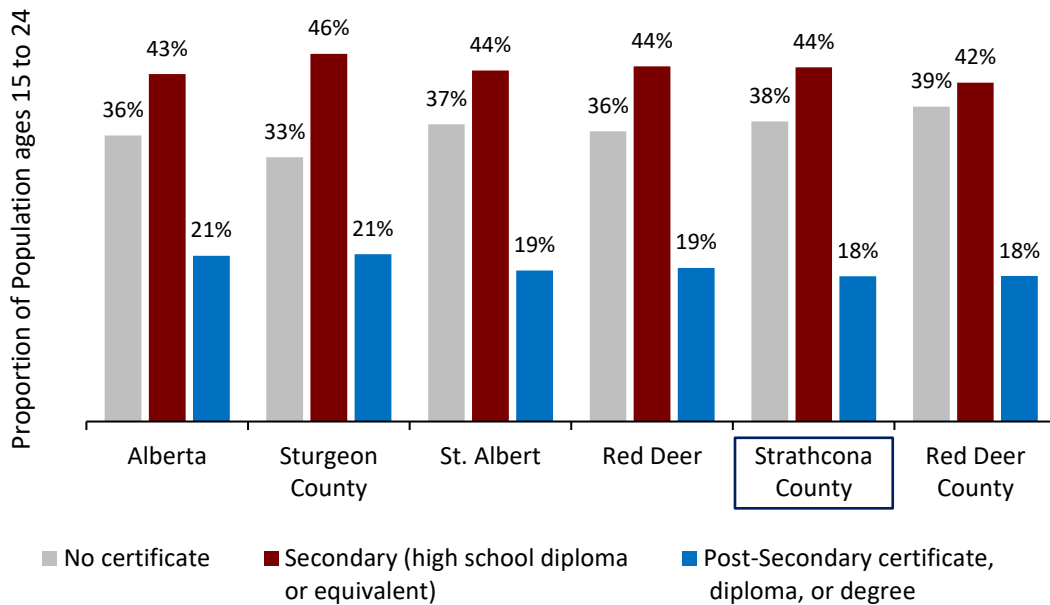
Source: Statistics Canada (2018b)

INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT

Strathcona County (along with St. Albert and Sturgeon County) has relatively higher individual ($53,403) and household ($126,399) incomes compared to the averages of Red Deer, Red Deer County, and Alberta overall – the provincial averages are $42,717 and $93,835, respectively. Nevertheless, four per cent of Strathcona County's population is considered low income, including six per cent of 0 to 17 year olds and three per cent of 18 to 24 year olds. Although these figures are lower than the provincial average (nine per cent for all ages, 13 per cent for 0 to 17 years, and 10 per cent for 18 to 24 years) and other comparison locations, they still represent a sizeable number of individuals (Statistics Canada, 2018b).

As shown in Figure 3, employment rates for Strathcona County residents aged 15 and up (67 per cent) and 15 to 24 years specifically (58 per cent) are similar to those across comparison locations and slightly exceed the provincial averages of 65 per cent and 54 per cent, respectively. At seven per cent, the overall unemployment rate in Strathcona County (for those aged 15 and over) is lower than the provincial average of nine percent and rates of other comparison locations (see Figure 4). However, the unemployment rate among Strathcona County's youth aged 15 to 24 (15 per cent) is more than double the overall rate

in the County, similar to trends in the other comparison locations (Statistics Canada, 2018b).

Figure 3   Employment rates (2016)
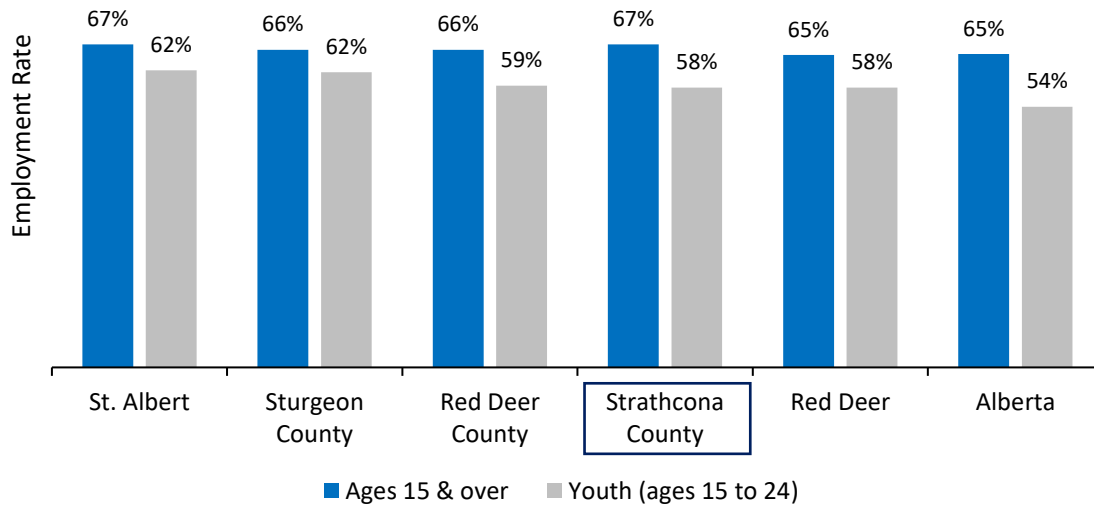
Source: Statistics Canada (2018b)

Figure 4   Unemployment rates (2016)
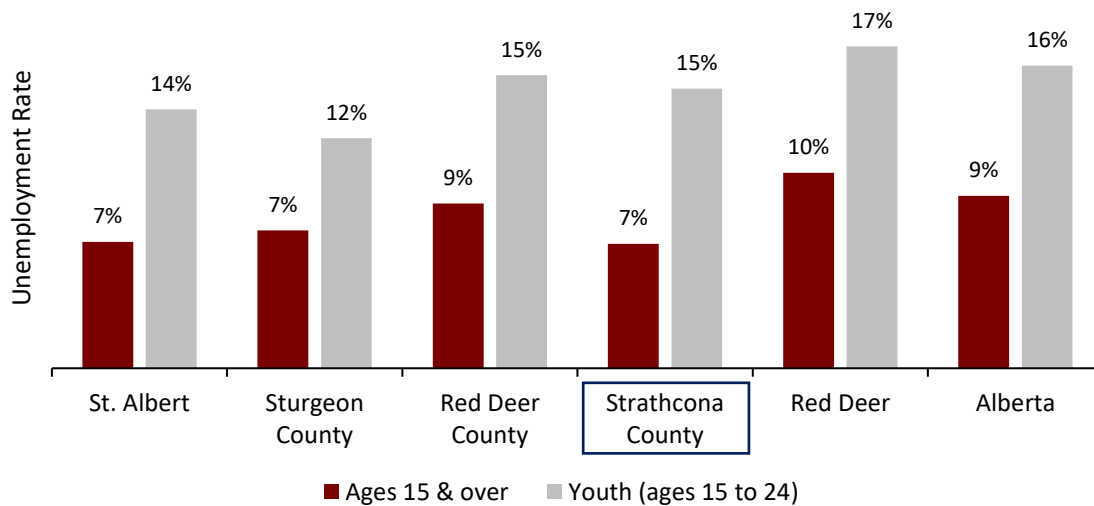
Source: Statistics Canada (2018b)

FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD

According to 2016 federal census figures (Statistics Canada, 2018b):

- At $511,612, average home/dwelling prices in Strathcona County are higher than the Alberta average but considerably less (by more than $100,000) than highest-priced Sturgeon County.

- About half of Strathcona County youth aged 25 to 29 years are married or in common law relationships, which is similar to Alberta overall and the other comparison locations.

- Lone parent families in general represent 12 per cent of families in Strathcona County, falling between rates in other comparison locations (ranging from seven per cent in Sturgeon County to 17 per cent in the City of Red Deer) but still below the Alberta average of 16 per cent (see Figure 5).

Figure 5   **Households with children (2016)**
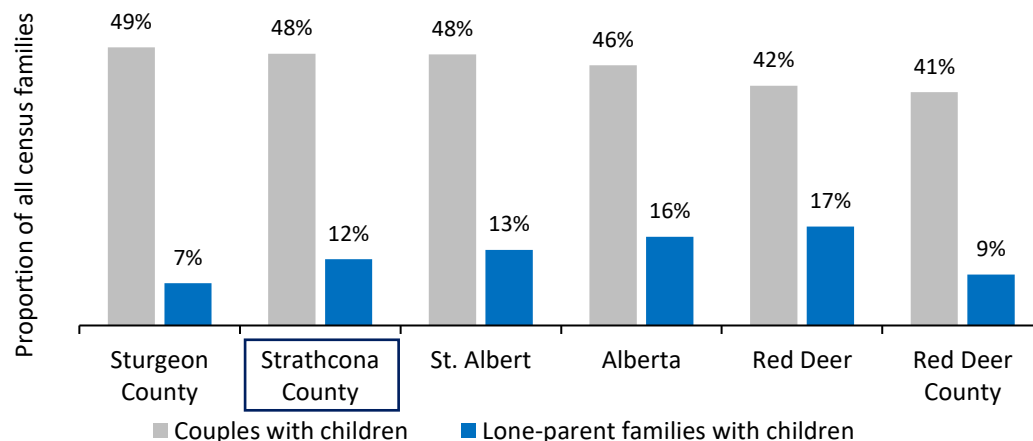
Source: Statistics Canada (2018b)

Results of Strathcona County's 2011 survey of Grade 6, 8, and 11 students shed additional light on young people's perceptions of their lives and families. For example, most youth across the three grades felt supported and encouraged by their parents and families, but about one in five did not. About half the participating individuals agreed they could talk about serious issues or concerns with their parents. Most tended to agree their parents want know where they are when not at home, but less frequently agreed their parents watch how much time they spend on the internet, especially among older survey respondents (Strathcona County, 2013).

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Health-related statistics collected through the 2017 Canadian Community Health Survey, although not specific to Strathcona County,[3] are generally similar for Albertans and Canadians overall. However, some differences exist. For example, Albertans were more likely to report very good or excellent health, higher rates of physical activity (for 12 to 17 and 18 years of age and over), and lower rates of stress – although the differences were not large, these and others were statistically significant (Statistics Canada, 2018a), that is, not likely to be due to chance. Further details are provided in Figure 6; statistically significant differences are noted with an asterisk (*).

Figure 6   Health indicators – Alberta and Canada (2017)
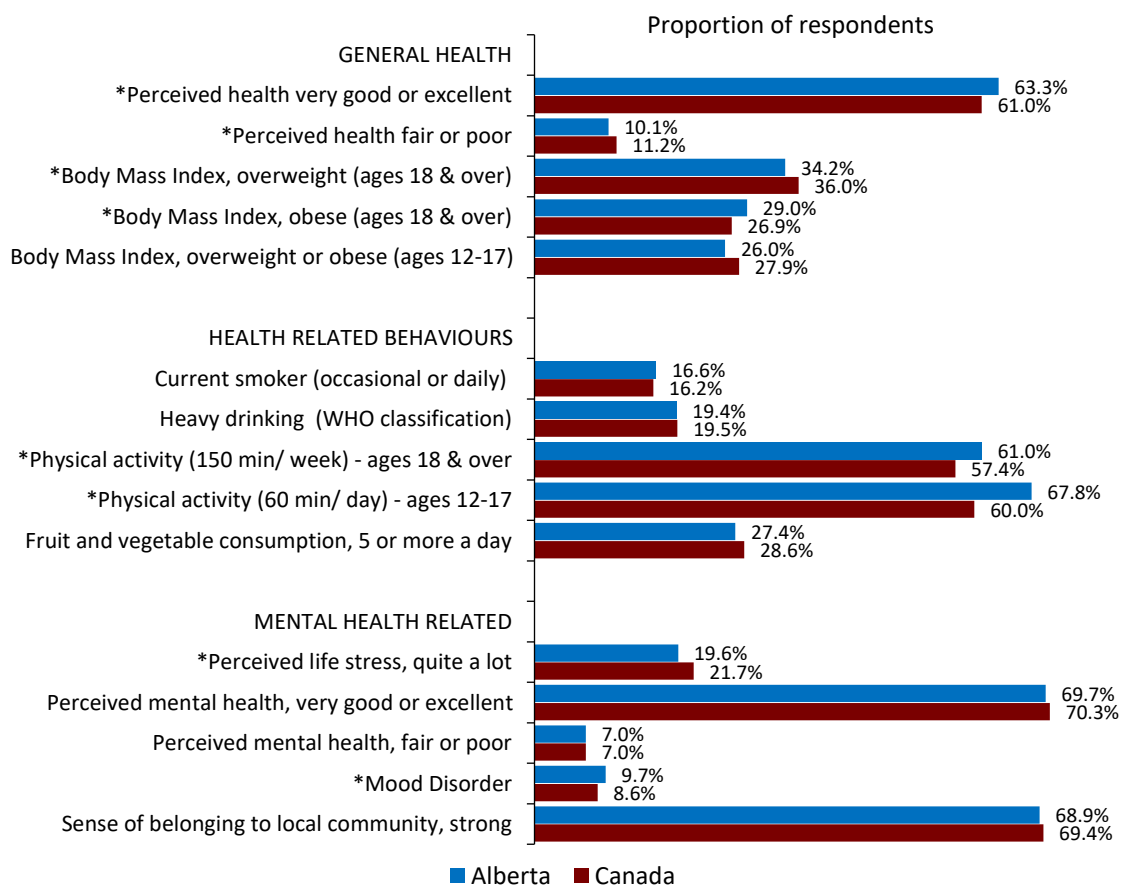
Source: Statistics Canada (2018a)

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[3] Data were not available for regional breakdowns (suppressed due to small numbers).

According to the results of Strathcona County's 2011 Youth Survey, a large majority of respondents in Grades 6, 8, and 11 saw themselves as being in good or excellent health. However, about one in ten students in Grades 8 and 11 identified fair or poor health. In addition:

- The majority of respondents across all three grades said they engaged in activities such as sports, clubs, organizations, or music/drama. However, sizeable proportions – roughly 20 to 30 per cent across grades – did not appear to be involved in these extracurricular pursuits.

- Some self-identified risky behaviour was greater among higher grades (e.g., occasional drinking, gambling for money), as was perceived pressure to try alcohol.

- Across the three grades, between five and seven per cent of respondents indicated they sometimes engaged in self-harming behaviour, that is, they sometimes try to cut or hurt themselves (Strathcona County, 2013).

CULTURE AND DIVERSITY

Across all comparison communities, the majority of residents are Canadian citizens. At 96 per cent, Strathcona County falls roughly in the middle of the range, from 91 per cent for the provincial average to 98 per cent for Sturgeon County. Although English is the mother tongue for 74 per cent of Albertans overall, rates in all other comparison locations were higher; these range from 85 per cent in Red Deer to 93 per cent in Red Deer County – Strathcona County again sits at the mid-point at 89 per cent. However, compared to provincial averages, substantially smaller proportions of individuals in Strathcona County identify themselves as immigrants[4] or visible minorities. In addition, a smaller percentage identify as Aboriginal (Statistics Canada, 2018b). See Table 2 for further details.

Table 2   Citizenship and immigration, mother tongue, and ethnicity (2016)

	Strathcona County	Sturgeon County	St. Albert	Red Deer County	Red Deer	Alberta
Citizenship & immigration						
Canadian citizens	96%	98%	96%	98%	92%	91%
Not Canadian citizens	4%	2%	4%	2%	8%	9%
Immigrants	10%	6%	11%	5%	15%	21%

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[4] Includes those with citizenship.

	Strathcona County	Sturgeon County	St. Albert	Red Deer County	Red Deer	Alberta
Mother tongue						
English	89%	89%	88%	93%	85%	74%
French	2%	4%	3%	1%	1%	2%
Other	9%	7%	9%	6%	14%	24%
Ethnicity						
Aboriginal identity	4%	8%	4%	4%	5%	6%
Visible minority	7%	3%	9%	2%	15%	23%

Source: Statistics Canada (2018b)

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS AND SELF-CONCEPT

According to Strathcona County's 2016 Community Talk survey (Strathcona County, 2017), for the most part, youth and adults share similar perceptions about aspects of community life they feel are important to achieve. More specifically, the majority agreed that a feeling of belonging and connection is important, as well as physical and emotional safety and freedom from harm; value, respect, and fair treatment; health; and working together to make the community stronger. However, youth were less likely than adults to feel these aspects are currently true in the County (no explanation for the differences was provided).

Across all age ranges, respondents indicated the top three goals for the community should be having their basic needs met, feeling safe and being free from physical and emotional harm, and being healthy.

Perspectives about having various basic needs met varied across age groups. However, all age groups were least likely to agree that affordable housing and childcare needs were being met. See Table 3 for further details.

Table 3   Results of Community Talk survey (2016)

Per cent that somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed that people in Strathcona County…	Youth 11-17	Youth 18-24	Adults (25+)
Feel like they belong and are connected to others			
Important to achieve as a community	84%	89%	90%
Think this is true right now	61%	68%	76%

Per cent that somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed that people in Strathcona County…	Youth 11-17	Youth 18-24	Adults (25+)
Feel safe and are free from physical and emotional harm			
Important to achieve as a community	83%	90%	92%
Think this is true right now	56%	76%	79%
Are valued, respected, and treated fairly			
Important to achieve as a community	86%	94%	93%
Think this is true right now	62%	74%	81%
Are healthy (physical, mental, spiritual, mental, and emotional wellness)			
Important to achieve as a community	82%	91%	91%
Think this is true right now	59%	68%	73%
Work together to make our community stronger			
Important to achieve as a community	84%	92%	92%
Think this is true right now	62%	69%	77%
Have their basic needs met			
Adequate income - think this is true right now	65%	75%	73%
Quality education - think this is true right now	80%	86%	85%
Quality and affordable childcare - think this is true right now	63%	50%	39%
Affordable housing - think this is true right now	52%	35%	41%
Reliable transportation - think this is true right now	70%	74%	68%
Have all their basic needs met (e.g., adequate income, education, childcare, housing, and transportation) - all important for us to achieve as a community	91%	95%	95%

Source: Strathcona County (2017)

Additional results from Strathcona County's 2011 Youth Survey showed that youths' sense of safety walking alone after dark tended to increase as they advanced from Grades 6 to 11 but a feeling of living in a caring community, knowing where to go for help, and having adult role models to look up to tended to decrease (Strathcona County, 2013). In terms of self-concept, the majority of youth agreed that they felt positive about the future, can stand up for what they believe, and take responsibility for their actions – these figures tended to increase with age. However, the percentage of respondents who indicated they had been bullied at least once in the past year or had witnessed bullying in the past year also increased in subsequent grades, nearly triple in Grade 11 compared to Grade 6 (Strathcona County, 2013).

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APPENDIX A: STATISTICAL PROFILE TABLES

Table 4 **Age profile (2016)**

% of total population provided, where applicable	Strathcona County (Specialized Municipality)		Sturgeon County (Municipal District)		St. Albert (City)		Red Deer County (Municipal District)		Red Deer (City)		Alberta (Province)	
	N	% of Total Pop.	N	% of Total Pop.	N	% of Total Pop.	N	% of Total Pop.	N	% of Total Pop.	N	% of Total Pop.
Total population (2016)	98,044		20,495		65,589		19,541		100,418		4,067,175	
Youth (total)	*17,685*	*18.0%*	*3,910*	*19.1%*	*11,780*	*18.0%*	*3,175*	*16.2%*	*21,285*	*21.2%*	*812,805*	*20.0%*
Age 15-19	6,595	6.7%	1,470	7.2%	4,355	6.6%	1,205	6.2%	6,030	6.0%	240,035	5.9%
Age 20-24	5,845	6.0%	1,330	6.5%	3,995	6.1%	950	4.9%	7,035	7.0%	261,830	6.4%
Age 25-29	5,245	5.3%	1,110	5.4%	3,430	5.2%	1,020	5.2%	8,220	8.2%	310,940	7.6%
Median age	40.1		39.0		40.7		43.0		36.1		36.7	

Source: Statistics Canada (2018b)

Table 5   Age profile for Strathcona County – total, urban, and rural (2018)

Strathcona County						
Age (years)	**Total**		**Urban**		**Rural**	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
0-4	3,977	4.4%	3,076	4.7%	901	3.6%
5-9	5,732	6.3%	4,235	6.5%	1,497	5.9%
10-14	6,371	7.0%	4,535	6.9%	1,835	7.3%
15-19	6,453	7.1%	4,526	6.9%	1,927	7.6%
20-24	4,999	5.5%	3,619	5.5%	1,380	5.5%
Youth (15-24 total)	*11,452*	*12.6%*	*8,145*	*12.4%*	*3,307*	*13.1%*
25-34	9,644	10.6%	7,627	11.6%	2,017	8.0%
35-44	12,253	13.5%	9,232	14.1%	3,021	11.9%
45-54	13,329	14.7%	9,109	13.9%	4,220	16.7%
55-64	13,464	14.8%	8,859	13.5%	4,606	18.2%
65-74	9,257	10.2%	6,506	9.9%	2,751	10.9%
75-84	4,208	4.6%	3,272	5.0%	936	3.7%
85+	1,195	1.3%	968	1.5%	227	0.9%
TOTAL	90,882	100.0%	65,564	100.0%	25,318	100.0%

Source: Strathcona County (2018b)

Table 6   Age and gender profiles for Strathcona County – urban and rural (2018)

Age (years)	Urban service area						Rural service area					
	Total		Males		Females		Total		Males		Females	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0-4	3,068	4.7%	1,511	4.7%	1,557	4.7%	891	3.5%	468	3.6%	423	3.5%
5-9	4,220	6.5%	2,114	6.6%	2,106	6.3%	1,494	5.9%	781	6.0%	713	5.8%
10-14	4,512	6.9%	2,273	7.1%	2,239	6.7%	1,831	7.3%	920	7.1%	911	7.4%
15-19	4,492	6.9%	2,349	7.3%	2,143	6.4%	1,919	7.6%	984	7.6%	935	7.6%
20-24	3,606	5.5%	1,872	5.9%	1,734	5.2%	1,375	5.4%	757	5.8%	618	5.0%
Youth (15-24)	*8,098*	*12.4%*	*4,221*	*13.2%*	*3,877*	*11.6%*	*3,294*	*13.0%*	*1,741*	*13.4%*	*1,553*	*12.6%*
25-34	7,604	11.6%	3,806	11.9%	3,798	11.4%	2,009	8.0%	1,031	7.9%	978	8.0%
35-44	9,203	14.1%	4,466	14.0%	4,737	14.2%	3,016	11.9%	1,465	11.3%	1,551	12.7%
45-54	9,096	13.9%	4,385	13.7%	4,711	14.1%	4,214	16.7%	2,115	16.3%	2,099	17.1%
55-64	8,852	13.5%	4,328	13.5%	4,524	13.5%	4,600	18.2%	2,384	18.3%	2,216	18.1%
65-74	6,499	9.9%	2,982	9.3%	3,517	10.5%	2,744	10.9%	1,465	11.3%	1,279	10.4%
75-84	3,267	5.0%	1,545	4.8%	1,722	5.2%	934	3.7%	517	4.0%	417	3.4%
85+	968	1.5%	365	1.1%	603	1.8%	227	0.9%	120	0.9%	107	0.9%
TOTAL	65,387	100.0%	31,996	100.0%	33,391	100.0%	25,254	100.0%	13,007	100.0%	12,247	100.0%

Source: Strathcona County (2018b)

Table 7 Highest level of education attained (2016)

	Strathcona County (Specialized Municipality)		Sturgeon County (Municipal District)		St. Albert (City)		Red Deer County (Municipal District)		Red Deer (City)		Alberta (Province)	
	N	% of Total Pop.	N	% of Total Pop.	N	% of Total Pop.	N	% of Total Pop.	N	% of Total Pop.	N	% of Total Pop.
Ages 15+												
No certificate	9,950	12.7%	2,540	16.0%	6,230	11.9%	2,735	18.1%	14,130	17.7%	540,665	16.9%
Secondary (high school diploma or equivalent)	22,290	28.4%	4,860	30.7%	14,450	27.7%	4,690	31.0%	25,050	31.4%	895,885	27.9%
Post-secondary certificate, diploma, degree	46,235	58.9%	8,430	53.3%	31,525	60.4%	7,700	50.9%	40,640	50.9%	1,769,500	55.2%
Ages 15-24												
No certificate	4,650	37.5%	845	33.1%	3,105	37.2%	855	39.4%	4,715	36.3%	176,870	35.8%
Secondary (high school diploma or equivalent)	5,490	44.3%	1,175	46.0%	3,665	43.9%	920	42.4%	5,770	44.5%	214,715	43.5%
Post-secondary certificate, diploma, degree	2,250	18.2%	535	20.9%	1,575	18.9%	395	18.2%	2,495	19.2%	102,460	20.7%

Source: Statistics Canada (2018b)

Table 8 Five-year high school completion rates – Edmonton Region, Central Region, and Alberta (2014-15 to 2016-17)

	Edmonton Region (%)	Central Region (%)	Alberta (%)
2016-17	82.8%	82.8%	83.4%
2015-16	82.7%	83.0%	83.2%
2014-15	80.9%	83.4%	82.1%

Source: Government of Alberta (2018)

Table 9   High school completion and drop out rates – Strathcona County and Alberta (2016, 2018)

	Strathcona County (%)	Alberta (%)
K-12 students	19.1% (n=17,182)	
Post-secondary students	3.3% (n=2,996)	
EIPS* 3-yr high school completion rate (2016)	81.2%	77.9%
EIPS 4-yr high school completion rate (2016)	86.8%	81.2%
EIPS 5-yr high school completion rate (2016)	86.8%	83.2%
EICS** 3-yr high school completion rate (2018)	87%	
EICS 4-yr high school completion rate (2018)	92%	
EICS 5-yr high school completion rate (2018)	91%	
EIPS drop-out rate (2016)	1.9%	3.0%
EIPS returning rate (2016)	19.8%	18.9%
EIPS high school to post-secondary transition rate (4-yr)	39.0%	37.0%
EIPS high school to post-secondary transition rate (6-yr)	63.2%	57.9%

Source: Strathcona County (2018b)

* Elk Island Public Schools

** Elk Island Catholic Schools

Table 10   Student status by service region – Strathcona County (2018)

	Total		Urban		Rural	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Child not yet in school	3,966	4.4%	3,076	4.7%	890	3.5%
Student (K-12)	17,182	19.1%	12,349	19.0%	4,833	19.2%
Post-secondary student	2,996	3.3%	2,139	3.3%	857	3.4%
TOTAL population of all residents	90,171	100.0%	65,036	100.0%	25,135	100.0%

Source: Strathcona County (2018b)

Table 11   Student status by gender and service region – Strathcona County (2018)

	Total				Urban				Rural			
	Males		Females		Males		Females		Males		Females	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Child not yet in school	1,972	4.4%	1,976	4.4%	1,511	4.8%	1,557	4.7%	2,460	19.0%	2,360	19.4%
Student (K-12)	8,713	19.5%	8,400	18.6%	6,253	19.7%	6,040	18.2%	461	3.6%	419	3.4%
Post-secondary student	1,322	3.0%	1,667	3.7%	938	3.0%	1,196	3.6%	384	3.0%	471	3.9%
TOTAL Population of all residents	44,678	100.0%	45,269	100.0%	31,750	100.0%	33,124	100.0%	12,928	100.0%	12,145	100.0%

Source: Strathcona County (2018b)

Table 12   Location of school for K-12 students by service region – Strathcona County (2018)

	Total		Urban		Rural	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
In Strathcona County	14,245	93.4%	10,433	94.9%	3,812	89.7%
Outside Strathcona County	999	6.6%	559	5.1%	440	10.3%
Total	15,244	100.0%	10,992	100.0%	4,252	100.0%

Source: Strathcona County (2018b)

Table 13   Location of school for students pursuing post-secondary education – Strathcona County (2018)

	Total		Urban		Rural	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
In Strathcona County	281	9.6%	220	10.5%	61	7.4%
Outside Strathcona County	2,644	90.4%	1,880	89.5%	764	92.6%
Total	2,925	100.0%	2,100	100.0%	825	100.0%

Source: Strathcona County (2018b)

Table 14   Income and employment (2016)

	Strathcona County (Specialized Municipality)	Sturgeon County (Municipal District)	St. Albert (City)	Red Deer County (Municipal District)	Red Deer (City)	Alberta (Province)
Median total income of <u>individuals</u> in 2015, before tax	$53,403	$50,204	$52,581	$42,434	$41,109	$42,717
Median total income of <u>households</u> in 2015, before tax	$126,399	$121,984	$119,905	$95,475	$85,794	$93,835
Prevalence of low income individuals (%)						
All ages	4.0%	5.3%	4.3%	8.6%	10.0%	9.3%
Ages 0-17	5.5%	6.2%	6.2%	11.3%	14.4%	12.8%
Ages 18-24	3.1%	3.5%	3.8%	6.0%	10.0%	9.9%
Employment rate (%)						
Ages 15+	67.4%	66.3%	67.4%	66.3%	65.2%	65.4%
Ages 15-24	58.4%	61.6%	62.0%	58.8%	58.4%	54.4%
Unemployment rate (%)						
Ages 15+	6.5%	7.2%	6.6%	8.6%	10.2%	9.0%
Ages 15-24	14.6%	12.0%	13.5%	15.3%	16.8%	15.8%

Source: Statistics Canada (2018b)

Table 15   Part-time employment among Grade 6, 8, and 11 students (2011)

	Grade 6(%)	Grade 8 (%)	Grade 11 (%)
Part-time employment – yes	22.1%	21.8%	59.7%

Source: Strathcona County (2013)

Table 16   Family and household (2016)

% of total population provided, where applicable	Strathcona County (Specialized Municipality) N	% of Total Pop.	Sturgeon County (Municipal District) N	% of Total Pop.	St. Albert (City) N	% of Total Pop.	Red Deer County (Municipal District) N	% of Total Pop.	Red Deer (City) N	% of Total Pop.	Alberta (Province) N	% of Total Pop.
Average value of dwelling	$511,612		$625,977		$447,829		$449,790		$370,299		$449,790	
Housing suitable (# of dwellings)*	34,965		6,700		23,505		7,005		38,565		1,458,550	
Housing not suitable (# of dwellings)	600	1.7%	170	2.5%	450	1.9%	90	1.3%	1,415	3.5%	69,125	4.5%
Households												
# of census families in private households	29,160		5,995		19,240		5,655		27,190		373,545	
Couples with children	13,905	47.7%	2925	48.8%	9150	47.6%	2,315	40.9%	11,445	42.1%	170,600	45.7%
Lone-parent census families with children	3,385	11.6%	445	7.4%	2555	13.3%	505	8.9%	4,715	17.3%	58,140	15.6%
Married or Common Law												
All individuals married or common law (ages 15+)	52,225		11,270		34,005		10,565		46,050		649,290	
Ages 15-19**	35	0.5%	5	0.3%	25	0.6%	15	1.2%	130	2.2%	3,375	1.4%
Ages 20-24**	705	12.1%	165	12.4%	460	11.5%	165	17.4%	1,640	23.3%	50,315	19.2%
Ages 25-29**	2,745	52.3%	605	54.5%	1615	47.1%	535	52.5%	4,010	48.8%	154,285	49.6%

Source: Statistics Canada (2018b)

* Housing suitability assessed by National Occupancy Standards based on number of bedrooms (Census 2016)

** Percentage reflects the per cent of all youth in this age category

Table 17   Strathcona County youth perceptions (2011)

Perception of parents and family (% that agreed or strongly agreed)	Grade 6 (%)	Grade 8 (%)	Grade 11 (%)
Parents encourage me to do the best I can	100.0%	90.3%	95.5%
Family provides me with lots of support	83.1%	83.6%	83.2%
Know my parents are there for me when I need them	90.3%	85.1%	86.5%
Parents help me succeed in school	84.2%	76.9%	73.5%
Parents want to know where I am when I'm not home	84.4%	85.0%	89.0%
Parents have clear rules about what I can and cannot do	70.7%	76.1%	76.7%
Parents know they can trust me to do the right thing	83.7%	84.4%	83.3%
My parents watch how much I am on the internet	40.1%	32.8%	9.7%
Can talk to parents about any serious issues or concerns	51.4%	53.7%	52.2%
Know some adults other than parent for advice & support	74.0%	71.4%	71.0%
Parents spend enough time with me	63.3%	75.4%	74.2%
Have enough money to do similar activities as friends	52.7%	78.9%	73.4%

Source: Strathcona County (2013)

Table 18   General health, health-related behaviours, and mental health – Alberta and Canada (2017)

Ages 12 & over, unless otherwise specified	Alberta	Canada	Significance (AB to CA)
General health			
Perceived health very good or excellent	63.3%	61.0%	Higher
Perceived health fair or poor	10.1%	11.2%	Lower
Body Mass Index, overweight (ages 18 & over)	34.2%	36.0%	Lower
Body Mass Index, obese (ages 18 & over)	29.0%	26.9%	Higher
Body Mass Index, overweight **or** obese (ages 12-17)	26.0%	27.9%	-
Health-related behaviours			
Current smoker (occasional or daily)	16.6%	16.2%	-
Heavy drinking (WHO classification)	19.4%	19.5%	-
Physical activity (150 min/ week) – ages 18 & over	61.0%	57.4%	Higher
Physical activity (60 min/ day) – ages 12-17	67.8%	60.0%	Higher
Fruit and vegetable consumption, 5 or more a day	27.4%	28.6%	-
Mental health			
Perceived life stress, quite a lot	19.6%	21.7%	Lower
Perceived mental health, very good or excellent	69.7%	70.3%	-
Perceived mental health, fair or poor	7.0%	7.0%	-
Mood disorder	9.7%	8.6%	Higher
Sense of belonging to local community, strong	68.9%	69.4%	-

Source: Statistics Canada (2018a)

Table 19   Health perspectives among Strathcona County Grade 6, 8, and 11 students (2011)

	Grade 6	Grade 8	Grade 11
Self-rating of health			
Excellent	49.0%	47.0%	35.7%
Good	44.1%	42.4%	52.6%
Fair	6.2%	8.3%	11.0%
Poor	0.7%	2.3%	0.6%
All below: % that agreed or strongly agreed			
Sexual health			
Important to use protection against STIs	83.9%	94.1%	97.7%
Important to use birth control	58.9%	70.5%	80.8%
Know what STIs are	40.8%	95.5%	96.1%
Alcohol use			
Believe it is important not to drink alcohol	90.4%	64.6%	27.8%
Feel pressured to try alcohol	8.9%	6.7%	21.3%
Occasionally drink alcohol with friends	2.1%	15.0%	58.7%
Tobacco use and gambling			
Believe it is important not to use tobacco products	92.4%	87.3%	81.8%
Use tobacco products every day	2.1%	3.7%	3.9%
Have gambled for money	8.2%	15.8%	21.9%
Drugs and drug use			
Important for me not to use illegal drugs	93.8%	87.3%	81.3%
Never used hard drugs such as cocaine, crystal meth, crack	73.5%	82.8%	82.6%
Know someone who has tried illegal drugs	19.9%	64.6%	89.1%
Believe illegal drugs are easy to obtain	15.8%	25.4%	54.9%
Feel pressured to try illegal drugs	10.2%	7.5%	7.1%
Have friends who have problems with illegal drug use	2.7%	22.4%	35.7%
Physical and mental health			
Spend time each week in sports/clubs/orgs/ or music/drama	67.8%	79.1%	69.7%
Exercise regularly	71.7%	87.2%	68.2%
Able to deal with anger/problems without violence	54.8%	66.5%	75.5%
Read for pleasure 3 or more hours each week	34.5%	38.1%	30.5%

	Grade 6	Grade 8	Grade 11
Sometimes I try to cut or hurt myself	4.8%	6.8%	5.1%

Source: Strathcona County (2013)

Table 20   Culture and diversity (2016)

% of total population provided, where applicable	**Strathcona County (Specialized Municipality)**		**Sturgeon County (Municipal District)**		**St. Albert (City)**		**Red Deer County (Municipal District)**		**Red Deer (City)**		**Alberta (Province)**	
	N	**% of Total Pop.**	**N**	**% of Total Pop.**	**N**	**% of Total Pop.**	**N**	**% of Total Pop.**	**N**	**% of Total Pop.**	**N**	**% of Total Pop.**
Canadian citizens	93,040	95.9%	19,495	98.4%	61,535	95.5%	18,000	97.9%	90,255	91.6%	3,622,740	91.1%
Not Canadian citizens	3,980	4.1%	325	1.6%	2,885	4.5%	380	2.1%	8,225	8.4%	355,410	8.9%
Immigrants*	9,940	10.1%	1,255	6.1%	7,535	11.5%	1,045	5.3%	14,680	14.6%	845,220	20.8%
Age at immigration between 15-24 years (i.e., # who were 15-24 years old when immigrated)	2,035		380		1,595		190		2,670		168,965	
Mother tongue												
English	86,005	89.2%	17,950	89.0%	56,115	87.8%	17,365	92.9%	82,645	84.9%	969,560	73.6%
French	1,825	1.9%	770	3.8%	1,885	2.9%	185	1.0%	1,315	1.4%	27,620	2.1%
Other	8,605	8.9%	1,445	7.2%	5,910	9.2%	1,145	6.1%	13,335	13.7%	319,475	24.3%
Generation of Canadians												
First generation	11,290		1,470		8,445		1,185		16,520		347,495	
Second generation	16,585		3,200		11,510		2,860		14,965		262,495	
Third generation or more	69,145		15,155		44,465		14,335		66,990		730,945	
Ethnicity												
Aboriginal identity	3,880	4.0%	1,655	8.1%	2,830	4.3%	765	3.9%	5,185	5.2%	258,640	6.4%
Visible minority	7,150	7.3%	705	3.4%	5,740	8.8%	320	1.6%	15,230	15.2%	933,165	22.9%

Source: Statistics Canada (2018b)

* Immigrants include persons who are, or who have ever been, landed immigrants or permanent residents. Immigrants who have obtained Canadian citizenship by naturalization are included in this category.

Table 21   Strathcona County community perceptions (2016)

% that somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agreed that people in Strathcona County…	Youth 11-17 yrs	Youth 18-24 yrs	Adults (18+ yrs)	Adults (25+ yrs)
Sense of belonging and connection				
Feel like they belong and are connected to others – important for us to achieve as a community	83.8%	89.0%	90.00%	89.9%
Feel like they belong and are connected to others – think this is true right now	61.1%	68.1%	75.30%	75.8%
Safety				
Feel safe and are free from physical and emotional harm – important for us to achieve as a community	82.6%	89.9%	91.80%	92.0%
Feel safe and are free from physical and emotional harm – think this is true right now	56.2%	75.7%	79.00%	79.3%
Respect				
Are valued, respected, and treated fairly – important for us to achieve as a community	85.6%	94.0%	93.40%	93.4%
Are valued, respected, and treated fairly- think this is true right now	62.1%	74.3%	80.60%	81.2%
Health				
Are healthy (physical, mental, spiritual, mental & emotional wellness) – important for us to achieve as a community	81.7%	90.6%	90.80%	90.9%
Are healthy (physical, mental, spiritual, mental & emotional wellness) – think this is true right now	59.4%	68.2%	73.10%	73.4%
Working together				
Work together to make our community stronger – important for us to achieve as a community	83.7%	92.1%	92.30%	92.3%
Work together to make our community stronger – think this is true right now	62.2%	69.4%	76.50%	77.0%
Basic needs				
Have all of their basic needs met (adequate income) – think this is true right now	65.4%	74.8%	73.30%	73.1%
Have their basic needs met (quality education) – think this is true right now	79.8%	86.0%	85.10%	84.9%
Have their basic needs met (quality & affordable child care) – think this is true right now	63.3%	49.9%	39.90%	39.1%
Have their basic needs met (affordable housing) – think this is true right now	51.5%	35.1%	40.40%	40.9%
Have their basic needs met (reliable transportation) – think this is true right now	70.2%	73.6%	68.00%	67.5%
Have all their basic needs met (e.g., adequate income, education, childcare, housing, and transportation) – all important for us to achieve as a community	91.0%	95.0%	95.10%	95.1%

Source: Strathcona County (2017)

Table 22   Youth assessment of community, self, and others among Strathcona County Grade 6, 8, and 11 students (2011)

% that agreed or strongly agreed	Grade 6	Grade 8	Grade 11
Community			
Felt safe walking alone after dark	34.9%	55.3%	61.3%
Have adult role models that I look up to	88.4%	78.4%	78.1%
Know where to go for help	79.5%	76.1%	71.6%
Live in a caring community	60.5%	65.4%	42.6%
Self			
It is important to do well in school	93.2%	91.0%	90.3%
Feel positive about my future	66.2%	85.8%	87.1%
Can stand up for what I believe	77.6%	90.3%	86.5%
Can get transportation as necessary	67.6%	81.4%	82.6%
Take responsibility for actions when getting into trouble	61.2%	71.6%	79.4%
Others			
Believe it is important to help others	89.0%	89.5%	87.1%
Past 12 months, have seen people bullied	34.0%	60.4%	67.7%
I have been bullied by someone at least once in past year	27.9%	38.4%	38.1%
Picked on someone at least once in the in past 12 months	15.5%	36.1%	43.2%
Worry about what other people think of me	23.1%	45.6%	35.5%

Source: Strathcona County (2013)

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